

- 14 A reference to the Five Pillars of Islam: the testament of faith; establishing prayer; alms-giving; fasting in the month of Ramadan; and performing the pilgrimage, or the *hajj*.
- 15 A reference to the early Muslim community that accepted the Prophet's message.
- 16 Ahmad, or the most praised, is another name of the Prophet.
- 17 Reference to Qur'an 3:81.
- 18 Remembrance, or *dhikr*, here is a reference to the Qur'an. General verses indicate the Qur'an refers to itself as a "Dhikr," for instance 15:9 or 16:44.
- 19 The reference to "his pool" (*hawdihi*) is a reference to the pool of the Prophet Muhammad, where he awaits his followers on the Day of Judgment. See Andrew Rippon, "Hawḍ," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. 3*, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson. First published online: 2016. First print edition: 2016.
- 20 This verse may be alluding to a famous *hadith*, wherein the Prophet is reported to have said: "The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets." For an extensive explanation and interpretation of this *hadith*, see Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *The Heirs of the Prophets*, trans. Zaid Shakir (Chicago: Starlatch Press, 2001).

### Chapter 9: Introduction to Part 3

- 1 For European-language introductions to Bamba and his life, see Cheikh Anta Mbacké Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853–1913* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007); Bachir Mbacké, in *Les Bienfaits de l'Éternel, ou la biographie de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké* (translated by Khadim Mbacké, Dakar, unknown publisher, 1995).
- 2 John Hunwick, ed., *Arabic Literature of Africa, volume 4: the Writings of Western Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
- 3 See Claudine Gerresch, "Le Livre de Métrique *Mubayyin al-ishkāl* du Cadi Madiakhaté Kala," *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* 36 (1974): 714–832.

### Chapter 11: Pathways of Paradise

- 1 Abdoul Aziz Mbacké, director of Majalis.org, used this turn of phrase in a conference on "Sufi Texts and Contexts" in Dakar in 2011.
- 2 For the *Nahju*—a piece on the etiquette of pursuing religious knowledge, as well as other medium-length works in the traditional religious sciences with original Arabic and French translations, see Ahmadu Bamba Mbacké, *Diwan fi 'ulum al-diniyya*, ed. and trans. Sam Mbaye (Casablanca: Dar el Kitab, 1989).
- 3 There is further discussion of Yadali in the notes below, but for now see Kota Kariya, "Khatima fi al-Tasawwuf: An Arabic Work of a Western Saharan Muslim Intellectual," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 81 (2011): 133–47.
- 4 It is clear from this reference that the work was composed after the passing of Momar Anta Saly in 1882/3. Conventional dating would put it shortly thereafter and connected to Bamba's trip to Mauritania in this period, when he apparently studied some of the works referenced in the book. This verse,

it should be mentioned, contains a prayer for all people, of any religion, who succeed in achieving sincerity of worship for God. The repetition of “all who achieved sincerity” following after “the sincere Muslims” makes that clear.

