

THE BURHONOV BROTHERS AND THE JADID EDUCATIONAL NETWORK IN BUKHARA BEFORE 1920

Soliyeva Dिल्фуза Nosirjanovna

ORCID: 0009-0001-0365-1699

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23274300>**Abstract**

This article examines the early lives and reformist activities of Mazhariddin, Mukammiliddin, and Muhammirm Burhonov, members of a prominent scholarly family in the Emirate of Bukhara. The Burhonov case reveals Jadidism as a practical program of social transformation in which pedagogy, philanthropy, publishing, mobility, and political reform were closely interconnected.

Keywords: Emirate of Bukhara, Jadidism, Burhonov family, new-method schools, Tarbiyai Atfol, Young Bukharans, Istanbul, educational reform

Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Emirate of Bukhara was undergoing a period of profound tension. Its ruler, administrative institutions, religious courts, and scholarly establishment remained in place, yet the emirate's military defeat in 1868 and subsequent agreements with the Russian Empire had sharply limited its political autonomy. By the late nineteenth century, Bukhara formally preserved its traditional system of government while functioning under growing Russian political and economic influence. The expansion of trade, the arrival of industrial goods, the export of cotton, karakul, wool, and other raw materials, and the proximity of the Trans-Caspian Railway integrated the emirate more deeply into the imperial economy.¹ These changes created opportunities for merchants and property owners, but they did not remove the heavy burden of taxation, tenancy, debt, and local levies borne by much of the rural population.²

This changing environment also produced a new debate about knowledge and social development. Reform-minded Muslim intellectuals, later known as Jadids, criticized educational practices that required many years of study but often failed to provide literacy, numeracy, geography, history, and other skills needed in a rapidly changing world. Their program was not initially directed at abolishing religion or overturning the political order. Rather, it sought to renew Muslim society through efficient schooling, modern textbooks, teacher training, the press, charitable organization, and contact with other educational

¹ Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 188–191.

² K. Z. Khakimova, *Krestyanstvo Bukharskogo emirata v kontse XIX – nachale XX v.: sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie i dvizhenie narodnykh mass* (Tashkent: Fan, 1991), 35–67.

Multidisciplinary research and Innovation (SICMRI 2026)

centers of the Muslim world. Over time, however, official restrictions on schools and publications pushed many reformers toward demands for wider administrative and political change.

The Burhonov family offers an especially revealing case through which to study this transition. Its members came from a respected scholarly and religious milieu that produced teachers, jurists, muftis, and officials. The brothers Mazhariddin, Mukammiliddin, and Muhammirmir did not simply abandon this inheritance in favor of a foreign model. They attempted to combine religious learning and moral responsibility with modern science, systematic pedagogy, and institutional reform. Their activities in Bukhara, Istanbul, and other Ottoman cities show that Jadidism operated through family ties and transregional networks as much as through formal political organizations.

This article therefore treats the Burhonovs not as three isolated biographies but as participants in a shared educational project. It focuses on the period before and during 1920, when new-method schools, overseas education, adult literacy, and political reform became interconnected elements of their activity. The analysis also considers Misbohiddin Burhonov, a representative of the next generation, to demonstrate how the family's reformist ethos was transmitted and how political repression turned family affiliation itself into a source of danger.

The Jadid movement in Bukhara emerged from within the existing Muslim scholarly environment. Reformers continued to value Arabic, Persian, Turkic literary culture, and Islamic ethics, but they questioned teaching methods based chiefly on memorization and long, unstructured courses of study. Newspapers and journals played a major role in widening this debate. Ismail Gasprinski's *Tercüman*, in particular, introduced readers to phonetic literacy instruction, linguistic and cultural unity, secular subjects, and the idea that education could serve as the principal instrument of Muslim social renewal.³

The reformers' goals acquired an organizational form through the charitable society *Tarbiyai Atfol* (Education of Children). The society supported new-method schools, helped prepare teachers and textbooks, distributed publications, and raised money to send promising Bukharan students abroad. Istanbul became the most important destination because it offered modern Muslim schools, universities, publishing houses, civic associations, and direct exposure to constitutional politics. Thus, educational mobility linked local reform in Bukhara to a wider Ottoman and Muslim intellectual sphere.

