



The Political Activity Of Mirza Salimbek

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Abstract: This article analyzes the political activity of Mirza Salimbek, his attitude toward the Jadid movement, and his role in the socio-political processes of the Bukhara Emirate. The study highlights Salimbek's firm stance in defending the interests of the local population, his complex relations with the emirate administration, and the historical reasons for his opposition to the Jadids. Particular attention is given to his religious and social views, commitment to traditional Islamic values, and his critical perception of Western modernization. The article also examines Salimbek's interactions with contemporaries such as Abdurauf Fitrat, Mirzo Nasrullo, and Fayzulla Khojaev, as well as his post-1920 activities, offering a new perspective on his place in Bukhara's history.

Keywords: Mirza Salimbek, Emirate of Bukhara, Amir Abdulahad Khan, Jadidism, Traditionalists, Abdurauf Fitrat, Mirzo Nasrullo, F. I. Kolesov invasion, Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, Islamic values, political activity, ideological perspectives, waqf administration, Russian Empire, Tarikh-i Salimi.

INTRODUCTION: Mirza Salimbek ibn Muhammad Rahim (1848–1930) was a historian, poet, statesman, and diplomat who lived during the Bukhara Emirate and the Bukhara People's Republic. He served as governor of several districts and provinces within the Emirate of Bukhara, carried out diplomatic missions on behalf of the emirs, and participated in negotiations with the British. After the Red Army's Bukhara operation in 1920, he was arrested, but released a year later. He then worked as an administrator under the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, participated in historical research, and managed the library of ancient manuscripts. In his memoirs, Mirza Salimbek describes the history of the Bukhara Emirate, the conditions in its provinces, the historical geography of various regions, and the activities of the Jadids in the Emirate of

Bukhara.

METHODS

Mirza Salimbek was one of the prominent statesmen of the Emirate of Bukhara, known for his social and political activities. His political career was closely connected with the changes taking place in the political environment of both the Emirate of Bukhara and Central Asia as a whole. Owing to his intellectual capacity and political vision, Mirza Salimbek left a notable mark in history as a figure who significantly influenced the political life of Bukhara society.

When examining Mirza Salimbek's political activity, it is important to briefly describe the early stages and context of his career. His political worldview and understanding of governance began to take shape in his youth. His education, the religious milieu in which he was trained, and the political circumstances of his time all contributed to shaping Muhammad Salimbek ibn Muhammad Rahimbek's interest in politics and his subsequent activity. His early political engagement, stemming from his interest in religious teachings and social issues, was primarily directed toward establishing practical relations with others. During this period, alongside his scholarly pursuits, Mirza Salimbek sought to study religious and political conditions, gradually developing his own political stance and outlook on social problems.

Mirza Salimbek's political initiatives and efforts directed toward social transformation not only influenced the political structure of Bukhara society but also had a positive impact on its diplomatic relations. His political decisions distinguished him as an influential figure who played a significant role in major political events and social changes within the Emirate of Bukhara.

Understanding the main principles and ideas that shaped Mirza Salimbek's political activity helps to better grasp his connection to social transformations and political shifts within society. Several factors played an important role in the formation of his political views, including his education, religious beliefs, and the broader political dynamics within the Emirate of Bukhara and the Central Asian region in general.

Mirza Salimbek's political career was directly tied to the political traditions established within the Emirate of Bukhara. The state officials of the Emirate were conventionally divided into two major groups: ulama and umara. The ulama were Islamic scholars and religious authorities who played a crucial role in religious, educational, and legal affairs of society, while the umara represented the administrative system responsible for organizing, distributing, and managing the state's financial resources.

The most significant political struggle within the Emirate occurred precisely between these two groups—the umara and the ulama. These internal political conflicts explain how Mirza Salimbek's political decisions eventually led him to openly criticize and oppose the Jadids.

Mirza Salimbek served in the fiscal branch of the state administration, which was responsible for financial policy, budgeting, taxation, and debt management. This position placed him among the umara class of political figures.

The political processes of the Emirate of Bukhara at that time were characterized by the complex relations between the umara and the ulama groups. In many studies devoted to this period, the accounts of ulama representatives (such as memoirs, correspondence, waqf documents, and periodical publications) occupy a dominant position, while the umara are often overlooked. One reason for this imbalance is that the so-called “progressive” Jadids mainly emerged from the ranks of the ulama. Consequently, during the Soviet era, research on Bukhara's political history was largely centered on the activities of the Jadids.

