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METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF STUDYING THE PROCESS OF MODERNIZATION IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF THE MUSLIMS OF CENTRAL ASIA AT THE END OF THE 19TH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Abstract. *This article sets out the methodological foundations for studying the process of modernization in the socio-cultural life of the Muslims of Central Asia at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Relying on comparative-historical, source-critical and historiographical methods, it examines the factors and historical conditions that gave rise to the renewal (modernization) process, the colonial policy of Tsarist Russia and its strategy of assimilation, and the activity of the Jadid enlighteners as the leaders of the national awakening movement. The article argues that the Jadids pursued two principal aims preserving religious and national values and selectively adopting the scientific and technological achievements of the West and that, although the movement was suppressed, it left a deep mark that remains relevant to the building of the society of independent Uzbekistan today.*

Keywords: *modernization, renewal, Jadidism, Central Asia, Turkestan, colonial policy, Tsarist Russia, assimilation, national awakening, enlightenment, methodology, comparative-historical method.*

INTRODUCTION

If we look at the history of our ancestors, we see that the various nations and peoples who lived in Central Asia and the neighbouring regions developed strong political, economic, cultural and educational ties over the centuries. Among the leading civilisations of the Eastern world in this respect, the place of the states of Central Asia is, without doubt, incomparable. The scholars who lived in these regions, and their forebears, always adhered to universal human values such as justice, morality, tolerance,

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industriousness, conscience and fidelity. In the periods when the Muslim Renaissance flourished in Central Asia that is, in the ninth to twelfth centuries the Muslim society here advanced along the path of progress with bold steps. They were always present and ready for renewal and development, in every age and every place. The spirituality of the peoples, founded on tolerance and on religious and national values, was very far from fanaticism and bigotry, for the strong ideology of the society of that time gave almost no opportunity for alien ideas to enter. The local scholars and ulama, too, contributed in this sphere as much as they could. Because Central Asia lay at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road, the indigenous population of the region was very active not only in trade and commerce but also in the mutual exchange of new ideas and thoughts. As an example, it is fitting to cite as a historical truth that such great scholars as Abu Abdullah al-Khwarazmi, Ahmad al-Farghani, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Imam Ismail al-Bukhari, Ahmad Yasawi and Bahauddin Naqshband made an enormous contribution to the flourishing and progress of the Islamic world.

However, as a result of a number of objective historical causes and subjective factors, this lofty spirituality, learning and spirit of inquiry in the Muslim societies gradually began to fall into crisis, and, as a natural consequence, stagnation and a lack of development began to appear in almost all spheres of socio-cultural and political life.

Since Uzbekistan attained independence, understanding our identity and who we are, and drawing the necessary lessons and conclusions from the past, has become one of the most pressing tasks for our society. There is no doubt whatsoever that, by objectively assessing the events that occurred in history, knowing the stages of historical renewal and progress through which our society has passed in order to develop further and reach the international level, and educating our youth as full-fledged and enlightened members of modern society, are among the most pressing tasks before us. We have witnessed this historical truth in our own recent quarter-century past. That the lifelong dreams of our enlighteners, whose history is now almost a hundred years old, are being realised in our own time a hundred years later is an undeniable historical truth.

Of particular importance regarding the significance of renewal in society and of keeping pace with the world is the speech delivered by President Sh. M. Mirziyoyev on 11 December 2023 to the participants of the international conference “Jadids: ideas of national identity, independence and statehood” (Mirziyoyev, 2023): “The ideological-

political, socio-educational and legal-ethical views advanced by our great enlightening ancestors, together with their efforts to establish the principles of tolerance and solidarity among various nations and peoples and to protect national interests, are a true model for all of us above all for our youth in the present complex and perilous age. Their lives and their courage remind us that today's peaceful and tranquil days were not attained easily, and constantly call upon us to protect our national independence and our beloved Homeland like the apple of our eye."

