САКРАЛЬНІ ТЕКСТИ СХОДУ

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INTERPRETATION OF THE TERMS *MUHKAMAT* AND *MUTASHABIHAT* IN MEDIEVAL QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS

The Qur'an has always been considered by the followers of the Prophet Muhammad as a universal source of beliefs and rules that are necessary to lead life according to the will of Allah. Yet, the complexity of social circumstances in different societies has also made Muslims realize that, being perfect in terms of rhetoric, the Holy Scripture can at the same time prescribe evidently conflicting or not totally consistent norms. For this reason, Muslim scholars were fully concerned about the legitimate ways of preserving the authority of the sacred text and eliminating controversial meanings, contradictions and some linguistic details that might be perceived as "deficiencies" of its language. Of course, the most appropriate way for them to accomplish this and to support their legal decisions or doctrinal issues was finding a solution inside the Qur'an itself.

In this context, this paper is devoted to the ayahs that have acquired a special methodological significance as giving prescriptions for reading and interpreting the Qur'anic text in general. The verses establishing such "rules" vary in the content and level of specificity, yet the two most important ones, widely used by Muslim exegetes, deserve the particular attention.

The first verse, *al-Baqara, 106,* has provided ground for introduction of the concept of *naskh* (abrogation)[1] which relies on the chronological principle of differentiation between Qur'anic passages:

مَا نَنسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلِهَا ۗ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

And for whatever verse We abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better or the like of it; knowest thou not that God is powerful over everything? [Arberry 1996].

This verse has allowed Muslim jurists to maneuver between inconsistent statements of the Qur'an, revealed at different stages of the Prophet's mission, and arrive at more or less uniform and logically sound conclusions. Yet, despite the fact that the theory of abrogation constitutes one of the cornerstones of Islamic Law (*fiqh*), some contemporary Muslim scholars and even researchers of Islam have pointed out that the very idea of *naskh* has no basis in the Qur'an and appeared largely due to ignoring the literary context of the verse al-Baqara, 106. For instance, M. Cuypers argues that this ayah was a part of Muhammad's polemics with the Jews concerning the possibility of abrogation of the Torah by the Qur'an and not one Qur'anic ayah by another [Cuypers 2011, *6*]. Thus, according to Cuypers, the whole theory of *naskh* is simply misplaced and derived from an incorrect interpretation of the Qur'an [Cuypers 2011, *6*].

Whatever the truth might be, this situation clearly demonstrates how this and others similar ayahs have been used as the basis for inventing important methodological tools in Islamic law. This is the case when literary context is disregarded or even sacrificed to the necessity of producing generally accepted norms of the *sharia*. To put it differently, this verse *al-Baqara, 106* has served to establish a mechanism for a legitimate replacement of religious and social norms without jeopardizing the authority of the Qur'an as a sacred text. In this respect, this verse was also evidently employed to reconcile between the idea about the Qur'an as the

eternal speech of God and the shifting character of many of its prescriptions: even having been abrogated or replaced, verses were not excluded from the Codex and still considered part of the revelation.

Another verse of this kind which is of major concern in this paper is *Al Imran, 7*. It introduces a different principle which was meant to resolve difficulties of comprehending the Qur'anic text as the consistent whole. Provisionally, the terms *muhkamat* and *mutashabihat* are left without translation:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

It is He who sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses *muhkamat* that are the Essence of the Book (*ummu-l-kitab*), and others *mutashabihat*. As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the *mutashabihat* ('ma tashabaha') part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation (*ta'wil*); and none knows its interpretation, save only God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say, 'We believe in it; all is from our Lord'; yet none remembers, but men possessed of minds (based on the translation of Arberry [Arberry 1996], emphasis added. – *D. Sh.*).

Although it clearly refers to a specific idea for approaching the internal structure of the Qur'an, this verse has attracted much less attention of Muslim scholars. A brief survey of the tafsir literature shows that Muslim exegetes of the medieval time had no substantial differences or disputes about identifying the general meaning of the ayah. However, there seems to be no full clarity and consensus as to how the two key terms – *muhkamat* and *mutashabihat* – should be defined and, consequently, how the overall meaning of the ayah should be understood.

