

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society

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Contents

Ibn 'Arabi on the web

Even over the past year there has been a noticeable increase in the depth and variety of web pages referring to Ibn 'Arabi to be found on the internet.

The printed works in the Society library come from more than a dozen languages. Equally, if one is going to get a picture of this subject on the web, one must search one language at a time. Some of the Arabic texts, notably the *Futûhât*, are now available on-line. But in other respects, it would seem that English is presently the language with the greatest richness of resources.

The Wikipedia is a collaborative encyclopedia on the internet, with the remarkable feature that anyone may create an entry or modify an existing one. At the time of writing there are entries on Ibn 'Arabi in nine languages – namely Arabic, English, Finnish, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish. Since each entry may be written by a different person or group of people, they vary greatly in quality. The entries in Turkish and English appear substantial, for example. Some of the others really need revision, or at least expansion.

One of the most refreshing surprises while looking round the net was the discovery of a "blog" in Turkish called "Ibn 'Arabi". A "blog" is a kind of web site which can take the form of a personal journal, with entries added from time to time. This site has a good bibliography of works in Turkish and an article about the life of Ibn 'Arabi. It has reflections on the author's reading of some of the works available in translation, and links to other pages in Turkish.

The author told us: "As a person who newly started to read books by and about Ibn 'Arabi, I realized that there were few and scattered resources on the net in Turkish. So I decided to publish citations from my readings in this blog; we can say that I am drawing the map of my journey."

Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi and Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi are two important persons for *tasawwuf* and also Turkey. Most of the people in Turkey know something about Mevlana; however there is too little knowledge about Ibn 'Arabi. So the visitors to my blog who don't know much about the Shaykh thank me for this work." This web site can be found at www.blogcu.com/ibnarabi.

Texts and translations

Anqa Publishing have a series of books in preparation which will be brought out in association with the Ibn 'Arabi Society. These are short works by Ibn 'Arabi, and each publication will include a critical edition of the Arabic text and an English translation.

The first two are due in September 2006. One is the *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds- Ibn 'Arabi's Treatise on Unification (al-Ittihâd al-kawnî)*. The translation by Angela Jaffray has already appeared on the internet, but here it is combined with the Arabic text edited by Denis Gril. The other publication will be *A Prayer for Spiritual elevation and Protection – Ibn 'Arabi's al-Dawr al-a'lâ (Hizb al-wiqâya)*. This will include a translation and analysis of its transmission, presentation and use across time made by Suha Taji-Farouki.

The first 250 copies of these books will be available at a special price through the Society or Anqa. See the MIAS and Anqa web sites for details. Other titles on the way include: *The Four Cornerstones of Sainthood (Hilyat al-abdâl)*; *Annihilated in Contemplation (Kitâb Al-Fanâ' fi'l mushâhada)*; and *Technical Terms of Sufism (al-Istilâhât al-sûfiyya)*.

Forthcoming events

"*Know Yourself*"- Symposium of the Ibn 'Arabi Society in Berkeley, California. October 14-15, 2006. See p. 7 for more information.

The Annual General Meeting of the Ibn 'Arabi Society in the UK will be held at the Friends Meeting House, Oxford, on Saturday 11 November at 2:30 p.m. All are welcome. Further details will be posted on the Events page of the Society web site.

Tradition in the Modern World. Sacred Web Conference, Edmonton, Canada. September 23 and 24, 2006. See www.sacredweb.com.

Temenos Essential Readings, London. Sept. 19 - Nov. 28, on Tuesdays from 7.00 - 8.30 pm. Cecilia Twinch and Jane Clark will lead study of the chapters of Isaac and Joseph from the *Fusûs al-Hikam*. See www.temenosacademy.org for details.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Ibn 'Arabi in Urdu Translation | 2 |
| Archive project | 3 |
| Society matters | 4 |
| US symposium | 6 |
| New publications | 7 |
| | 8,5 |

Ibn 'Arabî Studies in Urdu

An Overview by Qaiser Shahzad

For those caring about religious and intellectual matters in Pakistan an indifference to Ibn 'Arabî is not an option. First, the national poet-philosopher, Iqbal (1939), had an ambivalent intellectual relation to the Shaikh and his major philosophical contribution is considered a reaction against what he made out of him. Second, the attempts to relate *wahdat al-wujûd* and *wahdat al-shuhûd*, the official doctrine of *naqshbandiyyah mujaddidiyyah*, continue to the present. Third, a major part of the polemic on Sufism focuses on the Shaikh. Thanks to these factors we are able to talk about Ibn 'Arabî studies in Urdu.

