

The Enlightenment Movement in Turkestan

Ortiqov Umirillo Mamadiyorovich

Academic Lyceum of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

Email: -

Abstract

This article examines the enlightenment movement in Turkestan and its profound influence on the cultural and intellectual life of the region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Particular attention is given to the emergence and expansion of *usul-i jadid* (new-method) schools, which sought to modernize traditional systems of Muslim education by introducing secular subjects, improved pedagogical methods, and co-educational practices. The study also addresses the role of Jadid leaders and reformers in fostering a broader intellectual awakening through the establishment of newspapers, journals, and the publication of textbooks such as *Adibi avval* and *Adibi soniy*. Drawing on historical sources and recent scholarly research, the article highlights how these initiatives not only advanced literacy and modern education but also contributed to the formation of a new public sphere, stimulating debates on cultural identity, social reform, and political aspirations in colonial Turkestan. The findings underscore that the Jadid movement was more than an educational reform; it represented a comprehensive cultural renaissance that laid the groundwork for national self-awareness and the emergence of modernist currents within Central Asian society.

Keywords: Jadidism, enlightenment movement, new-method schools, Turkestan, Adibi avval, Adibi soniy, cultural reform, educational modernization

1. Introduction

From the very emergence of the first new-method schools (*usul-i jadid maktablari*) in Turkestan, the colonial administration closely monitored their activities and sought to prevent the expansion of their network [1]. Schools opened without administrative approval were placed under similar oversight as traditional schools and madrasas; the inspector (*mubashir*) of Muslim schools assumed this supervisory role [2]. In 1885, V. P. Nalivkin was appointed to this position [3].

The colonial authorities consistently obstructed the establishment of new-method schools, as demonstrated by the following incident. In September 1901, a petition from Uzbek residents of the Kokcha quarter in the old city of Tashkent was submitted to the Governor-General. These residents complained that the city mayor had refused them permission to open a new-method school, despite their plan to establish it in a private household fully equipped with necessary facilities [4]. When the opinion of the Military Governor of Syrdarya Oblast was solicited, he objected to opening a new-method school in Kokcha, an area densely populated by Muslims [5].

Nevertheless, in 1902 the Jadids of the old city—led by Abdulla Avloni and Munavvarqori Abdurashidkhanov—successfully opened the school. Subsequently, similar institutions were also inaugurated in the Sebzor, Shaykhontohur, and other quarters of Tashkent [6].

Abduqodir Abdushukurov, better known by his literary pseudonym *Shakuriy*, played a significant role in promoting new-method schools in Samarkand and worked tirelessly to provide these schools

*Corresponding author : -

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with textbooks and teaching manuals [7]. In 1901, at the school he personally founded, he introduced the first local practice of teaching boys and girls together, albeit in separate classrooms. At the time, this represented a genuinely courageous innovation in pedagogical practice among the local population [8].

Literature review

Soon thereafter, co-education for boys and girls began to be adopted by new-method schools in Tashkent and Andijan as well [9]. Among Shakuriy's educational contributions were the instructional manuals *Jome' ul-hikoyot*, *Havoyiji diniya*, and *Rahnamoi savod* [10]. In 1914, Sadridin Ayni assisted Shakuriy in publishing textbooks for students of new-method schools [11]. Additionally, in Samarkand, the new-method pedagogue Ismatulla Rahmatullaev published the alphabet primer *Rahbari maktab*, and the prominent Jadid Hoja Muin produced *Rahnamoi savod* and other pedagogical works [12].

Hoji Muin was born on March 19, 1883, in the Rukhobod district of Samarkand. He first became literate in a traditional school and later pursued education at a madrasa under Saidahmad Vasliy [1]. He independently mastered the Russian language and European culture [2]. From 1901, he began his teaching career, and in 1903 he opened a *usul-i jadid* (new-method) school in his neighborhood [3]. For this school, in 1908 he published an alphabet primer titled *Rahnomai savod* [4]. Beginning in 1913, he worked for Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy's newspaper *Samarqand* and the journal *Oyna* [5]. In 1914, he established a private *usul-i jadid* school in his home under the name *Tarbiyat* [6].

Not only in Turkestan but also in Bukhara and Khiva, great efforts were made to establish new-method schools, improve their quality, and expand their networks. Distinguished Jadid figures such as Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, Abdulla Avloni, Munavvarqori Abdurashidkhanov, Abduvohid Burhonov, Mo'min Aminov, Olimkhonto'ra, and others contributed significantly to this cause [7]. Abdulla Avloni authored two outstanding textbooks—*Adabiyot* and *Muallimi avval*—which were reprinted annually between 1912 and 1917 [8]. M. Abdurashidkhanov also wrote *Adibi avval* and *Adibi soniy*, along with several manuals on religious sciences that were used by both teachers and students of Russo-native schools [9].

