



## SODIQI MUNŠI, MIRZO

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**SODIQI MUNŠI, Mirzo**, Tajik poet (b. between 1753 and 1758 in the village of Jondori Bukhara; d. 20 October 1819 in Qarshi). Little is known of his life and career. At the madrasa in Bukhara he was a brilliant student, impressing his teachers with his innate ability and extensive knowledge, especially of poetry, history, and calligraphy. These qualities brought him to the attention of the Mangit rulers of Bukhara and led to his appointment as a secretary at the court beginning in the latter years of the reign of Emir Daniyol (Dāniāl; d. 1785) and continuing under his successors, Shah Morād (1785-1800) and Ḥaydar (1800-1826). Until a few years before his death Sodiqi Munshi seems to have enjoyed the confidence of his employers, for he accompanied Shah Morād on three military campaigns to Afghanistan and Iran between 1785 and 1791. Later, in old age, he became disenchanted with the endless intrigues at court and probably with the constraints that the authoritarian and superficially pious emirs and courtiers imposed on individual creativity. Whether he was exiled or chose to leave Bukhara himself is unclear. In any case, he spent the last years of his life in the mountains of Darvāz (Darvāz) and then in Qarshi (Qarši), visiting Bukhara briefly on one or two occasions.

Only a part of Sodiqi Munshi's poetry has come down to us, and all of it has remained in manuscript, except for fragments in a few anthologies and excerpts in Usmon Karimov's monograph. His surviving work is contained in two *divāns*. One consists primarily of *g̃azals*, 345 in number, but also of 59 *robā'is*, 20 *qet'as*, 14 *moḳammasas*, and two *qaṣidas*, 2291 *bayts* in all; the other contains four *maṭnavis* and 33 historical *qet'as*, totaling 2400 *bayts*. Of the 41



known copies of his *divāns*, 27 are in the manuscript collection of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, eight in the manuscript collection of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan in Dushanbe, four in the Library of the Russian Academy of sciences in St. Petersburg, two in the Ferdowsi National Library in Dushanbe, and one in private hands (Karimov, pp. 21-48). The poet Qori Raḥmatulloḥi Vozeḥ noted in his anthology, *T uḥfat-ul-aḥbob*, lithographed in 1871, that Sodiқи Munshi had also completed a *divān* of some 15,000 *bayts* composed of *maṭnavis*, but no trace of it has been found. (Ḥodizoda, p. 11).

Sodiқи Munshi was above all a lyric poet and was most famous in his own day for his *ḡazals*. As a poet, he found himself at a crossroads. On the one hand, he had great respect for tradition, and the influence of, among others, Ḥasan Dehlavi, Kamāl Қojandi, Hafez, and, especially, Sā'eb and Bidel is evident, but, on the other hand, he strove to free himself from the pervasive Indian style and the imitators of Bidel and to create a style and vision of his own. While respecting the forms and manner of his mentors, he diversified his subject matter and sought a clarity of expression that would make his intentions clear to his contemporaries. In his *ḡazals* and other poetry he wrote of love and heroes and the beauties of nature, to be sure, but he also revealed a keen social sense and expressed enlightened opinions on ethical questions and on the poverty and afflictions of ordinary people. He seemed committed to authentic, real life.

Of Sodiқи Munshi's *maṭnavis*, *Dakhmai Shohon* (1800) is perhaps the most original; it was the one most imitated by other Tajik poets of the early 19th century. In it he approaches the pervasiveness of injustice in a new way. He tells of a walk in the cemetery where the Ashtarkhanid khans, the predecessors of the Mangits, from their tombs confess their sins of cruelty and dissipation that ruined their country and its people. There seems to be no other work in Tajik literature like it. In *Rafi tumani Ohugir va Hairobod*, he pursues a similar theme, exposing the misery of the population as he travels about the surroundings of Bukhara. He condemns religious fanaticism and reveals his belief in the preordained destiny of each individual in *Qazovu Qadar*, a sympathetic portrayal of two young lovers overcoming adversity. A long poem, *Bo dukhtare oshiq shudani darvesh*, also treats of love, but woven within it is condemnation of officials who take advantage of a naïve dervish.

Sodiқи Munshi is one of the leading Tajik poets of the 18th and 19th centuries. His forward-looking views and his artistry and innovations suggest the need



for further study of a neglected figure.

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