

Zaynabidin Abdirashidov
'Abdurra'uf Fitrat in Istanbul

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Zaynabidin Abdirashidov

‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat in Istanbul

Quest for Freedom

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To the Blessed Memory of my Mother – Halima (1951–2020)

Contents

Preface — XI

The Beginning: New Ideas, Reform, and Other Trends — 1

Outlines of Fitrat's Early Biography — 11

Being Bukharayi but Turkestani — 16

Trip to Turkey: Escaping from Persecution? — 22

Different Political Options: *Sırat-ı Müstaqim* and *Hikmet* — 26

Fitrat and the Medrese al-Wa'izin — 32

Muslim Unity: The Inception of a New 'Salafism'? — 38

Ignorance vs Salvation: Ways to Exit Crisis — 45

Conclusion: Fitrat and Istanbul — 50

Bibliography — 53

Index — 59

Preface

The global Muslim reformist movement had identified multiple social and political issues which were of relevance also for the western part of Central Asia, when in the early 20th century the movement gained momentum in Turkestan. Intellectuals who subscribed to the overall goals of reformism in particular engaged in fields such as publishing, education and public affairs. ‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat (1886–1938), one of the most prominent Central Asian intellectuals of the 1910s to 1930s and a leading figure of modernism, for over two decades fought against, initially, what he perceived as narrow-minded conservative dogmatism and practice of the local ‘ulama and later, the intolerant dogmatism of the newly consolidating Soviet regime.

‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat’s engagement with social and civic activism and his striving for a new conceptualisation of liberty and a democratic state, which could bring in social freedom, is closely related to his political activism.

‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat received a traditional Islamic education in Bukhara. His ideological, social and political views bore Islamist overtones until he went to Istanbul in 1910. During four intensive years (1910–1914) spent in Istanbul, Fitrat formulated a clearer and well-considered Islamic perspective. These years proved to be formative for his worldview.

A famous Jadid thinker, writer, journalist and scholar, ‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat and his literary works have been the subject of numerous publications. This is also true of his works written and published during his stay in Istanbul. These writings and particularly, *Munazara* which was published in Persian in 1911, became a manifesto of Central Asian Jadidism. Many researchers testify to the essay’s significant influence on Jadidism in Turkestan¹. But recent findings have shown that once we tap into previously unused sources, there is still much more to

1 Erşahin, Seyfettin. Buhara’da Cedidcilik-Eğitim Reformu. Münazara ve Hind Seyyahının Kısası, Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı 2000; Dalimov, Uluğbek. Fıtrat ve “Münazara”. *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Yıl: 12, Sayı: 1, Nisan 2008, pp. 69–74; Erşahin, Seyfettin. Buhara’da Cedidcilik-Eğitim İslahatı Tartışmaları ve Abdurrauf Fitrat (XX. Yüzyıl Başları). *Dini Araştırmalar*, Ocak-Nisan 1999, Cilt: 1, Sayı: 3, pp. 213–255; Erşahin, Seyfettin. Fıtrat’ın Türkistan için II. Meşrutiyet Mahrecli Tecdid Teklifi Üzerine. *Bilgi*. Sayı: 47, Güz 2008, pp. 21–44; Komatsu, Hisao. Bukhara and Istanbul: A Consideration about the Background of the Munāzara. In Stephane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (eds). *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*. London, New York, and Bahrain: Kegan Paul, 2001, pp. 167–180; Vladimirova, Ninel’. Novellisticheskoe tvorchestvo Fitrata. *Zvezda Vostoka*, 2, 2011, pp. 133–138; Khudoyor, Ibrohim. Fitrat Bukhoriyning ‘Munozara’ asari strukturaviy tahlili. *Sino*, 37–38–39–40, 2011, pp. 43–85.

learn about Jadidism in Central Asia and ‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat’s multifaceted role in it.

Newly discovered articles by ‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat, which were published in the Istanbul magazine *Hikmet* from December 1910 till May 1911² – that is, even before the issue of his famous book *Munazara*³ –, seem very instructive when it comes to understanding components of his early convictions and worldview. Apparently, these publications established an ideological framework which Fitrat adhered to, at least till the October revolution of 1917. Some features of his ideas expressed in these articles recurred in Fitrat’s works up until the mid-1920s. All his works published during that period, starting from the *Munazara* (1911) and ending with *Hind Ihtilalchilari* (Indian Insurrectionists) (1923), are expanded and more detailed versions of his early articles.

This research attempts to locate the sources which influenced the political, social, and ideological stance of Fitrat, thus also putting in perspective some overall intellectual trends in Turkestan, especially in Bukhara in the early 1910s. Based on Fitrat’s early publications we aim to find out what intellectual milieu it was that shaped his worldview in the early 1910s, a worldview that could be designated as a first attempt at “freedom and sovereignty through Islam”. A thorough review of these publications also brings greater clarity to the issue of Fitrat’s ethnical identity, which sheds light on how he related to the worldwide community of Muslims and how he positioned himself towards political unity of the Muslim World.

By scrutinizing Fitrat’s intellectual legacy of 1910 – 1915, I hope to highlight some of the origins of Jadidism in Turkestan and place of Turkestani Jadidism in the context of worldwide Muslim reformism at the turn of the 20th century.

² ‘Abdurra’uf. Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan. *Hikmet*, 33, 01.12.1910, p. 6–7; Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i Bukharayai. *Hikmet*, 36, 22.12.1910, p. 1–2; Mijmar. Nala’-i jansuz-i yak Bukharayai. *Hikmet*, 42, 02.02.1911, p. 7; Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. Bukhara. Khan-i muhtaram-i navjahi. *Hikmet*, 43, 06.02.1911, p. 7; Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. ‘Ajaba Bukhara chira kharab ast. *Hikmet*, 50, 30.03.1911, p. 8; 51, 08.04.1911, p. 7–8; Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. Khadang-i zahrugin ba-itihad-i Islam. *Hikmet*, 57, 18.05.1911, p. 6–7.

³ Bukharayai, Fitrat. *Munazara-i mudarris-i bukhari ba-yak nafar-i farangi dar Hindustan dar bara-i makatib-i jadida. “Haqiqat natija-i tasadam-i afkar ast”*. İstanbul: Matbaa-i İslamiya-i Hikmet, 1327.

The Beginning: New Ideas, Reform, and Other Trends

As Edward Allworth asserted, an author's important works reflect both his worldview and his intellectual environment. It is possible to learn more about the character, ideas, and temperament of a person while studying his works.⁴ Following this logic, it is necessary to discern the early sources of Fitrat's inspiration before dwelling on whether his intellectual milieu had a formative effect on his worldview and the ideology of his works. This concerns Fitrat's Bukharan period as well as the years he spent in Istanbul.

After the European colonial expansion during the 19th century in Asia brought up to rise a Muslim revival and reform movements, those movements began to campaign for political ideas of supranational Muslim identity. Colonial domination of the West encouraged transnational Muslim solidarity and cross-border mobility of Muslim thinkers and activists. Under the reign of sultan 'Abdulhamid II (1842–1918), which lasted from 1876 to 1909, the idea of Muslim Unity or *Ittihad-i Islam* became an imperial ideology to legitimize the Ottoman Empire as a Caliphate and the Sultan-Caliph as a spiritual sovereign of all Muslims.⁵ Those new ideas, the quest for renewal, Muslim reformism and other new trends in the Muslim world were mostly spread through printed media. Muslim periodicals were circulating in Bukhara at least since the mid-1880s.⁶ Initially, the readership was very small in numbers as the Bukharan 'ulama deemed newspaper reading contrary to the shari'a.

Persian language newspapers and magazines published in India and Egypt, like *Hablumatini* and *Chehranama*, were first to have made their way to Bukhara. Muslim Turkic language periodicals from the Russian and the Ottoman empires, *Tarjuman*⁷ by Isma'il Gasprinski⁸, *Vaqt* by Fatih Karimi⁹, and *Sirat-i Müstaqim*¹⁰

4 Allworth, Edward A. *The Preoccupations of Abdalrauf Fitrat, Bukharan Nonconformist: an Analysis and List of His Writings*. Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000 (Anor 7), p. 12.

5 Yenen, Alp. Pan-Islamism (Ottoman Empire). In [encyclopedia.1914–1918-online.net/article/pan-islamism_ottoman_empire](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/pan-islamism_ottoman_empire) (last seen 19.06.2022); Özcan, Azmi. İttihād-i İslām. In islaman-siklopedisi.org.tr/ittihad-i-islam (last seen 19.06.2022).

6 Dindarov, Qasim. Bukharadan maktub. *Tarjuman*, 36, 21.10.1884, p. 2.

7 Abdirashidov, Zaynabidin. *Ismail Gaspirinskii i Turkestan v nachale XX veka: sviazi – otnosheniia – vliianie*. Tashkent: Akademnashr, 2011, pp. 110–126, 278–323.

8 Isma'il Gasprinski (1851–1914) was a Crimean Tatar intellectual, educator, publisher and politician who inspired the Jadid movement in the Russian Empire. He was one of the first Muslim intellectuals in the Russian Empire who realized the need for education and cultural reform and modernization of the Turkic and Islamic communities.

by Mehmed ‘Akif Ersoy¹¹, to name only the most prominent ones, also had some circulation among the Bukharans.

As was mentioned by Sadriddin ‘Ayni, the Bukharan youth, influenced by the Tatar intelligentsia, started to read and subscribe to Tatar periodicals¹², while the aforementioned newspapers also continued to flow into the country through various ways. Up until 1905 all the newspapers which were delivered to Bukhara were read in narrow circles only, for example among followers of the Bahai faith¹³, which came to Bukhara from neighbouring Iran. As was claimed by ‘Ayni there were only five or six local “advocates of progress” (*taraqqiyparvar*) and “reformists” (*islahatchi*) in Bukhara before 1905. The most famous of them were Boribay, Mirkhan Parsazada, Qari Burhan and Mirza Muhyiddin Mansurzada.¹⁴ Also, according to Sadriddin ‘Ayni these Bukharan intellectuals followed the news of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran (1905/06) through the media.

As is well known, at the end of the 19th century several intellectuals of Iran and Transcaucasia started to promote political reform in Iran. Among these, the most distinguished were playwright and radical critic of religion Mirza Fatali Akhundov¹⁵, esprit fort and socialist Mirza Aghakhan Kermani¹⁶, and writer ‘Abdurrahim Talibov¹⁷. Their major demands were to establish a modern system of government which would check the shah’s influence and power and to halt

9 Muhammad Fatih Karimi (1870–1937) was a chief redactor and co-publisher of *Vaqt* newspaper, traveler, and early representative of the Tatar didactical literature.

10 Adam, Volker. *Rußlandmuslime in Istanbul am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges. Die Berichterstattung osmanischer Periodika über Rußland und Zentralasien*. Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2002, pp. 36–51.

11 Mehmed ‘Akif Ersoy (1873–1936) was a Turkish poet, writer, academic, politician, and the author of the Turkish National Anthem.

12 ‘Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rikhi*. Shimada Shizuo, Sharifa Tosheva (eds.). NIHU Program Islamic Area Studies TIAS: Department of Islamic Area Studies, Center for Evolving Humanities, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, The University of Tokyo. 2010, p. 32.

13 “Bahatism” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*. iranicaonline.org/articles/bahatism-i (last seen 21.03.2022).

14 ‘Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rikhi*, p. 24–25.

15 Mirza Fatali Akhundov (1812–1878) was an Iranian Azerbaijani author, playwright, philosopher, and founder of Azerbaijani modern literary criticism who, while a bit underrated in his own day, was highly celebrated in Soviet times.

16 Mirza Aghakhan Kermani (1854–1897) was an Iranian intellectual reformer.

17 ‘Abdurrahim Talibov (1834–1911) was an Iranian Azerbaijani intellectual and social reformer.

European dominance in Iran.¹⁸ The extensive political activity of Iranian intellectuals eventually led to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. The consequences of this revolution and the revolutionary changes in Turkey in 1908, which brought the Young Turks to power, eventually had a huge impact on the development of progressive thought among the Bukharan intellectuals. At that time the *Sayahatnama-i Ibrahimbek*¹⁹, a 1895 book authored by Zaynulabidin Maraghai²⁰ which exposes negative features of Persian culture in comparison with the ‘other’ – that is, with Western culture²¹ – became especially popular in Bukhara. Maraghai’s work served as a ‘mirror’ for the Bukharans of that period, just as it had in Persia and other neighbouring countries ever since it first came out. Those in Iran who read that book were considered to be supporters of a constitutional monarchy and adherents of the reformist movement.²² In a way, Maraghai’s book continues some elements of the fictional politico-philosophical correspondence *Maktubat-i Kamaluddavla*²³ authored by Mirza Fatali Akhundov²⁴.

Naturally, these ideas had a strong influence among the Bukharan progressives, both young and old. The old generation of Bukharan progressive intellectuals primarily consisted of the earliest proponents of socio-political reform in Bukhara, such as Sadridin ‘Ayni, Hamid Kh^waja Mehri, Ahmadjan Hamdi and Mirza ‘Abdulvahid Munzim²⁵. ‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat was one of the leaders of a new generation of Bukharan Jadids. This became clear from the events of the 1917–1920, which shook the socio-political organization of the Bukharan emirate.

18 Afary, Janet. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911. Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, & the Origins of Feminism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 25.

19 ‘Ayni, Šadr al-Dīn. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rihi*, p. 39.

20 Zaynulabidin Maraghai (1837–1910) was a pioneer Iranian novelist and a social reformer. He is mostly known for the 1895 story *Travelogue of Ibrahim Beg (Sayahatnama-i Ibrahimbek)*. This work was seminal in the development of novel writing in twentieth-century Iran and played an important political role as well. The story criticises Persia’s political and social affairs of its time. It was widely read in Persia and gained the interest of revolutionaries and reformers who were to make the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.

21 Afary, Janet. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, p. 25.

22 Mujtahidi, Mahdi. *Rijal-i Azarbayjan dar ‘asr-i mashrutiyat*. Tabriz, 1327, p. 63.

23 *Azərbayjan ädəbiyyatı tarixi*, II. jild. Baku: Azərbaycan SSR Älmler Akademiyası nəşriyati, 1960, p. 536.

24 More on Akhundov and his works: Mämmädzadə, Hämid. *Mirzä Fätäli Akhundov*. Baku: Yaziji, 1982.

25 Mirza ‘Abdulvahid Munzim (1875–1934), one of the leaders of the Bukharan jadids, was a poet, social activist, and journalist. For more, see: Keith Hitchins, “Monzem, Mirzä ‘Abd-al-Wähed,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, iranicaonline.org/articles/monzem (last seen 03.03.2022)

Out of the Middle Eastern periodicals promoting Islamic reformism, the Istanbul journal *Sırat-ı Müstaqim*²⁶ attracted the widest readership among the youth of Bukhara. The first issue of the magazine, which was known for its Pan-Islamic character, came out on the 14th of August, 1908. It included materials of a religious nature and on Islamic philosophy, natural sciences, jurisprudence, literature, history, politics, and other matters, most of them related to Islamic issues. According to Hisao Komatsu, the magazine's chief editor Mehmed 'Akif invited Muslims from the Russian Empire, who migrated to the Ottoman domains after the revolution of 1905, to publish on the pages of his paper alongside prominent Ottoman intellectuals. The magazine thus provided to the Muslim émigrés, mostly Tatar and Azerbaijani journalists, a new venue for their activity.²⁷ These authors wrote on a range of issues about the life and activities of Muslims in the Russian empire. Bukharan life and events were also dealt with in some of those contributions; their authors published under names and pen names like Troiskli Ahmad Tajuddin, Nur 'Alizada Ghiyasuddin Husni, and Mukhabir-i Makhsus.²⁸ Occasionally, events were described in such minute detail that we could assume the information was sent right from Bukhara, while almost all the authors of these pieces, except for "Mukhabir-i Makhsus" ("Special Correspondent"), in fact lived in Istanbul. For instance, a journal article titled *Zavallı Bukhara* (Poor Bukhara) and authored by Troiskli Ahmad Tajuddin²⁹, describes an episode concerning a New-Method school in Bukhara and even quotes some statements by participants. This proves that those authors had informants right there in Bukhara. They did not indicate their sources, however.

26 The magazine *Sırat-ı Müstaqim* was first published by Abul 'Ula Zaynulabidin and Eshref Edib on August 14, 1908. During the period of the Second Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed 'Akif took the position of editorial writer for *Sırat-ı Müstaqim*. *Sırat-ı Müstaqim* was published weekly; it took up a variety of topics, in particular religious matters, and advocated pan-Islamic ideology. After the 183rd issue (March 8, 1912), the magazine's name was changed to *Sebilürreşâd*; see also Efe, Adem. "Sebilürreşâd" in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 36. Cilt, İstanbul, 2009, pp. 251–253; and an updated version at islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sebilurresad (last seen 21.03.2022).

27 Komatsu, Hisao. Bukhara and Istanbul: A Consideration about the Background of the Munâzâra. In Stephane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (eds). *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*. London, New York, and Bahrain: Kegan Paul, 2001, pp. 167–180, at pp. 169–170.

