

Introduction and Biographical Background

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds who in His essential divine substance is before time and ever-existent, who in His own necessary independence is the beginning and the end and whose eternity does not admit of end.

Praise belongs to Him who by His essence is Him. The Beloved is He who is Allah, the Soul Being, the Beloved is Him. He is the Independent, the Eternal, who begets no one. The One, who was not begotten, without opponent or rival. He is the Possessor of Splendour, the One, the Eternal. His Oneness is not, however, of the kind to be counted. He is without likeness, existent before creation and time. There has been, nor is nothing similar to Him.

He is untouched by time and place. The chapter of The Unity (in the Qur'an) is an indication of this. He is Existence from before time and without need. He is the Real and the Creator of the different essences. He is without annihilation, subsistent of Himself. He exists by His essence, the Source of Outpouring of all essences.

May blessings and peace without end be on Muhammad, the first radiant manifestation of the Essence, the first of the messengers of Allah, whose reality is the radiant point of manifestation of the essence of the Lord of the Worlds, who is himself also the seal of His prophets, and on his caliph and successor, the greatest of caliphs, the most excellent of guardians and the seal of spiritual authority from the Maker of the heavens and the earth, the Commander of the Faithful and the just divider of people between the Fire and the Garden, the *yamin of Allah'* – one of Allah's people of the right – as mentioned in the Qur'an.^{[1](#)}

May peace and blessings be also on the family and progeny of Muhammad, the purest of the pure who

are the joy and gladness of the worlds, and in particular on the last of these, the lord of the age and time itself, the caliph of the Merciful, the leader of men and jinn – may God grant him great favours. By the family of Muhammad was the correct path made known. It was in their houses that the Book was revealed. They are the proofs of Allah for mankind. In them and their forefathers there is no doubt. In particular Abu Hasan `Ali is revered for his high station of knowledge. He is the tremendous news, the ark of Noah, the door of Allah and the final word in eloquence.

He is the first wave from the ocean of Allah's beauty and love.

He is of the depths of the sea of nobility, from the Majestic.

He is the witness and the witnessed and, by your life, endowed with great eloquence,

He is the guide of the path leading to the fortunate abode. From God through him issues the intellect in its entirety. He is the king of the gathering of those messengers,

The completion of the prophets by the divine overflowing from before endless time,

The source of light for all the friends of Allah.

There is one sole sun which possesses radiance,

Although from him many lights of dawn appeared on the horizon.

It was that same face of the moon whose light broke though,

But it was by him that the twelve came to rejoice in their blessing.

The state of Muhammad issues from the outpourings of the essence,

And the family of Muhammad are the nobility of creation. The family of the Prophet are the lords of the two worlds.

The family of the Prophet are the keys to the doors of the gardens.

The family of the Prophet are the light of His beauty from before time.

The family of the Prophet are a source of gnosis which never dries up.

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon them

Until the moment the trumpet is sounded on the day of rising.

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The divine decrees come into being in a world other than our own and they are governed by an order and time which is particular to them – such that whenever the will of Allah impinges on this world, then the decree passes from the Tablet of knowledge in the *malakut* (the invisible world of spirit and angel) to the pages of material forms in the world of men. Since different manifestations of the divine decrees become visible in this world, we have taken to calling them 'events which happen by chance' or 'occurrences.' It is because we interpret what happens in relation to ourselves that we react with surprise when the decree of Allah causes something to come into being, or not to come into being, and we

become happy or unhappy accordingly.

The work before the reader came about in the following manner. One day some years ago one of my friends said that he had purchased a modest library wherein were several handwritten volumes. He asked me to take a look and to choose any book that I found interesting.

However much I tried to refuse his offer – saying that, although handwritten, they remained for me a mere adornment and a financial investment for the book collectors, adding that after the death of their owner these papers would be sold again in the market for a ludicrous price – there was nothing I could do but peruse the books for the sake of our friendship and to avoid offending him.

Of all the books – most of them of great value by reason of their illuminated pages, calligraphy and age – one in particular, which in contrast contained very bad calligraphy and not even the name of the author, attracted my attention. Despite its worn exterior, I purchased it at an extravagant price. This book was in fact 'The Mysteries of the Revealed Law, the Stations of the Way and the Light of the Truth' (*Asrar al-Shari`ah*) which the decree of God was now placing before my path.

By the style of the text I realized that it was the work of the lord of gnostics and divines Sayyid Haydar Amuli, an Iranian gnostic of great standing of the eighth century AH. His writing is eloquent and he fulfils the demand for spiritual knowledge among those persons whose mother tongue is Persian. Despite the poor calligraphy, it was nevertheless exceedingly correct and had been copied from the actual work of the author himself, may Allah protect his secret; moreover, there were marginal notes elucidating most places in the book written in 950 AH.

Despite research in different libraries of Iran and Turkey I could find no trace of another copy which would permit a cross-check of my copy. The copy possessed by the University of Tehran was only a selection containing no more than five or six pages of the book; the copy I found in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (previously the National Assembly) was half missing and full of defects. I thus made a photocopy of my copy and made up for the defects of the Assembly's copy. It was again the workings of the divine decree which caused me to then find a copy in the library of Ayatullah Mar'ashi of Qum.[2](#)

Although the copy from the library of Mar'ashi was good, having been written during the time of the Qacharis, it was not as correct as the copy I myself possessed. For this reason I made a further copy of my text and substituted it for the other which had been registered under the number of 388. I then completed correcting that work, spending many years in the process.

It so happened that one day I went to meet some friends at the Iranian Academy of Philosophy; the head of the academy was talking about the lack of correct texts and the plethora of unedited annotated works. It was at this point that the manifestation of another divine decree caused the bringing to a head of those

previous incidents of destiny which I had all but forgotten.[3](#)

Thus I disclosed that a rare text, of which no more than two copies existed in the world, lay in my hands ready for printing. Mention of this was greeted with great pleasure, and after attending to the technical matters of publication, the work was then actually printed.

As for the biography and historical importance of this divine prodigy, the men with whom he studied and the date of his death, in the majority of cases such details are recorded inaccurately; biographers have plagiarized details from others and in their ignorance some have added material to inaccurate material of a previous date.

In investigating these matters great care must be taken to look closely at what actually happened and to weigh the matters up with precision in order to discriminate the chaff from the grain and jumbled invention from reality. Most of the books containing such material are sources of erroneous data not only with regard to the life of this man but also with regard to his works.

One such book is *Al-Kashkul fi ma jara li ali'l-rasul* (Album of Events concerning the Family of the Prophet) which is attributed to Sayyid Amuli but in fact is the work of Haydar ibn 'Ali, a contemporary of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin, the teacher of Sayyid Amuli. He is mentioned with regard to the strife which broke out between the Sunnis and the Shiahs in 735 in Baghdad[4](#) when in fact at that time Sayyid Amuli was only sixteen years old and had never been in Iraq. The source of this and many other pieces of false information is the book *Majalis al-Mu'minin* (The Gatherings of the Believers).

As for the various (dubious) biographies there is that of Sayyid Haydar Tunī. It is significant that it is included in *Rawdat al Jinnah* (The Meadow of Paradise) as an appendix to the biography of Sayyid Amuli wherein many miraculous feats are ascribed to him. It is for this reason that we have not made any commentary on these matters.

The stations, inner states and spiritual journeying are described in his own words, they being truer and clearer than any one else's, so that any contradictory statements may be avoided. We have thus avoided the usual method employed which is to record anything which one has heard or read without checking its veracity and without assuming any responsibility for the facts presented.

Such writings only serve to obscure the true spiritual path of this friend of Allah and give a completely distorted picture of the story of his life; as a result his way of illumination has become hidden for subsequent generations and access to the right path, the path of light indicated by him, has been obstructed for the seeker, concealed from the sight of mankind.

Until now, no complete biographical commentary on this great gnostic, which is free from extraneous and erroneous material and which contains material written by himself, has been written in Persian.

Little, moreover, has been written in Arabic: the introduction which precedes his book *Jami` al-Asrar* (A Compendium of Secrets) is lengthy and tiring, and that which accompanies his work *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts) is concise but uninformative and does nothing to elucidate those matters about which we are ignorant.

It was for this reason that I decided to take the task upon myself. It was with the help of God that I set about composing this biography, using material from within his own works and avoiding any commentary or marginal notes.

Sayyid Amuli was born in 819 AH. His birth heralded the tremendous influence of his life. He illumined the world of darkness and tribulation, and embellished this world, this planting ground for the next. He says himself at the end of the introduction to *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts), which is a commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom) of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi: 'I completed this commentary in 782 AH at the age of sixty three.'

A brief genealogy and biography of his life appears in the first volume of his commentary entitled *Al-Muhit al-A`zam* (The Mighty Ocean) M.S. 301, Mar'ashi Library, Qum. The following is a translation of this: I am Rukn al-Din Haydar, the son of Sayyid Taj al-Din 'Ali Padashah, the son of Sayyid Rukn al-Din Haydar, the son of Sayyid Taj al-Din 'Ali Padashah, the son of Sayyid Muhammad Amir, the son of 'Ali Padashah, the son of Abu Ja`far Muhammad, the son of Zayd, the son of Abu Ja`far Muhammad, the son of Ibrahim, the son of Muhammad, the son of Husayn Kusaj, the son of Ibrahim, the son of Sana'llah, the son of Muhammad Harun, the son of Hamzah, the son of `Ubayd ullah al-`Araj, the son of Husayn Asghar, the son of Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-`Abidin, the son of Husayn the Shahid – the martyr, the son of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may the peace of Allah be upon them all.'

