

## CONTENTS

<i>EDITORIAL BOARD</i> . . . . .	3
<i>TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH</i> . . . . .	4
<b>M. Rezvan.</b> Qurʾān Manuscript A 1638 from the Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Practice of <i>Istikhāra</i> . . . . .	4
<b>T. Pang, N. Pchelin.</b> The Qing Imperial Credentials in the St. Petersburg Collections . . . . .	19
<i>TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION</i> . . . . .	26
<b>I. Tantlevskij.</b> Melchizedek and the Teacher of Righteousness: Some Peculiarities of Messianic and Eschatological Texts from Qumran . . . . .	26
<b>E. Tyomkin.</b> A Word about Bhāmaha . . . . .	54
<i>LIBRARIES AND NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES</i> . . . . .	59
<i>Towards an exchange network of Arabic authority records. Round Table (Part I)</i> . . . . .	59
<b>N. Rodriguez.</b> Propos liminaires. Opening Remarks . . . . .	60
<b>M. Beaudiquez.</b> Échange et réutilisation des fichiers d'autorité: quels principes promouvoir? . . . . .	62
<b>N. Boddart.</b> Classiques anonymes de la littérature arabe . . . . .	69
<i>BOOK REVIEWS</i> . . . . .	70

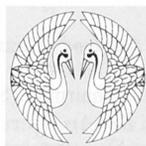
### Front cover:

Embroidery design of a dragon. The Qing imperial credentials of the Emperor Xuantong to the Russian Tsar Nicolas II, accordion binding cover. The collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, 34,5×22,0 cm.

### Back cover:

Embroidery design on a *tao*. Same credentials, 34,5×22,0 cm.

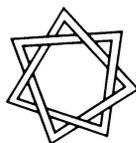
THESA PUBLISHERS  
IN CO OPERATION WITH  
ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES  
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM  
PETER THE GREAT MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY  
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



# Manuscripta Orientalia

*International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research*

Vol. 9 No. 1 March 2003



**THESA**  
**St. Petersburg**

# TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

M. E. Rezvan

## QUR'ĀN MANUSCRIPT A 1638 FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES AND THE PRACTICE OF *ISTIKHĀRA*

The Eastern manuscript that finds its way to the desk of the European scholar was removed many decades or centuries ago from the complex context that defined its existence. Created to meet the needs of people who lived in a specific place at a specific time, the manuscript contained important knowledge. It pleased the eye with its construction and the beauty of its calligraphy. It could act as a talisman. It provided descendants with information about their forbears. It preserved the remarks of earlier owners and readers... Although many elements of this context are often lost forever with the passage of time, the attentive researcher has tools that allow him to restore at least some of them. In doing so, one can grasp the true significance of a manuscript copy, which usually goes beyond the common identification of a manuscript with its text. Moreover, many of the elements mentioned here together form a certain code that must be deciphered to grasp the true meaning of a manuscript. The present article is an attempt to demonstrate this.

Each Qur'ānic manuscript has its own tale to tell. A manuscript preserves the memory of the copyist's hand and the many owners who left their mark on its margins: *waqf* notes, commentaries on *tajwīd*, as well as varied symbols and even drawings [1]. Worn-out copies were interred with the full honour due the sacred text [2] or buried alongside their deceased owner. This did not, however, always mark the end of the manuscript's life. Even at the beginning of the last century, widows without other means often dug up manuscripts from the grave and sold them to visitors [3].

During our work on describing the Qur'ān collection at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, we often recorded marginal notes, some of them less than comprehensible. Among other things, our attention was drawn to a small-format (6.7×11.0 cm) manuscript in a painted lacquer binding (see *fig. 1*) copied in a minute calligraphic hand on thin light-coloured paper of local production. The margins contain regular repetitions of the words: "very good" ("بسیار خوب" "very good") (see *fig. 2*); "not so good" ("میانہ خوب" "not so good"); "good" ("خوب" "good"); "bad" ("بد" "bad"); "not so bad" ("میانہ بد" "not so bad"). Later, B. A. Donaldson's "The Wild Rue" revealed a magical explanation for these notes. In her chapter on Qur'ānic

magic, she writes: "Some Korans are especially prepared for this purpose (divination — *M. R.*) and have their pages marked with letters which indicate what the answer is to be. Some have only three letters: خ, for خیر, meaning good; ش, for شر, meaning bad or unfavourable; and م, for میانه, signifying medium. Other copies have more details. Nine letters and combinations indicate very good, good, fair, medium, not good and bad. These signs simplify the reader's task and relieve him of the responsibility for an unfavourable interpretation" [4]. Manuscript A 1638 is just such a manuscript, specially prepared for fortune-telling.

The manuscript was acquired on 24 November 1955 in an Akademkniga store for 200 rubles. It is dated 1262/1846. It was copied in Iran, probably Tehran or Shiraz [5]. The inner side of the binding's back cover bears the seal of Akademkniga and the owner's signature in red ink: *Ex Libris. Klinushin*. The manuscript contains virtually the entire text of the Qur'ān (2:4—94:8). Page 312 provides a colophon:

تمت الکلام الله المجید فی یوم السبت فی شانزدهم شهر ربیع الاول سنه ۱۲۶۲

"[Copying] completed of the Holy Word of God on Saturday, the 16th day of the month of Rabi' al-awwāl year 1262".

Page 312b (see *fig. 3*) displays an Arabic-Persian inscription that contains an injunction with reference to the authority of the *amīr* of the faithful [6] to read a special prayer upon completion (of copying, reading?) the Qur'ān:

حضرت امیر المومنین علیه السلام هرگاه ختم قرآن میفرمودند ایندعا را میخوانند

اللهم اشرح بالقرآن بصری و اطلق بالقرآن لسانی و اعنی علیه ما ا [...] بالقرآن صدری و استعمل بالقرآن بدنی و نور بالقرآن لا حول و لا قوة الا بک

"O Lord, with the help of the Qur'ān open my eyes, with the help of the Qur'ān free my tongue, and [...] with the Qur'ān my heart, and use my body through the Qur'ān, and illuminate [me] with the Qur'ān, for there is no strength and no power save through You".

