Among the most important aspects of the traditional worldview of Muslim peoples is the idea that it is possible to establish contact with certain higher forces, with divinity. This concerns not only contact with God through prayers for help in the everyday affairs of “this life” and for the mitigation of retribution in the after-life. Such is the contact accessible to “mere mortals.” But the prophets, the saints (awliyā’), Sufi shaykhs and Shi‘ite imāms also establish contact with God, and this “contact” is of an entirely different nature. To this latter realm belong the ecstatic and occult practices which form an important part of popular Islamic belief.

Recent years have witnessed renewed interest in the problem of analysing and describing phenomena which are traditionally designated by terms such as trance, possession, ecstatic states or the somewhat more neutral phrase “altered states of consciousness” (ASC). Today this question attracts ethnographers as well as scholars of religion and psychologists. Aided by the methodological apparatuses of their fields, they are attempting to make sense of the phenomenon of ASC as such. In its current definition, it includes the socially and culturally determined possibility that a number of changes can take place in human consciousness, which have extremely serious consequences both for our particular interpretations of reality as well as for the character of our self-perception [1].

The rapid growth of interest in the problem of ecstatic states and the significant achievements in the understanding of the mental mechanisms through which they arise are linked with the tumultuous expansion and serious gains made by psychiatry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In analysing known descriptions of ecstatic states, specialists tried to discover in them as many features of a pathological character as possible. Parallels with cases described in psychiatry were considered sufficient explanations for phenomena in question. Ecstatic states were most often linked to hysteria [2]. Nonetheless, E. Linderholm noted that the tendency toward ecstatic states was directly connected to the deepest layers of the human psyche, and that such states could arise spontaneously or be consciously triggered. A person’s sense of space and time could vanish in such a state, although subconscious mental activity continued. He wrote about the key particularities common to such states among members of various cultures and religions (which are connected with the “switching off” of a number of aspects of “external culture” in the course of the trance) as well as about those characteristics undoubtedly influenced by cultural surroundings [3].

The role of psycho-physiological factors in conditioning ecstatic states was most fully investigated by E. Arbmann in the third volume of his essential study. Nonetheless, he concluded that ecstatic states cannot be fully explained as hysterical trance, despite the obvious similarities in their basic manifestations [4].

* The first Russian version of the article was published in Tradizionnoe mirovoozrenie u narodov Perednej Azii (Traditional World Outlook of the Peoples of Western Asia), eds. M. A. Rodionov and M. N. Serebriakova (Moscow, 1992), pp. 20—33.
The socio-cultural aspect of the problem began gradually to attract more and more attention, especially after the middle of the 1950s. Materials important for understanding the specific nature of ecstatic states and their place in traditional cultures were obtained by Erica Bourguigon and the members of her group. After researching occurrences of these phenomena in almost 500 ethno-cultural situations, they concluded that in nine out of ten cases traditional cultures are typified by existence of one or more stereotypes connected with ASC [5]. On the basis of this material, Bourguigon concluded that the phenomenon of ecstatic states is, in essence, an individual negotiation of a social situation with the help of the behavioural models or social roles characteristic of a given culture [6].

An attempt to unite the psycho-physiological and socio-cultural approaches is demonstrated by research published in a 1977 collection edited by V. Crapazano and V. Garrison [7]. In his research on the phenomenon of ecstatic states, Crapazano constantly stresses the interconnection of individual social needs of the individual, psycho-physiological particularities and the set of models offered by society for the realisation of those needs. Since he considers that in the culture of each traditional society there is a system of behavioural stereotypes and social relations connected with ecstatic states, he suggests that we view such states in the context of normal psychological processes [8].

By employing role theory to explain the phenomenon of ASC, T. Sarbin and V. Allen were able to hypothesise a "scale of intensity governing the body when roles are assumed". The intensity can vary from zero to extremely high, when a person is almost entirely enveloped by the role assumed. Ecstatic states are a part of this process. In particular, the authors concluded that the precisely regulated ritual side of ASC is intended to hinder their excessive duration, which can present dangers for the body [9].

A.-L. Sikkala, who has researched the phenomenon of Siberian shamanism, also employed role theory. She concluded that a person with a completely normal nervous system can be a shaman. In her opinion, the shaman's trance is typified by a delicate balance between the deep envelopment of the shaman in his role and the demands and expectations of his audience [10].

Thus, if ecstatic states were originally treated exclusively from the vantage point of mental pathology, a gradual and growing shift has taken place toward viewing them as a part of complex socio-cultural algorithms, toward explaining them from the vantage point of normal psychology. At issue is the intensification of various psychological mechanisms to a certain maximum point. Individual psychological traits — in particular, a creative bent [11] — aid this intensification, as do a system of religious and cultural stereotypes which correspond to the role assumed, and the setting (particular ritual practices, weather conditions, the time of the day, the expectations of the audience, etc.) [12].

