
 Research Notes

Known and Unknown Fiṭrat: Early Convictions and Activities

Zaynabidin Abdirashidov

The worldwide Muslim reformist movement, which also gained strength in Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century, helped determine aspects of the social and political affairs that were to have far-reaching effects on the western Central Asian region. This influence has been particularly strong in the sphere of publishing, education, and public affairs. One of the most prominent modernist figures and the region's leading intellectuals of that time, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Fiṭrat (1886–1938) for over two decades fought against, first, what he perceived as the restrictive conservative Islamic thought and practice of local Muslim elites and later, the rigid dogmatism of the newly installed Soviet regime.

This article aims at elucidating the early 20th century Bukharan society, the birth of the liberal-reformist movement, in particular the early shifts in Fiṭrat's political, social, and ideological convictions, and at putting the intellectual change in Bukhara into perspective. Fiṭrat's life and works have been the subject of several studies, but his early life and activity, in particular, the years spent in Istanbul raise a number of questions. The study of Fiṭrat's early Istanbul period of activity could facilitate the analysis of his attitude towards the Muslim faith, and the unity of Islam in general. Taking this into consideration, the article makes an attempt to describe Fiṭrat's early convictions in Turkey within the framework of the birth and development of the fledgling Bukharan movement. In addition, the article investigates the issue of Bukharans, especially Fiṭrat's activity in Istanbul. Fiṭrat along with the first Bukharan students at the beginning of their life in Istanbul found themselves close to circles where reformist ideas dominated and Islamic reformist ideas were actively discussed. During the first year of his stay in Istanbul, Fiṭrat was very close to the *Hikmet* publishing house and its founder Ahmet Hilmi. This is confirmed by his active participation in the newspaper *Hikmet*. In addition, the article revises Fiṭrat's early vision on the Muslim community in general and Muslim unity in particular. The liberal Bukharan society, in particular Fiṭrat's fascination for Islamic reform ideas, which determined the initial period of his activity, was probably in many respects defined by his vision of the situation in the Muslim Orient. These attempts to study Fiṭrat's legacy could also reveal the sources of Jadidism in Turkestan, as a whole, and enable us to analyze Turkestan Jadidism in the context of Muslim reformism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW INTELLECTUAL ELITE: FIṬRAT AND HIS MILIEU

By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Bukharan youth had become more active. They adopted social and political reform ideas from external sources. By this time, many young Bukharan people were reading the foreign press. Moreover, they began to write and send articles to newspapers on the problems of Bukharan society. ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Fiṭrat is certainly one of the most prominent and influential representatives of Central Asian intellectuals of the first quarter of the 20th century. He is well known as a writer, journalist, political figure, and an influential ideologist of Turkestanī Jadidism.

Not so many facts are known of Fiṭrat’s early life and activities, especially until 1914. We are left with published sources and memories of people who interacted with Fiṭrat in various capacities because of the absence of materials in the archives that might yield snippets of information about his early activities.

In the early 20th century, Fiṭrat was quite well known in the Bukhara poetry milieu under the pseudonym *Mijmar* (Incensory). During this period, Fiṭrat travelled across Asia on a pilgrimage to Mecca. During this journey, Fiṭrat lived for some time in India and worked as a barber there to earn the money for returning home.¹

While studying in a Bukharan madrasah, Fiṭrat became famous among students for his deep knowledge of the religious sciences. As ‘Aynī states, Fiṭrat at that time was one of the most enlightened and considered to be the most advanced and meritorious of Bukharan students.² Despite this, Fiṭrat was surrounded by a milieu where every innovation in the life of the Muslim society was considered as apostasy. Bukharan society led by the “all-powerful” clergy was in a deep stagnation. At this time the clergy, who in most cases controlled the activity of the Emir ‘Abd al-Aḥad, began to exert more pressure on him to eradicate the liberal-reformist movement, which was gaining some strength among Bukharan youth. Perhaps, in line with this trend, Fiṭrat also showed no interest in the reformist ideas and did not participate in the activities of the first Bukharan Jadid group.

One could suggest that the Bukharan madrasah played a monumental role in the distribution of reformist ideas among students despite the fact that all educational institutions were under the complete control of the clergy. Magazines and newspapers in Persian and Turkic languages distributed in the narrow Bukharan milieu began to find more supporters within the madrasah. At the end of the first decade of the 20th century, one of the main proponents of Islamic reformism was *Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm* magazine, which attracted the atten-

1 Sevara Karomatillakho’jaeva, “Qalbimga mangu muhrlangan... Abdurauf Fitrat haqida khotiralar,” *Tafakkur* 2 (1996), p. 70.

2 Sadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī, *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rikhi*, ed. Shizuo Shimada and Sharifa Tosheva (Tokyo: NIHU Program Islamic Area Studies TIAS, The University of Tokyo, 2010), p. 101.

tion of many young Bukharan people. The articles published in the magazine covered various religious themes, as well as materials on Muslim philosophy, science, law, literature, history, and politics. The magazine editor-in-chief, the famous poet Mehmet Âkif (1873–1936) along with prominent Ottoman intellectuals, also opened its doors to Muslim intellectuals who emigrated from Russia and provided them a new medium for their activities.³ These authors wrote on various topics related to the life and activities of Russian Muslims. Especially, the journal began to publish articles covering Bukharan life and events, especially a struggle around a new-method school and *Sunnî-Şî'a* clashes, in detail.

