



THE PROCESS OF RENEWAL IN THE SOCIO- CULTURAL LIFE OF THE MUSLIMS OF CENTRAL ASIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE PROMINENT ASPECTS OF THE JADID MOVEMENT

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Abstract. *This article examines the process of renewal in the socio-cultural life of the Muslims of Central Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century and the prominent aspects of the Jadid movement. It shows that, although the movement gained strength in the early twentieth century, the social conditions of the mid-nineteenth century gave the impetus to its emergence, and it traces the two main currents within Jadidism – the “isloh” (reform) trend led by Fitrat and Fayzulla Xo‘jaev, and the current led by Abdulvohid Burhonov that sought reform through the “good innovation” (bid‘a hasana) of the Sunna. The article analyses the Jadids’ wide international ties, their turn from enlightenment to political struggle, Mahmudxo‘ja Behbudiy’s reformist and legal programme, the congresses and organisations of 1917, and the proclamation of the Turkestan Autonomy, concluding that Jadidism was the first movement in three centuries to attempt the building of national democratic statehood.*

Keywords: *Jadidism, isloh, bid‘a hasana, Central Asia, Turkestan, Behbudiy, Fitrat, autonomy, national awakening, reform, colonial policy.*

INTRODUCTION

The strengthening of the Jadid movement falls mainly in the early twentieth century; yet it was precisely the social situation of the mid-nineteenth century that gave the impetus to its emergence and formation, for that period showed how far the local states and peoples had fallen behind world civilisation. For this reason the Jadids gradually began to relate the factors of progress in technology and social life to religion. Some of them – led by Abdurauf Fitrat and Fayzulla Xo‘jaev – held that reforming the educational system alone was not enough to lift the people out of backwardness. They



considered that, over the centuries, “harmful” and “conservative” views had entered the body of the religion of Islam and the Sunna as they were practised in the region, and that this had caused the Muslim communities to fall behind the West in development. This trend was called “isloh” (reform) within Jadidism.

MAIN PART

Another group of the Jadids, led by Abdulvohid Burhonov – Ibrat too belonged to this group – held that the possibilities of the Sunna for reforming society were limitless, and that, only by studying it well and, on that basis, without departing from the prescriptions of Islam, adopting suitable innovations from more developed societies – that is, “good innovation” (bid‘a hasana) – one could embark upon reforms.

The emergence of the Jadid movement in Central Asia may be said to have been a distinctive, natural product of a clash of civilisations. For this reason it is correct to regard it as a part of the reformist movement that continued within the Muslim communities across the vast territory stretching from the Ottoman Empire to India in the nineteenth century. The Muslim reformers held that it was precisely the weakness of the educational system and the backwardness in technology and economy that had turned the Muslim lands into victims of the colonial policy of the developed states.

In general, it may be said that colonial policy in Central Asia, with all its negative and positive consequences, became a field of new ideas, traditions and religious views for the local people. The weak ties with the European world shifted in a positive direction after colonisation, and close contact with the Russian Empire introduced novelties into everyday and legal life. Naturally, this aroused various – often negative – sentiments among the people; for before introducing any innovation one had to assess it from the standpoint of the sharia, accepting it as “good innovation” where it accorded, sometimes rejecting it and sometimes giving it an interpretation. For this reason it is difficult to assess innovations – even progressive ones – as having been immediately welcomed by the people, since abandoning customary, ingrained traditions and adopting new ones presented considerable difficulty.

The Jadids’ international ties were very wide-ranging. They were familiar with the programmes of various progressive currents in Russia, Turkey, Egypt and other countries, and exchanged experience through mutual visits and contacts. The revolutionary movements of 1905–1906 in Russia exerted their influence on Turkestan as well:



progressive forces began to consolidate, and the Jadids intensified their enlightenment activity. This was seen not only in the schools but also in lively journalistic activity, in particular the emergence of many newspapers. Thus, in 1906 *Taraqiy* was published under the editorship of Ismoil Obidov and *Xurshid* under that of Munavvar Qori; in 1907–1908 *Shuhrat* under Abdulla Avloniy and *Osiyo* under Ahmadjon Bektemirov. But the tsarist administration soon banned these newspapers, relying on the report of its expert N. P. Ostroumov. In a new wave of enlightenment, in 1913–1915 the newspapers *Samarqand*, *Sadoyi Turkiston* and *Sadoyi Farg‘ona*, the journal *Oyina*, and in 1917 *Hurriyat*, *Kengash*, *Najot*, *El bayrog‘i*, *Ulug‘ Turkiston* and *Turon* appeared.

