



SUMMER SCHOOL

PERENNIA VERBA
“Studies in Sufism”

4th Edition

Approaches to the
Study of Ibn ‘Arabi
and the Akbarian
School: Theories, Texts,
and Practices

Online seminars for 2020 edition
From 24th August to 5th September

Introduction

The 2020 edition of the Summer School “Studies in Sufism”, organized by the association Perennia Verba



PERENNIA VERBA

in collaboration with MIAS (Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society) Latina,



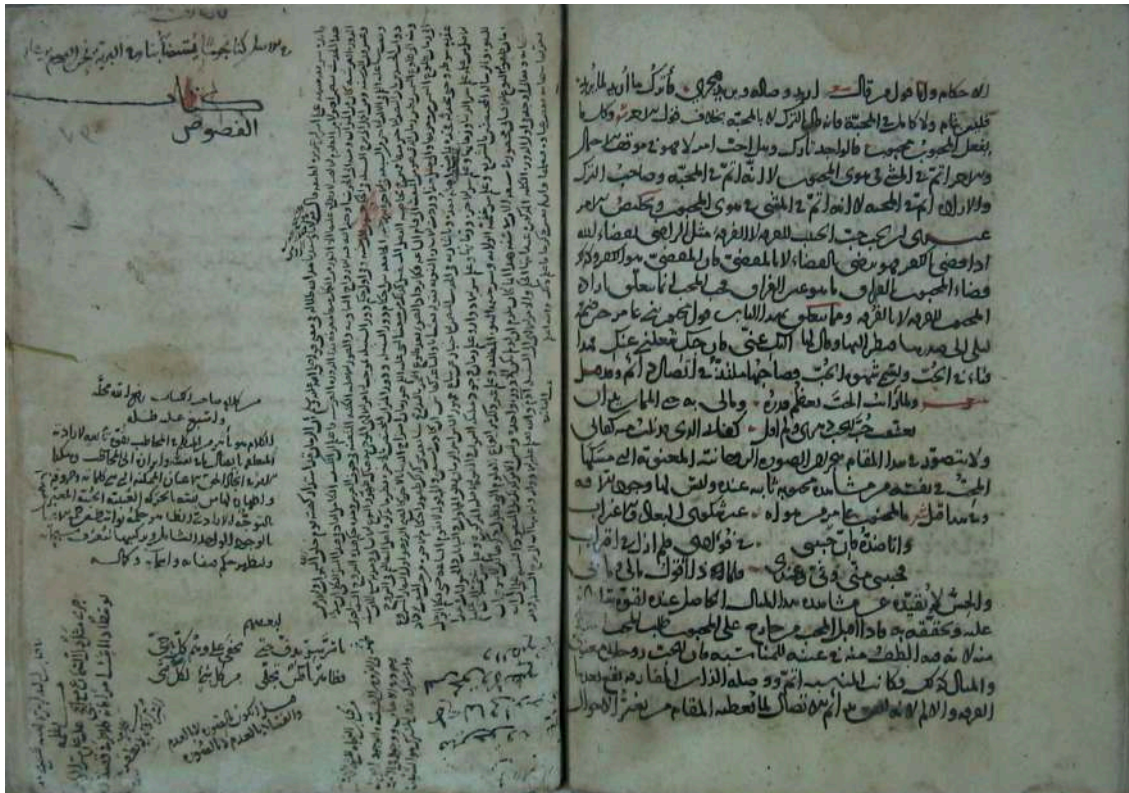
MIAS LATINA

will take place in the form of online seminars from **24th August to 5th September**, with the possibility to listen and interact with different scholars about the fundamental aspects of the doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī and the methodologies to approach it. Every lesson will address a different aspect of the teaching of the Shaykh al-Akbar and his followers, from the context in which Ibn ‘Arabī emerged in al-Andalus to his technical terminology as expressed in his works and systematized by later authors.

