

# The Early Turkestani Émigré Struggle and Turkestanism: Nation – Imagining in Emigration: 1925-1940

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## Abstract

The early Turkestani émigré struggle was an important example of ‘nation imagining’ in emigration. In this article, the challenges faced by Turkestani nationalist leaders who had left their fatherland after the Bolshevik invasion of their country are examined. The activities of émigré leaders and pan-Turkists like Zeki Velidî Togan, Mustafa Çokayoğlu, Osman Hoca and Nihal Atsız are illustrated in some detail. Special attention is given to policy formation, propaganda tactics, the use of media (mainly by publishing periodicals), and the organization of NGOs with the mission of setting and uniting the public (in diaspora) against Russian invasion. It is hoped that this discussion will enable researchers to make better assessments of the past and intelligent projections for the future. The work is based on extensive original sources, most of which have not been exploited before in English language publications.

## Keywords

Turkestanism, Nation Imagining in Emigration, Turkestan, Türkili, Türk Eli

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## Introduction

In this study, the early phase of the émigré life of Turkestanis out of their fatherland is examined. By 1925, numerous Turkestanî political figures, escaping from Bolshevik oppression, ended up either in neighboring countries or in Turkey and Europe. However, it should be noted that the largest part of the Turkestanî intelligentsia remained in the region, many becoming native national communists in the service of the Soviet State. The views and positions of the Turkestanî émigrés presented here are mostly the ones who considered themselves as the nationalists and patriots of the national liberation cause. Among the major challenges faced by the émigré leaders, some of the most important are outlined in this essay. These challenges included a wide spectrum of issues from the terminology (whether to use Turkestan, *Turkili*, *Türk Eli*, Central Asia, Middle Asia, etc.) to the Basmachi resistance movement, from émigré struggles for political representation of Turkestanis in abroad to tribalism among the very émigré leaders.

The activities of Turkestanî émigré leaders and organizations in different parts of the world during the 1920s and 1930s are now considered quite important, especially by the historians of independent Central Asian states, such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Those activities included the publication of periodicals, the establishment of émigré organizations, national unions and common fronts with whomever possible against “Soviet aggressors.” For modern scholars of the region, especially for those from the region, these émigré leaders and their struggle in exile represent an integral part of the national history. In most of the recent historiography of the region, it has been accepted that their struggle in emigration secured the survival of national independence cause throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There is still an important gap in the existing literature focusing on the activities and ideological mindsets of Turkestanî émigré leaders, as well as the differences between them. This article is an attempt to shed more light on the problems of émigré efforts in nation imagining. It is limited to the first phase of émigré struggle (1925-1940), with a number of leading Turkestanî émigré leaders’ activities and their reactions to each other as well as to Soviet policies in the Central Asian region. All of these are especially important to be known at a time of the contemporary efforts of writing a post-Cold war interpretation of the history of the region, independent from ideological subjectivities. Methodologically, the researcher has made an extensive use

original sources, namely the publications of early Turkestani émigrés, such as *Yeni Türkistan* and *Yaş Türkistan*, and the pamphlets published and distributed by different Turkestani émigré organizations in different parts of the world.

### Early Émigré Organizations<sup>1</sup>

The first signs of an organized émigré political struggle by the Turkestanis against the Bolshevik invasion of their country appeared in Istanbul in 1925. After a long and adventurous five years, the former Bashkir autonomy leader Zeki Velidî (Togan), former Turkestan autonomy president Mustafa Çokayoğlu (Çokay, Chokai, Chokaev, Chokai uly, Shokai), the former president of Bukharan People's Republic Osman Hoca (Kocaoğlu, Hocaev) and some other Turkestanis agreed to organize the political struggle for the independence of Turkestan, at a meeting in Istanbul, in 1925 (Kocaoğlu 1999: 160). There, they'd decided to launch a comprehensive émigré program informing the international public about the events going on in Turkestan. There were two immediate outcomes of this meeting. The first one was the publication of two significant periodicals: *Yeni Türkistan* (*YeT* from here on was published until 1932) [New Turkestan] in Istanbul in 1927 and *Yaş Türkistan* [Young Turkestan] in Paris, from 1929 on. (*YT* from here on) The second outcome was the organization of Turkestanis who had emigrated to Turkey, Europe, Iran (Editorial *YT*, no. 55, June 1934: 41), India (Editorial *YT*, no. 29, April 1932: 1-4) and Arabia under émigré political associations. The first example of these associations was the one established in Turkey under the name *Türkistan Türk Gençler Birliği* (TTGB) [Union of the Turkestani Turkish<sup>2</sup> Youth] in September 1927.<sup>3</sup>

The émigré political organization in Istanbul was run by Osman Hoca and Zeki Velidî, until the problems between Zeki Velidî and Çokayoğlu surfaced in the first half of the 1930s. The very definition of the term Turkestan in TTGB and *Yeni Türkistan* had three components: Uzbek lands, Bashkir<sup>4</sup> lands and Kazak-Kyrgyz lands. Apparently in this initial period of émigré life, there was a consensus on the leadership of Mustafa Çokayoğlu for the united émigré front. (Editorial *YeT*, no. 2-3, July-August 1927: 1-5, Editorial *YeT*, no. 4, September 1927: 1-3, Kayoğlu *YeT*, no. 8, March 1928: 1-7) With the TTGB's (İlter *YT*, no. 47, October 1933: 27-32) efforts, there were the beginnings of non-communist young national cadres for an inde-

pendent Turkestan rose up in Turkey (Editorial *YT*, no. 45, August 1933: 7-8).<sup>5</sup> This was the main service of TTGB to the political program of émigré political struggle.

