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## A Poem by Ibn al-‘Arabī

Each moment I behold you is my Night of Power.

While that which for mankind in the month of Ramadan  
is “better than a thousand months”, verily I –

I am better than that without any time[-limit]!

Its Graciousness depends on me, while my own Grace  
belongs to Him who made me in His [Image] ...

*Diwān*, p.47, translated by G. Elmore on p.19 of  
*Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time* (Leiden, 1999).

# Ibn 'Arabī's Treatise on the Knowledge of the Night of Power and Its Timing

*Pablo Beneito and Stephen Hirtenstein*

## Introduction

This little-known treatise on the Night of Power, which is attributed in all known copies to Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī, and is here translated and presented for the first time, sheds light on various aspects of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. In the copy of this work found in the library of Ṣadrūddīn al-Qūnawī, it is described as "a useful extract from the treatise on the knowledge of the Night of Power and its timing (*mudda*) by the Shaykh, the most perfect leader, the perfected one, father of his spiritual children, Muḥyiddīn b. 'Alī Ibn al-'Arabī."

We are going to present here a translation and brief analysis of this "extract", and correlate it to other passages in the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* which explain how Ibn 'Arabī and his followers view the Night of Power. First of all, some general remarks about the underlying symbolism of the month and the appearance of the Night of Power.

For Ibn 'Arabī, the lunar month of 28 days is a cycle that affords the most profound contemplation. He equates this cycle to the whole descent and movement of existence itself, from its highest level as the First Intellect or Divine Pen through all the levels of creation to its culmination in the two "heavy ones", the jinn and mankind, and their final fruition and apotheosis in the Perfect Man. At the same time there is the cycle of letters, whose degrees occur in the Arabic alphabet as 28 letters, and each of these corresponds to one of the 28 days. These letters, and their sounds as produced by the human being, encompass the whole range of human articulation, starting from the innermost centre of the chest, symbolised by

the *alif* or glottal stop of the *hamza*, and passing through all the production-points of each letter until it finally reaches the very edge of the lips, where the *wāw* is produced.<sup>1</sup> In addition he assigns 28 Divine Names to these degrees.

Thus he presents us with a correspondence between four apparently separate realms: the days of the lunar month, the hierarchy of existence, the letter-sounds of the alphabet and the Names of God.<sup>2</sup> The following three examples may give an idea of this interconnectedness: the first day of the month corresponds to the Divine Pen, the letter *alif* (or *hamza*) and the Divine Name, the Creative Inventor (*badī'*); the 14th day of the month, which is the full moon, corresponds to the 4th heaven, which is the Sun, the letter *nūn* and the Divine Name, the Light (*nūr*); the final day corresponds to the hierarchy of existence (rather than its manifestation), the letter *wāw* and the Divine Name, the One who elevates the degrees (*rafī' al-darajāt*).

The moon here is in reality an expression for the perfect servant. The moon, which God has made into a light, travels, and thus He makes it one of His own Names, so that He, may He be exalted, is the One desired and intended. As one of the places where Truth is manifest, the moon manifests the Name Light, and travels through the mansions of His servant, whose number is restricted to 28.<sup>3</sup>

As this apparent lunar light is identified with the inner Light, which is manifest in the various 28 phases, he goes on to explain that it can also be called the "singular man" (*al-insān al-mufrad*), or the servant who is realised in singularity. His states are as the 28 lunar phases, while his essence reflects the

1. It is interesting to note that the letter *wāw* has a numerical value of 6, which is known as the first "perfect number", that is a number which is made up of the sum of its divisors (3 + 2 + 1). The second perfect number is 28.

2. A full chart portraying these correspondences, which Ibn 'Arabī describes in the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, can be found in *Mystical Astrology according to Ibn 'Arabī* by Titus Burckhardt (Beshara Publications, 1977) p. 32.

3. *Fut.* I: 658.

single Light, just as the moon transmits the light of the sun. It is within this "month" of the servant that the Night of Power occurs, in which God's revelation is fully expressed and expounded. Thus the Night of Power can be identified symbolically with the Heart of the perfect servant, wherein God is contained. As is said in the hadith, "neither My heavens nor My earth can contain Me; only the heart of My faithful servant contains Me."

### THE NIGHT OF POWER

We brought it down on the Night of Power.

What could let thee comprehend what is the Night of Power?

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

The angels come down and the Spirit within it, by permission of their Lord from every order.