In the administrative hierarchy, career advancement usually began with education, but promotion to higher ranks was impossible without the patronage of senior officials. In the fiscal administration, a madrasa education was not strictly required for future service. Typically, such individuals started their careers as apprentices under high-ranking officials and later entered service as amlokdors (local governors). If they were successful, they could be promoted to the position of bek (district governor) of smaller territories and eventually to higher administrative posts overseeing larger regions. A clear example of this process can be seen in Mirza Salimbek's own experience: in 1868, upon the recommendation of his uncle Abdulazizbek, he was appointed as secretary to Ostonaqulbiy ibn Abbasbiy, the governor (bek) of the Ziyovuddin district.

One of the first internal political crises that arose in the Emirate of Bukhara during this period occurred when Amir Muzaffar's military forces were defeated by the troops of the Russian Empire. At that time, the Amir's eldest son, Abdumalik Tura, took advantage of the situation and managed to attract many Uzbek tribal nobles and high-ranking officials of the judicial system to his side. Realizing the political weakness of his state and the growing internal disorder, Amir Muzaffar was compelled to form an alliance with an external power — the colonial administration. The colonial authorities assisted the Amir in suppressing internal unrest and restoring his domestic authority. However, this

assistance came at a price: it effectively turned the Emirate into a protectorate, a status that was most evident in the realm of foreign policy.

After serving for six months under Ostonaqulbiy ibn Abbasbiy, Mirza Salimbek was sent, by order of Amir Muzaffar, to the city of Tashkent — the administrative center of the Turkestan General-Governorate — to observe the actions of the Governor-General. This mission represented an important step in establishing direct communication and diplomatic relations between the Emirate of Bukhara and the colonial administration.

The Russian Empire sought to control its protectorate, the Emirate of Bukhara, through two political institutions. One of them was the representative of the Governor-General of Turkestan in Tashkent, who was subordinate to the Ministry of War; the other was the Russian Political Agency, located in the city of Kogon, which was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The appointment of N. V. Charikov as the permanent representative of Turkestan Governor-General N. O. Rozenbakh in Bukhara aimed to ensure that the Governor-General's office remained directly informed about the situation within the Emirate. The Russian imperial authorities viewed the ulama as a more challenging group to control, though they remained an important social force. The umara, on the other hand, maintained closer relations with Russia — many of them spoke Russian and were militarily dependent on the Russian government. In this context, Amir Muzaffar appointed Mirza Salimbek as Bukhara's permanent representative in Tashkent.

In order to strengthen its control over the Emirate of Bukhara, the Russian Empire established the office of the Imperial Political Agency in Bukhara in 1885. From that time onward, the Emir of Bukhara became fully subordinate to the officials of the Political Agency and was prohibited from maintaining relations with foreign states without their consent. Russian garrisons were stationed along the Emirate's borders, and Bukhara effectively lost its independence, becoming a semi-colonial state.

Mirza Salimbek's service in the fiscal administration played a decisive role in his subsequent rise to a number of high-ranking state positions. His primary ambition was to attain the post of qushbegi — the head of fiscal and administrative affairs.

His political strategy consisted in forming a temporary alliance with the ulama in order to consolidate his position among the umara. By the order of the Amir in 1885, Mirza Salimbek was appointed amlokdor (district administrator) of the Khutfar and Samjon districts and

received the rank of miroxur (court official in charge of the stables). His loyal service in these lower administrative posts became the foundation for his subsequent advancement to higher positions within the Emirate.

During the period of his service, Amir Muzaffar passed away, and his son Amir Abdulahad ascended the throne. Upon his accession, Amir Abdulahad made an official visit to St. Petersburg, the imperial capital of Russia. Mirza Salimbek was among the officials accompanying the Amir and stayed in St. Petersburg for 62 days.

During the reign of Amir Abdulahad, Mirza Salimbek continued to rise through the administrative hierarchy, holding several important posts. He served as mirshab (chief of the night watch) for five years. In his memoirs, he recalls:

"Thus, in the year 1306 of the Hijri (1889), the year of the Mouse, I served as the head of the night guards in Bukhara for five years and two months, successfully fulfilling my duties and maintaining good relations with the people of Bukhara."