Background

Ashraf 'Alî Thânavî (d. 1943), one of the most influential Sufî masters of the twentieth century, wrote a defence of the Shaikh, largely based on Sha'rânî, *Tanbîh al-tarabî ilâ tanzîh Ibn 'Arabî*. He contributed two little commentaries upon some difficulties of *Fusûs*, *Khusûs al-kilam* and *Al-hall al-aqwam* and a refutation of the claim that Ibn 'Arabî allowed the coming of Prophets after Muhammed, peace be upon him.

Mehr 'Alî Shâh (d. 1937), an equally influential Sufî, delivered daily lectures on *Fusûs*, published as *maqâlât al-mardiyyah*. His conversations (*Malfûzât*) and correspondence abound with reference to the Shaikh. Mehr 'Alî wrote *Tahqîq al-haqq*, a highly philosophical response to the claim that every Muslim must believe in *wahdat al-wujûd*.

Fusûs al-hikam

The first translation, by 'Abd al-Ghafûr Daustî (Hyderabad Dakkan: 1889c), was revised by Maulavî Barkatullah (Luknow: 1903c). The introduction contains a biographical sketch, defence of the Shaikh and explanation of the basic concepts of his thought.

Seyyed Mubârik Alî's translation was published as *Kunûz asrâr al-qidam* (Kanpur: 1894). We also have a translation with introduction and summary of each chapter by Abdul Qadîr Siddîqî (Hyderabad Dakkan: 1942) which is most widely circulated.

There are at least three commentaries on the *Fusûs*. In addition to Mehr Alî's *Maqâlât Mardiyyah* Seyyed Mubârik Alî wrote a commentary titled *Khazâ'in asrâr al-kalim* published along with his translation (Karachi: 1994). In the detailed introduction, the translator has attempted to find rational and traditional proofs of *wahdat al-wujûd*, discussed concepts such as *tanazzulât* and *al-in-sân al-kâmil* and given an alphabetical glossary of important Sufî terms. This is the most important work on *Fusûs*. As its language is a bit archaic, this work must be presented in contemporary jargon.

Zahîn Shâh Tâjî (d.1978), a famous Sufi who had some prominent Pakistani philosophers

among his disciples, published his commentary on the *Fusûs* in *Al-tâj*, the journal he edited, during 1971-75. This commentary, based largely on Qaysarî, has been published in a separate volume (Karachi: 1981). Another commentary *Tahqîq al-amam* is by 'Atâullah Qâdrî (Peshawar: 1990). Though the worth of this contribution remains to be seen, the translation seems rather careless at certain crucial points.

Al-Futûhât al-Makkiyyah

The first attempt to render *Futûhât* into Urdu by Maulavî Fadhl Khan (d.1938) continued from 1913 to 1927. The translations appeared as tracts of 100 pages each. Most probably it was due to lack of readership that the project was abandoned after 30 chapters had been translated. For most of the early chapters extensive commentaries are provided but in a manner that makes it difficult to differentiate between translation and commentary. Anyway, this is the most accurate translation so far and has served as a foundation for later attempts.

In 1987 Sâ'im Chishtî published a four-volume translation, with Arabic text at the end of each volume. The terrible inaccuracy of this translation is clear even from the very first sentence translated as '...Allah who created things *ex nihilo* and then destroyed it'. This work is completely unreliable.

Fârûq al-Qâdirî has started translating *Futûhât*. The volume containing the first two chapters appeared in 2004. He has written a very good introduction in which he has tried to extenuate the Shaikh from charges of unorthodoxy. This translation equals Fadhl's in accuracy but is more accessible as the language used is contemporary. One can only wish for the completion of this project.

Rasâ'il

Four small works of the Shaikh have been translated (Lahore: 2001): *Shajarat al-kawn*, *Al-kibrît al-ahmar*, *Al-amr al-muhkam al-marbût*, and *Kitâb al-akhlâq*. *Al-amr*, first translated by Muhammed Shafî', the Grand Mufti of Pakistan, contains some explanatory notes by Thânavî.

In addition there are some translations of works on Ibn 'Arabî from other languages, books attacking him, and research papers in renowned journals. Compared to other languages, however, work in Urdu is meagre. This is thanks to a lack of interaction and organization among scholars interested in Ibn 'Arabî. I do believe that the Ibn 'Arabî Society can be instrumental in this regard.

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Some oral teachings of Ibn 'Arabi

Muhyiddin
Ibn 'Arabi Society

Reported by Ibn Sawdakin. Translated by Stephen Hirtenstein.

