

illuminating Guidance
on the
Dropping of Self-Direction
by
Shaykh 'Ibn 'Ata'illah as-Sakandari

Translated by
one who is poor before his Lord
and endlessly enriched by His Bounty,
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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

To the Reader

Dear reader! I pray that you find many benefits and blessings in this precious book, and that you will remember its author and translator in your prayers. I must say that I am very grateful to you because you have opened wider the door of blessings to the author, the translator, and yourself, and I humbly ask that  All h (Most High and Exalted) may join all of us in the circle of His love and tender care. Amen!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank firstly and lastly  All h, Who is the Origin of all good that emanates from this book and its author. He is the One Who has granted His worshipful slaves immense bounty when He sent to them His Beloved Messenger, our liege-lord Mu ammad, may the blessings and peace of  All h be upon him forever. From him his loyal followers inherited his words, actions, states of being, lights, knowledge, and many other gifts, until they each deserved the title 'intimate friend' (*wali*). Among the greatest of these friends, mention must be made of Sidi  Ali Abu'l Hasan ash-Shadh huli, his successor Sidi Abu'l  Abbas  Umar al-Mursi, and his successor Sidi Ahmad Ibn  Ata'illah as-Sakandari, the author of this book, may  All h be well pleased with them all. The original blessing which  All h deposited in His Messenger can still be seen, by those who have eyes, in his loyal followers to this day. I feel at the same moment unworthy and also grateful to  All h for opening His Door to me and causing me to come into contact with His select friends and chosen servants, specifically my Shaykh for the past number of years: Sidi  Abdullah Nooruddeen Durkee. May  All h shower him with His emanations of grace, and grant him long life filled with righteous action. It was he who told me to take on the task of translating this book into English, for the benefit of those who would not understand the Arabic. I have done my utmost in translating the wisdom of the author from his native Arabic to a foreign language, and only hope that it finds acceptance with  All h and becomes a further source of understanding and benefit for you.

In addition, I would like to extend grateful thanks to Shaykh Dr.  Ibr ahim Mu ammad al-Battawi, Sidi Mohammad Zakaria, Professor  Abdul-Hadi Kenneth Honerkamp, and Sidi Tariq Hamdi, the representative in America of Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller, for all their help in clarifying and translating difficult passages into English. I would

also like to thank my good friend Khaleel Abu Asma², who provided valuable help and support in getting this book published. It would not be complete without them, and they will no doubt share in its reward. I ask the reader to make a special Fatiha for them.

I think a few notes to the reader are due here. I first recommend that one already have a thorough background and understanding of the Islamic tradition in general, and Tasawwuf (Sufism) in particular. Without it, they may not reap much fruit from this book.

Secondly, I have retained throughout the book some key terms in their original Arabic, since no one word in English would do adequate justice to their meanings. For example, the word “*tadbīr*”, which is the main topic of the book, has for the most part been left transliterated, with only a few minor exceptions here and there where it is given a translation. For this reason, I highly recommend that the readers familiarize themselves with the Arabic words listed in the glossary of select terms at the end of the book before reading the main text.

For the translation of Qur^ʿānic verses (^ʿ*ayāt*), I have used the translations of Yusuf Ali, Muḥammad M. Pickthall, or my Ṣhaykh, or where the context calls for a different nuance, I have used my own. As for the hadiths, they are all my translations. Almost all of the hadiths are sourced in an index provided at the end of the book.

Finally, please be aware that any benefit you find comes from ^ʿAllāh and His Messengers and Friends, and any mistakes you may find are my own and I apologize for them.

Al-faqīr ^ʿIbrāhīm Hakim ad-Dimashq

A note about the translator:

^ʿIbrāhīm ibn Radwan Hakim al-Ṣhaghouri al-Faqīr was born in Washington D.C., to Syrian parents. He currently is a practicing pharmacist in Northern Virginia. He met his Ṣhaykh, Ṣhaykh Abdullah Nooruddeen Durkee, in the summer of 1997, and took the Ṣhadḥḥuli Tariqah from him on Sunday morning of Feb.11, 2001. He has also completed the translations of “Dhikr Allahu Akbar”, the Qur^ʿānic commentaries of Ṣhaykh Muḥammad Jamal Rifa’i, and numerous smaller works, and has written a long volume on the theory and practice of Tasawwuf, “In Defense of the Sunnah”.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Why is *al-Kitāb at-Tanwīr* important?

Shaykh Ibn ‘Abbad of Ronda, when he was asked by his student Yahya as-Sarraj to recommend books for him on Tasawwuf, replied that only two books were really needed by the wayfarer on the Way. Namely, the *Kitab al-Hikam*, or *Book of Aphorisms* by Imam Ibn ‘Ata’illah, and the *Kitab at-Tanwīr fi Isqat at-Tadbīr*, also by him. Shaykh Ibn ‘Abbad, who was one of the first to write a commentary on the *Hikam*, further went on to say that the *Kitab at-Tanwīr* “combines completeness with conciseness,” and as such suffices the seeker from needing to have recourse to other books.

One cannot overestimate the value of Imam Ibn ‘Ata’illah in preserving the teachings of the *Shadhḍhuliyyah*, since he was the first to write them down. Both Imam Abu’l-Hasan ash-Shadhḍhuli and his successor Imam Abu’l ‘Abbās al-Mursi (may ʾAllāh protect their secrets) never wrote any books on the Path. When asked why, Abu’l-Hasan replied, “My companions are my books.” Be that as it may, the teachings would not have survived down to this day as they have if ʾAllāh had not inspired Ibn ‘Ata’illah to put them into written form.

One of the main reasons why this specific book is so fundamental is that it deals with a cardinal doctrine of the *Shadhḍhuli* teaching, namely, the ceasing of self-direction and management in favor of choosing the management and direction of ʾAllāh (*isqat at-tadbīr*). A major subject, to which actually half the book is devoted, is *rizq*, or provision and daily sustenance.

Ibn ‘Ata’illah deals with the proper approach to acquiring one’s daily provision, the proper manners of withholding it and spending it, and most importantly, how and why one should not waste one’s energy in anxiety over it. In this respect, the Way of the *Shadhḍhuliyyah*, unlike some of the other ways of Sufism, does not call for a life of begging and mendicancy, but rather teaches its adherents to live a life of intense contemplation in the midst of the worldly means of livelihood. In other words, ‘being in the world but not of the world.’ And the importance of this book can also be seen in the method it teaches the reader of how to apply this advice.