- 5 This is *Mawahib al-quddus*, which began as versified summaries and commentaries on texts that Bamba taught in his father’s school. *Mawahib al-quddus fi nazm nashr shaykhina al-Sanusi* (Dakar: Maktabat Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba, n.d.).
- 6 See Aziz Batran, *The Qadiriya brotherhood in West Africa and the Western Sahara: the life and times of Shaykh al-Mukhtar al-Kunti (1729-1811)* (Rabat: University Mohammed V, 2001); Mahamane Mahamoudou, “The works of Shaykh Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti,” in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, eds. Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), 213–30.
- 7 On Yadali, see the introductory biography in volume I of al-Rajil bin Ahmad Salim Yadali, ed. *al-Dhabab al-ibriz fi tafsir kitab Allah al-‘aziz: aqdam tafsir Shinqiti* (Cairo: Markaz Najibawayh lil-Makhtutat wa-Khidmat al-Turath, 2014).
- 8 See the recent seven-volume publication of this, edited by al-Rajil bin Ahmad Salim Yadali.
- 9 al-Rajil bin Ahmad Salim Yadali, ed.
- 10 Qur’an 49:13.
- 11 Bamba does not finish the citation of the *hadith* because it would break the rhyme; the reader is expected to have heard the whole *hadith*: “The parable of my community is like the rain: it is not known which is better, its beginning or its end.”
- 12 The famous saying attributed to Malik bin Anas, eponym of the Maliki school of Jurisprudence: “Whoever learns law without Sufism becomes a dissident (*fasiq*), and whoever learns Sufism without law becomes a heretic (*zindiq*), but whoever combines the two has reached truth (*tahaqqaq*).”
- 13 On the concept of *‘amal* and the saying of Ahmadu Bamba, *liggey ci jammu Yalla la bokk* (work is part of worshipping God), see Kota Kariya, “The Murid Order and Its ‘Doctrine of Work.’” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42 (2012): 54–75.
- 14 God is understood to multiply the effect of good deeds by ten and counts evil deeds only as one; a common expression in Wolof to this effect is that it is shameful for a person to allow their “1 by 1s” to outnumber their “10 by 10s.”
- 15 The pre-dawn and fast-breaking meals before and after a day of fasting.
- 16 *Mu‘ajaza* and *karama* are translated as “miracle” and “marvel” respectively here.
- 17 Author of *Mira’i al-hisan*, an account of seventy of the visions of the Prophet that he had while compiling his commentary on the Sahih of Bukhari, *Bahjat al-nufus* (Sahih Bukhari is the usual title for the collections of authenticated traditions completed by Bukhari). It is unclear which work Bamba is referencing here.
- 18 This is a reference to Q 6:75–79. Where Abraham undertakes secluded contemplation of a star, the moon, and the sun to affirm his certainty that only the Creator of Heaven and Earth was worthy of worship.
- 19 *Fikr* is not to be applied to the essence of God because the infinite cannot be encompassed within the finite, nor can the Necessary be encompassed by the contingent.

- 20 *Falyuthbitan tadabbur al-Qur'an.*
- 21 The etymological affinities between the Arabic words for Sufi, purity, wool, the “people of the bench” during the time of the Prophet were discussed more fully by Ahmad Zarruq (d. 1493, Libya), and cited at length in Ibrahim Niasse, *Removal of Confusion*, 19–20. This section is included in the chapter on Niasse later in this volume.
- 22 *Ẓulumat, wa khisam, wa malam.*
- 23 As a provisionalary precaution, or to bestow it upon people.
- 24 *Bala wa mihna.*

### Chapter 12: “Gifts of the Benefactor in Praise of the Intercessor”

- 1 It is also, incidentally, the value of *kaf-ha-ya-‘ayn-sad*, the letters at the beginning of Sura Maryam (Chapter 19 of the Qur’an).
- 2 **[see the note from the conclusion, insert page numbers after second proofs].**
- 3 In the narration of the Hadith of Gabriel, attributed to Abu Hurayra, the order is *Iman, Islam, and Ihsan*. Bamba, who often puts the emphasis on understanding before action, employs this arrangement of the basic elements of Islam, as does Abu Hamid bin Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058–1111) in his *Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din*. This is in contradistinction to the more common *islam, iman, and ihsan* configuration from most familiar renderings of the Hadith of Gabriel, such as the narration attributed to ‘Umar in the introduction to this volume, where there is an implied progression from the outer to the inner. When *iman* is placed first, the underlying idea is that intentionality and orientation of worship to God precedes meaningful worship.
- 4 Here, as in verse 89 below, the reference to *houris* is to the innocent companions promised to the inhabitants of Paradise in the Qur’an. It is worth mentioning, since references to *houris* are often subject to sexist interpretations by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, that Bamba, following the Qur’an itself, mentions innocent *males* and *females* in the Gardens. *Wil’danun*, the term translated here means young males. They are made eternal in Q 56:17, and in Q 76:19 their beauty is emphasized: *There will circulate among them youths made eternal. When you see them you would think them scattered pearls.* The exact same wording with the image of beautiful male youths is found in Q 52:24 but with *ghil’manun*, which also means male youths. In other places in the Qur’an, it clearly has the meaning of “boys.” See also Wright’s note on *houris* in footnote 20, in Part 2, Chapter 6.
- 5 The term translated here as “bliss” is *luha’*, which is not found in Lane’s *Lexicon*. It is derived from *lam-ha-waw*; the root is a form of a Qur’anic noun (occurring in Q 6:32, 6:70, 7:51, 21:17, 29:64, 31:6, 47:36, 57:20, and 62:11) and used to refer to amusement, enjoyment, or distraction—here, its meaning is joy or happiness. To distinguish it from other, more common terms, I have translated it as the existential state of “bliss.”
- 6 *Minhu fida’i*: From him is my redemption—he redeemed me, he released me. The juxtaposition of this line, about redemption, with the next line alluding