The results of this research can be applied to an analysis of the available material, primarily Qur'anic, on the prophetic revelations of Muhammad and will, in our view, help us toward a satisfactory interpretation of this material.
A. Poulain, who specially studied and classified religious visions, distinguished external and internal ones. External visions consist in comprehending visual objects and hearing words, the object pronouncing them is, however, not visible. Internal visions can be classified into imaginative and intellectual. The first ones reach one’s consciousness directly as images, the second ones are mental links with no words [29].

Visual visions are described and considered by the Prophet in ḍyār 53: 4–18 and 81: 22–25:

“This is naught but a revelation revealed, taught him by one terrible in power, very strong; he stood poised, being on the higher horizon, then drew near and suspended hung, two bows'-length away, or nearer, then revealed to his servant that he revealed. His heart lies not of what he saw; what will you dispute with him what he sees? Indeed he saw him another time by the Lote-Tree of the Boundary nigh which is the Garden of the Refuge, when there covered the Lote-Tree that which covered; his eye swerved not, nor swept astray. Indeed, he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord”.

“Your companion is not possessed (majnūn); he truly saw him on the clear horizon; he is not niggardly of the Unseen”.

These visions were in detail analysed in special works [30].

The other possibility of communicating with God considered by the Qur’ānic texts shows that the “contact” with God by hearing was the principal form of communication between the Prophet and God; the Prophet perceives both visions and the words of Allah with his heart (qalb) (26: 193–194).

The Qur’ān contains the recurring idea that man is to be comprehended as a unity of three primary components: “hearing, sight, and heart” (16: 78/80): “And it is God who brought you forth from your mother’s wombs, and He appointed for you hearing, and sight, and hearts (al-sam’a wa-l-absāra wa-l-af’ idata), that haply so you will be thankful (see also 23: 78/80; 67: 23). Heart is considered in this case to be the repository of man’s intellect (22: 46/45): “What, have they not journeyed in the land so that they have hearts to understand with (qulūbun ya qilūna bihā) or ears to hear with (adhānun yaṣma’una bihā)? It is not the eyes (al-absāru) that are blind, but blind are the hearts (al-qulūb) within the breasts”.

In that way — “by heart” — the sounds which were coming, as it appeared to Muhammad, from without, were perceived by him as speaking directly in his consciousness.

The analysis of words derived from the stem why, which forms the principle Qur’ānic terms used in the sense
of “inspiration”, “revelation” shows that when they are used in connection with a human being they appear as notions implanted into human consciousness in verbal form, which could later be reproduced in one's native tongue (42:7/5). This imposition is something principally different from direct verbal contact: “It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by revelation (waḥy), or from behind a veil” (42:51/50). The last case concerns Mūsā; another passage tells that “unto Moses God spoke directly (kallama ... taklīman)” (4 : 164/162).

It is important to note that the visions of Muhammad were also accompanied by inspiration: “... revealed (awḥā) to his servant that he revealed (awḥā). His heart (qalb) lies not of what he saw; what, will you dispute with him what he sees?” (53 : 10 — 11).

Metrically organised speech was firmly associated with the idea of other-worldly contacts. Before Islam there were several people in Arabia who pretended to maintain connections with the powers of the other world and who would chant metrical texts supposedly inspired by supreme forces and expected to produce magic effects. Among them there were the fortune-teller (kāhin), tribal preacher (khāṭib) and poet (šāhār). Combining in his own person several social functions formerly belonging to different people Muhammad performed as well the functions of prophet, preacher and poet of the Muslim community. Muhammad's opponents repeatedly denied his prophetic mission, citing the similarity of his preaching and behaviour with the words and deeds of kāhins, khāṭibs and šāhārs. According to the tradition, a spirit (jinny) could throw a pre-Islamic poet to the ground, pressing his chest with its knees [32], which corresponds with the stories of Muhammad's personal experience. The following words are ascribed to the contemporary and panegyrist of the Prophet, poet Hassān b. Thābit: “Many a well made poems resounded through the night, which I received coming down from the air of the sky (wa-qafiyatin'ajjat bi-lJaylin razrnatin talaqqayatu min jawwi-l-samma'i nuzulaha). Further the poet is speaking about the Qur'ān: “The one who does not speak poetry (la yantuqu shi'ra 'indahrz) sees it and is unable to say something similar” [33].

