

# Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society

January 2017

Reports from the  
AGM of the Society,  
held in Oxford,  
26 November, 2016

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Ibn 'Arabi Society is an occasion for reporting on its activities over the past year. Since the membership of the Society is very widespread (in some 36 countries), it would be very difficult for a lot of members to be in Oxford for the presentations. So we have collected them here.

Standing in for Grenville Collins, Cecilia Twinch in the **Chairman's Report** reflected on how the Society must prepare for the time when those people currently doing the day-to-day work have to pass on their responsibilities. (p.2)

The **Archive Project** report by Stephen Hirtenstein reflected a year of consolidation, and preparation for the future. (p.3)

Also reporting on the **Journal**, Stephen gave details of electronic formats in which the Journal will be made available from 2017, alongside the print edition. (p. 4)

Richard Twinch gave details of **Events in the UK**, notably the Symposium held in Oxford in March 2016, on *Light and Knowledge*, and the forthcoming 2017 Symposium being organised in collaboration with SOAS. He then reported on the UK Society's Facebook Group, and the Youtube Video Channel. (pp. 6-8)

Jane Clark announced the winner of the third **Young Writer Award** (p. 9) and in the **Library report**, picked out some of the books which the Library has received in 2016. (p. 11)

Cecilia Twinch read a report from the **Society in the USA**, by Nick Yiangou and Jane Carroll, which again picked up the theme of preparing for the future. (p. 13)

Cecilia Twinch also gave an account of symposia and events in Spain involving **MIAS-Latina**, an independent sister organisation of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society. MIAS Latina produced the third volume of its journal *El Azufre Rojo (The Red Sulphur)* in 2016. (p. 14)

Martin Notcutt presented the **Treasurer's Report**. The figures underline how the Society is funded by the membership, and how it works through time freely given. He finished by reporting on the Society website. (p. 16)

Finally the Chairman thanked Bernard Sartorius from Switzerland for acting as **Fellows Representative** for 2016, and announced the election of David Hornsby, who lives in London, for 2017. David can be contacted by writing to journal@ibnarabisociety.org

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# From the Chairman's Report

By Cecilia Twinch

*Grenville Collins, the Chairman of the Society, was unable to be present at the AGM, and the meeting was chaired by Cecilia Twinch, who presented the Chairman's Report. After a review of the Society's activities in 2016, Cecilia turned to the question of how the work of the Society can be carried forward.*

As you may know, the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society was founded in 1977, so 2017 will be our fortieth anniversary. We are seeking to ensure that the work of the Society continues into the future, and looking at ways of restructuring it, so that it can be passed on to the next generation in the best possible way in order to fulfil its aims.

In addition, we need to find a permanent home for the library where it will be looked after in an appropriate way. Our current library in Oxford has grown from a small number of books and microfilms of manuscripts to a substantial collection. This reflects the enormous growth of interest worldwide in the works of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, and the various editions, translations and studies in many different languages that have been made. As you will know, a substantial digital archive of valuable early manuscripts of the works of Ibn 'Arabi and his school has also been collected.

Practical considerations mean that the library will have to move from its premises in the foreseeable future, and we are therefore seeking a new home for the collection either in the UK or overseas.

Not only does the library require physical space, it also needs the care of a trained librarian to ensure that the collection is preserved and maintained and continues to grow. Importantly, it also needs to be available for scholars to visit and work on the collection.

Many of the people who have been closely involved with the work of the Society over the past forty years will not be as active in the future. We are looking at ways in which much of the day to day administration and organization can be passed on within the next few years. There are many areas in which members can help and become more involved with the valuable work of the Society. If you have any skills, secretarial or otherwise, such as knowledge of digital media, book-keeping and so on, or are able to help organize or assist with events, videoing, putting up posters and flyers etc., please contact the secretary ([mias.uk@ibnarabisociety.org](mailto:mias.uk@ibnarabisociety.org)).

Finally I would like to thank all our members for continuing to support the Society and to thank all those who already help in any way with the Society's work.

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*In the left column, four editions of the Futūhāt al-Makkiyya, in the Society library. From top to bottom: the 4-volume Beirut edition, which was for many years the only one available. Then the Osman Yahyā critical edition, which was not completed, first volume printed Cairo, 1972. Third, a 9-volume edition from Lebabon, 1999, with index. Lastly, the 12-volume critical edition by 'Abd al-Aziz Sultan al-Mansub first published in Sana'a, Yemen, in 2010.*



# Archiving Report 2016

A report by Stephen Hirtenstein

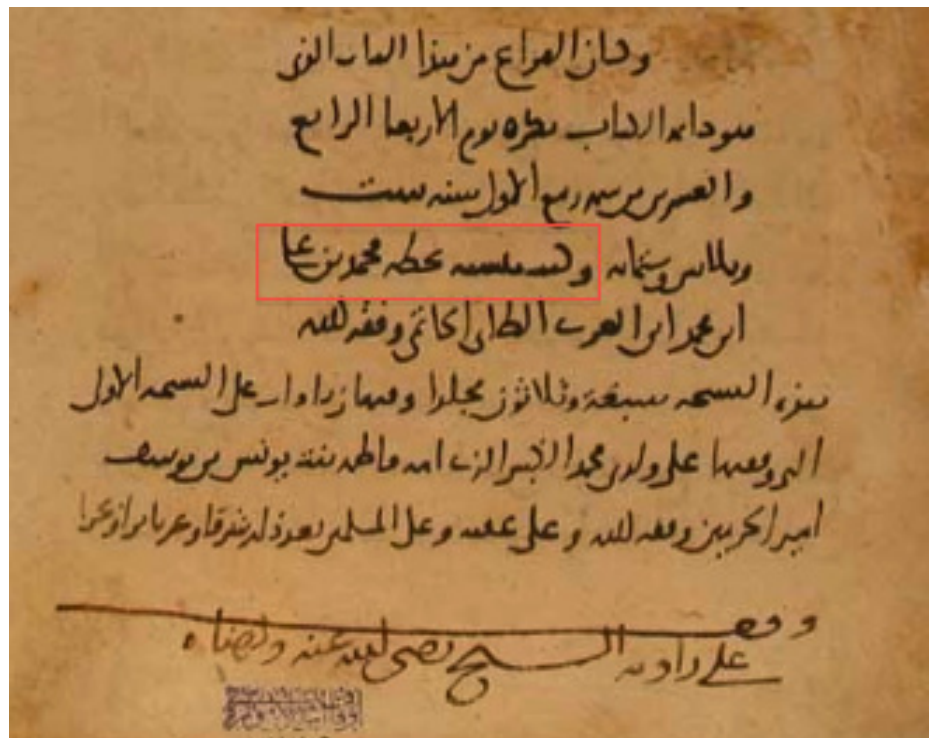
Since 2002 the Society has been supporting visits to Turkish libraries by its researchers to identify and collect copies of historic manuscripts connected with Ibn ‘Arabi. The first thought was to ensure the preservation of these documents. It has acquired over 900 digital copies of manuscripts of works by Ibn ‘Arabi. The catalogue of manuscripts has been made available to scholars through the Society’s Archive Project website, and to a wider audience on the general Society website. The Archive Project has been made possible by donations from members and grants received from TIMA, The Islamic Manuscript Association.

