



## CHANGES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE PEOPLES OF CENTRAL ASIA IN THE 19TH–20TH CENTURIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONS

*Sitora Safarovna Khamdamova*

*Senior Lecturer, Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs*

*Doctor of Philosophy, Associate Professor*

*Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

### ABOUT ARTICLE

**Key words:** cross-culture, 19th–20th century enlightenment ideas, Central Asia, intercultural communication, education and enlightenment, cultural influence, cultural dialogue.

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**Abstract:** This article explores the transformations in education and enlightenment among the peoples of Central Asia during the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as their impact on cross-cultural development from a philosophical and cultural perspective. The study analyzes the process of interaction and synthesis between European science, culture, and enlightenment ideas and local national culture, traditions, and values in the works of enlightening thinkers like Ahmad Donish.

## XIX–XX ASRLARDA MARKAZIY OSIYO XALQLARINING ILM-MA'RIFAT SOHASIDAGI O'ZGARISHLAR VA ULARNING KROSS-MADANIYAT RIVOJIGA TA'SIRI

*Sitora Safarovna Xamdamova*

*Ichki ishlar vazirligi*

*Akademiyasi katta o'qituvchisi, f.f.f.d., dotsent*

*Toshkent, O'zbekiston*

### MAQOLA HAQIDA

**Kalit so'zlar:** kross-madaniyat, XIX–XX asr ma'rifatparvarlik g'oyalari, Markaziy Osiyo, madaniyatlararo aloqa, ilm-ma'rifat, madaniy ta'sir, madaniy dialog.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqolada XIX–XX asrlarda Markaziy Osiyo xalqlarining ilm-ma'rifat sohasidagi o'zgarishlar va ularning kross-madaniyat rivojiga ta'siri falsafiy-madaniyatshunoslik nuqtayi nazaridan tadqiq etilgan. Maqolada Ahmad Donish kabi ma'rifatparvar mutafakkirlar ijodida Yevropa ilm-fani, madaniyati va ma'rifatparvarlik

gʻoyalari bilan mahalliy milliy madaniyat, urf-odat va qadriyatlarning oʻzaro taʼsiri va sintezi jarayoni tahlil qilingan.

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## ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В СФЕРЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И ПРОСВЕЩЕНИЯ НАРОДОВ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ В XIX–XX ВЕКАХ И ИХ ВЛИЯНИЕ НА РАЗВИТИЕ КРОСС-КУЛЬТУРНЫХ СВЯЗЕЙ

*Ситора Сафаровна Хамдамова*

*Старший преподаватель*

*Академии Министерства внутренних дел, доктор философские науки, доцент*

*Ташкент, Узбекистан*

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### О СТАТЬЕ

**Ключевые слова:** кросс-культура, просветительские идеи XIX–XX веков, Центральная Азия, межкультурная связь, наука и просвещение, культурное влияние, культурный диалог.

**Аннотация:** В данной статье с философско-культурологической точки зрения исследуются изменения в сфере науки и просвещения народов Центральной Азии в XIX–XX веках и их влияние на кросс-культурное развитие. В статье анализируется процесс взаимодействия и синтеза европейской науки, культуры и просветительских идей с местной национальной культурой, традициями и ценностями в творчестве таких мыслителей-просветителей, как Ахмад Дониш.

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**Introduction.** Ahmad Donish admired the culture of European and French intellectuals and praised them in his works. However, he did not encounter Europe in Paris or London, but rather in St. Petersburg, which he first visited as a secretary for the diplomatic mission of the Emirate of Bukhara sent to the Russian Tsar. Deeply distressed, he addressed Europeans saying, “Forgive us, we do not know your city or your rules, we are like leaping cattle, we are mute.” [Donish A. Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg. – Dushanbe, "Tajikgosizdat", 1960. – P. 128.] In his work “Navadir al-Vaqae” (Rare Events), Ahmad Donish compared the lives of Asians and Europeans, praising the achievements of Europeans - the Franks - in science, culture, education, and military art.