In the introduction of *Jami` al-Asrar* (The Compendium of Secrets) he further states: 'Know that from the earliest vigour of my youth, namely from my childhood to the age of thirty or thereabouts, I was engaged in studying the religion of my own forefathers, the *ma'sumin* – the infallible ones.

With regard to the outer aspect of the *shari`ah*, I undertook a study of the Imamiyah sect and their juridical school (*madhhab*) – which is daily practiced amongst the Shiahs; and with regard to the inner, namely the study of the truth and reality (*haqiqah*), I devoted my attention to the Sufis and the masters of the science of the unity of Allah (*tawhid*).

The two aspects came together and a joining of the outer *shari`ah* and the inner *haqiqah* was effected such that I reached the station of constancy and firmness. This I say not through any sense of pride, but rather as an expression of the endless bounty of Allah. Indeed I swear by Allah that if the seven heavens were made of paper and the trees of the earth were pens, if the seas of the world were ink and the spirits, mankind and the angels were scribes, then they would be unable to write even a jot of what I had

witnessed of the divine gnoses and realities referred to in the authentic or divinely inspired *hadith*, "I have prepared for the chosen of My slaves something no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no heart has perceived" and in the Qur'an:

"So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh their eyes; a reward for what they did" (32: 17).

The least of these truths was such that after seeing reality from both sides and the true and false aspects of each side, after perceiving in what manner the one was true and the other false, I was able to understand how every one of these matters was connected to a point of reality and *tawhid* – just as the line which is drawn from circumference of a cycle is connected to the central point. I was also able to understand the meaning of Allah's words:

"There is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock; surely my Lord is on the right path" (11:56)

and

"Allah's is the East and the West, therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's purpose" (2: 115);

and the secret contained in the words of the Prophet, "The ways leading to the Real are as many as the persons in creation".

The saying of the Commander of the Faithful, "Knowledge was no more than one point – and it was the ignorant who added to it" also became clear to me. I became as the incipient form before materialization, the form which is capable of taking on any other form, the form which accepts and understands any belief structure or desire, such that all was swallowed up in my boundless existence. This is as the sublime station of the Prophet when he stood before Allah saying, "O Allah, show me the realities of the beings of creation just as they are"; this is highest of the stations of *tawhid* and the most sublime of positions in the world of unveilings.

"That is Allah's grace; He grants it to whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace" (62:4).

`From the poetry of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi:

Before this I used to deny my friend, for my heart could not accept his religion.

Now my heart has adopted every shape of belief; It has become a pasture for the fine-eyed gazelles and a place of worship for the monk in his monastery.

It is the temple of idols and also the Ka'bah above which they make the rounds.

It is the tablets of the Torah and also the book of the Qur'an.

I have drawn close to the religion of love and passion such that From wherever their caravans leave I set

off too – for passion has become my way of life and faith.

After my affirmation of the truth of Sufism, certain persons were troubled by some of its more abstruse and esoteric aspects with regard to the Real – such people imagined that I was availing myself of invalid and other spurious means. May they realize that this was not the case and that in reality I was only drawing upon the religion of my own forefathers – the infallible Imams. Because of their extreme ignorance, the majority of Sufis think that the Imams were devoid of the excellencies and superior insights of Sufism.

Moreover many Shiah's also believe that the knowledge of their Imams is restricted to that same knowledge which is in common use amongst themselves. In fact there is not a single form of knowledge but that the Imams are the source of that knowledge; there is not a secret or hidden wisdom but that they are the mine from which it may be extracted; they are the teachers of the *shari`ah* and the leaders of the *tariqah* and the poles of the *haqiqah*; they are the caliphs and the vicegerents of Allah in the heavens and the earth; they are the manifestation of the power and majesty of Allah in His *mulk* – the earth and heavens – and in His *malakut* – the realm of the spirits and angels. I swear by God that if they did not exist, then the heavens would not be standing, the earth would not be outspread and the creatures would not be living in them.

This is the meaning of Allah's words to His Prophet, "If you were not, then I would not have created the cosmos"; here what is meant is the abode of the different creatures. According to the scholars of the divine sciences, the whole world is maintained in existence by reason of the reality of the Perfect Man and the planets are kept in orbit by his very breaths.

Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi says in his book *Nuskhat al-Haqq* (Copy of the Truth): "Allah established the Perfect Man as the teacher of the angels and has caused the planets to turn by his life and breath – and this by reason of his nobility, sublimity and elevated station.' By the consensus of the nation of Muslims, there are none greater than those great persons – neither from an intellectual standpoint, nor from conclusions drawn from the body of the traditions, nor from the station of unveilings.

It was the Prophet's own successor ('Ali) who proclaimed with pride: "I am the sign and indication of Allah, the All-Powerful and the Conqueror; I am the reality of the secret truths; I am the leader and guide of the heavens; I sit with the angels who make praise and with Gabriel and I am the friend of Mika'il; I am the guide of the planets; I am the tree of Sandalwood of the planets; I am the guardian of the thunder and the dazzling lightning; I am the face of Allah, the flank of Allah, the hand of Allah; I am the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden."

Sayyid Amuli also says in his own commentary: After understanding religion and its associated sciences and after mastering the different degrees of knowledge with regard both to the intellect and the related body of *ahadith* (traditions of the Prophet) this study being undertaken partly in the town of Amul, birth-

place and childhood home of myself and my forefathers, partly in Khurasan and Astarabad, and partly in Isfahan – I continued to strive until I arrived at the core and inner meaning of these matters.'

These studies lasted for approximately twenty years until for the second time I returned from Isfahan to Amul. Here I took up employment in the service of the just and temperate Padshah Fakhr al-Dawlah, the son of Shah Kay-Khisraw – may Allah grant them both a fair place in the Garden. Fakhr al-Dawlah treated me with particular respect and honour and placed me with those of his entourage who were intimate with him.

After a while he made me one of his most trusted confidants and thereupon one of his special deputies and chamberlains; he accorded me this special treatment as he himself was descended from Anusharvan, Yazdagird and Perviz, one of his close relatives being a Padshah by the name of Ardishir, son of Hasan, the son of Taj al-Dawlah whom Tahir al-Din Faryabi Sha'ir, Siraj al-Din Qamari and other poets and reciters of *qasidahs* (odes) would honour and praise in their writings.

'After some time, the just padshah, the champion of his time, the living padshah of padshahs, the brave unflinching warrior Fakhr al-Dawlah made a request to me. Thus it was that just as Jalal al-Dawlah Iskandar and the majestic Sultan Gustaham and Tus Malik came to be employed in the service of Fakhr al-Dawlah's brother, I also came to take up duties in his service. It was not long before – by the blessing of his company – I acquired such great position and wealth that it is impossible to imagine. In this way I came to live a life of luxury, prosperity and honour amongst the people, my friends and my fellow townsfolk.

'I passed some time in this state until a desire for the truth, a desire both instinctive and natural, began to flare up within me and Allah made me aware of the evil and corruption growing in me as a result of my ignorance and forgetfulness of Him. It became clear to me that I was following a way of perversity far from the straight path; it became manifest to me that I was treading the path of misguidance, close to the precipice of sin and crime.

It was at this moment that I prayed to the Lord from deep within myself. I implored him to free me from these actions of mine – all my passion and desire was to leave this world and its pleasures. I found within myself that I was ready to turn in the direction of the Real and to set out on the path of *tawhid* (divine unity).

'It was for this reason that I no longer wished to keep the company of those padshahs nor to continue living in my own locality and place of birth, despite my love of that place; nor too could I continue to sit with my friends and brothers. It seemed the best thing to do was to abandon them completely and to move away to a place where I could carry out those duties necessary for a life devoted to the Real and where the form of my existence would be of the highest order.

Thus it was that I freed myself forthwith from the rulers, as well as from the wealth of my sons and of my mother and brothers⁵ and I put on a patched garment – not worth more than a dirham – that had been thrown into an alley at the back of the house. It was in this that I set out via Ray, Qazvin and Isfahan with the intention of making the pilgrimage and visiting the sacred House of Allah and with the intention of visiting my forefather, the Messenger of Allah and the infallible Imams. In this way I arrived in Qazvin where I had previously spent a long period of my youth amidst wealth and honour.

It was because a contract of brotherhood had been made with the young men of that town (and by this I mean with the group of Sufis) that a contract was also made between myself and the perfect shaykh, the one of arrival, Nur al-Din Tihrani – Tihran being a village on the way to Isfahan in the region of Dardasht and which is pronounced with the open `t` sound by the people in contrast to the Arabic `t` with which it was originally spelt.

Shaykh Nur al-Din Tihrani was a gnostic of Allah and an ascetic. All the people, both the common and the elite, accepted him and became his disciples. I spent a month, or rather, a little less than a month, in his company – until he gave me the real patched garment of the Sufis to wear,⁶ and I came to master the *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) of the elite rather than that of the common people; by sitting with him, I was able – by an alchemic transmission – to profit greatly, despite the extreme brevity of my stay.