One of the archival documents relating to his mirshab service records an incident involving two students from Samarkand who resided in the cells of the Ayoziy Madrasa. Having cooked soup and left the room locked, they inadvertently caused a fire. Following this event, Sadr Mulla Abdushukur and mirshab Mirza Salimbek immediately carried out an investigation. The consequences of the incident were eliminated, and the damaged cells were subsequently reassigned to other students.

In 1892, Amir of Bukhara rewarded Mirza Salimbek with luxurious garments and an ornamented horse and appointed him as the bek (governor) of Yakkabog'. In the Emirate of Bukhara, the position of bek was not hereditary. Upon a bek's death, his property was transferred to the state treasury, and his heirs could not claim ownership of it — they could only later serve in the state administration if appointed. The Amir had full authority to replace a bek at any time, which meant that all subordinate officials under that bek would also be dismissed.

Upon arriving in Yakkabog', Mirza Salimbek appointed amlokdors (district administrators) to each territorial unit within the beklik. He ruled the Yakkabog' district for five years. After completing his tenure as governor of Yakkabog', Mirza Salimbek was appointed by the Amir to the governorship of Nurota. During his service as governor of Nurota (1898–1902), he was elevated to the rank of amiratpanoh bek (a higher administrative status). He moved there with his family to begin his official duties.

In 1898, an extremely harsh winter struck the Nurota region, killing all camels, sheep, goats, horses, and other livestock in the desert. In his memoirs, Mirza Salimbek recalls this period, noting the immense suffering endured by the population. He emphasized that during his governorship of Nurota, he maintained good relations with the local people.

While in office, Mirza Salimbek initiated the restoration of a pool located within the renowned pilgrimage site at the center of Nurota. He also repaired the mausoleum (dahma) of Shaykh Abulhasan Nuri and endowed it with two shops from his personal property as waqf (pious endowment).

By that time, the dam built under Abdullakhan II to collect spring rainwater in Nurota had fallen into disrepair. Mirza Salimbek began efforts to restore part of the dam and intended to report his progress to the Amir. However, before he could do so, the Amir appointed him governor of the Boysun beklik, which led to the suspension of the dam's restoration.

Mirza Salimbek governed Boysun between 1902 and 1905. According to some sources, he built the "Khalosiya" madrasa in Boysun, endowed land and property as waqf, and initiated restoration works on several monuments — although he did not mention these activities in his memoirs.

During his tenure as bek of Boysun, Mirza Salimbek oversaw the construction of the Boysun bathhouse (hammam) between 1902 and 1905. The structure was considered a remarkable example of architectural art of its time. The bathhouse consisted mainly of domes and arches and was built approximately three meters below ground level to maintain constant warmth. The building included three main sections: an entrance hall, a central chamber, and a heated room. The first room served as a changing area, followed by a large domed central space leading to the heated section. The heating system operated through an underground fire channel that warmed the stones, producing heat that was believed to have therapeutic effects for ailments such as back and joint pain. The dome featured a skylight to provide natural illumination.

The bathhouse served not only hygienic and health-related purposes but also functioned as an important social and cultural gathering place. Historical sources indicate that in 1936, the Soviet authorities demolished the Boysun bathhouse as a "relic of the past," and its baked bricks were reused in other construction projects.

At the beginning of the 20th century, one of Boysun's most renowned chopagons (bodyguards) — Sattor Ochiliev — served as Mirza Salimbek's personal guard. This illustrates Mirza Salimbek's ability to gather

around himself members of various local social strata, including respected and influential figures, thereby consolidating his position not only in the political and administrative spheres but also within the social life of the region.

Sattor Ochiliev is remembered as a courageous and devoted man, widely admired by the people of his time. His service under Mirza Salimbek testifies to the strong ties the bek of Boysun maintained with the local community. However, during the subsequent Soviet purges, Sattor Ochiliev, like thousands of other brave and educated individuals from Boysun, became a victim of repression.

