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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

CHAPTER X

A SMALL TRACT FROM THE KITAB 'N-NAYL OF AHMAD BABA

In the Kitab 'n-Nayl¹ of the learned jurist Ahmadu Baba, may Allah be merciful to him, he discussed the leading scholars of his clan². In it he says:

"There was **Ahmad ibn Umar** ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya ibn Kuqala 's-Sanhaja 't-Timbukti. He was the grandfather of the father of my father and was known as al-Hajj Ahmad. He was the oldest of three brothers who were famous for knowledge and religion in their locality among the people of excellence, bounty and religion. Al-Hajj was a guardian of the *sunna*, comprising of all manly virtue, respectability and inquiry. He was a lover of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, exemplified by his constant singing of praise songs for him and his unfailing reading of the Kitab 's-Shifa of *Qadi 'Iyad*. He was a jurist, linguist, grammarian, an expert in the science of prosody and very erudite. He was an assistant to the cause of learning and education throughout his entire life. He composed numerous books, writing them with his own hand which contained enough room on the sides for annotations. He is alleged to have left behind a library which contained 700 volumes. Al-Hajj Ahmad took knowledge from his maternal grandfather the jurist And Agh Muhammad³, from his maternal uncle, Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi⁴ and others. He traveled to the East in the year 890 A.H.⁵ and performed the pilgrimage. During his journey, he met al-Jalaal 's-Suyuti⁶ and *Shaykh* Khalid 'l-Waqad 'l-Azhari,⁷ the *Imam* of the grammarians and others. He returned from the East during the tribulations brought on by the heretic Sonni Ali⁸. He visited Kano and other metropolises among the *Bilad 's-Sudan*. He taught knowledge, served and benefited many people with his erudition. The greatest of his students was the jurist Mahmud⁹ who studied with him the al-Mudawwana¹⁰ and other books besides. He

¹ The Arabic text cited the name of the book of being Kitab 'd-Dhayl. This, however is an error of the copyist. The book cited is the Nayl 'l-Ibtihajj Bi Tatreez 'd-Dibaaj, a famous biographical dictionary of Maliki jurisprudents. It was written during his capture and stay in Marrakech, completed 7 *Jumada 'l-Ula* 1005 A.H./ 27 December 1596 C.E.. He was 40 years old at its completion.

² Here he refers not just to his family, the Aqit, or his clan, the Sanhaja - but to the scholars of the **Sankore'** quarter of northern Tinbuktu.

³ This is And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir whose daughter was married to Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit. See footnote # 65.

⁴ See footnote # 68.

⁵ This was in the year 1485 C.E..

⁶ He was Abu 'l-Fadl Abd'r-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad 's-Suyuti, [849-911 A.H.].

⁷ *Shaykh* Khalid composed works mainly on the science of Arabic grammar, linguistics and philology. He died in 1499 C.E..

⁸ This occurred between the years 1468 and 1493 C.E..

⁹ This was his brother al-Qadi Mahmud ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit. See footnote # 86.

extended tremendous effort in the service of knowledge either by acquisition or dissemination. He died on Friday night, in the month of *Rabi`a 't-Thani*, 943 A.H. at the age of 80.¹¹ He was sought out for the function of *Imam* (over the **Sankore'** university/mosque), but he refused preferring it for others. Among his more renowned miracles was that when he visited the noble tomb of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he wanted to enter the interior of the tomb. However, the attendants of the grave prevented him from that. He then sat down outside the tomb reciting praise songs for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Then suddenly the door opened of its own accord. This caused the attendants and all the surrounding people to rush towards him to kiss his hands. This is what I heard from the group that accompanied him on the journey.

Among them was **Abdallah ibn Umar** ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya's-Sanhaji 'l-Massufi. He was the blood brother of my afore mentioned grandfather. He was a jurist who had memorized the Qur'an. He was ascetic, pious and an upright *waliy* who had attained the highest degree of piety and fearful awareness. He was endowed with a prodigious memory. He taught in the region of Walata where he died in the year 929 A.H.¹². He was born in the year 866 A.H.¹³, and possessed many miracles.

Among them was **Mahmud ibn Umar** ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya's-Sanhaji't-Tinbukti. He was the chief judge of Tinbuktu, the praiseworthy, the splendid, the foremost scholar, the most righteous, the professor, the jurist and *Imam of Takrur*¹⁴ without doubt! He was among the best of the upright servants and Knowers of Allah. He was firmly established in matters, perfectly guided, tranquil, dignified and venerable. His learning and righteousness became famous throughout the lands and his repute spread throughout the regions in the East, West, North and South. His *baraka* appeared and became manifest in his religion, uprightness, austerity and integrity. He did not fear concerning Allah the criticism of a criticizer and he was respected by all people, whether from the rulers or those below them. They all came under his authority and visited him in his home taking from his *baraka*. He did not kiss up to them nor accept the gifts and presents they offered him. He was appointed over the judiciary in the year 904 A.H.¹⁵ during which he examined all affairs in detail and was strict in carrying out his judgments. He specified and strove for the truth and pointed out falsehood and caused it to wither. As a result of this, his justice became well known to the point where he had no equal in his time. Along with this, he remained occupied with teaching and instruction. In the teaching of the science of jurisprudence he was refined and graceful; facilitating its modes of expression and approximated its meanings without over burdening. Consequently, many benefited from him to the extent that he single handedly revived learning and erudition in his land. The majority of his students were students of the science of jurisprudence. Some of these students attained an outstanding degree in this science until they became scholars in their own right. The essential books which he taught to them were the *al-Mudawwana*¹⁶, the *ar-Risaala*¹⁷, the *al-Mukhtasar* of Khalil¹⁸, the *al-*

¹⁰ See footnote # 70.

¹¹ This corresponded with October of 1536 C.E..

¹² 1523 C.E..

¹³ 1462 C.E..

¹⁴ The term *takrur* refers to the entire region of the western *bilad's-sudan*. It originally referred to the first kingdom in the region to accept Islam as the religion of the state.

¹⁵ This was in 1498 C.E..

¹⁶ This text was compiled by Abd 's-Salaam ibn Sa'id ibn Habib 't-Tanukhi who was famous as Sahnun, [d 854 C.E.] and comprised the legal decisions of Imam Malik ibn Anas.

Afiyya¹⁹ and the as-Salaalijyya. Because of him the studying of the text of Khalil became widespread in Songhay. He composed commentaries upon it from which other commentaries were written by some of his students.²⁰ He performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in the year 915 A.H.²¹ where he met some of the masters of erudition. Among them were: Ibrahim 'l-Muqaddasi²²; the two disciples of Ibn Hajar²³ - *Shaykh* Zakariya²⁴ and al-Qalqashindi²⁵; the two al-Laqaanis²⁶ and others who became acquainted with his piety and uprightness. He returned to his country and persisted in benefiting and executing the truth. He taught for some fifty years until he died in the year 955 A.H., on Friday night the 16 of *Ramadhan*²⁷. He attained the highest degree of eminence and the people extolled him until his renowned spread and reached a degree which no other had attained. He was born in the year 868 A.H.²⁸. Among those who took knowledge from him were: his three sons, the judge Muhammad, the judge al-Aqib and the judge Umar; along with my father²⁹, may Allah be merciful to all of them.

Among them was **Makhluf ibn Ali** ibn Saalih 'l-Balbali. He was a jurist and geographer. He did not become occupied with knowledge and its acquisition until he was advanced in years, according to what had been reported. The first of his *shaykhs* was my master the upright servant Abdallah ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit, who was the blood brother of my grandfather, from the region of Walata.³⁰ He studied with him the ar-Risaala of Ibn Abi Zayd. This *shaykh* saw in *Shaykh* Makhluf superb intellectual skills so he motivated him to continue seeking after knowledge. *Shaykh* Makhluf thereafter had a strong urge for it and then traveled to the *maghrib*. There he studied with Ibn Ghazi and other eminent scholars. While there he became celebrated for his prodigious memory until his reputation in that was an astonishing achievement. He also traveled into the *Bilad's-Sudan*, like the metropolises of Kano, Katsina and other towns where he studied and taught. During this period he became involved with some legal polemics with the jurist al-Aqib 'l-Ansamuni³¹. He then entered Tinbuktu where he studied and taught before returning to the *maghrib*. There he taught in the city of Marrakech until he fell ill from poison. He returned to his land where he died in the year 940 A.H.³²

¹⁷ The author of this work was Abdallah ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawaani, [d. 996 C.E.].

¹⁸ This was Khalil ibn Ishaq ibn Musa 'l-Jundi, [d. 1374].

¹⁹ This text is a versification of the science of prophetic traditions by Abd 'r-Rahman ibn Husayn 'l-Iraqi, [d. 1404].