After this I went on from Isfahan to two other places, namely Aydhaj and Mali Amir, where in company with another man of perfection and spiritual gnosis, I spent some time while waiting for the caravan to form which was bound for Baghdad. The caravan never materialized, however, and this, and the onset of a severe sickness, caused me to return to Isfahan. After a time, I did finally reach Baghdad and from there I had the honour of visiting the sacred site of the martyrdom of the Commander of the Faithful, the graves of Husayn, Musa and Jawad together with the Imams of Samarra. I spent a whole year in these places before setting out in the direction of the Ka'bah with the intention of performing the pilgrimage. I was alone and destitute when I set out.

Having visited the tombs of the Messenger and the four Imams in Madinah, I returned to Iraq and in the holy city of Najaf – may Allah bless those who visit it – I took up residence and busied myself with spiritual exercises, periods of isolation (*Khalwah*), worship, and the seeking of *ilm al-laduni* (knowledge bestowed by Allah on His slave through no effort of his own).

There was no one in the region who had knowledge of this kind of activity and of these states. I associated, however, with a gnostic and man of perfection of this locality who, although living in obscurity, was in fact the leader of the saints of Allah; he was known amongst the people as `Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad Muqaddasi and although enjoying the most meagre of means was among the finest and most excellent of the men of knowledge.

I took to studying *Manazil al-Sa'irin* (The Stages of the Gnostic Travellers) together with its commentary,

thereafter *Fusus al Hikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom), together with its commentary and other books of the same nature. It was during this period of study that most of the realities contained in the books on Sufism (including both the simple and more detailed treatises) were revealed to me with clarity – and this by the blessing of that holy place, this holy person and the Imams.

Thus it was that I came to write many commentaries, made many notes on this subject and then wrote several other books. Twenty years have elapsed since that date and the books which I have written now number between twenty and twenty-four; these I catalogued with an index, the last of the books being a commentary on the Quran.'

Up to this point Sayyid Amuli records in detail the spiritual journey upwards to his Lord by a process of divine attraction. As for the journey through the self and the death of desire, he continues the description of his own states in the introduction of his commentary of the *Fusus al-Hikam* entitled *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts) (with regards to the second aspect of the *wilayah* of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi):

'I remained for a period in Isfahan occupied with the states of the spiritual path. It was then that, intending to go to Baghdad in order to visit the places of martyrdom of the Imams, the saints and the shaykhs of that region, and whilst planning to go to the house of Allah to perform the *hajj* and to remain forever close to this house, I suddenly saw one night in a dream that I was standing in the middle of a bazaar. I perceived that my body was as if dead, wrapped in a white shroud and fallen flat on the ground.

While trying to discover the cause of this, I was at the same time in a state of great surprise: how was it that I was both standing and lying flat on the ground. It was in this state that I awoke. This in fact was the beginning of the death of desire and the start of my spiritual path – the same death alluded to by the Prophet when he says, "Die before you die" and the same as that described by the sage who said, "Die by your own will so that you may live the true and natural life".⁷ God says:

"Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one of utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?" (6: 122)

I thanked God for His blessings; it is He who is the cause of eternal life and constant prosperity:

"Most surely this is the mighty achievement. For the like of this then let the workers work). (37:60-61)

'Likewise I saw again on another occasion that I was sitting in the shop of some friends. On my back there was copper receptacle ornamented with gold, just like those of the water carriers who would tour the bazaars pouring water for the people to drink. This receptacle had a strange mouth; just like that of

the large jars which they make out of fired clay.

I was giving water to those present from this receptacle while at the same time I was searching for myself. I was also sitting at the same time as I was standing. Moreover, just as I was giving water to the people to drink, I would take a drink myself. Because of this strange picture, I would repeatedly burst out laughing at myself and I felt great amazement at this state until I finally woke up. This dream was instrumental in bringing me many tremendous insights.

On another occasion, in Isfahan, I saw myself seated holding a severed head in my hand; at the same time my own head had been severed, although I had no knowledge of this. I was busy turning and playing with the head and at any moment would be seized by laughter at this strange picture, until I finally woke up.

This dream was the means by which I arrived at many of the most precious spiritual truths; indeed a wealth of the finest insights were revealed to me as they flowed out from the generosity of the divine unseen. In a similar dream to this, I heard that my father gave no more nor less than a thousand dinars to the person who could interpret such dreams, and this sum was also paid without delay by some of the padshahs by the law of the exoteric.

As for the inner world of meaning, a thousand things of note and worth, purer than the finest gold and clearer than the most translucent jewels promised to man in the Garden, were received from the real Padshah, namely Allah may He be exalted:

"That is Allah's grace; He grants it to whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace."
(62:4);

"And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty good fortune" (41:35).

Such events often occur to myself and our spiritual friends, but despite being far-removed from the state of man, they are not extraordinary for God:

"And this is not difficult for Allah" ' (14:20).

At the end of *Muqaddimah Fusus* (An Introduction to the Bezels), which is about the meaning for him of the unveilings and secrets of the *Fusus al-Hikam*, he describes the holy city of Najaf as being the cause of openings from the unseen occurring in his heart – just as one night Makkah became the cause of openings for Shaykh Muhyi al-Din and thereafter Madinah inspired the Madinan disclosures.

He then goes on to explain the course of his own spiritual journey both in relation to himself and to the cosmos: `Know that since God has commanded me to leave everything which is other than Him and to concentrate the heart completely on Him, there arose in my heart such a feeling of divine inspiration that

I decided to take the noblest and most sublime locality on earth as my place of residence and worship of Him.

Thus it was that I set out for Makkah – may Allah increase it in every way. It would be impossible to contain in a whole set of books the trials and hardships, the misfortune and toil which I underwent on the journey from Isfahan to that place. Despite all this, however, the words of Allah were always on my tongue:

"And whoever goes forth from his house flying to Allah and His Apostle, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (4: 100),

and also the lines of that gnostic and lover of the Truth who says:

I have left all men for the sake of Your satisfaction.

I have abandoned as orphans my own sons for the sake of Your witnessing.

Even if You cut me to pieces, my heart would still long for no one but You.

This was my state when I arrived in Makkah and completed the obligatory pilgrimage together with all the necessary and supererogatory rites. It was at this point – in 751 AH – that I conceived the desire and intention to stay forever in the proximity of that illustrious house. It was not long, however, that there arose within me the desire to live in the illuminated city of Madinah and it was for this reason that I set out for this city, where I visited the tomb of the Messenger of Allah and conceived the intention of staying within the confines of his splendid grave. At that moment, however, many obstacles were placed in my path, the greatest of these being a physical sickness, which made it necessary for me to return to Iraq and take up residence in the familiar surroundings of Najaf.

Thus I returned without further trouble to this spiritual city and busied myself with religious exercises, pious seclusion and acts of worship – of an intensity and severity never before achieved. By this means, throughout all this period, meanings, gnoses, realities and truths flowed into my heart from the direction of Allah, the Lord of the unseen. It would be impossible to reckon these things for they are divine utterances and as such cannot be contained within clearly defined limits.[8](#)

God, however, commanded me to reveal some of these gnoses to the elite of His slaves and so I set about writing a book about divine unity (*tawhid*) and an explanation of its secrets. Within a short time, I completed it and named it *Jami'al Asrar wa Manba'al-Anwar* (Compendium of Secrets and Source of Lights).

I then wrote two more books called *Risalat al-Wujud fi ma'rifat il-Ma'bud* (Treatise on Existences on the Knowledge of the Worshipped One) and *Risalat al-Ma'adfi ruju' al'Ibad* (Treatise of Eschatology; on the Return to the Godhead). After these I composed some forty other books and essays in both Persian and Arabic. It was then that Allah commanded me to undertake a commentary of the Qur'an and so,

after completion of the above-mentioned essays, I composed a work of seven thick volumes under the title of *Al-muhit al-A'zam wa'l-Tawd al-Asham fi Ta'wil Kitabillahi 'l-'Aziz al-Muhkam* (The Mighty Ocean and Lofty Mountain: esoteric exegesis on the clear and precious Book of Allah).

With the help of the Lord it was completed in the best and most perfect manner and in the finest and most eloquent language such that no one surpassed me in this matter, neither in the way it was arranged nor in the way it was edited.

`Allah then commanded me to undertake a commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam* which is a work directly inspired by His Messenger – it was the latter who gave it to Shaykh Muhyi al-Din in a dream saying: "Communicate it to those slaves who are worthy of it and who are ready to receive it". Thus I began this work, some thirty years after first taking up residence in Najaf, in 781 AH and completed it in 782 AH, a period of one year or less; my age at that time was sixty three years.'

The rest of what happened to him is described in different places of his own commentary; it is thus that he says: `After this activity I began service with the great shaykh of perfection, the sultan of the scholars, the Honour of the Truth and the Religion, Abu Mutahhir Hilli.

In his company I studied many of the books which contain both the foundation and ramifications of the sciences of the Family of the Prophet. The Shaykh bestowed on me a license in which he addresses me as "Zayn al-'Abidin the Second" – having witnessed something in my behaviour which caused him to believe that my station was only second to that of infallibility.

