

# Theme of Wine and Wine Drinking in Late Medieval Transoxiana Sufism in 16<sup>th</sup> Century

Ramil Tagirovich Yuzmukhametov<sup>1,\*</sup>, Lutfullo Eshonovich Ismoilov<sup>1</sup>, and Markhabo Tukhtasunovna Rajabova<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*African and Islamic Studies Department, Institute of International Relations, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia;* <sup>2</sup>*Department of Arabic Philology, Tajik National University, Dushanbe, Tajikistan*

**Abstract:** The article is devoted to *wine drinking* in the Sufi sources of Transoxiana of the 16th century, on the example of Manakibs. The *importance* of research on this topic lies in determining wine drinking in the secular and religious traditions of Muslim society. Besides, the *topic's relevance* is due to the insufficient study of the issues of semantic interpretation of the concept of wine in Sufi writings. Hence, this article aims to disclose the various meanings of the concept of wine contained in Sufi writings. The primary *method* in the study of this issue is the historical and comparative method, and the method of literary analysis, which allows creating a holistic view of the hidden images of wine in the Sufi writings of Maverannahr of the 16th century. It is known that wine, winemaking, and wine drinking for many centuries, despite strict Islamic prohibitions, were present in Muslim society, as evidenced by historical chronicles, literary works. This phenomenon also applies to the history of the State of the Timurids and Sheibanids, where winemaking and wine drinking were widely practiced among representatives of different sectors of society.

**Keywords:** Wine Drinking, Wine, Transoxiana, Manakibs, Sufism, Poetry.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Information about wine drinking, as an everyday occurrence, was also reflected in the genre of the Life of Muslim Saints (*manakib*) of Transoxiana of the 16th century. However, in such a specific genre, this reflection had a double meaning. In the first sense, wine drinking was secular, where a specific category of people through it satisfied their needs. Secondly, wine and wine drinking had a spiritual character. Sufis considered the concept of wine allegorically and considered it a means of revelation, which should come after strict Sufi procedures and exercises. The results' practical significance is not in doubt since the study is attractive to historians, philologists, and philosophers studying certain aspects of the cultural life of the 16th-century Transoxiana peoples. The study is devoted to the topic of wine drinking in Sufism in Transoxiana of the 16th century. This topic has been popular in Muslim social thought at all times. This is primarily due to the prohibition on the use of alcohol in Islam and Muslims' attitude towards this. Wine drinking and drunkenness, despite the application of strict Sharia law, were a frequent occurrence in large cities of Transoxiana of the Sheibanid Era, including in Bukhara and Samarkand. Strict Islamic standards were not even able to hide the often difficult situation in society in connection with the use of wine. In connection with the actualization of the question of the sacred and sinful life in the

then medieval society and the endless polemic around the concepts of *haram* (forbidden) and *halal* (permissible), this topic has acquired a special sound in written sources. It often appears in the Muslim Lives of the Saints of this period (Bidaoui, 2017). "When we ask about the nature of wine, we must remember that for the Sufi poets, the world and everything within it are loci of theophany for the Divine Reality. But by the very nature of things. Certain loci display that Reality more clearly than others. Among its more direct manifestations are "wine, women and song". Each is an image and symbol of higher realities, and eventually of the Highest Reality. Each can be a bridge from the visible world to the Unseen. But even if things are "symbols", this does not mean that they are no longer things. Each image symbolizes the Divine Reality, but at the same time a woman is a woman and wine is wine. Each thing maintains its individual identity because ultimately, it derives from certain Names and Attributes of God, which in turn determine its archetype or "immutable entity" ('ayn-i thabitah). An archetype is then an object of God's Knowledge from Eternity-without-beginning to Eternity-without-end. Thus the thing's reality exists eternally within God's Knowledge, to be manifested when God chooses to effuse being upon it. The individual thing possesses its own reality (= its immutable entity), which manifests certain Attributes of God. The being and attributes of each thing derive from God's Being and Attributes, but at the same time they pertain to the thing in a real sense, for its reality is immutable and eternal. So each thing is itself, and a symbol at the same time. A woman is a woman, and

