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PATTERNS OF CONTEMPLATION:

Ibn 'Arabi, Abdullah Bosnevi and
The Blessing-Prayer of Effusion

PABLO BENEITO &
STEPHEN HIRTENSTEIN

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IBN ARABI INTERRELIGIOUS RESEARCH INITIATIVE,
MONASH UNIVERSITY

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Published by Anqa Publishing PO Box 1178

Oxford OX2 8YS, UK

www.anqa.co.uk

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The Open Access publication of this book has been made possible by generous funding from the Ibn Arabi Interreligious Research Initiative, Monash University.

ISBN: 978-1-905937-70-7 (Hardback)

ISBN: 978-1-905937-71-4 (PDF)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Cover and interior design Andy Meaden meadencreative.com

Cover image: © AdobeStock/sezer66

First published 2021.

Dedicated to all our friends and colleagues who have accompanied us
on this ongoing path of exploration and discovery.

From Reviews of *Patterns of Contemplation*:

“In essence, this volume provides students of Ibn ‘Arabi and his immense historical influences with three different studies of very different lengths, each of which will repay repeated reading: firstly and most importantly, the most elaborate English introduction to the Arabic ‘science of letters’ and a host of closely related poetic features, devices and symbols which are central to deciphering and fully understanding both Ibn ‘Arabi’s immense poetic production and his prose; secondly, a previously unstudied window on the study, ongoing contemplation and spiritual interaction with Ibn ‘Arabi in the Ottoman realms (from the Balkans to the Arab heartlands); and thirdly, a quite different historical tradition of related metaphysical poetry and prayer-blessings, which gradually spread in devotional settings across North and West Africa down to the present day”

James Winston Morris, Boston University

“At once mathematical and spiritual, Patterns of Contemplation is a uniquely rich introduction to the science of letters and number symbolism, and itself a rare expression of artistic and scholarly devotion to the study of our human mystical heritage”

Aydogan Kars, Monash University

“We have an extraordinary achievement before us, where we observe great competence in Akbarian doctrines. The Science of Letters combined with numerical and geometric symbolism in particular is treated with thorough investigation and deep insight. The reader is taken by the hand, and even those who do not possess a specific training, nor that particular aptitude that would be desirable for such a peculiar and essential field, should be able to follow and appreciate the articulated dimensions of this ‘Pythagorean’ vision of existence. At the same time, one should also be able to understand that Ibn ‘Arabi’s treatment of this Science and, consequently, of a Master of his school like Abdullah Bosnevi, goes far beyond what may have ever been produced in the West, and reveals the heights of the Muhammadian doctrines”

Paolo Urizzi, Perennia Verba

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Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the following for their help and advice in our encounter with this poetical masterpiece: those who attended online seminars organised by the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society so that we could try out our findings; Jane Carroll, Julian Cook, Aydogan Kars, Mahmud Kiliç, James Morris, Adem Murphy, Mehmet Okutan, Mohammed Rustom and Paolo Urizzi for their generous help and perceptive comments; Tim Oldfield for his recording studio and expertise; the Ibn Arabi Interreligious Research Initiative, Monash University, for their financial assistance; and Carla for her inestimable support throughout.

Saturday 13 November 2021.

A Donkey Story

One morning Nasruddin realised he needed some flour and decided to take his donkey to the mill. As he was loading his donkey with a sack of grain, all his neighbours came one after another and asked him: 'Since you are going to the mill, could you please take our wheat with you as well?' Nasruddin agreed and took his nine neighbours' sacks of grain, loaded on their donkeys, along with his own to the mill. Once there, the millstone did its job, the sacks were filled with flour and the donkeys were loaded up again.

On his way riding back from the mill at dusk, Nasruddin turned around to make sure everything was in order, and counted: nine donkeys. Worried, he said to himself: 'Oh dear, I should have ten.' He got off his donkey, walked along the line, and counted them again. 'One, two three, four... ten. Fine', he said to himself with relief, and got back on his donkey. A little while later he turned his head and counted again: 'Only nine!' So he dismounted once more. He counted ten. 'I really haven't a clue what is going on. Every time I get on my donkey, there is one missing. It'll be much safer if I just stay on foot.'



Wall Panel with Geometric Interlace, 15th century.
On view in Gallery 454, The Metropolitan Museum, New York City.

INTRODUCTION

Patterns of Contemplation: Ibn ‘Arabī, Abdullah Bosnevi and The Blessing-Prayer of Effusion

The Blessing-Prayer of Effusion, which is the central subject of this book, and has so far always been attributed to the great Andalusian master Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), is one of the most remarkable devotional contemplations on the reality of the true human being found in Sufi literature. It has been given various titles: the most common are ‘The Blessing-Prayer of Effusion (*al-Ṣalāt al-fayḍiyya*) and ‘The Supreme Blessing-Prayer’ (*al-Ṣalāt al-kubrā*). We provide here for the first time a critical edition of the text, based on manuscripts from the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society archive project, with an annotated English translation as well as an appendix with our Spanish version. We also present some of our findings on the contemplations, images and symbols embedded in the Blessing-prayer in order to give a deeper sense of its extraordinary beauty, by investigating the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī and his Ottoman follower Abdullah Bosnevi (d. 1054/1644).

The overall framework we are working within can be viewed as a six-fold perspective, introducing interactive hermeneutic modalities for contemplation. We shall be considering, firstly with regard to words (logos):

- a) the rich symbolism of the Arabic letters, in particular the *alif* and the three letters *mīm*, *nūn* and *wāw*, which Ibn ‘Arabī calls ‘mirror’ or ‘circular’ letters, as well as the *ḍād* and *lām-alif*;
- b) the derivational root-system of Arabic words (*ishtiḳāq*), especially in relation to key terms such as ‘effusion’ (*fayḍ*) and ‘eye-entity’ (*‘ayn*);

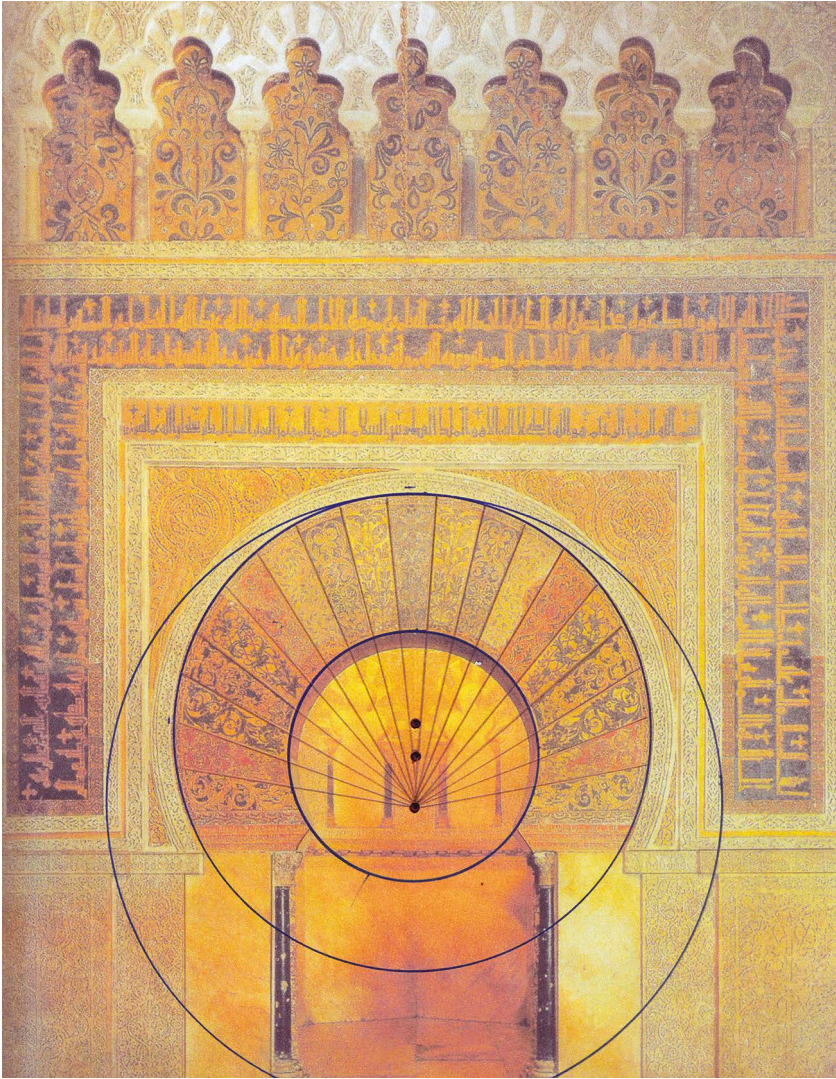
- c) the intertextuality that connects the Quran and Hadith with the reality of the human being, including both its ultimate principle as the Reality of Muhammad and its instantiation in all prophets and saints from time immemorial;
- and secondly with regard to arithmetic and geometry,
- d) the science of numbers, both in themselves and in how they relate to the structure of the Blessing-prayer – for many in our time this might seem an arbitrary use of numbers, but here we are considering their traditional symbolic value (as understood, for example, in the Hermetic, Pythagorean and Kabbalistic perspectives), where number is intimately connected to meaning;
 - e) the science of geometry, in terms of the dot, the circle and the square, the sphere and the cube, and its relation to specific Islamic symbols such as the Ka‘ba and circumambulation;
 - f) the cosmology and metaphysics of Being in the form of lunar mansions, degrees (*marātib al-wujūd*) and the Five Presences.

In general terms, the prayer may be viewed as a great pattern of contemplation similar to the geometry of ceramic designs or muqarnas vaulting in Islamic architecture. Like the panels of tiles, the text flows with a very natural style and simplicity, and does not feel artificial or rhetorical in any way. The prayer can also be considered as reflecting and resonating with the remarkable patterns found in the natural world, especially since it is written in a poetic style. When Ibn ‘Arabī discusses poetry, he makes direct reference to nature and the patterns of the natural world: ‘Is not poetry itself rhythm and proportion? So look at it and you will find it in every existent thing.’¹ He goes on to specifically mention the singing and flying of birds, the hives that bees construct and the webs that spiders weave, as examples of the subtle proportions to be found in all aspects of nature.

1 *Diwān al-ma‘ārif al-ilāhiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Azīz al-Manṣūb, 1/68.



At first sight the prayer is a very immediate expression of intimate feeling for the Divine, within a particular Islamic and Sufi tradition, similar to other expressions of pious devotion to the Prophet Muhammad. Nevertheless, once we focus on the expressive, rhythmic riches of the patterns and interactive resonances in the prayer, as well as its profound contemplations, we may taste the symbolical spaces of its construction, as it reveals itself to us as a proportioned building to be discovered. We believe that this apparently humble text is, in relation to the literary genre of *ṣalawāt*, as fine an example of its kind as the Blue Mosque of Istanbul is in relation to Ottoman architecture or the Great Mosque of Córdoba and the Alhambra in Andalusia. Analogous to how those great buildings affect human beings in spatial terms, this prayer has the capacity to make a fundamental impact on the reader and their state of knowledge and being, by aligning the reader to the Divine through the heart's presence in consciousness. This is why we devote such a long section to the detailed study of the secrets of its constitution (see Appendix C and D).



The underlying geometry governing the famous Mihrab at the Mosque of Cordoba (courtesy of Jane Carroll)

Any technical approach to arts such as geometry, jewellery, music or architecture, has an inherent complexity that appears to be particularly difficult to those who are not trained in its methods. The science of numbers and letters in relation to the structure of this prayer from the akbarian ‘school’ of Ibn ‘Arabi, is no exception. Is such a complex

approach to a devotional prayer really necessary? We might as well ask whether the refined symmetrical polishing of a diamond is really necessary, or the understanding of structure and space in the appreciation of a building. Here we come face to face with our own conceptions of the function of ‘art’. Art is necessary because human life and knowledge are arts in themselves. An analytical approach is not particularly needed if our only aim is to receive the immediate impact of the inherent harmony that an artistic masterpiece directly communicates, as is the case when we stand in front of Velázquez’ famous painting ‘Las Meninas’ or Bosch’s ‘The Garden of Earthly Delights’ or listen to one of Bach’s or Beethoven’s compositions. Nevertheless, we believe this kind of analysis enhances our perception and appreciation of a multifaceted artwork. Knowing the many secrets underlying the composition of Las Meninas most certainly opens up new dimensions of its beauty and meaning, through which we may experience the artistic interplay of life itself. In Islamic art, a little jar or a miniature or a poem... all may have a rich complexity comparable to that which we find in architecture: all elements harmonising on different levels and expressing the magnificence of the whole in the simplicity of the minimal and immediate. Something intimate and small that has this quality, like this prayer, can resonate with the strength we experience when visiting a mosque or a palace. By its qualities and powerful intention, this is a prayer that confronts us with overwhelming breath-giving beauty.

The Blessing of the Prophet (*Ṣalāt*)

First of all, the term *ṣalāt* (pl. *ṣalawāt*) has a very special meaning and place in Islamic devotional culture. It is mentioned as both an existential reality and a divine command in the Quranic verse: *God and His angels bless (yuṣallūna, from the same root as ṣalāt) the prophet. O you who have faith, bless (ṣallū) him and greet him with peace (Q 33:56)*. According to a well-known hadith, the Prophet Muhammad was told about the blessing-prayer by Gabriel directly from God: ‘I bring you tidings of joy: God, ever exalted is He, says to you: “He who greets you with peace, him

shall I greet with peace. He who blesses you, him shall I bless.”² The primary traditional form of this twofold blessing and greeting on the Prophet, which underlies the composition and pattern of the Blessing-prayer, is *ṣallā Llāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* (= صلعم , ‘may God bless him and greet him with peace’), with a longer form *Allāhumma ṣalli ‘alā sayyidi-nā Muḥammad wa-‘alā āli-hi wa-ṣaḥbi-hi wa-sallim* (‘O God, bless our master Muhammad and his Family and his Companions, and greet them with peace’). This form of blessing and greeting the Prophet is understood to be an already established reality because the Quran states that it is a blessing performed by God and His angels. It is also taken to be a reciprocal prayer in that whoever recites it will have it returned to and upon them by God Himself. As we have noted in a previous study, the blessing-prayer was incorporated into the ritual prayer and became an essential part of any supplication, which would otherwise be ‘suspended between heaven and earth’ as the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644) put it.³

The genre of calling down blessings upon Muhammad (*taṣliya*), which includes such exceptional and famous prayers as the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* of al-Buṣīrī (d. 694/1294) and the *Dalā’il al-khayrāt* of al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465), is specifically associated with Sufi practice, and seems to originate and predominate in the Maghrib from the 6th/12th century onwards. The inspired composition of *ṣalawāt* in homage to the Prophet, which were to be recited as a contemplative set of prayers (*wird*), became a literary genre in itself, especially in Sufi literature, and has given birth to several remarkable prayers, some of which are still regularly practised in many different parts of the world. The first celebrated example, produced in today’s Morocco, which has since been much commented upon in both the East and the West, is *al-Ṣalāt al-Mashīshiyya* by ‘Abd al-Salām Ibn Mashīsh (d. 625/1228), the spiritual master of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258).⁴ This short but very profound and refined prayer, which praises the Prophet in metaphysical

.....
 2 See Ibn ‘Arabī, *Divine Sayings*, Hadith 38, p. 53.

3 See Pablo Beneito and Stephen Hirtenstein, ‘The Prayer of Blessing by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī’, *JMIAS* 34 (2003), pp. 1–57. We also include the text (edited by Pablo Beneito) and translation of this prayer in Appendix E.

4 See the English translation with commentary by Titus Burckhardt as ‘The Prayer of Ibn Mashīsh’ in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 12/1 & 2 (1978), and the Spanish translation by Pablo Beneito in *La taberna de las luces* (Murcia, 2014), pp. 117–8.

terms, became well known and revered among the Shādhilī order, and seems to have been a primary inspiration for the longer compositions that arose later. In the entourage of Abū Madyan (d. ca. 589/1193⁵), we also find the magnificent *al-Ṣalāt al-mubāraka* (Prayer of Blessing) by the beloved companion of Ibn ‘Arabī, the Tunisian master ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī (d. 621/1224), to whom he dedicated his *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. This prayer, in rich rhyming prose, contains 24 *ṣalawāt* on the Muhammadian Reality, and is the most remarkable precedent for a fully coherent and very conscious use of numerical patterns within the genre. The most celebrated poetic composition is that written by Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Buṣīrī entitled *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* (‘The Ode of the Mantle’): it was inspired by the famous poem by Ka‘b b. Zuhayr (d. 24/662) (*Banat Su‘ād*), whose recitation had caused the Prophet himself to bestow his own mantle upon him. The *Burda* was, in turn, most probably the main inspiration for the later and equally celebrated seven-part *Dalā’il al-khayrāt* (‘The Guide to all Good’) by the 9th/15th-century Moroccan Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Jazūlī, in rhyming prose.⁶ Like his predecessor Muḥammad al-Buṣīrī, who was a direct disciple of Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287), al-Jazūlī was a Shādhilī. The Shādhilī connection and the link to the companions of Abū Madyan, several of whom were teachers or companions of Ibn ‘Arabī, shows the central importance of the Maghrib in the composing and spreading of *ṣalawāt*. A foundational role in this tradition should particularly be accorded to al-Mahdawī, whose prayer is to be unreservedly included in what we may call ‘the akbarian tradition’, since it displays in all respects the same references, terms, spirit and inspiration as Ibn ‘Arabī’s own writings. For this reason we have included al-Mahdawī’s *al-Ṣalāt al-mubāraka* in both Arabic and English in Appendix E, since we believe it represents the beginning of this particular akbarian tradition, alongside the prayer of Ibn Mashīsh which inspired the Shādhilī tradition.

.....
 5 There is some disagreement over Abū Madyan’s date of death, with many historians and Arabists giving 594/1198, but the earlier date seems much more likely and is given by Ibn ‘Arabī himself (*Fut.* IV.195). See Claude Addas, ‘Abū Madyan and Ibn ‘Arabī’ in *Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī: a Commemorative Volume*, ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan (Shaftesbury, 1993), pp. 175–6.

6 See Gavin N. Picken, ‘Shadhiliyya’, in Coeli Fitzpatrick and Adam Hani Walker (eds.), *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God* (Oxford, 2014), vol. 2, pp. 547–8.

Having developed in the Western lands of Islam, the genre of *ṣalawāt* would later become popular in the East, where new prayers and many commentaries on previous ones were composed. The composition of such *ṣalawāt* was often associated with Ibn ‘Arabī’s authorship, although we believe that it would be more accurate to talk about the akbarian inspiration of those texts. Although attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī and being purely akbarian, they have the flavour of a different authorship, as in the case of ‘The Blessing-Prayer of Effusion’, which we regard as the literary culmination of the genre.⁷

According to the spiritual perspective expounded by Ibn ‘Arabī, the *ṣalawāt* are not simply blessings on the historical physical being of the Prophet Muhammad, but more importantly and profoundly an ongoing, constantly renewed blessing-prayer upon the Reality of Muhammad (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), which is understood as the reality of all human beings. It represents the Truly Human Being, the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), who is the divine Image, the true cause of creation and the epitome of all beings. In simple terms, therefore, the blessing-prayer should be seen as a divine praise upon God’s Beloved (*ḥabīb*), in which humans are invited to participate through reiteration. In this sense it should not just be viewed as a blessing of the Prophet done by others, as such a religious practice might superficially appear to be, but as an invitation to join in or mirror an ongoing praise that is initiated by God Himself, a blessing and peace-greeting extended to His Own Image and Self.

.....
 7 We may note here that in many manuscripts of *al-Ṣalāt al-faydiyya*, we also find commentaries on *al-Ṣalāt al-Mashishiyya*, suggesting that the commentators generally viewed the tradition of *ṣalawāt* as beginning with Ibn Mashish and culminating with the Blessing-prayer of Effusion.

Brief overview of this book and the architecture of the Blessing-prayer

This book contains 5 introductory chapters, the text and translation of the Blessing-prayer, as well as various appendices. The initial chapters are designed to allow the reader to enter the world of contemplation by facilitating a deeper understanding of Arabic letters, numbers, geometry, intertextuality and so on. These themes underpin the ‘architecture’ and poetry of the Blessing-prayer, and we hope that this will give an even richer appreciation of the extraordinary contemplations embedded in it.

‘The Blessing-Prayer of Effusion’ (*al-Ṣalāt al-fayḍiyya*) consists of a series of descriptions of the Reality of Muhammad according to different perspectives. We may, for example, view the Blessing-prayer in terms of 99 sentences, which reflect or enumerate 99 explicit or implied ‘names’ of the Prophet, corresponding to the traditional 99 Names of God. Under this consideration, there are 40 explicit terms in Section 1, which may be coupled with a further 49 implicit terms. One reason for possibly approaching the prayer in this way is because there is an important historical practice of recording the names of the Prophet as a natural development of reciting the Names of God: a deep reflection on the Prophet’s epithets related to hadith and Quran goes back at least to the famous Maghribian traditionist al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ from Ceuta (d. 544/1149), whose *Kitāb al-Shifā’ bi-ta’rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā* (section 13) comments on the various traditions of the names of the Prophet. This is one way of contemplating the Blessing-prayer, where each sentence would be understood to express one of the attributes of Muhammad.⁸

We have divided it up into five sections in accordance with their corresponding five initial terms of invocation (*Allāhumma*, I–IV, and *Yā arḥam al-rāḥimīn*, V). The first section (I), prefaced by the overarching request for the effusion of blessing-prayers (*ṣalawāt*) and peace-greetings (*taslīmāt*), is in two parts: firstly, twenty rhyming couplets of sentences or affirmations which we have numbered as 1–20, relating to different attributes of the spiritual and metaphysical Human

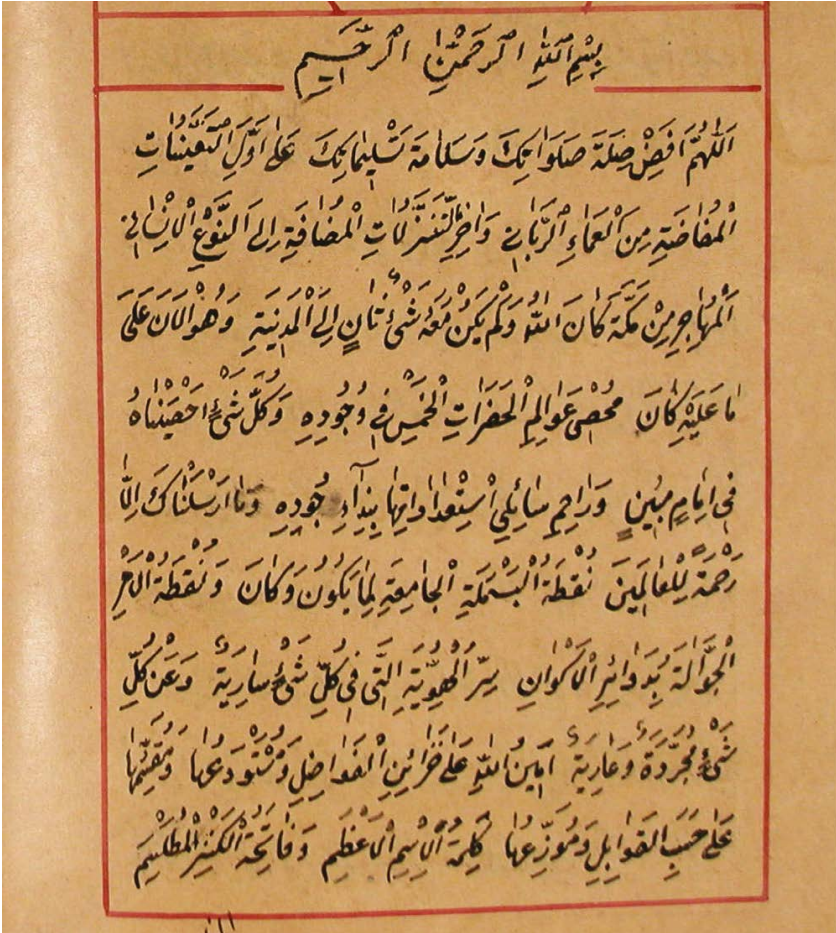
.....
8 See Appendix D for more details.

Being who is both cause and epitome of creation; and secondly, five additional rhyming couplets (21–25) that relate to the Human Being as the beloved (and lover) of God, and refer to the condition of divine representative (*khalīfa*) and his ascension (*mi‘rāj*). The second section (II) involves the supplication of the prayer-reader, also in two parts: the first is a *ṣalāt* (blessing-prayer) and the second a *salām* (peace-greetings), corresponding to the two faces of the door of Divine Love. The third (III) section concerns light and vision in the Lord-servant relationship, and has two parts: the first consists of the two modes of request and the second expresses their fulfilment in terms of enlightenment. The fourth (IV) section concerns journeying from darkness to Light and from death to Life, in the first part, and seeing the Divine Face with two eyes, in the second part. The fifth (V) and final short section ends with blessings and greetings upon the Prophet, his Family and Companions in respect of their spiritual reality. See appendix D for a more detailed explanation of the richness and complexity of the underlying kaleidoscopic structure and its relation to the Fātiḥa.

The Blessing-prayer naturally divides in this way for two reasons: firstly, the fivefold structure is explicitly delineated by the initiating terms of invocation, with four explicit mentions of the word *Allāhumma* (‘O God’) marking the first four sections, and the address to *Arḥam al-rāhimīn* (‘The Most Merciful of Mercifiers’) as the final one. Secondly, the number 5 plays a highly significant symbolic role in the Blessing-prayer, as it is the reduced numerical value of the Arabic letter *nūn* (whose major value is 50 and minor value is 5),⁹ which is also a central symbol in the text. We have tried to follow and investigate this underlying connection, as we shall see in later chapters.

There are also interior mirroring rhymes which are indicated in the Arabic text with two signs (◊ and ✧). The 99 full sentence end-rhymes of the prayer are marked with the symbol ☆. For clarity each section (I, II, etc.) is delineated separately, even though it is included within the sentence structure.

9 For a fuller description of the *abjad* systems, both major and minor, Western and Eastern, see Appendix C.



The opening of the Blessing-prayer, Izmirli Hakki MS 3635, fol. 1a

The Arabic text and commentaries

The text of the Blessing-prayer, which is always attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī in the copies that we have consulted, can be found in various manuscripts. All the copies we have seen are relatively late in relation to Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240): the earliest dating of 1141/1728 appears on copies of the text with a commentary by the well-known 18th-century akbarian author ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731).¹⁰ There is also extant a commentary by the Qādirī shaykh Muḥammad ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Jalīl al-Baghdādī (d. 1197/1779), composed in 1190/1776 (the Istanbul University MS we have used is dated 1261/1845), and one by Muḥammad Nūr al-‘Arabī (d. 1305/1888), dated 1283/1866. Where appropriate, we have included reference to these three main commentaries (with occasional reference to others).¹¹ It appears that this Blessing-prayer is first mentioned in the commentary by al-Nābulusī, who recorded it as ‘attributed to the Shaykh al-Akbar’.¹² However, he does not state on what grounds he made this attribution. Having made a detailed comparison of textual patterns, we have every reason to believe that the actual author of the Blessing-prayer is not actually Ibn ‘Arabī, but the great akbarian commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ*, ‘Abd Allāh Būsnawī (Bosnevi, known as ‘Abdi Efendi, d. 1054/1644) (for authorship, see chapter 5). One of our primary methodological concerns in analysing the Blessing-prayer in such detail has been to examine the ways in which Ibn ‘Arabī’s and Bosnevi’s writings differ in terms of terminology and style, while also acknowledging their shared mystical idiom.

