

A PERSIAN-LANGUAGE WORK ON THE “CENTRAL ASIAN MAKKA”

On the 11th of December 1912, a regular meeting of the Turkistān circle of lovers of archaeology was held in the building of the Turkistān District Engineering Department, where a member of this learned assembly, the famous orientalist L. A. Zimin, gave a report entitled “The Story of the City of Ūsh” [1]. This report was based on data given in the treatise *Ūsh shahrī risālasī* (“The Legend of the City of Ūsh”) printed in 1885 in *Turkestanskaia tuzemnaia gazeta* (“Turkistān Indigenous Newspaper”) in Turkic. The reading of the Russian translation of it and the accompanying commentaries made up the main part of the report. The data that we have regarding this work is very scanty. It is a collection in which an anonymous author gives more than ten (manifestly fabricated) *hadīths* connected with the city of Ūsh that glorify this settlement and its inhabitants, tell about numerous Muslim righteous men and prophets that visited it. These legends that make up the collection speak of the blessedness of this city and also contain information on the blessings that the pilgrims will be rewarded with for accomplishing pious deeds there. The compilation of this collection can be dated to the 13th/18th century [2].

The SPIOS collection contains a work very close in its character and partly in its content to the one that was used by L. A. Zimin. This small (three folios: 42a—44a) treatise in Persian titled *Dar bayān-i risāla-yi Ūsh* (“From the Legend of Ūsh”) is registered with the number C 2038. The anonymous work, which is an unfinished copy, is part of a combined manuscript sized 24.7×14.2 cm in Oriental pasteboard binding covered with leather. The text is written in *nasta‘līq* in black Indian ink on Oriental (Central Asian) paper with a size of 19.5×9.5 cm. The copy was created in the 19th century in Central Asia and arrived at the SPIOS manuscript collection in 1934 as part of the acquisitions of the Archaeological expedition of the USSR Academy of Sciences [3].

In view of the fact that the work *Dar bayān-i risāla-yi Ūsh* has not been properly studied and is very little known to the general learned public, it seems suitable to dwell longer on its content, and in particular compare it to the content of the treatise in Turkic. The comparative table given here clearly illustrates the similarities and differences in content which we find in the works under consideration (ŪSHR — *Ūsh shahrī risālasī*, DBRŪ — *Dar bayān-i risāla-yi Ūsh*):

Table 1

	ŪSHR	DBRŪ
Explanation of the name of Ūsh	+	—
Explanation of the name of <i>Khayr al-buldān</i>	+	+
Tales of the superiority of Ūsh and its inhabitants over other cities and people, their high morals, etc.	+	+
Tale of the prophet Sulaymān's visit to Ūsh	+	+
Tale of how Sulaymān built a mosque in Ūsh	+	—
Tales of the struggle of the people of Ūsh for their faith	+	+
Tale of Āṣāf b. Barakhyā's stay in Ūsh and his death and burial in that city	+	—
Tale from Zayd al-Anṣārī [4] about Muḥammad's words on the abundance of Ūsh	+	+
Mention of the Mountain of Barākūh in Ūsh	+	+
Tale of the visit of the prophets and the messengers of God to the Mountain of Barākūh	+	+
Tale of the amazing qualities of the water in Ūsh	+	+
Tale from the <i>ḥadīrat</i> ‘Umar about the establishment of the true faith in Ūsh in the time of the prophet ‘Īsā and about how one of the prophet ‘Īsā's followers was martyred in Ūsh	+	—
Tale from <i>Kh</i> ^w āja Yamānī about the great <i>mujtahid</i> and his tomb near the Simkish (?) pond	+	—