²⁰ The study of the al-Mukhtasar became so prevalent and sweeping in Songhay that Ahmadu Baba is credited to have said, "We are the people of *Khalil*. If he erred then we err with him."

²¹ This occurred in 1510 C.E.

²² He was Ibrahim ibn Muhammad 'l-Muqaddasi, a Shafi` scholar and *Imam* of the central mosque of Manjuk.

²³ He was *Shaykh 'l-Islam* and *Imam* Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Hajr, [909-974 A.H./1504-1567 C.E.]

²⁴ He was *Shaykh 'l-Islam* Zakariya ibn Muhammad ibn Zakariya, [823-926 A.H./ 1420-1520 C.E.].

²⁵ He was Ibrahim ibn Ali ibn Ahmad 'l-Qalqashindi, [d. 922 A.H./ 1516 C.E.].

²⁶ The first was Shams 'd-Deen 'l-Laqaani [935 A.H./1528 C.E.] and the second was Naasir 'd-Deen Muhammad ibn Hassan 'l-Laqaani, [873- 958 A.H./ 1466-1551 C.E.].

²⁷ October 19, 1548.

²⁸ This corresponds with 1463 C.E..

²⁹ He was Ahmad ibn 'l-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit.

³⁰ The exact location was in the town of Tazekht.

³¹ He was *Shaykh* al-Aqib ibn Abdallah 'l-Ansamuni the author of the treatise Fi Wujuub 'l-Juma` bi 'l-Qaryat Ansamun which challenged the views of *Shaykh* Makhluf.

³² This occurred in 1533 C.E..

Among them was **Muhammad ibn Ahmad** ibn Abu Muhammad at-Tazakhti. He was known as Ayda Ahmad³³ He was a jurist, scholar and a wise master of the science of prophetic traditions. He was versatile and proficient in diverse sciences and an excellent calligrapher. He possessed superb comprehension which became manifest in the many discussions he engaged in. He studied in his country with my grandfather the jurist al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar³⁴ and with his maternal uncle the jurist Ali, until he had attained superior learning at their hands. In Takedda he met the *Imam* al-Maghili³⁵ and was present at many of his lectures there. He then traveled to the East accompanying our master the jurist Mahmud. There he met and studied with many venerable scholars, like the *Shaykh 'l-Islam* Zakariya, the dialecticians: al-Qalqashindi, Ibn Abu Shareef³⁶, Abd 'l-Haqq's-Sunbati³⁷ and a large quantity of other scholars. He took from them the science of prophetic traditions, by means of direct transmission and from the perspective of the narrators. He attained a high degree of learning from them. He exerted great energy in seeking knowledge of this science until he excelled in all the variety of its sciences. Consequently, he became a master of the science of prophetic traditions³⁸. He was present at the lectures of the two brothers called al-Laqaani. He kept the company of Ahmad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad and Abd 'l-Haqq's-Sunbati. In Mecca, Abu'l-Barakat 'n-Nuwayri, his paternal cousin Abd 'l-Qaadir, Ali ibn Naasir 'l-Hijaazi, Abu 't-Tayyib 'l-Busti and others gave him license (*ijaaza*) to transmit what he had learned from them. He then returned to the *Bilad's-Sudan* and took up permanent residence in the town of Katsina. There he was honored by its people and was appointed over the judiciary. He died in that same region in the year 936 A.H. at the age of sixty and some odd years³⁹. He composed a commentary as notes on the margins of the al-Mukhtasar of *Shaykh Khalil*⁴⁰.

Among them was **Muhammad ibn Mahmud** ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya's-Sanhaji. He was the chief judge of Tinbuktu⁴¹. He was a jurist, erudite and intelligent and possessed penetrating intelligence which subdued the most quick-witted of people and vanquished the hypocrites among them. He was appointed as the judge after the death of his father. Good fortune attended him and he obtained the degree of political power and leadership he desired, acquiring great benefit from it and profiting from this world extensively⁴². He composed a poem in commentary upon the ar-Rajaz of al-Maghili on the science of logic. My father took

³³ The *Ayda* is written with the *hamza* inflected with *fat'ha*, the *ya* inflected with *sukuun*, the *daal* inflected with *fat'ha*. It is the adjacent noun of the word Ahmad and it means in the language of the Tuaregs 'the son of Ahmad'.

³⁴ See footnote # 85.

³⁵ He was *Shaykh* Muhammad Ibn Abd 'l-Kareem ibn Muhammad al-Maghili, [d.1503]. He was considered many African scholars to be the *mujaddid* of the 9th century A.H..

³⁶ He was Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr, [833 -923 A.H./ 1426-1516 C.E.], a Shafi` scholar of Cairo.

³⁷ He was Abd 'l-Haqq ibn Muhammad 's-Sunbati, [842 - 931 A.H./ 1435-1524 C.E.], a Shafi` scholar of Cairo.

³⁸ The title *muhadith* (traditionist) is preserved for those scholars who mastered the science of prophetic traditions (*'ilm 'l-hadith*).

³⁹ This occurred in 1530 C.E..

⁴⁰ The name of this text was Taqaaheed wa Turar `Ala Mukhtasar Shaykh Khalil.

⁴¹ He was appointed to the judiciary in 1548 C.E. and held the position for 17 years.

⁴² This was due to the fact his mother was a Soninke woman wedded to *Qadi* Mahmud by *Askiya* al-Hajj Muhammad. The *Askiya* requested that the child be named after him and gave 1000 *mithqals* which *Qadi* Mahmud invested wisely on behalf of his son. Because the *Askiya* was like a godfather to *Qadi* Muhammad, he was able to move up the social ladder of Songhay society unchallenged.

from him the science of logic and eloquence. He died during the month of *Safar* in the year 973 A.H.⁴³. He was born in the year 909 A.H.⁴⁴.

Among them was **al-Aqib ibn Mahmud** ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya's-Sanhaji, the supreme judge of Tinbuktu⁴⁵. He, may Allah be merciful to him, was extremely incisive, unflinching and exacting in his judgments. He was staunch in his support for the truth and did not fear the criticism of the one who criticizes. He had a very dynamic heart which made him courageous in staggering affairs which most daring people would fail to venture. Whether it was the *sultan* or any of his officials, he did not care. There occurred many disputes between them and him, yet they were submissive, respectful and obedient to him in all that he desired. Whenever he observed that which he disliked he would remove himself from his position and would lock his doors to the people and would not return until they had mitigated the problem; which occurred on many occasions. He possessed penetrating insight and clairvoyance with which he examined affairs. He never erred in his discernment as if he were looking into the unseen. He was very wealthy in worldly possessions and very fortunate in his affairs, although he was circumspect and god fearing with regard to what he possessed. He was widely respected and honored. He studied with his father and paternal uncle⁴⁶. He traveled extensively and performed the pilgrimage⁴⁷, where he met an-Naasir 'l-Laqaani, Abu 'l-Hassan 'l-Bakri⁴⁸, *Shaykh* Biskary and their colleagues. *Shaykh* al-Laqaani gave him license to pass on every thing he was licensed to transmit and he in turn wrote with his own hand an *ijaaza* recording that. He was born in the year 913 A.H. and died in the month of *Rajab* in 991 A.H.⁴⁹.

Among them was **al-Aqib ibn Abdallah 'l-Ansamuni 'l-Massufi**. He was from the people of Takeda, a village which was originally settled by the Sanhaja who reside near the *Bilad's-Sudan*. He was a distinguished jurist who possessed sharp apprehension and a brilliant mind which was preoccupied with learning and erudition. His fame as a scholar was circulated by tongues over the horizons. He composed and annotation called Ta`aliq Ala Qawl Khalil wa Khusisat Niyyat 'l-Haalif in the most superb mode of expression, drawing from other works. It was concerning the intention of one who takes an oath⁵⁰. I made an abridgement of this work, calling it Tanbeeh 'l-Waaqif Ala Tahreer Khasastu Niyyat 'l-Kaalif. He also composed a small treatise on the obligation of the *juma`* prayer in the village of Ansamun, called Juz Fii Wujuub 'l-Juma` Bi Quariyat Ansuman in which he disputed the views of other scholars. He wrote the al-Jawaab 'l-Majduud `an As'ilat 'l-Qadi Muhammad ibn Mahmud concerning answers to queries on the application of the law. Finally, he wrote the Ajwibat 'l-Faqir `an As'ilat 'l-Amir answering legal questions put to him by Askiya

⁴³ This corresponded with September 1565 C.E..

⁴⁴ This corresponded with 1504 .C.E..

⁴⁵ Al-Aqib was the most renowned judges of the city of Tinbuktu whose judiciary authority covered the whole of the Songhay empire. He was essential in developing the semi-autonomous nature of the judiciary as opposed to the executive government of Songhay.

⁴⁶ His father was al-Qadi Mahmud ibn Umar and his brother was Umar ibn Mahmud.

