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IN THIS ISSUE

Artiom V. Mesheznikov

Sanskrit Fragments of Mahāprajñāpāramitā
(SI 2097, SI 3017, SI 3331/5) in the Serindia Collection (IOM RAS) **3**

Youngsil Lee

Characteristics of the Term Bodhisattva in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka:
Bodhi-saTTva vs Bodhi-saTvan **25**

Tatsushi Tamai

Hōryūji's Dhāraṇī Texts Preserved in Tokyo National Museum **53**

Olga M. Yastrebova

Pre-History of a Collection: Owners' Marks in the Manuscripts
of Muḥammad 'Ayyād al-Ṭanṭāwī **76**

Timur Slesarev

Asrār-nāma: a Sufi Treatise in the Manuscript
from the Collection of Muhammad 'Ayyād al-Ṭanṭāwī
at the M. Gorky Scientific Library of SpbU **95**

Li Zhengfen 李正奮

Yongle Dadian or Investigations Concerning Yongle's Compendium
of Chinese Literature 永樂大典考. Translated by M.J. Hagerty
and H.C. Ho. Berkeley, California. Ed. by Hartmut Walravens **109**

ON THE COVER:

SI 2019 from the Serindia Collection, Petrovsky Subcollection, IOM RAS.

Timur Slesarev

***Asrār-nāma*: a Sufi Manuscript Treatise
from the Collection of Muhammad ‘Ayyād al-Ṭantāwī
at the M. Gorky Scientific Library of SPbU**

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Abstract: The paper deals with the brief Ottoman Sufi treatise *Asrār-nāma* included in the 18th c. handwritten *madjmū‘a* (collection of works) kept at the Scientific Library of SPbU (call number Ms.O. 701). The traditional attribution of the work to the Naqshbandī *shaykh* ‘Abd Allāh Ilāhī (d. 1491) looks highly doubtful. The author of the treatise was under profound influence of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s “Unity of Being” (*waḥdat al-wudjūd*) doctrine, of which the work is a simplified presentation. Some details of the Sufi Path described in the treatise indicate that its author was also familiar with the teaching of the Khalwatiyya brotherhood. The article gives a general description of the manuscript, an outline of the contents of *Asrār-nāma*, as well as brief characteristics of the first three texts gathered in the *madjmu‘a*.

Key words: Ottoman manuscripts, Ottoman translated literature, Sufism, Khalwatiyya brotherhood, Oneness of Being doctrine, al-Ṭantāwī collection, M. Gorky Scientific Library of SPbU

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The collection of Muḥammad ‘Ayyād al-Ṭantāwī (1810–1861), which was purchased by the St. Petersburg Imperial University in 1871, comprises 157 manuscripts in Arabic script, both handwritten books and scholarly materials of the owner, who was a professor of Arabic at the University from 1847 to 1861.

All manuscripts contain texts in Arabic except for a single one, an Ottoman *madjmū‘a* (collection) of Sufi works that is examined in this paper. It should be noted that Turkic manuscripts of the University collection in general remain uncatalogued, all available information about them being limited to a list of titles which are not always given correctly. Thus, the

manuscript in question (Ms.O. 701) is mistakenly described as *Risāla-i shaykh Aḥmad* (sic!) ‘*Ayn al-Quḍāt fī asmā’ Allāh ta‘ālā*’¹ (“Epistle by shaykh Aḥmad ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt on Names of Almighty God”).

The manuscript comprising four texts has two colophons after texts 2 (f. 29r) and 4 (f. 56r). The copyist, a certain Darvīsh Yūsuf Khalwatī (i.e. a member of the Khalwatiyya brotherhood), notes that he has finished the second text on 10 Šafar 1168 [26 November 1754]. The fourth text had been copied a month earlier, on 10 Muḥarram [27 October 1754]. All texts, except for the third one, are enclosed in a red frame; the unframed third text seems to be a supplement. On the whole, it seems that the manuscript’s two fragments were bound not in the order in which they had been copied, but this is impossible because the third and the fourth texts belong partly to the same quire. The only explanation that can resolve this contradiction is that a protograph was bound in a wrong way and the manuscript in question is its exact copy. Thus, it turns out that the colophons belong to the protograph and not to the manuscript which is, in fact, undated.