28 More information in: Kanlıdere, Ahmet. Türk Basımında Türkistanlı Ceditçilerin Kültürel Faaliyetleri 1910–1914. *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*. Cilt 1. 2014, pp. 167–176; Kanlıdere, Ahmet. *Sırat-ı Müstakîm Dergisinin Buhara Uyanışı Üzerindeki Etkileri (1909–1911)*. *VIII. Milletlerarası Türkoloji Kongresi. 30 Eylül – 04 Ekim 2013. Bildiri Kitabı IV*. İstanbul, 2014, pp. 552–565.

29 Troiskli, Ahmad Tajuddin. *Zavallı Bukhara*. *Sırat-ı Müstaqim*, 64, 1909, pp. 87–90.

Sirat-ı Müstaqim must have been known in Bukhara no later than 1909, since the first letter to the paper sent in from Bukhara was published on the 15th of July 1909 in issue no. 66.³⁰ The magazine gained popularity especially after the closure of the only New-Method school in the autumn of 1909 and following the violent Shi'a-Sunni conflict in January 1910: Numerous analytical articles about social and political life in Bukhara were published after these events.³¹

Possibly Fitrat also joined its readership during this period or a bit earlier. As Sadriddin 'Ayni claimed, by the end of 1909 through "reading *Sirat-ı Müstaqim* he became open minded", but did not participate in the activities around the New-Method school, which were organized by the Bukharan youth.³² It is possible to state that the ideas Fitrat took from these examples of the foreign press, and other writings by Muslim intellectuals (like contributions to the Indian/Persian paper *Hablulmatin*, and the above-mentioned *Sayahatnama-i Ibrahimbek*) determined his ideological path in the 1910s and consequently, Fitrat became enthusiastic about the ideas of pan-Islamism, Islamic reformism, and the establishment of an intellectually advanced Muslim state. Of particular relevance may have been his reading of Isma'il Gasprinski's *Darurrahāt Müsülmanlar*³³: This utopian novel is about an imaginary country where Muslims had reached intellectual and technical progress far surpassing the Western achievements of Gasprinski's day. Also, the novel depicts an ideal system of government based on the shari'a, where notably men and women enjoy equal rights.³⁴ This work of Gasprinski was recommended to young madrasa student Fitrat by a close friend.³⁵ This friend may have been 'Abdulvahid Munzim, his companion in arms who not only was the prime customer of some of Fitrat's books, but also financially supported their publication.³⁶

As a close reading of his articles published in *Hikmet* suggests, Fitrat had been fascinated by the ideas which point in directions like a strong, powerful and progressive united Muslim society – way before *Sirat-ı Müstaqim* began to

30 S. M. Bukhari. Bukharada shariat namına irtikab olan jinayet. *Sirat-ı Müstaqim*, 66, 1909, pp. 221–222.

31 Bukharadan mektub. *Sirat-ı Müstaqim*, 69, 1909, pp. 266–268; Husni, Nur 'Alizada Ghiyasuddin. Bukharaya dair. *Sirat-ı Müstaqim*, 74, 1910, p. 75; 76, 1910, pp. 228–230; Bukharadan mektub. *Sirat-ı Müstaqim*, 82, 1910, p. 74.

32 'Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rihi*, pp. 101–102.

33 Gasprinski, Isma'il. *Darurrahāt Müsülmanlar*. Baghcharay: Tarjuman neshriyati, 1906.

34 Ibid., pp. 12–14, 27.

35 Gasprinski, Isma'il. *Musalmanan-i Darurrahāt*. Mutarjimi 'Abdurra'uf Fitrat Bukharayi. Peterburg: Kitabkhana-i Ma'rifat, 1915, p. 3.

36 Fitrat, Abdurauf. *Oila yoki oilani boshqarish tartiblari*. Tashkent: Ma'naviyat, 1998, p. 9.

be read in Bukhara. Further down Fitrat's attitude to those questions will be discussed in detail (see next chapters).

Upon his return from the Hajj (1903/1904), Fitrat appears to have spent a few weeks in India.³⁷ This may have been the time when he started to read the Persian press of India, in particular *Hablulmatin*. This journal, published in Calcutta as of 1893, was a moderately pro-reform outlet advocating social and political change in Iran. From 1898 to 1906 the paper took a tangible pan-Islamist stance and was mildly critical of the economic and political situation in Persia.³⁸ Fitrat cherished this journal and wrote that "its sacred pages are close to the hearts of Persian-speaking readers". Also, when talking about editor Sayyid Jalaluddin Muayyid al-Islam Kashani (1863–1930), Fitrat underlined that for eighteen years that gentleman had been calling upon Muslims from India to Bukhara to pursue the sacred goal of uniting Islam ([...] *mudir-i muhtaram Muayyid ul-Islam [...] ba'd az mujahadat-i hajda sola, ke dar rah-i ittihad-i Islam va yagana-gi-yi muslimin ba-kar burda, az musulmanan-i Hind to Bukhara hame-ra ba-in maslak-i muqaddas savq kardand* '[...] the esteemed editor Muayyid al-Islam [...] after devoting 18 years of his life to the unity of Islam and the Muslims, had been beseeching people from India to Bukhara to build one single Muslim empire').³⁹ These enthusiastic remarks allow us to assume that Fitrat started to read the press from the early 1900s and possibly right from that time got inspired by ideas of Islamic reformism and in particular, the unification of all Muslims.

As prominent Uzbek composer Mutavakkil Burkhanov writes in his memoirs, the major driving force behind Fitrat's trip to Istanbul, which was going to change his mind and make him sympathetic to Jadidist ideas as a whole, was Mazhar Makhdum. (In 1928 Fitrat would marry Fatima, a niece of Mazhar Makhdum. Mazhar Makhdum was a mathematician and studied in India and Turkey.⁴⁰)

Timur Kocaoğlu argues that it was a fascination with pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism, very common amongst the intelligentsia of the Ottomans and the Rus-

37 Karomatillaxo'jaeva, Sevara. Qalbimga mangu muhrlangan ... Abdurauf Fitrat haqida xotiralalar. *Tafakkur*, 2, 1996, pp. 66–72, at p. 70.

38 Parvin, Nassereddin. *Hablal-Matin*. In iranicaonline.org/articles/habl-al-matin (last seen 31.05.2020).

39 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Khadang-i zahrugin ba-ittihad-i Islam. Hikmet*, 57, 18.05.1911, p. 7.

40 Burkhanov, Mutavakkil. Nurli siymalar (Fitrat va Cho'lpan haqida xotiralalar). *Fitna san'ati*, Vol. 2. Ahmadjan Melibaev, Sa'dulla Ahmad (eds.). Tashkent: Fan, 1993, pp. 116–123, at pp. 116–117.

sian Muslims, which brought Fitrat to Istanbul.⁴¹ However, we could claim that he was more a proponent of Muslim unity at that time. According to Fitrat's opinion, it was the disunity of the 'ulama that had caused Islam, which otherwise would have been coherent and unitary, to split up into Sunni, Shi'a, Wahhabiya, Zaydiya and so on and set all these factions at enmity with one another.⁴² This idea was dominant in his first publications in Istanbul as well as Bukhara.

As for Fitrat's purported pan-Turkist inclinations, we want to mind that up until 1916 he wrote and published mostly in Persian. Besides, as "the worthiest among the Bukharan students"⁴³ according to 'Ayni, he was likely to be familiar with Maraghai's above-mentioned work. Adeeb Khalid asserts that *Sayahatnama-i Ibrahimbek* was the major source of inspiration and influence for Fitrat's early works not only in terms of content, but also in terms of style.⁴⁴ This view is shared by Hisao Komatsu, who quotes a short verse in Fitrat's *Munazara* as proof of his acquaintance with the piece by Maraghai.⁴⁵ His linguistic preferences as reflected in his readings and writings alike, at least during that period, do not speak to much preoccupation with a pan-Turkist agenda.

This phase in Fitrat's life has been called his period of 'humanist free-thinking'⁴⁶. This assertion is difficult to concur with as in his early works he does not convey his thought the way free-thinkers like Mirza Fatali Akhundov, Mirza Malkumkhan, and 'Abdurrahim Talibov would.

As mentioned earlier, Fitrat had been under the strong influence of unity of Islam and Muslim reformism even before his trip to Istanbul, when magazines like *Hablulmatin* and *Sirat-ı Müstaqim* were his usual assigned readings. These ideas strongly manifested themselves in his works till 1915 and even some of his writings of the early 1920s⁴⁷ still bear this imprint.

41 Kocaoğlu, Timur. Abdurrauf Fitrat: A Central Asian Intellectual with the Changing Stages of National Identity. In *Mehmet Saray Armağanı: Türk Dünyasına Bakışlar*. İstanbul: Da Yayınları, 2003, pp. 401–406, at p. 402.

42 Fitrat. *Munazara*, pp. 88–89.

43 'Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rihi*, p. 101.

44 Khalid, Adeeb. Pan-Islamism in Practice: the Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and its Uses. In Elisabeth Özdalga (ed.) *Late Ottoman Society. The Intellectual Legacy*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, pp. 201–224, at p. 217.

45 Komatsu, Hisao. Bukhara and Istanbul..., pp. 177–178.

46 Vladimirova, Ninel'. 'Novellisticheskoe tvorchestvo Fitrata'. *Zvezda Vostoka*, 2, 2011, pp. 133–138, at p. 133.

47 Fitrat, Abdurrauf. *Chin Sevish*. Vol. 3. *Dramalar, publitsistik maqolalar*. Hamidulla Baltabaev (ed.). Tashkent: Ma'naviyat, 2003, pp. 5–41; Fitrat, Abdurrauf. *Hind Ikhtilolchilari*. Vol. 3. *Dramalar, publitsistik maqolalar*. Hamidulla Baltabaev (ed.). Tashkent: Ma'naviyat, 2003, pp. 42–91.

At that time all his books and articles which came out in both the Ottoman and Russian empires indicate Fitrat's devotion to unity of Islam and Muslim reformist ideology. From his first article, published in the journal *Hikmet* in December 1910, till the publication of his book *Rahbar-i Najat* in 1915, Fitrat continued to advance the ideals of "true Muslim values" and a strong Islamic state, which should be implemented in practice solely following the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunna of prophet Muhammad. In the introduction to *Rahbar-i Najat* Fitrat writes about his protracted search for best answers to his worries concerning the present condition of his fellow Muslims: His encounters with many people in multiple places in the end led him to the conclusion that Muslims "have no better guidance than our holy book". In his attempt to convince his readership he asserts, "When I started to read the Qur'an, its first response to my queries was '[...] Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves'⁴⁸".⁴⁹

Fitrat's most severe critique, however, was reserved for the 'ulama. Arguing against their pronouncement of the imminent Day of Judgement and that all the woes of Muslims are the result of the divine will he asked a rhetorical question:

Should we believe the 'ulama and accept our current condition as God's will or shall we rather search in the Qur'an for salvation?

Then he readily supplied the appropriate quotation from the holy book: "Whatever affliction befalls you is because of what your own hands have committed. And He pardons much. You can never escape [Him] on earth, nor do you have any protector or helper besides Allah (42:30–31)⁵⁰". Fitrat, seeking guidance only from the Qur'an, claims that after his thorough refutation of the 'ulama no one could offer a better alternative to his reasoning. He searches for ways to free people from religious obscurantism and ignorance and to help them attain progress, happiness, and peace. He concluded his piece with yet another rhetorical question:

Should we listen to our respected 'ulama to attain our goals? We shall not. We ought to find our answers only by consulting the holy Qur'an.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Qur'an 13:11. quran.com/13 (last seen 21.03.2022).

⁴⁹ Fitrat, Abdurauf. *Najat yo'li*. Vol. 5. *Ilmiy risalalar*. Hamidulla Baltabaev (ed.). Tashkent: Ma'naviyat, 2010, p. 64.

⁵⁰ Qur'an 42:30–31. quran.com/42 (last seen 21.03.2022)

⁵¹ Fitrat, Abdurauf. *Najat yo'li*, pp. 63–69.

These statements advocating a strict adherence to Qur'an and Sunna reveal Fitrat's "Salafist" mindset at that point.⁵² Yet, unlike purists of the Wahhabi kind he did not advocate a return to early Islam and to the prophet's companions' way of life. He attempted to remind both Muslim clergy and laymen that true Islam does not oppose progress and modern, "Western" science. The main guiding principles, however, in his opinion are to be found in Qur'an and the prophetic tradition, Hadith. Everything else would just lead the believers astray. It seems that Fitrat is really claiming *ijtihad*. But he does not (like all *ijthadis*) mock "stupid imitation" or whatever amounts to a rejection of *taqlid*. Fitrat factually claims *ijtihad*, but never says so explicitly. We can hardly imagine that Fitrat was ignorant of the big debate on *ijtihad* which was going on in Central Asia in the early 20th century.⁵³ In his early articles Fitrat was very attentive to the *ulama*. Fitrat, in his discussions about the future of Islam, about the future of Muslims, often turns to the *ulama*, who should be ahead of everyone and represent the true path of liberation:

Oh, those who are ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of honour and conscience of Islam! Oh, defenders of Muslim honour and good name! Our prophet had entrusted you our sacred faith telling you that "scholars are the heirs of prophets". Therefore, your task is to defend our holy religion. The prophet's words are augmented by those of Allah: "Of all of Allah's servants, only the knowledgeable [of His might] are [truly] in awe of Him."⁵⁴ Thus, (Allah) honoured us. You, the ones who possess knowledge, strengthen Islam with your wise thoughts and reflections, lead it to the path of progress, and reveal us the truth! We shall not impede you, in the name of Allah. We have sworn to protect our religion and homeland and shall stick to this path.⁵⁵

This approach was justified when the entire Muslim world was perceived as being in the grip of ignorance, and the 'ulama, as insisting that according to Islam or the *shari'a* it was not permissible to concern oneself with civic affairs or to mingle with anything non-Muslim. In his early Istanbul period (1910 – 1911) Fitrat advocated "a pure Islam", rejected sectarianism, and called for a uni-

52 Fitrat. Qur'an. *A'ina*, 16, 1915, pp. 443–445.

53 On *ijtihad* in Central Asia in the early 20th century, see: Baldauf, Ingeborg. *Jadidism in Central Asia within Reformism and Modernism in the Muslim World. Die Welt des Islams*. New Series, Vol. 41, Issue 1, 2001, pp. 72–88; Sartori, Paolo. *Ijtihād in Bukhara: Central Asian Jadidism and Local Genealogies of Cultural Change. Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 59, 2016, pp. 193–236; Yemelianova, G.M. (2002). Russia's Umma and Modernization at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century. In *Russia and Islam. Studies in Russian and East European History and Society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 69–98.

54 Qur'an 35:28. quran.com/35 (last seen 21.03.2022).

55 'Abdurra'uf. *Hasbihal*, p. 7.

fied Islamic caliphate under the leadership of the Ottoman sultan. In his early publications in *Hikmet*, Fitrat earnestly appealed to all Muslims to forget their discords and unite against the Western colonizers.

Outlines of Fitrat’s Early Biography

‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat is undoubtedly one of the most prominent and influential Central Asian intellectuals of the early twentieth century. A writer, poet and journalist, he was also a politician and a prominent figure of Turkestan Jadidism.

The details of his early biography, especially till 1909, are very sparse though. All researchers of his life claim he was born in 1886⁵⁶, in Bukhara, in the family of a petty or ‘rich’⁵⁷ or ‘prosperous’⁵⁸ merchant-moneychanger⁵⁹; his father was an Uzbek and his mother a Tajik⁶⁰. The fact that his father ‘Abdurrahim often travelled with business purposes to Iran, the Ottoman Empire and Chinese Turkestan⁶¹ attests to his ability to conduct large-scale business operations. Later he left his family in Bukhara and moved to Marghilan, and then on to Eastern Turkestan⁶², most probably to Kashgar, in 1913⁶³. For this reason, Fitrat was raised mostly without his father.

After completing traditional primary school Fitrat continued his education first in Mir-i ‘Arab⁶⁴ and then in another madrasa⁶⁵ in Bukhara. But the major part of his education he received at home from his mother.

56 In his brief autobiography, composed in 1929, Fitrat wrote, “I was born in Bukhara in 1884...” Fitrat. *Yapishmagan gajjaklar. Örtaq Baybölätovga achiq maktub. Qizil Özbekiston*, 215–216, 1929. Reprint: Fitrat. *Chin sevish. She’rlar, dramalar, maqolalar*. In Naim Karimov, Erik Karimov, Sher-ali Turdiev (eds.). Tashkent: G’afur G’ulom, 1996, pp. 242–252; Fitrat, Abdurauf. Vol. 3. *Dramalar*, pp. 228–236.

57 Khalid, Adeeb. *Pan-Islamism in Practice*, p. 216.

58 Bıçakçı, Salih. *Homeland and Nation on the Stage: A Review of Watan Concept in Abdalrauf Fitrat and Namık Kemal. Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları*, 2006, Cilt: 1, Sayı: 2, pp. 149–161, at p. 152.