One of the triggers for starting the Archive Project was the appearance of an Ibn ‘Arabi manuscript in a London auction. Two members of the Society noticed the similarity of the manuscript to one illustrated in Stephen Hirtenstein’s biography of Ibn ‘Arabi, ‘The Unlimited Mercifier’, and it emerged that this manuscript was stolen from the Yusuf Aga Library in Konya, Turkey. It was one of 103 Seljuk-era manuscripts, seven rare printed books and 63 golden inlaid covers stolen from the Library in 2000. The Society was able to prove that this one was a stolen manuscript by means of a microfilm copy that it had. The sale was stopped, and the manuscript itself was returned to the Library in 2003.

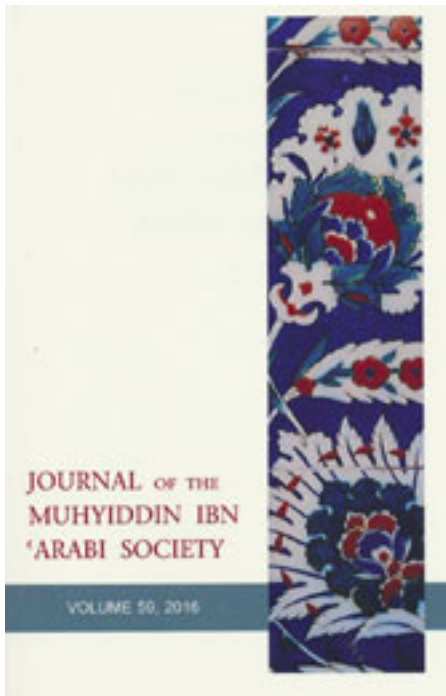
As recently as July 2015 it was reported that a Turkish Ph.D student at Utrecht University identified two further manuscripts from the Yusuf Aga theft in a collection in the University of Pennsylvania’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, and these have also been returned to Konya.

The past year has been one of consolidation, editing, updating in the light of new discoveries, and purchasing one or two digital copies to further research. Donations are always welcome as we seek to find further manuscripts. We are looking at ways to ensure that the Archive can be looked after in the long term, and made available to scholars in the future. We are in discussions with various institutions, both here in Oxford and further afield. I would like to thank my colleagues Jane Clark and Julian Cook for their inestimable work on the archive and leave you with a simple observation made by Claude Addas:

“Personally, I consider that the Archive Project is a most essential work and something which absolutely must continue... The role of MIAS in preserving the akbarian legacy is fundamental and I have no doubt has the *madad* (spiritual support) of the Shaykh. We must continue to collect, copy, digitize, catalogue, in short, to preserve at all costs the writings of the Shaykh so that future generations are not deprived of this heritage and can seek relief in this “Ark” of spiritual knowledge which constitutes Ibn ‘Arabi’s work.”



The attestation by Ibn ‘Arabī at the end of the second recension of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, dated 636H and dedicated to his eldest son ‘Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad: Evkaf MS 1881, fol. 111b. Courtesy of Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul.



*Volume 59 of the Journal (June 2016)*

*Members paid up in 2016 were given the opportunity to sample a free e-version of Volume 59 of the Journal in Pdf, Mobi/Kindle or ePub format.*

## The MIAS Journal

Report by Stephen Hirtenstein

Out of various discussions about how to improve the MIAS Journal (JMIAS) and give it a long-term future, we have decided to make some changes to the way in which JMIAS can be accessed.

### The Journal in electronic formats

In particular, we have been experimenting with a new electronic version in various formats, and one way we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of MIAS is by offering two kinds of journal: one standard print edition and the other an e-journal available in both pdf and e-book formats.

A brief explanation of what these mean:

- a) Pdf – the pages are static and as it is like a photographic image, it looks exactly like the print version, page numbers etc. It has the advantage of being searchable, and is readable on any device that has Acrobat Reader or equivalent software.
- b) ePub – these have the advantage of being a reflowable document, i.e. the text will adapt to the size or colour you want to read it in, and can be bookmarked, highlighted, notes added etc. Can be read on most tablets and there is free software for reading them on computers.
- c) Mobi – much the same as the ePub, but this is most commonly used on the Amazon Kindle, and again free software is available.

From 2017 onwards we will be offering members and fellows a choice of format for JMIAS: either to continue with the print version as in the past, or to opt for the new-style e-version. The format that you choose will be included in your membership. You will be able to receive both versions, print and e-journal, of the two annual volumes for an additional £15.00 per year.

We are also looking at ways in which we can make the e-JMIAS available as a Pdf more widely, in libraries and institutions etc., by using a third-party company to deliver access to readers within such places. E-journals will enable us to reach an audience that we currently cannot serve as well as we might (who live, for example, in places where the postal service is unreliable and books often do not arrive), as well as a more ‘virtual’ readership such as on Facebook.

### Production of the Journal

In terms of cost, JMIAS is still remarkably good value: the word count is usually about 30,000-35,000 per volume, and so twice a year members and fellows are receiving a high-quality journal, equivalent to a book of some 65,000-70,000 words. The current total costs per issue are about £1,300, most of which is printing expenses, plus approximately £350 for postage and packing, i.e. a total of about £3,300 per year, for just under 300 copies printed in the UK. Journals for US members are printed and despatched there. In terms of stock, we have over 3,000 physical copies in storage, a number which we have been trying to reduce over the past two years as space is limited. So do please order any back copies of JMIAS you would like! We are extremely grateful to the Notcutts and the Hills for housing the stock on behalf of MIAS.

