

Sufism, Literary Production, and Printing in the Nineteenth Century

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Transmission and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Maghreb: *Naʿt al-bidāyāt wa-tawṣīf al-nihāyāt* by Māʾ al-ʿAynayn (d. 1910)

Luca Patrizi

The character of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn has been amply studied from the point of view of history, and notably from that of social history. His key role in the resistance to French occupation of the then still poorly differentiated territories of Morocco and Mauritania and his role as a religious scholar and acknowledged Sufi master have been examined in a number of studies, some of which focus on the *ṭarīqa* Fāḍiliyya, which was founded by his father, Muḥammad Fāḍil.¹ However, the very considerable part of this Mauritanian shaykh's œuvre that was devoted to Sufism, consisting of thirty or so texts, of which the majority remain in manuscript form, has not heretofore been subjected to in-depth analysis. Neither B. G. Martin nor H. T. Norris (in the brief notice he provides in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*) does more than mention in passing the writings of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn.

We will begin by introducing the life of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn, divided as it was between resistance and intellectual activity, and proceed to an analysis of his fundamental work devoted to Sufism, *Naʿt al-bidāyāt wa-tawṣīf al-nihāyāt*.

The Life of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn

To examine the life of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn is to discover in it all the characteristics that make for an exemplary personality of his time: he was at the centre

¹ The most recent of these are B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976; B. G. Martin, "Māʾ al-ʿAynayn al-Qalqamī", *Les Africains* 12 (1978), pp. 175-195; S. A. Harmon, "Shaykh Māʾ al-ʿAynayn: Armed Resistance and French Policy in Northwest Africa, 1900-1910", *Jusūr* 8 (1992), pp. 1-22; H. T. Norris, "Shaykh Māʾ al-ʿAynayn al-Qalqamī in the Folk Literature of the Spanish Sahara", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31/1-2 (1968), pp. 113-136, 347-376; H. T. Norris, "Māʾ al-ʿAynayn", in *EI* 2, vol. 5, p. 889; R. Boubrik, "Homme de religion et de résistance au Maghreb: Māʾ al-ʿAynayn (1831-1910)", *The Maghreb Review* 24/1-2 (1999), pp. 2-18; F. Correale, "Māʾ al-ʿAynayn, il Marocco e la resistenza alla penetrazione coloniale (1905-1910)", *Oriente Moderno* 17 (nuova serie) (January 1998), pp. 227-278; G. W. McLaughlin, "Māʾ al-ʿAynayn (1830-1910)", *Encyclopedia of African History*, London, Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005, vol. 1. On the Fāḍiliyya, see R. Boubrik, *Saints et société en Islam: la confrérie ouest saharienne Fāḍiliyya*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 1999; R. Boubrik, "Fondateur et héritiers. La gestion d'une succession confrérique (Mauritanie)", *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* 159/XL-3 (2000), pp. 433-465.

of the intellectual and political history of his region, just as much as was his celebrated predecessor, the Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir, with whom he had a great deal in common.²

Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā Mā’ al-‘Aynayn b. Muḥammad Fāḍil b. Māmin was born in 1831, near Walāta, in the part of the French Sudan that is now in Mauritania. He was born in the desert, where he spent most of his life. His resistance to French colonisation could also be seen as resistance to the fragmentation of this desert, which was nevertheless later divided between the modern states of Mauritania, Mali, Algeria and Morocco. His father, Muḥammad Fāḍil (d. 1870), received the Qādiri affiliation from a transmission dating back, from father to son, to Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 1493).³

Mā’ al-‘Aynayn was taught Islamic sciences and Sufism by his father until he was twenty-eight years old. Having reached that age, he was ready for his trip to Mecca, which was for him a veritable voyage of initiation. His pilgrimage to the Holy Lands of Mecca and Medina began with a passing visit to Marrakesh, where he established fairly close relations with the sultan, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (r. 1822-1859), and especially with his son, Muḥammad (r. 1859-1873). He stayed at Mecca and Medina for three weeks. During his homeward journey, he was obliged to stop for five months in Alexandria to recover from an illness before finally returning to the Maghreb.

On his return, Mā’ al-‘Aynayn received permission (*ijāza*) from his father to transmit the Qādiriyya *ṭariqa*, and having reached adulthood, he left the place of his birth in search of his own territory. His travels led him to the borderlands of Morocco. On the death of his father, he was among the four brothers who officially inherited the function of head of the *ṭariqa* and of the family clan.

Eventually Mā’ al-‘Aynayn tried to put an end to his wanderings by founding a town, Smara; this attempt was surprisingly (but temporarily) successful. Mā’ al-‘Aynayn was well-known and respected throughout his region as the “chief of the Sahara nomads”, as the French traveller Douls (who had met him) tells us in his memoir.⁴ During his long life, Mā’ al-‘Aynayn contracted an impressive number of marriages: 116, according to the sources, which speak of brief unions designed to strengthen tribal ties. As a result, he had numerous children: twenty-two sons and thirty daughters.

² The primary sources on the life of Mā’ al-‘Aynayn are the following: Shaykh Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā Murabbih Rabbuh, *Qurrat al-‘aynayn fī karāmāt al-Shaykh Mā’ al-‘Aynayn*, microfilm no. 171, National Library, Rabat; Muḥammad al-Mukhtār al-Sūsī, *al-Ma’sūl*, IV, Fedala, Morocco, Mṭ an-Najāḥ, 1960, pp. 83-101.

³ See Boubrik, *Saints et société en Islam*, pp. 107-111; R. Boubrik, “Itinéraire initiatique du fondateur de la ṭariqa Fādiliyya (Mauritanie)”, *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1/2 (2000), pp. 259-274.

⁴ C. Douls, “Cinq mois chez les Maures nomades du Sahara Occidentale”, *Le tour du monde*, Paris, Hachette, 1888, p. 199.