Muhammir Burhonov, whose name is also rendered as Muammir in some sources, was born in Bukhara in 1897. He first studied in a Jadid school and then completed the initial stage of madrasa education. The new-method school introduced him to phonetic literacy, arithmetic, and geography, while the madrasa provided Arabic, Persian, religious sciences, and classical literature.⁴ This combination of two educational traditions shaped his later work and illustrates the hybrid character of Bukharan reformism.

³ N. U. Gafarov, *Kulturno-prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' jadidov v Buxarskom emirate v nachale XX veka*, dissertation abstract (Dushanbe, 1999).

⁴ D. Rashidova, 259–261; Museum of the Memory of Victims of Repression at Bukhara State University, biographical record on Muhammirmir Burhonov.

In 1912, with support from Bukharan Jadids, Muhammad was sent to the Ottoman Empire as part of Tarbiyai Atfol's program for training national specialists abroad.⁵ The Bukharan student community in Istanbul gave him opportunities both to study and to participate in organizational work. As an active member of the Ta'mimi Maarif association, he assisted students arriving from Bukhara with accommodation, adaptation, and the maintenance of educational ties.⁶

From 1914 Muhammad was active in the Young Bukharan association. Between 1914 and 1920 he lived, studied, and taught in Istanbul, Bursa, Eskisehir, and Kastamonu.⁷ Experience in several Ottoman cities acquainted him with different schools and teaching practices. He observed methods intended to organize lessons efficiently, encourage independent thought, and connect learning with everyday life. Despite the disruptions of the First World War, he continued his education and teaching.

Ottoman periodicals also shaped his political and cultural outlook. Publications such as Sirat-i Mustakim, Ta'rif-i Muslimin, and Turk Yurdu discussed the reform of Muslim societies, national identity, modern science, and constitutional government.⁸ Through this press, Muhammad and other Bukharan students compared the problems of their homeland with wider debates across the Muslim world. He consequently developed not only as a teacher but also as a young reformer concerned with Bukhara's political future.

Family memories emphasize that Muhammad and Mazhariddin worked as well as studied in the Ottoman Empire and became integrated into its social environment. Muhammad married Nazmiya Khanum in Istanbul and had two sons, Muzaffar and Mustafa.⁹ His years abroad therefore amounted to more than a temporary educational visit. At the same time, he followed reports of the 1917 events in Bukhara, the Kolesov campaign, and the exile of Jadids. He regarded the fall of the emirate in 1920 as an opportunity to build new schools and national institutions, although he remained in Turkey until the end of that year and returned to his homeland in 1921.¹⁰

⁵ B. Irzayev, "Buxoro amiri tomonidan 14 yoshida zindonga tashlangan o'smir, ilk o'zbek matematigi va Fayzulla Xo'jayevning shaxsiy kotibiga aylangan Burhonovlar sulolasi vakillari qismati," *Oyina*, 20 January 2023; "Muhammad Burhonov," *Jadid*, no. 18 (2025).

⁶ Hayitov, Badriddinov, and Rahmonov, *Buxoro Xalq Sovet Respublikasi*, 90, 112.

⁷ "Muhammad Burhonov," *Oyina*, 20 January 2023; Museum of the Memory of Victims of Repression at Bukhara State University, biographical record on Muhammad Burhonov.

⁸ Jamolova, *Buxoro amirligida jadidlar*, 80–83; Ershahin, "Buhara'da Cedidcilik," 229–233.

⁹ D. Rashidova, 260–262; Museum of the Memory of Victims of Repression at Bukhara State University, biographical record on Muhammad Burhonov.