The Prophet's adversaries also charged that he was inventing his “revelations”, that he was a “possessed” man (majnūn), who, according to the ideas of that time, spoke words inspired by supreme forces (68:51), that he was a “wizard” (sāhir) or “enchanted” (mashūr) (10:2; 17:47/50). The Prophet denied these accusations and received a special revelation (69:40—46): “it is the speech of a noble Messenger. It is not the speech of a poet (šāhār) little do you believe nor the speech of a soothsayer (kāhin) little do you remember. A sending down from the Lord of all Being. Had he invented against Us any sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand, then We could defended him”.

In this connection it should be mentioned that in the Qur'ān none of Muhammad's opponents compares his behaviour with the actions of ārrāf (“fortune-teller”, or “soothsayer”), who, unlike the kāhin, was always the initiator of contact with the deity [34]. Kāhin, khāṭib, and šāhār differed not only in the level of their “contact with the deity”, which could occur in verbal form, but also in the form of the contact and the character of their speech. Stylistic analysis of the Qur'ānic text shows that Muhammad's sermons included forms characteristic of the performance of each of these persons [35]. Evidently inheriting their social functions and the style of their preaching, the Prophet was obliged also to inherit the special forms of their behaviour in this specific situation. It possibly explains the variety of forms (al-kayfyyat) of “contacts” with God already noted by medieval Muslim scholars. Al-Suyūṭī (1445—1505) enumerates five such forms, other theologians — up to ten [36].

Through an analysis of the Qur'ān and the early Islamic tradition it is possible to reconstruct the main features of the psychological phenomenon which Muhammad viewed as prophetic inspiration (waḥy). Most often the revelations came at night, “before dawn” (97:5; 53:1). Muhammad felt their approach by his special state. They could come in a dream or in waking reality so that he could distinguish in his mind certain words and sounds which he could later reproduce in his native tongue. Sometimes these revelations were accompanied by a light similar to “the shining light of dawn”, which appealed to pre-Islamic notions of contacts with supreme forces [37]. In those moments Muhammad experienced ecstatic states, often painful: he tossed convulsively, felt blows which set all his being atremble, his soul seemed to leave his body, foam came from his mouth, his face turned red and pale in turns, he would sweat even when it was cold. The last feature is stressed most often [38].

Most often, especially at the initial stage, the revelations came unexpectedly. In the course of time the Prophet evidently learned to accelerate the approach of similar states by wrapping his head or by slowly reading the Qur'ān at night, submitting to a kind of self-hypnosis [39]. It was prohibited, however, to accelerate or to incite the coming of a revelation consciously: “Move not thy tongue with it to hasten it; Ours it is to gather it, and to recite it. So, when We recite it, follow thou its recitation. Then Ours is to explain it” (75:16—19). Muhammad considered the words received in this way as coming from the celestial book containing the words of Allah (35:31/28; 18:27/26). In the course of his prophetic activities his ideas about the actual power which conveyed the revelations changed. At first he had thought that he was listening to the words of Allah himself, later the notion of a spirit (rīh, 26:193; 42:52), of Jibrīl (62. 2), the conduit of revelations, appeared to pre-Islamic notions of contacts with supreme forces [37]. In those moments Muhammad experienced ecstatic states, often painful: he tossed convulsively, felt blows which set all his being atremble, his soul seemed to leave his body, foam came from his mouth, his face turned red and pale in turns, he would sweat even when it was cold. The last feature is stressed most often [38].

In 1981, in the Tarut collection of papers “Works on Sign Systems” there appeared an article by T. M. Nikolaeva considering reflections of the psychological aspects of poetic inspiration in the verse by nineteenth—twentieth century Russian poets [40]. The author used about 140 poems by A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, E. Baratynsky, F. Tyutchev, A. Fet, V. Solovyov, K. Balmont, A. Blok, A. Bely, I. Annensky, A. Ahmatova, M. Tsvetaeva, N. Zabolotsky, B. Pasternak, O. Mandelshtam, B. Ahmadulina. All of the poems mention certain inexplicable sounds. The poets speak of a certain “secret realm — not sound, not colour, nor colour, nor sound”; “they seem to me complaints and groans ... one all-conquering sound arises” (Ahmatova); “the far-off, secret sound of indistinct entreaty” (Blok); “ unearthly echoings of universal harmonies” (Sologub); “a three-starred, scattered peal” (Balmont); “an unknown, wingless, awful call” (Blok); “a dream-world voice” (Tsvetaeva); “an orchestra of other-worldly violins” (Blok);
"a rain of symphonies" (Belyi); "a rolling, rippling chime" (Balmont).

the poets hear these sounds at specific times, between "dusk and dawn". We find "scarlet twilight" (Blok); "the dying light of sunset" (Sologub); "foul-weathered, misted evening" (Tyutchev); "thick and sleepless night" (Pasternak), and "the hour of sunrise" (Balmont).

