

MAHMUDKHODZHI BEKHBUDY AND HIS ANALYTICAL BIOGRAPHY

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Abstract. This article presents a critical analysis of the life and socio-political activities of the outstanding leader of Turkestan Jadidism, Mahmudkhodzhi Bekhbudy (1875–1919). Unlike traditional historical reviews, this study uses a socio-psychological approach to examine the evolution of his educational views. The focus is on three key aspects, the formation of cognitive dissonance in childhood when bookish ideals collided with the realities of colonial society; mature institutional activity to transform education, the press and literature; and strategic miscalculations and weaknesses in his political doctrine. The analysis shows that Behbudi's tragedy lay in radically outpacing the level of development of the masses, his reformist pace gave rise to internal resistance from traditional society, and his political idealism proved defenceless in the face of violence during the period of instability after 1917.

The historical lesson of his life proves that the attempt of the intellectual avant-garde to force progress without proper preparation of the social foundation inevitably requires. The late 19th and early 20th centuries in Turkestan were marked by a deep systemic crisis caused by colonial rule and widespread illiteracy, which together hampered social progress. In this complex historical situation, the reformist Jadid

movement entered the political arena, with Mahmudkhodja Bekhbudi becoming one of its undisputed leaders.

In historiography, Bekhbud is most often viewed through the prism of heroism — as a symbol of national awakening and a martyr of enlightenment. However, such a one-dimensional approach does not allow us to fully appreciate the complexity of his character.

Bekhbudi was not merely a historical symbol, but a deeply reflective intellectual who knew the vices of his environment from within and tried to eradicate them. For a comprehensive understanding of his legacy, it is necessary to abandon exclusively apologetic rhetoric and analyse his activities through the prism of the conflict between progressive thought and a conservative social base. The purpose of this article is to explore the phenomenon of Mahmudkhodja Behbudu through an analysis of his psychological development, his practical contribution to the modernisation of society and, most importantly, through the prism of his strategic weaknesses and inability to reach a consensus with the society of his time. The study is based on methods of historical and biographical analysis, social psychology, and critical discourse analysis. The source base consists of archival documents, journalistic and literary works by M. Behbudu himself, as well as analytical reviews devoted to the Jadidism movement in Turkestan. The evolution of the reformer's views is examined through the prism of the concepts of social adaptation and cognitive dissonance. An institutional approach is used to assess Bekhbud's practical activities (study of the schools, printing houses and periodicals he created, author's note). A critical analysis of the weaknesses of his strategy is based on the sociological theory of elites and masses, which explains the reasons for the rejection of innovation by traditional society.

Mahmudkhodja Behbudu was born in 1875 into a religious family in the vicinity of Samarkand. Since his father was a mufti, the boy was immersed in the study of

religious disciplines such as the Koran, fiqh and Arabic from an early age. This conservative environment seemed stable and unshakeable on the surface, but it left little room for critical reflection on reality.

It was during his childhood that Behbudu began to experience acute cognitive dissonance. On the one hand, he read in books about an ideal, just, educated and highly moral Islamic society. On the other hand, on the streets he observed a completely different reality of illiterate peasants, the mechanical and meaningless performance of religious rites, and a life built on fear and blind imitation. This internal conflict between theory and practice laid the foundations for his future reformism. The main conclusion that the young Behbudi drew was that the formal knowledge of the clergy did not change the quality of life of the people in any way. This made him doubt the correctness of the traditional ulema's path.

In his quest to find answers to his questions, Behbudy went beyond theological studies and began to study history, geography and social structure. Travel had a decisive influence on the transformation of his worldview. Between 1899 and 1903, he made the hajj, visiting Istanbul, Egypt, and the Russian cities of Kazan and Ufa. This experience clearly demonstrated to him that Muslim societies are heterogeneous and that social and technical progress in no way contradicts religious beliefs, schools, the press and the theatre. Realising that the root of the problems lay not in religion itself, but in outdated forms of education and ways of thinking, Bekhbud actively joined the Jadid movement. In 1903, with his participation, the first new-method schools were opened near Samarkand, where teaching was based on the phonetic method, which allowed children to learn literacy and logical thinking in the shortest possible time. Education in these schools became closely linked to real life.

