PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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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 šuyukh Ahmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), known for his sharply imimical attitude for Shi‘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 tariqa 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 Mir ‘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 fārīqa (the support of the spiritual

* Supported by a research grant from the International Association for the Humanities (IAH).
estate, the abolition of taxes and duties, which were illegal from the standpoint of sharia, the restoration and construction of new religious facilities: mosques, madrasas, khangâhas, etc., which in the eyes of his contemporaries made him a true renewer, who cleansed and strengthened Islam. Shâh-Murâd, attaching a status of dominating school to Mujaddidiyya, attempted to weaken the influence of other brotherhoods, and in particular of those, who practiced a loud dhikr (tarihî jahriyya) [7]. This circumstance, however, was rather typical for Central Asia, where each dynasty allied with some mystical order [8]. On the other hand the support of this tariqa has to do with the struggle led by Shâh-Murâd for the possession of Marw, which at that time was under the sway of Shi'ites [9].

Our manuscript can be dated the middle of the 19th century, because one of the documents records the year of completion of the copying — 1275/1858–1859. Folio 17a has a manifestly later addition, which was written with an unstable handwriting, and the addition mentions 1317/1899–1900. The format of the MS is 22.0 × 13.0 cm, while the size of the page is 20.5 × 12.5 cm, and the number of lines at the page ranges from 11 to 13. Catchwords (haflizes) are in the left bottom corner; the pagination is obviously made at a much later time, written with a pen in the form of Arabic numbers from folio 3a. The binding is European and made of brown calico; it was made after the copying of the manuscript. In the right top corner of fol. 1a there is a call No. “Ms.O.1350”. Below there is an inscription: “Mulla Bâtûr ‘All b. Yusîf ‘All bây” (apparently the owner of the manuscripts or the compiler of the collection). The paper is European, yellow. The ink is black, while some words (mainly the Qur’anic terms) are marked out by underlining in the line spacing. Terms and names in the body of the work are heightened with red ink. The main part of the manuscript is copied with nasta’liq, while certain pages, chapter and section titles, sūras — with naskh. The text of the manuscript contains a great number of additions made before the main text of the documents with a more careless handwriting. For instance, there is an addition at fol. 1b that is made with lighter ink which is followed by the document devoted to the rules of performing prayers. After the praise for Muhammad, archangels Jibrâ’il and Mikâ’il, it contains instructions for the performance of namâz, as well as the prescription of the verses from the Qur’an, which need to be read over the course of each rak’a. Thus, first sūra “Fâtiha” needs to be read once and 93rd sūra “al-Duḥâ” — three times over the course of the first rak’a, the second rak’a needs to be accompanied with one recitation of sūra “Fâtiha” and aya 94:1 needs to be recited three times; at the closure of the prayer the author prescribes the supplicant to ask the Lord for forgiveness and mercy, hundred times.

The examined manuscript is trilingual: it contains documents in the Central Asian version of Persian language, Arabic and Turkic. For the sake of convenient thematic examination the document materials could be combined in three groups:

(i) works and documents, setting forth the teaching of Naqshbandiyya brotherhood;
(ii) prayers and religious instructions for various occasions;
(iii) sūras and ayaṭs and corresponding commentaries.

Folios from 1b to 7a present prayers and religious instructions in Arabic and Persian languages. For instance, the document on folio 2a in Persian language is a hadith concerning the status of imâm and mu’addhin in society. The document begins with the following words:

Know that the Lord Almighty said to the Messenger of God that imâm and mu’addhin are morally responsible before people (الو). For each people group, whose affairs are in order, the Lord gives imâm and mu’addhin. Paradise and the gates of Paradise He will open for this people. However, if they complain against imâm, whether in open speech (خواهد گفتند) or to oneself (خواهد گفتن), then the Lord Almighty will make worship of that people vain (بدون دوستی). Once the Messenger of God, may Allah glorify and bless Him, was asked by people: “[Should] the dress of imâm be short or long (کتیبه است یا داراز؟) and great concealment [of his] (غبار عظم) and [and] ease and the gates of Paradise He will open for this people. Everyone, who will be an imâm in hiding (گمکه اسم این در غیب باشد), is from the group of hypocrites (یافته) for the infidels will await them everywhere, and the penalty for hypocrites will be ingenious (”).

Folio 3a contains a prayer for the birth of a child (دعای فرزند) and for the sending down of a victory, happiness and fortune:

وَعَطَنَا فَتَحَ وَمَعَادَتُ وَبِخْتِ ټَيْشَان وَنَصْرَتَ وَآبَآ وَنَوَّلَتٍ بَيْتٍ

In the name of Allah All-merciful and All-pitying, O our Lord, open the gates of happiness and the doors of good fortune unto us, the gates of victory and the gates of
acquiring worldly goods (كسب) and guard us from burdens and hardships (عهشة)، disasters, difficulties, illnesses and deliver us from all agitation, O Almighty. They say “O Giver” seven times, and such prayer will be heard... If a woman has [never] given birth in her life, then write the following prayer and tie it around her neck. And the string of the amulet [should] be made long so that it would reach the navel (ثَنْاب). After [that] she is led to her husband—then a boy will be born without a fail.