God's ceaseless giving

And I heard him, may God be pleased with him, express the following meaning: "Among the people of our Way there are the commoners and the elite. Among the commoners are those who follow by way of imitation, who base themselves in their beliefs upon something fixed, and who follow the path despite this weakness. If something that conforms to their belief is revealed to them, they call it 'opening' (*fath*), and if it doesn't conform, they call it 'withholding' (*man'*). Sometimes the Real comes to the likes of these, and they do not accept Him, because He comes to them in a way that is different to what they believe [Him to be].

The people of realisation (*tahqiq*) and presence (*hudur*), on the other hand, who are the elite, have come to the realisation that there is absolutely no withholding from the Divine side. Rather, His Being is constantly being effused, and holding-back or concealment is merely a sign of the inner eye (*'ayn al-basira*) being turned towards something other than what it was created for. When this eye of spiritual perception turns away from vision of the created world (*kawn*), then the Creator (*mukawwin*) stands before it, without doubt. The inner eye never ceases to receive, and the mirror never ceases to reveal. Certainly what is seen varies: when it sees light, light comes and whatever the light uncovers; and when it sees darkness, it cannot go beyond that, because darkness does not reveal what lies beyond. After all, a blind person can only 'see' the darkness of water when it appears before his eyes. And God knows best!"

Learning the divine lesson

The shaykh, may God the Exalted support him, said: "How excellent is His Word: 'Whoever pardons and makes amends is recompensed by God' (Q.42.40). And I also recommend to you [the following]: when you find someone argue with you, or refute what you say about an insight (*fath*) which you have received or which you have heard from someone else or which you have noted down, do not respond to him after that at all or argue with him. Rather, stop, be silent, and then consider the matter deeply, so that you may come to the realisation that God only contradicted you via the tongue of this person who argued with you, in order to show you a wisdom or some inattentiveness that has befallen you.

So stop, investigate and discover what that is from God the Glorified through being in a condition of neediness (*iftiqar*), and then do not repeat [the mistake], so that you do not leave the good form of the Divine Presence.

When you mention this useful lesson to

someone, do not do so on the basis that you are more knowledgeable or superior to him, so that you are not veiled by that and self-love does not arise in your soul. Instead, mention this lesson to him with the Prophet's saying in mind: 'Whoever is asked about a knowledge and conceals it, will be restrained with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection'. We explain that as [indicating the need for] promulgating knowledge, providing support with it and giving each other sincere advice. Consider what He says: 'You shall make it clear to the people, and not conceal it.'¹ It is part of fulfilling the covenant that you are generous with passing on knowledge, from which someone who listens to you may particularly derive benefit. And God knows best!

It is part of fulfilling the covenant that you are generous with passing on knowledge . . .

Note 1: Q.3.187. The whole Qur'anic verse reads: "Call to mind when God took a covenant with those who were given the Book: 'You shall make it clear to the people and not conceal it'. But they threw it away behind their backs and sold it for a small price – how evil was that their selling!"

About Ibn Sawdakin

Shamsuddin Abu Tahir Isma'il b. Sawdakin b. 'Abdullah al-Nuri was one of the close disciples of Ibn 'Arabi for approximately 35 years. He was born in 588/1192 in Cairo, and seems to have first met Ibn 'Arabi there at the age of fifteen. He later went to live in Aleppo, and was much involved in the reading of different works by Ibn 'Arabi, including the *Futuhat al-Makkiyya*, at his house there and in Damascus. It was as a result of his request, together with that of Badr al-Habashi, that Ibn 'Arabi wrote his invaluable commentary to the *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*. Together with Sadruddin Qunawi he finished the reading-through of the final volumes of the *Futuhat* after the death of Ibn 'Arabi. He died in 646/1248 in Aleppo.

Ibn Sawdakin has left precious glimpses of Ibn 'Arabi's oral teachings: the above extracts are taken from *Kitab Wasa'il as-sa'il* (*The Book of Questions from the Questioner*), which records some of the discussions and clarifications which the Shaykh gave when responding to particular questions. He also transcribed oral commentaries by Ibn 'Arabi on three of his major works, *Kitab al-Isra*, *Mashahid al-asrar* and *Kitab al-Tajalliyat*.

Kitab Wasa'il was published with a German translation by Manfred Profitlich in 1973, and a full translation into English is now in preparation.

The Archiving Project

Copying and cataloguing historic manuscripts

The archive project has been continuing more quietly over the past year, with work focusing on collating materials and updating the database system. At present there are 1,649 separate entries, with 1,473 individual works which have been researched and 802 which have been copied. Most of these are works by Ibn 'Arabi or attributed to him, but there is also a growing number of works by other authors included on the database, both contemporaries such as Sadr al-din al-Qunawi and Sa'd al-din Hamuya, and later commentators such as Mu'ayyad al-din al-Jandi and 'Abdullah Bosnevi.

