

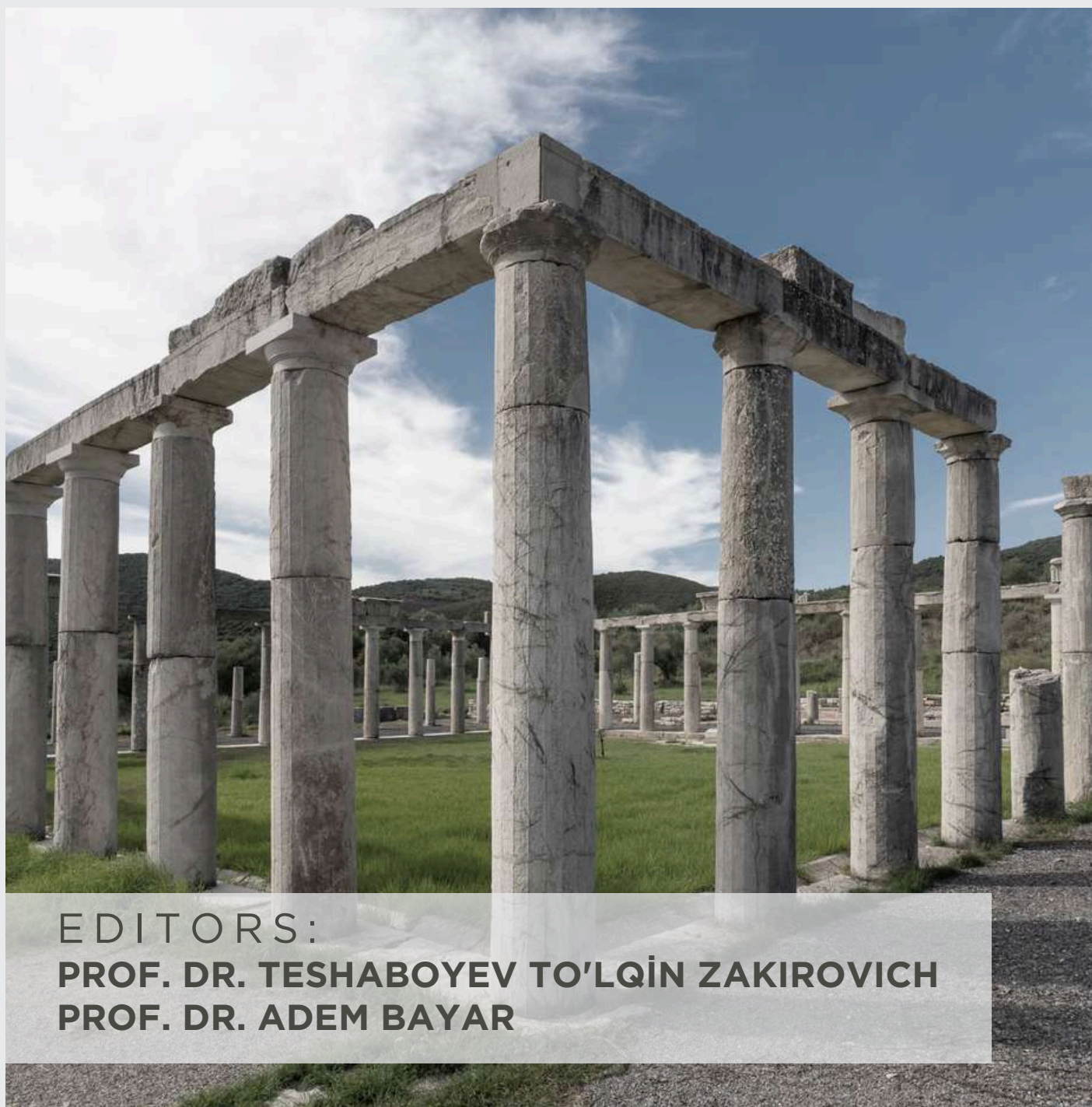
6TH INTERNATIONAL PALESTRA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS BOOK

JULY 27-29, 2025 | SKOPJE, N. MACEDONIA



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PARTICIPATION FROM
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PROF. DR. ADEM BAYAR

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Associate Prof. Sarvinoz SAMADOVA

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THE INFLUENCE OF JADID THEATER ON THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH

Associate Prof. Sarvinoz SAMADOVA

Bukhara State University, Faculty of History and Law, Department of Social and Political Sciences.

