

DATA ABOUT SUFISM ORDERS AND REPRESENTATIVES IN TURKESTAN PRESS AT THE END OF XIX – EARLY XX CENTURIES

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Abstract: The article discusses Sufism in Turkestan during colonial period, people attitude towards, ishans, sheiks, deterioration of Sufism orders, the reasons of the appearance of false representatives seeking wealth, the position of national intelligentsia to Sufism activities, the rituals of different tarikats in doing dhikr.

Keywords: Sufism, tarikat, ishans, sheiks, dhikr, qalandars, dervishes, Tashkent, press.

Introduction

Studying the history of Central Asia, it becomes known that the role of religious scholars and Sufism representatives who were prone and supported others in their life from common people to officials was considered huge by all strata of local population. They were considered “spiritual fathers” and

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there was need for their advice. For instance, the attitude of Amir Temur to Mir Said Baraka and Temurid Abu Said Mirzo's to Khodja Ahror Waliykan be shown as examples. This tradition was kept for centuries. People highly relied on scholar and Sufism representatives in the late XIX – early XX centuries since they were considered leaders preaching sermon and seeing the truth.

Particularly, trust and recognition towards Sufism representatives amongst people increased during the colonial period. The articles published in press confirm this idea. Russian and local press pages perform the views and information about teachings, religious movements, and representatives of Sufism, as sheikhs, qalandars, and dervishes from Central Asia. Because of ethnographic researches, there were published over 10¹ articles about Sufism, its branches and well-known people on this issue only in "Turkestanskiyevedemosti" that was an official Russian press. There were noted the views of European orientalists on Sufism in the articles.

Forms and of Sufism

Sufism education started to be researched in the XVIII century by European researchers² while Russian ones began in the second half of the XIX century comparing the works of European specialists on the problem and studying Sufism norms in conquered areas in the example of Central Asia. It is considered unfavourable that Sufism education was in the form of deterioration rather than being in its classic form³. Despite this, there were many followers of Sufism educations in different parts of Central Asia. The issue was explored as "Sufism" and "dervishizm" in Europe while Russian specialists used the term "Muslims' mysticism" in their works⁴.

In the XIX century, mostly three Sufism educations such as Naqshbandi education, Qodiriya (its founder was Abd al-KadirGhiloni) and Kubraviyawere spread in Central Asia. Naqshbandi was the most widely one spread among them. The press published information about the founders of aforementioned Sufism educations and the history of their origin⁵.

In addition, Qalandariya was widely spread in the area⁶. An article highlights interesting information about the claws in detail, along with interesting facts about its origins, specific features and aspects that differ it from other tarikats⁷. In particular, the qalandars lived in qalandarkhanas unlike other sofis and ishans. They could be seen the first historical forms of the sofis⁸. That is, they could be seen the appearance of zahid (devoting one's

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life to god praying), abstention from social life, not to pay attention to donations and wealth of murids [followers], to abstain from the world enjoyments, having meals once a day, and spend time praying to God⁹. Therefore, the members of qalandariya were mostly the lowest stratum of society. That is, they did not engage in social activities.

In the rural and urban markets and in the streets, the qalandars caught the attention of the people singing loudly about God, performing praying and religious philosophical ghazals. The people have poured them out with their endowments. Qalandars took the endowments given by people to qalandarkhanas and they were divided among them by their sheikhs.

In one article, the lifestyle of the qalandars is described by a Russian author as follows: "*This form reminds paternal family of the Orient that bases on equality*"¹⁰. Indeed, some of the qalandars were not married. People thought of them those who devoted their lives in prayer and worshiping, and residing in qalandarkhanas, rejecting the wealth of the world, devoting their lives to prayer, always remembering the names of God. As noted above, the qalandars were studied as an object of ethnographic research, and their lifestyle and activity in the 19th century.

However, besides real qalandars, there were also false "qalandars", who did not have enough religious and Sufism knowledge, but were only interested in their material interests using the sympathy of people towards religion. In the local press, the activities of these Sufism members were practically illustrated entirely, and they were harshly criticized. There is one article titled "Qalandarlar (monarkhlar) nomli toifa odamlar bor bizning Turkistonda (There are People in our Turkestan in the Category Called Qalandar)"¹¹. According to the author, qalandar abstained from the wealth of the world in their prayers and only mention the name of God in their speech. It seems that qalandars thought that it was haram thinking about daily life but praying to God, but were content with their everyday needs and spend their other time worshiping.