Peace it is until the rising of the dawn.<sup>4</sup>

The Night of Power is the traditional name for the night upon which the whole Quran descended, and it is celebrated on one of the last nights of Ramadan, the 27th, every year. This is one example of the importance of odd numbers, and in this context Ibn 'Arabī often quotes the hadith: "God is Odd and loves the odd." However, although the 27th of Ramadan is the normally accepted calendar date for celebrating the Night of Power, there are different views as to when the Night of Power may actually occur and be experienced as "coming down". In the following passages Ibn 'Arabī outlines his own position:

Then know that God brought down the Book as *furqān* [in distinctive mode] on the Night of Power, which was the middle night of Sha'ban [i.e. the 15th], and He brought it down as *qur'ān* [in unitive mode] in the month of Ramadan. It was brought down

4. Q.97.

as a whole to the nearest heaven (*al-samā' al-dunyā*), and from there it descended over a period of 23 years, in the distinctive mode as stars, in the form of verses and suras, so that the mansions could be known and the degrees be made clear. Because of its descent to the earth in the month of Sha'ban, it is read as *furqān*, while because of its descent in the month of Ramadan, it is read as *qur'ān*. Thus among us there are those who read it through Him, in which case it is the *qur'ān*, and those who read it through themselves, in which case it is the *furqān*. It is not possible for both of them to be read [simultaneously] in a single entity or in a single state. If you are in His Presence, you are in the presence of yourself; but if you are in the presence of yourself, you are not in His Presence. "Every thing is in His Presence according to a measure" (Q. 13:9), but it is not like that for Him. Rather, He is with every thing but only in the presence of one who mentions Him with remembrance (*dhikr*),<sup>5</sup> and of no-one else. For He is the One who sits with those who remember [Him].<sup>6</sup>

The night on which the Quran descended, which was the Night of Power, coincided [originally] with the middle night of Sha'ban. But it is a night which can move throughout the whole year. We consider it as moving in the year: I myself have seen it fall in Sha'ban as well as in the month of Ramadan. It may fall on any odd night in Ramadan, and I have even seen it on the 18th of the month of Ramadan, according to the way our fast was calculated that year. Whatever night of the year God wishes to make the place of manifestation of [His] Power, by which it may be named the Night of Power, He can [surely] do so! If it happens on a special night which is favoured above other nights of the year,

5. This refers to the *ḥadīth qudsī*: "I am the One who sits with him who remembers Me, so I am in his presence" (*Mishkāt al-anwār*, no. 43). The contrast Ibn 'Arabī makes between *'inda* (in the presence of) and *ma'a* (with) is a distinction between the eternal aspect of things being present with Him before they come into existence and His being with them after they enter existence. See *The Self-Disclosure of God* by William Chittick (SUNY, 1998) pp. 35–7.

6. *Fut.* III: 94–5.

such as a Thursday night,<sup>7</sup> or the night of 'Arafa,<sup>8</sup> or the middle night of Sha'ban or other such recognised special nights, the good of this [particular] night is added to the favour of Power, and such a Night of Power is more excellent than those which do not include any extra favour. So know that!<sup>9</sup>

Do not neglect to pray (*du'ā'*) every night, and in your prayer ask Him to pardon [your faults] and [restore you to] well-being in religion, in this world and in the next. For you do not know exactly when the Night of Power will fall during your year. I myself have seen it fall several times outside the month of Ramadan, since it moves in the year. It mostly occurs during Ramadan, mainly on odd nights, although it may [occasionally] take place on an even night – I myself saw it on the 18th night of the month of Ramadan, and I have also seen it in the middle ten of Ramadan.<sup>10</sup>

The doctrine that the Night of Power may appear on different nights seems to have been an ancient one, based on various hadiths, and is well-known.<sup>11</sup> If the Night of Power is not fixed

7. *Laylatu'l-jumu'a*, literally "the night of Friday", is actually Friday eve or Thursday night, since the Arab calendar begins with night and is calculated from sundown to sundown. It is the traditional night for group practices of *dhikr*, preceding the gathering of the whole community for Friday prayers in the mosque (*jāmi'*).

8. 9th Dhū'l-Hijjah is the night when pilgrims spend the night at Mount 'Arafat during the pilgrimage in Mecca.

9. *Fut.III*:158.

10. *Fut.IV*:486. As can be seen, he twice mentions that he saw it on the 18th night of Ramadan, which would appear to be at variance with what came to him in the treatise. However, it is important to note that he qualifies the date by "according to how our fast was calculated that year". In his time, variation in the starting day for Ramadan must have been common as it depended upon the first sighting of the new moon.