The text is copied in black ink, *sūra* titles are in red, and *juz'* and *ḥizb* beginnings are marked in the margins in red. Other *tajwīd* signs, as well as vowel signs, are in the same black ink as the main text. Custodes are set out consistently. The text is enclosed in an uneven triple border. The outer line is in gold, with a margin of 1.3 cm. The text is framed directly by a blue, and then a gold line. There are 16 lines per page. The upper margin is 0.6 cm, lower 0.8 cm, outer 0.9 cm. The interval between the lines is 0.2 cm. The end of each *āya* is marked with a red circle. The manuscript is defective (the beginning and end of the Qur'ānic text are missing, usually a sign of intensive use), but the surviving part (312 folios) has reached us in good condition [7].

As an instrument of *isikhāra* (from the root خـر "to choose, offer a choice, express a preference"), the manuscript testifies to the spread of the practice. A practitioner of *isikhāra* [8] entrusts to God the choice between possible versions of events. The practice is open to the pious, chosen man who wishes to cede his entire life to the will of God (*khayr*), and to the simple man who finds himself in a difficult situation and doubts the correctness of his decision (*mustakhīr*).

Since the tradition of divination has its roots in the most distant past (and *isikhāra* spread in the most varied parts of the Muslim world), Islam established special rules for the ritual to prevent a return to pagan traditions.

The practice of text-based divination — known as rhapsodomancy [9] or theomancy (divination on the basis of Scripture) [10] — was especially widespread in the Shi'ite world. *Isikhāra* differed from *fa'l* [11] — divination in the broader sense of the word (for example, "What will become of me?") — in that it determined only the desirability, undesirability, of performing a specific action (for example, "Should I marry Nuria?"). *Fa'l* [12], on the other hand, performs more general functions. As a rule, *fa'l* was used to foretell the future. Shi'ites consider Ja'far, Muhammad's cousin (killed 8/629 in a battle near Mu'ta) [13], the patron of rhapsodomancy.

According to tradition, the Prophet said that if a person performs *isikhāra* with the necessary veneration, he will know no loss or grief. *Isikhāra* is usually performed by professional practitioners, but any educated person can perform it in their absence. A specific ritual precedes the process of divination. B. A. Donaldson describes how this ritual was performed in Mashhad in the 1930s. First, the *al-Fātiḥa* was read, and then (in Arabic): "O God! You know what is concealed!". A part of *āya* 6:59 followed this: "And with Him are the keys of the Invisible. None but He knoweth them. And He knoweth what is in the land and the sea" [14]. Next came the traditional formula of greeting and wishing peace to Muḥammad and his lineage, after which the divination began. With eyes closed and turned toward the heavens, the diviner pronounces the name of God and opens the Sacred Text at random, after which he reads the first sentence, or part of a sentence, on the page and supplies an interpretation of the text [15]. The interpretation makes use of *ta'wīl* methods (symbolic and metaphoric exegesis).

*Fa'l* is performed in similar fashion. The chief difference is that the diviner begins not by reading the first word on the page, but by going to the beginning of the verse: if its meaning is seen as positive, then the beginning will be good. He then examines the end to determine the nature of the outcome [16].

The practice is still popular in Iran. This year in Tehran saw the publication of the "most complete and detailed" guide to *isikhāra*, drawn up by Ghulām Riḍā Naw'āi [17]. The guide is based on one of the manuscripts specially created in accordance with the *isikhāra* tradition [18]. An analysis of this book deserves special attention, as it is a fascinating source of information on divination in today's Iran.

The practice of *isikhāra* is the subject of numerous discussions today, just as it was hundreds of years ago. Is divination acceptable? Does not recourse to *isikhāra* hinder independent thinking? Does not the practice avoid individual responsibility? Kāshānī proves that the practice of divination on the Sacred Text is lawful with references to *ḥadīth*, the authoritative *imāms* Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and Riḍā, and quotes from the *imām* Khumaynī and Ṭabāṭabāi. The foreword by Dr. Aḥmad 'Abadī attempts to justify *isikhāra* by juxtaposing two concepts: *tafa'l* and *taṭayyur*. The former means "lawful divination", the latter — "forbidden divination". But the inconsistent use of these terms (and the subsequent contrast between *fa'l* and *isikhāra*) shows that until now there has been no definitive treatment of the question. Another fascinating issue is the question of whether it is possible to use *isikhāra* as legitimate proof in court. The main arguments in favour of *isikhāra* are that there is nothing reprehensible in seeking God's help in a difficult situation, that this has no relation to pagan practices, and that *isikhāra* does not give man access to concealed knowledge, but rather help and support in dealing with his doubts.

As a sign of the urgency of the question in contemporary Iranian society, the book is intended to ease the work of *imāms* in mosques who receive regular requests from people to perform *isikhāra* for them. Thanks to this book, people who do not know Arabic can appeal to God in difficult situations without intermediaries.

The book also contains information on (i) the typology of *isikhāra* (where the Qur'ān is listed as only one possible instrument of divination); (ii) the best time and place to perform it (on Saturday from sunrise to sundown; on Sunday from dawn to noon, and then from before dusk to sundown; on Monday from dawn to sunup, then from noon to sundown; on Tuesday, from dawn to noon, then from before dusk to the dark of night; on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from dawn until the dark of night); (iii) religious and ethical requirements for the practitioner of *isikhāra* (who must be reconciled to God, sincere, entirely serious about what he is doing, with clearly formulated questions; the matter on which advice is sought cannot contradict the *shari'a*, no action contrary to the result of divination must be performed, etc.).

We cite here the prayer rule of Ḥasan 'Askarī (232—260/845—872) from this book, which precedes the divination process: first, the *al-Fātiḥa* is read one to three times, then the 97th *sūra* (*Qadr*) is read ten times, and then the following prayer is pronounced three times:

اللهم انى استخبرك لعلمك بعاقبة الامور و استشيرك لحسن ظنى بك فى المامول و المحذور ،  
اللهم ان كان الامر الفلانى مما قد انيطت بالبر كه اعجازه و بواديه و حفت بالكرامه ايامه و لياليه، فخرلى .  
اللهم فيه خيرة ترد شومسه دلولا و تقضى ايامه سررا ،  
اللهم اما امر فانتتم و اما نهى فانتتهى ،  
اللهم انى استخبرك بر حمتك خيرة فى عاقبة .

