
PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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PRAYER AGAINST FEVER, CONNECTED WITH THE NAME OF KH^WĀJA AḤMAD YASAWĪ

A lot is connected with the name and personality of a mystic Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 886/1166) from Central Asia: he founded *ṭarīqat* Yasawīyya, an extensive literature exists on Aḥmad Yasawī and on the *ṭarīqat* founded by him [1]. To him a collection of mystical poems — *ḥikmat* (intricacies) in Jaghatāī language called *Dīwān-i ḥikmat* is ascribed [2]. Aḥmad Yasawī is mentioned in some sources of mystical character as an author of such texts. In this respect of special interest is a small text *du'ā'* — a prayer connected with the name of Aḥmad Yasawī. In it his spirit is mentioned as a means which helps to remove fever (*bizgak*).

In the list of works in Persian *Murād al-'arīfīn* [3], by a Jaghatāī poet Šūfī Āllahyār (1644—1724) [4] we have found an enclosure on a separate sheet — a *du'ā'* text (*fig. 1*) addressed to a certain person — Allah qūl bīk. Reasoning from its contents, the text can conditionally be called *Du'ā'-yi Khadrat Kh^wāja Aḥmad Yasawī* (Khadrat Kh^wāja Aḥmad Yasawī's Prayer).

Muslim Turks from Central Asia consider Aḥmad Yasawī [5] the second in the spiritual hierarchy after Prophet Muḥammad [6]. In different sources Aḥmad Yasawī was usually mentioned as a *šūfī shaykh* [7], and folk beliefs turned him into a “spirit” resisting disease [8]. This was a widely used practice. *Bakshī*, a folk healer, in his ritual dances in the process of healing of an ill person usually turned to help of saints [9]. He could be engaged in healing of an ill person with the help of a special dance or other methods. Accordingly, texts resisting certain diseases appeared.

Du'ā'-prayers played an important role in the spiritual life of Central Asia. There were special *du'ā'* to cure from any disease. There were particular prayers for creating favourable conditions for advancement of a certain business; for solution of various personal problems; for development of trade [10]; against rivals [11]; they can be found in epigraphical monuments [12] etc. Special books were written where texts of prayers and fortune-telling were collected [13].

Belief and the need for mystical texts also existed after colonization of Central Asia by Russia (from 1867). These texts were also popular among Russian population of Turkistan. For example, in the beginning of the 20th century

“in Tashkent they told fortune by handwritten books. In the Russian part of Tashkent there was a *sart* female fortune-teller to whose house often came Russian intelligent ladies who were quite satisfied with the old woman's fortune-telling by the book” [14]. At the same time the *tumārs* were widely spread — talismans against the evil eye inside which prayer-*du'ā'* was put. N. Lykoshin wrote that he had seen a “fortune-teller giving his clients talismans written on scraps of paper” [15]. *Tumār* (*tūmār*) — talismans as a means of resistance of different kinds of diseases, ailment and the evil eye still play an important role in the region.

The concerned text of *du'ā'*-prayer against fever is written on a rectangular sheet of paper, sizes 14,5 × 13. The size of the text is 11 × 8,5. *Nasta'liq* script, black ink. We have no exact date of this prayer's creation; the language can approximately be dated to the 18th—19th centuries. According to its poetic style, the text, to some extent, reminds of the *ḥikmat* from *Dīwān-i ḥikmat* ascribed to A. Yasawī [16]. Partly the text is written in rhyming prose (*saj'*). The choice of rhyme was often in detriment of sense. That is why in several cases a translation is very difficult to make, it can only be approximate.

By composition the text of the prayer consists of two parts: an introductory part — the destination of the prayer [17]; and the text of the prayer itself (*du'ā'*) [18].

The introductory part is written in Persian with elements of the Tajik language which is typical of Persian texts of Central Asia beginning from, approximately, 18th century. The text of the prayer itself is in Jaghatāī. This must have been done to emphasize the sacral character of the text. Apart from the *basmala* in the beginning of the prayer, after the introductory part, there is nothing in the text which accentuates its Islamic character.

The most important part of the text is driving out the disease with the help of A. Yasawī's spirit. In Central Asia there was a rite *kūčurūq* (“eviction”, “removal”, “driving out”) [19]. In shamanism the rite in which the shaman healed an ill person was considered a rite of a spirit's removal — *kūčurūq* [20]. In our case the text of the prayer in its essence is close to the abovementioned rite of driving out of spirits.