The popularity of this Blessing-prayer can be gauged by the number of commentaries it attracted, following its ‘appearance’ in al-Nābulusī’s work, during the 12th/18th and 13th/19th centuries, reflecting a

10 Istanbul University MS A522, fols. 17b–36b; Berlin Hs. Or. 4693, fols 1a–48b; Damascus Zahirīyya 11982, 4–83.

11 Al-Nābulusī primarily employs a lexicographical approach, drawing mainly on the *Misbāḥ al-munir* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī (d. 770H), *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* by Fayrūzābādī (d. 817H) or the writings of Ibn al-Qaṭṭā’ al-Ṣiqillī (d. 515/1121), author of the *K. Abniyat al-asmā’*. He quotes Sufi poets such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ and ‘Afīf al-Dīn [al-Tilimsānī] or even his own poetry. Al-Baghdādī, who considers al-Nābulusī as his *shaykh*, tends to rely on al-Nābulusī’s lexical analysis and discussions, and quotes from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ*, *Futūḥāt* and *Inshā’ al-dawā’ir* as well as al-Jilī’s *al-Insān al-kāmil*, among other sources. Nūr al-‘Arabī’s commentary does not seem to utilise the work of his predecessors, and seeks to explicate some of the meanings of the symbols in a more esoteric manner.

12 *Sharḥ al-Nābulusī*, University MS A522, fol. 17b.

widespread interest in devotional prayers. Osman Yahia recorded seven⁴, four of which are particularly worthy of note:

- 1) *Wird al-wurūd wa-fayḍ al-baḥr al-mawrūd* by ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī;⁵
- 2) *al-Hibāt al-anwāriyya ‘alā l-ṣalawāt al-akbariyya* by Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī (d. 1162/1749);⁶
- 3) *Sharḥ al-Ṣalāt al-kubrā* by Muḥammad ‘Umar al-Baghdādī;⁷
- 4) *al-Majāli l-zahrā’ fī sharḥ al-Ṣalāt al-kubrā* by Muḥammad Nūr al-‘Arabī.⁸



Opening and final folios of *al-Majāli l-zahrā’* by Nūr al-‘Arabī

4 Osman Yahia, *Histoire et Classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn ‘Arabī* (Damascus, 1964), 2/471–472 (RG 702). He also mentions two anonymous commentaries as well as one by Muṣṭafā b. ‘Uthmān al-Ṭarabulusī called *al-Durr al-jaliyya ‘alā l-Ṣalāt al-faydiyya*, Istanbul University MS 6370, fols. 1–57b (apparently incomplete).

5 Published as *Sharḥ al-ṣalāt al-kubrā li-l-shaykh al-akbar Ibn ‘Arabī*, ed. ‘Āshim Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī al-Darqāwī (Beirut, n.d.). Al-Nābulusī also wrote a commentary on the well-known *ṣalawāt* (including *al-Ṣalāt al-ṣuḡhrā*) of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, entitled *Kawkab al-mabānī wa-mawkiḥ al-ma‘ānī fī sharḥ ṣalawāt al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*.

6 Also known as *al-Rahabāt al-anwāriyya ‘alā l-Ṣalāt al-akbariyya* (see University A552, fol. 111a).

7 There are earlier copies of this work that are called *al-Durr al-thamīn [fī] sharḥ ṣalāt al-shaykh Muḥyi al-dīn*. See, for example, Dār al-kutub Cairo, Zāhiriyya MS 8138 (copied 1191H), or Budeiri MS 272 (1195H one year after the author's death), which states that the commentary was composed in 1190H.

8 Private MS, courtesy of Mahmud Kılıç.

In addition, two further commentaries, not mentioned by Yahia, have been printed:

- 5) untitled, appended to the commentary on a prayer attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī called *K. al-Ṭawr al-aghla fī sharḥ al-Dawr al-a‘lā* by Muḥammad b. Khalīl al-Qāwuqjī (d. 1305/1888);⁹
- 6) *Kashf al-asrār li-Ṣalāt sayyid al-abrār* by ‘Umar b. Ṭā’-Hā’ al-‘Aṭṭār (d. 1307/1890).¹⁰

The Blessing-prayer itself has been printed many times, following Yūsuf al-Nabhānī’s first printed version in 1309/1891, as *al-Ṣalāt al-kubrā* or as *al-Ṣalāt al-fayḍiyya*. It has been known by two other main names: al-Nābulusī calls it *al-Ṣalāt al-Muḥammadiyya*,¹¹ but copies of his commentary refer to it as *al-Ṣalāt al-kubrā*, a name which is also used by al-Baghdādī, Nūr al-‘Arabī, al-‘Aṭṭār and Aḥmad al-Kattānī (d. 1340/1921);¹² Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, on the other hand, calls it *al-Ṣalāt al-akbariyya*. It also appears in other significant collected works on prayer such as *Jalā’ al-qulūb* by Muḥammad al-Kattānī (d. 1345/1926).¹³ Yahia noted two unpublished versions in Ottoman Turkish,¹⁴ and Mahmud Kılıç utilised a further Ottoman translation by Abdulaziz Mecdi Efendi (d. 1941), which he translated into modern Turkish in his book on Ibn ‘Arabī, *Şeyh-i Ekber* (Istanbul, 1995).

A French translation by Michel Valsân, based on al-Nabhānī’s edition, was published after his death in *Études Traditionnelles* 446 (Nov-Dec 1974), pp. 242–51, and this was also translated into Italian in *Scienza Sacra* in November 2014.

9 Printed in Damascus (1301/1884) and Cairo (n.d.). Al-Qāwuqjī’s commentary on the Blessing-prayer does not materially add to previous commentaries.

10 Edited by Aḥmad Farid Mazyadī (Beirut, 1971).

11 University MS A522, fol. 17a. This could be translated as ‘The Blessing-Prayer on Muhammad’ or ‘The Muhammadian Blessing-Prayer’.

12 See Aḥmad al-Kattānī, *Tanbih al-awwāh fī-mā li min al-ta‘alluq bi-akram khalq Allāh (dīwān fī madh al-nabī)*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamza b. ‘Alī al-Kattānī (Beirut, 2007), an important book on the Prophet’s attributes, where the editor records among the author’s works his commentary entitled *al-Ḥadiqa al-gharrā’ ‘alā ṣalāt al-Ḥatīmī al-kubrā* (p. 19, n° 19).

13 See *Jalā’ al-qulūb min al-aṣḍā’ al-ghayniyya*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 2005). For example, see 2/313, when commenting on the name Fātiḥa (I.7) he speaks of ‘the famous (*mashhūra*) prayer by the *Shaykh al-Akbar*...’, confirming the wide diffusion of the prayer among his contemporaries.

14 The first is a commentary by Hasan Fahmī, *Tarjamat al-ṣalāt al-fayḍiyya*, Hacı Mahmud 3277/31, also found in Hacı Mahmud 2717 (where the name is given as Husayn Fahmī al-Kharputi); ‘Abd Allāh al-Naqshbandī, *Tarjamat wa-sharḥ al-ṣalawāt al-kubrā*, Hasan Hayrī Abdullah Ef. 151.

Al-Nabhānī also dedicated a special section in his *Jawāhir al-biḥār* to some aspects of the transmission of the Blessing-prayer, and in particular a significant transmission through a visionary dream. He states that he also transmitted the Blessing-prayer from a descendant of the Prophet in Damascus, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shuwaykī al-Dimashqī, who himself had had a dream-vision, when he was 15 years old, of a figure whom he took to be Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī. During the dream this figure asked him:

‘Do you want me to teach a prayer on the Prophet, whose reward is equivalent to 100,000 prayers?’ I said: ‘Yes’. So he said: ‘Listen! *Allāhumma aḥḍ ṣilata ṣalawāti-ka...*’ up to the end of this prayer. I felt the words of the prayer being engraved in my heart, and I memorised them. When he had finished reciting, he said: ‘Now you recite it’, which I did from beginning to end. Then he corrected me in two places where I had made a mistake, and then I recited it again to him from beginning to end. He said: ‘That’s fine’. Then I woke up.¹⁵

Al-Nabhānī and others were given permission to practise this Blessing-prayer by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shuwaykī, and al-Nabhānī states that the version he received in this way was the same as that previously transmitted by al-Nābulusī in his commentary apart from one or two words. According to al-Nabhānī, ‘no other blessing-prayer can be compared to it in terms of what it includes of the perfections of the Master of created beings (*sayyid al-makhlūqāt*).’¹⁶

Whatever the truth of the matter as regards authorship, we have before us a blessing-prayer that is magnificently rich in its praise of the Reality of the True Human Being, a grand meditation on the nature of *fayḍ* (effusion), and a prayer whose detailed contemplations in the realms of Quranic sciences, metaphysics, letters and numbers make it a true masterpiece of spiritual art and science.

This is the first critical edition of the Arabic text, translation into two languages, transliteration and study to be published. We have based the Arabic on several manuscripts (see the edition), and sought to maintain the harmonious balance of its composition in our decisions regarding

.....
15 al-Nabhānī, *Jawāhir al-biḥār*, vol. 4, p. 406.

16 Ibid.

particular readings. Above all other considerations, this is a blessing-prayer for recitation and contemplation. It is our hope and prayer that our edition, translation and efforts to understand, on behalf of all who will read it, will be acceptable to the author.



Detail of the muqarnas at the Sokollu Mehmet Pasha Mosque, Istanbul
(courtesy of Mehmet Okutan).

CHAPTER 1

The Geometry of Reality: sound and vision

*To Him returns the whole [creative] order (al-amr)
(Q 11:123)*

The revelation of the Book of the Quran is usually understood as a descent into perceptible sound and written form, describing itself as ‘a bringing-down by the Lord of all beings... in an Arabic tongue most clear’ (Q 26:192–195). While it is presented to human beings as a speech that can be recited and as a book that can be read, according to the Companion Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687), the Quran was sent down in two manners: firstly, synthetically as *qur’ān* to the nearest heaven, and subsequently from there, in starry fragments in accordance with time, as *furqān*, to Muhammad. Ibn ‘Arabī explains this as meaning that the Quran descends first to the heart and then to other faculties: ‘according to the inner interpretation, the servant’s heart is the nearest heaven to which the Quran descends in totality, then becoming ‘differentiation’ (*furqān*) in accordance with those who are addressed: so the portion received by the eye is not the portion that belongs to the ear’.¹ As a result, ‘the [essential] matter is concerned with uniting, not separating: whoever is established in uniting does not pay attention to separation, even if they are in [a state of separation]. Uniting includes separation, but separating does not include uniting.’² The descent of Meaning to the human heart can also become visible in terms of the ‘eye’ (*baṣīra*) of the heart, as happened in the earliest recorded event in Ibn ‘Arabī’s life:

1 K. al-Isfār, *saḥar al-Qur’ān al-‘azīz*: see *The Secrets of Voyaging*, adapted trans, pp. 59, 187–191.

2 From the chapter of Noah in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Mahmud Kiliç and Abdurrahim Alkış (Istanbul, 2016), p. 48. Note that the word *qur’ān* according to Ibn ‘Arabī means ‘unitiveness’ or ‘collecting together’ (from the root *q-r-n*), in contrast to the term *furqān* which denotes separation and differentiation.

One day I became seriously ill and plunged into such a deep coma that I was believed to be dead. In that state I saw horrible-looking people who were trying to harm me. Then I became aware of someone kindly, powerful, exhaling a delightful fragrance, who defended me against them and succeeded in defeating them. ‘Who are you?’ I asked. The being replied to me: ‘I am the Sura Yā Sīn. I am your protector.’ At this point I regained consciousness and found my father, God bless him, standing at my bedside in tears – he had just finished reciting the Yā Sīn.³

Since the Sura is normally recited over the dead or dying, in this episode from Ibn ‘Arabī’s very early years we can see a kind of physical death and rebirth, albeit without the will of the individual being involved. More importantly, for our purposes here, this appearance of the Sura reveals the interior living quality of the revealed Word, embodied in the realm of imagination as a human being, i.e. a total form rather than a portion received by one of the faculties. This can be likened to the appearance of Jesus manifesting in this ‘total’ human form in the sensory realm, so that in revelatory terms Jesus, as Spirit and Word of God, is parallel to the Book of the Quran, while Muhammad is parallel to Mary as receivers of the divine Word. We may also observe that the Yā Sīn is the ‘heart’ of the Quran, and so this vision demonstrates how the ‘heart’ of divine revelation protects and defends the human heart against all harm.

Revelation, in the sense of the expression of transcendent Meaning, may also take place in other visible forms, notably the natural world or universe. Comprehending the underlying geometric shapes and numerical patterns displayed in the world is one way of recognising the essential realities, and Ibn ‘Arabī makes use of various diagrams in his works, especially in the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, as modes of contemplation. In addition, he alludes to geometry in many subtle ways in his writing, showing how essential this aspect of knowledge is with regard to contemplating meanings, especially as it bypasses the ordinary conceptualisation so beloved by the rational intellect. According

.....
3 *Fut.* II.424.

to the late Keith Critchlow, ‘geometry is the art of continual renewal... traditional geometry is constantly renewed by every person who does it’.⁴ In other words, the eternal principles that geometry expresses are renewed by each person who realises them, in accordance with their level. Such geometrical comprehension is implicit in the following passage which begins Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Inshā’ al-dawā’ir* (‘The Production of Circles’), where he ‘explains’ his reasons for engaging in this kind of representation:

When God, glorified and exalted is He, brought me to recognise the realities of things as they are in their essential natures, and enlightened me, by unveiling, as regards the realities of their relationships and attributions, I wanted to express them in a visible diagrammatic mould⁵ so that their source and apprehension⁶ comes close for the companion and friend ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Ḥabashī, and in order to clarify these [realities] for anyone whose sight is not sharp enough to perceive them and whose mind-radiance cannot navigate [in glorious exaltation] in their spheres⁷. He will then have a clear vision of what degree he has in existence, and what eminence has been accorded to him, such that [all] angels humbly prostrate to him. If the purest noble angel prostrates to him, what do you imagine is the case of the incomplete lowest assembly [of angels]? Do you not see what the Real, who is Truthful, relates about him when He says: *and who has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in earth, all of it from Him?* Hence He brought the whole universe together under the authority of the most elevated Human Being...

I have drawn diagrammatic likenesses, set out image-parables and explained what is in the human being... in order to bring close comprehension and to bring [people] to knowledge. From

.....
4 Interview on the Cambridge Central Mosque project, 20 Dec 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLKVu7E56Ok>.

5 Ar: *fi qālib al-tashkīl al-ḥissī*. The term *tashkīl* not only suggests giving diagrammatic shape to meanings, but also making explicit and removing ambiguity (as in the dotting and pointing on Arabic letters).

6 Ar: *ma’khadh*, lit. ‘the place from where (or time when) something is taken’, here meaning both the source of the realities as well as their apprehension.

7 Ar: *aflāk*, orbiting spheres or 3-dimensional circles in which the realities of things are displayed.

the One who brought the world into being, we ask for support and assistance!⁵

The human being, as the centre of the circle of existence, is thus in an entirely different position to the rest of creation. All other beings who occupy the circle of existence are in some sense ‘peripheral’ and dependent on the authority of the central human ‘dot’. When Ibn ‘Arabī speaks of two kinds of angels, ‘the purest noble angel’ and ‘the incomplete lowest assembly’, he is alluding to the high angels of the upper ‘heavenly’ half of the circle of existence, which to us is hidden and interior, and the angels of the lower ‘earthly’ half, which represents manifest existence. The fact that both higher and lower angels prostrate to the human being is symbolised by the circle’s dependence on its centre. The whole universe, high and low, is under the authority of the true Human Being in the same way that the central dot has ‘authority’ over the representation of the circle.

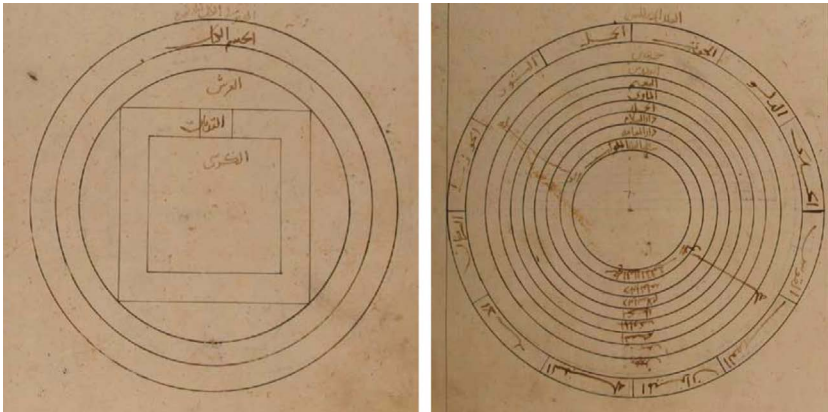
It is remarkable how the name of Ibn ‘Arabī’s close companion, whom he describes elsewhere as ‘my dear friend, a pure emptiness, an unadulterated light’,⁶ is geometrically significant here: he is the ‘Servant of God’ (‘Abd Allāh, servant of the all-encompassing Name rather than any particular Name), Badr, the ‘full moon’ (a complete circle illuminated by the hidden light of the Sun), and al-Ḥabashī, literally the ‘Ethiopian’ but also the one who collects and reunites everything within the whole (from the Arabic *ḥabasha*). In other words, this ‘companion (*ṣāḥib*) and friend (*walī*)’⁷ is like the perfect prototype of the human being enlightened by the inspiration of the solar author, who calls himself the Sun who rises in the West and the Seal of Sainthood (*walāya*). Furthermore, if al-Ḥabashī represents the full moon, others with less than perfect sight may be compared to the phases of the moon, more or less illumined.

5 *Inshā’ al-dawā’ir*, ed. Maurizio Marconi (*El Azufre Rojo* 5, 2018), pp. 105–6.

6 *Fut.* I.10. These epithets describe perfectly the nature of the full moon, which has no light of its own and acts as a reflective surface for the sun.

7 *Ar: al-ṣāḥib wa-l-walī*, which can also be translated as ‘the possessor and patron’, who as full moon already possesses full illumination of the connection of the realities to their central essential source.

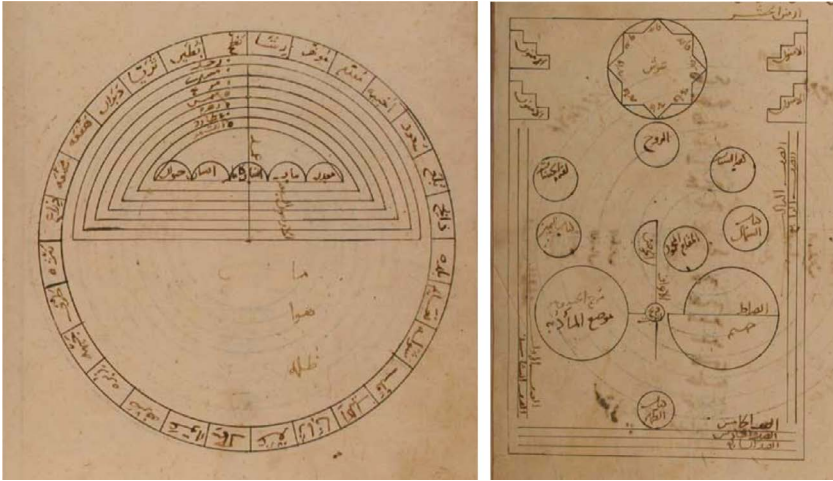
There are many important diagrams in the *Futūḥāt* which express different aspects of circularity. We may cite four of the twelve diagrams in chapter 371,⁸ which give an idea of the varied shapes that Ibn ‘Arabī employs. For example, in the first we can see two squares (the Footstool/*kursī* and the Two divine Feet/*qadamān*) included within the circle of the Throne, which is itself included within Universal Body and Prime Matter; in the second (enclosed by the Footstool), concentric circles displaying the levels of paradise within the circle of the 12 constellations; in the third, a bifurcation of the circle into concentric semi-circles within the 28 lunar mansions; and in the fourth, a rectangular representation of the ‘Plain of Assembly’ (*arḍ al-ḥaṣhr*) when human beings will be gathered on the Day of Resurrection, with various shapes including an octagon at the top depicting the divine Throne.⁹ This octagon has within itself a central point, making a total of 9, which as we will see is a highly significant number in the Blessing-prayer.



1. The Footstool within the Throne; 2. Levels of Paradise and Hell

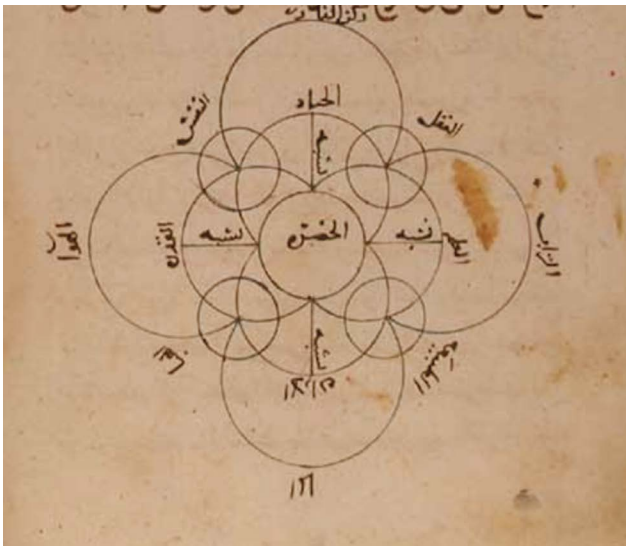
8 *Fut.* III.422–5; Evkaf MS 1870, fols 90–94. A proper study of these diagrams is long overdue, and we welcome Dunja Rašić’s study, *The Written World of God: the Cosmic Script and the Art of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Oxford, 2021) as well as the article by Sophie Tysser, ‘Visualizing the Architecture of the Universe: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Diagrams in Chapter 371 of the *Meccan Openings*’, in Giovanni Maria Martini (ed.), *Visualizing Sufism (1200–1600)* (Leiden, 2021).

9 This drawing is generally thought to have formed the ground-plan for the Taj Mahal, built for Shah Jahan between 1632 and 1653. See Wayne Begley, ‘The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of Its Symbolic Meaning’, *The Art Bulletin* 61/1 (1979), pp.7–37.



3. The Earth and the Heavens within the lunar mansions; 4. The Plain of Assembly

We may also note the important diagram of the Divine Presence in which the first original circle overflows into four further circles, drawn by taking bisection points on the first circumference, and then into four further circles.



5. The Divine Presence (Evkaf MS 1848, fol.92)

Here our purpose is not to go into the details of individual diagrams, but to emphasise the graphic visual aspect of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings and how there is a deep contemplative visual structure underpinning his teachings on reality.

He himself seems to have come to the fullness of this through his encounter at the Ka‘ba with the nameless Youth, who is far beyond considerations of space-time and was created to communicate only as a symbol (*ramz*), beyond the reach of any kind of word-based expression. The Youth orders him to ‘circle in my footsteps, and observe me in the light of my moon, so that you may take from my constitution what you will write in your book and dictate to your scribes’.¹⁰ While the *Futūḥāt* may be viewed as the outpouring of verbal expression in the light of the Youth’s ‘constitution’, Ibn ‘Arabī points to the non-verbal visual aspect of this ‘moon’ through his diagrams. The fact that this encounter took place in Mecca makes evident the central imagery of the Ka‘ba being surrounded by circles of pilgrims: the House of the Ka‘ba is thus a threefold picture of the heart of the world, the heart of the human being, and the divine Throne encircled by heavenly angels praising their Lord. In geometric terms, the Ka‘ba may be viewed not only as a three-dimensional cube but also as a two-dimensional square and a point. In three dimensions we can see the manifold aspects in the form of 6 faces, 8 corners and so on.¹¹ In two dimensions, it has a square form (as in the representation of the two divine Feet and the Footstool), or it is a simple point or centre. This latter aspect is represented in the sensory world by the Black Stone (*al-ḥajar al-aswad*), which is set into the eastern corner of the Ka‘ba, and according to tradition is the ‘point’ where God’s Right

10 *Fut.* I.48. He uses the same verb *aṭla‘ nī* to express that God enlightened him with knowledge of the station of this Youth.

11 Ibn ‘Arabī mentions en passant that the House (*bayt*) of the Ka‘ba is 27 cubits (the length of a forearm) in height (i.e. a 3x3x3 cube) while the upper enclosure (*al-taḥjīr al-a‘lā*, which seem to mean the upper enclosure of the roof) is 28 cubits [high] (i.e. equivalent to a circle with all the mansions of the moon, letters etc): ‘each cubit is a measure for some divine order which the people of unveiling (*ahl al-kashf*) recognise. These measures are equivalent to the mansions of the heart, which are divided up by the stars of faith traversing [the sky of the heart] in order to manifest happenings that flow through the soul...’ (*Fut.* I.666). While he does not explain the significance of these numbers, it is surely no accident that the preceding words mention the prophets (*al-anbiyā’*), 27 of whom are represented in the later *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, establishing a direct connection between the elevation of the Ka‘ba and the revelation brought by the prophets – perhaps Ibn ‘Arabī is also alluding to the idea of the wall of prophethood as mentioned in the famous dream of Muhammad in which he saw himself as the final brick in the wall.

Hand is in direct contact with the created world¹² – this symbolic aspect lies behind the ritual, established by Muhammad, of *istilām*, touching or ‘kissing’ the Black Stone at the beginning of the circumambulation, as an act of swearing allegiance to God.¹³

Ibn ‘Arabī makes an essential point about the universal return to God as the centre of all circumambulation, when discussing circles and circularity:

Know that since the universe is globe-shaped, in his ending the human being longs for his beginning.¹⁴ For we have come out of non-existence into existence through Him, glory be to Him, and to Him we return – just as He says *to Him returns the whole [creative] order (al-amr)* (Q 11:123), and He says *Be mindful of a day in which you will return to God* (Q 2:281), and He says *To Him is the final arrival* (Q 5:18), and *to God is the final result of everything* (Q 31:22).