Resistance to colonial occupation

We will leave aside the better-known details of Mā' al-ʿAynayn's story: his armed opposition to the advance of France in his region and his launching of *jibād*, which he then carried on for his entire life. Nevertheless, we must point to his confrontation with Xavier Coppolani, a Corsican orientalist and administrator in the service of French colonial power. Coppolani wrote, with Octave Dupont, a celebrated work on the Sufi Orders, *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes*, which was published in 1897. Both authors were troubled by "pan-Islamism" and by the Sufi networks, and eventually concluded that it was necessary for France to get the shaykhs and the Sufi Orders on their side in order better to control them. And yet, Coppolani died in an attack for which the responsibility was (unfairly, according to most commentators) laid at the feet of Mā' al-ʿAynayn.⁵ S. A. Harmon affirms that the exaggerated and easily exacerbated French fear of what they defined as the "pan-Islamism" of Mā' al-ʿAynayn was used as a *casus belli* to justify the war of occupation in North Africa.⁶

There are therefore historiographical debates centred on Mā' al-ʿAynayn's political vision and his "pro-Ottomanism". According to certain sources, he did in fact hope to rely on an Islamic Power, that of the Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909), who had himself turned towards pan-Islamism after the Berlin Conference.⁷ Mā' al-ʿAynayn's position with regard to power is precisely that which is traditional in Islam: "the scholars are the heirs of the prophets; their rank is superior to that of the political chiefs—but one also owes respect and veneration to sultans and governors, for they are the shadows of God on the earth".⁸ Speaking of the Ottomans, he affirms: "they are the elite of kings and their land is the elite of nations ... they will struggle against corrupt unbelievers such as the English and French. What's more, they possess the best and most extensive organisation and the most powerful State in the seven climates ... none of this was ever given to another state before theirs".⁹

And yet at the end of his life Mā' al-ʿAynayn was constrained to witness the sad spectacle of the Ottomans' decline, and he died on the eve of the oc-

⁵ See, for example, Harmon, "Shaykh Mā' al-ʿAynayn", p. 11.

⁶ See Harmon, "Shaykh Mā' al-ʿAynayn" and Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 139-142. For a general analysis of the question, see D. Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000. On pan-Islamism, see J.M. Landau, "Pan-Islamism", in *EI2*, vol. 8, p. 248.

⁷ See Harmon, "Shaykh Mā' al-ʿAynayn", p. 3. On the question of Abdülhamid II's Pan-Islamism and his relationship with Sufism, see Th. Eich, "The Forgotten *salafi* – Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādi", *Die Welt des Islams*, 43/1 (2003), pp. 61-87.

⁸ In *Fātiḡ al-ratq ʿalā ratiḡ al-fatq*, cited in Martin, "Mā' al-ʿAynayn al-Qalqami", p. 183.

⁹ In *Mubṣir al-mutashawwif ʿalā muntakhab al-taṣawwuf*, cited in Martin, "Mā' al-ʿAynayn al-Qalqami", pp. 184-185.

cupation of the province of Tripolitania by the Italians in 1911, of the establishment of the French Protectorate in Morocco in 1912, and of the first Balkan War (1912-1913). His hopes of receiving aid from the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who presented himself as a friend of Islam, were also betrayed. Western sources of his time affirm that at this point in 1912-1913 he would have claimed for himself the title of sultan, but researchers have found no documentary evidence of such self-proclamation.¹⁰ What does seem clear is that Mā' al-ʿAynayn made every possible attempt to prevent his region from falling to European rule. Finally, he was obliged to cede to French military might; he undertook a *hijra*, a flight from Smara to the more tranquil Tiznit, in the south of Morocco, where he died in 1910, at the venerable age of almost eighty years.

Mā' al-ʿAynayn's efforts as a *mujāhid* were taken up by his sons, some of whom also inherited certain of his intellectual and cultural functions to the point of becoming well-known Maghrebi intellectuals, as did, for example, his son Murabbih Rabbuh. Many of his descendants, in Mauritania as much as in Morocco, became involved in politics, and some remain so even to the present day. Mā' al-ʿAynayn's personality remains linked in the popular imagination with the Maghrebi desert: his story is retold in the 1980 novel *Desert* by the Nobel Prize winner J.M.G. Le Clézio, as well as in the 1981 book *La prière de l'absent*, by the Moroccan author Tahar Ben Jelloun, which was made into a film by the Moroccan director Hamid Bennani in 2001.

At the end of his life Mā' al-ʿAynayn appeared to have been defeated politically, but he became a central figure in the anticolonial struggle in Mauritania, and especially in Morocco. He remains important for the separatist Polisario Front even to this day. He shared certain traits with other combatants in the African resistance to colonisation, such as, in chronological order, ʿUthmān Dan Fodio (d. 1817)¹¹, al-Ḥājj ʿUmar b. Saʿīd al-Fūti (d. 1864)¹², Emir ʿAbd al-Qādir (d. 1883)¹³, ʿUmar al-Mukhtār (d. 1931)¹⁴, and Muḥammad al-Fikīni (d. 1950).¹⁵ However, Martin, in *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, comes to the conclusion that Mā' al-ʿAynayn was radically different from other chiefs of the resistance: he was the most conservative, and the least affected by the changes and reformist tendencies of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

¹⁰ See Norris, "Shaykh Mā' al-ʿAynayn al-Qalqami in the Folk Literature", p. 118 ; and Correale, "Mā' al-ʿAynayn, il Marocco e la resistenza", pp. 235-238.

¹¹ Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 13-35.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 68-98.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-67.

¹⁴ E. Santarelli, *Omar al-Mukhtar: The Italian reconquest of Libya*, London, Darf, 1986.

¹⁵ A. Del Boca, *Mohamed Fekini and the Fight to Free Libya*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

¹⁶ Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 8-11.

Mā' al-ʿAynayn's life presents particular parallels with that of Emir ʿAbd al-Qādir. Both men were descended from the Prophet; they were sons of Qādiri shaykhs, who transmitted to them a complete training in the interior and exterior sciences of the Islamic religion—a training that was perfected by the pilgrimage to Mecca in the early part of each man's life. Both men were famous as excellent riders: the Emir wrote a book about the Arab horse, and Mā' al-ʿAynayn was devoted to camels; both men were warriors, chieftains and great Sufi masters. Each of them sought the sultan of Morocco's protection, without any long-term success; ultimately, each of them failed in his struggle and was obliged to undertake a *hijra* and abandon his place of origin. Nevertheless, the two of them have been commemorated by history itself, which has turned them into heroes for their respective nations. They are remembered thanks to the importance of their writings, the influence of which reached their milieu of origin first, then spread and eventually extended far beyond their own nations.

