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Genealogy of the *Musaviyya* Sayyids in Funeral Epigraphy from the Shāh-i Zinda Complex

Babur Aminov

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan named after Biruni (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

Abstract: The paper addresses the genealogies of the *Musaviyya* Sayyids focusing on materials of funeral epigraphy from the Shāh-i Zinda

complex (15th -18th centuries). This is the first attempt on the basis of inscriptions to restore chronologically the history of the *Musaviyya* family, and to put forth the assumption of political functions of certain persons from this family.

For the first time the texts of epitaphs and their translations into English were brought in scientific circulation. The paper opens a wide field for further research on Sayyids' history, genealogies, and their reconstruction.

Key words: 15th -18th centuries, *Sayyids'* genealogy, *Sayyid Mūsaviyya*, Shāh-i Zinda complex, Mawaraunnahr, funeral epigraphy

The richest source of the *Sayyids'* genealogy in the Mawaraunnahr region is represented by funeral epigraphy from the Shāh-i Zinda complex, a unique and famous historical-architectural monument from the 14th – 15th centuries¹, where the prevailing number of gravestone constructions which absorbed the elements of the architectural decor and rich calligraphy, have survived in their original appearance. The complex occupies the area on the southern part of the ancient settlement Afrasiab, a famous pre-Islamic city center of Samarkand located in the east of the present-day city site.

¹ There are 11 memorial cultic constructions in Shāh-i Zinda, the majority of which are dated from the 14th and 15th centuries.

As a result of archeological excavations and restoration works which were carried out in the memorial complex Shāh-i Zinda before the 2750-th anniversary of the city of Samarkand², there were revealed a great number of gravestones unearthed and cleared from the ground and sediments, what enabled further studying the funeral epigraphy of that complex. Due to moral and material support rendered by the Max Van Bershem Foundation, in the autumn of 2006 and in the beginning of 2007, the epigraphic expedition worked in the territory of the necropolis and the cemetery. During these works, they registered over 100 gravestones with inscriptions.

Although the history of epigraphy studies at the complex Shāh-i Zinda is not rich in publications, but due to its location and specific architectural features, the complex, nevertheless, had drawn attention of some experts. At the end of the 19th century, S.A.Lapin undertook the first attempt to translate a small portion of inscriptions from that complex.³ Some information on inscriptions from Shāh-i Zinda is given in comments to the translation of the book “Samaria” by the renowned scholar V.L.Vyatkin.⁴ At the end of the last century, the inscriptions from Shāh-i Zinda were published by the French researcher E.Bloch, in whose translation the errors were noticed.⁵ In the middle of the 20th century, M.E.Masson made new translation and interpretation of the inscriptions from the Turkan-aka mausoleum included in that complex.⁶ V.A.Shishkin accomplished translation and publication of the most part of the survived inscriptions from the complex Shāh-i Zinda, though

² In the summer of 2004 the Muslim Religious Directorate of Uzbekistan, the administration of the Samarkand oblast and the Ministry of Culture put forward an initiative to establish a community fund of « Shāh-i Zinda » aimed at accomplishing restoration and reconstructive works in the architectural complex, as well as with respect to capital improvement. See. Andrey Kudryashov, Fergana.Ru (Tashkent-Samarkand) (<http://www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=3584>).

³ С.А.Лапин. Перевод надписей на исторических памятниках Самарканда. Справочная книжка самаркандской области (=СКСО), в.IV, Самарканд, 1896. Отдел IV, стр.1-22; там же: Шахи-Зинда и его намогильный памятник.стр.39-45

⁴ СКСО, 1898, в. VI, 1899.

⁵ E.Bloch. Les inscription de Samarkand, Revue Archeologique. 1897, v.I, pp.67-109

⁶ Е.М.Массон. О происхождении мавзолея Туркан-ака в Самарканде. Материалы по истории и теории архитектуры Узбекистана, в.1, [М.], 1950, стр.46

without the profound textual and paleographic analysis.⁷ Later, those inscriptions from the mausoleum Shirin-Beg aga, on the basis of the texts translated by V.A.Shishkin, were included in the collection *Repertoire chronologique d' épigraphie arabe*.⁸

Studying inscriptions of architectural buildings of a complex Shāh-i Zinda, experts have not taken into account materials taking place there funeral epigraphy. In terms of the information value and the content of historic facts, the gravestone inscriptions are of significant scientific importance and value. Unfortunately, until now, such monuments have not become the objects of solid research of historians and experts. The urgent necessity to investigate and publish them is dictated by such external factors as meteorological conditions, which cause obliterating and destroying the inscriptions, as a consequence, the important data can be lost for history.

