Early Best-sellers in the Akbarian Tradition

The Dissemination of Ibn ʿArabī's Teaching Through Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī[1]

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Work in recent years has begun to produce a fairly good picture of Ibn ʿArabī's life, and has given us some context within which to place his vast and comprehensive body of work. The first detailed biography, *Ibn ʿArabī ou La Quête du Soufre Rouge* by Claude Addas appeared in 1989,[2] and further information continues to emerge as the field of Akbarian studies develops. But clearly the story of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings does not end with his death in 1240. What we receive in the present day has come to us through a process of transmission and dissemination which has not only determined the body of works which we now have, but has also significantly influenced the way we understand them.

The history of this dissemination is an enormous subject, for Ibn ʿArabī has been so widely studied in the last 800 years that a complete picture would have to include the spiritual histories of all the places where Islamic thought has had influence – including Turkey, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, China, India, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Africa, etc. – and would even extend, if we take the twentieth century into account, to Europe and the USA. Further, as Michel Chodkiewicz has pointed out,[3] it would have to include not only the "noble" scholarly texts, but also the unacknowledged but perceptible influence of his ideas through secondary literature and oral teaching. This paper covers just a very small part of this saga by concentrating upon the transmission

[1] This paper is based on papers given at the UK Symposium, Worcester College, Oxford, May 2002, and the US Symposium, University of California at Berkeley, October 2002.

[2] C. Addas, *Ibn ʿArabī ou La Quête du Soufre Rouge* (Paris, 1989). English translation, *Quest for the Red Sulphur* (Cambridge, 1993) and subsequent translations into Turkish, Spanish and probably other languages.

[3] M. Chodkiewicz, "The Diffusion of Ibn ʿArabī's Doctrine", *JMIAS*, Vol. IX (1991), pp. 36–57. Chodkiewicz points out that it is possible to detect Akbarian influence even in writings or writers who simultaneously denounce him due to the criticism of the jurists. Thus the dissemination has great *depth* as well as great *width.*

which took place in the years immediately following his death, up to around 1350, through his most important disciple, Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī, who lived in Konya in the centre of the Anatolian plain, in present-day Turkey.

It draws upon the background research I have been doing for the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī Society Archiving Project, which involves a systematic study, *in situ*, of the earliest surviving manuscripts of Ibn ʿArabī's work. These manuscripts contain a wealth of information about the early spread of Ibn ʿArabī's writings – the people who wrote them, the places they came from, the curriculum they studied, the subsequent history of the manuscripts which has led to their preservation, the people who collected them in their libraries, etc. So this article is more a summary of our present state of knowledge than a presentation of new information, although I will illustrate some points with reference to the manuscript base where appropriate.

Almost all the material which has survived to the present comes from the second half of Ibn ʿArabī's life, when he was residing in the eastern Mediterranean, in the heartlands of the *Dār al-Islām*. He wrote a number of works whilst he was still in the West,[4] but the earliest manuscript discovered so far is a copy of *ʿAnqāʾ Maghrib* (Berlin 3266) which Elmore believes may have been written in North Africa in 597/1201 during his journey east.[5] Other Maghrebi works, such as *Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya*[6] and *Mashāhid al-Asrār*[7] have survived only in copies rewritten later on. The vast majority of his 200–300 works were composed in the East,[8] and it was only during this period, after his experiences in Mecca, when he was a mature teacher, that Ibn ʿArabī began to take on students in any significant numbers.

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[4] See G. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 76–7.

[5] Ibid., pp. 197–8. It may be that the autograph copy of *Al-safr al-sādis min Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* discovered in the Library of Tunis (13567, ff. 1–170) is even earlier; it lacks a date, but says that it was written for Ibn ʿArabī's only disciple in the West, Badr al-Ḥabashī. Many of the North African libraries remain uncatalogued, so it is not impossible that we will eventually find other works from these earlier times.

[6] The oldest known MS. is Yusuf Ağa 4859, which we have not yet inspected but is said by Osman Yahya to be an autograph, so written before 638/1240. (See O. Yahya, *Histoire et Classification de l'Oeuvre d'Ibn ʿArabī* (Damascus, 1964), pp. 476–7. This is the standard bibliography of Ibn ʿArabī's works, and will be referred to simply as "Osman Yahya" in all that follows.) The oldest MS. we have so far inspected has been Koprülü 713, written in Konya in 663/c.1265 during Ṣadr al-dīn's lifetime.

[7] The oldest known texts are Manisa 1183, dated 686/c.1288, a MS. not listed by Osman Yahya, and the text in the Sitt al-ʿAjam commentary (see below) also dated 686 H.

[8] Osman Yahya lists 846 works altogether but many of these have no surviving manuscripts, or are of doubtful attribution. No-one has ever produced an exact revised figure – the Archiving Project might eventually yield such a thing – but 200–300 is a commonly accepted estimate.

He had a reasonably large number of these in the years immediately before his death, many of whom we know of only through the *samāʿ* on surviving manuscripts, particularly the autograph *Futūḥāt*,[9] which he read with groups of up to 35 people in Damascus between 1236 and 1239. We also know that he read manuscripts with students in Cairo, Aleppo, Baghdad, Mosul and Damascus as well as in Anatolia. All of these places were important in spreading his ideas, and we have found manuscripts copied in several other places, such as Mecca, several centuries after his death. There were also a number of early followers who wrote important works: for example, Sitt al-ʿAjam (d.1288), a female follower in Baghdād who wrote a major commentary upon the *Mashāhid al-asrār*,[10] and Saʿd al-dīn al-Ḥamūya (d.1252), who was also a student of Najm al-Kubra and extremely important in the Persian tradition.[11] The justification for concentrating upon Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī is that the transmission which took place through him was particularly influential – in some places, decisively so – on the way that Akbarian studies were to develop, because of both his own works, and those of his students. Ibn ʿArabī's circle in terms of numbers was fairly small during his lifetime and it was not until the second generation, after around 1300, that the wide dissemination of his ideas began to take place. The chief vehicles for this were Ṣadr al-dīn's followers, and their followers in turn, several of whom wrote what we could call "best-sellers" which firmly established Akbarian concepts in Islamic culture.

Most of what follows is concerned with writings and commentaries by these followers, but alongside this went the preservation of the works themselves, many of which would qualify as "best-sellers" in their own right. The two processes obviously overlapped; writing a commentary presupposes familiarity with the work, and in a pre-printing culture (as Islam largely was until the middle of the nineteenth century)

[9] Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi, nos. 1845–1881, a complete autograph of the second recension in 37 volumes. It carries 71 *samāʿ* altogether. 1–57 were read in front of Ibn ʿArabī, 58–71 by Ṣadr al-dīn and Ibn Sawdakīn after the Shaykh's death.

[10] See Ayasofia 2019, which is an autograph, dated 686/1287; the commentary is about 250 pages long. Little is known about her; according to Awwād, she was unlettered, and one night had a dream in which Ibn ʿArabī appeared and gave her all the knowledge that she ever needed. Ayasofia 2019 also contains a work of her own, *Kashf al-kunūz*, which has sometimes been attributed to Ibn ʿArabī (see Osman Yahya, who gives it number 337 in his *Répertoire Générale*).

[11] He was born in Khurasan, and after living in Mecca and Damascus in the middle period of his life, returned there. He is credited with writing over 400 books, although the real number is probably far less. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (EI^2), Vol. 8, pp. 703–4. There is scholarly disagreement as to the transliteration of his name; he is also referred to as "Hamuwayi" and "Hamawī". I have followed Omar Benaissa in using "Hamūya".

this would involve keeping a hand-written copy. One of the most remarkable features of the Akbarian tradition is the sheer number of early manuscripts that have survived. We have so far identified more than 40 texts which date from Ibn ʿArabī's lifetime, and were written in his close proximity. As many as 20 of these may be autographs, including the massive *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* in his own handwriting, numbering 9200 pages.[12] For a man who lived nearly 800 years ago, this is a truly extraordinary heritage. Much of this prime material can be traced to Ṣadr al-dīn, either to his own personal collection, or to the libraries of his followers such as Shams al-dīn al-Fanārī (d.834/1430), the Ottoman *Shaykh al-Islām* in Bursa, whose grandfather (or father?) studied with him.[13] If we include manuscripts written in the lifetime of Ṣadr al-dīn, many under his supervision, then we have to add another 35 or so to our list, making a total of about 80 manuscripts which can be traced directly to the author.

