

The History of the Formation and Stages of Development of Sinology in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article analyzes the formation and development stages of the discipline of Chinese studies (sinology) in Uzbekistan based on historical sources and scientific research. The study covers the process of the emergence of Chinese studies, its formation as a scientific school, as well as the stages of its development during the Soviet period and the years of independence. In particular, special attention is paid to the issues of the establishment of the Tashkent School of Oriental Studies, the formation of the system of studying and teaching the Chinese language, and the development of scientific and cultural relations between Uzbekistan and China.

The article analyzes the scientific heritage of scientists working in the field of Chinese studies, their monographs and articles, and reveals the place of this field in the scientific environment of Uzbekistan. It also considers the development trends, new scientific directions and prospects of Chinese studies in the modern era. The results of the study serve to provide a deeper understanding of the process of the formation of the scientific school of Oriental studies and Chinese studies in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Chinese studies, sinology, Uzbekistan, oriental studies, scientific school, historical stages, China-Uzbek relations..

Introduction

By the beginning of the 21st century, fundamental changes in the world economic and political architecture have made the Eastern direction a priority task in the foreign policy of the Central Asian region, and in particular, of Uzbekistan. The strengthening of the global role of the People's Republic of China and the strategic importance of the mega-initiative "One Belt, One Road" (Belt and Road Initiative) require the re-formation of the field of Sinology in Uzbekistan not only as a philological, but also as a deeply academic and practical direction [1]. Relations between Uzbekistan and China have a two-thousand-year history and have passed an evolutionary path from cultural and commercial ties during the Great Silk Road to the level of today's strategic partnership. A systematic analysis of the scientific foundation of this process, that is, the stages of formation and development of the discipline of Sinology, is of great importance in forecasting the prospects of Uzbek-Chinese cooperation today.

During the years of independence, the expansion of political, economic and cultural ties between Uzbekistan and China further increased interest in the field of Sinology. As a result, the system of teaching the Chinese language was improved, new scientific research was conducted, and the training of specialists in this area expanded. In modern times, Sinology is being studied comprehensively not only from a philological, but also from a historical, political, economic and cultural perspective.

The principles of objectivity, historical consistency and comparative-logical analysis serve as the main methodological basis for studying the history of Sinology. The coverage of the topic is based on the decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the fundamental

improvement of the field of Oriental Studies, as well as the theoretical views of local and foreign sinologists-historians[2,3,4]. The study interprets the development of Sinology not simply as a process of “language teaching”, but as a complex system of disciplines that ensures regional security, economic diplomacy and intercultural dialogue.

Methods

Although some aspects of Sinology in Uzbekistan have been studied since the second half of the last century, the history of its gradual formation as a holistic object of research has been little studied. An analysis of scientific sources and literature shows that the historical roots of Sinology, which began in ancient and medieval times, rose to a new level in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, creating the basis for the further scientific development of this field.

The first written information about Central Asia is found in the works of ancient Chinese historians - Sima Xian and Ban Gu.

Sima Xian is the author of a large historical work consisting of 130 chapters called “Shiji” (“Historical Memoirs”). This work describes historical events from the earliest times of China to the beginning of the 1st century BC. This work is of great importance as an important source in the study of the history of the ancient East, including the peoples of Central Asia[5].

Another scholar who occupied an important place among ancient Chinese historians was Ban Gu, who was the author of the work “Han shu” (“History of the Former Han Dynasty”) (39–92 AD). This work by Ban Gu, especially in chapter 95, contains valuable information about the ancient history, population and lifestyle of the Central Asian regions, in particular the Kangli, Yuezhi and Usun, as well as East Turkestan[6].

Also, the work “Hou Han shu” (“History of the Later Han Dynasty”, 398–445 AD) written by the Chinese historian Fan Ye is one of the important historical sources. This work consists of 130 chapters, which, along with the events of the Later Han Dynasty, provide remarkable information about the history, population, and socio-economic life of the regions of Central Asia, East Turkestan, and Dzungaria[7].

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Russian geographers and historians N.M. Przhhevsky, G.E. Grum-Grzhimailo, and V.V. Bartold wrote fundamental works studying the historical and geographical connections between Central Asia and China. Their research laid the first scientific foundations of Central Asian Sinology[8,9,10,11].