⁴⁷ This had to occur prior to his appointment to the judiciary in 1565 C.E..

⁴⁸ He was Abu 'l-Hassan Muhammad 'l-Bakri, a *shaykh* of the *Qaadiiriya* brother from Cairo.

⁴⁹ He was born in 913 A.H./ 1507 C.E. and died in 991 A.H./ 1583 C.E..

⁵⁰ The legal meaning of taking oath (*haalif*) takes its foundation from the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. As for the Book, there is the word of Allah ta`ala; "Allah will not take you to task for what you advertently swear. But He will take you to task for the oaths which you solemnly swear. The penalty for a broken oath is the feeding of ten needy people from such foods as you normally offer to your own people; or clothing them; or the freeing of a slave. If he cannot afford any of these, he must fast three days. This is expiation for what you have sworn." [].

Muhammad and other Songhay rulers. He studied with and took knowledge from al-Maghili, al-Jalaal's-Suyuti and others. There also occurred between him and the *Haafidh* Makhluf 'l-Balbali, legal disputes in certain issues⁵¹. He lived up to the year 950 A.H.⁵².

Among them was **Abu Bakr ibn Ahmad** ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit. He was born in Tinbuktu and settled in the noble city of Medina. He was my paternal uncle and was a person of excellent repute, piety, austerity, fearful awareness and sincerity. He was a blessed *waliy* known for uprightness and whose austerity, piety and righteousness was apparent to all. He was firmly established in the religion, gave much charity and gifts. He rarely held on to anything and possessed few things of this world. He was unsurpassable in performing good deeds and there was none who emerged equal to him in that. He performed the pilgrimage and visited many lands. Then he had yearning for his own country because of his children. He returned with them and resettled them there. Thereafter, he performed the pilgrimage again and then resided in Medina until he died in the beginning of the year 991 A.H.⁵³. He was born in the year 932 A.H.⁵⁴. He was the first teacher with whom I studied the science of grammar. I benefited from his *baraka* and by means of him spiritual attainment was opened to me in a short time without any trouble⁵⁵. He possessed magnificent spiritual states, much fear and watchfulness of Allah. He gave sincere advice to Allah's servants. He was constantly making deep sighs and his tongue was succulent with the saying of **Laa ilaha illa Allah** and remembrance of Allah at all times. He was always opened hearted with people and showed them a pleasant face. He was among the best of the righteous servants who rejected this world and was ascetic in its beauties and comforts in spite of the high rank which the people of his house enjoyed at that time⁵⁶. I have not seen anyone like him nor one close to him in his advanced spiritual attainments. He composed many subtle and refined works on the science of *tasawwuf* and other sciences.⁵⁷

Among them was **Ahmad ibn Ahmad** ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya. He was my father, the son of a learned jurist, the son of a learned jurist. He was an accomplished and intelligent scholar who had mastered many sciences. He was a traditionist⁵⁸, possessed a generous share in the sciences of

⁵¹ See footnote # 143.

⁵² 1543 C.E..

⁵³ This occurred around February of 1583 C.E..

⁵⁴ 1527 C.E..

⁵⁵ Ahmadu Baba said, "*Fa fataha lili* ." It means in its etymological sense 'opening', but when used in the technical vocabulary of the People of Allah it indicates spiritual illumination which characterizes the attainment of a superior station in one's spiritual journey.

⁵⁶ The Aqit family for which he was a member were the wealthiest of the learned notables of Tinbuktu and the surrounding region.

⁵⁷ The science of *tasawwuf* takes its root from what *Imam* Malik is reported to have said, "Whoever purifies his heart (*tassawwafu*) and does not gain understanding of jurisprudence (*tafaqqahu*) will become heretic. Whoever gains understanding of jurisprudence (*tafaqqahu*) and does not purify his heart (*tassawwafu*) will become crooked. Whoever gathers between the two will have spiritual realization (*qad tahaqqaqu*)." It is divided into two divisions: [1] *tasawwuf li 't-takhalluq* (purification of the character) which entails removing all blameworthy destructive qualities from the heart and taking on every praiseworthy redemptive quality in the heart; and [2] *tasawwuf li 't-tahaqquq* (purification for spiritual realities) which entails knowledge attained from Allah about Himself and His creation. The first division is obligatory upon every Muslim. The second division is a gift which Allah only gives to His friends who have avoided innovation, arrogance, sins, love for leadership and love for this world.

⁵⁸ This means he was a master of the science of prophetic traditions (*'ilm 'l-hadith*).

the foundation of the law⁵⁹, rhetoric and eloquence. He possessed a gentle heart and exalted rank which earned him the respect of the notables of the kingdom. He was sufficient as a benefit to his people by his rank and standing. His intercession was never turned away or refused. He treated the rulers and their officials very roughly and they in turn showed him the utmost of humility. The rulers used to visit him in his home. Once when he became ill in the town of Kaghu⁶⁰, during one of his frequent journeys, the great *sultan*, *Askiya* Dawud would come to him at night and watch over him until he became well again. He would spend the night talking with him out of esteem for his rank. *Shaykh* Ahmad was famous for his elevated rank, majestic character and dignified demeanor. He never relinquished his love for the people of excellence, demonstrated by the exclusive humility he showed them. He never harbored hatred for anyone and was just and fair towards people. He had collected an extensive library of books which filled many coffers containing every precious and priceless work with which he was very generous in loaning out. He took knowledge from his paternal uncle, the *baraka* of the age Mahmud ibn Umar and others. He also traveled to the East in the year 956 A.H.⁶¹. There he performed the pilgrimage and visited the tombs of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace and the Companions. During his journey to the East, he met with a host of scholars like an-Naasir 'l-Laqaani, the *shareef* Shaykh Yusef the disciple of as-Suyuti, al-Jamaal ibn Shaykh Zakariya⁶², al-Ujhuri⁶³ and at-Taajuri⁶⁴. In Mecca and *Tayba*⁶⁵ he met with Amin 'd-Deen 'l-Maymuni, al-Mala`i, Ibn Hajar⁶⁶, Abd 'l-'Azeez 'l-Lamti, Abd 'l-Mu`ti 's-Sakhawi, Abd 'l-Qaadir 'l-Faakihi and others from whom he gained much benefit. He kept company with and took from the *baraka* of Abu 'l-Mukaram Muhammad 'l-Bakri and wrote down from him many beneficial sciences⁶⁷.

He then returned to his land and taught for a few years. During this time he composed a commentary upon the Takhmis of the al-Ishriniyat of al-Fazaazi, concerning the science of songs in praise of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace⁶⁸. He composed an excellent commentary upon the poetic verses of al-Maghili concerning the science of logic⁶⁹. He composed a gloss on certain important passages of the al-Mukhtasar of Khalil. He wrote a gloss upon at-Tata'i's commentary of the al-Mukhtasar with an explanation upon its margins of the passages concerning forgetfulness in prayer⁷⁰. He authored commentaries upon the Sughra of

⁵⁹ This science is called *usuul*.

⁶⁰ This was Gao, the capital of the Songhay empire.

⁶¹ This occurred in the year 1549 C.E..

⁶² He was Jamaal ibn Zakariyya ibn Zakariyya, [d. 959 A.H.].

⁶³ He was Abd 'r-Rahman 'l-Ujhuri, [d. 960 A.H.].

⁶⁴ He was Abd 'r-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn 'l-Hajj 't-Taajuri, [d. 962 C.E.].

⁶⁵ *Tayba* ('goodly') is the nickname of Medina 'l-Munawarra.

⁶⁶ He was Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Hajar, [909-974 A.H./ 1505-1567 C.E.].

⁶⁷ See footnote # 160.

⁶⁸ He was Muhammad ibn Abd 'r-Rahman ibn Yakhlaftan 'l-Fazaazi, [d. 1230 C.E.]. He composed his famous al-Qasaa'id 'l-Ishriniyyat Fii Madih Sayyidinaa Muhammad.

⁶⁹ The science of logic is called *ilm 'l-mantiq*.

⁷⁰ Forgetfulness in the prayer, called *sahwi*, is established by the *Sunna* in the al-Muwatta of Imam Malik on the authority of Yahya related to me from Malik that he had heard that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I forget or I am made to forget so that I may establish the sunna." Yahya related to me from Malik from Ibn Shihab from Abu Salama ibn Abd'r-Rahman ibn Awf from Abu Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "When you stand in prayer, Shaytaan comes to you and confuses you until you do not know how much you have prayed. If you find that happening do two prostrations from the sitting position."

as-Sanusi⁷¹, the al-Qurtubiyya, and the al-Jumal of al-Kawnji on the foundations of jurisprudence, but did not complete all of it. He transmitted the two Saheeh collections of *Imam 'l-Bukhari* and *Imam Muslim* and others for some twenty years which he finished in the month of *Rajab*. He died Monday night on 17 *Sha`ban* in the year 991 A.H.⁷². One night he was reading the Saheeh of Muslim in the central mosque when his tongue became heavy. Our *shaykh*, the learned Muhammad Baghyuyu⁷³ was sitting facing him and pointed out that he had ceased reading. He then died the Monday after that occurred. Many scholars took knowledge from him. Among them were the two righteous jurists: our *shaykhs* Muhammad and his brother Ahmad, the two sons of the jurist Mahmud Baghyuyu⁷⁴. They studied with him the foundations of jurisprudence, eloquence and logic. Among them were the two brothers the jurist Abdallah and Abd 'r-Rahman, the sons of the jurist Mahmud ibn Aqit and others.