As for the source of the sound, something misty and unreal is cited — "from the spheres of unearthly haze" (Balmont), "in this mad mist" (Blok) (cf. verses of Hassan b. Thabit, see above); celestial bodies — "far-off Syrian tremble" (Balmont). Sometimes the source of the sound is located in the poet himself — "singing — the boiling of blood" (Mandelstam). In some cases it is a certain fiery element — "the spirit wept, and in the starry deep the fiery sea was parted, and someone's dream in whispers spoke of me" (Blok).

T. M. Nikolaeva writes that "most probably the element of fire and flames was in some complicated way combined with the scarlet mist embracing a poet in his pre-active period and with an insistent noise growing into rhythm" [41].

Sounds were often perceived during periods of insomnia and unrest — "in those days when the soul is trembling full of worldly troubles" (Blok), when the poet is under strain, expectantly awaiting a creative burst: "I wait for the call, I wait for the answer" (Blok); "thus I prayed: quench my dark thirst for singing" (Ahmatova).

Various creative reactions take place: "but in vain it weeps and prays" (Tyutchev); "I blaze and burn, I struggle and soar, in languiors of extreme endeavour" (Fet); "a burnt to ashes layer of worlds lives within my budding ear" (Bely); "but now the words were heard... and lines came easily, dictation to a snow-white notebook" (Ahmatova); "but I forgot what I would like to say, the unfleshed thought returns to realms of shadow" (Mandelstam).

Though it is important to take into account the possible influence of poetic patterns, we get in general the following picture of a special psychological state characteristic of many poets: at a certain time, "between the sunset and the dawn", entering a specific pre-creative mood, when either fiery-scarlet colours predominate, or there is night-glitter, or, just after sunset, with its gloomy mist and dark-blue-and-red shades, the poet perceives certain sounds, which could be both bright and clear or indistinct and deadened (depending on the time of the day). The source of these sounds he either feels in himself, or somewhere near, or they come from remote celestial spheres. The emotional reaction that follows may then either develop into a period of creativity or into a spiritual crisis [42].

It is plain that a comparison of these materials with the Islamic tradition describing the character of Muhammad's prophetic revelations allows one to speak about the psychological resemblance of the different forms of "contacts with God" to the emotional reaction described [43]. One can remember also that the Ancient Greek poets claimed that they were musoleitos, i.e. their souls were possessed by the goddess of song. We recall as well the concept of religious and poetic inspiration developed by Plato, with its similar treatment of artistic and prophetic inspiration, the amazing closeness of the Geneiastic concept created by eighteenth—nineteenth century German philosophy and romantic poetry to the Islamic idea of prophetic gift (nubuwwa) [44].

Psychological research demonstrates, that a man in a special "transitional state", connected with a specific induction of the right hemisphere of his brain, can take the images created by his imagination for a special kind of communication. Besides that, the distinctive features of the neurotic-psychological strain described here have much in common with the description of Muhammad's revelation states. What takes place in similar states is "a process of reconstruction of the functional activity of one's body, when the achievement of the desired result could be ensured by the functioning of the body as well as by the functional state of its separate sub-systems" [45].

The rhythm and structure of many revelations, the appearance of "mistakes, errors in the grammar and syntax of sayings" [46] are also apparently connected with the Prophet's neurotic-psychological strain at the time when he was preaching or having a revelation, which led to a certain destabilisation of the process of making verbal constructions. These peculiarities of Qur'anic language inspired both the incredibly intricate explanations of medieval Muslim exegetes and entire theories of Qur'anic language [47]. They can, however, be convincingly explained if one takes into account the peculiarities of Muhammad's emotional state, the nervous and mental tension which accompanied the "revelation". This state led to a certain "destabilisation of the process of oral communication" [48].

Visions and psychological states new to Muhammad came to him when he was in a state of inner tension caused both by the events of his private life as well as by the realisation of the closeness and inevitability of the great catastrophe — the Last Judgement, by his eagerness to help his relatives and members of his tribe. Becoming sure of his prophetic mission — much of this belief instigated by those same visions described by the Qur'an — Muhammad started to behave according to the behaviour patterns worked out by society for those people who pretended to "connections" with God. These archetypes included also a set of phenomena expected to take place in the course of such revelations. Muhammad's consciousness included one of the principal provocative forces — the demand to follow archetypes accepted for the social roles he performed. Different forms of Muhammad's contact with God were of the same psychological contents and were connected with his acceptance of the corresponding functions belonging to kahin, šā'i'ir, and khâthīb. Evidently, the states experienced by Muhammad, as described above, were connected with the same psychological mechanism — he was a man with a special psychological structure similar to those of many creative personalities who have left a significant trace in the history of the world.