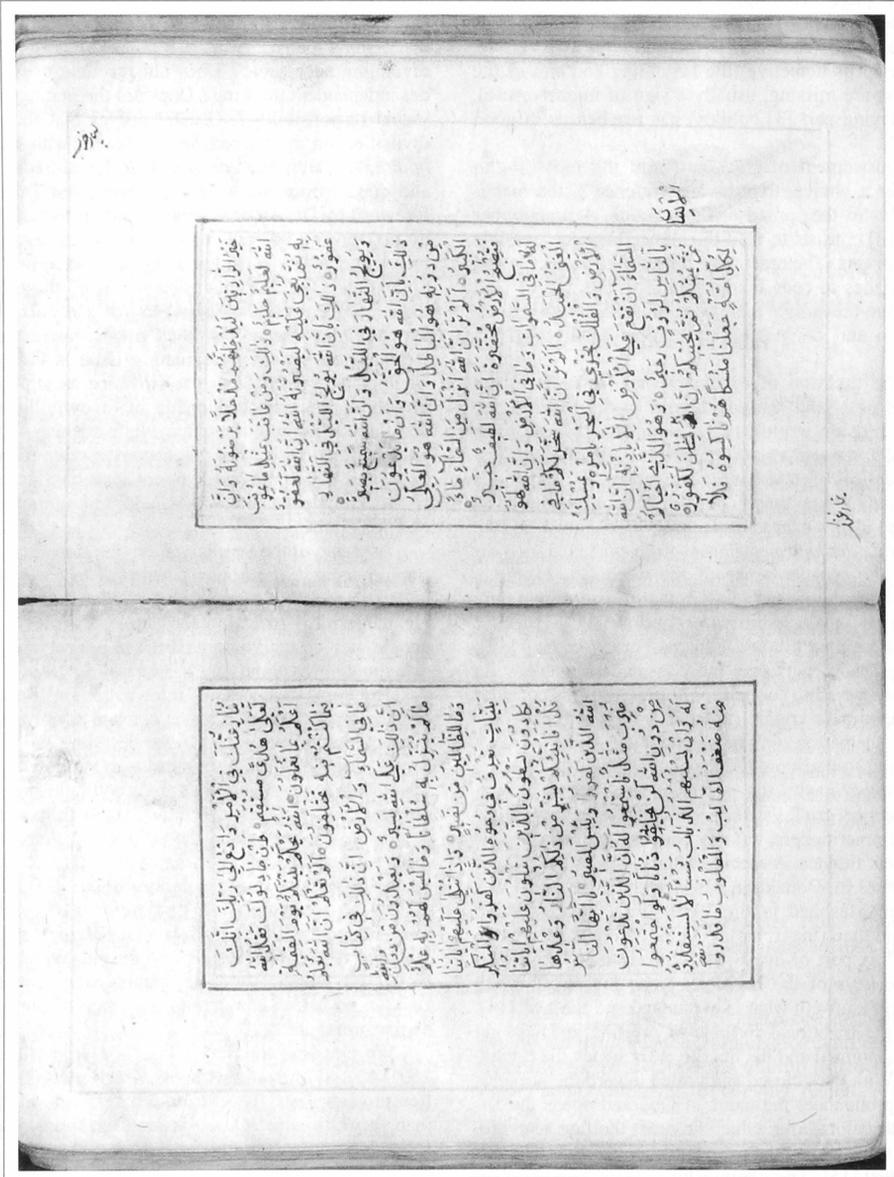


Fig. 2

الارض

هذا الارض كذا ونحوه مائة وخمسة واربعون  
 الله اعلم علمه ذلك ومن عاقب غيبا ما نوت  
 به الله ينجي قلبه بقوله الله ان الله اعلم  
 عسوره ذلك ان الله يوجب التكاليف في التكاليف  
 ويوجب التكاليف في التكاليف وان الله يجمع بين  
 ذلك ان الله هو الحق وان ما بينه وبين  
 من دونه فهو الباطل وان الله هو الحق  
 الكبر والارض الله ان الله ان الله ان الله  
 تجميع الارض محضه ان الله الحق حبه  
 له في السموات وما في الارض وان الله هو  
 الحق الحق ان الله ان الله ان الله ان الله  
 الارض والفلان تجزي في الجبر باجره وتبني  
 السموات تقع على الارض الارض ان الله  
 بالارض لو لم يكن رطب وهو الذي انما  
 من يخلق من يخلق ان الله ان الله ان الله  
 ليكلنا جعلنا منسلا هونا كسوه نالا

الارض

انما رتبك في الارض وان في رتبك انك  
 تعلى حادى مستقيم لان ما لو انك تعلى الله  
 اعلم يا كفاون الله اعلم يا كفاون الله اعلم  
 فكلتم نبي فكلتم نبي فكلتم نبي فكلتم نبي  
 ما في السماء والارض ان ذلك في كتاب  
 ان ذلك على الله ليه ونعم ومن من في الارض  
 فكلتم نبي به سلطانا وما ليس كمن به علم  
 وما القائلين من تقيروا يا مني قبيها لانا  
 نبيات تعرف جديوه الذين كروا والاسكار  
 طرادون يكون بالذئب يتاون عليهم انا  
 كل انما يديك تيتو من كلال النار وعكها  
 الله الذين كروا وطين يصيب ارجلنا  
 عكوب مثلنا سمعوا الله ان الذين كروا  
 من دون الله كروا وانا ولو انهم  
 له وان يسلمهم الداب فسمنا الاستعداد  
 منه صفعا الذي يب والعاوب ما تداروا

