



THE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHICAL-SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES OF SHAMS TABRIZI

Odinayev Mahmud Ahmadovich

PhD Candidate at Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

Phone: +998 93 635 42 12

E-mail: mahmud.odinayev@mail.ru

Orcid: 0009-0008-8710-0288

Abstract. This article analyzes the life and scholarly-philosophical activities of Shams al-Din Muhammad Tabrizi, one of the prominent representatives of Sufi philosophy. The unique aspects of his life and academic work, as well as his intellectual connections with Jalal al-Din Rumi, are examined based on historical sources.

Key words: Shams Tabrizi, Maqolat, philosophy, Sufism, Mevlevi Order, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Konya.

INTRODUCTION.

Shams al-Din Mohammad Tabrizi (Shams Tabrizi) was a 13th-century Persian Sufi mystic, spiritual instructor, and the beloved mentor of the famous poet Jalal al-Din Rumi. His deep spiritual insight and unorthodox teachings played a crucial role in transforming Rumi from a conventional religious scholar into a great mystical poet.

Shams Tabrizi was born in the late 12th or early 13th century in Tabriz, Persia (modern-day Iran). He was a wandering dervish and traveled extensively in search of spiritual enlightenment. His journey took him across various regions, where he engaged in discussions with scholars, mystics, and seekers of truth. Despite his vast knowledge, he chose to live a humble and secluded life. Shams is best known for his encounter with Rumi in Konya, around 1244. Their meeting was a turning point in both of their lives. It is said that Shams' deep wisdom and spiritual teachings ignited a profound transformation in Rumi, leading him to abandon traditional scholarship and embrace Sufism wholeheartedly.

MATERIALS AND METHODS.

Shams' presence in Rumi's life was controversial; many of Rumi's followers and family members disapproved of their close relationship. Eventually, Shams disappeared under mysterious circumstances, possibly killed by those who opposed his influence on Rumi.

Shams' influence on Rumi was profound and led to the creation of "Diwan-e Shams-e Tabrizi", a collection of ecstatic poetry written by Rumi in honor of his spiritual master. The themes of divine love, longing, and mystical union in Rumi's works are largely inspired by Shams' teachings. Shams Tabrizi remains an enigmatic figure in Islamic mysticism. His radical ideas and unconventional approach continue to inspire seekers of truth worldwide. His legacy lives on through Rumi's poetry, which has become one of the most celebrated expressions of Sufi philosophy in history.

In "Maqalat-i Shams-i Tabrizi" and, based on it, in "Manaqib al-Arifin", it is mentioned that during his childhood and youth, Shams led a mysterious life, possessed great spiritual abilities, engaged in frequent ascetic practices, performed sama (spiritual dance), experienced various mystical visions, and distanced himself from formal madrasa education [1].



It appears that Shams first became affiliated with Abu Bakr-i Salabaf, a sheikh from Tabriz, who is mentioned in Maqalat several times. According to Sahih Ahmed Dede, Shams became his disciple at the age of twenty-two and, after serving his master for fourteen years, embarked on a journey. Salabaf, who led a Sufi lodge (tekke) near Tabriz, earned his living by weaving baskets, did not clothe his disciples in khirqah (the Sufi cloak), and belonged to the circles of futuwwa (spiritual chivalry) and malamati (self-blame) Sufis. He played a significant role in shaping Shams' Sufi identity. According to Sipehsalar, Shams was a dervish uninterested in miracles, dressed in black felt, concealed himself from the public, constantly engaged in self-discipline (mujahada), traveled frequently disguised as a merchant, preferred staying in caravanserais rather than madrasas or Sufi lodges, and locked his room with a sturdy lock despite it being empty. He was a man full of secrets and supported himself by braiding the cords of trousers. Abdurrahman Jami states that Shams served Baba Kemal-i Jandi, a disciple of Najm al-Din Kubra and Baba Faraj-i Tabrizi, as well as Muhammad Rukn al-Din-i Sujasi, a disciple of Qutb al-Din Abhari and teacher of Awhad al-Din Kirmani. Dawlatshah traces Shams' spiritual lineage through Sujasi to Abu'n-Najib al-Suhrawardi and Ahmad al-Ghazali, while Kamal al-Din Husayn Khwarazmi connects him to Najm al-Din Kubra through Baba Kemal-i Jandi. According to him, Sujasi sent Shams to Anatolia to find a spiritual companion, whereas Jami attributes this to Baba Kemal-i Jandi. Since Maqalat does not mention Baba Kemal-i Jandi or Rukn al-Din Sujasi, Shams' affiliation with these two Sufis has been questioned, though, as a wandering dervish, he may have met and conversed with them [2].

According to Aflaki, Shams was called «Kamil-i Tabrizi» (The Perfect One of Tabriz) by the Sufi masters in his hometown, and because of his travels, he was also known as «Shams al-Din-i Paranda» (Shams al-Din the Flying) [1].

