

TITUS BURCKHARDT (IBR«HÂM ‘IZZ AL-DÂN)

(1908-1984)

An Outline of his Life and Works

M. S. Umar

Titus Burckhardt (Ibr«hâm ‘Izz al-Dân) a German Swiss, was born in Florence in 1908 and died in Lausanne in 1984. He devoted all his life to the study and exposition of the different aspects of Wisdom and Tradition.

In the age of modern science and technocracy, Titus Burckhardt was one of the most remarkable of the exponents of universal truth, in the realm of metaphysics as well as in the realm of cosmology and of traditional art. In a world of existentialism, psychoanalysis, and sociology, he was a major voice of the philosophia perennis, that ‘wisdom uncreate’ that is expressed in Platonism, Vedanta, Sufism, Taoism, and other authentic esoteric or sapiential teachings. In literary and philosophic terms, he was an eminent member of the ‘traditionalist school’ of twentieth-century authors.

Titus Burckhardt (Ibr«hâm ‘Izz ud Dân) was the son of the Swiss sculptor, Carl Burckhardt, and a member of a patrician family of Basle. Although he first followed in his father’s footsteps as a sculptor and illustrator, he was since his childhood always strongly attracted to oriental art. This led him to a theoretical study of eastern doctrines and to repeated sojourns in the Islamic countries. After some years of studying the history of art and oriental languages, he left Western academic circles to embrace Islam both intellectually and ‘existentially’. He was not a Western scholar of Islam in the usual sense but a person of exceptional intellectual and spiritual gifts who went to the Islamic world as a young man to master the Islamic disciplines from within at the feet of masters of both the exoteric and esoteric sciences. He was providentially chosen to express the truths of the Islamic tradition, and in fact tradition in its universal sense, to the modern world and in a language comprehensible to contemporary man. His writings in fact represent one of the major formulations and statements of traditional Islam in the modern world.

The great forerunner-cum-originator of the traditionalist school, to which Titus Burckhardt (Ibrāhīm ‘Izz al-Dīn) belonged, was Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wā‘id Ya‘qūb René Guénon (1886-1951). Guénon (Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wā‘id Ya‘qūb) traced the origin of what he called the modern deviation to the ending of the Middle Ages and the arrival of the Renaissance, that cataclysmic inrush of secularisation, when nominalism vanquished realism, individualism (or humanism) replaced universalism, and empiricism banished scholasticism. An important part of Guénon’s work was therefore his critique of the modern world from an implacably ‘Platonic’ or metaphysical point of view. This was fully expounded in his two masterly volumes *The Crisis of the Modern World* and *The Reign of Quantity*. The positive side of Guénon’s work was his exposition of the immutable principles of universal metaphysics and traditional orthodoxy. His main source was the doctrine of ‘nonduality’ (advaita), and his chief work in this respect is *Man and his Becoming According to the Vedānta*. However, he also turned readily to other traditional sources, since he considered all traditional forms to be various expressions of the one supra-formal Truth. A final aspect of Guénon’s work was his brilliant exposition of the intellectual content of traditional symbols, from whichever religion they might come. See in this connection his *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée*.

An illustrious scholar deeply influenced by Guénon (Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wā‘id Ya‘qūb) was Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) who, while being distinguished and gifted in his own right, had the merit, relatively late in life, of making the acquaintance of, and being thoroughly convinced by, the traditional point of view as it had been expounded, so fully and so precisely, in Guénon’s books.

It is important to note that Guénon’s writings, decisively important though they were, were purely ‘theoretical’ in character, and made no pretence of dealing with the question of realisation. In other words, they were generally concerned with intellectuality (or doctrine) and not directly with spirituality (or method).

The sun rose for the traditionalist school with the appearance of the work of Shaykh ‘Yūsuf Nūr al-Dīn A‘Āmad al-‘Alawī (Frithjof Schuon 1907-1998). Thirty years ago, an English Thomist wrote of him: “His work has the

intrinsic authority of a contemplative intelligence.”¹⁷¹ More recently, a senior American academic declared: “In depth and breadth, he is] a paragon of our time. I know of no living thinker who begins to rival him.”¹⁷² T. S. Eliot’s perception was similar. Regarding Schuon’s first book, he wrote in 1953: “I have met with no more impressive work in the comparative study of Oriental and Occidental religion.”

