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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SKILLFUL USE OF SUFI SYMBOLS IN THE WORKS OF SULAYMON BOQIRG‘ONIY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the representation of the stages of Sharia within the framework of the Yasaviya Sufi order in the works of Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy. The study focuses on the linguopoetic and conceptual interpretation of the ten maqoms at the gate of Sharia, highlighting their spiritual, ethical, and didactic functions in the formation of the perfect human being (insan al-kamil). Special attention is given to the five fundamental pillars of Islam – faith (iman), prayer (salat), fasting (sawm), almsgiving (zakat), and pilgrimage (hajj) – as reflected in Boqirg‘oniy’s hikmats. The research reveals that the poet integrates Islamic legal principles with Sufi philosophical concepts, presenting them in a simple, accessible, and pedagogically effective form for a broader audience. Through the analysis of poetic texts, it is demonstrated that Sharia serves as the foundational stage of spiritual development, preceding tariqa and enabling the seeker to attain higher mystical knowledge. The findings suggest that Boqirg‘oniy’s works play a significant role in disseminating Yasaviya teachings and in shaping the moral and spiritual consciousness of society.

KEYWORDS: *Sharia, Yasaviya order, Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy, maqom, Sufism, iman, salat, sawm, zakat, hikmat, spiritual development, Islamic ethics, linguopoetics, tariqa, perfect human*

The development of Sufism through Islam led to the emergence and growth of Sufi literature. Sufi symbols gradually developed and became firmly established as carriers of specific meanings. Since the formation of the concept of symbolism in Sufism, it has been regarded not only as a system understandable to a limited circle of individuals familiar with Sufi stages, but also as a holistic phenomenon that requires interpretation for a wider audience. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to state that the mastery of a poet and the level of their knowledge have been evaluated based on how effectively they employ symbols in Sufi poetry.

Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy also made extensive use of symbols in his hikmats. The symbolic nature of his творчество is unique to the poet himself. This is because Boqirg‘oniy, like his teacher Ahmad Yassaviy, followed the path of presenting Sufi teachings in a relatively simple and accessible manner. Nevertheless, the symbols used in his works are numerous, and their symbolic meanings are not difficult to understand.

Before discussing the symbols in the poet’s works, it is necessary to consider the terminological meaning of the word “symbol” and the approaches to symbolism in Sufi literature. Literary scholar Najmiddin Komilov explains the concept of a symbol as follows: “A symbol is the expression of meaning and intention through hints and indications; it may represent a word or phrase based on similarity and correspondence, or even convey a meaning that does not directly correspond.”

For example, the word *mahbub* may refer to God, the Prophet, a spiritual guide (pir), or a beloved person; *soqiy* may also represent these four meanings; *lab* (lip) may signify the words of a spiritual guide or divine grace; *qosh* (eyebrow) symbolizes the boundary between the divine and material worlds; *bel* (waist) represents the imagination of the perfect human; *ingichka bel* (slender waist) indicates the subtlety of that imagination; and *ko‘z* (eye) refers to the perfect human. Without understanding these symbols in detail, it is impossible to comprehend Sufi poetry [4.37].

According to M.L. Reisner, Sufi symbols did not appear suddenly; they existed in earlier spiritual and cultural traditions and were incorporated into Sufi poetry after the 11th century. These symbols became vivid images used not to compare natural features, but to express religious and Sufi doctrines [4.38].

It is well known that classical literary heritage is characterized by polysemy, which gives rise to symbolism. In classical literature, traditional artistic elements appear outwardly as images but inwardly function as symbols [3.18]. Therefore, the number of symbols used in Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy’s works is quite significant. Images familiar to the reader, through the author’s mastery, transform into new semantic wholes and acquire deeper symbolic meanings that may not be immediately apparent.

In the works of Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy, we can observe many symbols that correspond to this definition. Among them, the symbol of the “path” (*yo‘l*), widely used in Sufi literature, is also employed by the poet.

Tabib sansan da’vo qil, hojatimni ravo qil,
Fazing birla yoriy qil, yo‘lsiz qadam ursam man.
Qul Sulaymon so‘zladi, sirin xalqdin gizladi,
Suratsizin izladi, kerak diydor ko‘rsam man.

