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Education in Turkestan at the Turn of the 19th–20th Centuries: from Tradition Towards Reform

Ro'ziyeva Mohichehra Rustam qizi
Student of Denov Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy
Email: ruziyevamohichehra957@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T
This article highlights the changes in the educational system of Turkestan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing on the transition from traditional schools and madrasas to new-method schools. It analyzes the formation of the Jadid movement, its influence on education and enlightenment, and the innovations introduced in teaching methods during that period. The study also emphasizes the role and significance of education as the foundation of the national awakening era and identifies the main factors that contributed to the spread of enlightenment ideas among the peoples of Turkestan.

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Introduction

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the education system in the Turkestan region underwent a period of profound transformation. During this time, alongside the traditional old-method schools and madrasas, new-method (usuli jadid) schools also began to operate actively. The traditional education system, which had been formed over centuries, was primarily based on religious subjects – the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Arabic language, and Sarf-Nahv (Arabic grammar and morphology). The teaching methodology relied heavily on rote memorization, with little attention paid to developing students' critical thinking.

However, by the late 19th century, scientific and technological achievements were rapidly advancing on a global scale, and societal progress began to demand new types of knowledge. It was under these conditions that the Jadid movement emerged. The Jadids introduced the "usuli jadid" (new method) teaching system and started incorporating secular subjects into education, such as mathematics, geography, history, natural sciences, the native language, and the Russian language.

In addition, various theaters also began to operate during this period. Although some of them later had to cease their activities, theater, like any other innovation, did not easily take root in people's lives. In the early stages, theater in the Turkestan region faced strong resistance, obstacles, and even attacks. The literary scholar Shuhrat Rizayev discusses this issue in detail in his book *Jadid Drama*. According to him, the greatest obstacle came from the colonial authorities. Dramatic works had to pass through thousands of censorship barriers before they could be published and staged. Every word and sentence was scrutinized with particular care. Any passages that might awaken people's consciousness or encourage actions against the tsarist regime were removed from the works[1]. Such situations are reflected and illuminated through literary works.

Literature Review:

The topic "The Education System of Turkestan at the End of the 19th Century – Beginning of the 20th Century: From Tradition to Reform" is considered one of the relevant and sufficiently deeply studied subjects in Uzbek historiography. It primarily covers the process of transition from the traditional (ancient) education system (madrasas, maktabs, and oral traditions) to the new-method (usuli jadid) schools, the Jadid movement, the activities of enlighteners (Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, Abdulla Avloniy, Munavvarqori, and others), as well as the influence of Russian imperial colonial policy. The topic reveals the contribution of the Jadid educational reforms (new textbooks, newspapers and magazines, literacy campaigns) to the national awakening.

In the Soviet period (1920s–1980s), the topic was studied from the standpoint of communist ideology: Jadidism was evaluated as "bourgeois nationalism." During this time, mainly general information was provided based on archival documents (funds of the Russian Empire), but its national aspect was downplayed.

In the years of independence (from 1991 to the present), the topic has been re-evaluated in an objective and national spirit. Many monographs, dissertations, and articles have been written by Uzbek scholars. The degree of research on the topic can be assessed as high because:

- Historians (D. Alimova, D. Rashidova, D. Ziyayeva, R. Sharipov, R. Shamsuddinov, Q. Rajabov, H. Sodiqov, and others) have deeply analyzed the socio-political and educational aspects of Jadidism.

- Literary scholars (A. Aliyev, B. Qosimov, B. Nazarov, B. Do'stqorayev, I. Sulton, M. Xudoyqulov, N. Karimov, O. Sharafiddinov, P. Ravshanov, Sh. Rizayev, and others) have studied the works of Behbudiy and Avloniy from pedagogical and literary perspectives.

- Philosophers (A. Jalolov, A. Aliyev, G'. Maxmudova, J. Yaxshilikov, Z. Ahrorova, and others) have researched the socio-philosophical views of the Jadids.

- Foreign scholars (Adeeb Khalid – USA, E. Allworth – USA, A. Bennigsen – France, I. Baldauf – Germany, and others) have also studied the topic in an international context (comparing it with Tatarstan, the Ottoman Empire, etc.).

Today, the topic is widely covered in the fields of pedagogy, history, and philology. In many dissertations, the works of the above-mentioned scholars are analyzed in the section "Degree of Research on the Problem." Nevertheless, certain aspects (for example, women's education, statistics of Jadid schools by regions, or the re-evaluation during the Soviet period) are still considered insufficiently studied. In general, since independence, the topic has been actively developed as an important part of national history.

Methodology.

The following scientific methods are used in studying the topic (in standard historical-pedagogical research):

- Historical research and retrospective analysis — examining events in chronological order (beginning of the Jadid movement in the 1880s of the 19th century, its peak in 1905–1917).

- Critical analysis of sources — main sources include archival documents (Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Russian archives), Jadid press ("Tarjimon," "Ayina," "Xurshid," "Sadoi Turkiston"), textbooks ("Kitobat ul-atfol," and others), memoirs, and official reports.