¹⁰ Hatunoğlu, "Buhara'daki Cedidcilik," 23–30; Taşkaya, *Abdurrauf Fitrat*, 68–75; "Muhammad Burhonov," *Oyina*, 20 January 2023.

Comparison of the three brothers reveals a common objective pursued through different forms of action. Mazhariddin specialized in mathematics, higher education, and the organization of students abroad. Mukammiliddin established a new-method school and an adult evening course inside Bukhara and then carried educational principles into political organization and public administration. Muhammadir combined overseas study with teaching and strengthened the links between Bukharan Jadidism and Ottoman educational life. Their unifying conviction was that education should not be treated only as a path to individual achievement; it was a mechanism for transforming society.

Tarbiyai Atfol supplied the institutional framework for this shared project. School establishment, textbook preparation, teacher support, the circulation of publications, fundraising, and overseas study were organized as related parts of a single program.¹¹ The brothers' roles were correspondingly complementary: one opened schools in Bukhara, another helped supervise students in Istanbul, and another acquired and transmitted foreign pedagogical experience. Their contribution is best understood as a family-based and transregional network rather than as a collection of unrelated personal accomplishments.

The next generation shows both the continuity and the vulnerability of this network. Misbohiddin Burhonov was born in Bukhara on 26 December 1905 into the family of Muzainiddin Burhonov, also remembered as Muzayyin Makhdum. His father was a madrasa teacher known for his knowledge of mathematics and other exact sciences and for his sympathy toward renewal.¹² Misboh grew up in an environment shaped by Mukammiliddin's home school, Tarbiyai Atfol, and accounts of relatives studying abroad. Jadidism was therefore not an abstract political slogan for him; it was part of the family's everyday educational practice and sense of social duty.

Political conflict after 1917 had severe consequences for the family. In 1919, Muzainiddin was imprisoned in the Bukhara dungeon on suspicion of sympathy with Jadidism, together with his fourteen-year-old son Misboh. The boy was released during the same year.¹³ The imprisonment of a minor because of family association demonstrates that reformism had become more than an intellectual controversy. It directly affected the security of entire households.

11 Qosimov, "Buxoroda milliy-demokratik harakatning o'ziga xos xususiyatlari," 385–386; Jamolova, *Buxoro amirligida jadidlar*, 80–83; Validiy To'g'on, *Bugungi turk eli*, 354.

12 Mutavakkil Burhonov, "Nurli siymolar," *Ziyouz* (1991), accessed 4 October 2026, <https://ziyouz.uz/matbuot/qayta-qurish-davri-matbuoti/mutavakkil-burxonov-nurli-siymolar/>.

13 Museum of the Memory of Victims of Repression at Bukhara State University, "Misboh Burhonov," exhibition material, accessed 4 October 2026, <https://buxdu.uz/en/166-museum/8259/>.

Multidisciplinary research and Innovation (SICMRI 2026)

After his father's death in 1919, Misboh left Bukhara and continued his education in Samarkand and Tashkent.¹⁴ The families of his uncles assumed a larger role in the upbringing of the children. The death of his father thus did not sever him from the reformist milieu. When the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic was created in 1920, he joined efforts to establish new schools. Although his participation began at an unusually young age, it was consistent with the accumulated pedagogical experience of the family and with the political hardships through which he had lived.

Conclusion

The history of the family also shows that Jadidism was reproduced across generations. Misbohidin's early education, persecution, and involvement in new schooling after 1920 emerged from an established household culture of learning and public service. For this reason, the place of the Burhonov dynasty in Bukharan Jadidism cannot be measured only through the achievements of individual figures. Its historical significance lies in the creation of a family tradition, an international educational network, and an intergenerational commitment to reform. The Burhonov case therefore provides a valuable perspective on how educational initiatives could grow into a wider movement for institutional and political transformation in early twentieth-century Central Asia.