One short field trip to Turkey was undertaken in November 2005, and focused on two particularly lengthy collections in the Suleymaniye library in Istanbul: Shehit Ali 1348 and Hamidiye 188. These give a valuable insight into the kind of work which is being undertaken through this project, in determining the real corpus of works and manuscripts which can be considered historic and of good provenance. The Shehit Ali collection contains 17 works in total, 5 of which are by Ibn 'Arabi and the remainder mostly by followers of his school such as al-Sha'rani and al-Qashani. In fact the scribe describes 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani (d.973/1565) as "our shaykh and master", and the collection probably dates from 10th or 11th century Hijri (16th or 17th CE). Some of the works are untitled and no author is specified, so the task of detection is made more difficult. The collection had seemed important since according to Osman Yahia the Ibn 'Arabi works had been copied from the original. Although on inspection (as in other cases) we have not been able to confirm this, the codex does give an insight into materials considered important by members of Sha'rani's circle.

The second collection, Hamidiye, is slightly shorter in terms of pages, but much longer in the number of works copied. Written over the period 985/1577 to 1008/1599, it is a collection of works by the great Ottoman defender of Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn Kamal Pasha (d.950/1534), who is mainly known for his famous *fatwa*, promulgated in the time of Sultan Selim I, which among other things stated that "whoever refuses to recognise Ibn 'Arabi is in error; if he insists, he becomes a heretic. It is incumbent on the sultan to educate him and cause him to renounce his conviction." There are over 40 separate treatises, mostly quite short amounting to two or three pages. Their subject matter is broad, in keeping with Ibn Kamal's position as Shaykh al-Islam, and shows his position on subjects such as the uncreatedness of the Quran, spiritual states or sainthood. Only three are by Ibn 'Arabi himself: the *Risala al-'Aqa'id* (or *Aqida*), part of the passage at the beginning of the *Futûhât* which describes the different credos of the ordinary believers and the elite; secondly, an important short text giving counsel to one of his disciples, *Risala fi'l-wa'z*,

copied from the copy of Ibn 'Arabi's son which was dated 624H (and thus during the lifetime of the author); and thirdly, a copy of the original *Fihris* (held in the Yusuf Aga library) or autobiobiography, with a *sama'* certificate dated 627H in Damascus.

Other recent acquisitions to the archive include digital copies of three exceptional manuscripts which have been copied from private collections: 1) three shorter works by Ibn 'Arabi (*'Anqa' Mughrib*, *Haqq* and *Mafatih al-ghayb*) copied by a well-known disciple in Damascus during the last year of the author's life (Jumada Akhir 637/January 1240) and checked against the original; 2) the first volume of the *Futûhât al-Makkiyya*, copied in Muharram 641/July 1243 and checked against the original – this is a well-written copy made at a very early date and in a style (headings with multiple inks and ornate borders) which suggests that it was done without sparing expense; and 3) one volume of the *Great Diwan*, in Ibn 'Arabi's own hand (a full description of this manuscript is published in JMIAS XXXIX, 2006).

As part of the project, several short works are now being edited and it is hoped that these will be available in Arabic as a critically edited text and English translation in the future. In a joint venture between MIAS and Anqa Publishing, it is hoped to begin a series of editions and translations: the first two texts, *A Prayer for Spiritual Elevation and Protection (al-Dawr al-A'la or Hizb al-Wiqaya)* and *the Epistle of Unification (al-Ittihad al-kawni)*, are expected to be out later this year. In addition, we are planning to publish in each issue of JMIAS a short article on particular manuscripts or works and further results of the archive.

It remains only to express our deepest gratitude to all those who have so generously contributed, and continue to contribute, funds which have enabled this project, now the best digital resource of Ibn 'Arabi's manuscripts in the world, and one which will continue to have impact on Ibn 'Arabi studies for many years.

Stephen Hirtenstein

Archive catalogues

Two basic catalogues of the manuscripts investigated during the Archiving Project are now available. The first gives information on the 259 collections examined by Jane Clark and Stephen Hirtenstein, and the second gives details of the 1000 or so texts by Ibn 'Arabi they contain, presented so that researchers can identify the best manuscripts for any given work. Most of the collections are in Turkish libraries, but the list also includes some important manuscripts in private hands. The catalogues will be put on the Society web-site, and will also be available as paper copies.