The aim of this fourth edition of the Summer School-Studies in Sufism is to bring together senior scholars, emerging researchers and postgraduate students working on Islamic thought, for a set of lectures on the theme ***Approaches to the Study of Ibn ‘Arabi and the Akbarian School: Theories, Texts, and Practices.***

Approaches to the Study of Ibn 'Arabi and the Akbarian School

The fourth edition of our Summer School-Studies in Sufism will focus on Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (1165-1240) and his school of thought. Known also as *Al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, 'the Greatest Master', Ibn 'Arabi is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in the intellectual spirituality not only of the Islamic world, but of all history. His literary production is monumental and we can attribute to him with certainty at least 400 works, the most important of which are the well-known *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* and the *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam*. The first is a veritable encyclopedia of the 'inner science' of Islam, an ocean of all the esoteric knowledge of his era. As for the *Fuṣūs*, this 200-page book in Arabic can be considered as his spiritual testament and the synthesis of his thought, although Ibn 'Arabi affirmed that his source of inspiration for the work was the Prophet Muhammad himself who gave him the text in a dream.



Ibn 'Arabi's *Bezels of Wisdom (Fusus al-hikam)*
Ms Shehid Ali Pasa 1351 with the *sama'* of the Author

Many of the concepts exposed by Ibn 'Arabī in a profound, daring and often enigmatic language have become the actual foundations of later Sufism. The two main themes of his thought revolve around the notions of 'Unicity of Being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*, a term first used by his disciple Qunawī) and of the 'Perfect Man' (*al-insān al-kāmil*). It is not difficult to see in them the metaphysical dimension of the double formula of the Islamic profession of Faith. Both have been extensively elaborated by the interpreters of his thought, personalities like Şadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), Mu'ayyad al-Dīn Jandī (d. 1300), Sa'd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 1300), 'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī (d. 1330), Dawūd Qayşarī (d. 1350), Haydar Amoli (d. 1384), 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 1403), Molla Şadra Shirāzī (d. 1636), Abd Allah Busnawi (d. 1644), up to the most recent 'Abd al-Ghani Nabulusi (d. 1731) and Emir 'Abd al-Qādīr (d. 1883), only to mention the most famous ones.



Sadruddin tomb in Qonya

Program

Key lectures, by Sandra Benato (Federal University of São Paulo, BR), Pablo Beneito (University of Murcia, ES), Yousef Casewit (University of Chicago, US), Stephen Hirtenstein (Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, UK), Federico Salvaggio (University of Udine, IT), Luca Patrizi (University of Exeter, UK), Michele Petrone (UC Louvain, BE), Dunja Rašić (University of Belgrade, SRB), Patrizia Spallino (Università di Palermo, IT), Paolo Urizzi (Perennia Verba Association, IT), Gregory Vandamme (PhD UCLouvain, BE), Alberto Ventura (Università della Calabria, IT) will take place from Monday to Saturday and will be divided into morning and afternoon sessions.

Every lesson will address a different aspect of the teaching of the Shaykh al-Akbar and his followers, from the **context** in which Ibn 'Arabī emerged in **al-Andalus** to his **technical terminology** as expressed in his works and systematized by **later authors**. The following list is just a brief summary of the topics that will be discussed during the seminars:

- Akbarian technical terminology
- Hermeneutical approach to Qur'ān
- Numerological and letters symbolism
- Poetic imagery and its symbolism
- Muhammadan wholeness
- Unity of Being vs Unicity of Existence
- Andalusī Sufism
- Ibn 'Arabī's works: major texts, handwritten sources and their contents
- Main works of Qūnawī: texts, sources and contents
- The main Masters of the Akbarian School
- Qur'anic structure of the works of Ibn 'Arabī
- The notion of Sanctity according to the Shaykh al-Akbar

With the intention of providing students with the opportunity to approach the proposed texts from a perspective that is epistemologically consistent with the *Weltanschauung* of their authors, and of the historical milieu in which they lived, teachers have been selected among those scholars who besides being endowed with high academic standards are also gifted with the ability to penetrate and transmit the original spirit of the ideas and sources they discuss.