In this passage, the symbol of the *path* (*yo‘l*) represents the seeker’s entry into the path of divine love and the fear of

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deviating from it due to the deceptions of the ego (*nafs*) and desires. In the lines *"Tabib sansan da'vo qil, hojatimni ravo qil"*, the word *tabib* (healer) refers to the Creator Himself, emphasizing that only He can cure the seeker's spiritual ailments. It is well known that a healer can provide treatment only after diagnosing the nature of the illness. Here, however, the lover's suffering is described as the pain of love for the Creator, and it is stressed that only He can provide the cure. The phrase *"Suratsizin izladi"* also points to the Creator, indicating the search for the Divine beyond form.

Alloh yodi ko'ngullarni qildi xurram,
Balx mulkin qo'yub gilim qildi Adham,
Gilm kiyub hidoyatg'a urdi qadam,
Hidoyatg'a andog' qadam urg'um kelur. [34]

Sulaymon Boqirg'oniy, in the above *hikmat*, makes use of the symbol *gilim*. In this context, the word *gilim* is used in the meaning of *janda*, that is, a Sufi garment worn by dervishes. The symbol of *gilim* represents asceticism and detachment from all worldly existence. Through this symbol, Boqirg'oniy reinforces the idea he intends to convey to the reader, and further strengthens it by introducing the image of Ibrahim Adham. The harmony between the symbol and the historical figure helps to clarify the essence of Sufism. Renunciation of worldly attachments, focusing solely on the love of the Creator, and freeing oneself from worldly desires while submitting to divine guidance constitute the general meaning of this *hikmat*. In Sulaymon Boqirg'oniy's works, the symbol of *gilim* is also found in another *hikmat*, where it carries a meaning consistent with the one above.

Gilim kiygan oshiq qullar Haqg'a borar,
Ul sirlari dargoh ichra qilur qaror.
Ohlarindin ushbu tog'lar sizib, qaynar,
Salim bo'lib, u gilimni kiygim kelur. [34]

As understood from the previous *hikmat*, the symbol of *gilim* represents renunciation of worldly pleasures and withdrawal from material life. In this *hikmat*, Boqirg'oniy further deepens this meaning by clarifying the role of *gilim* in the life of the seeker (*solik*). The poet foretells that by wearing the *gilim*, that is, the garment of spiritual purity, one attains the vision (*diydor*) of the Divine. At this point, it should also be emphasized that the symbolism characteristic of Sulaymon Boqirg'oniy's works was directly shaped by the philosophical views of his teacher Ahmad Yassaviy and the principles of the Yasaviya order.

There are also several scholarly considerations suggesting that the symbols in Boqirg'oniy's works appear somewhat simpler compared to those used by Alisher Navoiy and other representatives of classical literature. These considerations help explain why the symbols in his творчество are relatively simpler. It is well known that many ideas in Sufi teachings are connected with spiritual life, experiential knowledge (*'ilm al-hal*), and awareness of divine mysteries. For this reason, expressing the ideas of the *tariqa* through concrete images may present certain difficulties. Symbolism and the use of Sufi language made literature somewhat more complex, resulting in poems and ghazals understandable mainly by a select group of individuals. However, interestingly, there are also many examples of Sufi poetry written in a remarkably simple language.

In this regard, the works of Ahmad Yassaviy and his followers, including Sulaymon Boqirg'oniy, as well as the writings of Sufi Allohyor, serve as clear examples. These poets conveyed religious and Sufi ideas in a popular and accessible manner, and their moral teachings, metaphors, and allegories are simple and understandable. The aim was to convey the essence of Sufism and Islamic truths to the hearts of the broad, often uneducated masses. It was also intended to spread the path of dervishhood among the people and to present dervishes as honored and beloved figures.

Especially Sufi literature in the Turkic language stands out for its closeness to oral tradition and its directness. It is not without reason that Tajiks living alongside Uzbeks in Movarounnahr also widely read Uzbek works such as *"Qissai Mashrab"*, *"Bobo Ravshan"*, and *"Qissai Hasan-Husan"* [5.56]. Although the Yasaviya order embodies a simple and popular essence, simplicity is also evident in its use of Sufi symbols. However, there are also symbols that can only be understood by initiated seekers (*xos soliklar*). Sulaymon Boqirg'oniy's works are not an exception in this regard. For this reason, it is natural that such a specific mode of symbolic communication can be observed among dervishes, ascetics, and mystics following the Yasaviya order. As mentioned above, Boqirg'oniy used symbols that were easy for ordinary people to understand. Nevertheless, his *hikmats* also contain a number of Sufi symbols, and as an example, the following *hikmat* may be cited:

Shavq sharobi yetilibon mani qildi xarob,
Muhabbatning o'ti birla bag'rim kabob.
Diydorini ro'zi qildi Izim Vahhob,
Dorussalom saroyig'a kirgim kelur

In these lines, the phrase *"shavq sharobi"* (the wine of longing) refers to the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence). It implies the union of the seeker (*solik*) with the Creator. Boqirg'oniy also portrays the burden of this union as heavy. The expression *Dorussalom saroyi* (the palace of eternal peace) symbolizes the lover's longing to be freed from this world and to attain true union with the Divine as soon as possible.

Sulaymon Boqirg'oniy's another *hikmat*, where symbolism predominates, also demonstrates the effective use of Sufi terminology.

Ma'rifat daryosida g'avvos bo'lib,
Muhabbat gavharlarin olg'im kelur.
Tariqat maydonida parvoz qilib,
Ul tubo daraxtig'a qo'ng'um kelur

In this *hikmat*, the key symbolic expressions are *"ma'rifat daryosi"* (the ocean of knowledge) and *"muhabbat gavharlari"* (the pearls of love). The ocean of knowledge represents a portion of divine knowledge, and diving into it signifies the seeker's desire to partake in the knowledge of the Creator. This knowledge is depicted as a blessing, since the one who attains it experiences a sense of fulfillment akin to enjoying the bliss of both worlds. By the "pearls of love," Boqirg'oniy refers to the experience of divine love. Furthermore, the "field of tariqa" is portrayed as a space where both common people and initiated seekers gather in pursuit of divine love, while the *tubo tree* symbolizes the ultimate station reached by true lovers — that is, the garden of Paradise.

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Symbolism is closely connected with polysemy and metaphorical expression. In this case, the creator does not focus on the outward appearance of an image, but rather on its essence. Instead of its external form, its inner meaning is utilized. As a result, a familiar object does not express its usual meaning but conveys an entirely different, often unexpected significance. Such artistic devices allow each reader to interpret the meaning in their own way. The artistic function of a symbol is broader than that of a simple image. Through a single image, it enables the expression of diverse and multifaceted ideas. Therefore, it has been widely used in classical literature [3.47]. In the works of Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy, metaphors are also employed to reveal new dimensions of familiar symbols.

Qul Sulaymon mungi bor, qayg‘u birla yurar zor,
Yorlaqag‘il yo Jabbor, jumla kuni ichinda

In these lines, the phrase *“jumla kuni”* refers to the Day of Judgment, the day when, according to Islamic belief, every individual will be held accountable for their deeds. However, Boqirg‘oniy also uses this expression to signify the initial state after death. As narrated by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “When the deceased is placed in the grave, he hears the footsteps of those who leave. Two angels come to him and make him sit up” [7.2]. The general meaning of this hadith corresponds closely to the meaning conveyed in Boqirg‘oniy’s lines. At this moment, divine mercy is of utmost importance for the individual; otherwise, it is foretold that one may remain in torment in the grave until the Day of Judgment.

Oshiq bo‘lur ul kishi, cheksa ishq soyasi,
Ranj-u birla mehnat ul, oshiqg‘a ishq doyasi

In these lines, Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy reflects Islamic teachings and the virtues bestowed upon a believer through refined metaphors. The phrase *“ishq soyasi”* (the shadow of love) refers to the hardships and trials that a person endures in striving for the pleasure of the Creator, emphasizing that without such trials, true love for the Divine cannot be perfected. The expression *“ishq doyasi”* (the nurse of love) symbolizes the birth of divine love that emerges after enduring suffering and hardship. If a lover possesses love for the beloved but does not act to attain union, reaching the beloved becomes impossible. Therefore, the lover must strive and seek a path to attain closeness. In this context, Boqirg‘oniy symbolically represents human actions as the nurturing force of love.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that Sulaymon Boqirg‘oniy effectively utilized Sufi images, symbols, and metaphors in his works. His poetry reflects Islamic ethics and the faith of a Muslim believer. Furthermore, it can be stated that through his *hikmats*, the teachings of the Yasaviya order were widely disseminated, and their essence was conveyed to the people in a simpler and more accessible form through artistic imagery. This can clearly be observed from the examples provided above.

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