The Jadids closely followed the political processes in Russia and studied the programmes of the emerging Russian political parties; but, proceeding from the peace-loving and composed disposition characteristic of the national mentality of the Uzbek people, they strove to attain their aims from the tsarist authority by peaceful means – public appeals, open debates in the State Duma and other legal means. Yet the tsarist administration forbade the participation of Turkestani representatives in the Duma, which on the one hand trampled the rights and dignity of the region’s people and on the other reflected the fear that the growth of their political consciousness threatened the statehood of the Russian Empire. Even then the Jadids – as reflected in Behbudiy’s article published in *Xurshid* on 11 October 1906 – came to the conclusion that it was necessary to unite and form a single Muslim party and to enter the All-Russia Muslim Union; in this article Behbudiy also expressed his negative attitude to the Social Democrats’ party, considering its programme a utopia that did not accord with the norms of Muslim life. After the Stolypin reaction, Jadidism took on a clandestine character: according to information conveyed to the Tashkent police department, one such group was led by the teacher Ahmadjonov and was composed mainly of national intellectuals and student youth; the secret group in Kokand consisted of 50 persons, and the secret organisation of the Andijan Jadids was called “*Taraqqiyparvar*,” one of whose leaders, according to police data, was Ubaydulla Xo‘jaev (Ubaydullaxo‘ja Asadullaxo‘jaev).

The Turkish and Iranian revolutions of 1905–1911 exerted a notable influence on Central Asian Jadidism; but the Turkestan Jadids did not copy their experience mechanically, selecting from the anti-colonial and democratic practice of the Eastern and European countries what suited the region’s conditions and rejecting or modifying



what did not. On the eve of the February Democratic Revolution in Russia, Turkestan Jadidism became a mature political movement. The radical part of the Turkestan Jadids – which formed the “progressives” (taraqqiyparvar) current – advanced a number of broad political demands: carrying out substantial administrative reforms, granting the region seats in the State Duma in proportion to its population, ensuring the basic democratic freedoms (above all freedom of the national press), and replacing tsarism with a constitutional system. In their view, several representatives were to be elected from each city and uezd, and a large centre and assembly – in effect a parliament – was to be established in Tashkent that could issue tax laws and decrees yielding practical results for Turkestan, mediating between the Russian government and the Muslims and strengthening a Turkestan administration that served the region’s prosperity.

But, as Behbudiy stressed, in order to attain their rights all the population – regardless of nationality – had to enter actively into the social struggle and, uniting with the Russian population, to establish a “Council of the Muslims of Turkestan” with a representative elected from each uezd. In his view, the first condition on the path to taking shape as an autonomy within a democratic Russian state and moving toward independence was the removal of internal contradictions and discords; Behbudiy understood very well that disunity in the national-liberation movement would again lead to colonial rule. The establishment of a new state order in Russia as a result of the February Democratic Revolution inspired the Jadids, who pinned their hopes on obtaining autonomy in the form of a state. At the same time national political parties and organisations – “Shuroi Islomiya,” “Ittifoq” and others – were formed by the Jadids. By this time the Jadids were able to draw behind them various strata of the local population and to awaken in their consciousness a sense of strengthening Muslim unity. But the Jadids soon understood that both the Provisional Government in Russia and its Provisional Committee in Turkestan were continuing the previous colonial policy in the region. From that time, independence and autonomy became a question of life or death for the Jadids, and intense political battles began. They sharply criticised the government’s colonial policy and set about striving to obtain the status of a national-territorial autonomy for Turkestan within the Russian Democratic Federative Republic, choosing the republican form as the foundation of governance and proclaiming an independent autonomous republic centred on Kokand, called the Turkestan Autonomy, on the basis of the rights set out in the new



Bolshevik government's declaration "On the right of nations to self-determination." In this Behbudiy stressed that no power grants a people independence of its own free will: "Right is taken, not given. The people of every nation and country obtain their rights, religion and politics from others through action and unity... We Muslims, and especially the Muslims of Turkestan, wish that no one should oppress or threaten our religion and nation, and we have absolutely no thought or intention of threatening others" (Behbudiy, 1917a, 1917b).

