

## Medical Practice in Maverannahr Sufism of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century According to the Descriptions of Manakiba

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### ABSTRACT

The article discusses the content of manakiba, which are dedicated to the famous Maverannahr Sufi sheikhs studies the description of the "medical practice" of the Sufi sheikh. The methods and ways of treating Sufis in a medieval atmosphere are interpreted, where religiosity was an integral part of social psychology, and Sufi medical practice was carried out according to prevailing religious beliefs.

**Key words:** Topics of manakiba, Sufi medical practice, Sufism in Maverannahr

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### INTRODUCTION

In manakibs (manakib is a Muslim hagiographic composition), the description of the "medical practice" of the Sufi sheikh takes a large place. To study this topic, manakibs, which are dedicated to the famous Maverannahr Sufi sheikhs of the XVI century, contain the necessary diverse life stories. The local Maverannahr population itself has always had a special respect for medicine. All existing libraries in Maverannahr contained not only religious, but also medical books. Almost every person who graduated from the madrasah was a doctor, as they studied to a certain extent medical writing.

Many people sincerely believed in Sufi sheikhs - healers endowed with God's gift and therefore preferred the methods of alternative medicine. Some Sufi sheikhs retained the methods of

treatment inherited from their ancestors. In their medical practice, the process of treatment and fortune-telling is not differentiated. The Sufi sheikh was a doctor (tabib) and a fortuneteller (fālbin) at the same time. They treated sick people, gave them advice, predicted their future.

From ancient times religion is expressed in various forms and based on the faith and beliefs of a human being. Every conscious and faithful person, depending on the degree of understanding, knowledge, beliefs, has their own idea of creating the world [1].

By the 12th century Sufism acquired traits of socially formed institute, and its main tariqahs (Chishtia, Suhrawardiyya, Qadiriyyah, Naqshbandiya) appeared [2].

Based on this, Sufis were engaged in medical practice to help those in need, as well as attract new adherents (murid). By the way, the manakibs also tell about the diseases of the Sufi leaders themselves - the leader of the Naqshbandi brotherhood Khojagi Ahmad Koson (died in 1549), Naqshbandi sheikh Khoj Islam

Dzhuybari (died in 1563), the famous Chakhrite Sufi Kasim-sheikh Azizon (died in 1581) and the leader of the Cubravian brotherhood, Sheikh Hussein Khorezmi (died in 1551). The latter, despite a serious illness, went to Hajj, died on his return to Sham and was buried there.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In that medieval atmosphere where religiosity was an integral part of social psychology, Sufi medical practice was carried out according to prevailing religious beliefs. The disease was considered as a spiritually beneficial event, since there is forgiveness of sins committed for various reasons. Further, the treatment of patients was realized primarily by the well-known Muslim principle - taqdir (destiny). The Sufi concept of medicine emerged from the traditional art of healing with the help of various magical substances (in manakibs, for example, šarbat is mentioned - essence) and special magical actions. Most likely, the therapy of the Sufi sheikh is based on the popular theory of the diseases that the people have about them. Therefore, it was at the same time a reflection of the mosaic picture of folk ideas and concepts.

However, the answer to the question of how the treatment methods of the Sufi sheikh differed from the practice of a folk doctor in those days remains exceedingly difficult. The very peculiarity of Sufi healing was the widespread use of magical actions and close interaction with supernatural forces (with the spirits of famous Sufi sheikhs). In turn, the peculiarity of folk healing was expressed in the fact that folk healers constantly sought help from the spiritual essence of Muslim saints. Thus, a thin line passed between these types of healing.

In the then Maverannahra, various diseases and their treatments were associated with holy places and mazars. According to the author of "Samaria", one of the miracles shown by a saint who rests in Mazar-i Kabz of Samarkand is as follows: people who suffer from urinary retention walk around the mazar several times and immediately receive healing. The author further writes that the mud taken from the pond at Khoja Abdi Darun's mazar is considered healing from cutaneous leishmaniasis (a type of smallpox) in children. They smeared a sore spot with mud or they pasted the mud to the wall of

the building of the mazar in the name of a sick child [3]. Patients visited the relics of Auliya year-round with the goal of recovering from various illnesses. Some patients did not use any form of treatment and, for the purpose of recovery, resorted only to donations and vows, but these measures did not always save them.

