

Jean Foucaud– The Muslim Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi al-Maghribi 'Uqayli– II. The Precursor.

Cheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi el Maghribi 'Uqayli above, left The Swedish  
Muslim

John G. Aguelii

in Islam, Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi

el Maghribi 'Uqayli

Jean FOUCAUD

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II. The precursor

When we write that Aguéli is a precursor, we are entitled to ask ourselves who... Had the response that will startle "strictly observant" Guénonians, (1) we will assert, with supporting texts, that Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi is not only the precursor of Akbarian Studies (2)– which is in itself a more than honourable title—but also the pioneer of Traditional Studies before the term existed, and therefore even before René Guénon, who would become its master par excellence. (3)

Just as Sheikh Mustafa cannot be reduced to his sole function as "Murshid" (4), Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi cannot be confined to the Islamic framework alone (notwithstanding a certain clumsy presentation of him in the December 1910 issue of *Gnose*: "He knows only Islam...", etc.); he is not only an extraordinary linguist; he also has a knowledge of universal symbolism that prefigures that of Guénon, and he has mastered a certain amount of cosmological data (and even techniques) on which Guénon will draw, reinserting them into his prodigious synthesis. universal metaphysics, as no one had done before (see below). Indeed, Aguéli did not merely "initiate" Guénon: he passed on to him technical knowledge that can be found in particular in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, *Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps*, *Aperçus sur l'Initiation* and *Initiation et Réalisation Spirituelle*, with discreet allusions to his own case and that of his Transmitter. The discerning reader will be able to find them. Moreover, if Aguéli had been merely a "simple intermediary brought in for René Guénon," as has been written, we would not accord him so important! In Aguel's case, we can even say, without exaggeration, that he achieved the level of the Lesser Mysteries (wa 'Llah a'lam), which was not so common in 20th-century Europe.

From a purely religious point of view, Aguel was already a pioneer in the 19th century: he was one of the very few Europeans to convert, along with Étienne Dinet – al-Haj Nasr-ed-Din [1861–1929]; the officer Jules Gervais-Courtellemont, alias Abd-Allah ben al-Bachir al-Haj [1863–1931]; and the original deputy for the Doubs, Dr Philippe Grenier [1865–1944; see *L'Initiation*, February 1897, p. 178], not to mention the extravagant Isabelle Eberhardt [1877–1904]; all converted at around the same time (between 1890 and 1898), if we except for an ancestor of Titus Burckhardt [1908-1984], Sheikh Ibrahim, a pilgrim to Mecca in 1814... From that date onwards, conversions to Islam continued unabated and even accelerated. (5) Other Europeans, some well-known, others less so, converted for reasons that were not at all "esoteric". (6) These were generally Germans and Anglo-Saxons. In any case, they had no descendants. intellectual or initiatory, unlike Aguéli, Guénon, and Michel Vâlsan. (7)

The pioneer, from the point of view of authorised translations, in an authentic traditional spirit and under the supervision of a Master, is indeed Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi. Indeed, what credibility can be given to laymen, generally neither Muslims nor initiates, such as Nicholson, Nyberg, Blochet, Massignon and tutti quanti? In the name of what should we recognise the authority of university researchers,

generally imbued with "Western" prejudice (more out of spite and "anti-Eastern" resentment than for any other reason), incapable of admitting that there is a perspective that escapes them because it is neither philosophical, literary nor bookish; in a word: people who are not mandated by any authority . (8)

What do Western minds (and sometimes de-Orientalised ones, such as Pastor Tartar), such as Louis Gardet, Caspar, Arnaldez, etc., who too often serve as instruments of war against Tradition in general (including their own tradition– r Christianity) and Islam in particular?

–What do you think of the umpteenth translation of the Koran by Jacques Berque, whose concerns have always been strictly sociological and exoteric for over 50 years!– What can a man who has never understood a thing about metaphysics or initiation possibly grasp of the hidden meaning of the Scriptures (whether Islamic, Christian, or other)? Do you still believe that it is enough to read French to understand Guénon or to read Arabic to understand the Koran? It is time to put an end to all these claims.

Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi's translations may not be flawless in terms of vocabulary (see VLT No. 72, p. 52, n.36), but at least his inspiration (ilham), orientation (tawajjuh) and intention (niyya) are authentically traditional. Therefore, we do not understand Michel Chodkiewicz's (who is otherwise very knowledgeable about Ibn Arabi) disdain and unfair criticism of Aguelhi's translation of *The Treatise on Unity and the Gift* (see review in "Connaissance des Religions"– , 1988, June-September issue, vol. iv, pp. 30-40), especially since he had understood certain aspects of Aguel's work very well (as evidenced by note 9, p. 31 -C of the R-), which he must have forgotten later! (8b) Will he have the simplicity to accept our point of view, namely that his translation not only does not seem better to us, but that it lacks the initiatory and, let us say, Akbarian "breath" that comes through in the text rendered into French by Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi? One really gets the impression that Michel Chodkiewicz has no idea who he is dealing with, despite his claims to the contrary (he apparently had the passages in Gauffin's book concerning Aguéli's stay in the East translated... Let us hope that the publication of our translation will shed some light on it, in sha' Allah).

We must not forget that a pioneer is a lone figure; he has all the more merit and right to our indulgence. It is easy nowadays, after the masterful works of Guénon and Michel Vâlsan, to criticise retroactively. It is moreover thanks to the work (and sometimes the errors) of Agueli that the two Masters mentioned above were able to set out the authorised, even definitive, traditional point of view on certain questions relating to Tasawwuf.

While we are on the subject, we would add this: what is the point of concessions made to the University's "specialists" in order to gain their favour and recognition, when we know how theses inspired by Guénon are rejected in Paris? (9) On the contrary, academics should have the honesty and humility to enrol in the School of Eastern Masters. We can see clearly enough what this kind of "appropriation" (= of the East by the University) gave rise to people such as Eliade, about whom Cioran said with his usual ruthless lucidity: "No matter how skilfully he describes and comments on [sacred texts], he cannot breathe life into them; he has drained them of all their sap, compared them with one another, worn them down against one another, to their great detriment; and what remains are bloodless symbols, which the believer has only do so, if at this stage of scholarship, disillusionment and irony there can [still] be anyone who truly believes [in it]. We are all, Eliade foremost among us, former believers; we are all religious spirits without religion. (Exercices d'Admiration, Gallimard 1986, p. 131) Did Cioran realise that, in doing so, he was signing his own death warrant? For him, as for Eliade, whom he dismantles as skilfully as he does cruelly, we would say that there are forms of intelligence that are corrosive rather than edifying: they are illustrated with talent, if not with happiness, in The University, a secular stronghold of Humanism since the 16th century (a century shamelessly referred to by the Spanish as the "golden age", as if the eight centuries of Arab-Muslim civilisation had been nothing but obscurantism!).

Thus, most university theses – approved because they conform to the exclusive criteria in use – have the "gift" of burying and fossilising living knowledge in this kind of archaeological museum called the heritage of humanity. Meanwhile, true knowledge and its transmission (as defined by the word "Tradition" without its original meaning, which only Guénon, in the 20th century, was able to restore) are perpetuated, sheltered from laboratories and other sterilisers of traditional thought, in places fortunately inaccessible to the curiosity of the uninitiated.

Can we seriously list the translators of Ibn Arabi from the 19th to the 20th century (as in the introduction to *The Seal of the Saints*, Gallimard 1986), placing them on the same level as Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi and Sheikh Mustafa? What an unfortunate concession to the modern mentality! When one reads the six long pages written in the appendix to his book at the request of Axel Gauffin by the Swedish Arabist Nyberg, we are torn between hilarity and indignation: does he not attribute to Sheikh al-Akbar (meaning "the greatest of the Masters") a belief in "the crudest superstitions" (sic!)? (10) Once again, we sense a sneaky attempt to downplay the importance of the author (Ibn Arabi), distort the Truth, reduce Esotericism to mysticism (it's so much easier!), and even Christianise Tasawwuf (as Asin Palacios, Massignon, etc. have already attempted). One clearly gets the impression that Westerners (or worse still, Westernised Easterners, who have twice the means to impose their views) are incapable of admitting the Obvious (which is the very definition of the "sin against the Spirit" which, it is said, will not

forgiven neither in this world nor in the next). So let us no longer be quoted by the luminaries who hold these chairs of obscurantism that universities sometimes are! This argument from authority has had its day! For we naively persist in believing that a truth (to be universal) cannot be conveyed by a vision scientific view of things that is exclusively secular. As we said above, the university is incapable of integrating the initiatory point of view: its field is too reductive because it is exclusively mental and "mentalistic". (11)

Aguéli, a PRECURSOR? On this subject, we should point out that Aguéli's writings (letters, articles, translations, etc.) are virtually incomprehensible unless one has first read and understood René Guénon... and Michel Vâlsan, who came after him! Conversely, we find many themes – even in the technical lexicon itself – in Guénon's work that can only have come from Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi. It is to this continuity that we refer (see VLT No. 72) and, as this is not a figment of the imagination, we need only take a few referenced examples that can be easily verified by any reader.

#### 1° Themes:

For example, "the manipulation of mental currents," a technique alluded to by René Guénon in *Orient et Occident* (Vega, 1964 edition, Part 2, Chapter 3, p. 184).

Referring to Axel Gauffin, we find a detailed programme which, given its length, we are obliged to include in an appendix to this article. This remarkable document (unfortunately unknown until now) demonstrates Aguéli's precise knowledge in this field: nearly 20 years later, in Cairo, Nyberg noted the continuing influence of the traditional ideas put forward by Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi and the Il-Convito team.

#### 2° The Akbarian Studies:

As we already know, these are translations, notes and commentaries (in Arabic, Italian and French), which we will discuss later in another section of our introduction to Aguéli ("The reader, the linguist, the writer, the translator").

### 3\* The technical lexicon:

Created by Aguéli, it was taken up (and sometimes improved upon) by René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan. A striking example concerns the explanation of an enigmatic concept unknown to them, used for the first time by Ibn Arabi (and therefore undoubtedly coined by him), namely the term "compound": "fahwâniya." Cheykh Mustafa points this out in a note in *Études Traditionnelles* (March–April 1961, p. 89), a text reprinted in the posthumous collection *Le Livre de l'Extinction dans la Contemplation*, where the editor fails to mention that Cheikh Mustafa also explained this in his translation of the *Prayer on the Prophet*, opportunely published on the occasion of his death (*Études Traditionnelles*, November–December 1974, p. 242).

However, more than 50 years earlier, Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi (II-Convito, 1907, p.58), in a study of Sufi vocabulary following his translation of *Progredire verso il Re dei Re* (by Qasam ben Silah-ed-Din al Khani; [1028-1109 AH/1619-1697]), noted this term: "fahwâniyah" – which he writes "fa-hû- wâniyah" for certain reasons related to the process known as "nirukta"– , for which he gives a precise definition that seems satisfactory to us, found almost word for word in Cheykh Mustafa ( who may have been familiar with it), in the journal *Études Traditionnelles* cited above, namely: "It is a word that God addresses to man in spiritual combat in the world of primordial images."

That is to say: "It is a word that Allah addresses to man during his spiritual struggle in the world of the Primordial Models." Let us compare this with the definition given by Sheikh Mustafa (*Traditional Studies*, 1974, p. 245): "Fahwâniyah in the strict sense, as used by Muhyi-d-Din Ibn Arabi in the *Futûhat*, refers to the divine word addressed directly [to man] in the worlds of Models ('Alamu-l-mithâl)" (12). [Correction published in VLT No. 79: As an honourable reader has rightly pointed out, there is a slip of the pen (not at all calamitous) concerning fahwâniya: Aguéli's definitions – like those of Michel Vâlsan – are, of course, translated from Ibn 'Arabi's text. This goes without saying, but it is better to say it anyway.]

This demonstrates Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi's profound knowledge of Ibn Arabi's works and his lexicon, and we must acknowledge, at least on this point (but there are many others), his role as a pioneer in Akbarian exegesis.

4° Let us continue with the technical lexicon, this time in French, taken from René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan, notably the remarkable phrase "Supreme Identity" (which, incidentally, we understand why it was questioned in the book *Les 7 Étendards du Califat*, chap. 3–, but another occasion will be needed to address this delicate point).

Aguéli, in the pages dedicated to Mercury (*La Gnose*, J.F. 1911), uses this term for the first time ("the Supreme Identity / *Wahdatu-l-Wujud* = the Identity of Existence"), which is found again at least three times, respectively in the Pages dedicated to the Sun and in the long article *L'Universalité en Islam*, where he writes: "Muslims say: *Et-Tawhidu wâhidun*, which means... the Doctrine of the Supreme Identity.

This concept will be constantly repeated and in a way "consecrated" by René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan. [ Correction published in VLT No. 79: "To prevent any confusion, old or new, we firmly reiterate that when Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi spoke of Supreme Identity, he always had in mind—to the exclusion of any other Arabic term—the concepts of *tahwid/wahdatu-l-wujud*, and in the Islamic context alone. Finally, we challenge anyone to find in 'Abdu-l-Hedi's writings reference where he uses the term *ittihad* (= Yoga= Union) to refer to Supreme Identity (or conversely, translates *ittihad* as Supreme Identity, a confusion already denounced by Ibn 'Arabi). In any case, even if this were to happen, it would only confuse those who have not properly assimilated the teachings of Michel Vâlsan and René Guénon.

The fact that it was created for the French language by a Swede who had just spent seven years in Egypt writing and

translate from Arabic and Italian is still something quite unusual. However, Sheikh Mustafa, without using the term "precursor" that we claim for Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi, clearly suggests the idea when writing about the work undertaken in the journal *Al-Nadi=Il-Convito* and the Akbariya Society (naming Sheikh Elish el-Kebir and Abdul-Hedi): "Readers of René Guénon will easily recognise certain fundamental theses of his work that will appear [...]

as the development of a providential idea"; and further on he adds: "The traditional idea as we know it today in the West, following the work of René Guénon, thus has a definite Islamic and Akbarian origin" (13) (*Études Traditionnelles*, January-February 1953, "L'Islam et la Fonction de René Guénon," pp. 32-33.

5° In his translation of the epistle entitled *Le Cadeau* (La Gnose, January-February 1911, p. 21, n. 5), Aguéli draws up a table of correspondences between metaphysical concepts, for which he creates key words in French, as follows:

Exaltation / Magnitude

Height / Width... etc., whose valuable list Sheikh Mustafa reproduced unchanged in his article on "Islamic References in the Symbolism of the Cross [by René Guénon]", adding that these key concepts correspond to the Arabic terms "tûl (length)" and "'ard (width)", "which suggests that Abdu-l-Hedi himself had in mind the Arabic technical terms we are now discussing." This belated tribute to Aguéli confirms the title of Precursor that we use in his regard. We say "belated" because René Guénon, in his *Symbolism of the Cross*, had also used the terms "Ampleur" and "Exaltation", but without citing their "inventor".

6° We could add to support our thesis the terms "Dominical Mysteries" (*asrâr rabbâniya*), to be distinguished from the term "Seigniorial" (*rubûbiya*)... etc., and in another vein, the foundation of a "purely intellectual organisation", foreshadowing René Guénon's "intellectual understanding between peoples" in 1925/26; the imminent project to build a mosque in Paris... etc., etc.

Finally, a point that we will deal with separately, there is much to be said about the mysterious lineage from Dante to René Guénon via Aguéli, a precursor in two respects...

Jean FOUCAUD (to be continued)

## NOTES

1. Michel Vâlsan told us more than 25 years ago: "Being a Guénonian nowadays means nothing!" – In context, this meant that "Guénonians" who did not engage in a



traditional initiatory path are for the most part condemned to paraphrase and parroting, when they are not simply "hotheads," as the editor of Cahiers de l'Herne, at his stand at the Salon du Livre, thereby stigmatising certain "worldly "Guénonism", a game at which many pseudo-intellectuals excel, who have their "Guénonian period" when it is – or was – fashionable.

2. Cheikh Mustafa is the undisputed, if not unquestionable, master of this movement for people of good faith (*homini bonae voluntatis*).

3. Despite the importance of Agéli's work and role, we cannot attribute to him the infallibility that René Guénon is credited with in all matters metaphysical, initiatory, esoteric and traditional in general; the two works on initiation are unique in the world and are not found in any religion or tradition. These books are reminiscent of a Testament by Sheikh Abdel-Wahid Yahya; it should also be noted that the second volume is a posthumous work. On this subject, Sheikh Mustafa spoke of a Charter of the Tariqa (Shadhiliya).

4. He has a complementary doctrinal function– and sometimes distinct– from that of Guénon, which will one day have to be taken into account. We hope to develop this theme soon with new data, complementing the point raised by Charles-André Gillis (see VLT No. 74).

5. All surveys on Muslims in France are very hesitant about the number of native French converts... What strange modesty! As for Buddhist converts, they are estimated to increase week to the next at between 200,000 and 700,000, without seeing the illogicality and impossibility of such a figure: Europeans have few children and, to our knowledge, Buddhist monks do not reproduce particularly vigorously!

6. See the case of Enrico Insabato, co-director of Il-Convito, who pretended to be a Muslim in order to better spy on and infiltrate the Senussi tribes. (See *L'Islam et la Politique des Alliés*, Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1920, p. 194, where he claims to be Catholic, causing his late collaborator Aguéli to turn in his grave !). Aguéli, suspecting the betrayal of this "double agent", never forgave him (cf. Gauffin, vol. II pp. 146, 148, 155... etc.).

7. Aguéli (op. cit., vol. II, p. 134) cites the two Arabists Van den Berg and Nallino (?) as secret practitioners of Islam.

8. Hence the difficulties encountered by Georges Vallin in dealing with "Metaphysics", due to his failure to resort to the two key concepts of "

Tradition" and "Initiation", which are excluded from academic axioms (La Perspective métaphysique, Dervy, 1977).

8b. When you consider that the best unpublished translation of Michel Vâlsan's *Traité de l'Unité*—, obviously, is still gathering dust in a drawer!

9. It should be remembered that the French university system once disgraced itself by rejecting René Guénon's thesis (*Introduction Générale à l'Étude des Doctrines Hindoues*) through the veto of Dean Sébastien Brunot.— On the other hand, nowadays, it does happen that a thesis breaks through the wall of academic prejudice, such as that of Patrick Geay (*Hermès trahi*), admittedly defended in Dijon, far from the intrigues of the Parisian microcosm. Apart from this honourable exception, does anti-intellectual terrorism not still reign in the City of Light, the "Beacon of Humanity"?

N.B. Isn't it strange that the disappearance of a Hindu convert like Alain Daniélou [1907-1994] should be passed almost unnoticed by the academic authorities in our country? Perhaps he was not sufficiently obsequious!

10. We intend to publish this addendum in a future issue of *Vers la Tradition*.

11. Not wishing to be unfair or accused of gratuitous mockery (but does the University always take kid gloves?), we readily acknowledge two outstanding qualities of academic research:

1) seriousness in documentation and referencing (as René Guénon said, more or less: they spare us this tedious work, which we then place in a traditional perspective).

2") rigour and method in presentation, qualities that are unfortunately often lacking in Easterners, whose style is too "flowery" and their development too disordered, even anarchic!

12. The term in brackets has been added by us, as it appears to be missing from the text of Études Traditionnelles n°446.

13. The italics are from [esprit-universel.overblog.com](http://esprit-universel.overblog.com)

Note: We have taken into account: Rectificanda (V.L.T. No. 77), Vers la Tradition, No. 79, March– April– May 2000.

Place Ivan Aguéli in Sala, Sweden

Abdul Hādī, La Gnose – June 1911, No. 6 – second year

The short treatise we wish to translate is one of the most interesting on the subject.

Arabic text has never been printed anywhere, as far as I know. Manuscripts abound, but they are rarely accurate and contain many variations from the original text. This one is therefore restore, but this task does not present any major difficulties in this case. The main idea is very clear, so that the different versions and numerous errors made by the copyists do not hinder full understanding of the text. The only points of contention are the title of the work and the name of the author.

The work is often referred to as "The Epistle of Knowledge of the Lord through Knowledge of Oneself." This is also the subject of the dissertation. Other titles include "The Treatise on Self-Knowledge" (The Key to Knowledge (of Allah) - Kitābul-Alif - "Kitābul-Ajwibah" - "The Treatise of Balabāni" (after the name of a presumed author). The title most frequently used by writers and dervishes alike is: "Risālatul-Ahadiyah", or the Epistle of Unity. This is the one we have adopted.

The question of authorship remains open to debate. We can say with certainty that his name is Mohammad Abd-Allah, but that does not get us very far. The manuscripts that specify the author's name more precisely fall into two categories: some say that the author is Mohammad Abu Abd-Allah ibn Ali Mohyiddin ibn Arabi el-Hātimi and-Tā'i el-Andalūsi, nicknamed the greatest of the Sheikhs (d. 638 H.). I am convinced that our great Master is indeed the author of this admirable treatise. The style indicates this quite sufficiently. Other manuscripts attribute it to a Mohammad or an Abd-Allah Balabāni, Bilbāni or even Balayāni. Who is this Sheikh? There is an Awhadud-Din Abd-Allah el-Balayāni (d. 686 AH). It could also be that Balabāni is a Kurdish-Persian nickname, from Bala = high, and Bān = voice. Kurdish scholars have always had a greater veneration for Mohyiddin than others. Balabāni would therefore be a Kurdish paraphrase of Es-Sheikhul-Akbar = the greatest of the Sheikhs or spiritual masters. Allah knows best the truth about this.

I have heard that some manuscripts attribute the authorship of this treatise to one of the Soyûtis. It seems unlikely to me that such a work could have come from either of these two scholars, as it is not a product of scholarship, but of esoteric mastery. The question of the true author remains open until further notice. I am deeply convinced that the author is Mohyiddin ibn Arabi, but I am currently unable to scientifically refute any opinion to the contrary.

I have about ten manuscripts at my disposal, none of which are even close to being correct. My translation was three-quarters complete when I learned that the work had already been translated into English, though I do not know where, when, or by whom. In any case, there is no French translation. We will follow up with the final version of the text once the Arabic printing press for this journal is up and running.

#### THE TREATISE ON UNITY

(Risâlatul-Ahadiyah) by the greatest of spiritual masters

Mohyiddin Ibn Arabi

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

We implore His help.

Glory be to Allah, before Whose Unity (1) there is no prior, except Him who is the First (2); after Whose Singularity (3) there is no after, except Him who is the Next (4). About Him (5) there is neither before nor after, neither high nor low, neither near nor far, neither how nor what nor where, neither state nor succession.

– : "He is as He was." "He is the One, the Tamer" (7) without (the ordinary conditions of) Unity (8). He is the Singular (9) without singularity (10). He is not composed of name and named, for the name is Him and the named is still Him (11). There is no name except Him. There is no named outside of Him. That is why it is said that He is the name and the named. (12). He is the First without antecedents. He is the Last without the ordinary conditions of finality, that is, without absolute finality. He is the Obvious without exteriority. He is the Occult without interiority. I mean that He is the existence of the "Glyphs" (13) of the external as He is the existence of those of the internal. There is neither external nor internal except Him, and this without these Glyphs changing to become Him, or Him,

He changes himself to become these Glyphs. It is important to understand this arcane well, lest you fall in the error of those who believe in incarnations of the Divine. He is not found in anything, and nothing is found in Him through any entrance or exit whatsoever (14). He must be known in this way, not through science, intelligence, imagination, sagacity, the senses, external vision, internal vision, understanding or reasoning. No one can see Him except Himself. No one grasps Him except Himself. No one knows Him except Himself. He sees Himself through Himself.

Himself) (15). He knows Himself through Himself. No one other than Him can see Him. No one other than Him can comprehend Him.

His impenetrable veil is His own Oneness. Other than Him does not conceal Him. His veil is His very existence. He is veiled by His Oneness in an inexplicable way. Other than Him does not see Him:

no prophet sent, no perfect saint or angel approached (16). His prophet is Himself. His messenger (apostle) (17) is Himself. His missive (apostolate) is Himself. His Word is Himself. He has sent His selfhood by Himself from Himself to Himself, without any intermediary or (external) causality other than Himself.

The same! There is no disparity (in time, space or nature) between the One who sends, the Message, and the Recipient of this missive. Its existence is that of the Letters of Prophecy, not other. Other-than-Him has no existence (or nominality), and therefore cannot be destroyed (having never existed). That is why the Prophet said, "He who knows his soul (that is, himself) knows his Lord." He also said, "I have known my Lord through my Lord." The Prophet of Allah wanted to make it clear with these words that you are not you, but Him; Him and not you; that He does not enter into you and you do not enter into Him; that He does not come out of you and you do not come out of Him. I do not mean that you are or that you possess this or that quality. I mean that you absolutely do not exist, and that you will never exist either by yourself or through Him, in Him or with Him. You cannot cease to be, because you are not. You are Him and He is you, without any dependence or causality. If you recognise this quality in your existence (that is, nothingness), then you know Allah; otherwise, you do not.

Most insiders say that Gnosis, or Knowledge of Allah, comes after Fanâ el-wujûdi and Fanâ el-fanâ'i, that is, through the effect of the extinction of existence and the extinction of this extinction. However, this opinion is completely false. There is a clear error here. Gnosis does not require the extinction of existence (of the self) or the extinction of this extinction, for things have no

existence, and what does not exist cannot cease to exist. To say that something has ceased to exist, that it no longer exists, is equivalent to saying that it existed, that it enjoyed existence. Therefore, if you know your soul, that is, yourself, if you can conceive that you do not exist and, therefore, that you do not cease to exist, then you know Allah; otherwise, you do not. To attribute Gnosis to Fanâ and Fanâ el-fanâ'i is an idolatrous creed. For if you attribute Gnosis to Fanâ and Fanâ el-fanâ'i, you claim that other than Allah can enjoy existence. This is to deny Him, and you are formally guilty of idolatry. The Prophet said: "He who He who knows his soul (18) (that is, himself) knows his Lord. He did not say, "He who extinguishes his soul (19) knows his Lord. If one affirms the existence of another, one cannot speak of its extinction, for one must not speak of the extinction of that which one must affirm. Your existence is nothingness, and nothingness cannot be added to anything, whether temporary or not. The Prophet said: "You do not exist now, just as you did not exist before the creation of the world. The word 'now' (taken here in its absolute sense) means eternity without beginning, as well as eternity without end. Now, Allah is the existence of eternity without beginning and eternity without end, as well as the pre-existence. These three aspects of eternity are Him. (Allah is the existence of these three aspects of eternity, without ceasing to be the Absolute.) If this were not so, His Solitude would not exist; He would not be without a partner. However, it is a rational, dogmatic, and theological obligation that He be alone and without any companion.

His partner would be the one who exists by himself, not by the existence of Allah. Such a being would not need Allah and would therefore be a second Lord God, which is impossible. Allah has no partner, no equal, and no equivalent. Anyone who sees something with Allah, from Allah, or in Allah, even if he attributes it to Allah through Lordship (20), makes that thing a partner of Allah, subject to Him through Lordship. Whoever claims that a thing can exist with Allah (regardless of whether that thing exists by itself or through Him), whether it ceases to exist or is extinguished from existence, such a person, I say, is far from having the slightest perception of the knowledge of his soul and of himself (21). For whoever claims that other than Him can exist (whether by itself or by Him or in Him), then disappear and cease to exist, then cease to exist in its extinction, etc., etc., such a man turns in a vicious circle of extinction upon extinction indefinitely. All this is idolatry upon idolatry and has nothing to do with Gnosis. Such a man is an idolater, and he knows nothing about Allah, himself, or his soul.

If one asks by what means one comes to know one's "soul" (i.e., the "proprium"; oneself) and to know Allah, the answer is: The way to these two kinds of knowledge is indicated by these words: "Allah was and nothing was with Him (22). He is now as He was." If someone says, "I see my soul (my "proprium", myself) other than Allah, and I do not see Allah as my soul", The answer is: By the term "soul," the Prophet means the "proprium," your (particular) existence, what you call "myself," and not the psychic element that is sometimes called "the soul imperious soul" or 'the one that irresistibly pushes towards evil', 'the reproaching soul', 'the reassured soul'. ", etc., etc. (23); but by "soul" he means everything other than Allah, as he said: "Make me"

"See (O God!) things as they are," referring to "things" as everything that is not Allah (may He be exalted). He meant: "Make me know what is not You, so that I may know and understand (the truth about) things, whether they are You or other than You; are they without beginning or end, or were they created and will they disappear?" So Allah showed him that everything that is not Him is (man) himself, and that everything that is not Him has no existence. And he saw things as they are; I mean that he saw that they were the essence of Allah, outside of time, space and all attributes (24). The term "things" can apply to the soul as well as to anything else. The existence of the soul and that of things are identified in the general idea of thing (25). Therefore, whoever knows things knows his soul, his "proprium", that is, himself, and whoever knows himself knows the Lord (26). For what you believe to be other than Allah is not other than Allah, but you do not know it. You see Him, and you do not know that you see Him. Once this mystery has been revealed to you, that you are not other than Allah, you will know that you are the goal of yourself, that you do not need to destroy yourself, that you have never ceased to be, and that you will never cease to be. to ever exist, as we have already explained. All of Allah's attributes are your attributes (27). You will see that your exterior is His, that your interior is His, that your beginning is His and that your end is His, this is indisputable and without any doubt. You will see that your qualities are His and that your inner nature is His, without you becoming Him or Him becoming you, without any (transformation), diminution or increase whatsoever. "Everything perishes except His face" (28), both outside and inside. This means that there is no other than Him; that other than Him has no existence, but is fatally lost, so that only His figure remains; in other words: nothing is stable except His figure (29). (Some manuscripts add: "Wherever you turn, you turn towards the Face of God": Qur'an, II, 109.) An example: A man is unaware of something thing, then he learns it. It is not his existence that has been extinguished, but only his ignorance. His existence remains, it has not been exchanged for that of another; the existence of the knowledgeable person has not been added to the existence of the ignorant person; there is no mixture of these two individual existences; only ignorance has been removed. Therefore, do not think that it is necessary to extinguish your existence. For then you veil yourself with that same extinction, and you yourself become (so to speak) the veil of Allah (30). Since the veil is other than Allah, it follows that other than Him can defeat Him by turning the gaze away from Him, which is an error and a serious mistake. We have said above that uniqueness and singularity are the veils of Allah, and nothing else. That is why it is permissible for the Wâçil, that is, the one who has attained (personal) Reality (31), to say: "I am the Divine Truth," or "Glory be to me, for my greatness is great! Such a Wâçil has not reached such a sublime degree without seeing that his attributes are the attributes of Allah and that his inner being is the inner being of Allah, without any transformation of attributes or transubstantiation of inner being, without any entry into Allah or exit from Him (or vice versa). He sees that he does not cease to exist in Allah, nor does he persist with Allah. He sees that his soul (that is, his "proprium") does not exist at all, not as having existed, then ceased to exist, but he sees that there is no soul or existence except His. The Prophet said: "Do not revile the Century" (32), for it is Allah. He meant by these words that the existence of the Century is the existence of Allah (may He be glorified and exalted). He is too exalted to have a partner, a similar being, or any equivalent. The Prophet said in a Qudsî tradition (33): "Allah says: My servant! I was sick and you did not visit Me. I was hungry and you did not give Me anything to eat. I asked you for for alms, and you refused." He meant that it was He who was the sick man and the beggar. As the



the sick and the beggar can be Him, then you and all things in creation, accidents or substances, can also be Him. When we discover the mystery of a single atom, we can see the mystery of all creation, both internal and external. You will see that Allah did not create all things, but you will also see that, in the invisible world as well as in the visible world, there is only Him, for these two worlds have no existence of their own. (You will see) that He is not only their names, but also the One who names them and the One who is named (by them), as well as their existence. You will see that He did not create one thing once and for all, but you will see "that He is all days in the state of sublime Creator" (34), through the expansion and concealment of His existence and His attributes beyond all intelligible conditions. For He is the First and the Last, the Outer and the Inner. He appears in His unity and conceals Himself in His singularity. He is the First by His persistency. He is the Last by His eternal permanence. He is the existence of the Glyphs of the First and the Last, of the External and the Internal, as the existence of these Glyphs is Him. He is His name; He is the one who is named. As His existence is inevitable, logical and dogmatic, so is the non-existence of anything other than Him. What we think is other than Him is not, in essence, a dual existence, for His existence means that a dual existence does not exist; otherwise, this dual existence would be His equal. But other than Him is not, for He is free from any other than Him being other than Him. This other is still Him, without any internal or external difference. He who is thus possesses attributes without number or end.