Ahmad Donish also expressed numerous thoughts and opinions regarding a wise person; in his view, a wise person is one who understands the concept of moderation [Salomova Kh. Philosophical Essence and Practical Significance of Moderation. – Bukhara, Durdona, 2018. – P. 106].

Some of Ahmad Donish's contemporaries, as well as later figures, wrote that Europeans were enemies to the life, culture, and religion of Muslims. In the works of Arab, Iranian, and Turkish intellectuals such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Ali Mubarak, Francis Marrash, Butrus al-Bustani, Muhammad Abduh, Ahmad Kasravi, Ali Ahmad, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ali Nadushvan, Abdulhusayn Zarrinkoub, Shihabuddin Marjani, Ismail Gasprinsky, Jamalludin al-Afghani, and Abdurauf Fitrat, it was written that Europe and the Islamic world were opposing cultures striving to consume and destroy one another. Ahmad Donish, on the other hand, believed that Muslim nations should learn morality, enlightenment, politics, law, and culture from Europeans. In his story "Faromushkhona" (The House of Oblivion), he wrote: "The Franks aim to prosper the entire world, and for this reason, they have achieved unparalleled success in crafts and professions; they do not back down a single step from this goal." He further stated: "The goal of the Franks is to prosper the whole world and to discover the secrets of the material world." As Ahmad Donish noted in his "Safarnoma" (Travelogue): "The rulers of the Emirate of Bukhara lack such a noble goal. These rulers are inherently ignorant, narrow-minded, and live only for the sake of their bellies. They are addicted to debauchery, adultery, gambling, and drunkenness." [Donish A. Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg. – Dushanbe, "Tajikgosizdat", 1960. – P. 88.]

Main part. Ahmad Donish sees his hopes and desires in the deeds and actions of Europeans. In his view, Westerners (the Franks) rely on intellect and science in their activities. For this reason, they have achieved great success both in their personal lives and in the social system. "Compared to Rum (which was under Muslim rule at that time), Europe and Russia have more land, deeper seas, and because the Franks fought many wars and battles, their armies are numerous. Since their distances are vast and their plains are boundless, they employ their intellect and full potential to make new inventions and achieve any goal they desire. As for us, we excuse ourselves by saying that we do not have such goals." [Tashkulov D. Donish. – Moscow., 1990. – P.130.]

According to Ahmad Donish, another reason why the Emirate of Bukhara lagged behind Europe in the fields of economy and culture was that no one in the emirate showed any interest in history. The Franks (Europeans) are not indifferent to their history and their past. For them, history is a wise mentor and educator in building a new, better life. The Franks take inspiration from their past and utilize it.

In the Emirate of Bukhara, however, people believe that history holds no interest either for the present or for the future. The rulers know neither world history nor the pillars of religion and Sharia law. They consider their own desires and inclinations to be more important than Sharia and justice.

Ahmad Donish evaluates the state and law during the reign of the Manghit dynasty (Daniyal, Abdul-Ahad, Muzaffar, Nasrullah) in the Emirate of Bukhara as a source of ignorance, foolishness, sorrow, and bloody wars. Having witnessed the order of the European state system in St. Petersburg, Ahmad Donish admired such a regime. During his stay in St. Petersburg as part of a delegation, he familiarized himself with Russian culture by visiting the Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, the Pulkovo Observatory, St. Isaac's Cathedral, the Imperial Botanical Garden, the Institute of Technology, the Mint, a school for children in Tsarskoye Selo, a manufacturing textile mill, and the Opera and Ballet Theatre. Upon his return to Bukhara, he presented Emir Muzaffar with his travel impressions and proposals regarding the study of European culture, teaching sciences, and building higher education institutions, factories, and plants. However, the Emir rejected these proposals.

The Russian government viewed Kokand as a strategic entry point into the Central Asian territories, a choice driven by its favorable geopolitical location.

