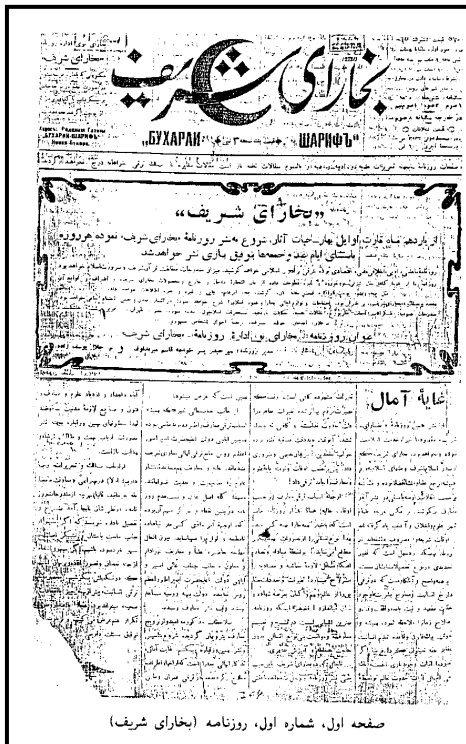


## Newspaper *Bukhara-ye sharif*

The newspaper *Bukhara-ye sharif* which begun publication on 11 March 1912 in Bukhara was the first Persian-language (Tajiki) newspaper in Central Asia. The Emirate of Bukhara with its capital Bukhara and its main city Samarkand had been a Russian protectorate since 1873. In 1920, after a successful attack of the Bolsheviks, it was replaced with the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent creation of the independent Republic of Tajikistan in 1991, the founding date of the *Bukhara-ye sharif* newspaper was officially declared as the Day of the Press in Tajikistan. The daily writes in its first issue: "people of ... [Central Asia] did not have a newspaper in their own national language. Now with the ambition and national heroism of a number of educational and development patrons of *Bukhara-ye sharif*, this newspaper of honorable Bukhara is established in the official language of Bukhara which is Persian. Now, this is the only news paper for the 9-10 million populations ..." <sup>1</sup>

The publication objectives of the newspaper are stated under the title of "goals and objectives" in the headline of its first issue. In a part it says, "The goal and objective is to



صفحه اول، شماره اول، روزنامه (بخارا شریف)

inform the people of Bukhara about the news in their surroundings, to promote the development and modernization of the fatherland and to increase knowledge, education techniques and industries.

Therefore the columns of this paper are open for publishing the views of the knowledgeable." <sup>2</sup>

The region's prevailing atmosphere on one hand, and the tranquil situation prior to the First World War on the other hand, compelled modernists of Bukhara to publish and propagate their views among the people for the implementation of reforms in the Emirate of Bukhara.

### Take-off

Mirza Muhayuddin and Mirza Sarajuddin, who were among the first modernizers in the region, knew well about the important role that newspapers could play

in raising the awareness of the Bukhara youth, organizing them, and implementation reforms. They designed a precise plan for obtaining the newspaper. First they acquired the funds and the necessary printing equipment to publish the newspaper. They convinced Mr. Q. L. Leven a Bukharian-Jewish businessman, that he could make "large profit" by obtaining the privilege of printing the newspaper. He accepted this proposal.

In the hope of obtaining material profit, Q. L. Leven approached the Russian Representative in Bakhara, and requested to have the privilege of printing the newspaper.

In order to reassure the Russian Representative, Haider Khwaja Mirbadal, interpreter of the Russian Embassy in Bukhara, was appointed director of the newspaper.

Based on a request and official permit issued by the Russian Embassy, the Emir of Bukhara issued permission to Mr. Q. L. Leven for publishing the newspaper.

### **Contributors**

The role and contribution of M. Jalal Yousufzadah, a well experienced journalist from the Caucasus, and the role of Mirza Saraj Hakim as the newspaper manager were great.

Because of the ruling censorship atmosphere and oppressed life of the society a lot of articles were published under fictitious names. Today it is very difficult to track the real names of their authors.