to imprisonment and release makes it clear that Bamba is referring to his deportation and exile to Gabon from 1895 to 1902. However, I think the poem is meant to allude to both spiritual and bodily emancipation granted by God and the Prophet. The enemies that he refers to repeatedly in this poem can obviously be read as the French (and the African chiefs) who conspired to have him arrested without cause and exiled, but he is also clearly referring in places to the four principal enemies discussed in the *Masalik* and many other classical texts: the lower soul, the devil, the passions, and the world. In Arabic these are, respectively, *nafs*, *shaytan*, *hawa*, and *dunya*, and in the teaching of the Muridiyya they are recalled with the mnemonic device *na-sha-ha-du*: “we bear witness.”

- 7 The term translated here as exile is *ighirab*.
- 8 I have interpreted these freely for meaning and effect. More literally they would be: “For you my pleasure, for you my honor, for you my dependence, with my urgent plea—you who healed me, you who shielded me, from he who oppressed me, by cleansing me of malady.”
- 9 In verses 6–7, and again in verse 11, Bamba appears to refer to the visionary experiences of the author of the most famous piece of Sufi *madha*, the famed *Qasīdat al-Burda* by Muhammad bin Sa‘id al-Busiri (d. 1296). [See the note in the conclusion of this volume] It is worth noting that before founding the Muridiyya Bamba routinely employed Shadhili ritual litanies (*awrad*) and that the *Burda* was and is widely read in West Africa. For an excellent translation alongside the Arabic original, see Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, *Qaṣīda Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 2:388–412. For the quotation above, see Syed Mohiuddin Qadri, *Qaṣīdat al-Burdah: The Poem of the Mantle* (San Francisco: Creative Commons: 2008), 7.
- 10 This is *wali*, usually meaning patron, rather than *wali*. These are distinct (though related) names of God and technical terms in Sufism, so eliding them a bit in the sense of ‘protecting friend’ seems to provide both an echo of the original and a rhyme.
- 11 “State” would be a more literal option here instead of “station,” since the former is often used to translate *hal* and the latter often used to translate *maqam*.
- 12 This is a liberal translation of “palaces without exile.” *Jalaa’* comes from the root *jim-lam-waw*, which usually gives meanings of “make manifest” (*tajalli*—divine manifestation, for example, comes from this root), but it occurs with the meaning of exile in Q 59:3. In some of his writing, Bamba uses this Qur’anic expression to refer to his own exile.
- 13 Verse 39 alludes obliquely to the idea, expressed in a number of *hadith* reports, that the *shaytan* cannot take the form of the Prophet. This seems directly connected to verse 40, which refers to the visionary experiences that Bamba had of the Prophet in Touba during Ramadan AH 1312 (March 1895) wherein the Prophet assured him that he would be made the *qutb al-zaman*, the pole of the era. ‘Abd al-Ahad Mbacké (1914–89), one of Bamba’s sons and the third caliph in the Muridiyya, gave many accounts of this visionary experience orally and at least one written account, in Arabic in 1979. Moustapha Diakhaté has a French-language account of the visionary experience, *L’exil de Khadimou Rassoul*,

based mainly on Caliph ‘Abdul-Ahad’s account as well as that of Musa Ka. I have not been able to find a copy of this short book in North America, so some of what I present here is based on the author’s, Diakhaté’s, reading of the book in Wolof for a Murid informational website, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4I0ZT766m70>.