Already Al-Tabari (d. 310/923) came up with a range of opinions on the subject which was further reproduced by the new generations of *tafsir* writers. Those opinions are often interwoven and not easy to set forth clearly. As it follows from "Jami' al-bayan", the approach that received the widest support from the scholars of the first centuries of Islam (*al-salaf*) was to treat the pair from Al Imran, 7 as directly corresponding to "*nasikh-mansukh*" division where *muhkam* is identified with *nasikh* (an abrogating verse) and *mutashabih* – with *mansukh* (an abrogated verse) [Al-Tabari, *V, 192*]. Al-Tabari quotes at least ten narratives from a number of earlier authorities in favor of this opinion.

Another view is to see *muhkamat* as a group of ayahs that prescribe concrete rules and norms of what is permissible and forbidden (*al-halal wa al-haram*), punishments for crimes (*hudud*) and obligations while mutashabihat are the verses that cover all the other material in the Qur'an, including stories of the Prophets, preaching, etc. [Al-Tabari, *V, 196*]. The latter is called *mutashabihat* because those verses are somehow similar to each other in their message, even though their form varies.

The third approach, singled out by al-Tabari, takes the discussion to a different direction – to an attempt at analyzing the logic of the ayah itself. According to this approach, *muhkamat* are defined as verses that can have only one interpretation (*ta'wil*) and, thus, could not be misinterpreted, whereas *mutashabihat* allow for several interpretations [Al-Tabari, *V, 197*].

And finally al-Tabari offers an opinion which, though not supported by references to the earlier authorities, has become predominant in the contemporary understanding of the verse: the term *al-muhkam* refers to an ayah which is clear to *Muslim scholars* in terms of the meaning and interpretation; on the contrary to that, *al-mutashabih* designates an ayah the precise knowledge of which is reserved to Allah only [Al-Tabari, *V, 199*]. As it is evident from the argument, this explanation of *mutashabihat* follows the line of the ayah itself. Yet, as it will be shown further, this did not prevent theologians from reinterpreting the verse in a way that allowed achieving the knowledge of the *mutashabihat* verses anyway.

The demonstrated difference of opinions, insignificant though it may seem, nonetheless brings the discussion back to determining the literal meaning of the two terms and all possible interpretations. It is evident that *muhkam* semantically has little to do with clarity *per se* and refers to "something made strong, stable, solid"; hence, "ayat muhkamat" – "a passage of the Qur'an of which the meaning is secured from change and alteration, and peculiarization, and interpretation not according to the obvious import, and abrogation" [Lane 1863, *II, 618*]. Yet, the major problem here is with the term "*mutashabihat*" which, following the context, has to be interpreted as "having multiple meanings, ambiguous" or "a passage of which the meaning is not secured" [Lane 1863, *IV, 1500–1501*].

It is interesting to note though that Muslim exegetes did not ignore or immediately rule out all other interpretations that could be derived from different meanings of the terms. A case in point here is the second opinion cited above from the tafsir of al-Tabari where *mutashabihat* were understood as "similar to each other"; this meaning was no doubt supported by some scholars because it was perceived to be more in accordance with the *literal* meaning of the term. Another interesting conclusion about the duality of the terms at hand, which can be derived from the interpretations, provided by al-Tabari, is that the Qur'an is divided into two parts: the verses that require both belief and action, and the verses that demand to be believed in only. However, from a Derridean perspective, the binary opposition of "clear-ambiguous" brings up a much more important issue, the substantial and specific characteristics of the Qur'an as a sacred text: it introduces *indeterminacy* as a legitimate quality of at least some part of the revelation which was otherwise claimed to be "clarifying" ("mubin") by the Qur'an itself.

