

The Reformist Movement in Turkestan In The 20th Century: A Bibliographic Analysis

Islamov Sharifjon

Al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, Uzbekistan

Received: 20 Feb 2026 | Received Revised Version: 08 Mar 2026 | Accepted: 29 Mar 2026 | Published: 24 Apr 2026

Volume 08 Issue 04 2026 | Crossref DOI: 10.37547/tajssei/Volume08Issue04-10

Abstract

The article presents an expanded bibliographic analysis of studies devoted to the reformist movement in Turkestan at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It examines the scholarly works of both domestic and foreign researchers, their methodological approaches, ideological influences, and the main problems in interpreting this historical phenomenon.

The author critically evaluates the established practice of dividing reformers into “Jadids” and “Qadimists,” pointing out its conditional and one-sided nature. The need for a comprehensive study of the reformist movement is emphasized, taking into account its religious, social, and political aspects.

Based on the analysis of sources, the article proposes directions for further improvement of research in this field.

Keywords: Reformist movement, Jadidism, Qadimism, History of Turkestan, Bibliographic analysis, Islamic reformism, Scholarly approaches, Ideological influence, Religious arguments, Source studies.

© 2026 Islamov Sharifjon. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). The authors retain copyright and allow others to share, adapt, or redistribute the work with proper attribution.

Cite This Article: Islamov Sharifjon. (2026). The Reformist Movement in Turkestan In The 20th Century: A Bibliographic Analysis. The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations, 8(04), 66–72. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume08Issue04-10>

1. Introduction

A number of studies in local and Western languages have been published on the activities and publications of representatives of the reformist movement that became active in Turkestan at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In this chapter, an analysis of these publications is presented. As a result, special attention is paid to the authors and their methodological approaches and styles, the ideology of their works, and the influence of this scholarly environment on researchers. Indeed, such an analysis helps to substantiate the aims and objectives set in this research

and to highlight existing problems in the study of the reformist movement.

However, it should be taken into account that the number of published articles is extremely large. The list of these articles alone would constitute several volumes of books. Therefore, we limit ourselves to presenting only the most representative ones. First, the reviewed literature is divided into the following two groups:

Literature published in Uzbekistan.

Works of foreign scholars.

Among the publications included in the first group on

Central Asian reformers, the works of the reformers themselves occupy a special place. Studies on their works and activities (especially in the fields of education and theatre) had already become a separate subject of historical and literary research as early as the 1920s. In most cases, these works, written by Jadids (Fitrat, Avloni and others), emerged under the influence of reformist movements in the Russian Empire (I. Gasprinsky, Tatar Jadids) or in the Ottoman Empire (Jamal al-Din Afghani, Muhammad Abduh), and can be regarded as initial attempts to comprehend their own movement. However, attempts to reinterpret their own history as a movement were, in fact, carried out in accordance with literary style and under the influence of the dominant ideological frameworks of that period. Moreover, these works lacked scientific analysis (in the academic sense of the term). Another important shortcoming of these works, or rather of the evaluations and approaches within them, is that “Jadidism” is described as the reformist movement.

In this context, the “Jadids” are presented as the only reformers. At the same time, other scholars who supported reforms within the framework of local Islamic traditions were portrayed as conservatives.

In general, the publications of that period can be considered a relatively reliable source of information on the history of new forms of education, cultural projects (such as theatre, cinema, etc.), and the emergence of new directions and genres in literature introduced by the Jadids.

Later, in the 1930s, after the Jadids themselves were repressed, the topic of “reformers” essentially became a prohibited subject for many years.

In the mid-1950s and early 1960s, after the period of I. Stalin (1879–1953), the names of the Jadids led to a revival of the topic of “reformers.”

At that time, the repressed and later rehabilitated Jadids (more precisely, those who survived) themselves initiated such studies. A. Lazizzoda’s work “The History of the Awakening of Turkestan” is a good example of this. However, there were also many contradictions in this revival of research on the reformist movement. The most significant of them was that the Jadids were now proclaimed as the “first heroes of socialist construction” and “progressive figures.” In other words, their descriptions employed other ideological terms common at that time.

