

Analysis of the social and political views of Mirza Sirodj and his work: "Tuhafi Ahli Bukhara" (Gifts to the people of Bukhara)

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to analyze the socio-political views of Mirza Sirodjiddin Hakim Bukhari, a key figure in the Jadid movement, through his seminal work *Tuhafi Ahli Bukhara* (Gifts to the People of Bukhara), and to explore how his writings reflect broader themes of reform, modern education, and cultural revitalization in early 20th-century Central Asia.

Research methodology: This study employs qualitative content analysis of *Tuhafi Ahli Bukhara*, examining its historical context and the author's narrative strategies. The research also considers relevant secondary sources to understand the ideological, cultural, and political messages embedded in the work, particularly regarding modernization and East-West comparisons.

Results: The analysis reveals that Mirza Sirodj advocated for embracing scientific knowledge, educational reform, and social justice while critiquing religious dogmatism and cultural stagnation. His work served as both a travel account and a strategic appeal for modernization, directed particularly at the young Emir of Bukhara. It offers a progressive vision rooted in Islamic enlightenment and highlights the transformative aspirations of the Jadid movement.

Keywords: *Mirza Siroj, Jadid, social justice, modern education, intelligence*

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1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, where different values and cultures increasingly encounter or conflict with each other, there is a growing need for enlightening perspectives. Jadidism did not oppose a scientific worldview to a religious one, nor did it set material progress against scientific development. (Nazarov, 2024; Rizoiev, 2023; Turdiyev Bexruz Sobirovich, 2023)(Mirziyoyev, 2024).

Therefore, it is important to study the socio-political views of one of the prominent representatives of the Jadid movement – the Bukharan traveler, enlightener, and healer Mirza Sirodjiddin Hakim (hereinafter referred to as Mirza Sirodj) and his work *Tuhafi Ahli Bukhara* ("Gifts to the People of Bukhara").

This work contains extensive information about the life, culture, customs, and traditions of various countries. The author also provides details about socio-political, economic, and cultural events in Iran, Afghanistan, India, and European countries.

The work *Gifts* has repeatedly been the subject of literary analysis, linguistic-semantic and etymological studies, serving as an important source for understanding the socio-political situation of its time, as well as a significant expression of the people's dreams, hopes, and views. Adib Khalid, portraying Mirza Sirodj as a unique enlightener, emphasizes that this work reflects Central Asia's attitude toward the

outside world and promotes mutual tolerance, reminding readers of the experiences of all developed countries (Khalid, 1999; Mirsagatovich, 2022).

At the same time, the work *Gifts* is especially interesting to researchers for its practical content, as it is important not only for studying socio-political issues but also for offering concrete proposals regarding necessary actions.

2. Methodology

The article analyzes the subjective views of Mirza Sirodj Hakim on Bukhara, the West, and the East, as well as discusses the problems faced by Bukhara and the entire Muslim world in the 19th–20th centuries, along with the ways in which the Muslim world competed with Christian civilization for its development.

On July 5, 1902, Mirza Sirodj set out on a journey through Europe that lasted about six months. After disagreements with his business partners in the winter of the same year, he traveled to Iran and then fled to Afghanistan, where he was accused of espionage. After a year of imprisonment, he earned the respect of the Afghan Emir Habibullah Khan. In the following years, Mirza Sirodj studied medicine in Iran and later practiced medicine under the name Doctor Sabir. In 1909, he returned to Bukhara and in 1910 opened a hospital where he began applying European treatment methods. At the same time, he was one of the founders of the first daily newspaper in Persian, *Sacred Bukhara*, where he headed the “Healthcare” section and published articles on hygiene and medicine (Nizomovich, 2023; Turdiyev Bekhruz Sobirovich, 2025).

3. Results and discussions

Alongside his medical work, Mirza Sirodj also wrote and published his poetry in Persian-Tajik and Uzbek languages. On July 15, 1912 (Gregorian calendar), in the city of Kaghan (New Bukhara), with the permission of local and imperial authorities, Mirza Sirodj’s travel essay *Tuhafi Ahli Bukhara* was published. Translated from Persian, the title means *Gifts to the People of Bukhara*. This work was primarily written for the people of Bukhara, but its main addressee was the young Emir Said Alim Khan (*Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Iftar ceremony at "Kuksaroy" residence*, 2025; Bukhara, 2001; Djuraeva, 2024).

In the context of modernization and democratization of education, as well as social changes in Bukhara, Mirza Sirodj decided to write his work for a broad audience. He understood the importance of active social groups and their growing role in societal changes, but he also recognized that to implement such changes, it was necessary to influence the Emir of Bukhara — the progressive monarch. Therefore, in his work, Mirza Sirodj addressed the new and young emir with words of respect and praise, expressing hope for his effective leadership (Almega & Yuliansyah, 2024; Chika, Promise, & Werikum, 2022).