The founding of Smara

Let us now examine a crucial event in the life of Mā' al-ʿAynayn: his founding of the town of Smara in the heart of the desert, in the Sāqiya al-Ḥamrā¹⁷, starting in 1890. Smara fairly quickly became a self-sufficient town with a population of 10,000, situated on the track that links Mauritania to Morocco, and also close to the roads to Algeria. Even though it suffered destruction on two successive occasions, Smara is one of the rare human settlements in the Western Sahara with a significant and stable human population.¹⁸

Mā' al-ʿAynayn built a veritable *zāwiya*-city, with religious schools to which he gave an enormous library, containing more than 5,000 manuscripts¹⁹. This was one of the famous 'Libraries of the Desert', a series of collections situated on the road that crosses the desert between Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria and Mali. The largest of these was Chinguetti (Shinqit), in today's Mauritania.²⁰ When the French arrived in Smara in 1913, three years after the death of Mā' al-ʿAynayn, they destroyed the town, including the li-

¹⁷ M. Côte, "al-Sāqiya al-Ḥamra", in *EI 2*, vol. 12, p. 698.

¹⁸ On this town, see *al-Samāra, al-ḥaḍāra al-rūḥiyya wa-l-jibādiyya li-l-ṣaḥrāʾ al-maghribiyya*. Nadwa munazzama bi-madinat al-Samāra, February 1-2, 1999, al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya, Jāmiʿat Ibn Zuhr, Kulliyat al-Ādāb wa-l-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyya, Agadir, 2002.

¹⁹ M. al-Zarīf, *al-Ḥaraka al-ṣūfiyya wa-atharūbā fi adab al-ṣaḥrāʾ al-maghribiyya (1800-1956)*, Manshūrāt Kulliyat al-Ādāb wa-l-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyya, al-Muḥammadiyya, 2002.

²⁰ See A. Gaudio, *Les bibliothèques du désert: recherches et études sur un millénaire d'écrits*. Actes des colloques du CIRSS (1995-2000), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2002; G. Krätli, "The Book and the Sand: Restoring and Preserving the Ancient Desert Libraries of Mauritania", *World Libraries* 14/1 (2004), pp. 1-2.

brary and all of the manuscripts.²¹ In Chinguetti a few manuscripts still survive, as well as forty-three works by Shaykh Mā' al-ʿAynayn that were printed by lithography in Fez during his lifetime, between 1891 and 1900.²²

Written production and printing

In the analysis of the role played by the introduction of printing into the milieu of the ulama during the nineteenth century, F. Abdulrazak's very interesting study of the history of the press in Morocco between 1865 and 1912²³ takes the case of Mā' al-ʿAynayn as a major example. Abdulrazak attests that in the desert regions and among the desert people, Mā' al-ʿAynayn's doctrines and personality were well-known before printing became commonplace. Thanks to the economic support he received from Moroccan powers, who saw him as a defender of the territory of the Moroccan interior, his work was printed and disseminated in Fez, and then in all of Morocco and as far as Cairo. Abdulrazak meticulously reconstructs the byways of this editorial success. According to him, were it not for printing, most of Mā' al-ʿAynayn's works would have been lost, for those works by our author that were not printed are indeed lost today, or else scattered among his numerous descendants.

Texts by Mā' al-ʿAynayn figure in a singular way among all the texts published in Morocco between 1865 and 1912, and they are significantly numerous during this period. When one examines the colophons of these books, one discovers the name of Aḥmad b. Mūsā, who was chamberlain to Sultan Ḥasan I (r. 1873-1894) and later to the Grand Vizier of Morocco under Sultan ʿAbd al-ʿAziz (r. 1894-1908) until his death in 1900. He was the editor and publisher of all of the texts by Mā' al-ʿAynayn published between 1891 and 1900.

According to Abdulrazak, Aḥmad b. Mūsā provided this political and financial support with the aim of consolidating his own position in the eyes of the sultan, and of distinguishing himself at the court, because Mā' al-ʿAynayn, who appeared at that time as a valiant defender of Islam and of Morocco, was a black African, as he was. Aḥmad b. Mūsā therefore financed the construction of several *zawāyā* for Mā' al-ʿAynayn in Morocco; his goal was to benefit from his spiritual prestige. Perhaps because of Aḥmad b. Mūsā's support, a section of the elite of Fez—some high officials and especially some ulama—affiliated themselves to the Order of Mā' al-

²¹ Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, p. 137.

²² McLaughlin, "Mā' al-ʿAynayn (1830-1910)", p. 870.

²³ F. Abdulrazak, *The Kingdom of the Book: The History of Printing as an Agency of Change in Morocco, 1865-1912*, Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1990.

ʿAynayn, or received *ijāza* (licences to teach) from him. Also, thanks to the increasing respectability of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn, some of the important religious authorities of Fez composed and printed poems in his honour. Scholars from the family of al-Kattānī in particular distinguished themselves by being devoted to printing the works of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn and by doing so for publishing houses such as al-ʿArabī al-Azraq, al-Yamlaḥī and al-Dhuwayb. For these houses, texts by Māʾ al-ʿAynayn represented a quarter of their publications between 1891 and 1900.

Finally, the milieu of scholars in Fez favoured the diffusion of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn's works because they felt an affinity with his anti-European and pro-Ottoman spirit, and with his appeal for a transversal fraternity, going beyond any divisions between the *turuq*. This idea corresponded with the mood among the Kattānī and among the Sufi scholars with whom they were in contact and with whom they formed a network in the Arab and Islamic world. This network included, among others, Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī (b. 1850, d. 1909)²⁴ and Yūsuf al-Nabhānī (b. 1849, d. 1931).²⁵

Māʾ al-ʿAynayn's œuvre

According to the sources, Māʾ al-ʿAynayn had a perfect mastery of all the Islamic disciplines such as Arabic (language, grammar and syntax), rhetoric, logic, jurisprudence, mathematics and medicine. He was also a master of all the traditional disciplines cultivated in the *ṣaḥrāwī* milieu.²⁶ Besides his role as teacher in his community, Māʾ al-ʿAynayn was also the tutor of the sultan of Morocco's son.²⁷ But his most remarkable legacy remains his writings: at least 140 texts brought together by his son Murabbih Rabbuh in his biography of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn, and about 300 works altogether, according to some historians.²⁸ This œuvre covered all the fields of classical Islamic scholarship and remained a considerable reference in the conservation and transmission of traditional Islamic knowledge during the Islamic world's delicate and tardy passage into the modern epoch. One cannot separate the military and political influence these writings had on their circle from their intellectual influence.