IBN ʿARABĪ'S CONNECTION WITH ṢADR AL-DĪN

There is every indication that Ibn ʿArabī knew how important Ṣadr al-dīn would be to his future work. He told him that before he left Andalusia (some years before Ṣadr al-dīn was even born) he paused at the edge of the Mediterranean sea:

> I resolved not to make the crossing until I had been allowed to see all the internal and external states that God had destined for me until the time of my death. So I turned towards God with total concentration and in a state of contemplation and vigilance that were perfect; God then showed me all my future states, both internal and external, right through to the end of my days. I even saw that your father, Isḥāq b. Muḥammad, would be my companion, and you as well. I was made aware of your states, the knowledge you would acquire, your experiences and stations, and of the revelations, theophanies and everything else with which God was to grace you. I then went to sea, with insight and certainty as my possession. Everything was and everything is just as it was bound to be.[14]

[12] See n. 9 above. These numbers are provisional, as we have not yet had the opportunity to verify the information on all the manuscripts.

[13] According to the Ottoman sources, it was his father who studied with Ṣadr al-dīn in Aleppo, but the dates are very hard to reconcile.

[14] From *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, pp. 215–20. Trans. C. Addas, *Quest*, p. 111.

This is related by one of Ṣadr al-dīn's most important disciples, Muʿayyid al-dīn al-Jandī (d.1300) who wrote it down in his commentary upon the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* which we will mention later.

Ibn ʿArabī's life falls approximately into three parts – his youth and apprenticeship in the West; an almost equal period in the East, where he set up centres of study in all the main cities and became the *Shaykh al-Akbar*, a sage, a teacher and an advisor to rulers and Sultans. Between these two periods lies a two to three year stay in Mecca, the spiritual centre of the Islamic world. During this time he underwent a number of crucial spiritual experiences; for instance, he had the vision of the "gold and silver bricks" which confirmed him as the Seal of Muhammadian Sainthood. And whilst circumambulating the Kaʿba, he met the youth – the *fatā* – upon whose form he read the Divine sciences which over the next thirty years he was to write down as the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.* It was during this time that he also met Ṣadr al-dīn's father, Shaykh Majd al-dīn, an event which ranks in importance with these more esoteric happenings.

Majd al-dīn came from Malatya, in Anatolia, and was a man of wealth and position, with high standing at the court of the rising new Seljuk dynasty based in Rum (Konya), and an agent for the Baghdad caliph, al-Nāṣir. He was one of the spiritual men who at that time became trusted advisors to kings and rulers.[15] Ibn ʿArabī and he became close friends, and when Ibn ʿArabī left Mecca in 1204, it was in his company. Majd al-dīn introduced him into political circles, particularly those of the Anatolian Seljuks, who gave Ibn ʿArabī the patronage and protection he needed to teach and work. Although he travelled constantly, Malatya was his main base for many years, before he moved to Damascus in 1223.

Both the Seljuks in Anatolia and the Ayyubids who were ruling in Cairo, Damascus and Aleppo, were active patrons of Sufi teaching, and this was the period in which Sufism began to be formalised into the orders which became the principal institutions of spiritual education in subsequent centuries. It was not like this in Ibn ʿArabī's day, even in these central regions; it was still common to study with different shaykhs, and many of Ibn ʿArabī's and Ṣadr al-dīn's pupils had also received initiations from other masters.[16] Many of the originators of the great orders, such as

[15] See S. Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 171–4.

[16] Fakhr al-dīn ʿIrāqi was also a pupil of a Suhrawardian master in Multan, Bahā' al-dīn Zakariyya, and al-Farghānī was a pupil of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī in Shiraz, and received the *khirqa* of initiation

Najm al-Kubra, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, whose orders bore their names, and Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, whose son, Sultan Veled founded the Mevlevi order, were near contemporaries living in the same region. But Ibn ʿArabī and his followers did not found an order in the standard sense. His teachings were widely studied and immensely influential on all the orders, but the direct transmission of his vision, once we go beyond the point of personal contact, was of a more various nature than that established in the *ṭarīqa*s (at least on the level of appearance), where definite physical lines of transmission from shaykh to shaykh, the *silsila,* became customary.[17] This raises the question of what we mean by speaking at all of an "Akbarian tradition"; for the purposes of this paper, I use the term only to refer to those people who have written with sympathy on Ibn ʿArabī's work, or who have adopted a perspective which is explicitly derived from his vision.

The absence of information about any other forms of transmission (unless they are specially mentioned), means that the written texts have great importance in the case of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, and discussion inevitably centres upon the way they were used; copying, teaching, lecturing, people taking notes and writing books, debating metaphysical points, etc. There was quite a lot of this last, for there is no doubt that Ibn ʿArabī's works are very intellectually demanding, and his followers, such as Ṣadr al-dīn himself and later figures in the Ottoman tradition such as ʿUthmān Faḍlī (d.1690), were equally erudite. But this does not mean that it was ever **merely**, or even **mainly,** a matter of intellectual study. Transmission would almost always take place within a teaching situation, and within a context of spiritual practice, even if there was no Akbarian *ṭarīqa* as such.

One of the recurrent themes of transmission, which Ṣadr al-dīn mentions himself as regards the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* was that of imbibing directly from the source

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from him, not from Ṣadr al-dīn. We have already mentioned Saʿd al-dīn al-Ḥamūya, who was one of the principal disciples of Najm al-Kubra. Ṣadr al-dīn himself studied with other masters apart from Ibn ʿArabī, as he lists in his *Fihris*, see G. Elmore, "Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's personal study-list of books by Ibn al-ʿArabī", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (1977), pp. 161–81.

[17] Thus even the Ottoman Jelveti, a branch of the Bayramiyya which was well-known for its special affiliation with Ibn ʿArabī, generating several great commentators such as Ismāʿīl Haqqī Bursawī (d.1725) and ʿAzīz Maḥmūd Hudayī (d.1628), does not claim an exterior form of descent. (See Rose, *The Darvishes*, 1867, repr. London, 1927). Its founder, Hazreti Üftāde (d.1580), however, had visited Damascus, and it is related that he conversed regularly with Ibn ʿArabī on an interior level towards the end of his life. Chodkiewicz tells us that there was a tradition of *khirqa akbariyya* by which the *baraka* of the Shaykh was transmitted; for example, to the great nineteenth-century Akbarian Emir ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazā'iri (d.1882) in Algeria. See Chodkiewicz, "Diffusion of Ibn ʿArabī's Doctrine", pp. 49–50.

– by which I do not mean from Ibn ʿArabī, but from the source from which **he** imbibed. For instance, we have this account by al-Jandī, of a study session on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*:

> While my master and guide Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Yūsuf al-Qūnawī was giving me a commentary on the prologue to the book (the *Fuṣūṣ*), the inspiration of the world of the mystery manifested its signs upon him and the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*) began to breathe in rhythm with his breathing. The air from his exhalations and the emanation of his precious breaths submerged my inner and outer being. His "secret" governed my "secret" (*bāṭinī*) in a strange and immediate manner and produced a perfect effect upon my body and my heart. In this way, God gave me to understand in the commentary on the prologue the contents of the entire book, and in this proximity inspired in me the preserved contents of its secrets. When the Shaikh [Qūnawī] realised what had happened to me … he related to me that he too had asked our master, the author [of the *Fuṣūṣ*], to provide him with a commentary on the … prologue [which] … had produced in him a strange effect by virtue of which he had understood the contents of the entire work.[18]

Ṣadr al-dīn himself, in his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, says of this incident:

> I only asked for an explanation of the preface (*khutba*) – nothing else – of this book from its author (may God be pleased with him). But it was [directly] from God to me, through His grace, that He granted me the [privilege] of sharing with him (Ibn ʿArabī) in realising that which was revealed to him, and of raising my glance to that which had been made clear to him, and of taking from God without causal intermediary but rather from the purity of Divine providence and essential binding which protects me from the effects which may come from the properties of intermediaries and the characteristics of [secondary] causes, conditions and ties.[19]

These quotes give a taste of the spiritual reality of the transmission, which reflects Ibn ʿArabī's own indications that he himself did not gain his knowledge through any particular master or spiritual path, but directly from God, without intermediary – an inclination expressed as his relationship with the spiritual guide, al-

[18] Addas, *Quest*, p. 284.