According to local legends, during one of the public gatherings in Boysun, Mirza Salimbek threw his pointed cloak (chakmon) onto the ground and announced that whoever could tear it to shreds would receive a generous reward. This act was a symbolic contest intended to demonstrate the strength and courage of local champions. One of Boysun's famous wrestlers, Ermamat Polvon, successfully completed the challenge by tearing the cloak apart with his bare hands. This legend illustrates Mirza Salimbek's deep connection with the traditions, customs, and communal life of the local people.

It was during this period that the first conflicts between Mirza Salimbek and the Bukhara ulama began to emerge. In particular, after he was dismissed from office due to the slander of Qazi Sirojiddin, he returned to the city of Bukhara. Nevertheless, Mirza Salimbek never openly criticized any of the prominent ulama, which reflects his prudent political strategy. His relationship with the religious scholars was largely shaped by the broader socio-political tensions between the ulama and the umara in the Emirate of Bukhara.

Later, taking into account Mirza Salimbek's administrative experience, Amir Abdulahad Khan began appointing him to the most complex and challenging regions of the Emirate. In 1905, he was assigned as the governor (hakim) of the Sherabad Beklik, located on the right bank of the Amu Darya, at the edge of the desert plains. Mirza Salimbek governed Sherabad for four years.

During his tenure, Amir Abdulahad Khan summoned him to Karmana to attend a festive celebration held in honor of the princes. His invitation to this banquet indicates that he was one of the few highly respected and trusted courtiers of the emir. Amir Abdulahad Khan, wishing that Mirza Salimbek would continue to serve him loyally in the future, presented him with pure gold coins and numerous gifts (nisor). Likewise, the heir apparent, Prince Amir Sayyid Alim Khan, continued this gesture, bestowing gold coins upon him to ensure his

future service.

The celebrations lasted for twelve days. At night, lanterns were lit, and various performances such as equestrian games and circus shows were held. Each evening, Russian entertainers staged circus performances. During this period, Amir Abdulahad Khan conferred upon Mirza Salimbek the title of Dodkhoh (chief judge) and gifted him several luxurious robes, a gold-embroidered turban, and a horse with ornate trappings. At the conclusion of the festivities, he further presented him with a fur coat, gold-braided black trousers, and a belt.

On the right bank of the Amu Darya, opposite the Balkh Beklik, the colonial Russian administration had, over several years, constructed a city with eleven gates, known as the Patta-Hisar settlement. The walls were equipped with embrasures for rifle fire. In addition, a special building housed the commander of the permanent garrison, who resided there with numerous soldiers and an abundance of weapons.

Mirza Salimbek, in response, ordered the construction of a building in the same area and stationed his own men there to observe the actions of the Russians. Every month, he personally visited Patta-Hisar and held meetings with high-ranking Russian officials.

At the beginning of the 20th century, during his tenure as governor of Sherabad, the Old Termez was demolished, and the construction of New Termez began. The military settlement of Patta-Hisar expanded rapidly. Amir Abdulahad Khan eventually ceded the territory between the Amu Darya and Surkhandarya rivers to the Russian Empire.

Mirza Salimbek repeatedly wrote letters to the emir urging him to reconsider this decision. During the construction of New Termez, building materials were taken from historical monuments, leading to the destruction of dozens of structures and architectural relics. Using his authority, Mirza Salimbek protested against the demolition of historical sites. In particular, he intervened to preserve the mausoleum of Iso at-Termizi, to repair historical monuments in the Termez district, and to protect the area around the mausoleum of Hakim at-Termizi from irrigation works.

After the Russian Empire occupied Central Asia, it sought to transform the region into a raw-material base. As early as the 19th century, new lands were developed for cotton cultivation. When the Bukhara Emirate became a Russian protectorate, the Surkhan oasis began to be turned into a "Second Fergana." Although the Emir of Bukhara formally donated the Termez territory to Russia, it remained under the emirate's jurisdiction on paper.

The coexistence of Islamic law (sharia) and Russian military regulations created a legal vacuum for Russian citizens in the area. Disputes over land and water rights became constant sources of tension. Moreover, the lack of state funds for land development slowed the process further. Under such conditions, the Tsarist administration encouraged private capital investment, granting long-term land leases and concessions across Central Asia.

