



THE REFORMIST MOVEMENT IN TURKESTAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract. *The article examines the development of the ideology of the reformist movement in Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century. On the basis of historical documents, it sets out the socio-political views of the Jadids, whose patriotic activity under the conditions of colonial Turkestan contributed to the intensification of the liberation movement and to the awakening of the national consciousness of the broad masses, and exerted a considerable influence on the formation of national-democratic organisations and societies among the indigenous population. Tashkent, as the administrative and cultural centre of the Central Asian region, became a gathering place of the reformists. The movement, led by Munavvar qori Abdurashidkhonov, Ubaydulla Khodjaev, Abdulla Avloni and Ismail Obidov in Tashkent, Mahmudkhodja Behbudi, Akobir Shomansur-zade and Saidahmadkhodja Siddiqi in Samarkand, Nosirkhon Tura in Namangan, and Obidjon Mahmudov, Ashurali Zohiri and Pulat Saliev in Kokand, spread widely among the urban population. The most important indicator of the intensification of socio-political life was a sharp revival of publishing activity, particularly of the press: the first newspaper of the Turkestan Jadids, “Taraqqiy” (“Progress”), appeared on 27 June 1906 and was followed by “Khurshid”, “Shuhrat”, “Tujjor”, “Osiyo”, “Samarqand”, “Sadoi Turkiston”, “Sadoi Farg‘ona”, “Oyna”, “Turon” and others. Most of them were short-lived, but they played an important role in the spread of reformist thought.*

Keywords: *reformist movement, Jadidism, education, new-method schools, national intelligentsia, national press, modernism in Islam, freedom, independence.*

INTRODUCTION

The movement for the renewal and reform of society, which entered history under the name of Jadidism, was one of the prominent socio-political movements of the past. It contributed to the growth of national self-awareness and played a significant role



in the formation and development of the ideology of national liberation in Turkestan. The participants in this reformist movement were called Jadids, that is, supporters of innovation. The Jadid movement expressed the most progressive tendency within the complex interweaving of political forces in Turkestani society at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It was based on universal humanitarian and national values and responded both to the pressing needs of social development and to the vital interests of the indigenous population of the region (Khalid, 1998).

Jadidism arose at a turning point in the social development of the Central Asian region. The national reformers' awareness of the depth of the crisis of colonial Turkestan, of its growing lag behind global processes, of the ubiquitous suppression of the freedom-loving aspirations of the indigenous population and of the stagnation of spiritual life served as the impulse for the emergence among them of ideas of urgent social reform.

The reformist movement, however, followed a complex and historically ambiguous path. Jadidism became an arena in which different philosophies and world-views concerning the prospects of social development clashed. It became internally differentiated on the key questions of social development and, above all, in its conceptual understanding of the ideology of dismantling the foundations of colonialism. The aim of this article is to trace the main directions of the activity of the early Jadids and to identify the basic tenets of their ideology on the basis of historical documents and the periodical press of the time.

MAIN PART

At the first stage the participants in the movement did not strive to change the entire established social system. The priority was seen in the modernisation of the spiritual sphere. By creating new-method schools, organising the regular publication of newspapers, issuing textbooks and teaching aids, especially in the natural sciences, and by promoting the need to borrow Western machinery and technology and to use the achievements of European culture, they prepared the ground for the emergence of national secular education, for the renewal and enrichment of spiritual life and for the rise of national self-awareness.

The first Jadid groups appeared in Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century. Its most prominent representatives were the people who formed the backbone of the



national intelligentsia: Mahmudkhodja Behbudi, Munavvar qori Abdurashidkhonov, Abdulla Avloni, Ubaydulla Khodjaev, Toshpulat Norbutabekov, Abdurauf Fitrat, Ismail Obidov, Akobir Shomansur-zade, Saidahmadkhodja Siddiqi, Nosirkhon Tura, Obidjon Mahmudov, Ashurali Zohiri, Pulat Saliev and others.

Being people with sensitive hearts and enlightened minds, the initiators of the reformist movement perceived with deep pain the historical impasse in which their people found themselves at that time. The hopeless poverty of the broad masses, who lived under the double oppression of both imperial and local despotism, the threatening lag behind the economically developed countries of the world, cultural regression and the stagnation of thought impelled them to search for effective means of accelerating social progress.

Under the prevailing conditions the advanced Muslim intelligentsia saw in the ignorance and lack of enlightenment of the people the main cause of the social backwardness of the country. The main road to solving the pressing problems was therefore seen in enlightenment. As a result, at the first stage the reform of education stood at the centre of the Jadids' attention. Moreover, they not only substantiated theoretically the need for this reform but also made active efforts to put their ideas into practice. They opened new-method schools, libraries and reading rooms, and wrote textbooks and teaching aids. One of the first new-method schools in the region was opened in Kokand in 1898 by Salohiddin domla. In the same year a Jadid school was opened in Tokmak. In 1899 Mannon qori in Tashkent and Shamsiddin domla in Andijan also founded schools teaching by the new method.

From 1900 onwards the network of new-method schools in Turkestan expanded steadily. Tashkent, Samarkand and Kokand became major centres of Jadid schools. By 1910 some 50 such schools had already been established in Turkestan, and in the most diverse parts of the region (Khalid, 1998).