[19] *Al-Fukūk,* ed. Muḥammed Khawājawī (Tehran, n.d.), p. 181.

Khiḍr.[20] I mention this because this aspect can easily become submerged beneath the multifarious dimensions of physical dissemination, but it should always be borne in mind, for it is in some ways the most important. In fact, it is impossible to properly understand the dissemination of the Akbarian tradition, early or late, without grasping the strength of spiritual energy and passion which underlies it. Omar Benaissa says, in discussing the dissemination to Iran during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries:

> It is certain that the rapid spreading of Ibn ʿArabī's work is not the result of a simple bookshop success, a spontaneous best-seller. There was a formidable impetus, a promotion that was wanted and that was conducted by the first, and subsequent, followers who sometimes devoted themselves body and soul to defend it and make it known.[21]

ṢADR AL-DĪN AL-QŪNAWĪ: LIFE AND WORKS

Ṣadr al-dīn knew Ibn ʿArabī from birth, and had intimate contact with him for more than 30 years, remaining with him until his death in 1240. He was probably born in Malatya,[22] and when he was seven or eight years old, his father, Ibn ʿArabī's close friend, died. Then he came into Ibn ʿArabī's care, and was brought up by him; the popular story[23] is that Ibn ʿArabī married his mother, but the evidence for this is not decisive.[24]

Ibn ʿArabī did not undertake the whole of his education himself, but instead, when Ṣadr al-dīn was about fifteen, he entrusted him to one of his companions, Awḥad al-dīn al-Kirmānī. Al-Kirmānī was an important figure in his own right; descended from a family of Seljuk princes, he was an eminent teacher, a poet, and a

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[20] For a good account of Ibn ʿArabī's encounters with this important figure, see R.W.J. Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia* (London, 1971; repr. Roxburgh, 2002). See also *Quest* and *Unlimited*.

[21] O. Benaissa, "The Diffusion of Akbarian Teaching in Iran during the 13th and 14th centuries", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXVI (1999), pp. 89–109.

[22] Probably in 1207: for a detailed discussion of the possibilities see Omar Benaissa's doctoral thesis (Sorbonne, 1998), "The Heir of the Perfect Man: The school of Ibn ʿArabī in Iran, in the 13th and 14th centuries". [I have only a digital copy of this work, with page numbers which do not correspond to the printed version, therefore, I have omitted them.]

[23] Found in Jamī's *Nafaḥāt al-Uns,* which is the main early biographical source for Ṣadr al-dīn. There is a printed version, ed. M. Tawḥīdipur (Tehran, 1336/1957), p. 556.

[24] See Benaissa, "Heir of the Perfect Man".

close friend of both Ibn ʿArabī and Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī.[25] It is likely that Ṣadr al-dīn travelled with him at this time, perhaps making the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, according to Benaissa, spending two years in Shiraz in central Iran.

The significance of the connection with al-Kirmānī is that the boy received training from two sources, the "western" Sufi tradition through Ibn ʿArabī, whose expression was in Arabic, and the "eastern" Sufi tradition through al-Kirmānī, whose expression was in Persian. Ṣadr al-dīn was to say that he had "tasted milk from the breasts of two mothers"[26] and it seems that he retained a deep affection for both his masters to the end of his life, for he asked to be buried wrapped in the Shaykh's clothing, and covered with a carpet given him by al-Kirmānī.[27]

The Persian connection was crucial, for this was a time when the emerging powers of eastern Islam were converting from Arabic to Persian as the language of cultural life – although Arabic remained the language of religious scholarship and philosophy.[28] The Persian literary tradition was already attaining the pre-eminence it was to have for many subsequent centuries, the poetic tradition, for instance, was already established by Firdawsī (d.1020) and ʿAttār (d.1220) and poets such as Saʿdī (d.1295) and Rūmī (d.1273) were about to take it to new heights.

Persian[29] was the court language of both the Anatolian Seljuks and the early Ottomans, as well as of the new Sunni dynasties in Iran and Khurasan. These were precisely the places from which Islam expanded so dramatically in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. These also proved to be the dynasties within which Ibn ʿArabī's teachings really took root. The influence of the jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) with his

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[25] He was probably the contact who arranged the meeting between Shams-i Tabrīzī and Ibn ʿArabī in Damascus. See Omid Safi, "Did the Two Oceans Meet?", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXVI (1999), pp. 55–88. Kirmānī's verses have been translated into English by B. Weischer and P. Lamborn Wilson as *Heart's Witness: The Sufi Quatrains of Awḥaduddin Kirmānī* (Tehran, 1978).

[26] See Addas, *Quest*, p. 230.

[27] From his will. See W. Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ʿArabī's Foremost Disciple, and some notes on its author", *Sophia Perennis*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1978). Despite this dual affection, we should note that "the Shaykh" or "our Shaykh" without any name always refers to Ibn ʿArabī in his writings, indicating that he regarded him as his principal guide and teacher.

[28] See M. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Ages (University of Chicago Press, 1974), for a good discussion of this period.

[29] That is, the new version of Persian using Arabic script. These new states eventually developed their own languages – Urdu, and Ottoman Turkish – which used Arabic script, although they continued to use both Arabic and Persian in intellectual circles for centuries.

criticism of *waḥdat al-wujūd*,[30] meant that Ibn ʿArabī and his school became controversial in places such as Cairo and Damascus quite early on. But the Ottomans and the Persians embraced him, and through them his ideas were to spread east into Iran and what is now Afghanistan, and eventually to India and China; and with the Ottomans he was carried west and north into Turkey, Russia, the Balkans and Africa.[31]

Persians were already visiting Ibn ʿArabī in his lifetime; their names, such as that of al-Balkhī, can be found on *samāʿ* for the *Futūḥāt*, for example.[32] But he himself did not speak Persian, and it was really through Ṣadr al-dīn that the great transmission to the Persian-speaking world was effected. He seems to have taught in Persian but to have written mostly in Arabic. Many of his pupils wrote in both languages, sometimes translating their own works from one to other.

Ṣadr al-dīn's apprenticeship with al-Kirmānī was actually quite short-lived, and by 1226/7, when in his early twenties, he was with Ibn ʿArabī in Damascus receiving an intensive education. There is a surviving list of over 40 works that he studied and was authorised to teach (the *Ijāza)*, including the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*.[33] Ṣadr al-dīn's name appears consistently on annotations to manuscripts right up to the time of Ibn ʿArabī's death, and it is clear that he held a very special place in Ibn ʿArabī's circle. The second version of the *Futūḥāt* is dedicated to him, and the best surviving copy of the *Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam* is one written in his hand.[34] He himself tells us

[30] Although highly pertinent, the details of this controversy lie outside the scope of this paper. For the best discussion, see A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition* (New York, 1999).

[31] The transmission to Africa, which remained largely Arabic-speaking, is a huge area of study. Of course there was an original contact with Ibn ʿArabī which did not go through Ṣadr al-dīn, but it would not be correct to see it as an entirely independent development, for much African territory came under Ottoman rule and/or influence later. For instance, Chodkiewicz has shown that the *khirqa* passed on to al-Jazā'irī came through a line which included Murtadā al-Zabīdī (d.1791) who was born in India; and that the work of al-Kāshānī and Ismāʿīl Haqqī Bursawī were well-known in North Africa in the seventeenth/eighteenth centuries. See Chodkiewicz, "Diffusion of Ibn ʿArabi's Doctrine".

[32] See Benaissa, "Diffusion of Akbarian Teaching".

[33] See Elmore, "Al-Qūnawī's personal study-list of books". According to Benaissa, Ṣādr al-dīn was "fully qualified" by the time he was 27.