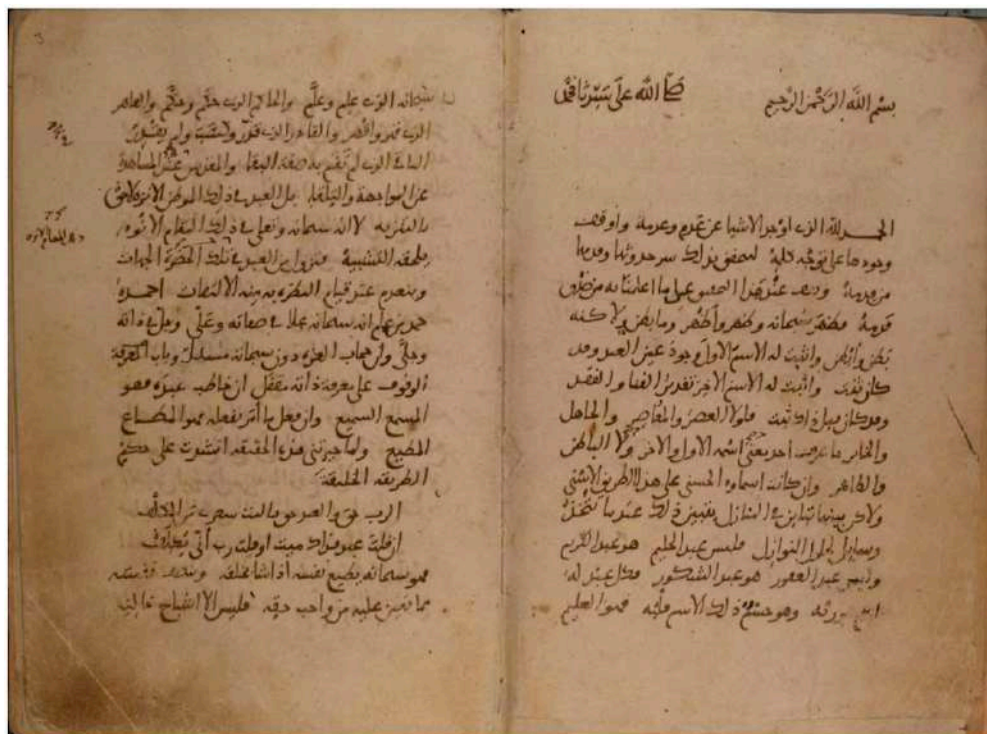
Monday 24 August

Morning session 10.00-12.00

o In the Master's Hand: an overview of Ibn 'Arabi's written works (1st part)

Stephen Hirtenstein (Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, UK)

Ibn 'Arabi is of course well known for his prodigious literary output, but how many books did he write? Which texts are authentic? How many have survived? This talk will give an overview of his major works, their contents and the way they have survived to the present day, in manuscript copies and printed editions, and some of the problems faced by modern researchers. We will also explore his unique method and purpose in writing, and what implications this might have for his readers.



Opening pages of the Konya manuscript of the *Meccan Revelations*, handwritten by Ibn 'Arabi

Monday 24 August

Afternoon session 17.00-19:00

- **Unity of Being and Unicity of Existence. The concept of wujūd in Sufi metaphysics**

Alberto Ventura (Università della Calabria, IT)

The expression *Waḥdat al-wujūd* has been translated variously in modern European languages, creating a certain confusion about the real meaning in which the phrase is to be understood. Sometimes *waḥdat* is rendered as “Unicity” and sometimes as “Unity”; the translation of *wujūd*, on the other end, varies from “Being” to “Existence”. This lesson will try to clarify the matter, exploring the various meanings of the terms in the different contexts in which they are addressed. At the same time, this will be useful to fully understand the related problems of Unity and Multiplicity, Being and Non-Being, *Wujūd* and *Shuhūd*.

Tuesday 25 August

Morning session 10.00-12.00

- **The notion of Sanctity according to the Shaykh al-Akbar (1st part)**

Paolo Urizzi (Perennia Verba, IT)

Sanctity (*walāya*) is the gateway to closeness to God. According to Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, it includes two categories of individuals: those who approach God through effort (*jahd*) and those who approach Him through the grace of divine attraction (*jadhba*). Besides being the early theorist of sanctity, Tirmidhi is also the first to introduce the controversial notion of the function of the “Seal of Saints”. A few centuries later, Ibn ‘Arabī resumed and expanded Tirmidhī’s positions on the subject and ordered them around the main axis of the idea of “prophetic inheritance”. At the same time he made of the function of “Seal of Saints” an enigmatic theme that for centuries has inflamed to the present day the most intellectual circles of Sufism.