Schuon’s work began to appear during the latter part of Guénon’s life. Until his dying day, Guénon (Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wa‘id Ya‘ay) used to refer to him (for example in the pages of *Etudes Traditionnelles*) as ‘notre éminent collaborateur’. Schuon (Shaykh ‘Alī al-Dīn Ahmad al-‘Alawī) continued, in even more notable fashion, the perspicacious and irrefutable critique of the modern world, and reached unsurpassable heights in his exposition of the essential truth-illuminating and saving-that lies at the heart of every revealed form. Schuon called this supra-formal truth the *religio perennis*. This term, which does not imply a rejection of the similar terms *philosophia perennis* and *sophia perennis*, nevertheless contains a hint of an additional dimension which is unfailingly present in Schuon’s writings. This is that intellectual understanding entails a spiritual responsibility, that intelligence requires to be complemented by sincerity and faith, and that ‘seeing’ (in height) implies ‘believing’ (in depth). In other words the greater our perception of essential and saving truth, our obligation towards an effort of inward or spiritual realisation.

Schuon’s work began with a comprehensive general study title of which serves to set the scene: *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. His further works include: *Language of the Self*, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, *Understanding Islam, Castes and Races*, *Logic and Transcendence* and, more recently, a wide-ranging compendium of philosophic and spiritual enlightenment entitled *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*.¹⁷³ Schuon’s writings on traditional art, along with the works of A.K. Coomaraswamy and Titus Burckhardt, are the most precious and profound expositions of the traditional theories of art available.

¹⁷¹ Bernard Kelly, in *Dominican Studies* (London), V01. 7, 1954.

¹⁷² **Emeritus Professor Huston Smith, 1974.**

¹⁷³ For details see S. H. Nasr (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon*, Amity House, New York, 1986; Also see S. H. Nasr (ed.) *Sophia, In Memory: Frithjof Schuon*, The Foundation for Traditional Studies, VA, USA, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1998.

Much has been written about the Providential necessity of Schuon's writings as a sequel to those of Coomaraswamy and Guénon (Shaykh 'Abd al-W«Áid YaÁy»). One can point out three main aspects of that need. Firstly it was important that the work of these great pioneers, and that of Guénon (Shaykh 'Abd al-W«Áid YaÁy») in particular, should have a living prolongation of younger writers who would keep it in the foreground of the minds of serious readers by continual quotations and references and developments. By far the most outstanding of these heirs and perpetuators was Frithjof Schuon (Shaykh 'ÿs« Nër al-Dân AÁmad al-'Alawâ). Titus Burckhardt is the next who must also be mentioned in this context.

Secondly, the work of a pioneer is almost bound to be fraught with simplifications and generalisations, and Schuon (Shaykh 'ÿs« Nër al-Dân AÁmad al-'Alawâ), who never simplified and who, on the contrary, continually made us aware of the extreme complexity of things, was providentially just the follower on that was needed to fill in the inevitable gaps, to tie up loose threads left hanging, and, by admitting and explaining unmentioned exceptions, to justify valid generalisations.

Thirdly, and most importantly, there was a certain order of development that had to be followed. We could say in general that the main theme of both Guénon (Shaykh 'Abd al-W«Áid YaÁy») and Schuon is esoterism. On this basis, the major part of Guénon's writing could be summed up as 'esoterism as principle with a view to the way'. But it remained for Schuon to write *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, the title of which does justice to his qualification to write about what follows initiation as well as about what precedes it. In this respect the writings of the elder man can be seen as a preparation for those of his successor. Unlike Schuon (Shaykh 'ÿs« Nër al-Dân AÁmad al-'Alawâ), it was never his function to be a spiritual Master. It was once remarked that in Guénon's writings, unlike those of Schuon, one has the impression that the author has eliminated himself. This is an exaggeration, which should be modified. Guénon (Shaykh 'Abd al-W«Áid YaÁy») had a luminous presence, and that light unquestionably manifests itself from time to time throughout his works. For those who knew him, certain passages recall the remarkable brightness of his eyes. But the writings of Schuon are vibrant throughout with the presence of their author as well as being, at the same time, totally objective. Or rather, let us say that we are made conscious of a mysterious identity, in him, between subjectivity and