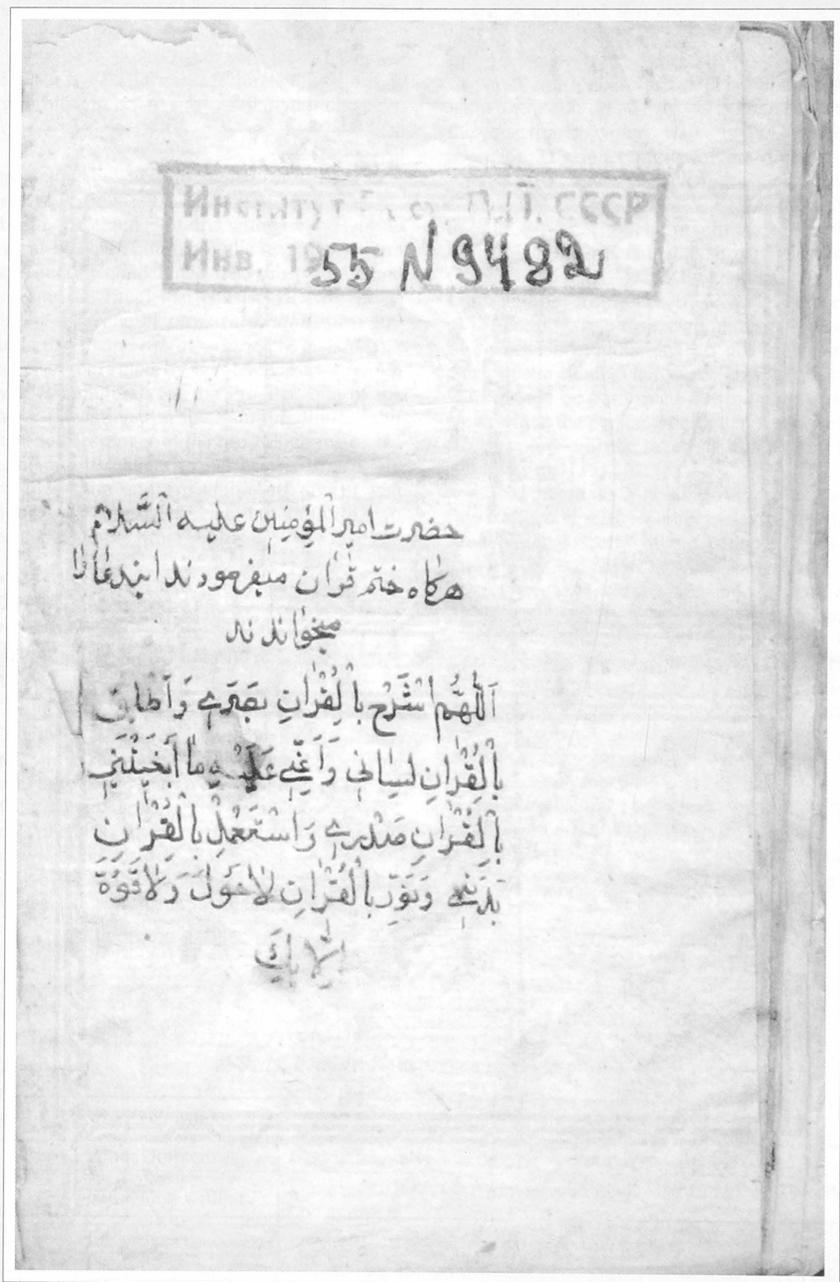


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Each page of the guide is divided into three components: in the upper part, the *āya*, or a part of it; in the central part, the Persian translation; and below, a brief commentary [19] with the result of the divination in parentheses *خوب است* (“good”); (“good”); *ان شا الله خوب است* (“good, God willing”); (“good, but in [specific] circumstances”); *خوب است اما با شرط* (“good, but selectively”); *نهی* (“better to reject this”); *نهی* (“forbidden”); *نهی شدید* (“strictly forbidden”); *نهی موكد* (“categorically forbidden”); *اختيار با توست* (“your choice”); *اين عمل بسيار خوب است، هر چند سرانجامش مرگ* (يا شهادت) يا تاشد (“this is a fine matter, but upon its conclusion death or a martyr's demise awaits you”) (fig. 4), etc.

In Sunni Islam, the practice of divination on the Qur'ān and the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, attested in the seventh — ninth centuries, was frequently condemned. The accepted method is to perform a specific ritual that consists of two *rak'as* and an established sequence of *sūras* (*al-Fātiḥa*, *sūra* 109 *al-Kāfirūn*, and in the second *rak'a* — *sūra* 112 *al-Ikhlāṣ*).

This practice is confirmed by a reference to a *ḥadīth* transmitted by a contemporary of the Prophet, one of the most authoritative transmitters in the Sunni tradition, Jābir ibn 'Abdallāh: “The Messenger of the Most High instructed us constantly and in all matters to perform *istikhāra*. He said, may God bless him and greet him, ‘If one of you should be troubled by a problem, let him perform two *rak'as* and then appeal to the Most High:

اللهم انى استخبرك بعلمك و استقدرك بقدرتك و اسالك من فضلك العظيم فانك تقدر و لا اقدر و تعلم و لا اعلم و انت علام الغيوب اللهم ان كنت تعلم ان هذا الامر [...] خير لى فى دينى و معاشى و عاقبة امرى فاقدره لى و يسره لى ثم بارك لى فيه. و ان كنت تعلم ان هذا الامر شر لى فى دينى و معاشى و عاقبة امرى، فاصرفه عنى و اصرفنى عنه، و اقدر لى الخير حيث كان ثم رضنى به [20]

“A God, I ask of You favour through Your omniscience. I ask you to show Your great strength through your omnipotence. I ask you to show Your great mercy. You are all-powerful, yet I am impotent. You are all-knowing, yet I am ignorant. All that is concealed is known to You. O Lord! If You know that this matter [...] is good for me, for my piety, for my being in this life and the next, then make it possible for me and grant me in the future a blessing in it.

If You know that this is evil for me, for my piety, for my being in this life and the next, then remove this matter from me and remove me from it. And grant me good where it may be and let me be satisfied with it”.

It is assumed that the person who performs *istikhāra* will immediately accept the correct decision from above. If this does not happen, accepted options are written on pieces of paper and lots are drawn [21]. Oneiromancy sometimes helped to elicit an answer [22]: after performing the ritual, the questioner would wait for an answer to come in a dream. The inner purity of the dreamer was especially important: a dream sent down by God could not penetrate a soul awash in passions. According to al-Nawāwī (631—676/1233—1277): “The practitioner of *istikhāra* must entirely reject inner personal desire and trust in the will of the Creator. This will grant the purchase of good from the Lord, and not from oneself” [23]. The preferred interpreter of the dream was a respected, pious person or a *mullā* [24]. The rules and regulations do not touch on the time and place of the ritual. There was, however, a belief that *istikhāra* should be performed in a mosque or other venerated place where the person would then sleep. Religious authorities disapprove of the latter, as it is closely linked with pagan traditions [25].

*Istikhāra* plays a notable role in contemporary Islam. One indication is the number of websites that discuss related issues (usually in the context of matrimonial matters) [26] or even offer “virtual” *istikhāra* [27].

As we have seen, a Qur'ānic manuscript dated 1846 and a book published in Tehran in 2002 are both parts of a single cultural code, a single tradition that continues in contemporary Islam despite the heated discussions it evokes. The existence and widespread nature of various forms of divination is, along with the complex fate of figurative art, an indication of the ambiguities inherent in Islam's doctrinal paradigm: on the one hand, representatives of various currents within Islam held various opinions on these issues in different times and places, from indulgent tolerance to strict prohibition; on the other hand, both the depiction of man, as well as other living things, and divination were common practices in the Muslim world.