59 Based on Hajji Ne’matullah Muhtaram’s anthology from the early 20th century, Begali Qasimov indicates that Fitrat’s father was a money-changer (*sarraf*). Qasimov, Begali. *Maslakdashlar. Behbudiy. Ajziy. Fitrat*. Tashkent: Sharq, 1994, p. 75; Qasimov, Begali et al. *Milliy uyg’anish davri o’zbek adabiyati*. Tashkent: Ma’naviyat, 2004, pp. 229–230.

60 Karimov, Erik. *Fitrat ijadi va hayati haqida. O’zbek tili va adabiyati*, 3, 1990, pp. 26–29, at p. 26; Erşahin, Seyfettin. *Fitrat’in Türkistan için II. Meşrutiyet Mahrecli Tecdid Teklifi Üzerine. Bilig*. Güz 2008, Sayı: 47, pp. 21–44, at p. 21; G’aibova, Shahnaza. *Abdurauf Fitratning ijtimaiy-falsafiy qarashlari*. PhD dissertation. Tashkent, 1996, p. 43.

61 Qasimov, Begali. *Maslakdashlar*, p. 71; Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*. Tashkent: Milliy kutubkhana, 2007, p. 5.

62 Allworth, Edward A. *The Preoccupations of Abdalrauf Fitrat, Bukharan Nonconformist: an Analysis and List of his Writings*. Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000 (Anor 7), p. 6.

63 Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, p. 5.

64 Karimov, Erik. *Fitrat ijodi*, p. 26; Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, pp. 5–6; Qasimov, Begali. *Maslakdashlar*, p. 71; Khalid, Adeeb. *Visions of India in Central Asian Modernism*:

According to Ne'matullah Muhtaram, Fitrat was quite famous among the Bukharan poets at the turn of the century. He wrote under the pen-name Mijmar ('Thurible'). Ne'matullah Muhtaram referred to him as Hajji Mulla 'Abdurra'uf.⁶⁶ Considering that Muhtaram wrote his work in 1903–1904, the title *hajji* suggests Fitrat's pilgrimage to Mecca at a young age. Begali Qasimov writes that Fitrat "studied in Bukhara till the age of 18 and then travelled the Orient – Turkey, India and Arabia – and Central Russia – Moscow and St. Petersburg"⁶⁷, which would suggest that he made the pilgrimage only at a slightly later point in his life, travelling alone as his adopted daughter Sevara Karomatillakhojaeva remembers.⁶⁸ While he was in India all his money was stolen and he had to work as a barber to earn his passage back home.⁶⁹

Up until 1910 Fitrat did not involve himself in Jadid affairs. Remarkably enough this includes the issue of schooling, while the other Bukharan Jadids, just like those of Russia and Turkestan, started their activity by opening a New-Method school.

In this context, let us briefly look back on the beginnings of New-Method schooling in Bukhara. The earliest information about this kind of school in Bukhara was published in 1897. In that year, a local by the name of Mulla Jorabay Pirmasti, having secured permission from Bukhara's *Qazi Kalan*, managed to open a New-Method school.⁷⁰ Sadriddin 'Ayni asserts that it was only in the early 1900s that Mulla Jorabay from Pirmast, who became acquainted with the new teaching method during his visit to Russia, opened the school in the quarter Postindozan of Bukhara. Mulla Jorabay promised that anyone would learn how to read and write in no more than 4–5 months.⁷¹ 'Ayni may have slightly

The Work of 'Abd ar-Ra'uf Fitrat. In Beate Eschment; Hans Harder (eds.) *Looking at the Coloniser: Cross-cultural Perceptions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Bengal, and Related Areas*. Würzburg: Ergon 2004, pp. 253–274, at p. 255; Borijan, Habib. Feʼrat, 'Abd-al-Ra'uf Boqāri. In iranicaonline.org/articles/fetrat-abd-al-rauf-bokari (last seen 01.11.2021).

65 Khan, Sarfraz. Abdal Rauf Fitrat. *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 24, Nos. 2/3, 1996, pp. 139–154, at p. 139.

66 Muhtaram, Hajji Ne'matullah. *Tazkiratu-sh-shuara*. Dushanbe: Donish, 1975, pp. 319–320.

67 Qasimov, Begali. *Maslakdashlar*, p. 74.

68 Karomatillaxo'jaeva, Sevara. Qalbinga mangu muhrlangan, p. 70. Hamidulla Baltabaev quoting from the work *Armughan-i Sabbaq* by 'Abdulqadir Karamatullah Sabbaq Bukhari, argues that Fitrat went to hajj together with his father: Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, p. 24. This information is also in: Khudoyor, Ibrohim. Fitrat Bukhoroiyning "Munozara" asari strukturaviy tahlili. *Sino*, 37–38–39–40, 2011, pp. 43–85, at p. 59.

69 Karomatillaxo'jaeva, Sevara. Qalbinga mangu muhrlangan, p. 70.

70 M. K. T. Bukharadan maktub. *Tarjuman*, 16, 22.04.1897, pp. 2–3.

71 'Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rikhi*, p. 37.

confused the opening year of the school as he wrote his book only more than twenty years later. Mulla Jorabay used Isma'il Gasprinski's *Kh^waja-i Sibyan* as a textbook. He translated the book into Tajik to ease its usage for the locals. He managed to enlist 13 students in his school. When Gasprinski learned about this school he promised to print and send as a gift to Bukhara 100 notebooks for penmanship and the entire 1000 copies print run of *Kh^waja-i Sibyan* in Persian.⁷² But the available sources do not mention the school of Mulla Jorabay or Gasprinski's free gift, so that for the time being this is all we can say about that earliest New-Method school in Bukhara.

The second New-Method school in Bukhara was opened in 1906⁷³ (1907⁷⁴) by the city's Tatar community and was located in the house of the Tatar merchant Nizam Sabitov. The next school was opened by the locals in 1908 and was not in any way connected to the Tatar school. Its founders Sadriddin 'Ayni⁷⁵, Hamid Kh^waja Mehri, Ahmadjan Hamdi and Mirza 'Abdulahid Munzim were not even aware of the existence of that Tatar New-Method school in town, although enrolment was extended to the locals as well. Sadriddin 'Ayni who in his historical writings describes in detail the activity of the Tatar school, Isma'il Gasprinski's visit to Bukhara in 1908⁷⁶, and all the events which followed concerning this school⁷⁷, had only slightly later learned about the school from the Tatar teacher 'Abdurrahman Sa'idi.⁷⁸

As was stated earlier Fitrat became interested in the new method of teaching and in general in Jadidism under the influence of certain people. Edward Allworth argues that he became "Behbudi's protégé after proving himself an extraordinary graduate of the Bukharan madrasa"⁷⁹. However, we need to admit that

72 Bukhara-yi sharif. *Tarjuman*, 17, 28.04.1897, p. 3.

73 A letter sent to the newspaper *Tarjuman* from Bukhara informed that there was a New-Method school of Nogays (Russian Turks) operating in the city for the last three years (uchinji sanadan beru noghaylar (rusyali turklar)ning usul-i savtiya maktablari davam etmakdadir): Bukhara maktublari. *Tarjuman*, 40, 02.10.1909, pp. 1–2.

74 'Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rihi*, p. 37.

75 Sadriddin 'Ayni (1878–1954) one of the founders of Bukharan Jadidism, writer, politician, and scholar.

76 For more detail, see Abdirashidov, Zaynabidin. İsmail Gaspralı'nın Türkistan Seyahatleri. *Türk Edebiyatı* 382, August, 2005, pp. 18–21; Abdirashidov, Zaynabidin. *Ismail Gasprinski i Turkestan v nachale XX veka: sviazi – otnoshenia – vliianie*. Tashkent: Akademnashr, 2011, pp. 219–229.

77 'Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rihi*, pp. 37–38.

78 See more on the history of the Bukharan school in Abdirashidov, Zaynabidin. *Ismail Gasprinski*, pp. 207–212.

79 Allworth, Edward. *The Modern Uzbeks. From the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History*. Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1990, p. 144.

Fitrat, however much he may have stood out against other students from his home town, outside of Bukhara was totally unknown even in 1910. While claiming that “Fitrat spoke out vigorously against the decadence of the religious establishment and its supineness in the face of tremendous problems in Central Asia”⁸⁰, Allworth focuses on the period when Fitrat had already gained some fame following the publication of his works in the Ottoman empire in 1910–1912, and translations thereof in Turkestan. Most probably Allworth based his argument on the memoirs of Sadriiddin ‘Ayni. Another claim that has repeatedly been put forward but was never substantiated with appropriate evidence is that Fitrat joined the Jadids having followed his mentor Mahmud Kh^waja Behbudī.⁸¹ ‘Ayni insisted that in 1910 ‘Abdurra’uf Fitrat was among the “enlightened” and was considered the best-prepared and worthiest among the students of Bukhara.⁸² While using these epithets ‘Ayni meant young Fitrat who advanced to this level while reading the journal *Sirat-ı Müstaqim* and preparing for the trip to Istanbul.

According to ‘Ayni it was *mudarris* ‘Abdulqadir Makhdum who suggested to Fitrat that he should read *Sirat-ı Müstaqim*.⁸³ As we briefly mentioned earlier, it is safe to assume that it was this journal alongside *Habulmatin* which took a decisive influence on Fitrat’s Weltanschauung and familiarized him with the ideals and ambitions of Muslim intellectuals of the late 19th century. *Sirat-ı Müstaqim* advocated, among others, the ideas of Muhammad ‘Abduh⁸⁴, Muhammad Farid Wajdi⁸⁵ and ‘Abdul‘aziz Shawish⁸⁶, who were highly influential in contemporary Islamic thought. Among the most emphasized topics in the magazine are questions like, why was the Islamic world regressing; how could Muslims develop; did Islam prevent progress; what could be done to unite the Muslims; was

80 Ibid., p. 144.

81 Borijan, Habib. Feṭrat, ‘Abd-al-Ra’uf Boḡārī. In iranicaonline.org/articles/fetrat-abd-al-rauf-bokari (last seen 01.11.2021).

82 ‘Aynī, Şadr al-Dīn. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rikhi*, p. 101.

83 Ibid., p. 101.

84 Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905) was an Egyptian Islamic scholar, jurist, theologian, and writer. ‘Abduh was the author of *Risalat al-Tawhid* (“The Theology of Unity”) and a commentary on the Qur’an. He briefly published the anti-colonial newspaper *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* alongside his mentor Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.

85 Muhammad Farid Wajdi (1875/78–1954), Egyptian journalist, Islamic scholar, and qur’anic commentator.

86 ‘Abdul‘aziz Shawish (1876–1929), Egyptian journalist, Islamic scholar. He followed in the footsteps of Muhammad ‘Abduh with his scientific activities. However, the conditions of the transition period in which he lived led him to political struggle rather than scientific work, and to an active life. In that he proved more similar to Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.

there a conflict between science and Islam; what were the necessary procedures and principles for the advancement of an Islamic society; how should the women's rights issue be tackled; how should the religion-state relationship be defined; could Islam and Western civilization be conciliated; was *ijtihad* necessary or not?⁸⁷ The authors who expressed their opinions around these basic problems would emphasize that the ways of explaining Islam needed to be reconsidered to the effect that all suggestions would conform to the actual stage of development, and respond to the needs of the modern age of religious sciences.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sebilurresad (last seen 24.03.2020)

⁸⁸ 'Aynī, Şadr al-Dīn. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rihi*, p. 43. On *Sirat-ı Müstaqim*'s impact on Bukharan intellectuals see, Komatsu, Hisao. Bukhara and Istanbul: A Consideration about the Background of the *Munāzara*. In Stephane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (eds). *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*. London, New York, and Bahrain: Kegan Paul, 2001, pp. 167–180; Adam, Volker. *Rußlandmuslime in Istanbul*, pp. 389–416.

Being Bukharayi but Turkestani

There are diverse scholarly opinions about Fitrat's identity and his ethnic identification at the beginning of the 1910s and on how to determine it. These opinions are primarily relying on his early works.

Salih Bıçakçı argues that when Fitrat mentioned *vatan* (homeland), he meant only the city of Bukhara, and being Bukharan represented his identity.⁸⁹ However, it is safe to assume that while speaking of Bukhara as his *vatan* and about its people, as a *millat* (nation), Fitrat meant the entire territory and population of the Bukharan Emirate, respectively:

My dear brethren and honourable compatriots! We have missed many of our good chances wallowing in ignorance and sloth. We are to be blamed for the ruin and decline of our homeland and nation. We have ceded all matters to foreigners. We mistook true friends for pagans and real enemies for friends. Contrary to the words of our prophet: "The best among you are those who bring greatest benefits to many others", we did not adhere to this idea. We forgot all sacred commands and fully immersed ourselves in selfish affairs. We eagerly participated in all forbidden deeds, erasing from our minds the love for religion, nation, and patriotism.⁹⁰

Fitrat in his early works written in Persian and published in Istanbul consciously expressed his identity as a Bukharan (*Bukharayi* or *Bukharali*), connecting it to the territorial integrity of the Bukharan Emirate.⁹¹ He considered the Bukharan *millat*, and Bukhara as their *vatan*, equally important and sacred. He would call the people of Bukhara his *hamvatanan-i bukharayi*, that is, Bukharan compatriots.⁹² He referred to the Bukharans as a 'valiant nation' (*millat-i ghayur*). Fitrat exhorted the nation to 'rise up against ignorance' or in more concrete terms, he would call upon the people to strive for the full independence of Bukhara, to rebel against the existing regime, and to seize the development of Bukhara in their own hands:

Oh valiant people of Bukhara, what has happened to you? How come you are walking toward your demise on your own feet? The homeland is yours; your life belongs only to yourselves, and so do your honour, the riches of the country, and regiment. (But) now, all is lost and you are on the path to extermination and enslavement. If Bukhara prospers then you would prosper equally. If Bukhara is destroyed then you would perish also. If Bukhara is enslaved then you would become slaves as well. If Bukhara is impoverished then you

⁸⁹ Bıçakçı, Salih. *Homeland and Nation on the Stage*, p. 152.

⁹⁰ Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

⁹¹ Kocaoğlu, Timur. *Abdurrauf Fitrat: A Central Asian*, p. 403.

⁹² 'Abdurra'uf. *Hasbihal*, pp. 6–7; Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, pp. 1–2.

would be paupers. At length, all Bukharan affairs are in your hands. If you take control (of your destiny), you will rise up. No one else will do this in your stead.⁹³

Both passages quoted here clearly show that more than anything else, Fitrat cherished a “Bukharan” identity that was defined by the territorial integrity of his *vatan* and ideally, by the kind of sovereignty of which the Emirate had been deprived through the dishonouring treaties of 1868 and 1873.⁹⁴ His article echoes the anti-colonial stance which many Middle Eastern and South Asian intellectuals had been advocating since the mid-1800s. By appealing to the ‘valiant people’ and their violated self-esteem Fitrat appears to deny the Bukharan rulers of his day the intrepidity or capability to support the cause of Bukhara. However, he does not go as far as to outright attack the Amir, be that out of respect or out of prudence.

While from some of his writings, “Bukharan” self-esteem and self-government emerge as Fitrat’s primary concern in the early 1910s, he does not appear to pay a lot of attention to other possible markers of identity which in later periods gained prominence not only for the whole of Central Asia, but also in a very personal way for Fitrat himself. Among these is the language issue.

Till 1916 Fitrat published only in Persian, which is not a big surprise taking into account that Persian, rather than any Turkic idiom, must have been his language of madrasa education along with Arabic, and hence, his preferred medium of intellectual expression. Let us not forget that his native Turkic idiom of Bukhara at that time matched neither the language of *Tarjuman* nor any of the early Tatar media possibly available to him, let alone the elaborate Ottoman Turkish of *Sırat-ı Müstaqim*. In order to express himself on the level he aspired to, Persian was his only choice. Timur Kocaoğlu, when pointing to the fact that Fitrat only used Persian in his early writings, also suggests to understand Fitrat’s language usage as detached from matters of ethnic self-identification. Kocaoğlu claims that Fitrat considered himself to belong to the Turkic ethnic group and his mother tongue was also Turkic.⁹⁵ Hisao Komatsu has similar argu-

⁹³ Mijmar. *Nala’-i jansuz-i*, p. 7.

⁹⁴ On details of these agreements, see: Khalikova, Rahbar. The Signing of the Peace Agreement Between Bukhara and the Russian Federation and Its Consequences. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology* Vol. 29, No. 5, (2020), pp. 1417–1424; Malikov, A. The Russian Conquest of the Bukharan Emirate: Military and Diplomatic Aspects. *Central Asian Survey*, 33:2, 2014, pp. 180–198; Morrison, A. (2020). War with Bukhara, 1866–8. In *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814–1914*, pp. 255–306.

⁹⁵ Kocaoğlu, Timur. Abdurrauf Fitrat: A Central Asian, p. 403.

ments stating that Fitrat in his early works barely paid attention to the idea of ethnicity. He emphasized Islam instead as a major factor and a source of inspiration. In Hisao Komatsu's opinion, Fitrat's usage of Persian in his works actually ran counter to the ideas of Turkism or pan-Turkism which had a strong influence in Istanbul and among the Russian Muslims.⁹⁶ This indicates that ethnic consciousness, or more precisely, self-identification based on linguistic affiliation, was not important for Fitrat, not at least till 1916. Contrary to these assertions William Hanaway argues that people's attitudes towards their language could indicate their cultural consciousness. To substantiate this statement, Hanaway, like the researchers named above, refers to Fitrat's *Munazara*, where the Bukharan mudarris says to the European, "I do not think you know Persian (Farsi)", to which the European replies, "Either I do not understand Persian properly, or you speak it wrongly"; and Hanaway concludes "thus we see this Bukharan referred to the language he was speaking as Farsi, Persian"⁹⁷.

