

Uṣūl al-Dīn
(The Fundamentals of the Faith)

Uṣūl al-Dīn
(The Fundamentals of the Faith)
Tibghūrīn b. ʿĪsā al-Malshūṭī

Critical edition and English translation by
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Acknowledgments

This book is the result of a reading that takes us back forty years ago around an intense friendly and intellectual relationship between two teachers who have been brought together by the vagaries of life.

As part of the preparation of the French translation of the thesis of the late Amr Ennami we made an important rediscovery upon reading his article published in 1977 in *al-Aṣāla* on the intellectual development of the Ouargla oasis in medieval times.

He claimed that a translation of Tibghūrīn b. ʿĪsā al-Malshūṭī's *Aqīda* in collaboration with Professor Trevor Le Gassik had been prepared and was about to be published. This information went unnoticed because no one seemed to be able to give us any information. And for good reason, this translation had never been published in the first place.

It was with the help of Paul Love, then a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, that we were able to contact Professor Trevor Le Gassick and share his testimony and the writing context with Amr Ennami. He spared no effort to find the typewritten text and entrust it to us for editing.

We would like to thank Yacine Daddi Addoun, Salah Bahmani, Nabel Dbeez and Ridha Laghouane who helped to perfect the text through their input and patient proofreading. We would like to thank Professor Sassi Ben Yahyaten for his introductory note and Dr. Abdulrahman al-Salimi for making this edition possible.

Soufien Mestaoui
Ibadica, février 2019

Foreword

This work of collaborative scholarship resulted from a friendship that developed between ‘Amr al-Nami and myself soon after his arrival at the University of Michigan. I should perhaps explain, as best I can, the circumstances of his joining us, his return to Libya following his stay in Tokyo, Japan and his later disappearance.

‘Amr came to Ann Arbor, Michigan, from his position as Professor of Islamic Studies at the Literature College at al-Fatih University, Tripoli, from which he had been given a leave of absence, following prior initiatives by our distinguished professors Raji Ram-muny and our then departmental chairman, Gernot Windfuhr, to establish joint academic activities between the University of Michigan and Libya. Their conversations in Libya and Ann Arbor had resulted in tentative agreements as a result of which a seminar was organized at our institution in the spring of 1977 on the subject of the present and future of Arabic and Islamic studies. ‘Amr al-Nami and I both spoke at that seminar, along with other Libyan and American scholars. Thereafter, ‘Amr remained in Michigan to teach an intensive summer course on modern Arabic thought. Over our academic year 1978-1979, he continued with us to teach a course in Islamic Studies that was attended by students enrolled in our department of Near Eastern Studies and the University of Michigan Law School.

Over those months and thereafter, from conversations with ‘Amr and other colleagues, I learned of his background and prior studies. Born in Nalut, a town in the largely Amazigh (also known as Berber) mountainous area of the Jebel Nafousa, in South-west Libya, he had graduated from Benghazi University in 1962, and then enrolled for further studies at Alexandria University in Egypt. This period was

one of expanding conflict there between the secular military regime of Gamal Abd el-Nasser and the soon banned Muslim Brethren movement and the eventual execution, in 1966, of its inspirational intellectual Sayyid Qutb. To live in Egypt at that time, as I did, one had to be aware of the growing disenchantment amongst intellectuals with the secular nationalism and one-man control represented by Nasser, soon to be publicly espoused in Libya by the army officer, Colonel Qaddafi, and the opposing Islamic groupings; as a devout Ibadi Muslim, 'Amr no doubt favored the latter. In any case, apparently unable to complete his M. A. program in Alexandria following a return to Libya, 'Amr gained entry into Cambridge, in the United Kingdom, where he studied from 1967 to 1971. He received his doctorate there in 1971 that was based on his research into the history and manuscript sources of the Ibadiyya community in North Africa.

'Amr and I soon established a firm friendship; perhaps it was the fact that we had both worked under the supervision of the deeply-learned and much travelled and published Scottish-born scholar of Arabic Professor R.B. Serjeant, an unusually kind and caring man whom we both greatly admired and respected, that assisted us in establishing and developing our mutual trust. From 'Amr I learned details of life in his country under the military dictator, Colonel Qaddafi, who had established absolute control there during 'Amr's studies in Britain. His account fascinated me since, brought up in England in World War II, I was very conscious of the universal miseries that such warped personalities can generate. In 'Amr's case, I was shocked to learn that at the airport upon his return to Libya from his Cambridge studies, all the academic books he had bought in England were seized, and that he had been taken straight to jail. I remember loaning to him my copy of George Orwell's "1984", suggesting that he read it as a warning to him to recognize the seriousness of the potential dangers he might face, though he was, of course, fully aware of this.