The article points out that the qalandars claimed that they were in Nakshbandiya and they were criticized for misusing their tarikat's name, carrying their children for begging across streets instead of supporting to derive education and building poor life style for them. Qalandars' fabricated speeches and stories about Bahauddin Naqshband, Imam Azam, and other Islamic scholars, as well as their contradictory views towards Islamic faith

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was criticized in the article¹². In additions, people were advised to be careful, not to follow them and not to give pittance.

Such activities of qalandars were contrary to the Islamic Shari'ah, it is noted that such bad manners as laziness and begging are condemned in the holy religion of Islam. Indeed, activities in this manner and character were not only a violation of the Islamic Shari'ah and bid'a [heresy], but also a social disability for society. Rituals in this form were one of the manifestations of weakening Sufism and losing its essence in the early 20th century. Therefore, the local press called for the purification of superstitions and the vigilance of the people. It was noted a lot that while entering the way of Sufism, the scholars and enlighteners of Turkistan had to be well aware of the Qur'an and Hadith that are the foundations of the Islamic teachings, studying Islamic Sharia, and then directing to tarikat¹³.

In another article, it was noted that most of the solution of religious and belief issues were derived from the Sufi books which had the spirit of *khurofot* [bad thinking] in Muslims of Turkestan. Many parts of these books contradicted Koran, hadiths, and people followed to them without realizing authentic Islam which consequently led to have belief and thought contradicting Koran and Hadith¹⁴.

It is known from history that besides qalandars, sofis, dervishes, ishans, sheikhs and pirs were distinguished from common people due to their such characters as strong belief to Creator, self-educating, sound manner and thriving for perfectness. Among the representatives of Sufism education in Turkestan and Sufism Order, dervishes were widely spread and there is much information especially in the periodicals of official Russian government and other Russian researches about them. The following information about dervishes is given in one of the researches: "When a group of dervishes had *dhikr* [Praising the God] walking through streets, people joined them in every street and their number grew gradually. People who meet dervishes or amateurs considering themselves dervishes take themselves aside freeing the road. Because there was developed good impression on common people by dervishes since they preach sacred names and qualities of God¹⁵". In addition, there was emphasised in the article that national intelligentsia had critical approach towards the activities of dervish and did not support them.

It is known that dervish movement had long history. Initially there were opened *knonaqohs* in Central Asia in IX-X centuries. In XI-XII centuries, there appeared Sufi schools in Central Asia. Together with sheikhs,

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qalandars, ishans, majzubs (dewonas) and common dervishes were highly respected by people in Sufism and tariqatcentres of Turkistan and Mewaraunnahr. As a consequence of this, the movement of dervishes was widely spread and there were developed the norms of khonaqoh. Dervishes occupied an important position in society as a stratum¹⁶.

Dhikr

The representatives of Sufism sang ghazals and songs at the mosques and khonaqoh mosques and at parties they were in favour, they had some movements like dancing with ishans, sheikhs and their murids (disciples). They sounded the names and qualities of Allah in a specific way of praying, threw themselves into ecstasy, and derived divine power of their performances. The conditions in this character were interpreted to open inner world of a person and feel the divinity more deeply¹⁷. The practice of praising the names and qualities of God and recollecting was conducted in two ways. The first method was called “djahriya (loud or sounded)” that means “open”. During religious rituals, the names and qualities of God were expressed in loud voice openly. In Turkestan, djahriya dhikr was widespread in religious customs and rituals of Qodiriya.¹⁸ A Russian researcher Pantusov who studied djahriya and even participated at it as a viewer noted a lot of interesting information about religious rituals of people making dhikr in djahriya.

