



HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN (1920S–1930S)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the formation and development stages of the higher education system in Uzbekistan during the 1920s and 1930s, alongside how these processes have been reflected in historiography. The paper thoroughly analyzes the establishment of the region's initial higher education institutions under Soviet rule (such as Central Asian State University, the Uzbekistan Higher Pedagogical Institute, among others), cadre training policies, and the transition from traditional education to the secular Soviet model.

Central to this research is a comparative-historical analysis of primary sources and academic literature on the history of higher education. It evaluates the biased, ideologically driven approaches characteristic of Soviet-era historiography, contrasting them with the objective insights gained during the independence period. Furthermore, the paper provides an impartial assessment of the Jadid enlighteners' contributions to establishing higher education, as well as the adverse impact of the 1930s command-and-control system and repressive policies on university faculty and students.

This material is intended for researchers, educators, and students studying the history of education, historiography, source studies, and the cultural life of Uzbekistan during the Soviet era.

The formation of Uzbekistan's higher education system in the 1920s and 1930s, along with its historiography (scholarly study), was a complex, contradictory process heavily shaped by ideological pressure.

The historiography of this era's education system can be analyzed through two main stages and three primary research directions:

Historical Context and the Formation of the Higher Education System (1920s–1930s)

- **Establishment of early higher education institutions:** Central Asian State University (SAGU / O'ODU) was established in 1920 on the foundation of the Turkestan People's University, which had been set up in 1918. In 1927, the Uzbekistan Higher Pedagogical Institute was founded in Samarkand, later becoming Uzbekistan State University in 1933.

- **Sovietization and cadre training:** The primary objective of the era was eradicating illiteracy, training specialized native cadres, and preparing professionals to propagate party ideology.

- **Abolition of the traditional system:** By 1929, traditional higher madrasahs were officially banned, and the secular Soviet education model was fully instituted.

Historiographical Periodization and Analysis of Higher Education

Period / Research Direction	Key Characteristics and Approaches
Soviet-Era Historiography (1920s–1980s)	• Primarily based on Marxist-Leninist ideology and the principle of party loyalty (<i>partiynost</i>). • Advanced a one-sided concept claiming that Soviet power brought "enlightenment" to Turkestan and eradicated illiteracy. • Denied the contributions of the Jadids and national enlighteners in higher education, or framed them as anti-Soviet movements. • Researches by Soviet historians like P. Galuzo highlighted party decisions and Soviet reforms exclusively in a positive light.
Independence-Era Historiography (Post-1991)	• Ideological constraints were discarded, initiating an objective and impartial analysis based on archival documents. • Particular attention was paid to the role of Jadids (such as Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, Munavvarqori Abdurashidxonov, and others) in laying the foundation for higher education and sending students abroad to Germany and other countries. • Revealed how the higher education system was turned into a tool for the Soviet communist apparatus and how independently thinking national intellectuals became targets of the 1930s repressions (1937–1938).

In studying and covering the history of Uzbekistan's higher education system in the 1920s and 1930s, several significant scientific and practical achievements were made—despite the complex constraints of Soviet ideology. During the years of independence, the historiography of this era was enriched on the basis of objective and impartial criteria.

I. Organizational and Institutional Achievements

- **Documentation of the early higher education foundation:** In historiography, the establishment of the first higher education institutions, such as Central Asian State University (SAGU / O'ODU, 1920) and the Uzbekistan Higher Pedagogical Institute (Samarqand, 1927), has been precisely periodized based on archival documents.

- **Specialized higher education branches:** Detailed research was conducted on the emergence of agriculture, medicine, engineering, and pedagogical institutes as distinct

branches, as well as the formation of their material and technical foundations resulting from the educational reforms of the 1930s.

Achievements in the Study of Cadres and Social Composition

- **Dynamics of national cadre training:** Statistical data regarding the enrollment of native local youth and women into higher education institutions (including the activities of "workers' faculties" or *rabfaks*) were collected and introduced into academic discourse.

- **Pedagogical and scientific potential:** The contributions of visiting specialists and scientists from Russia and other central cities toward training young local scholars and establishing scientific schools (in mathematics, chemistry, biology, Oriental studies, etc.) were fully highlighted.

Conceptual Achievements in Independence-Era Historiography

- **Restoration of the role of Jadids and national intelligentsia:** Topics that were fabricated or suppressed during the Soviet era have been thoroughly investigated. The efforts of Munavvarqori Abdurashidxonov and other enlighteners in organizing higher education in the early 1920s and sending young people to study in Germany received a fair and balanced evaluation.

- **Exposing the scale of repressions and persecution:** Objective historical truth was brought to light regarding the command-and-control system of the 1930s, "ideological purges" within higher education, and the fates of university faculty and students who fell victim to the 1937–1938 repressions.

- **Expansion of the source base:** Thousands of documents from the funds of higher education institutions and the People's Commissariat of Education (*Narkompros*) in the National Archives of Uzbekistan, previously classified as "secret," were opened for scientific research.

