

Visualizing Sufism

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Visualizing Sufism

*Studies on Graphic Representations in Sufi Literature
(13th to 16th Century)*

Edited by

Giovanni Maria Martini



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Giovanni Maria Martini

Lucca, 18 February 2022

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Introduction

Giovanni Maria Martini

This volume gathers a number of studies on a theme as vast and complex as it is little studied, or rather not studied in an organic and comprehensive way. This is the use of graphic representations, in most cases in the form of diagrams, within Sufi literature.¹ ‘Visual Sufism’—the neologism I have chosen to indicate this phenomenon—is a broad and multifaceted topic, which lends itself to being addressed from various points of view and suggests a multidisciplinary approach.² The material form possessed by the diagrams and figures under analysis, subject to innumerable variants within the manuscript and printed tradition of the texts, traced within works that are largely still unpublished, is a matter of Codicology, Philology, and Art History, particularly of the Art of the Book. The meaning and the employment of those same figures, on the other hand, fall under various headings in the Intellectual History and History of Ideas, and in the History of Religions and Philosophy, as well as in apparently very different disciplines such as Cognitive Sciences. This collective volume, which is the final result of a workshop entitled “Visualizing Sufism 1200–1600,” held in May 2018 at the Alexander von Humboldt Kolleg for Islamic Intellectual History at the University of Bonn, offers an attempt to study the visual materials contained in Sufi literature as a significant object of scholarly investigation and to do so from a broad perspective. This approach includes looking at the meanings of these figures according to each single author and at the use

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- 1 On this subject there exist some isolated studies that take into consideration in a more or less direct way one or another representation, or group of representations, contained in a given text of Sufism, or used by a single author, but there is no organic study that has as its main object such graphic elements. To my knowledge the only general survey of graphic representations in Sufism, which is introductory in nature and a useful starting point, is an article by Ahmet T. Karamustafa titled “Cosmographical Diagrams,” in *The History of Cartography, Volume 2, Book 1: Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, eds. James B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 71–89. For studies on the use of graphic representations in Sufism, or on related topics, see the Selected Bibliography at the end of this introduction and the bibliographies in the various chapters of this volume.
 - 2 In coining this neologism I was inspired by the title of the book by the Hebraist Giulio Busi, *Qabbalah visiva* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005) in which the scholar examined graphic materials of a similar character in the Jewish mystical tradition. ‘Visual Sufism’ is, like any definition, an imperfect and limited term, but at the same time it has the great virtue of being simple and synthetic, therefore convenient and useful for the purpose of communication.

and diffusion of visual elements in Sufi texts as being a complex socio-cultural, structured phenomenon resulting from and reflecting changes and evolution in the historical context. This trend is also investigated as being the result of the circulation of ideas in specific scholarly networks, and not as the semi-casual result of the contingent needs and individual reflections of the single authors. At the same time, the volume emerges as the largest corpus of research on (and samples of) visual materials selected from a vast amount of primary Sufi texts, many of which are unpublished, therefore otherwise not easily available to the reader. The hope is that the critical mass of visual and written documentation, as well as the reflections on the topic of visualization in Sufi literature elaborated from different angles by a number of scholars, can make of this volume a sound basis upon which further research in the same field, or in neighboring ones, can move forward. Another of the objectives of this collective work is to contribute to dispelling some preconceptions that still survive, for example about the alleged absence of graphic elements in Sufi literature and, more generally, about the disinterest or even insusceptibility of mystical experience to any form of representation.³ The presence of visual components is already observed in an early Sufi treatise composed between the 9th and the 10th centuries such as the *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn* of al-Ḥallāj (Nwya 1972) and the works of Shams al-Dīn al-Daylamī in the twelfth (Alexandrin 2012).⁴ The trend inaugurated by these isolated cases will then become more and more common from the thirteenth century onward. Such a new trend is well represented by the several Sufi scholars addressed in this volume, who employed diagrams in numerous works, some of which achieved great and widespread fame and were extremely influential. It is also useful to bear in mind that the authors analyzed in these pages constitute only a sample and by no means do they exhaust the list of Sufi thinkers who used depictions in their works between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Having recourse to diagrams is also observed in Sufi literature produced in a later period, for example in India, within the intellectual *milieux* of brotherhoods such as the Shaṭṭāriyya, Khalwatiyya, Qādiriyya, Chishtiyya and Naqshbandiyya amongst others (see e.g. Behl 2012, 236–246; Hermansen 1988 and 1992; Speziale 2007; Giordani 2012; Ventura 2019; Fārūqī 1957), not to

3 See for example the following remarks: “The literature of Islamic mysticism, vast in size and scope, is on the whole devoid of graphic elements. Given the unsusceptibility of mystical experience to any form of ‘representation,’ such a reluctance by mystics to translate inner experiences onto the plane of visual expression is hardly surprising,” in Karamustafa, “Cosmographical Diagrams,” 83.

4 Other cases exist besides those of al-Ḥallāj and al-Daylamī. Some diagrams for example are present in al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ulūm al-dīn* (al-Ghazālī 1388, 351, 112 and 113).

mention the role played by graphic elements in the West, for example in the Bektashiyya (cf. Mir-Kasimov, Chapter 5; De Jong 1989).

This brief introduction is not the appropriate place to go into detail as to this question, which deserves to be properly addressed, yet it is at least important to mention that the visual expression (of which the figures presented in this volume are just but one mode of manifestation) is indeed one of the most important mystical dimensions of Islam. Here, it is mostly a matter of defining what a visual expression is, but even at first glance it appears clear that mystical discourse in Islam, as in other contexts, was and still is filled with and partially constituted by visual elements. The fact that these visual elements are often presented and described in written accounts and not physically drawn should not be misleading with regard to the important role visualization plays in the mystical experience. These elements include (but are not limited to) the symbolism of light, the tremendous role played in Sufi thought by concepts such as *‘ālam al-khayāl* and *‘ālam al-mithāl*,⁵ the role of visions and dreams as favored means of spiritual communication and learning in the mystical experience, not to mention the important part played by the science of letters and literal symbolism in Sufi thought and in the Islamicate occult and esoteric culture in general. What are, in fact, letters, in the end, if not figures? We are reminded of this concept in many *lettrist* speculations by numerous authors, since there are basically two directions that speculation on letters can take in the Islamicate intellectual discourse in addition to their original phonic value: one is numerical (since each letter of the Arabic alphabet has a numerical value), and the second is visual (based on the shapes of the various letters); moreover, these aspects are sometimes intertwined in the authors' speculations (cf. Gardiner, Chapter 1; Alexandrin, Chapter 4; Mir-Kasimov, Chapter 5). Viewed from such a perspective, even the separation from 'written' and 'drawn' becomes ambiguous, as a text composed of words and letters might also appear and could be identified in a drawing, which is an image and a visual expression. Islamic civilization has well demonstrated, through some of the most peculiar outcomes of its artistic developments, especially calligraphy, how easy it is to cross the border separating writing from drawing.

The subject matter of this publication cannot exempt me from at least mentioning, obviously without any claim to exhaustiveness, the question of how the graphic materials contained in Sufi literature relate to the history of Islamic art of the book. Although, in this edited volume, the discussion of images in Sufi texts is approached especially from the point of view of Intellectual History and the History of Ideas, in it are also included insights and considerations

5 Rendered by Henry Corbin as "Imaginal World" and "Subsistent Images" (Corbin 1997).

related to the Art of the Islamic Book, and certainly with regard to the History of the Islamic Manuscript Tradition. This is especially true of Kropf's contribution (Chapter 7), fostered by her expertise and specific interests in the fields of codicology and preservation, but a focus on the material and artistic aspects of manuscripts, the use of color, and the layout and distribution of figures is also encountered in other chapters (e.g. in chapters 2 and 3). The theoretical considerations of some of the examined authors on the role and function of images in texts can also be of specific interest to art historians. Following the classification of the elements that contribute altogether to constitute the Art of the Book suggested by Oleg Grabar (Gruber 2010, Foreword), the graphic materials contained in Sufi works fall into the broad category of illustrations (*taṣwīr*).⁶ In the majority of cases they are geometrical illustrations. These characteristics make most of the images in Sufi literature somewhat akin or similar to those contained in scientific texts—such as mathematics, geometry, mechanics, astronomy and geography⁷—rather than to the figurative representations found in other kinds of works, especially literary ones. Even this simple observation is worthy of interest, for it connects to the idea that Sufism was considered, and intended to be considered by its adherents, as a “science” (*ilm*) in dialogue with other sciences (particularly philosophy, alchemy, theology, cosmology), albeit a science of a peculiar and personal character in that it was allusive (*ishārī*), inspirational (*ilhāmī*), and intuitive (*kashfī*); and that the development of the use of visual elements in Sufi literature was therefore, at least to some extent, a component of the broader process of legitimization and adoption of an organized scientific-philosophical language by Sufi thinkers (see *infra*). From this point of view, the present volume is, therefore, also a sort of complement, necessarily partial, to the studies and repertoires that specialists have been dedicating to painting in Arabic and, more generally, Islamic scientific manuscripts. Having made this general observation on the characteristics of the majority of the illustrations encountered in Sufi literature, it is nevertheless important to mention that beginning from a certain period—difficult to establish with certainty at the present time—in some Sufi circles, both Western (Bektashiyya in Ottoman territories) and Eastern (Shaṭṭāriyya, Qādiriyya and other brotherhoods in India), we witness a fascinating phenomenon of anthropomorphization of the graphic materials encountered

6 Indeed this term in conjunction with the related word *ṣūra* (pl. *ṣuwar*), is explicitly used by most Sufi authors who use diagrams. Cf. *infra* in this volume.

7 It is no coincidence that Karamustafa's pioneering survey of diagrams in Sufism was titled *Cosmographical Diagrams* and that it was commissioned for a history of cartography (Karamustafa 1992).

in the texts (see Mir-Kasimov, Chapter 5 and Martini, Chapter 6; see also De Jong 1989, Ernst 1999, Speziale 2007 and in general the bibliographies of the two aforementioned chapters). In this particular sub-genre of representations of Visual Sufism, the early and dominant abstract geometric type is diluted by assuming a figurative character, giving rise to a wide spectrum of solutions: cases in which geometry and figuration coexist in balance, others in which figuration takes over. This phenomenon has interesting implications not only from the point of view of the History of Islamic Art, but also from that of Islamic intellectual History, since the object of this process of anthropomorphization, in many cases, are aspects of the divinity (Aḥadiyya, Wāḥidiyya, Ḥaḳīqa Muḥammadiyya, etc.) and their interrelation (cf. Chapter 6) or, again, some divine names. We are therefore confronted, at least to a certain extent, with anthropomorphic representations of God in Islamic context, which put us in front of an exceptional outcome, both from an artistic and intellectual point of view, which does not seem to be found so explicitly in other forms of Islamic art, and which deserves to be further investigated. Still, with regard to the same subject, it is useful to observe the important role of mediation and bridging played in this process by calligraphic art.⁸ Often it is, in fact, through the elaboration of the shapes of the letters of the Arabic alphabet that the process of anthropomorphization, zoomorphization and, more generally, the transition from abstract-geometric representation to figurative representation takes place.⁹ The illustrations—both diagrammatic and non-diagrammatic—

8 Cf. Schimmel 1990, esp. p. 110 ff. and p. 133 ff. Schimmel writes that “the tendency to equate human figures with letters developed logically out of the art of calligraphy” (p. 110). This statement is certainly correct for the Islamic period, which we are interested in here. But wishing to speculate, accepting the well-known hypothesis that at the historical origin of the shapes of the letters of the Proto-Sinaitic script, from which the alphabets of the Semitic languages, including Arabic (as well as Greek, via Phoenician), would be derived, there were simplified forms of some Egyptian hieroglyphs, we could conceive the transition from letters to figures that we witness in Islamic art and culture as an ideal closing of the circle with respect to the very origins of alphabetic writing: from figures to letters; from letters to figures.

9 The intermediation of calligraphy in the process of transforming abstract geometrical forms into human figures is not only done through the pure graphic medium, but also through a further intermediary, naturally suited to connect letters (written text) and figures, namely poetry. I refer to the very extensive use that poets of the “Islamic languages” have made of the letter forms of the Arabic alphabet to describe in particular the physical features of the beloved. For as Safadī writes “as for comparing human limbs with letters, the poets have done that frequently” (quoted in Schimmel 1990, 134). For a rich selection of very interesting specimens of this kind of poetry, in various languages (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, etc.), see again Schimmel 1990, especially Chapters III and IV. Very pleasing is the picture of the ideal beloved of Persian poets as made up from letters elaborated, if I do not misinterpret, by Schimmel herself (p. 142).

contained in Sufi literature, thanks to the very close relationship that binds them to the written text, as all the studies collected in this volume clearly show, confirm that “text and images must be seen as complementary expressions of a highly specific, even personalized, conception,”¹⁰ and that it is oversimplifying, if not downright misleading, to study the images contained in a book in isolation from the text, as instead was the case for a long time in studies of Islamic art (cf. Contadini 2007, 3–16). This statement, in fact, turns out to be particularly true for Visual Sufism, insofar as the latter presents a peculiar characteristic that is not encountered so widely and systematically in other genres of Islamic illustrated texts: namely the fact that in the majority of cases the original author of the illustrations is the very same author of the text (this is confirmed for many of the authors studied in this volume, including al-Būnī, Ḥamūyeh, Maghribī, the latter’s disciples, Sha’rānī; but see above all the striking case of the holographic manuscripts of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* discussed in Chapters 2 and 3).¹¹ Among the many considerations to which the illustrations of Sufi manuscripts lend themselves from the point of view of Islamic art of the book, I would like to mention here, *en passant*, an aspect that, as far as I am aware, has not yet been the subject of specific study. This is the fact that some evidence suggests that these illustrated works, originally conceived by their authors without any explicitly decorative and aesthetic aim, but rather with pragmatic and explanatory intent, in close relation with the doctrinal content of the written text, in some cases and with the passing of time become instead perceived, and were copied and enjoyed specifically for their peculiar aesthetic aspect, that is, the presence of figures, suggesting how blurred the border between artistic and intellectual appreciation of a text is. In order to illustrate this point, I will mention the fortune of the prose works of the Sufi scholar and poet Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī (d. 810/1408), which possess the peculiar characteristic of all being illustrated by diagrams, relying on the survey I conducted on several dozens of manuscript copies of them in order to prepare a critical edition. Some interesting exemplars from this census emerged from an artistic point of view, which I can only mention here, and which I hope to present more fully elsewhere.¹² For example, a copy of Maghribī’s most famous work, the *Jām-i jahān-namā* (“The World-Showing Cup”), is found added as an appendix to a monumental codex of more than

10 Contadini 2007, 9.

11 This, too, is an aspect of the phenomenon of Visual Sufism that would merit further study, perhaps through the collaboration of an art historian and a historian of Sufism.

12 For further information on this author and his works refer to Martini, Chapter 6.

eight hundred folios, containing dozens of works, mostly of Persian mystical poetry (beginning with Rūmī's Mathnawī), richly illuminated and decorated in the first part, transcribed by a professional copyist, and certainly belonged to a member of the aristocracy.¹³ Maghribī's work, by a different hand than the rest of the collection, added at the end of the codex, is nevertheless carefully noted in the beautiful index, richly decorated and illuminated, organized in forty-eight medallions, which occupies two full pages of the manuscript. From where did the interest in this very brief writing of a few pages and the desire to add it to this precious codex come? I believe that the presence of diagrams, rendering it an unusual text, could have played a certain role in the choice of the editor. Other cases, after all, seem to suggest that the presence of diagrams ignited the interest of professional copyists and wealthy patrons. Of the *Jām-i jahān-namā* and other Maghribī's works, I signal other aesthetically valuable copies inserted in a large unitary codex, artistically coherent, transcribed, it would seem, by a single copyist, containing almost exclusively works related to Sufism, about forty in number, in prose and poetry.¹⁴ The copy of the *Jām-i jahān-namā* reflects the general style of the *majmū'a*: an illuminated and decorated title, a refined *mise-en-page*, its text enclosed in a gilded frame on all pages and, even more significant for the present discussion, gold used to draw the diagrams. A third case, which aroused my curiosity, consists of a manuscript in which another fine and precious copy of the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, with key texts written in gold and diagrams very carefully and skillfully drawn in golden, red, and black ink, is bound together with what apparently appears to be a Mongolian syllabary (*risāla-yi khatt-i mughūlī*).¹⁵ What could have been the reason for bringing together these two texts totally unrelated to each other in terms of content? The aesthetic aspect of both—the syllabary with its peculiar layout, gilded titles, original text in a *foreign* alphabet in black ink, and interlinear phonetic transcription in Arabic script in red; the fine copy of Maghribī's work just described—may have been decisive in my opinion. Another example is a

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- 13 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 4792. Some colophons are dated from 813–816 (1410–1414), the copy of the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, however, is by another hand and is not dated, and is probably a few years later. The copyist of the entire *majmū'a*, excluding the work of Maghribī, the last one, appears to be a single person. He signs himself As'ad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Kātib (fols. 545, 596^a, 801^a), and informs his reader that the copy was executed in Shiraz (fol. 801).
- 14 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Halet Efendi 800. The entire codex would appear to have been transcribed by the same copyist between 1042 and 1044 (1632–1635). This manuscript, as well as all the others reported in these brief notes, needs to be examined accurately.
- 15 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Lala İsmail 138. The copy of the *Jām-i jahān-namā* is dated to the end of 869 (1465).

precious copy of another one of Maghribī's prose works which is also accompanied by diagrams. As in the case of the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, this is a short text, which is given here maximum prominence by presenting it individually, in a graceful, small-format manuscript.¹⁶ In this case, too, the artisans of the book made extensive use of gold: in a florilegium in combination with blue ink in the *ʿunwān*, in the frames of all the pages, but above all in the highly accurate design of the diagrams. The result (and concept behind it) is a little solitaire: the conciseness of the work, enriched with illustrations, made it suitable for this purpose. Examples of this type are abundant. I end this brief inventory by citing an important document for the transmission of Maghribī's prose works, the manuscript Oslo, Schøyen Collection 5350.¹⁷ The manuscript was copied by a professional scribe, who signed himself (and made some transcription errors due precisely to his lack of expertise regarding the technical subject matter dealt with in the texts), and did so for a political personality, as is evident from some of the verses he dedicated to his patron, as well as from the statement at the beginning of the book.¹⁸ The artistic nature of the manuscript is made evident by the presence of fourteen diagrams. In this case too, the question arises as to whether the patron for whom the manuscript was intended was interested exclusively in the doctrinal contents of works (a possibility that should not be dismissed *a priori*, given the coherence of the texts contained in the *majmūʿa*), or whether the presence of illustrations contributed, as I suggest, to attract his interest. Certainly the peculiarities of the manuscript from the codicological and artistic point of view have played a role in the contemporary age in the choice of its current owner to acquire it for his important and valuable collection;¹⁹ just as this same aesthetic aspect may have played a role in the pre-

16 MS Istanbul, Millet Yazmar Eser Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri Arabi 1033, 23 fols., dated 891 (1486). The work in question is entitled *al-Durr al-farīd fī maʿrifat marātib al-tawḥīd* ("The Unique Pearl about the Knowledge of the Degrees of God's Oneness"). For some notes on the same, see Chapter 6.

17 Some images of the same are visible on the website of the Schøyen Collection: <https://www.schoyencollection.com/23-religions/living-religions/23-13-islam/sufism-kabbalah/muhammed-shirin-maghribi-ms-5350> (accessed 16/12/2021). For an analysis of the work of Maghribī *al-Nuzha al-Sāsānīyya* contained in this manuscript, of some of the diagrams it contains, and for further references to the codex, see Martini 2021. See also in this volume Chapter 6.

18 The copyist signs ʿAbd al-Ḥamid b. Murād al-Ardabīlī (fol. 6^a). On the first page it is stated that the present manuscript was part of the library of Amīr Shujāʿ al-Dīn Ḥamza Beg. The latter in the website of the Schøyen Collection is identified as the Amīr Shujāʿ al-Dīn Ḥamza Beg, son of Ḥamza b. Qara ʿUthmān (see the webpage cited in the previous note), but this identification needs to be ascertained.

19 One of the numerous cases that reminds us of the close relationship between collecting

servation of the manuscript through the centuries, unintentionally favoring the process of transmission of knowledge: the manuscript, in fact, preserves one of the only two currently known copies of a work by Maghribī that had long been thought to be lost; it is the only one of the two copies in which diagrams are present, and it is also the older of the two, thus proving to be indispensable for the knowledge of the work in question.²⁰ I would also like to bring attention here to another aspect of the phenomenon of Visual Sufism that might be of interest to historians of Islamic art, as well as to the history of ideas. It is related to the sensitive issue concerning aesthetic theory, or rather its alleged absence, in Islamic context.²¹ This is precisely to signal the development of a more or less embryonic aesthetic and cognitive philosophy relating to the perception and fruition of images by some of the Sufi thinkers who composed illustrated texts, of which there are some interesting examples in this volume as well, especially in the chapters devoted to Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), and to a lesser extent to Maghribī (d. 810/1408) and al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565), and which are also found in other authors, among which it is worth mentioning the fourteenth-century Persian Sufi thinker Ḥaydar ʿĀmulī (d. after 785/1385), who, as a great user of diagrams in his works, seems to explain, more fully than others, some of the cognitive processes that underlie the use of images, justifying it also by virtue of the innate propensity of the human soul towards sensible forms.²² Some-

and art history, and of their mutual interaction and influence, also with regard to Islamic Art (cf. Contadini 2007, 3).

- 20 This is the work entitled *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya*, on which see the references given in footnote 17.
- 21 Summarizing some main points of the scholarship on the subject, Contadini observed that “there are a handful of historical texts that record the lives of various esteemed artists or generically trace the development of a particular branch of Islamic painting [...] and there are also scattered statements about visual beauty in scientific and philosophical works,” that “Islamic art history has had to be elaborated in the absence of an indigenous theory,” that “there is no coherent body of work that treats of the nature, purpose or stylistic parameters of artefacts,” and that “it remains the case that there is next to nothing that clearly elucidates how or indeed if any presumed aesthetic values of the Muslim world were theorised” (Contadini 2007, 3 ff.).
- 22 Relevant passages from ʿĀmulī’s Qur’anic commentary in which the author explains the reasons for his use of diagrams are translated in Giovanni Maria Martini, “Note sul Sufismo visivo: rappresentazioni grafiche a supporto della realizzazione spirituale nel *Taṣawwuf*,” *El Azufre Rojo* 9 (2021): 69–94. Eliza Tasbihi presented a paper titled “Esoteric Deliberations on Visionary Unveiling: Mystical Knowledge From Ḥaydar ʿĀmulī’s *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*,” discussing some of the diagrams contained in ʿĀmulī’s commentary of Ibn al-ʿArabī’s *Bezels of Wisdom*, at the workshop “Visualizing Sufism 1200–1600.” On this subject see Eliza Tasbihi, “Visionary Perceptions through Cosmographical Diagrams: Mystical Knowledge from Ḥaydar ʿĀmulī’s *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 69 (2021): 31–81.

what paradoxically, the markedly intellectual and conceptualizing perspective of Sufi scholars regarding the use of figures in some of their texts could have favored the theorizing processes over a purely artistic approach to images. In any case, given the dearth of Islamic sources on these topics, the reflections one encounters scattered here and there in the works of Sufism could be a useful complement to the already known and widely discussed sources, and provide new material for studies on aesthetics in the Muslim world.

As mentioned, the topic and the materials that fall within the scope of visual Sufism are vast as well as ill-defined, due to the fact that the corpus of representations contained in Sufi works is mostly uncatalogued. This situation derives from a number of reasons, in addition to the one, already mentioned, that the representations contained in Sufi texts are to date a subject studied only sporadically and in a fragmentary way. Among these is that Sufi literature is an immense production, spanning more than a millennium of history across continents, from Africa to East Asia; that this vast literary production is written in numerous languages; and that a large part of the texts involved are unpublished and in manuscript form. These problems suggest that a survey and study that can be said to be at least minimally exhaustive is unlikely to be carried out by a single scholar, but rather requires the collaboration of a group of experts who can take advantage of the various areas of expertise necessary to work in geographic, historical, linguistic and cultural areas so different from each other. For these same reasons, the present volume, despite representing the most extensive effort undertaken so far on the subject of Visual Sufism, cannot and should not be considered either comprehensive nor conclusive, but rather a witness of the potentialities inherent in the study of this subject, and as a spur for further research in the same field.

Among the most significant questions awaiting to find precise answers, there is certainly that of the genesis and chronology of this matter. In order to clarify it, a general survey of the materials involved, in which this book is fully inserted, seems to be a premise equally useful and necessary. What is the relationship between the depictions found in Sufi literature and those encountered in the same and earlier periods in cognate disciplines, including philosophical, theological, alchemical, and hermetic texts, and with those produced by specific mystical movements in the Islamicate context (see e.g. Mir-Kasimov, Chapter 5, on the question of the graphic materials contained in Ḥurūfī, Nuḳṭavī, and Bek-tashī literature)? And why does the use of graphic representations in Sufism, in spite of some noteworthy precedents, seem to establish itself only after a certain period, i.e. from about the 13th century onwards? How does this novelty relate to major changes in the sociopolitical and intellectual history of this period? It can be suggested that two interrelated elements played some role

in the establishment of visual media in Sufism. One is the wide dissemination, reception, and influence on later authors of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 638/1240) oeuvre, who used graphic representations and diagrams in numerous of his texts (cf. Karjoo-Ravary, Chapter 2; Tyser, Chapter 3). This is also suggested by the fact that many later ‘Akbari’ authors are among the main users of diagrams (cf. e.g. Martini, Chapter 6; Kropf, Chapter 7). The role of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s work in the process of diffusion of graphic elements in Sufi literature had already been observed, for example by Karamustafa, who seems, however, to have exaggerated its scope when he writes that “the few cosmological diagrams that can be located in the [Islamic mystical] literature all bear the indelible stamp of Ibn al-‘Arabī.”²³ Ibn al-‘Arabī’s function needs to be contextualized. Although it is accurate to say that the ‘Sheikh al-Akbar’ played a key role in the diffusion of diagrams in Sufi literature (also thanks to the works of many later authors who decided to include visual elements in their treatises under the influence of his works), it would be a simplification to see in Ibn al-‘Arabī the unique initiator of this new trend as the result of independent personal reflection developed in a vacuum. Ibn al-‘Arabī, despite his towering personality, exceptional oeuvre, and the immense influence that his works exercised in shaping the subsequent history of Sufi thought, was a child of his time. In this regard, in a sense, it could be suggested that Ibn al-‘Arabī’s greatness if, on the one hand, it can be seen in his exceptionality and uniqueness, at the same time it is constituted precisely by his ability to anticipate and epitomize the trends of the era in which he flourished. As this volume attempts to show, although Ibn al-‘Arabī was indeed most influential, he was not, however, the only Sufi scholar of his generation to make extensive use of diagrams. Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 622/1225) and Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh (d. 649/1252), to whom two chapters of the book are dedicated (Gardiner, Chapter 1; Alexandrin, Chapter 4), are significant and prestigious contemporary examples of this trend, suggesting that Ibn al-‘Arabī’s deliberate use of diagrams was not simply the result of his personal elaboration, but also the result of a common tendency of the time and of particular ideas that were circulating, possibly further developed within a specific milieu represented by Sufi intellectual networks to which these scholars belonged (cf. Martini, Chapter 6). The second element to take into consideration, regarding the rising of the visual medium in Sufism starting from a certain historical period, is the slow process that will lead Sufism to present itself and be conceived as a science in conversation with other disciplines within the intellectual debate, in particular with philosophy, adopting and reframing concepts and terminology,

23 Karamustafa, “Cosmographical Diagrams,” 83.

giving life to what is often referred to as ‘Philosophical Sufism.’ From this point of view, the increased use and diffusion of diagrams within Sufi literature in the late-medieval and early-modern period can be read as a reflection of the philosophical-scientific language that was in the process of being established in Sufism.²⁴ As premised, there are suggestions here, and the role of these elements (i.e. the influence of Ibn al-‘Arabī and the rise of a new ‘philosophical’ language in Sufism) in the establishment of the graphic medium in Sufi literature needs to be demonstrated more appropriately.

Another question that awaits thorough and comprehensive investigation, including a comparison with older materials such as those taken into consideration in this volume, is the evolution of Visual Sufism in the later period, in the modern era and up to contemporary times. Far from fading away in fact, this visual mode of expression has continued to spread and assert itself in different contexts over the centuries, reaching the present day (see e.g. Behl 2012, 236–246; Hermansen 1988 and 1992; Speziale 2007; Giordani 2012; Ventura 2019; Fārūqī 1957; De Jong 1989; Janson, Tol and Witkam 1995), in many cases varying with new and original results in both the formal aspects and the contents of the representations, including the fascinating question of the relationship between abstract geometric diagrams and figurative and anthropomorphic ones (cf. e.g. Mir-Kasimov, Chapter 5; Martini, Chapter 6).

The questions touched upon by the issue of Visual Sufism are not confined to those mentioned so far. Consider, for instance, the potentialities represented by the study of the variants of the graphic apparatuses in the manuscript tradition from the point of view of Philology and the Art of the Book (cf. e.g. Kropf, Chapter 7; Martini 2021¹), or of the resurfacing of identical or closely related diagrams in works by authors who lived in regions and periods very distant

24 This element, too, had already been keenly observed by Karamustafa: “Even mysticism, however, is not impervious to philosophical speculation, and whenever philosophizing tendencies manifest themselves and mystics begin to subject ‘ineffable’ mystical experiences to systematic scrutiny, there may also emerge the need for graphic illustration.” Karamustafa, “Cosmographical Diagrams,” 83. This explanation and interpretation, however, does not seem to work for all types of representations observed in Sufi texts, and things (especially spiritual things), as often happens, tend to escape easy classifications. Next to graphic representations with a marked explanatory and didactic character, that aspire to clarity and whose rational reading is relatively easy, there are representations that seem instead to be built on principles that are in some ways opposite: enigmatic diagrams, intentionally not immediately intelligible, in which every possibility of rational interpretation seems precluded, giving way to another type of fruition, perhaps an intuitive and non-discursive meditation. See for example the already mentioned figures in al-Ḥallāj’s *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn* (Nwya 1972) or those drawn by al-Daylamī or Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh (on which see Alexandrin, Chapter 4).

from each other as far as intellectual history is concerned (cf. Martini, Chapter 6). Among the many that could still be mentioned, the last aspect on which I would like to dwell goes beyond the studies on Islam in the strict sense, entering the field of comparative studies. That is, the possibility of confronting the graphic materials present in Sufi literature, and the relative theoretical elaborations of the authors, with comparable graphic outcomes observable in mystical and religious phenomenology in most cultural contexts across the world. This is regardless of whether we assume direct contacts or cases of osmosis between what is found in Sufism and other spiritual traditions, which in any case is not to be excluded *a priori*, at least in some cases. In this sense, a fascinating yet unexplored line of research concerns potential contacts or instances of cultural osmosis that may have took place between visual Sufism and Kabbalah. This possibility is suggested by the fact that the earliest examples of graphic elements appear in works by Kabbalist masters who operated in an Islamicate cultural context in which Arabic represented an important language of cultural transmission. It seems that the earliest known examples of graphic accompaniment to a Kabbalistic text appear in al-Andalus in the middle of the 13th century, in the work of Ya'aqov ben Ya'aqov ha-Kohen (d. ca. 1270) entitled *Sefer ha-orah* (*Book of Illumination*) (Busi 2005, 110 ff.) The possibilities of interaction are certainly not limited to this single case. Many of the masters of Visual Kabbalah actually flourished in Spain in a cultural context theoretically favorable to the occurrence of some form of osmosis. These include, for example, Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka, a late thirteenth-century thinker who wrote the *Uns al-gharīb*, an exegetical collection in Judeo-Arabic, or the far more famous Abulafia (Busi 2005, 137–140 and 141–155).²⁵ That of possible similitudes, or

25 Exposure to and engagement with Arabic-Islamic sources also characterized the Roman Jewish community of the 13th century, made up of discerning and innovative readers who hired translators from Provence and Spain, who in Rome translated from Arabic many masterpieces by al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes. The first dated documents of Kabbalah that have come down to us were copied in Rome, in the 1380s, and in them there are some drawings. According to Busi, these are rather complex representations that suggest an already mature tradition, derived from previous models (Busi 2005, 125 ff.). Busi himself suggests a parallel, in the scientific-philosophical field, between some ideas of the neo-Platonic thinker, mathematician, astronomer and translator from Arabic Avraham ben Ḥiyya (d. ca. 1136) and his contemporary and countryman Ibn al-Sīd of Badajoz (444–521/1052–1127), author of the *Book of Circles* (*Kitāb al-Ḥadā'iq*), a work that contains an explanatory diagram and that was translated into Hebrew and enjoyed considerable success in the later Jewish tradition, both philosophical and cabbalistic (Busi 2005, 74n159). Busi also mentions Ibn al-'Arabī's *Book of the Production of Circles*, writing that "the formal origin and possible influence on Jewish mysticism of the designs used by the Sufi master Ibn 'Arabī in his *Kitāb Inshā' al-dawā'ir al-iḥāṭīyya* remains to be clarified." (ibidem, translation mine).

even contacts and osmosis, between the graphic outcomes of these two mystical traditions is, as we said, a hypothesis at the moment not substantiated by documentary evidence, and yet fascinating and worthy of being taken into consideration. These and more are the horizons open by the study of Visual Sufism. Preliminary and essential work on which to base further research remains the census and the study of the corpus of images contained in the immense mystical literature of Islam. This book is intended to be a contribution in this direction and an encouragement for future research in this area.

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Diagrams and Visionary Experience in al-Būnī's (d. 622/1225) *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt fī al-ḥurūf al-'ulwiyyāt*

Noah Gardiner

Around the turn of the seventh/thirteenth century, a discipline known as “the science of letters and names” (*‘ilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-asmā’*), which had been cultivated for some time in the Islamicate west, was introduced to the central Arab-Islamic lands by Sufi émigrés such as the Andalusian Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) and the Ifrīqiyan Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 622/1225 or 630/1232–1233). The science, often referred to as “lettrism” in recent scholarship, is a discourse on the relationship between divine speech and manifest existence that assigns central cosmogonical roles to the divine names and the letters of the Arabic alphabet. It has occult-practical components as well, including specially crafted invocatory prayers (*ad‘īya*, *awrād*, etc.), talismans bearing matrices of letters and numbers (*awfāq*, s. *wafq*), and various letter-based divination techniques. Originally confined to esotericist Sufi circles, the science was widely popularized among Muslim intellectuals and elites of the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries, exercising significant influence on Islamic thought and culture for centuries after.¹

Al-Būnī’s *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt fī al-ḥurūf al-'ulwiyyāt* (The Subtleties of the Allusions regarding the Superior Letters), completed in Cairo in 622/1225, is his

1 On the history of lettrism up to and including to al-Būnī, see Denis Gril, “The Science of Letters,” in *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz (New York: Pir Press, 2004), 103–219; Pierre Lory’s various essays on the topic collected in the volume *La science des lettres en islam* (Paris: Editions Dervy, 2004); Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in Al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-‘Arabī and Ismā‘īlī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Jean-Charles Coulon, “La magie islamique et le «corpus bunianum» au Moyen Âge” (PhD diss., Paris IV—Sorbonne, 2013), and various works by the present author. On the spread and development of lettrism in the centuries after al-Būnī, see Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “Of Islamic Grammatology: Ibn Turka’s Lettrist Metaphysics of Light,” *al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 24 (2016): 42–113; Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “Early Modern Islamicate Empire: New Forms of Religiopolitical Legitimacy,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Babak Rahimi (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 353–375; İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

main opus on the letters.² Intended for fellow Sufi esotericists, the text is highly allusive and sometimes deliberately obscure. One of the most striking features of the work is its rich array of tables, letter-number matrices, and other graphic elements, including a series of complex diagrammatic figures associated with individual letters of the Arabic alphabet.³ al-Būnī suggests throughout the work that contemplation of these letter-diagrams facilitates knowledge of otherwise incommunicable wonders and secrets of the *malakūt*, the multilayered mesocosmic realm of angels and other subtle entities often evoked in Sufi literature.⁴ Some are also claimed to have occult powers in the world when ritually prepared as amulets, providing for the protection, provision, and spiritual advancement of the adept.

This essay investigates a number of these letter-diagrams, considering the types of information they convey, their relationship to the main text of the *Laṭā'if* and other sources, how they were taught and transmitted, and how they were intended to be used. On the basis of the text and various aspects of the Sufism and manuscript culture of the period, I argue that these figures were not merely visual schematizations of al-Būnī's cosmological ideas. Rather, I contend, they were intended as vehicles for visionary experience of the spiritual realities they represent, a praxis grounded in al-Būnī's interwoven doctrines of the human being as a microcosm of the creation and the cosmogonic power of the hierarchy of living saints. My arguments rely in part on the concept

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- 2 *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt fī al-ḥurūf al-'ulwīyyāt* survives in at least twenty-two manuscript copies. Unless otherwise noted, all citations of the text in this article refer to my readings of Bibliothèque nationale de France MS arabe 2658, with certain passages checked against Berlin Staatsbibliothek MS oriental Folio 80. BnF 2658 was copied in 809/1406. It contains elements suggesting it was copied from an autograph manuscript, and an audition certificate (*samā'*) copied from the exemplar that records al-Būnī having presided over a reading of the work in 622/1225. Berlin or. Fol. 80, copied in 669/1270, appears to be the oldest surviving copy, but is in a difficult hand and lacks transmission certificates. In executing in collaboration with art director Mariano Fazzi my own digital renderings of the diagrams, included with this article, I have also drawn on Bibliothèque nationale de France MS arabe 2657, which was copied in Mecca in 788/1386. Dietrich notes the existence of a Cairene lithograph of the work dated 1307AH, though the present author has not seen it; *EI2*, s.v. "al-Būnī, Abu 'l-Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Yūsuf al-Ḳurashī al-Ṣūfī Muḥyī 'l-Dīn." More recently, Jean-Charles Coulon includes a transcription of the work in "La magie islamique," 111/64–180, though with numerous errors. For a more detailed discussion of the MSS, see Noah Gardiner, "Esotericist Reading Communities and the Early Circulation of the Sufi Occultist Aḥmad Al-Būnī's Works," in *Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives*, ed. Matthew Melvin-Koushki and Noah Gardiner, special issue *Arabica* 64, nos. 3–4 (2017): 405–441.
- 3 al-Būnī includes diagrams for the following letters, in the following order: Alif, Bā', Sīn, Mīm, Hā', Rā', Ḥā', Nūn, Yā', Qāf, Ṭā', Jīm, Dāl, Ṣād, Shīn, 'Ayn, Zā' (which he calls Zay), Wāw.
- 4 On the *malakūt*, see T.J. de Boer and L. Gardet, "Ālam," *EI2*.

of “graphicacy,” a culturally acquired skill for interpreting diagrams and other graphical figures. I propose that al-Būnī’s Sufi audience in Egypt likely had little or no previous exposure to diagrams like these, which claim to illustrate the invisible workings of the cosmos, and that he was consciously introducing a special variety of graphicacy to his audience as a previously undisclosed spiritual technology.



In a previous article, I have discussed the important place of astrology in *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, demonstrating that al-Būnī’s is an esotericist approach that claims to reveal the *bāṭin* of that science.⁵ Affirming God’s sovereignty over the creation, he interprets the apparent powers of the stars as the efflux of the divine names and the continuous flow of God’s creative speech, with the additional twist that the Sufi saints and adepts are recognized as among the main conduits through which these forces are channeled to the world—a function of their exceptional purity and connectedness to the divine. With all that in mind, he does not deny the usefulness of astrological reckoning and indeed employs elements of astrology in the rituals he describes.

One of the first diagrams in the *Laṭāʾif* shows the cosmos as a nested series of celestial spheres (Figure 1/Plate 1.1).⁶ It is a thoroughly conventional cosmographical image for the period, except that al-Būnī also assigns letters to each of the spheres, indicating that the forces emanating from the heavens are inseparable from the letters of God’s speech. The astrological elements of al-Būnī’s letterism are essential to understanding the talismanic and precatory practices he discusses; however, they represent only a portion of his teachings in the *Laṭāʾif* on the powers of the letters and the saints. The letter-diagrams, discussions of which take up far more of the *Laṭāʾif* than the material related to

5 Noah Gardiner, “Stars and Saints: The Esotericist Astrology of the Sufi Occultist Ahmad al-Buni,” *Journal of Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 12, no. 1 (2017): 39–65.

6 The figures published in this study are my own renderings of the diagrams based on material gathered from three witnesses: Berlin MS Or. fol. 80, BnF MS arabe 2658, and BnF MS arabe 2657. The diagrams pose considerable editorial difficulties, including issues of illegibility, major variations in the texts of the labels, and varying spatial arrangements within the diagrams. As such, these figures must not be taken as “corrected” editions of the diagrams or as entirely faithful renderings of them as they appear in one manuscript or another. Neither have I attempted any sort of critical apparatus to note variations, as such a thing would be far too immense for the present venue. As for my glosses of the texts of the labels, they are just that, and they sometimes suffer from the aforementioned difficulties. In short, those wishing to conduct further research on these diagrams should certainly consult the manuscripts rather than relying exclusively on what is presented here.

astrology, pertain to the higher reaches of al-Būnī’s vision of the ongoing process of cosmogony and the power of humanity therein.

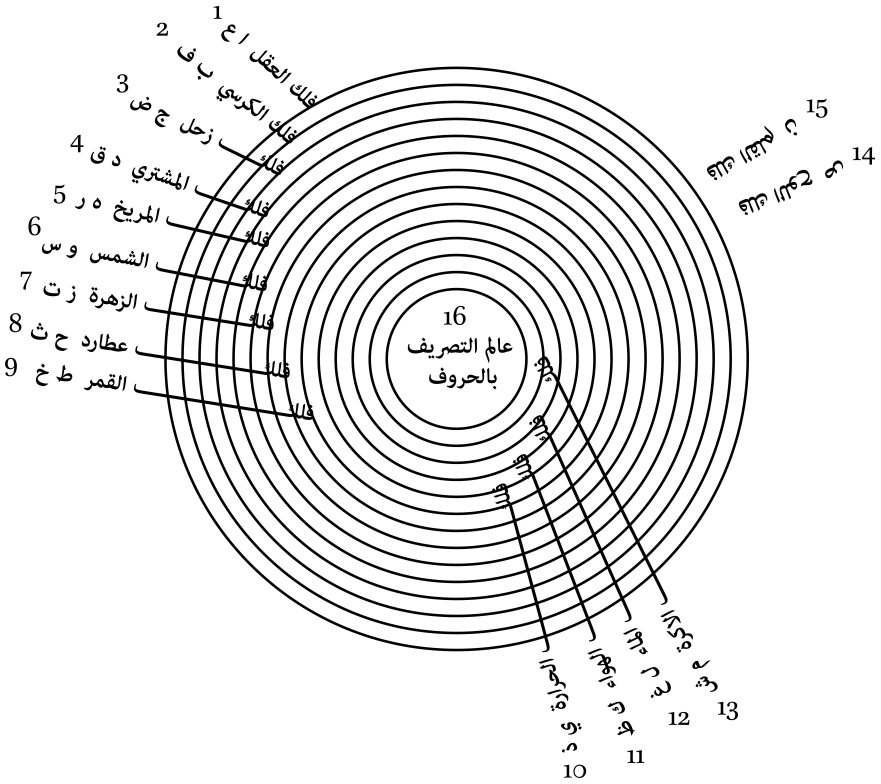


PLATE 1.1 Celestial-spheres diagram. Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* (Berlin Or. 80, fol. 11^b; BnF 2658, fol. 13^b; BnF 2657, fol. 9^a)

Key to Plate 1.1

1. Sphere of the intellect (*falak al-ʿaql*), *alif* and *ʿayn*.
2. Sphere of the dais (*al-kursī*), *bāʾ* and *fāʾ*.
3. Sphere of Saturn (*al-Zuḥal*), *jīm* and *dād*.
4. Sphere of Jupiter (*al-Mushtarī*), *dāl* and *qāf*.
5. Sphere of Mars (*al-Mūrriḵh*), *hāʾ* and *rāʾ*.
6. Sphere of the sun (*al-Shams*), *wāw* and *sīn*.
7. Sphere of Venus (*al-Zuhara*), *zāʾ* and *tāʾ*.
8. Sphere of Mercury (*al-ʿUtārid*), *ḥāʾ* and *thāʾ*.
9. Sphere of the moon (*al-Qamar*), *ṭāʾ* and *khāʾ*.
10. Sphere of heat (*al-ḥarāra*), *yāʾ* and *dhāl*.
11. Sphere of air (*al-hawāʾ*), *kāf* and *zāʾ*.
12. Sphere of water (*al-māʾ*), *lām* and *ghayn*.
13. Sphere of the earth (*al-ukra*), *mīm* and *shīn*.

14. Sphere of the tablet (*al-lawḥ*), *ṣād*.
15. Sphere of the pen (*al-qalam*), *nūn*.
16. The world as disposed by the letters (*‘ālam al-taṣrīf bi-l-ḥurūf*).

Central to al-Būnī’s ideas on the saints is the notion of *al-‘ālam al-insānī* (“the human world”), a primordial, macrocosmic Adam whose creation is inextricable from that of the universe. The introduction to *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt* includes an account of the creation of Adam in which the letters are “sown” (*gharasa*) into him at the four levels of his being: intellect (*‘aql*), spirit (*rūḥ*), soul (*nafs*), and heart (*qalb*)/body (*jism*, *fiṭra*)—these corresponding to four main planes or worlds through which the cosmos comes into existence: intellect, spirit, universal soul, and material world.⁷ Such ideas stem in part from Sufi understandings of Adam having been endowed with God’s form (*ṣūra*) through imbuelement with all the names of God, setting him above the angels. Muslim Neoplatonic thought of earlier periods on the macrocosm/microcosm relationship obviously informs this idea as well, though al-Būnī’s immediate inspiration was almost certainly the Andalusian mystic Ibn Barrajān’s (d. 536/1141) doctrine of the “universal servant” (*al-‘abd al-kullī*), an “initial, all-comprehensive reality” occupying “an intermediate station between God and the world of creation,” conceptualized as the human form writ large.⁸ Humans, microcosmic instantiations of this macrocosmic Adam, within whom are combined the heights of the divine spirit and the depths of materiality, have a unique potential to gather together the knowledge and power of all the outer and inner levels of existence. For al-Būnī, as for some other Sufi thinkers, the members of the hierarchy of living saints are those in whom this potential has been fully awakened, such that

7 al-Būnī, *Laṭā’if*, fol. 5^{a-b}. For a transcription, translation, and more detailed discussion of this account of Adam’s creation, see Noah Gardiner, “Esotericism in a Manuscript Culture: Aḥmad al-Būnī and His Readers through the Mamlūk Period” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014), 191ff. There and in my *Stars and Saints* article, I have sometimes used al-Būnī’s designations of these worlds or planes as “the first world of invention” (*‘ālam al-ikhtirā‘ al-awwal*) = the intellect, “the second world of invention” (*‘ālam al-ikhtirā‘ al-thānī*) = the spirit, “the first world of origination” (*‘ālam al-ibdā‘ al-awwal*) = the soul, and “the second world of invention” (*‘ālam al-ibdā‘ al-thānī*) = the body/material world. I have dispensed with that rather clunky terminology in this essay.

8 Yousef Casewit, *The Mystics of Al-Andalus: Ibn Barrajān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 173–174. See Casewit p. 171 for his argument that this is also the source of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s concept of the “perfect man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*). For a brief overview of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s views on this topic, see William Chittick, “Microcosm, Macrocosm, and Perfect Man in the View of Ibn al-‘Arabī,” *Islamic Culture* 63, nos. 1–2 (1989): 1–11. The ideas of these western Muslim mystics also bear a striking resemblance to the Jewish Kabbalistic concept of Adam Kadmon, one of many reasons that the historical relationship between lettrism and Kabbalah bears examination.

they act “to preserve the cosmic order and ensure the distribution of spiritual influence between the heavenly and physical worlds.”⁹ As we will see, the unitive powers with which humanity is endowed have important implications for the understanding and use of the letter-diagrams.

The first of the letter-diagrams belongs, unsurprisingly, to *alif*, a letter about which al-Būnī has a great deal to say throughout the text. As the first letter of the alphabet, he links it particularly to the world of the intellect, the first emanation from the godhead. The numerical value of *alif* is one, and much of al-Būnī’s thinking on it relates to the mystery of multiplicity contained within oneness. He thus states that all of the other letters, and indeed all of creation, exist *in potentia* within the *alif* qua intellect. This theme also prevails in his statement presenting the diagram for *alif* (Figure 2/Plate 1.2):

This is the figure of the *alif* and how God arranged in it the parts of the cosmos, natural and devotional, superior and inferior, of the *malakūt* and of the *mulk*. Whoever realizes what is in its hidden and apparent essence will ascend to the rank of the heirs [of the prophets, *al-wārithūn*; i.e. the saints]. And whoever realizes what is in its apparent and hidden worlds, God will make all beings to serve him and make him to serve His word. That is the relationship of the bliss of the garden which he bestows upon the saints, the ones near to God.¹⁰

9 Paul Fenton, “The Hierarchy of Saints in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 10 (1991): 12. Some of the major studies on Islamic sainthood are Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabi*, Golden Palm Series (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993); Bernd Radtke, John O’Kane, and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Mysticism: Two Works by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī* (London: Curzon, 1996); Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); Gerald Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Book of the Fabulous Gryphon* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Richard McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafā’ Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn ‘Arabi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Scott Kugle, *Sufis and Saints’ Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

10 *Fa-hādhā shakl al-alif wa-kayfa rattaba Allāh ta‘ālā fi-hi ajzā’ al-‘alam al-ṭabī‘ī wa-l-dīnī wa-l-‘ubwī wa-l-sufī wa-l-malakūtī wa-l-mulkī fa-man taḥaqqqaqā bi-mā fi dhāti-hi al-bāṭina wa-l-zāhira artaqā ilā darajat al-wārithīn wa-man taḥaqqqaqā bi-‘awālmi-hi al-zāhira wa-l-bāṭina akhdama Allāh ta‘ālā la-hū al-akwān wa-akhdama-hu kalāmi-hi wa-tilka al-nisba na‘im al-janna allātī ilay-hā nāl al-awliyā’ al-muqarrabīn.* al-Būnī, *Laṭā‘if*, Berlin Ms or. Fol. 80, fol. 30^a (the Alif diagram and this section of the text are missing from BnF Ms Arabe 2658).

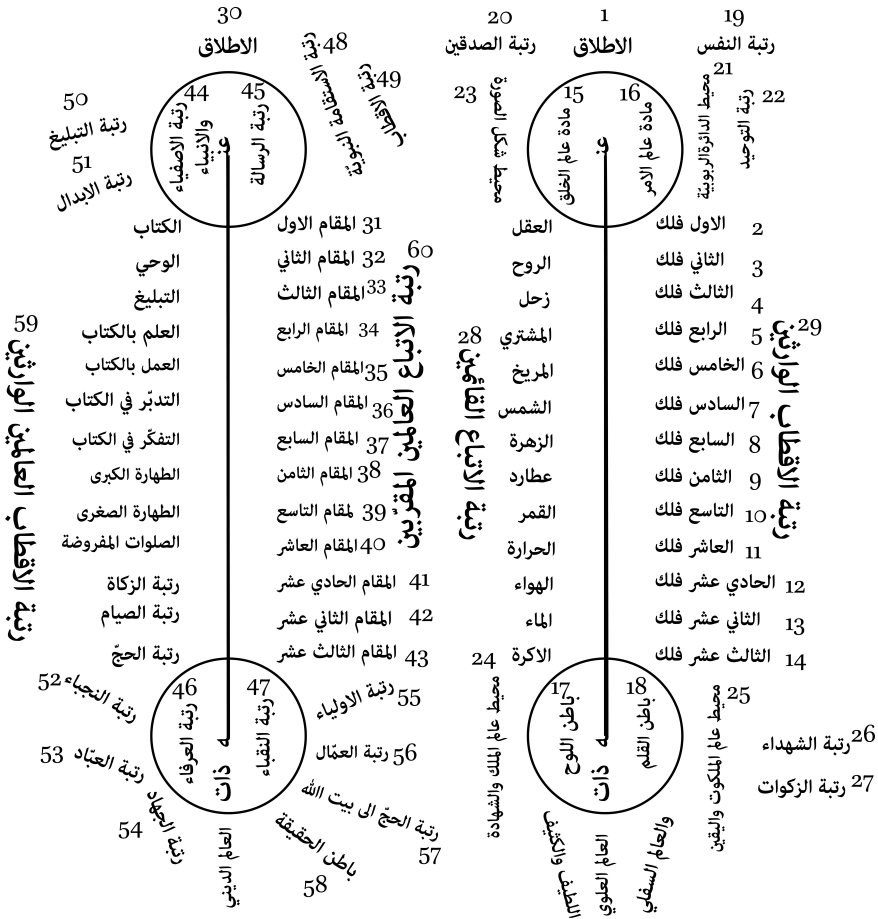


PLATE 1.2 *Alif*-diagram. Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* (Berlin Or. 8o, fol. 29b; BnF 2657, fol. 26b). The leaf of BnF 2658 on which this figure should be is missing)

Key to Plate 1.2

1. The [divine] utterance from which is the essence of the superior world and the inferior world, subtle and dense (*al-iṭlāq 'an-hū dhāt al-'ālam al-'urbwī wa-l-'ālam al-suṭī al-laṭīf wa-l-kathīf*).
2. The first is the sphere of the intellect (*al-awwal falak al-'aql*).
3. The second is the sphere of the spirit.
4. The third is the sphere of Saturn.
5. The fourth is the sphere of Jupiter.
6. The fifth is the sphere of Mars.
7. The sixth is the sphere of the sun.
8. The seventh is the sphere of Venus.
9. The eighth is the sphere of Mercury.

10. The ninth is the sphere of the moon.
11. The tenth is the sphere of heat.
12. The eleventh is the sphere of air.
13. The twelfth is the sphere of water.
14. The thirteenth is the sphere of the earth.
15. Material (*mādda*) of the world of the creation (*‘ālam al-khalq*).
16. Material of the world of the command (*‘ālam al-amr*).
17. Interior (*bāṭin*) of the tablet.
18. Interior of the pen.
19. Rank of the soul (*rutbat al-nafs*).
20. Rank of the upright ones (*al-ṣiddiqīn*).
21. Domain of the lordly circle (*muḥīṭ al-dā’ira al-rubūbiyya*).
22. Rank of unification (*al-tawḥīd*).
23. Domain of the form of the image (*shakl al-ṣūra*).
24. Domain of the world of dominion and witnessing (*al-mulk wa-l-shahāda*).
25. Domain of the world of the *malakūt* and certainty (*al-malakūt wa-l-yaqīn*).
26. Rank of the martyrs (*al-shuhadā’*).
27. Rank of the alms (*al-zakawāt*).
28. Rank of the established followers (*al-atbā’ al-qā’imīn*).
29. Rank of the inheriting poles (*al-aqṭāb al-wāriṭhīn*).
30. The utterance from which is the essence of the devotional world (*al-iṭlāq ‘an-hū dhāt al-‘ālam al-dīnī*).
31. The first station is the book (*al-maqām al-awwal al-kitāb*).
32. The second station is the revelation (*al-wahy*).
33. The third station is the conveyance (*al-tablīgh*).
34. The fourth station is knowledge of the book (*al-‘ilm bi-l-kitāb*).
35. The fifth station is action according to the book (*al-‘amal bi-l-kitāb*).
36. The sixth station is contemplation of the book (*al-tadabbur fī al-kitāb*).
37. The seventh station is reflection on the book (*al-tafakkur fī al-kitāb*).
38. The eighth station is the greater purity (*al-ṭahāra al-kubrā*).
39. The ninth station is the lesser purity (*al-ṭahāra al-ṣuḡhrā*).
40. The tenth station is the obligatory prayers (*al-ṣalawāt al-mafrūda*).
41. The tenth station is the rank of the tithing (*rutbat al-zakāh*).
42. The eleventh station is the rank of the fasting (*al-ṣiyām*).
43. The twelfth station is that of the pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*).
44. Rank of the purified ones and the prophets (*al-aṣfiyā’ wa-l-anbiyā’*).
45. Rank of messenger-prophecy (*al-risāla*).
46. Rank of the gnostics (*al-‘urafā’*).
47. Rank of the leaders (*al-nuqabā’*).
48. Rank of prophetic uprightness (*al-istiḳāma al-nabawīyya*).
49. Rank of the poles (*al-aqṭāb*).
50. Rank of the conveyance (*al-tablīgh*).
51. Rank of the substitutes (*al-abdāl*).
52. Rank of the nobles (*al-nujabā’*).
53. Rank of the worshippers (*al-‘ubbād*).
54. Rank of the struggle (*al-jihād*).
55. Rank of the saints [friends] (*al-awliyā’*).
56. Rank of the laborers (*al-‘ummāl*).

57. Rank of the pilgrimage to the house of God (*al-ḥajj ilā bayt Allāh*).
58. Interior of the reality (*bāṭin al-ḥaqīqa*).
59. Rank of the knowing inheriting poles (*al-aqṭāb al-‘ālimīn al-wārithīn*).
60. Rank of the intimate knowing followers (*al-atbā’ al-‘ālimīn al-muqarrabīn*).

Despite the intrinsic oneness of *alif*, the viewer will immediately notice that the figure consists of not one but two vertical columns (i.e. *alif* shapes), each formed of two circles joined by an axis. Each axis forms a sentence beginning with the horizontal word *al-iṭlāq* (“the [divine] utterance”) and then reading down the vertical text of the axis. The one on the right thus reads “The [divine] utterance from which is the essence of the superior world and the inferior world, subtle and dense”;¹¹ and the left “The [divine] utterance from which is the essence of the devotional world.”¹² The righthand column is segmented with thirteen labels, running from the “sphere of the intellect” (*falak al-‘aql*) at the top, to the “sphere of the spirit” (*falak al-rūḥ*) in the second position, and thence down through the seven planetary spheres and four elemental spheres. The left-hand column is segmented with an identical number of labels, described as “stations” (*maqāmāt*) rather than “spheres,” i.e. stages of spiritual attainment, according to well-known Sufi usage. The uppermost station is that of “the book” (*al-kitāb*, i.e. the Qur’an and/or its transcendent archetype); the second is prophetic revelation (*al-wahy*); the third is the conveyance of revelation (*al-tablīgh*); the fourth through seventh are various modes of engagement with the book; the sixth and seventh are the greater and lesser purification rites; and the final four are the fundamental Islamic rituals of prayer, tithing, fasting, and pilgrimage. The various other labels clustered at the base and head of each column mostly refer to various ranks of saints within the hidden hierarchy: “the gnostics” (*al-‘urafā’*), “the leaders” (*al-nuqabā’*), “the poles” (*al-aqṭāb*), etc. The vertical labels to the sides of the columns also refer to saints, e.g. the “rank of the inheriting poles” (*rutbat al-aqṭāb al-wārithīn*), the successive heads (“poles”) of the hierarchy of saints who are the inheritors of the spiritual authority of the prophets.¹³

The column on the right clearly represents the creation and structure of the cosmos as a series of emanations from the godhead. God’s “utterance” gener-

11 *al-iṭlāq ‘an-hū dhāt al-‘ālam al-‘uhwī wa-l-‘ālam al-sufī al-laṭīf wa-l-kathīf*. All texts from the diagrams are given in Arabic script in the renderings of them that accompany this study. References to the MSS are included therein.

12 *al-iṭlāq ‘an-hū dhāt al-‘ālam al-dīnī*.

13 These terms for various types of saints and their interrelations in the hierarchy are discussed at length in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s voluminous writings on sainthood and in many earlier sources. Discussions of them can be found in some of the works listed in footnote 9, *supra*.

ates the cosmos, as in the Qur'anic topos *kun fa-yakūn*, "God says Be! and it is."¹⁴ The column on the left, according to the sentence that is its axis, shows the creation of "the devotional world" (*al-ʿālam al-dīnī*), the sphere of religious contemplation and ritual. But because we know that *alif* is one, we are clearly intended to understand the two columns as in some sense representing the same thing. That is, it is incumbent upon the practitioner to meditate on ways that the hierarchical structure of the macrocosmic universe is identical or isomorphic to that of the world of human religious endeavor.

One solution emerges without much difficulty. The ranks of saints clustered mainly around the left-hand column make it clear that al-Būnī adheres to ideas of the hierarchy of living saints as the divinely sanctioned order of religious authority, and the inclusion of the vertical labels on both axes mentioning the "poles" (*aqṭāb*) of the hierarchy emphasizes that the saints play a cosmic role as well. Thus the cosmic and devotional hierarchies are fundamentally intertwined expressions of the divine command. This conclusion might have been intuitive to al-Būnī's early Sufi readers in Egypt, who were no doubt familiar with the notion that the saints safeguard the continued existence of the cosmos—as in, to take just one example from the classical Sufi literature, al-Hujwīrī's (d. ca. 465/1071–72) claim that the higher ranks of saints circumnavigate the universe each night to ensure no imperfections arise in it.¹⁵

What else might they have deduced in meditating on the diagram? Like much medieval Sufi literature, al-Būnī's writings are highly allusive and evocative, conveying ideas through densely packed references—often implicit rather than explicit—to other texts and discourses rather than through systematic argument or explication. This quality extends to the diagrams, and often to the relationship of the diagrams to the body of the text. For example, while the creation of the cosmos is apparently a downward process from the godhead, based on the direction of the sentences that form the axes, other elements of the diagram suggest ascent, such as some of the labels describing the "poles," the texts of which mostly flow upward.¹⁶ al-Būnī also mentions the ascent of the adept in his introduction to the diagram quoted above, just as he likens spiritual attainment to a process of ascent throughout the *Latāʾif* and his other works. This notion of ascending spiritual masters, combined with the heavenly spheres

14 Q 2:116–118, 3:46–48, 3:58–60, 6:72–74, 16:39–41, 19:34–36, 36:81–83, 40:67–69.

15 ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, trans. Reynold Nicholson, *An early Persian treatise on Sufism* (Havertown: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2014), 228.

16 As with all the diagrams, there are significant variations between manuscripts. Suffice to say that in most cases, most of the *aqṭāb* labels in a given rendition of the *alif*-diagram have the text moving upward.

of the righthand column, ineluctably evokes the Prophet's ascent to the heavens (*mi'rāj*), the classic prototype for Sufi visionary narratives, even though the *mi'rāj* is not mentioned.¹⁷ Things named in the diagrams often escape mention in the text too, such as the various ranks of saints that feature so prominently in the *alif*-diagram, most of which are nowhere discussed in his comments on *alif* or elsewhere in the work. Other evocative but unexplicated elements of the diagram are similarly left for readers to explore, such as the implied relationship between the element of fire and the obligatory prayers, which occupy the tenth sphere/station respectively, or that between the "station of contemplation of the book" on the left and the sphere of the sun on the right. al-Būnī's injunction to discern the *bāṭin* of the figure all but demands meditation on such correspondences, and the practitioner presumably would draw not only on the *Laṭā'if* in doing so, but on whatever share of the great intertext of the Sufi tradition that they could muster.

Would it have been obvious to al-Būnī's early readers in Egypt how they were to go about interpreting and otherwise interacting with this and the other letter-diagrams? A useful concept in thinking about the use of diagrams is that of "graphicacy." As historian Ildar Garipzanov has discussed, the term originates in modern education theory and cognitive psychology to denote "a specific intellectual skill" for "understanding and deciphering ... such graphic media as charts, graphs, and maps."¹⁸ Implicit in the term is the idea that graphic figures can convey information or concepts that other forms of communication cannot, or at least can do so more efficiently. Much like literacy and numeracy, graphicacy is culturally-specific, changes over time, and is not evenly socially distributed; that is, some groups within a given society are more "graphicate" than others.¹⁹ The history of graphicacy in Arabic-Islamic manuscript culture has not been much assayed (perhaps not at all under that heading), but suffice it to say that, in al-Būnī's period, the use of diagrammatic figures seems to have been rare outside of a few specialized discourses, e.g. medicine, geometry, and astronomy.²⁰ Certainly the literature of the medieval Sufi tradition

17 On Muḥammad's *mi'rāj* and its place in Sufism, see B. Schrieke et al., "Mirādīj," *EI2*, and the extensive list of primary and secondary sources given there; James Morris, "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn 'Arabī and the Mi'rāj, Part 1," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987): 629–652, and Part II of the article in the same journal, volume 108 (1988): 63–77; Bernd Radtke, "The Ascent to God and the Return from Him in Islamic Mysticism," *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 3 (2012): 98–107.

18 Ildar Garipzanov, "The Rise of Graphicacy in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *Viator* 46 (2015): 1–22.

19 *Ibid.*, 2–3.

20 A detailed exposition of this argument is beyond the scope of this brief paper. I would

is predominantly non-graphic, leaving aside such rarities as the crude figures in al-Ḥallāj's *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*. Indeed, the closest parallels to al-Būnī's figures—though still quite different—are found in some of the works of his fellow lettrist Ibn al-ʿArabī,²¹ with whom al-Būnī shared an important teacher.²² This suggests that they were both building on a graphic tradition specific to the western-Islamicate mystical circles whence they came, which regularly engaged with materials alien to the classical Sufi tradition.²³ Thus, they may have been inspired by diagrammatic representations of higher planes of existence in the Jabirian alchemical corpus, the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*, Ismaʿīli treatises, or perhaps even Jewish Kabbalistic tracts.²⁴ Egyptian Sufism under the Ayyubids,

suggest, however, that it is the Mamluk era, particularly in the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries, that was the watershed period in the development of Arabic-Islamic graphicacy among a wide audience, with various types of charts, tables, and diagrams (along with other innovations in *mise-en-page*) becoming used in a wide variety of works.

- 21 The most detailed study of some of Ibn al-ʿArabī's diagrams of which I am aware is Elmore, "Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time," 574–588. A number of his figures have also been gathered in Ali Hussain (ed. and trans.), *The Art of Ibn al-Arabi: A Collection of 19 Drawings from the Greatest Master of Sufism* (self-published by the editor, 2019, ISBN 978-1-79298-196-8). Dunja Rašić's *The Written World of God: The Cosmic Script and the Art of Ibn Arabī* (Oxford: Anqa, 2021) promises to be an excellent addition to this area of inquiry, though it unfortunately was not available prior to this article being finalized.
- 22 This was the shaykh of Tunis ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Mahdawī (d. 621/1224). On al-Būnī's relationship with him, see Noah Gardiner, "Esotericism in a Manuscript Culture: Aḥmad al-Būnī and His Readers through the Mamlūk Period" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014), 226–233. On Ibn al-ʿArabī's, see Gerald Elmore, "Shaykh ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz al-Mahdawī, Ibn al-ʿArabī's Mentor," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001): 593–613.
- 23 On the non-Sufi sources of western-Islamic mystical thought, see Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy* and Casewit, *Mystics of al-Andalus*. See especially pp. 57–90 of the latter for a detailed discussion of the distinction between western mystical thought and that of the classical Sufi tradition, and of their gradual merger beginning in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. al-Būnī is unfortunately missing from Casewit's discussion, as he must be considered to have been an important contributor to that merger.
- 24 For a number of examples of such diagrams in Jabirian and Ismaʿīli sources, see Ahmet Karamustafa, "Cosmographical Diagrams," in *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, ed. James B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11/71–89. Karamustafa's article is groundbreaking; however, insofar as he relies on late manuscripts or printed editions of such works, questions remain as to whether such diagrams were original to those texts or added as glosses by actors of later periods. On Kabbalistic diagrams, which seem to have become popular in roughly the same period and much the same environs as those in which Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Būnī came to maturity, see Marla Segol, *Word and Image in Medieval Kabbalah: The Texts, Com-*

however, was far more intellectually conservative,²⁵ such that it is unlikely that al-Būnī's early readers were highly graphicate, and even less so that they were familiar with diagrammatic figures that claimed to represent the metaphysical heights of the cosmic order. al-Būnī, I would argue, is aware of that fact, and takes steps within the *Laṭā'if* to cultivate graphicacy in his readers as a praxis for spiritual attainment, one that builds on notions of the human capacity to mirror and comprehend the whole of creation.

What did this special form of graphicacy entail? Throughout the *Laṭā'if* and his other works, al-Būnī amasses a dense web of associations among the letters, names of God, Qur'anic entities (God's throne, dais, pen, etc.), prophets, astrological entities (planets, zodiacal signs, lunar mansions), plants and animals, the parts of the human body, etc. This is in keeping with the analogism that underlies all of his thinking, whereby everything in the "great chain of being" that is the cosmos is interconnected through sympathetic "relations" (*nisab*, s. *nisba*), subtle connections that transcend the limits of physicality.²⁶ The letter-diagrams are a key site where al-Būnī primes these webs of associations to resonate and generate meanings, but the practitioner must actively participate in this process. In the case of the *alif*-diagram, the duality of the figure compels those contemplating it to infer connections between the macrocosm and microcosm, between the cosmic hierarchy and that of the saints, etc. The graphicacy al-Būnī seeks to instill entails the active discernment and forging of such connections. As we will see, for him this requires more than mere rumination on the figures, but rather their active visualization in the imagination, the faculty often conceived of in Sufi thought as the perceptive organ of the heart and a bridge to planes of existence beyond the manifest.

mentaries, and Diagrams of the Sefer Yetsirah (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). I should stress that the possibility of Kabbalistic influence is pure speculation at this stage.

25 On the largely conservative nature of Ayyubid-era Egyptian Sufism, see Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325* (Edinburgh [Scotland]: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

26 "Analogism" is intended here in Philippe Descola's sense: "a mode of identification that divides up the whole collection of existing beings into a multiplicity of essences, forms, and substances separated by small distinctions and sometimes arranged on a graduated scale so that it becomes possible to recompose the system of initial contrasts into a dense network of analogies that link together the intrinsic properties of the entities that are distinguished in it." Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, tr. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 201. For the classic treatment of such modes of thought in European intellectual history, see Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1964).



Following the discussion of *alif*, al-Būnī proceeds through the letters in an idiosyncratic order, producing diagrams for many but not all of them.²⁷ The sixth letter he addresses is *rāʾ*, and his discussion of the letter and its diagram offer further important clues to the intended use of these figures. The concept of *al-ʿālam al-insānī* again plays an important role, particularly in relation to the plane of the universal soul, which for al-Būnī is the world of images underlying and giving form to manifest reality, as in what Henry Corbin called the *mundus imaginalis* in his readings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and others.²⁸ al-Būnī also includes instructions for rendering the *rāʾ*-diagram as an amulet, and these too cast light on his conception of the nature and role of the letter-diagrams.

In the discussion of *rāʾ* that precedes the diagram, al-Būnī associates the letter alliteratively with the concepts of the *rūḥ* (“spirit”), *rahma* (“mercy”), *risāla* (“messenger-prophecy”), and God’s *ʿarsh* (“throne,” *rāʾ* being the middle letter of the word).²⁹ Making much of the well-attested *ḥadīth qudsī*, “When God had finished the Creation, He wrote over His throne, My mercy precedes My anger,”³⁰ al-Būnī asserts that the words of this inscription were the first to flow from God’s pen (*al-qalam*)—an entity linked elsewhere in the text to the world of the spirit (*ʿālam al-rūḥ*), the second of the four main planes of his emanative cosmos. The act of creation is an act of mercy, an efflux of the vivifying divine spirit that brings the cosmos into being, also bringing into being all the spir-

27 For the order of the letter-diagrams see footnote 3, *supra*.

28 This concept is developed throughout much of Corbin’s extensive corpus. The most concise formulation is perhaps Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis, or the Imaginary and the Imaginal* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1972). For more recent, less fiercely idiosyncratic approaches to these ideas in the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī and other thinkers, see Samer Akkash, “The World of Imagination in Ibn ʿArabī’s Ontology,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 1 (1997): 97–113; L.W.C. van Lit, *The World of Image in Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Sīna, Suhrawardi, Shahrāzūrī and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2018).

29 Interpreting the significance of the letters via alliteration, i.e. through words that begin with or include the letter, is quite common in the classical Sufi tradition. See, for example, the discussion in Gerhard Böwering, “Sulamī’s Treatise on the Science of Letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*),” in *In the Shadow of Arabic: The Centrality of Language to Arabic Culture, Studies Presented to Ramzi Baalbaki on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Bilal Orfali (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 339–397. In the *Laṭāʾif*, al-Būnī merges such alliterative readings with the distinctly cosmological letrist tradition of the Islamic west. On the distinction between these traditions, see Michael Ebstein and Sara Sviri, “The So-Called *Risālat al-Ḥurūf* (Epistle on Letters) Ascribed to Sahl al-Tustarī and Letter Mysticism in al-Andalus,” *Journal Asiatique* 299, no. 1 (2011): 213–270.

30 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, no. 9633.

its (*arwāḥ*) that animate the created things. This of course brings to mind the breathing of God's spirit into Adam, and, in turn, the role of the divine spirit in delivering God's word to the prophets.³¹ al-Būnī does not directly mention the first prophet here, but he does aver that *risāla*, too, is an act of mercy, implying that it brings order and sustenance to the creation. The attentive reader would note that in the *alif*-diagram, the sphere of the spirit on the righthand column correlates to the station of prophecy on the left, and there is no doubt that al-Būnī intends for the reader to actively seek out such connections across diagrams.

The *rā'*-diagram (Figure 3/Plate 1.3) amplifies these motifs of mercy, spirit, etc. while also introducing elements not addressed explicitly in al-Būnī's discussion of the letter. It consists of a double-ringed circle intersected by an axis with smaller circles at either end and various lobes to either side. According to the labels, the main circle represents both the movement of the spirit and the divine throne. It encompasses all parts of the cosmos, functioning as the limen between the uppermost metaphysical realms and the celestial spheres. The spirit traverses and conjoins these realms, and it similarly weds the human cosmos (*al-'ālam al-insānī*) to the sublunary world of elemental composition (*'ālam al-tarkīb*), thus establishing the existents (*al-akwān*), i.e. all the things that exist in the manifest world. As is often pointed out in discussions of God's mercy, *rahma* is from the same root as *rahim* ("womb"), and the womb-like nature of the life-giving throne-circle is obvious. As for the axis, it is structured much like one of the columns from the *alif* diagram and perhaps should be taken as the *alif* in "*rā'*" when the latter is spelled out. Its uppermost circle is labelled as containing "an image of a human (*ṣūrat ādamī*) upon a dais (*kursī*) of eight steps, and in his hand is a book in which ...";³² this is followed by a string of letters or numbers that varies between manuscripts but in all cases is undecipherable (at least to the present author), so that the contents of the book are a mystery. Earlier in the *Laṭā'if*, however, al-Būnī adduces an account of Adam receiving a Book of the Alphabet (*Kitāb al-Mu'jam*) from God, a proto-scripture with one letter of the alphabet per leaf, and other elements in the diagram suggest that this is the book in question, as discussed below. The axis, as it extends downward, is labelled "the connection of the spiritual light to the entirety of the inferior world."³³ The lower circles and the various lobes to each side of the axis refer to the realms of animal and vegetal life, as well as to the minerals (which were commonly thought to be quasi-living substances

31 Q 15:29.

32 *Hāhunā ṣūrat ādamī 'alā kursī thamāniya adrāj wa-bi-yadi-hi kitāb fi-hi ...*

33 *Ittiṣāl al-nūr al-rūḥī bi-l-'ālam al-suflī kullī-hi.*

growing inside the earth). The existence of these is regulated by the passage of the spiritual/celestial “hours” (*al-sa‘āt al-mulkiyya al-rūḥiyya* and *al-sa‘āt al-falakiyya*), i.e. the circulation of the celestial spheres that shapes the manifest world of generation and decay, a power that is implied to be imparted by the curvilinear—i.e. *rā*²-shaped—motion of the spirit. Finally, in the circle at the base of the axis is a label that reads: “In this circle is an image of an animal. I think it is a bull or a lion. Of the essences of the spirit[s], it is their wickedness.”³⁴

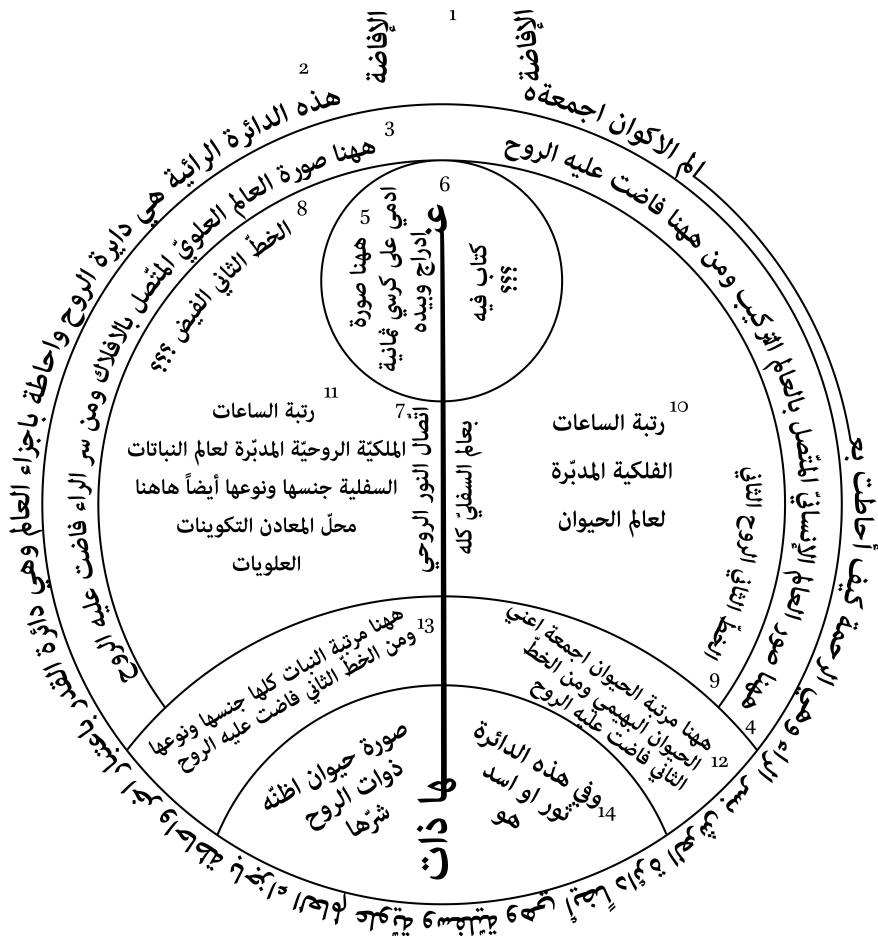


PLATE 1.3 *Rā*-diagram. Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* (Berlin Or. 80, fol. 43^b; BnF 2658, fol. 52^b; BnF 2657, fol. 39^b)

34 *Wa-fi hādhihi al-dāʾira šurat ḥayawān aẓunnu-hu thawr aw asad dhawāt al-rūh [al-arwāh] huwa sharru-hā.* Berlin MS or. Fol. 80 has *al-rūh*; BnF 2658 has *al-arwāh*.

Key to Plate 1.3

1. The outpouring (*al-ṭfāḍa*) ×2.
2. This *rā*-circle is the circle of the spirit, and it encompasses all parts of the world. By another interpretation it is the circle of predetermination, and it encompasses all parts of the world, superior and inferior. It is also the circle of the throne, in accordance with the secret of the *rā*, as it encompasses the world of all the existents (*hādhihi al-dā'ira al-rā'iyya hiya dā'irat al-rūḥ wa-aḥāṭat bi-ajzā' al-'ālam wa-hiya dā'irat al-qadar bi-ṭibār ākhar wa-aḥāṭat bi-ajzā' al-'ālam 'ubwiyya wa-suflīyya wa-hiya ayḍ^{am} dā'irat al-'arsh bi-sirr al-rā' wa-hiya al-rahma kayfa aḥāṭat bi-'ālam al-akwān ajma'at^{am}*).
3. Here is the image of the higher world connected to the celestial spheres, and the spirit inundates it by the secret of *rā'* (*hāhunā šūrat al-'ālam al-'ubwī al-muttaṣal bi-l-aflāk wa-min sirr al-rā' fāḍat 'alay-hi al-rūḥ*).
4. Here are the images [image?] of the human world connected to the world of composition, and from here the spirit inundates it (*hāhunā šurwar [šūrat?] al-'ālam al-insānī al-muttaṣal bi-'ālam al-tarkīb wa-min hāhunā fāḍat 'alay-hi al-rūḥ*).
5. Here is an image of a human upon a dais of eight steps, and in his hand is a book in which [undecipherable letter-number string] (*hāhunā šūrat ādamī 'alā kursī thamāniya adrāj wa-bi-yadi-hi kitāb fi-hi ...*).
6. From it [the human image on the dais] essence (*'an-hā dhāt*).
7. The connection of the spiritual light to the entirety of the inferior world (*ittiṣāl al-nūr al-rūḥī bi-l-'ālam al-sufī kulli-hi*).
8. The second line is the [??] emanation (*al-khaṭṭ al-thānī al-fayḍ ???*).
9. The second line is the second spirit (*al-khaṭṭ al-thānī al-rūḥ al-thānī*).
10. Rank of the celestial hours that organize the world of the animal (*rutbat al-sā'at al-falakiyya al-mudabbira li-'ālam al-ḥayawān*).
11. Rank of the angelical spiritual hours that organize the world of the vegetal, inferior are its species and types. Here too is the site of the superior generative metals (*rutbat al-sā'at al-malakiyya al-rūḥiyya al-mudabbira li-'ālam al-nabātāt al-sufliyya jinsi-hā wa-naw'i-hā ayḍ^{am} hāhunā maḥall al-ma'ādīn al-takwīnāt al-'ubwiyya*).
12. Here is the level of all the animals, meaning the bestial animals. From the second line is a connection to the spirit (*hāhunā martaba al-ḥayawān ajma'at^{am} a'nī al-ḥayawān al-bahīmī wa-min al-khaṭṭ al-thānī ittiṣāl bi-l-rūḥ*).
13. Here is the level of the plants in all their species and types. The spirit inundates it from the second line (*hāhunā martaba al-nabāt kulli-hā jinsi-hā wa-naw'i-hā wa-min al-khaṭṭ al-thānī fāḍat 'alay-hi al-rūḥ*).
14. In this circle is an image of an animal. I think it is a bull or a lion. Of the essences of the spirit[s], it is their wickedness (*Wa-fi hādhihi al-dā'ira šūrat ḥayawān azunnu-hu thawr aw asad dhawāt al-rūḥ [al-arwāḥ] huwa sharru-hā*).

The human figure in the circle atop the axis would seem to be the macrocosmic Adam/human cosmos whose creation is also the world's. The dais (*kursī*) of eight steps on which he stands presumably relates to the plane of the universal soul (*al-naḥs al-kullīyya*, *'ālam al-naḥs*), the third of the four main planes in al-Būnī's scheme, associated throughout the text with the divine *kursī*.³⁵ The

35 Q 2:256, 38:33; also Cl. Huart and J. Sadan, "Kursī," *EI2*.

eight steps likely relate to the eight angels who bear the throne,³⁶ whom al-Būnī associates with the letters of the alphabet as they function on that plane.³⁷ In al-Būnī's contribution to hylomorphism, these eight angels of the letters are said to shape the ethereal forms/images (*al-ṣuwar al-naḥsāniyyāt*) that give form to the created things, as he discusses earlier in the *Laṭā'if*.³⁸ The identification of this dais with the world of the soul is supported by the reference in the diagram to the juncture of *al-ʿālam al-insānī* and "the world of composition" (*ʿālam al-tarkīb*), i.e. the plane where the four elements are composed into existents in accordance with the forms/images. This is the genesis of the animal, vegetal, and mineral entities mentioned in the figure, a process over which the macrocosmic Adam with his book—presumably the Book of the Alphabet—presides. One way to understand the roles of the letters in al-Būnī's four-plane model of the cosmos is that they exist as the constituent parts of divine thought in the intellect, of divine speech/breath in the world of the spirit, of image/form in the universal soul, and of matter in the manifest world. I would suggest that, for al-Būnī, the imaginal world of the universal soul is the place where the letter-diagrams really exist to be seen and interacted with—they are the becomings-image of the letters of God's speech on their way to materialization, to use a Deleuzian turn of phrase. As such, they are to be understood as immensely powerful in shaping the manifest world, at least for those adepts who can reach back to the power of the macrocosmic Adam.

Following the diagram and just prior to the end of the section on *rāʿ*, al-Būnī includes comments on contemplative and amuletic uses of the diagram along with the promised results of those applications. His terse guidelines for contemplation are as follows:

He who meditates (*taʿammala*) upon the secret of *rāʿ* and how God ordered its inscription in the tablet-world (*al-ʿālam al-lawḥī*) will witness the wonders of the handiworks of God most high and discern (*ʿabara ʿalā*) the secret of the spirit: how it was established in accordance with

36 Q 69:17.

37 The letters are distributed among the angels in order of their numerical values according to the Western system of *abjad*, though unevenly: Alif comprises the entire name of the first angel and Bāʿ-jīm-dāl that of the second, with the remaining six names being four letters each, ordered according to their values in the western system of *abjad*, i.e. Hāʿ-wāw-zāʿ-ḥāʿ, Ṭāʿ-yāʿ-kāf-lām, Mīm-nūn-ṣād-ʿayn, Fāʿ-qād-qāf-rāʿ, Sīn-tāʿ-thāʿ-khāʿ, and Dhāl-zāʿ-ghayn-shīn. al-Būnī, *Laṭāʿif*, fol. 9^{a-b}. On the western and eastern *abjad* systems see note 43, *infra*. Ibn Barrajān held some similar views about the cosmogonic role of the throne-bearing angels, though without the letter associations; see Casewit, *Mystics of al-Andalus*, 282–283.

38 Al-Būnī, *Laṭāʿif*, fol. 9^a.

the divine command by the secret of issuing ordinances (*al-taḥkīm*) and took the form of a sphere encompassing all the superior and inferior parts of the cosmos.³⁹

This prescription for meditation indicates a contemplative-visionary practice. The verb *taʾammala* denotes both careful consideration and focused looking, and the verb *shāhada* (“to witness”) suggests an outcome of a visual/visionary nature. But what did this contemplative use of the diagrams look like in practice? Did the practitioner hold or prop the codex open to the appropriate leaf to stare at it? Was meditation on the images done in groups, as many Sufi spiritual practices—and medieval reading practices—were? Many early “readers” of al-Būnī’s work, some of them illiterate, would have encountered the work only in group settings, hearing rather than reading the text.⁴⁰ How did listeners access the diagrams?