Hierarchy. Another important issue that needs to be addressed in this context is that this ayah does not just divide verses into two basic categories – it also provides grounds to establishing a certain hierarchy of them through positioning the group of *muhkamat* as the core of the Qur'an (*umm al-kitab*) and the most important part of it. At the same time, the group of *mutashabihat* ('ma tashabaha') is reduced to the level of being the source of schisms and troubles for the community. Perhaps, it is this indication of a superior status of *muhkamat* that gave medieval Muslim scholar the idea of eliminating ambiguity or obscurity of *mutashabihat* by interpreting them exclusively in the framework of the verses whose meaning is regarded to be a) clear and fully comprehensible and b) stating the ideas that are central in Islamic doctrine. In other words, even though in the case of *mutashabihat* the ayah Al Imran, 7 gives the agency of understanding to Allah only, some Muslim scholars have found it legitimate to arrive at an acceptable interpretation of *mutashabihat* by strictly subjugating them to *muhkamat*. Thus, this has become a very substantial supplement to the methodological principle of *tafsir* which gives most credit and authority to the interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an. To put it differently, some verses do not just clarify or explain others – they also dominate by forming a specific frame of reference for interpreters.

Such an approach has been very common in the Ash'ari school of theology, especially in what concerns the verses that, if understood literally, lead to a certain degree of anthropomorphism. A well known example of employing "muhkam-mutashabih" dichotomy to resolve such a complicated issue in the Qur'an can be illustrated by interpretation of the verse Taha, 5 which is of relevance not just for the analysis of medieval debates, but also for the contemporary period[2].

Which ayahs are mutashabihat? It is interesting to note that mufassirs typically refrain from giving any lists of *muhkamat* or *mutashabihat* in their commentaries, limiting themselves to a few generally accepted examples. This might be considered as a certain testimony to the inherent controversy of the issue: no exegete was willing to take a risk of being accused of picking up a wrong ayah in his treatise.

The first very common example is based on the supposed historical context, namely the view that the ayah Al Imran, 7 (as the rest of the beginning eighty ayahs of this surah) was revealed on occasion of the delegation of Christians from Najran[3]. Even though they were not

mentioned by name – only as those "in whose hearts is swerving" – the Christians are referred here because they supposedly had chosen to accept only the ayah al-Nisa', 171 (which mentions the prophet 'Isa as "the word of Allah") and ignore all the others that clarify its meaning in the way totally contradicting the traditional Christian views [al-Qurtubi, *V, 22*].

Another common approach to this issue among mufassirs is resorting to the authority of tradition, or to earlier scholars whose status is indisputable. For instance, widely used is the reference to Ibn Abbas who is said to name among *muhkamat* the verses al-An'am, 151–154 and al-Isra', 23 [Qurtubi, *V, 18*].

Al-Nuhhas presents a more elaborated picture using the verses that speak of Allah's forgiveness – al-Zumar, 53, Taha, 82 and al-Nisa', 48 [Qurtubi, *V, 18*]:

al-Zumar (39), 53	Taha (20), 82	al-Nisa' (4), 48
قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ	وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ	إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا
Say: 'O my people who have been prodigal against yourselves, do not despair of God>s mercy; surely God forgives sins altogether; surely He is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate' [Arberry 1996].	Yet I am All-forgiving to him who repents and believes, and does righteousness, and at last is guided [Arberry 1996].	God forgives not that aught should be with Him associated; less than that He forgives to whomsoever He will. Whoso associates with God anything has indeed forged a mighty sin [Arberry 1996].

Notably, the verses speak on the issue in a different manner, presenting varying levels of generalization: if al-Zumar, 53 promises Allah's forgiveness for all sins, al-Nisa', 48 substantially limits the scope of the absolution by excluding the sin of polytheism ("ascribing companions to Allah"). In this case, to resolve the "inconsistency", Muslim scholars define al-Zumar, 53 as *mutashabih* while al-Nisa', 48 is declared to be *muhkam*. The next logical step is to state that all *mutashabih* should be interpreted and understood only in the light of and in conjunction with the muhkamat verses. In other words, the interplay of between *muhkamat* and *mutashabihat* is used here as a specific technique to help the tradition in resolving the apparent points of tension between different verses.

