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The book of women's rituals: the Central Asian adaptation of the 'Aqā'id al-nisā'

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Abstract

This article explores the Central Asian adaptation of the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' which has survived as a single copy within a manuscript codex located at the Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). Not only does the Central Asian adaptation of the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' lift 'the iron curtain' from the little-known world of rituals and customs practised by women in early modern Central Asian societies, it also serves as an important source to balance the androcentric view of gendered history of the early modern Persianate world, while challenging the preconceived notions of women's agency and authority in pre-modern Muslim societies.

Keywords: Women; rituals; customs; Central Asia; early modern period

The 'Aqā'id al-nisā' is the popular early modern Persian critique of women's beliefs and superstitions. It was completed in the later Safavid period and has been ascribed to the Iranian religious scholar named Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn Khwānsārī (d. 1122/1710). Kathryn Babayan rightly notes that 'it is a rare piece, for it provides a glimpse of women beyond court society where they are near-invisible in the extant sources of the Šafavid period (907–1135/1501–1722)'.¹ This treatise is also known as *Kulthūm Naneh*, named after one of the main female characters in the text. Its popularity extends beyond the Iranian territories, aided by its translation into both English and French in the nineteenth century.² As a product of the late Safavid religio-political social environment, the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' centres on the Isfahani urban context of the second half of the seventeenth century. The treatise is dedicated to the teachings and instructions of five authoritative female figures, referred to as 'ulamā', concerning women's customs and practices. Although the content focuses solely on the female experience, the author of the treatise is male and his descriptions of female customs and practices are told from his disparaging perspective:

¹ Kathryn Babayan, 'The "Aqā'id al-Nisā": A Glimpse at Šafavid Women in Local Işfahānī Culture', in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, (ed.) Gavin R. G. Hambly (New York, 1998), p. 350.

² James Atkinson (trans.), *Customs and Manners of the Women of Persia, and Their Domestic Superstitions* (London, 1832); J. Thonnelier (trans.), *Kitabi Kulsum Naneh, ou le livre des dames de la Perse* (Paris, 1881). The editor of the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' published in Tehran also mentioned additional French and Turkish translations of the treatise, which I have been unable to access. See Maḥmūd Katīrā'ī (ed.), 'Aqā'id al-nisā' va *Mīrāt al-bulāhā*: *Dū risāla-yi intiḳādī dar farhang-i tūda* (Tehran, [1379] 1970), pp. 14–15.

The humor and ridicule that permeates this account of customs, beliefs, and sayings of five Iṣfahānī female experts on ‘superstition’ are collated with other ‘texts’ on Ṣafavid women, not only to add more coloring, but to question the degree to which we are dealing with a masculine imagination of the age, and more particularly with a purist religious imagination.³

This article examines the Central Asian adaptation of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ which has survived as a single copy within a manuscript codex.⁴ This codex is not yet catalogued, but it is labelled with the inventory number 3759 and is located at the Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies (hereafter IVRUz) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.⁵ The colophon of this ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ names a certain Qārī Raḥmatullāh Marvī al-Shīʿa as the author of the treatise, which was produced in the year 1300/1882 (*tammat risāla-yi ‘Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ az taṣnīf-i Qārī Raḥmatullāh Marvī al-Shīʿa [dar] sana 1300*).⁶ Although neither the author’s name nor the date of completion match the abovementioned Iranian version, Qārī Raḥmatullāh’s place of origin in Marv and his identification as a Shīʿa leaves little doubt that there is a link between the two versions of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’. Thus, this article will discuss the reproduction of this treatise by Qārī Raḥmatullāh, who tailored it to better fit within a Central Asian context, guided by the following research questions: What makes Qārī Raḥmatullāh’s reproduction different from the Iranian version? In what ways does the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ reflect the social context around female-dominant private domains? To what extent does ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ challenge the dominant discourse on women’s agency and authority? How relevant are these rituals and practices in comparison to those practised in contemporary Central Asia? The original text of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ based on MS IVRUz 3759 is provided as an appendix to this article in order to make the text accessible to a broader audience.

Although the Central Asian adaptation of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ does not refer to ongoing social and political changes, a few comments are necessary to contextualise the text within the region of Central Asia. The second half of the nineteenth century was characterised by the Russian conquest of Central Asia. When the text was produced in 1882, the Russian imperial administration was in the process of firmly establishing its political control in Central Asia.⁷ The nineteenth century is also known for the threat posed by Turkmen tribes to people’s safety in Khorasan and its adjacent regions. Not only were they considered treacherous because of their plundering activities, they were also feared for their enslavement operations during which they captured Persian, mostly Shīʿa, populations for the purpose of selling them in the slave markets of Khiva and Bukhara.⁸ One

³ Babayan, ‘The “*Aqāʿid al-Nisāʿ*”’, p. 351.

⁴ Please note that the Central Asian adaptation of the work is referred to by its title ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ in the following pages for the sake of convenience. Otherwise, the use of the Iranian version of the text will be specified in the discussion.

⁵ ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’, MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 126b–138a. The two other works within the same manuscript codex were catalogued in A. A. Semenov (ed.), *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, Vol. V (Tashkent, 1950), pp. 184–185, nos. 3776 and 3777. The first work, *Kitāb-i inshāʿ*, is a treatise on a composition of letters ascribed to Mīrzā Ṣādiq-munshī Jāndārī, a court secretary of the Bukharan ruler Amīr Khaydar (r. 1800–1826). The second text, *Yārliqāt va munshāʿat*, is a collection of letters, state documents, and papers. Both texts were copied by the same scribe, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Bukhārī, and were written circa 1279/1862. It is likely that the other texts within the same codex, including the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’, were also reproduced in Bukhara.

⁶ MS IVRUz 3759, f. 138a.

⁷ For more information and references, see Yuri Bregel, ‘Central Asia vii. In the 18th–19th Centuries’, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, V/2, pp. 193–205, and Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814–1914* (Cambridge, 2020).

⁸ On the history of slavery in Central Asia, see Jeff Eden, *Slavery and Empire in Central Asia* (Cambridge, 2018). See also Abbas Amanat, ‘Central Asia viii. Relations with Persia in the 19th Century’, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, V/2, pp. 205–207.

year prior to the completion date of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’, the Russian imperial armies had massacred more than 8,000 Turkmen, including women and children, during the devastating punitive expeditions against the Turkmen tribes. Despite the lack of any direct indication in the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’, Qārī Raḥmatullāh’s association with Marv (located in today’s Turkmenistan) and his Shīʿī affiliation not only allude to his Iranian origin, but may also link his arrival in Bukhara to the Turkmen-led slave business.

The Central Asian adaptation of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ is not a word-by-word reproduction of the Iranian version, although the original version was unquestionably the main source for the adaptation. These two versions were written almost two centuries apart, and as there is little to no access to other potential Central Asian copies of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’, it is difficult to assess the revisions made and exactly how the adaptations were developed. In the Iranian version, the five female specialists are named as Kulthūm Naneh, Bībī Shāh Zaynab, Khāla Jān Aghā, Bājī Yāsaman, and Dede Bazm Ārā.⁹ In comparison, in the Central Asian adaptation, their names appear as Bībī Shāh Zaynab, Bībī Khāl Jūybārī, Bībī Māchān Bazm Ārā, Khāla Panīr Ḥavz Laylī, and Bībī Qalmāq Allākūy. The association of Bībī Khāl Jūybārī’s *nisba* (lineage) with the well-known locality of Jūybār in Bukhara (a place that is easily recognisable because of the famous clan of the prominent Jūybārī shaykhs¹⁰ belonging to the Naqshbandī tradition in Central Asia) is one of the noticeable marks of the adaptation of the text to the Central Asian context. Furthermore, the events in the Iranian ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ take place in and around Isfahan, as noted from the mention of the minaret of Kawn Birinjī,¹¹ while in the Central Asian version, the activities occur in Bukhara, as evidenced by the reference to the minaret of Gāvkuṣhān located in the city of Bukhara.¹²

The ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ consists of 16 chapters of varying lengths, each of which is dedicated to a particular topic. The following is the *fihrist* (table of contents) of the chapters appearing in the introduction to the Central Asian adaptation of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’:¹³

1. Ritual ablution, complete ritual purification, and dry ablution
2. Praying
3. Fasting
4. Marriage and wedding ceremonies
5. Wedding rituals
6. Childbirth
7. Bathhouse rituals
8. Musical instruments and performance
9. Special occasions [playing of musical instruments]
10. Intimacy between women and men
11. Ritual cooking

⁹ According to the version of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ used as a base in Atkinson’s English translation, the names of the female experts are: ‘Kulsum Naneh, the senior matron, Shahr-Banu Dadeh, Dadeh-Bazm Ara, Baji Yasmin, and Khala Gul-bari’: Atkinson (trans.), *Customs*, p. 2. The discrepancy between the names suggests the existence of different versions of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’. Therefore, throughout this article, we will be treating the different versions of the ‘*Aqāʿid al-nisāʿ*’ as separate texts while comparing them.