On f. 2r there is an inscription written in the same hand as the main text of the manuscript, stating that: “its owner (*ṣāhib*) is the Sultan of Knowers (*sultān al-‘ārifīn*) *sayyid shaykh* Muḥammad Afandī Dimyātī Khalwatī Sinānī,² may God bless his beloved tomb and make his grave full of light”. The last formula shows that this Muḥammad Afandī had already left this world by the moment when the inscription was made, and could have been its owner only in the sense that he had gathered the texts into the *madjmū‘a*. One of the meanings of the word *ṣāhib* in Arabic does allow for this interpretation.

As for the place of copying, the following remarks can be made. One of the *nisbas* of the “owner” indicates that he belonged to the Sinaniyya branch of the Khalwatiyya brotherhood. Since Istanbul was the main centre of Sinaniyya’s activity,³ it is highly likely that the manuscript was copied in that city. Consequently, al-Ṭantāwī may have purchased it when passing through Istanbul on his way from Egypt to St. Petersburg in 1840, 1842 or 1844.

The manuscript consists of 58 ff., measured 208*147 mm. Ff. 56v–58v are blank. The number of lines per page is 17. The script is a very good, almost calligraphic *naskh*, its density varies depending on the text from an average of 39–40 (text 4) to 50–51 letters (texts 2 and 3) per line. The text is

¹ SALEMANN & ROSEN 1888: 22.

² I could not identify this person.

³ BAHA TANMAN 1994: 6.

written in black ink, fully vocalized Arabic quotations are overlined in red in texts 1 and 2, and written in red in texts 3 and 4.

The paper is of European origin, thick, watermarked with three crescents. The Ottoman binding with a flap is covered with dark brown leather and decorated with oval stamped medallions with floral motifs on the outside of both covers and the flap.

This paper focuses on the fourth text of the *madjmū‘a*, but before discussing it, a brief description of the first three is given below.

1) F. 2v–26v (circa 35200 letters). A Turkish translation of the Persian treatise *Tamhīdat* (“Preludes”) by ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī (1098–1131).

The text is headed *Hadhā Risāla-i shaykh Muḥammad ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt quddisa sirruhu al-‘azīz* (“This is the Epistle by Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, be his beloved tomb blessed”). The title of the “*risāla*” is given in the foreword and appears as <...> *al-ḥaqāyiq wa kashf al-daḡāyiq* (<...> of Reality and Unveiling of Subtleties). The lost initial word must have been *zubdat* (cream), which ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt himself used, or *kanz* (treasure), which Ottoman scholars preferred to use in order not to confuse ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Persian work with his Arabic treatise entitled *Zubdat al-ḥaqāyiq*. The Persian treatise, however, is most commonly referred to simply as *Tamhīdāt*.

The person who had translated the treatise into Ottoman was identified quite recently. The following argumentation does look convincing. In the foreword to the Ottoman version of Farīd al-Dīn ‘Attār’s *mathnawī Mukhtār-nāma* some details of its translator’s biography are mentioned, which correspond with those of the poet Uskudārī ‘Ashqī (d. 1576/77). At the same time, a compiler of *Tamhīdāt* translation points out that prior to the treatise of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt he had translated *Mukhtār-nāma*.⁴ Consequently, the translator of *Tamhīdāt* and Uskudārī ‘Ashqī must have been the same person.

The translation has been published in facsimile and Turkish transcription.⁵ It contains roughly 100 000 letters, that is, almost three times more than the text of the manuscript under discussion. Its compiler has not only abridged the text, but also regrouped several paragraphs of chapters 8 and 10 (chapter 9 was fully removed). It should be added that ‘Ashqī himself has significantly shortened his translation: in the original Persian text of *Tamhīdāt* there are about 242 000 letters. Thus, the text in the *madjmū‘a* can be called an abridgement of the abridged translation of *Tamhīdāt*.

⁴ YAZAR 2011: 380–381, 384–385.

⁵ SANDIKÇI 2009: 61–144.

2) F. 26v–29r (circa 4300 letters). A short text headed *Dar bayān-i diyāfat-i al-‘ulamā’-i marhūm sulṭān Muḥammad khān* (“Explanation of the Visit of Scholars by the Deceased Sultan Mehmed-khan”). This is a story telling how Sultan Mehmed II consulted a certain *shaykh* Ilāhī about Allāh’s Beautiful Names (*al-asmā’ al-ḥusnā*).

