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**"IF SOMEBODY DREAMS ABOUT READING THE QUR'ĀN,  
IT IS A GOOD DREAM"  
(ON THE MODERN INTERPRETATION OF THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION)**

Oneiromancy, which is the art of dream's interpretation, has been known since the ancient times. There is a legend, according to which the predecessors of the modern Iranians received their knowledge about the secret properties of dream from the Biblical prophet Daniel (Dāniyāl), who had been granted the understanding of "different visions and dreams" (*Dan.* 1:17). According to the Islamic tradition, dreams are the most important "sphere" of a possible contact with a deity [1]. Analysis of Qur'ānic sermons shows that the term *ru'yā* — "vision", which is used in the description of the spiritual experience of Muḥammad himself (17:60; 48:27), as well as Yūsuf (for example, 12:4—5, 43) and Ibrāhīm (37:102, 105), Fir'awn (12:43) means "a vision in a dream" [2]. In his dream the Prophet travelled to the "most remote mosque" (17:1), in the dream Allāh promised him the victory over the Meccans (48:27).

In the Shī'ite circles a belief is widely spread that the members of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) and their direct descendants (*a'imma*, sg. — *imām*), who inherited the power determined by the God, possess the innermost knowledge written on the testimonies of destiny, that they are equally aware of the events of the past and the future. It is also considered that this talent was granted to 'Alī by Muḥammad himself [3]. So it is not surprising that it was among the Shī'ites that different techniques of fortune telling and prediction were most widely spread.

According to the traditional beliefs in a sleep the spirit leaves the body and sets off to spheres inaccessible for the material appearance — to the throne of Allāh, where it can communicate with angels or *jinn*s in accordance with the piety level of the person. Accordingly, dreams, which are a consequence of the contact of a soul with a *jinn* (*hulm*) give false information, while a prophetic dream (*ru'yā*) is the consequence of the soul's communication with an angel. But for the interpretation of the received information from the language of the heavenly spheres into a human one, it is not enough to be just a pious dreamer. Experience and imagination allowed to make a kind of dictionaries aimed at making a bridge between the symbols of dream and categories of reality, or, rather, to create an illusion of such a bridge. Muslim art of dreams' interpretation had been formed by the 3/9th c. [4]. By that time oneiromancy, which possessed immense verbal tradition (of Semitic, Iranian, Hellenistic origin), consecrated by the authority of

Muḥammad [5], obtained a strict code of principles, laws and practical regulations, which was fixed in a written form in numerous tractates which appeared in that period. A big role in this process was played by the *Oneirocritica* by Artemidorus (2nd century BC), which was translated by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (192—260/808—873) by request of the seventh 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn (170—218/786—833), within the framework of the activity of the famous Baghdād *Bayt al-Ḥikma* ("House of Wisdom") [6]. Thus, Muslim oneiromantics received a method for dreams' classification.

As symbols of dreams must reflect the realities of life, the authors of the oneiromancy tractates faced the problem of creating a full classification of the Universe, a classification which included all objects of the Universe which can be comprehended by human mind. An inevitable process of popularization of such tractates led to the appearance of numerous books of dreams interpretations, which contained a list of the most actual for dreams topics and themes of this or that epoch in an alphabetical order. To make them more convenient to remember, such collections were often written in the form of poems. Apart from interpretation of dreams, such book also contained common discussions about the nature of dreams, rules which a dreamer, who wishes to see a prophetic dream and get its correct interpretation, must follow. Not only the place and time of a dream is regulated [7], but also the pose of the dreamer [8].

The interest to the Medieval Muslim oneiromancy is still strong not only in the East but also in Europe and the USA [9]. A curious example of the modern existence of the medieval tradition in Russia is the "Muslim Book of Dream Interpretations" [10] published in 1997 in St. Petersburg, the system of dream interpretation in which is based, according to the compiler, on the "Muslim world outlook". This publication, which meets the demands of the modern Russian book market with its interest to everything occult and mysterious, contains three books of dream interpretations, very different in the place and time when they were written, translated the first from the Persian language, the second from the "Jalalay" [11] (ascribed to the famous dreamer Yūsuf), and the third from the "Turkic" (the so-called "new book of dream interpretations") language accordingly. This book also contains all the necessary elements which we have already discussed above (discourse on the dream's nature, practical recommendations and a

"calendar of dreams"). Unfortunately, the edition does not mention the sources from which the texts were translated, however the change in the form of the material organization seems very curious: in the second book of dream interpretations it is quite difficult to see a system of any kind, the first represents a transitional stage (the material is arranged in themes), the third, "modern" one, is compiled in the form of an alphabetical index.