Legitimization for mutashabihat. It must be noted that acknowledgment of *mutashabihat*, or ambiguous, unclear verses in the structure of the Qur'an constitutes an important aspect of its self-reflexive image. However, the principle of *inherent indeterminacy* of some ayahs without any doubt must have been perplexing for the later generations of Muslims for whom the initial meaning of the ayah Al Imran, 7 and the context of its appearance were most likely unknown. To state it more boldly, why should Allah need to confuse the followers of Muhammad by sending the ayahs the meaning of which was known only to him? Only a handful of medieval mufassirs found it necessary to grapple with this issue by presenting a number of explanations for the presence of unclear verses in the text of the Qur'an.

For instance, Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/885) in his "Mushkil al-Qur'an" argues that, by virtue of being sent in Arabic, the Qur'an necessarily reflects its specific features of expression, especially in what concerns *al-i'jaz* (metaphors), *al-ikhtisar* (brevity), etc. [Ibn Qutaybah, *I, 86–87*]. He also includes to this list the different ways of underlying meanings or, on the opposite, their deliberate obscuring and camouflaging, so they can be understood by the "smart" (*laqin*) only [Ibn Qutaybah, *I, 86–87*]. In other words, the appearance of *mutashabihat* in this respect may be considered simply as a side effect of the stylistics of Arabic at the time when the Qur'an was sent.

Elaborating on this argument, a Hanbali scholar al-Jawzi (d. 597/1201) goes further to note that the Arabs used to strongly differentiate between the two styles of expression – the one which is clear and fully comprehensive to the listener and the other, metaphorical, metonymical, symbolical [al-Jawzi, *I, 178*]. It is the latter style – closely linked to the poetry and

rhetoric – that, according to al-Jawzi, was solely accepted and respected by the Arabs as something worth attention [al-Jawzi*, I, 178*]. Thus, as it follows, Allah had no other choice than to make use of this style to win attention of the Arabs and make them appreciate the Qur'an in the only categories they could comprehend[4]. What is more interesting though is that, in al-Jawzi's account, it is the *combination* of the two styles in the Qur'an – clear and obscure – that constitutes the central feature of its inimitability (al-i'jaz), something that the Arabs were not able to imitate or reproduce themselves [al-Jawzi*, I, 178*].

Another way to approach this issue, taken by Ibn Qutaybah, is viewing *mutashabihat* as a certain positive challenge that, while creating a complex problematic situation, also necessarily stimulates human thought and activity. On the contrary to that, Ibn Qutaybah argues, a situation of total completeness (*al-kifayah*) leads to stagnation which produces stupidity and powerlessness (*al-'ajz*) [Ibn Qutaybah, *I, 86*]. Similarly, as al-Razi points out, the presence of *mutashabihat* makes achieving the truth more difficult and thus facilitates the accretion of wisdom [al-Razi, *VII, 185*].

Also, Ibn Qutaybah insists that the existence of verses that are obscure and difficult for understanding helps to maintain such an important structure as the hierarchy of statuses (*al-tafadul*) among people which corresponds to the level of their knowledge; this hierarchy is the basis for the authority of '*ulama'* that serves to prevent schisms and divisions in the community (*al-mihna*) [Ibn Qutaybah, *I, 86*]. Besides that, Ibn Qutaybah regards the "al-muhkam/al-mutashabih" distinction as the one of the utmost importance for preserving the frame of reference for comparison ("everything is learned in comparison") which works best through "binary oppositions": good – evil, useful – harmful, internal – external, hidden – evident etc. [Ibn Qutaybah, *I, 87*]. Thus, ambiguous ayahs in the structure of the Qur'an underscore or accentuate the message of those verses that are defined as *muhkamat;* this for Ibn Qutaybah is the wisdom of *mutashabihat* and the main argument against the necessity of the absolute clarity and unambiguousness for the whole text of the Qur'an as Allah's word [Ibn Qutaybah, *I, 87*].

