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Notes about Some Manuscripts Devoted to the Sufi Order of Yassawiyya

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Abstract

No extensive and comprehensive study based on sources about Ahmad Yassawi and representatives of the Sufi order of Yassawiyya has been carried out since Ord. Prof. F.Koprulu's well-known work "Turk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavviflar" (First Sufi saints in Turkish literature). The discovery of new sources on the Yassawiyya offers new possibilities for research into this area and for introducing it to the world of science. This paper will present some general information on these newly discovered sources. The sources that are presented in this article are written by the followers of Khodja Ahmad Yassawi. These books tell about the life, thinking, the activities of Khodja Ahmad Yassawi, the opinions of his followers, the principles of the Sufi order of Yassawiyya, as well as the life and words of representatives of the Sufi orders like Naqshbandiyya, Kubraviyya and Ishqiyya, which were common in Central Asia. These books are very important sources in the field of research Yassawi, as they contains original information and documents about Yassawi and Yassawiyya.

Keywords: Sufi orders, Khodja Ahmad Yassawi, Yassawiyya order, apophthegm (Hikmat), Sources, Research, Library, Hagiography, Composition, Miracle (karamat), Zikr-i arra.

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Introduction

Before enlightening of life, spiritual, scientific and religious activities of the founder of Turkic Sufi poetry Ahmad Yasawi, we should be thoroughly and deeply acquainted with the written manuscripts sources. Therefore, we will start our brief notes with a description of the most important sources for our subject area. Otherwise, our notes and suggestions would appear superficial and unfounded. In our opinion, the most important among those sources are the following compositions: “Mir’at al-qulub” by Sufi Muhammad Danishmand Zarnuqi; “Nasabname” translated into Turki (Chaghatai) by Mawlana Urung Qoylaqi; “Risala dar tarjima-i Ahmad Yassawi” of Husamiddin Signaki; “Hadiqat al-arifin” of Khodja Ishaq; “Jawahir al-abrar min amwaj al-bihar” of Sultan Ahmad Hazini, “Manba al-abhar fi riyad al-abrar”, “Jame al-murshidin”, “Hujjat al-abrar”, “Lamahat min nafahat al-quds” of Alim Sheikh Azizan, “Hujjat az-zakirin” by Muhammad Sharif Bukhari, and “Samarat al-mashaikh” by Sheikh Zinda Ali.

Although several papers in Uzbek, Russian and Turkic were published in the last century, many of them do not refer much to the written primary sources.

Sources about Yassawism

Meanwhile the composition “Mir’at al-qulub” by Sufi Muhammad Danishmand Zarnuqi, a close pupil of Ahmad Yassawi, took an important part in the research into the Yassawi heritage because it was written closer in time to Yassawi period. At present one copy of this manuscript is kept in Uppsala University Library in Sweden [Danishmand:2], and another in the manuscript funds of Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies at the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences [Danishmand:1].

Written by request of Sufi saints of the Yassawiyya, who asked him to leave behind a heritage as to the customs of their order, the pamphlet begins with the address of Ahmad Yassawi, i.e. “*Hazrat-i Sultan al-arifin*” (“king of scholars or king of Sufi mystical arifs”). The book expresses the great sufi’s ideas about the concepts of Shariah, Tariqah, Ma’rifah and Haqiqah. For example, he states that “Shariah is overt observance of the Islamic norms, tariqah is their observance wholeheartedly, and haqiqah is their observance with the secret in deep soul (essence of the heart)” [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.156b].

The author also relates pearls of wisdom by Ahmad Yassawi that holds a key position place in Sufism (Tasawwuf): “One cannot enter Tariqah (order, award) without a pure heart, and whoever gets across four seas gets his heart purified. These seas are the world, the people, the devil, and the self. One needs ships to sail across these seas. Devotion is the ship for the sea of the world; her provisions are modesty; her prospects, abasement; and her anchor,

patience. Despair and reclusion are the ship for the sea of the people; her anchor is isolation and its ballast is solitude. *Zikr* (remembrance of God) is the ship for the sea of the devil; her nourishment is rosaries; her anchor, the fear of God, and her ballast, affection. Hunger and thirst are the ship for the sea of the self; her food is love; her ballast is affection. Only after passing these seas can one reach the path of tariqah and get his heart purified” [Danishmand:1, p.163].

