

GAZING AT THE SUN
REMARKS ON THE EGYPTIAN MAGICIAN AL-BŪNĪ
AND HIS WORK

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The Corpus Būnianum

Whoever leafs through the editions of the works of the Egyptian magician Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Būnī (d. 622/1225) is bound to be soon confused. In his search for some structure in the author's argument, the reader will instead find numerous repetitions, and not seldom will he discover that he is reading what proves to be a second or third handling of issues that have already been the subject of earlier discussions, even in the very same work by al-Būnī which he has at hand. The more one reads in al-Būnī's published works, the more the impression grows that we here have the result of a continuous process of permutation of constituent elements and ideas. This may lead us to the assumption that some, if not all, of al-Būnī's works were not written by himself. Instead, we may consider several of the titles that go under al-Būnī's name as part of a *Corpus Būnianum*, as the product of the work of several generations of practicing magicians, who arranged al-Būnī's work and thought and brought it out, probably while mixing these with elements of their own works. This does not merely imply that there is a pseudepigraphic Būnian literature, but also that some works by al-Būnī, or ascribed to him, may in fact constitute a composition of fragments of very diverse origin.¹ This should not shock the trained philologist, who usually thinks in terms of a fixated text with certain authorship and a reconstructable

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¹ Mohamed M. El-Gawhary, *Die Gottesnamen im magischen Gebrauch in den al-Buni zugeschriebenen Werken* (Bonn, 1968), p. 17. El-Gawhary dates the composition of the *Shams al-ma'arif* to at least a century after al-Būnī's death. This is not contradicted by the datings of the Leiden manuscripts of the *Shams al-ma'arif* and the *Tartīb al-da'awāt* (see the 'Bibliographical note' below for all references to manuscripts and printed works).

stemma of manuscripts, since in the case of popular texts, both magical and other, the author is unimportant and has often disappeared behind 'his' text. Users and readers of such popular classics treat the work as their own books, in the double sense of the word, and feel free to alter these.²

Western scholarship has not always been kind to al-Būnī. Ullmann characterizes his intellectual achievement, while contrasting al-Būnī's ingenuity in analyzing a finely structured cosmos to his practical approach of the unseen world, as a sign of 'colossal credulity', and al-Būnī's method of using the numerical and other properties of words and letters as 'stupid, formalistic arithmetic.'³ When reading such qualifications, one wonders whether Ullmann by this remark had actually wished to propose that al-Būnī, if only he had worked in a less credulous and less formalistic arithmetical way, would really have provided his readers with meaningful answers to the enigma of the universe.

Ullmann is however correct in stating that al-Būnī's works do not constitute a source for our knowledge of the older Arabic literature on magic, and he proposes that they rather represent a cross section of practices and beliefs which were current before, during and after al-Būnī's lifetime, during which period the corpus, which now counts some forty⁴ titles, has come into being. Al-Būnī is the figurehead of this corpus, nothing more. Personally, I think that if the assumption of a popular origin of the varieties of magic discussed can be documented, it would make the Būnian corpus even more interesting.

Ibn Khaldūn, who often takes a relaxed view on those fields of science which he does not personally endorse, quotes al-Būnī on his own view of the attainability of letter magic, the most conspicuous element in his works, as: 'One should not think that one can get at the secret of the

² See e.g. El-Gawhary, *Die Gottesnamen*, p. 14ff. for a full discussion on the genesis of the Būnian corpus.

³ Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden [etc.] 1972), p. 391.

⁴ Brockelmann, *GAL*, G I, p. 497, in combination with S I, pp. 910-911, mentions 39 titles, but he has not even attempted to relate these to one another. His list still reflects the order in which he worked through the catalogues that constitute his primary sources for the bibliography of al-Būnī's works. Progress in manuscript cataloguing will reveal more titles. However, some of Brockelmann's 39 different titles will, upon closer examination, prove to be identical with others which go by other titles. The Corpus Būnianum is as yet far from being clearly defined.

letters with the help of logical reasoning. One gets to it with the help of vision and divine aid.⁵

By far the most widespread and best-known work by al-Būnī is his *Shams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-'awārif*, which may be translated as 'The Sun of all Knowledge and the Niceties of Those who Know'. It is a true encyclopaedia of Islamic, or Islamicised, magic. The reason for the book's popularity must have been the practical use for which it was evidently composed. It contains only few theoretical passages and the work abounds with instructions for the manufacture of amulets and popular medical recipes for all sorts of purposes and occasions. The point of departure for al-Būnī's propositions are *al-Asmā' al-ḥusnā*, the 'Beautiful Names' of God. Although these ninety-nine names are not all literally derived from the Qur'an,⁶ both by their very origin and by their semantic designation they have, in course of time, acquired an almost divine status. The elements of which they consist are the letters of the Arabic alphabet, and the many uses of letters (*ḥurūf*) are a recurrent theme in the Corpus Būnianum. The Arabic alphabet is of divine origin anyway, because God's final revelation to mankind was given in a clear Arabic tongue,⁷ and it may therefore be assumed that the writing on the well-preserved tablet, the archetype of the Qur'an which is preserved in heaven, is in fact the Arabic script. But even if this assumption would somehow prove to be inexact or incorrect, the very fact that God's ninety-nine names are, at least in this world, written in Arabic script makes the letters through which they are expressed, into holy and magically powerful constituent parts for all sorts of formulas, prayers, well-proven recipes and amulets. This is the idea which lies at the basis of most of al-Būnī's magical devices.

