CHAPTER THREE: LETTERS TO MUḤAMMAD AL-MAJDHÛB

ALBRECHT HOFHEINZ

INTRODUCTION

Muḥammad al-Majdhûb b. Qamar al-Dīn'st (1210/1796 to 1247/1831) acquaintance with Aḥmad b. Idrīs came about through his contact with Muḥammad ‘Uthmān al-Mirghānī. After his rather unsuccessful stay in Sinnār (and a short second visit to Kordofan), al-Mirghānī turned northwards to al-Matamma and Shendi, where he stayed for about a year, teaching and building a mosque. Among the people that flocked round him was al-Majdhûb, then in his early twenties, who lived in his native al-Matamma as a teacher of Qurʾān and the religious sciences.

Al-Majdhûb came from a family with a well-established religious reputation among the Jaʿaliyyīn. The Majādhib around 1650 had founded the mosque and town of al-Dāmar, and 150 years later they wielded considerable political influence between Shendi and Berber, centres of increasingly autonomous regional government within the crumbling Funj state. The rulers of Shendi and Berber had granted them land and tax privileges, and the Majādhib started to intermarry with them as well as with leading merchant families of the area. Al-Dāmar’s prosperity grew as its tax-free market attracted caravans heading for Egypt and Suakin. Security against bedouin attacks on the overland routes was guaranteed by an almost magical awe in which the population held the fakīs. In the schools of al-Dāmar, learning

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1 This is the form of his name current among his family today. Ibn Idrīs in his letters addresses him as ‘Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Majdhūb.’ The difference can be explained: ‘Muḥammad’ was his first name, by which he was called as long as he had not yet become prominent. To distinguish him from other Muḥamms, reference to his family was added by indicating the name by which its ancestor was known: ‘descendant of [al-]Majdhūb.’ As his reputation grew and he became the most outstanding religious personality of his family, the common ‘Muḥammad’ was dropped. Since then, he is usually referred to as ‘al-Shaykh al-Majdhūb.’

This is a slightly amended version of Ch. 3 of The Letters of Ahmad Ibn Idris, ed. Einar Thomassen & Bernd Radtke, London: Hurst, 1993, pp. 119-143. Fonts and pagination are not identical to the printed version.
flourished and attracted students from afar; contacts with al-Azhar and the Ḥijāz as well as with the new reformist² Sammāniyya ṭariqa indicate intellectual alertness. J.L. Burckhardt’s description³ of what he viewed as a ‘theocratic state,’ a haven of security, prosperity and learning as against the rather gloomy picture he paints of the rest of the country, has become a classic of Sudanese historiography.

Not only materially had the Majādhīb achieved distinction from their fellow countrymen. Around 1750 their leader, al-Fakī Ḥamad, was introduced to the Shādhiyya by a Moroccan belonging to the Nāṣirī branch of the ṭariqa. Whatever the original motives for this move might have been, it eventually was interpreted by the Majādhīb to express a somewhat élitist role of their ancestors. As proof of their higher standard of learning, the exquisite style of Shaykh al-Majdhūb’s writings is often mentioned; an example can be seen in his letter to Ibn Idrīs.

After finishing his education in al-Dāmar, al-Majdhūb returned to al-Matamma, where he embarked on a teaching career of his own. For spiritual guidance, he apparently turned to a local shaykh, al-Rayyah, who together with his students joined al-Mirghānī when the latter visited the region.⁴ Al-Majdhūb, who was only two years younger than Muhammad ‘Uthmān, decided to join him on his way back to the Ḥijāz. But before they reached their destination, serious differences had developed between them. They separated, and al-Majdhūb completed the journey on his own.⁵

He arrived in the Ḥijāz around 1821 and stayed until December 1828, most of the time in Medina, but visiting Mecca almost every year for the pilgrimage, as letter II suggests.⁶ Precise information on his relationship with Aḥmad b. Idrīs is scarce, and the matter has been the subject of polemics between followers of the Idrīsī, Khatmī and Majdhūbī traditions. While the Adārīa unequivocally rank al-Majdhūb among Ibn Idrīs’ students,⁷ the Majādhīb deny that he took the ṭariqa from Ibn Idrīs. The Khatmī view is influenced by the enmity between them and the Majādhīb. A detailed discussion of the problem is beyond the scope of this

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² The use of the term ‘reformist’ in this chapter does not imply a radical breach with tradition and the advocacy of something totally new and unprecedented (an attitude I would term ‘modernist’). It rather describes an attempt to re-establish the purity of what is perceived as being the right belief and behaviour in a world where these qualities had, according to the view of the reformists, suffered from decline. The reformists explicitly refer back to tradition—particularly early, ‘pristine’ tradition—in order to rectify what surrounded or immediately preceded them.


⁴ Kitāb al-Ībāna, ed. Abu Salim (see. above, p. 8), typescript p. 72 (ch. II).