Regarding the political climate, foreign scholar M. Khan writes that the relations between Kokand and Russia in 1857 were critical. Through Central Asian sources, the Punjab government learned that Kokand was anticipating the inevitable incursion of the Russians into its territory. The British ambassador in St. Petersburg, Lord Wodehouse, reported that Russo-Kokand relations were characterized by a "hostile atmosphere." [Khan M.A. *British attitude to the growth of Russian influence in the Central Asian states 1857-1878.* – Canada. McGill University, 1962. (Ph.D. diss.)]

Ahmad Donish negatively assessed the seizure of the Khanate of Kokand, the Khanate of Khwarazm, Samarkand, and part of the Emirate of Bukhara by Russian troops between 1865 and 1868. However, he approved of the slogan regarding the voluntary annexation of Central Asian khanates to Russia. This was because he believed Russia would end the oppression by local officials and bring culture and enlightenment to the people. Yet, the situation did not unfold as Ahmad Donish anticipated, and the local population found themselves under double oppression.

Looking back at history, foreign scholar Dempsey wrote: "There is considerable evidence that Russian officials and military officers had an eye to conquering Central Asia for the sake of the economic development of the empire from the very start of the nineteenth century." [Dempsey, Timothy A. *Russian Rule in Turkestan: A Comparison with British India through the Lens of World-Systems Analysis.* – US. The Ohio State University, 2010. (M.A. diss.)]

Foreign scholar A. Marshall noted that Russia's success in strengthening its sphere of influence in the Central Asian region, along with one of the unique traits of General A.I.

Baryatinsky, lay in his ability to view the Caucasus and Central Asia as parts of a unified strategic zone requiring special interest and care.

The patriotic sons of Bukhara fought selflessly for the freedom of their homeland against the Russian invaders. While rulers like Abdulmalik Tura (the Bey of Shahrisabz), Bobobek, and Jurabek besieged the Russian troops that had captured Samarkand and were on the verge of liberating the city, Amir Muzaffar sent troops to assist the Russian army against his own son. This was, in essence, an act of treason. By surrendering Samarkand to the Russians, the Amir intended to preserve the Bukhara Emirate. However, he was mistaken. During the Soviet era, Russian troops invaded Bukhara as well, destroying madrasas and homes. Since Ahmad Donish passed away in 1897, he did not witness the Soviet colonizers conquering Bukhara. Having seen the tyranny of the Bukhara amirs, Ahmad Donish would probably not have been saddened by the defeat of the Manghit amirs. Nonetheless, Ahmad Donish's views regarding the extreme backwardness of the Bukhara state system compared to European culture, science, and technology were accurate and just. To escape this backwardness, it was essential to develop science and education, reform the khanate system of government, and learn from European nations.

The majority of intellectuals, state officials, and religious figures in Bukhara did not know their own history—specifically, how science and secular knowledge had flourished during the eras of Al-Farabi, Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Al-Biruni, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. Because of this, they believed that studying natural sciences, as was done in Europe, was an innovation of heresy (*bid'ah*) and a devilish pursuit that would harm their religion, national customs, and morality. This belief was the result of intellectual stagnation, laziness, and ignorance. In such a difficult and complex environment, the cultural and educational activities of intellectuals like Ahmad Donish, Furqat, Mahmoudhoja Behbuddi, Siddiqiy Ajzi, Abdurauf Fitrat, and Ishaqkhan Ibrat met with fierce resistance from the ruling circles of the khanates and emirates. Their efforts included promoting European-style secular sciences, opening new-method (*jadid*) schools, and publishing scientific and literary books using printing houses to save the peoples of Central Asia from backwardness. As the prominent Uzbek and Tajik writer wrote in his historical novella *The Executioners of Bukhara*, by order of the amir and his officials, proponents of modernization were accused of godlessness, atheism, and being enemies of the existing regime. They were brought in groups to the edge of deep pits and slaughtered like sheep, spilling their blood. The Amir could not sentence Ahmad Donish to death because officials of the Russian Empire protected him, planning to utilize his service in the embassy as a translator who fluently knew both the Uzbek and Russian languages; however, the Amir demoted his rank. Amir Muzaffar

mocked the proposals written by the enlightened Ahmad Donish regarding the reform of the state system and regulations, stating: “I honored him and sent him abroad, and now he returns to lecture me on wisdom; I will never send him on an embassy mission again”.

