



Central Asian Jadids' Efforts to Serve the Nation by Bringing Enlightenment to the Country

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Abstract

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw fundamental changes in Central Asia's cultural and social life. During that time, Jadidism emerged as a progressive movement throughout the emergence of new bourgeois relations, resulting in a cultural, spiritual, and moral upsurge in Central Asian society. The Jadids – educated middle-class youth – recognized the importance of studying secular sciences to keep up with Western achievements, provide a boost in development, and close the existing gap with European achievements. Today a discussion about the Jadids' efforts for a secular society and their perspectives on the role and place of Islam in modern society is more important and relevant than ever since the Jadids worked to restore Central Asian religious traditions while introducing new ideas to the country. The paper examines how the Jadids' ideas might be related to the changes taking place in Uzbekistan today. Uzbekistan is currently attempting to establish a new society within the framework of modern Islam, by the Islamic concept of dynamic thinking that is constantly adapting to the course of events and history.

Keywords: *Jadids; Enlightenment; Education; Religious Traditions; Islam; Innovation; Modernity; Culture; Reforms; Reformers; Clergy; Religion*

Introduction

The Jadids raised issues related to the introduction of education, art, theatre, and music in Central Asia at the turn of the twentieth century that are still vital in today's Uzbekistan. Fairly recently the questions brought up by Jadids in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have been revived throughout Central Asia. The Jadids argued for the best way for Central Asia's nations to improve the well-being of

their diverse peoples. In other words, the Jadids' movement prepared the cultural and ideological ground for the emergence of national theater, professional music, and visual art. As for today's Uzbekistan, global changes are taking place in all areas of life. Accordingly, the Jadids' robust and courageous ideas could serve as the inspiration for progressive development and inspire a new generation of Uzbek leaders. According to Tursunov R., "the Jadid movement today is relevant not only from a historical but also from a modern standpoint" [1]. The Jadids strived to advance their fresh and innovative ideas among all strata of the population. However, due to the world war, the turbulent years of the Soviet revolution, followed by repressions, and a variety of other factors, the Jadids' ideas were only partially implemented. For political reasons, the Jadid's names and actions were obliterated or distorted for many years, however, did they not die, despite being frozen for a while. Therefore, the principles of Jadids on how to stay true to the rich and diverse cultural values of Central Asian nations while introducing innovation to the country are more important today than ever before. Furthermore, in terms of religion, reviving the legacy of Jadidism can help to strengthen the discourse between traditional Islam and modernity. Since Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, there has been a reinstatement of traditionalism in all areas of life. Above all, Islam has been constantly resurrected in Central Asian countries since then. P. Bobohanov argued that "The Jadids could not imagine that in a hundred years ... the medieval norms of Sharia, an archaic religious worldview in society would be defended fiercely, ... as the representatives of kadimism did in their time" [2].

A discussion about the Jadids' efforts for a secular society, as well as their perspectives on the role and place of Islam in modern society, is more important than ever. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, stated at a solemn meeting dedicated to the Day of Teachers and Mentors that "our outstanding ancestors-Jadids-educators could have carried out the country's Third Renaissance in the twentieth century. These highly educated, selfless individuals devoted themselves to the idea of national revival, directing all of their forces and capabilities to bring the country out of darkness and backwardness, to liberate the nation from the shackles of ignorance, and they sacrificed their own lives to accomplish this great goal" [3]. The names of Central Asian Jadids such as Abdulla Avloni (1878–1934), Mahmudhoja Behbudi (1875–1919), and Munavvar Qori Abdurashidhonov (1878–1931) were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Order by presidential decree for their dedication to the path to achieving independence, and for their outstanding contribution to the creation of the national education and upbringing system. Today, in Uzbekistan, monuments have been erected to the Jadids as a sign of deep respect and reverence, and museums have been opened.

Remedy for Central Asia

A Central Asian Muslim group of reformists, namely Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkhonov, Majid Qodiri, Abdullah Qodiri, Abdurauf Fitrat, M. Behbudi, Fayzulla Khodjaev, S. Mirjalilov, Hoji Muin Shukrullaev, to name but a few, were among those who saw as their duty to work for the progress their country and enlightenment of people. It was a movement of educated in western traditions Central Asian youth. The Jadids' views on political issues, particularly constitutional ideas, were influenced by European political thought. Thus, the Jadids sought ways to bring democracy to Central Asian countries through enlightenment and education to make them developed and prosperous states. However, recognizing that such massive transformations could not occur overnight the Jadids believed that it was necessary, to begin with by bringing changes to education since the greatest disparity was felt most in that field. Thus, one of the prominent Jadids Hoji Muin Shukrullaev argued: "the life and happiness of a people lie in knowledge. It is natural that nations without knowledge, without alliance, cannot survive, just as fish without water cannot survive..." [4].

