An Early Muslim Autobiographical Dream Narrative: Abū Jaʿfar al-Qāyinī and His Dream of the Prophet Muhammad

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It is said that the Prophet Muhammad, on the eve of his death, made his way into the mosque of Medina. Too weak to lead the community in prayer, he delegated that responsibility to one of his companions, and reluctantly and sadly returned to his home. As he was being carried out of the mosque on the shoulders of two companions, he turned to the assembled Muslims and proclaimed that after his death, “there shall remain naught of the glad tidings of prophecy except for true dreams.”

This saying, in conjunction with other prophetic traditions, formed for early Muslims the core of what might be called a theology of dreams. This theology saw dreams first and foremost as successors of Qur’anic revelation. With the death of Muhammad, God would no longer grant revelation through the Book. He would not cease, however, to reveal himself to his community. And the primary manner of his continuing revelation would be the true dream (al-ru’yā al-sādiqa). Such dreams would be granted to Muslims in an egalitarian fashion. All good Muslims could expect to receive guidance from God in their dreams. And as for the guidance they would receive, it would to be a form of prophetic knowledge. Indeed, as numerous prophetic traditions declared, these dreams were instances of revelation (wahy) and prophecy (nubuwwah), and thus were qualitatively no different from what God had granted through the Qur’an. Nevertheless, even if these dreams did not differ in kind from the Qur’an, they did differ quantitatively, for as other prophetic traditions specified, these dreams were but “one forty-sixth part of prophecy,” or some variant on that figure.

To be sure, not every dream was divine in its origin. According to prophetic traditions, some arose from the preoccupations of the self,

1. See, for example, Ibn Sa’d, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, 2:167.
2. For the development of this theology of dreams, see chapter three of my The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation.
3. See, for instance, Muslim, al-Šaḥīḥ, 15:22–23.
while others resulted from the machinations of Satan. Nonetheless, there was one type of dream that could never be false. This was the dream in which the Prophet Muhammad appeared. According to one widely cited prophetic tradition, Muhammad himself had declared: “Whoever has seen me in a dream, has seen me in truth, for Satan cannot imitate me in a dream.” Other, similar prophetic sayings abound. These were traditions that early Muslims took with great earnestness. And how could they not? For dreams of Muhammad might thus provide a touchstone of objectivity in a world otherwise beset by uncertainty. In a fine study of dreams in late antiquity, Patricia Cox Miller has suggested that divine dreams offered Christian dreamers a way to articulate concerns that they otherwise were unable to articulate: in a word, dreams could “bring submerged thoughts and fears to conscious awareness” and “provoke the dreamer to new forms of interaction with the world.” Scholars of the medieval Muslim world have also begun to attend in recent years to how the objectivity of dreams might play a role in the all too unobjective world of daily life. Dreams might be called on to attest sanctity. They might do service in the resolution of juridical difficulties. They might even be used to adjudicate the proper reading of the Qur’an. The present communication illustrates yet another function of dreams in the lives of medieval Muslims — the resolution of theological difficulties.

I here present a hitherto unknown, early Muslim autobiographical dream narrative. Composed in the late fourth century of the Muslim era by Abū Ja’far al-Qāyinī, this narrative is notable for a number of reasons. It is one of the fullest and most vivid dream narratives to survive from the early centuries of the Muslim era. Early Muslim dream manuals abound, as do philosophical discussions of the nature of dreams and their interpretation. Much rarer are autobiographical narratives of dreams. The interest of the present dream narrative does not end there, however. It is also remarkable as an example of controversial theology. Indeed, as will be argued, Abū Ja’far is using the device of his dream narrative in order to articulate a singular theological agenda, one that sought to advance an understanding of Islam that ignored and subverted many of the traditional boundaries established by the ulema.

4. Ibid., 15:20–21.
The Manuscripts

To my knowledge, Abū Jaʿfar’s dream narrative is found today in just two manuscripts. The first (S) is a miscellany preserved in the Süleymaniye Library.10 Copied in the year 1000/1591, this version is provided with a partial riwāya. From it we gather that the scribe of S was transmitting a version of the text copied some four hundred years earlier by a famous Syrian mufti.11 As is clear from the medieval biographical tradition, among the places where this mufti had studied was Nishapur. It was there, according to S’s riwāya, that the mufti had received his copy of Abū Jaʿfar’s dream narrative. As for the person who transmitted it to him, he seems to have escaped the attention of the medieval biographical tradition. Be that as it may, this person was transmitting the text through an unspecified chain of authorities from Abū Jaʿfar himself.

The second manuscript (T) is preserved in the Topkapı Saray.12 It, too, is a miscellany. Copied in 921/1515, this version of Abū Jaʿfar’s dream narrative is provided with a partial riwāya. According to this riwāya, this version was transcribed by a person who was transmitting the text — through four intermediate authorities — from a book written by a renowned historian and religious scholar who died in the early sixth century of the Muslim era.13 This historian in turn was transmitting Abū Jaʿfar’s dream narrative via an unspecified chain of authorities whose final link was one Abū Maṣūr al-Ṭuraythīḥī. This person, otherwise unknown, had received the account in 387/997 when he and Abū Jaʿfar were traveling together from Ṭuraythīḥī to Mecca.