11. The Night of Power is said to take place on one of the last seven nights of Ramadan, while it may also occur on "one of the odd nights among the last ten" (Bukhārī, *Laylatu'l-qadr*, 3). If this is taken to mean the last ten odd nights, this would be a basis for the pattern described here. The tradition stating that the Night moves through the year, which is referred here to the authority of Abū Ḥanīfa, can be



in the calendar, then it is up to the aspirant to be alert and awake to its coming. According to Sulaymān 'Atā',<sup>12</sup> you should "treat everyone you meet as Khidr and every night as the Night of Power."

At first sight, it would appear that Ibn 'Arabī concurs with this point of view. However, in this treatise on the Night of Power, he provides a more precise picture of its timing, and one that has a spiritual rationale. The underlying pattern can be found in the tables we have placed at the end, though this is not explained or found in any of the manuscripts we have consulted.

The following poem in the *Dīwān* also refers to the Night of Power:

Having seen the Night of Power on a Friday Eve, the 19th of Rabī'a al-Awwal, in the year 631 – since [this Night] moves through the year just as Imām Abū Ḥanīfa considers – [Ibn 'Arabī] also said:

The Night of Power is naught but the essence of its *rā'*  
 which is the indication of the good therein.  
 It contains all the good which You have destined to us  
 over a thousand months, and this measure suffices it...<sup>13</sup>

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found in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* 3.24. See Wensinck's *Concordance* (Leiden, 1936–69) for the many traditions concerning the Night.

12. He was a disciple of Aḥmad al-Yasavī, one of the most celebrated Turkish shaykhs of the 12th century. This quotation comes from *Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia* by Hasan Shushud (Coombe Springs Press, 1983), p. 18.

13. *Dīwān*, Būlāq edition (Cairo, 1855), p. 280. Abū Ḥanīfa was the eponym of the Hanafi school, c. AD 699–767.

## Translation

### Concerning the Knowledge of the Night of Power and Its Timing (*Risālah fī ma'rifati laylati'l-qadri wa muddatihā*)<sup>14</sup>

In the Name of God the All-Compassionate, the Most Merciful: Praise be to God alone, and may the blessings of God be upon our master Muhammad, and all his family and companions. This is a useful extract from the epistle on the knowledge of the Night of Power and its timing (*mudda*) by the Shaykh, the most perfect leader, the perfected one, father of his spiritual children, Muḥyiddīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn al-'Arabī, may God be pleased with him. He said:

"The reason I came to write this short piece is that God, glory to Him, revealed to me, in the course of a sublime vision, the knowledge of this blessed night[*'s* appearance] and the length of time before it comes again. If the night falls in Ramadan, its interval is a whole year, while if it does not fall in Ramadan, its interval may last up to nine months – that is because this night does not occur during Ramadan, when the first day of the month of Ramadan falls on either a Sunday (*yawm al-aḥad*) or a Friday (*yawm al-jumu'a*).<sup>15</sup> This confirms the validity of the doctrine of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, according to which this blessed

14. The full Arabic title is: *Fā'idah min risālah fī ma'rifati laylati'l-qadri wa muddatihā*. The word *fā'idah* (extract) suggests that this is part of a longer work, but all existing manuscripts follow this version, which may be in Ṣadrud-dīn al-Qūnawī's own hand. This manuscript is Yusuf Aḡa 4883 pp.18–20, no.428 in Osman Yahia's *Repertoire Generale*.

15. It would seem that the specifying of these two days is not accidental: Sunday in Arabic is equally the Day of the Unique One (*al-aḥad*) and Friday the Day of Gathering (*al-jam'*). Uniqueness and gathering or synthesis are both universal properties, and therefore can be applied to any of the months.

night does not fall exclusively in Ramadan, but may appear elsewhere in the year.

If the first of Ramadan falls on a Monday, then it may be expected on either the 23rd night or the 19th.

If the first of Ramadan falls on a Tuesday, then it will be on either the 29th night or the 25th.

If the first of Ramadan falls on a Wednesday, then it will be on either the 21st night or the 17th.<sup>16</sup>

If the first of Ramadan falls on a Thursday, it will be on either the 27th night or the 23rd.

If the first of Ramadan falls on a Saturday, it will be on either the 25th night or the 21st.

[In the case of the first of Ramadan falling on a Sunday] if the first day of any month other than Ramadan falls on a Sunday, then the blessed night will be on either the 17th night or the 13th [of that month].

[In the case of it being a Friday], if the first day of any month other than Ramadan falls on a Friday, then the blessed night will be on either the 15th night or the 19th [of that month].

There is here a mysterious property: when it does not occur in Ramadan, it cannot fall on any of the last ten nights [of the month in question]; it can only occur during the middle ten. On the other hand, in Ramadan it may occur during the last ten or the middle ten. There are thus two special favours for the month of Ramadan: the first that it is unrestricted, and the second that it has five particular days, whereas the other months only have two days.