MAIN PART

The rich scholarly heritage and timely research of the enlighteners Abdurauf Fitrat, Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkhanov, Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy and Validi Ahmet Zeki, and of such modern scholars as Saidakbar Agzamkhodjaev, Ravshan Abdullaev and others, have reflected the questions of studying the renewal process in the Muslim society of twentieth-century Central Asia (Behbudiy, 1917; Agzamkhodjaev, 2006). Among Western scholars, Adam Mez, Alexandre Bennigsen, James Fadiman and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, and among Turkish researchers Nadir Devlet, Ziya Gökalp and Hayit Baymirza, have also sought in their research to illuminate the processes of renewal and intellectual integration that the Muslims of Central Asia underwent in the past century (Ibrahim, 2005; Qillioghli, 2019; Nazirova, n.d.). Research connected with the intellectual-renewal processes that the Muslim peoples of our region experienced in history was also carried out by such CIS scholars as Vasily Vladimirovich Bartold, Lev Nikolayevich Gumilyov, Yevgeny Eduardovich Bertels, Musa Jarullah Bigiev, Pyotr Kirillovich Pozdeev, Ilya Nikolaevich Berezin, Mirza Muhammad Ali Kazembek, Nikolai Vladimirovich Khanykov and Vasily Vasilyevich Grigoriev. However significant these studies are from a scholarly standpoint, the essence of the present article consists precisely in those aspects of the intellectual-ideological renewal of the Muslim society of that period the ideological revolutions that passed through people's consciousness, and the new pages of subsequent history that they did not take into account. Broader scholarly facts on this subject are set out in detail in the monograph "The process of modernization in the socio-cultural life of the Muslims of Central Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century" (Abdulkadirov, 2025).

Among other things, the following aspects are set out in detail in that scholarly research:

a new and modern approach to the leaders of the renewal movements that took place in the Muslim societies of Central Asia in the twentieth century, and the question of how the renewal movement resonated in the life of the Muslim community;

the political and socio-psychological conditions in which the participants of the renewal processes operated, and the difficulties and obstacles against which they struggled;

how the renewal movements spread their ideas to the neighbouring peoples within the lands of Tsarist Russia, and through which factors and actions they ultimately emerged as the founders of enlightenment ideas;

the similarities and differences between the renewal process that began in Central Asia and the reformist movement that spread rapidly through the Islamic world of that period;

a comparative-historical study of how the renewal movement fell into crisis yet left a deep, unforgettable mark in history, and of the significance of that mark for the new formation of the society of our independent homeland with the results made available to researchers and to all readers interested in this field.

If we look directly at the history of Central Asia, we see that its historical truth the historical actions carried out by the mature representatives of the Jadid movement, the progressives and enlighteners who came forth in this land has by no means lost its significance to this day; on the contrary, it is even now being examined as a set of highly relevant questions.

Over the course of their history, the Muslims of Central Asia repeatedly carried out reforms in the cultural-educational, socio-political, ideological and educational spheres with the aim of fundamentally transforming society, acting with the intention of renewing the nation in every sense.

Named in world history by such terms as Jadidism, Pan-Turkism or Pan-Islamism, and Muslim reformism, these movements were the national awakening movement of the representatives and intellectuals of the Jadid movement in Turkestan. It left a bright and indelible mark in the history of our homeland and our nation.

The Central Asian scholars who have studied this process with great interest stress that, in the twentieth century, the Muslims of Central Asia experienced a difficult process

politically, economically and psychologically. For example, one of the young scholars who has conducted serious research in the field of the Turkestan national awakening movement and the history of Jadidism, Mehmet Erken Qillioghli, describes this process thus: “Central Asia, and indeed the whole Islamic world, whether it wished to or not, and despite accepting the superiority of the Western world in the military, scientific and cultural spheres, had begun, in the face of the West’s growing strength and power day by day, to seek measures to save itself and to rise to a position even better than its former state. The need for industry and reforms became an ever more pressing problem, and the question of what should be done and what measures should be taken against the threats and dangers clearly coming from these became one of the most important problems occupying the minds of the intellectuals, the state and the government” (Qillioghli, 2019:1).

For this reason, this study has sought if only a little to examine the activity of the enlighteners who were the representatives of the Jadid movement in Central Asia, and the renewal processes that, as a result, took place in the life of the Muslim society of these lands. It is hoped that the result attained will be reflected in the conclusion of the dissertation.

The force that makes a nation a nation, that brings its culture and its character to the fore and makes them known to the world, and that determines its past and its future, is, without any doubt, the attention it gives to education and upbringing. It is a historical truth that the conquering campaign of Tsarist Russia against the states of Central Asia, the First World War, and the grave economic and political decline were ultimately the most important factor that prompted the enlightened, intellectual stratum of Central Asia to renewal, to free breathing, and to liberating the nation from the fetters of oppression and crisis.

In our view, we shall not be mistaken if we say that the participants and leaders of the renewal process pursued two principal aims in this work. These are:

preserving our religious and national values and our culture in an unchanging form;
examining the advanced scientific and technological achievements attained by the Western world and, passing the Islamic world and the national mentality if the expression be permitted through a distinctive filter of their own, making use of them in the interest of society and the homeland.