Djahriya ceremonies used to be held at different places of Tashkent every day. They were held at mosques or the houses of ishans, pirs, sheikhs in old part of the city mostly on Monday evenings. They were also conducted a whole night from 9 PM to 5-6 AM on Thursdays. For example, EshonSohibkhodja mosque in Qoshghar mahalla near Urda bazar hosted for the events. Eshonkhoja mosque in Arpapoya mahalla also hosted at night from Sunday to Monday. They called the praying “dhikr”. It started after Salat al Isha (night prayer). They sat round from 10 to 15 people facing to the side of Kaaba. According to one source written by a local author, there was specific meaning and reason of sitting round facing to the side of Kaaba. Since there was no upper or lower part in a circle, everybody who sat was considered equal¹⁹. It was interpreted that all people were equal for God despite their social stratum and origin. Dhikr was started under ishan or pir.

The practices of djahriya was criticized in the works of local scholars. For example, Mufti Muhammad Ikrom ibn Abd as-Salam in his brochure

“Ijgozu-n-noimijn w aiaalomu-l djohiliyn” published in 1912 criticised dhikr in loud voice²⁰.

The other form of rituals in this character was “khoofya” [hidden, not performed] dhikr that was vice versa of djahriya dhikr. It was held inaudible or inner voice. The members of Naqshbandi Sufi order used this method. Therefore, most scholars and thinkers of Islamic world evaluated Naqshbandi dhikr methods as follow: “the most important thing in this order is peacefulness, that is to say, it is beyond loud sounds that demonstrate riyo [doing something in religion openly for fame]²¹”.

There is considerable data about khoofya dhikr rituals in researches and official press. Particularly, at the end of the XIX century, the representatives of Naqshbandi-khoofya order held their religious ceremonies over 10 places only in Tashkent city²².

Hazrat Miyon Fazli hazrat Miyon Kalonov quietly held khoofya dhikr in his home which was located in Toqli Djallob Mahalla in Kukcha quarter in Tashkent city. Besides that, khoofya dhikr supporters gathered at Moy-iMuborak and Baroqkhon madrasas and other places. Khoofya dhikr was usually fulfilled after Friday prayer and sometimes at night or early in the morning. Unlike djahriya dhikr, their sounds were quite low and they had light movements. According to press published at that period, djahriy and khoofya dhikr continued after tarowih praying during Ramadan. Particularly, from 400 up to 1000 devotees under their Sufi leaders did djahriy and khoofya dhikr in the mosques of every city of Turkestan at nights during Ramadan. They read Turkic and Persian lyrics relating to Sufism in a specific voice²³.

According to the explorations of researchers, higher stratum of Muslims were mostly in Naqshbandi. Although native people were in different tarikats and ways, there were few differences in their social, daily and family life. The only distinction can be seen in their rituals and way of praying²⁴. This practice reflects that it did not play an important role to which Sunna school or tarikat people followed. This exemplifies the existence of friendly manner and religious liberalism.

Sacred numbers

There is a special number in every Sufi order and tarikat. For instance, the founder of Naqshbandi order Hazrat Bahouddin Naqshband born in Bukhara highly evaluated the number 7. According to him, divine meaning and essence is secreted in this number. Therefore, it became a special

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tradition later. In Naqshbandi order, the disciples were accustomed to bringing 7 same presents. These could be animals (sheep, cows, etc.), bread, clothes and sometimes money.

The number 11 was accentuated in Qodiriya tarikat²⁵. It can be seen odd numbers were mostly used and it was interpreted as the loneliness of Allah, that is to say, Allah is odd. Thus, special attention was drawn to odd numbers.

Customs

Hofizs [classic singers], khatibs, dewonas and dervishes did dhikr during religious rituals. After doing dhikr, a hofiz told some riwayat about the history of Islam, hadiths, interpretation of parts of Koran and stories. (They also told about some events from the life of Prophet Muhammad pbuh, about death, life in tomb, paradise and hell). Hofizs told the stories as actors in order that they should become more impressive. In contrast, Russian researchers interpreted this event in another way "they were told in the manner of making fear in people's heart"²⁶. Since the stories were very impressive, the listeners were very astonished and hit their chests with their hands, some listened with tears in their eyes²⁷.

Sufi movements and Sufi teachings, **dhikr** rites and prayers did not only consist of remembering, praising and worshipping God, but also developed their members and people's religious knowledge and abilities. There was given knowledge about the history of Islam and its teachings.

In the XIX century, one group of the leaders in the social and religious life of Central Asia raising to the level of the leader of Sufism were ishans who were considered religious leaders in Sufism.