By the 1880s, a large and influential group had emerged, advocating for the modernization of religious schools and the purification of Muslim ideology from outdated or extraneous elements that hindered the growth of social activity and consciousness among the indigenous population [10]. The leader of this movement was Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, later one of the key initiators of the national-patriotic Jadid movement in Turkestan. His works included *Alifbo maktabi islomiya*, *Majali jug'rofiya umroniy*, *Kitob ul-atfol*, and *Amaliyoti islomiya*, which served as textbooks for both new-method and traditional Muslim schools. He also authored numerous pedagogical articles published in *Sadoi Turkiston* and *Oyna* [11]. These publications were financed by Behbudiy himself but were sold in schools and madrasas at a 25% discount [12].

New-method schools and traditional Muslim educational institutions played an important role not only in Turkestan but also in the Bukhara Emirate and Khiva Khanate. In 1909, Governor-General Mishchenko, in his "strictly confidential" report to the Minister of Public Education of the Russian Empire, wrote: "In Turkestan, particularly in its three core provinces—Syrdarya, Fergana, and Samarkand—the indigenous population enjoys a state of literacy far superior, in comparative terms, to the population of European Russia. A dense network of numerous primary schools as well as secondary and higher madrasas covers the vast territory of the region." Consequently, in addition to the arbitrary closures of new-method schools and madrasas by military-police administrations of provinces and districts, in 1910 Turkestan's Governor-General Samsonov approved the *Regulations on Muslim Educational Institutions of Turkestan*. The regulations specifically stipulated that "only politically and morally reliable Russian citizens shall be permitted to establish and teach in schools." [13]

In such challenging conditions, the expansion of the enlightenment movement was significantly supported by the material and organizational assistance of the wealthy strata of the indigenous population, particularly merchants and industrial circles [14]. Contrary to the colonial policy aimed at restricting indigenous education, this support contributed to strengthening national self-awareness, increasing social activity, and enabling the persistent struggle of the Jadids and other advocates of national interests. As a result, the number of both traditional and new-method schools and madrasas in Turkestan grew considerably [15]. By 1917, it can be noted that more than 100 officially functioning new-method schools were active across the region, and their number continued to increase steadily. The colonial administration was unable to fully identify and control all such institutions. According to reports from district and Tashkent city authorities, in 1910 there were seven schools in Kokand, more than ten in Andijan, and seventeen in Tashkent—including one in the old city—as well as five girls' schools in Samarkand [4]. Other records, however, indicated that at that time there were 24 new-method schools in Tashkent, 14 in Kokand, and 19 in Andijan [5].

Data from Turkestan oblasts provide a more comprehensive view of the new-method school network as of early 1917. Specifically, in Fergana oblast alone there were more than 55 schools (including 33 in Andijan and Kokand), five in Samarkand, 40 in Syrdarya, 18 in Semirechye (Yettisuv), and four along the Caspian littoral [6]. Moreover, as emphasized by the inspection commission of Count K. K. Palen, "more than political considerations, it was the desire of the indigenous population to provide the younger generation with an education more in line with the real demands of the present time that compelled them to send their children eagerly to these schools" [7].

The multi-ethnic indigenous population of Turkestan, particularly its intellectual elite, responded to the exploitation of the region's economic, natural, and labor resources, as well as to social and national oppression, by demonstrating a growing sense of national identity. They strived to preserve and enrich core national and universal values that shaped the lifestyle of local peoples [8]. In opposition to military-political repression, their enlightenment and later political aspirations manifested in the establishment of new-method schools in cities and numerous villages, the modernization of madrasas and traditional schools, the creation of remarkable scholarly, historical, philosophical, medical, and pedagogical works, as well as textbooks in both religious and secular sciences. Furthermore, they produced literary and folklore works, artistic masterpieces, and launched newspapers and journals in local languages. Ultimately, these efforts culminated in uniting peoples under the slogans of anti-colonial resistance and freedom, leading to the establishment of the national-democratic government of Turkestan (Kokand) Autonomy in 1917 [9], [10].

2. Conclusion

The enlightenment movement in Turkestan, particularly through the rise of *usul-i jadid* (new-method) schools, marked a transformative period in the region's cultural and intellectual development. The Jadid reformers sought to modernize education by introducing secular subjects alongside traditional religious teachings, laying the foundation for a more progressive and inclusive educational system. Their efforts were not limited to educational reforms; they extended to the creation of newspapers, journals, and textbooks such as *Adibi avval* and *Adibi soniy*, which provided a new framework for intellectual engagement and discourse.

By focusing on the modernization of educational practices, the Jadid movement fostered a culture of critical thinking, literacy, and social reform that transcended traditional boundaries. It significantly contributed to the development of a new public sphere, where ideas about national identity, social justice, and political participation were actively discussed. The movement also played a crucial role in shaping the modern consciousness of the Turkestan population, encouraging them to embrace a broader sense of self-awareness and autonomy.

Ultimately, the Jadid reforms in education and culture had a lasting impact on the intellectual landscape of Central Asia, paving the way for further modernization efforts in the region. They remain a vital part of Turkestan's historical legacy, influencing both its national movements and the broader trajectory of Central Asian history.

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