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# **SPECIFICS OF SUFI AND ISLAMIC TERMINOLOGY USE IN THE POETRY OF THE XIX<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

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## **Abstract**

This paper studies the specifics of use and function of Sufi vocabulary in Tatar poetry of XIX<sup>th</sup> century. In the course of research, semantic transformations and stylistic variants of traditional Sufi notions are found. Scientific novelty of this article is in the primary development of the above issue and is determined, first of all, by a new approach to the study of special Sufi vocabulary in poetry of that period. The article also covers the issue of translation of Sufi terms from Arabic to Tatar; Turkic-Tatar variants of some terms are also given. In the analysis of Sufi vocabulary used in Tatar poetry of that period, direct and specific Sufi meanings are detected. In the course of research it was concluded that the use of special Sufi vocabulary constitutes the function of stylistically developed poetic language of Tatar poetry of XIX<sup>th</sup> century.

*Keywords:* Sufism, Sufi vocabulary, Sufi terminology, borrowings, stylistic variation

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## **1. Introduction**

A typical feature of the contemporary Linguistics is the increased interest of scientists to the issue of studying history of Tatar literary language through the study of linguistic specifics of some writers' creations, bright and original personalities, and finding their role in the development of national language. Literary works are a valuable source for studying Tatar literary language history as they are reflecting the core trends and contradictions in its development obviously fixing all the changes occurring in any certain period, giving a number of advantages in studying ways of literary norms establishment.

The second half of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, especially the last quarter, and early XIX<sup>th</sup> century may be called spiritual renovation of the Tatar nation. Tatar literature's way at that stage was hard and contradictory. Cultural and historical situation of early XIX century and general literature issues raised by Tatar poets were reflected in the language of those works.

As it is known, the roots of Volga Turks ascend to the literary language of Golden Horde and Mameluke Egypt of XIII-XIV centuries [1]. Traditional part of that language was inherited and is represented by mostly Uygur-Karakhanid and less by Oguz tradition.

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Besides, since the second half of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century old Tatar literary language began to experience the influence of Chagatai tradition. That period of literary language development is characterized by growing Arabic and Persian borrowings. It also may be considered the influence of Chagatai language. For the classic period of Chagatai literature development a lot of Arabic and Farsi words use was especially typical. As stated by researchers, poets of the Golden Age of Chagatai literature were bilingual and wrote poems in Turkic and Persian.

Thus, cultural and historical situation in late XVIII<sup>th</sup> – early XIX<sup>th</sup> century had direct great impact on the literary language, in particular, on the poetic texts of that time. To a great extent it is reflected in the language of Tatar poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century which is based on written traditions of the literary language and affected by strong influence of old literary traditions, being their extension. Sufi poetry filled with Arabic and Persian elements and greatly affecting the development of literary written language contributed to the wide use of Arabic words in Tatar language vocabulary of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century.

The objective of this article is to study special Sufi vocabulary in Tatar poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and to find the basic specifics of its function. The specifics of use and function of Arabic lexical elements and Sufi terminology in the works of K. Nasyiri and G. Tukai were studied by Y. Valitova and S.A. Ramazanov. At the turn of XX-XXI centuries that issue was addressed a lot by theses and monographs with special attention to ‘returned’ vocabulary in Tatar language [2, 3], lexical composition of the literary language of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century [4, 5], use of Arabic and Persian borrowings in Tatar folk proverbs [6] and morphological structure of Sufi works of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century [7]. Some aspects of Sufi literature study are considered in works of a group of scientists engaged in the study of medieval literary sources of Siberia [8, 9]. However, the issues on special Sufi vocabulary and terminology in the poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century remained outside the attention of scientists. Insufficient study of that matter in Tatar linguistics determines the actuality of the research from scientific theoretical and practical points of view.

The scientific novelty of this paper is determined by a new approach to the study of special Sufi vocabulary in the poetry of that period. In that respect, of great interest are poetic legacies of poets of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century Shamsetdin Zaki, Abelmanikh Kargali, Hibatulla Salikhov. First of all, their works from the point of view of Sufi words use and finding basic functional particularities are not studied due to ideological reasons, and second, their poems are rather imaginative and expressive, rich in Sufi terms and lexical elements.