Tuesday 25 August

Afternoon session 17.00-19:00

- **In the Master's Hand: an overview of Ibn 'Arabi's written works (2st part)**

Stephen Hirtenstein (Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, UK)

See 1st part – 24 August

Wednesday 26 August

Morning session 10.00-12.00

- **The notion of Sanctity according to the Shaykh al-Akbar (2nd part)**

Paolo Urizzi (Perennia Verba, IT)

See 1st part – 25 August



Thursday 27 August

Morning session 10.00-12.00

- **Qūnawī: the disciple son**

Patrizia Spallino (University of Palermo, IT)

This lesson will be centered on the figure of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunāwī, his life, experiences and personality in relation with his reference figure and adoptive father, the Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn al-‘Arabī. The focus will be on his works and the main themes of his thought, which are in close relation with akbarian elaborations of metaphysical and cosmological doctrines. More specifically, we will give a close look at some passages of the correspondency about philosophical and Sufi topics between al-Qunāwī and another fundamental figure of the time, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

Afternoon session 17.00-19:00

- **‘Afif al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī and the Akbarian tradition**

Yousef Casewit (Univeristy of Chicago, US)

The North African Sufi poet and author, ‘Afif al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 1291), was one of the leading pupils of Ibn ‘Arabī and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī. His highly original commentary on the divine names represents an early engagement with the writings of his two teachers. In this talk, Yousef Casewit explores the major themes in Tilimsānī’s thought including his notion of the Four Journeys to God and methods of spiritual training (*tarbiya*) in his writings.

Friday 28 August

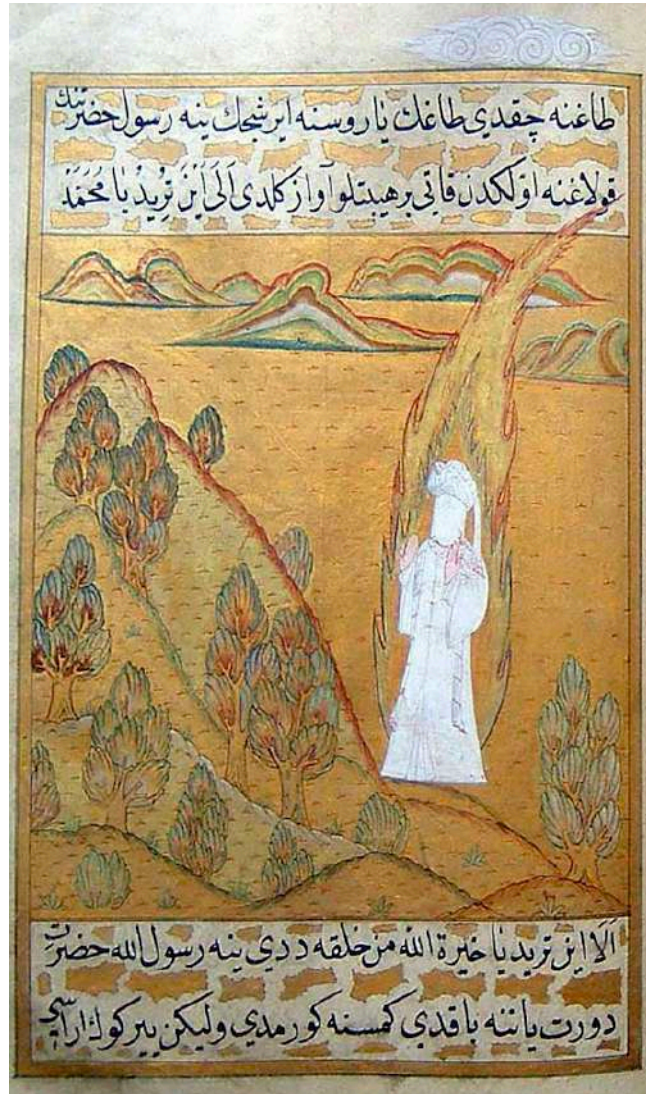
Morning session 10.00-12.00

- **Muhammad as the Universal Mediator**

Luca Patrizi (University of Exeter, UK)