My father, may God rest his soul, informed us about the coming of this blessed night by virtue of [recognising] special signs (*'alāmāt*).<sup>17</sup> When the night was due, these signs would appear. This happened [outside Ramadan], once in the month of Sha'ban and another time in the month of Rabī'a al-Awwal.

16. Mss. A here reads "27th", but mss. B correctly says "17th". The symmetry of the pattern, where the first higher number is four more than the second lower, proves this reading.

17. One of these signs is mentioned in the *Futūḥāt*: "The dawn at the end of the Night of Power is not from the light of the sun; it is the light of the Night of Power itself which manifests in the body of the sun, just

Thus I found this excellent pattern based on what the Envoy of God, peace and blessings be upon him, had related, and I confirmed that it is in accordance with reality. I thanked God for this abundant blessing, asking Him for an increase [in knowledge].”<sup>18</sup>

Then later he said:<sup>19</sup>

“Know that when I was invoking this presence<sup>20</sup> by which I came to know the way the blessed night appears, I recognised therein a rare secret, consisting of the fact that when it [the Sura] is read in the 6 directions of the body, it will protect its master from calamities and vicissitudes. So when God wishes to protect you, He inspires you to recite it in moments of fear, and to ask that this presence be brought about – and that is only possible for the elect.”<sup>21</sup>

Because of this we [decided to] return to the [practice of] reading aloud. This is a rare secret, and as I have explained, [the reciter] is safeguarded by God, and one who opposes him with evil intent will get his just deserts in this world before the next.”<sup>22</sup>

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as with the light of the moon, it is the light of the sun which appears in the body of the moon. If the light of the moon came from itself, it would emit rays of light. Thus, as the Night of Power effaces the rays of the sun, the sun remains like the moon, shining on things and giving light without rays.” (*Fut.* I: 659)

18. In accordance with the prayer of Muhammad: “My Lord, increase me in knowledge” (Q. 20. 114).

19. This inserted phrase seems also to indicate that this is an extract from a longer work, now presumably lost, or that it may have been transmitted orally.

20. That is, the presence of the Sura of Power (Q. 97), which describes the descent of the Night of Power.

21. For the invocation of a Quranic Sura in a similar manner, see the story of Fatima in the *Rūḥ al-quds* (translated by R.W.J. Austin as *Sufis of Andalusia*, Beshara Publications, 1988, p. 143).

22. The extract ends with the phrase: “Here ends the treatise”.

## THE PATTERN OF THE NIGHT OF POWER

Ibn 'Arabī describes Muhammad as "the one whose day is the known day (*al-ma'rūf*), whose day in terms of visible effect is Tuesday and in terms of essential particularity is Friday. His subtleties permeate every day, and his realities suffuse every hour."<sup>23</sup>

The first of these three ways of seeing Muhammad's "day" refers to the universal day, which is known to everyone. Whatever the particular day, the unit that constitutes "every day" belongs to him because his message encompasses everyone and everything. On the other hand, Tuesday may be considered specific to him as it is the third day (Sunday being the beginning of the week), and the number 3 expresses the principle of singularity (*fardiyya*) – it is this wisdom that Ibn 'Arabī explains in the final chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* in the Word of Muhammad. Friday is the day of gathering (*jam'*), when the community gathers together in prayer, and this derives from the Prophet's special quality of all-inclusiveness. It is then not surprising that the pattern of the appearance of the Night of Power, in which the Quran was brought down, should be based upon these two particular Muhammadian days, as is shown in the following scheme.

Scheme A is one of the ways of representing the "excellent pattern" which the Shaykh al-Akbar was shown. It has been constructed by counting from the particular day which constitutes the first of Ramadan. The numbers corresponding to the days on which the Night of Power occurs will always fall in the pattern of this scheme on a Tuesday or a Friday (provided that it is odd in number).

In addition, we have represented this pattern in two other ways in order to show further examples of its intrinsic symmetry and harmony. It seems clear that the appearance of the Night of Power for Ibn 'Arabī is far from arbitrary; indeed, it conforms to the very spirit of the Night itself, a harmonious and "excellent pattern".

23. This line occurs in the opening prayer of the *K. Ayyām al-sha'n* (The Days of God's Work), in *Rasā'il* (Hyderabad, 1948), p.1.