He also issued many other licenses for me – both of a general and explicit nature – in all the sciences, one of which I shall now give:

The most excellent Sayyid, the great Imam, the worthiest of the scholars of the world and the most knowledgeable of the noble amongst men, the guide to those on the spiritual path, the saviour of the souls of the gnostics, the renewer of the faith and the giver of life to the way of his forefathers, the one who combines the sciences of tradition with those of reason, and those of the foundations of juris-prudence with its branches, the possessor of a purified soul and the courtesy of a prophet, the pride of the family of the Prophet, which is the object of the special attention of the Lord of the Worlds, the pillar of the nation, of the truth and of the religion, Haydar ibn Sayyid al-Said Taj al-Din 'Ali... (including the rest of his genealogy to the Commander of the Faithful) has read and studied with me in the most scrupulous manner the following books: the Qur'anic commentary, *Jawami` al jami`* by the great shaykh and protector of the faith, shaykh Tabrisi, *Shari`ah al-Islam* by the great jurist Shaykh Najm al-Din Muhaqqaq Hilli, *Manahij al-Yaqin* concerning the science of theology (*kalam*) by my father, may Allah have mercy on him, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* (An Education of the Laws) by Shaykh Tayfah Tusi, *Nahj al-Balaghah* by the Commander of the Faithful and *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* by the sage Ibn Maytham.

Thus do, I give permission for him to transmit all of these books, just as I give permission for him to transmit all of his own works and writings concerning the sciences based both on the traditions and reason. I also hand over to him all the above-mentioned books which he may use with his own direct chain of transmission from them – in particular the books of my father which he has acquired through me. Moreover, he has permission to transmit the books of Shaykh Mufid (there being thus two paths of transmission from himself to Shaykh Mufid) together with the books of Shaykh Tusi, Sayyid Murtada and all the *ahadith* transmitted from the family of the Prophet (the "Four Books"), all with a complete chain of transmission.'

This detailed license (*ijazah*) was given in Ramadan, 761 AH in Hillah; the Arabic text is in my possession, but for reasons of brevity I have omitted to mention the full chain of transmission, making do with a translation and resume of the whole.

After recording this *ijazah* he says: 'This kind of license given to me with regard to the sciences based on the *ahadith* (traditions) and on reason is well-known only amongst the Arabs.' In Rajab 753 AH he was given a license to teach *Manazil al-Sa'irin* and *Fusus al-Hikam*, together with their commentaries, by `Abd al Rahman ibn Ahmad al-Muqaddasi; this license is written in much the same manner as that of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin and in it we read: 'I have benefited from him more than he (Sayyid Amuli) has benefited from me.'

He then mentions a method of *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) from Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani. It is possible that he was instructed by this man himself because he was one of his contemporaries. Sayyid Amuli goes on to say: 'Some of the *fuqara*' – the bereft in Allah – have explained their own way of *dhikr*, and the following is quoted:

'This poor fakir Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani – may God bestow on him the same as those who receive eternal life after the annihilation of this world – was instructed in the way (of *dhikr*) by Shaykh Salih al-Din Abi'l Khayr Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad Isfahani and the latter learnt the *dhikr la ilaha illa'llah* on the `Id al-Fitr 703 AH in the *khanqah's* assembly (Sufi spiritual retreat) of Samisati in the Bayt al-Ahzan quarter near the Friday mosque in Damascus from Shaykh Salih Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Isfarayni Zayn al-`Ibad, the Flag Bearer of the ascetics, the Honour of the virtuous, the one of constant *dhikr* in the morning and the evening.

He in turn learnt it from Shaykh Sayf al-Din Abu'l-Mu'ali ibn Mutahhir ibn Said Badarzay and he from the Shaykh and Pole of the Age, Abu'l-Janab Najm al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdullah Khiyuqi, the same Shaykh Najm al-Din al-Kubra, one of the poles of the "golden" chains of transmission (indeed any "golden" chain of transmission connected to him is known as a "major golden chain"); the latter in turn received it from Shaykh Isma'il Qasri and he from Shaykh Muhammad ibn Mankil who got it from Shaykh Daud ibn Muhammad known as the Servant of the Poor.

The latter received it from 'Abbas ibn Idris who got it from Abu'l-Qasim ibn Ramadam who in turn got it from Abu Ya'qub Tabrisi, from Abu 'Abdullah ibn 'Uthman, from Abu Ya'qub Nahrjuri, from Abu Ya'qub Susi, from 'Abd al-Wahid ibn Zayd, from Kamil ibn Ziyad Nakh'i (may God be content with them all), from the Commander of the Faithful, from the Messenger of Allah, from Gabriel the Guardian of Revelation, from the Lord of Power may He be exalted.'⁹

Sayyid Amuli describes the method of instruction of the *dhikr*: 'Transmission of the *dhikr* takes on a distinct form and order amongst the people of this science'; a concise description is contained in the detailed *ijazah* of the above-mentioned fakir, namely Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani; in it we see an affirmation of the transmission of the following *hadith* by the Sufi shaykhs: 'One day 'Ali came in to see the Messenger of Allah saying: "Instruct me in the way which leads quickest to Allah and which is the most acceptable to Him and the way which is easiest for His slaves."

He replied: "O 'Ali, may you be blessed in that which has come to you by way of prophethood." 'Ali then asked: "And what is that, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "*Dhikr* of Allah." He then said: "If the excellence of *dhikr* is so great, then all the people would make *dhikr* of Allah." He replied: "Abandon such thoughts – the Day of Resurrection will not take place so long as there is someone on the earth saying 'Allah Allah.'

He then said: "O 'Ali, be silent. I will say this *dhikr* to you three times and you should listen; when I am silent, you should then say it so that I may hear it from you." Thus it was in this way that the Messenger of Allah instructed 'Ali in the way of *dhikr*, who then transmitted it to Hasan al-Basri, to Habib al-'Ajami – to Da'ud al-Ta'i, to Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, to Sid al Saqti, to Junayd al-Baghdadi, to Mimshad Daynuri, to Ahmad Aswad Daynuri, to Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah Bakari Suhrawardi, known as 'Awami, to Qadi Wajih al-Din 'Umar ibn Muhammad Bakari, to Abu'l-Najib 'Abd al-Qahir Suhrawardi, to Shihab al-Din 'Umar ibn Muhammad Suhrawardi Bakari, to Mu'in al-Din, one of the companions of the Shaykh of the Shaykhs of the land of Rum (the west or Byzantine), to Ahmad ibn Mas'ud in the town of Konya, one of the shaykhs of my father and forefathers, who then transmitted it to myself, the fakir, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani on the 10 Jumada al-Ula in 731 AH.'

As for the taking on of the patched robe, this has been transmitted from the Commander of the Faithful in various chains of transmission. He goes on to say: 'The *kharqah* – the patched garment – both among the common and the elite is an expression of the secret of *wilayah* (intimacy with Allah) and the hidden wisdom of *tawhid*.

This *wilayah* and wisdom was bestowed by Allah on Adam' (as we have explained earlier); he continues: 'As for an investigation into the relationship of the *kharqah* to the Commander of the Faithful and his infallible progeny – both in the outer realm of the manifest and in the inner realm of meaning – then it is as follows: 'as for what is manifest, I am Rukn al-Din Haydar, the son of Sayyid Taj al-Din...' and the ancestry here given is the same as that stated earlier.

As for the realm of meaning, the account of his own childhood, spiritual development and his donning of the outer *kharqah* has already been mentioned; he himself says: 'Most of the chains of transmission of the *kharqah* come through Junayd al-Baghdadi, as he was the leader of a community, the Shaykh of a spiritual order and lived soon after the time of the infallible Imams.'¹⁰

He then relates the chain of transmission of the patched robe of the perfected shaykh Sa'd al-Din Hamawi and thereafter the chain of the gnostic and *muhaqqiq* (he who has arrived at the station of inner truth) Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi according to the license that he had given to some of his own disciples – a chain which stretches back in three different paths of transmission to the Commander of the Faithful.

He quotes this license given by Shaykh Shihab al-Din to his disciples saying: 'Know that the way of the Sufis has two aspects: the aspect of company and that of the patched robe. As for the aspect of company, I trace my relationship to my shaykh, Shaykh al-Islam Muhammad ibn Hamawi who himself held company with Khidr. As for the aspect of my *kharqah*, know that Muhammad ibn Hamawi took it on from his grandfather Imam Muhammad ibn Hamawi... from Ibn 'Ali Farmadi, from the pole of the age Abu'l-Qasim Gargani, from Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, from 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida and the latter took it on from the Seal of the Prophets (Muhammad).

Shaykh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, known as Abu Hafs says: "My paternal uncle Shaykh al-Islam Abu'l-Najib Dia' al-Din 'Abd al-Qahir 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad Suhrawardi invested me with the patched robe and he himself was invested with it by his paternal uncle Wajih al-Din Muhammad known as 'Amawiyya... and he, by two great shaykhs, the first Akhi Faraj al-Din... whose chain of transmission reaches to 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida and the second by his father Muhammad ibn 'Amawiyya from Shaykh Aswad Daynuri whose chain also reaches to 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida.'¹¹

In the same book *Al-Muhit al-A'zam*, he relates how, besides the chain of transmission of the patched robe of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani, he also took on another *kharqah* from the hand of Shaykh Nur al-Din Tihrani: 'I (Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr), the shaykh of the shaykhs of Abu'l-Hasan ibn 'Umar ibn Abi l-Hasan, have been invested with the *kharqah* from 'Imad al-Din 'Umar ibn Abi'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Hamawi and he held company with his grandfather Imam Muhammad ibn Hamawi (this being an indication that Sayyid Amuli also took on the *kharqah* from the hand of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani).'

