

FRITZ MEIER'S UNPUBLISHED PAPERS AND THE TIJĀNIYYA

BERND RADTKE*

Academic research on the more recent centuries of Sufism, in particular on the Tijāniyya, has, so it would seem, proceeded under an unlucky star—indeed, the same can unfortunately be said about the study of classical Sufism, for some time now, as I have maintained in the Introduction to my Tirmidhī text edition.¹ With regard to the Tijāniyya, we have at our disposal the works of Abun-Nasr² and Willis³ which are inadequate in several respects. We have Reinhard Schulze's attempts at interpreting more recent Sufism which suffer from the defects of gross dilettantism.⁴ And for the veneration of Muḥammad we have Annemarie Schimmel's book.⁵ As for the shortcomings of the scholarly literature on so important a personality as Aḥmad b. Idrīs, one may read the critical introduction of Seán O'Fahey's *Enigmatic Saint*.⁶

* This paper was read at the 1st International Colloquium on Libraries and the Transmission of Islamic Thought in Africa, Evanston, 25-27 May 2001.—I wish to express my warmest thanks to John O'Kane (Amsterdam) for having translated this paper from German.

1 See Bernd Radtke, *Drei Schriften des Theosophen von Tirmid*, Erster Teil, Beirut-Stuttgart 1992, Einleitung, ix.

2 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya. A Sufi Order in the Modern World*, London 1965.

3 John Ralph Willis, *In the Path of Allah. The Passion of al-Hajj 'Umar*, London 1989.

4 See in detail my book *Autochthone islamische Aufklärung im achtzehnten Jahrhundert. Theoretische und filologische Überlegungen. Fortsetzung einer Debatte*, Utrecht 2000.

5 *And Muhammed is His Messenger*, Chapel Hill 1987.

6 R.S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint. Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi*

This situation started to become clear to me twelve years ago in Bergen. As far as Aḥmad b. Idrīs is concerned, some progress has now been made, but I do not wish to enter further into this subject. In the introduction to my book *Autochthone islamische Aufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert* [Indigenous Islamic enlightenment in the eighteenth century],⁷ which came out last year, I state:

In view of the unreliable generalizations and misinterpretations of recent Sufism which are found not only in Schulze's writings, I have seen it as my primary task to survey relevant sources by means of traditional philological methods and in some cases to make these materials available in a critical edition. Of my work in this area, I wish to single out in particular my article 'Sufism in the 18th Century' and the recently published book *The Exoteric Aḥmad Ibn Idrīs*. In both these works one will find the first indications of an interpretation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century developments which is capable of standing up to philological criticism.⁸

In addition to these works, I would also like to mention, without going into details, the following articles which specifically deal with the Tijāniyya:

(1) 'Von Iran nach Westafrika' [From Iran to West Africa], published 1995 in *Die Welt des Islams*.⁹

(2) 'Studies on the sources of the *Kitāb Rimāḥ ḥizb al-rahīm* of *al-ḥājj* °Umar', which was published in *SAJHS*, 6, 1995.¹⁰

The latter article may be known, whereas the first is probably not known as it is in German. In 'From Iran to West Africa', on the basis of analyzing the sources he refers to, I point out that *al-ḥājj* °Umar drew on two fifteenth-century works from Egypt which were influenced by ideas associated

Tradition, London & Evanston 1990, 1-9.

7 See note 4.

8 Vorwort, vii f.

9 'Von Iran nach Westafrika. Zwei Quellen für al-Ḥāğğ °Umars *Kitāb Rimāḥ ḥizb ar-rahīm*', *Die Welt des Islams*, xxxv, 1995, 37-69.

10 *SAJHS*, 6, 1995, 73-113.

with the Kubrawiyya. More on this subject will shortly be appearing in the *Festschrift* for Hermann Landolt under the title: 'The Eight Rules of Junayd: A General Overview of the Genesis and Development of Islamic Dervish Orders'.

But now let us turn to our main topic. Fritz Meier died in 1998.¹¹ He left his unpublished academic papers to the University of Basel. This unpublished material consists of thousands of pages in A4 format. In fact it comes to a staggering total of almost 23,000 pages, much of which is made up of source material he collected on the most diverse subjects in Islamic studies. A table of contents will be published on the Internet as part of a project undertaken by the University of Basel under the direction of Gudrun Schubert. The great majority of the papers consists of translations from primary sources. Meier has left us his collected materials in a highly ordered state. Certain broad subjects dominate, but there are also almost 200 smaller subjects, often arranged in further thematic subdivisions. On the Internet all this will appear under subject headings which present brief descriptions of the contents of individual pages, often with mention of the original source. The Internet address is:

<<http://www.ub.unibas.ch/spez/meier/index.htm>>

Besides this collected material, Fritz Meier left behind four manuscripts of which the posthumous publication is now being planned or is already underway. The largest of these works bears the title, in Meier's own formulation, *Bemerkungen zum Mohammedverehrung* [Observations on the veneration of Muḥammad]: a typical title for Meier, and one which might easily mislead many readers concerning the actual exhaustiveness of his treatment of the subject. These 'observations' were intended by Meier to be a comprehensive presentation of all forms of veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad, broadly speaking a reworking and extension of the subject Tor Andræ dealt with in his book *Die person*

11 See my obituaries in *Persica*, xix, 2000, 1-7, and in *Oriens*, xxxvi, 2001, 359-65.

Muhammeds in lehre und glauben seiner gemeinde which appeared in 1918. The material which Meier left behind, as well as the personal remarks he made, bear witness to this intention.

Unfortunately, Meier was unable to complete this undertaking. Two subjects ‘only’ were brought to completion. Firstly, the use of the *taṣliya*, invoking blessings on the Prophet. This is dealt with in the first part of this manuscript—around 130 A3 pages—in 53 chapters. Meier already published one of these chapters in an expanded version in 1986 under the title ‘Die segenssprechung über Mohammed im bittgebet und in der bitte’.¹² This article has been made available in English translation in *Fritz Meier: Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*¹³ under the title ‘Invoking Blessings on Muḥammad in Prayers of Supplication and When Making Requests’.¹⁴

It goes without saying that in the unpublished portions of the manuscript one also encounters Meier’s characteristic method of work and presentation: the thoroughness of his treatment, the stupendous breadth of his reading and knowledge of sources, and his analytical acumen. It must be said that even the first part of this work will be an authoritative study of Islamic piety and folklore. This first part of the work will be published by Brill before the end of 2001.

The second part of the manuscript, somewhat smaller in size, describes the role of the *taṣliya* in Sufi contexts. Meier addresses himself especially to North African Sufism of recent centuries and in particular to the Tijāniyya, whose doctrine and practices are in fact here treated comprehensively for the first time. Among other things, the forms of *taṣliya* as employed by the Tijāniyya are studied as to their

12 *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, cxxxvi, 1986, 364-401.

13 Trans. John O’Kane with editorial assistance of Bernd Radtke, Leiden 1999.

14 *Ibid.*, 549-88.

genesis, role, content and specific usage, especially the *Ṣalāt al-fātiḥ*, the *Jawharat al-kamāl*, and so on. A separate chapter is devoted to clarifying the concept of *ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya*; I will not go further into the meaning of this term here. In this connection Meier introduces the concepts of 'a mysticism of God' and 'a mysticism of Muḥammad'. He dates the beginning of the latter to around 1100—thus by no means to the time when the so-called Neo-Sufism shall have appeared. Generally, this publication, if scholarly consensus takes note of it, will deliver a *coup de grâce* to the fantasy of Neo-Sufism.

One of the last of the eighteen chapters deals with 'seeing' the Prophet in a dream and when awake, the *ru'yat al-nabī*, which has been of extremely great significance in more recent Sufism. Around 200 pages of collected source material exist which deal with this subject. These, together with other material, will be published along with Meier's manuscript in a second volume in 2002.

The two parts of the manuscript were written between the second half of the 1970s and the middle or end of the 1980s. Chapter 17, the last to be produced, bears the title 'Berührungen und zärtlichkeiten' [Physical touching and caresses], referring to such contacts with the Prophet. And it is certainly the case that this subject attracted Meier to another undertaking. He followed his *kashish* and the final result was his monograph on Bahā'-i Walad, the father of Mawlānā.¹⁵ It is difficult to say whether one should regret that Meier followed this 'attraction' and thereby had to give up working on the Muḥammad book, as he himself called it. In any case, he had checked over the whole manuscript and added numerous corrections and additions, and he often remarked that it would be desirable for the work to be published.

Furthermore, there is the prospect that other materials from Meier's bequeathed papers will in turn be published by

15 Fritz Meier, *Bahā'-i Walad. Grundzüge seines lebens und seiner mystik*, Leiden [Acta Iranica 27] 1989.

Brill; works to do with Sufism, for example on Ḥallāj, and works to do with folklore and demonology.

One further bit of information in closing. There has long been an initiative to translate Hellmut Ritter's *Meer der Seele* into English. I can now announce that financing for the project has been arranged and an appropriate translator has been found—John O'Kane, who has already translated Fritz Meier's essays. The translation will hopefully appear some time early in 2003.