On the particular areas and between the sites built up by over tomb constructions, which are located to the left and to the right sides from the main narrow pass of the complex, there are concentrated the tombstones with inscriptions, which mainly have a pedestal form. Each site contains the different quantity of plates: from 3 to 30 and more. Sometimes there are met separate gravestones. The big number of epitaphs can be found also on the site to the east from the main entrance of the complex, in the territory of a modern cemetery Shāh-i Zinda. The epitaphs from the tombs located near the main pass of the complex represent great interest for the Sayyids' history and genealogy. All epitaphs (63 items in total) are localized according to the place of their disposing, and divided into four groups, respectively. The first group consists of 31 tombstones; two of them are without any inscriptions. The second group contains 11 epitaphs, the third group 7, and the fourth group contains 12 epitaphs. Each over-tomb plate is numbered according to the location in the complex. Forty-five gravestones from this list are distinguished for their

⁷ В.А.Шишкин.Надписи в ансамбле Шахи-Зинда.Зодчество Узбекистана. Материалы и исследования. Вып. II.Ансамбль Шахи-Зинда.Ташкент,1970. С.7-71

⁸ Repertoire chronologique d' épigraphie arabe fondé par Étienne Combe, Jean Sauvaget et Gaston Wiet. Tom XVIII (Année 784 à 800 de l'hegire)/ Etabli par Ludvik Kalus. Institut francais de l' archeologie orientale du Caire, 1991., pp. 44-46

dressing and wealth of data. Twenty-six gravestones of the total number represent burial places of male representatives of the House of *Sayyids*, the rest gravestones mark the female tombs. Reading and translation of epitaphs were carried out after decoding and additional treatment of inscriptions.

The investigation results have shown that the main part of these tombstones represents burial places of representatives from the House of *Sayyids*. The genealogic chain of gravestone inscriptions counts from 2 up to 29 names. Twenty-nine names are available in the genealogic chain of epitaphs numbered Shz-III (25) (text №1, Fig. 1) and Shz-14 (text №2, Fig. № 2).⁹ In inscriptions from gravestones numbered Shz-5 and Shz-6 (text №3, Fig. 3) there were identified 28 names belonging to the male representative of the *Sayyids* family. Among the female names from this house, there were revealed the names of the genealogy frequently mentioned in the following gravestone inscriptions: 29 names in Shz-22, 23 names in Shz-VII-29, etc.

The majority of the investigated here gravestones related to the *Sayyids* family, chronologically pertain to the epoch of the Uzbek khanates (16th -18th centuries). The tombstones from the Timurid period are met less frequently.

As judged by the data from the gravestone inscriptions, it was determined that here in Samarkand in the 15th century, and especially in the 16th -18th centuries, there was a community of the *Sayyids* whose representatives bore the eponym of *Mūsaviyya*. The reason for this can serve the term *Sayyid Mūsaviyya* available in the structure of names of important persons and officials from among the descendants of the Prophet. As the presented genealogies of the particular epitaphs from the necropolis Shāh-i Zinda have shown, the *Sayyids Mūsaviyya* are descendants of the Termez *Sayyids*. They descent from Ja'far ibn **Ibrāhīm Mūsa**, appointed as a *nakib* (the head of the *Sayyids*) during the

⁹ Hereinafter the numbering of epigraphic monuments is given in accordance with the Catalogue compiled by the author of the article based on the expedition materials in the order of location in the complex area. For instance, SHZ (Shāh-i Zinda).

epoch of the Samanids in the settlement of the *Sayyids* near Termez.¹⁰ Proceeding from the *Sayyids*' genealogy, it is necessary to note that the genealogic line of the Samarkand branch of the *Sayyids-Mūsaviyya* in traced his ancestry to Khamza,¹¹ the son of the seventh imām **Mūsa al-Kāzīm** (745-802). The above-mentioned Ja'far ibn **Ibrāhīm Mūsa** is in the eighth degree of consanguinity from Ḥamza. There is an opinion that the *Musaviyya* Sayyids represent a separate branch of descendants of the Termez *Sayyids*. But the nisba *termīzī* is absent in the texts of inscriptions from the tombstones of the *Musaviyya Sayyids*.