The relationship between Shams Tabrizi and Jalal al-Din Rumi was one of the most profound and transformative connections in the history of Sufism. Their spiritual bond not only changed Rumi's life but also influenced the course of mystical poetry and thought for centuries. Shams al-Din Muhammad Tabrizi, a wandering Sufi mystic, met Rumi in Konya around 1244. At that time, Rumi was already a respected Islamic scholar and theologian. However, Shams' deep spiritual insight and unconventional approach to divine love and mysticism had a profound impact on Rumi [3].

One famous account of their first meeting states that Shams posed a question to Rumi: «Who is greater: the Prophet Muhammad or the Sufi saint Bayazid Bastami?» Rumi's response, along with their subsequent conversations, led to an intellectual and spiritual awakening for Rumi, shifting him from a traditional scholar to an ecstatic Sufi poet. Shams became Rumi's spiritual guide, leading him away from bookish knowledge towards direct mystical experience of divine love [4].

Shams' growing influence over Rumi caused resentment among Rumi's followers and family members. They viewed Shams as a disruptive force taking their master away from them. As a result, Shams left Konya at least once but returned upon Rumi's request. However, around 1248, Shams disappeared mysteriously, and some sources suggest that he may have been murdered by Rumi's jealous disciples. After Shams' disappearance, Rumi withdrew into deep mourning and began expressing his grief and love for Shams through poetry [5].

Rumi immortalized Shams in his poetry, especially in the *Diwan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, where he praises him as a divine guide and source of inspiration. The Mevlevi Sufi Order (Mawlawiyya) was later founded based on the spiritual path Rumi developed after his



transformation under Shams' influence. Their relationship is seen as a symbol of divine love, where Shams acted as a mirror that helped Rumi discover the presence of God within himself. Their bond continues to inspire Sufi traditions, mystical poetry, and spiritual seekers around the world [6].

The *Maqalat*, a work consisting of Shams al-Din Tabrizi's Sufi sayings, ideas, anecdotes from his life, legends about him, and conversations with Rumi and other Sufis, is also known among the Mevlevi as *Khirqah-i Shams* and *Asrar-i Shams al-Din-i Tabrizi*. In some manuscripts, it is recorded under the titles *Kalimat-i Shams-i Tabrizi* and *Ma'arif-i Shams-i Tabrizi*. It has been suggested that the work was compiled by Sultan Walad (Rumi's son) or by multiple individuals together. However, Ismail Ankaravi and Muhammad Ali Muwahhid believe that it was compiled by Rumi himself. Some stories and anecdotes that appear in Rumi's *Masnavi* can also be found in this work. The oldest manuscript of the "*Maqalat*" is preserved in the Konya Mevlana Museum Library (catalog no. 2154). Other significant copies are mentioned in Abdulkaki Gölpınarlı's work *Mevlânâ Celâleddin* (pp. 27-31). Several early Mevlevi texts, such as *Risalah-i Sipehsalar*, Sultan Walad's *Ibtidanama*, and Aflaki's *Manaqib al-'Arifin*, have drawn upon the *Maqalat* [7].

The *Maqalat* has been published by Ahmad Khoshnewis (*Maqalat-i Shams-i Tabrizi*, Tehran, 1970), Nasir al-Din Sahib al-Zamani (*Khatt-i Savvum*, Tehran, 1972), Muhammad Ali Muwahhid (*Maqalat*, Tehran, 1990), and Ja'far Mudarris-i Sadiqi (*Maqalat*, Tehran, 1994). Attempts by Badi al-Zaman Foruzanfar to publish it were unsuccessful. The Turkish translation of the *Maqalat* was done by Mehmet Nuri Gençosman (*Konuşmalar I-II*, Istanbul, 1974-1975; republished as *Maqalat*, Istanbul, 2006).

In 2005, William Chittick's book *Me and Rumi* (Louisville, 2004), dedicated to Annemarie Schimmel, won Iran's Book of the Year award. This book presents two-thirds of the *Maqalat* in English translation, attempting to reconstruct Shams Tabrizi's autobiography [8].

A work titled *Marghub al-Qulub*, a 138-verse poem in *masnavi* form, has also been attributed to Shams Tabrizi, but this attribution has not been widely accepted.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, the life, scientific, and philosophical activity of Shams Tabrizi hold great significance in Islamic philosophy. His teachings, mystical insights, and influence on Jalal al-Din Rumi played a crucial role in shaping Sufi thought and the Mevlevi Order. Shams' emphasis on direct spiritual experience, divine love, and breaking conventional religious norms challenged traditional perspectives and deepened the philosophical discourse within Islamic mysticism. His legacy continues to inspire scholars, poets, and spiritual seekers worldwide.

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