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### Front cover:

“Khusraw watching Shīrīn combing her hair after bathing”, miniature from the manuscript *Farhād wa Shīrīn* by Kamāl al-Dīn Bāfiq Waḥshī and Muḥammad Shaḥī’ al-Shīrāzī Wiṣāl in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, call number A 910. Copied by Muḥammad Ismā‘īl al-Anjawī al-Shīrāzī in Rabī’ I 1284. July 1867, fol. 51b, 6.4×4.2 cm.

### Back cover:

- Plate 1.** ‘*Unwān* and page decoration, a Qājār style, the same manuscript, fols. 1b–2a, 14.3×8.8 cm.  
**Plate 2.** “Farhād in the castle of Shīrīn”, miniature, the same manuscript, fol. 48b, 4.9×3.2 cm.  
**Plate 3.** “Shīrīn sees Farhād while coming to see the works at Mount Bīsūtūn”, miniature, the same manuscript, fol. 65b, 4.8×5.1 cm.

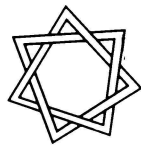
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# **Manuscripta Orientalia**

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## ON THE HISTORY OF 'ISHQIYYA BROTHERHOOD SACRED RELICS. I: THE *KHIRQA* OF THE PROPHET\*

Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, reports from Afghanistan speak of a Muslim holy relic, the *khirqa-yi mubārak* ("blessed mantle"). Perhaps the only known images of Ṭālibān leader Müllā 'Umar are the internationally famous pictures of him receiving the *khirqa* of the Prophet, which sanctifies his power and underscores the messianic role assigned to him and the *ṭālibhaye karam* ("merciful ṭālibs"), chosen to carry out the mission of the *farishta-yi najāt*, angels who liberate the world's Muslims from the godless West. The very appearance of the Ṭālibān was called an *'urīj* (raising) [1]. The Emirate they created was only the first step on the path to creating a world-wide caliphate, a task they stressed with their ritual "coronation" and ceremonial presentation of the blessed *khirqa* to the "renewer of the faith" (*mujaddid*), Müllā 'Umar.

This use of holy relics was traditional for medieval Islam. According to legend, Muḥammad presented his *burda*, a piece of woollen cloth, which was worn as a cloak by day and used as a blanket by night, to Qa'b b. Zuhayr as a reward for a poem that eulogised the Prophet. Later it was bought by Mu'āwiya, and then preserved in the treasury of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, who treated it together with the warder and seal of the Umayyads as the symbols of caliph's power and dignity. The fame of the legendary relic reached nearly all outposts of the Muslim world after the appearance of *Qaṣīdat al-burda* by Muḥammad b. Sa'īd al-Buṣṭīrī (1212—1294) [2].

According to some sources the *burda* perished during the Mongol siege of Baghdad, but in the early sixteenth century, when a new Islamic dynasty, the Ottomans, claimed power over *dār al-islām*, a very similar relic found its way to Istanbul together with the key of Mecca and other Islamic relics. *Khirqā-yi sharīf* or *khirqā-yi sa'ādat*, one of the mantles ascribed to the Prophet, was brought to the Ottoman capital by Muḥammad Abū Numayy, son of the *sharīf* of Mecca, after the conquest of Egypt in 1517 by the Ottoman ruler Selim I (r. 1512—1520). It immediately became one of the symbols of Ottoman power (sword-girding and oath of allegiance ceremonies) and the alleged

sacred source of their military successes. Today the 1.24 cm-long black mantle with wide sleeves and a cream-coloured woollen lining is preserved at the Topkapı Sarayı Museum in Istanbul "wrapped in seven silk velvet cloths, embroidered with gold thread; these in turn are protected by a gold box with a double lid, which is given further protection by a gold casket... This is then placed on a silver table in the silver throne" [3].

Another *khirqā* of the Prophet appeared in Istanbul in 1617—1618. We note that this *khirqā* was believed to have been sent by the Prophet to the famous Ṣūfī Uways al-Qaranī. Now it is preserved in one of the Istanbul mosques and displayed to the public every year between 15 Ramaḍān and Laylat al-Qadr.

Two years ago I published an article on the so-called "Uthmānic Qur'ān" from Katta Langar (now in Uzbekistan) [4]. At the turn of the fifteenth—sixteenth centuries, such a copy appeared among the sacred relics of the 'Ishqīyya brotherhood. The latter also included such significant items as a *tasbīh*, a string of yellow rosary beads which allegedly belonged to Muḥammad himself (they were stored in the Katta Langar mosque and shown to those who performed the *ziyāra*, but no one was allowed to hold them); *muy-i mubārak*, sacred hairs from the beard of Muḥammad [5]; and, finally, a *khirqā* or *janda-chapan*, which was also supposed to have belonged to Muḥammad.

The *khirqā* was of light-brown camel skin. The fabric was covered in yellow, blue, and red decorations. Some felt that the *khirqā* was made from the skin of the sheep sacrificed by Ibrāhīm. According to tradition, it had no seams and was miraculously created for Muḥammad. It was also said to possess a special quality: it appeared to be of varying colours to all who succeeded in seeing it [6].