¹⁰ For more details on the Jūybārī shaykhs and further references, see R. D. McChesney, ‘Juybāris’, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, V/4, pp. 262–268.

¹¹ For more information on the minaret of Kawn Birinjī located in Isfahan, see Babayan, ‘The “*Aqāʿid al-Nisāʿ*”’, pp. 363–364.

¹² This minaret is a part of the larger architectural complex known as Khwāja Gāvkuṣhān Ensemble, which is included on UNESCO’s World Heritage List.

¹³ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 126b–127a. There are 12 chapters in Atkinson’s version, which differ slightly from the Iranian and Central Asian versions. Atkinson (trans.), *Customs*, p. xix.

12. Amulets protecting from the evil eye
13. Unmarriageable and marriageable kin
14. Prayers
15. Guests
16. Oath sister.

Although both the Iranian and Central Asian versions share an overall compositional construction, there are occasional discrepancies in the text, including changes in the terminology, modifications of the compound verbs, and structural reorganisation of the second half of the Central Asia adaptation. For instance, the chapter on ritual ablution makes reference to *ūsma* (woad leaves), which is absent in the Iranian version. Tinting one's eyebrows with hand-pressed woad leaf extract is still a popular beauty regimen among the older generation in today's Central Asia. It is also worth mentioning that the chapter on ritual fasting in the Iranian version discusses the benefits of the fasting of Murtażā 'Alī—indicating the Shī'ī devotion that is predominant in Iran—whereas the Central Asian adaptation refers to the fasting of Bībī Seshanba (Lady Tuesday),¹⁴ who is considered to be a saintly figure popular in Central Asia in whose honour women make offerings on Tuesdays. In addition, the chapter on childbirth in the Central Asian version concentrates on the well-being of the newborn child who needs to be protected from the demon, Umm al-ṣibyān. In contrast, the Iranian version focuses on the recovery of a woman who has just given birth (*zā'ū*) in order to protect her from the disease of *āl* which afflicts post-partum women. Another example can be found in the references to fruit and vegetables. Those in the Central Asia adaptation name fruit and vegetables that are more common in Central Asia, whereas the Iranian version frequently mentions citrus fruits such oranges (*nāranj*) that do not grow in Central Asia. Examples of this sort are abundant throughout the text.

The order of chapters is in agreement in both versions until the ninth chapter. Specifically, the ninth chapter in the Central Asian adaptation becomes a continuation of the eighth chapter in the Iranian version, which discusses musical instruments. Thus, the preceding chapters in the Central Asian version follow this disorganisation and, consequently, neither the sixteenth nor concluding chapters which appear in the Iranian version¹⁵ are present in the Central Asian adaptation. While this explains why the Central Asian adaptation is shorter than the Iranian version, the Central Asian rendition of the '*Aqā'id al-nisā'* deserves to be read as a complete work in its own right and should be examined as a text that has been modified to better align with early modern Central Asian societies.

Far from being a prescriptive counsel for women, the Central Asian adaptation of the '*Aqā'id al-nisā'* is not comparable to instruction manuals on religious education written for women by male authors.¹⁶ Instead, it is an intricate text on women's rituals and practices described by a male author. While the text does not fit the mould of a single genre, the parts of the '*Aqā'id al-nisā'* dealing with the relationship between wives and husbands

¹⁴ For more information, see Maria Louw's discussion on 'Doing Business with Bibi Seshanba', in *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (London; New York, 2007), pp. 153–166.

¹⁵ The sixteenth chapter describes gifts that women send to each other, and the conclusion covers supplications and ethics. See Katirā'i (ed.), '*Aqā'id al-nisā'*, pp. 39–44.

¹⁶ For instance, in comparison to the untitled Chaghatay book of guidance, which was written for women in sixteenth-century Central Asia and has survived in a single manuscript copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France under the inventory number of MS Supplement Turc 1315. See Devin DeWeese, 'Telling Women's Stories in 16th-Century Central Asia: A Book of Guidance in Chaghatay Turkic for a Royal Lady of the Bukharan Court', *Oriens* 43 (2015), pp. 154–222. Or in comparison to the twentieth-century Urdu counsel for women titled *Bihishti Zewar*. See Barbara Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar* (Berkeley, 1990).

bring to mind the stories commonly known as the wiles of women (*makr-i zan* or *kayd al-nisā'*).¹⁷ The 'Aqā'id al-nisā' should certainly be read with caution in order to avoid misinterpreting it. On the one hand, we cannot disregard the author's disparaging attitude towards women's ceremonies; on the other, the survival to the present day of certain rituals described in the 'Aqā'id al-nisā', as discussed below, suggests that the author did not merely invent these rituals and practices. Despite the lack of any evidence proving this likelihood, the richness of the detail in the descriptions of rituals raises the possibility that the author was female and she had a direct access to the world of women. Regardless of the identity of its author or editor, the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' is an important source that opens a window into the little-known world of women's rituals in early modern Central Asia.

Chapter-by-chapter summary of the Central Asian adaptation of the 'Aqā'id al-Nisā'

The first chapter discusses the differing opinions of the five female specialists regarding how long a woman may be permitted to refrain from ritual purification due to exceptional circumstances.¹⁸ For instance, she is allowed to refrain from *vuzū'* (ritual ablution) if her hands are painted with henna and if her eyebrows are tinted with *ūsma*. Additionally, a woman is allowed to abstain from performing *ghusl* (full body ritual purification) in the following situations: if her absence would create an opportunity for her husband to have intercourse with a female slave; if her husband does not renew her worn-out bathing wrap (*fūta*) and loincloth (*lung*); or if her husband does not pay a bathhouse fee.

The second chapter expounds on the circumstances in which a woman is permitted to abstain from obligatory prayers.¹⁹ Among the listed conditions are: during a wedding night; when a musician or a drummer enters her house; when she goes out to watch an entertaining show (*tamāshā*); when she wears a new garment that can get wrinkled (*kham*) in the position of *rukū'* (belt-low bowing); when she is adorned to go to a wedding ceremony; and when her husband returns from a long journey.

The third chapter describes several types of ritual fasting performed by women who want to make their wishes come true.²⁰ The fasting of *Bībī Ḥūr* and *Bībī Nūr* is listed first, without providing the details of its observances.²¹ Next is the fast to be performed from the 17th of the month of *Rajab* until midday (*pishin*). One needs to break the fast with a mixture of one *mithqāl*²² of arsenic (*marg-i mūsh*), five *mithqāl* of senna (*sanā*), three chickpeas, three *mithqāl* of pus from a camel's mouth (*chirk-i dahān-i shutr*), and

¹⁷ See Shalom Goldman, *The Wiles of Women / The Wiles of Men: Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in Ancient Near Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Folklore* (Albany, 1995); Gayane Merguerian and Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Zulaykha and Yusuf: Whose "Best Story"?', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 4 (1997), pp. 485–508; Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Reading: And Enjoying: "Wiles of Women" Stories as a Feminist', *Iranian Studies* 32, no. 2 (1999), pp. 203–222; Ashley Walker and Michael Sells, 'The Wiles of Women and Performative Intertextuality: 'A'isha, the Hadith of the Slander, and the Sura of Yusuf', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 30, no. 1 (1999), pp. 55–77; Margaret Mills, 'Whose Best Tricks? *Makr-i zan* as a Topos in Persian Oral Literature', *Iranian Studies* 32, no. 2 (1999), pp. 261–270; and M. Mills, 'The Gender of the Trick: Female Tricksters and Male Narrators', *Asian Folklore Studies* 60, no. 2 (2001), pp. 237–258.

¹⁸ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 127a–128a.

¹⁹ MS IVRUz 3759, f. 128a.

²⁰ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 128a–129b.

²¹ The observances of the fasting of *Bībī Ḥūr* and *Bībī Nūr* are found in Atkinson's translation of the 'Aqā'id al-nisā'. According to it, on those special days beautifully dressed women go out accompanied by little girls and try to attract the attention of handsome young men. After that, these women must sit down and retell the story of *Bībī Ḥūr* and *Bībī Nūr* to the little girls before breaking the fast to ensure their wishes are granted. See Atkinson (trans.), *Customs*, pp. 25–29.