Some of the production is now being done by free-lancers, and over



time these costs are very likely to increase. Historically most people have given their services free of charge, so a real commercial rate would be much higher. These costs are entirely underwritten by members' subscriptions, i.e. without members we could not produce JMIAS. And we should bear in mind that JMIAS is not simply for you as members, but it goes to many libraries and institutions worldwide and is read by a much, much larger audience. To quote two of our Hon. Fellows on the importance of JMIAS:

“The Journal (like the symposia!) provides a common ground or meeting place where scholarly specialists at every stage of development can share their insights, translations, and perspectives with wider interested audiences and with younger students and scholars. This unique function cannot be replaced in any realistic way.” (James Morris)

“It is the finest journal I know of that is both academic and open to non-academic contributors. The editing and design of the journal has been superb. It has been, along with the symposia, a key to the creation of an international community of those seriously interested in Ibn al-‘Arabi.” (Michael Sells)

As a small additional note, over the last 40 years there have been articles, studies and translations, by nearly 120 contributors, from all over the world, and many of these papers have been groundbreaking research.

In terms of personnel, we have been enlarging the team over the past couple of years so as to train up new designers, copyeditors, typesetters and proofreaders who can assist and in due course take over from those whose eyesight may be gradually failing... We are really fortunate to have the expertise of people who have worked on JMIAS for many years and whose exceptional skills have been honed on the job, esp. Michael Tiernan typesetting, Judy Kearns-Waddington copy editing and Rosemary Brass proofreading, as well as Caroline and Martin Notcutt who handle orders and posting out physical copies. We still need help in various areas, so if you can offer some help, please tell David Hornsby ([journal@ibnarabisociety.org](mailto:journal@ibnarabisociety.org)) or the Society secretary ([mias.uk@ibnarabicosociety.org](mailto:mias.uk@ibnarabicosociety.org)).

### **Volume 60**

Finally, despite our best intentions to get Vol. 60 out on time and in time for the Christmas holiday period, I'm afraid I have to announce a short delay – Vol. 60 will be out, God willing, in February 2017, and so all I can do is give you a brief and hopefully tantalising glimpse at the rich contents, which will come this time with copious illustrations:

- Jane Carroll: The Circle and the Square – the interpenetration of heaven and earth in the Andalusia of Ibn ‘Arabi.
- Denis Gril: The Quranic Figure of Pharaoh according to the interpretation of Ibn ‘Arabi.
- Ali Hussain: Jesus and Enoch in the Barzakh of Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-‘Arabi – role playing and myth weaving in the drama of creation.
- Stephen Hirtenstein: In the Master’s Hand – a preliminary study of Ibn ‘Arabi’s holographs and autographs.



Ahmad Sukkar, Oxford 2016



Sara Sviri, Oxford 2016



Todd Lawson, Oxford 2016



Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS

## UK Symposium and Events

Report by Richard Twinch

### Symposium – Ibn ‘Arabi Light & Knowledge

In March 2016 we held a one day symposium at Wolfson College in their new award winning lecture theatre. This was an experiment trying out a new venue, out of the centre of Oxford, which had the benefit of ample parking – allowing delegates to come readily from London and other parts of the UK. Excellent papers were delivered by three speakers, as well as a luminous introduction by Stephen Hirtenstein.

Sara Sviri: “Beyond the Opposites: Identities and How to Survive Them in Light of the Light of Oneness.”

Todd Lawson: “Water, Light, Knowledge: Towards an Ecology of Imagination.”

Ahmad Sukkar: “The Structure of Divine Light and Human Knowledge.”

Videos: These talks were all well received, and have continued to be so, thanks to being filmed and edited by Ayman Saey. They are up on the Ibn ‘Arabi Society You Tube site. Each talk has been listened to by about 500 people – including 1,123 views in the last month alone.

Finances: There were some 60 delegates. It was also an experiment, in that Wolfson College charged per delegate, rather than for hire of the rooms. Although this included a good lunch, there were no discounts for students or helpers. We were able to subsidise a few. Thanks also to a generous donation from the Beshara Trust towards Todd Lawson’s air fare from Canada, the event broke even. In the past the symposia have had to be subsidised by the Society to the tune of about £2500 – though these previously have been two day events.

### SOAS-MIAS Symposium 2017

Professor Stefan Sperl of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London attended the Wolfson College Symposium and generously offered help towards a future event, for which the Society is most grateful. This turned out to be in the form of a joint Symposium between SOAS and the Society this coming May. The title of the symposium is “Reason, Revelation and Inspiration, Ibn ‘Arabi & the Philosophers”. It is to be held on May 6th 2017 at the Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, which takes up to 250 people (where the film *Looking for Muhyidin* was shown in 2014).

Our speakers will include:

Salman Bashier, whose doctoral dissertation was published in 2004 under the title *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Barzakh: the Concept of the Limit and the Relationship Between God and the World*. He has spoken before at a Society Symposium in Oxford (2007) and at the New York Symposium in 2009. His most recent book in English is *The Story of Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Al-‘Arabi, and others on the Limit between Naturalism and Traditionalism* (2012). The title of his talk: “Ibn al-‘Arabi and the Merging of the Two Seas of Mysticism and Philosophy in Islam”

Maria de Cillis, whose doctoral thesis has been published as *The Discourse of Compromise: Theoretical Constructs of Free Will and Predestination in the Works of Avicenna, Ghazali and Ibn 'Arabi*. She is currently working at the Ismaili Institute, London, researching early Shi'ite mystics, especially Hamid Kirmani. In addition she currently focuses on Shi'i Islam and Ismaili philosophy. Title: "Ibn 'Arabi on Free Will and Predestination. Between Philosophy and Mysticism."

Eric Geoffroy teaches Islamic Studies at the University of Strasbourg, France, and other centres (including the Catholic University of Louvain). He specialises in Sufism and also works on issues of spirituality in the modern world (globalisation, ecology). He is president of the International Foundation "Sufi Consciousness". He contributed 20 articles to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and is author of over a dozen books. Prof. Geoffroy spoke at the Society Symposium in Oxford in 2012.

### *Summary Statement*

Ibn 'Arabi, in reporting about his meetings with Ibn Rushd (Averroes) on two occasions – once as a 'beardless youth' and once at the funeral of the great Aristotelian philosopher – highlighted the differences between their ways of thinking. Philosophical knowledge, he declared, is based on reason (*aql*) and revelatory knowledge is based on insight (*kashf*) and inner certainty (*yaqin*). In some cases they are the same and in others they differ.