## Appendix

### *Sūras, āyāt* and outcomes of divination

Table 1

<i>Sūra</i>	<i>Āya</i>	Result	Commentary
1	1—2	good, God willing	God will help you in this, it is good and has His blessing
2	5	good, God willing	Go through with what you have in mind — this matter is worthy of praise and approval
	24	forbidden	Do not do this, for you will be drawn into sin
	38	good, God willing	This matter conceals hidden good inducements, but [it] is the cause of privations and difficulties
	58	good, God willing	You will achieve the opposite of your goal, but despite this, it is better to begin this matter than to turn away from it
	69	good, God willing	It is possible to achieve the goal. But this is not enough, [one must] want more

## Continuation of Table 1

2	84	good, God willing	Seek the opposite of what you wish (seek another means of resolving this)
	94	good, God willing	But you will not achieve what you want
	106	good, God willing	Give this up and wish for something better, or, at least, similar. On the condition that you do not have another goal
	120	forbidden	It is not suitable to undertake this matter
	135	forbidden	It is not suitable to undertake this matter
	146	forbidden	It is not suitable to undertake this matter, for you will not achieve what you want
	164	good, God willing	Very good, but you will not fully achieve what you wish
	177	forbidden	Give up and set another goal
	187	good, God willing	The beginning of this matter contains no difficulties
	196	good, God willing	Better to begin this unless an obstacle arises at the very beginning
	209	forbidden	It is not suitable to undertake this matter
	220	good, God willing	Better to undertake this
	230	good, but under [certain] conditions	This matter is not suitable unless [you observe certain] conditions
	235	forbidden	This is not the right time for this
	248	good, God willing	You will achieve not all of what you wish, but only a part of it
	257	good, God willing	Very good and worthy
	265	good, God willing	Very good and worthy
275	strictly forbidden	Very bad and pernicious	
283	good, God willing	This matter has a condition, and without [observing] this condition, it is incorrect	
3	10	forbidden	The beginning of this matter will cause unhappiness and terrible difficulties
	24	forbidden	It is not suitable to undertake this matter
	38	good, God willing	You will achieve what you wish and your goal
	53	good, God willing	Very good and worthy
	71	forbidden	Utterly damnable
	84	good, God willing	This matter is very good and worthy
	101	forbidden	It is not suitable to undertake this matter
	116	forbidden	This undertaking will not lead to anything good
	133	good, God willing	Quickly undertake this and do not forsake it
	149	forbidden	The result of beginning this matter is a loss and remorse
	158	—	This is very good, but upon completing it, death or a martyr's demise awaits you
	174	good, God willing	This is very good
187	good, God willing	This is very good, but you will not achieve what you want and your goal	
4	1	forbidden	Refrain from beginning this
	12	good, God willing	Upon completing [this matter] good and benefit will be [your] lot
	20	good, God willing	Under [a certain] condition, this is good, without it, it is incorrect
	27	good	You will not achieve what you wish
	38	forbidden	The beginning of this matter is bad and pernicious
	53	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	66	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	79	good, God willing	Good, but look to another matter
	92	forbidden	Do not count on finishing this matter
	102	good, God willing	This will cause you to escape danger
	114	good, God willing	Without [observing certain] conditions it is not suitable, only with them is it suitable
128	good, God willing	This is most preferable	

Continuation of Table 1

4	141	forbidden	Refrain from trickery and cunning
	155	forbidden	Because this [matter] will end badly and you will not achieve what you wish, give it up
	171	strictly forbidden	—
5	3	strictly forbidden	Because it will have a bad end
	10	strictly forbidden	Because it will have a bad end
	18	strictly forbidden	The result of this matter is vile and pernicious
	32	forbidden	Because it will have a bad end
	42	forbidden	The beginning of this matter is vile
	51	strictly forbidden	Because it will have a bad end
	64	forbidden	This matter is extremely foul
	76	good	This matter is good, although you will not achieve what you wish
	90	forbidden	Keep away from this matter
	104	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
114	good, God willing	You will not achieve your desire and your goal	
6	9	forbidden	In accordance with an established tendency, the completion of this matter is inexpedient
	28	forbidden	Keep away from this so that you incur no harm
	45	forbidden	Keep away from this matter, for it will end poorly
	60	good, God willing	This matter speaks of power and force
	74	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	91	forbidden	It is not suitable to undertake this
	102	do this and do not be afraid, for it is good	Do this and do not forsake it
	118	under [certain ] conditions, God willing, it is good	Begin this matter only [if you observe a certain] condition
	131	forbidden	Refrain from this matter because of a bad end
	143	good	The beginning of this matter will not encounter difficulties, although you will not achieve what you desire
152	good, but under [certain] conditions	The beginning of this matter without [fulfilling certain] conditions is not suitable	
7	1—2	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	23	forbidden	The beginning of this matter will serve as the cause for remorse
	38	forbidden	The beginning of this matter will serve as the cause for remorse and difficulty
	52	good, God willing	Very good and worthy, but you will not achieve your goal and desire
	68	good, God willing	Very good, undertake this and do not forsake it, although the goal and the desire will not be achieved
	82	forbidden	The goal will never be achieved, it will bring nothing but unease
	96	forbidden	You goal and desire will not be achieved
	122—123	good, God willing	It is very good and worthy, and contains good for this life and the next
	138	good, God willing	Undertake it, in this is success and salvation
	150	forbidden	The beginning of this matter will bring remorse and regret
	160	good, but selectively	You will achieve the goal and desire only by dividing the matter
	171	good, God willing	Undertake it, for in it is complete power and strength
188	forbidden	Because of the impossibility of achieving the goal	
8	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	17	good, God willing	Undertake it, in it is victory and a good end
	34	forbidden	Because of a bad end refrain