(1) El-Wahdaniyah.

(2) Qablu.

(3) El-Fardaniyah.

(4) Baadu

(5) Literally: with Him, Maaho

(6) Kawn, the changeable, conditioned, temporal being.

(7) El-Wâhid, El-Qahhâr.

(8) El-Wâhidiyah.

(9) El-Fard

(10) El-Fardâniyah.

(11) Hôa=11=wh (see Gnosis, Year 2, No. 5, p. 151).

(12) It is also the name, as we shall see later when discussing divine Lordship, Er-Rabbâniyah, or more specifically here El-Marbûbiyah.

(13) Hurûf = letters, that is, spiritual elements (see the Sefer ha Zohar).

(14) In other words: Nothing enters Him and nothing comes out of Him; He does not come from anything and nothing comes from Him.

(15) Nafsaho, literally: His soul, that is, Himself, His selfhood.

(16) Ghairoho.

(17) Quran, IV, 170.

(18) Man yaraf nafsaho.

(19) Man afna nafsaho.

(20) Er-Rubûbiyah; from an exoteric and even pietistic point of view, it means glorification.

(21) Literally .....is far from sensing the fragrance of knowledge of the soul, that is, of oneself.

(22) See La Gnose, Year 1, No. 12, p. 270.

(23) The soul, En-nafs, spn, from the root nafasa, to breathe, to blow. This word has many meanings in Arabic, but above all: (a) The personal pronoun "same", to emphasise the individuality of a living being, preferably a rational one. From the meaning of "proprium" in Sufism. It is commonly said nafsânî in the sense of selfish. (b) The vital soul, animal or human, whose gradual evolution through seven stages is the moral goal of Derwishism. This subject has already been touched upon by several Orientalists; we will return to it later.

(24) See La Gnose, Year 1, No. 12, p. 272.

(25) Sheyyiyah= "thingness," from Shey= thing.

(26) Sic: Er-rabb; it should be "his Lord" rabbaho, according to the established formula (see Gnosis, Year 2, No. 5, p. 152).

(27) In some manuscripts, we find: You will see that all your actions are those of Allah and that all His attributes are yours.

(28) See Gnosis, 1st year, no. 12, p. 270.

(29) This passage can be interpreted, and therefore translated, in different ways, but the traditional meaning is that things only exist because of our ignorance. They disappear as our ignorance diminishes. Their existence being an illusion, their disappearance is just a figure of speech. I

wanted to explain this fundamental idea of Muslim esotericism in Gnosis: Pages dedicated to the Sun, Year 2, No. 2, p. 63, and Universality in Islam, Year 2, No. 4, p. 121. I have referred to "things" as "collective reality". things" as "collective reality."

(30) Allah is never veiled. He appears to be, but this is an illusion. It is man who is veiled, either by himself or by others, so that he cannot see his Lord. Such is the tradition.

(31) See Gnosis, Year 2, No. 2, Pages dedicated to the Sun, and No. 4, Universality in Islam.

(32) Ed-dahru: see Gnosis, 2nd year, no. 2, p. 63.

(33) The traditions thus named contain what Allah said directly to the Prophet. The Qur'an is the Word of Allah, revealed through the angel Gabriel.

(34) Quran, LV, 29.

Abdul Hâdî Aguéli– The Supreme Identity in Muslim Esotericism (continued and concluded).

Abdul Hādī, La Gnose– July 1911, no. 7– , second year

## The Treatise on Unity

(Risālatul-Ahadiyah)

by the greatest of spiritual masters

Mohyiddin Ibn Arabi

(Continued)

He who is thus described possesses countless attributes. Just as he who dies, in the literal sense of the word, is separated from all his praiseworthy and blameworthy attributes, so he who dies, in the figurative sense, is separated from all his praiseworthy and blameworthy attributes. Allah — may He be blessed and exalted — is in His place in all circumstances (1). The "inner nature of Allah takes the place of His "inner nature".

"; the "attributes" of Allah take the place of His "attributes". That is why the Prophet — may Allah pray upon him and greet him — said: "Die before you die", meaning: "know yourselves".

yourselves (your souls, your "proprium") before you die." He also said: "Allah says: My worshipper continues to draw closer to Me through supererogatory deeds until I love him. And

when I love him, I am his hearing, his sight, his tongue, his hand, etc. (2)." The Prophet means: He who kills his soul (his "proprium"), that is, he who knows himself, sees that his whole existence is His existence. He sees no change in his "inner nature" or in his "attributes". He sees no need for his attributes to become His. For (he has understood that) he was not himself.

the existence of his own "inner nature," and that he had been ignorant of his "proprium" and of what he was at heart. When you become aware of what your "proprium" is, you are freed from your dualism (3), and you will know that you are none other than Allah. If you had an independent existence, an existence "other than Allah," you would not have to efface yourself or know your "proprium." You would be a

Lord God other than Him. Blessed be Allah, so that there is no Lord God other than Him.

The value of knowing the "proprium" lies in knowing, but with absolute certainty, that your existence is neither reality nor nothingness, but that you are not, have not been, and will never be. You will clearly understand the meaning of the phrase: Lâ ilaha ill'Allah (= there is no God but is God) (4), that is, there is no God other than Him, there is no existence other than Him, there is no other than Him, and there is no god except Him.

If someone objects, "You are abolishing His Lordship (5)," I reply, "I am not abolishing His Lordship, for He does not cease to be (Lord) magnifying, nor does He cease to be (worshipper) magnified. He does not cease to be Creator, nor does He cease to be created. He is now (6) as He was. His titles of Creator or magnifying Lord are not conditioned by (the existence) of a created thing or a magnified (worshipper). Before the creation of created things, He possessed all His attributes. He is now as He was. There is no difference, in His Oneness, between creation and pre-existence.

His title as the Exterior implies the creation of things, just as His title as the Occult or the Interior implies pre-existence. His interior is His exterior (or His expansiveness, His evidence), just as His exterior is His interior; His first is His last and His last is His first; the whole is one and the one is the whole. He is described as: "Every day He is in the state of the Sublime Creator; nothing else was with Him; He is now as He was." In reality, other than Him does not exist.

existence. As He has been from all eternity, every day in the state of Sublime Creator. (There is) nothing (with Him) and no day (of creation, to the exclusion of another), as there is no pre-existence of things or days (7), for the existence of things or their nothingness is one and the same. If this were not so, it would have been necessary to create something new that was not included in His Oneness, which would be absurd. His title of The One makes Him too glorious for such a supposition to be true.

When you can see your "proprium" thus qualified without combining the Supreme Existence with any adversary, partner, equivalent or associate of any kind, then you know it as it is (that is, you truly know yourself). That is why the Prophet said: "He who knows his 'proprium' knows his Lord." He did not say, "He who extinguishes his 'proprium' knows his Lord." He knew and saw that nothing is other than Him. Then he said that knowledge of oneself, of the "proprium"

(of his soul), this is Gnosis or knowledge of Allah. Know what your "proprium" is, that is, your existence (8); know that deep down you are not you, but that you do not know this. Know that (what you call) your existence is (in reality) neither your existence nor your non-existence. Know that you are neither existing nor non-existing, that you are not other than existing or other than non-existing. Your existence and your nothingness constitute His Existence (absolute, such that one cannot and must not discuss whether It is or is not). (9). The substance of your being or your nothingness is His Existence. Therefore, when you see that things are nothing other than your existence and His, and when you can see that the substance of His Being is your being and your nothingness in things, without (however) seeing anything with Him or in Him, then you know your soul, your "proprium". Now, to know oneself in this way is Gnosis, the knowledge of Allah, above all equivocation, doubt or combination of a temporary thing.

with eternity, without seeing in eternity or through it or beside it anything other than eternity.

If someone asks, "How then does Union (El-wiṣāl) occur, since you affirm that other than Him is not? A thing that is unique can only unite with itself," the answer is: In reality, there is neither union (waṣl) nor separation (faṣl), just as there is neither distance (buud) nor closeness (qurb).

One can only speak of union between two things, not when it comes to a single thing. The idea of union or arrival implies the existence of two things, whether analogous or not (10). If they are analogous, they are similar. If they are not analogous, they are opposed to each other. However, Allah — may He be exalted — is free from any likeness, rival, contrast or opponent. What is commonly referred to as "union", proximity or distance (12) are not such (in the proper sense of the word). There is union without unification, rapprochement without closeness, and distancing without any notion of near or far.

(To be continued)

(1) Allah is here to be considered as the formula of Destiny, universal or individual.

(2) A famous "Holy Tradition" (Hadīṭ qodsī) (see Gnosis, 2nd year, no. 6, p. 174, note 7).

(3) Itnāīyah= dualism; bi-existence; belief in two divinities; from Itnāīn= two. In some manuscripts, I find: Ananiyah = egoism, from Ana = I, me.

(4) See La Gnose, Year 2, No. 2, p. 64, and No. 3, p. 111 (errata in No. 2).

(5) Er-rubūbiyah, meaning lordly, magnifying, glorifying influence.

(6) This always refers to "Permanent Actuality".

(7) That is to say: From our human point of view, there is currently nothing with God, nor is there a particular day of creation, no more now than before the creation of the world.

(8) That is, what your individual life could have been, separated from universal life.

(9) The words in brackets are the translator's attempts to clarify the meaning of the text according to the author's main idea. A translation (Tarjumah) from Arabic or Chinese into a Western language corresponds exactly to a native commentary in the language of the text itself.

(10) Mutasâwi= r parallel.

(11) Wiçâl, qurb, buaud; very common Sufi terms. Referring to psychological phenomena, they are mainly used in morality. This is why they have fallen, more than other Sufi ideas, into sentimental vulgarity, after losing their true meaning. It is incumbent upon metaphysicians to restore the original meaning to words that designate principles.

(12) Just as a great artist transforms a trivial event into an immortal monument, so the metaphysician purifies commonplaces by ridding Tradition of routine.

#### SUPREME IDENTITY IN MUSLIM ESOTERICISM

Abdul Hâdî, Gnosis- August 1911, no. 8- , second year

The Treaty of Unity

(Risâlatul-Ahadiyah)



by the greatest of spiritual masters

Mohyiddin Ibn Arabi

(Continued and concluded)

If someone asks, "What is union without union, proximity without proximity, or distance without distance?" the answer is: I mean that in the state you call "proximity" (qurb), you were none other than Him—may He be exalted. You were none other than

Him, but you did not know your "proprium"; you did not know that you were Him and not you. When you reach Allah, that is, when you know yourself "without the letters of knowledge" (1), you will know that you are Him, and that you did not know before whether you were Him or not (2). When knowledge (El-Irfân) comes to you, you will know that you have known Allah through Allah, not through yourself.

Let's take an example: Suppose you don't know that your name is Mahmûd, or that you should be called Mahmûd — because the real name and the one who bears it are, in fact, identical. Now, you imagine that your name is Mohammad; but after some time of error, you eventually learn that you are Mahmûd and that you have never been Mohammad. However, your existence continues (as in the past), but the name Mohammad has been taken away from you; this happened because you knew that you are Mahmûd and that you were never Mohammad. You did not cease to be Mohammad by extinguishing yourself (El-fanâ an nafsika), because ceasing to exist (fanâ) implies the affirmation of a previous existence. Now, whoever affirms any existence other than Him, gives Him a partner—blessed be He, and exalted be His name.

(In our example), Mahmûd has never lost anything. Mohammad has never lived (literally: breathed, nafasa) in Mahmûd, has never entered him or left him. The same is true of Mahmûd in relation to Mohammad. As soon as Mahmûd knew that he was Mahmûd and not Mohammad, he knew himself, that is, he knew his "proprium", by himself and not through Mohammad. The latter did not exist.

How could he have informed anyone of anything?

Therefore, "the one who knows" and "that which is known" are identical, just as "the one who arrives" and "that which is arrived at," "the one who sees" and "that which is seen" are identical. "He who knows" is His attribute (çifa); "that which is known" is His substance or "inner nature" (dât). "He who arrives" is His attribute; "that which is arrived at" is His substance. Now, the quality and that which possesses it are identical.

This is the explanation of the saying: He who knows himself knows his Lord. Whoever grasps the meaning of this simile understands that there is neither union (joining or arrival) nor separation. He understands that "He who knows is He," and that "that which is known" is still He. "He who sees" is He; "that which is seen" is still He.

He. "The one who arrives" is He; "that which is arrived at" in union is still He. No one other than He can join Him or arrive at Him. No one other than He separates from Him. Anyone who can understand this is completely free from the great idolatry (3).

Most initiates who believe they know their "proprium" as well as their Lord and who imagine themselves escaping the bonds of existence say that the Way is practicable or even visible only through "the extinction of existence" (El-fanâ) and through "the extinction of this extinction" (Fana-el-fana'i). They do not. They dogmatise in this way because they have not understood the words of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. As they wanted to remedy idolatry (which results from contradiction) (4), they spoke sometimes of "extinction", that is, the extinction of existence, sometimes of "the extinction of this extinction", sometimes of "erasure" (El-mahw) and sometimes of "disappearance" (El-içtilam). But all these explanations amount to pure idolatry, for whoever asserts that there is anything other than Him, which subsequently ceases to exist, or speaks of the cessation of the cessation of that thing, such a person, we say, is guilty of idolatry by his assertion of the present or past existence of another besides Him (5). May Allah—may His name be exalted—guide them and us to the true path.

(Verses:) You thought you were yourself. But you are not, and you never existed. — If you were yourself, you would be the Lord, the second of two! Abandon this idea, — For there is no difference between you and Him in terms of existence. — He is no different from you, and you are no different from Him. If you say out of ignorance that you are other than Him, then you are of a coarse mind. — When your ignorance ceases, you become

Be gentle, for your union is your separation, and your separation is your union. Your departure is an approach, and your approach is a departure (6). This is how you become better. — Stop reasoning reasoning and understand through the light of intuition, — Otherwise you will miss what radiates from Him (7). Beware of giving Allah any partner, For then you debase yourself, and that by the shame of idolaters.

If someone says, "You claim that knowledge of your 'proprium' is Gnosis, that is, knowledge of Allah, may His name be exalted; but man is other than Allah, even if he knows his proprium" (8), then how can he who is other than Allah reach Him? The answer is: "He who knows his 'proprium' knows his Lord" (9). Know that the existence of such a man is neither his own nor that of another, but that of Allah (10) (without any fusion of two existences into one), without his existence entering into God, coming out of Him, being collateral with Him or residing in Him. But he sees His existence as it is (11). Nothing has come into being that did not exist before (12), and nothing ceases to exist through erasure, extinction or extinction of extinction. The annihilation of a thing implies its previous existence. To claim that a thing exists by itself is to believe that this thing created itself, that it does not owe its existence to the power of Allah, which is absurd to the eyes and ears of all. You must note well that the knowledge possessed by the one who knows his "proprium" is the knowledge that Allah has of His "proprium," of Himself,

for His "proprium" is none other than Himself. The Prophet—may Allah pray upon him and greet him—wanted to use "proprium" (nafs) to refer to existence itself. Whoever has reached this state of mind, his exterior and interior are nothing other than the existence of Allah, the word of Allah (13); his action is that of Allah, and his claim to know his "proprium" is the claim to Gnosis, that is, to perfect knowledge of Allah (14). You hear his claim, you see his actions, and your gaze encounters a man who is other than Allah (just as you see yourself as other than Allah), but this is only because you do not possess knowledge of your "proprium". Therefore, if "the believer is the mirror of the believer" (15), then he is Himself (by his substance, or by his eye) (16), that is, by his gaze. His substance (or his eye) is the substance (or the eye) of Allah; his gaze is the gaze of Allah without any specification (keifiyah) (17). This man is not Him according to your vision, your knowledge, your opinion, your fantasy or your dream, but it is He according to His vision, His knowledge and His dream (18). If he says, "I am Allah," listen to him carefully, for it is not he, but Allah Himself who (through his mouth) utters the words, "I am Allah." But you have not reached the same level of mental development as him. If you had, you would understand his words, you would say as he says, and you would see what he sees.

Let us summarise: the existence of things is His existence without things being. Do not be misled by the subtlety or ambiguity of words, so that you imagine that Allah is created. A certain initiate said: "The Sufi is eternal," but he only spoke thus after all mysteries had been revealed to him and all doubts and superstitions had been dispelled. However, this immense thought can only be appropriate for one whose soul is vaster than the two worlds. As for one whose soul is not that, as vast as both worlds, it does not suit him (19). For, in truth, this thought is greater than the sensible world and the hypersensible world, both taken together.

Finally, know that "He who sees" and "That which is seen," "He who causes to exist" and "That which exists," "He who knows" and "That which is known," "He who creates" and "That which is created," "He who attains through understanding" and "That which is understood" are all the same. He sees His existence through His existence, He knows it through itself, and He attains it through itself, without any specification, outside the ordinary conditions or forms of understanding, vision, or Knowledge. Since His existence is unconditional, His vision of Himself, His understanding of Himself, and His knowledge of Himself are also unconditional.

If someone asks, "How do you view what is repulsive or attractive? If you see, for example, dirt or carrion, do you say that it is Allah?" The answer is: Allah is sublime and pure; He cannot be these things. We speak to those who do not see carrion as carrion or filth as filth. We speak to those who can see, not to the blind. Those who do not know themselves are blind, born blind. Until their blindness, whether natural or acquired, is removed, they cannot understand what we mean. Our discourse is with Allah, and not with anyone other than Him, or with those who are blind from birth. He who has reached the spiritual station necessary to understand knows that there is nothing that exists except Allah. Our discourse is with those who

seek with firm intention and perfect sincerity to know their "proprium" (name) from the knowledge of Allah — may He be exalted — which, in their hearts, keeps all its freshness (20) in their request and in their desire to reach Allah. Our speech is not addressed to those who have neither intention nor purpose.

If someone objects, "Allah — blessed and holy be He — said: The eyes cannot reach Him, but He reaches the eyes (21); you say the opposite; where is the truth?", the answer is: Everything we have said is in accordance with the divine word: The eyes cannot reach Him, that is, no one, nor the eyes of anyone, can reach Him. If you say that there is another in what exists other than

You must agree that someone other than Him can reach Him. However, (in this part of His Arabic words):

"No eyes can reach Him," Allah warns (the believer) that there is no one other than Him. I mean that no one other than Him can reach Him, but the one who reaches Him is He, Allah, He and no other. He alone reaches and understands His true "inner nature" (Ed-dat), no one else. No eyes can reach Him, for they are nothing but His existence (22).

About the one who says that gazes cannot reach him, because they are created, and the created cannot reach the uncreated or eternal, we say that this man does not yet know his "proprium" (23).

There is nothing, absolutely nothing, glances or other things, that exist apart from Him, but He understands His own existence without (however) this understanding existing in any way.

(Verses:) "I have known my Lord through my Lord without confusion or doubt. — My 'inner nature' (dât) is His, truly, without flaw or defect. Between us there is no becoming (24), and my soul is the place where the occult world manifests itself. — Since I came to know my soul without mixture or disturbance, — I have attained union with the object of my love without any distance between us, neither long nor short. — I receive graces without anything descending from above (to me), without reproach, and even without reason. I have not erased my soul because of Him, and it has had no temporal duration to be destroyed afterwards (25).

If someone asks, "You affirm the existence of Allah and deny the existence of anything else (besides Him); what then are these things that we see?" the answer is: These discussions are addressed to those who see nothing but Allah. As for those who see something other than Allah, we have nothing to do with them, neither questions nor answers, for they see only what they see; whereas those who know their "proprium" see nothing other than Allah (in everything they see). He who does not know his "proprium" does not see Allah, for every vessel only allows its contents to filter through — We have already discussed this subject at length. To go further would be useless, for he who is not made to see will not see. more (through our efforts). He will not understand and will not be able to attain the truth. He who can see, sees, understands and attains the truth (according to what we have said). To him who is (hyperconsciously) arrived, a slight indication is enough for them to find the true Way in this light, walk with all their energy and reach the goal of their desire, with the grace of Allah.

May Allah prepare us for what He loves and approves of in terms of words, deeds, knowledge, understanding, light, and true guidance. He is capable of all things, and He responds to every prayer with the right answer. There is no means or power except with Allah, the Most High, the Immense. May He pray upon the best of His creatures, upon the Prophet and upon all members of his family. Amen.

(1) Through the transformed and enlivened synthesis of detailed and precise knowledge.

(2) My manuscripts differ greatly from one another. In some, I read: '.....if you were Him or someone other than Him." Elsewhere I find: ".....if you were Him or if He were other than Him." A third category of manuscripts gives: '.....if you were Him or if He were Him." The confusion is only apparent, because the tradition is, as we shall see later, that He is Gnosis and that Gnosis is Him. We see God through the eye of God.

(3) Word for word, the idolatry of idolatry, Shurkus-Shurki.

(4) The idolatry of dual existence (dualism) has not escaped any Islamic theologian who has thought in Arabic. This language is algebraic, so that the study of its grammar is, so to speak, an exposition of the mechanism of thought. It is difficult to make a false argument in Arabic without making errors of syntax, vocabulary or other kinds. The clarity of the Arabic sentence is the best proof of the sanctity of this language, that is, of its primacy or Edenism. In Chinese, and in  
In the Malay section, we find similar things.

(5) That is to say, it is dualistic because it believes in the coexistence of what exists.

(6) Fa waçluka hijrun wa hijruka waçlum — Wa bu'duka qurbun wa qurbuka bu'dun.

(7) Uncertain reading; I am translating this last verse at random.

(8) The accentuated nuance comes from the translator; word for word, it reads: He who knows his "proprium" is other than Allah.

(9) The author responds, in turn, with a dogmatic statement. This attitude in the discussion is easy to understand here.

(10) That is to say, he has become completely fatalistic. He knows his destiny, that is, his reason for being in the universal economy, his place in the hierarchy of all beings. He willingly carries out his cosmic mission. He is in direct obedience, which gives his progress a harmonious flow. This surrender to the Will of Allah is "Islam".

(11) Bihalihi, meaning: he sees his place in the order. Now, the order is such that everything is everyone and everyone is everything. Every place, every "detail" contains the whole, and the entire order is found in every place. That is why everything that is in its place, no matter how small, represents the whole. That which is in order is order itself. Now, God is order.

(12) We consider this treatise to be the best exposition of Islamic-Semitic thought because of its denial of time and progress. Without this notion, we cannot understand anything about living immobility, which, under different names, is the principle of art, magic, morality and esotericism.

(13) Elsewhere, in other manuscripts, we find: "... his word is the word of Allah," which is more in line with tradition.

(14) Variation: "... his claim to know his 'proprium' is the divine claim to know Himself." Another variation: "... his claim to Gnosis is the knowledge of his 'proprium'."

(15) El-mu'minu mir'atul-mu'mini, a famous tradition that can be interpreted in different ways, because El-mu'min= the believer is also a name of Allah). It can be read as: the believer is the mirror of the believer, which is the social-moral interpretation; or: the believer is the mirror of the Believer, which is the idea in the psychological order. The one we preferred in the text is the idea in the metaphysical order.

(16) Biāinihi; Aīn= eye, then source, substance; usually used in the sense of "same", as in the expressions: binafsihi, bidātihi, etc.

(17) =Scholastic word derived from the particle keīf, meaning 'how'.

(18) It is unnecessary to tell readers of La Gnose that it is He according to His vision.

(19) In the text: This morsel is for those whose throat is wider than the two worlds. It is not suitable for those whose throat is only as wide as the two worlds.

(20) Çurah, form, image. I preferred form: 1° to avoid anthropomorphism as much as possible; 2° because form, or even formula, has much greater importance and holds a higher place in Islam than elsewhere. I intend to develop this subject later.

(21) Quran, ch. VI, v. 103.

(22) From a certain point of view, which is not ours, however, one could say that it is matter that becomes conscious of itself. An atheist who is not a cynic is, in general, fairly well equipped to understand the metaphysics of Islam.

(23) Variation: 'is far from knowing'.

(24) So no transubstantiation, incarnation, etc. Variants: Hījrân= escape, emigration; Haīrân = astonishment, etc.

(25) There are several variants, each more obscure than the last, mainly due to the poor condition of the manuscripts, which makes them difficult to read. Some manuscripts even have an extra verse that begins: Wa niltu= I have arrived. The rest is illegible.

## COMMEMORATION OF THE DEATH OF AGUÉLI– by Jean Foucaud

1 October 1917: accidental death in Barcelona of the Swedish painter John-Gustav Agelii, alias Ivan Aguéli, (in Islam: Cheykh 'abduḥ Hedi al-Maghrībi 'Uqayli - 1869/1917)

Thus, exactly one hundred years ago, an exceptional man passed away, who would have been forgotten had we not rectified this omission nearly 20 years ago with three articles in the journal *Vers la Tradition* by the late Roland Goffin (Nos. 72 and 73, 1998; No. 77, 1999 + Rectificanda No. 79, 2000), and more recently, since 2013, with a series of unpublished texts presenting, for example, two enigmatic articles by Aguéli on three successive websites (*Esprit-universel/blog.spot* – *Dinul-qayyim* – *al-Simsimah*).

In 1998, we spoke of *Précurseur*; in fact, Sheikh 'Abduḥ-Hedi had not only founded a study society called "al-Akbariya" (dedicated to Sheikh Muḥyī-d-Dīn Ibn 'Arabi) and introduced René Guénon to Islamic esotericism (known in Europe as "Sufism", a term that has since been overused) under the name Abdel-Wahed Yahya. He also apparently founded a Shadhiliya zawiya in Paris in connection with the eminent Sheikh Elish-Kébir of Cairo, known as the Pole of his time ("Qutb al-zaman"), of whom we still have a few *qasâ'id* and invocations written in his own hand.

same as Agéli's \*, and still in use in the Shadhili zawiya, with a few variations, particularly in France in the zawiya of Cheykh Mustafa (radiya'llah 'an-hu). If we may quote ourselves, we wrote in issue 72 of *VLT* (1998): "...a providential man, without whom one might wonder whether there would currently be any Tasawwuf worthy of the name in Europe" (p. 44).

However, we are fairly certain that he never played the role of *murshid*, contenting himself with the position of *muqaddam* assigned to him by Sheikh Elish. It should be remembered that *afrad* do not lead disciples, as their spiritual genealogy is too specific. Some people, misinformed about the laws of *tasawwuf*, have claimed that the *Afrad* did not have any affiliations: this is false, as we have seen recent examples of this in Tunis. Therefore, there is no contradiction in the fact that Aguelhi was affiliated with Guénon, among others. But they do not lead others, because having practised what is known in Alchemy as the Dry Way, they cannot help simple disciples to progress on the Wet Way, which is the only one suitable for them...

To commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the death of Aguéli (rahimahu'llah), we will first present the ACTION PROGRAMME of Abdul-Hâdi (Ivan Aguéli)– . We will then continue our biography of Aguéli by exploring the mysteries of his life related to his personal circumstances and his role.



We would like to remind you that we are working from documents in Arabic, French, Swedish, German, Italian, etc., which are not available to those who have accused us of having too much imagination: if they knew everything we could say about Aguéli, what would they say? With regard to the pedants and the malicious

Embittered by our ignorance of foreign languages, we simply say that we were well prepared for the study of Aguel and his relationship with Guénon, thanks to solid and lengthy studies in linguistics, classical philosophy and Islamology, not to mention the knowledge we gained from frequenting masters, the most distinguished of whom was Michel Vâlsan. But unlike certain ambitious individuals who are currently positioning themselves everywhere, we do not proclaim ourselves to be "specialists in Guénon or Tasawwuf", leaving this title to the upstarts of the neo-Sufi milieu.