The work includes verses and hadiths about the Ascension (miraj), seventy thousand curtains, seventy ranks, seven ranks that lead to Allah, improving discernment, patience, the cause (da’wa) and interpretation, true and false sheiks and divine light as well as words by great sheiks and Ahmad Yassawi’s aphorisms.

“Nasabnama” (genealogy of Ahmad Yassawi), translated from Arabic into Turkic in 1146 by Yassawi’s brother Mawlana Safiy ad-din Qoylaqi, is of great importance because it was written in the same period as Yassawi.

In this source important information is given about Khodja Ahmad Yassawi’s life and accomplishments. For example, the holy saint Khizr prophesizes when Khodja Ahmad gets twenty-two that he will live a long life, have many followers (murids), and become the great sheikh. Indeed, it is written in this work that Ahmad Yassawi was born in Sairam, then moved to Yassi. He had ten thousand followers and lived one hundred and twenty years.

Also in this work are views of Ahmad Yassawi on issues in Sufism. A distinctive feature of the work is that Yassawi’s life and views on Sufism along with incidences from other Sufi saints are related in cooperation with saint Khizr.

The presentation of many preternatural events and miracles in Nasabnama attests to the fact that this work is hagiographical in character.

In some copies of manuscripts and editions of Nasabnama ["Nasabnama"; Mirholdoroghli:1992; Muminov, Jandarbekov:1992] there is no information on Yassawi’s relation with Arslanbab and Yusuf Hamadani, nor is there any mention of Yassawi’s education in Bukhara. Yet R. Abdushukurov’s edition published in Tashkent gives information about Yassawi’s meeting with Arslanbab, his training under Hamadani, the legend about “the jug of divine love”, his son Ibrahim’s murder by the tribe of Suyri, and the Grand Sheik’s going into seclusion at the age of 63 years and dying there in solitude when he was a hundred and twenty years old [Ahmad Yassavi ajdodlari shajarasi, p.17-20].

In this work are narrated relations of Khodja Ahmad with his followers along with his preternatural acts and services in the order of Yassawiyya.

In this work are given words of Khodja Ahmad about spiritual education of followers (murids) through of the solitude of forty days' cycle [Mevlana Safiyud'din:1996, 50]. These words are brought also by the author of "Jawahir al-abrar" Hazini [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.13b, 18a]. Also the term "sofra tutmoq" which has a meaning of "hold a cloth" is used as in sense to appeal of the people to the true way. In the composition of "Jawahir al-abrar" the word "*sofra*" (cloth) is used in the same sense too. It shows that Hazini was simultaneously well familiar with «Nasabnama».

In the work there is some missing information. First, dates of the birth and death of Yassawi's ancestors and events connected with them are not given; the story begun with Is'haqbab, further the author went to the events associated with Yassawi, then returned on Is'haqbab; and last, in the work is given much information on hagiographical character. Still, "Nasabnama", where some historical events are narrated, gives lists of names and information about the lives of the people who lived during this period along with a genealogy of the Yassawi's descendants. The historical, scientific, literary and hagiographic value of this work is determined with its translation from Arabic into Turkic in 540/1146 by Mawlana Safiy ad-din who was from descendants of Ahmad Yassawi.

