his house’. Then the wazir Āmadu said: ‘There is no might or strength save in God. To God we belong and to Him shall we return. Where did this man go? He has caused us disgrace. Why did he flee?’ Then the wazir Ahmad gathered all his fellow men and informed them of what had happened, and what their brother [the emir] had done. They said to him: ‘We are under your orders in obedience to God and to you. We delegate matters to you, so see what you think for you are the senior among us, so get us back to our homes in Kano.’ Then the wazir said to them: ‘Let every one of you ride his horse and let us make for our houses in Kano’. They said: ‘We follow you’. Then they departed to return to Kano.

We return to the story of wambai āAbbās. When people chose him in préférence to his peers he was appointed to the emirship by the Christians. They made him emir of the people of Kano, and he became emir on a Friday in the evening. The people of Kano rejoiced and celebrated and beat drums for seven days. After he acceded to office the governor in Dungurum summoned him and he and his officers and officials travelled to Dungurum. When they reached Zungeru they went to be received by the governor. He spoke to the emir and thanked him and expressed pleasure at his coming. He gave him an increase in rank. Then he released him and the emir returned to Kano and undertook the government of his emirate.

FALKEIANA IV: THE SHAYKH AS THE LOCUS OF DIVINE SELF-DISCLOSURE: A POEM IN PRAISE OF SHAYKH ḤAMĀHU ‘LLĀH

Benjamin Soares and John O. Hunwick

Introduction

Among the manuscripts in the ‘Umar Falke Collection at Northwestern University is a poem about Ḥamāhu ‘llāh, the twentieth-century Tijānī shaykh and reputed wali, who died in exile in France in 1943. The manuscript consists of a single sheet of paper, apparently torn from a French school cahier, and is item number 2352 of the Falke Collection. The poem, which is written on only one side of the page (the other being blank), is in neat Sahrawī hand without vocalization. The paper is somewhat fragile and there is wear at the edges, with the loss of two or three words in the last line. The poem is only prefaced by the basmala and the tasliya. There are several indications, apparently in another hand, in the right margin. At the top is bayt 21, although there are, in fact, 22 verses in the poem. Beneath this is written vertically: kāmil, indicating the metre of the poem. To the right of that, very close to the edge of the paper, is written the name of the poet: Muḥammad al-Amin b. al-Akhtar. Beginning at line 9, the verses are numbered from 1 to 13, the last line having no number. There is no indication of where or when it was copied. It is possible that it was acquired by ‘Umar Falke from a passing Mauritanian shaykh who

* Thanks are due to Vincent and Rkia Cornell for help in the initial interpretation of the poem, and to Bernd Radtke for reviewing the article as a whole. Its remaining inadequacies, however, are entirely our own.

Sudanic Africa, 7, 1996, 97-112
copied it down for him, perhaps in some haste, or from memory, since the manuscript contains numerous errors of orthography. A possible candidate would be the Hamawi scholar, Sidati b. Bäbä c Aynayn from Nema, who studied in Kano during the early twentieth century, probably establishing a scholarly network in this way. This manuscript text was subsequently compared with a printed text published recently in Casablanca (see below).

Shaykh Hamâhu 'lläh: a brief biography

Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. sayyidinä c Umar, better known as Shaykh Hamâhu 'lläh, has attracted considerable attention since his emergence as a religious leader in West Africa under French colonial rule early in this century. He was born into a family of Tishît sharfian descent, c. 1883. He became a disciple of Sïdï Muhammad b. Ahmad b. c Abd Allâh al-Akhdar, a Tijani sharîf of Tuwat who had settled in Nioro, and who taught that the Tijani prayer Jawharat al-kamal was to be recited only eleven times in the wazîfâ rather than twelve, the majority practice. This seemingly minor ritual difference came to distinguish Hamâhu 'lläh's followers, as they grew in number, from other Tijânîs in the region.

1 A biography of this scholar can be found in Mulây Muhammad b. Sidati, Kitâb qasr al-tä'ifa al-hamawiyya li'l-şalât al-rubâ'iyya, Casablanca 1986.