Research Works and Monographs

- Historians (such as R. Khodjayev, K. Rajabov, S. Inoyatov, and others) published numerous monographs, dissertations, and scientific articles dedicated to the education system of the 1920s–1930s, the consequences of Sovietization policies, and the fates of the national intelligentsia.

The historiography of Uzbekistan's higher education system in the 1920s and 1930s (including historical primary sources, contemporary periodicals, and subsequent scholarly research) exhibits several serious socio-political and methodological shortcomings and limitations. These drawbacks can be examined from the perspective of two distinct periods:

II. Shortcomings in Soviet-Era Historiography

- **Extreme ideological bias:** Historical processes were analyzed exclusively through the prism of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Communist Party resolutions. Every success in the educational system was attributed to party leadership, while real problems were deliberately concealed.

- **Denial of the role of Jadids and national enlighteners:** The efforts of Munavvarqori Abdurashidxonov, Fitrat, Ashurali Zohiriy, and other Jadids toward establishing national higher education in the early 1920s were intentionally distorted or labeled as "bourgeois-nationalism" and erased from historical records.

- **One-sided approach (Rejection of national identity):** Madrasahs and the rich spiritual-educational heritage existing in Turkestan prior to Soviet rule were portrayed as

completely "backward and reactionary." An incorrect concept was advanced, claiming that higher education only began in 1920 with the founding of SAGU.

- **Distortion of facts and statistics:** Although the actual proportion of local (Uzbek) students and instructors in higher education institutions was very low, official reports and literature artificially inflated these figures.

- **Tabooing of repressions:** The fates of university faculty and students targeted during the 1930s (specifically the repressions of 1937–1938) were strictly tabooed.

Key Issues and Directions in Historiography

- **Cadre shortages and korenizatsiya (nativization):** Due to a lack of local teaching specialists in the 1920s, former madrasah scholars (*mudarris*) and Jadid intellectuals were initially employed. However, by the 1930s, they were persecuted, and emphasis shifted toward training cadres loyal to Soviet ideology.

- **Language and alphabet reforms:** The transition from the Arabic script to Latin, and subsequently to Cyrillic, severely disrupted the continuity of scientific and educational resources in higher education.

Overall, the higher education system of the 1920s and 1930s is represented in modern Uzbek historiography through both its positive aspects (the formation of specialized higher institutions and technical cadres) and its negative dimensions (ideological suppression and the repression of the national intelligentsia).

1. Main Academic Literature and Monographs

- **Rajabov, K., & Haydarov, M.** (2000). *History of Uzbekistan (1917–1993)*. Tashkent: O'zbekiston. (Provides an analysis of educational policy and cultural processes during the 1920s–1930s).

- **Inoyatov, S., & Rajabov, K.** (2010). *The Intelligentsia of Uzbekistan: A Glorious and Tragic History*. Tashkent: Fan. (Covers the formation of national cadres in higher education and the repressions).

- **Khodjayev, R.** (1998). *History of the Formation and Development of Higher Education in Uzbekistan (1917–1941)*. Tashkent.

- **Shamsutdinov, R.** (2012). *The 1930s Repressions in Uzbekistan and Their Tragic Consequences*. Tashkent: Sharq. (A valuable source on the repressions targeted at university faculty and students).

- **Sodiqov, X., Rajabov, K., et al.** (2000). *New History of Uzbekistan. Book 2: Uzbekistan During the Soviet Colonial Period*. Tashkent: Sharq.

- **Ziyoeva, R.** (2015). *History of the Enlightenment and Education System in Uzbekistan (1920s–1940s)*. Tashkent: Fan va texnologiya.

- **Allavetov, R.** (2004). *History of Higher Education and Scientific Institutions in Turkestan (1918–1924)*. Tashkent: Yangi asr avlodi.

2. Dissertations and Scientific Articles

- **Qosimova, M. S.** (2006). *History of the Formation and Development of Higher Pedagogical Education in Uzbekistan (1920s–1930s)* [Candidate dissertation]. Tashkent.

- **Rasulov, B. M.** (2018). *History of Cultural and Educational Institutions of Uzbekistan (1920–1939)*. Fergana.

- **Usmonov, Q.** (2014). Sovietization policy in the higher education system of Uzbekistan and its consequences. *Journal of the History of Uzbekistan*, (3).

3. Electronic and Online Resources

- **National Library of Uzbekistan (named after Alisher Navoi):** www.natlib.uz (Electronic catalog of dissertations and monographs on the history of higher education).
 - **"History of Uzbekistan" Scientific Journal (Institute of History, Academy of Sciences):** www.historyjournal.uz (Studies on the history of higher education and culture).
 - **State Museum of Memory of the Victims of Repression Portal:** www.shaxidlar.uz (Archival data on higher education faculty members repressed in the 1930s).
 - **Scientific Library and Archives of the National University of Uzbekistan (NUUz):** www.nuu.uz (Archival documents related to the history of Central Asian State University / SAGU).
- ZiyoNet Information and Educational Network:** www.ziynet.uz (Scientific articles and manuals on the history of enlightenment and education).