The same words also can be said about the composition of "Risala dar tarjima-i Ahmad Yassawi" by Imam Husamiddin Sighnaki (died in 1311) which is stored in Manuscripts' fund of the Institute of Oriental studies after name of Abu Rayhan Beruni of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences [Sighnoqi]. The volume of this manuscript is not so large, but it served as an important source in the writing of many books on Yassawi heritage written later. For example, "Lamahat min nafahat al-quds" by Alim Sheikh Azizan (the 17th century) and "Hujjat az-zakirin" by Muhammad Sharif Husaini al-Bukhari (the 17th century) refer to some narrations in the book of Sighnaki. The latter work has hagiographical and historical value because it contains important information on Yassawi's life and personality. We can suppose that the first oral news about Ahmad Yassawi have been brought from this source. For example, the book has information about the student life of Ahmad Yassawi under the tutelage of Yusuf Hamadani; the Yassawi's friendship with Abdulkhaliq Ghijduvani; his tutoring follower-pupils like Baba Machin Muhammad Khotani, Hakim Ata, Sufi Muhammad Danishmand, Khodja Dugi; the participation of different ranks of the people as ulemas, muftis, imams, sultans, slaves and sufis in conversations and discussions of Ahmad Yassawi; the life of the great sheikh lasted more than hundred years.

We also can meet divergences as well as the convergences between "Risala dar tarjima-i Ahmad Yassawi" and other compositions dedicated to Ahmad Yassawi. For example, there is not information in "Risala" about the personality of Yassawi's first teacher

Ahmad– Arslanbab, Yassawi’s life in solitude during the period of forty days’ cycle; about the legend of “the Jug of divine love”. However, information about the Yassawi’s meeting with the sheikh Khodja Arif Revhari is considered as a new data.

In “Risala dar tarjima-i Ahmad Yassawi” of Signaki firstly was brought the story about small box which often meets in many sources of Yassawism. Signaki contains new information about that Khodja Ahmad, who it says, lived and studied in Kaaba (Mecca) for thirty years, taught follower-pupils in 73 subjects, and fed falcons and dogs for hunting. The following verses from “Diwani Hikmat,” collection of Yassawi’s Sufi verses corroborate this information:

Ayo dostlar, shunqor qushum uchurdum man,
Qanot qoqib qaysi taraf ravon boldi.
Gahi-gahi orqasidin unday qoldim,
Davr olibon kozlarimdin nihon boldi.
Qaro lochin qayrilibon qanot qoqar,
Oshiq uldur tan-jonini otqa yoqar.
Piri mughon nazar qilib anga boqar,
Shunqor yangligh qanot qoqib uchar dostlar.
Davlat yangligh shunqor qushi kimga qonar,
Lochin yangligh halqa ichra ozin urar,
Jonni qushi parvoz qilib hozir turar,
Hozir bolub tavba qilib yurung dostlar.

Translation:

O comrades, I released my falcon,
It fluttered its wings into the distance.
Sometimes I called him back,
Away it flew, disappearing before my eyes.
The black falcon returns, waving its wings,
Enamoured the one who lights body and soul.
The spiritual leader turns his gaze upon him,

It flies away like a falcon, comrades.

Whoever the falcon alights upon,

Like the falcon he has come in a circle

Bird of showers flew up and was ready,

Be ready, repent, and march, friends.

“The twelve-year-old Khalif Yassawi’s work reached majority,” says Sighnaki, whose remark is confirmed by a couplet in “Diwani Hikmat”:

Hoyu havas moumanlik turmay kochti,

On ikkimda bu sirlarni kordim mano.

Translation: The passionate desires and temporary affairs have quickly passed/At twelve I saw all these secrets.

This information requires that Risala of Sighnaki be taken into consideration in any study of Yassawi’s life and heritage because it is not unlikely that Sighnaki had intimate knowledge of older texts of “Diwani Hikmat”.

Ismail Ata’s son and a descendant of Ahmad Yassawi’s (the 14th century), Is’haq Ata brings forth in his work “Hadiqat al-arifin” (The Garden of Saints closer to the God) some of Yassawi’s opinions on the title of sheikh (the spiritual leader in Sufism); interrelations between the sheikh and followers (murids); valor and nobleness, patience and persistence, and zikri arra (remembrance of God in loudly) ... [Is’haq Ata].

Sultan Ahmad Hazini’s works (the 16th century) “Jawahir al-abrar min amwaj al-bihar” (“Pearls of good people on waves of the seas”), “Manba al-abhar fi riyad al-abrar” (“Sources of the seas from gardens of good men”), “Jami al-murshidin” (“The Collection of sacred leaders”) and “Hujjat al-abrar” (“Documents of good man”) are worth mentioning among these sources.