The identity of “*shaykh* Ilāhī” raises no doubt. This is the famous ‘Abd Allāh Ilāhī who contributed greatly to the spread of Naqshbandī teaching in Turkey.⁶ He was so famous that Sultan Mehmed II himself invited him to Istanbul. Ilāhī accepted this offer, though not immediately, and moved to Istanbul only in 882 [1477/78]. Mehmed was still alive then, and his meeting with the shaykh could have taken place in theory.⁷

3) F. 29v–32v (circa 5400 letters). A short text headed *Hadhā sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* (“This is a Commentary on the Most Beautiful Names of God”), containing interpretation of the God’s name in the Turkish language. Despite the fact that in the introduction the number of the Most Beautiful Names of God is given as 99, there are 100 names commented on in the main body of the text. The “extra” name not included in the commonly accepted list is *al-djamīl* (the Handsome).

As for the fourth treatise, it is found on f. 33r–56r (circa 29100 letters). As this copy lacks the heading and initial lines, the text starts in the mid-sentence. Its first folio was obviously lost. Fortunately, the title of the treatise is preserved:

“[I have decided] to compile (lit., “bring to form”) this *Asrār-nāma* [The Book of Secrets] for it to be a reminder to those seeking the Absolute”.

A search in the database of Turkish literary works produced a quick result.⁸ It became clear that the *Asrār-nāma* in question is commonly ascribed to ‘Abd Allāh Ilāhī, the same person who met with Sultan Mehmed II in the second part of the *madjmū‘a*.

The treatise has already drawn attention of researchers,⁹ who mention in total almost 50 of its copies. The oldest dated one was written in 1061 [1651].¹⁰ Three copies have been published, two of them both in transcription and facsimile,¹¹ and the third one, bearing the greatest similarity to the

⁶ For detailed information on this person see: KARA & ALGAR 1988.

⁷ KARA 1988: 366–367.

⁸ UYAN 2022.

⁹ YAVUZER 1988; ÖZKAN 2006; SAVAŞ 2013; ÇELEBİOĞLU 2014.

¹⁰ ÖZKAN 2006: 30.

¹¹ ÖZKAN 2006: 55–82, 94–121; SAVAŞ 2013: 58–103; 12–57.

text discussed here, only in transcription.¹² Comparative analysis has revealed the following peculiarities of the *madjmu'a* copy. Firstly, the missing fragment at the beginning contains circa 300 letters. Secondly, the copyist¹³ has mixed up two fragments, both containing circa 460 letters. Thirdly, another short fragment (circa 370 letters) is omitted.¹⁴ This fragment draws an analogy between the human body and the state, the mind being likened to a *vazīr* etc.

There is a disagreement over attribution of the treatise to 'Abd Allāh Ilāhī.¹⁵ In my opinion, at least four remarks on the question can be made.

Firstly, the conception of the so-called "seven stages of soul" (*aṭvār-i sab'a*),¹⁶ which is presented in the treatise in a brief and highly simplified form, is much more associated with practices of the *Khalwatī* order,¹⁷ rather than with those of the *Naqshbandī* one. Moreover, in one of the works attributed undoubtedly to 'Abd Allāh Ilāhī, entitled *Maslak al-tālibīn wa-l-vāṣilīn* ("A way of those who seek [for God] and reach"), the author only deals with the three stages of the soul that are mentioned in the *Qur'an*.¹⁸

Secondly, the treatise in question and the aforementioned one present a concept of the Perfect Human, but in very different ways. In *Maslak al-tālibīn* an extremely detailed description of the Perfect Human is given.¹⁹ On the contrary, the Perfect Human of *Asrār-nāma* is a traditional abstraction in which all attributes of God are gathered. Although the author believes that this state can be reached by an ordinary human,²⁰ none of the 23 qualities of perfectness listed in *Maslak al-tālibīn* are even mentioned.

Thirdly, the description of the Sufi Path in *Asrār-nāma* seems so vague and general that it is hard to imagine that it was compiled by such an experienced Sufi *shaykh* as 'Abd Allāh Ilāhī. In fact, the author of our work con-

¹² YAVUZER 1988: 43–105.

¹³ Given the above, the copyist of the protograph must have done it.

¹⁴ This mistake could obviously be made both by the copyist of the *madjmu'a* manuscript and the copyist of the protograph.