However, a difference between points of view is not an essential separation. The Shaykh al-Akbar would surely have agreed with the last recorded words of the great Neoplatonist Plotinus, "Strive to give back the Divine in yourselves to the Divine in the All."

Greek philosophical texts, first translated in Baghdad in the 8th and 9th centuries, were widely available in Muslim Spain. Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, who is sometimes called Ibn Aflatun 'The Son of Plato', would have had access to these, both directly and indirectly through the Islamic philosophical schools.

This symposium aims at delving into these roots by exploring Ibn Arabi's engagement with the philosophical heritage of his time.

## **The Society Facebook Group**

### **Report by Richard Twinch**

'My heart has become capable of all forms' is very much the theme of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society Facebook Group.

Facebook now links 1.5 billion people around the globe. It reflects the world – 'good' and 'bad' – it opens up great possibilities as well as disseminating untruths that topple the mighty.

The Society in the UK 'pitched' its own tent in this vast desert of information a couple of years ago and now has nearly 3000 members. In keeping with generosity and hospitality we are open to all provided they come with good will. Several of us (particular thanks to Eva Muchtar in Indonesia) monitor applications and check out, as far as possible, whether the application has merit or is just being used for others and organisations to exclusively promote their own agendas. Insofar as they concord with the aims and intentions of the Society we are happy to accommodate them. Similarly with topics raised for discussion – though these need monitoring sometimes to avoid confrontation.

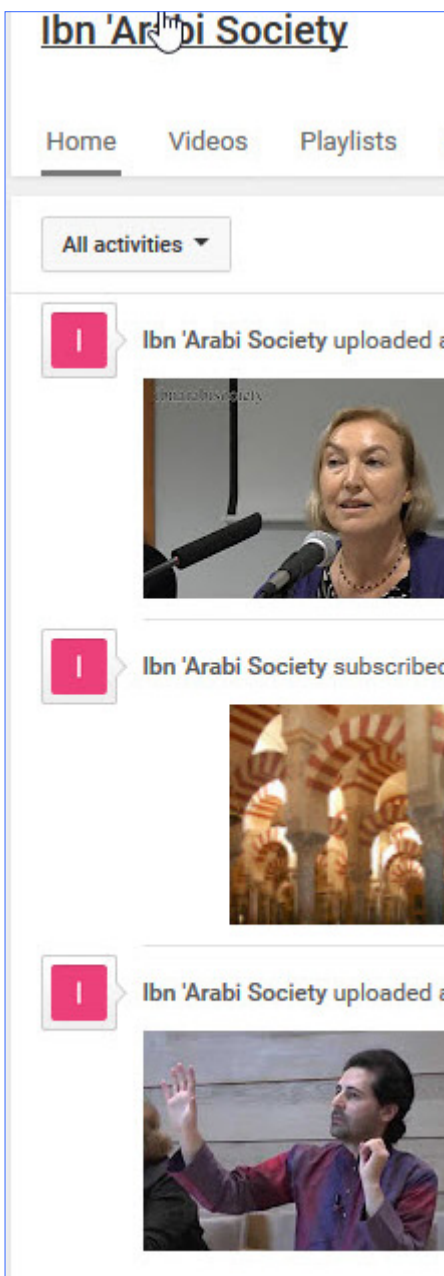
On the whole the Facebook Group is a place where breaking news happens:

- as when new videos are produced, books released or reviewed.
- relevant events around the world are announced – whether organised by the Society, or by others – such as the CAMEA conference in July 2016 in Adelaide, *‘Ilm: Science, Religion, and Art in Islam*
- theories are propounded – such as Mohamed Haj Yousef’s post on Physics Nov 2nd – search for physics.
- questions are asked – and sometimes answered.
- general appreciation expressed and shared.

It is a joy to speak with those attracted by the Shaykh al-Akbar from all around the world independent of race, religion, gender or age.

## Videos on YouTube

Report by Richard Twinch



Several years ago it became apparent that on-line streamed video had moved from being the preserve of land-based PCs, to being a general medium used by people both static and on the move. This was because of developments in technology, 3G and 4G mobile networks and the general availability of fibre optic cables. Google also took over YouTube and enabled much bigger video streams – allowing for longer and higher definition videos. Mobile phones became much more powerful and ubiquitous.

To respond to these developments, initially, a working YouTube site was set up called *ibnarabiideas* in 2014 that included the MIAS Latina conference in Murcia in October. The USA Society set up the Ibn 'Arabi Society channel in early 2015 and loaded the videos recorded at the symposium 'Symbols of Transformation, Jesus and Mary in the Teachings of Ibn 'Arabi' at Zaytuna College, Berkley. This was followed closely by the Oxford Symposium 'A Living Legacy: Ibn 'Arabi in Today's World'.

There were some technical issues with some of these earlier recordings – but these are resolved and we are able to re-publish the videos that were affected at higher definition and with more elegant titling and editing through the use of professional software. In this we have been helped by Ayman Saey who is based in London.

There are now many thousands of views. The Ibn 'Arabi Society YouTube site has some 410 subscribers and over 1000 views in the last month. Where videos are shared on Facebook, and other social media, the numbers increase exponentially. Mobiles are taking over as the platform of choice.

Videos are time consuming to make compared with podcasts, and require high-end technical skills, software and hardware, and the Society is going to need to raise money by donation to keep this going. I would hope to continue with *ibnarabiideas* as a place for more creative videos developing Ibn 'Arabi's ideas in a medium he would have revelled in as a place of imagination.



# Young Writer Award

Report by Jane Clark

The Young Writers Award is a tri-annual prize of \$1000 given by the Society for the best essay by a scholar under the age of 35. The aim is to encourage students to work on Ibn ‘Arabi and his school at an early stage of their career. The judges this year were Professor Todd Lawson of the University of Toronto; Professor Denis Gril of the University of Aix-de-Provence, and Jane Carroll, of MIAS USA, and the award was generously supported by the Beshara Trust and a private donor.