\*cf. documents reproduced by Ms Viceca Wessel, in "Porträtt av en rymd", Stockholm, 1988, p. 93

Guillaume Apollinaire: "The Swedish Mohammedan"

(...) Thus, in his introduction to Agüeli for readers of the *Mercure de France* in September 1912, Guillaume Apollinaire shamelessly wrote that Agüeli was born in Paris and lived with his parents on Rue Cortot, in Montmartre (sic). How could he have made this up? It is quite possible that Agüeli told him anything to get rid of a curious person (he used to tell anyone who would listen that he was the "son of a king"!).

A.A.H- The mysteries in Aguel's life- The pseudonyms

The Swedish Muslim

Cubist painters have recently had the pleasure of receiving a visit from one of the most unusual men imaginable, even in dreams. Mr Aghéli is Swedish and Muslim. It seems that, at remaining, that the religion of Muhammad will make great progress in Europe, if not in France, at least in Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Mr. Aghéli, or Abdul-Hadid (that is his Muslim name), was raised in Paris, where his parents lived on Rue Cortot, in Montmartre. But he has mainly lived in his homeland, Sweden, and in various Muslim countries. He is said to be well versed in the occult sciences. He never goes out without a shopping bag. Cubist painting and sculpture have found in him an ardent defender full of new ideas. He resembles the King of Sweden, whose taste he praises.

artistic, and to whom, upon his return to his country, he wants to show the beauties of the new French painting. Although he is tone deaf, Mr Abdul-Hadid is a great music lover. His voice can take on the most contemptuous inflections when he speaks, for example, of the futurist painters, and he is rightly surprised at the amused indulgence they have been shown in France.

Dressed in shabby clothes, his shopping bag in his right hand, our Muslim friend wanders through Paris, which he adores: "A country of effort," he says, "which is still not rewarded."

Guillaume Apollinaire

[Guillaume Apollinaire, Le Suédois mahométan, Le Mercure de France, no. 365, 1 September 1912, pp. 220–221.]

IVAN AGUÉLI THE MAN, THE MYSTIC, THE PAINTER

BY AXEL GAUFFIN

Addendum to Volume II (by H. S. Nyberg [1889– 1974])

p. 299.

(Translated from Swedish and annotated by Jean Foucaud.)

Having stayed in Cairo in 1924–25, I spent a great deal of time with an employee of the National Library named Zeki Efendi, who belonged to a well-known Cairo family, the Sakkaqui family. Among his ancestors were several eminent theologians. Zeki Efendi no longer belonged to Islam in the strict sense of the word, as he had converted to the Bahá'í religion, which, although derived from Islam (1), had rejected several of its basic principles and claimed to be something higher and more universal than Islam. It was not uncommon for me to have meals at Zeki's house, in the home of his parents, as he himself was single at the time. He once told us that my compatriot Aguéli had often sat in the very room where we were eating; he had even often spent the night on the sofa that served as our dining room. Zeki, who must have been about fifty at the time, had fond memories of him from his youth. It was there that I first learned that Aguéli had converted to Islam. Like all Baha'is, Zeki was rather pretentious when it came to religion and spoke somewhat condescendingly about Aguéli, saying that he was a somewhat bizarre mystical fanatic. He was particularly fond of the great Muslim mystic and theosophist Ibn al-Arabi (2) and had always dreamed of finding his enormous allegorical commentaries on the Koran, which are believed to be lost and which, in any case, have been hidden until now. According to Zeki, Aguéli was already deaf when he arrived in Cairo.

(1) Nyberg's erroneous assertion: this sect was founded by a heretical Muslim.

(2) For the rest, we will stick to the current transcription, which is Ibn 'Arabi (to distinguish him from another "Ibn al-'Arabi").

From the information I have been able to gather from Aguéli's estate, we can form a very clear picture of his position within Islam and how deeply he had embraced the religion. Aguéli had a perfect command of written literary Arabic, which is still the classical Arabic of today. We have preserved a few draft letters in Arabic written by Aguéli. He has the style of a native speaker and expresses himself simply and easily with rich and elegant phrasing. Here and there, we encounter grammatical errors, but they are of the same kind as those made by

Egyptians cultivated in everyday life, given that he writes without affectation. Aguéli's Arabic is very lively and natural, and it faithfully reflects the literary milieu of Cairo. It also appears that he possessed a remarkable gift for languages and a voracious appetite for all kinds of idioms.

Agoueli's conversion to Islam was prepared by the resolutely hostile attitude he openly adopted towards Christianity and the Church from school age onwards. It is not uncommon to observe how Islam – with its doctrine set out in an exceptionally clear, simple and rigid manner; the absolute certainty of its followers and the proud and religious attitude of its citizens – exerts a powerful attraction on spiritually sensitive but rootless individuals. Contributing to this is the romantic fascination with the East, which is particularly strong among those who are disillusioned with Western civilisation and its ever-increasing mechanisation. But it is also a common observation that those who approach Islam with their European education in their blood are generally attracted to this mysticism (3), which culminates in a grandiose Gnostic or theosophical system. The Egyptians who have studied in Europe for a long time often become more or less alienated from orthodox Islam in its everyday and social expression, but they find a way back to the religion of their fathers through mysticism, which allows them, through allegorical interpretation, to sidestep the overly burdensome and harsh aspects of popular religion and gives their religiosity the nourishment it needs.

(3) Each time, the term "mysticism" should be understood to mean tasawwuf, or Sufism.

Aguéli was perfectly predisposed to such spiritual development. He ended up in the world of thought ruled by one of the greatest theosophists of all time, Muhyi-d-Dīn (= the reviver of religion), Ibn Arabi, born in Murcia (Spain) in 1165 and died in Damascus in 1240 after a 40-year journey through the countries of the Middle East. He is never referred to by any other name than the glorious title of "greatest Sheikh," and his tomb at the foot of Mount Kasiyūn at the gates of Damascus is still a famous Muslim pilgrimage site today.

Ibn Arabi develops a radical monistic pantheism [sic] of great scope: God is in everything, God is everything. Rarely has a doctrine been pushed to its most extreme consequences as in Ibn Arabi. The world is nothing more than a series of "crystallisation points" for the divine and places of manifestation of the divine presence. The entire universe and the course of the world have existed for all eternity as an ideal reality in the divine consciousness; the events around us signify only the emergence from the hidden realm of a reality that has existed for all eternity (4): the projection of a film that has been shot for all eternity, one might say, to express the idea in today's figurative language. The

The world and its evolution are necessary components of the divine. While conventional cosmological doctrines state that the world would be unthinkable without God, Ibn Arabi reverses the formula to say that God would be unthinkable without the world. This is the deepest mystery of his doctrine and therein lies his radical originality in relation to the Islamic reference system that surrounds him. Apart from this, Ibn Arabi was a staunch supporter of orthodox Islam in its most outward forms, with the most literal belief and attachment to the Islamic tradition.

that surrounds him. Apart from that, Ibn Arabi was a staunch supporter of orthodox Islam in its most outward forms, with the most literal belief and an attachment

fanatical about any outward form. He could afford to be so because letters and outward forms were for him merely the clothing of deeper mysteries. No one has taken symbolic interpretation so far, with such virtuosity and without such complexes. Every idea, every word, every piece of writing,

the simplest thing he touched, was transformed under his hand into a manifestation of the divine, into an element of his theosophy. With his unique sensitivity, he encompassed

everything, from the lowest to the highest, in his grandiose system of allegory. He was personally a visionary and a thaumaturge of great stature. In his system, alongside the most sublime and abstract speculation, the most primitive superstitions and the crudest magic abound.

crude magic [sic], talismans and fakir tricks abound in the world in which he moves. He recapitulates, as it were, not only the entire evolution of the Islamic world, but also the entire circum-Mediterranean cultural world since ancient times.

(4) In Guénonian language, one would say: "Phenomena are only the manifestation, outside the unmanifest, of a reality...etc."

(4bis) The explanation for this paradox—, namely that God is self-sufficient and yet created the world—, is given by Ibn 'Arabi when he says that "there is no Lord without a vassal" (and vice versa)...

He is a typical representative of what Spengler called "magical culture" (5). He is a phenomenon of much the same kind as the last Neoplatonists, such as Iamblichus or Proclus (6), and like them he represents a high point and a culmination. Given that he died in 1240, the decline of Islamic civilisation at the hands of the Mongols had already begun.

(5) Spengler Oswald (1880– 1936), German philosopher, author of "The Decline of the West" –

(6) – Iamblichus (250–330) was the author of "The Life of Pythagoras"; he was initiated into the Egyptian and Chaldean mysteries.

–Proclus (422–485), also initiated into the Mysteries by Syrianus, is the author of commentaries on Plato's Dialogues.

NB: These two figures were descended from a "Plotinian" lineage; we know of Plotinus' importance in the history of metaphysics: RG even devoted a study to him (without mentioning his correspondence with Mlle Maurice-Denis).

It is interesting to note that Ibn Arabi, through his theosophy, was inclined to be tolerant of other religions. For him, they were all manifestations of the one divine truth. With astonishing radicalism, he expressed his indifference to all religious barriers in a few often-quoted verses which, for any true Muslim, are the height of blasphemy:

"There was a time when I was indignant when my friend's religion did not conform to mine.

But now my heart has become such that it has taken on every form:

It is a place of prayer for gazelles and a convent for [Christian] monks,

a temple for idols and a kaaba for pilgrims,

[it is] both the Tables of the Law and the Holy Book of the Koran.

It is the religion of Love that I profess, and wherever his mount may take him,

it is my religion and my faith."

Similar ideas have been expressed in the past by mystical poets such as Omar Khayyam (7) and are found to a greater or lesser extent in all genuine mystical speculation; but they have rarely taken such a free form as here, at least within the framework of Islam.

(7) Omar Khayyam (1050–1123): Persian famous for his treatise on algebra (and later known for his "Rubaiyat" (quatrains)).

Ibn Arabi began his career as a secretary in the service of a prince and belonged to this corporation from which the great minds of Islam were recruited. Literary studies were always part of a secretary's training. Ibn Arabi was also perfectly familiar with the most refined Islamic literature, first ancient and then modern poetry. He believed that he was descended from a famous pre-Islamic lyric poet, Hâtim at-Tâ'i. He wrote in literary Arabic, fluid, full of clarity and taste. He himself was a poet, although not of the highest order. In this mystical brotherhood, of which he became the leader, alongside the strict discipline of the Order, there was a certain freedom of spirit (8) that rose above the various social prejudices of Islam. Thus, there has always been a certain place for women in the mystical circles of Islam, and they are not locked behind the same barriers as in ordinary life. In Ibn Arabi's group, there were also holy women, even "miracle workers", and it seems that he associated with them naturally and without difficulty. In some respects, Ibn Arabi's doctrine constitutes a phenomenon of reduction (9) within Islam: according to him, his religion is resolved in its becoming, in a game of Chinese shadows (10).

(8) Literally: "emancipation"!

(9) or "resorption," "dissolution." The term used by Nyberg is at odds with the Doctrine developed by Sheikh El-Akbar, as are many of the ambiguous or downright false considerations repeated in this Addendum. This shows the limits of understanding of Arabists such as Mr. Nyberg and those of his time.

(10) Note the Platonic allusion in this phrase (the Myth of the Cave).

He gave the superstition and crude magic of the Middle Ages a kind of philosophical legitimacy and contributed greatly to their perpetuation in Islam. One would search in vain for fruitful and decisive ideas for the future in his work. But precisely because of his reductionism systematic, it exerts a significant attraction on minds enamoured of rigour who believe that they have fulfilled their obligations by outwardly observing Islam and seek the solution to the religious problem in a universal theosophy that breaks down the narrow limits of any given historical form. This was precisely the case with the aforementioned Bahá'ís, who regard historical Islam as a stage already surpassed. It is likely, to put it bluntly, that it was at their instigation that Ibn Arabi's writings continued to be printed in Cairo. An orthodox sheikh I met met in a bookshop in Cairo vehemently expressed his deep dissatisfaction that such



miserable heresy could be published among Muslims. If the wishes of orthodox believers were to be followed, Ibn Arabi should be left to the library rats (11).

(11) In both senses of the word. The Swedish expression refers to "library cats".

This is undoubtedly why Agüeli took his new religion very seriously, even in his outward appearance, and strove to strictly observe its forms. Among his Arabic books are the usual "standard" writings. In the letters his Muslim friends sent him, he is always treated as a full member of their religious community.

It is possible that he was circumcised, which is the outward sign of conversion to Islam. Like all converts, he changed his baptismal name to an authentic Muslim name, 'Abd-al-Hâdi ("Servant of the One who guides on the Path"), and he ingeniously Arabised his name Agüeli to 'Uqayli, which is pronounced 'Ageli in the Lower Egyptian dialect.

Servant of the One who guides on the Path") and ingeniously Arabised his name Agüeli to 'Uqayli, which is pronounced 'Ageli in the dialect of Lower Egypt. 'Uqayli is an old Arabic name meaning "belonging to the tribe of the 'Uqayl", and is borne by various scholars in Islam.

Nevertheless, as a Muslim, Agüeli was an ardent supporter of Ibn Arabi's theosophy. He devoted a dense and detailed study to the "greatest of the Sheikhs". Among the books he left us is Ibn Arabi's major work, "The Revelations of Mecca". But above all, like

all those who have sought to penetrate the intellectual universe of this mystic, he studied the treatises and minor works that Ibn Arabi produced by the hundreds. They can be found in almost all collections of Arabic manuscripts in libraries; unfortunately, few have been published. (The author of this article began his career as an Arabist by editing some of Ibn Arabi's minor works)

(12). Agüeli's posthumous literary estate contains several copies of these minor treatises, which he himself made or had made by a scribe from the Cairo library. Various notes show that he attempted to synthesise the material for himself in order to study it more easily. He clearly assimilated Ibn Arabi's theosophy exhaustively, from the crudest superstitions to the most elevated metaphysical speculations. Agüeli was

presumably in direct contact with the Dervish Orders, which are numerous in Cairo and in which the theory and practice of Ibn Arabi's doctrine play a decisive role. For his

Muslim co-religionists, he had to behave like a Sufi in the modern sense of the word, i.e. a theosophist with the profound knowledge (13) specific to the Initiates. In his succession, finds a copy of a short treatise on the principles of the Order of the Malâmatis, written by a certain Ibn 'Abderrahman. This copy was made by a man with a Turkish name (partly difficult to decipher), but revised and corrected by 'Abd-al-Hâdi 'Uqayli, i.e. Agüeli. (13bis)

(12) "Kleinere Schristen des Ibn 'Arabi", – Leinden, 1919.

(13) The word used in the Swedish text is "Gnosis", literally "Gnosis".

(\*) Note by Nyberg: According to Dr Axel Nelson, who personally met the old man in Rome.

(13bis) See reproduction in V. Wessel: AGUÉLI, Porträtt av en rymd.

At the end of this manuscript, the author added a dedication in Turkish from himself and Aguéli to Enrico Insabato (\*). Aguéli's relationship with Insabato is discussed elsewhere in this book. This is a good opportunity to comment on the journal in which Insabato wrote in Cairo and where Aguéli published the fruits of his intellectual activity in Egypt.

On 22 May 1904, the first issue of a weekly newspaper appeared in Cairo with titles in Arabic and Italian: *Il Convito* (The Banquet) in Italian and *An-Nâdi* in Arabic, which means the same thing (14).

The weekly appeared in both Italian and Arabic. The text of the warning that introduced the first issue follows the Italian text fairly closely, but already the two sections are distinct: the long article in Arabic on the Russian-Chechen war included in this issue has no equivalent in the Italian section, and conversely, most of the Italian text is missing from the Arabic section. This is already becoming the general rule. During the first half of the year, the newspaper had four pages. In the library of the National Museum, we find year I, issues 1 to 18 in a series covering the period from 22 May to 30 October 1904. From 22 November 1904 onwards, the newspaper had eight pages and now there is also a text in Turkish. The National Museum has issues 19 to 29 (first year), covering the period from 20 November 1904 to 25 June 1905. Dr Gauffin has shown that it is indeed Aguéli who appears under the signed by Dante and Abdul Hadi Magribi (a name with a double meaning: "the Moroccan" and "the Westerner"), and traces of it can still be found in a multitude of other articles. From its fourth year onwards, the first half of which, according to the Arabic cover page, appeared on 15 May 1907, the weekly became a monthly magazine (from Anno IV, series 2, no. 1), continuing with the same title and text in both Italian and Arabic, but in such a way that the content of the two sections only coincided sporadically (14bis). Here, Aguéli appears above all as the specialist on Ibn Arabi and the Islamic mystical literature (15). In its fourth year of publication, it published in a series of issues the Arabic text of the mystical-theosophical treatise by a late author, Qâsim Ibn Salâh ad-Dîn al-Hânî al-Bagdâdî al-Halabî, who lived in the years 1619– 1697/98. This treatise is entitled "Ascension to the King of Kings" and, like all writings of this kind, deals with the ascent of the soul through the various mystical stages to the Supreme Essence. The Arabic text can be found in the Arabic section on pp. 21 to 32, 42 to 46, 65 to 69 and 129 to 136, and is translated into Italian under the title: "Il progredire verso il Re dei Re" in the Italian section. In his short preface written in Arabic, Aguéli says that, despite the few

renown of its author (16), he deliberately chose this text from among all those dealing with this subject for the simple reason that it is very clear and very well written. He particularly emphasises that this author is free from any heresy.

(14) The title, curiously Platonic

(14bis) was the last issue published in December 1907.

(15) It should be noted for the umpteenth time that the terms "esoteric" or "initiatory" – , which would seem appropriate here – , are not used in the Swedish text, even though they exist in that language and were frequently used by Aguéli as early as 1893: Nyberg's "philosophical" prejudice is already apparent.

(16) According to Osman Yahya, his name is al-Khani.

On pages 19 to 22 of the Italian section, he includes an article entitled "–" ("The great Muslim initiates") – , which consists of a short introduction followed by a translation of chapter 558 of Ibn Khaldun's "The Book of the Decree" ("The Meccan Revelations").

Arabi with explanatory notes (16bis). This introduction is soon translated into Arabic on pp. 84–85, in the Arabic section. The same collection includes, in the Italian section, a letter in Italian from Agueli to Insabato, from which it appears that the latter asked him to write in the journal about the "Supreme Sheikh", i.e. Ibn Arabi. In his reply, he highlights some features of Ibn Arabi's doctrine which he considers essential. Two main principles govern this doctrine: on the one hand, the gradual purification of the motives that drive action, and on the other, [the principle of] universality. He makes the very apt observation that Ibn Arabi lacks the intellectualism characteristic of Persian mystics with their preciousness, and attributes this to the fact that Ibn Arabi was a pure Arab: his splendour lies in the art of conciseness, and in the sudden silence, deep within his being, there is a flame – "his smile is sober".

It would be interesting to compare this judgement with that of the greatest contemporary expert on Islamic mysticism, Louis Massignon (1883– 1962), who found Ibn Arabi cold and "icy" (17) compared to the incandescent heroes of early Islamic mysticism. Ultimately, these two judgements are not as incompatible as they seem at first glance. Compared to the ancient

men of God with their mystical-ascetic attitude, Ibn Arabi comes across as cold because he is much more intellectual and refined than they are (18). But the precious aestheticism of the Persian mystics and their frivolous smile

are completely foreign to him. – This letter is translated into Arabic on pp. 86-89 in the Arabic section.

(16bis) This chapter, which is very long, deals with divine names, and it seems impossible that Aguéli could have translated it in its entirety. From him, in "Il-convito", we have only about ten pages (in Italian). NB: see V. Wessel, note 50, p. 185, which gives the following reference: "Dio il Bello- La maesta della Bellezza", Il Convito, 4th year, no. 1, pp. 19-25- May 1907. (Aguéli would therefore have translated only one divine name)

(17) : in French in the text. Some have said the same thing about René Guénon!

(18) : literally: "man of the world" (!)

The rest, on pages 89 to 101, begins in the Arabic section with a series of articles entitled al-Akbariya, which continues on pages 145 to 162. They are written by Aguéli and deal with Ibn Arabi; this title [al-Akbariya] could be translated into Swedish as "everything related to al-Akbar", i.e. "the greatest (Sheikh)". This series also appears in the Italian section under the same title, spelled El-Akbariya. However, the two series do not coincide perfectly. In the last part of the Arabic text, Aguéli published, on the one hand, the comments of a late mystic on Ibn Arabi's salât

(18b), that is, his conception of the meaning to be given to the official worship of God, and, on the other hand, some minor works by Ibn Arabi himself. Aguéli did not feel capable of rendering this part in Italian, which is why the last part of the series of articles in Italian entitled "El-Akbariya" consists of the commentary that another contributor (18ter) to the journal, Abderrahmân 'Ilesh (in Italian Eleishe), made on Ibn Arabi in the Arabic section. Aguéli has added some summary remarks on Ibn Arabi in which he seeks to find a relationship between the latter's concepts and the thought of modern. Here, he shows himself to be familiar with a theme that he had already explored passionately in the early years of Il Convito. He simply wants to see Ibn Arabi as a "modern" mind, a prophet for our times.

(18bis) –See Mohamed al-Tantawi

(18ter) – What a lack of consideration!

Aguéli's papers reveal that he wanted to found an international society dedicated exclusively to the study and translation of Ibn Arabi. This society was to be called El-Akbariya. In a draft letter in Arabic, undated but dating back to his stay in Paris in 1909 ( 19), Aguéli recounts that a society had been founded. However, the selection rules were very strict and membership (20) was strictly exclusive. What happened next is unknown to me.

(19) Impossible: Aguéli did not return to France until April 1910, after spending seven years in Egypt followed by a year in Switzerland.

(20) The term does not seem to be used here in the technical sense it has in Islamic esotericism.

Aguéli had published articles on Ibn Arabi and his theosophical doctrine in the journal *La Gnose*. Aguéli's posthumous work contains various articles whose titles and wording, at least in terms of terminology, testify to the strong influence exerted on him by the intellectual world of the last Islamic theosophists and, of course, Ibn Arabi. A careful analysis of these articles under

The particular insight provided by the Islamic influence would be of great interest in understanding both Aguéli's personal development and certain schools of thought in Cairo at the time.

Around the magazine *Il Convito* and its European editors, who were strongly influenced by Islam, Insabato and Aguéli, a school of thought emerged that was welcomed by the progressive minds of Cairo's Islamic milieu. This circle was passionately interested in all burning Islamic issues, including colonial politics. This programme set out in detail a global propaganda campaign for Islam. Aguéli's papers even contain a "tract" for such propaganda—, a document that foreshadows in a rather disturbing way the methods of

most advanced propaganda of the time (21). The [First] World War obviously interrupted this process. The Islamic nationalism (22) so diligently advocated by Aguéli and his friends quickly became unbearable to the English: Aguéli was forced to leave Egypt and the circle undoubtedly broke up. But the ideas he supported continued to operate. Now that I have in my possession

some of Aguéli's papers and his magazine *Il Convito*, I am struck by the similarities between the ideas expressed there and the currents of thought I have encountered in certain circles of Cairo during my stay there in 1924–25. This deserves further examination.

(21) This is an obvious reference to totalitarian techniques—, notably K. Lewin's "group dynamics"—, fascists and communists, which emerged in the 1930s. Remember that this book was published in 1941. NB: for those who might be shocked by what we say about K. Lewin, many people are unaware that these techniques were used in Nazi party training centres! Recently, their use in teacher training centres (formerly IUFM) has shown that they are not without danger and are reminiscent of the totalitarian mentality prevalent among the "mad" educators of today's National Education system!

(22) Wrong! It is pan-Islamism, not pan-Arabism.

Finally, the question may be asked whether Aguéli, with his passionate fervour and constant evolution, has really managed to remain within the bounds of Islam, or whether Islam was ultimately just a passing phase for him. His whole temperament quickly predestined him to fail in the Bahá'í milieu of Cairo. As far as I know this milieu, Aguéli could well have taken up residence there. In any case, he must have felt spiritually close to them. Perhaps there is a clue to his closeness to the Bahá'ís in one of his letters, but this is only a random guess on my part.

part. In any case, even if Aguéli had sympathised with them, he would not have been able to express it publicly. The Bahá'ís are frowned upon by strict Muslims, which is why they willingly hide behind an orthodox appearance; this was certainly even more the case Aguéli's time than it is now. It remains troubling, however, that the man I referred to at the beginning of this article, whose house Aguéli frequented assiduously, was a Bahá'í! (23)

H.S. NYBERG

(23) The apparent open-mindedness of the Bahá'ís is deceptive: the heresy of their doctrine could not escape a connoisseur of Ibn 'Arabi and an initiate such as Sheikh 'Abdul-Hedi. (And the fact that their world centre is located in Israel, well protected by the Zionist authorities as a war machine against Islam, does not inspire confidence! )

But, on the other hand, Agüeli frequented such diverse circles (anarchists, theosophists, socialists, revolutionaries...) and such unorthodox ones that he left himself open to insinuation by Mr Nyberg, who seems in any case to lack any discernment in traditional matters.

In any case, the question of Aguéli's traditional "regularity" does not arise: he merely said that, in times of persecution, the Sufis took refuge with the "Bektachis" whom he may have frequented in Cairo, and who have nothing to do with "Baha'ism".

Ivan Aguéli

Article

Talk

Read

Edit

View history

Tools

"Sheikh Abdul Hadi" redirects here. For the Singaporean footballer, see Sheikh Abdul Hadi (footballer). Ivan Aguéli ('Abd al-Hādī 'Aqīlī)

Ivan Aguéli.gif

Ivan Aguéli in Cairo.

Title Sheikh, "Muqaddim of Europe"

Personal

Born 24 May 1869

Sala, Västmanland, Sweden

Died 1 October 1917 (aged 48)

L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Catalonia, Spain Religion

Sunni Islam

Region Europe, Egypt

Creed Shadhili, Malamatiyya

Main interest(s) Sufism, Impressionism, Symbolism, Comparative religion, Animal rights, Anarchism

Notable idea(s) Non-syncretic metaphysical comparative analysis of orthodox religious esotericisms, the core of the traditionalist method.

Notable work(s)Writings for La Gnose (French)

Senior posting

Influenced by

Influenced

Ivan Aguéli (born John Gustaf Agelii) (24 May 1869 – 1 October 1917), also known as Shaykh Abd al-Hādī al-Aqīlī (Arabic: أبو عبد الله محمد بن أحمد *ẓiṭ*) upon his conversion to Islam, was a Swedish wandering painter and author. As a devotee of Ibn Arabi, his metaphysics applied to the study of Islamic esoterism and its similarities with other esoteric traditions of the world. He was one of René Guénon's initiators into Sufism[1] and founder of the Parisian Al Akbariyya society. His art was a unique form of miniature Post-Impressionism where he used a blend of colours to create a sense of depth and distance. His unique style of art made him one of the founders of the Swedish contemporary art movement.

Childhood and youth

Ivan Aguéli was born John Gustaf Agelii in the small Swedish town of Sala in 1869, the son of veterinarian Johan Gabriel Agelii. Through his mother, he was related to the 18th-century Swedish metaphysician Emanuel Swedenborg.

Between 1879 and 1889, Aguéli studied in Gotland and Stockholm. Early on in his youth, he began to show exceptional artistic talent and a keen interest in religious mysticism.

In 1889, he adopted the name Ivan Aguéli and travelled to Paris, where he became a student of the Symbolist painter Émile Bernard. Before returning to Sweden in 1890, he made a detour to London, where he met the Russian anarchist scholar Prince Kropotkin.

Returning to Stockholm in 1890, Aguéli attended art school in Stockholm where he was taught by Swedish artists Anders Zorn and Richard Bergh. By the end of 1892, he returned to Paris, where he became acquainted with French poet and animal rights activist Marie Huot (1846–1930).

Active in French anarchist circles, he was arrested in 1894 and put on trial in the "Trial of the Thirty". Within months of his release in 1895, he left France for Egypt, where he lived until he returned to Paris in 1896. It was later in Paris that Aguéli ended up converting to Islam and adopted the name 'Abd al-Hadi.



In 1899, he travelled to Colombo (in present-day Sri Lanka), returning to France in 1900.

## Egypt

In 1902, Aguéli moved to Cairo and became one of the first Western Europeans to be officially enrolled at Al-Azhar University, where he studied Arabic and Islamic philosophy. In 1902, he was also initiated into the al-'Arabiyya Shadhiliyya Sufi order by the great Egyptian Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman Ilaysh al-Kabir (1840–1921).

With the blessing of Shaykh Ilaysh, Aguéli and an Italian journalist named Enrico Insabato (1878–1963) founded and contributed to a magazine published in Cairo (1904–1913) named *Il Convito* (Arabic: *An-Nadi*). It was published in Italian and Arabic (and briefly also in Ottoman Turkish). In Arabic, it promoted a favourable view of Italy as a friend of Islam, and in Italian it promoted a favourable view of Islam. It contains the first known use of the term "Islamophobia," in an article by Aguéli.

## Al Akbariyya

Aguéli founded Al Akbariyya as a secret Sufi society in Paris in 1911. Among its first members was René Guénon. Its purpose was to promote the teachings of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi among the "scholarly, educated and freethinking classes..."[8] through the practice of the Shadhili and Malamati Sufi paths. The only time this society is mentioned is in a letter written by Aguéli in September 1911 to an unknown address in Cairo announcing its founding,[8] not much more is known.

During this period, Aguéli wrote several articles on Islamic topics for *La Gnose*, an esoteric journal edited by Guénon. These articles were later reprinted in *Études traditionnelles*, the main journal of the Traditionalist movement.

## First World War and Spain

Suspected of being an Ottoman spy, he was expelled to Spain in 1916. Stranded in Spain, Aguéli was left without money to return to Sweden and on 1 October 1917, he was killed by a train at a level crossing in the village of L'Hospitalet de Llobregat outside Barcelona.

After Aguéli's death, Prince Eugen Bernadotte, who was known as a patron of artists, made sure to return his paintings and belongings to Sweden.

## Aguéli's legacy

The Fountain of Ivan Aguéli in Sala.

