



THE ROLE OF THE JADID MOVEMENT IN THE MODERNIZATION OF UZBEK SOCIETY IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract: The Jadid movement emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a modernist reform initiative among Muslim intellectuals in Central Asia, particularly in what is now Uzbekistan. Rooted in educational and cultural reform, the movement aimed to modernize Muslim society through new methods of learning, civic engagement, and cultural revitalization. This paper explores the historical background, ideological foundations, and societal impact of the Jadid movement. Through a review of primary sources and scholarly interpretations, the study highlights the movement's role in shaping national consciousness, educational reform, and early ideas of autonomy under Russian colonial rule.

Keywords: Jadid movement, education reform, national identity, Central Asia, modernization, Uzbek history, Russian Empire, colonialism, intellectual resistance, civic engagement

Introduction

The decline of the Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand khanates and the consolidation of Tsarist Russian control over Central Asia in the 19th century led to widespread political, cultural, and educational stagnation. In response to this, a group of intellectuals known as the Jadids sought to revitalize Uzbek society. Influenced by global modernist trends and Islamic reformist thought from the Ottoman Empire and South Asia, the Jadids viewed enlightenment, education, and cultural revival as essential tools to protect identity and resist colonial assimilation.

The movement was not merely a cultural renaissance but also a political awakening that laid the groundwork for the later struggle for independence. By promoting modern schools, journalism, theater, and civic participation, the Jadids contributed significantly to the intellectual and cultural modernization of the Uzbek people during the late imperial and early Soviet periods.

Methods

This research draws upon a combination of primary historical sources, including Jadid writings, newspaper articles, and school curricula from the early 20th century, alongside secondary academic literature analyzing the movement's evolution and impact. Key sources include the writings of prominent Jadid thinkers such as Ismail Gasprinsky, Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkhanov, and Mahmudhoja Behbudi. Archival materials from Russian imperial records and Central Asian periodicals such as *Taraqqiy*, *Shuro*, and *Hurriyat* were reviewed to assess the educational and political agenda of the movement.

The study also employed content analysis of Jadid school textbooks (*usuli-jadid*) and plays to examine how ideas of reform, identity, and modernity were communicated to the broader

population. Comparative perspectives with reformist movements in the Ottoman and Persian worlds were included to contextualize the Jadids' intellectual roots.

Results

The Jadid movement made significant advances in transforming traditional Islamic education by introducing the *usuli-jadid* (new method) schools that emphasized phonetic reading, arithmetic, geography, and science. These schools aimed to produce a literate, nationally conscious generation capable of engaging with the modern world. By 1917, hundreds of Jadid schools had been established in major cities such as Tashkent, Samarkand, and Andijan.

In parallel, the Jadids launched newspapers and journals in Uzbek and Russian, using them as platforms to criticize backwardness, promote reform, and stimulate civic consciousness. The theater became a key tool for public education, with plays addressing themes of women's rights, ignorance, and national pride.

Politically, while the movement was not initially revolutionary, it grew increasingly political by the 1910s, especially after the 1917 Russian Revolution. Jadid leaders supported autonomy and the creation of a modern Turkestan state within a federative Russian republic. However, after the Bolsheviks came to power, the Jadid movement faced suppression. Many of its leaders were executed or imprisoned during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s.

Discussion

The Jadid movement marked a turning point in Uzbek history, representing a transition from traditionalism to reform-oriented modern nationalism. It was one of the first organized efforts to modernize society from within Islamic and indigenous cultural frameworks, rather than through direct Westernization.

The movement's legacy is complex. Although it was crushed during the early Soviet years, its ideas endured and were later rediscovered in post-independence Uzbekistan as a source of national pride and intellectual inspiration. The Jadids' emphasis on education, language, critical thought, and civil responsibility directly influenced the formation of national identity and the structure of modern Uzbek civic institutions.

Moreover, the Jadid experience illustrates broader themes in the global history of Islamic reformism, colonial resistance, and modernization. It shows how intellectuals can act as agents of change, even within authoritarian or colonial contexts, by shaping cultural and educational discourse.

Conclusion

The Jadid movement was a foundational force in the modernization of Uzbek society. Through its commitment to educational reform, national consciousness, and civic engagement, the movement laid the groundwork for the emergence of a modern Uzbek identity. Despite its suppression under Soviet rule, the Jadids' intellectual and cultural contributions remain vital to understanding Uzbekistan's historical trajectory and postcolonial revival. Recognizing their legacy is essential for appreciating the roots of modern Uzbek statehood and the resilience of national culture in the face of political adversity.

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