There is a certain inconsistency in Fitrat's definition of his ethnic identity in the early articles published in the journal *Hikmet*. While discussing Central Asia's glorious past, instead of praising only his small homeland Bukhara, Fitrat writes about the entire Turkestan as his fatherland, and conceptualizes the Turkestani as a unified and resilient nation. For him, Amir Timur (1336–1405), Ulugh Bek (1394–1449), al-Farabi (872–951/52), Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari (810–870), al-Zamakhshari (1075–1144), al-Taftazani (1322–1390) are his ancestors all alike, and he considers himself as a part of this all-encompassing *millat-i Turkistan* 'Turkistani nation'.⁹⁸

In yet another instance, Fitrat counts himself among the *zumra-i munawwara-i iraniyan* – a new "group of enlightened Iranians," who in his opinion is "ready and capable to prepare the advancement of Islamic enlightenment." Reflecting on the periodical press in the Persian language – leaving open what media he is exactly referring to, since papers from Teheran, Tiflis, Istanbul or Calcutta were all on his mind – he emphasizes how "close (that press) is to us Persian-speakers and our hearts."⁹⁹

So while Fitrat perceived of himself as a Turkestani, on the other he upheld Persian as his mother tongue. And on top of everything, he clearly kept Bukhara

⁹⁶ Komatsu, Hisao. The Evolution of Group Identity among Bukharan Intellectuals in 1911–1928: An Overview. *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, 47, 1989, pp. 115–144, at p. 119.

⁹⁷ Hanaway, William L., Jr. Farsi, the Vatan and the Millat in Bukhara. In Allworth Edward (ed.) *The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia*. New York: Praeger, 1973, pp. 143–150, at p. 144.

⁹⁸ Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. 'Ajaba Bukhara, p. 8.

⁹⁹ Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Khadang-i zahragin*, p. 7.

as a part of Turkestan while Muslim unity or unity of Islam turn out to have been of prime concern to him.¹⁰⁰

Fitrat's ethnic identity in this period is a complicated matter. 'Ayni writes that despite the proliferation of articles by Tajik authors in the foreign press after 1905 (for example Mirkhan Parsazada in *Hablulmatin*) and the publication of school textbooks by Mahmud Kh^waja Behbudi and others, it was actually due to the works by 'Abdurra'uf Fitrat that Tajik was elevated to the status of a literary language.¹⁰¹ In this 'Ayni provides more arguments for Hanaway's above-mentioned theory: highlighting the fact that Fitrat held the "Tajik language" in higher esteem than many of his contemporaries did, he seeks to prove Fitrat's Tajik background.

But if we scrutinize Fitrat's works written before 1916 it is possible to observe just the opposite. In the introduction to *Aila* (1915) he states that he had wished to write this book "in the language of our *millat*, i. e. in *Turkiy Chighatay*". However, 'Abdulvahid Munzim, the publisher insisted the book be written and published in Persian.¹⁰² It is possible that when speaking about the "Turkic-Chaghatay" language Fitrat meant the idiom of the entire Turkestan. He wanted his book to be accessible for all the denizens of Turkestan. Echoing this sentiment Hajji Mu'in said in his review¹⁰³ that this book's biggest shortcoming was that it was not written in the "Turkic dialect of Turkestan". This way, Hajji Mu'in insisted that the language of Turkestan was a Turkic dialect or as Fitrat claimed, *Turkiy Chighatay*.

All that is a testament that Fitrat like other Jadid-minded Turkestani intellectuals did not acknowledge himself as a member of any ethnic group in the understanding of later decades when native language, in the singular, came to play the all-determining role. He considered himself a Turkestani. Or as he put it in the mid-1920s, *oruslar Turkistanga kelmasidan bir iki mulchar ('asr) burunraqdan alib song kunlargacha bizning yalpi ('umumiy) atimiz yoq edi* 'for two centuries before the Russian conquest of Central Asia and up until today we did not have a common name'. In his own terms, Fitrat and his compatriots till the creation of a new state by the name of Uzbekistan were simply *turkistanli* 'Turkestanis'.¹⁰⁴

100 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

101 Ayni, Sadriddin. *Namuna-i adabiyat-i tajik (300–1200 hijri)*. Moskva: Chapkhana-i nashriyat-i markazi-yi khalq-i ittihad-i jamahir-i susyalisti, 1926, p. 531.

102 Fitrat, Abdurauf. *Oila*, p. 9.

103 Hajji Mu'in ibn Shukrullah. 'A'ila yakhud vaza'if-i khanadari. *Hurriyat*, 40, 22.09.1917.

104 Fitrat. *Sarf*. Tashkent: Orta Asiya davlat nashriyati, 1925, p. 7.

Not long after this, however, we find Fitrat turned a staunch proponent of Turkic culture and language. At the very beginning of the 1920s he vehemently advocated the introduction of a single reformed Turkic language all over Turkestan, and its purification from Arabic and Persian vocabulary. To achieve this task, he suggested recording the oral legacy of the steppe peoples which was less influenced by Perso-Islamic culture, investigate that idiom, and supplement the literary language with freshly-coined genuine Turkic words.¹⁰⁵

There are a lot of examples when Fitrat referred to Bukhara as well as Turkestan as his *vatan* ‘homeland’, and to the people or nation as *millat*, which in his early period clearly bears a meaning different from what *millat* ‘nation’ came to denote in Soviet times. In his quest to eradicate ignorance, he would appeal to his “brethren” and “compatriots”, by which he meant Bukharans as well as (other) Turkestanis.

For Fitrat, the process of eradicating ignorance went hand in hand with the independence of his homeland. While deploring the ills that demanded immediate action he never failed to unleash a scathing criticism of the Bukharan government. In his opinion, the government had ceded protection of the homeland to clandestine foes – *dushmanan-i khufya*, who “deprive us of our rights” under the pretext of running the state, and justified their “vile acts by ensuring the peaceful life” for the Bukharan people.¹⁰⁶

Fitrat called the Bukharan people a noble nation (*millat-i najiba-i Bukhara*¹⁰⁷). This people or nation – his terminology in these matters is neither differentiated nor consistent – he imagined as a unified body, an undivided whole without regard for particularist linguistic, religious or sectarian affiliation.

In a later work, when giving his view on people and nation, Fitrat writes that when the Uzbek tribes headed by Shaybani conquered Turkestan, its population gradually lost the denotation of “Chighatay” while tribal and territorial names spread widely. This situation continued till the creation of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924.¹⁰⁸ Fitrat claimed that the population of Turkestan lacked a single common endonym. This assertion allows us to speculate that Fitrat conceived of the “noble nation” as the total of all inhabitants of Bukharan territory, including all tribes, religious sects, and strata of society: that was, in his understanding, the people – or nation – of Bukhara.

Komatsu underlines that Fitrat’s concepts of *vatan* for Bukhara, and *millat* for the Bukharans, were novel, positive and integrative. These concepts, accord-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 5–6.

¹⁰⁶ Mijmar. *Nala’-i jansuz-i*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Fitrat. *Sarf*, p. 7.

ing to Fitrat, were fundamental to the Bukharans' quest for independence from foreign influence and would safeguard them against internal strife.¹⁰⁹ The future of his Bukharan homeland depended on national unity and opposition to clandestine foes. If people were idle, nothing positive would occur, and there would be no saviour caring for the nation but that very nation itself.¹¹⁰

109 Komatsu, Hisao. *The Evolution of Group Identity*, p. 117.

110 Mijmar. *Nala'-i jansuz-i*, p. 7.

Trip to Turkey: Escaping from Persecution?

The Bukharan community of Istanbul was an old one but a new generation of Bukharans, who desired to go abroad for study purposes, started to join it at the turn of the 20th century. These new-generation Bukharans chose the Ottoman Empire as an ideal place of study because they perceived it as more powerful and more progressive than neighbouring Iran.¹¹¹ For some students from Central Asia who wished to deepen their religious studies, on the other hand, Egypt was the destination of choice.¹¹²

From the beginning of the twentieth century wealthy Bukharan merchants started to send their sons to study in Istanbul. Bukharan Jadid Ahmad Na'im Nusratullah Bek claimed that he and his brother were the first Bukharan students in Istanbul.¹¹³

Sevara Karomatillaxo'jayeva remembers that in later years Fitrat was not very outspoken about the time of his youth. Only on rare occasions, when there was spare time after supper, he would recall his student past. In one of these reminiscences he said:

My youth was full of hardship. It was especially tough for me when I was in Istanbul. I had gone there contrary to the wishes of my father. So, he had withdrawn any financial support and I found myself penniless there. I had to eke out my existence by doing any job which was at hand. For a short while, I used to buy wholesome melons, cut them into smaller pieces and sold those slices for profit. Later I was employed in a small tea-house.¹¹⁴

Fitrat's father 'Abdurrahim kept supporting his family even after leaving them. Probably he kept in touch with his sons as well. Fitrat used to inform his father about his plans, including his desire to study in Istanbul. His half-sister Mahbuba Rahim¹¹⁵ noted that Fitrat made his way to Istanbul working as a porter on a ship. Afterwards, he made ends meet as a yard keeper in a madrasa and a mosque. Besides, his brother 'Abdurrahman provided some financial assistance.¹¹⁶

111 Khalid, Adeb. Pan-Islamism in practice, p. 215.

112 Bukhara. *Tarjuman*, 26, 23.08.1888, p. 1; Allworth, Edward A. A Conversation with Ahmad Na'im Nusratullahbek, a Young Bukharan Jadid Under the Amirate. In Timur Kocaoglu (ed.) *Reform Movements and Revolutions in Turkistan: 1900–1924*. Haarlem: SOTA, 2001, pp. 77–108, at pp. 84–87.

113 Allworth, Edward A. A conversation with Ahmad Na'im Nusratullahbek, p. 87.

114 Karomatillaxo'jaeva, Sevara. Qalbimga mangu muhrlangan, p. 70.

115 Mahbuba Rahim (qizi) was 'Abdurrahim's daughter from his Marghilani marriage; *ibid.*, p. 66.

116 Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, p. 18.

Fitrat and his classmate and close friend Muqimiddin left Bukhara in spring 1910 and travelled to Istanbul via Iran.¹¹⁷ Claims that they left in autumn 1909¹¹⁸ are not substantiated by any sources. At the very beginning of 1910, there was a carnage between Sunnis and Shi'is of Bukhara. Sadriddin 'Ayni, an eyewitness of this massacre, has left a detailed account.¹¹⁹ But the incident has also been described by Fitrat himself:

On Saturday, I had left my madrasa and came to Taq-i Telpakdozan¹²⁰. There were about fifty students discussing something. I eavesdropped on their conversation and learned about the clash beyond the Samarkand gate which happened between the Iranis¹²¹ and several local students who went to watch the 'Ashura celebrations of the Shi'is. This happened on the 10th of Muharram, 1328 (22 January, 1910).¹²²

Fitrat depicted these events in great detail¹²³, which proves that at this time he had not yet left for Istanbul¹²⁴. Sadriddin 'Ayni has details about how Fitrat and his companion eventually travelled to Istanbul:

Nizamuddin Urganji's¹²⁵ brother Muqim Bek was Fitrat's classmate and close friend. Muqim Bek was on strained relations with an uncle of his and he was kept in Charjuy almost as a prisoner. He wanted to go to Istanbul with Fitrat but could not manage to escape from there. After the tragic Sunni-Shi'i incident, Mirza Urganji went to Bukhara and this gave

117 Togan, A. Zeki Velidi. *Bugünkü türkili Türkistan ve yakın tarihi*. Cilt I. Istanbul, 1942–1947, p. 354; Ayni, Sadriddin. *Ta'rikhi inqilobi Buxoro*. Dushanbe: Adib, 1987, p. 83, 101. In one of the book's chapters the year is 1911 (p. 83); most certainly this is a typo. See critical edition: 'Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rikhi*. Shimada Shizuo, Sharifa Tosheva (eds.). NIHU Program Islamic Area Studies TIAS: Department of Islamic Area Studies, Center for Evolving Humanities, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, The University of Tokyo. 2010.

118 Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, pp. 15–33.

119 'Ayni, Şadr al-Din. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rikhi*, pp. 71–100.

120 Also known as Taq-i Telpakfurushan, one of the domed bazaar quarters of Bukhara.

121 Irani is the self-designation and allonym of the shi'a population of Bukhara and Samarkand.

122 Fitrat. *Davra-i hukmrani-i Amir Alimkhan*. A. Nasriddinov (ed.). Dushanbe: Palatayi davlatiyi kitobho, 1991, pp. 19–20.

123 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–23.

124 Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, p. 19.

125 Nizamuddin Urganji (1871–1921). During the reign of Amir Sayyid Alim Khan, he held the position of *bek* of Charjuy, then he was appointed to the position of *divanbegi*, and in April 1917, at the insistence of the head of the Russian Political Agency in Bukhara Alexander Miller, he was appointed commandant of Bukhara, and after Qushbegi Nasrulla's being removed from office, he was appointed supreme *qushbegi* of the Bukhara emirate. In 1920, he fled Bukhara together with the Amir.

Muqim Bek a chance to escape. In the spring of 1910 ‘Abdurra’uf and Muqim Bek left for Istanbul through Iran.¹²⁶

‘Ayni’s words could have misled some researchers who concluded that Fitrat had to leave for Istanbul under the threat of persecution by the authorities in the aftermath of the Sunni-Shi’i conflict.¹²⁷ These are baseless claims, in my opinion. Had Fitrat actively participated in this event his name would have been mentioned in historical accounts or in other writings of that time. However, there is no evidence supporting the claim of his escape to Turkey from the government’s persecution. ‘Ayni does not mention him in his description of the massacre and its aftermath. He writes about the enlightened Bukharan youth who joined together after the carnage and promoted a New-Method school and other reforms. He lists the most prominent members of that union, but Fitrat is not in their ranks.¹²⁸ The Bukharan authorities in their turn did their best to reconcile both parties and stop the massacre; they did not even try to persecute the participants in earnest lest passions escalate once more.¹²⁹

On his trip, as some scholars are wont to argue¹³⁰, Fitrat had financial support from the Bukharan reformists or the company *Shirkat-i Bukhara-i Sharif* or

126 ‘Ayni, Şadr al-Dīn. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’riki*, p. 101.

127 Umniakov, I.I. K istorii novometodnoi shkoly v Bukhare. *Biulleten’ Sredneaziatskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*. Vyp.16. Tashkent, 1927, pp. 81–95, at p. 88; Khan, Sarfraz. *Muslim Reformist Political Thought: Revivalists, Modernists and Free Will*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p. 119.

128 ‘Ayni, Şadr al-Dīn. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’riki*, pp. 85–87.

129 *Rossiiā – Sredniaia Aziia*. T.1: Politika i islam v kontse XVIII – nachale XX vv. Moskva: Lenand, 2011, pp. 408–412.

130 Zenkovsky, Serge A. Kulturkampf in Pre-Revolutionary Central Asia. *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1955, pp. 15–41, at p. 37; Khalid, Adeeb. Pan-Islamism in practice, p. 216; id. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 111; Baltabaev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, pp. 15–18; Qasimov, Begali. *Maslakdashlar*, pp. 73–74; Allworth, Edward (ed.) *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance. A Historical Overview*. 3rd ed., Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1994, p. 198; Erşahin, Seyfettin. Buhara’da Cedidcilik-Eğitim Islahatı Tartışmaları ve Abdurrauf Fitrat (XX. Yüzyıl Başları). *Dini Araştırmalar*, c. 1, s. 3, 1999, pp. 213–255, at p. 237; Dalimov, Uluğbek. Fitrat ve “Münazara”. *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Yıl: 12, Sayı: 1, Nisan 2008, pp. 69–74, at p. 69; Bıçakçı, Salih. Homeland and Nation on the Stage, p. 152; Ergasheva, Mavluda. *Abdurauuf Fitratning siyosiy va huquqiy qarashlari*. Ph.D. dissertation. Tashkent, 2002, pp. 38–39; Abdujalilova, Shoira. *Abdurauuf Fitratning oila tarbiyasiga oid qarashlari*. Ph.D. dissertation. Tashkent, 2005, p. 19; Ahatova, Durdona. *Abdurauuf Fitratning ma’rifiy-pedagogik qarashlari*. Ph.D. dissertation. Tashkent, 1998, pp. 24–25; G’oibova Shahnoza. *Abdurauuf Fitratning ijtimoiy*, p. 43.

even from the charitable organization *Tarbiya-i Atfal*. However, all reliable accounts we have checked suggest that Fitrat left for Istanbul by his own choice, but without a penny in his pocket.