This is the third time that the award has been given. We received eight very impressive essays from all over the world, with entries from students from USA/Nigeria, the Netherlands, Egypt, UK, Turkey and Indonesia. These days, someone’s place of origin is not necessarily the same as their place of study or work, and it was striking to see the extent to which students are moving from place to place to obtain the best possible education in this field. It was also striking to see how many of them mentioned the influence of well-established scholars, many of whom have been connected with the Society for many years; personal contact is clearly one of the most important ways in which people come to study these ideas. Three of the essayists have already progressed from their doctorate studies into academic posts, and this bodes very well for the future of akbarian studies.

It was very good to see people tackling contemporary issues such as the environment and gender relations from an akbarian perspective. Three essays tackled cross-cultural matters in one form or another, and this is another indication of how research is now developing; as more works are translated into English, and/or become available in digital form, it becomes possible to do much more interesting things in the way of comparison and cross referencing.

The standard of the essays was very high this year, and the judges wanted to commend four of them for their excellence. The winning essay was written by Dr Oludamini Ogunnaike (USA/Nigeria), with the title ‘The Shining of the Lights and the Veil of the Sights in the Secrets Bright: An Akbarī Approach to the Problem of Pure Consciousness’. This explored the contemporary Katz-Forman debate: Is it possible to have any experience – even a mystical experience – which is not shaped by a particular culture or belief system? The judges felt that the essay showed not only an impressive grasp of Ibn ‘Arabi’s ideas and deep insight into the issue, but also great originality, being formatted as a dialogue between the author and the imaginal figure of Ibn ‘Arabi himself. The title reflects the common practice within Islam of giving a title which rhymes: it is rendered in Arabic as *ishrāq al-anwār wa niqāb al-abṣār fī birāq al-asrār*.

Oludamini is now an assistant professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary, a public research university in Virginia, USA. He holds a PhD in African Studies and the Study of Religion from Harvard University, and spent a year as a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University’s Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies. He writes:

“I was introduced to Ibn ‘Arabi while an undergraduate at Harvard University through Caner Dagli’s translation of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and William Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson’s translation of *Iraqī’s Lama’at* – two books which were to be my constant companions for the next four years. I also studied Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* during



Oludamini Ogunnaike



Eric van Lit

weekly reading seminars with James Morris in Boston while completing my PhD, a comparative study of the epistemologies of Tijani Sufism and Ifa, an indigenous Yoruba spiritual/intellectual tradition. My research examines the philosophical dimensions of postcolonial, colonial, and pre-colonial Islamic and indigenous religious traditions of West and North Africa, especially Sufism and Ifa. I would like to thank the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society for their work in helping to introduce and make accessible Ibn ‘Arabi’s works and legacy, and for this generous award. I would also like to thank my wife, Naseemah Mohamed, for her support, and Dr. Muhammad Rustom for informing me of the competition, and for his encouragement.”

The judges gave the status of ‘Highly Commended’ to the entry by Dr Eric van Lit entitled ‘Suhrawardī, Ibn ‘Arabi, and the World of Image: One term, different meanings’. This drew on an impressive range of material to consider whether the term *‘ālam al-mithal*, which is used by both authors, has, as many scholars have assumed, the same meaning in the different contexts.

Eric is currently a visiting scholar at the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo where he is conducting private research and working for a large-scale digitisation project managed by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. He completed a PhD in 2014 at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, on the topic of the world of image in Suhrawardī and his commentators. Afterwards he was a postdoctoral scholar at Yale University for two years, during which he converted his dissertation into a book which is coming out in the Spring of 2017 with Edinburgh University Press. He works on Islamic intellectual history of the late medieval and early modern period, in particular the transmission of knowledge through commentary traditions.



Heba Youssry

The judges awarded the status ‘Commended’ to two essays. One by Heba Youssry, currently based in Cairo, entitled ‘A Journey through *Wasl* and *Faṣl*: Women and Sexual Relations in Ibn ‘Arabi’s Thought’, boldly tackles the issues of gender equality and intimate relationships within Islam. Heba is currently the Director of Manor House International School in Egypt, having obtained a double BA in the fields of Business Administration and Philosophy and a double MA in Arabic Literature and Philosophy from the American University in Cairo. She writes:

“My passion for Ibn ‘Arabi was ignited when one of my philosophy professors would say beautiful quotations and attribute them to ‘someone’ till one day I decided to ask who this ‘someone’ was, and he replied that it was Ibn ‘Arabi. From this day on I became entrenched in the Akbarian sphere and in awe of his ever-present teachings. For me, Ibn ‘Arabi’s teachings are a mode of being that guide me along the path of life.”



Aydogan Kars

The other ‘Commended’ essay was by Dr Aydogan Kars, entitled ‘What is Negative Theology? Lessons from the Encounter of Two Sufis in Medieval Seville’. This analyses Ibn ‘Arabi’s encounter with a Mu‘tazilite Sufi master, al-Qabrafiqi, in Seville and their different understandings of divine transcendence. Aydogan earned his PhD in Religion at Vanderbilt University, USA, and is currently serving as a Lecturer in Islamic and Interreligious Studies in the Centre for Religious Studies at Monash University, Australia.

Other submissions were:

‘Re-integrating Shariah and Tasawuuf : Was there an Akbarian *fiqh*?’ by Mohammed Haseeb Khan, a post-graduate student at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

‘Comparison of the Monistic Ontologies of Ibn ‘Arabi and Spinoza’ by Thannima Ahmed Shamoli, a postgraduate student at Oxford University, UK.

‘The Perfect Man (*Insan Kamil*) on Mysticism of Ibn ‘Arabi: an analytic study for empowering younger generation’ by Wa Ode Zainab Zilullah Toresano, a doctoral student in Jakarta, Indonesia.

