



WISDOM WRITING IN THE WORKS OF AHMAD YASSAVIY AND SHAMS O'ZGANDIY

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the artistic-aesthetic and ideological features of the wisdom writing tradition in the works of Ahmad Yassaviy and Shams O'zgandiy, prominent figures of Turkic Sufi literature. It establishes that Shamsiddin O'zgandiy's wisdom poems are a consistent continuation of the spiritual and artistic tradition founded by Yassaviy.*

Keywords: *wisdom writing, Sufi, murid (disciple), sinner, self-reproach, zikr circle, divine wrath and grace, ecstasy, annihilation.*

Introduction

It is well known that Ahmad Yassaviy holds a unique place in the formation and development of Sufi teachings in Turkic literature. The core of the Yassaviya order consists of ideas regarding the spiritual purification of a person, curbing the ego, honesty, and the heartfelt realization of God. The ideas of this teaching spread widely through the poet's simple, folk-style wisdom poems. This tradition of wisdom writing even reached such a level that a number of *wisdom* poets emerged. This tradition, started by Ahmad Yassaviy, was continued by the followers of the Yassavi school. It should be noted that wisdom writings play a specific role in the formation and development of Sufi literature by conveying Islamic principles to the people and interpreting the essence of the Quran and Hadiths. Ahmad Yassaviy's *wisdom writings* were very popular among the people, leading to their widespread dissemination. In addition, *wisdom writings* created by the followers of the Yassavi school were also copied by many calligraphers and published using the lithographic method. One of them is Sulaymon Boqirg'oniy. His *wisdom writings* are very close to those of his mentor, Ahmad Yassaviy, in terms of style and linguistic features. It

is also appropriate to mention the names of Shams O'zgandiy, Kamol Shayx Iqoniy, and Hudoydod as representatives of the Yassavi school. The fact that the *hikmats* of these followers were collected and compiled into books among Turkic peoples indicates that their *hikmats* were also quite popular among the people. In particular, the "Boqirg'on Kitobi" (Book of Boqirg'on), which compiles examples of *wisdom writings* by poets of the Yassavi school, should be noted. This book was published in 2018 in the Ottoman Turkish country. The following sentences from this book require special attention: "Bu geleneğin en önemli temsilcisi, Ahmet Yesevi'nin ucuncu halefi, Yesevi tarzındaki hikmetleri ve menkıbeleriyle Turkler arasında da büyük bir şöhret ve nüfuzu olan Suleyman Hakim Ata'dır. O, gerek şekil gerekse içerik açısından murşidi Ahmed Yesevi'yi takip etmiş ve Yesevi muridleri arasında hikmet geleneğini sürdürmede en mustesna yeri kazanmıştır. Hatta farklı şairler tarafından meydana getirilen ve Yesevi tarzı hikmetleri ihtiva eden Bakırgan Kitabı da tarihi surec içerisinde Suleyman Hakim Ata'ya isnat edilmiştir".¹ [7;5-b.] Furthermore, the attribution of this book to Sulaymon Hakim Ata is based on the fact that the opening poems of the book belong to this specific creator. However, it should be noted that the "*Boqirg'on Kitobi*", although widely known as the work of Sulaymon Hakim Ata, is actually an anthology composed of poems by various poets who lived between the 12th and 18th centuries. In addition to Sulaymon Hakim Ata, the work includes poems by poets from different periods, such as Iqoniy, Shamsiy O'zgandiy, Mashrab, Navoiy, Qul Sharif, Hudoydod, and Faqiriy. One of these is Shams O'zgandiy. Regarding this poet, Abdurauf Fitrat states: "In the *wisdom writings* of the *Boqirg'on Kitobi*, we see that he used the pen name 'Shams' most of

¹ Translation: The most prominent representative of this tradition, Sulayman Hakim Ota — the third successor of Ahmad Yasawi — achieved great fame and influence among the Turks with his wise sayings and anecdotes in the Yasawi style. In both form and content he followed his teacher Ahmad Yasawi and occupied a special place among Yasawi disciples in continuing the tradition of wisdom. Indeed, the "*Boqirg'on Kitobi*," compiled by various poets and embodying Yasawi wisdom, has historically been attributed to Sulayman Hakim Ota.