The distribution of the magazine in Bukhara probably started in 1909. At least, the first letter from Bukhara was published in the 66th issue on July 15, 1909.⁴ The magazine became especially popular among the population of Bukhara after a new-method school was closed in the autumn of 1909 and *Sunnî-Şî'a* clashes took place in January 1910; then the magazine published numerous analytical articles on the social and political life of Bukhara.⁵

One could suggest that the Bukharan youth took a great interest in Islamic reformism and they got their information primarily from *Şîrât-i Mustaqîm* magazine, one of the main Islamist organs of the press in the Ottoman Empire after the second Constitutional Revolution of 1908. The magazine probably attracted Bukharan readers, especially madrasah students, by its use of citations from the *Qur'ân* and *Hadîth* as arguments for explaining the necessity of carrying out reforms in the social-political life of Muslims.

Earlier, Fîrât was an opponent of the Jadids,⁶ but under the influence of certain people,⁷ he developed sympathy toward the new-method school and more generally toward Jadidism and Islamic reformist ideas. Fîrât, probably, got into reading *Şîrât-i Mustaqîm* magazine in the late 1909 or a bit earlier and became interested in the Islamic reformist ideas.

3 Hisao Komatsu, "Bukhara and Istanbul: A Consideration about the Background of the Munâzara," in Stéphanie A. Dudoignon and Hisao Komatsu, eds., *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)* (London: Kegan Paul, 2001), pp. 169–170.

4 M. Ş. Bukhârî, "Bukhârâda şarî'at nâmina irtikâb ülinân jinâyât," *Şîrât-i Mustaqîm* 66 (1909), pp. 221–222.

5 "Bukhârâdan maktûb," *Şîrât-i Mustaqîm* 69 (1909), pp. 226–227; Nûr 'Alizâde Ğiyath al-Dîn Hûsnî, "Bukhârâda sunnîler, şî'iler," *Şîrât-i Mustaqîm* 74, pp. 250–252; "Bukhârâya dâ'ir," no. 82, p. 75; no. 91 (1910), pp. 228–230; "Bukhârâdan maktûb," *Şîrât-i Mustaqîm* 82 (1910), p. 74.

6 Fîrât, "Yâpişmagan gajjaklar. Ūrtoq Boybûlatovga âchiq maktûb," *Qizil Ūzbekistân*, no. 215–216 (15–16.9.1929), pp. 2–3.

7 The famous Uzbek composer Mutavakkil Burkhanov writes in his memoirs that Fîrât's decision to leave for Istanbul was directly influenced by his uncle Mazhar Makhdum. Mutavakkil Burkhanov, "Nurli siymolar (Fîrât va Cho'lpon haqida khotiralar)," in *Fitna san'ati*, 2-kitob, nashrga tayyorlovchilar: Ahmadjon Meliboyev, Sa'dulla Ahmad (Toshkent: Fan, 1993), pp. 116–117.

The concept of Islamic reformism or reform in general, as declared by Bukharan Jadids, meant fighting against corruption in the government and promoting the transformation of Bukhara into a modern state. Special attention must be paid to reforms of the state financial system, which recommended a distinct division between the public and personal treasury of the ruler; putting an end to the animosity between religious communities; fighting against the conservative clergy by means of reforming madrasahs and reforming the Muslim world view; and finally, teaching the population by means of establishing new-method schools and providing the masses with books.⁸ Based on the above concepts, it can be argued that, in his first articles and works, Fiṭrat “spoke out vigorously against the decadence of the religious establishment and its supineness in the face of tremendous problems in Central Asia.”⁹

Fiṭrat, as Allworth asserts, “became Behbudī’s protégé after proving himself an extraordinary graduate of the Bukharan madrasah.”¹⁰ Moreover, Fiṭrat acquired some knowledge of ancient Greek philosophy precisely during the years he spent in Bukharan madrasahs. According to Fiṭrat, his teacher Ākhund Mulla Ğiyāth al-Dīn had a very good (in Fiṭrat’s words, “perfect”) knowledge of ancient philosophy.¹¹

In his first years of activity, Fiṭrat was a proponent of reforms through Islamic values such as Muslim unity and, as “the most meritorious of Bukharan students” Fiṭrat was probably well familiar with *Sayāhatnāma-i Ibrāhīm Bek* (The Travel Report of Ibrahim Bek) by Maraġā’ī which served as a mirror not only for Iranians, but also for the population of neighboring countries, in particular, of Bukhara. Ideas adopted from *Şirāt-ı Mustaqīm* and other sources like *Sayāhatnāma-i Ibrāhīm Bek* determined the main directions of his activity and works in the early 1910s. Adeeb Khalid supposes that Fiṭrat’s early works were written under the deep influence of *Sayāhatnāma-i Ibrāhīm Bek* in both style and content.¹²

The intellectual milieu that heavily influenced Fiṭrat in the early 1910s was quite diverse. According to Komatsu, the contemporary Islamic reformists probably had a greater influence on Fiṭrat than the Bukharan thinker Aḥmad Dāniš (1827–1897). In the works of contemporary reformists, especially Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s (1849–1905) articles translated into Ottoman Turkish and presented in the *Şirāt-ı Mustaqīm*, and the thoughts of ‘Abd al-Rašid Ibrāhīm (1857–1944) directly influenced Fiṭrat’s terminology and logic of na-

8 F. Khodzhaev *Izbrannye trudy v trekh tomakh* (Tashkent: Fan, 1970), p. 91.

9 Edward Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), p. 143.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

11 “Bukhārā ‘ulamāsi,” *Ḥurriyat* 48 (1917), p. 2.

12 Adeeb Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice: The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and Its Uses,” in Elisabeth Özdalga, ed., *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 217.

tional reformism.¹³ Besides, Komatsu, reflecting on the reform of traditional Islam, asserts that Fitrat's reformist ideas were being formed under the influence of the Islamic movement founded by Tatar theologian Šihāb al-Dīn Marjanī (1818–1889). This movement, like the teaching by 'Abduh, assumes the revival of early Islamic pragmatism for the unification of the modern Muslim community. According to it, Muslims should study Western-European sciences for self-preservation and defense from the Europeans' invasion; this circumstance does not contravene Islamic principles.¹⁴

However, Fitrat, despite his "extraordinary reputation" in the milieu of Bukharan students, was absolutely unknown and unheard of beyond Bukhara even until 1911. He became known as the ideological leader of the Bukharan Jadids only after his books were published in Istanbul for the first time in 1911–1912.

BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES: EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL FORCE AND FITRAT

After the new-method school was established in Bukhara at the end of 1908 by young Bukharan Jadids, they had a problem with providing the pupils with textbooks in the local language and with training qualified teachers for future schools. To solve these problems, *Širkat-i Bukhārā-yi Šarīf* (Company of Noble Bukhara) was established by the Tatar and Bukharan teachers of new-method schools on *Rabī' al-Awwal* 1, 1327 (March 23, 1909). The first and the only publications of this company were the books *Tartīl al-Qur'ān* and *Tahdhīb al-Šibyān* by Šadr al-Dīn 'Aynī in the summer of 1909 and 1910 respectively.¹⁵ This company did not set a goal of sending students to study abroad. As 'Aynī states, some of the company members ('Uthman Khwāja Pūlāt Khwāja ūġlī and Hāmid Khwāja Mehri) were sent to Bakhchisarai and Istanbul to familiarize themselves with the school system. But apparently, these members of the Society went to the Crimea and the Ottoman Empire in the hope of finding support for the continuation and development of reform ideas in Bukhara. This trip played an important role and contributed to the establishment of a new Benevolent Society of Bukharans in Istanbul. After some time, these Benevolent Societies, established in Bukhara and Istanbul, led to the emergence of the first political forces in Bukhara.

The activity of *Širkat-i Bukhārā-yi Šarīf* was restricted to the above-mentioned actions. After the closing of the new-method school at the end of 1909 by Bukharan authorities and the *Sunni-Šī'a* massacre at the beginning of 1910,

13 Hisao Komatsu, "The Evolution of Group Identity among Bukharan Intellectuals in 1911–1928: An Overview," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 47 (1989), p. 118.

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

15 'Aynī, *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rihi*, pp. 50, 102.

Bukharan Jadids were at a loss to some extent because of the harsh persecution by an aggressive clergy.

Later, most of the *Širkat* founders joined the Society *Tarbiya-i Atfāl* (Up-bringing of Children), which was established on *Dhilqa'da* 28, 1328 (December 1, 1910). This Society had to act secretly because of persecution by the clergy and as A. Samoilovich states, the Society had been formed purely for enlightenment purposes and went underground because young Bukharan followers of Islamic reform thought “became the subject to persecution from reactionaries and government.”¹⁶

‘Aynī also indicates that out of caution the Society limited its activity to educational goals, but in reality its members allegedly carried on political propaganda of reforms.¹⁷ According to the prominent Turkestan political figure Faizulla Khodzhaev (1896–1938), the *Tarbiya-i Atfāl* Society’s full programme also included, alongside its educational goals as stated above, fighting against corruption in the government, promoting the transformation of Bukhara into a modern state and putting an end to the animosity between Bukharan religious communities.¹⁸ These articles defined the origins and the aims of the society in full detail.

The Society’s main activities included a program of sending students to Istanbul and the organization of new-method schools, a detailed account of which can be found in ‘Aynī’s work. Khodzhaev pays attention to the fact that ‘Aynī entirely ignores the meaning of New Method schools for the cause of preparation for a political fight against the Amir of Bukhara, for organizing antigovernment elements and for direct agitation among parents involved in functioning of the schools. Khodzhaev explains ‘Aynī’s approach by the fact that he belonged to a group of old Jadids who were not sympathetic toward an active fight against the Amir and limited their tactics to purely cultural activities.¹⁹

Samoilovich compares the *Tarbiya-i Atfāl* Society with freemasonry because of the difficult conditions of entry into the Society. However, the Society members to whom he spoke, repeatedly stated that they learnt about freemasonry after the Society was established.²⁰ One could suggest that Samoilovich was right. The main founders of *Tarbiya-i Atfāl* Society (‘Abd al-Wāhid Munzim and Šadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī) became familiar with freemasonry due to the book written by Aḥmad Dāniš *Nawādir al-Waqāe’* in 1900. Munzim and ‘Aynī secretly copied the book for Šarīfjān Qāḍī²¹ and got acquainted with its contents in detail and, in particular, with the history of freemasonry in India.

16 A. Samoilovich, “Pervoe tainoe obshchestvo mladobukhartsev,” *Vostok: Zhurnal literatury, nauki i iskusstva*, kniga 1 Petrograd: Vsemirnaia literatura, 1922), p. 98.

17 ‘Aynī, *Bukhārā inqilābining ta’rīkhī*, p. 117.

18 Khodzhaev, *Izbrannye trudy*, p. 91.

19 Faizulla Khodzhaev, “O mlado-bukhartsakh,” *Istoriik marksist* 1 (1926), p. 129.

20 Samoilovich, “Pervoe tainoe obshchestvo,” p. 98.

21 Muḥammad Šarīf Makhdūm Šadr-i Diyā (1867–1932)—a writer and historian. Served as *qaḍī* (judge) of the largest provinces of Bukhara (1893–1920) and was *Qaḍī Kalān* (Chief

At the end of 1909, *Bukhārā Ta'mīm-i Ma'ārif Jam'iyat-i Khayriyasi* (Benevolent Society of Bukhara for the Dissemination of Knowledge among the Masses)²² was established in Istanbul. According to the data on the title page of the Society Statute, it was founded on *Şawwal* 11, 1327 (October 26, 1909). As for organizers of the *Bukharan Society* in Istanbul, they are never named anywhere. In Gasprinski's point of view, the principal organizers of the Society were Turkestaniyans permanently living in Istanbul.²³ Many researchers state that Fitrat was one of the principal founders of this benevolent society.²⁴

As mentioned above, some members of the *Şirkat* were sent to Istanbul for studying the Ottoman educational system. Apparently, during the two or three months that they stayed there, they also did some other things. They probably came to an agreement with acting representatives of Tatar and Crimean student societies in Istanbul²⁵ to establish *Bukharan Society*, which was supposed to solve the problem of training highly qualified teachers for further expansion of the New Method schools in Bukhara.