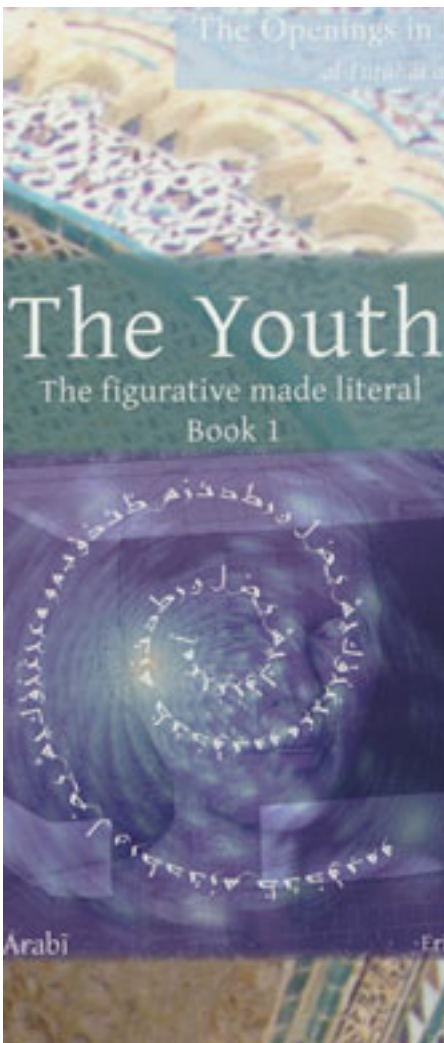
‘Eco-friendly vision based on Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Tajalli*’ by Fithri Dzakiyyah Hafizah, also studying at the Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Islam (STFI) Sadra, in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Our heartfelt thanks to all those who took part in this project – the writers who put in so much time and effort to produce a set of fascinating essays, the judges who gave their time and their expertise to the demanding task of reading them all, and the Beshara Trust and other donors for generously supporting the award. The next one will, God willing, take place in 2019.

Jane Clark

## Library Report: Additions in 2016

Report by Jane Clark



Cover of Book 1 of *The Openings in Makka : al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyya*

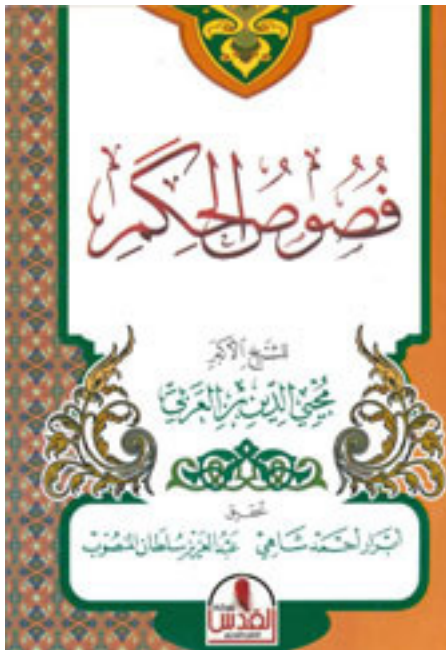
Probably the most important publication in English during the last year is Eric Winkel’s continuing translation of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyya*. This is the first attempt at a complete translation in English of the whole of Ibn ‘Arabi’s magnum opus, which comprises 560 chapters in thirty-seven sections. The first twelve sections are already available as twelve separate books and can be obtained from Amazon in the USA and the UK. They can also be bought as e-books through iTunes / iBooks.

A valuable addition to our knowledge of the early tradition which developed from Ibn ‘Arabi’s work is Caner Dagli’s *Ibn ‘Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture; from mysticism to philosophy* (Routledge, London, 2016). This traces the development of the idea of *wujūd* (existence) from thinkers before Ibn ‘Arabi (Avicenna, al-Ghazali, Suhrawardi) through the four major heirs to his thought – Qunawi, Jandi, Kashani and Qaysari. Each of these important but to date rather under-studied followers has a separate chapter devoted to their metaphysical interpretation of what became known, by the time of Qaysārī, as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being).

Another important publication is Maurice Gloton’s *Jesus Son of Mary in the Qur’ān and according to the Teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Fons Vitae, Louisville, 2016). This is a translation of the French work which appeared in 2006 (Albouraq, Beirut). It considers all the mentions of Jesus and Mary in the Qur’an, commenting verse by verse, and in the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt*. It is the culmination of a life-time’s engagement with Ibn ‘Arabi’s work by Gloton, whose expertise is in etymological/grammatical analysis of the texts with the aim of bringing out their universal meaning.

### Arabic Language

It has been an exciting year for Arabic publishing with the launch of a new series of critical editions of Ibn ‘Arabi’s works by the Cairo publisher (Al-quds li-l-nashr wa al-tawzī‘). These have all been edited by

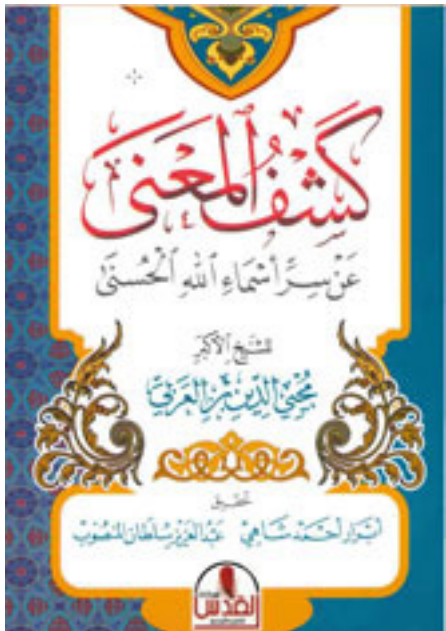


the Yemeni scholar 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Manṣub, whose excellent critical edition of the *Futūḥāt* appeared in 2010. The series includes the first published critical editions of *al-Tanazzulāt al-Mawṣiliyya*, *Mawāqī' al-nujūm*, *'Anqā' Mughrib* and *K. al-Maḥajja al-bayḍā'*. Also in the series are new critical editions of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Kashf al-ma'nā* which have been jointly edited by Abrar Aḥmad Shahi of the Ibn 'Arabi Foundation in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Many of these editions use manuscripts from the MIAS Archive Project.

From the Ibn 'Arabi Foundation in Pakistan there are new critical editions alongside translations into Urdu of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Kashf al-ma'nā* by Abrar Aḥmad Shahi. This is the latest in a series of translations which are bringing Ibn 'Arabi's works to the populations of Pakistan and Northern India; it is estimated that between 60 and 70 million people worldwide speak Urdu.

Our thanks to the editors for donating copies of these valuable books to the Society library.

A further welcome addition to the library is another critical edition of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* edited by Said Nizam al-Hussayni. This also includes a new edition of *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, Ibn 'Arabi's own brief commentary upon the text. This book appeared in 2010 but it has proved hard to obtain a copy. Our thanks to Cyrus Zargar for arranging for us to have one in the library.



# The Ibn 'Arabi Society in the USA

Report by Nick Yiangou and Jane Carroll

After the Symposium in New York in Autumn 2015 the Society in the U.S. had a quieter year. We have presented three workshops since the last Annual report: Bob Darr in December 2015, Todd Lawson in May 2016 and Eric Winkel in late September 2016. All were well-received.