Continuation of Table 1

8	46	good, God willing	Fulfil it and do not forsake it
	62	good, God willing	Undertake it, you will not encounter difficulties and anxieties
9	1	good, God willing	Undertake the matter that you have set as your goal
	14	good, God willing	Fulfil and do not forsake it, as in it is victory and gifts
	27	the choice is yours	The achievement of the goal and the opposite are equal. You are free to achieve it or not.
	37	strictly forbidden	---
	48	forbidden	The desire and goal will not be achieved
	56	forbidden	Its being and essence are bad
	73	good, God willing	Fulfil this and do not forsake it
	87	forbidden	To begin this matter is vile because of its bad end
	100	good, God willing	In it is virtue, salvation, and the achievement of your desire
	112	good, God willing	In this matter is good news and the achievement of what you wish
	123	good, God willing	Fulfil this and do not forsake it, for it comes along with victory and the achievement of the goal
10	7	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
	21	forbidden	You will not achieve what you wish, the opposite will come to pass
	34	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	53	good, God willing	Do this and do not forsake it, for you will achieve your goal
	71	good, God willing	Although this matter is good, you will not achieve your desire and your goal
	89	good, God willing	What you wish will be fulfilled with delay in several days
	107	the choice is yours	This is someone else's matter. He is free to undertake it or not
11	13	forbidden	The beginning of this matter is accompanied by a loss
	29	good, God willing	In it is victory and suitability; but you will never achieve your desire and goal
	46	forbidden	It is of a bad essence; you will not achieve the goal
	63	good, God willing	Do this and do not forsake it, although it is painful, and you will not achieve your desire
	82	forbidden	The beginning of this will cause unhappiness and stark difficulties
	98	forbidden	The beginning of this will cause unhappiness and stark difficulties
	118	forbidden	According to what is generally accepted, the beginning of this matter is unsuitable
12	15	forbidden	It is very bad to begin this because of [its] bad end
	31	good, God willing	With the help of cunning, the desire and goal will be achieved
	44	forbidden	Know that you will not be able to obtain this and will not achieve what you desire, leave this
	64	under [certain] conditions, God willing, it is good	Suitable, but with [certain] conditions, although the achievement of what you desire is difficult, its completion presents no difficulties
	80	forbidden	Upon achieving what you wish, you will be disappointed
	96	good, God willing	In this matter, the resolution [of difficulties] follows difficulties
13	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	14	good, God willing	Do this and undertake nothing else
	27	forbidden	The beginning of this matter is entirely unsuitable
	42	forbidden	What you wish will not come to pass, possibly, you will achieve the opposite
14	11	better to turn away from this	It is suitable, victorious, and will not call to account [despite losses], but the desire and goal will not be accomplished without anxiety
	25	good, God willing	In this is good and joy
	42	forbidden	Not a suitable time, better to leave it
15	16	good, God willing	Undertake your matter, for it is fitting and good

## Continuation of Table 1

15	52	good, God willing	Undertake this, you will achieve your wish and goal
	91	strictly forbidden	—
16	15	good, God willing	In this is guidance, strength, and hardihood
	35	strictly forbidden	—
	55	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
	73	strictly forbidden	In this is delusion and a bad end
	88	strictly forbidden	In this is a dreadful outcome and extreme difficulties
	103	forbidden	Requires thought, you will not achieve what you desire
	119	better to avoid	Unsuitable, only under [certain] conditions
17	8	forbidden	If you carry this out or intend to carry this out, you will cross the bounds of what is acceptable
	52	forbidden	The time is wrong for achieving your goal and desire
	70	good, God willing	In this is good and daily bread / the journey is full of grace
	93	forbidden	You will never achieve your goal and desire
18	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	18	forbidden	The outer side of this is good, but the inner is ugly and terrible
	29	good, God willing	Undertake it, for [this matter] is the best, and you have already undertaken it, do not forsake it. Pay not attention to what is not approved
	46	good, God willing	The goal is in essence good, but there is a better alternative, and [you] should decide
	62	good, God willing	Your desire and goal will not be achieved without some measure of less, damage, and privation
	84	good, God willing	Undertake it, for in it is strength and power
	110	good, God willing	Undertake it, in it is freedom from reproach, and your desire will be received without insistence
19	26	good, God willing	Undertake your matter, in it is happiness and gifts
	52	good, God willing	Undertake your matter, it will grant a high place to the person from whom you want to [obtain] what you desire
	77	strictly forbidden	—
20	13	good, God willing	Very noble, but to undertake it is impossible
	52	forbidden	You will never achieve your desire and your goal
	77	good, God willing	Undertake this matter, for you are protected from danger
	98	good, God willing	Undertake this and never turn from this matter to another
	126	forbidden	Your desire and goal will never be fulfilled
21	12	forbidden	This matter is the cause of terrible difficulties and flight along a long path
	36	forbidden	Your desire will not be fulfilled, endeavour though you may
	59	good, God willing	Very good, but a source of temptation. The possessor of this will perish and will not remain unharmed
	82	good, God willing	Your desire and goal will be fulfilled entirely
	102	strictly forbidden	—
22	6	good, God willing	Undertake this and do not forsake it, the beginning of this is like the Resurrection of the Dead
	24	good, God willing	Undertake this, for in it is indescribable good
	38	good, God willing	Undertake this matter, in it is salvation from danger
	56	forbidden	Your desire and goal are not part of your obligations
	73	forbidden	Do not undertake this, it is a great delusion, it has no benefit and the goal is unknown
23	18	good, God willing	Undertake this, it has aspects of virtue and welfare
	43	forbidden	The time is not right for this
	75	forbidden	Do not undertake this, for you will achieve the opposite of what you desire
	105	forbidden	Do not undertake this because of its bad end

## Continuation of Table 1

24	11	good, God willing	Undertake this, despite the fact that the beginning is not good, the end is good
	28	good, but under [certain] conditions	Do not undertake this matter without the permission of a person of good taste. If he gives his permission, undertake it
	37	forbidden	Endeavour [to complete] what you have in mind
	54	good, God willing	Undertake it and do not forsake it, although only a part of what you desire will be fulfilled
	62	good, God willing	Do not undertake this matter without the permission of a person with good taste. If he approves, undertake it, if not, leave it. If you find no one, [and the matter] appeals to you, undertake it.
25	12	strictly forbidden	—
	33	good	For you victory over the other, although you will not achieve what you desire... [your] desire will not be fulfilled
	56	good, God willing	Undertake this, in it is good, but a part or all of what you desire will not come about
26	1—2	good, God willing	God will aid you in this, it is good and blessed
	40	forbidden	You will not achieve anything except the opposite of what you desire
	84	good, God willing	Undertake this, you will achieve your desire and your goal
	137	strictly forbidden	because of the foulness of the matter
	184	strictly forbidden	—
27	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	23	good, God willing	Undertake this, your goal and desire will be fulfilled in time
	44	good, God willing	Undertake this, in it is peace and prosperity in this world and the next
	64	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and goal
	89	good, God willing	Undertake this, you will see good, although there is no hope of eliminating danger
28	14	good, God willing	Undertake this, the time is ripe for it
	29	good, God willing	Undertake this, the time is ripe for it
	44	forbidden	—
	60	—	Your matter is, in essence, good. But others are better
	78	forbidden	Undertaking this is extremely foul
29	7	good, God willing	Undertake it, your goal will be accomplished beyond your desires
	24	forbidden	Your desire and goal will only be achieved with difficulties and tribulations
	39	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end and difficulties
	54	categorically forbidden	—
30	6	good, God willing	Undertake it, your goal and desire will be fulfilled
	25	good, God willing	Undertake this, you will achieve your desire and your goal
	42	categorically forbidden	Because of a bad end
31	1—2	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	20	good, God willing	There will be no obstacles in carrying this out, but your desire and your goal will never be accomplished
32	1—2	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	21	forbidden	Refrain from achieving this goal because of a bad end
33	7	good, God willing	Undertake it, for it is very noble, but your desire and goal will not come to pass completely
	23	good, God willing	This matter is good, but it entails perishing on the way to good
	36	forbidden	Stick with what you intended [to do] and do not change the circumstances
	51	good, God willing	You have the freedom of choice either in all or a part of what you possess
	63	forbidden	Your desire and goal will never be achieved
34	8	strictly forbidden	—