Çokayoğlu started publishing *Yaş Türkistan* in Paris in 1929.<sup>6</sup> His efforts were backed by common Turkestanî political platform called *Türkistan Millî Birliği*<sup>7</sup> (TMB) [Turkestan National Union] (*Çokaybay YeT*, no. 7, December 1928: 11-15). The objective of the TMB in exile was “to free Turkestan from Russian Proletariat and/or Russian hegemony and the establishment of a free national Turkestan state.” (Editorial *YT*, no. 9-10, August-September 1930: 4). But there was still a lack of unity among the Turkestanis. For the émigrés, unification remained the primary objective (Editorial *YT*, no. 9-10, August-September 1930: 5). Çokayoğlu, in an emotional manner, had this to say to all Turkestanis about the importance of uniting under TMB:

O Young Turkestanî! Never forget the great weight of your sacred duty and the greatness of your responsibility. Get prepared, day and night, non-stop, for freeing your land from the Russian invasion and horror and for establishing a Free Turkestan! Your land and nation demands these from you more than everything else! (Editorial *YT*, no. 9-10, August-September 1930: 7)

The highest numbers of Turkestanî refugees during the 1920s were in Afghanistan, where they soon became residents. However, Bukharan Amir’s continuing claims for his throne was a source of discomfort for the nationalists (Editorial *YT*, no. 23, October 1931: 21-23). Amir was a popular target of other émigré political leaders, not only in terms of political reasons but also financial ones (Toktamışoğlu *YT*, no. 29, April 1932: 31). From the early days of émigré life, Turkestanî leaders had declared Amir as the enemy of the Turkestan’s Liberation Movement! (*Çokayoğlu YeT*, no. 5-6, October-November 1927: 1-7).

In Afghanistan, the Committee for the Salvation of Bukhara and Turkestan [*Encümen-i Saadet-i Buhara ve Türkistan*] was established to unite Turkestanis in this country and organize them to launch a final offensive against the Reds in Turkestan (Taşkendi *YT*, no. 45, August 1933: 32-35). However, Afghanistan itself was far from being a stable favorable émigré country (Editorial *YT*, no. 48, November 1933: 37-38). Turkestanis in Afghanistan continued their pre-soviet life-style freely and enjoyed the atmosphere of Jihad among the Basmachis, which was politically quite popular until the end of the 1930s

(Kemimzâde *YT*, no. 60, November 1934: 38-39). As expected, most of the Bukharan refugees in Afghanistan and some main Mujahedeen groups were still loyal to Amir - rather than to the nationalist movement.

By 1934, the Turkestani émigré flow to British India was still continuing (Mesud *YT*, no. 57, August 1934: 33). Most were probably Turkestanis who had spent a couple of years in Afghanistan but could not find a better life left there and ended up in Indian cities. Émigré activities in India were mainly concentrated in Peshawar and Delhi (Ziyae'ddin *YT*, no. 52, March 1934: 34-37). The name of the Turkestani organization in India was the Committee for the Unity of Turkestani Émigrés [*Encümen-i İttihadı-ı Muhacirin Türkistan*]. In 1935, Turkestani émigrés in Bombay organized themselves under the name Union of Turkestani Émigrés [*Türkistan Muhacirler Birliđi*], and started to publish their monthly Sun of Turkestan [*Türkistan Kuyası*] periodical. (Ziyae'ddin 1934: 32). Both organizations continued their activities until the Second World War.

In Germany, the Turkestani community was limited to a few dozens of students or graduates of German Universities. Tahir Çağatay and Ahmetcan Oktay were among those who were sent by the Bukharan Republic in 1921. They mainly worked with Çokayođlu in publishing *Yaş Türkistan* (Kocaođlu 1999: 160). This small but very active community enjoyed the attention and help of scholars of Turkestan like Dr. Gerhard von Mende (Editorial *YT*, no. 63, February 1935: 37-38). Unlike their other European counterparts, the German press was not totally ignorant about the causes of Turkestanis (Editorial *YT*, no. 63, February 1935: 39). Under the auspices of Gerhard von Mende, the Nazi press started to become interested in the Turkestan question, especially those tied to the Anti-Comintern organization in Berlin (Editorial *YT*, no. 89, April 1937: 37-38).

There was also a considerable Turkestani émigré community in *Hijaz*, Arabia. However, according to the *Yaş Türkistan*, the members of this community were deeply polarized among the town-based identities like Bukharan and Samarkandi. This lack of unity was harshly criticized by *Yaş Türkistan* (Abidcan Ođlu *YT*, no. 89, April 1937: 27-29).

### Relations with Russian and Other Émigré Organizations

This was also a period during which “White” Russian émigré organizations were active in Europe and in Turkey. Turkestani leaders were cautious to