References

1. Becker, Seymour. *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia Bukhara and Khiva 1865 to 1924*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.
2. Burhonov, Mutavakkil. "Nurli siymolar." *Ziyouz*, 1991. <https://ziyouz.uz/matbuot/qayta-qurish-davri-matbuoti/mutavakkil-burxonov-nurli-siymolar/>.
3. Erşahin, Seyfettin. "Buhara'da Cedidcilik Eğitim Islahatı Tartışmaları ve Abdurrauf Fitrat XX Yüzyıl Başları." *Dinî Araştırmalar* 1, no. 3 (1999): 213–234.
4. Gafarov, N. U. *Kulturno prosvetitskaya deyatelnost jadidov v Buxarskom emirate v nachale XX veka*. Dissertation abstract. Dushanbe, 1999.
5. Hayitov, Sh. A., S. Badriddinov, and K. J. Rahmonov. *Buxoro Xalq Sovet Respublikasi iqtisodiyot ijtimoiy siyosat madaniy hayot 1920 to 1924*. Bukhara: Buxoro, 2005.
6. Hatunoğlu, Nurettin. "Buhara'daki Ceditçilik Hareketi ve Yaş Buharalılar." *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 38 (2015): 19–32.
7. Irzayev, B. *O'zbek yoshlari va xorijiy ta'lim*. Tashkent, 2025.
8. Irzayev, B. "Buxoro amiri tomonidan 14 yoshida zindonga tashlangan o'smir, ilk o'zbek matematigi va Fayzulla Xo'jayevning shaxsiy kotibiga aylangan Burhonovlar sulolasi vakillari qismati." *Oyina*, 20 January 2023.
9. Jamolova, D. *Buxoro amirligida jadidlar va qadimchilar faoliyati XIX asr oxiri XX asr boshlari*. Tashkent: Muharrir, 2020.
10. Karimova, M. X. *Arabovy iz Bukhary*. 2nd expanded ed. Dushanbe: Shoxin-S, 2024.

14 B. Irzayev, "Buxoro amiri tomonidan 14 yoshida zindonga tashlangan o'smir," *Oyina*, 20 January 2023; M. X. Karimova, *Arabovy iz Bukhary*, 2nd expanded ed. (Dushanbe: Shoxin-S, 2024), 30–32.

11. Khakimova, K. Z. Krestyanstvo Bukharskogo emirata v kontse XIX nachale XX veka sotsialno ekonomicheskoe polozhenie i dvizhenie narodnykh mass. Tashkent: Fan, 1991.
12. Museum of the Memory of Victims of Repression at Bukhara State University. Biographical records on Mazhariddin, Mukammiliddin, Muhammirmir, and Misboh Burhonov. Accessed 4 October 2026. <https://buxdu.uz/166-muzey/>.
13. "Mazhar Burhonov 1878 to 1937." Oyina, 26 January 2023.
14. "Muhammir Burhonov." Oyina, 20 January 2023.
15. "Mukammil Burhonov 1884 to 1938." Tarix.uz. Accessed 4 October 2026. <https://tarix.uz/mukammil-burhonov-1884-1938.html>.
16. "Mukammil Burhonov sulolasining yana bir vakili." Jadid, no. 18 (2025).
17. "Mukammil Burhonov." Uzpedia. Accessed 4 October 2026. https://uzpedia.uz/pedia/mukammil_burhonov.
18. Qosimov, B. "Buxoroda milliy demokratik harakatning o'ziga xos xususiyatlari." In Markaziy Osiyo XX asr boshida islohotlar anglash taraqqiyot va mustaqillik uchun kurash, 385–386. Tashkent, 2026.
19. Taşkaya, H. Abdurrauf Fitrat ve Yaş Genç Buharalılar Hareketi. Master's thesis, Istanbul University, 2014.
20. Validiy To'g'on, A. Z. Bugungi turk eli Turkiston va uning yaqin tarixi. 2nd ed. Istanbul, 1981.
21. O'zbekiston tarixi 1917 to 1991. Vol. 1. Tashkent: O'zbekiston, 2019.