



## BEHBŪDĪ

---

**BEHBŪDĪ**, MOLLĀ MAḤMŪD K̄ĀJA, one of the leaders of the Jadīd movement in Central Asia in the 1900s-1910s, journalist and playwright. He was born in 1875 in Samarkand, studied in a traditional school (*madrasa*) and served for a while at the Muslim court (*qāżī-kāna*) of Samarkand as secretary and mufti. In the early 1900s, he joined the Islamic reform movement in Turkistan, and very soon became one of its leaders. In 1903 he organized the first reformed school in Samarkand, and during the period 1903-04 wrote a number of textbooks, mainly in history and geography, in Uzbek and Tajik according to the principles of the movement (*oşūl-e jadīd*), and intended for the “new method” schools. Later, in 1911, he wrote the first Uzbek play *Padarkuš* (The patricide), which was staged in Tashkent in 1913 and which became very popular in Central Asia before the First World War. As a journalist, Behbūdī started with articles in two newspapers published in Tashkent by the Russian administration, *Turkestanskije vedomosti* (in Russian) and *Turkestanskaya tuzemnaya gazeta* (in Turki), where he expounded his ideas about the reform of Islamic education. But Behbūdī’s main activity as a journalist began with the period of political liberalization in Russia, 1906-07. In September, 1906, a group of the Jadīds in Tashkent under Behbūdī and Monawwar Qārī started the publication of a Turki biweekly *K̄ūršīd*, where Behbūdī was a regular contributor (only 10 issues were published till November, when it was suspended by the Russian authorities). In no. 6 of this newspaper (11 October), Behbūdī published an article which contained a Jadīd program of reforms for Central Asia. In the same article Behbūdī criticized both the Russian right- and left-wing parties and called on the native population of Turkistan to support



the party of “constitutional democrats” (or “kadets”); Behbūdī remained politically moderate till the revolution of 1917. In August, 1907, Behbūdī helped Mīr Sayyed Karīm Azimbaev, a merchant from Tashkent, to start the publication of the newspaper *Tujjār* (discontinued after the 36th issue). At the end of the same year, Behbūdī was among the group of prominent Jadīds (together with Monawwar Qārī) who started in Tashkent a new periodical *Ḥaḳīqat*, which from 1 December 1907 was renamed *Šohrat* and was suspended by the authorities on 14 February 1908, after 10 issues.

During the years of reaction of 1908-1912, Behbūdī seemed to have been engaged in educational activities: he opened a “new method” school in his own house in Samarkand, founded his own publishing house where he published textbooks, and established a public library for the native population of Samarkand. In April, 1913, he started publishing a biweekly called *Samarqand* (in Turki, with some articles in Tajik and Russian); the publication ceased after the 45th issue because of financial difficulties. On 20 August 1913 he began to publish a weekly literary review *Āyīna* (in Turki and Tajik), which continued for 136 issues till 15 June 1915; it was probably the best native periodical in pre-revolutionary Central Asia. In 1917, he participated in the Tashkent weekly *Najāt* (in Turki), published under the editorship of Monawwar Qārī. The same year, when the editorship of the Samarkand newspaper *Ḥurrīyat* (from no. 27) passed to ‘Abd-al-Ra’ūf Feḫrat, Behbūdī became one of the most active members of the editorial board of this periodical (discontinued in 1918, after no. 87).

Besides his journalistic activity, Behbūdī was involved in politics as one of the most influential Jadīds of Turkistan. In May, 1916, when the news about the forthcoming mobilization of Central Asians into workers’ battalions became known, a group of Jadīds held a meeting in the house of Behbūdī in Samarkand and decided to call for a general uprising if the decree about mobilization were published; however, this decision was not carried out. In early April, 1917, Behbūdī came as a representative of the Jadīds of Turkistan to Bukhara and, at the meeting of the Young Bukharans, called on them to press the amir of Bukhara to implement the reforms that he had promised. Later that month he participated in the work of the First Muslim Congress of Turkistan, where he was among the “federalists,” defending the principle of autonomy of Turkistan in the future Russian Federation. On 21 April Behbūdī was elected a member of the executive council (*Türkistān Mūsūlmān Markazī Šūrāsı*, later known as *Millī Markaz*) formed by this congress. There are



conflicting reports about Behbūdī's subsequent political activity. According to Togan (1942-47, p. 372), in 1918 he heard rumors that Behbūdī and his friends in Samarkand were trying to establish connection with the Mensheviks and the British in Ashkhabad; Hayit (*Turkestan*, p. 93, n. 270, citing a Soviet publication of 1934) says that Behbūdī was a member of the "military organization" formed in the summer of 1918 by Colonel Pyotr Kornilov, which plotted against the Bolsheviks in Tashkent. However, the latest Soviet writing on Behbūdī, the *Uzbek Soviet Encyclopedia*, claims that Behbūdī gradually began to cooperate with the Bolsheviks; in May, 1918, he was appointed commissar for education of the Samarkand "Soviet of Muslim Workers and Peasants," and in July, 1918, he visited Tashkent, participated in the work of several committees which prepared drafts of new laws of the Turkistan Autonomous Republic, and in his speeches and articles defended Soviet policy. In March, 1919, he went to Šahr-e Sabz, where he was arrested by officials of the amir of Bukhara and accused of being a Bolshevik spy. He was tortured for two months and then put to death in the town of Qaršī by the order of the amir.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

E. Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, New York, 1967 (see index).

A. Bennigsen and Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay, *La presse et le mouvement national chez les musulmans de Russie avant 1920*, Paris and the Hague, 1964 (see index).

H. Carrère d'Encausse, *Réforme et révolution chez les musulmans de l'Empire Russe: Bukhara 1867-1924*, Paris, 1966, pp. 165, 187-88, 206-07.

B. Hayit, *Turkestan im XX. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt, 1956 (see index).

A. Z. V. Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili (Türkistan) ye yakin tarihi*, Istanbul, 1942-47, pp. 355, 357, 372-73, 502-05, 519.



Idem, *Hâtıralar*, Istanbul, 1969, pp. 150-54, 159-60, 163, *Ūzbek sovet ènsiklopediyasi* II, 1972, pp. 202-04.

*Search terms:*

□□□□□□ behboudi behboodi