The largest concession in the Bukhara Emirate was established in the present-day Termez region and became known as "Sherabad." From that point on, the socio-economic life of the Termez area became closely tied to the activities of this concession.

A Russian military engineer stationed in the Termez garrison, A.G. Ananyev, sought to lease land near Termez and approached Ostonakul Qushbegi, one of the leading officials of the Bukhara Emirate. Mirza Salimbek, as governor of Sherabad, held negotiations with Ananyev at the guesthouse beneath the Sherabad fortress, agreeing to lease the land for an annual rent of 400 rubles.

After Mirza Salimbek's reassignment, Ananyev expanded his land acquisition efforts. In 1910, he submitted a memorandum to the Governor-General of Turkestan, outlining the economic potential of developing the Surkhan oasis. The Turkestan Governor-General, in turn, forwarded Ananyev's proposal to the Russian political agent in Bukhara, A.A. Izvolsky, emphasizing in September 1910 that the development of lands in Sherabad and Boysun was of not only economic but also military and political importance.

In 1911, A.G. Ananyev published a book titled "Irrigating the Sherabad Oasis with the Waters of the Surkhan River", promoting his development plans for the region.

During his tenure as the governor (begi) of Sherobod, Mirza Salimbek maintained a firm stance in defending the interests of the local population, as evidenced by historical sources, including his own memoirs. In his writings, he recounts that certain representatives of the colonial administration offered him bribes to facilitate the purchase of new lands; however, he categorically rejected such offers.

Following this incident, representatives of the Russian administration appealed to Qushbegi Ostonaqulbiy, requesting his mediation in resolving the issue. Ostonaqulbiy, in turn, approached Salimbek, asking him to comply with their request. Nonetheless, Mirza Salimbek explained the situation, emphasizing that the proposed project contradicted the interests of the local population, and he therefore refused to implement it.

This incident illustrates that certain tensions existed in Mirza Salimbek's political relations with the colonial administration and that he remained uncompromising in defending the interests of his compatriots. In this regard, his period of service as governor of Sherobod can be regarded not only as an example of administrative activity but also as a manifestation of political struggle aimed at protecting public interests.

Mirza Salimbek maintained good relations with both the Russian inhabitants of Termiz and the population of the Sherobod district. In 1908, in order to resolve land and irrigation problems, he organized a communal hashar (collective labor) to expand the Jarquvon canal up to the village of Zang. At Zang, on May 12, the canal branched off and began supplying water to the surrounding lands. Additionally, Mirza Salimbek had another canal dug in this area, which came to be known as the "Bekariq."

In 1909, Amir Abdulahad summoned Mirza Salimbek to Karmana, appointing Miroxur Muhammadqulbek as his successor in Sherobod. In Karmana, Mirza Salimbek was granted a decree (farmon) appointing him as governor (begi) with authority to collect zakat (alms tax) in Shahrisabz. As part of the appointment, he received three complete sets of upper garments, a turban embroidered with gold, a horse with an elaborately woven saddle, and other honorary gifts. During their meeting, the Amir spoke with Mirza Salimbek, remarking that he himself, as well as several of his officials, had grown old. In response, Mirza Salimbek assured him of his unwavering loyalty and willingness to serve the Emirate until the end of his life.

The Bug'chabardor Yovqochti To'qsabo was assigned to accompany Mirza Salimbek from Bukhara to Shahrisabz to ensure his safety. In Shahrisabz, historically known as "Keshi Dilkash," Mirza Salimbek served as governor for four years. The Shahrisabz district consisted of thirteen amloks and was primarily inhabited by members of the Kenegas tribe. Salimbek described them as follows: "Although they outwardly appear poor and destitute, they are in fact rough-tempered and ill-mannered; they harbor a deep resentment toward the people of Bukhara and, if given the opportunity, would prefer not to remain subjects of the Bukharan ruler."