The Winkel workshop was arranged as a full day with a morning and afternoon session with lunch provided. The venue was a lovely center in Sausalito, near the bay, with an adjoining garden.

The subject was Winkel's translation of the Chapter of Love in the *Futuhat*. We found that the full day format allowed for the presentation of a serious amount of material and the opportunity for some deep questioning and discussion. There were about 40 attendees and we received glowing reviews – one couple wrote to say it was the best workshop they had attended in six years!



Eric Winkel

The board members of the Society remain Nick Yiangou, Jane Carroll and Maren Gleason though we have volunteer help with membership reminders and with mailing out of the Journals. Maren still handles booksales on Amazon.

We will be having our own annual board meeting at the beginning of December and are well aware that we need to increase the circle of support if the Society is to continue.

Adobe, where Nick works, has given a second very generous contribution to the Society, and in addition provided Nick with group seminars on running a non-profit organization, from which we all hope to benefit.

Current membership is 85 (excluding Honorary Fellows), with over 1000 on the mailing list, and the US Facebook page continues to grow with over 2,500 “likes”. The Society accounts are healthy, so we will be looking for interesting programs to present in 2017.

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If you would like to listen to the seminars given in the US in the last year, they are available through the Ibn 'Arabi Society USA Facebook page, or the podcasts page of the Society website:

<http://ibnarabisociety.org/podcasts/>

Eric Winkel's Workshop on *The Atlas of Love* is presented as a podcast with a wonderful accompanying slideshow, which can be downloaded. Todd Lawson's talk, *Symbols of Transformation*, is available as a podcast as is Bob Darr's talk *Waking to the Embrace: Applying Ibn 'Arabi's Teachings on Embodiment*.

Some of these talks and seminars can also be accessed directly through YouTube (e.g. search for “YouTube Ibn 'Arabi Robert Darr”).

# In Spain: MIAS Latina

Report by Cecilia Twinch

We have had news from Ibn ‘Arabi scholar, Gracia Lopez Anguita, that over the three days 24-26 November, 2016, they celebrated the 900th anniversary of the birth of Abu Madyan, in Cantillana, near Seville, where Abu Madyan was born. Claude Addas informs us in her book, *The Red Sulphur* that of all the masters that Ibn ‘Arabi mentions, it is to Abu Madyan that he refers most often, even though he never met him in the flesh.

There was a symposium opened by the mayoress, a reception at the Town Hall, concerts, theatre, an exhibition, readings of Abu Madyan’s poetry, and the placing of a memorial plaque. The symposium was organized by the government of Cantillana in collaboration with the Three Cultures Foundation and the University of Seville. At least 100 places were reserved for students.

Among the many presentations, Gracia Lopez Anguita spoke on “Sufism in al-Andalus under the gaze of Ibn Arabi” and Pablo Beneito spoke on “Abu Madyan, Ibn ‘Arabi’s Master”.

As many of you know, the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society Latina, commonly known as MIAS Latina, is based in Murcia, Spain, Ibn ‘Arabi’s birthplace. It is an independent affiliated organization meant for Spanish speakers, as well as Catalan, Portuguese and Italian speakers and is supported by Murcia’s Puertas de Castilla Cultural Centre.

The 850th Anniversary of the birth of Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi was celebrated in Spain in 2014-2015 through many events, including symposia, seminars and workshops, nearly one a month, as well as film screenings, dance performances, art exhibitions, cultural visits, book launches, concerts and poetry readings.

The past twelve months were not quite so busy, but still very active. In November 2015 Richard and I were invited to travel to Murcia to participate in the First International Meeting of Ibn ‘Arabi Reading Circles. Participants came from the Reading Circles in Murcia, Cartagena, Sevilla, Talavera, Valencia, Melilla (a Spanish Province in Morocco), Barcelona and Granada. The title was: “From the text to the heart” and it included, among its 14 talks, a videolink presentation by Ariosto Matus of the Mexican Reading Circle. Monthly reading circles are continuing in all these places as well as in Lisbon and a group newly-established in Reus (Tarragona).

On the 4-5 December 2015, the Second MIAS Latina Symposium in Barcelona took place at the Centre for Christian Studies. The subject was, “Affinities between the mystic Ramon Llull and Ibn ‘Arabi against the background of Mediterranean thought”, and it included a screening of the documentary made by Miguel Valls: “Ibn ‘Arabi and the Splendour of al-Andalus.”

2016 began with a weekend seminar in February in Murcia (20-21Feb) entitled “From the source of Life” at the Puertas de Castilla Cultural Centre.

Also in February in Murcia (19 Feb 2016) the First Ibn Arabi Seminar of Interdisciplinary Studies was held. It began a cycle of meetings in the framework of SEMILIA, the Ibn ‘Arabi Seminar Series, bringing



Murcia, International Meeting of Ibn ‘Arabi Reading Circles, November 2015



*The third volume of the MIAS-Latina Journal of Ibn 'Arabi Studies, "El Azufre Rojo" (The Red Sulphur), appeared in 2016.*

together scholars of Ibn Arabi, Sufism, Islam, comparative religion, traditional thought and its resonances in contemporary thought, art etc. Pablo Beneito introduced the seminar and, among many other speakers, David Fernandez Navas (UNED) of the University of Madrid, presented a paper on "The Language of Love in Ibn 'Arabi".

In April there was a weekend seminar in Valencia in collaboration with Miguel Valls, the film-maker and director of the series "Journey to the Mediterranean Tradition". The seminar was entitled: "The double ladder and the divine Names: the inner journey through the Names" and was led by Pablo Beneito and Fernando Mora.

The Sixth International Symposium on Ibn Arabi of Murcia, under the title, "Presence", took place in May as part of The Festival of Three Cultures and was held at the University of Murcia.

Prizes awarded this year were as follows:

The *Tarjuman* Prize for translation, research, publishing and diffusion was awarded *ex aequo* (jointly) to Mohammed Rustom (Canada), and Carmela Crescendi (Italy), who were both speakers at the symposium.

The *Barzakh* (Isthmus) Prize, for artists whose work has been inspired by Ibn 'Arabi, went this year to Abdul Wahid Martin, sculptor and engraver.

And the *Hikma* (Wisdom) Prize, first established last year (for Institutions and Initiatives which promote interfaith exchange and creative, intercultural dialogue), was accepted by Fatimah Benlabbah (Morocco), (director of IHEL), on behalf of the Institute of Hispano-Lusitanian (Portuguese) Studies at the University of Mohamed V in Rabat. (Instituto de Estudios Hispano-Lusos de Rabat).