3 See Traoré, Cheikh Hamahoullah, 155.

4 The name zawîdâ is given to western Saharan groups who devote themselves principally to religious pursuits—the acquisition of learning, teaching, and juristic functions. See al-Mukhtar wuld Hámid, Hovrît Märtäniya: al-Jughrîfiyya, Rabat: Jâmî [Manshûrât Ma'had al-Diräsat al-Ifrîqiyya: Masâdir wa-MAawsûtâ, 1], 1414/1994, 29. On the Tinwâjîyyû, see idem, 76-9.
exile, planned to last another ten years. He was sent first to Algeria, and then to France where he died in Montluçon in January 1943. During this same period, many of his followers were subject to persecution and harassment.

Although a number of scholars have written about Ḥamāhu ‘llâh and his disciples within the socio-economic and political contexts of French colonialism, the religious aspects of the Hamawiyya branch of the Tijāniyya (in European writing often called the Ḥamāliyya) have received inadequate attention. The poem in praise of Ḥamāhu ‘llâh offered here in translation provides us with an entry into the discourse of sainthood which surrounded Ḥamāhu ‘llâh. The language of this text is arcane and esoteric, reflecting the Sufi world of divine secrets, and God’s self-manifestation through His chosen human vessels. It is precisely this Sufi language and its use in praising Ḥamāhu ‘llâh that stirred such a heated debate around Ḥamāhu ‘llâh and his teachings. While such a debate was to those who participated in it a part of the discourse about religion, it was profoundly political in its development and ultimate consequences—the arrest and exile of Ḥamāhu ‘llâh, ending in his death in 1943, and the persecution of his followers by the French colonial authorities.

Poetry in praise of Ḥamāhu ‘llâh

Like Sufi shaykhs in other times and places, Ḥamāhu ‘llâh had many poems written in his honour, including some by leading West African scholars of his day. Throughout French colonial archives, there is frequent mention of poems about Ḥamāhu ‘llâh, with an occasional translation but never an Arabic text. One poem dated 1916, the year when his career of sainthood began in earnest, was published with a French translation in the recent monograph about Shaykh Ḥamāhu ‘llâh by Alioune Traoré. It is said to have been written to celebrate Shaykh Ḥamāhu ‘llâh’s being blessed with the ‘Grand Illumination (al-fath al-‘azîm),’ and his becoming the qutb of his age and the khalîfa of his time. Of the many poems in praise of Ḥamāhu ‘llâh in West African languages, a Fulfulde poem from Nioro du Sahel in Mali was translated into French by Constant Hamès.

The poem presented here was written by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Ṭālib b. Akhtar of the Idaw al-Ḥājj from near Kiffa, remembered in Ḥamawi circles as a learned scholar, but, above all, as a devoted follower of Ḥamāhu ‘llâh. Named a muqaddam by Ḥamāhu ‘llâh, Muḥammad al-Amīn was considered among the shaykh’s most important deputies and is said to have been Ḥamāhu ‘llâh’s only follower given the title ‘shaykh’ by Ḥamāhu ‘llâh himself. Muḥammad al-Amīn was one of the shaykhs who replied to Ḥamāhu ‘llâh’s Muslim critics in written texts, often in verse, as he did, for example, concerning the controversy which erupted in 1936 over the shortening of prayers. In January 1937, while in prison in Nioro du Sahel, for reasons that remain unclear, Muḥammad al-Amīn died.

Muḥammad al-Amīn’s poem is somewhat different from those noted above and is of interest for a number of reasons. While there has been considerable research on the Ḥamawiyya in most of the countries of the former French West Africa (AOF), there is a paucity of research on the Ḥamawiyya in this issue of Sudanic Africa.

6 More usually called al-fath al-kabîr. This is achieved after the seeker has obtained the first stage of illumination in which the secrets of the material cosmos are revealed to him. With the Grand Illumination comes an unveiling that allows the seeker to behold the angels, the prophets, the spirits of the Friends of God, as well as Paradise, Hell, and the barzakh. Such, at any rate, is the definition provided by the K. al-lbrîz of Ahmad b. Mubarak al-Lamatî, which was an important source for Tijāni doctrines. See Bernd Radtke, ‘Ibrîziana’, in this issue of Sudanic Africa.

