THE LEGITIMIZATION OF THE MADHĀHIB
THROUGH DREAMS

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In his article «The Cultural Function of the Dream as Illustrated by Classical Islam», Von Grunebaum points out the fact that there «... is hardly any phase in the life of the [Islamic] community and the individual where dreams ... [do] not play a part»¹. Since the nineteenth century, Islamic scholars, in a wide range of studies, have stressed the role of dreams in the Islamic community. Most of these studies concentrated on the interpretation of dreams, their reliability as a major source for transcendental knowledge, as well as the firm status they gained by Prophetic sayings. Dreams have been summarized, recorded and studied as a reflection of the various aspects of Islamic life².

Several years ago, in an introduction to K. al-Manām by Ibn Abī d-Dunyā, the author of the present study presented an extensive survey of themes covered by dreams to examine and demonstrate the similarity between the dream and the hadīth as a means of authority in Islam³. Nevertheless, there are still aspects of the subject of dreams that need further elaboration. One such theme is the legitimization process of dreams: How are decisions taken, how are preferences established, and how do ideas gain approval through dreams. In other words, there is need to deal with «Legitimizing Dreams», dreams which in most cases should be defined as edifying.

² For a detailed bibliography of studies made in the field, see L. Kinberg, «Interaction between This World and the Afterworld in Early Islamic Tradition», Oriens, 1984 (forthcoming), (abridged: «Interaction»), note No. 50.
«Legitimizing-Edifying Dreams» can be found widely throughout Islamic literature. These are dreams that instruct people on how to behave, think, or react to definite situations in their daily lives. Most of these dreams show how deeds performed by people during their life on this earth correlate with their condition after death in the next world. They demonstrate the merits of each deed, thus encouraging people to act accordingly. Some dreams offer solutions to debatable questions, such as those raised by the Mu'ātazīlah, Shi‘ah, Khawāรīj, and so on. They either describe the celestial bliss bestowed on those who follow the «proper» path, demonstrating the bad fate of those who follow the «wrong» path, or simply expound the appropriate approach. Dreams that deal with the different schools of law in Islam (madhāhib) are one of many groups included in the category of the «Legitimizing-Edifying Dreams».

In this article I will concentrate on the question of how the «legitimizing-edifying» function of dreams is evident with regard to the dispute among the madhāhib. It is important to note here that I. Goldziher has already mentioned the fact that rivalries among the madhāhib are reflected in hadīths, saying: «Amongst the many varieties of tendentious traditions, one group is noticeable, the part which might best be named the traditions of the schools, i.e. ḥadīths which have been invented within a particular theological school for the purpose of demonstrating its excellence as opposed to another rival school, and of giving weight and authority to their own teachings».

The purpose of the present study is to call attention to the fact that this rivalry among the different theological schools is also reflected in dreams, in the very same manner as in hadīths. In the following pages I will concentrate on the way the four jurists are presented in dreams, how dreams should be understood with regard to the jurists' influence and status in the Islamic community, and their value and trustworthiness as the eponyms of the schools of law.

Madhāhib-dreams can be divided into two main groups, depending on the technique used to relate the dream. The first group uses visions actually seen by the founders of the madhāhib, whereas the other presents us with visions in which the founders of the madhāhib appear to other

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4 This topic was treated in the introduction to K. al-Manām, pp. 58-74. The present study is an elaboration of that discussion.
5 I. Goldziher, Muslim Studies (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971), Vol. 2, p. 142, and see also ibid., p. 82, especially note No. 2.