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YEARS OF LIFE AND NAMES OF AL-HAKIM AT-TERMIZI

Abstract: Through an analysis of definitive sources and facts regarding the life of al-Hakim at-Termizi, this article attempts to establish the concrete dates and years of his life, as well as the names, pseudonyms, kunai (structural part of one's name, usually added at the beginning of the name) and nisbahs (part of the name indicating religious, ethnic and other origins of the person) of the great scholar he was known under.

Key words: al-Hakim at-Termizi, years of life, sufism, kunai, nisbah.

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Introduction

The life and work of a great scholar al-Hakim at-Termizi have been attracting not only Eastern, but also Western researchers for centuries. However, despite the ever-growing interest toward Termizi's figure, there are still controversies surrounding even the most basic facts about his life. In this article we will try to get closer to understanding of the years of life and the names he was known under.

I. THE YEARS OF TERMIZI'S LIFE

There have been several theories about the years of life of the great thinker formed in the literature, mainly concerning al-Hakim At-Termizi's inclusion in the second class of Sufis and the date of his death.

Some literature sources suggest that al-Hakim At-Termizi reached the age of either one hundred and fifteen or one hundred and twenty. However, to be considered valid, this point requires some scientific evidence. *It is obvious, however, that there is no correlation between the scale of a person's greatness the number of years he lived.*

In his book called "Nasayim-ul-muhabbat" ("المحبت نساييم"), Alisher Navaiy mentions the existence of six classes of Sufis and, according to this classification, al-Hakim At-Termizi belongs to Class 2 [6:84].

Before we proceed further in our discussion, I think it is important to shed some light on the Sufis'

classification system. In his book "Tabaqal al-suffiyya" written in arabic, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn Sulami classifies Sufis into five categories, with twenty Sufis in each. Further clarification of the system was made by Mawlana Jami in the Introduction to the book "Nafahat-ul-uns", where he explained that the classification set forth by Sulami was based on the time period when a particular Sufi lived [1:10].

For a deeper understanding of the basis for classification, let's consider the following words by Alisher Navaiy: "Sheikh Ibrakhim bin David Cassor Rikii lived long enough to reach Class 3 which Sulami assigned to him. He died in AH 327" [6:115]

Obviously, the classification was based on the years when they lived. According to the aforementioned books of Jami and Navaiy, Class 1 encompasses the years from AH 161 till AH 271, Class 2 corresponds to the period from AH 283 to AH 300 and so on. The years of Sufis' lives are usually unknown, which is why the year used as the criterion for classification is the year of their deaths.

In the literature, Yahya Muaz Razi (died in AH 258), Bayazid Bastami (died in AH 261), Abu Hafsa al-Haddad (died in AH 264) and Hamdun Kassar (died in AH 271) are all included in Class 1, which begs the question: if the tombstone of al-Hakim At-Termizi reads that he died in AH 255 (869 CE), why do the founders of the classification system, such as Sulami

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and Abdullah Ansori (as well as Jfmi and Navaiy later, who were basing their assumptions on the works of the founders), claim that al-Hakim at-Termizi belongs to Class 2 and not Class 1?

Navaiy in his book about sheikhs claims that al-Hakim At-Termizi used to meet and have conversations with Abu Turab Nahshabi (died in AH 240), Ahmad Hizravi (died in AH 245) and Yahya Muaz Razi (died in AH 258) [10:11]. As will be demonstrated below, Termizi was probably still at a young age at the time when those meetings happened.

As stated above, al-Hakim At-Termizi probably lived for 115-120 years, an assumption based on various scientific researches. On the other hand, according to the German researcher Dr. Bernd Rudolf Radtke, whose doctoral dissertation was dedicated to the life years of al-Hakim At-Termizi, the latter lived for 80-90 years [9:18].

A Sufism researcher of Iranian origin Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub (1922-1999) said that Farid ud-Din Attar's (1145-1221) assumption about al-Hakim At-Termizi having lived for 115 years is far-fetched. I suppose, that Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi's (died in AH 385, 955 CE) thinking that al-Hakim At-Termizi died in AH 296 (909 CE) is probably closer to the truth.

We now will turn to other sources. Dr. Bernd Radtke writes "the fact that al-Hakim at-Termizi mentioned muhaddiths (Hadith compilers) possibly shows that al-Hakim at-Termizi made hajj in AH 246 (860 CE)" [9:39]. Moreover, Termizi in his memoir book called "Bad'u Shaani Abu Abdullah" wrote "I performed hajj when I was 27" [3] These evidences make us rethink the accuracy of the tombstone date, according to which Termizi passed away in 255 AH.

Furthermore, in "Bad'u Shaani Abu Abdullah" al-Hakim at-Termizi said: "I had a dream on the first of the last 10 days of the Zulqida month in AH 269" [3:37]. This points to the fact that Termizi lived past the year of AH 255.