Different Political Options: *Sırat-ı Müstaqim* and *Hikmet*

Fitrat's worldview was in the early 1910s formed under the influence of diverse intellectual sources. Contemporary Muslim reformists such as Ahmad Danish (1827–1897) from Bukhara had a great impact on him. Journal articles by Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905) reprinted in Ottoman Turkish in *Sırat-ı Müstaqim*, and the writings of 'Abdurrashid Ibrahim¹³¹ shaped his *millat*-related reformism.¹³² There is a claim by Hisao Komatsu about Shihabuddin Marjani's¹³³ ideas as having shaped Fitrat's reformist attitudes. However, research does not reveal any significant ideological connections between these two persons. It is true, as Komatsu argues, that some of the Tatar reformists in concordance with 'Abduh's ideas were in favour of reviving early Islamic pragmatism and consolidate the Muslim community on that basis. According to Komatsu, they were keen on learning Western sciences with the purpose of self-preservation and defence against European encroachment.¹³⁴ But there are still indications that in his early reasoning Fitrat did not support compromises with the West.

Hélène Carrère d'Encausse argues that Fitrat's ideas were in stark contrast to those of 'Abduh, regardless of many overlapping stances on other issues: for example, both of them considered educational issues as a field of crucial importance.¹³⁵ In contrast to what Carrère d'Encausse suggests, Fitrat neither denigrated "the Europeans" nor did he deny the usefulness of Western culture and

131 'Abdurrashid Ibrahim (1857–1944) was an Inner Russian Muslim scholar, journalist, and traveler. 'Abdurrashid Ibrahim became known for the journeys he undertook within Central and Southern Asia and in the Far East between 1907 and 1910. Apart from being the first known individual to have preached Islam in Japan, he also played a crucial role in the opening of the Tokyo Mosque in 1937. In 1939, Islam was accepted as an official religion by Japan due to the efforts of 'Abdurrashid Ibrahim.

132 Komatsu, Hisao. *The Evolution of Group Identity*, p. 118.

133 Shihabuddin Marjani (1818–1889) was a Tatar Turkic Hanafi Maturidi theologian and historian. In 1876–1884 he lectured on religion in the Tatar Teachers' School. He became the first Muslim member of the Society for Archaeology, History and Ethnography at Kazan State University. As a historian, he was the first Tatar scholar to employ a synthesis of European methodology with the traditions of Oriental scholars. He authored more than 30 volumes about Tatar history.

134 Komatsu, Hisao. 20. *Yüzyıl başlarında Orta Asyada türkçülük ve devrim hareketleri*. Ankara: Turhan kitabevi, 1993, pp. 8–9.

135 Carrère d'Encausse, Hélène. *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*. London: Tauris. 1988, p. 113.

science as such. Just the contrary: he admonished Muslims to excel in “European” knowledge, since only that would allow them to get set for their strife for self-assertion:

[...] (if we follow what the) Qur’an says, “So, if anyone attacks you, retaliate in the same manner”¹³⁶, and engage in learning the sciences which are considered Christian and which have led to the victories over Islam [...] then we would be able to defend our national and religious rights (*huquq-i milli va mazhabi*).¹³⁷

In this place like in many others, Fitrat uses quotes from the Qur’an to strengthen his argument and to encourage people to study the modern sciences, insisting on the compatibility of shari’a and European scientific skills.

From the beginning of his intellectual endeavours, Fitrat was under the influence of the Ottoman reformers while he was not very familiar with the thought of Central Asian thinkers such as, for example, Ahmad Danish¹³⁸. Danish was banished from the Emir’s court and had only a very narrow circle of friends. Sadr-i Ziya, Bukhara’s last *Qazi Kalan* (chief judge), describes in detail meetings with Ahmad Danish and mentions that his works were banned in Bukhara.¹³⁹ Sadr-i Ziya secretly copied Ahmad Danish’s volume *Nawadir al-Vaqaye’* with the help of ‘Abdulvahid Munzim and Sadridin ‘Ayni.¹⁴⁰ However, even Munzim and ‘Ayni, who copied the book, never suggested that Danish’s ideas and legacy had a strong impact on young intellectuals of Bukhara or Turkestan.

Adeeb Khalid points out that Fitrat’s vision of the Muslims’ contemporary condition was formulated in essentialist religious categories; his concern over the religion when he called his fellow countrymen to act resolutely (“if we do not want our mosques to be turned into pagan temples or our azan replaced by bell sounds, or our imams substituted by priests”¹⁴¹) sounds rather strange. Khalid argues that Fitrat was heavily influenced by one particular intellectual milieu of Istanbul, where the European colonial advance was interpreted as motivated by deep-seated religious hatred.¹⁴² It is of interest, then, to take a closer look into that specific milieu and their intellectual production.

136 Qur’an 2:94. quran.com/2 (last seen 21.03.2022)

137 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

138 Ahmad Danish (1827–1897), Bukharan scientist, writer, educator, philosopher, thinker and poet.

139 Allworth, Edward A. (ed.). *The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual. The Diary of Muḥammad Sharif-i Šadr-i Ziyā*. Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 38, 46 et al.

140 ‘Aynī, Šadr al-Dīn. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rihi*, p. 110.

141 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

142 Khalid, Adeeb. *Visions of India in Central Asian Modernism*, p. 258.

Fitrat's appeals upon the *millat* are based on the idea of unity of Islam. It does not come as a big surprise that these early articles of his were published in *Hikmet*, since that journal, guided by its editor-in-chief Ahmed Hilmi¹⁴³, strongly promoted such ideas and ideals. Before his arrival to Istanbul Fitrat's thought had borne the imprint of Mehmed 'Akif's reformist ideology. Soon after settling in the Ottoman capital, however, he appears to have developed more radical ideas, mainly under the influence of Ahmed Hilmi.

Since the closing years of the autocratic reign of sultan 'Abdulhamid II, Ahmed Hilmi had been involved in clandestine oppositional activities. After graduating from Galatasaray Lycée the young man was sent to a government job in Beirut. Due to his connections with the Young Turks he had to escape to Egypt where, however, he continued to work in the secret society. When in 1901 he felt safe enough to return to the capital, he was arrested and exiled to Libya. Hilmi spent several years in a remote region of the Sahara. There he joined the 'Arusiya brotherhood and had a spiritual experience which made him embrace the faith again after years of quest for meaning.¹⁴⁴ While many other modernist sympathizers of political change were at the same time irreligious or even free-thinkers, Ahmed Hilmi advocated Islam as an indispensable element of individual happiness and social life. However, he shared their disdain of the religious establishment (*'ulama*), which he found guilty of the kind of backwardness which hampered progress and ultimately caused the Ottoman failure to assert itself.¹⁴⁵

After the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, Hilmi came back to Istanbul and was offered a teaching position in philosophy at university. He started as a chief editor of the weekly periodical *İttihad-i İslam* (Islamic Unity) which lasted only from the 4th of December, 1908, till the 23rd of April, 1909. In mid-1910 he then launched the newspaper *Hikmet* (1910–1911) which was more successful. On the pages of *Hikmet* Ahmed Hilmi again took a stance for Islamic unity, explicitly calling upon 300 million Muslims to overcome sectarian conflict, catch up on

143 For more on Shehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (1865–1914), a prominent Ottoman philosopher and publicist, see Uçman, Abdullah and Özerverli, M. Sait. Şehbenderzâde Ahmed Hilmi. *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. C. 38, pp. 424–427; Uludağ, Zekeriya. *Şehbenderzâde Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi ve Spiritüalizm*. Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1996; Aydın, Ömer. Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi'nin Din Anlayışı. *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*. Sayı 4, 2001, pp. 69–107; Tepekaya, Ahmet. Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi'nin Hikmet Dergisini Yayınlamasındaki Amacı. *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*. Sayı 8, Çorum. 2005, pp. 40–46.

144 Bein, Amit. A "Young Turk" Islamic Intellectual: Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi and the Diverse Intellectual Legacies of the Late Ottoman Empire. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 39, No. 4, 2007, pp. 607–625, at 609–612.

145 *Ibid.*, p. 609.

modern sciences and most importantly, break free from European supremacy.¹⁴⁶ His radical propaganda against the European powers caused the ire of the ruling Committee of Union and Progress and the journal was closed.¹⁴⁷

Just like the majority of Ottoman intellectuals, Ahmed Hilmi had embraced and supported the Constitutional Revolution and joined the ranks of the party of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Teraqqi). But soon he started to criticize it, severely disagreeing with its political decisions although he shared much of its ideology, for example Turkism. The oppositional party “Hürriyet ve İtilaf”, which held a more ethnically inclusive position and showed some pro-British inclinations, did not escape his criticism either.¹⁴⁸ Explaining his political position he wrote: “Our aim is not to absolve Union and Progress from its well-known fallacies. But the errors of one party do not make other parties infallible in their policies”.¹⁴⁹

Hikmet's motto was “Unity is life, separation is death” and that is a succinct summary of its editorial policy. Ahmed Hilmi wrote the following about the relationship between Ottoman Turkey and Iran:

Despite every person knowing that union is a source of life while separation is a cause of death, astonishingly the Ottoman and Iranian states are still disjointed.¹⁵⁰

In the eyes of Fitrat, whose closeness to both of these states and their intellectual cultures we have mentioned earlier, this must have looked like a most meaningful appeal. It is safe to assume that Ahmed Hilmi's call upon the religious brethren to “hold on to God's tight rope”¹⁵¹ resounded the title of Fitrat's earlier favourite Indo-Persian newspaper as well.

In short, Fitrat embraced *Hikmet*'s doctrine, political orientation and the ideology of Muslim unity. On the pages of that paper he began exhorting the Muslims and the Bukharan people in particular, to forsake all divisions and to consolidate for the defence of Islam and self-preservation. His exhortations were particularly acute in the light of the early 1910 Sunni-Shi'i incident in Bukhara. However, petty internal conflicts were only one dimension of Fitrat's concerns. He was also worried about disunity on the level of inter-state relations,

146 Ibid., p. 616.

147 Uçman, Abdullah. Şehbenderzâde Ahmed Hilmi, p. 424; Landau, Jacob M. *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 77–78.

148 Tepekaya, Ahmet. Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi'nin, p. 42.

149 Ibid., p. 42

150 Shaykh Muhr al-Din 'Arusi. 'Usmanlı-İran i'tilafı. İlk zemzeme-i ittihad. *Hikmet*, 40, 19.01. 1911, p. 4.

151 Ibid.

as he clarifies in his harsh and acerbic review of an anonymous piece, which I assume must have been published in *Hablulmatin*. Fitrat compared that article to “a poisoned arrow” aimed at destroying a fragile peace between Shi‘ites and Sunnites, and accused its anonymous author of having attempted “to push sincere and respectable Iranians to revolt” against “the Great Ottoman State”, which to his understanding meant, against the stronghold of all Muslims.¹⁵²

The newspaper *Tarjuman* quoting *Hayat* of Istanbul wrote that in 1911 the Ottoman state sought to extend its protection over Iran, aiming to defend its economic interests while using religious affinity as a pretence.¹⁵³ Under this pretext, the Ottoman power began to intervene in Iranian domestic affairs, a policy that obviously was not welcomed by the author of the *Hablulmatin* editorial due to their proximity to Iranian power actors.

The ideological struggle to define the political course of the Ottoman Empire had been exacerbated from the 1870s on. That period saw the decline of ‘Ottomanism’ and the rise of pan-Islamism. This shift was exploited by sultan ‘Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) who sought to limit the influence of the European powers in his realm using Islamist doctrine as a tool. On the one hand, this policy unified the Muslims of the Empire against a common enemy – the West – but on the other, it undermined the delicate balance between various religious and confessional communities and caused religious clashes.¹⁵⁴ The weakened Ottoman state also aggressively pursued its economic interests when dealing with neighbours. Fitrat was sensitive to confessionalistic overtones when *Hablulmatin* implored its Persian-speaking (predominantly Shi‘i) readership to resist such economic intrusion of the Ottomans.

For Fitrat there was no distinction between Muslims of various confessions. He regarded all Muslims without exception as “followers of the prophet Muhammad” who adhered to the principle “there is no other deity but Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet”.¹⁵⁵ Analysing Fitrat’s thoughts on the unity of Muslims, it would be appropriate to mention here that in the Shi‘ite creed ‘Ali is placed along with the prophet himself. From Fitrat’s reference to the fundamental “point of unity” in Islam, discord and controversy are immediately implied. But Fitrat behaves as if he either was not aware of this, or did not mind the “inclusion” of ‘Ali in this doctrine. He even appealed to the Sunnites of Bukhara to

152 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Khadang-i zahragin*, pp. 6–7.

153 ‘Usmanlı ve İran. *Tarjuman*, 50, 09.12.1911, p. 1.

154 Kartashian, A. Z. Osmanskaia politika v otnoshenii étno-konfessional’nykh men’shinstv kak model’ upravleniia poliétnichnym i polikonfessional’nym obshchestvom. *Kazanskiy pedagogicheskii jurnal*. 6, 2015, pp. 175–181, at p. 177.

155 ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal*, pp. 6–7; Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, pp. 1–2.

apologize to the Shi'ites for the massacre because they were, before anything else, their "brotherly fellow countrymen"¹⁵⁶.

In his vision, Fitrat saw all Muslims united under command of the Ottoman sultan – the caliph of all Muslims. This is Fitrat the pan-Islamist. The consolidation of "Muslims from India to Bukhara" was designed to pursue the ultimate goal of merging into a "single great Muslim empire"¹⁵⁷, which would make the Muslims a progressive nation anew. Both Fitrat and Ahmed Hilmi¹⁵⁸ considered Istanbul the centre of that whole Muslim world under the leadership of the sultan. Fitrat expressed his eagerness "to participate in this consolidation and to support all [good] intentions" of the Ottoman power.¹⁵⁹ Ahmed Hilmi's and his *Hikmet's* sway over Fitrat in the early 1910s could not have been expressed more obviously.

156 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

157 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Khadang-i zahragin*, p. 7.

158 Hasbihal. *Hikmet*, 26, 13.10.1910, p. 7.

159 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. *Khadang-i zahragin*, p. 7.

Fitrat and the Medrese al-Wa‘izin

Fitrat’s early days in Istanbul are murky due to the lack of sources. In 1914, Mahmud Kh^waja Behbudi¹⁶⁰ mentioned Fitrat as a student of “Dar al-Wa‘izin” and sent him an issue of his journal *A’ina*.¹⁶¹ Opinions vary whether Fitrat attended the Medrese al-Wa‘izin¹⁶² or Istanbul University¹⁶³, the latter claim being largely unsubstantiated so far. If Medrese al-Wa‘izin was founded only on the 29th of December, 1911¹⁶⁴, then what was Fitrat’s occupation in Istanbul till that day?

The beginning of the 20th century and in particular, the years of the second Ottoman Constitutional Revolution were tumultuous times and the Bukharan students who came to study in Istanbul at this period were thrown into the thick of intellectual turmoil in the Ottoman capital.¹⁶⁵

Soon after his arrival in Istanbul Fitrat most likely settled in the *Naqshbandi Özbekler Tekkesi* located in Sultantepe: there is an entry in its registrar for the year 1911 under the name Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf.¹⁶⁶ This Tekke was the main centre of interaction between visitors from Central Asia and Ottoman society and fostered strong ties between Muslims of the two regions.¹⁶⁷ The Tekke, in particular, hosted mostly young people, some of whom could stay there for an ex-

160 Mahmud Kh^waja Behbudi (1874–1919) was a Jadid activist, writer, journalist and leading public figure in Imperial Russian Turkestan.

161 Ghulja i‘anasidan yubarılgan A‘inalar. *A’ina*, 30, 1914, p. 588.

162 Allworth, Edward A. *The Preoccupations of Abdalrauf Fitrat*, p. 12; Komatsu, Hisao. *20. Yüzyıl başlarında Orta Asya’da türkçülük ve devrim hareketleri*. Ankara: Turhan kitabevi, 1993, p. 3; Khan, Sarfraz. *Muslim Reformist Political Thought*, p. 119; Erşahin, Seyfettin. Fitrat’ın Türkistan için, p. 22; Baltabayev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, p. 24.

163 Qasimov, Begali. *Maslakdashlar*, p. 74; Kara, Halim. Reclaiming National Literary Heritage: The Rehabilitation of Abdurauuf Fitrat and Abdulhamid Cholpon in Uzbekistan. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 54:1, 2002, pp. 123–142, at p. 125; Kocaoğlu, Timur. Abdurrauf Fitrat: A Central Asian, p. 402.

164 Ergün, Mustafa. II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Medreselerin Durumu ve İslâh Çalışmaları. *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*. Cilt: 30. Sayı:1.2, 1982, pp. 59–89, at p. 86; Akman, Zekeriya. Osmanlı Son Dönem Kurumlarından Dâru’l Hikmeti’l-İslamiye’nin Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi Alanındaki Faaliyetleri. *İslâmî Araştırmalar Dergisi*. Cilt: 20. Sayı: 1. Kış, 2007, pp. 85–94, at p. 86.

165 Khalid, Adeeb. Society and Politics in Bukhara, 1868–1920. *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 19 (2000), pp. 367–396, at p. 383.