objectivity. It is thus almost as if the reader in search of wisdom were able to have recourse to the sage himself who is there in the background as a light-giving personification of what his pen has set down.

We can now return to Titus Burckhardt. He was Frithjof Schuon's junior by one year, and they spent their early schooldays together in Basle around the time of the First World War. This was the beginning of an intimate friendship deeply harmonious intellectual and spiritual relationship that was to last a lifetime.

Burckhardt's chief metaphysical exposition, beautifully complementing the work of Schuon, is *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*.¹⁷⁴ This is an intellectual masterpiece that analyses comprehensively with precision the nature of esoterism as such. It begins by making clear, by a series of lucid and economical definitions, what esoterism is and what it is not, goes on to examine the doctrinal foundations of Islamic esoterism or Sufism, and ends with an inspired description of 'spiritual alchemy', or the contemplative path that leads to realisation. This work clearly established Burckhardt as the leading exponent, after Schuon, of intellectual doctrine and method. This book is an introduction to a study of the doctrines of Sufism, not from the viewpoint of pure scholarship, but with the purpose of contributing to the efforts of those who seek to understand those universal truths of which every sacred doctrine is an expression. In Part One Titus Burckhardt defines the nature of Sufism and discusses it in relation to Christian mysticism (as exemplified by the Greek Fathers of the early Christian Church), and Hinduism. Part Two consists of an examination of doctrinal foundations of Sufism, while in Part Three the author deals with spiritual realisation. This section commences with a dissertation on the three elements of 'operative' Sufism, and includes perceptive commentaries on rites, meditation and contemplation.

Readers previously unacquainted with the subject will find that Sufism embraces doctrine, initiation and spiritual method. Titus Burckhardt attempts

¹⁷⁴*Introduction aux Doctrines ésotériques de l'Islam*, Paris, Dervy- Livres, 1969. *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (translated from the French by D. M. Matheson), Lahore, Ashraf, 1959; Wellingborough, England, Thorsons, 1976; Suhail Academy, Lahore, Pakistan, 1985, 1999. Attention is drawn to the bibliography in which details of all the original publications and translations are given.

to show the intellectual perspective of Sufism by making use of Sufism's own way of expressing things, but where necessary there are included whatever explanations that may be needed for understanding.

Burckhardt devoted a large portion of his writings to traditional cosmology, which he saw in a sense as the 'handmaid of metaphysics'. He formally presented the principles at stake in a masterly and concise article 'The Cosmological Perspective', first French in 1948 and now constituting the first chapter in the collection of his articles posthumously published under the title *Mirror of the Intellect*.¹⁷⁵ Much later-in a series of articles published in both French and German in 1964-he covered the cosmological ground very fully indeed, and also made many detailed references to the main branches of modern science. These articles, under the title 'Traditional Cosmology and Modern Science' now form the second chapter in the aforementioned book *Mirror of the Intellect*. They were also included in *Sword of Gnosis* (an anthology of articles from the English journal *Studies in Comparative Religion*) edited by Jacob Needleman in 1974, and reprinted in 1986. Indeed Burckhardt's principal work in the field of cosmology was his full-length book *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*,¹⁷⁶ a brilliant presentation of alchemy as the expression of a spiritual psychology and as an intellectual and symbolic support for contemplation and realisation.