Referring to particular words and terms designating the state ranks and religious grades, it is possible to determine the sociopolitical and religious functions of the *Musaviyya Sayyids*. It is supposed that those persons participated in the organs of the state-administrative system of the society in the 16th-18th centuries. In the components of names of some representatives of the *Sayyids* there are such titles, as *amīr al-kabīr* (*amīr-i kabīr*) *amīr*, *sulṭān*, *mīr*. Amir 'Abd ul-Khay (Shz-2, Shz-7, Shz-19), *amīr Sayyid* Mahdi (Shz-I (23)), are named by an epithet *amīr al-kabīr*. *Mīr* as a brief form of the title *amīr* is met only in the structure of names of genealogical gravestone Shz (III)-3. Probably, not all the *Sayyids* bore a title *amīr* what is testified by the texts of particular epitaphs. Both titles – *amīr* and *sulṭān* are placed on some tombstones. Some persons from that family for their merits and accomplishments were bestowed by supreme titles and epithets *al-valī*, *al-sayyid al-fāḍil al-a'lim* that gives an indication about the *Sayyid's* excellence in mystical knowledge.

There is no exact data in our disposal on migration of this branch of the *Sayyids* to Samarkand. Apparently, the descendants of Dja'far ibn Ibrahim settled there in the Amir Timur's epoch, which saw the stabilization in society. It should be also noted that Timur, as well as the rulers of the following centuries, held the *Sayyids* in estimation and respect.

¹⁰ Дж. Мирзаев. Роль термезских саййидов в истории Центральной Азии. www.kitab.uz/cms/files/%20Саййиды.doc - [Pages similaires](#) C.4

¹¹ Бартольд В.В. VII. Работы по исторической географии и истории Ирана, М.:Наука, 1971. С.135

Thus, the funeral epigraphy materials from the complex Shāh-i Zinda have shown that the genealogic data of gravestone inscriptions serve as the evidence of not only ancestral relationship of the *Sayyids* family, but also attest their social functions in administrative and managerial system of the state, as well as their active participation in religious life in the centuries under consideration. Further inquiry into the history of the *Sayyids* of Mawaraunnahr on the basis of gravestone inscriptions and their publication can reveal new historic facts and data on the history of this important stratum of the Muslim society.

Appendix

Shz-III (25) (size of groundstones: 172x39x47) (text №1)

الوجه الغرب
 هذا مرقد المنورو المشهد المعطر لسيد العالم السعيد الشهيد امير سلطان حسين
 ابن جناب سيادتماب نقابت [اناب] مرتضوى انتساب امير عبد الغفار ابن امير مطهر ابن امير
 سلطان محمد
 ابن امير ابراهيم ابن امير حسين ابن امير جمال الدين امير محمود شاه ابن امير حسين ابن
 امير
 طاهر ابن امير حسين ابن امير على ابن امير محمد ابن ابراهيم ابن موسى ابن جعفر
 ابن محمد ابن اسماعيل ابن احمد ابن محمد ابن عرابي ابن قاسم ابن حمزه
 ابن امام موسى كاظم ابن امام جعفر صادق ابن امام محمد الباقر ابن امام زين العابدين ابن
 امام حسين ابن امير المومنين على ابن ابى طالب
 كرم الله وجهه فى التاريخ شهر شوال سنة 970 سبعين و تسعمائه

The western end face:

1. This is the effulgent and exhaling fragrance tomb of al-Sayyid, the scholar, al-Sa'id the martyr amīr **Sulṭān Ḥusayn**
2. of the son of the Lord a refuge of the Sayyids, the sign of greatness, from the clan of murtadavi and amīr 'Abd-Ghaffār ibn amīr **Sulṭān Muḥammad**

3. ibn **Ibrāhīm** ibn amīr **Ḥusayn** ibn amīr **Jamāl ad-dīn** amīr **Maḥmūdshāh** ibn amīr **Ḥusayn** ibn amīr
4. **Tāhir** ibn amīr **Ḥusayn** ibn amīr ‘**Alī** ibn amīr **Muḥammad** ibn **Ibrāhīm** ibn **Mūsa** ibn **Ja‘far**
5. ibn **Muḥammad** ibn **Ismā‘il** ibn **Aḥmad** ibn **Muḥammad** ibn ‘**Arābī** ibn **Qāsim** ibn **Ḥamza**
6. ibn **Imām Mūsa Kāzīm** ibn **Imām Ja‘far Ṣādiq** ibn **Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir** ibn **Imām Zayn ul-ābidiyn** ibn
7. **Imām Ḥusayn** ibn amīr **al-mū ‘minīn** ‘**Alī** ibn **Abī Ṭālib**
8. Let Allah shed glory on him, died in the month of shavval 970 year, (nine hundred seventieth) (970/1562)

Shz-14 (size of groundstones: 151x30x41) (text №2)