Although this renewal process in Central Asia had occurred a little earlier in the Ottoman Turkish Empire, one of the strong Islamic states of the time, the demand and need for renewal and reform subsequently began to intensify in almost all the lands under the hand of Tsarist Russia, and gave rise, through the local actions of the enlightening Jadids, to its emergence.

Without doubt, when we speak of the renewal and reformist movement in the Muslim societies of Central Asia, what first comes before our eyes is the activity of a group of Jadids. According to the project they worked out, the first and most important aim was to protect the Muslims of the region, who had been left helpless before Tsarist Russia and the Western world, and, in the subsequent stages, to re-educate them, to raise them to the level of the most advanced, enlightened and broad-minded persons of the age, and to preserve and develop the homeland by their hands.

In this article, the hitherto unexamined aspects and historical nuances of the factors and historical conditions that gave rise to the beginning of the renewal processes in the Muslim society of twentieth-century Central Asia that is, the aspects not disclosed in history are examined from their objective-historical sides, making use of historical perspectives and hypotheses.

First of all, it must be said that the Jadids and the other representatives of the renewal process in the Muslim society were, unlike the local religious figures who had for various reasons fallen behind modern progress, national representatives of an advanced spirit who thought in a new way and had attained a certain level both in religious and in secular learning. The supporters of renewal entirely abandoned the old and now ineffective methods of struggle and advanced the idea of contending on the basis of enlightenment and education, reformism and democratic principles. (It should be noted that the aim here is not that the representatives of the renewal movement absolutely rejected organised, armed struggle and open methods of struggle in the fight for independence, but that, given the spirit of the age and the existing conditions, they considered enlightenment the priority.)

Although the renewal movement was unable to liberate our homeland entirely, we shall not be far from the truth if we say that, with its short life, it left a deep mark on society and became one of the grounds that served the future independence. Bitter though it is, the truth must be told: almost all of them were unjustly condemned in the

Soviet period as a bourgeois current, a merchant bourgeoisie, enemies of the people and of progress, and nearly all were physically destroyed in the years of repression. For a long time, historical facts and truths were approached in an entirely mistaken way and interpreted incorrectly. It must be specially affirmed that only after the years of independence did we gain the opportunity to produce truthful and scholarly articles about this movement and to acquaint ourselves with the sources. For this reason, in the Soviet period it was not possible to write a new kind of article on this subject or to reveal the whole truth. It would not be wrong to say that the making of historical discoveries is reflected in certain articles produced from the period of independence onward. In the present article, too, the matter is approached on the basis of an entirely new approach, and an effort has been made to study the whole truth that is, whatever was written in history as it is.

In this article, on the basis of information studied in the light of historical facts, the pressure of Tsarist Russia upon Central Asia is examined, and the facts are illuminated of how, as a result of the conquering campaigns carried out by them, the population of the country was kept under constant control and, by gradually changing the consciousness of society and making it forget its history and its identity, was reduced to the state of *mankurts*.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Tsarist Russian Empire had seized the lands of Turkestan from Aq Masjid to the Kyzylkum desert and had formed a colonial region subject to Russia, named the Turkestan oblast (*Turkistan viloyati*).

Among the factors that gave rise to the renewal processes in society, the following historical facts may be cited:

- political subjugation, and the stifling in the cradle, so to speak of any aspiration to national independence and renewal;

- the restriction and humiliation of religious and national values;

- backwardness in secular science and innovation, the failure of the religious madrasas to meet the demands of the age, and the underdevelopment of such spheres as the press, literature and the arts;

- the gradual estrangement from national values, the imitation of the Russians and the striving to live as they did, and the ever-increasing spread of negative moral vices.

Although, in the time of Empress Catherine II (1762–1796), certain measures regarded at first sight as positive were carried out such as the translation of the Holy Qur'an into

the Turkic and Russian languages, the construction of congregational mosques in some large cities, and the organisation of meetings and conversations between the religious ulama and the senior officials of the Tsarist regime it is nonetheless necessary to dwell separately, in the course of the article, on the disdain, and at times the humiliation, with which the officials appointed by the empire to govern the Central Asian region treated religious and national values.

One of the principal factors that stirred the participants of the renewal process into action was, together with political subjugation, the policy of destroying religious and national values. The Tsarist Russian government, on the one hand, tried to present itself as in the Middle Ages as the religious and cultural patron of the peoples subject to it, while on the other hand it sought, by this very means, to destroy in people's consciousness, as soon as they arose, the religious-national reactions that might emerge within society (Hann & Pelkmans, 2009).