Legends about Muhammad's mission were created among a circle of people who remembered the stories told by the Prophet or had been present at the time of some of his revelations. These legends were later unconsciously modified in conformity with then current views on prophetic missions. That is how the version of the active form of Muhammad's call came into being — answering the behaviour of 'arrâfs — Arabian fortune-tellers, whose practice it was to "send an enquiry" to the gods. This tradition definitely contradicts the whole pathos of the Qur'anic sermon: there it is many times repeated that Muhammad was only a transmitter of Allah's will; any attempts to incite or enforce a revelation were condemned. Meanwhile, the version of the passive reception by Muhammad of his pro-
The practice of Muhammad's reception of prophetic revelations was thus connected with the system of corresponding ideas then circulating in pre-Islamic Arabia. It should be taken into account also that in the sixth—seventh centuries many settled inhabitants of Arabia shared Jewish and Christian ideas of the connection between man and God. They could in some way have influenced the notions considered here.

In the Jewish environment of Muhammad's time there was a belief that God, after he had ceased to send his prophets to the world, could reveal his will to some people, making them sensitive to a kind of echo of certain words and sounds (bat qol) expressing his intentions. It is the lowest level of prophetic revelation. In this way future events could be predicted, though no new laws could be established through bat qol, nor could the old ones be interpreted. One of the features of bat qol which distinguishes it from real prophecy was that it was not spoken in Hebrew [49].

The ayā 51/50 of Sūrat al-'Ankabūt cited above (wahy... kallama taklīman) could be a reflection of the idea of the two "levels" of contact with God. However, it did not find any further development in the Qur'ān. Its appearance was, apparently, the result of some polemics with the Jews. Muhammad argued that what Jews thought to be the second "level" of communication with God also corresponded to real prophetic status. Evidently the Jews, even if they recognised the possibility of Muhammad's "contact" with God, his revelations coming in Arabic (46:12/11) [50], could regard the voice he heard only as bat qol, i.e. the lowest level of prophecy. This led to a definitive rejection of Muhammad's prophetic status, of the new religious and social norms instituted through his revelations. Eventually, it ended in a complete break with the Jews and helped to establish the Qur'ānic idea of prophesy based mainly on the pre-Islamic traditions of Arabia.

After the death of the Prophet, as the dogmatic system and the law of Islam became more and more complicated, the development of the notion of prophetic revelation (wahy) took place. It was formed, in particular, in the course of disputes about the createdness of the Qur'ān (khalq al-Qur'ān) [51].

The idea of prophetic revelation developed by classic Muslim philosophy goes back to the Platonic concept of religious-poetic inspiration (recognised in Europe only during the Renaissance) — its influence on the formation there of the theory of poetic inspiration was decisive. This evidently explains the difference between the corresponding European and Islamic cultural paradigms. While in the West the idea of the mystic contents of poetic inspiration coexisted with the idea that any comparison between poetic and religious (Christian) inspiration at the same level was impossible, in Islam, within the framework of the theory of the "inimitability of the Qur'ān" (i'jāz al-Qur'ān) it turned out to be possible to consider the "artistic form" of the Qur'ān through direct comparison of the sacred text with poetic, i.e. "profane" texts [52].

In the works by Muslim mystics in the Shi'ite environment there were attempts to explore the difference between prophetic gift (nabwān) and saintliness (wilāya). One of the fundamental features of this difference was that prophecy was dependent upon divine revelation (wahy), while saintliness was connected with inspiration (ilmām). While the famous historian and exegete al-Ṭabarī (838—923) had explained the term wahy, when it was applied to prophets, as synonymous with ilmām, in later times ilmām became a stable term for the religious inspiration of saints (awālīyā'ī), Sūfi shaykh and Shi'ite imāms. It was discussed, in particular, by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149/50—1209) who also distinguished between wahy — inspiration and vision — and wahy — direct contact with God. According to al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), a saint (wallī) could possess knowledge unknown to a prophet (nabi), though the first one could not comprehend the knowledge of the Divine Law. The fundamental difference between ilmām al-wallis (cf. bat qol) and wahy al-nabī is that the first is predetermined for the wallī himself while the second one is socially significant, being addressed to all people [53].

The entire set of notions and patterns considered here was developing in Islam in conformity with the rule formulated by I. Lewis in his fundamental work "Ecstatic Religion". According to this law, as the religious system was developing and becoming more complicated, and the position of religious authorities more firm, there was more and more animosity towards ecstatic practice [54]. The opposition of the Sunni theologians to the religious practice of Sūfīs, especially to its extreme ecstatic forms (mawjūdī), did not, however, hinder the growth of Sūfī influence [55]. Ecstatic and occult practices became widespread in popular Islam, both in its Sunni and especially its Shi'ite forms [56].

