

CONFERENCE IN HONOR OF TITUS BURCKHARDT

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A Major international conference was held May 5-9, 1999 under the auspices of Morocco, the country that Burckhardt had visited since his youth and about which he wrote three important books in addition to many reports and articles. Scholars from both Morocco and abroad participated in the four-day gathering that was punctuated by numerous traditional cultural events including traditional music and poetry. Entitled 'Sagesse et splendeur des arts isianiques: Hommage -Titus Ibrkĥâm Burckhardt', the conference was held at the Ben Youssef Museum in the heart of the old city in a beautiful traditional Moroccan house and next to the Ben Youssef Mosque, the oldest in Marrakesh, and the Ben Youssef madrasah which is considered to be one of the finest examples of maghribâ architecture.

In conformity with the interests of Burckhardt that included both metaphysics (along with cosmology) and traditional and sacred art, speakers were invited to deal with either or both of these subjects. The very rich four-day affair included papers by well-known traditionalist authors, traditional Moroccan and Algerian authorities and Western and Eastern academic writers interested in the traditional perspective and Guénon, Schuon, and Burckhardt who were among its greatest expositors. The titles of papers concerned more directly with tradition in its various aspects and Burckhardt himself are as follows:

Martin Lings,	'The Quranic Arts of Calligraphy and Illumination
Jean-Louis Michon,	'Titus Burckhardt and the Sense of Beauty
Seyyed Hossein Nasr,	'The Spiritual Significance of Islamic Art'
Muhammad Suheyl Umar	'The Importance of Titus Burckhardt's Works'

Kamil Khan Mumtaz	‘Living Tradition in the Art of Architecture’
Mahmud Etol Kilic	‘Influence of the School of Wa’adat al-wujed in Seljuq Art’
James Morris, Eric Geoffrey,	‘The Challenge of the Future’ ‘Shadhila Masters Concerning sam↓’
Pierre Lorry,	‘Movement and Dance in Islamic Mysticism’
Jean-Pierre Laurent,	‘Tradition and Sacred Art in the West at the beginning of the 20 th century’
Philippe Faure	‘Christian and Islamic Arts in the Works of Titus Burkhardt’
Stefano Bianca,	‘Titus Burckhardt: Personal Recollections’
Victor Palleja de Bustinza,	‘Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: Man of Wisdom’

There were also a number of papers delivered by local Moroccan authorities on the subject of the city of Marrakesh and its traditions and also expositions of Islamic doctrines pertaining to wisdom and art by North African traditional authorities. The latter category included:

Abdelillah Benarafa,	‘Poetry Between Art and Knowledge’
Abdalbaki Meftah,	‘Wisdom and Its Relation to Art in Ibn ‘Arabi’

The papers of the conference which were delivered in Arabic, French, and in one case English, are to be published in a volume by al-Mawsimiyyat al-Marrakushiyyah, a major cultural organization in Morocco under the direction of Sidi Jaafar Kansoussi and inspired by the living presence of the spirit of the great saints of the city of Marrakesh.

There is no doubt that the conference honoring Burckhardt, one of the greatest masters of the traditionalist school, is among the most important held in recent years in the field of traditional studies. Burckhardt's long years of devotion to the study of Morocco and his role in saving the traditional crafts and helping to protect the city of Fez from various Suicidal programs for its so-called 'development' are of course deeply appreciated by at least traditional Moroccans if not by the modernists. But the conference also revealed a wider interest in his metaphysical, cosmological and artistic works and furthermore in tradition in general as repeated reference to the masters of the traditional perspective such as Guénon, Coomaraswamy, and Schuon made evident. Many of the local scholars referred to tradition as defined by Guénon and this included some who are associated with various North African Sufi orders. The publication of the papers of the conference should therefore be of special interest not only to those concerned with the works of Burckhardt, but also to all who are attracted to the perennial truths of tradition and the dissemination of traditional teachings today.

Sophia (The Journal of Traditional Studies) has devoted its Vol. 5 Number 2 to Burckhardt in which some of the papers delivered in this conference have been published in English translation.

The Frithjof Schuon Study Circle was recently formed with the purpose of discussing the writing of Schuon, particularly with reference to the question of how to strike the true balance between a universalist perspective and a serious commitment to one traditional religion and one spiritual path. Contact Charles Upton /28 Marine Dr./ San Rafael, CA 94901-22511/tel. 415 457 3065.

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