As discussed by Eryn Kropf elsewhere in this volume, the Egyptian Sufi and scholar ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī’s (d. 973/1565) *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, itself a work replete with instructive diagrams, includes an account of his illiterate Sufi master drawing a diagram on a wall with a stick to illustrate his response to a query about the relationship between the schools of law.⁴¹ I would argue that a shaykh teaching the *Laṭāʾif* would have done something similar to al-Shaʿrānī’s, restricting his pictorial efforts to the basic geometrical shapes of the diagrams while reciting the textual components and probably adding his own exposition. Literacy is not a precondition for graphicacy in such a setting, as listeners could memorize the relatively simple shapes along with the texts of the labels and/or the images the labels describe. Indeed, the likely physical

39 BnF ms arabe 2658, fol. 52^b, immediately beneath the figure-fol. 53^a. *Man taʾammala sirr al-rāʾ wa-kayfa rattaba Allāh wadʿa-hā fī al-ʿālam al-lawḥī shāhada ʿajāʾib maṣnuʿāt Allāh taʿālā wa-ʿabara ʿalā sirr al-rūḥ wa-kayfa qāmat bi-l-amr li-sirr al-taḥkīm wa-stadārat falak^{an} muḥīṭ^{an} bi-ajzāʾ al-ʿālam ʿubwīyya wa-sufliyya*. al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif*, fol. 52^b. This concept of God’s command being expressed as ordinances (s. *ḥukm*) which manifest in circular/cyclical form is another element of Ibn Barrajān’s thought adapted by al-Būnī. See Casewit on Ibn Barrajān’s concept of “cycles of determination,” *Mystics of al-Andalus*, 283–288.

40 As I have discussed elsewhere, paratexts in some early copies of the *Laṭāʾif* indicate that al-Būnī himself employed the practice of “audition” (*samāʿ*)—reading a text aloud to a group of listeners—in promulgating this and other of his works to his followers, and later teachers of the work can be assumed to have sometimes done the same; Gardiner, “Eso-tericist Reading Communities,” 424–436.

41 See Eryn Kropf, chapter seven in this volume, entitled “Sensible Images’: Pictograms in the Manuscript Transmission of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī’s (d. 973/1565) *al-Mizān al-kubrā*,” 291.

constraints on reproducing the diagrams in group settings are one indication that, with regard to contemplation, the imagination of the practitioner was the main medium on which these figures were to be inscribed. This is suggested in a roundabout way by the tentative note regarding the denizen of the lowest sphere, “I think it is a bull or a lion,” hinting that al-Būnī himself received a vision of the diagram in the *‘ālam al-naḥs* which he then struggled to capture on the page. Certainly the description of the human figure on the dais evokes a picture in the mind’s eye—or the heart’s eye, as it would more likely be phrased in Sufi discourse.

Another diagram discussed later in the *Laṭā’if*, that of the letter *ṭā’* (Figure 4/Plate 1.4), further suggests that the diagrams were meant to be visualized, and is thus worthy of a brief digression. The figure is graphically simple: just a circle with text in the center and more text around its perimeter. The center text describes an image (*ṣūra*) of a peacock with four wings with nine *ṭā’*-s on each—an image said to resemble the angels. It goes on to emphasize that only the “people of the inner meaning” (*ahl al-bāṭin*) will understand its secret, *ṭā’* being one of the letters of God’s name *al-bāṭin* (“the hidden”). It concludes: “Upon each wing is that which arises from among the worlds, God willing.” This last sentence clearly relates to the secrets of the throne, pen, dais, and tablet mentioned in the perimeter text as being upon each wing, the four of which correspond to al-Būnī’s four main worlds. The perimeter text ends by mentioning: “Upon the breast is the secret of the celestial spheres, and the back is the divine command (*al-amr*).” The minimalist nature of the figure all but demands imaginative visualization, particularly as the mention of the peacock’s “back” endows it with three-dimensionality, while the “God willing” in the final sentence of the center text indicates that success in doing so is not guaranteed. A true member of the *ahl al-bāṭin* will presumably see the angelic peacock hovering before him, but this is a practice, a skill to be learned and developed. This ability to translate the diagram on the page into such a vision in the heart’s eye is, I would argue, the essence of the special variety of graphicacy al-Būnī seeks to instill.

Returning to the *rā’*-diagram, al-Būnī’s guidelines for inscribing it as an amulet also speak to the internalization of the figure:

He who writes it [*rā’*] on a parchment after eight days of fasting, [maintaining] cleanliness, *dhikr*, and [the state of] sincerity, and writing with it ‘Our Lord (*rabbu-nā*), give us good in this world and good in the hereafter’ and every [other] verse in the Qur’an with [the phrase] ‘Our Lord’, as well as this figure and image, with the verses above the image in a circle around it, and carries this inscription, God will not inflict the dread of poverty



PLATE 1.4 *Tā*-diagram. Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* (Berlin Or. 80, fol. 56^b; BnF 2658, fol. 75^a; BnF 2657, fol. 52^b)

Key to Plate 1.4

1. In its center is an image of a bird known as the peacock, except that it has four wings. This means that the peacock multiplies images of the angels, who resemble this image. Upon each wing are 9 *tā*'s. No-one will understand the secret of the *tā*' except for the people of the inner meaning by means of [spiritual] realization, because it does not appear except in His name *al-bāṭin* and His name *al-ṭāhir* and His name *al-ṭayyib*. Upon each wing is that which arises from among the worlds, God willing (*wa-fi wasaṭi-hi šurat ṭā'ir yu'raf bi-l-tāwūs illā anna la-hu aḥniḥa arba'a wa-huwa a'nī al-tāwūs akthara šurwar al-malā'ika shabiha bi-hādhihi al-šūra wa-'alā kull janāḥ 9 ṭā'āt wa-lā yaqfham sirr al-ṭā' illā ahl al-bāṭin bi-l-taḥqīq li-anna-hu lam yaẓhar illā fī ismi-hi al-bāṭin wa-ismi-hi al-ṭāhir wa-ismi-hi al-ṭayyib wa-'alā kull janāḥ mā qāma bi-hi min al-'awālim in shā'a Allāh*).
2. Upon the first wing is the secret of the throne (*fa-l-janāḥ al-awwal 'alay-hi sirr al-'arsh*).
3. Upon the second wing is the secret of the pen (*wa-l-janāḥ al-thānī 'alay-hi sirr al-qalam*).
4. Upon the third wing is the secret of the dais (*wa-l-janāḥ al-thālith 'alay-hi sirr al-kursī*).
5. Upon the fourth wing is the secret of the tablet (*wa-l-janāḥ al-rābi' 'alay-hi sirr al-lawḥ*).
6. Upon the breast is the secret of the celestial spheres (*wa-l-ṣadr 'alay-hi sirr al-aflāk*).
7. The back is the command (*wa-l-ẓahr al-amr*).

within him, and God will ease the sensory constraints for him and make clemency and mercy manifest in his interior.⁴²

In making the amulet, the practitioner bodily enacts the cosmogonic process the diagram describes. A reflection of the macrocosmic Adam, his vegetal reed pen (*al-qalam* being an avatar of the spirit, as noted above) inscribes God's mercy and lordship in mineral ink on animal-hide parchment. The instructions for the material fabrication of the amulet can also be taken as an analog for the work of imagination its contemplation requires, the care, labor, and time required to make the physical amulet paralleling the construction of the figure in the heart's eye. As for the "magical" action of the amulet, it is directed entirely at the practitioner: the removal of fear, an easing of the sensory constraints that prevent access to the imaginal world of the soul, and the filling of his interior (*bāṭin*) with divine mercy.

Of the other letter-diagrams that include instructions for rendering as amulets, some are more outward-directed in their effects. The amulet based on the diagram for the letter *hā'* (see Figure 5/Plate 1.5), for example, draws on the powers of the angels named in the figure to afford the practitioner who inscribes it on a silver signet ring "protection from the devil and the oppression of men."⁴³ Whatever the specifics, the function of the diagrams-made-amulets is always to ensure the practitioner's ability to pursue their path toward spiritual attainment, thereby making themselves more perfect conduits of the divine command. Ultimately, then, the amuletic and contemplative uses of the letter-diagrams are entirely aligned.

42 *Fa-man kataba-hā fi raqq ba'da ṣawm thamāniya ayyām wa-ṭahāra wa-dhikr wa-ikhlāṣ wa-yaktubu ma'a-hā {rabba-nā āti-nā fi al-dunyā ḥasanat^{an} wa-fi al-ākhirā ḥasanat^{an}} wa-kull aya fi al-Qur'ān fi-hā rabbu-nā wa-hādihā al-shakl wa-l-ṣūra wa-'alā al-ṣūra al-ayāt dā'irat^{an} bi-hā ḥāmil hādhihi al-maktūba lā yaḥdutha Allāh fi bāṭini-hi khawf al-faqr wa-yayasir Allāh 'alay-hi al-asbāb al-ḥissiyā wa-yaḥzur fi bāṭini-hi al-rāfa wa-l-raḥma. al-Būnī, *Laṭā'if*, fol. 53^a. The internal quote is from Q 2:201.*

43 *Isma min al-shayṭān wa-l-ḥulma min al-uns.*

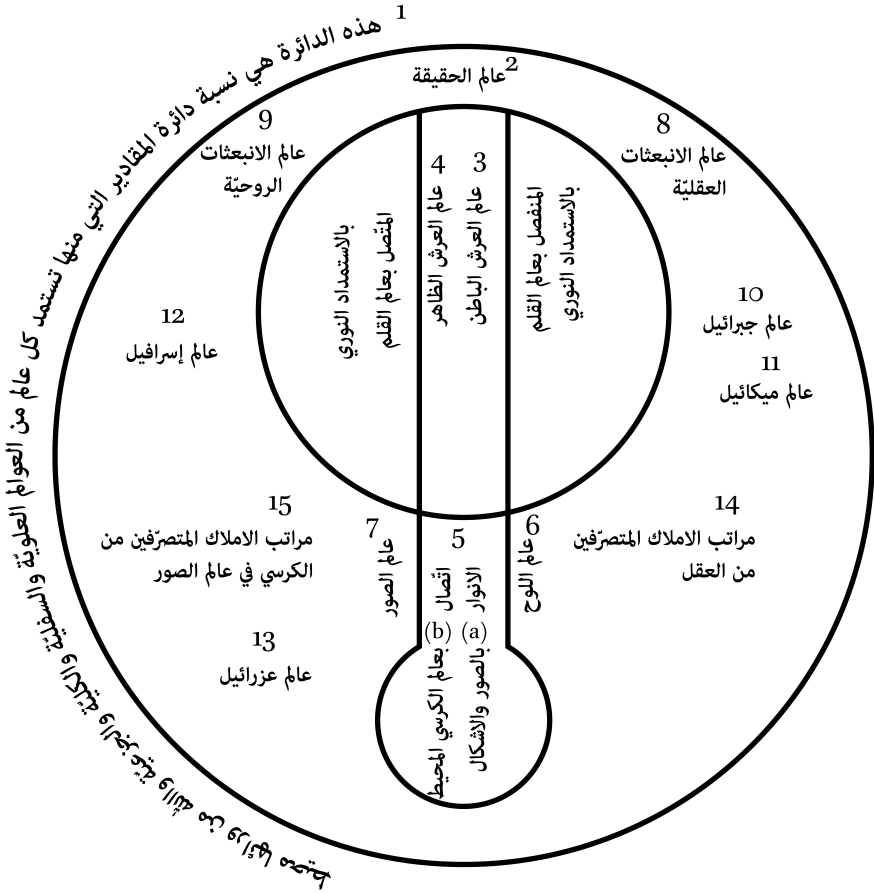


PLATE 1.5 *Hā'*-diagram. Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* (Berlin Or. 80, fol. 41^a; BnF 2658, fol. 48^b; BnF 2657, fol. 37^b)

Key to Plate 1.5

1. This circle is a link to the circle of the determining powers from which emanates every world from among the worlds, the superior and the inferior, the universal and the particular. By God, one who stands behind them [i.e. the angels named in the figure] is surrounded (*hādhihi al-dā'ira hiya nisbat dā'irat al-maqādīr allatī min-hā tastamidu kull 'ālam min al-'awālim al-'ulwiyya wa-l-sufliyya wa-l-kullīyya wa-l-juz'īyya wa-Allāh man warā'ihim muḥīt*).
2. World of the [divine] reality (*'ālam al-ḥaqīqa*).
3. [N.B. that nos. 3 and 4, which seemingly are meant to be read from the center outward, present numerous variations and other difficulties across manuscripts, such that what is represented here is effectively a collection of editorial guesses.] The hidden world of the throne separated in the world of the pen in the luminous extrusion (*'ālam al-'arsh al-bāṭin al-munfaṣil bi-'ālam al-qalam bi-l-istimdād al-nūrī*).
4. The manifest world of the throne connected to the world of the pen in the luminous extrusion (*'ālam al-arsh al-zāhir al-muttaṣil bi-'ālam al-qalam bi-l-istimdād al-nūrī*).

5. Connection of the lights (a) to the images and forms; (b) to the encompassing world of the dais (*ittiṣāl al-amwār a: bi-l-ṣuwar wa-l-ashkāl; b: bi-‘ālam al-kursī al-muḥīṭ*).
6. World of the tablet (*‘ālam al-lawḥ*).
7. World of the images (*‘ālam al-ṣuwar*).
8. World of the intellectual emissions (*‘ālam al-inbi‘āthāt al-‘aqliyya*).
9. World of the spiritual emissions (*‘ālam al-inbi‘āthāt al-ruḥiyya*).
10. World of Gabriel (*‘ālam Jibrā‘il*).
11. World of Michael (*‘ālam Mikā‘il*).
12. World of Israfil (*‘ālam Isrā‘il*).
13. World of Azrael (*‘ālam ‘Azrā‘il*).
14. Ranks of the dispositive angels from the intellect (*marātib al-amlāk al-mutaṣarrifīn min al-‘aql*).
15. Ranks of the dispositive angels from the dais in the world of the images (*marātib al-amlāk al-mutaṣarrifīn min al-kursī fī ‘ālam al-ṣuwar*).



We have already seen that the *rā*²-diagram is an image of the divine throne (*al-‘arsh*), portrayed as the all-encompassing outermost sphere of the cosmos from which God’s mercy flows inward. The final two figures addressed in this paper belong to the other two letters of the word *‘arsh*, *‘ayn* and *shīn*, and are also representations of the throne. Appearing one after the other in the text, these figures, along with al-Būnī’s commentary on them, speak further to the visionary nature of the diagrams while also enacting dizzying shifts of cosmological perspective. I argue in what follows that these shifts of perspective are intended to compel the practitioner to resolve the multiple cosmic visions of the diagrams into a whole, and to gain thereby an experiential understanding of al-Būnī’s conception of human participation in cosmogony.

Much of al-Būnī’s introductory commentary on *shīn* revolves around its numerical value of 1000—this in accordance with the western system of *abjad* values to which he adheres throughout his oeuvre.⁴⁴ This makes it the highest-value letter in the alphabet and, in that sense, the final letter. The numerical relationship of 1000 to one causes *shīn* to resonate with *alif*, which is associated with the intellect and the throne, such that *shīn* can be seen as the fullest, lowest extension of the *alif* as it unfolds into cosmos. This is one of many ideas

44 Indeed, one of the surest ways to identify pseudo-Bunian texts is their frequent reliance on eastern abjad values. The western values are as follows: *alif* = 1, *bā* = 2, *jīm* = 3, *dāl* = 4, *hā* = 5, *wāw* = 6, *zā* = 7, *ḥā* = 8, *ṭā* = 9, *yā* = 10, *kāf* = 20, *lām* = 30, *mīm* = 40, *nūn* = 50, *ṣād* = 60, *‘ayn* = 70, *fā* = 80, *qād* = 90, *qāf* = 100, *rā* = 200, *sīn* = 300, *tā* = 400, *thā* = 500, *khā* = 600, *dhāl* = 700, *zā* = 800, *ghayn* = 900, *shīn* = 1000. The eastern system differs in that *sīn* = 60, *shīn* = 300, *ṣād* = 90, *qād* = 800, *zā* = 900, and *ghayn* = 1000, with the other values remaining the same.

rendered visible in the *shūn*-diagram (Figure 6/Plate 1.6). The figure shows the throne as three circles (perhaps meant to recall the three curves in the letter) in an overlapping vertical stack. The overlaps define five regions, with only the third/middle region partaking of all three circles. The three circles are the worlds (*awālim*) of the three letters of the word *‘arsh*, the top circle that of *‘ayn*, the middle that of *rā’*, and the bottom that of *shūn*. Functioning as a sort of Venn diagram *trés avant la lettre*, the labels in the five regions defined by the overlapping circles describe the interactions of these letter-worlds.

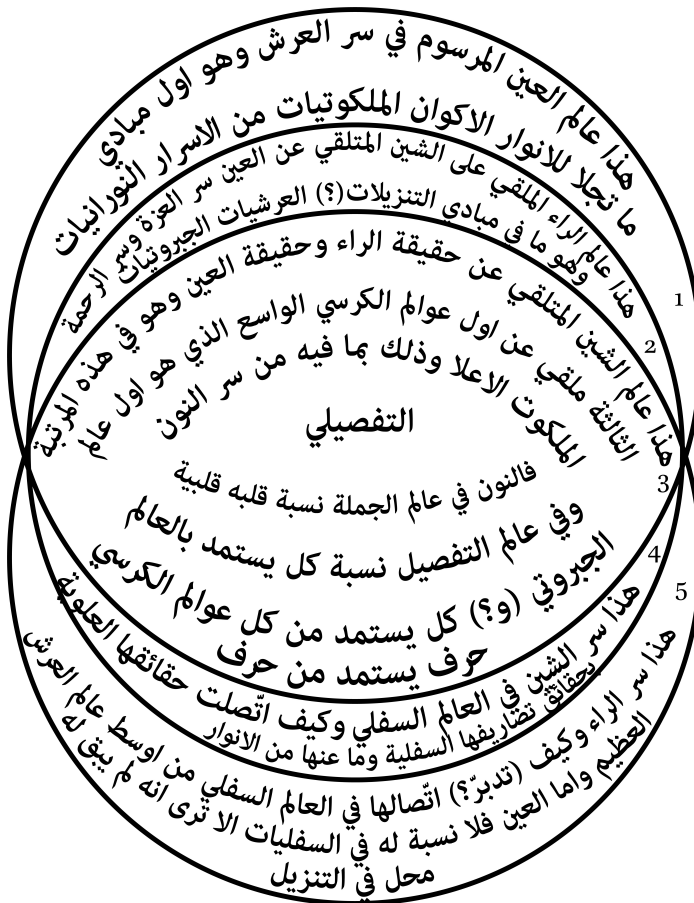


PLATE 1.6 *Shūn*-diagram. Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* (Berlin Or. 80, fol. 60^b; BnF 2658, fol. 82^a; BnF 2657, fol. 57^a)

Key to Plate 1.6

1. This is the world of the *‘ayn* written in the secret of the throne, and it is the first manifestation revealed by the lights of the existents of the *malakūt* from among the luciform

secrets (*hādha 'ālam al-'ayn al-marsūm fī sirr al-'arsh wa-huwa awwal mubādī mā tajallā li-l-anwār al-akwān al-malakūtiyyāt min al-asrār al-nūrāniyyāt*).

2. This is the world of the *rā'* casting down upon the *shīn* and receiving from the *'ayn* the secret of might and the secret of mercy, and it is that which is in the manifestation of the *jabarūt-al*, thronal descenders[?] (*hādha 'ālam al-rā' al-mulqī 'alā al-shīn al-mutalaqqī 'an al-'ayn sirr al-'izza wa-sirr al-raḥma wa-huwa mā fī mubādī al-tanzilāt[?] al-'arshīyyāt al-jabarūtiyyāt*).
3. This is world of the *shīn* receiving from the reality of the *rā'* and the reality of the *'ayn*, and it, in this third level, is cast from the first of the worlds of the expansive dais, that which is the first world of the highest *malakūt*. And that is in accordance with what is in it from the secret of the particularized *nūn*. The *nūn* in the world of gathering is linked to his/its heart, and in the world of extension is linked to everything emanating from the *jabarūt-al* world. Everything emanating from all the worlds of the dais is a letter emanating from a letter (*hādha 'ālam al-shīn al-mutalaqqī 'an ḥaqīqat al-rā' wa-ḥaqīqat al-'ayn wa-huwa fī hādhihi al-martaba al-thālitha mulqī 'an awwal 'awālim al-kursī al-wāsi' alladhī huwa awwal 'ālam al-malakūt al-a'lā wa-dhālika bi-mā fī-hi min sirr al-nūn al-tafṣīlī fa-l-nūn fī 'ālam al-jumla nisbat qalbi-hi wa-fī 'ālam al-tafṣīl nisbat kull yastamidu bi-l-'ālam al-jabarūti kull yastamidu min kull 'awālim al-kursi ḥarf yastamidu min ḥarf[?]*).
4. This is the secret of the *shīn* in the inferior world and how the superior realities are conjoined with the realities of the inferior dispositive forces, and what lights are from them (*hādha sirr al-shīn fī 'ālam al-sufli wa-kayfa ittaṣalat ḥaqā'iqū-hā al-'ubwiyya bi-ḥaqā'iq taṣārīfi-hā al-sufliyya wa-mā 'an-hā min al-anwār*).
5. This is the secret of *rā'* and how its connection in the inferior world is contemplated[?] from the center of the world of the great throne. As for the *'ayn*, it has no relation to the inferiors. Do you not see that there perduced in it no site for descent/revelation? (*Hādha sirr al-rā' wa-kayfa tadabbara[?] ittiṣāla-hā fī al-'ālam al-sufli min awṣaṭ 'ālam al-'arsh al-'aẓīm wa-ammā al-'ayn fa-lā nisba la-hu fī al-sufliyyāt a-lā tarā anna-hu lam yabuq la-hu maḥall fī al-tanzīl*).

The first and uppermost region, which is the part of the circle of *'ayn* that overlaps with neither of the others, is described as the world of the *'ayn* in which the first of the “luciform secrets” (*al-asrār al-nūrāniyyāt*) manifest (*tajallā*). The second region, created by the overlapping of the circles of *'ayn* and *rā'*, is the world of the *rā'* receiving the secrets of might (*al-'izza*) and mercy (*al-raḥma*) from the *'ayn* and transmitting them downward to the *shīn*. In doing so it is the vehicle of the forces descending from the *jabarūt*; this is the realm of divine lights metaphysically prior to the *malakūt*, and for al-Būnī it may be synonymous with the world of the spirit. The third region, a horizontal vesica piscis that participates in all three circles and is the visual focus of the diagram, is the world of the *shīn*. Gathering from the “realities” of the worlds above it (*ḥaqīqat al-rā' wa-ḥaqīqat al-'ayn*), it marks the highest levels of the *malakūt*, here identified with the world of the divine dais (*al-kursī*). In other words, this seems to be the imaginal *'ālam al-naḥs* discussed previously, where the light of divine speech/spirit manifests in the images/forms forged by the angels of the

letters.⁴⁵ Mention is made here of the “particularized *nūn*” (*al-nūn al-taḥṣīlī*), which here relates to the final *nūn* in *shīn*. For al-Būnī, particularization is part of the process of the descent of being from the godhead whereby God’s universal commands are made manifest as particularized entities, events, etc. *Nūn* is also the letter he associates most strongly with the divine pen,⁴⁶ and the idea here seems to relate to the pen transforming divine speech/light into the letter-based images of the world of the soul. The fourth region, which partakes of the circles of *rāʾ* and *shīn*, is described as “the secret of the *shīn* in the inferior worlds” (*sirr al-shīn fī al-ʿawālīm al-suflīyya*). It is promised that the adept will see here how the superior realities become dispositive powers (*taṣārīf*) in the inferior worlds, i.e. the morphological forces of manifest existence. The fifth region is located only in the circle of *shīn*, but it is described as the secret of *rāʾ* conveying the forces of the throne into the inferior worlds. It is also noted here that the world of the *ʿayn* has no corresponding relation to the inferior worlds: “Do you not see that there perdures no site of descent/revelation for it?”⁴⁷ In other words, the highest and lowest parts of the throne have no unmediated contact.

In the conclusion to the *shīn* section following the diagram, al-Būnī asserts that only “one who contemplates the meaning of this shape and understands its secrets will learn that which is revealed from among the lights of the throne and what among them connects to the inferior world.”⁴⁸ He then links the *shīn* and its diagram alliteratively to *shahāda* (“witnessing”), emphasizing the personal, visual/visionary experience that awaits the practitioner who contemplates the figure (*wajadta li-l-shahāda shuhūd^{an} wa-mushāhadat^{an}*). Finally, he returns to the point that the lights of the world of the *ʿayn* do not reach into the inferior realm at the base of the figure, i.e. the manifest world, noting that the exception to this is the revelations made to the prophets and the “élites among the believers” (*khawāṣṣ al-muʿminīn*) who are the “people of witnessing” (*ahl al-shuhūd*). The horizontal vesica piscis at the center of the figure is

45 The description ends with a cryptic statement made more difficult by variations across manuscripts: either “The world of the dais is a letter emanating from a letter” (*ʿālam al-kursī ḥarf yustamadd min ḥarf*) or “The world of the dais is a part emanated from a part” (*ʿālam al-kursī juzʾ mustamadd min juzʾ*). The meaning in either case, I think, is that the world of *shīn* is one of particularized entities rather than the lights of the higher worlds.

46 See Figure 1 (Plate 1.1), when *nūn* is assigned to the pen. This association is perhaps due to the disconnected *nūn* at the head of *Sūrat al-Qalam* (Q 68:1).

47 *A-lā tarā anna-hu lam yabīq la-hu maḥall fī al-tanzīl.*

48 *Wa-hādihā al-shakl man tadabbara maʿnā-hu wa-fahama asrāra-hu ʿalama mā tajallā min anwār al-ʿarsh wa-mā yattaṣil bi-l-ʿālam al-suflī min dhālika.* al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif*, fol. 82^a.

perhaps the image of the opened eye of the adept's soul, partaking of the lights of the thronal *ʿayn* ("eye") and thus becoming the conduit between the lights and the inferior world. In sum, after the prophets, it is only those spiritual elites capable of attaining to the world of *shīn* who can witness the higher realities. Contemplation of the figure is given as a means of achieving this ecstasy of witnessing, of being caught up into the higher reaches of the throne amidst the angels.

Immediately following the section on *shīn* is that on the letter *ʿayn* and its diagram. In the commentary, al-Būnī dwells largely on *ʿayn*'s numerical value of seventy. Because seventy is a multiple of seven, the letter is linked to the seven heavens and earths of Qurʾanic cosmography. The number also links the letter to the hadith that were it not for the "seventy veils of light and darkness" concealing God's face, the sight of it would destroy all who looked upon it.⁴⁹ Because *ʿayn* is the first letter of *ʿarsh*, the letter is also intimately associated with the throne. The diagram (Figure 7/Plate 1.7) portrays the throne and the cosmos it incubates as the multi-part instantiation of the divine command or decree (*amr*). The main structure is a circle in which is a series of six semi-ellipses that define seven regions within the circle. The whole is bisected vertically by an axis formed by the words "the world of the [divine] command" (*ʿālam al-amr*). The uppermost region is labeled: "This is the world of the *ʿayn* which encompasses the world of created things in all its particulars (*tafṣīl^{an}*), and it is the secret of the throne."⁵⁰ The labels in the lower six regions describe each as a world in some relation to the *ʿayn* of *al-ʿarsh*. The second through fourth regions are the worlds of the pen, footstool, and tablet respectively, each of which is "encompassed by the *ʿayn*" (*muḥīṭ bi-hi al-ʿayn*) by virtue of a "secret," e.g. the "secret of the *nūn*" (*sirr al-nūn*) which determines the world of the pen. The sixth region represents "the world of the seven celestial spheres, which are encompassed by the secret of the thronal *ʿayn* like the egg encompasses the yolk."⁵¹ As for the seventh region, it is "the dwelling place of the [divine] command" (*mustaqarr al-amr*), the manifest world as the culmination of the emanations of the elemental and celestial spheres, the angels, the imaginal forces of the dais, and various other powers of the higher planes of existence.

49 al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif*, fol. 83^a. A great number of variations of the hadith are extant. They generally begin: *Inna li-Llah sabʿīn ḥijāb^{an}* ... Many variants have the number of veils at 70,000 rather than 70.

50 *Hādhā ʿālam al-ʿayn al-muḥīṭ bi-ʿālam al-akwān tafṣīl^{an} wa-huwa sirr al-ʿarsh.*

51 *Hādhā ʿālam al-aflāk al-sabʿa al-muḥīṭ bi-hā sirr al-ʿayn al-ʿarshī ka-iḥātat al-bayḍ bi-l-ṣufra [or al-ṣafra, though one would expect ṣafār; the form is unusual, but the meaning is clear].*

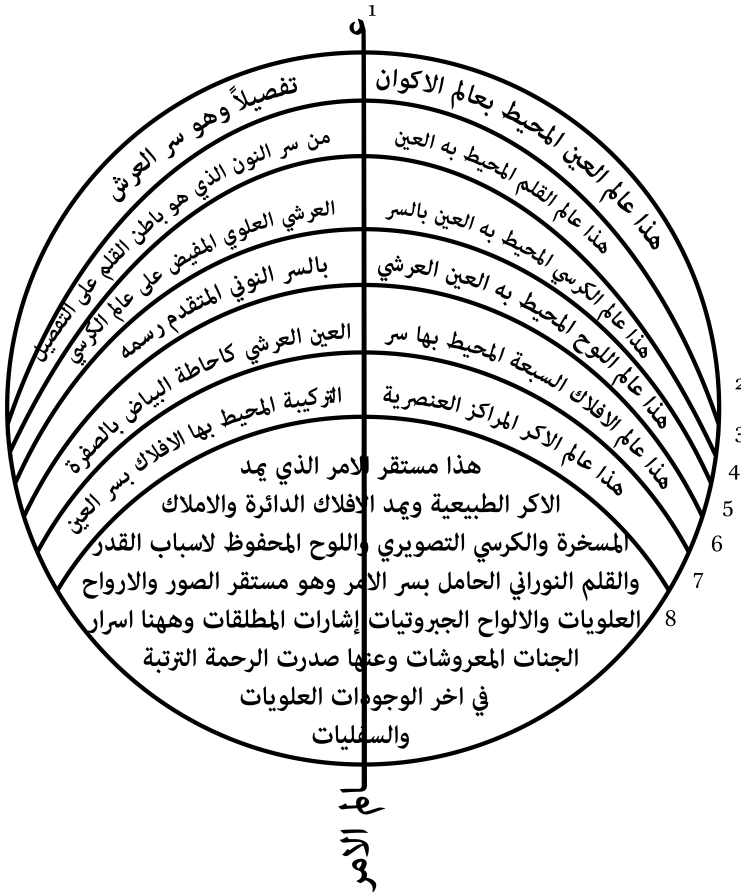


PLATE 1.7 'Āyn-diagram. Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* (Berlin Or. 80, fol. 61^b; BnF 2658, fol. 84^a; BnF 2657, fol. 58^b)

Key to Plate 1.7

1. The world of the command (*'ālam al-amr*).
2. This is the world of 'ayn encompassing the world of the existents particularizingly. It is the secret of the throne (*hādha 'ālam al-'ayn al-muḥiṭ bi-'ālam al-akwān tafṣīl^{an} wa-huwa sirr al-'arsh*).
3. This is the world of the pen encompassed by the 'ayn through the secret of the nūn that is the interior of the pen in extension (*hādha 'ālam al-qalam al-muḥiṭ bi-hi al-'ayn min sirr al-nūn alladhī huwa baṭīn al-qalam 'alā al-tafṣīl*).
4. This is the world of the dais encompassed by the 'ayn by means of the superior thronal secret emanated upon the world of the dais (*hādha 'ālam al-kursī al-muḥiṭ bi-hi al-'ayn bi-l-sirr al-'arshī al-'ūbī al-muḥiṭ 'alā 'ālam al-kursī*).
5. This is the world of the tablet encompassed by the thronal 'ayn by means of the previously inscribed nūn-al secret (*hādha 'ālam al-lawḥ al-muḥiṭ bi-hi al-'ayn al-'arshī bi-l-sirr al-nūnī al-mutaqaddim rasmi-hi*).

6. This is the world of the seven celestial spheres encompassed by the secret of the thronal *‘ayn* like the eggwhite surrounds the yolk (*hādha ‘ālam al-aflāk al-sab‘a al-muḥīṭ bi-hā sirr al-‘ayn al-‘arshī ka-iḥāṭa al-bayāḍ bi-l-ṣufra*).
7. This is the world of the globes that are the composed elemental centers, encompassed by the celestial spheres by means of the secret of the *‘ayn* (*hādha ‘ālam al-ukar al-marākiz al-‘unṣuriyya al-tarkība al-muḥīṭ bi-ha al-aflāk bi-sirr al-‘ayn*).
8. This is the dwelling place of the [divine] command that causes to dilate the elemental globes, the spheres of the circle and the subjected angels, the image-producing dais, and the preserved tablet in accordance with [divine] predetermination and the luciform pen that bears the secret of the command. It is the dwelling place of the images and the superior spirits and the *jabarūt*-al tablets that are the signs of the absolutes. Here are the secrets of the trellised gardens, and from them arises the [divine] mercy established at the bottommost ends of existence, superior and inferior (*hādha mustaqarr al-amr alladhī yamuddu al-ukar al-ṭabī‘iyya wa-yamuddu al-aflāk al-dā‘ira wa-l-amlāk al-musakhkhara wa-l-kursī al-taṣwīrī wa-l-lawḥ* al-maḥfūz li-asbāb al-qadar wa-l-qalam al-nūrānī al-ḥāmīl bi-sirr al-amr wa-huwa mustaqarr al-ṣuwwar wa-l-arwāḥ al-‘ubwīyyāt wa-l-alwāḥ al-jabarūtīyyāt ishārāt al-muṭlaqāt wa-hahunā asrār al-jannāt al-ma‘rūshāt wa-‘an-hā ṣadarat al-raḥma al-turṭaba fī ākhir al-wujūdāt al-‘ubwīyyāt wa-l-sufliyyāt*).

In the commentary that follows the figure, al-Būnī provides what amounts to a guided meditation on the figure, including instructions about which elements to focus on and the phenomena one will witness:

The relation (*nisba*) of what goes on in the circle is the relation of that which is between the throne and the soil (*al-tharā*), and thus that which is between every relation among the superior relations (*al-nisab al-‘ubwīyyāt*). It is made clear to you that the thronal *‘ayn* encompasses the essences of the created things. Pay close attention to the secret of the command: How it descends from the uppermost to the bottom and returns from the bottom to the uppermost to begin again. How it is one, and how the emanation of the entirety of all the cosmos is from it. How it is one in itself while the cosmos is multiple with regard to its planes and its types of compositions. How the people of the right take from it a command that conjoins them to God the highest, while the people of the left [take from it] a command that distances them from God the highest, while He is one in His essence. This is the secret of His saying: ‘It is Allāh who has created seven heavens, and of the earth the like thereof. The command comes down among them, that you may know that Allāh is powerful over all things’ (Q 65:12).⁵²

52 *Fa-qad tabayyana la-ka iḥāṭat al-‘ayn al-‘arshī bi-dhawāt al-akwān wa-anbah ilā sirr al-amr wa-kayfa nazala min ‘ulūw ilā sufl wa-raja‘a min sufl ilā ‘ulūw ‘awdan ‘alā bad’ wa-kayfa huwa wāḥid wa-kayfa istimādāt al-‘ālam kullī-hi ajma‘i-hi min-hu wa-huwa wāḥid fī nafsi-*

In visualizing the figure, then, it is as if one is standing on the soil and gazing at the seventh heaven, the six others partially visible beyond its horizon. Following al-Būnī's guidance, one is to see the continuous motion of efflux and return, of unity producing and encompassing multiplicity, of the obedient and disobedient portions of humanity being reabsorbed into the godhead or lost to the churn. If, as discussed earlier, we can imagine a teaching-shaykh tracing a diagram on the wall or in the dust on the floor while discussing its contents, al-Būnī's directives suggests that he might also verbally guide his disciples as they contemplate a figure in the heart's eye.

The diagrams of *'ayn*, *rā'*, and *shīn* offer radically different visions of the throne, different perspectives. How can they be resolved? Consider the *rā'* and *shīn* diagrams, for example. It may be the case that the upper circle of the *rā'*-diagram with the human figure on the dais is the same cosmic location as the eye-shaped vesica piscis of the *shīn* diagram; that is, the place whence the lights of the spirit and the superior worlds connect to the material below, in which case *insān* (human) takes its alternate meaning as "pupil" too. Has the macrocosmic Adam on the dais in the *rā'*-diagram disappeared from that of *shīn* because the practitioner, attaining to the position of witness to which al-Būnī promises access through the diagram, merges with Adam in the imaginal world of the soul? In contemplating the figure of *'ayn*, by contrast, the first and highest letter of the throne, we seem to stand outside and view it as a totality that is at once a unity and a multiplicity. But why do we view it from beneath? Is it the perspective of one who has returned from his own *mi'rāj*? I ask these questions not because they can be satisfactorily answered in an academic essay, but rather because al-Būnī implicitly lays the task of asking and answering such queries before the practitioner. The diagrams, the graphicacy required to internalize them, and al-Būnī's comments in the text are a scaffolding from which to begin the process of visionary ascent in search of answers beyond the surface of the page.

*hi wa-l-'ālām al-muta'addid min ḥaythu aṭwāri-hi wa-anwā' tarākibi-hi wa-kayfa akhadha min-hu ahl al-yamīn amr^{an} yuwaṣṣilu-humu ilā Allāh ta'ālā wa-kayfa ahl al-shamāl amr^{an} yuba'idu-humu 'an Allāh ta'ālā wa-huwa wāḥid fī dhāti-hi wa-dhālika sirr qawli-hi {Allāh allādhī khalaqa sab' samāwāt wa-min al-arḍ mithla-hunna yatanazzal al-amr baynahunna li-ta'lamū anna Allāh 'alā kull shay' qadīr} (Q 65:12). al-Būnī, *Latā'if*, fol. 84^b. al-Būnī here weaves together various Qur'anic statements on the divine throne. His use of *al-tharā* ("the soil") is a reference to Q 20:5–6, "The Merciful Who is established above the throne / To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth (*al-arḍ*) and what is beneath the soil (*al-tharā*)"; and the quote above ends with almost the entirety of Q 65:12 on the seven heavens, no doubt presuming that the reader would fill in the final part of the verse: "And God has encompassed all things in knowledge."*



In concluding, let us return for a moment to the celestial spheres diagram (Figure 1/Plate 1.1). Aside from the letters appended to it, it is, for the period, a common-sense picture of the cosmos, one that even non-graphic members of al-Būnī's audience were likely able to grasp with a minimum of exertion. One could even suppose that it activated their potential for graphicacy by straightforwardly representing familiar cosmological concepts in visual form. Beginning from the *alif*-diagram, however, the figures would have been sources of consternation and wonder, signposts of a *mysterium tremendums et fascinans*. al-Būnī, I would argue, is counting on a sense of wonder to spur practitioners to engage with the diagrams, to pursue the visionary praxis that doing so entails.

Over the course of the *Laṭā'if*, al-Būnī guides the audience through a series of visions keyed to the letters. The audience's part in this process is anything but passive. Rather, it is upon them to exercise the unifying capacity of their soul—the great inheritance from Adam—and its organ, the imagination, to resolve the multiplicity into a whole, a cosmos. Their participation in this process is vital to al-Būnī's message in that it mirrors, or even contributes to, the most vital function of the hierarchy of saints, making and remaking the cosmos so as to vouchsafe its continuing existence. In this, as with the esoteric astrological material, the *Laṭā'if* is at once a radical assertion of the awesome gnostic power of the saints and an invitation to taste of it.

Finally, although the diagrams are contained in a book, contemplating them was not intended as a bookish exercise, a puzzle for a lone scholar (the severe limitations of such an approach are obvious from this paper). Rather, like other Sufi spiritual exercises, work with the diagrams was meant to be done under the guidance of one's shaykh and in the company of fellow aspirants. *Dhikr*, supererogatory fasting, and other regimens are regularly called for in association with the diagrams, and their rendering as amulets can be understood as one of various embodied practices for forging connections between the invisible and visible worlds. Thus, even though much of the content of the *Laṭā'if* would have been alien to al-Būnī's early readers in Egypt, he intended for it to be taught, learned, and used in much the same ways that the Sufi tradition had long been transmitted and internalized. This is vital to consider not only with regard to understanding the conditions under which the *Laṭā'if* and its diagrams were encountered in their historical context, but also as pertains to whether or not the diagrams ever succeeded in engendering the sort of visionary experiences for which al-Būnī aimed. I would posit that the subjectivities produced within late-medieval Sufi collectives were likely to be quite susceptible to such experiences—certainly more so than is the case for those of us

laboring under the cognitive constraints of modern thought. In other words, did the diagrams actually work in permitting some Sufis of the period to witness the wonders of the *malakūt*? The answer is probably yes.

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Illustrating the Forms: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 638/1240) Images in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*

Ali Karjoo-Ravary

Introduction

On a winter night in 627/1231, the Andalusian Sufi Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) was finishing a chapter on one of the names of God, “the Clear” (*al-mubīn*). After explaining that the names of God correspond to forms, he wrote that he was overcome by a vision of spreading white light on a red backdrop in the night sky. This vision was so important to him that he, uncharacteristically, gave the date in both the Hijri and Julian calendars:

As I was writing this section on the fourth of Rabī‘ II in the year 627, concurrent with the eve of Wednesday, the twentieth of February (*ṣubāt*), I saw, in the actual world (*fī al-wāqī‘a*), the Outward of the Divine Hennes and its Inward reality in a verified witnessing the likes of which I had never seen before in any place ... and I illustrated (*ṣawwartu-hā*) its likeness/image (*mithāl^{an}*) in the margin just as it was, so whomever illustrates it should not change it.¹

Until 2010, all published editions of the text, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (“The Meccan Openings”), transmitted the image incorrectly (Plate 2.11), failing to capture the looped triangle and the stylized “*huwa*” (“He” in Arabic, referring to God’s Essence) within it.

While the role of images and the imaginal in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s metaphysics is well-studied, his theory of visual representation is obfuscated by a faulty publication history and lack of attention to his own recension of the *Futūḥāt*.²

1 The first edition to transmit it faithfully simply scanned the image. Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb (Cairo: al-Majlis al-‘Alā li-l-Thaqāfa, 2013), 6:309 and Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā‘iri et al. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubrā, 1329/1911), 2:449.

2 The most detailed academic analysis of these images is Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Archi-*

This is despite the fact that his use of visual representation was the beginning of a long-lasting tradition of Sufi visual representation, and the theories he articulated were of importance to multiple fields of intellectual and artistic production.³ For Ibn al-‘Arabī, visual representation is independent of but complementary to the prose of the *Futūḥāt*, and he identifies it with God’s teaching through “image/similitude” (*mathal*) in the Qur’an. These images are significant even in their rough details, and he writes that they carry an efficacy that changes from hand to hand and which is wholly reliant on their shape and look. Visual representation, he argues, is one “form” (*ṣūra*, a word that also means image) among many (include “textual” forms like prose, poetry, etc.), and each form contains an articulation of reality that is unique to it. In so doing, he plays with the ambiguity of the Arabic words for form, *ṣūra*, and likeness, *mithāl/mathal*, both of which also mean image, to tie visual representation into the Prophetic tradition (*sunna*) and establish it as a part of the Shari‘a, which in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s usage refers to the revealed sources of Islam, the Qur’an and Hadith. After detailing this theory, this article will consider the totality of the visual representation of the *Futūḥāt* in reference to both the narrational context of each image as well as the larger sequence of images throughout the text. Through this, it aims to show that Ibn al-‘Arabī uses geometric and formal continuity between these images to illustrate an unarticulated “three journeys,” each from origin to return.⁴ This is an interpretive choice that is not meant to be definitive. Rather, I hope to encourage creative engagement with this tradition of visual representation so as to fully consider the ramifications of the independence yet complementarity of image and text—instead of subjecting image to text, what does image say that remains unarticulated in text? That this approach is merited should be clear through the obvious cycling from one

ecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), though they occasionally appear in the secondary literature. While discussing some of the images, it uses different adaptations of these diagrams and maps as the basis to talk broadly about the cosmology of Islamic architecture. It does not consider the roles of these images in the *Futūḥāt* and does not mark departures from Ibn al-‘Arabī’s recension.

- 3 The notion of Ibn al-‘Arabī as the beginning of an entire school of visual representation is from Ahmet T. Karamustafa, “Cosmographical Diagrams,” in *The History of Cartography, Vol. 2: Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, eds. James B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 83.
- 4 The notion of three journeys is elaborated in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *al-Isfār ‘an natā’ij al-asfār*, a text that can shed more light on these images in a future analysis. On the three journeys in *al-Isfār* see William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 406n10, and Aboueleze Balkis, “Le voyage dans *Kitâb al-isfâr ‘an natâ’ij al-asfâr d’Ibn ‘Arabî: entre finitude et absolu*,” *Cahiers d’études hispaniques médiévales* 30 (2007): 185–195.

to many, from point to circle, and from high to low that runs throughout the sequence of the images. All of this, I argue, is used by Ibn al-‘Arabī to imprint the perspectival nature of reality unto the reader until they can “see with two eyes,” an eye that negates and an eye that affirms, the identity of the cosmos with the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) itself. His goal in turning to visual representation, like the rest of his work, is to transform and expand the reader’s imaginal capacity until they “see things as they are,” that is, see with the singular vision of the Real, who is “the Sight of the Cosmos” (*baṣar al-‘ālam*).

1 The Images of the *Futūḥāt* and Their Reception

Ibn al-‘Arabī wrote the *Futūḥāt* twice, a first draft that was completed in 629/1231 and a revision that was completed in 636/1238.⁵ While the first recension is no longer extant, the complete thirty-seven volumes of the second recension are held in Istanbul’s *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi*. Written in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own hand, the second recension provides the best vantage point for studying his approach to visual representation.⁶ This is particularly important as many of these images have been altered throughout their reception history.

There are twenty-eight images in the entirety of the manuscript’s thirty-seven volumes.⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabī uses verbs from the root *r-s-m*, meaning to etch, design, or draw, or *ṣ-w-r*, meaning to form, shape, or make, to describe the act of drawing these images. He describes the images with the words *ṣūra*, from the aforementioned root, meaning form or image, and *mithāl*, a word meaning image as well as likeness, semblance, and even simile.

Ibn al-‘Arabī uses the latter term to connect his use of visual representation to the Qur’an, where the root *m-th-l* is used frequently associated with

5 For a comprehensive account of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s autographs and holographs see Stephen Hirtenstein, “In the Master’s Hand: A Preliminary Study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Holographs and Autographs,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 60 (2016): 65–106; and Jane Clark and Stephen Hirtenstein, “Establishing Ibn ‘Arabī’s Heritage,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 52 (2012): 1–32.

6 The earlier edition exists in fragments and copies. The Konya manuscript can be found in Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1845+. The published editions are not reliable when it comes to these images. Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, MSS Istanbul, Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi, Evkaf Müzesi 1845+. One of the volumes (9) and the last or first pages of several other volumes are not in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s hand, but as there does not appear to be any visual representation associated with those sections, it does not bear significantly on the present study.

7 He does mention, though, that nine of these images are “faces” or “aspects” (*wujūh*) of a single image.

the process of God's teaching, for instance Q 29:43 "These are the images that God strikes for humanity; none grasps them save the knowers." This serves to entrench his use of visual representation in the sources of Islam, a strategy that he bolsters in image 5 (Plate 2.5) where he reproduces an act of visual representation that is found in Muḥammad's sunna. In the relevant hadith, Muḥammad traced a set of lines in the sand to represent "the straight path," the middlemost line flanked on each side by lines that angle away from the center. By transmitting the image, Ibn al-'Arabī situates his own use of visual representation as an imitation of the Prophet.

The first distinction among the images in the text is the hand in which they are written. Fifteen are clear and made using tools like a compass or straight edge while the rest are drawn without the aid of a tool. Fifteen also occupy a full page or occur within the main text of the narrative, while thirteen are marginal. Ibn al-'Arabī alerts the reader to all but one of the marginal images by specifying that he has drawn them "in the margin" (*fī al-hāmish*). The only marginal image that he does not reference is image 15, though the particular passage is itself a discussion of image and likeness. In the thirty-seven volumes of the *Futūḥāt*, each called *safar* in Arabic, the majority of the visual representation is found in the twenty-sixth volume where nine consecutive images are found in the middle of the chapter. The placement and order of these images is offered in Table 2.1.

While a full study of the reception of these images is beyond the scope of this paper, it must be noted that a preliminary exploration of some later copies of the *Futūḥāt* found no copy that transmits these images without changing them. There seem to be multiple traditions of transmission, for instance, Nuruosmaniye 2502 and Ayasofya 1974 (held at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul) and Arabe 1333–1335 (held at Bibliothèque nationale de France), are heavily adorned copies likely for royal or elite consumption whose adaptation and elaboration of some of the images are near identical to each other (but not the holograph).⁸ All editions that I have seen transmit the nine consecutive maps, with significant variations, but miss several of the smaller images. Even those written in a careful scholarly hand only occasionally extend that care

8 Muḥyi al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Nuruosmaniye 2502; MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 1974; MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 1333–1335. For a similarly adorned manuscript that was for royal consumption but whose images are part of a different reception history, see Muḥyi al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, MS Istanbul, Turhan Valide Sultan Kütüphanesi 187.

TABLE 2.1 Organization of images in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*

| | | | | |
|----------|----------|-------------|----------|------------------|
| Image 1 | Safar 2 | Chapter 8 | Marginal | Plate 2.1 |
| Image 2 | Safar 3 | Chapter 17 | Body | Plate 2.2 |
| Image 3 | Safar 4 | Chapter 47 | Body | Plate 2.3 |
| Image 4 | Safar 4 | Chapter 48 | Body | Plate 2.4 |
| Image 5 | Safar 4 | Chapter 64 | Body | Plate 2.5 |
| Image 6 | Safar 11 | Chapter 73 | Marginal | Plate 2.6 |
| Image 7 | Safar 15 | Chapter 177 | Body | Plates 2.7 & 2.8 |
| Image 8 | Safar 16 | Chapter 188 | Marginal | Plate 2.9 |
| Image 9 | Safar 16 | Chapter 198 | Marginal | Plate 2.10 |
| Image 10 | Safar 17 | Chapter 198 | Marginal | Plate 2.11 |
| Image 11 | Safar 17 | Chapter 198 | Marginal | Plate 2.12 |
| Image 12 | Safar 18 | Chapter 260 | Marginal | Plate 2.13 |
| Image 13 | Safar 20 | Chapter 297 | Body | Plate 2.14 |
| Image 14 | Safar 24 | Chapter 360 | Marginal | Plate 2.15 |
| Image 15 | Safar 24 | Chapter 360 | Marginal | Plate 2.16 |
| Image 16 | Safar 24 | Chapter 360 | Marginal | Plate 2.17 |
| Image 17 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Marginal | Plate 2.18 |
| Image 18 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.19 |
| Image 19 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.20 right |
| Image 20 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.20 left |
| Image 21 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.21 right |
| Image 22 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.21 left |
| Image 23 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.22 right |
| Image 24 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.22 left |
| Image 25 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.23 right |
| Image 26 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Body | Plate 2.23 left |
| Image 27 | Safar 26 | Chapter 371 | Marginal | Plate 2.24 |
| Image 28 | Safar 30 | Chapter 471 | Marginal | Plate 2.25 |

to the images.⁹ The copyist’s choice to be careful always conveyed their own understanding of how these images should be transmitted within the constraints of their medium and material situation. In other words, larger paper meant more images on the same page, or access to red and gold ink allowed

9 For unadorned editions that clearly transmit some images see Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, MS Istanbul, Milli Kütüphanesi Beyazid 3745 and MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby Or. 24–26.

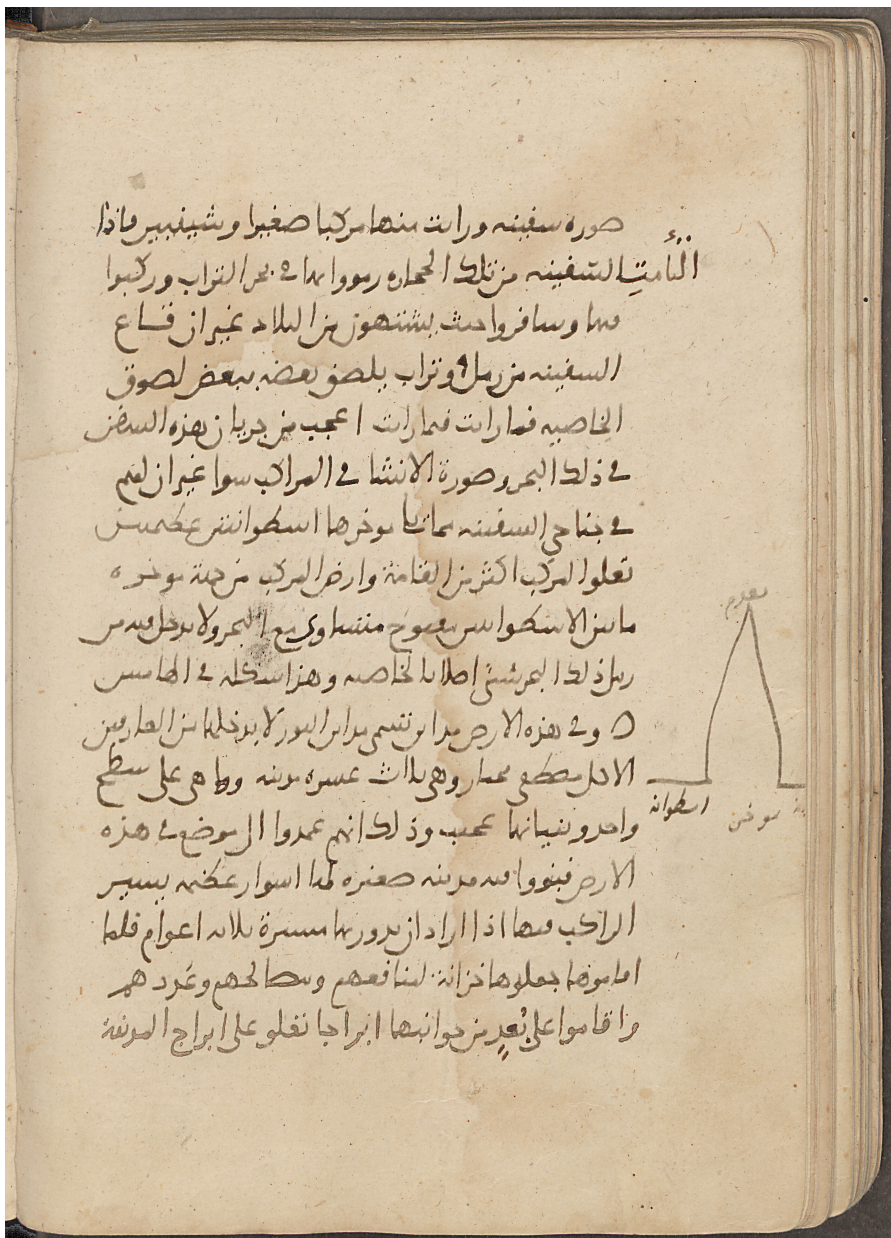


PLATE 2.1 [Ship]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1846, fol. 91^b)

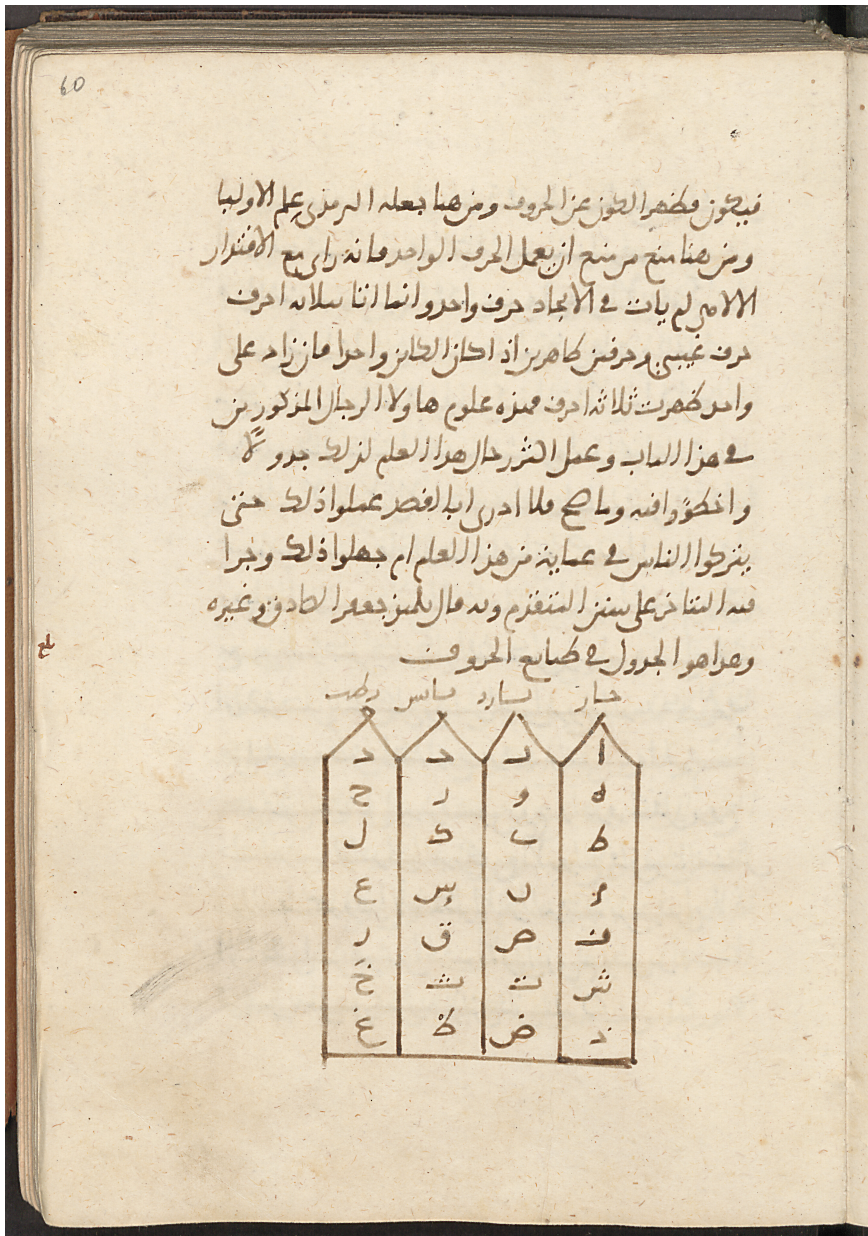


PLATE 2.2 Table (*jadwal*) of the Natural Properties of the Letters (*tabā'ir al-ḥurūf*) [of the Arabic Alphabet]. Ibn al-Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1847, fol. 60^a)

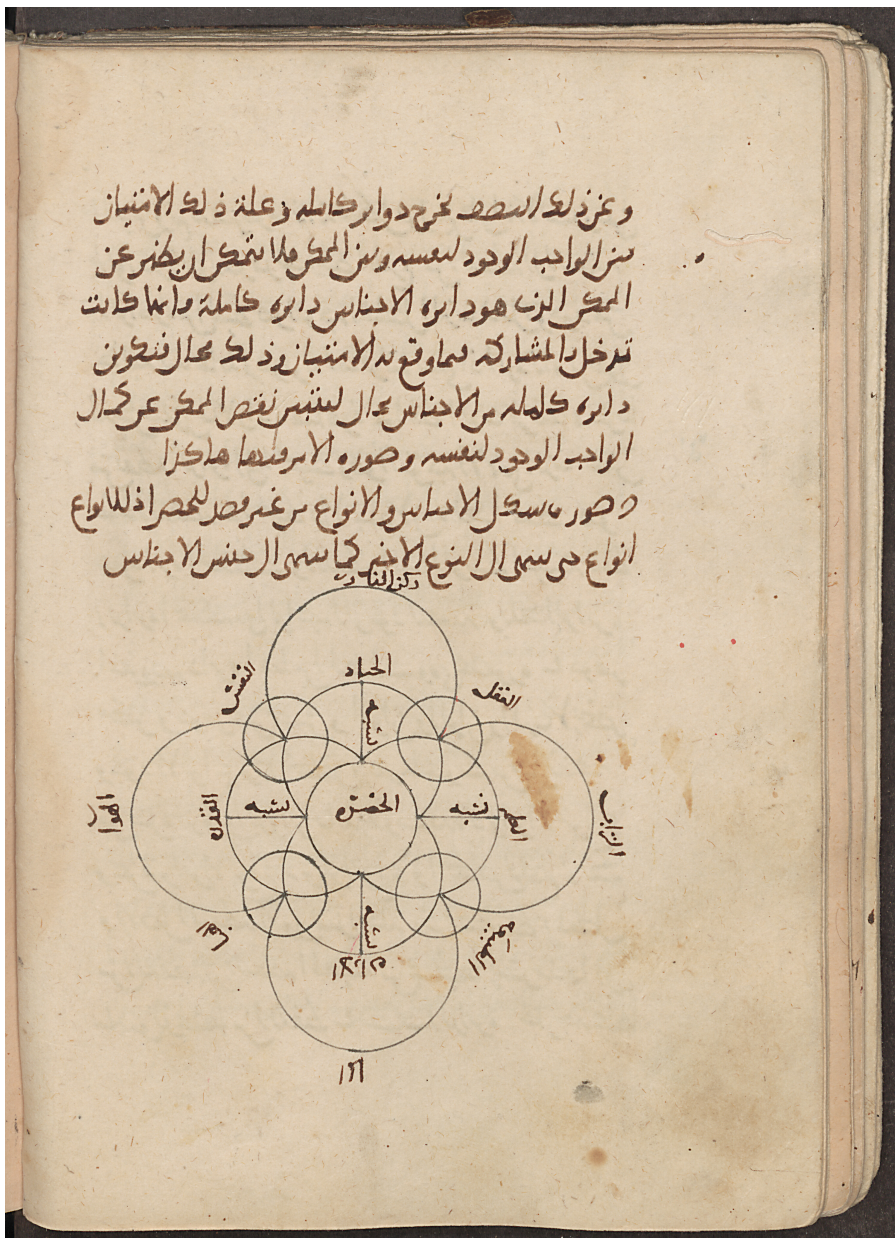


PLATE 2.3 The Form of the Shape of the Species (*al-ajnas*) and Types (*al-anwā'*) without Intending to Encompass them All, for Even the Types have their own Types until They Reach Another Type, just as They End in the Species of All Species. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1848, fol. 47^b)

ولا نفتح لهم نوع العطاء ورتنا واما صاحب السموات فانه يفتح
 لهم نوعا اخر اذ الله يلفظونوما سئلوا لا اله الا الله مخلصا
 فصوص له في معاقبه التسعة والستون سجلا من اعمال البشر
 كل عمل منها جازر المعزب والشرف واذ لا اله الا الله ما له عمل
 جزي غيرها فخرج كعبها بالجمع وتكثير السموات مستحب
 من ذلك ولا يدخل السوار الا اعمال الجوارح بشرها وخبرها
 السمع والبصر واللسان واليد والرجل والفرج والرجل
 واما الاعمال فلا يدخل الميزان المحسوس لا يكون عام بها العمل
 وهو العمل الحكيم المعنى محسوس لمحسوس ومعنى لمعنى
 يعامل كل شيء بمثله فلهذا اقرن الاعمال بربها ما هي مستوفيه
 الرابع الصراط وهو الصراط المستوي
 الذي كل من اعني ينصب هذا الصراط محسوسا فعول الله لنا
 وان هذا صراطا مستقيما فاتبعوه ولا تسعوا السبل يعرف
 بكره سبيله واما على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم هذه الاية
 خطا خطا وخط عن خطيته حكوا هذا
 وهذا هو صراط التوحيد ولو ازمه وحقوقه فالرسول الله
 صلى الله عليه وسلم امره ان يابل الناس حتى يقولوا لا اله الا الله

المسألة

PLATE 2.5 [The Path (*al-ṣirāt*)]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1848, fol. 155^b)

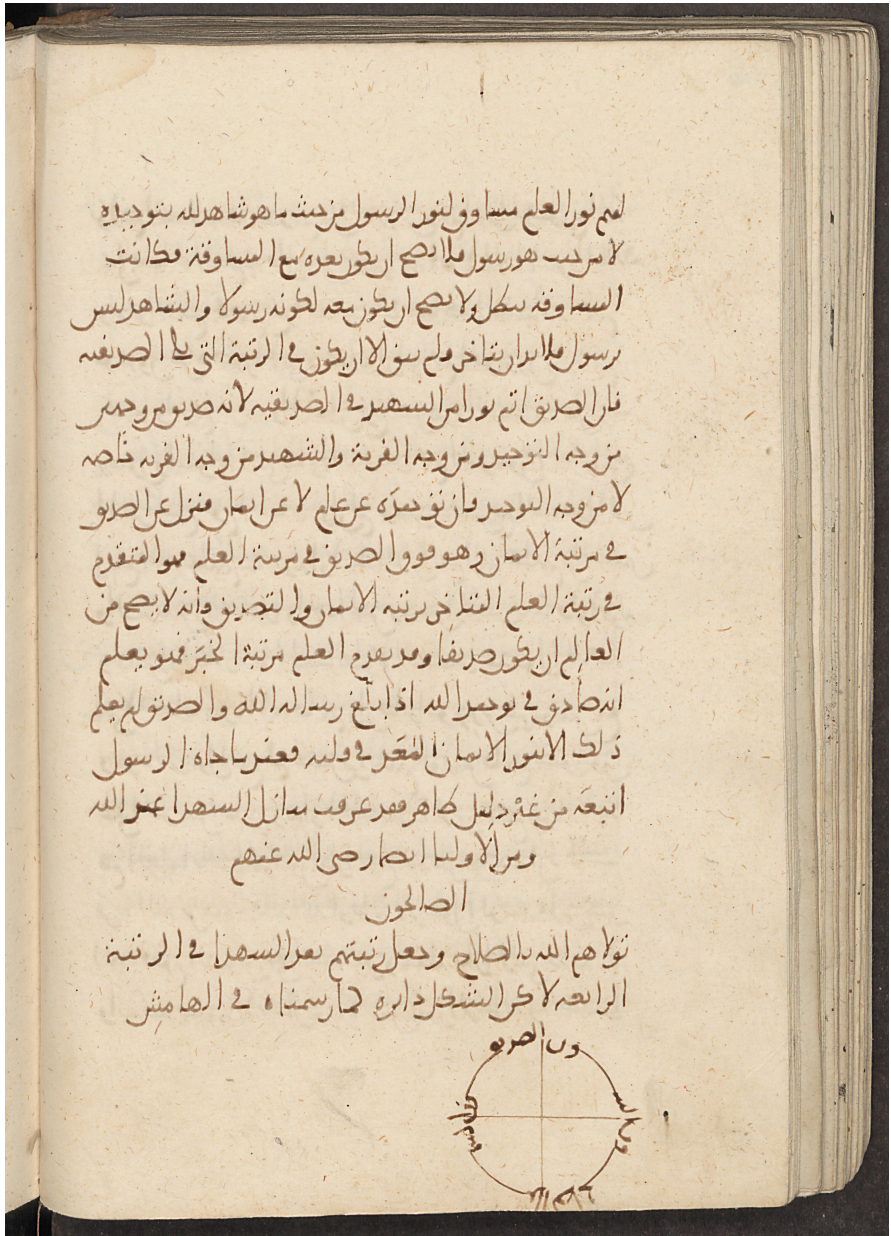


PLATE 2.6 [Circle of the Prophets (*al-nabiyyūn*), the Truthful (*al-ṣiddīqūn*), the Witnesses (*al-shuhadāʾ*), and the Righteous (*al-ṣāliḥūn*)]. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1855, fol. 110^b)

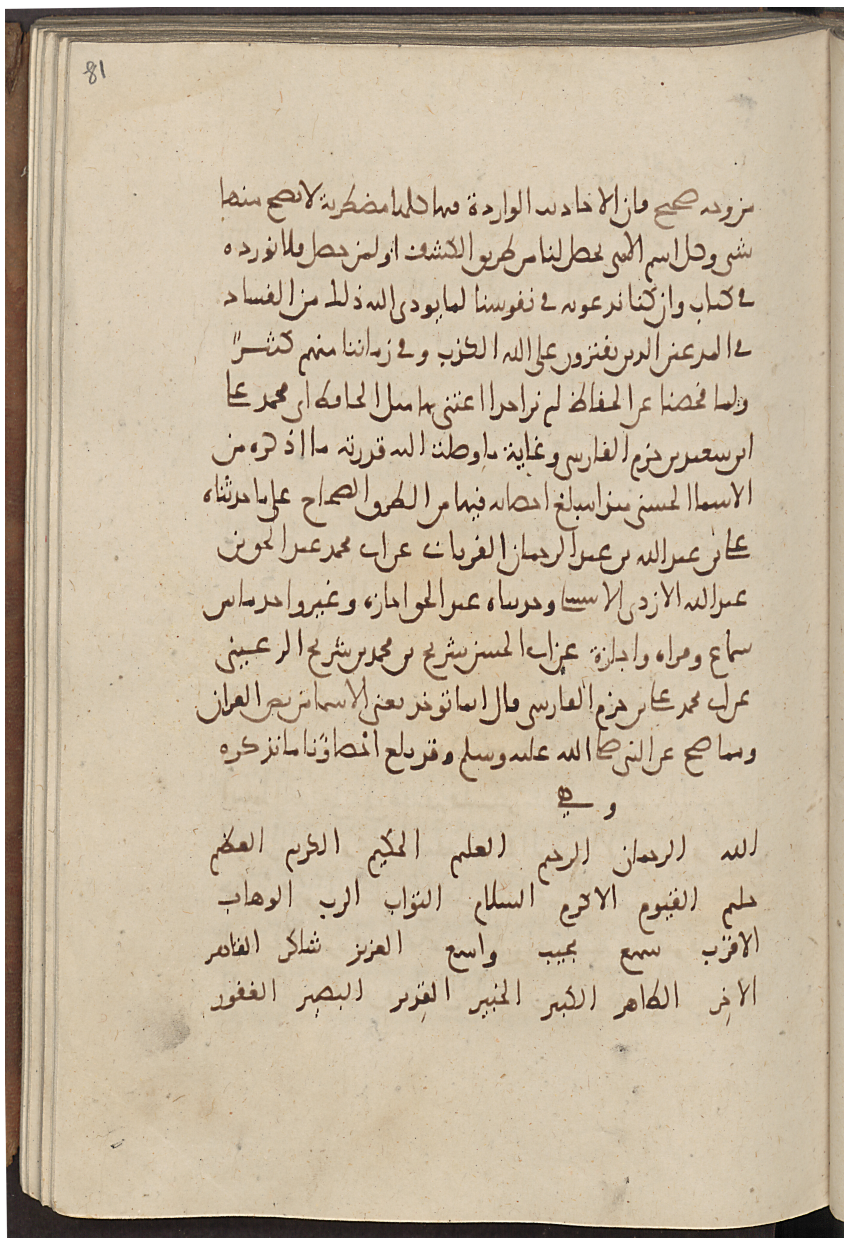


PLATE 2.7 [Grid Containing Eighty-Three of the Most Beautiful Names of God—First Part]. Ibn al-Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1859, fol. 81^a)

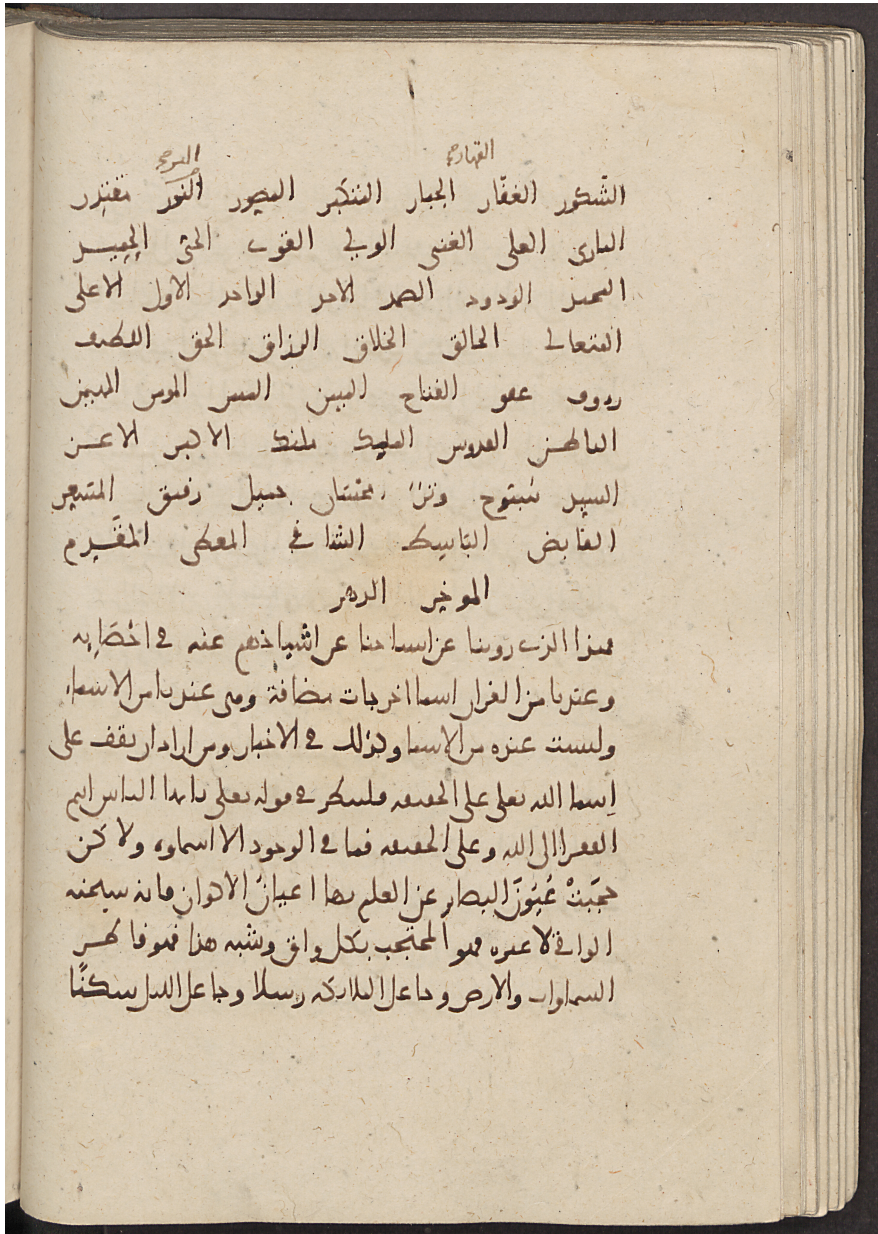


PLATE 2.8 [Grid Containing Eighty-Three of the Most Beautiful Names of God—Second Part]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1859, fol. 81^b)

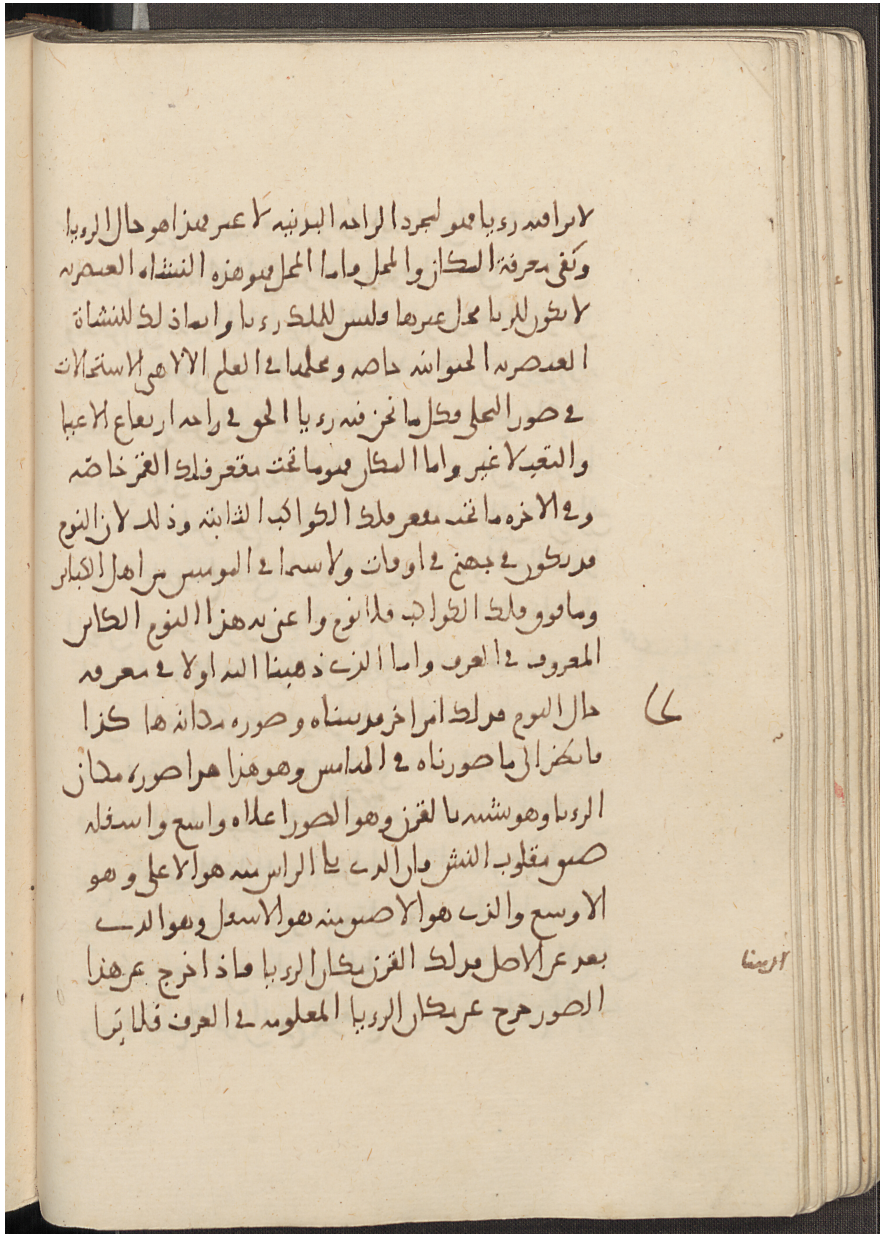


PLATE 2.9 The Horn. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1860, fol. 76^b)

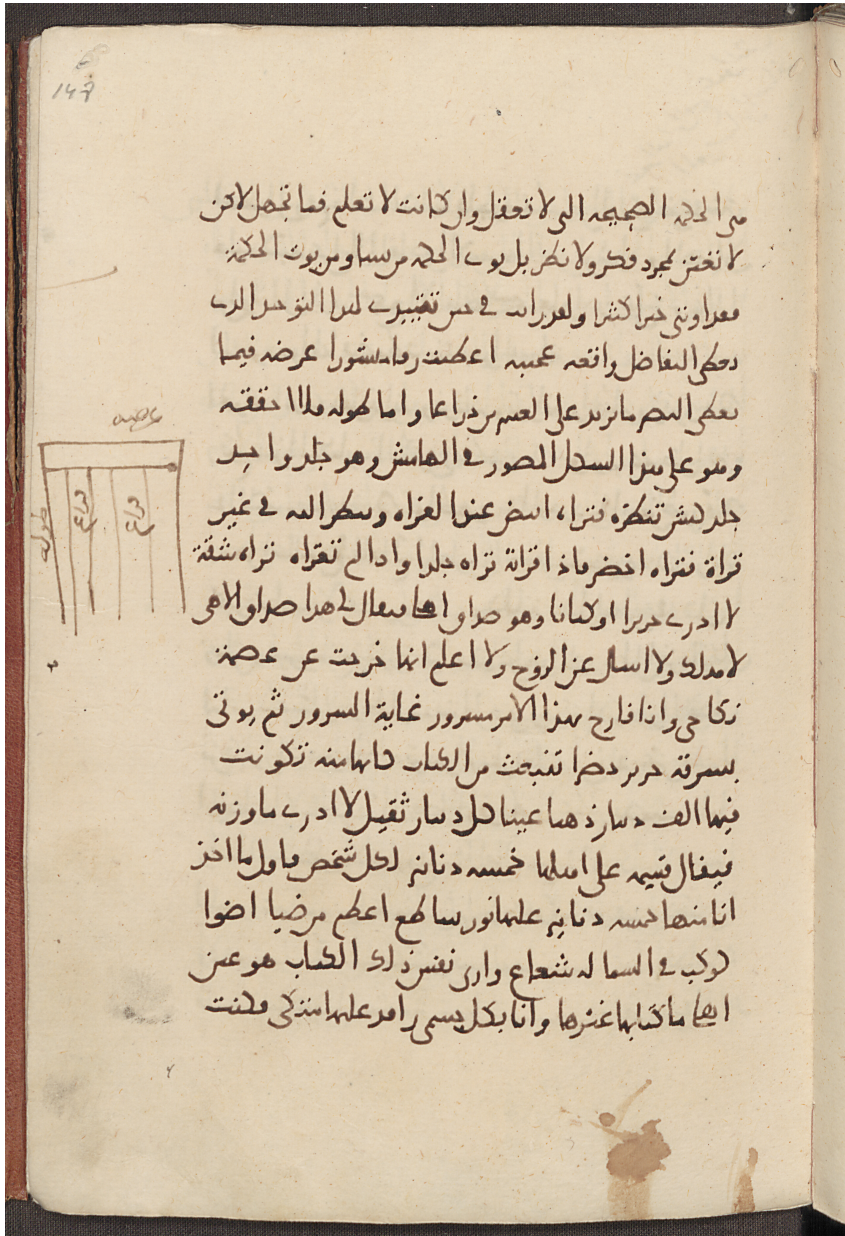


PLATE 2.10 [Unfurled Scroll]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1860, fol. 148^a)

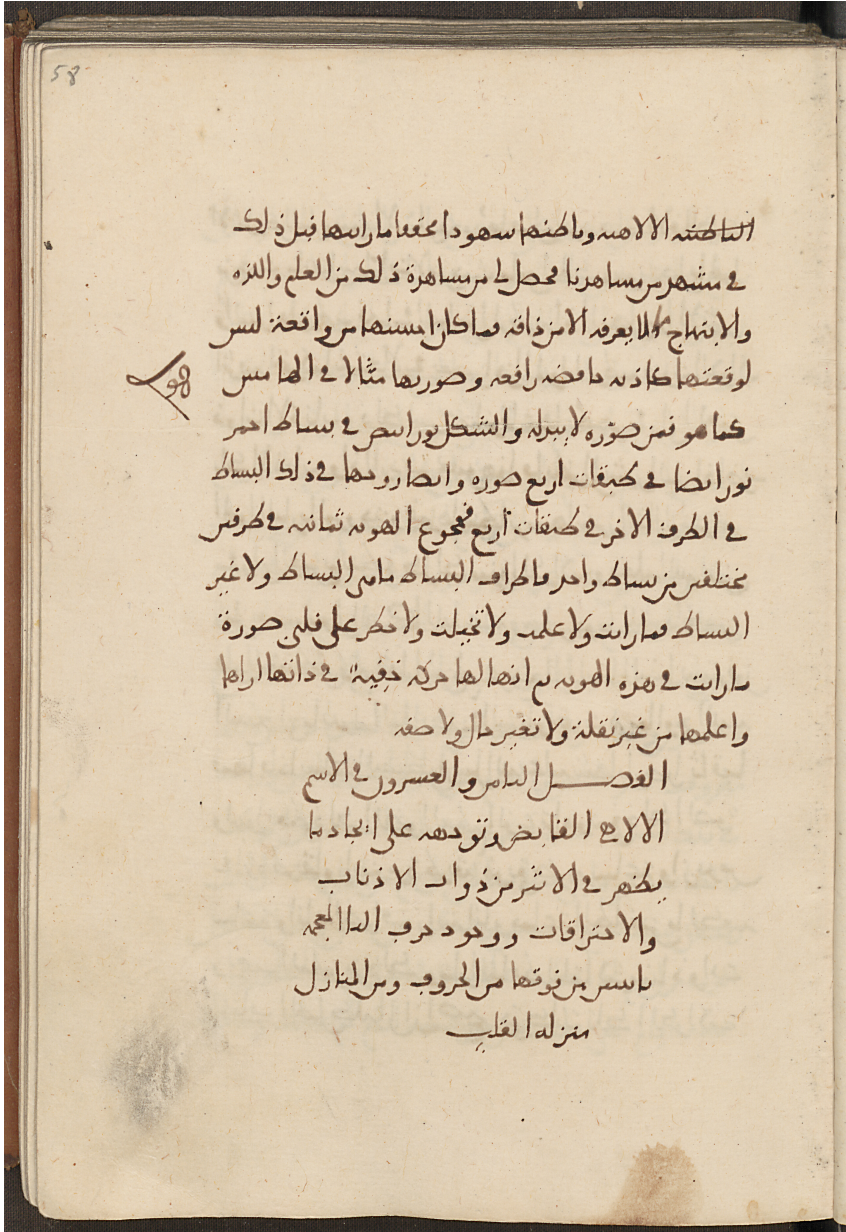


PLATE 2.11 Outward of the Divine He-ness and Its Inward (*zāhir al-huwiyya al-ilāhiyya wa-bāṭinu-hā*). Ibn al-Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1861, fol. 58^a)

