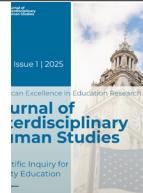




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PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT KHOJA AKHRARI VALIA AND MIRZA ULUGBEK

Abstract. In the history of the social development of our people, the XIV-XV centuries stand out as the period of the greatest achievements in the political, economic, cultural and spiritual spheres. The works created during this period in the scientific-philosophical, religious-mystical spirit are considered unique masterpieces of the spiritual heritage not only of Movarounnahr, but also of the peoples of the whole world. It was during this period that the ideological foundations, rules, stages and statuses of the Sufi doctrine, which formed the core of the Islamic religion, received a consistent development, and it acquired its leading role in the life of the people. This, in turn, led to the formation of the Islamic Sharia, the political system, its democratic principles and became the basis of the country's domestic and foreign policy. Therefore, it cannot be denied that in the XIV-XV centuries in Central Asia, including Movarounnahr, the role of Sufism and its leading scientists was great in public administration, the internal and external life of the country.

Keywords: religious and mystical, educational, scientific and spiritual heritage, religious and mystical, Islamic studies, jurisprudence, scientists, research, history of Islam, Islamic ideology, Eastern philosophy, word.

INTRODUCTION

In the years of independence, the objective and scholarly study of Uzbekistan's national history and spiritual heritage has gained renewed importance. In this context, reassessing Sufism and its major representatives – previously interpreted through ideological lenses – has become a key academic task. Among them, Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar Vali, a leading figure of the Naqshbandiyya order, stands out as a prominent

Sufi master whose life and activities played a significant role in the socio-political and spiritual life of fifteenth-century Mawarannahr.

MAIN PART

During the years of independence, the study of national history and spiritual heritage in Uzbekistan on an objective and scientifically grounded basis has entered a new stage. In particular, the need has emerged to reassess religious and spiritual heritage, Sufism, and the activities of its prominent representatives, which for many years were interpreted through a one-sided and ideological framework. From this perspective, an in-depth scholarly analysis of the Naqshbandiyya order – one of the most significant traditions in the history of Sufism – and the life and activities of one of its eminent representatives, Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar Vali, constitutes one of the most pressing academic tasks (Sirojiddinov, 2001: 44–46).

Khoja Ahrar Vali occupies a distinctive place in the history of fifteenth-century Mawarannahr not only as a highly authoritative Sufi master, but also as a historical figure who actively participated in socio-political processes and exerted a considerable influence on relations between the state and society. Through his activities, the actual role of Sufism in social life, its interaction with state governance, and the impact of religious and moral values on political decision-making are clearly manifested (Bartold, 1963: 137–139).

The fifteenth century, during which Khoja Ahrar Vali was active, represents a complex and contradictory stage in the historical development of Mawarannahr. This period was characterized by internal political struggles among the Timurids, economic hardships, and social tensions. Under such conditions, Sufism – particularly the Naqshbandiyya order – emerged as a spiritual force capable of stabilizing society. Standing at the center of these processes, Khoja Ahrar sought to act as a mediator between rulers and the populace, to ensure social justice, and to incorporate Sharia norms into political life (Trimingham, 1971: 201–203).

During the Soviet period, the personality and activities of Khoja Ahrar Vali were interpreted in a manner far removed from historical reality, and he was frequently portrayed as a “reactionary cleric” or a “defender of feudal interests.” In particular, the unfounded association of Khoja Ahrar’s name with the martyrdom of Mirzo Ulugbek

led to a distortion of his historical image. Post-independence research, based on reliable sources, has demonstrated that such interpretations lack scholarly validity (Kattaev, 2004: 30–33).

Today, the study of Khoja Ahrar Vali's legacy is significant not only for elucidating the history of Sufism, but also for understanding Uzbek statehood, political thought, and the system of social relations. His teachings and practical activities reveal the role of religious and spiritual values in governance, the function of Sufism in ensuring social stability, and the importance of individual agency in historical processes (Algar, 1992: 54–56).

The primary aim of this study is to analyze Khoja Ahrar Vali's role in the socio-political and spiritual life of fifteenth-century Mawarannahr on the basis of scholarly sources, to provide an objective assessment of his Sufi views and practical activities, and to restore historical truth. In pursuing this aim, historical sources as well as the academic works of Eastern and Western scholars are examined using a comparative and analytical methodology.

Khoja Ahrar Vali (1404–1490) is regarded as a scholar who put into practice the Naqshbandiyya principle of “being among the people and living together with them.” He interpreted Sufism not merely as a path of individual spiritual perfection, but as a force capable of stabilizing society morally, economically, and politically. Consequently, issues of social responsibility, justice, and the protection of public interests occupy a central place in his teachings (Trimingham, 1971: 202–204).