Western scholarship got a first grasp of the content of the *Shams al-ma'ārif* through Ahlwardt's detailed list of the chapter titles of the Berlin manuscript of the text.⁸ The content of many other manuscripts

⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah. An introduction to History*. Translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal (London, 1958), III, p. 174. See for another example of Ibn Khaldūn's common sense his view on the traditional sciences ('... no place for the intellect in them...'), *ibid.*, II, p. 436.

⁶ Louis Gardet, 'al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New ed.), I (Leiden, 1960), p. 714.

⁷ Qur'an 16:103.

⁸ W. Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften [der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin]*, III (Berlin, 1891), pp. 509-510. The first editions published in the Middle East and India precede Ahlwardt's catalogue.

of the *Shams al-ma'ārif* closely follows this pattern. However, if one were to assume that the numerous uncritical and commercial editions which have appeared in the Orient since the middle of the 19th century follow that selfsame pattern, then one is in for a surprise. Although the printed editions are rather uniform in their content, they diverge widely from the manuscript tradition of this work. This can immediately be seen, not only by comparison between the texts, but especially from the enormous amount of figures, squares and other graphics in the printed editions, whereas the manuscripts have only a limited number of such features.

In the manuscripts, where the title is usually given by the author in his prologue,⁹ the book is entitled *Shams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-'awārif*, and this title is equally given in the prologue to the work in the printed editions. However, the title-pages of the printed editions give slightly different title, namely *Shams al-'awārif al-kubrā wa-laṭā'if al-'awārif*, which makes all the difference. There are two ways to explain this addition. One may interpret this additional term *al-kubrā*, 'the larger/largest version', within the context of approaches in classical Islamic scholarship, where an author would compose several versions of one and the same work. It is not uncommon in many branches of Muslim scholarship to have an extended version, a concise version and even in some cases an intermediate version in circulation. Within that context, the addition *al-kubrā* to the title might indicate that the printed editions offer such an extended version, whereas the known manuscripts only give the shorter or the intermediate version.¹⁰ This may be as it is, but another explanation of the additional word *al-kubrā* in the title of the printed editions is possible and more probable. When the *Shams al-ma'ārif* was first prepared for print, an enormous corpus of magical squares, schedules, circles and other graphics with their accompanying texts, was added to it. The unknown publisher or editor, who must have been responsible for this, may have wished to bring out a version that would supersede all other (manuscript) versions. The title, *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* may be translated as 'the (most) extensive *Shams al-ma'ārif*' whereby it is to

⁹ Generally speaking, titles on title-pages, or on the lower edge of the book block for that matter, are additions by copyists, librarians, owners or readers, and have less bibliographical value than the information given by an author in his introductory remarks.

¹⁰ The terms *kabir*, *basīf*, *mabsūf*, *mutawwal*, etc. are all used for such extensive versions, and this would not exclude the use of the word *kubrā* in the same context.

be understood that the additions are the publisher's own. This example of the first, or of an early, edition became the norm, and many of the later editions, if not all, contain this extensified and over-illustrated version of the text. As a result, the *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* consists of many parts that seem to have simply been patched together without much consideration for compository requirements and their mutual relevance. Hence the confusion which I noted at the beginning of this article.

Al-Būnī's Tartīb al-Da'awāt

If the *Shams al-ma'ārif*, whether *kubrā* or not, has become a popular and wide-spread text, because of its practical use and its matter-of-fact and non-intellectual approach of the mysterious world of the unseen, the opposite is true for a text by al-Būnī which so far has escaped the attention of scholars. It is a work entitled *Tartīb al-da'awāt fī takhṣīṣ al-awqāt 'alā ikhtilāf al-irādāt*, which may perhaps be translated as 'The Order of Invocative Prayers. On the Determination of the Moments, according to the Different Wishes'. It is a rare text, and I am not aware of any other copy than the manuscript in the Leiden University Library.¹¹ Although it was duly mentioned in all of this library's catalogues,¹² it somehow escaped Brockelmann's attention, and, as a result, was not mentioned among his thirty-nine titles, nor does it seem to have attracted any further scholarly attention. Already the indication of the name of the author, immediately after the *basmala*, makes it clear that it was written after his death, probably by an admirer or a pupil.¹³ Its content is a mixture of the well-known Būnian themes on the magical use of letters, divine names and sentences from the Qur'an, but astrological and other

¹¹ MS Or. 1233. It has been in Leiden since the mid-18th century, first in the private collection of J.J. Schultens (1716–1778). It was auctioned off in 1780, and in 1781 it was registered by the University Library, together with other manuscripts of the Schultens collection. It may already have been in Europe before it came into Schultens' possession.

¹² Lastly in P. Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and other collections in The Netherlands*. 1st ed. (Leiden, 1957) and 2nd ed. (The Hague, 1980), p. 374.