In Sweden, Aguéli is admired as a celebrated contemporary painter. Most of his paintings are found at the Swedish National Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Modern Art and the Aguéli Museum in Sala. Aguéli's impact in Sweden was clearly shown in 1969 when, on the centenary of his birth, six of his paintings were printed as stamps by the Swedish Postal Service.

Aguéli is also recognised as an important influence on Guénon and, through him, on the Traditionalist movement. His views on Islamic esotericism have been widely adopted.

Aguéli's remains were kept in Barcelona, Spain until 1981, when he was brought back to Sweden and reburied with Islamic rites in his hometown of Sala.

The Aguéli Museum in Sala has the largest collection of his artworks, donated by Sala's well-known physician Carl Friberg to the Nationalmuseum.

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See also

[Biography portal Islam](#)

[portal](#)

Hossein Nasr Titus

Burckhardt Martin

Lings Shadhiliyya

Malamatiyya

## INTRODUCTION

Curious silence, this total silence–, and for over 40 years! (1)– on the case of John-Gustav Agelii (2)... Could it be overshadowing certain current leading figures of Islamic esotericism in France and Italy, who are otherwise so prolific in their writings and translations? It seems that everyone wants to trivialise, minimise or even discredit the importance of the role of Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi al-Maghribi 'Uqayli. And there is no excuse for the lack of information about him: Michel Vâlsan himself spoke of him in glowing and unequivocal terms (3). He even had extracts from Axel Gauffin's monumental and irreplaceable work translated (unfortunately only partially and poorly) (4). The few references to Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi, in France at least, are insufficient or inaccurate, when they are not are not entirely disingenuous (5).

The purpose of this introduction is to present and rehabilitate a providential man, without whom one might wonder whether there would currently be any Tasawwuf worthy of the name in Europe. Some have been shocked by an apparent lack of "virtue" and "discernment". Easy to say! People like Abdu-l-Hedi, and eminently René Guénon, helped to avoid all the pitfalls. They cleared and "marked out" the Way until the supreme Magisterium arrived in the person of Sheikh Mustafâ Abdel-Aziz. Those who criticise them should first acknowledge what they owe them or not.

speak. That is why we believe we are filling a void and, why not, righting an injustice by publishing this first chapter on the man who was, in his time, the pioneer of Akbarian studies in the West.

(1) With the exception of the introduction to Agüeli's posthumous writings, which is so poorly printed that it borders on deliberate disrespect and carelessness. It is nothing but a web of deliberately distilled errors.

(2) Born in Sweden in 1869, died in Barcelona in 1917; painter, linguist, writer and Muslim translator of Sufi texts. N.B. His official name is indeed "Aguelii".

(3) See posthumous work, *L'Islam et la Fonction* by René Guénon, Paris, 1984, (multiple references).

(4) Ivan Aguéli, *Människan, Mystikern, Malaren*, 2 volumes, Stockholm, 1940–41.

(5) Almost all of the information provided by Chacornac–, in a book on René Guénon that is otherwise useful, is erroneous or biased; as for the other authors, we prefer not to cite them out of intellectual charity and to avoid any sterile polemics!

It is not known exactly when John-Gustav Aguelii (whose artist's name was Ivan Aguéli) converted to Islam: Chacornac, following Axel Gauffin, leans towards the second half of 1897 (6). His most recent biographer, Ms Viveca Wessel (7), pushes this date back to early 1898. We believe that these dates could easily be pushed back several years: it all depends on whether one relies solely on "historical" data or on other references of a more "internal" nature. What we mean here (and examples are not rare) is that it is entirely possible to be a Muslim of

heart long before pronouncing the "shahada", because the environment (particularly in Europe) prevents or delays the effective practice of Islam, which, especially in our time and given the environment in which he lived, was eminently the case with Aguel, not to mention the very special case of René Guénon, all things considered. It is also possible to recite the Shahada without revealing anything . The real question is rather: who brought Aguéli to Islam?

And if one demands proof or documents, one need only refer first to Aguéli's exceptionally early interest in Islam, the Arab world and the Qur'an (8), and above all to a certain letter from 1907 to understand this. In fact, as early as 1893, Ivan Aguéli had a vision of Sheikh Akbar that left no room for doubt, and we will return to this at greater length later.

Akbar that leaves no room for doubt, and to which we will return at greater length. At the same time (1893), he had a revelation of the Science of Letters in a "linguistic" form, which is an aspect of what is symbolically called the "Gift of Tongues" (9) and, apart from René Guénon, we know of no other European in the 20th century who benefited from such an indisputable and prodigious gift.

(10). On this subject, further discussion in the form of an appendix (11) would be useful, since nothing precise has ever been said about the "Gift of Tongues" (except for a short chapter by René Guénon in *Aperçus sur l'initiation*).

: Aguéli himself, after announcing a study in La Gnose, ultimately refrained from doing so (12)

: this silence deserves reflection... and caution (13). So, well before his "official" practice of Islam in India and then in Egypt, it seems as if Aguéli was preparing himself in secret for this new stage in his spiritual life (14) and the role he was to play for some fifteen years as an intermediary between the Arab East and Europe. If we count the time spent in preparation, we can say

that Agüeli devoted 20 years of his short life (15) to what must be called his "traditional mission traditional mission" both as an "Initiate" and as a "Precursor", the latter point requiring arguments that by their very nature escape secular history (see below).

(6) Gauffin writes: "Despite all my research, I have never been able to establish when and under what circumstances this happened." (Ivan Aguéli, *Människan, Mystikern, Malaren*, II, p.40).

(7) Viveca Wessel, *Ivan Aguéli – porträtt av en rymd*, Stockholm, June 1988, p. 20.

(8) From November 1891 to July 1892, he was a regular visitor to the Oriental and Islamic section of the Royal Library in Stockholm (Gauffin, op. cit. I, pp. 72–73).

(9) See letter to Arthur Bianchini (Gauffin, op. cit. I, pp. 91–94).

(10) That is, knowledge of the main traditional doctrines and understanding of their transcendent unity, directly from the original text. As for linguistic "performance", Aguéli was able to read more than 20 languages, half of which were Eastern languages. We are, of course, excluding the case of "Cheikh Murshid", which is not relevant here.

(11) To be included at the end of this study.

(12) La Gnose, December 1910, where Aguéli wrote his very first article.

(13) See Ibn Arabi's warning (Fut. I, chap. 26, p. 191).

(14) From May 1894, while in prison, he attempted to abstain from alcohol.

(15) From 1893 to 1913. Remember that he died at the age of 48.

Thus, in 1899, despite hostility from his peers (including obstacles raised by Marie Huot), he made contact with the most eminent and mysterious Sufi organisation in India, one that no Westerner had ever heard of before: the Akbariya tariqa (16). He did not do this as an individual: Ivan Aguéli was not a man to engage in "tourism" for pleasure in India; he accomplished his mission at the risk of his life (17) and his health, returning with malaria and severe hearing loss.

The question that arises is obviously the following: with what mandate and on whose orders did he carry out this mission and make these contacts? At that time, it does not appear that he had already met Cheikh Elish el-Kebir. In any case, in a very short time, he met with eminent figures in the Indian esoteric world, about whom he is extremely discreet (18). When we consider the importance in his initiatory life of the person and work of Sheikh al-Akbar, we can nevertheless gain some insight into the invisible forces that guided him in his endeavour and why, despite all the hazards of such an expedition at that time, and with practically no fortune, he succeeded, benefiting from an astonishing immunity (as he would later during his seven years in Egypt). To understand the significance of this, one must refer to the few discreet allusions made by Michel Vâlsan, without whom no one would have grasped the providential aspect of the function and work of Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi (19). Aguéli's conversion to Islam was anything but a passing fad. "Orientalist" and "exotic". We know from direct witnesses that he would sometimes say the canonical prayer in his own time and in the street, as Arabs commonly do, even in front of sceptical Europeans, as reported by Mr Georges Rémond, controller of Fine Arts in Cairo (20). Islamic life having become "second nature" to him, he wrote in a letter from Colombo: "Life in a non-Muslim country is HELL." (June 1899).

From the moment he arrived in Cairo, especially from 1902 onwards, he was perfectly acclimatised to the way of life. traditional, thinking and writing in Arabic, dressed like an Arab, living like them and enjoying this way of life. If this adaptation was so easy and natural, it is because, like certain predestined beings predestined individuals, Aguéli was born a stranger to his own family, his homeland and the pseudo- or anti-traditional European mentality (21). This explains his so-called "eccentricities", his rebellion against his family and his environment, his apparently "anarchist" reactions (22), his inability to fit into the school system and the rejection of the prevailing religiosity (Protestantism), for which he was not suited and where he felt stifled (23). The apparent oddities of his behaviour cannot be easily explained by certain modern tendencies that reduce the spiritual to the psychological or see only psychology where there is metaphysics and tradition.

(16) In a letter dated 22 March 1899, he wrote of the Malays of Colombo: "Almost all of them here are Sufis. Among them, there are some who are remarkably intelligent."

(17) In a letter to Marie Huot, he wrote: "My little revolver saved my life... but you'll have to get me a bigger one!" (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 70).

(18) To keep his trip a secret, he even led his friends to believe that he was going all the way to Lhasa (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 41), and to calm Marie Huot, who was jealous of his absence, he pretended to be very interested in Buddhism, which he would later denounce in the harshest terms! (ibid., pp. 56, 62, etc.).

(19) *Études Traditionnelles*, 1953. – reprinted in *L'Islam et la Fonction de René Guénon*. Éd. de l'Œuvre, Paris, 184, pp. 37–38.

(20) Mr Rémond and his friends were unable to suppress a sudden urge to laugh: Abdu-l-Hedi had begun to pray at length in front of them, in the open air, apologising because "it was prayer time" (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 139).

(21) In one of his many fascinating letters from prison to his friend Verner von Hausen, he shows that he had already chosen between the "Aryan" world and the "Semitic" world. For example: "They are Muslims and monotheism, which heal all impurities of blood and race: it purifies everything through faith and thus constitutes a receptor of the highest spiritual energy." (Gauffin, op. cit. I, p. 166).

(22) Despite his associations in this milieu, he never became a militant anarchist. See his right of response to the newspaper *La Libre Parole*, which called him an "anarchist" and an "agitator". (Gauffin, op. cit. II, pp. 115–116).

(23) See his "Notes on Islam" in *L'Initiation*, August 1902: "[Islam] places the homeland in the heart of man and makes him feel at home everywhere." He even exclaimed one day: "My homeland is the universe!" (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 96).\*

\*In a letter dated May 1894, he explained his fondness for the East and for the primitive by "hatred of [his] homeland, [his] native language, [his] education..." (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 96).

As for his personal status within Islam, or more precisely within Sufism, we can already note his official title as a traditional writer working under the guidance of a Sheikh of the stature of 'Abder-Rahman Elish el-Kebir, "Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi, khâdim al-Awliya" (24). To this name 'Abdu-l-Hedi, he added that of 'al-Maghribi', which was that of his master Elish el-Kebir, and also that of 'Uqayli', the name of a family of Egyptian scholars well known in the country. This title also appears on his personal seal. (25)

(24) This is his name as author, translator and proofreader, as it appears on the cover of the Arabic reissue of *Usûl al-Malâmatiya* (Cairo, 1907). See Viveca Wessel, op. cit., p. 81.\*

\* As for the title *Khâdim*, let us recall the Islamic adage: "*Khâdim el-Qawm, sayyidu-hum*". On the "*Khâdim*", see "*Les Haleines de la familiarité*", *Études Traditionnelles*, 1955, p.176.

(25) Reproduction on p. 93, and in colour on the cover of Viveca Wessel, Ivan Aguéli, *porträtt av en rymd*.

It was already unusual at the end of the 19th century to see a European, a Swede at that, integrate so authentically into a traditional Arab society and into the very closed circles of the Shadhili brotherhoods. But there is more. In the letter of 29 July 1907 that we have already mentioned, in which he refers to his vision 14 years earlier of Sheikh al-Akbar, Aguéli reveals that Sheikh Elish-el-Kebir, even before he knew who he was, kept calling him "Muhyi-d-Din", which is the very title of Ibn Arabi ( "Reviver of Religion"), (26) and his name. Now, we know that exceptional beings who have a deceased or invisible master belong to the privileged category of the "Uwaysy". (27)

This was the case with Aguel, or rather "Cheykh 'Abdu-l-Hedi al-Maghribi, 'Uqayli, Khâdim al-Awliya". With Abdu-l-Hedi, it is in fact a whole Akbarian lineage that originated in Europe and continued with Cheykh Abd-el-Wahed Yahya (René Guénon) and Cheykh Mustafâ 'Abdel-Aziz (Michel Vâlsan), without excluding other possible successors in the Western world. The function and work of these successive personalities cannot be explained without reference to Seyyiduna Ibn Arabi, Cheykh al-Akbar and his ever-present Baraka (Rûhâniya). But we must acknowledge that, in the European world at least, the starting point was Ivan Aguéli, [Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi], himself a link in a chain of "revival" whose eminent and distant precursor, for the Arab world, was none other than Emir Abd-l-Qadir al-Jazâ'iri (28). One may wonder whether Abdu-l-Hedi was aware of his role and his "mission". The answer can be found in a letter to his mother in the summer of 1904: "If everything continues to go well, I can look forward to a glorious future and announce a path that no one has ever taken before me." (29)

It was also on Abdu-l-Hedi's initiative that a study society called "Al-Akbariya" was formed in Paris on 26 Jumada II of the Hijri year 1329, i.e. on the night of Thursday to Friday 23 June 1911, of which René Guénon was obviously a member. (30) This society, which is not a "Tariqa", is nevertheless not without analogical connections to the "Tariqa Akbariya" with which he had come into contact in India (October-November 1899). (31)

(26) This title also appears in the full name of Emir Abd el-Qader.

(27) A linguistic remark is in order here: the title Uways, which is attributed to a Sufi of the same name, is in fact the grammatical diminutive of the word "aws," which means "lynx." name, is in fact the grammatical diminutive of the word "aws", which means "lynx" and, like "wolf", symbolises the "seer" or the Hindu "rishi" in most European languages. Furthermore, the Arabic "aws" is not without prophetic or even etymological connection with the Greek root "oψ (sight, vision). Returning to the case of Aguel, we recall the pre-eminence he accorded to vision over hearing, and not only as a painter. For him, there could be no contradiction between intuitive vision and its aesthetic application.

(28) See Charles-André Gilis, *Introduction à l'Enseignement et au mystère de René Guénon*, p. 29.

(29) Gauffin, op. cit. II, pp. 133 and 160-161.

This has an earlier "Shadhili" resonance in the words of Sidi Belhassen before his death: "By Allah, I have brought to this path what no one has brought before."



(30) See letter from Abdu-l-Hedi to an unknown recipient, written in Arabic in September 1911.

(Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 189)

(31) Despite repeated assertions by Aguel, René Guénon, and Michel Vâlsan, some have believed that they could deny the existence of an Akbariya Tariqa as such. Perhaps it is just a quarrel over words? A beginning of an explanation might perhaps be found in what Aguel says about a certain

Tariqa "malâmatiya" in a translation of the text by 'Abu Abder-Rahman al-Sulâmi (La Gnose, 1911); see also the unpublished excerpt from a letter by René Guénon, quoted by the editor of Arche Milano in the posthumous collection: *Écrits sur La Gnose*, 1988, p. XXIII.

Returning to Cheikh al-Akbar, the vision that Abdu-l-Hedi (or rather Ivan Aguéli at that time) had of him was decisive and sheds some light on the short enigmatic passage that the latter devotes to the "Two Initiatic Chains", inserted without transition– and apparently without reason– in his article in *La Gnose*: "Sahaif Ataridiya". (32) He wrote: "There is always a master, but he may be absent, unknown, or even deceased for several centuries" (33). The importance of this text did not escape René Guénon, who referred to it in his chapter "À propos du rattachement initiatique" ("On Initiatic Attachment") with an additional note (34). In any case, Abdu-l-Hedi later benefited from regular connection with an Egyptian Sheikh who ratified and consecrated, in a manner of speaking, the Akbarian enlightenment of his exceptional disciple (35).

We also know that Sheikh Elish was very complimentary about his disciple's work (36), and, through Chacornac, we learn that Abdu-l-Hedi became moqqadem of his Sheikh, with permission from transmitting initiation, which, while not informing us about his spiritual status, shows the dignity of his function, since he was in a way responsible for establishing Sufism in Europe, and what is more, in its Akbarian form.

Three elements come into play in initiation: the transmitter, the Baraka and the beneficiary of the connection; however, this is not just any connection, since the beneficiary is René Guénon himself; moreover, the Baraka is specifically Akbarian, conveyed in particular by the Shadhili Tariqa (37); and, if the transmitter is Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi, this should somewhat temper the hypocritical zeal of Aguel's detractors, who are quick to point out his eccentricities, his career as a painter, his political activities, and his secret agent activities.

However, as René Guénon pointed out in a private note, it is not insignificant to be associated with one person or another (38). If Abdu-l-Hedi had been unworthy of this position, he would not have received it from Cheykh Elish el-Kebir. On the other hand, René Guénon's case being exceptional, it is quite logical that he should have had an exceptional transmitter in the person of Sheikh Abdul-Hedi. When one considers the eminent position of Sheikh Abdel-Wahed Yahya in the Islamic esoteric hierarchy thereafter, and his undoubted quality of the Rosicrucians, we can gauge the importance of the Sufi contribution transmitted by Abdu-l-Hedi and immediately realised by its beneficiary. We also know from Abdu-l-Hedi that "[the Afrad] attain initiation (and operate through it) in a particular way (that is, each of them has a special initiation formula special formula of Initiation)" (39). To conclude this brief overview of the relationship between Ivan Aguéli and René Guénon, we can confirm the date of the latter's affiliation, given once by Michel Vâlsan, to

namely 1911, and not 1912 as many authors believe, following Chacornac (40).

(32) In literary Arabic: "Sahâ'if 'utâridiya".

(33) A clear reference to the case of the Uwaysy.

(34) Respectively pp. 55 and 271 of the posthumous work: *Initiation et Réalisation Spirituelle*, Paris, 1971.

(35) It should be noted that in 1893, the year of his "vision", he was not yet officially a Muslim, that he did not visit Egypt for the first time until September 1894, and that nothing is known about his Islam before 1897-98. The unknown, absent and deceased master referred to by Aguéli can only be Sheikh al-Akbar.

(36) See also Michel Vâlsan's unpublished handwritten note on the Treatise on Oneness, quoted appropriately by Viveca Wessel: "Abdu-l-Hedi's translation is subtle, intelligent and rich, but uneven. His language is often ingenious, but technically not always adequate; it even reflects somewhat the occult atmosphere of the milieu to which La Gnose was addressed, but Abdu-l- With this work, Hedi has rendered an invaluable service to those who have taken a closer interest in Islamic metaphysics and esotericism; (op. cit., p. 184).

(37) See Michel Chodkiewicz, *Introduction aux Écrits Spirituels de l'Émir Abdel-Qadir*, p.36.

(38) In a letter, he dissuaded certain correspondents from becoming affiliated with Probst-Biraben.

(39) "The Categories of Initiation," *La Gnose*, December 1911. See reference in *Initiation and Spiritual Realisation*, p. 164.

(40) Aguéli stayed in France from October 1910 to June 1911, then left France until May 1912. It was during this first period, and therefore before the founding of the Akbariya Society, that René Guénon became involved. Based on the limited chronological data we have been able to gather on Aguéli, there are strong indications that this affiliation took place in early 1911, which corresponds to the Islamic year 1329, month of Muharram (1st month of the year) \*

\* This was undoubtedly the year René Guénon joined Taoism (February 1911).

Also noteworthy is Aguéli's age when he joined René Guénon, which was 42.

Returning to the spiritual status of Sheikh Abdul Hedi, some have questioned whether he was a "malâmati" based on the confusing (to say the least) external aspects of his public life. Without wishing to definitively judge the case of Aguel, whose complexity we are only beginning to discover, we would say that there is a misunderstanding, or even a misinterpretation: the true Malamati is not someone who engages in acts that are reprehensible from the point of view of orthodoxy, but rather someone who is blamed,

criticised and persecuted for his unwavering integrity in the exercise of his duties, whose authenticity is perceived as a challenge by the narrow-minded and decadent exoteric milieu.

In any case, Sheikh Abdul-Hedi showed admirable contempt for danger and indomitable courage through all the vicissitudes and despite all the obstacles raised by his enemies, among whom he sometimes counted Marie Huot (41). Forced to leave Egypt in 1909, he wrote: "I no longer need my freedom. I am free everywhere, in any situation, under any constraint..." (42)

Unfortunately, the last years of his life raise fears that this state of serenity may be lost: carefully rereading the letters and documents from 1913 to 1917 until his tragic end, one is gradually overcome by a growing unease. It is as if, once his mission in Egypt (and probably in Europe, around 1912) was complete, he made a fatal mistake by returning to paint in Egypt, where he no longer seemed to enjoy the extraordinary immunity he had enjoyed during the years 1902–1909. Misfortune piled up: he was practically starving, financially insolvent, abandoned by everyone; he was expelled by the English (he had thrown himself into the lion's den!) and ended up being crushed by a train in Barcelona (43).

(41) This charming person would one day confess to him that she had "intended to poison her friend with 'mascarine des champignons', which leaves no trace, and that she would have done so without scruples or remorse" (Gauffin, op. cit. II., pp. 13-14).

(42) Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 165; and letter of September 1911, p. 188 et seq. (written in Arabic). Reading this passage from Aguéli's letter, I am reminded of a few lines he translated from the *Malâmatis*: "Their outer life is completely exposed, while the subtleties of their inner life are rigorously hidden;" in *The Treatise on Unity*, Éd. de l'Échelle (= Éd. Orientales), 1977, p.72.

(43) Can we go so far as to talk about a loss of Baraka? In any case, there is a striking contrast between the years when everything seemed to be going well for him in Cairo and Paris, and those when, having accomplished his "Islamic" mission, he devoted himself exclusively to painting. (Perhaps we could refer to this as "Takhfif al-dhunûb".) (a)

(a) sacrificial alleviation of sins committed.

It is clear that Aguéli's case is complex, and one controversial issue is that of his teachers. Apart from the Invisible Master, i.e. Cheikh al-Akbar himself, we know for certain that he had at least two or three teachers: Cheikh Hosafi (44) and, above all, Cheikh Elish el-Kebir fils. As for Cheikh Senûsi, his relationship with him was mainly political and "exoteric". It is not known exactly when or how he came into contact with them. Abdul-Hedi is silent on this point.

on this subject, but it was probably shortly after his arrival in Egypt (1902), at the latest when the magazine *Al-Nadi* (= *Il-Convito*) was founded in 1904.

The controversial point is that 'Abdu-l-Hedi had several teachers and claimed that possibility, which was generally discouraged for Europeans. In the 1902 magazine *L'Initiation*, he wrote:

"[The Sheikh] is more of a spiritual father, whom one chooses and whom one can leave whenever one wishes. Leaving one, even to follow another, should not be considered an insult to the first. Far from it." " (45) This article appeared in August 1902, before Agüeli returned to Egypt. Had he already benefited from the guidance of a Master during his first stay (September 1894-September 1895), when he was not yet officially a Muslim, or did he have one in Paris? This point in his personal biography is not important in itself, but it may lead today's aspiring Muslims to believe that one can change Master without further ado and forget that Agüeli's case is exceptional and therefore not at all exemplary.

In any case, it is clear that Aguelhi had excellent teachers and that his Islamic education was not fanciful, having been received in the country, in the original language, for nearly seven years, which represents optimal conditions that virtually no European has ever enjoyed. It is not within everyone's reach, even today, to assimilate an Eastern language and religion, let alone to write studies on Sufi doctrine directly in Arabic, French and Italian, as Agüeli did. He

– did so masterfully, with the grace of God– , and this is an extremely rare case in the 20th century: only René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan have accomplished this feat.

Also, when we see the gratuitous suspicion cast by the Swedish Arabist Nyberg– , who never had any doctrinal competence (46)– on the orthodoxy of Abdu-l-Hedi, suspecting him of having become a "Baha'i"

" (sic!) at the end of his life, one cannot help but think of the famous phrase: "Slander, slander! Something will always stick!" Indeed, following Nyberg, those who know nothing about Agüeli, having never read him in the original text, are quick to spread this slanderous accusation , which is based on nothing, since Nyberg adds (which is deliberately omitted): "This is just a random guess on my part." So why seek to tarnish Agueli's memory? It would have been better to refrain.

(44) Abdu-l-Hedi quotes it once (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 190), and a second and final time (ibid., p. 271) in a letter dated 14 August 1916: "I have a few small works on exoteric and esoteric Islam by my revered Sheikh Sidi Hosafi of Cairo."

(45) This latitude suggests an Akbarian privilege.

(46) See his Addendum to Volume II, pp. 299-304; (A. Fauffin, op. cit.).

In conclusion, and at the risk of repeating ourselves, we would say that the merit of Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi was to accomplish his task and fulfil his role without being deterred by the obstacles, suffering and persecution he encountered, of which he had more than his share. We can say of him what René Guénon wrote when, for once, he spoke of himself, namely that "his only merit was to try to express some traditional ideas to the best of his ability" (47). The "individual" Agüeli completely effaced himself– for years– before his mission. It was only later that another facet of his rich personality emerged: painting, which we will discuss later, and which may pose a problem in terms of Islamic orthodoxy.

"Wa inna 'Llâh a'lam"

(47) See "Notes on Islam" in L'Initiation, August 1902: "I have nothing new to announce."

Jean FOUCAUD

(excerpt from a forthcoming book on Agéili)

(to be continued)

ADDITIONAL NOTES

On the first chapter devoted to John Gustave Agelii

(see VLT No. 72)

Jean Foucaud

Vers la Tradition, No. 73

(September– November 1998)

–It is clear that we could not and did not intend to say everything there is to say about Agéili in our first article. Our presentation is necessarily a summary of our research: we have attempted to provide as much reliable information and well-founded hypotheses as possible in 10 short pages, as this field is, to our knowledge, highly specialised and still largely unexplored, if not unknown (even in Sweden!).

Readers will also have noticed that we associate Agéili with René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan. If there are any apparent coincidences, we can do nothing about them (and so much the better); this first unpublished chapter was in fact written nearly nine years ago. We also intend, if circumstances so require, to show why one cannot speak of one without speaking of the other two, for they are linked by an invisible bond that we will call the Ruhâniya Akbariya, which is a providential case of "survival" for Westerners at the end of the 20th century.

The same readers will have noticed a first enigma, namely "a Path that no one has traced before me", a phrase that is identical to that used by Sidi Abul Hassan El Shâdhili 650 years earlier. In the latter case, we understand that this Path will bear the imprint of the Master, that is to say, it will be Shâdhilite. But this is an understatement, and it would take a book to explain the intellectual specificity, excellence and rigour of this spiritual method. (1) So what does Agéili mean when he writes: "I can announce a path that no one has traced before me"? What part of himself would he add to the role assigned to him by Sheikh Elish el-Kebir (particularly in Egypt and later in Europe)? Later (in January 1910) he returned to this idea in an even more enigmatic formulation, writing: "I must succeed out of cosmic duty" [?!] (2)

Additions to the notes

n.24 For readers who do not know Arabic, we will gladly translate this phrase [Khâdim el-Qawm Sayyiduhum] as: "the Servant of the Initiates is [sometimes] their Master". As for Agélii's "Sirr" [intimate secret], only Allah knows.

NB: Remember that "Khâdim al-Awliyâ" means "Servant of the Saints".

n.27 If we were to be presented with the (common but outdated) objection that Arabic is a Semitic language and that Western languages are Indo-European, and therefore apparently unrelated, we would simply reply that there is a very ancient original relationship between these languages (Latin, Greek, German, Sanskrit) and the so-called Semitic languages (Akkadian, Syriac, Ethiopian, Arabic, Hebrew), without forgetting the Hamito-Semitic languages (Pulaar, Egyptian, Libyan-Berber, etc.), in which we have found many common roots that belong to a single Tradition and a single language, dating back to the beginning of the present manvantara, and which are called "universal roots". (remnants of the "solar" language, known as "Syriac" [sûriyâniya]).

solar" language, known as "Syriac" [sûriyâniya]).

n.31 Without detracting from our assertion, by "repeated assertions" we mean successive assertions, since it is obvious that René Guénon did not spend his time repeating that there was an Akbariya Tariqa in India. We hope that one day we will be in a better position to provide at least some evidence of the existence of this "predominantly" Akbarian Tariqa.

Epistolary references

1° (pp. 45, 46, 47 of our article).

Here is the unpublished translation of an excerpt from this letter from 1907 (3): "About 14 years ago, I saw in a dream the image of an unknown man... And now, reading the biography of Ibn 'Arabi written by one of our Arab colleagues, I recognise him: it was indeed him. I have never spoken of my dream, for the simple reason that it was an enigma to which I had no key. Every detail was there, from the eye to the colour of the clothes he usually wore, the exact shade of his hair and complexion, everything was there..." (4)

2° (p.47 of our article).

Regarding the founding of the Akbariya in Paris, here is the translation of the letter written in Arabic in Sweden in September 1911, translated into Swedish by Nyberg and transcribed here into English:

"As for France, I mean Paris, many of our friends have embraced Islam, such as 'Abdel Wahidet Abdel Halim. (5)– The vast majority belong to educated, literary and liberal circles, but none to political circles - I have had enough to do with such people, not to mention my experience with Dr. Insabato. They converted to Islam out of love for the greatest Sheikh, Muhyi-d-Din Ibn 'Arabi– may Allah be pleased with him– and out of inclination towards the order of the Malâmatis. For them, the key to Islam is the doctrine of Unity [Enhetslära] in accordance with the "philosophical" system of Ishrâq [illumination of the heart], in other words: Unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in Unity (...)

Finally, with the help of the VERY HIGH, we founded the AL AKBARIYA company in Paris on Friday night 26. We did not advertise. Membership in the said company is by co-optation only, and we grant membership only after a rigorous screening process.