New Publications

Continued from back page

Muhyiddin
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Beauty and Love, by Shaykh Galip

Translated into modern Turkish and English by Victoria Rowe Holbrook. The Modern Language Association of America, New York, 2005. 216pp.

A classic Turkish poem written in 1783 by the distinguished head of the Istanbul Mevlevi Order. It is a romantic tale in which the girl Beauty and the boy Love undergo trial and tribulation on their path to union; it is a fine example of the way in which the mature Ottoman tradition brought together the visions of Ibn 'Arabî and Mevlâna (Rûmî) to form a powerful expression of the spiritual path. It is ably translated by Holbrook (the Turkish and English versions are published as separate books) who even manages to retain the original form of rhyming couplets without descending into doggerel.

Sharh al-mashâhid al-qudsiyya by Sitt 'Ajam al-Baghdâdiyya, edited by Bakri Aladdin and Souad Hakim. IFPO, Damascus, 2004. 493pp.

A critical edition, in Arabic, of an important early commentary on Ibn 'Arabî's *Mashâhid*. Written in about 1288H in Baghdad and extending to over 250 pages in the original manuscript, it is the only major metaphysical work in medieval Islam known to have been written by a woman. There is no translation as yet (although some parts were used in the translation of *Mashâhid* by Hakim and Beneito), but Aladdin and Hakim have produced a clear and well annotated text and gathered together what little information we have about the author. A short introduction in French by Michel Chodkiewicz reminds us of Ibn 'Arabî's remark that: "All the stations, all the degrees, all the attributes can belong to whomever God wishes from among women just as they can belong to whomever God wishes from among men". Ibn 'Arabî insists on this point many times, contrary to the view of many.

Papers

Ibn 'Arabî dans l'oeuvre de Henry Corbin, by Michel Chodkiewicz. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses, No 126, 2005. pp. 81-91

Publication of the paper which Chodkiewicz delivered at the conference dedicated to Henry Corbin at the Sorbonne a few years ago. It is a masterly critique upon Corbin's contribution to Ibn 'Arabî studies, considering in particular those elements, such as his emphasis upon Shi'ite philosophy, with which contemporary scholarship would take issue.

The Prophetic Tradition and the Battle for the Soul of the World, by Tom Cheetham. Temenos Review, X, 2005.

An article summarising the lectures that Tom Cheetham gave in London for the Temenos Academy based upon his reading of Corbin's *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabî*. He draws out the aspect of Ibn 'Arabî's vision which concerns the role of imagination on the spiritual path, particularly in prayer.

New publications in Indonesia

Kautsar Noer informs us that translations of three works by Ibn 'Arabî have been published in Bahasa Indonesia (the Indonesian language). These are:

What the Seeker Needs (Kitâb Kunh Mâ lâ budda lil-murîd min-hu), *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom (Kitâb al-Tadbîrât al-Ilâhiyyah)*, and *Journey to the Lord of Power (Risâlat al-Anwâr)*. All three were translated by Hodri Arieu.

Two translations have been published of *Ibn 'Arabî's Theory of the Perfect Man and Its Place in the History of Islamic Thought* by Masataka Takeshita.

Full details of these works and others can be found on the Society web site: www.ibnarabisociety.org/indonesianpublications1.html

New titles in Turkey in 2006

A search of the online catalogue of a Turkish bookshop shows no fewer than twelve titles related to Ibn 'Arabî printed in 2006.

Some of these are re-issues of books printed previously, such as *Özün Özü (The Kernel of the Kernel)*, and translations of the *Mishkat al-anwar* and *Sufis of Andalusia*.

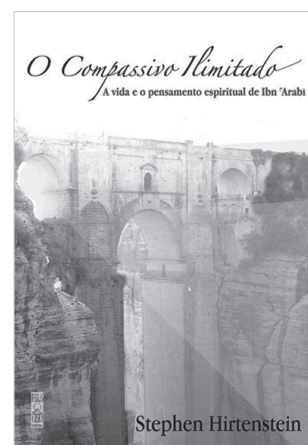
However, the most eye-catching items must be the first two volumes of a projected eighteen-volume translation of the *Futûhât al-Makkiyya*. Published by Litera Yayincilik of Istanbul, they were translated by Ekrem Demirli. This translator has been very active over the past few years, publishing translations of other works by Ibn 'Arabî and several volumes by Sadruddin Konevi, as well as studies by A.A. Afîfi and Souad Hakim.