¹⁵ In YAVUZER 1988 and ÖZKAN 2006 the traditional attribution is neither questioned, nor somehow proved. In SAVAŞ 2013 and ÇELEBİOĞLU 2014 other attributions are offered, but no arguments against the attribution to 'Abd Allāh Ilāhī are adduced.

¹⁶ A Sufi way of becoming the Perfect Human by means of a successive transition through seven states of the soul, each of them being a complex of certain qualities. See, for example: ALESKEROVA 2015: 196.

¹⁷ ALESKEROVA 2015: 196; USTA 2015: 10.

¹⁸ ÖZÇELİK 1990: 84, 149.

¹⁹ Ibid.: 231–253.

²⁰ An appeal to find *murshid-i kāmīl* (a perfect teacher) runs like a red thread through the text. On the Perfect Human in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought see: MORISSEY 2020.

fines himself to recommending a reader to find a teacher in order to transform the character. The fundamental practices of the Path such as, for instance, retreat (*khalwa*) and *dhikr* (remembrance of God) are, even if mentioned, dealt with only briefly and superficially.

Fourthly, there are 16 poetic passages, both whole poems and fragments, in the text of the treatise. Eleven fragments, containing 14 *bayts* in total, are preceded with a reference to their authors, namely Djalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273), Mahmūd Shabistarī (1288–1340), Yūnus Emre (12th–13th cc.) and ‘Imād al-Dīn Nasīmī (1369–1417). The remaining five poems are *ghazals* given without attribution, but the last *bayt* in each of them contains the *takhalluṣ* (pen name) Laṭīfī (in one case in a form of Luṭfī).²¹ In total, these *ghazals* contain 37 *bayts* (circa 2000 letters), that is, almost three times the entire amount of those belonging to aforementioned renowned masters of poetry. Considering that the content of the *ghazals* ideally corresponds to those fragments of the text which they are meant to illustrate, it is logical to assume that they were intentionally composed for the treatise by a certain Laṭīfī, or that he was himself the compiler of the treatise.

Two scholars have made assumptions about the identity of this mysterious Laṭīfī. One of them asserts, without any proofs, that it was the most famous among those bearing this *takhalluṣ*, Qastamūnī Laṭīfī Chalabī (d. 1582).²² Another argues for a little-known poet Tūṭī-i Lāṭif Būrshawī (d. 1565), who became interested in Sufism toward the end of his life, but had never been a member of any order.²³ Taking into account the above remarks, this candidacy seems quite probable. Nevertheless, the problem of the authorship of *Asrār-nāma* can by no means be considered solved.

The author of *Asrār-nāma* was deeply influenced by views of the great Sufi thinker Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240) whose core ontological and anthropological ideas as explicated in the treatise are the following.

All existing things are manifestations of the Absolute (*al-ḥaqq*, lit. “the truth”, or “the reality”). It has created things, so to say, from within Himself through a chain of entifications (*ta‘ayyunāt*; lit., “making oneself a particular, individual entity”²⁴). The Human is the last creature to have been created,

²¹ According to H. Yavuzer, the verses must have been a later addition: YAVUZER 1990: 27.

²² SAVAŞ 2013: 10.

²³ ÇELEBİOĞLU 2014: 6.

²⁴ In this context the term *tadjallī* ([Divine self-]manifestation) is more common: *tadjallī-i awwal* (the first manifestation) etc. *Ta‘ayyun* is a particular way of *tadjallī*. See: IZUTSU 1984: 152. The term *tadjallī* is used by the author of *Asrār-nāma* in the sense of mystical visions of the Absolute (see below).

and in this sense he is the aim of Creation. However, the idea of the human, or to put it in another way, the human as an ideal abstraction, appeared within the Absolute before all other things;²⁵ in this sense the human is the reason of Creation.²⁶ This abstraction is commonly referred to as the Muḥammadan Reality (*ḥaqīqat-i muḥammadiyya*), or the Perfect Human (*insān-i kāmīl*), encompassing all attributes (*ṣifāt*) of the Absolute or all traits of the world, i.e. a microcosm.²⁷ Consequently, self-knowledge becomes the main duty of a human, because knowing himself enables him to know the Absolute,²⁸ but only by means of a “transformation of character” (*tabdīl-i akhlāq*) so that his qualities which are, in fact, identical to those of the Absolute, reach a state of perfection and the Absolute can witness them in the human. Actually, the Absolute’s desire for self-knowledge is the very goal of Creation. It is no coincidence that the author of the treatise began his work with a quote from one of the most famous *ḥadīths*: “I [i.e. the Absolute] was a Hidden Treasure (*kanz makhfī*), and I wished to be known, so I created a creature”.