According to the Society Statute, it was established for the dissemination of knowledge and establishment of schools in Turkestan, and in Bukhara in particular. The Society did not pursue any political goals and did not support any political force in the region. However, the students who studied under the auspices of the Society after graduation were obliged to go to places they were asked to by the leadership of the Society. If a student refused to obey, he had to compensate the costs of his education.²⁶

As the newspaper *Hikmet* informed: "In Istanbul, was founded *Educational Society of Bukharans*, which published a program of this Society... Several copies of the program were sent to some people in Bukhara. But Russian mail seized these programs and notified the public authorities. Later these people to whom the mail had been addressed along with several others."²⁷

Considering the goal set by the Society, one can suggest that it pursued the creation of such intellectual and elite layers that could be controlled by the

Justice) of Bukhara (1917). For detailed information on his life and activities, see Edward A. Allworth, ed., *The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual: The Diary of Muḥammad Sharīf-i Šadr-i Ziyā* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 1-75.

22 For details, see *Bukhārā Ta'mīm-i Ma'ārif Jam'iyat-i Khayriyasiniñ nižāmnāma wa khaṭṭ-i Harakatidir, Ta'riḫ ta'sisi* 11 *Şawwal* 1327, *Markazī: Dar Sa'adat Wazirkhān*, maṭba'asinda tab' ūlinmišdir, 1327.

23 "Istanbulda Bukhārā jam'iyat-i khayriyasi," *Tarcūmān* 52 (1909).

24 'Aynī, *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'riḫi*, p. 122; Sarfraz Khan, *Muslim Reformist Political Thought: Revivalists, Modernists and Free Will* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 119; Edward Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*, 3rd edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 198.

25 For details on the activities of Russian Muslim societies in Istanbul, see Volker Adam, *Rußlandmuslime in Istanbul am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges: die Berichterstattung osmanischer Periodika über Rußland und Zentralasien* (Frankfurt a. M, 2002).

26 *Bukhara Ta'mīm-i Ma'ārif Jam'iyat-i*, pp. 6-7.

27 "Bukhārāda tawqifāt," *Hikmet* 13 (14.07.1910), p. 7.

Society headquarters in Istanbul. This was a cause of concern for the police department. This Benevolent Society was judged by the Turkestan police officials to be an organization aimed at providing Turkestanian and Bukharan youth with Pan-Islamist education.²⁸

A contemporary study points out that *Bukharan Society* in Istanbul is a branch of the *Tarbiya-i Atfāl*.²⁹ One can suggest such statements are logically incompatible as *Bukharan Society* in Istanbul was founded in late 1909 as stated above and did not have any branches as was stated initially in its Statute.³⁰ It is possible that the Society was established, and then its representatives went to Bukhara to select students for studying in Istanbul. At the beginning of 1910, the first people selected to be sent to Istanbul were ‘Uthmān Kh^wāja, his brother ‘Atā Kh^wāja, and Mazhar Makhdūm Burhān Makhdūm ūġlī. Fiṭrat and Muqīm al-Dīn followed them. It can be assumed that the main task of this Bukharan group was to intensify the activity of the *Bukharan Society* in Istanbul and to prepare the conditions for future students from Bukhara.

As argued by Türkistanlı Abdullah Receb Baysun, Fiṭrat along with some Bukharans established *Turan Neşri Maarif Camiyeti* (Turan Society for Disseminating Education) as a second Bukharan Society in Istanbul. This Society along with *Bukhārā Ta’imim-i Ma’ārif Jam’iyat-i Khayriyasi* actively helped Bukharan students.³¹ Thus, the topic of the activity of the second *Bukharan Society* in Istanbul requires further study.

One can suggest that after commencement of the *Bukharan Society* work during 1910 by Fiṭrat and others, the headquarters of *Bukharan Society* in Istanbul decided to establish its branch in Bukhara for further selection of students. We can argue that this branch is known as the *Tarbiya-i Atfāl* Society, the founders of which were also the members of Istanbul *Bukharan Society*.

The *Tarbiya-i Atfāl* Society maintained contact with the headquarters of the *Bukharan Society* in Istanbul via Bukharan students sent there. The *Society* members used a special cipher for correspondence as they had to act very cautiously. Amir’s subordinates and representatives of the Russian Political Agency in Bukhara were suspicious towards the founders of the New Method schools, considering them proponents of revolutionary ideas. That is why members of the *Society* were selected very carefully.

28 “Kratkii otchet o nastroenii musul’anskogo naseleniia v Turkestanskom krae k oktiabriu 1914 goda,” Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, f. 102, op. 244, d. 74, ch. 84, ll. 18–40ob. cited from *Rasy i narody: Sovremennye etnicheskie i rasovye problemy*, vypusk 32 (Moscow, 2006), p. 282.

29 Ahmed Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü türkili (Türkistan) ve yakın tarihi* (İstanbul, 1942–1947), cilt 1, p. 354; Timur Kocaoglu, ed., *Reform Movements and Revolutions in Turkistan: 1900–1924* (Haarlem: SOTA, 2001), p. 20; H. Boltaboyev, *Fitrat va jadidchilik* (Toshkent: Alisher Navoiy nomidagi O‘zbekiston Milliy kutubxonasi nashriyoti, 2007), p. 19.