keep their distance from those “still-imperialistic” circles (Editorial *YeT*, no. 14-15, September-October 1938: 4). The “white” Russians had never recognized the self-determination rights of Turkestanis. For them, Çokayoğlu and his comrades were no more than rebel colonial peoples. Many of these Russian émigré organizations had enjoyed a significant prestige and power in several European platforms. They had an adverse effect on the performance of the Turkestanî groups there (Taşbalta *YT*, no. 54, May 1934: 24-27). In fact, Russian and Turkestanî émigrés in Paris and throughout the world remained enemies (Yaş Türkistanlı *YT*, no. 67, June 1935: 17-20). However, Turkestanis were not alone. There was a natural alliance between Turkestanî émigrés and Ukrainian, İdel-Ural [i.e. Volga-Ural], Caucasian, Crimean and Azerbaijani émigré leaders, to balance the imperialist Russian émigrés. *Yaş Türkistan* pages were also used as a forum for Azerbaijani, Crimean even Ukrainian nationalist émigrés. Turkestanis in Paris were active participants of the famous Committee for the Friendship of Ukraine-Caucasus and Turkestan (Editorial *YT*, no. 64, March 1935: 28-29).<sup>8</sup> Both *Yaş Türkistan* and *Yeni Türkistan* (Seydahmet *YeT*, no. 16, November 1928: 8-12) strongly supported the Caucasian, Crimean, Ukrainian and İdel-Ural’s independence causes (Kıvançlı *YT*, no. 67, June 1935: 36-37). The relations between the Turkestanî and the Kazan Tatar émigré groups were very good all over the world. In their struggle against the “Great Russian Chauvinism” of the Soviet power, the Ukrainian diaspora was the most helpful to Turkestanî émigrés in Paris. During a conference given by Ukrainian nationalist Maksim Antonovich Selavinskiy for the Committee for the Friendship of the Peoples of Ukraine-Turkestan and Caucasus, the issue of a national state was separated from the issue of National Republics and Nationalities’ Policy just for the sake of Turkestanis (Mustafa *YT*, no. 91, June 1937: 14).

### **Propaganda Tactics of the Émigré Movement**

Some of the Turkestanis in the emigration harbored positive feelings about Soviet “progressive policies” in Turkestan. This Soviet propaganda for national self-determination rights was also propagandized by the western media, which was then under the illusion of the Soviets’ “progressive policy” in the East (Osman Kocaoğlu *YT*, no. 20, July 1931: 13-14). There was a need to explain to Turkestanis that Soviet self-determination propaganda, which sounded quite promising and positive, was not sincere (Hokandlı *YT*, no.

19, June 1931: 15). Thus, the most important duty for the émigré leaders was to keep the Turkestanist idea alive to motivate their fellow émigré Turkestanis (Timuroğlu *YT*, no. 47, October 1933: 6-13).

From the point of view of Çokayoğlu, Soviet and Tsarist Russians were the enemies of Turkestan from the same imperial impulse. Their approaches to Turkestanis were the same in terms of the motives of exploitation. But the Soviets were well organized and developed effective allegations (Timuroğlu *YT*, no. 49, December 1933: 10-11). The anti-imperialistic stand taken by Çokayoğlu forced him to develop also an overt anti-British policy, blaming the British for agitating Turkestanis for their own imperialistic interests (Editorial *YT*, no. 21, August 1931: 1-7). That was probably a reaction to the Soviet propaganda that accused him of being a British agent (Editorial *YT*, no. 45, August 1933: 5). In response to the Soviet allegations about Çokayoğlu being a Japanese agent, he wrote as “we have been far from British and French military in the past and we are far from the Japanese fascists now. And our view and sympathy about Trotskist-Zinovievists is not any different than our view and sympathy about Stalinists...” (Editorial *YT*, no. 91, June 1937: 24-25). However, Turkestanis’ sympathy for Japan from 1905 on was still observable, and many leaders thought that Japan was the only power which could stand against the Bolshevik Russia and imperialist China (İlter *YT*, no. 16, March 1931: 26-28). Russia’s retreat from Manchuria was interpreted as the beginning of Russia’s retreat from the whole Asia (Çokayoğlu *YT*, no. 61, December 1934: 24-29) However, Soviet accusations against Çokayoğlu and his supporters for being Japanese agents continued (Editorial *YT*, no. 89, April 1937: 20-23) Given the constant changes in accusations, apparently, Soviet intelligence was reading *Yaş Türkistan* carefully.

For the Turkestanists, the Soviet regime was a disease, which could not be cured but should be rooted out totally (Timuroğlu *YT*, no. 77, April 1936: 31). The 1937 famine was an open failure of the Soviet *Kolkhoz* and *Sovkhoz* policy in Turkestan, when hundreds of thousands people lost their lives (Editorial *YT*, no. 90, May 1937: 37-39). This was nothing but an overt massacre. *Yaş Türkistan* also interpreted Stalin’s rule over the rest of the Soviet Union as being equally disastrous for the Russian people and peasants, who lost their lives in millions (Baltabay *YT*, no. 70, September 1935: 18). Émigré leaders have used the independent and anti-imperialist character of

Turkestanis as a basis for their propaganda too. They believed that Turkestanis had never accepted the rule of foreign imperialists and rebelled at every opportunity. Çokayoğlu was mourning on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion of Turkestan (Tashkent) by the Russian armies (Editorial *YT*, no. 67, June 1935: 9). The year 1865 was declared to be the “black-year of Turkestan’s history”. Çokayoğlu was even declaring the Turkestanis who had lost their lives during the 1916 uprising as the martyrs of the Turkestani independence cause, (Editorial *YT*, no. 80-81, August-September 1936: 2-11) though it was by then a well-known fact that the episode had not had much to do with an overall Turkestani independence movement. Turkestanis in the 1916 uprising were even untrained about using weapons that they have captured from Russian barracks (Editorial *YT*, no. 80-81, August-September 1936: 23-24). The 1916 uprising caused a massive exodus of Kazak (i.e. Kyrgyz) tribes to Eastern Turkestan escaping from Tsarist punishment as well as conscription to the Russian army (Editorial *YT*, no. 80-81, August-September 1936: 12-15)<sup>9</sup> Even minor events, like the 1929 rebellion in Turkestan, were exaggerated in the pages of *Yaş Türkistan* (Hasan Ali *YT*, no. 57, August 1934: 15-21). It should be noted that most of the “rebellion” news were received from pieces of Soviet press and interpreted with an important optimistic subjectivity by the émigré leaders as nationalist rebellions for a free and national Turkestan.

