



Shaykh Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī ؓ

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His full name was Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Umar ibn 'Alī al-Khazraji al-Balansi whose noble lineage is traced back to the great companion Sa'ad ibn 'Ubadā al-'Anṣarī ؓ. He was known by the agnomen Abu'l 'Abbās and by the nickname al-Mursī after the place he was born - Mursia. His grandfather was Qays ibn Sa'ad, the leader of Egypt before our master Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in 36 H.

Our master Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī was born in the city of Mursia in Andalusia² in the Islamic year 616H [1219 AD]. His father worked there and sent his son to a teacher to study the Majestic Qur'ān and to understand the commands of the religion. Abu'l 'Abbās memorised the entire Quran in one year and went on to study the principles of Jurisprudence, reading and writing.

His father was a Mursian trader and Abu'l 'Abbās used to participate with him in his business. The money which Abu'l 'Abbās received from the trade went into the pockets of the poor, the destitute and the wayfarers. The profits of his trade were sufficient to maintain him and his lifestyle.

He engaged his heart in the remembrance of Allah and in doing so he proceeded day after day, a step at a time, on to the path of truth and realisation.

Abu'l 'Abbās was known for being truthful, trustworthy, decent and possessing integrity in his business transactions. If the profits of his business were one hundred thousand he would give one hundred thousand to charity. He was an example for the other traders of his time in terms of etiquette and gentle manners required by the religion. He was also an example for the youth in holding steadfast to the pillars and the rights of Allah ؓ. He would fast for several days every month. He would observe night prayers for part of the night and he would restrain his tongue from foolishness or prattle.

¹ Adapted from <http://alalawi.1934.free.fr/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=10>

² Modern day Spain

In the Islamic year 640H [1242 AD], his father resolved to perform pilgrimage to the house of Allah. So he accompanied him as well as his brother, ‘Abdullah Jalal al-Dīn and their mother Sayyida Faṭīma, daughter of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Māliqī. They travelled by sea from Algeria until they reached the furthest outpost of the shores of Tunisia when a violent storm hit them. All the passengers drowned except the ones in the care of Allah ﷻ. Abu’l ‘Abbās al-Mursī and his brother were saved by Allah Most High and they proceeded to Tunisia where they took up residence.

Abu’l ‘Abbās al-Mursī received the Spiritual Path at the hands of his teacher - the famous spiritual leader Abu’l Ḥasan al-Shādhilī ؒ. Abu’l ‘Abbās met him in Tunisia, in the Islamic year 640H after which he was nourished with the knowledge of the time relating to jurisprudence, Qur’ānic exegesis, Prophetic narrations, logic and philosophy. The seasons passed in the spiritual path until he mastered these sciences.

Imām al-Mursī said, “When I arrived in Tunisia, I had come from Mursia in Andalusia, I was a young man at the time. I heard about Shaykh Abu’l Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and a man invited me to visit him. I said I would request Allah for guidance [in this matter]. That night I slept and saw myself in a dream ascending a mountain top. When I reached the peak, I saw a man in a green cloak; he was sat with a man on his right and a man on his left side. He looked at me and said, ‘You have found the vicegerent of the time.’ I woke up and it was time for the dawn prayer when the same man who had invited me to visit the Shaykh came again. So I went with him and entered into [the shaykh’s] presence and noticed the same bench that I saw on the mountain peak - I was astonished. Shaykh Abu’l Ḥasan As-Shādhilī said, ‘You have found the vicegerent of the age. What is your name?’ So I informed him of my name and lineage. He said, ‘Ten years ago I raised you up to myself.’ From that day onwards he accompanied Shaykh Abu’l Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and travelled with him to Egypt.

Al-Shādhilī noticed that Abu’l ‘Abbās al-Mursī had a pure spirit and a good soul keen to approach his Lord. He gave him many gifts and took personal care of his spiritual nurturing because he would become his vicegerent after him. He said, “O Abu’l ‘Abbās, I swear by Allah that you did not accompany me, until I became you and you became me. O Abu’l ‘Abbās, you have what the men of Allah have but the men of Allah do not have what you have.”

Amongst the narrations that have reached us about Abu’l Ḥasan al-Shādhilī that are renowned in the spiritual circles is, “Since Abu’l ‘Abbās reached Allah he has not been veiled; even if he sought a veil, he could not find it. Abu’l ‘Abbās knows the causeways of the skies better than the causeways of the Earth.”

It is authenticated that Abu’l ‘Abbās al-Mursī accompanied Shaykh al-Shādhilī and became the leader in the path after Imam al-Shādhilī. Before this, Abu’l ‘Abbās married one of the daughters of al-Shādhilī; who gave birth to children, amongst them Muḥammad and Aḥmad. One of his daughters married Shaykh Yāqūt al-Arshi who was one of her father’s students in knowledge and mysticism.

In the Islamic year 642H [1244 AD], Shaykh al-Shādhilī ؒ saw the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in his sleep who ordered him to move to Egypt. So he left Tunisia with Abu’l ‘Abbās, his brother ‘Abdullah and his servant Abu al-‘Azayim. They headed for Alexandria under the protection of the King al-Ṣāliḥ Najmuddīn Ayyūb.

Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī ؓ said, "I was with Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan al-Shādhilī headed for Alexandria on our way from Tunisia when I was overcome by a severe constriction. It weakened me until I could not bear its burden so I went to Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan. When he felt my presence he said, 'O Aḥmad?' I replied, 'Yes, my master.' He said, 'Allah created Ādam with his hands, prostrated the angels to him, made his abode Paradise then sent him to Earth. Before he was created Allah said, 'I will place a vicegerent upon the Earth,'³ he did not say 'in the sky' nor 'in Paradise.' The descent of Ādam (upon him peace) to Earth was honourable, not dishonourable. He used to worship Allah, in Paradise, through experiential knowledge and when he was sent to Earth he worshipped through responsibility. Only when someone has passed through these two stages of worship does he deserve to become a vicegerent. You have a share of Ādam. Your beginning was in the realm of the souls in Paradise, experientially. Then you descended to world of the soul and worshipped through responsibility. So only when you passed through these stages did you deserve to become a vicegerent."

Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī ؓ said, "As soon as the Shaykh finished this explanation, Allah expanded my chest and the constriction and the whisperings that I had, left."

Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī ؓ said, "When we arrived in Alexandria, we came to 'Amūd al-Sawārī. We were in need and extremely hungry. A righteous man of Alexandria came with food. When the Shaykh was informed he said, "No one should eat any of this food." We spent the night as we entered it, hungry. Morning came and the Shaykh led us in the dawn prayer then instructed us to bring the food; we presented it and ate from it. The Shaykh said, "I heard a voice in my dream that said the most permissible item is that which you did not expect, and that which you did not request a man or a woman for."

We settled down in the province of Kowm ad-Dakat. For the lessons of knowledge and spiritual gatherings al-Shādhilī chose a famous masjid called *masjid* al-A'ṭareen - also known as the *masjid* of the West. These lessons and gatherings were attended by a large number of the elite of Alexandria as well as the public.

This was not by mere accident as Alexandria was, during this time, a distinguished city and a place of learning various major sciences. This was noticed by major figures before al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī had taken residency there. The attendees of the lessons had included al-Ṭarṭawshī, Ibn al-Khaṭṭab al-Rāzī and Ḥāfiẓ Abu Ṭāhir al-Salafī. Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ayūbī was keen to spend the month of Ramadan in Alexandria in order to listen to Prophetic traditions from al-Ḥāfiẓ Abu Ṭāhir al-Salafī.

Abu'l 'Abbās continued to strive with al-Shādhilī in terms of his spiritual nurturing and proceeded upon the path. He did not leave him for a moment until al-Shādhilī passed away. Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī ؓ spent forty three years in Alexandria spreading knowledge, purifying souls, nurturing students and setting examples of piety and devotion. Many received knowledge at the hands of Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī, scholars and companions alike, such as Imam al-Buṣīrī, Ibn 'Ata'illah Al-Sakandarī, Yāqūt al-Arshi, Ibn al-Laban, 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-ām, Ibn Abū Shāma and others.

He passed away ؓ on the twenty fifth of Dhul Qa'ida in the Islamic year 686/1287 and was buried with his sons Muḥammad and Aḥmad in the province of "Ras al-Teen."

³ Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:390

Abu'l 'Abbās received the leadership of the Shādhilī spiritual path after the passing away of Abu'l Ḥasan al-Shādhilī in the Islamic year 656/1258. At that time he was forty years old and he remained holding the banner of knowledge and spirituality until he died. After he had spent forty years in Alexandria the shine of the Shādhilī path finally passed on into the horizon.

The States of Man According to Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī

Imam Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī ﷺ apportioned the states of man into four they are; Blessing, Tribulation, Obedience and disobedience.

I swear by Allah, in every state there is a right of servitude that is necessary upon you through divine decree.

- In states of obedience be grateful for the blessings from Allah upon you. Allah guided you to it and established you therein.
- In states of disobedience seek forgiveness.
- In states of blessing show gratitude thus joining the heart with Allah.
- In states of tribulation, be satisfied with the decree [of Allah] and be patient.

The Greatest Invocation

Imam Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī ﷺ used to advise others to invoke the name of Allah. He advised his companions to make their invocation the name of Allah because it is the name of the Ruler of the Heavens. To Him is increase and benefit; the increase is knowledge and the benefit is light. The light is not an intention in itself, it is only to support and uncover. All of the names of Allah can be attributed to creation except the name Allah. An example of this is when you call him "O Patient"⁴ you address him from the name "The Patient." He is "The Patient" and his servant is "patient." If you call him "Noble", you address him from the name "The Noble." He is "The Noble" and his servant is "noble." This is likewise for all the names of Allah except the name Allah, this is solely his; as it constitutes divinity and cannot be attributed to creation.

From the Speech of Our Master Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursī

- The Prophets (upon them peace) are presents to their nations; our Prophet ﷺ is a gift. The difference between a present and a gift is, a present is for the needy and a gift is for the lovers. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "I am only a merciful gift."
- He ﷺ commented on the Prophetic statement of our master the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "Without boast, I am the master of the children of Ādam." Meaning he is not boasting about his mastery but he is boasting about his servitude to Allah mighty and majestic.

⁴ Ḥalīm

- The entire existence is subservient and you are a servant in His presence.
- I swear by Allah that I did not sit with the people because they plundered what I had. Someone said to me, “If you do not sit with them so that they can take from you, then we will not bestow unto you.”
- For forty years the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has not been veiled from me for a blink of an eye. If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was veiled from me; I would not consider myself to be a part of the Muslim nation.
- Encompassment is of two types: major and minor. Minor encompassing is for the commonality of this group in that that the Earth is folded up for them from its east to its west within a single soul. Major encompassment is that of the peculiarities of the soul.