The Jadids' conclusions about state-building in Turkestan were importantly shaped by their observation of the region's economic development. One of Ubaydulla Xo'jaev's articles (1915) gives a full picture of the economic condition and character of the region's intellectuals. Having gone to Kokand, Andijan and Namangan and seen the situation with his own eyes, Xo'jaev was led to the sad conclusion that throughout Turkestan the Muslims were living in extremely difficult economic conditions; the population of Kokand in particular stood out for its backwardness, with the factories and the cotton-cleaning industry in the hands of representatives of the European nations. The author asked why the Muslims were so passive, lacking initiative and weak in this respect, and saw the cause in their failure to understand that only diligence, activity and labour could change the situation. The condition of the Andijan Muslims was considerably better, and in Namangan – though, in the author's words, considerably behind in scientific thought and cultural development – trade, entrepreneurship and production were concentrated in the hands of the local population and developing successfully. In all the cities, young people who recognised their own "national and cultural shortcomings" and were trying gradually to reform them were coming to the forefront of cultural life, and Xo'jaev noted the considerable influence of Tashkent and its intellectuals on the youth of these cities.

The Jadids considered that Turkestan's future depended on rights and knowledge. In his articles "The law of Europe," "Right is taken, not given!," "The project" and "A project on qazis and biys," Behbudiy wrote of the grave situation that had arisen in the legal sphere in Turkestan and criticised the Russian government for having entirely entrusted the resolution of legal questions to the *ellikboshis* and *qazis*, who, as a result, decided not only religious but also everyday matters on the basis of bribery. Convinced that the sharia contained rules that did not accord with Russian policy and culture but answered the demands of the Muslims, and able – through his deep knowledge of Islamic



law – to see clearly the violations and the qazis' self-interested falsification of sharia norms, Behbudiy was led to the conclusion that the system of qazi courts had to be abolished and replaced by state courts with an appeals commission established in each of the five provinces of Turkestan, and a Supreme Court chamber consisting of a chairman, a deputy and three members opened to supervise the district courts; in his view, every Turkestani who had reached the age of 20 was to take part in the volost elections.

The Jadids' attention was also held by important questions of cultural heritage and the people's self-awareness. The author reminded readers what a vast cultural and scientific heritage the people possessed, holding that al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ulugh Beg were truly the founders of social and scientific reform in Central Asia, and that studying the works of these thinkers would advance the region's development and raise the people's national self-awareness. He noted as a negative fact that, according to his information, only two delegates from Turkestan had taken part in the All-Russia Muslim congress held in St Petersburg (1914), and called on the people to overcome the stagnation in social consciousness. The Jadids also considered the development of the national press and public education one of the important factors of progress and one of the marks of national statehood; in writing that "without a national press there is no nation itself," Toj Rizobadli looked far ahead. Asking what hindered Turkestan from emerging from the whirlpool of stagnation, backwardness and ignorance, the Jadids saw the cause first of all in the needless and harmful customs that seemed to be protected by the sharia but were in fact alien to Muslim rules and further burdened the people's already hard life. "What gnaws at us and pulls us back?" Behbudiy posed this question and, having in mind lavish weddings and funeral ceremonies, answered: the entirely superfluous rites and the expenses spent on them (Behbudiy, 1915).

On the basis of the Qur'an and hadith, Behbudiy explained the needlessness of such practices, which threatened families with ruin: the funds spent on superfluous celebrations should be used in the sphere of education, and the Muslims should rebuild their own thinking – an idea reflected in all the works of the Jadids and of the enlightener Behbudiy, the leader of the movement. The Jadids' assessment of Turkestan's cultural and economic condition with a critical eye led them to the conclusion that Turkestan was in essence a colony and that the administrative system of the Russian administration did not meet the national needs – questions posed especially sharply on the eve of the



February Revolution. There were two reasons why the aims of the Jadid organisations broadened and took on a political character: first, the crisis Jadidism experienced in 1914–1915 – the closure of newspapers and new-method schools – showed that the authorities would not allow the Jadids to broaden their struggle against ignorance and heedlessness, and that without this no change in society could be achieved; second, a flow of young forces who had studied abroad and learned the experience of national progressive movements abroad joined the movement and demanded that, instead of confining themselves to cultural work, concrete political tasks be set. (Many Jadids continued their education abroad; Is’hoqxon Ibrat, for example, lived and studied in Jidda, Istanbul, Sofia, Athens and Rome, spent a long time in India, and learned French, English, Urdu, Persian, Hebrew, Arabic and a number of other languages.)

