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SOME ARABIC ISLAMIC MANUSCRIPTS FROM SHAYKH ḤUSAYN (BALE, ETHIOPIA) (A SHORT DESCRIPTION BASED ON THE MAE RAS PHOTOGRAPHS)

In 1913 the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography sent a scientific expedition to South-Eastern Ethiopia. Head of the expedition was famous Russian poet Nikolai Gumil'ev. In 2008 the Museum sent another expedition that followed Gumil'ev's itinerary.

Shaykh Ḥusayn, where in 1913 and 2008 photographs of Arabic manuscripts were taken, was one of the key points of both expeditions. Arabic texts found in 1913 photos were partly deciphered in the course of the Museum research and exhibition project.

In June 2008 when I was studying the manuscripts stored in St. Petersburg collections I met Prof. Efim Rezvan, Deputy Director of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography who, because of the absence of the necessary publications in St. Petersburg libraries, asked me to make an examination of the texts presented at the photos taken both in 1913 and 2008. What follows is a very brief description of the results of the work.

Analysis has shown that the manuscript photographed by Gumil'ev in 1913 contains the famous hagiography of *shaykh* Ḥusayn (or Nūr Ḥusayn) [1] the most revered saint of Ethiopian Muslims, buried in his venerated shrine at Annajina, in the Southern Ethiopian region of Bale, where twice a year (in *Dhū al-ḥijja*, during the *hajj* period, and on the 15 of *Jumādā II*) a huge mass pilgrimage takes place.

The text of the hagiography was published for the first time in Cairo, at "Maṭba'at al-sharq", in Rajab 1345 (25 December 1926 — 24 January 1927). The expenses of the printing procedure were met by the "Maktaba al-Ḥusayniyya", owned by Aḥmad and Muḥammad al-Ḥusayni in Egypt and Ethiopia (al-Ḥabasha) with an office in Addis Ababa [2].

In 1368/1948–49 it was republished, with minor changes, in Egypt at the "Dār Iḥyā' al-kutub al-'arabiyya", property of the famous Egyptian printer 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, at the expenses of the much renowned Muslim Harari learned man *al-ḥājj* Yūsuf 'Abd al-Raḥmān [3]. Afterwards, it was several times reprinted in other local Ethiopian printing presses. In the

following lines, all the page references will be to the first Egyptian edition.

All the printed editions present the hagiographical material divided into three different works: the *Kitāb rabī' al-qulūb fī dhikr manāqib wa-faḍā'il sayyidinā al-shaykh Nūr Ḥusayn* ("Book of the Spring of Hearts in Reminder of Merits and Virtues of our Lord *shaykh* Nūr Ḥusayn") (pp. 1–43); the *Kitāb nuzhat al-asrār wa-tahārat al-aqdhar fī manāqibih wa-faḍā'ilih ayḍan* ("Book of Delight of Hidden for Cleansing of Vices in his Merits and Virtues") (pp. 1–62) and, finally, the genealogy of the holy man (pp. 64–71), *Nasabuh al-sharīf*.

In the manuscript which was photographed by Gumil'ev and his trip companion Sverchkov, we find the *Kitāb rabī' al-qulūb fī dhikr faḍā'il Ḥusayn b. Malkā'ī* (title page in photo 2198–25 (fig. 1) [4]; incipit — p. 7 (fig. 2), photo 2198–30; explicit — photo 2198–88) (fig. 3) [5]. As for the *Kitāb nuzhat al-asrār*, the photos contain its incipit (photo 2198–88 on the left side) (fig. 4) and the text until the first line of p. 14 (photo 2198–96). Then a wide lacuna is there and the text starts over again at p. 59 up to the end (p. 62; photo 2198–89). The manuscript has an incomplete colophon; no date of completion of the writing is mentioned but the copyist is remembered: he is an otherwise unknown 'Abd al-Salām b. Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm. Considering our scarce knowledge of the palaeography of Islamic Arabic manuscripts of the Horn of Africa, it is honestly impossible to dare to date it by analyzing the *khatt*, which resembles the *naskhī ductus* current in South Ethiopia and Somalia.

This manuscript has a great importance for the text of the hagiography of *shaykh* Ḥusayn whose critical edition is still missing.

The manuscript of Gumil'ev goes indeed to join the other unpublished manuscript of the work presently kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris [6]. Surprisingly enough, no manuscript of the hagiography of the *shaykh*,