Not unconnected with his interest in cosmology, Burckhardt had a particular affinity with traditional art and craftsmanship and was skilled in the evaluation of traditional architecture, iconography, and other arts and crafts. In particular, he dwelt on how they had been-and could be-turned to account spiritually, both as meaningful activities which by virtue of their inherent symbolism harbour a doctrinal message, and above all as supports for spiritual realisation and means of grace. *Ars sine scientia nihil*. Here of course it is a case of *scientia sacra* and *ars sacra*, these being the two sides of the same coin. This is the realm of the craft initiations of the various traditional civilisations, and specifically of such things, in the Middle Ages, as operative masonry and alchemy.

¹⁷⁵ *Mirror of the Intellect: Essays on Traditional Science and Sacred Art* (translated by William Stoddart), Cambridge, England, Quinta Essentia, 1987.

¹⁷⁶ ***Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul* (translated from the German by William Stoddart), London, Stuart and Watkins, 1967; Baltimore, Maryland, Penguin Books, 1972.**

Burckhardt's contribution to the discipline of Art calls for a few remarks. First of all the question of Islamic art. It was a category not accepted until a few decades ago. The reason was that the western scholars judged all the other civilisations from the point of view of their own civilisation. Until the end of the middle ages all European art was Christian art. With the gradual weakening of Christianity and the rise of secularism the national borders began to emerge as the designing features of the art. We had Italian art, French art of the 18th century, the German art of the romantic period, American art of the 20th century, so on and so forth. So they looked at other things and other civilisations, including the Islamic civilisation, in a similar way. There is a whole subject, a discipline, of the study of art, which is distinct from making of art. The study of art is a 19th century German invention. It was born of the 19th century German philosophical thought, which still carries with it its origin, and the ideas, which brought it about. This way of looking at the art of the Islamic world tried to belittle as much as possible the Islamic character of Islamic art and usually attention was paid to regions. All the major collections and museums of the West had collections on Persian Art (it being the most famous and easily available), Mughal art, Andalusian art etc. The category of Islamic art did not exist. Once in a while some one would write a book on Muhammadan Art. Even that was rare. The Idea that there should be a study of Islamic art and that it is really a distinct category of art was initiated with in the West, more than any one else, by Titus Burckhardt (Ibrakhâm 'Izz al-Dân) to whom we all owe the greatest debt in the understanding of Islamic Art. It was primarily through his works and practical efforts that, for the first time, Islamic Art was presented qua Islamic Art. Objections were raised that the regional titles were not emphasised i.e. Persian Art, Moroccan Art, and Indian Art. It is true that regional arts exist but all of these are integrated into a larger worldview, which is that of the Islamic Art. All of the art produced in the Islamic world from the rise of Islam to the time when about 150 years ago, the Western Civilisation began to make its encroachments, was Islamic art that was informed by the Islamic worldview and derived its distinctive features from the Islamic civilisation.

Burckhardt's main work in the field of art was his *Sacred Art in East and West*,¹⁷⁷ which contains many wonderful chapters on the metaphysics and

¹⁷⁷ *Sacred Art in East and West (translated from the French by Lord Northbourne), Bedfont, Middlesex, England, Perennial Books, 1967.*

aesthetics of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, and Islam, and ends with a useful and practical insight into the contemporary situation entitled 'The Decadence and Renewal of Christian Art'.

Burckhardt's last major work was also related to Art and more specifically to a masterly study of Islamic Art. We mean to mention his widely acclaimed and impressive monograph *Art of Islam*.¹⁷⁸ Here the intellectual principles and the spiritual role of artistic creativity in its Islamic forms are richly and generously displayed before us.

During the fifties and sixties Burckhardt was the artistic director of the Urs Graf Publishing House of Lausanne and Olten. His main activity during these years was the production and publication of a whole series of facsimiles of exquisite illuminated medieval manuscripts, especially early Celtic manuscripts of the Gospels, such as the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow (from Trinity College, Dublin) and the Book of Lindisfarne (from the British Library, London). This was pioneer work of the highest quality and a publishing achievement that immediately received wide acclaim both from experts and the wider public.