**Scheme A**

**Sunday = 13 or 17**

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

**Friday = 15 or 19**

| Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

**Monday = 19 or 23**

| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

**Tuesday = 25 or 29**

| Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

**Wednesday = 17 or 21**

| Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

Thursday = 23 or 27

| Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

Saturday = 21 or 25

| Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

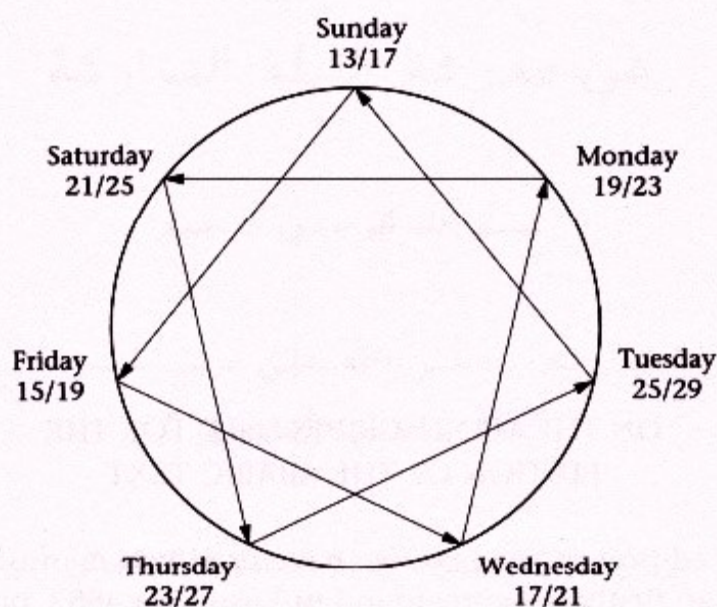
### Scheme B

|           | 13 | 15 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 27 | 29 |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Sunday    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Friday    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Wednesday |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Monday    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Saturday  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Thursday  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Tuesday   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

The days in the left-hand column appear at 5-day intervals in this diagram.

S

## Scheme C



Both cycles of the diagram begin with Sunday and follow the 7-pointed pattern:

Sun (13) – Fri (15) – Wed (17) – Mon (19) – Sat (21) – Thur (23) – Tue (25)

Sun (17) – Fri (19) – Wed (21) – Mon (23) – Sat (25) – Thur (27) – Tue (29)

The enumeration of two cycles of 7 days, or 14 days in total, is in itself significant. The number 14 is considered by Ibn 'Arabī to be highly symbolic: in relation to the 28-day lunar cycle it represents the full moon and thus is a symbol of the most complete beauty, wherein the light of the sun is fully reflected. It stands for the perfect human soul (*nafs kāmila*), who is fully receptive to the action of the Divine Spirit. Exactly the same pattern of a 7-pointed star can be used to depict the relationship of the 7 *abdāl*, the so-called “interchangeable” saints who are responsible for the 7 climes according to the Shaykh.<sup>24</sup> The relationship of the *abdāl* to the Perfect Man is thus parallel to the relationship of the 7 days of the week to the Night of Power.

24. See Chapter 15 in the *Futūḥāt*. Further details of the importance of the number 14 can be found in the introduction to our translation of the *Awrad/Wird* of Ibn 'Arabī (Anqa Publishing, Oxford, forthcoming).



#### ON THE MANUSCRIPTS USED FOR THE EDITION OF THE ARABIC TEXT

For the edition of the text, we have used two manuscripts in particular: firstly the copy found in Yusuf Ağa 4883, pp. 18–20, referred to as A; and also the one found in Beyazit 8008, fols. 2–2b, referred to as B. Both are written in legible *naskhī* script and undated. Mss. A. follows a pristine copy of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Hilyat al-abdāl*, while mss. B precedes a copy of his *K. al-Hujub*.

## في معرفة الليلة المباركة<sup>١</sup>

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله<sup>٢</sup> وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد  
وآله وصحبه أجمعين<sup>٣</sup>

فائدة<sup>٤</sup> من رسالة الشيخ الإمام الكامل<sup>٥</sup> المكمل أب الأولاد<sup>٦</sup>  
الإلهيتين محيي الدين محمد بن علي<sup>٧</sup> بن<sup>٨</sup> العربي<sup>٩</sup> رضي  
الله عنه<sup>٩</sup> في معرفة ليلة القدر ومدتها.

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<sup>١</sup> كذا في "ب" فقط .

<sup>٢</sup> ب: - الحمد لله .

<sup>٣</sup> ب: + الحمد لله وحده .

<sup>٤</sup> ب: - فائدة .

<sup>٥</sup> ا: الأكمل .

<sup>٦</sup> ا: اولاد .

<sup>٧</sup> ب: محمد .

<sup>٨</sup> ب: - بن .

