



Muḥī al-Dīn Muḥammad  
ibn 'Alī ibn-'Arabī  
مُحِي الدِّين مُحَمَّد ابْن عَلِي ابْن عَرَبِي

A Mystic, Philosopher, Poet

*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*  
The Magister Maximus

(A.H. 560-638/A.D. 1165-1240)

Prepared by: [pathofmystics.com](http://pathofmystics.com)

# Spain



# Mursiya in al-Andalus (Murcia in present-Day Spain)

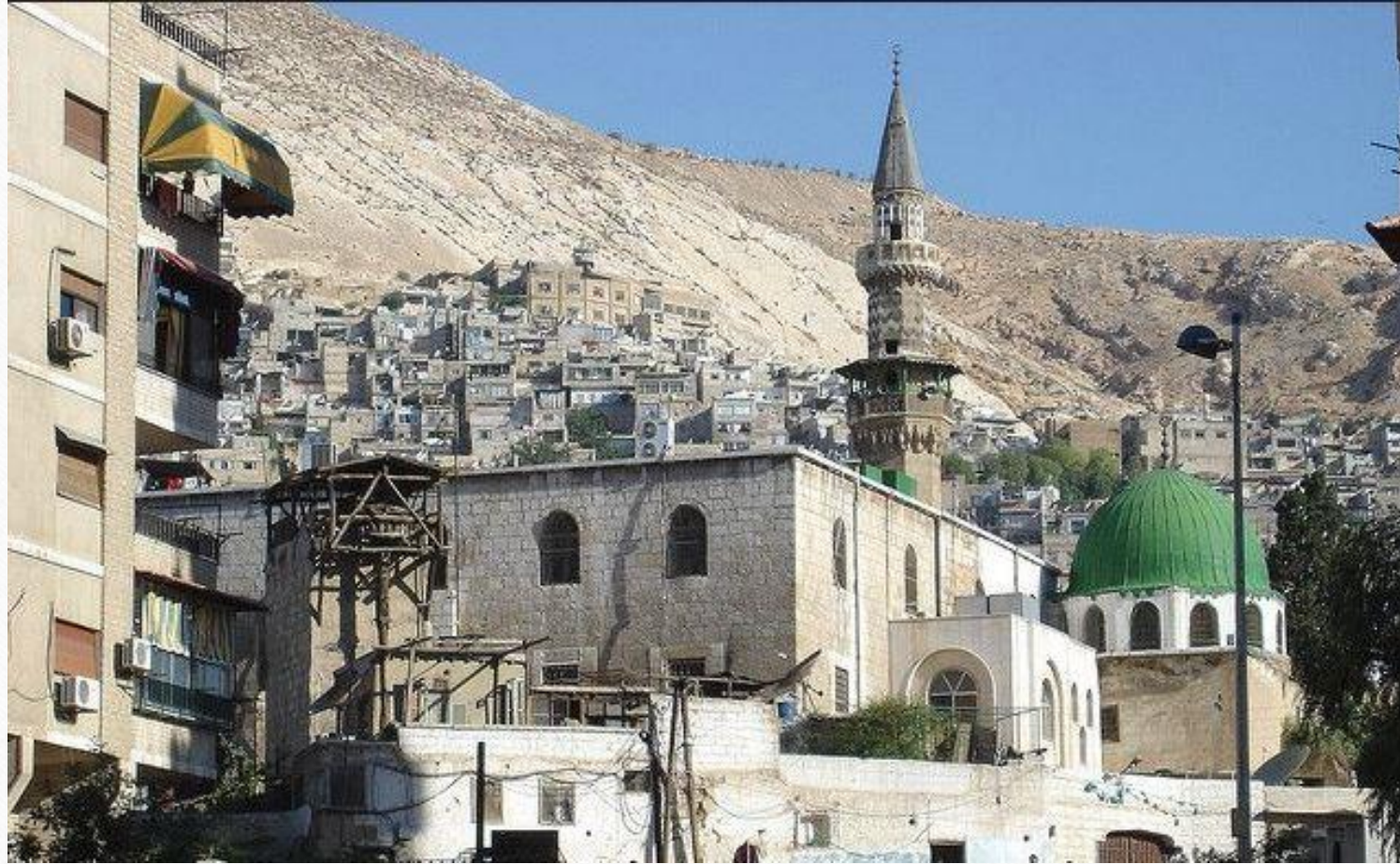


# Birth to Death

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- Born in Murcia
- Move to Seville – 7 years old
- Travel to Tunis – 30 years old
- Vision instructed him to travel to East
- Pilgrimage to Mecca in 1202 - 37
- Extensive Travels: Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Rum (Turkey)
- Settled in Damascus, Syria with a circle of his disciples until his death 1240 (75 years old). – 17 years

# Mohi al-Din Bin Arabi Mosque – Damascus, Syria



# Mohi al-Din Bin Arabi Mosque – Damascus, Syria



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Grave





Grave of his famous disciple – Junaid & two sons

# Overview

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- Spent life in studying, writing and teaching
- Involved in social and political life of the community
- Good terms with three kings
- Initiated into the Sufi Way – 20 years old
- Studied with ninety masters of religious sciences
- Sufis of Andalusia