Hamawiyya in Nigeria. It is known, however, that the French colonial administration in the AOF worried about pan-Islamism and the possible support that might exist for Ḥamāhu 'Ilāh among Tijānīs from beyond French West Africa. This was certainly the case in the 1920s after the death of Malik Sy of Tivaouane in Senegal, and before Seydou Nourou Tall rose to his prominent role in relation to the colonial administration. There was particular concern about the possibility of support for Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh coming from the descendants of Ahmadu Sheku and his entourage who made hijra to the east, particularly those who had settled in areas under British control in northern Nigeria. Although it is unclear what support, if any, Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh had from so far afield, we know from this poem that he was familiar to at least some scholars in Nigeria during his lifetime. Nonetheless, he and his tarīqa were unquestionably overshadowed by other Sufi orders and shaykhs in Nigeria, not to mention subsequent anti-Sufi currents.

During research in Mali, Soares learned that the poem translated below is well-known in Ḥamawī circles and is merely one among the many learned by Ḥamawī adherents, often young boys and men studying the Qur‘ān. These poems are frequently committed to memory during time free from regular Qur‘ān instruction in the evenings and chanted liltingly on various occasions, usually by individuals or small groups of men. They are performed publicly in Nioro du Sahel, and most prominently at the celebration of ism al-nabī, which follows one week after the mawlūd al-nabī, the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birth. This is the largest annual gathering at the zāwiya in Nioro of Ḥamawiyya and others seeking the baraka of Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh and his descendants. Such poems are also sung in Ḥamawī circles in conjunction with ceremonies marking the life cycle, such as naming ceremonies and the recitation of the Qur‘ān following a death. The literal meaning of such poems is not readily apparent to most members of the audience, given their complexity, as well as the manner of recitation which prevents immediate apprehension even for highly literate people. The recitation of these poems is considered a pious act and herein lies the performative effect.

As indicated above, the poem has been published. It is one of several by Muḥammad al-Amīn included in a book of qasīdas collected and published in Morocco in 1988 by the Mauritanian Sayyid Muḥammad b. Mu‘ādh. The poems in this collection are all in praise of Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh, and were written by a small Muslim scholarly elite of the first half of this century, nearly all ‘Moors’ (bīdān). The collection is considered official, being published with the blessing of Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh’s son Muḥammad, who lives in Nioro and is widely recognized as the leader of the Ḥamawiyya. It is important to note that there are poems in praise of Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh that are better known within Ḥamawī circles than the one presented here. A number of such poems were not included in the official published collection because they failed to meet the rigorous criteria of correct Arabic grammar. Similarly, none of the innumerable poems in the region’s vernaculars, many of which are written in the Arabic script, are included in the official corpus. Almost without exception, these poems in the region’s vernaculars are not sung at official gatherings at the Ḥamawī zāwiya in Nioro. They remain, however, more popular among the many followers of Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh who are not literate in Arabic.

11 Muḥammad is the sole living child of Ḥamāhu ‘Ilāh, following the recent death of his younger brother Abū Bakr and his older sister, Zaynab.
The ideas contained in Muḥammad al-Amīn’s poem

The first eight lines of the poem are fairly straightforward. In them the poet evokes his longing for the dhikr assemblies of disciples of Ḥamāhu ‘llāh in which they strove to comprehend spiritual truths and to draw near to God through recitation of mystical poetry and the performance of spiritual exercises. Lines 9-17 portray the shaykh as a virtual alter ego of God; in fact, it is difficult to be sure sometimes whether the poet is speaking of the shaykh or of God. This is especially true of lines 13-15, except that it becomes clear that he is speaking of the shaykh when he says ‘[he is] possessed of a soul that encompasses the mystery of God in its entirety, assuming the [divine] traits’. Nevertheless, it is small wonder that Muḥammad al-Amin refers to ‘the ignorant one’ (al-jahūl) who accuses Ḥamāhu ‘llāh of ‘heresy’ (tazanduq). There was certainly no lack of such critics.