The methodological basis of this article is the experience of national and foreign Turkology and Oriental studies on hermeneutic analysis of written texts based on system and function approach to language.

The basic linguistic method of the research in this paper is comparative historical method which allows to detect the specifics of interaction of Tatar language with Arabic and Persian in the course of creating poetry, to find some development trends of morphological system of that period’s national literary

language. In the course of analysis, first of all, in the comparison, generalization and classification of the analyzed material, descriptive method was used. In finding similar common features of specifics of non-kin languages (Arabic, Persian and Tatar) comparative typological method was also used.

When required, statistical method was used, enabling to judge on the frequency of some or other morphological phenomena.

## **2. Results and discussion**

In the language of Sufi poets of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, special vocabulary is in the first place, in particular, words and notions of Sufi and Islamic terminology or general Muslim vocabulary as well as Sufi symbols and metaphors used in Sufi media, but semantically transformed.

When Bulgars adopted Islam, Sufism found its place in the history of Tatar people and entered the spiritual and cultural life of Turk-Tatar areal. In Volga Bulgaria, the doctrine of Hoja Ahmet Yesevi and S. Bakyrğani – founders of Sufi trend – yesevia was spread. As shown by researchers, then yesevia trend became a spiritual source and foundation of nakshbandi brotherhood, active in Tatar environment in the XVI-XVIII centuries.

In public philosophic and literary aesthetic thought of late XVIII<sup>th</sup> – first half of XIX<sup>th</sup> century, Sufism occupies a special place. In Tatar nation's history, the second half of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by the beginning of a new Christianization wave. A.T. Sibagatullina, a researcher of Tatar Sufism, is proving that “Sufism among Tatars activated mainly during the fall of Kazan khanate and especially developed during colonization and forced Christianization of Tatars. It became a powerful support of the Muslim religion and to some extent helped the nation to resist the tsarist policy.” [10] In such historical conditions, Sufi works were understood by the Tatar nation as an instrument for fighting Christianization policy. The influence of Sufism on Tatar Muslim life continued in the first half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century.

J.S. Trimmingham, a Sufism researcher, stresses that in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century the Muslim East saw renewal of orders due to weakening Sufi experience. “In all religious organizations the spiritual life fell into decay and orders were on the decline”, he wrote. “the true spirit of Sufi experience weakened, yet some people and small groups went on following the Sufi Way” [11]. As opined by A. Yuzeyev, by the XIX<sup>th</sup> century in the Volga area interest to Sufism got to weaken as new time brings new requirements changing the traditional lifestyle of the Muslim society. Having studied the history of Sufism and Sufi traditions in Tatar public philosophic thinking, the scientist proves that “new time brought new requirements to the change of traditional lifestyle of the Muslim society towards liberation of personality, learning secular knowledge, while Sufism gradually became the palladium of retrogression, spiritual dogmatism” [12]. However, as the research shows, Tatars do not refuse Sufism which evolves into social and philosophic context. This time, the influence of religious world view, including Sufi, was noticeable and strong.

The development of Turkic poetry of the Volga area was initially related to Sufism till the middle of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century (A. Kargalyi, K. Salikhov, G. Kandalyi, S. Zaki, etc.) as noted by a Western scientist A. Bennigsen, “many representatives of the Tatar culture were under Sufi influence before jadidism” [13]. Tatar literature was developing for many centuries in the course of Sufi doctrine, as typical for the whole Muslim world. Tatar poets, connected by spiritual links with the Muslim East, could not stay away from those processes and phenomena. This factor, as we opine, is a significant circumstance in activation of Sufi ideas and views in that period’s poetry. Especially, “Sufi symbol as the core principle of creative thinking is becoming widely spread and becomes the turning point of poets’ thinking, the basic means of expression of Sufi’s mystic love to Allah” [14]. Therefore, knowledge of special Sufi notions and terms is required for authentic understanding of author’s position.

As is known, Sufi texts are special code-based forms of allegories. Let us see the examples of allegoric use of words of various thematic groups in Tatar poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century. In the analysis of Sufi and Islamic terminology used in Tatar poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, there are direct and Sufi meanings. To find the latter, Islamic encyclopaedic dictionary (A.A. Ali-zade) [<http://slovar-islam.ru/>, accessed 05.03.2014], ‘Tasavvuf terimleri ve deimleri sözlüğü’ (Ethem Cebecioğlu) [15], ‘İstlyahat as-sufiyya’ (K. al-Kashani) [16] and Internet page – Dictionary of Sufi terms [<http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/Termini.php>, accessed 05.03.2014] were used.