<sup>٩</sup> ب: - رضي الله عنه . + فائدة .

قال -رضي الله عنه-: ثمّ إنّي لمّا قيّدت هذه العجالة أطلعني الحقّ سبحانه في بعض الوقائع الشريفة على معرفة الليلة المباركة ومعرفة مدّتها إلى أن تأتي منها.

إذا كان في رمضان فإنّ مدّتها سنة كاملة ، والسنة التي لا يكون في رمضان فإنّ مدّتها إلى أن تأتي تسعة أشهر . وذلك لأنّها لا تكون في رمضان إذا كان أوّل شهر رمضان أحد هذين اليومين الأحد والجمعة ؛ ومن هنا تَعْلَمُ<sup>١٠</sup> صحّة مذهب الإمام أبي حنيفة -رضي الله عنه- في كون الليلة المباركة لا تختص<sup>١١</sup> برمضان بل تدور في سائر السنة :

فإن كان أوّل شهر رمضان الإثنين فإنّها تنتظر<sup>١٢</sup> في الليلة<sup>١٣</sup> الثالثة والعشرين أو التاسعة عشر ، وإذا كان أوّل يوم الثلاثاء فإنّها تكون في التاسعة والعشرين أو الخامسة والعشرين ، وإذا كان أوّل يوم الأربعاء فإنّها تكون في

<sup>١٠</sup> ا + ب : يعلم .

<sup>١١</sup> ا + ب : يختص .

<sup>١٢</sup> ب : تنتظر .

<sup>١٣</sup> ب : ليلة .

الحادية<sup>١٤</sup> والعشرين أو السابعة عشر<sup>١٥</sup>، وإذا كان أوّله يوم الخميس فإنّها تكون في السابعة والعشرين أو الثالثة والعشرين، وإذا كان أوّله يوم السبت فإنّها تكون في الليلة الخامسة والعشرين أو الحادية<sup>١٦</sup> والعشرين؛ وإذا كان أوّل أيّ شهر كان غير رمضان يوم الأحد فإنّ الليلة<sup>١٧</sup> المباركة تكون فيه في الليلة السابعة عشر أو الثالثة عشر، وإذا كان أوّل أيّ شهر كان غير رمضان الجمعة فإنّ الليلة المباركة تكون فيه في الليلة الخامسة عشر أو التاسعة عشر.

وهنا سرّ غريب وهو كون الليلة المباركة إذا كانت في غير شهر رمضان لا يمكن أن تكون<sup>١٨</sup> في العشر<sup>١٩</sup> الأخير بل لا تكون<sup>٢٠</sup> إلّا في العشر الأوسط وفي رمضان تكون<sup>٢١</sup>

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<sup>١٤</sup> ب: في ليلة الحادي .

<sup>١٥</sup> ا: والعشرين .

<sup>١٦</sup> دب: الحادي

<sup>١٧</sup> دب: ليلة .

<sup>١٨</sup> ا+ب : يكون .

<sup>١٩</sup> ب: عشر .

<sup>٢٠</sup> ا+ب : يكون .

<sup>٢١</sup> ا+ب : يكون .

في العشر الأخير والأوسط ، فهذا فضل لشهر رمضان كونه غير مقيّد ، والفضيلة الثانية كونه اختصّ بخمسة أيّام وبقيت لسائر الشهور يومان .

فكان<sup>٢٢</sup> والدي -رحمه الله- أخبرنا بالليلة المباركة بعلامات، فلما جاءت الليلة ظهرت تلك العلامات وذلك في شهر شعبان والمرّة الثانية في شهر ربيع الأوّل فاعتبرت هذا الشكل الشريف على ما كان أخبر به رسول الله -رضي الله عنه-<sup>٢٣</sup> فوجدته موافقاً للحقّ فشكرت الله<sup>٢٤</sup> على هذه النعمة السابغة طلباً للمزيد .

ثمّ قال بعد ذلك : واعلم أنّي لما ذكرت هذه الحضرة التي علمت منها صدور الليلة المباركة علمت فيها سرّاً غريباً وهو أنّه إذا قرأت في جهات الجسم الست<sup>٢٥</sup> فإنّها لتحفظ صاحبها من طوارق الحدّثان وهو<sup>٢٦</sup> سورة (إنّا

<sup>٢٢</sup> ا: وكان .

<sup>٢٣</sup> ب: - رسول الله رضي الله عنه . + تع (= تعالى) .

<sup>٢٤</sup> ب: + تع .

<sup>٢٥</sup> ب: في جهات الستة .

<sup>٢٦</sup> ب: وهذه .