The complex of concepts alluded to in the middle verses of the poem may best be understood by reference to the writing of Sachiko Murata.12 The following introduction to these ideas is taken from that work, though in the footnotes to the text we have also referred to explanations of particular concepts taken from the writings of William Chittick, Michel Chodkiewicz and Titus Burckhardt. We present these by way of sharḥ—in the manner of Muslim commentators—in order to give a variety of ways of understanding the theosophical discourse that lies behind the language of the poem.

To paraphrase Murata: without creation, God’s names were latent or non-manifest, and could not be distinguished from His Essence. God created the universe in order to make manifest His Names. In the words of the well known hadīth qudsī: ‘I was a Hidden Treasure, and I desired to be known’. At this level of Exclusive Oneness (ahadiyya), therefore, the names are undifferentiated. In order for them to be known they have to be differentiated and manifest their own properties in multiplicity. ‘The creatures are the receptacles, the loci within which God’s names are displayed. Without them, the Treasure would remain eternally hidden.’13 Differentiation becomes actualized in the cosmos, but its principle is found in Reality Itself, which is Sheer Being (al-wujūd al-mahd). Being, or Existence, is strictly indefinable and unknowable. Delimitation and definition belong to quiddity (maḥiyya). We can only know wujūd inasmuch as its qualities are manifested by things. Sometimes wujūd is described as that which in itself is non-manifest while making other things manifest, just as ‘light’ is invisible in itself while allowing us to see other things. Visible light is a dim reverberation of true, invisible light. What we call wujūd (being, existence) is, in fact, existing things, which are a dim reverberation of true wujūd (Being).

God is both One and Many, in that His Essence (His wujūd) is One, but He knows all things, and this knowledge of His of all things is concurrent for all eternity with Knowledge of Himself. ‘[K]nowledge and awareness are qualities inherent within Being, and Being knows every reality that becomes manifest through Its own reality’.14 While Sheer Being is absolutely undifferentiated, knowledge has many objects, and so is relatively differentiated. Hence Being is known as the Unity of All-comprehensiveness (ahadiyyat al-jam‘). In as much as Being and Knowledge are both one and also discernible from each other, the Real is known as the Station of All-comprehensiveness (maqām al-jam‘). According to the school of Ibn ‘Arabi, the different designations refer to different levels (marāṭīb)—a term employed in line 10 of the poem under consideration—or presences (hadārāt), which, while they have no ontological distinction, may be distinguished through their effects on the cosmos. Murata

12 See her The Tao of Islam (Albany, NY 1992, 61-8) In her explanations she frequently draws on the writings of Sa‘īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d 695/1296), a disciple of Ibn ‘Arabi’s stepson and a major commentator on the poetry of Ibn al-Fārid.

13 Murata, Tao of Islam, 61
14 Murata, Tao of Islam, 67.
quotes al-Farghani: ‘Before the level of Divinity we have the level of the Unity of All-Comprehensiveness, where the Oneness of Being and the Manyness of Knowledge are identical with each other … Within this Presence, oneness and manyness, Being and Knowledge, entification and non-entification are all identical with each other and with the Essence, without any separation or distinction’. This concept seems to be embodied in the language of lines 13-14 of the poem below.

**Text**

The text is that of the published edition, with the readings of the manuscript text (al-asl) in the footnotes, except where otherwise noted.

**FALKEIANA IV: A POEM IN PRAISE OF HAMĀHU ‘LLĀH 107**

[1] هاج "القرص" لوعتي، ونشوتي وآثار دمعها مسبلاً بتدفق
[2] ووجفا الكرى جفني وغادر "لوعة" في القلب غير جفائه لا تتقى
[3] توب السفاك تذكري ونشوقي
[4] وظاميإب "الأحباء" في زاوية يتدافعون لذكره بحلق
[5] يتدارسون العلم علم حقائق "برم" الجهول علمها ب củذدق

15 Ibid.
16 هاج "القرص" لوعتي، ونشوتي وآثار دمعها مسبلاً بتدفق
18 قارئ
19 لوعة
20 فؤاد
21 وجفا الكرى جفني وغادر "لوعة" في القلب غير جفائه لا تتقى
22 يا مغالس
23 برم
24
25 ونزا
26 في النص المطبوع: "المنفي" 4
27 في النص المطبوع: "رقية" 3
28 في النص المطبوع: "رقية" 4
29 في النص المطبوع: "رقية" 3
30 في النص المطبوع: "رقية" 3
31 بالليل
32 كلمة "شرق" غير واضحة في الأصل
33 يتدافعون
34 بعكس
35 الملأ
36 ليل
37 فلا فهم
38 للنجل
39 مسؤول
40 في النص المطبوع: "ملحاة" 4
41 في النص المطبوع: "ملحاة" 4
42 الكون
43
Separation stirred up my passion and my longing, and brought forth tears copiously pouring down.