Realising the lack of educational literature, Bekhbudy took it upon himself to create it. A special place in his legacy is occupied by the textbook Kitobat ul-atfol,

published in 1908. This work became a unique phenomenon — the first source on the basics of jurisprudence and paperwork in the history of Uzbek statehood. The book not only explained the rules for writing official petitions, receipts and certificates, but also established the concepts of children's rights and obligations to their parents, which formed the basis of the legal consciousness of the new generation. Bekhbudu emphasised the need to learn several languages in order to survive in the modern world, calling for knowledge of the local language, Arabic, Russian and European languages.

In addition to schools, Bekhbudu considered the press to be an important tool for modernisation. In 1913, he founded the bilingual newspaper Samarkand and the magazine Oina in Samarkand. In these publications, he brought taboo topics such as women's education, illiteracy and the destructive influence of fanaticism into the public arena.

To reach those segments of the population who could not read, Bekhbudi turned to art. In 1911, he wrote the first Uzbek drama, Padarkush, which addressed society in an artistic form. It is important to note the political maturity of the author in this play, in which he demonstrated not only the destructiveness of ignorance, but also the hidden danger of uncontrolled, superficial acceptance of Western innovations without a solid moral foundation.

The new-method schools founded by the Jadids proved highly effective and quickly changed the worldview of their students. However, the parents of these children and the general population were unable to adapt to such rapid cognitive shifts. This gave rise to fierce internal resistance, the conservative clergy and ordinary citizens began to perceive the Jadids not as saviours, but as destroyers of traditional foundations.

Political mistakes and isolation Behbudi's fundamental mistake was his excessive idealism. He sincerely believed that society could be awakened solely through open speech, rational dialogue and education. However, in the context of growing political

destabilisation at the beginning of the 20th century, especially after the revolutionary events of 1917, open thought proved completely defenceless against brute force.

In this situation, Behbudy continued to hope for political consensus and civilised methods of struggle. He became one of the ideologists of the Turkestan Autonomy, created at the end of 1917, attempting to build a democratic state. But in a political environment dominated by violence and radicalism on the part of both the Bolsheviks and the emirate, his rational approach failed.

Bekhbud's tragedy was compounded by his inability to rely on the support of the masses. The society, which had not undergone sufficient education, was unaware of its objective interests and was unable to act as a protective buffer for the intelligentsia. As a result, the reformer found himself in a political vacuum, left alone with his enemies. In the spring of 1919, Mahmudkhodja Bekhbudu was arrested on the orders of the Bukhara Emir's men in Shakhrisabz and executed in Karshi. His death was not only a personal tragedy, but also the historical end of an intellectual who had lost his social support.

Historical lessons An analysis of Mahmudkhodja Behbudu's life provides an important sociological lesson. Despite the greatness of his educational and cultural initiatives, history has shown that it is impossible to mechanically pull society forward without preparing the mass consciousness for this. Behbudy sometimes misjudged the real capabilities of his people and underestimated the factor of historical time. His progressive ideas required gradual adaptation, and the attempt to force this process demanded enormous human sacrifices. Today, Behbudy should be perceived not simply as a frozen monument or an impeccable hero, but as a complex historical experience that calls on contemporary reformers to engage in responsible and balanced social planning.

Mahmudkhodja Behbudu's activities became a watershed in the history of Turkestan, marking the transition from medieval stagnation to attempts at integration

into the modern world. His deep inner dissonance, born of the conflict between the high ideals of Islam and the oppressive reality, was transformed into powerful creative energy. The creation of new-method schools, the publication of the first national newspapers, the emergence of national drama and the development of legal textbooks for children laid the foundation for the formation of the modern Central Asian intelligentsia.

Nevertheless, objective analysis shows that Behbudi's educational project faced an insurmountable barrier — the unwillingness of traditional society to undergo rapid modernisation. The intellectual gap between the reformers and the people led to the isolation of the Jadids, and the idealistic belief in the power of words collapsed in the face of political terror. The historical fate of Mahmudkhodja Behbudu proves that the sustainable development of a nation is impossible without synchronising advanced ideas with the level of mass consciousness. His legacy remains a relevant warning for any era of change, progressive ideas that are detached from the social soil risk becoming a catalyst for tragedy, but in the long term, their seeds inevitably determine the vector of national revival.

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