However, as all other émigré leaders, Çokayoğlu was getting most of his information on Turkestan from European sources (Editorial *YT*, no. 61, December 1934: 2-5). Their direct connection with the motherland was very limited. The émigré activists were quite successful in interpreting this limited news from the Soviet sources in accordance with the nationalist causes. For instance, there was an important debate going on about the rise of “Westernism” in Turkestan, as an alternative to Soviet popular culture. This was used as a propaganda issue in *Yaş Türkistan* (Editorial *YT*, no. 66, May 1935: 18). Like most of the other émigré leaders, when leaving his country, Çokayoğlu declared that his intention was to return to Turkestan in a matter of months’ time, just after the defeat of the Bolsheviks, which never happened (Çokayoğlu *YT*, no. 74, January 1936: 5). Of course, most of the emotional poems and calls to Turkestani Youth in the pages of *Yaş Türkistan* to rebel had no opportunity to reach the real Turkestani youth (T. Yolçı *YT*, no. 77, April 1936: 36.)<sup>10</sup> For the editors of *Yaş Türkistan*, the



victory of Soviets in Turkestan in terms of economic, social and cultural developments would mean the defeat of Turkestanî patriots (Timuroğlu *YT*, no. 70, September 1935: 13).

The sharpest criticisms and attacks of the Soviets' "progressive" policy and propaganda targeted the religious masses of Turkestan and all kinds of Islamic institutions. Émigrés, in fact, celebrated this deadly Soviet policy, claiming that these policies would only arouse more reactionary feelings among the Turkestanîs (Editorial *YT*, no. 74, January 1936: 2-5). Sometimes, even the straightforward Soviet attacks on traditional Muslim clergy and their students in Turkestan were presented by *Yaş Türkistan* as attacks against Muslim nationalist organizations (Oktay *YT*, no. 75, February 1936: 19). *Yaş Türkistan* had an open policy to show all anti-Soviet forces as parts of an organized Muslim nationalist movement. In fact, the strongest resistance to Bolshevik atrocities and everything "Soviet" came from local *Khalifa* and especially *Sheikhs-Khojas* of Ferghana in Turkestan (Taşbalta *YT*, no. 97, December 1937: 31-34). Harsh criticism by Soviet newspapers about the religious activities in Turkestan like the continuing prestige of *Khalifas*, the non-attendance of pupils to schools and workers to their jobs during the religious holidays, and rally-like visits to cemeteries and saints' tombs, led émigrés to propagandize that the Soviet regime's policy towards Turkestan was a clear continuation of the assimilationist Ilminskiy-Ostromov line. This meant clearly that the Soviets were both worried and in search of a solution to this brand of "traditionalism nationalism," at east from the point of the émigrés (*A YT*, no. 91, June 1937: 28-32).

### **The Emphasis on Soviet-Russian Colonialism and Diplomatic Efforts**

The most practiced tactic in *Yaş Türkistan* was to highlight colonial features of the Russian-Soviet rule over Turkestan. Citing an article in the French newspaper *Le Matin* in Paris, dated 17 June 1930, "Soviet government executing a heavy colonial policy in Turkestan," (Editorial *YT*, no. 7-8, June-July 1930: 1) Çokayoğlu tried to convince his own Turkestanîs as well as the international public that Turkestan should be counted among the colonial regions of the world. Apparently, some of the leading émigré leaders such as Tahir (Çağatay) initially wholeheartedly believed in the Soviet promises of national self-determination – as late as 1936 they were complaining about how they had been fooled (Tahir *YT*, no. 78, May 1936: 2-7). Prior to the

Second World War, there were two centers in Europe, Berlin and Moscow, for Turkestanis (Editorial *YT*, no. 64, March 1935: 29-32). Soviet patriotism was becoming a serious alternative to Turkestan nationalism (Editorial *YT*, no. 66, May 1935: 2-5).

The émigrés questioned the Soviet propaganda of how sincerely “they were trying to destroy the remnants of imperial-colonial Russian chauvinism in Turkestan.” They found Soviet insincerity about self-determination as a proof of the surviving Russian chauvinism in the region. In fact, they never believed in the sincerity of the Soviets in solving this problem (Kızıl Özbekistan’dan *YT*, no. 19, June 1931: 29-30). For Çokayoğlu it was a simple matter of “colonization” (Editorial *YT*, no. 31, June 1932: 1-6). The very failure of nativization was also a proof of existing foreign colonial rule in Turkestan (Editorial *YT*, no. 64, March 1935: 8). Çokayoğlu used to compare British and Russian style colonialism; he found the Russian one to be more brutal and militaristic (Mustafa *YT*, no. 92-93, August-September 1937: 10-14). The anti-colonial rhetoric of Bolshevism among the young Turkestanis during the revolution turned most of them into so-called “national communists.” And it was a vain hope on the part of Soviets to expect from them to become directly the servants of “Muscovite Russians” like their feudal predecessors (Mustafa *YT*, no. 97, December 1937: 19-21). Émigré leaders were quite sure that their compatriots back home would never surrender to the pressure of the center-Moscow as easily as the Khans and Amirs of Turkestan.

Another form of the same sort of propaganda was based on a new tactical campaign launched in émigré publications: *Yaş Türkistan* started publishing news of rebellions in Turkestan against the Bolshevik atrocities. Apparently, the scales of such reported “rebellions” were quite exaggerated, mostly as the products of wishful thinking (Editorial *YT*, no. 15, February 1931: 1-3). The basic aim in this sort of propaganda was, as always, to keep the Turkestanist nationalists’ motives warm and popular among the Turkestanis in emigration.

