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TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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THE DIYA' AL-QULŪB ON PRE-ISLAMIC BELIEFS OF THE QIRGHIZ

The opinion that works of Eastern hagiography are free from many conventions of court writing traditions is shared by many scholars who believe that hagiography can serve as a valuable source of important historical and cultural information. Actually, the biographies of Şūfī shaykhs, though compiled on the basis of folk traditions and often conveying their style, bring us valuable details of living history, and can provide invaluable ethnographic material otherwise lacking. The veracity of such information, of course, requires special critical verification.

Of great interest to specialists on the history of Central Asia are in particular texts devoted to the lives of Ṣūfī shaykhs of the influential Naqshbandīya order. The leaders of this widespread tarīqat exerted a significant influence on the political life of Central Asia in the fifteenth—sixteenth centuries. Many generations of Ṣūfī shaykhs set themselves the goal of the greatest possible dissemination and affirmation of Islam among Central Asian nomads. Working to increase the number of adherents, and thus to strengthen their influence and economic power, the shaykhs moved from place to place and settled in direct proximity to "infidels", collecting tribute from them and recruiting murīds. Numerous darwīsh-preachers from among the shaykh's closest assistants were sent into the steppe with the same aim.

The adoption of a new faith by the nomads in Central Asia was not always a voluntary process. Where proselytising and "miracle-working" failed to achieve the goal, brute force was often employed. Moreover, the missionary activities of Ṣūfīs frequently assumed the form of military raids.

Usually, historical writings of Muslim authors lack information on how this conversion was carried out in steppe. On the contrary, the lives of *darwīsh* saints frequently contain curious details of the conversion of nomads to Islam. Interesting information on the Islamisation of Qirghiz tribes in the sixteenth century is found, for example, in the work entitled *Diyā' al-qulūb*, devoted to the life of a well-known Central Asian Ṣūfī *shaykh*, Khwāja Isḥāq. The manuscript with the text of this work is held in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies [1]. Only two copies of the work are known at present in the former Soviet Union [2].

The Diyā' al-qulūb was long neglected by scholars. All information about it was limited to a three-line description in the Zapiski Vostochnogo otdela Russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva (Transactions of the Eastern Section of the Russian Archaeological Society), where it is mentioned as one of the most interesting manuscripts which were held (in 1913) in private possession in the Ferghana region [3]. It is also mentioned in the Ukazatel' persidskoĭ literatury po istorii uzbekov v Sredneĭ Azii ("Index to Persian Literature on the History of the Uzbeks in Central Asia") published in 1925 in Tashkent by A. A. Semyonov.

Khwāja Isḥāq (d. 1598), whose religious exploits serve as the basis for the work under consideration, was the youngest son of shaykh Sayyid Aḥmad Kāsānī, known by the laqab Maḥmūd A'zam. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Maḥmūd A'zam headed the Naqshbandīya order and was much praised in Muslim annals for converting the pagans of East Turkestan to Islam [4]. Khwāja Isḥāq was raised from childhood as his father's successor by the well-known Central Asian shaykh Luṭfallāh Chustī (d. 1571), who gained fame as an ascetic and saint famous for his miracle-working. He was, according to tradition, a most zealous Ṣūfī preacher among the nomads of Central Asia [5]. A direct successor to his father and mentor, Khwāja Isḥāq was an ardent partisan of the Islamisation of the nomadic tribes of Central Asia.

The text of the Diya' al-qulub presents the biography of Khwāja Ishāq, and, judging by the author's own words, the composition was drawn up in about 1012/1603 [6]. The manuscript in the holdings of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies does not contain the author's name. Basing his conclusion on information contained in copy No. 2604 at the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, A. A. Semyonov indicated the name of the compiler as Muhammad Yāwaz [7]. Recollections of the author, who was a pupil of the shaykh Khwāja Ishāq, as well as accounts of the latter's close friends and companions are contained in the work. The author collected these materials and wrote them down over the course of many years [8]. Each account is accompanied by brief information about the person on whose words it is based. The accounts are short; they are written in simple language and in conversational-narrative