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/*0000-0002-1486-8340

Abstract: This article explores the significant role of the Jadid movement in the evolution of theater arts and its broader cultural and educational impact on society, particularly among the youth. The Jadids progressive Muslim intellectuals and reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries used theater as a powerful medium to challenge ignorance, backwardness, and social stagnation. Through the creation and performance of plays rooted in real social issues, they sought to awaken public consciousness and promote a vision of a more enlightened and just society.

The article delves into the key themes that dominated Jadid theatrical works, including justice, freedom, equality, and the urgent need for modern education. These plays not only entertained but also educated, becoming a subtle yet forceful means of socio-political commentary and moral instruction. The stage became a platform for addressing issues such as illiteracy, gender inequality, colonial oppression, and religious dogmatism, aiming to foster a spirit of critical thinking and civic responsibility.

Particular attention is given to the spiritual development of youth as one of the Jadids' central concerns. Their plays often portrayed young protagonists grappling with moral dilemmas, seeking knowledge, and striving to contribute to the betterment of their communities. By doing so, the Jadids aimed to instill values of self-awareness, ethical conduct, and a sense of purpose in the younger generation.

According to Behbudi, a school alone is not sufficient for enlightenment. A nation needs a mirror in which it can see both its flaws and virtues. This truth inspired him to establish theaters and create plays for them. As a result, one of the first works of Uzbek drama, "Padarkush" ("The Parricide"), was created.

Hamza Hakimzoda Niyozzi was one of the Jadids who held an important place in Uzbek literature due to his activities in the field of theater and his contributions to Uzbek theater. For this reason, the large theater building in Tashkent and many places in Uzbekistan are named after him. His first success in this field was the work "Zaharli hayot yoxud ishq qurbonlari" ("Poisonous life or victims of love").

One of the active representatives of the Jadid movement in Tashkent, Abdulla Avloniy, wrote the plays "Pinak", "Biz va Siz" ("We and You"), "Portugaliya inqilobi" ("The Portuguese revolution"),

“Advokatlik osonmi?” (“Is being a lawyer easy?”), and “Ikki muhabbat” (“Two Loves”). In his works, Avloniy revealed the stagnant state of traditional life and addressed harmful habits such as gambling, drawing attention to preventing the lack of education and upbringing.

Overall, the article highlights how Jadid theater functioned not only as a cultural innovation but also as a transformative educational force. It underscores the movement’s enduring legacy in shaping modern identity, fostering spiritual awakening, and laying the groundwork for progressive social change through the arts.

Key words: “Turon” theater troupe, “Tarjimon” newspaper, “Padarkush” drama, Mahmud Khoja Behbudi, Abdulla Avloniy, Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziy.

Mahmudkhoja Behbudi famously remarked that “the theater is a school of morality,” a statement that underscores the stage’s unique capacity to elevate human consciousness. In a single performance, young audiences witness kindness rewarded, courage honored, and selfishness exposed—lessons that textbooks and lectures often fail to imprint as vividly. By dramatizing themes of patriotism, filial piety, friendship, and professional dedication, theater offers youth a living syllabus of civic and ethical values.

For this reason, cultural policymakers and theater practitioners are actively working to bring more young people into playhouses, commission scripts that feature contemporary role models, and stage narratives that reveal the tragic costs of crime and corruption. Reading statutes or hearing classroom warnings rarely conveys the full gravity of unlawful acts; but when audiences watch the fallout of real-life transgressions unfold on stage—families shattered, futures lost—the moral message resonates far more deeply. Such productions touch not only the hearts of the young but also reawaken the conscience of adults, weaving a shared moral fabric across generations. The Jadids primarily placed great importance on the field of education and upbringing. They sought to turn the education system into the most crucial link in the development of society. The Jadids attributed the backwardness of development in Central Asia to the misinterpretation of Islam. Therefore, they believed it was necessary to reform the madrasa education system.

In 1883, Ismail Gasprinski launched the newspaper “Tarjimon” in the Turkic language and began promoting Jadidist ideas through it. When it was first published, the newspaper came out once a week; from 1903, it was issued twice a week, and starting in 1912, it became a daily publication. Although “Tarjimon” was widely read in Turkestan, it did not become a part of the population’s daily routine [2.636].

The reform movements in Istanbul, Paris, and Egypt had a significant influence on the Jadids. After traveling to Istanbul and meeting with individuals who supported cultural reform there, prominent Jadids such as Ismail Gasprinski, Cho‘banzoda, Fitrat, and Mahmud Khoja Behbudi experienced a shift in their views.