²² *Mithqāl* is a unit of mass equivalent of 4.25 grams.

five walnuts that should be eaten with sesame seeds and sugar. During the fasting of Bībī Seshanba, one ought to beg for money by knocking on doors with a wooden spoon pretending to be a barefooted beggar while keeping silent. A woman should break her fast later in the afternoon (*vaqt-i 'asr*) with a meal cooked with rice, dates, and sour milk bought with the money collected through begging. Khāla Panīr and Bībī Qalmāq recommend that women beg while beating a sieve (*ghirbāl*) with a wooden spoon. The fasting of Sayyidam Band Kushād requires a woman to gather water from seven wells and break her fast with that water in addition to performing two *ra'kat* (iterations) of prayer. These ritual fastings are recommended for a maiden who wants to find a loving husband from a respectable family or for a married woman who wants to overpower her mother-in-law. According to Bībī Shāh Zaynab, if a maiden wants to get married in a timely manner, she needs to rub against (*bi-māland*) the minaret of Gāvkuṣhān, saying these verses:

O minaret of Gāvkuṣhān!
 Spread yourself once before me.
 My loins want a grasp,
 Desiring to embrace a man's girdle.²³

After the verse, she needs to crack a walnut with her buttocks (*maq'ad*), with Bībī Shāh Zaynab saying it is best to do so with the right side. If her buttocks (*surīn*) are 'meaty' (*pur gūsh*t), she needs to put a piece of board on top of the walnut before cracking it.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to wedding rituals.²⁴ During a marriage ceremony (*dar vaqt-i 'aqd*), a bride should not be engaged in dyeing her body with henna, *ūsma*, or *surma*, and she should not wear gold-embroidered tunics. Previously unmarried young women are prohibited from removing their pubic hair (*mūy-i zahār*). At the time of the ceremony, a bride is expected to be veiled, but in order to avoid bad luck, the veil should not be made with lace (*rū-pāk-i tūr*). According to Bībī Qalmāq Allākūy, it is a good omen if a bride holds an egg in her hand and throws it against the wall facing the *qibla*²⁵ at the end of the ceremony. Lastly, Bībī Māchān Bazm Ārā also recommends that a young woman who wants to live happily with her husband should make embroidery (*sūzan*) using green silk, and that the rites of *sāchāliq* and *nithār*, where money and sweets are thrown among people, should be performed during the wedding banquet.

On the wedding night, a bride and a groom should open the Quran and look at the Sura of Yūsuf with the intention of becoming like Yūsuf and Zulaykhā. According to Bībī Panīr, it is also necessary for the newlyweds to look in a mirror together. In order to make a groom obedient and submissive, says Bībī Shāh Zaynab, they should make him pass under the partition of the room. Foreplay is highly recommended, and after his bride is presented to him, a groom is advised to lovingly fondle her breasts so that her body and private parts (*badan va farjash*) become relaxed:

Her breasts become soft from kissing,
 If kisses do not stop until [her] belly button.²⁶

²³ ای منار کاوکشان خود را یکی بمن فشان
 میانہ من دستہ خواهد مرد کمر بستہ خواهد

MS IVRUz 3759, f. 129a.

²⁴ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 129b–131a.

²⁵ Direction towards the Kaaba in Mecca.

²⁶ سینہ اش از بسکہ باشد نرم صاف بوسہ از لغزش نایستد تا بناف
 MS IVRUz 3759, f. 130b.

The rest of the chapter reports the differing opinions of the female experts related to bringing musk into the bride chamber, a bride crying on the wedding night, the prayers of an unmarried woman to settle down, and the importance of the matchmaker (*dallāla*).

The fifth chapter is largely a continuation of the previous chapter on wedding rituals.²⁷ The crying of a bride and her mother on the wedding night are among the obligatory customs. During the wedding, a groom is considered *maḥram* (unmarriageable kin) for all participating women who are not required to hide from him. The groom and bride are required to compete with each other to determine who first steps their right foot onto the other's right foot. The one who wins is believed to have the upper hand over their spouse. There are different opinions regarding how far a candle should be lit in front of a bride. A bride and a groom should be served juice or a sweet beverage (*sharbat*) in the bedchamber. A bride's mother, her sister, or a matchmaker are expected to advise and teach a bride how to behave in the bedchamber. In particular, they should teach her to remain silent and refrain from eating until a groom gives her a gift. The newlyweds should be showered with sweets and those who eat sweets from the top of a groom's turban (*dastār*) will have their wishes come true. Women should sing and play the tambourine. The bedding of the newlyweds should be made by a woman of good fortune (*nik bakht*) who has not been married twice and who is loved by her husband. It is obligatory for women to sit behind the partition of the newlyweds in order to hear the couple engage in intercourse. After the morning prayer, the newlyweds are expected to reveal the result of their first night together on a piece of fabric stained with blood, assuming that the bride is a virgin. The female experts in the text all have varying opinions regarding the colour of the bloodstains. On the day a bride should be given cardamom (*heyli*) and rose-water (*gulāb*) to help her conceive a baby boy.

Chapter 6 discusses the practices and rituals of childbirth.²⁸ When a woman is in labour, a midwife needs to say this to the unborn baby: 'Come out faster! All of your things have arrived. They sewed your bed and heated water to bathe you.'²⁹ After a woman gives birth, her face should be covered with white-wash (*saḥīd-āb*) and her eyebrows and moles should be tinted for up to six days. A newborn's bedding should not be red in order to avoid any harm from Umm al-ṣibyān, a demon that inflicts pain on children. To protect a newborn from this demon, an unveiled sword should be placed next to the baby's head. For the first six days, a newborn must sleep together with their mother. On the seventh blessed day since birth, a newborn is placed in a cradle. While breaking a walnut above the cradle, a nurse says to the newborn: 'Do not be scared if there is noise. Do not be scared if your mother and father argue with each other. Do not be scared if dogs and cats make noise.'³⁰ Lastly, it is recommended that the mother has a skewer of three to five onions and red cloves (*qalanfūr-i surkh*) next to her, and on the day that she visits the bathhouse, she needs to remove the onions and throw them into running water. On the same day, a postpartum woman should crack a walnut with her foot, as it can be used to treat a toothache.

The seventh chapter is about the rites and customs around visiting public bathhouses.³¹ The discussion starts with an explanation as to why shaving the front genitals (*ʿavrat-i pīsh*) is not considered obligatory. Next follows a description of the etiquette of using a depilatory lotion called *nūra* (a mixture of arsenic and quicklime). According to the description, women form a circle and apply the depilatory lotion while revealing

²⁷ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 131a–132b.

²⁸ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 132b–133a.

²⁹ MS IVRUz 3759, f. 132b.

³⁰ MS IVRUz 3759, f. 133a.

³¹ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 133a–b.

everything that happens between spouses. Duck, goose, cucumbers, cherries, beets, greens, and watermelon are among the suggested food items to be eaten during bathhouse visits. Following the prophetic tradition, Khāla Panīr also recommends eating stale bread once a month.

The eighth chapter recounts the advantages of the tambourine, with the recommendation that one is kept in every household.³²

The ninth chapter discusses special days and occasions when playing musical instruments is encouraged.³³ For instance, it is necessary to play musical instruments on the 13th of the month—Safar—and on *Chārshanba-yi sūrī*, the last Wednesday before Navrūz, in order to oust evil that appears on those days. Musical instruments should also be played during weddings, holidays, childbirth, and after returning from journeys. When a drum is played, women should go inside the house, when it is also necessary to stop praying.

The tenth chapter is dedicated to the relationships between husbands and wives, and between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.³⁴ According to the female experts, a wife's happiness directly depends on her husband's behaviour and attitude to her (i.e. whether he spends time with her, presents her with gifts, or takes additional wives). Bībī Shāh Zaynab recommends that a husband let his wife go out to watch an entertaining show, as well as visit public bathhouses, madrasas, and shrines (*mazār*). According to Bībī Māchān, a husband should say these words to his wife every day: 'Whenever you want, you can go out for a walk or to [watch] an entertainment.' A complicated relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is highlighted in the text, in which both parties are juxtaposed as 'enemies' (*dushman*). 'Even though they like each other in their hearts, they will surely be enemies from outside' (*Har chand dar dil bā ham dūst bāshand dar zāhir albatta dushman bāshand*).³⁵ Their relationship is described as so inimical that a daughter-in-law is expected to do the opposite of whatever her mother-in-law tells her to do. Additionally, a wife is instructed to deceive her husband by telling him all sorts of lies from 'the sayings of the accursed Shayṭān', and also to alienate her husband from his sister with the intention of severing their bond.

The eleventh chapter describes ritual cooking that is performed on special occasions.³⁶ Among the ceremonial culinary recipes mentioned is *samanū*, cooked with flour, wheat, and water. Some recipes also call for walnuts and almonds. According to Bībī Māchān and Bībī Shāh Zaynab, *samanū* is prepared with thirty maund³⁷ of flour and one maund of wheat. On the other hand, Khāla Panīr's recipe calls for 30 maund of flour and three maund of wheat. *Āsh-i qalamkār* is also mentioned as a popular ritual meal but its exact recipe is not provided.³⁸ When holding the ritual of Bībī Seshanba women should prepare *āsh-i shīr birinj* (rice porridge), *ūmāch* (pottage), and *ḥalvā-yī-tar* (a sweet desert made from flour, oil, and sugar) on a Tuesday. As part of this ceremony, a plate of flour covered with a piece of white cloth should be placed in a corridor of the house. After some time, an old lady should bring in the plate after printing her palm on it, saying that it is Bībī Seshanba's palm print. All participating women put a pinch of flour on their faces while petitioning Bībī Seshanba about their needs.

³² MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 133b–134a.

³³ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 134a–134b.

³⁴ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 134b–135a.

³⁵ MS IVRUz 3759, f. 134b.

³⁶ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 135a–135b.

³⁷ Maund (or mann) is unit of mass that is equal to 40 kg.

³⁸ *Āsh-i qalamkār* is a popular hearty stew made with a variety of beans (such as mung beans, black-eyed peas, and lentils), meat, onions, and rice in the Persianate world. It is better known as *moshkichiri* in contemporary Central Asia.

The twelfth chapter discusses amulets and talismans that protect against the evil eye.³⁹ There are a number of such charms which are believed to have supernatural powers, including: blue and white beads; deer antlers and leopard claws that are supposed to be attached to a drum; a donkey's penis (*ālat-i ḥimār*); a blue rag (*latta-yi kabūd*) with which Bībī Khāl Jūybārī recommends covering one's eyes on Wednesdays; *Bābā Ghūrī* beads composed of 40 colourful pieces that Bībī Khāl Jūybārī recommends getting from a person who has children and who has never lost a child; and wild rue (*ispand*), which should be burnt at sunset. Burning of wild rue is most effective when it is bought with money gathered from begging on a Wednesday. Burning wild rue against the evil eye on a Friday evening is not recommended. After burning, the cinders of the wild rue should be applied to the legs, head, nose, and the palms of hands. It is also recommended that it be applied on a child's chin as a protection against the evil eye.

The thirteenth chapter provides guidance on different categories of *maḥram* and *nā-maḥram*.⁴⁰ According to the female experts, *nā-maḥram* is a group of men a woman must avoid; it includes: anyone who wears a male turban (*dastār-i pisar*), including a child; those who wear a rider's turban (*dastār-i suvāra*); and students (*tālib-i'ilmī*). On the other hand, the following group of men is recognised as *maḥram* (i.e. they are not obligated to hide from these men): a drum player, a vegetable seller, a beet seller, and a Jewish door-to-door salesperson. Some experts also include a salad seller and a pumice (*sang-i pā*) seller in this category, but the author did not agree with this opinion (*nazd-i faqīr ṣaḥīḥ nīst*).

The fourteenth chapter discusses special occasions and times when prayers are answered,⁴¹ including: when musical instruments—such as the drum, *surnā* (hornpipe), and *kamāncha* (bowed string instrument)—are played; while adding the ingredients (*maṣāliḥ*) to a dish, *ḥalīm*, that is being cooked;⁴² when a bride is applying henna; if an unmarried maiden asks for a husband; when going to bed; during a boy's circumcision ceremony; when a maiden does not want to get married; at the time of a marriage ceremony; and during childbirth.

The fifteenth chapter expounds on the principles of hosting guests.⁴³ The female specialists warn against hosting guests on Wednesdays in order to avoid possible trouble (*balā*) that may come from a guest's house. If a guest comes on a Wednesday evening, they are expected to bring all of their children along, including an infant that uses a cradle. It is not harmful to eat whatever is brought by the guest. It is not recommended to send flowers such as chamomile (*hamīsha-bahār*), tulips (*lāla*), marshmallow plant (*khaṭmī*), and, possibly, water lilies (*nīlūfar*). If one has upcoming travel arrangements, guests should not be hosted on a Friday evening. Guests should be offered something to eat even when they swear that they are not hungry, and they should also be offered sweets when the head of the household has intercourse with his own wife.

The sixteenth and final chapter discusses the importance of having an oath sister.⁴⁴ The female specialists put great emphasis on having an oath sister, even to the extent that they consider it to be a deed that will aid women to enter paradise, despite their sins (*gunāh*). Oath sisters are seen as so important that purposefully forsaking them is considered to be an immoral action. The ritual of becoming oath sisters should take place on the 18th of the Dhū al-ḥijja with the oath: 'You and I became oath sisters'

³⁹ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 135b–136a.

⁴⁰ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 136a–b.

⁴¹ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 136b–137a.

⁴² *Ḥalīm* is a popular type of stew made of meat, wheat, or barley that is cooked slowly for several hours in a large caldron.

⁴³ MS IVRUz 3759, f. 137a.

⁴⁴ MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 137a–138a.

(*man va tū khwāhar khwānad shavīm*). In addition, the oath sisters need 14 handkerchiefs (*dastmāl*)—representing various kinds of affection such as coquetry, elegance, flirtation, and seduction—that they should tie on different parts of their body and clothing. The final chapter ends abruptly after the introduction of the thirteenth handkerchief. What follows next is the abovementioned colophon stating that the work ascribed to Qārī Raḥmatullāh Marvī al-Shī‘a was completed in 1300/1882.

Rituals and practices in modern Central Asia

Having grown up in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, I recognise some of the rituals described in the Central Asian adaptation of the ‘*Aqā’id al-nisā*’. Not only have I witnessed them being practised, especially during wedding ceremonies, but I have also participated in their performance. Many practices, such as tinting one’s eyebrows with *ūsma* extraction (see [Figure 1](#)) and burning wild rue for ritual purification, are still popular among the older generation of Uzbek women. It is remarkable that some of these rituals have survived to the present day considering the rapid modernisation of Central Asia in the past two centuries.

Among the described rites and observances, one recognises contemporary rituals, especially those related to the ceremonials around weddings practised in Central Asia today. The abovementioned rules of etiquette and manners of conduct prescribed to either attendees, guests, or newlyweds remain practically unchanged in modern Central Asian societies. For instance, when a newlywed couple enters their bedchamber for the first time (known as *chimidliq*), together they look at the Quran and into a mirror (see [Figure 2](#)). This ritual was also described in the *Turkestan Album* sponsored by the Russian Imperial administration in the newly invaded Central Asia.

It is still expected that a groom will present a gift, usually a piece of jewellery, to his bride after he enters the bedchamber. The bedding of the newlyweds is still expected to be made by an older woman who has had a happy and successful married life. The contest between a groom and a bride to step first on their spouse’s right foot to find out who will become dominant in marriage is still practised, although rather nominally. In other words, a bride lets a groom step on her foot. Following the abovementioned instructions, a couple of more experienced female relatives from the families of the newlyweds are expected to stay behind the bedchamber, to oversee the first night and to witness the evidence of the bride’s virginity. It is also noteworthy that during the wedding ceremony, sweets are still thrown among people in addition to showering the newlyweds with money. Among other customs and rituals that are practised even today are the ritual of Bībī Seshanba, the cooking of *samanū* (better known as *sumalak*),⁴⁵ and the burning of wild rue as a protection from the evil eye. The ritual of putting a newborn in their cradle while performing the rites to drive away the evil eye still happens to this day.

The question of agency, age, and authority in private space

The reading of the ‘*Aqā’id al-nisā*’ through the lens of Saba Mahmood’s study of the question of ‘agency’ allows us to see that what is being subtly implied, and openly denounced, in this text is women’s agency and dominance in the private domain.⁴⁶ In the ‘*Aqā’id al-nisā*’, male agency does not actively feature, but is instead mentioned as secondary in a female-dominated space. The ‘*Aqā’id al-nisā*’ does not portray women as passive individuals lacking agency and dependent on male members of the society; rather, women are

⁴⁵ *Sumalak* is traditionally cooked for the celebration of Navruz (also known as Persian New Year) that marks the first day of spring.

⁴⁶ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, 2005).



Figure 1. A modern Uzbek woman tinting her eyebrows with *ūsma* extraction. Source: Photo by the author.

depicted as comfortably dominating and owning their space in the private domain. This, of course, does not imply that these women did not comply with societal norms and rules on gender restrictions in the male-dominant public domain. The active and dominating female agency serves as a focal point that both bothers and attracts the author of *‘Aqā’id al-nisā’*, who devotes his time and efforts to composing an entire treatise dedicated to women’s beliefs, customs, and practices.