S and T offer recensions of the text that are substantially the same. There are, however, a fair number of small variants between the recensions. Most of these do not touch the sense of the text; a few do. When it is a question of the text’s sense, it is usually the case that S’s text is the more perspicuous, while T’s is the more difficult. It may be that Abū Jaʿfar himself put two different versions of his dream narrative into circulation: a first and second edition, if you will; or it may be that a later scribe attempted to clean up an earlier version of the text. I would tend toward the first option, in part because some of S’s

10. Lâleli 3720, ff. 137r-141v.
12. Ahmed III 3163, ff. 83r-102r.
13. That is, Abū ʿl-Ṣuḥājī Shīrāzī b. Shahrdār al-Daylamī (d. 509/1115), a famous Shāfī’i historian, scholar of prophetic traditions, and author of many books. On him, see the notes to the translation at §2.3.
improvements and clarifications seem unlikely to have been made via a later scribe’s ingenuity. Whatever the case, the text of T strikes me as the more primitive, if only for the reason that it usually offers the lectio difficilior. Accordingly, I have taken it as the basis for the present analysis and translation of Abū Ja’far’s dream narrative. But again, it bears repeating, the recensions preserved in S and T are substantially the same — apart, that is, from their divergent riwāyat.

As far as I have been able to determine, Abū Ja’far escaped the notice of the medieval Muslim biographical tradition. What we know of him must therefore be gleaned from his dream narrative. Assuming that the manuscripts have correctly preserved his nisba, we gather that he or his family were originally from Qāyin, a town two hundred or so kilometers south of Nishapur. Twice he had attempted to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, both times without success. His third attempt at pilgrimage took place in 387/997, the year after his dream and in large part as a result of it. In that his narrative was transmitted by Shāfīʿīs, it is possible that Abū Ja’far himself was a member of that legal school. As will be seen, it is also likely that he was a Sufi of one form or another. This much and little else can be inferred about the identity of Abū Ja’far.

Abū Ja’far al-Qāyinī and His Dream Narrative

On Tuesday, the eleventh of Shawwal, in the year 386 (27 October 996), Abū Ja’far has a dream. In it, he sees himself laboriously engaged in the ascent of a mountain. On reaching its summit, he happens on a man engaged in prayer.

I came round and knelt in front of him, until there was between me and his knee but a single span. I looked at his face and his beard. And, lo, he was thickly bearded. I looked at his cheeks. And, lo, in them was just a touch of white. I looked at his lips. And, lo, they were thick. I thought to myself: These are the characteristics of the Messenger of God. . . . I bowed my head and spoke not a word, neither did he speak. I then glanced up at him a second time, examining him closely, and I was persuaded that he was the Messenger. . . . Timidly and reverently, I asked: Are you the

14. It may be noted that I intend to include an edition of the present text in a future volume of opera minora on dreams from the early Islamic period.
15. His full name: Abū Ja’far Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qāyinī. S adds that he also bore the nisba al-Sulamī.
16. Usually the manuscripts of his dream narrative bear al-Qāyinī. Occasionally, however, they bear the unintelligible forms al-Qātī or al-Fābīnī.
17. See, for example, Yāqūt, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qātī, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qāyinī, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Fābīnī.
Messenger of God? He said: Yes, I’m the Messenger of the Lord of the Universe. I’m Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.\textsuperscript{18}

Sitting down in the Prophet’s presence, Abū Ja’far begins to lodge his complaints: the times are evil, the religious scholars are corrupt, the political authorities are tyrants, the laity are ignorant, and he himself is perplexed.

Following his lament, Abū Ja’far asks and receives permission to put various questions to the Prophet. These questions cover a wide range of topics: the nature of dreams of the Prophet, the divisions of the Muslim community, the differences between the legal schools, the prophetic traditions and their reliability, the paucity of authentic prophetic traditions, and so on. It is thus that the narrative proceeds, ending only when Abū Ja’far awakes. The Prophet “took hold of my hand. I then awoke. And it was as if my hand was still in his hand.”\textsuperscript{19}

Abū Ja’far’s dream narrative is a complex work. Some of its themes are strictly personal. Abū Ja’far is upset with Muhammad for not having recently visited him in his dreams:

Whenever I was concerned for anything, you would appear to me in a dream and deliver me from my concern. And now, though for many years I’ve been perplexed, I’ve not seen you and you’ve not appeared to me.\textsuperscript{20}

He desires that Muhammad bless one of his friends:

By the way, I’ve a friend to whom I’m greatly obliged. I speak his praise to you now that you might beseech God for him. He said: Who is it? I said: Bahr al-Jinni. He said: The brother of Amr? I said: I’m not sure. He said: Yes, he’s his brother and he’s one of those folk who listen intently to the Qur’ān.\textsuperscript{21}

Not unlike many other students, past and present, Abū Ja’far desires confirmation that he has been unjustly sanctioned by his teachers:

Many of the leading scholars of prophetic traditions . . . used to disparage the trustworthiness of our reverent and pious elders and declare the prophetic traditions they transmit to be weak. And yet, many of the contemporary ulema prevent me from doing the same, saying: “This is slander. Don’t disparage them. . . . Don’t call them weak transmitters. . . . Don’t do this, even if the leading scholars of prophetic traditions did so.”