Variations and modifications of these ideas can also be found in the treatises of al-Jawzi and al-Razi. For instance, al-Jawzi approaches *mutashabihat* as an important test for believers which functions to unveil those who are inclined to deviate, in contrast to those who in case of doubt or confusion, resort to the help of knowledgeable individuals [al-Jawzi*, I, 179*].

In his turn, Al-Razi tries to supplement these ideas with his own interpretations. On the one hand, he sees *mutashabihat* as the characteristic of the Qur'an that facilitates pluralism and diversity of points of view which would be impossible if the Holy Scripture was sent as one single body of *muhkamat* [al-Razi, *VII, 185*]. According to al-Razi, in the latter case the Qur'an could become a basis only for one *mazhab*, thus automatically rejecting what is outside of it, be it a diverging opinion or a school of thought; this situation, al-Razi argues, is rather unpleasant for many. In other words, the presence of *mutashabihat* precludes the formation of the strict, dogmatic orthodoxy, of the inflexible regime of truth and the tyranny of one group of individuals which establishes it [al-Razi, *VII, 185*]. Thus, the *mutashabihat* verses help to accommodate more points of view and facilitate tolerance and open-minded attitude that resist a final closure of the arguments on all topics. Instead, it brings in a healthy competition among different schools of thought for creating the strongest and most persuasive argument. On the other hand, the legitimate existence of several mazhabs allows forming a collective effort through which all *mutashabihat* can be successfully reduced to *muhkamat* [al-Razi, *VII, 185*].

In connection with the idea mentioned above, al-Razi makes another point, namely that *mutashabihat* in the Qur'an serve as an internal defensive mechanism against the stagnation of *taqlid* (a blind obedience in following a tradition) because they require extensive resorting to reason (*al-'aql*) and rational argumentation as a tool in interpretation [al-Razi, *VII, 185*].

However, perhaps the most interesting argument to the necessity of *mutashabihat* (which al-Razi himself finds the most important) concerns the matter of social statuses, or the fundamental division of people into the elite (*al-khawass*) and the masses (*al-'awam*) [al-Razi, *VII, 186*]. As al-Razi points out, the latter have certain specifics in the way they learn and compre-

hend the basic precepts of religion; the qualities that need to be taken into account in teaching and preaching. For instance, in al-Razi's view, the postulate that Allah has no body, no limits in space or cannot be pointed at, may simply lead the masses to the thought of God being "nothing" (*'adam*) or total negation of His attributes (*al-ta'til*) [al-Razi, *VII, 186*]. For this reason al-Razi argues that at the beginning it is much more effective to address the masses with what they are able to imagine or what directly relates to their experience. Here is where *mutashabihat* come in handy as they appear to contain some elements of popular beliefs [al-Razi, *VII, 186*]. Thus they come as the first stage of gradual presenting of the topic to the masses which prepares them to learn and fully accept *muhkamat* verses.

This last argument constitutes the representation of a certain strategy of approaching theological knowledge by the Ash'ari scholars. For instance, a similar case is found in al-Ghazali's treatment of the verse Taha, 5, the explanation of which he divides into two categories: one for religious specialists, Muslim scholars, and the other, in the simple and most consistent form, for the masses[5] [al-Gazali 1994, *65*]. However, unlike al-Razi, al-Ghazali's view is that the most complicated and confusing aspects of the problem should not be revealed to a common believer at all [al-Gazali 1994, *66*].

Conclusions. Despite the seeming straightforwardness of the principle of differentiating between clear and ambiguous verses, the major question here seems to be about the exact criteria for classifying each separate ayah. It is rather obvious that the judgment of clarity in this process may turn out to be observer-relative and involve a great deal of subjectivity, pertaining to the level of training, intellectual qualities as well as theological preferences of an individual. In other words, Al Imran, 7 merely states the fact of "*muhkamat-mutashabihat*" distinction without providing guidance as to how not to confuse the two kinds of verses. Taking this issue to its limits, one can assume that this ayah may be in and of itself considered as belonging to *mutashabihat*.