The author of "Kashf al-Zunun" Haji Khalfah (1609-1657), V.V. Bartold (1869-1930) and A.A. Semenov (1873-1958) all think that the date of AH 255 written on Al-Hakim At-Termizi's tombstone is the correct one; while such great Sufism scholars as Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub, Ibrahim Khudayar (Iran), Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (England), Bernd Radtke (Germany) are of the opinion that the date of his death must be either AH 285 or AH 296 [10:4; 7:102; 2:47].

Consequently, based on the aforementioned sources, we can infer that:

1. The fact that al-Hakim at-Termizi is attributed to Class 2 suggests that the date of his death is after the last year of Class 1, i.e. after AH 271 (885 CE);

2. The German scholar Dr. Bernd Radtke's assumption that al-Hakim at-Termizi made hajj in AH 246 (860 AD) supports this line of reasoning;

3. The fact that al-Hakim at-Termizi made a reference to the year AH 269 (883 CE) in "Bad'u Shaani Abu Abdullah" proves that the author was alive then;

4. It was typical for the authors of those days to inflate the length of sheikhs' lives. For example, in Alisher Navaiy's "Nasayim-ul-muhabbat" (نَسَائِمِ الْمُحَبِّبِ) most sheikhs were said to have lived for around 125 years;

5. Most of the great scholars of Sufism based their assumptions about the death date of al-Hakim at-Termizi not only on his tombstone engravings, but also on other sources, except for such researchers as V.V. Bartold (1869-1930) and A.A. Semenov (1873-1958), whose assumptions were made based on his tombstone's date, probably due to the fact that al-Hakim at-Termizi's tombstone was created 5 centuries after his death and at that time it was impossible to find out the exact date thereof.

6. It is surprising that Navruznoma's author says that al-Hakim at-Termizi lived to be 125 years. However, it is yet to be proved that the 125 years reference was made in relation to al-Hakim at-Termizi, because this book was never listed as one of the books written by al-Hakim at-Termizi, so the subject of the book might have been some other person who was its author. Furthermore, Dr. Bernd Radtke reckons that al-Hakim at-Termizi did not write in Farsi, the language Navruznoma was written in.

7. The authors of fundamental research works on the life of al-Hakim at-Termizi believe that Termizi lived to be around 80-90 years. Some sources, such as the Islamic encyclopedia and certain sources found on the Internet, claim that al-Hakim at-Termizi's year of death was even later, around AH 320 (932 AD). However, the information from the sources that we have mentioned before disproves this supposition.

I believe that since the year when al-Hakim at-Termizi died is unknown, it can be assumed that he was born at the beginning of the 9th century, most likely in AH 206 (820 CE) and died, according to reliable sources, in AH 296-300 (909 CE), and therefore we can conclude that al-Hakim at-Termizi lived to be around 80-90 years.

II. THE NAMES OF AL-HAKIM AT-TERMIZI

Another point of dissension regarding al-Hakim at-Termizi's life is his full name and nisbahs used in reference to him.

One of the greatest mystics Abdul-Hasan Ali ibn Usman ibn Ali al-Ghaznawi, who gained his fame for composing "Kashf al-mahjüb" ("Unveiling of the Hidden"), considered to be the "earliest formal treatise" on Sufism in Persian, provided some useful information about al-Hakim at-Termizi in his book. [4] One of the manuscript copies of this work can be found in the Archeology Museum in Termez. In that

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book, al-Hakim at-Termizi is quoted as Sheikh number 41 in the list of all Sheikhs. In it, al-Hakim at-Termiziy is referred to as Bishr Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali at-Tirmizi (بشر ابو عبدالله محمد بن علي الترمذي). This name that includes al-Hakim at-Termizi's names, aliases, kunai (structural part of name, usually added at the beginning of a name) and nisbahs (another structural part of name – describing religious, ethnic or another affiliation of the person).

In his book called “Nasayim-ul-muhabbat” (“تسایم المحبت”), Alisher Navaiy (1441-1501) mentions Al-Hakim At-Termizi under number 128 and calls him Muhammad bin Ali Hakim Termezi, which means that he thought “Abu Abdullah” was his kunai.

A Sufism researcher of Iranian origin Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub (1922-1999) in his book “Research in Iranian Mysticism” in the chapter called «Sufi of Khuroson» refers to Al-Hakim At-Termizi as Abu Muhammad Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Husayn Al-Hakim Termezi. [2]

We should also acknowledge the work done by Dr. Bernd Radtke. He translated al-Hakim at-Termizi's memoir book called “Bad'u Shaani Abu Abdullah” into German and, later, English. Basing on his Arabic translation of “Bad'u Shaani Abu Abdullah”, a Persian scholar Majiduddin Cevoni subsequently translated “Bad'u Shaani Abu Abdullah” into Persian. It is thanks to that work of Cevoni that we know of the fact that Dr. Bernd Radtke formulated Hakim Termezi's names, aliases, kunais and nisbahs as Abu Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ali b. al-Hasan b. Bishr b. Harun al-Tirmidhi [8].