The examination of the *‘Aqā’id al-nisā’* as an expression of its author as a historical person, including his intentions, choices, and decisions in shaping the text, not only allows us to contextualise the work, but also to deconstruct it. Apart from the author’s intention to berate women for their ceremonials, the *‘Aqā’id al-nisā’* opens a window into the little-known world of women’s daily activities, rituals, and customs as practised in early modern Central Asia. Behind the author’s reproachful language, one discovers women’s total dominance and active agency in the private domain. This agency is likely to have provoked the composition of the *‘Aqā’id al-nisā’*, which should be read as a communal product rather than a composition of a single author. To put it differently, the *‘Aqā’id al-nisā’* serves as a mirror reflecting the anxieties and fascination of androcentric society about the concealed inner world of women, as seen through the eyes and words of its male author (along with male editors and copyists) who serves as an instrument echoing the ongoing discourses in the society. The different versions of the *‘Aqā’id al-nisā’* not only suggest that it evolved as a communal product over the course of time and across geographical regions, it also reveals the male audience’s continuing fascination with this remarkable source on women’s beliefs and practices, which are labelled as superstitions.

In addition to being addressed as ‘religious scholars’ (*‘ulamā’*) in both versions of the *‘Aqā’id al-nisā’*, the five female specialists are sarcastically referred to as ‘learned [wo] men’ (*fūzalā’*) and ‘legal scholars’ (*fuqahā’*). At the same time, they are also cursed, with their names frequently followed by the Arabic phrase *‘alayhā al-la’na’* (let her be accursed). The author’s rhetorical use of religious jargon is intriguing from a gendered perspective as he, despite his mocking, elevates these female characters to the same



Figure 2. Newlyweds looking into a mirror together. Source: *Turkestanskii Albom: Chast' Etnograficheskaiia. 1871–1872*. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Image no. 227, LC-DIG-ppmsca-09947-00002.

level as *‘ulamā’*, *fūzalā’*, and *fuqahā’*,⁴⁷ which are the specific terms used to address formally trained male religious authorities. In the author’s imagination, this masculinisation of the female experts is a necessary step in dealing with women who transcend gender differences and step into roles traditionally held by men. What is remarkable in this case is that the male author, who exercised power and control over how these female experts are portrayed in the text, claims manly authority on their behalf.

Following the introduction of the five female specialists in the preface (*muqaddama*), the author’s remarks about female old age are of special interest: ‘Every woman who gets old (*har zanī ki bisyār sin bāshad*) becomes possessed by a fairy (*parī*) and an evil spirit (*khurāfat*).⁴⁸ Her sayings and practices become esteemed (*mu‘tabar*). Every woman who opposes them becomes a great sinner (*gunāh-kār-i ‘azīm bāshad*).⁴⁹ The emphases on women in old age becoming ‘experts’ on superstitions or supernatural causation supports the argument for the importance of age as an analytical category for better understanding gender constructions and gender history in Islamic communities.⁵⁰ This argument proposes an analysis of the category of woman through the two slippery sub-categories of ‘sexualised woman’ and ‘non-sexualised woman’. The sub-category of the sexualised

⁴⁷ That is, masculine plural forms of *‘alim*, *fazil*, and *faqih*.

⁴⁸ According to Steingass, *khurāfat* is a ‘name of a man supposed to have been possessed of an evil spirit, and accustomed to tell of strange things he had seen’: F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary: Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be met with Persian Literature Being Johnson and Richardson’s Persian, Arabic and English Dictionary* (London, 1892), p. 452.

⁴⁹ MS IVRUz 3759, f. 126b.

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion, see Aziza Shanazarova, ‘A Female Saint in Muslim Polemics: Aghā-yi Buzurg and Her Legacy in Early Modern Central Asia’, unpublished PhD dissertation, Indiana University Bloomington, 2019, pp. 140–153.

woman falls inside the gendered hierarchy, abiding with gendered norms and expectations of sexuality and childbirth. In contrast, the sub-category of non-sexualised woman stands outside the gendered hierarchy and, consequently, is treated differently than the sub-category of the sexualised woman. Depicting gender hierarchy in this manner makes it explicit that the social behavioural norms dictating how woman should behave change alongside the rites of passage as women pass from one sub-category to another. Within Islamic societies, the societal expectations of a woman's gender change as she ages, thereby inadvertently modifying her status in the public sphere. To put it differently, a sexualised woman and a non-sexualised woman experience different social status, responsibilities, functions, and expectations. Accordingly, the five female 'ulamā', fuḏalā', and fuqahā' of the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' fall within the category of non-sexualised women, which sheds light on their portrayal of being non-restricted and even authoritative within the male-dominated early Persianate world.

The 'Aqā'id al-nisā' allows us to see how women played an active role in making their lives more meaningful, despite gendered restrictions and societal prescriptions. For instance, having an oath sister was a way of enriching a woman's life by allowing her to develop intimate and emotional bonds, and widening and securing her social and support circle. Therefore, the emphasis put on sisterhood, defined as a path leading to paradise, demonstrates the way in which women had high regard for and protected an opportunity to develop friendships.⁵¹ The portrayal of an 'ideal husband' who lets his wife go out to watch an entertaining show and visit a public bathhouse, madrasas, and shrine (*mazār*) not only alludes to women's struggle to go out in public at will, but it also challenges the notions of women's confinement in private domains in pre-modern Muslim societies.⁵² Weekly visits to a public bathhouse provided women with an opportunity to socialise and entertain that brings to mind modern-day spas.

It is worth highlighting that the suggestions and opinions of the female experts on bypassing the tenets of Islam, such as obligatory praying and fasting, demonstrate the ways in which women reinterpreted the Islamic law, making it suitable for their needs. The author's lack of concern and disinterest in problematising this question (besides cursing the female experts) is of special interest. His lack of interest is not only intriguing, but it might also suggest that women's observance of religious obligations and duties was not strictly regulated. Moreover, the reinterpretation of the definition of *mahram* that does not require women to avoid produce sellers to a certain degree made their daily lives easier. Not only does this show the fluidity of the societal norms of gender segregation and restrictions, but it also implies the continuous renegotiations of gendered boundaries in the society.

Conclusion

To a certain degree the Central Asian adaptation of the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' lifts 'the iron curtain' from the little-known world of rituals and customs practised by women in early modern Central Asian societies. All in all, it is a rare piece that trespasses into the threshold of the female-dominated private domain that is largely ignored in court histories, state documents, and/or religious literature. In addition to providing a glimpse of the author's and editor's gender-specific perceptions, the 'Aqā'id al-nisā' serves as an

⁵¹ On sworn sisterhood, see Kathryn Babayan, "In Spirit We Ate Each Other's Sorrow". Female Companionship in Seventeenth-Century Safavi Iran', in *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire*, (eds) Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi (Cambridge, MA, 2008), pp. 239–274.

⁵² See Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, 1985); Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*.

important source that not only balances the androcentric view of gendered history of the early modern Persianate world, but also challenges the preconceived notions of women's agency and authority in pre-modern Muslim societies.

Conflicts of interest. None.

Appendix: The Central Asian adaptation of the 'Aqā'id al-Nisā' based on MS IVRUz 3759, ff. 126b–138a.

این کتاب عقاید النساء بوده است
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

بر ضمیر آینه نصیر اخوان ایمانی پوشیده نمائند که این مختصر ایست در بیان اقوال و افعال زنان و واجبات و مندوبات و محرومات و مکروهات و مباحات ایشان و این رساله مشتمل است بر یک مقدمه و شانزده باب و خاتمه و مسمی است بعقاید النساء اما مقدمه در بیان اسامی علما و فضلا و فقها و فضیلت آنها بدانکه افضل فضلا و علمای زنان پنج نفرند اول بی بی شاه زینب دویم بی بی خال جویباری سیوم بیبی ماجان بزم آرا چهارم خاله پنیر حوض لیسکی پنجم بی بی قلماق الاکوی آنچه از اقوال و افعال اینها باشد نهایت و شوق دارد و محل اعتماد است و بغیر ازین پنج نفر علما و فقها بسیارند ذکر آنها موجب تطویل است بدانکه هر زنیکه بسیار سن باشد و پیری و خرافت او را دریافته باشد افعال و اقوال او بسیار معتبر است و هر زنیکه خلاف فرموده ایشان کند گناه کار عظیم باشد باب اول در بیان وضو و غسل و تیمم باب دویم در بیان نماز باب سیوم در بیان روزه باب چهارم در بیان نکاح در شب یا روز زفاف باب پنجم در بیان اعمال شب زفاف و روز زفاف باب ششم در بیان زیارتین زنان و اعمال آن باب هفتم [127a] باب هفتم در بیان حمام رفتن باب هشتم در بیان سزاها و فعل آن باب نهم در بیان فصلها و اوقات آن باب دهم در بیان معاشرت زنان و شوهران باب یازدهم در بیان مطبوخاتکه بنظر واجب شود باب دوازدهم در بیان تعویذ بجهت زخم چشم باب سیزدهم در بیان محرم و نا محرم باب چهاردهم در بیان استجاب دعا باب پانزدهم در بیان مهمان بخانه آمدن باب شانزدهم در بیان خواهر خواندن خاتمه در کیفیت شب چهارشنبه صوری است