الوجه الشمال

هذه مرقد منور مطهر عاليجناب سيادت ماب نقابت
 انا ب مرتضوى انتساب امير محمد جعفر بن حيدر محمد بن
 غضنفر سلطان بن محمد سلطان ابراهيم بن سلطان حسين بن جمال الدين
 محمود شاه بن حسين بن طاهر بن حسين بن على بن محمد بن موسى بن ابراهيم بن محمد
 بن اسماعيل بن احمد بن محمد الاعرابي بن قاسم بن حمزه بن امام موسى بن

Northern end face:

1. This effulgent sacred (purified) tomb of a Master, the place of come-back of the Sayyids,
 2. The etiquette of greatness, from the clan of murtadavi and amīr **Muḥammad Ja‘far** ibn **Ḥaydar Muḥammad** ibn
 3. **Ghāḡanfar Sultān** ibn **Muḥammad Sultān Ibrāhīm** ibn **Sultān Ḥusayn** ibn **Jamāl ad-dīn**
 4. **Maḥmūd Shāh** ibn **Ḥusayn** ibn **Ṭāhir** ibn **Ḥusayn** ibn ‘**Alī** ibn **Muḥammad** ibn **Mūsa** ibn **Ibrāhīm Muḥammad**
 5. ibn **Ismā‘il** ibn **Aḥmad** ibn **Muḥammad al- Arābī** ibn **Qāsim** ibn **Ḥamza** ibn **Imām Mūsa** ibn
- (continuation on the upper plane of a plate)

امام جعفر صادق بن امام محمد باقر
بن امام زين العابدين بن حسين
الشهيد بن علي بن ابي طالب كرم
الله وجهه فاطمه بنت رسول الله

6. ibn **Imām Ja‘far Ṣādiq** ibn **Imām Muḥammad Bāqir**

7. ibn **Imām Zayn ul-ābidiyn** ibn **Ḥusayn**

8. **al-shāhid** (martyr) ibn ‘**Alī** ibn **Abī Ṭālib**, let

9. Allah bestow a blessing on him, **Fāṭima**, the daughter of the **Envoy of Allah**

الوجه الجنوب
يوم الخميس
في التاريخ شهر شوال سنة ثمانين و تسعمائه
الهجرة النبوية هرکه خواند دعا طمع دارم

Southern end face:

1. On Friday

2. in the Month of shavval of the nine hundred eightieth year of

3. al - Hejira of the Prophet, he, who is reading (this text), is blessed by me

Shz-6 (size of groundstones: **196x48x49**) (text №3)

الوجه الشمال
هذا مرقد الشاب الامجد المغفور المبرور
امير جمال الدين ابن امير سلطان حسين بن
امير عبدالغفار بن امير مطهر بن امير سلطان محمد
بن امير ابراهيم بن امير حسين بن امير جمال الدين بن محمود شاه بن امير حسين بن امير
طاهر

بن امیر حسین بن امیر علی بن امیر محمد بن امیر ابراهیم بن موسی بن محمد جعفر بن
اسماعیل بن احمد بن محمد
بن عرابی بن قاسم بن حمزه بن امام موسی کاظم بن امام جعفر صادق بن امام محمد الباقر
بن امام زین العابدین امام بن امام حسین بن امیر

Northern end face:

1. It is a tomb of a good young man, forgiven and absolved
2. amīr **Jamāl ad-dīn** ibn amīr **Sulṭān Ḥusayn** ibn
3. amīr ‘**Abd ul-Ghaffar** ibn amīr **Muṭṭahir** ibn amīr **Sulṭān Muḥammad**
4. ibn amīr **Ibrāhīm** ibn amīr **Ḥusayn** ibn amīr **Jamāl ad-dīn** ibn **Maḥmūd Shāh** ibn amīr **Ḥusayn** ibn amīr **Ṭāhir**
5. ibn amīr **Ḥusayn** ibn amīr ‘**Alī** ibn amīr **Muḥammad** ibn amīr **Ibrāhīm** ibn **Mūsa** ibn **Muḥammad Ja‘far** ibn **Ismā‘il** ibn **Aḥmad** ibn **Muḥammad**
6. ibn **Arābī** ibn **Qāsim** ibn **Ḥamza** ibn **Imām Mūsa Kāzīm** ibn **Imām Ja‘far Ṣādiq** ibn **Imām Muḥammad al- Bāqir** ibn **Imām Zayn ul-‘Abidiyn** ibn **Imām Ḥusayn** ibn amīr

The system of transliteration of the Arabic letters accepted in the present work

Arabic letters	Latin letters
ا	‘
ا	a
آ	ā
ب	b
پ	p
ت	t
ث	th
ج	dj, j, ġ
چ	ch
ح	ḥ

خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
ژ	j
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	‘
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
گ	g
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
و	ū
و	o
و	v, w
ه	h
ی	i, ī

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