[34] Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi, no. 1933, with two *samāʿ* dated 630 H. It used to be thought that Ṣadr al-dīn and the Shaykh were alone when they read this through, leading one modern commentator to question whether it is entirely by Ibn ʿArabī, or whether Ṣadr al-dīn added some passages. But recent research by Chodkiewicz has established that there is a second annotation proving that it was witnessed by seven other *bona fide* students.

that he regarded himself as Ibn ʿArabī's spiritual heir, even closer than Ibn ʿArabī's own son, Saʿd al-dīn.[35]

He must have been about 33 when Ibn ʿArabī died, and he outlived him by 34 years. During this time, he was the principal focus for the circle of Ibn ʿArabī which remained, keeping in touch with his friends and pupils in the various cities of the Middle East. We do not yet have an exact chronology of his life, for he seems to have been extremely reticent about personal matters, but he did leave a long work detailing some of his spiritual experiences, *al-Nafaḥāt al-Ilāhiyya*, in which he sometimes tags on a time or date; for instance, that he received the total unveiling of the unseen world whilst he was in Damascus.[36] We know that he continued to travel in the middle period of his life; after Ibn ʿArabī's death, he visited Egypt at least once more[37] and he was in Aleppo in 1243, where he read the end of the *Futūḥāt* with Ibn Sawdakīn and Majd al-dīn al-Tabrīzī, perhaps completing a task he had begun with the Shaykh.[38]

Ṣadr al-dīn did not spend the rest of his life simply repeating the teachings of the Shaykh in a literal manner. He was very much his own man. Nor did he conform to the standard image of a holy man. He inherited his father's wealth and rank, so he was a rich aristocrat with position at court, and he ran a large household with a full entourage of servants, etc.[39] He was also extremely learned in all fields of Islamic knowledge. He was a respected *muḥaddith* (a transmitter of the traditions of the Prophet), referred to by contemporary sources as *Shaykh al-Islām*, and some of his most famous pupils, such as the scientist and encyclodaedist, Quṭb al-dīn Shirāzī[40]

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[35] He says in his *Nafaḥāṭ* that Ibn ʿArabī appeared to him in November 1255 in the night, and confirmed that he was his pre-eminent disciple, even greater than his son Saʿd al-dīn. See Chittick, EI^2, Vol. 8, p. 753, ref. *Nafaḥāt*, 152–3.

[36] Ibid., ref. *Nafaḥāt,* 12. There is a printed edition of the *Nafaḥāt,* edited by Muḥammed Khawājawī, (Tehran, 1418/1997).

[37] In the company of Tilimsānī, where they met Ibn Sabʿīn (d.1270). See Benaissa, "Heir of the Perfect Man".

[38] See *Samāʿ* 58–71 on the autograph *Futūḥāt*. Osman Yahya, pp. 229–31.

[39] See Benaissa, "Heir of the Perfect Man". According to him, there is a document written in Majd al-dīn's lifetime which specifies that his son will inherit his position with the Abbāsid caliphate in Baghdad.

[40] Quṭb al-dīn al-Shirāzī (d.1311) was a scientist who wrote extensively on medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy and traditional science. He was a pupil of the philosopher al-Ṭūsī, and met both Rūmī and Qūnawī during a visit to Konya in 672/1273, and studied with the latter. He wrote a commentary on Suhrawardī's *Philosophy of Illumination* and also a famous encyclopaedia, *Durrat al-tāj li-ghurrat al-Dunāj*. John Walbridge has studied his thought, and concludes that he was more influenced in his own metaphysics by the illuminist philosophy of Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl than by Ibn

came to him to learn *ḥadīth*, not the works of Ibn ʿArabī. He was also learned in philosophy, having a firm grasp of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics, and in *kalām*, so that, like Ibn ʿArabī, he was able to bring all these aspects of knowledge together.[41] In his will, he mentions books on philosophy, medicine, law, Quranic commentaries and *ḥadīth,* which he bequeathed all together as a library.

He wrote 20 to 25 books. There is no standard bibliography of his works, and numbers vary from biographer to biographer. There is no argument, though, about the six or seven most important ones, which include the *Nafaḥāt* mentioned before, which was one of the most widely read; the *Miftaḥ al-ghayb*, a metaphysical exposition which was widely commentated upon; the *Nuṣūṣ*, a collection of 21 texts on the "station of perfection"; his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, *al-Fukūk*, and a commentary on the first *surat* of the Qur'ān, *Tafsīr al-Fātiḥa* (or *al-Ijāza al-bayān*).[42] One of his most famous works is a short correspondence with the Shi'ite philosopher, al-Ṭūsī,[43] which discusses the means by which real knowledge can be attained – reason versus taste – which is reminiscent of Ibn ʿArabī's discussions with Ibn Rushd and Fakhr al-dīn Rāzī. Not one of these works has yet come into a Western European language.[44]

Ṣadr al-dīn's inclination was to express Ibn ʿArabī's ideas as found in the *Futūḥāt* and the *Fuṣūṣ* in a highly systematic and metaphysical way, removing from

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ʿArabī's school. See J. Walbridge, *The Science of Mystical Lights: Quṭb al-dīn Shirāzi and the Illuminist Tradition of Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). The second volume of a copy of *Jāmiʿ al-usūl* he wrote out in 673 H at Ṣadr al-dīn's house in Konya is extant, Feyzullah 300. See Helmut Ritter, *Autographs in Turkish Libraries* (Oriens VI, 1953), pp. 63–90.

[41] We know little about how he acquired his extensive knowledge. He mentions his books on philosophy in his will, asking for them to be sold, i.e. not kept as part of his endowment. According to Chittick, one seems to have slipped through the net – Yusuf Ağa 5544, which is a copy of al-Rāzi's *Lubāb al-ishārāt,* a summary of Ibn Sīnā's *Isharāt* (see Chittick, "Last Will and Testament", p. 35), which is in Ṣadr al-dīn's own handwriting. His correspondence with al-Ṭūsī makes it clear that he had read his commentary on the *Isharāt* and Benaissa thinks that he had also read the *Isogoge* – the collection of treatises by Aristotle – particularly *Categories,* as this was the subject of a famous debate involving Ibn Sabʿīn at the time. See Benaissa, "Heir of the Perfect Man".

[42] A copy of this written by one of his principal disciples, Saʿīd al-dīn al-Farghānī in Konya in 669/1271 and signed by Ṣadr al-dīn, has survived; Köprülu 41 in Istanbul.

[43] This has been edited as *Annäherungen* by Gudrun Schubert (Beirut, 1995). See also Chittick's summary, "Mysticism versus philosophy in earlier Islamic history: the al-Ṭūsī, al-Qūnawī correspondence", in *Religious Studies*, 17 (1981), pp. 87–104.

[44] Although there is an English version of a small work, *Mirʿat al-ʿAriſīn,* entitled "Reflections of the Awakened", translated by Sayyid Hasan Askari (London, 1983). This has traditionally been attributed to Ṣadr al-dīn, but a manuscript in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul, Ragid Pasha 1453, which we have inspected, has a note saying it was written by one of his pupils, M. Shīrīn al-Maghrebī. Chittick has also published three short works as *Faith and Practice of Islam* (Albany, NY, 1992) which may be by Ṣadr al-dīn, or by a Nāṣir al-dīn al-Qūnawī.

them most of the "dangerous" elements and formulating the ideas in a way which was much more acceptable to the intellectuals of his day. His style was very different from Ibn ʿArabī's, who wrote in an "inspired mode" even when dealing with metaphysics, and included things like stories, biographical details and poems in the text.

Today Ṣadr al-dīn seems even harder to understand than his master, but there is no doubt that his works gripped the attention of the Ottoman and Persian Sufis and their leaders in the following generations. To give a couple of examples of the former: Chittick has written a paper on a work by the Sultan of Sivas, Burhān al-dīn, (d.1398) who was clearly a remarkable man, and most famous for a massive *Dīwān* (poetry).[45] He commissioned several commentaries upon Ṣadr al-dīn's work, wrote one himself called *Iksīr al-saʿdāt fī asrār al-ʿibādāt*, and engaged in a correspondence about certain metaphysical points in the *Miftaḥ al-ghayb* with a local Sufi called ʿAlā' al-dīn Yār ʿAlī Shirāzī[46] – an interesting figure in his own right, who wrote perhaps the earliest commentary on ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt* (see pp. 46–7). The Sultan's interest in the Shaykh seems to have begun when he sent a pair of carpets to Ṣadr al-dīn's tomb in Konya and in return received a copy of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* adorned with Ṣadr al-dīn's own handwriting. His biographer, al-Astarābādī says: "And of course, when a book falls into the hands of a seeker after knowledge, he studies it … ."[47]

Chittick also tells us that the conqueror of Istanbul, Mehmet II (1451–81) was an adherent of the school of Ibn ʿArabī.[48] He took as his advisor ʿAq Shams al-dīn (d.1459), a disciple of Haci Bayram (d.1430), a follower of Ibn ʿArabī who had spent several years in Damascus.[49] Mehmet commissioned at least three commentaries upon Ṣadr al-dīn's writings – by al-Izniqī, al-Qirīmī, and al-Ilāhī. The one by al-Ilāhī, on the *Miftaḥ al-ghayb,* includes several asides to the ruler in the midst of the text, indicating that he expected him to read it.[50] He also ordered Ṣadr al-dīn's works to be

[45] See Chittick, "Sultan Burhān al-dīn's Sufi correspondence", in *Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morganlandes* (Vienna, 1981), pp. 33–45.