It was during these years with the Urs Graf Publishing House that Burckhardt presided over an interesting series of publications with the general title of *Steitten des Geistes* ('Homesteads of the Spirit').¹⁷⁹ These were historical-cum-spiritual studies of certain manifestations of sacred civilisation, and covered such themes as Mount Athos, Celtic Ireland, Sinai, Constantinople, and other places. Burckhardt himself contributed the books *Siena, City of the Virgin*,¹⁸⁰ *Chartres and the Genesis of the Gothic Cathedral*,¹⁸¹ and *Fez, City of Islam*.¹⁸² *Siena* is an enlightening account of the

¹⁷⁸ *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning* (translated from the French by Peter Hobson), London, Islamic Festival Trust Ltd, 1976.

¹⁷⁹ See bibliography in which details of all the original publications and translations are given.

¹⁸⁰ *Siena, City of the Virgin* (translated from the German by Margaret Brown), Oxford University Press, 1960.

¹⁸¹ *Chartres and the Genesis of the Gothic Cathedral* (translated by Peter Hobson), Golgonzoza Press, 1995.

¹⁸² *Fez, City of Islam* (translated from the German by William Stoddart), Cambridge, England, Islamic Texts Society, 1997.

rise and fall of a Christian city which, architecturally speaking, remains to this day something of a Gothic jewel. Most interesting of all, however is the story of its saints. Burckhardt devotes many of his pages to St. Catherine of Siena (who never hesitated to rebuke the Pope of her day, when she felt that it was necessary) and to St. Bernardino of Siena (who was one of the greatest Catholic practitioners-and teachers-of the saving power of the invocation of the Holy Name). Chartres is the story of the religious 'idealism' (in the best sense of the word) which lay behind the conception and practical realisation of the medieval Cathedrals-the still extant monuments to an age of faith. In Chartres, Burckhardt expounds the intellectual and spiritual contents of the different architectural styles-not merely distinguishing between the Gothic and the Romanesque, but even between the different varieties of the Romanesque. It is a dazzling example of what is meant by intellectual discrimination.

One of Burckhardt's several masterpieces is undoubtedly his Fez, City of Islam. As a young man, in the 1930's, he spent a few years in Morocco, where he established intimate friendships with several remarkable representatives of the as yet intact spiritual heritage of the Maghrib. For Titus Burckhardt's relationship with Morocco was a beautiful and longstanding love story, which began in the 1930's and which was faithfully continued and renewed by frequent visits later. This was obviously a formative period in Burckhardt's life, and much of his subsequent message and style originates in these early years. Already, at the time concerned, he had committed much of his experience to writing (not immediately published), and it was only in the late 1950's that these writings and these experiences ripened into a definitive and masterly book. In Fez, City of Islam, Burckhardt relates the history of a people and its religion-a history that was often violent, often heroic, and sometimes holy. Throughout it all runs the thread of Islamic piety and civilisation. These Burckhardt expounds with a sure and enlightening hand, relating many of the teachings, parables, and miracles of the saints of many centuries, and demonstrating not only the arts and crafts of Islamic civilisation, but also its 'Aristotelian' sciences and its administrative skills. There is indeed much to be learnt about the governance of men and societies from Burckhardt's penetrating presentation of the principles behind dynastic and tribal vicissitudes-with their failures and their successes.

His relationship to Maghrib and more specifically to the city of Fez has many aspects that have been described elsewhere. To give you a glimpse of his activity I quote from an account of Burckhardt's activity recorded by one of his close associates J. L. Michon.¹⁸³

"I should be attempting the impossible if I were to try to cover several years of activity on the part of a man whose speed of work and concentration were astounding. I shall therefore limit myself to two aspects to which Titus Burckhardt never ceased to devote much time, so convinced was he of their usefulness and value: his educational activities, as both writer and speaker, and his field work, as investigator and organiser. In each of these roles, Titus Burckhardt excelled."