⁵ Majdhūbī and Khatmī oral sources. A short version of the story of the dispute is printed in Sayyid Hurreiz, Ja‘aliyīn Folktales, Bloomington 1977, p. 123, no. 68.

⁶ Cf. also Wasila, 110, 116.

introduction; but it seems as if the nature of al-Majdhūb's relationship with Aḥmad b. Idrīs is indicative for Ibn Idrīs' method of teaching in general and his way of dealing with his followers.

It is now established that Ibn Idrīs never founded an organised ṭariqa. He devoted his time to teaching and personal guidance; he held general majālis for a larger public and gave special advice and awrād to those he thought more advanced in spiritual perfection. These are things any Sufi shaykh claiming to be a murshid would do. But as a close look at our sources suggests, Ahmad b. Idrīs consciously tried to direct his students' attention away from himself and onto the Prophet. Personal modesty and integrity as well as a reforming effort must both have played a part in this. The following passage from the K. al-Wasila is central for our understanding of the dynamics between Ibn Idrīs and his student:

Al-Majdhūb used to say of Ibn Idrīs, 'He is my shaykh.' Asked, 'Did you take a binding oath to him in the (Sufi) path (akhadhtu 'alayhi 'ahdan fī l-ṭariq)?' he answered, 'No.'—'So how can he be your shaykh?'—'Through one word he said to me.'—'What was that?'—'I was confused at first about my state (ḥāl) compared to the state of the friends of God (awliyā'). (Even) the most eminent of them are proud of (certain miraculous) things they have achieved through their progress on the spiritual path; but I never gave heed to these things and even regarded them with contempt. I was thus in a state of doubt who of us was really on the right path. When I consulted him (sc. Ibn Idrīs) in this matter, he said: 'They are on a (right) path, and you are on a (right) path. However, the fact that you don't pay any attention to these things clearly shows the gap between them and you. For their spiritual support (madad) comes from the shaykhs that educate them; yours though, my brother, comes from God and His Messenger.' And upon this word, my innermost self became calm.'

Thus directed toward the Prophet, al-Majdhūb left Mecca to settle in Medina; it was there that the doors opened for him and he entered into direct communication (wasla) with Muḥammad. The Prophet confirmed to him his initiation into the Shādhiliyya, which he had originally taken from his father, and al-Majdhūb thus became spiritually independent from the authority of other shaykhs. While this was perfectly legitimate from the point of view of Ahmad b. Idrīs, it marked a definite break with Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Mirghānī. To Ibn Idrīs, who was preoccupied with individual guidance, al-Mirghānī's (or al-Majdhūb's) claims to spiritual leadership were acceptable and even natural as long as they did not lead to self-inflation and distraction from the path of Truth. As the letters show, he believed that al-Mirghānī had fallen into this trap in his endeavour to create a centralised organisation with a hierarchical leadership. The roots of this thinking must have

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8 Ibrāhīm al-Rashīd, Nubdha min baʿːl kārāmāt [...] al-Majdhūb, translated in Hofheinz, 'Encounters,' 56.
9 Cf. below, letter IV to al-Majdhūb. Also ʿĀkish, Munāẓara, 337 Abū Dāhish.
10 Wasila, 13.
been present already during al-Mīrghanī’s first visit to the Sudan,\(^1\) and it might well be here that we have to look for the reasons of al-Majdhūb’s split with him.

Asked about the difference between them and the Khatmiyya, the Majādhīb often draw attention to the fact that whereas their own \textit{mādiḥ} is directed exclusively to the Prophet, the Khatmiyya also sing songs of praise to al-Mīrghanī and his descendants. The Majādhīb even abandoned the common \textit{dhikr}; other than the \textit{ṣalāt}, \textit{mādiḥ} is the only form of communal devotion they know. Special regard for the Prophet has often been described as a central characteristic of the 19th century Sufi reform movements.\(^2\) Al-Majdhūb seems to have carried this to an extreme. He severely denied any attempt to assert an authority other than (even if subordinate to) the Prophet’s. This appears to lie at the heart of his dispute with al-Mīrghanī. At the same time this attitude would endear him to Aḥmad b. Idrīs. In contrast to the concerns the master voices in his writings to al-Mīrghanī, the letters to al-Majdhūb show a true paternal love and benevolence toward ‘the attracted one’ living in the Prophet’s \textit{miḥrāb} in Medina; the same appreciation is also reflected in Ibrāhīm al-Rashīd’s \textit{Nubdha}.