However, the Bolsheviks were winning victory after victory in the diplomatic field, including in the League of Nations (Editorial *YT*, no. 55, June 1934: 2-4). Certain Western intellectual circles parroted Soviet pretensions as liberators of Eastern peoples in the Western media. This forced Çokayoğlu to clarify the Turkestanî progressive-nationalist position again (MÇ *YT*,

no. 68, September 1935: 29-30). *Yaş Türkistan* was protesting the friendship between the democratic regimes of Europe and the totalitarian dictatorship of the Soviet Union. In fact, Turkestani émigrés were far from understanding the basics of international politics of Europe (Editorial *YT*, no. 84, November 1936: 6-9). When the Soviet Union became a member of the League of Nations, Turkestanis saw this as an opportunity to carry their cause to this international platform (Editorial *YT*, no. 71, October 1935: 7-10).

### Geography and Ethnical Identity

Another issue was the creation of a consensus on the geography and ethnicity of Turkestan. This was tried to be achieved mostly by Osman Hoca (Kocaoğlu). He defined Turkestan, to mean “the land of Turkic Peoples;” (1936: 8) being located between Asia’s Northern and Southern parts and between China and Western Asia-Europe (1936: 6).

Osman Hoca defined the boundaries of Turkestan as:

Suchu (Northwest of Kansu) and Kara Ula regions in the East. Altay-İrtiş line in the North. Ural River and Caspian Sea in the West. Atrek and Gurgan rivers, Khurassan Mountain range, Hindukush, Muhtag, Künlün ranges in the South. Greater Türkistan is equal to 5,300,000 square kilometers (1936: 9 and 16).

Osman Hoca argued that since the ancient times, the geographic divisions of Turkestan had remained quite similar (Kadioğlu 1936: 15). The Tien-Shan range was the natural border between the Eastern and Western parts of Turkestan. Turkestani émigré leaders apparently were well informed about the ancient history of the region (Togay 1936: 4). That was basically why they had put up a stiff resistance to the Soviet “manufactured” versions of the history of the region. The realistic use of the term Turkestan was meant to be “golden days” of Turkestan at the height of the Timurid Empire, when all of Turkestan was united under one political authority, as a rich and prosperous country (Okay 1936: 7).

In terms of the ethnicity of Turkestan, Osman Hoca was keen to include Tajiks into the common Turkestani identity. Tajiks were openly considered as the natives of Turkestan and a part of Turkestani identity (Osman Kocaoğlu 1936: 7). It is difficult to find any example of exclusive émigré approach to the issue of Tajik and Sart (settled-culturally Persianized) identities within the context of *Yaş Türkistan*. However, this issue remained a political and a

practical problem between the Turkestani émigrés and the rest of the Turkish pan-Turkish circles based in Turkey.

### Political Affiliations-Program

The favorite terms used by the émigré leaders out of Turkestan were “patriot” (*vatançı*) and “Jadidist” (*Cedidçi*) (*Çokay YeT*, no. 2-3, July-August 1927: 6-7). The pages of *Yaş Türkistan* was a platform: for both keeping Turkestanis out of Turkestan united (intact), and providing media support to the Turkestani political figures in exile to carry out their political activities.

Çokayoğlu was already in Europe and had launched his renowned *Yaş Türkistan* publications from December 1929 on. In the first issue, he explained their identity and objectives as follows:

We, the independence fighters of Turkestan, are fighting for the salvation of our race and our motherland Turkestan. Our aim is to establish a national state in Turkestan in spirit and in appearance.... free and independent Turkestan (Editorial *YT*, no. 1, December 1929: 3).

Unification remained the foremost problem among the émigré Turkestanis, especially after Çokayoğlu diverted his attacks from Bolsheviks to feudal lords of Turkestan. He began to criticize the political history of Turkestan, blaming Khans for the backwardness of their country by having prevented the people from uniting and putting up barriers among the natives (Editorial *YT*, no. 19, June 1931: 3, 6, and 10). By 1931, both Çokayoğlu and *Yaş Türkistan* declared that their political affiliation concept was Turkism (*Türkçülük*) (Editorial *YT*, no. 20, July 1931: 1-6).

The 1920 revolution in Bukhara apparently was the target of harshest criticisms of the Amir’s circles, while *Yaş Türkistan* considered it to be neither socialist nor proletariat, but mainly a national revolution (Editorial *YT*, no. 22, September 1931: 1-8). This was surely a part of the heritage of the Khans in Turkestan, which was seen as a barrier to nationalization of the tribes. According to Çokayoğlu, the very reason of Turkestan fell to the hands of Russians was the fact that Turkestanis did not have a common Turkestani national consciousness. If there were no city or tribal based identities in Turkestan, Turkestanis would have resisted against Russians as a whole. Russians, appreciating this fact, supported tribal and city identities after establishing themselves in the region. It was impossible to create a common Turkestani identity without destroying Bukharan and Khivan sep-

arate political identities. Territorial integrity was the key to achieve national independence. The realms of Khiva, Bukhara and Kazakh lands had to be included into the concept of Turkestan at any costs for achieving this territorial-national union. Çokayoğlu's stand was to include all realms of Soviet Central Asia to his Turkestanist approach (Editorial *YT*, no. 28, March 1932: 1-4).