Do you not see that when you begin to make a circle, from the moment you start you continue to go round until you come back to the place where you began? Only then does it become a circle. If the order were not like that, then we would come out from His Presence in a straight line and be unable to return to Him, and then His words *and to Him you will return* would not be true – and He is the Truthful One!¹⁵

This premise might seem counter to human experience in this world, since many believe that they come into the world, live for a time and then die, as if life was like a straight line drawn between point A and point B on a piece of paper. However, this could only be true if we lived in the realm of two dimensions. In a three-dimensional

12 See al-Daylāmī, *Firdaws al-akḥbār bi-ma’thūr al-khiṭāb*, ed. Muḥammad Zaghlūl (Beirut, 1406/1986), 2/159. There is another stone known as ‘the Stone of True Happiness’ (*ḥajar al-sa’āda*) set into the opposite Yemeni corner, which some authorities say should also be touched or kissed (see *Fut.* I.703).

13 See *Fut.* I.699. We may note that Abdullah Bosnevi wrote a short unedited treatise on this subject entitled *al-Yad al-ajwad fī istilām al-ḥajar al-aswad* (Carullah MS 2129, fols. 184a–191a).

14 Ar: *ḥanna al-insān fī nihāyati-hi ilā bidāyati-hi*. The term *ḥanna*, like others that he uses in this context such as ‘*aṭafa*’, means not only ‘longing, yearning’ but also ‘being favourably inclined and affectionate towards’, suggesting a curving movement.

15 *Fut.* I.255 (ch. 47).

world, a straight line only appears as such because of our limited perspective, but is in fact always curved. As soon as we think in three dimensions, we realise that space and the universe itself is actually curved (a truth generally accepted since the time of Einstein), and this must reflect an essential truth about Being itself. For this reason, Ibn ‘Arabī remarks that ‘all roads require circularity’¹⁶, and there is no such thing as a straight-line road’.¹⁷ We should bear in mind that according to Ibn ‘Arabī all beings are on ‘the straight path’ (*al-sirāṭ al-mustaqīm*), which leads each one back to their origin, and this path is in fact ‘circular’. The fact that the circle is only fully visible when the endpoint reaches the beginning may help to explain the illusion human beings have of ‘straightness’ and some of the consequent ideas about linear development and progress.¹⁸ He also comments elsewhere: ‘He did not create the existent things He created in a linear way without there being within them an inclination towards circularity or seeking circularity in the world of bodies.’¹⁹ Hence circularity is omni-present in the natural world, and in Ibn ‘Arabī’s view comprises the bodily nature of each existent as well as its interior journeying and inclination.

The Circle and the Compass

In many places and contexts Ibn ‘Arabī emphasises the underlying geometry of the circle as an image to be contemplated. Sometimes he focuses on the 2-dimensional circle and sometimes on the 3-dimensional sphere:

.....
16 Ar: *mustadīra*, often translated simply as ‘circular’, but since Form X of the verb suggests seeking or requiring something, there is an important nuance in Ibn ‘Arabī’s use of this adjective to show how everything participates in the innate drive towards circularity.

17 R. *al-Anwār*, Yusuf Aḡa 7838, fol. 49a; see Bernd Radtke, *New Critical Essays* (Utrecht, 2005), p. 130.

18 In the modern globalised world the implications of this in economic terms are beginning to be seen: for example, a linear use of resources has detrimental consequences, and there are now calls for a sustainable ‘circular’ global economy.

19 See *Fut.* III.119, ch. 332. It is worth pointing out that according to Ibn ‘Arabī the three words ‘*atf*, *mayl* and *ḥunū* which he uses in this passage all mean curvature (in the realm of bodies) and affectionate loving inclination and compassion (in the realm of spirits and meanings).

Every order and every existent is a circle that returns to where it began, and God has specified for each existent its [particular] degree in His Knowledge.²⁰

The divine [creative] order (*amr*) is circular, and this is why God's order concerning things never ends. For the circle has no first or last in it except through the determining property of 'bisecting' [which intersects the circumference and creates an apparent two-ness]. Because of this the universe emerged as circular, in accordance with the form of the order as it is in itself, until it came into shapes. The first shape to receive Universal Body [i.e. embodiment] is that of a circle, and this is the orbiting sphere (*falak*).²¹

The word he uses here which we have translated as 'bisecting' (*farḍ*)²² normally means an obligation, but here is meant more in its primary meaning of 'cutting', 'notching' or 'incision'. In other words, as soon as a circle is bisected (for example, by drawing another circle from any point on the circumference which becomes the centre of a new circle intersecting the original), a division has occurred. It is only through this that we can envisage that the circle has a beginning and an end. In itself the circle still remains a complete whole, or in 3 dimensions a sphere.

Ibn 'Arabī gives precisely this image when he is discussing the closeness experienced by the Prophet during his ascension (*mi'rāj*) to 'the joining of the two arcs or [even] closer' (*qāb qawsayn aw adnā*, Q 53:9). In the margin of his *Futūḥāt*, he puts a small drawing at the beginning of chapter 260 on the knowledge of closeness (*qurb*).

.....

20 *Fut.* I.255 (ch. 47).

21 *Fut.* I.663 (ch. 71). The word *falak* means both 'sphere' and 'orbit', so we should conceive of a sphere as being movement by its very nature, rather than static.

22 *Ar.* *farḍ*, literally 'an incision', which bisects the circle and leads to the appearance of duality. This image provides the related secondary meaning of *farḍ* as 'obligation' or 'command', creating a distinction between dos and don'ts.

In the introductory poem, he explains:

If you bisect a circle with a line, two arcs appear –
that is the closeness of the Real, so cross over²³
to the inner Reality of “[even] closer” from the two of them!



When you pass beyond it, the nature of spiritual vision shines
forth
for the [vertical] ascensions that belong to the spirits are a relationship
with [Reality]
unlike the [horizontal] domain that physical vision travels in.²⁴

When we consider the image of a circle, we may bear in mind some of the symbolic aspects of how it is produced through the action of a compass (or dividers). A compass is perhaps one of the most significant scientific inventions that humankind have used for millennia, and its very rich symbolic value lies behind some of the suggestive imagery that Ibn ‘Arabī uses to depict reality.²⁵ It is the underlying metaphysics of geometry that Ibn ‘Arabī clearly delineates in his discussions of the letters. We do not call this ‘sacred’ or ‘spiritual’ geometry in contrast to a supposed ‘mundane’ geometry, because it is a single science, contemplative and practical at the same time.

When closed, a compass resembles the letter *alif* (ا), standing alone, and when its two legs are separated, it resembles an inverted *lām-alif* (لا), which also means ‘[there is] no’ (*lā*). The connecting circle that links the two legs is sometimes known to geometers as the ‘eye of God’,

23 Ar: *i’tabirū*, which can also mean ‘contemplate’. On the principle of *i’tibār*, see Gracia López Anguita, ‘Ibn ‘Arabī’s Metaphysics in the Context of Andalusian Mysticism: Some Akbarian Concepts in the Light of Ibn Masarra and Ibn Barrajān’ (*Religions*, 12, 40, 2021; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12010040>); and Yousef Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus* (Cambridge, 2017).

24 Fut. II.558. The term *nisba* (which we have translated differently as ‘relationship’ and ‘domain’) is used twice in the last two lines, indicating that in spiritual vision there is the relationship of the One with Himself in ‘dualitude’, while in physical vision there is an apparent duality of seer and seen.

25 Historically, the prominent use of the compass symbol along with the square in Freemasonry, which began in the 14th century within the newly established guild of stonemasons, seems to have derived from Islamic guild teachings (such as Anatolian *akhī* and Arab *futuwwa* organisations), which in turn had incorporated many principles from earlier spiritual teachings. See Ali Akbar Dianat, ‘Akhi’, *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, vol. 3, pp. 417–22.

and resembles the linking base of the *lām-alif*.²⁶ The imagery of two interconnected legs is used in the Quran in connection with the Day of Resurrection, when all is revealed in truth: *leg (al-sāq) intertwined with leg, [to your Lord on that day driven on]* (Q 75:29–30), a verse that Ibn ‘Arabī explicitly links to the letter *lām-alif* and its two ‘legs’ in a remarkable poem on this double letter:

The all-knowing *alif* and the *lām* embrace neck to neck
 like two lovers, when the time-cycles are propitious,
 and *the leg is intertwined with the leg*²⁷ which is great[er].
 From the two of them entwining, there came to me a [direct]
 instruction:
 as a beating heart²⁸ implies an embrace of two [opposites],
 there appears in [*lām-alif*] existention and annihilation.²⁹

Ibn ‘Arabī thus evokes the image of the *lām-alif* as the two letters intimately embracing each other, like lovers, but at the same time contemplates their two-ness as springing from Unity: just like a heart has two phases, systolic contraction and diastolic relaxation, so also the world has two aspects: being brought into existence and being removed from existence. The *lām* (in shape) is an *alif* plus an extension as a *nūn*, representing the bringing about of existence, while the *alif* is solo and unique, annihilating otherness.

In order to understand more fully the allusions here, let us consider how to draw a circle with a compass or set of dividers. The straight upright leg of the compass (identical to the shape of an *alif*) is separated from its other leg and placed upon a blank sheet of paper so as to establish the centre of the circle in the form of a hidden dot or point. Then the

.....
 26 It also suggests the circular eye of the *mīm* (◌), so that from this perspective the first three isolated letters in the Quran, the *alif lām mīm* at the beginning of Sūrat al-Baqara, also symbolise the whole act of creation through the imagery of the compass. See *Fut.* I.61.

27 Q 75:29. The ‘leg’ here alludes to the two *alifs* inherent in *lām-alif*, since the straight part of the *lām* is identical to an *alif*.

28 The word *fu’ad* means a heart that beats, i.e. in a state of ‘on’ and ‘off’.

29 *Fut.* I.75. The author explains a few lines later that this image is particularly connected to the four positive and negative formulations of *lām-alif* appearing in the formula *lā ilāha illā Llāh*. These four *lām-alifs* in the four words are related to the numerical value of *lām-alif* (=31=4) and the value of the rhyme-letter (*mīm* =40=4) in the poem.

adjustable or variable second leg (which holds the pencil or pen) traces a circle, starting from one point (the second ‘dot’, this time visible, on the circumference) and continuing to draw the ‘curved line’ of the circumference until it reaches the point from which it started, thereby completing the full circle. Without the ‘distance’ between the two legs (which represents the essential separating of the Essence into ‘two’), no circle can be drawn. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception, the *alif* (ا , =1) stands for the Absolute Unity or Uniqueness (*aḥadiyya*), which is beyond all conception of number and numerality. When this self-standing *alif* separates from itself, creating a distance between what are now ‘two legs’, the second adjustable leg becomes ‘active’, capable of drawing on the blank sheet of paper. This second leg is represented by the second letter *bā*’ (ب , =2), which stands for the Reality of Muhammad, the First Intellect, the Pen and so on. As Ibn ‘Arabī explains,

‘God says: “[Your Lord is the Most Generous] who taught by the Pen”, that is, He taught all created beings by the Pen, meaning the Just Equilibrium and the Truth by which the heavens and the earth came into being, which is the First Intellect, and the Muhammadian Reality, and it is also the *bā*’.³⁰

Just as the pen that draws is held in the adjustable leg of the compass (while the standing leg is stable), so it is the *bā*’ through which all things manifest: ‘it is really an *alif*, single in respect of its essence, and it is a *bā*’ in respect of it manifesting in the second degree of being.’³¹

In the imagery of the compass, the adjustable leg is really joined up to the standing leg, but in its separation from the standing leg, it becomes established in ‘the second degree of being’, which is activity, in contrast to the blank sheet of paper which is wholly receptive to the action of the pencil. Whatever is represented on the paper is subsequent to this primary splitting of ‘active’ and ‘receptive’, of Pen and Tablet in cosmological terms, through which the circle of all the visible ‘letters’ can be drawn and made manifest. There is, therefore, a fundamental distinction between

30 See Hülya Küçük and Stephen Hirtenstein, ‘Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Kitāb al-Bā*’, *JMIAS* 65 (2019), p. 16. Later authors sometimes related the *alif* to Intellect and the Throne, and the *bā*’ to the Pen and the Footstool, but the implied fundamental imagery of the two legs of the compass remains the same.

31 Ibid., p. 17.

the verticality of the *alif*-like compass and the horizontal plane of the circle with its dot. Likewise, in three dimensions, there is a difference between the supra-dimensional ‘actor’ and the three-dimensional sphere that has a central point (as in blowing up a balloon, for example) – or in metaphysical terms, between the transcendent Reality as It is Itself and all the subsequent manifestation and conceptualisation of transcendental reality, which is necessarily limited. The initial ‘separation’, represented by the compass and its two legs, is reflected in a second separation, represented by the circle and sometimes referred to as Heaven and Earth, or the Divine realm and the realm of creation. In respect of this second distinction, Ibn ‘Arabī describes the Cloud in which the Lord was prior to creation as the ‘pavilion of Divinity and a great barrier preventing the created world from joining the Divinity and preventing the Divinity from joining the created world, I mean with regard to the essential limits.’³²

To understand this symbol more deeply we need to take a broad view of the term ‘geometry’, which literally means ‘the measuring of the earth’: this should be understood not simply as the measuring of the physical earth but more comprehensively as the measurement of what Ibn ‘Arabī calls ‘the Earth of Reality’³³ or ‘the Vast Earth’ of Imagination, a domain that extends to all possible forms and witnessings. This reflects the continuum between the corporeal and the spiritual, physics and metaphysics, exterior and interior, and so on. The whole world of creation or the circle of Being is seen as the support for direct contemplation (*shuhūd*). What lies beyond this cannot be ‘measured’ or contemplated, since it is a state of pure dimensionlessness which is unknowable and never seen (*ghayb*). In terms of the circle there are two sides: the upper hidden semicircle of the relative invisible (‘night’) and the lower manifest semicircle of the relative visible (‘day’), but both belong to the circular realm of full witnessing and contemplation. In any representation of manifestation there is always a relative interior and a relative exterior. According to Abdullah Bosnevi, ‘the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) is [actually] two Unseens: a Real (*ḥaqīqī*) Unseen, which is the Essence

.....
32 *K. al-Isfār*, p. 50.

33 See chapter 8 of the *Futūḥāt* which is entitled ‘the Earth of Reality’ (*arḍ al-ḥaqīqa*). For an understanding of the relevance of ‘contemplative geomancy’ in this context, see Pablo Beneito, ‘Qurrat al-‘Ayn: the Maiden of the Ka’ba’, *Religions*, 12/3, 158 (2021), pp. 9–12.

(*dhāt*) and the realities of the Essential Names, which are the keys of the Unseen; and a relational (*idāfī*) [Unseen], which is the world of the Order and of originating in terms of intellects, selves and spirits.³⁴

The Real Unseen is identified with the ‘Absolute Unseen’ (*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*), which is free from all constraints or relations, and the relational Unseen is linked to the initiating of creation through the command ‘Be’, and is then expressed in what Ibn ‘Arabī calls ‘the world of outlining’ (*‘ālam al-takhṭīṭ*),³⁵ where the First Intellect draws out the implicit relationships in the world of outward expression and writing.

We may note here that the differentiated letters that appear on the circumference (which is divided by Ibn ‘Arabī into 28 in accordance with the number of letters in the Arabic alphabet and the number of the lunar mansions) should be distinguished from the non-differentiated transcendent letters that are hidden in an uncreated state within the ‘ink’ of the pen: the latter are sometimes called ‘sublime letters’ (*al-ḥurūf al-‘āliyāt*), and are only known through their manifested counterparts, which are the elements of all existential words, in whatever degree they may appear within the realm of existence. In a poem (sometimes attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī as well as to others), these high letters are mentioned as unspoken or unarticulated:

We were sublime letters, not spoken,

suspended in latency within the highest peaks of dark covering.

In Him I am you and we are you – and you are He –

the whole is He within He – ask one who has attained.³⁶

The mention of ‘He’ is significant as it denotes the Ultimate Presence of Absolute Unity, present only to Itself beyond all Name or quality, within which all plurality is drowned. In a similar way the *alif* (which indicates this unnameable Uniqueness) is the only straight letter, while all other letters are curved. This should not be confused with the straightness of images such as ‘the straight path’ (*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*), which can be represented geometrically as the line of the radius that extends from the

34 *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, Yusuf Ağa MS 5464, fols. 140b–141a.

35 *Fut.* I.50 and 109; (Manṣūb) I/205 and 366.

36 See Bodleian Pococke 275, fol. 35b.

centre to any point on the circumference and metaphysically denotes the direct unmediated relationship of closeness between each existent ‘other’ and Reality.³⁷ This line is as if a shadow of the vertical *alif*, since the only real straightness belongs to the Creator Himself, just like the straight legs of the compass that stands at the centre, from which the circle of creation is drawn.

This imagery of an endless circle or sphere that is constantly in circular movement, which underlies the contemplations in the Blessing-prayer of Effusion, is to be found beautifully expressed in chapter 1 of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*, when he is discussing the vision of the Youth that inspired the writing of the book:³⁸

When a circle is being drawn, as the end of the circle is reached, the [adjustable] leg of the compass returns to its beginning-point. Thus, the last [part] of the [creative] order is tied [indissolubly] to its first: its endless space-time everlastingness (*abad*) inclines and curves into its beginningless, supra-temporal eternity (*azal*). There is only continuous Being (*wujūd*) and freshly established Witnessing (*shuhūd*).³⁹

Here Ibn ‘Arabī alludes to an important feature of the circle as being made up of two semi-circles, which represent all polarities such as beginningless eternity and endless everlastingness, hidden and manifest, heaven and earth. While the circle of Being remains whole and continuous, Witnessing or contemplation is constantly in movement from one polarity to the other, from one place of looking to another. The principle that these two aspects are tied to each other indissolubly can be found in many of his writings. For example, in his *K. al-‘Abādila* he states:

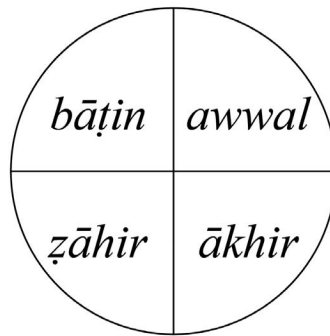
37 Ibn ‘Arabī makes a point of distinguishing between the ‘straight path’ of *tawḥīd* which leads to salvation and the ‘serpentine path’ of *da’wā* (claiming, pretension) which leads to perishing. See *Fut.* I.115.

38 This is, incidentally, the only time Ibn ‘Arabī uses the Persian term ‘compass’ (*birkār*) in the *Futūḥāt*. For the vision of the Youth, see Eric Winkel, ‘Understanding, and translating, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiya*’, *JMIAS* 55 (2014), pp. 1–32, which contains a translation of the relevant passage in Chapter 1, as well as his full revised translation in *The Openings Revealed in Makkah* Books 1 & 2 (New York, 2018).

39 *Fut.* I.48. Ar: *shuhūd thābit mustaqirr*. There is a complex allusion here in the idea of vision or witnessing as intrinsic to the continuous circling of Being: on the one side, there is the established potentiality or eye-entity (*‘ayn thābita*) and on the other, the freshness of the eye (*qurrat al-‘ayn*) that is constantly being renewed through gazing at the beloved. The divine Beloved is always in movement and change, stability in changeability (*tamkin fi talwīn*). For the notion of ‘finding a firm stable position’ inherent in Form X of *qarra*, see Q 36:38 referring to the idea of the sun arriving at its appointed term (*mustaqarr*).

One who does not have a hidden [side] cannot have a manifest [side]. [Exterior] things are only known through their interiors [lit. their souls]... *He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden* (Q 57:3), so He puts the Hidden last because it is in accordance with the image/form of the First.⁴⁰

This rather elliptical saying comes into sharper focus when we imagine the Quranic verse as being written in circular clockwise form: the First (*awwal*) between the hours of 12 and 3, the Last (*ākhir*) between 3 and 6, the Manifest (*ẓāhir*) between 6 and 9, and the Hidden (*bāṭin*) between 9 and 12.



In other words, there is an ontological connection between these Names which appears only when represented in the form of a circle: the ‘upper half’ is thus First and Hidden, and the ‘lower half’ is Last and Manifest. As we shall see in relation to the Blessing-prayer, the circle may thus be regarded as divided into four sections, or rather, into two sections of two pairs.

The two halves of the circle of existence appear as first and last, unseen and seen, hidden and manifest, heavenly and earthly. Ibn ‘Arabī sometimes relates this to the atemporal creation of the world, symbolised by the days of the Divine Work (*sha’n*) in relation to the earth:

.....
40 In the voice of ‘Abd Allāh b. Hibat Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Bāṭin (‘the Servant of God, son of the Gift of God, son of the Servant of the Interior’, who is no. 112 of the 117 chapters, and corresponds to Q 112, Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ). See *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Maṣṣūb, 1/299, and Pablo Beneito, ‘La inspirada inocencia de la interioridad original en el *Kitāb al-‘Abādila* de Ibn ‘Arabī de Murcia’, in *Una nueva visión de la literatura y el arte*, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico, 2014), pp.51–76.

two days for working on it in respect of its eye-entity ('*ayn*) and self-nature (*dhāt*): one day for its manifest and visible dimension; one day for its inner and unseen dimension; and [then] two days when He deposited in the earth the unseen and seen kinds of sustenance. Then there took place the most holy sitting on the Throne...⁴¹

According to this, this primary division of first and last, unseen and seen, which springs from the very nature and reality of the 'earth', is blessed by the 'Most Holy (*aqdas*) sitting on the Throne', or in other words, by the All-Compassionate (*al-Raḥmān*) being seated on the encompassing circular 'throne' of existence or on the integrating cubic 'throne' of the human heart.

As Ibn 'Arabī describes in a very beautiful poem on the human Ark that expresses the endless movement of the divine Throne,⁴²

Contemplate the Throne upon whose waters

an Ark sails with Its Names.

What a prodigious circular Craft within whose hold

lies the cargo of creation entrusted to Her!

Across an ocean without shore She glides

in the dark mists of the Unseen! ...

If only you were able to see how She crosses secretly

through all creation from scripture's *alif* to the *yā*,⁴³

.....
41 K. *al-Isfār*, 53, referring to Q 20:5. We may observe a correspondence of the seven days of creation with the seven letters of *kun fa-yakūn*, underlying this passage.

42 The introductory line in the *Dirwān* specifies that this poem is on succession (*kawr*) and circularity (*dawr*). There are two versions of this poem: in the *Ayyām al-sha'n* it has 7 verses, corresponding to the seven days, while in the *Mawāqif al-nujūm* there are 10 verses, corresponding to the value of *markab* (boat, craft, =10) and of the letter *yā* (=10). In addition, the *rāwī* of the rhyme is *hā* (=5), which is also the value of the two major terms designated as objects of contemplation: *al-'arsh* (Throne, =14=5) and *al-ḥikma* (Wisdom, =23=5, in the second part of the poem), which are both introduced by the same imperative 'behold/contemplate' (*unẓur*), as well as *ṣan'a* (the divine Work, =23=5) and the final word in the 10th line (*inshā'ihī*, =5). Since there are ten verses with a rhyme-value of 5 (-*h*) and an extended rhyme of 7 (-*ā'ihī*), this may allude to the value of the *nūn* (=50) and of the '*ayn*' (=70), respectively.

43 This not only refers to the whole alphabet according to al-Laythī (from A to Z), but also numerically from 1 to 1(0). See Dunja Rasic, *The Written World of God*, p. 79.

and how in this journey, turning and turning again,
to Her port of origin She always returns, in an endless
procession of beginning!⁴⁴

.....
⁴⁴ *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī*, 2/57 (*Ayyām al-sha'n*). This poem is fully translated and studied in Pablo Beneito, 'The Ark of Creation: the Markab motif in Sufism', *JMIAS* 40 (2006), pp. 53–6 et passim.



Detail of the muqarnas at the Sokollu Mehmet Pasha Mosque, Istanbul
(courtesy of Mehmet Okutan)

CHAPTER 2

Contemplation in letters and numbers, circles and mirrors

Nūn: By the Pen and that which they write! (Q 68:1)

At this point we should emphasise that according to Ibn ‘Arabī, following a traditional injunction,¹ every single element in manifestation requires to be given its rightful due, whether it be a person or thing that is given its due, or a word or vowel or particle that is given its true value and meaning, in whatever realm it may be: nothing at all is out of place in the divine order of things. Furthermore, there are correspondences between beings and letters and numbers that are hidden from the exoteric point of view, and are strictly a matter of contemplative insight. These correspondences are not artificial constructs of a limited intellectual approach, but living symbols inspiring direct contemplations of and in the heart. Ibn ‘Arabī describes them as a living community consisting of individuals characterised by the states of life, death and sleep as well as fulfilling functions such as being ‘the imams of spoken words’, ‘emissaries’ (*rusul*) or ‘poles’ (*aqṭāb*).² These living symbols are of the same nature as poetry itself, including proportional patterns of rhythm and rhyme: as Ibn ‘Arabī observes, ‘poetry (*shi‘r*) is the origin of the whole creative order (*al-amr*).’³ Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings overflow with these insights, albeit in coded language. This certainly also applies to Bosnevi’s language and perception of reality, and is manifest most explicitly in this Blessing-prayer. In this respect, we regard this Blessing-prayer as an artistic masterpiece in the spiritual context of the ‘art of contemplation’, and our comments in the following chapters on letters and numbers are intended as pointers to this dimension.

¹ al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *adab* 86.

² See K. al-‘Azama, *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*, 2/310–11, 314–17; *Fut.* I.51, 58.

³ *Dīwān al-ma’arīf*, ed. al-Manṣūb, 1/68.

In relation to the science of letters (and numbers), Ibn ‘Arabī himself distinguishes clearly between those who are given the secrets of this knowledge by God, i.e. His friends (*awliyā’*), and those who seek to utilise and manipulate its properties for certain benefits. For example, he states that the science of letters (*‘ilm al-ḥurūf*) is primarily a matter of real contemplation that arises naturally from God, rather than as the fruit of intellectual investigation or the illusion of power manipulation:

It is a high science in itself, but it is quite rare to be safe and protected from its effects. It is thus preferable to give up striving for it [and thus seeking something other than God], since it is a science which God has specially given to His friends in its entirety. Even though some individuals do possess it in small quantities, they did not receive what they know in the same way as God’s righteous servants. This is why these individuals who are involved in it experience unhappiness instead of [the grace of] happiness. May God make us knowers through God.⁴

This suggests that letters are to be regarded as living beings rather than inanimate haphazard signs. Like the so-called ‘perfect’ or ‘complete’ flowers that possess both stamens and carpels, they are capable of being both male and female, bisexual or hermaphroditic – hence, in grammatical terms, they may be treated as masculine and/or feminine. This perception of the living quality of letters also leads to a fuller appreciation of their intrinsic value and uniqueness rather than simply their utilitarian value or ‘power’ – this might be compared to the difference between treating other human beings with dignity, consciousness and respect and seeking to make use of them for one’s own ends.