Below I give an outline of the contents of the treatise.

The traditional praise to God foreshadows the main theme of the work and looks as follows:

“Praise and thanks to the Knower of the Absent of the Absents (*‘ālim-i ghayb al-ghuyūb*) who brought His Perfectness and Power that had been the Hidden secret (*sirr-i khafā’*), from the World of the Absent of the Absents (*‘ālam-i ghayb al-ghuyūb*) into Being (*wudjūd*), by means and for the reason of the Muḥammadan Reality! Peace and prayer to the Pure light (*nūr-i pāk*) of the Muḥammadan rational soul (*nafs-i nātiqa-i muḥammadiyya*), which is a reason of two Beings (*kawnayn*) and existence of two Worlds (*‘ālamayn*)!”²⁹

The narration itself begins with a statement that the first duty of a believer is knowledge of God’s existence (*varliq*) and oneness (*birlik*). The Absolute Essence (*dhāt*) is one and indivisible, but due to Its attributes It seems multi-

²⁵ The *ḥadīth* “The first thing God created was my spirit (*rūḥ*)” is quoted in the text twice.

²⁶ The *ḥadīth* “If you had not been, I would not have created the heavens” occurs in the treatise three(!) times.

²⁷ It is the “comprehensive being” (*al-kawn al-djāmi’*) mentioned in the first chapter of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (“The Bezels of Wisdom”). See: ZUTSU 1984: 219.

²⁸ The *ḥadīth* “Whoever knows himself knows his Lord” is quoted in the text twice. For its philosophical interpretation see: ZUTSU 1984: 40–41.

²⁹ The initial fragment which our manuscript is lacking is translated from: YAVUZER 1988: 43.

ple. First of all, the Absolute subsisted in a hidden (*bāṭin*) state, “a stage of oneness” (*martaba-i aḥadiyya*), “purified” (*munazzah*) from all kinds of forms (*ṣūrāt*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*), but being their source. Then, the so-called “first entification” (*al-ta’ayyun al-awwal*) follows, it encompasses “names (*asmā*’), attributes and levels (*marātib*)” and is also referred to as “Muḥammadan reality”, or “reality of Ādam” (lit., “the real Ādam”, *Ādam-i ḥaqīqī*). The “second entification” (*al-ta’ayyun al-thānī*)³⁰ is most commonly known as “permanent archetypes”³¹ (*a’yān-i thābita*), which are further to be embodied in visible things from celestial bodies to minerals, plants, animals and humans.

Thus, the Human is the last (*ākhir*) creature to have descended onto the Earth. Therefore, the ultimate aim of the Creation can be said to be the existence of the Human. At the same time, the Divine manifestation as the Human is determined by the fact that “the first (*awwal*) of all appearances and entifications is the Reality of the Human (*ḥaqīqat-i insān*)”. To clarify this idea the author offers the following allegory. A gardener plants an apricot seed. The tree grows, its elements begin to differ from one another and obtain their own names, such as branches, leaves, flowers; but the ultimate aim of the gardener is the fruit. The gardener is the Absolute, the tree in all its forms stands for the multiple world, the fruit is the human; but in fact, all of this is nothing but the initial seed, which represents the “Reality of Muḥammad”.³²

Just as some unripe apricots can fall down and rot, some people “who have not saved their souls from the gloom of nature (*tabī’at zulmati*) are worse than animals”. Here the author articulates his core ethical idea, namely that the principal duty of a believer is to save his soul from qualities of animals and to develop qualities of God which must be revealed so that the Absolute can contemplate them, because “the jewels of the Hidden Treasure are entrusted to Human essence (*insāning dhāti*), being secretly reflected in his mirror”.

God’s attributes belong to two groups, namely Kindness (*luṭf*) and Violence (*qahr*), both necessary for a believer, but only if he tries to comprehend his rational soul. Otherwise, even mother’s milk is forbidden (*ḥaram*)

³⁰ For these two stages in terms of *fayḍ* ([Divine] emanation) see: IZUTSU 1984: 152–158.