²⁴ Eich, "The Forgotten *salafī*", pp. 61-87.

²⁵ Abdulrazak, *Kingdom of the Book*, pp. 165-178. On al-Nabhānī, see M. Chodkiewicz, "La 'Somme des miracles des saints' de Yūsuf Nabhānī", in D. Aigle (ed.), *Miracle et Karāma: hagiographies médiévales comparées*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000, pp. 607-622.

²⁶ Norris, "Māʾ al-ʿAynayn".

²⁷ See Harmon, "Shaykh Māʾ al-ʿAynayn: Armed Resistance", p. 8.

²⁸ The most accurate and comprehensive bibliography lists 189 works. Cf. U. Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, Würzburg, Ergon, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 486-493; cf. also the list of the works of his father Muḥammad Fāḍil, pp. 338-339.

Among these works, about thirty are devoted to Sufism, according to Mā' al-ʿAynayn's biographers, and of these thirty (apart from *Naʿt al-bidāyāt*), the following have been published and are currently available: *Fātiq al-ratq ʿalā rātiq al-fatq*²⁹; *Munil al-maʿārib al-bashār sharḥ al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar*³⁰; *Majmūʿ Rasāʾil wa-qaṣāʾid al-quṭb al-kabir Mā' al-ʿAynayn b. Fāḍil b. Māmin al-Ḥasani al-Shinqīṭi*³¹; *Madbbab al-makhbūf ʿalā daʿwāt al-ḥurūf*³²; *Mubṣir al-mutashawwif ʿalā Muntakbab al-taṣawwuf*.³³

In Morocco a foundation established during the 1990s, *Muʿassasat al-Shaykh Murabbih Rabbuh li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth wa-l-Tabādul al-Thaqāfi*, has published several works by Mā' al-ʿAynayn and his descendants.³⁴ Among these, the texts on Sufism by Mā' al-ʿAynayn are *Mufid al-rāwī ʿalā anni mukhbāwī*³⁵ and *al-Idāh li-baʿḍ al-iṣṭilāḥ*.³⁶

Mā' al-ʿAynayn's vision was of a single government for all Muslims, modelled on the Ottoman Empire—a government going beyond questions of nationality and ethnic particularities. However, it would be wrong to speak of pan-Islamism in his case because Mā' al-ʿAynayn seems to have been quite remote from any political vision in the modern sense. It's clear that the pan-Islamism of the Muslim reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was conceived in a modernist spirit, which was antithetical to the conservative ideals of our author. As far as Sufism was concerned, Mā' al-ʿAynayn's sympathies led him, in certain passages of his texts, to speak in favour of fraternity among the different Sufi *ṭurūq*. His text *Mufid al-rāwī ʿalā anni mukhbāwī*, a commentary on a poem on the subject of fraternity in Islam and in Sufism, sums up his vision in this domain:

²⁹ Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2006, 440 pp.

³⁰ Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2007, 256 pp.; this contains the following treatises: *Sharḥ al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar*; *Munil al-ʿabd munāb fi man yuzilluhum Allāb*; *Sabl al-murtaqā fi l-ḥabth ʿalā l-tuqā*; *al-Maqāṣid al-nūrāniyya fi dbikr min dbātihi wa-ṣifātihi mutaʿāliya*.

³¹ Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2008, 220 pp.; this collection includes the following treatises: *al-Sayf wa-l-mūsā ʿalā qaḍīyyat al-Khibr wa-Mūsā*; *al-Idāh li-baʿḍ al-iṣṭilāḥ*; *Sabl al-murtaqā fi l-ḥabth ʿalā l-tuqā*; *al-Maqāṣid al-nūrāniyya fi dbikr min dbātihi wa-ṣifātihi mutaʿāliya*; *Qaṣida: Muntakbab al-taṣawwuf, wa-l-ʿayniyya, wa-l-kibrīt al-aḥmar*.

³² Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2006, 72 pp.

³³ Mauritania, Maktabat al-Imām Mālik, 2006, 558 pp.

³⁴ I was not able to consult some works devoted to the life of Mā' al-ʿAynayn. One of them is al-Ṭālib Akhyār b. Shaykh Māmin Āl Shaykh Mā' al-ʿAynayn, *al-Shaykh Mā' al-ʿAynayn: ʿulamāʾ wa-umarāʾ fi muwāʿajabat al-istiʿmār al-ʾUrūbbi*, n.p. 2007, 774 pp.

³⁵ Rabat, Muʿassasat al-Shaykh Murabbih Rabbuh li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth wa-l-Tabādul al-Thaqāfi, 1999, 96 pp.

³⁶ Rabat, Muʿassasat al-Shaykh Murabbih Rabbuh li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth wa-l-Tabādul al-Thaqāfi, 2000, 108 pp.; this is a collection of Sufi technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*).

Truly I am in brotherhood with all the Paths,
 brotherhood of the faith among the pious.
 And I do not distinguish among the Saints (*al-awliyā*),
 as he does who makes a distinction among prophets (*al-anbiyā*).³⁷
 The Most High has said, “The believers are but a single brotherhood (*ikbwa*)”.³⁸
 The fact of not distinguishing follows the model of the Best of all Creatures.³⁹
 On the contrary, to distinguish is to follow the model of each and every heretic,
 Jewish and Christian, who is cursed by believers. ...
 Observe that which al-Sha‘rānī said
 about the external—oh how ephemeral it is!
 While that which is interior is stronger,
 because the interior is the contemplation of the singularity of God by all of existence.
 Therefore, to discriminate thus is impossible,
 neither in the view of exterior Law nor of essential Truth (*ḥaqīqa*).
 This is all the more true for the Paths,
 each of which follows the unique Path of the Prophet,
 whereas the Paths that diverge from the Prophet’s Path are not true.
 Truly I am in brotherhood with all the Paths.⁴⁰

Most scholars claim to detect in this statement of belief a kind of “pan-Sufism”, which would parallel Mā’ al-‘Aynayn’s alleged “pan-Islamism”; they affirm that his goal was to fuse all the Sufi Paths into a single one.⁴¹ However, we have not discovered the least trace in his texts of such a conception: Mā’ al-‘Aynayn’s position in this respect was completely traditional and did not involve a syncretic fusion of all the different Paths. Rather, he encouraged the followers of the different *ṭurūq* to keep an open mind and to live in brotherhood and respect for each other, without conceiving of any one Path as superior to another, for every authentic Path leads to God.