أنزلناه في ليلة القدر) فإذا أراد الحقّ حفظك ألهمك بقراءتها وقت الأهمال<sup>٢٧</sup> والاستحضار لهذه الحضرة وهذا لا يمكن إلاّ للخواص<sup>٢٨</sup> ، فلهذا رجعنا إلى القراءة باللفظ وهذا<sup>٢٩</sup> سرّ غريب فلهذا قلت إنّه محروس من الحقّ والمعترض إليه بالأذى لا بدّ له من المجازاة في الدنيا قبل الآخرة .

تمّت الرسالة<sup>٣٠</sup> .

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<sup>٢٧</sup> ب: الهوال .

<sup>٢٨</sup> ب: الخواص .

<sup>٢٩</sup> ا: فهذا .

<sup>٣٠</sup> ب: - الرسالة .

## Book Reviews

***Concerning the Knowledge of the Night of Power and Its Timing [Fī Maʿrifat laylat al-qadr wa-muddati-hā], attributed to Ibn al-ʿArabī. Edited, translated and introduced by Pablo Beneito and Stephen Hirtenstein, in "Ibn ʿArabī's Treatise on the Knowledge of the Night of Power and Its Timing", JMIAS, 27 (2000), pp. 1–19.***

Over the years since its inception in 1982 the *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* has developed from being an open forum for high-minded enthusiasts to that and something more – an organ for the publication of world-class critical scholarly studies of the writings and teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī – and this achievement has been due in no small measure to the inspired efforts of the two editors/translators of the short monograph we shall now consider. Apart from Pablo Beneito's facsimile edition of some pages from Chapter 558 of the *Futūḥāt al-makkīyah* (in vol. 24, 1998), this is the first time that a critical Arabic text has appeared in the Journal, and we should applaud the bold venture and commend its success. Hopefully in the future longer texts will occasionally be offered. As for the present one, it is quite slight, amounting to just a half-dozen or so paragraphs of translation – hardly long enough to qualify as a brief *risālah*, really; and, in fact, the author expressly calls it an '*ujālah*, 'a quick sketch, or jotting-down of notes'. The copyist of the principal source, *MS Yusuf Aḡa 4883* (pp. 18–20), presents it as an extract (*fā'idah*) from an antecedent treatise (*risālah*) by the Shaykh al-Akbar; but if so, it would appear that the work may no longer be extant. The general subject-matter of *Laylat al-qadr*, the 'Night of Power/ Decree', and its precise calendar-date or 'occurrence in time' (*zamānu-hā*) is discussed toward the end of Chapter 71 of the *Futūḥāt* (1911 edn., vol. I, pp. 658.8–61),<sup>1</sup> but that is not the source of our present text, which uses the term, *muddah* (length of time, duration; interval), instead of *zamān*. This change in terminology could, indeed, suggest that

1. Cf. also the passages quoted by the editors in nn. 6, 9 and 10.

at some point after redacting the *Futūḥāt* passage Ibn al-‘Arabī had suddenly realized the ‘pattern’ (*shakl*) of the intervals of time *between* occurrences of the blessed Night – and could, henceforth, actually predict its date each year – and that he then wrote down the information and later shared it with his disciple and ‘spiritual son’, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), who was living with him in Damascus in his later years. *Yusuf Ağa 4883* was part of the personal library of Ṣadr al-Dīn in Konya and may actually be in his own handwriting, as the editors indicate (see n. 14). There is no gainsaying the importance of this text, then. (It is listed in Osman Yahia’s *Histoire et classification* as r. g. no. 428). But I am skeptical that it may be an actual extract from a work by Ibn al-‘Arabī and would question, therefore, that it should be attributed to his authorship (even though the information may well derive from him, as alleged.)

First and most significant, as the critical annotations of Beneito and Hirtenstein make clear, the text is characterized by several errors of grammar (incorrect gender of verbs) which could not possibly be ascribable to Ibn al-‘Arabī but which evince precisely the sort of carelessness that often mars the Arabic writing of Persian-speakers like al-Qūnawī. (Whatever his virtues may have been, the mastery of Arabic style was not among them.) For this reason I do not think that our text, probably written originally by al-Qūnawī, could possibly have been based *directly* on either a written or a dictated (oral/aural) model of Ibn al-‘Arabī himself but must have been copied *from memory* (this also could account for the mistake noted in the Arabic footnote 15) – memory either of seeing the Master’s original note or hearing him read it at some time in the past. (That the transcript was produced after the death of the author would seem to be evident from the use of the *tardīyah* formula in the opening paragraph and, moreso, of the *tarḥīm* in the second passage translated below.) We could speculate that it was during the course of al-Qūnawī’s later perusal of the passage from Chapter 71 of the *Futūḥāt* in Konya that he recalled the Shaykh’s comments that bore upon the passage, and wrote it down *memoriter* on that occasion, many years after the event. It is known that al-Qūnawī sometimes did make such authori-