Throughout history, theater has gone through many stages of development. It is an art form that emerged as a result of religious, magical, and spiritual influences. While the word “theater” initially referred to the place where performances were held, it later came to be used to mean a staged production. Since ancient times, many nations—such as the Greeks, French, and Italians—have contributed to the development of theater.

Although the history of theater in Central Asia dates back to ancient times, it developed mainly through the staging of legends and epics passed down from ancestors. Modern forms of theater in the region emerged in the last quarter of the 19th century under the influence of the Jadids.

The Jadid movement, which began with educational and upbringing activities, later expanded into the fields of press, theater, and literature. Journalism and magazine publishing developed, numerous printing houses were established, and many books were published.

According to Behbudi, a school alone is not sufficient for enlightenment. A nation needs a mirror in which it can see both its flaws and virtues. This truth inspired him to establish theaters and create plays for them. As a result, one of the first works of Uzbek drama, “Padarkush” (“The Parricide”), was created.

In 1911, Behbudi wrote his novel “Padarkush”. “Padarkush” consists of three acts and four scenes and is written in simple language. The story of “Padarkush” takes place among three characters: Boy, a fifty-year-old who believes that everything revolves around money and earning wealth; Domla, who has a modern worldview and tries to explain to Boy that this belief is wrong; and Ziyoli, an educated intellectual who studied at a Russian school. Behbudi expresses his ideas about education and upbringing through the words of the characters Domla and Ziyoli. Despite numerous advice, Boy refuses to send his son to school. As a result, his ignorant son Toshmurod joins street hooligans, kills his own father, and is subsequently exiled to Siberia.

The purpose of staging the play “Padarkush” was to unite all intellectuals in the cause of national interests and to emphasize the importance of educating and nurturing children. The staging of the “Padarkush” drama became a foundation for the development of Uzbek literature. This also increased interest in the theater genre. The drama “Padarkush” was performed in Tashkent in 1913, in Samarkand in 1914, and by the “Turon” theater troupe in Fergana between 1914 and 1916. The play was also staged during revolutionary periods. After “Padarkush”, many amateur theater troupes were established[3.225].

Theater groups were established in the cities of Tashkent, Samarkand, and Kokand, and theater writers and art specialists such as Avloni and Hamza were trained. Between 1911 and 1917, the number of Uzbek stage works written—whose titles are known to specialists—exceeded forty.

The Jadids placed great importance on theater. They staged performances in theaters across many cities. The main idea promoted in these performances was to lead the people out of darkness and

ignorance. For the Jadids, theater was an unlimited opportunity to convey their ideas to the entire society.

Theater provided the Jadids with an opportunity to create an environment for discussion. In the dramatic works written by Jadid authors, greater emphasis was placed not on the individual personalities of the characters, but on their representation as social types. Overall, socially themed performances featured both positive and negative characters. Each performance had an ideological purpose it aimed to convey to the audience. As a result, the intended goal was achieved, and by the end of the play, the audience would understand the idea presented. At the conclusion of each performance, one of the characters would summarize the main message of the show.

Since there were no professional actors in the theater, the staged works were performed by amateurs. When plays were staged with madrasa students, it was very difficult to find female actors, so in the early days, male actors played female roles. Until 1914, occasionally Armenian or Georgian girls also performed on stage[1.177].

Hamza Hakimzoda Niyozzi was one of the Jadids who held an important place in Uzbek literature due to his activities in the field of theater and his contributions to Uzbek theater. For this reason, the large theater building in Tashkent and many places in Uzbekistan are named after him. His first success in this field was the work “Zaharli hayot yoxud ishq qurbonlari” (“Poisonous life or victims of love”). This work depicts the pure love between two young people and their deaths caused by an ignorant environment.

In Kokand, Hamza Hakimzoda Niyozzi wrote the work “Boy ila Xizmatchi” (“The rich man and the servant”), emphasizing the importance of literacy. In addition, his works titled “Kim to‘g‘ri?” (“Who is right?”), “Tuhmatchilar jazosi” (“The punishment of slanderers”), and “Maysaraning ishi” (“Maysara’s affair”) are among the earliest examples of comedy. His work “Paranji sirlaridan bir lavha yoki yallachilar ishi” (“A scene from the secrets of the veil or the work of the yalla singers”) is a psychological drama.