In conclusion he says: 'My arriving at the Truth and my unveilings were not dependent on the above; my arrival was first and foremost because of God rather than on account of my own spiritual progress. I was a *majdhub* – a person intoxicated by divine attraction – amongst spiritual travelers: I was of the beloved of Him rather than of those who love Him and the former have precedence over the latter – just like the prophets, the saints and their followers in the correct path for Allah says: "Those who have been recorded with good deeds from Ourselves they are far removed from the bad"; I had achieved the

desired goal through the care and grace of God, not through any action on my part nor through any knowledge I possessed.'¹²

Up to this point we have described the life of this great gnostic Sayyid Haydar Husayni Amuli, the pole of the gnostic cosmos and the moon in the heaven of glory and sublimity up to the year 782 AH, using his own words of truth and drawing from different places from a variety of his works.

Many of the works of this great gnostic resemble the name of the fabulous Simurgh; nothing remains of them but their titles. From 782 AH onwards we have no information about the life of this sage. We know nothing about when and where he died – except that he wrote a book entitled *Risalah fi'l-`Ulum il-`Aliyya* (A Treatise concerning the Sublime Sciences) in 787 AH, and as Sahib Dhari'ah has noted: 'In it is mentioned that it was written after the book *Muntakhab al-Ta'wil* (An Anthology of Hermeneutics),' but other than this we have no other information or indication of any date.

As for the body of gnostic writings he has left us, it is better that I describe them by quoting from his own illuminating words which are the truest and most appropriate record of the matter; indeed his work is as a burning torch in the darkness of history and a shining lamp in the darkened hearts of the ignorant.

In the introduction of *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts) he himself says, after the opening section entitled 'The historical circumstances related to the writing of the books':

1. Realize, O seeker of knowledge, that God painted the eye of the heart with the light of guidance and success after I finished writing *Majma'al-Asrar wa Manba'al-Anwar* (Collection of Secrets and the Source of Lights);¹³ this work contains an explanation of *tawhid* (the unity of Allah) and the hidden truths, which are connected to *tawhid* (general definitions, classifications, states of doubt and ambiguity, subtleties and points of wisdom, secrets and indications), and a description of how *tawhid* may be defined in terms of divine *tawhid* or existential *tawhid*.

It also shows how the science of *tawhid* may be divided in another way, namely into the *tawhid* of essence, of attribute and of action, or to express this otherwise, the *tawhid* of knowledge, of experience and of absolute truth; thereafter follows a clarification of these matters with respect to prophethood, to the message of prophecy and to *wilayah*; in conclusion there is an investigation into the *shari'ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* together with an investigation into submission, faith and certainty accompanied by appropriate examples.

2. I then undertook *Risalat al-Wujud fi Ma'rifat al-Ma'bud* (Treatise on Existence; on the Knowledge of the Deity) concerning the nature of existence – with respect to absolute, accidental and necessary existence and also with respect to the oneness of existence, the manifest existence and the plurality of existence. In this work I have proved that He, that is

"Existence", is the necessarily existent by His essence and that He necessarily cannot be conceived as non-existent; I have also shown that that which is in the outward is not other than Him for "He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (over all) and the Knower of hidden things, and He is Cognizant of all things" (57:3).

3. After this I completed *Risalat al-Ma'adfi Ruju'il-'Ibad* (Treatise of Eschatology, on the Return to the Godhead) together with a study of those matters pertaining to the Last Day and the rising from the grave, according to its three aspects: the minor day of rising, the intermediate day and the major day – and a proof of these according to the twelve risings of the outward and inward within the balanced framework of the cosmos as a whole and within that of the human self.

4. I then finished *Al-Usul wa 'l-Arkan fi tahdhibi 'l-Ashab wa'l Ikhwan* (Principles and Pillars, concerning the Reform of the Companions and Brothers). This work describes the five principles of belief, and each belief is examined with regard to the three classifications of *shari'ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*, and the five pillars of the religion (prayer, fasting, alms tax, pilgrimage and *jihad*).

5. I then completed *Risalat al-'Ilm* (Treatise of Knowledge) which deals with the three groups of men, namely the Sufis, the sages, and the scholastic theologians (*mutakallimun*); in it I describe the different spheres of knowledge of the three groups, including the principles, major subject matters and finer points associated with each.

6. There then followed the *Risalat al-'Aql wa 'l-Nafs* (Treatise on the Intellect and the Soul) which contains an examination of the difference between the intellect and the soul – with regard to both the particular and the general – together with an investigation into other related matters.

7. ... thereafter *Al-Amanat al-ilahiyah fi tayin al-khilafat al rabaniyyah* (Divine Trusteeship in Man, determining the Divine Caliphate) which is concerned with the *ayah*:

"Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth..." (33:72)

and offers an explanation of why the mention of the injustice and ignorance of man is as a form of praise of the highest order on behalf of Allah – in contrast to those shortsighted persons who think that this *ayah* refers to the disgrace and ignominy of man. [14](#)

8. ... *Al-Hujub wa Khulasatu 'l-Kutub* (The Veils and Quintessence of Books), containing a study of the *ayah*:

"Then thrust him into a chain the length of which is seventy cubits" (69:32),

an explanation of the saying of the Prophet, "There are seventy thousand veils of light and darkness

before God...", and a comparison of these two statements. Such a comparison presents considerable difficulties, especially with regard to the whole sum and its parts, with regard to the parallel drawn between the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions and with regard to the phrases "a thousand years," "five thousand years" and "three hundred thousand years"; such metaphors are similar to the statement of one of the great shaykhs: "I am two years younger than my Lord", and that of another: "Between myself and my Lord there is no difference except that I come first in the state of slavery."

9. ...*Risalat al-Faqr wa Tahqiq al-Fakhr* (Treatise on Poverty and the Fulfilment of Glory) containing a comparison of the three *ahadith related from the Prophet concerning faqr – poverty*: "Poverty is my honour and by it I gain distinction over the rest of the prophets and messengers" and "Poverty means blackness of face in the two worlds" and "Poverty brings one almost to a state of unbelief (*kufir*). [15](#)

10. ...*Risalat al-Asma'i-Ilahi wa Ta'yin al-Mazahiruha min al-Ashkhas al-Insaniyah* (Treatise on the Divine Names and Identification of their Epiphanies among Human Beings) which deals with the prophets from Adam to Muhammad – may peace be upon them.

11. ...*Risalat al-Nafs fi Ma'rifat al-Rabb* (Treatise of the Soul; on the Knowledge of God) which contains the saying of the Prophet: "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord" and which is composed in the light of the words of Allah:

"And He is with you wherever you are (57:3)

and

"And in your own souls (too); will you not then see?" (51:21).

12. ...*Asrar al-Shari'ati wa Anwar al-Haqiqah* (Mysteries of the Law and Lights of the Truth) containing a description of each by the people of each group – just as Allah says:

"For every one of you did We appoint a law and a way" (5:48)

and just as the Prophet has said: "The law (*shari'ah*) is my speech, the spiritual way (*tariqah*) my work and the truth (*tariqah*) my inner state. [16](#)

13. ...*Risalat al-Jadawal* (Treatise of the Diagrams) also entitled *Madarij al-Salikin fi Maratib al-'Arifin* (Degrees of the pilgrims, concerning the Ranks of the Gnostics) describing the hundred basic stations of the journeying and the thousand subordinate grades, drawn from a cycle of one hundred divisions each containing ten grades:

14. ...*Naqd al-Nuqud fi Ma'rifat al-Wujud* (Final Examination of the Knowledge of Existence) which is a selection from our *Risalat al-Wujud*. [17](#)

15. ...*Muntaqa al-Ma`ad fi Murtada il-`Ibad* (A Quintessential Eschatology of the Chosen One amongst the Slaves) which is a selection from our work *Al-Ma`ad*.

16. ...*Risalat al-Tanbih fi l-Tanzih* (Treatise of Advice in the *via negations*) which, as is clear (by its title), is about Allah – may He be exalted.

17. ... *Amthalat al-Tawhid wa Abniyat al-Tajrid* (Examples of Divine Unity and the Principles of Divestment) after the manner of the book *Lama`at `Iraqi*. [18](#)

18. ... *Risalat al-Kanz al-Kanuz wa Kashf al-Rumuz* (Treatise of the Treasure of Treasures and the Unveiling Symbols).

19. ... *Nihayat al-Tawhid fi Bidayat al-Tajrid* (The Conclusion of Divine Unity in the Beginning of Divestment) which is a selection from *Jami `al-Asrar* and *Manba `al-Anwar*.

20. *Tayin al-Aqtab wa l-Awtad* (Identification of the Poles and Supports) containing mention of nineteen persons (seven great prophets and twelve Imams) – no more nor less (neither three hundred nor forty nor seven nor three nor one) since the number is nineteen with regard to the station of realization; I have also composed a further forty or so writings in a similar vein, in both Arabic and Persian.

21. ...after completion of the above mentioned works – during a long period extending over thirty years – I wrote a commentary on the Qur'an entitled *Al-Muhit al-A`zam wal-Tawd al Ashamm fi Ta'wil Kilab illahi l-`Aziz al-Muhkam* (The Mighty, Ocean and Lofty Mountain; esoteric exegesis of the clear and precious Book of Allah), comprising seven large volumes.