Jean FOUCAUD

#### NOTES

1. cf. what Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi wrote:

"Whenever you find a man in the East who is superior in character and knowledge, you can be almost certain that you are in the presence of a Shaykh al-Lita." That is to say:

"Whenever you meet a man in the East who is superior in character and knowledge, you can be almost certain that you are in the presence of a Shadhili." (Il Convito 1907, Anno IV, series 1, p. 108).

2. Axel Gauffin, op. cit. vol. II, p. 161.

3. As with all quotations taken from Axel Gauffin in our article in VLT No. 72, the translations are ours.

4. Gauffin, op. cit. vol. II, p. 143.

5. The latter remains unidentified to this day. As for 'Abdel Wahid, everyone will have recognised René Guénon.

#### APPENDIX 1 / REHABILITATION OF AGUELI

Clarification:

Despite my studies published in VLT in 1998–99 concerning the probable date of René Guénon's initiation (through Aguéli), those who parade in the microcosm of Parisian esotericism continue to talk about 1912 (which is false!), not without malicious intent, as this allows them to make a gratuitous connection between his marriage in July 1912 and the date of his initiation. In this way, they attempt to conflate:

- his Catholic marriage
- his Sufi initiation
- his Masonic affiliation (all of which was incompatible with the Catholic milieu of the time),

emphasising, of course, René Guénon's supposed duplicity and his concealment of this from his wife and in-laws. However, all his connections predated his marriage, as will be seen in our Appendix 2.

At the forefront of this malicious campaign is, of course, a certain Jean-Pierre Laurant, followed by all his sycophants, including, unfortunately, a certain Abdelwadoud Gouraud in his latest translation, despite our warning after his lecture at the Grand Mosque of Paris a few years ago.

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Let us recall that the first mention of belonging to Sufism was made by Aguéli in September 1911, that Sheikh Mustafa also refers to 1911, and that René Guénon himself wrote a letter to a correspondent in New Zealand, also in 1911, signing himself Abdelwahid (see the special issue of *Science Sacrée* 2003). Finally, let us not forget René Guénon's curious dedication to Cheikh Elish el-Kabîr (in *Symbolism of the Cross*): 1329-1349; the Hijri year 1329 corresponds exactly to the solar year 1911, it is even entirely included in it. This date therefore has special significance for René Guénon: what exceptional event took place during this period (and not in 1910)? 1

But in the meantime, a letter from René Guénon to his doctor Tony Grangier was discovered, mentioning a connection in 1910 (letter dated 28 June 1938): "...my affiliation with Islamic initiatory organisations dates back to 1910 [underlined by Guénon]" (ref. *Les Cahiers Verts*, no. 4/2009).

Hence our current clarification. We have never said that René Guénon was not already affiliated before (he speaks of initiatory organisations in the plural); in a letter dated 1948, he even refers to affiliation "for nearly 40 years", i.e. 1909 or 1910.



For our part, we have only attempted to show that the effect of this connection culminated with the baraka chadhiliya coming from Sheikh Elish El Kébir–, considered the pole of his time–, and through Sheikh Abdulhédi al Maghribi 'Uqayli (an idea suggested to us by Mr. Patrice Brecq as early as 1990, noting the excellence of Guénon's first article in the 1911 journal *La Gnose* - "La Prière et l'Invocation"–, which leads us to believe that it was just after his affiliation).

Afterwards, Mr. Gilis can talk about the connection in 1910 (indeed, Guénon does not mention Aguéli in his letter of 1938), it is not impossible, but what does he know, apart from what we have written ourselves?  
?

Let us recall that Aguéli returned to France in April 1910, but he was unable to meet Guénon (no doubt with P. Genty, at Dujols') until the summer of 1910 or even late 1910 at the earliest. Before that, he could have been attributed by Champrenaud, but we do not believe that he was a mutaṣawwif before Aguéli returned to France after an eight-year absence (1902~ 1910), and at that time, he knew nothing about Islam, the Arabic language and the Arab world (which in no way prejudices his qualities as a metaphysician, which were appreciated by René Guénon – see his obituary in the 1925 edition of *Le Voile d'Isis*).

It should be noted that we are not reducing René Guénon's spiritual wealth to the sum of his connections. For he benefited from other divine graces (as Mr. Gilis clearly saw in his curious book *L'Héritage Doctrinal de Michel Valsân*) and to which he makes a discreet allusion [ishàra] in the continuation of his 1938 letter to Dr Grangier: "... this in no way prevents anything else..."

And then there would be curious considerations to be made about "hidden" Islam (for example, among others, that of the "rijāl al-ghayb"–, cf. the second sura: "al-muttaqīn/ al-ladhīna yu'minūna bi-ghayb"), which, fortunately, unlike the *turuq*, completely escapes the grip of the modern world and its persecutions. But this is not public knowledge (cf. René Guénon: "my sources contain no references").  
include any references").

PS: For us, in 1911, there was not a simple attachment but a genuine "transfer of power by Elish le-Kébir through Aguéli. (This means that Guénon was invested with a special function for France, as we shall see later.)

On this subject, Jean Robin, who became a specialist (and victim!) of counter-initiation, had a curious insight into the secret nature of the relationship (at a distance, as they never met).  
encountered) between Elish el-Kébir and René Guénon (cf. "Le Royaume du Graal", Trédaniel, 1993; p. 601: " [ in his attempts to manipulate Guénon] nothing prevented the counter-initiation (which can only know beings through what belongs to the intermediate world within them) from seeing in Guénon an individuality of exceptional spiritual power, who should be recruited as quickly as possible! Guénon, for his part, due to his very particular spiritual generation, was not then 'armed' to

recognise the Adversary. But this interest shown by the counter-initiation also attracted ... that of the Pole, who otherwise would not have known Guénon, and who of course helped him in this perilous situation.

(It was Abdul-Hedi who would later form the "physical" link between Guénon and the Pole.)

Thus, Guénon's destiny foreshadowed the moment when the initiates belonging to the Pole and those belonging to el Khidr would henceforth work together... (...) From then on, it was no longer a question of the powers below securing Guénon's cooperation, but rather of eliminating him altogether. (Jean Robin, "Le Royaume du Graal"

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Unlike René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon not only ignores the Primordial Tradition (which he referred to as an "act of faith")– , which prevented him from understanding the invisible action of S. le-Khidhr– , but above all, and what seems to us much more serious, he ignores the Centre of the World (as evidenced by his article "Avoir deux Centres" [Having Two Centres], remarkable but limited solely to the individual psychological realm), and therefore ipso facto ignores the King of the World and, subsequently, the corresponding function called "tasarruf" (which we mentioned earlier as having taken over from the "power of the Keys" lost by Christianity).(\*).

This role was the privilege of the Qutb of the time, in this case the Egyptian Sheikh Elish le-Kébir al-Maghribi, under whose authority Sheikh 'Abdul-Hédi al-Maghribi worked as an assistant, so to speak. a function taken over by Sheikh 'Abdel-Wahed Yahya, whose work is not theoretical (it is doctrinal, which is not the same thing) but is accompanied by more or less apparent action, which he expressed only once , showing that he was neither an "author" nor a "writer", but "in charge of Mission" (.....) [cf. letter to Louis Cattiaux, 10/10/1950: "...My work, which certainly has nothing in common with the work of a 'man of letters' [...] when he says: "We will continue... until we have crushed the nest of vipers" – underlined by Guénon– , referring to the satanic lair that had become , among other things, the sinister magazine RISS (cf. Le V.d'l., 1932; reprinted in "Le Théosophisme", p. 4 6 4 – , 1969 edition).

As for Aguéli's role, we refer to his action programme (announced in the appendix to our article of September 1998, but not published due to its length: 10 pages), which will soon be available on the website Esprit-Universel. Guénon drew inspiration from this when discussing the "manipulation of mental currents" in "Orient et Occident" (see VLT No. 77).

Guénon left France after 19 years (19=, the solar number par excellence; and a symbol of protection 2—as a friend reminded us– , because it is the number of guardian angels called "

zabâniyya "- cf. Sura 96) and settled in Cairo, the "geographical" centre of the world (?), according to Abbé Moreux (author of "Le Secret des Pyramides" [The Secret of the Pyramids]).

There were exchanges of a "ruhani" nature between him and Michel Vâlsan, and not just letters, which are obviously contested by the current historicists who are rampant at the EHESS, allowing them to conceal temporarily their ignorance and metaphysical incompetence! Yet they had never met (unlike F. Schuon, who saw Guénon about fifteen times in Cairo- , but to what end? ...).

(\*)If he had had access to the Centre of the World, F.S. would certainly not have failed to display his knowledge... He plays at being the universal master (a universalism criticised by M. Vâlsan in his article in E.T. in 1951), which explains but does not justify the fact that not only has he never been to Tunis (even though he is, after all, a Shadhili), and even less to Mecca (which is the last thing one would expect from a chaykh murshid who is supposed to set an example), even though he has been to Morocco ten times, Venice twice, and the USA once (before his exile in 1980), etc. This may explain the enigmatic statement by Cheykh Mustafa:

"Sheikh Aissa is higher than me, but I am more central." And for us, there is no doubt that CH. Mustafa had a special connection with the Centre of the World, taking up the torch from René Guénon, but within the framework of a completely different mission, the broad outlines of which he outlines at the end of his 1951 article...

1As for the second date (1349/1930), the solution to the enigma is probably to be found in the article entitled "al-Tawhid" which Guénon, shortly after arriving in Cairo, wrote between March and June 1930 and which is very precisely dated 23 Shawwal 1348 (and located in Gebel Mousa) and 10 Muharram 1349 H./ i.e. Ashura Day (and published in July 1930 in "Voile d'Isis"), which is exactly 20 lunar years, but also 19 solar years and a few months, a figure that has a certain symbolic significance, as it marks the end of a period when Guénon was, in a way, in charge of France (and for 19 years, like a certain French heroine, whose motto was the purest tawhid in a Christian context: "God first served"), which is a matter of tasarruf, which took over after the Church of Rome and France was disqualified twice (the Templar affair and the condemnation of Joan of Arc), deprived of its "Power of the Keys". (a)

Returning to the article, we note very similar reflections between Guénon and Aguéli: "... countries where the sun, through its intense radiation, absorbs everything into itself, so to speak, making it disappear before it, just as multiplicity disappears before Unity..." Compare this with "

The East, where the marvellous and dazzling light consumes all details and transforms proportions and perspective, is the land of this synthesis characteristic of human vitality."

inner self called Religion..." (Gauffin, vol. II, p. 127 - unpublished translation). And finally, let us conclude with these words, which were undoubtedly inspired by a very powerful "Hâl" and a blessed vision (Qaddasa Llah sirra-hu!): "... the

desert, where the sun traces the divine Names in letters of fire in the sky" (Le V.d'I. - July 1930).

PS: There is no need to emphasise the connection between Sinai, Seyyidna Musa, the Burning Bush and Tawhid, or the article by Sheikh 'Abdel-Wahed inspired by this place.

(a) The third betrayal will be Vatican II, prepared by a pope taking the name of an anti-pope (which is extremely rare) and reigned like him for five years (1958–1963)! ("Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.")

2He even signed this secret role (in his articles on Freemasonry sent to the English magazine *The Speculative Mason*) with the trigram AWY (but only from 1935 onwards).

The interpretation of this signature as the initials of Abdel Wahid Yahya sparked a controversy between M. Gilis and his opponents, who pointed out that the "A" could not correspond to the Arabic letter "aïn", which is not as certain as they believe! ... Let's move on!

In fact, the explanation lies elsewhere and was not difficult to find: AWY is simply the only Arabic word formed from the three semi-consonants (i.e. sometimes vowels, sometimes vowel supports) alif-waw-ya, which is found in particular in Sura XCIII,6 with the meaning of refuge, asylum (hence the idea of protection), which, in our opinion, applies almost entirely to the person and function of Sheikh 'Abdel Wahid Yahya... Wa 'Llahu a'lam!

## APPENDIX 2:

### RENE GUENON'S CONNECTIONS

These are of several kinds:

- there are connections to pseudo-initiatory organisations such as the Martinist Order (1907) or the Gnostic Church (1909), about which Guénon had no illusions but which he wanted to investigate,
- there is his affiliation with authentic organisations such as Freemasonry in 1907 (as membership is not permitted before the age of majority), followed by his entry into operative Masonry at an unknown date. We can assume that this affiliation made Guénon the last operative Mason in

France, alas! To this may be added his initiation into the Compagnonnage as a Compagnon Printer (the only clue we have is that Guénon once signed a report under the name "Le Liseur")

His connection to the HB of L (Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor) can be traced back to around 1910, perhaps through F.-Ch. Barlet (note that the first three letters of this double first name correspond to "Frère de la Communauté Hermétique" [Brother of the Hermetic Community]).

At the same time, there were various connections to Islamic initiatory organisations (see "Appendix 1") and, possibly, in 1911, a connection to a Taoist master.

Despite Guénon's initiatory knowledge of Kabbalah, Hinduism and Christian esotericism, no respective affiliation can be inferred.

– There was his mysterious investiture within the OTR (Ordre du Temple Rénové) in 1908 and the special instruction he received from Sayyidunà Al Khidhr (wallāhu a'lam).

#### PROBLEMS POSED BY THE MULTIPLICITY AND HETEROGENEITY OF AFFILIATIONS

We have seen that Guénon had several different affiliations at the same time, or that he accumulated them in a very short period of time. Apparently, he did not mix traditional forms, but neither did he practise the exotericism corresponding to these affiliations. No doubt he was already R+C and, as such, above particular forms. Or, as Jean Reyor would later point out, he accumulated connections without seeing any prohibition or incompatibility in doing so, believing that it was better to "have several strings to one's bow," leaving later, like Reyor, to return to his roots or to favour a traditional form that suited him better (cf. letter from René Guénon to Galvao dated 12/11/1950: "... as for affiliation to several organisations, ... two safeguards are better than one.")

Now, given Guénon's exceptional status, did he not benefit from an extraordinary dispensation? Indeed, only beings who are delivered during their lifetime are (temporarily) exempt from legal obligations (rites and prayers); see the note on this subject–, now largely forgotten, by Michel Valsân in *Etudes Traditionnelles*. 1953 no. 307, p.131, note 3 in his translation of chapter 45 of the *Futūhāt*.

One might also think that the Afrād, by virtue of their birth status (cf. Michel Valsân: "The matrices of providence had formed his entity in a precise manner. " ET 1951) reach God directly without going through official bodies (Church, Zaouias, etc.). This exceptional status explains why Guénon did not immediately practise a particular religion. ("My Truth is of divine origin, obtained by revelation, impersonal, detached and without passion").

Wallāhu a'lam...

Jean Foucaud

The Swedish Muslim (...) – II. The Pioneer.

(by Jean Foucaud)

John G. Aguelii

in Islam, Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi el Maghribi 'Uqayli

II. The Forerunner

by Jean FOUCAUD

Towards Tradition No. 77

(Sept.-Oct. 19– Nov. 1999)

When we write that Agueli is a precursor, one might well ask of whom... Should the response that will startle "strictly observant" Guénonians, (1) we will assert, with supporting texts, that Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi is not only the precursor of Akbarian Studies (2)– which is in itself a more than honourable title—but also the pioneer of Traditional Studies before the term existed, and therefore even before René Guénon, who would become its master par excellence. (3)

Just as Sheikh Mustafa cannot be reduced to his role as "Murshid" (4), Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi cannot be confined to the Islamic framework alone (despite certain clumsy presentations of him in the December 1910 issue of *Gnose*: "He knows only Islam...", etc.) [See online: Project to explain the technical terms of the various traditional doctrines. ] He is not only an extraordinary linguist; he also has a knowledge of universal symbolism that prefigures that of Guénon, and he has mastered a number of data (and even techniques) of a

cosmological data on which Guénon would draw by reinserting them into his prodigious synthesis. universal metaphysics, as no one had done before (see below). Indeed, Aguéli did not merely "initiate" Guénon: he passed on to him technical knowledge that can be found in particular in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, *Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps*, *Aperçus sur l'Initiation* and *Initiation et Réalisation Spirituelle*, with discreet allusions to his own case and that of his Transmitter. The discerning reader will be able to find them. Moreover, if Aguéli had been merely a "simple intermediary brought in for René Guénon," as has been written, we would not accord him such importance! In Aguéli's case, one can even speak without exaggeration of Realisation at the level of the Lesser Mysteries (wa 'Llah a'lam), which is not so common in 20th-century Europe.

(1) Michel Vâlsan told us more than 25 years ago: "Being a Guénonian nowadays means nothing!" – In context, this meant that "Guénonians" who did not engage in a traditional initiatory path are for the most part condemned to paraphrase and parroting, when they are not simply "temperamental", as the editor of *Cahiers de l'Herne* kindly told us one day at his stand at the *Salon du Livre*, thereby stigmatising certain "temperamental" individuals. editor of *Cahiers de l'Herne*, at his stand at the *Salon du Livre*, thereby stigmatising certain "worldly "Guénonism", a game at which many pseudo-intellectuals excel, who have their "Guénonian period" when it is – or was – fashionable.

(2) Cheikh Mustafa is the undisputed, if not unquestionable, master of this movement for people of good faith (*homini bonae voluntatis*).

(3) Despite the importance of Agéli's work and role, we cannot attribute to him the infallibility that René Guénon is credited with in all matters metaphysical, initiatory, esoteric and traditional in general; the two works on initiation are unique in the world and are not found in any religion or tradition. These books are reminiscent of a Testament by Sheikh Abdel-Wahid Yahya; it should also be noted that the second volume is a posthumous work. On this subject, Sheikh Mustafa spoke of a Charter of the Tariqa (Shadhiliya).

(4) He has a doctrinal function that complements – and sometimes differs from – that of Guénon, which will one day need to be taken into account. We hope to develop this theme soon with new information, supplementing the point raised by Charles-André Gilis (see VLT No. 74). [Blog note: article entitled "The role of Michel Vâlsan", reprinted in the collection "Le Maître de l'Or– Aperçus complémentaires sur la tradition hermétique" (The Master of Gold: Hermeticism and the Hermetic Tradition: Additional insights into the Hermetic tradition) (published by Le Turban Noir).]

Aguéli was already, from a purely religious point of view, a pioneer in the 19th century: he was one of the very rare European converts with Étienne Dinet – al-Haj Nasr-ed-Din [1861–1929]; the officer Jules Gervais-Courtellemont, alias Abd-Allah ben al-Bachir al-Haj [1863–1931] and the original deputy for Doubs, Dr Philippe Grenier [1865–1944; cf. *L'Initiation*, February 1897, p.178], not forgetting the extravagant Isabelle Eberhardt [1877–1904]; all converted at around the same time (between 1890 and 1898), with the exception of an ancestor of Titus Burckhardt [1908–1984], Cheykh Ibrâhim, a pilgrim to Mecca in 1814... except for an ancestor of Titus Burckhardt [1908–1984], Cheykh Ibrâhim, a pilgrim to Mecca in 1814...

From that date onwards, conversions to Islam continued unabated and even accelerated. (5) Other Europeans, some well-known, others less so, converted for reasons that were in no way "esoteric". (6) They were generally Germans and Anglo-Saxons. In any case, they had no intellectual or initiatory descendants, unlike Aguéli, Guénon and Michel Vâlsan. (7) intellectual or initiatory descendants, unlike Aguéli, Guénon, and Michel Vâlsan. (7)

(5) All surveys on Muslims in France are very hesitant about the number of native French converts... What strange modesty! As for Buddhist converts, they are estimated to increase from 200,000 to 700,000 from one week to the next, without seeing the illogicality and impossibility of such a figure: Europeans have few children and, to our knowledge, Buddhist monks do not reproduce particularly vigorously!

(6) See the case of the co-director of Il-Convito, Enrico Insabato, who pretended to be a Muslim in order to better spy on and infiltrate the Senussi tribes. (See *L'Islam et la Politique des Alliés*, Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1920, p. 194, where he claims to be Catholic, much to the dismay of his late collaborator Aguéli, who must be turning in his grave.

!). Aguéli, suspecting the betrayal of this "double agent", would never forgive him (see Gauffin, vol. II, pp. 146, 148, 155, etc.).

(7) Aguéli (op. cit., vol. II, p. 134) cites the two Arabists Van den Berg and Nallino (?) as secret practitioners of Islam.

The pioneer, from the point of view of authorised translations, in an authentic traditional spirit and under the supervision of a Master, is undoubtedly Sheikh Abdul Hadi. Indeed, what credibility can be accorded to laymen, generally neither Muslims nor initiates, such as Nicholson, Nyberg, Blochet, Massignon and tutti quanti? In the name of what should we recognise the authority of academic researchers, generally imbued with "Western" prejudice (more out of spite and "anti-Eastern" resentment than for any other reason), incapable of admitting that there is a perspective that escapes them because it is neither philosophical, literary nor bookish; in a word: people who are not mandated by any authority . (8)

(8) Hence the difficulties encountered by Georges Vallin in dealing with "Metaphysics", due to his failure to resort to the two key concepts of "Tradition" and "Initiation", which are excluded from academic axioms (*La Perspective métaphysique*, Dervy, 1977).

What do Western minds (and sometimes disoriented ones, such as Pastor Tartar), such as Louis Gardet, Caspar, Arnaldez, etc., understand about Islam (it is not enough to know Arabic), who too often serve as weapons against Tradition in general (including their own tradition–, Christianity) and Islam in particular?



–What do you think of the umpteenth translation of the Koran by Jacques Berque, whose concerns have always been strictly sociological and exoteric for over 50 years!– What can a man who has never understood a thing about metaphysics or initiation possibly grasp of the hidden meaning of the Scriptures (whether Islamic, Christian, or other)? Do you still believe that it is enough to read French to understand Guénon or to read Arabic to understand the Koran? It is time to put an end to all these claims.

Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi's translations may not be flawless in terms of vocabulary (see VLT No. 72, p. 52, n.36), but at least his inspiration (ilham), orientation (tawajjuh) and intention (niyya) are authentically traditional. Therefore, we do not understand Michel Chodkiewicz's (who is otherwise very knowledgeable about Ibn Arabi) disdain and unfair criticism of Aguelhi's translation of the Treatise on Unity and the Gift (see review in "Connaissance des Religions"–, 1988, June-September issue, vol. iv, pp. 30-40), especially since he had understood certain aspects of Aguel's work very well (as evidenced by note 9, p. 31 -C of the R-), which he must have forgotten later! (8b) Will he have the simplicity of accepting our point of view, namely that his translation not only does not seem better to us, but that it lacks the initiatory and, let us say, Akbarian "breath" that comes through in the text restored in French by Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi? One really gets the impression that Michel Chodkiewicz has no idea who he is dealing with, despite his claims to the contrary (he apparently had the passages in Gauffin's book concerning Aguéli's stay in the East translated... Let us hope that the publication of our translation will shed some light on it, in sha' Allah).

We must not forget that a pioneer is a man alone; he has all the more merit and right to our indulgence. It is easy nowadays, after the masterful works of Guénon and Michel Vâlsan, to criticise retroactively. It is moreover thanks to the works (and sometimes errors) of Aguéli that the two Masters mentioned above were able to set out the authorised, even definitive, traditional point of view on certain questions relating to Tasawwuf.

While we are on the subject, we would add this: what is the point of making concessions to the "specialists" at the University in order to gain their favour and recognition, when we know how theses inspired by Guénon or Valsan are rejected in Paris, the city of Liberty. (9) On the contrary, academics should have the honesty and humility to enrol in the School of Eastern Masters. We can see clearly enough what this kind of "appropriation" (= of the East by the University) gave rise to people such as Eliade, about whom Cioran said with his usual ruthless lucidity: "No matter how skilfully he describes and comments on [sacred texts], he cannot breathe life into them; he has drained them of all their sap, compared them with one another, worn them down against one another, to their great detriment; and what remains are bloodless symbols, which the believer has only

do so, if at this stage of scholarship, disillusionment and irony there can [still] be anyone who truly believes [in it]. We are all, Eliade foremost among us, former believers; we are all religious spirits without religion. (Exercices d'Admiration, Gallimard 1986, p. 131) Did Cioran realise that, in doing so, he was signing his own death warrant? For him, as for Eliade, whom he dismantles as skilfully as he does cruelly, we would say that there are forms of intelligence that are corrosive rather than edifying: they are illustrated with talent, if not with happiness, in The University, a secular stronghold of Humanism since the 16th century (a century shamelessly referred to by the Spanish as the "golden age", as if the eight centuries of Arab-Muslim civilisation had been nothing but obscurantism!).

(9) Let us remember that the French university once disgraced itself by rejecting René Guénon's thesis (Introduction Générale à l'Étude des Doctrines Hindoues) through the veto of Dean Sébastien Brunot. On the other hand, in the present day, it does happen that a thesis breaks through the wall of academic prejudice, such as that of Patrick Geary (Hermès trahi), admittedly defended in Dijon, far from the intrigues of the Parisian microcosm. Apart from this honourable exception, does anti-intellectual terrorism not still reign supreme in the City of Light, the "Beacon of Humanity"?

N.B. Isn't it strange that the death of a world-renowned Hindu musicologist– , Alain Daniélou [1907-1994], went virtually unnoticed by academic circles in our country?

\* In 1998, we did not have access to the criticism of Daniélou's colleagues and Hindu scholars. But he taught us a great deal about India, and his autobiography c o n t a i n s some excellent observations on the modern world, unfortunately marred by some stupid remarks about René Guénon.

Thus, most university theses– approved because they conform to the exclusive criteria in use– have the "gift" of burying and fossilising living knowledge in this kind of archaeological museum called the heritage of humanity. Meanwhile, true knowledge and its transmission (as defined by the word "Tradition" without its original meaning, which only Guénon, in the 20th century, was able to restore) are perpetuated, sheltered from laboratories and other sterilisers of traditional thought , in places fortunately inaccessible to the curiosity of the uninitiated.

Can we seriously list the translators of Ibn Arabi from the 19th to the 20th century (as in the introduction to The Seal of the Saints, Gallimard 1986), placing them on the same level as Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi and Sheikh Mustafa? What an unfortunate concession to the modern mentality! When one reads the six long pages written in the appendix to his book at the request of Axel Gauffin by the Swedish Arabist Nyberg, one is torn between hilarity and indignation: does he not attribute to Sheikh al-Akbar (i.e. "the

greatest of the Masters") belief in "the grossest superstitions" (sic!) (10) Once again, we sense a sneaky attempt to downplay the importance of the author (Ibn Arabi), distort the Truth, reduce Esotericism to mysticism (it's so much easier!), and even Christianise Tasawwuf (as Asin Palacios, Massignon, etc. have already attempted). One clearly gets the impression that Westerners (or worse still, Westernised Easterners, who have twice the means to impose their views) are incapable of admitting the obvious (which is the very definition of the "sin against the Spirit" which, it is said, will not be forgiven neither in this world nor in the next). So let us no longer be quoted by the luminaries who hold these chairs of obscurantism that universities sometimes are! This argument from authority has had its day! For we naively persist in believing that a truth (to be universal) cannot be conveyed by a vision scientific view of things that is exclusively secular. As we said above, the university is incapable of integrating the initiatory point of view: its field is too reductive because it is exclusively mental and "mentalistic". (11)

(10) We plan to publish this addendum in a future issue of *Vers la Tradition*.

(11) Not wishing to be unfair or accused of gratuitous mockery (but does the University always take such care?), we readily acknowledge two outstanding qualities of academic research:

- 1) seriousness in documentation and referencing (as René Guénon said, more or less: they spare us this tedious work, which we then place in a traditional perspective).
- 2) rigour and method in presentation, qualities that are often lacking, alas, in Easterners, whose style is too "flowery" and whose arguments are too disordered, even anarchic!

Aguéli, a PRECURSOR? On this point, we should point out that Aguéli's writings (letters, articles, translations, etc.) are pretty much incomprehensible if you haven't read and understood René Guénon... and Michel Vâlsan, who came after him! On the other hand, we find many themes – even in the technical lexicon itself – in Guénon's work that can only have come from Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi. It is to this continuity that we refer (see VLT No. 72) and, as this is not a figment of the imagination, we need only take a few referenced examples that can be easily verified by any reader.

1\* Themes:

For example, "the manipulation of mental currents," a technique alluded to by René Guénon in *Orient et Occident* (Vega, 1964 edition, Part 2, Chapter 3, p. 184).

Referring to Axel Gauffin, we find a detailed programme which, given its length, we are obliged to include in an appendix to this article. This remarkable document (unfortunately unknown until now) demonstrates Aguéli's precise knowledge in this field: nearly 20 years later, in Cairo, Nyberg noted the continuing influence of the traditional ideas put forward by Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi and the Il-Convito team.

## 2° The Akbarian Studies:

As we already know, these are translations, notes and commentaries (in Arabic, Italian and French), which we will discuss later in another section of our introduction to Aguéli ("The reader, the linguist, the writer, the translator").

## 3° The technical lexicon:

Created by Aguéli, it was taken up (and sometimes improved upon) by René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan. A striking example concerns the explanation of an enigmatic concept unknown to them, used for the first time by Ibn Arabi (and therefore undoubtedly coined by him), namely the term "compound": "fahwāniya." Cheykh Mustafa points this out in a note in *Études Traditionnelles* (March–April 1961, p. 89), a text reprinted in the posthumous collection *Le Livre de l'Extinction dans la Contemplation*, where the editor fails to mention that Cheikh Mustafa also explained this in his translation of the *Prayer on the Prophet*, opportunely published on the occasion of his death (*Études Traditionnelles*, November–December 1974, p. 242).

However, more than 50 years earlier, Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi (Il-Convito, 1907, p.58), in a study of Sufi vocabulary following his translation of *Progredire verso il Re dei Re* (by Qasam ben Silah-ed-Din al Khani; [1028-1109 AH/1619-1697]), noted this term: "fahwāniyah" – which he writes "fa-hû- wāniyah" for certain reasons related to the process known as "nirukta"– , for which he gives a precise definition that seems satisfactory to us, found almost word for word in Cheykh Mustafa ( who may have been familiar with it), in the journal *Études Traditionnelles* cited above, namely: "It is a word that God addresses to man in spiritual combat in the world of primordial images."