One of the active representatives of the Jadid movement in Tashkent, Abdulla Avloniy, wrote the plays “Pinak”, “Biz va Siz” (“We and You”), “Portugaliya inqilobi” (“The Portuguese revolution”), “Advokatlik osonmi?” (“Is being a lawyer easy?”), and “Ikki muhabbat” (“Two Loves”). In his works, Avloniy revealed the stagnant state of traditional life and addressed harmful habits such as gambling, drawing attention to preventing the lack of education and upbringing.

Abdurauf Fitrat had a great influence on the development of theater in Bukhara. On one hand, Fitrat was involved in opening new Jadid schools, and on the other, he was engaged in organizing theaters. Fitrat gained his true fame through his theatrical works. In his theatrical works, Fitrat focused on historical themes and aimed to enlighten the public. He wrote plays such as “O‘g‘uzxon”, “Chingizxon”, and “Temur sag‘anasi”. The main theme of “Chin sevish” and “Hind inqilobchilari”

was the independence of India. The play “Hind Inqilobchilari” (“The Indian Revolutionaries”) depicts the struggle against the British in all its difficulties and details. In the play, the theme of love is used as a means to convey the main message.

Fitrat participated in the staging of theatrical works. Another of Fitrat’s theatrical works, “Shaytonning Tangriga isyoni” (“The Devil’s rebellion against God”), was a dramatic short epic. This work explains that the devil did not obey God’s commands. It narrates the story of how the devil, created from fire, was expelled from paradise for refusing to bow to Adam, who was created from clay. The work titled “Abulfayzxon” is the first historical drama in Uzbek literature. In this play, Abulfayzxon’s attempts to ascend the throne and his oppression of the people are depicted critically, and ultimately, his assassination is mentioned. The author emphasized the need to fight against tyranny through the character of Ibrahim.

Due to unfavorable conditions and factors such as censorship, staging theater performances was not easy. The first theatrical performances were organized in private homes and continued for a long time.

During the Jadid period, the foundation of theatrical art was firmly established and, despite many Jadids being massacred, it was successfully continued by writers who followed in their footsteps.

Mahmud Khoja Behbudi’s novel “Padarkush” demonstrated how powerful the influence of theater can be. Besides Behbudi, many intellectuals such as Abdulla Qori, Abdulhamid Cholpan, Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoz, Abdulla Avloniy, Abdurauf Fitrat, and Munavvar Qori created literary works.

Despite pressures and obstacles, theater continued to develop. There were attempts to stage works even if done secretly. Initially performed by amateur groups, these works were later presented to audiences by professional troupes.

As society progressed, women also began to take their place in theater and started to demonstrate their significant influence within society through the stage. Theater became an important cornerstone in enlightening the people.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that Uzbek theater was born as the fruit of the Jadid movement in the form of an enlightening theater. The main goals of the theater, as stated in the “Nizom” of the “Turon” troupe—the first Uzbek creative ensemble—were: a) to develop a serious attitude towards stage performances and philanthropy among the population, and b) to present performances to the people and provide them with wholesome entertainment...[4.3].

One of the most defining features of Jadid theater and dramaturgy was its profound ability to portray family life with emotional depth and moral clarity, offering audiences not only heartfelt reflection but also intellectual enrichment. Through realistic and often poignant depictions of everyday domestic struggles, generational tensions, and evolving social roles, Jadid playwrights transformed the stage into a mirror of society one that both reflected and shaped public consciousness. These dramatizations

went beyond mere entertainment; they became powerful tools for moral education and cultural revival, reinforcing the ideals of national awakening that were steadily taking root across the region.

Jadid theater served as a conduit through which reformist ideas were humanized and made accessible to a broad audience. Its narratives celebrated knowledge, self-discipline, and personal responsibility, often set within the intimate context of family life, thereby making abstract ideals tangible and emotionally resonant. This alignment of artistic expression with ideological purpose created a unique form of theater that was as politically and spiritually influential as it was artistically compelling.

The flame kindled by the Jadid reformers continued to burn brightly into the early decades of the 20th century, casting light on new paths for artistic exploration and cultural expression. Until the 1930s, Jadid-inspired theater remained a dynamic force in promoting social progress, intellectual awakening, and national identity. Even as political tides shifted and many Jadid figures faced suppression, their legacy endured embedded in the very language, themes, and moral aspirations of modern Central Asian dramaturgy.

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