"To illustrate the above, let me offer the outline of a talk given by Titus Burckhardt in April of 1973 to some prominent citizens of Fez who had just formed an Association to conserve the Medina. This was entitled, "Fez, a Human City". He began with a perceptive and intuitive vision of the basis of Moslem "civilisation", which gives the Islamic city, and Islamic town planning, its special value: "This way of life, of which Fez is the crystallisation, answers to the needs of the whole man, who is at once body, soul and spirit, having physical needs, an affective life of the soul and an intelligence which surpasses both these planes..." The explanations which then followed, and which flowed naturally from this premise, amounted to a complete lecture on the city and on the importance of water (Fez is built on a watercourse, with tributaries and underground springs) as a necessary element of material life, aesthetic pleasure and ritual purity; the inward-looking architecture, so well suited not only to the city's climate and social needs but also to a particularly spiritual perspective; the streets and passage-ways which are "dramatic" in feeling, "now narrow now wide, with many twists and turns like the passage-ways that guard the entrance to private houses. Wisdom and prudence have always counselled Fez against giving her heart away too easily"; and, finally, the city's crafts, which are uniquely able to meet physical requirements, delight the soul and allow a spiritual dimensions to shine through them. "It is in the nature of art to rejoice the soul, but

¹⁸³ "Titus Burckhardt in Fez 1972-1977", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Titus Burckhardt Memorial Issue, Vol. 16, Nos. 1, 2, 1984, pp 57-61.

not all art possesses a spiritual dimension. In the case of Moroccan art, this dimension is manifested directly by its intellectual transparency and by the fact that this geometrically and rhythmically harmonious art is addressed not to a particular kind of intelligence, stamped with passionate tendencies to a greater or lesser degree, but rather to intelligence itself, in its universal aspect”.

Close in spirit to Fez is another of Burckhardt’s mature works, namely *Moorish Culture in Spain*.¹⁸⁴ As always, this is a book of truth and beauty, of science and art, of piety and traditional culture. But in this book, perhaps more than in all others, it is a question of the romance, chivalry, and poetry of pre-modern life.

Before making a few remarks about Titus Burckhardt’s relationship with Morocco mention must be made of his posthumous collection of writings *Mirror of the Intellect*¹⁸⁵ that is composed mainly of articles which were originally published in a variety of French and German periodicals, and had not previously appeared together in book form. One exception is the article entitled ‘The Seven Liberal Arts and the West Door of Chartres Cathedral’, which has been extracted from the book *Chartres und die Geburt der Kathedrale*. A full English translation of this book has been published also.¹⁸⁶

During his early years in Morocco, Burckhardt immersed himself in the Arabic language and assimilated the classics of Sufism in their original form. In later years, he was to share these treasures with a wider public through his translations of Ibn ‘Arabâ¹⁸⁷ and Al-Jâlâ.¹⁸⁸

Burckhardt’s significance in making Ibn ‘Arabâ known to the Western world cannot be over emphasised. One recalls his *La Sagesse des prophetes* (The Wisdom of the Prophets)¹⁸⁹, *Von Sufitum* written also in French as

¹⁸⁴ *Moorish Culture in Spain* (translated from the German by Alisa Jaffa), London, Allen and Unwin, 1972; New York, McGraw-Hill, 1972; Suhail Academy, Lahore, Pakistan, 1999.

¹⁸⁵ See note 5.

¹⁸⁶ *Chartres and the Genesis of the Gothic Cathedral* (translated by Peter Hobson), Golgonzoza Press, 1995.

¹⁸⁷ *La Sagesse des Prophetes* (FuĀĒĀ al-Āikam), Albin, Michel, Paris, 1955.

¹⁸⁸ *De l’Homme Universel* (Al-Insān al-Kāmil), Derain, Lyons, 1953.

¹⁸⁹ *The Wisdom of the Prophets* (partial translation of ‘FuĀĒĀ al-Āikam’ by Ibn ‘Arabâ), Sherbourne, Beshara, 1975; Suhail Academy, Lahore, Pakistan, 1985, 1999.