The *Bukhara-ye sharif* newspaper follows many of the recognized rules and principles of journalism. The newspaper is published in four pages. Most important news issues have been given attention in the newspaper. Because of need and necessity, news occupied an important place in the newspaper. Letters from readers, mainly from a critical and reformist angle, were reflected in the newspaper.

In general there was an editorial in all the issues of the newspaper that was printed after being signed by its director general. Important social issues along with views from involved personalities of the newspaper were reflected in it.

### **Spirit of the times**

Prior to anything else, the views of the newspaper were influenced by the “New Movement” in Central Asia and the modernist movement of the period in the region.

Therefore familiarity with the contents of the *Bukhara-ye sharif* editorials helps us to understand the views and observations of those running the newspaper and of the intellectuals of Bukhara in general. It also gives a better understanding of the spirit of that time. Certainly understanding both of the above points are important in respect of socio-political relations of the Emirate of Bukhara during those periods. The editorials of the newspaper *Bukhara-ye sharif* mainly have been devoted to the following subjects:

The generalization of science, promotion of education, opening and reforming of schools and madras's, improvement of agriculture, irrigation and gardening, animal husbandry and economical development, devoting attention to the rights and duties of the government and citizens, reformation of the administration of Bukhara Emirate, struggle against ignorance, superstitious and unfit costumes, health care, the relationship between religion and theology and the unity of the world of Islam, etc.

One of the serious and conspicuous goals of the circles, the intellectuals and reformers in the region, was the generalization of science, spreading of education, and the expansion of schools and madras's.

### **Science and education**

As far as the contents of the newspaper *Bukhara-ye sharif* shows, “the encouragement of people towards science, and reformation of the state of education”<sup>3</sup> was the daily’s top priority. The newspaper was carrying this objective forward. The newspaper recognizes generalization of science and strengthening of education and expansion of schools as “religious and national” duty. It considers their role in awakening of the people, the struggle against ignorance and superstitious, and the development of the society at large. The newspaper does not only encourage its readers to learn natural and social sciences, improvement of education and reformation of schools, but also makes specific proposals to the Emir of Bukhara and its associated offices, and to the intellectual circles of the Emirate of Bukhara. One sixth of the newspaper’s contents are devoted to the above issues. The newspaper propagates and publicizes the new method as “the new basics, which is taught to children in primary school”. The activities of Bukhara intellectuals in implementing the “New Method”<sup>4</sup> resulted in naming this move “Modern” and its supporters “modernists”. The modernists belong to the second educationalist generation of Bukhara, while Ahmad Danish and his friends belonged to the first educationalist generation of Bukhara. Whatever the case, for the modernists education was the central issue. They wanted history, geography, mathematics and natural sciences to be taught in schools and madras’s. They were reiterating that without these subjects the development of the society is impossible.

### **Agriculture**

Since the majority of the central Asians were engaged in agriculture, cotton plantation, raising silkworm, gardening, animal husbandry, producing Karakul skin, weaving carpets and rugs growing flowers. And the people in Transoxania, as the region was called since ancient times, formed an agricultural community. For this reason one of the main activities of *Bukhara-ye sharif* consisted of publishing articles about the above issues.

The role of land and water was vital in the life of central Asia including Bakhara, and remains so. During those periods farmers, next to the shortage of agricultural equipment and seeds, were also suffering from water shortages. That is why in the life of the villager the role of *Mir-ab* (Water Distributor) in the village was not less than that of a headman, a profiteer, and mullah.

### **Corruption**

The newspaper criticizes profit and profiteering in the village and recognizes it as an obstacle for the development of agriculture and animal husbandry. In this respect, and as an instrument to help the farmers and the destitute, the newspaper proposes the establishment of a low interest “peasantry bank”<sup>5</sup> and “Charity association”<sup>6</sup>.