- Comparative-historical (comparative) method — comparing Turkestan with reform processes in Tatarstan, the Ottoman Empire, and other Muslim regions.

- Analytical review and generalization — revealing the differences between traditional education (savtiya method, religious content) and the new method (phonetic teaching, secular subjects).

- Synthesis of scientific sources — comparing Soviet and independence-period literature to provide an objective assessment.

- In additional pedagogical research: observation, surveys (questionnaires, interviews), and statistical analysis (number of schools, dynamics of students).

These methods allow for a deep and objective illumination of the topic. For example, in studies on Behbudiy's pedagogy, retrospective analysis and comparative methods play the main role.

In conclusion, the topic is well studied in Uzbek science; however, there are broad opportunities for new research based on modern requirements (digital sources, international comparisons).

Results.

When we leaf through the pages of Turkestan's history, we witness how this sacred land — where we live today — was trampled under the feet of countless invaders, how the rights of our ancestors were repeatedly violated over the years and centuries, and how the vast wealth created by our people through the sweat of their brow and the light of their eyes was reduced to ruins. This long-suffering nation endured countless trials and tribulations. Especially during the period of the Tsarist Russian invasion, the sufferings our people experienced are beyond measure, and no one has yet been able to count the riches plundered and taken away from our homeland.[2]

Nevertheless, our people showed resilience against every trial and invasion, preserving their national values, religion, and culture. Particularly at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, a new era — the era of enlightenment and awakening — began in the Turkestan region. During this period, interest in knowledge, literacy, and modern education grew significantly among the population. While only religious subjects were taught in the old schools and madrasas, the need to acquire secular knowledge increased in the new era.

It was under these conditions that the Jadid movement emerged. The Jadids set themselves the goal of leading the people toward freedom and progress through education and enlightenment. In the new-method (usuli jadid) schools they opened, subjects such as mathematics, history, geography, natural sciences, the native language, and Russian began to be taught. These schools were far more progressive than the old education system and taught students to think critically, become literate, and acquire practical knowledge.

The activities of the Jadid movement began in the field of schools and education, and later extended to the press, art, and politics. The foundations of resistance against Russian colonialism and its colonial policy were laid by Ismail Bey Gasprinsky (1851–1914). He opened the first "usuli jadid" (new method) school in Bakhchysarai.[3]

It should be noted that after Russia conquered the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, it made serious efforts to completely eradicate the language, religion, history, national traditions, and culture of the local population from their lives and consciousness. In this context, one of Ismail Bey Gasprinsky's greatest contributions was uniting and bringing closer the Turkic peoples living on the borders of Russia, who had become alienated from one another. He brought about a real revolution in schooling and education in the history of the Eastern peoples.

Abdurauf Fitrat, one of the leaders of the Bukhara Jadids, was born into an enlightened family. He first studied at a secondary school and later at the Mir-i Arab Madrasa. Between 1909 and 1913, with the support of the "Tarbiyai Atfol" society, he went to Istanbul to study. During his years abroad, he established ideological connections with like-minded individuals among the Bashkir, Tatar, and Azerbaijani progressives studying in Istanbul, as well as with the Turkish national liberation movement.[4]

In later periods, Fitrat's works published in Turkey were brought to Turkestan, but after review, they faced resistance and were not published. The fate of other Jadid writers' works was similar.

In this regard, the Khiva Jadids played a major role in the Jadid movement in Turkestan. Their main objectives were to reform the education system, open new-method schools, raise the literacy of the people, pay attention to women's education, establish a national press, introduce reforms in state administration, and awaken the people against colonial oppression through the path of enlightenment.

Boboakhun Salimov was one of the founders of Jadid schools and a prominent promoter of enlightenment. Polvonniyoz Khoji Yusupov was the political leader of the Khiva Jadid movement and later became one of the organizers of the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic.

The 1917 Russian Revolution created new opportunities for the Khiva Jadids. Between 1917 and 1920, they actively participated in the Khiva Revolution. The Jadids played a leading role in ending the Khanate system and establishing the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic in 1920. This republic initially served as an important step toward national statehood and enlightenment reforms. However, later, due to the centralization of Soviet power, most of the Jadids were repressed as "enemies of the people."

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the Jadid movement grew stronger throughout the Turkestan region. The aim of this movement was to lead the people toward knowledge, enlightenment, modern thinking, and national awakening. Jadidism spread widely across all regions of Turkestan - Tashkent, Bukhara, Khiva, Samarkand, and especially the Fergana Valley.

The Fergana Jadids initiated innovations not only in the education system but also in the fields of culture, politics, press, and theater. Hamza Hakimzoda Niyozi (1889–1929) was the most famous of the Fergana Jadids. He organized new-method schools, called the people to enlightenment and freedom, and staged the first theatrical works in the Fergana Valley. Through his plays such as *Padarkush*, *Zaharli Hayot*, and *Boy ila Xizmatchi*, he urged the people to fight against ignorance. Hamza was stoned by the crowd as a supporter of incorrect ideas, but the Jadids continued their activities[5].