\textsuperscript{18} §4.5–6.
\textsuperscript{19} §16.3.
\textsuperscript{20} §5.2.
\textsuperscript{21} §16.1–2.
[The Prophet replied]: This isn’t slander. If it were a question of people other than the transmitters of prophetic traditions, it would be. But as it is, it’s only through the chain of transmitters that scholars of prophetic traditions can declare accounts sound and distinguish between those that are sound and those that are not.22

Other of Abū Ja’far’s concerns are apparently questions by which he has recently been troubled: the paucity of authentic prophetic traditions or the nature of dreams in which prophets appear. Above and beyond such topics, however, there is in Abū Ja’far’s dream narrative a common theme, and this is his attempt to forge what might be called a non-partisan understanding of Islam. The traditional boundaries to which the ulema appealed in order to discern the contours of an orthodox Islam are in Abū Ja’far’s dream narrative subverted through an appeal to the authority of the oneiric Muhammad. Eschewing arguments based on Qur’an and Sunna, Abū Ja’far cites as his authority a more personal arbiter of truth, the Prophet Muhammad himself.

Abū Ja’far’s non-partisan approach to understanding Islam is well illustrated by a passage where he inquires of Muhammad as to the meaning of the well-known prophetic tradition, that, after Muhammad’s death, the Muslim community would fracture into seventy-three divisions, all but one of which was destined for Hell. Muhammad replies that the first part of the saying is correct, while the second part is in error. “Yes, all of these divisions will divide my community, but the mercy of God . . . and my intercession shall encompass them all.”23 And to this statement Abū Ja’far can only respond: “God is most great! You’ve given me great joy! May God grant you the means to accomplish this!”24 Abū Ja’far then remembers another tradition. In it Muhammad declares that there are some who will come to the eschatological Pool only to be driven away by the Prophet for having changed the religion of Islam after his death. Does this tradition not contradict what Muhammad has just said? No, the Prophet states. Those who will be driven away are not heretics within the Muslim community, but those who abandoned Islam after his death. “Such as these,” Muhammad declares, “have no share in God’s mercy or in my intercession.”25

Just how far does Abū Ja’far’s oneiric Muhammad go in his unwillingness to condemn heretics? Remarkably, even those who say that God

22. §12.1–3.
23. §7.2.
24. §7.3.
25. §9.2.
has a body and those who subscribe to a Qadarite theology are encompassed by his intercession:

I said: As for those who say that God has a body, is their heresy encompassed by your intercession? He replied: Such as these do not wish to assimilate God to a body, but only to establish the faith. I said: What of the Qadarites? They say that God does not will human beings to be disobedient . . . and that human acts of will are not preordained. Is their heresy encompassed by your intercession? He replied: They do not wish to deny God’s power. They only wish to attribute to themselves responsibility for their own disobedience. I said: What of the Kharijites? They declare people to be unbelievers on account of their sins. He replied: They’ve slipped in the darkness.26

It may be noted that the only sect that Muhammad declares outside the fold of God’s mercy is the Kharijites, and this for the simple reason that they declare others to be unbelievers — precisely what Abū Ja’far seems to be seeking to avoid.

In the end, Abū Ja’far’s oneiric Muhammad proposes what might be called a minimalist definition of Islam, suggesting also that if Muslims adhere to this minimum, it is enough.27 And of what does this minimum consist?

- Believe what has been revealed to and declared by Muhammad.
- Be an enemy to the enemies of Islam and a friend to the friends of Islam.
- Acknowledge that God is one and without companion.
- Acknowledge that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
- Acknowledge the resurrection and the requital of deeds.

Using such generic characteristics, Abū Ja’far, through his oneiric Muhammad, offers a new set of boundaries for the Muslim community, boundaries that encompassed many of the heretics traditionally excluded by the ulama. And he is able to do this by appealing not to his own learning or his own authority, but directly to Muhammad.

If Abū Ja’far’s Muhammad is unwilling to give much weight to the traditional sectarian divisions of the Muslim community, so also he is unwilling to take a partisan approach to the subject of the legal schools. Although these legal schools differ on many points, Abū Ja’far’s Muhammad cannot bring himself to declare any of them in the wrong: “Each of them in his ijtihād is correct.”28 To the Prophet’s statement, Abū
Abū Jaʿfar al-Qāyinī and His Dream of the Prophet Muhammad

Jaʿfar boldly objects: “This is a question about which Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shāfiʿī differed.” 29 Abū Ḥanīfa had said: “If there are two jurists who exercise *ijtihād* but come to different conclusions, both are correct, but the truth is with only one.” 30 On the other hand, al-Shāfiʿī had said: “If there are two jurists who exercise *ijtihād* but come to different conclusions, one is correct and one is in error, but the one who errs should be pardoned.” 31 When the Prophet insists that both sayings mean the same thing, Abū Jaʿfar persists, asking for a decisive statement as to which saying is the closer to the truth. And for his persistence, he receives from the Prophet a sharp retort: “Both are right!” 32

Still pressing home his objections, Abū Jaʿfar tells Muhammad about a dream had by the Shāfiʿī jurist al-Zubayr b. Aḥmad al-Zubayrī (d. 317/929). In this dream, al-Zubayrī had seen Muhammad reprimand Abū Ḥanīfa and praise al-Shāfiʿī.