This approach explains quite well the main political issue among the Turkestanis in emigration. The basic issue was to create a united Turkestanî front, ignoring city and tribal identities, as well as the Bukharan Amir's authority over the émigrés. So Çokayoğlu's nationalist stand had two important targets to attack: first, the Soviet-Russian propaganda, and second, the Amir and conservative Turkestanî elements. Nationalism for Turkestanis was Turkism; it was an appeal for Turkic unity and it was never meant tribalism (Kırimer 1936: 21). The stand by the nationalist Turkestanis was by all means Turkism (*Türkçülük*). That was probably why Çokayoğlu was proud of Bolsheviks' naming reactionary elements in Turkestan as Çokay-Fascists (Editorial *YT*, no. 87, February 1937: 2-6). His pan-Turkist stand became quite clear and apparent in the pages of *Yaş Türkistan*, especially in the second half of the 1930s. In 1937, he announced his political position once more as being a Turkic (Turkish) nationalist and standing for a Turkic (Turkish) Union (Editorial *YT*, no. 88, March 1937: 4-5). Çokayoğlu's this late pan-Turkist stand was appreciated much by the other Turkestanî émigré groups and the émigré leaders (Oktay *YT*, no. 88, March 1937: 18).

However, the ideal-ideology of *Yaş Türkistan* was formulated as the pursuit of the "Turkic (Turkish) Union of Turkestan." (Tahir *YT*, no. 90, May 1937: 5) So Çokayoğlu's primary objective remained limited to the creation of a united national independent Turkestan. The legacy of the Khokand Autonomy, Çokayoğlu hailed, was a gigantic step towards the unity of the whole of Turkestan. Its holy spirit was alive with *Yaş Türkistan* (Editorial *YT*, no. 97, December 1937: 2-4). And the upcoming Great War was a potential opportunity to free Turkestan (Editorial *YT*, no. 62, January 1935: 7-13). Although the name of the basic nationalist political movement in Turkestan was "Turkism," (Oktay *YT*, no. 106, September 1938: 27-36) "Turanism" was another and broader approach used in the political program. Following the fashion of the 1930s, among the Turkestanis, there was a tendency to consider themselves to be part of Greater Turan, where geographically

Turkestan occupied the heartland and the core (Togay 1938: 4). Turan was a very loosely defined term with a strong emotional context, (Togay 1938: 6) especially given the Persian (literary) influences on the Turkestani intellectual circles. In short, as the heart and core of Turan, (Togay 1938: 4-6) Turkestan was considered as the source of all the nations of Turan (Togay 1938: 7).

### **Écoles in Emigration: Çokayoğlu versus Zeki Velidî and Atsız<sup>11</sup>**

Although there were minor disputes over the independence issues between the Zeki Velidî and the Çokayoğlu camps, the real bone of contention was over the use of terms the Turkestan, *Türk İli* (Turkic Land) and *Türk Yurdu* (Turkic Homeland). Zeki Velidî and his pan-Turkist comrades in Turkey started to use Zeki Velidî's concept of *Türk İli* for Turkestan, which was a Turkified form of the Persian word Turkestan (Togan 1970). Almost simultaneously, *Atsız Mecmua* declared the language of *Yaş Türkistan* the "Sart language." (Tursun *YT*, February 1932: 17-20). It should be noted that the very word "Sart," among Kazaks, Kipchaks and pan-Turkists of the time had very offending connotations. Atsız accused Çokayoğlu of being assimilated by the Persian culture and language (Atsız 1933: 1-4). The continuing attacks of *Atsız Mecmua* on Çokayoğlu and *Yaş Türkistan* forced Çokayoğlu to write an open letter to Atsız (Çokayoğlu *YT*, no. 30, May 1932: 24-25). Most of the arguments between Turkestani nationalists, among whom a considerable Tajik speaking group always existed, were over the issue of Sartness. Both sides were accusing each other of being tribalists. The "Kipchak-wing"<sup>12</sup> led by Zeki Velidî and Atsız, stepped up their accusations that Çokayoğlu was a Sart-Uzbek nationalist. The immediate reaction of Çokayoğlu was to declare his critics "tribalists," who were in fact represented by the "Kipchak wing" of Zeki Velidî, as the enemies of the nation and the national unification (Editorial *YT*, no. 32, September 1932: 1-5).

Probably after these first major problems with Zeki Velidî and *Atsız Mecmua*'s attacks, in 1932, Çokayoğlu declared that pan-Turkism was an unrealistic cause. However, in the late 1930s he turned to the pan-Turanian and pan-Turkist stands again.

The problems between Zeki Velidî and Çokayoğlu were not confined to the political stands of the two. Zeki Velidî's historical-ethnographic categorization of the Kazak sub-tribes (*Uruglar*) was protested and harshly criticized

by Çokayoğlu (Çokayoğlu *YT*, no. 35, October 1932: 18-23). The latter claimed that, Zeki Velidî was in fact a foreigner to the region. While being very unkind to each other, Çokayoğlu published one of the most unpleasant letters of Atsız in his *Yaş Türkistan* as a proof of Zeki Velidî's involvement (Nihal *YT*, no. 36, November 1932: 6-10). According to Çokayoğlu, Atsız was an Anatolian chauvinist and Zeki Velidî was a falsifier of history (Çokayoğlu *YT*, no. 37, December 1932: 10). That was why Zeki Velidî was providing Atsız with the material to launch a campaign against Çokayoğlu. Most probably the origins of these problems between Çokayoğlu and Zeki Velidî went back to the times of revolution, when Çokayoğlu had sided with the unitary Idel-Ural camp of Sadri Maksûdi. It was the exact time period when Zeki Velidî and "three Tatars" were in deep conflict over the issues of independence and unitary nature of the nation. Zeki Velidî had never forgotten "three Tatars" who worked for a non-territorial cultural autonomy within the Russian and then Soviet Empire. Çokayoğlu was in defense against Zeki Velidî's accusations of the unitarist group of Jadids who worked with Russian *Kadets* before and during the revolution and who were mostly against full independence of Turkestan or federalism (Çokayoğlu *YT*, no. 63, February 1935: 20-21).