[46] Ibid.; Chittick has also translated this correspondence.

[47] Al-Astarābādī, *Bezm u rezm*, ibid., p. 34.

[48] Ibid., p. 37, n. 14.

[49] See M. Tahrali, "A General Outline of the Influence of Ibn ʿArabī on the Ottoman Era", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXVI (1999), p. 50. Haci Bayram was the founder of the Bayramiyya order in Turkey.

[50] See EI^2, Vol. 8, p. 754a.

translated into Persian, and kept a copy of al-Jandī's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* in his own library.[51]

Mehmet was not the only Ottoman Sultan to take a personal interest in Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, although he and his son Bayazit II seem to have been the only real bibliophiles. The support given by the Ottoman state to Ibn ʿArabī was such that he has sometimes been described as their "patron saint" – the connection going back long before the conquest of Istanbul, perhaps even to Osman himself.[52] This is the subject of an article in itself, but suffice it to say here, that the early Ottoman sultans showed every sign of revering the Shaykh al-Akbar, and provided a protective environment for his followers. When Selim I conquered Syria in 1517, the first thing that he did was search out the site of Ibn ʿArabī's tomb, which had fallen into neglect, and order a mosque to be built over it.[53] And, as controversy over his orthodoxy grew in other areas, Ibn Kamāl Pasha (d.940/1535), the *Shaykh al-Islām* of Süleyman the Magnificent, issued an official ban on the defamation of Ibn ʿArabī throughout the Ottoman empire.[54]

The result was that Akbarian studies flourished in Ottoman lands, both in terms of the copying and collecting of manuscripts – such that Turkey now has by far the greatest collection of early manuscripts in the world, almost all the important historical texts of which we know being in the libraries there – and in terms of exposition. In this latter, Ṣadr al-dīn's influence was profound and long-lasting, and he set the pattern for all future work, as we shall see. It became standard practice to write commentaries upon his works as well as those by Ibn ʿArabī, particularly the *Miftaḥ al-ghayb*. The most famous of these is *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, by Shams al-dīn al-Fanārī (d.1430); another important one is by the seventeenth-century Sufi, ʿUthmān

[51] This has survived: Shehit Ali 1240, now in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul.

[52] Osman had a relationship with a Shaykh Edebali, who, according to M. Kiliç (see "The Ibn al-ʿArabī of the Ottomans", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXVI (1999), pp. 110–20) was a "secret Akbarian" who had met him in Damascus. Osman married his daughter. Goodwin says of this: "It was a love-match, by all accounts, but it also wedded Osman to the spiritual energies which lit up the fourteenth-century borderlands." [*Lords of the Horizon* (London, 1999), p. 8.] There was also the belief that Ibn ʿArabī had foretold the success of the Ottomans, particularly the conquest of Syria, in *al-Shajara al-nuʿmāniyya*; this work is now considered to be apocryphal, but there is no doubt that it was immensely influential upon the Ottoman consciousness. For a good discussion of this, see Tahrali, "General Outline", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXVI.

[53] See R. Atlagh, "Paradoxes of a Mausoleum", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXII (1997), pp. 1–24.

[54] See Tahrali, "General Outline", pp. 46–7, 50.

Faḍlī (d.1690), the teacher of the great Jelvetī saint and commentator, Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī Bursawī (d.1725).

Similarly, in Persia, Ṣadr al-dīn's influence was so great that Chittick considers that:

> In the Eastern lands of Islam, where Ibn ʿArabī's school has been of primary importance in determining the course of all metaphysics and philosophy to the present century, the influence of al-Qūnawī through his own writings and those of his immediate students has been such that Ibn ʿArabī has always been seen through his eyes.[55]

We know for instance that in the Persian *madrasa*s, the *Miftaḥ al-ghayb* was considered to be the most advanced work on metaphysics, and along with *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, it was always taught after the *Fuṣūṣ*.[56]

KONYA IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The other aspect of Ṣadr al-dīn's influence was his ability to inspire his pupils through his teaching. According to Chittick,[57] he had students in Egypt, Syria and Anatolia – in the same places in which Ibn ʿArabī had taught – but Konya was his principal place of residence, and between them, he and Rūmī made it a centre of spiritual teaching from the mid-thirteenth century onwards.

I mention Rūmī (1207–73) here because he and Ṣadr al-dīn were almost exact contemporaries, being born and dying within a year of each other, and living in the same town side by side for many years. Students who came to Konya to study in the mid-thirteenth century entered into a *milieu* where both teachers were active, and they had the choice to attend either or both of their classes, given that they were accepted. Whilst the question of the relationship between Ibn ʿArabī and Rūmī remains famously controversial, the question for the next couple of generations is much more open; in fact, we know that several people studied with both masters, and that some of Ṣadr al-dīn's most intimate companions, such as Kirmānī and ʿIrāqī, knew Rūmī as well.

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[55] Chittick, "Last Will and Testament", p. 43.

[56] Ibid., p. 34.

[57] "Spectrums of Islamic Thought" by W. Chittick in *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, ed. L. Lewisohn (London, 1992), p. 27.

One of the results of all this is that Rūmī's presence in Konya is inevitably a factor, albeit one we might find it hard to define, when considering the dissemination of Ibn ʿArabī's teaching. At least within the Ottoman tradition, the two lines of transmission became intermingled in subsequent centuries; Ibn ʿArabī's works, particularly it seems, the *Futūḥāt*, were a major source as the Mevlevi order refined its metaphysical understanding, and when later writers came to comment upon Rūmī's work, it was the tradition begun by Ṣadr al-dīn's students which provided the pattern. Many Akbarian commentaries upon the *Mathnāwī* were written over the next five hundred years, such as that written by Ismāʿīl al-Anqarāwī (d.1631), who is buried in the Mevlevi centre in Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

There are numerous anecdotes related by the early biographers concerning the relationship between Ṣadr al-dīn and Rūmī. Aflākī (d.1360) is one of the main sources; there are more than 30 mentions of Ṣadr al-dīn in his *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*,[58] and although his purpose is nearly always polemical, concerned to elevate Rūmī's knowledge above that of all his contemporaries, he makes it clear that the two men had great respect for each other, and even had an intimate friendship. There are accounts of Rūmī attending Ṣadr al-dīn's classes on *ḥadīth*, and of Ṣādr al-dīn being at *samāʿ* with Rūmī, and many instances of their praising each other and defending each other from criticism. He recounts:

> One day Mevlāna went to see the Shaykh of Shaykhs, the prodigy of the age, the King of Traditionalists, Shaykh Ṣadr al-dīn, may God be pleased with him. The shaykh came forth to meet him with complete respect, sat down on his prayer rug and positioned himself politely on his two knees opposite Mevlāna. They then entered contemplation, and for some time swam and travelled within the ocean of light-filled concentration (*ḥodūr*)[59]

Rūmī designated Ṣadr al-dīn to deliver the address at his funeral – a mark of the highest respect, and a privilege which was, according to Aflākī "the desire of all the great scholars and judges".[60]

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[58] Aflākī is the earliest source on the life of Rūmī, and includes sections on his father, his teachers, Shamsī Tabrīzī and his early followers. There is a new translation into English by John O'Kane, *The Feats of the Knowers of God* (Leiden, 2002).

[59] Ibid., p. 193.

[60] O. Safi, "Did the Two Oceans Meet?", p. 63.

There are all sorts of interesting things to contemplate in this relationship, for the two men were opposite in many ways. They wrote in different languages; they expressed their knowledge in different ways – metaphysics and poetry; their teachers embodied different modes of Sufism, Ibn ʿArabī from the far West and Rūmī's father, Bahāʾ al-dīn coming from Balkh in the far East. They also lived very different lives. Rūmī was poor and ascetic, whilst Ṣadr al-dīn, as we have seen, was rich and had many social responsibilities. He was also known to be extremely generous in his charity, and his establishment was a major resting-place for travellers and the poor, as well as housing his students and his *zāwiya*, or place of teaching.