# Literary Production

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- 700 books. 400 Extant. The Futahat al-Makiyya – 17,000 pages. 560 Chapters
- An Encyclopedia of Islamic Sciences
  - Qur'an, Hadith, Events in the Life of the Holy Prophet s.aw, Sharia, Fiqh
  - Divine names and attributes
  - The Relationship between God and the world
  - The structure of the cosmos
  - The make-up of the human being, the various human types
  - Stages of ascend to God
  - The ranks and kind of angles, nature of Jinn, the characteristics of time & space, symbolism of letters, the nature of the inter-world between death and Resurrection, Heaven and Hell, etc.

# Ibn 'Arabi's Writings

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“What we deposit in every chapter, in relation to what we have, is but a drop in the ocean.”

“In what I have written, I have never had a set purpose, as other writers. Flashes of divine inspiration used to come upon me and almost overwhelm me, so that I could only put them from my mind by committing to paper what they revealed to me. If my works evince any form of composition, that form was unintentional. Some works I wrote at the command of God, sent to me in sleep or through a mystical revelation...”

# Best Known Works

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- ***Fusûs al-hikam*** ("The Bezels of Wisdom")

Considered to be the quintessence of Ibn 'Arabi's spiritual teaching, it comprises twenty-seven chapters, each dedicated to the spiritual meaning and wisdom of a particular prophet. Over the centuries Ibn 'Arabi's students held this book in the highest esteem and wrote over one hundred commentaries on it.

- ***Al-Futûhât al-makkiyya*** ("The Meccan Openings")

- Written over 20 years – 17,000 pages.

- ***Tarjuman al-ashwaq*** ("The Interpreter of Yearnings")

This short collection of love poetry was inspired by his meeting during his first pilgrimage to Mecca with Nizam, the beautiful and gifted daughter of a great scholar from Isfahan. He later wrote a long commentary on the poems to prove to one of his critics that they deal with spiritual truths and not profane love. It was the first of Ibn 'Arabi's works to be translated into English.

# Usage of Words

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- مشاكلة – Same word used with different meanings...  
ومكروا ومكر الله والله خير الماكرين
- العين – Eye, Threading hole, essence, spy, guard, choice, prime, top, lord, master
- Aqeeda of Hazrat Ibn Arabi r.h - Al-Futûhât al-makkiyya – Vol 1. pg 36

# Three Levels of Knowledge

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- 1. Knowledge through the intellect (*'ilm al-'aql*).. Some sound, some invalid
- 2. The knowledge of 'states'
  - Immediate experience, no conceptual proof can ever establish that knowing
    - The knowledge of the sweetness of honey, the bitterness of aloes, the pleasure of intercourse, love, ecstasy, or passionate longing.
    - Impossible for anyone to know of this knowledge without directly experiencing it
- 3. The knowledge of the Divine Secrets
  - This is the knowledge that is beyond the stage of the intellect. It is knowledge of 'the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit in the heart,' and it is peculiar to prophets and saints.
  - This is 'all-encompassing knowledge' which embraces the entirety of knowable things!

# Fusûs al-hikam ("The Bezels of Wisdom")

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- فصوص / فص

1. A Bezel - A groove holding the stone of a gem in its setting.

2. Essence

- 27 Chapters

- Divine Wisdom, Angelic Inspiration, Divine Inspiration, Quddus, Love, Spirit, Light, Iman, Ihsan...





# Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I (r.a)

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“Hadhrat Muhiyudeen Ibn al-Arabi may Allah be merciful to him (1164 – 1240) predicted that a special minister of the promised one would be a Hafiz of the Quran. He writes thus ‘All his viziers will be non-Arabs none from among them will be an Arab. But they will speak in Arabic. One of them will be Hafiz of the Quran. He will not be of their kind. For he will never have disobeyed God. He will be the special minister of this promised one and the best of those who carry his trust.’ (Al- Futuhat al-Makkiya iii, 365)”. (Shahid, Hadhrat Maulana Dost Muhammad. Tarikh e Ahmadiyyat iii)

# Tafsir - The Holy Qur'an

- Sheikh Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi writes that he has understood new meanings from The Holy Praise each time he has read it although I cannot make such a claim...

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً  
وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

- “O ye who believe fight such of the disbelievers who are adjacent to you and let them find you unrelenting; and know that Allah is with those who are mindful of Him.” (9:124)  
  
‘Such of the disbelievers who are adjacent to you’ Sheikh Ibn ‘Arabi writes: that the nearest disbeliever is our ego which disobeys Allah manifoldly. Thus the battle with that ought to be foremost.
- So he writes about the nature of descent on page 262 of his commentary that ‘Jesus will descend but in the sense that he will be associated with a different body’

# God – *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* & *Wahdat-ush-shuhud*

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- Two schools of thought among the Sufis in regards to God:
- Oneness of Being ( *واحدة الوجود* *Wahdat-ul-wujud* )
- Oneness of Witnessing ( *واحدة الشهود* *Wahdat-ush-shuhud* )
- *Wahdat-ul-wujud* means “oneness of being”, or that the things God created are God Himself. (Pantheism)
- *Wahdat-ush-shuhud* refers to the fact that God and his creation are entirely separate.

