



The Hurufi Sect and its Mystical Essence

Hüruflilik təriqəti və onun mistik mahiyyəti

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Xülasə. XIV əsrdə Fəzlullah Nəimi tərəfindən yaradılan Hürufi təriqəti ərəb əlifbasının mistik əhəmiyyəti ətrafında mərkəzləşmiş İslam mistisizmi, numerologiya və ezoterik fəlsəfənin unikal qarışığını təmsil edir. Ərəbcə “hüruf” (hərflər) sözündən yaranan “Hürufi” termini hərflərin təkcə dilin əsası deyil, həm də kainatın dövrü hərəkətlərini və yaradılışdakı ilahi varlığı dərk etmək üçün açarlar olduğunu inamı əks etdirir. Hürufiliyin intellektual görüşlərinə baxmayaraq, hərəkət həm siyasi, həm də dini hakimiyyətin müqaviməti ilə üzləşdi və nəticədə Nəiminin edam edilməsi ilə nəticələndi. Bu məqalə Hürufi təriqətinin əsas inanclarını, təcrübələrini və tarixi kontekstini araşdırır, onun dövrün mənəvi mənzərəsinə dərin təsirini araşdırır. Məqalənin metodologiyası Hürufi təriqətini dini, siyasi və mədəni kontekstində araşdırmaq üçün tarixi araşdırma, fəlsəfi təhlil və müqayisəli ilahiyyatı birləşdirən çoxsahəli yanaşmadan istifadə edir.

Açar sözlər: Fəzlullah Nəimi, Hürufi, İslam, hərflər, mənbələr

Abstract. The Hurufi sect, founded by Fazlullah Naimi in the 14th century, represents a unique blend of Islamic mysticism, numerology, and esoteric philosophy centered around the mystical significance of the Arabic alphabet. The term "Hurufi," derived from the Arabic word huruf (letters), reflects the belief that the letters of the alphabet are not only the foundation of language but also keys to understanding the cyclical movements of the universe and the divine presence within creation. Despite the intellectual allure of Hurufism, the movement faced opposition from both political and religious authorities, culminating in Naimi's execution. This article explores the foundational beliefs, practices, and historical context of the Hurufi sect, examining its profound influence on the spiritual landscape of the time. The methodology employs a multi-disciplinary approach, combining historical research, philosophical analysis, and comparative theology to explore the Hurufi sect in its religious, political, and cultural context.

Key words: Fazlullah Naimi, Hurufi, Islam, letters, sources.

Резюме. Движение хуруфи, основанное Фазлуллахом Наими в XIV веке, представляет собой уникальное сочетание исламского мистицизма, нумерологии и эзотерической философии, сосредоточенной вокруг мистического значения арабского алфавита. Термин «хуруфи», происходящий от арабского слова хуруф (буквы), отражает веру в то, что буквы алфавита являются не только основой языка, но и ключами к пониманию циклических движений вселенной и божественного присутствия в творении. Несмотря на духовность хуруфизма, движение столкнулось с противодействием, как со стороны политических, так и религиозных властей, что привело к казни Наими. В данной статье рассматриваются основные положения эзотерического учения и практик движения хуруфи, а также её глубокое влияние на духовный ландшафт того времени. Методология исследования основана на междисциплинарном подходе, сочетающем исторические исследования, философский анализ и сравнительную теологию, для изучения движения хуруфи в её религиозном, политическом и культурном контексте.

Ключевые слова: Фазлулла Наими, Хуруфи, Ислам, письма, источники

Introduction

"Hurufi" is from the word "huruf", which is the plural of the Arabic word "harf" (letter). The letters and numbers of the Arabic alphabet and their numerical meanings had a special mystical meaning in the Hurufis and were regarded as symbols of the cyclical movements of the world. They take words as the basis of existence. The Hurufis said that Words were the matter of the world as revelations from God in and through the Quran. The idea of "God manifesting in man through the words of the Quran" belonging to the Hurufis originates from here. (11)

The Hurufi sect, which calls it "Ahle-haqq" or "Ahle-haqiqat" ("People of the absolute Truth), is among the sects formed during the time of Amir Teymur. (3, s. 86) According to the belief of Fazlullah Naimi's father, Abu Muhammad, all "letters" are sacred and each of them has a hidden secret. Therefore, the place where each letter represented in the alphabet appears is the human body. Of course, it should be noted that the sanctity of letters is not a new idea in Islam, and as early as the second century AH, the leader of the Mughayriyyas, who are considered to be extreme Shiites, Mugheyra ibn Said Ajali, considered God to be a being composed of light, and His "organs of the body" is similar to syllabic letters and he said: "Alif" is his two legs and the letter "ayn" is his eye". (12, s. 153)

Fazlullah Naimi used to say: "If a person constantly struggles with his own feelings in order to achieve perfection through discipline, he can achieve the level of divinity." Hurufis believed that letters were manifested in beautiful faces and considered people with beautiful faces to be saints. According to this belief, God has hidden his throne and Sidratul-Mutaha in the face of man, and they even considered Hazrat Khatamul-anbiya Muhammad al-Mustafa ((phub) to search for his true face and watch God's Jamal (Jamal means "beauty" in Arabic). (12, s. 153)