This situation would not be guessed at by a modern visitor to Konya, where Rūmī's splendid tomb dominates its surroundings and attracts thousands of people every year. Ṣadr al-dīn's tomb, by contrast, is modest and set in the back-streets. This situation to some extent reflects the subsequent history of their followers: Rūmī's established the Mevlevi Order of which he was the venerated head, whereas the Akbarian tradition, as we have mentioned, developed in another way. The modesty of his tomb is also due to his own request, for he asked in his will that he should be buried amongst "ordinary Muslims", and that:

> no building should be built over my grave, nor should any roofing be erected. Rather let only the grave itself be constructed with a strong stone, nothing else, lest it fall into oblivion.[61]

The whole area around the tomb used to be a graveyard, in one corner of which the author of a famous *Fuṣūṣ* commentary, ʿAbd Allāh Busnawī (d.1644) is also said to be buried. But it has all been built over in recent years. Only the tomb and the small mosque next to it have survived. This latter was built by Ṣadr al-dīn's followers soon after his death in order to hold the books which he specified as an endowment.[62] They included many of the manuscripts by Ibn ʿArabī which have survived to this day, including the autograph *Futūḥāt* which remained there for many centuries.[63] Those

[61] Chittick, "Last Will and Testament", p. 53.

[62] This did not include his own works which were put into the care of al-Tilimsānī who was told "not to be niggardly in giving them to those in whom he sees the qualifications to profit from them". Tilimsānī must have followed orders, because there are few early Ṣadr al-dīn manuscripts now in Konya. See Chittick, "Last Will and Testament".

[63] We can find quite late copies of manuscripts copied in Konya, such as Ragib Pasha 1453 which contains seven works taken from copies in Ṣadr al-dīn's library, including very good texts of *ʿAnqāʾ Maghrib* and *K. al-Isrāʾ*. There is no date on the MS. but it could be as late as the 18th century, and

that survived were transferred at some point either to the libraries of Istanbul or to the Yusuf Ağa library in the grounds of Rūmī's tomb.

Konya was still relatively new as a cultural centre in the thirteenth century, and did not attract huge numbers of people in the way that the established cities like Baghdad or Damascus did. Nor were Rūmī or Ṣadr al-dīn fabulously famous in their own lifetimes. But the city during their lifetime was the capital of the remarkable and vibrant new culture of the Anatolian Seljuks who sprang up and died away in a period of about 100 years – like "Aladdin's Lamp" as a recent exhibition of their art in Istanbul stated.[64]

The Seljuks were tolerant of foreigners, receptive to new ideas and supportive of Sufism, and under their umbrella a great flowering of architecture, visual arts, learning and writing took place.[65] All these factors made the city reasonably attractive to the many people travelling in search of knowledge. They would come to find a teacher, receive instruction in particular texts which they would then copy and be formally authorised to teach, and to follow practices such as *dhikr* and retreat. Teachers would also give classes or lectures to selected groups of students, and we have several descriptions of those given by Ṣadr al-dīn, and of the great effect they had upon the attendees.

CLASSES AND PUPILS

In fact, we know of three sets of classes that Ṣadr al-dīn gave: on the *Fuṣūṣ*, on the *Futūḥāt*, and on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's famous Sufi poem, *al-Tā'iyya* (so called because it takes the letter *Tā'* as its rhyme) which is also called *The Poem of the Way*. ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (1182–1235) was a contemporary of Ibn ʿArabī's who lived in Egypt, and was considered to be the greatest Arabic poet of his time – indeed, perhaps of all time, revered both as an artist and a saint. Ṣadr al-dīn had long been a fan of his, and it is

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could even have been commissioned by Ragib Pasha himself (d.1763). None of the originals from which this collection was taken have survived.

[64] At Yapi Kredi Kültür Sanat, Autumn, 2001. See also the catalogue, *Aladdin's Lamp: Sultan Alāeddin Kaykubād and the Art of the Anatolian Seljuks Age* (Yapi Kredi, 2001). Ibn ʿArabī had very close links with this regime; Majd al-dīn had introduced him to its first great ruler, Kaykhusraw, to whom he became an advisor; he was made tutor to his son, Kayka'ūs, who later became Sultan himself.

[65] There has been some research into the link between the mystical ideas of Ibn ʿArabī and the new forms of art generated by the Seljuks, showing, for example, how diagrams in the *Futūḥāt* inspired patterns carved into the great gateways and mosques of the time. The work has been done by Dr Semra Ögel, but we have no detailed references as yet.

said that in his youth he travelled to Egypt to meet him, but failed.[66] He is most famous for his two long mystical poems in Arabic – the "Poem of the Way" (*Naẓm al-sulūk*) and the "Wine-song" (*al-Khamriyya*).[67]

Ṣadr al-dīn himself relates that he began to read the "Poem of the Way" with a group of students in Egypt in 1245–6, and continued to do so in Syria and Anatolia.[68] There are a number of accounts of these classes in the literature, all of which indicate that he was conveying Ibn ʿArabī's ideas very directly. One story is that, before teaching, Ṣadr al-dīn would retire to a little anteroom to ablute, and there, Ibn ʿArabī would appear to him and they would have a discussion about the contents of his class that day. Another account appears in the work of the seventeenth-century bibliographer, Kātib Celebi, who claims that he had a written commentary on the poem by Ibn ʿArabī which filled five notebooks.[69]

There is an account of the classes by Shams al-dīn Īkī (d.1274):[70]

> In the sessions of our Shaykh, the possessors and seekers of knowledge used to attend. The shaykh would speak about different sciences. Then he would end the session with one verse from the "Poem of the Way" upon which he would comment in Persian. He expounded marvellous words and God-given meanings, but only the possessors of tasting (*dhawq*) could understand him. Sometimes on another day he would say that a different meaning of the verse had become manifest for him, and he would explain a meaning even more wonderful and subtle than before. He often used to say: "One must be a Ṣufi to learn this poem and to be able to clarify its meanings for others." Shaykh Saʿīd Farghānī would devote all his attention to understand what our Shaykh said, and then he would

[66] See al-Farghānī's Persian *Mashārik al-Darārī.* See Ritter, *Autographs*, p. 70.

[67] There is a recent translation by Th. Emil Homerin, *Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi verse, saintly life* (New York, 2001).

[68] This information is given in the introduction to the Persian commentary by al-Farghānī (d.1299); see Chittick, "Spectrums".

[69] See Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint* (Cairo, 2001), pp. 29 and 105, n. 49.

[70] According to Homerin, al-Īkī (or Aykī) related this to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's son, Kamal al-dīn Muḥammad, and his son, Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, included it in his famous introduction to the *Diwan* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the *Dībājah.* The connection with Ibn ʿArabī's school led to Ibn al-Fāriḍ being associated subsequently with the exponents of *waḥdāt al-wujūd*, and Homerin describes a number of controversies in which Ibn Fāriḍ's work was consequently attacked by jurists. The earliest of these was in 1288, and was led by Ibn Bint al-A'azz, the vizier of the time; it resulted in al-Īkī being disgraced and losing his post as head of the Ṣalāḥīya *khānqāh* in Cairo. See Homerin, ibid., pp. 29–30, 40–2.

