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THE ROLE OF JADID INTELLECTUALS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEK JOURNALISM: A STUDY OF MAHMUDKHODJA BEHBUDI'S JOURNALISTIC ACTIVITY

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Abstract: This article examines the role of Jadid intellectuals in the formation and development of Uzbek journalism through the journalistic activity of Mahmudkhodja Behbudi, one of the leading representatives of the Turkestan Jadid movement. The study focuses on Behbudi's editorial and publicistic work, particularly the newspaper Samarqand and the journal Oyina, and analyzes the ways in which these publications connected enlightenment, social reform, language, education, public ethics, and national awareness with the emerging practices of modern journalism. The research applies historical-comparative, textual, and discourse-analytical methods to selected journalistic writings and recent scholarship on Jadidism and Central Asian print culture. The findings indicate that Behbudi treated the press not merely as a channel for transmitting news but as an institution for educating readers, interpreting social problems, organizing public discussion, and forming civic responsibility. His editorial practice contributed to the expansion of journalistic themes and genres, the strengthening of a modern reading public, and the development of a socially engaged model of Uzbek journalism. The article argues that Behbudi's journalistic legacy should be understood as an important stage in the institutional, intellectual, and ethical formation of the Uzbek national press.

Keywords: Jadidism, Mahmudkhodja Behbudi, Uzbek journalism, Samarqand newspaper, Oyina journal, national press, enlightenment, public sphere.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Turkestan region entered a period of accelerated intellectual and cultural transformation. The Jadid movement emerged in this environment as a reformist current that sought to renew education, broaden access to modern knowledge, reconsider social customs, and create new forms of public communication. Although the movement initially became widely associated with the usul-i jadid, or new-method school, its historical significance extended far beyond pedagogy. The Jadids increasingly regarded newspapers, journals, publishing houses, libraries, literature, and theater as interconnected instruments of social modernization. In this system, the periodical press acquired a particularly important position because it made it possible to address a geographically dispersed readership, respond to current events, introduce new concepts, and transform private concerns into matters of public discussion. Recent scholarship therefore treats Jadid

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print culture as one of the principal mechanisms through which a modern intellectual public sphere began to develop in Turkestan.

Mahmudkhodja Behbudi occupied a central place in this process. He combined the roles of educator, publisher, playwright, publicist, editor, and social reformer, and his activities demonstrate how the Jadid project linked knowledge production with public communication. Behbudi's journalistic experience developed through contributions to different periodicals and reached an institutional form in 1913, when he launched the Samarqand newspaper and later the Oyina journal. Modern archival and bibliographic studies indicate that Samarqand began publication on 15 April 1913 and appeared twice a week before ceasing after its forty-fifth issue in September of the same year. Oyina began publication on 20 August 1913 and continued until June 1915; modern Uzbek sources commonly record sixty-eight issues totaling approximately 1,720 pages. These publications addressed education, language, religion, social behavior, economic development, political awareness, theater, geography, international events, and the everyday problems of Turkestan society. Their thematic breadth shows that Behbudi understood journalism as a form of social knowledge rather than as the simple reproduction of official information.

The relevance of studying Behbudi's journalistic activity lies in the need to identify the mechanisms through which early Uzbek journalism acquired a reformist agenda, an editorial voice, a public mission, and a sense of professional responsibility. In many histories of Jadidism, Behbudi is presented primarily as a leading reformer or as the author of the drama Padarkush; however, his work as an editor and publicist reveals an equally important dimension of his legacy. His publications demonstrate how journalism could mediate between local experience and global knowledge, between traditional forms of authority and new intellectual demands, and between individual opinion and collective debate. The purpose of this article is therefore to determine the principal features of Behbudi's journalistic practice and to evaluate its contribution to the development of Uzbek journalism. The study addresses three related questions: what communicative functions did Behbudi assign to the press; which themes and editorial strategies characterized his publications; and how did these practices contribute to the formation of a modern Uzbek journalistic tradition?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Research on Behbudi and the Jadid movement has expanded considerably in the last decade. A major source for the present study is the two-volume edition of Behbudi's Selected Works published by Akademnashr in 2021, which brings together social-political articles, speeches, literary criticism, travel notes, letters, and other publicistic materials. These volumes are especially important because they make it possible to analyze Behbudi's journalistic thought through his own texts rather than only through later historical interpretations. Zaynabidin Abdirashidov's recent studies provide a systematic reconstruction of Behbudi's biography, intellectual environment, relations with other Jadids, and publishing work; his monograph on Behbudi and his studies of the Oyina journal emphasize the close relationship between education, language reform, publishing, and journalism. Abdirashidov also

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shows that Behbudi's interest in language, sociological observation, and cultural questions was inseparable from his editorial and journalistic practice.