Fig. 1

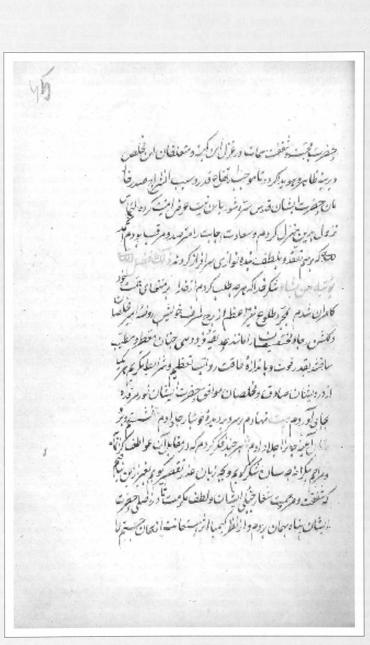


Fig. 2

form, which is characteristic of hagiography writings. Khwāja Isḥāq is depicted in these accounts as a great walī blessed with a gift of miracle-working. He is also shown as a zealous Şūfī preacher skilfully converting to Islam the animistic tribes of Central Asia.

A significant part of the work is devoted to Khwāja Ishāq's activities among the Qirghiz tribes. The author repeatedly notes that Khwāja Ishāq lived for long periods among the pagans and succeeded in destroying eighteen Qirghiz and Kalmyk temples and in converting 180,000 unbelievers to Islam [9]. The St. Petersburg manuscript contains an account of Khwāja Ishāq's riding out for extended stays to Qirghiz encampments, where the saint lived in tents with his disciples and domestics. This fact is also testified by Mawlānā Bīrū'ī Bukhārā'ī, a disciple of the shaykh, who also wrote his teacher's biography entitled Jalīs-i mushtāqīn [10]. But the author does not provide the location of these Qirghiz encampments, indicating only the "slope of a mountain" (dāmana-yi kūh). That was the place where the clashes described in the manuscript took place between the Qirghiz and Khwāja Ishāq and his disciples. Although Khwāja Ishāq appears to have struck fear into the Qirghiz because of his sanctity and miracles, they were brave enough to resist openly the religion they were forced to adopt. The manuscript even contains an account of how a certain Qirghiz chieftain by the name of Lūlūm-Qirghīz, accompanied by four hundred horsemen, made a raid to kill Khwāja Ishāq [11]. The Jalīs-i mushtāqīn describes how Khwāja Ishāq, in response to one of these raids in the region of Sarīq-kūl, was compelled to organise a genuine military campaign against the Qirghiz. Messengers of the shaykh, motivated by a missionary zeal did not hesitate to punish unbelievers and scattered the guilty tribe throughout the steppe, depriving it of shelter, bread, and clothing, or, as the text reads, "effaced the darkness of paganism from the mirror of the world" [12]. But relations between the shaykh and the Qirghiz were not always hostile, and, according to the Diyā' al-qulūb, the Qirghiz themselves sometimes visited Khwāja Ishāq and, bringing rich gifts, asked for his supreme intercession and aid in the difficulties and hardships of their lives.

One of the stories which our manuscript contains tells about a Qirghiz tribal chief who came to Khwāja Isḥāq with rich gifts and asked him to intercede on the Qirghiz' behalf before God to find a source of water which had once existed at the time of their fathers in those parts. It was said that the water had turned aside, and, no matter how the Qirghiz sought it, they could not find it; their households had gone into decline because of a lack of water. Khwāja Isḥāq helped the tribe to find the water source, and the story runs that this place by the foot of a mountain was named Nazargāh-i Ḥaḍrat-i Īshān; people built many dwellings there. The same tribal chief, as the following story recounts, once again visited the shaykh several days later, bringing with him many people, and spread out before the shaykh

gifts he had brought on camels and horses. This time he asked the *shaykh* to send up prayers so that salt would appear some where nearby. After the *shaykh* had shown a saltmine to the Qirghiz, the pagan "padishah" and his *nūkers*, and then others adopted Islam in response to this miracle of the *walī* [13].

