



SCIENTIFIC AND PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY OF SAYYID BURHONIDDIN TERMIZI

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Abstract

This article explores the scientific and pedagogical activity of the prominent Islamic scholar and spiritual figure, Sayyid Burhoniddin Termizi. Known for his deep knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence, Sufism, and education, Sayyid Burhoniddin played a significant role in shaping the intellectual and spiritual environment of his time. The article provides an overview of his life, highlighting his educational background, major works, and influence on both contemporaries and later scholars. Special attention is given to his contributions to pedagogical thought, his methods of moral and spiritual education, and his role in the dissemination of Islamic values. The study also investigates his interaction with students and scholars, his emphasis on ethical teachings, and his legacy within the Islamic educational tradition. Through historical analysis and reference to manuscript sources, the article reveals the importance of Sayyid Burhoniddin's approach in blending traditional Islamic sciences with practical moral instruction. This paper aims to emphasize the relevance of his ideas in modern educational discourse, especially in the context of spiritual upbringing and character development.

Keywords: Sayyid Burhoniddin Termizi, Islamic pedagogy, Sufism, spiritual education, moral development, Termiz scholars, Islamic heritage, pedagogical methods, historical analysis, educational legacy.

Introduction

The rich intellectual and spiritual heritage of Central Asia has produced numerous scholars and saints whose contributions have left a lasting impact on Islamic thought and education. Among these esteemed figures is Sayyid Burhoniddin Termizi, a prominent scholar, educator, and spiritual guide who lived in the region of Termiz. His life and work represent a profound synthesis of religious



scholarship, ethical teaching, and spiritual enlightenment. Sayyid Burhoniddin is particularly known for his efforts in nurturing a generation of morally upright and intellectually capable individuals through both formal education and spiritual mentorship.

This article aims to examine the scientific and pedagogical activity of Sayyid Burhoniddin Termizi by shedding light on his scholarly background, pedagogical methods, and the broader cultural and religious influence he exerted in his time. It investigates how his teachings combined traditional Islamic sciences with Sufi principles, emphasizing the role of inner purification and ethical behavior in the educational process. By analyzing historical records and manuscript sources, this study seeks to highlight his role not only as a religious authority but also as a transformative educator whose legacy continues to inspire modern approaches to spiritual and moral education.

Material and methods. Sayyid Burhaneddin, the esteemed spiritual master of Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi and one of the prominent saints of Kayseri, was born in the abandoned and ruined old city of Termiz, located west of the modern city of Termez, near the junction of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers in southern Uzbekistan, close to the Afghan border, in the year 561 AH / 1165-6 CE. Sayyid Burhaneddin's second name is known as Husayn. His father was Sayyid Hasan Tirmidhi, and his grandfather was Sayyid Qasim Tirmidhi. It is said that his lineage traces back to Imam Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad [1].

Sayyid began his early education in the scholarly city of Termiz under the guidance of his father. He later traveled to Balkh, where he became a student of Sultan al-Ulama Baha al-Din Walad (d. 628 AH / 1231 CE), the father of Mevlana Rumi. Sayyid studied both external (material) and internal (spiritual) sciences with him for twelve years and became his disciple. According to one account, as a result of serving Sultan al-Ulama for forty days during his youth, Sayyid attained the highest degree of sainthood.

According to researcher Sevgi: "In Mevlevi sources, Sayyid Burhaneddin is described with expressions of deep reverence, such as 'the crown of saints and truth seekers, the essence of pure and wise ones, meticulous in judgment, a master of spiritual unveiling and secrets, steadfast in trust in God and divine authority, a vast ocean of divine knowledge (ma'rifa), and admired by the spiritually enraptured (majdhubs)."



When Baha al-Din Walad's son, Muhammad Jalal al-Din (later known as Mevlana), was still a child, he entrusted his son's upbringing and education to Sayyid Burhaneddin. Thus, Sayyid became Mevlana's spiritual guardian and mentor.

The city of Balkh, where Sayyid received his education, was one of the centers of Islamic mysticism, as well as a hub of science and art. Before his teacher Baha al-Din Walad left Balkh due to certain political reasons (likely the approaching Mongol invasion of the Khwarazmian-held region), Sayyid departed the city and returned to his homeland of Termiz. There, he withdrew into seclusion and lived a life of intense worship and devotion.

Discussion and results. Baha al-Din Walad migrated with his son, Jalal al-Din (later known as Rumi), to Konya, the capital of the Seljuk Sultanate. After their migration, Baha al-Din passed away in Konya in 1231. In 1232, Sayyid Burhaneddin arrived in Konya and took on the responsibility of completing the education of the young Jalal al-Din Rumi, who had been left without a father and teacher. Sayyid Burhaneddin continued Rumi's education until 1239–1240, after which he left Konya and settled in Kayseri, where he established his own dervish lodge (dergah).