It is hardly surprising then that this situation has opened a large space for exploiting the "*muhkam-mutashabih*" division as a means of legitimizing one's arguments or a discursive strategy in theological discussions which often go as far as ideological conflict between the views of the majority and a dissenting group. This problem was articulated already by al-Razi who asserted that everyone "calls the ayahs confirming his mazhab *muhkamat* and the ayahs contradicting his mazhab *mutashabihat*" [al-Razi, *I, 185*]. For the Ash'ari school of the Islamic thought, to which al-Razi belonged, the presence of ambiguous ayahs has become a license for the legitimate use of reason and rational argumentation in both exegesis of the Qur'an and theological speculations. Moreover, building a strong hierarchy of the ayahs and eliminating unclarity through their – sometimes forced – interpretation according to *muhkamat*, has provided a basis for advancing a strict "regime of orthodoxy", which requires a higher level of obedience to already formulated dogmas.

In conclusion of these preliminary remarks on Al Imran, 7, one can only note that medieval exegetical tradition demonstrated a conservative approach to this verse and over the centuries was reproducing the same set of ideas. At the same time, the attempts of mufassirs to make sense of this ayah can be considered as an illustration for the fact that interpretation of the Qur'an in the tafsir tradition has not been limited to clarifying its meanings – it has also involved *constructing* them with intricate procedures intended to legitimate God's will through "establishing" his hidden reasons and motivations.

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[1] For a detailed scholarly analysis of this verse and the principle of abrogation, see: Hasan A. Theory of naskh // Islamic Studies. – Vol. 4 (2). – 1965. – P. 181–200; Cuypers M. L'analys e rhétorique, un enouvelle method pour l'exégèse du Coran // Al-Mawāqif, Actes du premier colloque international sur: 'Le Phénomène religieux, nouvel les Lectures des Sciences socials et humaines'. – Algérie: Publications du Centre Universitaire de Mascara, 2008. – P. 5–27.

[2] According to Ash'ari theologians, the most common, literal meaning of the verb *istawa'* ("establish") used in this ayah Taha, 5 cannot be accepted because it presupposes that Allah has certain dimensional (spatial) characteristics that make it possible for him to either establish himself on the throne or rise over it. Thus, the very possibility of such a reading of this verse renders it to be one of *mutashabihat*, or ambiguous. In this case, its meaning may not contradict any of the verses that are considered to be *muhkamat*. Thus, Taha, 5 must be conceived as *mutashabih* and interpreted in the framework of an unambiguous clear-cut statements, in particular the one provided in al-Shura, 11 ("Laysa ka mithlihi shay"). See on the whole debate about Taha, 5 and the conflict of traditionalists and *asha'ira:* [Шестопалец 2012].

[3] See on that: Massignon L. La mubahala de Médine et l'hyperdulie de Fatima // Opera Minora. – Vol. 1. – Beirut: Dar el-Maaret Liban, 1963. – P. 550–572; Strothmann R. Die Mubāhala in Tradition und Liturgie // Der Islam. – Vol. 33. – Issue 1–2. – 1957 (Jan.). – P. 5–29; Schmucker W. Die christliche Minderheit von Nagran und die Problematik ihrer Beziehungen zum fruhen Islam // Banner Orientalish Studien, N.S. – Vol. 27/1. – 1973. – P. 183–281.

[4] In this respect, very little is written on why Muhhammad, despite the profound poetic beauty of the oldest verses of the Qur'an, had experienced so much difficulty during the early stages of his career as a prophet. Moreover, the inimitability of the Qur'an did not seem to win him any additional loyalty among the Arab tribes of Arabian peninsula which were constantly inclined to *rida* (breaking of agreement). Thus, this appeal to "the Arabs" and their linguistic tastes appears to be a later form of legitimation, a discursive strategy intended to explain the difficulties by reference to the past contexts, whether true or constructed.

[5] See more detailed analysis of this issue in: [Шестопалец 2012].

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