The apparent contradictions in the surviving records on al-Majdhūb’s relationship with Aḥmad b. Idrīs can be reconciled, if we take into consideration the different points of view of the respective authors. Al-Majdhūb did not take the \textit{ṭariqā} from Ibn Idrīs; there is conclusive evidence for this. Formal allegiance was practised in the Idrīsī circle,\(^3\) but not by al-Majdhūb. However, he was his student in a more general sense. He owed him much; neither he nor his descendants ever denied this. He received his master’s shirt as a sign of blessing;\(^4\) he incorporated Ibn Idrīs’ chief prayer into his own litanies. Ibn Idrīs is one of the prime legitimizing figures in the \textit{K. al-Wasila}, and al-Majdhūb’s letter to him is read aloud in full at every \textit{hawlīyya}.\(^5\) On the other hand, he was not one of those who lived constantly with Ibn Idrīs; he preferred to stay with the Prophet. He came to visit regularly, and Ibn Idrīs felt responsible for him and through him for his students in Medina.\(^6\)

\(^1\) Note that Ibn Idrīs first regarded al-Majdhūb as a follower of al-Mīrghanī, not of himself. For more details, cf. the introduction of my ‘Encounters.’


\(^3\) Cf. O’Fahey, \textit{Enigmatic Saint}, 158.

\(^4\) Cf. below, letter II. This gesture should not be over-interpreted, though. Garments were commonly exchanged as signs of honour (cf. \textit{Wasīla}, 190, and \textit{passim}), and al-Majdhūb himself sent one to Ibn Idrīs (cf. letter I).

\(^5\) Anniversary celebration of Shaykh al-Majdhūb in al-Dāmar, around the 27th of Muḥarram.

\(^6\) Cf. letters II, III and IV. Nothing can be said about the number of al-Majdhūb’s students in Medina. Shaykh al-Ṭāhir met some of them when he went on pilgrimage in 1859 (cf. \textit{Wasīla}, 15); but no trace of them seems to have survived in other sources.
sum up: al-Majdhūb partook of the Idrīsī tradition, but did not feel dependent on it; he used its elements in a unique way.

His final years need not concern us here. A year later than Aḥmad b. Idrīs he too left the Ḥijāz and went to Suakin, where he arrived on 7 January 1829. In this town, then under Ottoman rule, he built a zāwīya and laid the foundations for the spread of the Shādhiliyya among the Beja. Early in 1831 he returned to al-Dāmar, but fell ill and died soon afterwards. His family and students do not seem to have maintained any direct contact with Ibn Idrīs or his descendants.

* All the letters presented here seem to be addressed to al-Majdhūb in Medina. Only in the case of letter I this is evident beyond doubt; but references to other messages and the apparent ease with which they were exchanged seem to preclude the possibility of the recipient living across the sea in Suakin. From the contents of the letters I would also surmise that they were all written while Ibn Idrīs was still in Mecca, i.e. before 1243/1827–8. Al-Majdhūb was definitely established as a Sufi teacher in Medina in 1238/1822–3; so it is between 1822 and 1828 that Ibn Idrīs' letters should probably be dated.

The letter by al-Majdhūb, on the other hand, seems to refer to the troubles Ibn Idrīs had in Mecca, and would thus be rather late; its exquisite and difficult style is characteristic of al-Majdhūb's writings. As there is no hint to the yearning for the Prophet which marks his Suakin years, and no indication that he himself was under any pressure from outside, I would date this letter to about 1827.

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17 Wasila, 19.
18 Spaulding, ‘Wayward Saint,’ 46, thinks they were written not long after al-Majdhūb’s departure for Suakin in 1830 [sic]; but this rests on the assumption that al-Majdhūb used to live with Ibn Idrīs in Mecca and therefore they exchanged letters only after his departure for the Sudan.
19 Wasila, 23.
الجوابات المرسلة إلى محمد المجذوب

مصادر

ترجمة الأستاذ الأعظم والملاذ الأفخم صاحب العقد النفيس
مولاي المغربي الشريف سيدي السيد أحمد بن إدريس، مخطوطات،
دار الوثائق القومية، الخرطوم، متنوعات رقم ٢٤٧/١٢٦٢، ومتنوعات رقم ٤٣٢/٥٥/١٠٣٠.

أعطار أزهر الشاذلي حظيرة التقديس في كرامات السيد أحمد بن
إدريس، تحقيق صالح الجعفي، القاهرة، ١٣٩٤/١٩٧٤.

محمّد المجذوب بن محمّد بن أحمد بن جلال الدين، أنسا المطالبة
في مختصر المناقث في ترجمة القطب المحبوب ولي الله الشيخ
محمّد المجذوب، القاهرة.

سلطان الطاهر بن الطيب المجذوب، كتاب الوسيلة إلى المطلوب في
بعض ما أستهر من مناقب وكرامات ولي الله الشيخ المجذوب.
القاهرة، ١٣٣٢/١٩١٤.
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

من أحمد بن إدريس إلى أخيه ولاية واصفيّ محمّد بن مجذوب، جذبه الله بسلاسل محمته إليه وأحضره بغاية عشقة لديه، السلام عليكم ورحمة الله تعالى وبركاته.

أما بعد: فقد وصل الثوب والجيبة أوصللك الله إلي رضوانه الأكبر وكماك جبّة الإمام الذي لا كفر فيه وسرربك جبّة الحياء منه حيث لا يراك حيث هلاك ولا يفقدك حيث أمرك.