I composed it in the manner of the great shaykh Najm al-Din Razi, known as "Dayah", who wrote a further six volumes of his book after completing the volume called *Bahr al-Haqaiq wa Manba' al-Daqaiq* (The Sea of Truths and Source of Subtleties). Our commentary is also written in accordance with the *hadith* of the Prophet which says "The Qur'an has an outer and an inner aspect: as for the inner there is always another aspect within this – extending to seven inner aspects"; all of the great and well-known figures of spiritual realization and all those intimate with these matters affirm that this work has no equal, in particular with respect to Qur'anic knowledge. Moreover, this work is not a product of any effort of any effort on my part, but rather it is the result of the outpourings from the unseen – from the Beneficent Himself. [19](#)

22. After completion of all these writings a group of persons of perspicacity together with a number of eminent men of Allah were exceedingly desirous that I write for them a commentary on the *Fusus*

al-Hikam... and this work is the same *Nass al-Nusus fi Sharh al-Fusus* (The Text of Texts Elucidating the Bezels) mentioned at the beginning of the introduction.'

These are books and essays (*Rasa'il*) written by Sayyid Amuli up to 782 AH and which have been described by his own hand in the introduction to the *Nass al-Nusus* – the commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam* of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi.

He has made no reference to any other essays, but other works written in his graceful hand have been recorded by the bibliographers:

23. *Risalat al-Ta'wilat* (Treatise of Spiritual Hermeneutics), a work of Qur'anic commentary which is a selection from the book *Al-Bahr al-Khadm* (The Great Sea) and which is also known as *Muntakhab al-Ta'wil* (Extract of Hermeneutics).

24. *Masa'il al-Amulial* (Amuli Questions), a copy of which, consisting of approximately six pages and written in the hand of the author, exists in the Central University Library of Tehran (under the file no. 1022); in it he says: 'These treatises are concerned with questions of jurisprudence and take the form of questions, posed by myself (on various occasions), and the corresponding answers in the form of legal opinions (*fatwas*) by the great Shaykh, the sultan of the scholars of the earth, the honour of the Arab and non-Arab alike, the example and model of realization for the whole or creation, the object of special favour by the Lord of the Worlds, the Imam and eminent scholar, Fakhr al-Haqq wa 'l-Millat wa 'l-Din, the son of 'Allamah Hilli; the first of these interviews took place at the end of the month of Rajah in 759 AH in the town of Hillah; I, the questioner, am the slave and fakir Haydar ibn 'Ali ibn Haydar al-'Alawi al-Husayni al-Amuli.'

The questions are twelve in number and cover a variety of subjects in the realm of theology and jurisprudence. They, together with the accompanying treatises, are all in Arabic and all are written in the hand of Sayyid Amuli; the replies in the form of *fatwas* are in the hand of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin Hilli; the date of the writing of the *Masa'id* is 761 and the other *risalahs* 762 AH.[20](#)

25. *Rislatu fi'l-'Ulum al-'Aliyah* (Treatise on the Sublime Sciences), related by the author of *Al-Dhari'ah* and composed and written in 787 AH.[21](#)

As for the other treatise which have been attributed to him in such bibliographies as '*Iyan al-Shi'ah*, *Idah al-Maknun* (The Unveiling of the Hidden), *Majalis al-Mu'minin* (The Gatherings of the Believers), *Mu'ajam al-Mu'alifin* (The Encyclopaedia of Authors), *Fuwa'id al-Ridawayah* (The Benefits of al-Rida), *Hadiyat al-Arifin* (The Guidance of the Gnostics), *Rawdat al-jannah* (The Meadow of Paradise), *Al-Dhari'atu* (The Dhari'ah), *Rayhan al-Adab* (The Scent of Courtesy), and others it should be said that it cannot be ascertained for certain whether they are actually his works or not; indeed there is more

evidence to indicate the contrary; the following is a list of such works:

26. *Rafi`at al-Khilaf `an Wajh Sukut Amir al-Mu'minin `an al-Ikhtilaf* (Justification for the First Imam's attitude to the three first Caliphs).[22](#)

27. *Risalat al-Mu`tamid min al-Manqul fi-ma Awha ila al-Rasul* (Treatise of the Trustworthy Narrations concerning the Revelations to the Messenger).

28. *Risalat al-Zad al-Musafirin* (The Treatise of the Travellers' Provision).

29. *Lubb al-Istilahat al-Sufyah* (Kernel of Sufi Terms) – which is a selection of the *Istilahat* of Kamal al-Din `Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani.

30. *Kitab al-Kashkul fi-ma jara li'l Alil-Rasul* (Album of Events concerning the Family of the Prophet) which has already been mentioned.

If these works had actually been written by him, then he would have mentioned them in the introduction to *Nass al-Nusus* – in particular *al-Kashkul* which dates from 735 AH. *Nass al-Nusus* was composed in 782 AH; if we examine the rest of the books from this perspective, then it is clear, just as it is clear at first glance to those who are familiar with the style of Sayyid Amuli, which of the works are actually his and which are merely attributed to him: 'Whenever we scrutinize a particular art, it seems that art belongs to a particular person.'

In conclusion we should not forget that *Asrar al-Shari`ah* is twice mentioned by Sayyid Amuli in *Jami `al-Asrar*; as we have seen from above list many of the works of Sayyid Amuli are either shortened versions of his own books or – to use the language of the logicians – they are either complete abridgements or abridgements with regard to one aspect only; thus the content of one of his books may closely resemble that of another, or the structure of one may reflect that another.

Thus, for example, the important work *Ta'wilat Qur'an al-Karim* (The Hermeneutics of the Noble Qur'an), which I read in the Mar'ashi library in Qum, usually treats the *ayat* according to the same three levels, namely *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*, and the text of *Asrar al-Shari`ah* is almost always perceptible throughout the whole of the commentary.

Similarly, the book *Jami `al-Asrar* revolves around the three levels of *tawhid* – essence, attribute and action – together with *tawhid* of knowledge, experience and truth, a study of prophethood, prophecy and *wilayah*, a study of *shari`ah*, *tariqah*, and *haqiqah*, and the subjects of submission (*islam*), faith (*iman*) and certainty (*iqan*). The *Risalat al-Ma`ad*, which is about the resurrection of God's slaves, contains amongst other matters the three-tiered aspect of the day of rising – the minor, intermediate and the major – which has already been dealt with in a more comprehensive manner in *Asrar al-Shari`ah*.

Similarly, the book *Usul wa'l-Arkan* (Principles and Pillars) is an abridgement of this same book and the abridged text of *Risalat al-Hujub* (The Treatise of the Veils) is to be found in the chapter concerning the Day of Resurrection, just as the subjects of prophecy and the Final Day are dealt with in *Risalat al-Asma'* (Treatise of the Names) in an abridged and different form. *Risalat al-Tanbih* (Treatise of Advice) explains the three levels of divine unity, and *Risalat al-Wujud* (Treatise of Existence) – in particular in the introduction – deals with many of the questions of *tawhid*, albeit in a different manner.

Thus this precious work contains the subject matter for seven or eight of his main books of research into the divine truths; it contains the finest selection of Sayyid Amuli's ideas, both with regard to the Islamic system of belief and to the acts of worship – drawn from the Possessors of Divine Inspiration, the pillars of divine unity, the store-houses of boundless knowledge, namely the infallible Imams – drawn by way of unveilings and witnessing after long years of divine attraction, spiritual exercises and acts of worship and then set down in this book at the command of Allah as if without any effort on his part.

Shari'ah, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* – are different names indicating one truth – namely the pattern of behaviour of Muhammad. Each, however, has its own specific realm of meaning: just as the almond consists of a shell, an outer skin and the kernel, so the shell is as the *shari'ah*, the outer skin the *tariqah* and the kernel the *haqiqah* – the inner core; the almond as a whole embraces all three.

In the *Majallah* (Place of Manifestation) of Ibn Abi Jamhur and *Bahr al-Ma'arif* (Sea of Gnosis) by Mulla `Abd al-Samad Hamdani prayer is treated as consisting of three different levels: *khidmah* (service), *qurbah* (a drawing closer through humility) and *wuslah* (union); *khidmah* is thus on a level with *shari'ah* and the physical actions of the prayer, *qurbah* on a level with *tariqah* and the concentration of the heart during prayer, and *wuslah* on a level with *haqiqah* and the core meaning of prayer; all three are also contained in the word prayer. Sayyid Amuli also says in *Jami' al-Asrar*: '*Shari'ah* is on a par with the divine message, *tariqah* with the prophecy and *haqiqah* with *wilayah* (intimacy with Allah); all accept these truths: anyone who rejects them or who rejects just one of them is an unbeliever.'

Therefore, do not deny something simply because you cannot understand it. It is by purifying the heart of the impediments and troubles caused by this world, and by deep reflection on the words of these great people that the outward meaning of what they are saying will become comprehensible to you; this is because their speech comes from the world of witnessing and vision and not from the realm of mere knowledge and explanation; however much one tries to express this state in the language of knowledge and explanation, it is never more than secret compounded upon secret; God himself says:

'And they do not assign to Allah the attributes due to Him' (6:91).