Na‘t al-bidāyāt wa-tawṣīf al-nihāyāt: *The text*

The most important and most widely disseminated work by Mā’ al-‘Aynayn, *Na‘t al-bidāyāt wa-tawṣīf al-nihāyāt* is devoted to Sufism. Composed in 1883, it was lithographed in Fez and printed for the first time in Cairo. It has been reprinted up to the present day in a number of editions.⁴²

³⁷ Reference to Sura 2:285.

³⁸ Reference to Sura 49:10.

³⁹ I.e., the Prophet Muḥammad.

⁴⁰ Mā’ al-‘Aynayn, *Mufīd al-rāwī ‘alā amī mukhāwī*, p. 75.

⁴¹ See, for example, Norris, “Mā’ al-‘Aynayn”, p. 889.

⁴² The two most recent editions are: Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1998, 281 pp., and Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2006, 448 pp. In this article I am using the 1998 edition.

This is an unusual Sufi manual, knitted together from a great many quotations drawn from all of classical Islam's heritage; it is surprising to discover in a Sufi manual explicit quotations from authors of classical literature such as Ibn al-Muqaffa^c (d. 757), al-Aṣmā'ī (d. 828), Ibn Qutayba (d. 885), Ibn Abi l-Dunayā (d. 894), Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 940), al-Damīrī (d. 1405), and al-Ibshihī (d. after 1446). One finds in it anecdotes and edifying examples in the literary genre of "mirrors for princes", such as the sayings of the pre-Islamic Persian sage Khusraw Anūshirvān (Chosroes I, r. 531-579), his minister Bozorgmehr and the Mazdean priest Ardashir. These texts are at the centre of the celebrated *Shābmāma* by Firdawsī, but are also familiar to the creators of Arab literature in the first centuries of Islam.⁴³

Although the subject is too complex for us to explore in depth here, it should be mentioned that classical *adab* literature had an important, if discreet, influence on Islamic religious literature even before Ibn Qutayba, who straddles the two milieux. The role of the first *kuttāb* was fundamental to this, and also to the formation of the technical notion of *adab*, which came about from the fusion of the etiquette and norms of the Sassanid court with the ancient Arabic notion of *adab* as *murū'a* and corrective education (*ta'dīb*). With *Na't al-bidāyāt*, this formerly subterranean influence reappears more explicitly.⁴⁴ Mā' al-'Aynayn's recourse to this sort of literature also comes from the close relationship he maintained with the sultanate of Morocco.

Na't al-bidāyāt also contains a great many poems, some of which are classical, by such famous authors as Abū Tammām (d. 845), al-Mutanabbī (d. 965) and al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122). The *Tāj al-'arūs* by al-Zabīdī (d. 1791), that monument of eighteenth-century Arab lexicography, is often cited in it when lexicographical questions arise. But essentially *Na't al-bidāyāt* is built on numerous quotations from the Quran and the hadith, as well as several sayings attributed to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Quranic commentary within the text comes principally from *Rūḥ al-bayān*, by Ismā'il Ḥaqqī (d. 1725), which is the most often-quoted text in *Na't al-bidāyāt*; it also includes commentaries drawn from the *al-Ta'wilāt al-najmiyya* by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1220) and the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209). One also finds in it quotations from two singular Quran commentaries: the *tafsīr* by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 767) and the *Kashshāf* by Zamakhsharī (d. 1144). The number of hadiths quoted is also impressive: among the commentaries, Mā' al-'Aynayn chooses to use the *sharḥ* of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī (d. 870) by al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 1517). He also cites the *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-kubrā* by al-Subkī (d. 1370), and Ibn 'Asākir (d. 1176).

⁴³ *Na't al-bidāyāt*, p. 130.

⁴⁴ On this question, see the article "Adab", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition: www.iranicaonline.org/articles/adab-index.

Where Sufism is concerned, all the great names are included, starting from Muḥammad (d. 1111) and Aḥmad (d. 1126) al-Ghazālī and continuing through Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240) and, above all, al-Shaʿrānī (d. 1565), whose *al-Anwār al-qudsiyya fi maʿrifat ādāb al-ṣūfiyya* is the reference for the general structure of Māʿ al-ʿAynayn’s work.⁴⁵ Al-Shaʿrānī is honoured in this text by the appellation *quṭb al-wāṣilīn wa-imām al-ʿarīfin*, and one also finds a quotation several pages long from his *al-Akhlāq al-matbūliyya*.⁴⁶ Some very unusual and quite interesting texts are also cited, such as *Ḥadāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq* by Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 1267)⁴⁷, *Qawānīn ḥikmat al-isbrāq* by Abū al-Mawāhib al-Shādhilī (d. 1477)⁴⁸, *al-Sayr wa-l-sulūk ilā malik al-mulūk* by Qāsim b. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Khānī al-Ḥalabī (d. 1697)⁴⁹, *Kitāb al-Faḍl wa-l-minna* by ʿAlī al-Bayyūmī (d. 1769)⁵⁰, and *al-Nafahāt al-Shādhiliyya fi sharḥ al-Burda al-Būṣiriyya* by Ḥasan al-ʿIdwī al-Ḥamzāwī (d. 1886)⁵¹, a contemporary of Māʿ al-ʿAynayn.

Al-ʿIdwī was at the origin of the widespread diffusion of al-Shaʿrānī’s works during the nineteenth century, for as a result of his intense religious devotion to al-Shaʿrānī’s person and his works, which culminated in a pious dream in which (according to his testimony) he received a spiritual inheritance from al-Shaʿrānī, al-ʿIdwī began to edit and to publish some twenty-five of his works. Al-Shaʿrānī incarnated the prototype of the scholar and traditional mediaeval saint, and remained the reference par excellence in the Islamic world during the Ottoman period and until the arrival of reformism at the end of the nineteenth century. He continued to be important even after that time, although in increasingly restricted circles. The dif-

⁴⁵ On al-Shaʿrānī see M. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wāḥab al-Sharānī*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Books, 1982. However, this study, with its general tendency to minimise the figure of al-Shaʿrānī, does not, in my view, manage to grasp his real importance.