واعلم أنك مني على بال، والسلام عليك وعلى جميع الإخوان ورحمة الله تعالى وبركاته.

ويا أخي أخوك علي اليمني مكلف بزيارة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم عن رجل اسمه عبدو بن مقبول، فأنست أذكري هذا الرجل في حضرة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مرتين متعدّدة في أيامه، عسى الله أن يقبله، فافعل ذلك عن أخيك علي اليمني، والسلام.
I

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

From Ahmad ibn Idrīs to his brother and close and sincere friend, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Majdhūb, may God draw him unto Him through the chains of His love, and bring him unto His presence by His utter loving passion. Peace be with you, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High.

The garment and mantle have reached us—may God let you reach His greater satisfaction, dress you in the mantle of faith free of all unbelief and wrap you in the mantle of shame before Him so He may not see you doing what He has forbidden you, and not miss you where He has commanded you.20

Know that you are in my thoughts, and peace be with you and with all the brethren, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High!

Brother! Your brother ʿAlī al-Yamānī is commissioned to visit the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, for a man called ʿAbdūh b. Maqbūl.21 (Could you please) mention this man in the presence of the Prophet,22 may God bless him and grant him peace, several times on (various) days; perhaps God will accept it. Do this in lieu of your brother ʿAlī al-Yamānī. And good-bye!

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20 Cf. al-ʿlqd al-nafīs, 99 (= Risālat al-qawāʿid, 4th principle).

21 ʿAlī al-Yamānī is obviously a Yemeni; ʿAbdūh [sic] b. Maqbūl from his name might be either a Yemeni, or else of slave origin. The letter is addressed to Shaykh al-Majdhūb in Medina, as is clear from the contents.

22 I.e. when he visits the tomb of the Prophet. The practice of sending a representative to perform the rites of pilgrimage or visit the tomb of Muḥammad is quite common among Muslims; this representative may, in turn, commission a third person; cf. Meier, Bahāʾ-i Walad, 182, n. 36.
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

من أحمد بن إدريس إلى أخيه وحبيبه ووصيّه الشيخ محمود بن
محدث، جذبه الله، مغنته محبته إليه آمين، السلام عليك ورحمة
اللّه تعالى وبركاته.

أما بعد: فاعلم يا أخي أنّه لم يفتّلك حج ولا غيّره، فأتست معاً
وتخن معك حينما كنت، وأثر ذلك عدك ظاهر، وقد وجهنا إليّك
قميصنا الذي كنّا نلبسه، تتبّكا وتشبّها.

وحرص الإخوان على الخلوة بالصلاة العظيمة، ونن سيم لم يقدر
عليها فعله بالعزلة والصمت، ووسع صدرك معهم فإنَّ اللّه أمر نبيّه
صلّى اللّه عليه وسلم بقوله: فاعف عنهم، يعني في حقوقهم
صلّى اللّه عليه وسلم، واستغفر لهم، أي تب علّيهم في حقوقنا الليّ
لنا عليهم، ومن لم يبت عن زلة إخوانه فليس بوارث كامل.

والسلام عليك وعلى جميع إخوانك كلّهم ورحمة اللّه تعالى وبركاته.

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23 تعالى -ب-، ط
24 وبالصلاة العظيمة -ب-، برسولات العظيم من
25 تعالى -ب-، ط
II

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

From Ahmad ibn Idris to his brother and beloved and sincere friend Shaykh Muhammad ibn Majdhub, may God draw him unto Himself through the magnet of His love. Amen. Peace be with you, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High!

Know, my brother, that you have not failed a hajj, nor any other duty, for you are with us and we are with you, wherever you may be; the trace of this is evident with you. We have sent you our gown which we have been wearing, as a sign of benediction and imitation.

Urge the brethren to practice retreat, using the ‘Azimiyya prayer; those who do not have enough strength to do so should stick to simple solitude and silence. And be patient with them, for God commanded His Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, saying, ‘Pardon them’—that is, for what is owed to him may God bless him and grant him peace—and ask forgiveness for them (K., 3:159)—that is, forgive them for what they owe to Us. Whoever does not forgive a lapse of his brethren cannot be a perfect heir.

26 This seems to be written in reply to a complaint by al-Majdhub of not having been able to perform the last pilgrimage. Ahmad b. Idris apparently was still in Mecca at the time; thus, the letter must have been written before 1827.

27 Ibn Idris apparently plays on several classical Sufi concepts here. He sends al-Majdhub his qamis—a simple gesture personalising the venerable investiture with the khirqa. And he does this as a sign of tabarruk and tashabhuh. As Sufi technical terms, these words denote a looser bond between pupil and master, as opposed to genuine novitiate. A tariqa is often taken ‘for the blessing’, to get the baraka of its shaykh, not to actually practice it. Similarly, a mutashabbih is someone who ‘imitates’ the Sufis, without completely and unconditionally surrendering to their rule (cf. Trimingham, Sufi Orders, 185; ‘Abd al-Mun’in al-Hifni, Mujam mustalahat al-Safiyya, Beirut: Dar al-Masira 1980, p. 335). Ibn Idris, it seems, alludes to these concepts here, even though not necessarily in a strictly technical sense.