Ahmad Donish believed that studying European (Frankish) culture, education, and upbringing methods would cause no harm; on the contrary, it would help the people and the country escape backwardness. According to his writings, Islamic scholars considered innovation to be a heresy (*bid'ah*) and viewed studying the secrets of the material world as a footprint in water or a mirage—insignificant. They believed that things should be accepted exactly as God created them, and attempting to uncover their secrets was harmful to religion. Consequently, reforming the field of education was at the center of the Jadids' attention [Ahmadjonov G.A. *The Russian Empire in Central Asia*. – T.: Ta'lim Manbai Jamiyati, 2003. – P. 219.].

In contrast, Greek philosophers sought to uncover the secrets of nature to improve their material well-being due to a scarcity of natural resources. They sought answers to questions like “What is this thing? What is it made of? What is it for?”. Europeans spared neither precious time nor labor to find rational answers to these questions; even today, they continue to search for answers to these questions and invent new things. According to Islamic scholars, however, all of this was viewed as indulging in useless philosophy, misleading people, and guiding them down the wrong path. For they say, “No protector shall be found for those communities that have gone astray themselves” [Ahmad Donish. *Navodir-ul-Vaqoe (Rare Events)*. Book 1. – Dushanbe, Donish. 1998. – P. 126.].

When Ahmad Donish visited St. Petersburg again in 1857, he became even more convinced that studying sciences improves social life. Witnessing Europe's advancement in science, arts, and crafts, he regretted that in Central Asia at that time, there were no prominent figures in state affairs like those in Europe - people who dedicated their lives and energy to science, mastered the heritage of past great creators, and had absorbed this knowledge into their very blood and marrow. When the Emir offered Ahmad Donish a higher government post, he set a condition for the Emir, stating that it was necessary to remove all ignorant, uneducated, and corrupt individuals from power and state administration. If the Emir agreed, Donish promised to write a treatise on the principles of rational state governance for him. In his view, a ruler can fulfill his duties successfully only if he relies on science and experience

According to Ahmad Donish, Central Asian science can only be applied to life through education and enlightenment. Education and enlightenment can save the ship that is sinking in the ocean of ignorance and foolishness. Only through education and enlightenment can the heavy

burden of the people be lightened. However, unfortunately, in this day and age, neither the government nor the citizens understand this truth. In our time, ears do not hear the truth, and eyes do not see it; only one path remains: I will write down what I know, read it myself, and weep by myself, for there is no remedy to escape this sorrow and misery. Whoever speaks the truth is accused of being insane, a drug addict, or an opium dreamer. [Donish A. Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg. – Dushanbe, “Tajikgosizdat”, 1960. – P. 130.]

Ahmad Donish’s idea that society can be renewed through education has found its full validation and practical expression today in the new development stage of Uzbekistan, which is directed from revival towards progress. In 2017, a new chapter opened in the development of Uzbekistan. On December 29, 2016, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on measures to further improve preschool education was announced. According to it, conditions are being created for 6,500,000 preschool-aged children in Uzbekistan to receive education. While in 2016 only 27% of children were enrolled in preschool education institutions, by 2019 their number reached 44.5%, and this process is ongoing. At the same time, reforms at all stages of the education system provide opportunities for representatives of various segments of the population to acquire knowledge, which is a bold step taken on the path of the spiritual renewal of society.