166 Baltabayev, Hamidulla. *Fitrat va jadidchilik*, p. 24. Although the author argues that 1329 H. corresponds to 1909 A.D., in fact it corresponds to 1911 A.D.

167 Can, Lâle. Connecting People: A Central Asian Sufi Network in Turn-of-the-Century Istanbul. *Modern Asian Studies*. Vol. 46, Mar 1, 2012, pp. 373–401, at pp. 375–378.

tended period, provided they met its criteria for receiving charity.¹⁶⁸ The *Naqsh-bandi Özbekler Tekkesi* was a meeting place of Istanbul intelligentsia among whom members and supporters of “İttihad ve Terakki” were predominant. The famous mathematician Salih Zeki Bey (1864–1921), painter Hüseyin Zekai Pasha (1860–1919) and philosopher and politician Rıza Tevfik (1869–1949) were among them, just to name a few.¹⁶⁹ The Tekke was not only a vibrant cultural hotspot but also a political club, a place for political discussion. Young Fitrat must have found himself in the centre of political and ideological activity where the most important issues of Muslim life and the Muslim world were debated.

Often the Tekke hosted menial workers who swept the courtyard, ran errands, and worked in nearby markets and caravan-serays. They formed a link between the Tekke and the old city. They also constituted a diasporic net and helped the newcomers to find jobs and shelter.¹⁷⁰ Possibly Fitrat who worked in a bazaar, and as a scullion, swept the courtyards of a madrasa and a mosque also benefited from this assistance. His early time in the city likely was divided between work hours and preparation for admission to the madrasa.

Fitrat worked with the material he had drafted in Bukhara. ‘Ayni reports that before his departure, Fitrat travelled through the emirate, visited several provinces, collected data for his future works, and prepared himself for his long journey.¹⁷¹ His early works bear the hallmarks of literary trends of his time, whereby, for example, the people of India were exalted as heroes fighting against colonialism. Most probably, he had already known what he was going to write and which genre he was going to use. During his visits to Bukharan provinces, he seems to have gathered facts and data about the social conditions of the Bukharan peasants and artisans which he then carried along as outlines of his future articles and books.

Religious, philosophical, and political topics which dominated the Ottoman intellectual landscape are prominent in Fitrat’s works of 1910–1915. His proximity to Sufi circles eventually led him to Medrese al-Wa’izin, one of the first madrasas based on a reformed system, which was opened on the 29th of December,

168 Ibid., pp. 379–386.

169 Ülger, Mustafa. 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Fikir Hayatındaki Yeri Bakımından Tekkeler. *İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 18:2, 2013, pp. 45–52, at p. 50; aavsar.blogspot.jp/2007/12/istiklal-savana-farkl-bir-bak.html (last seen 14.11.2020)

170 Can, Lâle. Connecting People, pp. 388–391.

171 ‘Aynî, Şadr al-Dîn. *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rihi*, p. 101.

1911.¹⁷² Its location is unclear: either in Soğukçeşme Vani Efendi Medresesi¹⁷³ or in Bayezid Medresesi¹⁷⁴. It is possible that Medrese al-Wa'izin initially started to function in Bayezid Medresesi and later moved to Vani Efendi Medresesi, as Bayezid Medresesi needed renovation.¹⁷⁵ Studies in Medrese al-Wa'izin were an important next step for graduates of ordinary madrasas.¹⁷⁶

The statute of the madrasa declared its mission: “[...] to teach people the rulings of the holy Qur’an, and Muslim culture [...]”. To be admitted, an applicant had to be between 20 and 35 years old, have no criminal record, be in a good health, be sure to have no stammer, pass the entry exams successfully, and consent in advance to post-graduation job placements to recoup the cost of his tuition.¹⁷⁷ This madrasa had been established by the state to train some ‘ulama in non-traditional, secular subjects.¹⁷⁸

Admission exams were fairly difficult and required an extensive and thorough knowledge. The studies lasted for four years and forty students were enrolled each year. It was tuition-free, students received 150 guruh as a monthly stipend, and one free meal per day. After successful graduation students were expected to work for four years in a position determined by the school.¹⁷⁹

For the academic year of 1913–1914 the admission of 48 students, including ten Muslims from foreign lands, was announced.¹⁸⁰ The date of Fitrat’s admission remains unknown due to the paucity of sources. If we are to follow the words of Ahmed Zeki Velidi (Togan), he was “the first Bukharan Tajik to be admitted to Medrese al-Wa'izin”¹⁸¹. Zeki Velidi visited Bukhara in the summer of 1914 to collect data about local manuscript collections. At the same time, Fitrat

172 Aydeniz, Tuğba Yalçın. Osmanlı’da İlk Vaiz Yüksek Okulu: Medresetü’l-Vâizîn. *Osmanlı İstanbulu*, III: III. Uluslararası Osmanlı İstanbulu Sempozyumu Bildirileri, 25–26 Mayıs 2015, İstanbul, 2015, pp. 597–621, at p. 605.

173 Ergün, Mustafa. II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde, p. 86; Akman, Zekeriya. Osmanlı son dönem, p. 86.

174 Aydeniz, Tuğba Yalçın. Osmanlı’da İlk Vaiz Yüksek Okulu, p. 604.

175 Ibid.

176 Ergin, Osman. *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*. İstanbul: Eser Kültür Yayınları, 1977, p. 160.

177 Karacabey, Salih. Osmanlı Medreselerinin Son Dönemi’nde Hadis Öğretimi. *T.C. Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi*. Cilt: 8, Sayı: 8, 1999, pp. 149–169, at p. 161; ercaninal.blogspot.jp/2012/12/ilmiiye-sinifi.html (last seen 07.11.2014); bizimtarhchiler.blogcu.com/medrese-tu-l-vaiz-n/3074596 (last seen 07.11.2014).

178 Khalid, Adeeb. Visions of India in Central Asian Modernism, p. 255.

179 Aydeniz, Tuğba Yalçın. Osmanlı’da İlk Vaiz Yüksek Okulu, p. 607.

180 Ergün, Mustafa. II. Meşrutiyet döneminde medreselerin, p. 86.

181 Validov, A. O sobraniikh rukopisei v Bukharskom khanstve. *Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva*. Vol. 23. 1915. Petrograd, 1916, pp. 245–262, at p. 261.

was back in Bukhara. During his brief trip, Zeki Velidi had studied libraries of Bukhara and lamented that most of them were almost empty. Probably, he met Fitrat in one of these libraries. Fitrat could have introduced himself as a student of Medrese al-Wa'izin and offered him his book *Bayanat-i Sayyah-i Hindi*. In his account of the madrasa libraries, Zeki Velidi refers to this book, which contains some information about Bukharan madrasas and their sources of income.¹⁸²

With the beginning of the First World War many Istanbul madrasas, including Medrese al-Wa'izin, had to send their students home. Their premises were given to refugees and the military.¹⁸³ By mid-1914 many students from Turkestan left and went back home. Fitrat had been in Istanbul at least until May 1914.¹⁸⁴ In November that same year, he spent a few days in Samarkand according to the words of Behbudi. We could surmise from this information that Fitrat was unable to resume his studies in Istanbul because of the war and instead chose to visit the southern provinces of the emirate.¹⁸⁵

The curriculum of Medrese al-Wa'izin included the following subjects¹⁸⁶:

Table 1: Subjects taught in Medrese al-Wa'izin

Tefsir	Exegesis, particularly commentary on the <i>Qur'an</i>
Hadis	Recorded sayings or tradition of the Prophet Muhammad
İlmü 'l-Kelam	The discipline of philosophy and theology concerned specifically with the nature of faith, determinism and freedom, and the nature of the divine attributes
Fiqh	Jurisprudence
Siyer ve Tarih-i İslam	Life of the Prophet and History of Islam
Tarih-i Edyan	History of Religions
Edebiyyat-ı 'Arabiyye	Arab Literature
Edebiyyat-ı 'Osmaniyye	Ottoman Literature
İlm-i Ruh	Psychology

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁸³ Aydeniz, Tuğba Yalçın. Osmanlı'da İlk Vaiz Yüksek Okulu, p. 616.

¹⁸⁴ Ghulja i'anasidan yubartilgan A'inalar. *A'ina*, 30, 1914, p. 588.

¹⁸⁵ 'Sayyah-i Hindi' va 'Munazara' kitablarining muharriri... *A'ina*, 1, 06.11.1914, p. 5.

¹⁸⁶ Zengin, Zeki Salih. Osmanlılar'da II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Yeni Açılan Medreseler ve Din Görevlisi Yetiştirme Çalışmaları. *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 36, 2016, pp. 33–61, at p. 42.

Table 1 (Continued)

Lisan-ı Farisi	Persian Language
Ma'lumat-ı Huquqiyye	Introduction to Law
Joghrافیa-yı İslam ve 'Osmani	Geography of Islamic Countries and Ottoman Empire
Hesab	Mathematics
Hüs-n-i Khatt ve İmla	Calligraphy and Orthography
Usul-i fihh	Methodology of Islamic Law
Tarikh-i 'Osmani	Ottoman History
Tarikh-i 'Umumi	General History
Jebr	Algebra
Hendese	Geometry
Hıfzu 's-Sihha	Hygiene
Felsefe	Philosophy
Hikmet-i Tabi'iyе	Physics
Kimya	Chemistry
Mevalid-i Selase	Mines, plants and minerals
Khitabet ve Mev'ize	Religious Oratory
Hey'et	Astronomy

Among the teachers of that madrasa there were such famous people as Yusuf Aqchora (Akçura) (1876–1935), one of the main ideologists of Pan-Turkism, who taught the history of the Turkic peoples. Mehmed 'Ata Bey (1856–1919), historian and journalist at the service of the state financial administration,¹⁸⁷ taught literature, ethics and history. Poet and diplomat Yahya Kemal Beyatlı (1884–1958) taught history, history of culture, and Western literature. The famous writer and public intellectual Ahmed Midhat Efendi (1844–1912) had during the madrasa's first year been its instructor of "history of religions" and published in 1913¹⁸⁸ a book under that very title – *Tedris-i Tarikh-i Edyan*.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ See Özcan, Abdülkadir. Mehmed Atâ Bey. In islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ata-bey-mehmed (last seen 21.03.2022)

¹⁸⁸ turkedebiyati.org/ahmet_mithat_efendi.html (last seen 21.03.2022)

¹⁸⁹ Aydeniz, Tuğba Yalçın. Osmanlı'da İlk Vaiz Yüksek Okulu, p. 612.

Although Fitrat could not complete his course of study the knowledge he had obtained there provided him with a great intellectual capacity. During his years in Istanbul, he wrote eight treatises which were fine examples of “pan-Islamism in practise”¹⁹⁰. The essence of these works written and published in 1911–1916, *Rahbar-i Najat*, *‘A’ila yaki vaza’if-i khanadari*, *Mukhtasar Ta’rih-i Islam* in particular, promoted true Muslim values and advocated the creation of a strictly Islamic society based on the Qur’an and Hadith.

He also had a chance to meet and converse with Ahmed Hilmi and Mehmed ‘Akif and to read the writings of these and other influential masterminds of pan-Islamist ideology. In addition, Fitrat also had the opportunity to personally meet or listen to the sermons of ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim in the Süleymaniye Mosque, and he contributed an article¹⁹¹ to the *Ta’aruf-i Müslimin* newspaper which was published under the editorship of ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim. The influence of these intellectuals on Fitrat is reflected in his essayistic and fictional works of those years.¹⁹²

190 Khalid, Adeeb. Pan-Islamism in Practice, p. 217.

191 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. Bukhara Veziri Nasrullah Bi Parvanacı Hazretlerine Açık Mektub. *Ta’aruf-i Müslimin*, Vol. 2, 25, 1328, p. 10.

192 Komatsu, Hisao. Muslim Intellectuals and Japan: a Pan-Islamist Mediator, Abdurreshid Ibrahim. In *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World. Transmission, Transformation, Communication*. Stephane A. Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao, and Kosugi Yasushi (Eds.). London: Routledge-Curzon, 2006, pp. 273–288, at p. 279; Erşahin, Seyfettin. Fitrat’ın Türkiistan için, p. 24; Erşahin Seyfettin. Buhara’da Cedidcilik, p. 237.

Muslim Unity: The Inception of a New ‘Salafism’?

Fitrat’s position on Muslim unity, as far as it comes clear from his writings mentioned above, is close to a Salafist one in that he seeks and accepts guidance only from the Qur’an and Hadith.¹⁹³ However, unlike actual Salafists, he does not advocate returning to the early days of Islam. He postulates that true Islam is a religion which does not oppose progress or the study of secular, “Western” sciences. In his opinion, the true path lies in following the Qur’an and Hadith.

Reflecting on Muslim solidarity Fitrat concludes that ignorance is the Muslims’ main enemy. Ignorance, as it were, was the reason why Muslims lived under the yoke of infidels. Because of ignorance, Islam was going to perish and its “cherished sons” (*farzandan-i ‘aziz*) were forced to become “servants of the enemies of Islam” (*khizmatkar-i dushmanan-i Islam*).¹⁹⁴ Muslims observe and hear the truth and listen to edifying words but due to their ignorance they do not reflect upon these and “adhere to a distorted and falsified Islam”. This leads to the lamentable condition of the entire Muslim world.¹⁹⁵ Fitrat claims that unless the whole Muslim world unites in an “intellectual thrust” the future generation will inherit nothing but “impotence, ignobleness, and servitude”.¹⁹⁶ He relates these conclusions to the situation in Bukhara where the Sunni-Shi’i bloodshed in early 1910 had brought a rift into society. He appeals to “common sense which would wake from a fatal slumber of ignorance”.¹⁹⁷

There was some difference in Fitrat’s understanding of pan-Islamism with that of ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim. The latter considered pan-Turanism or pan-Turkism as the basis of pan-Islamism and claimed that pan-Turanism and pan-Islam were essentially one. Pan-Turanism was the temporary nucleus out of which pan-Islamism would germinate. ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim considered the Ottoman sultan the leader of a united Muslim world. Some simplified form of the Turkish language of Istanbul as a common tongue for all Turkic peoples was to form the basis of this unification.¹⁹⁸

193 Fitrat. Qur’an. *A’ina*, 16, 1915, pp. 443–445.

194 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, pp. 1–2; *Mijmar*. Nala’-i jansuz-i, p. 7.

195 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Khadang-i zahragin*, p. 7.

196 *Mijmar*. Nala’-i jansuz-i, p. 7.

197 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

198 ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim. *Panturanizm*. *Ta’aruf-i Müslimin*, Vol. 1, 2, 1328, pp. 17–20; ‘Abdurashid Ibrahim “Yana Panturanizm” yaki “Aqvam-i Türk’un birleshmesi”. *Ta’aruf-i Müslimin*, Vol. 1, 5, 1328, pp. 57–58.

The idea of creating a common literary language had been promoted by Isma‘il Gasprinski from the very beginning of the publication of his newspaper *Tarjuman* in 1883.¹⁹⁹ Gasprinski widely propagated the “dialect of reconciliation”²⁰⁰, which he deemed a singular literary language that could serve all Turkic peoples.

Fitrat’s stance on language is different. In the mid-1920s Fitrat, summarizing his pre-revolutionary activities, wrote that until 1916 like any other Jadid he was inspired by the idea of “a common literary language” for all Turkic peoples, which sounds like a hint to Isma‘il Gasprinski and ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim’s ideas. After that idea did not come to fruition, he, along with other Turkestanian Jadids, founded the society *Chighatay Gurungi* where they undertook serious research in order to establish “the grammar of the Turkestanian dialect of the Turkic idiom”²⁰¹ rather than messing about with a common literary language.

Fitrat, in contrast to ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim, did not view pan-Turanism or pan-Turkism as the very basis of pan-Islam. When he described his vision of Muslim solidarity and political union he did not dwell on the issue of a common tongue, though he did regard the Ottoman sultan as leader of this union. His major emphasis was on bridging the rift between various Muslim confessions and on establishing their unity and amity. Fitrat, adhering to this line, perceived and shared the ideas by the newspaper *Ta‘aruf-i Müslimin* only in this regard, considering reconciliation between Sunnites and Shi‘ites a must when he wrote about Muslim unity. In an article published in *Ta‘aruf-i Müslimin* its author wrote:

“The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy”²⁰² – by these words of God the Muslims, united under the banner of Islam regardless of their national affiliation, are not strangers to one another but are blood brethren. [...] Affinity in Islam is determined not by physical resemblance but also by spiritual brotherly kinship and it compels every Muslim to go for reconciliation (*islah*) with his brethren.²⁰³

199 For more, see: Akpınar, Yavuz. Gaspıralı’nın Türk Diline Bakışı. *Türk Dünyası Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi*, Sayı:12/1, 2001, pp. 385–408.

200 Baldauf, Ingeborg. *XX asr o‘zbek adabiyatiga chizgilar*. Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2001, p. 38.

201 Fitrat. *Sarf*, p. 4.

202 Qur’an 49:10. quran.com/49 (last seen 21.03.2022)

203 Ya‘qub Kemal. İslamda ukhuvet-i diniye ve bugünkü müsliminlar. *Ta‘aruf-i Müslimin*, Vol. 1, 1, 1328, pp. 14–15.

Fitrat’s understanding of Muslim solidarity and unity regardless of national and confessional belonging very closely corresponded to this view. The Islam of Muslim unity, for Fitrat, is an Islam without sectarian or other split.