30 *Bukhara Ta’imim-i Ma’ārif Jam’iyat-i*, p. 8.

31 Türkistanlı Abdullah Receb Baysun, *Türkistan millî hareketleri* (İstanbul, 1945), p. 16. I express my gratitude to Prof. Hisao Komatsu for providing this source.

Considering the above-mentioned circumstances, one could say that *Bukhārā Ta'mīm-i Ma'ārif Jam'iyat-i Khayriyasi* in Istanbul and *Tarbiya-i Aḫfāl* in Bukhara were established for the preparation of a new political force against Emir's regime and the conservative clergy. Fıtrat, along with the first Bukharan group sent to Istanbul, took an active part in the preparation of this force. In addition, Fıtrat, by actively expressing his position in the Turkish press and through the publication of books in Istanbul, became the ideological mastermind behind the new elite of Bukhara.

UNITY OF MUSLIMS: FİTRAT'S FASCINATION FOR ISLAMIC REFORM IDEAS

The beginnings of the 20th century, especially the years of the Second Turkish constitutional revolution, were tumultuous times in the Ottoman capital. There had long been a Bukharan community in Istanbul, but by the early 20th century, a new generation of Bukharans began arriving in Istanbul. Istanbul might have favored the Bukharans as a choice for students as they perceived were as strong and modern compared to neighboring Iran. However, sometimes Bukharans and Turkestanis preferred going to Egypt for continuing their religious education. Adeeb Khalid points out that in these very years, "Bukharan students who came to study were thrown in the middle of the intellectual ferment of the time. It is not easy to trace their activities there, but it seems safe to say that most of them had strong affinities for the anti-imperialist Muslim modernism espoused by Islamic reform thought journals such as *Şirāt-ı Mustaqīm* and *Tā'āruf-i Muslimīn*."³² As one can see, many researchers focus on the fact that Bukharan students in Istanbul were close to reformist circles. Besides, one should not miss the fact that the Second Turkish constitutional revolution also had a great impact on the activities and social networks of young Bukharans.

Fıtrat left for Istanbul within a first group of Bukharans in spring 1910. Owing to lack of information, we still do not know what Fıtrat actually did on arrival in Istanbul. In 1914, Behbudī mentions Fıtrat as a student at *Dār al-wā'izīn*.³³ A comparative study of Fıtrat's life and works argues that he studied at *Madrasah al-wā'izīn*³⁴ or Istanbul University.³⁵

32 Adeeb Khalid, "Society and Politics in Bukhara, 1868-1920," *Central Asian Survey* 19 (2000), p. 383.

33 "Gulja i'ānasidan yubārilgān," *Ā'inalar*, *Ā'ina* 30 (1914), p. 588.

34 Edward A. Allworth, *The Preoccupations of Abdalrauf Fıtrat, Bukharan Nonconformist: An Analysis and List of His Writings* (Anor; 7) (Berlin: Des Arab. Buch, 2000), p. 12; Hisao Komatsu, 20. *Yüzyıl başlarında*, p. 3.

35 B. Qosimov, *Maslakdoshlar. Behbudiy, Ajziy, Fitrat* (Toshkent: Sharq, 1994), p. 74; Halim Kara, "Reclaiming National Literary Heritage: The Rehabilitation of Abdurauf Fitrat and Abdullhamid Cholpon in Uzbekistan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54:1 (2002), p. 125; Timur Kocaoğlu, "Abdurrauf Fıtrat: A Central Asian Intellectual with the Changing Stages of National Identity," in *Mehmet Saray Armağanı: Türk Düğnyasına Bakışlar* (İstanbul: Da Yayınları, 2003), p. 402.

The *Madrasah al-wā'izīn* was founded only in late 1912 and so we face a question: what did Fiṭrat do between mid-1910 and late 1912 in Istanbul?

Before his departure to Istanbul, Fiṭrat was interested in Islamic reform ideas and mainly read the *Şirāt-ı Mustaqīm* journal. On arrival in Istanbul in early summer 1910, Fiṭrat and his compatriots apparently found a place to live: they temporarily stayed in *Naqshbandi Özbekler Tekkesi* in Sultantepe. Over the course of the late 19th century, the *Naqshbandi Özbekler Tekkesi* in Sultantepe had emerged as a primary locus of interactions between the Central Asian arrivals and the Ottoman state and society and served to “strengthen the bonds of Islam.”³⁶ Besides, such institutions performed the function of social community and cultural center. According to Lâle Can’s research, in the first quarter of the 20th century (between 1907 and 1923) *Özbekler Tekkesi* in Sultantepe was the place where mainly young people between the ages of 21–30 stayed. Many guests stayed there for quite a long time as the *tekke* opened its doors to long-term guests—as long as they met the eligibility criteria for charitable assistance.³⁷

Along with providing shelter to new arrivals, the *Naqshbandi Özbekler Tekkesi* in Sultantepe became a meeting place for Istanbul intellectuals at the very beginning of the 20th century. The *Tekke* evidently was not only a cultural center, but also a political club as well, where various political themes were certainly discussed. Among the *Tekke* guests, there were also workers who helped to clean the courtyard and perform chores around the *tekke*. As Lâle Can states, the *tekke*-registered guests often worked at bazaars and caravanserais and other places situated nearby “as laborers or merchants”; thus, “they formed networks between the *tekke* and the old city in Istanbul.” Furthermore, they managed to form “diasporic clusters” that helped new arrivals find rooms and employment.³⁸ Fiṭrat earned his living in Istanbul working at different places. He probably used the services of the above-mentioned “diasporic clusters.” He worked as a seller in the bazaar, as a street cleaner at the madrasah and mosque, as an assistant cook, and so on. We can suggest that at first Fiṭrat who found himself penniless in the big city along with the intensification of the Bukharan Society in Istanbul mainly worked as well as prepared himself for entrance examinations at the madrasah.