Although Çokayoğlu was very careful in using the term Turkestan for Central Asia, there were instances in *Yaş Türkistan* when the terms *Türk İli* and *Türk Yurdu* also appeared, surely with an explanation that they both meant Turkestan (İshakoglu *YT*, no. 80-81, August-September 1936: 43).

### Alashism and Jadidism

In *Yaş Türkistan*, "Alashism" (*Alaşçılık*) was identified with Turkestan nationalism in all aspects (Timuroğlu *YT*, no. 32, September 1932: 18-21). One of the most important problems before the Alash leaders was to draw the borders of Kazakh land. However, in a meeting with the members of the Bashkir government in Samara, the same leaders also showed their desire to unite with all other parts of Turkestan as early as August 1918. Çokayoğlu always included original Alash Orda as an organ of Turkestan nationalism in the north (Çokayoğlu *YT*, no. 34, September 1932: 13). Simply because he was a member of both the Khokand and Alash Orda governments, Çokayoğlu saw no single difference between the political stands of the two, in terms of their commitment to the Turkestani independence cause.



Jadidism was a Muslim enlightenment movement, fueled by nationalist tendencies. Claiming the legacy of Gasprinskiy's Jadid movement, Çokayoğlu was using every opportunity to underline Jadidism's great role on their enlightenment. Early Russian propaganda in Turkestan, presented the Jadids as the reactionary rebels against Bukharan Amir and the reactionary religious circles (Editorial *YT*, no. 65, April 1935: 7). However soon they, Jadids of Turkestan and Alash Orda, became the scapegoats of the Bolshevik press (Editorial *YT*, no. 68, September 1935: 2, 6). The Soviets, however, had to wait until 1937 for the execution of famous Jadid-nationalist Turkestani figures like Çolpan, Fitrat, İlbeg, Nasir, Haşim etc (Oktay *YT*, no. 96, November 1937: 26).

### Conclusion

During this first phase of émigré activities, two major camps emerged. The first camp was based in Turkey and led by Bashkir Zeki Velidî and his Turkish (non-Turkestani) pan-Turkist comrade Nihal Atsız. This camp advocated the Turkification of the term Turkestan to *Türk İli* or *Türk Eli*. This was not a simple change of terminology, but an exact exclusion of Persian and/or Tajik heritage from Turkestanist patriotism; as there was a considerable support to the Turkestanist cause from the Tajik/Persian speaker natives of Turkestan at the emigration. Even the Basmachi movement in Central Asia was quite dominated by the support of these Persian speaking natives of Turkestan. Their exclusion, in the name of pure racist nationalism was, of course, unacceptable for native patriots like Çokayoğlu and Osman Hoca. The second camp was the group loyal to Mustafa Çokayoğlu, based in Paris and Berlin. Çokayoğlu was an ethnic Kazakh who was exceptionally accepted as a leader by both Uzbek/Tajiks and Kazakhs in emigration. As the creator of Turkestan Autonomy in Khokand and as a member of Alash Orda government, he was considered as the real heir of Turkestani liberation movement during and after the revolution. However, like many other Turkestani figures of the time, he was aware of the fact that Sart/Tajik component was an important part of common Turkestani identity.

The problems between the two camps first emerged during the late 1920s, and continued throughout the 1930s with an exchange of unpleasant open letters to each other. However, the more painful and "separatist" differences appeared especially during the WWII and afterwards, dividing the émigré



activities virtually into two different camps of Turkestanists and pan-Turkist *Türk Eli* supporters.

This (1925-1940) era also illustrates an important effort on the side of émigrés for defining, building and limiting a new national identity for Turkestanis. A similar effort was also valid for the Soviets in the homeland. While Soviet nationalities policy continued to create new nations in Soviet Central Asia, émigré leaders constantly evaluated and reacted to these developments at homeland. As we see in this study, their efforts significantly concentrated on the creation of a consensus on an all-Turkestani national identity, common history and geographical myth of a homeland. The differences in the very name of this geography, terminology, inclusiveness and exclusiveness of patriotic/nationalist approaches marked a common feature of this era's émigré struggle. These differences continued with increasing bitterness throughout the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Notes

- 1 The best-ever produced volume on the Turkestani émigré life and political activities is written by a Turkestani émigré leader in Turkey who also served as a state minister in Turkish government during 1990s. See Ahat Andican, *Cedidizm'den Bağımsızlığa Hariçte Türkistan Mücadelesi*. İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 2003. This volume is also available in English. A. Ahat Andican, *Turkestan Struggle Abroad: From Jadidism to Independence*. Haarlem: SOTA Publications, 2007. The book also includes original documents and photos from the very rich archive of the author.
- 2 It should be noted here that the use of *Türk* in this literature covers both Turk(ish) and Turk(ic). The use of *Türkî* (Turkic) was quite unusual in both *émigré* and pan-Turkist publications. So, in most of the translations, the original form *Türk* is translated as Turkish rather than Turkic. That is simply because the (nationalist) authors probably never intended to make any difference between the two terms.
- 3 *Türkistan Türk Gençler Birliği* was established in the former Bukharan Lodge or *Özbekler Tekkesi* and continued its activities there until July 1940. In 1940, its name was changed into *Türk Kültür Birliği* [Turkish Cultural Union] and it became an important pan-Turkist association in