At folio 7b there are tables with numbers and letter ligatures. Judging by the overall makeup of the given manuscript, it might be supposed that these tables were used in performing some magic activities (fol. 183ab).

Folios 8a—17a is a fragment of the account of the foundations of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya brotherhood in Turkic (fig. 2).

The documents starts with the following words:

أفغِنِسَكَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بُلْسَمٍ أَرْبَابُهُمْ بَرَكَاهُمْ لَنَّذِرُ وَلَا تَخَفِّضْ

Engage yourself in latifa, set this latifa within your heart

This document describes the order of capturing of and concentration at particular sites as well as compares the attributes necessary for its understanding (basar, sāmā’, irāda, kalām, etc.) with particular colour combinations (black, red, white, yellow and so on and so forth). Each of these elements is also linked to the names of the prophets (Adam, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, Isā, Muhammad), who possess this area of knowledge and expertise [11].

Folio 18a — niyya of the mandatory Friday prayer (in Persian language).

Folios 18b—147a is the main work, the account of the foundations of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya brotherhood (fig. 3).

The title of the work is missing but on account of a number of indirect indications it can be figured that this work is none other than Risāla dar tarīqa “The Treatise of the Mystical Path” of shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, another copy of which is kept in the collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Science of Uzbekistan under the call No. 3808/7 [12]. The work is incomplete, the text breaks off at folio 199b.

Most likely we have one of the works of the maktubāt genre, which is very traditional for this brotherhood, because the members of the given tarīqa preferred to promote its teaching not only by means of oral conversations (مَلْفَظَات), but mainly by means of written messages (مَكْتُوبَات).

No special introduction of any kind is present. The author of the work goes straight to the account of the body of the text, a part of which is stated in the form of questions and answers (words “جواب” and “سؤال” are highlighted with red ink or underlined in red). A significant part of the work is devoted to the fundamentals of Mujaddidiyya dhikr, at the heart of which there is the teaching of physical and spiritual make-up of man, which is formed by ten elements (ثَلَاثَاءٍ عَشْرَة)، called ten virtues (اللهامات عشرة):

The path followed by this saint, the renewer of the second millennium [of Islam] shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, may Allāh have mercy on him and may His mercy be upon us, in the brief account [looks] thus: man is formed from ten elements (أجزاء) and they are called (طائف) أجزاء (Earth and Water) and they are [the following]: soul [of man] (انغماس) and four substrates (عنصار ارتباط)، and five more — from the world of spiritual dominion of Allah (ملاك)، and they are [are]: physical body (القلب)، soul (روح)، mystery (سر)، the concealed (المريحة، خفي)، and the absolutely concealed (الامور التوبة). The Lord Almighty, after the alignment of the body structure of man (نزة السماك)، which is [made up] of five elements of the created world, each of the five elements of the spiritual world, the place of which is over the Throne (القلم)، has established them in their condition in the man, whom [He considered] worthy for the man to become a copy of the created world and spiritual world and worthy of the title of the lower world (ستحقق في طوره) [13].

Further there is a detailed account of the mystical path with a description of each of these elements. The work is finished with the account of the spiritual genealogy of the shaykhīs of the brotherhood in Arabic language (نسمة)، lifted to Muhammad, Salmān al-Fārisī, Bāyāzīd Baṣtāmī, Abū al-Hasan Kharqānī, Abū ‘Alī Farmādī, Kh ṭaja Yusīf Hamdānī and so on (fol. 183ab).

There is an insert that is attached to folio 31b—32a, it is written with calligraphic nasta’liq in Turkic:

مکروتینگ در تاریخ ربع الیال اولس سنه 1317 یکهزار و سیصد و هفده

Abovementioned at the months of the year 1317 (thirteen seventeen)

Page 42b contains an interesting moment concerning the attitude of Mujaddidiyya for the practice of pilgrimage.

Pages from 147a to 193b contain the biography of certain ‘Abd Allāh Ghūlām ‘Ali, devoted to his mystical experience. A significant part of the text is unreadable, perhaps, as a result of the moisture dampening the manuscript pages. The titles of the chapters and sections are highlighted with read ink and entered in the margins.

Pages from 194b to 208a contain the text of khubha, read during the Friday prayer, done in calligraphic naskh. Page 208a has an addition, prescribing the reading of certain āyāts while performing mandatory prayers. This page also has an addition of a separate notebook page, which is written with a different handwriting.

Pages 208b—212b contain the horoscope calendar (سال نامه) by Kh ṭaja Abū al-Hakīm Tirmizī [14].

The page pasted into the manuscript and labelled as page 208a, contains the information about ‘Ayād al-firāt and ‘Ayād al-Qurban. On account of this pasted-in page the subsequent European pagination is upset, i.e. the reverse side of the inset is not included into the pagination, which continues from the page sewn together, which is also labelled as 208a. This fragment obviously
Fig. 1

Fig. 2
belongs to a later origin, but it is of particular interest from the standpoint of the evolution of religious notions and traditions. Therefore, we present our version of the translation of this piece below:

If you are asked, why 'Ayd al-fi'tr falls on the first day of the month of Shawwāl, whereas 'Ayd al-Qu'rān — on the tenth day of the month of Dhū al-hijja, and where these festivities have come from, answer them thus: it was precisely from the first day of Shawwāl that the spirit (روح) of Prophet Ādām, may our prayer abide in him, was joined with the Most High; the Lord Almighty commanded His angels to pour out aromatic fragrances of paradise on top of Ādām's head, may peace be upon him, and make that day a feast.

