

Muhammad's Vision of Interaction with Supernatural Beings According to the Hadith in Comparison to Parallels of Other Cultures

Authors : Vladimir A. Rozov

Abstract : Comparative studies of religion and ritual could contribute better understanding of human culture universalities. Belief in supernatural beings seems to be a common feature of the religion. A significant part of the Islamic concepts that concern supernatural beings is based on a tradition based on the Hadiths. They reflect, among other things, his ideas about a proper way to interact with supernatural beings. These ideas to a large extent follow from the pre-Islamic religious experience of the Arabs and had been reflected in a number of ritual actions. Some of those beliefs concern a particular function of clothing. For example, it is known that Muhammad was wrapped in clothes during the revelation of the Quran. The same thing was performed by pre-Islamic soothsayers (kāhin) and by rival opponents of Muhammad during their trances. Muhammad also turned the clothes inside out during religious rituals (prayer for rain). Besides these specific ways of clothing which prove the external similarity of Muhammad with the soothsayers and other people who claimed the connection with supernatural forces, the pre-Islamic soothsayers had another characteristic feature which is physical flaws. In this regard, it is worth to note Muhammad's so-called "Seal the Prophecy" (ḥ ātam an- nubūwwa) -protrusion or outgrowth on his back. Another interesting feature of Muhammad's behavior was his attitude to eating onion and garlic. In particular, the Prophet didn't eat them and forbade people who had tasted these vegetables to enter mosques, until the smell ceases to be felt. The reason for this ban on eating onion and garlic is caused by a belief that the smell of these products prevents communication with otherworldly forces. The materials of the Hadith also suggest that Muhammad shared faith in the apotropical properties of water. Both of these ideas have parallels in other cultures of the world. Muhammad's actions supposed to provide an interaction with the supernatural beings are not accidental. They have parallels in the culture of pre-Islamic Arabia as well as in many past and present world cultures. The latter fact can be explained by the similarity of the universal human beliefs in supernatural beings and how they should be interacted with. Later a number of similar ideas shared by the Prophet Muhammad was legitimized by the Islamic tradition and formed the basis of popular Islamic rituals. Thus, these parallels emphasize the commonality of human notions of supernatural beings and also demonstrate the significance of the pre-Islamic cultural context in analyzing the genesis of Islamic religious beliefs.

Keywords : hadith, Prophet Muhammad, ritual, supernatural beings

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