The doctrine of Universal Intermediation (*wasīla, wāsiṭa*) of Muḥammad towards God, particularly on the Day of the Judgment, is widely attested in the primary sources of Islam. Together with the practice of intercession (*shafā’a, tawassul, istighātha*) from which it derives, it represents the main point of differentiation and controversy between Sunni and Shi’i doctrine and Reformism in Islam. In Islamic esotericism, this doctrine is the object of a metaphysical interpretation closely connected

to the reality of Muḥammad as *Insān Kāmil*. The attributes of Muḥammad as the Universal Mediator as described in the primary sources, namely his rank on the Day of the Judgment, the *maqām maḥmūd*, and his direct management of the celestial cistern that will quench the thirst of the blessed (*ḥawd*), received a specific cosmological and esoteric interpretation in Sufi literature, particularly in the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. The main esoteric interpretation identifies Muḥammad with the God's cupbearer, who distributes the luminous divine drink that leads to spiritual intoxication, whose real nature is nothing more than the *nūr al-muḥammadiyya*.



Saturday 29 August

Afternoon session 17.00-19:00

- **The Multiple Single Face of the Third Thing according to Ibn ‘Arabī**

Sandra Benato (Federal University of São Paulo, BR)

Much has been said, in the work of Ibn ‘Arabī, about the meeting of the two seas, the union of the opposites and barzakh – the imaginal state between yes and no. This ambiguity is often taken as related to the “third thing” that, despite indefinable, is experienced, and implies in the existence of the Real. As the experience is renewed at every instant, the names of this third thing are many, depending on the point of view (‘ayn) we live our reality.

Our intention here is to search for the interconnection of those names in the experience of self, under the ineffable guidance of this third element’s attraction force..

Tuesday 1 September

Afternoon session 17.00-19:00

- **The Notion of ‘Ḥayra’ (Perplexity): A Key to Ibn ‘Arabī’s Epistemology and Qur’anic Hermeneutics”**

Gregory Vandamme (PhD UCLouvain, BE)

Perplexity” (*ḥayra*) is considered to be the most perfect knowledge and spiritual realization by Ibn ‘Arabī. It also plays a major role in his Qur’anic hermeneutics, in that the divine perfection of Revelation lies for him precisely in its ability to bring Perplexity to the human receiver.

We will examine some key passages of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* and other works in order to introduce this key notion of Perplexity and its practical implications.

Wednesday 2 September

Morning session 10.00-12.00

o Poetry and its role in Sufi writing

Michele Petrone (UCLouvani, BE)

Ibn 'Arabī's use of poetry in his works, especially in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* represents a specific mode of communication between the author and the reader, the master and the disciple.

This seminar will give the students an overview of the poetic work of Ibn 'Arabī, from the *Diwān* to the *Tarǧūmān al-Ašwāq*, to the poetry inserted in his prose works.

Following the indications given by the Šayḥ al-Akbar himself about how to approach his poetry, we will examine some verses accompanying the prose, analyzing how these two are related in the construction of meaning.

Another aspect that will be analyzed is the literary context in which Ibn 'Arabī's poetry was composed (from the *Muwaššahāt* of al-Šuštari to the *Burda* of al-Būširī). This will help distinguish different forms and functions of Sufi poetry, from instilling piety to instruction about elevated metaphysical doctrines.