Sufi sheikhs accompanied famous doctors of that period during their treatment of the Sheybanid elite. In this joint treatment, the Sufi sheikh cares more about the mental and spiritual problems of the patient [4]. In this regard, the question arises whether in medicine existed in the XVI century Maverannahra was rational scientific thinking that functioned independently of the magical practices of Sufi sheikhs? Did the then doctors consider the disease as a pathological process in the body caused not by occult, but by natural causes? The investigated written sources do not contain answers to these questions.

Manakib contains information about the magical use of Quranic verses and verses in the treatment of the patient. Mystics and even professional tabibs (doctors and pharmacists) focused on understanding the disease, on the one hand, as a manifestation of a divine test and, on the other, as a negative influence of external forces like genies, spirits, evil eye and other things. Due to these circumstances, baraka / barakat, which took place not only in the personality of the Sufi sheikh, but also in the medicines prepared by the Sufi sheikh himself, became an important means of treating the patient. And representatives of the ruling elite, the nobility, and the ordinary people constantly turned to the Sufi sheikhs for help.

The baraka of a Sufi sheikh could help its wearer have a beneficial effect on the critical situation with the patient. In treating patients, the Sufi sheikh used inculcation, which stemmed from his charisma. But this beneficial psychic effect had a temporary effect. Further, the diseases cured by the Sufi sheikhs were not limited to certain species or their history.

The medical care of a Sufi sheikh can be considered a panacea (despite the previous history of a person's illness) from any ailment. It is true that Sufi sheikhs cured various diseases in representatives of different sectors of society. According to the author of the life-like work

“Jama`a-al-maqāmāt” (“The storehouse of degrees of spiritual perfection”), dedicated to the famous Naqshbandi sheikh Khojagi Ahmad Kosoni (died in 1549), the sheikh successfully cured Muhammad Ali mukhtasib (Ruz-e hazrat-e išān Mohammad Ali mohtasib-rā az kasali-ye rahā kard). Another time, this Sufi sheikh cured the Shaybanid ruler of Bukhara, Abd al-Aziz Khan (he died in 1950). But this ruler after his recovery went to another sheikh and again fell ill and died (Amma čon sihat šod ba molāzemat-e šaikh-e digar raft, ba kasali-ye mobtalā šod va mord) [5].

Despite the broad description of the medical practice of the Sufi sheikh, the mechanism of such treatment is not disclosed by the authors of manakibs and therefore remains unclear. Judging by the information of the manakibs, caring for the health of people in need took bizarre forms. These Sufi ideas about medicine were more magical and mystical nature. They represented unsystematic and eclectic knowledge of medicine, therefore Sufi diagnostic and therapeutic methods were unusual. There were often cases when the Sufi art of treatment turned into continuous quackery.

It should once again be ascertained that the authors of manakibs (as opposed to historical works) found the cause of the hardships to be found in the sinfulness and injustice of society as a whole, in the acts of individuals and rulers in particular. To educate people, God will send them various disasters and diseases, including drought, locusts or pestilence. Often, for the unjust behavior of the ruler in relation to the Sufi sheikh, God without exception punishes the inhabitants of that country or a particular city with diseases, drought, and hunger. Society bears collective responsibility for sins committed by individuals.

#### SUMMARY

Several Muslim hagiographic writings cite some common diseases of that era, such as cholera (vabā), typhoid (dāmana), chicken pox (naghzakān), eye diseases, dropsy or edema (istiskā), “as a result of which the stomach swells”, and others. But in the lives of Muslim saints there is no more detailed description of the external features of the disease, for example cholera, where diarrhea was its main symptom.