## Continuation of Table 1

34	23	good, God willing	Your desire and goal will be accomplished only [under certain] conditions
	41	forbidden	Give up your desire and your aim
35	4	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	19—20	forbidden	This matter utterly lacks justice and impartiality
	39	good, God willing	Extremely virtuous, but you will not achieve what you wish
36	13	good, God willing	Undertake this, for you there are no excuses, but you will not achieve your desire and your goal
	42	good, God willing	Undertake it, in it is strength and great benefit
	74	forbidden	Stay away from this because of its bad end and uselessness
37	31	strictly forbidden	—
	83	good, God willing	Undertake it, this is extremely good
	134—135	good, God willing	Upon completing this, peace and salvation [await you]
38	4	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	28	forbidden	Refrain from this, for the opposite of it is just and impartial
	63	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
39	6	good, God willing	Your matter is very good
	22	good, God willing	Carry it out, in it is the limit of good and contentment
	42	forbidden	The result of this matter is destruction and the demise of what you want
	57	forbidden	Refrain from this, for it is bad and forbidden
	75	good, God willing	Your matter is very good
40	18	good, God willing	Carry out and do not forsake this, although the goal will still not be achieved
	34	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	50	good, God willing	Carry it out and your goal will be achieved
	67	good, God willing	This is extremely good and strong, but it seems that your desire and goal will not be achieved
41	1—2	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	21	strictly forbidden	You will not achieve your goal because of a bad end
	39	good, God willing	Extremely good and strong, although you will not achieve your goal and desire
42	1—3	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	16	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
	23	good, God willing	Extremely good and strong, but the desire and goal are in different hands (not under your control). If they want, it will come about, and if not, it will not.
	52	good, God willing	You will accomplish your goal and all that is useful and beneficial in it
43	24	forbidden	You will never achieve your desire and your goal
	49	forbidden	This matter is poor. If you achieve your desire and your aim, the opposite of this will take place
	76	forbidden	—
44	20	good, God willing	This matter is extremely difficult, taking into account that he will not achieve what he wishes, but begins [this matter] and undertakes a journey, although he will not achieve what he wishes
45	1—2	good, God willing	Very good
	23	strictly forbidden	—
46	5	strictly forbidden	—
	20	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
47	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
	19	do this and do not forsake it	Undertake and do not forsake this
48	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed

## Continuation of Table 1

48	16	good, God willing	Undertake and do not forsake this, although you will not achieve what you wish
	29	good, God willing	This matter is very noble, you will achieve your desire and your goal
49	12	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
50	16	good, God willing	This matter is extremely good and strong
51	7—8	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your goal
	51	strictly forbidden	—
52	32	forbidden	Extremely flippant [condemnation] and reprehensible [recompense]
53	26	good, God willing	The goal will only be accomplished [under certain] conditions
54	5	good, God willing	This goal is extremely strong, but you will not achieve what you wish
	45	forbidden	The outcome of this matter is defeat and flight
55	39	forbidden	—
56	17	good, God willing	It is very noble because it has a good end, you will achieve what you wish
	77—78	good, God willing	The matter is extremely strong and unshakeable, taking into account what worthy and virtuous people enjoy
57	11	good, God willing	It will accomplish what is wished beyond expectation
	25	good, God willing	Undertake and do not forsake this, a part of your desire and goal will be fulfilled
58	7	good, God willing	This matter is extremely strong and unshakeable
	21	good, God willing	Do it, in this is victory and the achievement of what you wish
59	10	good, God willing	This is a very noble matter and you will comprehend your goal
60	1	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
	11	good, God willing	What you wish is linked with [a certain] condition, do it as you wish
62	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
63	5	forbidden	You will not achieve your desire and your wish
64	10	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
65	6	do this [thing] and do not forsake it	Do this and do not forsake it
66	8	good, God willing	Do this and do not forsake it, you will achieve what you wish
67	12	good, God willing	It is very noble because of its good beginning
68	13	strictly forbidden	—
69	1—3	forbidden	You will only achieve the opposite of what you wish
	50—51	forbidden	It is extremely sad and leads to remorse
71	1	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
72	1	good, God willing	Do this and do not forsake it, you will achieve your goal
73	1—2	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
74	9	strictly forbidden	—
75	1—2	strictly forbidden	There is fear, trepidation, and peril in this
76	11	good, God willing	It is good to do this and you will achieve your goal
77	15	strictly forbidden	—
78	28	strictly forbidden	Accompanied by the impossibility of achieving the goal
79	39	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
81	8	forbidden	This matter results in tremendous difficulties
83	11	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
84	23	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
87	1	good, God willing	Do this and do not refrain
89	13	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
91	10	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
95	1—2	strictly forbidden	Because of a bad end
98	8	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed
103	1—3	good, God willing	God will grant aid in this matter, it is good and blessed

Table 2\*

Nos.	Divination outcomes	Number of occurrences	
1	ان شا الله خوب است	good, God willing	142
2	نهی	forbidden	98
3	خوب است اما با شرط	good, under a [certain] condition	1
4	نهی شدید	strictly forbidden	41
5	خوب است	good	4
6	انجام بده و نترس که خوب است	undertake this [matter] and do not be afraid, for [it] is good	1
7	با شرایطی ان شا الله خوب است	under [certain] conditions, God willing, it is good	2
8	خوب است اما با شروطی	good, under [certain] conditions	2
9	خوب است اما با جدا کردن	good, but selectively	1
10	اختیار با توست	the choice is yours	2
11	ترک ان بهتر است	better to refrain from this	1
12	ترک کردن بهتر است	better not to do	1
13	نهی موکد	categorically forbidden	2
14	انجامش بده و ترکش مکن	undertake this [matter] and do not forsake it	2

## Notes

1. For example, on fol. 01b of manuscript A 976 we find dated and recorded the main events in the life of the owner's family. See also E. A. Rezvan, "Qur'ānic manuscripts as birth, death, land and library register", *Manuscripta Orientalia*, VIII/3 (2002), pp. 17—25. Copies and editions of the Old and New Testament were used in similar fashion.