The work contains the following words:

“The accession to the throne of the great ruler, leader of the imams and Muslims, Sultan Muhammad Alimkhan Bahadur Sultan, from the line of great sultans, is a good sign for me. In this fortunate state, I have completed my work and dedicated it to the great ruler...”

By this time, the tradition of writing travel notes in Bukhara was fully established. Among the travelogues written at the same time as Mirza Sirodj, one can mention *Munthakhab at-Tawarikh* by Mirza Hakimkhan, *Navadir al-Waqa’i* by Ahmad Donish, and *Sawaneh al-Masalik* by Qori Rahmatullo Vazeh. Mirza Sirodj presented his work as a unique and culturally significant event (Hardana, 2024; Riswan, Salsabila, Mulya, & Saputra, 2021).

He writes: “Every year thousands of our people travel to other countries for trade, industrial work, and pilgrimage, and it is necessary to mention the achievements and important aspects that need to be studied, but until now, we have no such book...” (Mirzo Sirodj, 1912).

Mirza Sirodj, who compared himself to European explorers of the new era, spent years traveling to gather knowledge about his countries and recorded everything in travel notes, emphasizing this as the main aspect of his work (Natamiharja, Panjaitan, & Setiawan, 2025; Siagian, Riza, & Lubis, 2023; Wulansari, 2023).

He writes: “Travelers from the West and East have traveled from city to city for many years, striving to learn about the lives of different peoples and to collect information about Mediterranean countries and regions of the continental world... All European achievements are the result of discoveries made by their scholars and travelers. I, like these scholars, took a unique path and wanted to present to my people the conclusion of my many years of travels.”

In his work, Mirza Sirodj, besides it being merely a travel essay, also explained important points about the social, cultural, and political changes of his time.

In *Gifts to the People of Bukhara*, the main emphasis is placed on the achievements of the West in science and culture, and the main goal of Mirza Sirodj’s journey was to study these achievements and implement them in his homeland. Along the way, he carefully studied the cities and was greatly impressed by their public life.

Expressing his excitement about the development achieved by Europe, Mirza Sirodj emphasizes that this development is the result of scientific progress. He stresses that if efforts and diligence are properly applied, Bukhara can also achieve much, particularly great progress in agriculture: “To us, the peoples of Asia, God has easily granted many blessings, but we are unable to appreciate them properly. If we studied science and art as the peoples of Europe do, there would be no richer nation and more prosperous country at any time.”

At the same time, Mirza Sirodj highlights that in the past, Muslim civilization was flourishing and served as an example to others, but today this civilization has fallen into a pitiful state. In his view, the cause of the historical defeat of Muslims is their indifference to science and religious fanaticism. These ideas are reflected in the following excerpt from *Gifts*: “We need to understand that we are falling behind the times. What was the foundation of our development? And who was responsible for this? Today our knowledge or spiritual consciousness is not what it once was. At that time, we were well acquainted with our unity and knowledge, but now we are helpless in development and secularism.” (Ekawati & Yudoko, 2024; Pratiwi, Luh Putu Agustini Karta, Ramanita, Aprilia, & Wardani, 2023).

This work of Mirza Sirodj reflects a new source of knowledge, with descriptions of various countries and rich materials for comparing Bukhara with other cultures. Mirza Sirodj raises questions about the causes of the decline of the Muslim people, emphasizing the weakening of religious education and spiritual purity. He connects hope for spiritual revival with the efforts of the new ruler of Bukhara. He also stresses that economic freedom can be achieved through the rejection of conservative views, as well as through tolerance and consensus. An important step in this process, he considers, is the rejection of false teachings and the attainment of true knowledge in the Quran. This will lead to overcoming religious-ethnic isolation of nations, the assimilation of the wealth of other civilizations, and further development of their own Muslim civilization.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of *Tuhafi Ahli Bukhara* by Mirza Sirodj reveals the significant intellectual and reformist contributions of the Jadid movement to early 20th-century Central Asian society. Far beyond a mere travelogue, the work embodies a visionary critique of the stagnation in the Muslim world and a passionate call for scientific progress, educational reform, and cultural renewal. Mirza Sirodj’s comparative insights between the West and the East emphasize the urgency of embracing modern knowledge while remaining rooted in spiritual and moral values. His appeals to the Emir and the people of Bukhara reflect both a strategic and hopeful effort to initiate transformation from within the society. Ultimately, *Gifts to the People of Bukhara* stands as a pioneering document that articulates the aspirations of an era and serves as a valuable historical and ideological source for understanding socio-political reform in the Muslim world.

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