However legendary these accounts might be, one can glean from them a grain of historical truth. It is evident that only very serious, earthly reasons could make the Qirghiz refuse the beliefs of their fathers and to adopt a new faith. Among these reasons was the need for water and salt, or, as one finds in another tale, a desire to rid themselves of diseases. In the harsh conditions of nomadic life, these motives were predominant.

But what attracts our special attention in the text of the manuscript is its account of idol worship among the Qirghiz. Information of this kind is extremely rare in the writings of Muslim authors avoiding any mention of the idolatry beliefs of non-Muslim peoples. Unlike other Central Asian peoples, in the sixteenth and even in the seventeenth century, the Qirghiz whose Islamic faith was always under great suspect were considered "neither Muslims nor kāfirs" [14]. The Qirghiz invariably followed their folk beliefs, which had taken shape over centuries, and defended them from the influence of other religions. "It is remarkable," points out W. Barthold in estimating the Qirghiz in the ninth and tenth centuries, "that despite trade ties with Buddhists (Tibetans) and Muslims, there is no evidence of any success for Buddhist or Muslim propaganda among the Qirghiz" [15]. Moreover, even after the Muslim faith had been formally adopted by the Qirghiz, they long retained the remnants of earlier, pre-Islamic beliefs and rituals the nature of which is not always clear. Brief notes on Qirghiz demonology, shamanistic customs and superstitions can be found in A. Divaev, A. Levshin, F. Poyarkov, A. Kharuzin, S. Abramzon, and some others [16]. Ch. Valikhanov provides many additional details [17], but his non-systematic notes primarily reflect the author's personal observations recorded at a later time, mainly in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The information on the Qirghiz' beliefs, provided by medieval Muslim authors, such as Gardīzī and Abū Dulaf al-Marwazī, is scarce, and has not been wholly systematised yet. Besides, the legitimacy of ascribing it specifically to the Qirghiz cannot always be considered entirely proven. All this makes information contained in the <code>Diyā</code> al-qulūb especially interesting.

The text includes the description of a visit which a group of Khwāja Isḥāq's disciples pays to the Qirghiz during their worship. The Şūfīs witness the ritual and become furious about its idolatry nature, which make them throw the Qirghiz idol to the ground, interrupting the service, apparently somewhere in the middle. We present here a translation of the account:

"An account [recorded] from the above-mentioned janāb Kwāja Hāshim ibn Kwāja Ḥusayn. He said: "At the time when Ḥadrat-i Ishān (i.e. Khwāja Ishāq — Z. V.) was among the Qirghiz, he once deigned to order me: 'Go to Seryük-Qirghiz, convey my greetings and tell him: you have been afflicted by illness, Ḥadrat-i Ishān has heard of your ailment and appeals to you, saying: come, here [are my] followers [17]; we will all pray together, God willing, strength will return to you'. And here Ḥadrat-i Ishān was motivated by a hidden thought [of his own] which I did not [at first] ascertain. And, behold, at the order of Ḥadrat-i Ishān and with a group of companions, followers of the shaykh, we set out for Seryük. I saw him: at his sides were his retainers [in the quantity of] four families, and before Seryük sat a large crowd which had gathered to eat and drink. We conveyed greetings from Ḥadrat-i Ishān and [immediately] noticed that he was seriously ill.

They brought food, and separately some sort of vessel [19], which they placed in the centre. And from each [piece of] meat they cut a piece and threw it into this vessel. Then all of the men and women rose and went over to some kind of tree. I followed in order to see where they would go and what they would do. [They] went up to the tree and bowed down to it; they set down the vessel and [all of them] bent down before the tree. I looked at this tree and saw that [they had] made some kind of idol (but) out of silver and hung it on the tree, and around it — in the number of two thousand — hewn from wood [and] stone [were] other idols; and this was the temple (butkhāna) of the Qirghiz. And the name of this idol made from silver was talbiya-yi jaqar [20].