2. A similar practice of "burying icons" has been attested in Balkan monasteries. In Russia, old icons were floated down the river.

3. V. Badzh (W. Budge), *Amulety i suveriiia* (Amulets and Superstitions), trans. from English into Russian (Moscow, 2001), p. 65.

4. B. A. Donaldson, *The Wild Rue* (London, 1938), p. 131.

5. We are indebted to Prof. O. F. Akimushkin for localizing the manuscript in question.

6. The reference is apparently to Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Alī, the fourth "Rightly-guided" caliph (d. 40/661).

7. As a parallel to our manuscript, one notes the copy from the famed Hyderabad collection dated to the first third of the eighteenth century. See M. Ashraf, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Salar Jung Museum and Library* (Hyderabad, 1962), No. 163, pp. 116—7.

8. *Istikhāra* is possible with the most varied instruments of divination (for example, rosary beads, rings, writing on paper, etc.).

9. Cf. divination on the verses of Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ (*fāl-i Ḥāfiẓ*), 'Umar Khayyām, Sa'dī. In Russia, divination was practiced on the text of Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin". Dozens of websites exist in the Russian-language internet for divination on the verses of Eastern poets. See e.g. <http://www.glagol.ru/hafes>, <http://www.sufism.ru/hafiz/>, <http://www.sufism.ru/rumi/cgi-bin/gadanie.html>, <http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Hall/1436/gadanie0.htm>, etc. Surprisingly, we found no sites for divination using Pushkin's poem.

10. Cf., for example, the medieval Christian *Sortes Sanctorum* or *Sortes Apostolorum* — special texts of the Bible with brief commentaries on Biblical stories in the margins (*perfectum opus, gloria magna*, etc.). See J. R. Harris, "The 'Sortes Sanctorum' in the St. Germain Codex", *American Journal of Philology*, 9 (1888), pp. 58-63.

11. This form of divination was covered in special *Fāl-nāma* textbooks (*dīwāns* used for rhapsodomancy usually bear the same name), which often presented extremely complicated methods of divination. The most popular of them was ascribed to the *imām* Ja'far al-Šādiq (80—148/699/700—765). The collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies contains an entire series of *Fāl-nāma* textbooks: B 349, B 361, B 844, B 1957, B 2062, B 2211, B 4474, C 462, C 1404, C 1555.

12. *Fa'* could also be applied to a wide variety of instruments of divination (for example, hands, or peas).

13. T. Fahd, "Ḳur'a", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* CD-ROM edn. v. 1.0.

14. Translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall.

15. Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

17. (۱۳۸۱) (تهران، مالف غلامرضا نوعی (تهران، ۱۳۸۱) Cf. the manuscript *Qur'at al-imām Ja'far ibn Abī Tālib* or *Ja'farīyya* (MS. Aya Sofya 1999), fols. 2—18b. See Fahd, *op. cit.*

18. According to a footnote, the original of this manuscript is unknown. The manuscript itself is held in the private collection of the Bahraini scholar *shaykh* Aḥmad 'Aṣṣūr, who recommended the manuscript for the guide, noting that each divination he had performed with the manuscript had proved accurate.

19. See *Table 1*.

\* According to the guide, there are 14 possible outcomes of divination. Practically, however, they are of two types: "good" and "bad". *Table 2* presents all varieties found in the book.

20. For more on the Sunni version of *istikhāra*, see the book by the *imām-khaṭīb* of the Moscow Memorial Mosque on Poklonnaya Mount, the al-Azhar graduate Sh. Aliautdinov, *Put' k vere i sovershenstvu* (Path to Faith and Perfection) (Moscow, 2001), pp. 195—7. The book is available on the site [www.umma.ru](http://www.umma.ru).

21. E. Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Alger, 1909), p. 413.

22. In Islam, oneiromancy is justified by the text of the Qur'ān, where the theme of dreams occurs several times. See, for example, 8:43 (where a dream sent down by God helps to achieve victory in the Battle of Badr), 12:43 (interpretation of Pharaoh's dream by Yūsuf), 30:22 (dream as a sign of God), 37:101, 105 (dream-reader Ibrāhīm), 48:27 (Muḥammad's dream, sent down by God, comes true), etc.

23. Cited from Sh. Aliautdinov, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

24. For example, people came from all over the Maghrib to *shaykh* al-Sanūsī (838/9—895/1435/6—1490), famed for his ability to interpret such dreams (both his own and those of others). This strengthened his reputation as an authority both on religion and the mystical arts. See H. Bencheneb, "Al-Sanūsī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* CD-ROM edn. v. 1.0.

25. T. Fahd, *La divination arabe, études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam* (Leiden, 1966), pp. 363—7.

26. See, for example, [http://www.albalagh.net/qa/istikharah\\_marriage.shtml](http://www.albalagh.net/qa/istikharah_marriage.shtml) where the *mullā* Taqī 'Uthmānī carefully analyses the story of a man who received a propitious pre-wedding *istikhāra* only to see two marriages turn out unsuccessfully.

27. For example, a certain Āyatallāh Shafī'ī from Qum offers to deliver a detailed *istikhāra* quickly by e-mail: <http://www.geocities.com/shjnaqvi/istikhara.htm>.

### Illustrations

**Fig. 1.** Marginal divination notes. Manuscript A 1638 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fols. 152b—153a, 6.7×11.0 cm.

**Fig. 2.** Fol. 312b of the same manuscript with an Arabic-Persian inscription containing an injunction.

**Fig. 3.** A page from the "most complete and detailed" guide to *istikhāra* (Tehran, 2000).