³¹ For the permanent archetypes see: IZUTSU 1984: 159–196.

³² Likening a human being to a fruit is rather common in Sufi literature. Like the human in the context of Creation, fruits are both the reason (since they contain seeds) and the goal of planting trees.

for him and everything he does is nothing but hypocrisy. Such a state is a kind of disease which can be cured by means of a forty-day retreat from the world. In any case, one must first find a perfect teacher (*murshid-i kāmīl*) so that he, like a skillful doctor (*ṭabīb-i ḥādhiq*), diagnoses the disease.

There are seven diseases of the soul, *shaykhs* call them “attributes of fire” (*ṣifāt-i nāriyya*): pride (*kibr*), arrogance (*‘udjb*), hatred (*kīn*), lust (*shahwa*), wrath (*ghaḍab*), envy (*ḥasad*), greed (*hirṣ*), all having origin in love for the Lower world (*ḥubb-i dunyā*).

The author lists seven stages of developing qualities of God, namely the [evil] commanding soul (*nafs-i ammāra*), the soul reproaching [itself] (*nafs-i lawwāma*), the inspired soul (*nafs-i mulḥima*), the reassured soul (*nafs-i muṭma’inna*), the pleased soul (*nafs-i rāḍiyya*), the pleasing soul (*nafs-i marḍiyya*), the perfect soul (*nafs-i kāmīla*).³³ Some people, whom God leads by means of His power, are able to move from one stage to another on their own, they are known as “attracted wayfarers” (*sālik-i madjdihūb*);³⁴ all others need an intermediary in the person of a perfect teacher.

Shaykhs teach, “the path to God is two steps long, the first being annihilation of the self, the second — subsistence with God. <...> [The first step] is called *fanā fī-llāh*, [the second one] — *baqā’ bī-llāh*”. Actually, both are called “transformation of the character”. Wayfarers are sometimes honored with an ability to contemplate a manifestation of the Absolute’s essence (*tadjallī-i dhāt*) that can be of three kinds, namely, “manifestation via acts” (*tadjallī-i āthār*), “manifestation via attributes” (*tadjallī-i ṣifāt*) and “manifestation via images” (*tadjallī-i ṣūrī*).³⁵ The process is so complicated that everyone needs a perfect teacher to identify it, even if it concerns attracted wayfarers.

The author likens the Lower world to an ugly woman wearing a *niqāb*. She is an evil witch turning youths, seduced by her, into different animals; in other words, she gives them attributes of animals. The perfect teacher is, in turn, likened to Prophet Khidr who is able to wash off the witchcraft with “water of knowledge” (*āb-i ma’rifa*).

³³ Each stage is a complex of certain qualities. The qualities given by our author almost entirely coincide with those in ÇELİK & YILDIRIM 2018. For example, the qualities of *nafs-i lawwāma* are given in both texts as enthusiasm (*havas*), cunningness (*makr*), arrogance (*‘udjb*), lust for carousals (*‘ishrat*), [excessive] desire (*tamannī*), and violence (*qahr*).

³⁴ For detailed information on *djadhba* ([a way of Divine] attraction) see: KHISMATULIN 1996: 36–63.

³⁵ See note 21.

The transformation of character can be made only in the Lower world. Everyone is creating his own Hereafter (*ākhirā*) by his actions here (*bunda*): “The Lower world exists by means of existence, the Hereafter exists by means of attributes”. Explicating this thought the author lists 14 acts that can be performed in the Lower world, and 14 awards that correspond to them in the Hereafter. For instance, “if love for God has a hold over one’s soul, he will be given some “pure wine” (*sharab ṭahūr*), will get drunk with God’s manifestation and see nothing but Him”, or “reflection on the nature of things (*fikr-i ḥaqā’iq-i ašyā*)” here [i.e. in the Lower world] turns [in the Hereafter] to jewels, rubies and corals”. The final award, which comprises all previous ones, is Presence with God; it can be earned only by the Perfect Human (*insān-i kāmīl*).³⁶

The source of good and bad deeds lies in what one eats (*ghidā*) and with whom one communicates (*mušāḥaba*). Alcohol is forbidden, since it fills the soul with attributes of fire and death (*ṣifāt-i rāḍiyya*). Different kinds of meat are also forbidden. For example, pork makes the eater lazy, lion meat increases pride, bear meat affects lust. At the same time, the allowed kinds of meat, such as lamb, poultry and pigeon meat, strengthen good qualities, namely calmness and piety, intelligence, *dhikr* and reflection on God. Just as food can give good or bad attributes, so can a person you communicate with exercise influence on them. If one talks with Perfect persons, his heart is getting inclined to God; if one talks with ignorant people, he is gradually influenced by their qualities.