That is to say: "It is a word that Allah addresses to man during his spiritual struggle in the world of the Primordial Models." Let us compare this with the definition given by Sheikh Mustafa (*Traditional Studies*, 1974, p. 245): "Fahwāniyah in the strict sense, as used by Muhyi-d-Din Ibn Arabi in the *Futūḥat*, refers to the divine word addressed directly [to man] in the worlds of Models ('Alamu-l-mithâl)" (12). [Correction published in VLT No. 79: As an honourable reader has rightly pointed out, there is a slip of the pen (not at all calamitous) concerning fahwāniya: Aguéli's definitions – like those of Michel Vâlsan – are, of course, translated from Ibn 'Arabi's text. This goes without saying, but it is better to say it anyway.]

(12) The term in brackets has been added by us, as it appears to be missing from the text of *Études Traditionnelles* No. 446.

This demonstrates Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi's profound knowledge of Ibn Arabi's works and his lexicon, and we must concede, at least on this point (but there are many others), his role as a precursor of Akbarian exegesis.

4\* Let us continue with the technical lexicon, this time in English, taken up by René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan, notably the remarkable formula of "Supreme Identity" (which, incidentally, we understand why it was questioned in the work *Les 7 Étendards du Califat*, chap. 3–, but another occasion would be needed to address this delicate point).

Aguéli, in the pages dedicated to Mercury (*La Gnose*, J.F. 1911), uses this term for the first time ("the Supreme Identity / Wahdatu-l-Wujud = the Identity of Existence"), which is found again in three repeated at least once, respectively in the pages dedicated to the Sun and in the long article "Universality in Islam," where he writes: "Muslims say: Et-Tawhidu wâhidun, which means... the Doctrine of Supreme Identity."

This concept will be constantly repeated and in a way "consecrated" by René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan. [ Correction published in VLT No. 79: "To prevent any confusion, old or new, we firmly reiterate that when Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi spoke of Supreme Identity, he always had in mind—to the exclusion of any other Arabic term—the concepts of tahwid/wahdatu-l-wujud, and in the Islamic context alone. Finally, we challenge anyone to find in 'Abdu-l-Hedi a reference where he would use the term ittihad (= Yoga= Union) to refer to the Supreme Identity (or conversely, translates ittihad as Supreme Identity, a confusion already denounced by Ibn 'Arabi). In any case, even if this were the case, it would only confuse those who have not fully assimilated the teachings of Michel Vâlsan and René Guénon." ]

That it was created for the French language by a Swede who had just spent seven years in Egypt writing and Translating from Arabic and Italian is quite unusual. However, Sheikh Mustafa, without using the term "precursor" that we claim for Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi, he clearly suggests the idea when writing about the work undertaken in the journal *Al-Nadi=Il-Convito* and the Akbariya Society (naming Sheikh Elish el-Kebir and Abdul-Hedi):

"Readers of René Guénon will easily recognise certain fundamental theses of his work, which will appear [...] as the development of a providential idea"; and further on he adds: "The traditional idea as we know it today in the West following the work of René Guénon thus has a historically certain Islamic and Akbarian origin" (13) (*Études Traditionnelles*, January-February 1953, "L'Islam et la Fonction de René Guénon," pp. 32-33.

(13) The italics are ours.

5° In his translation of the epistle entitled *Le Cadeau* (La Gnose, January-February 1911, p. 21, n. 5), Aguéli draws up a table of correspondences between metaphysical concepts, for which he creates key words in French, as follows:

Exaltation / Ampleur

Height / Width... etc., which Sheikh Mustafa reproduced, without changing a thing, in his article on the "Islamic References in the Symbolism of the Cross [by René Guénon]", adding that these key concepts correspond to the Arabic terms "tûl (length)" and "ʿard (width)", "which suggests that Abdu-l-Hedi himself had in mind the Arabic technical terms we are now discussing." This belated tribute to Aguéli confirms the title of "precursor" that we use to describe him. We say "belated" because René Guénon, in his *Symbolism of the Cross*, had also used the terms "Ampleur" and "Exaltation", but without citing their "inventor".

6° We could add to support our thesis the terms "Dominical Mysteries" (*asrâr rabbâniya*), to be distinguished from the term "Seigniorial" (*rubûbiya*)... etc., and in another vein, the foundation of a "purely intellectual organisation", foreshadowing René Guénon's "intellectual understanding between peoples" in 1925/26; the imminent project to build a mosque in Paris... etc., etc.

Finally, a point that we will deal with separately, there is much to be said about the mysterious lineage from Dante to René Guénon via Aguéli, a pioneer in two respects...

Jean FOUCAUD

(to be continued)

The Swedish Muslim, Cheykh 'Abdu-l-Hedi al-Maghribi 'Uqayli – Presentation and unpublished appendices

John G. Aguelii

in Islam, Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi el Maghribi 'Uqayli

## PRESENTATION

[See also: Jean Foucaud – COMMEMORATION OF THE DEATH OF AGUELI.]

A curious silence, this total silence – and for over 40 years! (1) – on the case of John-Gustav Agelii (2)... Could it be overshadowing certain current leading figures of Islamic esotericism in France and Italy, who are otherwise so prolific in their writings and translations? It would seem that everyone wants to trivialise, minimise or even discredit the importance of the role of Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi al-Maghribi.

'Uqayli. And let no one claim that there is a lack of references or information about him: Michel Vâlsan himself spoke of him in glowing and unequivocal terms (3). He even had (an unfortunately partial and flawed) translation made of excerpts from Axel Gauffin's monumental and irreplaceable work (4). The few references to Sheikh Abdul Hadi in the book are limited to a few brief mentions in the introduction and a few references to his writings in the bibliography.

unfortunately partial and flawed) of excerpts from Axel Gauffin's monumental and irreplaceable work (4). The few references to Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi, in France at least, are insufficient or inaccurate, when they are not completely disingenuous (5).

The purpose of this introduction is to present and rehabilitate a providential man, without whom one might wonder whether there would currently be any Tasawwuf worthy of the name in Europe. Some have been shocked by an apparent lack of "virtue" and "discernment". Easy to say! Beings such as Abdu-l-Hedi, and eminently René Guénon, made it possible to avoid all pitfalls. They cleared and "marked out" the Way until the supreme Magisterium arrived in the person of Sheikh Mustafa Abdel-Aziz. Those who criticise them should first acknowledge what they owe them or not speak of them at all. This is why we believe we are filling a void and, why not, righting an injustice by publishing this first chapter on the man who was, in his time, the pioneer of Akbarian studies in the West.



(1) With the exception of the introduction to Aguel's posthumous writings, which is so poorly printed that it borders on deliberate disrespect and carelessness. It is nothing but a web of deliberately distilled errors.

(2) Born in Sweden in 1869, died in Barcelona in 1917; painter, linguist, writer and translator of Sufi texts. N.B. His official name is indeed "Aguélii".

(3) See posthumous work, *L'Islam et la Fonction* by René Guénon, Paris, 1984, (multiple references).

(4) Ivan Aguéli, *Människan, Mystikern, Malaren*, 2 volumes, Stockholm, 1940–41.

(5) Almost all the information provided by Chacornac–, in a book on René Guénon that is otherwise useful, is erroneous or tendentious; as for the other authors, we prefer not to cite them out of intellectual charity and to avoid any sterile polemics!

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It is not known exactly when John-Gustav Aguelii (whose artistic name was Ivan Aguéli) converted to Islam: Chacornac, following Axel Gauffin, leans towards the second half of 1897 (6). His most recent biographer, Ms Viveca Wessel (7), pushes this date back to early 1898. We believe that these dates could easily be brought forward by several years: it all depends on whether one relies solely on "historical" data or on other references of a more "internal" nature. What we mean here (and examples are not rare) is that one can very well be a Muslim at heart long before pronouncing the "shahada", because the environment (especially in Europe)

prevents or delays the effective practice of Islam, which, especially in our time and given the environment in which he lived, was eminently the case with Aguéli, not to mention the very particular case of René Guénon, all things considered. One can also pronounce the Shahada without letting anything show

. The real question is rather: who brought Aguéli to Islam?

And if one demands proof or documents, one need only refer first to Aguéli's exceptionally early interest in Islam, the Arab world and the Qur'an (8), and especially to a

certain letter from 1907. In fact, as early as 1893, Ivan Aguéli had a vision of Sheikh al–

Akbar, which leaves no room for doubt, and to which we will return at greater length. At the same time (1893), he had a revelation of the Science of Letters in a "linguistic" form, which is an

aspect of what is symbolically called the "Gift of Tongues" (9) and, apart from René Guénon, we know of no European in the 20th century who has benefited from such an indisputable and prodigious gift.

(10). On this subject, further discussion in the form of an appendix (11) would be useful, since nothing precise has ever been said about the "Gift of Tongues" (except for a short chapter by René Guénon in *Aperçus sur l'initiation*).

: Aguéli himself, after announcing a study in La Gnose, ultimately refrained from doing so (12)  
: this silence deserves reflection... and caution (13). Thus, long before his "official" practice of Islam in India and then in Egypt, it seems as if Aguéli was preparing himself in secret for this new stage in his spiritual life (14) and the role he was to play for some fifteen years as an intermediary between the Arab East and Europe. If we count the time spent in preparation, we can say that Aguéli devoted 20 years of his short life (15) to what must be called his "traditional mission traditional mission" both as an "Initiate" and as a "Precursor", the latter point requiring arguments that by their very nature escape secular history (see below).

(6) Gauffin writes: "Despite all my research, I have never been able to establish when and under what circumstances this happened." (Ivan Aguéli, *Människan, Mystikern, Malaren*, II, p.40).

(7) Viveca Wessel, *Ivan Aguéli – porträtt av en rymd*, Stockholm, June 1988, p. 20.

(8) From November 1891 to July 1892, he was a regular visitor to the Oriental and Islamic section of the Royal Library in Stockholm (Gauffin, op. cit. I, pp. 72–73).

(9) See letter to Arthur Bianchini (Gauffin, op. cit. I, pp. 91–94).

(10) That is, knowledge of the main traditional doctrines and understanding of their transcendent unity, directly from the original text. As for linguistic "performance", Aguéli was able to read more than 20 languages, half of which were Eastern languages. We are, of course, excluding the case of "Cheikh Murshid", which is not relevant here.

(11) To be included at the end of this study.

(12) La Gnose, December 1910, where Aguéli wrote his very first article.

(13) See Ibn Arabi's warning (*Fut. I*, chap. 26, p. 191).

(14) From May 1894, while in prison, he attempted to abstain from alcohol.

(15) From 1893 to 1913. Remember that he died at the age of 48.

Thus, in 1899, despite hostility from his peers (including obstacles raised by Marie Huot), he made contact with the most eminent and mysterious Sufi organisation in India, one that no Westerner had ever heard of before: the Akbariya tariqa (16). He did not do this as an individual: Ivan Aguéli was not a man to engage in "tourism" for pleasure in India; he accomplished his mission at the risk of his life (17) and his health, returning with malaria and severe hearing loss.

The question that arises is obviously the following: with what mandate and on whose orders did he carry out this mission and make these contacts? At that time, it does not appear that he had already met Cheikh Elish el-Kebir. In any case, in a very short time, he met with eminent figures in the Indian esoteric world, about whom he is extremely discreet (18). When we consider the importance in his initiatory life of the person and work of Sheikh al-Akbar, we can nevertheless gain some insight into the invisible forces that guided him in his endeavour and why, despite all the hazards of such an expedition at that time, and with practically no money, he succeeded, benefiting from an astonishing immunity (as he would later during his seven years in Egypt). To understand the significance of this, one must refer to the few discreet allusions made by Michel Vâlsan, without whom no one would have grasped the providential aspect of the function and work of Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi (19). Aguelhi's conversion to Islam was anything but a passing fad. "Orientalist" and "exotic". We know from direct witnesses that he would sometimes say the canonical prayer in his own time and in the street, as Arabs commonly do, even in front of sceptical Europeans, as reported by Mr Georges Rémond, controller of Fine Arts in Cairo (20). Islamic life having become "second nature" to him, he wrote in a letter from Colombo: "Life in a non-Muslim country is HELL." (June 1899).

From the moment he arrived in Cairo, especially from 1902 onwards, he was perfectly acclimatised to the way of life. traditional, thinking and writing in Arabic, dressed like an Arab, living like them and enjoying this way of life. If this adaptation was so easy and natural, it is because, like certain predestined beings predestined individuals, Aguéli was born a stranger to his own family, his homeland and the pseudo- or anti-traditional European mentality (21). This explains his so-called "eccentricities", his rebellion against his family and his environment, his apparently "anarchist" reactions (22), his inability to fit into the school system and the rejection of the prevailing religiosity (Protestantism), for which he was not suited and where he felt stifled (23). The apparent oddities of his behaviour cannot be easily explained by certain modern tendencies that reduce the spiritual to the psychological or see only psychology where there is metaphysics and tradition.

(16) In a letter dated 22 March 1899, he wrote of the Malays of Colombo: "Almost all of them here are Sufis. Among them, there are some who are remarkably intelligent."

(17) In a letter to Marie Huot, he wrote: "My little revolver saved my life... but you'll have to get me a bigger one!" (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 70).

(18) To keep his trip a secret, he even led his friends to believe that he was going all the way to Lhasa (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 41), and to calm Marie Huot, who was jealous of his absence, he pretended to be very interested in Buddhism, which he would later denounce in the harshest terms! (ibid., pp. 56, 62, etc.).

(19) *Études Traditionnelles*, 1953. – reprinted in *L'Islam et la Fonction* de René Guénon. Éd. de l'Œuvre, Paris, 184, pp. 37–38.

(20) Mr Rémond and his friends were unable to suppress a sudden urge to laugh: Abdu-l-Hedi had begun to pray at length in front of them, in the open air, apologising because "it was prayer time" (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 139).

(21) In one of his many fascinating letters from prison to his friend Verner von Hausen, he shows that he had already chosen between the "Aryan" world and the "Semitic" world. For example: "They are Muslims and monotheism, which heal all impurities of blood and race: it purifies everything through faith and thus constitutes a receptor of the highest spiritual energy." (Gauffin, op. cit. I, p. 166).

(22) Despite his associations in this milieu, he never became a militant anarchist. See his right of response to the newspaper *La Libre Parole*, which called him an "anarchist" and an "agitator". (Gauffin, op. cit. II, pp. 115-116).

(23) See his "Notes on Islam" in *L'Initiation*, August 1902: "[Islam] places the homeland in the heart of man and makes him feel at home everywhere." He even exclaimed one day: "My homeland is the universe!" (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 96).\*

\* In a letter dated May 1894, he explained his fondness for the East and for the primitive by "hatred of [his] homeland, [his] native language, [his] education..." (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 96).

As for his personal status within Islam, or more precisely within Sufism, we can already note his official title as a traditional writer working under the guidance of a Sheikh of the stature of 'Abder-Rahman Elish el-Kebir, "Sheikh 'Abdu-l-Hedi, khâdim al-Awliya" (24). To this name 'Abdu-l-Hedi, he added that of 'al-Maghribi', which was that of his master Elish el-Kebir, and also that of 'Uqayli', the name of a family of Egyptian scholars well known in the country. This title also appears on his personal seal. (25)

(24) This is his name as author, translator and proofreader, as it appears on the cover of the Arabic reissue of *Usûl al-Malâmatiya* (Cairo, 1907). See Viveca Wessal, op. cit., p. 81.\*

\* As for the title *Khâdim*, we recall the Islamic adage: "*Khâdim el-Qawm, sayyidu-hum*". On the "*Khâdim*", see "*Les Haleines de la familiarité*", *Études Traditionnelles*, 1955, p.176.

(25) Reproduction on p. 93, and in colour on the cover of Viveca Wessel, Ivan Aguéli, *porträtt av en rymd*.

It was already unusual at the end of the 19th century to see a European, a Swede at that, integrate so authentically into a traditional Arab society and into the very closed circles of the Shadhili brotherhoods. But there is more. In the letter of 29 July 1907 that we have already mentioned, in which he refers to his vision 14 years earlier of Sheikh al-Akbar, Aguéli reveals that Sheikh Elish-el-Kebir, even before he knew who he was, kept calling him "Muhyi-d-Din", which is the very title of Ibn Arabi ( "Reviver of Religion"), (26) and his name. Now, we know that exceptional beings who have a deceased or invisible master belong to the privileged category of the "Uwaysy". (27)

This was the case with Aguel, or rather "Cheykh 'Abdu-l-Hedi al-Maghribi, 'Uqayli, Khâdim al-Awliya". With Abdu-l-Hedi, it is in fact a whole Akbarian lineage that originated in Europe and continued with Cheykh Abd-el-Wahed Yahya (René Guénon) and Cheykh Mustafâ 'Abdel-Aziz (Michel Vâlsan), without excluding other possible successors in the Western world. The function and work of these successive personalities cannot be explained without reference to Seyyiduna Ibn Arabi, Cheykh al-Akbar and his ever-present Baraka (Rûhâniya). But we must acknowledge that, in the European world at least, the starting point was Ivan Aguéli, [Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi], himself a link in a chain of "revival" whose eminent and distant precursor, for the Arab world, was none other than Emir Abd-l-Qadir al-Jazâ'iri (28). One may wonder whether Abdu-l-Hedi was aware of his role and his "mission". The answer can be found in a letter to his mother, written in the summer of 1904: "If everything continues to go well, I can look forward to a glorious future and announce a path that no one has travelled before me." (29)

It was also on Abdu-l-Hedi's initiative that a study society called "Al-Akbariya" was formed in Paris on 26 Jumada II of the Hijri year 1329, i.e. on the night of Thursday to Friday 23 June 1911, of which René Guénon was obviously a member. (30) This society, which is not a "Tariqa", is nevertheless not without analogical connections to the "Tariqa Akbariya" with which he had come into contact in India (October-November 1899). (31)

(26) This title also appears in the full name of Emir Abd el-Qader.

(27) A linguistic remark is in order here: the title Uways, which is attributed to a Sufi of the same name, is in fact the grammatical diminutive of the word "aws," which means "lynx." name, is in fact the grammatical diminutive of the word "aws", which means "lynx" and, like "wolf", symbolises the "seer" or the Hindu "rishi" in most European languages. Furthermore, the Arabic "aws" is not without prophetic or even etymological connection with the Greek root "oψ (sight, vision). Returning to the case of Aguel, we recall the pre-eminence he accorded to vision over hearing, and not only as a painter. For him, there could be no contradiction between intuitive vision and its aesthetic application.

(28) See Charles-André Gilis, *Introduction à l'Enseignement et au mystère de René Guénon*, p. 29.

(29) Gauffin, op. cit. II, pp. 133 and 160-161.

This has an earlier "Shadhili" resonance in the words of Sidi Belhassen before his death: "By Allah, I have brought to this path what no one has brought before."

(30) See letter from Abdu-l-Hedi to an unknown recipient, written in Arabic in September 1911.

(Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 189)

(31) Despite repeated assertions by Aguelhi, René Guénon, and Michel Valsan, some have believed that they could deny the existence of an Akbariya Tariqa as such. Perhaps it is just a quarrel over words? A beginning of an explanation might perhaps be found in what Aguelhi says about a certain Tariqa "malâmatiya" in a translation of the text by 'Abu Abder-Rahman al-Sulâmi (La Gnose, 1911); see also the unpublished excerpt from a letter by René Guénon, quoted by the editor of Arche Milano in the posthumous collection: *Écrits sur La Gnose*, 1988, p. XXIII.

Returning to Cheikh al-Akbar, the vision that Abdu-l-Hedi (or rather Ivan Aguéli at that time) had of him was decisive and sheds some light on the short enigmatic passage that the latter devotes to the "Two Initiatic Chains", inserted without transition– and apparently without reason– in his article in *La Gnose*: "Sahaïf Ataridiya". (32) He wrote: "There is always a master, but he may be absent, unknown, or even deceased for several centuries" (33). The importance of this text did not escape René Guénon, who alluded to it in his chapter "À propos du rattachement initiatique" with an additional note (34). In any case, Abdu-l-Hedi later benefited from a regular association with an Egyptian Sheikh who ratified and consecrated, in a manner of speaking, the Akbarian enlightenment of his exceptional disciple (35).

We also know that Sheikh Elish was very complimentary about his disciple's work (36), and from Chacornac we learn that Abdu-l-Hedi became moqqadem of his Sheikh, with permission to transmit initiation, which, while not informing us about his spiritual status, shows the dignity of his position, since he was in a sense responsible for establishing Sufism in Europe, and what is more, in its Akbarian form.

In initiation, three elements come into play: the transmitter, the Baraka, and the beneficiary of the ; however, this is not just any connection, since the beneficiary is René Guénon himself; moreover, the Baraka is specifically Akbarian, conveyed in particular by the Shadhili Tariqa (37); and, if the transmitter is Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi, this should somewhat temper the hypocritical zeal of Aguel's detractors, who are quick to highlight his eccentricities, his career as a painter, his political activities and his secret agent manoeuvres.

However, as René Guénon pointed out in a private note, it is not insignificant to be associated with one person or another (38). If Abdu-l-Hedi had been unworthy of this position, he would not have received it from Cheykh Elish el-Kebir. On the other hand, René Guénon's case being exceptional, it is quite logical that he should have had an exceptional transmitter in the person of Sheikh Abdul-Hedi. When one considers the eminent position of Sheikh Abdel-Wahed Yahya in the Islamic esoteric hierarchy thereafter, and his undoubted qualities of the Rosicrucians, we can gauge the importance of the Sufi contribution transmitted by Abdu-l-Hedi and immediately realised by its beneficiary. We also know from Abdu-l-Hedi that "[the Ahrad] attain initiation (and operate through it) in a particular way (that is, each of them has a special initiation formula special formula of Initiation)" (39). To conclude this brief overview of the relationship between Ivan Aguéli and René Guénon, we can confirm the date of the latter's affiliation, given once by Michel Vâlsan, to namely 1911, and not 1912 as many authors believe, following Chacornac (40).

(32) In literary Arabic: "Sahâ'if 'utâridiya".

(33) A clear reference to the case of the Uwasy.

(34) Respectively pp. 55 and 271 of the posthumous work: *Initiation et Réalisation Spirituelle*, Paris, 1971.

(35) It should be noted that in 1893, the year of his "vision", he was not yet officially a Muslim, that he did not visit Egypt for the first time until September 1894, and that nothing is known about his Islam before 1897-98. The unknown, absent and deceased master referred to by Aguéli can only be Sheikh al-Akbar.

(36) See also Michel Vâlsan's unpublished handwritten note on the Treatise on Oneness, quoted appropriately by Viveca Wessel: "Abdu-l-Hedi's translation is subtle, intelligent and rich, but uneven. His language is often ingenious, but technically not always adequate; it even reflects somewhat the occult atmosphere of the milieu to which La Gnose was addressed, but Abdu-l- With this work, Hedi has rendered an invaluable service to those who have taken a closer interest in Islamic metaphysics and esotericism; (op. cit., p. 184).

(37) See Michel Chodkiewicz, *Introduction aux Écrits Spirituels de l'Émir Abdel-Qadir*, p.36.

(38) In a letter, he dissuaded certain correspondents from becoming affiliated with Probst-Biraben.

(39) "The Categories of Initiation," *La Gnose*, December 1911. See reference in *Initiation and Spiritual Realisation*, p. 164.

(40) Aguéli stayed in France from October 1910 to June 1911, then left France until May 1912. It was during this first period, and therefore before the founding of the Akbariya Society,

, that René Guénon became affiliated with the group. Based on the limited chronological data we have been able to gather on Aguéli, there is strong evidence that this affiliation took place in early 1911, which corresponds to the Islamic year 1329, month of Muharram (1st month of the year)\*.

\* Probably the year René Guénon became involved with Taoism (February 1911).

Also noteworthy is the age of Aguéli when he connected René Guénon, namely 42 years old.

Returning to the spiritual status of Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi, some have wondered whether he was a "malâmati" based on the confusing (to say the least) external aspects of his public life. Without wishing to definitively determine the case of Aguel, whose complexity we are only beginning to discover, We would say that this is a misunderstanding, even a misinterpretation: the true Malamati is not someone who engages in acts that are reprehensible from an orthodox point of view, but rather someone who is blamed, criticised and persecuted for his unwavering integrity in the exercise of his duties, whose authenticity is perceived as a challenge by the narrow-minded and decadent exoteric milieu.

In any case, Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi showed admirable contempt for danger and courage. Indomitable through all the vicissitudes and despite all the obstacles put in his way by his enemies, among whom he sometimes counted Marie Huot (41). Forced to leave Egypt in 1909, he wrote: "I no longer need my freedom. I am free everywhere, in any situation, under any constraint..." (42)

Unfortunately, the last years of his life gave rise to fears that this state of serenity was coming to an end: in Carefully rereading the letters and documents from 1913 to 1917 until his tragic end, one is gradually overcome by a growing unease. It is as if, once his mission in Egypt ( and presumably in Europe, around 1912) was complete, he made a fatal mistake by returning to paint in Egypt, where he no longer seemed to enjoy the extraordinary immunity he had enjoyed between 1902 and 1909. Misfortune piles up: he is practically starving to death, financially insolvent, abandoned by all; he was expelled by the British (he had thrown himself into the lion's den!) and ended up being crushed by a train in Barcelona (43).

(41) This charming individual would one day confess to him that she had "intended to poison her friend with 'mascarine des champignons', which leaves no trace, and that she would have done so without scruples or remorse" (Gauffin, op. cit. II, pp. 13-14).



(42) Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 165; and letter of September 1911, p. 188 et seq. (written in Arabic). Reading this passage from Aguel's letter, I am reminded of a few lines he translated from the Malâmatis : "Their outer life is completely exposed, while the subtleties of their inner life are rigorously concealed;" in *The Treatise on Unity*, Éd. de l'Échelle (= Éd. Orientales), 1977, p.72.

(43) Can we go so far as to talk about a loss of Baraka? In any case, there is a striking contrast between the years when everything seemed to be going well for him in Cairo and Paris, and those when, having accomplished his "Islamic" mission, he devoted himself exclusively to painting. (Perhaps we could refer to this as "Takhfif al-dhunûb".) (a)

(a) sacrificial alleviation of sins committed.

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It is clear that Agüeli's case is complex, and one controversial issue is that of his teachers. Apart from the Invisible Master, i.e. Cheikh al-Akbar himself, we know for certain that he had at least two or three teachers: Cheikh Hosafi (44) and, above all, Cheikh Elish el-Kebir fils. As for Cheikh Senûsi, his relationship with him was mainly political and "exoteric". It is not known exactly when or how he came into contact with them. Abdul-Hedi is silent on this point.

on this subject, but it was probably shortly after his arrival in Egypt (1902), at the latest when the magazine *Al-Nadi* (= *Il-Convito*) was founded in 1904.

The controversial point is that 'Abdu-l-Hedi had several teachers and claimed that possibility, which was generally discouraged for Europeans. In the 1902 magazine *L'Initiation*, he wrote: "[The Sheikh] is more of a spiritual father, whom one chooses and whom one can leave whenever one wishes. Leaving one, even to follow another, should not be considered an insult to the first. Far from it." " (45) This article appeared in August 1902, before Agüeli returned to Egypt. Had he already benefited from the guidance of a Master during his first stay (September 1894-September 1895), when he was not yet officially a Muslim, or did he have one in Paris? This point in his personal biography is not important in itself, but it may lead today's aspiring Muslims to believe that one can change Master without further ado and forget that Agüeli's case is exceptional and therefore not at all exemplary.

In any case, it is clear that Aguel was taught by high-quality teachers and that his Islamic education was not fanciful, having been received in the country, in the original language and for nearly seven years, which represents

optimal conditions that virtually no European has ever enjoyed. Even today, it is not within everyone's reach to assimilate an Eastern language and religion, let alone write studies on Sufi doctrine directly in Arabic, French and Italian, as Agüeli did. He did so with mastery – with the grace of God – and this is an extremely rare case in the 20th century: only René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan have accomplished this feat.

Also, when we see the gratuitous suspicion cast by the Swedish Arabist Nyberg– , who never had any doctrinal competence (46)– on the orthodoxy of Abdu-l-Hedi, suspecting him of having become "beha'i" (sic!) towards the end of his life, one cannot help but think of the famous phrase: "Slander, Slander! Something will always stick! Indeed, following Nyberg, those who know nothing about Agüeli, having never read him in the original text, are quick to spread this slanderous accusation , which is based on nothing, since Nyberg adds (which is deliberately omitted): "This is only a random supposition on my part." So why seek to tarnish Aguel's memory? It would have been better to refrain.

(44) Abdu-l-Hedi quotes it once (Gauffin, op. cit. II, p. 190), and a second and final time (ibid., p. 271) in a letter dated 14 August 1916: "I have a few small works on exoteric and esoteric Islam by my revered Sheikh Sidi Hosafi of Cairo."

(45) This latitude suggests an Akbarian privilege.

(46) See his Addendum to Volume II, pp. 299-304; (A. Fauffin, op. cit.).

In conclusion, and at the risk of repeating ourselves, we would say that the merit of Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi was to accomplish his task and fulfil his role without being deterred by the obstacles, suffering and persecution he encountered, of which he had more than his share. We can say of him what René Guénon wrote when, for once, he spoke of himself, namely that "his only merit was to try to express some traditional ideas to the best of his ability" (47). The "individual" Agüeli completely effaced himself– for years– before his mission. It was only later that another facet of his rich personality emerged: painting, which we will discuss later, and which may pose a problem in terms of Islamic orthodoxy.

"Wa inna 'Liâh a'lam"

(47) See "Notes on Islam" in L'Initiation, August 1902: "I have nothing new to announce."

Jean FOUCAUD

(excerpt from a forthcoming book on Aguéli)

(to be continued)

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#### ADDITIONAL NOTES

On the first chapter devoted to John Gustave Agelii

(see VLT No. 72)

Jean Foucaud

Vers la Tradition, No. 73

(September– November 1998)

–It is clear that we could not and did not intend to say everything there is to say about Agélii in our first article. Our presentation is necessarily a summary of our research: we have attempted to provide as much reliable information and well-founded hypotheses as possible in 10 short pages, as this field is, to our knowledge, highly specialised and still largely unexplored, if not unknown (even in Sweden!).