There was a lot of oppression and injustice, bribery and looting in Bukhara. There was no rule and the Emirate’s administration was chaotic. In reality the relationship between the state and its citizens was one between the ruler and citizens and between Chief and sub-

ordinates. Under such conditions, the newspaper attempted to encourage implementation of reforms in the administration of the Emirate and to regulate society by the rule of law. The backwardness of the society, the low level of literacy, and above all the oppressive acts by the authoritarian regime of Bukhara has created an unacceptable culture and deterrent traditions in the society, to which extensive groups of people are faithful. These superstitious believes are acting as an obstacle for modernization and development of the society. Emir and conservative Mullahs were trying to hold the public in ignorance and faithful to the superstitious. In its several editorials under the topic of “Habit” the newspaper attacks ignorance, superstitious, fanaticism, petrification, ravishment and unaccepted traditions, and considers it deterrent to society. In this respect, the organizers of the newspaper certainly act cautiously.

### **The Nation**

*Bukhara-ye sharif* never uses the word nation-state as interpreted by Europeans. Regardless of their tribe and nation, the people of Bukhara consider themselves as Bukharaian or the nation of Bukhara or Muslim people. They mostly apply the word nation to Non-Muslims. It was the Russians who by their presence in the region including Bukhara spread these words in their European meanings in the Central Asian multinational countries. The Pan-Turkism, Pan-Islamists and Bolshevik intellectuals judged Central Asia an interesting area for spreading their nationalistic views.

The editors of the newspaper, who worked in the context of on the one hand suffocation, rude oppression by Emir (King) Alim Khan and the presence of the Russian Tsar in Central Asia, and on the other hand the influence of the religion of Islam, used an Islamic perspective to indirectly criticize both the Emirates administration, and the presence of the Russian Tsar. They used the Islam as a means to awaken the people and organize them in favor of reform programmes. In those conditions, for the modernists, freedom lovers and reformists of Bukhara the meaning of the Flag of Islam and the unity of the Islamic world was above all a revival of their national identity, securing the independence of the country and implementation of reforms. All pages of the newspaper reflect this. In this way, the newspaper tries to take away the dust and haze which has been spread on the old culture of the region as a result of attacks by colonialists.

One of the recognized methods for expressing views and objections against difficulties and social discrepancies is to publish debates, dialogues, questions and answers in the newspaper.

### **Persian language**

The newspaper in its pages devotes utmost attention to safeguarding and developing the Persian language, and teaching of lingual methods.

The *Bukhara-ye sharif* newspaper was active during the non-existence of mass media and publication laws. In other words, it was active within a context in which the instructions and decrees of Emir of Bukhara were the law. The most difficulties facing the organizers of the

newspaper and the intellectuals of Bukhara was the despotic and obstinate atmosphere, the suffocating conditions and censorship created by the Emir of Bukhara and the Russian ruler in Central Asia.

The yearning for freedom, pleadings for justice, modernization, and demands for reforms in the newspaper *Bukhara-ye sharif* gradually found its place among the intellectual circles and in the society, and played an effective role in the socio-political growth and development, and on their formation around a reformist program.

### **Repression and suspension**

The despotic government of Bukhara, conservative Mullahs, and the Russian colonialists considered the increasing role and effectiveness of the newspaper as deterrent and dangerous to themselves. They were afraid of the awareness of the people of Bukhara about their historic and social destinies, and feared their awareness about changes in the world and in the region. Therefore they decided to stop it forever.

In December 1912 the Russian Tsar's political representative in Turkistan requested Emir of Bukhara to stop publishing the newspaper *Bukhara-ye sharif*. Emir received this request with warmth and with pleasure.

On January 1913 Mr. Petrov the representative of Russia in Bukhara wrote a threatening letter in the name of Emir Alem Khan King of Bukhara to Mirza Jalal Yousufzadah the editor-in-chief of *Bukhara-ye sharif* newspaper<sup>7</sup>, in which he was instructed: "In accordance to the wishes of his royal highness the Emir of Bukhara, from today the effective publishing of the newspaper "*Bukhara-ye sharif*" and "*Turan*" is prohibited."<sup>8</sup>

The intellectuals and modernists of Bukhara did not receive the possibility of revival of *Bukhara-ye sharif* newspaper, or privileges of printing of another publication during the entire ruling period of Emir Bukhara. During seven decades after the establishment of the Soviet's rule in Bukhara, tens of newspapers and magazines were published in Persian (Tajiki) language in the Central Asia and Bukhara. But all attempts made by Bukhara's men of culture to revive *Bukhara-ye sharif* did not succeed due to political reasons.