In his youth, Fazlullah Astarabadi was called "Halalkhor" (the word halal khor literally means those who eat halal food) because he was very serious about piety and diet. He considered himself one of the Alawite Sayyids, he went on pilgrimage when he was eighteen years old (758 AH) and when he returned from there, he stayed in Khwarazm. Naimi then went to Isfahan and spent his life sewing hats there. He went to Tabriz at the age of forty and, in his own words, "here he acquired the unseen knowledge of the heavenly books, and thus rose to the status of 'prophecy' and 'imamate'." Fazlullah Tabrizi then returned to Isfahan and began to openly declare and propagate his beliefs in 788 A.H. He wrote his work "Javidannamayi-kabir" while he was in prison in Shirvan and started inviting

the emirs and rulers of his time to this sect. (12, s. 153)

In the works belonging to the "Bektashi" sect, which came under the influence of the Hurufi sect, it is mentioned that Fazlullah Naimi was born in 740 AH, started preaching openly in 788 AH, and attained martyrdom in 796 AH. One of the oldest written sources that provide information about Fazlullah Naimi is the work "*Al-Uqudul-farida fi tarajimil-ayanil-mufida* / العقود الفريدة في تراجم الاعيان المفيدة" written by Taqiyeddin Maghrizi. The author of this work was one of the contemporaries of Fazlullah Tabirzi, and he was thirty years old when Naimi was killed (796 AH). (10, s. 214) This information is also reflected in the work "*Addu al-ama liahli-lqarni aj-tasi* / الضوء الامع لاهل القرن التاسع" written by Shamseddin Muhammad Sakhavi. The only difference is that the date of Fazlullah Naimi's death is indicated here in the year 804 AH. (9, s. 174) Fazlullah chose nine caliphs for himself, and four of them were considered privy to the secrets of their murshids (mahrami-raz). These four persons are the following: "Aliyul-Ala", "Majdaddin Astarabadi", "Kamaleddin Sanayi" and "Mohammed". (12, s. 154)

According to Naimi Hurufi, man's advantage over other beings is his eloquence. He uses the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet to speak and express his wishes. The declaration of meanings by letters and sounds takes place in two forms and patterns. The first is done through the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, which is the language of the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad (phub). The second is realized through the 32 letters of the Persian language, and the work "*Javidannama*" written by Fazlullah Astarabadi was written with these letters. Hurufis make a special division of the letters of the alphabet and say that there are seven lines on a person's face, and when these seven numbers are multiplied by the four elements of nature, 28 is obtained, which is equal to the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet. (8, s. 205; 1, s. 67)

The Spiritual Revolution of the Hurufis: Letters, Truth, and Revelation

The insistence of the Hurufis on the alphabet and numbers of letters indicates that the people targeted by this sect were mainly the educated class of the city, and perhaps because of this, the main illiterate mass of the society was left out of this propaganda and as a result, they could not achieve their political goals. For example, let's note that, on the contrary, the main goals of the Safavi sect, before seizing the throne and power, were to spread their beliefs among the common people and explain their teachings in simple language. (1, s. 67; 2, s. 505-507)

Unlike other dervish schools, there is no vird* or zikr to be recited in Hurufism. But they gathered every morning at the house of the head priest, whom they called "Baba", and he gave each of them a glass of wine, a piece of bread and cheese. The disciples took it politely, rubbed a little on their faces and drank it. (12, s. 154)

One of the other traditions of the Hurufis was that they secretly confessed their sins to "Baba". It seems that their belief was formed under the influence of Christianity. Fazlullah Naimi calls himself “و من عنده علم الكتاب” in his work "Javidannama" as "a person who knows the science of the book". In other works and also in the books written by his followers, the following nicknames are attributed to Fazlullah Naimi: "Khatamul-ovliya", "Khatamus-sani", "Mazharul-uluhayat", "Mesihi-qaim", "Qaimi Ali Muhammad", "Mahdiyyi-Shahid", "Sahibi-bayan", "Sahibi-tawil", "Mazhari-kalami-gadim", "Zibhi-azim", "Shahidi-ala", "Azzi-fazluh", "Jalla izzuh" etc. (12, s. 154)

In the work "Kursinama", Fazlullah Naimi's nickname is mentioned as "Shahabeddin":

فضل را چون شد شهاب الدین لقب
احتراق جن ز علم او طلب

Philological translation: Since Faz was given the nickname of Shahabaddin, now you should also look for the method of incineration of jinns in his science.