¹³ Beginning on p. 1: قال الشيخ الإمام العارف العالم الرباني مزي المریدین شیخ السائلین قدوة العارفين ابو: العباس أحمد بن علي بن يوسف البوني القرشي قدس الله روحه ونور ضريحه.

considerations are given here as well. In the overall level of its intellectual approach, the work differs from the *Shams al-ma'arif*. Another difference consists in the fact that the application of amulets and recipes is made subservient to the appropriate moment, and such moments are determined by astrological considerations. Also concepts such as *ṭabī'a*, 'nature', and *imtizāj*, 'mixing', of the natural elements of the letters are introduced and discussed. The four elements (fire, air, water and earth) are, among other things, brought into connection with the values of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, and consequently with the magical value of the words and sentences which they constitute. One may find such considerations and concepts in the *Shams al-ma'arif* as well, but in the *Tartīb al-da'awāt* they seem to receive more attention, and, it would seem, on a higher intellectual level than is the case in al-Būnī's other works. This in fact may be the reason why the text is so rare. Another reason for its rarity may be the fact that the Leiden manuscript of the *Tartīb al-da'awāt* stands out by a large number of expertly drawn and sophisticatedly constructed magical squares and figures. These, too, may have hindered the manufacture of more manuscripts and the spread of this text.

The general structure of the content of the *Tartīb al-da'awāt* is familiar enough. After an introduction on the subject of the divine names and the letters of the names as their constituent elements, al-Būnī (if he is the author) treats the divine names according to a categorization of his own (pp. 14–100). In the following, which is the main part of the text, the author sets out to treat Qur'anic sentences (*mufradāt al-Qur'ān*) and the magical operations (*a'māl*) which he performs in connection with these. The Qur'anic sentences seem to be given more or less in their order of occurrence in the Qur'an, a habit which is highly recommended among readers of the Qur'an.¹⁴ This order is not strictly adhered to, however. The first quotation is from *Sūrat al-Baqara* (p. 101), and the last one

¹⁴ See for this recommended habit e.g., 'Alī Muḥammad al-Dabbā', *Kitāb faṭḥ al-karīm al-mannān fī ādāb ḥamalāt al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1353/1934), p. 10: 'It is a recommended custom that he [that is the *Qārī* who recites fragments of the Holy Book, JJW] recites in the order of the Qur'an text, because that order is there for a wise reason (*ḥikma*).' This short text by a 20th-century author on handling the divine word is available in many editions. It is often published together with *al-Tibyān fī ādāb ḥamalāt al-Qur'ān*, a similar text, by al-Nawawī. One of the editions which I have used is the one published in Cairo (Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Halabī) in 1353/1934. An English translation of the *Faṭḥ al-karīm al-mannān* by myself is forthcoming in the Yūsuf Ibiḥ Memorial volume, to be published by the al-Furqān Foundation in London.

from *Sūrat al-Nās* (p. 332), and generally speaking the author adheres to the order of the *sūras* and *āyāt*, but a random check reveals a few irregularities. One may view this part of the *Tartīb al-da'awāt* as a selective exegesis of the Qur'an and the work of the author as a systematic attempt to make magic out of God's Word.

One feature may be discussed here in more detail. At the end of the work, the author treats the *Qalam al-ṭabī'ī*, the 'natural secret alphabet' (pp. 335–337), and he gives a table of this secret alphabet, which he connects with the four elements. The division according to the elements is as follows. Fire (*Nār*) has *alif, bā', tā', thā', jīm, ḥā', khā'*. Air (*Hawā'*) has *dāl, dhāl, rā', zāy, ṭā', zā', kāf*. Water (*Mā'*) has *lām, mīm, nūn, ṣād, ḍād, 'ayn, ghayn*. Earth (*Turāb*) has *fā', qāf, sīn, shīn, hā', wāw, yā'*. From the magical literature of the period in which the Corpus Būnianum has originated, at least two more examples of this particular 'natural script' are known from the survey of secret and esoteric scripts which was compiled by the *hurūfī* mystic al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454) in his work *Kitāb mabāhij al-a'lām fi manāhij al-aqlām*.¹⁵ On f. 25a–b of the Leiden manuscript of this text, *al-Qalam al-ṭabī'ī* is explained as the *Qalam al-ḥikma*, the 'wisdom script', and its invention is attributed to a certain Ardīmūs al-Ḥakīm, whom I have not identified. Al-Biṣṭāmī in his survey quotes yet another 'natural script', which was purportedly taken from the work *Kayfiyyat al-ittifāq fi tarkīb al-awfāq*, a compilation made by al-Shaykh Ya'īsh b. Ibrāhīm al-Umawī al-Andalusī.¹⁶ Although the explanations of the nature and use of these 'natural scripts' are entirely different between al-Būnī, al-Biṣṭāmī and al-Shaykh Ya'īsh, the signs of the 'natural script' as given by al-Būnī and al-Shaykh Ya'īsh are remarkably similar in shape, whereas the script proposed by al-Biṣṭāmī is entirely different from that of the other two authors. Whether or not the interest in such secret alphabets in different works dating from the 9/15th century would indicate that there is a multiple use from different sources of similar or related content, needs further investigation. Apart from more detailed information on the history of esoteric alphabets, it also may shed some

¹⁵ He is 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Hanafī al-Biṣṭāmī, see GAL G II, p. 232. His work is quoted here after the Leiden MS Or. 14.121. See Jan Just Witkam, *Catalogue of Arabic manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and other collections in The Netherlands* (Leiden, 1983–1989), pp. 210–218, esp. p. 214. See also his work *al-Fawā'ih al-miskiyya fi 'l-fawātiḥ al-makkiyya* (Leiden MS Or. 947).

¹⁶ Cursory mention of this 9/15th-century author is made in GAL S II, p. 379. The work *Kayfiyyat al-ittifāq* is mentioned in GAL S N II, ad p. 155.

light on the methods and chronology of the composition of the works which are part of the Corpus Būnianum.

