Ninth Annual Victor Danner Memorial Lecture in Islamic Studies

April 18, 2011
University Club
Indiana Memorial Union

“Servants of the All-Merciful”:
Building Communities of Realization in a Global Civilization

Presented by
Professor James W. Morris,
Boston College

Opening Remarks by
Professor Nazif Shahrani,
Chair of NELC

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*Thank you!*
Dr. James W. Morris is Professor of Islamic Theology at Boston College. Prior to joining Boston College, Professor Morris held the Sharjah Chair of Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter, and he has taught previously at Princeton University, Oberlin College, Temple University, and the Institute of Ismaili Studies in Paris and London. He has served as visiting professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris), University of Malaya, and University of Sarajevo, and he lectures and gives workshops widely throughout Europe and the Muslim world.

Professor Morris is an active member of many international academic societies in his fields of research and serves on numerous editorial, consulting and examining boards. Most of his published articles, chapters, reviews, and several books are freely available at his Boston College faculty publications website: http://escholarship.bc.edu/james_morris/

His most recent books include Knowledge of the Soul (2006); The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn ‘Arabî’s ‘Meccan Illuminations (2005); Orientations: Islamic Thought in a World Civilization (2004); Ibn ‘Arabî: The Meccan Revelations (2002); The Master and the Disciple: An Early Islamic Spiritual Dialogue (2002), and several online volumes.

Forthcoming books include Openings: From the Qur'an to the Islamic Humanities; Ibn ‘Arabi and His Interpreters: Contexts and Foundations; and Ibn 'Arabî's 'Divine Comedy': Eschatology and Spiritual Realization in the Meccan Illuminations.
Professor Victor Danner was born on October 22, 1926, in Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico to Arthur James and Maria Lopez Danner. As a young man, he served his country during World War II. After the war he attended Georgetown University where he received his B.A. magna cum laude in 1957. Later that year he traveled to Morocco to become an instructor and eventually director of the American Language Center, sponsored by the US Information Service. While there he took advantage of the opportunity not only to get acquainted with the country but also to perfect his knowledge of classical Arabic texts.

In 1964, Professor Danner returned to the US for his doctoral studies and graduated from Harvard in 1970. He came to IU in 1967 and was a professor of Arabic and Religious Studies at Indiana University until his death in 1990. He served as chairman of the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures Department for five years, and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Middle Eastern Studies Program.

He was an internationally renowned scholar in the fields of Islamic mysticism, comparative religion, and classical Arabic literature. In 1976, he was invited to speak at the international World Festival of Islam in London. Professor Danner was also active in a number of professional organizations, including the Foundation for Traditional Studies, based in Washington, D.C., for which he served as secretary-treasurer. He wrote *Ibn ‘Ata ‘Allah’s Sufi Aphorisms* (1973); *Ibn ‘Ata ‘Allah: The Book of Wisdom*, (1978); and *The Islamic Tradition: An Introduction* (1988), in addition to over twenty-five articles and reviews.

One of his students, Lauri King Irani, captured his essence: “As a teacher, Victor Danner had few equals. He taught Arabic, classical Arabic literature, Islam, Sufism, the Qur’an, comparative religion, comparative mysticism, and Eastern religions. His dignified bearing, elegant gestures, and verbal eloquence transformed his lectures into performances which had the power to captivate and inspire his students, whether he was discussing Arabic grammar or Islamic theology. His concern for and encouragement of his students, coupled with his understated sense of humor, earned him a well-deserved reputation as a caring and committed educator who taught not only when behind the classroom lectern, but also by example.”

*He who is illumined at the beginning is illumined at the end.*
-from *Sufi Aphorisms* by Ibn ‘Ata ‘Allah (d.1309),
Translated by Victor Danner