\*Address correspondence to this author at the African and Islamic Studies Department, Institute of International Relations, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia; Tel: +79534903367; E-mail: ismail.nauz@yahoo.com

the manifestation of the Attributes of Divine Beauty at the same time. Wine is wine, and also a theophany of the fire and water (= intoxication and knowledge) of Love. If Sufis speak of their beloved, they may not be referring only to God, but they also are not referring to "so-and-so" as such, but only inasmuch as she is a reflection of the true Beloved. Wine likewise may be wine, and music, music. But if so, they are only dim reflections of true Wine and true Music. But here another point must be considered: although all things within the world can be considered as symbols of the Highest Reality in some respect, and although some of them reflect it more directly than others, certain of them are legitimate and certain illegitimate from the point of view of the Shari'ah or Divine Law. On this question 'Iraqi has an instructive passage: "Even if the lover has attained the state of Unveiling within which he directly witnesses the Face of the Beloved in every form, he must not be satisfied with something not approved of, for 'God approves not unbelief in His servants'. A lover who sees God through God and sees the whole world as God must reject reprehensible acts (munkarât) through God, in God and for God, with his argument upheld by God, for he will not see the Beauty of God in anything forbidden by the Shari'ah. Necessarily he will avoid it. Rather, by its very nature he will not have the slightest desire for it (Chittick, 1983; Sungur, 2020).

The purpose of the study is the disclosure of the diverse meanings of the concept of wine and wine drinking, contained in the Sufi writings (manakib) of Transoxiana of the 16th century, through this gaining an idea of the political and cultural life of Transoxiana and neighboring countries, and the folk customs of the country. The main sources for this study are the Lives of the Muslim Saints "Sa'adiya" by Hussein Serakhsi (), "Jodat-ul-oshikin" by Sharif ad-din Hussein Khorezmi (Sharif ad-din, Husejn Horezmi) and "Lamahat min nafahat al-kuds" by Muhammad Alima al-Siddiqi al-Alawi (Alim & al-Alawi, 1938), created in the 16th century in Transoxiana.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mojaddedi (2003) in his article debate about the relative merits of drunkenness and sobriety is presented next, under the heading al-kaldm ft -sukr wa-l-sahw . This begins by presenting, in turn, the views of those who think that drunkenness is the superior of the two and those who think that sobriety is the better. Abui Yazid and his followers are said to prefer drunkenness because, for them, sobriety involves the reinforcement and balance of human attributes (tamkin wa i'tiddl-i

sifat-i adamiyyat), thus representing the greatest veil for the Sufi, whereas drunkenness means a reduction of human attributes (naqs-i sifat-i bashariyyat), as well as the diminishing of self-control (tadb-r) and individual will (ikhtiydr) so that one might subsist in a higher potentiality (quwwat) present within. This viewpoint is supported by two citations from the Quran which are interpreted as illustrations of sobriety and drunkenness respectively: first, the Prophet David is said to have been an example of sobriety, in that the Quran states 'David killed Goliath' ; Hujwiri comments that the action was attributed to David, in spite of the fact that the slaying of Goliath was actually a miracle brought about by God. On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad is described as drunken when the Quran states 'You did not throw when you threw, but God threw' because the action Muhammad actually carried out himself was attributed to God. The latter is considered superior because of what it implies with regard to the annihilation of one's own attributes and subsistence in God; it is better for one's own actions to be credited to God, than for God's actions to be credited to oneself. There is no inherent link between these two citations and drunkenness and sobriety, according to the earlier definitions at least, but they are being employed here because of the intention to associate drunkenness with annihilation in order to argue for its superiority (Mojaddedi, 2003). Latypova and others Colleagues in their work, describing the love to God, the paired symbols of "wine and intoxication" are used often. For example, in the poem "Yz-yzen bitërley shigyre" written by Sh. Zaky (The poem about blaming himself) ("Echële hikmät shëraben, och ële kyklër yaga (Drink you wine to the bottom, and fly in the sky drunken) intoxication acts as the state of ecstasy. The same picture is observed in the poem "... Bulgan, bulmagay" ("Will be, won't be"). In addition to wine image within a poem the divine love is explained using the term "bazarnyĥ säydäse" which is interpreted as a place where they sell souls. The author encourages people to spiritual and moral perfection, through which you can understand the truth, feel the love to Allah. The poem "Yä, ilyahi, nəzar kylgyl ber" ("Ya Allah, do something") discloses the concept of divine love by the means of "wine and cup" Sufi symbols which concentrate mystical feelings (Latypova et al., 2016).

