



## DĀNEŠ, AḤMAD MAḠDŪM

**DĀNEŠ** (Doniš), **AḤMAD MAḠDŪM** b. Mīr b. Yūsuf ḤANAFĪ ŠEDDĪQĪ BOḠĀRĪ (1242-1314/1827-97), known as Aḥmad Kallā and Mohandes (lit., “engineer”), a historian and progressive Tajik writer of Bukhara. The son of the imam of a small mosque in Bukhara, he proved more interested in stories told in the street than in koranic studies (Islamova, p. 50). Nevertheless, he studied in a *madrasa* (religious school), where he also taught himself history, literature, astronomy, geometry, medicine, calligraphy, and music; his artistic gifts caught the attention of the court architect, whose protégé he became (Epifanova, pp. 9-10). In about 1850 he entered the service of the amir Naṣr-Allāh (1242-77/1827-60) as a painter and calligrapher; he subsequently became a court astronomer and served as liaison between the amir and the ‘*olamā*’ (*yasāvole-‘olamā*) of Bukhara.

Although as a freethinker he was unpopular at the courts of Naṣr-Allāh Khan and his successor, Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Khan (1277-1302/1860-85; Radzhabov, 1957, p. 155), the amirs wished to make use of his talents while keeping him at a distance from the court. He was thus sent three times to St. Petersburg as secretary of Bukharan embassies, in November 1857, October 1869, and January 1874 (Dāneš, 1960a; idem, 1960b). These journeys convinced him of the backwardness of Bukhara and the need for reforms (*Istoriya*, p. 259). In 1297-98/1879-80 he abandoned the court, disgusted by what he perceived as immorality in ruling circles.

Nevertheless, in his treatise *Resāla dar naẓm-e tamaddon wa ta’āwon*, part of his major work, *Nawāder al-waqāye*, which was composed in 1292-1300/1875--



82, he tried to persuade Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Khan of the need for reforms (Radzhabov, 1976; Mirzoev, 1953). These reforms included reorganization of the treasury, fixing of wages, and formulation of ethical standards for civil servants. Dāneš argued that the four pillars of government are the army, the subjects, gold, and water and that the five elementary requirements of the state are a strong and righteous ruler, honest civil servants, competent physicians, an educated population, and sufficient water (Dāneš, 1989, *passim*). His proposal that science and technology be included in the *madrassa* curriculum led to his denunciation as an infidel in religious circles (Radzhabov, 1957, p. 367). He also favored the teaching of Russian (Avezboeva, p. 13). He was particularly interested in irrigation, and, after negotiating with the Russian authorities, he tried in vain to persuade the amir to accept “infidel” Russian conditions for building irrigation works for Bukharan agriculture (Mirzoev, 1964). Dāneš’s treatise, however, displeased Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Khan, who in 1302/ 1885 dispatched him as a religious judge to the remote provinces of Kuzar and Nahrpay; he returned to Bukhara a few months later, after the amir’s death. The rest of his life he devoted entirely to writing (Scarcia, p. 88).

One of Dāneš’s most important books is a history known by various titles: *Risola (Resāla)*, *Toriḳča (Tārīḳča)*, and *Tarjimai holi amironi Buḳori šārīf az Amīr Daniyol to ‘asr-i Amīr ‘Abdalahad (Tarjoma-ye ḥāl-e amīrān-e Boḳārā-ye šarīf az Amīr Dānīāl tā ‘aṣr-e Amīr ‘Abd-al-Aḥad)*, written in 1312-15/1895-97. It had to be circulated in secret, for in it Dāneš denounced the institutions of Bukhara and the corruption of the regime (Braginskiĭ, p. 95; Epifanova, pp. 13-22; Nadzhafova, *passim*; Radzhabov, 1961, p. 88). It is a major historical source for this period, containing a description of Dāneš’s journeys to St. Petersburg, an account of the wars between Bukhara and Russia, and Dāneš’s negative views of tsarist colonial policy in Central Asia.

Dāneš appears to have promoted the custom of the literary salon in Bukhara, bringing together such poets and musicians as ‘Abd-al-Qāder Ḳvāja Savdo (Sawdā’; 1238-90/1823-73), Šams-al-Dīn MaḠdūm, known as Šohin (Šāhīn; 1275-94/1859-94), Moḥammad-Šeddīq Ḥayrat; 1295-1320/1878-1902), [Qārī Mollā Karāmat-Allāh Tanbūrī Boḳārā’ī Delkaš](#) (d. 1320/1902), and he thus exercised a decisive influence on later Bukharan reformers (Bečka, 1968, pp. 525-26) like [Šadr-al-Dīn ‘Aynī](#) (1295-1373/1878-1954) and Tāš-Ḳvāja ‘Ašīrī (1380-1434/1864-1916). His career, evolving from court functionary to opposition critic and historian, illustrates the broader cultural changes that



were occurring in 19th-century Central Asia.

Manuscripts of Dāneš's writings, some in his own hand, are to be found in Dushanbe, St. Petersburg, and especially in the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Tashkent. In addition to the works already mentioned, they include his works *Nomus ul-a'zam* (*Nāmūs al-a'zam*), *Munozir al-kavokib* (*Manāẓer al-kawākeb*; 1288/1870), *al-Risola dar a'mol ul-kura* (*al-Resāla dar a'māl al-kora*; 1287/1878-79) and *Ma'ayor al-ta'din* (*Me'yār al-ta'dayyon*; 1311/1893-94) on the controversy between Sunnite and Shi'ite Muslims (1311/1893; Mirzoev, 1951, pp. 29, 67-74; Nadzhafova, p. 15; Epifanova, pp. 9, 12; Bertel's, pp. 9-36).

Dāneš also wrote poetry, mostly *ġazals*, *qaṣīdas*, and *robā'īs*, some of which are preserved in his prose works and various *taḍkeras* (*Istoriya*, p. 259; Epifanova, p. 11; for critical views see Nadzhafova, p. 14). He wrote in a clear and simple style, including realistic and satirical images drawn from the popular oral tradition, which represented a sharp break with the florid style of *Bīdel*, which had predominated in Transoxania (Muminov, 1957, p. 108).

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