I said: What did al-Zubayr b. Aḥmad al-Zubayrī mean when he said that he had a dream and in it Abū Ḥanīfa was on your left and al-Shāfiʿī was on your right and that he himself then took the hand of his son and placed him in front of you, saying: “I wish to complain to you on account of this, my son. He is causing me much vexation with his appeals to the arbitrary opinions of Abū Ḥanīfa.” You then pointed at Abū Ḥanīfa and said: “If these reject them [the Book, the Authority, and the Prophecy mentioned in verse 6:89 of the Qurʾān], we shall entrust their charge to a people who reject them not.” You next looked at al-Shāfiʿī and said: “Those were they who received God’s guidance. Copy the guidance they received.” 33

Being discordant with his vision of Islam, Abū Jaʿfar inquires of Muhammad as to the meaning of this dream. And to his query Muhammad replies, quite simply:

I don’t recall saying that. If I had said it, though, I would have said to both of them: “Those were they who received God’s guidance. Copy the guidance they received.” 34

Abū Jaʿfar’s response: “Praise be to God. Truly in this matter is all-reaching bounty. I hope that their difference is a mercy.” 35

The penultimate section of Abū Jaʿfar’s dream narrative turns to

29. §10.3.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. §11.1–2.
34. §11.3.
35. Ibid.
the question of Sufism. And it is perhaps here that Abū Jaʿfar permits Muhammad to express his own deepest yearnings.

I said: Messenger of God, what of the Sufi elders such as Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Dhū al-Nūn, al-Junayd b. Muḥammad, al-Sarrī, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Nībājī? They forbid their followers three things: the study of disputational theology (kalām), participation in or listening to discussions concerning the ḥitna of the Companions, and obstinacy in matters of religion. They also bid them to be thorough in their ablutions, upright in their treatment of others, and devoted to the rectification of their hearts before God. . . .

Perhaps not surprisingly, Muhammad himself turns out to be a Sufi, for he declares: “This is my path. Whoever travels it is on a straight path.”

Conclusions

Through the device of his dream narrative, Abū Jaʿfar sought to articulate an understanding of Islam that ignored many of the traditional boundaries established by the ulema. The sects were of as little importance as the divisions of the legal schools. What counted above all was adherence to a minimalistic definition of the faith, as well as goodness toward others and goodness toward God. Whether and to what extent these were novel views in the fourth century of the Muslim era is a matter for another time. For the present purpose, what is important is the way that Abū Jaʿfar chose to articulate his views. The workshop in which his theology was crafted was not his own, but the Prophet’s. These were not, after all, Abū Jaʿfar’s views. While he may have asked the questions, the answers to his questions came from outside himself. They were the Prophet’s, and as Abū Jaʿfar and all Muslims knew, the Prophet had declared that dreams in which he appeared could not be false. And just in case there were some who doubted, Abū Jaʿfar had opened his interrogation by asking Muhammad about precisely this point.

Messenger of God, may I ask you a question? He said: Yes. I said: I know that I’m now asleep and that this is a dream. Hishām b. Ḥassān reported from Muhammad b. Sūrān, who reported from Abū Hurayra, that you once said: “Whoever has seen me in a dream has seen me in a waking state, for Satan does not imitate me.” Is this an authentic saying? Did you really say this? Is there anything wrong with its chain of transmitters?

36. §15.1–3.
37. §15.4.
38. §6.1–2.
And to this Muhammad replied, in a manner as laconic as it is definitive: “Yes, I said that.” Dreams of Muhammad are always true, and this is certain because Muhammad himself confirmed it in a dream. The argument is circular for all that, it is not the less effective.

The Dream Narrative of Abū Jaʿfar al-Qāyinī (translated from Ahmed III 3163, ff. 83r-102r)

I. Scribal Invocation

1. This is an account of the dream of al-Imām al-Ustādh Abū Jaʿfar Muhammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qāyinī al-Ḥāfiz. May God most high shed His light on his bed and grant cool comfort to his bedroom—and this, for the sake of Muhammad and his descendants! May God give him peace! 2. In the name of God the most merciful, the most kind. 3. My Lord, may you facilitate this endeavor through your aid! May you seal it with good! I ask God for help. 4. Praise be to God the Lord of the Universe! May God’s blessing and abundant peace be on our master, Muhammad, and on his descendants and companions!

II. Riwāyah

1. This account was told to me by al-Shaykh al-Imām al-ʿAllāma Muftī al-Farīqayn Ḥujjat al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn Baqiyat al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥīn Abū ʿl-Faṭḥ Muhammad b. al-Shaykh al-Qudwa al-ʿAllāma Majd al-Dīn Shaykh al-ʿUlamāʾ Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Wahb al-Qushayrī. I heard this account from him on Tuesday, with five days remaining in Rabi’ II, in the year 686, in the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmilīyya (may God have mercy on its endower), in Cairo the city protected by God. 3. Abū ʿl-Faṭḥ al-Qushayrī said: This account was related by al-Ḥāfiz Abū Shujāʾ Shīrāwāyh b.