Madrasah al-wā'izīn—one of the first madrasahs based on the reformed system, started its functioning on December 28, 1912.³⁹ This madrasah was established by the state to train ‘*ulamā*’ who would be conversant with non-traditional secular disciplines as well and intended to train students after their

36 Lâle Can, “Connecting People: A Central Asian Sufi Network in Turn-of-the-Century Istanbul,” *Modern Asian Studies* 46:2 (01.03.2012), pp. 375–378.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 379–386.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 388–391.

39 Ergün Mustafa, “II. Meşrutiyet döneminde medreselerin durumu ve islâh çalışmaları,” *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* cilt 30, sayı 1–2 (1982), p. 86.

graduation from conventional madrasahs to become Islamic missionaries.⁴⁰ Probably in mid-1913, Fiṭrat passed the difficult entrance examinations successfully and became the first “student of the Constantinople religious school *Madrasah al-wā’iẓīn*.”⁴¹ There Fiṭrat studied not only the main disciplines of Islamic science, but he obtained a deep knowledge of the history of Oriental literature as well.

Unfortunately, the First World War did not allow Fiṭrat and other Bukharans to complete their course of study there. Due to the outbreak of war in mid-1914, many students including Fiṭrat returned to their home countries.

On coming to Istanbul, Fiṭrat came under the influence of *Hikmet* magazine and its editor Aḥmet Hilmī,⁴² a Sufi Turkish language writer and thinker. This close relationship between them is confirmed by Fiṭrat’s active participation in the newspaper *Hikmet*. From December 1910 to May 1911, Fiṭrat published five bulky articles in *Hikmet*.⁴³ The *Hikmet* magazine had the slogan “And hold firmly and do not become divided: Unity is life, separation is death.” This slogan distinctly represented the essence of the magazine’s program and its orientation; for instance, Hilmī openly supported the idea of Islamic unity and campaigned for it. Following this *Hikmet* orientation and ideology of Islam unity, especially after the *Sunnī-Şī’a* conflict in Bukhara in early 1910, Fiṭrat in those articles in *Hikmet* started to call on Muslims, especially Bukharan people to unify and to forget religious divisions for the protection of Islam and self-preservation. Fiṭrat, seeking to promote “Unity of Muslims” of different denominations referred to Muslims as the “unified disciples of Muḥammad.”⁴⁴ Fiṭrat sees the future of the Islamic people in this very unification, asserting that “Muslims from India to Bukhara all act based on this holy testimony, to build a huge Muslim Empire which will become the center of the whole Islamic world.” Fiṭrat, as Hilmī,⁴⁵ sees Istanbul with the Ottoman sultan in charge as

40 Karacabey Salih, “Osmanlı medreselerinin son dönemi’nde hadis öğretimi,” *T. C. Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi* cilt 8, sayı 8 (1999), p. 161; Ergin Osman, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi* (İstanbul, 1977), p. 160.

41 A. Validov, O sobraniikh rukopisei v Bukharskom khanstve,” *Zapiski vostochnago otdeleniia Imperatorskogo russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva*. Tom 23 (Petrograd, 1916), p. 261.

42 Ahmad Hilmi (1865–1914) is a Sufi Turkish language writer and thinker. In 1910, he started to publish the weekly newspaper *Hikmet* and established the *Hikmet Matbaa-yi İslâmiyesi* publishing house, which published mostly works on Islamic thought.

43 Bukhârâli ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf, “Ḥasbiḥâl Bahamwâṭanân,” *Hikmet* 33 (01.12.1910) and 36 (22.12.1910); Mijmar, “Nâla’-i jânsüz yek Bukhârâ-yi,” *Hikmet* 42 (02.02.1911); Bukhârâli ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf, “Bukhârâ khan-i muḥtaram nûjâhî,” *Hikmet* 43 (06.02.1911); Bukhârâli ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf, “‘Ajabâ Bukhârâ chirâ kharâbist,” *Hikmet* 50 (30.03.1911) and 51 (08.04.1911); Bukhârâli ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf, “Khadañ-i zahrâgîn baittiḥâd-i İslâm,” *Hikmet* 57 (18.05.1911).

44 Bukhârâli ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf, “Ḥasbiḥâl Bahamwâṭanân Bukhârâ-yi,” *Hikmet* 33 (01.12.1910); 36 (22.12.1910).

45 [Huwa al-Rašid al-Muršid] Ḥasbiḥâl, “Qâr’in-i kirâmimizla,” *Hikmet* 26 (13.10.1910), p. 7.

the center of this Islamic world and expresses the willingness to participate with his “suggestions and support all [good] intentions” of the Ottoman state.⁴⁶

Fiṭrat, discussing the unity of Muslims, comes to the conclusion that ignorance is the main enemy of the Muslim community. According to him, it is precisely this ignorance that has placed all Muslims of the world under the rule of infidels. Fiṭrat supposes that due to this ignorance, Islam is perishing and vanishing off the face of the earth and its “glorious sons” are becoming “infidels’ servants.”⁴⁷ Besides, Fiṭrat thinks that Muslims see and listen to the truth and regard precepts, but because of their ignorance they understand nothing and do not want to think; they are “the followers of false or fake Islam.” The result of this, in Fiṭrat’s opinion, “is just the increase of piteous groan and sad condition.”⁴⁸ Fiṭrat tries to prove, that if Muslims, and the Bukharan people, in particular, do not unify and do not dare to attempt an “intellectual breakthrough,” they will not be able to leave anything “but powerlessness, baseness and slavery” for future generations.⁴⁹ According to his definition, “common sense is a good and radical method to awake from the dream of ignorance” to eradicate this “disastrous disease.”⁵⁰