In Brazil

O Compassivo Ilimitado: A vida e o pensamento espiritual de Ibn 'Arabî, by Stephen Hirtenstein. Translated by Regina Pedrosa de Araujo. Fissus, 2006. 334pp. www.fissus.com.br

A translation into Portuguese of *The Unlimited Mercifier*. The publisher says "This excellent introduction to Ibn 'Arabî is certainly the most comprehensive book on this subject published in Brazil." The only other book published in Brazil is *The Alchemy of Perfect Happiness*.

A German translation of *The Unlimited Mercifier* is being prepared by Chalice Books.



Questions, questions

Some of the enquiries received by the Society

In this age of web sites and e-mail, the Society regularly receives requests for information on a wide range of subjects. This is a sample of the enquiries received in the past few months.

1. How to get the Arabic text of the *Futûhât al-Makkiyya*

We generally direct people to Librairie Avicenne in Paris, or Al Saqi Books in London. Both have web sites and do mail-order. If anyone knows of other bookshops or online sellers regularly stocking the *Futûhât*, please let us know, and we will include this information on a "Frequently asked questions" page on the Society web site.

2. Where can I get a translation of the *Futûhât*?

As yet there is no full translation of the *Futûhât* in any language, so far as we know, though there are early volumes of full translations in Persian, Turkish and Urdu. The list of works in European languages containing translations from the *Futûhât* is growing, but there is still a long way to go. Titles in English, for example, include *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* and *The Self-Disclosure of God* by William Chittick, *The Meccan Revelations* (two volumes, ed. M. Chodkiewicz), and *The Mysteries of Bearing Witness to the Oneness of God and Prophethood of Muhammad*, translations by Aisha Bewley. These books and others are sold on the Society's web site.

3. "O marvel, a garden amidst flames"

This is one of the best-known quotations from Ibn 'Arabi, and people ask where it comes from. The answer is *The Tarjumán al-Ashwáq*, poem 11. R.A. Nicholson's 1911 translation of the *Tarjuman* was the first translation of a work by Ibn 'Arabi to appear in a European language. He rendered the line "O marvel! a garden amidst fires." Also becoming well known is Theophany 81 from the *Kitab al-Tajalliyat*, translated by Henry Corbin in *Alone with the Alone*. It begins, "Listen, dearly beloved..."

4. People looking for the texts of other works by Ibn 'Arabi, or translations, or copies of hard-to-find articles, or references

e.g. "I am doing research on religious symbolism in thirteenth century Anatolia. I am looking for a translation of Arabi's *Risaletü'l Ittihadü'l Kevni*. I discovered Denis Gril's translation into French (*Le Livre de l'arbre et des quatre oiseaux*). But I wonder whether it has been translated into English or not. Could you please inform me about this and if available show me a way to find it?"

This enquiry was easy to satisfy, because a link to an online translation was on the Society's web site. Sometimes questions of this kind have to

New Honorary Fellows

We are pleased to announce that Yasushi Tonaga and Ibrahim Kalin have become Honorary Fellows of the Society. Yasushi Tonaga is Associate Professor, Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Japan. Ibrahim Kalin is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, College of the Holy Cross, Department of Religious Studies, Worcester, MA, United States of America.

Thanks to the editors

The past three issues of the Society newsletter were produced by Jane Clark and Julia Dry. We would like to thank them for the huge amount of work they put into them.

Since they retired as editors it has proved difficult to fill their shoes. This has led to a delay in bringing out this edition, for which we apologize. This issue was put together by Martin Notcutt.

be sent to a number of scholars. Some questions are multi-disciplinary:

e.g. "I wondered if someone in your Society might know if the *Futûhât al-Makkiyyah* was available to Coleridge" [the 19th century English poet].

5. Questions about meaning

e.g. "What exactly is the position of Ibn 'Arabi on astrology? Does he write about it in his works? ... I have a copy of *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn 'Arabi*. But I need to know more."

e.g. "I want to know more regarding Ibn 'Arabi's view point about waiting (*entezar*)."

6. Contact details for some well-known members of the Society

Obviously we cannot pass these on. We are sometimes able to forward an e-mail. University people often have addresses listed on departmental web sites.

7. Occasional questions from people about visits to Damascus or other places associated with Ibn 'Arabi

The complex of buildings including the tomb of Ibn 'Arabi is in the Salihyya district of Damascus, at the base of al-Qasiyun, the mountain that overlooks the city. The tomb is down a staircase from the ablutions courtyard of the mosque, which was built in honour of Ibn 'Arabi by Sultan Selim. Locals often refer to the area as Shaykh Muhyiddin.

Stephen Hirtenstein has organised tours of Andalusia and Anatolia, "Following in the Footsteps of Ibn 'Arabi". See the website of Anqa Publishing for more information: www.ibn-arabi.com.