Al-Būnī's spiritual genealogies

Ullmann seems to have expressed his unfavourable judgment of al-Būnī's working method exclusively on the basis of the printed editions of *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, since he mentions one particular section in the book which is absent in all manuscripts which I have seen. It is a number of *sanad's*, lists of authorities whom the author considers to be his predecessors or teachers, a sort of spiritual or educational pedigree, which is far from a rare feature in Islamic scholarly literature.¹⁷ At the end of part 4 of the *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* is an epilogue which by content and form is different from the rest of the work. It is titled 'Epilogue in which is mentioned the chain of our *shaykhs* [...]'.¹⁸ The tone of this section is much more matter-of-fact, sometimes even personal, which stands in contrast to the descriptions of the world of magic phenomena in the main part of the *Shams al-ma'ārif*, in which the author remains rather impersonal towards his readers. One wonders when and why these *sanad's* were added to the text, and what their origin might be. If they were not integral part of the *Shams al-ma'ārif* from the very beginning (and the manuscript tradition does not seem to warrant this), they may have been part of the author's *Fahrāsa*, the educational (auto)biography, a genre which has become particularly popular in the Maghrib. The present *sanad's* may have been added to the printed text of the *Shams al-ma'ārif*, and probably at a quite late date. This addition as well may have been the initiative of an early publisher of the printed text. However, its origin may also lie in one particular manuscript, or diploma text, which at some stage was added to the *Shams al-ma'ārif*.

¹⁷ See Jan Just Witkam, 'The human element between text and reader. The *ijāza* in Arabic manuscripts,' in Yasin Dutton (ed.), *The codicology of Islamic manuscripts* (London, 1995), pp. 123–136, for an overview of the characteristics of such lists.

¹⁸ *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, in the al-Ḥalabī edition, pp. 530–535; the Murād edition, pp. 506–510; the Calcutta (or Bombay?) edition, pt. 4, pp. 135–139 (see below under 'Printed sources used or quoted') (خاتمة في ذكر سند مشايخنا رحمهم الله تعالى وقدس أرواحهم آمين). This epilogue was – partly, but quite literally – also added at the end of *Manba' uṣūl al-ḥikma* (pp. 323–325), but its occurrence there is evidently a recent addition, whereas in the *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* it makes at first the impression of being an integral part of the text.

The editions of the *Shams al-ma'ārif* which I have seen all contain these pedigrees at the end, whereas they are absent in all manuscripts which I have seen. Interestingly enough, apart from a few occasional remarks in the course of al-Būnī's works, it seems to be the only longer text which contains a few details of his life.¹⁹ An obvious reason for the inclusion of the *sanad* material must have been an attempt to authenticate al-Būnī's authorship of the *Shams al-ma'ārif*.

The epilogue contains the author's spiritual pedigrees for four different sorts of knowledge (*Shahāda*, *ʿIlm al-Bāṭin*, *Ḥurūf*, *Awfāq*). A survey of the *Sanad* material follows here. After having stated that the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, first received the *Kalimat al-Shahāda* (the words of the confession of faith) from the Prophet Muḥammad, he continues with the spiritual pedigrees, which are here fully reproduced.²⁰

Pedigree A (for the Kalimat al-Shahāda)

1. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Būnī (d. 622/1625), who took from:
2. *al-Imām al-ʿĀlim* Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Yaʿqūb al-Fakūnī²¹ al-Tūnisī al-Mālikī, who took from:

¹⁹ See Rosenthal's remark to his translation of Ibn Khaldūn's *al-Muqaddima*, III, note 807, concerning al-Būnī's lifetime. The date of copying of the Berlin MS Mf. 80 (Ahlwardt 4126), a work going by the rather non-descript title *Kitāb ma'ānī asrār al-ḥurūf*, identified by Ahlwardt, III, pp. 510–511 as *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt fi asrār al-falak wa l-ḥurūf al-ma nawīyyāt*), and apparently identical with work entitled *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt fi asrār al-ḥurūf al-ulwiyyāt* (Ullmann, p. 391) is 669/1270, which would thereby be the oldest known historical indication of the existence of a work of the Būnian corpus. For the commonly accepted year of al-Būnī's demise (622/1225) there seems to be no other authority than the *Kashf al-zunūn* of Ḥājji Khalifa. I am not aware of any research done on the manuscripts of the *Shams al-ma'ārif*, or any other text by al-Būnī for that matter. Many printed editions mention the fact that 'old and correct manuscripts' were used, but such remarks should not be given any credit, as they are made by the publishers for commercial reasons, and do not serve any philological purpose. Numerous popular books with doubtful antecedents claim on their title-page to be based on unique, old or valuable manuscripts. The title-page of the Leiden MS Or. 336 has some additional information on al-Būnī's parentage: his father is referred to as *al-Shaykh al-Ajall al-Muqri* Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī, the most striking element of which is the occupational indication, *al-Muqri*, 'the Qur'an reader'. It suggests that al-Būnī may have been intimately familiar with the text of the Qur'an from an early age onwards.

²⁰ The structuring of this material, by designating the different pedigrees with letter A-K, by numbering the names within each pedigree, and by indicating the cross-references, is mine. From the collation between the three printed texts, it is clear that the Murād edition belongs to one branch, and the combined Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay editions to another.

²¹ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: al-Kūfī.