> record it. He wrote an explanation of the poem first in Persian, then in Arabic. This was all because of the blessing of our Shaykh, Ṣadr al-dīn.[71]

Al-Farghānī's Persian notes became a famous work called *Mashāriq al-darārī*;[72] Ṣadr al-dīn wrote an endorsement to it, and an introduction. Then, dissatisfied with the limited audience it might reach, al-Farghānī rewrote it in Arabic[73] and in the process refined and amplified it, adding a more detailed introduction that set out the basic principles of Ṣadr al-dīn's teaching. It was widely and enduringly read, and had a decisive influence upon the development of Sufism in the Ottoman Empire and Persia, and then later in India, more than any other work by any of Ṣadr al-dīn's followers. It is the first of our second-generation "best-sellers". Chittick has made a summary of it in which he says that it is only due to the general brilliance of his era that al-Farghānī is not better known; in any other age, he would have been regarded as a very great spiritual master and thinker.[74] Another of his works received wide circulation by being plagiarised by his friend, Quṭb al-dīn Shirāzī, who used it as the section on mysticism in his well-known – best-selling even – encyclopaedia.[75]

Chittick remarks[76] that in these classes, Ṣadr al-dīn covered both aspects of Sufism – the poetical type represented by the great Sufi poets and the earlier "ecstatics" like Ḥallāj and Basṭāmī; and the sober and theoretical "speculative" type represented by the "philosophical" Sufis like al-Ghazālī, and al-Junayd. As with Ibn ʿArabī himself, but in a different way, within Ṣadr al-dīn's compass these different aspects became intermingled and united into a new kind of synthesis. On the one hand, his lectures upon the *Tā'iyya* initiated a whole new genre of commentary upon ecstatic poetry, and many other leading Akbarians went on to write on Ibn al-Fāriḍ: al-Tilimsānī (d.1291) on the *Ta'iyya*, Dā'ūd al-Qayṣarī (d.1350) on the *Khamriyya*, al-

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[71] Chittick, "Spectrums", p. 208, n. 6.

[72] Printed in Iran, edited by S. J. Ashtiyānī (Mashad, 1978).

[73] *Muntahā al-madārik*, published in Istanbul in 2 volumes (1876), by Maktab al-Ṣanāʿi. Chittick notes that Arabic, even in Iran, remained the principal language for religious and philosophical discourse, and al-Farghānī was correct in his impulse, for the Arabic version was much more widely read even in some Persian-speaking lands. In India, though, it seems that it was read in Persian, especially through the influence of al-Maghrebī's *Jām-i jahān-namā.*

[74] See Chittick, "Spectrums".

[75] *Durrat al-tāj li-ghurrat al-Dunāj.* The long section on mysticism is al-Farghānī's *Manāhij al-ʿibād ilā al-maʿād.* See n. 40.

[76] See Chittick, "Last Will and Testament".

Nabulūsī (d.1731) on the whole *Dīwān*, al-ʿUshshāqī (d.1782) on the *Khamriyya*, etc. In time this extended to other poets, such as Rūmī, as we have seen.

On the other hand, we have a corresponding genre of poetry inspired by his classes on metaphysics. The first such work was Fakhr al-dīn ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt.*[77] ʿIrāqī was from Hamadan, in Persia, and already known as a spiritual master, an ecstatic and a poet when he came to Konya. He was a *qalandar* – or wandering dervish – a close friend and admirer of both Rūmī and Ṣadr al-dīn, who attended classes on the *Fuṣūṣ*. He was inspired by these, and wrote a series of poems in Persian whilst in states of ecstasy, which re-formulated Ṣadr al-dīn's teachings into the language of love. It became very famous indeed – definitely a "best-seller" – and has been one of the most loved of all Persian poems to the present day.

In the following generation, another Persian poet was inspired by studying Ibn ʿArabī's work. Maḥmūd Shabistārī (d.1339), was born in Tabriz, and describes his education in this very poetic way:

> I spent a long part of my life studying the science of Divine Unity, travelling through Egypt, Turkey and Arabia, day after day, night after night. Year in and out, for month on end, like time itself, I trekked through town and country, sometimes burning the midnight oil, sometimes making the moon itself my bedside lamp … I took pains in the study of the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, neglecting no minute detail in either book. Despite these exertions in scholarship, my heart still felt restless. I was puzzling over this disquiet and anxiety when a hidden voice seemed to cry out within me, saying: These words are written in the language of the heart; seek their meaning from your heart. Do not follow every quest and call; knock not upon every door.[78]

Shabistārī wrote a poem *Gulshan-i-rāz* ("Garden of Mystery") which was, like ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt,* formatted as a series of inspirations. Lewisohn describes it as "the culmination in Persian of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings". It became immensely popular – another "best-seller" – and by the sixteenth century it had inspired close to 30 commentaries in Persian. These Persian poems became so popular in their own right that their origins in Akbarian thought have often been forgotten; consequently they

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[77] There is an English translation available by Lamborn Wilson and Chittick, *Divine Flashes* (London, 1982).

[78] See L. Lewisohn, "The Transcendental Unity of Polytheism and Monotheism in the Sufism of Shabistārī", in Lewisohn, ed., *Medieval Persian Sufism*, p. 379.

have been read and appreciated by many who would never approach a work like the *Fuṣūṣ* or *Futūḥāt*, either because they lack the education, or, influenced by the opinions of the jurists, because they believe Ibn ʿArabī's ideas to be heretical.

Lastly, we should not neglect to mention ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d.1492), even though he lies a little outside our period, for his *Lawā'iḥ* ("Flashes of Light") has also been one of the great and enduring Akbarian best-sellers.[79] He lived and worked for most of his life under the Timurids in Herat. From this almost totally Persian-speaking area, Ibn ʿArabī's ideas were transmitted even further east – to the Mughal courts of northern India, where by the seventeenth century we find Akbarian commentaries upon Hindu texts appearing,[80] and even to China, where Jāmī and his followers were the most important influence upon the thought of the substantial Islamic population, and even had influence upon Confucian philosophy.[81]

FUṢŪṢ AL-ḤIKAM COMMENTARIES

The second set of works inspired by the *Fuṣūṣ* classes was a series of commentaries. These are perhaps the most important element in the early dissemination, because the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* has been by far the most widely read (also the most controversial) of the Shaykh's works, and has usually been read in conjunction with a commentary.

The earliest commentary was probably written by ʿAfīf al-dīn al-Tilimsānī (d.1291), which has survived, as far as we known, in only one complete manuscript.[82] Al-Tilimsānī studied with both Ibn ʿArabī and Ṣadr al-dīn; he attended Ṣadr al-dīn's classes and is mentioned in his will as his literary executor. He also wrote a commentary upon the *Ta'iyya* which, like al-Farghānī's, was based upon his notes from class but, unlike his, according to Homerin, was mainly concerned to defend Ibn al-Fāriḍ against accusations of heresy and incarnationism. Al-Tilimsānī was himself singled out amongst the early followers by Ibn Taymiyya in his attack on the concept

[79] Jāmī, *Lawā'iḥ,* translated by E.H. Whinfield and Mīrzā M. Kazvīnī (London, 1906; repr. 1978).

[80] See R. Vassie, "Abd al-Raḥmān Chishtī and the Bhagavadgita: 'Unity of Religion' Theory in Practice", in Lewisohn, ed., *Medieval Persian Sufism*, pp. 367–78.

[81] See Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light* (New York, 2000), which contains a translation of a 17th-century version of Jāmī's "Flashes" with Confucian terminology from the Chinese.

[82] Shehit 1248.

of *waḥdat al-wujūd*; according to Addas, he called him "the most pernicious of the lot and the most excessive in his impiety."[83]

The major early commentary was by Ṣadr al-dīn himself, the *Fukūk*, which we have already mentioned. It is about the same length as the *Fuṣūṣ*, but very different from it in style. It does not attempt a line-by-line analysis, but outlines various principles giving a theoretical background to the Shaykh's comments.

In the next generation, the major commentary was by al-Jandī (d.1299). This was very much longer, giving a line-by-line commentary based upon his studies with Ṣadr al-dīn. Al-Jandī was possibly Ṣadr al-dīn's most intimate student, and we have already seen something of the depth of connection he had with the *Fuṣūṣ*. We have a bit of biographical information on him, for in his *Nafḥat al-ruḥ*, he relates that when he first became attracted to search for the Truth and to abandon "everything other than God", he was faced with many obstacles from family and friends. Finally, by turning over some property, he was given permission to go his own way.

> I gave 1000 dinars to my wife, and turned towards the search for God. After cutting myself off from everything, I crossed the sea with the intention of making the *ḥajj,* until finally God provided me with the companionship of Shaykh Ṣadr al-dīn M. b. Isḥāq b. Yūsuf (Qūnawī) who was the Perfect Man of his age, the Pole of Poles of the time and the *khalifa* of the Seal of Muḥammadan Sanctity (Ibn ʿArabī). For ten years in his service I spent most of my time in retreats, forty-day vigils and spiritual disciplines until I attained correct inspirations from God and direct approval from the mouth of my Shaykh, may God be pleased with him.[84]

In the third generation, the major commentary was by a pupil of al-Jandī's, Kamāl al-din ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d.1329). Unlike his master, who was, according to Benaissa, rather timid and self-effacing, al-Kāshānī was gifted in public relations. He lived at a time when the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* was under the first wave of attack by Ibn Taymiyya, and he became a fierce defender of Akbarian ideas,

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[83] See Addas, *Quest*, p. 258. Chittick, however, in his recent entry on *waḥdat al-wujūd* in the EI^2, (see Vol. 11, pp. 37–9) says that in the three works of Tilimsānī's that he has studied, he cannot find one use of the exact term; rather he uses *al-jamʿ wa-l-wujūd* and on one occasion, *tawḥīd al-wujūd*. However, it appears many times in Farghānī's commentaries, and it seems likely that Ṣadr al-dīn did use the term in his lectures.