According to sources, the nickname of Fazlullah Naimi's daughter, who was killed in Tabriz by the king of Karagoyunlu, was "Kalimatul-ulya wa Gurratul-ayn". (12, s. 154)

The basis of the Hurufi belief is reflected in the book "Mahramname" written in 828 AH, as well as in other treatises related to this sect. (4, s. 213) The Hurufis consider the world to be "ancient" and say that this world has been in constant motion since time immemorial. "The reason for the changes we observe in the world is that it is in motion. The Supreme God manifests in the personality of a being called human. The divine attributes begin to appear successively in the person of the prophets and saints, and finally His divinity is revealed. Muhammad ibn Abdullah (pbuh) was the last of the chain of prophets, and after him the position of prophethood reached the saints, and these saints continued from Hazrat Ali (pbuh) to the eleventh imam Hasan Askari (pbuh). Fazlullah Astarabadi is the last of the saints. But he considered himself to be the beginning of the "New Era" and the person who manifested the divinity, and according to his own words, he is the manifested Mahdi. He declared that he was seriously influenced by the Shia sect by confirming the issue of

* **Vird** is a regular zikr and a mystical worship practiced by murids and saliks and in Islamic Sufism.

Imamate. Fazlullah was able to create a unique sect in the form of Alevi Mahdism, which could take the rights of the oppressed from foreign oppressors by combining his letter teachings with various elements of Sami, Alavi and Indian beliefs with beliefs of Iranian origin. Naimi declared that he was against some kind of injustice by claiming to be the "Mahdi". This aspect was the main reason for the disputes between the Hurufis and the ruling power. According to some researchers, Fazl Tabrizi worked to bring Iranians to power instead of Arabs. (5, s. 6) But one thing should not be forgotten, that in the period in question, Arabs were not in power in Iran. But if the term Arab means the Sunni sect followed by most Arabs, then Naimi's steps in this direction have found their logical answer. (12, s. 154)

Fazlullah Hurufi announced in Tabriz in 778 A.H. that the Truth had manifested in his body and the mysterious truths were revealed to him. This event happened when he was forty years old. If we consider the date of his birth as 740 AH, taking into account that he stayed in Tabriz for two years, i.e. from 776 AH to 778 AH, it can be estimated that he was forty years old when he began to propagate Hurufism. Aliyul-Ala, who is considered his caliph, wrote in the poem "Kursinama" that his invitation coincided with 778 AH:

هست با سبع المئانی بیست و یک
از حروف کردگار و نیست شک
چون ز فضل اسرار قران فاش گشت
بود هجرت هفتصد و هفتاد و هشت

Philological translation: Sabul-Masani (Surah al-Hamd) is in year twenty-one, and there is no doubt that these are from Khaliq's letters, when the secrets of the Quran were revealed by Fazl, it was the seven hundred and seventy-eighth year of the Hijra. (7)

According to the sources, as soon as Miranshah, the son of Amir Teymur, became aware of the blasphemous words of the Hurufi sect during his rule in Azerbaijan, he sent Fazlullah Naimi from Shirvan to Tabriz and, after receiving a fatwa from the Sharia scholars of the time, had him executed, and his body was carried around the streets of Tabriz. After that, the Hurufis called Miranshah "Maranshah" (King of snakes) or "Dajjal" (an evil figure in Islamic eschatology similar to the Antichrist in Christianity, who will pretend to be the promised Messiah, appearing before the Day of Judgment according to the Islamic eschatological narrative.) in their books. The famous scholar Edward Brown writes that Fazlullah Naimi was executed in Shirvan and buried in the "Alinja" fortress of Nakhchivan. (12, s. 154) Some sources also mention the Alinja fortress of Tabriz. But despite this, in the letter he wrote in the prison of Shirvan, Fazlullah talks about the "disloyalty" of the people of

Shirvan and his situation with two verses, which confirms that he is in the hands of Shirvan:

در همه عمرم مرا یک دوست در شروان نبود
دوست کی باشد کجا ای کاش بودی آشنا
من حسین وقت و نا اهلان یزید و شمر من
روزگارم جمله عاشورا و شروان کربلا

Philological translation: Throughout my life, I didn't have a single friend in Shirvan, let alone a friend, I didn't even have a single acquaintance, I am the Hussein of my time, and the wicked people are Yezid and Shimr for me, and my period is Ashura from beginning to end, and Shirvan as Karbala.

According to some sources, Fazlullah Naimi even invited Teymur himself to the Hurufism, and Teymur was enraged by his courage and ordered his murder. Perhaps, Teymur could not accept this invitation because he was slandered by Samarkand jurisprudents and they incited him to kill Naimi. (1, s. 64) Fazlullah Naimi wrote a will before his death, in prison or when he was taken to prison, and he expressed that he was too worried about his children in this writing.

Conclusion

At the end of that chapter, taking into account the political and social situation of that period and the prevailing religious conditions in the society, we present several concrete factors that led to the rapid spread of the Hurufi sect promoted by Fazlullah Naimi in the country:

1) - The fact that Fazlullah Tabrizi was a descendant of Astarabadi's Sayyid earned him great respect.

2) - His inclination towards Sufism created the impression of sharing the pain of the societies living at that time and sharing the same ideas with them.

3) - Fazlullah Naimi's skill in the field of dream interpretation caused him to be met with great respect and sympathy by many influential people.

But despite all this, the people belonging to the ruling forces and the influential scientists of the time determined that his ideas and thoughts were dangerous from a political and religious point of view, and they did their best to eliminate him and they succeeded in it.

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