39. §6.2.
40. It is not known who is transmitting the text from Abū ʿl-Faṭḥ al-Qushayrī. Regardless, it is this unknown person’s text that was copied about two hundred years later by the transmitter mentioned in §17.2.
42. The fifth from last day of Rabi’ II in 686 A.H. fell on a Monday not a Tuesday. The date given here may be off by a day. If so, the text was probably copied on either the 9th or the 10th of June in 1287 C.E.
43. A famous madrasa in Cairo founded in 622/1225 by the Ayyubid al-Kāmil Muhammad. See al-Dhahabi, Siyār 22:128. According to the biographical notices on Abū ʿl-Faṭḥ al-Qushyarī, he was indeed an instructor in this madrasa.
Shahrdār al-Daylamī⁴⁴ in his book al-T.ḥ.lī.⁴⁵ As for Abū Shujāʿ al-Daylamī, he transmitted it through a chain of transmitters whose final link was Abū Manṣūr al-Muẓaffar b. ʿIrāhīm al-Ṭūraythīthī.⁴⁶ 4. Abū Manṣūr al-Ṭūraythīthī said: This account was told to me by al-Ustādh Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qāyīnī al-Ḥāfiẓ (may God most high have mercy on him), in the year 387,⁴⁷ while he and I were traveling from Ṭūraythīthī to Mecca.

III. Setting the Stage

1. Abū Jaʿfar al-Qāyīnī said: On the night of Tuesday, the eleventh of Shawwal, in the year 386,⁴⁸ I saw in a dream that I was walking a well-traveled path. I reached a steep mountain and the path went two ways. One followed along the base of the mountain, while the other went up it. I took the path that went up the mountain. 2. After I had for a while been making my way up, I grew tired and despaired of the ascent, with the result that I returned to the other path. (To the right of the path on which I now was, there was a canal.) I then decided to walk along the slope between the two paths. After doing this, I noticed a way between the two paths. 3. I said to myself: The path I should take is this way. The other two are the paths of the rest of humanity. 4. I walked on this new way between the other two paths. Not a single soul was with me on it. I then saw a boulder spanning the distance between the two paths, that is, the path going up and the path following along the base of the mountain. 5. I sat below the boulder and looked closely at it. And, lo, in it there were two cracks. I searched about for some pieces of wood and found two, each measuring just over a span. I took them and put each of them in a crack and pounded them in with stones. 6. With both hands, I grabbed hold of one of the pieces of wood while stretching out my feet to the other. I next stood on one foot and took hold of the top of the

⁴⁵ The name of the book in question appears to be corrupt. Of Abū Shujā‘s works known from the medieval biographical tradition none bears such a title or even one similar to it. Nonetheless, it is tempting to identify the work in question with Abū Shujā‘s book on dreams. Seemingly no longer extant, this text is variously titled (rather generically): Ḥikāyat al-manāmah and Kitāb al-Manāmah. On this work, see, for example, al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt 5:66, and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ṭabaqāt 1:487.
⁴⁶ This person appears to be otherwise unknown.
⁴⁷ That is, 997/98 C.E.
⁴⁸ In Qūhistan. See Yāqūt, Mujam al-buldān 4:33–34.
⁴⁹ That is, 27 October 996, which did indeed fall on a Tuesday.
boulder and sought to get my chest on top of it. I then endeavored to get my belly on top of it. I next stretched out my right foot until I could place it atop the rock. I then stretched out the other foot until I could stand atop the rock. It was then that I saw another path leading up to the top of the mountain.

IV. Meeting the Prophet

1. I said to myself: At one time there must have been steps here. These were neglected, with the result that a flood destroyed them. I then climbed to the top of the mountain. And, lo, on it there were two mosques, one to the right and one to the left. 2. I stood between the two mosques atop the steep mountain, and with a loud voice acclaimed and bore witness to God: God is most great! There is no god but God! God is most great! To God be praise! 3. I then looked to my right. And, lo, there was a man praying in the mosque, sitting on his left haunch and reciting the tashahhud. I said to myself: Insofar as he is still sitting on his haunch, this must be the final tashahhud. Now he'll give the Salutation and then I'll be able to ask him about the path and where I might stay—for I'm deprived of traveling companions and have no one here with me. 4. He gave the Salutation, which I could hear; and after bowing his head, he looked at me. I said: Peace be on you and the mercy of God most high! He replied: And on you be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings! I said to myself: He must be a scholar, for he answered me with a greeting more courteous than that which I offered him. 5. I came round and knelt in front of him, until there was between me and his knee but a single span. I looked at his face and his beard. And, lo, he was thickly bearded. I looked at his cheeks. And, lo, in them was just a touch of white. I looked at his lips. And, lo, they were thick. I thought to myself: These are the characteristics of the Messenger of God (God’s blessings and peace be on him). 6. I bowed my head and spoke not a word, neither did he speak. I then glanced up at him a second time, examining him closely, and I was persuaded that he was indeed the Messenger (God’s blessing and peace be on him). Timidly and reverently, I asked: Are you the Messenger of God? He said: Yes, I’m the Messenger of the Lord of the Universe. I’m Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭalib.

50. The tashahhud is the portion of the Muslim prayer recited after the second rak’a’s second ṣadqah and (if required) after the third or fourth rak’a.