### **Scope**

I believe in fact these 153 issues of *Bukhara-ye sharif* newspaper are valuable social, political and cultural documents of that time that reflected proposed views, which were mainly based on reformism and legality. It has contributed in creating a national, political and cultural awareness, to the strengthening of the spirit of self-confidence; struggle for freedom, and to the revival of the national and Islamic identity of the people of Bukhara and above all the youth. The newspaper succeeded in bringing the views of religious clergies in the newspaper, and to let the readers judge them on their own.

By studying the newspaper it appears that: "the objective of its organizers is reformation of the regime, and not crashing the rule of Emir's rule. The newspaper does not move on policies of adventurism and transaction, excessiveness and eulogy. At the beginning the political activities of the newspaper was not too much but reasonable. Its socio-cultural

work was more considerable. Gradually its political work increased through their articles, news, journey reports, poems, etc. The writers and literary men reflect most important social issues in the newspaper of *Bukhara-ye sharif*, and they invite people to awaken and become more vigilant. By using their writing weapons, the goal of the writers of Bukhara is to free their people from the chains of ignorance, petrification, superstitious and backhandedness. And to open a new window for the youth of Bukhara to see the new world. To make them familiar with the new civilization. And without picking up prescriptions from here and there, to find a remedy to the pains of society.

The newspaper *Bukhara-ye sharif* is the first journalist experience of the people of Bukhara in Persian language. The organizers of the newspaper try to bring the verbal and written languages closer. On many instances in this regard they profit from using their common language. In general the publication of the newspaper in a simple method and with a commonly understandable language not only increases its influence among intellectual circles but it also increases its effectiveness among the illiterate classes of society. The role of the newspaper in innovating Persian prose is important within the territory of Bukhara. The prose of the newspaper has kept the cleanness of words, the respect and glory of the pen, has avoided using complicated sentences, and in general has avoided provocation and threats, accusations and slandering, wounding the tongue and mockery.

Now nine decades have passed since the newspaper of *Bukhara-ye sharif* was suspended but fortunately still a lot of the issues which were published are now available.

An almost complete run of this newspaper is available in the International Institute of Social History.

Call Number: ZF 65850

Text: N. Kawyani

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#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The *Bukhara-ye sharif* daily, issue 15, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> The *Bukhara-ye sharif* daily, issue 1, 1912

<sup>3</sup> The *Bukhara-ye sharif* daily, issue 5, 1912.

<sup>4</sup> The New Methods: This was the New Method of training in the schools where besides the religious sciences books other subjects such as geography, history, natural sciences was thought to the students. The conservative clergies and Amir's court were opposed to the new method's schools, while the modernists of Bukhara and their supporters were demanding such schools and considered it a means of their country's development. Because of the activities by Bukhara intellectuals at the beginning for the new methods schools this movement was called *Jadidah* (modern) and its supporters *Jadidis* (modernists).

<sup>5</sup> The *Bukhara-ye sharif* daily, issue 32, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> The *Bukhari-ye sharif* daily, issue 44, 1912.

<sup>7</sup> Y. Usamanov and D. Douranov, *History of Tajik publications*, Dushanbe, 1997, p.37.

<sup>8</sup> Dawran Aashorov, *The dictionary of Tajikistan dailies and magazines, the Tajik Persian culture research center*, Dushanbe, 1999, p.21; *The Russian Encyclopedia and Tajik industry*, Dushanbe, 1989, 2nd book, p.316, and *the Russian-Tajik Encyclopedia*, Dushanbe, 1978, 2nd book, p.557-558, both in Tajiki language (Persian) with Kirlic alphabet