Imam Ahmad Ghazali has said: 'Anyone who has no portion of *tawhid*, then I fear for him that the outcome of his affair will be a bad one – that is his final seal and judgment on death will be as one of the unfortunate'; the minimum portion is that he accept and submit to the people of realization – who are the

saints or friends of Allah.

Our Imams have also said: 'To deny is to cover up the truth: those who speak of the essence, the attributes and the actions of God are speaking only in order to increase our awareness and to encourage us'; in fact nobody really understands the *wali* (the intimate friend of Allah) and the attributes of the *wali* but the *wali* himself the unripe cannot encompass the ripe so it is better to be brief and say: Peace!

The denial of those who deny is merely a physical response to what they hear: their very efforts not to understand such matters are all-powerful and all contentment and submission have been extinguished in them. Since this group live on the level of the senses, they are incapable of understanding anything but tangible things; they are incapable of going beyond this level.

Since the worm is hidden in the apple, it knows nothing but that as its world and heaven.

If they were to step out of the prison of the senses into the world of the heart, they would perceive that:

The heavens are contained in the wali whose divine Intimacy causes the ordering of this world's heaven.

Most of mankind is in the station of those who are anxious for their sustenance, who are greedy and miserly, and who are caught up in all the material aspects of the world. Imam Baqir has said:

Most men are beasts and *four-footed animals*

Open the eye of your heart that you may see the soul and the unseen.

If you enter the realms of divine passion, you will see all horizons as a garden.

Rise above all the people of this world by your intent and look around the heavens.

The heart wants that which you see and that which your heart wants you shall see.

The heart will see its sun in every splitting of the atom. If you give everything you have with passion, then call me an unbeliever if you ever suffer loss in your desiring. If the soul burns up with the fire of passion, then you will see passion as the elixir of the soul.

Travel beyond the confines of this life and see the vastness of His kingdom beyond space.

Let your ear listen to what it has not heard and your eye see what it has not seen, until it leads you to where you see the One of the world and all the worlds.

Express your passion for the One from your heart and soul until you see Reality with the eye of certainty:

There is only One and nothing but Him, He is Alone and there is no god but Him.[23](#)

It is for this reason that the teaching shaykhs always warn their students and disciples against denying the people of Allah saying: The expressions of these people are obscure; it is hard to understand them when they talk about their thoughts and intentions because such matters are far removed from the minds of ordinary people.

Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari comments in the following way: 'The saints of this path, both before (Muhammad) and after (him) have given indications of their inner experiences. When they became aware of the parameters of the self, they described both the one who acquires knowledge and the source of this knowledge. Since each man's speech is a reflection of his station, the common people find it difficult to understand this variety of experience.'

Shaykh Sa'd al-Din Hamawi said to some of his own disciples: 'Do not be duped by the variety of terms, and do not be negligent of their inner meanings, for on the day when the people are raised from their graves and when that which was hidden in their breasts becomes known, when the great plain of the Last Day encloses all of mankind, out of every thousand persons who are raised up, nine hundred and ninety nine of them will be killed by the sword of those expressions or by the arrow of those indications – blood will be split on the necks of those very people who were careless with regard to the meanings, who pursued the way of rejection and denial and abandoned the edifice of knowledge.'

Allah will forgive the person who desired that his actions be just and who, with the help of his intellect, avoided any dispute because he realized that he had no knowledge in these matters; this is the way of the spiritually advanced (*salihun*) and the sincere of His slaves. He says:

'Those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding' (39: 18)²⁴

It remains to me to thank those at the Cultural Studies and Research Institute of the Islamic Iranian Academy of Philosophy and all those who, whatever the circumstances have a passion for Islamic texts and who have a profound love for the truths of gnosis – all those who by the music of spirituality awakened my lifeless heart and broken spirit after an extended period away from any research of this nature. I have completed this introduction with the desire that it be of particular interest to the honoured scholars and researchers of this institute.

I have added to it a list of contents which shows in detail the principles on which each section is based, principles which are as it were the links in the golden chain of this divine religion and which reflect the progression from *shari`ah*, through *tariqah* to *haqiqah*. I hope that I have managed to portray the beauty, radiance and splendour of these gnostic truths and subtleties which issue from behind the subtle veils of that garden of profundities, that abode of magnificence and elegance (which is the heart). I desire as reward for my efforts nothing but increase in God's grace and generosity, nothing but illumination by the

lights of the Muhammadi realm and nothing but spiritual assistance on the path from Sayyid Haydar `Alawi. It is thus that I present this brief work as a service to Allah who is reward can only be received in the next world.

This introduction was completed in the evening of the first of Muharram 1403 after the *hijrah*, lunar dating (26 Mehr 1361 AH, solar dating); I ask Allah that He bless all those who undertook that *hijrah*.

Sing the song of goodness in this echoing dome of the world.
For it shall return your song generously after death.

Muhammad Khajavi (26/7/1362 AH solar dating)

Postscript

The burial place of Sayyid Amuli is to be found in the town of Amul, at the lower end of the bazaar in a quarter known as Buqayye Mir Haydar ('Say Tan'); the building contained therein dates from the Seljuk period and the dome resembles that of Baba Rukn al-Din Shirazi, the renowned gnostic who died in 769 AD in Isfahan. On two small doors on either side of the building is written in Arabic: 'Construction of this revered burial ground was undertaken on the instructions of the Pole of the men of spiritual realization and the Proof of the spiritual travelers, Sayyid `Izz al-Din ibn Sayyid Baha' al-Din Amuli.' Again I express the hope that God willing, in the future, the illuminated visage of Sayyid Amuli will reveal itself more clearly to us from the dark mirror of history.

[1.](#) 'Ali is the yamin (right hand) of Allah, guarded by the army of Truth. The phrase *ashab al yamin* (the Companions of the Right Hand) indicates none other than the people of 'Ali.

[2.](#) It was with much charm and kindness that the employees of this fine library put a photocopy of the work at my disposition. The director of the library also supplied me with a copy of *Al-Muhit al-A`zam*. (The Mighty Ocean), which had been handwritten by the author himself this is the only copy which exists in Iran – the only other extant copy is in the library of Najaf – and I shall subsequently refer to it. When my eyes fell on the amber-like calligraphy of this sayyid, written as it were in the ink of the Cathay musk deer, they brightened with joy, and on a thorough reading I was apprised of his knowledge of the chains of transmission, of his way of the patched garment and granting of permission to his students.

[3.](#) The reason for my forgetfulness was that I was totally absorbed in correcting the books of commentary of *Sadr al-Muta`lihin The Core of the Divine Gnostics* – which number fourteen detailed volumes – and *Kitab Mafatih al-Ghaib* (Book of Keys to the Unseen). The latter is the last introduction to the commentary of this great commentator and the key to understanding the deeper meanings of the Qur'an.

[4.](#) This strife – mostly occurring in the Karkh area of Baghdad inhabited by the Shiah – was caused by political motives, according to historical testimonies (in particular that of *al-Kamil Ibn Athir*).

[5.](#) Thus acting in accordance with the ayah: 'Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and property which you have acquired, and the slackness of trade which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command; and Allah does not guide the transgressing people' (9:24).

6. With regard to the patched robe, he himself says in *Al-Muhit al-Azam* (The Mighty Ocean): 'This garment which is well-known amongst the common and elite of the muwahhidin – those who affirm the unity of Allah – is an indication of the secret of wilayah – friendship with Allah – and the secret wisdom of tawhid which came from Allah by means of Gabriel to Adam and then to his son Seth: this wilayah was transmitted as an inner reality by means of this lineage. Thereafter, it was transferred to Noah through a chain of prophets and saints (awliya) until it reached the Mahdi, may Allah speed his appearance on earth. With the Mahdi this transmission came to an end and it is for this reason that he is the seal of the awliya'. Thus the patched garment is not an indication, as the ignorant maintain, of something made of wool or cotton or the like – all are aware that the outer garment itself is not an indication of the taking on of the qualities of human perfection – rather it is connected to the right-guidance of the prophets, saints and the great amongst the shaykhs and men of perfection. As an explanation of the taking on of the inner meaning of the way of these great men – through an embodiment of their character and qualities and obedience to: their way of life – the patched garment is a term both noble and subtle; thus it is that God says: 'Say: If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you, (3:31).'

7. That is according to the divine pattern or sunnah which holds sway over nature; this means that those whose desire has not died are, according to the natural pattern of life, themselves dead. This pattern of nature is an order of interconnected harmony based on wisdom and the whole cycle of beneficence is as a spark from the inner divine order.

8. This is an allusion to the ayah: 'And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them'. (14:34)

9. A biography of each of these great shaykhs requires detailed investigation; there does in fact exist ample biographical material, but since it would be difficult to include in this introduction these golden chains of wilayah will be investigated according to the strict methodology of this science (of determining the veracity of the men and chains of transmission) if a suitable opportunity arises, God willing.

10. The form of my ijazah to wear the outward kharqah – which I received from Shaykh Nur al-Din Isfahani – was in accordance with the way he himself had received it and under the same conditions imposed by the shaykhs of this realm; indeed all the shaykhs without exception took it on in this way – right up to the perfect shaykh, Junayd al-Baghdadi, who himself received it from his maternal uncle Sirri al-Saqi, who received it from Ma'ruf al-Karkhi and in turn from 'Ali bin Musa.