I was present with him and took from him many sciences. He gave me license to transmit all that he had been given license. From him I listened to his reading of the two Saheeh collections of *Imam 'l-Bukhari* and *Imam Muslim*, the al-Muwatta of *Imam Malik*⁷⁵, and the as-Shifa of Qadi `Iyad. He was born in the beginning of the month of *Muharram* in the year 929 A.H.⁷⁶. I saw him in my dreams after his death in a good vision, may Allah be merciful to him.

Among them was **Ahmad ibn Muhammad** ibn Sa`id, the great grandson of the jurist Mahmud ibn Umar. He was a learned jurist, a storehouse of knowledge and a teacher. He was present with his above mentioned great grandfather and took from him the al-Risaalat and the Mukhtasar of Khalil many times. He also studied the Mukhtasar and the al-Mudawwana with other scholars. The people took much benefit from him from the year 960 A.H. until he died in al-Muharram in the beginning of the year 976 A.H.⁷⁷. Among those who benefited from him were the two brothers and jurists, our *shaykh* Muhammad and his brother Ahmad who read from him the al-Muwatta, the Mudawwana, the Mukhtasar and others. He also composed a gloss upon the Mukhtasar of Khalil relying in it on its literary style and direction of transmission. He was born in the year 931⁷⁸. I met him when I was young and was present during his sway as the leading scholar of the metropolis.

Among them was **Muhammad ibn Mahmud** ibn Abu Bakar al-Wangari at-Tinbukti. He was known as Baghyuyu (with the letter *ba* inflected with *fat'ha*, the letter *ghayn* inflected with *sukuun*, the letter *ya* inflected with *damma* and the letter `ayn with *damma*.) He was our *shaykh* and *baraka*, a learned jurist who was accomplished in many sciences. He was an upright servant, abstinent and was among the most excellent upright servants of Allah and the right acting scholars. He was a man stamped with goodness, perfectly loyal and pure in nature. He innately wished for the good and believed the best concerning people until they were all treated equally with him because of the excellence of his opinion towards them and his lack of knowledge of evil from them. He was always striving to take care of their needs

⁷¹ He was Muhammad ibn Yunus ibn Umar 'l-Hassani 's-Sanusi, [d. 1486]. He composed three works on the subject of *tawheed* (divine unity). The most extensive is the work referred to above called al-Kubra ('the Extensive One') `Aqeedat Ahl 't-Tawheed 'l-Kubra.

⁷² This occurred on 6 September 1583 C.E.

⁷³ He was Muhammad Baghyuyu ibn Mahmud ibn Abu Bakr, whose biography will follow.

⁷⁴ He was Mahmud ibn Abu Bakr Baghyuyu who was appointed chief judge of Jenne in 1562/3 C.E..

⁷⁵ He was Abu Abdallah Malik ibn Anas 'l-Asbahi, [d. 795 C.E.].

⁷⁶ In December 1522 C.E..

⁷⁷ From 1553 until 1568 C.E..

⁷⁸ 1525 C.E..

and often endangered himself on behalf of them. He was always tormented over their evils and he strove to arbitrate between them. He sincerely advised people towards the love of knowledge and being persistent in acquiring it. He used to spend his entire time on behalf of learning and keeping company with its people and his humility was perfect.

He would generously loan the rarest and marvelous books on various sciences out to people and would not inquire of them after that, regardless of who are where they were taken. It was in this way that he lost many rare books, may Allah benefit him because of it. Sometimes a student would come to his door seeking a particular book. He would then give it to him without knowing who he was. In this regard he was truly amazing, doing it purely for the sake of Allah ta`ala and in spite of the fact that he had a great love of books and collected them through purchase and transcription. For example, I came to him one day desiring a book on the science of grammar. He then searched in his coffer and gave me every book on the subject which he was able to find. He did this because of his tremendous spirit for learning and education which occupied him throughout the day. This was also demonstrated by his patience with teaching and conveying beneficial knowledge to the dull-witted. He did this without any show of irritation or annoyance with their mental disabilities until their thoughts became weary from the extent of knowledge he conveyed to them. In this regard, he did not care, until some of our companions said about him, "I think that this jurist has drunk the water from the well of *zamzam*⁷⁹ due to the fact that he never wearies from studying and teaching knowledge!" We were amazed at his fortitude for learning along with his clinging to the worship of Allah and his receiving with honor and respect those who possessed destructive characteristics.

He entertained nothing but good for all creatures even to the point of accepting to help the unjust while avoiding plunging into excess and unimportant matters. He was draped in the most magnificent cloak of discretion and reserve. With his noble hands he held up the greatest banner of integrity with tranquility, dignity, excellent character and a modesty which indulged all desires and breasts. For the hearts of all people loved him and the entire populous praised him unanimously. There was none that did not have love, esteem, and praise him for his virtuousness and veracity. He was forbearing and long-suffering and never scorned teaching the beginner or the slow-witted. In this he spent his entire years doing, along with adhering to taking care of the needs of the common people and the matters of the judiciary. In this they could not find besides him a substitute nor could they procure besides him an equal. The *sultan* sought him out to confer upon him the authority of the judiciary of his region. This he rejected, abstained from and relinquished it to others, although people sought him out as an intermediate and arbitrator. He was sincere towards Allah ta`ala in his studies and acquisition of learning, even after the death of our master Ahmad ibn Sa`id⁸⁰.

I observed that it was his daily custom to teach from the early morning after the *subh* prayer until the time the sun had risen high. He would then get up and return to his home where he would pray the *duha* prayer for some time⁸¹. Sometimes he

⁷⁹ The well of *zamzam* is the famous well which lies southeast of the *Ka`ba* in Mecca. Its water is full of *baraka* which is sought after by millions the world over.

⁸⁰ He was Abu 'l-Abass Ahmad ibn Muhammad Sa`id, [d. 975 A.H./1568 C.E.]

⁸¹ The *duha* prayer is a voluntary prayer performed in the morning after the sun has risen. Its foundation is in the *Sunna* as related in the *al-Muwatta* of Imam Malik, on the authority of Malik from Zayd ibn Aslam from A`isha that she used to pray *duha* with eight raka`ats, and she would say, "I would never stop doing them even if my parents were to be brought back to life."

would go the judge and take care of the affairs of the people or arbitrate between the people. He would then teach at his home until the time of noon and then go and pray the *dhuhr* prayer with the people. In the mosque he would teach until the time of *asr* prayer. He would then pray the *asr* and then go to another locale in the city to teach until dusk or near it. After the *maghrib* prayer he would give lectures in the central mosque until the time of *isha* prayer. After the prayer he would return to his house. I heard that he would give life to the last part of the night with worship of Allah. He was perceptive, sharp, astute, quick-witted and very clever. His insight was extremely illuminated. He would remain silent for long periods while maintaining a dignified bearing. Sometimes he would laugh and joke with the people and sometimes he would reproach them and this was an indication of his good understanding and swift grasp. And he was known for this.

He took the science of Arabic linguistics and jurisprudence from the two righteous jurists, his father and maternal uncle. He then resided with his brother the righteous jurist Ahmad in Tinbuku. He adhered to the jurist Ahmad ibn Sa`id in the reading of the Mukhtasar of Khalil. After that he performed the pilgrimage with his maternal uncles. There he met an-Naasir al-Laqaani, at-Tajuuri, the *sharif* Yusef al-Awmayuni, al-Birhamushi al-Hanafii, *Imam* Muhammad al-Bakri and others. From these scholars and jurists he took many beneficial sciences.

He then returned after their pilgrimage and during the journey, his two uncles died. He then settled in Tinbuku. There he took from Ibn Sa`id the science of jurisprudence and prophetic tradition. He read with him the al-Muwatta, the al-Mudawwana, the Mukhtasar and other works. He followed Ibn Sa`id's pattern in everything. He took from my master and father, the science of the foundations of jurisprudence, literary style and logic. He read with him the Usuul of as-Subki⁸² and the Talkhees 'l-Miftaah⁸³. He attended the lectures of our *shaykh* the unique of his age Jamaal 'l-Kawnji, adhering to his lectures and methodology in teaching until he became the best of the *shaykhs* of his time in all the sciences without any equal.

