

MIAS ARCHIVING PROJECT 2010

TIMA SECOND-YEAR REPORT

December 31, 2010: Stephen Hirtenstein

The MIAS archiving project has the aim of creating an online catalogue for the historic manuscripts of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi and his school. The catalogue builds on the pioneering work of Osman Yahia in the 1960s, and seeks to establish the real corpus of Ibn 'Arabi's writings that has survived. In so doing, it will provide a solid and comprehensive basis for future researchers by clarifying those works written by Ibn 'Arabi, resolving the many anomalies in Osman Yahia's work, and including new manuscripts which have come to light in the last 50 years and research done by various scholars in the field.

We had three broad aims in this second year:

- 1) to make a field-trip to Turkey in order to further research the Istanbul and Konya manuscript collections.
- 2) to complete the first stage of the database, the production of a final catalogue, as we had been unable to do so in 2009. This included the initial stages of setting up a web-based catalogue with specialist help.
- 3) to make this electronic catalogue available to leading academics in the field, and to include feedback from them regarding available printed editions.

The 2010 archiving TIMA grant covered a field-trip to Turkish libraries (8 days), and working on the archiving database and with scholars to produce a final catalogue (26 days).

1. Field-trip to Turkey (October 2010): 8 days

I spent five days in the libraries in Istanbul and three in Konya, with the aim of covering those parts of the Turkish libraries that we had so far not managed to check. Particular attention was given to copies of *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya*, *Fusus al-hikam* and relevant commentaries, small works of dubious authenticity which have been attributed to Ibn 'Arabi, and works by famous akbarians (eg al-Qunawi, Bosnevi). The new system of digitisation at the major libraries means that now most materials can be checked from the comfort of a computer screen. The new software system is efficient, although not everything from the smaller libraries is yet available on screen. The only downside is that it is impossible to view the actual books without special permission from the library director, which is usually forthcoming but takes time.

In Istanbul I divided my time between the Suleymaniye (checking odd titles which had been identified before, correcting the database) and the Beyazit libraries. As a much smaller institution, the Beyazit library is less well organised and staffed than the Suleymaniye, although their collections are highly valuable. The important collections of Beyazit and Veliyuddin (one of which contains autographs in Ibn 'Arabi's own hand) took much longer than anticipated, even up to the very morning of my departure!

At the Bolge manuscript library in Konya, I was able to check through the computer holdings of several small libraries (Akşehir, Darende, Diyarbakir, Elaziğ, Hacı Bektaş, Isparta, Izmir Milli, Konya Il Halk, Niğde, Trabzon, Rhodes), which only served to confirm that they generally hold late copies of works by Ibn 'Arabi and his school, and there was nothing worth digitizing for the

MIAS archive. I also went through the collections we had looked at before in Bursa (Genel, Haraccioğlu, Husein Celebi, Orhan, Ulu Cami), which are now largely accessible from the Konya database (they have made copies of some of the important collections). I managed to find works that I was not able to check on previous visits in person to Bursa, some of which are very early. There are also large quantities of manuscripts acquired from overseas (Palestine, Iraq, Dubai, for example), which are as yet uncatalogued due to the shortage of staff, but I was unable to make more than a cursory examination of these – the director assured me that in the future these would be catalogued.

The summary of the trip is as follows:

Suleymaniye library (Istanbul): 30 collections viewed, 98 entries catalogued

Beyazit library (Istanbul): 24 collections viewed, 33 entries catalogued

Bolge library (Konya): 64 collections viewed, 73 entries catalogued

Important digitised copies include:

Hekimoğlu 494 – copy of IA's *Fuṣūṣ* in the hand of Abdullah Bosnevi, dated 999H

Shehit Ali 1247 - copy of Bosnevi's *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ* in Arabic written during his lifetime, dated 1024H

Husein Celebi 475 – includes SQ's *R. al-Murshidiyya* and *Nuṣūṣ*, dated 909H

Husein Celebi 477 – includes SQ's *Fukūk* and *Nuṣūṣ* and IA's *Miftāḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, undated, very clear Seljuk naskhi almost certainly in the hand of the author, i.e. the original of the first two titles and one of the earliest copies of the third

Genel 1687 – includes SQ's *Fukūk* and *Nuṣūṣ* and IA's *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, very clear Seljuk naskhi, probably c.700H (probably copied from Husein Celebi 477)

Veliyuddin 1640 – early copy of IA's *Anqā' Mughrib*, c. 700H

Veliyuddin 1673 – early copy of IA's *Sharḥ Khal' al-na'layn*, dated 677H

Veliyuddin 1782 – *Mashāhid al-asrār*, dated 929H, attesting that it was copied from a copy dated 596H with IA's handwriting on it

After some 10 years work, most of the main manuscript work in Turkey seems to have been completed: while there may well be one or two more major discoveries in the future, they are quite unlikely to significantly alter the overall picture that the database currently presents.