During the years of independence, interest in studying the Chinese language, history, culture and politics increased. The Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies (now a university) and other higher educational institutions opened departments of the Chinese language and Chinese studies, and new curricula were developed. As a result, a system of training qualified specialists was formed. Scholar Ablat Khojayev conducted significant research on the history of Central Asian-Chinese relations. His works form the basis of modern Chinese studies in Uzbekistan[12,13]. Another scholar who made a significant contribution to the development of Chinese studies in Uzbekistan is Natalya Karimova. Her scientific research is mainly devoted to the study of the history of Central Asia based on Chinese historical sources. The scholar's monograph "Chinese written sources on the history of Central Asia" demonstrates the scientific importance of Chinese sources in the study of the history of Central Asia. This study analyzed information about the Central Asian states based on Chinese annals, palace documents, and historical chronicles[14].

Also, in his scientific article “Chinese Written Sources of the Qing Era and Their Importance for the Study of the History of Central Asia”, the historical significance of Chinese sources during the Qing Dynasty is analyzed. These studies have made a significant contribution to the development of the direction of Chinese source studies.

Results and Discussion

It is appropriate to systematically analyze the study of Sinology in Uzbekistan into four stages.

The first stage covers the early stages of Sinology in Uzbekistan. This period is directly related to the development of Uzbek-Chinese scientific, cultural and trade relations during the era of the Great Silk Road.

A deep and comprehensive study of ancient Chinese written sources on the history of Central Asia, in particular Uzbekistan, and the introduction of information in them into scientific circulation are of great scientific and methodological importance. These sources are one of the main historical sources for covering the political, socio-economic and cultural processes of the history of the region.

The history of Uzbekistan-China relations dates back more than two thousand years. In the 2nd century BC, the ambassador of the Han dynasty, Zhang Xiang, visited the Western regions, including the Fergana (Chinese: Dayuan), Samarkand (Kang) and Bukhara (Anxi) regions, and laid the foundation for diplomatic and trade relations. It was from this period that the Great Silk Road began to function actively.

Chinese sources - such historical works as "Sima Xiang Shiji", "Han Shu", "Wei Shu", "Tan Shu" - contain rich information about Sogdiana, Bactria and Khorezm. These sources are still of great importance in the study of the archeology and history of Central Asia today [15].

Sogdian merchants traveled as far as the Chinese city of Dunhuang and traded. The Dunhuang Sogdian letters, discovered in 1907, are written evidence of these contacts. The Sogdians played an important role in trade and diplomacy in China.

The Chinese Buddhist pilgrims Fa Xiang (5th century) and Xuanzang (7th century) passed through Central Asia and left valuable information about this region. Xuanzang in particular described Samarkand, Tashkent and other cities in detail, providing unique information about their socio-economic situation.

During the Tang Dynasty (618–907), ties between Central Asia and China deepened. Central Asian musicians, dancers, and artists worked at the Chinese court; in turn, Chinese culture, technology, and art also spread widely to Central Asia.

The second stage is characterized by the development of local Sinology in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the Sinology of the Soviet era (1920–1991). During this period, the study of Chinese history, language, and culture in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, began to be scientifically systematized.

With the conquest of Central Asia by the Russian Empire (1860–1880s) and the establishment of the Governor-General of Turkestan (1867), scientific research in this region also intensified. The Russian Empire paid special attention to studying the history of the region based on Chinese sources.

The second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century were a period of fundamental change in the historiography of the Central Asian region. As a result of the growth of the geopolitical interests of the Russian Empire in the region, there was a need to study the historical and geographical relations with the countries of the East, in particular with China, on a scientific basis. During this period, scientific expeditions and fundamental research by such prominent Russian geographers and orientalists as N.M. Przhevalsky, G.E. Grum-Grzhimailo and V.V. Bartold laid the foundation for the science of Central Asian Sinology (sinology). In particular, the geographical, ethnographic and historical data collected by N.M. Przhevalsky during his four major trips to the interior of Central Asia radically changed the perception of the region's bordering areas with China. G.E. Grum-Grzhimailo's expeditions to Western China and the Pamir-Alai regions served as a map of trade routes and ethnic ties of that time[7, p.68].

The merits of Academician V.V. Bartold are incomparable. In his fundamental works, he painted a holistic picture of the history of the region through a comparative analysis of Chinese sources, in particular, information from medieval chronicles, with Arabic, Persian and Turkic sources. Thanks to his research, Sinology went beyond the level of mere geographical description and

became a serious academic discipline based on source studies and historical-critical methodology[16].