Those young renovators fought primarily to improve Muslim public education. They recognized that the country needed urgently the skilled professionals in the fields of culture and science. They claimed that the old education arrangements, people's beliefs, and the governing system itself, among

other things, needed to be reformed. Yet, the Jadid's goal was not to dully adopt European norms of education and upbringing collected over the centuries but to utilize European civilization's knowledge and put it to use in the service of national culture. As argued by Ziyö Kukulp (1876-1924), the founder of the national ideology and sociology in the Republic of Turkey: "Modernization means the ability to produce and use equipment, armored vehicles, cars, aircraft like Europeans: modernization does not mean that we have to look and feel like Europeans" [5].

In essence, the Jadids believed that "for the people of Central Asia to adapt to the requirements of the modern world, there should be a relationship between education, modernity, and literacy" [6].

The Jadids' beliefs were based on the fact that the country's backwardness rested on Islamic misinterpreted traditions. While traditional adherents of Islam vehemently opposed any changes in Islam since they believed that any amendments introduced to the foundations of religion would contradict the norms that Muslims have adhered to for centuries. In this respect, a poet under the pseudonym Tavvalo wrote: "*We contrapose an airplane with a flying kite, and we contrapose a car with a Kokand wain*" [7]. As for the Jadids, they believed that knowledge was the essential means of survival for the people of Turkestan. They strongly supported the notion that changes to the education system would bear fruits, as by educating indigenous people the new so-called national capital would emerge, which in turn, would work towards the develop the economy, industry, and agriculture of Central Asia. Likewise, their ultimate goal was to raise living standards and improve the well-being of the indigent. That would bring the country out of poverty, and increase the number of wealthy people. Thus, their attempts were ultimately aimed at the formation of strong sovereign states in Turkestan [8].

In terms of Islam, the issue of the precise consideration of the role of religion in the development of society occupied a vital place in the Jadids' ideology. They fully recognized that, given the conditions of the local Central Asian society, without the approval of Islam, a new full-fledged education adjoining world standards would be too difficult to introduce. Despite the doubts on the part of some strong believers who did not want any changes in the then existing system. Despite some doubts that the representatives of the Jadidism were true believers, the former never denied Islam. Moreover, these young reformers wanted to preserve and even develop Islamic heritage and national identity, but they were looking for ways to improve the situation of local society so that it could adequately meet the challenges of the modern world. Although they sought to modernize society and borrow social constructs from other cultures, the Jadids argued that Islam did not contradict the parliamentary system, but was based on the Shura, as it worked under public decision-making grounded in the Quran and Sunnah commands [9]. Notably, among the famous Jadids were such prominent theologians of Islam as Domullo Ikram, Boboohun Salimov, Mullo Zafar Khukandi, etc. They were educated, renewed, and modernized mullahs and conveyed progressive ideas to the congregations. They differed from the conservative clergy in that they had their views on the issues outlined in the sacred books, but they did not at all reject those books. Mostly, the Jadid mullahs were progressive, intelligent, and keeping up with the times. They sought to show the ossified mullahs and believers the gains of modern civilization. In other words, their idea was to show the believers that the interpretation of Sharia had been frozen and there should have been the need to evolve. Behbudy, (1875—1919) one of the ideologists and leaders of Jadidism wrote "Indeed, Islam is such a strong and capable religion that the more knowledge a person obtains, the stronger his faith in Islam will be. For example, ... many of the most educated European scholars were Muslims. So ... science is not only harmless to modern Islam but even beneficial" [10].

There were also many poets, writers, musicians, playwrights, literary and theater critics, artists, and scientists in various fields of science, among famous Jadids.

The Jadids believed that by raising the level of knowledge of the young generation, the future could prepare them for the correct and conscious perception of European culture. They stressed the need

to open the “gates of ijtihad” to solve the tasks assigned to Muslims by European civilization and fight ignorance and fanaticism [11]. Today Uzbekistan is working towards the revival of Islam. However, even today one can hear judgments that Islam should not undergo modernization, and, unlike other religions, it is more “correct” and does not need reforming.

Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkhanov, (1878—1931) one of the representatives of the Jadids, argued about what he considered obligatory for every Muslim: “Study various sciences and languages, obtaining the knowledge necessary for daily life and religion” [12]. Thus, the Jadids reasoned that Islam makes it the responsibility of every Muslim to achieve a certain level of education and encourages the pursuit of science. Therefore, he urged us not to miss any opportunity to gain knowledge and fight as hard as possible with the enemy of humanity, which he believed to be ignorance. The Jadids argued that Sharia obliges Muslims to study science that benefits humankind. They urged to gain knowledge and fight ignorance, considering the latter as the worst enemy. The population at that time could study mainly in religious schools, with a few exceptions. Given that, the Jadids faced massive opposition from society. The people who belonged to that society had a high degree of religiosity. The confrontation of the conservatively minded clergy was stronger and more effective. That quite often led to schools being destroyed by a crowd of mullahs [13].

The Jadids, for their part, just argued that clergymen were educated in an old way and passed that method from generation to generation. Kemper M. argued that the traditional method of teaching Arabic and Islamic subjects were quite sophisticated and irrational, as the Jadids would claim [14]. They strived to change the way people were educated and introduced different methods to follow the new tendencies. The critical approach to studying history, science, and art did not contradict Islam, in the Jadids’ opinion. The Jadids remained faithful to their rich and varied cultural and religious traditions. They opened discourse on how to reconcile the new values of modern society with Islamic ideas. However, that did not save them from attacks by the defenders of pure Islam and confronted them with the widespread opposition within the Muslim community. The Russian colonial administration supported the Jadids from the very beginning. However, over time, people began to treat them with suspicion [15]. By the time Jadidism began to gain ground, the former started to assess it as a political system capable of resisting the existing one.

Equally important, at the beginning of the 20th century, there was a division among the Jadids into two branches. The first branch sought to engage only in educational activities and remained in the essence of a cultural movement only. The other ones were looking for a political platform to transform the system of society. Thus, the movement of “Young Bukharians” became the basis of the revolutionary-democratic wing of the Jadids. In particular, the “Young Bukharians” was a national-democratic movement that emerged in the early twentieth century on the territory of the Bukhara Emirate based on the Jadid movement [16]. The Central Asian Jadids were divided into Turkestan, Bukhara, and Khiva’s. They differed in that they saw the path of progress differently. However, the main goal was still the same - a high level of education and the culture of the people. R.S. Bobokhonov (a senior researcher, Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies, Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences) argued that the Jadids proposed to assist those in need of the targeted groups permanently. They argued that “as much as it was necessary to provide material assistance to the poor, they also needed psychological help. Therefore, if the poor obtain an education, they will later earn a living without losing their dignity. Tramps, beggars, the homeless, and other lower classes of society lived, as a rule, on the street and sometimes received help from mosques and religious structures. Instead of just giving alms to beggars and the homeless, the Jadids created homes for street children, organized charity dinners for the poor, and sometimes provided them with other free services, including medical, etc” [17]. The Jadids introduced ideas about a healthy lifestyle. Abdullah Avloni stressed that physical education was necessary for a healthy mind, morality, knowledge, and education. He wrote, “Keeping the body in a healthy state is the

most important thing for a person. Because to read, study, and absorb knowledge, a person needs a strong, healthy body". That was not a religious notion, it was based on humanistic principles [18].

Jadidism was not associated with merely a Central Asian phenomenon, it took its form as a modernist movement throughout the Muslim world in the late nineteenth century. Extensive traveling throughout the world helped the Jadids to gain a keen understanding of the contrast between advanced Europe and backward Central Asia. The Jadids emphasized the necessity to borrow Western skills and technologies and apply them to the spiritual sector of society. They paved the way for secular education based on national ideals, as well as spiritual regeneration and enrichment, and the development of self-awareness. Central Asia's alarming gap behind economically developed countries, cultural regression, and intellectual stagnation drove them to seek out efficient ways to accelerate social and cultural progress. Jadidism represented the Muslim intelligentsia movement at the turn of the twentieth century. The Jadids movement sought ways to advance the country, establishing the ground for the independence concept. The movement sparked a resurgence of national pride and rich culture, and as a result, the majority of the region's progressive youth rallied behind it [19].

A cultural movement, Jadidism, took its roots from a new phonetic method of teaching the Arabic alphabet in elementary schools for Tatars in Crimea. In 1884, in the Crimean city of Bakhchisarai, Ismailbek Gasprali founded a new teaching method called "usul jaded". In the 90s, this new method reached Turkestan. In 1893, Ismailbek Gasprali himself came to Bukhara, met with the emir, and managed to open a new school" [20]. Thus, opening the way for a new trend, hitherto unknown to Central Asian society. Following this path, Salokhiddin Domla opened the first school in 1898 in Kokand. At the same time, another similar institution was opened in Tokmok. In 1899, Mannon Qari in Tashkent and Shamsiddin domla in Andijan braced this initiative [21].