I followed Muhammad Baghyuyu for more than twenty years. With him I completed the al-Mukhtasar of Khalil, reading it myself and listening to others read it nearly eight times. I also completed with him a deep study of the al-Muwatta and a detailed and critical study of the Tas'heel of Ibn Maalik⁸⁴ over a period of three years. I read with him a penetrating study of the al-Usuul of as-Subki with the commentary of al-Mahalli three times⁸⁵. I also read with him the al-Alfiyya of al-Iraqi⁸⁶ with its author's commentary. I read with him the Talkhees 'l-Miftaah with the abridged commentary of as-Sa`d⁸⁷ two times or more. I read with him the Sughra of as-Sanusi⁸⁸ and as-Sanusi's commentary upon the al-Jaza'iriyya⁸⁹ and the Hikam of Ibn Ata`illah⁹⁰

⁸² He was Abu Nasr Abd 'l-Wahhaab ibn Ali 's-Subki, [d 1370 C.E.]. The name of the text Jami` 'l-Jawaami`.

⁸³ The author of this work was Muhammad ibn Abd 'r-Rahman 'd-Dimashqi, [d 1338 C.E.].

⁸⁴ He was Muhammad ibn Abdallah ibn Muhammad 'l-Ghayaani, [d. 1273 C.E.]. The name of this text Tas'heel 'l-Fawa'id wa Takmeel 'l-Maqaasid.

⁸⁵ He was Jalaal 'd-Deen Muhammad ibn Ahmad 'l-Mahalli, [d. 1459 C.E.].

⁸⁶ He was Abd 'r-Rahman ibn Husayn 'l-Iraqi, [d. 1404 C.E.].

⁸⁷ He was Sa`d 'd-Deen Mas`ud ibn Umar 't-Taftazani, [d. 1389] and his commentary is called Sharh Mukhtasar.

⁸⁸ The text was called Umm 'l-Baraaheen. For the author see footnote # 183.

⁸⁹ The name of the text is Mandhuumat 'l-Jazaa'iriyya Fii 't-Tawheed by Ahmad ibn Abdallah 'l-Jazaa'iri, [d 1497 C.E.]. The commentary upon this text by as-Sanusi is called al-'Iqd 'f-Fareed Fii Hall Mushkilaat 't-Tawheed.

⁹⁰ He was *Shaykh* Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abd 'l-Kareem ibn `Ata`illah 'l-Iskandari, [d. 1309 C.E.].

with its commentary by az-Zarruq⁹¹. I read with him the metrics of Abu Muqr`i and the Hashimiyya on the science of astronomy with their commentaries⁹², along with the al-Muqaddima of at-Tajuuri⁹³ on the same subject. I read with him the Rajaz of al-Maghili⁹⁴ on logic and the al-Khazrajiyya on the science of prosody with its commentary by as-Shareef's-Sabti.⁹⁵ I read with him a large portion of the Tuhfat 'l-Hukkaam of Ibn Asim with all of its commentary by his son⁹⁶.

All of these were in my own reading. I also made a penetrating study with him of the entire Far`i of Ibn al-Haajib⁹⁷. I attended his detailed reading of the Tawdeeh and I only missed the section on deposited goods up to the section on legal decisions⁹⁸. I read with him much of the al-Muntaqi of al-Baji⁹⁹ and the al-Mudawwana with its commentary by Abu 'l-Hassan 'z-Zarwili¹⁰⁰. I read with him the Shifa of Qadi`Iyad. I read to him half of the Saheeh of al-Bukhari and listened to his reading of it. In the same way I studied the Saheeh of Muslim. I studied with him some parts of the Madkhal of Ibn 'l-Hajj¹⁰¹ and some lessons from the ar-Risaala, the al-Alfiyya and other works. With him I studied the science of exegesis of the Mighty Qur'an up to part of the chapter called al-'Araaf.¹⁰² I heard his delivery of the entire Jaami`l-Mi`yaar of al-Wansharisi which comprises many volumes and other discourses of his.¹⁰³ In all these works I researched into and discussed the problematic issues with him at length and cross-examined him on the most important issues in them.

He was my *shaykh* and professor and no one benefited me in the same manner as he did. By his hand, he wrote me license to transmit all the things for which he himself received license and all the things for which he gave license. May Allah ta`ala reward him with Paradise. I showed him one of my own compositions for which he was pleased with and wrote commendation for it in his own handwriting. He even wrote down some of my researches for himself and I heard him quoting some of them in his lectures. This was due to his objectivity, humility and acceptance of the truth wherever he found it.

⁹¹ He was *Shaykh* Ahmad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad 'z-Zarruq, [d. 1493 C.E.], and his commentary is called Tanbeeh Dhawq 'l-Himam.

⁹² Both these texts are on the science of astronomy. As for the author he was Abu Muqr`i Muhammad ibn Ali 'l-Battiwi, [d. 1365 C.E.]. His metrics concerns the exact determination of the hours.

⁹³ See footnote # 176 concerning at-Tajuuri. The text is called Risaalat Fii 'l-Fusuul 'l-Arba`.

⁹⁴ See footnote # 147.

⁹⁵ The proper name for the al-Khazrajiyya is ar-Raamizat 's-Shaafiyya Fii 'Ilm 'l-'Arud wa 'l-Qaafiyya by Abdallah ibn Uthman 'l-Khazraji, [d. 1243 C.E.]. The commentary referred to above was by Muhammad ibn Ahmad 's-Sabti, [d 1359 C.E.].

⁹⁶ He was Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn `Asim, [d. 1247 C.E.] and the text is Tuhfat 'l-Hukkaam Nukat 'l-'Uquud wa 'l-Ahkaam.

⁹⁷ He was Uthman ibn Umar ibn Abu Bakr ibn 'l-Haajib, [d. 1250 C.E.] and the text is called Jaami` 'l-Ummahat.

⁹⁸ This text is a commentary upon the Mukhtasar of Khalil ibn Ishaq composed by the above mentioned Uthman ibn 'l-Haajib.

⁹⁹ He was Sulayman ibn Khalaf 'l-Baji, [d. 1081 C.E.], and the text is al-Muntaqa Sharh 'l-Muwatta.

¹⁰⁰ He was Abu 'l-Hassan Ali ibn Muhammad 'z-Zarwili, [d. 1318 C.E.].

¹⁰¹ He was Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn 'l-Hajj, [d. 1336 C.E.], and the text is Mudkhal 's-Shar`i 's-Shareef.

¹⁰² This science is called *'ilm 't-tafseer*.

¹⁰³ He was Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Muhammad ibn Abd 'l-Waahid ibn Ali 't-Tilimsani 'l-Wansharisi, [d. 1508 C.E.] and the compiler of one of the greatest works concerning the legal decisions of the Maliki scholars of Andalusia, Morocco and West Africa called al-Mi`yaar 'l-Mughrib `An Fataawi `Ulama Ifriqiyya wa 'l-Andalus wa 'l-Maghrib.

He was also with us when the affliction befell us; for that was the last attachment between him and I. it later reached me that he died on Friday in the month of *Shawaal* in the year 1000 A.H.¹⁰⁴. He was born in the year 930 A.H.¹⁰⁵. He composed a well arranged gloss and marginal notes in his own hand which called attention to what was written in the commentaries of the Mukhtasar of Khalil and other works, following in that book what was in the commentary of at-Tata'i concerning forgetfulness in the prayer. This work evidenced the greatest advantage. I also included it into one of the sections of one of my own works. May Allah ta'ala be merciful to him." Here ends what Ahmadu Baba composed in his an-Nayl.

Some of the masters of the people of the **Sankore'** quarter, whose narration is impeccable related that Muhammad Baghyuyu once gave 1000 *mithqals* of gold as alms by the hand of the jurist, the *shaykh*, the upright *waliy*, the judge Abu Abdallah Modibo Muhammad 'l-Kaburi. Muhammad Baghyuyu divided it among the poor at the door of the **Sankore'** mosque. The reason for this was that the people of the city were suffering from draught and famine at that time. As a result of the draught, *Shaykh* Modibo Muhammad 'l-Kaburi said during one of his lectures, "Whoever begins by giving 1000 *mithqals* of gold in alms, I guarantee him Paradise." Consequently, Muhammad Baghyuyu was the first to furnish the alms and had it divided among the poor and destitute. It was said that *Shaykh Modibo* Muhammad 'l-Kaburi had a dream and in it he heard a voice say, "Do not guarantee the Paradise to anyone after that." It has been related that the ascetic *waliy* and jurist Abd 'r-Rahman the son of the jurist Mahmud narrated that story during one of his lectures in the mosque. Then a man said to him, "O Sidi! Can you now guarantee Paradise to the one who gives 1000 *mithqals* of gold in alms?" Sidi Abd 'r-Rahman said in answer to him, "Only al-Kaburi and his like are the men of that way."