In the “Story of Faromushkhona” (The House of Oblivion), Ahmad Donish expresses interesting thoughts about Europe being a land of science, culture, and prosperity. He writes about the Freemasons—a secret society founded in England in the 18th century: “Why does science and technology flourish only in Europe? Why does backwardness prevail in all spheres in Bukhara? Why are our scholars bewildered and dazed? Are we, the unfortunate ones, not the children of Adam?” Ahmad Donish appreciated that they focused on issues necessary for improving life through science, rather than engaging in obscure, useless fields of knowledge. They do not deal with religious matters known only to God. European scientists, while passing down past knowledge, cultural, and spiritual heritage from generation to generation, look at ancient knowledge with a critical eye, renew scientific ideas, and make discoveries in science. Europeans apply their knowledge in practice and implement it into life. “Even in our villages, there are wise people who, though they do not engage in science like city dwellers, have gained great experience in their crafts and are valued as people who have seen much in life.” [Donish A. Navodir-ul-Vaqoe (Rare Events). Book 1. – Dushanbe, 1968. – P. 123-124.]

In addition to what Ahmad Donish witnessed during his travels to St. Petersburg, he also formed an idea of foreign progress from the stories of his acquaintances who had traveled abroad. Seeing that the people in his homeland lived a life of hardship, he grieved deeply. He came to

realize that timely changes were essential in many areas, including politics, science, and culture. In his story “Faromushkhona” (“The House of Oblivion”), he writes: “To establish order and justice in the world, every country must be content with its own lands, must not seize the territories of other nations, and the strong must not oppress the weak. If someone (any ruler) violates these conditions and encroaches upon the lands of others, the people must unite and guide them to the right path with courage, nobility, and wise counsel.” In this story, speaking through a character from Ajam (Persia/non-Arab lands), he states that London, Paris, and St. Petersburg are the greatest capitals in the entire world, and compared to them, other cities look like mere villages and quarters. [Donish A. Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg. – Dushanbe, “Tadzhikgosizdat”, 1960. – P. 168.]

The protagonist of the story notes that London’s population includes a vast number of drunkards, prostitutes, pickpockets, lunatics, ordinary citizens and aristocrats, the wealthy and the poor, the elderly and the youth, as well as world-renowned merchants. To become a wealthy merchant like a European, it is necessary to learn German, French, and English. [Donish A. Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg. – Dushanbe, “Tadzhikgosizdat”, – P. 169.]

During his journey to St. Petersburg, Ahmad Donish witnessed the development of science and knowledge in Russia. When the director of the Asiatic Department (section) of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented Ahmad Donish with a map of the Earth and a globe, he rejoiced greatly, considering these gifts more valuable than gold and silver.

In the chapter titled “The Story of the Pilgrimage and the Benefits of Travel,” Ahmad Donish writes with deep respect about the governor and viceroy in India, who was the son of Queen Victoria (1837–1901) of Great Britain. He writes with admiration about the knowledge, diplomacy, and artistic and literary interests of Victoria -who was proclaimed Empress of India in 1876-as well as her familiarity with Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh.

In this narrative, Ahmad Donish notes that the British were interested in the underground natural resources of Mountainous Badakhshan, including its gold, turquoise, rubies, and sapphires. In contrast, the officials of the Bukhara state showed no interest in opening mines or conducting research related to excavation works.

When he returned to Bukhara from St. Petersburg, serious changes had taken place in his worldview. He saw that science, education, and culture had advanced in Europe. The local intelligentsia deeply felt that the Bukhara Emirate was lagging far behind in these fields, yet they did not dare to write about it as openly as Ahmad Donish did. After becoming acquainted with European culture, science, and art, Ahmad Donish felt Bukhara’s shortcomings in these areas even

more profoundly. He began to write openly about how backward Bukhara was in socio-political and state administration fields.

Although Ahmad Donish now thought at a European level, he did not lose the beautiful style of the classical Uzbek-Tajik language that had evolved in the East over thousands of years in his writing, language, and style. The language of the works of Daqiqi, Rudaki, and Ferdowsi can still be understood by modern Tajiks and Uzbeks today.

However, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Central Asian poets such as Makhmur, Muqimi, Furqat, and Zavqi began writing in new genres using the lively vernacular language, while preserving their traditional national mindset. Similar to Zokirjon Furqat, Ahmad Donish was amazed by European scientific and technological innovations, the beautiful palaces and buildings they constructed, the gardens, avenues, fountains, ballroom dances, social receptions, electric lights that made the night as bright as day, and the elegantly dressed, beautiful European women—the fairy-faced maidens. The Europeans, on the other hand, laughed when they saw our traditional robes (chopons) and turbans (dastors). From Navodirul-Vaqoe (Rare Events): "One of the fairy-faced maidens tapped my chest with her crystal-smooth little hand and pushed me back. As we stepped backward, we encountered the hand of another fairy-like beauty. 'Stop,' she said, 'my silver breast is as delicate as a rose petal; do not hurt it with your roughness.' Losing our minds and senses, we bowed as if to say, 'We are speechless people of the plains, like cattle; we are savages.'" [Donish A. *Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg*. – Dushanbe, "Tajikgosizdat", 1960. – P. 129.]

Ahmad Donish was delighted by how high-society women in St. Petersburg lived in the world of culture and art, and by the respectful and honorable attitude of men toward women. According to Ahmad Donish, a woman is the embodiment of beauty, elegance, and a source of inspiration. However, this was not the case in Bukhara. Comparing Central Asian women with European women, Donish notes that in Bukhara, during the reigns of the Manghit emirs Haydar (1800–1826), Nasrullo (1826–1860), and Muzaffar (1860–1885), women were deprived of their rights, shrouded in the paranja (veil), and confined within four walls.

In Donish's view, the wonderful women and queens praised by Nizami, Jami, and Navoi belonged to the past. He furiously condemns the fact that during the era of the Bukhara emirs, women were viewed solely through the lens of lust. Donish describes high-society women in European society as symbols of elegance and beauty with aesthetic emotion and a love for life. He wished for his compatriots in Bukhara to view women with the same aesthetic appreciation and

respect. [Donish A. Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg. – Dushanbe, "Tajikgosizdat", 1960. – P. 129.]

He dreamed that the peoples of Turkestan and Central Asia would escape from ignorance, darkness, and brutal social and state systems, and achieve social and cultural progress similar to that of Europe. He believed that positive changes would occur in Bukhara in the near future. According to Ahmad Donish, although studying European culture and enlightenment could not save the peoples of Central Asia from the oppression of the Manghit emirs, it showed these nations the paths to progress and deliverance from ignorance and social ills, opening the way for free creative thinking and open-mindedness.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, Ahmad Donish's enthusiastic writings about what he saw in St. Petersburg, the magnificent palaces, and the luxury were not merely his aesthetic views; they also expressed his socio-political and spiritual perspectives on prosperity, well-being, and progress in an enlightened state. Other intellectuals in Central Asia who read the works "Navodir ul-Vaqoe" (Rare Events) and "Journey from Bukhara to St. Petersburg" also began to take an interest in European culture, art, and state governance. The Kazakh writer Abai Qunanbaiuly noted in one of his poems that for the peoples of Central Asia, journeys to Europe had become akin to the Hajj pilgrimage to the Kaaba. Central Asian intellectuals began to understand that European culture had advanced ahead of Turkic culture. True, this shift in social perspectives did not happen easily. Russia's conquest of Central Asia also brought many negative consequences. However, at the same time, under the influence of Russian industry and culture, cotton factories, textile mills, and various enterprises were built in Central Asia, and industry began to develop. Uzbeks and Tajiks became acquainted with the masterpieces of world literature through the influence of Russian language and literature. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Central Asian intellectuals such as Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdulla Avloniy, Siddiqiy Ajziy, and Sadriddin Ayni developed Ahmad Donish's culture-based ideas and initiated the period of national awakening (Jadidism).

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