29 The ‘Azimiyya prayer, lying at the beginning and the heart of Ibn Idris’ prophetic encounters, has become a distinctive hallmark of all the tariqa that expressly claim to belong to the Idrisi tradition. It is therefore highly interesting to see that the K. al-Wasila disclaims this tradition by changing the text from al-salat al-‘azimiyya to salawat al-‘azim. Note that within the Majdhubi tradition today, the salat al-‘azimiyya is never used in its complete original form, but only in a modified version. For a translation of the prayer, see the letter to ‘Arabi al-Hawwari below.

30 This obviously refers to the famous hadith, inna al-‘ulama‘ warathat al-anbiyaa’ (Wensinck, Concordance, iv, 321). Although in this context, emphasis is on the sympathetic attitude of the master in the educational process, the phrase may contain a passing shot at those who cannot truly be called ‘ulama‘: the legalists who only judge outward acts (al-zahir) without taking into account human circumstances and inner motivations (al-batin). By stressing the importance of the latter, Ibn Idris places himself firmly
Peace be with you and with every one of your brethren, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High!

within a Sufi tradition which opposes the legalist separation between ethics and jurisprudence. Cf. also Ibn Idris, *al-Iqd al-nafis*, 188-9, where the 'heir' is said to be the one pure at heart, i.e. the Sufi.
III

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

From Aḥmad ibn Idrīs to his brother and beloved and sincere friend, the delight of his eye, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Majdhūb, may God draw him unto the perfection of His knowledge and love. Amen. Peace be with you, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High!

We have received your first, second, and third letter, and acknowledged the arrival of the items which you sent, for they all reached us as you had specified. We pointed out to you that you should introduce to the Retreat those in whom you see zeal and determination. For the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, has urged that some of the brethren be introduced to the retreat, and prescribed that they enter it using the ‘Aẓīmiyya prayer; so they entered it, and the gate opened between them and God and His Messenger.36

Peace be with you and with all who are with you, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High! Greetings.

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36 This is an example of the ‘Muḥammadan Way’ (al-ṭariqa al-Muḥammadiyya): Aḥmad b. Idrīs is guided by a direct revelation of the Prophet to him; and the ‘Aẓīmiyya prayer, in turn, leads to faith and direct contact with God and the Prophet. On the khalwa cf. the preceding letter.
4

 Heavenly Name, His Mercy and Compassion

In the Name of al-Hamad bin 'Ali bin 'Abdul-Wahab bin Muhammad to His well-known friend Muhammad bin Sa'id.

The one who carries this letter to you is my brother, may Allah be pleased with him. He informed me of your letter to me, Allah be his intercessor. I carried it to the Prophet, and he gave me this reply:

"If you have a wish, Allah will give it to you in whatever way He wishes. If you wish to see me in meeting, I will appear to you as long as you have faith in me. If you want to see Mecca, I will take you there. If you have a desire, I will fulfill it for you. If you want to see the like of me, I will show you the like of me. My intercessions are accepted by Allah and my prayer is accepted by Him."

May Allah give you good news, and may He give you peace of mind.

Yours truly,

Muhammad bin Sa'id
In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

From Aḥmad ibn Idrīs to his brother and beloved and close and sincere friend, the friend of God Muḥammad ibn Majdhūb, may God attract him unto Him through His self-displaying. Amen. Peace be with you, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High.

The one who comes to you carrying this letter is an Indian scholar and one of your brethren in love;⁴³ so provide him with what is useful to him on the way of the love of God.

Give our regards to all the brethren. This letter is written in a hurry. We sent to you some books a while ago; hopefully they have reached you.

Peace be with you, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High!

PS: Praise be to God alone! Know, brother, that I had intended to send you the two mighty prayers known as ‘The Aḥmadan Devotion’ and ‘The Eternal Secret’

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⁴¹ al-ʾāmān
⁴² Qustā ʾal-ʾāsār
⁴³ Muḥibbīn often—but not always—refers to ‘lay brethren’: those who love the Sufis and support them morally and financially, but do not themselves adhere to their rules. The distinction between muḥībb and murīd (‘novice’) is not sharply drawn (cf. Fritz Meier, Abū Sāʿīd-i Abū l-Ḥayr, Leiden 1976, 337-345).
(also called ‘The Supreme Secret’ and ‘The Most Abundant Treasure’). I ordered one of the brethren to write them down, but he was ill and did not submit them by the time I dispatch this letter. God willing, they will reach you later.