Sorcery (sihr) is a special field where ecstatic practice flourished in popular Islam. Since the time of the Prophet sorcery had been denounced, but ideological controversy in medieval Islam brought forth very different opinions. Among the followers of the Prophet were people who, according to the Qur'ān, considered him a wizard (sahir) or enchanted (mashhūr) and his preaching — sorcery given to him by someone (sihr ya'thar). Those people claimed also that sorcery had been unknown to their ancestors [57]. As we have just seen, original Arabian magic practice was connected with persons designated by the terms kāhin, 'arrāf, shā'ir, majnūn. Sihr in the Qur'ān was connected first of all with Egypt (there are several descriptions of the contest between Mūsā and the wizards of the Frī'ānūn (for example, 7:113/110) and with Babylon (2:102/96)). The idea that sihr (sorcery) was connected with Babylon was common for the Near East and the Mediterranean. It is present in the Ancient tradition and in the Bible (Ex. 47:11).

According to the Qur'ān (2:96), sihr was received from Allah by two angels in Babylon — Hārūt and Mārūt. The guardians of this occult knowledge were shayyātins, who taught it to men. In the course of the Arab conquests the Muslim state annexed the lands where occult practices had been most widespread. Those were, first of all, Egypt and Mesopotamia. By the tenth century a number of corresponding Byzantine, Persian and Indian works on occultism were translated into Arabic. This knowledge was integrated during the formation of classical Arabic culture and became one of its distinctive features.
Egypt became the centre of occult studies in the caliphate — "the Babylon of wizards", as Ibn al-Nadîm called it in the tenth century. The corresponding pre-Islamic tradition continued there for a long time. Later this centre shifted, probably towards the lands of North Africa. It was possibly, connected with the activities there of darvîsh orders, the widespread distribution of Sufism, which included in its system occult knowledge along with the heritage of Black Africa. In Arabic folklore, in particular in the tales of the "Thousand Nights and One Night" black Africans and natives of Maghrib most often appear as wizards. This shift was also reflected in folklore: Berber magicians were gaining the upper hand over Egyptian ones.

The connection of occult knowledge with the development of Sufism also manifests itself in the idea that the supreme achievement of divine magic was the cognition of "the greatest of the names" (al-ism al-a'azam) of Allah, which could become known only to divine messengers and prophets. They thought that with that name it was possible to kill and resurrect, to go to any place and to perform any miracle. The attitude of Muslim theologians to sifr developed not only under the influence of the Qur'an but also in disputes over the existence of saints (awliyâ) and miracles (mu'âjza, âya, karâma). Mu'tazilites regarded all miracles as sîhir. Later, however, (between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries) the notions of sîhir and miracle became more distinct. They began to distinguish two kinds of magic: the lawful one (al-tarrqa al-maftûma - ("the approved way") and the forbidden (al-tarîqa al-madhmu- ma - "the disapproved way"). The first one was thought to go back to Âdam and his daughter Anâq, to Sulaymân (Solomon) and to Jamshîd of Persian myths. The second one takes its roots from Alâs, who gave this knowledge to Baydâa, his daughter (or his son's daughter). Magic as such was based on a wizard's link with jînns. People who practised "lawful" magic (al-mu'azzîmûn - "enchancers") achieved the same aim by submitting to Allah's will, by seeking his help. Those who practised "forbidden" magic (al-sahara — "sorcerers") established connections with jînns through evil deeds. In the Muslim world this practice was forbidden and punished with death.

Mu'tazilites, as well as Hanafites and Shâfi'ites, thought that "forbidden" magic could not change the nature of things, as it was confined to affecting the human senses by various means, such as drugs, incense, etc. This point of view, however, never became dominant. Magic actions of this kind became known as al-sîmîyya (from síma - "sign, feature, quality"). "Real" magic was denoted by the term al-rûhâni ("spiritual"), in its turn it was divided into "high" ("îlî) or "divine" (rahmânî - "of the Merciful One") and "low" (sûfî) or "devilish" (shaytânî) magic. A number of the most primitive magic actions based neither on astrology nor on "lawful" magic were called 'ilm al-rûqqa ("the science of spindle", i.e. women's work), probably, a distortion of the term 'ilm al-rûqqa — "the science of sorcery".

Al-Ghazâlî, like other theologian-traditionalists, denounced all kinds of magic, though he did not doubt the possibility of establishing contacts with jînns and using their power to interfere with worldly matters. In spite of the disapproval of the Sunni theologians, magic practices and occult knowledge still make up one of the most important features of the traditional culture of all levels of Arabic-Muslim society. Moreover, small talismanic Qur'âns or talismanic sheets covered with the Qur'anic citations, as well as the Qur'ân fragments (âyâ, Sûras, and collections of Sûras), took a great part of Muslim occult practice.