Fiṭrat wants to see modern Muslims, especially the nation of his native Bukhara, as educated, truly patriotic people who sincerely love Islam. He declares his confidence that “if all consider themselves our Motherland’s legitimate sons,” “if all realize the high honor and good name of our Motherland,” “if all understand well the essence of Islamic Sharia laws,” and “according to the Ḥadīth *love for Motherland originates from faith*, all of them till their last breath will look for ways toward prosperity of their motherland.” Fiṭrat proceeds: “But the saddest thing is that your unhappy, loving children, sacrificing their lives for you, have not yet opened their eyes from the dream of ignorance.” Fiṭrat considers the duty of “each patriot sincerely loving Islam” to wake up the huge masses of Muslims from the dream of ignorance; the latter, in his opinion, is the main cause of slavery and disgrace.⁵¹

When Fiṭrat reflected on Europeans or, in general, on western culture, he did not reject it. On the contrary, he called on Muslims to study European sciences to be able to resist Europe during the fight for self-preservation: “Sciences developed by Christians became the reasons for their victory over Islam. According to the precept [of *Qur’ān*]... we may study this knowledge.”⁵² Thus,

46 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Khadañ-i zahrāgīn baittiḥād-i Islām,” *Ḥikmet* 57 (18.05.1911), p. 7.

47 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Ḥasbiḥāl Bahamwaṭanān Bukhārāyi,” *Ḥikmet* 36 (22.12.1910), p. 2; Mijmar, “Nāla’-i jānsūz yek Bukhārā-yi,” *Ḥikmet* 42 (02.02.1911), p. 7.

48 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Khadañ-i zahrāgīn baittiḥād-i Islām,” *Ḥikmet* 57 (18.05.1911), p. 7.

49 Mijmar, “Nāla’-i jānsūz yek Bukhārā-yi,” *Ḥikmet* 42 (02.02.1911), p. 7.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

51 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Ḥasbiḥāl Bahamwaṭanān,” *Ḥikmet* 33 (01.12.1910), p. 1.

52 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Ḥasbiḥāl Bahamwaṭanān Bukhārāyi,” *Ḥikmet* 36 (22.12.1910), p. 2.

Fiṭrat quotes the *Qur'ān* to justify his opinion and emphasizes that studying European sciences is not contrary to Sharia precepts.

Fiṭrat, addressing mainly '*ulamā'*' and naming them contributors for "the honor and conscience of Islam," calls on them to correspond with the words of the prophet: "*the scholars are the heirs of the prophet.*" Fiṭrat sees in these words of the prophet "the holiest task" for Muslim scholars "to preserve and defend holy Islam."

Fiṭrat, expressing his internal thoughts on the future of the Muslim nation tries to assess all arguments and identify the reasons why Muslim communities suffered defeats all over the world. He tries to use people's sacred feelings for drawing them into the common cause—unity of Islam under the leadership of '*ulamā'*—Muslims' "guardians of honor and good name." Fiṭrat uses harder and harder words while addressing theologians, reiterates that they were involved in the *Sunnī-Šī'a* bloodshed in Bukhara and blames them for damaging Islam.

Probably, God forbid, you do not want the progress of Islam and Muslims' peace of mind. Probably, God forbid, you do not know that the defense of the sacred motherland is your duty. Probably, God forbid, you are not protectors of Islam. You refuse to be mediators who save our religion and help the survival of our nation. Unfortunately, you became a toy used to deceive others. You did not realize that they, who called on you to destroy the pillars of Islam, made you the enemies of Islam.

Then Fiṭrat, addressing the '*ulamā'*', says, "if you are really those scholars who were blessed by the God and the prophet, act for Islam, for the liberation of Muslim peoples from the rule of infidels... Teaching only the ways of performing ablution and praying with which you load ignorant people is not beneficial for Islam."⁵³

Fiṭrat, reflecting on the Islamic greatness of the past and the contemporary situation of Muslims, considers that saving Muslims and Islam depends on: 1) founding and spreading new-method schools; 2) unity of all Muslim denominations and branches; and 3) publication and distribution of newspapers.

Fiṭrat sees the new-method school as the base for two other factors. According to him, the school "embodies hope, happiness and the existence of our motherland." The closure of the new-method school in Bukhara in 1909⁵⁴ is regarded by Fiṭrat as "the elimination of hope, happiness and the life of our mother (Bukhara) by the clergy." The Bukhara clergy, declaring the school to be "out of Sharia" by means of "lies and mercenary aims," put on the agenda "the very existence of Islam" in Bukhara.⁵⁵ It should also be emphasized here that Fiṭrat regards the death of the emir of Bukhara 'Abd al-Aḥad (1859–1910)

53 Bukhārāli 'Abd al-Ra'ūf. Ḥasbiḥāl Bahamwaṭanān," *Ḥikmet* 33 (01.12.1910), p. 1.

54 More details on Bukharan new method school, see 'Aynī, *Bukhārā inqilābining ta'rikhi*, pp. 37–71.

55 Mijmar, "Nāla'-i jānsūz yek Bukhārā-yi," *Ḥikmet* 42(02.02.1911), p. 6.

as a “huge slap in the face” of new-method school opponents, especially the clergy of Bukhara.⁵⁶