the time, 'Shamsiddin' in one instance, and 'Shams O'zgandiy' in only one or two places".[1;p.34]

Fitrat supports his data with information found in "*Samaratul mashoyix*". Specifically, he notes that Kamol Shayx Iqoniy had a disciple named Sayid Ahmad, who served Iqoniy for twenty years and, in his youth, had a conversation with Khoja Ahror. He provided information indicating that Mavlono Shams O'zgandiy was one of the disciples of Said Ahmad Shayx, who lived and died in Samarkand. Mavlono Shams was originally from O'zgand and received his formal education in Herat. Later, he became a disciple of Sayid Ahmad Shayx in Samarkand. According to the author of *Samaratul Mashoyix*, after the death of his master Sayid Ahmad Shayx, he likely returned to Samarkand and served as a sheikh in his place; he died in Samarkand and was buried next to his master, Sayid Ahmad Shayx. Fitrat provided extensive information about Shams O'zgandiy. In particular, the following thoughts of his are considered noteworthy: "The author of "*Samaratul mashoyix*", mentioning that Shams also has *wisdom writings*, copies the line 'Qutbi jahon Sayid Ahmad, yo (hazrat) shayxam madad' (Sayid Ahmad, the pole of the world, oh my sheikh, help me) into his book. This line definitively proves that the 'Shams' poems in the "*Boqirg'on Kitobi*" belong to our Shams O'zgandiy." [1; p. 35]

The Main Part

There is also information about Shams O'zgandiy in Po'latjon Domulla Qayumov's work "Tazkirayi Qayumiy." In particular, he notes that this sheikh was originally from the town of O'zgand in the Fergana Valley, that his name was Shamsiddin, and that he shortened his name and adopted it as his pen name. Po'latjon domla places special emphasis on Shams O'zgandiy's being a disciple of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi and quotes excerpts from his poems:

Shayxning kim debon kelsa qulog'img'a sado

Qutbi jahon Sayid Ahmad ayo hazrat Shayximdur.

In this ghazal he indicates that he is from O'zgand as follows:

Olo ey Shams O'zgandi qamug' yoronlaring yonda

Gunohidin bag'ishlandi, mani osiy na qilg'ayman." [2;89-b.]

Therefore, based on the sources reviewed, it should be noted that Shams O'zgandiy was a native of the valley and a follower of Ahmad Yasawi. In analyzing the Sufi-poet's verses, we also encounter wisdoms written in the Yasawi style in the spirit of divine supplication:

Yo Rabbano, fag'firlano osiy mano, G'ofir sano

Munglug' mano, irlik sano, ojiz mano, Qodir sano.

Sandin karam, mandin xato, mandin sitam, sandin ato

Bu osiy qullaringni lutfing bilan yopar sano [3;12-b.]

In this supplicatory poem Shams O'zgandiy appeals to the Creator and depicts three basic states of human beings: the sinner (osiy), the sorrowful (munglug'), and the powerless (ojiz). He then places side by side the lofty attributes of the Almighty — al-Ghafir (the Forgiver), Irlik (the Healer), and al-Qadir (the Omnipotent). By using the rhetorical device of contrast (tazod) the author attains vivid, figurative expression. Likewise, opening the maxim with an exclamation enhances its emotional impact. A wisdom of the same content can also be seen in Yasawi's work:

Yo Rabbano, fag'firlano, zunubano!.,

Gunohing'a iqrar bo'lub keldim mano.

Qahr aylasang, qohir sano, qodir sano,

Lutf aylasang, yuz ming osiy xandon bo'lur. [4; 301-b.]

In both sayings the spirit of supplication predominates. On munajat Ahmad Taroziy says: "If they supplicate in the Presence of God, they recite munajat" [6; p.133]. In Sufi poetry munajat reflects the servant's acknowledgement of his own sin and his turning to divine mercy. In both sayings the main idea is the balance between divine wrath and grace. If God is wrathful, He is al-Qadir and al-Qahir — that is, He has the right to punish. But if He shows grace, His mercy can bring joy to a hundred thousand sinners. This is the widespread Sufi philosophy of hope and mercy.