Introduction aux doctrines esoteriques de l'Islam (An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine),¹⁹⁰ Cle spirituel de l'astrologie musulmane (Mystical Astrology according to Ibn 'Arabi)¹⁹¹ and De l'homme universel (Universal Man)¹⁹² with its incomparable introduction. How essential were these writings in the sense of expounding the essence of the teachings of Ibn 'Arabâ and his school in a metaphysical language of great power and clarity, formulated first by Guénon, perfected in an amazing way by Schuon and applied in an ingenious manner to the teachings of al-Shaykh al-Akbar by Burckhardt.

Reading these works one realises fully the significance of Burckhardt's achievement. He had succeeded in reaching the heart of Akbarian metaphysics and making it known in contemporary language without divorcing it from the barakah of Sufism or the rest of that tradition. His translations and commentaries, which are at once traditional and full of living wisdom and light, differ markedly from those pedantic and dry translations by some claiming to adhere to the traditionalist school. Some of these would reduce the whole of Sufism to Ibn 'Arabâ alone, and Ibn 'Arabâ himself to a cerebral presentation of theoretical metaphysics far removed from the living presence that emanates from his teachings and which can be seen both in the writings of Burckhardt and the traditional masters of his school.

Dr. S. H. Nasr remembers Burckhardt at the tomb of al-Shaykh al-Akbar in the following memoir.¹⁹³

“To have beheld Burckhardt there, (at the tomb of al-Shaykh al-Akbar) lost in the contemplation of that Truth which lies at the heart of all traditional metaphysics and of course of Sufism itself; to have witnessed his humility before the Divine presence and transparency before the Truth which manifests Itself in a mysterious fashion in certain loci determined by sacred geography and usually identified with tombs or

¹⁹⁰ *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (translated from the French by D. M. Matheson), Lahore, Ashraf, 1959; Wellingborough, England, Thorsons, 1976; Suhail Academy, Lahore, Pakistan, 1985, 1999.

¹⁹¹ **Mystical Astrology, according to Ibn 'Arabi** (translated from the French by Bulent Rauf), Sherbourne, England, Beshara, 1977.

¹⁹² **Universal Man** (partial translation of '*Al-Insān al-Kāmil*' by 'Abd al-Karām al-Jâlâ), Sherbourne, Beshara, 1983.

¹⁹³ “With Titus Burckhardt at the Tomb of Ibn 'Arabâ”, *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Titus Burckhardt Memorial Issue, Vol. 16, Nos. 1, 2, 1984, pp17-20.

maq«ms of great saints - to have done this was fully to realise the incredible chasm which separates theoretical understanding of wisdom or al-Áikmah from its realisation. In contrast to many who write of Ibn ‘Arabâ and claim strict traditional orthodoxy without, however, having realised the truth of Sufism, Burckhardt lived the truth of which he wrote. The exceptional light of intelligence which emanated from him pierced to the heart of the texts that he studied and illuminated their meaning in a manner which is possible only for a person in whom the truth has descended from the place of the mind to the centre of the heart and become fully realised. At the tomb of Ibn ‘Arabâ, Burckhardt manifested the qualities of a saintly man possessing a penetrating intelligence of extraordinary lucidity, combined with virtue and a luminous soul transmuted by the presence of that Truth whose doctrinal aspects he studied with such depth and understanding.”

One of his most important works of translation was of the spiritual letters of the renowned eighteenth-century Moroccan Shaikh Mulay al-‘Arabâ ad-Darq«wâ. These letters constitute a spiritual classic and are a precious document of practical spiritual counsel.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ *Letters of a Sufi Master (Ras«‘i)*, Perennial Books, Bedfont, England, 1969. Reprinted Suhail Academy, Lahore, Pakistan, 1985, 1999.

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Titus Burckhardt (Ibrāhîm ‘Izz al-Dân) has now left this plane of ephemerality for the empyrean of the Spirit, but his works, which are the fruit of realised knowledge, continue in a unique fashion to illuminate the path of those seriously interested in Sufism in general and in the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabâ in particular. They are in fact among the most significant formulations of the essence of the teachings of traditional Islam in the modern world. May God shower His choicest blessing upon him.

Ra‘imahu Allāh wa raiya ‘anhu.

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