During this period of the formation and development of

research on the reformist movement, instead of a deeper study of the works and ideas published by reformers at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, a division into “Jadids” and “Qadimists” began. This became characteristic of that time. In this framework, “Jadids” were classified as progressives, while “Qadimists” were labeled as ignorant and backward conservatives, and this division became firmly established. Researchers themselves became prisoners of outdated dogmas. This was because the study of Qadimist works was considered inappropriate, and conclusions about their “backwardness” and “fanaticism” were drawn without sufficient basis, relying on approaches imposed earlier by left-wing reformers such as Fitrat.

Later (in the late 1970s), historians of literature and genres began to engage in the study of Jadid heritage. Historians studying the colonial period also joined them. They often repeated the same methodological mistakes, dividing reformers into two opposing camps. At the same time, without attempting to understand the views of theologians classified as “Qadimists,” they attributed the “banner of progress” exclusively to the Jadids.

During the period of independence, researchers in Uzbekistan were tasked with ideologically re-examining the history of reformers, especially their periodicals and political activities. The works of the most prominent Jadids were published within the framework of the national project “Heroes of Independence.” In this series, selected works of writers active at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were published in genres such as history, biography, memoir, essay, documentary literature, and fiction. The works of Mahmudhoja Behbudiy, Abdulla Avloni, Abdurauf Fitrat, Ishaqkhan Ibrat, Munavvar qori Abdurashidkhanov, Hoji Muin and others are among them. These collections were published in both Cyrillic and Latin scripts in a popular format for readers and researchers. They include samples of literary, dramatic and journalistic works, travel memoirs, articles, national poems and satirical writings, which provide a broad understanding for young researchers. However, since these materials were mainly prepared for publication by literary scholars, certain shortcomings related to textual studies and Islamic studies are present. For example, cases of replacing original words with modern Uzbek equivalents or omitting parts of texts can be observed.

Since the selected works published under the title “Heroes of Independence” are intended for a wide

audience, strict transcription requirements and detailed analysis of religious arguments were not given particular attention. Nevertheless, these publications play an important role in introducing the literary heritage.

It should be noted that another shortcoming of these publications is reflected in their interpretations. In evaluating the activities of the left wing of reformers (i.e., the “Jadids”), they continued to artificially divide the reformist movement into “progressives” and “conservatives.” Furthermore, modern political-ideological approaches have overlooked and failed to explain the position of the Jadids and even the changes in their political views. This is particularly noticeable in the prefaces of the publications. For example, why did some of them willingly cooperate with the Bolshevik regime and even hold positions in the new government institutions? Why did they adopt the Bolshevik idea of nation-building? Or why, for example, did Fitrat, according to his own admission, abandon religion and fully accept Bolshevik ideology?

The authors of this series did not wish to pay attention to such “specific elements,” since, in essence, it can be assumed that they might undermine the idea and the series of the “Heroes of Independence” project. In any case, the “artistic approach” to serious historical works once again demonstrated its insufficiency and shortcomings from the point of view of a scientific approach.

Somewhat earlier, works on the political and social activities of the Jadids had been published by certain historians. For example, these include the studies of Professor D. Alimova, in which the main focus is placed on the “idea of tariqat-supporters” as exemplified by new reforms and changes that took place in society at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In general, the researcher’s works can be regarded as a step forward. However, from the perspective of professional historical training, the religious arguments of the reformers were given little attention in these studies.

Professor S. Agzamkhodjaev devoted a number of his works to the study of political activities in Turkestan at the end of the colonial period and the beginning of the Soviet era. He extensively used journals in which reformers’ articles were published at that time, and reconstructed the history of organizations such as “Shuroi Ulamo” and “Shuroi Islam,” the names of their leaders, their political platforms and characteristics, and their attitudes toward the role of Islam in society.