⁴⁶ *Naʿt al-bidāyāt*, pp. 118-126. On *al-Akhlāq al-matbūliyya*, see C. Mayeur-Jaouen, “Le cheikh scrupuleux et l’émir généreux à travers les Akhlāq matbūliyya de Shaʿrānī”, in R. Chih and D. Gril (eds.), *Le saint et son milieu, ou comment lire les sources hagiographiques*, Cairo, IFAO, 2000, pp. 83-116.

⁴⁷ Cairo, Maktaba al-Thaqāfa al-Diniyya, 2002, 416 pp.; see ʿU. R. Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifin: tarājīm muṣannifi al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya*, Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1993, vol. 3, p. 168.

⁴⁸ See E. Jabra Juji, *Illumination in Islamic Mysticism: A Translation, with an Introduction and Notes, Based upon a Critical Edition of Abū-al-Mawāhib al-Shādhilī’s Treatise Entitled Qawānīn Ḥikmat al-Isbrāq*, London, Princeton University Press, 1938.

⁴⁹ Cairo, Maktaba al-Thaqāfa al-Diniyya, 2002, 332 pp.; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifin*, vol. 2, p. 643.

⁵⁰ ʿA. al-Bayyūmī, *Risālat al-Faḍl wa-l-minna*, Cairo, Mṭ al-Taḍāmūn, 1931; see W. A. S. Khalidi, “Bayyūmiyya”, in *EI* 2, vol. 1, p. 1151.

⁵¹ Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005, 560 pp.; see G. Delanoue, *Moralistes et politiques musulmans dans l’Égypte du XIXe siècle*, Cairo, IFAO, 1982, pp. 261-284; F. de Jong, “al-ʿIdwī al-Ḥamzāwī, Ḥasan”, in *EI* 2, vol. 12, p. 408.

fusion of his principle texts, with the help of printing, exerted a very strong influence on the milieu of the ulama of the nineteenth century in all parts of the Islamic world, as evinced by the works of Mā' al-ʿAynayn, who lived at the western extreme of this world.⁵²

Unexpectedly, Muḥammad Faḍīl, the father and master of our author, is seldom quoted. Mā' al-ʿAynayn cites only two texts by his father: *al-Badr al-tāmm*⁵³ and *Maṭiyyat al-mughd nāziman li-mā lā budda li-l-murid minbu*⁵⁴. From the second of these, Mā' al-ʿAynayn took a short poem on the spiritual Path, on which he commented. Among the other authorities that he cited are al-Sarrāj (d. 988), al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 875), al-Hallāj (d. 922), al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), the two Suhrawardīs, Abū l-Najīb (d. 1168) and ʿUmar (d. 1234), Ibn ʿAṭā Allāh (d. 1309), al-Qayṣarī (d. 1350), al-Qashānī (d. 1330), and Zarrūq (d. 1493).

The offering of these quotations, and the diverse influences that one can detect in this work, do more than inform us as to which texts could be available to a Sufi scholar of the nineteenth century. They show us the considerable erudition of this man of the desert, who combined what was doubtless an excellent memory with a vast library, even under the difficult conditions of an essentially nomadic life. One can see that in his appeals to go beyond the conflicts and exclusiveness of the different Sufi Paths, Mā' al-ʿAynayn is not addressing one particular Sufi group over another, but wants to put at the disposal of his public a manual of general utility for all Sufis, regardless of affiliation, as was the case with *al-Anwār al-qudsiyya* by al-Shaʿrānī.

The proper behaviour (adab) on the Sufi Path

In the title of his work, inspired by the last chapter of the *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif* by ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī⁵⁵, Mā' al-ʿAynayn uses the symbol of the beginning and the end of the spiritual Path, which he compares, in his introduction to the text, to the beginning and the end of divine creation. The work is therefore divided into two parts, each of which comprises four chapters. The first book is devoted to the rules that disciples should observe as they set out on the spiritual Path, and the second is addressed to disciples who have advanced on the Path and to spiritual masters themselves.

⁵² Delanoue, *Moralistes et politiques*, pp. 273-274.

⁵³ *Nāʿt al-bidāyāt*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28; this text is also cited on p. 50; on this work see G. W. McLaughlin, *Sufi, Saint, Sharīf. Muḥammad Faḍīl wuld Māmūn, his Spiritual Legacy, and the Political Economy of the Sacred in Nineteenth Century Mauritania*, PhD thesis, Northwestern University Evanston, 1997, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁵ The title of the chapter is *Fī dhikr shay' min al-bidāyāt wa-l-nūbāyāt wa-siḥḥātubā*, cf. ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, Dār al-Maʿārif, Cairo, 2000, vol. 2, p. 323-335.

The first chapter of the first book details “the proper behaviour (*ādāb*) of the disciple towards his master, until he has obtained his own complete spiritual stability”.⁵⁶ One finds within it the usual admonitions on the necessity of attaching oneself to a master and on the importance of the initiatic chain; plus explanations of the facts that the master is a substitute for the Prophet Muḥammad and that the *ādāb al-ṣūfiyya* are the rules that the Companions (*ṣahāba*) took care to observe toward the Prophet. Mā’ al-ʿAynayn supports what he says by reviewing the Quranic verses that imply a divine order that the master should be respected.⁵⁷

The second chapter deals with the rules that the disciple should observe in the practice of his religion, and of his spiritual duties towards his Lord, with numerous classical quotations regarding the meanings of *adab*. Here Mā’ al-ʿAynayn presents five foundations (*shurūṭ*) and five sorts of proper behaviours (*ādāb*) toward God, taken from his own father’s *Badr al-tamm* and touching on the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) and the practice of spiritual retreat (*khalwa*).⁵⁸

