
PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

A. Alexeev

MANUSCRIPT MS.O. 1350 FROM THE COLLECTION OF ORIENTAL DEPARTMENT OF SPBSU: PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTION*

As academician V. V. Barthold (1869—1930) pointed out almost 100 years ago:

In the field of oriental studies the primary task of each branch of philological and historical science has not yet been carried out — to make the main literary monuments and historical sources accessible to researchers by means of printed matter and translations; each undertaking in this direction in the life of a scholar is just as much an event as it used to be twenty five years ago [1].

The words of Barthold ring partially true even today: in spite of a great number of monuments and their copies introduced into scientific circulation by foreign and our orientalists, a significant portion of the heritage of Arabic and Muslim literature still waits for its researcher.

A major contribution to the versatile study of the manuscript collection of the Oriental Department was made by Professor A. T. Tagirdzhanov (1908—1983), who described a significant portion of the Persian manuscripts [2], as well as supplemented the copies of the manuscripts, put together by Carl Salemann, V. R. Rosen and A. A. Romaskevich [3]. The manuscript, which the given article talks about, was added by A. T. Tagirdzhanov to the appendix of the aforementioned copies, but its description was not made.

We took the liberty of presenting the preliminary description of this manuscript and single out a number of themes — that we deem interesting — relating to ethnography and traditional beliefs of Central Asian peoples.

A great number of documents of this monument displays the compiler's devotion to the ideas of the founder of Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya *shaykh* Ahmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), known for his sharply inimical attitude for *Shī'*ism, which he considered practically the greatest

obstacle in the spread of Islam all over India [4]. After his initiation into Naqshbandiyya brotherhood Ahmad Sirhindī took particular measures in reforming the ideology of the brotherhood, having cleansed it from the teaching of Ibn al-‘Arabī (560—638 / 1165—1240) about the unity of reality (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), which, in his opinion, was creating an opportunity for the convergence of Islam and Hinduism, which took place within the timeframe of the religious reforms held during the rule of the Great Mogul Akbar (r. from 972 to 1014 / 1564—1605). In addition, Sirhindī advanced his concept of the unity of testimony (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*), which clearly differentiated between God and His creation. Simultaneously he attached a more effective organizational structure to the brotherhood, which played a significant role in his social activity, which showed in various areas of the Muslim world. In relation to social issues, Sirhindī and the *ṭarīqa* he had formed were perceived as the opponents of authorities stuck in their self-interests and unbelief, which made him look rather popular with people at large [5].

Mujaddidiyya began its active spread in Central Asia from the end of the 17th century and it was solidified in the time of the Manghit Dynasty, one of representatives of which — Shāh-Murād (r. from 1199 to 1215 / 1785—1800) was a staunch supporter of this branch of the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood. As a matter of fact, many representatives of the Manghit Dynasty were related to some school of Naqshbandiyya. According to the version of Mīr ‘Abd al-Karīm Bukhārī, the predecessor of Shāh-Murād at the throne of Daniyāl-biy, even requested to be buried next to the burial vault of Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband (718—791 / 1318—1389) [6].

The activity of Shāh-Murād was in keeping with the social ideas of the *ṭarīqa* (the support of the spiritual

* Supported by a research grant from the International Association for the Humanities (IAH).