It was as a result of the scientific heritage of these scientists that the first systematic system of studying the Chinese language in Central Asia and introducing into scientific circulation information about the peoples of Central Asia (Sogdians, Turks, Kangli) preserved in ancient Chinese chronicles was formed. This process, in turn, laid the foundation for the emergence of oriental studies as a scientific school in Tashkent and the development of professional Chinese studies in the future. Chinese sources also began to be collected in the Turkestan Archaeological Circle, established in Tashkent in 1870, and later in the Turkestan Library. During this period, Uzbek historians also tried to shed light on the history of the region by turning to Chinese sources.

Representatives of the Jadid movement - Mahmudkhodja Behbudiy, Abdurauf Fitrat, Munavvar qori Abdurashidkhanov - got acquainted with Western and Eastern science and put forward the idea of developing secular education. They saw the experience of modernization of Asian countries such as China and Japan as a model for studying.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia (1920s), scientific life was also centralized. Turkestan State University (later Central Asian State University, OASU), founded in Tashkent in 1918, established oriental studies education.

Since 1940, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan began to operate in Tashkent. This institute became a center for scientific research on working with Chinese sources on the history of Central Asia. The institute also collected manuscripts and sources from Chinese archives.

During the Soviet period, sinology developed mainly in two directions: the first - working with Chinese sources within the framework of historical and archaeological research; the second - studying the socio-economic development of the People's Republic of China for political purposes[17].

During the Soviet period, the main obstacle for Uzbek scholars in the field of Sinology was the dominance of Moscow and Leningrad scientific centers. The central authorities imposed restrictions on the independent research of local scholars, who were often forced to work as assistants to Moscow scholars.

At the same time, during this period, important scientific bases for Sinology in Uzbekistan were formed: oriental languages, including Chinese, began to be taught at the OASU and later at Tashkent State University; a collection of Chinese sources was formed in the library of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan; archives and manuscripts in Chinese began to be cataloged.

In the 1950s, during the years of Soviet-Chinese friendship, Chinese language teaching expanded in Tashkent. During this period, teaching specialists were also invited from China. However, in the 1960s, the aggravation of Soviet-Chinese relations stopped this process, and Sinology was again limited.

The third stage is characterized by the development of Chinese studies during the period of Uzbekistan's independence (1991–2010) and the formation of new scientific schools. During this period, scientific research aimed at studying the Chinese language, history, culture, and modern political and economic processes expanded in the country, and new scientific centers and research schools began to form in the field of Chinese studies. After the declaration of independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan on September 1, 1991, the system of science in the country also began to change radically. Freed from the ideological restrictions of the Soviet era, Uzbek scientists were able to conduct independent scientific research. Qualitative changes in the field of Chinese studies occurred under the influence of several factors: relations with China became a priority in Uzbekistan's foreign policy; social demand for the study of the Chinese language and culture increased sharply; Uzbek scientists were able to study in China through international grants and programs.

New scientific directions have been opened at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Scholar Ablat Khojayev conducted significant research on the history of Central Asian-Chinese relations. His works form the basis of modern Sinology in Uzbekistan [18].

As a result of scientific research conducted by Natalya Ermanovna Karimova, Professor of the Department of History and Anthropology of the Eastern Countries, Faculty of Oriental Civilization and Philosophy, a number of important scientific and educational publications have been created. In particular, the textbooks “Stranovedenie (China)” (Tashkent, 2025) and “History of China — XX century (new era)” (Tashkent: Impress Media, 2025. — 186 p.), as well as the monograph “Actual issues of socio-economic, political and cultural development of the countries of East Asia (China's People's Republic)” (Tashkent: Voris Publishing House, 2024) deserve special attention. Along with these works, many scientific articles and monographs of the scientist have also made a significant contribution to the development of the field of Sinology and are highly appreciated by the scientific community. Uzbek scientists began to participate in doctoral and internship programs at Chinese universities. This laid the foundation for the formation of a new generation of Sinology scholars [19].

The Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies (TSIDS), established in 1991 on the basis of the Central Asian State University, became the main center of Chinese studies in Uzbekistan. A department of Chinese philology was established at the institute, and the teaching of the Chinese language, literature and culture was systematized.