2. Database

The database, which has been developed over a period of eight years, holds all the information about the manuscripts we have investigated in over 40 separate fields, and from this basic template different kinds of catalogue can be generated. The manuscripts which are considered historically valuable have been digitised: currently 1,168 separate works, totalling some 35,000 folios.

As the database can be held on a portable computer, manuscript details are inputted in situ, i.e. whilst in the libraries. Initially entered in a fairly basic fashion in order to maximise time, the information is subsequently refined and correlated with other details from digital copies. This is an ongoing task, as there is a wealth of detail on many of the manuscripts: for instance, in addition to basic information such as title, date, scribe, place of writing, quality of text, there are numerous side-notes and *samā'* containing names of followers, additional texts and commentaries, poems, etc.

The specific tasks undertaken this year were:

1) Detailed cataloguing work on the manuscripts investigated on the field trip. The total records held on the database are now as follows:

Individual works: 2793 of which 1658 are by Ibn 'Arabi himself, 174 by his principal follower, Sadr al-din al-Qunawi, and the remainder are works by various followers over the centuries or writers whose works happen to be in collections where there are akbarian texts.

Collections: 441 separate collections have been catalogued with detailed listing of the different manuscripts they contain.

2) A thorough cross-checking and proof-reading of the relevant parts of the catalogue prior to created a web-based interactive version. This involved in many cases returning to the original manuscripts (i.e. the digitised versions in the archive) in order to check dates, handwriting, etc and remove any inconsistencies.

Each manuscript has also been assessed in terms of authenticity (i.e. whether it is by Ibn 'Arabi or not), accuracy and historical value, and whether it is worth copying. In many cases it has to be compared to other texts to verify its identity. This has meant categorising each text according to the likelihood of it being a genuine work by Ibn 'Arabi, i.e. certain, probable, unknown (needing further assessment) and definitely not (often this means identifying the alternative author by means of manuscript evidence). We hope to publish an article within the next year on the findings of the archive in relation to the existing corpus, which will list the works according to these categories.

3) Addition of new fields to record printed versions of the works, as this is considered necessary in order to move on to the next stage of the project, which is to start producing good critical editions using the texts in the archive. There are now additional fields for printed editions, critical editions and translations, and these are being filled in. We ourselves are undertaking to fill in the information on critical editions (complete), but are relying on feedback from the scholars in our group to make a complete record of all printed editions, as this lies beyond our particular expertise. This is an ongoing process that we expect to maintain over the coming years.

4) Conversion of the whole system over to the latest version of the File-maker Pro database. This has been a major conversion as the system has changed considerably in the last ten years. In addition, it has been necessary to convert from our previous font, which was a special one developed for MIAS, to a new type-face which is Unicode compatible. This has involved carefully cross-checking, as many of the special characters have had to be changed manually.

5) Creation of an on-line version of the catalogue using information from the database. This does not entirely replace the File-maker Pro database, which continues to be the entry point for information and updating, but uses a number of the fields to create an interactive web-based system which can be accessed by scholars by themselves. This web-based version allows fast movement between the three different elements of the catalogue – the list of Ibn ‘Arabi works, the list of manuscripts and the list of collections – and has the principal aim of giving the user information about the best text of any given work. It is also interactive, and users can give feedback in all three parts. For the purposes of creating this web version, we have had the help of a member of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society who has not charged us professional rates.

In the first stage, which went ‘live’ to a limited group of scholars in December 2010, the catalogue is based upon the listing of Ibn ‘Arabi works, according to the RG number given to each in the standard bibliography by Osman Yahia. An extension will be needed in the future to include works by major followers, but this is a major task because, as mentioned in last year’s report, bibliographies have not yet been done for even the most important akbarian thinkers such as al-Qunawi, al-Farghani, al-Jandi, al-Kashani, al-Qaysari, Jami, etc.

5) The second version of the web-catalogue is now in progress. This involves incorporating the comments that have been received on the first version into the main database, and then re-launching it. One of the aims of the second version is that it should be available as a research tool for a wider audience, and certain aspects will have to be redesigned in order to cope with the wider dissemination.

3. Financial report

a) Field-trip:

Due to the shorter period of the trip and the generosity of friends in Istanbul who provided some accommodation, the total costs were kept well within the original budget. We used a small part of the extra funds to make digital copies of extra material.

Detailed breakdown:

Travel – flights, buses, taxis:	£365	(£360 budget)
Hotel:	£180	(£660 budget)
Subsistence 8 days @ £35:	£280	(11@£35=£385 budget)
Digitisation:	£840	(£750 budget)
TOTAL:	£1,665	(£2,155 budget)

b) Cataloguing:

As mentioned above, these costs are low because the software engineer did not charge professional rates for the work of creating the web-based catalogue and his time has been absorbed into cataloguing costs.

24 days @ £100 per day	£2,400	(£2,300 budget)
Computer software	£22.00	
Software engineer	£500.00	

Hard-drive for data storage	£91.58	
TOTAL:	£3013.58	(£2,500 budget)
GRAND TOTAL:	£4678.58	(£4,665 TIMA grant)