Sufi terms used in poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century may be for our purpose divided into the following thematic groups.

### **2.1. Words required to describe Sufi world**

Examples are: arš (throne), šäräb (drink, beverage; syrup; wine), qaun (world, being), kursi (chair), saqyj (cupbearer), malaqut (sovereignty, kingdom), etc. For instance, the word šäräb (drink, beverage; syrup; wine) is used as ‘wine, alcohol drink’ which assisted a Sufi to get in trance. It is known that there are various means for getting in trance including drinking šäräb: inebriety was considered by Sufis as one of trance means. For instance, “šäräb xikmäte qançym kilür” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, Composed by Zinnatulla Mukhametrakhimi, Archives of Ufa Institute of History, Language and Literature, Bashkir Academy of Science, Fund. 3, Vol. 63, p. 117] “want to know (try) the mystery of wine”.

In the studied poetry, the main meaning of any Sufi term may be expressed by a Turkic word. Thus, lexical and stylish variation of original Arabic and Turkic words is established. As an example may be seen the word ‘bal – honey’, which is used as ‘wine’ or ‘alcohol drink’: “can ilä iman – ikäulär – ber öjüdä bal eçär” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 99] “soul and faith – together – drink wine in one house”.

## **2.2. Terms defining a Muslim ascetic, mystic, a Sufi himself**

As is known, in Sufi practice, depending on the achieved level, quality and volume of knowledge, a Sufi is called differently. In the studied poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century the variation of the following terms is seen: *sufi* (woolly; Sufi; mystic), *därwiš* (beggar), *γarif* (knowing, competent), *zahid* (temperate; religious; man of faith, ascetic), *fäqyjr* (poor, in need; poor man; fakir).

- *sufi* – woolly; Sufi; mystic. The contemporary science does not know the etymology of terms *tasavvuf* and *Sufi*. That term is interpreted differently in various studies: *sofiya* – wisdom, *suf* – wool, *suffa* – ‘people of bench’, *safa* – purity, *sifat* – feature, etc.
- *γarif* (knowing, competent) – he who is granted with knowledge; man with practical experience. In Sufism, *γarifs* possess off-experience knowledge and are experts of the spiritual way [15]; holder of mystic knowledge, mystic, ‘behold’ [<http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/Termini.php>]. For instance: “*irgäz dörgäh xaqya γarifıyη aγähny*” [17] “let wise man to Almighty’s threshold”.
- *zahid* (temperate; religious; man of faith, ascetic) – a Muslim ascetic, a man working hard in serving Allah, afraid of Him, doing all religious rituals, praying a lot, having high moral features and not linked to the benefits of this world [<http://slovar-islam.ru/>]. For instance: “*nəchə zahidlaryn əgməlen badə virənder bu*” [17] - “eager work of ascetic (Sufis) he frittered away”.

Persian borrowing *därwiš* (beggar) – is a term describing membership in mystic order (*tarika*) [<http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/Termini.php>] and Arabic word *fäqyjr* (poor, in need; poor man; fakir) are synonyms. “In Sufism, the word ‘*fäqyjr*’, from which ‘*fakir*’ originates, means ‘need in necessary’. Under that necessity, pervading material and spiritual being of a Sufi means God.” [<http://slovar-islam.ru/>] For instance: “*julynda sän γanineη bän fäqyjreη*” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 90] “before you, rich, I am poor”.

## **2.3. Terms describing states arising in the course of attainment of Almighty’s truth**

Examples are: *näzar* (look; consideration; seeing; vision; discussion, understanding), *söxbät* (community; communication, friendship), *fäna* (dying; death; disappearance; nonexistence; Nirvana (for Sufis)).

- *näzar* – spiritual attention of mentor directed at a Sufi; care about mentee [<http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/Termini.php>]. For instance: “*möntäzyjr män, ber näzar qyjlyl bu ülmeš küñlemä*” [17, p. 214] “I am waiting, look into my dying soul”.
- *Söxbät* – intimate oral and spiritual communication of two persons, often a sheikh and a mentee, and establishment of spiritual link between them (*nisbat*) [<http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/Termini.php>]. For instance: “*bolaj dib äüljanyη söxbätene*” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 85] “so I understand communication with a saint”.