The author was not tasked to give descriptions. Probably, it was not accepted to talk about them and therefore this issue was bypassed. It is noteworthy that in written sources there is almost no mention of child mortality, which was the scourge of the middle Ages.

It is worth noting that mass epidemics recurring almost every decade were supplemented by even more frequent local outbreaks of cholera, epidemics of typhoid and other types of infectious diseases. The epidemiological situation in the country was complex and unpredictable. In particular, an English traveler A. Jenkinson, who visited Bukhara in the 50s of the 16th century, writes that the city is very large. A small river flows in the middle of the city, the water of which is very unhealthy, since people who drink it give rise to worms the length of an elbow [6]. This sanitary state of water was preserved in subsequent centuries. At the end of the XIX century Russian travelers who visited the central cities of Central Asia note that you can't drink raw water here or even wash yourself with this water, because of its morbidity [7]. Most likely, cholera usually affected cities and large villages, probably due to unclean water [8].

The general medical situation in the region remained practically unchanged at a later time. E.K. Meyendorf, who visited the Central Asian region in 1832, notes that many people die here from smallpox (naghzakān - a type of smallpox), especially vulnerable categories of the population - children and the elderly [9]. According to N. Khanykov, who visited Bukhara in 1841, various diseases were common in the city, such as dropsy (istiskā), eye diseases, and others. Eye diseases were especially widespread and they were very different [10]. Vicious epidemics (naghzakān, ābakān) occurred frequently and led to death or, at best, disfigurement of people. Spells, talismans, and prayers invented against this disease did not contribute at all to improving the epidemiological situation and treating patients. In addition, the then medical treatment methods were also ineffective.

The absence of concepts about the causes of the disease was expressed in the lack of hygiene in people in general, and among Sufis in particular. A number of manakibs indicate the simplest ways to deal with certain diseases, such as cholera (pesticides), although, for well-known reasons,

the healers struggled with the symptoms and did not cure the disease itself.

In an epidemic, the ruler usually forbade the population of nearby rural areas from visiting the city, and if it happened, they had to leave its borders immediately. This means that a quarantine regime was established, and the city was isolated from the outside world, where the epidemic apparently did not rage so much. The ruler himself, during the peak of the epidemic, visited some Sufi sheikh, presented him with gifts from the people and the ruling elite (*az khās-o ām in`ām meāvard*) and stayed at the sheikh's place for several days (*bisyār ruz dar molazimat-e hazrat-e išān mānd*) [11]. The success of political rule in specific territories depended partly on cholera control. The organization of a testimonial is a request to the Sufi sheikhs for help. The presence of a Sufi sheikh during an epidemic is a guarantee of protecting the people from disaster. But there were also cases when, during the plague epidemic, people in safer territories organized collective prayer, a collective pilgrimage to the tombs of Auliya. At such critical moments, the population resorted to the help of religion [12].

### CONCLUSIONS

Actually, as modern practice in some regions of the world shows, the fight against cholera as an infectious disease implies, in particular, drinking clean water, clean houses, exterminating rodents as carriers of the disease, quarantine regime, and so on. Apparently, in those days there was no corresponding answer to such requirements. In addition, preventive and therapeutic measures were naturally absent (for example, the first thing to save the patient's body from dehydration). Further, meteorological and climatic conditions (warm climate) could also contribute to the spread of the disease.

So, from the position of Sufism, medicine deals only with the bodily organization of a human being and does not operate on his spiritual and mental life for the health of the body. According to the Sufis, any disease, except for bodily causes, has spiritual roots: all sorts of human passions, which are considered sinful. The commission of sins (*gonāh*), a curse (*doā`ye-bad*), God-giveness (*gomrāhi*) and other actions could

become the causes of human illness. Or the general sinfulness of human society could cause the illness of a particular person. Bearing the disease with patience (*sabr*) and thanksgiving to God is a laudable quality of the patient. In the same way, Khoja Islam Juibari did the same. Sickness is a spiritual cleansing, a renewal of faith. It pacifies the hot flesh.

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