The word "Ishan" is a Persian word and it means the third person plural form "they". According to the tradition of the Orient, noble people were addressed in respect without mentioning their names, even though they were not present. Ishans were also known as sheikh, murshid, master, pir (teacher, guide) in Turkestan. The word "Hazrat" was used as title for the scholars at this level in Bukhara. For example, in Bukhara, there were frequent references to Ishans as Hazrat ShirKulol, Hazrat Bobo Oghaliq, Hazrat Shah Jahan, Hazrat Divoni, Hazrat Bahouddin²⁸.

In one of the press pages, the ishans were described as follows: Ishans were called the outstanding people of Sufism education in the East, Sufism members in Europe, "dervishes", "the poor" in India, "sofi" in Iran (derived

from Arabic), "dervishes" in Turkey and North Africa, and Tartars and Central Asians called "ishans"²⁹.

Those who followed ishans keeping their way with high respect were called "murids (disciples)" among population³⁰. The murids were spiritually obedient to their pirs, ishans or murshids. The term murid means, "Giving a hand". Some ishans had thousands, even ten thousands of followers. Some ishans had great wealth. The followers acted under the direction of the ishans in every case or with his prayer. Thus, the ishans were not only leaders in religions, but also in all directions in that period. The status and reputation of the ishans were not always high among the people. It is known from history that they did not only limit themselves with their religious views, morals, and way of life, but also supported material aid to the people in need of social funding. They built madrassas for education and especially paid great attention to donating to the lower layers of the population. For example, during the reign of Khan of Kokand Muhammad Alikhon, there were three most famous ishans in Tashkent such as Khan Tora Eshon, Yusuf Khan Eshon and Eshon Vali, and later their descendants. This Hadji Ishans financed the construction of madrassas³¹.

On religious holiday "Mawludinabi" (the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (phub) in particular, in the month of Rabi ul-Avval in 1893, Hazrat Miyon Solih, Hazrat Miyon Fazli and Miyon Fazli Ghofur laid the table as donation for people³². It is worth noting that it was traditional for Nashbani-khoofiya ishans to lay the table and serving dishes for people on these days. By this time, besides ishans with strong belief and knowledge, there were many ignorant, fraudulent and insincere people considering themselves ishans in the area.

Critical articles about ishans who mistreated saying and doing something improperly, relating to Islam was regularly published in the local press by native people, enlighteners and scholars supporting development. The unhealthy actions of the ignorant ishans under religious masks were condemned and urged to warn the public³³. Besides, some of the scholars noted that people did not oppose the false sofis, sheikhs, ishans, and their being inattentive to the spiritual and religious life of the local people influenced negatively.

One of the native intellectuals who provided a lot of information about fake ishans was Sattorkhan Abdulgafforov of Shymkent. S. Abdulsaraforov criticized ignorant ishans and described them as "force retarding the

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society"³⁴. By memoirs published in the press, S. Abdlugarafforov pointed out how the authentic ishans in the period the Kokand Khanate were, and what religious knowledge they had in the example of his grandfather Muminkhon Khoja Ishon³⁵.

Besides, there were published refuted articles about the activities of "false" ishans on local press pages³⁶. In some of these articles, some Sufism representatives were criticized, the reasons why the number of "false" ishans and sheikhs grew and why people followed them. The measures to eliminate the problem were proposed and discussed³⁷. In the case of Turkistan, the imperial government's restrictive policy towards the Islamic religion in the country, the abolition of a number of religious positions, and the implementations of changes and restrictions led to the unmanageable activity of religious leaders and religious life. All these led to a lack of religious and secular knowledge among the population. In addition, the growth of colonial pressure, the decline in the standard of living led to the growth of "false" sheikhs and ishans, who tried for their own economic interests.

Conclusion

In summary, a number of positive and negative interpretations in official and local press about the teachings of Sufism and its orders show that they played an important role in the life of society in Turkestan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A loyal nation of its religious beliefs and national traditions followed to Sufism representatives by seeking religious and spiritual source even being under the influence of colonial period. Thus, there were regularly published books illustrating teachings, life and activities of Sufism representatives at printing houses that were gradually opened during colonial period in Turkestan.

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