Terms of that group are used in the said meanings only in Sufi literature. Their field of use is limited to religious (Sufi) discourse.

#### **2.4. Terms in connection with spiritual development of a Sufi**

Examples are: waqt (time; moment; season), wüçüd (being, existence), näfs (soul; self), xäl (circumstance, case; position, condition), tariq (way, road; route, method), mäyrifät (knowledge; cognition, acquaintance), xaqiqät (truth; reality, actuality, essence), himmät (energy; effort, striving), säfär (trip; travel).

- waqyt – this is what visits human heart during xäl, i.e., means the appearance of the Creator to his Creature [16, p. 53]. As shown by Turkish Sufism researchers, “time is the moment when Allah’s slave begins experiencing divine afflation of mystic nature and divine features begin reflecting in him, exerting great influence on slave... a Sufi under waqyt must show his satisfaction and devotion, and Allah’s slave complying with all waqyt requirements is called ibn-ul waqyt (son of waqyt). In that condition, a Sufi is away from the time limits of the past, future and present and must do what complies with waqyt.” [15, p. 283]. For instance: “härqaçan süz waqyty kilsä, bel jänä...” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 126] “always know when time to speak comes”.
- tariq – way, the name of Sufi way; mystic method, system or school of learning [<http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/Termini.php>]. For instance: “ğäm tarihynda bulu - ruze vaslät dzinanə yul” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 92] “being indifferent (in the way of indifference) is the road to meeting in Paradise”.

In the studied poetry, a Turkic synonym of that term ‘jul’ (road, way) is used. For instance: “igre jullarny qujubän tuıry jula warasy, tarek idüb äyjare ul täñrijä jalwarasy” [17, p. 208] - “leaving other ways, one should go straight road”.

The terms of that group also have narrow special meanings and without special training and outside the context, the exact meanings cannot be found. That terminology was developed for the purpose of Sufi sacred texts.

The poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century also actively uses the words and notions related to Islamic terminology or general Islamic lexical fund. The Islamic terms used in the language of the studied works may be divided into a few thematic groups.

#### **2.5. Words and notions defining names and attributes of God**

Examples are: Allah (god, Allah), İlâhi (god, divine), xoda (god), täñre (god), xaq (law; fairness; truth, true; duty, liability), nur (light).

- Allah – Creator and supervisor of the existing being. Besides Him, no one possesses those features. Allah’s existence is necessary for the Universe and his absence is impossible. He is self-existent. Allah has nothing equal and in that is His absolute unity [<http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/>

Termini.php]. In Arabic, the word ‘Allah’ is originated from the word Ilāh plus definite article ‘al’. As is known, the word Ilāh means ‘he who is worshipped’, ‘worth worshipping’. The article ‘al’ points to the Sole true God, worth worshipping [http://slovar-islam.ru/]. For instance: “fa šökrü niymäti Allahi, — dide xaq” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 125] - “and be grateful to God’s gifts, – God said”. Besides, in the studied poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, to define the Almighty – Allah, Persian (‘Xoda’) and Turkic (‘Täñrijä’) variants are often used. For instance: “xacätem sändin delärmen, i xoda” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 134] - “oh God I want to pray for You with my need”; “tarek idüb äyjare ul täñrijä jalwarasy” [17, p. 208] - “leaving others, Almighty shall be prayed”.

- xaq – one of God’s names meaning ‘True’ [http://саморазвитие1.рф/Sufizm/Termini.php]. For instance: “kem ki xaqnyñ doşmanydyr, bän anyñ doşmany män” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 117] - “Who is God’s enemy, I am”.
- nur – one of Almighty’s names. “In Muslim tradition it is accepted to think that Allah has a lot of names which express His attributes... An-Nur – Light of Heaven and Earth, Giving light of Faith” [http://slovar-islam.ru/]: “nuryñ ilä kitde zolmät” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 132] - “your beam dispersed the dark”.

Thus, words and terms of that group (words and terms defining the names and attributes of God) have narrow special meanings and in poetry of the XIX<sup>h</sup> century interpret the monotheism doctrine.