Among them was the *shaykh*, meaning by that, the jurist and judge **Modibo Muhammad 'l-Kaburi**, the *shaykh* of all the *shaykhs*, may Allah ta'ala be merciful and pleased with him and benefit us by him in the two worlds. He settled in Tinbuktu in the ninth century and Allah knows best. He was contemporary to many *shaykhs*. Among them were: the jurist Sidi Abd' r-Rahman 't-Tamimi; the grandfather of the judge Habib¹⁰⁶; the jurist And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir; the maternal grandfather of the jurist and judge Mahmud; the jurist Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit; his father, Muhammad¹⁰⁷; the learned *Qutb* Sidi Yahya at-Tadaalisi and others.

Shaykh Modibo Muhammad 'l-Kaburi attained the utmost degree in erudition and piety. Those who took knowledge from him were the jurist Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit and Sidi Yayha. It was said that a month would not pass before he had completed the entire text of the Tahdheeb of al-Baraada'i, due to the frequency with which he taught it. During that time there were large amounts of Black students from among the people of the West who were *mujtahids* of knowledge and piety¹⁰⁸. So much so that it was said that there are buried with him near his grave some thirty Blacks from Kabura. Each of them was erudite scholars and pious worshippers. His grave is

¹⁰⁴ July, 1593 C.E..

¹⁰⁵ He was born 1524 C.E..

¹⁰⁶ He was al-Qadi Habib ibn Muhammad 's-Saalih ibn Abd 'r-Rahman 't-Tamimi, [d. 1498 C.E.]. He held the post of chief judge during the mercurial years of Sonni Ali.

¹⁰⁷ He was Muhammad Aqit who settled in Tinbuktu with his family from Massina. See footnote # 108

¹⁰⁸ The *Sudanese* or Blacks referred to here were those scholars of Fulbe, Malinke and Soninke origin who came to the region from learning centers such Jenne', Dia, Kabara, Kabura, Kunjuru, Biru, Timbo, Bitu and Massina. It is understood from this that the level of learning of the *Sudanese* was of a high status in caparison to other scholarly clans.

located between the grave of the *waliy* of Allah ta`ala, the jurist al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit and the place where the prayer for rain was usually performed¹⁰⁹. This is based upon what we were told by our *shaykh*, the ascetic jurist al-Amin ibn Ahmad, the brother of the jurist Abd 'r-Rahman, who was responsible for placing the earth over their graves¹¹⁰.

This blessed *shaykh* (*Modibo* Muhammad 'l-Kaburi) had many remarkable miracles. Among them was that one of the students from Marrakech let loose his tongue concerning him and said things about him which were not fitting until he went as far as mispronouncing his name "*al-kaafiri*" instead of "al-Kaburi". By that insinuating that the *Shaykh* was a disbeliever. This man was among the people of high rank and great affluence among the ruling notables. He used to narrate to them the Saheeh of al-Bukhari during the month of *Ramadhan*. As a result of what he said, Allah subjected him with elephantiasis. There came to him medical practitioners (legitimate and bogus) from every region and place until one of the bogus doctors said, "He cannot be cured except with the heart of a young child, which he must eat." As a result many innocent children were unjustly slaughtered by the ruler on behalf of this man. However, this brought no benefit to him until he died in the most disgusting of conditions. We seek refuge with Allah from that! That was related by the learned jurist Ahmadu Baba, may Allah ta`ala be merciful to him.

Among the miracles of *Modibo* Muhammad 'l-Kaburi is what was related to me from my father¹¹¹, may Allah ta`ala be merciful to him, on the authority of his *shaykhs*, that one day during the first ten days of *Dhu 'l-Hijja*, the *Shaykh* went out, accompanied by one of his disciples, to buy a sacrificial animal¹¹². The place where he intended to buy it was just on the other side of the Niger river. The *Shaykh* then proceeded to walk on the surface of the water and the disciples followed behind him swimming, thinking this was the right thing to do. Allah knows best why the disciple did that. After the *Shaykh* finished crossing the river, the disciple began to drown in the middle of the river. The disciple then called out to the *Shaykh* who extended his hand from the shore all the way to the middle of the river and pulled him out. The *Shaykh* then said to him, "What prompted you to do that?!" He responded, "When I saw you walk on the surface of the water, I imagined I could do it also." The *Shaykh* then said, "Where are your feet in comparison to feet which have never walked in disobedience!" The day that he died, may Allah ta`ala be merciful to him, the *waliy* and *imam*, the gnostic *shaykh*, the paradigm and illumined *Qutb*, the complete savior

¹⁰⁹ *Salaat 'l-istisqa'a*, 'the prayer for rain', has its origin in the *Sunna* in the al-Muwatta, "Yahya related to me from Malik from Abdullah ibn Abi Bakr ibn Amr ibn Hazm that he had heard Abbad ibn Tamim say that he had heard Abdullah ibn Zayd al-Mazini say, 'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came out to the place of prayer and asked for rain, and when he faced the *qibla* he turned his cloak inside out.' Malik was asked how many *rakats* there were in the prayer of asking for rain and he said, 'Two *rakats*, and the *imam* does the prayer before he gives the *khutba*. He prays two *rakats*, and then he gives a *khutba* and makes *dua*, facing the *qibla* and turning his cloak inside out. He recites out loud in both *rakats*, and when he turns his cloak inside out he puts what is on his right on his left, and what is on his left on his right, and all the people turn their cloaks inside out when the *imam* does so, and face the *qibla*, sitting."

¹¹⁰ These two were the sons of Ahmad 'l-Mujtahid.

¹¹¹ He was Ahmad ibn 'l-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit.

¹¹² The sacred month *Dhu 'l-Hijja* is the last lunar month of the year. The first ten days of the month is the season for pilgrimage. The climax of the pilgrimage comes on the 'day of sacrifice' marking the day when Prophet Ibrahim was commanded to sacrifice his first born Isma'il. On this day the pilgrims as well as the Muslims who did not make the pilgrimage make a sacrifice of a lamb, sheep or cow to commemorate this blessed tradition of sacrificing the worldly things for the Creator.

and wayfarer, the sublime *shareef*¹¹³ - Sidi Yahya 't-Tadaalisi said in his poem in eulogy of him:

"Remember! For in remembrance there are sublime benefits.

Wherein are to be found the best of support and subsistence.

Have you not seen how the traveler obtains special favors?

But those who travel with their thoughts are even more illustrious.

Remembrance gives the mind the good nature of youth

By means of it the mind outstrips the chivalrous youth and it becomes strong.

Here we will mention the lineage of *Shaykh* Sidi Yahya, may Allah ta`ala be merciful to him and benefit us by him and reward us with his *baraka* in this world and the Hereafter. He was **Yahya ibn Abd 'r-Rahim** ibn Abd 'r-Rahman 't-Tha`labi ibn Yahya 'l-Buka'i ibn Abu'l-Hassan Ali ibn Abdallah ibn Abd 'l-Jabbar ibn Tamim ibn Harmuz ibn Haatim ibn Qusay ibn Yusef ibn Yusha`i ibn Warad ibn Bataal ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Isa ibn Muhammad ibn 'l-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abi Taalib, may Allah ennoble his face and may Allah be pleased with them and be merciful to them.

He came to Tinbuktu, and Allah ta`ala knows best, during the beginning of the government of the Tuaregs. There he met the Tinbuktu-*Koy*, Muhammad Naddi, who showed him love and unbounded respect. He then had a mosque built for him and made him the *imam* of it¹¹⁴. He attained the highest degree in knowledge, piety and friendship with Allah. His renown spread throughout the regions and in every horizon. His *baraka* became manifest to the common as well as the elite of the society. He made constant remembrance of death and possessed spiritual unveiling. The jurist Abu 'l-Barakat Mahmud said, "No single person's feet alighted upon the soil of Tinbuktu except that Sidi Yahya was more excellent than him." Qadi Mahmud's son, the ascetic *waliy*, the jurist and preacher Abu Zayd Abd 'r-Rahman ibn 'l-faqih Mahmud said, "It has been made a daily duty upon the people of the region of Tinbuktu to visit the tomb of Sidi Yahya to take from his *baraka*. Even if the person is three days travel from it." It has been related that in the beginning of his affair he was free of all social transactions and intercourse. Then he became preoccupied with social intercourse and transactions later. It was reported that before he became preoccupied with social life, he would see a vision of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace every night. Then it got to the point where he did not see him except once a week. Then after that, only once a month. Then after that, only once a year. When he was asked about the reason for this, he said, "I think it is only from these social transactions I am involved with." They said to him, "Why do you not leave them?!" He responded, "No because I dislike being in need of people."