The *Nūn*

Here we will look more directly at the symbolism of the letter *nūn*, the Arabic letter which most directly expresses the mystery of the circle. This letter, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, should be understood, on the one hand,

.....
 4 Fut. I.191; see the translation by Denis Gril in *The Meccan Revelations* vol. 2 (New York, 2004), p. 123.

as a written shape (◡), which he views ideally as a semi-circle (even if in actual script it may not have this precise shape), and on the other, as composed of the three letters (*nūn* + *wāw* + *nūn*) that form the name of the letter, along with their respective numerical values.⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī often operates on three levels when considering the letters: the letter itself (*n*); the letters of the name of the letter (*nūn* = *nūn-wāw-nūn*, *n-w-n*); and the constituent parts of all the letters of the name (*nūn-wāw-nūn*, *wāw-alif-wāw*, *nūn-wāw-nūn*, i.e. 4 *nūns*, 4 *wāws* and 1 *alif*).

There are two aspects of this letter in relation to the other letters: first of all, in the original alphabetical written order (*abjad*) as well as in the phonic order of articulation, the *nūn* occupies the midway point in the series of letters. In the first alphabetical case, it is halfway between the first letter *alif* and the last letter (*shīn* in the Western system, or *ghayn* in the Eastern), or between the principle of Uniqueness and the principle of ‘witnessing’ (*shuhūd*) or ‘otherness’ (*ghayr*).⁶ In the second phonic case, as sounds uttered by the human being, it lies halfway between *alif* and *wāw*, the latter representing the complete or perfect Human Being, who is both the divine Image (*ṣūra*) and the divine Representative (*khalīfa*) on earth. In this respect, these two orderings taken together allude to the principle that what appears in manifestation as ‘other than God’ is only fully given its right through the Human Being who is the complete image of the Divine. This aspect of being in the same position in both alphabetical orders is only shared with one other letter, the *alif*, suggesting a special relationship between the two letters *alif* and *nūn*, or between the first and the middle.

This special relationship is also to be found in the second aspect of the *nūn* in relation to others: Ibn ‘Arabī alerts us to the fact that the order of the isolated letters, which appear at the beginning of 29 suras in the Quran, begins with *alif* (as in *alif lām mīm* in the Sūrat al-Baqara, Q 2, the Cow) and ends with *nūn* (in Sūrat al-Qalam, Q 68, the Pen). In this respect the *nūn* is the opposite of the *alif* itself:

5 This follows a general approach in arithmosophy which may also consider the value and significance of the components of a letter’s name.

6 See Appendix C for a fuller discussion of the alphabet and its *abjad* values in the two systems.

He made the first of the [isolated letters] the *alif* in writing (*khaṭṭ*) and the *hamza* in articulation (*lafẓ*), and the last of them the *nūn*. The *alif* belongs to the Being of the Essence in Her perfection because She does not need a vowel, while the *nūn* belongs to the existence of half of the universe, which is the world of composition – that is the half of the circle (*dā'ira*) that is manifest for us from the sphere (*falak*), and the other half is the *nūn* which can be understood and inferred from that – if [this other half] were to appear in the senses and be transferred from the world of spirit, [the *nūn*] would become a full circle (*dā'ira muḥīṭa*). But this spiritual *nūn*, by which there is the perfection and completeness of being, is hidden. He made the dot of the *nūn*, which is visible, an indicator (*dalīl*) to that. So the *alif* is perfect and complete in all respects, while the *nūn* is incomplete. The Sun is perfect and complete, while the moon is incomplete because it can disappear,⁷ and its light quality is borrowed – this [light] is the sacred Trust which it bears.⁸



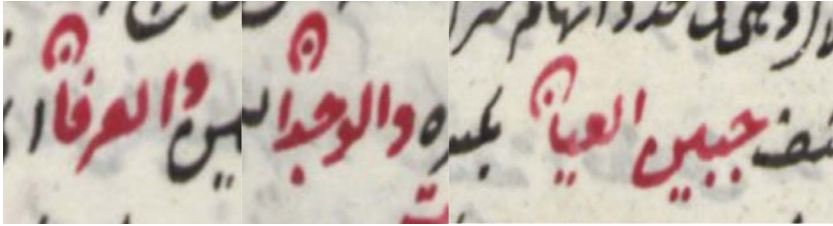
The written form of the *nūn* depicts a semi-circle with a dot. If we picture this – as Ibn ‘Arabī and the akbarians do – as only the visible part of a circle, there is another semi-circle hidden above it. This unseen upper half of the circle is what Ibn ‘Arabī calls the ‘spiritual *Nūn*’, while the visible lower half is the ‘lowly *nūn*’.

This way of understanding letters as graphic shapes and their relationship in spatial terms is sometimes depicted by authors or scribes in various ways: for example, a whole circle with a dot inside as a way of representing the *nūn*, or an inverted elevated *nūn* placed above an *alif*.

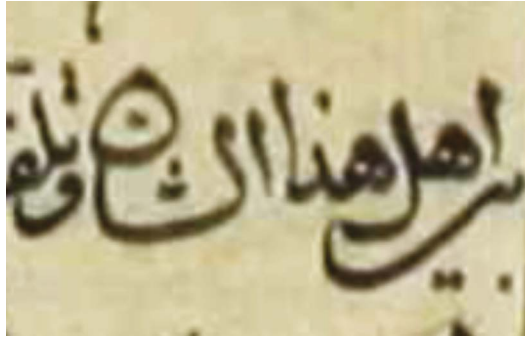
.....
7 Literally, ‘it is disappearance’, meaning the side of the moon that is covered by the shadow of the earth.

8 Fut. I.60.

This kind of graphic symbolisation, which is also applied to other letters and words⁹, is in certain ways akin to concrete poetry and would be a fruitful field of future research.



The upside-down elevated *nūn* on the top of an *alif*, found on the rhyming words ('*irfān*, '*wijdān*, '*iyān*) in the final section of the Blessing-prayer in Baghdadī's commentary (University MS A522, fol. 15b).¹⁰



The circular *nūn* placed above the *alif* of the word *al-sha'n* in a copy of an original *samā'* dated 614H found at the end of a copy of Ibn 'Arabī's *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (Raghib Pasha MS 1453, fol. 202b).

The dot itself, Ibn 'Arabī says, indicates the tip of a hidden *alif*, that is, an *alif* extending in a different dimension.¹¹ These two types of *nūn* are also manifested by the constituent letters within the *nūn* itself: the initial *nūn* representing the Spirit, the final *nūn* representing the world. The third letter, the medial *wāw* (و), represents not only the connection between

9 See Appendix C for an image of the symbolic writing of *ṣalātan wa-salāman*.

10 The Istanbul University scribe of al-Baghdādī's commentary clearly understood the symbology of the *nūn*, as this feature appears on words in the introduction such as '*iyān* (eye-vision) and *a'yān* (established potentialities, eye-entities) (University MS A522, fol. 1b).

11 See *Fut.* I.53, where he explains that the dot is like the visible tip or point of an *alif*, the rest of which is in the invisible – echoing the imagery of the compass. He also observes the *nūnic* connection between the letters *alif*, *zāy* and *lām* that make up the word *azal* ('eternity'). See the drawings in Eric Winkel's translation of *The Openings Revealed in Mecca* (New York, 2018), Book 1, p. 169.

the two *nūns* of Spirit and world, but also – as Ibn ‘Arabī often explains when discussing the *wāw* (being the final letter that can be articulated in the phonetic system, so that it ‘contains’ the properties of all the previous other letters) – the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Furthermore, in terms of the Blessing-prayer, the fact that the *wāw* links and articulates the two sentences within a couplet in the first section is highly significant in terms of the centrality of the *wāw* as the Perfect Human.¹²

Many of the implications of the letter *nūn* as the visible half of a circle are drawn out allusively in Ibn ‘Arabī’s extraordinary 3-line poem on the letter *Nūn*:

The dot of the self-nature¹³ of the *nūn* of existence –

in her [unseen] reality as an eye¹⁴ – indicates the object of her adoration.

Her own being¹⁵ is from His Generosity and His Right Hand¹⁶

.....
12 We may also note that the Blessing-prayer in total is divisible in the same way as the Fātiḥa, the first section of which belongs to God, the second section to the servant, with a shared middle section whose two parts are linked by a *wāw* – see Appendix D for details. We may observe that the use of the linking *wāw* in Section 1A of the Blessing-prayer acts as a contrast between the two sentences of a couplet, but changes from Section 1B onwards, becoming a connective feature of almost all sentences.

13 Ar: *dhāt*, a feminine term normally translated as ‘essence’. *Dhāt* literally means ‘that which possesses...’, implying relationship in the sense of ‘that to which qualities (*ṣifāt*) are attributed’. It also contains a graphical dot on the first letter *dhāl* (ذ), mirroring the dot in the *nūn*.

14 Here there is a very interesting divergence in Ibn ‘Arabī’s originals for this poem. The Arabic of the holograph second version of the *Futūḥāt*, followed in all the printed editions, reads: *fi ‘ayni-hā ‘aynan* (‘in her entity as an eye’). However, in the earlier autograph *Asrār al-hurūf* (Uni A79, fol. 100a), which is followed by the text in the *Diwān* (Paris BN 2348, fol. 73b; Berlin spr. 1108, fol. 10a), an alternative reading is given as an addition in the margin: *fi ḡhaybi-hā ‘aynan* (‘in her hidden reality as an eye’). In the holograph Ahmadiyya 774 (now Assad Zahiriyya 14067), fol. 10b, which contains the first-version *Futūḥāt* poems, there is no pointing, leaving the reading open (since *ḡhayb* غيب and ‘*ayn* عين only differ significantly in the dots). We have tried to suggest this ambiguity in our translation. In the following expression we find the pupil-point of the eye-circle indicating or looking towards the vertical *alif*, ‘the object of her adoration’. From a numerical point of view, the four repetitions of ‘*ayn* in the second version are significant, two in the first line and two in the third: 4x7=28, the second ‘perfect’ number (whose ‘perfection’ resides in being the sum of its divisors), i.e. the full range of manifestation as expressed in the lunar mansions and letters of the Arabic alphabet. This fourfold repetition also corresponds to the value of the name of the letter ‘*ayn* (7+1+5 =13=4), in which case it can be expressed as 4x4=16, which is the value of the name of the *nūn* (5+6+5=16), or as 7 (=1+6), the value of the letter ‘*ayn* again.

15 Ar: *wujūd*. If the first *wāw* is removed, it reads *jūd* (generosity). Hence Being derives from sheer Generosity. If the *jīm* is also removed, the word *wadd* (‘constant Love’) appears. See also Chapter 4.

16 The Right Hand of God is here an allusion to the Black Stone: according to a hadith transmitted by Ibn ‘Abbās, the Stone is the extension of the Right Hand of God on earth, the place where He directly ‘touches’ His creation (al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* 877). While the Ka’ba is usually thought of as a cube, the Stone, symbolising the whole Ka’ba (or the Ka’ba itself as the centre of the circle of existence), may be regarded as a ‘dot’, which is being circumbulated by the pilgrims. Hence the visible *nūnic* semi-circle derives from the unseen semi-circle above and from the divinely-touched dot at the centre.

and all the created beings of her higher [side]¹⁷ are from her generosity.

So observe, with your own eye¹⁸, the [manifest] half of the reality of her being,

out of her generosity, guiding [you] to her non-manifest [half].¹⁹

The important elements of this poem for our purposes here are: the linking of the *nūn* to circularity (as in the circumambulation of the Ka‘ba), with its unseen and seen elements; the femininity of the *nūn* as a letter indicating a (higher) vessel that pours and a (lower) vessel that receives; and also the idea of the creative act and creation (*kun*, *kawn*, *akwān*), in which the whole of existence (*wujūd*) derives from generosity (*jūd*) and is guided back to the origin of Love (*wadd*).²⁰

Here there is an essential point to notice: the letter *nūn* stands as a primary symbol of manifestation, and since it is semi-circular in shape, it is incomplete and points implicitly to its other mirror-half, the semi-circle of non-manifestation, the half that we cannot see with the senses. This suggests that the understanding of this hidden half only takes proper shape within the context of the full circle, which is the expression of Unity. Numerically this is expressed by the value of the letter *nūn* as 50 (or 5), which when added to its other invisible half makes 100 (or 10), i.e. 1 (wholeness). In Arabic the number 5 is written as a circle (◯). In other words, numerically this letter only shows its true circular fivefold nature when both manifest and hidden dimensions are taken into consideration. This is one of the meanings behind the well-known story of an event that took place during the Prophet Muhammad’s ascension (*mi‘rāj*). During this journey – which may be understood as travelling within the unseen dimension of the spiritual *nūn* – he received the divine instruction to order his community to pray 50 times a day, i.e. through all the aspects of manifestation (symbolised by the *nūn*). Through the help of Moses,

17 Ar: *akwān al-‘ulā*, indicating that the higher spiritual side of the *nūn* ‘creates’ through ‘generosity’. The use of the term *akwān* shows the direct connection with the act of creation (*kun*).

18 Ar: *bi-‘ayni-ka*, lit: ‘through your own ‘ayn’, a multi-faceted phrase that can also mean ‘in your own reality’.

19 ut. 1.70. The poem in itself would require a detailed commentary on almost every word to clarify the remarkable interweaving of allusions. We will go into more detail in our forthcoming book *The Letter-Poems of Ibn ‘Arabī*.

20 For the same play on the letters *wāw* and *dāl* in words such as *jūd* and *wadūd*, see Bosnevi, *al-Qirā al-rūḥi al-mamdūd lil-adyāf al-wāridin min marātib al-wujūd*, Carullah MS 2129 fol. 1b. Note that the repetition of the two letters in the title (-ūd) may also allude to the doubling of the *w-d* in the Name *Wadūd*.

this number was reduced to 5, which is both the reduced value of *nūn* as well as the value of *hā'*. The letter *hā'* (هـ), the first letter of the word *huwa* (هو, 'He'), is considered by Ibn 'Arabī as circular in shape, and can be understood as the letter specific to the hidden, non-manifest semi-circle, in that it takes form as a complete circle. In other words, what is hidden from our sensory point of view is that existence is in fact a full circle. Travelling in the next world or spiritual ascension may be conceived as taking place within the hidden semi-circle, which is the realised circle symbolised by the *hā'*. Therefore, the initial divine instruction to Muhammad's community can be understood as desiring them to pray within the fullest dimensions of circularity, while the reduction in the number of prayers signifies devotion to the essential circular Reality of all things.

'Between the created world (*kawn*) and the Real (*ḥaqq*) there is the veil of [the creating word] "Be" (*kun*). The *kāf* is connected with the *nūn* (ن) because the *nūn* is 50, which is the *hā'* (=5) in the tens [column]. This is like the five daily prayers which preserve the degrees of 50 in prayer, just as reported by al-Bukhārī: "They are five, and they are 50 – the Word does not change with Us". So five is the same as 50 from this point of view.'²¹

This understanding of 50 is also the way that Ibn 'Arabī understands travelling after death, whether this death takes place spiritually in this world or only physically at the end of this life. As Ibn 'Arabī observes in the first line of the opening poem of chapter 64,²² 'the Day of Ascensions (*yawm al-ma'ārij*) is 50,000 years long', where 50 relates to the number of the halting-places of the Resurrection (*mawāqif al-qiyāma*, according to a hadith), and 1,000 suggests that these places are fully manifest and can be directly witnessed (*shuhūd*). The rhyming letters of this poem express a most marvellous conception of Unity: the main rhyme-letter (*rāwī*) is *hā'* (the unseen semi-circle, =5), which is preceded by a *nūn* (the manifest semi-circle, =5), preceded by a *sīn* (of *sana*/year or travelling

21 K. *al-Mīm wa-l-wāw wa-l-nūn, Rasā'il*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Manṣūb (Cairo, 2017), 2/82.

22 Fut. I.307. See Eric Winkel, *Openings*, vol. 2, p. 663; and the French translation by Maurice Gloton, *Ibn 'Arabī: De la mort à la résurrection* (Beirut, 2009), p. 157.

in and out of time, =3). This suggests that true spiritual ascension takes place as a journey from the manifest to the hidden realms, always within the context of Unity ($s\bar{in}+n\bar{un}+h\bar{a}'=13=aḥad$).²³ Sometimes this 'journey' is symbolised by the removal of the dot from the letter *ghayn* (غ), which is associated with 'otherness' (*ghayr*) and 'hiddenness' (*ghayba*), so that all that remains is the letter 'ayn' (ع), i.e. the eye-entity or the reality that 'sees'.²⁴

The word 'ayn in expressions such as *al-a'yān al-thābita* is normally translated as 'essence' or 'entity' (as in 'the immutable/latent essences'), but this loses the crucial meaning of 'eye' and 'vision' that is explicit in Ibn 'Arabī's treatment of the term. The 'ayn is not simply an abstract intellectual concept as in philosophical texts, but implies the symbolic image of a sphere or circle that is a contemplative place of vision. The understanding of 'ayn as 'eye-entity' appears clearly in the following passage, where he clarifies that the 'ayn is directly involved in loving and seeing in its very root:

'As for Divine Love, it is from His [double-sided] Name "The Beautiful and the Light" (*al-jamīl wa-l-nūr*). The Light advances towards the eye-entities of the possible things (*a'yān al-mumkināt*), and dispels from them the darkness of [being absorbed in] gazing at themselves and at their state of potentiality, bringing about for them [the faculty of] vision, which is His own vision, since it is not possible to see except through Him. So He reveals Himself to this eye-entity through the Name The Beautiful, so that it is completely engrossed in love of Him, and the eye of that possible thing becomes a place of manifestation (*maẓhar*) for Him.'²⁵

.....
23 Remarkably there are seven instances of these rhyme-letters in this 6-line poem, again indicating Unity ($13 \times 7 = 91 = 1$).

24 See the Thursday Eve prayer in Ibn 'Arabī's *Awṛād*, *Prayers for the Week* (Oxford, 2021): '... so that I am not veiled from the 'ayn by the [dot of the] *ghayn*' (p. 65).

25 *Fut.* II. 116.

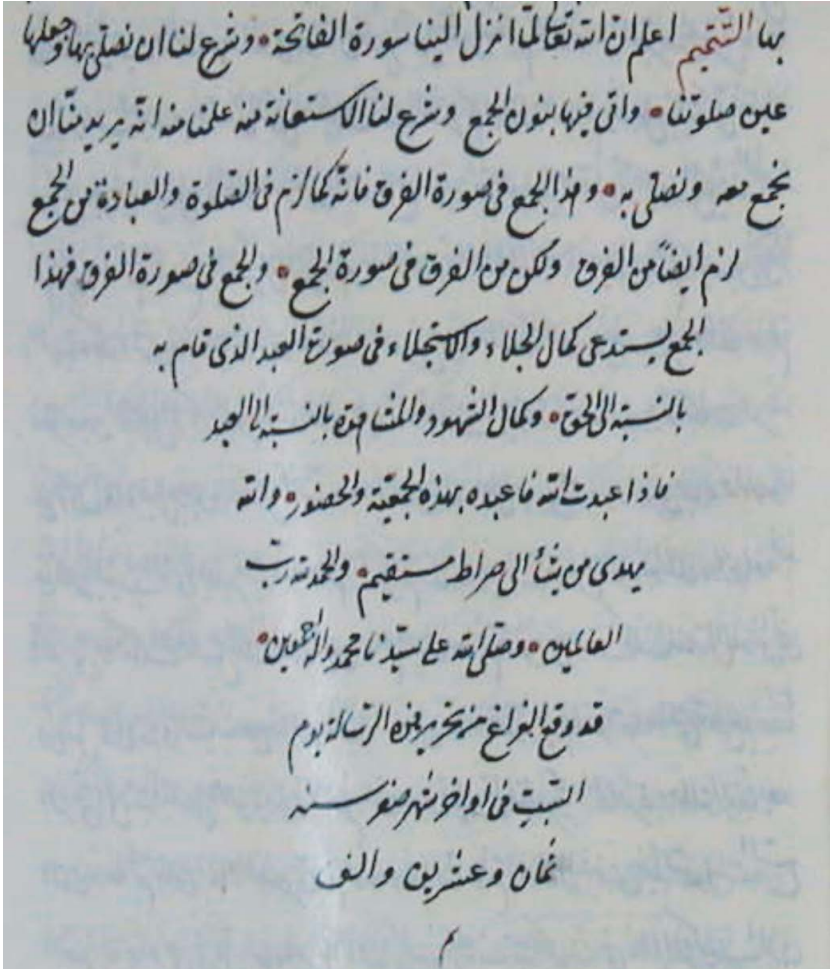
We may observe how this passage contains the very unusual mention of ‘His Name’ The Beautiful and the Light (*al-jamīl wa-l-nūr*), a double-but-one Name which includes the three circular mirror-letters (*mīm*, *wāw* and *nūn*, in the same order as in Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatise on these letters). This reflects the two-sided nature of Reality in connection with the two Effusions and the linking human *barzakh*, in correspondence with the Quranic phrase ‘He is ... the Manifest and the Hidden’ where the Beautiful is manifest and the Light is hidden, invisible in Itself.

With all this in mind, we can appreciate some of the dense allusions in the closing section of Bosnevi’s treatise on the middle verse of the Fātiḥa:

‘When God revealed to us the Sūrat al-Fātiḥa and commanded us to pray with it, making it the very essence of our prayer, and brought with it the Nūn of Union (*nūn al-jam‘*)²⁶, and established that we have to ask for His support, He taught us that He desired from us that we should re-unite with Him and pray through Him. This union is in the form of separation: just as union is required in prayer and adoration, so also is separation: but [it means] separation in the form of union, and union in the form of separation.’²⁷

26 This very important expression, which indicates the full circle of alphabetical possibility, may also be understood as referring to the *nūn* of plurality in the middle verse of the Fātiḥa, which reads: *īyyā-Ka na‘budu wa-īyyā-Ka nasta‘in* (‘It is You alone we worship; and it is You alone we ask for aid’). This understanding can be found in Ibn ‘Arabī’s *K. al-‘Aẓama (Rasā’il, 2/323)*. The *nūn* is the letter of the first person, not only plural (‘we’, *na-*) as in the verse but also singular (‘I’, *ana*). The expression *nūn al-jam‘* can be understood in various ways, as the Divine ‘I’ (*ana*) or as the implicit plurality of His Names or of His possibilities (*naḥnu*, ‘we’). Given that the term *jam‘* has a value of 14, it corresponds to the ‘seven repeated’ (*al-sab‘a al-mathānī*) of the Fātiḥa as well as to the value of the *nūn* itself (1+4=5). On the other hand, the whole expression *nūn al-jam‘* has a value of 34 or 7, corresponding to the verses of the Fātiḥa (whose value as *fātiḥat* is also 7).

27 *Tajallī al-nūr al-mubīn fī iyyā-Ka na‘budu wa-īyyā-Ka nasta‘in*, Carullah MS 2129, fol. 53a. Note how the two *nūns* of *nūr* and *mubīn* (one initial and one final) correspond to the two *nūns* of the Quranic verse. Bosnevi’s dating reflects the symbolism of ‘the seven repeated’ of the Fātiḥa: Saturday (7th day) of Šafar (=7, second month) 1028, which total 7 (7+7+29=43).



The closing section of Bosnevi's *Tajallī al-nūr al-mubin*, Carullah MS 2129, fol. 53a

We find the same expression used in the opening lines of al-Baghdādī's commentary on the Blessing-prayer:

All Praise be to Him who brought out the high letters (*al-ḥurūf al-ʿāliyāt*) from the *Nūn* of Union (*nūn al-jamʿ*) through the Most Holy Effusion, and all Gratitude to Him who opened up from the First Individuation the forms of the established eye-entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) through the Holy Effusion. Blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad, the centre of the circle of

Generosity and the dot [constituting] the letters of the realities of Being, and upon his Family who are the carriers of his mysteries, and his Companions who are the places of manifestation of his moons, and his Heirs who contemplate with two eyes (*'aynayn*) and who eradicate the dot of the [letter] *ghayn*.²⁸

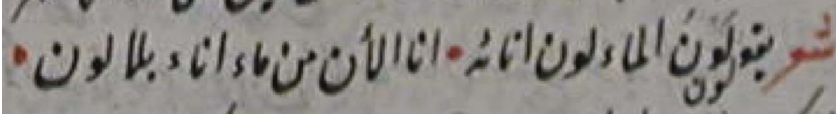
The principle of the visible *nūn* as a receptacle or inkwell is also beautifully expressed by Abdullah Bosnevi in a remarkably allusive one-line poem (*mufrad*) in his commentary on the chapter of Idris in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Playing with the interconnections of *alif-nūn* in the words *inā* ('receptacle'), *ana* ('I') and *ān* ('presence, instant, now') and of *wāw-nūn* in the word *lawn* ('colour'), he expresses the manner in which the Complete Human Being is absolutely without limitation and is identified with the water of the Absolute Essence while at the same being a receptacle fully expressive of all the colours of the Names. This verse can be seen as expressing the secret of the pronoun *Ana* ('I'), which contains two *alifs*: the first isolated and symbol of the Name Allāh belonging only to the Essence, the second connected to the *nūn* and symbol of the Human who is the 'image' of the Name Allāh. The verse reads:

They say the colour of water is the colour of its receptacle

but I am/is the actual presence of water, a receptacle without colour.²⁹

28 *Sharḥ al-Baghdādī*, University MS A522, fol. 1b. In Chapter 3 we will consider more deeply the principle of 'Effusion' (*fayḍ*). The letter *ghayn* refers to hiddenness (*ghayba*) and obscurity: when its dot (understood as a veil concealing the hidden world) is removed, the letter *'ayn* remains, representing simultaneously the eye, vision, source and the manifestation of realities (*a'yān*). The author, al-Baghdādī, also transmitted the *Awṛād* and *Dawr* attributed to Ibn 'Arabī (see Esad Ef. MS 1442, fol. 52a).

29 Ar: *ya'qulūna lawnu l-mā'i lawnu inā'i-hi / ana l-ānu min mā'in inā'un bi-lā lawnī*. It is difficult to render in translation all the allusions in this single line: the second hemistich can be read as 'I (*ana*) is the instant (*al-ān*)...' or more obviously as 'I (*ana*) am now (*al-ān*) from water, a receptacle without colour'. The verse is in *ṭawīl* metre, with 14 (=5) syllables in each hemistich. The final letters of each hemistich (*-h* and *-n*) both equal 5. The two key terms *mā'* (water) and *lawn* (colour) also equal 5. There is equally a play on the three mirror-letters, *wāw*, *nūn* and *mīm*. Note the poetic visual feature of the first word *ya'qulūna*, whose last three letters *l-w-n* are written in graphic correspondence to the same three letters of the following word *lawn* written above it. See Bosnevi, *Sharḥ* fol. 170b, repeated also in the chapter of Joseph, fol. 243b. This verse also resonates with the final two verses of the last poem (which rhymes in *nūn-alif*, =5+1=6) in the chapter of Abraham in the *Fuṣūṣ*: 'I have two faces, He and I; He has no 'I' through [my] 'I' / But in me is His place of appearance – we are for Him like a receptacle (*inā'*). On the meaning of the receptacle (*inā'*, *nūn*) and the water related to effusion (*fayḍ*) as symbols that should not be understood as two things but as the One in manifestation, see Bosnevi's commentary on these lines (*Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, fol. 187a).