Fiṭrat expresses some sympathy toward the new emir of Bukhara ‘Ālim-khān (1880–1944) and praises him; after his accession to the throne, the emir announced some reforms in the social-political life of the Emirate of Bukhara in his first decree. Fiṭrat does not hide his inspiration for this step by the new emir and calls him “our fortunate and loving ruler” who is predisposed to opening systemic new-method schools, sending gifted young people to study in developed countries, preparing skilled officials and talented teachers.⁵⁷ Consequently, Fiṭrat on behalf of Bukharans permanently living in Istanbul expresses his willingness to support sending Bukharan students and preparing talented teachers for Bukharan schools.⁵⁸

In the first place, according to Fiṭrat, the Bukharan ‘*ulamā*’ must support the young emir’s new initiatives, meaning they should demonstrate benevolence toward the “enslaved and powerless people and destroyed motherland.” They could express their benevolence via “opening systemic new-method schools,” “granting permission to read, publish and distribute newspapers,” and “campaigning for the unity of different Muslim denominations.” By doing so the ‘*ulamā*’ “will greatly support proponents of religion, defenders of Sharia, and people’s voice and patriots.”⁵⁹

Fiṭrat sees in the people of Bukhara or his “dear brothers and respected compatriots” the power that “must find [a way] and cope with all ... problems.”

According to Fiṭrat, to achieve full “happiness every Muslim, regardless of his *mazhāb* (religious denomination) must think that [all of them] are the same Motherland’s sons and brothers who profess the same religion. Everybody who professes Islam must take a vow on the greatness of the *Qur’ān* and the honor of Prophet Muḥammad that a new-method school, reading press and unity of all Muslim denominations are not forbidden by *Ṣari’a*.”

In his concluding remarks, Fiṭrat repeats one more time that the Bukharan people’s subsequent fate depends on, as mentioned before, on the school, press and Muslim unity. Only by moving in these directions will they be able to achieve knowledge and progress, will they achieve the unity of Muslims, and via newspapers will they be able to discuss ideas common in the Islamic world. In Fiṭrat’s opinion, Muslims will be able to defend their national rights and religion. Besides, Fiṭrat campaigns in favor of reading newspapers “instead of empty legends by Maṣrāb and Abū Muslim.”

A brief review of the first publications by Fiṭrat in the Turkish press shows that before publishing his famous book *Munāẓara*, he familiarized readers with his main ideas on the Muslim world and the Bukharan emirate, in particular.

56 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Bukhārā khan-i muḥtaram nūjāhī,” *Hikmet* 43 (06.02.1911), p. 7.

57 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “‘Ajabā Bukhārā chirā kharābist,” *Hikmet* 51 (08.04.1911), p. 8.

58 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Bukhārā khan-i muḥtaram nūjāhī,” *Hikmet* 43 (06.02.1911), p. 7.

59 Bukhārāli ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, “Ḥasbiḥāl Bahamwaṭānān,” *Hikmet* 33 (01.12.1910), p. 1.

One may also assert that during his first year of staying in Istanbul he fell under the heavy influence of Hilmî, an ardent campaigner for Islamic unity and *Hikmet* magazine.

CONCLUSION

Fiṭrat's activity and, especially, his early articles and fictional works published in Istanbul played a significant role in the history of Bukhara and Turkestan Jadidism. Despite this, the information and materials covering his early activity is scarce. *Şirat-ı Mustaqîm* and *Hikmet* magazines and works by their editors had a deep influence on Fiṭrat's outlook as well as on the content of his published works. Besides, his ideology was being formed under the influence of politicians who took part in the Iranian constitutional revolution and Russian Muslim politicians who emigrated to Turkey.

Young Bukharan reformers saw their future in the establishing of Charity Societies. They saw them as a stronghold for the preparation of future politicians who could promote and actively embody in life the reforms and fight against the Emir's regime and the conservative clergy. Fiṭrat along with other Bukharans, dealing with the matter of the Bukharan Society in Istanbul on a voluntary basis, took an active part in the birth of a political force in Bukhara.

The Istanbul years gave him much. During these very years in Istanbul, Fiṭrat composed more than eight treatises, which became excellent examples of Islam unity and Islamic reform in action. Besides, he, at least, had an opportunity of direct communication with such influential ideologists of Islamic reform as Ahmet Hilmi, Mehmet Akif, Abdürreşid İbrahim and others, and he familiarized himself with their main papers. Later Fiṭrat's publications in Istanbul became ideological guidance for other Bukharan and Turkestani intellectuals.

At the beginning of his life in Istanbul, Fiṭrat found himself close to circles where reformist ideas dominated and Islamic reformist ideas were actively propagandized and discussed. In his early Istanbul period, despite his commitment to the *Şirat-ı Mustaqîm* journal, Fiṭrat was close to Şehbenderzade Ahmet Hilmi and the newspaper *Hikmet*.

Fiṭrat following the *Hikmet* ideology of Islam unity, calls on Muslims, especially Bukharan people, to unify, to forget religious divisions for the protection of Islam and self-preservation. Fiṭrat sees the future of the Islamic people in this very unification. Fiṭrat, as Hilmî, sees Istanbul with the Ottoman sultan in charge as the center of the unified Islamic world.

Fiṭrat wanted to see Bukhara as the embodiment of Islamic unity. Despite religious differences, he believed that the Bukharan people must unify and resist external enemies and fight for self-preservation. Fiṭrat's ideal is Islamic unity. Considering the unity of Muslims, he does not deviate from *Hikmet's* orientation and continues developing this ideology, at least, in Bukhara.

Young Fiṭrat, fascinated by Islamic reform ideas, believed that only true religion, true faith, true Islam can ensure happiness and prosperity for Turke-

stan, especially Bukharan society. At the same time, he thought that Muslims should study modern sciences and considered this their salvation from ignorance and backwardness. Fitrat, who rejected Jadidism initially, became one of its main ideologists in Bukhara and Russian Turkestan.