



Shaykh Sīdī Muhammad al-`Arabī bin al-Sā'ih

Shaykh Fakhruddīn al-Owaisī

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Sayyidinā al-Shaykh al-`Arif Billāh Abū Hāmid Muhammad al-`Arabī bin Muhammad al-Sā'ih al-Sharqī al-`Umarī was born in the ancient city of Meknes (*Miknāsāt al-Zaytūn*), Morocco, in 1229 H (1814 CE), to a family who were direct descendants of `Umar al-Fārūq ibn al-Khattāb ؓ.

He was a renowned 19th century Moroccan scholar of Hadīth, Mālīkī Fiqh, Tasawwuf and Arabic poetry. His teachers included men like al-Faqīh al-Muhaddīth Sīdī `Abdul Qādir al-Kawhān, al-`Allāmah Muhammad al-Hādī Bādu', Shaykh al-Sharīf Walīd al-`Irāqī and other savants. He also exchanged *ijāzāt* with many famous North African scholars.

Moreover, al-Walī al-Sālih, Sīdī al-`Arabī bin al-Sā`ih was one of the greatest Tījānī Saints of his time. He took the Tījānī Tarīqah from accomplished spiritual masters such as Sīdī `Abdul Wahhāb al-Ahmar and Mawlay Muhammad bin Abul Nasr al-`Alawī of Fez, and the Qutb Sīdī `Alī al-Tamāsīnī of Algeria, all of whom were venerated *Muqaddams* of the Muhammadan Saint Sayyidinā Shaykh Ahmad al-Tījānī ﷺ.

Renowned as a friend of Allāh, countless seekers approached him to take the Way from him. Among these were men who later on became great Masters themselves.

Sīdī al-`Arabī established a beautiful Tījānī Zāwiyah in Rabāt that became a well-known center of Islamic Knowledge and Spirituality and remains so till today. It is also from amongst those few Zāwiyahs which have preserved the traditional Moroccan *fāsī* style of reciting the blessed *Qasīdat al-Burdah*.

His greatest service to the Tarīqah, however, was authoring the masterpiece called *Bughyat al-Mustafīd* which became one of the motherbooks of Tījānī Sūfism, and which was a detailed commentary on the Sūfī Poem called *Munyat al-Murīd*, written by the Mauritanian Tījānī master, Shaykh Ahmad Tījānī bin Sīdī Bāba al-`Alawī al-Shinqītī. Due to his mastery of the sciences of *Sharī`ah* and *Haqīqah*, as well as deep understanding of the Tījānī Path, Sīdī al-Arabī's works became essential reference works for later Tījānīs. Sīdī al-Arabī also mastered the works of al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhiyuddīn Ibn `Arabī and quotes from them extensively in his works.

The *Bughyat al-Mustafīd* is a brilliant exposition of *tasawwuf* and has gone through numerous prints. ¹ Explaining the *wirds* (litanies) that disciples of the Sūfī Orders recite after gaining permission from their Shaykhs, he writes in the celebrated *Bughyah*:

*The reality of the awrād is that they are contracts and commitments
that Allāh has taken from His servants through the Shaykhs.*

*Therefore, he who honored the Shaykhs and stayed true to his contract
and fulfilled his commitments will gain the goodness of both Worlds.*

Allāh most High says:

‘O Ye who Believe! Fulfill your contracts’ ²

**‘Among the believers are men who have been true
to the contract they made with Allāh’ ³**

¹ the best one being the 2002 edition by the Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah of Beirut. His poem *Munyat al-Murīd* can be read on this site: www.nafahat7.net

² Sūrat al-Mā`idah; 1

³ Sūrat al-Ahzāb; 23

*And he who makes little of the Shaykhs,
and neglects the contracts and commitments (he made),
then that will be the cause of his ṣaygh (deviation from the Straight Path)
and the puncturing of his boat (i.e. his destruction).*

Allāh most High says:

***‘It is deeply abhorrent to Allāh that
you should say what you do not do’.⁴”***

Explaining the *maqām* (spiritual rank) of *Khātām al-Wilāyat al-Muhammadiyya* (Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood), which Tījānīs attribute to Shaykh Sīdī Ahmad al-Tījānī, he writes:

The meaning of his (Shaykh Sīdī Ahmad al-Tījānī) being the *khātām* (Seal) of the rank of *al-Wilāyat al-Muhammadiyyah* (Muhammadan Sainthood) is that none will appear in that rank in the (complete) way that he appeared, therefore, he is the Seal of the complete manifestation of that rank, and not (the seal of) the rank itself.

Quite a few scholars authored separate works on Sīdī al-‘Arabī’s life and intellectual and spiritual achievements, such as the Moroccan historian Shaykh al-Faqīh Muhammad al-Hajūjī who authored *al-Aḥbār al-Atirat al-Rawā’ih fī al-Ta`rif bi-Mawlānā al-‘Arabī bin al-Sā’ih*, and the contemporary Moroccan Tījānī research scholar Dr. al-Sharīf Muhammad al-Rādī Gannūn al-Hasanī al-Idrīsī who authored *al-Misk al-Fā’ih bi-Dbīker ba’ad Manāqib Sīdī al-‘Arabī bin al-Sā’ih*, and Shaykh al-‘Arabī bin ‘Abdullāh al-Wazzānī. His biography is also found in *al-A`lām* by al-Zaraklī, *al-Ightibāt bi-Tarājim A`lām al-Rabāt* by al-Bujandār, and *A`lām al-Fīker al-Mu`āsir bil-Udmatayn* by ‘Abdullāh al-Jarrāī.

His trusted friend, the saintly scholar and poet, Sīdī Muḥammad Balamīnū al-Rabātī wrote about him:

*I traveled the lands of the East and the West (in vain)
To find the likeness of the Imam al-‘Arabī bin al-Sā’ih
The Star of Guidance, the Pole of (spiritual) height, Our Teacher
The succor of every inanimate and animate object*

Sīdī al-‘Arabī bin al-Sā’ih passed away in 1309 (1892) in Rabāt, where he used to live, and where his blessed Tomb and Zāwiyyah remain. May Allāh sanctify his Secret. *Amin.*

⁴ Sūrat al-Saff; 3