3. *al-Shaykh* Mādī 'l-'Azā'im, who took from:
4. *al-Shaykh al-Qutb* Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ḥirzhum,²² who took from:
5. *al-Shaykh al-Ṭawīq*²³ *wa-Ma'din al-Taḥqīq* Abū Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ b. 'Aqbān al-Wākili al-Mālikī, who took from:
6. *Hujjat al-Zamān wal-Wāhid fī 'l-'Irfān* Abū Madyan Shu'ayb b. Ḥasan al-Andalusī al-Ishbīlī (E-9, H-3),²⁴ who took from:
7. Abū Shu'ayb Ayyūb b. Sa'id al-Ṣanhājī (H5), who took from:
8. *Shaykh al-'Ārifīn Qutb al-Ghawth al-Fard al-Jāmi'* Abū Ya'zā²⁵ al-Ma'arri, who took from:
9. Abū Muḥammad b. Manṣūr, who took from:
10. Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Jalīl b. Maḥlān, who took from:
11. Abū 'l-Faḍl 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Bishr (H-7), who took from:
12. Mūsā al-Kāzīmī,²⁶ who took from:
13. Abū Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (B-1?),²⁷ who took from his father:
14. Muḥammad al-Bāqir, who took from his father:
15. Zayn al-'Ābidīn,²⁸ who took from his father:
16. al-Ḥusayn, who took from his father:
17. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who took from:
18. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh (B-3, H-14, I-13), the Prophet.

Pedigree B ('Ilm al-Bāṭin)

1. *al-Imām* Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (A-13?), who took from:
2. Qāsīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, who took from:
3. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh (A-18, H-14, I-13), the Prophet.

²² Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: Ḥarām.

²³ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: *Shaykh al-Ṭariq*.

²⁴ His hagiography in 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih al-anwār fī ṭabaqāt al-akhyār* (Cairo, 1373/1954), I, pp. 154–156 (No. 275).

²⁵ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: Ya'r. Under his name Abū Ya'zā al-Maghribī his hagiography can be found in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, pp. 136–137 (No. 257).

²⁶ The hagiography of Mūsā al-Kāzīm in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, p. 38 (No. 58).

²⁷ The hagiographies of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, pp. 32–33 (Nos. 38, 39).

²⁸ His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, pp. 31–32 (No. 37).

Pedigree C ('Ilm al-Ḥurūf):

1. *al-Shaykh al-Imām* Abū Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who took from:
2. Ḥabīb al-'Ajamī (H-11), who took from:
3. *al-Shaykh* Dāwūd al-Jabalī,²⁹ who took from:
4. *al-Shaykh* Ma'rūf al-Karkhī,³⁰ who took from:
5. *al-Shaykh* Sarī al-Dīn al-Saqatī (H-9),³¹ who took from:
6. *Shaykh al-Waqt wa 'l-Ṭarīqa Ma'dīn al-Sulūk wa 'l-Ḥaqīqa al-Shaykh* al-Junayd al-Baghdādī,³² who took from:
7. *al-Shaykh* Ḥammād al-Dīnawarī, who took from:
8. *al-Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Aswad, who took from:
9. *al-Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (I-2), who took from:
10. *al-Shaykh* Abū 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī,³³ who instructed (*laqqana*):
11. *al-Shaykh al-'Ārif al-Fāḍil* Aṣīl al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who instructed:
12. *al-Shaykh* 'Abd Allāh al-Bāyānī, who instructed:
13. *al-Shaykh* Qāsim al-Sarjānī, who instructed:
14. *al-Shaykh* al-Sarjānī,³⁴ who instructed:
15. *al-Shaykh al-Imām al-'Ārif al-Ṣamadānī wa 'l-Hammām al-Nūrānī* Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Biṣṭāmī, who instructed:
16. *Shams Wuṣṣlatī wa-Badr Qalbī Ṭawd al-Ḥaqā'iq al-Shāmikh wa-Jabal al-Ma'ārif al-Rāsikh Shams al-'Ārifīn wa-Sirr Allāh fī 'l-Arḍīn* Abū 'Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī.

Pedigree D ('Ilm al-Awfāq)

1. Also taken from *al-Shaykh al-Imām al-'Ārif bi 'llāh* Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī.

Pedigree E ('Ilm al-Awfāq), taken from

1. *al-Shaykh al-Imām al-'Allāma* Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī, who took from:

²⁹ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: al-Jilī.

³⁰ His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, p. 72 (No. 142).

³¹ His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, pp. 74–75 (No. 144).

³² His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, pp. 84–86 (No. 164).

³³ His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, p. 140 (No. 261).

³⁴ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī has for Nos. 13 and 14: *al-Shaykh* Qāsim al-Sarjānī, and *al-Shaykh* al-Sīrḥānī, whereas Calcutta/Bombay have here: *al-Shaykh* Qāsim al-Sīrḥānī, and *al-Shaykh* al-Sīrḥā.

2. *al-Shaykh* Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḡdisī,³⁵ who took from:
3. *al-Shaykh* Shams al-Dīn al-Fārisī, who took from:
4. *al-Shaykh* Shihāb al-Dīn al-Hamadānī (F-3), who took from:
5. *al-Shaykh* Quṭb al-Dīn al-Ḍiyā'ī (F-4), who took from:
6. *al-Shaykh* Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (F-5), who took from:
7. *al-Shaykh* Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. al-Tūrīzī, who took from:
8. *al-Shaykh* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurashī (H-2, K-1),³⁶ who took from:
9. *al-Shaykh* Abū Madyan al-Andalusī (A-6, H-3).

