



House of Ḥabīb Aḥmad in Qaydūn.

because he had accompanied his father but had not taken her on Hajj. He therefore accompanied her on Hajj the following year.

At that time Ḥabīb Ṭāhā was the senior member of the Ḥaddād family at Ḥāwī Khal' Rāshid and thus acted as something of a *manṣib* until he died in 1949 CE/1368 AH. He was buried near his great-grandfather, Ḥabīb 'Abd Allāh ibn Ṭāhā al-Ḥaddār al-Ḥaddād.

As for Sharīfa Ṣafiyya, Ḥabīb Aḥmad described his mother as a strong-willed person whose

state resembled that of the *Abdāl*.¹⁵ I once read in Ḥabīb Aḥmad's presence a draft of the introduction to the English version of *Key to the Garden* where, based on Ḥabīb Muṣṭafā al-Miḥḍār's testimony, I had written that his father was a great saint whose state was hidden. Ḥabīb Aḥmad asked me to remove the words 'great saint'. It is justifiable, therefore, to conclude that although Ḥabīb Ṭāhā was undoubtedly a saintly and virtuous man, he had not been gifted with the major openings that are the prerogative of the truly great ones.

In his father's absence, Ḥabīb Aḥmad was raised by Ḥabīb 'Abd Allāh ibn Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād, who was one day to give him his daughter Khadīja in marriage. By the time Ḥabīb Ṭāhā next returned to Ḥaḍramawt in 1933 CE/1351 AH, his son Ḥabīb Aḥmad was twenty-six and already a man of God. During his stay, Ḥabīb Ṭāhā spent his time between Qaydūn and Ḥāwī Khal' Rāshid.

Ḥabīb Ṭāhā returned to Ḥaḍramawt for good in 1947 CE/1366 AH, two years before he died, bringing his Indonesian-born daughters with him. Soon after his return he left for Hajj accompanied by his son, Ḥabīb Aḥmad, who by this time had moved to East Africa. Upon their return, Ḥabīb Aḥmad found his mother upset

¹⁵ *Abdāl* is the plural of *Badal* (Substitute), a term indicating a high-ranking category of saints of whom there are a fixed number at each time, so that whenever one of them dies another is immediately appointed to replace him.



The path leading up the hill to the house of Ḥabīb Aḥmad in Qaydūn and the door of the house.

remembrance of God was incessant, like her father's. He said that she always recited the Qur'ān as she was falling asleep, and once asleep she could be heard carrying on with her recitation. Whenever she stopped reciting she would immediately wake up, resume her recitation, and then fall asleep again.

Ḥabīb Aḥmad loved his mother dearly and tried never to upset her. She once sent him on an errand and having lost track of the time playing with the other children, he tarried, which upset her so much that when he returned home, he found she had locked herself up in her room and would not speak to him. He lay down at her doorstep all night waiting for her to relent, until she opened her door at dawn and forgave him.

Still unhappy about her husband's absence, Sharīfa Ṣafiyya sometimes complained to Ḥabīb Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-'Aṭṭās, when he came from Ḥurayḍa to Qaydūn, that she had been abandoned and left to her own devices by her husband. Ḥabīb Aḥmad al-'Aṭṭās comforted her, encouraged her to be patient, and also made sure the people knew her spiritual rank by calling upon her from the street 'Ṣafiyya! Ṣafiyya!' Greatly embarrassed, she requested him to lower his voice, but he refused, saying 'Pray for me!' He obviously wished her townsmen to know she was a saint.

Nūr, one of Ḥabīb Aḥmad's half-sisters from his mother's previous marriage, married one of his teachers, Ḥabīb 'Alawī ibn Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād. His other half-sister, Khadīja, married a certain 'Aydārūs al-Bār and moved with him to Jeddah, where she lived for



The earliest known photograph of Ḥabīb Aḥmad.