We have mentioned terms like “kunai” and “pseudonyms” a lot. It is time now to get to the discussion on what a “kunai” is.

Kunai composes a part of a name, similar to “ab”, “Abu”, “Ibn”, “Abi”, “um”, “band”, that is added before an honorable alias in accordance with Arabic customs and traditions.

Alias here is a made-up name that can have a respecting, complimenting or humorous connotation. It is important to know that back then it was a tradition to add extra names such as kunia to those of ancestors or respected people, to show respect and pride towards them. Thus, we can conclude that Abu Abdullah is al-Hakim at-Termizi's kunia, Muhammad is his name and Ali is his father's name. Furthermore, Binni Hassan (in some sources “Husseini”) is his grandfather's name, while Binni Bishr (in some sources “Bashir”) Bin Harun is his ancestors' name.

In some sources, “Bishr” (al-Hakim at-Termizi's grandfather's name) is put before his name to show respect, e.g. in Hujwiri's “Kashf al-mahjūb” (“Unveiling of the Hidden”). Also, “al-Hakim”, as he was mostly known as, is in fact a part of Termiziy's name intended to show respect, that almost became the name of Termizi. The reason why he is given that alias (Hakim) is not because he was a healer (doctor) (although some sources do refer to him in such

capacity), but because he was said to be a wise and intelligent person, in other words, Hakim.

It is also important to point out that back then it was common to give the same name to different people. Therefore, it is not uncommon to come across different people being named the same in ancient books. For example, we can see mentions of 17 Termezi's in different sources, 6-7 among which were named Muhammad.

In the past, even though having proper names, scholars were mostly famous for their alias and kunai. For example, Ghaznawi, Jullabi and Hujwiri were all the pseudonyms of the greatest mystic Abdul-Hasan Ali ibn Usman ibn Ali that were given to him because of his place of birth (Ghazna is a country region, and Jullab and Hujwir are towns in Ghazna).

In one of his articles Ibrahim Khudayar says that al-Hakim's grandfather's name was “Bashar”, not “Bishr. However, we can argue that “Bishr” is probably a more correct spelling than “Bashar”, because “i” sound in “bashir” (بشير) has a longer sound and, therefore, “i” should be written. However, the “i” in “Bishr” is pronounced very shortly and is written with three letters with the symbol “sokin” above the letter “shin”. This means that there is no action (“i” does not have a long sound).

To summarize the aforementioned opinions, it can be concluded that the full name of Termizi was Hakim (his honorable alias given due to his wisdom) Abu Abdullah (his kunia) Muhammad (first name) Ali (father's name) Hasan (or “Hussain”) Bishr Harun (grandfather's name) Termizi (place of birth).

As for al-Hakim at-Termiz's nisbahs, opinions vary depending on the source. For example, Ubaidullah Uvatov claims at-Termizi's nisbahs to be “Sheikh”, “al olim”, “al-alloma”, “al-muhadeeth”, “al-zohid”, “al-hafiz” and “al-imam” (“Al Hakim at-Tirmizi”, p. 18), while Dr. Bernd Radtke figures that at-Termiz's nisbahs were “mufassir” (interpreter), Muhaddith (specialist who profoundly knows and narrates hadith), mutakallim (مُتَكَلِّم), faqih (islamic jurist, an expert in fiqh) and orif (sufi, zahid).

We can see that Hakim Termezi's nisbahs just complete each other and do not require further clarification. Hakim and Termizi are self-explanatory: Hakim is an honorable alias, Termiz (Termez) – the place of birth, both of which are just as famous as his real name Muhammad. In some literature (especially that of Tajikistan) Hakim is written “Alhakim” which effectively turns it into his kunai.

III. CONCLUSION

Al-Hakim at-Termizi was a great scholar, whose influential works, life and scientific activities have shaped the early development of Sufism. However, while his writings underwent extensive studying and analysis, some fundamental aspects of his figure are still yet to be established.

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As we could see earlier, the guesses about Termizi's length of life range from 80 years to as far as 125 years. However, based on the reliable sources scrutinized in this work, I believe that the assumption about him passing away at the age of 80-90 is the most reasonable and corroborated one.

Like many other prominent people of those times, Termizi was known under many names, altogether composing his full name consisting of his

honorable alias, kunia, first name, father and grandfather's names and place of birth.

The nisbahs of the great thinker reflected the nature of his activities and were as diverse as the sources mentioning them. Depending on the researcher, we can meet such nisbahs as "Sheikh", "mufassir", "Muhaddith", "faqih" and others, all proving once again how important and respected the great mystic of the 9th century was.

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