Foreign and comparative scholarship helps situate Behbudi's work within the broader transformation of Central Asian Muslim society. Adeeb Khalid interprets Jadidism as part of a wider modernizing response to imperial rule and global intellectual change, stressing the importance of new schools, print networks, and reformist elites in the reorganization of public life . Veli Savaş Yelok's study of the Uzbek Jadid movement and Jadid press likewise identifies the printing press and periodicals as essential instruments through which reformist ideas were disseminated and national consciousness was cultivated. Recent Uzbek research has renewed attention to Behbudi's publicistic legacy, emphasizing his role in national awakening, the history of the press, and the intellectual development of Turkestan. Taken together, these works allow Behbudi's journalism to be studied not as an isolated biographical episode but as part of a larger process of media formation and social modernization.

Methodologically, the article uses a qualitative historical approach. First, historical-comparative analysis is employed to place Behbudi's press initiatives within the development of Jadid print culture and the broader transformation of the Turkestan public sphere. Second, textual and thematic analysis is applied to selected articles, editorials, programmatic statements, and publicistic materials represented in the 2021 Selected Works and discussed in recent scholarship. The analysis focuses on recurring thematic clusters: education and schooling, language and identity, social ethics, public responsibility, cultural modernization, international awareness, and the relationship between knowledge and progress. Third, discourse analysis is used to examine Behbudi's communicative strategies, including direct appeals to readers, problem–solution structures, comparison with other societies, moral argumentation, and the use of journalism as a platform for collective self-examination. The study does not attempt to produce statistical frequency counts from the complete corpus of Samarqand and Oyina; instead, it reconstructs the dominant functions and patterns of Behbudi's journalism through qualitative evidence. This approach avoids artificial quantification while making it possible to identify the structural contribution of his press activity to Uzbek journalism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis show, first, that Behbudi conceived journalism as an educational institution. In his publicistic writings, information is rarely presented as an end in itself. News, examples from foreign countries, discussions of schools, observations about social behavior, and commentary on local problems are generally connected to a didactic purpose: readers are encouraged to compare, evaluate, and act. This distinguishes Jadid journalism from a purely administrative or descriptive model of the press. The reader is addressed as a participant in social development. Education in Behbudi's journalism therefore has a broader meaning than formal schooling; it includes the cultivation of reading habits, critical judgment, awareness of public affairs, and responsibility for the future of society. The newspaper and journal become extensions of the classroom, but their

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audience is the community as a whole. Such a model helped establish one of the enduring principles of Uzbek publicistic journalism: the expectation that the press should not only inform society but also contribute to its intellectual development .

Second, Behbudi's editorial practice broadened the thematic boundaries of the national press. Samarqand and Oyina combined discussions of education with questions of language, economy, public health, religion, literature, theater, geography, political institutions, international news, and community ethics. This variety was significant because it accustomed readers to viewing social life as an interconnected field of public problems. Behbudi's writings repeatedly linked backwardness not to a single cause but to a combination of inadequate education, weak reading culture, limited knowledge of the wider world, ineffective social organization, and resistance to reform. His journalistic method was therefore diagnostic: he identified a problem, explained its consequences, compared local conditions with other contexts, and proposed a reformist response. In this respect, his publicism contributed to the formation of analytical journalism. The importance of comparison is especially visible in his use of travel observations and international examples, which expanded the geographical imagination of the reader and placed Turkestan within a wider world of technological, educational, and political change.

Third, the study finds that Behbudi's journalism played an important role in constructing a modern public voice. He wrote in a manner designed to be socially consequential: the article was a form of intervention. His tone could be explanatory, critical, persuasive, or admonitory, yet the underlying strategy was consistent—public problems had to be named, discussed, and made understandable to readers. This communicative orientation encouraged the transition from passive readership to public participation. Oyina in particular functioned as a forum where literature, language, education, social reform, and cultural identity could be discussed within the same publication. Recent studies of Jadid print culture emphasize that such periodicals created new forms of interaction among editors, writers, correspondents, and readers, thereby enlarging the sphere of public communication. Behbudi's contribution was not only the content of his individual articles but also his creation of an editorial environment in which different forms of knowledge could circulate.

Fourth, Behbudi helped shape the ethical foundations of socially responsible journalism. His publicism consistently tied knowledge to duty: an educated person, teacher, intellectual, parent, merchant, or public figure was expected to contribute to communal progress. This ethical orientation also affected the role of the journalist. Journalism was not imagined as neutral detachment from social problems; rather, the publicist was expected to investigate social weaknesses, explain their causes, defend education and cultural renewal, and encourage reasoned reform. From the perspective of contemporary journalism studies, this model may be described as advocacy-oriented enlightenment journalism. It differs from modern norms of strict news neutrality, but within the historical setting of early twentieth-century Turkestan it represented an important stage in the professionalization of the press because it clarified the social function of the editor and publicist. Behbudi's editorial leadership,

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regular publication schedule, thematic planning, cultivation of contributors, and attention to readership all contributed to the institutional logic of journalism.

The conceptual relationship between Behbudi's press initiatives and the development of Uzbek journalism can be summarized in Figure 1. The diagram demonstrates that his influence operated through a chain rather than through a single text or publication: the establishment of press platforms enabled a reformist editorial agenda; the agenda generated specific journalistic functions; and these functions contributed to the emergence of a more modern national press and public sphere.