[84] Chittick, "Last Will and Testament", p. 46. Ref. *Nafḥat al-rūh* (unpublished, see Haci Mahmud 2447 for the best MS.).

engaging in public debates and a famous correspondence with ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d.1336).[85] He was clearly a man who rose to the challenge of his times. He wrote an Akbarian commentary on the Qurʾān which is often, in our present times, attributed to Ibn ʿArabī.[86] His *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ* is long and comprehensive, and has been one of the most influential down the ages, available today in a widely available printed edition.[87]

He had two famous pupils, Rukn al-dīn Shirāzī (d.1367) and Dāʾūd al-Qayṣarī (d.1350). Both of these wrote commentaries in turn, but Qayṣarī's was the most famous. It was written in Persian, not Arabic, and so was especially influential in the Persian-speaking world. Qayṣarī was also the founder of Akbarian teachings for the Ottoman state, for the second Ottoman Sultan, Orhan Ghazi, invited him to set up the first Ottoman-sponsored *madrasa* in the newly conquered town of Iznik.[88]

This series of commentaries shows a process of evolution which reaches a mature form with Qayṣarī. It consists of an ever-more extensive use of philosophical terminology, the development of a special Akbarian technical vocabulary so that concepts such as "Absolute being", and "ʿ*ayn al-thābita*" are defined and elaborated upon, and the development of a long metaphysical introduction. By the time of Qayṣarī, this had become a 12-part exposition laying out a comprehensive system, starting with a chapter on "Being" and ending with one on Prophecy and Sainthood.[89]

There are no translations of these early commentaries, although Izutsu in his *Sufism and Taoism* uses al-Kāshānī extensively and translates quite long passages,[90] and the great seventeenth-century commentary attributed to Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī Bursawī which has been translated into English by Bulent Rauf[91] draws on all previous

[85] The first person to formulate the doctrine of *waḥdat al-shuhūd,* as opposed to *waḥdat al-wujūd*. This idea was later refined by the great Indonesian reformer, Aḥmad Sirhindī (d.1624). Benaissa has translated this correspondence, see "Heir of the Perfect Man".

[86] There is a French translation by Pierre Lory, *Les Commentaires Esoteriques de Coran* (Paris, 1980).

[87] *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Cairo, 1966).

[88] Tahrali, "General Outline".

[89] See Benaissa, "Heir of the Perfect Man".

[90] Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism* (Berkeley, 1984). Sachiko Murata also translates substantial passages from al-Farghānī in her *The Tao of Islam* (New York, 1992).

[91] *Ismail Hakki Bursevi's translation of and commentary on Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam by Ibn ʿArabī,* rendered into English by Bulent Rauf (Oxford, 1986–1991). This is widely agreed to be actually by ʿAbd Allāh Busnawī (d.1644).

expositions, and includes the long introduction, which takes up nearly 100 pages in the English edition.

Chittick has made a study of the concept of the "Divine Presences" as it evolves through these early commentaries, referring also to al-Farghānī's *Muntahā al-madārik*. Chittick's work is especially interesting because the formalisation of the "Presences" as a distinct concept was made by Ṣadr al-dīn, not by Ibn ʿArabī, and so it gives us a good example of how the early tradition seemingly added to the Shaykh's original exposition. It is this sort of thing which has led people to question Ṣadr al-dīn's role. The nub of this questioning is: was he really true to the original intention of the revelation to the Shaykh, or did he introduce "innovations" which were extraneous, either due to misunderstanding or faint-heartedness in the face of criticism, or by indulging his own personal inclination towards philosophy?

Jāmī, who was the great traditional commentator upon this early period, had no doubt. He wrote that:

> The shaikh's intention with regard to the question of *waḥdat al-wujūd* can only be grasped in a way that harmonises with reason (*ʿaql*) and with law (*sharʿ*) through the study of Ṣadr al-dīn's works and through understanding them as they should be understood.[92]

This is a telling remark, which gives a strong indication of the kind of considerations – reason and law – which the early followers had to take into account. It equally suggests that any evolution of expression probably came about not because of personal preference, but as an appropriate response to the cultural environment in which these people lived and worked. The tradition did not develop in isolation, as an ascetic one practised by hermits, but at a time when Sufism was transforming from an informal system of mystical training into the institutionalised *ṭarīqa*s which became such a prominent feature of Islamic society for the next six hundred years. Ibn ʿArabī's great exposition of mystical knowledge was an essential component of this transition; his work was widely discussed and it was natural that clarification of his dense writings should be sought.

At the same time, the growing pre-eminence of Sufism was not going unchallenged; *falsafa* and *kalām* were still potent forces in society, arguing that truth could better be approached through intellect (*ʿaql*) or proof (*burhān*) rather than

[92] See Addas, *Quest*, p. 231.

through taste (*dhawq*). Ibn ʿArabī himself, in his later works and particularly in the *Fuṣūṣ*, began to challenge these rivals by refuting them in their own terms, using their own language. Ṣadr al-dīn, one feels, was simply continuing this in a more intensive way.

Most of all, the later commentators, as we have already indicated, also had to contend with a challenge on a much more dangerous front, that of Ibn Taymiyya and other jurists who levelled the charge of heresy at Ibn ʿArabī and his followers based almost entirely upon their understanding of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.[93] Others had to counter accusations of other heresies, such as Sāʿīn al-dīn Turka (d.1432), an early Persian follower who wrote a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*. He was accused by the Timurid regime in Herat of being a follower of the *ḥurūfiyya* and was moved, like many others at the time, to write a defence of his position.[94]

Such considerations give a context to the early dissemination of the tradition, and make it clear that these early propagators were indeed true servants to the Shaykh. It is also evident that they undertook their work in a true Akbarian fashion – not by slavish literality, but by opening their hearts to the inner spirit of the Shaykh's vision, whilst at the same time taking account of outer circumstances in order to express its meaning in the best manner for their particular time and place. That they successfully accomplished their task is attested by the enduring popularity and influence of their works, and the survival of the Akbarian heritage to the present day.

The image which has presented itself to me as I have been working on these notes is that of an ark, in that the written works produced by Ibn ʿArabī and his early followers were like an ark which carried the essential spirit – just as Ibn ʿArabī described in the chapter on Moses in the *Fuṣūṣ* – safely through the tricky waters of their times. And onward, swept along by the expansion of Islam into all corners of the world, the teaching found safe haven in cultures as diverse as China, India, Turkey and Eastern Europe. And in the present times it has been carried further still – into

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[93] As mentioned before, Knysh gives a comprehensive account of this confrontation in *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*.

[94] Sāʿin al-dīn Turka (d.1432) was from Isfahan. In the preface of the recently published *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ* (Tehran, n.d.), it is described how he spent 25 years travelling in search of knowledge and teaching before returning as a teacher (at the age of about 50) to what is now Afghanistan. He mentions al-Fanārī, calling him "our Shaykh". He wrote a treatise called *ʿIlm al-ḥurūf* which caused him to be associated with the *ḥurūfiyya*, an extreme sect who were involved in a plot to assassinate Timūr's son, Shārukh. (See H.T. Norris in Lewisohn, ed., *Medieval Persian Sufism*, pp. 87–99 for some insight into their ideas.)

Western Europe, America, Australia and Japan. These writings are a "form", and what they carry, if they are true to their source, is the spirit, and the original intention, in line with what Ibn ʿArabī himself was told when he received the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* from the Prophet in a dream. He heard: "This is the book of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. Take it, and bring it out to people, for they will benefit from it."[95]

[95] From Ibn ʿArabī's introduction to the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. See, for example, the critical edition by A. E. Affifi (Beirut, 1946), p. 47.