The poem in Bosnevi's *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, Yusuf Aḡa MS 5464, fol. 170b

The Three Circular Mirror-Letters: *mīm, nūn and wāw*

In the Blessing-prayer there is an underlying appreciation of the three unique mirror-letters or 'circular letters'³⁰, which are the only Arabic letters whose names begin and end in the same letter: *mīm* (4= ميم), *nūn* (5= نون) and *wāw* (6= واو). This suggests a circular 'coupling' or 'pairing' as we have seen in the semi-circles implied in the form of the *nūn*. According to the Quran, this coupling is a divinely ordained feature of the world and of ourselves: 'Glory be to God who created all the pairs out of what the earth causes to grow and out of themselves and out of what they do not yet know' (36:36).³¹

The unique qualities of these three letters are described in a special treatise that Ibn 'Arabī devoted to them, entitled 'The Book of the *Mīm* and the *Wāw* and the *Nūn* (*K. al-Mīm wa-l-Wāw wa-l-Nūn*)'.³² In it he uses the technical term *ma'ṭūfa* (from the root 'aṭafa meaning 'to bend, incline favourably, fold') to describe the empathetic folding over, a movement of loving identification, between the first and last letters of each of these letter-words.³³ If we take the example of the *nūn* and regard it as a three-letter word in its own right, it is made up of two 'elements' (*basā'it*): *nūn* (= *n*, twice) and *wāw* (= *ū*). In this respect the numerical

30 They are specifically called *al-ḥurūf al-dawriyya* ('circular letters') in an early 8th/14th-century manuscript copy of Ibn 'Arabī's *K. al-Mīm wa-l-Wāw wa-l-Nūn* (see Shehit Ali MS 1375, fol. 79a).

31 Q 36:36. See also: 'He created you all from a single soul, and then He made its pair from it...' (39:6).

32 RG 462, which was written in his 'Eastern' period, sometime before 617H.

33 He may well have drawn some of this from a Hallāj-inspired work on the nature of love by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Daylamī (d. ca. 392/1001) entitled *K. 'Aṭf al-alif al-ma'lūf 'alā al-lām al-ma'tūf* ('The Attachment of the Alif of Union to the Lām of Inclination'), which has a wonderful play on words involving the *alif* befriending and being befriended by the *lām* (as in the first two letters of Allāh). See al-Daylamī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī, 'Aṭf al-alif al-ma'lūf 'alā al-lām al-ma'tūf, ed. J. N. Bell and Ḥasan Maḥmūd 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Shāfi' (Cairo, 1428/2007); *ibid.*, English trans. as *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, by J. N. Bell and Hasan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh, 2005).

value of *nūn* is $5+6+5=16=7$, suggesting a link between the *nūn* and other letters such as ‘*ayn*’ (=7). As already explained, if we break this down even further and consider the elements of the constituent letters, the word *nūn* can also be said to be made up of a whole family of letters, containing a total of four *nūns*, four *wāws* and one *alif*, with the first and last always being a *nūn*. When we express this numerically, we get $20 (4 \times 5) + 24 (4 \times 6) + 1 = 45$, a special number in Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception as it represents the number of the ‘Adamic sciences’ (from the name Ādam, $1+4+40$), or all the primordial types of knowledge that exist in potential in the human being. In this way we can represent the *nūn* ‘family’ in a table:

N ن	W و	N ن
W و	Ā ا	W و
N ن	W و	N ن

If we start reading anti-clockwise from the top right-hand corner, it is as if the word *nūn* repeats itself, endlessly circling around the central square containing the *alif*. This symmetry is a unique characteristic of the *nūn*, one that is not shared by any other Arabic letter.

The reason that the first *nūn* of the word *nūn* is regarded as having a special ‘inclination’ for the second *nūn*, is that according to Ibn ‘Arabī, although the second looks like a simple ‘repetition’ of the first, it is really a kind of mirror-image, simultaneously the same as and different from the first *nūn*. In fact this is a prime example of the idea of ‘similarity’ (*mithl*), which he expounds in various contexts such as the human as the ‘likeness’ of God or the nature of the moment in which there is no repetition but is similar to the previous instant. So this ‘inclination’ or loving identification of the first *nūn* for the second (or the first *mīm* for the second, or the first *wāw* for the second) reveals also the nature of the Divine yearning for Himself in creation. The yearning of the One is for

Himself in the mirror of the ‘second’, who is simultaneously Himself and other than Himself, just as the image in a mirror is both identical to the viewer and non-identical. Likewise, the relationship of the second to the first in these letters symbolises the returning of this Divine yearning to its origin. As we can see depicted in the table above, each *nūn* becomes the first as well as the last in its circular motion, so that this process of yearning is always a mutual affair between the ‘two’ sides within Oneness.

We may note here that the *nūn* is the only mirror-letter that exhibits this extraordinary total symmetry. If we represent the *mīm* or the *wāw* in a similar tabular form, the central square has to remain blank (since we cannot write the central letter *yā’* in the *mīm* or the *alif* in the *wāw* as circular letters in the way we can with the *wāw* in the *nūn*):

M م	Y ي	M م
Y ي	[!]	Y ي
M م	Y ي	M م

W و	A ا	W و
A ا	[!]	A ا
W و	A ا	W و

We might then infer that although the Ka‘ba-like *alif* lies at the centre of all three representations, being circumambulated by the three ‘pilgrim’ letters, nonetheless this centre is only visible in the *nūn* and it remains invisible in the *mīm* and *wāw*. This is yet another aspect of the mystery

of the dot above the *nūn* being the visible point of a vertical *alif* (the letter *mīm* has two dots below the letters, and the *wāw* has no dot).

In the following passage from Ibn ‘Arabī’s introduction to his book on these three letters, it may be useful to have in mind two metaphors: on the one hand, a sphere like the moon, where the ‘bright’ side is visible and other is the ‘dark’ invisible side; and on the other hand, two curved hands that are joined at the wrists and are coming together at the fingertips, forming a sphere (which in the case of the hands entails a 5:5 relationship of the fingers). These two depictions show the two different aspects of what Ibn ‘Arabī is expressing so succinctly: according to the first, what we see is only half of what is actually present – the dark hidden half can never be seen, even though we know it is there; and according to the second, the first element is joined to the last, so that the circle is complete:

The [dark, unseen] backs of the three letters (*mīm*, *wāw* and *nūn*) are folded over [to join] onto their [bright, visible] fronts through the mediation of the ‘causative’ letters³⁴ [that form the axes of the folding movement]. They are supported by the authority of ‘Be’ (*kun*) so that they can generate what needs to come into being. These [‘causative’ letters] are: the *alif* in your saying ‘*wāw*’ (*wāw-alif-wāw*), which is necessarily inherent in the Presence of Generosity (*jūd*, containing a central *wāw*) by which the *known measure* [of each thing] is sent down, even if it were not to have [previously] been ‘stored’;³⁵ and [secondly] the *wāw* that vowelises [and is united to] the preceding letter with a *ḍamma* (‘u’) in your saying ‘*nūn*’, which indicates spiritual causes to a people who contemplate;³⁶ and [thirdly] the *yā* which vowelises the preceding letter with a *kasra* (‘i’) in your saying

.....
34 Referring to the letters *yā*, *alif* and *wāw* which are the second middle letter of the three respective names. The grammatical expression, *hurūf al-‘ilal*, are usually understood as ‘defective’ letters, i.e. those which are unstable and are always in movement, connected to the three vowels they imply (i, a, u), but also mean the secondary causes (another meaning of ‘*ilal*’) which are manifestations of the creative ‘Be’. This may explain why Ibn ‘Arabī refers to two ways of seeing causation, spiritual and physical.

35 Referring to Q 15:21: ‘There is nothing for which We do not have stores; and We send it down only in a known measure.’

36 Ar: *yanzurūn*, a common Quranic expression for deeper observation found in various verses such as: ‘Have they not contemplated the spiritual realm (*malakūt*) of the heavens and the earth?’ (Q 7:185).

‘*mīm*’, which indicates physical causes to *a people who reflect*.³⁷ May the blessing-prayer of God be upon our master Muhammad and his family, and may He greet them with abundant peace-greetings, as long as the Pen inscribes in detail what [the inkwell of] the *Nūn* contains in summary.³⁸

As we can see in this passage, the contemplation of these three letters implies the imagery of a circle or sphere, as well as a very loving relationship between first and last, hidden and manifest. We may also note the Quranic imagery of the Pen and the *Nūn* or inkwell, which is a metaphor for all divine creative expression as ‘writing’, specifically employed in relation to the blessing-prayer upon the Prophet. As we shall see, the Blessing-prayer of Effusion is specifically structured according to these three mirror-letters, and here it may be useful to reflect a little more deeply on the *mīm* and the *wāw*.

For Ibn ‘Arabī poetry is intimately connected to the science of letters. Poetry naturally implies rhythms and proportions, musicality and numbers. One of the aspects of the numerical patterns underlying Ibn ‘Arabī’s compositions is the value of the rhyme. Poems on the letters are especially connected to a significant play on numerical values. The value of the letter or of the name of the letter is directly linked to the value of the main rhyming letter (*rāwī*) or the value of the full rhyme (the *rāwī* with its extensions, the one or more letters that are repeated alongside it), as well as the number of verses and even the metric pattern. As we shall see, Ibn ‘Arabī employs several possible ways of linking these numerical values to the letter or subject of the poem in question – and we will also see later how these and similar procedures resonate in the Blessing-prayer of Effusion.

In the chapter on the letters in the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn ‘Arabī introduces his reflections on the letter *mīm* with a remarkable 3-verse poem that directly links it to the *nūn*:

.....
37 Ar: *yatafakkarūn*, another common Quranic term for intellectual reflection. See for example: ‘In that there are signs for a people (*qawm*) who reflect’ (Q 13:3).

38 K. *al-Mīm wa-l-Wāw wa-l-Nūn*, 2/77. There is here an allusion to the previous mention of *kun* (=2+5), because the Pen is symbolised by the *bā’* (=2) and the Inkwell is the *nūn* (=5).

The *mīm* is like the *nūn*,³⁹ if you realise the mystery of the two of them

as an eye-entity in the ending of manifest existence and its beginnings.

The *nūn* is for the Real, and the noble *mīm* is for me⁴⁰ –

beginning for beginning, and endings for endings.

The isthmus of the *nūn* is spirit in the places of His knowledge,

and the isthmus of the *mīm* is lord over created beings.⁴¹

The main rhyme (*rāwī*) here is *tā'* (=4), the same value as the *mīm*, but we can also find two levels of extended rhyme: *alif-tā'* (=5), which refers to the value of the *nūn*; and *yā'-alif-tā'* (=6), which refers to the value of the *wāw*. This last calculation is significant in that the full rhyme of the three verses (6x3=18) total 9, which is the value of the name of the *mīm*.

This number is also reflected in the 9 occurrences of the letter *mīm* in the poem, where each of the three lines contains 3 *mīms*, alluding to the triple nature of Muhammad.⁴² Each line of the poem, as seen in the final rhyming words, may also be understood to refer to one of the three letters of the name *mīm*: 'beginnings' (*bidāyāt*) corresponding to the first *mīm*, 'endings' (*ghāyāt*) to the last *mīm*, and '[lord over] created beings' (*bariyyāt*) to the medial *yā'*. In this reading the first line

39 According to Ibn 'Arabī, these two letters share a circular shape: while the *nūn* appears as only half a visible circle, the *mīm* appears as a full circle in connection to other letters. In Arabic, letters can be both masculine and feminine. Here the *mīm* and the *nūn* are both treated as feminine. We may note that the letter *mīm* immediately alludes to the principle of motherhood (*umm*) and thus precedence (as in *amām*) and leadership (*imām*), and observe the monoliteral origin of primary family terms (*m* = *umm*, mother, *bā'* = *ab*, father; *khā'* = *akh*, brother).

40 Grammatically the *nūn* stands for the first person (*ana*) and presence (*innā, annā, hunā...*). This line may allude to the I-ness of the Real, since only God can truly say 'I', while the *mīm* alludes to the manifest or derived existence of 'me'. Grammatically, as a prefix, *mīm* indicates the condition of space-time (for example, in the name Muhammad, which is also Ibn 'Arabī's own personal name, the *mīm* denotes the space-time entity of praise).

41 *Fut*. I.74. The 'isthmus (*barzakh*) of the *nūn*' refers to the medial *wāw* of the name of the letter, connected to the spiritual reality of the Universal Human Being, while the 'isthmus of the *mīm*' refers to the medial *yā'*, a letter with two dots symbolising the attribute of 'dualitude', the interrelationship of two as in Lord and servant. The *yā'* is connected to the self-identity of a thing, as it is the possessive suffix 'my' (-i), and this relative I-ness 'rules' over all creatures. In the same way, while the *wāw* is non-manifest and purely spiritual in the *kun* ('Be') as a *ḍamma*, the *yā'* of *yakūn* (in the expression 'and so it becomes') is manifest and governs the actualisation of coming into existence. The 'lord over created beings' (*bariyyāt*) implies dualitude, Lord/servant, Creator/created and so on. The term *bariyyāt* is associated with a divine Name 'the Creator' (*al-Barī*).

42 For 3 as 'the first of the primes' (*awwal al-afrād*), see the chapter of Muhammad in the *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kılıç, p. 202.

emphasises the essential circularity of the *mīm* (like the *nūn*), while the second line emphasises the differentiation of the servant from the Real, where the second *mīm* points to the meaning of the *mīm* in the grammatical forms of space-time manifestation, implying the equivalent of a genitival construction (**Muḥammad** as ‘the place of praise’, *mazḥar al-ḥamd*; *muqaddas* as ‘the place of holiness’, *mazḥar al-quḍḥ*; and so on). In this second line the *nūn* is said to refer to the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) in Himself, while the *mīm* denotes the Real through whom creation happens (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*), or in other words the Reality of the Perfect Human Being. The third line emphasises the distinction between the medial letters *wāw* (*barzakh al-nūn*) and *yā*’ (*barzakh al-mīm*) in the two realms of non-dual knowledge and the presence of ‘dualitude’ (the two-ness of One).

In the same chapter, Ibn ‘Arabī follows this with a 4-verse poem on the letter *wāw*,⁴³ which he describes elsewhere as ‘a noble letter with multiple aspects and a rare and sublime source [of knowledge], and the first perfect number’.⁴⁴ By ‘perfect number’ he is referring to the important mathematical principle that certain numbers are the sum of their divisors, the first two of which play an important role in Ibn ‘Arabī’s teaching: the first, as in this case, is 6, which is both $1+2+3$ and $1 \times 2 \times 3$, and 6 is the value of the letter *wāw*, which is why he states that ‘the *wāw* has the properties of the number 6 as well as the properties of 2 and 3’; the second is 28, which is both $1+2+4+7+14$ and $1 \times 2 \times 4 \times 7 \times 14$. Ibn ‘Arabī’s poem on the *wāw* treats the letter as masculine, perhaps to allude to the active principle of the perfect Human Being. Again he emphasises two-ness or dualitude in the distinction between the initial and final *wāws* of the name of the letter, as well as in its phonic nature since it emanates from the two lips:

.....
43 *Fut.* I.75.

44 *K. al-Mīm, Rasā’il*, ed. Maṣṣūb, 2/81. There is an infinite range of perfect numbers, of which the first four were known to Euclid: 6, 28, 496 and 8128, and just over 50 to scientists in the modern world. As far as is known, all perfect numbers are even. We may observe two extraordinary patterns in these perfect numbers: firstly, a perfect number must always end in 6 or 28 (the first two perfect numbers); secondly, as far as we could count, the total of the digits always reduces to 1 (starting from the second perfect number 28, up to the 8th which has 19 digits): for example, $8+1+2+8=19=1$.

The *wāw* of *You alone*⁴⁵ is more holy
 than my being⁴⁶, and more precious
 for it is a perfected spirit
 and it is a sixfold mystery.⁴⁷
 Wherever its [circular] wholeness⁴⁸ shines forth⁴⁹,
 it is said to be *holy land*.⁵⁰
 Its house – the high Lote-tree⁵¹ –
 is founded in us.⁵²

The first two words of this remarkable poem are an allusive shorthand to a typically akbarian kaleidoscopic contemplation, a symbolical interaction of Quranic phrasing, letter and number on various levels. First of all, there is a clear reference to the central verse of the Fātiḥa which mentions two *īyyā-kas* ('You alone') connected with a *wāw* ('[It is You alone whom we worship and adore, and It is You alone whom we ask for aid', *īyyā-Ka na'budu wa-īyyā-Ka nasta'in*). This verse is described as being 'shared

45 Ar: *wāw īyyā-Ka*, alluding to the shared verse in the middle of the Fātiḥa (Q 1:4). For further analysis of this and other poems, see our forthcoming book *The Letter-Poems of Ibn 'Arabi*.

46 Ar: *wujūdi*, a word that contains two *wāws* and points to the place of the servant. This mention of 'my' parallels the last verse where the plural, 'in us' (*fi-nā*), is mentioned, pointing both to the community and to the 'we' in the central verse of the Fātiḥa.

47 Referring to the sixfold cubic nature of the Ka'ba and the six faces of the human heart, as well as the six directional orientations of the spherical human constitution.

48 Ar: '*aynu-hu*, referring to the whole nature of the *wāw*, its 'entity', as well as to its circular quality as an 'eye'.

49 Ar: *lāḥa*, whose primary meaning is 'shine, light up', but also means 'appear, manifest'. It is also related to the tablet (*lawḥ*) upon which one writes.

50 Echoing Q 5:21, when Moses said to his people: 'O my people, enter the holy land (*al-arḍ al-muqaddasa*) that God has prescribed for you...' In the original text there is an additional note in Ibn 'Arabi's hand, adding the word *bayt* above the word *arḍ*, suggesting that this expression may allude to the sanctified Temple Mount (*al-bayt al-muqaddas* or *maqdis*) in Jerusalem or the House (*bayt*) of the Ka'ba. The verb *lāḥa* ('shines', 'discloses') suggests the Tablets (*alwāḥ*, from the same root) that Moses was given by God as revelation to his people. The word *muqaddas* also echoes the *aqdas* of the first sentence, suggesting that all that people call holy and sacred ('land') derives from the manifesting of the supreme holiness of Essential Reality ('*ayn*). This leads to two perspectives: if you perceive the *wāw* through its known name as three letters (13=4), it corresponds to the four faces of the horizontal Temple/Ka'ba, where you can only see the manifested horizontal dimension of four orientations. If you recognise the full spiritual reality of the *wāw*, the letter itself, you know the six sides of the cube in the circular wholeness of the Temple.

51 Ar: *bayt*, (referring to the *wāw*) which means 'a house, tent, a poetic verse'.

52 We may observe that in the middle verse of the Fātiḥa there are two mentions of 'we' (*na-*), linked by the central *wāw*, exactly as it occurs in the name of the letter *nūn* itself. Hence in some sense the *nūn* itself symbolises this central verse.

between God and His servant',⁵³ because it is the only one that mentions both sides (You/we), while the first part is in praise of God alone and the last part is a request on the part of the servant. In other words, when we contemplate this medial verse in the Fātiḥa, we focus on the divine Unity of 'You alone', at the same time as contemplating the implicit plurality hidden within this Unity, which gives rise to the explicit 'we' of 'we worship and adore'. From the perspective of this verse itself, the *wāw* is that which joins the two aspects of 'You alone': the aspect of loving worship and devotion to the One and Only Lord, and the aspect of asking and being in need of the One and Only Giver – this *wāw* signifies conjunction, the 'place' that brings together these two aspects of the Beloved and His Grace on His side and love and neediness on ours. From another perspective this is the *wāw* of the whole central line of the Fātiḥa: *īyyā-Ka na'budu wa-īyyā-Ka nasta'in* which links the first part that belongs to God alone in His praiseworthiness, and the second part that belongs to the servant in his requesting. In this central line, this *wāw* is the central word, or rather, 'the centre of the centre' or 'the heart of the heart'.

However, this does not explain the full meaning of the phrase 'the *wāw* of *īyyā-Ka*'. It is when we also consider it in terms of numerical value that it really begins to come into focus: 'the 6 (= *wāw*) of the 5 (= *īy[y]ā-Ka*)', meaning that the number 6 is implicit and hidden in the number 5. In what sense is this meaningful? There are many aspects of this principle. From the perspective of numbers, the sum of the series 1–5 (1+2+3+4+5=15=6) shows how the constituent parts of 5 sum up to 6, and so in this respect 6 lies embedded within 5.⁵⁴ We may also view 6 as 'hidden' within 5 before it appears as the next number in the series. Let us also note that the numerical value of the whole middle verse of the Fātiḥa is 59 (=14=5), in which case the *wāw* of *īyyā-Ka* may refer to the way it links to the two *īyyā-Kas*, its centrality within the verse and even the whole medial verse. In another respect, *īyyā-Ka*, if the doubled *yā*' is counted, totals 6, alluding to the 'sixfold secret' in the poem. From the point of view of the coincidence of numerical values of different words

53 *Fuṣṣūṣ*, ed. Kiliç, chapter on Muhammad, p. 213, referring to the *ḥadīth qudsī* included in his *Mishkāt al-anwār* (Divine Sayings, Hadith 31, p. 49).

54 It is also important to note that 15 (=6) is the combined value of the *mīm* (4), *nūn* (5) and *wāw* (6).

in the *abjad* system (which the Greeks referred to as *isopsophia*), we may note here the numerical value of *qalb* ('heart', =132=6) and the name Muḥammad (=132=6).

Ibn 'Arabī makes the same point when he discusses the name *Huwa* (هو 'He'):⁵⁵ the written shape of the first letter *hā'* (هـ) conceals the form of a *wāw* (و), while the second letter of the word is a visible *wāw*. Bearing in mind that the value of *iy[y]ā-ka* is 5 (the same value as *hā'*), the *wāw* (=6) of 'You alone' also alludes to the hiddenness of the *wāw* within the *hā'*, or the 6 within the 5.

We may also note an elevenfold equivalence between the value of *wa-iy[y]ā-Ka* (6+5), the value of *Huwa* (5+6) and the value of the names of the letters *wāw* + *alif* + *wāw* (13+111+13=137=11). All of this provides symbolic images of the central point that the plurality which is hidden within Unity, i.e. the unmanifested Divine Names, is 'more holy and precious' than the manifest multiplicity, or that the primordial *wāw* of the Perfect Human Being, or the Reality of Muhammad, is holier than its instantiation in personal existence.

This is reflected in the two-line poem on the letter *hā'*, where the *hā'* is considered in its primary relationship to the *wāw*, as in *Huwa* ('He'). The subtle gender implications of the feminine word *huwiyya* ('He-ness') and its masculine referent ('He') are very much part of the twoness within the poem:

The *hā'* of the He-ness: how clearly She points towards everyone who possesses I-ness, to whom She appears [as Hidden]⁵⁶ in the Manifest!

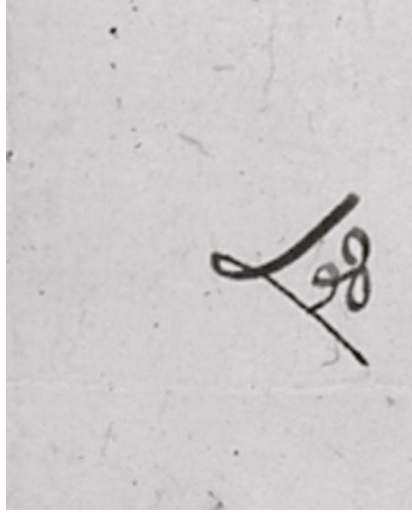
Why aren't you erasing the existence of your trace [as a separated *wāw*], when the eye-entities of the Last are appearing to its First?⁵⁷

Since the initial *hā'* in *Huwa* includes the graphic form of *wāw* within itself, the *wāw* of the human being within *Huwa* has to be erased in order that it can subsist as the interior *wāw* of the *hā'*.

55 K. *al-Mim*, 2/82.

56 See Lane, p. 779, for the contrast of *khafiya* 'alay-hi ('to be hidden from') and *khafiya* la-hu ('to appear to').

57 Fut.I.66. The numerical value of the *hā'* is 5, and the value of its name is 6 (=wāw). The poem has two verses corresponding to the value of the *rāwī* (*rā'*=2), and also to the value of the word *Huwa* (5+6=11=2).



Ibn 'Arabi's drawing of the Divine *Huwa* that he saw in a vision (Evkaf MS 1861, fol. 58a)

A further possible approach to the poem on the letter *wāw* is to consider the first hemistich of each line in the light of the initial *wāw* of *w-ā-w*, and the second hemistich in terms of the final *wāw*. The first *wāw* which precedes the *alif* thus corresponds to 'the *wāw* of You alone' (*wāw iyyā-Ka*), with the medial *alif* alluding to the Aloneness (*aḥadiyya*) of the Essence, in contrast to the second *wāw* which is found in the *wāw* of 'my being' (*wujūdi*). Throughout the poem, the initial *wāw* is expressed in the non-manifest singularity of a perfected spirit, a circular wholeness and the high lote-tree, while the final *wāw* is manifesting in sixfoldness, the holy land and 'us'. If we view the *wāw* as a circular letter, then it has two sides, one hidden and one manifest, like two halves of a circle, suggesting that there is an upper *aqdas wāw* (as in the first hemistich) and a lower *muqaddas wāw* (as in the 6th hemistich). The twoness or dualitude found in the poem, which includes the two *iyyā-Kas* and the two *wāws* of the *w-ā-w* corresponding to the hemistiches, derives from the property of the number 2 within the number 6 as a perfect number (2×3). The number 3 is to be found in the main rhyme (*rāwī*) of the poem, which is *sīn* ($=3$). If we include the first rhyming hemistich of the poem, there are 5 rhymes in *sīn*: $5 \times 3 = 15 = 6$, the value of the *wāw*. The number of the verses corresponds to the value of the constituent letters, *wāw* +

alif + *wāw* ($6+1+6=13=4$). This fourness may also be seen in connection with the Eastern value of the letter *sīn* ($=6$), since both numbers express two fundamental numerical aspects of the Ka'ba: a building with 4 corners and 6 sides. The poem explicitly refers to a sixfold pattern in the second verse and has allusions to four major prophets of the Abrahamic tradition, who appear in the 'East' of manifestation (Mashriq, in contrast to the saints who appear in the 'West' of non-manifestation) and whose names incorporate the letter *sīn* (the *rāwī* of the poem): specifically, Jesus ('Īsā, spirit, *rūḥ*), Solomon (Sulaymān, a sixfold mystery, *sirr musaddas*, referring to the famous seal of Solomon), Moses (Mūsā, holy land, *arḍ muqaddas*) and Enoch (Idrīs, who was taken up to a 'high place').⁵⁸ In this way the poem expresses a direct relationship between the *wāw* and the House of God itself.