Also Asadollahi believes that Bacchanalian verse and songwriting refer to poems written in the form of Mathnawi and is in a transcendental context, and talks about wine and drinks. The celebration of the Timurid kings by the Sufi elders made the 9th century, one of

the most favorable times for Sufism to flourish; so Sufism becomes religion in this covenant; Ibn Hessam also had a mystical look at the religious system of the Middle East. The Safavid kings encouraged poets to sing religious epics. Bazil and Raji were deceased mystics of the Old Testament, sang the Haidari attack. With the formation of Sufism, special terms appeared in the field of mysticism, which had a special meaning within this institution. Among the three epic poets, Bazil demands wine from the world of meaning that with a drop of it, he will regain his life. He takes the language from the epic to the lyric. His tone uses words of intimacy and verbs to create greater intimacy with regard to their vocabulary and how they are used. Ibn Hussam considers wine as eternal and vital as Khadr, and like the Khadr water, the poet's wine is also full of love and world. In exaggeration, he takes the simile elements more than natural phenomena and uses a sad tone in expressing mourning alongside the epic style (Asadollahi & Zeinali, 2020).

Kateryna in her article "Sufi poetry: a pearl of the middle east culture", her purpose of the study is to identify the content and characteristics of Sufi poetry and its influence on the culture of the Middle East in particular and the world in general. The methodology of the research is based on the complex use of methods of analysis, synthesis and generalization that made it possible to characterize Sufi poetry in the diversity of its content and style. Historical and retrospective methods provided disclosure of the peculiarities of poetic searches of Sufi philosophers through specific examples. The scientific novelty of the study consists in an integrated approach to the analysis of the heritage of the Sufi poets-philosophers, based not only on genre and stylistic characteristics, but also on meaningful and philosophical interpretations. Conclusions. The Sufi poetry has had a significant influence on the development of the socio-political thought of the East, full of deep philosophical content, unique style and rebellious spirit. It has left a profound sense in the world culture and has become the heart of the culture of the Middle East and She further discusses that Characteristic of Sufism is the use of the symbolic language, which was reflected in the work of Khayyam, because he professed the teachings of Sufism. Thus, Khayyam succeeds the Sufi metaphor about a drop that dissolves in the ocean, which shows the connection of an individual with Allah. The same is metaphor about a butterfly burning in a flame of candle. The same metaphoric senses have eyes, lips, locks, birthmarks, belt, wine, interweaving of erotic and

humble motifs in literature. However, Khayyam is part of secular-philosophical direction in Sufism, which reflects the thoughts of rational-thinking stratum of Persian society (Hololobova, 2019).

### 3. METHODS

In the course of the study, a historical and comparative method of studying the source were used. This approach requires consideration of *manakibs* in their relationship, taking into account the historical situation, the class and ideological position of the author of the work, besides, general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, a systematic approach, and a descriptive method were used.

In the course of the study, we relied on the works of domestic and foreign scientists who studied the topic of wine drinking in Muslim poetry, in particular, the work dedicated to the Arabic poetic tradition of Hamriyat by Muhammad, (2020) and the fundamental study on Sufism by Carl W. Ernst (Ernst, 2002) and others.

The claimed research topic is interesting to historians studying Medieval Transoxiana History, philologists studying Persian-Tajik Literature, philosophers studying the philosophy of Muslim peoples in Central Asia, and others.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

"Whenever classical Persian poetry is discussed, the subject of the symbolism and meaning of its images is bound to arise. As Annemarie Schimmel has pointed out, two points of view exist concerning the images of wine and sensory love employed by the Persian mystical poets such as Hafiz: first, that the images are purely mystical; and second, that they are purely sensual and profane. Schimmel herself believes that neither point of view is correct and opts for a position in between. She holds that the ambiguity of the images is "intended, the oscillation between the two levels of being is consciously maintained... One cannot derive a mystical system out of Persian or Turkish poetry or see in it an expression of experiences to be taken at face value." Professor Schimmel's judgment may be correct as far as it goes, but it ignores the question of the primacy of one level of being and meaning over the other. I wish to offer some observations based upon what I believe to be the views of some of the famous Sufi poets, such as Hafiz and 'Iraqi who use these images, and to add a short passage from Jami on the subject of wine in support of my arguments. No doubt