The phenomenon of the Qur'ân cannot be adequately explained without constantly bearing in mind that the Sacred Book derives from any source but God, that it was sent down to the Prophet in a miraculous way [58]. The Qur'ân itself is the main miracle of Islam. On the other hand, the role of the Qur'ân in the everyday life of millions of Muslims, its significance for the Muslim magic and occult practice is so great, that the phenomenon of Qur'ân could be properly evaluated if only all these matters are taken into account. One of the next papers in this series will be specially devoted to this aspect of the existence of the Qur'ân.

Notes
1. "Ecstasy research in the 20th century" (an Introduction to Religious Ecstasy Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Religious Ecstasy Held in Abo, Finland, on the 26th—18th of August, 1981, ed. Nils G. Holm (Stockholm, 1982), p. 9. Also see here the rich bibliography on the subject. Hereafter cited as Holm, "Ecstasy research".
2. See, for example, P. Janet, De l'angoisse à l'extase: un délire religieux, la croyance (Paris, 1986); idem., De l'angoisse à l'extase: les sentiments fondamentaux (Paris, 1988); E. Kraepelin, Psychiatrie (Leipzig, 1915), iv; T. Ribot, Les maladies de la personnalité (Paris, 1924); E. Linderholm, Pngststörelsen (Stockholm, 1904); E. Andrae, Mystikens psykologi (Stockholm, 1926).
4. E. Arbmann, Ecstasy or Religious Trance (Uppsala, 1970), iii, p. 45.
14. A. Sprenger, Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed (Berlin, 1861—1865), i—iii.
16. Bartold, op. cit., p. 284. Cf., however, O. G. Bol'shakov, Istoritìa Khalifatà (The History of the Caliphate) (Moscow, 1989), i,
p. 238, No. 104, citing the opinion of professor of psychotherapy E. A. Lychko: “All features characteristic of Muhammad’s fits are symptomatic of temple epilepsy” (also pp. 96—7).

17. V. V. Bartold, “Islam” (Islam), Sochinenia, vi.


19. Andrae, Mohammed, p. 69.


23. V. V. Bartold, “K voprosu o prizvanii Mukhammada” (“To the question of the summons of Muhammad”), Sochinenia, vi, pp. 615—6.

24. Andrae, Mohammed, p. 65. Ahrens has a different point of view which did not find support among specialists. In his opinion, Muhammad’s visions were caused by hallucinogenic drugs, see K. Ahrens, “Muhammad als Religionsstifter”, Der Islam (1935), p. 24.


28. Ibid., p. 12.


30. See Poulain, op. cit.

31. The Qur’an, 12: 43—44: “And the king said, ‘I saw 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’ya), if you are expounders of dreams (al-ru’iyah)’. — ‘A hotchpotch of nightmares!’ they said. ‘I know nothing of the interpretation of nightmares (al-ahfām)’. I. Al-야야ά 1: 5 and 7, where it is spoken about Muhammad himself and, correspondingly, the word ahfâm and the verb wâhâf (“to inspire”) are used: Andrae, Mohammed, pp. 37ff.; Bell, op. cit., pp. 145—54; Paret, Mohammed und der Koran (Stuttgart, 1957), pp. 44—6.


34. T. Fahd, La divination arabe (Strassbourg, 1966), p. 62.

35. It would, however, be a great simplification to reduce the entire stylistic diversity of the corresponding Qur’anic texts to the influence of special forms of ecstatic speech activity of kâhin, šãr ir or kâhin. In examining the language of the Qur’an from the vantage point of the indissoluble aspects of the tripartite formula “what is said, by whom, in what state?”, it is possible to detect in it an “emotive aspect”, which reflects Muhammad’s state when he preached, and an “indicative aspect”, which reflects the group and individual status of the Prophet himself, his listeners and opponents at one moment or another of his prophetic activity. See V. I. Golunov, “Rech’, èmotzii i lichnost’. Problemy i perspektivy” (“Sound speech organisation as one of the ways of its emotional colouring”), Rech’, èmotsii, lichnost’, Materialy i soobshcheniia (Leningrad, 1978), pp. 3—4. Here one should pay special attention to the rhythm and structure of the “revelations”, to the significant number of grammatically and logically incomplete phrases, to the presence of “rough spots” and errors in the grammatical-syntactic formulation of his utterances. About it see Golunov, op. cit., p. 10 (also see below, note 48 of the present article).