Ibn 'Arabī observes an interesting distinction between the three mirror-letters in terms of their written form, which is reflected in the ordering of the letters he discusses in his *K. al-Mīm wa-l-Wāw wa-l-Nūn*. This work shows the importance of the letters' numerical value as each is discussed in descending order in the text (*wāw*/6, *nūn*/5 and *mīm*/4). However, the title of the work (*mīm*/4, *wāw*/6, *nūn*/5) has a different order, neither numerical nor alphabetical.⁵⁹ This apparent anomaly can be explained by the fact that in the title Ibn 'Arabī is subtly emphasising the central connective function of the *wāw* as linking the two 'realms' of *Mīm* and *Nūn*, as well as joining each of the three elements (*al-Mīm wa-l-Wāw wa-l-Nūn*) as well as joining the two *nūns* of the letter *Nūn*. In addition, we may note the centrality of the letter *alif* hidden within the name of the *Wāw*, so that it is the *Alif* that appears at the very heart of this book title.⁶⁰

.....
58 There is also an alternative connection to prophets through the idea of *bayt* ('house'): Jesus and Moses in terms of the Temple in Jerusalem, and Abraham and Muhammad in terms of the Ka'ba. This linkage to messengers seems to indicate an allusive connection between each *īyyā-Ka*, which might be seen as a divine Name in itself, and the two parts of the *shahāda*: the first *īyyā-Ka* is equivalent to the adoration in testifying that 'there is no god but God', while the second relates to asking for mediation through 'Muhammad is the messenger of God', implying that the connective *wāw* between the two parts alludes to the 'conjunction' between God and His messenger.

59 This is in contrast to the chapter in the *Futūḥāt* where the letters are treated in terms of their phonic order, in which *nūn* appears before *mīm* and *wāw*.

60 On the other hand, we may observe a possible grammatical ordering: the sequence of the corresponding vowels of the names of the three letters (*kasra*, *fatha* and *ḍamma*) mirrors the order of grammatical cases (genitive, accusative and nominative).

The letters of the name *mīm* (ميم) all join together in writing, with the medial *yā'* (=10) linking to both the first and second *mīms*. These two *mīms* symbolise the first and last prophets, Adam and Muhammad: the latter is our spiritual father, the possessor of 'Mercy' (*rahma*), and the former is our physical father, the possessor of 'the Names' (*asmā'*).⁶¹ The letters of the *nūn* (نون), on the other hand, are not all joined in writing, since the final *nūn* appears isolated, pointing to its veiling quality: hence, what manifests is only the lower semi-circle, while the upper semi-circle is hidden, concealing the whole circle. The lower half is like a word that is physically articulated in sound, while the upper corresponds to the reality of the meaning it conveys.⁶²

In the third case of the *wāw* (واو), none of the letters are joined up, such that the initial *wāw* is the *wāw* of Ipseity (*huwiyya*), concealed like the number 5 (*hā'*) is hidden within the 6 (*wāw*), while the second *wāw* is the *wāw* of the created world (*kawn*), manifested as itself.⁶³ This suggests that the *wāw* (which itself means 'and') symbolises both the bringing-together and differentiating of two worlds: the world of the Unseen ('He') and the world of the seen ('me'), and represents in its structure many of the aspects that Ibn 'Arabī depicts in the Perfect Human Being (*al-insān al-kāmil*). In all three cases these letters (م ن و) represent various aspects of circularity in their written form.

When we consider the letters numerically, we have seen that they can be considered in two major ways: according to their 'inherent' value as a letter (whether in the major or minor system) and according to their 'name' value as a word made up of three letters. Thus the name *mīm* (=40/4) is *mīm*, *yā'* and *mīm* (40+10+40=9), indicating the last of the numbers (and the value of the *ḍād*; see chapter 3). The *nūn* (=50/5) is made up of *nūn*, *wāw* and *nūn* (50+6+50=106=7, the value of the 'ayn or eye-entity). The *wāw* (=6), which is the first 'perfect' number as defined by the Pythagoreans, is made up of *wāw*, *alif* and *wāw* (6+1+6=13=4), indicating its numerical connection to the *mīm* as

61 *K. al-Mim*, 2/84–86. Note that *rahmah* =19, while *asmā'* =9, so that in one sense Adam being completed by Muhammad is expressed by the transformation of 9 ('the Names') into 19 ('Mercy') by addition of the medial *yā'* to bring everything expressed in 9 (the value of the name *mīm*, =4+1+4) back to Unity.

62 *Ibid.*, 2/83–84.

63 *Ibid.*, 2/83. For a fuller translation of this passage, see *Prayers for the Week*, Appendix D.

well as to the *lām-alif* (=4). The value of the names of all three letters (*mīm* + *nūn* + *wāw*) together (90+106+13=209) comes to 11, the value of *Huwa* ('He', 5+6). The reduced value of the names of the letters (9+7+4) comes to 20, the value of the name Muham[m]ad (4+8+4+4). The combined value of the letters themselves (4+5+6) comes to 15=6, the value of the letter *wāw* which signifies the all-inclusive Complete Human Being (*al-insān al-kāmil*). These mirror-letters, therefore, mysteriously and emphatically reflect the central threefold akbarian doctrine of the Reality of Muhammad: the Presence of Divinity (*ulūhiyya*), the place of manifestation of the Divine (*ma'lūhiyya*) and the 'third thing', the isthmus (*barzakh*) that unites and separates both sides.

These three mirror-letters can also be viewed as different structural approaches or keys (alongside others) to the Blessing-prayer of Effusion, each having its own character and profile as well as interconnecting with others (see Appendix D). As we have seen, such constellational or kaleidoscopic considerations are also necessary in order to better appreciate the highly allusive poems on the letters that Ibn 'Arabī inserted into chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*.⁶⁴ These poems appear as early as possible in the book so as to establish certain principles, and are laid out in phonic order, i.e. the order in which they are articulated through the human voice and become manifest as sound (see Appendix C).

.....
 64 These are more or less the same as the letter-poems originally located at the end of the text of his holograph *Rūḥ al-quds*, known as *Asrār al-ḥurūf* ('The Mysteries of the Letters') – see University A79, fols. 98a–102a, dated 600H, i.e. around the same time as the writing of Chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*. For a fuller study of 'the mysteries' of these remarkable letter-poems, see our forthcoming book *The Letter-Poems of Ibn 'Arabī*.

CHAPTER 3

The Two Effusions and the Language of Numbers: *Fayḍ*, *Suryāniyya* and the letter *Ḍād*

I entrust my [whole] affair to God (Q 40:44)

The prayer under consideration here is primarily known as ‘the Blessing-Prayer of Effusion’ (*al-Ṣalāt al-fayḍiyya*). The word *fayḍ* in Arabic has various layers of meaning, but as we shall see, one of the main associations of the term in akbarian thought is the overflowing of the One Essence into manifestation. In a sense this is similar to the Plotinian ‘emanation’ of the One into the Many, which Islamic philosophers translated as ‘*fayḍ*’, but as a Sufi term it has a unique shift in line with Islamic sensibility and scriptural background, including an emphasis on the circular conception of manifestation and return. From an akbarian perspective, the ‘overflowing’ or ‘effusion’ is normally regarded as a 2-stage process of creation, but it also implies a ‘return’, understood as the moment-by-moment returning of the whole of manifestation to its origin. This return occurs by the very nature of things, but in the case of the human being, needs to be made conscious, i.e. in awareness of both the outflow of the Breath of Compassionate Mercy which brings things into existence and also the way in which things are reintegrated into their source.

One way of understanding this ‘overflowing’ is in terms of the procession of numbers. In other words, the number 2 is simply the addition of 1 to itself, $1 + 1$, as symbolised by a reflection in a mirror. From an essential point of view, this is 1 appearing at the degree of 2. Hence, in one sense, 2 is 1,1 or 1 two times, and 3 is 1,1,1, or 1 three

times, and so on for all possible numbers, which are the names and degrees of all infinite possibilities while remaining essentially 1. At the same time, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s teaching this is a subtle matter, and he makes an important distinction between the noun 1 (which is only a Name or a degree) and the Essence of the 1. As he explains in his *K. al-Fanā*¹:

It is through His Name [‘One’, *al-wāḥid*] that there is extinction (*fanā*), and it is through His Essence that there is subsistence (*baqā*). Therefore when you say ‘One’, everything other than it is annihilated through the reality of that Name; and when you say ‘two’, its reality (*‘ayn*) manifests through the being of the Essence of the One in that degree, not through His Name [One]. For His Name contradicts the existence of this degree, whereas His Essence does not.¹

From this it is important to understand that for Ibn ‘Arabī the only possible kind of unification (*ittiḥād*) is within the realm of number and nature (as in his expression *al-ittiḥād al-kawnī*), but not in terms of ‘two essences becoming one’ – that is, there is no unification at the level of Uniqueness or in relation to the One Essence.²

Fayḍ

In Arabic there are several interrelated roots around the letters *f-y-ḍ* such as *f-y-ṣ*, *f-w-ṣ* and *f-w-ḍ*. The original frame of reference seems to come from the term *fayṣ*, which means ‘going away [from one place to another, for example, into the country]’. The dynamic of ‘going away’ can be applied to the effusion of light (‘shining’) and to the expression of speech (‘being clear, fluent’ as in *fawṣ*). With the same imagery of ‘moving from one place to another’, the word *fayḍ* means both the overflowing of a liquid (‘pouring out from a state of fullness’) and the outpouring of words (‘expressing, disclosing’). It has also come to mean the idea of profusion and the abundance of these flows (for example, ‘deluging, drenching,

1 *K. al-Fanā* ‘fi l-mushāhada, p. 16.

2 For a fuller discussion, see Angela Jaffray’s explanation in her translation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *al-Ittiḥād al-kawnī*, translated as *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 53–8.

bathing’, ‘talking effusively, reporting extensively’). In Form I the term *fayḍ* means to divulge secrets or broadcast information, while in Form IV it means to pronounce a word clearly or to be prolix, thus clearly pointing to an added dimension of revealing in speech. In this sense, it indicates bringing into manifestation what lies hidden as possibilities, directly paralleling the Quranic phrase (Q 16:40) ‘[When We desire a thing, Our Word to it is] “Be”, so it becomes’ (*kun fa-yakūn*). From Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, we can also understand a further dimension of lexical connection between the root of *fayḍ* (*f-y-ḍ*) and the root of *fawḍ* (*f-w-ḍ*): the latter (in Form II) means ‘committing or consigning something to another person, entrusting authority to another’, as in delegating authority to someone you trust and sending a delegation to negotiate, for example. In all these cases, the fundamental meaning remains moving, or transferring something/someone, from one ‘place’ to another.

The word *fayḍ* does not appear in the Quran, but is well known in Neoplatonic and philosophical discussions of ‘emanation’ from the One to the Many. Here there is an important point to note with regard to translation: the term *fayḍ* was used to translate the Greek term ἀπορροια (*aporrhōia*)³ or ὑπορρῦην (*hyperrhuen*), and it is often assumed that the meanings of the two words are more or less interchangeable, so that *fayḍ* is commonly translated into English as ‘emanation’ in the sense of issuing from a source.⁴ However, a simple word-for-word translation in English would reduce the multi-layering of Sufi discourse to only one reading, and would equally do an injustice to the Arabic language, where words have a distinct underlying image behind them. In the hermeneutics of Ibn ‘Arabī and others, this imagery plays a central role. If we try to understand his conception of *fayḍ* (or other terms) solely from the Greek universe of ideas or from philosophical language, we are limiting the scope of the subtle interlexical meanings embedded in the Arabic roots, something that Ibn ‘Arabī himself was particularly conscious of. First of all, the One ‘source’ from which the effusion comes is identical with Allāh, the One who is named by all the Names, or the

3 As in Plotinus, *Ennead* II.3.2.

4 See Cristina D’Ancona, ‘Emanation’ in *EI3*, which assumes a like-for-like usage of *fayḍ* and emanation. It would be a mistake to think that the philosophical use of a particular term is what is intended in a Sufi context, where the common philosophical meaning may be just one of several meanings implied.

Name that designates the all-inclusiveness of God, beyond which lies the Absolute Unseen, which cannot be named in any way. Secondly, the only qualification that is given to the divine ‘effusion’ (*fayḍ*) is that it is ‘Most Holy’, *aqdas*, and ‘Holy’, *muqaddas*, terms which denote the manifesting of transcendental ‘holiness’ (*quds*). In other words, the primary emphasis is that the divine overflowing is utterly pure and uncontaminated by any relative imperfection since it comes directly from the source of all holiness. As we shall see, the term *fayḍ* has been used by Sufis not connected to the philosophical tradition, in the *taṣliya* genre, i.e. specifically for prayers on the Prophet Muhammad, at least since the 6th/12th century in the Maghrib.

This may help to clarify why Ibn ‘Arabī connects *fayḍ* specifically to the related root *f-w-ḍ*, which appears in the Quranic verse *I entrust (ufawwiḍu) my [whole] affair to Allāh* (Q 40:44, the only Quranic instance of either root). When we bear in mind the multi-faceted meanings of *amr* (‘affair’, ‘order’, ‘command’), it is clear that this verse not only refers to the obvious meaning of ‘giving everything that belongs to me back to God’, but also relates to the notion of being fully aligned with the divine existential command ‘Be’ itself.⁵ In this sense the statement in this Quranic verse comes to designate something more fundamental and essential: ‘I return the authority of the command I have received to come into being back to the One who gave it in the first place.’

This ‘delegation’ of authority is ontological: when we become conscious that we are a place where the divine order occurs, then we are participating in the circular flow of the existential command, which has never ceased to belong to its true Author. It parallels the recitation of the Quran, His Word that He Himself has revealed and spoken: when we recite, we are directly participating in the ever-flowing divine Speech, from meaning to form, and we may become the means by which this divine Speech is heard and reiterated and renewed. This underpins the principle that it is God who prays over the Reality of the Human

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5 An example of this alignment can be seen in the remarkable patterns that are generated with Chladni plates: each sound frequency creates a particular geometrical form. The pattern is in potential and through the action of the sound, the ‘Name’ that rules this pattern brings its effect into being in the formless primordial matter of the salt. When things are aligned in harmony – and the same applies to the realm of consciousness – the pattern emerges in its fullness and beauty. This is a classic metaphor for contemplation.

Being, and that when we pray, we are returning this divinely established prayer and completing the circulating of prayer. We might compare the circularity of prayer to a divine ‘outbreath’ (*nafas*) that is breathed into the human being,⁶ and which we participate in by breathing back and returning it to its source.⁷

In his commentary on the above-mentioned Quranic verse of ‘entrusting’ (*tafwīd*), Ibn ‘Arabī mentions that *fayḍ* means overflowing, ‘an increase above what a receptacle can contain’,⁸ like the inundation caused by the Nile bursting its banks. Any receptacle is necessarily limited by its own particular capacity. For akbarians such as al-Jīlī, who distinguish different levels of ‘entrusting’ according to what is acknowledged and understood as one’s ‘capacity’, this *tafwīd* by the human being who receives God’s effusion is an essential entrusting and alignment equivalent to ‘submission’ (*taslīm*), a returning of the whole affair to God.⁹ From the point of view of a limited receiver, entrusting one’s whole affair (*amr*) to God means not simply giving up control or relying fully on God, but giving back any sense of limitation that might come from the ‘place’ of receiving. *Tafwīd* is a direct response to the divine effusion, such that we ‘overflow’ our self-limitations by giving back to God what has always belonged to Him. To entrust ‘my whole affair to God’ may be understood as returning my whole awareness of being, all that I call myself and other than myself, to the pure origin of Being. It is therefore like a mirror to the divine *fayḍ*, and signifies a conscious action on the part of the human receiver. From the point of view of God Himself as the Absolute Actor, on the other hand, *fayḍ* denotes the superabundant divine gift of Being, which is always flowing, overflowing and disclosing Itself (all meanings inherent in the word *fayḍ*) towards created beings according to the creative command (*amr*) ‘Be’.

The imagery inherent in the term *fayḍ* is primarily water or liquid overflowing from a container or source. This brings to mind the Quranic verse (Q 21:30): ‘... the heavens and the earth were closed up together,

6 ‘And I breathed into him of My Spirit’ (Q 15:29).

7 In Sufi terminology, this became known as ‘the cycle of originating and return’ (*al-mabda’ wa-l-ma’ād*).

8 *Fut.* IV.98, ch. 469 on the abode (*manzil*) of ‘I entrust my [whole] affair to God’.

9 See ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil*, ed. Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ṣalāḥ Muḥammad ‘Uwayḍa (Beirut, 1418/1997), 274–275.

and We split them apart, and We made every living thing of water...’,¹⁰ suggesting that all life originates from the overflowing of the oceanic source of the divine Essence. An example of this association of *fayḍ* (in a verbal form) and water can be found in the Friday morning prayer from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Awṛād*: ‘O my Lord, from the seas of pure detachment of the *Alif* of the Most Holy Essence bathe (*afīḍ*) me ... O You who deluges (*muḥīḍ*) all with the rain-clouds of His Effusion (*fayḍi-Hi*).’¹¹

On the other hand, from a divine perspective it may equally refer to the spiritual imagery of light overflowing, as in sunlight (*fayḍ al-shams*) which falls equally on all beings.¹² This effusion is implied in the expression in the famous Light verse (Q 24:35): ‘God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His Light is like a niche in which there is a lamp... light upon light’, as well as in the hadith: ‘God created all things in darkness and then sprinkled upon them some of His Light.’¹³ Just as sound emanates from a physical object in a spherical manner, so does light emanate from a source in all directions.

The specific linking of effusion and light is often to be found in blessing-prayers (*ṣalawāt*) upon the Prophet Muhammad, a genre which seems to have a Maghribi Sufi origin. One of the first examples of this we have found is the famous *al-Ṣalāt al-Mashīhiyya*, attributed to a disciple of Abū Madyan, ‘Abd al-Salām Ibn Mashīsh (d. 625/1227), who speaks of ‘the effusion of [the Prophet’s] lights’ (*fayḍ anwāri-hi*). The second example, more or less contemporary with Ibn Mashīsh, is *al-Ṣalāt al-mubāraka*, also by one of Abū Madyan’s Tunisian students and someone whom Ibn ‘Arabī knew very well, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī (d. 621/1224), who describes ‘the tree of [the Prophet’s] luminous origin, which shines upon him out of the effusion of Your Names’ (*al-muḥīḍ ‘alay-hi min fayḍ asmā’i-Ka*). In both cases we find *fayḍ* being used as a technical term in a Sufi context as the overflowing of the Muhammadian Light or the Light of the divine Names, which is far from a philosophical description of ‘emanation’. This may have been part of Abū Madyan’s

10 The primordial closure (*ratq*) and splitting (*fatq*) of heaven and earth became technical terms in Sufi cosmology to refer to the opening-up of creation from the uncreated state within the ‘womb’ of the Essence.

11 See *Prayers for the Week*, pp. 81, 83.

12 See *Fut.* II.530, and the discussion of *mumtani’* in couplet 17 of the Blessing-prayer.

13 See al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2642; also III.3 in the Blessing-prayer.

teaching, although there is no evidence that we know of to corroborate this.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the Mahdawī blessing-prayer is particularly important for our discussion as it seems to have been the very first attempt to structure a blessing-prayer according to a specifically numerological symmetry. It has 24 sections beginning with Allāhumma, a number that designates Muhammad in his full name (including the doubled *mīm*, i.e. $4+8+4+4+4=24$) as well as in his representation of the Complete Human Being ($2+4=6$, the first perfect number and the number of the letter *wāw*). The prayer also invokes the two realms of existence as two halves of the full ‘day’ of the Muhammadian Reality: 12 hours of invisible night (his interior light) and 12 hours of visible day (his manifest light). The reduced numerical value of the title of the prayer, *al-Ṣalāt al-mubāraka* ($18+19=37=1$), also alludes to this unity of the two halves of the Muhammadian ‘day’. Furthermore, the individual sections contain numerical correspondences: for example, the first blessing refers to the Pen (*qalam*), whose vertical form reiterates the *alif* ($=1$) and whose initial letter is *qāf* ($=1$).¹⁴ In the same way, the Blessing-prayer of Effusion reveals multiple numerological symmetries in its remarkably detailed and kaleidoscopic structure (see Appendix D).

More significantly for our purposes here, we also find examples of the association of abundant overflowing (*fayḍ*) with light (*nūr*) and unveiling (*kashf*) in another prayer from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Awrād*:

‘O my Lord, bathe (*afīḍ*) me in the radiance of Your Light, unveiling for me all that is concealed within me, so that I may witness my existence from Your standpoint, not mine... I ask of You, by Your Name with which You pour forth (*afaḍta*) light upon the receptacles....’¹⁵

A further dimension is added by al-Baghdādī in his commentary on the Blessing-prayer of Effusion: he describes *fayḍ* as continuous superabundant overflowing, calling it ‘a technical term referring to

14 For more on the structure and its relation to numbers, see Appendix E as well as Pablo Beneito and Stephen Hirtenstein, ‘The Prayer of Blessing by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī’, *JMIAS* 34 (2003), pp. 1–58.

15 See *Prayers for the Week*, pp. 86, 87.

an action that is being done continuously and not out of any sense of reward or obligation.¹⁶ Some translators have opted for the word ‘flow’ or ‘emanation’ to translate *fayḍ*,¹⁷ but this misses the important nuance that al-Baghdādī points to here as an action that occurs without any limitation of having to be done or the actor needing anything in return. It also omits the idea of an ‘abundant overflowing’ that goes beyond the limitation of a particular receiver. The idea of filling to overflowing, like a river bursting its banks, is central to the image of *fayḍ*, even if such an image cannot ever adequately convey the true ‘inverse’ meaning of the Essence, unlimited and absolute, abundantly overflowing into levels of limitation.

In the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ‘Arabī almost always uses the term in the form ‘divine effusion’ (*al-fayḍ al-ilāhī*),¹⁸ but there is one example of the important phrase *al-fayḍ al-aqdas* (‘the Most Holy Effusion’) relating to the Universal Intellect (or Muhammadian Light, which is masculine and active) and the Universal Soul (which is feminine and receptive):

All the known things, the high and the low, are carried by the Intellect (‘*aql*’), which takes directly from God without any intermediary, and nothing of the knowledge of the higher and lower created world is hidden from It. From Its gift and generosity comes the Soul’s knowledge of [all] things, as well as from Its Self-disclosure to Her, Its Light and Its Most Holy Effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*). So the Intellect receives [Its gift] from the Real, exalted is He, and provides this benefit to the Soul, and the Soul receives [her gift] from the Intellect.¹⁹

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16 University MS A522, fol. 2a.

17 See, for example, Michael Ebstein’s translation of a passage from the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’: ‘the word of Allāh, may He be exalted, is continuously attached to [the world], reinforcing it with abundance (*ifāḍa*) and benevolence in order that it be complete and continue existing. [The *kalīma*] begins its flow (*fayḍ*) through its unification with the first created being, the active intellect...’ (*al-Jāmi’a*, 1/635, cited in *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, Leiden, 2014). Hermann Landolt cites Shihab al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) in a key passage from his *K. al-Talwīḥāt* as speaking of the ‘abundance (emanation, *fayḍ*) of the Intellect who is by nature overflowing (*al-‘aql al-fayyād*)’ (see ‘Suhrawardī’s “Tales of Initiation”’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 107/3, 1987, p. 483).

18 For example, *Fut.* II.542.

19 *Fut.* 192–93. For the implications of the term *muqaddas* in relation to the principle of the Unity in the phrase *maqām al-waḥdāniyya al-muqaddasa*, see *Fut.* I.64. Al-Fārābī seems to have been one of the first Islamic philosophers to have given a systematic emanationist hierarchy of intelligences and souls (see S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Cambridge, 1964). See also al-Ghazālī’s view in his *al-Risāla al-ladunniyya*: ‘the Universal Intellect is more noble, more perfect, stronger and nearer to the Creator Most High than the Universal Soul’ (*Majmu’ at rasā’il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut 1406/1986, vol. 4, p. 105).

Although at first sight this appears to be a classical ‘emanationist’ context of Intellect and Soul giving rise to all of creation, we should note that the special use of the adjective *aqdas* (‘Most Holy’) emphasises the essentially pure nature not only of the transcendent effusion itself but of that which receives the effusion. The ‘Soul’, which is both macrocosmic and microcosmic, is thus the recipient of the full meaning of Divine Self-disclosure. We may also note two mentions of *al-fayḍ al-aqdas* in the *Awṛād*, where the principle of the Most Holy Effusion is specifically linked to perfect receptivity and divine Generosity. ‘O my Lord, grant me the gift of the most perfect aptitude (*istiḍād*) to receive Your Most Holy Effusion’; and ‘everything that is other than You is in need of the Most Holy Effusion of Your Generosity’²⁰.

This principle of receptivity is also linked with *al-fayḍ al-aqdas* in Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, where the term is also mentioned once, this time in the context of the creation of the Adamic Human Being:

The Real brought into existence the whole universe as an indistinct and undifferentiated being, within which there was no spirit, and so it was like an unpolished mirror. Now, it is part of the Divine rule that He never arranges a place without it being able to receive a divine spirit, which He designates [in the Quran] by [the expression] breathing into him²¹. This is nothing but the coming-about of this undifferentiated form’s aptitude to receive the constant effusion (*fayḍ*) of Self-revelation, which has neither beginning nor end. Nothing else remains but that which receives [the revelation], which can only come into being from His Most Holy Effusion (*fayḍi-Hi l-aqdas*). So the whole affair (or creative order) is from Him, both its beginning and its end, *and to Him the whole affair returns*,²² just as it begins with Him.²³

20 *Prayers for the Week*: Friday Eve prayer, p. 79; Wednesday Eve prayer, p. 59.

21 This refers to the story of the creation of Adam in Q.15:29: ‘when I have formed him and breathed into him some of My Spirit, fall down in prostration to him’.

22 Q.11:123: ‘To God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and to Him the whole affair returns.’ Some translators give this verse as ‘All that exists returns to Him’.

23 *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Kılıç, p. 27. This last part of the sentence can also be understood as: ‘the whole affair is from it [the receptacle], both its beginning and end, and to it the whole affair/order (*amr*) returns, as it begins with it.’

When he discusses the term *fayḍ* in his commentary on these lines, Abdullah Bosnevi follows previous akbarian commentators in drawing out the implications of Ibn ‘Arabī’s statement and distinguishing between two degrees of ‘effusion’: ‘the Most Holy Effusion’ (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) and ‘the Holy Effusion’ (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*).