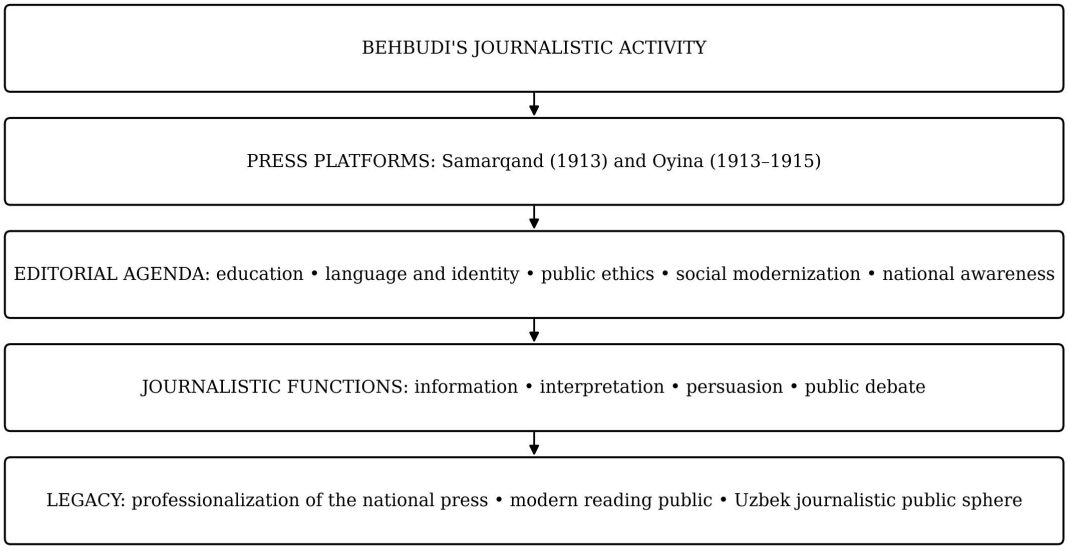


Figure 1. Conceptual model of Behbudi’s contribution to the development of Uzbek journalism

The diagram also clarifies why Behbudi's legacy should be evaluated in institutional as well as ideological terms. The significance of Samarqand and Oyina lies not only in their support for enlightenment ideas but also in the practices they normalized: periodic communication with readers, editorial selection of socially relevant themes, interpretation of domestic and international events, the coexistence of informative and analytical genres, and the use of print as a space for public reasoning. These practices influenced the later development of Uzbek journalism because they established expectations about what a national press could do. The press could define an agenda, create a vocabulary for discussing reform, connect local society with wider intellectual networks, and foster a sense of shared responsibility. Behbudi's journalism therefore stands at the intersection of cultural history and media history.

At the same time, a historically balanced assessment requires recognition of the constraints under which this journalism operated. The Jadid press developed within the Russian imperial environment, under censorship, limited financial resources, a relatively narrow literate readership, and opposition from conservative social groups. The short life of Samarqand and the eventual closure of Oyina demonstrate the fragility of independent publishing in this context. Yet these limitations make

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Behbudi's achievement more, not less, significant for the history of journalism: he attempted to create a sustainable intellectual press despite weak market conditions and political restrictions. The resulting model was necessarily reformist and pedagogical, but it also introduced a durable principle into Uzbek journalism—the idea that the national press is a forum in which society interprets itself. Contemporary scholarship on Behbudi increasingly returns to this feature of his work, linking his journalistic activity to national awakening, cultural modernization, and the formation of a modern Uzbek intellectual tradition.

CONCLUSION

Mahmudkhodja Behbudi's journalistic activity represents one of the most important stages in the development of early Uzbek national journalism. The analysis shows that his contribution cannot be reduced to the founding of the Samarqand newspaper and the Oyina journal, although these publications were central achievements. More fundamentally, Behbudi articulated and practiced a model of journalism in which the press served four interconnected functions: informing readers, interpreting social reality, persuading society of the need for reform, and creating a space for public discussion. Through this model, education, language, culture, social ethics, and national awareness became legitimate subjects of sustained journalistic attention. His publicistic method connected diagnosis with argument and argument with civic responsibility, thereby giving the journalist a clearly defined social role.

Within the broader Jadid movement, Behbudi demonstrated that modernization required not only new schools but also new channels of communication. The press could extend reformist education beyond the classroom, connect local readers with international events, and transform scattered social concerns into a common agenda. For this reason, his legacy is relevant to the history of both Uzbek journalism and the Uzbek public sphere. Behbudi's experience shows that the emergence of modern journalism is not simply a technical history of newspapers and printing; it is also a history of new relationships between knowledge, readership, public responsibility, and social change. Further research may deepen this interpretation through systematic corpus analysis of the complete issues of Samarqand and Oyina, genre-based comparison with other Jadid publications, and the study of reader correspondence and editorial networks. Such work would provide an even more detailed understanding of how Behbudi and his contemporaries transformed the press into one of the principal institutions of national intellectual life.

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