Pedigree F ('Ilm al-Awfāq), taken from

1. *al-Shaykh* Muḥammad 'Izz al-Dīn b. Jamā'a al-Shāfi'ī, who took from:
2. *al-Shaykh* Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (H-12),³⁷ who took from:
3. *al-Shaykh* Shihāb al-Dīn al-Hamadānī (E-4), who took also from:
4. *al-Shaykh* Quṭb al-Dīn al-Ḍiyā'ī (E-5), who took from:
5. *al-Shaykh* Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (E-6).

Pedigree G ('Ilm al-Ḥurūf wa'l-Wafq), taken from

1. *al-Shaykh al-Imām al-'Ālim al-'Allāma al-Faqīh al-Thiqa* Musā'id b. Sāwī b. Mas'ūd b. 'Abd Allāh b. Raḥma al-Ḥawārī al-Ḥimyarī al-Qurashī, who took from:
2. *al-Shaykh* Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Shādhilī, who took from:
3. *al-Shaykh* Tāj al-Dīn b. 'Aṭā' al-Mālikī al-Shādhilī, who took from:
4. *al-Shaykh* Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Anṣārī al-Mursī.³⁸

Pedigree H ('Ilm al-Ḥurūf wa'l-Wafq), taken from

1. *al-Shaykh al-Imām al-'Allāma* Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Maymūn al-Qaṣṭalānī,³⁹ who took from:
2. *al-Shaykh* Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurashī (E-8, K-1), who took from:

³⁵ Reading of Murād and Ḥalabī, whereas Calcutta/Bombay have here: *Khalīfat* al-Maḡdisī.

³⁶ His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, pp. 159–160 (No. 281).

³⁷ His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, I, p. 36 (No. 49).

³⁸ His hagiography in al-Sha'rānī, *Lawāqih*, II, pp. 12–20 (No. 310).

³⁹ Evident typesetting error in Murād: al-Saṭlānī.

3. *al-Shaykh al-Imām al-‘Allāma Ustādh al-‘Aṣr wa-Awḥad al-Dahr* Abū Madyan Shu‘ayb b. Ḥasan al-Anṣārī al-Andalusī *Ra’s al-Sab‘at Abdāl wa-Rāḥat al-Arba‘at Awtād* (A-6, E-9), who took from:
4. *al-Shaykh al-Ustādh al-Kabīr* Dāwud b. Maymūn al-Harmīrī⁴⁰ (apparently a blind man, with an anecdote on Abū Madyan visiting him), who took from:
5. *al-Shaykh al-Imām Quṭb al-Ghawth* Abū Ayyūb b. Abī Sa‘īd al-Ṣanhājī al-Azammūrī (A7),⁴¹ who took from:
6. *al-Shaykh al-Walī al-Kabīr* Abū Muḥammad b. Nūr, who took from:
7. *al-Imām al-‘Ālim* Abū ‘l-Faḍl ‘Abd Allāh b. Bishr (A-11), who took from his father:
8. Abū Bishr al-Ḥasan al-Jūjarī, who took from:
9. Sarī al-Dīn al-Saqaṭī (C-5), who took from:
10. Dāwud al-Tā‘ī, who took from:
11. *al-Shaykh* Ḥabīb al-‘Ajāmī (C-2), who took from:
12. *al-Shaykh* Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (F-2), who took from:
13. Anas b. Mālik (I-12), who took from:
14. The Prophet Muḥammad (A-18, B-3, I-13).

Pedigree I (‘Ilm al-Ḥurūf wa‘l-Wafq)

1. al-Būnī met with:
2. (with many epithets) *al-Shaykh* Abū ‘l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (C-9), who instructed (*laqqana*):
3. *al-Sirr al-Makhzūn wal-Durr al-Maknūn wa ‘l-Sirā’ al-Qarīb Ad‘af ‘Ibād Allāh wa-Aḥqar Khalq Allāh al-Mutamassik bi-Dhayl Karam Allāh* Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Qurashī (with whom al-Būnī himself is meant, but evidently not in his own words), saying that he had seen:
4. *al-Shaykh al-Imām* ‘Alī b. Sīnā, who took from:
5. *al-Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Dawrakī,⁴² together with whom he had sat [...], and who had seen:
6. *al-Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Jazarī,⁴³ who had seen:

⁴⁰ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: al-Harīrī, or al-Hurayrī.

⁴¹ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: al-Armūzī.

⁴² Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī and Calcutta/Bombay have here: al-Dawūkī.

⁴³ Reading of Murād. Ḥalabī has al-Jarazī and Calcutta/Bombay has: al-Jararī.

7. *al-Ṣadr al-Kabīr al-Shaykh* ‘Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. Sulaymān al-Anṣārī, who had seen:
8. *al-Ṣadr al-Ajall al-Shaykh al-Imām* Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Qudṣī, who had seen:
9. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā, who had seen:
10. Muslim b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Makkī, who had seen:
11. Ḥumayd al-Ṭawīl, who had seen:
12. Anas b. Mālik (H-13), the companion of the Prophet Muhammad, who had been accepted as the scribe of:
13. The Prophet Muḥammad (A-18, B-3, H-14; follows anecdote).

Pedigree K (‘Ilm al-Ḥurūf wa’l-Wafq), taken from

[other *Shaykhs* of al-Būnī]

1. *Shaykhunā* Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurashī (E-8, H-2), *min A’yān Mashā’ikh al-Gharb wa-Miṣr*, who took from more than six hundred *Shaykhs* (follows anecdote).
2. *Shaykhunā al-Imām al-‘Arif bi ‘llāh al-‘Allāma* Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Ḥarrānī (follow anecdote), who lived in Ḥamā, where he died in 538 AH.