In November 2016 there was a series of talks in Totana, near Murcia, in The Sanctuary of the Saint, (University of Santa Eulalia), entitled "In the heart of the Beloved: mystical experience in the religions of the Book" - on Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Finally, the third volume of *Azufre Rojo: Journal of Ibn Arabi Studies* was launched at the May symposium. And Coleccion Dragoman – the publishing arm of MIAS-Latina – also has two forthcoming titles which are works by Ibn Arabi translated into Italian by Maurizio Marconi: *Secrets of Fasting* (Ch.71 of *Futuhāt*) and *Kitāb al-inshā' al dawa'ir - Book of Encompassing Circles*.

Please see the website at [ibnarabisociety.es](http://ibnarabisociety.es) for more details – choose the flag at the top for Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese or Italian!

*The Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society was founded in the United Kingdom in 1977. The intention was to make Ibn 'Arabi's meanings and writings better known and understood. The Society in the USA was established in 1983 as a non-profit corporation in California. Although they are distinct legal and financial entities, the Society in the UK and the USA act as one body. The Society's activities are funded by the annual subscriptions and donations of its members. The Society in the USA is responsible for members in North and Central America, the Society in the UK administers members in all other countries, 36 countries at this time. MIAS-Latina, an independent organisation in Spain, was established in 2011.*

*The Honorary Fellows of the Society have included many of the outstanding scholars in this field, from Henry Corbin and Osman Yahya onwards.*

*The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society has been published in the United Kingdom since 1982, so far making available some 300 articles and translations, many book reviews, and poems by Ibn 'Arabi. The Journal is received by members of the Society, and is subscribed to by about 40 university libraries and similar institutions. It will become available in electronic format in 2017.*

*Since 2010 the Society has sponsored a Young Writer Award for an original essay by a person under 35, which is now a triennial event.*

*The Society is the co-publisher of the four-volume translation of the Fusus al-Hikam (1986-1991), together with the unique commentary in Ottoman Turkish, rendered into English by Bulent Rauf. It published the Arabic text and transliterations of two books of Ibn 'Arabi's prayers in 1979 and 1981. In 1993 it published a Commemorative Volume of essays with a very wide range of contributors, to mark the 750th anniversary of the death of Ibn 'Arabi. It has collaborated with Anqa Publications in the production of some works. The Society has been part of the great increase in the number of works published in English in the past four decades. At the time when it began, there were literally a handful of titles available*

## Treasurer's Report 2016

### Report by Martin Notcutt

The Society in the UK has had income between £20,000 and £30,000 over the past three years.

The income came from four main sources:

- Membership Subscriptions
- Registration fees for the Symposium
- Donations
- Sale of books and back issues of the Journal.

2015 was an exceptional year for donations, because an appeal was made for help for the Archive project.

The money was spent in five main areas:

- Events (the biggest single item) - the Symposium and AGM, and insurance
- Producing and delivering the Journal
- The Digital Manuscript Archive
- Buying books for resale
- Office and internet.

A few things stand out from this:

The Society's normal spendable income basically comes from Membership Subscriptions (about £5,500). This enables everything else. It pays for the production of the Journal and provides working capital for the Symposium. The Archive is largely funded by donations.

The Society is a voluntary Society. It has very little in the way of overheads: no rent, no salaries. It is based on the gift of time and subscriptions by its members.



*in English. The Society's library now contains works relating to Ibn 'Arabi in at least 15 languages.*

*34 Symposia have been held in the UK since the first one at Durham in April 1984, and particularly since 1993 these symposia have been events with speakers from many countries. The first symposium was held in the United States in 1987. Many speakers have testified to the encouragement they have received from the existence of the Symposium. Speakers from the Society have taken part in conferences in Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Morocco, Spain, Syria, Turkey, the USA and more.*

*The Society has had a website since 1996. Apart from news about events, the website has rich content, making available more than 200 articles and 100 podcasts. Between 200 and 300 people visit the website each day. Podcasts have been available through iTunes as well as the Society's website since 2009. The Society in the USA has had a Facebook page since 2011, and the Society in the UK has had a Facebook group since 2014. Videos have been published on Youtube since 2014.*

*Since 2002 the Society has been supporting visits to Turkish libraries by its researchers to identify and collect copies of historic manuscripts connected with Ibn 'Arabi. The first thought was to ensure the preservation of these documents. It has acquired over 900 digital copies of manuscripts of works by Ibn 'Arabi. The catalogue of manuscripts has been made available to scholars through the Society's Archive Project website, and to a wider audience on the general Society website. The Archive Project has been made possible by donations from members and has received grants from TIMA, The Islamic Manuscript Association.*

*The catalogue of manuscripts has been the basis for the first revision of the catalogue of works by Ibn 'Arabi since the seminal study by Osman Yahya, published in 1964. The resources of the Archive Project have helped many scholars in their work of producing critical editions and translations of Ibn 'Arabi's works.*

## The Society Website

Report by Martin Notcutt

The Society website is visited by over 200 people per day.

It has information about the Society and relevant Events worldwide, but chiefly it has a lot of rich content. There are more than 200 substantial articles on the site, mainly from the Journal of the Society, and over 100 podcasts, mainly recorded at Society symposia. A paper may be delivered to 100 people at a Symposium, be printed in 300-400 copies of the Journal, and be viewed and listened to more than 100 times per month on the website. One of the most popular papers, "Expérience et doctrine de l'amour chez Ibn Arabi", by Claude Addas, in French, has been viewed more than 200 times per month for more than 10 years.

The 10 top countries for visitors at this time are the United States, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Canada, France, Indonesia, Turkey, Malaysia, Australia.

A website has two big dimensions – the visible content, and the way it is delivered.

There are two things I would like to ask for help with:

- The current version of the website is not adapted to being viewed on mobile telephones, and that is important now. There is more than one way of achieving this. This is a technical matter, and if there are people here with experience and skills which they could contribute to resolving this, I would be glad to hear from them.
- There are also matters to do with content which could benefit from input from more people. For example, the list of books and articles relating to Ibn 'Arabi is much in need of being updated.

Martin can be reached via [mias.uk@ibnarabisociety.org](mailto:mias.uk@ibnarabisociety.org)

