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Some Aspects of Al Būni's Talismanry

Summary

As the study of the phenomenon of esotericism is rapidly deepening worldwide, more and more attention is being given to Islamic esotericism. This is a double progress, given the fact that for centuries both Islam and – even more so – esotericism have been academically (and non-academically) marginalised (or vice versa) for various reasons. The names of the eminent Islamic mystics mentioned only in the margins are finally coming to the fore in a new and much larger way: *Dhul-Nun Al-Misri*, *Al-Qurtubi*, Suhrawardī, Al Buni, Ibn Arabi, and others. Whereas these names used to be heard in the past exclusively in Sufi contexts, now – with the broadening of conceptual and historical approaches – we are talking about the interaction between Islamic esotericism and the occult sciences, or, in other words, about the theurgical instrumentarium and the issue of God's operation / theurgy.

The close interaction between Islamic occult sciences and Sufism is undoubtedly a source of academic attention, including the long-demonised Sufi writings. One of them, and the subject of this article, is Al Buni's *Šams al-ma'ārif* (The Sun of Gnosis), notorious as a banned medieval grimoire, which, in the light of today's esotericism research, is rather more likely to be described as an encyclopaedia of Islamic mysticism. This paper will focus on the cryptographic forms prevalent in Al Buni's work, delving deeper into their composition and meanings. It will be shown that Al Buni's talismanry is closely related to the doctrine of the oneness of God, focuses on the operation of God or His trustees, therefore cannot be understood according to the Western definition of magic, let alone be identified with it.

Keywords: Sufism, occult sciences, magic, theurgy, talismanry, Al Buni, Islamic philosophy.