Not long ago a special edition was published in Teheran, dedicated to the concerned issue [12]. This peculiar "encyclopaedic dictionary of dreams" can give some impressions about the character of existence of the corresponding Islamic tradition in its Shī'ite variant in modern Iran. As magical practices connected with the Qur'ān lie in the sphere of our special interests the sections in this edition, as well as in the medieval books related to the Qur'ān, attract our special attention.

The texts from the Qur'ān naturally played a huge role in all spheres connected with Muslim magical practices. It is clear that the sphere of dreams and their interpretations was no exception. For example, the tradition has preserved for us a belief, according to which a person, who saw a bad dream, must turn around, spit and read the 114th *sūra* and *āyat al-Kursī*, and then pronounce a prayer, stand up and repeat the necessary *namāz*, the next day give alms to neutralize the negative consequences that this dream might cause [13].

It was considered that by using certain quotations from the Qur'ān one could evoke dreams of certain contents. For example, to see an exact location of a hidden treasure in a dream it is necessary to write on a piece of deer or wolf skin the 14th and the 15th *āyāt* of the fourth *sūra*, wash off

the written words with water and to splash it on the place where the treasure is supposed to be. To receive the information in a dream about how one should do this or that thing, one must write on linen clothes the 59th—63th *āyāt* of the sixth *sūra* and place it under one's pillow. And if one ties to his hand before sleep a rag on which these *āyāt* are written, he might dream about a man who would "teach him wonderful things" [14].

The Qur'ān itself and its separate *sūras* can also be present in a dream as independent objects. For instance:

If one dreams about reading the Qur'ān loudly, luck and happiness will always accompany this person.

Reading of a half of the text of the Qur'ān means that half of the dreamer's life has passed.

If one dreams about becoming a *ḥafīz* (which means he had memorized the text of the Qur'ān), such person will become famous for his erudition, piety and will win people's trust.

A person who dreams about finishing reading the Qur'ān will achieve his goals and the desired.

And if a person who is not familiar with the text of the Qur'ān dreams about it, he must start preparing for death, as his hour has come, etc. [15].

The abovementioned modern Teheran edition shows that a complex of certain oneiromantic beliefs was connected with almost each of the *sūras*. The following table is based on this source.

Table 1 [16]

**Sūras and their interpretation**

Sūra	Interpretation
1.	Perform good actions. You will live long.
2.	Be sincere in your deeds. You will endure difficulties patiently.
3.	Eventually you will pass from misfortunes to prosperity.
4.	You will reach your goals. You will inherit fortune from your relatives.
5.	Success and health are your fate. You will receive a high rank and status.
6.	Having done something and having increased your nobleness, you will reach happiness in the divine and earthly worlds.
7.	You will complete your acts honestly and will make people happy.
8.	Your happiness is great and you will gain great wealth.
9.	You will confess in your wicked acts and will receive a present.
10.	You will pronounce beautiful words. You will guard yourself from slyness of your enemies.
11.	During your whole life you will work hard, and in its end you will live in pleasure.
13.	You will perform good acts. Your life will be short.
14.	Having performed good acts, you will find yourself near the God the Almighty and [pious] people.