Stored in the Berlin library, the unique manuscript of “Jami al-murshidin” gives descriptions of sheikhs of orders of Yassawiyya and Naqshbandiyya [Hazini, Jami al-murshidin]. The author of the composition Hazini in poetic and prosaic genres widely described the life and personality of Ahmad Yassawi, also his thoughts on Sufism. Hazini, who was himself from sheikhs of Yassawiyya order paid special attention in Sufi rank and genealogy of Ahmad Yassawi. In this work we find new information on names and occupations of leaders (sheikhs) of Yassawiyya order. The author wrote that when Ahmad Yassawi was the spiritual leader (murshid) in Turkestan people from all over the world would

come, hear and enjoy his conversations and discussions. Therefore, Yassawi's lodge was called "Kaaba of Ajam" [Köprülü:1991].

It is narrated in legend that with the blessing of Yassawi the people of Bukhara got rid of drought and hunger. Ahmad Yassawi and Abdulkhaliq Gijduvani exactly with their spiritual services have made well-known the city of Bukhara as a "Qubbat al-Islam" (the Dome of the Islam). Thanks to them Bukhara was cleared from infidelity, heresy, meanness and disaster. The faith in Sunna, prosperity and abundance were developed there. Cities of Bukhara and Yassi became "eyes of the world" with greatness and merits of Ahmad Yassawi. The poet wrote that in these two cities there is a happiness of two worlds:

Az buzurgi on shahi alavi,

Hazrati Khodja Ahmad Yassawi...

Nurbahshi jahon faqr-u fana,

Qaddasallohi sirrahu abada...

Hast sardori avliyo-i jahon,

Ganji irfon – qutb-i Turkiston [Hazini, Jami al-murshidin, p.66]

(Translation: Ahmad Yassawi from descendants of Hazrat-i Ali has disseminated in all worlds a light faqr-u fana. Let his saint secrets will remain eternally sacred. He was a leader of all sacred in the world, a treasure of enlightenment, a pole of Turkestan).

Hazini also extensively narrates legends about Khodja Ahmad's underground seclusion called chillakhona; the loss of his favorite son Ibrahim and his beautiful horse Ablaq; and his interactions with Abdulkhaliq Gijduvani and Khodja Arif Revhari.

"Manba al-abhar fi riyad al-abrar," the other work by Hazini, is kept in the library of Istanbul University [Hazini, Manba ul-abhar] and addresses great spiritual leaders of Yassawiyya and Naqshbandiyya orders.

Written partly in verses and partly in prose, the book gives hagiographical information about Yassawi's life and activities and events connected with him.

The author writes about Ahmad Yassawi's views on the four tenets of tariqah (order): time, place, brotherhood and obedience. According to Yassawi, for secrets to be revealed and for spirituality to emerge, fakirs (hermits) and arifs (perceivers) must adhere to these four tenets. It is impossible to attain the perfection without any one of these four tenets.

It is known that the upbringing of the soul (spirit) and the self-reproach of the soul are main requirements of the Sufism. Hazini well used from outcomes of Yassawi in the solution

of this problem. He writes that Ahmad Yassawi told his followers, “If a spiritual leader (murid) is honorable among people, he must not be proud with the supernatural advantages and ranks he has reached”.

Another work of Hazini is “Jawahir al-abrar min amwaj al-bihar” and its only manuscript is kept in the library of the Istanbul University [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar]. This book is unique source that contains rich material about norms, tenets, principles and history of Yassawi Sufi order. According to Köprülü, the book is of great value because it gives extensive information about regulations of Yassawi Sufi order [Köprülü:1991, p.35,98].