### **Two Schools of Thought Among the Mystics— Oneness of Being and Oneness of Witnessing**

A study of this verse also demonstrates that the Oneness of Being (*wahdat-ul-wujud*) is an ideology that has gone far from the truth and has failed to grasp the attributes of God. This concept is unable to realise the very relationship between servitude (*ubudiyyat*) and divinity (*ulubiyyat*). The reason for this, as it appears, is that from among those who subscribe to this ideology there were those blessed with visions and those engaged in spiritual struggle; when they ventured into the depths of contemplation, they were unable to distinguish between the characteristic nature of servitude (*ubudiyyat*) and divine providence (*rububiyyat*), and ultimately began to hold that the things God created are God Himself.

The Holy Quran descends upon the heart before it flows from the tongue. The heart possesses such a close affinity with the Divine that it became the recipient of God's Word. It is understandable that some could be misled by the deep and subtle nature of this subject. However, the fact of the matter is that when a person

advances on the basis of a misunderstanding, they become trapped in a vortex of difficulty. As I have just mentioned, the interactions of God Almighty with human beings are so profound and multifaceted that no human power can articulate them. For if it was within the power of man to express, divine providence and the perfect attributes of Allah Almighty would not be expounded by Him in the Quran.

Our non-existence is the very proof of God's existence. It is certainly true that when man is helpless in every respect, he is essentially a non-entity. Certain people were unable to grasp this subtle and profound secret and as a result began to proclaim:

خَلَقَ الْأَشْيَاءَ هُوَ عَيْنٌ

*God created things and He is those things.*

From among the Wujudis and Shuhudis, the former are those who declare and believe that 'God created things and He is those things.' The latter group, however, believe in the annihilation of perception (*fana-un-nadhari*) and assert that man can become so engrossed in love that he can become annihilated in God (*fana fillah*); whereafter such people may be described as embodiments of the following verse:

من تو ھم تو من ھي من تن ھم تو ھاں ھي

تا کس نگويد بعد انں من ديگرم تو ديگري

*I have become you, and you me, I the body, you the soul;*

*So that no one can say hereafter, that you are someone, and me someone else.*

All of this aside, even mystics are compelled to accept the presence of God's independent, overarching power and control, whether they are Wujudis or Shuhudis. Various sages and masters from among them such as Bayazid Bastami<sup>th</sup>, Shibli<sup>th</sup>, Dhun-Nun<sup>th</sup> and Muhy-ud-Din Ibni Arabi<sup>th</sup> have generally expressed this view in their discourses, either explicitly or implicitly. However, I would like to state clearly that we are not at liberty to mock them or look down upon them. On the contrary, they were wise and intelligent people. The fact of the matter is that this subject is a subtle and profound secret that relates to understanding the essence of the Divine, and so they were unable to grasp the nature of this relationship—that is all, nothing else.



Everything in the universe reflects God's attributes, but it does not mean those things themselves become God. For example, the moon is reflected on water, but it seems as if the moon is in the water. In reality, the moon is moon and water is water, but it seems the moon has descended in the water. The interplay of water and the moon creates a beautiful relationship between the lowly and the high (and the ever-fluctuating and the Unchanged).

وَاللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Unto Allah belong the East and the West, and whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's Countenance. Lo! Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (2:116)

The term *shuhūd* is of special interest, since certain Sufis in India—especially Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624)—undertook to criticize the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or the “Oneness of Being” in the name of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* or the “Oneness of Witnessing,” and the controversy between the supporters of the two positions has reverberated down to recent times. But we have already seen that Ibn al-‘Arabī never employs the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and that *wujūd* in his usage signifies not only Being/existence but also the “finding” of God by God Himself or by the servant; as such it is a synonym for *kashf*, and the great Sufis are the “People of *kashf* and *wujūd*.” We saw above that the knowers of God recognize His self-disclosure “by way of *shuhūd* and *wujūd*” (III 101.31). These few indications are enough to show that when Ibn al-‘Arabī was designated as the great expositor of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and criticized in terms of *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own position was not the real issue.<sup>21</sup> By the seventeenth century there was a received wisdom concerning what he had said, and it was this that became the object of debate. In the present



If the seeker desires divine loci of witnessing and lordly sciences, he should multiply his nightly vigils and continually multiply within them his concentration (*jam'iyya*). If scattered lights should appear to him such that between each light darkness is interspersed, and if those lights have no subsistence but disappear quickly, this is one of the first marks of acceptance and opening. Those noble lights will never cease becoming manifest to him through his acts of spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*) and his striving until a greatest light is unveiled for him. Then the obstructions which prevent people from reaching these knowledges will be removed and mysteries of which he had nothing in himself and by which he was not described will be unveiled for him in their stations. (II 626.3)