51. If the tashahhud needs be recited a second time (as it would in all but the early morning prayer), one does not stand again until the prayer is finished. It is thus that Abū Ja’far infers that this is the end of the prayer.

52. The closing words of the Muslim prayer.

53. Cf. Q 4.86.
V. al-Qāyinī’s Complaints

1. When I was a child, I had a dream. This dream I narrated to the Prophet, saying: Messenger of God, in that dream you took hold of my arms while I sat in front of my father and you lifted me from the ground until my feet touched the heads of the people. You then placed me back on the ground, saying: “Follow my way!” As a result of this dream, I have pursued the study of prophetic traditions above all other theological disciplines—and this, out of love for you and so that I might “follow your way.” 2. Whenever I was concerned for anything, you would appear to me in a dream and deliver me from my concern. And now, though for many years I’ve been perplexed, I’ve not seen you and you’ve not appeared to me. 3. I set out for the pilgrimage but had to return from Kufa. I set out a second time but had to return from Medina. When I had decided to set out a third time, Muhammad b. ‘Alī al-Qaṣṣār came to me with good news, saying: “Yesterday, I dreamt that I saw the Prophet (God’s blessings and peace be on him). I said to him: ‘Abū Ja’far al-Qāyinī has set out twice for the pilgrimage but did not accomplish his goal. This year he has decided to set out once again.” You responded: “People will make the pilgrimage if it is the will of God most high.” I then renewed my intention to make the pilgrimage; and heartened by the dream, that year I made the pilgrimage. 4. Now then, allow me to speak and ask questions, for I’m drowning in a sea of perplexity. I complain to you, first, because of my evil self and my wicked nature, and then because of the befuddled times, and then because of the unjust acts of tyrannical rulers, and then because of wicked scholars (some seek worldly success; others seek political power), and then because of the ignorant masses who neither understand the shari‘ah nor try to gain what they know not. I am confused. I alone am guided neither to a state of comfort nor to a straight path.

VI. The Nature of Dreams of Muhammad

1. I wept and then glanced at his eyes (God’s blessings and peace be on him). And, lo, they were full of tears. I was silent and wiped away my tears, and he did the same (God’s blessings and peace be on him). I said: Messenger of God, may I ask you a question? He said: Yes. 2. I said: I know that I’m now asleep and that this is a dream. Hishām b. Ḥassān, reported from Muhammad b. Sīrīn, who reported from Abū Hurayra.

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54. This person appears to be otherwise unknown.
that you once said: “Whoever has seen me in a dream has seen me in a waking state, for Satan does not imitate me.”58 Is this an authentic saying? Did you really say this? Is there anything wrong with its chain of transmitters? He replied (God’s blessings and peace be on him): Yes, I said that. 3. I said: Am I now seeing the real form of the Messenger, the form in which he was, or another form, a likeness of his real form, while his real form, the form in which he was, is in Medina under the earth? He replied: This form is only a likeness of my real form. 4. I said: Is the spirit that is in this form the spirit that was in the real form? He replied: Yes, the spirit of the prophets is specific to their forms. As for those who are not prophets, their spirits are specters, for after their deaths their spirits are confined in the grave.

VII. The Divisions of the Muslim Community

1. I said: Messenger of God, what of the tradition that was transmitted by ‘Awf b. Mālik al-Ashja‘ī, Abū Umāma al-Bā hil, and Anas b. Mālik,59 that you said: “My community will be divided into three and seventy divisions, all of them in the fire, except for one.”60 2. He replied: Yes, all of these divisions will divide my community, but the mercy of God (may He be lifted up and exalted) and my intercession shall encompass them all. 3. I said: God is most great! You’ve given me great joy! May God grant you the means to accomplish this!

VIII. Heresy

1. I then said: What of the attempt to attribute the origins of all heresy to four sects — the Kharjites, the Shi‘ites, the Mu‘ tazilites, and the Murji‘ites — each of these sects in turn being divided into eighteen parts, with the result that there are a total of two and seventy divisions? He replied: This is just a contrivance. Heresy is indeed manifold, but all heresy is encompassed by the mercy of God and my intercession. 2. I said: As for those who say that God has a body, is their heresy encompassed by your intercession? He replied: Such as these do not wish to assimilate God to a body, but only to establish the faith. 3. I said: What of the Qadarites? They say that God does not will human beings to be disobedient, that the Pen does not write on the Preserved Tablet, and that human acts of will are not preordained. Is their heresy encompassed by your intercession?

58. For this well-known tradition, see, for example, Muslim, Šāhiḥ 15:24.
60. For parallels, see, for instance, al-Dārimī, Sunan 2:214, ’Abd al-Razzāq al-San‘ā nī, al-Muṣannaf, 10:156, as well as the versions in al-Baghda dī, al-Farq bayn al-firaq, 4–9, and al-Shahrastānī, Kitāb al-milal wa‘l-niḥal, 1:20–21.
He replied: They do not wish to deny God’s power. They only wish to attribute to themselves responsibility for their own disobedience. 4. I said: What of the Kharjites? They declare people to be unbelievers on account of their sins. He replied: They’ve slipped in the darkness. 5. Regarding all of these different heresies, whoever believes God in what was revealed to me and believes me in what I declare, whoever is an enemy to the enemies of Islam and a friend to the friends of Islam, whoever confesses that God is one and without partners, whoever confesses that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, whoever confesses that they will be raised up after their death and requited for their deeds—all such are righteous and are encompassed by the mercy of God and my intercession.

