ORIGINAL ARTICLE

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ISSN: 2692-515-x, Impact Factor: 9.23
American Academic publishers, volume 6, issue 01,2026

Journal: https://www.academicpublishers.org/journals/index.php/ijai

"TRAVEL MEMOIRS": THE EXPRESSION OF JADID THOUGHT IN UZBEK TRAVEL WRITING

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Abstract

This article provides a scholarly analysis of Mahmudkhoja Behbudi's *Travel Memoirs* within the context of Uzbek travel writing and the Jadid movement. It argues that through his travel impressions, the author reveals the socio-political, cultural, and educational condition of Turkestan society by employing a comparative method. Behbudi's travelogue is evaluated not merely as a record of journeys, but as a publicistic source promoting Jadid ideology. The study examines the work's ideological orientation, stylistic features, and its role in the process of national awakening.

Keywords

Mahmudkhoja Behbudi; travelogue; Jadidism; Uzbek journalism; national awakening; enlightenment; printing culture; pilgrimage; Al-Aqsa Mosque; *Rahnama* (brochure).

A substantial part of Uzbek literary heritage consists of works devoted to nature, travel, and especially travelogues. These works deserve scholarly study, promotion, and academic evaluation as important sources reflecting the development of national consciousness. This article focuses on the analysis of Mahmudkhoja Behbudi's *Travel Memoirs*, created during the period from the 1870s to the early twentieth century, alongside other travel narratives of the era.

The twentieth century in Turkestan began with the emergence, expansion, and growing influence of the Jadid movement. In pursuit of reforms, Jadids of Turkestan traveled extensively to Russia and abroad—particularly to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Crimea, the Caucasus, Turkey, Iran, and Arab countries—to study their experiences. At the same time, intellectuals of Turkestan recorded their observations, impressions, and encounters with progressive ideas and technological innovations in the form of travelogues and memoirs, disseminating them among the broader public. Through these efforts, they sought to cultivate public support for socio-political and cultural reforms in Turkestan and Bukhara, and to resist stagnation and backwardness fostered by feudal emirates and Russian colonial rule.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, several works describing foreign travels by Turkestani intellectuals were produced. One notable example is Ahmad Donish's (1827–1897) travelogue *Rare Events*. He first visited St. Petersburg in 1857 as part of an embassy led by the Emir of Bukhara, Nasrullo, stayed there for a year, and later returned to Russia in 1869 and 1873–1874. His book recounts these journeys and includes memories of St. Petersburg and Moscow.[1]

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Another travel writer was Qazi Rahmatulla Bukhari (Vazih), who traveled in 1886–1887 through Turkmenistan, Iran, the Caucasus, and Istanbul to Arabia, returning via Iraq and Iran. His travel notes are recorded in *Ghara'ib al-khabar fi 'aja'ib al-safar*, which provides detailed descriptions of numerous cities, rivers, canals, mines, farmlands, streets, markets, and mausoleums.[2]

In the same period, Bukhara native Muhammad Porsoxoja ibn Inoyatullakhoja traveled to Turkey and India, while Mirzo Sirojiddin (1878–1914) journeyed extensively across Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India, and Western Europe, including Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, and London.[3]

Sadriddin Ayni noted that *The Travelogue of Ibrahim Bek*, published in Tehran in 1905, was a major cultural event in Bukhara's socio-political and cultural life.[4] In the early twentieth century, travelogues such as Salim Garoy Sultanov's *Pilgrimage Journey* and Rizauddin ibn Fakhruddin's *Ismail's Journey* had a profound influence on Jadids and intellectuals of Turkestan. According to German scholar Ingeborg Baldauf, Peter Thomsen's *Palestinian Literature* (Leipzig, 1916) documents more than one hundred travelogues written between 1910 and 1914, many of which were published in cities such as Kazan, Saratov, and Odessa.[5]

While many of these travelogues were written as simple informational accounts, Behbudi was among the first Jadids of Turkestan to publish *Travel Memoirs* in the journal *Oyina*, first issued in Samarkand on August 20, 1913. During his tenure as editor, Behbudi embarked on his second journey to Arab lands. Reflecting on his travels, he writes about his pilgrimages, visits to major cities, and participation in intellectual gatherings.[6]

Behbudi's *Travel Memoirs* stands as the first travelogue published in the Uzbek periodical press. Written in a relatively accessible style, it avoids excessive didacticism and emotional exaggeration. Instead, Behbudi objectively depicts events he witnessed, employing comparative imagery to highlight the dire condition of Turkestan society. His descriptions of cities, peoples, education, and printing culture consistently serve as implicit calls for reform, enlightenment, and progress.

Throughout the narrative, Behbudi emphasizes education, enlightenment, and printing, comparing developments abroad with the situation in Turkestan. His observations of Istanbul are particularly optimistic, highlighting Turkish military resilience and national consciousness. In contrast, his depictions of Muslim communities in Palestine reveal deep concern for moral decline, social inertia, and intellectual stagnation.

In conclusion, *Travel Memoirs* marks a new stage in Uzbek travel writing, integrating Jadid thought, reformist ideology, and journalistic mastery. The work vividly expresses ideas of global engagement, enlightenment, cultural advancement, and national awakening. It remains a significant source for understanding Jadid intellectual history and the evolution of Uzbek publicistic literature.

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