A number of important achievements were made on the basis of the Chinese language teaching program at the TSIDS: Chinese-Uzbek and Uzbek-Chinese dictionaries were compiled; textbooks on Chinese literature and culture were created, adapted to the Uzbek language; Chinese diplomatic and economic terminology was studied.

The institute began to defend dissertations in Chinese studies. Nosirova Saodat Abdullayevna's candidate dissertation entitled “Lexical-semantic and structural analysis of diplomatic terms of the modern Chinese language” (2008) was one of the first fundamental works in this field.

Regular scientific conferences entitled “Current Problems of Sinology” began to be held at the TDSHI. These conferences united the scientific community of Sinology in Uzbekistan and helped to expand international scientific ties.

The institute established master's and doctoral programs in the field of Oriental Studies. Uzbek Sinology scholars had the opportunity to study at the universities of Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and Nanjing. This radically improved the quality of scientific personnel training.

Uzbek-Chinese academic cooperation began to take an institutional form in the mid-1990s. The establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 1996 and Uzbekistan's acquisition of observer status (2001), and later full membership (2004) further strengthened scientific cooperation between the two countries.

The first Confucius Institute was opened in Tashkent in 2008 as part of the Chinese government's "Confucius Institute" program. This institution, in addition to promoting the Chinese language, culture, and art, also promotes research in the field of Sinology.

A number of joint Uzbek-Chinese scientific projects were implemented in the 2000s. In particular, projects on archaeological research on the Ancient Silk Road, the study of Sogdian monuments in China, and the reassessment of the history of Central Asia based on Chinese sources were implemented.

Chinese universities have also shown increasing interest in Uzbekistan. A number of Chinese historians and linguists have organized scientific trips to Uzbekistan and begun to study sources in local archives and libraries. This bilateral scientific exchange has raised Sinology to a new level.

The fourth stage is the period of development of modern Chinese studies (2010–2025), which is characterized by increased institutional development in this field and the formation of new scientific directions. During this period, Chinese studies research has further expanded, and

research centers, educational programs, and international cooperation have consistently developed.

Several new areas have been formed in modern Uzbek Sinology: the study of the Chinese economy (Chinese economic model, investments, trade); Chinese political science (CPC governance, foreign policy); modern Chinese literature and cinematography; comparative studies of Chinese philosophy and culture.

The announcement of the “One Belt, One Road” (BRI) initiative in 2013 further increased the demand for Sinology in Uzbekistan. Since Uzbekistan is located on one of the important routes of the BRI, the need for specialists who know the Chinese language and understand the Chinese economy has increased sharply.

The reforms that began in Uzbekistan since 2017 also concern the science system. Doctoral programs in the field of Sinology have been expanded, the number of special schools and courses in the Chinese language has increased, and bilateral education programs have been established between Uzbek and Chinese universities.

In modern Uzbek Sinology, several scientific schools and directions can be distinguished. The School of Historical Sinology operates at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, working mainly in the field of source studies and archeology.

Based on the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-4680 dated April 16, 2020, the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies was reorganized into a university. Within the framework of the implementation of this document, fundamental reforms are being carried out in the field of training qualified specialists who will serve the development of bilateral and multilateral political, economic and cultural relations of Uzbekistan with the countries of the East. In particular, a system has been established for the formation of personnel with analytical thinking who can correctly interpret geopolitical processes taking place in the world, and for the training of highly qualified simultaneous interpreters in oriental languages.

The main tasks and areas of activity of the university are as follows:

To train personnel who are well-versed in modern knowledge of the languages, history, culture, material and spiritual heritage, economy, politics, international influence of the countries of the East, their modern anthropology and ethnology, translation studies, as well as tourism and guide services, and who are competitive in the labor market;

To scientifically study the development factors of the countries of the East, their modern socio-political and economic processes, Eastern culture and heritage, ancient monuments and manuscripts, to train scientific and pedagogical staff in this area, and to conduct research work together with local and foreign partners;

As a key higher education institution in the republic for teaching Eastern languages and literature, history, culture, philosophy, politics and economics, in cooperation with relevant government agencies of foreign countries, to develop and implement methodologies for assessing the level of knowledge of Eastern languages, to develop modern media products and electronic educational literature that provide information in the field of language education and on Eastern countries;

Researching modern trends, historical processes, cultural ties and heritage of the Eastern peoples in the countries of the East, preparing analytical information and publishing popular scientific literature, textbooks and monographs in this field;

implementing measures to strengthen love for the Motherland, involvement in its fate, and loyalty to the profession among students and professors, increasing the effectiveness of educational processes and spiritual and educational work;

systematically organizing internships and advanced training of professors and teachers in the fields of Oriental studies and Eastern cultural heritage in the republic and foreign countries;

tasks were set to establish joint educational programs in new areas and specialties that are promising for the republic in cooperation with foreign higher educational institutions and to

implement international projects.