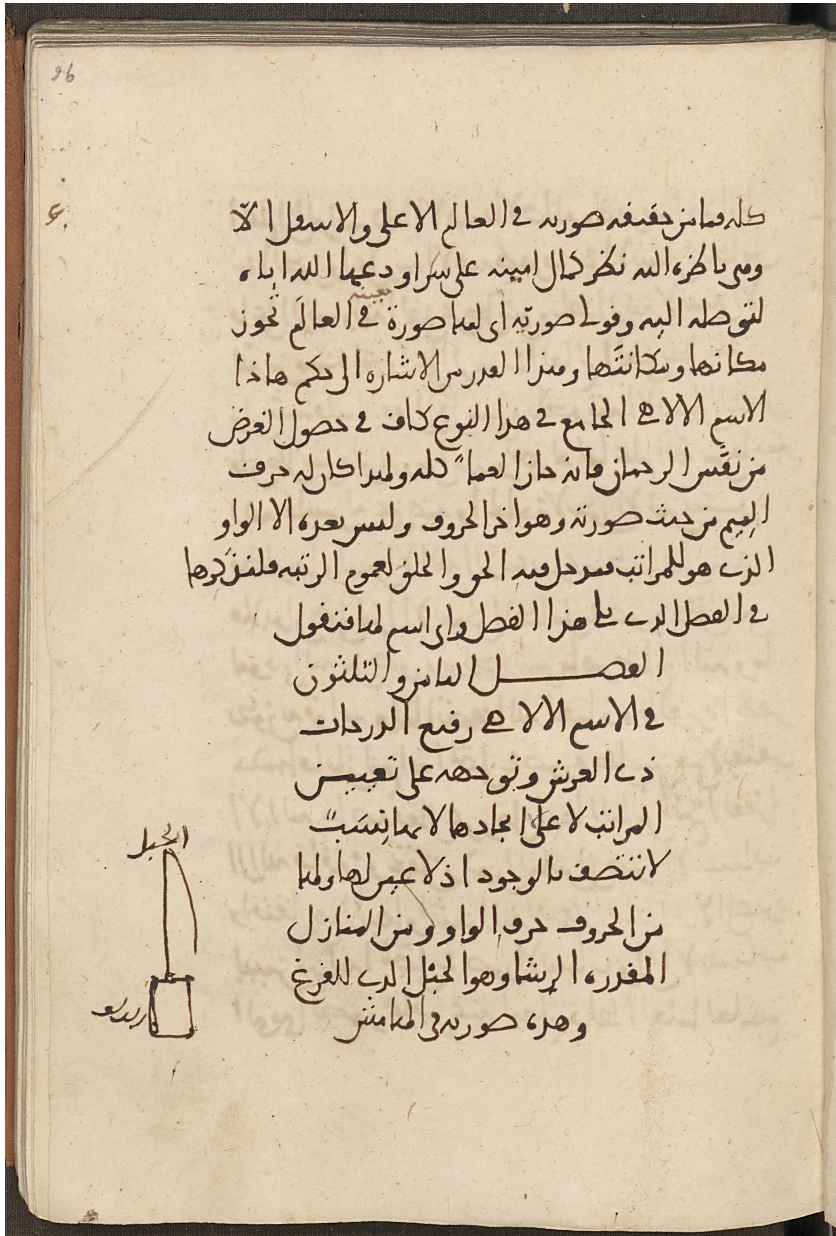


PLATE 2.12 The Rope and The Bucket. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1861, fol. 96^a)

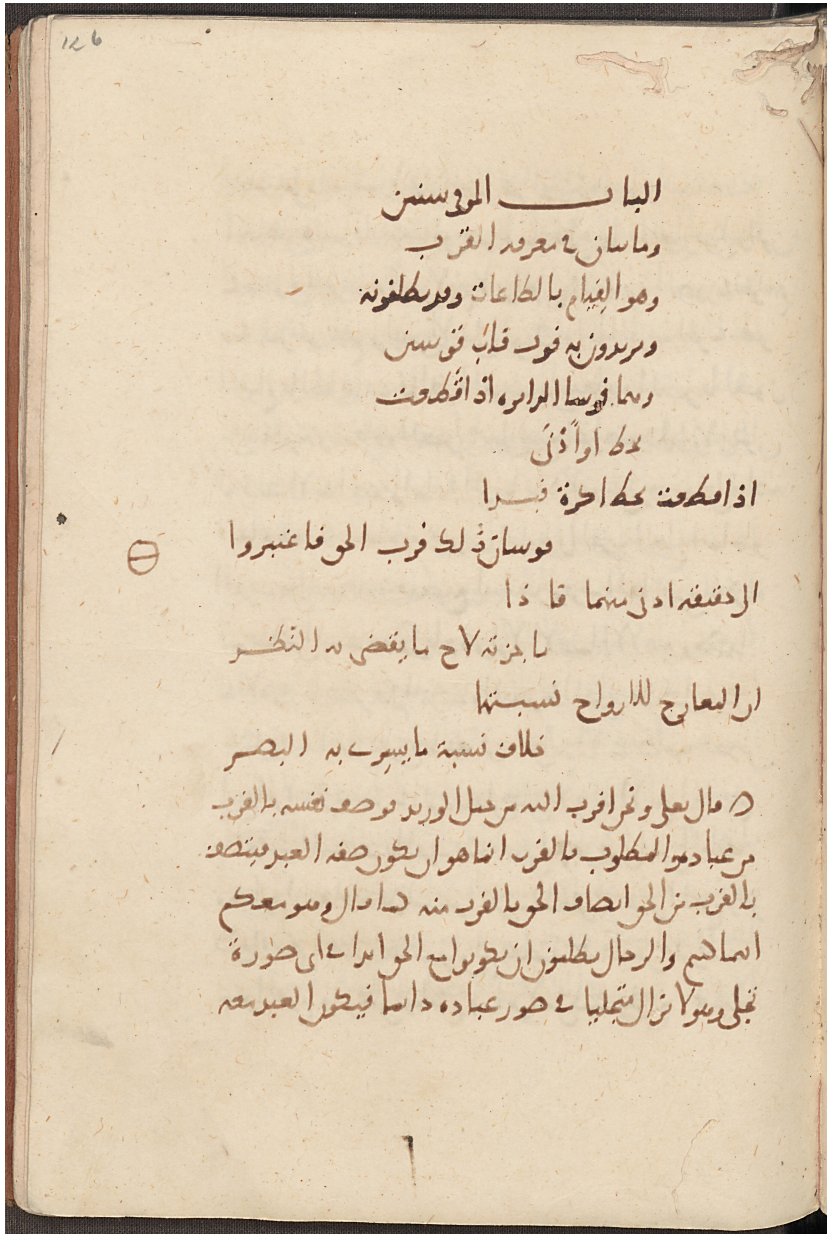


PLATE 2.13 ["Two bows or closer" (Q. 53:9)]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1862, fol. 126^a)

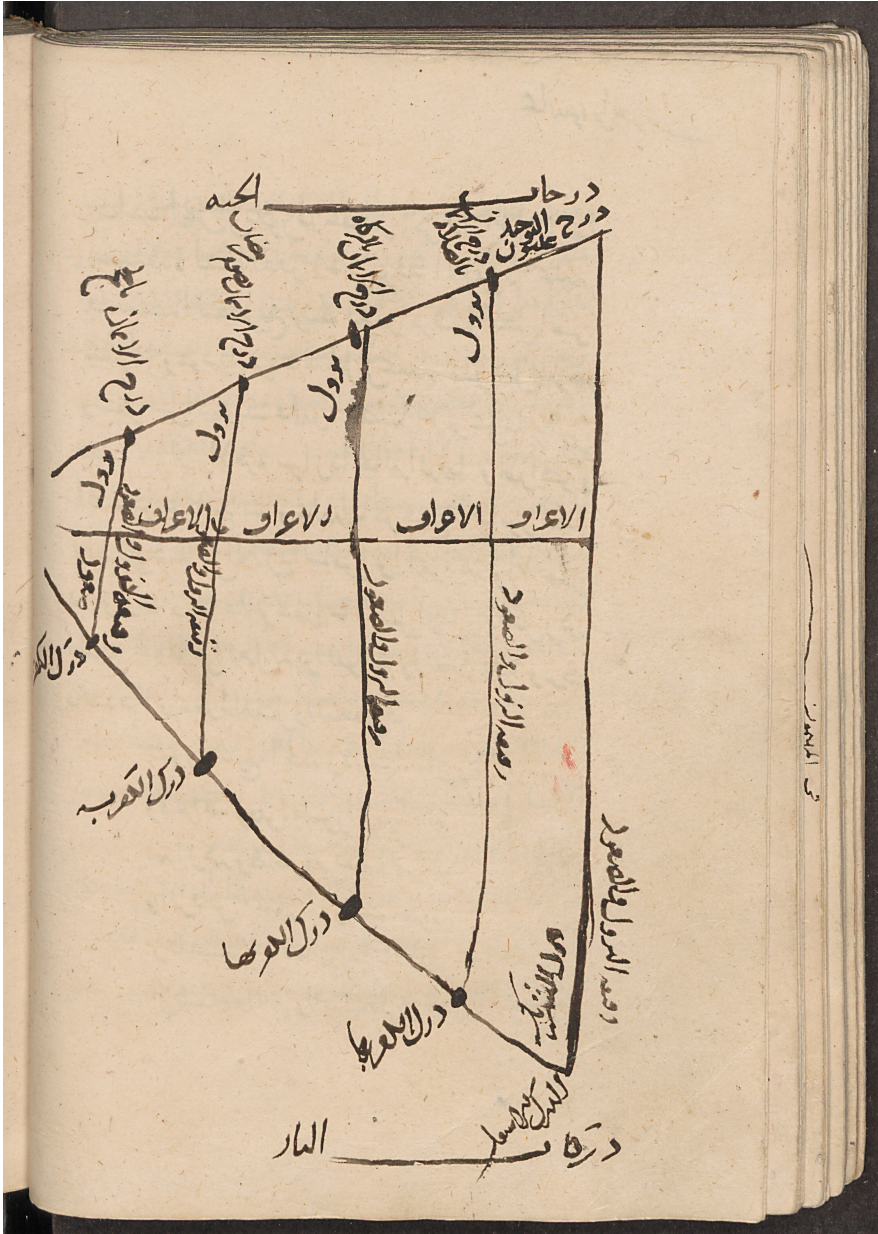


PLATE 2.14 [Ascents and Descents of Paradise and Hell]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1864, fol. 73^b)

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المعقوبه ظهور العقل ونور الايمان ونور العلم والحكمة والقدرة
 كحكمة الحمل والبشرط وعن العقل والوقت لسبق الحكمة ولا
 نور كالتسك والرض والحيرة والنظر فمنها ايضا لسبق
 الحكمة ولا نور فمنها بحارات دعوات الواحد والحوار المنكر
 في عمرو المحضات فخرج المحض مما فيه من المعاني
 والمحسوسات والحالات ومنها المجموع لا يوجد حكمه الا
 في المحض لا في الكفر في اصطلاح العلم بالمحض مع العلم
 الواسع العلم بالواجب الرب تغرف منه السبق وهو
 محمول على الاحرفيه ولا يعمل في حكمه ما تتخيله العقول
 الفاضله عن ادراكها العلم بالميز والشمال لها بينهما
 لسبق هذا الامر كذلك بل ان كان ولا بد من التميل فلتتميل
 ما هو الاقرب بالشبه لما ذكرناه ان السبق في نفسه
 لا تنفك من المحك وما اسمها والبعك الحو والفراع الخارج عن
 المحك العدم او قل الطلعه وسائر النفك والافراع الخارج
 عن المحك كالمسك كاسمها مثالها في الهامش وانما
 اعطيت البعك لانها اصل وجود المحك كحكمة الدراره
 والنفك كحزب كقولنا كهر المحض الا بالحو والمجيد

ازم
 (حزب)

PLATE 2.15 Possibility. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1868, fol. 87^a)

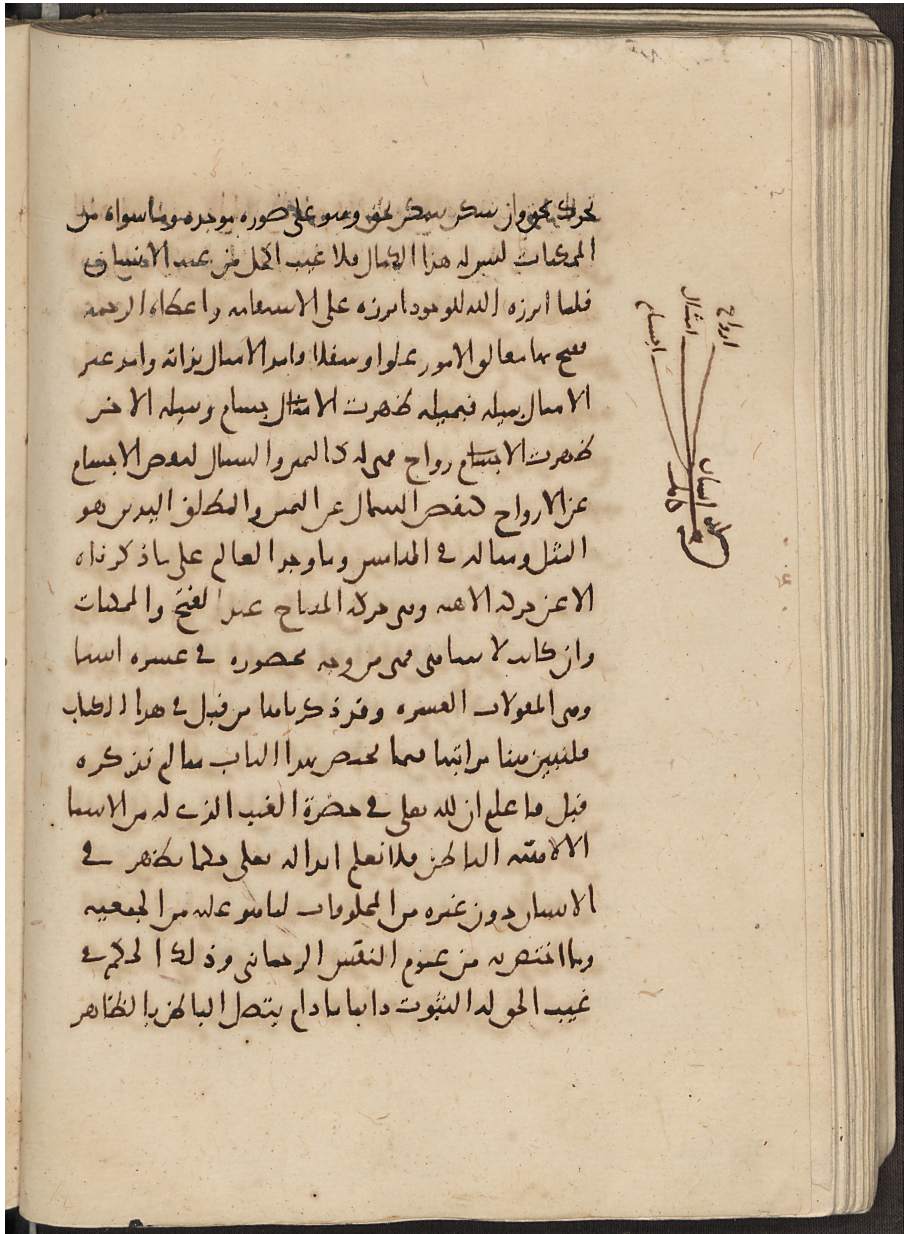


PLATE 2.16 Perfect Human Being (*insān kāmil*). Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1868, fol. 95^b)

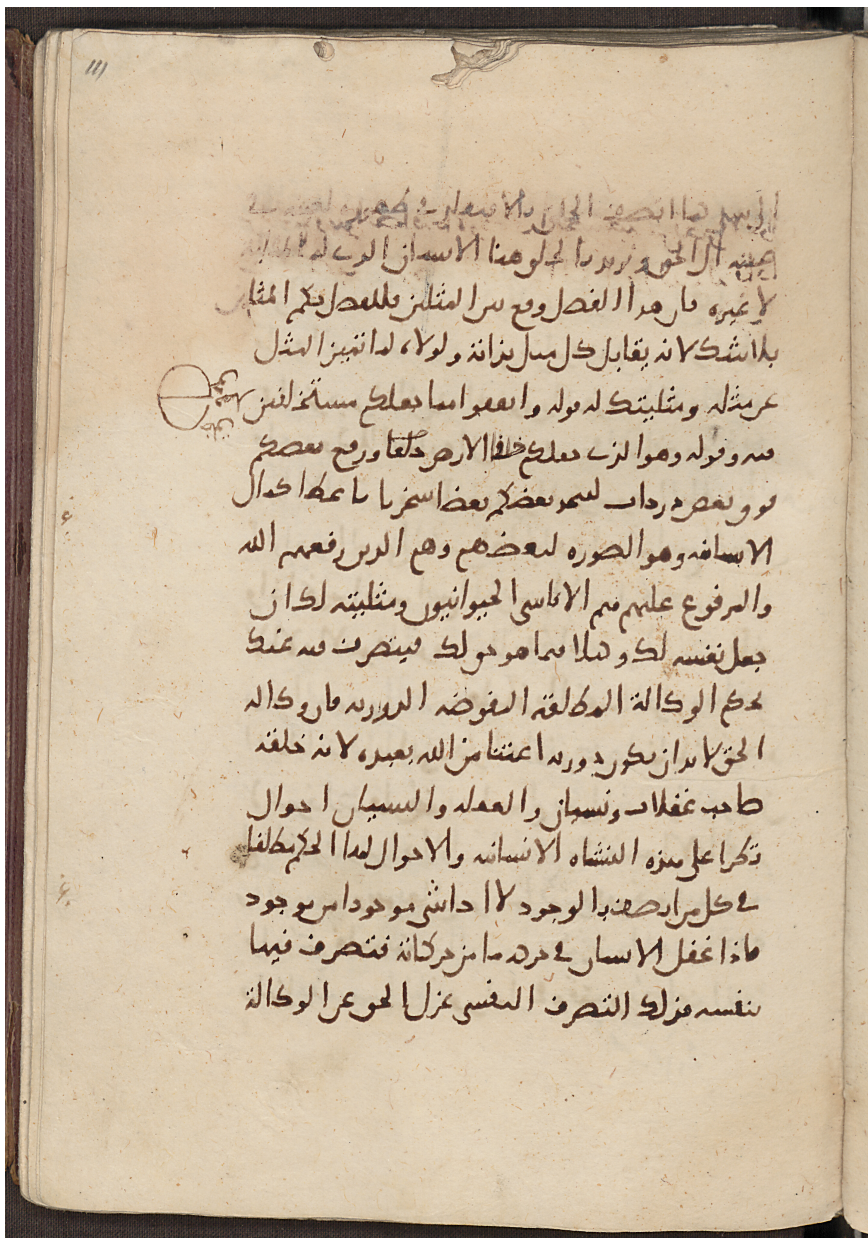
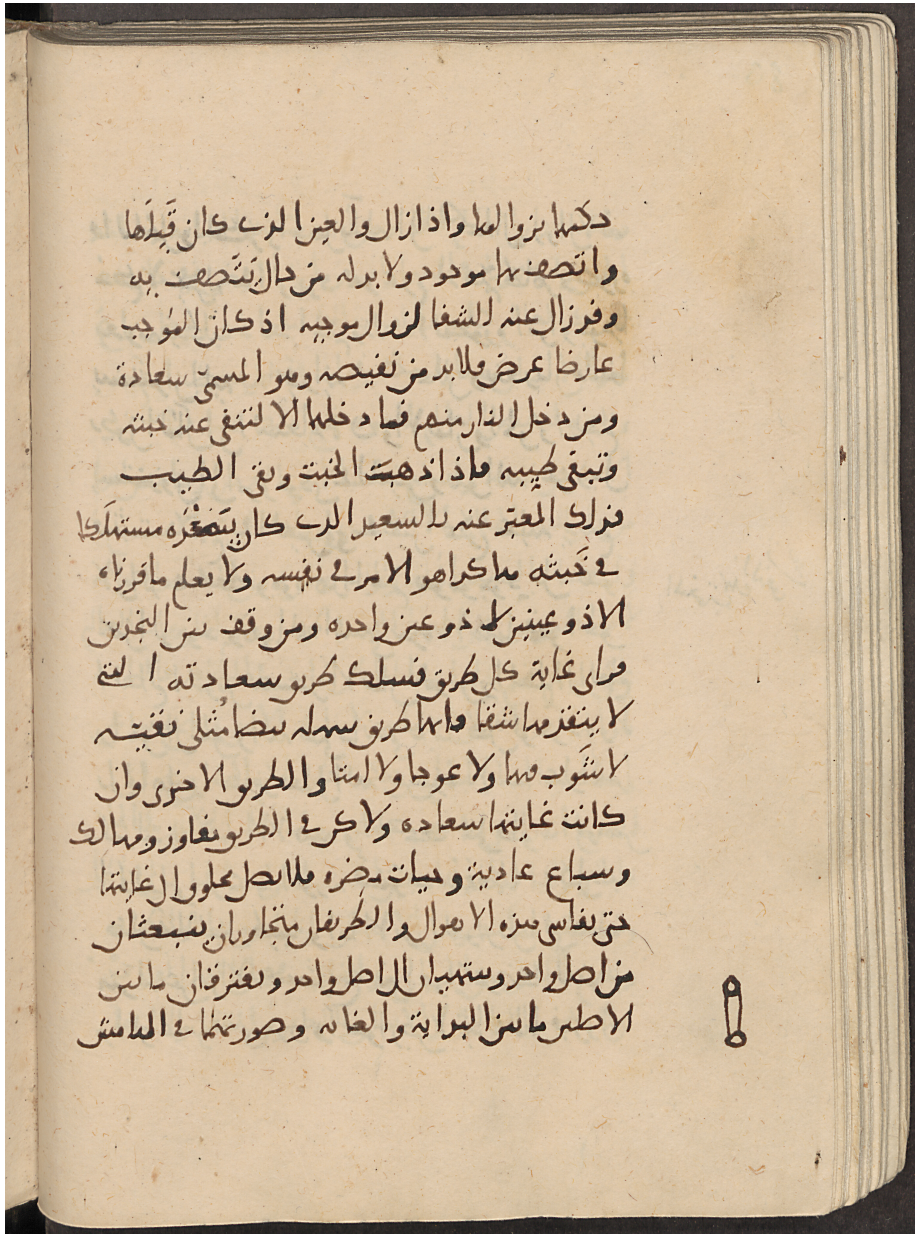


PLATE 2.17 [Real (*ḥaqq*), Separation (*faṣl*), and Creation (*khalq*)]. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1868, fol. 111^a)



دكهما بزوالهما واذا زال والعين التي كان قبلها
 واتصف بها موجود ولا يبرله من حال يتصف به
 وفوزال عنه للشغائر والموجبه اذ كان الموجب
 عارضا عرض فلا يبر من نفيصه وهو المسمى سعادة
 ومن دخل النار منم فما دخلها الا لتتفي عنه خبثه
 وتبقى لهيبه فاذا ذهبت الخبث وبقي الطيب
 فذلك المعتبر عنه بالسعير التي كان يتصفه مستهلكا
 في خبثه ما كراه الامر في نفسه ولا يعلم ما قرأه
 الا ذو عينين كما ذو عين واحدة ومن وقف من الخندق
 من اية غاية كل طريق فسلك طريق سعادته التي
 لا يتغيرها شيئا فاما طريق سبله سقامتلى نقيته
 لا شوب بها ولا عوجا ولا استواء الطريق الاخرى وان
 كانت غاية سعادة ولا كثر في الطريق فاغوز ومهاك
 وسباع عادية وحيات مضره فلاصل محلو وان غابتها
 حتى يفاسى هذه الاصول والكرفان متجاوران في بعضان
 من اصل واحد وسنديار الاصل واحد ويفترقان ما من
 الاطر ما من البراية والغاه وصورتها في الماس

PLATE 2.18 [The Two Paths (*al-najdayn*)]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fol. 83^b)



PLATE 2.19 The Cloud and What It Contains Until the Throne of Sitting. Ibn al-'Arabi, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fol. 90^a)

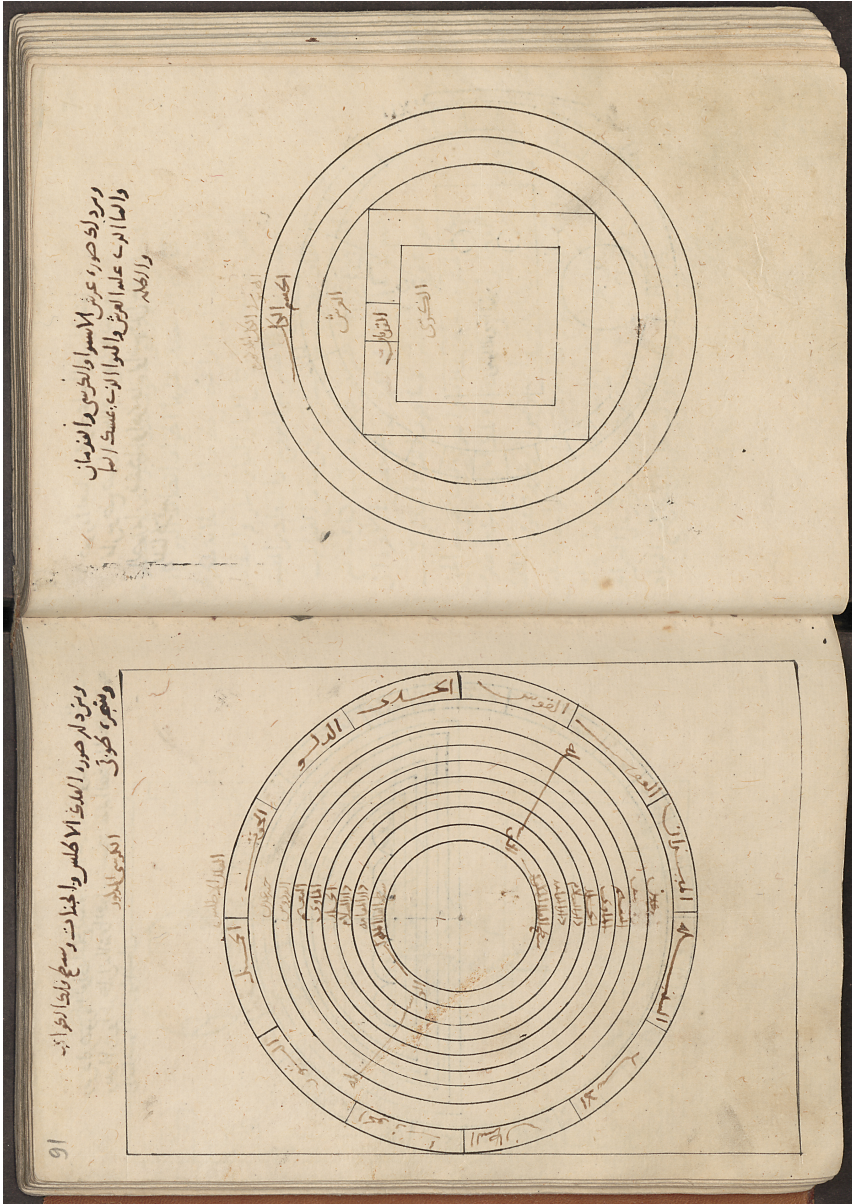


PLATE 2.20 The Throne of Sitting, the Footstool, the Two Feet, the Water upon Which is the Throne, the Air Which Upholds the Water, and the Darkness (right)—The Ultimate Sphere of Black Satin (al-Aṭlas), the Gardens, the Roof of the Starry Sphere, and the Tree of Ṭubā (left). Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fols. 90^b–91^a)

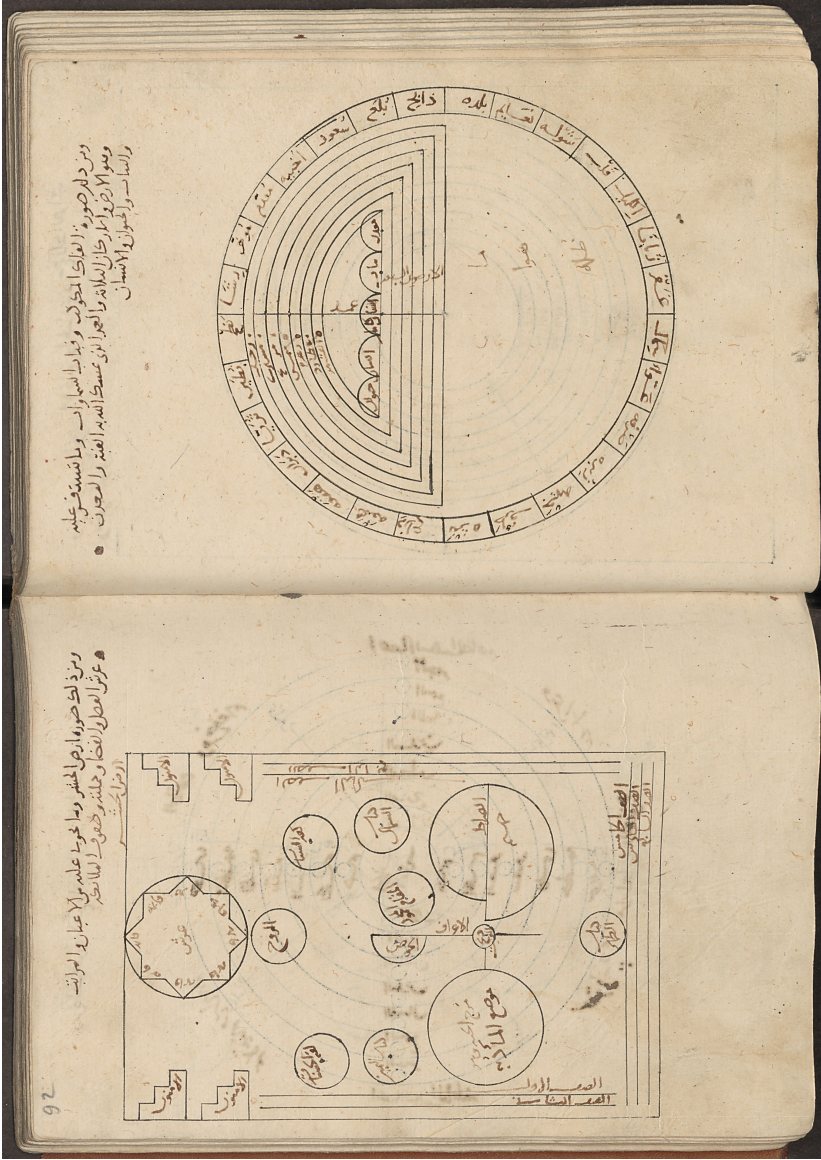


PLATE 2.21 The Starry Sphere, the Domes of the Heavens and What Rests upon What They Settled Upon: The Earth, the Three Pillars, the Support Through Which God Upholds the Dome, Minerals, Plants, Animals, and Humans (right)—The Earth of Mustering and the Entities and Levels It Contains, the Throne of Division and Decree and Its Bearers, and the Rows of Angels (left). Ibn al-'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, ms 1870, fols. 91^b–92^a)

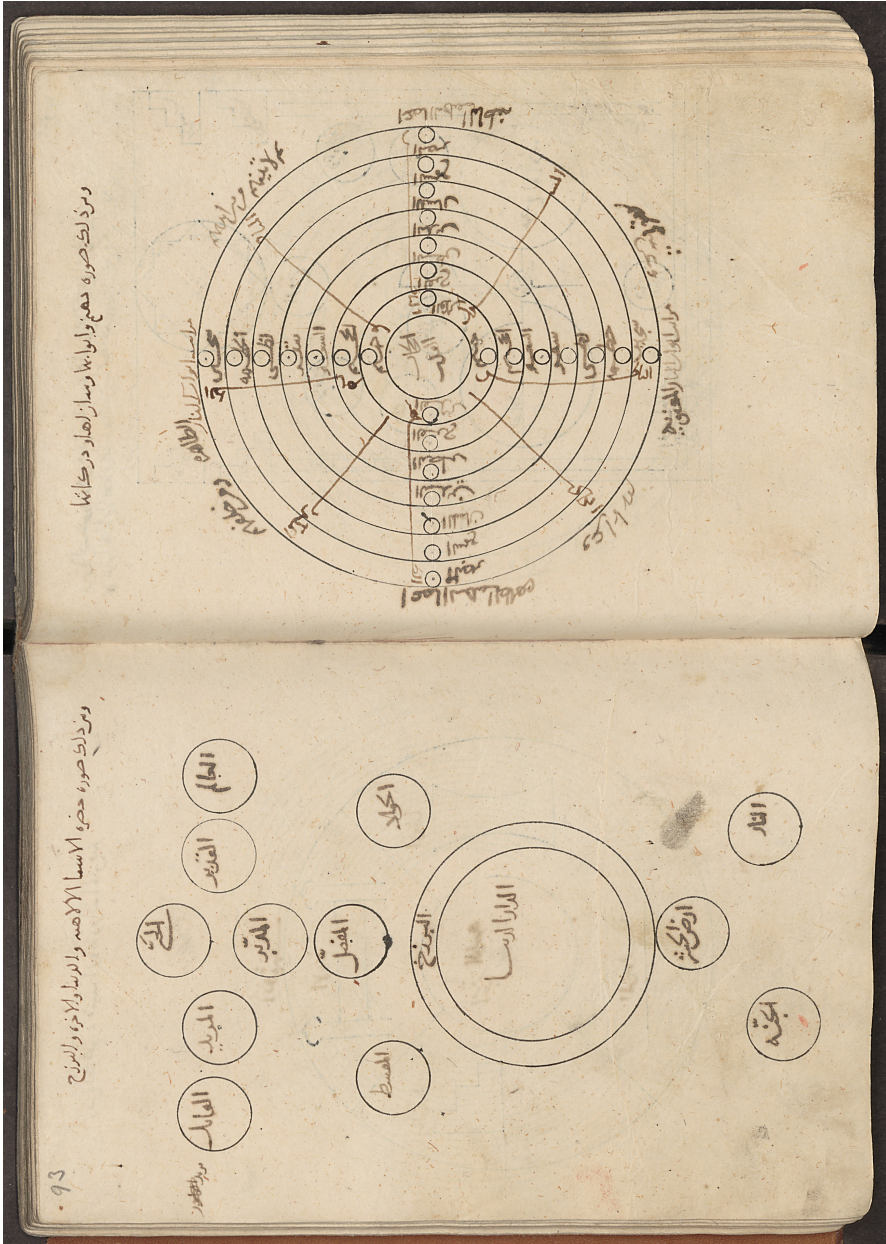


PLATE 2.22 Hell, Its Gates, Its Waystations and Its Descents (right)—The Presence of the Divine Names, the World, the Hereafter, and the Isthmus (left). Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Mützesi, MS 1870, fols. 92^b–93^a)

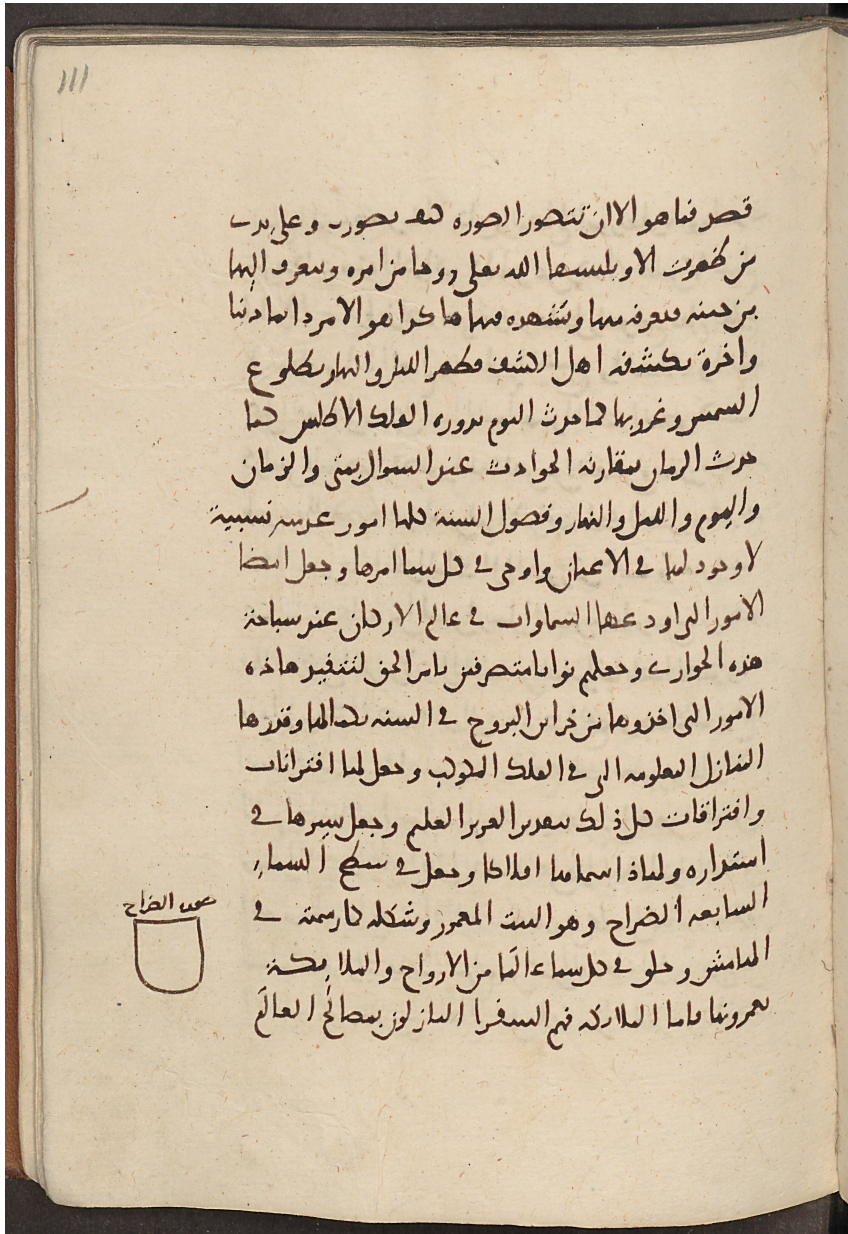


PLATE 2.24 The Distant [House] (*ṣūrat al-Ḍurāḥ*). Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fol. 111^a)

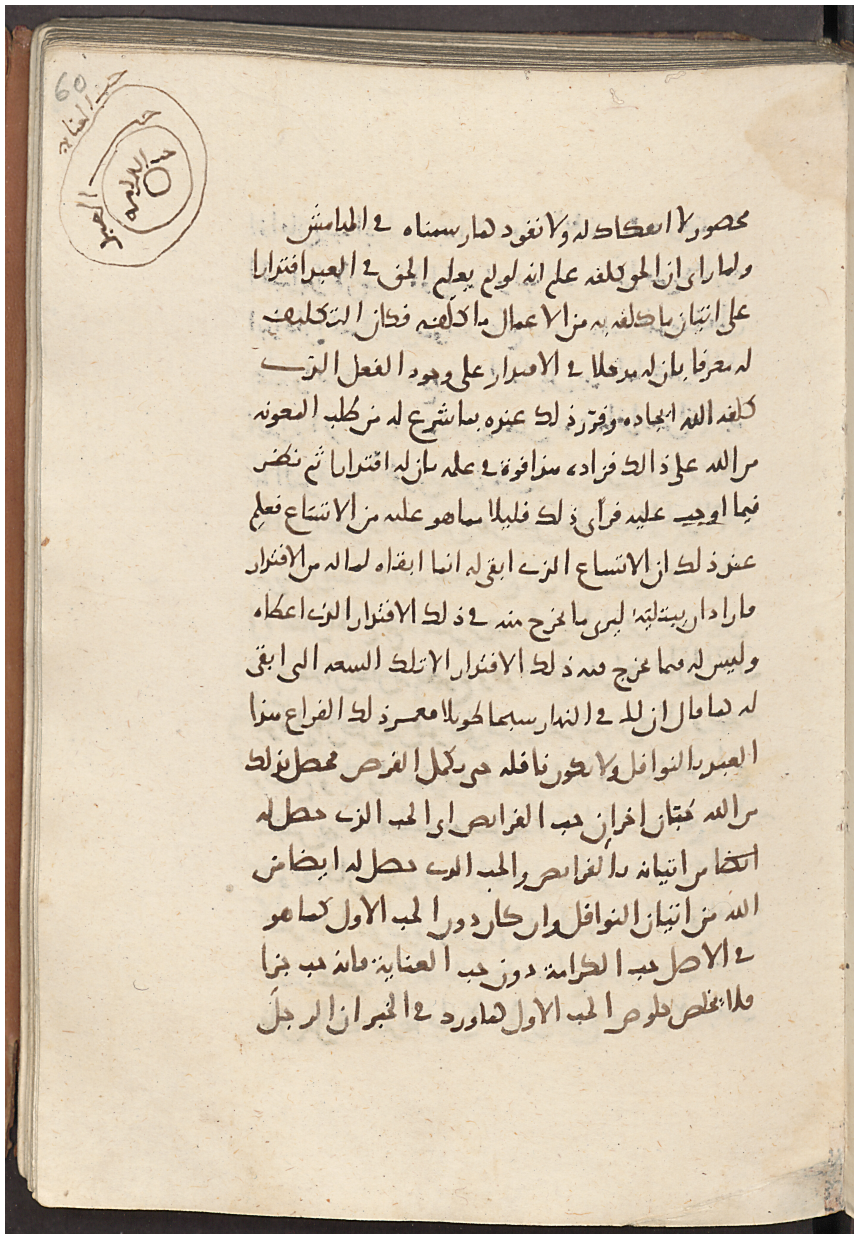


PLATE 2.25 The Love of Generosity (*ḥubb al-kirāma*), the Love of the Slave (*ḥubb al-ʿabd*), and the Love of Solicitude (*ḥubb al-ʿināya*). Ibn al-Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, ms 1874, fol. 60^a)

further elaboration. These points are noteworthy because Ibn al-‘Arabī himself only used red ink when offering the nine consecutive maps, though it has long faded, and he writes of the same images that, if he had room, he would draw them as a single image. Some later transmitters likely took these textual indications as an opportunity to creatively adapt these images. Furthermore, it should be noted that the notion of faithful transmission of image is contingent on cultural specificity and, before the age of mechanical reproduction, would have operated on a basis different than the transmission of certain types of text. In fact, in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own theory of visual representation, the effects of a shape change from hand to hand, therefore necessitating the adaptation of an image by every scribe into a form of their own.

The publication history has also had a troubled relationship to the images of the *Futūḥāt*. Early editions suffered from technical difficulties in relation to printing images as well as a lack of access to the second recension. The 19th century saw at least two published editions of the *Futūḥāt*, products of royal patronage in Cairo, whose images were based on a manuscript tradition that departs from the holograph in significant ways.¹⁰ These editions were later improved by a team led by the famed Algerian scholar ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī

10 The first published edition of the *Futūḥāt* was printed at the Būlāq press (*al-Maṭba‘a al-Amīriyya*) in Cairo in four volumes between Dhū l-Ḥijja 1269/October 1853 and Muḥarram 1274/August 1857: Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Maṭba‘a Būlāq, 1269–1274/1853–1857) *University of Toronto—Robarts Library*, <https://archive.org/details/alfutuhatalmakkioibnauoft/page/771/mode/2up>. Accessed 14 February 2022. The first volume is dedicated to ‘Abbās I (d. 1270/1854) of the Muḥammad ‘Alī dynasty and involved an editing team led by the poet, scholar, and statesman, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl (d. 1274/1857). The next three volumes, produced respectively in Shawwāl 1270/July 1854, Dhū al-Qa‘da 1272/July 1856, and Muḥarram 1274/August 1857, are dedicated to Sa‘īd Pāshā (d. 1279/1863) and were edited by Aḥmad Abū Muṣliḥ al-Fishāwī with the help of Aḥmad al-Ibyārī. The volume ends with a short biography of Ibn al-‘Arabī by a member of the editorial team, Muḥammad Qiṭṭa al-‘Adwī. This edition was reprinted in 8 volumes (two volumes for each original volume) at the same press, in Jumādā II 1293/July 1876: Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maṭba‘a Būlāq, 1293/1876) *Early Arabic Printed Books-BL: Religion and Law*, [tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/DQPtG0](https://tinyurl.com/tinyurl/DQPtG0). Accessed 14 February 2022. This version was dedicated to Khedive Ismā‘īl (d. 1312/1895), who had recently purchased the Būlāq press as a royal possession. The head editor of this project was Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Ghaffār al-Dusūqī (d. 1300/1883), who wrote that he aimed to correct the mistakes of the first edition. This version also includes a short biography of Ibn al-‘Arabī from al-Maqqarī’s (d. 1041/1632) *Nafḥ al-Tīb*. For a guide to all of these, including links, see Julian Cook and Claude Addas, “Six Printed Editions of *al-Futūḥāt al Makkīyah*: a brief survey by Julian Cook and Claude Addas,” *The Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/futuhatal-makkiyya-printed-editions-claude-addas/> (retrieved February 14 2022).

(d. 1300/1883), whose later life in exile gave him access to the second recension which he used for this project. The project outlived him and was completed in 1329/1911, and while it still makes significant departures from the holograph, the images were edited to appear closer to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own images.¹¹ Yet this edition still takes deep liberties with some of the images and should not be considered a reliable source for the *Futūḥāt*’s visual representation.

It was only in the late 20th and early 21st century that attempts at critical editions began to pay more attention to the images of the text. The first of these was attempted by Osman Yahia (d. 1418/1997), who published fourteen volumes between 1972 and 1992, covering less than half of the text, before his death. Yahia was precise when presenting the few images that fell in his edition and offered alternative images from the manuscript tradition in footnotes. The first complete critical edition by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, first published by the Ministry of Culture in Yemen in 2010 and then republished, with edits (including of images), in 2013 by the Supreme Council of Culture in Egypt. This is the edition that is referenced throughout this paper, but because it still has difficulty transmitting some of images of the *Futūḥāt*, our focus remains on the images that are in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own hand.

2 Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Theory of Visual Representation

The contemporary bifurcation between text and image does not translate clearly into the past, wherein the conventions of a given literary tradition and the practical realities of writing could either close or widen the gap between the two. Furthermore, visual representation predates writing (itself a form of visual representation), and the persistence of certain forms in its long history has given those forms a type of universality despite their continued contextual specificity.¹² This contextual specificity differs from person to person, as

11 It was completed under the guidance of Muḥammad al-Zuhri al-Ghamrāwī in 1329/1911 at Cairo’s Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubrā Press through the patronage of a Kashmiri merchant from Mecca, Fadā Muḥammad al-Kashmīrī, and his associates: Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, (Cairo: Maṭba‘a Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubrā, 1329/1911) *Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt*, <https://archive.org/details/Al-Futuhah-Al-makkiya/Guz1/mode/2up>. Accessed 14 February 2022. The most significant corrections happened in the sequence of nine maps. Of these, this edition is still easily accessible and was reprinted in Beirut several times since 1968. A nine-volume edition was published in 1999 with indices under the editorial guidance of Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn of Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya.

12 See James B. Harley and David Woodward, *The History of Cartography. Volume 1: Car-*

each interprets and gives meaning to visual representation based on their own knowledge and perspective.¹³ A cleverly crafted image, then, can draw on a reader's expectations to induce particular realizations.

Ibn al-'Arabī upholds the independence of visual representation without placing it in a dichotomous relationship with text. He points out that all visual communication is, in fact, shapes and forms. He makes this clear early, in Chapter 17, in the middle of a discussion of how “symbols (*rumūz*) and allusions (*tabwīḥāt*)” are a distinct form of communication.¹⁴ He distinguishes between different types of letters/words (*hurūf*), classifying them as written (*raqam-īyya*), vocalized (*lafẓīyya*), and recalled (*mustahḍara*), and explains that expressions in each category have a power corresponding to the mechanics of their articulation. Vocalized and “recalled” words (meaning those that can and are called to the faculty of imagination, that is, they are memorized) are limitless, the former remaining in the phenomenal world, forever echoing, and the latter remaining in the soul/imaginal world. Written words, on the other hand, are finite, and remain effective for only as long as the series of shapes (*ashkāl*) that are perceived through sight remain. He thereby distinguishes what is written from not only the sounds and meanings that letters signify, but even the internalization of those very shapes through memory. Each shape has a power that is exercised on the soul of whomever sees it through a specific spirit (*rūḥ*)

tography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and Karamustafa, “Cosmographical Diagrams,” 71–89. As mentioned before, Karamustafa points out that the tradition of Ibn al-'Arabī and his students incorporate more cosmographical diagrams than many other Islamic textual traditions. For specific examples of earlier visual representation in Arabic, see Emilie Savage-Smith and Yossef Rapoport, *Lost Maps of the Caliphs: Drawing the World in Eleventh-Century Cairo* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); chapters 1–2 are particularly pertinent for the visual background of the nine sequential images contained in the *Futūḥāt* (Images 18–26/Plates 2.19–23). For illustration in general, particularly in relation to (scientific) scholarship see Eva Hoffman, “The Beginnings of the Illustrated Arabic Book: An Intersection between Art and Scholarship,” *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 37–52. That illustration was, from an early date, associated with scholarly and scientific works is an important point for reading the *Futūḥāt*, which doesn't style itself as a purely “Sufi” text, but rather an exposition of all knowledge and a harmonization of the intellectual, transmitted, and experiential sciences (in the broadest sense of the term). In this respect, it helps to place it in conversation with broader cosmological debates, see particularly Liana Saif, “From *Gāyat al-ḥakīm* to *Šams al-ma'ārif*: Ways of Knowing and Paths of Power in Medieval Islam,” *Arabica* 64, nos. 3–4 (2017): 297–345, 322–326.

13 On how one interprets based on one's foreknowledge, and the general relation between seeing and cognition, see Richard L. Gregory, *Eye and Brain: The Psychology of Seeing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

14 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 1:573.

that governs the shape, and whose existence is tied to its continued presence in the actual world. If that shape is altered in the actual world, the spirit is immediately changed. If it is erased, that spirit dies. To clarify this power of visual representation, he offers image 2, a table (*jadwal*) of the natural properties of the letters (*ṭabāʿiʿ al-ḥurūf*) of the Arabic alphabet (Plate 2.2), complaining in the process that he had come across many incorrect versions of it before.¹⁵ He then explains that since the table is written, its efficacy is in keeping with its shapes, and that their “act (*ʿamal*) differs with the differences of pens/hands/scripts (*aqlām*).” He even writes that, if these letters are combined, creating a different shape, their act, efficacy, and governing spirit again change. In other words, his table is only accurate in the visual plane and in the specific way that he has written; once copied in a different hand, its qualities change. If differences in shape transmit different effects, we should not suppose that there is anything arbitrary in the details of these images. Their subtlest aspects are meant to be transmitted to the reader who, upon studying and recalling them, incorporates not only Ibn al-ʿArabī’s knowledge, but even his own hand, into his or her imagination.

Ibn al-ʿArabī further explains the independence of visual representation from other forms of representation at the end of Chapter 371 in volume 26, where the bulk of the *Futūḥāt*’s visual representation is located. Here, he offers the aforementioned nine consecutive maps depicting “the order of coming into being” (*tartīb al-ījād*). After presenting the nine images, he writes that “we will now talk about every form (*ṣūra*) of it in another form (*ṣūra*) in regards to what the situation is in and of itself, in nine chapters (*fuṣūl*) just as we drew it (*rasamnā-hu*) in nine faces (*wujūh*) of form-giving (*al-taṣwīr*). We didn’t place it in order (*al-tartīb*) to set priority (*al-taqdīm*) or posterity (*al-ta’kḥīr*), but rather speech (*al-kalām*) about it clarifies what is prior or posterior to it, or what is undifferentiated (*al-mujmal*) or differentiated (*al-mufaṣṣal*).”¹⁶ After offering lengthy prose explanations of this order, he follows with a sermon in rhymed prose and a *qaṣīda* poem, changing the order of cosmological features each

15 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1847 59^b–60^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 1:577–578. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazāʿirī et al., 1:188–190. It is fruitful to compare his attitude in this section to that of his contemporaries who also used visual representation, see Noah Gardiner, “Esotericist Reading Communities and the Early Circulation of the Sufi Occultist Aḥmad Al-Būnī’s Works,” *Arabica* 64, nos. 3–4 (2017): 405–441. See also Lisa Alexandrin, “Witnessing the Lights of the Heavenly Dominion: Dreams, Visions and the Mystical Exegeses of Shams al-Dīn al-Daylāmī,” in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, ed. Ozgen Felek and Alexander Knysh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 215–231.

16 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:328.

time. He explains this change, writing that “our verses in this regard take a different path (*tarīqa*) when compared to the first configuration,” meaning the earlier sequence of images.¹⁷ This, he explains, is because ranking and order are a matter of perspective, and what appears as ranked above from one perspective can be ranked below from another perspective. In fact, all of being is “ranked above as well as ranked below (*fāḍil^{an} wa-mafḍūl^{an}*).” When looked at from the perspective of totality, “this results in equilibrium (*musāwā*), as if one could say there is none ranked above or below, only noble, perfect, and complete being without any deficiency (*wujūd sharīf kāmīl tāmm lā naqṣa fī-hi*).”¹⁸ It is only for those who have “unveiled the affair as it is” to understand that the “order of the cosmos (*tartīb al-‘ālam*) has varied pathways (*mutanawwi‘ al-masāq*), in the oration (*khutba*) it has an order that is not in the poem (*manzūm*), and so on in the rest of the chapter.”¹⁹ Even literary forms, which also have their own visual form in the Arabic manuscript tradition, are their own perspectives on reality.

For Ibn al-‘Arabī, all written communication is primarily visual but subject to different forms (*ṣuwar/ṣūra*), ranging from prose (*nathr*), poetry (*naẓm*), rhymed prose (*saġ‘*), and image/illustration (*mithāl*).²⁰ Each of these forms are complementary to but independent of the others, and reality is articulated and ordered in each in a unique way. For this reason, the independence of visual representation is not only worthy of consideration, but intended, as it offers, for Ibn al-‘Arabī, a perspective on reality that cannot be expressed through other forms.

The last major feature of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s theory of visual representation is his awareness of how the medium in which forms appear effects and limits representation. Before starting the sequence of nine images, he writes that “the place of the images of the shapes (*mawḍi‘ ṣuwar al-ashkāl*) gets tighter here, without expanding in the way we want so that we could create a single composition (*tashkīl*); if it did expand, it would have been clearer to the one who sees it.”²¹ This articulation of the limits of the physical codex invites us to consider the strategies he used to deal with these limitations as well as potentials of the codex that are lost in an age of digital reproduction. In this regard, for instance, it is clear that Ibn al-‘Arabī experienced the codex as a

17 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:368.

18 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:369–370.

19 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:370.

20 That is, when seen as written communication, when they are recited and heard or remembered, they also have properties in keeping with the medium of air or the imagination.

21 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:319.

three-dimensional object that could be manipulated, and he frequently used curved or reversed script (such as in image 4, 20, or 23, this latter corresponding to Plate 2.22 right) to incite the reader to turn the codex, thereby imparting a sense of dynamism to an otherwise static image.

3 The Images of the *Futūḥāt*

It is imperative that we consider the visual representation of the *Futūḥāt* in light of Ibn al-ʿArabī's argument that every "form" has an order unique to it. For this reason, in addition to paying attention to each image, it is also important to consider the overarching sequence of the images, just as attention has been given to the overarching structure of the text itself.²² What follows is an introduction and analysis of all the images in the *Futūḥāt*, their relationship to each other, and the significance of the order in which they appear within the narrative. As mentioned before, I argue that they follow an unarticulated overarching sequence that illustrates three journeys, building on Ibn al-ʿArabī's own writings, wherein he indicates that "there are three journeys, without any fourth that the Real has affirmed—a journey beginning at Him, a journey to Him, and a journey in Him."²³ My intention here is not to be definitive but rather to harvest a portion of the full interpretive possibilities that the sequence of images offers in order to approach a sense of what "unarticulated" meaning they contain, as well as to encourage further creative engagement with this aspect of the visual history of Islam.

I have divided images 1–6 into the first journey (Plates 2.1–6), images 7–16 into the second journey (Plates 2.7–17), and images 17–28 into the third journey (Plates 2.18–25). The first cycle starts with a formal "opening" that leads into the letters that are articulated on God's breath, follows the unfolding of Being, and ends in a rooting of visual representation in Muḥammad's message and its relation to the degrees of return to God from the perspective of human becoming. The second cycle begins with the names of God and how their imaginal forms are encountered in the phenomenal world, emphasizing that the return is the process of realizing that the line between the Real and creation is itself imaginal, and that ultimately, everything is both Real and not Real. The third cycle,

22 An excellent starting point to thinking about the larger structure of the text is James W. Morris, "Introduction" in *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz (New York: Pir Press, 2002), 17–20.

23 This is from *Iṣfār ʿan natāʾij al-asfār* and is quoted and translated by William C. Chittick in Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 406m10.

marking the journey in God, appropriately situates the journey from origin to return within God, ending with the realization that creation is the reflection of the Real, the One who sees and is seen. In this respect, creation is the outpouring of God's self-love and humans are enveloped in that love from every direction. In each of these journeys, the images cycle from smaller illustrations to bigger ones and then end again in smaller ones, itself another way of marking the journey from Unseen to Seen. In this regard, I will also make note of formal continuity between these diagrams, which I argue is intentional though admittedly hard to prove. All of this is but one interpretation, but one whose viability, I hope, is clear in the discussion that follows.

4 The First Journey

Image 1

The first image in the *Futūḥāt* begins a theme that runs throughout Ibn al-'Arabī's use of visual representation—image is the primary mode through which one must understand the revealed sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Hadith, particularly when they appear illogical or irrational. Only through image and the imaginal, which are capable of gathering opposites into a single vision, can one understand that the apparent meaning of revelation is completely true and correct even as it appears contradictory to reason. The image, a marginal drawing in Chapter 8, "On Knowledge of the Earth made from the Remainder of Adam's Clay, that is, the Earth of Reality" (Plate 2.1), occurs in a section devoted to explaining such a hadith, "Honor your paternal aunt, the Palm Tree, for she was created from the same clay as Adam."²⁴ This section identifies this paternal aunt with an entire "earth" separate from and larger than our own cosmos.

Among the vivid images in this section, including peoples and lands made of saffron, inverted cities, and fruits the size of our entire earth, the only thing he illustrates is a rough schematic of a ship that was used on that earth (Plate 2.1). He explains that the oceans of that world were made of a liquid dust

24 MS Istanbul Evkaf Müzesi 1846 91^b–92^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 1:411–417. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī et al., 1:126–130. This hadith occurs in none of the standard sources, but was commonly circulated in the medieval period onwards. One early occurrence is in the exegetical work attributed to Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī in his interpretation of Q 19:25, which mentions date palms. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Aẓīm*, ed. As'ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib (Riyadh: Maktaba Nazār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1417/1997) 1:2405–2406.

upon which rock-like objects floated through something like a magnetism. The people of that world shaped these rocks into cylinders and used them to run their ships. The semi-arched hull of the ship leads into a triangular bow. The stern is flanked by two cylinders that jut out of the sides where they would presumably spin. The bow, the stern, and the two cylinders are all labelled. The stern is not enclosed by a line because, he explains, that ocean's water does not splash, allowing the deck to be completely level with the sea.

The occurrence of the *Futūḥāt*'s first image in one of its most vivid sections is likely not an accident, rather, it seems that Ibn al-'Arabī uses the active state of his readers' imagination to introduce visual representation into his narrative.²⁵ In this regard, its formal features must contain a significance beyond the text. As the opening image, the image of a line that opens upwards draws on "opening" as theme, termed *fath* in Arabic. As a *fath*, it calls to mind not only the *Futūḥāt* as a text ("The Meccan Openings") but also the first chapter of the Qur'an, *al-fātiḥa* ("the opening"). The formal similarity to the *mīhrāb* of a mosque, the empty prayer niche towards which the *ṣalāt* is performed, orients the reader's imagination towards Being-as-Image. When read in tandem with the narrative, the image of a ship marks a departure, embarking on an imaginal journey with the vivid descriptions of the section, all of which activate the reader's imagination and stretch its boundaries until it can break past the limits of earthly logic and thereby reflect on a world beyond paradise, with its own people, religions, cities, and norms. The image of the ship thereby becomes a vessel that prepares the imagination, a voyage that will bolster and be bolstered by the narrative, but which ultimately also speaks a language that is independent of the narrative. The triplicity in the diagram is also of note, where one point extends out in two lines that lead to three, two black lines and the hidden line in the middle. In Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysics, triplicity is the root of all creation, the product of the marriage between two things.²⁶ As a beginning, it also represents the beginning of all beginnings, the breath of God within and through which the cosmos is articulated, and in this vein, the similarity to an open mouth is noteworthy.

25 For another interpretation of this section, particularly in relation to poetry and its capacity to transmit realities, which sheds further light on the relation of the aforementioned textual "forms" to one another, see Claude Addas, "The Ship of Stone," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, 19 (1996): 5–24.

26 Triplicity is an important theme in Islamic cosmological literature, see Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 151–152.

Image 2

The second image is the previously discussed table, “the Natural Properties of the Letters” (Plate 2.2). As Ibn al-‘Arabī’s discussion has already been considered, we will only take into consideration its visual features. Note the continuity from the previous image, the triangle at the top now extends down, encompassing the letters of the Arabic alphabet which, for Ibn al-‘Arabī, are the very fabric of creation.²⁷ The numbers progress from the previous image, one to three has led to four, and each of the four extends down into an array of seven, for a total of four sevens, the twenty eight letters of the Arabic alphabet. Four becomes the underlying principle at every level of creation, from the four ruling properties (hot, cold, dry, wet, written above each triangle at the top, in that order, from the right) all the way down to the four elements of the earth (fire, water, air, earth, which will appear in the next image). Seven, as the combination of three and four, marks the number of the “Imams of the Names,” the leading names of God on which all other names rely.²⁸ When we read this image as the continuation of the previous image, which marked progression from one to three, the arrays of seven can be added on to reach ten, the decad which, building on Pythagorean symbolism, marks the completion of the first sequence of numbers and the opening of unity to limitless diversity—from what he calls “the Unity of the One” to “the Unity of Manyness” that allows diversity.²⁹

Note also that the letters of the Arabic alphabet (in the abjad order) in the first row, starting from the right, *alif*, *bāʾ*, *jīm*, *dāl*, all incorporate shapes from the previous image, whether from the straight lines that jutted out from the side or the curving and bending shapes of the hull, as if each is now a ship that prepares the faculty of the imagination to receive the visual effect of what it sees and will see throughout the text. These continue from right to left in each row, identifying each letter with a particular ruling property as identi-

27 On the letters as the building blocks of the cosmos see William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 128–129. On their correspondence to the levels of creation see William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, xxix–xxxii.

28 This relationship from triplicity to seven, eight, and beyond is found in many parts of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s work, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 228–229. On Pythagorean number symbolism in Islam, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 47–51. For a comparative and accessible approach to number symbolism, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), particularly 18–19. On the four elements, see Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 135–139.

29 Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 168–173.

fied at the top. Ibn al-‘Arabī uses a script here that differs from the rest of the manuscript in its dotting. Only letters that occur after the third row from the top have dotting, even if traditionally some of the letters at the top (like *ba* and *jīm*) would be dotted and some later (like *sīn* or *mīm*) would not. This could mark the gradation from unity at the top towards multiplicity at the bottom. Since the dot is also an image of unity itself, it also marks the movement from one dot to many dots, one beginning to many beginnings, just as the apex of the top triangles moves from a dot to a knot from right to left. In keeping with his aforementioned theory of visual representation, these shapes are meant to transmit their ruling properties to the reader’s sight and, if they accept them, imagination, where they will take on a life and activity of their own.

Image 3

The next image (Plate 2.3) occurs in Chapter 47 in the midst of a discussion of the relationship of a circle to its circumference. The image’s long label reads: “the form of the shape of the species (*al-ajnās*) and types (*al-anwā’*) without intending to encompass them all, for even the types have their own types until they reach another type, just as they end in the species of all species.”³⁰ Ibn al-‘Arabī explains that circularity itself has multiple dimensions and trajectories, and that every circle leads to multiple other circles in order “to distinguish between the Being that is Necessary through Itself and between the possible thing.”³¹ This image, corresponding to the decad, shifts from the line, triangle, and quadrilateral to circular representation. The numerical progression here from the previous image is also evident: the four of the previous image now expands in eight directions for a total of twelve circles emanating from the center, the first circle (or thirteenth if we shift perspective).

The image, drawn with a compass and centered on the page, continues the visual progress of the images through the four points that form the apex of the arches to the sides of the center circle, themselves formed from the overlap of the first four circles that emanate from the center. The center circle is labelled “the Presence,” the four lines that come out of its circumference are each labelled “relation.” These four lines are the radii of four other circles that are labelled clockwise “life,” “knowledge,” “desire,” and “power.” These are the four primary names (out of seven) and are now connected to the previously

30 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1848 47^b–48^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 2:66–68. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’iri et al., 1:260–261. For a translation and discussion of this see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 229–230.

31 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 2:67.

mentioned cycles of four that started with hot, cold, dry, and wet on the previous image. The radii of these circles form the radii of other circles that read clockwise “the pillar of fire,” “earth,” “water,” and “air,” the extension of the Natural Properties from the previous image. Four smaller circles are formed in the corners of the diagram, reading clockwise again “the Intellect,” “Nature,” “the Dust,” and “the Soul.” The powers of the first four primary names are disclosed into each of the elements with which they are associated: life is disclosed in fire, knowledge in earth, desire in water, power in air.³² The four smaller circles in each corner combine four of the larger circles and contain six sections. Thus, for example, in “intellect,” fire, earth, life, and knowledge meet. These combinations reflect active and receptive pairs. Intellect acts upon the soul, soul acts upon nature, and nature acts upon the Dust.

This is the first image where Ibn al-‘Arabī’s takes full advantage of the physical codex and uses the directionality of the script to force the reader to move the book in a circle, emphasizing that these images are meant to be experienced as objects, a feature that will remain consistent throughout.³³ By using script in such a way, Ibn al-‘Arabī emphasizes one of the main points of his cosmology—reality is perspectival, and even the embodied act of reading is its own perspective. By changing the direction of text, he alerts the reader to how perspective shapes and limits their vision.

The semblance to a flower seems intentional as the self-disclosures of Being are oft-described through the metaphor of a blossoming flower, and when read in tandem with the previous image, can be seen as the cycle of the spade, the seed, and the flower. In other words, the first image corresponds to the spade which opens the earth, but is empty. The letters in the second image, riding on the spade, correspond to seeds (or roots) that are planted in the open earth. This image, third in the sequence, marks the blossoming of those seeds, the flower of manifest being and the first image to incorporate the phenomenal world. One becomes ones which become many. The reader’s imagination is expanded until it realizes that the unfolding of being is not the relationship of

32 For an in-depth analysis and break-down of this diagram as well as its symbolism, see Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam*, 74–79. For more on these relationships in Sufi cosmology see Sachiko Murata, *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 243–244. Ibn al-‘Arabī gives a different version of this list elsewhere, reflecting again the importance of perspective and form in how these connections are drawn out.

33 This reflects the use of calligraphy on other three dimensional objects in the material history of Islamicate societies. See Margaret Graves, *Arts of Allusion: Object, Ornament, and Architecture in Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 126–138.

the center to one circumference, but of a center that produces infinite centers and circumferences.

Image 4

The next image shifts from circular multiplication to cyclical progression from origin to return. The image (Plate 2.4), centered on the page and drawn with compass and straight edge, occurs at the beginning of Chapter 48 in a discussion of cause and effect. It is labelled “the issue of circularity (*dawriyya*), and this is its image.”³⁴ His goal in this section is to show the interrelationship and interdependence of God, the cosmos, and humanity. Having reached the lowest points of the journey from origin to return, the image steps back four from twelve, resulting in eight divisions. The circle, shaped like a ring, reads counter-clockwise, and necessitates the reader’s interaction with the physical book. By turning the book to read the image, the image moves as it is seen and committed to the imagination, allowing Ibn al-‘Arabī to convey dynamism within the constraints of his medium. He further cements this point by writing that there is no beginning point to this circle.

From the top right quadrant it reads, “the revealed paths (*sharā’i’*) differ in relation to the divine relationships (*al-nisab al-ilāhiyya*),” meaning that the different religions of each prophet differ in accord with the names of God. The next two sections are labelled “the divine relationships differ in relation to the states (*al-aḥwāl*)” and “the states differ in relation to the times (*al-azmān*),” referring to how the states of humanity change with time, influencing how they call out to God. Next, “the times differ in relation to the movements (*al-ḥarakāt*),” identifying the progression of time with the movement of cosmic and celestial bodies. This movement is then connected to God in the next quadrant, labelled “the movements differ in relation to the turnings of attention (*tawajjuhāt*),” meaning the turning of God’s face towards a thing.³⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabī writes that these turnings are the root of all difference and differentiation in the cosmos and without them, everything would move in the same manner and with the same speed. The next label, “the turnings of attention differ in relation to the goals (*maqāṣid*),” refers to the reasons why God wants a thing

34 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1848 55^b–56^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 2:80–84. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 1:265–266. It should be noted that, in this volume, Ibn al-‘Arabī switches between the paper he normally uses and paper that appears to be tinted slightly pink. While it is interesting that he switches the paper between this and the previous image, to my eyes, his use of the two papers does not seem to be anything beyond practical necessity.

35 The Arabic word for attention comes from the same root as the word for face/facing.

to exist. This is followed by “the goals differ in relation to the self-disclosures (*al-tajallīyyāt*),” bringing the discussion back to the continuous self-disclosure of God, which, in the last quadrant, ties the circle back to the beginning: “the self-disclosures differ in relation to the revealed paths.”

Ibn al-‘Arabī leaves a hollow center that emphasizes the ring-like nature of the image, calling to mind the “turning spheres” of the heavens and highlighting the image’s relationship to time.³⁶ The text in each box is doubled so that each top line reads “x differs” and every bottom line reads “in accord with the differences of y.” All the boxes mirror their direct opposites, raising the possibility of another layer of correspondence between the cycles, namely between “divine relationships” and “turnings of attention,” between “states” and “goals,” between “self-disclosures” and “times,” and between “movements” and “revealed paths.”

The formal continuity of this image with the previous one lies in the eight surrounding points in the previous image, four at the end of the straight lines labelled “relation” and four at the center of the smaller circles, which have, in a sense, been pulled out to the edges of this circle to create its eight quadrants. The contrast of the empty center of this image with the full center of the previous image imparts a sense of shifting perspective, and whereas the previous image seemed floral this image appears solar in its symbolism. Note also that this image and the previous one are on the same side of the bi-folio and close enough in the same volume that the reader can flip back and forth between them, visualizing their relationship and even imagining the former image in the empty center of the latter, thereby imagining two types of movement (from center to circumference and around the circumference).

Image 5

The fifth image (Plate 2.5) occurs in Chapter 64 “On Knowledge of the Resurrection, its Way-stations, and the Quality of the Rising (*ba‘th*).”³⁷ Eschatology is a major feature of the *Futūḥāt*’s visual representation and, as a journey all humanity must eventually make, its correct visualization is of utmost importance to Ibn al-‘Arabī. This particular image is “the Path” (*al-ṣirāt*), the bridge that rises from the Earth of the Resurrection to the walls of paradise, which he identifies with the fourth waystation of the Resurrection and he will represent

36 The relationship of this image to human society and the passage of time is clearer in the text, where Ibn al-‘Arabī ends the section by offering the circle of justice, which envisions human society as a similar interrelated cycle, in poetic form.

37 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1848 155^b–156^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 2:212–214. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 1:315.

again in image 22 (Plate 2.21 left). He roots the image in Q 6:153, “This is my straight path, so follow it ...” writing that, “when the messenger of God recited this verse, he drew a line, then drew lines next to it like this,” referring to image 5 (Plate 2.5).³⁸ His discussion continues to talk about how humanity will be divided into those who will fall off the Path into the punishment of hell, those whose punishment is simply trying to cross the bridge, and those who cross it successfully.

The shift from a representation of all “revealed paths” to the particular path of Muḥammad, appropriately placed near the end of this journey (as the Seal of the Prophets), roots visual representation in Muḥammad’s Shari’a, complementing Ibn al-‘Arabī’s interpretation of *mathal* in the Qur’an as visual representation. Note here that he not only refers to the hadith, but also reproduces the act it refers to, infusing the text with the Prophetic presence while also situating his own visual representation in a chain reaching back to the Prophet.

Outside of its discursive meaning, the image is, in a sense, a reduced version of the upper half of the previous image. The text, circles, and quadrants have disappeared and only the lines that vertically fall from the upper curve remain. Numerically, there are seven lines here, one step closer to unity from the previous eight.

Image 6

The next image (Plate 2.6), the last in this journey, shifts to a circle split into four quadrants (four steps closer to the origin). The image’s formal continuity with the previous image is in the straight lines of the cross that mark the body of the circle, which together bring the circle back into focus. Situated in Chapter 73, it is part of a larger discussion of the ranks of humanity and the Qur’anic “friends of God” (Q 10:62), a term which includes groups that are not equal, but are interdependent. He again uses a circle (like image 4/Plate 2.4) to illustrate such a relationship.

The circumference of this circle consists of curved Arabic script that marks four ranks of human beings, reading counterclockwise from the upper right “the Prophets (*al-nabīyyūn*), the Truthful (*al-ṣiddīqūn*), the Witnesses (*al-shu-*

38 This is a reference to a hadith in *Sunan ibn Māja*, Book 1, Bāb 1, Ḥadīth 11. There is another hadith, found in Bukhārī, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Māja, wherein the Prophet also draws a square in the sand. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book 81, Bāb 4, Ḥadīth 6493 and *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Book 33, Bāb 22, Ḥadīth 2642, and with different wording *Sunan ibn Māja*, Book 38, Bāb 27, Ḥadīth 4372.

hadā'), and the Righteous (*al-ṣāliḥūn*).³⁹ This is taken from Q 4:69, “Whoever obeys God and the Messenger is with those whom God has blessed—the Prophets, the Truthful, the Witnesses, the Righteous—what beautiful companions are they.” There is an ascent in station from the lower right quadrant to the upper right quadrant, visually arguing that the end of Prophecy is righteousness, and all the Prophets are righteous, even if not all the righteous are prophets.

As a representation of the furthest limits of human becoming, which itself is a further allusion to the Qur’anic verse about creation’s final homecoming, we reach the end of our hypothesized first journey. As a cycle, this journey began in Him, with the formal opening of being and its articulation through the shapes of the Arabic alphabet, moved to the circular and cyclical process of hierarchical differentiation that marks creation, then switched to the specific language of Islam, rooting visual representation in the Sunna while ending in the goal of human becoming, friendship with God. This friendship is most perfectly embodied in the person of the Prophet. In other words, this first journey, by resulting in the ultimate guide, is the means through which the second journey, the journey *to* God, is possible.

5 The Second Journey

Image 7

Image 7 is a use of text as image that is lost in most published editions of the *Futūḥāt*, including the most recent edition. Situated in Chapter 177, Ibn al-‘Arabī offers eighty three of “the most beautiful names of God” (Q 59:24), collected from the Qur’an and Hadith, writing that this is as “it was transmitted from our shaykhs from their shaykhs” (Plates 2.7–8).⁴⁰ These names are arranged in a grid that is situated on two sides of the same folio and, despite the page break, the grid reads horizontally and diagonally in both directions.

39 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1855, 110^b–111^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 4:330. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:26–27.

40 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1859, 80^b–82^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 5:553. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:302–303. Elsewhere he talks about the ninety-nine names, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 173–175. I admit that this is the hardest section to present as an image because, like any other premodern text in Arabic script, scribes play with spacing to mark changes in types of text frequently. There are some places in the *Futūḥāt* where Ibn al-‘Arabī plays with text in a similar way, such as in Safar 5 (MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1849, fols. 101^a–102^b), but after going through the manuscripts several times I still believe that this particular use is meant to function as a type of visual representation.

This recalls the multidirectional and circular nature of reality and serves as a tool for committing these names to the imagination, encapsulating them in a form that can be recalled when needed.

To receive the totality of the “most beautiful names” as they are configured in the revealed sources of Islam prepares the reader for another journey, now from the perspective of Muḥammad’s specific revelation. This is the journey to God, wherein the revealed book opens the cosmic book to help the seeker see that the phenomenal world is nothing but the names of God, the “meanings” behind the “forms” of the world. In this regard, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s preservation of the “form” of this transmission at the expense of textual continuity serves to incorporate the reader into the same chain. The reader’s receipt of this form connects them visually to the Prophet through Ibn al-‘Arabī preparing them for their second journey. Thus, the next four images are concrete visual manifestations of metaphysical realities.

Image 8

The next image is found in Chapter 188, “On Knowledge of the Station of Visions, that is, Glad Tidings,” and it is of “the Horn,” (Plate 2.9) which is the means through and the place in which creation happens.⁴¹ He plays on the linguistic similarity between the horn that marks the Day of Resurrection, *al-ṣūr*, and “form” (*ṣūra*) to establish it as an image of everything other than God, representing the totality of the imaginal world where forms can be seen.⁴² God, as “the Real,” blows into it from the bottom and all worlds appear in its body until reaching, at the top, the corporeal world where forms are constantly entering and leaving.⁴³ The image of God blowing on the horn recalls not only the aforementioned horn of the day of Resurrection but also the “Breath of the All-Merciful,” a key concept in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s cosmology. He also identifies the Breath as the first existent thing and the place of creation where things come to be as “words” or “letters” (*ḥarf*), articulations on the breath of God.

As a depiction of the entirety of the imaginal world, it is also where every articulated name and entity acquires an image. In this regard, its continuity with the previous image emerges, the horn is the medium through which the

41 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1860, 76^b–77^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 6:113. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:375–380.

42 For more on the Imaginal World see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 112–121.

43 For more on the horn and an interesting adaptation of this diagram, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 14–16.

previous array of the names of God take form. While the names, inasmuch as they belong to God, are prior to all existent things, they penetrate the forms of the horn and constitute the very makeup of the imaginal world. Every name, in this regard, has an imaginal form that is instantiated in concrete existence through the breath that blows through the horn. Note also that the previous array in image 8 ended with a shorter row that leaned to the right, and this depiction of the horn similarly shortens in width towards the lower right.

Image 9

After representing the entire cosmos as the imaginal world, the next three images all relate to imaginal forms of the names of God. The first of these occurs appropriately in Chapter 189, “On Knowledge of the Breath,” where Ibn al-‘Arabī explains the relationship of God’s engendering command to the aforementioned “Breath of the All-Merciful.”⁴⁴ The cosmos, he explains, is nothing but “the words of God,” but while these words all have the same relationship to the Breath, they differ from each other in relation to their own excellence (*tafāḍul*). He cites the example of the Qur’an, writing that while all scriptures are the words of God, the Qur’an is the most excellent among them, and even within the Qur’an, some parts are more excellent than others. Chief among these “more excellent” words is the first half of the Muslim testimony of faith, “there is no god but God,” which is the declaration of unity (*tawḥīd*). Ibn al-‘Arabī comments on thirty-six different ways this testimony is articulated in the Qur’an. Image 9 (Plate 2.10) occurs in the twenty-third of these, “declaring unity through choice” (*tawḥīd al-ikhtiyār*): “And He is God; there is no god but He. His is the praise in the first and in the last; His too is the rule and to Him you will return” (Q 28:70).⁴⁵ This articulation, he explains, allows for the aforementioned hierarchical differences in the cosmos.⁴⁶

In keeping with the theme of this cycle, after remarking that God’s wisdom is not achieved through discursive knowledge, he writes that he was overcome by a vision while writing this section. The image is a depiction of what he saw—an unfurled scroll whose ends he couldn’t see. The top label says “width,” the left label says “length,” and the two remaining labels indicate an empty space

44 The continuity in topic even as the chapters jump forward is further proof that the sequence of images has a continuity irrespective of the text. For more on the Breath, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 125–127.

45 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1860, 147^b–148^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 6:210–213. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:416–417.

46 For a translation and in-depth analysis of this section and image see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 192–193.

between written columns. The unlabeled columns mark where there was writing on the scroll in the vision, and the labels mark the wide empty spaces between them.

This image is the first in a series of vivid visionary experiences. He describes the details of this scroll in the narrative: its width was more than twenty cubits, its length seemed endless (hence why it is not enclosed in its representation), when he read it, it looked like white parchment. When he didn't read it, it looked like green cloth. And as he looked at it, a voice said to him, "This is a divine dowry for your wife," a statement that caused him surprise because she had not asked for her dowry nor had they divorced, the two conditions where the giving of dowry would be obligatory in Islamic law. Still, he was overcome by joy upon hearing that and a piece of green silk emerged from the scroll "as if it came to be from it." Within it, there were a thousand heavy gold coins. He was commanded to distribute the coins to those "with a right to them," five to each person, and the first five he extracted were covered in a light brighter "than the brightest star in heaven." He then noticed that the scroll was his wife and that he was lying fully on her, completely supported by her body. He turned to the writing on the scroll and saw that it was their dowry agreement in rhymed prose, written in the handwriting of a judge he knew in Aleppo. As he read it, he returned to his senses and saw that he had finished writing this section in a way that was identical with his vision. The prominence of his wife in this passage, he explains, was because she had "a greater share in it" than he did, and he ends the passage reflecting on his wife's name, *Maryam*, its meaning, and Mary's role as the bearer of the word of God.

This image, as the imaginal form of the aforementioned expression of *tawhīd*, relates to free choice. Freedom is the means through which hierarchical difference appears in the cosmos as difference is based on excellence, the result of one's choices. As an image that shifts from a dowry scroll to a bed to his own wife, it plays on themes related to free choice in the world. To give a wife her dowry without divorce "frees" one of the obligation to provide a dowry; and since it was neither demanded or needed, it was an act relating to freedom. Furthermore, marriage is for Ibn al-'Arabī (and the Islamic tradition in general) one of the most crucial aspects of human life, and one wherein human choice plays a large role.⁴⁷ The prominence of his wife in this passage and her connection with Mary plays on notions of macrocosmic marriage, the original and meta-physical marriages that lead to the world of creation and difference.⁴⁸ The color

47 The full significance of marriage for the Islamic intellectual tradition, and Ibn al-'Arabi in particular, is laid out in Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 171–202.

48 See Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 143–170.

play of green and white relates to issues of the levels of excellence—green is the color of the highest station right before prophethood, the station of being truthful (*ṣiddīqiyya*, cf. image 6), and white is the color of the name of *Allāh* and the highest of the created lights.⁴⁹

The formal continuity with the previous image is in the open bottom which, when compared to the open top of the horn, builds on the image of “blowing” into creation. The use of five rows could relate to the “Five Divine Presences” (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyya al-khamsa*)—representing the five “places” where God can be “found,” (1) Himself, (2) the spiritual, (3) the imaginal, (4) the corporeal, and lastly, (5) the perfect human being.⁵⁰ In terms of shape, the movement is from an array that could be followed through multiple lines to a triangle in the previous image and now a quadrilateral. Furthermore, as an image of marriage and, by extension, sexual union, its similarity to a bedspread comes to the fore. This is of particularly relevance in this journey which will continue, in at least the next three images, this conjugal imagery. Since the Names are the fabric of the actual world, their images must also be concrete and tangible things.

Image 10

The next image (Plate 2.11) was discussed at the beginning of this study, the image of the “outward of the Divine He-ness and its inward” (*ẓāhir al-hurwiyya al-ilāhiyya wa-bāṭini-hā*) which “should not be changed” when copied since it was based on direct vision. This occurs under his explanation of the name, “The Clear” (*al-mubīn*). In the narrative of that section, he further described the image, writing that he saw it as a white light with eight layers of light, “four in the direction of spirit, four in the direction of form,” on a spreading red background whose edges “are not it but are also not other than it.”⁵¹ The color symbolism here relates to the Essence, whose primary manifestation, the name *Allāh*, is white and whose reflection is red.⁵² The fourfold and eightfold

49 For green as the color of *ṣiddīqiyya* see *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 4:520. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:91; for the interplay of white, green, and red light see Michel Chodkiewicz, “The Vision of God According to Ibn ‘Arabi,” *The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 14 (1993): 53–67.

50 William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 5. Of course, five can be many other things too, like the “Five Descents,” the five “marriage acts” that Ibn al-‘Arabi’s students identified building on his work and Ibn al-‘Arabi doesn’t specify in a single list. On the Five Descents, see Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 194.

51 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1861, 57^b–58^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 6:309. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:444–449.

52 Chodkiewicz, “The Vision of God According to Ibn ‘Arabi.”

layers relate to the creation of the first body and “shape” through which all other bodies exist, the product of the first cosmic marriage.⁵³

The image is a triangle with a loop in which is written the word “*Huwa*” (“He” or “He is”), which is used to indicate God’s essence. The Arabic letter *h* is written in a stylized hand whose two circles are proportioned to be mirror images of each other. The formal continuity with the previous image is in the progression of the shape—here we have reached the place of the circle (four in fact), and even the triangle in this image has a loop. This loop allows another reading for the triangle, the Arabic word “*lā*,” meaning no/not. The significance of this is essential to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s cosmology—everything that exists is both “He” (*huwa*) and “not He” (*lā huwa*) and this is the primary way to understand the totality of the imaginal world.⁵⁴ This is also how Ibn al-‘Arabī explains visions of God in general, and is the ultimate manifestation of God’s simultaneous similarity and difference from all things.

As alluded to in the explanation of image 9 (Plate 2.10), the imagery of gardening as creation that was implicit in the first journey (spade, seed, blossom) has been replaced with the imagery of marriage in the second journey, progressing from the bedspread to this image, whose interpenetration imparts a sense of conjugal union. The vision he has is not just of the Essence, but how the Essence comes to give birth to the imaginal and corporeal worlds. The reason this is the imaginal form of “the Clear” is related to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s notion of the meaning of the sexual act: by uniting two split halves (male and female) of the original human unity, it is the ultimate means to “see things as they are” and witness the most complete self-disclosure of God, in both its “inward” and “outward.”⁵⁵

Image 11

In the 38th subsection of the same chapter, he shares the imaginal form of the divine name, “Raiser of Degrees, Possessor of the Throne.”⁵⁶ In explaining the “degrees” that God raises, he writes that the image of this name is a bucket and rope in a well (Plate 2.12). He draws this image in the margin, depicting even the slackness of the rope and the ring to which the rope is attached. It is labelled

53 On body as anything with at least eight points see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 229.

54 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 116.

55 Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 190–195.

56 MS Istanbul Evkaf Müzesi 1861, 95^b–96^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 6:360–363. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:468–470.

“the rope” and “the bucket.” The “raising” in this name is towards “nearness to God,” symbolized by the rope. The imagery of a rope is from a Hadith, “If you let down a rope, it will fall upon God,” which Ibn al-‘Arabī interprets as meaning that God encompasses everything.⁵⁷ The bucket represents the “degrees,” marking the “specific place and portion” of each and every thing. As discussed earlier, for Ibn al-‘Arabī, all created things are words of God that differ only in relative excellence, and these words have concrete imaginal forms which allow the phenomenal world to exist.