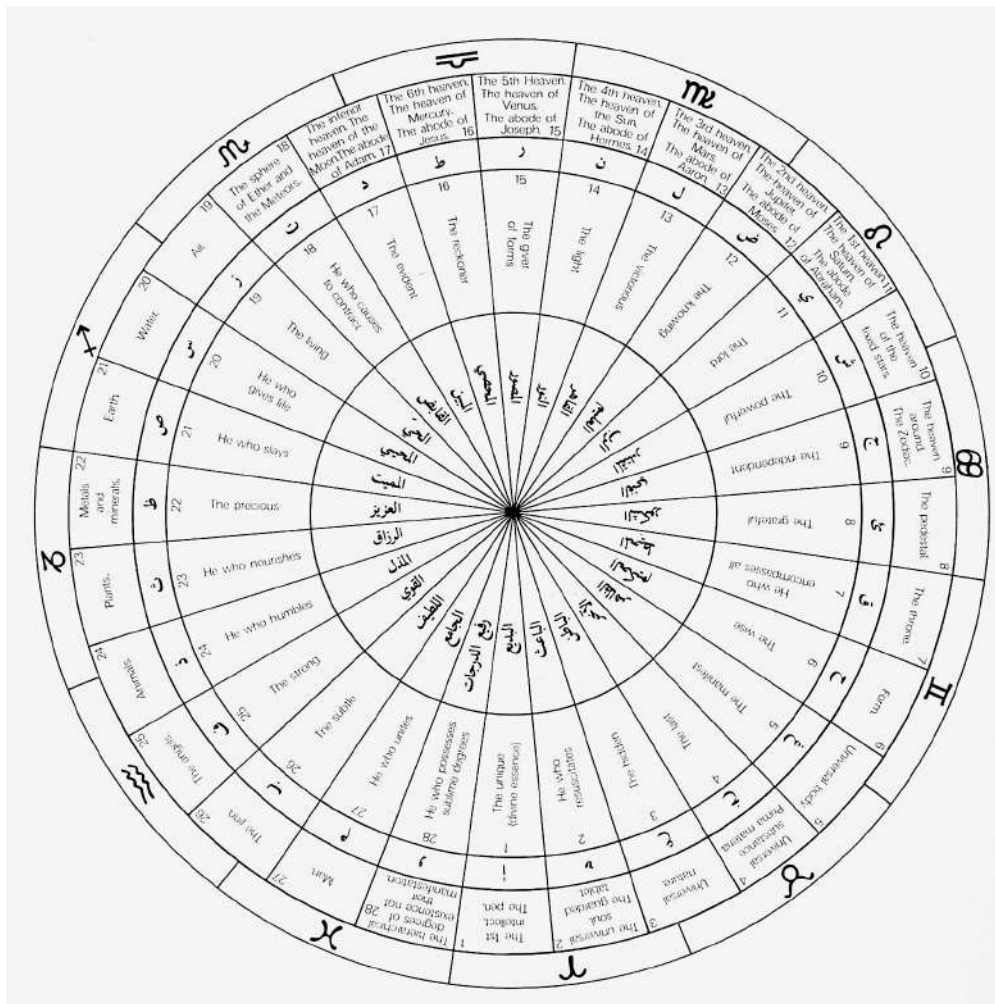
Thursday 3 September

Afternoon session 17.00-19:00

o The Written World of God. The Science of the Letters in the Works of Ibn 'Arabī

Dunja Rašić (University of Belgrade, SRB)

Apart from God, Ibn 'Arabī believed, a man can speak, an angel can speak and a djinn can speak. However, human beings were the only ones with a potential to come to terms with the secret properties of letters. The science of letters (ar. *'ilm al-ḥurūf*) represents one of the central elements of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. Until today, it also tends to be perceived as one of the most abstruse ones. This lecture will give an overview of Ibn 'Arabī's notions on the science of the letters and the symbolical interpretation of the letters of the Arabic alphabet in his works.



Friday 4 September

Morning session 10.00-12.00

- **Semantic Explanations in the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* in the Light of Ibn Arabi's Hermeneutic Principles**

Federico Salvaggio (University of Udine, IT)

In the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* Ibn Arabi presents us with several linguistic explanations about the meanings of specific words and expressions (mostly Qur'anic occurrences). From a modern linguistic perspective, many of those explanations would be judged as belonging to the category of folk etymologies or as the product of fanciful speculations. By making explicit the epistemological and theoretical framework standing behind them, in our contribution, we will try to show how, far from being the product of popular fantasy, Ibn Arabi's linguistic analysis reveal themselves as highly sophisticated hermeneutic practices grounded in a thorough knowledge of various branches of Islamic science. Moreover, when investigated in the light of Akbarian hermeneutic principles such practices result perfectly consistent with the vision of language (of its origins, internal composition, ultimate purpose, etc.) developed in the Islamic context by confronting the sacred text and the linguistic structure of revelation and which finds its most complete metaphysical elaboration in the thought of the Andalusian master.