- 14 The term translated here as path is *suluk*, which has technical connotations of “wayfaring” in the Sufi tradition. The term appears again in a different form in verse 85.
- 15 *Silat*, gifts, is the first part of the line, but the reference is clearly to *salat ‘ala al-nabi*, prayers of peace on the Prophet, and there is a play on words with *silat* and *salat*, so “blessings” is the most appropriate translation for gifts here. Incidentally, there is an error in the Arabic transcription of this line in the Sam Mbaye edition of this text in *Diwan fi amdah khayr al-mursalin*: both words are rendered as *salat*.
- 16 This line is more literally, “Come serve your Master, Maker of the skies”; however, reversing the nouns makes the line work much better in English without violating the basic meaning.
- 17 A reference to Qur’an 8:17.
- 18 It becomes clear throughout the poem that the Prophetic intercession that Bamba is evoking in the title is not only meant to refer to the day of judgment (as it appears to be in this verse) but also to the Prophet’s intervention, by Divine permission, into the life of the saints (*awliya*).
- 19 This appears to be a reference to the face-to-face conversation between Muhammad and God at the pinnacle of the *mi’raj*, where the Prophet was brought to within two spans (or less) of the Divine Essence.
- 20 After his visionary experiences with the Prophet (and according to some accounts, these began in 1883 after the death of Bamba’s father Momar Anta Saly), Bamba began referring to himself as the *khadim al-rasul*, the servant of the Messenger. His service, his labor for the Prophet is usually understood by Murids to mean extending the Prophet’s call to Islam; singing His praises; and, especially, writing praise poetry.
- 21 The absolution from jihad is central to Bamba’s overall non-violent thought, and it is rooted in his visionary experience in Touba in 1895 before being sent into exile. During that encounter, he saw the Prophet with his companions who had fought at the famous Battle of Badr in the second year of the *hijra* (624) and asked how he could join their illustrious company. He was told that the time for spilling blood was over, but that if he wished to be raised into their company he would have to go and face his enemies in his time as the people of Badr had faced theirs. According to internal Murid sources, Bamba completed his fast and went to Mbacké-Bari in Jolof, where he was arrested and later deported.
- 22 The word I have translated here as “residence” is literally castles or palaces. It seems clear to me that Bamba is writing of Touba here, the city that he founded and wherein he reported visionary experiences with the Prophet during spiritual retreat in the mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan AH 1312 (March 1895), which presaged his exile. But this line in its literal form is

more generic, and could quite easily be represented as: “He guides goodness to residences, His aid in evidence, and His resplendency.”

- 23 For a discussion of the Prophet’s miracles in traditional scholarship, see chapter four of ‘Iyad Ibn Musa, *Muhammad Messenger of Allah (Ash-Shifa of Qadi ‘Iyad)* (translated by ‘Aisha Bewley, Cape Town: Madinah Press, 2008), 134–209.
- 24 This is all the same word (the variations on ‘trust’ are all the same word), *al-Amin*, the verbs and prepositions used make it clear that the first refers to the Prophet, the second to Jibril, and the third to al-Buraq, the creature that carried the Prophet on the *isra’*. The verses from 117 to 126 constitute a pithy poetic account of the Night Journey, alluding to the Prophet Muhammad leading the congregational prayer in a gathering of all the Prophets and returning confirmed in his mission. In Muslim conventional accounts, the form and number of the daily *salat* (ritual prayer) are established during the *mi’raj*, and part of what is recited silently in the seated position in prayer is understood to re-enact the conversation between God and the Prophet on that occasion.
- 25 “Over my trials” is not explicit in the text, but certainly implied, and elaborating on this point allows for alliteration in the English rendition while keeping the rhythm and syllabic structure of the original.
- 26 The first line here makes denotation—the year in *salat ‘ala al-nabi* and *madha*—of what is only connotation—six (months) and six (months) in the original. This reading is especially clear, given that the preceding verse speaks of praising by day and by night, so this is just another way of dividing time rhetorically. This is also the reading taken by his son, Bachir Mbacké, in *Les Bienfaits de l’Eternel, ou la biographie de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké* (translated by Khadim Mbacké, Dakar, unknown publisher, 1995). Also, throughout the poem I have translated forms of *taqwa* with forms of Godly and pious, and either would work equally well in English verses in the second line here.
- 27 Honorifics used to refer to Abu Bakr, Islam’s first caliph.
- 28 Honorifics referring to ‘Umar, the second caliph.
- 29 Honorific referring to ‘Uthman, the third caliph.
- 30 Honorifics referring to ‘Ali, the fourth Caliph, and the Prophet’s cousin.
- 31 The lines from 140 to 148 appear to be a general commendation of the early soldiers of Islam, but it is important to remember that Bamba reported seeing the people of Badr repeatedly during his visionary experiences with the Prophet after Ramadan 1312 (1895 CE). Also, according to his son and caliph, ‘Abd al-Ahad Mbacké, Bamba said that he submitted to arrest by the French because he believed firmly that this was the sacrifice required of him to join the people of Badr in their state of continuous proximity to the Prophet. This interpretation is strengthened by verses 149–150, in which Bamba prays directly to God to preserve him from future imprisonment or oppression, though he has made it clear a number of times in the poem that his gratitude is “free from recrimination.” He accepts that his trials were a favor from God, designed to raise his station.
- 32 Literally, “my pens and my constructions,” this passage could easily be rendered as “writings and buildings.”