They placed the vessel with meat before this large idol and made signs to the idol — partake, they said, of this food. Then they moved the vessel with meat away somewhat, placed one piece of meat in the idol's left hand, another in its right hand, and a third, [having cut it up], they threw about in the air. For some time, I was obsessed by a violent fit of rage because of their actions, and I threw this large idol to the ground. The Qirghiz raised a clamour: 'Oh, khalifa, do not do this, at least for the sake of Seryük!' But fear of Ḥadṛrat-i Īshān restrained the hearts of these Qirghiz, and they did not resist. Then I said: 'Take these idols and go prostrate yourselves before Ḥadṛrat-i Īshān [21]. And take this sick man with you'. The Qirghiz answered: 'We will take all of the idols, but the talbiya-yi jaqar idol we will not take'. I cursed all of them and once again threw this large idol to the earth. Then we brought the entire group of men and women to bow down before Ḥadṛrat-i Īshān and [we] told him what had happened.

Hadrat-i Ishān addressed the crowd: 'Whāt is this?' and he pointed to the talbiya-yi jaqar. 'What is this and what can it do?' And those who were gathered answered: 'This is our god (khudā) and all that your god does, our god does as well'. Hadrat-i Ishān said: 'And can your god heal this sick man today or tomorrow?' Those who were gathered answered: 'Oh, our Khwāja! If the truth be told, our god is of no use'. Then Hadrat-i Ishān said: 'If our God heals your sick man, will you believe in our God?' The people said: 'Yes, with all our hearts we agree!' Ḥadrat-i Ishān said: 'Oh, friends of mine, I will pray, and you will say amen'.

Hadrat-i Ishān bared his sacred head and rubbed his sacred face with earth from the gate to the temple of God the Most High, and raised a weeping and a wailing. And so powerfully did he wail that the angels began crying at the roof of the vault of heaven. Hadrat-i Ishān said: 'Gifts to the gate of the temple of God!' They brought the gifts. The Qirghiz bared their heads, tore their collars, and as though they were half-blinded birds, began to roll upon the earth. And suddenly by the mercy of the Most High, that sick man sneezed, rose from his place, and said: 'I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah', and he was suffused with the light of the true faith before Hadrat-i Ishān.

And all of those gathered embraced faith in God the Most High and became Muslims. After this, they broke all of the idols and broke the talbiya-yi jaqar, and gave its silver to the retinue [of Hadrat-i Ishān]"" [22].

Unfortunately, reliable material to give exhaustible interpretation of the passage is too scanty. However, certain parallels with individual elements of the Qirghiz service described above can be found in the accounts of other Muslim authors. Thus, an annual feast with religious rituals and the invitation of a soothsayer (faginūn) among the Qirghiz was testified by Gardīzī. Gardīzī also mentions the veneration of various trees [23], which was common among the Turkic peoples. Worshipping sacred trees, linked with magic rituals, was widespread among the Qirghiz even after their formally adoption of Islam. Near the place of such a worshipping general praying, accompanied by offerings to reject certain hardship, was usually carried on. Conjurations were also pronounced which had nothing to do with Islam [24]. The sanctification of certain trees and their worshipping were preserved among the Qirghiz until the recent past. According to a nineteenth-century author Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, "a tree which grows alone in the steppe or an ugly plant with unusually twisted branches serve as objects of veneration and [places for] passing the night. When passing by, each person fastens onto this tree a piece of his clothing,

a rag, throws cups, bring animals, or pleats the manes of horses" [25].

The information provided by the author of the Divā' al-qulūb also proves an exceptional importance the Qirghiz attached to their fetishes (ongons). As a brilliant expert in Qirghiz culture S. M. Abramzon pointed out, the ritual of worshipping, aimed at the healing of the sick Qirghiz tribal chief, was accompanied by the feeding of a Qirghiz ongon—talbiya-yi jaqar—designated by the author of the Diyā' al-qulūb as but (idol). It is known that these anthropomorphic ongons were made of stone, wood, and silver [26], which is proved by the text.

The above mentioned passage in the $Diy\bar{a}'$ al-qul $\bar{u}b$ is of additional interest since it reveals a great advantage of studying Muslim hagiographic writings which can provide, despite its special nature, valuable information lacking in the works of Muslim historiographers. In any case, further study in this area, in particular, research on the lives of Sufi shaykhs, can throw additional light on the as yet not quite clear question of the repertoire of the Qirghiz' pre-Islamic beliefs.

