

**THE ROLE OF TATAR-BASHKIR ENLIGHTENERS IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL  
AND CULTURAL LIFE OF TURKESTAN (LATE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURIES)**

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**Abstract:** The restoration of an honest and truthful history of the nation, our beloved land, and the territory of our state plays a vital role in the process of national self-awareness. Therefore, studying and knowing history is essential; there is no future without history. This article discusses the socio-political and spiritual life of Turkestan in the early 20th century. It examines the conditions in Turkestan during this period, the socio-political changes taking place, and public affairs in the region. History is our future; it is impossible to face the future without knowing the past, for the future begins today, and today begins with history. Furthermore, the article explores the ideas of the enlighteners of that era, their efforts toward unification, and the implementation of policies to modernize the region. The future of the Turkestan people depended primarily on the people themselves, their spiritual strength, and the creative power of their national consciousness. During this period, significant attention was paid to increasing the spiritual and intellectual growth potential of the nation, as spirituality and enlightenment have always been the most distinctive features of the Turkestan people throughout their long history.

**Keywords:** Turkestan, Tatar-Bashkir enlighteners, Jadidism, socio-political life, culture, press, education.

### Introduction

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the region of Turkestan underwent complex historical processes. Under the colonial rule of the Russian Empire, radical changes occurred in political, economic, and cultural spheres. In this context, ideas of national awakening, enlightenment, and the Jadidist movement emerged. Tatar-Bashkir enlighteners from the Volga-Ural region played an active role in this process alongside local intellectuals. Bringing advanced pedagogical views, publishing experience, and political ideas, Tatar-Bashkir intellectuals significantly influenced the socio-cultural life of Turkestan. Their activities became a crucial factor in the formation and development of Jadidist ideas in the region.

### Main Part

The idea of Turkestan's unity was an age-old dream of the peoples living there, and today, this idea remains shared by all our nations. At the beginning of the 20th century, the territory of present-day Uzbekistan consisted of three political entities: the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan (formed after the Russian conquest as a colony), and the semi-independent but Russian-dependent Emirate of Bukhara and Khanate of Khiva. The Governor-Generalship of Turkestan was the largest in terms of size and population, comprising the Samarkand, Syrdarya, Fergana, Trans-Caspian, and Semirechye regions. The majority of its five million inhabitants were Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Turkmens, and other indigenous peoples.

In the second half of the 19th century, the development of capitalist relations in the Volga-Ural region, the intensification of Russification policies, and the crisis in the traditional religious education system prompted Tatar-Bashkir intellectuals to seek new arenas for activity. Turkestan offered favorable opportunities for trade, education, and cultural exchange. Furthermore, the traditional educational system of Turkestan's Muslim society became an important testing ground for Tatar-Bashkir Jadids to implement reforms and introduce "New Method" (*Usul-i Jadid*) schools.



One of the most significant contributions of Tatar-Bashkir enlighteners in Turkestan was related to educational reform. They were directly involved in establishing schools based on the Jadid method, which focused on phonetic literacy, secular sciences, geography, history, and mathematics. The ideas of Ismail Gasprinsky were widely spread through these enlighteners. On their initiative, local teachers were trained, and new textbooks and manuals were created. This process strongly influenced the development of local Jadids such as Mahmudkhuja Behbudiy, Munavvarqori Abdurashidkhonov, and Abdulla Avloniy.

By the early 20th century, Tatar-Bashkir enlighteners also became active in political processes, promoting constitutionalism, the rule of law, and national equality. The 1905 events in the Russian Empire further activated these views. Cooperation between Tatar-Bashkir and local Turkestani intellectuals was based on Pan-Turkic unity, cultural affinity, and progress through enlightenment. This collaboration later played a key role in creating the ideological foundation for national liberation movements in Turkestan.