The formal continuity from the previous images is in the shifted triangular shape, whose apex was towards the right in image 8 (Plate 2.9), towards the left in image 10 (Plate 2.11), and now at the top in this image. The knot has moved down over the bucket, marking where the rope is tied to it. Its relation to the theme of the previous two images is also evident—a bucket is a receptive object, you drop it down to bring water higher. God is both the top and the bottom, while creatures are in between at different stations. The image of entering and pulling out builds on the conjugal theme of the previous two names, as is the resulting differentiation from this act of union. The shifting perspectives in this journey is meant to show that God is both behind, in front, at the bottom, and at the top of each image and humanity is always in the middle. The journey to God, as it develops in this cycle, is simply the realization of humanity’s perpetually intermediate status.

Image 12

The next image occurs at the beginning of Chapter 260, titled “On Knowledge of Nearness (*qurb*), which is abiding through acts of obedience. They ascribe this to and mean by it the nearness of ‘two bows ...’ (Q. 53:9) that is, the two arcs of a circle when it is bisected by a line, ‘or closer.’”⁵⁸ The image (Plate 2.13), an obvious referent for the text as a circle bisected by a line, is not mentioned by Ibn al-‘Arabī with his usual “in the margin.” Its placement, though, is in the margin directly at the end of the first couplet of the poem that starts the chapter:

When you bisect a sphere with a line there appears
Two bows—this is the nearness of the Real—so take perspective!

57 For this and a discussion of circularity see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 224. The hadith is found in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Book 43, Bāb 56, Ḥadīth 3611.

58 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1862, 126^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 6:624. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 2:558.

The word I translate as “take perspective,” the command form of *i’tibār*, can also mean “take heed” but, in this context, has the sense of take a standpoint, view, or to cross-over from one place to another. In this regard, it is clear that this placement is intentional, and it calls the reader to “take perspective” and then see the image, through which they can contemplate that “nearness” is a matter of perspective as the Real encloses and permeates all. He starts the chapter with Q 50:16, “We are nearer to him than the jugular vein,” remarking that this is meant to ascribe nearness to the servant so that they learn to “be with the Real forever in whatever form He discloses Himself ... [they] never cease witnessing nearness continuously, since they never cease witnessing forms within themselves and outside of themselves, and that is nothing but the self-disclosure of the Real.”⁵⁹

The formal continuity of the bisected circle recalls the last image of the previous sequence, image 6 (Plate 2.6), an appropriate allusion to the perfect human being who is the subject of this section too. It encapsulates the discussion of this entire section, namely that the summation of the conjugal return is the union of two in one or, rather, the realization that two were never separate from one. It is a closing of what was open in the previous images and which will open again in the next, continuing the dynamism of this journey while reminding that the human is not only situated within the imaginal intermediate reality, but is it.

Image 13

The next image occurs in Chapter 297 in a discussion of the ascents and descents of paradise and hell.⁶⁰ The image (Plate 2.14) is drawn without the use of any tools and takes up a full page. The labels in the image are written from multiple different perspectives, encouraging the reader to move the book. Keeping the normal orientation of the page, the upper half represents paradise and the lower half represents hell. The lines mark stairways, and the descending stairs of hell descend lower than the ascending stairs of paradise. The point where the stairs and steps start is not drawn.

The purpose of this map is to illustrate that the people of paradise and hell end up in their respective places by obeying or rejecting the same things. The line in the middle of the image is labeled *al-A‘rāf*, the mountain-like wall that separates paradise from hell in the hereafter. Ibn al-‘Arabī connects it with

59 This is Chittick’s translation. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 366. See also Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 233.

60 Ms Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1864, 73^b–74^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Mansūb, 7:306. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā‘irī et al., 2:679–682.

Q 57:13, remarking that its “inward is mercy and its outward is chastisement.” The lines above the wall are the ascending stairs of paradise, and the lines beneath the wall are the descending steps of hell. Every ascent in paradise has a parallel descent in hell relating to acts of obedience to God. At the top, from left to right, the image reads “Ascending Stairs of Faith (*al-īmān*) in the Hajj,” “Ascending Stairs of Faith in the Fast of Ramadan,” “Ascending Stairs of Faith in Alms,” “Ascending Stairs of Faith in the Ritual Prayer,” and the “Ascending Stairs of the Declaration of Unity of the Highest Paradise (*‘illīyyūn*).”⁶¹ This marks the highest part of the diagram at the upper right with the lowest at the lower right. Thus, each ascending path is also labeled “Descent.” The descending stairs at the bottom are all labeled “the Descending Stairs of Unfaithfulness (*al-kufr*) to it,” where “it” refers to the above act of obedience except for the rightmost, which reads “the Descending Stair of Ascribing Partners [to God]” (*al-shirk*). The leftmost stairs in hell read “Ascent” only, although the other side of the same line and every other stairwell of hell is labeled “Descending and Ascending Stairs.”

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s image of paradise and hell are not only inverted but connected. Were it not for the wall, the paths would lead from the depths of hell to the heights of paradise. Continuing the conjugal theme, he uses what he calls “the Mothers,” the obligatory actions of Islam, to show this.⁶² The formal continuity with the previous image is in the line of the bucket, which was used to show the different ranks and degrees of humanity. It has now multiplied with branches to show the final ranking and degrees based on humanity’s actions, the fruit of one’s aforementioned “free choice.” Note also the continuity of shape from image 10 (Plate 2.11), except whereas that triangle’s apex was closed and its end open, this triangle’s apex is open and its end is closed. This is tied to the role of paradise and hell as the manifestation of God’s mercy and “mercy mixed with wrath,” the descending place of His right and left feet, between which all will find themselves. The image also builds on the previous image (Plate 2.13) whose bisecting line becomes the central line of this image. Just as that described the situation of the perfect, the ability to see the totality of this image is also crucial to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s conception of human perfection, which requires the vision of the totality of God’s face, not just mercy or wrath. In this sense, the middle line corresponds directly to the perfect human being, a representation that will be explicitly shown in images 21–22 (Plate 2.21 right and left). This image is also open to the left, thereby creating a progression from image 8

61 Faith here, of course, means faithfulness to and not simply “belief.”

62 These are also called “the Pillars.”

(Plate 2.9), which was open to the top, image 9 (Plate 2.10), which was open to the bottom, and image 10 (Plate 2.11), which was open to the right. The opening, the triangle, and its triplicity have travelled full circle, reminding the reader that the circle never ceases to be present.

Image 14

The last three images in this journey all consider the full meaning of human intermediacy with the conclusion of the journey to God in the realization that the journey was *in* God all along. All three occur in Chapter 360, titled “On Knowledge of the Waystation of Praiseworthy Darkneses and Witnessed Lights.” Appropriate to the chapter number, the next image (Plate 2.15) is a circle that depicts the state of everything other than God: “possibility.”⁶³ In keeping with basic Muslim theology and philosophy, God is the only Necessary Being and everything other than Him is only a possible thing. Since the only “space” for creation is within God, Ibn al-‘Arabī locates possibility in Necessary Being itself. In explaining this, he writes that “possibility is an ocean whose shores can never be reached” and then offers this image in the margin.⁶⁴

This small depiction of a cosmic ocean consists of a center point labelled “Real,” (*ḥaqq*), in a stylized script that calls to mind image 10 (Plate 2.11), drawing together two depictions of the Essence. The center-point here is fully enclosed, emphasizing that the Essence can never be reached. The center-point of a circle is also the means through which the circle exists, signifying the relationship between Necessary Being and everything else. The outermost circle is the word, “Impossible” (*al-muḥāl*), written in a stretched out manner that is curved into a circle. The impossible refers to that which can never achieve being. As the circumference, the “impossible” not only comes into being through God, but is also God. The word “possible” stretches across the middle circle, indicating that humanity, the locus of possibility, is always between two shores of the same endless reality.

That the stylized “Real” resembles the “He” that was depicted in image 10 (Plate 2.11) helps situate this image in the formal continuity of this cycle, again using the movement from lines, triangles, and quadrilaterals to the circle to

63 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1868, 86^b–87^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 8:520. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā‘iri et al., 3:274–275.

64 For a different rendition of this diagram, based on a different recension, and an in-depth translation and discussion of the whole section see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 228. Akkach also discusses a different rendition of this diagram in Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam*, 69–71.

signify geometric progression as endless journey. Furthermore, the middle line recalls a barrier, invoking both the Qur'anic *barzakh* (the "isthmus" between two seas in Q 50:19–20 which figures largely in Ibn al-'Arabī's work) and the straight line at the center of the previous image, thereby situating the perfect human being as the dividing line between the opposing traits of the Real.

Image 15

The next image in the *Futūḥāt*, in the same chapter, shifts perspective to consider the cosmos as the perfect human being, the ultimate intermediate reality whose being results in the imaginal world (Plate 2.16).⁶⁵ The image says "perfect human being" (*insān kāmil*) on the bottom, and is surrounded by a semi-circle that calls to mind a key bit. The semi-circle could be read as a stylized *Allāh* but is unclear. The three lines may also be the bits. The shank of the key is the perfect human being. Each line represents a desire, the left is desire for bodies (*ajsām*), the right is for the spirits (*arwāḥ*), and the middle is for images (*amthāl*). While the left and right desires are described as being the result of *mayl*, the Arabic word for desire and inclination, the middle desire is described as being essential to the perfect human being's own intermediary essence.

He connects this image to a "specific meaning" that had been again "unveiled" to him, namely, that the perfect human being is the Qur'anic image of the "Keys of the Unseen" (*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*; Q 6:59). In keeping with this journey, he again gives concrete shape to the language of revelation. The perfect human being, as the complete image of God, possesses knowledge and desire, two of the chief traits of God. With these two traits, the perfect human being draws the cosmos out of the Unseen like a key that opens a treasure chest. For this reason, its essence is "the isthmus" or "the imaginal world" as a whole.

This image uses human intermediacy to reemphasize the primacy of image and thereby situate visual representation in a larger cosmology and metaphysics. By using the word *amthāl*, he connects this image to his larger theory of visual representation as divine pedagogy, recalling the Qur'anic verse cited earlier in this study: "these are the *amthāl* God strikes for humanity; none grasps them save the knowers" (Q 29:43). Instead of using the image of the horn, like image 8, it uses the image of a key. Thus, while the horn and the perfect human being are the same reality, they take on different imaginal forms

65 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1868, 95^b–96^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulṭān al-Mansūb, 8:531. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī et al., 3:279–280.

in keeping with shifting perspective. The continuity with the previous image can be seen in the circle at the bottom, and it formally resembles features from previous images, such as the identification of the middle line with the human situation, but with a different orientation, signaling again shifting perspectives. In this regard, its formal features also provide another reading of image 10 (Plate 2.11)—a key and a keyhole.

Image 16

The last image (Plate 2.17) in this cycle, in the same chapter, highlights intermediacy from a perspective that stresses the imaginal nature of the difference between God and creation.⁶⁶ It consists of a circle divided by a straight line in the middle, just like image 12 (Plate 2.13, albeit a bit larger and oblong). The text is written upside down, necessitating turning the manuscript to read it. If one turns the manuscript, the text reads from the bottom “Real” (*ḥaqq*), “separation” (*faṣl*), and “Creation” (*khalq*). This choice to write the text upside down is intentional, as moving the manuscript forces the reader to again realize that what appears at the top or bottom is simply a matter of perspective. By this point, the reader is well aware that the top and bottom are both God, and the goal is to show that the Real remains the Real and creation remains creation, even if they are two halves of the same ultimate principle. This builds on the same notions that were introduced with image 10 (Plate 2.11)—everything is He, nothing is He.

The formal continuity with the previous images, beyond the obvious reflection of image 12, lies in the dividing middle line, which was the “perfect human being” in Image 15 (Plate 2.16). By this point, it is clear that the perfect human being is the separating barrier, the *barzakh*, between the Real (unseen) and creation (seen). As the last image in the second journey, it returns again (after a cycle of pulling closer and further) to the simplicity of the circle, showing that unity is not changed by the imaginal barrier, rather, the imaginal barrier is the very image of God that allows for differentiation within unity. Without it, creation would remain in nonexistence. The conclusion to the journey to God, therefore, is seeing what humans really are and where they’ve always been.

66 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1868, 110^b–111^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 8:551. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:417–418.

6 The Third Journey

Image 17

The next image starts the last cycle, the journey in God, and consists of the most elaborate visual representations in the *Futūḥāt*. The goal in this section is to elaborate what the last cycle ended on: to see things as they truly are, one needs to see with a sight that simultaneously affirms and negates the identity of all things with the Real. Only then will one see that creation has never left the Real. While the complicated nature of these images requires a discussion that is beyond the scope of this chapter, a consideration of the formal continuity between them will be offered.⁶⁷

The goal of the next 11 images, which all occur in Chapter 371, “On Knowledge of the Station of a Secret and the Three Secrets that are of the Tablet, of the Unlettered, and of Muḥammad,” is to teach the reader to always see “with two eyes,” that is, with both negation and affirmation, until they can realize that none sees and none is seen but God. He roots this imagery in the Qur’anic verses, “Have we not made for him two eyes? A tongue and two lips? And guided him on the two broad paths (*al-najdayn*)?” (Q 90:8–10). Ibn al-‘Arabī writes that these refer to two paths, one which is safe and another that is difficult and full of danger. Both paths “arise from one root and end in one root,” but the travelers on the difficult path are “blind” and can only perceive their own path. This is in contrast to the traveler of the safe and easy path who can “see with two eyes,” perceiving even those on the difficult path, for they see the “ends of all paths.”⁶⁸

He illustrates the difference between these two paths in a marginal illustration (Plate 2.18) consisting of two circles that are connected to form an enclosed shape.⁶⁹ As the image is unlabeled, it is difficult to ascertain which path is which, or if the circles or the lines consist of the path. As a quadrilateral and two circles, it clearly resembles many of the previous images we’ve seen. It could be argued that image 16’s single circle, divided in half, has now

67 These images are also covered by Sophie Tyser in Chapter 3 of this volume entitled “Visualizing the Architecture of the Universe: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 638/1240) Diagrams in Chapter 371 of the *Meccan Openings*,” as well as in Ali Karjoo-Ravary, “Mapping the Unseen: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Maps in Chapter 371 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*,” *Journal of Sufi Studies*, published online ahead of print 2022, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341336>.

68 For more on seeing with two eyes see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 361–364.

69 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, fol. 83^b. Most of the publication history has published another image, though it is unclear where that image is sourced from as it does not appear in any of the manuscripts previously mentioned.

been stretched out into two circles, signifying the “expansion” of the imaginal world to allow creation and differentiation. Given the discussion of seeing with “two eyes,” the images similarity to two eyes seems intentional, and the circles, rather than the lines, seem more likely to represent the paths. That only those with two eyes are capable of truly seeing the whole situation, while the “blind” or “one-eyed” see only partially, is the main theme of this whole journey. In this regard, the image’s similarity to a candle, a light that allows one to see, is also noteworthy. The image can also be read as two depictions of the “one root,” the circle, showing that two paths begin and end in the same place, but differentiate in the middle, that is, in this life.

His discussion about the path, image, vision, and seeing, is again used to root his visual representation with God’s pedagogy, thereby preparing the reader to receive the bulk of the *Futūḥāt*’s images. To further this, he identifies the safe path with two hadiths, first, the aforementioned depiction of the Prophet drawing his community’s “path” (*ṣirāt*) in the sand (image 5/Plate 2.5), and another in which Muḥammad says that he has left his community with a “white” or “bright” path (*al-maḥajja al-bayḍā*).⁷⁰ Elsewhere in the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn al-‘Arabī identifies this path with the Shari‘a, understood broadly as the revealed sources and images of Islam, as opposed to independent reasoning (particularly of the rational philosophers and the schools of law).⁷¹ Thus, in another sense, this image of two paths can also represent one that sees discursively, in an abstract way, thus stressing transcendence, and another that sees through unveiling and image, thus stressing similarity and nearness.

Image 18

The next nine images constitute some of the most elaborate visual representation in the *Futūḥāt* which we will only partly consider. At this point, Ibn al-‘Arabī has already covered, both in text and image, the major themes of this section. What he intends to do here is to offer another perspective, and at the end of the section he clarifies that the images, as forms (using *ṣūra* for both), can be explained through other forms, offering prose, rhymed prose, a *qasīda* poem, and an oration as an example of these, each with their own specific “order” (*tartīb*). He calls these images “nine faces (*wujūh*) of visualization/form-giving (*taṣwīr*),” remarking that he would have preferred to offer these nine as a single image. These images make full use of tools like a straight edge and compass, and even use two different ink colors, black and red, though the red has

70 A version of this hadith exists in *Sunan Ibn Māja*, Book 1, Bāb 6, Ḥadīth 45.

71 Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 7:526–533.

significantly faded.⁷² He provides these “likenesses to make their visualization (*taṣawwur*) near to the one who cannot visualize meanings without the striking of an image/likeness (*min ghayr ḍarb mathal*),” again following this justification with multiple “likenesses/images” that God strikes in the Qur’an. This, he writes, will help those “weak of understanding” to draw closer to the way things are.⁷³

This sequence starts with a depiction of “the Cloud” (Plate 2.19), the place of creation within God which Ibn al-‘Arabī identifies with the “Breath of the All-Merciful.”⁷⁴ It is surrounded by the “Enraptured Angels,” the thirty sections around the circle, who know only God, except for one (the triangular shape) who is “the Pen” or “the First Intellect.” This identification of the technical vocabulary of philosophy with the imaginal language of revelation is one of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s main goals in this section. By identifying each discursive reality with a single image, he furthers his own argument that the language of image is unique and superior in its ability to unite opposites and allow the reader to “see with two eyes.” This angel, possessing “three hundred and sixty knowledges” (hence the circle), sits above a quadrilateral labelled “the Tablet” and “the Universal Soul.” Within this tablet there are two circles labelled “the two powers,” corresponding to the two hands of God. This depicts the “first marriage” that produces “Nature,” the smaller quadrilateral in the lower left corner, divided into the four aforementioned basic qualities: hot, cold, dry, and wet. As the daughter of the first marriage, Nature is also the mother of the entire world of possibility, the circle at the bottom labeled, “the Universal Hyle.”

This image contains multiple levels of formal continuity with the previous images. The two circles at the center recall the two circles of the previous image, and given the discussion of seeing with two eyes, reinforce the notion that the root of duality is found within the One itself and it is only through that duality that any other differentiation is possible. The multiple triangles in the image

72 My deepest gratitude to Kristine Rose-Beers, head of conservation at the Chester Beatty who confirmed that the faded brown ink could have been red originally, and indicated that this type of fading, together with the “slight transparency” of the ink is a characteristic of organic colorants. One example of such an ink would have been made by sumac, see Claudia Colini, “‘I tried it and it is really good’: Replicating Recipes of Arabic Black Inks,” in *Traces of Ink: Experiences of Philology and Replication*, ed. Lucia Raggetti (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 138–141. Ibn Bādīs, according to Rose-Beers, also gives a recipe using lac and wallflowers which may also have faded over time. Kristine Rose-Beers, e-mail correspondence, June 4, 2021.

73 Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:297.

74 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 90^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:319. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:421.

recall the earliest triangles, both in the first image as well as in the table of the four qualities that we saw earlier. Like earlier, the sexual imagery here is intentional since this marks the first of a series of unions that bear the cosmos into being.

Image 19

The next image (Plate 2.20 right) moves into the lower circle of the previous image and signals this shift in perspective by labelling the outermost circle, “the aforementioned Universal Hyle.”⁷⁵ The next circle is labelled “the Universal Body” and marks the space wherein all tangible bodies, whether subtle or dense, are located. Within that, there is a circle containing a square, and these two are labelled “the Throne.” The two lines that connect the larger square with the smaller one are labelled “the Two Feet,” which is where the first signs of wrath appear for Ibn al-‘Arabī—before this there was only Mercy.⁷⁶ They touch the final square, labelled “the Footstool.” While the previous image had many shapes that were touching but separate, this image has nested squares within circles. It conveys a sense of looking down at the Throne from above, implying that the “Universal Body” surrounds and hangs down into the center. In contrast to the previous image, which had the Pen and Tablet merely touching, this image suggests penetration.

Image 20

Image 19 to image 26 (Plates 2.20–23) each have a facing image whose features and subjects mirror them. The mirror of image 19, to its left, is image 20 (Plate 2.20 left), which depicts the levels of paradise.⁷⁷ The rectangle surrounding the image is labelled “the aforementioned Footstool,” again signaling a shift in perspective by linking the outermost feature of this image with the innermost feature of the previous image. The Footstool is thus expanded from a square to a rectangle, looking downwards at the levels of paradise. These descend from the outermost circle, “the Sphere of Aṭlas,” which is the “black satin” that encompasses the entire cosmos, towards the innermost circle, “the Starry Sphere.” The

75 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 90^b. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:320. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:422.

76 This is bound to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s interpretation of the hadith, “My mercy takes precedence over my wrath,” leading him to deny any place for wrath when referring to the hands of God. Both hands, right and left, are sheer mercy. Even at this level, he writes that the right foot is mercy and the left is “mercy mixed with wrath.” Pure wrath does not exist.

77 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 91^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:321. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:423.

second outermost circle with twelve divisions represents the zodiac, which Ibn al-‘Arabī calls “the Twelve Imams.”⁷⁸ Formally, this part of the image recalls the image of the “Enraptured Angels” at the beginning of the sequence (one turn of the page away). In relation to that image, the thirty divisions of the three hundred and sixty degrees of the previous circle result in the twelve divisions of this section. The next seven circles are the layers of paradise, labelled with their names as found in the Qur’an. The two diagonal labels cutting across these layers mark a special layer of paradise unique to Muḥammad, *al-wasīla*. Again, the script is oriented in such a way so as to incite the reader to turn the codex. The lowest layer is “the Roof of the Starry Sphere.” In other words, the Sphere of Atlas is the heaven of the Starry Sphere, which is its earth, thereby situating paradise between the stars and the blackness of the night sky. This also establishes a relationship wherein every reality is the “heaven” of what is below and the “earth” of what is above it. Borrowing from the language of a famous hadith, he writes that the dimensions of the Starry Sphere in relation to the Sphere of Atlas is like those of a ring lost in a vast desert.

Image 21

Images 21 and 22 depict the same place, but at two different times. Image 21 (Plate 2.21 right), marks a shift in perspective from a top-down view to a horizontal representation of the current situation of earth.⁷⁹ The outermost circle that surrounds the whole image marks the twenty-eight tropical mansions of the Moon, marking the most important stars in relation to earth (a point that he stresses is *only* because of the passage of the moon, otherwise these stars are not more important than other stars). The outermost feature, again, continues the circular shape seen in image 18 (Plate 2.19) and image 20 (Plate 2.20 left) in this sequence. Numerically, this saw a shift from an outermost circle divided into thirty to twelve and now to twenty-eight quadrants, the sidereal month, thereby marking the progress of different types of time. The arcs correspond to the seven heavens (each with a small dot representing their planet), and the lines beneath them correspond to the seven earths. The innermost arc is earth, and the five smaller arcs within it are the “Five Progenies,” here identified from right to left with, “the minerals, the plants, the perfect human being (centered), the humans, the animals.” The line that runs through the perfect human being is labelled, “the Support,” building on the aforementioned

78 Ibn al-‘Arabī was, of course, a Sunni, and he thus remarks that this sphere is the furthest place those who believe in twelve Imams can reach.

79 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 91^b. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:322. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:424.

theme of centering this figure while also identifying them with the greatest living “friend of God” in Sufi belief, through whom the heavens and the earth are maintained.

Beneath the earths, it says from top to bottom, “Water, Air, Darkness.” While they are below the earths here, Ibn al-‘Arabī earlier remarked that they lie beneath the Throne and Footstool, building on Q 11:7, “His Throne was on the water.” He writes that this water is frozen because the air at the edges of the cosmos is exceedingly cold, and beyond it, there is nothing but darkness. When considered in the context of this whole sequence, it imparts the sense that everything pictured so far is suspended between the Footstool and the water it rests upon, reemphasizing the intermediacy of creation.

Image 22

Image 22 (Plate 2.21 left) marks the transformation of the heavens and the earths into the “Earth of the Resurrection” after the Hour.⁸⁰ The perspective shifts, with what corresponded to the earths and heavens (the previous image) now transformed into the large circle in the lower right of the rectangle. The circle to the left is the lowermost meadow of paradise from which the faithful ascend into paradise proper. The line in the middle is the wall of *al-A‘rāf* that separates paradise from hell and on which death will be slaughtered in the next world, marked by the small circle in the center of the line. The half circle at the top is “the Pool” from which the Faithful will drink, and the full circle to its right is the “Praiseworthy Station” belonging to Muḥammad. The eight-pointed star at the top represents the Throne of God, which was a quadrilateral, but is now depicted in its “descended” form. Ibn al-‘Arabī writes that with the descent of the Throne, God’s right foot descends into paradise and His left foot descends into hell. The circle directly below the Throne is “the Spirit” (*al-rūḥ*).

The smaller circles to the right and left represent where those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds (to the left of the image corresponding to the right hand of God) and those whose evil deeds outweigh their good deeds (to the right of the image corresponding to the left hand of God). The imbalance in the scale is intentional as good deeds weigh more than evil ones. The smaller circle at the bottom corresponds to those who sold God’s signs in life, and thus the book of their deeds is behind them. The rectangle that encompasses everything else is labelled “the Earth of Gathering.” The four step shapes are

80 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 92^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:323. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:425.

labelled “the Safe Ones” (*al-āminūn*) and refer to those who will be shielded from the horrors of the Day of Judgment in minbars enveloped with light. The seven lines around the lower part of the image correspond to the angels of each heaven, standing in rank at attention.

The whole image mimics the layout of a court, marking the moment where God will descend as “the King” for judgment. The formal continuity with the previous image is in the line at the center, a correspondence that is clear when looking at the bifolio. Just as the perfect human being is the cosmic pillar that keeps the heavens and the earth from collapsing, in the next world, as mentioned previously, perfect human beings are between paradise and hell so that they may see the totality of God’s face, not just one aspect of it. Note also the anthropomorphism of this image, with the circles forming the rough outline of a body, a point that will be further clarified in the coming images.

Image 23

Image 23 (Plate 2.22 right) is an image of hell, which Ibn al-‘Arabī identifies with the transformed heavens and earths.⁸¹ The perspective has shifted into the lower right-hand circle of the previous image. The center of this image is its highest point, labelled “The Veil” and “the Heart,” which he identifies with the locked gates of hell at *al-A‘raf*.⁸² This innermost circle is veiled and blocked off, reflecting the relationship of the inhabitants of hell to the higher planes of being. There are seven levels to hell outside of the inner circle and the small circles with dots in their centers represent the gates of their walls. The vertical labels are the names of hell from the Qur’an, repeated twice from edge to center on each side. The horizontal labels, written in a way that requires moving the codex, mark the body parts on which God has mandated obedience, also repeated from edge to center on each side. The top and right labels are accompanied with an extended text that cuts through the layers reading “the Outward” (*al-ẓāhir*) and the bottom and left labels are accompanied with an extended text that cuts through the layers reading “the Inward” (*al-bāṭin*). The text at the top of the vertical column reads “The Outer Levels of the Gates

81 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 92^b. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:324. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:426.

82 This label is ambiguous for multiple reasons. Given that the vertical and horizontal labels are two different sequences, one of the Qur’anic names for hell and the other of the parts of the body, I am reading it as two different terms. *Al-Ḥijāb*, “the Veil,” continues the Qur’anic imagery, and *al-Qalb*, “the Heart,” continues the bodily imagery. At the same time, *ḥijāb al-qalb* is a medical term for either the walls of the heart or what separates the heart from the rest of the chest. I thank my colleague Giovanni Maria Martini for this observation.

of the Fire” (*marātib abwāb al-nār al-zāhira*) and the text at the bottom of the vertical column reads “The Suprasensory Levels of the Gates of the Fire” (*marātib abwāb al-nār al-ma‘nawiyya*). The horizontal labels read “the Parts of Outer Obligation [to the Law]” (*a‘dā’ al-taklīf al-zāhira*) on the left and “the Parts of Inner Obligation [to the Law]” (*a‘dā’ al-taklīf al-bāṭina*) to the right. The circling text between the labels around the circumference quotes Q 7:17, where Satan says, “Then I will come upon them from before them, from behind them, from their right hands, and from their left hands,” split into four parts starting from “before them” in the upper right, “behind them” in the upper left, “right hands” in the lower left, and “left hands” in the lower right. The text that stretches across the levels diagonally in four sections, reads “the Hypocrite” (*al-munāfiq*) in the upper right, “the Lie” (*al-kidhb*) in the upper left, “the Liar” (*al-kadhhdhāb*) in the lower left, and *al-shirk* (“partnering others with God”) in the lower right.

Ibn al-‘Arabī uses this image to argue that hell is nothing more than the transformed heavens and earth, meaning that images 21–23 (Plate 2.21 right and left and Plate 2.22 right) show the same place from three different perspectives, mapping its progression in the cosmic hierarchy. After the earth’s transformation into hell, it becomes the inverse of paradise as represented in image 20 (Plate 2.20 left). For instance, the center of image 20 was its lowest point, whereas the center of this image is its highest point. The vertical column in image 20 listed, on both sides, the Qur’anic names of paradise, and the vertical column in this image lists the Qur’anic names of hell on both sides, and the diagonal lines that cut across mimic Muḥammad’s special level of paradise. The difference is that this image has a full horizontal column (which is meant to be read as a vertical column, with its own diagonal, once the reader moves the book). This formally calls to mind the transformed Throne of image 22 (Plate 2.21 left), but whereas it had shifted forty-five degrees in that image, it has shifted ninety degrees in this one. This imparts a dynamism to these images that marks, in a sense, the passage of time.

The inverse relationship with image 20 (Plate 2.20 left) means that, unlike image 21 and 22 (Plate 2.21 right and left), this image nests perfectly (in terms of perspective and formal continuity) inside image 20, envisioning the inverse relationship between paradise and hell as a concave shape whose top and bottom reflect one another. Furthermore, this mirroring relationship between the two has already been shown from other perspectives—in image 13 (Plate 2.14), where the continuity between the two was emphasized, and in image 21 (Plate 2.21 right), where their place in the cosmic balance in relation to the perfect human being was emphasized. And given the relationship of the two to God’s hands and feet, it in fact started in image 18 (Plate 2.19), where God’s two hands (note the formal similarity of two circles on a rectangular plane as well as a rect-

angle with two diagonals beneath it) marked the beginning of differentiation and in image 19 (Plate 2.20 right), where we see the first image of the Throne with two lines marking “the Two Feet,” which then move down and rest in paradise and hell.

Image 24

Ibn al-‘Arabī continues in image 24 with another shift in perspective, moving out from hell to consider the totality of the situation in regards to ontological and temporal progression (Plate 2.22 left).⁸³ “The Fire” that was just illustrated in detail becomes the small circle in the lower right. The top of the circle represents the ontological beginning, starting with the top-most circle labelled “the Living,” the leader of all Divine Names by virtue of the necessity of life over any other attribute. Then, horizontally, four more names are depicted from right to left, “the Knower,” “the Powerful,” “the Desirer,” and “the Speaker.” Once these are established, they result in the next two vertical names, “the Governor” and “the Differentiator.” Ibn al-‘Arabī signals the beginning of creation through this name, leading to the first pair of names, “the Bestower” to the right and “the Just” to the left. This corresponds to all the other complementary pairs that mark the difference between the right and left of God—mercy and wrath, gentleness and severity, etc. This is because the Bestower gives without question and the Just gives only what one deserves.

The differentiation that happens at “the beginning” allows for the birth of “the Abode of the World,” the large circle in the center, surrounded by “the Isthmus,” (*al-barzakh*), marking the intermediary world of images that not only lies between the non-corporeal and the fully corporeal, but also between this world and the next.⁸⁴ The circle that touches the bottom of these larger, nested circles, reads “the Earth of the Gathering,” as the Day of Judgment is born of these two and marks when they become one—in other words, there is no distinction between “Seen” and “Unseen” on that day because, in the words of Q 50:22, “Your sight that day is piercing.” The events of that day, which according to Q 70:4 lasts fifty thousand years, lead to the splitting of creation into “the Fire” in the lower right and “the Garden” in the lower left. It is important to emphasize that the uneven nature of the two, with “the Garden” lower down, is intentional.⁸⁵ As we have seen in previous images, God is both the top and the

83 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 93^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:325. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:427.

84 On the Isthmus see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 331–339.

85 A point missed by the entire publication history.

bottom. Hell is closer to the world because it still shares some of its distance from God, whereas paradise, for Ibn al-‘Arabī, is always a step closer.

It should be clear by now that the abstract anthropomorphism of this image is in keeping with Ibn al-‘Arabī’s general approach to visual representation. It also calls to mind the imagery of image 22 (Plate 2.21 left), particularly the circles marking the books, a correspondence that can be clearly seen when one pages back to the previous image. The facing image encourages the reader to associate the two centers with one other, and the association of the center labelled “the heart” and “the veil” in image 23 (Plate 2.22 right) connects the present world to those concepts, both as a veil on reality as well as the place where the heart is still capable of turning. The continuation of the crossing lines from the previous image coupled with the circles in this image highlight other unarticulated correspondences—“the Fire,” as the abode of Justice, corresponds to the name that is diagonally across from it, not directly above it. Similarly, “the Garden” sits diagonally across from “the Bestower.” If the two differentiating names correspond, as Ibn al-‘Arabī mentioned earlier, to the two feet of God, and these feet descend into paradise and hell, the image also gives a sense of God turning, just like the cosmos itself. The orientation of the top half of the image (above the world) is towards the top, representing the origin, with the right foot to the right and the left foot to the left, and the orientation of the bottom (below the world) is towards the bottom, with the right foot (paradise) on the left and the left foot (hell) on the right. This is a “turning of the face” from origin to return that imparts a sense of dynamism to the static image while signifying everlasting change. The open-endedness of this change is furthered by the depiction of paradise as a step ahead of hell. I use the word step intentionally, as Ibn al-‘Arabī plays with the similarity between the Arabic word for “foot” (*qadam*) and “eternity” (*qidam*). The image is open towards the next step: what lies in and beyond paradise, which is described in the hadith as “what no eye has ever seen.”⁸⁶

Image 25

Image 25 (Plate 2.23 right) moves deep into the lower left hand circle to a place in Eden (the highest level of paradise) where vision becomes the primary means of experiencing reality for most of creation. It is labelled “the image of the Dune (*al-kathīb*) and the levels of creation in it.”⁸⁷ The Dune is a place

86 From a widely reported hadith, for one example see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book 59, Bāb 8, Ḥadīth 3280.

87 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 93^b. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:326. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā‘irī et al., 3:428.

in Eden where “God resides” in His citadel as “the King,” accompanied by His chosen friends. After judgment and intercession are finished, the people of paradise will be invited to this citadel to see God’s face. The image is meant to be a map of how that unveiling of God’s face will be experienced, divided into four sections that mark the differing places of the people in it. The center is labelled, “the Essential Gardens” (*al-jannāt al-dhātīyya*) and is the point of orientation for each quadrant, which mark the different groups of humanity. The right quadrant is labelled “the Messengers” and contains the image of a pulpit, the top quadrant is labelled “the Prophets” and contains the image of a throne or chair, the left quadrant is labelled “the Friends” and contains the image of a footstool, and the bottom quadrant is labelled “the Faithful,” marked by a straight line that signifies their rows on foot. While there is a hierarchy here, the distinction between the Messengers and Prophets is less clear than the distinction between them and the Friends and Faithful. The imagery invokes the furniture and placement of a mosque, except the orientation is towards the center, not a qibla wall (similar to the mosque in Mecca, the “house of God” on earth). While this image marks the moment everyone in paradise will finally see the face of God, Ibn al-‘Arabī writes that it also marks the moment after which God’s face will be continuously and constantly unveiled, encompassing even the people of hell in the second and third unveilings. This is because with the first unveiling, mercy overcomes all things, even hell and its inhabitants.

In terms of formal continuity, many of the shapes in this image, and the general sense of a court, reflect image 21, but on a smaller scale. The circular and simpler nature of this suggests greater intimacy, which is in keeping with the theme of this image (mercy over justice). The theme of mirroring is continued as the diagonal lines look like the lines in hell, as a quick turn of the page back demonstrates.

Image 26

Image 26 (Plate 2.23 left), the last image in this sequence of nine images, is labelled “the form of the cosmos, all of it, the ordering of its layers, spiritual and corporeal, high and low.”⁸⁸ The only label in this image is a series of numbers in the top left “six and seven and seven and eight.” This adds up to twenty-eight, the letters of the Arabic alphabet, recalling the notion that the entire cosmos is articulated on God’s breath as depicted in image 18 (Plate 2.19).

88 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 94^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:327. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 3:429.

The primacy of image allows us to read this image in multiple ways, thereby avoiding the limits that discourse places on perspective. The number of layers, for instance, depend on how one counts them. There are twenty-three circles including the center circle, which is itself divided into four quadrants. For these to add up to twenty-eight layers one would have to include each quadrant in the numbering as well as the center point, which is a feasible reading. If we follow the cosmic layering offered in this series, there are two ways of reading this image—starting from the seven earths counting all the way up to the Universal Hyle, where all bodies take shape, there are twenty-two layers. This would mark the center circle with the four quadrants as “Nature” with its four fundamental qualities. The center circle would then be “the Tablet,” and the center dot “the Pen.” One could also read the center as the human on earth, the four quadrants representing the four elements, then all the layers up to the Cloud. The ambiguity of this image and these multiple readings are intentional and are, in actuality, one of the advantages of visual representation over discourse.

Interestingly, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s explanation of this section does not refer to the image, thereby bringing its visual elements to the fore as the reader is forced to interpret it in light of the rest of the sequence. In fact, it is its formal continuity with its facing image that leads to its most profound aspect, an aspect that is almost completely lost in its reception history. The center of this image is formally the same as the center of its facing image in “the Dune,” except slightly rotated. If the culminating point of the previous image was the continuous and endless unveiling of God’s face, this image of the cosmos is in fact an image of the cosmos as God’s face. When used as an object of contemplation, the bi-folio featuring the two facing images reveal two eyes looking back at the reader, separated only by the line where the codex closes. One eye sees difference rooted in similarity, the other eye sees only similarity. The reader now sees “two eyes” in the mirror of the book so that they learn to also see with “two eyes.” Once seen in such a way, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s explanation of this section opens to the reader. He writes,

the cosmos is the totality of all forms/images (*ṣuwar*) that appears in the Cloud ... these *ṣuwar* are the possible things, and their relationship to the Cloud is like the relationship of images to a mirror when they appear to the eyes of someone looking at the mirror. The Real is the sight of the Cosmos (*baṣar al-‘ālam*) and He is the one who sees. He is the one who knows by the possible things, and nothing is perceived except what is in His knowledge from the forms of the possible things. The cosmos appears between the Cloud and the vision of the Real, and what appears in it

leads to the one who is seeing, and that is the Real, so understand and know who you are.⁸⁹

The progression of images now unveils the entire sequence as the reflected image of God into the cosmos. The two pages gaze back at the reader so that they realize that they themselves are the reflection in the mirror. This last image ties the discussion back to image 16 (Plate 2.17), which taught the reader that the clearest path is to “see with two eyes.” When one sees with two eyes, one understands that two-ness comes from their own deficiency, for they are the image in the mirror. Like any reflection in a mirror, they both are and are not the same as what is being reflected. To think themselves any different would be to see duality where there is only unity, and the One who looks into the mirror of the cosmos entertains no duality, His two eyes see as one.

Image 27

Image 27 is the second to last image in the *Futūḥāt* (Plate 2.24) and is situated in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s explanation of the aforementioned sequence of nine images, specifically in his discussion of image 21 (Plate 2.21 right). It is a small marginal illustration of *al-Durāḥ*, the heavenly house which Ibn al-‘Arabī places in the roof of the seventh heaven.⁹⁰ The earthly Ka‘ba, he writes, is a reflection of this heavenly version. The shape includes the *ḥijr* which marks the walls of the original Ka‘ba, which today is only marked off by a low wall that is still circumambulated around.

As this image occurs in the section explaining image 21, the reader is supposed to page back when reading. This highlights the formal continuity of the image—in image 21 the arcs face up towards the heavens, whereas the arc of this Ka‘ba faces down, towards the earth. This illustrates the general principle that everything below mirrors everything above. When seen through the act of flipping back and forth, the image transforms into a rectangle with two arcs at each end. This recalls image 17 (Plate 2.18), the image of the two eyes that preceded the sequence of nine images. This adds another unarticulated layer to this journey: since the imaginal world corresponds to the perfect human being, when one sees with the real two eyes of the cosmos, sight itself becomes the house of God.

89 Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 9:361.

90 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, 111^a.

Image 28

The 28th and final image in the *Futūḥāt* (Plate 2.25) occurs one hundred chapters later. It recalls image 14 (Plate 2.15) and like it, depicts the intermediary status of the human condition. It is situated in Chapter 471, “On Knowledge of the State of the Pole whose Waystation is ‘Say: if you love God, follow me’ (Q 3:31).”⁹¹ Consisting of three concentric circles, its inner circle says “the love of generosity” (*ḥubb al-kirāma*), its middle circle says “the love of the slave” (*ḥubb al-‘abd*), and its outer circle says “the love of solicitude” (*ḥubb al-‘ināya*). Through it, Ibn al-‘Arabī illustrates that human love, “the love of the slave,” is encapsulated by two divine loves. “The love of generosity,” the innermost circle, is the universal bestowal of being from God’s essence, regardless of its recipient’s worthiness for being, and its outermost circle is “the love of solicitude,” the love that is a response to the slave’s voluntary love. He connects the first love to Q 5:54, “He loves them and they love Him,” where the priority of love is with God, and the second love to Q 3:31, “if you love God, follow me, and God will love you,” where the priority of love is with the slave. Even in love, the creative power that lies behind every cycle and beyond, the human remains in its intermediate position.

Ibn al-‘Arabī ends on love because the third journey has no end, but rather continues forever to create new worlds. Love is the perfect image of this, for it is the force that unites two to produce something new. Once one sees with two eyes, with the seeing of the Real, the journey in God continues with God forever towards “what no eye has seen.” Like the end of the previous journey, it ends with a single circle, but instead of a line separating a single circle, it depicts a series of nested circles. Seen in relation to the totality of these images, it becomes clear that the ship that set sail in image 1 (Plate 2.1) still sails in an ocean without shore. The guiding winds of this journey are love, intimately tied to knowledge in the famous hadith that lies at the core of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s cosmology, “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known.” As God is infinite, His love of knowing, which is seeing for Him, continues without end, and the whole saga of origin to return, depicted in full three times throughout the order of visual representation of the *Futūḥāt*, will always continue. This is why image 28, as the image of love, marks humanity’s final and forever homecoming. Once one learns to see with two eyes, an eye that sees similarity and an eye that sees difference, one sees God’s face everywhere, since “wherever you turn, there is the face of God” (Q 2:115). The journeys continue even after two

91 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1874, 59^b–60^a. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 10:435. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī et al., 4:102–104.

become one, except they are characterized with the realization that none sees and none journeys but God.

Conclusion

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s cosmos is one that is forever subject to perspective, and he roots his visual representation in the sources of Islam to show the significance of perspective to its cosmology. He shifts and moves his images until the reader realizes their own position vis-à-vis the image, so that they will realize the perspectival nature of reality itself. Rather than offer a single static cosmic hierarchy, he pushes the limits of how cosmic hierarchy can be articulated in the physical constraints of the world and its media, exploring how the medium itself changes that articulation. This allows us to sketch out a theory of visual representation that emphasizes the minute details of illustration and the influence of a scribe’s hand on the qualitative affect of an image while taking into consideration the tools and materials used for that illustration. Furthermore, it allows us to think of a tradition wherein a simple bifurcation between text and image does not exist, and instead multiple forms of text and image are all different types of visual representation that complement each other while retaining their own independence. In other words, they can explain each other without exhaustion because each conveys something that the others can’t. While a clear theory of visual representation emerges from this, it must still be reiterated that Ibn al-‘Arabī’s representations are not meant to be systematic, rather, by denying these forms any finality in perspective he means to break the hold of any single system. In this sense, when the full force of visual representation is specific to the hand of its writer, each re-representation is a new perspective. While attention to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own recension was the only way we could fully recover his theory of visual representation, once recovered, it can then be used to argue that the unfaithfulness of its reception history is not as problematic as one would assume. Rather, the changing nature of the medium, combined with the scribe’s hand or the printer’s tools, translate the images to forms that are appropriate to their media. For this reason, the most interesting afterlives of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s images are not in its own reception history, but rather in the work of those scholars who, under his influence, continued the language of visual Sufism and articulated it from their own perspective.

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Visualizing the Architecture of the Universe: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 638/1240) Diagrams in Chapter 371 of the *Meccan Openings*

Sophie Tyser

Introduction¹

It is not unusual that the famous Andalusian Sufi master Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (560–638/1165–1240) had recourse, in his writings, to the symbolism of geometric figures in order to express realities of physical or metaphysical nature, insofar as the world is “what exists between the circumference and the point (*al-‘ālam mawjūd mā bayna al-muḥīṭ wa-l-nuqṭa*).”² The depiction of metaphysical principles through the primary forms of geometry, which is not unprecedented in the writings of his Sufi predecessors,³ follows on from an ancient history lying beyond the horizon of Islamic civilization. In Ibn al-‘Arabī’s work, this geometrical symbolism is translated in a verbal mode, but sometimes also in a graphic mode in the form of diagrams elaborated by the Andalusian master himself, and placed either in the margins of his work, or in the body of the text itself.⁴ The act of graphically depicting a teaching in order to facilitate its transmission is not absent from Islamic traditional sources, as testified by certain *ḥadīths* attributed to the prophet Muḥammad, interpreting

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2 Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Uthmān Yaḥyā (Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb), chap. 15, 2:374.

3 Ḥusayn b. Mansūr al-Ḥallāj, *Akḥbār al-Ḥallāj. Recueil d'oraisons et d'exhortations du martyr mystique de l'Islam Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr Ḥallāj*, ed. Louis Massignon (Paris: Librairie philosophique Vrin, 1975), 107.

4 On the symbolism of geometric forms in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s writings, see: Alessandro Bausani, “Note sulla circolarità dell’essere in Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240),” *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 56 (1982): 57–74; and Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006). In the third chapter of this book, Samer Akkach describes certain of the diagrams which are the focus of this article (see pp. 113–147).

the meaning of figures that he drew in the sand to his companions. According to a *ḥadīth* known in different forms:

Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh said: “We were with the Prophet—may God grant him peace and blessings—and he traced a line (in the sand), and then two lines at his right side and two lines at his left side. Then he put his hand in the center of the line and said: ‘This is the path of God.’ Then he recited the following verse: ‘And that this is My path, straight; so do you follow it, and follow not divers paths lest they scatter you from His path. (Q 6:153)’”⁵

This *ḥadīth* attracted Ibn al-‘Arabī’s attention, who echoed it in his work not only in textual form,⁶ and also drew it in the 64th chapter of the holograph manuscript of his *magnum opus*, the *Meccan Openings* (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*).⁷ A graphic representation of this *ḥadīth* is present in the *Kitāb nuskhat al-ḥaqq* as well.⁸ In the 371st chapter of his work, in which the nature of the world as a path (*ṭarīq*) towards the hereafter is emphasized, Ibn al-‘Arabī inserts

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- 5 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, ed. Huda Khattab (Riyad: Dār al-Salām, 1428/2007), 1:79 (*ḥadīth* n° 11). The same *ḥadīth*, reported by ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd, appears in a significantly different shape in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-imām Ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1417/1995), 7:207–208 (*ḥadīth* no. 4142). Other traditions have been reported about the Prophet drawing lines or other figures to use them as transmission medium of a teaching; see al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhayr b. Nāṣir al-Nāṣir (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh, 1422/2001), 8:89 (*ḥadīths* nos. 6417 & 6418). All subsequent quotations from the Qur’an will be taken from Arberry’s translation, sometimes slightly modified.
- 6 For example, in chapters 64 (*fī ma‘rifat al-qiyāma wa-manāzilī-hā wa-kayfiyyat al-ba‘th*) (cf. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Uthmān Yahyā, 4:471), 132 (*fī ma‘rifat maqām al-istiqāma*) (cf. *ibid.*, 14:295–296), and 318 of the *Meccan Openings* (*fī ma‘rifat manzīl nusakh al-shar‘a al-muḥammadīyya wa-ghayr al-muḥammadīyya*). Cf. *ibid.*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb (Tarim: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 1434/2013), 7:527–528.
- 7 MS. Türk ve İslām Eserleri Müzesi (TIEM) 1848, Istanbul, fol. 155^b. The diagram is reproduced in: *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Uthmān Yahyā, chap. 64, 4:471. This chapter, as well as its three preceding chapters and the following chap. 65, have been translated and presented in French by Maurice Gloton, *Ibn ‘Arabī, De la mort à la resurrection* (Beirut: Albouraq, 1430/2009). These five chapters, fundamental to understand the eschatological dimension of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s work, are closely interlinked with Chapter 371.
- 8 The oldest manuscript preserving the *Kitāb nuskhat al-ḥaqq*, the MS Sehit Ali Pasa 2813 (Süleymaniye), foreshadows the beginning of the diagram, see fol. 2^b (I am grateful to Maurizio Marconi who shared with me a digital copy the manuscript). This manuscript has been copied in the MS Veliyuddin 1826, used by Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ for his edition of the *Kitāb nuskhat al-ḥaqq* which reproduces the diagram: Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Kitāb Nuskhat al-ḥaqq*, in *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*, ed. Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Intishār al-‘Arabī, 1424/2004), 1:271.

a small figure reminiscent of this prophetic action of tracing figures in the sand to illustrate his sayings in the margin of the text (Figure 1/Plate 3.1).⁹ This minimal figure illustrates the two paths (*al-najdayn*)¹⁰ opened to man: the first one is an immaculate white path with neither crookedness nor curving (*ṭarīq saḥla bayḍā' muthlā naqīyya lā shawb fi-hā wa-lā 'iwaj^{an} wa-lā amt^{an}*), associated with the white path (*al-maḥajja al-bayḍā'*) mentioned in a famous *ḥadīth*,¹¹ and the second one, an arduous path full of dangers. Both paths, as Ibn al-Arabī states, emerge from the same point (*aṣl*), and tend towards the same finality (*ma'āl*): felicity (*al-sa'āda*).

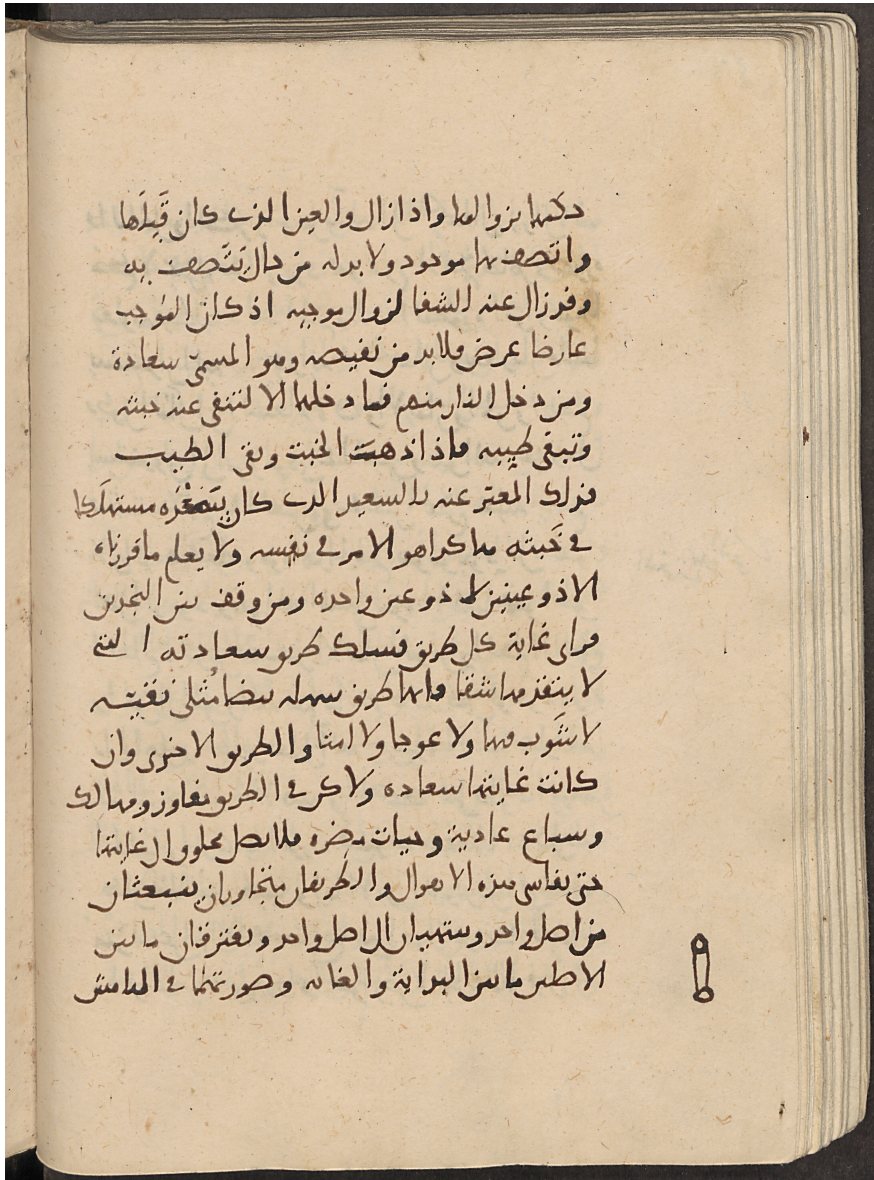
If the *Meccan Openings* are not the only work in which Ibn al-ʿArabī inserts diagrams, a significant number of them are to be found in Chapter 371, entitled “On the Knowledge of the Abode of One Secret and Three Secrets Emanating from the Principial Muḥammadan Tablet” (*fi maʿrifat manzil sirr wa-thalāthat asrār lawḥiyya ummiyya Muḥammadiyya*). Among the series of diagrams scattered within the *Meccan Openings*, twelve of them appear in this chapter which, in addition to the better-known Chapter 198 “On the Knowledge of the Breath” (*fi maʿrifat al-nafas*), is probably the one that provides the greatest number of keys of understanding that allow the reader to penetrate the complex cosmological edifice of the Andalusian master. Nine of the twelve diagrams in Chapter 371 sketch the cosmological dimension of the text and illustrate, in the form of geometric figures according to a common practice of his time in scientific, philosophical and esoteric literature,¹² the levels of cosmic hierarchy as described in the chapter, ranging from its lowest degrees

9 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fol. 83^b.

10 Q 90:8–10.

11 *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, 1:75–76 (n° 5). In chap. 318 of the *Meccan Openings*, Ibn al-ʿArabī associates the “white path” (*al-maḥajja al-bayḍā'*) to the divine Law (*al-sharīʿa*) (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 7:527).

12 As Ahmet Karamustafa shows in his rich overview of the cosmological diagrams in classical Islamic literature, there is no shortage of illustrations of the general structure of the universe in the scientific, philosophical or hermetic literature that precedes the time of Ibn al-ʿArabī; see: Ahmet T. Karamustafa, “Cosmographical Diagrams,” in *The History of Cartography, Vol. 2, Book 1, Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, eds. James B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 71–89. If the depiction of the world in the form of diagrams is, in fact, relatively common, it seems, however, to be an unprecedented fact in the Sufi texts, although we can find some examples of diagrams mostly devoided of a cosmological scope, as evidenced by the enigmatic figures of al-Ḥallāj’s *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, or the few figures of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. On the *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, see al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Paul Nwyia, in *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph*, 47 (1972): 185–238; 197, 200, 211, 212, 213, 214 and 215. On the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Shaʿb, 1388–1390/1969–1971), 351, 1112 and 1113.



دكها بزوالها واذا زال والعز الذي كان قبلها
 وانقصها موحود ولا يبرله من حال ينقص به
 وفر زال عنه الشفا لزوال موجب اذ كان الموجب
 عارضا عرض فلا بد من نفيصه وهو المسمى سعادة
 ومن دخل النار منم فما دخلها الا لتنفى عنه خبثه
 وتبقى كيبه فاذا ذهبت الخبث وبقي الطيب
 فذلك العبر عنه بالسعير الذي كان يتصغره مستملا
 في خبثه ما كراهوا الامر في نفسه ولا يعلم ما قرأه
 الا ذو عينين له ذو عين واحدة ومن وقف من الجنين
 فرأى غاية كل طريق فسلك طريق سعادته التي
 لا يتغير ما شقها فاما طريق سمله سوا من نقيته
 لا شوب منها ولا عوجا ولا استواء الطريق الاخرى وان
 كانت غاية سعادة ولا كثر في الطريق يغاوز ومالك
 وسباع عادية وحيات مضرة فلا يصلحوا لغايتها
 حتى يفاس منه الاصول والكرفل يتجاوزان فيبعثان
 من اصل واحد وسنبيان الاصل واحد ونفترقان ما من
 الاطر ما من البراية والغاه وصورتهما في الملامش

PLATE 3.1 [The Two Paths (*al-najdayn*)]. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fol. 83^b)

to the highest degrees of the world of commandment (*‘alam al-amr*), yet beyond any spatio-temporal determination. Ibn al-‘Arabī was well aware of this common practice, since in his monumental work of *adab*, the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār*, he briefly described a diagram (*dā’ira*) which drew his attention in the *Secret of secrets* (*Sirr al-asrār*),¹³ the famous mirror for princes compiled during the 4th/10th century, which takes the form of a series of letters of political and ethical nature, addressed by Aristotle to Alexander the Great (Iskandar).¹⁴

This article aims to shed light on the teachings carried by Chapter 371’s nine structural diagrams and on the logic of their sequence within the chapter. After a succinct presentation of Chapter 371, we will present a few passages of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s writings highlighting the purpose of diagrammatic representation in his work. From the example of the nine diagrams, we will attempt to determine how the visual elements are superimposed on the text, in order to understand the nature and the role of this particular mode of expression in the *Meccan Openings*, which enables to provide form to that which, in essence, has no form.

1 Chapter 371, “On the Knowledge of the Abode of One Secret and Three Secrets Emanating from the Principial Muḥammadan Tablet”

Chapter 371 is included in the fourth section of the *Meccan Openings*, the “Section of Spiritual Mansions” (*faṣl al-manāzil*), which gathers chapters 270 to 383 of the work. In his seminal work *An Ocean Without Shore*,¹⁵ Michel Chodkiewicz highlights the specific structure of this fourth section and its close relationship with the Qur’anic text, in describing the correspondence between the title and the number of its chapters, named “mansions” (*manāzil*), and

13 Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Kitāb Muḥāḍarat al-abrār wa-musāmārāt al-akhyār* (Beirut: Dār al-Yaḳẓa al-‘Arabīyya, 1388/1968), 2:51–52.

14 Ibn al-‘Arabī knew well this book since he wrote, at the request of one of his Andalusī masters, Abū Muḥammad al-Mawrūrī, a mystical commentary on it: the *Kitāb al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya fī iṣlāḥ al-mamlaka al-insāniyya*. The diagram of the *Sirr al-asrār* which he refers to, described by the Pseudo-Aristotle as the quintessence of the book (*zubdat hādihā al-kitāb*) and as containing the whole world, has to be meditated with a “true” glance (*fatadabbur-hā bi-naẓar ṣādiq*): Pseudo-Aristotle, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa fī tadbīr al-riyāsa al-ma’rūf bi-Sirr al-asrār*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Badawī, in *al-Uṣūl al-Yūnāniyya li-l-naẓariyyāt al-siyāsiyya fī al-islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1954), 126–127.

15 Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore. Ibn Arabī, the Book and the Law*, trans. David Streight (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).

those of the suras of the Qur'an. By analogy with the 114 Qur'anic suras, the *faṣl al-manāzil* includes 114 chapters which correspond to the order of the suras of the Qur'an in a reversed mode. According to this specific order, Chapter 371 coincides with the 13th sura of the Qur'an (*sūrat al-ra'd*), whose second verse evokes a non-visible pillar (*'amad*), or pillars, according to the common comprehension of the verse, in which God raised up the heavens.¹⁶ This pillar, according to Ibn al-'Arabī, is none other than the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), whose existence prevents the seven heavens to fall upon the Earth. As depicted in the 4th structural diagram of Chapter 371 (Figure 5), to which we shall come back below, man is the cornerstone of the cosmic tent (*al-nuqṭa al-latī yastaqirru 'alay-hā 'amad al-khayma*).¹⁷ Pivot of the universe, it is for him that the entire world has been created and around him that the world moves. There is nothing in this world which is not present within: often described as the compendium of this world (*majmū' al-'ālam*), he appears moreover in Chapter 371 as the very aim of existence (*al-'ayn al-maqṣūda min al-wujūd*). If the order of the world (*tartīb al-'ālam*) is the focal point of the chapter, the figure of the Perfect Man, as ultimate goal of the universe, remains ever-present in the background.

After an introductory part leading towards the function assigned to the Perfect Man, the text is divided into nine sections (*fuṣūl*), each connected to a diagram, in which Ibn al-'Arabī brings to light the principles of his cosmological edifice according to a descending logic, starting with the first principles exhaled by God in His divine breath, to the last wave of the emanation of being: man. As illustrated by the diagrams, this chapter develops also an eschatological dimension in focusing on the process of the ultimate evolution of the world and its reintegration into its principle. On similar grounds to the other chapters of the *faṣl al-manāzil*, Ibn al-'Arabī enumerates one by one, in the final part of the text, the other sciences relative to the sura around which the chapter is articulated and into which he did not delve deeper. Indeed, as he mentions in the end of the second chapter of the *faṣl al-manāzil*, each chapter contains but a drop of the ocean without a shore of the Qur'an.¹⁸

16 *Allāhu alladhī rafā'a al-samawāti bi-ghayri 'amadⁱⁿ tarawna-hā* (Q 13:2).

17 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 355, 8:440.

18 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 271, 7:28–29.

2 The Function of Graphic Symbolism: Pouring Spiritual Realities into Sensible Molds, and Making the Invisible Visible

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s work, the *Book of the Production of Circles* (*Kitāb Inshā’ al-dawā’ir*), dedicated to one of his closest disciples, ‘Abdallāh Badr al-Ḥabashī (d. c. 618/1221),¹⁹ is fundamental for understanding his diagrams. In the *Meccan Openings*, Ibn al-‘Arabī specifies that in this treatise, he depicted the world and the two presences (*al-‘ālam wa-l-ḥaḍratayn*) in figures (*ashkāl*) to “bring closer” the one who is capable of imagination to their science (*li-yuqarriba al-‘ilm bi-hā ‘alā ṣāḥib al-khayāl*).²⁰ In the beginning of the *Kitāb Inshā’ al-dawā’ir*, indeed, the Andalusian master asserts his will to convey the realities revealed to him “by pouring them into the mold of sensible representation in order to facilitate their access to the intimate companion ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Ḥabashī, and to clarify their meaning to the one whose sight is too weak to grasp them and whose shining stars of meditative thoughts do not navigate in these spheres.”²¹ Further, Ibn al-‘Arabī adds that he inserted circles (*dawā’ir*) and tables (*jadāwil*) into his written work in order to facilitate the disciple (*tālib*) in terms of access to their profits (*fawā’id*) and to their spiritual meanings (*ma‘ānī*). In visualizing these figures, Ibn al-‘Arabī specifies, “the disciple will represent in himself the spiritual meaning (*ma‘nā*) in a materialized form, thereby facilitating its explicit expression (*tushalu al-‘ibāra ‘an-hā*) by its integration into the imagination. He who considers (the spiritual meaning in a materialized form) will then aspire to complete his consideration and thus, to come to know the totality of its spiritual meanings, because sensation (*al-ḥiss*), once poured into the mold of form and figure (*qālab al-ṣūra wa-l-shakl*), is taken with the spiritual reality. The disciple finds pleasure in it, which provides him with delight, and this leads him to realize what manifests to him (the vision of) the figure, and

19 About ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Ḥabashī, see: Denis Gril, “al-Badr al-Ḥabashī,” in E13; and Denis Gril, “Le *Kitāb al-mbāḥ ‘alā tariq Allāh* de ‘Abdallāh Badr al-Ḥabashī. Un témoignage de l’enseignement spirituel de Muḥyi l-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Annales Islamologiques* 15 (1979): 97–164.

20 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 369, 9:261.

21 (*Arad-tu an udkhila-hā*) *fī qālab al-tashkīl al-ḥissī li-yaqrraba ma’khadhu-hā ‘alā al-ṣāḥib al-walī ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Ḥabashī wa-li-yattaḍiḥa li-man kalla baṣaru-hu ‘an idrāki-hā wa-lam tasbaḥ darārī afkāri-hi fī aflāki-hā* in Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Inshā’ al-dawā’ir*, ed. Henrik S. Nyberg, in *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-‘Arabī* (Leiden: Brill, 1919), 4. The new edition of the text elaborated by Maurizio Marconi, “Edizione del *Kitāb Inshā’ al-Dawā’ir*,” *El Azufre Rojo* 5 (2018): 103–134, does almost not differ for the passages of the *Kitāb Inshā’ al-dawā’ir* that we are quoting in this article.

what is materialized to him by this form. It is for this reason that we have integrated the spiritual meaning into the representation and the configuration.²²

As highlighted in these passages, the diagrams in the *Kitāb Inshā' al-dawā'ir* are conceived by Ibn al-ʿArabī as tools for meditation in order to help his disciple to grasp the metaphysical principles which are formulated in the treatise. As visual supports, these diagrams aim at inducing the one who visualizes them to ascend from the sensible level of perception to the imaginative one, and by means of the imaginative faculty, to reach the spiritual meaning or reality (*maʿnā*) manifested by the figure.²³ For man, as Ibn al-ʿArabī stresses in Chapter 198 of the *Meccan Openings*, consists of three aspects (*muthallath al-nashʾa*): an interior and spiritual aspect (*nashʾa bāṭina maʿnawiyya rūḥāniyya*), an external, sensible and natural aspect (*nashʾa ḡāhira ḥissiyya ṭabīʿiyya*), and a median and corporeal aspect, relative to the territory of archetypes (*nashʾa mutawassīṭa jasadīyya barzakhiyya mithālīyya*).²⁴ The world of images, models or archetypes (*ʿālam al-mithāl*), which lies between the visible world (*ʿālam al-shahāda*) and the invisible world (*ʿālam al-ghayb*), indeed, is the place *par excellence* where the spiritual realities appear in sensible molds (*ḡuhūr al-maʿānī fī al-qawālib al-maḥsūsa*).²⁵

In Chapter 371 as well, Ibn al-ʿArabī more allusively highlights the purpose of the diagrams that he inserted into the chapter. These diagrams, according to him, aim at “bringing (his reader) closer” (*wa-qad bayyanā dhālika fī al-ṣūra al-*

22 *Wa-yataṣawwaru al-maʿnā fī nafsi-hi ṣūrat^{an} mutajassadat^{an} tashulu ʿalay-hi al-ʿibāra ʿan-hā li-quwwat ḡuṣūli-hā fī al-khayāl wa-yahriṣu al-nāzīr ʿalā istiṭāʿ al-nazar ḡattā yaqīfa ʿalā kullīyyat maʿānī-hā idh al-maʿnā idhā udkhila fī qālab al-ṣūra wa-l-shakl taʿashshaqa bi-hi al-ḥiss wa-ṣāra la-hu fūrja yatafarraju ʿalay-hā wa-yatanazzahu fī-hā fa-yuʿaddī-hi dhālika ilā taḡqīq mā nuṣiba la-hu dhālika al-shakl wa-jussidat la-hu tilka al-ṣūra fa-li-hādhā adkhalnā-hu fī al-taṣwīr wa-l-tashkīl (*Inshāʾ al-dawāʿir*, ed. Henrik S. Nyberg, 6). We followed Maurizio Marconi in suppressing the particule *mā* in the last sentence (“Edizione del *Kitāb Inshāʾ al-Dawāʿir*,” 7).*

23 Mention should be made of the intrinsic link between the imaginative activity and the act of drawing, expressed by the Arabic word of *ṣūra*, used to designate both the “form” and the “drawing.” The word used to designate Seraphiel’s trumpet (*ṣūr*), mentioned in the Qurʾan and a *ḡadīth*, and identified by Ibn al-ʿArabī to the world of archetypes (*ʿālam al-mithāl*), derives from the same root. On the notion of “horn of light,” see: William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 122–123.

24 *al-Futūḡāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 198, 6:287.

25 *al-Futūḡāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 311, 7:455. On the notion of *ʿālam al-mithāl*, see the classical study by Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ʿArabī* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

mithāliyya al-muqaddima fī hādihā al-bāb ‘alā al-taqrib), since the function of images, as well as parables,²⁶ is to “bring closer” the one who visualizes them to its underlying spiritual meaning or reality. In the first part of Chapter 371, the Andalusian master formulates, in words which echo al-Ghazālī’s language, especially in the *Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*),²⁷ his intention to address hell and paradise according to the modality of images (*amthila*), “in order to facilitate their representation to those who cannot represent the spiritual realities without a parable (*mathal*), just as God proposed to the hearts the parable of water descent in the valleys according to their measure,²⁸ and just as He proposed the parable of the light in the niche.²⁹ God has made all of it to facilitate the access to the spiritual meaning for those who are endowed with poor understanding.”³⁰ And further, he adds: “We have shown this in the form of figures to propose a model (*mithāl*) to bring those endowed with a reduced understanding closer (*al-afhām al-qāshira*), unable to grasp the spiritual realities without a

26 It is difficult to translate the central term here of *mithāl*, which expresses at the same time the concepts of ‘model,’ ‘archetype,’ ‘image’ and ‘symbol.’ It derives from the same root as the term *mathal*, which designates both the ‘parable’ or ‘allegory,’ and the ‘example.’ Moreover, it designates Man, according to Ibn al-‘Arabī in his *al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*. For Ibn Barraḡān, “the similar, the image and the model are one and the same thing (*al-mithl wa-l-mathal wa-l-mithāl huwa naḥs al-shay*).” Ibn Barraḡān, *Tanbih al-afhām*, ed. Aḥmad F. al-Mazyadī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1434/2013), 1:549.

27 The high esteem Ibn al-‘Arabī holds for al-Ghazālī is well-known. On Ibn al-‘Arabī’s references to al-Ghazālī, see: Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur. The Life of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, Golden Palm Series, 1993), 103n36. The second chapter of al-Ghazālī’s famous *Niche of Lights* is dedicated to the secret of symbolic representation (*tamthūl*) and its laws, to the modality (*wajh*) in which the spiritual significations (*arwāḥ al-ma‘ānī*) are grasped in the molds of their models (*qawālib al-amthila*); and to the correlation between the visible world (*‘ālam al-shahāda*), “clay of the models” (*ṭīnat al-amthila*), and the celestial world (*‘ālam al-malakūt*) from which the spiritual significations (*arwāḥ al-ma‘ānī*) descend. For the visible world, according to al-Ghazālī, is “a ladder to the celestial world (*mirqāt ilā ‘ālam al-malakūt*), and following the “straight path” is an expression of the climbing of this ladder (*al-taraqqi*).” Indeed, “there is nothing in this world that does not correspond to a model in the celestial world (*fa-mā min shay’ min hādihā al-‘ālam illā wa-huwa mithāl li-shay’ min dhālika al-‘ālam*).” See al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, ed. Abū al-‘Alā ‘Afifi (Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyya li-l-Ṭab’a wa-l-Nashr, 1383/1964), 67.

28 Q 13:17.

29 Allusion to the famous verse of Light (Q 24:35).

30 *Wa-li-naḥs al-dhālika kulla-hu fī amthila li-yaqraba taṣawwuru-hā ‘alā man lā yataṣawwaru al-ma‘ānī min ḡayr darb mathal kamā ḍaraba Allāh li-l-qulūb mathal^{an} bi-l-adwiyya bi-qadri-hā fī nuzūl al-mā’ wa-kamā ḍaraba al-mathal li-nūri-hi bi-l-miṣbāḥ kull dhālika li-yaqraba ilā al-afhām al-qāshira al-amr* (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 371, 9:313).

parable, because God has made knowledge that man has of himself but a model for the knowledge of his lord.”³¹

As visual metaphors, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s figures aim at leading the one who visualizes them to reach, by means of the analogy, the underlying spiritual realities of the forms of the figures. In closing, it should be reminded that although Ibn al-‘Arabī does not associate these diagrams with specific spiritual practices, as it will be the case in later contexts,³² this ascension from the formal to the informal is also evoked by the Andalusian master in another context, that of the spiritual retreat (*khalwa*). If the aspirant engaged in a spiritual retreat is called to perform an imaginative invocation (*al-dhikr al-khayālī*), which consists in visualizing the letters of his invocation (*dhikr*), it is only to ascend towards an invocation beyond all form, which is the invocation of the heart (*dhikr al-qalb*).³³

3 Tracing the Figure of the Universe

In his *Risālat al-Anwār*, Ibn al-‘Arabī asserts: “Know that all the paths are spherical and that there is no straight line. But this treatise is too short to address such issues.”³⁴ If there is one figure that dominates in these nine structural diagrams of Chapter 371, it is that of the circle symbolizing the sphere, described repeatedly in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s writings as the most excellent form (*afḍal al-ashkāl*) and the very symbol of existence.³⁵ As stressed by Ibn al-‘Arabī in Chapter 371, “the form of the world in its totality is the form of a spherical circle” (*fa-ṣūrat al-‘ālam bi-jumlati-hi ṣūra dā’ira falakiyya*). In the circle of existence, man and his correlate (*naẓīr*), the First Intellect, coincide insofar as the Intellect, as first being existentiated, is the starting point of the circle; whereas man,

31 *Wa-inna-mā dhakarnā hādhā lammā nuẓhiru-hu min al-ashkāl li-ḍarb al-amthāl li-l-taqrīb ‘alā al-afḥām al-qāṣira ‘an idrāk al-ma‘ānī min ghayr mathal fa-inna Allāh mā ja‘ala ma‘rifat al-insān nafsa-hu illā ḍarb mithāl li-ma‘rifat rabbi-hi* (ibid., 9:317).

32 See: Marcia K. Hermansen, “Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge: A Semiotic Approach to Sufi Cosmological Diagrams,” *Journal of Religious Studies and Theology* 12, no. 1 (1992): 52–77.

33 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ‘Uthmān Yaḥyā, chap. 78, 13:364–365.

34 *al-Ṭuruq kulla-hā mustadira wa-mā thamma ṭariq khaṭṭī wa-ghayr dhālika mimmā taḍīq hādhihi al-risāla ‘an-hu* in Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Risālat al-Anwār*, ed. Bernd Radtke in *Neue kritische Gänge* (Utrecht: M.Th. Houtsma Stichting, 2005), 130.

35 About Ibn al-‘Arabī’s vision of the circularity of existence, see: Alessandro Bausani, “Note sulla circolarità dell’essere in Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240),” 57–74.

as the last existentiated being (*al-mawjūd al-ākhir*), is its ultimate point. The human being, thus, joins the Intellect, completing the circle of existence.³⁶

In Chapter 1 of the *Meccan Openings* “On the Knowledge of the Spirit” (*fī maʿrifat al-rūḥ*), Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to the movement of the conversion of the compass (*al-birkār*) in the drawing of the circle (*fī fatḥ al-dāʿira*), bringing the end of the circle to coincide with its point of origin (*nuqṭat al-bidāya*). He returns to the action of tracing a circle in Chapter 47:

Know that insofar as the world is in spherical form, man yearns for his beginning when reaching his end. It is by Him—may He be exalted—that we come from non-existence to existence, and to Him that we shall return. As He—may He be praised—said: “To Him everything shall be returned” (Q 11:123). He said: “And fear a day wherein you shall be returned to God” (Q 2:281), and He said: “and unto Him is the homecoming” (Q 5:18, 42:15, 64:3), “and unto God is the issue of all affairs” (Q 31:22). Do you not see that when you start tracing a circle, you persist in rotating your tracing until you return to the beginning point, and that then only it becomes a circle? If it would not be like so, and if our action would result in a rectilinear line, we would not return to Him, and His saying “to Him you shall return” would not be true.³⁷

It is in the manner of the architect, before engaging in his work, who draws the plan or model (*mithāl*) of what he wants to reveal only once having conceived it through his mental faculty (*dhihn*),³⁸ that Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to have drawn the model of the world. For the world itself, as alluded to in Chapter 4 of the *Meccan Openings* “On the Cause of the Origin of the World” (*fī sabab badʿ al-ʿālam wa-marātib al-asmāʿ al-ḥusnā min al-ʿālam kulli-hi*), was created according to

36 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā, chap. 7, 2:251–252.

37 *ʿĪlam anna al-ʿālam lammā kāna akrī al-shakl li-hādihā ḥanna al-insān fī nihāyati-hi ilā bidāyati-hi fa-kāna khurūju-nā min al-ʿadam ilā al-wujūd bi-hi subḥāna-hu wa-ilay-hi narjīʿu kamā qāla ʿazza wa-jalla “wa-ilay-hi yurjīʿu al-amru kullu-hu” wa-qāla “wa-ttaqū yawm^{an} turjaʿūna fī-hi ilā Allāh” wa-qāla “wa-ilay-hi al-maṣīr” “wa-ilā Allāhi ʿāqibatu al-umūr” a-lā tarā-ka idhā badaʿat waḍaʿa dāʿira fa-inna-ka ʿindamā tabtadiʿu bi-hā lā tazālu tudīru-hā ilā an tantahiya ilā awwali-hā wa-ḥinaʿidhiⁱⁿ takūnu dāʿira wa-law lam yakun al-amr ka-dhālika la-kunnā idhā kharajnā min ʿindi-hi khāṭṭ^{an} mustaqīm^{an} lam narjīʿ ilay-hi wa-lam yakun yaṣḍuqu qawlu-hu wa-huwa al-ṣādiq “wa-ilay-hi turjaʿūn”* (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā, chap. 47, 4:127–128).

38 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā, chap. 73, 30th question, 12:214.

a model preserved in the Universal Soul or Well-Guarded Tablet before the existentiating of the world. The idea of a model of the world that precedes its physical existence is reminiscent of the correlation between the divine creative act and the operation of the architect, established by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) in the *Book of Wonders of the Heart* (*Kitāb Sharḥ ‘ajā’ib al-qalb*) of the *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*. God, compared by al-Ghazālī to the architect who designs and draws his construction plans on paper before executing them, conceived the copy or pattern of the world (*kataba nuskhāt al-‘ālam*) preserved in the Well-Guarded Tablet before creating it according to this same pattern (*‘alā wifq tilka al-nuskha*). The image of the world that has come to existence is perceptible to the imaginative faculty of man, because, as al-Ghazālī says, “he who looks at the Heavens and the Earth, and then closes his eyes, sees their image in his imagination as if he were looking at them. If Heaven and the Earth ceased to exist, and he remains within himself (*wa-baqīya huwa fī nafsi-hi*), he would still find their image within himself as if he were contemplating them. His imagination thereupon leaves a trace in the heart.”³⁹ Al-Ghazālī concludes: “God made your pupil, despite the smallness of its size, disposed to receive the impression of the image of the world, the heavens and the Earth in all their greatness. From its existence in the sensible realm, it gets into an existence in the imagination, and then into an existence in the heart. You will therefore always perceive but what reaches you, and if God did not place in your very being a model (*mithāl*) of the whole world, you would be unable to perceive the information (that comes to you) from what is different from you.”⁴⁰

4 Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Diagrammatic Representation of the Hierarchy of the World (*tartīb al-‘ālam*) in Chapter 371

In the legend of the first diagram of this series, Ibn al-‘Arabī points out his incapacity, due to the narrowness of the space of the drawing, to elaborate a

39 *Fa-inna man yanẓuru ilā al-samā’ wa-l-arḍ thumma yaghuḍḍu baṣara-hu yarā šūrat al-samā’ wa-l-arḍ fī khayāli-hi ḥattā ka-anna-hu yanẓuru ilay-hā wa-law in’adamat al-samā’ wa-l-arḍ wa-baqīya huwa fī nafsi-hi la-wajada šūrat al-samā’ wa-l-arḍ fī nafsi-hi ka-anna-hu yushāhidu-humā wa-yanẓuru ilay-himā thumma yata’addā min khayāli-hi athar ilā al-qalb* (Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, 1374).

40 *Ja’ala ḥadaqata-ka ‘alā ṣuḡhr ḥajmi-hā bi-ḥaythu tanṭabī’u šūrat al-‘ālam wa-l-samāwāt wa-l-arḍ ‘alā ittisā’ aknāfi-hā fī-hā thumma yusrā min wujūdi-hā fī al-ḥiss wujūd ilā al-khayāl thumma min-hu wujūd fī al-qalb fa-inna-ka abad^{an} tudriku illā mā huwa wāṣil ilay-ka fa-law lam yaf’al li-l-‘ālam kulli-hi mithāl^{an} fī dhāti-ka la-mā kāna la-ka khabar mim mā yubānu dhātu-ka* (ibid.).

unique diagram crystallizing all the components of the diagrams, which would be more explicit to the one who considers them.⁴¹ One should, therefore, not forget that the nine diagrams he drew are all connected to each other and should be viewed in reality as one unique and complex diagram.⁴²

4.1 *Diagram of “the Form of the Cloud and What It Contains until the Throne of the Session”*

The first diagram (Figure 2/Plate 3.2) illustrates the deployment of the first levels of the hierarchy of being in the primordial Cloud (*al-‘amā’*), first invisible entity (*awwal ghayb*), until the universal or Prime Matter (*al-hayūlā al-kull*).⁴³ As Ibn al-‘Arabī explains in Chapter 371, “the form of the world in its entirety is a spherical circle, and then the forms of the figures are differentiated in this circle in the form of squares, triangles, hexagons, to infinity, in terms of propriety, not of being (*ḥukm^{an} lā wujūd^{an}*). The angels which revolve around the Throne have a course only in this circular Cloud in which appeared also the entity of the Throne.”⁴⁴

41 *Fa-inna mawḍi‘ šuwar al-ashkāl ḍayyiq hunā lā yuttasi‘u li-šuwar mā nurīdu tashkīlat^{an} wāḥīdat^{an} fa-inna-hu law ittasa‘a kāna abyān li-l-nāzīr fī-hi (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manšūb, chap. 371, 9:319).*

42 Before inserting the nine diagrams into the body of the text, Ibn al-‘Arabī enumerates and describes the content of each diagram. We ignore why the content described by the Andalusian master in the text does not always correspond to the diagrams of the Konya holograph manuscript, drawn by his own hand. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s description in Chapter 371 does also not correspond totally to the diagrams as they appear in the two first Būlāq editions of the *Meccan Openings*, which differ from the diagrams of the holograph manuscript. According to an unpublished study of Julian Cook and Claude Addas (Claude Addas & Julian Cook, “Editions of Ibn ‘Arabī’s al-Futūḥāt al-makkīyya—a brief history—plus case studies of textual variation,” summarized in: Claude Addas & Julian Cook, “Six Printed Editions of al-Futūḥāt al Makkīyah. A brief survey,” available at: <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/futuhah-printed-editions.html>), the two first Būlāq editions of the *Meccan Openings* are based on numerous manuscripts, including manuscripts based on the first and the second versions of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *magnum opus*. It is only since the third Būlāq edition that the editors of the text started to focus on the Konya holograph manuscript. It is also on the diagrams of the holograph manuscript, reproduced in the present article, that we focused our attention.

43 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi 1870, fol. 90^a.

44 *Fa-šūrat al-‘ālam bi-jumlati-hi šūra dā‘ira falakīyya thumma ikhtalafat fī-hā šuwar al-ashkāl min tarbī‘ wa-tathlīth wa-tasdis ilā mā lā yatanāhā ḥukm^{an} lā wujūd^{an} wa-l-malā‘ika al-ḥāffūn min ḥawl al-‘arsh mā la-hum sibāḥa illā fī hādihā al-‘amā’ al-mustadīr alladhī ḡahara ayḍ^{an} ‘ayn al-‘arsh (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manšūb, chap. 371, 9:316).*



PLATE 3.2 Form (shura) of the Cloud and What It Contains Until the Throne of the Session. Ibn al-Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fol. 90^a)

The all-encompassing circle (*al-dā'ira al-muḥīṭa*) of the Cloud (*al-'amā'*)⁴⁵ in which the existence entirely unfolds, is divided into thirty parts, representing the stations of the angels distraught with love (*al-malā'ika al-muḥayyama*), the close cherub angels (*al-karūbiyyūn al-muqarrabūn*) which are described as seeing nothing but God and as ignoring that He created something other than themselves. Ibn al-'Arabī specifies that God elected among them one angel named the First or Universal Intellect (*al-'aql al-awwal*), identified with the Qur'anic Pen (*al-qalam*). Depicted in the form of a triangle, this angel is the first existentiated being (*awwal mawjūd*), elsewhere intertwined by Ibn al-'Arabī with the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*).⁴⁶ From the First Intellect emanates the Universal Soul (*al-naḥs al-kullīyya*), identified with the Qur'anic Well-Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*), depicted in the form of a rectangle containing two circles, which represent the two faculties of the Soul (*al-quwwatayn*): the sapiential faculty (*al-quwwa al-'ilmīyya*) and the practical faculty (*al-quwwa al-'amalīyya*). As highlighted in the text, it is from the union of the Intellect and the Soul that the degree of Nature (*martabat al-ṭabī'a*) proceeds, appearing also here in the form of a rectangle divided into four parts representing the elementary qualities: the hot (*al-ḥarāra*), the cold (*al-burūda*), the humid (*al-ruṭūba*), and the dry (*al-yubūsa*).

4.2 *Diagram of the "Form of the Throne of the Session, the Footstool, the Two Feet, the Water upon Which Is the Throne, the Air Which Sustains Water, and the Darkness"*

The next diagram details the last and most inferior element of the previous one: the Universal or Prime Matter (*al-hayūlā al-kull*), identified with the Qur'anic notion of dust (*al-habā'*). The Prime Matter that, by essence (*li-dhāti-hi*), is the receptacle of forms (*yuqabbilu al-ashkāl*), is depicted here in circular form,

45 Described as "a merciful vapor" (*bukhār raḥmānī*) in Chapter 371, the notion of 'amā' is drawn from the *ḥadīth* according to which before creation, "God was in a cloud ('amā') under which and above which there was no air (*hawā'*). Then He created the Throne above the water." Associated by Ibn al-'Arabī to the divine Breath (*naḥs al-raḥmān*) from which the creation of the whole world proceeds, the Cloud is the "first ramification that appeared from the root (...); branches have branched out from the Cloud to the end of the world of command and creation: the Earth (*awwal far' zahara min aṣl (...) tafarra'at min-hu ashjār ilā muntahā al-amr wa-l-khalq wa-huwa al-arḍ*)."
(*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 371, 9:317).