Later, a number of Professor S. Agzamkhodjaev’s students continued his research. In particular, S. Ulugbekova defended a dissertation on the topic “The role of the journal ‘Al-Isloh’ in the socio-political and religious-educational life of Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century.” Based on this dissertation, a book entitled “The journal ‘Al-Isloh’ – a historical source for the study of the reformist movement in Turkestan (1915–1918)” was published. In it, issues such as the content of reformist ideas in Turkestan, socio-political processes, and the reflection of Islamic enlightenment in the journal “Al-Isloh” were comprehensively studied by classifying them into the works of the journal’s editors, articles reflecting reformist ideas, reforms in the education system, socio-political content, and articles on Islamic history and teachings, as well as on Babism and Baha’ism. The involvement of this publication in research in this field is useful, as it provides an opportunity for a comprehensive acquaintance with the relatively little-studied journal “Al-Isloh.” However, since it does not directly relate to the objectives of this publication, the analysis of religious arguments in the authors’ heritage was also not addressed.

The remaining publications aimed at publishing the works of reformers by literary scholars and historians are presented in the bibliography section. Since most of them are intended to be published in a popular scientific format, issues such as the religious arguments presented, their usage, and their relation to legal (fiqh) schools are not specifically addressed.

Uzbek researchers, relying on controversial labels that emerged from internal debates among reformers, hastily and without serious justification divided the reformers themselves into “classes” based on their mutual criticisms.

The form and content of such criticism, which clearly reflect a journalistic character, cannot be interpreted hastily from the perspective of present-day realities without deeply studying and analyzing the causes of disputes between them or the methods of their religious argumentation. Moreover, when there are more similarities than fundamental differences between disputing parties, the dominant approach that equates “Jadidism” with progress and “Qadimism” with “conservatism” loses its meaning.

Uzbek scholar B. Bobojonov was among the first to begin publishing, with greater scholarly rigor, sources related to the religious, political, and social evaluation of

the turbulent events of the early 20th century. In this regard, the critical edition of the work “Mizan az-zamon” by Ishaqkhan tora ibn Junaydulloh Khoja Ibrat, as well as the facsimile edition of articles from the journal “Haqiqat” prepared jointly with Japanese scholar H. Kamatsu, became exemplary publications. From the perspective of our research objectives, it is important that both local and foreign researchers, for the first time, paid attention to the analysis of the religious arguments presented by Ibrat, such as well-known hadiths about the necessity of acquiring knowledge or mastering technical skills. However, neither in these publications nor in subsequent ones was the idea of broadly analyzing the published and manuscript works of reformers from the perspective of a deeper study of religious arguments further developed.

We also have other observations regarding these publications. In particular, there are certain inaccuracies in their introductions. The life dates of some individuals are not precisely indicated, and the authors of certain articles or persons associated with their writing are not clearly identified. In particular, we consider the direct comparison of the idea of “Mu‘tazilism” with “Jadidism” to be a hasty conclusion.

When speaking about the second group of works, it is appropriate to begin with the issue of the comprehensive study of the reformist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Muslim countries. As leaders of this movement, the activities of Jamal al-Din Afghani (1839–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), and other reformers have been regularly studied in various academic and popular formats as “leaders of reform”. The important aspect of these studies is that they serve as foundational sources for further research in political, economic, military, religious, and other fields. In these works, along with explaining and interpreting the content of reformist ideas, especially in publications devoted to the complete activity of reformers, full texts of correspondence, articles, fatwas, debates, and other informative materials related to them are presented. Since the purpose of such publications and studies is to publish historical materials in a scholarly-popular format, special attention has not been paid to archival references or storage locations of materials, which necessitates re-examination in subsequent research.

However, the shortcoming of such studies lies in the fact that the scholars who conducted them limited the reform movement in the Muslim world only to the former Ottoman Empire and did not pay sufficient attention to

reform movements among Muslims in other imperial colonies (such as those of Great Britain, Russia, and France). In fact, there were constant connections among these reformers, and this influence was particularly strengthened through published and often translated literature.