Expectation of divine mercy can be seen in the maxims of Ahmad Yasawi and Shams O'zgandiy. To support our point, consider the following maxim of Yasawi:

Tanim isyon, so'zum yalg'on, korim xato,
Gunohim ko'b behad erur, vo hasrato.
Rahmat lutfung qamug' qilsang bizga ato,
Gunohimdin sanga yig'lab keldim mano. [4; 281-b.]

In the first line of the hikmat, the poet criticizes and reproaches himself. The phrase "Jonim isyon" ("my soul is in rebellion") indicates that his spirit and ego (nafs) have gone out of obedience and are inclined toward sin. In Sufism, self-reproach is widely discussed among members of various tariqas and in the works of classical poets. The expressions "So'zum yolg'on" ("my words are false") and "Korim xato" ("my deeds are mistaken") clearly show this spirit of self-blame. In Sufi thought, the beginning of repentance can often be seen in a person's inner suffering and spiritual distress. At the same time, the poet expresses hope for the mercy of the Truth (God) in his lines. In the hikmat, the word "mano" ("I") is used as a sign of humility and weakness. This can be connected with the concept of "fano fil ummah". The meaning of "fano fil ummah" is not seeing oneself as superior to others and becoming united with the community. A hikmat with a similar meaning can also be found in the works of Shamsiddin O'zgandiy:

Ey Shamsiddin zor yig'la qilmishlaringni anglagil
Qulluqg'a beling bog'lag'il xizmetda sen Ojiz sano [3; 13-b.]

O'zgandiy, in these verses of a malāmatī character, also calls for "tying the belt of service" (i.e., committing oneself to spiritual service). In Turkic Sufi literature, the themes of dhikr (remembrance of God), sky and divine love occupy a central place. In particular, in the works of Ahmad Yassavi and the poets of the Yassaviyya school, the circle of dhikr is interpreted as a crucial point for attaining divine truth. Moreover, in the poetic examples of the Yassaviyya school, dhikr is represented not only as a form of worship but also as a symbolic process expressing the stages of

spiritual perfection. In this regard, Shamsiddin's *hikmat* with the refrain "Bu halqaning ichinda" ("Within this circle") serves as a vivid testimony to the tradition initiated by Yassavi.

Oshiq kerak cholinsa, bu halqaning ichinda

Alloh teyu cholinsa, bu halqaning ichinda [3;30-b.]

In this couplet, the murid's conscious entrance into dhikr can be observed: directing both his tongue and heart toward the name of Allah, and regarding it as a step taken on the path of the *ṭarīqa*. In the expression "Alloh teyu cholinsa", the form of dhikr is verbal (*lafzī*); that is, the murid, with full awareness, directs his spiritual state toward conscious worship. In the *hikmats* of Ahmad Yassavi, however, this state is interpreted as follows:

Oshiqdari o'ynasa bu halqaning ichinda,

Hu-hu teyu jon bersa bu halqaning ichinda. [4; 297-b.]

In this couplet, the expression "hu-hu" represents the essential name of Allah, while "giving one's soul" does not signify physical death; rather, it denotes renouncing the ego, that is, attaining the spiritual station of *fanā' fī Allāh* (annihilation in God). In the phrase "Hu-hu teyu jon bersa", the form of dhikr becomes existential: the murid, in a state of spiritual ecstasy, transcends the self and becomes absorbed beyond his individual existence. The phrase "bu halqaning ichinda" ("within this circle"), which repeatedly appears in the *hikmats*, is certainly not an ordinary expression. Here, the circle is used in the sense of a spiritual space. Only a true lover—one who burns with the love of Allah—is worthy of entering this circle. Any act that begins with the name of Allah constitutes true dhikr. From the very first couplet of the *hikmat*, a condition for entering the circle is set for the spiritual seeker who has embarked upon the Sufi path. In the Qur'an, in Surah Al-Ankabut, the following statement is given: "...*Indeed, the remembrance of Allah is greater (than all things)*". [8; p. 401].