46 In the 6th chapter of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (*fī ma'rifat bad' al-khalq al-rūḥānī*), Ibn al-'Arabī associates the First Intellect with the Reality of Muḥammad, "master of the world in its totality and first principle which appeared within existence" (*sayyid al-'ālam bi-asri-hi wa-awwal ḥāhir fī al-wujūd*) (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Uthmān Yaḥyā, chap. 6, 2:227).

since the circle is the most comprehensive form insofar as it potentially contains all the others (Figure 3/Plate 3.3 right).⁴⁷

Through the intermediary of the practical faculty (*al-quwwa al-ʿamaliyya*) of the Soul, God gives a shape within Prime Matter to the Universal Body (*al-jism al-kull*), represented in the form of a sphere embraced by the Prime Matter's sphere. Beneath the Universal Body's degree, God created the sphere of the divine Throne (*al-ʿarsh*), described in Chapter 371 as the "first dense, diaphanous and luminous entity (*awwal kathīf shaffāf nūrī*) that appeared," or also as a "diaphanous, subtle and circular body encompassing the bodies of the world" (*al-jism al-shaffāf al-laṭīf al-mustadīr al-muḥīt bi-ajsām al-ʿālam*). The Throne is sustained by four angles or pillars (*arkān*), which correspond to the four primitive elements: fire (*al-nār*), air (*al-hawāʾ*), water (*al-māʾ*), and earth (*al-turāb*). From the divine Throne hang the two feet of God (*al-qadamān*), one set in Paradise (*qadam al-ṣidq*) and the other in Hell (*qadam al-jabbār*), both resting over the Footstool (*al-kursī*). Between these two planes of existence of the Throne and the Footstool, we migrate from the invisible and informal world to the material world, represented through geometry by the passage from the circle to the square.

4.3 *The Diagram of the "Form of the Ultimate Sphere, the Paradisiacal Abodes, the Surface of the Sphere of the Fixed Stars, and the Tree of Tūbā"*

In the Footstool's cavity (*jawf*), God created a transparent and circular body divided into twelve sections, associated with the "zodiacal towers" (*burūj*) of the eponymous sura's first verse (Q 85:1), which are detailed in the third diagram of the series (Figure 4/Plate 3.3 left).⁴⁸

It is between the sphere of the zodiacal towers (*falak al-burūj*) or ultimate sphere (*al-falak al-aṭlas*), identified with the ninth starless sphere of the Ptolemaic system, and the sphere of fixed stars (*al-falak mukawkab*) or sphere of the mansions (*falak al-manāzil*), that Ibn al-ʿArabī locates the eight paradisiacal abodes or degrees, depicted in the third diagram. All connected through

47 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, 1870, fol. 90^b. The last three elements mentioned in Ibn al-ʿArabī's description of the diagram (the water on which the Throne rests, the air which sustains water, and the darkness) appear more explicitly in the versions of the diagram reproduced in the first two editions of Ibn al-ʿArabī's *magnum opus* published by Bülāq.

48 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, 1870, fol. 91^a. Among the differences which distinguish this diagram, extracted from the Konya holograph manuscript, from the version of the diagram reproduced in the two first Bülāq editions, we can observe the addition, in the version of the two first Bülāq editions, of the three layers of aether (*athīr*), air and water, covering the semicircle of the sublunary world.

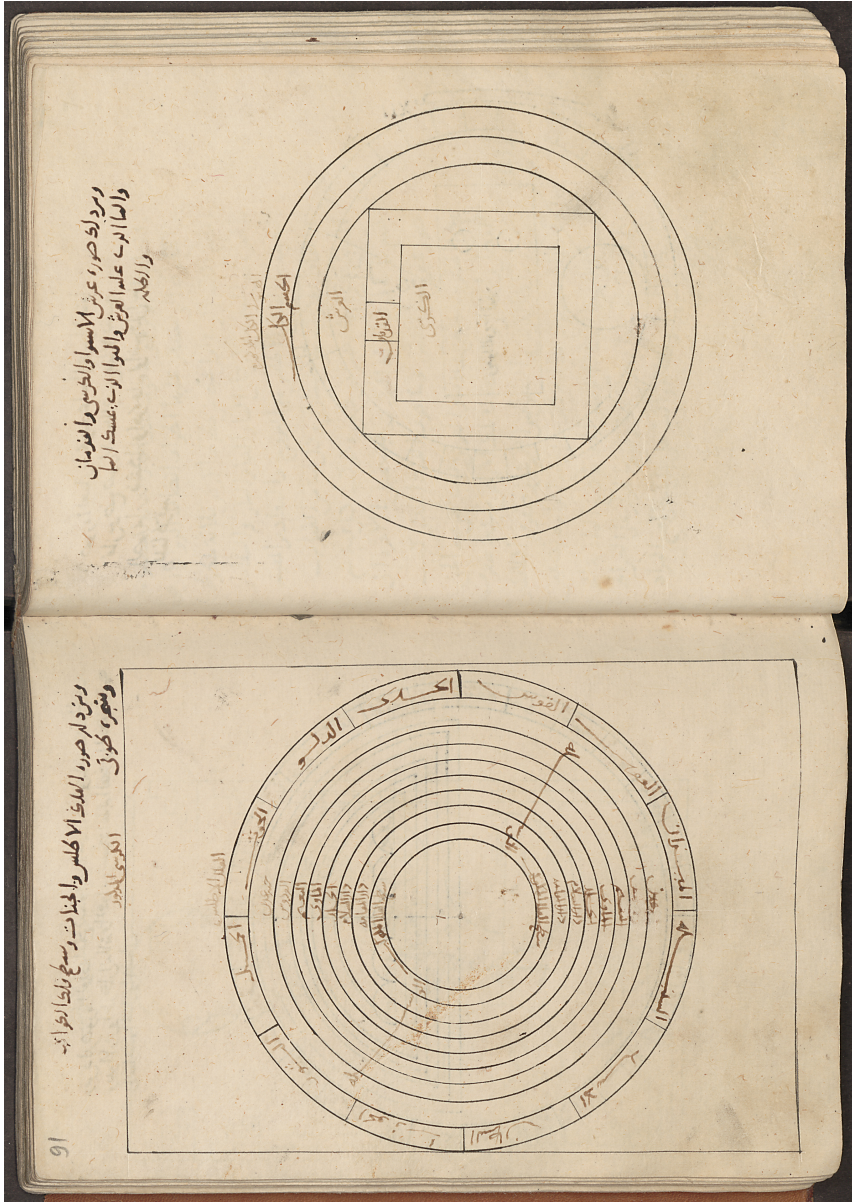


PLATE 3.3 Form of the Throne of the Session, the Footstool, the Two Feet, the Water upon Which Is the Throne the Air Which Sustains Water, and the Darkness (right)—Form of the Ultimate Sphere, the Paradiasiacal Abodes, the Surface of the Sphere of the Fixed Stars, and the Tree of Tūbā (left). Ibn al-'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, Ms 1870, fols. 90^b–91^a)

a line symbolizing the intercession (*al-wasīla*), the eight paradisiacal spheres, from the most superior sphere of Eden (*ʿadn*) until the sphere of everlastingness (*al-maqāma*), are located on the surface of the sphere of fixed stars (*sath al-falak al-mukawkab*). These eight degrees are associated in the text with the eight doors or body members (the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand, the stomach, the reproductive organ, the leg and the heart) subjected to Law (*taklīf*).

4.4 *The Diagram of the “Form of the Sphere of the Fixed Stars, the Domes of the Heavens and of What Rests upon Them: The Earth, the Three Elements, the Pillar by Which God Sustains the Dome, the Mineral Realm, the Vegetal Realm, the Animal Realm, and Man”*

It is in the cavity of the sphere of the fixed stars, crossed by the course of the Moon divided into 28 stations (*manāzil al-qamar*), that the lowest degrees of universal existence lie. As depicted in the diagram, it is in the form of a dome or a tent that God created these last levels, in which the lowest level of existence, the *dunyā*, is surmounted by the seven heavens mentioned in the Qurʾan, and described as domes (*qubba*, pl. *qibāb*) in the text (Figure 5/Plate 3.4 right).⁴⁹ The seven Qurʾanic heavens, associated in a common manner with the seven planetary spheres of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology, are embedded by the seven planets illustrated in the diagram: the Moon (*al-qamar*), Mercury (*ʿuṭārid*), Venus (*al-zuhra*), the Sun (*al-shams*), Mars (*al-mirrikh*), Jupiter (*al-mushtarī*), and Saturn (*zuḥal*). All these spheres are crossed by a vertical line named the “pillar” (*amad*), in reference to the invisible pillar of the universe mentioned in *sūrat al-Raʿd* (Q 13:2), and which is identified, as we already mentioned, with the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) (see above). The line also crosses the seven Qurʾanic earths,⁵⁰ surmounted in the diagram by five semi-circles symbolizing the four kingdoms of the natural world (*al-muwalladāt*): the animal kingdom (*ḥayawān*), the human kingdom (*insān*), the vegetable kingdom (*nabāt*), and the mineral kingdom (*maʿdīn*). At the core of the four kingdoms lies a “fifth element” which supports the “pillar” of the world: the Perfect Man (*insān kāmil*), through whose existence God holds heaven from falling upon the Earth.⁵¹

49 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, 1870, fol. 91^b.

50 Q 65:12.

51 *al-Insān al-kāmil ʿamad al-samāʿ alladhī yumsiku Allāh bi-wujūdi-hi al-samāʿ an taqaʿa ʿalā al-arḍ fa-idhā zāla al-insān al-kāmil wa-intaqala ilā al-barzakh hawat al-samāʿ wa-huwa qawlu-hu taʿālā “wa-inshaqqati al-samāʿu fa-hiya yawmaʿidhⁱⁿ wāhiya” ayy sāqita ilā al-arḍ (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 371, 9:313). As illustrated in this diagram, every man did not achieve perfection, and only the Perfect Man bears within himself the totality of creation.*

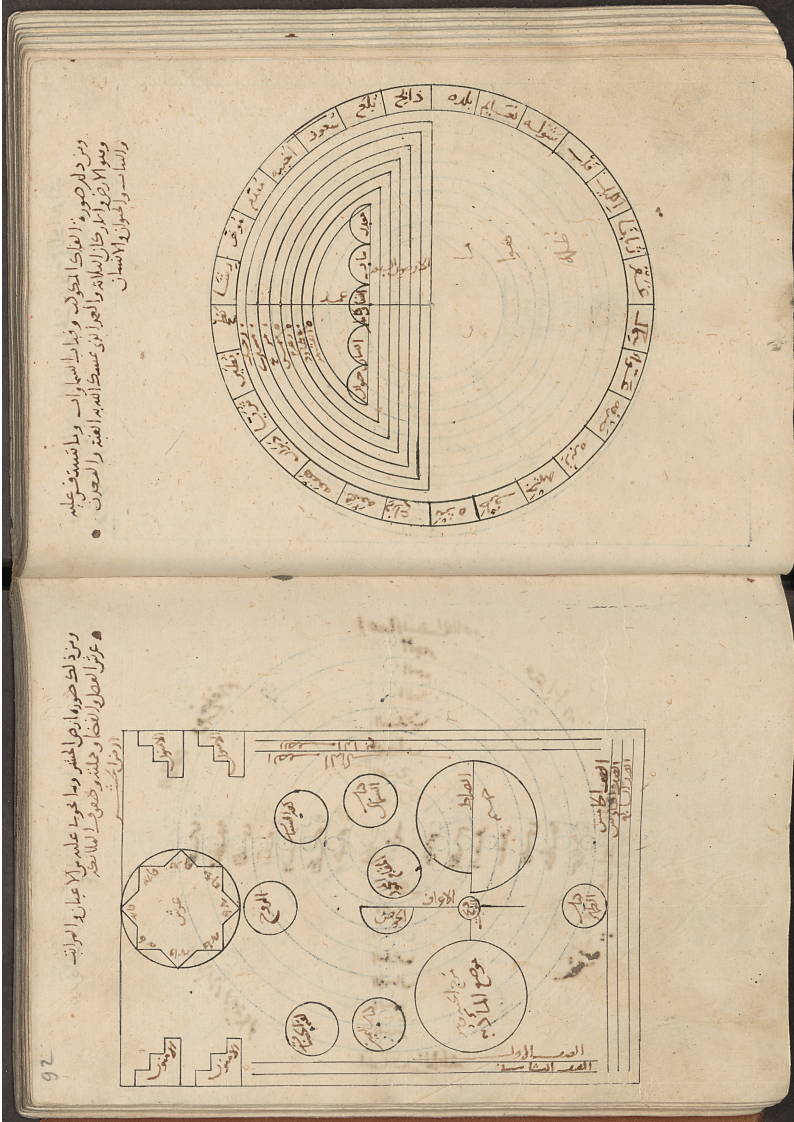


PLATE 3.4 Form of the Sphere of the Fixed Stars, the Domes of the Heavens and of What Rests upon Them: The Earth, the Three Elements, the Pillar by Which God Sustains the Dome, the Mineral Realm, the Vegetal Realm, the Animal Realm, and Man (right)—Form of the Land of Gathering and the Entities and Degrees It Contains, the Throne of Separation and Judgement and Its Bearers, and of the Rows of Angels (left). Ibn al-Arabī, *al-Futiḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fols. 91^b–92^a)

The lowest degrees of existence, which constitute the visible world (*‘ālam al-shahāda*), appear in this diagram as mirroring an empty space. Three elements are named by Ibn al-‘Arabī, which do not correspond to any geometric figure in this diagram: water (*mā*), air (*hawā*), and darkness (*zulma*). These elements are mentioned in Chapter 61 (*fī ma‘rifat jahannam wa-a‘zam al-makhlūqāt ‘adhāb^{an} fī-hā wa-ma‘rifat ba‘d al-‘ālam al-‘ulwī*), where Ibn al-‘Arabī describes his own vision of hell in which he saw water floating in the air, and his own soul in the air. Above his soul, he saw the water which was prevented by the air to descend towards the Earth.⁵² This water, of course, is not the water found on Earth, but the celestial water on which the divine Throne rests (Q 11:7), described in Chapter 371 as solid water (*mā’ jāmid*) on which the Throne’s four pillars are placed. According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, this water lies (*maqarru-hu*) on cold air (*al-hawā’ al-bārid*), which freezes the water. “This air,” specifies Ibn al-‘Arabī, “is darkness itself (*naḥs al-ḥulma*), which is none other than the realm of the Unseen, and that only God knows. When the ‘Earth brings forth her burdens’ (Q 99:2) on the Day of Judgement, the visible world will sink into the darkness which lies under the bridge. On this day, the creatures will be gathered on the bridge (*jīsr*) established by God above darkness, and the state of Earth, ‘stretched out’ (Q 84:3), will be altered.” As Ibn al-‘Arabī asserts, however, no creature will be able to observe the modality of the alteration of Heaven and Earth (*kayfiyyat al-tabdīl fī al-samā’ wa-l-ard*),⁵³ “until the world extends to the earth of Gathering (*ard al-ḥaṣhr*):” an earth “wherein thou wilt see no crookedness neither any curving” (Q 20:107).

Mention here should be made about one of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Andalusian predecessors, Ibn Barrajan (d. 536/1141), the “Ghazālī of al-Andalus,” who is mentioned on various occasions in the *Meccan Openings, inter alia* in an eschatological context.⁵⁴ The teachings carried by this intermediary diagram in the series of the nine diagrams of the chapter is reminiscent of Ibn Barrajan’s eschatology,

52 Maurice Gloton, *De la mort à la résurrection*, 111–112. Commenting the *ḥadīth* of the cloud in his *Kitāb al-Jalāla*, Ibn al-‘Arabī specifies that the cloud is the air which carries the water, and the water is life from which everything comes (*al-jaww al-hāmil li-l-mā’ alladhī huwa al-ḥayāt wa-min-hu kull shay’*). See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Kitāb al-Jalāla*, in *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1390/1971), 50.

53 The notion of *tabdīl* refers to the following verse: “Upon the day the Earth shall be changed (*tubadillu*) to other than the Earth and the Heavens” (Q 14:48).

54 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Uthmān Yahyā, chap. 61, 4:369. On the points of convergence between Ibn al-‘Arabī’s doctrine and that of Ibn Barrajan, see: Denis Gril, “L’interprétation par transposition symbolique (*i’tibār*), selon Ibn Barrajan et Ibn ‘Arabī,” in *Symbolisme et herméneutique dans la pensée d’Ibn ‘Arabī*, ed. Bakri Aladdin (Damascus: Presses de l’Ifpo, 2007), 147–151.

which foreshadows, in many respects, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own vision of entanglements between this world and the hereafter. According to Ibn Barraġān, the visible world is the mirror of the invisible one (*mir’āt al-ghayb*), which appears in the shadow of this world: “God hides (*khabbā’a*) the next world in the shade of this world (*zill al-dunyā’*),” which surrounds this world. “It is hidden within it, yet concealed from us.”⁵⁵

4.5 *Diagram of the “Form of the Land of Gathering and the Entities and Degrees It Contains, the Throne of Separation and Judgement and Its Bearers, and of the Rows of Angels”*

In the fifth diagram of the series, which illustrates the structure of the eschatological Land of Gathering (*arḍ al-ḥaṣhr*), where the creatures will be gathered waiting God’s judgement, Ibn al-‘Arabī provides us with a topography of the hereafter (Figure 6/Plate 3.4 left).⁵⁶ The diagram, molded in the general shape of a cosmic scale (*mīzān*), in accordance with the Qur’anic symbolism of the scale of deeds,⁵⁷ illustrates the division of the creatures according to the book of their deeds, in reference to the following verses: “We shall bring forth for him, on the Day of Resurrection, a book he shall find spread wide open, ‘Read thy book! Thy soul suffices thee this day as a reckoner against thee.’” (Q 17:14–15) All those judged, whether destined to Hell or Paradise, will walk over the path (*ṣirāt*), a narrow bridge described in a *ḥadīth* as “thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword.” Stretched on the surface of hellfire, the path is concealed within hellfire (*al-ṣirāt ‘alā matn jahannam wa-ghā’ib fī-hā*),⁵⁸ in accordance with the following verse mentioned by the Andalusian master in Chapter 371: “Not one of you there is, but he shall go down to it (Q 19:71).” The bridge,⁵⁹ symbolized by a horizontal line in the diagram, is described in the text as extending from the Earth to the surface of the sphere of the fixed stars. The term indicates, as depicted in the diagram, a meadow located outside of the walls of Paradise, “place of the banquet” (*marj al-janna wa-huwa mawḍi‘ al-ma’duba*). The blessed people of the banquet (*aḥl al-ma’duba*) will feast in this place, described in Chapter 371 as an immaculate white land (*darmaka bayḍā’ naqīyya*).

55 Yousef Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus. Ibn Barraġān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 276.

56 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, 1870, fol. 92^a.

57 Q 7:8–9, 21:47, 23:102–103, 101:6–9.

58 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Uthmān Yaḥyā, chap. 64, 4:476.

59 Ibn al-‘Arabī evokes sometimes not one, but seven bridges stretched out hellfire (ibid., p. 446), perhaps in correspondence with the seven doors of Hell depicted in the next diagram.

As illustrated in the diagram, the point of departure of the path (*ṣirāṭ*) and its point of arrival are separated by a perpendicular vertical line symbolizing the Qur'anic "peaks" (*al-a'rāf*), that is to say the boundary-wall (*sūr*) evoked in the eponymous sura (Q 7:46–48) which separates Hell from Paradise. At the intersection of the line of the path (*ṣirāṭ*) and the line of the peaks, a circle symbolizes the immolation of death (*dhabḥ al-mawt*), that God will make appear between Hell and Paradise in the form of a black and white ram (*kabsh amlaḥ*).⁶⁰ At the very end of the path, the pool (*ḥawḍ*) of prophet Muḥammad, described in a *ḥadīth* as quenching the thirst of those drinking from it, awaits believers in Paradise. During the Day of Judgement, God grants the praised station (*al-maqām al-maḥmūd*) to the Prophet (Q 17:79), which will allow him to perform intercession for all humanity. All these elements depicted in the diagram are framed by seven rows of angels (*ṣufūf al-malā'ika*) preceded by the Spirit (*al-rūḥ*), the angel Gabriel. The rank of the Prophet, symbolized by a circle, lies below the Spirit and the Throne of Separation and Judgement (*'arsh al-faṣl wa-l-qaḍā'*), which surmounts all the elements of the diagram. On the right and the left side of the Throne lie the pulpits of the protected ones (*al-āminūn*). As depicted in the diagram, the Throne, on the Day of Judgement, will not be established on four, but eight pillars, carried by the eight angels mentioned in the Qur'an.⁶¹

4.6 *Diagram of the "Form of Hell, Its Doors, Its Abodes and Its Descending Levels"*

The sixth diagram of the series details the structure of Hell, its degrees (*dara-kāt*) mentioned in the Qur'an, and its doors (Figure 7/Plate 3,5 right).⁶² As for the degrees of Paradise (*darajāt al-janna*), each of the seven infernal gates corresponds to one of the seven above-mentioned members of the human body subjected to Law (*a'ḍā' al-taklīf al-zāhira*). As Ibn al-'Arabī specifies, "the interior of man in this world becomes exterior in the hereafter (*fā-inna bāṭin al-insān fī al-dunyā huwa al-zāhir fī al-dār al-ākhirā*)."⁶³ The center of the diagram is occupied by the door which veils the heart (*al-ḥijāb al-qalb*), which is the place of the invisible within man (*mawḍi' al-ghayb min al-insān*). Described in Chapter 371 as a paradise surrounded by calamities (*makāriḥ*), this door (*bāb al-ḥijāb*) shall not open until God establishes servitude (*al-'ubūdiyya*) within

60 Ibn al-'Arabī here refers to a *ḥadīth* recorded in al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:93 (ḥadīth n° 4730).

61 Q 69:17.

62 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, 1870, fol. 92^b.

63 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 371, 9:356.

the judged one. It masks the vision of God (*ru'yat Allāh*) and remains sealed to the veiled inhabitants of Hell.

4.7 *Diagram of the "Form of the Presence of the Divine Names, the Lowest World, the Hereafter, and the Intermediary World"*

Ibn al-'Arabī's cosmological edifice cannot be grasped without taking into consideration his doctrine of divine Names. The seventh diagram of the series illustrates the articulation between this world and the hereafter, joined by the intermediary world (*al-barzakh*), and the divine Names, whose interaction is at the origin of the appearance of the world (Figure 8/Plate 3.5 left).⁶⁴ Just as there is an order of the world, there is an order among the divine names, which can be divided into "chiefs" (*a'imma*) or "lords" (*arbāb*), and "servants" (*sadana*). Seven principal names (the "mothers of the names," *ummahāt al-asmā'*), depicted in this diagram, are the cause of the existence of the world: the Living (*al-ḥayy*), the Knower (*al-'ālim*), the One who wants (*al-murīd*), the One who can (*al-qādir*), the One who says (*al-qā'il*), the Most-Generous (*al-jawwād*), and the Equitable (*al-muqṣit*). These names are the "daughters" (*banāt*) of two other names: the one who administers things (*al-mudabbir*) and the one who distinguishes them (*al-mufaṣṣil*).

4.8 *Diagram of the "Form of the Dune of the Vision and of the Degrees of Creation within It"*

The eighth diagram of the series illustrates the Dune of the Vision (*kathīb al-ru'ya*, *kathīb al-mushāhada*),⁶⁵ a dune of white musk (*kathīb min al-misk al-abyaḍ*) located at the summit of Paradise in the garden of Eden (*jannat 'adn*), from which the people destined to Paradise will be able to see God during the supreme visitation (*al-zawr al-a'zam*) on the Day of Judgment (Figure 9/Plate 3.6 right).⁶⁶ It is also the sixth and last abode (*mawṭin*) enumerated by Ibn al-'Arabī in his *Risālat al-Anwār*, which follows the abode of Hell and Paradise.⁶⁷ Pulpits (*manābir*), thrones (*asirra*), and seats (*karāsī*) are disposed in this place according to the degrees occupied by the people of the Dune (*ahl al-kathīb*), divided into four communities (*ṭawā'if*): the believers, the saints, the prophets, and the messengers.

64 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, 1870, fol. 93^a.

65 Q 73:14.

66 MS Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, 1870, fol. 93^b. Ibn al-'Arabī describes the Dune more in detail in chap. 65 (*fī ma'rīfat al-janna wa-manāzili-hā wa-darajāti-hā*).

67 Ibn al-'Arabī, *Risālat al-Anwār*, ed. Bernd Radkte, 56.

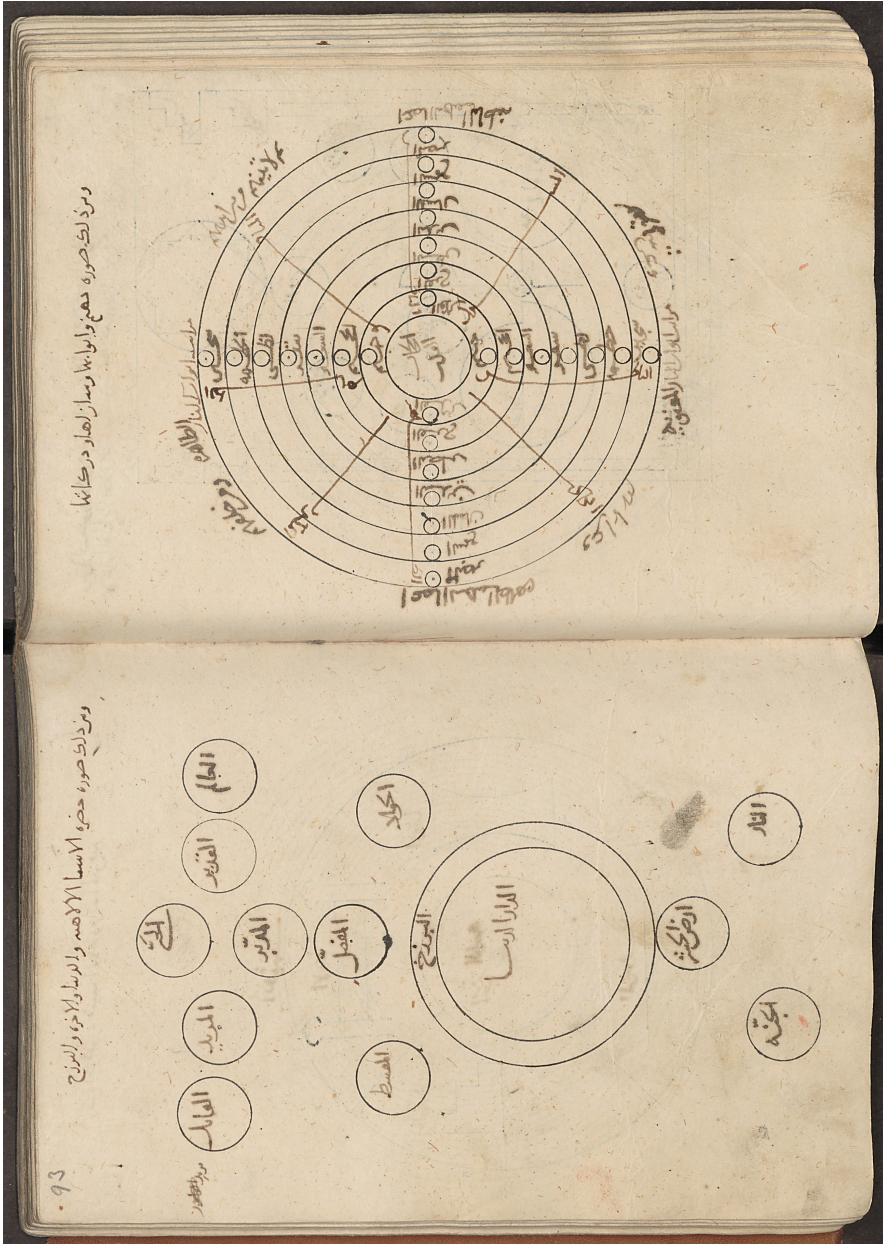


PLATE 3.5 Form of Hell, Its Doors, Its Abodes and Its Descending Levels (right)—Form of the Presence of the Divine Names, the Lowest World, the Hereafter, and the Intermediary World (left). Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, MS 1870, fols. 92^b–93^a)

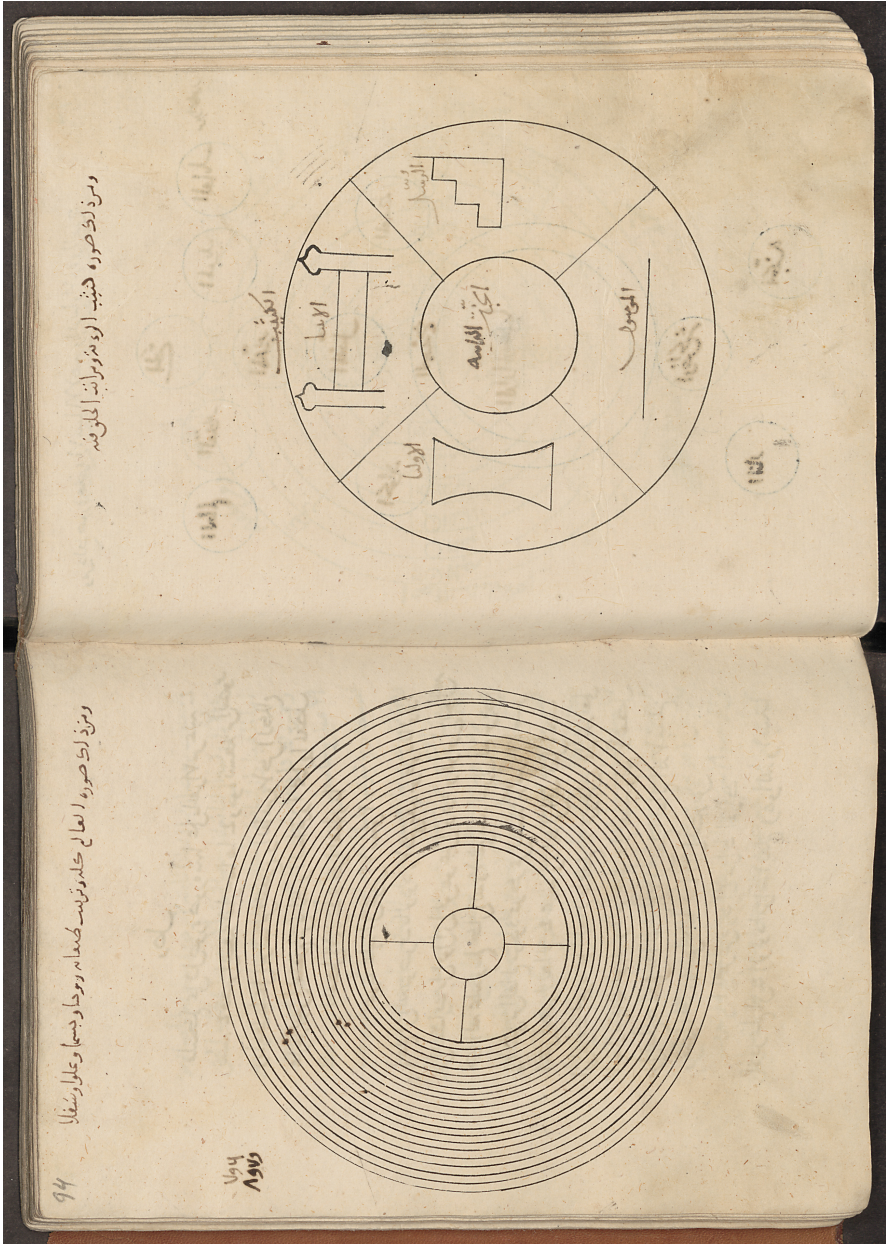


PLATE 3.6 Form of the Dune of the Vision and of the Degrees of Creation within It (right)—Form of the Entire World and of the Hierarchy of Its Spiritual and Corporal, High and Low Layers (left). Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Istanbul, Evkaf Müzesi, ms 1870, fols. 93^b–94^a)

4.9 *Diagram of the “Form of the Entire World and of the Hierarchy of Its Spiritual and Corporal, High and Low Layers”*

As a synthesis of the eight precedent diagrams, the last diagram of the series illustrates the entire gradation of universal existence, depicted as a perfectly storied and organized whole (Figure 10/Plate 3.6 left). It constitutes the visual support of the last section of the chapter, which provides us several classifications of the degrees of the universe according to different points of view. In this representation of the world as a whole, the hereafter appears at the very core of the world.⁶⁸ As specified in this section, the world, defined as “all that is other than God” (*kull mā siwā Allāh*), is none other than the forms accepted by the Cloud and which appeared in it. These forms, explains the Andalusian master, are like that appearing in the mirror to the eye of the one who looks (*al-rāṭ*), who is none other than God, the glance of the world (*baṣar al-ālam*). “The world, in sum, appears between the Cloud and the glance of God.”⁶⁹

Conclusion

As a graphic representation of his cosmological teachings, the figures drawn by Ibn al-‘Arabī in the *Meccan Openings* show us to what extent his vision of the world is anchored in the universe of the Qur’an and the *ḥadīth*.⁷⁰ Indeed, as it has been often underlined, the focal point of the Andalusian master’s *magnum opus*, which can be read as a large commentary of the Qur’an, is the interpretation of the divine Revelation.⁷¹ The data derived from Revelation, however, does not contradict the knowledge of the astronomers (*aṣḥāb ‘ilm al-hay’a*). As Ibn al-‘Arabī asserts in the introductory part of Chapter 371, their observations

68 The shape of the central part of the diagram, indeed, corresponds to the shape of the diagram of the “Form of the Dune of the Vision.”

69 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 371, 9:461.

70 As Ibn al-‘Arabī emphasizes on this point in the beginning of chap. 371: “the knowledge of the hierarchy of the world is not the lot of rational judgement (*laysa al-‘ilm bi-hi min ḥaẓẓ al-fikr*), but depends on the information of the One who made the creatures and who gave them their forms.”

71 This is the main idea which runs through *An Ocean Without Shore* of Michel Chodkiewicz. As demonstrated by these diagrams, the importance of the *ḥadīth* in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s universe must not be neglected. On the influence of the *ḥadīth* on the Andalusian master’s doctrine, see: Denis Gril, “Le hadith dans l’œuvre d’Ibn ‘Arabī ou la chaîne ininterrompue de la prophétie,” in *Das Prophetenḥadīth: Dimensionen einer islamischen Literaturgattung*, eds. Gilliot C. and Nagel T., (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 123–144 (translated into English, “Hadith in the work of Ibn ‘Arabī: The uninterrupted chain of prophecy,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 50 (2011): 45–76).

are correct, insofar as God did not transgress the ordinary course of things (*lam yakhrīq Allāh al-‘āda*) in determining the movements of the stars in the heavens. Their observations are correct as well as when it comes to the science of the eclipses (*‘ilm al-kusūfāt*) and the arrangement of the spheres, nested one within the other, just as the spiritual paths followed by the travelers (*sālikīn*). The astronomers elaborated a possible arrangement of the world (*tartīb jā’iz mumkin*) in virtue of the rational judgement (*fī hukm al-‘aql*), but they only partially grasp the commandment that God revealed to heaven (*ba‘ḍ mā awḥā Allāh min amri-hi fī al-samā’*).

The vivid and dynamic figures inserted by Ibn al-‘Arabī into this chapter, which summarize and condense in visual form the complex cosmological notions formulated in the text and that the reader of the *Meccan Openings* is called to grasp and internalize, offer us an illustration of the porous boundaries between the spiritual path, cosmology and eschatology in the Andalusian master’s vision of the world; and thus provide us with an example, in graphic form, of his rich and puzzling language. These diagrams not only offer us a dynamic representation of the unfurling of the universal existence from the primordial Cloud to man, but also of its ultimate reintegration within its principle in the description of the posthumous evolution of the world and its eschatological stages. Designed to help those who visualize them to reach a more immediate knowledge of the hierarchization of the world and its dissolution, they offer a graphic depiction of the entanglement of cosmology and eschatology, of this world and the next. As Chapter 371 underlines, the lower world is but a path towards the hereafter (*ṭarīq li-l-ākhirā*). At the very core of the world, the hereafter is present in this world here and now, for those who are able to perceive it.

The perception of the hereafter is also a step of the spiritual journey (*mi‘rāj*), which is defined in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Risālat al-Anwār* as an ascension through the degrees of existence (*marātib al-wujūd*). As Michel Chodkiewicz points out, the ascent of the friend of God (*walī*), manifestation of the presence of the Perfect Man in this world, is fundamentally a journey of de-creation.⁷² The diagrams in Chapter 371, which Michel Chodkiewicz describes occasionally as “maps” of the hereafter,⁷³ also depict the direction to follow in order to return to the principle. This journey of de-creation is possible insofar as man contains the world:

72 Michel Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of the Saints* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 155. As Ibn al-‘Arabī describes it in his *Risālat al-Anwār*, it is an ascension of dissolution which follows the order of the degrees of existence (*mi‘rāj al-tahḥīl ‘alā al-tartīb*) (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Risālat al-Anwār*, ed. Bernd Radtke, 118).

73 *Ibid.*, 167.

“God,” specifies Ibn al-‘Arabī, “created what is exterior to man only to propose him a model (*mithāl*), so that he knows that everything which appears in the world is within man, who is the very aim of existence.”⁷⁴

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74 *Wa-mā khalaqa Allāh al-khārij ‘an al-insān illā ḍarb mithāl li-l-insān li-ya‘lama anna kull mā zahara fī al-‘ālam huwa fī-hi wa-l-insān huwa al-‘ayn al-maqṣūda min al-wujūd (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, chap. 371, 9:309).*

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Reading and Reciting the Qur'an: Calligraphic Spaces in Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh's (d. 649/1252) *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*

Elizabeth R. Alexandrin

Introduction

One of the extant manuscripts of Sa'd al-Dīn al-Ḥamūyeh's (d.ca. 650/1253) *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* (*The Book of the Beloved*), copied on 16th Muharram 753 (February 1352) by Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tustarī, is housed in Bursa's İnebey Yazma ve Basma Eserler Kütüphanesi (Plate 4.1). At present, one of the oldest known copies of the *Maḥbūb* in European manuscript collections is MS Chester Beatty 4159, which was copied in 15 Sha'bān 663 (2 June 1265) by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Māhān al-Simnānī.¹ My study introduces two schemata (i.e., diagrams) included in the manuscripts of the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* as a point of entry into a topic that is very much open to debate: how was Ḥamūyeh's *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* first read in the 13th CE? In addition, some thoughts will be offered on Ḥamūyeh's reading of the Qur'an. To the extent that it is possible at this stage of research, this study speaks to how the calligraphic spaces in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* intersect with Ḥamūyeh's teachings on the rising to visibility of the seal of God's friends (*khātim al-awliyā'*).²

1 Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2 vols. and 3 supplements (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937–1949), Supplement 1: 803.

2 To help to situate Ḥamūyeh vis-à-vis Sufi discussions of *walāya*, Paul Ballanfāt has noted, on the basis of his research on Ḥamūyeh, that the great-grandson of Ḥamūyeh, Khwāja Ghiyāth al-Dīn, provides the date for Ḥamūyeh being in Damascus from 634 to 640 (1236 to 1243), where he met with Ibn al-'Arabī, after which he came to Tabriz in 641/1241. See Khwāja Ghiyāth al-Dīn, *Kitāb Murād al-murīdīn*, MS Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi Majlis-i shūrā-yi Islāmī 594, and the article by Sayyid 'A.A. Mīr-Bāqirī Fard and Zahra Najafī, "Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūya dar Murād al-murīdīn," *Muṭāla'āt-i Islāmī* 9 (1388): 133–154. Ballanfāt also has pointed out that the same manuscript calls Ibn al-'Arabī the seal of God's friends (*khātim al-awliyā'*), using the form of this expression related to *kh-t-m* according to Ḥamūyeh, and not Ibn al-'Arabī. I would like to thank him for providing these important references. E-mail communication on 10 February, 2016.



موسطرين

أناك القم بنظره في مخطوطك ركب بصيرته
 في عين مخطوطك ويصنأ سورة الأقرين و
 وصفة حقوة الخيري أن نظري في نظري
 كما نظري في الأقرين والأقرين من البنية
 والعهديين والشهلاء، والله محمدي

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| BURSA GENEL KİTAPÇISI | |
| Kisim | Orhan |
| Tasnif No | 638 |
| Kisim No | |

كتاب المحبوب

تأليف الإمام العلامة شيخ شيوخ الإسلام ووالده بول الله بن الام
 سرالله في الارضين صفوح رب العالمين سلطان الواصلين
 سعمال الله والحق والدارين مرسى المحققين مرشد الاخلاق اجمعين
 ابو الخالد محمد بن المولى ابو الجوزي رضوان الله عليه طاب ثراه في الآخرة

عبد
 ١٢
 نصفه
 مائة

موسطرين
 والاحسان على ما لا تدركه والفتيات
 فداوة العارفين صبا الله والدارين
 حاد في السمع العيون فطوب الواصلين
 السعيل الحرام احيى كماله والذين
 الحمد له ايام الله تكمه والله
 وجعل من عبيد القاصدين

وقف في نسخة الشيخ احمد العزبي
 عليه رحمة الله
 رحمه الله

PLATE 4.1 Front-piece and title page. Sa'ûd al-Din Ḥamûyeh, *Kitâb al-Maḥībūb* (Bursa, İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, ms Orhan 638)

My reflections on the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*'s schemata have a specific starting point. Shortly after I had worked on this manuscript in the İnebey collection, I read Rustin Zarkar's article, "Word as Image," in which he states, "Thus, calligraphy functioned as a transmitter of messages as well as ornamentation in both open and closed spaces."³ Zarkar's comment proposes a new perspective on the art of calligraphy as well as raises some questions on the vantage points while seeing calligraphy. If Zarkar's work on the Tunisian street artist el-Seed prompts us to consider the sensorium of viewing calligraphy in public spaces, the perspective Belting has taken on optics and "optical theory" draws us back to medieval and early modern discussions on these interesting issues, and alerts us to advances in the field of Visual Studies as well as their relevance to the study of Islamic manuscript cultures and traditions.⁴ Vision and visualizing, as situated in medieval Islamic texts, and with their long histories in the Middle East and Western Europe, places consideration on a sustained gaze or a "rapid and fleeting gaze," as well as viewing from a "window" or onto a "horizon." With the additional dimensionality of focal points and their relationship with the viewer's body, the individual's inner senses remained key to what comprised perception as a whole.⁵

In brief, "word as image" provides a stepping-stone for approaching the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*'s calligraphic spaces, in particular, spaces inside of a manuscript demarcated by both Qur'anic calligraphy and Qur'anic interpretation. Ḥamūyeh's approach to reading the Qur'an configures the schemata, the spheres (*dā'ira*; pl. *dawā'ir*) associated with specific Arabic letters (*ḥarf*; pl. *ḥurūf*), and how they are presented in written form in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*. Yet reading the Qur'an is much more than reading; in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*, Ḥamūyeh is speaking and hearing, face to face with the Qur'an.

This chapter outlines some circular and sequenced readings of two schemata from the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*, as examples of calligraphic spaces, employing frames of Qur'anic passages and Qur'anic touchstones, in both reading and recitation. In my humble opinion, these two schemata give form to one of Ḥamūyeh's central questions on the rising to visibility of the beloved (*maḥbūb*) as the friend of God (*walī Allāh*). To note all too briefly here, some of the short treatises Ḥamūyeh wrote also explore the "heart of the Qur'an," that is,

3 Rustin Zarkar, "Word As Image: Contextualizing 'Calligraffiti: 1984–2013' with French-Tunisian Street Artist eL Seed," accessed February 14, 2022, <http://ajamc.com/2013/09/17/word-as-image-contextualizing-calligraffiti-1984--2013-with-french-tunisian-street-artist-el-seed/>.

4 Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science*, transl. Deborah L. Schneider (Cambridge, MA-London: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011), 4–9.

5 Ibidem.

the Sūra Yāsīn (Q 36), “in the name of God” (*bismillāh*), and Q 20:14. The word “Allāh” with the expression, “Indeed I, I am Allāh” (*innī anā Allāh*) (Q 20:14), holds a central place in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* and in terms of his commentary on invocation, in the name of God (*bismillāh*),⁶ since it is composed of three letters “a” (*alif*) and two letters “n” (*nūn*). In double, or in two halves, side by side, or it could be said, doubled, the two *nūn* and three *alif* of Q 20:14 parallel the three parts- syllables- of *bismillāh*.⁷ Of course, there are other levels of discourse and discussion in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*. As well, there are other diagrams. However, at this stage of my research, in what follows I would like to give preference to the two schemata framed by the Qur’anic verses, Q 20:14 and Q 2:255, in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*.

1 Kitāb al-Maḥbūb

There is a significant gap in the scholarly literature at present, both in terms of critical editions of Ḥamūyeh’s works and publications on his thought. His works have not been explored in detail, as either a micro-study of a 13th-century Sufi thinker, or in terms of 13th-century and post-13th-century mystical messianisms. Almost no attention has been paid to addressing Ḥamūyeh’s corpus as a whole or in fact, the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*. To date only three of Ḥamūyeh’s works have been edited: the *Miṣbāḥ fī al-taṣawwuf*,⁸ *Fī ‘ulūm al-ḥaqā’iq*, and the *Qalb al-munqalib*.⁹

6 It can be said that Q 20:14 frames both the introduction as well as the first *wajh* of the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*. See in particular the set of verses in the introduction. MS 638 Orhan, fol. 2^a. In addition, see the short treatise, *Sharḥ Bismillāh*. MS 445 Çorlulu Ali Paşa, fols. 1^b–13^b.

7 I would like to thank Paul Ballanfath for his generous and kind guidance in reading through these two schemata as well as for his comments on the *nūn*. Personal communication, June 2018.

8 Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh, *al-Miṣbāḥ fī al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Najīb M. Hiravī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1362 h.sh./1403/1958). Secondary literature on Ḥamūyeh’s *Miṣbāḥ* is also lacking. This collection of Ḥamūyeh’s teachings potentially stand as an advanced “primer” for the *Maḥbūb*.

9 Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh, *Qalb al-munqalib*, ed. Najīb M. Hiravī, in *Ma‘ārif* 5/2 (1347): 256–288. The treatise titled *Ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā’iq* is frequently attributed to Ibn al-‘Arabī, but sometimes to Ḥamūyeh. See Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l’oeuvre d’Ibn Arabi: étude critique* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1964), R.G. #217. This treatise, under the title *Fī ‘ulūm al-ḥaqā’iq wa-ḥikam al-ḥaqā’iq*, has been published as a work of Ḥamūyeh in *Majmū‘at al-rasā’il* (Miṣr 1328/1910), 488–498, and also in *Ganjīna-yi bahāristān* (Tehran 1379/2000), 421–434. It is not, however, contained in the collection of 27 shorter pieces of Ibn al-‘Arabī published in two parts as *Rasā’il Ibn al-‘Arabī* (Hyderabad-Deccan, 1948). I would like to thank Professor Hermann Landolt for his kind and generous assistance with these references to

Since there is such a significant gap in the scholarly literature, a very brief summary of the extant manuscripts of the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* has to suffice for the time being, before turning to the topic at hand.¹⁰ The extant manuscripts of the *Maḥbūb* number between 202 and 250 folios (equivalent to between 404 and 500 pages).¹¹ The Arabic text is divided into ten introductory chapters, titled *wajh* (face), followed by roughly 35 subsections, which commence with the *bismillāh*. In the introductory chapters and subsections, the diagrams (numbering from two to six) give the impression of a distinctive visuality to the *Maḥbūb* manuscripts. These diagrams appear consistently in the complete extant manuscripts, from the earliest to the latest. Furthermore, in terms of the work as a whole, the majority of the diagrams are only in the introductory sections of the *Maḥbūb*.

some of the short treatises by Ḥamūyeh. See Brockelmann. *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, Supplement 1: 803; Jamal Elias, "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad: Sa'd al-Din and Sadr al-Din Hamuwayi," *Iranian Studies* 27, nos. 1–4 (1994): 53–75, and Sa'īd Nafīsī, "Khāndān-i Sa'd al-Dīn-i Ḥamawī," *Kanj-kāvīhā-yi 'ilmī va adabī* 83 (1950): 6–39, for information about the unedited works of Ḥamūyeh.

- 10 I would like to extend much gratitude to the head librarian of İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Mr. Osman Nuri, for the permission to reproduce images from MS 638 Orhan.
- 11 Paul Ballanfat and I are currently preparing for publication a critical edition of the *Maḥbūb* and as a second volume, a critical edition of a set of Ḥamūyeh's short treatises on messianism. The work for this critical edition of the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* is funded by a SSHRC Insight Development Grant, 2018–2022. Having identified at present more than fourteen extant manuscripts, the critical edition will rely primarily on the following manuscripts: MS Ar. 4159 Chester Beatty (663AH/1265CE); MS Carullah 1078 (706AH/1306CE), MS Nurusoşmaniye (706AH/1306CE), MS A1418 Topkapı Museum Library, Istanbul (718AH/1318CE), MS 2058 Ayasofya (736AH/1335CE), Süleymaniye Library, MS 4084/Pm. 153. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (the information in colophon(s), which also mentions accounts of Ḥamūyeh's completion of the *Maḥbūb* and his death, suggests between 1335 and 1353CE), and MS 638 Orhan Bursa Genel, İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi (753AH/1352CE). These manuscripts date between 1265CE and 1353CE. A number of the known manuscripts are incomplete (only one volume extant): MS 726 Yeni Cami (no colophon), MS 2785 Fatih (701AH/1302CE, though parts of the manuscript may have been recopied in Dhū l-Ḥijja 799AH/August 1397CE), MS 1224 Manisa (727AH/1326CE), MS 2057 Ayasofya (no colophon), MS 1396 Beyazit General Collection, listed as *Maḥbūb al-muḥibbīn wa-maṭlūb al-waṣīlīn* (nd first volume). The last manuscript mentioned here, MS 1398 Beyazit, was not noted previously by other scholars. Other manuscripts will be consulted for our critical edition of the *Maḥbūb*: MS 1342 Şehit Ali Paşa, Istanbul; MS 1096 Carullah Efendi, Istanbul; MS 507 Hekimoğlu; Microfilm 1170 (of MS 4084/Pm. 153), Markaz-i İhyā-i Mirāth-i İslāmī, 618 pp. (7th AH/13th CE); MS 3253 Dānīshgāh (7th–8th AH/13th–14th CE); MS 3253 (34S), 698 pp. (7th–8th AH/13th–14th CE); MS Sāzmān-i Lughat-nāma-yi Dihkhudā 52 (9th–10th AH/15–16th CE). I would like to thank Chester Beatty Library and the Directorate of the Turkish Institute of Manuscripts for their assistance in obtaining manuscripts and for the permission to use specific folio images in this study.

Following the introductory chapters, and serving as chapter divisions are the twelve “spheres” (*dawāʿir*)¹² associated with the letters of the Arabic alphabet, which conveys further the visual dimensions of the *Maḥbūb* manuscripts. For example, concerning the letters of the Arabic alphabet, some of the chapter divisions on the spheres are further divided into sections (*faṣl*) as well as “degrees” (*martaba*, pl. *marātib*). In the chapters on the spheres, the *Maḥbūb* includes prose and poetry. The work as a whole contains between 83–90 poems, with each line of verse ending with the same letter, throughout the entire alphabet; that is to say, a substantial body of poetry reinforces Ḥamūyeh’s discussions of each letter of the alphabet, in connection with the spheres of the letters. It also contains roughly eight short rhymed verses of four quatrains, with some poems with lines in both Persian and Arabic.¹³

Hirschler’s research findings permit for additional reflections on reading and hearing “books” in 13th-century Muslim societies, holding much relevance for the part-by-part composition of the *Maḥbūb*.¹⁴ As well, the reception histories of reading and interpreting Ḥamūyeh’s teachings present in related manuscript traditions what could be called something like notes on a text or on a teaching; for example, how the *Maḥbūb* was often copied in two or three volumes, and other book formats. For the latter, a number of compiled works (*majmūʿa*) that date from 14th-century onward exist in multiple collections in Iran and Turkey, including notes on the *Maḥbūb* as well as particular sections from the first half of the *Maḥbūb*, interspersed with diagrams.¹⁵ The *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*, as a book, was meant to be read and studied, to be held and touched, to have its pages turned, and to be carefully copied—and it was.

The *Maḥbūb*’s transmission from Ḥamūyeh has its own unique history and legacy, even if, for the most part, forgotten at present. In the milieu of formalizing Sufi orders (*ṭarīqa*, pl. *ṭuruq*), near contemporaries remarked on Ḥamūyeh’s

12 MS 2058 Ayasofya, fol. 207^b.

13 It is of interest that in ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quḍs*, ed. Muḥammad Mahdī Tawḥīdīpūr (Tehran: Maḥmūdī, 1337/1958), 429, some of these poems are preserved.

14 Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 27–29.

15 Collections in Iran and Turkey, which include notes on the *Maḥbūb* as well as particular sections from the first half of the *Maḥbūb*, such as MS Hudāi Efendi 4792, fols. 200^a–202^a. Many other treatises of Ḥamūyeh, such as MS 4393 Bursa Genel, *Risālat-i nāṣiḥa*, fols. 111^b–119^a; MS 1622 Ulu Camii, *al-Faṣl fī al-faḍl* (103 folios), and MS 1183 Haraççioğlu, which contains the treatise *Kitāb fī ‘ilm al-ḥaqāʾiq*, plus shorter, untitled writings of Ḥamūyeh (201 folios), exist in collective manuscripts that also include, as catalogued currently, numerous works of Ibn al-‘Arabī and Qūnawī.

inclination for prolonged states of visionary experience and his enjoyment of music. In different contexts, they questioned his exact association with the Mongol ruling elite.¹⁶ The Ḥamūyeh family, especially Ḥamūyeh's son, Ṣadr al-Dīn, figures prominently in hagiographical and historiographical narratives on the Īlkhān rulers' conversion to Islam, like Ghāzān Khān, and in ways that point to the 13th-century fluidity of scholarly circles and religious identities at the court of the Īlkhāns.¹⁷ Indeed, the list of links and lines of relations between Ḥamūyeh, and those who shaped what we as scholars call Sufism of the 13th CE, is very long, but two deserve special mention: Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 618/1221) and Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240).¹⁸

Kubrawī-affiliated authors participated in forming a corpus of Kubrawī Sufi teachings in the centuries following the death of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, the eponymous founder of the Kubrawī Sufi Order. The Kubrawī Sufi tradition's corpus in general, and the collective Qur'an commentary in particular, alludes to the importance of a specific selection of Qur'anic verses for Sufi practitioners to contemplate and verify mystical experiences against the "touchstone of the Qur'an."¹⁹ The Kubrawī authors thereby established a Qur'anic framework for understanding "visionary concentration" (*himma*) and mystical experiences.²⁰

13th–14th-century Kubrawī Sufi works incorporated diverse forms of literature: written correspondences between masters and disciples, dream diaries, and Qur'an exegesis. Arabic and Persian works written by the Kubrawī authors, such as Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Sayf al-Dīn Bākhārī, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh, Nūr al-Dīn al-Isfarā'īnī and 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī, exemplify

16 Elias, "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad," 58–60 and 70–75; Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 428–429.

17 Elias, "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad;" Charles Melville, "Pādshāh-i Islām: The Conversion of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān," in *Pembroke Papers*, ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 179–212; Judith Pfeiffer, "Reflections on a 'Double Rapprochement': Conversion to Islam Among the Mongol Elite During the Early Ilkhanate," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), 367–389.

18 See as well, Ḥamūyeh, *Risāla fī taṣawwuf*, MS Serez 3932, 33^b–43^b.

19 Paul Ballanfat, "La prophétologie dans le 'Ayn al-Hayāt, tafsīr attribué à Najm Al-dīn Kubrā," in *Mystique musulmane. Parcours en compagnie d'un chercheur: Roger Deladrière*, ed. Geneviève Gobillot (Paris: Cariscript, 2003), 171–364; Jamal Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995); Paul Nwyia, "Muqaddimat tafsīr al-Qur'an li-'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī (736/1336)," *al-Abhāth* 26 (1973–1977): 141–157; William Shpall, "A Note on Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the *Baḥr al-ḥaqā'iq*," *Folia Orientalia* 22 (1981–1984): 69–80.

20 Paul Ballanfat, "Reality and Image in the *Tafsīr* of Kubrā and Rāzī," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 35 (2004), 100–102; Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *La Pratique du Soufisme: quatorze petits traités*, trans. Paul Ballanfat (Nîmes: Editions de l'éclat, 2002), 62.

some of the most striking approaches to Sufi dream interpretation and discussions of visionary experience.²¹

As Ballanfat, Corbin, Elias, and Molé have studied in depth, Kubrā's theory of the body's subtle centers (*laṭā'if*)—the primary *loci* of dreams, delusions, and visionary experiences—are correlated with colors and the individual practitioner's mystical states and stations.²² Yet over time, with the introduction of new texts and new questions, the model of subtle centers comes to stand as a particular signature of the Kubrawī Sufi tradition as well as a line of resistance for particular authors thinking about visionary concentration, dream interpretation, and Qur'anic touchstones in relation to oneness and unity (*tawhīd*).

Significantly, Ḥamūyeh is not situated prominently in the Kubrawī lineage (*silsila*) as a teacher (*shaykh*) in the Kubrawī Sufi order despite receiving a certificate of training (*ijāza*) from Kubrā and the acknowledgement of his discipleship.²³ Writing about Ḥamūyeh, two Sufi authors, 'Azīz al-Dīn al-Nasafī (a student of Ḥamūyeh) and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, remarked specifically on the diagrams and figures in Ḥamūyeh's works.²⁴ In the *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, Nasafī suggests that his teacher's Ḥamūyeh's works were "difficult."²⁵

Additional pointed critiques of Ḥamūyeh's works appear in Nasafī's *Kitāb al-Insān al-kāmil*, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* and *Kashf al-ṣīrat*.²⁶ In the *Kitāb al-Insān al-kāmil* and *Maqṣad al-aqṣā*, Ḥamūyeh's concepts of the coming of the Lord of the time (*sāhib al-zamān*) and sanctity/friendship with God (*walāya*) are con-

21 Eyad Abuali, "Words Clothed in Light: *Dhikr* (Recollection), Colour and Synaesthesia in Early Kubrawī Sufism," *Iran* 58, no. 2 (2020): 279–292; Hartwig Cordt, "Die Sitzungen des Ala ad-dawla as-Simnani" (Zürich: PhD Diss., University of Basel, 1977), 22, 32–33 and 67, n. 1.

22 Ballanfat, "La prophétologie dans le *'Ayn al-hayāt*"; Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*; Nwyia, "Muqaddimat tafsīr al-Qur'ān li-'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnāni"; Shpall, "A Note on Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the *Baḥr al-ḥaqā'iq*."

23 MS 2058 Ayaşofya, fol. 215^b. Concerning the *ijāza* from Kubrā, this has been translated into French by Paul Ballanfat, *La pratique du soufisme*, 13–14. See MS 2800 Şehid Ali Paşa, fol. 20^b.

24 Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 428–429.

25 Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, "Intiqād-i kitāb: *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*," *Farhang-i Īrān-zamīn* 13 (1344): 298–310.

26 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. Aḥmad Mahdavi Dāmghānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī va Farhangī, 1384/2005), 3–4 and 10; 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Le Livre de l'homme parfait. Kitāb al-Insān al-Kāmil*, ed. Marijan Molé (Tehran-Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1962), 320–321. See also Hermann Landolt, "Le paradoxe de la 'Face de Dieu': 'Azīz-e Nasafī (VIIe/XIIIe siècle) et le 'monisme ésotérique' de l'islam," *Studia Iranica* 25 (1996): 163–192; Hermann Landolt, "Sa'd al-Dīn al-Hammū'i," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2nd Edition, 9:703–704; Marijan Molé, "Les Kubrawīya entre sunnisme et shī'isme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l'hégire," *Revue des Études islamiques* 29 (1961): 61–142.

tested in part.²⁷ On the one hand, Nasafi advances a critique about the twelve friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*), supposedly proposed by Ḥamūyeh as a teaching on the “seal,” and how they cannot be shaykhs who train disciples; a statement that reflects mid-13th to 14th-century concerns with formalizing mystical sovereignties within Sufi orders, “problematizing,” it could be said, Ḥamūyeh as one of the “twelve disciples of Kubrā.”²⁸ On the other hand, Nasafi's dream about the Prophet Muḥammad, Ibn Khafīf and Ḥamūyeh, recorded in the *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, significantly linked “publishing” his own writings to making public his teacher's Ḥamūyeh's esoteric teachings, to be revealed as content through solely Nasafi himself.²⁹

On the matter of the diagrams again, Haydar Āmulī, referencing the *Mahbūb*, claimed that Ḥamūyeh, through using the science of letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*), and allusions, by means of spheres (*dawā'ir*), or without spheres, proposed that the name of the *walī* after the Messenger of God (note here: Āmulī means, *muṭ-laq^{an}* and *muqayyad^{an}* pertaining to the “seal” and “sealing”) can only be 'Alī, and therefore is related to Mahdī's identity.³⁰

27 Hermann Landolt, “Nasafi, 'Aziz,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Available on-line at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nasafi>.

28 *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, 3–4; *Kashf al-ṣirāt* (see Molé, 11–15); Hermann Landolt, “Le paradoxe de la ‘Face de Dieu,’” 175; Paul Ballanfat, “Les visions des lumières colorées dans l'ordre de la Kubrawiyya,” *PRIS-MA* 19 (2003): 1–44, 8, n. 44. Note that *Kashf al-ṣirāt*, MS 1767 Veliyüddin, fol. 208 ff.; MS 1685 Veliyüddin, fols. 79^a–103^b, includes additional discussions and critiques of Ḥamūyeh.

29 'Aziz al-Din Nasafi, *Kitāb al-Insān al-kāmil*, Intro, 7–20; 316–322; *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, in *Ganjīna-yi 'irfān*, ed. Ḥāmid Rabbānī (Tehran: [ca. 1973]), 245–246; *Kashf al-ṣirāt*, MS 1685 Veliyüddin; *Kashf al-ṣirāt*, MS 1767 Veliyüddin; *Kitāb al-tanzīl*, MS 1767 Veliyüddin.

30 Over the years, many scholars of Persianate Sufism have argued that Ḥamūyeh's works reflect Shī'ī leanings because of his messianic views on the “seal of the friends of God” (*khātīm al-awliyā'*), and the identity of the Mahdī. See in particular, Nafisi, 19. For the discussion by Haydar Āmulī, see *Jāmi' al-asrār wa-manba' al-anwār, ba inḍimām-i Risālat naqd al-nuqūd fi mar'ifat al-wujūd/La philosophie schi'ite. Somme des doctrines ésotériques (Jāmi' al-asrār)* 2. *Traité de la connaissance de l'être (Fi mar'ifat al-wujūd)*, eds. Henry Corbin and Osman Yahya (Tehran-Paris: Département d'iranologie de l'institut franco-iranien de recherche-Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1347/1969), 43: *al-walī*, a name only applied to 'Alī; Nasafi, *Le Livre de l'homme parfait*, 238–239, 312–325; twelve *awliyā'*, the twelfth is the seal/Mahdī; Ballanfat, “Les visions des lumières colorées,” 8, n. 44; Fritz Meier, “Die Schriften des 'Aziz-i Nasafi,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für der Kunde des Morgenlandes* 52 (1953): 62–63 (Shī'ī Islam and *ahl al-bayt* questions), 75–76, 137–138.

2 Visualizing the Qur'an

The diagrams in the first half of the *Maḥbūb* provide frames for reading. Visualizing would more precisely mean, according to Ḥamūyeh, “everything that is being opened to be seen” (*fath^{an} mubīn^{an}*) (Q 48:1), rather than a primary focus on dream visions, visionary experiences, or other cosmological concerns. On another level, as discussed in the *Maḥbūb*, the whole issue of the seal and of Yaṣā is the process of the realization of unity, of *tawḥīd*, which means the accomplishment of God’s love within the beloved (*maḥbūb*), as seal, through apparition and disappearance. As Ḥamūyeh explains about this beloved in the introductory sections of the *Maḥbūb*, in the tenth *wajh*: because of God’s gaze on the beloved, love descends to him, and his soul melts so much that his heart goes up to his Lord, and “the Real is revealed to him.”³¹ Likewise the letters of the Arabic alphabet themselves as well as the diagrams are open to both this visibility and this melting and dissolving in unity.

It is then possible to suggest that Zarkar’s “word as image” could be extended to all of the *Maḥbūb*. In this work, there is no clear and decisive demarcation between diagram, poetry, and prose, as the poems and quatrains, divided into two *bayts*, flow like rivers between the sections of prose and the schemata in the first half of *Maḥbūb* and visually unify the second half of this work, especially with the verses that end on a single letter.

In what now follows in this chapter, some of the primary questions posed in the *Maḥbūb* shape the ways of thinking about the diagrams and schemata; as mentioned earlier, what is rising to visibility in terms of the face (*wajh*) of the beloved (*maḥbūb*), who is the *walī* of God? What do we know about God’s heart (*qalb*), as the *walī* of God is the heart? Two ways of coming to be seen are specific to the prophet (*nabī*) as well as the *walī*; *khurūj*, giving an idea of a face appearing in and among other faces in a crowd, a face coming to be seen among other faces, and *burūz*, which would be an appearance coming to the top of visibility (coming to be seen at the summit of all things).³²

31 MS 1078 Carullah, fol. 3^a.

32 A term first introduced in Tirmidhī’s consideration of the *khatm*. See n. 70 and 71. Furthermore, parts of the *Maḥbūb* are signaled as specifically controversial, on the one hand, or seen to confirm a philosophical and theological shaping of *walāya* and the identity of the seal within Muslim societies on the other, as is the case with Nūrbakhsh (d. 1464 CE), who introduces these terms as elements of his rhetoric to justify himself as the Mahdī. Nūrbakhsh’s *Risālat* primarily drew on Ḥamūyeh’s *Kitāb fi zuhūr khatm al-wilāya* (MS 2058 Ayasofya) rather than the *Maḥbūb*. In terms of the reception of Ḥamūyeh’s teachings, significantly, Ḥamūyeh gave no dating on the appearance of the Mahdī in his written works. He tended to assimilate the seal with the Mahdī; that is, by forming a ternary with Jesus

On multiple levels of consideration, and step by step, Ḥamūyeh's *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* presents points of juncture as well as openings in visualizing the Qur'an and the words of God, as will be discussed in other sections of this chapter, with particular reference to Q 20:14. Since very little scholarly literature exists on the *Maḥbūb* as well as Ḥamūyeh's other works, Kubrā's well-known work, *Fawā'ih al-jamāl* (The Flowerings of Beauty and the Perfumes of Majesty), will be used to set in context Ḥamūyeh's use of particular concepts, such as *nuqṭa* (point) and *dā'ira* (sphere/circle), even though Ḥamūyeh ventures into different cosmological considerations than Kubrā.³³

As Kubrā advances a color theory, which is one that contrasts darkness and light, he explains the subtle center (*latīfa*) of the heart.³⁴ Witnessing (*mush-āhada*) opens up perception (the inner eye) by uncovering what veils it, by turning the garment of form inside out, at first, and likewise resituating the centers of perception within the body. The heart is like a sphere (*dā'ira*) that is rotating. In reference to a sphere's movement (*ḥaraka*), or stillness, in the example of writing, the root (*aṣl*) of writing is in a sense, the point as a turning point (*nuqṭa*), where and when the pen touches the surface of the page, and the point (*nuqṭa*) of the *dā'ira* of the true heart (*al-qalb al-ḥaqq*).³⁵ Kubrā, in a play on the word notes that the heart is called the heart (*qalb*) because of how it changes and transforms (*taqallub*) its colours in relation to "objects" nearby it.

On another level, one way to consider how senses are changed to other means of perception is through the example of sleeping. In sleep, the individual can potentially acquire the visionary knowledge of how "[t]hings have several levels, one of which is beyond man's reach."³⁶ Kubrā explains that if one goes to sleep after eating, one can still find the taste of food on one's lips.³⁷ Taste

and Ya'sā, who is the *khātim*. Therefore, the *Kitāb fi zuhūr khatm al-wilāya*, is significant for understanding the transmission of Ḥamūyeh's teachings in post-13th-century Sufi contexts.

33 Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Die Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa-fawā'ih al-ḡalāl des Naḡm ad-dīn al-Kubrā: eine Darstellung mystischer Erfahrungen im Islam aus der Zeit um 1200 n. Chr.*, ed. Fritz Meier (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963). Abbreviated citation henceforth, *Fawā'ih* (Meier edition), 2–3; 6–7; Gerhard Böwering, "The Ascetic Struggle and Mystic Prayer of a Central Asian Sufi," *Discussion Papers Series, Tokyo Sophia University* 3–14 (1987), 15: "Mystical experience has two moments, in Kubrā's view, contemplation and taste."

34 *Fawā'ih* (Meier edition), 2–3; 6–7.

35 *Fawā'ih* (Meier edition), 66, para. 139.

36 Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Les éclosions de la beauté et les parfums de la majesté* [Flowerings of Beauty and Perfumes of Majesty], trans. Paul Ballanfat (Nîmes: Editions de l'éclat, 2001), 100.

37 *Fawā'ih*, 18, para. 41.

(*dhawq*) changes both existence and being (*wujūd*), as well as souls, and substitutes the five senses with other senses. Sleep is “another existence” (*wujūd ākhir*); for example, one can do things like talk, walk and arrive at a far-away land. Sleep is an existence that alludes to a more perfect one, suggestive of the mystical body’s potentialities.³⁸

According to Kubrā, the quality of createdness may also be explained by considering the *hā*’ of Allāh, the Arabic letter that forms a circle (◌). This letter, like the human being, and the shape of the heart, alludes to how the circle is capable of encompassing everything, while at the same time, points to its “emptiness.”³⁹ When the individual achieves inner emptiness, his/her existence is annihilated. Concerning annihilation, Kubrā states:

Annihilation (of self) consists of two annihilations, the annihilation of characteristics in the characteristics of the Real, which is the annihilation in singularity (*fardāniyya*); and the annihilation of His characteristics in His essence, which is the annihilation in unicity (*waḥdāniyya*).⁴⁰

This is the point, the moment of “One (*Aḥad*)! One! If he is annihilated in His essence (*dhātu-hu*), he endures (= abides) through Him (*bi-hi*) and he lives through Him (*bi-hi*).⁴¹ He/she becomes like a pure lamp of translucent glass through which the Divine light passes.⁴²

Just as the *Fawā’ih* address the complex issue of annihilation, as implied in the work’s title, of equal concern is the “opening” of the chapters of the Qur’an and Qur’anic openings. It also makes sense to consider specific passages from this work in the context of the practices of *dhikr*; for example, the breathing in and exhaling of the pronunciation and recitation of *Hū*.⁴³ At times the *Fawā’ih* demarcates the dynamic process of *fanā*’ (annihilation) as two arcs, which connect the individual and God. This too is the matter of *wujūd*. As Ballanfat explains: “... meaning both body and existence, and which refers both to the egoism of the traveler, of which he must rid himself, and to the ipseity of God,

38 Marjjan Molé, “Traité mineurs de Nagm al-Dīn al-Kubra.” *Annales islamologiques* 4 (1963): 1–78. See 1–13: critical notes on the manuscript traditions connected to the Kubrawī “tradition.” See as well, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Kitāb Manārāt al-sā’irīn wa-maqāmāt al-tā’irīn*, ed. Sa’īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ (Cairo: Dār Sa’ād al-Ṣabāḥ, 1993), 119–130.

39 Paul Ballanfat. “Reality and Image in the *Tafsīr* of Kubrā and Rāzī.”

40 *Fawā’ih*, 36, par. 78; Kubrā, *Les éclosions de la beauté*, 165.

41 *Fawā’ih*, 36, par. 78; Kubrā, *Les éclosions de la beauté*, 165.

42 *Fawā’ih*, 106.

43 This corresponds to the first part of the word “huwa,” meaning “Him” in Arabic, being a reference to Allāh.

in which he must annihilate himself.”⁴⁴ In ways that reflect the points of the separation as well as the joining of individual letters, Kubrā explains:

The recollection of God (*dhikr*) flows onto the souls of all of living creatures—their souls ascend or descend. In every breath ascends and descends the name of God, Exalted and Glorious. It is the “h” [aspiration of the first part of the word *huwa* = He = Allāh], for the “h” is the ascent of the treasure house of the heart, and the *hā* [= the name of the letter] is the descent of the treasure house of the Throne. The “w” (*wāw*) [= the second letter of the word] in the *huwa* is the name of the soul (*rūḥ*) because it is from the servants of the presence of the ipseity (*huwiyya*), as it obtains this union (*wiṣāl*).⁴⁵

Furthermore, Kubrā theorizes the Sufi practice of contemplation and vision on three parallel ontological levels, progressing from reading the body, to reading the Qur'an, and to reading God's Creation, and *vice versa*: “[T]he truth of the whole thing is that, be that as it may, the heart (*al-qalb*) longs for the Throne (*al-‘arsh*), the Throne yearns for the heart.”⁴⁶ His development of visionary concentration (*himma*) into the modalities of Qur'anic “constellations” places into context Ḥamūyeh's schemata, and especially those that frame his discussions of visualizing letters, the spheres (*dawā'ir*) and face/aspects (*wajh*, pl. *wujūh*).

The subjects of visionary concentration and what rises to visibility feature in some of the questions and queries posed in the *Fawā'ih*. One of the most significant passages for this particular study is as follows: “God, the Exalted and the Glorious, has written books in the Hidden, some of which are written in points (*al-nuqaṭ*), some with shapes (*al-ashkāl*), and some with letters (*al-ḥurūf*), but with other than these interpretations (*al-‘ibārāt*).”⁴⁷ Let us turn now to the third schemata in MS Orhan 638 of the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* and think about how it might have been read (Plate 4.3; cf. also Plates 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5). As we explore some of the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*'s schemata, Kubrā depicted in the *Fawā'ih*, the Qur'anic “constellations” as a set of points (*nuqaṭ*), as seen in the folio image from MS 2800 Şehit Ali Paşa (Plate 4.6). According to Kubrā, the names of God are inscribed in the hearts of men and women. Are those *nuqaṭ* their hearts in actuality? In accordance with the individual's capacity for

44 Ballanfāt, “Reality and Image in the *Tafsīr* of Kubrā and Rāzī,” 102.

45 *Fawā'ih*, 65.

46 *Fawā'ih*, 30; 67, para. 141; Ballanfāt, “Reality and Image in the *Tafsīr* of Kubrā and Rāzī,” 107.

47 *Fawā'ih*, 33, para. 61: See as well, 53, para. 111; 55, para. 115: “the sphere of the eye”; the entirety of the spheres is the Great Face (*al-wajh al-karīm*).

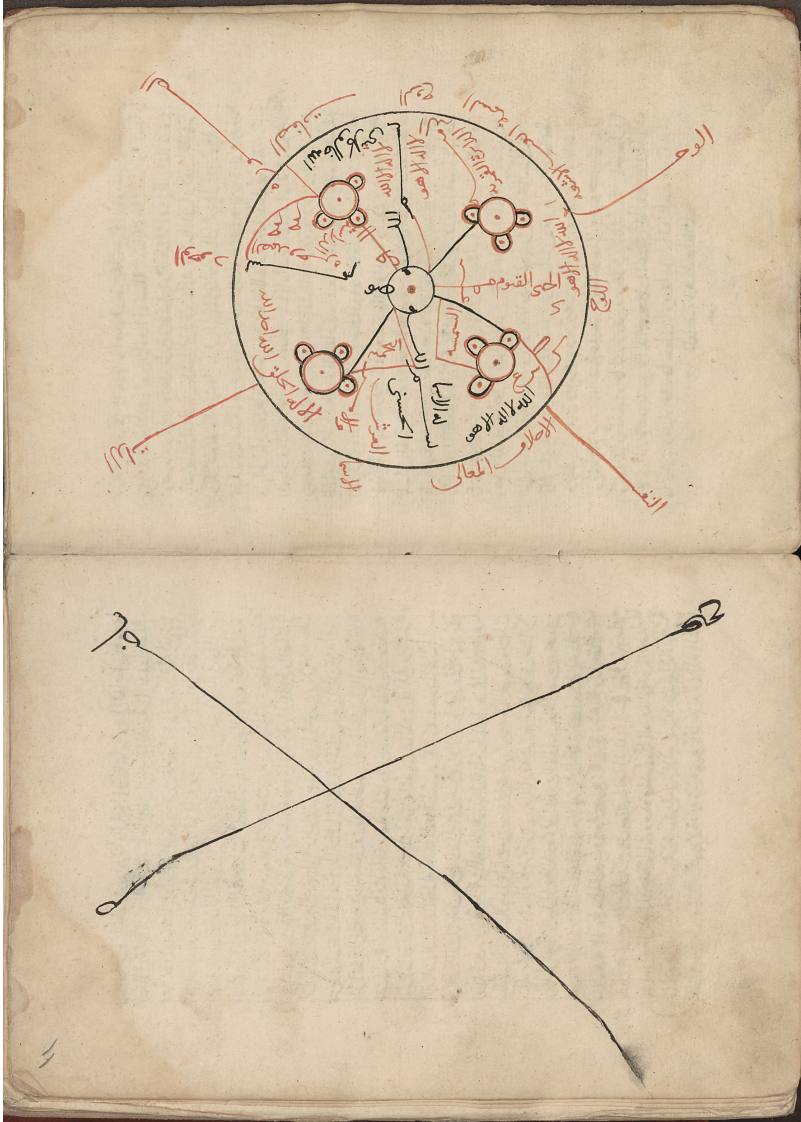


PLATE 4.4 The Third Schemata in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh, *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Nuruosmaniye 2577, fol. 10^b-11^a)

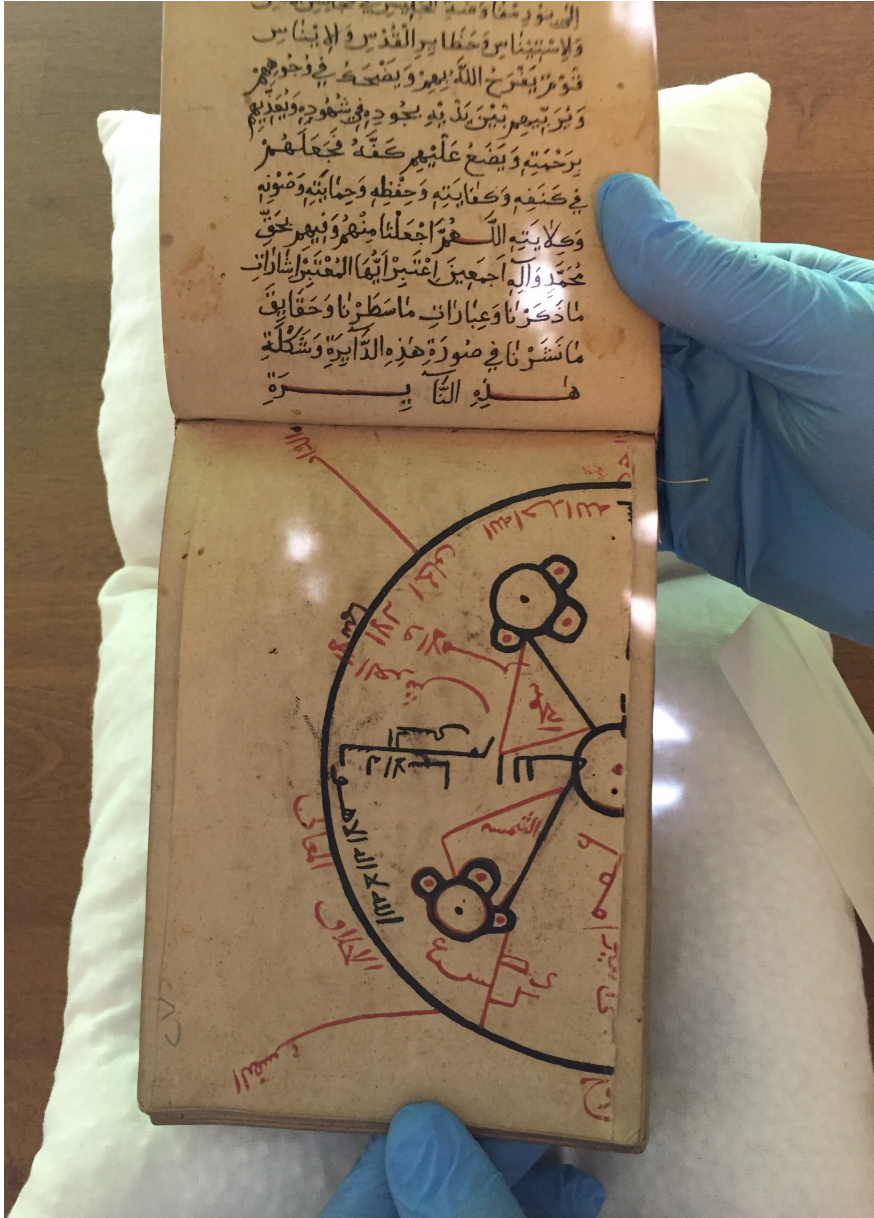


PLATE 4.5 The Third Schemata in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* (portion). Sa'd al-Din Ḥamūyeh, *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Yeni Cami 726, fol. 27^a; photo by Elizabeth R. Alexandrin)



PLATE 4.6 Qur'anic 'constellations' as a set of points (*nuqat*). Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā'ih al-jamal wa-fawā'ih al-jalāl* (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Şehit Ali Paşa 2800, fol. 15^b)

visionary concentration and contemplation the names of God drift in and out of focus in the Heavens. Keeping in mind Zarkar's comment from earlier, viewing the schemata establishes a relation between the inside and outside of the person "seeing" and reading; that is, reading the letters and words, which in this case, is a rotating, circular reading in a calligraphic space, and takes place first of all within the margins of the text, right to left, as well as outside of the margins of the schemata, back into the main text.

Between the main body of the text and the schemata Ḥamūyeh introduces structural relations established between spaces and forms, between the spoken and written, the unarticulated and the articulated, the seen and the unseen, as well as darkness, shadow, and light. His Qur'anic hermeneutics point to how some Arabic letters are linked together or appear separately, and stand alone, through clear or only indicated meanings to verses from the Qur'an as well as the names of God. Let us mention two letters, *nūn* and *alif* before turning again to the image of MS Orhan 638, fol. 12^a (Plate 4.3; cf. also Plates 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5).⁴⁸

48 Meier notes that this diagram appears in the key manuscripts used for his edition, but with

As in Q 20:14, *innī anā Allāh* (“Indeed I, I am God”), there are three *alif* and two *nūn*.⁴⁹ The three *alif* and the two *nūn* are parallel to the three syllables of the *bismillāh* (“In the name of God”), and are like the form of letters and the question of form, all of which are doubled, visible in the invisible, hidden in the apparent (the degrees of existence and witnessing (*tartīb* of *wujūd* and *shuhūd*)). In the *Maḥbūb*, as in other works of Ḥamūyeh, “innī anā Allāh” is linked to, as Ḥamūyeh states, “I am in the *nūn*, I am in I, I am in the light” (*anā fī al-nūn, anā fī anā, anā fī al-nūr*) as well as the doubling of “Indeed I” (*innī*), “I” (*anā*), and “Thou”/“you” (*anta*).⁵⁰ As part of Ḥamūyeh’s mystical discourse, the *anta* has two potential referents, and at times, simultaneously operates on these two registers: Allāh as “Thou”; and the familiar and intimate “you.”

As is seen in the second folio image presented here (Plate 4.3; cf. also Plates 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5), the text is related back to the schemata through the reader’s reading itself, but in a way, Nasafī was correct regarding how difficult Ḥamūyeh’s works are! Ḥamūyeh’s works present complex ideas, which Nasafī made reference to in his own works. We may be further puzzled over Ḥamūyeh’s use of some of the alphabet. It is in fact not at all a secret alphabet, but rather represents the extension of particular letters, such as the *alif*, the *yā*, ‘*ayn*, *sīn*, *mīm*, *rā*, and *kāf*, and how meanings may be linked to the attached letters, the detached letters, to the name of God, to *ḥadīth*, and to allusions from Qur’anic verses and chapters.

In the third diagram of the *Maḥbūb*, the “Throne verse” (Q 2:225, *ayāt al-kursī*) may be used as a frame for reading. As Ḥamūyeh himself explains, imagine folding in half (two *nūn* and three *alif*) this schemata, and viewing it and reading it in two halves, as Ḥamūyeh suggests by separating and breaking open in two parts, one each for the two *nūn*. In Plate 4.5 it is possible to see how the third diagram in the manuscript Yeni Cami 726 (Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul) was specifically designed and created as a fold-out image, but at present, only one half of the folio with the diagram on it remains. Therefore, picture folding over one half of the diagram, and then in reading as a circle, the verse in this order, from the right and left. To aid this reading, below is one translation, with the key Qur’anic touchstones in italics:

some variations in the first and third line. See Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Die Fawā’iḥ al-ḡamāl*, 77n2. This diagram is also reproduced in Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Les éclosions de la beauté*, 205. Ballanfat also notes that some manuscript variations exist in terms of this diagram. At the time of completing this contribution, I did not have a chance to check the manuscripts myself.

49 *Miṣbāḥ*, 81; MS 638 Orhan, fols. 12^a–13^a.

50 *Miṣbāḥ*, 122.