At first, owing to the absence of precisely defined curricula, there was considerable diversity in teaching methods, depending on material means and on the individual characteristics and degree of preparation of the teacher: in some schools only mechanical reading and writing were taught, in others the spoken language, while in a third group instruction was integrated, combining reading, writing and conversation.



Another direction of the Jadids' activity became the public promotion of the ideas of enlightenment through the mass media. The first national newspaper of the Turkestan Jadids was "Taraqqiy" ("Progress"), which appeared on 27 June 1906 and was edited by the prominent Turkestani public figure Ismail Obidov. Alongside "Taraqqiy", the Turkestan Jadids began to publish other newspapers in Tashkent: "Khurshid" ("The Sun") in 1906, and "Shuhrat" ("Fame") and "Tujjor" ("The Merchant") in 1907–1908. The newspapers "Khurshid" and "Shuhrat" were published and edited by one of the prominent leaders of the Jadid movement in Turkestan, Munavvar qori Abdurashidkhonov. The publisher of "Tujjor" was the major Tashkent entrepreneur Sayyid Azimboy Muhammadboyev.

Subsequently a number of other Jadid newspapers and magazines appeared in Turkestan: "Osiyo" ("Asia"), "Samarqand", "Sadoi Turkiston" ("The Voice of Turkestan"), "Sadoi Farg'ona" ("The Voice of Ferghana"), "Oyna" ("The Mirror"), "Turon" and others. Most of them were short-lived, but they played an important role in the spread of reformist thought (Khalid, 1998).

If the theoretical views of the early reformers are considered in their concrete historical context, several basic tenets can be distinguished that formed the dominant of the whole subsequent ideology of Jadidism. First, understanding that the progressive development of Turkestan was impossible without the enlightenment of the people and without introducing the broad masses to the achievements of Russian and world culture, the enlighteners rightly held that spiritual liberation must go hand in hand with social deliverance from colonial oppression and burdensome obligations.

A central place in the writings of the reformers was occupied by the criticism of colonial-feudal political and legal institutions. In their works they criticised the holders of power, exposing such manifestations of colonial-feudal despotism as lawlessness, bribery and exorbitant exactions. The Jadids condemned the system of electing representatives of the local administration of colonial Turkestan and protested against the tax policy of tsarism.

Admittedly, many problems of social renewal were only outlined in the ideology of early Jadidism. Nevertheless, under the colonial regime the enlighteners' condemnatory criticism of the prevailing social practice and their advancement of ideas concerning the illegitimacy of the power of the oppressors represented an important step towards the formation of the ideology of national independence (Khalid, 2015).



The initiators of the Jadid movement linked the acceleration of historical progress organically with the modernisation of Islam and with the formation of the socio-economic preconditions for the creation of a civilised market space.

Unlike many enlighteners of Europe and Russia, the Jadids did not reject religion and were not atheists. On the contrary, as in our own day, they advocated the preservation of Islam as a necessary factor promoting the unity of Muslims in the pursuit of social progress, and as a means of educating the peoples of the region in the spirit of high morality, patriotism, friendship and solidarity, and of consolidating their efforts in the struggle to overcome the crisis. The Jadids regarded the Islamic religion as the most important means of spiritual purification. For this, however, they believed, it had itself to be cleansed of medieval scholasticism.

The Jadids saw the modernisation of Islam in the mastery of the achievements of science and advanced technology in close unity with the fruitful precepts of the original Muslim religion and with due regard for contemporary realities. At the first stage the initiators of the reformist movement opposed the monopoly of confessional education, frozen in medieval scholasticism, and advocated the introduction of the new-method system of teaching. As their ideology developed, however, the reform of Islam acquired ever greater conceptual depth and an ever closer connection with the needs of social progress.

The reformist movement of Turkestan brought about a fairly substantial break with traditional idealist systems and an intensification of secular education. At the same time it reflected the interests of the nascent national bourgeoisie and the realities of the emerging commodity-market relations. By advocating the reform of traditional education, the creation of new-method schools and theatre troupes, and the possibility for a Muslim to deal with banking and financial capital, the Jadids thereby rejected the claim of the clergy to be the final arbiter of truth. They in fact overturned certain outdated medieval dogmas, recognising the special role of secular sciences such as mathematics, geography, history, grammar and others in accelerating socio-economic progress. The organic link between the needs of spiritual and economic renewal is attested by many early Jadid publications. Thus, the leader of the Jadid movement Mahmudkhodja Behbudi wrote frankly in 1914 in the journal “Oyna” (“The Mirror”), which he published: “...You, respected ones, must



strive to teach your children modern knowledge, so that they may serve religion and the nation; for service to the nation and to religion is possible only through knowledge and money” (Behbudi, 1914:21).

CONCLUSION

Thus, the undoubted historical merit of the reformers in the person of the Jadids was their elaboration of evolutionary reformist principles for resolving pressing social tasks and their choice of the most effective path of formational and institutional transformation and of the liquidation of the colonial regime. Their conceptual ideas served as the spiritual forerunner of contemporary transformative practice and as the genetic foundation of the present strategy and course of large-scale reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan.

The analysis shows that the activity of the Jadids developed in three interconnected directions – the reform of education through new-method schools, the creation of the national periodical press, and the renewal of religious thought – and that it was precisely the combination of these directions that transformed an educational movement into a factor in the formation of national self-awareness and of the idea of independence.

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