All the good tidings that come down upon you, write them down and don’t neglect them! The Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, used to ask his companions after morning prayer: ‘Those of you who have had a vision (tonight), let them tell it!’ It is counted as an instance of revelation, and one should not disregard revelation, for God, glory to Him, does not cause it to no purpose. Think of the story of Joseph, peace be with him: he preserved his vision, together with his father, for long years; and when its true meaning became evident in the world of senses he said immediately—for throughout this long time he had always kept it in mind: ‘O my father! this is the fulfilment of my vision of old! My Lord hath made it come true!’ (K., 12: 100). And be not among the negligent!

44 These two highly valued hizbs, the first two of the current Idrisī awrād collections, belong closely together. Ibn Idris apparently emphasised their importance to many of his students; cf. his letter to Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar of al-Mukhā, below, and letters VI and X to al-Mirghāni. Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī’s edition of the Awrād (1940), 6, n. 2 gives the text of a note allegedly added by Ahmad b. Idrīs himself to one of the MS sources: wa-tattāt baʿdahu [i.e. after the Maḥāmīd al-thamāniya? al-ḥizbayn al-musammayn bi-l-Wird al-Aḥmādī wa-l-Sirr al-sarmādī wa-l-musammayn āyāt bi-l-Sirr al-aʿżam wa-l-Kanz al-akram wa-baʿd al-jamiʿ al-ṣalawwāt.

45 The text in Wasila gives the translation, ‘but he became in some way ill ….’

46 The two hizbs comprise thirty-five and a half pages in the Ḥalabī edition.

47 Cf. Wensinck, Concordance, ii, 206.

48 The term wahy is normally reserved for the Prophets only (thus also by Majdhūb; see Wasila, 42). Ibn Idrīs’ explaining nightly visions as an instance of revelation is, however, based on the hadith “awnal mā budiʿa bihi Rasūl Allāh (s) min al-wahy al-ruʿyā al-ṣāliḥa fi al-nawm” (Bukhārī, K. Bad al-Wahy, 3), a tradition also used by Ibn Ḥarith (Ibn Ḥarith, al-Fatūḥāt al-Ḥalabīyya, Ch. 73/Juzʾ 82). More mainstream is the view that good tidings (mubashshirāt) may be explained as ‘a pious man’s visions’ and counted as the only instance of nubuwwa remaining after Muḥammad’s death (Mālik, Ruʿyā, 4; similarly, Wasila, 166); in this context, however, nubuwwa is interpreted merely as ‘foretelling the future’ (Mālik, Ruʿyā, 3).

49 Cf. K., 12:80. ‘Negligent’, i.e. toward those who have dreams, like Joseph. — Majdhūb’s practice in Suakin was to ask his followers about their dreams, some of which he interpreted, others not (Wasila, 166).
٥

(س، ص ١٧٦)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

من أحمد بن إدريس إلى أخوّي وصيّي ووليّ الشيخ محمّد بن مجذوب،
جذب الله بتحلي عظّمته إليه؛ آمين، السلام عليكم ورحمة الله تعالى
وبركاته.

أمّا بعد، فقد وصل كتّابكم أوصل لكم اللّه إلى نوره الذي لا
ظلم فيه؛ آمين، وقد كلّمنا الجارية بمرّ زواج على الأخ
إبراهيم فرضت، وإلي الآن ما تمّ الأمر معها.

ناسأل اللّه تعالى عافيتك ظاهرة وباطنًا حسّا ومعين، وسّلم منّا
على جميع الإخوان وخصوصاً أخانا محمّد بن الآمين، وبشّره منّي
بإقبال الخير عليه، فإنه كاتباً ولم يتيسّر لنا الجواب لضيق الوقت
وكثرة الشغل، وعلى الأخ محمّد برادة.

والسلام عليكم أجمعين.
In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

From Ĥamad ibn Idrīs to his brother and sincere and close friend, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Majdhūb, may God draw him unto Him through the self-displaying of His majesty. Amen. Peace be with you, and the mercy and blessings of God Most High.

Your letter has reached us—may God let you reach His Light, where there is no more darkness. Amen. We talked to the slave girl about her getting married to brother Ībrāhīm, and she consented. Until now, the matter has not been brought to a conclusion with her.

We ask God Most High for your well-being outwardly and inwardly, materially and spiritually. Give our regards to all the brethren, especially our brother Muḥammad ibn al-Amīn, and tell him on my behalf that goodness is soon to come to him—for he has written to us, but due to shortage of time and an abundance of work we have not yet been able to answer—and to brother Muḥammad Burāda as well.

Peace be with all of you.

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50 Is this perhaps Ībrāhīm al-Khuzāmī, one of the inner circle of Ibn Idrīs’ students (O’Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, 83)? Al-Khuzāmī was ‘afflicted with carnal lust’ according to Ībrāhīm al-Rashīd’s *Nubdha min ba’d karāmāt,* cf. Hofheinz, ‘Encounters,’ 58.

