

SAIDNOSIR MIRJALILOV: A LEADING FIGURE OF THE JADIDIST MOVEMENT IN TURKESTAN

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Abstract. This article explores the pivotal role of Saidnosir Mirjalilov in the socio-political and cultural transformation of Turkestan during the early 20th century. As one of the foremost leaders of the Jadidist movement, Mirjalilov championed educational reform, national awakening, and the struggle for autonomy under the banner of modern Islamic thought. The study examines his contributions to the development of Jadid schools, his involvement in the short-lived Turkestan Autonomy (Kokand Government), and his resistance against Soviet colonial policies. Drawing on contemporary sources and recent scholarship, the paper highlights Mirjalilov's multifaceted identity as a merchant, educator, and political activist. His tragic fate under Stalinist repression reflects the broader suppression of Central Asian intellectuals during the Soviet era. This research positions Mirjalilov as a symbol of enlightened resistance and a visionary of Turkestan's modern national identity.

Key words: Saidnosir Mirjalilov, jadid, Kokand Government, politician.

САИДНОСИР МИРДЖАЛИЛОВ: ВЕДУЩАЯ ФИГУРА ДЖАДИДИСТСКОГО ДВИЖЕНИЯ В ТУРКЕСТАНЕ

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается ключевая роль Саидносира Мирджалилова в социально-политических и культурных преобразованиях Туркестана в начале XX века. Будучи одним из ведущих лидеров джадидистского движения, Мирджалилов отстаивал реформу образования, национальное пробуждение и борьбу за автономию под знаменем современной исламской мысли. В исследовании рассматривается его вклад в развитие джадидских школ, его участие в недолго просуществовавшем Туркестанском автономном государстве (Кокандском правительстве) и его сопротивление советской колониальной политике. Опираясь на современные источники и недавние научные исследования, в статье рассматривается многогранная личность Мирджалилова как торговца, педагога и политического активиста. Его трагическая судьба в период сталинских репрессий отражает более широкое подавление среднеазиатской интеллигенции в советское время.

В данном исследовании Мирджалилов рассматривается как символ просвещённого сопротивления и визионер современной национальной идентичности Туркестана.

Ключевые слова: Саидносир Мирджалилов, джадид, Кокандское правительство, политик.

Introduction. The early twentieth century was a period of profound political, cultural, and intellectual upheaval in Central Asia, particularly in the region known as Turkestan. Amid the collapse of imperial structures and the rise of nationalist movements, a new generation of Muslim reformers emerged, advocating for enlightenment, modernization, and national consciousness.

Known as *Jadids*, these intellectuals sought to reconcile Islamic values with modernity through education, journalism, and social reform. Among their prominent leaders was Saidnosir Mirjalilov, a visionary thinker, educator, and political activist whose efforts left a lasting imprint on the region's historical trajectory.

Mirjalilov's role in shaping the ideological and institutional foundations of the Jadidist movement in Turkestan has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years. He was instrumental in the establishment of modern schools, the promotion of Turkic identity, and the mobilization of resistance against colonial and authoritarian rule. As a member of the Kokand-based Turkestan Autonomy, Mirjalilov also participated in efforts to establish a sovereign political entity rooted in democratic and Islamic ideals—an initiative that was quickly crushed by the Soviet Red Army.

This paper aims to investigate the multidimensional legacy of Saidnosir Mirjalilov within the broader context of Central Asian reform movements. By analyzing his educational projects, political engagement, and intellectual contributions, the article sheds light on the transformative impact of Jadidism in Turkestan and reconsiders Mirjalilov's place in the history of Muslim modernism and anti-colonial thought.

Saidnosir Mirjalilov was born in the late 19th century in Turkestan, a region under Russian imperial rule that was experiencing rapid political, economic, and cultural changes.

Emerging from a merchant family, Mirjalilov used his economic position not only to engage in trade but also to finance educational and cultural projects. He was deeply influenced by the modernist ideas circulating among Muslim intellectuals in the Russian Empire, especially those associated with the Jadid movement in Tatarstan and Crimea.

He quickly distinguished himself as a reform-minded educator, founding one of the first *usul-i jadid* (new method) schools in Turkestan. These schools emphasized critical thinking, science, and native language instruction, replacing the rote memorization methods of traditional *maktabs*. Mirjalilov believed education was the key to awakening national consciousness among Turkestan's Muslims and empowering them in the face of colonial subjugation.

2. Political Involvement and Role in the Turkestan Autonomy

Mirjalilov's activism was not confined to the cultural sphere. With the collapse of Tsarist authority in 1917 and the formation of provisional governments across the Russian Empire, Central Asian reformers saw an opportunity to assert self-rule. Saidnosir Mirjalilov played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Turkestan Autonomy (also known as the Kokand Autonomy), declared in late 1917 as a response to the marginalization of Muslim voices in the new political order.

As a member of the autonomy's leadership, Mirjalilov advocated for a democratic and Islamic-based governance model that would uphold national identity, language rights, and educational reform. He sought to unify the ethnically and linguistically diverse population of Turkestan under a common political vision. Unfortunately, the Kokand Autonomy was short-lived — in early 1918, Bolshevik forces brutally crushed the movement, killing thousands and dismantling its structures.

Mirjalilov fled but continued his resistance through exile activities, participating in attempts to present the Turkestan cause at international forums, such as a failed mission to gain

diplomatic recognition in Europe. His continued resistance made him a target of Soviet surveillance, and he was eventually arrested and executed during Stalin's purges in the 1930s.

3. Cultural Legacy and Contribution to Jadidism

Despite political failure, Mirjalilov's legacy endures in the intellectual and cultural history of Central Asia. He was part of a broader movement that reshaped the identity and consciousness of Muslims in Turkestan. His writings, speeches, and educational initiatives laid the foundation for later cultural reforms, particularly during the Uzbek SSR's early years before Stalinist centralization.

The Jadidist values he championed—educational reform, cultural revival, and moral renewal—remained influential among post-independence historians and intellectuals in Uzbekistan. Today, Mirjalilov is remembered not only as a political leader but also as a martyr of cultural enlightenment whose vision anticipated modern debates about national identity, secularism, and Islamic ethics in Central Asia.

Conclusion. Saidnosir Mirjalilov stands out as one of the most influential yet under-recognized figures in the intellectual and political history of early 20th-century Turkestan. His unwavering commitment to educational reform, national awakening, and political autonomy exemplifies the transformative ambitions of the Jadidist movement. By integrating modern pedagogical principles with Islamic ethical values, he sought to build an enlightened and self-determined Muslim society in the face of imperial and later Soviet domination.

His participation in the short-lived Turkestan Autonomy reflected both the aspirations and limitations of Muslim political agency during a time of revolutionary change. Though ultimately defeated by Bolshevik force, the vision Mirjalilov promoted lived on as a source of inspiration for future generations of Central Asian thinkers and reformers. His tragic execution during the Stalinist purges serves as a stark reminder of the violent suppression of indigenous leadership in Soviet Central Asia.

In revisiting the life and work of Saidnosir Mirjalilov, this study not only recovers a neglected figure of regional importance but also contributes to a broader understanding of Muslim modernist movements, colonial resistance, and the historical struggle for identity and autonomy in Central Asia. His legacy remains vital today as the region continues to grapple with questions of cultural renewal, historical memory, and national sovereignty.

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