Reflecting on the future of the Muslim world Fitrat untiringly puts his finger on ignorance as the main reason for its woes. It is because of ignorance that the once-victorious Islamdom suffered defeats and humiliations. The infidels would continue to crush the Muslims and their lands. Lands and places (*mamalik*) like Kashgar, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkestan, Egypt, Java, Tunis, Sudan, Morocco, Kazan, Crimea, and the Caucasus all succumbed to the vice of ignorance.²⁰⁴ One look at a political map of the world in 1914 was enough to recognize that all countries from Morocco to India and Indonesia were occupied by European powers: Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Russia. Western military power, state-of-the-art weaponry and most of all, advanced knowledge were the major “adversaries” of the Muslim world. Having the populations of these countries and regions in mind Fitrat argued that “ignorance had bowed the necks of 300 million Muslim believers”²⁰⁵.

Fitrat wanted Muslims, especially his people in Bukhara, to become enlightened patriots devoted to Islam. He was sure that “all those who considered themselves legitimate sons of their homeland,” if only they “cherished the honour of their motherland and knew the precepts of the shari‘a well,” would have worked for the benefit of their country, following the maxim that “love for one’s homeland is a matter of faith”. But the saddest thing was that all too many poor souls had not yet opened their eyes from their slumber of ignorance. Every patriot must do his best to “awaken the Muslim masses from that slumber, which is the main cause of servitude and shame”.²⁰⁶

As almost every Muslim reformist insisted, the main reason for Muslim backwardness was ignorance. Isma‘il Gasprinski in his brochure *Russkoe Musul‘manstvo* (“The Muslims of Russia”) wrote that the social and intellectual isolation of the Muslims, their ignorance and their quiescence in all major spheres led to sad consequences, culminating in the downfall of the Muslim world under European pressure.²⁰⁷ Similar criticism was voiced by Gasprinski when he wrote about the problems of Turkestan. In one of his articles, he compares the Turkes-

204 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

205 *Ibid.*

206 *Ibid.*

207 Gasprinski, Ismail. *Russkoe musul‘manstvo: Mysli, zametki i nabliudeniia musul‘manina*. Simferopol’: Tipografiia Spiro, 1881, p. 5.

tanis to the Seven Sleepers (*Ashab-i Kahf*)²⁰⁸, as “they act as if they were completely isolated from this world and hear nought and do nothing”²⁰⁹.

Fitrat continued this tradition of castigation and severely criticized Bukharan domestic affairs using “ignorance” as a pretext. Lack of accountability of local officials, iniquity toward common people, squandering of government funds, and pauperization of peasantry and craftsmen were the major factors of Bukhara’s downfall and he saw all these as a result of that “accursed ignorance.”²¹⁰

He appeals to the ‘ulama, asking them “to save and to preserve our sacred religion” and keep to the saying that “the ‘ulama are the successors of the prophets”. He quotes from the Qur’an: “Of all of Allah’s servants, only the knowledgeable [of His might] are [truly] in awe of Him”²¹¹ and considers scholars to be privileged by God. In his interpretation, these words oblige those “who possess knowledge, to give strength to the community and send it on the path of progress and truth”. The community should accept this path without any hesitation, since only in this way “we can preserve our sacred faith and protect our holy land”.²¹²

At the beginning of his career as a public intellectual Fitrat was in agreement with ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim, who also saw the ‘ulama as the saviours of Islam. Fitrat’s deliberations concerning the ‘ulama are very similar to the ideas of ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim on the role of Muslim clerics in a resurgence of Islam. ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim wrote about the ‘ulama that according to the words of the prophet they should stand between God and the people and reveal to the latter the commandments of the former. But the actual scholars did not fully comprehend their mission and failed to deliver the true word to Muslims. Their true task is to first re-shape and reform (*islah*) themselves and then apply their efforts to reform the community which is about to fall into an abyss.²¹³

In the mid-1910s Fitrat radically changed his opinion on this issue and no longer regarded the ‘ulama as the leaders of the community. He would from now on call upon the Muslims to seek guidance only from the Qur’an which, he argued, was the only reliable guide to salvation for all Muslims.²¹⁴

208 Turkistaning hali, *Tarjuman*, 136, 20.06.1913, p. 1.

209 Isma’il. Rusiya Turkistani. *Tarjuman*, 37, 12.04.1906, p. 1.

210 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. ‘Ajaba Bukhara chira kharab ast. *Hikmet*, 50, 30.03.1911, p. 8; 51, 08.04.1911, p. 7–8.

211 Qur’an 35:28. quran.com/35 (last seen 21.03.2022)

212 ‘Abdurra’uf. Hasbihal ..., p. 7.

213 ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim. Qū anfasakum ... *Ta’aruf-i Müslimin*, Vol.1, 1, 1328, pp. 7–9.

214 Fitrat, Abdurauf. *Najot yo’li*, p. 64.

As Fitrat claimed, he met many people, visited plenty of places but still could not find satisfactory solutions to the problems that beset the Muslim world and impeded its progress. Eventually, he found them only in the Qur’an. He rhetorically asks the Muslims whether they should really trust the words of “our esteemed ‘ulama”, who insisted that the current situation was a result of the will of God, and whether Muslims should really desist from taking initiative in solving their problems. In response, he suggests to disobey the ‘ulama, get active and search for solutions in the Qur’an.²¹⁵

There is little doubt that Fitrat during his time in Istanbul was in conversation with many influential Muslim intellectuals and sought answers to the questions and concerns which troubled him, a young and devout Muslim worried about the future of his community. It is conceivable that the publications and actions of influential Muslim intellectuals like ‘Abdurrashid Ibrahim, Isma‘il Gasprinski and Ahmed Midhat captured Fitrat’s imagination and wielded a considerable influence on him at the inception of his career.

For Fitrat, European powers were enemies of Islam. He considered these powers responsible for the destruction of “the honour, good name, happiness, life, homeland, and rights of the three-(hundred)-million-strong, hapless Muslim community”. In his opinion, this dire situation arose as a result of the continuous harm done to Muslim communities by the Europeans. Subsequently, all major Muslim powers collapsed and their territories fell apart and were captured by infidels.²¹⁶ The Muslim countries he had in mind were probably the above-mentioned ones from Morocco to Kashgaria and Java. It can be deduced that Fitrat had an acute understanding of contemporary world affairs and imperial and colonial history. His political assessment was very close to the opinion of Isma‘il Gasprinski, who came to similar conclusions about the dire effects of ignorance on Muslims while analysing their affairs.

Fitrat reckoned the inertia of Muslim scholastics “a misuse of Islam”. He again quoted the Qur’an: “[It is to] have faith in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if only you knew.”²¹⁷ And he obligated his fellow Muslims to be ready to fight for their sacred religion.

How, then, did Fitrat imagine this fight for the sake of Islam? In his opinion it was a campaign for studying the modern sciences and healing people from ignorance. Again, Fitrat relied on the Qur’an in support of his stance: “If your pa-

²¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 63–69; Fitrat. Qur’an. *A’ina*, 16, 1915, pp. 443–445.

²¹⁶ ‘Abdurra’uf. Hasbihal, p. 7.

²¹⁷ Qur’an 61:11. quran.com/61 (last seen 21.03.2022)

rents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish – [if all these] are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His way, then wait until Allah brings about His will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people.”²¹⁸ The campaign should continue until all Muslims appreciated the aforementioned quote. In this opinion, Fitrat was in line with the reformists who wholeheartedly and in masse were admonishing the Muslims to study the modern sciences. In Istanbul Fitrat had a chance to read and learn from numerous periodicals printed in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian which had a wide circulation in the Empire. Printed outlets like *Servet-i Fünun* (1891–1944, Istanbul), *Al-Manar* (1898–1935, Cairo), *Al-Muqtataf* (1876–1952, Beirut, Cairo) popularized science along with their support for reformist policies.

Early on Fitrat publicly rejected the particular way of life and “unfounded superstitions” which in his opinion had come to be associated with religious faith in Bukhara. In his writings produced in Istanbul, Fitrat was very cautious in criticizing the policies of the Bukharan emir while he was intolerant toward perceivedly incompetent mullahs and imams, as Allworth rightfully observes.²¹⁹ However, it was still the religious elites to whom Fitrat appealed to lead the necessary reforms, although he did not spare clerics from his criticism and insisted that their primary duty before the nation and Islam was to edify the Muslims on the way of progress. They ought to consolidate their congregations, not to bring strife to the already fragmented community. They should ameliorate the political situation in Muslim countries, not aggravate it:

What is the matter with you? God forbid, perhaps you are against Islam’s progress and the Muslims’ tranquility? Heavens above, are you aware of your sacred duty of defending your homeland? Aren’t you the champions of Islam? What a pity, you are not saviours of our faith nor a source of life to our nation. You have fallen into the others’ trap and became their lackeys. You have failed to recognize those enemies of Islam who are urging you to destroy it.²²⁰

Anticipating objection on the part of the ‘ulama, or in fact facing it, Fitrat is alerting them:

It will not benefit Islam if you consider my previous words meaningless and continue to talk the commoners into believing that such words make ablutions and prayers void.²²¹

218 Qur’an 9:24. quran.com/9 (last seen 21.03.2022)

219 Allworth, Edward A. *The Preoccupations of Abdalrauf Fitrat*, p. 13.

220 ‘Abdurra’uf. Hasbihal, p. 7.

221 Ibid.

Thus, Fitrat found the source, the cause, and the cure for ignorance in the 'ulama to whom he allotted the role of saviours of the Muslims from their slumber and ignorance. They were supposed to lead the reform movement, although they failed to adequately perform that task. Fitrat saw the salvation of Islamdom in unity beyond all possible sectarian dissonance and other religious disagreement. In his incessant reference to the Qur'an Fitrat takes a "salafite" stance, beseeching the Muslims to turn to a true Islam. At the same time, he deviates from Salafism as we know it: instead of encouraging the return to the days of early Islam and the adoption of its rules, Fitrat advocates a true Islam guided only by the Qur'an and simultaneously appeals to the Muslims to master the modern sciences.

Ignorance vs Salvation: Ways to Exit Crisis

Reflecting on the past glory of Islam and the deplorable present condition of the Muslim world, Fitrat opined that the salvation of Islamdom depended on

[...] three things: the establishment of New-Method schools, continuous reading of newspapers, and the unification of all Muslims regardless of their confessional affiliation. I swear upon the holy Qur'an and the prophet's honour that these tasks are not only by no means *haram*, but (even) obligatory (*wajib*) for every Muslim.²²²

The New-Method school was for Fitrat the necessary foundation for implementing the other two conditions for salvation of Islam as a religion. In his opinion, this type of school embodied hope, happiness, and the existence of the Motherland. The shutdown of the New-Method school in Bukhara in 1909 was regarded by Fitrat as the destruction of hope and the future of the Bukharan people – and it was caused by the clergy. By self-interestedly announcing that New-Method schools contradicted the shari'a, the Bukharan 'ulama jeopardized the existence of Islam in Bukhara.²²³ Emir 'Abdulahad's death (1910) was felt like a catastrophe by Fitrat and filled the supporters of New-Method teaching with despair.²²⁴

Fitrat thought the easiest way to reach progress and bring to an end the feebleness of the Muslim world was through schools and education.²²⁵ Once again he cites the Qur'an in support of his arguments: "Allah intends ease for you, not hardship"²²⁶ is what he quotes when inviting his compatriots to go for the "easiness" of learning brought about by the New-Method, rather than adhering to the old, complicated method of teaching.²²⁷

Fitrat initially praised the new emir of Bukhara, 'Alimkhan (1880–1944), who upon his ascension to the throne of Bukhara promised to implement some social and political reforms. Fitrat was jubilant because of such promises and referred to the amir as "our felicitous, beloved sovereign" who appeared to be positively predisposed to the re-opening of New-Method schools, who fav-

222 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i, p. 2. ([...] se amr ast: kushad-i maktab-i jadida, davam dar mutala'a-yi jarayid, ittihad-i jam'-i firqa-yi islami [...] ba 'izzat-i Qur'an qasam, ba abru-yi hazrat-i Muhammad savgand har kudam az in se amr ilava bar in ki haram nist ba har ki nam-i musulmani darad wajib ast).

223 Mijmar. Nala'-i jansuz-i, p. 6.

224 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. Bukhara. Khan-i muhtaram-i navjahi. *Hikmet*, 43, 06.02.1911, p. 7.

225 Mijmar. Nala'-i jansuz-i, p. 6.

226 Qur'an, 2:185. quran.com/2 (last seen 21.03.2022)

227 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i, p. 2.

oured sending brilliant youths to study in Europe and supported the training of professional bureaucrats and teachers.²²⁸ Thus, Fitrat, speaking up on behalf of the Bukharans in Istanbul, expressed his readiness to endorse dispatching Bukharan students to study abroad and training teachers for Bukharan schools.²²⁹

Fitrat expected the ‘ulama of Bukhara to back the new initiatives of the young amir, to desist from obstructing New-Method schools, to allow the reading of newspapers, and to at last encourage Muslim unity in “our ruined homeland”. Otherwise, the ‘ulama would not be considered champions of the religion, defenders of the shari‘a, or simply patriots (*muhibb-i vatan*), but all other Muslims would deem them hostile to the religion, opponents of the shari‘a, enemies of the motherland (*dushman-i vatan*), and traitors of the nation (*kha’in-i millat*).²³⁰ At this point Fitrat addresses the Bukharan religious scholars on behalf of the entire Muslim world.

As comes clear from these appeals, for Fitrat modern education was not a goal in itself but should serve a much higher purpose, namely, the salvation of his homeland from trespasses by (sc., better educated and hence more powerful) alien forces. In addition, education was supposed to serve as a solid foundation for the unity of a nation that was until then divided into different religious sects. Therefore, Fitrat regarded the people of Bukhara, his dear brethren (*baradaran-i ‘aziz*) and esteemed compatriots (*hamvatanan-i muhtaram*), as a political force which would find the right path and unite to solve the primary tasks assigned to them. The main problems were seen by him as machinations of the alien foreigners (*bazicha-i biganagan*). In this analysis of a game of the Great Powers, as it were, between Britain and Russia, Fitrat manifested himself as a young but astute politician. As a patriot true to his religious background he admonished his brethren and fellow countrymen with a hadith: “The best of people is the one who is useful for others”. In his opinion, the Muslims had forgotten God’s and the Prophet’s instructions and had fallen prey to mean self-interest and avarice. He wholeheartedly believed in this statement from the Holy Book: “Allah would never change a people’s state [of favour] until they change their own state [of faith].”²³¹ He appealed to the people of Bukhara to free the religion from all humiliations and woes. He declared that Bukhara, which represented the dignity (*haysiyat*), honour (*namus*), glory (*sharaf*), happiness (*sa‘adat*) and tranquillity (*asayish*) of all his compatriots, was in grave danger. By this danger Fitrat means the discussions by the Russian imperial officials about abolishing

²²⁸ Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. ‘Ajaba Bukhara chira kharab ast. *Hikmet*, 51, 08.04.1911, p. 8.

²²⁹ Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. Bukhara. Khan-i, p. 7.

²³⁰ ‘Abdurra’uf. Hasbihal, p. 7.

²³¹ Qur’an, 13:11. quran.com/13 (last seen 21.03.2022)

the Emirate of Bukhara and replacing it with a general-governorship, i.e., turning it into another Russian province.²³² Only if people were on their guard (*hushyar*) while defeating ignorance (*ghaflat*) and sloth (*tanbali*) would it be possible to withstand this challenge. If the Bukharans continued to slumber and remained ignorant, their names would be wiped out from the earth. Fitrat encourages his “assiduous, dedicated, noble brethren” (*baradaran-i ghayrati, himmati, hamiyati*) to serve their fatherland “to find solutions and to relieve the religion from oppression and rescue the homeland from destruction”. Once again, he refers to the Qur’an to find proof for his argument: “...and struggle in His way, so you may be successful.”²³³ His hopes are with God to bless the people of Bukhara and to liberate them from this “dark abyss of misfortune and pitiful existence”.²³⁴

Fitrat in his practical activities in Istanbul and after his Istanbul period published many papers. As mentioned earlier, before visiting Istanbul Fitrat, like many other Bukharan intellectuals, would read *Srat-i Müstaqim*, but after arriving in Istanbul he gave up his taste for that journal in exchange for *Hikmet*, and his first papers were published in *Hikmet* and *Ta’aruf-i Müslimin*. In 1912 he published some papers in the newspaper *Bukhara-i Sharif* established by a group of Bukharan intellectuals. During 1914–1915 he published his well-known texts such as “Qur’an” and “Himmat va sabati bolmagan millatning haqq-i hayati yoqdir” in Behbudi’s magazine *A’ina*.²³⁵

Fitrat’s writings are safely grounded in Muslim reformist, enlightenment and anti-colonial thought, but in his reasoning, he relies only on his own intellect. He did not have immediate fellow-pens at any time. Even in his first publications, Fitrat was a “voice on par” with the Ottoman and Tatar contributors and did not imitate their thoughts and claims. Fitrat, speaking about the unity of the Muslim world, talks within the framework of either Bukhara, or sometimes Turkestan. He deliberately focuses on Bukhara, where clashes between the two large confessions of Islam were happening in actual fact and where the “ignorance” he deplores as engulfing the entire Muslim world, was at its high tide according to his perception. Fitrat, while zooming in on the example of a small

232 Logofet D.I. *Strana bezpraviia. Bukharskoe khanstvo i ego sovremennoe sostoianie*. Saint Petersburg 1909; Bukharaning istiqbali. *Tarjuman*, 77, 28.11.1908, p. 2.