IX. A Possible Objection

1. I said: What of the tradition of al-‘Alā’ b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān? He reported from his father, who reported from Abū Hurayra, that you said: “Surely, there are men who will be driven away from my Pool even as the errant camel is driven away. You will call to them: ‘Come.’ And it will be said: ‘After your death, they changed.’ You will then say: ‘Away with them, away!’” 2. He (peace be on him) replied: These are folk from among “those whose hearts were reconciled.” When I left this world, they submitted to the hypocrites and came to doubt and waver. Before Islam they were astray, and when I left the world, they returned to their original religion, in submission to the hypocrites. Such as these have no share in God’s mercy or my intercession.

X. The Legal Schools

1. I said: You have clarified this question, but another remains. He said: Go ahead. I said: What of those leading jurists who were followers of your companions, for instance, Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab, Makḥūl, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ‘Aṭā’, and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha’ī What of the successors of the followers, for instance, Sufyān, Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Awzā‘ī, and Ibn Abī Laylā What of those who came after the successors, for instance, al-

62. The eschatological pool symbolizing the Prophet’s intercession.
63. For this tradition, see, for instance, Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ 3:127–29.
64. Cf. Q. 9:60, referring to certain Arabs to whom Muhammad presented gifts in order to induce them to convert.
65. All figures who died in the late first or early second centuries A.H. See, respectively, Sezgin, GAS 1:276, 404, 591–92, 31, 403–4.
66. All of these men died toward the middle of the second century A.H. See, respectively, Sezgin, GAS 1:518–19, 457–58, 409–10, 516, 518.
Shāfīʿī, al-Buwayṭī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ḩishāq b. Rāhawayh, Abū ‘Ubayd, Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, and Zufar?67 2. Such as these differ on many questions. Each adduces verses of the Qur’ān susceptible to differing interpretations, as well as contradictory prophetic traditions, some of which are susceptible to abrogation and others not, some of which are susceptible to reconciliation and others not. He (peace be on him) replied: Each of them in his jiṭḥād is correct. 3. I said: This is a question about which Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Shāfīʿī differed. Abū Ḥanīfah said: “If there are two jurists who exercise jiṭḥād but come to different conclusions, both are correct, but the truth is with only one.” al-Shāfīʿī said: “If there are two jurists who exercise jiṭḥād but come to different conclusions, one is correct and one is in error, but the one who errs should be pardoned.” He replied: Both sayings mean the same, even if their wording differs slightly. I said: But of the two schools, whose words are closer to the truth? He (peace be on him) answered: Both are right!

XI. The Dream of al-Zubayrī

1. I said: What did al-Zubayr b. Aḥmad al-Zubayrī68 mean when he said that he had a dream and in it Abū Ḥanīfah was on your left and al-Shāfīʿī was on your right and that he himself then took the hand of his son and placed him in front of you, saying: “I wish to complain to you on account of this, my son. He is causing me much vexation with his appeals to the arbitrary opinions of Abū Ḥanīfah.” 2. You then pointed at Abū Ḥanīfah and said: “If these reject them,69 we shall entrust their charge to a people who reject them not.”70 You next looked at al-Shāfīʿī and said: “Those were they who received God’s guidance. Copy the guidance they received.”71 3. The Prophet responded: I don’t recall saying that. If I had said it, though, I would have said to both of them: “Those were they who received God’s guidance. Copy the guidance they received.” I said: Praise be to God. Truly in this matter is all-reaching bounty. I hope that their difference is a mercy.

XII. Prophetic Traditions and Their Transmission

1. I said: Another question, Messenger of God? He answered: Go ahead. I said: [This prophetic tradition is difficult for us. We are not able to

69. Alluding to the Book, the Authority, and the Prophecy cited in Q 6:89.
70. Q 6:89.
71. Q 6:90.
evaluate it on account of its errors.]72 Many of the leading scholars of prophetic tradition, for instance, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, Yaḥyā b. Ṣaʿīd al-Qaṭṭān, ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Madīnī, and Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn,73 used to disparage the trustworthiness of our reverent and pious elders and declare the prophetic traditions they transmit to be weak. 2. And yet, many of the contemporary ulema prevent me from doing the same, saying: “This is slander. Don’t disparage them or give reasons for doing so. Don’t call them weak transmitters or give reasons for doing so. Don’t do this, even if the leading scholars of prophetic traditions did so.” 3. He (peace be on him) said: This isn’t slander. If it were a question of people other than the transmitters of prophetic traditions, it would be. But as it is, it’s only through the chain of transmitters that scholars of prophetic traditions can declare accounts sound and distinguish between those that are sound and those that are not.