Regulations concerning Yassawi Sufi order are presented in two forms in the work. The first is through an understanding Yassawi’ ideas. In this case in the beginning of the narration was brought the following phrases: «Ul muhaqqiqi maoni-i Quroni va mudaqqiqi maboni-i furqoni... sanjida-i qarn ul-azim sayyid ul-alavi Khodja Ahmad Yassawi quddisa sirruh ul-aziz» (Khodja Ahmad Yassawi, the true researcher and the Koranic scholar-connoisseur). After that, was brought words of Ahmad Yassawi. The work gives as many as forty similar aphorisms that address problems such as five patterns in the character of the person², good appearance and inner purity, abstention, asceticism, the struggle against desires of the materiality, remembrance of God, solitude, divine love, comprehension of God, relations between the sheikh (the master) and the follower (murid), orders of Tariqah (suluk), Ascension (meradj) of sacred persons (Sufis), miracle and review, Sufi whirling in ecstasy (raqs-u samo), seeking refuge only from the God (faqr-u fano), etc. Also the second kind of the regulations concerning Yassawi Sufi order fixed in the composition have been told by Hazini.

The true value of this work lies in the fact that the author refers to Yassawi’s views on the main problems of Sufism and its orders. For example, narrations about the radiance of the soul told by himself Yassawi: “Khodja Ahmad Yassawi told that: if the person has a good appearance and inner purity he reaches perfection, and the palace of his fills with the light of the God. After that he aspires to “Hazarat-i khamisa” (five degrees) and obtain them [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.6b]³.

² Five qualities in human nature: Rububiyat - education of the Divine morals; Malakiyat - to achieve to happiness with a mention of the God; Sabuiyat - to be wild and cruel; Bahaimiyat - will continuously satisfy voluptuousness and passion; Shaytaniyat - debauchery to raise the conflict, to sow conflicts. In opinion of Akhmad Yassavi, from these five qualities the first - a primary factor in achievement to the God. As the purpose of Sufi ways too is to reach the God.

³ Hazaroti hamsa – Five main degrees of the universe: 1. Category *mutlaq ghayb*; 2. Category *shahadat*; 3. Category *izafi ghayb*; 4. Category, which consists of four worlds (the world of the person, the world of things, the world of angels, the world *jabarut* /divine/); 5. Category *ahadiyat* (unity) (see: Uludağ S. Tasavvuf terimleri sözlüğü. İstanbul 1997, s. 232)

And also the author of this work very wisely enlightened the life of leaders of the order of Yassawiyya, their relations with followers of the order, and secrets of Shariah, Tariqah, Marifah and Haqiqah. Although the Hazini's poetry is very similar in style to that of Yassawi, "Jawahir al-abrar" also provides poems written by Yassawi. Hazini writes that Yassawi is the author of sacred wise verses, in which senses is hidden a lot of precious matter. He brought some examples from these verses. For example:

Holiqimni istaram tun-kun jahon ichinda,

Tort yonimdin yolandum kavnu makon ichinda.

Translation: I seek my Founder the clock round at the Universe, from four sides I am directed into space.

The presence of abovementioned sacred verse in "Jawahir al-abrar" disproves the claim that Yassawi did not write any wise verses.

And also the dedication of this work to the norms of Yassawi Sufi orders and the narration in it some views of Ahmad Yassawi about Tariqah, which are not found in other books proves the correctness of our hypothesis.

Hazini in his "Jawahir al-abrar" elaborates on the tenets of the order of Yassawiyya like Pir (Old Saint), Sheikh (spiritual leader of the order) and Wali (Sufi sacred man). For the formation of ideas of Hazini influenced the wise verses of Yassawi. For example, in Yassawi's "Diwani Hikmat" we read verses such as

Qulovuzsiz yolgha kirmang ayni hato,

Yolgha kirgan manzillardin ozar dostlar.

Or:

Yahshi bilsang tariqatni hatari bor,

Qulovuzsiz ushbu yolgha kirmang dostlar.

Translation:

It is a mistake going without the guidebook,

If you will go with the guidebook, you surpass halts, dear friends.

Whether you know, in Tariqah has danger,

Without the guidebook you do not enter into this way, dear friends.