Notes

1. Manuscript (call number A 1615) is kept in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. The MS dates to the late eighteenth — early nineteenth century. It is written in bold Central Asian nasta'līq (mīrzāī)on the Qokand well-polished paper; Indian ink, text in a double red frame, 13 lines per page, 10.5×18.8 cm. The names of persons of importance and headings are in red. On fol. 165a is the seal impression with the date 1286 (1869/70). The same seal impression is found on fol. 2a; where the name Mullā 'Azīm Khān and the date — 1286 (1869/70) — can be read. Custods, muqawwā' binding. There is also the seal impression on fol. 1a, on which the beginning of the name 'Abd al-(?) and the date 1225 (1810) are discernible. The date of the composition — 1012 (1603) — is indicated on fol. 3b. I am grateful to the late N. D. Miklukho-Maklai for referring me to this work as containing some information on the Qirghiz. It should be noted that, in addition to the Divā' al-qulūb, two other lives of Khwāja Ishāq exist: one is Jalīs-i mushtāqīn by Mawlanā Bīrū'ī Bukhārā'ī, a rare copy of which is held in the same collection under call number A 232 (it also contains information on the Islamisation of the Qirghiz). The other is Manāqib-i Khwāja Ishāq, stored in 1916 in the private collection of the resident of Namangan — Yūsuf Khwāja. See Protokoly zasedanīt i soobshcheniia chlenov Turkestanskogo kruzhka liubiteleī arkheologii (The Transactions of Sessions and Reports by Members of the Turkestan Circle of Lovers of Archaeology), fasc. 2 (Tashkent, 1916), p. 68. The manuscript's location is unknown at the present time.