tative notations. In the very valuable *MS Yusuf Ağa 5624*, in conjunction with the earliest known copy of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s collection of ‘Annunciatory Dreams’ (*Al-Mubashshirāt*) transcribed by al-Qūnawī himself, the disciple has left a record of several other Dreams of Ibn al-‘Arabī, added to the manuscript as appended notes (*nawādir*) at various times – presumably as they occurred and were recounted by the Master.<sup>2</sup> It may be noted that there, too, al-Qūnawī’s goauche Arabic diction is in marked contrast to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s usual lucid eloquence.

The Arabic edition produced by Beneito and Hirtenstein is exemplary (since they correct the copyist’s mistakes, it is better than the original text). Their brief introductory analysis is very engaging and informative, although I suspect that readers of the *Journal* would have liked to hear more about what it means for “the aspirant to be alert and awake” (p. 6) to the coming of the inspiring Power – may we say “like a thief in the Night” (1 *Thess.* 5: 2; *Rev.* 3: 3) whose coming no one may know in advance, but for which the Faithful alone will be found ready? Ibn al-‘Arabī seems to say as much in a passage from the *Futūḥāt* which our editors also quote:

Do not neglect to pray (*du‘ā’*) every night, and in your prayer ask for pardon and well-being in Religion, in this world and in the next. *For you do not know when the Night of Power will unexpectedly fall (tuṣādifu) in your year* (IV, 486.27–9, quoted on p. 5 [italics mine]).

But the whole point of the present work, of course, would appear to belie that wise counsel, inasmuch as an elaborate scheme is proposed for precisely determining and, hence, predicting the coming of the blessed Night – taming the Sacred, as it were! It is for that reason that I feel that even if Ibn al-‘Arabī was, indeed, responsible for the theory promulgated here, still he would not have chosen to make it public in such a stark utilitarian fashion, but would have made more allowance

2. See my description in “Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī’s Personal Study-List of Books by Ibn al-‘Arabī”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 56: 3 (1997), pp. 163–4 and 176–7. I have edited and translated these notes in a study of the *Mubashshirāt* which will be published in the near future.

for the Divine prerogative of Revelation in his presentation. Be that as it may, the theory is not without appeal, and Beneito and Hirtenstein have provided three very helpful graphics to illustrate its “harmonious and excellent pattern”.

I have one other suggestion to make about this text. Although I have not seen the original manuscript, on the basis of the splendid annotated edition provided I would propose an alternate reading of the paragraph beginning “My father”, which I take to be an interpolation written by the copyist in his own voice as a comment upon the preceding quoted material. I would translate that paragraph in al-Qūnawī’s voice, as follows (p. 18):

My father [that is, Ibn al-‘Arabī] (May God have mercy on him!) used to inform us about the Blessed Night by means of Signs (*‘alāmāt*). And when the Night came, those Signs appeared. That [happened once] in the month of Sha’bān and, for the second time, in Rabi’ al-Awwal. Then I considered this Excellent Pattern (*al-shakl al-sharīf*) in accordance with what the Messenger of God (May God be pleased with him!) had related [in Tradition], and I found it to be in agreement with the Truth. So I gave thanks to God for this abundant blessing by way of seeking an increase [in knowledge].

Then [Ibn al-‘Arabī] said after that . . . .

Thus, “my father” is, I think, al-Qūnawī’s reference to Ibn al-‘Arabī, his ‘spiritual father’ (and perhaps his adoptive step-father, literally), and not, as Beneito and Hirtenstein suppose, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own reference to *his* father. Besides the fact that it would appear incongruous for Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Senior*, who was *not* an aficionado of Sufism, to have made a custom of divin-  
ing the signs of the Night of Power, there is no cogent reason why the Shaykh would have used the plural pronoun, “used to inform *us*”, in speaking of it. It makes more sense to understand the referents as Ibn al-‘Arabī’s disciples, Ṣadr al-Dīn among them. Note, also, that in the opening paragraph the Master is lauded as “the father of the Godly children” (*ab al-awlād al-ilāhiyīn*) – unless we should read, without the emendation (at n. 6, p. 15), “the father of the children of the Godly ones” – the “children”, in any event, being those elect disciples who were

privy to his 'extra-curricular' teachings, of which the present text on the prognostication of *Laylat al-qadr* is apparently a genuine example.

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