Historically, there had long been animosity between the Kenegas and the Manghit clans in Shahrisabz. According to the work Gulshan al-Muluk, during the reign of the Ashtarkhanid ruler Abulfayz Khan, one of the founders of the Manghit dynasty, Muhammad Hakimbiy, was granted the rank of parvonachi and dispatched to Shahrisabz. However, the Kenegas tribe refused to submit to the envoy sent by the khan and instead appointed Ibrohimbiy Kenegas as their own

ruler. Thus, what began as a local power struggle within the Bukhara Khanate and later the Emirate evolved into a prolonged conflict between the Manghit and Kenegas factions, exhausting the state through continuous warfare. During the reign of Amir Nasrullo, Shahrisabz was finally subdued after relentless military campaigns. Consequently, the local Kenegas population maintained a traditionally hostile attitude toward the emirate's administration. Nevertheless, despite these circumstances, Mirza Salimbek successfully governed Shahrisabz for four years, maintaining good relations with its inhabitants.

The northern and eastern parts of Shahrisabz were mountainous, inhabited by Tajiks who referred to themselves as Chaghatays. By this time, dissatisfaction among the local population—particularly among the Kenegas tribe of Shahrisabz—toward the Amir had intensified. In 1913, during his tenure as governor, Mirza Salimbek had a dispute with Qushbegi Mirza Nasrulla and was consequently dismissed from his post. The reason was that Salimbek had dismissed a corrupt official responsible for market supervision in Shahrisabz and replaced him with an honest man named Solih Jebachi. The former official then traveled to Bukhara and lodged a complaint against Salimbek with Qushbegi Mirza Nasrulla. Nasrulla subsequently sent several letters to Salimbek, openly expressing his dissatisfaction with his actions. In turn, Mirza Salimbek responded sharply, criticizing the Qushbegi's interference. These exchanges ultimately led to his removal from the governorship.

Years earlier, Mirza Nasrulla had already prevented Salimbek from being included in the next diplomatic mission to St. Petersburg. Mirza Salimbek later recalled that during his governorship in Shahrisabz, Mirza Nasrulla confiscated property worth 50,000 tanga from him and, upon his return to Bukhara, seized an additional 150,000 tanga worth of possessions.

The political conflict with Mirza Nasrulla significantly influenced Mirza Salimbek's subsequent political activities. In particular, he maintained a lasting sense of resentment toward both Nasrulla and the Jadid reformers supported by him. As a result, Mirza Salimbek joined forces with Burhoniddin and his allies in opposition to Nasrulla and his supporters. In the ensuing political developments, Mirza Salimbek achieved a series of victories over his rivals.

It is noteworthy that the available sources contain no evidence of Mirza Salimbek criticizing any prominent Bukharan ulama. This appears to have been a deliberate element of his political strategy, aimed at avoiding unnecessary enmity with influential religious figures that could undermine his own standing.

Likewise, he remained largely neutral toward Burhoniddin and his relatives, refraining from expressing either praise or criticism of them. Among the qozikalons (chief judges), one of those he held in particularly high esteem was Abdushukur, whom he described in very favorable terms. Abdushukur had served as qozikalon when Mirza Salimbek was appointed mirshab (chief of night patrol), and Salimbek expressed great respect for him. Abdushukur died in 1306 AH (1889 CE), and was succeeded by Badriddin, although little is known about the relationship between the latter and Mirza Salimbek.

Having served under Amirs Muzaffar Khan, Abdulahad Khan, and Olim Khan, Mirza Salimbek retained considerable political influence within the Emir's court. Despite repeated complaints against him by his rivals, his loyal service to the Amirs ensured his continued presence at court and allowed him to hold several important administrative posts.

The revolutionary events of 1917 in the Bukhara Emirate marked a crucial turning point in Mirza Salimbek's later political career, fundamentally altering the balance of political forces within the state. As a result, on 29 June 1917, Mulla Muhammadsharif was dismissed from the position of qozikalon and replaced by his predecessor, Mulla Mir Burhoniddin. Mulla Izomiddin was appointed as the rais (mayor) of Bukhara, while Mirza Salimbek received the high court title of Parvonachi. He was entrusted with overseeing trade and communication routes to Kabul, Mashhad, Urgench, Khujand, and Tashkent, as well as supervising the collection of zakat within the territory of Bukhara. In recognition of his service, he was presented with honorary garments, a richly decorated horse with golden trappings, and other prestigious gifts—signs of the Amir's particular favor.