There are two more concepts of considerable importance, namely word and thought. The importance of word is explained through an example of *shahāda* (testimony).³⁷ It has the power to raise the dead, that is to say, to convert unbelievers to Islam. On the contrary, as soon as one denies God, one dies. Another applications of word are *dhikr* and speaking about Divine wisdom (*ḥikmat-i ilāhī*), prophets and saints, all of them being spiritual food. As for thought, its significance is confirmed with two quotations from the *Qur’ān* and the *ḥadīths*.

After presenting his recommendations the author returns to the main anthropological idea of the treatise, that of the Human as a “comprehensive being” combining all divine attributes. Taking the attributes “the Evident” (*ẓāhir*) and “the Hidden” (*bāṭin*) as examples, he explains what they mean

³⁶ Cf.: IZUTSU 1994: 247–261. The Japanese researcher explains that the Perfect Human, or the Saint (*walī*) is one whose heart becomes unified with the Absolute, so that the latter witnesses itself in itself.

³⁷ Declaration that there is no deity but God, the first of the Five Pillars of Islam.

with regard to people who are evident in terms of their bodies and hidden in terms of their souls. Moreover, the author states that such attributes of Essence (*ṣifāt-i dhāt*), as “the Living” (*hayy*), “the Hearing” (*samīʿ*), “the Powerful” (*qādir*) and “the Willing” (*murīd*), correspond to four humors in the human body, namely blood (*qān*), yellow bile (*ṣafrāʾ*), phlegm (*balgham*) and black bile (*sawdāʾ*).

Further, the author expresses his views on the so-called “three born [kingdoms]” (*mawālīd-i thalātha*), presenting their structure as “plants–animals–people”.³⁸

“Till the age of forty the perfectness which is [hidden] in the Human is ready to manifest itself (*zuhūr*). But we have been dealing so long with animals, that their qualities became our nature (*tabīʿa*). In fact, however, being in the treasury of God’s wisdom, we have got accustomed to God and His qualities have entered our nature, but only in generalized (*idjmāl*) form. For this reason, the Human has descended (*tanazzul*) [onto the Earth] to bring these generalized qualities of God to perfection by means of existence. But, in fact, he has been captured (*maḥbūs*) by qualities of animals”.³⁹

Then, an extensive fragment follows that contains an outline of traditional Islamic views on the nine heavens, “fixed” stars and planets, as well as an explanation of their astrological role.

Having emphasized a special role of water in the Creation,⁴⁰ the author of the treatise turns again to Sufi cosmology. With reference to certain “men of knowledge” (*ʿirfān ahli*), he lists the well-known hierarchy of worlds, including those of *lāhūt*, *djabarūt*, *malakūt*, *mulk* and *nāsūt*,⁴¹ and immediately adds that there are, in fact, only the “Sea of the Evident” (*baḥr-i zāhir*), the “Sea of the Hidden” (*baḥr-i bāṭin*) and the “Isthmus” (*barzakh*) between them. The Muḥammadan Reality is double-faced.⁴² The first face is turned to the world of oneness (*ʿālam-i waḥda*), which is the source of all attributes of

³⁸ Traditionally minerals, animals and people are regarded as three kingdoms. In our opinion, people have been added to this scheme as a separate kingdom, and minerals were excluded from it in order to draw a clearer distinction between people and animals and to underline once more that humans should save their souls from animal qualities cultivating the qualities of God.

³⁹ The idea of a strong connection between the three kingdoms has been put forward by Avicenna. See: NASR 1997: 38–39.

⁴⁰ For water in Ibn al-ʿArabī’s thought see: IZUTSU 1984: 141–151.

⁴¹ For a three-component variant of this hierarchy offered by Ibn al-ʿArabī and given below see: TERRIER 2023: 287–289.

