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**M. E. Rezvan. *Koran v sisteme musul'manskikh magicheskikh praktik* (The Qur'ān in the System of the Muslim Magical Practices). St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2011. 220 pp. + ill.**

The Qur'ān and magic... Having seen the combination of these two words in the title of the book, a potential reader may at first be surprised and think how compatible these notions are? Indeed, not infrequently Islam appears in contemporary mentality (as opposed to that of the Middle Ages) as a strict monotheistic religion, which leaves no room for any non-canonical practices. The canonicity of any action is conditioned by the Qur'ān. Thus, does it turn out that the Sacred Scriptures of Muslims have certain foundations, upon which magic is founded? And is there any relationship between magic and religion whatsoever?

For in spite of our understanding of magic, whether we see it as the lowest level of man's communication with the spiritual reality, or as the starting phase of religion, the combination of these two notions is rather strange, because in this case magic will belittle the virtue of religion as such. At the same time the Qur'ān is at the very foundation of the Muslim teaching, and this book, as with any text, encourages all kinds of understandings and interpretations on account of a great number of unclear passages. These interpretations may turn out to be rather close to high religious ideas hidden in the text or they may lead one astray and toward a scientific or magical comprehension. There is nothing surprising about that because religion is called to come instead of magic.

However, magical comprehension of reality has become deeply embedded in the nature of man. Mankind has created an intricate combination of magical and religious mentality. Not infrequently insufficient understanding of sacred texts forces man to address a simpler form of communication with the spiritual world, subordinating everything to the letter endowed with a particular symbolic meaning. And depending on the source, magic can also be divided into two — “white” and “black”. “White” magic, as a rule, is presumably thrown back to the Almighty Himself, and causes no concern

and is allowed for even by those, who are called to fight any manifestation of magical mentality.

It is the latter that makes room for

referring to *Muslim magic* as an individual phenomenon, detaching it from the pre-Islamic, western and other traditions, due to the fact that the source of power, which it draws from, is none other but Allāh Himself. Therefore, inscriptions that grant efficacy to amulets, are mainly made up of quotes from the Qur'ān, “the most beautiful names of Allāh”, invocations of Allāh and prayers affirming a steadfast faith in Him” (p. 22).

Magic understanding, as one of the forms of interpretation of the Qur'ān, was established during the struggle for power in the Arabic Caliphate, when various commentaries to the Sacred Book were used for political purposes. Later Ismā'īlism and Ṣūfism had their say. As a result, by the 13th century the fact of approved (*al-ṭarīqa al-mahmūda*) and disapproved (*al-ṭarīqa al-madhūmūna*) magic had already been firmly established in theological works and in the mentality of the general public (pp. 23—28). The approved magic penetrated even secular works, in particular poetic anthologies (*tadhkira*). Thus, we find quite a few useful instructions (*fāyyida*), interwoven into the general outline of the narration, in the work of Muṭribī Samarqandī *Tadhkira al-shu'arā'* (“Memoirs of the Poets”), completed in 1013/1604–5. For instance, the story of Muḥammad-Zamān-mirzā, posing as the son of the Badakhshān ruler, Shāhrukh-mirzā Badakhshānī, and leading the rebellion against the Shaybānids in 998/1590, which led to his imprisonment, is followed by *fāyyida*, where it talks about ways to hastily rid oneself of “chains and jail” in accordance with the book of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Suhayl al-Jawzī (Ibn Khashshāb) *Durr al-nazīm fī faḍā'il al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm* (“Beaded Pearls of the Wisdom of the Great Qur'ān”). For this purpose *āyāt* 100—101 of 10th *sūra* “Yūsuf” needs to be written on a piece of paper, then the sheet needs to be fastened to the right hand and the verses need then to be recited in the mornings and evenings. In addition, 52nd *sūra* “al-Ṭūr” can also be read for the purpose of