Sleep fled my eyelids and left behind in the heart a passion that feared nothing, except estrangement.

My heart and limbs were clothed openly in a cloak of [spiritual] sickness by my remembrance and longing.

For assemblies of the beloved in a zawiya, turn by turn invoking remembrance (dhikr) of Him in a circle.

They teach one another knowledge—knowledge of mystical truths. The ignorant one condemns their knowledge as heresy.

You see each one of them is deeply versed in the science of the shari‘a—the guided one and he who follows.

They recite to one another such poetry as draws them close to God. Through it they achieve mutual ecstasy during a night that gives spiritual illumination.

They clamour for the goblet (al-ka‘s) energetically, not in idle fashion, in the presence of the evolved shaykh, the spiritual teacher.

The axis of existence (qutb al-wujūd), its spirit and

its refuge, the locus of God's self-disclosure (majlāṭ), the perfect in goodness, the pure.

[10] He is His essence, but not in regard to levels of descent (tanazzulāṭ) of the Essence—so understand my logic.

[11] He is His task (sha'nuhu),67 concealed in His Transcendent Unity (ahadiyya), which has no ruling property (lukm) for Self-disclosure, so verify (fa-haqqiq).68

[12] He is His light,69 which He Himself disclosed by

66 Henry Corbin (Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi, Princeton 1969, 224) summarizes Ibn 'Arabi's discussion of the hierarchial planes of being, the ḥāḍārāt, or 'Presences': 'There are five of these Presences, namely the five Descents (tanazzulāṭ); these are determinations or conditions of the divine Ipseity in the forms of His Names; they act on the receptacles which undergo their influx and manifest them. The first Ḥadra is the theophany (tajalāli) of the Essence (dhāṭ) in the eternal latent hexeities which are objects, the correlata of the Divine Names. This is the world of Absolute Mystery ('ālam al-ghayb al-maṭlaq, Hadrat al-Dhāṭ). The other ḥāḍārāt are 'the angelic world of determinations or individuations constituting the Spiritus (ta'a'yūnāt rāhīya);' the world of individuations constituting the Souls (ta'a'yūnāt nafṣiyya); the world of Idea-Images ('ālam al-mithal) "typical Forms, individuations having figure and body, but in the immaterial state of "subtle matter"; the fifth is 'the sensible and visible world ('ālam al-shahāda), of dense bodies'. On the system of five planes as used by Ahmad al-Tijani, see Bernd Radtke, 'Sufism in the 18th Century', Die Welt des Islams, xxxvi, 3, 1996, 352.

67 According to Ibn 'Arabi, God never displays Himself twice in the same form. 'Each day He is upon some task (sha'īn)' (Q 55:29). See Chittick, Sufi Path of Knowledge, 96.

68 Chittick (Sufi Path of Knowledge, 4) defines the 'verifiers' (al-muhaqqāqūn) as 'those Friends who have verified the truth of their vision on every level of existence and [have found], not least on the level of intelligence and speech, the specific marks of being human'.

69 There is a reference here to the pre-existent light of the Prophet Muhammad, the actualization of which was the reason for the creation of the universe. This explanation was provided to Soares by Hamāhu 'llāh's son Muhammad in Nioro. The apparent meaning would be that Hamāhu 'llāh himself is another manifestation of the Prophetic or Muḥammadan Light (nūr muḥammadi). On the possibility of participating in this light, see U. Rubin, 'Nūr Muḥammadi', EI (2), viii, 125. We are indebted to Stefan Reichmuth for drawing our attention to this.