- Turkey. After 1950, its name has been changed again to *Türkistanlılar Kültür ve Sosyal Yardımlaşma Derneği* [Association of Cultural and Social Cooperation of Turkestanis].
- 4 Apparently, the inclusion of Bashkir lands to the concept of Turkestan was closely associated with the very existence of Zeki Velidi's among the Turkestanî émigré circles. Otherwise there seems to be no serious evidence showing any attempt by Turkestanis, including Bashkiria, into the concept of Turkestan.
  - 5 It was *Türkistan Türk Gençler Birliği*, which facilitated significant numbers of Turkestanî students to receive their higher education in early Republican Turkey, and this was done for the sake of raising national cadres for the future independent Turkestan.
  - 6 There are two very comprehensive and analytic biographies of Mustafa Çokayoğlu available in Turkish. The first one is written by a Turkish national Kazakh émigré scholar, which covers a great literature produced by and produced about Mustafa Çokay during and after his life. See Abdulvahap Kara, *Türkistan Ateşi: Mustafa Çokay'ın Hayatı ve Mücadelesi*. [Fire of Turkestan: The Life and Struggle of Mustafa Çokay] İstanbul: Da Yayıncılık, 2002. The second one is a volume written by an important Kazakh scholar, covering the life and ideological mindset of Mustafa Çokay in a very extensive manner. See Darhan Hıdıraliyev, *Mustafa Çokay: Hayatı, Faaliyetleri ve Fikirleri*. [Mustafa Çokay: His Life, Activities and Ideas] Ankara: Yeni Avrasya Yayınları, 2001.
  - 7 Although *TMB (Türkistan Millî Birliği)* was originally established back in Turkestan several years ago, Çokay continued to use its legacy of being a common Turkestanî platform.
  - 8 This Committee was headed by former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Alexander Sholgin. Their activities in Paris continued during the 1930s and Turkestanis actively attended to their meetings.
  - 9 After the 1916 uprising, more than 60 thousand Kyrgyz families passed the border to Eastern Turkestan. The total Russian death toll was 2325 with a counted loss of 1384 persons. More than 9 thousand villages were destroyed completely and tens of thousands killed.
  - 10 It is time to unite Oh Turkestan Youth,

It is time to work day and night without any rest

It is time to fight by taking the path of Chengiz

It is time to put our all efforts to send Russians out.

- 11 Hüseyin Nihal Atsız (1905-1975), a well known Turkish nationalist and pan-Turkist, who heavily involved with the Turkestani, Azerbaijani and İdel-Ural émigré circles throughout 1930s. For one of the most comprehensive English language analysis of Atsız's political stand see Umut Uzer, "Racism in Turkey: The Case of Huseyin Nihal Atsız," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2002, pp. 119-130.
- 12 This represents the concept of the Atsız-Velidî camp, named by the author to underline their Kipchak-oriented approach against the so-called "Sart" stand of Çokayoğlu.

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# Türkistan'ın Erken Dönem Muhaceret Mücadelesi ve Türkistancılık: Muhacerette Milli Kimlik Tasavvuru: 1925-1940

Hasan Ali Karasar\*\*

## Öz

Erken dönem muhaceretteki Türkistanlıların mücadeleleri vatan dışında “Milli Kimlik Tasavvuru” oluşturma gayretlerinin önemli bir örneğidir. Bu makalede ülkeleri Bolşevikler tarafından ele geçirildikten sonra vatanlarını terk eden Türkistanlı milliyetçi liderlerin karşılaştıkları fikişsel sorunların bir kısmı ele alınmaktadır. Özellikle de muhaceret liderleri ve Türkçü düşünürlerden Zeki Velidî Togan, Mustafa Çokayođlu, Osman Hoca ve Nihal Atsız'ın kimlik merkezli tartışmalarına değinilmektedir. Bu çalışmada siyasa yapımı, propaganda taktikleri, dergi neşriyatı ile medya kullanımı ve sivil toplum örgütlenmesi yolları ile muhaceretteki Türkistanlıların Ruslara karşı birleştirilmelerine çalışılmasına öncelik verilmiştir. Muhaceretteki liderlerin vatandan izole ancak vatandaki problemleri yanlarına alarak başlattıkları bu mücadelenin de ana öğelerinden biri kimlik siyaseti olmuştur.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Türkistancılık, Muhacerette, Milli Kimlik Tasavvuru, Türkistan, Türkili, Türk Eli

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## **Борьба ранней туркестанской эмиграции и «Туркестанизм» : формирование национальной идентичности в эмиграции: 1925-1940**

**Хасан Али Карасар\***

### **Аннотация**

Борьба мигрировавших в ранний период туркестанцев является важным примером попыток создания «национальной идентичности» в эмиграции. В данной статье рассматриваются некоторые проблемы, с которыми столкнулись национальные лидеры Туркестана, покинувшие свою родину после большевистского завоевания. Отдельное внимание уделяется обсуждениям эмигрантскими лидерами и тюркскими мыслителями, такими как Заки Валидов, Мустафа Чокай, Осман Ходжа и Нихал Атсыз вопроса национальной идентичности. Основная часть работы посвящена политической структуре, тактикам пропаганды, выпуску журналов, использованию средств массовой информации и организации НПО с целью объединения деятельности туркестанцев в эмиграции в борьбе против русских. Одной из главных тем борьбы лидеров эмиграции, изолированных от родины, была политика национальной идентичности.

### **Ключевые слова**

туркестанизм, национальная идентичность в эмиграции, Туркестан, тюрки, Тюрк Ели

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