XIII. The Paucity of Authentic Prophetic Traditions

1. I said: Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj74 was able to cite about four thousand prophetic traditions. As for Mūhammad b. Ḫisam al-Bukhārī, Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, and Mūhammad b. Khuzaymah,75 they were able to add to that number. Their devotion to this religious duty was more intense than ours and their resources in pursuing it were greater than ours. Do you consider it best that we follow them in what they have collected and adjudged sound? He answered: Yes. 2. I said: Messenger of God, the sum total of what they adjudged sound is not greater than seven thousand prophetic traditions. And yet, your words and deeds over the course of three and twenty years--is this all of them? 3. He replied: What they remembered of my words and deeds in relation to what they didn’t is but a little from among much--and who can possibly remember them all! Moreover, what they’ve lost of the little they’ve remembered is more than what they’ve remembered.

XIV. Forged Prophetic Traditions

1. I said: What of those traditions about you that were forged? We’re quite sure that they’re forgeries, but all of them are good, concordant

72. The bracketed sentences are difficult to construe in the context. They seem to be a marginal gloss that has worked its way into the body of the text.
75. Collectors of prophetic traditions from the mid-third century A.H. See, respectively, GAS 1:115–16, 154–59, 601.
with the Book and the Sunna, in agreement with authentic traditions, in conformity with the light of natural reason. 2. Those who forged such traditions, if they did so with good intent and did not spoil them out of pride, can we hope that God will reward them for their acts of forgery? 3. He said: Those who intentionally lied about me, seeking thereby to cause my community to behave well and attain an exalted status in the next world--for such as these, I’m the most merciful of men. I shall not oppose them; indeed, I shall intercede for them--and God is more merciful than me. 4. Those who by lying aimed to corrupt my community, sow division in it, and overturn the truth--I’m their opponent. I’ll not intercede for them, but neither shall I attempt to keep God from being merciful, and He’s the most merciful of the merciful. Their affairs are subject to the will of God (may He be lifted up and exalted).

XV. Sufism

1. I said: Messenger of God, what of the Sufi elders such as İbrāhīm b. Adham, Dhi‘ al-Nūn, al-Junayd b. Muḥammad, al-Sarrī, Abū Yazīd al-Bīstāmī, and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Nībājī? 2. They forbid their followers three things: the study of disputational theology (kalām), participation in or listening to discussions concerning the fitna of the Companions, and obstinacy in matters of religion. 3. They also bid them to be thorough in their ablutions, upright in their treatment of others, and devoted to the rectification of their hearts before God (may He be lifted up and exalted). 4. He (peace be on him) said: This is my way. Whoever travels it is on a straight path.

XVI. Conclusion

1. I said: Messenger of God, I’ve been a bother to you. And yet, you’ve delighted me. By the way, I’ve a friend to whom I’m greatly obliged. I speak his praise to you now that you might beseech God for him. 2. He said: Who is it? I said: Bahr al-Jīnhī. He said: The brother of ‘Amr? I said: I’m not sure. He said: Yes, he’s his brother and he’s one of those folk who listen intently to the Qur’an. 3. I then stood, and he stood with


77. Probably a reference to debates concerning who legitimately succeeded to the command of the Muslim community after Muḥammad’s death.

78. This person appears to be otherwise unknown.

79. There is a pun here between the nisba of this person and the jinn mentioned at Q 46:29, where they are called “fol... who listen intently to the Qur’an.”
me. He took hold of my hand. I then awoke, and it was as if my hand was still in his hand (God’s blessing and peace be on him). Praise belongs to God alone!

XVII. Scribal Note

1. This was written on the twentieth day of Ramadan in the year 921 of the Prophet’s hijra. It was transcribed from a copy made by al-Shaykh al-Imām al-ʿAllāma ʿAbd al-Ṣāʾir al-Ḥanafī. May God grant him and all Muslims His hidden kindness! 2. As for al-Ṣāʾir, he transcribed from a copy made by Mawlānā Shaykh Mashāyiḥ al-ʿĪslām Muḥibb al-Dīn ʿAbū ʿl-Faḍl Muḥammad b. ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Shaḥna. May God have mercy on him and on all Muslims! 3. Praise be to God alone and God’s blessing and peace be on the best of His creation, Muhammad, as well as on his descendants!

XVIII. A Second Scribal Note

1. al-Imām Abū Faḍl (may God have mercy on him) said: I hope that God will not reject these labors. With God is the success. God’s blessing and peace be on our master, ʿAbd al-Faḍl Muḥammad, and on his descendants and companions. For us, God is sufficient and He is the best disposer of affairs.

80. That is, 28 October 1515. It is the scribe of the manuscript, Abū ʿl-Faḍl Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-ʿĀraji, who is here speaking. Coincidentally, this same scribe was also responsible for copying Köprülü 1202 (another work on dreams), finishing his transcription in the very same year.

81. An Egyptian jurist, renowned for his knowledge of both religious and secular subjects. He died ca. 934/1527. See Ibn al-Imād, Shadrārat al-ṭalāb fi ʿakhbār maṣāḥah, 8:201.

82. A Ḥanafī jurist who died in 890/1485. On him, see Bağıdatlı Ismail Paşa, Ḥadiyyat al-ʿārifin, 2:213. Ibn Shahna’s copy was made from that of the anonymous scribe mentioned in §2.1.

83. That is, Abū ʿl-Faḍl Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-ʿĀraji (see n. 80).

84. Cf. Q. 3.173.
Abū Jaʿfar al-Qāyinī and His Dream of the Prophet Muhammad

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