In the study of the reformist movement, the following works of Eastern and Western researchers can be highlighted. It should be noted that researchers must have a solid theoretical foundation to assess the connection of the reformist movement with religion. As the German Islamic scholar Rudolf Peters emphasized, studies on the opposition between “taqlid” and “ijtihad” provided specialists with important “keys” to understanding the emergence of the reformist movement in the Islamic world. However, not all scholars, especially Western researchers studying Islam in Central Asia, made use of these “keys.” In other words, Western Islamic studies on the colonial and especially the Soviet period were not free from the influence of ideology (more precisely, “Sovietology”) that emerged from the general confrontation of two ideological systems. In this context, Western scholars studying Islam during the colonial period assumed that reformers were the most active “class” opposing the colonial regime and therefore paid special attention to them.

In the works of analysts of the 1970s–1980s, we also observe that resistance to the Soviet regime by Islamic leaders was interpreted in a similar manner.

As for direct studies of the reformist movement, Professor Edward Lazzarini of Indiana University (Bloomington, USA) was among the first to initiate such research. However, his approach was also framed within the dichotomy of “correct” and “incorrect” Islam, that is, in the form of a “Jadid reformism.” Later, Western researchers began to doubt the appropriateness of such a binary approach to the problem.

The French researcher Stéphane Dudoignon was among the first to bring this issue into discussion. He wrote: “It is necessary to study the ‘Qadimists’ and try to understand who they are. It is extremely important to understand not only their political motivation but also their religious motivation”. It should be noted that this issue remains relevant today.

American researcher Professor Adeb Khalid made a significant contribution to the study of the social and political doctrines of reformers, primarily the Jadids. The

scholar made extensive use not only of archival documents but also of reformist publications, including the journal “Al-Isloh”. He also emphasized the importance of analyzing the religious arguments of reformers; however, without proposing a concrete method, he clearly demonstrated in all his works that his primary aim was to study Islamic reform in Central Asia from political, cultural-logical, and social perspectives.

Japanese Professor Hisao Komatsu conducted interesting research on the ideology of Central Asian reformers and defended a dissertation on the works of Abdurauf Fitrat as early as the 1980s. Later, he repeatedly raised the idea of the “political sovereignty of Muslims.” Some reformers in the Russian Empire attempted to substantiate this idea.

Dr. Paolo Sartori, a researcher at the Institute of Iranian Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, was among the first to draw attention to the relationship between the reformist movement and religion. The researcher highlighted certain aspects of reformers’ criticism of widespread “customary practices” among ordinary Muslims, such as visiting the tombs of “saints,” adherence to “Sufism,” and similar practices. He also demonstrated that individual *ijtihad* had deep roots among religious scholars in Central Asia and that the ideas and ideology of reformism had matured earlier and later bore fruit.

Thus, foreign researchers also employ various approaches and methods in studying the reformist movement in Central Asia. However, although in recent years some foreign scholars have begun to place greater emphasis on the religious arguments of Muslim reformers, it is still too early to speak of a systematic study of this issue.

Most importantly, in recent years the question has been raised that there is no clear scientific basis for opposing different groups of reformers to one another. This is because their arguments are often so similar that it does not allow one group to be labeled as “progressive” and another as “conservative.” The views of B. Bobojonov and P. Sartori are close to the truth. According to them, a thorough analysis of the religious-legal arguments of the authors of the journal “Al-Isloh” compels us to abandon the established dichotomy between “reformer-Jadids” and “Qadimists” (“traditionalists”). This binary opposition, as well as the customary division of religious reformers of the imperial period into groups, does not reflect the clear similarity of their religious-legal

arguments.

Although the authors were among the first to draw attention to this issue, the content of the idea presented has not yet been widely explored. This is precisely where the relevance of the problem lies.

