

THE APPEARANCE OF THE PROPHET IN DREAMS

I should like to supplement in a measure, from one point of view, the arguments on this topic furnished by Mr. F. Krenkow in the *Journal*, *ante*, pp. 77-9. It is no uncommon thing in Islamic literature to find both theological doubts and questions of practical controversy solved by the decision of the Prophet, who appears in a dream, and this on the authority of the *ḥadīth* treated by Mr. Krenkow,—decisions which extend as well to isolated cases affecting *individuals*, as to matters affecting the interests of the *community at large*. Let me give instances of both classes from that literature.

A man was employed by its owner to drive an ox from one place to another. On the way he was attacked by robbers to the peril of his life, and he escaped only by surrendering to them the ox entrusted to his charge. Thereupon the question of law arose: Was the agent bound to compensate the owner for the property entrusted to him, or did the danger to his life amount to *vis major* and so displace the liability. The once renowned jurist Ahmad b. Abi Ahmad al-Ṭabari, known as Ibn al-Qāṣṣ, ob. A.H. 335 (A.D. 946-7), in Tarsus, maintained the former view, whilst Abu Ja'far al-Ḥannāti held that on the true view he was exempt from liability to make compensation. At this point, according to Ṭājj al-dīn al-Subki,¹ the Qāḍi Abu 'Alī al-Zajjāji, a pupil of Ibn al-Qāṣṣ, saw the Prophet in a dream, and seized the opportunity of asking him to decide the point of controversy between his teacher and al-Ḥannāti. "It is your teacher who has decided aright," pronounced the Prophet, to the great joy of his questioner.

Of much the same date is a dream vision in which the Prophet solved a doubt which disquieted the pious Ṣūfī Abu Bakr Muḥammad b. Sa'dūn al-Jazīrī, a Maghribi who spent a large part of his life in journeying about

¹ *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya*, ii, p. 104.

Eastern Islām, and took part in its wars; died A.H. 344 (A.D. 955-6). This holy man, around whom when praying we are told that a light used to play, was anxious to be assured on the point, how many *Rak'ahs* were obligatory during the *Ṣalāt al-ḍuhā*. Under the tenets of Mālik and of Laith there was a discrepancy in the number prescribed. The pious man tells us how his doubt disturbed him during his wanderings in the Muqattam range of hills near Cairo, until the Prophet pronounced in a dream a decision in favour of the ruling of the Imām Mālik.¹

The renowned Shafeite jurist of Mecca, Ibn Hajar al-Haithami, ob. A.H. 973 (A.D. 1565), mentions in his treatise *Riyād al-riḍwān* (preserved in the History of Gujarat by Abd Allah Muḥammad Ulughkānī, which has been edited by E. Denison Ross), in the course of a eulogistic life of the learned vizier, 'Abd al-'Aziz Āṣaf Khān, that a contemporary pious Ṣūfi Shaikh was in continuous communication with the Prophet. On any question of doubt presenting itself, he used to say, "Wait until I can make inquiry of the Prophet," and shortly afterwards he brought the Prophet's decision.² This anecdote seems, nevertheless, accounted for by the Shaikh's hallucinations when in a *wakeful* state—a trait rather frequently present in Ṣūfi biographies.

The foregoing cases are instances of instruction imparted to individuals; but a number of instances are to be gathered from literary sources where doubts on religious questions affecting the entire community were decided by means of such visions; cf. the vision of al-Ash'arī, the motive for his action against the Mu'tazilah. A disputed point of old standing as to ritual was this: whether when holding prayer over the dead

¹ *Maqqari*, ed. Leyden, i, p. 552.

² *An Arabic History of Gujarat*, ed. E. D. Ross (Indian Texts Series II), London, 1910, p. 375.

(*ṣalāt al-jināza*) the corpse may be borne into the precincts of the mosque, or whether the rite should be performed outside.¹ The celebrated mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabi (whose visions of the Prophet in his dreams were most frequent, as appears from his work, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, throughout) was desirous that the question in dispute should be set at rest, so far as concerned his place of abode, Damascus. He accordingly narrates how he saw in a dream a corpse carried into the mosque, and that he also saw the Prophet disapprove of this, and direct the corpse to be removed from the mosque, and conveyed to the Jairūn Gate.²

Changes in ritual, too, which confirmed conservatives habitually resisted, were at times alleged to have received the Prophet's approbation in a vision, and this expression of consent was made to supply the want of any confirmation by a written tradition. When the Dervish class in Cairo managed (A.H. 791, A.D. 1389) to get the long-established *Adhān* formula extended by the inclusion of Praise of the Prophet, the innovation was rested on the Prophet's approval announced in a vision.³ And when two centuries later conservative circles resisted the establishment of *ṣalawāt* meetings as introduced by the Sūfis, the legend was spread abroad that the Prophet had appeared in a dream to one of the bitterest opponents, and had signified his approval of the pious custom thus introduced in his honour.⁴ The appeal to this form of decision passed among this superficial folk as the weightiest argument against the expressed disapproval of theological jurists at the pious *Bid'ah*.

Earnest voices were, indeed, upraised in disapproval of

¹ *Ibn Sa'd*, III, i, 105, l. 3; ib. 302, l. 19; and al-Nahrawālī, *al-I'lām bi-a'lām beit Allāh al-ḥarām*, ed. Wüstenfeld, *Gesch. d. Stadt Mecca*, iii, 208.

² Murtadā, *Ithāf al-Sādu* (commentary on the *Iḥyā*, ed. Cairo, iii, 458).

³ Muqrizī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1st ed., ii, 272.

⁴ Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-Athar*, ii, 455.

legal decisions being based on such visionary arguments, especially when they sanctioned practices which were in contradiction to the *Sunna*. To this effect is the opinion of al-Nawawī against any authoritative use being made of reputed visions in dreams.¹ And the Maghribi Sunna-zealot, Muḥammad al-'Abdarī (ob. A.H. 737, A.D. 1336-7), devotes an entire chapter of his work, which he rests on Nawawī's authority, to combating such methods of seeking counsel.²

But even up to a very recent period it has been possible to impose on the superstitious multitude, especially on those far removed from the centres of Islamic civilization, precepts which have been imparted by the Prophet in dreams. In East Africa a versified religious manual (*Manẓūmāt al-tauḥīd*) is widely current, which was dictated to its editor, Aḥmad al-Marzūqī, in A.H. 1258 (A.D. 1842), in a dream, on which the author himself, and a learned Javanese, have written commentaries.³ On Java too descended, in A.H. 1297 (A.D. 1880), through a revelation of the Prophet vouchsafed to a certain Shaikh, 'Abd Allāh, in a vision, an earnest exhortation to true believers, the written text of which was alleged to have been found by the Shaikh near Muḥammad's tomb at Medina. This exhortation was some time since brought to public notice by Professor Snouck Hurgronje, who has pointed out its significance.⁴

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¹ *Tahdhib*, ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 55, l. 7, *infra*.

² *Madkhal al-shar' al-sharif*, Alexandria, 1293, iii, pp. 302 ff.

³ Cf. on this C. H. Becker in *Der Islam*, 1911, ii, 27.

⁴ De laatste Vermaning van Mohammed aan zijne Gemeente uitgevaardigd in het jaar 1880 n. Chr. : in *De Indische Gids*, July, 1884.