

## FUNERAL PRAYERS TEXTS INTENDED FOR SUPPORT OF THE DECEASED\*

In 2002 I visited the city of Andijān (Farghāna valley, Republic of Uzbekistān) and one of the townspeople presented me with a hand-written book. According to structure, it was a usual collection of various hagiographical stories and *hikmat*-genre [1] verses, ostensibly written by the founder of *ṭarīqat* Yasawiyya from Central Asia Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 886/1166) [2]. This manuscript was copied in 1303/1885–86. Marks about it are available in the manuscript in folios 70a and 127b. The manuscript consists of 128 folios; the size is 15.1 × 15.5 cm. The folios 1b—126a contain the texts of various stories and *hikmat*-genre verses. Handwriting is large, Central Asian *nasta‘īlīq*. A paper is eastern. Binding is cardboard, without special ornamentation.

Similar folk books were usually widespread among Turkic and Iranian peoples of Central Asia and re-copied in hundreds copies. Accordingly, the manuscript was not of special interest. However, my attention attracted a short prayer from this manuscript, with volume of two pages (126b—127a). It had the title in Old-Uzbek — “The Prayer to Be Written on a Shroud” (*Kafanga būtdūrghān du‘ā’*) (figs. 1—2). As well as all titles in manuscripts, the heading of the prayer was written in red ink [3]. The text of a prayer, as well as all texts in the manuscript, was written in black ink. This text was followed by another half-a-page prayer entitled “Fī *khāṣ-i āyat al-kursī*” (2:255). Probably these prayers were from the funeral ceremonies repertoire. If it was so, what assignment had the “Prayer Written on a Shroud”? Our colleague Professor Shadman Vahidov helped to answer this question. He explained that the given prayer is referred to as *jawāb-nāma* and is frequently used in the upper reaches of the Zarafshān and the Zarafshān valley [4]. As Sh. Vahidov informs, his mother H. Safarova

(b. 1930) writes such *jawāb-nāma* for deceased. She is a pensioner and now lives in the city of Panjīkant [5]. Now H. Safarova continues her activity in capacity of *bībī-atin*, that is, a leader or the head conducting various female rituals among Muslims of Central Asia. To tell the truth, Sh. Vahidov noted that those *jawāb-nāma* which are produced by his mother are written on separate sheets of paper, instead of on a shroud.

For me the most important was the fact that I found out the true assignment of the text in ritual life of Central Asian peoples. Further on, I began to search for data about *jawāb-nāma*. The following definition is given in F. Steingass dictionary about *jawāb-nāma* — “letters of reply”; a writing fixed to the winding-sheet or the breast of the deceased, which is intended to be read by the angels Munkir and Nakīr, should his soul be too much flurried to answer their questions [6]. Following the definition of the given dictionary, the genre *jawāb-nāma* is known to scholars. However, we have not found yet a sufficient material on *jawāb-nāma*, and on their application in rituals. Now I continue studying *jawāb-nāma*.

The text from the considered manuscript — “The Prayer to Be Written on a Shroud” has two parts:

1. Introduction. Volume is 5 lines, language is Old-Uzbek [7]. The introduction informs that Prophet [Muḥammad] told to his servants / people — a woman or a man, that if they write the given prayer on a shroud their sins written down in their *nāma-yi ‘amal* [8] will be forgiven. And it will be easy for servants of [Allāh] [9] to reply to Munkir and Nakīr’s questions, and their burial will be illuminated by light rays.

2. A prayer. 9 lines [10]. Language is Arabic. In this part of the text in traditional and general phrases the omnipotence of Allāh is eulogized.

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