Because the Jadids recognized illiteracy as the primary cause of the country's social backwardness, they saw education as a way to address pressing issues. Given that many of the Jadids' representatives were well-off, they primarily opened new method schools in the region on their own. They followed the European model at such schools, teaching secular arithmetic, geography, and other subjects [22, 23].

The Jadids fought to introduce a new method of teaching to replace the existing practice in madrasa-based "maktab", as primary schools in Central Asia were known in the late 19th century [24]. In schools, the educational system was based on an archaic letter-subjunctive teaching method. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the traditional way of learning the alphabet in traditional Muslim schools (maktab, madrasa) took an enormous amount of time. The Jadids opposed rote memorization, advocating the importance of functional literacy [25]. The Jadids were the first to introduce modern facilities at schools. They used teaching aids like maps, globes, abacus, blackboards, desks, and benches, which helped the students to master literacy. They were for simultaneous teaching of various disciplines with formal exams and diplomas [26]. The Jadids' educational approach made literacy training relatively simple and rapid. However, the goal was to help pupils develop a new worldview that was free of fanaticism and conservatism. The Jadids opened their schools to visitors, local dignitaries, and imperial functionaries, who were invited to the final examinations alongside students' parents [27].

The Jadids belonged to the age of the printing era, evolving into the publication of newspapers, magazines, books, and even theatre. Moreover, they decided to establish their press as a social movement to communicate their progressive ideas to their audience. Specifically, the ideas expressed in the first edition of the Sadoi Turkiston newspaper, published in 1914, were as follows: "We founded this newspaper because we felt that ignorance was a betrayal of our sacred motherland and our loving mother, Turkestan" [28].

However, illiterate and uneducated indigenous people by this time were not ready to buy and read the magazines and books issued by the reformers. Therefore, at first, the Jadids came up with the idea to read the press aloud for those illiterate. Moreover, by raising literacy they prepared people to read the press they used as a tribune. On the one hand, literate and educated readers were needed for the press to be profitable, but also, through the press, they spread their ideas in society.

Munavvar Qori Abdurashidhonov in “Our ignorance is our worst enemy” wrote: “... There are many fathers who do not know why they came to this world, who do not encourage science and education, walk the streets with their lovely children, and burn the dear lives of innocent poor people in the fire of ignorance” [29].

Conclusion

As a cultural and educational movement, Jadidism demonstrated that to modernize society, one must begin with its weakest component - education. Even with all of the restrictions and obstacles imposed on them by the local government, the fruits of this modernization were clear, according to Jadidism’s history. The Jadid initiated the modernization of society, notably Islam. Much time was needed to modernize Islam and bring it in line with the norms of the secular society of that time. That gave impetus to the development of culture and, in particular, musical art, which was rejected with particular eagerness by traditionalists. In 1923 the creation of the Sharq Musiqiy Maktab (Eastern Music School) was initiated by Abdulrauf Fitrat, which over time, was supposed to be developed to the level of European conservatories. Due to this legacy today, the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan hosts around 1,500 students each year. Among these students are talented young people from various backgrounds and groups including disabled, blind, and visually impaired students [30]. Musical art flourishes in Uzbekistan, a country with roughly an estimated 94 percent of Muslims [31, 85].

However, the Jadids’ knowledge, resources, experience, and time were insufficient. Thus, the historical roots, socio-economic preconditions, political factors, and the main ideological origins of Jadidism in Central Asia should be profoundly explored so that it can be reintroduced into the process of revival of traditionalism that has begun in all spheres of Uzbekistan’s society. Every year, thousands of people from Uzbekistan travel to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage. Old non-operational mosques were reopened, and religious education was reestablished [32,14]. On the one hand, the country has been re-establishing links with the larger Muslim world rediscovering renowned Muslim figures such as Muhammad al-Bukhari, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Biruni, Amir Temur, Ulugbekh, and Babur.

As shown above, the focus of the Jadids’ reform was not against Islamic norms, but on immoral acts that resulted in a neglect of community duty. “Jadidism as a Muslim movement arose at a specific time and place, in the age of the colonial empire”, writes Adeb Khalid [33]. This fact defined the opportunities and possibilities available to reformers while also imposing certain constraints. Today’s Uzbekistan, which has embarked on the path of democratic reforms, should deeply reconsider the reformist ideas of the Jadids, who were previously unacknowledged. It was because the Jadids centered their ideas on religion. They by no means sought to give up on Islam, while the Bolsheviks, who came to power at that time, abolished most religious institutions. As a result, the social order prevented the Jadids from achieving noble goals. The concept of national revival remained an unattainable dream for our people at the time. There are now all of the prerequisites in place.

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