باب اول در بیان وضو و غسل و تیمم بدانکه اجماعی علما است که وضو و غسل واجب است مگر در چند موضع وقتی که دست را حنا بسته باشد یا بر ابرو و سسمه کشیده باشد یا چیز چسبانیده باشد درین صورتها ترک وضو و غسل واجب است و اکثر علما در حنا سه روز را ساقط میدانند و بی بی شاه زینب علیها السلام در پنج روز یا شش روز وضو را ساقط میدانند و میگوید که چنانچه در حالتی که و سسمه کشیده باشد قبل از پنج روز وضو بسازد حرام است و دیگران مکروه دانسته اند و روز ششم را او نیز مکرر⁵³ میدانند اما غسل هر گاه زن جاریه داشته باشد و یکی از مادر زن و یا خویشان دو حاضر نباشند که از شوهر او یا خبر باشند [127b] یا شوهر را امین ندانند که میداند چون زن بحمام رود شوهرش یا جاریه جماع کند درین صورت ترک غسل واجب است هر چند مدتی که باشد و بی بی خال جویباری تا یک هفته غسل را درین صورت ساقط میدانند و بعضی بیشتر و بعضی کمتر گفته اند و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا تا یک ماه جایز دانسته اما کسی درین قول با او موافقت ننموده و قول اول با احتیاط افریست و دیگر فوته و لنک زن هر گاه کهنه یا پاره باشد و شوهر او را وعده کرده باشد مادامیکه شوهرش نکیرد غسل ساقط است و این قول اجماعی است اما خاله پنیر و بی بی قلماق الاکوی گفته اند که اگر زن برادرش نیست باشد مادامیکه شوهرش لنک نکرفته باشد اگر غسل کند فعل حرامی باشد و بعضی مکروه دانسته اند و قول اول اقوی است و دیگر هر گاه مرد اجرت حمام نداده باشد از خانه بیرون رود غسل از آن زن ساقط است هر چند که مدتی نکرد و بعضی تا سه روز قایل شداند اما بی بی ماجان بزم آرا گفته اند که اگر داند اجرت حمام را مرد بعد از آنکه زن از مال خود داده باشد خواهد داد جایز است که غسل کند و کسی درین قول با او موافقت ننموده و این قول [128a] از اشکال نیست.

باب دویم در بیان اوقاتیکه نماز ساقط است و ترک آن واجب است اول در شب عروسیها دویم در وقت سازنده یا نقاره چی بخانه آمده باشد سیوم وقتی که زن خویشان خود را در حمام بیند لازم است که ترک غسل و ترک نماز کند و احوال شوهرش را بخویشان گوید چهارم روزیکه از برای تماشا بیرون رفته باشد پنجم روزیکه لباس نو پوشیده باشد و ترسید که جامه خم خورد در حال رکوع و ضایع شود درین صورت خاله پنیر تردد در وی دارد و گوید که ترک نماز مستحب است نه واجب است و این قول خالی از قوت نیست ششم روزیکه زن زینت عید کرده باشد ما بعروسی رفته باشد یا زنیکه شوهرش در سفر باشد و بیاید علی الخصوص اگر مدت در سفر باشد درین صورتها ترک نماز واجب است و این مسئله اجماعی است و باز در چند موضع دیگر ترک نماز و روزه واجب است چون سندش ضعیف بود و اختلافی داشته ایراد نشد

باب سیوم در بیان روزه بدانکه زانرا چندین روزه میباشد که [128b] بان روزه بمطلب خود میرسد اول روزه بی بی حور و بی بی نور دویم روزه هفده ماه رجب است تا پیشین و وقت پیشین روزه دار میباشد که افطار کند بکدامها یکمقال مرک موش پنج مقال سنا سه نخود حب الملک سه مقال چرک دهان شتر پنج چار مغز شتر جمع اینها را بیکجا کوفته معجون میشود ازینها باید افطار کند بکنجد و قند و بی بی شاه گفته اند که کنجد و قند از پل کدایی باید کرفته شود سیوم روزه بی بی سه شنبه و آداب آن این است که باید حرف نزند و از جهت افطار بخانه رفته کدایی کند باین نوع که قاشق بدرخانها بزند و بدست درآورد و از وجه کدایی برنج و خرما و جغرات بخور وقت عصر روز مذکور اما برهنه کرده مذکورات را طبخ نموده بآنها افطار نماید و خاله پنیر و بی بی قلماق را اعتقاد آنست که در یک دست قاشق در یک دست غربال را کرفته قاشق را بغربال زند درین احوط است چهارم روزه سیم بندکشا و آداب آنست که از هفت چاه آب بیارد بان آنها افطار کند و دو رکعت نماز [129a] و دو رکعت نماز بکنجد و بی بی زینب گفته که باید از کدایی یک شمع و یک کوزه بگیرد و بی بی قلماق شمع را مستحب میدانند و این مسئله در وجوب و استحباب اختلافی دارد و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا فرموده که این دختر روزه را دختر بنظر کند بشوهر خوب ذات العمود که دلخواه او باشد و برود بر سر او بعد این و بی بی خال

⁵³ مکرر

جویباری و خاله پنییر گفته که سریع الاجابت تری ازین نیست زن دیگر که پلانچ کویند نیاید و بر مادر شوی غالب گردد و بی بی شاه زینب از جهة کشادن بخت دختران و زود بشوهر رفتن ایشان بنزد مناره کاوکشان رفته خود را بان بمانند و بکویند

ای منار کاوکشان
خود را یکی بمن فشان
میانه من دسته خواهد
مرد کمر بسته خواهد

بس با مقعد چارمغز بشکنند بی بی شاه زینب کوید که چارمغز را از طرف راست مقعد بشکنند و بی بی خال جویباری گفته که اگر سیرین دختر پر کوشت باشد و نتواند چارمغز را شکستن باید که جوز را بر زمین گذارد و بر روی آن تخته گذارد و بضرط مقعد خود را [129b] بران تخته بزند که جوز در تحت آن شکسته شود و این قول اقوی است

باب چهارم در بیان نکاح در شب نکاح واجب است که تمام بندها را بکشاید حتی بند زیر جامه را و طشتی سرنکون بگذارد و در زیر طشت چراغ بسوزاند از روغن طعام و عروس از روزین بنشیند و خاله پنییر گفته که اگر زین نباشد بعضی آن تکیه گذارد و دست را بر بند ابزار کرده نباتی بران نهد و بی بی شاه زینب و دیگران آنرا مستحب میدانند و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا کوید که آن نباتی که بر بند ابزار گذاشته و در وقت بیرون آوردن بدهن داماد نهند که در نظر داماد بسیار شیرین مینماید و این قول اقوی است و جمیع علما متفقند که در وقت عقد حنا و نکار نباید بست و تکمه کرته را هم نباید بست زیرا که درکار عروس کره می افتد و بی بی خال جویباری گفته که درین اوان و سسه و سرمه را نیز ممنوع داشته اند درو پاک طور بر سر عروس نیندازند که آن هم کره دارد [130a] دارد و بی بی قلماق الاکوئی گفته که در عقد مستحب است که عروس تخم مرغ بست خود بگیرد در وقت بر خواستن رو قبله آن تخم را در دیوار زند و بی بی شاه زینب این را اشراف میدانند و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا کوید که هر دختریکه خواهد بختش با شوهر ساز شود باید که ابریشم سبز بسوزن کند در وقت عقد عروس بسوزن رود و در چادر عروس فرو کند و بر دارد و آنرا بر سر خود زند که مجرب است در شب عقد ساجالق که نثار کویند واجب است و ترکش عمد حرام است دیگر دختران مادامیکه بشوهر نرفته باشند موی زهار را گرفتن مکروه است و بی بی قلماق گفته که از آله موی دختر باید که به بند انداختن باشد و بی بی خال جویباری بسوزانیدن قایل شده و بی بی شاه زینب گفته که این دو قول اقوی است و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا گفته که مکروه است دختر اواله کردن موی هر چند که صد ساله باشد و مویش یک چاریک شده باشد فاما کسی درین قول [130b] با او موافقت نکرده و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا گفته که واجب است که شب عقد داماد عروس کلام الله را وا کرده سوره حضرت یوسف را بنظر هر دو دارند که هر دو بمثل یوسف و زلیخا شوند و بی بی پنییر نیز بنظر در آوردن آینه را از لوازمات میدانند و بی بی شاه زینب کوید که باید که داماد را از تحت ابزار کیلین گذارند که یکی از جمله فرایض است که شوهر مطیع و فرمان بردار کیلین شود و بی بی خال جویباری علیه⁵⁴ اللعنه گفته که باید که شب عقد در تحت جای اشکیل و لجام و پوستک گذارند که داماد دایم بمثل اشکیل و لجام کرده کی برین از پیش عروس جای دیگر نرود خاصیت پوستک آنست که داماد بکیلین کرم میشود و چون دختر را بشوهر برند این اجزا را بمانند که بدن و فرجش نرم و نازک شود چنانچه شاعری کوید سینه اش از بسکه باشد نرم صاف بوسه از لغزش ناپسند تا بناف اجزا این است [131a] این است کثیر ای سفید کل خطمی عرق بنفشه و عنبر و بی بی قلماق گفته که داخل کردن مشک واجب است و بعضی مستحب میدانند و بعضی مکروه میدانند و کریستن دخترانرا در شب عقد بی بی شاه زینب مستحب میدانند و بعضی واجب و این قول اقوی است و اکثر علما برانند که دخترانرا وقتی که در خانه آمد برای شوهر کردن دعا کردن و حاجت طلبیدن واجب است در وقت دلالة آمدن زینت کردن و بند زیر جامه را بر دلالة ظاهر کردن واجب است