There is also an interesting legend about how the *khirqā* made its way to Māwarā' al-nahr. According to tradition, Muḥammad bequeathed it on his deathbed to the Yamanī Uways al-Qaranī, one of the first Ṣūfīs to convert to Islam in the spirit of the Prophet. The latter is said to have lived in a cave not far from "Northern Langar".

\* This is the first in the series of articles on 'Ishqīyya brotherhood sacred relics and historical sources about them. In an upcoming issue of *Manuscripta Orientalia* we plan to publish articles by our Tashkent colleagues Dr. S. Vahidov and Dr. B. Aminov. The first is devoted to a ninth-century Qur'ānic copy in Kūfī script stored in Katta Langar, the second — to an 'Ishqīyya *shajāra* recently found in Iski Langar.

Muhammad charged Abū Bakr and two of his military leaders with delivering the *khirqa*. According to another version, the *khirqa* was brought to Yemen by the future caliphs 'Uthmān and 'Alī, where they presented it to Uways; much later, one of the latter's pupils took it to Māwarā'al-nahr. Others believed that the *khirqa* was brought there by Uways himself.

In the present issue of *Manuscripta Orientalia*, you will find an article of one of the leading Russian experts on Afghan history, Prof. Sergei Grigoryev, on the accounts of Afghan historical sources on the history of the Prophet's *khirqa* preserved now in Kandahār. According to him, the appearance of the holy *khirqa* in Kandahār took place in the mid-eighteenth century and is connected with the activities of Ahmad-shāh Durrānī (d. 1773), the first of the Sadūzay rulers of Afghanistan and founder of the Durrānī empire.

Those times political instability and military raids on nearby cities also affected Katta Langar. Constant internal strife led to the appearance of Kazakhs, who in 1723 were brought there by one of the contenders for the *khān's* throne. But their obedience soon ended, and with truly

catastrophic consequences: surrounding towns, including such large centres as Samarqand and Shahr-i Sabz, were completely deserted. Groups of Kazakhs roamed the region. On occupying Katta Langar, they turned the mosque and *mazār* into a cattle-pen; on leaving, they took with them everything of value. The population hid in the mountains, spiriting away their sacred relics; they were not soon to return [7].

The *khirqa* thus departed from Katta Langar and found its way back to Afghanistan, whence it came at the turn of the sixteenth century [8]. The description of the Kandahār *khirqa* is very close to that of Katta Langar. According to the Afghan sources, it was brought from the region of Bukhara-Karshi and is also connected with Yemen and a certain 'Umar b. al-'Amir al-Quranī (Uways al-Qaranī?). It seems to me that the Afghan historical sources supply the missing pages in the history of the Prophet's *khirqa*, which for at least two centuries belonged to the 'Ishqiyya brotherhood. It is the relic that was used by Mūllā 'Umar to sanctify his power and underscore his messianic role as the new caliph, legatee of the Umayyads, 'Abbāsids and Ottomans.

### Notes

1. R. R. Sikoev, "Ot emirata do khalifata (o messianskikh ambitsiakh rukovodstva talibov)" ("From emirate to caliphate: the messianic ambitions of the Ṭālibān leaders"), in *Musul'manskie strany u graniits SNG* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 144—5.

2. Al-Buṣīrī's famous *qaṣīda* was dedicated to self-deprecation, as well as to praising the Prophet and his miracles. According to tradition, the partially paralysed poet composed it and loudly recited it after praying. Once, in a dream, al-Buṣīrī saw Muhammad, who, by dressing him in his cloak (*al-burda*), healed the poet. Word of the miraculous healing soon spread. The story tells that the poem became extremely popular and was regarded as possessing supernatural power. It came to be used in amulets, it adorned the walls of public buildings, it was read along with *sūras* of the Qur'ān at burial ceremonies. Late Šūfī authors composed in abundance commentaries on al-Buṣīrī's poem. These works frequently became independent theological treatises. See R. Basset, *La Bordah du cheikh al-Busiri, poème en l'honneur de Mohammed* (Paris, 1894); see also I. Goldziher's review of the work by R. Basset in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, XXXI (1896), pp. 304—11.

3. N. Atasoy, "Khirka-yi sherif", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-ROM edition, v. 1.0 (Leiden, 1999). See also Tahsin Öz, *Hirka-i Saadet dairesi ve emanat-i mukaddese* (Istanbul, 1953) and Kemal Çiğ, *Relics of Islam* (Istanbul, 1966).

4. E. Rezvan, "Yet another "'Uthmānic Qur'ān" (on the history of manuscript E 20 from the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies", *Manuscripta Orientalia*, VI/1 (2000), pp. 49—68.

5. According to the accounts of long-time residents, the hair of the Prophet was red or light-brown. This occasionally startled pilgrims who believed that Muhammad was dark-haired.

6. M. E. Masson, "Katta Liangar v oblasti srednevekovogo Keshā" ("Katta Langar in the region of medieval Kesh"), *Trudy Tashkentskogo gosudarstvennogo Universiteta im. I. I. Lenina*. Fasc. 295: *arkheologiya Srednei Azii*, VII (Tashkent, 1966), pp. 96—7.

7. Masson, *op. cit.*, pp. 93—6.

8. Rezvan, *op. cit.*, pp. 52—3.