The Most Holy Effusion is the Self-revelation of the Essence (*al-tajallī al-dhātī*) to the receptive potentialities (*a’yān*) in the Presence of Knowledge and Names, for the established potentialities and realities of knowledge are receivers of the Most Holy Effusion. The beginning of the individuations²⁴ in the Essential Self-revelations is their being individuated in Knowledge as potential entities and realities of the world: they are unembodied meanings and relationships within knowledge, distinguished by [their] essential characteristics, like a half, a third or a quarter can be intellectually distinguished, by one who understands, within the number 1 in the realm of numbers²⁵... [On the other hand,] the Holy Effusion is the Self-revelation through the Names in [the Presence of] witnessing in accordance with the ‘place’ of disclosure, and this depends upon the receivers who are the places of manifestation of the Names, for this [second effusion] demands the manifestation of something in the exterior, which is required by the aptitudes of the potential realities... The beginning of the order is the Essential revelation, and its ending is the Witnessing revelation, which comes back to [the beginning of the Essential revelation]. It is through this ‘ending’ [which implies a new beginning] that the [continuous] circle of Being is completed.²⁶

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24 Ar: *ta’ayyunāt*, which is sometimes translated as ‘self-determinations’ or ‘entifications’. Rather than such objectifications of Reality, we have preferred the term ‘individuation’ (and its verbal correlative ‘to be individuated’) to convey the particular connection of *fayḍ* with the reality of the human being as a singular, undivided subject or entity (*‘ayn*) who ‘sees’ (or through whom God sees). This technical term is not to be confused with the idea of *tashakhkhūs*, the ‘personification’ of an individual (*shakhṣ*) within a species or genus.

25 Compare this with the statement in the Pythagorean treatise of Iamblichus: ‘If the potential of every number is in the monad [1], then the monad would be intelligible number in the strict sense, since it is not yet manifesting anything actual, but everything is conceptually together in it’ (Iamblichus, attrib., trans. Robin Waterfield as *The Theology of Arithmetic: On the Mystical, Mathematical and Cosmological Symbolism of the First Ten Numbers*, Grand Rapids MI, 1988, p. 39). Iamblichus (ca. 250–330) is probably not the author of this Pythagorean treatise, but simply the compiler (see pp. 23–27).

26 *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Yusuf Ağa MS 5464, fols. 50a-b. Bosnevi also correlates the initial *aḥadiyya* level with the presence of being appointed as the *khalīfa* of God, and the *wāḥidiyya* level with the presence of exercising the authority of the *khalīfa* over others.

This passage is important in demonstrating the visionary element in Bosnevi's profound reflections on the idea of *fayḍ*. The idea of 'essential revelation' is conjoined with 'witnessing revelation' (*shuhūd*), so that the circle of Being (*wujūd*) is completed and fulfilled. In other words, it is through the manifestation of things, especially human beings, as places of 'seeing' or consciousness that the purpose of creation is realised. Further on, Bosnevi specifies that 'the eye-entity of the servant'²⁷ in the Presence of Knowledge is the place of manifestation for the Most Holy Effusion'. Here the circle symbolises an 'eye-entity', with the pupil of the eye being like the dot at the centre of the circumference – the pupil in Arabic is 'the human being of the eye' (*insān al-ʿayn*). As Ibn ʿArabī remarks in the chapter of Adam in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, '[The human's] humanness is due to the inclusiveness of his constitution and to his encompassing all the realities. He is to the Real as the pupil is to the eye, through which observing happens – and [here] this signifies vision. That is why he is called human being, for through him the Real looks upon His creatures and mercifies them.'²⁸

According to al-Qūnawī, who also develops what is implicit in Ibn ʿArabī's teaching, the two levels of effusion are: (a) the essential divine effusion (*al-fayḍ al-dhātī al-ilāhī*),²⁹ which came to be known as the 'Most Holy Effusion' (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) or the First Individuation (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*), which is the overflowing of the Absolute into Its Relation with Itself or God's Self-disclosure to Himself in Knowledge; and (b) the effusion of manifesting the oneness of plurality (*al-fayḍ al-waḥdānī*), which is known as the 'Holy Effusion' (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*) or the Second Individuation (*al-taʿayyun al-thānī*), in which the contents of God's Self-Knowledge, the Names and Qualities, are given expression. These two levels of effusion together form the prime explicit contemplation in the first 20-couplet section of the Blessing-prayer of Effusion: each numbered couplet in our translation contains

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 27 Ar: *ʿayn al-ʿabd*. We may note that the numerical values of the word *ʿayn* (eye, entity), *ʿabd* (servant) and *aḥad* (Unique) are all 13. For further indications, see the Blessing-prayer I.13.

28 The primary meaning of 'mercifying His creatures' for Ibn ʿArabī is that with this quality God gives existence to every created being, by saying 'Be' (*kun*) to their request to come into existence. Compassionate Mercy (*rahma*) is universal and encompasses everything – 'He embraces all things in mercy and knowledge' (Q.40:7).

29 See al-Qūnawī's comments on the chapter of Noah in his *Fukūk*, ed. Khwajawī, p. 195.

two parts, the first rhyming half corresponding to the *aqdas* level of the possibility to which the creative order 'Be' (*kun*) is addressed, the second rhyming half to the *muqaddas* level of 'so it becomes' (*fā-yakūn*). Each couplet is thus a deep contemplation of both levels of existence.³⁰

Furthermore, when we consider the numerical value of the word *fayḍ* as 180 (according to the Western *abjad* system favoured by Ibn 'Arabī), it becomes clear that we are also entering into the contemplation of the image of a circle, just as we have seen with the letter *nūn*: the two *fayḍ*s together make 360 [degrees], i.e. a full circle. The *aqdas* level of the circle is the upper half, representing the level of all-possibility (*imkān*) which is transcendent, beyond space-time, and it is therefore connected to the principle of 'eternity without beginning' (*azal*) and non-visibility (*ghayb*)³¹. This should not be thought of as simply 'timeless' in the ordinary sense, since *al-Dahr* ('Time') is one of the essential divine Names. While the intellect tends to conceive of eternity as an absolute absence of temporality and the essential realm as pure nothingness or emptiness, this is not how Ibn 'Arabī and his followers perceive it: the level of eternity (*azal*) is beyond ordinary space-time (just as dreams are) and represents a fullness of meaning that is pregnant with potential for expression. The *muqaddas* level is the lower half of the circle, manifestly expressed and immanent, in space-time (as in the visible *nūn*), and it is connected to the principle of 'endlessness' (*abad*) and visibility (*shuhūd*).³²

On the other hand, the numerical value of *fayḍ* may also be regarded as 9 (1+8), such that the first *fayḍ* is 9, the second *fayḍ* is 9, and the complete circle of the two is 9 (18=9). The importance of this number can be seen in the final letter of *fayḍ*, the *ḍād*, whose numerical value is 90 or 9. This letter is written with a fully visible circular form linked to a semi-circular form (ض): it is identical to the letter *ṣād* ص, but has an extra dot above the letter, like the *nūn*. These three letters all share certain

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30 For a full analysis, see Appendix D.

31 According to the 'minor' system (where the digits are added together), *aqdas* is 405 =4+5=9, and *azal* is 18=1+8=9, showing their complementarity and equivalence.

32 *Muqaddas* (counting both *dāls*) is 448 =16 =7, and *abad* =7. For the association of *azal* with *imkān* (possibility) and of *abad* with *ḥāl* (condition/state), see *Fut.* I.189.

characteristics of circularity according to Ibn ‘Arabī.³³ Furthermore, the numerical value of the letters of the word *ḍād* is $9+1+4=14=5$, which links it immediately to both the *nūn* (50) and the *hā’* (5).

The Language of Numbers

Let us first consider the number 9 in a little more detail. As the last of the units, it represents the end of primary manifestation, since the next number is 10, which is 1 in the tens column. If the numbers are represented around a closed circle, then the 9 simultaneously stands at the furthest distance from 1 and is next to 1. This is equally the case with 99, where the extra 1 turns it into 100 (or again 1). In fact, although it is self-evident to describe it like this, it is the only unit which reverts to 1 (via 10), when 1 is added to it. All other numbers, even 1, become ‘another’ through addition (i.e. $1+1=2$, $2+1=3$ and so on). Although the system is referred conventionally as a decimal system, this is actually based on nine separate digits. With the introduction of zero, the end of the series is in one sense 9 and in another sense 10. At the same time it is important to realise that in any tradition numerical patterns may be related to different number systems, as in the 7 days of the week or 12 months of the year.³⁴

Nine was regarded by the Pythagoreans and Neoplatonists such as Iamblichus and others (4th-century CE) as ‘the greatest of the numbers within the decad [10] and is an unsurpassable limit... there is natural progression up to it, but after it there is repetition.’³⁵ It was the number delineated in Graeco-Roman, Syriac, Byzantine, Arab-Islamic and medieval Latin philosophy for the categories of ‘accidents’ (such as quantity, quality, relation, place, time and so on) that can be applied to a ‘substance’, and it formed the basis of Porphyry’s arrangement of

.....
33 See *Fut.* I.54; Winkel, *The Openings*, Book 1, pp. 170–1.

34 Every civilisation developed its own signs for numbers. The Roman system, for example, was relatively primitive and used only three main symbols to represent the units: I, V, X, so that 9 was regarded as IX (i.e. $10 - 1$). In ascending order (L = 50, C = 100, D = 500, M = 1000), we may observe that this is in a way a 5-based system, where 5 is the axis of every sequence (tens, hundreds etc).

35 Iamblichus, p. 105. On the importance of the Pythagorean understanding of numbers and a general view of different number systems in various cultures, see Anne-Marie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 3–19; and Juan Acevedo, *Alphanumeric Cosmology From Greek into Arabic* (Tübingen, 2020).

Plotinus' *Enneads* into six groups of nine ($6 \times 9 = 9$).³⁶ The Greeks envisaged 9 as 'Oceanus', the ocean of water that encircles the outer limits of the world, and 'horizon', because all things are made from number and 9 is the furthest limit of number digits. Its relation to the number 3 was also commented on: 'The ennead is the first square based on an odd number (3^2). It is called "that which brings to completion" and is called "perfect" because it arises out of 3, which is a perfect number.'³⁷

The importance of the triad (3) was much discussed by the Pythagoreans, for whom it represented 'primary perfection', i.e. that which has a beginning, middle and end. 'Secondary perfection', which consisted of being equal to the sum of its parts, was said to be first found in the hexad ($6 = 2+2+2$) and then in the ennead ($9 = 3+3+3$). When regarded in threes, numbers display intriguing and remarkable patterns: 'the first triad of quantities, 1, 2, 3, is given its identity by the hexad itself (i.e. $1+2+3=6$), and the second quantities, 4, 5, 6, are again given their identity by a hexad (i.e. $4+5+6=15=6$), and the subsequent quantities, 7, 8, 9, are again given their identity by the hexad (i.e. $7+8+9=24=6$)...' ³⁸ As the Greeks noted, this pattern extends through all subsequent triads, leading to the conclusion that 'all number is formed by the dependence of triad on hexad.'³⁹

There is no doubt that these arithmosophical contemplations on the nature of number occur across a number of cultures, and found their way into Jewish, Christian and Islamic mysticism. For example, we can better understand the rationale behind certain Islamic calligraphic patterns by observing the multiplication pattern of the number 6: $6 \times 1 = 6$; $6 \times 4 = 24 = 6$; $6 \times 7 = 42 = 6$; $6 \times 10 = 60$; $6 \times 13 = 78 = 6$... As is evident, every three instances the 6 repeats itself.⁴⁰

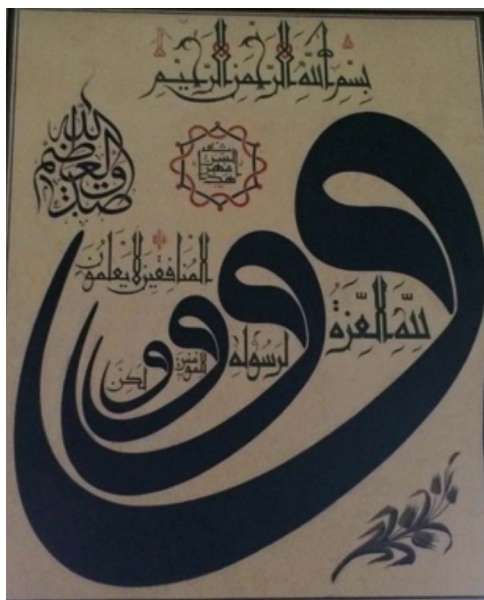
36 See Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, 'Unity of Thought and Writing: Enn.6.6 and Porphyry's Arrangement of the Enneads', *Classical Quarterly* vol. 58/1 (2008), pp.277–85.

37 Iamblichus, p. 107. We may also note here the Pythagorean approach to 10 as 'a perfect number... which contains an equal amount of prime and incomposite numbers [1, 2, 3, 5, 7], and secondary and composite numbers [4, 6, 8, 9, 10]... no number less than 10 has this property' (p. 112). They also contemplated the sacred Tetraktys, which includes the pyramidal symmetry of the first four numbers returning through addition to their origin ($1+2+3+4=10=1$) (see Keith Critchlow, Foreword, *The Theology of Arithmetic*, pp. 9–21). For more texts on the nature of the decad according to the Greeks, see Juan Acevedo, pp. 58–66 et passim.

38 Iamblichus, p. 76.

39 Iamblichus, p. 77.

40 The other repeating numbers are 3 (e.g. $6 \times 2 = 12 = 3$) and 9 (e.g. $6 \times 3 = 27 = 9$), hence always within the triad.



Four *wāws* from the Ulu Cami in Bursa, Turkey, reflecting both the 'returning' 6 ($6 \times 4 = 24 = 6$) and the value of the name of the *wāw* ($6 + 1 + 6 = 13 = 4$), drawn from Q 63:8



Two interwoven triangles on a stone in a Jewish synagogue, making the hexagonal star of the Seal of Solomon, and symbolising the union of spirit and body

When Ibn 'Arabī, however, discusses the secrets of numbers in an allusive way in chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*, he says that he came to this knowledge only by way of unveiling (*kashf*):

As regards the knowledge of numbers, we possess amazing secrets through the path of unveiling, by way of what the nature of this [knowledge] requires, and by way of the divine realities that belong to it.⁴¹ If life were to be lengthened for me, I shall devote a book to the inner knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of numbers.⁴²

Such a book does not seem to have ever been written or found, but there are enough clues in his writings to provide a glimpse into the direct taste and contemplation of numbers.

In the *Futūhāt* he devotes a specific section to explaining the relationship of letters to numbers or their numerical value. He does so according to two primary forms of calculation (*ḥisāb al-jummal*): the major (*al-jazm al-kabīr*) and minor (*al-jazm al-ṣaghīr*) systems of *abjad*. In the major system the full value of an individual letter is considered, e.g. *mīm* = 40; and in the minor or abridged system, only the reduced value is considered, e.g. *mīm* = 4. It is often thought that the major system of counting is of greater importance and of higher status, since it considers the full value of words, and would be crucial for understanding relationships in the domain of plurality. However, the minor system would carry more weight if we are considering the expression of the essential fundamental principles on which all manifestation is based – this helps to explain why Ibn ʿArabī refers to it as ‘the first key’ (*al-miftāḥ al-awwal*).⁴³

This applies whether the overall alphanumerical system is ‘Western’ (*gharbī*) or ‘Eastern’ (*sharqī*).⁴⁴ The former is the one favoured by Ibn

.....
41 It is significant that here Ibn ʿArabī uses the expression *min ṭariq* (‘through the path of’, ‘by way of’) three times in succession, apparently insisting on the continuous journeying involved in contemplation through unveiling, in contrast to an analytical systematic approach.

42 *Fut.* I.60.

43 *Fut.* I.80. In general, we are primarily considering the minor values in this book, but taking into account the major value when it seems particularly significant, as we believe this to be the methodology followed by our authors themselves.

44 For a fuller explanation of these two systems, see Appendix C. Here let us note the way each system privileges one direction over the other and how they act as mirrors to each other: the Western system culminates with the letter *shīn* (=1000), symbolising the opposite of the West, i.e. East (*sharq*) and manifestation (*shuhūd*) or witnessing (*shahāda*), while the Eastern system ends in the letter *ghayn* (=1000), symbolising the West (*gharb*) and the Unseen (*ghayb*). We are grateful to Paolo Urizzi for pointing out that this suggests that the initiatic journey of the people of mysteries ends in the contemplation of the manifested world (Unity in multiplicity), while that of the people of lights ends in the contemplation of Essence (multiplicity in Unity).

‘Arabī, who as a thoroughgoing ‘Westerner’ describes it as the one used by the ‘people of mysteries’ (*ahl al-asrār*), as opposed to the latter which is employed by the ‘people of lights’ (*ahl al-anwār*).⁴⁵ The word ‘mystery’ (*sirr*) is thus connected to the meaning of the root of ‘West’ (*gharb*), which implies the blackness of the non-manifest, while the ‘lights’ (*anwār*) refer to the ‘East’ (*sharq*) as the place where lights rise and shine in distinct colours.

Ibn ‘Arabī privileges the West over the East not simply in terms of physical space, but more essentially as a symbol of the antecedence of the hidden root over the manifest branches, of the night over the day, and of the upper spiritual semi-circle over the lower earthly one. This is why he describes ‘the blessed tree’ of the Reality of the Human Being in terms of ‘its root is its west and its branches are its east, and it itself is neither of the east nor the west.’⁴⁶ Just as the interior root is single and the manifest branches are many, Ibn ‘Arabī seems to prefer the Western system for depicting numbers according to their root meaning, as more in line with ‘unveiling’ (*kashf*).

We can represent the minor and major Western systems in a table, showing the importance of the number 9 as the culmination of each line:

45 Hence the ‘people of mysteries’ are those who privilege the West and the night as the symbol of the origin, where the darkness of the unseen has primordality over the light of manifestation. The ‘people of lights’ should not be understood as an allusion to those who followed the teachings of Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), the *Shaykh al-Ishrāq*, but as a more general principle of those who view light as superior to darkness, the day of illumination as superior to the night of obscurity and ignorance. For more on the notions of West and East, darkness and light, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, see Stephen Hirtenstein, ‘The Land of the Olive: Between East and West’, *JMIAS* 40 (2006), pp. 67–88.

46 K. *al-Tajalliyāt al-ilāhiyya*, ed. Osman Yahia (Beirut, 2002), oral commentary on the Theophany of the Tree (*tajallī* 73), p. 40.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
units	<i>alif</i> ا	<i>bā'</i> ب	<i>jīm</i> ج	<i>dāl</i> د	<i>hā'</i> ه	<i>wāw</i> و	<i>zāy</i> ز	<i>ḥā'</i> ح	<i>ṭā'</i> ط
tens	<i>yā'</i> ي	<i>kāf</i> ك	<i>lām</i> ل	<i>mīm</i> م	<i>nūn</i> ن	<i>ṣād</i> ص	<i>‘ayn</i> ع	<i>fā'</i> ف	<i>ḍād</i> ض
hundreds	<i>qāf</i> ق	<i>rā'</i> ر	<i>sīn</i> س	<i>tā'</i> ت	<i>thā'</i> ث	<i>khā'</i> خ	<i>dhāl</i> ذ	<i>ẓā'</i> ظ	<i>ghayn</i> غ
thousand	<i>shīn</i> ش								

In the following passage from the *Futūḥāt* which deals with numbers in terms of their root, Ibn ‘Arabī opens up further dimensions of potential ‘benefit’ for those who follow his teachings:

The benefit (*fā’ida*) of numbers, according to us in our path through which our happiness is completed, is that when the verifier or the aspirant takes one of these letters (of the various kinds that are of the seen or unseen worlds), he connects the minor calculation (*jazm*) to the major. For example, the value of the *qāf* in the major system, which is 100, is connected to its value 1 in the minor, and in this way this person always considers the number [of the letter] according to the minor system, which is from 1 to 9, bringing it back to its essential nature (*dhāt*). If the value is 1, which is the letter *alif* in both systems, and the *qāf* and the *shīn* and the *yā'* for us (who use the Western system) – and for others (who use the Eastern system) the *ghayn* instead of the *shīn* – in the minor system, he takes the number 1 as the subtle reality that is sought from these [letters] in whichever system is used. As for the values from the *alif* to the *ṭā'*, which are the simple elements of number [units 1 to 9], they are the same in both major and minor systems. Therefore, when the letters are considered in the minor system, [the verifier or aspirant] relates them [directly] back to you (*radda-hā ilay-ka*), and when considered from the perspective of the major system, he refers

them back to [outward] inspirations that are intended for you
(*radda-hā ilā l-wāridāt al-maṭlūba la-ka*).⁴⁷

Here we have our first glimpse into the multifaceted nature of Ibn ‘Arabī’s contemplation of numbers and letters. Not only do 19 of the letters have two possible values according to the major and minor systems, whereby they can always be reduced to units, but these two values express two different relationships: one, the units, we might regard as intrinsic to the person (‘related to you’), while the other, the full value, expresses some degree of external intermediary because the term *wārid* means ‘that which arrives [in the heart]’, so that the expression can be understood as ‘inspirations that come to you and are meant for you’.

The ‘essential nature’ of the primary numerical sequence 1–9 relates to the idea of an underlying primordial language spoken by human beings in the pre-Babel era, which is known in Islamic esotericism as ‘*Suryāniyya*’ (‘Syriac’, in the sense of a solar language spoken by the prophets and saints and related to Hermes/Idrīs).⁴⁸ This language is said to have been taught by God directly to Adam as a language to name all things, and was understood by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, al-Sha’rānī and others,⁴⁹ to be a language of nine ‘letters’ (*hurūf*) or ‘signs’ (*‘alāmāt*), corresponding to the nine ciphers of the enneadic numerical system. Thus we may understand that it is also not only the primordial but also the universal language of the permeating (*sarayān*) of the Essence in all things (see the Blessing-prayer I.3), because the ‘names’ of all things are encoded within the numbers 1–9 as the infinite variations of the Many in

47 *Fut.* I.80. For more about the numbers 1 to 9 according to Ibn ‘Arabī, see Winkel, *The Openings*, pp. 269–73.
48 We may note the etymological connection between ‘allusion’ (*ishāra*, from *sh-w-r*), the Assyrian god Ashshūr represented as a sun with wings (as in the name of the ruler Ashurbanipal, Ashshur-bani-apli, = *al-shūr*, and in the later name of Syria), and the *Suryāniyya* language (connected to the roots *s-r-y* and *s-y-r*). The letters *shīn* and *sīn*, which are a single letter in Hebrew, are written identically in Arabic apart from the later diacritical points on the top of the *shīn*: therefore, the lexical inter-reference of *sh-w-r* and *s-w-r/s-y-r* seems very plausible. This suggests that *Suryāniyya*, which is associated with the language of human beings prior to the Tower of Babel, is a universal subtle solar language permeating all existence. References to this important language can be found in the 4th epistle of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tāj al-rasā’il* (*Rasā’il*, 2/270–78), where the Western alphabet (ending in *shīn*) is symbolically commented on.

49 For the exposition of *Suryāniyya* by the Moroccan master ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Dabbāgh (d. 1135/1723) according to his disciple Aḥmad Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 1155/1742), see Maestri, Massimo Archetti, ‘La Lingua Primordiale nel *Kitāb al-Ibriz* di Ibn al-Mubārak’, *Quaderni Di Studi Arabi* 14 (1996), pp. 77–100. Accessed June 26, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25802792>. Our thanks to Aydogan Kars for this reference. See also René Guénon, *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chapters 6 and 7.

the One.⁵⁰ The Adamic language, which is the knowledge of 45 primordial sciences ($1+2+3+\dots+9=45=\text{Ādam}$), is the immediate language within all existent languages and beings, since all are reproducing the codes, frequencies, vibrations, proportions and patterns of the numbers 1–9. It is this primordially that lies behind Ibn ‘Arabī’s fourfold exposition of knowledge (‘*ilm*’) as: 45 sciences insofar as God is rich beyond need of the universes, 450 insofar as He is intelligible through Intellect, 4,500 insofar as He is perceptible through Nature, and 45,000 in terms of what is connected to elemental body.⁵¹ This means 45 in the units column (corresponding to being *ghanī*), 45 in the tens column (corresponding to the Intellect), 45 in the hundreds column (corresponding to Nature) and 45 in the thousands column (corresponding to the world of elements).

Thus, in a sense, the whole of existence is intimately hearing and speaking the primordial *Suryāniyya*, and it is the language by which all beings are praising God. However, this is only fully known to the people of unveiling, because they contemplate the secrets (*asrār*), the secret *suryānī* name of each divine manifestation, which is its essential secret name ruling over it, i.e. its ‘Lord’, and celebrating His praise. *Suryāniyya* may be understood, in this sense, as an interior language related to the various meanings of its root: the intimate joyful (*surūr*) mystery (*sirr*) which hiddenly diffuses and permeates in the night (*sarayān*) of the ‘solar’ speech of existence.⁵²

Its link to the numerical values 1–9 is implied in the following important passage from *K. al-Ḥaqq*, where Ibn ‘Arabī expresses the fundamental principle of going beyond all allusion to the Reality of Unity:

50 This ‘coding’ relates to the idea of allusiveness (*ishāra*) embedded in the *Suryānī* language, which constitutes the foundation of arithmosophy. See *Prayers for the Week* (Thursday Morning Prayer), p. 71.

51 *K. al-Ifāda*, Manisa MS 1183, fol. 114a. Numerically this alludes to the circle divided into four quadrants, since $45 + 45(0) + 45(00) + 45(000) = 49,995 = 36(0)$, of which the first two may be regarded as forming a higher semicircle ($495 = 18[0]$), and the last two a lower semicircle ($49500 = 18[0]$). This may correspond to the four Quranic Divine Names represented earlier in the circle. We may also note that 45 is the value of *al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā* (‘the speaking self’, or better perhaps, ‘the self in full expression’), which according to Bosnevi stands for the degree of the Perfect Human in terms of encompassing all the possibilities of expression in manifestation (see *Sharḥ*, fol. 18a).

52 From the perspective of arithmosophy, *lughah suryāniyyah* (‘Syriac language’) = $17+19=36$ (the attestations of Unity, *tawḥīd*) = 9; *suryāniyyah* = 19, i.e. all numbers from 1 to 9 being brought back to one-ness ($1+9=10=1$).

The [people of realisation] come to know Him when knowledge of the divine relations is raised up for them in their Syriac seeking (*al-ṭalab al-suryānī*), and so they cut it in two: in annihilation they find Him, and in remaining they worship Him. It is in incapacity, perplexity and limitation that they truly realise Him.⁵³

This ‘Syriac seeking’ may be understood as tasting the very limitation of the personal ‘I’ and thus going beyond to the non-limitation of witnessing the essential permeation (*sarayān*) of the mystery (*sirr*) of Unity in all things with the divine ‘Eye’ (‘*ayn*’).

Furthermore, the person making the calculation may take account of one further way of viewing the numerical value of letters in Arabic, a procedure that is usually only used occasionally, where the duplication (*tashdīd*, *shadda*) of a letter in pronunciation is taken into consideration. For example, Muḥammad is written as four letters (*m-h-m-d* = 92=2), but may also be considered as five letters (*m-h-m-m-d* = 132=6). This suggests a linkage between the counting of the doubled letter and the level of manifest, ‘spoken’ existence. In other words, the distinction between the written form and the full double spoken form of a word might be understood as corresponding to two levels of existence: the hidden/implicit, and the manifest/explicit. This might have implications for our way of understanding the remarkable correspondence we have found in the Blessing-prayer between the number of a couplet and the number of a key word.⁵⁴

Ḍād

Such constellational or kaleidoscopic considerations are necessary in order to better appreciate the allusive poems on the letters that Ibn

53 We slightly diverge from the critical edition by al-Manṣūb (*Rasā’il*, 3/405) and Marconi’s Italian translation (*El Azufre Rojo* 2, 2015, p. 139). Note the use of *sārī*, *sirr* and *suryānī* in this passage.