And it was precisely the tenth day of the month of Dhū al-hijja, that the Lord, Great and Glorious He is, in all His generosity, revealed the source (ياء وحاء) of light at the left side of prophet Ādām, may peace be upon him, and commanded angels to pour out fragrances of paradise on top of Ādām's head, having created the platform of light. And that day became a feast. Since then and up to this day Muslims celebrate [these] days, and their celebration is mandatory to those, who live according to the Law of God (الله شريعته).

The reverse side of the inset:

And the Master of believers (امير المؤمنين) will to say that every day, when a believer does not commit any sin is a feast; therefore, there can be three hundred sixty five feasts (!) a year. And adherents of the ṭariqa (الطريقة) said thus: “Beyt. Mystics celebrate two feasts every two days.”

There is an instruction given at page 208a of the main sewing-together — in cursive and with different handwriting; the instruction concerns the manner of performing the prayer of two rak'ah (fig. 4).

Pages from 213a to 215a contain a treatise of shaykh Abū al-Ḥakīm Tirmīzī Dar bayān-i Nawrūz-nāma (“On the New Year Day”). This piece of work is devoted to the correct detection of the Iranian new year and traditional distinctive marks related to Nawrūz. Thus, in accordance with this treatise, if Nawrūz falls on a Tuesday, then fair yield (الحصاد) is to be expected; but then again if the new year falls on a Saturday (الجمعة), this year may be accompanied with hunger (الجوع), disturbances and uprisings. It is natural that the author of the work believes Friday to be the best for the arrival of the new year (الثوابت), but his opinion, if written on this year, there will be much joy (فراغة بسبار بانده).

Pages from 216a to 216b contain a piece of work in verse in Turkic language (غزل محور). From page 217b and on there are the texts of prayers, where part of them are lifted in honour of shaykh Abū al-Qādir Jilānī, the other part is devoted to praises of the Almighty, instructions in the necessity of reading of particular sūras of the Qur’ān a certain number of times, etc.

In summing up our analysis of the manuscript materials, it can be affirmed that we have a collection that is a practical guidance on various aspects of everyday religious life. Based on the document selection, we can suppose that the compiler of the collection (or the owner of the manuscript) was one of the followers of the brotherhood Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya and possibly one of the local mentors of the given brotherhood. The time-frame of the copy compilation and the material selection testify to complex ideological discussions, taken place in state establishments of Central Asia at the time preceding its annexation to the Russian Empire. The materials of the monument are interesting from the standpoint of the Sunni and Shi’ite relations in the region, too. Just as we pointed out above the founder of the Mujaddidiyya school, Ahmad Sihindī was a fierce opponent of Shi’ism, believing it to be the principal danger for the Muslim world.

It is possible that the manuscript was used by the owner in the capacity of a handbook of sorts with instructions for the teaching of neophytes, or these are the notes of a neophyte, written down over the course of his conversations with his mentor. Unfortunately, both of our conclusions remain at the supposition stage, because the manuscript lacks such elements — important for the completion of the codological and textual analysis — as authorship, place and conditions of copying, stimuli of the author and the copyist for the compiling of the collection. It may be most assuredly affirmed that the materials of the manuscript are of great significance for the broadening of our perceptions of Islam as a way of life among peoples of Central Asia and its interaction with traditional beliefs.

Notes


2. A. T. Tagirdzhanov, Opisanie tadjikskikh i persidskikh rukopisii Vostochnogo otdelenia biblioteki LGU (The Description of Tajik and Persian Manuscripts of the Oriental Department of the Library of the LSU), ed. by A. N. Boldreyev (Leningrad, 1962), i.


12. Ibid., p. 350.

13. Ibid., pp. 349—50, footnote 36.

14. On this work see our article in the previous issue of the journal: “The horoscope calendar of Khâja Abû al-Ḥakîm Tirmîzî as an ethnographic Source”, Manuscripta Orientalia XVIII/1, pp. 42—4.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Anonym. European paper, 22.0×13.0 cm, 270 pages + 1 page. Mid 19th century. Oriental Department of the M. Gorky scientific library of St. Petersburg State University, call No. Ms.O.1350, fols. 7b—8a. Courtesy of the Library.

Fig. 2. The same MS, fols. 8b—9a. Courtesy of the Library.

Fig. 3. Ahmad Sirhindî, Ṭariqa-i ki taslih-i an hadrat-i mujaddad-i alf-i sani-yi shaykh (A Mystical Path, Which Was [Undertaken by] His Holiness the Reformer of the Second Millennium [of Islam] shaykh Ahmad Sirhindî). The same MS, fols. 18b—19a. Courtesy of the Library.

Fig. 4. The same MS, fol. 208a. Courtesy of the Library.