In the Yassaviyya order, loud dhikr (jahrī dhikr) is practiced. During the dhikr, because the sound produced from the dervish's throat resembles the noise of a saw, the Yassaviyya dhikr is called “zīkr-i arra” or “zīkr-i minshoriy.” This dhikr is performed as follows: the dervish places both hands on his knees, exhales toward his abdomen while saying “yes,” then inhales again from the abdomen and, without moving the head, waist, or shoulders, says “hey.” The dhikr continues in this manner.[5;p.107].

This state is expressed in the Yassavian style in the following way:

*Ishq o 'tig 'a qaynasa, aql-u hushi o 'ynasa,
Alloh teyu jon bersa bu halqaning ichinda. [4; p. 297]*

Shamsiddin writes:

*Ishq o 'tig 'a qaynasa, aqlu hushi o 'ynasa,
Hoyu hu teyu o 'ynasa bu halqaning ichinda. [3; p. 30]*

In these lines, the phrase “ishq o ‘ti” (the fire of love) refers to the state of spiritual ecstasy (jazba) in Sufism. As love intensifies, reason becomes powerless, and the sālik is portrayed as being in a state of ecstatic attraction. The expression “hoyu hu” is a Sufi invocation of dhikr, signifying the constant remembrance of Allah. This cry is one of the ancient forms of dhikr and alludes to the doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd (the unity of being). It signifies the sālik's abandonment of the ego and his spiritual closeness to the Divine Truth (Haq).

The following couplet from the third verse of Shamsiddin's hikmat:

*Yod bahriga cho 'msam man, na 'ra faryod ursam man,
Hoyu hu teyu o 'lsam man, bu halqaning ichinda. [3; p. 30]*

is expressed in Yassavi's hikmats as follows:

*Ishq bahrig 'a cho 'msam men, nola-faryod qilsam men,
Hu-hu teyu o 'lsam men, bu halqaning ichinda. [4; p. 297]*

In this couplet, the “sea of remembrance (yod bahri)” represents the boundless ocean of Allah's dhikr. One who enters this ocean forgets the self, while

“na’ra-faryod” (a loud cry or lament) is a sign of spiritual ecstasy.

Shamsiddin writes:

Zokir qullar, jam o ‘lub yodin aytur jon urub,

Soqiy kezar o ‘grilub, bu halqaning ichinda. [3; p. 31]

This couplet from Shamsiddin’s hikmat appears in Yassavi’s poem in the following form:

The corresponding couplet in **Ahmad Yassavi’s** hikmat reads as follows:

Zokir qullar jam’ bo ‘lub, faryod urub, jon uzub,

Soqiy yurar o ‘rgulub bu halqaning ichinda. [4; p. 297]

Although both couplets are close to one another in form and meaning, they differ in the ideological and artistic intensity conveyed through certain words. In both lines, the image of a Sufi gathering—the circle of dhikr—is depicted. Here, “zokir qullar” refers to the dervishes who remember God, “halqa” symbolizes spiritual unity, and “soqiy” represents the one who distributes divine love. In the line from Shams O‘zgandiy’s hikmat, “*jam o ‘lub yodin aytur jon urub,*” the process of dhikr is portrayed as relatively calm and inward, accompanied by internal spiritual anguish. Likewise, the phrase “*soqiy kezar o ‘grilub*” suggests that the movement of the soqiy occurs quietly and discreetly, almost in a hidden manner. Here, the spiritual state is expressed as inner burning and inward suffering. The expression “*yodin aytur*” indicates a quiet remembrance, while “*jon urub*” conveys the sense of burning one’s soul in devotion.

In contrast, in Yassavi’s hikmat, the phrase “*jam bo ‘lub, faryod urub, jon uzub*” indicates that dhikr has reached an intense spiritual state. The line “*soqiy yurar o ‘rgulub*” portrays the soqiy’s movement as open and fervent. Here, “*faryod urub*” signifies an ecstatic and passionate dhikr, while “*jon uzub*” expresses a level of love so intense that it leads to losing consciousness of the self. From this, it becomes clear that Yassavi’s hikmat demonstrates a higher degree of emotional intensity in depicting spiritual experience.