⁴² For the Muḥammadan Reality as the intermediary level (*barzakh*) between the Absolute and the visible world see: IZUTSU 1984: 236.

the Absolute. The second face looks at the world of multiplicity (*'ālam-i kathra*), in which the attributes manifest themselves and come to existence, so that things become “locus of manifestation” (*maẓhar*) for attributes, the attributes, in turn, becoming essential qualities (*māhiyya*) of things. Thus, the Muḥammadan Reality is the essence gathering all attributes. At the same time, the name Allāh is a repository (*mustajma'*) of all attributes plus the attribute of being the repository of all attributes, which is inherent to the Muḥammadan Reality. Therefore, the name Allāh encompasses all levels of the world. For this reason believers say, “God is the most great” (*Allāh ak-bar*). So, Being (*varliq*) of the God is the One.

There are eight attributes, on which the Noble Essence (*dhāt-i sharīf*) of God is based, namely “the Living” (*ḥayy*), “the Eternal” (*bāqī*), “the Knower” (*'ālim*), “the Powerful”, “the Willing”, “the Speaking” (*mutakallim*), “the Hearing” and “the Seeing” (*bāṣir*). All other attributes are those of acts (*ṣifāt-i af'ālī*).⁴³

Further, the author informs the reader about spiritual significance of *namāz* (prayer), *zakāt* (charity), fasting (*ṣawm*) and *ḥadjj* (pilgrimage) for a lover (*'āshiq*).

Namāz is necessarily preceded by ablution (*ghusl*), which means washing off love for the Lower World and the Hereafter. Claspings the hands when praying stands for removing them from all being except God. Facing the *Qibla* (the direction towards the *Ka'ba*) is turning to one's own heart which is the Mecca of Divine love (*Makka-i 'ishq-i ilāhī*). A sign that one's prayer is heard is seeing God's beauty (*djamāl*).

Keeping the fast shows that the lover refrains from everything except God. As for *zakāt*, it stands for giving one's soul on the path to God.

The most interesting interpretation is that of the *ḥadjj*. The spiritual pilgrimage is described as follows:

“The *ḥadjj* of lovers is to leave the homeland of love for the Lower World (*vaṭan-i maḥabbat-i dunyā*) to turn to the believer's heart which is the Divine and True Mecca (*Makka-i ilāhī-i ḥaqīqī*), and to perform *ṭawāf*⁴⁴ seven times, since there are seven stages of the soul. For every round of *ṭawāf* a special sign appears. That of the first stage is a green light, that of the second round is a blue light, that of the third round is a red light, that of the fourth round is a yellow light, that of the fifth round is a white light, that of the

⁴³ The division of attributes into those of essence and those of acts is widely known. See: IBRAHIM & SAGADEEV 1991: 210.

⁴⁴ Walking around the *Ka'ba*, one of the practices of *ḥadjj*.

sixth round is a black light. The sign of the seventh round is a colorless, absolute light”.⁴⁵

In the final part of the treatise the author divides wayfarers into three types. Those who are imbued with Divine Love (*‘ashīq*), are able to endure all hardships and to overcome all obstacles, which occur on the Path. They are equally indifferent both to the Lower World and to the Hereafter, since love for the former is a “veil of darkness” (*parda-i ḡulmānī*), while love for the latter is a “veil of light” (*parda-i nūrānī*). The “attached ones” (*muḥibb*) are mainly fond of the Hereafter. When hardships become excessive, they cannot bear them. The third type, namely “imitators” (*muqallid*), having seen a lover, they feel enthusiasm, but their attachment to the Lower World is too strong.

The treatise ends with yet another appeal to interaction with the Perfect Human.

To conclude, the notes on the treatise can be summarized in the following way. *Asrār-nāma* presents, in a highly simplified form, the main ontological and anthropological ideas of the Oneness of Being teaching, combining them with an explication of some traditional Islamic ideas. Information on the Sufi Path in the treatise is very scant, which is an indication that its compiler could not have been an experienced Sufi teacher. Some details, however, suggest that he was familiar with the teachings of the Khalwatiyya brotherhood. Despite its traditional attribution to ‘Abd Allāh Ilāhī and attempts to propose a different author, the work should be considered anonymous. The treatise was quite popular because of the simplicity of its language and style.

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⁴⁵ Another sequence of lights is given in ÇELİK & YILDIRIM 2018 and ALESKEROVA 2015: 96: 1) blue; 2) yellow; 3) red; 4) white; 5) green; 6) black; 7) colorless. These colors mark the stages of the aforementioned seven-step Khalwatī way of developing the soul.

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