In the same year, the Russian Political Agency in Bukhara expressed its dissatisfaction with the internal situation to Amir Olim Khan. Its representative, S. V. Chirkin, described Mirza Salimbek as "a wise and honest man," and even discussed the possibility of appointing him as Qushbegi (chief minister). Eventually, Mirza Salimbek was appointed to the position of lower qushbegi (zakotchiyi poyon).

During the period of the Bolshevik commissioner F. Kolesov's military aggression against Bukhara (March 1918), Mirza Salimbek was appointed to the post of lower qushbegi (deputy governor) and took command of the Bukhara State army. He also led the delegation of Bukhara representatives who conducted negotiations with F. I. Kolesov. Acting on behalf of the Emir of Bukhara, he signed the Qiziltepa Agreement with the Bolsheviks at the Qiziltepa railway station on

March 25, 1918.

A year later, in 1919, he was sent to Tashkent to negotiate the issue of water shortage in Bukhara, and in his memoirs, he recorded the devastation caused by the Bolsheviks in the region. In addition, he reportedly traveled to the Trans-Caspian territories to establish contact with the British. Emir Alimkhan, in his memoirs, noted that Mirza Salimbek and Abdurauf, the head of a caravan, had been dispatched to the city of Chorjuy (modern-day Turkmenabat) to seek assistance from the British in preserving the independence of the Emirate. However, by that time, the British had already left Chorjuy.

In March 1920, Mirza Salimbek was dismissed from his post as lower qushbegi and subsequently served as the governor (bek) of Chorjuy from March to August 1920.

Mirza Salimbek's relations with the Bukhara Jadids occupy a special place in his political activity. In his memoirs, he provides extensive information about the Jadid movement. Although he did not openly support Jadid schools, he acknowledged their achievements in the field of education. Notably, Mirza Salimbek's own children were educated in Jadid schools.

His dissatisfaction with the new-method schools and the Jadids stemmed mainly from the events following the Russian Revolution — particularly the failed Bolshevik attack on Bukhara in 1918 under Kolesov's command, and the subsequent 1920 invasion, which had severe economic and political consequences for Bukhara. However, these events alone do not fully explain his opposition to the Jadids. Another contributing factor may have been the rivalry between Mirza Salimbek and Mirza Nasrullah over the position of qushbegi.

According to Mirza Salimbek, Mirza Nasrullah indirectly enabled the Jadids to gain influence within the Emirate. The replacement of Chief Qazi Burhoniddin with Sharifjon Makhdum in 1917 played an important role in shaping Salimbek's attitude. As a respected scholar, Mirza Salimbek did not dare to criticize Sharifjon Makhdum openly, and thus did not label him as a Jadid. Nevertheless, the alliance between the Jadids, including Sharifjon Makhdum and Mirza Nasrullah, compelled Salimbek to side with Burhoniddin and his allies.

In Salimbek's view, the emergence of the Jadid movement was closely linked to Mirza Nasrullah, whom he blamed for it. Between 1910 and 1917, Mirza Nasrullah was among the most influential figures in the Emirate. Salimbek wrote that the qushbegis had invited many Jadids from different parts of Bukhara to the capital, where they later consolidated their power. However, he never criticized the most prominent Jadid

authors of 1910 by name in his works.

Mirza Salimbek's political activity had a direct impact on the historical transformations within the Bukhara Emirate. His opposition to the ruling authorities and his rivalry with Mirza Nasrullah played a significant role in shaping his political stance. His disagreements with the Jadids were primarily rooted in ideological, political, and social differences. He rejected the Jadids' ideas, particularly their acceptance of the West as a model of progress. For Salimbek, the preservation of Islamic traditions and values in society was paramount. The Jadids' reformist zeal and their drive for change prompted him to criticize them, viewing their actions as a source of instability and disorder within society.

The political tensions between Salimbek and Mirza Nasrullah were influenced by numerous historical factors and had a direct effect on Salimbek's relations with the ruling elite. Mirza Nasrullah regarded Salimbek as a political rival, which deepened their mutual hostility.

As a representative of the conservative forces within Bukhara, Mirza Salimbek opposed reforms on the basis of sharia law. He argued that the reforms carried out in Russia and Turkey could not serve as appropriate models for Bukhara. Therefore, instead of adapting to the demands of the time, Salimbek defended Bukhara's governance and society through the prism of religious and legal values.