## **2.6. Words related to general Muslim lexical fund**

The following may be exemplified: acäl (span, time interval limit, term; end), iman (faith), täübä (confession; reformation), batyjn (internal; hidden, secret; interior), etc.

To this group the terms expressing the following may be related:

- sins and confession. Täübä – confession, prayer to Allah to forgive sins [15, p. 263]. For instance: “bu xalä sidqy dildän täübä juq” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 125] - “that cannot be confessed in word”.
- categories of people. Käfir (faithless; unfaithful; godless) – unfaithful, ungrateful, concealing, not admitting truth, not believing in existence or oneness of Allah. The word is originated from the verb ‘kafara’ – cover, conceal. The word ‘käfir’ in narrow sense means “concealing his knowledge about God” [http://slovar-islam.ru/]. For instance: “möddäyyj ike cihanda ber doryr, ike nästä estajän käfer doryr” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 128] - “in both worlds the same appellant wishing to get two (things) is unfaithful (godless)”.
- terms used in kalam. “Kalam is the science on personal and attributive features of Allah, the essence of prophecy, beginning and end of being in compliance with Islam provisions.” [http://slovar-islam.ru/] They are ‘acäl’ (span, time interval; limit, term; end) used in the sense of period, interval,

the time that will come inevitably. In Islamic doctrine, inevitable end of life granted for each living creature (in particular, to humans) by Allah [<http://slovar-islam.ru/>]: “forsatyn waqtyn çanimät bel, äcäl kilmäzdän uñ” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 113] - “know for yourself the moment of trophy winning, let death not catch you”.

- batyjn. “That is one of Allah’s wonderful names. Batyjn is the personification of Allah’s closeness to humans, all creatures and the manifestation in created world... In kalam, batyjn means hidden, secret, esoteric manifestations of any being.” [<http://slovar-islam.ru/>] For instance: “küz dägel sahir küze, batyjn küze ulmajynça, kürmäjä mäynä jöze” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 122] - “visible eyes cannot be considered eyes if the internal sight does not see the essence of sense”.
- fani (ramshackle, old, perishable, inconstant) – what has end, perishable, temporary. According to the Islamic doctrine, all things are perishable and temporary. Only Allah is eternal (Bagi)... [<http://slovar-islam.ru/>] For instance: “bu fani ewläre wäjrän qylubän, ad baqyj jörüne tözmäk kiräkder” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 85] - “having broken those old houses we need to build the eternal”.
- iman – “terminologically, means adoption of the true Islamic faith and fixing its provisions in personal views” [<http://slovar-islam.ru/>]. For instance: “anyñ qasdy imanyñda wä canyñda wä qanyñdadyr” [*Poems of Shamsetdin Zaki*, p. 81] - “his impurity is in your faith, your soul and blood”.

As the research results show, the terms of that group are also narrow-sensed, nevertheless, that group may be understood from the context subject that the reader is familiar with general Muslim culture.

Thus, in connection with Tatar poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century we should speak about semantic transformations of Sufi terms and simultaneously about stylistic variation: co-existence of Arabic and Persian Sufi lexical elements on one hand, and their Turkic analogues on the other hand. Use of Sufi vocabulary by Sufi poets evidences that they had a rather stylistically developed language.

### 3. Conclusions

Some portions of the lexical elements of poetry are taken up by borrowed words. Arabic and Persian borrowings fixed in the language of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century’s poetry are a great portion of the vocabulary of those poetic works. We opine that poets purposefully used Arabic and Persian borrowings to show typical specifics of Sufi literature’s terminology. Sufi terms in Tatar poetry of that period are transformed and some terms are present in poems in rather different form, remote from the original Sufi religion’s roots.

In the language of the poetry of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century we see active use of words and notions related to Islamic terminology or general Muslim lexical fund. Terms of that group (words and notions defining names and attributes of

God) have narrow special meanings and interpret monotheist doctrine and Muslim culture in the language of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century's poetry.

Sufi and Islamic terminology including Sufi symbols are peripheral components of lexical and stylistic system of that period's language which determines variation of literary and written norm.

Classic old Tatar literary language of XIX century was a mix containing lexical and stylistic elements of Arabic, Persian, Chagatai and Osman Turkish languages which is clearly seen in the lexical and stylistic system of language. Their interaction becomes the basis of structural and functional variation of the language norm.

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