In these hemistiches Ahmad Yassawi expresses that whoever wishes to become member of Tariqah (order) should first become a follower of the perfect tutor -guide

(murshid). Here the word "tutor-guide" must refer to the perfect *Sheikh, Pir* because only the Tutor attained good appearance and inner purity can guide people to the true way. To be assured on this statement, it is necessary to address Yassawi's opinions given in "Jawahir al-abrar". Hazini writes following words from the side of Yassawi that: "The sheikh al-mashayikh (Ahmad Yassawi) said, "Whoever wants to get divine piety, reach God and know true wisdom should become the follower of perfect sacred teacher and learn all knowledge from him, and he will not be ashamed in the Doomsday [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.58a]. After that Hazini stated his views on the problem:

Vahdati Haq gar tilarsang vahdati pir tila,

Gar muvahhidlik kerak vahdatda tadbiring tila [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.88a].

Translate: If you want Unity of God, wish Unity of the Teacher,

If you wish to become Muvahhid then take measures in Unity).

It is impossible to interpret the following verses by Hazini without mentioning Yassawi's influence on them:

Shartdur shayhi murabbiy zi-hayot,

Amru nahi emas ahli mamot.

Shayhdin gar sohibul irshodsen,

Qaydi bayatdin qula ozodsen [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.16a].

Ey Hazini, muqtado yolinda bol,

Ghofil bolma shayhdin chun shahsi gol [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.11a].

Translation: Is necessary in this life the tutor-sheikh,

That he will direct us to a true way.

If the leader has authorized you for *rushd*,

Then you are free from *bay'at*.

Hey Hazini, be you in a way of the sheikh,

Don't be naïve and don't ignore the sheikh.

Why on stages of sayr-i suluk (sufistic a way of clarification) the training from shaikh is so important? Hazini clearly answers this question with Yassawi's words. He writes that the Tutor guide can solve difficulties of the follower (murid), which he bring up and improve. If arise lacks and the arrogance in Shariah and Tariqah, at that time the Tutor guide (murshid)

liquidate all these negativities with spiritual lights of the true way (irshad) and treats the follower (salik) from inner abscesses [Hazini, Jawahir al-abrar, p.11b, 16a, 57b, 58b].

The views and thoughts on Tasawwuf (Sufism) given in “Jawahir al-abrar” helps us correctly understand Yassawi’s way of thinking.

Another manuscript book written by Hazini “Hujjat al-abrar” is kept in Paris library [Hazini. Hujjat ul-abrar]. The book which opens with praises of rulers as in «the ruler of seven continents, the defender of Islam, the owner of the throne, justice and power Sultan Muradkhan son of Sultan Selimkhan” [Hazini. Hujjat ul-abrar, p.116a] is dedicated to Ottoman emperor Sultan Muradkhan 3rd. In the composition of “Jawahir al-abrar” widely described lives, activities and wonders of Ahmad Yassawi, Sayyid Mansur and other spiritual leaders (sheikhs of Yassawiyya. In this work the author states that the two Sufi orders (Yassawiyya and Naqshbandiyya) sprung from a single source, are fed by a single source, and are very similar to each other.

In this work the author gives more information about his biography, through which the reader gets intimately familiar with his outcomes, views, purposes and aspirations. In part he in interesting style narrated a lot of stories like his relations with sheikh (teacher) Sayyid Mansur; the degradation in his soul after the death of his teacher; his travels to Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Mecca, Medina and Anatolia; his return to Bukhara and back to Anatolia. Also he praises Istanbul and scholars of the Ottoman Empire. He explains the toponymy of Istanbul linked with Turkish word “Islambul” which meant “the blessed Islamic city”.

In this work Hazini extensively writes about theoretical problems of Sufism such as the sheikh and his activity; zikr (remembrance of God), its essence and role in the perfection of spirituality of the person; zikri hafi (remembrance of God in soul) and zikri jahri (remembrance of God with loudly), material and spiritual features of zikri arra (remembrance of God with loudly, similar in the saws); special attention of Sufi to learning of true knowledge.

So Hazini was the talented creator who left for us a precious heritage. The more we learn about his heritage, the more we are impressed with the detailed description of the scientific, cultural and spiritual life of his time. In addition, we also obtain rich information about Yassawi’s life, tariqah, poetry and followers.

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