باب پنجم در بیان اعمال شب زفاف و روز آن بدانکه کریستن عروس و مادرش در شب عروس واجب است و بدانکه داماد در شب نکاح جمیع زنان محرم است و بی بی شاه زینب کوید که با هر زنیکه دست بازی و ملاعبه کند میتوان کرد و بی بی خال جوی باری و سایر علما آمدن مادر عروس را حرام میدانند و واجب است داماد و عروس را که در شب زفاف پای راست بر پشت [131b] پای راست بکینیک گذارند پیشتر از دیگری ساقط میشود و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا گفته که اگر هر شوهر مقدم دارد بر عروس غالب بود و اگر عروس مقدم دارد بر شوهر غالب باشد و این معنی تجربه شده است و اگر کسی عمدا ترک کند از فرایض کویا کرده باشد و اگر فراموش کرده باشد قضا کند هر چند مدتی گذشته باشد و دیگر در وقت عروس آوردن شمع عروس میباید که محاذی روی عروس باشد و از عروس پیش یک نرخ و چاریک نبوده باشد و بعضی تا سه نرخ تجویز کرده اند و بی بی شاه زینب و سایر علما نفازه و سرنا را از عقب عروس و اعجب میداشت و اهل خانه بعروس داماد شربت دادن را مستحب میدانند و بی بی خال جویباری و بی بی قلماق گفته که عروس را در خانه خودش مادر یا خواهر یا دلالة نصیحت و تعلیم کنند که با شوهر حرف زنند و چیزی نخورد تا شوهر چند چیز باو ببخشد و یا بگردن گیرد و علما را درین مسئله خلاقی نیست و شب زفاف اگر انک بارنده باشد خاله پنییر را اعتقاد آنست که عروس ته دیک [132a] دیک خورده است و نقل بر سر داماد و عروس ریختن واجب است و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا را مذهب آنست که بر سر دستار داماد ماند باشد هر که آنرا بخورد مرادش براید و دایره زدن واجب است و بر سر زنان لازم است که بصدای بلند کویند

بادا بادا یا رب مبارک بادا
امشب چه شب شب فراغ است امشب
این خانه پر از شمع چراغ است امشب

دیگر رخت خواب داماد و عروس را باید زنی اندارد که نیک بخت باشد یعنی پلانچ نداشته باشد و دو شوهر نکرده باشد و شوهر او را دوست دارد و بر همه زنان واجب است که در پشت دیوار چادر عروس و داماد بنشینند و کوش دارند و هر قول و فعل که از ایشان صادر شود شنود و ببینند که وقت نما صبح نماز را ترک کرده گاهای ایشان را نقل نمایند و اگر عروس باکره باشد خون بکارت آنرا که باصطلاح زنان بشانه کویند در لعلی انداخته دران مجلس بنظر یک دیگر رسانند تا عروس و مستندان او سرخ رو باشند و الا از لته حیض کمتر شوند [132b] و بی بی شاه زینب گفته که بهتر آنست که آن لعلی از نقره باشد و بی بی قلماق گفته که اگر مقدور باشد طلا بهتر است و واجب است در آن روز هیل و کلاب باو بدهند که پسر زایند باب ششم در بیان زایندن زنان و اعمال آن بدانکه در وقتی که درد زایندن کرد دیر زاید باید که دایه سینه بند خود را گرفته بفرج زن نگاه دارد بطفل خطاب کند که زود بیرون آی که همه چیزت آماده است رخت برای تو دوخته اند و آب جهت شستن تو گرم کرده اند و این مجرب است بعد از وضع

54 علیها

حمل تا شش روز سفید آب بر تمام صورت زن بمالند و ابرو گذارند خال نیز گذارند و رخت طفل باید که سرخ نباشد که ام الصبیان ضرر میرساند و بجهت دفع ضرر آن باید که شمشیر در دست برهنه گرفته چار حد خانه را بر سر شمشیر خط بکشند و بی بی شاه زینب گفته که شمشیر را قدری از غلاف کشیده زیر سر طفل گذارند و این مجرب است بجهت دفع ضرر ام الصبیان اگر بیخبر باشند جگر زنرا از دیده از آب کنزاینده میرند و اکثر گفته اند که مادامیکه از آب نکشسته علاج آن ممکن است با این طریقه که اسبی را بیارند در دامن زن جویند تا اسب شکند و [133a] علما گفته اند اگر بآب رسیده باشد علاج ندارد و طفل شش باید که بر زمین باید بخوابد شب هفتم بکوهار ببنند و این شب را شب مبارک گویند و طفل را دست بدست دستک کنند و بگویند که

بچه بچه جان بچه
خدا نگهدار بچه
هر که خورد نان بچه
دعا کند جان بچه

و چارمغز بالای کوهار بکشند در حین شکستن دایه بطفل گوید که اگر صدایی شود نترسی و اگر پدر و مادر با هم جنک کنند نترسی و اگر سک و کربه صدا کنند نترسی اینها را از جمله لوازمات میدابند وقت حمام رفتن زن بیای جو و جوز را بشکند و این قول اقوی است و سه عدد پیاز با پنج عدد پیاز و قلفور سرخ نزد او بگذارد و پیازها بسیخ آهن کشیده روز حمام رفتن زن پیازها را از آن کشیده بآب روان اندازد و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا گفته که مغزان جوز را که زن وقت حمام رفتن بیای شکسته برای درد دندان نافع

باب هفتم در حمام رفتن علما گفته که ستر عورت پیش واجب نیست [133b] و بی بی شاه زینب علیه⁵⁵ اللعنه را اعتقاد آنستکه ستر هیچ یک از پس پیش لازم نیست خصوصاً در وقت صابون مالیدن آداب نوره کشیدن اولاً باید که همگی حلقه زده گشفت عورت نموده نوره کنند و هر اخلاطی که بین زن و شوهر گذشته باشد در آنجا نقل کنند و این مسئله اجماعی است و از ماکولات که در حمام خورده شود رتاله را از جمله فریاضات میدانند آوردن و قاض را واجب دانسته اند و خاله پنیر ماهی شب مانده را خوردن سنت موكده دانسته اند و خیار را نیز تجویز کرده و گفته که خوردن الوچه و لبلبو و سبزی و تربز بی احتیاط اقرب است

باب هشتم در بیان سازها بدانکه دایره زدن ثواب عظیم دارد خصوصاً چیل حلقه و هیچ یک از علما درین سخن خلاقی نکرده اند واجب است در هر خانه بودن آن و اگر دایره یافت نشود بی بی قلماق گفته که در عوض آن در و پنجره [134a] و پنجره و لعلی را نیز میتوان نواخت و اگر هیچ یک یافت نشود خاله پنیر گفته که دست را بر هم زند و این قول خالی از قوت نیست لعنة الله علیهم اجمعین⁵⁶

باب نهم در فصل اوقات بدانکه سیزدهم سفر و چارشنبه آخر سفر که چارشنبه سوری میگویند واجب است نواختن سازها چونکه درین دو روز بلا نازل میشود سبب زدن سازها دفع بلا میشود و در عریسیها و عیدها و حنا در وقت از سفر آمدن و تولد فرزند درین اوقات زدن سازها واجب است در سایر اوقات مستحب است در وقت آمدن نقاره چی بخانه واجب است نقاره زدن و اگر مانعی باشد مثل فوت یکی از خویشان البته یک دو چوپ بر نقاره بزنند که بدون نقاره شوگون ندارد که نقاره چی از خانه رود و بی بی شاه زینب گفته که در وقت زدن نقاره واجب است که همگی زنان بدر خانه روند و اگر زنی در نماز باشد واجب است که قطع نماز کند و خاله پنیر گفته که مستحب است که زنان بر نقاره چی [134b] سلام کنند و اما کریختن از نقاره چی مأموم است باعتقاد جمیع علما این قول اقوی است و اجماع است که کسی ابتدا بکار کند اواز نقاره را نشود البته آن کار بر او خیز خواهد بود