These two couplets may, in fact, be interpreted as two stages of the same spiritual process: in Shamsiddin's hikmat, it points to the beginning of the spiritual journey (sulūk) initiated through dhikr, whereas in Yassavi's poem, it represents the state of annihilation culminating in spiritual ecstasy.

The *hikmat* of Shamsiddin O'zgandiy with the refrain "ichinda" concludes as follows:

*Hal raavniy mujdasin eshitib Haqdin Shamsiddin,
Jon o'ynag'il bad az in bu halqaning ichinda.* [3; p. 31]

The phrase "Hal raavniy" literally means "Have you seen me?" The central emphasis in this line is placed on this glad tiding; upon hearing this message coming from the Truth (Haq), the poet indicates entering a state of spiritual ecstasy. Thus, the line alludes to a mystical condition associated with divine love—namely, the states of *jazba* and *fanā*.

If we turn to the concluding couplet of Ahmad Yassavi, we read:

*Toliblarni murshidi, Qul Xoja Ahmad deb aydi
Bosh o'ynag'il sen deydi bu halqaning ichinda.* [4; p. 297]

In this couplet, the main emphasis is placed on the murshid (spiritual guide). The verse highlights the murshid's role as one who guides the seekers (*tālibs*) and leads the gathering of dhikr. The phrase "bosh o'ynag'il" conveys the meanings of submission, obedience, and surrender. It should be particularly noted that in this verse, the discipline of the *ṭarīqa* and the spiritual bond with the murshid (the stage of *irshād*) are elevated and strongly emphasized.

The above analyses demonstrate that the hikmat-writing tradition founded by Ahmad Yassavi occupies an important place in the formation and development of Turkic Sufi literature. The spiritual school established by Yassavi not only instilled religious and ethical ideas into the consciousness of the people but also strengthened the artistic form of expression of Sufi thought. Through his wisdom writings, Sufi ideas were popularized by means of vernacular language, simple expression, and

vivid imagery, thereby reaching a broad audience. The analysis of Shamsiddin O'zgandiy's hikmats clearly reveals that he is a direct continuator of the Yassavian school. His hikmats, composed in the spirit of munājāt (supplicatory prayer), interpret the relationship between the servant and the Divine Truth through the concepts of repentance, supplication, hope, and mercy, which represent a natural continuation of the Yassavian tradition. In particular, when the hikmats containing the invocation "Yo Rabbano" are comparatively examined, a clear ideological affinity, harmony in Sufi terminology, and similarity in the expression of spiritual experiences become evident. Moreover, the image of the dhikr circle is interpreted as one of the central symbols in the works of both poets. The image of the "circle" (halqa) appears not merely as a physical space but as a sphere of spiritual unity, ecstasy, guidance, and annihilation (fanā). In Yassavi's hikmats, the state of dhikr is portrayed with strong emphasis on its intense, ecstatic nature that leads to the station of fanā, whereas in Shamsiddin's wisdom writings the process of dhikr is more often depicted through inner suffering, inward burning, and calm spiritual reflection. This reflects the different stages of the Sufi experience, representing the process of spiritual perfection from the path to ecstatic attraction.

The interpretation of the symbol of love (ishq) also carries a profound Sufi meaning in the works of both poets. Through images and forms of dhikr such as "the fire of love," "hoyu hu," and "hu-hu," the sālik's renunciation of the ego, overcoming of the lower self, and spiritual approach to the Divine Truth are expressed. In this respect, the hikmats of Shamsiddin O'zgandiy are conceptually grounded in Yassavi's teachings, though they also reveal a distinctive tone in their artistic expression and spiritual imagery.

Conclusion

In general, the hikmats of Shamsiddin O'zgandiy represent a consistent continuation of the spiritual and artistic tradition established by Yassavi. Through them, the fundamental concepts of Sufi thought—repentance, dhikr, divine love,

spiritual ecstasy, annihilation, mercy, and divine grace—find their artistic expression. This confirms, on a scholarly basis, the firm and enduring place of the Yassavian school in the history of Turkic literature and demonstrates that its influence continued in subsequent centuries.

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