when Hafiz speaks of wine, he means wine. The question is, "What is wine?" All Sufi thought goes back to a cosmology and metaphysics. In order to understand the nature of wine, we must refer to the philosophical and metaphysical beliefs of the Sufi poets who employ the image. For example, Sufi thought of the school of Ibn al-'Arabi - of which both 'Iraqi and Jami are representatives- holds that the things of this world are not just things, rather they are created by God, derived from God, and ultimately Self-Manifestations of God, loci of His Theophany, places in which He reveals the "Hidden Treasure", mirrors in which the Beauty of the Beloved can be contemplated. God, or if one prefers, "Absolute and Nondelimited Being" (*wujūd-i mutlaq*), is the Origin of all creatures, of all relative and delimited existents.

So when 'Iraqi or Jami speak in their poetry about the creatures of the world, one of which is wine, we must remember the underpinnings of their thought. 'Iraqi was a student of Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, the greatest metaphysician of Ibn al-'Arabi's school after the Magister Maximus himself; and Jami is the author of numerous prose works on Sufi metaphysics and cosmology. If we do not take these facts into account, we cannot do justice to their poetry. Moreover, it is not as if these figures only dabbled in metaphysics, or only wrote poetry to amuse themselves and others, without expressing their philosophical and mystical beliefs. Anyone who takes the trouble to read the prose works and study the lives of such authors will never doubt that for them the metaphysics they speak of is the pivot of all their thought and experience and has nothing to do with mental acrobatics and philosophical wordplay. For them it is not a question of semantics to say, "The world is the locus of manifestation (*mazhar*, *majla*) for God's Reality", it is a matter of direct contemplation (*shuhūd*, *ru'yat*) and Unveiling (*kashf*)" (Chittick, 1981; Sungur, 2020).

"Alcohol has been known to people of Central Asia for millennia, and in line with local mythology, wine was used as an anaesthetic for the Caesarean birth of the mythical hero Rostam. In classical Farsi-Dari (Persian) literature, the term alcohol and/or wine is used in two different contexts; firstly, as an allegory; referring to a 'divine wine' and as a source of spiritual intoxication bringing the consumer closer to his Creator. This school of thoughts is symbolised by Rumi and Sufi poets; secondly, as a source of physical intoxication, bringing the drinker happiness and the ability to forget about everyday concerns. This school of opinions is represented by Khayyam and Manuchehri. From a

religious point of view, alcohol is described as "the mother of all evil". Nevertheless, there are also a lot of those, who praise wine for its hypnotic properties describing it as 'a remedy for sleepless nights', or for its anxiolytic characteristics, 'taking away worries and bringing peace to one's mind'; and notably for its antidepressant effects declaring 'there is nothing better than wine to banish sadness'. The aim of this paper is to review Persian literature of Central Asia and neighbouring regions between the 10th and 14th centuries with the focus on alcohol and its illustration in the works of influential authors of the period, including Rudaki, Manuchehri, Khayyam, Rumi, Hafez, etc" (Shahpesandy, 2020).

The motive of wine is presented in the beliefs of people of all civilizations: from the ancient agrarian myth of the dying and rising God and the ancient Greek cult of the fertility god Dionysus to rituals in Christianity and Judaism and carnival images in medieval Europe. In Muslim cultures, we also see a significant role of wine themes in the works of various poets, mainly Sufis. This article does not pose the task of considering all the Arabic and Persian-speaking poets who addressed the topic of wine. We will only consider the information contained in the Lives of the Saints of Transoxiana of the 16th century, and which points of view on the issue of wine drinking existed in the then society of Transoxiana. In the history of Transoxiana of the 16th century, not only representatives of the middle strata of society but also representatives of the Sheybanid dynasty, along with formal observance of Sharia regulations, indulged in drunkenness and suffered from alcoholism. Many representatives of the Sheybanid House were also lovers of wine drinking and encouraged winemaking. Some sources consider the abuse of wine to be the cause of the death of the Shaybanid ruler of Barak Khan (Navruz Ahmad Khan, the ruler of Tashkent). They brought to us information about cases of explicit neglect by certain Sheibanids of the precepts of Islam, in particular, the ban on drinking wine, listening to music and so on. Due to the widespread of such practice and the severity of this problem in higher circles, the court historian Hafiz-i Tanysh Bukhari (died 1596) (Tanysh & Buhari, 1983) often repeats his admonition to the representatives of the Sheybanid elite: every sovereign who spends time carelessly, indulges in passions, frequently spends his life with wine, always harms the country, his dignity and army suffer and decline. The ruler from the very beginning, should abandon the pleasures of life (Tanysh & Buhari, 1983; Ghazanfari et al., 2019).