*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Allah! There is no God but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, the Eternal. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. All things in heaven and earth are His. Who could intercede in His presence without His permission? He knows what appears in front of and behind His creatures. Nor can they encompass any knowledge of Him except what he wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them, for He is the Highest and Most Exalted. Allah, the Most High, speaks the truth.*⁵¹

Starting from the center of the third diagram, there is one circle, in black ink (Plates 4.2 to 4.5). Three words are written in black around the central circle: “Hü,” with the *hā*’ inside the circle, and the *wāw*, outside of the circle; and Allāh, as the second word, is written twice in black ink. In both instances, the *hā*’ of Allāh is half inside of the center circle. The ligature of the letter “h” curves into the black ink of the central circle. Three black lines as well as one red line are coming out of the circle, connecting and tracing three *bismillāh*, alluding to the three *nuqṭa*, and three parts to *bismillāh*. At another level, an indication is that the lines (themselves *alif*) could be pointing, directionally to the heart, the self, and the breath, as all of the *hā*’ from the *bismillāh* are inside of the center circle, shaping circle within circle, and to the three smaller circle-sets, formed of four circles, with three points in red ink, in the smaller circles, and one red point in the larger circle.

Returning to the outer circle of this diagram, and starting from the top, like the notch of the twelfth hour on a clock, and reading what is written on the right-hand side of the schema, it is written in red, around the black circle: the form (*al-ṣūra*); the soul (*al-naḥs*); the face (*al-wajh*); the Tablet (*al-lawḥ*); the loftiest virtues (*al-akhlāq al-ma’ālā*); the names (*al-asmā*’); the essence (*al-dhāt*); existence (*al-wujūd*). Some of the words, starting with the expression “pertaining to its forms” (*li-ṣuwar-hi*), begin in black (with *ṣ*) and then turn into red, arriving at “characteristics” (*al-ṣifāt*).⁵²

In turning and viewing the two halves of the diagram, and reading around on the right side, towards the third hour on the clock, it is written, “there is no God but God” (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*). The black line between *bism* and *Allāh* points

51 Translation by Kabir Helminski, accessed 12 May 2019: <https://sufism.org/origins/quran-islam/quranic-chapters/ayat-al-kursi-the-throne-verse-from-the-quran-2>.

52 See in particular Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh. *Maḥbūb al-Qulūb*. MS Ar. 4159 Chester Beatty, Chester Beatty Library, fol. 14^a.

to “there is no God but Him” (*lā ilāh illā huwa*).⁵³ On the right hand side, it is written, adjacent to the *Hū*, “The Eternal, He alone” (*al-ṣamad waḥda-hu*). Parallel to the two names of God, “the Living, the Subsisting” (*al-ḥayy al-qayyūm*), yet outside of the circle, “the Tablet” (*al-lawḥ*) is written in red ink.

Directing lines also extend over on the right-hand side, in red ink, circulating around and towards the expression, “the moon sphere from it” (*min-hu al-dā'ira al-qamariyya*). Set in a red triangle, on the left-hand side, and written in red is *al-naǧmiyya* (“the star [sphere]”), and then in another red triangle, near the black “border-line” going back to the center-circle, with one red point in the middle, *al-shamsiyya* (“the sun [sphere]”), as *dhurriyya* (“particle or mote [sphere]”), as another set of spheres is written under “The Eternal.” Outside of the circle in black ink, words are written in both black and red inks; in one instance, half in red and half in black, as in the case of *al-asmā' = ilā*, then in red.

On the left-hand side of the schemata, in red ink, three *alif* are written on the central line (perhaps another *alif* itself), and on right hand-side, again, three *alif*, but both halves have circle-sets of three, attached to a larger sphere, with red points. In the section on “the letter ‘h’ in the sphere of the spheres of stopping places/stations” (*hā' fī dā'ira al-dawā'ir al-maḥaṭṭa*), Ḥamūyeh suggests that the boundary of the sphere is made visible by the characteristics and the names of God, helping to explain why those words are written outside the largest circle and yet remain within almost touching distance of the parameter.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the “spheres concerning (= in) the traveller” (*dawā'ir fī sālik*) are the five spheres associated each with *naǧmiyya*, *qamariyya*, and *shamsiyya*.⁵⁵ In actuality “the reality of the *nuqṭa* of the *dawā'ir* is the *nuqṭa al-maḥbūbiyya* and *al-maḥabba*.”⁵⁶ Moving from the edge of the diagram back to the center of the image, the single red *nuqṭa*, in the absolute center of the schemata, points to the heart of God, the *walī*, the *maḥbūb*. This central *nuqṭa* stands in proximity to the *Hū*.

53 Notably, in two manuscripts of the *Maḥbūb* the *nuqṭa* dot of “b” in *bism* is outside of the central circle and in heavy black ink (MS 4084/Pm. 153 Berlin, fol. 12^b; MS A1418 Topkapı, fol. 14^b).

54 MS 1078 Carullah 10^a; MS 638 Orhan 638, fol. 9^a; MS 4084/Pm. 153 Berlin, fol. 9^b.

55 MS 638 Orhan 638, fol. 9^a; MS MS 4084/Pm. 153 Berlin, fol. 9^b. MS 1078 Carullah, fol. 10^a: “the circle of the *hā'* is the circle which encompasses; it is a single circle and it comprises fifteen circles in the beginnings and the endings, and it is the place of their rise and descent, but it is encompassing all. God has organized them into five circles (*naǧmiyya*, *qamariyya*, *shamsiyya*, *dhawātīyya*, *dhurriyya*) that bring together the fifteen circles (letters), which are the Davidian circles in which are the heavenly and earthly dwellings that belong to God and form fifteen dwellings.”

56 MS 638 Orhan, fol. 10^b.

This schemata may be further parsed through the sequenced commentaries Ḥamūyeh presents on it; in the *Maḥbūb*, it is a commentary that overall is in three parts. Ḥamūyeh explains that the “sphere of the *nūn*” is broken open (*inshaqqat*), for the letters *ḥāʾ*, *jīm*, and *lām*. In *wajh* “Eight,” Ḥamūyeh considers how the face was revealed to the beloved by His letters and He revealed Himself to Him:

God hid in the beloved, by His pre-eternal and phenomenal love (*bi-maḥabbati-hi al-qadīma wa-l-ḥadītha*), the truth of the point (*al-nuqṭayya*) and the polarity (*al-quṭbīyya*), and He gave him an allotment (*khiṣʿan*) from these two among the higher meanings and the high ecstasies, making him in reality a pole in the universe of His contemplation, and a point in the circle of His existence so that the spheres revolve around his sphere, and in him appear the universes in His encompassing universe by which he is.⁵⁷

In relation to the two *nūn* and the two *alif* is the *nūn* of the date palm (*al-nakhl*), with reference to Q 28:8–9, and how the infant Moses was pulled from the river by the family of Pharaoh, then to be raised by the wife of Pharaoh, as a comfort to her. Ḥamūyeh explores this set of verses from Q 28:8–9 through the statement, “Indeed, I, I am Allāh, but He. I am the light” (*innī anā Allāh, illā huwa. Anā al-nūr*), with his reading on the registers of the letter “n” and saying “I” (two *alif* and one *nūn*), as well as the Qurʾanic word-set, “consolation to the eyes” (Q 28:9, *qurrat al-ʿayn*).⁵⁸ Chapter 28 of the Qurʾan reverberates with the Pharaonic “I” and conceptions of “except for He,” resonating with the name of God, appearing and disappearing in unity (*tawḥīd*).

In what constitutes the second of the two readings, circling back and crossing over, between the diagram and the text, Ḥamūyeh explains again to the reader, to look at the *nuqṭa* in the *dāʿira*, and to divide the two *nūn* in half. The two *alif* then point to the structure that can be seen from them in the reed pen (*qaṣaba*), as an allusion to “I am in the light. I.” (*anā fī al-nūr anā*), which can be understood as written as *a/n-a/n*, or in terms of the Arabic, with the diacritical marker of ‘a’ (*fatha*) rather than the second (long and fully vocalized) *alif*. The second reading on the *nakhl* draws into the discussion a hadith about the Prophet Muḥammad and his companion Bilāl al-Ḥabashī about the taste of

57 MS 1078 Carullah, fols. 3^b–4^a.

58 MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fol. 14^a.

dates, whether sweet (*ḥalwa*) or bitter (*murr*):⁵⁹ the root (*aṣl*) of the *nūn* of “light” (*nūr*) is the *nūn* of “descent” (*nuzūl*) to the *nabī* and the *nūn* of the “date palm” (*nakhl*), which Ḥamūyeh divides into another two level/stage/degree (*martaba*): the stripping away (*salkh*) and the expansion (*baṣṭ*) of the letters opening all of the “laws” (*jāmi‘ al-nāmūs*), with respect to command (*ḥukm*) and decree (*qaḍā’*), where the Spirit (*rūḥ*) travels to God by means of prayer (*ṣalāt*): “Indeed I, I am Allāh, Lord of the worlds.” (*innī anā Allāh rabb al-‘ālamīn*). The Lord (*rabb*) of the worlds pertains to another aspect of Allāh and representations of unity in construct with God’s unity, just as the letter *alif* is in itself inside and outside of all letters.⁶⁰ According to Ḥamūyeh, this speaks to the *martaba* of letters that are composed and compiled (*murakkaba*), and allude to the permitted (*ḥalāl*) and the forbidden (*ḥarām*), between “I” (*minn-ī*) and “Thou” (*min-ka*). As well, between “I” and “you” are both light (*nūr*) and shadows (*ẓulām*).⁶¹

The final part of Ḥamūyeh’s sequenced commentary returns to the two *nūn* and the one (*al-wāḥid*). In this context, the letter *lām-alif* (ل), with its two halves, and the Soul (*al-naḥs*), is visually in between in the schemata, but in fact, written in red ink, outside of the sphere. What is between the “m” and the “a” is the soul, directing the opening of seeing to the ‘*ayn* (ع) of the sphere (also written in red, inside of the sphere).⁶² Pertaining to the *naḥs*, counting from the letter *mīm* to the letter *alif*, are fourteen letters that open the worlds of souls, thus opening up the sphere in two sections (the two *nūn*). The *naḥs* is between *alif* and *mīm*, but the two *nūn* are between the letters *hā’* and *mīm*.⁶³ In this section, the *wajh* presents the secret of the five [modes of] seeing (*sirr al-‘uyūn al-khamsa*), as light is connected with the eye (*ittiṣāl*), in a corollary relationship with the Tablet and the “trust” (*wifāq*) of Adam and Muḥammad.⁶⁴ The letter ‘*ayn* (pl. *‘uyūn*) likewise holds the meaning of source; the sources as well as springs upon the beloved’s heart, which also flow onto the hearts of the prophets, the friends of God, and the truthful ones (*al-ṣiddīqūn*).⁶⁵

Context-wise, in this sphere of the “h,” Ḥamūyeh explains how the *dā’ira dur-rīyya* and *dhawāṭīyya* combines fifteen *dā’ira*, as the fifteen spheres of Dā’ūd, making beneficial the heavenly houses (*buyūt samāwīyya*) and the earthly

59 This seems to be linked to a hadith in Bukhārī (*ḥadīth* 3:506), narrated by Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, on the quality of good and bad dates.

60 *Miṣbāḥ* 61.

61 MS 638 Orhan, fols. 10^b–11^b; MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fols. 14^b–15^b.

62 MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fol. 15^b.

63 MS 4084/Pm. 153 Berlin, fol. 16^a–16^b.

64 MS 4084/Pm. 153 Berlin, fol. 15^a–15^b.

65 MS 1078 Carullah, fol. 17^a–17^b: the five sources being *raḥmānīyya*, *subḥānīyya*, *rubūbiyya*, *anānīyya*, and *anīyya*.

houses (*buyūt arḍiyya*).⁶⁶ Following these hints, let us return now to the *hā'* of *Hū*, which is in the “central sphere” of this diagram. Other letters are written inside of this sphere, with and without diacritics (without “points”), such as *nakhl* (date palm), and possibly the letters for Throne (*kursī*). Two *nūn* and two *alif* raise the question, what is “rising/ascending to the Throne” (*istawā' alā al-'arsh*)? Ḥamūyeh's allusion is: two worlds (*al-'alamīn*) and the name of God, *al-Ḥayy*. To the question what is descending (*nuzūl*), an answer is given: the secret (*sirr* of form) of the “I” “I” (*anā anā*), and how the letters of *lām-alif* and *mīm* bring the wisdom of the two *nūn*. Seeing and visualizing the two *nūn* is opening up the perception of the *hā'* of this sphere.⁶⁷ In other words, as Ḥamūyeh explains about visualizing the schemata, when the circle was split into two halves, two *nūn* appeared, and when looking at the *hā'* of the circle and its *mīm*.⁶⁸

Looking directly at the letter *mīm*, written in red ink, stands in directional relationship to the *'ayn* of the *dā'ira*,⁶⁹ with the sets of circles. Some of the smaller circles have *nuqṭa*, demarcating or outlining empty spaces, in and of the individual's heart, in which the letters and names may appear and become manifest. But what is rising to visibility, to be seen? Ḥamūyeh explains: *innī anā*, and specifically the *walī* and the *nabī*. As the *nūn* is split in half (like the entire schemata of the *dā'ira*), ascending to the Qur'anic touchstone, *'alā al-'arsh*, are the word-sets *raḥmān* and *raḥmāniyya*, “Muḥammadan” (*muḥammadiyya*) and “Aḥmadan” (*aḥmadiyya*).

In this third sequence of Ḥamūyeh's commentary, as is mentioned elsewhere in the *Maḥbūb*, the two *nūn* (= dual *nūn*) refer to the *nabī* and the *walī*, hidden (*bāṭin*) in the apparent (*ẓāhir*) and *ẓāhir* in *bāṭin*, generally (*amma*) and with specificity (*khāṣṣa*). Ḥamūyeh's *tafsīr* of the “halves” is that one *nūn* is connecting at the beginning the *nabī*, and the other, at the end, to the *khāṭim al-awliyā'* but all of these halves of the *nūn*= the two *nūn* = are one form (*ṣūra wāḥida*). The center-most circle, with one point, one central *nuqṭa*, in red ink, could be viewed as the two *nūn* together, side meeting side. In one form the two *nūn* are attached to and belonging to *nubuwwa* and *walāya*. But when the sphere is divided, the spheres are broken [into five], like, by allusion to a well-known prophetic tradition, the splitting of the moon.⁷⁰

66 MS 638 Orhan, fol. 9^b.

67 *Miṣbāḥ*, 60–61; MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fol. 98^b: on the *lām-alif*; *al-lām*; *kalām*; *walī*; *al-mawlā al-'alā bi-l-alif wa-l-lām*. See as well, Princeton Garrett Collection MS 3793Y, fol. 80^b, ln. 12–22.

68 MS 1078 Carullah, fol. 18^a.

69 MS 638 Orhan, fol. 15^b.

70 MS 638 Orhan, fol. 10^b.

3 Dimensionality

It is important to note here before turning to the second schemata introduced in this chapter that in Tirmidhī's *Sīrat al-awliyā'*, he describes the gathering (of the *awliyā'*) (*majlis*) he saw in a dream, employing the term "in his presence" (*bayna yaday-hi*) to describe his proximity. Throughout the *Maḥbūb*, Ḥamūyeh himself uses repeatedly this term referring to proximity.⁷¹ Visually, the "structures" of the third and fourth schemata in the *Maḥbūb* are reminiscent of how Tirmidhī describes the bridal pavilion (*ḥajla*) of the "friends of God," with its coverings and curtains (*ḥujūb*).⁷² The *awliyā'* are the "treasure-houses," and safeguard (or veil) the divine deposits of the "divine trust" (*amāna*). They are protected under the "cupolas" (as mentioned in a *ḥadīth* often quoted in Sufi works, "My friends are underneath my domes; no one knows them but Me"). In Tirmidhī, the divine deposits are sealed and safeguarded by the "sealer" (*khātam*) and the "sealing" (*khatm*) of *walāya*. According to Ḥamūyeh, there is a suggestion that the disclosure of the known and unknown meanings of the unified name (*al-ism al-jāmī'*) belonging to all of the spheres of the letters shapes an eschatological horizon. This is a point, however, that requires both further reflection and explanation. As another consideration, perhaps the schemata are not cosmological but point to the individual's potential realizations- seeing and hearing- through reading and understanding the Qur'an, the divine book unlike any other book.

As we approach the fourth schemata in the *Maḥbūb* (Plates 4.7 and 4.8), we may also want to ask, does the *nuqṭa* have dimensionality, and in what ways? Dimensionality would take into account what constitutes the relationship of the three points (*nuqṭa*) shaping the letters *sīn* and *shīn* and the three parts

71 See a specific reference to Tirmidhī in Ḥamūyeh's discussion of "striving" (*sa'y*), MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fol. 19^a. The concept of *sa'y* in Ḥamūyeh's is of exclusive importance to the name of Yas'ā, the "seal"; a name which is also an anagram of the name 'Īsā, as discussed in part below. In his many works, Ḥamūyeh repeatedly introduces this name Yas'ā as "seal." At the Endtime, Jesus and the seal are re-united in the city of Damascus. His name appears to be discussed in a wide range of Sufi commentary traditions based on the specific verses that correlate his striving with the figure of Ḥabīb al-Najjār (the beloved carpenter) (Q 28:20 and Q 36:20). Referring back to the concept of "striving," see al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Drei Schriften des Theosophen von Tirmid*, 2 vols., ed. Bernd Radtke (Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1412/1992), 1:28. The passage in Tirmidhī treats the question of the relationship between the knowledge (*ilm*) of the prophets and the *awliyā'*. See as well al-Tirmidhī, *Drei Schriften*, para. 86, p. 62; (English translation), 131.

72 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī*, annotated translation and introduction by Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), 19, para. 8.

of the name of God, but then too the multiple spheres of letters: those letters with or without *nuqṭa*, the “sun letters,” the “moon letters,” and the “star letters.”⁷³ Furthermore, the letters in the circles or spheres are often written with or without *nuqaṭ*. Underlying all these aspects of dimensionality, it could be said, remains unity (*tawḥīd*). Therefore, in reading the fourth schemata from MS Orhan 638 of the *Maḥbūb* (Plate 4.8; cf. also Plate 4.7), let us start with the three points of the *sīn/shūn*, and then focus on the letter “f” (*fā*), the big circle at the top and in the center. The schema begins with the “f” of *al-fātiḥa* (Q 1, “The Opening”), and commences with *al-fātiḥa*; a requisite of daily prayer and the devotional acts of daily life. The schema presents visually two parts of *fātiḥa*, or double-aspects of this Qurʾan chapter. The first half and second half of *fātiḥa* would be *ẓāḥir/bāṭin*. Under the outer edge and on each side of the central lines of writing (= text) in this schema *Allāh* is written twice (doubled). Regarding the bottom of the schema, where *Allāh* is written forty times, the forty *Allāh* (= of Ibrāhīm) are opened by *fātiḥa*. On the outer edge, like a canopy, are written two *wāw*, or sets of *wāw* and *dāl*, which would be like stars and shadows, forming the word, repeated, “shading” or “shadow” (*zill*).⁷⁴ Reading around the spheres, right to left, *alif* is like *yā*, if with no points, but then could now be *alif*, again, like the *ẓāḥir* and *bāṭin* of the *bismillāh*. Reading around the spheres, from right to left, the following words and letters are written in black ink, in the section upside down (right hand side): permissible (*ḥalāl*) and forbidden (*ḥarām*); the “ambiguous verses” (*mutashabbihāt*); *raḥmānīyya*, and *riḍwānīyya*; *sīn* and *ʿayn*; double *wāw*. Some words, because of the middle letter, *mim*, or *dād*, can be read parallel: *raḥmānīyya/riḍwānīyya*.

What about the letter *hā* in this schema? Could it be visualized as an empty circle, a teardrop, or a drop of water? In the lower right-hand corner and in the lower left-hand corner, there is a set of points inside of the “h” on right hand side but not on left hand side. Central lines written: “these are the spheres (*dawāʿir*) of going astray (*ḍalāl*),” and then circulating from this, another line, stating, “and the form (*ṣūra*) of *lām-alif* pertaining to states (*aḥwāl*),” which is written again in the prose sections that follow directly after this schema.⁷⁵

There is a set of lines written around the spheres (seven on each side), “In his presence, in his presence, it is He that is Thou (you). We are I. Indeed I

73 MS 1078 Carullah, fol. 40^a–40^b: the properties of letters are three: of the letter, the point, and the declination; and the properties of prophecy are three: *nubuwwa*, *risāla* and *walāya*.

74 MS 2058 Ayasofya, fol. 8^b: types of spheres, starting with five: sun and moon, and *dhawātīyya* and *dhurriyya*.

75 MS 638 Orhan, fol. 118^b.



PLATE 4.7 The Fourth Schemata in the *Kitāb al-Maḥḥabūb*, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh, *Kitāb al-Maḥḥabūb* (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms Ar. 4159, fols. 96^b–97^a)

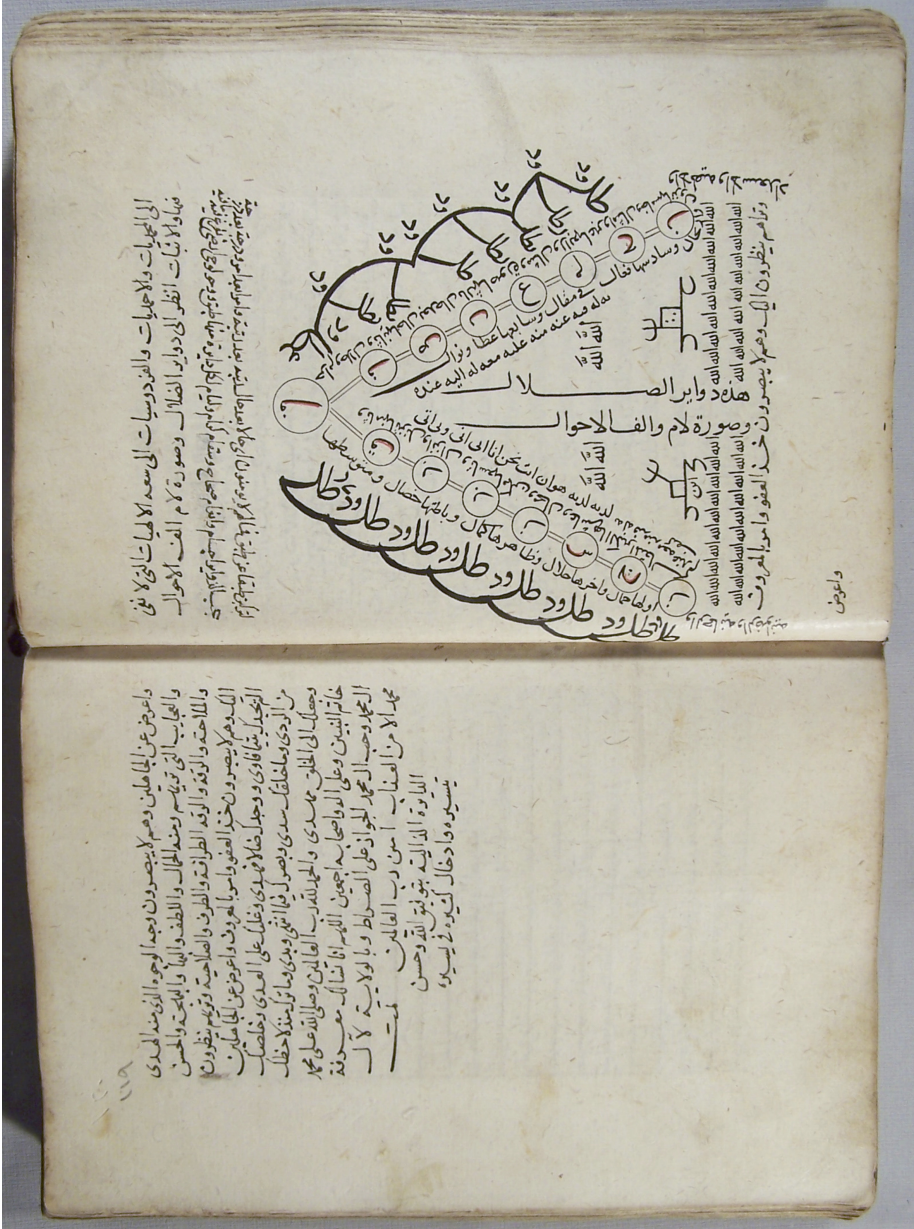


PLATE 4.8 The Fourth Schemata in the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh, *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* (Bursa, İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi), ms Orhan 638, fols. 118^b–119^a)

am. Indeed I am and with indeed I am." (*laday-hi laday-hi huwa an anta nahnu anā innī innī wa-bi-innī*). Describing the spheres, Ḥamūyeh explains: the first of them is beauty and the last of them is majesty; the apparent of them is perfection and the hidden of them is natural disposition (*khisāl*); and the *mutawassit* of them is forbidden (*ḥarām*) and licit (*ḥalāl*). It establishes state (*ḥāl*) after state. The third sphere is the form and the resemblance. The fourth is the carrying over (*'ibār*) and the likenesses (*amthāl*). Parallel to the prose that follows this schema, Ḥamūyeh alludes to the Qur'an: "And you see they are looking at you and they do not perceive."

Following this, continuing a reading that goes from the right-hand side, to the left, in the next line, circulating around the spheres, Ḥamūyeh writes: "and the sixth is actions in speech, and the seventh is the gift (*'aṭā'*) and the favour (*nawāl*) to him, for him, in him, from him, pertaining to him, upon him, with him, for him, towards him, according to him (*'inda-hu*)"⁷⁶

As we shift back and forth between the text and the diagram, and regarding the pronouns above, how does the letter *wāw* open up seeing (*baṣīr*), given that *hā'* split in two looks like two *wāw*? Rather than dimensionality, is Ḥamūyeh suggesting determination as relational, in the pronouns that are articulated, spoken, and written; for example, you- I- He; He as You; or the Thou who is addressed, and the pronouns such as *hū*, *anā*, *anta*? *Huwa* as a pronoun is significant in Ḥamūyeh's mystical commentaries on oneness in its two modalities, *aḥadiyya* and *waḥdāniyya*. Image four, is, after all, the *dā'ira* of *lām* and *alif*, and *lām-alif*; as in the previous schema discussed, "but He" (*illā huwa*), it offers, by way of another explanation, the relationship of the parallelism of the Muslim testimony of faith, the *shahāda*.⁷⁷ The story of the beloved in Ḥamūyeh's *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* is often one of separation; that is, the separation of the heart from representations and appearances of the Lord (*rabb*) and God (*Allāh*), and more generally, separation from unity, while referring back to these two modalities of oneness (= the two *nūn*). The *alif-lām*, two *alif* unified, and separation or cutting (*qāṭi'*) of the *lām* and *alif*, points to both junctures and separations. These points of juncture and separation are of equal significance in Ḥamūyeh's mysticism and messianism, especially in his thinking with respect to Muḥammad and the seal Yas'ā.

Throughout the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* the name "Living" (*Ḥayy*) is equated with the heart of the *maḥbūb* as the beloved. However, what about the earlier question of the rising apparition (*khurūj*) of the *khātīm al-awliyā'*, Yas'ā? It

76 MS 638 Orhan, fol. 118^b.

77 MS Orhan, fol. 118^b.

is important to note here that in the earlier pages of *Maḥbūb*, Ḥamūyeh discusses the name of the Messiah (*masīḥ*), composed (*murakkab*) together of the letters *mīm-sīn* and *ḥāʾ-yāʾ*; something that could be brought into English as “touching”–“living” (“*mas*”–“*hayy*”), the station (*maqām*) of ʿĪsā and Yasʿā.⁷⁸ If the idea of a face or aspect is used to explain this rising to visibility and what is seen, then Ḥamūyeh is aiming to speak to something about Muḥammad and ʿĪsā in the sense of generality (*ʿamma*) at the level of the seal of *walāya*. In the case of prophethood, the aspect/face of Muḥammad, is the totality (*kulliyāt*) and oneness (*waḥda*) of perfection and being perfected, as prophethood has been sealed. It can be said that in the first *wajh* of the *Maḥbūb* under discussion here, the apparition of ʿĪsā is in the scope of Yasʿā. Another dimensional aspect of the *dāʾira* of a letter can be seen in the example of the letter “k” (*kāf*), as an interplay of black, white, and shadow.⁷⁹ These considerations therefore pertain to the sealing as *ʿamma*, whereas regarding the *khāṣṣa*, the seal is remaining open.⁸⁰

In the *Maḥbūb*, Ḥamūyeh’s circular and sequenced reading about the *kāf* and the *nūn* commences in a section that provides a discussion on how *kāf* and *nūn* do not repeat in the *muqaṭṭāʾāt* letters at the beginning of Qur’an chapters. This section precedes Ḥamūyeh’s words on the “seal” (*khātim*) as well as a set of his poems on “my heart” (*qalbī*, Arabic/*dil-am*, Persian).⁸¹ In this sphere, we can find al-Ḥallāj and Jirjīs (a lesser known prophetic figure), Muḥammad, the messiah (*masīḥ*) as ʿĪsā, and Yasʿā. As Ḥamūyeh in fact is speaking about another face of the messiah rising to visibility, one of the hints to reading about his concepts may be linked to the hadith of “I was a hidden treasure” (*kuntu kanz^{an} makhfiyy^{an}*) as well as the directionality of the letters and spheres to God and *tawḥīd*. In these passages, Ḥamūyeh’s triple-plays on words and letters, such as *khāfi*/*makhfiyy^{an}*, parallel to *nāzīr*, *nazr* and *manzūr*, can be brought to bear on this question of rising to visibility; in particular, apparition and disappearance in *tawḥīd*. It would be interesting to think of this treasure hidden in the heart of God, *makhfiyy^{an}* but not explicitly articulated through the verbal noun of *ikhtifāʾ*—hidden, disappeared, disappearance, but not disappearing. Both Ḥallāj (as a friend of God) and Jirjīs are brought to the arriving place (*mawṣil*) of

78 MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fol. 178^b.

79 MS 3793Y Princeton Garret Collection, fol. 46^a–46^b: ʿĪsā and the *nuqta*, with reference to *umm al-kitāb*. Other passages in this short treatise seem to suggest that the *alif* would be like the *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* between/moving in between *nūr* and *ẓulma* and *ẓulma* and *nūr*, and *ẓulma* is actually *mutawassīṭa*; like the two seals, in dual, coming out of the darknesses, rising to visibility and unifying two souls as one *alif*, like a written line, a flat line.

80 MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fol. 206^b.

81 MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fol. 178^b.

being killed, pointing again to what appears as directionally ascending towards the *'arsh* of God; what is carried on the names Compassionate (*raḥīm*) and Merciful (*raḥmān*) in relation to God's unity, as well as some *ṣifāt* and *dhāt* related to the human being and the prophets.

4 Colours

As noted previously, one of the hallmarks of Kubrawī Sufi thought was colour. According to Ḥamūyeh, the apparent and hidden are doubled. In these doubled structures Ḥamūyeh proposes, it remains difficult to determine how he situates colour *per se*, with or without dimensionality. In numerous passages, the *Maḥbūb* and Ḥamūyeh's short treatises speak to the white and black spheres of letters as well as white, black, and red.⁸² Since this requires more focused research, at present one example from *Maḥbūb* will have to suffice. This passage from the *Maḥbūb* concerns the *alif* and the *barzakh*, and appears in another sequence of his discussion and commentary on *innī anā Allāh*. He mentions the white and black of the lines or threads (*al-khayṭ*) after considering the writing and written line (*khaṭā'* and *khaṭṭ*) of the letter *alif* as "intermediary" (*barzakh* and *barzakhī*).⁸³ The hint to morning prayer (*ḥajr*) is quite beautiful: *khayṭ*, those lines or threads of whites and blacks indistinguishable at the very verge of daybreak, and the first rays of sunlight rising from the horizon, before the time of morning prayer, which God's creation ties to His *tawḥīd*. Thus there is a hint in this passage of two whites and two blacks, inside and outside of the written black *alif* on the white of a page, like the threads of *khayṭ*. In this instance, Ḥamūyeh's reference to the *zāhir* in *bāṭin* and *bāṭin* in *zāhir* could be conceived (= or perceived) as inner and outer whites as well as inner and outer blacks.⁸⁴

Therefore Ḥamūyeh is directing our thinking, as readers, towards considering the letters. But then moving in his speaking to questions around the figuration and representation of the Lord and Allāh, both sides and both being a (the) face as well as appearance (= *wāw* of *huwa* and *wāḥid*), it would not necessarily be because he is self-fashioning his writings as a "letter mysticism." It is a

82 MS 3793Y Princeton Garret Collection, fol. 56^b, ln. 4 ff.: white and black spheres of letters; letter "d" at the end of names Muḥammad and Dā'ūd. Significantly, in MS 3793Y, fol. 46^b: *bayāḍ* of *al-maghrib*; *bayāḍ* of *al-mashraq*; red black of soul; three souls; and lastly, MS 638 Orhan, fol. 10^b: three colours, black, white; and MS 638 Orhan, fol. 202^b: letters, colours, book, *murīd*, *murād* (in relation to the letters *kāf* and *sīn*).

83 MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fols. 100^b; 101^a-ff.

84 *Misbāḥ*, 57.

turn, moving into other ways of speaking. What requires additional research is in what ways Ḥamūyeh, in his writings, worked towards speaking against and across Ibn al-‘Arabī, his most renowned contemporary.⁸⁵

As this study draws to a close, let us return to the image of the letter *hā*’ as an open circle, a drop of water, or the *qurraṭ al-‘ayn*, and raise another set of questions: was the third diagram from the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb* in fact the open, speaking mouth of the *maḥbūb*?⁸⁶ Could we say, between speaking and silence, that the circular image, like the letter *hā*’, is the open and empty heart of the *maḥbūb*, saying or reciting *innī anā Allāh*? Is this schema in fact the beloved’s face and open mouth, speaking not necessarily in delirium or ecstasy, but rather speaking as seeing? Who is speaking? Is “I” between “He” and “you” or “Thou”? Where do the words come from which are being spoken?

In conclusion, the number of explicit passages on messianism and the End-time in Ḥamūyeh’s works⁸⁷ suggest as well as mark another shift in 13th-century Sufi understandings of the body, cosmology, and eschatology. There is likewise a marked absence of particular Sufi concepts- even Kubrawī concepts-

85 I am currently preparing two articles for publication, which develop further some of the preliminary research presented concerning the written correspondence between Ḥamūyeh and Ibn al-‘Arabī, first identified by Molé, and recently edited by Khāmah-Yār, as well as the short treatises originally attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī, such as the *Baḥr al-shukr* (see Gerald Elmore, review of *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*, *Journal Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* (2004) 35:109–115), as these sources provide other considerations of Ḥamūyeh’s meeting with Ibn ‘Arabī. For this exchange of letters, which will form one of my forthcoming publications, see MS Majlis 594. Ed. Aḥmad Khāmah-Yār, “Makātib-i Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥammū’ī,” in *Jashn-nāma-i Ustād-i Aḥmad Ḥussayinī Ashkūrī*, ed. Rasūl Ja’faryān (Tehran-Qom: Nashr-i ‘Ilm/Kitāb-khāna-yi Takhaṣṣuṣ-i Tārīkh-i Islām va Irān/Khāna-yi Kitāb, 1392 h.sh./2013), 451–474; MS Majmū’a 32, Letter No. 4 (fols. 99–108). Letter No. 4. UCLA Library. Special Collections. Minassian Collection. MS Tehran University 2451. Discussed in Muḥammad Tāqī Dān-ishpazhūh’s review of Aḥmad Maḥdavi Dāmghānī’s edition of Nasafī’s *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq* “Intiqād-i kitāb: Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq.” Some of the preliminary research findings appear in Elizabeth R. Alexandrin, “Seals and Sealing of Walāyah in Ṣūfī and Shī’ī Texts: The Cases of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyah,” in *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī’ah Islam: Symposium 2015*, eds. Sajjad Rizvi and Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad (London: Oxbow Books, 2017), 69–93. MS *Kitāb murād al-murīdīn*, fols. 7^{a-b}; 8^a; 52^a For the list of Ḥamūyeh’s works, see Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh. *Kitāb al-maḥbūb*, MS 726 Yeni Cami, fol. 1^a. Furthermore, in MS Şehit Ali Paşa 1342, fols. 142–152^b, on the first folio of the *majmū’a* states something specific about a treatise of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s in Sa’d’s “hand” (handwriting). These folios could be Ḥamūyeh’s copy, in his own hand, of either his notes on a work by Ibn ‘Arabī on *‘ilm al-ḥurūf*, or his notes more generally speaking on Ibn ‘Arabī?

86 MS 2577 Nuruosmaniye, fols. 18^a–19^b.

87 MS 3793Y Princeton Garret Collection, fols. 71^b–72^a, where Ḥamūyeh speaks about ‘Īsā and Yas’ā.

in Ḥamūyeh's works. There is so much more to be said on these issues, and especially Ḥamūyeh's views on messianism and the seal of God's friends, than can be discussed at present. Suffice it to say for now, Ḥamūyeh writes independently of most 13th-century authors and thinkers on the manifestation of the seal and the apparition of the Mahdī/Messiah figure, Yas'ā. As Ballanfat has elucidated in part, and which will form our larger research project, Ḥamūyeh's teachings would have a long legacy in the contexts of Timurid and Ottoman Sufi messianism.⁸⁸ Perhaps the above-mentioned points offer some suggestions as to why the majority of the manuscripts of the *Kitāb al-Maḥbūb*, and Ḥamūyeh's other works, are currently located in Turkish manuscript collections, including MS 638 Orhan, as well as provide some preliminary frameworks for reading and regarding the dimensionality of schemata in Ḥamūyeh's works.

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88 Mehmet Muhyiddin Üftāde, *The Nightingale in the Garden of Love*, trans. Angela Culme-Seymour (Oxford: Anqa, 2005), 54, n. 118; Paul Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté* (Paris: Harmattan, 2012), 85, 120, 168–169; Paul Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité: Le courant Melâmî-Hamzevî dans l'Empire ottoman* (Paris: Harmattan, 2013), 258; 260.

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Use of Diagrams in the *Ḥurūfī* and *Nuḡṭavī* Manuscripts, and Possible Links between the *Ḥurūfī* ‘Verbal’ and the *Bektashi* Visual Iconographies

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov

Introduction

Let us begin with a short explanation of proper nouns mentioned in the title. The *Ḥurūfī* is the name given in some sources to a mystical and messianic movement founded in the second half of the 8th/14th century by an Iranian thinker named Faḡl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394).¹ Throughout this chapter, the name *Ḥurūfī* indicates this specific movement; it is not used with reference to general use of the ‘science of letters’ (*‘ilm al-ḥurūf*) in Islam. The *Nuḡṭavīs*, a group established by Maḡmūd Pasīkhānī (d. 831/1427–1428), an excommunicated disciple of Faḡl Allāh Astarābādī, were an offshoot of the *Ḥurūfīs*.² Finally, the *Bektashis* were an influential Ottoman dervish order, the eponym of which was a famous Anatolian saint Ḥājji Bektāsh Velī (fl. 7th/13th century).³ The *Bektashi* communities still subsist in Turkey and in Balkans.

1 See Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, “Astarābādī, Faḡl Allāh” and “Ḥurūfīyya,” *EI3*.

2 See Hamid Algar, “Nuḡṭawīyya,” *EI2*. The most extensive work on the *Nuḡṭavīs* to date is done by Iranian scholars such as Šādiq Kiyā, *Nuḡṭavīyān yā Pasīkhānīyān* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Irān, 1320 sh./1941). More recently, ‘Alī Riḡā’ Dhakāvati Qarāguzlū devoted several articles to the study of the *Nuḡṭavī* history, doctrines and rituals. Most of these articles are conveniently assembled in a single volume: ‘Alī Riḡā’ Dhakāvati Qarāguzlū, *Jumbish-i Nuḡṭavī* (Qum: Adyan Publication, 1383 sh./2004–2005).

3 On the *Bektashis*, see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien (vom späten fünfzehnten Jahrhundert bis 1826)* (Vienna: Verlag des Institutes für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 1981), and references there; Ahmet Karamustafa, “Kalenders, Abdals, Ḥayderīs: The Formation of the Bektāšīye in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Süleymān the Second and his Time*, eds. Halil Inalcık and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul: Isis press, 1993), 121–129; Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Bektachīyya: Etudes sur l’ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach* (Istanbul: Isis press, 1995); Irène Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars. Genèse et évolution du soufisme populaire en Turquie* (Leiden: Brill, 1998). Among recent monographs devoted to the *Bektashis* are Yuri Averyanov, *Хаджу Бекташу Велу и*

Starting from the 9th/15th century, Hūrūfī doctrines started spreading in Ottoman mystical milieus.⁴ The Bektashis played a particularly important role in the preservation of the Hūrūfī intellectual heritage.⁵ It is not entirely clear whether the Hūrūfī doctrines were incorporated into Bektashi teachings or were perceived as unambiguously different from the latter.⁶ However, it seems that at least some distinctively Hūrūfī ideas combined with other doctrinal substratum found an artistic expression in Bektashi iconography, and more specifically in characteristic Bektashi calligraphic images representing the human face and body.⁷

cyfuiŭckoe 6pacmco Bektauuŭa (Moscow: Marjani, 2011), and Es'ad Coşan, *Hacı Bektâş-ı Velî ve Bektâşilik* (Istanbul: Server Yayınları, 2012). John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London-Hartford: Luzac & Company, 1937), still remains a valuable source of information.

- 4 According to Gölpınarlı, this process was most likely initiated by two close followers of Fađl Allāh Astarābādī, Mir Sharīf and Sayyid 'Imād al-Dīn Nasīmī. See Abdŭlbāki Gölpınarlı, *Hurŭfīlik metinleri katalođu* (Ankara: Türk tarih kurumu basımevi, 1989), 28.
- 5 Edward Browne, one of the pioneers of Hūrūfī studies, noted that most of the Hūrūfī manuscripts he was able to obtain were derived from the Bektashi order of dervishes. See his "Further Notes on the Literature of the Hurufis and their Connection with the Bektashi Order of Dervishes," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (July 1907): 533–581, 534.
- 6 To some degree, the Hūrūfī influence on Bektashism seems undeniable. Preservation of the Hūrūfī manuscripts by the Bektashis is one of the signs of this cooperation. However, a Bektashi dervish informed Birge that members of the Bektashi order clearly distinguished the Hūrūfī books from the properly Bektashi sources. On the basis of this and other evidence, Birge concluded that "rather it appears that Hurufism and Bektashiism are to a certain degree, and have always been separate systems of doctrine." See Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, 60. This seems to be corroborated by the fact that, in his response to the Ottoman anti-Bektashi and anti-Hūrūfī polemics titled *Mir'at al-maqāsid fī dağ' al-mafāsīd* published in 1293/1876, the Bektashi author Ađmad Rif'at refutes the idea that the Hūrūfīs are part of the Bektashi order. However, Ađmad Rif'at's argument shows his close familiarity with distinctively Hūrūfī ideas, of the origin of which he could difficultly be unaware, and which he nevertheless ascribes not to Fađl Allāh Astarābādī but to the prominent Sufi shaykhs such as Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) or Ismā'īl Haqqī Burŭsavī (d. 1137/1725). On the Hūrūfī-Bektashi relationships, see also Hamid Algar, "Horufism," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, and Hamid Algar, "The Hūrūfī Influence on Bektashism," in *Bektachiyya: Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, eds. Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (Istanbul: Isis press, 1995), 41–54. For Ađmad Rif'at's polemical work, in addition to Algar's articles, see also Mir-Kasimov, "Takfir and Messianism: The Hūrūfī Case," in *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfir*, eds. Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016), 199–202.
- 7 One example of explicit Hūrūfī traces in Bektashi iconography is the word 'Fađl' (for Fađl Allāh Astarābādī) written into facial features of a Bektashi dervish, accompanied by a couplet: "Adam is the Table revealing the universe / Fađl the Real is written on Adam's face" (*Ādam ān lawh-i vujŭd-i 'ālam-ast / Fađl-i haqq maşŭr-i vajah-i Ādam-ast*) (Algar, "Horufism," fig. 1, from Besim Atalay, *Bektaşilik ve Edebiyatı*, (Istanbul: Ant yayınları, 1921), facing p. 36; see below, Figure 14/Plate 5.14).

To the best of my knowledge, the visual aspect of the Ḥurūfī and Nuḡṭavī manuscripts has not been properly explored yet. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to establish a provisional inventory of images, mainly based on the Ḥurūfī manuscripts, and to assess the paths of possible evolution that link the Ḥurūfī iconography, either visual or 'verbal,' with the Bektashi calligraphic images. This should be regarded as a preliminary reflection based on limited manuscript material that was available to the author.⁸

The human being, the form of the human body and the features of the human face occupy a central place in Ḥurūfī thought. This anthropocentric orientation is in line with doctrinal positions of main mystical currents of Islam. Thus, the concept of Imām in early Shi'ism included the idea that the Imām was the locus of manifestation (*maẓhar*) of divine Names and Attributes, and the knowledge of the letters of the supreme Name of God was part of Imām's supernatural knowledge (*'ilm*).⁹ In Ismailism, the Prophets and Imāms were described as representatives of the hierarchical levels of cosmic Intellects, and this enabled them to lead the rest of humans towards the most complete knowledge of God accessible to created beings.¹⁰ This function of the Prophets and Imāms, the link between the metaphysical truths, including the primordial divine Word, on the one hand, and the physical form of the Imām on the other, was especially emphasized in the Nizari Ismaili theory of Resurrection (*qiyāma*).¹¹

Outside the Shi'i context, the Sufi idea of Pole as head of spiritual hierarchy (*qutb*) expresses the same principle of human form as locus of manifestation of the knowable aspect of God, also often in connection with linguistic or scriptural dimension of the divinity (divine Names, divine Word, divine Pen (*qalam*), divine Writing on Well-Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*)) embedded into the form of the human body or features of the human face. For example, the

8 The catalogue of the Ḥurūfī manuscripts preserved in the Turkish libraries, written by Abdülbakı Gölpinarlı, *Hurufilik metinleri kataloğu*, Ankara 1989 (2nd edition), and an inventory included in my PhD dissertation, "Etude de textes Hurūfī anciens: l'oeuvre fondatrice de Fadlallāh Astarābādī" (PhD diss., Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, 2007), 733–769, can provide an idea of the wealth of the Ḥurūfī written heritage.

9 Cf. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin dans le shī'isme original*, (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1992), 230–232.

10 Cf. Paul E. Walker, *Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in Age of al-Ḥākīm* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 102–103 and 108–117.

11 For the examples from the Ismaili works and their comparison with similar passages from the *Jāvidān-nāma* of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī see Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, "The Nizārī Ismaili Theory of the Resurrection (*Qiyāma*) and Post-Mongol Iranian Messianism," in *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 323–352.

prominent Naqshbandi master Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1419) gives the following definition of the Pole: “Pole of Poles is Muḥammadan truth, he is the form of the comprehensive divine name.”¹² This definition reflects Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 638/1240) concept of Perfect Human Being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) as intermediary between God and created universe and the locus of manifestation of the divine Word.¹³

Iranian mysticism of love, the prominent names of which are mystics such as Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) and Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī (d. 606/1209), and poets such as Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. ca. 627/1230), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), and Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (d. 792/1390), emphasized the beauty of human body and face as guide to the divine knowledge. The technical vocabulary of Persian mystical poetry, and in particular names of parts of human body and features of human face, such as eyes, eyebrows, eyelashes, cheeks, moles, hair, lips and teeth, used to designate manifestation of divine truth revealed in mystical experience, progressively acquired the quality of what Pourjavady aptly named ‘verbal iconography.’¹⁴ All of these anthropocentric intellectual and mystical lines of thought might have potentially inspired Ḥurūfī and later more explicit Bektashi iconography.

Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr, Faḡl Allāh Astarābādī’s magnum opus, consistently describes the human bodily form and the features of the human face as the most complete manifestation of the 28/32 primary forms, or letters (*ḥurūf*) of the primordial divine Word.¹⁵ In other words, although all objects and beings of the universe are brought into existence by various combinations of these primary letters, only human form and face contain the complete ‘alphabet’, the complete set of the 28/32 primary forms, thus being the only full manifestation of the creative divine Word.

12 *Wa-quṭb al-aqtāb huwa al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya wa-huwa šūrat al-ism al-jāmī’ al-ilāhī*. Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, ed. Jalil Misgarnizhād (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1381 sh./2002–2003), 662.

13 On Ibn al-‘Arabī’s concept of Perfect Human Being see, for example, Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des saints: prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d’Ibn Arabī* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 78–81.

14 Nasrollah Pourjavady, “Origines historiques du développement de l’Imago Dei dans la poésie mystique persane,” *Loqman* 8 (1991): 9–26.

15 The series of 28 and 32 primary elements of sound and form are used jointly in the Ḥurūfī texts, and serve as a basis of the numerical structure of the universe. Together, they produce number 60, linked to the organisation of time (60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, etc.) and space (60 minutes in every degree of the heavenly sphere, six times 60 degrees in the sphere). For a more detailed presentation of the relationship between these two series, see Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power: Ḥurūfī Teachings between Shi’ism and Sufism in Medieval Islam* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), Glossary pp. 437–438.

This anthropocentric doctrine and, in particular, detailed descriptions of the features of the human face reflecting the lines of the divine ontological writing—descriptions which abound in the Ḥurūfī writings—seem to be particularly appropriate for visual expression. However, with a few exceptions which will be mentioned later, the manuscripts of the Ḥurūfī works known to me do not contain any image explicitly representing the human body or the human face, or any other figurative representation. The only images to be found in these manuscripts are either diagrams or diagram-like text arrangements (like text surrounded by the letters of the alphabet, or text written within a circle). An inventory of these diagrams, mostly from the *Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr*, with a few examples from other Ḥurūfī and Nuḡṭavī works, will occupy the first two sections of this chapter.

The diagrams, however, are only remotely related to the verbal anthropocentric descriptions found in the *Jāvidān-nāma* and other Ḥurūfī works. Therefore, these anthropocentric passages mostly remain at the level of ‘verbal’ iconography, radically different in its nature from the figurative iconography of the Bektashis. However, some of the Ḥurūfī manuscripts do contain drafts of images which are closer to the Bektashi visual representations. These images, which might indicate a missing link between the Ḥurūfī and Bektashi iconographies, will be discussed in the third section.

1 Diagrams in the Manuscripts of the *Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr*

The first group of diagrams are those from Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī’s *Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr*.¹⁶ The *Jāvidān-nāma* is a bulky work (with manuscripts containing between 400 and 600 folios), which was regarded as a sacred text by Faḍl Allāh’s followers. It is written in Persian with some passages in local Iranian dialect of Astarābād. As would be expected of a sacred text, it was copied very carefully and most of the diagrams appear exactly in the same order and exactly in the same parts in all manuscripts of the *Jāvidān-nāma* known to me.¹⁷

16 It seems that Astarābādī was writing this work continuously over a long period of time. The latest date mentioned in the *Jāvidān-nāma* is 2 Rabīʿ 11 796 (4 February 1394), which is only a few months earlier than the date of Astarābādī’s execution in September of the same year. The oldest manuscript of this work that I was able to consult is MS Istanbul Millet Library, Ali Emiri Farsi 920, completed by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Ḥusaynī on 17 of Ramaḍān 992/22 September 1584 (colophon fol. 423^b).

17 This consistency across the manuscript copies of the *Jāvidān-nāma* enabled me to use the diagrams as markers to localize the corresponding passages when comparing four manuscripts of this work for a partial critical edition. See Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, *Christian*

*Figure 1 (Plate 5.1): Text Framed with Letters (Twenty-Eight Arabic and Four Persian Letters)*¹⁸

This text highlights one of the central positions of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī's doctrine, namely that the human body is the locus of manifestation of the 32 letters of the divine ontological alphabet. Whoever is able to understand and to discern these 32 letters in his/her own being, gets the key to the understanding of all prophetic books and attains the ultimate truth.

Translation:

They [the surrounding letters of Arabic alphabet] are the ultimate truth (*ḥaqīqat*) of genies, humans, angels, unbelievers, sinners, prophets, saints, and of everything that was, is, and will be. When the 32 [letters] and their ultimate truth manifest themselves in the locus of manifestation of a certain person, the ultimate truth of everything finds itself manifested through [that person's] body. All the vices disappear in such a locus of manifestation, only virtues subsist. This is the station of "Whose is the Sovereignty?"¹⁹ [Q 40:16] ... Whenever the ultimate truth and the being (*ḥastī*) of the 32 words is explained, all the heavenly books find themselves explained, and the ultimate truth of them all is disclosed to such a person.

*Figure 2 (Plate 5.2): Small Circular Diagram*²⁰

This diagram reflects the idea that love and beauty are the principle of attraction in the universe. The human form is the most beautiful form in the universe and the center around which the universe rotates. According to the *Jāvidān-nāma*, the Ka'ba symbolizes the human face as the locus of manifestation of the divine Word. It is for this reason that the Ka'ba became the direction of prayer for the Prophet Muḥammad.

Apocalyptic Texts in Islamic Messianic Discourse: The 'Christian Chapter' of the Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr by Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394) (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017). These included Ali Emiri Farsi 920 mentioned in previous note; Cambridge University Library Ee. 1.27 (n.d., no mention of the copyist, estimated 9th/15th century); British Library Or 5957 (copied by ʿĪsā b. Kamāl al-Dīn, completed on 18 Dhū al-Qa'da 1196/25 October 1782, colophon fol. 481^{a-b}); and Basel University Library M v1 72 (copied by Sayyid Walī, n.d.). However, there are two diagrams in Ali Emiri Farsi 920 which do not appear in Basel University Library manuscript and are omitted from the inventory below.

18 MS Basel, Basel University Library M v1 72, fol. 108^a. Reproduced by kind permission of the Universitätsbibliothek Basel.

19 Qur'anic citations in this paper are mostly in agreement with the translations of Abdullah Yusuf Ali or Muhammad Pickthal, slightly modified when necessary.

20 MS Basel, Basel University Library M v1 72, fol. 140^a.

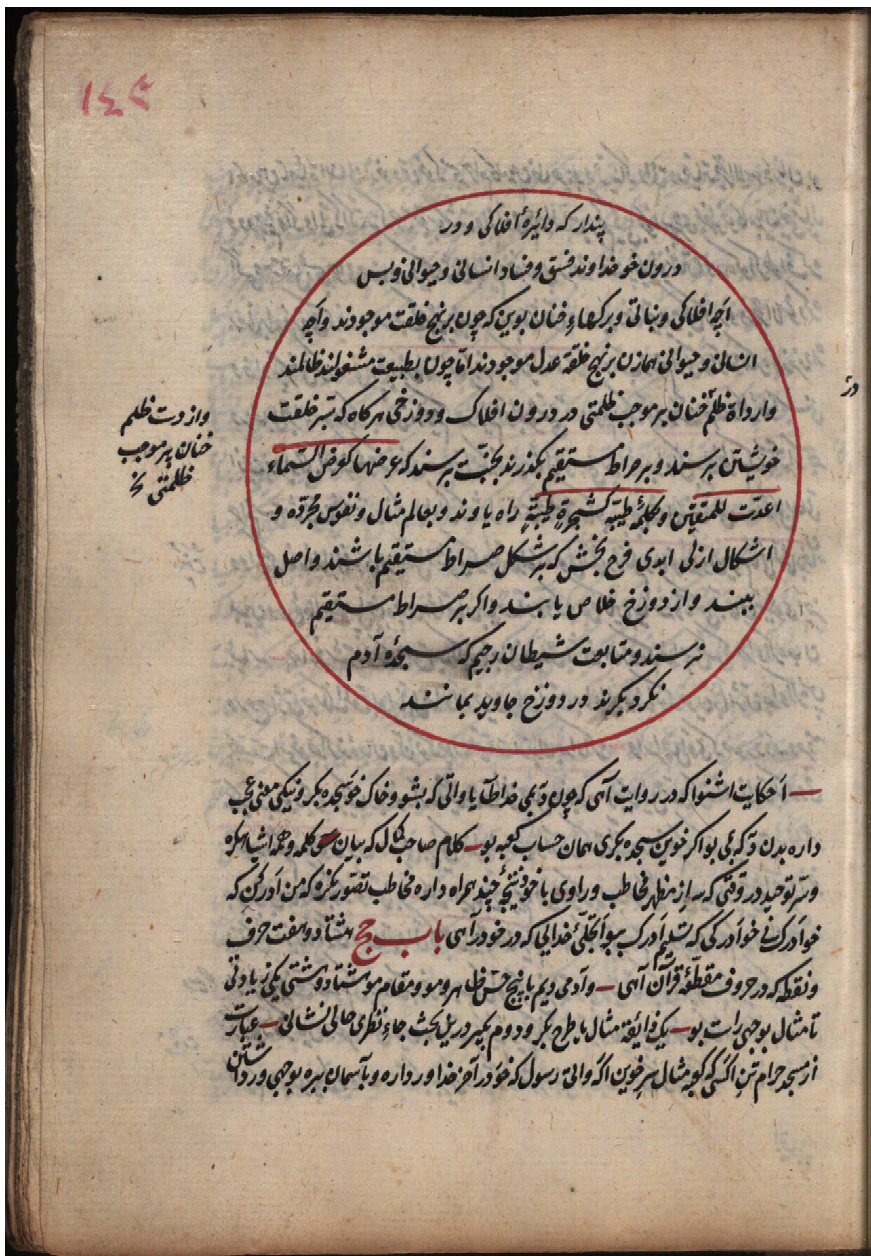


PLATE 5.3 Text inscribed in a circle. Faḥl Allāh Astarābādī, *Jāvidān-nāma* (ms Basel, Basel University Library M VI 72, fol. 143^a)

Description of the diagram. Center left: letters *kāf*, ‘*ayn*, *bā*’ representing *Ka’ba*. Other inscriptions in the circle: “love and beauty” (*‘ishq va ḥusn*, this inscription forms the diameter of the circle), “this is the reason of union and mutual inclination among things” (*ashyā’ rā bā hamdīgar imtīzāj va meyl az īnjā-st*, this inscription is found in the left half of the circle); and two *ḥadīths*: “God is beautiful and He loves beauty”,²¹ and “there is a market in the Paradise [where forms of men and women are sold, and when a man desires a form he enters there]”²² (the two *ḥadīths* are found in the right half of the circle).

*Figure 3 (Plate 5.3): Text Inscribed in a Circle*²³

This passage emphasizes another central concept of the *Jāvidān-nāma*, that of the “straight path” (*ṣirāt-i mustaqīm*). The “straight path” is identified in the *Jāvidān-nāma* with the line of symmetry in the mineral, vegetal, animal, or human form. This line reveals the divine inscription which is contained in every existing form and is the ontological principle which brings that form into existence. The passage seems to state that heavenly spheres and plants, which cannot act independently, remain in agreement, at all times, with their ontological principles, while animals and humans possess capacity for independent action and therefore can, out of ignorance, act in disagreement with their ontological principles, thus deviating from the “straight path” and committing injustice. This ignorance is illustrated by the case of Satan, who did not discern the divine Word written into the bodily form of Adam and did not bow down to him.

Translation:

Consider that humans and animals are certainly the source of disobedience and corruption within the heavenly spheres. You can see that the heavenly spheres and the plants with their leaves exist in accordance with their original nature. Humans and animals also exist in accordance with the original nature of justice, but when they get involved with nature they become unjust, and their unjust intentions generate injustice and hell within the heavenly spheres. Whenever they discover their original nature and travel the straight path, they reach paradise “thereof the breadth is as

21 *Inna Allāh jamīl yuḥibb al-jamāl*, For references, see Arent Jan Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 8 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1936–1969), 1:373.

22 *Inna fī al-janna la-sūq^{an} [mā fī-hā shirā’ wa-lā bay’u illā al-ṣuwar min al-rijāl wa-l-nisā’ fū-īdhā ashtahā al-raḥul ṣūra dakhala fī-hā]*. For this saying, cf. Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Tafsīr al-muḥīt al-a’zam wa-l-baḥr al-khiḍamm*, 4 vols. (Tehran: Nūr ‘Alā Nūr, 1422 sh./2001–2002), 2:130; Louis Gardet, “Djanna,” *EI2*, 2:447–452.

23 MS Basel, Basel University Library M VI 72, fol. 143^a.

the breadth of the heavens ... which is in store for those who believe ...” [Q 57:21], and to “a goodly word as a goodly tree” [Q 14:24]. They reach the world of creative imagination, that of the detached souls and of the delightful forms without beginning and without end, which are all in the form of the straight path. They are thus delivered from the hell. If they do not reach the straight path, they follow the lapidated Satan, who did not bow down in front of Adam, and remain eternally in hell.

*Figure 4 (Plate 5.4): Small Circular Diagram*²⁴

The *ḥadīth* “God the Most High created Adam in the form of All-Merciful,” usually combined with “God created Adam in His form”²⁵ is frequently used in the *Jāvidān-nāma* in order to emphasize that God created the human form as locus of manifestation of His Word. However, the meaning of the two concentric circles is unclear.

Description: the diagram consists of two concentric circles. Inscriptions inside the circles: “God the Most High created” in the inner circle, in the bigger circle “the father of mankind and his form” in the lower part and “Adam in the form of All-Merciful” in the upper part.

*Figure 5 (Plate 5.5): Small Circular Diagram*²⁶

This passage highlights the symbolism of the Ka’ba which, according to the *Jāvidān-nāma*, is the place from where the clay for Adam’s face was taken.²⁷ The Ka’ba is the direction of prayer and the direction in which the faces of the animals are turned before they are sacrificed and consumed, because Adam’s face is the locus of manifestation of the divine Word. Turning animals’ faces in that direction before slaughtering them, and then incorporating them into the human body by eating them is a salutary action by which the animals are incorporated into human form and get a chance to be born as human beings.²⁸

24 MS Basel, Basel University Library M v1 72, fol. 165^b.

25 For these *ḥadīths* see Daniel Gimaret, *Dieu à l’image de l’homme: les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leur interprétation par les théologiens* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1997), 123–142.

26 MS Basel, Basel University Library M v1 72, fol. 167^b.

27 This statement is made with reference to the *ḥadīth* according to which different parts of Adam’s body were made of clay taken in different locations, the head of Adam being made from the clay taken from the place of future Ka’ba. For this *ḥadīth* see Meir J. Kister, “Adam: a Study of Some Legends in Tafsīr and Ḥadīth Literature,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993): 113–174, 133–135.

28 For the Ḥurūfī theory of evolution through the food chain, see Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power*, 88–89 and 207–208.

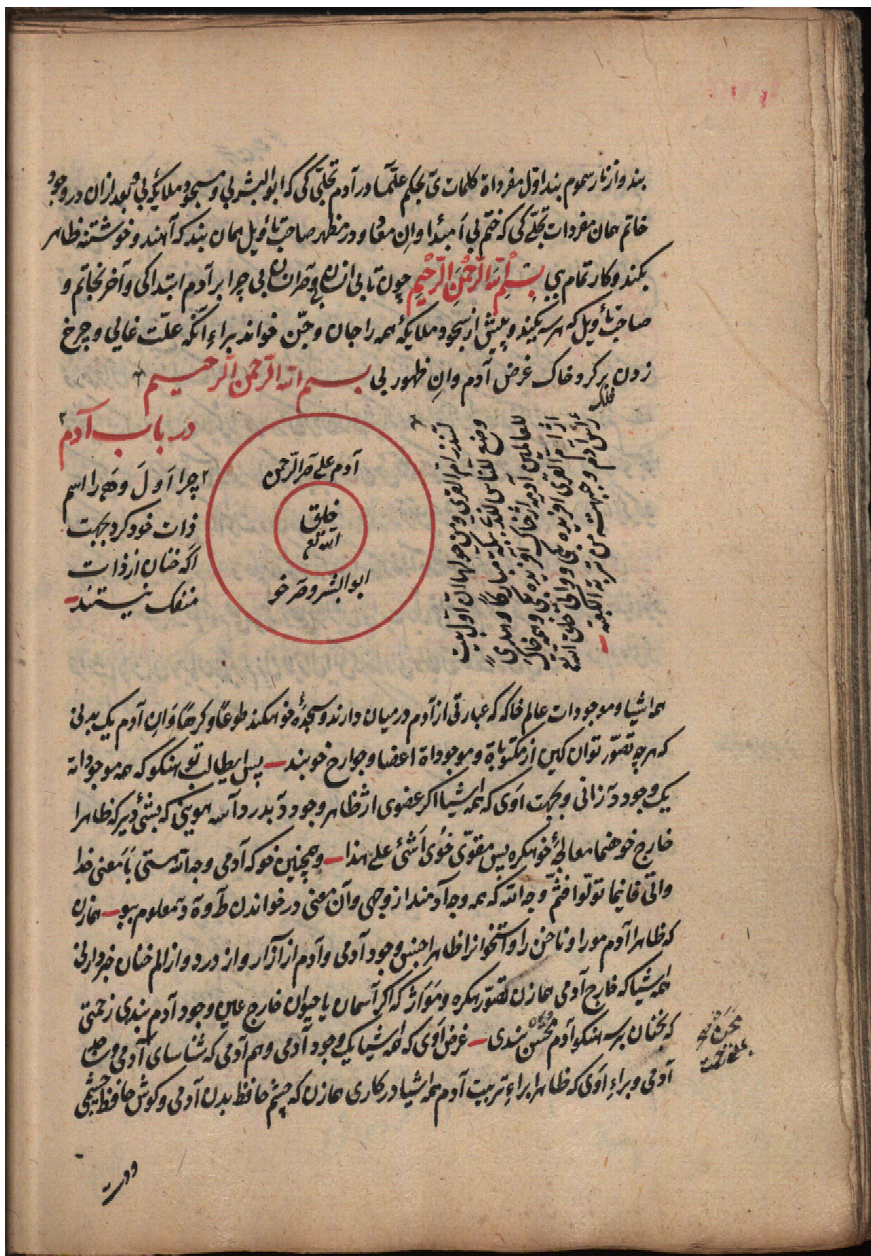


PLATE 5.4 Small circular diagram. Faḡl Allāh Astarābādī, *Jāvidān-nāma* (ms Basel, Basel University Library M vi 72, fol. 165^b)



PLATE 5.5 Small circular diagram. Faql Allāh Astarābādī, Jāvidān-nāma (Ms Basel, Basel University Library M vi 72, fol. 167^b)

Description: two concentric circles, words “Ka’ba” and “face” or “surface” (*ka’ba dīm*) written in center. In the space between circles the names of the prophets (Noah, Moses, and Prophets (*anbiyā’*), Iṣḥaq, Ismā’īl, Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad) are written, then a Qur’anic verse is written across the outer circle: “full of blessing and of guidance for all kind of beings” [Q 3:96]. Inscription around the outer circle:

All of them [of the prophets] performed the circumambulation around it [the Ka’ba]. It was necessary that all the prophets turn to the Ka’ba, [which represents] the Face, in order to worship God [and] to sacrifice. It was in that direction that Abraham turned the face of Ishmael when he was going to sacrifice him, otherwise it would have been an imposition. Since Muḥammad and all [other] prophets appeared from the back [i.e., loins] of Adam, it is in that direction [i.e., direction of Adam’s back] that they turned [when praying]. The faces of all animals that they ate were turned in that direction, then they slaughtered and ate them. All the believers and all the saints circled the Ka’ba for several days, and they prostrated themselves facing the Ka’ba.

*Figure 6 (Plate 5.6): Circular Diagram*²⁹

This is the first in the series of 5 diagrams made with 13 concentric circles representing the spheres of the four natural elements and the nine heavenly spheres.

Description:

Thirteen concentric circles. Written in center: “Ka’ba ‘arsh lawḥ sidrat al-muntahā va kursi” (Ka’ba, Throne, [well-preserved] Tablet, Lote-tree of the Boundary, and Pedestal) (MS MVI72).³⁰ All circles are named: four correspond to natural elements and nine to the heavenly spheres. Numbered inscriptions, with the first line starting in the inner circle and going across all the circles, following lines outside the outer circle.

First (*al-awwal*): In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. From all the directions, the face should be turned in the direction of the Ka’ba.

Second: “Messenger Maternal (*ummi*) Prophet” [Q 7:157], who became the foundation of the soil of the Ka’ba, since “God the Most High created

29 MS Basel, Basel University Library M VI 72, fol. 188^b.

30 In MS Ali Emiri Farsi 920 only the word “Ka’ba” is found.



PLATE 5.6 Circular diagram. Faḡl Allāh Astarābādi, *Jāvidān-nāma* (MS Basel, Basel University Library M VI 72, fol. 188^b)

the head and the forehead of Adam from the soil of the Ka'ba, and [He created] his chest and his back from the [soil] of Jerusalem, his thighs from the soil of Yemen and his legs from the soil of Egypt, his feet from the soil of Ḥijāz and his right hand from the soil of the east and his left hand from the soil of the west."

Third [following the line enumerating previous spheres]: Eighth sphere, which is the sphere of constellations. "By the heaven holding the constellations" [Q 85:1], and "And the moon: We have measured her mansions" [36:39].

Fourth: "Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings" [Q 3:96]. Starting with Moses, Jerusalem was the direction of prayer for all the prophets and, at the beginning, it was also the direction of prayer for the Messenger, peace be upon him.

Written across all the circles: “Mother of the Cities, The Black Stone, the direction of prayer of Abraham, Adam and other prophets, peace be upon them.”

*Figure 7 (Plate 5.7): Big Circular Diagram*³¹

This diagram consists of thirteen concentric circles representing the four natural elements and the nine heavens. It is mainly focused on the idea that the Ka’ba represents the human face, which is the locus of manifestation of the divine Word. It also emphasizes the special status of the earth as the central element of the universe and the main element in the constitution of the human body and face. The diagram contains several citations from the Qur’an and the *ḥadīth*, which are amply commented upon in the text of the *Jāvidān-nāma*.

Description of the diagram. Centre:

“Point of the earth, Adam and Eve”; “Ka’ba is the station of Adam, of his face, his head, his forehead”; “The Black Stone, and the Covenant which will emerge when it is broken. This Covenant will have eyes to see and a tongue to speak. Seven rounds of circumambulation have to be accomplished around it. ‘God the Most High created Adam in the form of the All Merciful and in His form’ and in ‘the best of molds’ [Q 95:4]. Ka’ba, the Inhabited House, the Temple of Jerusalem, ‘Lote-tree of the boundary, near it is the Paradise of Abode’ [Q 53:14–15], ‘In the Well-Preserved Table [Q 85:22]’”; “When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him. So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together, Not so Iblis: he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves” [Q 15:29–31]; “The Day that the shin shall be laid bare, and they shall be summoned to bow in adoration” [Q 68:42].

The inscriptions on the periphery of the diagram are mostly Qur’anic verses linked to some concepts from the central inscriptions. Concerning Eve (MS Istanbul Millet Library, Ali Emiri Farsi 920): “Eve is the mother of the prayer, mother of the Book and mother of the Qur’an, Adam, Eve and their original nature.” Concerning Adam (MS Basel University Library M vI 72): “Everything is part of his body, or connected with his body, or is in his stomach. Everything turns around the centre of the Earth which is the foundation of the bodies of Adam and Eve.”

31 MS Basel, Basel University Library M vI 72, fol. 239^b.

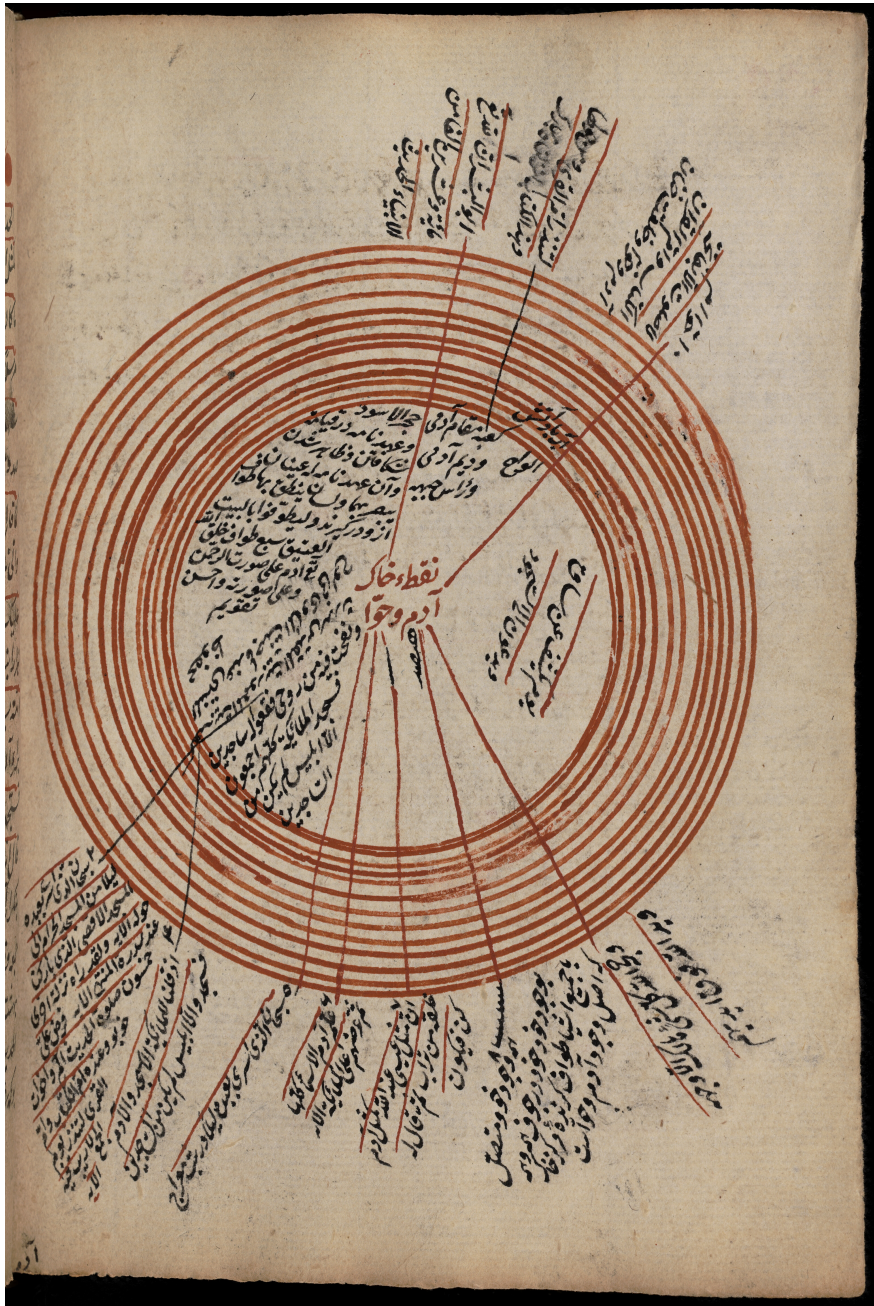


PLATE 5.7 Big circular diagram. Faḡl Allāh Astarābādī, *Jāvidān-nāma* (ms Basel, Basel University Library M vi 72, fol. 239^b)

*Figure 8 (Plate 5.8): Complex Circular Diagram*³²

This diagram expresses the idea that the universe and time are structured in accordance with the divine Word and its 28 and 32 aspects. The human face is the most complete locus of manifestation of the divine Word, and this is reflected in the fact that the prayer is performed with the face turned in the direction of the Ka'ba, which symbolizes the face of Adam. The 28 and 32 aspects are contained in the structure of the prayer, in the opening chapter of the Qur'an, in the 28 phases of the moon, and in the division of the heavenly spheres into 360 degrees. There is, thus, a shared essential identity between the three entities expressing the totality of the divine Word, i.e. human being, time and universe.

Description:

13 circles. Centre: Earth (*arḍ*). Right: "Mother of the Cities, Ka'ba, the head and the forehead of Adam." Left: "The Temple of Jerusalem, the locus of the chest and back."

First four circles: "Water, air, fire."

Between the fourth and the fifth circles:

"'And He taught Adam the names of all things' [Q 2:31]. The [human] face [contains] is the inscription of the 32 divine [letters] without beginning and without end. God is worshipped in the locus of [Adam's] head and forehead, by performing 17, 15 and 11 *rak'at*."

Then text is written in a spiral beginning between the 9th and the 10th circles and ending between 11th and 12th:

"And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Twofold (*sab'an min al-mathānī*)" [Q 15:87]: these are in the fourteen inscriptions of the disjointed letters that appear at the beginning of some of the [Qur'anic] suras. "Seven Twofold" also refer to the first sura of the Qur'an (*al-ḥamd*), which must be read in accordance with the numbers of 17 and 11 divine words. It is also seven heavenly spheres with seven planets, which are 14: "And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Twofold." 14 are above the earth because the original nature of the face of Adam, peace be upon him, makes 14 lines appear, and 14 are below the earth. And the sphere of constellations contains 12 constellations, as God the Most High said: "By the heaven holding the constellations" [Q 85:1]. And every constellation [occupies] 30 degrees, which makes 360 degrees, or six times 60 degrees.

32 MS Basel, Basel University Library M VI 72, fol. 327^b.

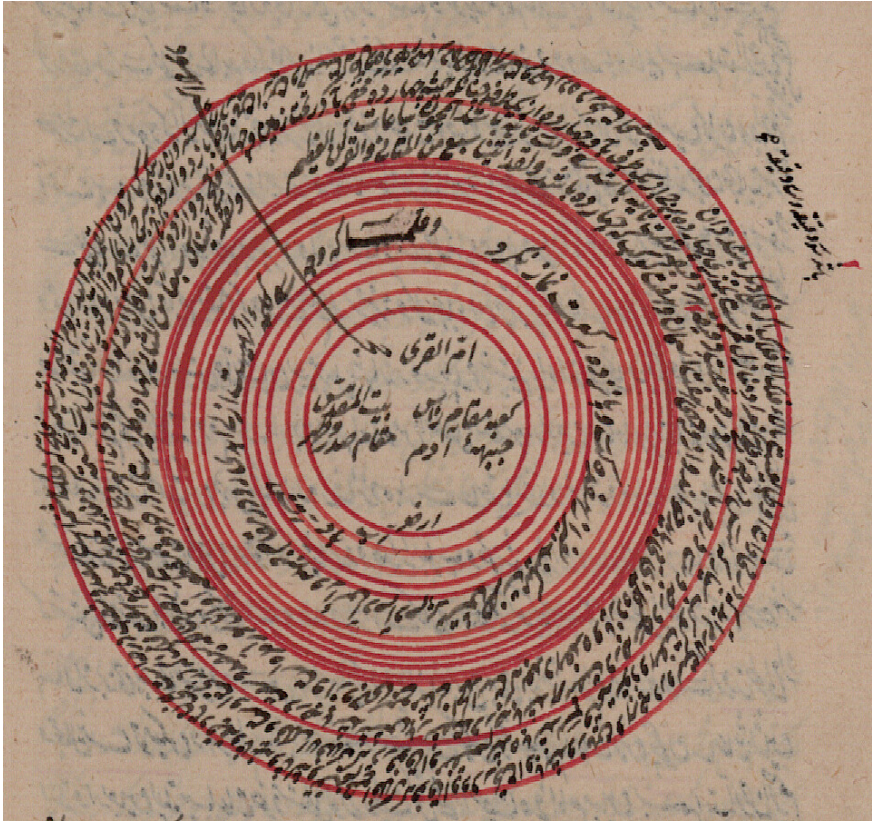


PLATE 5.8 Complex circular diagram. Faḡl Allāh Astarābādī, *Jāvidān-nāma* (MS Basel, Basel University Library M VI 72, fol. 327^b)

Every 60 degrees contain 28 and 32 degrees, and every degree contains 60 minutes, or 28 and 32 minutes, and every minute contains 60 seconds, or 28 and 32 seconds. Every minute and second participates in the division of the 12 constellations in 28 [sections] in accordance with the phases of the moon: “And the moon: We have measured her mansions” [Q 36:39]. [...] And the division of all the spheres which are above or below [the sphere of constellations], of the earth and of everything that is on it is necessarily in accordance [with the division of the sphere of constellations, including] the elementary natures. If there was another heavenly sphere above the heaven of the heavens, it would also be divided in accordance with the [proportions of] 28 and 32 [divine words], as the sphere of constellations.

The inscription “black stone” (*ḥajar al-aswad*), starting in the center and crossing circles 1 to 12, marks the beginning of the inscriptions between the circles.

The *Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr*, the foundational text of the Ḥurūfī doctrine, contains a set of diagrams, most of which are consistently reproduced in all known copies of this work. The primary goal of these diagrams seems to be that of providing a compact summary of the central ideas of the *Jāvidān-nāma*. Most of these diagrams are the circular representations of the universe which emphasize various aspects of the cosmological, anthropological, and epistemological theories discussed in the text. To my knowledge, there is no evidence of any magical or talismanic use of these diagrams.

2 Diagrams from Other Ḥurūfī and Nuqtavi Texts

*Figure 9 (Plate 5.9): Circular Diagram*³³

This diagram, contained in an anonymous Ḥurūfī manuscript in Persian titled *Ḍavābiṭ-i Jāvidān*, emphasizes the distinction between the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet and the 32 letters of the Persian alphabet, apparently linking them respectively to Muḥammad and to Adam. These letters are also associated with divine omnipresence. An explicit link is made to the human face and to the name of Faḍl (meaning ‘bounty’ in Arabic).

Description:

Two concentric circles, four words, *inna-hu muḥīṭ bi-kull shayʿ* (“Truly, He encompasses everything”), inscribed outside at four points at 90 degrees of distance from each other. Along the diameter of the inner circle are written 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet; along the inner half of the circle are written the same letters plus four Persian letters. At the ends of the diameter, in the space between the inner and the outer circles, is written: “He is the First, Adam” at the one end, and “And the last, Muḥammad” at the opposite end. At 90 degrees, at the one end of the space between the circles *wa-l-bāṭin* (i.e., “interior”) is written, on the opposite end: *wa-l-zāhir* (i.e., “exterior”). Between *wa-l-zāhir* and “He is the First,” “Your lasting unity by *fāʿ*, by *ḍād*, by *lām*” is written in Arabic. There are also other sayings relevant to the idea of manifestation of the Face and to the name of Faḍl Allāh. Inside the inner circle, Qurʾanic citations including “He established Himself in balance on the Throne” [Q 20:5] and “Everything will disappear except His face” [Q 28:88].

33 MS Basel, Basel University Library M VI 65, fol. 10^a.



PLATE 5.9 Circular diagram. Anonymous Hurūfī manuscript titled *Ḍavābiṭ-i Jāvidān* (ms Basel, Basel University Library M VI 65, fol. 10^a)

*Figure 10 (Plate 5.10): Circular Diagram Consisting of Fifteen Concentric Circles*³⁴

This diagram represents the idea of the Seven Twofold (*sab' min al-mathānī*), with seven double circles around the Ka'ba representing Adam. "Seven Twofold" (Q 15:87) is a Qur'anic expression often used in the *Jāvidān-nāma* to refer to the features of the human face, which are the loci of manifestation of the lines of the divine ontological scripture. The diagram thus also emphasizes the idea of similarity between the macrocosm and microcosm.

Description:

Ka'ba written in the center.

Writings on the edges:

"Jerusalem is the land of the Resurrection, this can be found in the hadith."

"Earth, water, air and fire. Seven heavenly spheres with a planet on each sphere, divided by the line of balance (*khatt-i istivā*), produce the Seven Twofold. Seven heavenly spheres are thus distinguished from the sphere of constellations, since every heavenly sphere has [only] one planet."

"The seven heavens and the heaven of constellations are divided in such a way that [demonstrates that] they are turned towards the world of earth, air, water and fire which constitute the body of Adam."

"The [Inhabited] House situated in the heaven represents Adam. It is called 'inhabited' because [The Prophet Muḥammad] said: 'I and [other] prophets, we are like a building with perfect foundations, with the place for one brick left open' until 'I fill [the place] of that brick, I am the brick'"³⁵

"The Inhabited [House] is the counterpart of the Ka'ba in the heaven."

34 MS Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pers. 140, fol. 73^a. This is an anonymous and undated Ḥurūfī manuscript in Persian titled *Kitāb Maḥabbat Allāh* (fol. 2^b).

According to a note added on fol. 1^a in a different hand, this manuscript contains *Maḥabbat-nāma* and *Amānat-nāma* of Sayyid Iṣḥāq, a successor (*khalīfā*) of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī. There exist several (at least six) other manuscripts of this work. In various manuscript catalogues, it is also attributed to another close follower of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī, named 'Alī al-A'lā, as well as to Faḍl Allāh himself.

35 *Mithlī wa-mithl al-anbiyā' ka-mithl qaṣr uḥsina bunyānu-hu turika min-hu mawḍi' labinati ... anā sadadtu* (text: *asadatu*) [*mawḍi'*] *tilka al-labinat* (text, added: *wa-anā labinat*). The author probably amalgamates different versions of this *ḥadīth*. For references, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Aḥmadī Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1989), 53–54; Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme*, 18.