باب دهم در بیان معاشرت زنان با شوهران و مادر خواند بدانکه زن از شوهر وقتی راضی میشود که زن دیگر نکیرد و روز شب با او صحبت دارد و هر چه او را امر کند بفعل آرد هر وقتی که شوهر از خانه بیرون رود برای او چیزی بیارد و بی بی شاه زینب گفته که هر گاه زن بجهت تماشا بکوچهها و حمامها و مدرسهها و سر مزارها رود مستحب است که شوهر منع نکند و بی بی ماجان گفته که مستحب است که هر روز شوهر زنرا گوید که هر گاه خواهی بجهت سیر و تماشا برود اجماع علما است که عروس با مادر شوهر و مادر شوی با عروس البته دشمنی کنند هر چند در دل با هم دوست باشند در ظاهر البته دشمن باشند و بی بی ماجان گفته که باید اعضای یکدیگر را بندگان گیرند [135a] بندگان گیرند و در نهایت شدت و غضب بکنند و بی بی شاه زینب از قول مرشد خود ابلیس لعین گفته که هر چه مادر شوهر گوید عروس باید که عکس آنرا بعمل آورد بر عروس واجب است که روز شب دروغ و افتزای بسیار از قول شیطان لعین بشوهر نقل کند و هر وقت که مادر شوهر از پیش عروس کند واجب است که در عقب او اشاره به پنجه کند و این را در اصطلاح بوغمه گویند واجب است که بشوهر بگوید که هر وقت که خواهرش بیاید مهروبانی و محبت نکند شاید باین سبب کمتر بیاید

باب یازدهم در بیان مطبوخاتیکه بنظر واجب میشود اول سمنو که از آرد و کند و آب میزند و بعضی جوز و بادام نیز داخل کرده اند بی بی شاه زینب و بی بی ماجان بزم آرا را اعتقاد آن است که وقتی که سمنو را وضع کردند سی من آرد و یک من کندم بوده است و خاله پنیر گفته که سی من آرد و سه من کندم بوده است [135b] قول اول اصح است دویم آتش قلمکار که مشهور است سیوم آتش بی بی سه شنبه که الحال متداول است و طریقه آن چنین است که آتش شیر برنج و اوماچ بویی و بعضی حلوا بی تر نیز میکنند بعد از آن یک طبق آرد را بر بالای لته سفید پوشیده در دهلیز خانه میدارند بعد از ساعتی پیره زنی در آمده آن آرد را میرارد پنجه دست خود را بر آن میزند میگوید که جناب بی بی سه شنبه پنجه خود را زده اند هر کدام از زنان باعتقاد تمام از آن آرد قدری بروی خود میمالند از بی بی سه شنبه طلب حاجت کنند و این آتش واجب است که در روز سه شنبه باشد و روز دیگر درست نیست چون بسیار مشهور بود بتفصیل آن نپرداختیم

باب دوازدهم در بیان تعویذ و زخم چشم که چند چیز است بدانکه اول مهرهای کبود که خوش رنگ باشد دویم شاخ آهو سیوم ناخن پلنک و بی بی شاه زینب گفته که باید که شاخ و ناخن را بنقره گرفته شود [136a] شود چهارم مهره سفید که آن کسرا کربه گویند و این عظیم تر است پنجم آلت حمار و اصح آن است که آلت حمار کوچکتر باشد و بعضی گویند که هر قدر بزرگتر باشد بهتر است ششم لته کبود باتفاق خصوصاً خاله پنیر از تعویذات جلیله

⁵⁵ علیها

⁵⁶ علیهن اجمعات

است و بی بی خال جویباری گفته که باید که لته کبود را روز چارشنبه پیش چشم بر بندند هفتم مهره بابا غوری که اثر عظیم دارد و بعضی چهل پینه چهل رنگ گفته اند که از جای باشد و بی بی خال جویباری گوید باید از کسی گیرند که داغ فرزند ندیده باشد و فرزندش باشد هشتم اسپند سوزانیدن خاصه نزد غروب آفتاب و بعضی گویند که پل اسپند را باید که از کدای باشد و باید که روز چارشنبه خریده شود طریق سوزانیدن اسپند آنست که باید که در شب جمعه نباشد که اثر نمیکند وقت سوزانیدن بگوید که ترقد چشم حسود و منافق و جهود از سیاهی اسپند که بعد از سوختن بهم رسیده کف دست و کف پا و سر بینی کنند که تأثیر عظیم دارد و طفل را در زیر ذقن بمالند

باب سیزدهم [136b] در بیان محرم و نا محرم بدانکه کسانیکه دستار بسر دارند نا محرم اند هر چند طفل باشند و خاله پندیر گوید که اگر صاحب دستار سواره باشد نا محرم تر است و ازین بدتر و نا محرم تر طالب علمانند هر چند که کلاه دار باشند که کریختن از ایشان واجب است و بی بی ماجان گفته که هر طالب علمیکه فضلش بیشتر باشد و خدانشناس تر باشد حرمتش بسیارتر است اما آنانیکه محرمند نفا ره چی و سبزی فروش و لبلبو فروش و یهودیکه بدر خانها بطریق فروشنده کی میگردد و هر که غیر از طالب العلم باشد و بعضی از علما کاهو و دلاله و سنک پا فروش را نیز داخل کرده اند و نزد فقیر صحیح نیست

باب چهاردهم در وقتهایکه دهها مستجاب است اول وقت نفا ره زدن که دعارد نمیشود دویم در وقت ناوختن هر ساز خصوصاً سرنا و کمانچه سیوم وقت حلیم پختن و مصالح ریختن چهارم نزد حنا بستن عروس خصوصاً دعای دختران بجهت شوهر پنجم وقت خواب رفتن ششم وقت خطنه کردن به پسران خصوصاً دعای دختران بشوهر نرفته هفتم [137a] هفتم وقت جا کردن سالبانه هشتم وقت عقد عروس نهم وقت تولد فرزند

باب پانزدهم در بیان آمدن مهمان بخانه و بیرون رفتن اجماع علما است که چارشنبه مهمان بخانه نباید آوردن زیرا که بلایی که در خانه مهمانست بخانه آن شخص میروند و اگر شب چارشنبه بیاید مهمان جمع اطفال خود را حتی طفل کهوره را بیارد و اگر درین شب مهمان چیزی ناخورده برود ضرر ندارد و کل فرستادن بجای خوب نیست مگر کل همیشه بهار و لاله و خطمی و بعضی نیلوفر را داخل نموده اند و بعضی گفته که اگر سفری داشته باشد شب جمعه مهمانرا بخانه نگذارد فردای آن از برای او چیزی بفرستند و باید بتکلیف و زور چند لقمه بعد از پسر شدن بمهمان خوراند هر چند قسم میخورده باشد و اگر صاحب خانه با وجود مهمان بخانه بودن با زن خود جماع کند باید که شیرینی بمهمان دهد و بر مهمان لازم است که خود طلب کند هر چند بیگانه باشد و هر چند آن دختر مهمان باشد

باب شانزدهم در خواهر گرفتن علما گفته که کسی [137b] خواهر خواند نداشته باشد چگونه امید دارد ببهشت و کسیکه خواهر خواند نداشته 57 باشد بیحساب هر دو ببهشت بروند هر چند گناه بسیار داشته باشند اگر عمد ترک نماید گناه کار و بر دین یهودی و نصرانی خواهد مرد بدانکه صیغه خواهر خواندی هژدهم ذی الحجه باید خوانده شود باین طریقه من و تو خواهر خواند شدیم و چهارده دستمال ضرور است اول دستمال غمزه بند که بطرف راست پیشانی بندند دویم دستمال ناز بند که در میان قصبه بندند سیوم عشوه بند که بر یک طرف سرکج بندند چهارم دستمال بیابکن که به پشت سر اندازند پنجم یک شاخ که یک سر دستمال را بسر بند کرده سر دیگرش را بدوش اندازند ششم پشته انداز که سر دستمال را بسر بند کرده سر دیگرش را بدوش اندازند و میان آنرا بر پشت اندازند هفتم چکی چکی که در زیر ذقن برده سر آنرا بر پشت سر بند کنند هشتم دستمال زنار که آنرا از پشت کردن در پیش سر کره کرده زدن نهم یال بند که بنازو بندند دهم داغ بند که بنزدیک مرفق بندند دوازدهم [138a] دوازدهم نفس خیز که به پشت دست بندند سیزدهم حقه بند

این خاتمه در چارشنبه سوری بسیار مشهور است که بنوشتم تمتم رساله عقاید النساء از تصنیف قاری رحمت الله مروی الشیعه تمتم تمتم
سنه ۱۳۰۰

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