According to historical sources, Khoja Ahrar possessed control over extensive landholdings and economic resources in Mawarannahr. However, he used these opportunities not for personal gain, but to alleviate the hardships of ordinary people. In particular, he purchased villages and lands to protect peasants burdened by excessive taxation, and in some cases succeeded in securing the abolition of state taxes (Kattaev, 2004: 24–26; Fletcher, 1995: 112).

Khoja Ahrar Vali's role in political life is especially evident during the Timurid period. He maintained direct relations with rulers such as Abu Sa'id Mirzo, Sultan Ahmad Mirzo, and Umar Shaykh Mirzo, urging them to end internal conflicts and pursue just policies. The exemption of the population from the tamgha tax by Abu Sa'id Mirzo in 1460–1461 at Khoja Ahrar's request serves as clear evidence of the Sufi

master's tangible influence on state policy (Bartold, 1963: 139; Kattaev, 2004: 27).

Khoja Ahrar Vali's activities are of particular scholarly significance with regard to relations between Sufism and the state. He sought to maintain a balance between Sharia, the Sufi path (tariqa), and political authority. According to historians of Sufism, the Naqshbandiyya order, as embodied by Khoja Ahrar, adopted a conciliatory yet independent position toward the state (Algar, 1992: 55–57).

During the Soviet era, a negative image of Khoja Ahrar Vali was deliberately constructed, portraying him as a “reactionary force” and a “defender of feudal interests.” Post-independence studies have demonstrated the groundlessness of these views. On the contrary, historical sources depict Khoja Ahrar as a spiritual guide who defended the interests of the people and sought to restrain the oppression of rulers (Sirojiddinov, 2001: 52–54).

The issue of Khoja Ahrar Vali's relationship with Mirzo Ulugbek has also long been a matter of debate. According to Rashahāt ‘ayn al-ḥayāt by as-Safiy, Khoja Ahrar never met Mirzo Ulugbek directly and had no involvement whatsoever in Ulugbek's martyrdom. This account is particularly significant because it was recorded by the author directly from Khoja Ahrar himself (As-Safiy, 1910/2003: 87–89).

Komilkhon Kattaev also conducted a specialized study of this issue and identified Mawlana Nizamiddin Khamush – not Khoja Ahrar – as the figure responsible for the Ulugbek tragedy. According to the researcher, the association of Khoja Ahrar's name with this event represents a distortion of historical truth (Kattaev, 2004: 34–38).

Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar Vali was a great Sufi scholar who played a crucial role in the socio-political and spiritual life of fifteenth-century Mawarannahr. He interpreted Sufism not as an isolated spiritual practice detached from society, but as a force regulating real social relations. His activities clearly demonstrate that he served as a strong bridge between the theoretical foundations of the Naqshbandiyya order and practical life.

The findings of this study show that Khoja Ahrar Vali did not confine Sufism to the sphere of individual spiritual perfection, but closely linked it with governance, economic relations, and principles of social justice. Through dialogue with rulers, he exerted moral and normative influence on political decisions and sought to align state policy with Sharia and humanitarian values. His efforts to protect public interests, reduce taxation, and ensure social equality confirm his real influence on political processes.

Khoja Ahrar Vali's activities represent a historical model of relations between Sufism and the state. In this model, Sufism appears not as a subordinate force, but as an independent moral authority that balances political power. The Naqshbandiyya principle of "dil ba yār, dast ba kār" ("the heart with God, the hand at work") acquired practical meaning in Khoja Ahrar's life, through which religious teachings were integrated into all spheres of social life.

Furthermore, the study substantiates – on the basis of scholarly sources – that Khoja Ahrar Vali had no involvement in the historical events surrounding Mirzo Ulugbek. It has been established that the misinterpretations formed during the Soviet period contradict historical reality, and that the true cause of the Ulugbek tragedy lay in political struggles for power. This necessitates a reconsideration of the negative evaluations previously assigned to Khoja Ahrar's personality.

Khoja Ahrar Vali's activities also demonstrate that, alongside his Sufi maturity, he possessed a high level of social responsibility and civic engagement. He remained closely connected with the lives of ordinary people and defended the interests of peasants, craftsmen, and merchants. This contributed to the transformation of Sufism into an institution that ensured social stability.

In general, the legacy of Khoja Ahrar Vali constitutes an integral component of Uzbek statehood, political thought, and spiritual culture. A thorough scholarly study of his life and activities not only sheds light on the history of Sufism, but also contributes to understanding the enduring importance of moral principles in relations between society and the state. In this respect, the teachings of Khoja Ahrar Vali continue to retain significant theoretical and practical relevance for the analysis of contemporary socio-political processes.

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