"Time and Non-Time" in New York

Report by Jane Carroll on the Society Symposium in 2005

Muhyiddin
Ibn 'Arabi Society

In October the Ibn 'Arabi Society of America left the leafy glades of Berkeley, Ojai and Seattle, where recent symposia have been held, and headed across the country to the heart of New York City where the 2005 symposium was held on the campus of Columbia University. The hustle and bustle of the busiest city in America was exhilarating, exhausting or both depending on the disposition of the attendee. But whatever the surroundings, the talks this year were exceptional. 2005 being the year of Einstein, and the centenary year of the publications which shattered previous concepts of time in the West, many correspondences were found between Ibn 'Arabi's thought and the findings of modern physics although it was repeatedly pointed out that Ibn 'Arabi's value transcends these correspondences.

Caner Dagli opened the Symposium with his talk "Levels of the Soul and the levels of Time" describing various models of time from the medieval geocentric cosmology of Ibn 'Arabi's era to the period of Newtonian physics and classical mechanics to the New Physics in which the scientist makes no absolute statement about what we can know. This has had the paradoxical effect of returning the human to an understanding of the world based on his real experience.

For Ibn 'Arabi who asserts that time and space have no essential reality but are modes of revelation of the eternal unchanging Self, the spiritual journey consists of aligning the self which experiences time and movement, with the non-temporal self so that the former can be transfigured by the latter.

Ibrahim Kalin continued the theme of "experienced" time in his paper, "Temporal and Eternal Time in Ibn 'Arabi and Mulla Sadra". The modern concept of time as an even continuum which can be measured by a clock denies our experience of its different qualities. Both Ibn al-'Arabi and Mulla Sadra speak of time (*zaman*) as subjective and "imaginary" the experience of which alters according to state. The "Eternal Now" is the essential reality of the changing things and the path of the sufi is the preparation of the soul for participating in this.

Alison Yiangou's talk "'There's no Time like the Present'" dealt with the matter from the human perspective. As each instant is a "coming into being" of the singular ever present Reality in one of the forms of its possibilities, from our point of view this instant is the gift, or present, of existence in the form of our own possibility. We are necessarily an image of our time and our time is an image of us. In both senses of the word, there is literally no better time than the present.

In the early evening Rafi Zabor read from his just published book "I Wabenzi" a section relating to his first studies of Ibn 'Arabi in the early 70's and also a section describing his own experience

of a timeless moment in attempting to practise the Mevlevi turn. To hear the description of a personal experience of time and timelessness so convincingly rendered provided an original end to the day.

On Sunday morning Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila delivered a paper on "*Ayan thabita* and Ibn 'Arabi". He suggested that Ibn 'Arabi's concept of time as an organising principle between events having no existence in itself corresponds in many respects to modern physics' view of time as a fourth dimension. The changing things of this world whose reality is the *ayan thabita* or immutable entities are analogous to modern scientists' description of things moving through time and space in space-time worms.

Gerald Elmore's paper "The Sun of Religion Meets its 'Reviver'?" was a speculation on the relationships between Shams-i Tabrizi, and by extension Rumi, and Ibn 'Arabi. The possible connections in time and space of these great saints and their differing but complementary legacies was explored in history and legend. Given the theme of the symposium, their connection outside of time was shown to be indisputable.

Stephen Hirtenstein completed the symposium with a paper entitled "The Mantle of Khadir, mystery, myth and meaning" which extracted Ibn 'Arabi's writings on Khidr, his interpretations of his meaning and his descriptions of his own encounters with him. Ibn 'Arabi tells us that at the level of Khidr, which he calls the Station of Closeness, is a prophethood which is fundamentally esoteric, unconditioned by people, place and time. It was entirely appropriate that this symposium should conclude with a description of a guidance to the inner reality of man from a station unconstrained by time.

"Know Yourself"

Berkeley, California - October 14-15, 2006

The Ibn 'Arabi Society in the USA will hold its Annual Symposium at the Faculty Club, University of California at Berkeley on October 14th and 15th, 2006.

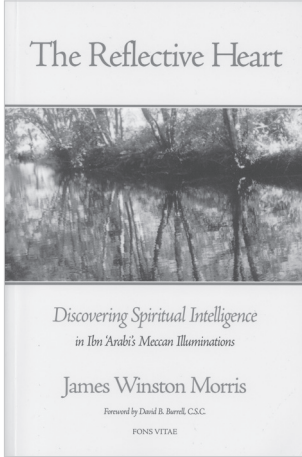
The speakers include Samer Akkach (University of Adelaide, Australia), Suleyman Derin (Marmara University, Istanbul), Olga Luchakova (Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, San Francisco), Jim Morris (Boston College), Elizabeth Roberts (Beshara School, Scotland), Omid Safi (University of North Carolina), Laury Silvers (Skidmore College).

