



'ABD-AL-KARĪM BOḲĀRĪ

'**ABD-AL-KARĪM** B. MĪR ESMĀ'ĪL **BOḲĀRĪ**, MĪR[ZĀ] (d. after 1246/1830-31), Bokharan traveler and memorialist. Data regarding him are found in his one known work, which was left untitled (*Histoire*, ed. C. Schefer; see bibliog.). As his *nesba* shows, he was apparently born in or near Bokhara.

At the age of sixteen he traveled to Kashmir and back, via Herat, Qandahār, Kabul, Peshawar, and Moẓaffarābād (*Histoire*, I, p. 104; II, p. 236). His second long journey apparently began in 1204/1789-90 (*Histoire*, I, p. 104 gives 1224 erroneously; cf. II, p. 236, n. 1); its route was Semipalatinsk (Sīmī-Pūlād), Kulja (Īla), Āqsu, Kāšġar, Yarkand, Tibet, Kashmir, and back. He does not mention the duration or purposes of these journeys.

In 1214/1799-1800, BoḲārī was attached to Shah Maḥmūd Dorrānī while the Shah took refuge in Bokhara for eight months. At that time, 'Abd-al-Karīm must have been at least in his late twenties or early thirties, for he was born approximately in the early 1180s/1760s. In 1219/1804-05, he participated, in a minor role of a steward, in a Bokharan embassy to the Russian court headed by Mīr 'Alā'-al-dīn. The embassy spent nine months in Petersburg, returning to Bokhara via Moscow, Astrakhan (Ḥājjī Tarkān), and the Khanate of Kīva. It reached Kīva shortly after Ēltūzar Khan came to power. The latter (r. 1219-21/1804-05 to 1806) was unfriendly to Bokhara, and the embassy staff saw all his preparations for a foray (*čapāvol*) against Bokhara. The author himself vainly warned the Bokharan amir Ḥaydar Tōra (1215-42/1800-01 to 1826-27) through the agency of the prime minister Moḥammad Ḥakīm Bī (*Histoire*, I, pp. 70-72; II, pp. 159-61).



At the end of Raġab, 1222/beginning of October, 1807, ‘Abd-al-Karīm came to Istanbul as a member of the staff of a Bokharan embassy to the Sublime Porte headed by Mīrzā Moḥammad Yūsuf b. Šūfī Raġab Bāy via Russia, Rumania, and Bulgaria. Within a year the ambassador with his family and the family of ‘Abd-al-Karīm died from pestilence. In time he married again and apparently remained in Istanbul as a permanent resident (*Histoire*, I, p. 2; II, pp. 1-2).

In Rabī‘ II, 1233/February, 1818, he described himself as “the *sarkāteb* (chief scribe) of the ambassador of Bokhara” (*Histoire* I, p. 3; cf. II, p. 4; cf. Storey, I/1, no. 517, p. 383; Storey-Bregel, II, no. 1015[517]) and began to compose his work at the request of ‘Āref Bek Effendi, identified by Schefer as a man who “for a long time performed at the court of Constantinople the functions of the master of ceremonies” (*Histoire* II, intro., p. 2). The same year, he finished writing it. Most entries concerning people still alive at the time of the work’s composition are dated “in the year 1233” (*Histoire* I, pp. 18, 29, 41, 42, 78, 80) or even “now (*al-waqt* or *al-ḥāl*) [when] the year [is] 1233” (*Histoire* I, pp. 13, 36, 38, 76, 91, 102, 107). Later he updated portions of his work, but these were very limited (e.g., *Histoire* I, p. 57; III, p. 129 [1246/1830-31]; I, p. 70; II, p. 159 [1245/1829-30]). The text in its present form is evidently the second version, from 1246/1830-31, of a work composed in 1233/1818. The year 1246 is also the date of the Bibliothèque Nationale manuscript purchased by Schefer in 1851 from the library of ‘Āref Bek Effendi. (Cf. E. Blochet, *Catalogue de la collection des manuscrits orientaux ... formée par Ch. Schefer*, Paris, 1900, part II, no. 1391, where the date is given as 1264/1847[-48]; this is repeated in his *Catalogue des manuscrits persans de la Bibliothèque Nationale* I, Paris, 1905, no. 635, and on the authority of the latter, also in Storey, loc. cit., and Storey-Bregel, loc. cit.). Since the manuscript is written in a late Central Asian *nasta‘līq* (cf. *Histoire* II, intro., p. 3), it is almost certain that it is ‘Abd-al-Karīm’s autograph or, less probably, an “authorized” manuscript prepared under his guidance. Though the work has reached us in its second version, in at least on place it seems to have been mechanically copied from a lacunary prototext (in *Histoire* I, p. 30, the chapter listed by title about ‘Ālamgīr b. Tīmūr Shah and beginning of the chapter about Shah Šoġā‘ are missing; cf. *Histoire* II, intro, p. 2, text, p. 60). There are several unfinished sentences and other syntactic lapses in the text, so that the text as a whole gives an impression of incompleteness.

The main substance of the work concerns events in Central Asia (emphasizing Bokhara and Afghanistan) from the campaigns of Nāder Shah (r. 1148-60/1736-47) up to early 1220s/1800s, i.e., until the author left Central Asia.



Less detailed sections discuss Kīva (“Kevāq,” I, pp. 78-93; II, pp. 175-206), Kōqand (I, pp. 93-102; II, pp. 207-29), and Eastern Turkistan (Kāšgar, I, pp. 95-96; II, pp. 212-18). Tibet (I, pp. 103-04; II, pp. 233-39) and Kashmir (I, pp. 105-06; II, pp. 240-42) receive vivid traveler’s descriptions. Khorasan is defined very vaguely and broadly (I, pp. 4, 107, 109-11; II, pp. 5, 245, 249-52); Badakṣān, Chitral (Câṣetrār), Darvāz (I, pp. 102-03; II, pp. 231-32), Kolāb (I, pp. 107-08; II, p. 245), and Jammu (I, p. 103; II, p. 234) are mentioned in passing and handled geographically.

In his attitudes and judgments about events in Central Asia, ‘Abd-al-Karīm is undoubtedly Bokhara-centered, and even in the non-Bokharan historical sections of the work the relations of various states with Bokhara receive much attention. The main enemy of Central Asians is, to his mind, “Goglike Russia” (*Rūsīya-ye Ya’jūj-šefat*), and only the near-impassability of the Kazakh (Qazāq) steppes saves Central Asia from Russian conquest (*Histoire* I, p. 89; cf. II, p. 197).

The language of the work demonstrates distinctive features of Bokharan Tajik. At the same time, it contains a certain number of Ottoman Turkish terms: *Kāhya* (*kahyā*) for *kadkodā* “steward,” “lieutenant” is the most frequent (*Histoire* I, pp. 71, 91, 99); *sinir* (*senūr*) “frontier” is also used several times (I, pp. 88, 104, etc.). The work is of particular value for descriptions of events which the author witnessed or about which he had firsthand information; nevertheless, it has been almost unused in historical research.

Two of the poems at the beginning of the work are signed, one with “Nadīm” (vocative form, *Nadīmā*), the second with “Nadīmī,” both ‘Abd-al-Karīm’s pen names (*takalloṣ*). No other poems so signed are to be found in Central Asian sources of this period. Nothing is known about ‘Abd-al-Karīm after 1246/1830-31.

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