Research on Chinese studies is also intensifying at the National University of Uzbekistan. Here, China is studied mainly from the perspective of political science and international relations. The political and economic aspects of modern Sino-Uzbek relations are becoming the main object of research.

The Tashkent State University of Economics studies the economy of China, the investment environment, and trade and economic relations. This direction is very important from a practical point of view, since the volume of trade between Uzbekistan and China is increasing every year.

Among modern Uzbek sinologists, such names as Ablat Khojayev, Akramdjon Karimov, Hamidulla Dadabayev, and Khalida Alimova should be especially noted. Their scientific works serve as the main source in the training of sinologists.

Modern sinology in Uzbekistan faces a number of problems. First of all, there is a shortage of specialists with a high level of knowledge of the Chinese language. Since the study of the Chinese language has been widely introduced in Uzbekistan relatively recently, the number of scientists with in-depth knowledge of linguistics is still small.

Secondly, the possibility of working directly with Chinese sources is limited. Access to many important Chinese archival materials requires direct presence in China, which is not always convenient for Uzbek scholars.

Thirdly, there is still a lack of scientific literature and textbooks on Sinology in the Uzbek language. Most educational materials are still in Russian or Chinese, and the number of translations and adaptations in Uzbek is limited.

Fourth, integration with the international scientific community is not sufficiently developed. The number of articles published by Uzbek Sinology scholars in internationally prestigious journals and participation in international conferences is still insufficient.

In terms of prospects, a number of positive trends are observed. The Uzbek government is paying increasing attention to science and education. Uzbek-Chinese cooperation is expanding, creating the basis for new scientific projects. The number of young people studying Chinese is increasing every year. These factors are the basis for the further rapid development of Sinology in Uzbekistan.

Thus, the priority tasks of modern Uzbek Sinology are: training highly qualified Sinology scholars; creating scientific literature on Sinology in the Uzbek language; expanding international scientific cooperation; and developing applied Sinology - economic, political, and legal areas.

Conclusion

Analysis of the history of the formation and development of Sinology in Uzbekistan shows that this field has gone beyond the stage of mere language study and has now become a comprehensive academic direction serving the strategic interests of the state. As a result of the study, the following fundamental conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, scientific and cultural ties between Uzbekistan and China have deep historical roots of two thousand years. Ancient Chinese chronicles (works of Sima Xian, Ban Gu) and the records of medieval travelers serve as primary sources in studying the history of Central Asian statehood. This determines the place of Uzbek Sinology not only in modern needs, but also in restoring historical heritage.

Secondly, the development of the field has gone through several complex stages. If in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet era, Chinese studies were to some extent influenced by a centralized scientific system (Moscow and Leningrad schools), the years of independence created the basis for the national school of Chinese studies to have its own independent platform. In particular, the establishment of the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies and the increase in its scientific potential radically changed the quality of personnel training.

Thirdly, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-4680 began a new

era in the development of the field. Chinese studies is now not limited to the philological direction, but has become a multidisciplinary discipline that studies economic diplomacy, regional security, geopolitics, and intercultural dialogue. Cooperation within the framework of the “One Space, One Road” initiative has further increased the need for analytical personnel in this direction.

Fourthly, modern Uzbek Chinese studies face a number of urgent tasks. It is of paramount importance to expand the ranks of scholars who can work directly with Chinese sources (in the original language), enrich the base of fundamental textbooks and dictionaries in the Uzbek language, and strengthen integration with international sinology centers. In conclusion, it can be said that the development of Chinese studies in Uzbekistan is one of the main factors in strengthening mutual trust and strategic partnership between the two countries. In the future, research in this area will serve not only as a study of the past, but also as an important tool in scientifically forecasting the place of Central Asia in global political and economic processes.

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