70 Chittick (Sufi Path of Knowledge, 62) explains the simāt as 'temporally originated things—the Beautiful Names'.

71 Titus Burckhardt, An Introduction to Sufism, Wellingborough 1990, 55: 'Uniqueness (al-Wāhidīyya) ... is in a sense a correlative of the Universe and it is in it that the Universe appears divinely. In each of its aspects, and they are beyond number—God reveals Himself uniquely and all are integrated in the unique Divine Nature.' In his glossary (p. 126) Burckhardt adds: '[Uniqueness] is to be distinguished from the Transcendent Unity (al-Ahadiyya) which is beyond all distinctive knowledge whereas the Uniqueness appears in the differentiated just as principal distinctions appear in it.' Murata (The Tao of Islam, 61) explains this in another way: Ahadiyya is 'Exclusive Unity', or the reality of God in Himself without regard to the cosmos—in other words Sheer Being (al-wujūd al-mahd), Wāhidīyya is 'Inclusive Unity', or God as the source of the cosmos.

72 Chittick (Sufi Path of Knowledge, 214 quoting Ibn 'Arabi, al-Futūhât al-Makkiyya): 'Though Being is One Entity, the entities of the possible things have made It many, so it is the One/Many (al-Wāhid al-Kathîr). He points out that the word for existence—wujūd—also means 'finding' and is related to wajd/wujdân, meaning 'passion, longing'. Hence wujūd is finding the Real in ecstasy. Murata (The Tao of Islam, 62) puts this, perhaps, more clearly: 'Differentiation becomes actualized in the cosmos, but its principle is found in Reality Itself, which is Sheer Being'. Undifferentiation is often synonymous with jam', or all-comprehensiveness, whereas differentiation is synonymous with farq (dispersion).

73 Chittick (ibid., 59): 'The name Allāh, which brings together all the divine names ... is the coincidence of opposites (jam' al-addād).'
its entirety, assuming the [divine] traits.\textsuperscript{74}

[16] A spirit that imposed itself on all creation, and acted within it with unrestricted authority (idhn mutlaq).\textsuperscript{75}

[17] [His spirit] assumed power [like a sultan] and sat on its throne,\textsuperscript{76} acting as the successor to him who opened that which was closed.\textsuperscript{77}

[18] May God bless [the Prophet] so long as his son,\textsuperscript{78} my shaykh, who is my refuge in distress, inherits guidance from him,

[19] My shaykh—may God protect him (hamâhu 'llâh) from all evils that beset him—and may my Lord cause his effusion [of blessing] constantly and abundantly to overflow.

[20] He is my desire, he is my wish, and the one to whom I cleave. I cleave to his protection not to the protection of any other.

[21] May God bless the warner, our intercessor, the succour of mankind, the merciful solicitous guide,

[22] And the family, the family of the Chosen One and the Companions, so long as separation stirs up my passion and my longing.

\textsuperscript{74} Chittick (Sufi Path of Knowledge, 43): '[The] friends of God assume His character traits (takhalluq) by gaining nearness to Him'.

\textsuperscript{75} His being a spirit that imposed itself on all creation would follow from his being the axis of existence (line 9 above), where he is also described as the 'spirit' and 'refuge' of existence. The axis of the age is the head of the saintly hierarchy to whom all Friends of God are subservient, and he is the locus of God's surveillance (mawdîl ' naṣar Allâh) of the world ('Abd al-Razzâq al-Kâshânî, Iṣṭilâḥât al-ṣâyiyya, ed. A. Sprenger, Calcutta 1845, 141).

\textsuperscript{76} It is not clear, grammatically, what the feminine pronoun 'its' in the phrase 'alâ karsiyyiyâhâ refers to.

\textsuperscript{77} In the celebrated Tijâni prayer Jawharat al-kamäl the Prophet Muhammad is referred to as 'he who opened that which was closed' (al-fâtiḥ li-mâ ughlaq).

\textsuperscript{78} The word 'son' is to be understood here in the meaning of 'descendent'. In as much as Hamâhu 'llâh was a shârif, he was in this sense a 'son' of the Prophet. Cf. the poem in praise of Ḥamâhu 'llâh by Thîerno Alû Nouba Dîân in Traoré, Cheikh Hamâhâoulât, 231, where he is referred to as Ḫîn rasîl Allâh.