Examine, if you will and may Allah be merciful to you and us - the affliction of social intercourse and transactions along with the fact that this blessed *shaykh* took the utmost precautions in guarding these from detrimental actions. Examine also the burden of being in need of people, how this blessed *sayyid*¹¹⁵ was willing to forego

¹¹³*Shareef* (lit. 'noble', pl. *shurafa'*) -the descendents of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace through his daughter Fatima and his cousin Ali ibn Abi Taalib. Each *shareef* draws his descent from one or both of the grandsons of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: Hasan and Husayn. Many of the descendents of the Prophet fled or traveled into Africa and intermixed with its people. The *shareef* is sometimes called *sidi*, *sayyid* or *mawlay*.

¹¹⁴ This mosque/educational center was named Sidi Yahya mosque. It was sometimes called the mosque of Muhammad Naddi. It is located in the center of the city of Tinbuktu along the Jingerber-Sankore' axis. The mosque acted as the *qutb* (pole/axis) of the metropolis because it was crucial in the integrating of the two main population centers.

¹¹⁵ See above footnote #231.

this great and exalted blessings of visions of the Prophet in order not to be depended on people. We ask Allah for forgiveness and well-being in the two worlds. It has been related that one day he was in one of his lectures which was being held outside in the shade of the minaret. He was teaching and around him sat a group of students. Suddenly there appeared a cloud which began to give forth rain until the students were ready to leave. Then a loud thunder clap was heard. He said to the students, "Take it easy and relax. The rains will not fall here. The Angel has ordered it to send forth rain to another land." This was allowed because of the *shaykhs* high spiritual state. Our *shaykh*, the ascetic jurist al-Amin ibn Ahmad, may Allah be merciful to him informed us that one day some of the female neighbors of the *Shaykh* Sidi Yahya were cooking fresh fish. The fish was being cooked from the early morning until night and the fire had no affect upon it. They were amazed at that until he heard about that. He said to them, "My feet touched something damp when I left for the *subh* prayer today. This is the reason because the fire cannot burn anything which has touched my body."

It has been related that some of the students of the **Sankore'** university/mosque came to him to take knowledge from him. He said, "O people of **Sankore'**, sufficient for you in your learning is Sidi Abd 'r-Rahman't-Tamimi. He came from the lands of the *al-Hijaz*, accompanying *Sultan* Musa, the ruler of Mali when he returned from the pilgrimage. Sidi Abd 'r-Rahman settled in Tinbuktu to teach. There at the **Sankore'** university he attended many of the lectures of the Black jurist. When he realized that even the Black students surpassed him in the knowledge of jurisprudence, he journeyed to Fez and studied knowledge of jurisprudence there. He eventually returned and resided in the city, marrying into the families of the Black inhabitants. He is the grandfather of the judge Habib, may Allah be merciful to him." In the year 866 A.H. Sidi Yahya died and soon after that his close friend the Tinbuktu-Koy, *Shaykh* Muhammad Naddi died, as has been mentioned. May Allah be merciful to both of them.

Among them was the *Shaykh* **Masra Bubu 'z-Zaghrani**, the close friend of the jurist Mahmud ibn Umar. He was an eminent scholar, benevolent and an upright slave. He was unparalleled among his people because they were not known for uprightness nor excellent Islam. He kept the company of the preacher the ascetic jurist Abd'r-Rahman ibn *al-faqih* Mahmud in the beginning of his affair. He was directed by his guidance and he used to listen to his sermons. It was said that one day he was in one of *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman's lectures, when the *shaykh* sought permission from the people to leave to pray over a Muslim who had died. They asked who he was and it was said that the man was from the Zaghrani clan. *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman then said, "We should pray over him because of the *baraka* of *Shaykh* Masira Bubu." He then left and prayed over the man's body.

Among them was the knower of Allah ta'ala, the spiritually unveiled *shaykh*, the jurist, the *waliy* of Allah and possessor of many miracles, **Abu Abdallah Muhammad** ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Musa **'Ariyan'r-Raas**. He was among the righteous slaves of Allah. He was ascetic and generous, who gave away all his wealth as alms for the sake of Allah. Abundant gifts and wealth would be brought to him but he would not utilize any of it for himself. Rather, he would give it in alms to the poor and destitute. He would also purchase many slaves and free them for the sake of Allah ta'ala seeking by that the next life. In his home he had no door so that people entered his home without his permission and used to visit him from all directions and during all times of the day. It was after the *`asr* prayer on Fridays when the people would most times visit him. The people who came to him were those who realized his

abundance of *baraka* from the ruling class of the people of the Makhzin, those under their authority and travelers resting from their passage. He was always in a state of happiness or disquiet. When he was joyous he would talk to those who came to him with the most electrifying and curious stories or he would laugh and become completely abandon in that. Or sometimes he would slap his blessed hands in the hands of those near him in his lectures during humorous situations while placing his left hand over his mouth. He used to do this a lot. During the times when he was disquieted he would not talk with anyone except to answer those who questioned him. And the most of which was heard from him during these times was: "What Allah desires will be and what he does not desire will not be."¹¹⁶ Or he would say, "Allah is enough for me and Allah's hearing is sufficient for he who calls upon Him. There is nothing beyond Allah."¹¹⁷ Whenever people would seek from him a prayer of opening during times of hardship, he would raise his blessed hands and recite after seeking refuge with Allah and the *basmalla*¹¹⁸, the chapter of *Yasin* to the end¹¹⁹. He would then say, "O Most Merciful of the Merciful, O Most Merciful of the Merciful, O Most Merciful of the Merciful".¹²⁰ Then he would read the *Faatiha* three times¹²¹ and then make supplication, saying, "May Allah secure us and you, may He settle our affairs and your affairs, and may He correct our completion and yours in good.", three times.¹²²

This was his practice up until his final years as that supreme journey of death approached. It was then that he had doors affixed to his home and he would not give permission for people to enter his home the way he did during the earlier years. On the contrary, he would sometimes turn people away. During this time he would restrict the reciting of the *al-Fatiha* to one time and eventually he left it all together. One day he said to me when I was sitting with him, "Everyone who comes to me now, I say to them that I am not able to read the prayer for opening they way I used to." He then made the said supplication for me. This was the last thing he did, may Allah be merciful to him and be pleased with him and raise his rank in the most exalted of stations.

In the beginning of his affair when he was a young man, the *waliy* of Allah, the gathered *qutb*, Sidi Abu 'l-Makaaram Muhammad 'l-Bakri once manifested

¹¹⁶ ما شاء الله كان وما لم يشاء لم يكن

¹¹⁷ حسبى الله وكفى سمع الله لمن دعى ليس وراء الله منتهى

¹¹⁸ بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

¹¹⁹ *Yaasin* is the thirty-sixth chapter of the Quran. It is considered the heart of the Quran based upon what the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, "Everything has a heart and the heart of the Quran is the chapter *Yaasin*." It is called by the Africans *ad-Daafi`* -'the Defender' because it's a defense against every harmful thing. They call it *al-Qaadiya* -the Accomplisher' because by it all things are accomplished.

¹²⁰ يا ارحم الراحمين يا ارحم الراحمين يا ارحم الراحمين It has been related by al-Haakim on the authority of Abu Amama that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, "Verily there is an Angel who is responsible for the one who says, 'O Merciful of the Merciful'. Whoever says it three times, the Angel says to him, 'Verily the Merciful of the Merciful has accepted your prayer, so ask whatever you wish'."

¹²¹ The *Faatiha* is the first chapter of the Quran. It is called the *Umm 'l-Kitaab* (the mother of the Book) also *al-Hamd* (the chapter of Praise). It has been related by al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Abu Sa`id 'l-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, "The *Faatiha* is a cure." The Africans believe among the advantages of this chapter is that no one is able to enumerate or deny its power. Whoever persist in reciting it will see extraordinary things in his life and will attain all of his hopes.