The Jadids split into two opposing currents – the old-thinking and the youth led by Fitrat – which gave rise to discords and uncoordinated actions; as a result, the peaceful demonstration held to support the emir’s manifesto was suppressed and repressions against the Jadids began. Unlike the older generation, the Jadids did not consider the tactic of open action a mistake. According to S. Ayniy, “because the left group led by Fitrat and Fayzulla Xo‘jaev could not see far ahead and misunderstood the situation, the group of Jadids was routed.” As Fayzulla Xo‘jaev wrote, after the emir’s repression of March 1917 the situation changed sharply: “The social base of Jadidism narrowed, for the merchant representatives left and their material support ceased... The property-owners withdrew from the struggle. The left wing occupied the central place. The organisation’s further expansion proceeded at the expense of the propertyless strata of the population... The organisation weakened, and its moral influence on society weakened too.” According to the literary scholar N. Karimov, the French intelligence officer Major Lacoste, who had studied the activity of political parties in Turkestan well, wrote in a secret report sent to his country in 1906: “The most notable political force with the brightest future in the Turkestan region is neither the Social Democrats (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) nor the Social Revolutionaries nor the Cadets and liberals, but the Uzbek Jadids.”

Having set themselves a task of crucial importance for the fate of the peoples of Turkestan, the Jadids sent their delegates to the All-Russia Muslim Congress held in St Petersburg in January 1906 and established ties with other Muslim peoples living under Russian rule and with their leading figures. The great organisational ability of



Abduvohidqori Abduraufqoriev of Tashkent, the first deputy elected from Turkestan to the Russian State Duma, is especially noteworthy; he later established the “Shuroi Islom” society together with Munavvar Qori Abdurashidxonov.

The Russian secret police in Turkestan, alarmed that the Jadids were supported by the Uzbek trade and industrial class and were exerting a bad influence on the emerging generation, called for serious reckoning with the central Jadids. The national-liberation uprising of 1916 and the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia played a great role in the further broad upsurge of the Jadid movement in the region and in a sharp qualitative change in the Jadids’ activity: their struggle on the enlightenment-ideological front took on the character of a clearly expressed political struggle, and as a movement it rose to a new stage.

By what marks was Jadidism an extraordinary phenomenon? What helped the Jadids to see so clearly the crisis and fanaticism in society and to approach religious, legal and moral norms in a practical way? First, its uniqueness was determined above all by the fact that it brought together intellectuals of an exceedingly high intellectual level who possessed knowledge characteristic of both Eastern and European culture. Looking to the past, studying it and analysing their own age, the Jadids were able to draw up a project for their homeland’s future and to plan its paths of development. All of them, having received higher religious education and been raised in the spirit of the poetry of Jami, Navoi and Fuzuli and the philosophical works of the ancient Eastern thinkers, enriched their knowledge with the achievements of foreign – both Eastern and Western – culture. In realising their ideas of building a developed society, the Jadids of Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva attached particular importance to the struggle against fanaticism, indifference and backwardness, relying on progressive, educated youth and citing historical examples of the paths by which the states of Europe had reached development. Giving special attention to the importance of language study and scientific-technical progress, they systematised Turkestan’s future thus: the building of a free, independent state founded on the principles of a strong secular authority, the inviolability of private property and the freedom of bank capital – a state that, while preserving respect for Islam, would be benevolent toward the free development of cultures of every direction (Inostrannaya voennaya interventsia, 1964).



CONCLUSION

In general, the Jadids dreamed of raising the people's cultural level to the international standard, considering for this that the youth had to be educated in the best educational institutions of Europe. Their activity and programme indeed became a model for the future. That the Jadids worked out the resolution of the social tasks that had matured in society on the principles of evolutionary advance, and that they were able to choose acceptable paths for formational-institutional change and for the radical removal of the colonial order – such achievements are, without doubt, among their historical services. The phenomenon of Jadidism lies in the fact that, for the first time in three centuries, this current attempted to build national democratic statehood, struggled for a single independent Turkestan, laid the foundation of the idea of national independence, and roused the sleeping East to awakening and movement – to the remembrance of freedom, national pride, its great ancestors, its rich culture and all the values forgotten under the pressure of the colonial order.

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