PLATE 5.10 Circular diagram consisting of fifteen concentric circles. Anonymous Ḥurūfī manuscript titled *Kitāb Maḥabbat Allāh* (ms Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pers. 140, fol. 73^a)

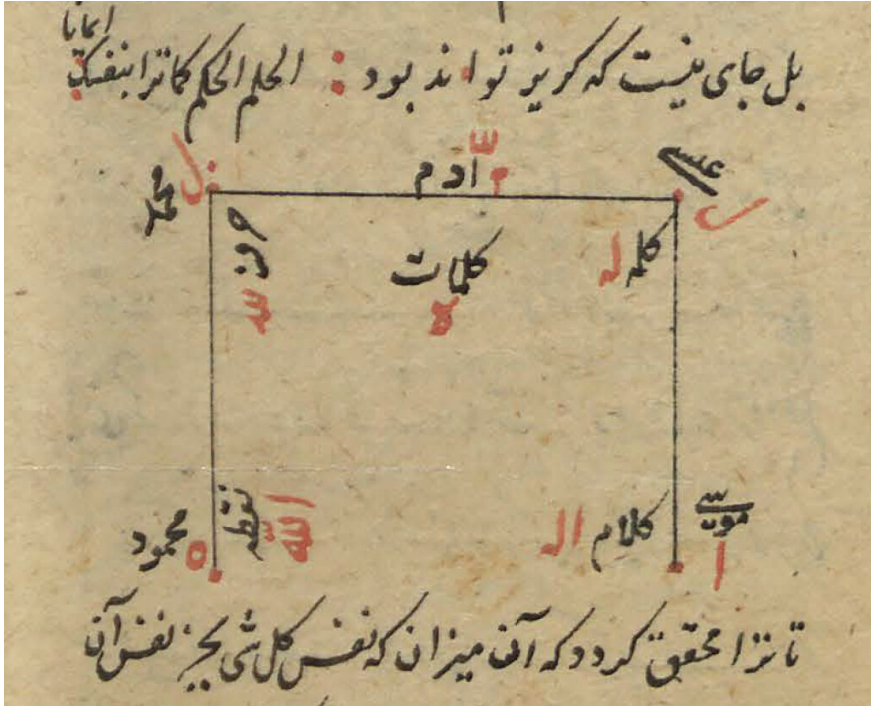


PLATE 5.11 Rectangular diagram. Maḥmūd Pasikhānī, *Kitāb-i Mīzān* (ms Tehran, Malek National Library and Museum Institution 6226, fol. 3^b)

*Figure 11 (Plate 5.11): Rectangular Diagram*³⁶

This is a Nuḥṭavī diagram from one of the most important Nuḥṭavī texts, the *Kitāb-i Mīzān* of Maḥmūd Pasikhānī (d. 831/1427–1428). Maḥmūd was the founder of the Nuḥṭavī doctrine, and this is clearly indicated in the diagram, where Maḥmūd is described as “Dot of God” (*nuḥṭat Allāh*). The diagram is a square with names of the prophets and their relations to the divine Word. Every angle contains a letter of the word *Allāh*, the name of a prophet, and the name of an element of language. Right lower angle, letter *alif*, *Mūsā kalām Allāh*; right upper angle, letter *lām*, *Īsā kalimat Allāh*. Upper line center: *tashdīd*, *Ādam*

36 Maḥmūd Pasikhānī, *Kitāb-i Mīzān*, ms Tehran, Malek National Library and Museum Institution 6226, fol. 3^b. Manuscript undated. Image courtesy of Malek National Library and Museum Institution in Tehran. My thanks to Marjan Afsharian and Shahram Khodaverdian for helping me to obtain the high resolution copy of this image and to secure the printing permission from the Malek Library.

kalimāt [*Allāh*]; left upper angle: letter *lām*, *Muḥammad ḥarf Allāh*. Left lower angle: letter *hā'*, *Maḥmūd nuqṭat Allāh*.³⁷

The text surrounding the diagram (fols. 2^b–3^b) explains that the diagram represents the divine balance (*mizān-i Allāh*), which encompasses everything existent. Every letter of the name *Allāh*, including the *tashdīd* over the second *lām*, is identified with a prophet and with an element of language. Thus Adam = *tashdīd* = words (*kalimāt*), Moses = *alif* = speech (*kalām*), Jesus = *lām* = Word (*kalima*), Muḥammad = *lām* = letter (*ḥarf*), Maḥmūd = *hā'* = dot (*nuqṭa*). The text does not discuss the order in which the names are arranged on the diagram, nor does it specify the meaning of the linguistic elements attributed to the prophets. If we can establish parallels with the Ḥurūfī texts, it can be presumed that ascription of “words” to Adam is inspired by the Qur’anic episode in which God teaches to Adam the “names of all things” [Q 2:31]; the attribution of “speech” to Moses is based on the episodes in which Moses heard divine discourse (on the Mont Sinai and from the Burning Bush), as reflected in the Qur’an; Jesus’ identification to the Word of God is explicitly Qur’anic (4:171); and Muḥammad’s ‘lettrism’ is an allusion to the famous disjointed letters of the Qur’an (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta’a*).³⁸ Maḥmūd’s identification with the Dot is, of course, his own idea.³⁹

Also with reference to the Ḥurūfī context, it is possible to offer an explanation for the order of the linguistic entities and the related prophets. Linguistic entities progress from complex to simple: the sum of all words, speech, word, letter, dot. According to the Ḥurūfī works, it is the simple elements of lan-

37 The word *Allāh* is clearly written only in the expression *nuqṭat Allāh*. In the lower and upper right angles it appears rather like *ilāh*; the word *kalimāt* in the center is followed by a sign resembling the ligature *lā*, and the word *ḥarf* in upper left angle is followed by *li-Llāh*. However, from the surrounding text, it appears clearly that the author discusses homogenous entities, that is, words, speech, letter etc. of God.

38 Letters and combinations of letters inserted at the beginning of some of the Qur’anic suras. These mysterious letters fascinated generations of Islamic thinkers. For general information, see Keith Massey, “Mysterious Letters,” *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2001–2006), 3:471–476.

39 In Ḥurūfī texts, it is ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib who is identified with the ontological ‘dot’ of the divine language, which is the source of all revealed knowledge. See Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power*, 70 ff. This quality of ‘Alī is often mentioned in relation to the well-known *ḥadīth* where ‘Alī says: “All the secrets of God the Most High [are contained] in prophetic books, all prophetic books are [contained] in the Qur’an; all that is in the Qur’an [is contained] in the Opening chapter; all that is in the Opening chapter [is contained in the formula] *In the name of God (bismi’llāh)*; all that is in *bismi’llāh* [is contained in the letter] *bā’* of the *bismi’llāh*; all that is in the *bā’* of the *bismi’llāh* [is contained in the [diacritical] point under *bā’*; and I am the point under *bā’*.” Cf. Āmulī, *Tafsīr*, 1:211, no. 14.

guage, i.e. letters, that convey the most basic meanings of the metaphysical divine language. Knowledge of these metaphysical meanings is the key to the interpretation of the more complex linguistic entities, like words and speech.⁴⁰ Maḥmūd takes this schema one step further, claiming the knowledge of the ontological Dot, which is the source of all the letters, probably in an implicit bid to supersede his master, Faql Allāh Astarābādī. Other than Qur'anic associations mentioned above, the choice of the prophets could also reflect the ecumenical ambitions of Maḥmūd Pasīkhānī. Moses represents Jews, Jesus represents Christians and Muḥammad represents Muslims. By positioning himself as the most universal and the simplest linguistic element (the dot, of which letters, words and larger linguistic entities of all languages are composed), Maḥmūd Pasīkhānī probably aims at conveying an idea of a universal and final religion which will bring together the followers of all previous prophets.

To conclude this section, it can be observed that visual representations found in Ḥurūfī and Nuqtavī works other than the *Jāvidān-nāma* consist mostly of diagrams similar to those of the *Jāvidān-nāma*. Their apparent purpose is to concisely summarize the ideas expressed in the surrounding text. The Nuqtavī diagrams reflect the focus on the dot as the primary ontological principle of the universe, which is characteristic of the Nuqtavī doctrine. There is no trace of calligraphic imagery representing the human face and body in these manuscripts.

3 From 'Verbal' to Figurative Iconography

The absence of the pictorial representations other than the diagrams in the Ḥurūfī and Nuqtavī works is somewhat surprising, because these texts, and especially the *Jāvidān-nāma*, contain many passages with detailed descriptions of human face and body. The basic idea behind these passages is that the form of the human body is unique, it is the only form in the entire universe that expresses the entire "alphabet" of the divine creative language. Still more precisely, the lines of divine ontological writing, containing the full set of 28/32 primary letters, are expressed in the seven "maternal" and seven "paternal" lines of the human face, associated with the lines of hair. The hairline, two lines of eyebrows, four lines of eyelashes represent seven "maternal" lines, which express the most basic lines of divine writing shared by all humans independ-

⁴⁰ Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power*, 263 ff. and Glossary, "Return to the origin," 455–457.

ently of their age and sex. Seven “paternal” lines, represented by the lines of the beard and mustache, appear only on the face of adult men. Such descriptions, which can be called Ḥurūfī ‘verbal iconography,’ naturally lend themselves to calligraphic representations as result of visualization of the “scriptural” aspect of the human body and face.⁴¹ The fact that pictorial representations reflecting omnipresent ‘verbal iconography’ are almost absent from the Ḥurūfī works is, it itself, an interesting observation that needs an explanation.⁴²

This issue is all the more intriguing because, in spite of obvious preference for the diagrams, some Ḥurūfī manuscripts do display drafts or images directly inspired by anthropomorphic ‘verbal iconography.’ One example is Figure 12 (Plate 5.12),⁴³ which shows what appears as an unfinished draft of the “maternal” lines of the human face. These lines are sketched at the margin of the folio containing a description of these lines: “It is required to accomplish seven rounds of circumambulation around the house of the Ka’ba and the black stone, which symbolize another seven which are the hairline, then eyelashes under the hairline, and so on.” The drawing on the margin represents exactly this: a hairline and four lines of eyelashes.

A second example (Figure 13; Plate 5.13) is the human figure composed of inscriptions which appears at the last folio of the manuscript containing the *Durr-i Yatīm*, an Ottoman Turkish adaptation of the *Jāvidān-nāma* attributed to

41 For an example of description and interpretation of the “maternal” and “paternal” lines of the human face see Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power*, 114–115.

42 It is unlikely that absence of figurative iconography in Ḥurūfī and Nuḡṭavī manuscripts is explained by the general Islamic legal prohibitions. Muslim figurative art existed well before Mongol invasions, and flourished during Mongol rule, nourished by cultural exchanges across the *Pax Mongolica*, especially by the influence of Chinese artistic traditions and techniques. Muslim figurative art, and especially manuscript illustration, continued developing after Mongol period, under Timurids, Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals. Exquisitely illustrated manuscripts of Firdawsī’s *Shāh-nāma* produced across the Islamic world, starting from the Mongol period, clearly demonstrate this tendency (*Shāh-nāma*’s illustrated manuscripts organized according to time and geographical location can be found on the Cambridge Shahnama project (director Charles Melville) website, <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/shahnama/1>, accessed on 19/04/2019). For general references related to the development of Islamic figurative art during and after the Mongol period see, for example, Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia-Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 162–174, Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 49ff. Therefore, legal prohibitions do not seem to hinder pictorial representations at the time when Ḥurūfī and Nuḡṭavī manuscripts were produced.

43 MS Basel, Basel University Library M VI 72, fol. 134^b.

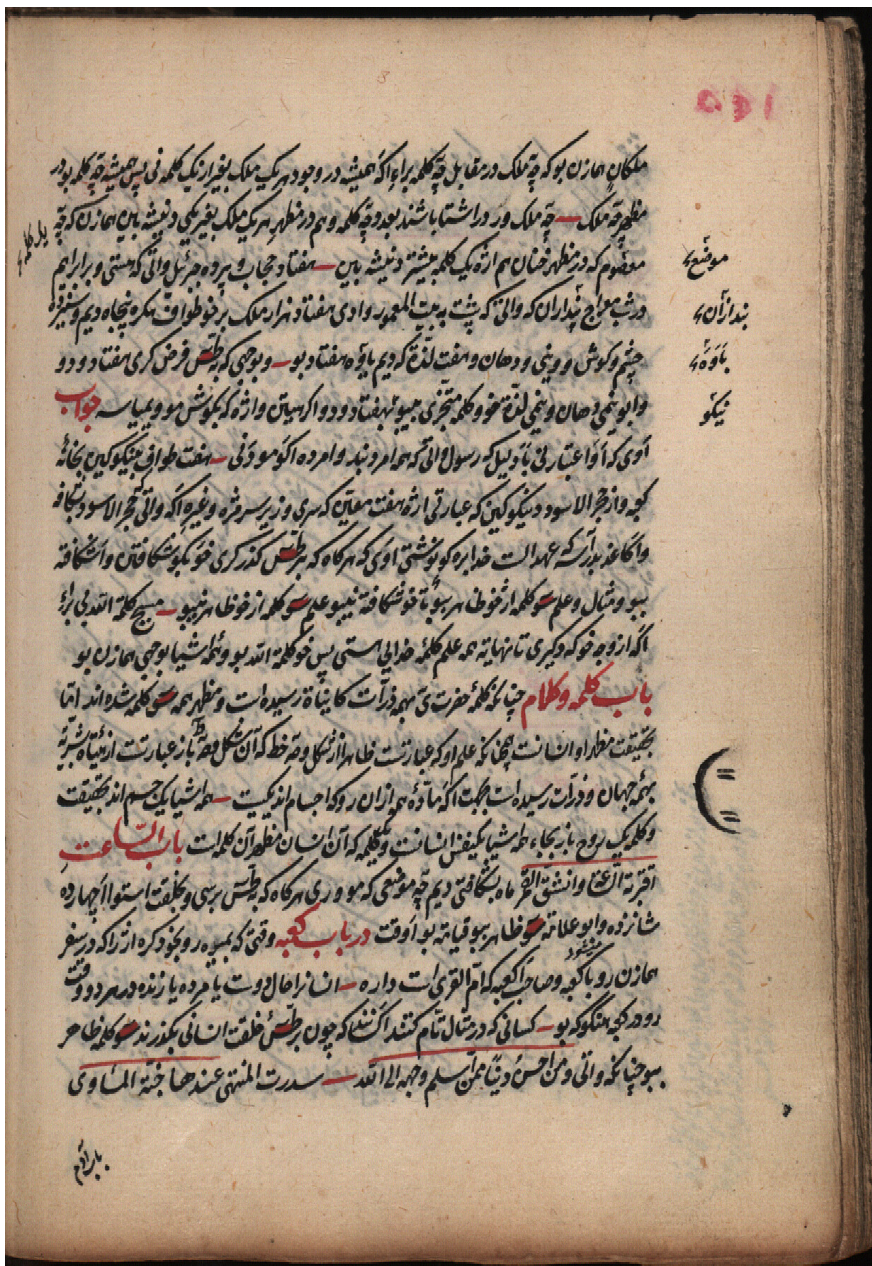


PLATE 5.12 Unfinished draft of the “maternal” lines of the human face. Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī, *Jāvidān-nāma* (ms Basel, Basel University Library M vi 72, fol. 134^b)

the Bektashi dervish Murtaḏā.⁴⁴ The copy was produced by Akçehisarlı dervish Sulaymān in 1222/1807–1808. The image occupies fol. 327^a, and is placed after the selection of verses (fol. 326^{a-b}) which follows the colophon and which was added at a later date (in 1273/1856–1857). This date can be taken as the *terminus post quem* for the image.

The image represents a human body and face composed of the letters of the Arabic alphabet (e.g., *jīm* is the neck, *qāf* and *fā'* are eyes and eyebrows, *zayn* and *rā'* are ears, etc.), words (e.g., the word *Allāh* is the contour of the face), and Qur'anic combinations of disjointed letters (*muqatta'āt*) (e.g., *tā hā'* and *kāf hā' yā' 'ayn šād* forming sides of the body or arms). It is much more developed than the sketch of the “maternal” lines of the human face that we discussed previously. Unlike the previous image, it is not directly supported by textual evidence. The *Jāvidān-nāma* of Faḏl Allāh does not specify which letters or combinations of letters correspond to the parts of the human body or to the features of the human face.⁴⁵ Still, Figure 13 (Plate 5.13) can be regarded as a characteristically Һurūfī image because it appears as an appendix to a Һurūfī text, and because it reflects some basic points of the Һurūfī doctrine, that is, the idea that the human body and especially the human face represent the totality of the divine creative alphabet (this could be the purpose of the name *Allāh* used as a contour of the human face); and the foundational role of the disjointed Qur'anic letters which, according to the *Jāvidān-nāma*, represent the source of the divine writing (*umm al-kitāb*). In this quality, Figure 13 can be regarded as continuation and development of the tendency towards a transition from ‘verbal’ to visual iconography that would have existed within Һurūfī tradition. However, more evidence is needed to confirm this conjecture.

On the other hand, Figure 13 (Plate 5.13) is close to the Bektashi calligraphic images (Figures 14–16; Plates 5.14–16),⁴⁶ representing the human face and body

44 MS Princeton, Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Manuscripts Collection, Islamic Manuscripts, Third Series no. 254. MS Mevlana Müzesi Abdülbakı Gölpinarlı Kütüphanesi Yazma Kitaplar Kataloğu, 203, description and digital copy at the website of Princeton University Digital Library under the title *Kitāb-i Jāvidān-i Durr-i Yatīm ast*, <http://pucl.princeton.edu/objects/xs55mc12f#page/1/mode/2up> accessed 12/04/2019). Courtesy of Princeton University Library. My thanks to Russell Harris for bringing this image to my attention.

45 It is possible that this picture is inspired by some later Һurūfī texts which might discuss correspondences between specific letters and parts of the human body, but I am not aware of any such descriptions.

46 My thanks to Thierry Zarcone for bringing these images to my attention. They come from some auction catalogues. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain the references of these catalogues.

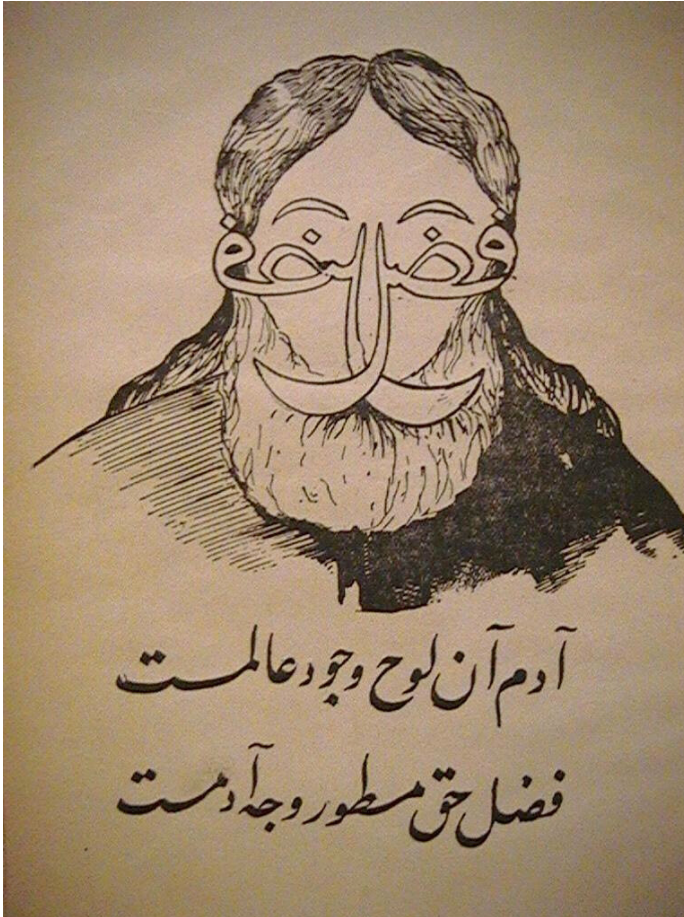


PLATE 5.14 Human face as composed of inscriptions (Algar, "Horufism," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, fig. 1, from Besim Atalay, *Bektaşilik ve Edebiyatı*, facing p. 36. Compare with Malik Aksel, *Türklerde Dinî Resimler*, fig. 66, p. 113)

as composed of inscriptions. Some of these Bektashi images are unmistakably inspired by the Ḥurūfism, such as Figure 14 (Plate 5.14), which shows the name "Faḍl" written into the facial features of a dervish, clearly alluding to Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī, which is also confirmed in the poetry written under the image.⁴⁷ Other Bektashi images (Figures 15 and 16/Plates 5.15 and 5.16) do not display

47 See note 7.

any distinctively Һurūfī features and express Bektashi devotion to ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib and to the prophetic family.

What is more, some evidence indicates that Figure 13 (Plate 5.13) is part of a larger series of images, most likely inspired by the Һurūfī ideas, but also incorporating animal symbolism characteristic of Turkic and especially Bektashi pictorial art. Malik Aksel’s book on Turkic religious images contains two illustrations which look like variants of Figure 13 (Plate 5.13). The first of these images (Figure 17/Plate 5.17) is a human figure composed of letters and inscriptions very similar to Figure 13 (Plate 5.13) (the word *Allāh* as contour of the face, two ‘*ayns* as cheeks, *fā*’ and *qāf* as eyes and eyebrows, *alif* as nose, combinations of the Qur’anic disjointed letters inscribed along arms and legs), but contains many additional elements, including circular diagrams⁴⁸ incorporated into the human figure (unfortunately, illegible on Aksel’s illustration), a dragon with its tail around the right hand and its head protruding between the legs of the human figure, a lion at the left hand of the human figure, a fish under its feet, and two angels carrying inscriptions in round circles at both sides of its head.⁴⁹ The second image (Figure 18/Plate 5.18) is less Һurūfī and more Bektashi; it is a human figure covered in inscriptions, but without disjointed letters on its face and body, with the same animals in the same positions (dragon, lion, fish), plus a cock, and the same angels carrying inscriptions.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, Aksel does not provide any information about the dates or the context in which these images were produced. Figure 17 (Plate 5.17) appears in the chapter “Human being and cosmos in letters” (*Harflerle insan ve evren*), Figure 18 (Plate 5.18) in the chapter “Bektashi calligraphic pictures” (*Bektaşilikte yazı resim*). Further research is needed to determine whether an image originally rooted in Turkic mysticism (Figure 18/Plate 5.18) with its animal symbolism was progressively adapted to represent Һurūfī ideas, with addition of the disjointed letters (Figure 17/Plate 5.17) and eventual removal of the animals (Figure 13/Plate 5.13) or, conversely, an originally Һurūfī image was progressively deprived of its Һurūfī features and transformed into a Bektashi picture. Figure 13 and related images might thus represent a link between authentically Һurūfī iconography and Bektashi visual representations for which Һurūfism was only one source of inspiration, among many others.

48 Is this an example of connection between the circular diagrams discussed earlier and figurative representations of the human body and face?

49 Malik Aksel, *Türklerde Dinî Resimler* (Istanbul: Kapı yayınları, 2015; first published in 1967), 98.

50 *Ibid.* p. 114.



PLATE 5.15 Human face as composed of inscriptions (Private collection. Compare with Malik Aksel, *Türklerde Dinî Resimler*, p. 92)



PLATE 5.16
Human figure
as composed
of inscrip-
tions (Private
collection.
Compare with
Malik Aksel,
*Türklerde Dinî
Resimler*, p. 93)



PLATE 5.17 Human figure as composed of letters and inscriptions (Malik Aksel, *Türklerde Dinî Resimler*, p. 98)



PLATE 5.18 Human figure as composed of letters and inscriptions (Malik Aksel, *Türklerde Dinî Resimler*, p. 114)

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Shīrīn Maghribī's (d. 810/1408) Visual Sufism: Diagrams, Intellectual Networks, and the Transmission of Spiritual Knowledge in 14th Century Tabriz and beyond

Giovanni Maria Martini

Introduction¹

When I decided to embark on the study of this subject, which I initially described with the neologism “Visual Sufism,” I was counseled by an experienced colleague and friend, who advised me to begin my research by focusing on a single, meaningful case study; this was carried out with careful consideration of the scope and complexity of the issue, enhanced by the fact that it is a little-explored field.² It was keeping this advice in mind that during the scrutiny of a vast manuscript literature, I isolated the figure of Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī (d. 810/1408), an author who had so far been known and studied mostly for his Sufi poetry. Maghribī seemed to be an excellent subject of investigation for multiple reasons. A principal consideration is the fact that in addition to his Songbook, Maghribī also authored a small number of prose works, in all of which he systematically employed diagrams, and that none of these works had been the subject of previous studies. The validity of focusing on Shīrīn Maghribī to address the theme of Visual Sufism received confirmation in the further discoveries I made during the continuation of said research. Among the main findings is the realization that Maghribī's prose works received considerable attention

1 The findings presented in this chapter are part of the output of a larger research project on the Tabrizi Sufi poet and scholar Shīrīn Maghribī, which at different stages received generous support from two German institutions. These are the Alexander von Humboldt Kolleg for Islamic Intellectual History at the University of Bonn, directed by Prof. Judith Pfeiffer, and later on the Gerda Henkel Foundation, which supported the continuation of this line of research as part of a two-year individual research grant named “Shīrīn Maghribī: A Key Agent in the Transmission of Mystical Knowledge in 14th to 17th Century Sufi Networks” (research grant no. AZ 40/F/18).

2 See *Introduction*.

from his contemporaries, as well as later generations of Sufis, attention in which the presence of diagrams within the texts had played an important role. Secondly, the fact that the combined study of Maghribī's prose works together with a number of previously unknown documents clearly demonstrated that his systematic practice of employing diagrams was not the product of an individual choice of the author, but rather the result of the cultural environment in which he was operating. In the following pages, I will address the question of the genesis and consequences, or causes and effects, of Maghribī's extensive employment of visual elements in his writings. The focus of this essay will not be the analysis of the numerous diagrams this author included in the treatises he authored (a question that I have partially addressed elsewhere and which I am planning to resume in future studies),³ but an attempt at situating and contextualizing the phenomenon of Maghribī's extensive employment of visual elements in his writings from the perspective of Islamic intellectual history.

During my research on Shīrīn Maghribī, initially dictated, as mentioned, by his noteworthy employment of diagrams, I had the chance to make further intriguing discoveries about this relatively little-known intellectual. In particular, I could ascertain the significant role Maghribī played within the School of Ibn al-'Arabī, especially in the transmission of Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) chains of spiritual descent and in teaching, commenting on and disseminating Ibn al-'Arabī's texts and ideas.⁴ An initial assessment of these questions has been presented elsewhere and will not be directly addressed here.⁵ Nevertheless, since Maghribī's involvement in the School of Ibn al-'Arabī was an aspect deeply interrelated with his extensive employment of visual elements in his own works (as I hope it will become clear from the following pages), it is convenient to mention this important aspect of his intellectual activity within the premise of the present study.

3 See Giovanni Maria Martini, "al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya by Shīrīn Maghribī (d. 810/1408): A Recently-Discovered Cosmological Treatise in Persian of the School of Ibn al-'Arabī," in *Oriens* 49 (2021): 35–94.

4 I am aware that the expression "School of Ibn al-'Arabī" (or "Akbarian School") is to a certain extent vague and imprecise, and therefore questionable. My understanding and usage of it is in agreement with the general overview of this term made by William C. Chittick in "The school of Ibn 'Arabī," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London-New York: Routledge, 1996), 914–915.

5 See Giovanni Maria Martini, "Muḥammad Šīrīn Mağribī (d. 810/1408) as a Key Agent in the Transmission of Akbarī *Silsilas*," in *Arabica* 68 (2021): 121–170 and Martini, "al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya by Shīrīn Maghribī." Cf. also Giovanni Maria Martini, "Note sul Sufismo Visivo: Rappresentazioni grafiche a supporto della realizzazione spirituale nel Taṣawwuf," in *El Azuŕe Rojo* 9 (2021): 69–94.

1 Shīrīn Maghribī's Prose Works and Their Diagrams

Internal references included in the texts themselves, combined with a list of Shīrīn Maghribī's works provided by Ibn Karbalā'ī in the *Rawḍāt al-jinān va jannāt al-janān*,⁶ as well as information derived from other sources, make it possible to establish with certainty the authorship of three writings as belonging to the Tabrizi Sufi scholar and poet. These three texts are all written in Persian. The most influential and renowned, because it was the most copied, read and commented on, is entitled *Jām-i jahān-namā*,⁷ that is, the "World-Showing Cup." This is also the only one of Maghribī's prose works to have been edited.⁸ The *Jām-i jahān-namā* is a brief but very dense treatise written in clear and plain prose on the essential metaphysical question of the self-disclosure of the divine essence, its successive determinations, the multiple degrees of being, and the relationship between the unicity of the principle and the multiplicity of its manifestations. In common with all of Maghribī's literary production, this text reflects the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabī and of the School named after him. In particular, the *Jām-i jahān-namā* relates to Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī's (d. ca. 699/1300) famous work *Mashāriq al-darārī*.⁹ So far, I have traced about one hundred manuscript copies of this treatise, as well as numerous commentaries (some of which were widely copied and read in their turn), in addition to quotes and explicit references to it contained in later independent Sufi works, testifying to the wide and lasting reception of this text. Although a detailed history of the reception of the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, which I intend to undertake elsewhere, goes beyond the scope of this study, the reader will observe that one of the main arguments developed in the final part of this paper is based on preliminary observations concerning the dissemination of this text in the Indian area. The *Jām-i jahān-namā* contains two diagrams.¹⁰

6 Ḥāfiẓ Ḥusayn Karbalā'ī (known as Ibn Karbalā'ī), *Rawḍāt al-jinān va jannāt al-janān*, ed. Ja'far Sulṭān al-Qurrā'ī, 2 vols., (Tabriz: Intishārāt-i Sutūda, 1383 h.sh./2004), 1:66.

7 The last word of the title can be vocalized either "namā" or "numā."

8 Abū Ṭālib Mīr-'Ābidīnī, *Dīvān-i Shams-i Maghribī: Ghazaliyyāt, tarjī'āt, rubā'īyyāt, fah-laviyyāt, Risāla-yi Jām-i jahān-namā*, 3rd edition (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1393 sh./2014; 1st edition, Tehran: Kitāb-furūshī Zawwār, 1358 sh./1979). This edition is unfortunately inadequate, containing numerous mistakes that in some passages affect the real understanding of the text. The publication of a critical edition of Shīrīn Maghribī's three Persian prose works of certain attribution is planned by the present author.

9 Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī. Sharḥ Tā'yya-yi Ibn-i Fāriḍ*, ed. S.J. Āstiyānī (Mashhad: Cāp-Khāna-yi Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī, 1398/1978).

10 The first diagram will be discussed briefly in the final part of this chapter (Plate 6.2). A late copy of the second diagram included and discussed by Shīrīn Maghribī in the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, drawn on two full pages, was chosen as the cover image of this volume.

The second most diffused of Maghribī's works, according to the number of manuscripts I traced, which are about twenty, is entitled *al-Durr al-farīd fī ma'rifat marātīb al-tawhīd* ("The Unique Pearl about the Knowledge of the Degrees of God's Oneness"). The work addresses the concept of God's oneness (*tawhīd*) from three different perspectives, the highest of which explains this notion in relationship with the doctrine of the Unicity of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Despite the fact that the presence of extant manuscripts of this work was known to previous scholarship on Maghribī, the text remained unedited and unstudied. Maghribī endowed this writing with three diagrams.

A third work by Maghribī is entitled *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya fī ma'rifat bad' ijād nash'at al-'ālam ilā al-šūra al-insāniyya*, which could be translated as "Sasan's Delight in the Knowledge of the Beginning of the Formation of the World Culminating in the Human Form." Earlier scholarship held that this work did not reach us; however, during my research I identified two manuscript copies of this treatise. This is a cosmological text intimately interrelated with some of Ibn al-'Arabī's chief cosmological texts, namely Chapter 371 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and the treatise entitled *'Uqlat al-mustawfīz*, of which Maghribī's work can be described as being simultaneously a Persian translation, an abridgment and a commentary.¹¹ This is also Maghribī's work containing the largest number of diagrams, eleven, to which a twelfth that is mentioned within the text but has not reached us in the manuscripts should probably be added.¹²

There is a fourth text worthy of being mentioned here, although on the basis of our current knowledge it cannot be considered with certainty to be a work of Maghribī. This is a short esoteric commentary of the Fātiḥa (the opening chapter of the Qur'an) in Arabic, written in the spirit of the School of Ibn al-'Arabī, which makes use of some diagrams. Entitled *Mir'āt al-'arīfīn fī multamas Zayn al-'Ābidīn* ("The Mirror for the Gnostics Solicited by Zayn al-'Ābidīn"), this text had success and large diffusion throughout the whole Islamic world, and displays a complex manuscript tradition in which it is variously attributed to either Ibn al-'Arabī, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) or Shīrīn Maghribī, although in all probability none of these three scholars was the actual author of the text.¹³ Even though probably wrong, the attribution of this treatise to

11 On this work by Maghribī and its links with Ibn al-'Arabī's cosmological texts, see Martini, "*al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya* by Shīrīn Maghribī."

12 Several of the diagrams contained in *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya* are reproduced in the article cited above, which also contains an analysis of the relationship existing between some diagrams drawn by Maghribī in *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya* and those drawn by Ibn al-'Arabī in Chapter 371 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *'Uqlat al-mustawfīz*.

13 Ibn al-'Arabī's authorship of the text was already rejected on the basis of sound arguments

Maghribī, which is stated in a great number of manuscript copies of it, is noteworthy for at least two reasons. The first is to stress the inclusion of the Tabrizi scholar within the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī, to the point of contending with two towering figures such as these the authorship of a text perceived by later generations as a short condensate of Akbarian teachings.¹⁴ The second is the suggestion that the attribution of the *Mirʾāt al-ʿarīfīn* to Maghribī was favored by the presence in it of numerous diagrams, which was associated in the cultural milieu in which this text was copied with the recognition of Shīrīn Maghribī's predilection and systematic utilization of visual elements in all of his works. If this suggestion, indirectly supported by the evidence that the *Mirʾāt al-ʿarīfīn* is often found copied in the codices together with Maghribī's authentic works,¹⁵ is correct, the traditional attribution of this writing to the Tabrizi Sufi master would be but a collateral effect and a proof of the recognition of the use of diagrams as Maghribī's most distinctive mark by the intellectual community.

2 Socio-Historical Reasons for Shīrīn Maghribī's Employment of Diagrams

2.1 *Inheritor of a Visual Sufi Tradition and Member of a Visual Sufi Intellectual Network*

A main indication, suggesting that Maghribī's large employment of diagrams was the result of the intellectual context and social environment in which he was operating, is the realization that he was a spiritual and intellectual heir of some of the most prominent Sufi scholars who employed diagrams in their writing, and that he was immersed in a cultural environment that was both

by Osman Yahya in his classical study *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn ʿArabī* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1964), 388–389, work register n° 475. The same judgment is restated in the ongoing archive project of Ibn al-ʿArabī's works undertaken by the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī Society (MIAS): http://archive.ibnarisociety.org/archive_reports/works_pdf_alpha/475.pdf#page=1&pagemode=none&toolbar=1&navpanes=0 (accessed on #14/12/2021#). Şadr al-Dīn Qūnawī's paternity of the same work is put into doubt by two major experts of Ibn al-ʿArabī's foremost disciple. See William Chittick, "Şadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Muḥammad b. Yūnus al-Ḳūnawī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* 8 (1995): 753–755, 754, and Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man. Şadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 186, work n° 28 (cf. also footnote 2 at p. 28).

14 The adjective "Akbarian," or "Akbarī," derived from the honorific "al-Shaykh al-Akbar," that is, the "Greatest [Sufi] Master," Ibn al-ʿArabī is known by.

15 This happens e.g. in MS Oslo, Schøyen Collection 5350; MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Lala İsmail 191; MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Pertev Paşa 606; MS Bursa, Bursa Bölge, Hüseyin Çelebi 449 and MS Manisa, İl Halk Kütüphanesi 2936.

well-aware and receptive to this new trend. As mentioned, Maghribī's profound knowledge of Ibn al-'Arabī's oeuvre, as well as his special interest in some of the works in which the Shaykh al-Akbar utilized diagrams, emerges clearly from the examination of his writings. Textual evidence is strong and indisputable proof, which we can therefore take as a solid basis for building the argument. Starting from this point, and also taking into account a different set of information, we can get a broader picture. This occurs by looking at Maghribī's chains of spiritual descents and, more widely, at the intellectual networks in which he participated. In doing so, it becomes clear that Maghribī was interconnected with many actors belonging to this new wave of Sufi men who felt the need and saw the opportunity for conceiving and utilizing visual elements within their writings. Maghribī's chains of spiritual descent recorded by Ibn Karbalā'ī, which I partially transposed in Figure 6.1, together with pieces of information derived from other sources which will be discussed below, establishes a connection between the Tabrizi author and two Sufi scholars of the first generation addressed in this volume.¹⁶ These are Ibn al-'Arabī and Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh, who together with al-Būnī inaugurated, so to speak, the new season of the employment of diagrams in Sufi literature on the eve on the Mongol Invasion. This spiritual pedigree also includes the name of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, to whom a couple of writings including diagrams are also traditionally attributed, although they are most probably both spurious.¹⁷ A careful examination of Ibn Karbalā'ī's list of Maghribī's chains of spiritual descent also returns other significant information. The most important is that the *silsila* connecting Maghribī back to Ibn al-'Arabī corresponds to the most significant Ibn al-'Arabī's chain of spiritual descent, the *Silsila Ḥātim-*

16 The information included in Figure 6.1 refers to only two out of the six *silsilas* to whom Shīrīn Maghribī was attached according to Ibn Karbalā'ī (*Rawḍāt al-jinān*, 1:67–69.). These are the two *silsilas* which are relevant to the argument developed in the present study. A detailed discussion of Maghribī's "mystical pedigree," according to Ibn Karbalā'ī, is in Leonard Lewisohn, "A Critical Edition of the Divan of Maghrebi (With an Introduction Into His Life, Literary School, and Mystical Poetry)," 2 vols., (Ph.D. Diss., School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 1988), 1:68–83.

17 In addition to the previously mentioned *Mir'āt al-'arīfīn*, another work often ascribed to Qūnawī is *al-Lum'a al-nūrāniyya fī ḥall mushkilāt al-Shajara al-Nu'māniyya*, which is "a commentary on a diagram that Ibn al-'Arabī is said to have drawn up to illustrate the general direction of future events in Egypt." (Chittick, "Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāk b. Muḥammad b. Yūnus al-Kūnawī," 754). The attribution of *al-Lum'a al-nūrāniyya* to Qūnawī is questioned by William Chittick (*ibid.*), Michel Chodkiewicz (*An Ocean Without Shore. Ibn 'Arabī, The Book, and the Law*, transl. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 137n55), and Richard Todd (*The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 28n2, 174n31, 184).

iyya, which Maghribī transmitted in his turn to some of his acquaintances, and which has been recorded, including Maghribī's name, in numerous later sources. I addressed the question of Maghribī's role within this important *silsila* in a separate study,¹⁸ but it is mentioned here because through the analysis of this chain of spiritual descent it was possible to establish a direct relationship between Maghribī and another scholar, who is in his turn relevant for the question of Visual Sufism. Said scholar is 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a (d. 819/1416–1417), to whom Shīrīn Maghribī taught some of Ibn al-'Arabī's works, and to whom he transmitted a famous *ḥadīth musalsal* he had received via the above-mentioned Ibn al-'Arabī's *silsila*.¹⁹ Scion of one of the most important scholarly families of Mamluk Cairo and Jerusalem, 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a was an affirmed theologian and Shafī'ī jurist, student of Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1403), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), and teacher of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalanī (d. 852/1448).²⁰ His interests and activities, however, were not restricted to jurisprudence and theology: numerous pieces of information also indicate committed engagement in Sufism.²¹ With regard to the phenomenon of Visual Sufism, the relevant pieces of information are three. First of all, as mentioned, is 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a's personal acquaintance with Maghribī, with whom he studied some of Ibn al-'Arabī's books and from whom received the transmission of a particular *ḥadīth* (denominated Ḥadīth al-Mushābaka) through a *silsila* going back to Ibn al-'Arabī. Secondly, 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a was involved in the transmission of the works of al-Būnī (who, as previously mentioned, was an author inclined to use diagrams) to 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454), another prominent scholar in the intellectual

18 See Martini, "Muḥammad Shīrīn Maḡribī (d. 810/1408) as a Key Agent in the Transmission of Akbarī *Silsilas*."

19 For full reference and detailed discussion of the sources recording Maghribī's connection with 'Izz al-Dīn b. Jamā'a see Martini, "Muḥammad Shīrīn Maḡribī (d. 810/1408) as a Key Agent in the Transmission of Akbarī *Silsilas*," 142–146 and *passim*.

20 On the Ibn Jamā'a Family see Kamal Salibi, "The Banū Jamā'a: A Dynasty of Shāfi'ite Jurists in the Mamluk Period," *Studia Islamica* 9 (1958): 97–109; Kamal Salibi, "Ibn Jamā'a," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, 3 (1986): 748–749; Elizabeth Sirriyeh, "Whatever Happened to the Banū Jamā'a? The Tail of a Scholarly Family in Ottoman Syria," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28 (2001): 55–65.

21 Entries on 'Izz al-Dīn b. Jamā'a are included in the majority of the bio-bibliographical dictionaries of the period. A detailed entry, listing many works of the scholar, is in Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āt fi ṭabaqāt al-lughawīyyīn wa-l-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols., (Aleppo: Maṭba'a 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Shurakāh, 1384/1964), 1:63–66. For further information on 'Izz al-Dīn b. Jamā'a, see Martini, "Muḥammad Shīrīn Maḡribī (d. 810/1408) as a Key Agent in the Transmission of Akbarī *Silsilas*," 142–146 and *passim*.

landscape of the period, who is also known for having employed diagrams in some of his works.²² This is not all. ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā’a’s belonging to a scholarly Sufi network whose actors were particularly known for their interest in visual elements (which included Maghribī, Ibn al-‘Arabī via the latter, al-Būnī through knowledge of his works, and al-Biṣṭāmī) seems to have influenced his own personal authorial choices. We find a clue to this in the study conducted by Mohammad Gharaibeh on the commentary tradition of the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), a major work on the sciences of *ḥadīth*.²³ Among the tens of commentaries of the *Muqaddima* collected and examined by Gharaibeh, it emerges that only one includes some visual elements, namely diagrams, and that this is precisely the commentary authored by ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā’a.²⁴

These pieces of information show that Maghribī and various other Sufi authors who used visual elements in their works were related to each other either through direct interpersonal knowledge, participation in common chains of spiritual descent, or through the study and transmission of texts. This seems to be equally true for the earlier generation of scholars addressed in this volume, if it is true that al-Būnī and Ibn al-‘Arabī had at least a master in common, that is, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī,²⁵ and that Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh met al-Qūnawī, and perhaps the very Ibn al-‘Arabī in Damascus. Figure 6.1 shows Shīrīn Maghribī’s visual Sufi network reconstructed on the basis of the sources discussed in this chapter.

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- 22 ‘Izz al-Dīn b. Jamā’a taught al-Biṣṭāmī al-Bunī’s treatise entitled *al-Lum’a al-nūrāniyya*. On the relationship between these two scholars, see Noah Gardiner, “Forbidden Knowledge? Notes on the Production, Transmission, and Reception of the Major Works of Aḥmad al-Būnī,” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 12 (2012): 81–143, 115–117; Jean-Charles Coulon, “La magie islamique et le «corpus bunianum» au Moyen Âge,” 2 vols. (Ph.D. Diss., Université de Paris IV—Sorbonne, Paris 2013), 1:420, 537–538. On the same subject, cf. also Jean-Charles Coulon, “Building al-Būnī’s Legend. The Figure of al-Būnī through ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī’s *Shams al-āfāq*,” *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5 (2016): 1–26, 12n45, and Noah Gardiner, “Esotericist Reading Communities and the Early Circulation of the Sufi Occultist Aḥmad al-Būnī’s Works,” *Arabica* 64, no. 3–4 (2017): 405–441, 435.
- 23 Mohammad Gharaibeh, “The Sociology of Commentarial Literature. An analysis of the commentary tradition of the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge,” (Habilitation Thesis, University of Bonn, 2019).
- 24 ‘Izz al-Dīn b. Jamā’a, *Sharḥ Kitāb Ibn Ṣalāḥ*, ms Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Ahmed Kitablığı 669, where the diagram at issue is at fol. 127^b. The diagram is found within a section discussing the question of the five interior (i.e. the intellectual faculties) and the five exterior senses. Mohammad Gharaibeh is planning to reproduce and discuss this diagram in an article on this unpublished commentary by ‘Izz al-Dīn b. Jamā’a (written communication dated October 1st 2019).
- 25 Noah Gardiner, “Forbidden Knowledge?,” 87.

2.2 *The Inclination of Maghribī's Inner Circle for Diagrams*

Directly connected to the impact exerted on Maghribī's extensive implementation of diagrams by his belonging to a specific Sufi network is the influence exerted on him by his disciples in the same direction. That Maghribī's students were, in turn, aware of the novelty represented by visual elements in Sufi literature, and that they explicitly requested their sheikh to incorporate diagrams in his works, is recorded by Maghribī within the introductions to two of his prose works, which also contain other remarkable information on the issue of Visual Sufism. What follows is the introduction to the *Jām-i jahān-namā*:

A group of friends that were in search of the science of the divine oneness (*'ilm-i tawhīd*), and wishing to undertake the step of spiritual realization (*taḥqīq*) and of disengagement from phenomena (*tajrīd*), and could not obtain certitude from the words of the leaders of this group (*a'emma-yi īn tā'ifa*), and had limited access to their books and little understanding of their metaphors (*va az kutub-i īshān va fahm-i 'ibārāt-i ān qāṣir būdand*), begged this poor man: "Compose an epistle that gathers the entirety of the science of divine oneness (*'ilm-i tawhīd*) and the degrees of existence (*marātib-i vujūdi*); and for each degree (*barā-yi har martaba*) arrange a circle (*dā'ira*); and show the form of each degree (*ṣūrat-i har martaba*) as a circle (*dā'ira*); and by keys made of forms of sensible objects (*bi-mafātiḥ-i ṣuvar-i maḥsūsāt*, i.e. the circular diagrams), disclose the meanings and the intelligible objects." I answered their entreaty and, after having conciliated the divine favor, I occupied myself with composing it, and I named the epistle "The World-Showing Cup."²⁶

26 The following is the transcription of the translated passage according to the reading established by the author in the currently unpublished critical edition of the treatise (in 'Abidīnī's edition, op. cit., the corresponding passage is on p. 248.):

طایفه دوستان که طالب علم توحید بودند و محبّ قدم تحقیق و تجرید، و از الفاظ ائمّه این طایفه ایشانرا بُرد الیقین حاصل نمی شد، و از کتب ایشان و فهم عبارت آن قاصر بودند، ازین فقیر التماس کردند که رساله ای که جامع کلیات علم توحید و مراتب وجودی باشد بساز، و از برای هر مرتبه ای دایره ای بپرداز و صورت هر مرتبه ای را بدایره ای بنمای، و بمفاتیح صور محسوسات در معانی و معقولات بگشای. التماس ایشانرا اجابت کردم، و بعد از استخاره بانشای آن مشغول شدم، و رساله را نام جام جهان نمای کردم.

As anticipated, from this passage we learn that the text was written as the result of an explicit request by a group of “friends” (*dūstān*), and that the disciples deliberately asked their master to insert diagrams (called here “circles,” *dā’ira*, pl. *davā’ir*) into the text. Maghribī takes up the challenge and the diagrams become the focus of his writing. That the disciples’ request mentioned by Maghribī was real and not a mere rhetorical artifice devised by the author is indirectly confirmed by traces of the intellectual activity of some of Maghribī’s students, which will be addressed later on in this study.

This information, together with the awareness of the intellectual environment in which Maghribī and his students were immersed, seem to suggest that the use of diagrams, by the time Maghribī had begun writing the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, was becoming a sort of genre, at least within specific Sufi circles. His disciples, in fact, formulate a precise request to their master. They do not ask him for a generic text, but want it to contain diagrams, which is only possible as long as the claimants had already seen, read, but especially appreciated, other texts making use of this “special device.” The information contained in the introduction to the *Jām-i jahān-namā* is supplemented by that embedded in the introduction to his works entitled *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya fī ma’rifat bad’ ijād nash’at al-‘ālam ilā al-ṣūra al-insāniyya*. In it we read that upon coming back to Tabriz after a long period of time, Maghribī found his hometown in a deplorable state of decadence, to the point that he resolved to leave it again.²⁷ He was persuaded to stay only by the heartsick entreaties of his relatives (*ahālī*), students (*ṭullāb*), and companions (*aṣḥāb*). In any case, they managed to keep the Sufi master in town only temporarily. Maghribī in fact adds that he had to move anyway to spend the winter in Gilan.²⁸ It was precisely because of his distance from Tabriz and from his friends (*dūstān*) that Maghribī resolved to establish an epistolary correspondence with them (*bi-irsāl-i murāsālāt va iblāgh-i mukātabāt*), so that despite their physical separation (*mufāraqat-i jis-mānī*), their spirits (*arvāḥ*) could be joined.²⁹ Therefore, Maghribī continues, as a result of the idea of writing epistles to his friends in Tabriz while he was away:

27 For a tentative interpretation and historical contextualization of these vague references, see Martini, “*al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya* by Shīrīn Maghribī,” 39–42.

28 See *ibidem*.

29 Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī, *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya fī ma’rifat bad’ ijād nash’at al-‘ālam ilā al-ṣūra al-insāniyya*. The following is the transcription of the relative passage according to the reading established by the author in the currently unpublished critical edition of the treatise based on MS Oslo, Schøyen Collection 5350 and MS Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi Majlis 10103:

After having asked for authorization from the Lord, and having prayed to the True God for proper guidance, an epistle was compiled that it might be a compendium of the science of "Indeed in the science there is a hidden aspect,"³⁰ and contain a well-protected secret (*sirr-i maṣūn*) and was then sent; [it is an epistle] concerning the mode of manifestation and arrangement of worlds (*kayfiyyat-i zuhūr va tartīb-i 'avālim*) and of the coming into view of the [peculiar] shapes of the landmarks by which one guides himself on the way (*va burūz-i ashkāl-i ma'ālim*), starting from the origin of the world up to Adam's existentionation (*min bad' al-ālam ilā ijād Ādam*), [clothing these doctrines] in a dress [made] of circles and shapes (*dar kisvat-i davā'ir va ashkāl*), and archetypal and imaginary forms (*va dar ṣūrat-i mithāl va khayāl*), in order to help their

أما بعد چنین گوید راقم این مرقوم [...] الشیخ [...] أبو عبد الله محمد بن عرّ الدین عادل بن یوسف المغربي المشتهر بشیرین [...] که چون بعد از مدّت مدید و عهد بعید بتبریز دلاویز عود افتاد، آن معموره را خراب یافت و آن دریا را سراب دید، با دل گفت بیت: آن مصر مملکت که تو دیدی خراب شد و آن نیل مکرمت که شنیدی سراب شد؛ آیه ﴿كَسْرَابٍ يَقِيعَةٌ يَحْسِبُهُ الظَّمَانُ مَاءً﴾ (Q 24:39) بر خواند و راکب عزم را بر مرکب سفر نشانده، اهالی و طلاب و موالی و اصحاب که سر ساز داشتند، ما را از سفر باز داشتند و بدل نوازی پیش آمدند تا مانع سفر این فقیر آمدند، لیکن چون معهود بود که زمستان بگلستان گیلان رجوع افتد— که زمستان گیلان گلستانست— و با دوستان سروآسا در بوستان در تبریز چون اقامت پیش آمد این معنی در خاطر این درویش آمد که در ایام مفارقت جسمانی روابط مواصلت روحانی از آن دوستان جانی منقطع نگرداند و بارسال مراسلات و ابلاغ مکاتبات شرایط محبت را محکم و رابط مودّت را مربوط دارد.

- 30 This is the beginning of a hadith stating "Indeed in the science there is a hidden aspect that is only known by those who know thorough God, when they talk about that, that is not contradicted except by those who are distracted in regard to God." (*inna min al-'ilm ka-hay'at al-maknūn, lā ya'rifu-hu illā al-'ulamā' bi-Llāh, fa-idhā naṭaqū bi-hi lam yunkir-hu illā ahl al-ghirra bi-Llāh*). Like for other statements ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad in Sufi literature, there is a debate about the genuineness of this hadith. It is not present in the most authoritative collections and is considered "weak" (*da'if*) or even "fabricated" (*mawḍū'*) by some scholars. It is, however, widely cited by important classical traditional Sufi-related authorities. Among the prominent authors who have used it are, in chronological order, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/998) in the *Qūt al-qulūb*, al-Sulāmī (d. 412/1021) in *al-Arbā'in fī al-taṣawwuf*, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) in the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, and Ibn al-'Arabī in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*. This hadith is also discussed by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) in *al-La'ālī al-maṣnū'a fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍū'a*. Its importance for Maghrībī is underlined by the fact that he also recorded it in another of his works, the aforementioned *al-Durr al-farīd fī ma'rīfat marātib al-tawḥīd*.

visualization and facilitate their contemplation (*tashīl^{an} li-taṣawwuri-hā wa-taysīr^{an} li-tadabburi-hā*).³¹

From these lines emerge some interesting points supporting and partially complementing the ideas present within the introduction to the *Jām-i jahān-namā*. First of all, this text confirms the presence of numerous Maghribī disciples in Tabriz, but especially the deliberation, by the Sufi scholar, of inserting diagrams within the text as tools for helping their understanding of abstract concepts. If possible, in this work Maghribī's awareness of the central role played by diagrams becomes even more explicit, as they are specifically mentioned within the introduction, being described as one of the key features of the text. Moreover, an embryonic theory of visualization is detectable in it, suggested by the employment of a specific terminology, using *davā'ir* and *ashkāl* to indicate the diagrams, the verbs *taṣawwara* and *tadabbara* to describe the interaction among the reader-viewer and the figures, and references to technical concepts such as *mithāl* and *khayāl*, a whole set of terms and concepts most probably inherited and retuned from previous masters, among which is Ibn al-'Arabī.³²

2.3 *Diagrams as Didactical Tools*

In the introduction to the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, Maghribī associates his disciples' specific request to compose a text containing diagrams to their difficulty in understanding earlier works composed on the subject. Maghribī explicitly expresses his decision to insert diagrams within the text as tools in order to help his disciples understand abstract concepts also within the introduction to *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya*. In this second text, the deliberate didactic aim of both writing the text and drawing the images is further indicated by Maghribī when he explains that he wrote and forwarded this sort of textbook of Akbarian

31 Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī, *al-Nuzha al-Sāsāniyya*. The following is the transcription of the relative passage according to the reading established by the author:

پس بنابرین معنی رسالدهای که جامع علم "ان من العلم کهیئة المکنون" و شامل سرّ مصون باشد، بعد از تقدیم استجازة ربّانی و استخارة حقّانی، انشا کرده [و] فرستاده شد، مشتمل بر کیفیت ظهور و ترتیب عوالم و بروز و اشکال معالم من بدء العالم إلى ایجاد آدم در کسوت دواير و اشکال و در صورت مثال و خیال تسهیلًا لتصورها و تیسیرًا لتدبرها.

32 On the use of a similar technical terminology in connection to diagrams by other Sufi authors cf. the contributions by Gardiner (Chapter 1), Karjoo-Ravary (Chapter 2), Tyser (Chapter 3), and Kropf (Chapter 7) in this volume. Cf also the excerpt from a text by Maghribī's disciple al-Bazzāzī translated below in this chapter.

cosmology to his friends in order to obviate to his physical absence from Tabriz. This range of statements, which could seem to be just rhetorical expedients, rather, on the contrary, hints at what is adduced by various authors of visual Sufi texts as the main reason for the implementation of the diagrams. This is the idea, already expressed by earlier authors such as Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Būnī, that the diagrams serve as didactic tools to help the novice understand difficult abstract metaphysical concepts.³³ Recapitulating, it is possible to trace at least three factors, strictly interconnected, to explain Shīrīn Maghribī's extensive employment of visual elements in his prose works. These were, firstly, his being the spiritual and intellectual heir of a specific Sufi milieu in which the implementation of visual elements received great impetus. The second factor was the pressure exercised by his students who, belonging to that very same intellectual tradition, were most probably aware of the literature produced in that intellectual environment, and of the visual novelty characterizing many of its products. The final factor was Maghribī's teaching-oriented style and his understanding (this, too, inherited from his intellectual landmarks) of diagrams as didactic tools to help the novices grasp concepts otherwise difficult to assimilate. It was at the intersection of these historical and social tendencies that Shīrīn Maghribī's inclination for a visual mode of Sufism originated.

3 Maghribī's (Visual) Legacy on His Direct Disciples

If, it has been suggested, the implementation of diagrams by Shīrīn Maghribī was not the result of an individualistic choice, but rather a product of the specific intellectual context in which the scholar developed and operated, effects of this new trend should be traceable within the next historical phase as well. This is exactly what can be observed within the intellectual production of some of Maghribī's disciples. This scriptural evidence represents, at the same time, a verification of Maghribī's disciples' inclination for visual elements which had been put forward in the previous section on the basis of the references

33 Cf. especially chapters 1, 2, 3 and 7 in this volume. The same idea was shared by other Sufi authors committed to the adoption of visual elements in their writings, including Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. after 787/1385). See Ḥaydar Āmulī, *al-Muqaddimāt min Kitāb Naṣṣ al-Nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam/Le text des textes (Nass al-nosus). Commentaire des «Fosūs al-hikam» d'Ibn ʿArabī. Les prolégomènes*, ed. Henry Corbin and Osman Yahia (Tehran-Paris: Département d'iranologie de l'Institut Franco-Iranien de recherche-Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1353 sh./1975), 31, § 81.

contained in the introduction to the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, in which the Tabrizi scholar states that his students explicitly requested that he insert diagrams within the text.

The question of Maghribī's influence on his students risked remaining unanswered, since only a few of these individuals were known by name, and only a prose work by one of them was known to be extant.³⁴ The best known among Maghribī's disciples is certainly 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khalwatī (d. 859/1454), also known by his *nom de plume* "Mashriqī," clearly related to that of his notable master. According to Ibn Karbalā'ī, in addition to a *divan*, which is extant, Mashriqī also wrote some Sufi prose works.³⁵ Most probably, these writings would reveal Maghribī's strong influence, as Mashriqī's song-book actually does,³⁶ and could potentially include diagrams. However, this question remains unanswered, at least for the time being, as none of these texts appear to have survived.

Another disciple mentioned in the sources is 'Abd al-Raḥīm Bazzāzī (d. unknown). These same sources do not record any work by Bazzāzī, but as often happens for the late medieval and early modern periods, for which only a minority of texts are published and many others are even still unknown, it is from the research in manuscript collections that additional information can emerge. While I was intent on collecting manuscript copies of Maghribī's works, I was able to identify a couple of short previously unknown texts by two of his disciples. These texts help to shed light on the question of the reception of Maghribī's works, teachings, and utilization of diagrams within his circle in Tabriz. One of these two short writings is by Bazzāzī, and is, so far, the only known work authored by him. For the present aim, the title of Bazzāzī's work is

34 This is Aḥmad b. Mūsā Rashtī Ustādī's (d. after 850/1446) commentary (*sharḥ*) on Maghribī's *Jām-i jahān-namā*. On this author see below.

35 Ibn Karbalā'ī ascribes to Khalwatī-Mashriqī the following works: (1) *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*; (2) *Hāshiya bar Sharḥ-i Iṣṭilāḥāt-i shaykh 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshī*; (3) [*Hāshiya bar*] *Sharḥ-i Nuṣūṣ-i Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī* (sic); (4) *Sharḥ bar Qaṣida-yi Mīmīyya-yi Khamriyya-yi Fārīḍiyya*; (5) *Risāla-yi sanati-yi sarmadiyya*; (6) *Risāla-yi Mir'āt al-'ibād fī ma'rīfat al-ma'ād*; (7) *Sharḥ bar Rubā'ī-i Ḥawrā'īyya*; (8) *Sharḥ bar ba'dī az abyāt-i mushkila-yi Gulshan-i rāz* (Ibn Karbalā'ī, *Rawḍāt*, 1:86, cf. Lewisohn, *Dissertation*, 1:35 and Idem, "The Life and Poetry of Mashreḳī Tabrizi," *Iranian Studies* 22, nos. 2–3 (1989): 99–127, 101–102). Any of Khalwatī's treatises seems to be extant. It should be noted that some of the titles listed by Ibn Karbalā'ī as Khalwatī's are identical to those authored by famous Akbarian scholars, suggesting that Ibn Karbalā'ī's list might contain some imprecisions and might not be fully reliable. E.g. title n° 1 corresponds to that of a treatise by Qūnawī (cf. Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine*, 185–186), while n° 5 resembles very much of that of a work by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī.

36 Cf. Lewisohn, "The Life and Poetry of Mashreḳī Tabrizi," 111 and *passim*.

already revealing. This is *Epistle of the Circles about the Corporeal and Spiritual Realms* (*Risālat al-Dawā'ir fī al-mulk wa-l-malakūt*). The circles are mentioned in the title and this short epistle in Arabic is centered on a circular diagram (see Plate 6.1), precisely as diagrams are embedded in all the prose works of his master. The introduction to this text is also of interest for the topic discussed in this pages. In it we read:

My friend in God Abū Muḥammad 'Aṭā' Allāh [...] entrusted me to figure a circular diagram (*amara-nī an arquma dā'ira*), hinting at the corporeal and spiritual realms, at the small and great intermediary dominions (*al-barzakhiyya al-ṣuḡhrā wa-l-kubrā*), and at the analogical correspondence (*al-munāsaba*) among these two, making it apparent for he who meditates and contemplates it (*wāḍiḥ^{an} 'inda man ta'ammala wa-tadabbara*), and examines and muses (*wa-tafahḥaṣa wa-tafakkara*).³⁷

Bazzāzī's epistle is a precious external piece of written evidence of the influence exercised by Maghribī's focus on a visual mode of Sufism among his disciples in Tabriz, not only because it includes a diagram. Its incipit shows at least two more meaningful features. As with Maghribī, as well as Ibn al-'Arabī, al-Būnī and others, Bazzāzī includes synthetic references to a technique of visual meditation. The awareness of the visual means and of its technical use, probably to take place in a ritual context, are precisely the elements that enable us to speak of a phenomenon of Visual Sufism. Finally, in Bazzāzī's epistle we see the very same pattern noticed in the *Jām-i-jahān-namā*: a Sufi, belonging to that same spiritual circle, explicitly asking a companion to write not a generic mystical work, but a specific diagram-focused text. Bazzāzī, in fact, informs us that he composed this epistle at the request of another companion, and especially that this companion did not ask him to write a generic text, but specifically a circular diagram. This is not all. Bazzāzī's friend, who commissioned him to write the epistle, is called Abū Muḥammad 'Aṭā' Allāh in the text. He would have remained nothing but a name if a short text by him was not copied and transmitted in a miscellaneous codex containing Maghribī's works.³⁸ From this document, we learn that Abū Muḥammad 'Aṭā' Allāh, whose full name is complemented here by the three adjectives "al-Ṣūfī al-Anṣārī al-Wahdānī," was also in his turn a direct disciple of Shīrīn Maghribī. The work is described in the

37 'Abd al-Raḥīm Bazzāzī, *Risālat al-Dawā'ir fī al-mulk wa-l-malakūt*, according to the reading established by the author in the currently unpublished critical edition of this short text. Cf. MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Lala Ismail 191, fol. 90^b.

38 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Lala Ismail 191, fols. 88^b–89^b.



PLATE 6.1 Diagram of the Circles about the Corporeal and Spiritual Realms. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Bazzāzī, *Risālat al-Dawā’ir fī al-mulk wa-l-malakūt* (ms Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Pertev Paşa 606, fol. 134^a)

first lines as “an epistle in rhyme on the comment of the Circle of the Shaikh al-Maghribī called ‘The Circle of Existence,’ that the master presented in his book named *Jām-i jahān-namā*.”³⁹ Abū Muḥammad, by declaring himself Maghribī's disciple, by writing a comment on a diagram contained in a text by his master, and by requesting to one of his companions the composition of an original work including a diagram, provides more independent proof of the reception of Maghribī's visual mode of Sufism by his Tabrizi circle.

Another one of Maghribī's direct acquaintances was Aḥmad b. Mūsā Rashtī Ustādī (d. after 850/1446). According to our present knowledge, Rashtī did not personally employ diagrams in his writings, but spent a long time in Tabriz reading the *Jām-i jahān-namā* with Shīrīn Maghribī, receiving an official authorization (*ijāzat-nāma*) from the master to teach and transmit the text. Rashtī returned twice to Tabriz after Maghribī's death (810/1408), once in the year 820 (1417) and a second time in 850 (1446).⁴⁰ On both occasions he met circles of Maghribī's disciples. The first time he was asked by his hosts to teach them the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, the second to put in written form a commentary to the same text, which he did. Rashtī's account, included within the introduction to his commentary to the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, is a precious indication of Maghribī's activity of teaching and transmission of his own text which includes diagrams, as well as of the lasting interest in Maghribī's writings in Sufi circles in Tabriz for a long time afterwards, about forty years after he had passed away.

The existence of another one of Maghribī's student-disciples is documented by an 851 (1447) copy of an *ijāza* Maghribī's lent to a certain Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā'īl.⁴¹ The document records a number of texts Kamāl al-Dīn read and studied under Shīrīn Maghribī's supervision, followed by a statement in which the

39 “Hādhihi risālat^{um} manzūmat^{um} fi sharḥ dā'irat al-shaykh al-Maghribī al-musammāt bi-dā'irat al-wujūd, allatī awrada-hā al-shaykh fi kitābi-hi al-musammā bi-*Jām-i jahān-namā*.” Ibid., fol. 88^b.

40 Aḥmad b. Mūsā Rashtī Ustādī, *Sharḥ-i Jām-i jahān-namā*, MS Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi Majlis 10064. The folios in this manuscript are not numbered. According to my counting, the beginning of Rashtī's commentary, the location of the information I am mentioning, is on fol. 248^b. The Majlis' manuscript is the original from which was produced the microfilm kept at the Central Library of the University of Tehran which was utilized in their studies by both Lewisohn (*Dissertation*, 1:197, footnote 2) and 'Ābidīnī (*Dīvān-i Shams-i Maghribī*, 243).

41 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Raḡıp Paşa 687, fols. 284^b–285^a. A transcription of it is in Maḥmūd al-Sayyid al-Daghīm, *Fihris al-makhtūāt al-'arabiyya wa-l-turkiyya wa-l-fārisiyya fi maktabat Rāghib Bāshā*, 10 vols. (Jaddah: Saqīfat al-Ṣafā al-'Ilmiyya, 1437/2016), 6:146. I would like to thank Cecile Bonmariage for having brought to my attention this document.

Sufi master declares that he initiated him to the Sufi path, ending with a recapitulation of the key requirements of the spiritual way. Considering the number of works recorded within the *ijāza*—24 in all—the teaching sessions must have lasted at least for some months. Despite the document not mentioning where the teaching took place, the fact that the 851 (1447) copy was transcribed in Tabriz suggests that the Azerbaijani capital (Maghribī's main residence) was also the location of the teaching and of the original issuing of the *ijāza*.⁴² Apart from these tangential remarks, what is interesting to observe for our present aim is the fact that among the books taught by Maghribī to Kamāl Dīn Ismā'īl there are three key Sufi treatises containing diagrams. These are Ibn al-'Arabī's *Kitāb al-jadāwīl wa-l-dawā'ir*⁴³ and *Uqlat al-mustawfiz*, plus Maghribī's own *Jām-i jahān-namā*.

The list of Maghribī's students whose activity shows traces of engagement with Sufi visual literature ends with a figure already mentioned in the previous section. This is 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a, to whom the Tabrizi scholar taught some of Ibn al-'Arabī's books and transmitted a particular *silsila* in Cairo; and who is the author of a commentary on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima* of which is unique in its genre precisely for including a diagram.

It results from this excursus that all Shīrīn Maghribī's students for whom information is available show engagement with visual elements to various degrees. Such concentration of interconnected individuals inclining toward the visual mode of Sufism, at the current status of the researches in the field, appears to be exceptional, as does Shīrīn Maghribī's consistency in utilizing visual devices in all his prose works. Because of these characteristics, the picture emerging from the examination of the intellectual activities of his students verifies the exceptionality of Shīrīn Maghribī's case for the investigation of the phenomenon of Visual Sufism. Since the interest of these people in diagrams and visual elements did not develop by chance but, rather, was in relation to Maghribī's teachings which, as we have seen, were generated in turn within a peculiar intellectual environment, these individuals can be regarded as the next generation of the network firstly addressed in the preceding section and represented in Figure 6.1, in which the names of Maghribī's students occupy the lower part.

42 MS Ragıp Paşa 687, fol. 284^a. Cf. al-Daghīm, *Fihris*, 1:144 and 157.

43 This is an alternative title of Ibn al-'Arabī's treatise, nowadays generally known as *Kitāb Inshā' al-dawā'ir*. Ibn al-'Arabī refers to this work as "Kitāb al-jadāwīl wa-l-dawā'ir" in *Kitāb Ayyām al-sha'n* (see Yahya, *Classification*, 176), *Kitāb al-Azal* (Ibid, 178), *Kitāb al-Qasam al-ilāhī bi-l-ism al-rabbānī* (Ibid, 420), and the *Kitāb al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhīyya* (Ibid, 476–477). Cf. also Yahya, *Classification*, 284, 311 (work n° 289) and 566.

4 An Insight into Shīrīn Maghribī's Long-Lasting (Visual) Legacy in India

The influence of the use of diagrams by Maghribī did not remain within the circle of his students. In this final section, I will briefly mention the main avenue thorough which Shīrīn Maghribī's (visual) legacy perpetuated thorough the centuries, occasionally influencing the intellectual development of either individual scholars or larger Sufi groups. This is closely related to the history of the reception of Maghribī's most famous text, the aforementioned *Jām-i jahān-namā*. Given the numerous texts, over several centuries, showing traces of an influence of this work, the history of the reception of the *Jām-i jahān-namā* deserves to be addressed in its own right. The few comments presented in these pages are only preliminary hints of such a study, which is currently underway. While the main objective of the following observations is to stress further the influence of Maghribī as a significant scholar of the School of Ibn al-'Arabī whose intellectual activity to date has remained mostly in the shadows, it also aims towards a different goal. This is to suggest the usefulness of studying the visual elements of a literary tradition for the purpose of tracing the trajectory of specific ideas over time and space, that is, as an instrument of investigation in the fields of Intellectual History and the History of Ideas. The *Jām-i Jahān-namā* knew incredible fame in the Indian Sub-continent. The short treatise had probably already reached India during Maghribī's lifetime, or immediately afterwards, for an Arabic translation and commentary of the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, entitled *Irā'at al-daqa'iq fī sharḥ Mir'āt al-ḥaqā'iq*, is traditionally ascribed to 'Alī Mahimi (Mahā'imī) (d. 835/1432), a major Indian Akbarian Sufi Scholar from Mumbai and younger contemporary of Maghribī, who died about twenty years after him.⁴⁴ After about a century of silence, around the

44 Mahimi played an important role in the diffusion of Ibn al-'Arabī's ideas in India. Among other works, he composed a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, a commentary on Qūn-awī's *al-Nuṣūṣ fī taḥqīq al-tawr al-makhṣūṣ*, as well as, apparently, an apologetic text in defence of the Shaykh al-Akbar. Despite the peculiarities and fame of this figure, who is revered as the protector of Mumbai police and whose festival attracts hundreds of thousands of people every year, I am not aware of any dedicated study to Mahimi. In consideration of the Akbari nature of the work, the use of Arabic, but above all the explicit ascription to Mahimi in various manuscripts, the attribution of the *Irā'at al-daqa'iq* to Mahimi seems highly probable. The definitive confirmation could come from a systematic examination of the manuscripts of the work. The work by Mahimi should not be confused with a gloss on al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* bearing the same title authored by a later Indian author, Şibghaṭat Allāh al-Barwajī (d. 1015/1606), on which cf. Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām: Qāmūs tarājīm li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-l-nisā' min al-'arab wa-l-muta'arribīn*

middle of the sixteenth century, we notice a new rise in interest for the *Jām-i jahān-namā* in the circles of the Shaṭṭāriyya brotherhood based in Gujarat. It is in the Shaṭṭārī circles that several commentaries of Maḡhribī's work were produced, amongst which the most widespread are those by Ibrāhīm Shaṭṭārī (d. ca. 991/1583)⁴⁵ and Wajīh al-Dīn 'Alawī (d. 998/1589).⁴⁶ The presence of these commentaries and their numerous manuscript copies indicates a serious interest for this writing by Maḡhribī. But what is more important from the present perspective, focusing on the visual aspects of this phenomenon, is that the diagrams contained in the *Jām-i jahān-namā* seem to have played a relevant role in shaping the cosmology of the Shaṭṭāriyya. Such a significant influence of the visual aspects of Maḡhribī's work on Shaṭṭārī Sufism was indicated in his scholarly testament by the late professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Adithya Behl. In his *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379–1545*, Behl devoted several pages to the role and reception of the *Jām-i jahān-namā* in some of the Shaṭṭārī foundational texts:

In addition to the general theories of Ibn 'Arabī, the Shattaris based much of their cosmological structure directly on a short prose treatise, the *Jām-i Jahān Numā* or "The World-Showing Cup," written in 1385 by the Persian poet Muḡammad Shīrīn Maḡhribī. [...] Soon after he wrote the treatise, a certain Shaikh Rashīd read it and wrote a long work on it entitled the *Davā'ir-i Rashīdī* ("The Circles of Rashīd"). In it Shaikh Rashīd, about whom nothing else is known, extended Maḡhribī's ideas and elaborated a scheme for invoking the divine Names. The Shattaris in India took up Maḡhribī's treatise and seem to have taught it extensively in Shaṭṭārī *khānaqāhs*. The *Jām-i Jahān Numā* was the subject of at least three Shaṭṭārī commentaries, one by the famous Shaikh Wajīh al-dīn 'Alawī Gujarātī,

wa-l-mustashriqīn, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm al-Malāyīn, Beirut 2002¹⁵), 3:200. The lasting interest for Maḡhimi's translation and commentary (therefore, implicitly, for Maḡhribī's work) is suggested by the fact that the *Irā'at al-daqa'iq* had already received an early edition in Mumbai before 1919: see Yūsuf 'Ilyān Sarkīs, *Mu'jam al-maṭbū'āt al-'arabiyya wa-l-mu'arraba*, 2 vols. ([Cairo]: Maṭba'a Sarkīs bi-Miṣr, 1346/1928), 1717. A modern edition of the text is included in 'Aṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī al-Ḥussaynī al-Shādhilī al-Darqāwī (ed.), *Rasā'il ṣūfiyya fī al-ḥaqā'iq wa-l-tajalliyāt al-ilāhiyya al-anfusiyya wa-l-āfāqiyya* (Beirut: Kitāb-Nāshirūn, 2013).

45 See Qazi Moin Uddin Ahmad, "History of the Shattari Silsilah," (Ph.D. Thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1963), 151 and ff. for additional information on this sheikh.

46 See Qazi Moin Uddin, "History of the Shattari Silsilah," 114 and ff. for additional information on this sheikh.

a second by a Shaikh Ibrāhīm Shaṭṭārī, and a third by a Shaikh Bahlūl. Maḡhribī's cosmological structure was also adapted into Shattari practice by a later Shattari shaikh named Hazrat Ibrāhīm Shaṭṭārī 'Gāzur-i Ilāhī,' "the washerman of God."⁴⁷

And again:

The *Jām-i Jahān Numā* and the three Shattari commentaries on it sketch out both the larger macrocosmic universe and its parallel microcosm in the human body. In combination with Shaikh Muḡammad Ġhaus Gvāliyārī's writings [...] these texts form the framework for Shattari Sufi practice, which they termed the *mashrib-i Shaṭṭār* or the Shattari way.⁴⁸

Behl explains that one amongst Shaṭṭārī's most important masters, Muḡammad Ghawth Gvāliyārī (d. 970/1562), drew heavily on the work by Maḡhribī, but what is more important from the present perspective is that the focus of this elaboration was once again on the diagrams: "In the *Kalīd-i Makhāzin*, Shaikh Muḡammad Ġhaus elaborates parts of the wider cosmological structure of Maḡhribī's *Jām-i Jahān Numā* into a system of three *dā'irahs* or circles."⁴⁹ Such abundance of later references suggest, it would seem, that Maḡhribī's choice of focusing on diagrams in his works was both successful and timely. What results from the previous discussion is a general reassessment of Shīrīn Maḡhribī and of his intellectual influence on contemporary and later generations of Sufis, which is directly tied to his activity as a transmitter of Akbarian lineages, as well as to his diagram-centred writings and teachings. Maḡhribī's is an extremely valuable case-study to investigate this new trend in Sufi literature, which saw an increment in the employment of visual materials in the texts, and it proves that such visual devices were neither conceived by their authors nor perceived by their readers as being marginal elements, but rather as being, in many cases, the very centre of the intellectual discourse. The hope is that this realization might contribute to changing the general perception about Sufi diagrams by looking at them from a new perspective as useful devices in the hands of scholars for investigating the intellectual history of Sufism.

47 Adithya Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379–1545* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 236.

48 Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic*, 237.

49 Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic*, 238.

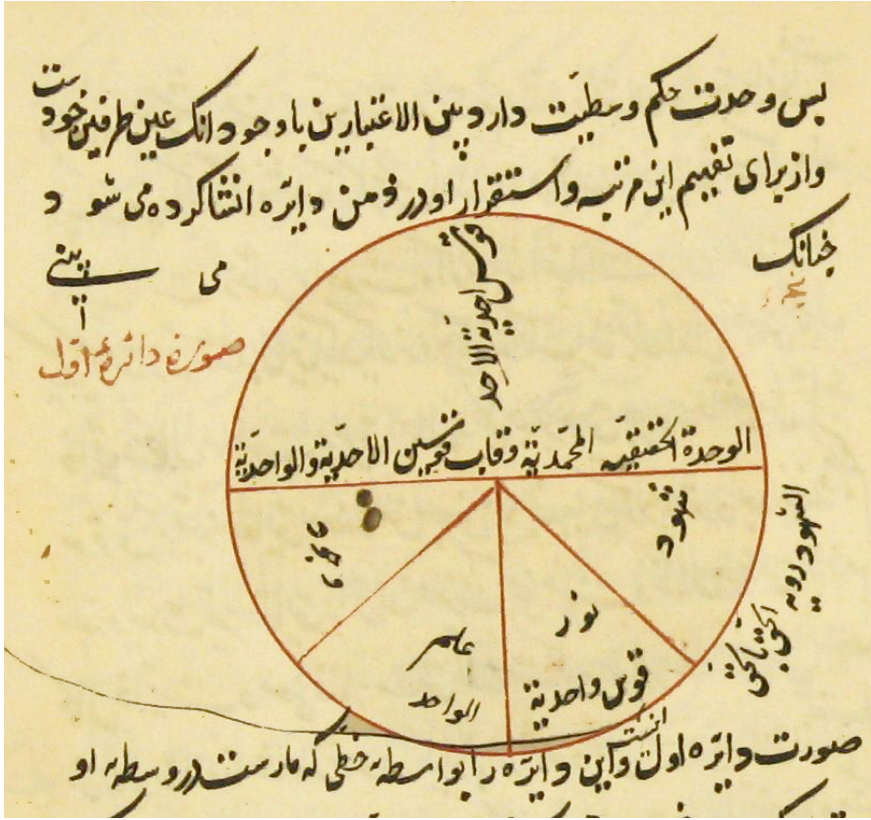


PLATE 6.2 Circular Diagram (*dā'ira*) Concerning [the Relationship between] Unity (*Aḥadiyyat*), Oneness (*Waḥdat*) and Unicity (*Wāḥidiyyat*). Shīrīn Maghribī, *Jām-i jahān-namā* (ms Manisa, İL Halk Kütüphanesi, 45 Hk 2936, fol. 3^a., dated 864/1459)

As a final example of this century-long and geographically-wide discourse, I would like to conclude by presenting a comparison between the first circular diagram contained in Shīrīn Maghribī's *Jām-i jahān-namā*, reproduced here from an Anatolian manuscript copied before 864/1459 (Plate 6.2)⁵⁰ and a variant of the same diagram which is contained in a huge, eight-hundred page long text in Urdu entitled *Ta'līm-i ghawthiyya*, written in India in 1887 by the Qādirī shaykh Sayyid Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar (Plate 6.3).⁵¹

50 Shīrīn Maghribī, *Jām-i jahān-namā*, "Form of the First Circle concerning the Aḥadiyyat, Waḥdat and Wāḥidiyyat," ms Manisa, İL Halk Kütüphanesi, 45 Hk 2936, dated 864/1459, fol. 3^a.

51 Sayyid Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar, *Mir'āt al-waḥda, al-ma'rūf ba Ta'līm-i Ghawthiyya*, ed.

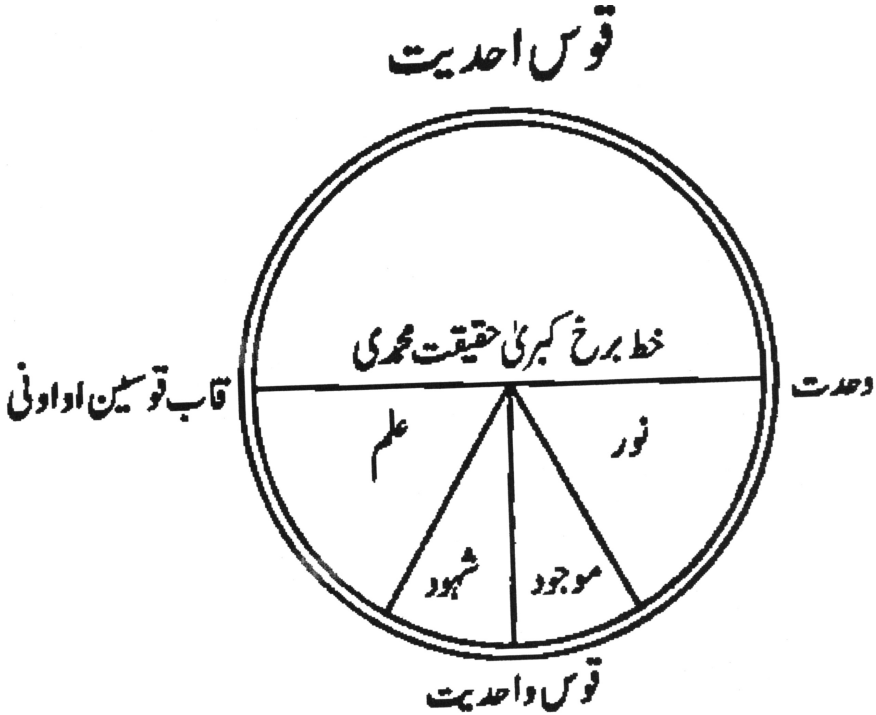


PLATE 6.3 [Circular Diagram (*dā'ira*) Concerning [the Relationship between] Unity (*Aḥadiyyat*), Oneness (*Waḥdat*) and Unicity (*Vāḥidiyyat*)]. Sayyid Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar, *Mir'āt al-waḥda, al-ma'rūf ba Ta'līm-i Ghawthiyya* (completed in 1877) (ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Shaṭṭār Ṭāhir, Shabīr Brādarz, Lahore 2003, p. 471)

This diagram aimed to synthetically represent the relationships between three different aspects of Unity as the first determination, or self-disclosure (*tajallī-yi arval*) of the divine essence (*dhāt*). In order to designate these three “aspects” of the Unity, three technical terms are used, which seem rather difficult to render adequately in translation. They are *Aḥadiyya*, *Wāḥidiyya* and *Waḥda*, which I tentatively translate here, respectively, as “Unity,” “Unicity,” and “Oneness.” *Aḥadiyya* indicates here Unity in an absolute sense, as the negation of all multiplicity. When *Aḥadiyya* is considered, only it ‘is present.’ Nothing is conceivable ‘with’ it and nothing can proceed ‘from’ it. On the other hand, the term *Wāḥidiyya* means Unity as the origin of all multiplicities. *Wāḥidiyya* contains in itself all possible differentiations *in potentia*. Finally,

Muḥammad 'Abd al-Shaṭṭār Ṭāhir (Lahore: Shabīr Brādarz, 2003), 471. The one presented here is only one among the numerous visual elements present in this work.

here the term *Waḥda* means Unity, considered simultaneously according to the two aspects of *Aḥadiyya* and *Wāḥidiyya*. Restricting the description to the main elements only, at the top of the diagram we see the “arch” (*qaws*) of “Unity” (*Aḥadiyya*), while at the bottom is the arch of “Unicity” (*Wāḥidiyya*), which is subdivided in turn into four segments named “Vision,” “Light,” “Science,” and “existence” (*shuhūd, nūr, ‘ilm* and *wujūd*).⁵² In the middle, between the two semicircles, there is a horizontal diameter called “Oneness” (*Waḥda*), which is identified with the “Mohammedan Reality” (Ar. *al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*/Pers. *Ḥaqīqat-i Muḥammadi*).

The reason for briefly introducing this diagram in the conclusion of this study is not to examine the reception and reworking of these dense metaphysical concepts by Maghribī in detail but, rather, to present an example of the striking persistence of these visual materials through the centuries, therefore arguing for their potentiality and the worth of their investigation for the advancement of our understanding of the history of Sufism. From this perspective, in fact, any migration, modification, or new surfacing of a specific diagram from manuscript to manuscript and from text to text, authored by different scholars in different geographical places and historical moments, must be regarded as a visual trace of an ongoing intellectual discourse that in large part still awaits exploration.

The potential of a diachronic research that would be focused on the visual elements in Sufi literature is suggested by another diagram contained in the *Ta’līm-i Ghawthiyya* by Shāh Gul Ḥasan. The previous comparison has made it possible to establish nearly perfect continuity between the diagrammatic representation contained in Maghribī’s text, originally written in Tabriz towards the end of the fourteenth century, and an Indian text of the nineteenth century, therefore suggesting, above all, the idea of cultural *continuity* within such vast area. This other figure, on the other hand, speaks to us of the specular aspect, that is, that of *change* and enrichment, and of the intellectual elaboration that took place through the wide span of space and time (almost five hundred years) that separates these two works (Plate 6.4).⁵³ This figure, in fact, represents an extremely interesting outcome in which it is observed how, at the end of a long journey, the geometric and rigorously abstract structure of the primitive diagram ended up taking on anthropomorphic connotations.

52 These four terms are placed in a different order in the two versions of the diagram.

53 “Circular diagram of the Unity of the Essence” (*Dā’ira-yi aḥadiyyat-i dhāt*), in Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar, *Ta’līm-i Ghawthiyya* (Hyderabad: Mīnār Buk, s.d.), 153. This diagram was discussed by Fabrizio Speziale in “Il simbolismo mistico del volto umano nel trattato (in

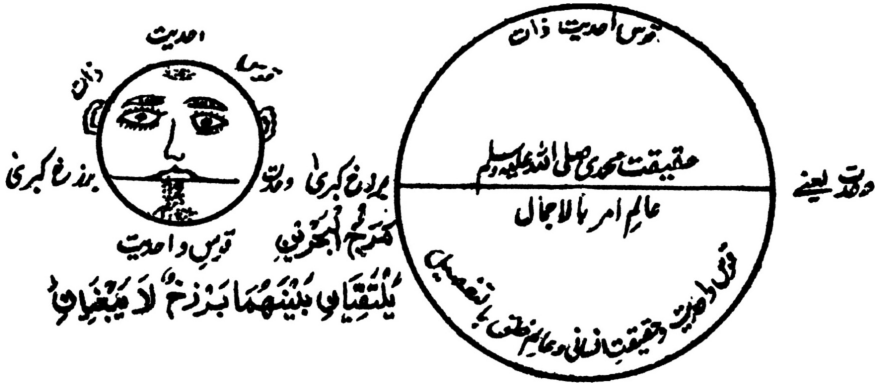


PLATE 6.4 Circular diagram of the Unity of the Essence (*Dā'ira-yi ahadiyyat-i dhāt*). Sayyid Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar, *Ta'līm-i Ghawthiyya* (completed in 1877) (ed. Mīnār Buk, Hyderabad, s.d.)