51 No particular person can be identified here. The combination of the two names suggests a man of Ja’āli or even Majdūbāwī background; but I know too little about Ḥijāzī naming patterns to draw more specific conclusions.

52 Ibn Idrīs apparently indicates that Muḥammad b. al-Amīn is close to illumination (fāth).

53 There is a religious family in al-Ṭayy called Wad al-Burāda (Ībrāhīm, ‘Madrasat Ahmad ibn Idrīs’; cf. also ‘Awn al-Sharīf Qāsim, *Qāmūs al-tahāja*, 87).
ملحق

جواب

من محمد المجذوب إلى أحمد بن إدريس

(س، ص 172-173؛ ق، ص 24-26)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله الذي غمر صفوة عباده بلطائف التخصيص، طولاً وامتناناً، وألف بين قلوبهم فأصبحوا بنعمته إخواناً، ونزع الظلم من قلوبهم في الدنيا فظلوا فيها أصدقاء وأخداً، وفي الآخرة رفقة وخلاناً، وأفضل الصلاة على سيّدنا محمد الذي أنزل عليه الكتاب لكون شهٍّيّةً تبناً، وعلى آل وصحبه الذين أتبعوه واقتدوا به قولاً وفعلاً وعملًا وعذلاً وإحساناً.

أما بعد: فأبلغ سلام يستمسك بذيل عرفه نسيم الصبا، وأجلَّ تحية تعيد زمن الشيب سرورًا كأيام الصبا، وأكرم تشيّف بعمره كل صديق وخيل، وأجل إجلال يتحمل به كله وضيّع وچيل، وأعرّ مهابة يحملها الإكرام بالتعظيم، وأتم رحمة يكلّمها سلام قولاً من ربّ رحيم، شرعًا:

سلام وما التسليم مغنى عن اللقا

ولكن لأجل بعد نقطع بالكتب

بطاقة التخصيص: بالخصوص في
54
وعداً في
55
عند السيف الأول، رفع الرتبة والمحل، لعذري الذهن ألمعي الإدراك
وأقول مخاطباً لحضرته العليّة، وطلعته البهية:

أقول بود خالص ملا البحرا أخيف
وخلقني بل إمامي وسيدي عنيته
الرفيع القذر ذا الفخر أحدنا فلا
زال للطلالاب كعببة مسّك

واعلم يا أخي أن الدنيا قد ولت مدّيرة ومع ذلك قد استتولت
محبّتها على القلوب وقطعت الجم الغفير من الناس عمّا هو الواحّب
عليه ومنه مطلب، فلن تكاد تجد زاهداً فيها حقّاً ومقيباً على ربّه
صدقًا، وأحسن الناس في هذا الزمان من أئصر بثائنة المراتب، وهي
كما قال حجة الإسلام الإمام 57 أبو حامد الغزالي: والناس ثلاثة:
رجّل شغله معاده عن معاشه، أي آخره عن دنياه، فهو من
الفائزين، ورجل شغله معاشه عن معاده، فهو من أجله الكين، ورجل
شغله معاشه معاده، فهو من المقتضين، قال الأصمعي: رأيت امرأة
في البادية عليها قميص أحمر وهي مختضبة وبيدها سمحة، فقلت:
سبيحان الله، ما أبعد هذا من هذا، فقالت وأنشدت:

ولله مني جانب لا أضيعه ولله مني والبطلة جانب

56. تلاثة من ر. 
57. الإمام - . 
58. أي آخره عن دينه - .
والملحق بقوله۶۴ مثل هذه المرأة في زماننا قليل وأعز ممن القليل، وكان عوف بن عبد الله إذا عصاه عبد يقول له: ما أشبهك بمولاك، أنت تعصي مولاك ومولاك يعصي مولاك.

وما أحسن قول أبي العلاء المعرى:

إذا لم تكن ملكًا مطاعًا فكن عبدًا مالك مطيعًا وإن لم تملك الدنيا جميعًا كما تعود فطلقه جميعا

هنا شينان من ملك ونصك ينيلان الفضي شرفًا رفيعًا ومن يريد من الدنيا بشيء

والمطلوب من جميل فضلكم صالح الدعاء بصلاح الخال والتوفيق لصالح الأعمال والدعاء بأعلى درجات الإيمان على الكمال، تقبل الله منا ومنكم ذلك، فإنه على ذلك قدير وبالإجابة جدير.

وسلام على جميع من تحويه شففتكم نسكا وطيبًا ومودة.

وتحية، أمين.
APPENDIX: A LETTER FROM MUḤAMMAD AL-MAJDḤŪB TO AḤMAD B. IDRĪS

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
Praise be to God, who lavished upon the élite of his servants exquisite favours special in scope and generosity; who joined their hearts in love so that by His grace they became brethren,\(^{62}\) and stripped their hearts of rancour\(^ {63}\) in this world so they stayed in it intimate friends, and close companions in the next. And the most excellent prayer and blessings to our lord Muḥammad, ‘to whom was sent down the Book explaining all things,’\(^ {64}\) and to his Family and Companions who followed and imitated him in words and deeds and justice and graciousness.