37. V. V. Bartold, “Islam” (Islam), Sochinenia, vi.

38. J. C. Archer, Mystical Elements in Muhammad (New Haven, 1924), pp. 72—6; W. M. Watt, op. cit., p. 58.


41. Andrae, Mohammed, p. 66.

42. Ibid., p. 68. Cf. Josef Brodsky’s remark: “... How do I write? I simply don’t know. I think that a poem begins with a certain noise, a hum, if you will, with its own psychological nuance. That is, there is a certain sound in it which, if not really a thought, then at least expresses a certain relation to things. And when you write, you try more or less to get closer to this hum on paper in a certain rational fashion. Besides, I think that it is not a man who writes a poem, it is always the former poem that composes the next one. That is why the main task which stands before the author is probably to avoid repeating himself. For me, each time this hum begins, there is something new in it...” — the quotation is taken from “Nikakol melodramy...” (“Not at all melodramatic...”), a conversation with Josef Brodsky conducted by journalist Vitaly Amursky in Jossf Brodskii raznerom podlinnika (Josef Brodsky, Original Stature). A collection dedicated to his fiftieth birthday (St. Petersburg, 1994), p. 118. Cf. also Brodsky’s remark: “The writer of poetry writes because language suggests or simply
dictates the next line. At the beginning of a poem, the poet, as a rule, does not know how it will end. Sometimes he is very surprised at the result, for the result is sometimes better than he expected; his thought sometimes goes farther than he had hoped. This is the moment when the future of a language intervenes in its present. As we know, three types of knowledge exist: analytic, intuitive, and the method used by the biblical prophets — revelation. Poetry is distinguished from other forms of literature by its simultaneous use of all three (tending primarily toward the second and third), for all three are present in language. Sometimes, with the aid of a single word, a single rhyme, the writer of a poem succeeds in reaching a place he has never been — farther, perhaps, than he intended. First and foremost, the writer of a poem writes because the composition of verses immensely accelerates consciousness, thought, one's sense of the world. Having experienced this acceleration once, a person is no longer capable of refusing to repeat the experience. He becomes dependent on this process, as people become dependent on drugs or alcohol. Someone in a similar state of dependency on language is, I think, a poet" (Josef Brodsky's address on receiving the Noble Prize. Cited from V. Ulfian, "Ot poeta k miru" ("From the poet to the myth"), idem., p. 174).

43. Andrea, Mohammed, p. 60.

44. Navid Kermani, "Revelation and aesthetic dimension: some notes about apostles and artists in Islamic and Christian culture", The Qur'an as Text, pp. 214—24. Cf. the conclusion by A. Guillame: "All the Hebrew prophets were poets" — see his Prophecy and Divination among the Hebrews and Semites (London, 1938), p. 243.


51. J. van Ess, "Verbal inspiration. Language and revelation in classical Islamic theology", The Qur'an as Text, pp. 177—94.


54. I. Lewis, op. cit., p. 34.


57. The Qur'ân, 10: 2; 17: 47/50; 28: 36; 38: 4/3.

58. When this article was ready for publication, I received information about the publication of the papers presented in 1995 at the Strasbourg conference devoted to a topic very close to that of the current article (Oracles and Prophecies in the Antiquity. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 15—17 Juin 1995, ed. Jean-Georges Heintz, (Paris, 1997). — Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grece Antiques, vol. 15). The publication proves the growing interest of the scholarly community in the topic. The papers presented at the conference covered a broad historical and geographical ranges: Ancient Egypt, Mesoopotamia, Semitic world—Hebrew Bible, Christianity, Islam, Greece and Rome. Of prime importance for us are the presentations of T. Fahd’s "De l’oracle à la prophétie en Arabie" (pp. 231—41) and R. G. Khoury’s "Poétique et prophétie en Arabie: convergences et luttes" (pp. 243—58).

Illustrations

Fig. 1. "The Night Journey of Muhammad and the Ascent to Heaven", a later miniature from the early sixteenth-century manuscript C 1674 of Khamsa by Nizâmî preserved in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 3b, 21.2 x 13 cm. The depiction is connected with Sûra 17: 1 and 17: 93/95.

Fig. 2. "Jibril", a miniature from the fourteenth-century manuscript E 7 of 'Ajâ'îb al-makhliqât wa gharâ'îb al-mawjûdât by Abū Yahya Zakariyâ' b. Muhammad b. Mâmmûd al-Qazwînî preserved in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 36a, 28.4 x 21.8 cm.

Fig. 3. "Jibril", a miniature from the manuscript D 370 of 'Ajâ'îb al-makhliqât wa gharâ'îb al-mawjûdât by Abū Yahya Zakariyâ' b. Muhammad b. Mâmmûd al-Qazwînî of 988/1580 preserved in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 33a, 24.8 x 18.7 cm.
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Plate 1. "A high-spirited stone, a divine oriole". Illustration No. 46 to the Chinese novel A Dream in the Red Chamber from the same Album, 15.5 × 19.6 cm.
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Plate 3. "Lin Dai-yn speaking to a parrot". Illustration No. 57 to the Chinese novel A Dream in the Red Chamber from the same Album, 15.5 × 19.5 cm.