The programme and registration form will be posted on the Society web site.

New Publications

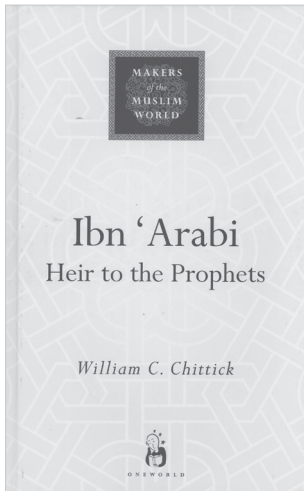
Notes by Jane Clark on books received by the Library

***The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn 'Arabi's Meccan Illuminations*, by James Winston Morris. Fons Vitae, Louisville, 2005. 420pp.**



In this important book for a general audience, Morris gathers together papers and talks given over a number of years. Based upon his practical experience of presenting the ideas in classrooms and workshops, his aim is to demonstrate the relevance of the Shaykh's vision to a modern audience and to show how the difficulties of language can be overcome so that his writings speak directly to the process of "spiritual intelligence" in each reader. Making explicit the Qur'anic context and including much new translation from the *Futūḥāt* itself, he covers such themes as "Journeying (Wandering and ascent)", "Listening (Contemplation and the Purified Heart)", "Seeing (Spiritual vision and the mysteries of *ihsân*)", "Discerning (Learning to translate from God)", and "Returning (Exploring the Divine shadow-play)". Essential reading.

***Ibn 'Arabi, Heir to the Prophets*, by William Chittick. Oneworld, Oxford, 2005. 152pp.**



This is a general introduction to the thought of Ibn 'Arabi which summarises the themes which Chittick has developed in his longer works, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, (SUNY, 1989) and *The Self-disclosure of God* (SUNY, 1998).

There are very few short "entry level" introductions to the Shaykh's thought, and this does a very good job, covering a great deal in a few pages. It deals only very briefly with his life and works, but plunges straight into topics such as "The Muhammadan Inheritance", "The Divine Roots of Love", "The

Cosmology of Remembrance", "Knowledge and Realisation" and "The Hermeneutics of Mercy".

***New Critical Essays: On the Present State and Future Tasks of the Study of Sufism*, by Bernd Radtke. M.Th. Houtsma Stichting, Utrecht, 2005. 330pp.**

This important collection of essays, written for the most part in German, includes a new translation of Ibn 'Arabi's *Risalat al-Anwâr*. This short work on retreat has already been translated by Rabiya Terri-Harris as *Journey to the Lord of Power* (East-West Publications, New York, 1981), and Radtke has included her version here, alongside an Arabic transliteration of a critical edition based upon verified manuscripts, and translations into French and

Spanish by Chodkiewicz and Palacios. He has also produced a new translation into German himself, and his collaborator John O'Kane has brought this into English. The result is fascinating because not only does it give us a new, and more accurate, version of the text, but also gives a chance to compare the different translations.

***Paths to Transcendence, according to Shankara, Ibn 'Arabi and Meister Eckhart*, by Reza Shah-Kazemi. World Wisdom, Indiana, 2006. 262pp**

An informed comparative study which looks at the essential message of these three great mystics. The bulk of the book is taken up by summaries of their thought structured around the themes of "the doctrine of absolute transcendence", "the spiritual ascent" and "existential return". Then there is a short chapter at the end which looks at "essential commonalities", followed by an interesting appendix entitled "Against the reduction of transcendence: a critical appraisal of recent academic approaches to mystical experience". Dedicated to Frithjof Schuon, it shows the influence of his thought in its final assertion that "the attainment of the transcendent essence of religion entails surpassing, but not bypassing, the boundaries of formal religion."

***The Tree of Being*, by Ibn 'Arabi. Interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak. Archetype, Cambridge UK, 2005. 254pp.**

An interpretative rendering of *Shajarat al-kawn*, which Bayrak calls "an ode to the perfect man". The text has already been translated into English by A. Jeffery (in *Studia Islamica*, 1959), and into French by Maurice Gloton (*L'Arbre du Monde*, Les Deux Océans, Paris, 1982). Both previous editions are more scholarly. However, the most important information for students of Ibn 'Arabi is that this is now considered to be an apocryphal work, the real author probably being 'Abd al-Salâm b. Ghânim al-Maqdisî (d. 1280).

Continued on page 5

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