Readers will also have noticed that we associate Agélii with René Guénon and Michel Vâlsan. If there are any apparent coincidences, we can do nothing about them (and so much the better); this first unpublished chapter was in fact written nearly nine years ago. We intend, if circumstances allow, to show why

one cannot speak of one without speaking of the other two, for they are linked by an invisible bond that we will call the Ruhâniya Akbariya, which is a providential case of "survival" for Westerners at the end of the 20th century.

The same readers will have noticed a first enigma, namely "a Path that no one has traced before me", a phrase that is identical word for word to that of Sidi Abul Hassan El Shâdhili 650 years earlier. In the latter case, we understand that this Path will bear the imprint of the Master, that is to say, it will be Shâdhilite. But this is an understatement, and it would take a book to explain the intellectual specificity, excellence and rigour of this spiritual method. (1) So what does Agélii mean when he writes: "I can announce a path that no one has traced before me"? What part of himself would he add to the role assigned to him by Sheikh Elish el-Kebir (particularly in Egypt and later in Europe)? Later (in January 1910), he returned to this in an even more enigmatic formulation, writing: "I must succeed out of cosmic duty" [?!] (2)

Additions to the notes

n.24 For readers who are not familiar with Arabic, we will translate this phrase [Khâdim el-Qawm Sayyiduhum] as: "the Servant of the Initiates is [sometimes] their Master". As for the "Sirr" [intimate secret] of Agélii, only Allah knows.

NB: Remember that "Khâdim al-Awliyâ" means "Servant of the Saints".

n.27 If we were to be confronted with the common but outdated objection that Arabic is a Semitic language and Western languages are Indo-European, and therefore seemingly unrelated, we would simply respond that there is a very ancient original relationship between these languages (Latin, Greek, German, Sanskrit) and the so-called Semitic languages (Akkadian, Syriac, Ethiopian, Arabic, Hebrew), without forgetting the Hamito-Semitic languages (Pulaar, Egyptian, Libyan-Berber, etc.), in which we have found many common roots that belong to a single Tradition and a single language, dating back to the beginning of the present manvantara, and which are called "universal roots". (remnants of the "solar" language, known as "Syriac" [sûriyâniya]).  
solar" language, known as "Syriac" [sûriyâniya]).

n.31 Without detracting from our assertion, by "repeated assertions" we mean successive assertions, since it is obvious that René Guénon did not spend his time repeating that there was an Akbariya Tariqa in India. We hope that one day we will be in a better position to provide at least some evidence of the existence of this "predominantly" Akbarian Tariqa.

Epistolary references

1° (pp. 45, 46, 47 of our article).

Here is the unpublished translation of an excerpt from this letter of 1907 (3):

"About 14 years ago, I saw a vision of an unknown man... And now, reading the biography of Ibn 'Arabi written by one of our Arab colleagues, I recognise him: it was him. I never spoke of my dream, for the simple reason that it was a mystery to which I had no key. Every detail was there, down to the colour of his eyes, the clothes he usually wore, the exact shade of his hair and complexion..." (4)

2° (p.47 of our article).

Regarding the founding of the Akbariya in Paris, here is the translation of the letter written in Arabic in Sweden in September 1911, translated into Swedish by Nyberg and transcribed here into English:

"As for France, I mean Paris, many of our friends have embraced Islam, such as 'Abdel Wahidet Abdel Halim. (5)- The vast majority belong to educated, literary and liberal circles, but none to political circles - I have had enough to do with such people, not to mention my experience with Dr. Insabato. They converted to Islam out of love for the greatest Sheikh, Muhyi-d-Din Ibn 'Arabi- may Allah be pleased with him- and out of inclination towards the order of the Malâmatis. For them, the key to Islam is the doctrine of Unity [Enhetslära] in accordance with the "philosophical" system of Ishrâq [illumination of the heart], in other words: Unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in Unity (...)

Finally, with the help of the VERY HIGH, we founded the AL AKBARIYA company in Paris on Friday night 26. We did not advertise. Membership in the said company is by co-optation only, and we grant membership only after rigorous screening.

Jean FOUCAUD

## NOTES

1. cf. what Sheikh Abdu-l-Hedi wrote:

"Whenever you find a man in the East who is superior in character and knowledge, you can be almost certain that you are in the presence of a Shaykh al-Lita." That is to say:

"Whenever you meet a man in the East who is superior in character and knowledge, you can be almost certain that you are in the presence of a Shadhili." (Il Convito 1907, Anno IV, series 1, p. 108).

2. Axel Gauffin, op. cit. vol. II, p. 161.
3. As with all quotations taken from Axel Gauffin in our article in VLT No. 72, the translations are ours.

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#### APPENDIX

##### Clarification:

Despite my studies published in VLT in 1998-99 concerning the probable date of René Guénon's initiation (through Aguéli), those who parade in the microcosm of Parisian esotericism continue to talk about 1912 (which is false!), not without malicious intent, as this allows them to make a gratuitous connection between his marriage in July 1912 and the date of his initiation; thus, they attempt to conflate:

- his Catholic marriage
- his Sufi initiation
- his membership of the Freemasons (all of which was incompatible with the Catholic milieu of the time), obviously emphasising René Guénon's supposed duplicity and his concealment of this from his wife and in-laws.

At the forefront of this malicious campaign is, of course, a certain Jean-Pierre Laurant, followed by all his sycophants, among whom we unfortunately count a certain Abdelwadoud Gouraud in his latest translation, despite our warning after his lecture at the Grand Mosque of Paris a few years ago.

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Let us recall that the first mention of membership in tasawwuf was made by Aguéli in September 1911, that Cheykh Mustafa also speaks of 1911, and that René Guénon himself wrote a letter to a correspondent in New Zealand in 1911, also signing himself Abdelwahid (see the special issue of *Science Sacrée* 2003).

But in the meantime, a letter from René Guénon to his doctor Tony Grangier was discovered, mentioning his affiliation in 1910 (letter dated 28 June 1938): "...my affiliation with Islamic initiatic organisations dates back to 1910 [underlined by Guénon]..."

Hence our current clarification. We have never said that René Guénon was not already affiliated before (he refers to initiatic organisations in the plural); in a letter dated 1948, he refers to affiliation "...for nearly 40 years...", i.e. 1909 or 1910.

For our part, we have only tried to show that the effect of this connection culminated with the baraka chadhiliya coming from Sheikh Elish El Kébir–, considered the pole of his time–, and through Sheikh Abdulhédi al Maghribi 'Uqayli (an idea suggested to us by Mr. Patrice Brecq in 1990, noting the excellence of Guénon's first article in the 1911 journal *La Gnose* - "La Prière et l'Invocation"–, which leads us to believe that it was just after his affiliation).

Afterwards, Mr Gilis can talk about the connection in 1910 (indeed, Guénon does not mention Aguéli in his letter of 1938), which is not impossible, but what does he know apart from what we ourselves have written? ?!

Let us remember that Aguéli returned to France in April 1910, but he was unable to meet Guénon (no doubt with P. Genty, at Dujols' house) until the summer of 1910 or even late 1910 at the earliest. Before that, he could have been connected with Champrenaud, but we do not believe that Champrenaud was a mutaṣawwif before Aguéli's return to France after an eight-year absence (1902–1910).

Need we remind you that we are not reducing René Guénon's spiritual wealth to the sum of his connections? For he benefited from other divine graces (as Mr Gilis clearly saw in his curious book *L'Héritage Doctrinal de Michel Vâlsan* [The Doctrinal Legacy of Michel Vâlsan]), to which he makes a discreet allusion [ishâra] in the continuation of his 1938 letter to Dr. Grangier: "...this does not prevent anything else from happening."

There would also be curious considerations to be made about "hidden Islam" (e.g. that of the *rijâl al-ghayb*), which fortunately (and unlike the *turûq*) completely escapes the grip of the modern world and its persecutions. But this is not public knowledge. (cf. René Guénon: "My sources contain no references").

Jean Foucaud, March 2013

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## APPENDIX 2:

### RENE GUENON'S CONNECTIONS

These are of several kinds:

– there are connections to pseudo-initiatory organisations such as the Martinist Order (1907) or the Gnostic Church (1909), about which Guénon had no illusions but which he wanted to investigate,



– there are connections to authentic organisations such as Freemasonry in 1907 (as one cannot join before reaching the age of majority), followed by entry into operative Masonry at a date that cannot be determined. It can be assumed that this membership made Guénon the last operative Mason of France, alas! To this we can possibly add his initiation into the Compagnonnage as a Compagnon Printer (the only clue we have is that Guénon once signed a report under the name "Le Liseur")

We can date his affiliation with the HB of L (Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor) to around 1910, perhaps through F.-Ch. Barlet (note that the first three letters of this double first name correspond to "Frère de la Communauté Hermétique" [Brother of the Hermetic Community]).

At the same time, there were various connections to Islamic initiatory organisations (see "Appendix 1") and, possibly, in 1911, a connection to a Taoist master.

Despite Guénon's initiatory knowledge of Kabbalah, Hinduism and Christian esotericism, no respective affiliation can be inferred.

– There was his mysterious investiture within the OTR (Order of the Renewed Temple) in 1908 and the special instruction he received from Sayyidunà Al Khidhr (wallàhu a'lam).

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#### PROBLEMS POSED BY THE MULTIPLICITY AND HETEROGENEITY OF AFFILIATIONS

We have seen that Guénon had several different affiliations at the same time, or that he accumulated them in a very short period of time. Apparently, he did not mix traditional forms, but neither did he practise the exotericism corresponding to these affiliations. No doubt he was already R+C and, as such, above particular forms. Or, as Jean Reyor would later point out, he accumulated connections without seeing any prohibition or incompatibility in doing so, believing that it was better to "have several strings to one's bow," leaving later, like Reyor, to return to his roots or to favour a traditional form that suited him better (cf. letter from René Guénon to Galvao dated 12/11/1950: "... as for affiliation to several organisations, ... two safeguards are better than one.")

Now, given Guénon's exceptional status, did he not benefit from an extraordinary dispensation? Indeed, only beings who are delivered during their lifetime are (temporarily) exempt from legal obligations (rites and prayers); see the note on this subject- , now largely forgotten, by Michel Valsân in *Etudes Traditionnelles*. 1953 no. 307, p.131, note 3 in his translation of chapter 45 of the *Futûhât*.

One might also think that the Afrâd, by virtue of their birth status (cf. Michel Valsân: "The matrices of providence had formed his entity in a precise manner. " ET 1951) reach God directly without going through official bodies (Church, Zaouias, etc.). This exceptional status explains why Guénon did not immediately practise a particular religion. ("My Truth is of divine origin, obtained by revelation, impersonal, detached and without passion").

Wallâhu a'lam...

Jean Foucaud

Abdul-Hadi's ACTION PROGRAMME (Ivan Aguéli)

Action programme of Abdul-Hādī (Ivan Aguéli)

"Appendix announced in VLT No. 77":

AGUELI'S ACTION PROGRAMME

(The Reform of Mentalities).

Reminder (VLT No. 77):

1st Theme:

For example, "the manipulation of mental currents," a technique referred to by René Guénon in *Orient et Occident* (Vega, 1964 edition, Part 2, Chapter 3, p. 184).

Referring to Axel Gauffin, we find a detailed programme which, given its length, we are obliged to include in an appendix to this article. This remarkable document (unfortunately unknown until now) demonstrates Aguéli's precise knowledge in this field: nearly 20 years later, in Cairo, Nyberg noted the continuing influence of the traditional ideas put forward by Cheykh Abdu-l-Hedi and the Il-Convito team.

Jean Foucaud – The Swedish Muslim (...)– II. The Pioneer

[Right click to enlarge.]

CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME

[Axel Gauffin, biography of Aguéli, volume II, pp. 180–181.]

His ardent Italian friend [Insabato] was outraged by his country's policy of conquest in Tripoli [in Libya]. He certainly had much to reproach France for its violence in Africa, but the perfidy of Garibaldi's homeland affected him more deeply. His dearest wish was to contribute to a reform of French colonial policy and to win the understanding of the intellectual circles of that country for his fellow believers in the East.

From the moment he arrived in Paris with the task of bringing France and Islam closer together, any critical attitude or old grudges were forgotten. And so we can show how, in that year, he invested all his profound knowledge of the situation in the Muslim world and used all his dialectical powers of persuasion to devise ways in which an understanding could be reached between "Marianne" and the followers of Muhammad. In one of the boxes rescued from Mme Huot's attic thanks to Prince Eugène (\*), I found notes scribbled in pencil on the back of an advertising card for "Eternal Youth – Eternal Beauty, Madame Debaon, 13 rue du Vieux-Colombier, Paris VIe (Discretion)". (\*\*)

It is easy to imagine that the ever-young and beautiful but strictly thrifty Mrs Huot supplied the writer with cheap but perfectly usable paper. These advertising cards covered with writing that, when put together, allow us to listen to Ivan Aguéli's Franco-Islamic dreams. And I wonder if this multi-talented genius wrote anything more impressive and insightful than these pages, in which he gives expression, based on several years of bitter experience, to his most transparent form.

As a supplement to the programme that follows, Article 2 is attached, which partially repeats the first article in other words, but also provides details about the Franco-Islamic group referred to in this programme statement.

A third document concerning Franco-Islamic projects is a draft letter to General Cherif Pasha, the well-known Turkish statesman, requesting assistance in finance a magazine project for the above-mentioned group. The great interest of this draft is that it shows us that Agüeli was not content with mere dreams.

\* Prince Eugene, brother of the reigning king of Sweden and second son of King Oscar II.

\*\* In French in the text. It should be noted that Debaon (or de Baon) is the maiden name of Mrs Huot, named after the village near Tonerre (Yonne).

[These historical documents must be viewed in their colonial context of the 1900s and 1910s, as pointed out by Mr. Foucaud in the notes below.]

#### DOCUMENT I

Thanks to our national character, we can, depending on the circumstances, act with simple firmness, sometimes with Italian flexibility. No one is better able than we are to rule with an iron fist in a velvet glove. We should therefore be the first colonisers of the world. And  
However, we are not, at least not yet, and the reason for this is easy to see. Our colonial expansion was too sudden for the average French person to realise that any of our colonies are like madhouses, that it is to the most miserable of all foreign countries that we send so many soldiers, and that it is there that the senior civil service is in French hands. That is all!

However, it is very important not to be an intruder in one's own colonies. Yet this is our situation, because ultimately we are reduced to playing the role of tyrants despite ourselves.

We have therefore created a large colonial empire, not only to contribute to national prosperity (immediate), but also in the interest of civilisation. The preservation of our conquests—, that is to say, of our future—, and, secondly, control of the sea, will depend on how we deal with the indigenous peoples. An empire, without the imperial art of binding our fate to that of our subjects or vassals, can become nothing more than a temporary presence. It is unfortunately true that the indigenous peoples do not

are not all happy. Even in cases where our domination, at least from our point of view, has improved their purely material lives, they are not satisfied. The fact is that they are not living their own lives, and it is impossible for them to live ours.

Whatever we do, we will not make them happy, which is nevertheless the first condition for ensuring and continuing our domination in the colonies. We will always need the natives, their cooperation and therefore their goodwill in their relations with us. This is absolutely essential when it comes to countries with long traditions.

But the situation is that all attempts made so far to interest the natives in our colonising work have completely failed. This is particularly true in Muslim countries

that the errors of our system are most evident. We have caused a violent rupture in the lives of the indigenous people, but that is not the worst of it, and besides, it was inevitable. But instead of helping them forget the reasons for their quarrels by helping them recover their Islamic way of life and live better than before, from the very beginning of the conquest, we have indiscriminately done everything to lead them down a path that is not theirs, dangling all sorts of material advantages before them like bait. But this life material things are of little importance to them. Despite everything that is happening, traditions are what matter most to them. You would have to have lived the Muslim life to understand.

know that, despite the misery caused by intellectual and moral decline, despite even apparent scepticism, Muslims, all Muslims, are deeply attached to their traditions. Our contempt, or our tolerant indifference to their religious life, will forever prevent them from trusting us. From their point of view, they are perfectly right. The reality is that religion, that is to say Islam, encompasses the entire Tradition in its social, intellectual, moral, historical and even popular dimensions. But it is important to note that this notion temporal does not correspond at all to the same thing among Muslims and Europeans. This may be the result of patriarchal life or a particularly strong sense of family, or for some other reason: the fact is that Muslims live in the past or the future as much as in the present moment. It follows that anything done against Islam is not

not only felt as an act of hostility towards the Muslims standing before you, but also as an affront to their fathers and a threat to their children. Compared to such a situation, a few material advantages mean absolutely nothing in return.

There is nothing surprising about this for a French person. From a foreigner who gives us the opportunity to do some good business, but who does not understand us, who does not grasp our uniqueness or our national tradition, and who despises the way we govern ourselves, from such a man, we

We will seek to profit as much as possible, without showing them any kind of gratitude. All this to show that Muslims, whoever they may be, will always judge you, in the end, by the position you take towards their religion.

Now two questions arise: 1) Is the Islamic life of the natives compatible with our interests or not? 2) What can we do to help Islam in the current circumstances?

It is now scientifically established that Islam, far from being an obstacle to civilisation, is on the contrary the powerful factor that has promoted it, and that the principles of this civilisation are rather liberal. History shows that Muslims saved English domination over India at a critical moment

English rule in India and that, even today, they constitute its most eminent support (1). The dogma of the universal Caliphate or Imamat is nothing more than a formality with no practical significance, which is not can only be compared, from a distance, to the influence of the Pope in the Catholic world. We have heard more than once from the most eminent religious authorities of Islam that if a European government gave solid guarantees of support for Islam, both internally and externally, all Muslims, led by their ulema, would rush to submit to that government and allow themselves to be ruled by it. Islam was once uncompromising in the days when

Intolerance reigned in Europe. Now, this is no longer the case. However, Islam has sometimes stood in our way. Here, it seems to me that we have failed to understand that Islam is nothing

but a weapon in the hands of a few fanatics who stir up trouble among the ignorant. And nothing should prevent us from using the same weapons for the cause of peace and good government. The forms that Islam-friendly policies take would depend

necessarily circumstances. Under no circumstances should one interfere in theology, but rather allow Islamic laws to follow their normal course. The English have not always respected this rule. This is why the work of Mohammed Abdouh in Egypt has served Egyptian nationalism rather than English politics.

(1) The argument is only paradoxical at first glance.– First, we must not forget that Ivan Aguéli is Scandinavian: he is not involved in colonial disputes. Secondly, he wants to show that the English would have every interest in reconciling themselves with people who supported them, willingly or unwillingly, militarily–, rather than thinking only of all the Muslims and Africans who died for France. Aguéli's argument is therefore clever and justified.

What seems most urgent to us under normal circumstances is:

1') The construction of a mosque in Paris; given that there is one in London, Moscow and even Vienna, it is unthinkable that the "City of Light" (2) should lag behind these capitals in terms of tolerance. The Muslim community in Paris suffers terribly, both morally and socially, from this lack, as it constitutes a serious obstacle to solidarity among its members.

social terms, because this deficiency constitutes a serious obstacle to solidarity among its members.

The construction of this mosque is not a matter of national or bourgeois pride, but rather a fundamental duty required of us by the laws of hospitality.

2\*) Provide material support for the pilgrimage [to Mecca] by improving the financial situation and safety of pilgrims. Provide them with a good ship, specially equipped for the ritual needs of believers, with adequate sanitary facilities, kitchens, rooms reserved for prayer, etc.

3\*) Given that usury in all its forms is strictly forbidden by religion, some scrupulous Muslims refuse to use the Western savings or deposit system. In this case, it would be appropriate to create special savings banks (or at least deposit "institutes") for the use of Muslims. Interest should be replaced by a guarantee system that is more advantageous than that usually granted to depositors, as well as by facilities for withdrawals, transfers, etc.

4\*) An arbitration tribunal for any disputes between Muslims and French people.

5\*) A purely intellectual organisation, whose aim would be to persuade Muslims around the world of our good intentions, thereby guaranteeing our sincerity. This organisation would be multifaceted. For the time being, we will only discuss the creation, with state support, of a Franco-Islamic group composed of French citizens and Muslims, for which we have information (3). This group should have headquarters in Paris and in Muslim capitals such as Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus and even Tunis.

(2) In French in the text.

(3) This project (already) anticipates the creation by René Guénon and his friends of the "Union for Intellectual Understanding between Peoples" in the years 1925-1926.

This group should begin by:

a) founding the Arab Academy, which has been awaited for several years.

b) winning over certain Muslim groups that represent the holy Tradition, which, although partly secret, nonetheless enjoys enormous influence in the politics of the Muslim world.

c) founding a moderate party among Muslims of all countries, a party characterised by the aspiration for development and a healthy understanding of things. It would be composed of honest businessmen, civil servants and, in particular, intellectuals.



d) It could prepare future ambassadors and senior civil servants to play their role in difficult and delicate situations.

The usefulness of this Islamic organisation, as we have presented it, would be:

1° – to provide us with loyal collaborators, especially among the indigenous population with the necessary dignity and authority.

2. The– of creating an elite group of Islam-friendly French citizens who are highly competent and destined for national service in Muslim countries.

–3° To promote the extension of our political and commercial relations.

4° – ting the refutation of all the slanders circulating among Muslims concerning us and which alienate them from us. We thus have in our possession remarkable documentation proving that Pan-Germanism has penetrated even the credulous minds of Muslims.

5° – to make Muslims understand that we are the best friends of Islam, the only ones who are fair to them, and that this pro-Islamic policy is thus penetrating public consciousness and opinion. The existence of a large Franco-Islamic group is not only the best but also the only guarantee of the "given word" (4) that a republican nation can offer Muslims. Thus, Muslims, whatever country or corner of the earth they come from, and whatever need they have for Europe, should choose France.

6° – destroy all religious prejudices on which our opponents in Africa rely. Peace would thus be much more easily restored in Morocco, as well as order in our other colonies (5).

(4) We know how successful this formula would be, particularly with Louis Massignon.

(5) It is noteworthy that Aguéli assimilated so well into the cause of Franco-Islamic understanding that he speaks of "our colonies" as if he were French. But behind this "our" lie the Italian intrigues of Insabato and Giolitti.

When Islam blocked our path—, which happened more than once during our colonial history—, how many French people were able to clearly grasp the meaning of the situation, to understand that, at that moment, Islam was not in principle an obstacle, but only a instrument, a weapon against us, in the hands of a few fanatics, who were causing unrest among the ignorant masses; and that we could have used the same weapons, not only to defend ourselves but also, in exchange for numerous material advantages, to establish a moral and bourgeois order among backward or degenerate populations.

A few enlightened minds had nevertheless sensed that Islam would be used as a catalyst for civilisation in Africa. But at that time, Islam was not well understood. It was accused of rigidity and intolerance, traits as far removed from the character of the Prophet as the French mentality. Some politicians then wanted to found an ad hoc religion, a kind of Reformed Islamic Church [modelled on the Protestant churches]. Needless to say, this pretentious attempt to modify a tradition dating back more than a thousand years failed miserably. Better still, we owe to it Egyptian nationalism and the Young Turk movement (6).

(6) This remark gives an idea of the extensive and unusual information available at the time.

Ivan Aguéli and why his collaboration with the magazine *La Gnose* (even though it apparently did not deal with politics) was enthusiastically welcomed by its editor Palingénius. – We should remember the suspicious role played in this movement by Russian, Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities in Turkey, whose secret aim was the abolition of the Caliphate, which would have benefited the subsequent establishment of the Jewish state.

Now we know better. We know that the true French conception of things, particularly in its most recent form, does not differ greatly differences from the authentic Islamic conceptions as expounded by the great spiritual or canonical masters of the past. The Islam we are talking about is not a second-rate religion invented for our trivial needs and out of consideration for (or for the benefit of) the colonial administration, but rather the great Islam of the sacred Tradition, the only authority moral code recognised by Muslims, the Sovereign Judge, who is virtually invisible, of all their decisions, the only means not only of getting to know them, but also of ensuring their good faith (7).

(7) Or: "to ensure their trust".

Driven by the ambition to achieve this "policy of association", we have founded "L'Union Franco-Islamite" (8), with the intention of dispelling the misunderstandings that exist or may arise between French people and Muslims in our colonies. To this end, we wish to bring international law into line with Islamism, which is not impossible. Islamic civilisation is based on universality in the broadest sense of the word. This also applies to French civilisation, heir to the Latins, and in more ways than other peoples. We also want Muslims to be worthy of the name, because this is an essential condition for their moral responsibility and, consequently, for any negotiation aimed at reaching an agreement or collaboration of any kind.

(8) In French in the text.

The Franco-Islamic Union will begin its work with new studies, without addressing all the issues that fall within its remit, as well as through concrete acts of justice and tolerance. The studies should lead not only to formulas that are consistent with authentic tradition in terms of social, intellectual and moral relations between French people and Muslims, but also to the definition of a rational policy for Muslim administration, a policy that the French government will sooner or later have to implement in its own interest and in the interest of its citizens. Muslims, but also to the definition of a rational policy for Muslim administration, a policy that the French Government will sooner or later have to apply in its own interest and in the interest of its citizens.

The Union should be, so to speak (in a manner of speaking), an arbitration tribunal between French people and Muslims, a kind of spokesperson (9) for the grievances of Muslims who have suffered from French colonisation in their legitimate rights. It will be responsible for advancing their grievances by supporting them with the means that the Republican Constitution makes available to its best citizens.

(9) Literally: "mouthpiece".

DOCUMENT III (10)

To His Excellency

General Chérif Pacha. (11)

If the matter were not so urgent, we would have postponed our request. Given that we are in no way involved in your campaign, we understand that the new situation in Turkey requires your undivided attention. However, in this case, it is not about us or personal interests.

An Islamic group has formed on our initiative that promises to become influential. It is dominated by intellectuals, some of whom are well known. There are also politicians, some of whom are members of parliament. Some of them would like to go to the East to study Islamic law, while others, who are more pragmatic and focused on the external aspects of things, limit their aspirations to reforms in favour of Muslims within the framework of the colonial administration. But although I recognise the presence of diverse elements within our group, I refrain from judging consciences, for I welcome any rapprochement, however small, in whatever form it may take, towards Islamic concepts. However, I see an absolute necessity to immediately create a purely spiritual and intellectual bond between these new friends of Islam, so that differences of opinion and interests never undermine the foundations of the Faith.

(10) Translator's note: draft letter in Arabic to Sherif Pasha.

(11) In English in the Swedish text.

It would also be highly desirable to have at our disposal a publication independent of any non-Islamic pressure, for example a journal, however modest, which could serve as a periodic bulletin [linking] the members of the group, as well as a means of propaganda and defence of our ideas.

We entrust our cause to your high assistance. For my part, I am willing to devote part of my time to this undertaking, without expecting any material advantage whatsoever. However, as I have no personal fortune, I am unable to contribute to the costs of printing, shipping, and administration. Would you be willing to assist me in this particular matter?

I can assure you that an Islamic initiative in Paris, even if it were exclusively scientific and intellectual, would be welcomed by devout Muslims around the world with unreserved approval reservation. They would offer their prayers in support of the Ottoman State that would have created an "Islamic stronghold" within Europe.

It goes without saying that, if you grant me your kind support, we will use it with the utmost discretion.

If you are unable to provide us with direct assistance, could you perhaps interest an influential Muslim in our project?

I should add that our group should not be confused with the recently founded "Society of Muslim Arts". I have the utmost respect for this association, and we should support it as much as we can, but our goal is much broader (12).

(12) or: "in the longer term".

I hope you will consider our request for protection and remain, yours sincerely,

Ivan Aguéli.

The Treaty of Unity (Ibn 'Arabī)– Translation by Abdul-Hādī Aguéli

The Treatise on Unity– Translation by Abdul-Hādī (1911)

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

We implore His help.

Praise be to Allah, before the Unity there is no prior, except Him who is the First; after the Singularity there is no after, except Him who is the Next. About Him, there is no before or after, no high or low, no near or far, no how, no what, no where, no state, no succession of moments, no time, nor space, nor being: "He is as He was." — "He is the One, the Tamer" without the ordinary conditions of Unity. He is the Singular without singularity. He is not composed of name and named, for the name is Him and the named is still Him. There is no name except Him. There is no named outside of Him. That is why it is said that He is the name and the named. He is the First without anteriority. He is the Last without the ordinary conditions of finitude, that is, without absolute finitude. He is the Obvious without exteriority. He is the Occult without interiority. I mean that He is the existence of the Glyphs of the external. as He is the existence of those within. There is neither external nor internal except Him, and this without these glyphs changing to become Him, or Him changing to become these glyphs. It matters to understand this mystery well, lest you fall into the error of those who believe in the incarnations of the Divinity. It is not found in anything, and nothing is found in It through any entrance or exit whatsoever. He must be known in this way, not through science, intelligence, imagination, sagacity, the senses, external vision, internal vision, understanding or reasoning. No one can see Him except Himself. No one grasps Him except Himself. No one knows Him except Himself. He sees Himself. He knows Himself. No one other than Him can

see Him. No one other than Him can grasp Him. His impenetrable veil is His own Oneness. No one other than Him conceals Him. His veil is His very existence. He is veiled by His Oneness in an inexplicable way. No one sees Him except Him: no prophet sent, no perfect saint or angel approached. His prophet is Himself. His messenger (apostle) is Him. His message (apostolate) is Him. His Word is Him. He has sent His selfhood by Himself from Himself to Himself, without any intermediary or external cause other than Himself. There is no disparity of time, space or nature between the One who sends, between the Message, and the Recipient of this message. His existence is that of the Letters of the prophecy, nothing else. Other than Him has no existence or name, and therefore cannot be destroyed, having never existed. That is why the Prophet said: "He who knows his soul, that is, himself even knows his Lord." He also said, "I have known my Lord through my Lord." The Prophet of Allah wanted to make it clear with these words that you are not you, but He; He and not you; that He does not come from you and you do not come from Him. I do not mean that you are or that you possess such and such a quality. I mean that you do not exist at all, and that you will never exist either by yourself or through Him, in Him or with Him. You cannot cease to be, because you are not. You are Him and He is you, without any dependence or causality. If you recognise this quality in your existence, that is, nothingness, then you know Allah, otherwise you do not.