233 Qur’an, 5:35. quran.com/5 (last seen 21.03.2022)

234 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i, p. 2.

235 Fitrat, ‘Abdurra’uf. Himmat va sabati bolmagan millatning haqq-i hayati yoqdir. *A’ina*, 7, 1915, pp. 162–165; Qur’an. *A’ina*, 16, 1915, pp. 443–445. On a list of Fitrat’s publications, see: Allworth, Edward. *The Preoccupations of Abdurrauf Fitrat, Bukharan Nonconformist: an Analysis and List of his Writings*. Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000 (Anor 7).

piece of the large Muslim world, manages to point out more general paths from crisis to progress. This independence of thinking notwithstanding, he joins the running debate on the Caliphate when he harshly criticizes the editor-in-chief of *Hablulmatin*. At the same time, Fitrat calls on Muslims to gear up with the achievements of Western science for a fight against colonialism with Europe's own weapons. He was amazed by such a capable thinker and writer as Muhammad 'Abduh, who was willing and able to join debate with Westerners on a par and refuted their statements on Islam which he deemed erroneous (such as the writings by French philosopher Gabriel Hanotaux).²³⁶

A new generation of Muslim intellectuals was to open up a new progressive era of Muslim society. Fitrat lamented that while so many journals and books were by "the others" printed daily with the intention to harm Islam, the Muslims themselves were unable to face their problems. In order to achieve real progress, the clerics ought to agitate the Muslim masses to read up-to-date newspapers for the necessary information about the current situation of Muslims²³⁷ instead of burying themselves in "tall tales about Mashrab and Abu Muslim", as he put it.²³⁸ (Despite this scepticism, in 1916 Fitrat came to write a drama titled *Abu Muslim* about an historical struggle for independence, in which he gives the topic an emancipatory twist. Later in his life, when he completely devoted himself to scholarly work and published academic pieces on literature, he investigated that kind of tales in depth and acknowledged their value and potential.²³⁹)

Ignorance in Fitrat's opinion did not only come from the inaction of Muslim scholars in the face of the tyranny, but also from the noxious influence of the perceivedly ignorant representatives of local religion, the *ishans*. The Muslim masses in religious matters trusted *ishans* more than they would trust scholars or clerics. The *ishans*, who mainly operated in so-called sacred places, abused the trust and ignorance of the locals and had a huge influence on the religious views of the populace.²⁴⁰

236 Komatsu, Hisao. Bukhara and Istanbul, p. 170.

237 Bukharali 'Abdurra'uf. Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i, p. 2.

238 On this type of popular literature and modernist responses to it, see Kleinmichel, Sigrid. *Halpa in Choresm und Atin Ayi im Ferghanatal. Zur Geschichte des Lesens in Usbekistan im 20. Jh.* Berlin: Verlag Das Arab. Buch 2001; and id. *Aufbruch aus orientalischen Dichtungstraditionen. Studien zur usbekischen Dramatik und Prosa zwischen 1910 und 1934.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1993.

239 Fitrat. *Eng eski turk adabiyati namunalari.* Tashkent-Samarqand: Öznashr, 1927; Fitrat. *Özbek adabiyati namunalari.* Tashkent-Samarqand: Öznashr, 1928.

240 Fitrat, Abdurauf. Vol. 1. *She'rlar, nasriy asarlar, dramalar.* Hamidulla Baltaboev (ed.). Tashkent: Ma'naviyat, 2000, pp. 104–108.

Another sacred duty the Muslim scholars, according to Fitrat, failed to perform in adequate ways was to strive for unity regardless of confessional affiliation.²⁴¹ Fitrat states that the scholars should unite and “act for the sake of Islam, to free the Muslim peoples from the yoke of infidels”. This included to...

[...] reform our antiquated and complicated education (by applying) a new and easy method; [...] adopt the wisdom contained in holy scriptures: “So, if anyone attacks you, retaliate in the same manner”²⁴², and excel in sciences which are deemed Christian and which helped (the Christians) to secure victories over Islam; [...] re-establish our country’s glory, strengthen our religion through educating our children, and instill high moral values in them; [...] extirpate ignorance from our souls with the light of science and progress [...]

all of which would then culminate in

[...] restore[ing] Muslim unity through reading journals and newspapers. Then we’d be able to defend our national and religious rights.²⁴³

But what Fitrat actually perceives while looking at Muslim scholars is only that they “actively resist the ways of quick cure”. According to Fitrat, it was through the noxious intervention of clerics that “many schools were closed and many newspapers were banned”. And on top of everything, the Muslim scholars “are to be blamed for the Shi’i-Sunni massacre”²⁴⁴ since they did nothing to prevent this massacre.

Fitrat tirelessly repeated the need to consolidate the community and to cease interconfessional strife. Unless the Muslims strictly adhere to Allah’s commandment “and hold firmly to the rope of Allah and [are] not divided”²⁴⁵, they will never reach concordance. He warned his Muslim brethren about two deadly foes: the infidels and ignorance; both were capable of destroying and exterminating Islam.²⁴⁶

241 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

242 Qur’an, 2:194. quran.com/194 (last seen 21.03.2022)

243 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

244 ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal*, p. 7.

245 Qur’an, 3:103. quran.com/3 (last seen 21.03.2022)

246 Bukharali ‘Abdurra’uf. *Hasbihal ba-hamvatanan-i*, p. 2.

Conclusion: Fitrat and Istanbul

Fitrat's activities, in particular his contributions to debates on educational, publishing, and more generally, publicistic matters had a significant impact on the history of Bukharan and Turkestan Jadidism. Despite the importance of his contribution, the data about his early career as a public intellectual is scant. Young Fitrat was absorbed with the ideas of Islamism and believed that only true religion, sincere faith, true Islam could bring happiness and prosperity to the Muslims. In the same breath, he argued that the only way to be rescued from ignorance and backwardness lay in the mastering by Muslims of the modern "European" sciences. Fitrat initially rejected Jadidism but soon emerged as one of its leading figures in Bukhara and Russian Turkestan. The *Munazara*, the masterpiece among Fitrat's texts authored during his Istanbul period, was to become a manifesto of the Jadid reformist movement in Central Asia.²⁴⁷

Fitrat was fascinated with the idea of Muslim unity – which implied the creation of a single Islamic state encompassing all Muslim lands – that could lead the Muslim nation to progress, long before his visit to Istanbul. It was the Persian-language newspaper *Hablulmatin* that first attracted Fitrat to the milieu where these ideas were common currency, and shaped his position as a staunch supporter of a caliphate led by the Ottoman sultan, a position which solidified during his time in Istanbul due to manifold encounters with prominent Ottoman thinkers who shared this ideal.

Despite the wealthy background of his merchant father Fitrat spent most of his youth in penury. As a true Muslim, he always acted relying on divine providence. He went to Istanbul without a penny to his name and hoping for his good fortune, which is a testament to his sincere faith in God and explains the way he perceived reality and shaped his outlook on the world. Regardless of all difficulties he faced at the beginning, his stay in Istanbul not only broadened his outlook on scholarly work and political activism, but can be considered an early climax in his formation and something like a first turning point in his intellectual development.

In Istanbul, Fitrat probably volunteered to assist the Bukharan Society organization, continued to work and to study, and re-wrote earlier drafts of his written pieces. Perhaps he also attended Sufi gatherings and even took part in their ceremonies. The knowledge of Sufism he acquired in those years helped him in his later research on this subject. Subsequently, he considered himself an expert on Sufi literature and related matters.

247 Komatsu, Hisao. Muslim Intellectuals and Japan, p. 279.

The years spent in Istanbul benefited him in many ways. Despite his financial privations, Fitrat got access to the new and high-ranking Medrese al-Wa'izin where he attained a profound knowledge of the history of Oriental literature, the humanities at large, and the natural sciences. This comprehensive learning imparted the gifts of clairvoyance and foreboding, gifts which allowed Fitrat to freely express his attitudes to reality and religion. By the mid-1910s he had already been shaped as a mature writer and philosopher, a truly free-thinking person.

A glance at Fitrat's early publications in the Ottoman press reveals his eagerness, even as a newcomer to the Ottoman intellectual milieu, to share his views on the state of affairs in the Muslim world and the Bukharan Emirate in particular. During his first year in the Ottoman capital city, he came under the influence of the journal *Hikmet* run by Ahmet Hilmi, who was the most zealous proponent of Muslim political unity. Fitrat's articles published in *Hikmet* consistently argue for reform in education to advance Muslim solidarity and union. The 'ulama were supposed to lead the community to this goal.

Hablulmatin, *Sırat-ı Müstaqim*, *Hikmet* and their respective editorial boards had a significant role in shaping Fitrat's worldview and the content of his publications. Thanks to his cooperation with these newspapers and journals Fitrat became acquainted with Muhammad 'Abduh's intellectual legacy and the ideas of other influential contemporary Muslim scholars and thinkers. Participants of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and Russian Muslim émigrés in Istanbul also had a certain impact on his ideological stance. By moving to Istanbul Fitrat had placed himself in an intellectual milieu that was rife with various reformist ideas. This milieu was crucial in shaping him intellectually.

There are, however, some intellectual and socio-political trends of that vibrant Istanbul milieu which Fitrat did not unequivocally align himself with. While Turkism and Panturkism flourished all around him, Fitrat did not fall into line with those who advocated identity-formation on the basis of ethnicist self-attribution based on the European romanticist notion of a single mothertongue. Fitrat was—in terms of fashionable trends of his day—not decided in defining his identity or ethnic background: While reflecting on the glorious past of his ancestors he considered himself a bairn of Turkestan. However, when discussing current Muslim affairs he was counting himself among a new generation of Iranian, Persian-speaking intellectuals. The overarching identity for Fitrat was his association with Bukhara as his homeland. This loyalty superseded all his other identifications. Bukhara's independence and territorial integrity were of paramount importance for Fitrat.

He wished to see Bukhara as an epitome of Muslim unity. Against all odds, the Bukharan people were supposed to unite, withstand their external foes, and struggle for survival. Fitrat's ideal was the unity and consolidation of all Mus-

lms. Fitrat, while collaborating with *Hikmet*, shared many of its common values and directions. But at the same time he did not fully follow the stance of *Hikmet* on the unity of Shi'ites and Sunnis and had his own ideas concerning the future of Bukhara, which played no role in the journal.

Fitrat, like many other prominent reformists, regarded ignorance as the main affliction of the Muslims. He firmly believed that it was due to ignorance and disregard for the modern sciences that the Muslim world had fallen prey to the infidels and remained under their yoke. Common sense and sound judgment should have urged all Muslims to unite in the struggle to gain freedom. The 'ulama were expected to guide the Muslim masses onto the right path, while the community should break free from the noxious influence of the purportedly ignorant and backward-oriented representatives of a defiled local religion, the *ishans*. This inconsistency within his own "unifying" claims is surprising, given the otherwise solid logics of his thinking. The 'ulama should have propagated New-Method schools and the Muslim press, and advocated for the leadership of the Ottoman sultan over a united Muslim world. Fitrat regarded three factors to be decisive in consolidating the Muslim community and Islam: The New-Method schools were tasked with teaching a new generation of Muslims capable to withstand the assaults of the infidels. The Muslim press, through discussions of the shared problems of Muslims around the world, should prepare Muslims for confrontation and struggle against internal and external enemies. Patriotism, love for the motherland, and the political will to rise up against violence and ignorance, was the ultimate goal of all efforts. Muslims, who were hitherto divided into different sects, had to join forces to preserve the future of Islam. This was Fitrat's vision for the future of a united Muslim world, which he pursued with his own most powerful weapon: the pen.

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Index

- 'Abduh, Muhammad 14, 26, 48, 51
'Abdulhamid II 1, 28, 30
Akhundov, Mirza Fatali 2f., 7
'Akif, Mehmed 2, 4, 28, 37
al-Bukhari 18
al-Farabi 18
Al-Manar 43
Al-Muqtataf 43
al-Taftazani 18
al-Zamakhshari 18
Allworth, Edward 1, 11, 13f., 18, 22, 24, 27, 32, 43, 47
Amir Timur 18
Aqchora, Yusuf 36
'Ata Bey, Mehmed 36
'Ayni, Sadridin 2f., 5, 7, 12–14, 19, 23f., 27, 33
- Baldauf, Ingeborg 9, 39
Bayanat-i Sayyah-i Hindi 35
Behbudi, Mahmud Khwaja 13f., 19, 32, 35, 47
Beyatli, Yahya Kemal 36
Boribay 2
Bukhara 1–7, 9, 11–18, 20, 22–24, 26f., 29–34, 37f., 40f., 43, 45–48, 50f.
Burhan, Qari 2
Burkhanov, Mutavakkil 6
- Carrère d'Encausse, Hélène 26
Chehranama 1
Chighatay 19f., 39
- Danish, Ahmad 26f.
- Fitrat, 'Abdurra'uf 1, 3, 5–14, 11f., 16–35, 19f., 22–24, 32, 37–52
- Gasprinski, Isma'il 1, 5, 13, 39–40, 42
- Hablulmatin* 1, 5–7, 14, 19, 30, 48, 50f.
Hadith 9, 37f.
Hamdi, Ahmadjan 3, 13
- Hanotaux, Gabriel 48
Hikmet 5f., 8, 10, 18, 26, 28f., 31, 36, 41, 45–47, 51f.
Hilmi, Ahmed 28f., 31, 37, 51
Husni, Nur 'Alizada 4–5
- Ibrahim, 'Abdurrashid 3, 26, 37–39, 41–42
ijtihad 9, 15
Iran 2f., 6, 11, 22–24, 29f., 40
Islamdom 40, 44f.
Ittihad-i Islām 28
Ittihad ve Teraqqi 29
- Jadid 1, 12, 19, 22, 32, 39, 50
Jadidism 9, 11, 13, 24, 50
- Karimi, Fatih 1f.
Kashani, Sayyid Jalaluddin 6
Kermani, Mirza Aghakhan 2
Khalid, Adeeb 7, 11, 22, 24, 27, 32, 34, 37
Kocaoğlu, Timur 6f., 16f., 22, 32
Komatsu, Hisao 4, 7, 15, 17f., 20f., 26, 32, 37, 48, 50
- Makhdum, Mazhar 6, 14
Mansurzada, Mirza Muhyiddin 2
Maraghai, Zaynulabidin 3, 7
Medrese al-Wa'izin 32–35, 51
Mehri, Hamid Khwaja 3, 13
Midhat Efendi, Ahmed 36
millat 16, 18–20, 26, 28, 46
Muhtaram, Ne'matullah 11–12
Mu'in, Hajji 19
Munazara 7, 18, 35, 50
Munzim, 'Abdulvahid 3, 5, 13, 19, 27
- Naqshbandi Özbekler Tekkesi* 32
New-Method 4f., 12f., 24, 45f., 52
- Ottoman 1, 4, 7f., 10f., 14, 17, 22, 26–33, 35f., 38f., 43, 47, 50–52

- pan-Islamism 5 f., 30, 37 f.
 pan-Turkism 6, 18, 38 f.
 Parsazada, Mirkhan 2, 19
 Pirmasti, Mulla Jorabay 12
- Qasimov, Begali 11 f., 24, 32
 Qur'an 8 f., 14, 27, 34 f., 37–39, 41–47, 49
- Rahbar-i Najat* 8, 37
 Revolution 2 f., 28 f., 32, 51
- Sadr-i Ziya 27
 Sa'idi, 'Abdurrahman 13
Sayahatnama-i Ibrahimbek 3, 5, 7
Servet-i Fünun 43
 Shawish, 'Abdul'aziz 14
 Shaybani 20
 Shi'a 5, 7
Sirat-ı Müstaqim 1, 4 f., 7, 14 f., 17, 26, 51
 Sunni 5, 7, 23 f., 29, 38, 49
- Ta'aruf-i Müslimin* 37–39, 41, 47
 Talibov, 'Abdurrahim 2, 7
Tarbiya-i Atfal 25
Tarjuman 1, 12 f., 17, 22, 30, 39, 41, 47
 Tevfiq, Rıza 33
 Troiskli, Ahmad 4
 Turkestan 1, 11–14, 18–20, 27, 32, 35, 40, 47, 50 f.
- Ulugh Bek 18
- Vaqt* 1 f.
vatan 16 f., 20, 46
- Wajdi, Muhammad Farid 14
- Zekai Pasha, Hüseyin 33
 Zeki Bey, Salih 33
 Zeki Velidi, Ahmed 23, 34 f.