11. The three dots indicate that some of the links in the chains are omitted to avoid repetition. They are delineated in Sufi books; it is possible that they will vary somewhat in who they include or omit.

12. My opinion was and still is that when the state of profound divine attraction overcomes a person – just as it overcame Ibrahim Adham and Shaykh 'Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani and many others like Uways al-Qarani, then the Real transports them to His court where He himself undertakes to bestow perfection and courtesy on them – this has been witnessed to be true in the case of many of the majdhubs, who are amongst the great saints of God: people such as Shaykh Abu l-Hasan al-Kharaqani who drew perfection from the spirituality of Bayazid Bastami; indeed Sayyid Amuli also received perfection directly from the spirituality of the infallible Imams, from the poles of previous ages and from the poles and saints of his time, and in the course of his spiritual path he crossed the station of the majdhub – and Allah knows best the truth of such matters.

13. This book was printed in 1347 (Persian solar calendar) by the Iran and France Institute.

14. This work is wrongly entitled *Risalat al-Amanah* (Treatise of Divine Trusteeship) in some copies.

15. Sayyid Qutub al-Din Nayrizi, one of the great gnostics and torch bearers during a time of declining Sufism and darkness, says in his book *Fasl al-Kitab* (The Decisive Book on the subject of the gnostics who believe in the unity of existence). 'Sayyid Haydar bin 'Ali al-Husayni al-Amuli of the country of Tabaristan and Mazandaran possesses boundless excellence and is of the station of unveiling and witnessing; from among his beautiful works there are those entitled *Jami' al-Asrar* (Compendium of Secrets), *Muhit al-Azam wa 'l-Bahr al-Khadam* (The Mighty Ocean and the Great Sea). These works which are in my possession are amongst the most precious of books. The commentator of *Fasl al-Kitab* who it appears had seen the *Risalat al-Faqr* (Treatise on Poverty), relates: 'I have written this book after seeing some of the ignorant believing that there is a contradiction in terms between the way of faqr (the state of the fakir on the path to Allah) and the way of the Shi'ah. In it I have demonstrated that any Shi'ah who is not of the people of poverty and spiritual journeying is not of the Shi'ah and every fakir who is not a Shi'ah is not a true fakir nor a salik (spiritual traveler), since these two matters are of their nature connected – the way of poverty being the way of the infallible Imams: to profess

Shi'ism means that one follows them in their actions and their worship. Thus anyone who is neither a faqir nor a salik is in reality beyond the pale of Shi'ism, even though he may call himself a Shi'ah. I have composed the following lines about the people of the outward:

Such people are unaware of both the outward and the inner, and so they go astray by their ignorance and lack of guidance;
They are immersed in worship of other than Him, while to tell the truth,
There is in reality no actor save Allah.'

16. This book is referred to sometimes as *Asrar al-Shari'ati wa Anwar al-Haqiqah* and sometimes as *Anwar al-Haqiqah wa Asrar al-Shari'ah* in the book *Jami al Asrar*; according to the text in my possession it is *Anwar al-Haqiqah wa Atwar al-Tariqah wa Asrar al-Shari'ah*; according to the index of the university it is *Asrar al-Shari'ati wa Anwar al-Haqiqah*; in the library of Ma'rashi in Qum it is *Anwar al-Haqiqah wa Asrar al-Shari'ah*.

17. This book together with *Jami'al-Asrar* was printed by the Iran and France Institute in 1347 AH (solar dating).

18. These two books, namely *Risalat al-Tanbih* and *Amthalat al-Tawhid* in addition to *Jami' al-Haqaiq* were written in Persian and the another indicates this at the end of *Jami' al-Asrar*.

19. In another volume of this book (No. 301 in the library of Mar'ashi in Qum) he says: 'I completed this at the end of the month of Shawwal 777 AH in Najaf'

20. These risalahs are written in the hand of Sayyid Amuli, a hand more fair and beautiful than a ravishing face; the fatwas of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin, the teacher of Sayyid Amuli, are to be found in the margins and between the different sections of the work; the following is a list of these thirteen risalahs:

1. *Masa'il Amuliat* consisting of twelve questions put to Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin by Sayyid Amuli: (1) concerning the necessity of divine gnosis and concerning the attributes which may or may not be associated with Him; (2) concerning the mukallaf (the one on whom some duty is incumbent) who does not have the capacity to carry out that duty, who by his ignorance is in a state of extreme weakness and by his foolishness is in great need of sustenance; (3) concerning the duty of the mukallaf and how a portion of it may be more difficult than the rest (4) concerning the trader who does not pay the khums tax on his wealth; (5) and (6) concerning the 'Alawi Sadat (those who are descended from the Prophet by the lineage of 'Ali) and the way in which khums is given to them; (7) and (8) concerning the khums of those who are not descended from the Prophet and who are either employees or workers; (9) concerning the love of the mukallaf for the Prophet and the Imams and concerning what kind of love it should be – whether it should be the same as that associated with mankind – a love caused by inclination, natural passion or some other kind of love (10) concerning the request for blessings on the Prophet and whether or not it is obligatory or recommended and whether it is obligatory in the prayer and at other times just recommended; it also concerns the question as to whether it is an absolute obligation and deals with the difference between the asking of blessings on Muhammad and his Family and the asking of blessings merely on His family; it discusses too the difference between ahl and al, both linguistically and in terms of their application; (11) concerning the saying of amin after the al-Hamd surah (something which is done by the Sunnis), whether or not the saying of it invalidates the prayer and whether or not this word is part of the Qur'an or not; (12) this particular page is torn and patched up and the fatwa of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin is missing.

Within this collection – apart from the *Masa'il Amuliat* there are also twelve other treatises, all written in the hand of Sayyid Amuli:

2. *Masa'il Madaniyat* (Madinan Questions) by 'Allamah Hilli; written on the back of this manuscript is the ijazah of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin and in the work itself he corrects several points of the risalah of his own father.

3. *Risalat fi Hajj al-Mutamatti' bihi wa Wajibatuhu* (The Treatise of the Hajj alTamattu' and its obligations) by Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin.

4. *Risalat Mi'raj al-Salamah wa Minhaj al-Karamah* (The Treatise of the Ascent to Safety and the Miraculous Way) by 'Ali

ibn Sulayman al-Bahrani.

5. Kitab Suyun al-Hikmah (The Book of the Springs of Wisdom) by Fakhr.
6. Risatatu l-Hudud (The Treatise on the Legal Parameters and Punishments) by Ibn Sina.
7. Masa'il Mufarriqah (Miscellaneous Questions).
8. Risalat al-Tawhid (The Treatise on Divine Unity).
9. Istalahat Hukama (The Terminology of the Wise).
10. Risalah Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi.
11. Risalat at-Ilm (The Treatise on Knowledge).
12. Questions put by Shaykh Sadr al-Din Qunyawī to Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi.

13. Risalat al-Qada' wa l-Qadr (The Treatise of the Decree and Predestination) by Hasan Basri.

[21.](#) I saw this work – written in the hand of the author – included with the book Muhit al-A`zam in the library of Najaf (there is another copy of the same volume in the library of Mar'ashi in Qum). In it the author says: 'I wrote this brief treatise concerning the sciences of the three groups (the Sufis, the philosophers and the theologians) at the behest of certain respected persons. It consists of an introduction and ten subjects of investigation: the introduction deals with the three types of knowledge, the first an explanation of the knowledge of the people of Allah, the second concerning the way in which revelation and inspiration are transmitted, and the third concerning the nature of unveiling together with the different orders of divine names – the names of action, the names of the attributes and the names of the essence.' This risalah is the same Risalat al-Ilm which has already been mentioned above (no. 5) or rather it is a shortened version of it; the year 787 AH, however, does seem rather late; Sayyid Amuli would describe each year of his life in the course of his writings but from 782 AH, the year in which he completed the commentary on the Fusus to 787 AH, there is an inexplicable gap of five years of which we know nothing; with regard to the date of writing of the commentary (in the library of Mar'ashi – written in the graceful hand of the author) the year 777 AH is recorded, and it is possible that this treatise, which is part of another volume of commentary, has been wrongly dated by the writer or has been misread – that is that the middle number has been inverted: and Allah knows better the truth of all matters.

[22.](#) Henry Gorbin attributes this work to Haydar Amuli and states that it was written at the request of his teacher Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin. See La Philosophie shi'ite (Tehran and Paris, 1969), p. 41

[23.](#) This set of verses ending (in the original) with the refrain 'you see' is an indication of divine passion and the witnessing of the Truth – which is the basis of divine gnoses. Such witnessing entails a divine attraction towards oneness by means of the attributes of tawhid, then an entering into the different levels of unveiling – in which the heart becomes aware of every molecule – and then a passing into the levels of fana' (annihilation) whereby the spiritual traveler gives up everything he possesses to his desire for the divine existence. In doing so, all excess or lack of material wealth ceases to exist since his own illusory existence has disappeared into oneness with God. Thereafter there is the baqa' – in which one abides in Allah; in this state passion is transformed by alchemy into the elixir of existence and one moves beyond the limits of the world of the senses and the four dimensions.

[24.](#) The editor's commentary on the text has been omitted since it largely comprises a selection of passages translated into Persian for the benefit of the Persian reader with a poor knowledge of Arabic.

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