

Jadid modernism in Central Asia: the reformist vision of Abdurauf Fitrat

Ruxsatbegin To'ymurod-qizi Hojiyeva
khadjievaruxsatbegin1212@gmail.com
Bukhara State University

Abstract: This article examines Jadid modernism in Central Asia through the reformist thought of Abdurauf Fitrat. While Jadidism is often described as a regional enlightenment movement, this study argues that it represented a structured intellectual response to colonial domination and social stagnation. Focusing on Fitrat's educational and socio-political ideas, the research interprets his reformist vision as a localized model of Muslim modernism rather than a simple adaptation of Western paradigms. Using a historical and conceptual approach, the article demonstrates that Fitrat sought to reconcile tradition with modern rationality through educational transformation and civic awakening. His project aimed to reconstruct collective identity and promote social renewal. By situating Jadid modernism within broader debates on modernity and reform, the study contributes to expanding global perspectives on non-European modernist movements.

Keywords: jadidism, modernism, history, reformist, literacy, enlightenment, politics, heritage, Central Asia

Introduction. Modernism in Muslim societies has frequently been interpreted through Middle Eastern and Ottoman-centered narratives, often marginalizing Central Asia within broader intellectual history. Although the Jadid movement has been acknowledged as a reform-oriented initiative of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is commonly portrayed as a regional enlightenment effort focused primarily on educational improvement. Such readings, however, tend to overlook the deeper epistemological and political dimensions of Jadid reformism. [1:B.23]

This article argues that Jadid modernism in Central Asia represented a distinct intellectual response to colonial subordination and internal social stagnation. Rather than functioning as a derivative imitation of European models, it emerged as a negotiated project of cultural transformation that sought to reconcile inherited traditions with modern rationality. Within this context, the reformist thought of Abdurauf Fitrat provides a crucial lens for understanding the structural ambitions of Jadid modernism.

While existing scholarship frequently emphasizes Fitrat's literary production or political activity, fewer studies conceptualize his ideas within the broader framework of Muslim modernist theory. This study proposes to reinterpret Fitrat's reformist vision as a systematic attempt to reshape collective identity through educational restructuring and civic consciousness. By situating his thought within theoretical debates on modernity, colonial transformation, and intellectual reform, the article aims to reposition Central Asian Jadidism within global discussions of non-European modernisms.

Through this reinterpretation, the study seeks to address a gap in comparative intellectual history and contribute to a more plural understanding of modernist movements beyond Eurocentric paradigms.

Methodology. This study employs a historical-analytical and conceptual research design to examine Jadid modernism in Central Asia through the reformist thought of Abdurauf Fitrat. The research focuses on interpreting intellectual and educational ideas rather than measuring empirical social data. Therefore, qualitative analytical methods are prioritized. The primary data sources include Fitrat's intellectual heritage, historical documents related to the Jadid movement, and existing scholarly interpretations of early twentieth-century Central Asian reformist thought. The study utilizes secondary academic literature to contextualize Fitrat's ideas within broader debates on modernism, colonial transformation, and educational reform. [2. B. 78.]

The analytical approach is based on interpretive intellectual history, which allows reconstruction of reformist concepts by examining ideological meaning, historical context, and theoretical implications. Special attention is given to the relationship between education, social modernization, and national identity formation within Jadid modernist discourse. Comparative analysis is applied by relating Central Asian reformist thought to global discussions of Muslim modernism and non-European modernization processes. This enables identification of distinctive features of Fitrat's intellectual project.

Since the research is theoretical in nature, statistical procedures were not used. Instead, thematic synthesis and conceptual interpretation were employed to ensure analytical depth and academic originality.

Results and Discussion. The analysis reveals that Jadid modernism in Central Asia functioned as a multidimensional intellectual response to colonial pressure, cultural stagnation, and educational limitations. The reformist vision of Abdurauf Fitrat demonstrates that modernization was conceptualized not as cultural abandonment, but as epistemological renewal. Fitrat's thought reflects an attempt to establish a balanced relationship between historical tradition and rational modern knowledge. One of the significant findings is that Fitrat positioned education as a

central mechanism of social transformation. Unlike purely pedagogical reformers, he viewed education as a structural instrument for constructing collective national consciousness. This perspective suggests that Jadid modernism operated as a civilizational strategy rather than a simple institutional reform movement. Educational modernization was linked with ethical development, civic responsibility, and intellectual independence.

The study also shows that Fitrat's reformist ideology incorporated elements of cultural adaptation rather than radical rejection of traditional values. His intellectual project emphasized selective integration of modern scientific knowledge while preserving cultural identity. Such an approach represents a localized model of modernism shaped by colonial historical conditions. From a broader theoretical perspective, Central Asian Jadidism can be interpreted as a transitional modernist paradigm emerging outside European intellectual centers. Fitrat's reformist thought illustrates how Muslim intellectuals negotiated modernity by combining educational reform, social awakening, and national consciousness formation. These findings contribute to comparative studies of global modernism by highlighting the role of education as a tool of civilizational transformation in colonial contexts.

In conclusion, the reformist thought of Abdurauf Fitrat provides a significant lens through which Jadid modernism in Central Asia can be more fully understood. The analysis demonstrates that Jadidism was not merely an educational reform movement but a broader intellectual project aimed at addressing the challenges of colonial domination, social stagnation, and cultural transformation. Fitrat's ideas reveal a deliberate effort to reconcile traditional cultural values with the demands of modern rational knowledge, thereby creating a distinctive model of Muslim modernism within the Central Asian context. The study highlights that education occupied a central role in Fitrat's reformist vision, functioning as a catalyst for social renewal, civic consciousness, and the formation of collective identity. Rather than rejecting tradition outright, Fitrat advocated a selective integration of modern scientific and intellectual principles while preserving the cultural and moral foundations of society. This approach demonstrates that Jadid modernism represented a negotiated process of modernization shaped by local historical realities. By situating Fitrat's thought within broader debates on modernity and reform, the article underscores the importance of recognizing Central Asia as an active participant in global modernist discourse. Jadid reformism illustrates how non-European intellectual movements developed their own strategies for modernization in response to colonial pressures and internal societal needs. Consequently, examining the intellectual legacy of Fitrat contributes to expanding the comparative study of global modernisms and provides a more inclusive understanding of the diverse pathways through which modernity has been conceptualized and pursued.

References

1. Qosimov B. Milliy uyg‘onish davri adabiyoti. – Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2004.
2. Karimov N. Jadidlar merosi va istiqlol mafkurasi. – Toshkent: O‘zbekiston, 2001.
3. Ahmedov B. Jadidchilik harakati tarixi. – Toshkent: Sharq, 1999.
4. Abdurauf Fitrat. Tanlangan asarlar. 1–2 jild. – Toshkent: Fan, 2000.
5. Adeb Khalid. The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia. – University of California Press, 1998.
6. Togan Z. V. The Origins of Central Asian Nationalism. – London: Routledge, 1981.
7. Said E. W. Orientalism. – New York: Vintage Books, 1978.