From the 1800s onward, after the states of Central Asia became politically and economically subject to Tsarist Russia, measures began to be taken with the aim of gradually distancing the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Tajiks and certain Muslim peoples of the Caucasus from Islam and from national values such as the destruction of mosques and madrasas, the restriction of the role of the imams in society, and the permitting only of religious education.

In order to alienate from their religion and nation, and to Christianise, the children of the local nobility who had been admitted to private Russian schools and to the higher educational institutions located in the large cities of the empire, special mentors and clergymen worked permanently in these places, striving as much as they could to fulfil the task set before them a task they even considered honourable for themselves.

Special mention must be made of K. P. von Kaufman (d. 1881), the first Governor-General of the Turkestan oblast, in turning the societies of Central Asia into pawns on a chessboard in the religious-spiritual, political and economic sense. His foremost aim in life was to subject the local population of the conquered Turkestan khanates to Russian assimilation. Kaufman and other officials who thought like him laboured so zealously to realise this idea that, in 1906, they seized upon the assassination of Tsar Nicholas, carried out by a group of nihilists, as a windfall, and compelled the peoples of Central Asia to adopt the Cyrillic alphabet in a forcible manner.

Although a transition to the Latin alphabet was made for a time in the 1930s, from 1940 onward the peoples of the region were entirely transferred to the Cyrillic alphabet. It must also be specially stressed that, in the period of Tsarist Russia and the subsequent Soviets, the names of populated places, cities and villages were changed into Russian, and the names of the local population were adapted to Russian and mispronounced in a word, a process of assimilation was carried out on a wide scale.

On the basis of the information given above, Tsarist Russia, not content with subjecting Central Asia merely in the political and economic sense, made the uprooting of local customs, traditions and values one of its strategic aims as well.

The Soviets, the heirs of the Tsarist Russian order, found a very convenient environment in Central Asia for protecting their interests and pursuing their policies.

At the beginning of the past century, the representatives and intellectuals of the societies of Central Asia, their advanced-thinking members, not only endured the pressure of the Tsarist government in all spheres of political and socio-economic life, but also sought ways out in order to leave a free and prosperous homeland for the oppressed people and, most importantly, for the youth. The grave living conditions and the psychological state prevailing in society such that a prominent person could not accept or grow accustomed to them were brought to a point where their giving rise to a renewal process became a simple and natural matter.

The first representatives of this process were the leaders of the Jadid movement that emerged in Turkestan at the beginning of the twentieth century Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkhanov, Abdulla Avloniy, Ubaydulla Xo'jaev, Sadriddin Ayniy, Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, Toshpo'lat Norbo'tabekov, Abdurauf Fitrat and others. According to a widespread view, the first actions of the Jadids were a narrowly directed cultural-educational movement whose main aim consisted of reforming the local schools and introducing certain European elements into the educational system. One may, in a certain sense, agree with this view, for in the first years of Jadidism and of the renewal movement in general its ideological doctrine was not yet truly connected with the foundations of the struggle for national liberation. Because the representatives of this group of the Jadid movement deeply understood that daily life was growing harder by the day, that the people were being crushed under the oppression of both the despotic regime and the hypocritical policy of the local rulers, and that the country

had fallen behind in modern technical and cultural development, they tried to work out methods of ideological struggle as quickly as possible and to put them into practice (Agzamkhodjaev, 2006:33; Kurat, n.d.).

For the Jadids and those who followed them, this ghazal of one of our great poets, Fitrat, could serve as the most concise depiction of their grief and sorrow: “My sorrows are so many that, were I to load them onto a camel, the infidels cast into prison would be set free.”

Another of the difficulties facing the participants of this process was the local ulama, who were firm opponents of renewal and reform. They regarded any innovation as bid‘a, a path leading society to ruin, and were opposed tooth and nail to the general activity of the Jadids, to their reforms, their schools and their press.

For this reason, the participants of the renewal process called, in the first place, for renewing education, worldview and religious consciousness; for reforming, through a new path of ijtiḥad, the religious rules and ideas that had frozen into a single mould; for freedom of conscience and the abandonment of religious superstitions and needless, costly ceremonies; and, beginning above all with the educational system, for the complete renewal of society.

CONCLUSION

We are living witnesses to how closely the scholarly facts cited above are bound up with the present day, and to how far the ideas advanced at that time accord with the demands of today. Yet it is clear that, for this idea to be realised, almost a hundred years had to pass in history. As a result of the fundamental reforms being carried out in our country today, the re-awakening of our hundred-year history and the fact that it is supported not within the framework of a single country but by the mature leaders of the states of Central Asia is the historical truth of our present day. These processes that took place in history will be illuminated in still greater detail in our subsequent articles.

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