References

1. Abdulla Avloniy. *Tanlangan asarlar / Nashrga tayyorlovchi*. B. Qosimov. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2006. – 270 b.
2. Abdurauf Fitrat. *Arslon*. – Samarqand: O‘zbekiston davlat nashriyoti, 1926. – 119 b.
3. Abdurauf Fitrat. *Bayonoti Hind*. – Istanbul, 1911. – 128 b.
4. Abdurauf Fitrat. *Tanlangan asarlar / Nashrga tayyorlovchi*. H. Boltaboyev. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2003. – 254 b.
5. Agzamxodjayev S. *Turkiston Muxtoriyati. Milliy-demokratik davlatchilik qurish tajribasi*. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2000. – 168 b.
6. Allen J. Frank. *Muslim Cultural Decline in Imperial Russia: A Manufactured Crisis // Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. 2016. Vol. 59. No. 1–2. Pp. 166–192.
7. Allworth, E. *Central Asia: A Century of Russian rule*. – New York – London: Columbia University Press, 1967. – 552 p.
8. Allworth, E. *The modern Uzbeks: from the fourteenth century to the present: a cultural history*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1990. – 410 p.
9. A’zamxo’jayev S. Ulugbekova Z. “Al-Isloh” jurnali – Turkiston islhotchilik harakatining o‘rganish bo‘yicha tarixiy manba (1915–1918-yillar). – Toshkent: O‘zbekiston xalqaro islom akademiyasi, 2021. – 158 b.
10. De Weese, D. *It Was a Dark and Stagnant Night (‘til the Jadids Brought the Light): Clichés, Biases, and False Dichotomies in the Intellectual History of Central Asia // Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. 2016. Vol. 59. No. 1–2. Pp. 37–92
11. Dudoignon S. A., Is’haqov D., Möhämätšchin R. (Eds.) // *L’islam de Russie: Conscience communautaire et autonomie politique chez les Tatars de la Volga et de l’Oural, depuis le XVIIIe siècle*. Paris, 1997. Pp. 207–225.
12. Ernazarov T., Akbarov A. *Istoriya pechati Turkestana (1870–1925 gg.)*. Uchebnoye posobiye. – Tashkent: O‘qituvchi, 1976. – 288 s.