His memoirs also provide detailed accounts of his relationships with various emirs, his struggles against political opponents, and the ways he used alliances within the palace to secure influence. These conflicts and alliances played an important role in his efforts to maintain political authority. His worldview—especially his devotion to Islam and his opposition to Western influence—profoundly shaped both his writings and his political career.

The main motive behind Salimbek's resistance to reforms within the Emirate was his desire to preserve social and religious stability. He viewed the growing influence of Western ideas and the Jadids' reformist activities as a threat to Bukhara's cultural identity. Consequently, in both his writings and political actions, he consistently favored the preservation of traditional values over modernization.

On the other hand, Mirza Salimbek had no close relationship with Fayzulla Khojaev, the first leader of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic established in 1920. Several factors may explain this: Fayzulla Khojaev's youth, his secular education, and his limited integration with the traditionalist Bukhara elite. Another possible factor was the economic rivalry between the Khojaev merchant family of Tashkent and

Salimbek's own background. Most importantly, Salimbek accused Fayzulla Khojaev of financing the Bolshevik attempt to seize Bukhara in 1918 — an event that greatly discredited the Jadid movement.

Nevertheless, after the overthrow of the Emirate and the establishment of the Jadid-led Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, Salimbek was released from prison in 1921 and began working for the People's Commissariat of Education. He also worked at the Bukhara Public Library and in Bukhstariskom — the Committee for the Preservation of Ancient Art and Natural Monuments.

At that time, the Commissariat of Education was headed by Abdurauf Fitrat, while the waqf administration, which oversaw Bukhstariskom, was chaired by Muhammad Sharifjon Makhдум (Sadri Ziyo). Fitrat, Salimbek, and two uncles of Emir Alimkhan were members of the Bukhara Historical Society. Mirza Salimbek also worked alongside several leading intellectuals, former nobles, and officials of the Emirate, including the former qushbegi Ostonakulbiy, who were then active in the Soviet administration. Thus, owing to the demands of the new era and his scholarly qualifications, Mirza Salimbek managed to cooperate with his former ideological opponents.

According to historical sources, after the revolution Mirza Salimbek continued to respect Abdurauf Fitrat as a scholar, yet he refrained from direct communication with him. This attitude may have been influenced by the devastation caused by the alliance between the Bolsheviks and the Jadids during F. I. Kolesov's 1918 invasion or by the subsequent 1920 incursion into Bukhara.

Although Mirza Salimbek later worked alongside Abdurauf Fitrat after 1920, the characteristics that Fitrat used to describe the qadimchilik (traditionalist) faction correspond closely to Mirza Salimbek himself. Even Salimbek's activities within the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic—particularly his work in the waqf administration, one of the republic's most important institutions—were consistent with his broader conception of historical continuity.

However, in many ways, the 1920 invasion of Bukhara led by Mikhail Frunze, the establishment of the new government, and the abolition of the shar'i (Islamic legal) administration marked the end of the historical epoch in which Mirza Salimbek had lived and worked.

Mirza Salimbek's political activity, his intellectual perspectives, and his critical stance toward certain religious ideas, as well as his reflections on the socio-political environment of his time, help to more clearly define his position and influence within society. His approach to navigating the political struggles of his era and his desire to preserve religious and social values

distinguish him as a unique historical figure. A deeper examination of his ideological outlook provides valuable insight into the nature and significance of his political engagement.

CONCLUSION

The political activity of Mirza Salimbek represents a transitional moment in the history of Bukhara — a period when the traditional order faced profound ideological and structural challenges. Although he later showed a degree of respect toward reformist figures such as Abdurauf Fitrat, Salimbek remained deeply rooted in conservative intellectual traditions and consistently opposed the Jadid movement's radical social and cultural reforms. His involvement in the Waqf Administration of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic reveals his attempt to preserve religious and historical continuity amid the collapse of the old emirate and the rise of new Soviet institutions. The 1920 invasion of Bukhara and the abolition of the sharʼi administration marked not only the end of an era in Central Asian governance but also the conclusion of Salimbek's own historical epoch. Studying his worldview and political stance thus provides valuable insight into how traditional elites responded to revolutionary transformations, and how their intellectual legacy shaped the complex cultural and political identity of early twentieth-century Bukhara.

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