The link between this representation (Plate 6.4) and the diagram included in Shīrīn Maghribī's *Jām-i jahān-namā* introduced previously, appears quite evident (Plate 6.2, cf. Plate 6.3). It is rather clearly indicated by the terminology used in the figure reproduced in Plate 6.4 in the circular diagram on the right, repeated a second time in the representation of the human face on the left, since in the upper semicircle we read "Arch of the Unity of the Essence" (*qaws-i ahadiyyat-i dhāt*), in the lower one "Arch of Unicity" (*Qaws-i Wāhidiyyat*), and on the central diameter "Oneness" (*Waḥdat*), identified with the "Mohammedan Reality" (*Ḥaqīqat-i Muḥammadi*), precisely as occurs in Plates 6.2 and 6.3. The implications of such an evolution from a rigorously abstract and geometric representation to a figurative one appear fascinating in consideration of the generally aniconic character of the Islamic tradition, but above all of the fact that we find ourselves here in front of an anthropomorphic representation not of any subject, but of the *divine*. That such a late outcome of an early geometric diagram already encountered in Maghribī's work, that is, an anthropomorphic representation of divine reality in an Islamic context, is a quite sensitive and problematic issue is not only easily imaginable but can also be documented. Once again, this is made possible thanks to the graphic trace left by visual representations, yet another proof of the usefulness of the iconographic study of the phenomenon of Visual Sufism. So we find out, with a certain surprise, that in a different edition of the *Ta'līm-i Ghawthiyya* by Gul Ḥasan

Urdu) *Sūrat-i ma'lūma-yi ṣuwari 'ilm* di Karīm Allāh 'Ashiq," *Journal Asiatique* 295, no. 2 (2007): 439–459, 444–445.

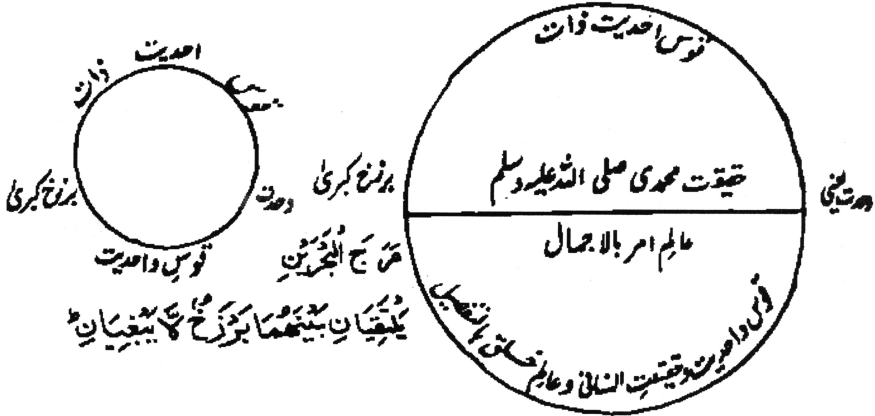


PLATE 6.5 Circular diagram of the Unity of the Essence (*Dā'ira-yi ahādīyyat-i dhāt*). Sayyid Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar, *Ta'lim-i Ghawthīyya* (completed in 1877) (ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Shaṭṭār Ṭāhīr, Shabīr Brādarz, Lahore 2003, p. 305)

this representation has been 'censored,' and that the human face was replaced with an empty circle (Plate 6.5).⁵⁴ The human face 'appears' to immediately 'disappear' again. The geometric shape becomes figurative, to become geometric again. The empty circle leaves space for a full face, to become empty again. These are all signs of incessant intellectual engagement and tension with visual representations in Sufi literature which have their roots in the past and emerge alive and well to the present day.

The questions raised by the second representation taken from the *Ta'lim-i Ghawthīyya* (Plate 6.4), in which the representation of a male human face is superimposed on the circle representing the three aspects of the unity of the divine essence (*ahādīyya*, *wāḥidiyya* and *waḥda*), are numerous. Where and when was this superposition elaborated for the first time? Was it an original development of Gul Ḥasan, or of his master, or was it simply incorporated in that text from earlier sources? If and what are the relations between this representation and the anthropomorphic graphic developments found in other currents of Sufism, or contiguous to Sufism, such as the Ḥurūfiyya, the Nuḡṭawīyya and the Bektashīyya, of which Mir-Kasimov presented a wide survey in the previous chapter? These questions remain unanswered for the time being. The progressive recognition and publication of materials pertinent to the phenomenon of Visual Sufism, even apparently not directly related to Maghribī's

54 "Circular diagram of the Unity of the Essence" (*Dā'ira-yi ahādīyyat-i dhāt*) in Sayyid Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar, *Mir'āt al-waḥda*, 305.

work, could certainly facilitate the identification of intermediate links between the primitive form of the diagram as it is found in the *Jām-i jahān-namā* and the anthropomorphic version included in the *Ta'lim-i Ghawthiyya*.⁵⁵ As already mentioned, the main purposes of hinting at the reception of the *Jām-i jahān-namā* in the Indian Subcontinent in this study were essentially two: to mention the long-term effects of Maghribī's intellectual activity and his specific interest in the use of diagrams, and to underline some potentialities inherent to the study of the visual materials contained in many Sufi texts. It is my hope that both have been achieved, at least in part.

Conclusions

In this study I tried to show how the use of diagrams was one of the peculiar features of the work of the Persian Sufi scholar Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī, suggesting that this specific interest was not the result of a purely personal choice by the author, but rather the outcome of the intellectual environment in which the author lived and worked. This was done through the examination of primary sources of various kinds, many of them unpublished. These sources are represented by reports on the chains of spiritual descent of the author, his and his direct disciples' texts, a reading and initiatory certificate (*ijāza*), commentaries on Maghribī's works, and explicit or implicit references to diagrams contained in them. The picture that emerged from this analysis is that Maghribī participated in the spiritual legacy of some authoritative masters who before him had used visual tools in their works (Ḥamūyeh, Ibn al-'Arabī), and that he knew, for having quoted, commented or taught them, some of the main works of Ibn al-'Arabī containing diagrams (*Kitāb Inshā' al-dawā'ir*, *Uqlat*

55 I trust that at least some of the steps in the path and modifications undertaken by this diagram will be clarified in a study dedicated to the reception of Maghribī's *Jām-i jahān-namā* that I am carrying out and for which I have already collected many materials. In this process of anthropomorphization, the Shaṭṭāriyya circles, which we have seen were very receptive to Maghribī's *Jām-i jahān-namā* and to the use of diagrams and visual meditation in general, may have played a certain role. This impression is reinforced by two short treatises by the Shaṭṭārī master 'Īsā Jund Allāh (d. 1031/1622) translated into English by Carl Ernst. In these two texts, entitled *Risāla-yi Murāqaba* and *Risāla-yi Barzakh* respectively, there are indeed some representations in which the names of Muḥammad, 'Alī and Allāh give form to human faces and bodies and which, as also observed by Ernst, closely resemble some representations attested in the Bektashiyya. See Carl W. Ernst, *Teachings of Sufism*, (Boston-London: Shambala, 1999), 53–72. Ernst based his translation on MS Aligarh, Aligarh Museum University, Mawlana Azad Library, Persian JF 73.

al-mustawfiz, Chapter 314 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*). We also learn that the disciples of Maghribī were, in turn, particularly inclined to visual elements, being influenced in this by the intellectual activity of their master, and influencing him in turn. For each individual who studied with Maghribī and for whom information is available, it is possible to observe a more or less direct involvement with visual tools. They range from those who in turn composed texts including diagrams (‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Bazzāzī, ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā’a), to those who commented on Maghribī’s texts containing figures (Aḥmad b. Mūsā Rashṭī, Abū Muḥammad ‘Aṭā’ Allāh), to those who studied works containing diagrams with the Sufi master (Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā’īl). It is likely for no other Sufi scholar is it possible to find so many clues that indicate such a systematic involvement with visual elements as happens for Shīrīn Maghribī, which makes his a particular and rather interesting case for investigating the issue of Visual Sufism. The central role played by diagrams in Maghribī’s work can also be appreciated through the reconstruction of the history of the reception of the author’s works, in particular of the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, of which some examples from the Indian area have been briefly introduced in the final part of this study. For the same reasons, it seems correct to say that much of Maghribī’s posthumous legacy can be attributed precisely to this peculiar feature of his work, namely the use of visual elements. To mention the history of the reception of the *Jām-i jahān-namā*, and of one of the diagrams it contains, was also an opportunity to highlight some of the potential inherent to the study of diagrams in order to trace paths within Sufi intellectual history and history of thought. Since one of the most influential authors to have used diagrams in many of his works was Ibn al-‘Arabī, and since Shīrīn Maghribī was fully in the wake of the great Andalusian master, and had a role in the so-called Akbarian School, what we could call the micro-history of the reception of Maghribī’s work should be considered part of the wider process of dissemination of the work and thought of Ibn al-‘Arabī throughout the Islamic world. Precisely in view of the fact that among the best known and most influential Sufi intellectuals who made use of visual elements in their works are Ibn al-‘Arabī and many Akbarian masters of later generations, it is not without significance to point out that in many cases—although not in all of them—the history of Visual Sufism corresponds with the history of the diffusion of the work and thought of Ibn al-‘Arabī.

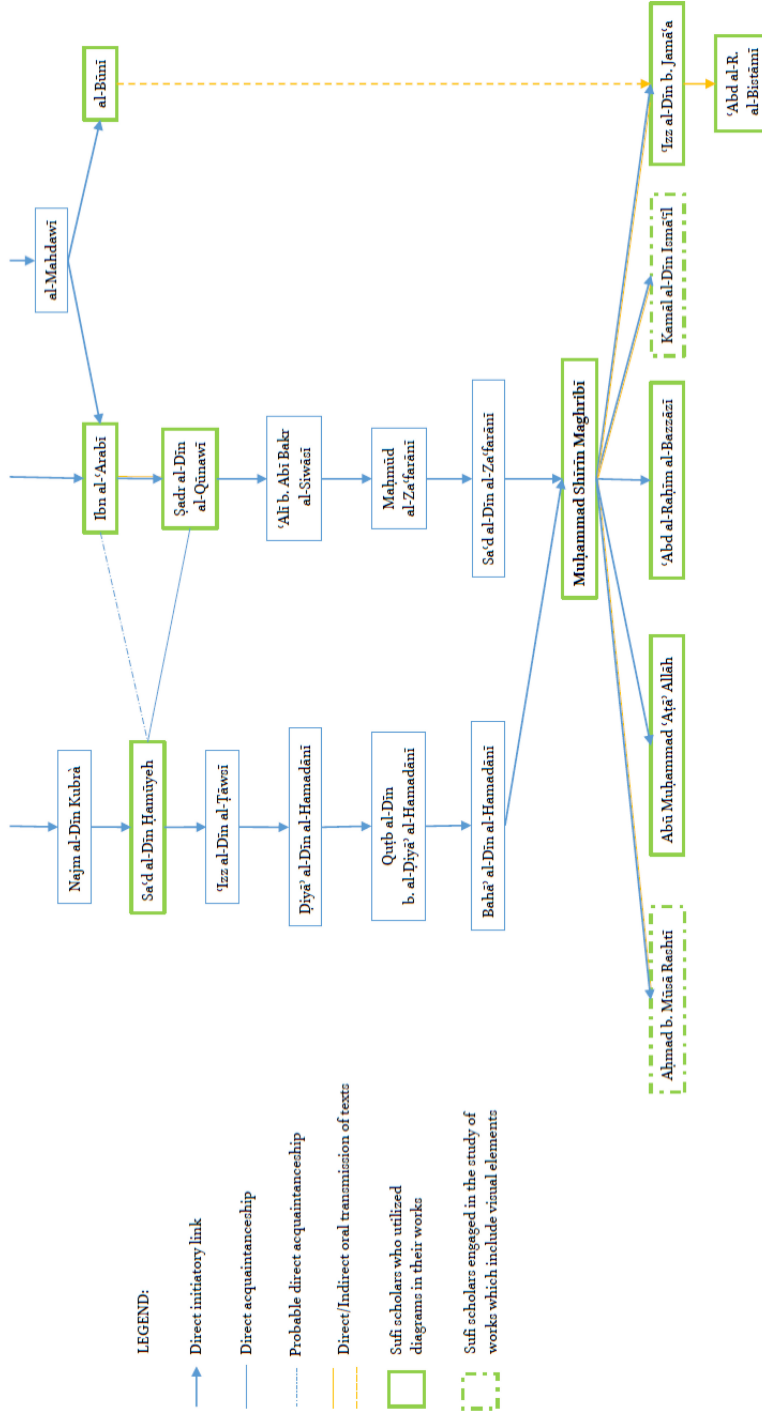


FIGURE 6.1 Shirīn Maghrībī's visual Sufi network

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“Sensible Images”: Pictograms in the Manuscript Transmission of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī’s (d. 973/1565) *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*

Eryn Kropf

Introduction

In one of his earliest works, *Kashf al-ghumma*, the popular and prolific 16th century Egyptian scholar and mystic ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī (d. 973/1565) first introduces a remarkable theory on the equal orthodoxy of the four Sunni *madhāhib* (schools or ways) and the pragmatic application of such plurality to facilitate legal and ritual transactions.¹

al-Sha‘rānī more fully elaborates this theory of *Mīzān* (Balance or Scale) in his later work *al-Mīzān al-kubrā* (The Great Balance). Within this theory, al-Sha‘rānī commends the equality of the *madhāhib* while contending that the differences between them are not substantial.² There is a single *Sharī‘a*—to which all of the *madhāhib* Founders and their followers are equally connected at the Source—and two standards of interpretation, strict (*al-‘azīma wa-l-tashdīd*) for the ‘ulamā’ and Sufis and lenient (*al-rukḥṣa wa-l-takhfīf*) for laypeople.³ Indeed, in its higher, profound reality (*ḥaqīqat^{an}*) the Perfect Law is the entirety of all the *madhāhib* valid in their teachings.⁴

1 See pp. 164–169 of Chapter 5 “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Influence on ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī,” in Samer Dajani, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of Ijtihād: its origins and later reception” (PhD Diss., SOAS University of London, 2015); Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim, “al-Sha‘rānī’s Response to Legal Purism: A Theory of Legal Pluralism,” *Islamic Law and Society* 20, nos. 1–2 (2013): 110–140; pp. 161–163 in Adam Sabra, “Illiterate Sufis and Learned Artisans: The Circle of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī,” in *Le développement du soufisme en Égypte à l’époque mamelouke*, eds. Richard McGregor and Adam Sabra (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2006): 153–168; and Samuela Pagani, “The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib* in ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī’s *al-Mīzān al-Kubrā*,” *Islamic Law and Society* 11, no. 2 (2004): 177–212, 184.

2 See Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982), 236–241.

3 Cf. *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*, ms Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fols. 2^b, 5^{a-b} [present order]; ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī, *Kitāb al-Mīzān al-kubrā* (Miṣr: al-Maṭba‘a al-Kastaliyya, 1279/1862, henceforth referred to as “Cairo 1862 ed.”), 3; Ibrahim, “al-Sha‘rānī’s Response to Legal Purism,” 125, 129 and 133; Marion H. Katz, “‘Azīma and rukḥṣa,” *Encyclo-*

As Michael Winter and Samuela Pagani have demonstrated, al-Shaʿrānī composed and developed his theory of Balance within the conceptual framework of Sufism⁵—drawing on the teachings of his spiritual director ʿAlī al-Khawwās al-Burullūsī (d. 939/1532–1533) and other shaykhs, and through his extensive study of Sufi writings—particularly those of the renowned Sufi theoretician Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).

Indeed, al-Shaʿrānī cites Ibn al-ʿArabī extensively in *al-Mizān*, particularly his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. al-Shaʿrānī even attributes the central concept of his theory—all four Sunni *madhāhib* originating in a single source—to Ibn al-ʿArabī’s thought.⁶

Widely studied and appreciated in the centuries since its writing,⁷ *al-Mizān al-kubrā* has circulated in a vast number of manuscript copies and printed editions, drawing the particular attention of scholars exploring the social and legal implications of what Michael Winter has called al-Shaʿrānī’s “bold, original and revolutionary idea.”⁸

paedia of Islam, Three. For a thorough treatment of al-Shaʿrānī’s theory in the context of *fiqh*, see A.É. Schmidt, *ʿAbd-al-Vakhhāb-ash-Shaʿrānī (973/1565) i ego kniga Razsypannykh zhemchuzhin* ([St. Petersburg]: Tip. Imp. Akademii nauk, 1914).

- 4 “fa-l-sharīʿa al-kāmila ḥaqīqat^{an} hiya jamīʿ al-madhāhib al-ṣaḥīḥa bi-aqwāli-hā ...” *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 13^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 30.
- 5 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 237, 241 and Pagani, “The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*,” 194 ff. Knut Vikør also characterizes al-Shaʿrānī’s approach to the “irrelevance or ‘unification’ of the *madhhabs*” as “deeply steeped in Sufi ideas,” see p. 374, 364–375 of “The Shaykh as a *mujtahid*: A Sufi Conception of *ijtihād*,” In *El Sufismo y las normas del Islam: Trabajos del IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Jurídicos Islámicos, Derecho y Sufismo, Murcia, 7–10 mayo 2003*, ed. by Alfonso Carmona (Murcia: Editora Regional de Murcia, 2006): 351–375.
- 6 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, Cairo 1862 ed., 16–17; ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 7^a–b. al-Shaʿrānī has also echoed Ibn al-ʿArabī in his concern for the practice of laypeople and pragmatic school boundary-crossing Cf. Ibrahim, “al-Shaʿrānī’s Response to Legal Purism,” 132 and especially Dajani, “Ibn ʿArabī’s conception of *Ijtihād*,” 151–193, in which he attempts to thoroughly analyze Ibn al-ʿArabī’s influence on al-Shaʿrānī.
- 7 On the popularity of al-Shaʿrānī’s writings including *al-Mizān* see Leila Hudson, “Reading al-Shaʿrānī: The Sufi Genealogy of Islamic Modernism in Late Ottoman Damascus,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2004): 39–68.
- 8 Cf. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 241. These include Hikimathulla Bin M.H. Babu Sahib, “A Study of al-Shaʿrānī’s *al-Mizān al-kubrā*,” (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995); Pagani “The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*”; Ibrahim, “al-Shaʿrānī’s Response to Legal Purism”; and Dajani, “Ibn ʿArabī’s conception of *Ijtihād*,” Chapter 5. Of course al-Shaʿrānī is indebted to earlier pragmatic writings on the validity of differences of opinion among the *madhāhib*, useful for practitioners in offering legal advice to laypeople. The most salient is the *Raḥmat al-umma fī ikhtilāf al-aʿimma* of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dimashqī al-Uthmānī (fl. 780/1378). Some scholars have argued that al-

Even so, little attention has been paid to another compelling aspect of the work—namely, al-Shaʿrānī’s use of imagery in the form of a series of nine schematic illustrations or pictograms that appear with extensive labels and companion explanatory texts in a dedicated chapter of the work’s introduction.⁹ al-Shaʿrānī refers to these pictograms as *amthila maḥsūsa*—sensible images or simulacra which serve as allegories subject to sensory perception.¹⁰

My initial survey of a preliminary corpus of more than 50 manuscript copies of al-Shaʿrānī’s *al-Mizān al-kubrā* reveals that the pictograms appeared in the earliest known manuscripts as fundamental content, essential to the work’s emerging form.¹¹ This includes a manuscript—Şehid Ali Paşa 994, now

Shaʿrānī took this work as a model (cf. Joseph Schacht, “Ikhtilāf,” *EI2* and Pagani, “The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*,” 190) but Ibrahim notes that al-Shaʿrānī (in contrast to al-Dimashqī) attempts to provide a theoretical justification for legal practice (cf. Ibrahim, “al-Shaʿrānī’s Response to Legal Purism,” 125). See also Ignaz Goldziher, “Zur Literatur des Ichtilāf al-Madhāhib.” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 38 (1884): 669–682.

- 9 These simplified symbolic visualizations indirectly signify abstract concepts while resembling their intermediate metaphorical referents. Thus, they are both symbolic and iconic and I therefore characterize them as pictograms. Samuela Pagani does touch on the pictograms (which she calls “drawings”) quite briefly in her treatment of al-Shaʿrānī’s theories, notably his “peculiar blending of Sufi and legal discourses” (cf. Pagani, “The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*,” 195 note 85 and 210). Samer Dajani also makes brief reference to the pictograms (cf. Dajani, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of Ijtihād,” 173–175).
- 10 Of course *amthila* being the plural of *mithāl*, variously understood as ‘image,’ ‘simulacrum,’ ‘model,’ ‘allegory,’ ‘analogy’ or even ‘imagination’ and distinct from *mathal* (pl. *amthāl*) ‘similitude,’ ‘likeness,’ or even ‘sensible form.’ See William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 85 and 117, and Jamal Elias, *Aisha’s Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 222–223 and 230. For Fazlur Rahman *‘ālam al-mithāl* equates to “realm of images,” cf. “Dream, Imagination, and *‘ālam al-mithāl*,” In *The Dream and Human Societies*, eds. Gustav von Grunebaum and Roger Caillois (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966): 409–419. Samer Akkach adds “*Mithāl* equates ‘symbol’ in the sense of being a shadow of a higher reality revealed in a sensible form.” Cf. Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 28.
- 11 I have been compiling a census of manuscripts for the *Mizān*, and from that have drawn my preliminary corpus. Almost all of the manuscripts within the present corpus were produced in the 17th and 18th centuries in former Ottoman areas, were eventually collected by Ottoman officials and are now preserved in the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul. I have also consulted manuscripts for *al-Mizān* and related works now preserved in the University of Michigan Library, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library (Yale University), British Library, Leipzig University Library, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, New York Public Library, and Gazi Husrev-Begova Biblioteka in Sarajevo. I continue to consult additional manuscripts.

preserved in the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul—that numerous subsequent copyists came to regard as an exemplar in the hand of the author.

This manuscript contains the entire work in a single volume of only around 190 folios with incredibly dense layout.¹² The manuscript carries numerous signs of emendation, and the overall impression is of an evolving text potentially just emerging from its draft stages.¹³ The manuscript includes an authorial colophon and though variations in hand and line thickness are apparent at multiple places in the manuscript, it seems plausible that some portion may indeed be in the hand of al-Shaʿrānī and that he directed the production of the copy (Plate 7.1).¹⁴ The manuscript was obviously heavily used and valued, and it has received numerous repairs, including a rebinding that has resulted in several of the opening folios being positioned out of order. Again, most importantly, subsequent copyists considered it an autograph exemplar (Plate 7.2).¹⁵

12 The number of lines per page reaches a remarkable 40 in places. In most printed editions, the work is presented as two volumes—often two volumes in one.

13 Extensive annotations appear in a few different hands on the margins throughout and symbols of correction and collation together suggest that the transcript underwent a thorough review process. Most of the corrections provide omitted text. Some areas of text have been struck through. Other corrected words and passages have been provided on bits of paper pasted over earlier text. Such corrections extend to the title piece where the title assigned to the work was altered from *al-Mizān al-Khaḍirīyya*—the title of another shorter, earlier work of al-Shaʿrānī on the same theme, to be discussed in due course—to *al-Mizān al-Shaʿrānīyya* (cf. MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 1^a).

14 The title piece (fol. 1^a) attributes the work's authorship to its copyist (*taʿlīf kātibi-hā*) whom it identifies as al-Shaʿrānī not by *nisba* but instead with an extensive listing of his *nasab*. The authorial colophon at the close of the text (fol. 190^b) reads: *قال ذلك وكتبه عبد الوهاب ابن احمد الشعراني مولف هذا الكتاب في سلخ شهر رمضان المعظم قدره سنة ست وستين وتسعمائة بمصر المحروسة جعلها الله تعالى دار اسلام وايمان واحسان وايقان الى يوم الدين امين امين امين امين.*

While this statement certainly offers a reasonable indication of authorship, date, and place of completion for the composition of the work (30 Ramaḍān 966 [ca. 6 July 1559] in Egypt), its reference to transcription does not necessarily extend to the entire volume. In fact, there are variations in hand and line thickness apparent at multiple places in the manuscript (including a change in hand where the *khātima* begins, though this authorial colophon is in that same hand) and it may have actually been transcribed by a few different copyists. Still, at this stage it is certainly plausible that al-Shaʿrānī was directly involved in the production of this copy.

15 The copyist of the undated MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Laleli 1228 reproduces verbatim the authorial colophon appearing in MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994 and takes pains to model that manuscript's transcript and pictograms with earnest fidelity, presumably believing it to be an autograph. The copyist of MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Reisülküttab 403, dated 3 Jumādā I 1015 [ca. 6 Sept. 1606], similarly reproduces the authorial colophon (and other elements) of MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994 and explicitly indicates in his colophon that he has worked from an autograph (*min khaṭṭ al-muʿallif*). This copyist was presumably close to al-Shaʿrānī's circle, as one of his *nisbas* suggest his resident affiliation with the Sufi order

Further, the pictograms were later transmitted by copyists and collaborating artisans—those skilled at drawing, painting, and illumination—who considered them integral to the work and significant icons in their own right.

In fact, inclusion of the pictograms extends across the manuscript corpus and even to almost all lithographed and printed editions of *al-Mizān*.¹⁶ I have yet to encounter a manuscript of the work without the pictograms, though I have encountered a copy that includes only two of the nine.¹⁷

Perhaps even more interestingly, I have also encountered the pictograms in the manuscript corpus beyond witnesses for *al-Mizān*. The pictograms appear incorporated into prayer compendia as devotional devices (Plate 7.3),¹⁸ tipped in and incorporated into a couple of manuscript copies of *silsilename* works,¹⁹ and even inserted out of order at the opening of a manuscript copy of Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı’s (d. 1780) *Marifetname*.²⁰ This appropriation of the pictograms further suggests that they acquired a more expansive iconic significance—likely by way of association with mystical experience and supersensory revealed knowledge of otherwise unseen profound realities—and merits more thorough investigation.²¹

associated with al-Sha’rānī (*al-Sha’rāwī waṭān^{an} wa-khirqat^{an}*) cf. colophon on fol. 278^b وكان الفراغ من تبييض هذه النسخة من خط المؤلف يوم الثالث المبارك ثالث جمادى الاول سنة خمسة عشر بعد الالف من الهجرة النبوية على صاحبها افضل الصلاة والسلام على يد الفقير الحقير المدعي بالعجز والتقصير احمد بن علي الشبراهارسي بلدا الشعراوي وطنا وخرقة غفر الله له ولوالديه ولمن دعا له بالمغفرة امين امين امين.

- 16 To not include the pictograms is quite the exception, but the 1970s Istanbul edition of the introduction (*Mizān-ül kübrā kitābınun önsözü*, Ed. Hüseyin Hilmi Işık) omits them and deliberately so. Though essentially a reprint of the earlier mid-19c Cairo editions, the section on the pictograms is left out and the pagination altered to disguise the omission.
- 17 MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Kılıç Ali Paşa 465, copied 12 Rabī 1 1020 [ca. 25 May 1611]. The two diagrams appear on fol. 40^a and fol. 40^b without complete context (i.e. the opening of the chapter is lacking as well).
- 18 Staatsbibliothek Ms. or. oct. 1602 (copied in 1707–1709, likely in Istanbul) and New York Public Library M&A Arab 22 (copied in 1874). My thanks to Christiane Gruber for bringing these manuscripts to my attention.
- 19 MS Çelebi Abdullah 262, likely transcribed during reign of Ahmet I (r. 1603–1617) with diagrams likely later, perhaps even 18th c., and MS Nuruosmaniye 3304, likely transcribed during reign of Mehmet IV (r. 1648–1687), both Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi. My thanks to İlker Evrim Binbaş for bringing these manuscripts to my attention.
- 20 MS Ankara, Milli Kütüphane, 06 Mil Yz B 621/1. Again, my thanks to Christiane Gruber for bringing this manuscript to my attention.
- 21 For an overview of the varied roles and significations of pictorial motifs in illustrated Ottoman prayer miscellanies, see Christiane Gruber, “A Pious Cure-all: the Ottoman Illustrated Prayer Manual in the Lilly Library,” In *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition: Ten Centuries of Book Arts in Indiana University Collections*, ed. Christiane Gruber (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009): 116–153.

ان سمعوا كما نصب امام نبي امواتهم وانفسهم وحرمتهم بوجوده حتى علموا انه
 لا يقوم للدين شيئا الا بملكه وحالته الواجب الاله فهو واجب وانما يورد
 له حديث ما لا يرضى عن الامام الاعظم نوابه لما في ذلك من الرضاية والكبر
 الذي لا يشاركه الا من امن به الله فلو امر انكوع بطلب الاحاطة صريحا
 لكان منه تعريض للفتنة والاشواق الامر بما فيه فتنة بل نبي عن الامارة
 الا ان يكون العبد مشغولا بما فعله من كونه الولاية الذي لم يشكك في امره
 احد في داره فضلا عن البراري ولا يصح لاحد اخذ اخراج من الشك ولا يصح احد
 ولا وجهه ان يفتق على المجاهدين والدارين وضاعف صاحب الجليل صاحب
قائمة محمد بسائر العالمين **ويشتم في كتابه** **البيان الشرعية الالهية**
 لولا ان هذا الله لم يجران وسل ربنا ما نحن وانما اسأل بالله كل باطن في هذا الكتاب
 من علم المذاهب الاربعة رضي الله تعالى عنهم ان يظهر ما يراه في هذا الكتاب من خطأ
 والتحرير لكي يورد اعراض النظر في الادلة والمقائل والتوجهات والسلامة
 من العصب لذلك دون غيره ولقد مررت على دجلة واصلت دليل التي لمع بعد اطرافه
 على وجه القبول التي هذا ما بين يدي المزار وتصورته من الشريعة المطهرة التي
 على كلف متفرع منها قول كل صنف من المفسرين والتأخرين ويعود شهاده ان عن الشريعة
 هذا الله المتبرع من الكفاية كما انه عاين اصبر او في الكفاية اصنع كذلك **البيان**
 كما اصنع اولها في شريعتهم من حيث كفاية تنظيم في القبول في قوله كلام الائمة المحترمة
 وادراك ان المراتب اولها في فن احتياج ضرورة التي من ضعف كلامه واستدرك
 عليه لخصر استحضار الوقت كل ما يورد على صطوق ذلك البلاغ وعبره حال التنازل
 ولو انه كان تقدر على ذلك لما اصحاح الناس الى شرحه بل هو ولا اصاحبه الشرح
 الى جوانبه ولا احواشي الى احواشي ولو كان من عند غيره له حروا منه اخلافا كما
 وقد لونا مرارا ان جميع ما الفناه من الكتب اما هو حسب ما فيه الله تعالى به على قلبي
 حال الثالث ما عدى الكتب التي اشتملها **فوجه** الله تعالى من عذري في وقوع
 لغزته في حقا او تحريف في هذا الكتاب **وجه** الله من حقا الله عليه فوجه الشرح في احوال
 على الائمة
 الامام اوضح ما وحشته به واكتفه بحوضه من هذا الكتاب ثم عذرتي في الغامض
 لتوحيد كل من جمع المذاهب المستعملة والمدارس فانه امر لا اعلم احدوا سبغني الى التزامه
 ومن يامل فيه وفيه ما يورد مواهب جمع المحققين حتى كانت صاحب واستحق ان
 يلقب **شيخ** اهل السنة والجماعة في عصره ومن لم يلقنيه بولي فقد طاه واسمع
 يا اخي **بشي** وامبع النظر فيه والتم الادب مع سائر الائمة المحترمة لباعدوا بغيره
 في صواب يوم الدين **وجه** الله عليه **وجه** الله عليه **وجه** الله عليه
 وحسن الله وجهه والحق والاحول **وجه** الله عليه **وجه** الله عليه **وجه** الله عليه
 من احمد السوادني مؤلف هذا الكتاب من سنة 965 هـ في رمضان المعظم سنة 965 هـ في شهر رجب
 بمصر الحرس جعله الله دارا سلم وانا في احسان وايقال اني يوم الدين امر امره



PLATE 7.1 Colophon, marginal annotations, strike-through, annotated paste-overs, etc. visible at the close of the autograph exemplar of *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (*al-Mizān al-Shaʿrāniyya* in title piece). al-Shaʿrāni, *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (ms Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 994, copied in Egypt in 966/1559, fol. 190^b)



PLATE 7.2 Comparison of pictograms in the recognized autograph MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fols. 25^b–26^a (above) and MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Laleli 1228, fols. 32^b–33^a (below), a copy taken either directly from the autograph or from a careful intermediary, al-Sha'rānī, *al-Mizān al-kubrā*.

هذا شجر عرش وكرسي وسواء

Handwritten text in Ottoman Turkish, including a central tree diagram with red and green leaves. The text is arranged in vertical columns on either side of the tree.

مقامه پنجاه و نه در بیست و نه کلمه

Handwritten text in Ottoman Turkish, including a central tree diagram with green leaves. The text is arranged in vertical columns on either side of the tree.

پنجاه و نه مرتبه و نود و نه مرتبه
میزانک باشماخ دورسل
کرکرد

PLATE 7.3 Pictograms from al-Sha'rānī's *al-Mizān al-kubrā* appropriated for an Ottoman prayer compendium (ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, or. oct. 1602, dated 1119–1121/1707–1709, fols. 38^b–39^a)

The pictograms’ significance emerging from the manuscript corpus has raised a number of questions for me regarding their origins, their functions, and al-Sha‘rānī’s purpose in including them. To explore these questions, I have turned to al-Sha‘rānī’s exposition of the pictograms which he presents alongside them in *al-Mizān*, as well as to his influences and his intentions—particularly as explicitly laid out within the text.

In this contribution, I will introduce the pictograms of al-Sha‘rānī’s *al-Mizān al-kubrā* and offer preliminary observations regarding their function as persuasive, instructive visual devices grounded in a Sufi paradigm. I will explore the intellectual contexts from which the author produced this work, interrogate his interpretations of the pictograms, and consider his intentions surrounding their purpose and function. Ultimately, I will argue that the pictograms reflect a deliberate effort at conveying indispensable visual content that gives form to the spiritual. In this way, the author validates and brings nearer to comprehension his claims for the metaphysical reality underpinning his theory and details a prescription toward a similar encounter with the Source of the Law (*‘ayn al-sharī‘a*) for the seeker approaching revealed knowledge.

1 Sufi Paradigms: Intellectual Contexts for *al-Mizān*

According to al-Sha‘rānī’s own autobiographical accounts and the biographers who relied heavily upon them,²² he was born into a distinguished, scholarly family and raised in a Sufi milieu. In his writings, al-Sha‘rānī claims descent from Mūsā ‘Imrān (d. 707/1307), a son of the sultan of Tlemcen who became a disciple and follower of the celebrated shaykh Abū Madyan Shu‘ayb (d. 589/1193 or 594/1198), spiritual father of the Shādhilī Ṣūfī order.²³

al-Sha‘rānī himself considered roughly 50 shaykhs among his teachers instructing him in *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, mysticism and other subjects and he references many of their teachings in *al-Mizān* and in his other writings.²⁴ Among the most significant is the celebrated Shāfī‘ī scholar Zakarīyā b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī (d. 925–926/1519–1520)—al-Sha‘rānī’s chief teacher in *fiqh* who, despite

22 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 38–41.

23 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 41–42; Winter, “al-Sha‘rānī,” *EI2*; and indeed this lineage appears in the title piece of ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994. For biographical details for many of these notable individuals, see al-Sha‘rānī’s *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (= *Lawāqih al-anwār fi ṭabaqāt al-akhyār*), ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1414–1421/1993–2001).

24 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 54 ff.

his outward occupation as an important jurist, was also a Sufi who composed several important works and even initiated al-Shaʿrānī as a Sufi novice.²⁵

The most important shaykh in al-Shaʿrānī's Sufi education was 'Alī al-Khawwāṣ al-Burulluṣī (d. 939/1532–1533), an illiterate palm-leaf plaiter to whom al-Shaʿrānī attributes ideas and sayings copiously dispersed throughout his writings, including *al-Mīzān*. al-Shaʿrānī composed at least two volumes in which he compiled his master's rulings and responses to various questions.²⁶

Further, al-Shaʿrānī studied numerous written works—annotating them and their commentaries. Among the most often quoted such works in his writings are those of al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and particularly Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) of whom he is recognized as a fervent admirer, devoted student and passionate defender.²⁷

Indeed, emerging from al-Shaʿrānī's extensive engagement with Ibn al-'Arabī's works, it can be asserted that from Ibn al-'Arabī al-Shaʿrānī adopted much of his Sufism and his theory of cognition.²⁸

The Law (*al-sharī'a*) was quite important within Ibn al-'Arabī's mystical philosophy and in his seminal masterwork *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, he discusses at length the inviolability of the Law and the just Scale (or Balance) of the Law (*al-mīzān al-sharī*).²⁹ al-Shaʿrānī emphasizes Ibn al-'Arabī's views on the significance of the Law and its necessity for attainment of mystical unveiling (*kashf*) in his abridgement of his own synopsis of the *Futūḥāt*, *al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar*.³⁰

25 In fact al-Shaʿrānī considered him to be a Sufi saint; cf. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 55.

26 *Durar al-ghawwāṣ fi Fatāwā al-Khawwāṣ*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh Ismā'īl (Cairo: Dār al-Hudā, 1405/1985) and *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 1418/1998) cf. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 57. al-Shaʿrānī was also influenced by the teachings of 'Alī al-Khawwāṣ' shaykh, the well-known Ibrāhīm al-Matbūlī (d. 877/1472), a central figure in the 15th century Sufi circles of Cairo. al-Shaʿrānī named his principal manual of ethics for him, *al-Akhlāq al-Matbūlīyya* (cf. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 8–9 notes 31, 43–44, etc., and Sabra, "Illiterate Sufis and Learned Artisans," 154).

27 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 53, 165 ff. Winter notes that "No other Sufi writer is quoted so much in his works" (p. 165).

28 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 166; see also William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*.

29 See for example chapter 11 "The Scale of the Law" in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 170–189, as well as "The Inviolability of the Law," 258 ff. On pp. 173–174 Chittick gives the following excerpt from the *Futūḥāt* "He who desires the path of knowledge and felicity should not let the Scale of the Law drop from his hand for a single instant ... In the same way, no one for whom the Law is prescribed (*al-mukallaf*) or rather no human being should let the Scale established by the Law drop from his hand ... (111 239.19)."

30 See pp. 380–384 in Richard J.A. McGregor, "Notes on the Transmission of Mystical Philo-

al-Shaʿrānī also gives tremendous weight to the *Futūḥāt* in *al-Mizān* and cites the work extensively in his introduction.³¹ In a passage addressing corroboration for his theory in the writings of other scholars,³² al-Shaʿrānī cites the *Futūḥāt* and credits Ibn al-ʿArabī with espousing the idea that, to whatever *madhhab* a jurist adhered, he would find that *madhhab* terminating in the Source (*al-ʿayn*) from which its imam derived their rulings. There he would see the rulings of all the imams dipped out from the same sea (*taghtarifu min baḥr wāhid*).³³ Thereby that jurist would be loosened from strict adherence to a single *madhhab* but would thereafter give decisions according to the equal soundness of all the *madhāhib*. Elsewhere in the introduction, al-Shaʿrānī cites the *Futūḥāt* in his discussion of the necessity of following the Sufi path under the guidance of a shaykh for attaining revealed knowledge of the Balance by direct tasting (*dhawq*) and even attaining direct witness (*shuhūd*) of the Source of the Law (*ʿayn al-sharʿa*).³⁴

This influence of Ibn al-ʿArabī extends to al-Shaʿrānī’s use of imagery, which Ibn al-ʿArabī also employed liberally.³⁵ In the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions that he is utilizing images or simulacra (*amthila*) and similitudes or sensory forms (*amthāl*) to bring concepts nearer to imagination (*taṣawwur*) for those

sophy: Ibn ʿArabī according to ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī,” In *Reason and Inspiration in Islam. Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought: Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt*, ed. Todd Lawson (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005): 380–392. Altogether, al-Shaʿrānī devoted no fewer than four of his works to the *Futūḥāt*, including his own work of Sufi doctrine, *al-Yawāqit wa-l-jawāhir*. Other works include: *Lawāqih al-anwār al-qudisiyya fi bayān qawāʿid al-Ṣūfiyya* (or *al-Muntaqāh min al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*) a synopsis of the *Futūḥāt* (*GAL* II, 336, no. 8); *Sawāṭiʿ al-anwār al-qudisiyya fi-mā ṣadarat bi-hi al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, explaining the verses of the *Futūḥāt* (*GAL* II, 336, no. 9); and of course *al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar fi bayān ʿulūm al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, an abridgement of *Lawāqih al-anwār* (*GAL* II, 336, no. 11). See Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 165. As Richard McGregor has pointed out, it is through al-Shaʿrānī’s works on the *Futūḥāt* (especially *al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar*) that many Muslim scholars accessed Ibn al-ʿArabī’s thought (cf. McGregor, “Notes on the Transmission of Mystical Philosophy,” 390).

31 In at least seven instances directly and elsewhere indirectly, as Samer Dajani has also observed. Dajani further notes instances of al-Shaʿrānī placing ideas which appear in the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī into the mouth of al-Khawwās (Cf. Dajani, “Ibn ʿArabī’s conception of Ijtihād,” 184–185 and 188–189).

32 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 7^{a-b}; Cairo 1862 ed., 16–17.

33 al-Shaʿrānī uses this same terminology of *ightirāf* in numerous places in *al-Mizān* to reference the all the *madhāhib* or their respective rulings being dipped out from the Source of the Law (cf. for example *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fols. 1^b, 10^a and 14^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 1, 22 and 33).

34 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 14^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 33–34.

35 See the contributions of Ali Karjoo-Ravary (Chapter 2) and Sophie Tyser (Chapter 3) to the present volume.

weak intellects who cannot imagine or perceive (*idrāk*) the meaning of such things apart from a similitude (*mathal*). In this “striking of similitudes” (*ḍarb al-amthāl*) or allegorical imagery, he follows the practice of God himself.³⁶

al-Shaʿrānī similarly characterizes his own use of sensible images or allegories subject to sensory perception (*amthila maḥsūsa*) in *al-Mizān*.

2 al-Shaʿrānī’s Explanation of the Pictograms of *al-Mizān*

al-Shaʿrānī first alludes to the pictograms of his *al-Mizān al-kubrā* early in his introduction to the work as he outlines his approach and the various issues he will address. There he indicates that he has included several introductory chapters which are beneficial as elucidation of obscure expressions or as a corridor that conducts one to the far interior of a house. He continues, indicating that:

... one of the introductory chapters includes mention (*dhikr*) of sensible images or allegories subject to sensory perception that bring nearer to comprehension (*tuqarribu ʿalā al-ʿaql*) just how all the *madhāhib* derive from the Great Source of the Law (*ʿayn al-sharʿa al-kubrā*) and the manner of connectedness—taken from the Presence of Divine Revelation—between the rulings of the latest followers (*muqallidīn*) of the Founders and the rulings of the earliest of them, from Throne to Footstool to Pen to Tablet to Jibrīl to Muḥammad to the Companions to the Followers to the Followers’ followers to the Founding Imams and their followers (*muqallidī-him*) to the Day of Judgment. And [the chapter includes] clear exposition (*bayān*)³⁷ of a Tree, Net, Circle, and Sea from which the person who considers them and reflects intently can apprehend (*yaʿlamu al-nāzir fī-hā idhā taʿammala*) that nothing of the rulings of the Imams departs from the Law. [Further, it includes] clear exposition of how all the Founding Imams will be interceding for their followers and regarding their distresses in this World and the Intermediate (*Barzakh*) and on the Day of Resurrection such that they can pass over the Bridge. [Further, it includes] clear exposition of how every *madhhab* adopted with sincerity

36 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aḥlā li-l-Thaqāfa, 2017), 9:313 and 317 (= Fut. III, 419 & 420).

37 Also “evidential proof,” cf. Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 312–313. See also S.A. Bonebakker, “al-Maʿānī wa ʿl-Bayān. 1. Arabic,” *EI2*.

will lead to the Gate of Paradise, and finally clear exposition of the nearness of all the Founding Imams with the Prophet along the River of Life in Paradise, as it is revealed by mystical unveiling.³⁸

The pictograms themselves appear a bit later, in the chapter alluded to previously. al-Shaʿrānī titles this chapter:

Chapter on clear exposition of a significant number of the sensible images or allegories by means of which is apprehended the connectedness of the rulings of all the legal interpreters and their followers with the Great Source of the Law. So contemplate them for they will guide you, God willing.³⁹

Immediately following the chapter title, al-Shaʿrānī launches into the pictograms. Through a series of rectangular fields terminating in triangular shapes and joined by rules, the opening pictogram presents a “*mithāl* (image or simulacrum) of the Presence of Revelation (*ḥaḍrat al-waḥy*), branching off it or from it all legal judgments” through a series of Presences or orders of being (*ḥaḍarāt*) each of which are labeled (Plate 7.4).⁴⁰ Surmounted by the Unconditioned Presence of Revelation (*ḥaḍrat al-waḥy allatī lā tukayyafu*), they continue in manifestation with the Throne, the Footstool, the Pen, the Preserved Tablet, the Tablets of Obliteration and Affirmation, Jibrīl, Muḥammad, the Companions, the Founding Imams (*al-aʿimma al-mujtahidīn*), and finally their followers to the day of resurrection. In the accompanying explanatory text, al-Shaʿrānī explicitly states that he has not placed a rule joining the Presence of Revelation to the others, for it is not reasonable to conceive of its direct connectedness to anyone.⁴¹

38 This full passage appears in MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 4^b [present order] and in the Cairo 1862 ed., 10.

39 The chapter appears in MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994 on fols. 22^b–26^a and in the Cairo 1862 ed. on pp. 52–59.

40 The supplied heading in the autograph exemplar reads *فثال حضرة الوحي وتفريع جميع* *الاحكام عنها او منها* cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā* MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 23^a and compare Cairo 1862 ed., 53.

41 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 23^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 53. In many manuscripts, the artisans rendered this detail, taking care to omit a band between the opening field (labeled *ḥaḍrat al-waḥy*) and the next. However, some artisans either did not notice or did not recognize its significance as discussed in the companion text (perhaps owing to limited mastery of the Arabic) and therefore included a joining band (cf. MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Yeni Cami 584, copied 1669, fol. 25^a).



PLATE 7.4 Pictogram of the Presence of Revelation (*ḥaḍrat al-waḥy*), branching off it or from it all legal judgments. al-Shaḥrānī, *at-Mizān al-kubrā* (Ms Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 994, copied in Egypt in 966/1559, autograph, fols. 22^b-23^a)

The next pictogram presents the “*mithāl* of the Source of the Pure Law (*‘ayn al-sharī’a al-muṭahhara*)” as an opening at the base of a Tree (*shajara*).⁴² al-Sha’rānī explains that from this opening emerges large branches representing the rulings of the Founders of the four *madhāhib*, then smaller branches representing the sayings of their important followers, and limbs branching off from the various sides of the branches representing the students of those followers. Finally red dots at the tips of the small limbs represent the questions for decision derived from the rulings of the scholars in every epoch (Plate 7.5 right).⁴³ al-Sha’rānī indicates that the viewer contemplating this tree should come to know that no ruling can be found that is not connected to those that preceded it back to the Source of the Law.⁴⁴ In their rendering of a tree, many artisans have carefully included branches of various sizes with the smallest branches terminating in red dots, after the model in the autograph exemplar. Others departed from the explanatory text and simply rendered a tree.⁴⁵

The next pictogram—almost always appearing on the facing page—presents “another *mithāl* of the connectedness of all the *madhāhib* of the Founding legal interpreters and their followers (*madhāhib al-muṭahhidīn wa-muqallidihim*) with the Source of the Law” in the manner of a Circle (*dā’ira*, as it is characterized elsewhere in the text) of lines or watercourses (*khuṭūṭ*) leading to a central Spring (*‘ayn*).⁴⁶ Each line or watercourse is labeled for a *madhhab* (school or way) and the central circle is typically labeled “The Source of the Law” (See Plate 7.5 upper left and compare Plate 7.6).⁴⁷

42 Provided in a label in the autograph exemplar but without independent heading مثال عين الشريعة المطهرة cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 23^b. Some later manuscripts supply a heading as well. In the opening lines of his preface, al-Sha’rānī characterizes the Sharī’a itself like unto the Great Spreading Tree, with the rulings of the ‘ulamā’ like the branches and twigs. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 1^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 2:

فان الشريعة كالشجرة العظيمة المنتشرة وأقوال علمائها كالفرع والأغصان فلا يوجد لنا فرع من غير اصل ولا ثمرة من غير غصن

43 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 23^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 54.

44 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 23^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 54.

45 Some taking an extremely naturalistic approach cf. MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hacı Selim Ağa 403, Egypt 1604 (though pictograms much later), fols. 48^b–49^a.

46 The supplied heading in the autograph exemplar reads: مثال اخر لاتصال سائر مذاهب المجتهدين ومقلديهم بعين الشريعة Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24^a and compare Cairo 1862 ed., 55.

47 The view of *madhhab* leans toward the sense of doctrine rather than the technical sense for legal system and is quite expansive, with more than 18 included in the pictogram.



PLATE 7.5 Pictogram of the Tree (right) facing Pictogram of the Spring and Watercourses / Circle (upper left) and Pictogram of the Net (lower left), al-Sha'rānī, *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 994, copied in Egypt in 966/1559, autograph, fols. 23^b-24^a)

وكل من تامل في هذه الشجرة وأمعن النظر فيها لم يجد قولاً منها غير متصل بما قبله أبداً وهذا مثال آخر
 لارتباط سائر مذاهب الجتهدين ومقلديهم بعين الشريعة فتأمل

فانظر يا اخي الى العين الوسطى التي هي مثال عين الشريعة المطهرة التي تنفد عن منها كل قول من اقوال الجتهدين ومقلديهم
 الى يوم القيامة ومثال مذاهب جميع الجتهدين المندسة والمستعملة مثال الخطوط المشارة الى العين
 الوسطى في سائر الجوانب فمن تامل في ذلك عرف ما اردنا به بقولنا انه ليس من مذاهب اهل الشريعة من مذهب ارجو عها
 كلها العين واحدة انتهى ونظير ذلك ايضا شبكة الصياد فان كل عين من انما تنقل العين الاولى في سائر الادوار وهذا مثالها

فانظر يا اخي الى العين الاكبرى التي تنفد عن منها كل قول من اقوال الجتهدين ومقلديهم
 الى يوم القيامة ومثال مذاهب جميع الجتهدين المندسة والمستعملة مثال الخطوط المشارة الى العين
 الوسطى في سائر الجوانب فمن تامل في ذلك عرف ما اردنا به بقولنا انه ليس من مذاهب اهل الشريعة من مذهب ارجو عها
 كلها العين واحدة انتهى ونظير ذلك ايضا شبكة الصياد فان كل عين من انما تنقل العين الاولى في سائر الادوار وهذا مثالها

فانظر يا اخي الى العين الاكبرى التي تنفد عن منها كل قول من اقوال الجتهدين ومقلديهم
 الى يوم القيامة ومثال مذاهب جميع الجتهدين المندسة والمستعملة مثال الخطوط المشارة الى العين
 الوسطى في سائر الجوانب فمن تامل في ذلك عرف ما اردنا به بقولنا انه ليس من مذاهب اهل الشريعة من مذهب ارجو عها
 كلها العين واحدة انتهى ونظير ذلك ايضا شبكة الصياد فان كل عين من انما تنقل العين الاولى في سائر الادوار وهذا مثالها

PLATE 7.6 Pictogram of the Spring and Watercourses / Circle and Pictogram of the Net. al-Sha'rānī, *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (ms Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Aşır Efendi 124, Egypt? 1023/1614, fol. 32^a)

Below the Circle/Spring and Watercourses appears a *mithāl* of the “Fisherman’s Net (*shabakat al-ṣayyād*),”⁴⁸ with each hole interlocked and connected back with the first hole, which represents the Source of the Law. Most artisans rendered this as a triangular shape with crosshatch infill, surmounted by a larger loop or circle labeled “the Source of the Law” (See Plate 7.5 lower left and compare Plate 7.6).

The next pictogram presents the “*mithāl* of the *ṣūra* (simulacrum of the form) of the connectedness of all the *madhāhib* of the Founding legal interpreters and the rulings of their followers with the Sea of the Revelation and the Tradition (*baḥr al-kitāb wa-l-sunna*) by way of manifest ascription.”⁴⁹ In the presumed autograph exemplar, the pictogram includes a perimeter defining the boundary of the Sea from which extends small lines representing the *madhāhib* of the Founders (Plate 7.7 upper right). This is certainly subtle, and many artisans failed to distinguish it from the surrounding frame of the written area and even neglected the extending bands entirely.⁵⁰

Below the Sea appears the “*mithāl* of the position of the four imams and others at the Accounting and the Weighing (*al-ḥisāb wa-l-mīzān*) with their followers behind them so that they may intercede.”⁵¹ The stations of the imams are typically provided along the interior corners of an inner square with a rendering of a balance or scales at the center. Extending back from the inner square are fields with strokes or marks representing the followers (see Plate 7.7 lower right and compare Plate 7.8).

On the facing page appears the “*mithāl* of the position of the Founding Imams regarding their followers on the Bridge (*al-ṣirāṭ*) such that they may be delivered to Paradise without falling into the Fire.”⁵² Two different images for

48 No heading is provided with this pictogram in the autograph exemplar and the term *mithāl* is not explicitly used but understood as the Net is characterized this way elsewhere in the introduction. In the text, the words شبكة الصياد also and نظير ذلك ايضا are rubricated within the text cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24^a.

49 The heading supplied in the autograph exemplar reads وهذا مثال صورة اتصال مذاهب المجتهدين واقوال مقلديهم بجزر الكتاب والسنة من طريق السند الظاهر cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24^b and compare Cairo 1862 ed., 56.

50 Cf. MS University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center), Isl. Ms. 586, likely late 17th century, p. 64 and MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Nuruosmaniye 1875, copied in 1694, fol. 26^b.

51 Intended is the accounting at the end of days. The heading supplied in the autograph exemplar reads: مثال موقف الائمة الاربعة وغيرهم عند الحساب والميزان واتباعهم خلفهم ليشفعوا. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24^b and compare Cairo 1862 ed., 56.

52 The heading supplied in the autograph exemplar reads: وهذا مثال موقف الائمة المجتهدين يلاحظون اتباعهم على الصراط حتى يخلصوا الى الجنة من غير وقوع في النار. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 25^a and compare Cairo 1862 ed., 57.



PLATE 7.7 Pictogram of the Sea (upper right) and Pictogram of the Accounting / Weighing (lower right) facing the Pictogram of the Bridge (left). al-Sha'rānī, *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 994, Egypt 966/1559, autograph, fols. 24^b–25^a)

the Bridge are given according to whether or not the people on them kept to the Law or diverted from it—one straight and one jagged in a zig-zag fashion—and the *mithāl* of Hell is given below, typically in the form of a solid dark rectangular field (see Plate 7.7 left and compare Plate 7.8 left).

The next pictogram presents a “*mithāl* of the paths of the *madhāhib* of the Founding Imams to the gates of Paradise and that whoever sincerely follows a *madhhab* among them will be conveyed by it to the gate of Paradise” (Plate 7.9 right).⁵³ This is typically represented as a large rectangular field with several lines labeled for the paths of the followers of each of several imams, each of which leads to an opening labeled “the Gate of Paradise” (*bāb al-janna*). Into the design of the gate some artists have incorporated the Qur’anic verses “But the righteous will be in Gardens with springs—‘Enter them in peace and safety!’” (Plate 7.10)⁵⁴

The final pictogram on the facing page presents the “*mithāl* of the Domed shrines (*qibāb*) of the Founding Imams by the River of Life (*nahr al-ḥayāt*) in Paradise, which is the semblance (*maẓhar*) of the Sea of the Pure Law in the world” (See Plate 7.9 left).⁵⁵ This is typically represented by series of five dome shapes along a rectangular field with vegetal forms sprouting from it. Each dome is labeled for a different Founding Imam or for the Prophet, whose dome is larger than the others. al-Sha’rānī says that “the perfection of their pleasure in Paradise is beholding the essence of the Prophet.”⁵⁶ Again some artists have added here the Qur’anic verses: “The righteous will live securely among Gardens and rivers, secure in the presence of an all-powerful Sovereign”⁵⁷ (See again Plate 7.10), but more commonly a solid field is employed.

al-Sha’rānī concludes the chapter presenting these *amthila* with an emphatic statement regarding the source of this final *mithāl*, namely that he did not draw the domes with his mind, but according to a *ṣūra* (form or image) which he saw in Paradise during one of his visions.⁵⁸

53 The heading supplied in the autograph exemplar reads: وهذا مثال طرق المذاهب الائمة والمجتهدين الى ابواب الجنة وان كل من عمل بمذهب منها خالصا اوصله الى باب الجنة. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 25^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 58.

54 Q 15:45–46 trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem. See for example ms Şehid Ali Paşa 995, Egypt 1625, fol. 36^b.

55 The companion text in the autograph exemplar opens: وهذا مثال قباب الائمة المجتهدين على نهر: الحياة في الجنة الذي هو مظهر بحر الشريعة المطهرة في الدنيا. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 26^a and compare Cairo 1862 ed., 59.

56 فكان من كمال نعيمهم في الجنة شهود ذاته صلى الله عليه وسلم. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 26^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 59.

57 Q 54:54–55 trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem. Again see ms Şehid Ali Paşa 995, fol. 37^a.

58 وما رسمت هذه القباب بعقلي وانما رسمتها على صورة ما رايتهما في الجنة في بعض الوقائع ... Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 26^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 59.



PLATE 7.9 Pictogram of the Gate (right) facing Pictogram of the Domed shrines by the River of Life (left) in autograph exemplar. al-Sha'rānī, *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 994, Egypt 966/1559, fols. 25^b-26^a)

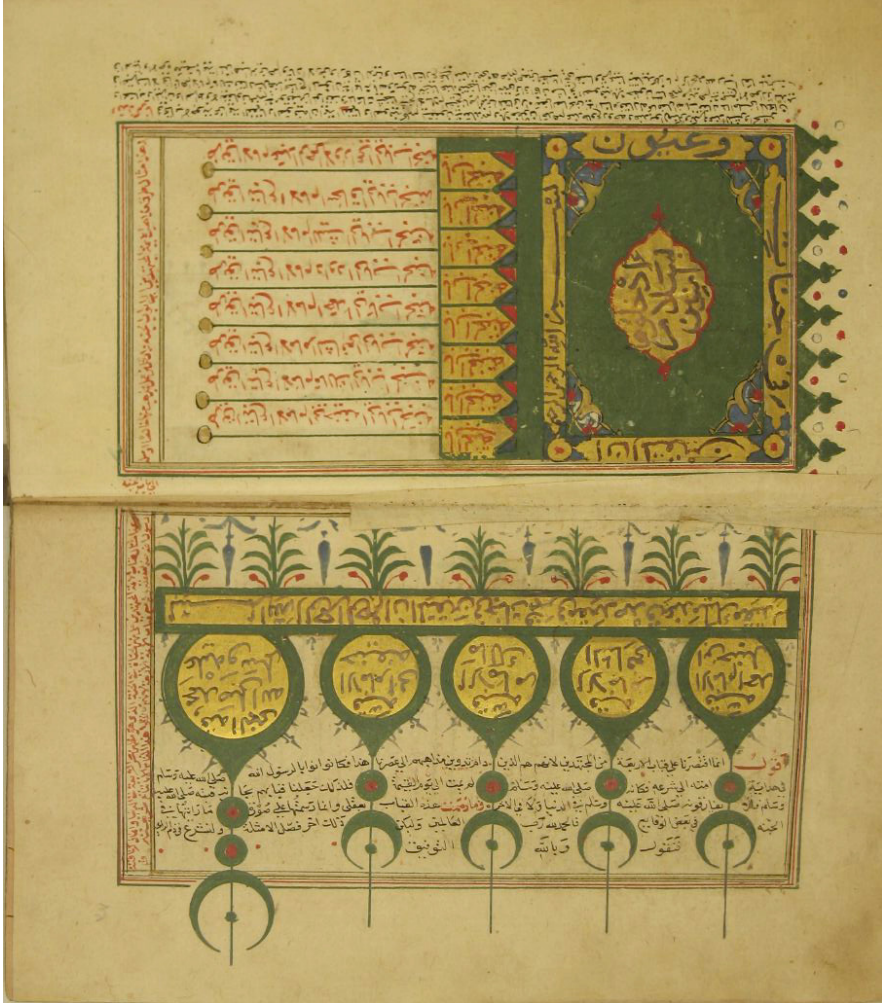


PLATE 7.10 Pictogram of the Gate (right) facing Pictogram of the Domed shrines by the River of Life (left), each incorporating Qur'anic verses. al-Sha'rānī, *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (Mrs Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa 995, Egypt? 1034/1625 fols. 36^b–37^a)

3 al-Sha'rānī's Own Experience of Attaining Revealed Knowledge of the Balance and the Source of the Law

As a defender of Sufi orthodoxy and ardent adherent of Ibn al-'Arabī, al-Sha'rānī himself held particular regard for the Law and its significance as an essential guide even in mysticism—even surer than mystical unveiling which could vary in its source but in its true form would always agree or correspond with the Law.⁵⁹

In *al-Mizān*, al-Sha'rānī is careful to emphasize that attaining gnosis (*ma'rifa*) of the Balance by direct tasting can only be realized while rigorously following the Sufi path under the guidance of a shaykh.⁶⁰ Further, no one can attain direct witness of the Source of the Law unless that person progresses on the Sufi way, following and submitting to the guidance of a shaykh who has experienced supersensory knowledge of the Balance.⁶¹

al-Sha'rānī goes on to describe in detail his own rigorous experience of denial and devotion that led to his witnessing the Source of the Pure Law with the eye of his heart (*waqaftu bi-'ayn qalbī 'alā 'ayn al-sharī'a al-muṭahhara*), following his own shaykh 'Alī al-Khawwās.⁶² He indicates that he first received it from al-Khaḍir by knowledge, faith, and surrender (*'ilm^{an} wa-īmān^{an} wa-taslīm^{an}*). He then progressed along the way under the direction of his shaykh 'Alī al-Khawwās (*fī al-sulūk 'alā yad shaykh*) until he came to examine and know (*al-iṭṭilā' 'alā*) the Source of the Law by direct tasting, mystical unveiling, and certitude (*dhawq^{an} wa-kashf^{an} wa-yaqīn^{an}*). He further describes his path and what he beheld and then indicates that a form (*ṣūra*) of what he saw (*ra'aytu*) will appear in the chapter dedicated to sensible images or allegories.⁶³

A bit later in the text, al-Sha'rānī again describes what he himself saw (*ra'aytu*) when God bestowed on him to examine and know the Source of the Law.⁶⁴ He goes on in the same passage to detail what he observed as he gazed upon (*naẓara ilā*) the *madhāhib* of the Founding Imams (*al-a'imma al-mujtahidīn*) and all that branched out from them across epochs: none of the

59 After all, al-Sha'rānī was a respected member of the *'ulamā'* as well as a Sufi. Cf. Ibrahim, "al-Sha'rānī's Response to Legal Purism," 13; Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 234 and 237; cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 8^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 13:

ان الكشف الصحيح لا يأتي دائما الا موافقا للشريعة كما هو مقرر بين العلماء والله أعلم.

60 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 14^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 33–34.

61 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fols. 10^a and 14^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 22 and 34.

62 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 10^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 22–23.

63 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 10^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 23.

64 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 14^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 32.

rulings departed from the Law owing to their mutual connectedness to the Source of the Law.⁶⁵ He mentions that the nearest visual allegory conveying that mutual connectedness back to the Source of the Law is the fisherman’s net used in Egypt (*shabakat ṣayyād al-samak fī arḍ Miṣr*).⁶⁶

In fact, al-Shaʿrānī first introduces his own revelatory and validating experience of the Source of the Law in the presence of al-Khaḍīr in his earlier work on the Balance, *al-Mīzān al-Khaḍīriyya*.⁶⁷ In this work he also emphasizes that—as he himself heard from his shaykh ‘Alī al-Khawwāṣ— the way to attain a direct witness of the Source of the Law is to follow the path of asceticism and sincere devotion and to restrain one’s members—exoteric and esoteric—against everything which God hates, for whoever does that will reach the Great Source of the Law.⁶⁸

4 al-Shaʿrānī’s Intentions in Composing, Illustrating and Circulating *al-Mīzān*

While al-Shaʿrānī strongly advocated for the direct personal guidance of a shaykh in matters of Sufism—including the mystical grounding of *al-Mīzān*—he was also one of many orthodox Sufis who were prolific authors and teachers and whose *zāwiya*s were schools.⁶⁹

65 Cf. *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 14^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 32.

66 See again the pictogram of the Fisherman’s Net (*shabakat al-ṣayyād*), Plate 7.5 and Plate 7.6.

67 This work was composed three years prior to *al-Mīzān al-kubrā* and is essentially a shorter version of it (in the manuscript corpus it is occasionally identified as *al-Mīzān al-ṣaghīr* or *al-Mīzān al-ṣuġhrā*, i.e., “the Minor Balance”). As for the significance of this report, its transmission, and in particular inclusion of the diagram as essential content, we can turn once again to the manuscript corpus. While printed editions of this work exist and include the diagram—including the 1989 Cairo edition of ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd in which he relies on the Būlāq 1300/1882–1883 edition and a manuscript transcribed in 1165/1752—I have been able to consult additional, earlier manuscripts, each of which also includes the diagram with the report: MS British Library, Or. 3197 (copied 1034/1625), MS Yale University Hartford Seminary Arabic 103 (copied 1111/1700), and MS Leipzig, Vollers 850, I (copied 12th/18th century). In one early manuscript, MS British Library, Or. 3197 (dated 1034/1625), the copyist claims to have worked from an exemplar in the hand of the author. This same copyist, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-‘Uṭaywī al-Shabrāhārīsī al-Shaʿrāwī, also wrote out a copy of al-Shaʿrānī’s *al-Mīzān al-kubrā* (MS Reistülküttab 403) which he also claims to have transcribed from an exemplar in the hand of the author. As discussed earlier, I believe the latter exemplar to be MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994.

68 Cf. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Mīzān al-Khaḍīriyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd ([Cairo]: ‘Ālam al-Fikr, 1409/1989; henceforth referred to as “Cairo 1989 ed.”), 43.

69 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 194.

al-Shaʿrānī was clearly touched by the debate—ongoing for centuries by his time—around the role of books in Sufism.⁷⁰ The consensus in this debate was that “books were useful tools with which to instruct the novice in the ethical aspects of the Way.”⁷¹ Still, in mystical aspects, guidance and spiritual training (*riyāḍa*) under a shaykh was considered essential and self-education by books was considered “unreliable and dangerous” because of possible misinterpretation.⁷² In the introduction to *al-Mīzān*, al-Shaʿrānī declares that certain gnosis cannot be reached through careful study of books but only by way of true mystical unveiling (*al-kashf al-ṣaḥīḥ*).⁷³

In his autobiographical accounts, al-Shaʿrānī relays that when he first came to shaykh ʿAlī al-Khawwās, the shaykh ordered him to sell all of his books and give the money to charity in order to rid himself of acquired knowledge and make room for heavenly knowledge. al-Shaʿrānī did so, and shortly after composed his first book which the shaykh approved.⁷⁴ al-Shaʿrānī did deliberate over whether he should write or not, provided he was inspired. He consulted his shaykh who left the decision to al-Shaʿrānī’s “own understanding of God’s will” and his ability to resist those who would question what he wrote.⁷⁵ al-Shaʿrānī decided to write, following in the tradition of numerous popularizers of Sufism.

In composing *al-Mīzān*, al-Shaʿrānī intended its study and circulation among scholars, particularly those with Sufistic inclinations.⁷⁶ In his introduction, al-Shaʿrānī declares that he composed the work “for the brethren among the seekers of knowledge.”⁷⁷ As we have already seen, he also writes for those who seek gnosis of the Balance by means of direct tasting, even addressing them dir-

70 Even Ibn Khaldūn threw into this debate around the necessity of a spiritual guide for those embarking on the Sufi path and the role of books in Sufi training and practice cf. Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 154–156 ff.

71 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 192.

72 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 192.

73 Cf. *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 8^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 14.

74 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 57.

75 Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 194 ff.

76 And as the manuscript corpus attests, it was indeed widely circulated and read, but by whom is another extremely important question to pursue (particularly in light of arguments that al-Shaʿrānī targeted “the Muslim community at large” and “no longer ... scholars and students of jurisprudence” only, cf. Dajani, “Ibn ʿArabī’s conception of Ijtihād,” 181).

77 And “only after their repeated questioning” (a common device). Cf. *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*, ms Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 8^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 15.

ectly in sections on this topic.⁷⁸ This certainly includes ‘*ulamā*’ and other legal practitioners, particularly those in a position to advise laypeople and especially those inclined or even already initiated to the Sufi path. al-Sha‘rānī invites and expects them to be perusing his volume, and in his conclusion adjures them to correct any mistakes which they encounter.⁷⁹

Ultimately, al-Sha‘rānī is writing for novices—those still progressing along the way.⁸⁰ Over and over in *al-Mizān* he outlines the way to fully grasp his theory—that is, to reach the inspiration of the Source of the Pure Law and to reach revealed knowledge of the Balance by way of direct tasting. The way is through following the Sufi path under the guidance of a shaykh.⁸¹

al-Sha‘rānī contends that the ‘*ulamā*’ too can reach this level—attaining knowledge and even a direct experience of the Balance. Those who claim to have done so must be carefully evaluated,⁸² but it is possible for them, provided they take the necessary steps.

All in all, al-Sha‘rānī’s allegorical exposition in *al-Mizān*—studied independently or in consultation with one’s teachers—conveys not only his theory but also a means of realization via examination of the Source of the Pure Law—the Law as it really is—under the guidance of a shaykh. Early on in the introduction of *al-Mizān*, al-Sha‘rānī states clearly that in authoring the text he is responding to a need for exposition of this theory of the Balance and clarification of its meanings.⁸³ As we have already seen, he characterizes his intro-

78 For example the chapter فصل إن اردت يا اخي الوصول الى معرفة هذه الميزان ذوقا. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 14^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 33.

79 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 190^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 246. This follows his lengthy discussion of various practical examples (*amthila*) of the application of his theory organized by the typical topical classification for works of *fiqh*. As elaborated by Ibrahim, al-Sha‘rānī wrote with special concern for laypeople and the pragmatic application of his theory depended a great deal on persuading legal practitioners of its theoretical justification. Cf. Ibrahim, “al-Sha‘rānī’s Response to Legal Purism,” 129, 133, etc.

80 Michael Winter points out that at various places in al-Sha‘rānī’s writings he conveys clearly that with his Sufi works he intends to provide ethical manuals (not mystical treatises) which expound “ideal mores for novices not perfect Sufis” cf. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt*, 195. This seems to extend this more practical legal work as well.

81 As we have already seen cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fols. 10^a and 14^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 22 and 33–34.

82 He even includes a chapter of the introduction on how to respond if such a scholar comes claiming to have attained gnosis of the Balance by direct tasting cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 13^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 32.

83 That is, “... استخرت الله تعالى وأجبتهم الى سؤالهم في ايضاح الميزان”. Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, Cairo 1862 ed., 10. In MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994 (fol. 4^b) the continuation of the passage does not

duction as an explanation of difficult or obscure expressions and a corridor that conducts one to the far interior of a house. Further, he emphasizes that he includes sensible images or allegories subject to sensory perception (*amthila maḥsūsa*) in order to bring nearer to comprehension the central underpinning of his theory: the unseen realities of the Source and the legal traditions emerging from it.⁸⁴ These references and versions of the pictograms themselves appear in the earliest known copy of the manuscript prepared under his direction. A seeker can thus begin along this progression of perception by first gazing upon the pictograms that convey these unseen realities.⁸⁵

al-Shaʿrānī further characterizes what he is conveying by way of sensible images as *bayān*—clear exposition but also evidential proof. He indicates that these *amthila* are clarifying, but also evincing and validating the unseen realities supporting his theory: the connectedness of the *madhhab* Founders with the Source of the Law, the way each *madhhab* delivers its followers to the Gate of Paradise, and so on.⁸⁶

Commensurately, in the explanatory texts accompanying each pictogram, al-Shaʿrānī repeatedly adjures readers to look, consider, and reflect intently upon these sensible images so that they too may be persuaded and guided. Indeed, al-Shaʿrānī's shaykhs took such an approach with him, deploying allegory and imagery in their teachings.⁸⁷ Elsewhere in the introduction to *al-Mizān*, he indicates that he heard his esteemed shaykh Zakarīyā al-Anṣārī say many times that the Source of the Law is like the sea and from whatever side one dips out from it, all is one.⁸⁸ al-Shaʿrānī may be echoing this teaching—

appear in the main transcript, but is provided on the outer margin in another hand (along with *signe-de-renvoi* indicating placement). However, both the supplied text and the insertion sign have also been struck through. All such signs suggest a fairly well-developed text and theory finally being elaborated in writing.

- 84 Cf. again *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 4^b [present order]; Cairo 1862 ed., 10.
- 85 Samuela Pagani states, "... even the least sophisticated of readers can catch a glimpse of the relationship between the 'source' and its derivations, thanks to the drawings in the book." Cf. Pagani, "The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*," 210.
- 86 For example, in the context of shifting from one *madhhab* to another (school boundary-crossing) cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 11^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 25.
- 87 al-Shaʿrānī's experience with imagery appears to extend to interpretive contexts for a diagram known as *al-Dā'ira al-Shādhilyya*. At least two manuscripts transmitting a *sharḥ* of this diagram attributed to al-Shaʿrānī are known to me: MS Berlin, Sprenger 810 (Ahlwardt 4140) and MS Princeton Islamic manuscripts, Garrett no. 1206Y, fols. 44^b–53^b. The attribution is more explicit in the Berlin manuscript. The text of the Princeton manuscript is less clear in terms of attribution, but suggests that the author is relaying material received from his father Aḥmad.
- 88 Cf. *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 14^b; Cairo 1862 ed., 33.

which, as we have seen, he attributes to Ibn al-‘Arabī as well—in the simulacrum of the form of the connectedness of all the *madhāhib* of the Founding legal interpreters and their followers with the Sea of the Revelation and the Tradition which he presents among the sensible images.

In conveying a teaching transmitted from his most important shaykh ‘Alī al-Khawwāṣ in the introduction to *al-Mīzān*, al-Sha‘rānī references another *mithāl* (allegory or simulacrum) which his shaykh may have utilized. The imagery is another relatable form of palm, fingers and joints which al-Sha‘rānī details in words.⁸⁹ He notes that he once heard his shaykh say in regard to the fact that the scholars of the Law (*‘ulamā’ al-sharī‘a*) order the student to adhere to a particular *madhhab* and the scholars of Profound reality (*‘ulamā’ al-ḥaqīqa*) order the novice (*murīd*) to adhere to a single shaykh approaching the way, that a relevant allegory (*mithāl*) for the Source of the Law or the Presence of the Gnosis of God (*ḥaḍrat ma‘rifat Allāh*) is the palm. Further, a *mithāl* for the *madhāhib* of the Founding legal interpreters and the ways of the shaykhs is the fingers, and a *mithāl* for the duration spent occupied with a particular *madhhab* or way of a particular shaykh is the joints of the fingers. He goes on to clarify that each of the joints represents a third of the way along the path to the Source which is likened to the palm.⁹⁰

Perhaps most significantly, al-Sha‘rānī conveys that his shaykh ‘Alī al-Khawwāṣ once responded to al-Sha‘rānī’s question of which *madhhab* was best by drawing a circular pictogram on the wall with a stick.⁹¹ al-Khawwāṣ then explained the drawing saying, “No *madhhab* is foremost than another with respect to the Law (for the one who clings to proper conduct).”⁹²

al-Sha‘rānī relates this episode in *al-Mīzān al-Khaḍirīyya*, and faithfully includes a reproduction of the drawing with the report, preceded by a heading: “And this is the image of what Sīdī ‘Alī al-Khawwāṣ drew (for me)” (Plate 7.11).⁹³ Following the pictogram, al-Sha‘rānī explains what each element signifies, as well as the resulting conclusion to be drawn by those for whom God

89 The ease of visually referencing this analogy with a gesture or gaze to one’s hand may explain why al-Sha‘rānī did not feel compelled to include a visual depiction as well.

90 Cf. *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 11^a; Cairo 1862 ed., 25.

91 Cf. *al-Mīzān al-Khaḍirīyya*, MS British Library, Or. 3197, fols. 28^b–29^a; MS Yale University Hartford Seminary Arabic 103, fol. 16^a; MS Leipzig, Vollers 850, I, fol. 27^a; as well as Cairo 1989 ed., 42. My gratitude to Adam Sabra who mentions this episode in his “Illiterate Sufis and Learned Artisans,” 164.

92 *al-Mīzān al-Khaḍirīyya*, Cairo 1989 ed., 42. Continues in MS British Library, Or. 3197, fols. 28^b–29^a “... along with the Founding Imams.”

93 Cf. Cairo 1989 ed., 42; British Library Or. 3197, fol. 20^a; Leipzig Vollers 850, I, fol. 27^a; Yale Hartford Seminary Arabic 103, fol. 16^a.

اشارة اذا كتبت سبوا لا تنزل يد قذ حاصل كما تتردد وانما فطعن في حيد يد
 التي يتبع منها حق لم تكن حق فيمكن يصح القول بان كل منعه
 مهيب وسيعلم بقوله لكل عام اذا نشأ صيغ المعاهد المتصلة
 والمندرسة الاندلسي مما لها الي مرتين الترتيبات كتحقق
 وتتميز بمرات لا يرد من عدم العلم بانها في المدرج بطال كما
 في بقية من اصل استخراجها وانما المراد في ذلك التتاليه
 والحديث فيتمهيد الحنف يقول ذلك العام في حقه الزمان
 فخر يرضاه الله ذلك يعرف عالم اخر يرضع خلال في القول الاول
 وقد كان في اناس وانما في قوله في ذلك العام في حقه الزمان
 طويله فلي جا ذلك العالم الثاني تركها فخر يرضع خلال
 لتوالت لاحد عمل به في القول الذي يرجع على الزمان
 غير الي ذلك **وقد اجمع أهل الكوفة** انما منقول
 من انقول العلم هذه الترتيبه الا وكان شرا لابي تقدم
 نارا والحق فينا في بفضله ورحمته ان يكون له في الامير
 نصيب من الامير الذي جعل العالمين شريفة كل انما علم
وقد تلتك مرة لسيد وعلما في حقه الله فلي
 مع برهين

اصغر علي فكل لا يحصر برك المعصية
 في يد ابراهيم تملأ حتما في الحضر عليه السلام انما ذهب
 انتم فحتم في الخيال بعد كان في يده هذا الذي يقول
 ليس بذهب اولي بالشعبه من مذموم من اوله
 وهذه صورته ما خطه سدي علي حرم في العشر



هذه فصول الترتيبه هي الايقاف الصوري الذي في الوسط والذهب
 المستعمله و المندرسة هي الخطوط المنقحة في الارتفاع
 من جميع الحق ابي ليس مذموم اولي بعين الترتيب من مذموم
 عند كل من كتف الله فلي فينا في انا فينا فلي
 فطريق الوصو الي فتحو عين الترتيبه فلي فينا فينا

PLATE 7.11 Pictogram from a manuscript witness of *al-Mizān al-Khaṭīriyya*. al-Shārānī, *al-Mizān al-Khaṭīriyya* (Ms Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Vollers 850, i, copied 12th/18th century, fols. 26^b-27^a)

has removed the veil of obscurity. He indicates that the Source of the Law is the circle at the center⁹⁴ and the *madhāhib* practically applied and studied are the lines leading toward the central circle from all sides. Thus, no *madhhab* is foremost with respect to the Law than another.⁹⁵ al-Shaʿrānī has reproduced a version of this same pictogram, and a prescription for attaining a glimpse of the Source of the Law, in *al-Mizān al-kubrā* (see again Plates 7.5 and 7.6).

Conclusions

While diagrammatic illustrations are not uncommon in Sufi literature—especially in the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his successors—on the whole they remain understudied in their origins, significations and functions, particularly as manifest historically in the manuscript corpus.⁹⁶ This has certainly been the case for the pictograms of al-Shaʿrānī’s *al-Mizān al-kubrā*.

These sensible images or sensory allegories for perceiving unseen realities—have their origins in what al-Shaʿrānī’s illiterate shaykh (*shaykh ummī*) and other spiritual guides taught, and what al-Shaʿrānī himself was eventually able to see with the eye of his heart as graced by God while under the inspiration of al-Khaḍir and under his shaykh’s guidance. Following the practice of use of imagery by his immediate teachers and others—in particular Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Shaʿrānī has offered a means of perceiving what is otherwise unseen, on a higher plane of profound reality.

94 “الدائرة الكبرى” in British Library Or. 3197, Yale Hartford Seminary Arabic 103, and Cairo 1989 ed., but “الدائرة الصغرى” in Leipzig Vollers 850, 1.

95 Cairo 1989 ed., 42; British Library Or. 3197, fol. 20^a; Yale Hartford Seminary Arabic 103, fol. 16^b; Leipzig Vollers 850, 1, fol. 27^a.

96 Certainly great strides are being taken with the present volume. Sufistic cosmological diagrams—often far more dense and involved in their modes of presentation and referents than the pictograms of al-Shaʿrānī’s *al-Mizān al-kubrā*—have already been explored to some degree. Marcia K. Hermansen utilized semiotic analysis to ground a series of South Asian Sufi diagrams in a presentation of “model of” and “model for” spiritual practice mapped onto various dimensions of the human body (cf. “Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge: A Semiotic Approach to Sufi Cosmological Diagrams,” *Religious Studies and Theology* 12, no. 1 (1992): 52–77). Samer Akkach explored the visual symbolism utilized by Ibn al-ʿArabī in particular to elaborate the convergence of metaphysics, cosmology and mysticism for spatial organization. He declares that symbolism in Sufi contexts hinges on “hierarchical conception in constructing ontological links between the lower and the higher, the sensible and the intelligible” (cf. Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Pre-modern Islam*, 25).

Many of these images have allegorical referents in observation of everyday life—the Tree, the Fisherman’s Net used in Egypt, the Spring and Watercourses / Circle, the Sea, the hand and fingers—while others, such as the Domed shrines along the River of Life in Paradise—are the products of visionary experience.⁹⁷

Across referents and across witnesses in the manuscript corpus, these pictograms provide clear exposition and manifest evidential proof for concepts of meta-historical, metaphysical reality: the Source of the Law and the equal connectedness of all the Founders of the *madhāhib*, their rulings and their followers. Further, they attest to the underlying inspiration and validity of the claims al-Sha’rānī is making regarding the equal orthodoxy of the four Sunni *madhāhib*.⁹⁸

The artisans transmitting al-Sha’rānī’s work recognized the iconic significance of these pictograms and carefully reproduced them. While the pictograms as they have been transmitted are rather rudimentary and—lacking a dense and involved iconographical program—may not manage to effectively promote prolonged contemplation via their visual execution apart from their label texts, the author nevertheless invites readers to consider, contemplate and reflect intently upon them.

According to al-Sha’rānī’s teaching, while simply regarding and pondering the pictograms is not sufficient for fully realizing the revealed knowledge of an experiential observation of the Source of the Law itself, such contemplation—alongside submission to a shaykh, asceticism and sincere devotion—could conduct the seeker further along the progression of perception leading to such an encounter. Indeed the pictograms can serve to mediate later recognition of these realities as one progresses along the path.

This was, in fact, al-Sha’rānī’s own experience, for it was before his revelatory encounter with al-Khaḍīr that his shaykh drew a pictogram for him, utilizing a drawing as a means of instructing and conveying the idea. In providing these allegories subject to sensory perception in *al-Mīzān*, al-Sha’rānī thus follows the instructive and validating practice of his shaykh, of Ibn al-‘Arabī and indeed of God himself who “coineth the similitudes for mankind in order that they may reflect.”⁹⁹

97 As Samuela Pagani has also noted (cf. Pagani, “The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*,” 195 note 85).

98 This is another dimension of the “metaphysical validation of *ikhtilāf*” and acceptance of it which Pagani contends al-Sha’rānī is emphasizing in *al-Mīzān* (cf. Pagani, “The Meaning of the *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*,” 205).

99 Q 14:25 trans. Pickthall.

TABLE 7.1 Pictograms of *al-Mizān al-kubrā*

| Pictogram | Where found in <i>al-Mizān al-kubrā</i> | Plates |
|--|---|--|
| Presences (<i>ḥaḍarāt</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994 fol. 23 ^a ; Cairo 1862 ed., 53 | 7.4 |
| Tree (<i>shajara</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994 fol. 23 ^b ; Cairo 1862 ed., 54 | 7.5 (right) |
| Circle (<i>dā'ira</i>) / Spring and Water-courses (<i>'ayn wa-khuṭūṭ</i>)* | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24 ^a ; Cairo 1862 ed., 55 | 7.5 (upper left) and 7.6 |
| Fisherman's Net (<i>shabakat al-şayyād</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24 ^a ; Cairo 1862 ed., 55 | 7.5 (lower left) and 7.6 |
| Sea of the Revelation and the Tradition (<i>baḥr al-kitāb wa-l-sunna</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24 ^b ; Cairo 1862 ed., 56 | 7.7 (upper right) and 7.8 (upper right) |
| Accounting and the Weighing (<i>al-ḥisāb wa-l-mizān</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 24 ^b ; Cairo 1862 ed., 56 | 7.7 (lower right) and 7.8 (lower right) |
| Bridge (<i>al-şirāt</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 25 ^a ; Cairo 1862 ed., 57 | 7.7 (left) and 7.8 (left) |
| Gate of Paradise (<i>bāb al-janna</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 25 ^b ; Cairo 1862 ed., 58 | 7.9 (right) and 7.10 (right) |
| Domed shrines by the River of Life (<i>qibāb 'alā nahr al-ḥayāt</i>) | MS Şehid Ali Paşa 994, fol. 26 ^a ; Cairo 1862 ed., 59 | 7.9 (left) and 7.10 (left) |

* Compare pictogram in *al-Mizān al-Khaḍiriyya* (Plate 7.11)

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