The movement for unity in Turkestan was a long-standing aspiration for its diverse populations. At the beginning of the 20th century, the region was divided into three political entities: the Russian-administered Governor-Generalship of Turkestan, and the semi-independent states of the Bukhara Emirate and the Khiva Khanate. The Governor-Generalship was the largest, inhabited by over five million people, predominantly Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and other indigenous groups.

During the late 19th century, Tatar-Bashkir intellectuals began migrating to Turkestan, driven by the rise of capitalism in the Volga-Ural region and the pressure of Russian imperial policies. Turkestan provided a fertile ground for their educational and cultural reforms. These enlighteners played a pivotal role in introducing the "**Usul-i Jadid**" (New Method) schools, which modernized the traditional education system by integrating secular subjects such as mathematics, geography, and history. Based on the vision of **Ismail Gasprinsky**, these schools replaced rote memorization with phonetic literacy, profoundly influencing a new generation of local leaders like Mahmudkhuja Behbudiy and Abdulla Avloniy.

Beyond education, Tatar-Bashkir enlighteners were instrumental in fostering a modern socio-political consciousness. By the early 1900s, especially following the 1905 Russian Revolution, they began advocating for constitutionalism, civil rights, and national equality. Their expertise in printing and journalism helped establish a press that circulated progressive ideas across the region.

The collaboration between Tatar-Bashkir and local Turkestani intellectuals was built on a foundation of Pan-Turkic unity and shared cultural heritage. This partnership did not only aim for educational reform but also laid the ideological groundwork for national liberation. By bridging the gap between traditional values and modern progress, these enlighteners helped transform Turkestan's social landscape, empowering the nation to envision a future defined by intellectual and spiritual sovereignty.

## Conclusion

Jadidism, which entered Turkestan's social life as a cultural-enlightenment movement aimed at reforming the old school system, evolved into a broad social movement by the early 20th century. It united various social strata, including the young national intelligentsia, progressive elements of the Muslim clergy, merchants, teachers, students, civil servants, publishers, writers,



and journalists. Notable figures included Mahmudkhuja Behbudiy, Abdurauf Fitrat, Sadriddin Ayni, Abdulvohid Burhonov, Fayzulla Khujayev, Abdulla Qodiriy, Ubaydulla Khujayev, Munavvar Qori, Polvonniyoz Khoji Yusupov, and Tavallo. While the Tsarist regime tried to suppress these progressive groups, they succeeded in gaining public attention by uniting the people under the ideals of spiritual unity and the long-held dreams of the Turkestan people.

Jadidism initially emerged in Turkestan as a modest cultural and educational initiative aimed at reforming the outdated school system. However, by the dawn of the 20th century, it had rapidly evolved into a comprehensive and powerful social movement. This movement served as a melting pot for various social strata, successfully uniting the burgeoning national intelligentsia, progressive members of the Muslim clergy, forward-thinking merchants, and motivated students. Prominent figures such as Mahmudkhuja Behbudiy, Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Munavvar Qori became the architects of this intellectual revolution, advocating for a society that balanced traditional values with modern scientific progress.

The activities of Tatar-Bashkir enlighteners were essential in this transformation, providing the necessary pedagogical frameworks and media platforms to disseminate these reformist ideals. Despite the heavy-handed censorship and political pressure from the Tsarist Russian administration, which viewed any form of national awakening as a threat to colonial stability, the movement continued to gain momentum. The "Progressives" (Taraqqiyatparvarlar) demonstrated remarkable resilience, focusing on the ideological unification of the people and the long-held dream of a sovereign, enlightened Turkestan.

In summary, the influence of Tatar-Bashkir intellectuals on Turkestan's socio-political and cultural life was profound and multifaceted. They did not merely export a new method of teaching; they helped cultivate a spirit of national identity and intellectual independence. Their legacy lies in the successful mobilization of Turkestan's creative and spiritual potential, proving that the future of the nation depended on its ability to embrace enlightenment. This historical period remains a testament to the fact that today's progress is rooted in the brave reforms of the past, serving as a vital foundation for the national self-awareness that defines modern Uzbekistan.

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