Continuation of Table 1

15.	You will reach your goals and the desired. You will win people's respect and esteem.
16.	You will obtain an honestly acquired fortune. You will reach erudition and knowledge. In case of getting ill, you will recover.
17.	If you strengthen your faith and perform good acts, you will find shelter near God and His creation.
18.	Your life will not only be happy, but also long.
19.	You will become subject of slander; however, you will purify yourself from it.
20.	You will become famous in the sphere of science or art.
21.	You will obtain knowledge and wisdom. After you overcome difficulties, you will reach peace and quiet.
22.	Perform worthy acts and you will become famous for asceticism and abstinence.
23.	You are an honest and trustworthy [person] and you will go a worthy way.
24.	You will find use in science and will become an unprejudiced and pious scholar.
25.	You will aspire to turn from an illicit to the pious way. You will choose the right way together with the others.
26.	You will turn away from lies and will go the way of truth.
27.	You will receive a lot of money. You will reach honour and grandeur.
28.	You will acquire wealth and fortune. You will reach success in faith.
29.	You will triumph over your enemies and rivals.
30.	You will win victory over hypocrisy and the enemies of faith.
31.	You will obtain wisdom and knowledge, and people will benefit from it. You will obtain wealth and will do much good for people.
32.	You will reach prosperity performing good acts.
33.	You will reach success in life. You will find something and return it to its owner.
34.	You will reach success in life and faith.
35.	You will obtain wealth and fortune.
36.	You enjoy the favour of the Messenger of Allāh, and will eventually reach prosperity.
37.	You are a reliable and sincere person. You will have a worthy child.
38.	You will receive money. You will reach a high rank and status.
39.	You are strong in faith and will reach success in your professional sphere.
40.	Your prayers will be heard. You will achieve happiness and prosperity.
41.	You will live a long life.
42.	You will reach prosperity through obeisance of God and abstinence.
43.	You are pure in your words and speeches and will reach prosperity.
44.	Obedience and worship of God will be of great use. You will obtain wealth and great fortune.
45.	You will confess in wicked acts and will approach God.

Continuation of Table 1

46.	You will make good to your parents. You will see something really wonderful.
47.	You will protect yourself from damage caused by your enemies. You will strengthen your good features of character and you will go the way of truth more surely.
48.	By performing good and pious acts, you will find peace in both worlds.
49.	By treating people well you will reach prosperity.
50.	With hope and faith in God you will obtain property in an honest way.
51.	Work will become easy for you. Luck will accompany you in crafts and agriculture.
52.	You will turn away from wicked deeds. You will avoid argument and disputes with ailments.
53.	You will receive the allowed property and your daily bread. You will have a chaste child.
54.	You will escape difficulties. You will gain wealth and fortune.
55.	You will avoid lies. You will become wealthy.
56.	You were born under a lucky star. Having confessed, turn away from sin and obey the Divine will.
57.	You will receive money, but not without hardships.
58.	You will squabble with your family and dear ones.
59.	You will triumph over enemies and rivals.
60.	You will have an accident, which will eventually lead to your death.
61.	You aspire for God's approval and will be killed on that way.
62.	Take measures to make good acts, and people will respect you.
63.	Turn away from causing disagreement and you will go the right way.
64.	You are sincere in your words and speeches and support the feeble.
65.	You will show obstinacy in your [relations] with your spouse and family.
66.	There will be disagreement among your dear ones. You will be alienated from your family and dear ones.
67.	Make good to other people and, eventually, you will obtain prosperity.
68.	You will obtain knowledge and wisdom. You will make good to people.
69.	Search for the truth and you will obtain prosperity.
70.	Go the way of good acts and you will reach success in your spiritual life.
71.	You are protected from fear and terror. You will find happiness and peace.
72.	Do not allow the fear of <i>jinn</i> s, <i>perī</i> and other bodiless creatures to be rooted in your heart, as they will do you no harm.
73.	Love the evening <i>namāz</i> and you will reach success in piety.
74.	You perform pious acts. You should not hide anger with other people in your heart.
75.	Before death confess in your lies and sinful deeds.
76.	Treat other people well and aspire for God's approval.
77.	Search for the true way and you will one day obtain the allowed wealth.
78.	Your business will flourish and you will become famous.