After having mentioned these two *Shaykhs* the author gives a short epilogue, which concludes the *Shams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*. I will desist, at least for the moment, from a detailed analysis of all authorities mentioned in these pedigrees. A few general remarks are in place, however. There are several Maghāriba and Andalusians in the different pedigrees, and this shows that there is indeed a Western origin in the Corpus Būnianum. Yet there are Oriental pedigrees as well. From pedigree A, especially from the mention of several of the earlier Shī‘a imāms (given as Nos. 12–16, though for some with curious variants in their names), it might be surmised that the spiritual forebears of al-Būnī could also be found in the Shī‘a tradition. But the Shī‘a connection is clearly not the only one, and al-Būnī should not, on the basis of pedigree A only, be identified as a Shī‘ite.⁴⁴ Pedigree B is an evident attempt to sunnify

⁴⁴ As is done by El-Gawhary, p. 14. The fact that al-Būnī’s *Shams al-ma‘ārif* is mentioned in the *Dharī‘a* is probably based on the occurrence of the names of the early imāms in pedigree A, and cannot, therefore, be adduced (as El-Gawhary seems to do) as additional proof for a Shī‘ite affiliation of al-Būnī. The names of the early Shī‘a imāms are also mentioned in the orthodox canon, and they are also mentioned in mainstream orthodox hagiographies such as al-Sha‘rānī’s *Lawāqih al-anwār*.

the Shī'a connection. Other pedigrees, such as pedigree H, show that the spiritual forebears of al-Būnī can also be found in the orthodox Ṣūfī milieu, with perfectly Sunni credentials, also for the early period. The ensemble of the pedigrees may be interpreted as an attempt to make al-Būnī into an author for all people, both Sunna and Shī'a, both in the East and in the West of the Islamic world.

Bibliographical note

1. Manuscripts of works by al-Būnī

Shams al-ma'arif wa-laṭā'if al-'awārif

Berlin We. 1210 (Ahlwardt 4125). Undated, but the date of copying estimated by Ahlwardt as c. 1100/1688, copied by al-Ḥājj 'Alī al-Shāmī.

Leiden Or. 336. Dated the end of Sunday 9 Jumādā II 857/1453, copied by Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Buqrāt al-Ḥamawī al-Shāfi'i, in Cairo.

Leiden Or. 666 (1), on f. 1a–233b. Dated 853/1449–1450, copied by al-Ḥājj b. al-Ḥājj Sāsān al-Jilānī.

Leiden Or. 736. Dated Saturday 20 Ṣafar 981/1573, copied by Yaḥyā b. Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. *al-marḥūm* 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sibāṭī al-Shāfi'i al-Ash'arī al-Muqri'.

Leiden Or. 1055. An extract (*khulāṣa*), undated but possibly a 15th-century MS (in view of the paper).

Leiden Or. 8371 (1) ff. 1a–89b, slightly lacunous. Dated Wednesday 14 Ṣafar 1057/1647, copied by al-Ḥājj Muṣṭafā b. al-Ḥājj 'Alī, commonly known as Ibn Anjīr (or Abkhīr).

Tartīb al-da'awāt fī takhṣīṣ al-awqāt 'alā ikhtilāf al-irādāt

Leiden Or. 1233. Dated 19 Rajab 812/1409, (partially, according to the colophon) copied by Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Anṣārī.

2. Selected manuscripts containing texts with a possible connection to work by al-Būnī

Leiden Or. 947. *al-Fawā'ih al-miskiyya fī 'l-Fawātiḥ al-makkiyya* by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Bistāmi (d. 858/1454), GAL G II, 231. Undated, but an owner's note by Muṣṭafa b. al-Ḥājj Yūsuf al-Fāṣilī, with seal print with date 1034 AH. Ewald Wagner, describing MS Berlin Or. oct. 3931, says about this text: 'Auf 100 Kapitel geplante, aber nur bis zum 30. Kapitel vollendete Enzyklopädie aus der Sicht mystischer and magischer Weltanschauung.'⁴⁵ According to Wagner the work is mainly based on al-Būnī's *Shams al-ma'arif* and Ibn al-'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. This remark, however, shows a certain lack of familiarity with al-Būnī's works.

Leiden Or. 7283. This is a composite volume copied in the middle of the 19th century, most probably in Palembang, Sumatra, Indonesia. It contains the Malay translations

⁴⁵ Ewald Wagner, *Arabische Handschriften*. Teil I, unter Mitarbeit von F.-J. Dahmanns [...] beschrieben von Ewald Wagner. Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland; Bd. 17 B 1 (Wiesbaden, 1976), p. 79, No. 92.

of two substantial magical texts in Arabic, together with some shorter notes. The second text in the volume is characterized by the cataloguer, Teuku Iskandar,⁴⁶ as an al-Būnī-like text. The name of al-Būnī does not seem to be mentioned in this text, however, and the link with the *Shams al-ma'ārif* remains unsubstantiated by the text itself. The first text in the volume, however, is a work entitled *Shumūs al-anwār wa-kunūz al-asrār*. It is the Malay translation of the Arabic work by that title by Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Tilimsānī al-Maghribī,⁴⁷ which contains mystical calculations, diagrams, *da'irah* etc., and is divided into thirty chapters.⁴⁸ This work does indeed offer some features which can also be encountered in works by al-Būnī, including a sequence on *hurūf*, *asmā'* and *āyāt* in the first three chapters: f. 2b. *Bab 1. Fī sirr al-hurūf*; f. 14a. *Bab 2. Pada menyatakan sekali khaṣṣiyat Asmā' Allāh yang Ḥusnā*; f. 49a. *Bab 3. Fī khawāṣṣ ba'd al-āyāt*. Al-Tilimsānī's authorship of this text, whether genuine or spurious, demonstrates again that this type of magic is considered to come from the West, as is the case with al-Būnī, whose *nisba* refers to Bōne, now 'Annāba, in Eastern Algeria.