Saturday 5 September

Afternoon session 17.00-19:00

- **Lexical Derivation (*iṣṭiqāq*) as Hermeneutic Dimension in Ibn Arabi's Works**

Pablo Beneito (University of Murcia, ES)

The Arabic alphabet (*abjad*) combines the symbolic keys of the sciences of letters and numbers. In this presentation we will address a third fundamental hermeneutic dimension linked to letters: lexical interference. The science of *iṣṭiqāq*, or morphosemantic derivation, explores the original meanings and images of the basic forms of Arabic lexical roots and their analogy with meanings and images of the derived forms. That is an essential element of Akbarian hermeneutics: moreover to distinguish between the various modalities and implications of interference bears an essential importance in order to understand Ibn 'Arabi's thought, since each single term in his writings, refers, among other things, to this dimension of the providential language of the Arabic revelation.

Application

The subscription fee is 53 Euros. Members of MIAS (Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society) benefit from a reduced fee of 30 Euros (if you are a MIAS member please mention it in your application). The organizers reserve the right to apply a reduced fee also to students with specific financial conditions. The subscription fee is intended to support the organization of the event and will grant you access to all lessons and to a forum exclusive for students and teachers of the Summer School. There you will have the opportunity to ask more questions, further develop the discussion and exchange study materials. Please apply only through the Summer School site

<https://studiesinsufism.altervista.org/buy-now/>.

Before proceeding to the payment we invite you to register, using the form on the website page. You should pay only AFTER having being contacted by us, with a confirmation of you subscription. We invite you to tell us something about your reasons to participate to the Summer School, so that we can start knowing each other before the lessons start!

Please also tell us what is your **academic qualification** and **affiliation** (current or last affiliation). We would also like to know if you have any knowledge of Arabic. Please notice that only knowledge of English is strictly required but this will help us to better organize lectures and teaching materials. You can insert all these details in the box "Other details" on the website page.

Fees can only be paid through PayPal. After receiving the confirmation of the payment, you will be contacted by the organization team and you will be provided with the access credentials for the Summer School. You will also receive instructions to create a forum account, that will be accessible as soon as the Summer School begins.

Failing to submit the payment before the beginning of the Summer School implies the automatic exclusion from all events, despite any form of previous contact.

Access credentials to the lessons and the forum are strictly personal and any user sharing them with others will be automatically excluded from the Summer School and permanently banned from the forum.

There is no refund of the registration fee after the beginning of the Summer School or in case the user will share his personal credential with others. Users with connection issues are kindly requested to contact the organization through the form above.

Director:

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[For more information please contact us through the form in the subscription page.](#)

Summer School site: <https://studiesinsufism.altervista.org>

THE (HA') OF DIVINE ESSENCE, ORIGIN OF THE LETTERS AND OF EXISTENCE AND THE TULIP MOTIF.

The tulip motive

by Valerie Behiery

The tulip is native to Central Asia, the original homeland of the Turks, explaining why it is inextricably bound up with their history. If the flower from the lilac family is so firmly associated with the Ottoman period, it already played a role during the earlier Seljuks of Rum dynasty (1077-1308).

As a symbol, the tulip is rich and multi-faceted. In addition to signifying feminine beauty, perfection, paradise, the Turkish native homeland and collective cultural identity, the tulip also possessed a spiritual dimension. To best understand the prevalence of the tulip motif in religious settings turn to the Turkish (originally Persian) word for tulip, *lale* that possesses orthographic and onomatopoeic similarities to the word Allah. Moreover, in the abjad system or Islamic numerology *lale* carries the same value as Allah. As such, the tulip constitutes an object of spiritual meditation. Mystics also liked to state that the flower is humble because, when in bloom, it bows its head before the majesty of God.

source: http://islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine/view/beloved_bloom_the_tulip_in_turkish_art/