## Continuation of Table 1

79.	Plots of the <i>shayṭān</i> will leave you and you will find the true way.
80.	You are gloomy and bad-tempered; however, you are merciful to the feeble.
81.	You will get rid of fear. You will set off in a travel.
82.	You fear God's retribution and will approach respected people.
83.	You are just with people.
84.	You will have many children.
85.	Free yourself from sorrows. Your income will increase.
86.	Drive away all hardships from your mind by your own efforts.
88.	Aspire for God's approval. Someone remembers you in good words.
89.	Make good godly acts.
90.	Make good and God will be pleased with you.
91.	You will avoid unhappiness. You will make an act which you will later regret.
92.	You will reach success in your faith in God.
93.	Treat people well and politely.
94.	Success is your friend and work will become easy for you.
95.	By performing good acts and following the right way, you will find welfare in both worlds.
96.	You are a modest person with pure intentions.
97.	You will reach a high rank and status.
98.	You set people on the right path by your words and actions.
99.	You are a merciful person and far from tyranny.
100.	You are a follower of <i>ahl al-bayt</i> (or: "you are the master in your house"). You like race horses.
101.	Perform good, pious acts and you will win people's respect.
102.	You will have good income and profit from craft and trade.
104.	You say valuable things and enjoy authority among people.
106.	People will love you for your good acts.
107.	You will win victory over your enemies. You will make a good deed.
108.	You will obtain wealth and prosperity. You do charity and you will be rewarded for it.
109.	You are tempted with earthly blessings, however, you will find the right path.
110.	You encounter asperities and difficulties, but will eventually reach the desired.
111.	Someone has plotted against you, but [enemies] will not succeed.
112.	By worshiping and hoping in God you will reach the desired in both worlds.
113.	You will be protected from fears, asperities and troubles of this world.
114.	You will be protected from slyness and anger of you enemies.

As we can see, the range of the meanings of the dreams in which the Qur'ān is present, is quite wide. The Qur'ān, as an element of a dream, plays the part of a substituting marker, which determines basic life categories. The inter-

pretation of dreams about separate *sūras* is, as a rule, based on direct associations related to their names. An exceptional role which the Qur'ān plays in the life of each Muslim, is naturally transferred onto the world of dreams.

## Notes

1. See: E. A. Rezvan, *Koran i ego mir* (The Qur'ān and Its World) (St. Petersburg, 2002), p. 123. A recent work by John C. Lamoreaux, "The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation", *Sunni Series in Islam* (New York, 2002) is also dedicated to the Muslim "theology of dreams".

2. For example, compare the Qur'ān, 12:43—4: "And the king said, 'I saw in a dream seven fat kine, and seven lean ones devouring them; likewise seven green ears of corn, and seven withered. My counsellors, pronounce to me upon my dream (*ru'yā*), if you are expounders of dreams (*al-ru'yā*)' (12:43). 'A hotchpotch of nightmares (*aḥlām*)!' they said. 'We know nothing of the interpretation of nightmares (*al-aḥlām*)'" (12:44) (translation by A. J. Arberry.). Compare also 21:5 and 21:7, where it says about Muḥammad himself and *al-aḥlām* and the verb *vaḥā* "to inculcate" are used accordingly; see: Rezvan, *op. cit.*, p. 124, n. 32.

3. T. Fahd, "Djafir", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* CD-ROM edn., v. 1.0 (Leyden, 2002). One can get an impression about the richness of modern literature on oneiromancy at the following web site: <http://www.szygyjob.net/dreams/books.shtml>.

4. The first known tractate on oneiromancy was compiled by Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd Allāh al-Kirmānī (158—169/775—785) and is called *Dustūr fī al-ta'bīr* ("Guide on Interpretation").

5. In *sīra* and *aḥādīth* there are numerous mentions of the practice of dream interpretation approved and applied by the Prophet and the members of his family.

6. Fahd, "Ru'yā", *Et.*

7. The dreams seen in the last third of a night are considered to be the most trustworthy. See: B. A. Donaldson, *The Wild Rue* (London, 1938), p. 177.

8. For example, it was considered, that one must sleep on his right side, however, modern books of dream interpretations, referring to the achievements of medicine, prescribe sleeping on the left side for better digestion. See: *ibid.*

9. See for example numerous American editions of *Tafsīr al-manām. Ibn Sīrīn's Dictionary of Dream Interpretation* by Shaykh Muḥammad al-'Aqīlī (Philadelphia, 1996—2004).

10. G. Bodykin (compiler), *Musul'manskiĭ sonnĭk* (Muslim Book of Dream Interpretation) (St. Petersburg, 1997).

11. As it is given in the text.

12. M. 'Alīkhāh, *Ta'bīr-i khāb-i nawīn. Khāb-i khud-rā ta'bīr konīd* (The New Book of Dream Interpretation. Interpret Your Dream) (Tehrān, 1380).

13. Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

15. 'Alīkhāh, *op. cit.*, pp. 131—8.

16. The interpretation of the *sūras* 12, 87, 103, 105 is absent in the text.