3. Printed editions of works by al-Būnī

Būnī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-, *Manba' uṣūl al-ḥikma* (Cairo, 1951). This volume contains four works by al-Būnī and two related works by other authors. The works by al-Būnī in the volume are: *al-Uṣūl wa 'l-ḍawābiṭ al-muḥkama*, *Bughyat al-mushtāq fī ma'rifat waḍ' al-Awfaq*, *Sharḥ al-birhatiyya al-ma'rūf bi-Sharḥ al-'ahd al-qadīm*, and *Sharḥ al-Jaljalūtiyya al-kubrā*. The two other works are: *al-Sirr al-maẓrūf fī 'ilm baṣṭ al-hurūf*, by Muḥammad al-Shāfi'ī al-Khalwatī al-Ḥanafī, and *al-Durra al-bahiyya fī jawāmi' al-asrār al-rūḥāniyya*, by 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṭandatā'ī al-Qārī. I used an undated reprint by al-Maktaba al-Thaqāfiyya of Beirut, made after the edition of Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī published in Cairo in 1370/1951 (a copy of the original edition is extant in the Leiden University Library, class-mark 8096 B 17).

Būnī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-, *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*. I used three editions, two from Cairo, the third published in India. 1. Edition published Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Cairo, 1 Rajab 1345/1927) [Leiden 8192 A 15, olim 862 D 90]. Apart from the *Shams al-ma'ārif*, this volume contains four treatises by 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ḥusaynī al-Adhamī: *Risālat mizān al-'adl fī maqāṣid aḥkām al-raml*, *Risālat fawātiḥ al-raghā'ib fī khuṣṣiyāt awqāt al-kawākib*, *Risālat zahr al-Murūj fī dalā'il al-burūj*, and *Risālat laṭā'if al-ishāra fī khaṣā'is al-kawākib al-sayyāra*; 2. Edition published by Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-Miṣriyya, edited by 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Abd al-Ḥamid Murād, Cairo 1380/1960. 3. Indian lithographed edition, possibly published in Bombay or Calcutta, dated 1291/1874 [Leiden University Library class-mark 8196 C 21].

Būnī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-, *Sharḥ ism Allāh al-a'zam fī 'l-rūḥāni*, *wa-yalihi Kitāb al-lam'a fī 'l-fawā'id al-rūḥāniyya 'azizat al-sum'a* (Cairo: Maḥmūd 'Alī Ṣubayḥ, n.d.).

⁴⁶ Teuku Iskandar, *Catalogue of Malay, Minangkabau, and South Sumatran manuscripts in the Netherlands* (Leiden, 1999), I, pp. 400–401 (No. 878).

⁴⁷ C. Brockelmann, *GAL G II*, p. 83 mentions this author as Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥājj al-Fāsī al-'Abdarī al-Qayrawānī al-Tilimsānī, a scholar of *maghribī* origin, who died in Cairo in 737/1336. In *GAL S II*, p. 95 arguments are given for a different authorship of this popular magical compilation, of which many editions exist.

⁴⁸ See G.W.J. Drewes, *Directions for travellers on the mystic path. Zakariyya al-Ansari's Kitāb Faḥ al-Rahmān and its Indonesian adaptations with an appendix on Palembang manuscripts and authors* (The Hague, 1977), pp. 207–208.

Būnī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-, *Shams al-ma'ārif al-ṣuḡhrā al-ma'rūf bi-Shams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-awārif al-ṣuḡhrā*, ed. Abū Salāma al-Farīdī al-Falakī (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā: Maktabat al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 1424/2003). The editor signs in the introduction (p. 3) without the addition *al-Falakī* to his name. He adds to it: *al-Azhar al-Qāhira*. In his list of writings of al-Būnī (18 items) he postulates the existence of a work *Shams al-ma'ārif al-wuṣṭā*, but he adds to it that he has never come across a manuscript of the text. The book proves to be a newly typeset edition of a manuscript version, which had on its titlepage, in clear *naskh* script: *Kitāb Shams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-awārif lil-Shaykh al-Imām al-'Allāma al-Qudwa Muḥyi 'l-Dīn Abī 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. al-Shaykh al-Ajall al-Muqri b. 'Alī b. Yūsuf al-Būni raḥimahu 'llāhu ta'ālā wa-naffa'anā bihī*. From this is evident that the double *al-Ṣuḡhrā* addition on the title-page is of the making of the editor, to whom it had not escaped that this was indeed a version of more modest size than the large editions. Copyist of the manuscript (or is it in fact a lithograph?) is Ḥasan al-'Inānī al-Sa'dī. The manuscript seems to bear the date 1280 (1863–1864, see the reproductions on pp. 7–9).

O ye Gentlemen
Arabic Studies on Science and
Literary Culture

In Honour of Remke Kruk

Edited by
Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan P. Hogendijk



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