Most insiders say that Gnosis, or Knowledge of Allah, comes after Fanâ el-wujûdi and Fanâ el-janâ'i, that is, through the extinction of existence and the extinction of this extinction. However, this opinion is completely false; there is a clear error here. Gnosis does not require The extinction of the existence of the self or the extinction of this extinction; for things have no existence, and what does not exist cannot cease to exist. To say that something has ceased to exist, that it no longer exists, is equivalent to asserting that it existed, that it enjoyed existence. Therefore, if you know your soul, that is, yourself, if you can conceive that you do not exist and, therefore, that you do not cease to exist, then you know Allah, otherwise you do not. To attribute Gnosis to Fanâ and Fanâ el-janâ'i is an idolatrous creed. For if you attribute Gnosis to Fanâ and Fanâ el-janâ'i, you claim that other than Allah can enjoy existence. This is to deny Him, and you are formally guilty of idolatry. The Prophet said: "He who knows his soul, that is, himself, knows his Lord." He did not say, "He who extinguishes his soul knows his Lord." If one affirms the existence of another, one can no longer speak of its extinction, for one must not speak of the extinction of that which one must affirm. Your existence is nothing, and nothing can be added to something, whether temporary or not. The Prophet said: "You do not exist now, just as you did not exist before the creation of the world." The word "now" is taken here in its sense of absolute present, meaning eternity without beginning, as well as eternity without end. Now, Allah is the existence of eternity without beginning, and of eternity without end, as well as pre-existence. These three aspects of eternity are Him. Allah is the existence of these three aspects of Eternity, without ceasing to be the Absolute. If this were not so, His Solitude would not exist; He would not be without a partner. However, it is a rational, dogmatic and theological obligation that He be alone and without any companion. His partner would be the one who exists by himself, not by the existence of Allah. Such a being would not need Allah and would therefore be a second Lord God, which is impossible. Allah has no partner, no likeness, and no equivalent. He who sees a thing with

Allah, from Allah or in Allah, even if it is made to come from Allah by His Lordship, makes that thing a partner of Allah, subject to Him through His Lordship. Whoever claims that a thing can exist with Allah, whether that thing exists by itself or through Him, whether it ceases to exist or is destroyed, such a man, I say, is far from having the slightest perception of the knowledge of his soul and of himself. For he who claims that other than Him may exist, whether by itself or through Him or in Him, then disappear and die out, then die out in its extinction, etc., such a man turns into a vicious circle through extinction upon extinction indefinitely. All this is idolatry upon idolatry and has nothing to do with Gnosis. Such a man is an idolater, and he knows nothing of Allah or of himself or of his soul.

If we ask how we can come to know our "soul," that is, our "proprium," ourselves, and to know Allah, the answer is: The path to these two kinds of knowledge is indicated by these Words: "Allah was and nothingness was with Him. He is now as He was." If someone says, "I see my soul, my 'proprium', myself, other than Allah, and I do not see that Allah is my soul," the answer is: The Prophet means by the term "soul" the "proprium", your particular existence, that which that you call "myself," and not the psychic element that is sometimes called "the imperious soul" or "that which irresistibly pushes towards evil," "the reproaching soul," "the reassured soul," etc. But by "soul" he means everything that is other than Allah, as he said: "Show me, O God, things as they are," meaning by "things" everything that is not Allah, exalted be He. He meant to say: "Let me know what is not You, so that I may know and understand the truth about things, whether they are You or other than You; whether they are without beginning or end, or whether they have were created and will disappear? Then Allah showed him that everything that is not Him is man himself, and that everything that is not Him has no existence. And he saw things as they are; I mean, he saw that they were the essence of Allah, outside of time, space, and all attributes. The term "things" can apply to the soul as well as to anything else. The existence of the soul and that of things are identified in the general idea of thing. Therefore, he who knows things knows his soul, its "proprium", that is, itself, and he who knows himself knows the Lord. For what you believe to be other than Allah is not other than Allah, but you do not know it. You see Him, and you do not know that you see Him. Once this mystery has been revealed to you, that you are none other than Allah, you will know that you are your own purpose, that you have no need to destroy yourself, that you have never ceased to be, and that you will never cease to exist, as we have already explained. All of Allah's attributes are your attributes. You will see that your exterior is His, that your interior is His, that your beginning is His and that your end is His, this is indisputable and without any doubt. You will see that your qualities are His and that your inner nature is His, without you becoming Him or Him becoming you, without transformation, diminution or increase whatsoever. Let it be so. "Everything perishes except His face," both outside and inside. This means that there is no one else but Him; that nothing else exists but Him, but is fatally lost, so that only His figure remains; in other words, nothing is stable except His figure. Some manuscripts add: "Wherever you turn, you turn towards the Face of God" (Quran, II, 109). An example: A man does not know something, then he learns it. It is not his existence that has ceased, but



only his ignorance. His existence remains, it has not been exchanged for that of another;

The existence of the learned has not been added to the existence of the ignorant; there is no mixture of these two individual existences; only ignorance has been removed. Do not think, therefore, that it is necessary to extinguish your existence, for then you would be extinguishing yourself, and you w o u l d become, so to speak, the will of Allah. Since the veil is now other than Allah, it follows that other than Him can defeat Him by turning their gaze away from Him, which is a mistake and a serious misunderstanding. We have said above that uniqueness and singularity are the veils of Allah, and no others. That is why it is permissible for the Wâçil, that is, the one who has attained personal Reality, to say, "I am the True Divine," or "Glory be to me; how great is my solitude!" Such a Wâçil

did not reach such a sublime degree without believing that his attributes are not the attributes of Allah and that his inner being is the inner being of Allah, without any transformation of attributes or transubstantiation of inner being, without any entry into Allah or exit from Him or vice versa. He sees that he does not cease to exist in Allah and that he does not persist with Allah any longer. He sees that his soul, that is, his "proprium," does not exist at all, not as having existed and then ceased to exist, but he sees that there is no soul or existence except His. The Prophet said, "Do not insult the Century, for it is Allah." He meant by these words that the existence of the Century is the existence of Allah, may He be glorified and magnified. He is too exalted to have a partner, a likeness or an equivalent of any kind. The Prophet said in a tradition: "Allah said: 'My servant! I was sick, and you did not visit Me. I was hungry, and you did not feed Me. I asked you for alms, and you refused.'" He meant that it was He who was sick and begging. As the sick and the beggar can be Him, so you and all things in creation, accidents or substances, can also be Him. When one discovers the enigma of a single

atom, we can see the mystery of all creation, both internal and external. You will see that Allah not only created all things, but you will also see that, in the invisible world as well as in the visible world, there is only Him, for these two worlds have no existence of their own. You will see that it is not only their names, but also He who names them and He who is named by them, as well as their existence. You will see that He did not create one thing once and for all, but you will see

"that He is every day in a state of sublime creation" (Quran, LV, 29), through the expansion and concealment of His existence and His attributes beyond all intelligible conditions. For He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward. He appears in His unity and conceals Himself in His singularity. He is the First and Last, Outside and Inside, as the existence of these Glyphs is Him. He is

His name; He is the one who is named. As His existence is fateful, logical and dogmatic, so is the non-existence of anything other than Him. What we think is other than Him is not, in essence, a dual existence, for His existence means that a dual existence does not exist; otherwise, this dual existence would be His semblable. But other than Him is not, for He is free from anything other than Himself being other than Himself. This other is still Him without any internal or external difference. He who is thus possesses attributes without number or end.

He who is thus qualified possesses countless attributes. Just as the one who dies, in the literal sense of the word, is separated from all his praiseworthy and blameworthy attributes, so too is the one who dies, in the figurative sense, separated from all his praiseworthy and blameworthy attributes. Allah — may He be blessed and exalted —

is in His place in all circumstances. The "inner nature" of Allah takes the place of His "outer nature.""; Allah's "attributes" take the place of His "attributes". That is why the Prophet — may Allah bless him and grant him peace — said: "Die before you die", meaning: "know yourselves yourselves, your 'proprium', before you die". He also said: 'Allah says: My worshipper does not cease to draw closer to Me through supererogatory deeds until I love him. And When I love him, I am his hearing, his sight, his tongue, his hand, etc.'" The Prophet means: He who kills his soul, his "proprium," that is, he who knows himself, sees that his entire existence is His existence. He sees no change in his "inner nature" or in his "attributes." He sees no need for his attributes to become His. For he has understood that he was not himself.

The existence of his own "inner nature," and that he had been ignorant of his "proprium" and of what he was at heart. When you become aware of what your "proprium" is, you are freed from dualism and know that you are none other than Allah. If you had an independent existence, an existence "other than Allah," you would not have to efface yourself or know your "proprium." You would be a Lord God other than Him. Blessed be Allah, so that there is no Lord God other than Him.

The value of knowing the "proprium" lies in knowing, but with absolute certainty, that your existence is neither reality nor nothingness, but that you are not, have not been, and will never be. You will clearly understand the meaning of the phrase: There is no God except God, that is, there is no God other than Him, there is no existence other than Him, there is no other than Him.

He, and there is no god but He.

If anyone objects, "You are denying His Lordship," I reply, "I am not denying His Lordship, for He does not cease to be Lord, just as He does not cease to be worshipped.

ceases to be the magnifying Lord, any more than He ceases to be the magnified worshipper. He does not cease being Creator, no more than He ceases to be created. He is now as He was. His titles of Creator or magnifying Lord are not conditioned by the existence of a created thing or a magnified worshipper. Before the creation of created things, He possessed all His attributes. He is now as He was. There is no difference in His Unity between creation and pre-existence. His title of the External implies the creation of things, just as His title of the Occult or the Internal implies the pre-existence. His interior is His exterior or His expansiveness, His evidence, just as His exterior is His interior; His first is His last and His last is His first; the whole is one and the one is the whole. He is described as: "Every day He is in the state of the Sublime Creator; nothing else existed with Him; He is now as He was." In reality, other than Him has no existence. As He was from all eternity, all days in the state of Supreme Creator. There is nothing with Him and no day of creation, except for another, as there is nothing in the pre-existence of thing or day, for

The existence of things or their non-existence is one and the same. If this were not so, it would have been necessary to create something new that was not included in His Oneness, which would be absurd. His title of The One makes Him too glorious for such a supposition to be true.

When you can see your "proprium" thus qualified without combining Supreme Existence with a adversary, partner, equal or associate, then you know him as he is, that is, you truly know him. That is why the Prophet said: "He who knows his 'proprium' knows his Lord." He did not say, "He who extinguishes his 'proprium' knows his Lord." He knew and saw that nothing is other than Him. Then he said that self-knowledge of the "proprium" of

His soul is Gnosis, or knowledge of Allah. Know what your "proprium" is, that is, your existence; know that deep down you are not you, but that you do not know this. Know that what you call your existence is in reality neither your existence nor your non-existence. Know that you are neither existing nor non-existing, that you are not other than existing or other than non-existing. Your existence and your non-existence constitute His absolute Existence, such that one cannot and must not discuss whether He is or whether He is not. Substance of your being or your nothingness is His Existence. Therefore, when you see that things are nothing other than your existence and His, and when you can see that the substance of His being is your being and your nothingness in things, without however seeing anything with Him or in Him, then you know your soul, your "proprium". Now, to know oneself in this way is Gnosis, the knowledge of Allah, above all equivocation, doubt or combination of a temporary thing with eternity, without seeing eternity or, through it or beside it, anything other than eternity.

If someone asks, "How then does Union take place, since you affirm that other than Him there is nothing?" ? Something that is unique can only unite with itself. The answer is: In reality, there is neither union nor approximation. We can only speak of union between two things, not when it comes to something unique. The idea of union or arrival implies the existence of two things, whether analogous or not. If they are analogous, they are similar. If they are not analogous, they are opposed. But Allah — exalted be He — is free from all similarity, as well as from all rivals, contrasts, and opposites. What we call ordinarily "union", proximity or distance, are not to be understood in the strict sense of the word. There is union without unification, closeness without proximity, and distance without any idea of being far or near.

If someone asks, "What is the junction in the junction, the proximity in the proximity, or the distance in the distance?" The answer is: I mean that, in the state you call "proximity," you were none other than Him—may He be exalted. You were none other than Him, but you did not know your "proprium"; you did not know that you were Him and not you. When you reach Allah, that is, when you know yourself "without the letters of knowledge," you will know that you are Him, and that you did not know before whether you were Him or not. When knowledge comes to you, you will know that you have known Allah through Allah, not through yourself. Let us take an example: suppose you do not know that your name is Mahmūd, or that you should be called Mahmūd. — because the true name and the one who bears it are, in reality, identical. Now, you imagine that your name is Muhammad; but, after some time of error, you come to know that you are Mahmūd and that you have never been Muhammad. However, your existence continues as before, but the name Muhammad is taken away from you; this happened because you knew that you are Mahmūd and that you have never been

been Muhammad. You did not cease to be Muhammad by extinguishing yourself, for to cease To exist presupposes the affirmation of a prior existence. Now, whoever affirms any existence other than Himself gives Him an associate—blessed be He, and exalted be His name. In our example, Mahmūd has never lost anything. Muhammad never lived in Mahmūd, never entered him or left him. The same is true of Mahmūd in relation to Muhammad. As soon as Mahmūd knew that he was Mahmūd and not Muhammad, he knew himself, that is, he knew his "proprium," that which is by himself and not by Muhammad. The latter did not exist. How could he have informed us of anything?

Therefore, "the one who knows" and "what is known" are identical, just as "the one who arrives" and "what is arrived at," "the one who sees" and "what is seen" are identical. "He who knows" is His attribute; "what is known" is His substance or "inner nature." "He who arrives" is His attribute; "what is arrived at" is His substance. Now, the quality and that which possesses it are identical. Such is the explanation of the formula: He who knows knows his Lord. Whoever grasps the meaning of this similarity understands that there is neither union, junction, nor arrival, nor separation. He understands that "He who knows" is He, and that "What is known" is still He. "He who sees" is He; "What is seen" is still He. "He who arrives" is He; "that which is arrived at" in union is still He. No one other than He can join Him or arrive at Him. No one other than He separates from Him. Whoever can understand this is completely free from great idolatry.

Most initiates who believe they know their "proprium" as well as their Lord and who imagine themselves escaping the bonds of existence say that the Way is practicable or even visible only through "The extinction of existence" and "the extinction of this extinction". They are only dogmatic because they have not understood the words of the Prophet — may Allah bless him and grant him peace. As they wanted to remedy the idolatry that results from contradiction, they spoke sometimes of "extinction," that is, the extinction of existence, sometimes of "the extinction of this extinction", sometimes of "the erasure" and sometimes of "Disappearance." But all these explanations amount to pure and simple idolatry, for whoever asserts that there is anything other than Him, that thing subsequently ceases to exist, or speaks of the extinction of that thing, a man, let us say, makes himself guilty of idolatry by affirming the present or past existence of another besides Him. May Allah—may His name be exalted—guide them and us to the true path.

To: You thought you were you. — But you are not and you never existed. — If you were you, you would be Him. Lord, the second of two! — Abandon that idea. — For there is no difference between you two in terms of existence. — He does not differ from you, and you do not differ from Him. — If you say out of ignorance that you are other than Him, — Then you are of a coarse mind. — When your ignorance ceases, you become gentle, — For your union is your separation and your separation is your union. — Your distance is a approach, and your approach is a beginning. — That is how you become better. — Stop reasoning reasoning and understand through the light of intuition, — Otherwise you will miss what radiates from Him.

— Beware of giving Allah any partner, — For then you would be avaricious, and that is the shame of idolaters.

If someone says, "You claim that knowledge of your 'proprium' is Gnosis, that is, knowledge of Allah—may His name be exalted— — Man is other than Allah, even if he knows his 'proprium'; but he who is other than Allah, how can he know Him? How can he reach Him?", the answer is: 'He who knows his 'proprium' knows his Lord'.

Know that

The existence of such a man is neither his own nor that of another, but that of Allah without any fusion of two existences into one, without his existence entering into God, coming from Him, being collateral to Him or residing in Him. But he sees his existence as it is. Nothing has come into being that did not exist before, and nothing ceases to exist through erasure, extinction or extinction of extinction. The annihilation of a thing implies its previous existence. To claim that a thing exists by itself means to believe that this thing created itself, that it does not owe its existence to the power of Allah, which is absurd to the eyes and ears of all. You must note well that the

The knowledge possessed by one who knows his "proprium" is the knowledge that Allah possesses of His "proprium," of Himself, for His "proprium" is none other than Himself. The Prophet—may Allah prays to Him and knows Him — wanted to designate by "proprium" existence itself. Whoever has reached this state of mind, his exterior and interior are nothing other than the existence of Allah, the word of Allah; his action is that of Allah, and his claim to know his "proprium" is the claim to Gnosis.

That is, to the perfect knowledge of Allah. You hear his claim, you see his actions, and your gaze encounters a man who is other than Allah, just as you see yourself as other than Allah, but this does not come from the fact that you do not possess knowledge of your "proprium." Therefore, if "the believer is the mirror of the coryant," then he is Himself by His substance, or by His eye, that is, by His gaze. His substance or His eye is the substance or the eye of Allah; His gaze is the gaze of Allah without any specification. This man is not Himself according to your vision, your knowledge, your opinion, your fantasy, or your dream, but He is Himself according to His vision, His knowledge and His dream. If He says, "I am Allah," listen carefully carefully, for it is not he, but Allah Himself who speaks the words "I am Allah" through his mouth. But you have not reached the same level of mental development as he. If you had, you would understand his words, you would speak as he does, and you would see what he sees.

Let us summarise: The existence of things is His existence without things being. Do not be misled by the subtlety or ambiguity of words, so that you imagine that Allah is created. A certain initiate said: "The Sufi is eternal," but he only spoke thus after all mysteries had been revealed to him and all doubts and superstitions had been dispelled. However, this immense thought cannot apply to those whose souls are vaster than the two worlds. As for those whose souls are only as large as the two worlds, it does not suit them. For, in truth, this thought is greater than the sensible world and the hypersensible world, both taken together.

Finally, know that "He who sees" and "That which is seen," "He who brings into existence" and "That which exists," "He who knows" and "That which is known," "He who creates" is "That which is created," "He who attains through understanding" and "That which is understood" are all the same. He sees His existence through His existence, He knows it through itself, and He attains it through itself. "He who attains through understanding" and "that which is understood" are all the same. He sees His existence through His existence, He knows it through Himself, and He attains it through Himself, without any specification, outside the ordinary conditions or forms of understanding, vision, or Knowledge. Since His existence is unconditional, His vision of Himself, His understanding of Himself, and His knowledge of Himself are also unconditional.

If someone asks, "How do you view what is repulsive or attractive? If, for example, you see filth or carrion, do you say that it is Allah?" The answer is: Allah is sublime and pure; He cannot be these things. We speak to those who do not see carrion as carrion or filth as filth. We speak to those who can see, not to the blind. Those who do not know themselves are blind, born blind. Until their blindness, whether natural or acquired, is removed, they cannot understand what we mean. Our discourse is with Allah, and not with anyone other than Him, or with those who are blind. He who has reached the spiritual station that is necessary to understand knows that there is nothing that exists except Allah. Our discourse is with him who seeks with firm intention and perfect sincerity to know his "proprium" in the name of the knowledge of Allah — may He be exalted — that he keeps in his heart, in all its freshness, the form of his request and his desire to reach Allah. Our discourse is not addressed to those who have neither intention nor purpose.

If someone objects, "Allah—blessed and holy be He—said, 'No vision can reach Him, but He sees all visions' (Quran, VI, 103); you say the opposite; where is the truth?" the answer is: Everything we have said is in accordance with the divine word: No vision can reach Him, that is, no one, not even the gaze of anyone, can reach Him. If you say that there is another besides Him in what exists, you must agree that this other besides Him can reach Him. But in this part of His Arabic verse: "No vision can reach Him," Allah warns believers that there is no one other than Him. I mean that no one other than Him can reach Him, but the one who reaches Him is He, Allah, He and no other. He alone reaches and understands His true "inner nature," no one else. The eyes cannot reach Him, for they are nothing but His existence.

As for those who say that gazes cannot reach Him, because they are created, and the created cannot To reach the uncreated or the eternal, we say that this man does not yet know his "proprium". There is nothing, absolutely nothing, looks or anything else, that exists except Him, but He understands His own existence without this understanding existing in any way. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, looks or other things, that exists except Him, but He understands His own existence without this understanding existing in any way.

To: I have known my Lord through my Lord without confusion or doubt. — My "inner nature" is His, truly, without flaw or defect. — Between us there is no becoming, and my soul is the place where the occult world manifests itself. — Since I came to know my soul without confusion or disturbance, — I have attained union with the object of my love, and there is no longer any distance between us, neither long nor short. — I receive graces without anything descending from above to me, without reproach, and even without cause. — I have not erased my soul because of Him, and it has had no temporal duration for be destroyed afterwards.

If someone asks, "You affirm the existence of Allah and deny the existence of anything other than Him; what then are these things that we see?" The answer is: These discussions are addressed to those who see nothing other than Allah. As for those who see something other than Allah, we have nothing to do with them, neither questions nor answers, for they see only what they see; whereas those who know their "proprium" see nothing other than Allah in everything they see. He who does not know his "proprium" does not see Allah, for every vessel lets only its contents filter through. We have already spoken at length on this subject. To go further would be useless, for he who is not made to see will not see. more through our efforts. He will not understand and will not be able to attain the truth. He who can see, sees, understands and attains the truth according to what we have said. To him who is has attained hyperconsciousness, a slight indication is enough for him to find the true Path in this Light, to walk with all his energy and to reach the goal of his desire, with the grace of Allah.

May Allah prepare us for what He loves and approves of in words, deeds, knowledge, intelligence, light and true guidance. He can do all things, and He answers every prayer with the right answer. There is no power and no strength except with Allah, the Most High, the Great. May He pray upon the best of His creatures, upon the Prophet and upon all the members of his family. Amen.

## THE RIDDLES IN THE LIFE OF AGUÉLI

### THE PSEUDONYMS

This is obviously not a literary game or a simple fiction, as we will try to demonstrate below.

His official name, Agelii, is already a pseudonym! His real surname is MOBERG. However, when his grandfather, Isak Moberg, wanted to enrol him in college, the headmaster forced him to change his name to Agelii, on the pretext that "Moberg" was a coachman's name (sic! – See Gauffin, vol. I, p. 14).

It should be noted that "Agelii" is the genitive form of the Latin name Agelius, a Latinisation that was common in Scandinavian countries at the time (e.g. Sibeilius, Vilnius, Emmanueili Swedenborgis, etc.).

However, there is an

ingenious hypothesis about the origin of this name, perhaps suggested by Agelii himself, put forward by one of his anarchist-theosophist friends, Jacques Tasset, who said that Agelius was a contraction of the name of the Latin writer Aulus Gelius (A – lus Geli – us), author of "Attic Nights" (around 130 BC).

A plausible argument, but nothing more (op. cit., I, p. 61)!

Before adopting his artist pseudonym "Aguéi," transcribed into French, he had signed a sketch on 15 October 1889 with the Cyrillic characters Иван Агзлини, meaning "Ivan [= John= Jean] Agei (or Aguéi)," a name he would keep throughout his life. But a little later, in 1894 in Cairo, he received letters addressed to Mr Ivan Stranyi, which in Russian means "foreigner" and perhaps gives

This already gives us a clue as to his mysterious personality, as the title brings to mind the "Cosmopolitans", the Rosicrucians, the Passers-by and other "Noble Travellers"... René Guénon even wrote that the original name was "

Aquileff or Aguileff" (unpublished letter dated 26/3/1938), but Aguéli was an expert in the art of covering his tracks regarding his true origins, like a good secret agent! 2



In Italian, he naturally transcribed his name as "Agheli"; curiously, this name is entirely contained in the name Alighieri, leaving out the three letters RII. Transcribed in Arabic script, this would give "al-Ighieri" (or al-Ighiari); however, the root "ghiâr", adjective "ghiâry / ghairy", means "to come to the aid of". Dante's name could therefore be read "in Arabic" as Ali-ghiari... Without any guarantee of plausibility. We are simply raising this possibility, which some might criticise us for overlooking.

In Egypt, Agelii adopted the Arabic name `Ageli, which is closest in dialect to his Swedish name and to the family name of Egyptian scholars [‘Uqayli, in classical vocalised script]. However, this term is interesting in that it is the grammatical diminutive— of the type "fa'al — fu'ayl"— of `aql, meaning "intellect", and its vocalisation is the same as in the term "uwaysi", which we have attributed quality to Sheikh `Abdul-Hadi and which comes from "aws" — the lynx with keen eyesight (cf. VLT n°72, p.51, n°27), i.e.:

– `aql — ‘uqayl — ‘uqayli: the little intellect.

– aws — uways — uwaysi: the little seer.

For our part, we see in this a discreet allusion to the spiritual case of Sheikh `Abdul-Hedi.

Let us continue this "valse" of pseudonyms with the following: "Volontario", under which he signed his first articles (in Italian) in the political and social review "Il Commercio italiano", Cairo 1902, two years before the famous review "Al-nadi = Il Convito".

What is curious is his alleged Tartar origin, and P. Genty, who met him at Dujol's (and perhaps introduced him to Guénon on that occasion), found him to have Asian features!

What is certain is that Aguéli had brown eyes and that his photos do not resemble a Mongol! But Genty's judgement was not always very reliable and his ethno-linguistic knowledge was sometimes rather fanciful (as in his incredible work on the "Celts" - Editions Traditionnelles, Paris, 1973).

This brings us naturally to his fourth pseudonym: Huei-Tso, as revealed by Axel Gauffin (vol. II, p. 168). We reproduce here the note we wrote in our unpublished translation of Gauffin's work:

[It is January 1912], and it was at this time, following his meeting with Chiang Kai-shek, that Agui took the pseudonym Hoei-Tso, which is the Swedish transcription of Wei-Tsu (in "pin-yin": Hui-Ze), which also means "the painter". This pseudonym was not chosen at random; in fact:

a) Hwei-Tse is the name of the "logician" (or "dialectician") in the famous dialogues with Tchwang-Tse.

b) There was a Japanese painter named Hoi Tsu (1761-1828).

c) Finally, the term "Wei" (Hui) specifically refers to Chinese Muslims from Xinjiang (Uyghur), this character being made up of two squares, one inside the other.

The same sound in a different spelling can also mean "(secret?) society, meeting, gathering".

Aguéli used it to sign an article on "Political Ideas in Contemporary China", strongly inspired by the future and famous opponent of Mao Zedong: Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jie-shi).

The following pseudonym is more enigmatic than it appears: Dante!

It was in the magazine "Il-Convito" that he signed thus in issue no. 4 of 19 June 1904, a pseudonym that could correspond to an "entity" (see above) based on Dante Alighieri. Moreover, as we are not inventing anything, in a letter to his mother, Aguéli indicated that this pseudonym covered several people (op. cit., vol. II, p. 133).

Finally, there is the most important point:

"A-maghrabi", like his master, meaning "Western" (and not "Moroccan"), alludes to a function in relation to the West (remember: "I have traced a path that no one has traced before me") to which Aguéli would return in 1910 to found a society (the "Akbariyya") and establish a Zawiya where the first four known French followers would gather.

At that time (Guénon, Aguéli, Champrenaud-, and the Italian Moronti, according to an excerpt from a letter quoted by the journal *Science Sacrée*-, no. 7, Dijon, 2005). In any case, he was assigned by his master Elish el-Kabîr to a task which, as we have said, consisted of establishing Tasawwuf in the West, particularly in Paris, where

returning only in April 1910, he quickly met René Guénon (between April and July, ), because by the summer he was preparing an article for the journal *La Gnose* (see Gauffin, vol. II, p. 176 et seq.), which was not published until December of that year... – It is assumed that this kind of In order to identify themselves, personalities have physiognomic means ("ilm al-firasa") that are unknown to ordinary people–. This is still currently the privilege of the Aḥmad. As for his initiatory title, "Khādim al-Awliya", we see in it an ishara referring to his invisible Master ("Khātim al-Awliya").

In conclusion, we will point out the multiplicity of Agélli's gifts and facets: the férus Astrologers will attribute this to his Gemini sign, traditionally characterised by a gift for languages, prolonged youth and physical and intellectual mobility. This is certainly true of Agui, but the explanation provided by the stars seems too simplistic and reductive to us: there is no influence of the stars, but there may be (not to be taken literally) an "energy" symbolised by certain stars (see above). However, this science has been almost completely lost in the non-traditional West.

A.A.H., 11 Jumada II, 1436 h.

#### NOTES:

1 According to his own statements, when René Guénon used different signatures, they were not simple pseudonyms but corresponded to distinct entities, so that one should not attribute attribute to him only the books or articles signed René Guénon. But what about his articles signed in Arabic AWY (in the Cairo magazine *Al-Ma'rifa*)?

We are not saying that this was the case with Agui, except on one point discussed below.

2 Thus, in his introduction of Agélli to readers of *Le Mercure de France* in September 1912, Guillaume Apollinaire wrote unabashedly that Agélli was born in Paris and lived with his parents on Rue Cortot, at Montmartre (sic). How could he have invented that? It is quite possible that Aguéi told him anything to get rid of a curious person (he told everyone that he was the "son of a king"!).

3 See the authoritative study by J. Robin in his first book on Guénon, published in 1978. Although this author should be taken with a pinch of salt, he sometimes displays surprising knowledge in the esoteric field.

4 After our first article on Aguéli (VLT, 1998), a few sceptics, doubting the fantastic aspects of his life, had the presumption to claim that we were victims of our own imagination.  
imagination!

If we revealed everything we know about Aguéli, what would they say?