The third chapter presents the rules to be observed by the disciple in relation to his brothers. Here Mā’ al-ʿAynayn speaks of one of his fundamental themes, the *ṣuhba*, or spiritual brotherhood, using a great many examples drawn from Arabic poetry. According to Mā’ al-ʿAynayn, spiritual brotherhood is one of the foundations of Islam, and it is almost more important than brotherhood in the flesh. The decisive argument that he puts forth to uphold his affirmation is that according to the sharia a Muslim cannot inherit from his brother if this brother, for whatever reason, falls into the category of *kuffār*, unbelievers. According to one hadith, when Judgement Day comes, external and family ties between men will no longer have any value, and only closeness to the Prophet will be taken into consideration. This closeness is divided into three categories: closeness through descent in the flesh, the spiritual closeness of the saints, and closeness springing from both of these at once.⁵⁹

The fourth chapter deals with the exhortations and prayers that may be useful to those who are at the beginning of the spiritual Path. This chapter is devoted to the practice of the *dhikr*, in particular the formula of the *tablīl* (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*, “there is no deity but God”), chosen as the *dhikr* that is appropriate for those who are in the first part of the spiritual Path. In addition, Mā’ al-ʿAynayn, who dedicated a large part of his life to waging *jihād* against the enemies of Islam, a war he defines as *jihād al-aṣghar* or “lesser *jihād*”, exhorts readers to devote themselves to the real *jihād*, the war against

⁵⁶ *Nāʿt al-bidāyāt*, p. 7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

the harmful inclinations of their own spirit. He calls this the *jibād al-akbar* or “greater *jibād*”, an expression drawn from a famous hadith that is frequently cited in Sufi literature.⁶⁰

The second book also comprises four chapters. It concerns the second and final part of the spiritual Path, giving the rules that apply to those who follow the Path until the end of their lives. The first chapter is devoted to the *adab* of the master teacher (*al-murabbī*) toward his Lord (*rabbihī*). The *murabbī* is the one who imparts *tarbiya*, spiritual training; the name comes from the root *r-b-w*, which is also used to describe the husbandry of animals and the cultivation of plants, in analogy with the ancient Arabic meaning of the root *ʿ-d-b*.⁶¹ The central part of the chapter presents the levels of contemplation (*shubūd*) and of theophany (*majlā*), and the chapter ends with a classification of the *dhikr* formulas that are best-suited to the *murabbī*.

The second chapter deals with the *adab* of the master toward his disciple. Māʾ al-ʿAynayn begins by affirming that a master among his disciples is like a prophet among his people. The master is like a father for the disciple; he is the true spiritual father, who makes possible the second birth of his disciple.⁶² He is more important than the father of the flesh, to such a point that when Māʾ al-ʿAynayn speaks of his own father, he precedes his name with the formula “our master and father” with the word *master* taking pride of place.⁶³ After this section, he continues by describing the rules of the *shūba* between master and disciple, with extensive quotations from the hadith.

The third chapter of this section concerns the *adab* of the master towards other creatures and towards all of creation. It consists of quotations from the sayings of the Prophet in order to demonstrate what his attitude was to the people around him, as well as his comportment in special and in ordinary circumstances.

The fourth and last chapter discusses that which can be of use to those who are reaching the last part of the spiritual Path. It is in this section that Māʾ al-ʿAynayn introduces most of his quotations from classical *adab* literature, touching largely on the concepts, central to ancient Arab culture, of virility (*murūʿa*),⁶⁴ reason (*ʿaql*) and “noble character” (*makārim al-akblāq*)—values that, far from being upheld purely rhetorically, preserve their full meaning for a man of the desert such as Māʾ al-ʿAynayn.

The second part of the chapter begins with an exposition of the uses of the Divine Names, taken from the well-known *Shams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, by

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 80.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 28, 87.

⁶⁴ The *murūʿa* may be defined as the sum of excellent human qualities.

al-Būnī (d. 1225).⁶⁵ Māʾ al-ʿAynayn then introduces some thoughts on the science of letters, concentrating particularly on the secrets of the letter *ḥā* (he had also composed a brief work specifically on this same theme, the *Madḥḥab al-makḥūf ʿalā daʿwāt al-ḥurūf*, to which he refers his reader).⁶⁶ Next he discusses the specificities of the Sufi litanies (*awrād*) that were transmitted and recited in the Maghreb in his time. He singles out the case of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 1166) who, according to his own words, affiliated disciples not only to forty well-known and different Sufi Orders, but also to others still, the external reality of which remained hidden.

Māʾ al-ʿAynayn reports on the *wird* of the Shādhiliya, of the Nāṣiriyya, of the Qādiriyya (on which, according to him, “all the other *awrād* depend, whereas it does not itself depend on any other”), and of the Tijāniyya (which “possesses the particularity of facilitating the pilgrimage to Mecca for the one who recites it”).⁶⁷ Let us not forget that, according to the doctrine of the *ṭarīqa* Tijāniyya, its founder Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1815) is placed above all other saints as the *khatm al-awliyāʾ*, “Seal of the Saints”, having received his affiliation directly from the Prophet Muḥammad. From this premise (which is an esoteric transposition of the idea of the election of the Prophet above every other prophet, and of the Islamic religion above all other religions) spring obligations and interdictions for the followers of this *ṭarīqa*: they must renounce all former affiliations and refuse all intercessions from saints, living or dead, who are strangers to the Order. This pact is to be considered definitive and unbreakable.⁶⁸

The Tijāniyya has similarities with the contemporary Paths that claimed for themselves the name *ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya*, among which one can count the Idrisiyya of Aḥmad b. Idris (d. 1837)⁶⁹ as well as the Mirghaniyya (also known as Khatmiyya) and the Sanūsiyya, established by Ibn Idris’ disciples Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Mirghani (d. 1851)⁷⁰ and Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Sanūsi (d. 1859)⁷¹ respectively. Affiliation to these *ṭuruq* is exclusive, and they forbid multiple affiliation. Knowing this, it is surprising how casually Māʾ al-ʿAynayn treats this question: his sons affirm in their biographies of their father that he was able to affiliate disciples to the four *ṭuruq* men-

⁶⁵ *Nāʿt al-bidāyāt*, pp. 152-165.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172; p. 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-186.

⁶⁸ On the fundamentals of the Tijāniyya, see Muḥammad al-ʿArabi b. al-Sāʿih, *Bughyat al-mustafid li-sharḥ Munyat al-murīd*, Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003, pp. 76-84.

⁶⁹ See R. S. O’Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*, London, Hurst, 1990.

⁷⁰ See the article “Mirghaniyya or Khatmiyya”, *EI* 2, vol. 7, p. 124.