13. Eski maktab – yangi maktab (Muharrir va noshir: Xoji Muin). – Samarqand, 1912. – 48 b.
14. Fitrat A. Yopishmagan gajaklar // Abdurauf Fitrat. Tanlangan asarlar, T.3. / Tuzuvchi. H. Boltaboyev. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2003. – B. 233.
15. Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziyning tarjimai holi // Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziy arxivining katalogi. – T.1. – Toshkent: Fan, 1990. – 455 b.
16. Hoji Muin. Tanlangan asarlar / Nashrga tayyorlovchi. N. Nomozova. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat. – 2005. – 175b.
17. Is’hoqxon to‘ra Ibrat. Tanlangan asarlar / Nashrga tayyorlovchilar: U.Dolimov, N. Jabborov. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2005. – 200 b.
18. Isxak-xan tura ibn Djunaydallax Xvadjja [’Ibrat]. Mizan az-zaman.
19. Khalid, Adeeb. Muslim Printers in Tsarist Central Asia: a Research Note, “Central Asian Survey”, 11/3. 1992, pp. 113–118;
20. Khalid, Adeeb. The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998.
21. Khalid, Adeeb. Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR. Cornell University Press, 2015.
22. Khalid, Adeeb. Nation into History: The Origins of National Historiography in Central Asia / Stéphane A. Dudoignon (Ed.) // Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century. Berlin, 2004. Pp. 127–45.
23. Ko’knori (Muharrir va noshir: Xoji Muin). – Samarqand, 1912. – 12 b.
24. Komatsu H. Dār al-Islām under Russian Rule As Understood by Turkestani Muslim Intellectuals // Empire, Islam, and Politics In Central Eurasia / U. Tomohiko (ed.). – Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University. 2007. P. 3–21.
25. Komatsu Hisao. The Evolution of Group Identity among Bukharan Intellectuals in 1911–1928 // Memoirs of the Pesearch Department of the Toyo Bunko. – 1989. – № 47. – P. 118.
26. Lazzerini, E. From Bakhchisarai to Bukhara in 1893: Ismail Bey Gasprinskii’s Journey to Central Asia. Central Asian Survey Volume 3, Issue 4, January 1984.
27. Lazzerini, E. Ismail Bey Gasprinskii and Muslim Modernism in Russia, 1878–1914, PhD diss., University of Washington, 1973.
28. Lazzerini, E. Suppressed histories of the Jadids in Turkestan and Bukhara // Turkestan and historians. – Köln, 1987. – 326 r.
29. Mahmudxo‘ja Behbudiy. Tanlangan asarlar / Nashrga tayyorlovchi. B. Qosimov. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2006. – 277 b.
30. Mirza–Amedova P., Rashidova D. Djadidь: kto oni? // Zvezda Vostoka. – 1990. – № 9. – S. 137–142.
31. Munavvarqori Abdurashidxonov. Tanlangan asarlar / Nashrga tayyorlovchi. S. Ahmedov. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2003. – 302 b.
32. Qosimov B. Jadidchilik. Ayrim mulohazalar // Yoshlik. – 1990. – № 7. – B. 71–78
33. Qosimov B. Karvonboshi // Yoshlik. – 1990. – № 1. – B. 62–66;
34. Qosimov S. Behbudiy va jadidchilik // O‘zbekiston adabiyoti va san’ati. – 1990, 19-yanvar.
35. Rudolph, Peters. Ijtihād and Taqlīd. In 18th and 19th Century Islam // Die Welt des Islam. 1984. Vol. 20. No. 3–4. – P. 133.
36. Sartori P. Ambigue defi nizioni. I ‘ulamā’ di Tashkent tra tradizionalismo e rivoluzione, testi di dottorato, Università di Roma “La Sapienza”, 2005, pp. 12–17;
37. Sartori P. Tashkent 1918: Giurisperiti musulmani e autorità sovietiche contro i “predicatori del bazar” // “Annali di Ca’ Foscari”. Serie orientale 37, 2006, xlv/3, pp. 113–139
38. Sartori P. Ijtihād in Bukhara: Central Asian Jadidism and Local Genealogies of Cultural Change // Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient. 2016. Vol. 59. No. 1–2. Pp. 193–236
39. Sartori P. Who Can Employ the Offerings to the Shrines? A Steppe Mullah Against the Descent Groups. // G. Bonora, N. Pianciola, and P. Sartori, (eds.), Kazakhstan: Religions and Society in the History of Central Eurasia. Turin, 2009. 211–221.
40. Turdiyev Sh. Mahmudxo‘ja Behbudiy // Fan va turmush. – 1989. – № 1. – B. 18-21
41. Xamrayev L. Istoriya revolyutsionnoy pechati Samarkanda (1900–1920 gg.) Avtoref. ... kand. ist. nauk. – Tashkent, 1970. – 26 s.
42. Алимова Д.А. Jadidchilik harakati va uning ijtimoiy–siyosiy mohiyati. Jadidlarning davlatchilikka oid qarashlari / O‘zbekiston davlatchiligi tarixi ocherklari. – Toshkent: Sharq, 2001. – B. 149-172.
43. Алимова Д.А. Mustabid tuzumning O‘zbekiston

milliy boyliklarini talash siyosati: Tarix shohidligi va saboqlari, Toshkent: Sharq, 2000. – 432 b.

44. Алимova Д.А. Бухара конца XIX – начала XX века и зарождение джадидизма // Общественные науки в Узбекистане. – 1997. – № 9–10–11. – С. 81–93.;
45. Алимova Д.А. Джадидизм в Средней Азии. Пути обновления, реформы, борьба за независимость. – Ташкент: Узбекистан, 2000. – 223 с.
46. Бабаджанов Б. Журнал «Haqīqat» как зеркало религиозного аспекта в идеологии джадидов // TIAS Central Eurasian Research Series. – Tokyo, 2007.