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ON CHINESE HUI-MUSLIM ELEMENTARY VOCABULARY (2): FUNERAL TERMINOLOGY¹

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Abstract

With this paper the writers continue their series of articles on Chinese Muslim elementary vocabulary. As already mentioned in the first part,² in most Chinese dictionaries the specific elementary vocabulary of Islam is omitted. The paper in hand deals with the funeral terminology of Chinese Muslim.³ In contrast to the prayer terminology, we can only find one direct borrowing in Sino-Arabic, but no Sino-Persian transcription (Arabic and Persian loanwords phonetically transcribed with Chinese characters) among the funeral terms. More often the common Chinese terms are also used in the specific Muslim context. Furthermore, it is obvious that the number of terms is somehow limited comparing to the prayer terminology.

- (1) *bīn yí tīng* (殡仪厅) ‘house for washing, shrouding and preparing the corpse before burial’ (~ Arabic مَحْسَلَة الْمَوْتِ *maḥsala lilmawtā*). Not all Muslim communities have such a house. It mainly depends on costs for running such an institution.

¹ The paper in hand results from some fieldworks in the context of socio-linguistic research on the Hui-Muslim communities in the province of Shāndōng.

² Sūn, Knüppel (2020a).

³ On the Hui Muslims’ funeral customs cf. also Sūn, Knüppel (2020b).

- (2) *chuān bù* (穿布) ‘the (three) shrouds for shrouding the corpse’ (~ Arabic كفن *kafin*); cf. also → *kè fán* (克凡). While in other Muslim communities five shrouds are used for women, the Hui-Muslims in Shāndōng use only three.
- (3) *dà chuān bù* (大穿布) ‘the third of the three shrouds for shrouding the corpse’ (→ *chuān bù* [穿布] ~ *kè fán* [克凡]) ‘reaching from over the head till under the feet’ (~ Arabic لفافة *lufāfa*).
- (4) *huí guāng fǎn zhào* (回光返照) ‘the “death struggle”’ (~ Arabic سكرة الموت *sakrat almawt*); here no specific Hui-Muslim term is used, rather the common Chinese word occurs in this specific Muslim context.
- (5) *jià zǐ* (架子) ‘a kind of stretcher for the transport of the corpse from the house of the deceased’s family to the cemetery’ (~ Arabic نعش *naʿš*; this can point to both a stretcher and a coffin). Such stretchers are provided by the communities of the respective mosques. In this case the common Chinese word for such a tool is used in the specific Muslim context, too.
- (6) *jìng lǐ* (净礼) ‘the ritual of washing the corpse’ (~ Arabic تغسيل الميت *taḡsīl almayit*, غسل الميت *asl almayit*). This follows a specific ritual. The corpse has to be washed three times, if needed, more times. For the several steps of it, there are no specific words. Here again we have no Muslim lexical item and common Chinese words are only used.
- (7) *jīng xiá* (经匣) ‘a transparent cooling container/coffin for keeping the corpse before transporting to the cemetery’ (~ Arabic غرفة حفظ الموتي *ḡurfat ḥafẓ almawtā*; this indeed points to a cooling chamber, e.g. in a hospital). Such containers/coffins are owned by the mosque communities and have a cooling system to keep the corpse for some hours if needed.
- (8) *kǎn jiān* (坎肩) ‘the first of the three shrouds for shrouding the corpse’ (→ *chuān bù* [穿布] ~ *kè fán* [克凡]); ‘reaching from the shoulders over the knees’ (~ Arabic إزار *īzāra*); in most Muslim communities it reaches from the hip to the ankles.
- (9) *kè fán* (克凡) → *chuān bù* (穿布).
- (10) *lǐng shǔ rén* (领属人) ‘the “death prayer” spoken after the person deceased or before the burial’ (~ Arabic صلاة الجنازة *ṣalāta al-ḡināza*).
- (11) *qī qiào* (七窍) ‘“seven orifices of the body” that have to be closed during or after the washing of the corpse’ (~ Arabic مخرج الجسم *maḥāriḡ al-ḡism* ‘“orifices of the body”’); these are the nostrils, ears, eyes, and mouth that have to be “stuffed” or covered (eyes) with cotton tampons. Among the Hui Muslims of Shāndōng the closing of other orifices of the body is not practised.
- (12) *qī qiào mǐ* (七窍米) ‘the cotton tampons (filled with rice) to close or cover the “seven orifices of the body”’ (→ *qī qiào* [七窍]) ‘during preparation of the corpse for burial’ (~ Arabic قطن *quṭun*).
- (13) *shèng xíng* (圣行) ‘funeral procession’ (~ Arabic تشييع الجنازة *tašyīc al-ḡināza*).
- (14) *shuǐ liū* (水溜) ‘shelf for the ritual washing of the corpse before burial’ (~ Arabic كخشبة الغسل *kaḥšabat al-ḡusli* ‘shelf/board, e.g. for washing the corpse’).
- (15) *xiǎo chuān bù* (小穿布) ‘the second of the three shrouds for shrouding the corpse’ (→ *chuān bù* [穿布] ~ *kè fán* [克凡]) ‘reaching from the shoulders to

the ankles’ (~ Arabic قَبِيص *kamīṣ*); in most Muslim communities it reaches from the neck to the feet.

- (16) *zhàng zǐ* (帐子) ‘canopy for the superstructure of the of stretcher for the transport of the corpse’ (→ *jià zǐ* [架子]) ‘made from cloth (often with broideries)’. For this the common Chinese word for the canopy is used in the specific Muslim context, too.
- (17) *zhě nà zé* (者那则) ‘the burial/funeral’; this is a Sino-Arabic transcription of Arabic الجنازة (*al-ǧināza*) (the lexeme is also used for transport/arrival of the corpse; in some Arabic societies the word مَاتِم *mātim* is used for burial/funeral even though it is the lexical item referring to collective mourning/devotion).
- (18) *zuò zhèng yán* (做证言), the Muslim *creed* – “šahādah” (شهادة; لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ; شهادة) = “There is no god but God and Muḥammad is the messenger of God”), which is repeated by the family and friends of a dying person during the death struggle to let the person passing away repeat it.

References

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