He explained that, while a student at Cambridge and following the overthrow of the monarchy by Qaddafi, he had been contributing articles to Libyan newspapers expressing the hope and expectation that under the new regime his nation would be able to develop a

society where democracy and freedom of expression would prevail. It was, he told me, these commentaries that had led to his initial and brief imprisonment. On his release ‘Amr, already a well-known and respected figure in intellectual circles in the Libyan universities in Benghazi and Tripoli, continued to voice his views that offered alternatives to Qaddafi’s attempts to contain and consolidate his own personal control of the machinery of Libyan affairs. Dictators do not welcome, of course, any suggestions of policies contrary to their own expressed wishes; moreover, he told me, he had avoided actually making personal contact or expressing his loyalty directly to the country’s leader, in marked contrast to most of his prominent contemporaries. It is not surprising, therefore, that ‘Amr’s deputations overseas, to get him out of the country, soon began, with his dispatch to join us at Michigan. He soon became well known among the Libyan student communities of mid-Michigan, as well as admired and respected by our faculty.

I worked over some months in close collaboration with ‘Amr on this present work and thereafter, in 1980 he received orders from the Libyan government, that he should take up residence, with his wife and six children, in Japan where he would join the Libyan Islamic outreach mission there. He had no alternative but to agree. But after some months living there he came back to Ann Arbor. Since he and his family knew no Japanese and felt isolated and unhappy there, he told me, he had decided to return to Nalut to care for his aging relatives and to devote himself to his studies in Islam in his home town. He would, he told me, give sincere assurances to the Libyan government that he would play no part in the country’s public affairs. He believed – naively, in my view, as I told him at the time and as was obvious – that the leadership would accept this, since he would be in an area far isolated from the intellectual communities of the Libyan coastal cities and that Qaddafi, through his ubiquitous agents, would easily be able to verify that he was playing no public role or meeting with critics of the regime.

And so he left Michigan to return to Libya. As he parted from us, he presented to me his copy of “The Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam”, as well as gifts to my young children, saying that he assumed from his prior experience that any books with which he returned

from overseas would surely be confiscated and presumably destroyed. Thereafter I received no news of him – despite my frequent enquiries to mutual Libyan friends – until I learned of his eventual ‘disappearance’ from Nalut and of the burning down of his home; he had apparently been continuing there, as agreed, his academic studies of Islam and, as I later learned, shepherding the flock of sheep he had bought.

Since the downfall of the Qaddafi regime a number of memorial meetings and conferences have been held in Libya honoring the memory of Dr. ‘Amr al-Nami. Speakers at these have confirmed that no solid news of him had circulated after 1984, the year in which he is assumed to have died, a curious coincidence with the title of Orwell’s famous novel I had suggested he read. No solid evidence of the timing or circumstances of his death have yet, as I am told, been fully established. There are, it is said, many in Libya who, to this day, still hope that he survived and that he will one day return. Naturally, theories relating to his fate and the timing of his disappearance are many. A widely-held belief is that Qaddafi, for some reason or the other, sought his cooperation, a request that ‘Amr declined, insisting that he wanted only to continue his scholarly and farming activities in the area of his birth. It is commonly assumed that thereafter ‘persuasion’ in the form of torture was inflicted on him, to the point where he ultimately died. One account I have heard is that, following lengthy torture in jail, he was transferred to a hospital where he was visited in his room by two men who beat him to death.

As I write this Foreword at my home, at the request of the publishers of this work, it happens to be Memorial Day in the United States, an occasion for remembrance of those who have died in the service of their countries. And so I remember and commemorate ‘Amr al-Nami with great sadness mingled with thanks that I was fortunate enough to meet this exemplary human being, scholar and hero. Loss of him was to the world, not just to his family and friends, at this time of tragic conflict, misunderstanding and international confusion. And surely we are conscious, as we mourn him and suffer the ongoing miseries of our world, that charismatics and narcissists, often paranoid, who, through the certainty of

their expressed convictions, persuade and manipulate leadership in their societies, should somehow be prevented from the acquisition of power.

Trevor Legassick

٧٢ وأما الميزان
٧٣ وأما ضغطة القبر وعذابه
٧٦ الملاحق
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