⁷¹ K. S. Vikor, *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muḥammad b. Alī al-Sanūsi (1787-1859)*, London, Hurst, 1995.

tioned above, including the Tijāniyya.⁷² However, when Māʾ al-ʿAynayn spoke of Ibn al-ʿArabī, he placed before his name the appellation *al-shaykh al-akbar*⁷³, and also *al-shaykh al-ʿarif al-wāsil al-wāriṭh al-kāmil*⁷⁴, but there is no reference in his text to the doctrine of the *kbatmiyya*.

The real difference between the *Naʿt al-bidāyāt wa-tarwīf al-nihāyāt* and the manuals of *ādāb al-ṣūfiyya* that preceded it are found in the final part of the text—differences which doubtless come from the very particular influence of the sub-Saharan milieu in which Māʾ al-ʿAynayn was immersed all his life. This section of the text is devoted to a complete exposition of the healing properties of each letter of the Arabic alphabet and of the *basmala*, supported by the inclusion of several esoteric squares (*wafiq*, pl. *awfāq*, *jad-wal*, pl. *jadāwil*)⁷⁵, and to the *kharwaṣṣ al-Qurʾān*, with a very detailed exposition of the possible practical esoteric uses of each chapter of the Quran.⁷⁶ On this subject, Māʾ al-ʿAynayn cites the most ancient known treatise on this question, the *Kharwaṣṣ al-Qurʾān*, by al-Tamimī (d. 970), which still remains in manuscript.⁷⁷ In addition, most of the quotations from his father’s works are to be found in this part of the final chapter.

Conclusion

Naʿt al-bidāyāt illustrates the role played by Māʾ al-ʿAynayn, as well as by a number of Sufis before him, such as al-Sulamī⁷⁸ and al-Shaʿrānī: the role of bringing together and transmitting Islamic heritage and Sufi doctrines during a difficult period of social and historic transition.

On the subject of the introduction of printing into the milieu of scholars and Sufis in the nineteenth century, the case of Māʾ al-ʿAynayn is exem-

⁷² “Muhammad obtained his Qādiriyya initiation from his father. It is not clear, in the present state of research, when he received initiation into other Sufi Orders, but the practice of multiple affiliations was already established in his family. He claimed initiation to the Tijāniyya and authorisation to initiate, in turn, based on his father’s visit to Fez and direct contact with Ahmad al-Tijānī. He used this authorisation as the basis for his interpretation of the Tijāniyya as a non-exclusive Order compatible with multiple Sufi allegiance” (Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, p. 163).

⁷³ *Naʿt al-bidāyāt*, p. 90.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-190; see also S. Cammann, “Islamic and Indian Magic Squares. Part I”, *History of Religions* 8/3 (1969), pp. 181-209; “Islamic and Indian Magic Squares. Part II”, *History of Religions* 8/4 (1969), pp. 271-299; A. M. Piemontese, “Aspetti magici e valori funzionali della scrittura araba”, *La Ricerca Folklorica* 5 (1982), pp. 26-55.

⁷⁶ *Naʿt al-bidāyāt*, pp. 191-228.

⁷⁷ See Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kasbf al-zunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-l-ḥunūn*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d., p. 727.

⁷⁸ See J.-J. Thibon, *L’oeuvre d’Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (325/937 – 412/1021) et la formation du soufisme*, Damascus, IFPO, 2009.

plary. We have witnessed an interesting mutual dependence between temporal and spiritual power: the grand vizir of Morocco, Aḥmad b. Mūsā, benefited from the authority of Mā' al-ʿAynayn and had his works printed with the intention thus of increasing his own prestige in the eyes of the sultan, while Mā' al-ʿAynayn, thanks to this printing, saw his works diffused beyond the desert and into the cities of the Maghreb; later they spread throughout the Arab and Muslim world of the time. Paradoxically, we see that Mā' al-ʿAynayn managed to take advantage of the modern invention of printing to conserve Islam's traditional heritage.

We have also seen that in a region that played host to well-established *ṭuruq* such as the Tijāniyya (and others), which claimed to be very distinct from each other, the Sufism proposed by Mā' al-ʿAynayn seems to have underlined similarities and affinities much more than differences. However, according to our careful analysis of *Naʿt al-bidāyāt*, a work that was expressly devoted to this theme, the appellation “pan-Sufism”, applied by some researchers, seems to us excessive, because our author never envisaged a syncretism among all the Sufi Paths. Instead, he limited himself to encouraging all adherents to avoid considering one Path superior to the others, for all the Paths, he contended, lead in the same manner to God.

Throughout the history of Sufism, normative literature such as *Naʿt al-bidāyāt* has generally developed in a specific social context and with reference to a specific society. This was exactly the case with the work of Mā' al-ʿAynayn, who, in founding a community, needed textual support appropriate to his time and place. He brought the structure of this sort of normative text to new heights. In the part of the text directed at disciples, he emphasised the *ādāb* in the opposite order to that which would generally pertain in a classical normative text. The disciple, who is not permanently in the presence of God while he is at the beginning of his Path, starts by concentrating on what is simplest for him: the practice of the *adab* toward his master. Then he may, as he follows his Path, be able to attain the *adab* towards God.

For the masters, on the other hand, it is the *adab* towards God that is most important, for the masters remain constantly in His presence. Afterwards, the masters can take care of the *adab* towards their disciples. But the ultimate level for them is the practice of the *adab* towards all creatures and towards creation in its entirety—creation, in which it is very difficult to achieve a contemplation of God's reflection. Thus if the first phase of this Path for the realised master is to do with the *fanāʿ*, annihilation, during which he sees nothing but God, the two other phases, especially the third phase, have to do with the *baqāʿ*, permanence, in which the realised master turns towards all of creation.

This analysis has shown us the resistance, which was simultaneously military, intellectual and cultural, of a scholar and Sufi living during the nine-

teenth century on the margins of the Islamic world. The military resistance was carried out over the course of his entire life, right up to the last day, in the face of the irresistible force of an adverse destiny. The intellectual and cultural resistance operated through the transmission of Islamic, Sufi and *sahṛāwī* heritage during the conflict between one world, which still remained essentially tied to traditional rhythms and references, and another, the advancing modern world, which was applying strong pressure in the form of European colonisation.