The writer, historian, and poet Zayn ad-din Vosifi (died in 1566) in particular reports on numerous wine shops in Samarkand (Vasifi, 1961). For example, one shop was located in the Pul-i Safed area, where numerous representatives of literary circles flocked. Elsewhere, the Wosefi essay often features cursory messages about the practice of winemaking.

Placing the wine in Sufi writings, numerous facts of wine drinking were reflected not only in historical chronicles but also in the Muslim Lives of the Saints (manakib) of that period. Quite a lot of scattered information of manakibs about winemaking and wine drinking, as well as addictions to alcoholic beverages and drunkenness during the Sheybanid era, testifies to the facts of cynicism in the then society. For example, in the everyday work "Sa'adiya" (Dedication to Khoja Sa'ad Juybari), one of its sheets states that "drunken people often walked along the city streets of Bukhara's streets with wine containers in their hands (ba"d-i chand-e az on kucha guruh-i maston dar dast surohiv-u sharob baromad) (note 1).

A description of similar acts is also found in the sheets of other manakibs. In particular, the author of the manakib "Jodat-ul-oshikin" ("The wide road of those who love the truth") (note 2) informs us that a famous Qur'an reader named Hofiz Ne' mat lived in Urgench. He brilliantly knew the Qur'an by heart. But this man had one disapproving habit, that is drinking wine. He walked drunk through the streets of Urgench (Sharif ad-din, Husejn Horezmi). True, one day, after another bout of drunkenness, he accidentally ended up in the *khanaka* (Sufi monastery) of Sheikh Hussein Khorezmi (died in 1551) and after this incident, finally stopped drinking wine (Sungur, 2020).

Interestingly, in one place of his work, the famous Transoxiana literary historian Mutribi Samarkandi gives a recipe for those who want to stop drinking. In his opinion, for this, it is necessary to rewrite a Quranic surah (Surah 23 "Believers") (Qur'an, 1938) and hang a piece of paper on his neck, then the Almighty Lord will save a person from the ailment of wine drinking (Ernst, 2002). The presence of alcohol risks, such as violence, accidents, diseases, and so on, in Transoxiana society, can only be guessed from scattered information from written sources. Along with such facts about the unbridled nature, the English traveler Anthony Jenkinson, being in Bukhara in 1558-1560, notes the strict rules of the city authorities in relation to alcohol consumption. According to him, special officials have been appointed for this, which

very tightly monitor the drinkers. If someone breaks the laws, then he is whipped and beaten, leading to open markets (perev & Got'e, 1938; Qadri, 2020).

It is known that the use of the concepts of "wine", "wine drinking", "drunkenness" in Sufi poetry and prose literature has its own characteristics when a literary hero walks along city streets in a drunken state (in Persian: *rend*; in English: *rogue*) and rages. In this regard, the literary hero of the Persian poetic heritage has a conflict with people who see only his external state, without delving into his inner world.

This is clearly stated in one hagiographic episode posted in a biographical work dedicated to the famous Central Asian saint Divan-i Mashrab (18th century) (Muhammad, 2020).

Muhtasib made the butler to pour wine on the ground,

He did not have the mind to understand that wine leads to revelation.

In another part of this essay, very interesting comments by a couplet of the Persian poet Hafiz Shirazi (died 1390) by the famous Kashgar Sufi of the 18th century Afak-Khoja (his ancestors were from Samarkand) are given. This Kashgar Nakshbandi Sheikh comments on the following verse in the spirit of Sufism, where the concept of "wine" denotes the word of God, the word *tavern* (mayhona) means the perishable world, and the innkeeper (pir-i mugon) refers to the Prophet Muhammad .

To zi maykhona dame nomu nishon hohad bud,  
Sari mo hoki rahi piri mugon hohad bud.

#### Translation:

As long as the echo of the word "inn" remains, Our heads will always worship the butler.