- 2. The manuscript is not mentioned in catalogues printed abroad. A second copy is held at the Institute of Oriental Studies of Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences. See Sobranie vostochnykh rukopiseĭ Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoĭ SSR (Collection of Eastern Manuscripts of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR), ed. A. A. Semyonov (Tashkent, 1955), iii, No. 2064, p. 331.
- 3. See "Vostochnye rukopisi v Ferganskoi oblasti" ("Eastern manuscripts in the Fergana region"), Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniia Russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva (henceforth ZVORAO), XXII (Petrograd, 1915), p. 304; also "Nekotorye dannye po istorii Fergany XVIII-go stoletiia" ("Some information on the history of Ferghana in the 18th century"), fasc. 2, p. 68, footnote.
 - 4. N. Veselovskii, "Dagbid", ZVORAO, III (St. Petersburg, 1889), p. 85, etc.
 - 5. V. V. Bartol'd, Qirgizy. Istoricheskii ocherk (The Qirghiz, a Historical Essay) (Frunze, 1927), p. 38.
 - 6. Diyā' al-qulūb, manuscript A 1615, fol. 3b.
 - 7. The reading Yāwaz suggested by A. A. Semyonov seems to be not correct. The reading 'Iwad is preferable.
 - 8. Diyā' al-qulūb, manuscript A 1615, fols. 3 a-4a.
- 9. *Ibid.*, fol. 5 a ("Clear proof of Ḥaḍrat'i İshān's greatness of spirit and perfection is the fact that [he] went to the lands of the Qirghiz and Kalmak, destroyed eighteen temples (*bukhāna*) and made Muslims of one-hundred-eighty thousand *kāfirs* and idol-worshippers"); it is noted later that these 18 temples were smashed somewhere not far from Kashghar and Samarqand. In the manuscript *Jalīs-i mushtāqīn*, we read: "[Ḥaḍrat-i İshān] deigned to say: 'I favoured several thousand Qirghiz and Kalmaks with the light of the [true] faith, [liberating them] from the yoke of ignorance and dissipation! And this is when I learned what good lies in serving Islam, and I spent several years in the regions of Aksu, Kashghar, Kuch, and Khotan, setting people on the true path'" (*Jalīs-i mushtāqīn*, manuscript A 232, fol. 8b).
 - 10. Jalīs-i mushtāqīn, manuscript A 232, fol. 45 a.
 - 11. Ibid., fol. 25 a-25 b.
 - 12. *Ibid.*, fols. 45a—46a.
 - 13. Diyā' al-qulūb, manuscript A 1615, fols. 25 b, 26 b, 27 b.
- 14. "Histoire de l'Asie centrale" par Abdoul Kerim Boukhary, publiée, trad. et annotée par Ch. Schefer. App. Seifi, "Histoire des souveraines de l'Inde, au Sinde, etc.", trad. française (Paris, 1876), p. 302; see also the reference to Seifi (according to the Leiden manuscript) in Barto'ld, op. cit., pp. 38—9; there is in the same place also a reference to Maḥmūd b. Walī, who called the Qirghiz kāfirs.
 - 15. Bartol'd, op. cit., p. 22.
- 16. A. A. Divaev, "Primety Qirgizov" ("Omens of the Qirghiz"), Trudy Obshchestva izucheniia Kirgizskogo kraia, fasc. 3 (Orenburg, 1922); A. Levshin, Opisanie kirgiz-kazach'ikh ord i stepei (Description of the Qirghiz-Kazakh Hordes and Steppes) (St. Petersburg, 1832); F. Poiarkov, "Iz oblasti Kirgizskikh verovanii" ("On the beliefs of the Qirghiz"), Etnograficheskoe obozrenie, 4 (1891); idem, "Kara-kirgizskie legendy, skazki i verovaniia" ("Kara-Qirghiz legends, tales, and beliefs"), Pamiatnaia knizhka Semirechenskoi oblasti (1900); M. Miropiev, "Demonologicheskie rasskazy Kirgizov" ("Demonological tales of the Qirghiz"), Zapiski Imperatorskogo Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva, X, fasc. 2 (1888); A. Kharuzin, "Kirgizy Bukeevskoi ordy", ("The Qirghiz of the Bukeev horde"), Antropo-etnologicheskii ocherk, fasc. 1 (Moscow, 1889); S. M. Abramzon, Ocherk kul'tury kirgizskogo naroda (An Essay on the Qirghiz People Culture) (Frunze, 1946); idem, Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul'turnye sviazi (The Qirghiz and their Ethnogenetic and Historical-Cultural Links) (Frunze, 1990), and others.
- 17. Sochineniia Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova (Works of Ch. Ch. Valikhanov), ed. N. I. Veselovsky (St. Petersburg, 1904), see here his "Sledy shamanstva u kirgizov" ("Traces of shamanism among the Qirghiz"), "Zametki o shamanstve. Tenkri" ("Notes on shamanism. Tengri"), and others.
- 18. The word yārān ("friends", "assistants") is apparently used in this text as a Sūtī term meaning "pupils", "companions", "followers", "members of the shaykh's retinue". The word is translated in accordance with context.
 - 19. The Persian-Turkic word taghār (taghāra) can mean "clay cup", "measure", "tank", "bucket", "vat", "basin", "trough", "tub".
 - in the original. We propose our conjecture here (the meaning of the term remains obscure).
- 21. The term mulāzamat, frequently used in the text in reference to Khwāja Ishāq, is apparently part of Şūfī terminology and means "permanent service", "presence in the retinue", "promise of submission to a spiritual mentor", but also the ceremony of greeting the shaykh and his headquarters.
 - 22. Diyā' al-qulūb, manuscript A 1615, fols. 86b, 87a, 88a, 88b.
- 23. See V. V. Bartol'd, Otchet o poezdke v Sredniuiu Aziiu s nauchnoĭ tsel'iu (Report on a Trip to Central Asia for Scholarly Purposes), appendix, text, p. 87, translation, p. 111.
 - 24. Abramzon, Ocherk kul'tury kirgizskogo naroda, p. 53.
 - 25. Sochineniia Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova, p. 276.
 - 26. Abramzon, Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul'turnye sviazi, p. 327.

Illustrations

- Fig. 1. *Diyā' al-qulūb*, manuscript A 1615 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Central Asia, late 18th early 19th century, fol. 86b, 10.5×18.8 cm.
- Fig. 2. Jalīs-i mushtāqīn, manuscript A 232, in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, East Turkestan, 17th century, fol. 45 a, 6.0×13.0 cm.