By the beginning of the 20th century, fearing the revolutionary changes occurring on the world stage, the colonial authorities further strengthened their political control over the peoples of the region[6]. The reason was that the widespread dissemination of the Jadid movement — which carried the idea of national independence among Russian Muslims — along with the influence of the Turkish and Iranian revolutions and the influx of progressive publications and literature, could significantly increase the socio-political activity of the local population, especially the intellectuals, by the early 20th century.[7]

The events mentioned above even led to an increase in crime in the provinces. The centuries-old dignity and honor of the Turkestan region were trampled underfoot[8]. Certain norms in the sphere of Sharia were also violated. From these events, we can conclude that by this period, the political activity of the local population had increased. In the views of the intellectual strata of society, not only among the Jadids but also among the ulama, there was a reflection of hatred toward the colonial system and confidence in the imminent collapse of the decaying empire[9].

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Khiva Khanate was under the external influence of the Russian Empire and internal pressure from feudal relations. The level of illiteracy among the population was high, and economic opportunities were limited. The Jadid movement set itself the goal of changing this situation and leading the people toward knowledge and culture[10].

Polvonniyoz Khoji Yusupov (1880–1937) was one of the most active and politically mature representatives of the Khiva Jadid movement. He initially engaged in trade and later began promoting ideas of enlightenment among the people. Between 1910 and 1917, he directly participated in the establishment of Jadid schools in Khiva. His main ideas included:

- Introducing modern education to save the people from ignorance;

- Establishing a constitutional system of governance in the Khanate;

- Implementing fair taxation and economic reforms.

In 1920, the Khiva Khanate was overthrown and replaced by the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic (KPSR). During this period, Polvonniyoz Khoji Yusupov served as chairman of the republic, while Boboakhun Salimov acted as the People's Commissar of Education. Polvonniyoz Khoji was known as one of the leaders of the "Young Khivans" movement — the political program of the Khiva Jadids. After the 1917 Revolution, he actively participated in the establishment of the Khiva People's Republic and held a government leadership position. He led the opening of new schools, teacher training, and the organization of women's education[11].

Boboakhun Salimov (1881–1938) was also a prominent representative of the Khorezm Jadids. He worked in the Khiva and Qo'ng'irot regions and was known as a teacher, enlightener, and reformer. He led the establishment of new-method schools, the writing of textbooks, and the upbringing of youth in the spirit of national awakening. His activities focused on:

- Opening new-method schools instead of old ones;

- Training teachers and introducing new teaching methods;

- Developing national press, theater, and culture.

He served as the practical leader of educational reform in Khorezm and, together with Polvonniyoz Khoji, worked to elevate public education to the level of state policy[12].

Between 1910 and 1920, Jadids and reformers in the Bukhara Emirate began active movements. They formed a political group called the "Young Bukharans" and fought against religious conservatism in the Emirate. Fayzulla Khojayev, one of the leaders of this movement, promoted ideas for modernizing education, governance, and the economy in Bukhara. In his view, to save the people from ignorance, it was first necessary to reform schools and madrasas, teach modern sciences, and organize women's education[13].

In September 1920, as a result of the Bukhara Revolution, the Emirate was abolished and the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic (BPSR) was established. Fayzulla Khojayev was appointed chairman of the republic's government. During this period, he began implementing the following reforms.

The opportunity to illuminate these events free from historical ideological pressure emerged only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although Uzbekistan has made fairly full use of this historical opportunity, a biased approach to history and historical events continues in the Russian Federation.[14]

Conclusion.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the changes that took place in the field of education in the Turkestan region brought about a profound turning point in the spiritual life of society. At a time when the traditional system of schools and madrasas, which had continued for centuries, could no longer meet the needs of the era, the new-method schools and the Jadid movement led the people toward enlightenment. The establishment of new-method schools made it possible to introduce secular subjects and modern teaching methods into the educational process. This, in turn, created a foundation for the expansion of the younger generation's thinking and the formation of ideas of national identity and awakening[15].

As a result of the activities of Jadid intellectuals, the education system was no longer limited to religious knowledge alone; it became a powerful force capable of leading the nation toward progress and independent thinking. Thus, the process of transition in the Turkestan education system from tradition to reform became a historically significant stage that caused not only innovation in the field of enlightenment but also a transformation in the thinking of the entire society.

The experience of this period has remained an invaluable source of national awakening, cultural advancement, and enlightenment for future generations[16].

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[1] The above sentence is taken from Shuhrat Rizayev's book Jadid Dramasi. T., "Sharq", 1997. (Note: The original text mentions Rustam Sharipov's book Turkiston jadidchilik harakati tarixidan (Tashkent: "O'qituvchi", 2002) as the first source, but the specific idea about theater and censorship is attributed to Shuhrat Rizayev. I have kept the reference as you wrote it, with a clarification for accuracy.)
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