Most eloquent salutations, with whose delicate fragrance gentle Zephyr plays; noblest greetings that return to old age the joy of youthful days; most distinguished reverence embracing every friend and intimate; most solemn venerations fit to adorn low and high alike; the strongest awe inspired by deference and glorification; and boundless mercy, perfected by words of peace, from an All-Merciful Lord.

Greetings!—They never replace an encounter;
But for the distance we shall be content with writing—

to the noblest lord, high in rank and standing, of ingenious wit and bright perception. Let me commence by addressing these words to his Splendid Highness:

With pure affection, as vast as the sea, I say:
I love the imam, the savant unique and foremost,
My brother and friend, nay! my imam and my lord,
Whose blazing appearance enraptured my mind:
I mean the high-standing, the glorious Ahmad.
He who first passed the baton deserves our thanks,
May he remain the Kaʿba steering the searchers’ devotion
To which the yearning repair on land as on the sea.

\(^{62}\) Adapted from K., 3:103.
\(^{63}\) Adapted from K., 7:43; 15:47. The Koranic passages refer only to a future state of beatitude in Paradise; consequently, Shaykh al-Majdhūb claims that the chosen élite attains a heavenly state already in this world.
\(^{64}\) Adapted from K., 16:89.
Know, my brother, that the world has turned around and shows its back, yet nevertheless love for it has taken possession of the hearts and cut off the majority of people from what is their duty and expected of them. You will hardly find in it a true ascetic, devoting himself sincerely to his Lord; and the best people in these times are those who belong to the third of the three groups mentioned by Hujjat al-Islām Imām Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, who said: ‘There are three kinds of people: those whom the hereafter distracts from their material existence (that is: the next world from this one)—they will achieve salvation;65 those whom their material existence distracts from the hereafter—they will perish;66 and those who make use of their material existence for the hereafter—they have adopted a middle course.’67 As al-ʿĀṣmaʾi68 said: ‘I saw a woman in the desert; she wore a red dress and had put on make-up, and held a rosary in her hand; so I exclaimed: ‘By God who is beyond all his creatures! How far apart is this from that!’ There she recited:

To God belongs a part of me I will not lose
And to pleasure belongs and idleness a part.69

But those who follow the pattern described in the words of this woman are few in our time, very few indeed. ‘Awf ibn ‘Abdallāh70 used to say when his slave disobeyed him: ‘How similar you are to your master! You disobey him, and he disobeys his master!’ And how excellent Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarī71 has put it:

66 An allusion to K., 12:85.
67 An allusion to K., 35:32. This verse is often cited to establish a tripartite classification of men, and al-Ghazālī apparently draws on this *topos* here. The quotation is from *Ibyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn, K. Ādāb al-kasb waʿl-maʾāsh*, introduction. Apart from changing the sequence (Ghazālī starts with the ǧālibin), al-Majdhub values the three categories differently from Ghazālī, who says: ‘The most balanced position is the third one [...]’, and no one will reach the degree of even-handedness if he does not give to the world its due share.’ ‘Material existence’ for Ghazālī ‘is the medium towards the hereafter and helping unto it; this world is the sowing field of the next one.’
68 Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Qurayb al-ʿĀṣmaʾi, 740–828, the famous lexicographer and grammarian of the Baṣra school. He collected pre-Islamic poetry, and is most famous for his ʿAṣmaʾiyyāt, a collection of 72 pre-Islamic poems (ed. Ahlwardt, Berlin 1902). (Cf. GAS, viii 71-6; ix 66-7).
70 ‘Awf ibn ʿAbdallāh b. al-ʿĀṣmar al-Azdī, the most famous Shīʿī poet of early Islam; fought with ‘Ali in the battle of Ǧifīn (657) and lamented the death of al-Ḥusayn 680 (GAL, S I, 93).
71 Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarī, 973-1057; very famous Syrian poet (GAL, i 295–97, S, i 449–54). I could find the quoted passage neither in *Saqṭ al-zand* (Beirut 1884) nor in the *Luzūmiyyāt*; in view of rhyme and
If you cannot be a king commanding obedience
Be a slave to his Lord, obedient.
And if you cannot reign the world entirely
Like you wish: repudiate her entirely!
Two things there are: reign, and devotion
That offer high honour to the young;
And he who contents himself with other than those two
In this world will count low in it.

Let me ask you, if you kindly permit, to say a good prayer for ableness and for help in doing good deeds, and for attaining one's end at the most perfect degrees of faith. May God accept this from you and from us; He has the power to grant it and the capacity to respond.

Peace be upon all who are encompassed by your compassion, kin and student, friend and devotee!

contents, it would fit within the latter collection. It is interesting to see that al-Majdhūb quotes such a 'heterodox' poet, albeit with perfectly 'acceptable' verses.