In Kayseri, Sayyid Burhaneddin was appointed as a teacher (mudarris) at the madrasa adjacent to the Hunat Mosque, which had been built by Mahperi Hatun, the wife of Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad. It is reported that he also served as the imam at the Hakırdaklı Mosque, located in the Mükremin neighborhood of Kayseri—a mosque now partially destroyed, with only its vaults remaining. It is said that while leading prayers, Sayyid Burhaneddin would enter spiritual ecstasy (jazbah) and remain in prayer for a long time. As a result, he asked the congregation to find another imam, but they strongly opposed this request. It is also mentioned that he had a khalwatkhana (seclusion chamber) next to the mosque, though no traces of it survive today. Additionally, it is believed that the dervish lodge of Sayyid Burhaneddin once stood on the site where the current Vakıf İş Hanı building is located. Previously, this location was occupied by the Great Mevlevi Lodge (Mevlevihane), built by Ottoman vizier Bayram Pasha. The waqf deed of that Mevlevihane survives, supporting the claim that it was indeed the site of Sayyid Burhaneddin's lodge [2].

The exact date of Sayyid Burhaneddin's death remains debated. While some sources suggest he died in 1240, 1241, or 1242, Mevlevi sources such as Ahmed



Eflaki's *Manaqib al-'Arifin* mention that Sayyid encountered the Mongols during their plundering of Kayseri. Since this event took place in 1243, it indicates that Sayyid Burhaneddin must have died after that year. Sultan Walad, the son of Rumi, notes that after Sayyid Burhaneddin's death—who had guided Mevlana for nine years—his father suffered great distress until the arrival of Shams al-Tabrizi in Anatolia in 1244. This would suggest that Sayyid died in 1239, but this date is not accurate. He did not die in that year; rather, he left Konya and went to Kayseri, which Sultan Walad mistakenly recorded as his death date. The most likely and widely accepted date of his death is 1244.

This aligns with the signatures of Sayyid Burhaneddin and Mevlana found on the *Hisarcık Suyu Waqf Document of Kayseri*, dated 1244, which are thus considered authentic. Upon learning of his teacher's death from Vizier Shams al-Din Isfahani, Mevlana traveled to Kayseri, retrieved Sayyid's books, and gifted some of them to the vizier.

Sayyid Burhaneddin, known as al-Muhaqqiq («knower of truths») and Sayyid al-Sirdan («Master of Secrets»), was not only Mevlana's spiritual guide but is also recognized as the teacher of Salah al-Din Zarkub (Salahaddin the Goldsmith), who later became Mevlana's successor and the spiritual leader of the Mevlevi Order [3]. In *Manaqib al-'Arifin* («The Legends of the Gnostics») by Ahmad Eflaki, the following information is found about Sayyid Burhaneddin (may Allah have mercy on him): It is known that historians in Khorasan, Termiz, Bukhara, and other regions referred to Sayyid Burhaneddin with the title “Sayyid-i Sirdan”—meaning “Master of Secrets.” He became well known by this title. He was a saint who could reveal the secrets hidden in hearts and speak of unknown matters.

When Baha al-Din Walad (the father of Mevlana) migrated from Balkh, Sayyid-i Sirdan also traveled toward Termiz and went into seclusion there. After some time, on a day when he was engaged in teaching spiritual wisdom (*ma'rifah*) and insightful knowledge (*hikmah*), he suddenly cried out in deep sorrow on February 24th, 1231 CE, saying: “Alas! Alas! My sheikh has passed from this earthly realm into the pure divine realm!” He wept intensely. Those present immediately recorded the exact date of this event [4].

Later, when he came to the land of Rum (Anatolia), he learned that Baha al-Din Walad had indeed passed away on the very date he had sensed. He performed the funeral prayer in absentia and carried out the mourning rituals. All the notables of



that land observed a forty-day mourning period. On the fortieth day, Sayyid-i Sirdan declared:

“The son of my sheikh, Jalal al-Din Muhammad (Mevlana), has been left alone. He is waiting for me. It has become an obligation upon me to go to the land of Rum, remain in his service, and deliver to him the trust (knowledge) that my sheikh left in my care.”

Together with several honorable men of Termiz and a few close companions, Sayyid set out on the journey. When they arrived in Konya, the capital, one year had passed since the sheikh's death. At that time, the noble master (Mevlana) had gone to the city of Larende (present-day Karaman). Sayyid, after spending a few months in seclusion at the Sinjari Mosque in Konya, sent a letter containing spiritual wisdom to Mevlana through a dervish [5].

Conclusion. Sayyid Burhaneddin Termizi stands as a monumental figure in the history of Islamic spirituality, education, and intellectual tradition. Rooted in the scholarly environment of Termiz and spiritually matured in Balkh, he exemplified a perfect harmony between deep religious scholarship and Sufi enlightenment. His influence on one of the greatest mystics in Islamic history - Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi - is a testament to his exceptional pedagogical insight and spiritual depth. As both mentor and guide, Sayyid Burhaneddin played a crucial role in shaping Mevlana's formative years, not only transmitting knowledge but also instilling the foundations of ethical and spiritual awareness.

His journey from Termiz to Konya via Balkh, and later to Kayseri, reflects his commitment to spreading spiritual wisdom and preserving the continuity of knowledge in a turbulent historical period marked by migration and Mongol invasions. His titles—such as Sayyid-i Sirdan (Master of Secrets) and al-Muhaqqiq (Knower of Truths)—underline his elevated status among scholars and Sufi saints. Sayyid Burhaneddin's life serves as a powerful example of how education in the Islamic tradition goes beyond intellectual transmission, embracing character formation, mystical insight, and service to the community. His legacy continues to live on through the Mevlevi order and the broader Islamic heritage, making him a central figure not only in the history of Sufism but also in the pedagogical development of the Muslim world.



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