Further, it should be noted that in manakibs the word "wine" is used in literal and figurative meaning (majāz). In the first embodiment, wine is an intoxicating drink, the use of which is not approved and condemned by the Muslim community (Alim & al-Alavi, 1938). In the second version, as appears from the everyday texts themselves, the Sufi understanding of wine has certain nuances.

In the context of this option, the author of the Life of the Saints "*Lamahat min nafahat ul-uns*" ("Glimpses of the breath of holiness") (note 3), in one place of his

work, says that as one of the adherents of the Sufi *Tariqah Jahriya* after the end of a long and difficult solitude (*hilwat*) as a sign of goodwill and the reward saw in front of him a large cup of wine (*kosa-i sharob*) (Alim & al-Alavi, 1938), which was considered a reward for his zeal and suffering (*naticha-i rijazat*). In this episode of life, the main determinant is not the wine itself as a forbidden product, but the feeling, the state of drunkenness associated with it.

In this above hagiographic fragment, the concept of wine symbolically meant the water of eternal life. If the Sufi seeks the water of eternal life, then this source is near the doors of solitude (*hilwat*). It is known that Sufi writers used allegory: wine is the divine truth, the divine word. Wine saves the Sufi from the shackles of being. In the Lives of the Saints, wine is considered as a means or symbol of the ecstatic disappearance of a person, its alienation from everything earthly for merging with God.

The nature of the discussion about the perception of the feasting motifs of Muslim poetry can be described in a quote from one instructive gazelle, where the poet preacher warns the listener against a direct interpretation of the motive for "tasting wine", because he says: "If you are Muslim, refrain from poisonous wine." Just as the Drunkenness with the Truth is opposite to the real consequences of drinking, the desire for a Divine lover is the opposite of earthly love obscured by animal passions (Qadri, 2020).

According to the Sufis, one should not condemn a drunken person (that is, a Sufi). Nobody knows what the fate of a person will be like (*takdir ba sarash chi navisht*); nobody knows the vicissitudes of fate. Maybe one day he suddenly comprehends the Truth.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Thus, the theme of wine and wine drinking in Muslim chronicles, Lives of the Saints, and poetry is one of the most sought after in the Middle Ages. Almost all the famous poets turned to the *symbolism of wine* for discussion of the eternal questions of being and the divine essence of the Universe. In the Sufi tradition, the symbolism of wine is filled with a new meaning. True mystics tried to interpret the symbolism of wine in an allegorical sense (Qadri, 2020). The Persian poet Hakim Sanai (died 1131) calls *drunks* those who reveal a secret.

Give your heart to Genesis, give it!

Without interruption for a moment, drink cup after cup, [while you] are here. But do not taste the wine that makes the hangover worse and that which satisfies heart melancholy.

Wine dedicates the Sufi to the secrets of the Universe (*sir-i kazo*). If he is intoxicated, he will say who his Beloved is. According to the connoisseur of Sufism, Carl Ernst (Ernst, 2002), although Islamic law prohibits wine, the Qur'an describes the inhabitants of paradise with "full bowls". Such a picture of paradise partially served as a source of excessive symbolism of wine drinking in later Sufi poetry (Ernst, 2002). The grapevine and its fruit, wine, act as symbols of the test of man and the grace bestowed by God. At the same time, the use of wine in society was condemned because it incurred innumerable troubles for those who drink and for those who suffer from wine abusers. Thus, the issue of wine drinking is not simple, but very deep for the Medieval Muslim society.

The introduction of research results in the educational process is aimed at forming a comprehensive idea of the history and traditions of the Medieval Transoxiana, materials from manakibs with information from medieval official historiography confirm their scientific reliability, thereby proving their historical significance. This topic is also of great interest for philology, since studying the development of the genre of wine verses makes it possible to reconstruct the insufficiently studied process of the evolution of the system of genres in the poetry of Muslim peoples in general, in Persian-Tajik poetry in particular. There is also the opportunity to reflect on the correlation of "drunk" and "sober" minds in the writings of Medieval thinkers, on the correlation of "lies" and "truth" of the perception of things in the world. The stated problems are of theoretical and practical importance for the continuation of the research of historical sources over the period of the 16th century related to Transoxiana, the development of the content of historical, source study, literary and linguistic disciplines.

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