¹²² اصلحنا الله وابلحنا واصلح امورنا واموركم واصلح عاقبتنا وعاقبتكم في عافية

himself miraculously to Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas¹²³. This happened when Muhammad 'l-Bakri had left the company of his beloved friend in Allah ta`ala, the jurist Ahmad ibn 'l-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit, which was a habitual practice of miraculous visitation between them. He found the young Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas sitting next to the door of the **Sankore'** university/mosque which was still locked during the time of the suns descent from its zenith. In the hand of the young man was the ar-Risaala of Ibn Abi Zayd 'l-Qayrawaani, which he studied with his teacher and *shaykh*, the jurist Abd 'r-Rahman ibn 'l-*faqih* Mahmud. The blessed *Shaykh* Muhammad 'l-Bakri stood next to him and asked, "What is the book which is in your hands?" He said, "The ar-Risaala." He then extended his blessed hand and said, "Show it to me." He then placed it in his hand. He perused through the book a little and then returned it back to him. He then said, "May Allah bless you in it." He then took the book and had no idea who this man was nor had he ever seen a person with his skin complexion before. When his *shaykh*, the jurist Abd 'r-Rahman came to the mosque for the lecture, he informed him of what had happened. *Shaykh* Abd 'r-Rahman considered that the man had to be *Shaykh* Muhammad 'l-Bakri. When *Shaykh* Abd 'r-Rahman left the mosque he met his brother, the jurist Ahmad ibn 'al-*faqih* Mahmud and said to him, "Did Sidi Muhammad 'l-Bakri come to you today?" He said, "Yes, and he stayed with me today a little longer than is his normal custom." *Shaykh* Abd 'r-Rahman then informed him of what had happened between the blessed *shaykh* and Muhammad the son of Ayd Ali Musa, as he was known among the people of the **Sankore'** quarter.¹²⁴

It was after this that the reasoning of Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas became muddled, so much so that the people assumed that he had gone insane. During this time he only spent his nights in the mosque. However, the end of his affair eventually turned out well. I was informed by a reliable source from among his students that he was asked, "Is there anyone in this world who has seen Allah in his heart?" He said, Yes. There is someone with you in these lands now who has seen Allah ta`ala, majestic be His might." The student said, "I then relayed this to our *shaykh* the jurist Muhammad Baba ibn *al-faqih* al-Amin without mentioning who informed me". He then said, "The one who said that to you is the one who has seen Him blessed and exalted be He." One day there were three of us with him, myself and two other men. This was after the *asr* prayer on Friday. The *shaykh* was in a state of happiness conversing with us, when a rain cloud swirled up. Then his face altered and he became as though he was confused and broke off his talking. This caused much disturbance in his assembly. When the first of the rain began falling, he began to speak rudely to us and became very severe. He then said, "I do not sit with people when it rains!" He then dismissed all of us. I then informed our *shaykh*, the jurist al-Amin and he too was astonished at his actions.

It has been related that one of the brothers said, "I used to have a neighbor with whom I used to sit at the end of the day and converse with. One day I sought of missed him. Since his home was near my home, I decided to walk to his house in order to see how he was doing. When I approached his door to give him the greetings,

¹²³ The ability to translocate is among the miracles attributed to the Messengers, Prophets and *awliyya*. It has its foundation in the Book of Allah when He says, "And unto Solomon (We subjected) the wind, whereof the morning course was a month's journey (from Damascus to Syria its journey took from the morning until noon) and the evening course a month's journey (from Syria to Jerusalem its journey took from noon until sunset)." [34:12]; as Abdullahi Dan Fodio says in his Diya' 't-Ta'weel Fii Ma`ana 't-Tanzeel.

¹²⁴ The term *Ayda* in the language of the Tuaregs mens 'the son of'.

the doors were suddenly closed in my face and someone said, "My master said you cannot see him at this hour." I was on the point of losing my temper for what the person had said. I then struck my chest with my bare hands and said, "The likes of me comes to so-and-so's home and he refuses me without me even seeing him?!" I then became determined never to speak to him again.. After that I visited the blessed *shaykh* Sidi 'l-Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas. When I was in his presence he initiated the conversation with me after giving the greetings of peace saying, "There was a *waliy* from among the *awliyya* of Allah ta`ala who was deprived of one his spiritual states. As a result he became so extremely dejected that he endeavored to meet *al-Khidr*¹²⁵, upon him be peace so that he could be a means with Allah ta`ala in having this spiritual state returned to him. However, Allah ta`ala returned it to him by His generosity and bounty without the median of anyone. After this *al-Khidr* came to the door of his home and gave the greetings of peace. The *waliy* said, "Who are you?" He said, "The one you wished for." He then responded, "Allah has sufficed me from being in need of you." *Al-Khidr* then departed without striking his chest and saying, 'O so-and-so, will you refuse the likes of me?!' You see son, people have excuses and perhaps they can be in a condition which they do not wish anyone to see them in." I then understood what the *shaykh* was hinting at. I then repented in my soul and sought forgiveness for what I had done. I then went to that friend of mine and gave him the greetings of peace. He ordered the door to be opened immediately. I entered and he said, "I apologize for what happened when you came and did not see me. I was lying flat out on my stomach at that time. I was in a condition in which I did not wish anyone to see me." I then said to him, "May Allah pardon us and you all together."

One of his neighbors reported that he said, "I went to *Qadi* Mahmud ibn Ahmad ibn Abd 'r-Rahman one day and he said to me, 'You have a neighbor over there, do you not?' I said, 'Yes.' He then said, 'Is he not that *waliy* who does not come to the *juma`* prayer?' I remained silent. Later, I went to visit my neighbor Sidi Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas and he said to me, 'O so-and-so, shall we pardon you or not?' I said, 'Of course pardon is better.'" He then said, 'If we do not pardon you, then that which is undesirable will happen. And say to the one who claims that people are not attending *juma`* prayer, 'How does he know that even before he himself comes to the *juma`* that the one he claims is not coming is not already there?' Stories which are of a similar nature about *Shaykh* Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas are numerous.¹²⁶ May Allah ta`ala be merciful to him, be pleased with him and benefit us by him in the two worlds, Amen.

Among them was the learned jurist, the upright ascetic, the meticulously pious, our *shaykh al-Amin ibn Ahmad*¹²⁷, the brother of the jurist, Abd 'r-Rahman ibn Ahmad. His tongue was constantly moving in the remembrance of Allah ta`ala. Sidi Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas only named him al-Amin '*d-Dhaakir* ('the one makes much remembrance of Allah') because of that. One of the brothers of the **Sankore'** quarter informed me on the authority of his father, who was an elderly man, that he said, "I have met the scholars and pundits of the **Sankore'** university and many of the

¹²⁵ He is Abu 'l-Abass *al-Khidr* Bayla` ibn Malikan, who is believed to be alive presently and will remain until the appearance of the *Dajjal* (Anti-Christ). He is the one referred to in the Quran as the teacher of Prophet Moses [18:65], "So they found one of Our servants on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We had taught knowledge from Our own presence." He is said to be the helper of the wayfarers and those who are traveling the spiritual journey.

¹²⁶ He was able to attend the *juma`* prayer in the metaphysical sense while he remained physically in his home. This miracle was conferred upon him when he had attained an advanced age.

¹²⁷ See above footnote # 70.

righteous forebears who abundantly reside in its quarter, and I have never seen anyone whose spiritual state was like that of the jurist, Al-Amin, concerning the excellence of his *Islam*." He, may Allah be merciful to him, informed me in one of his lectures that the jurist Umar ibn Muhammad ibn Umar, the brother of the jurist Ahmad Maghia, that he was studying the text of the as-Shifa of *Qadi`Iyad*¹²⁸ with the learned jurist and traditionist Ahmad ibn 'l-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit¹²⁹ while his son the jurist Ahmad Baba and the jurist and judge Sidi Ahmad were also present. The professor did not allow anyone to ask questions during his lectures except the knower of Allah Umar ibn Muhammad and Sidi Ahmad in certain occasions. As for his son Ahmad Baba, whenever he would ask a question, he would say to him, "Be quiet!" This was his custom until one day the professor asked the student Umar a question about the verb *qabuha* (to be morally repugnant). He asked, "Is it a transitive verb or is it intransitive?" Umar was silent. He then asked Sidi Ahmad the same question and he too was silent. I then recited this Qur'anic verse, '*They are from those who are morally repulsive.*'¹³⁰ The professor raised his eyes towards me and smiled."

We were among a group showing to our *shaykh* the jurist al-Amin the book called Dalaa'il 'l-Khayraat¹³¹. The copy which we had varied in confirming the expression of our *shaykh* and in omitting some things he said. We asked him about that and he said, "We once showed this same problem to the erudite *shaykh* the jurist Muhammad Baghyuyu and asked him about that. He said, 'These variations are not detrimental nor is there any defect in them.' We also asked about the words of the author of the Dalaa'il, "And that You forgive so-and-so the son of so-and-so." He said, 'We used to also show this to the jurist Abd'r-Rahman ibn *al-faqih* Mahmud and asked him about that and he answered, 'And that You forgive Your slave Abd'r-Rahman.' And he did not mention his father. As for the exact time of his death, we will mention the circumstances surrounding it, if Allah wills. It occurred in the year 1041 A.H.¹³². The exact year in which Sidi Muhammad `Aryan 'r-Raas died was 1020 A.H.¹³³. We will also explain the circumstance surrounding his death, if Allah wills

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¹²⁸ See above footnote # 86.

¹²⁹ He died 6 September 1583 C.E.. For his biographical sketch see chapter X above.

¹³⁰ Quran - 28:32.

¹³¹ The Dalaa'il 'l-Khayraat is the most celebrated text on the prayers upon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ever composed. Its author was *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Sulayman 'l-Jazuuli. It is recited throughout the Muslim world and especially in Muslim Africa.

¹³² This corresponded with the year 1637 C.E..

¹³³ This corresponded with the year 1618 C.E..