Ḥabīb in Kenya in the 1970s.

news!’ The man answered that he had seen him in the form of the Prophet, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his Family. Another person who said he had seen him in the likeness of the Prophet, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his Family, was Shaykh Ḥasan Shaddād Bā-‘Umar, whom we mentioned when speaking about Ḥabīb’s trips to Somalia. Ḥabīb also said that people also often saw him in the likeness of Imam al-Ḥaddād. One such instance was when Shaykh Zaynī⁴³ of Makka told him that he had seen him in the likeness of the Imam and Ḥabīb had replied that this was very possible because those who stand in for the great people in spreading their summons can indeed appear in their image, and he was spreading the summons of Imam al-Ḥaddād wherever he went, disseminating his *Rātib* and his books. Then he added: ‘Someone had said about people who are seen in the likeness of the Prophet, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his Family, that the meaning of God’s Words, Exalted is He, **And rely on the August, the Compassionate, who sees you as you stand and when you turn about among those**

43 Shaykh Zaynī Buayān, a scholar of Southeast Asian origin, Buayān being a region in the Philippines. He lived in Makka where he became famous as a reciter of *Mawlid*s and singer of spiritual poems. We will meet him again later on in Makka.

ten-shilling bills, after which he woke up and resumed his reading. A few pages later, he found the two bills tucked in between the pages and understood that Ḥabīb Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan had sent him a gift from the Intermediary World. However, that gift of money must have been indicative of something else – something spiritual – for at that time Ḥabīb was in no need of money, nor had he called for help from his elders.

More than once Ḥabīb was seen by various people in dream-visions in the likeness of the Prophet, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his Family. Ḥabīb said that he once ran across a certain acquaintance who greeted him in a manner that struck him as different, somewhat more respectful than usual. Sensing that he had something on his mind, he urged him repeatedly to say what it was: ‘Come on, what do you have for me today? Give me the good

who prostrate themselves,⁴⁴ is that the ‘turning about’ shall be in his descendants, who prostrate themselves and otherwise worship God. All this requires a connection, to be tied to the Rope of God; may God connect us to them.⁴⁵



In 1970 CE/1390 AH, Ḥabīb opened a shop in Baguma Road, in the vicinity of the Taj Hotel, which he called Al-Haramayn Stores, for his two sons, Sayyid Ḥasan and Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir. Sayyid Ḥasan worked there until he left for the Comoros four years later, while Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir left earlier to work at a petrol station and later moved to Jeddah.

Also in 1970 CE/1390 AH, contrary to his habit and for some undisclosed reason, Ḥabīb wished to spend the month of Ramaḍān in the Ḥijāz rather than in Mombasa. He asked his son, Sayyid ‘Alī, to send him a visa and to enlist, if necessary, the help of Shaykh Sirāj Ka‘kī, a wealthy businessman from Makka. However, neither he nor Sayyid ‘Alī were able to obtain a visa. On 19th Ramaḍān, Ḥabīb wrote to Sayyid ‘Alī from Aden that all year he had been talking about spending Ramaḍān in the Ḥijāz, but now he was forced to spend it in Aden. He added that

This may well be something like the Victory of Ḥudaybiya preceding the conquest of Makka.⁴⁶ As God says, Exalted is He, **He knew what you did not know, and so brought before that a nearer victory**,⁴⁷ and as the hadith says, *There are in Madina people who, whatever distance you may march, or valley you may cross, are there with you; they were held up by force of circumstances*.⁴⁸ The least you can do is for you and your mother to remember me before the House and pray for me. The Real manifests Himself in both a special and a general way to succour those who, being cut off, seek refuge with Him; and we are among those. How could it not be so, when He is the Generous, the Bestower, there is no barrier before His door, and He provides for those He will, visibly and invisibly, without reckoning? Look not at the attraction of the debris (of this world), or the manner in which its people enjoy and brag about it, for this is nothing but the sign of having fallen from the consideration of God – may God

44 Qur’ān, 26: 217, 218, 219.

45 **And when you turn about among those who prostrate themselves** is taken to mean that the Prophet, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his Family, will appear among his saintly descendants, in their words, deeds and virtues, and/or by appearing in their image in dream-visions. No one achieves such merits, however, who is not powerfully attached to him.

46 *Fath al-Ḥudaybiya*, the Victory of Ḥudaybiya, is the episode when the Prophet, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his Family, wished to enter Makka to perform ‘Umra, but was prevented by Quraysh. Eventually he accepted a peace treaty stipulating that he and his followers would forgo their ‘Umra for the time being but would be allowed it the following year. To all outward appearances this seemed like a defeat, but in reality it opened the door for the conquest of Makka and was thus a major victory. The meaning, therefore, is that an apparent setback may in reality herald a greater victory.

47 Qur’ān, 48: 27

48 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4423.