

**“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* (*ḥulm*) 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