54 For example, in Section I (GW structure) in couplet 2a (the hidden level), the word Mecca (Makkah) would be counted as three letters, *M-k-h* (40+20+5=65=11=2); in couplet 11b (the manifest level) the phrase *al-fayḍ al-muqaddas* would be counted with the duplication, i.e. 22+16=38=11 (see Appendix C).

‘Arabī inserted into chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*.⁵⁵ These appear as early as possible in the book so as to establish certain principles, and are laid out in a specific phonic order, i.e. the order in which they are articulated by the human voice (as fricatives or labials etc.).⁵⁶ None more so than the complex 3-line poem on the *ḍād* (which is here treated as a masculine letter). The following is a brief commentary on certain aspects of this poem:

In the *ḍād* lies a mystery: if I were to disclose his remembrance,
you would see the secret of Allāh in His supreme Unitedness
(*jabarūt*).

Observe him as one: [you will see that] his unparalleled perfection
lies in the two presences of His supreme Mercifulness (*raḥamūt*).

His imam is the utterance through whose being
the All-Compassionate made him travel by night from His
supreme Kingliness (*malakūt*).⁵⁷

The main rhyming letter (*rāwī*) of the poem is *hā’* (=5), the value of the name of the letter *ḍād* (9+1+4=14=5) and of the word *sir[r]* (‘secret’) in the first verse. The 6 *hā’* (at the end of the hemistiches, i.e. 6x5) make 30 (=3), which is reflected in the 3 verses. If the rhyming letters of the *rāwī* and its first extension are counted (*tā’* + *hā’* =4+5=9), we find the value of the *ḍād*, which is repeated in each line, i.e. 3x9=27=9.⁵⁸ This fourness or fiveness of the rhyming letters is also reflected in the metre, which is *al-kāmil* (‘the complete, perfect’ =14, as in the name of the letter *ḍād*), a metre that in this poem has either 13 (=4) or 14 (=5) syllables in each

55 These are more or less the same as the letter-poems originally located at the end of the text of his holograph *Rūḥ al-quḍṣ*, known as *Asrār al-ḥurūf* (‘The Mysteries of the Letters’) – see University A79, fols. 98a–102a, dated 600H, i.e. around the same time as the writing of Chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*, and following the vision of the ‘Youth’ (*fatā*) in Mecca after he arrived in 598H.

56 This is not precisely the same phonic order as that found in chapter 198 of the *Futūḥāt*. See the listing in Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Alchemy of Human Happiness* (Oxford, 2017), appendix A, pp. 170–172, based on *Fut.* II.397 ff.

57 *Fut.* I.68. Since the letters are a living community of ‘beings’ that praise God like any other, we are using ‘his’ instead of ‘its’ in the translation. As ever, the pronouns are non-determined and susceptible of various interpretations.

58 Other expressions in the poem are equally significant: *bi-dhikrihi*=18=9. In addition, the final letters of the first hemistich of each verse (*k-r-h* / *ā-l-h* / *j-ū-d-h*) total 9.

hemistisch.⁵⁹ If the second extension of the rhyme is included ($wāw + tā' + hā' = 6+4+5=15$), we find the same values as the three mirror-letters ($4/mīm + 5/nūn + 6/wāw = 15=6$): this sixness is also reflected in the two Names implied in the *Raḥamūt*, *al-Raḥmān* (=23) and *al-Raḥīm* (=19), totalling 42=6. According to the phonic order which Ibn 'Arabī is using in this chapter, the *ḍād* poem is in the 9th place, whereas according to the phonic order used in chapter 198, the *ḍād* is in the 12th place, i.e. 3 (the number of verses of the poem). Since all the multiples of 9 (18, 27, 36, 45 etc.) return to 9 and the addition of all the units ($1+2+3+4+...+9=45$) also comes to 9, this number can be seen as the fullest and most inclusive expression of Oneness in the order of units, or 'the secret of Allah' (*sirr Allāh*, counting the hidden *alif* of *Allāh*, $=5+67=72=9$) or the total of the three Names of the *basmala* (*Allāh* =66 + *al-Raḥmān* =23 + *al-Raḥīm* =19=108=9). Hence the *ḍād* is a symbol of the Last (*ākhir* =81=9), which proceeds from and is the final destination and resting-place of the First (*awwal* =37=1).

The second verse also invites the reader to consider the *ḍād* from the perspective of 'unity' (*wāḥid* =19): when the 1 'joins' with the 9, they manifest together as 19 in the 'double presence' of *Raḥamūt* (meaning both *Raḥmān* =2+8+4+5, and *al-Raḥīm* =1+3+2+8+1+4, each of which equal 19). This double presence is also reflected in the very graphic form of the letter *ḍād*, where the first circle is completely manifest (as *Raḥmān*) and the second circle is only manifest as a half (as *Raḥīm*, which manifests in apparent opposition to punishment): the semi-circle also points to the possibility of travelling in the other semi-circle, represented by the invisible 'night' of the Prophet's ascension (referred to in the third verse).

In the third verse the *imām* (=10=1) is the *alif*-like 1 that precedes the 9 in the 19, and is referred to as an 'utterance' or expression (*lafẓ* =19) that has 'being' (*wujūd*=19). We should note here the possible implicit reference to the word *subḥān* at the beginning of the Quranic verse in *Sūrat al-Isrā'*: *Subḥāna lladhī asrā bi- 'abdi-Hi...* ('Glorified is the One who made His servant travel by night...'), where the word *subḥān*

59 The very name of the metre suggests that the letter *ḍād* has an intimate connection with the notion of being *kāmil*. The same procedure of linking the metre to the letter values in the poem can be found in these poems on the letters as well as in other poems by Ibn 'Arabī.

(=19), in addition to its verbal nature, may be understood as a Divine Name, the subject of the expression ‘made His servant travel’. From this point of view, *subhān* is the very utterance through whose existence the human being is made to return through the *Raḥīm* to the wholeness of the *Raḥmān*. From the 19 of the *malakūt* (=19), the *Raḥmān* (=19) made the *ḍād* (=9), which is in the *mulk* (=9), travel by night (*asrā bi-*, =19), i.e. in the interior. Although this of course brings to mind at first sight the Prophet Muhammad, who as His servant (‘*abdi-Hi*’ =18=9) was made to travel on the night-journey back to the presence of ‘the distance of two bows’ length or closer’ (Q 17:1), it would equally apply to the Perfect Human in all respects.

There are also several further mysteries in the number 19: it is the prime divisor of 114, the number of the individual *ṣūras* of the Quran and of the corresponding *manāzil* (‘way-stations’, ‘alighting-places’) in the *Futūḥāt*. Ibn ‘Arabī specifies that there are 19 ‘matrices’ (*ummaḥāt*) that form the basis of these *manāzil*, which when multiplied by 6 (= *wāw*, human being), total 114, representing a map of the whole of human spiritual experience.⁶⁰

In short, the ninefold *ḍād* is a symbol for Muhammad, the last of the original prophets, the human being who synthesises and reunites at the 27th degree (=9) linked to the *mīm* (=9) of his name (as in the 27th chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* devoted to a Word of Muhammad), and who is himself the ‘secret of Allāh’. It is ultimately the wholeness of the *Raḥmān* (=19=1) that leads the servant-multiplicity back to the full conscious reintegration of all aspects within the divine Unity. Through its circular form the *ḍād* (=14=5 through its constituent letters) also reminds us of both *nūn* and *hā’* (=5).

This kind of contemplation of numbers, hidden within the words and phrases and rhymes of the poem, underpins the apparently disconnected ideas it contains. It reveals a complex and profound interweaving pattern of circularity and metaphysical meaning. The resulting distinctions and correspondences are like an underlying textual geometry, with complex

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60 114 = 6x19. If the 19 correspond to the matrices, the 6 correspond to the 6 sections (*juz’*) of the whole work.

patterns designed to open up the door of imagination. As we have already suggested in the introduction, this is akin to the overflowing effect of arabesques in Islamic art or *muqarnas* in architecture, where rhythmic curves and interlacing decorative motifs are founded on geometric designs, all of which derive from and go back to the fundamental simplicity of the circle.⁶¹

Clearly some texts, in this case the letter-poems of Ibn ‘Arabī, exhibit this textual geometry in a stunning way. In the Blessing-prayer of Effusion this alphanumeric geometry is not only embedded within the structure but is also directly alluded to in couplet I.11 in the context of the *fayḍ*:

‘the Most Holy Effusion of the Essence through which potential realities and their preparedness to receive are individuated, and the Holy Effusion of the Qualities by which created beings and their extension in forms are composed.’

The Most Holy Effusion of potentialities within God’s Knowledge is linked to the principle of the ‘preparedness to receive’ (*isti‘dād*), which in turn is directly related linguistically to ‘counting’ and ‘number’ (*‘adad*): each possibility represents a specific capacity to be arranged and enumerated through the light of Being, just as each number represents a different property and manner of counting within the One. On the other hand, the Holy Effusion is linked to the manifesting of qualities within the realm of ‘extension’ (*istimḍād*), which comes from the same root as *midād*, ‘ink’, *mudda*, ‘period’, or *mādda*, ‘matter’. This extension in space-time encompasses all ‘how much’ and ‘how long’ etc. Thus, in accordance with the Plotinian maxim that the cosmos is ‘multiplicity ordered by number’,⁶² numbers are the ordering principle within the potential receptive nature of things, or in Ibn ‘Arabī’s terminology

61 For more on the geometrical basis of Islamic art, see the late Keith Critchlow’s many works, especially the classic *Islamic Patterns* (London, 1976). We may also reflect on the popularity of the modern game of Sudoku, whose Japanese name means: ‘the digits are limited to one occurrence’, in which the nine digits are to be arranged in each line, each row and each 3x3 section in a 9x9 grid: aside from its obvious aspect of the pleasure involved in mental gymnastics, Sudoku’s appeal is based on the interweaving of all the digits that accords with our innate sense of order and harmony.

62 See Slaveva-Griffin, 285.

‘the first key’ (*al-miftāḥ al-awwal*).⁶³ They rule over all patterns of manifestation and extension in the space-time dimension. Here we can see the central importance that Ibn ‘Arabī gives to arithmosophy (the wisdom of numbers) as the primordial hermeneutical key for the understanding of the universal *Suryāniyya* language of existence in all forms.

So far the only researcher of our time to face the depth of this hermeneutical dimension has been the Algerian ‘Abd al-Bāqī Miftāḥ, whose contribution to this field has been extensive and remarkable.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it has tended to be diminished and neglected among scholars due to the ‘doubts’ that the methodology of arithmosophy provokes in the modern mind: many commonly consider the variants of the *abjad* esoteric procedure to be a naïve and arbitrary approach, and the use of the minor system to be a meaningless simplification, rather than paying proper attention to the indications that Ibn ‘Arabī himself provides on the matter, and which are closely taken into account by his followers, such as Bosnevi. It is this consideration that underlies the explorations we have undertaken in this book in relation to the Blessing-prayer and in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī and Bosnevi.

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63 *Fut.* I.80.

64 Among his many works, see, for example, *al-Mafāṭīḥ al-wujūdiyya wa-l-qur’āniyya li-Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam li-Ibn al-‘Arabī* (Beirut, 2005); *al-Ḥaqā’iq al-wujūdiyya al-kubrā fi ru’ya Ibn al-‘Arabī* (Damascus, 2013); and *Shurūḥ wa-mafāṭīḥ li-mafāḥim al-shaykh al-akbar Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī* (Beirut, 2016).

CHAPTER 4

Quranic Principles of Creation: *kun fa-yakūn*

When We desire a thing, Our Speech to it is 'Be', and so it comes to be (Q 16:40)

As we have seen, the creative order can be understood as the overflowing of Being (*wujūd*) through Loving Generosity (*jūd*), or a breathing-out (*tanfīs*) through Compassionate Mercy (*rahma*), whose nature is circular, revealing what is hidden, endlessly enumerating the One according to all the possibilities of number. One other Arabic letter features prominently, albeit allusively, in the structure of the Blessing-prayer of Effusion: the letter *kāf* (ك), whose numerical value is 20 or 2, and which functions as a word meaning 'like' (as in *ka-mithli-hi*). When the *kāf* combines with the *nūn*, it 'creates' the word of the divine creative command 'Be!' (*kun* = *kāf* + *nūn*), a word that forms the central dynamic of the famous Quranic verse: *When We desire a thing, Our Speech to it is 'Be', and so it comes to be (kun fa-yakūn, Q 16:40)*. We can understand this, therefore, as having three parts or stages: the divine Desire or Will (*irāda*), the divine Speech of 'Be' (*kun*), and the consequent act of coming into existence (*fa-yakūn*). All three are related to 'a thing', i.e. something completely unspecified as to whether it is animate or inanimate, human or not, spiritual or imaginal or material. This 'thing' (*shay*), from the same root as *mashī'a*, the 'place of the divine Wish' is passive in relation to the divine Will or Desire, as a thing desired (*murād*). It is also passive in relation to the divine Speech, as a hearer of the Word 'Be'. The only 'act' that can be attributed to it is to become what it is, or rather to express what it is known to be. We see here the important distinction between what a thing is in the divine Knowledge, its eternally established potentiality ('*ayn*

thābita), and what a thing is in manifestation, its concrete existence (*‘ayn wujūdiyya*). The Word *kun* is the consequence of divine Desire, which itself comes from Knowledge, and this Knowledge depends on the potentiality itself, which is the known thing (*ma‘lūm*).

When Ibn ‘Arabī comments on this Quranic verse in the chapter of Ṣāliḥ in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, he points to a triplicity of aspects on the divine side (Essence, Will/Desire and Word/Speech) and a triplicity on the thing’s side (thingness, hearing and obedience):

If it were not for this Essence and Its Desire – which is the relationship whereby [the Essence] specifically faces towards the bringing into being of something– and then if in that facing there were not also His saying ‘Be’ to that thing, then the thing could not have come into being. There manifests within the thing a triple singularity, through which, from the side of the thing, its coming into being and its being qualified with being also become true: this [triplicity] is its thingness, its hearing and its obedience to the order of the One who gives it existence by bringing it into being. Thus a threesome faces a threesome: the thing’s essence, which is established in the state of its non-existence, corresponds to the Essence of the One who brings it into being; its hearing corresponds to the Willing Desire of the One who gives it being; and its receptivity through obedience to the creative act by which He commands it corresponds to His Word ‘Be’. So ‘it becomes’, and the act of coming into being is related to it. If in its capacity it did not have the ability to come into being from itself when it heard this Word, then it could not have come into existence. So nothing brings this thing into being after it was not, at the time of the order to come into being, except itself. [In this verse] the Real established that the coming into being belongs to the thing itself, not to the Real; what belongs to the Real in this is simply His command.¹

We may note here that according to Ibn ‘Arabī, even though everything participates in this level of creation by virtue of being a

1 *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kılıç, p. 98. See also *Fut.* II.401.

‘thing’, there are in fact three ways of bringing into being through the divine ‘Be’ (*kun*):

... one kind is brought into being through ‘Be’ (*kun*) and nothing else – this is the case for most of the cosmos; another kind is brought into being through ‘Be’ and the One Hand, like the Garden of Eden, the Pen, the writing of the Torah and other things; a third kind is brought into being through ‘Be’ and His Two Hands – this applies only to the human being (*insān*), which is why he emerged according to the Form, just as [the Prophet] said: ‘Indeed God created Adam according to His Form.’²

Here again Ibn ‘Arabī emphasises the very special privilege of the human being, which is not shared by any other created being, in being the outcome of the uniting of the Two Hands: in other words, just as the Reality of the Human Being precedes all division as the very principle and potential of division itself, so does the realised human being unite all the divisions that flow from the two arcs of Lordship and servanthood, of Uniqueness and Oneness (see the Blessing-prayer, I/13). As Bosnevi puts it in his *Sharḥ*,

this Reality, which preserves the two halves [of Absolute non-manifest Uniqueness and manifest Oneness of Names] is the degree of the most complete Perfect Human Being (*al-insān al-kāmil al-akmal*), who brings together the place of manifestation of the Absolute Essence by virtue of being unlimited in primordial receiving, and the place of manifestation of the Names and Qualities and Actions by virtue of the integration and equilibrium contained in his universal constitution and the scope, breadth and perfection that his manifestation contains.³

Elsewhere Ibn ‘Arabī deals with the human adoption of *kun* as a ‘power’ or creative ‘word’ that is employed in performing so-called ‘miraculous acts or graces’ (*karāmāt*). In general he regards this kind

2 *Nuskhat al-ḥaqq*, in *Rasā’il*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Manṣūb, 3/286. Note that the *khuṭba* to this treatise rhymes in *kāf* (=2), thus signifying the mirroring dualitude in the cosmos (*kawn*).

3 *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, fol. 14b. The mention of Two Hands also implies a 5:5 relationship as found in the two arcs of the *nūn*, symbolising a return of the mirroring two-ness to Unity (5+5=10=1) – see Appendix C.

of extraordinary power as something to be relinquished out of proper courtesy towards God, or better, because of a perfect realisation that everything is under the order of the divine *kun*, and therefore such an exercise of spiritual power in the world can only take place because of a divine order that it be so.⁴ However, this power is inherent in the potential of the human being:

In his interior the human being possesses the power of *kun*, but all that he has outwardly is the passive aspect [of being commanded to be]. However, in the next world the ruling property of *kun* will come about from him outwardly, and some people may be given this in this world but that is not the general rule... the person of true courtesy [among the men of God] is a creator in this world through good works ('*amal*), not through [saying] '*kun*' – or rather, it is through 'In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful' (*bism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*).⁵

When the realised human being acts, their action is accomplished through the action of God, since 'God is his ears and his tongue' in accordance with the tradition of the supererogatory acts (*nawāfil*), and therefore his saying 'In the Name of God' has the same effective power as God's *kun*.

Furthermore, the vowel 'u' (*ḍamma*) in the word *kun* can be viewed as a hidden *wāw*: this vowel (which is written as a superscript *wāw*) not only connects the two letters *kāf* and *nūn* to make the word *kun*, but when it manifests itself 'between the *kāf* and *nūn*' as a connective letter *wāw*, it produces the word *kawn* (*k-w-n*, created existence). In other words, the manifestation of the *wāw* causes the world of created existence to become visible, or the creative act results in that which is hidden having manifestation 'added' to it. The manifesting of the *wāw* between the letters *kāf* and *nūn* is equally a contemplation of the complete Human

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4 See *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kılıç, p. 117.

5 *Fut.* III.240. That is, it is not actually the act that the servant performs, which is effective, but the power of the divine Action implicit in our saying the *basmala*. Elsewhere, Ibn 'Arabī states that our saying *Bismi Llāh* in bringing about an action is the human equivalent of God saying *kun* (*Fut.* II.397, 401). For a fuller discussion, see Sara Sviri, 'KUN: the Existence-Bestowing Word in Islamic Mysticism', *The Poetics of Grammar and the Creative Power of Language Conference* (Jerusalem, 2013), pp. 35–67.

Being: the numerical value of *wāw* is 6, the same as the reduced total value of the whole name Muḥammad.⁶

The letter *wāw* also plays a prominent central role in a triplicity of terms much employed by Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers: *jūd* (j-w-d, Generosity) / *wujūd* (w-j-w-d, Being, i.e. *wāw* added to generosity), *mawjūd* (m-w-j-w-d, existent being, *mīm* added to Being). This contrast of *jūd* and *wujūd* is employed in the Blessing-prayer in section 1 couplet 3, where they are used in inverse order to depict Muhammad as the mirror-image of the Real: if God begins with Generosity in bringing into Being (*wujūd*), the Human begins by being and manifests with generosity towards the world. Again, the connective *wāw* at the beginning of the word *wujūd* as well as in the word *jūd* symbolises the Perfect Human Being, who forms the link between divine Generosity and existent beings, referred to in the verse: ‘We have only sent you as a mercy for the worlds’.⁷

There are various ways to contemplate the principle of *kun* (*kāf* = 2/20, *nūn* = 5/50) in the structure of the first *Allāhumma* section in the Blessing-prayer. First of all, the initial couplet A rhyming in *kāf* (*ṣalawāti-k* / *taslīmāti-k*) at the very beginning of the Blessing-prayer is followed by 50 (= *nūn*) individual sentences, many of which specifically rhyme in *nūn*, notably couplets 1–4. Within this first section there are two parts: the first 20 (= *kāf*) couplets all concern the Reality of Muhammad in its supra-personal dimension, while the second part begins with the word *ḥabību-ka* (‘Your beloved-lover’) and has 5 (= *nūn*) couplets concerning the concrete experience of the Prophet’s *mi‘rāj* (ascension).

From another perspective, the numerical value of the name *nūn* (counting its individual constituent letters) is 50 (*n*) + 6 (*w*) + 50 (*n*) = 106 = 7, which is equal to the word *kun* (20+50=7) and the word *amr*, i.e. the creative command (1+40+200=241=7).⁸ Whether we view this first section as a total of 25 couplets (2+5) or 2 initial sentences followed

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6 Counting the name Muḥammad with all five letters as *m-h-m-m-d* (40+8+40+40+4=132=1+3+2=6). Having 5 letters in this way, the name Muḥammad alludes to the Five Presences that are included in his being (see couplet I.3).

7 Q 21:107, cited in the Blessing-prayer Section I/3b.

8 We may also note that the sum of the numerical values of *al-ṣalāt* (19) and *al-salām* (15) equals 34 (3+4=7=*kun*). For the symbolism of the number 7, see *Prayers for the Week*, pp. 9–18 and appendix A.

by 50 (2+50), we arrive at a total of 7 (= *kun* or *nūn*), a number that also evokes the value of ‘*ayn* (=70), the ‘eye-entity’ that sees.

While Section I may be identified with the *nūn*, the remaining four sections together, comprising a further 40 rhyming couplets, are in a certain sense identifiable with the *mīm* (=4/40). Were these two letter-sections to be viewed as linked by an implicit *wāw* (or *ḍamma*, as in the letter hidden between the *kāf* and *nūn* of *kun*), then the whole Blessing-prayer could be seen as a profound meditation on *kun* through all three mirror-letters.⁹

The Blessing-Prayer as Quranic Hermeneutics

Creative Opening and Speech

We may also contemplate two further correspondences drawn from a particular way of reading the Quranic text. The whole Quranic verse of the *kun* is generally interpreted as *When We desire a thing, Our Word to it is ‘Be!’ and it becomes’* (*kun fa-yakūn*),¹⁰ but it may also be read in a different allusive manner, as having only two parts: ‘When We desire a thing, Our Speech to it is: “Be-so-it-comes-to-be”’. In other words, the whole Arabic phrase *kun fa-yakūn* may be read as a single item of speech rather than as a command followed by an action, and this phrase is the ‘content’ of the divine Speech or Word (*qawl*), a single whole containing two sides or halves. According to this reading, ‘Be, so it becomes’ (*kun fa-yakūn*) is considered as a single composed existential order. This is reflected numerically in the value of the whole phrase (2+5+8+1+2+6+5), which totals 29, i.e. the number of all the letters of the Arabic alphabet (including *lām-alif*¹¹), or (2+9=) 11=2 (the final value of the name Muḥammad).

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9 The multiple perspectives that arise in the contemplation of the Blessing-prayer are treated in more detail in Appendix D.

10 Q 16:40; see also 2:117, 3:47, 36:82, 19:35, 40:68.

11 This double-letter is to be included in the alphabet according to a prophetic hadith, and this numbering is followed by Ibn ‘Arabi in his letter-poems in chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*.

A further aspect of this phrase is that the divine *kun* (=7), when articulated through the presence of *fā*’, doubles itself and ‘becomes’ (*yakūn*, =14). The *fā*’ represents the bridge to full expression or articulation, and like the *wāw* of *wa-* (meaning ‘and’), functions as a linking word meaning ‘and so’. We may note that *fā*’ is the monoliteral origin of the word ‘mouth’, as in *fā*, and its phonic articulation implies an opening (*fath*) of the mouth. This understanding lies behind Ibn ‘Arabī’s use of the technical term *fahwāniyya*, the ‘presence of divine-human speech’. In the poem on the *fā*’,¹² he mentions that the letters *fā*’ and *yā*’ are ‘mixed’ and ‘connected’ in existence, as we can see in the expressions *fa-yakūn* and *fayḍ*, and explicitly in the preposition *fī* (‘in’), all of which imply coming into existence.

The reason why this is significant here is that in the Blessing-prayer we find each rhyming couplet containing two parts or sentences, like two halves of a circle, which are linked by *wāw* (which like the *fa-* of *fa-yakūn* operates as a *barzakh*). The first sentence is at the level of the Most Holy Effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) and corresponds to the ‘hearing’ level of *kun*; the second is at the level of the Holy Effusion (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*) and corresponds to the ‘obedience’ level of *fa-yakūn*. Or to put it another way, in accordance with Ibn ‘Arabī’s ‘threesome’ explained above, the first sentence of the couplet expresses the inner non-manifest relationship between the Essence of the One and the individuated essence (‘*ayn thābita*’), while the second sentence expresses the outer expressed relationship. If the *kāf* suggests the initiating of the creative order (*kun*) within the hidden realm, then the *fā*’ of *fa-yakūn* symbolises the consequential expression within the world of relativity, which is speech or verbalisation (*fahwāniyya*), so that all beings are viewed as ‘words’ of God.¹³ These two letters, *kāf* and *fā*’, are found in this precise manner in the first section of the Blessing-prayer, as the initial letters of the two main terms of couplet 7, where the Prophet is referred to, firstly, as *kalima* (‘word’, beginning with the letter *kāf*), in the sense of the Human Being as ‘the Word of the Supreme Name [of

12 *Fut.* I.74.

13 ‘If all the trees on earth were pens and the sea [ink], with seven seas after it to replenish it, the words of God would not be used up. God is Mighty and Wise. The creation and raising of you all is only like that of a single soul...’ (Q 31: 27–28).

God]’, and secondly, as *fātiḥa* (‘Opener’, beginning with the letter *fā*’), the one who enables all the Names encoded in the divine Treasure to be given their full expression. According to this perspective, the Blessing-prayer in total is like an existentiating divine ‘Word’ of desire and love for the Truly Human Being.

Covering Creation and Love

It is He who initiates and brings back [to the beginning]. And He is the [Manifesting] Coverer (al-Ghafūr), the Constantly Loving (al-Wadūd) (Q 85:13–14).

The theme of God’s special love for the Human Being can also be seen implicitly in the structure of the four sections that make up the second part of the Blessing-prayer:

II	III	IV	V
6 couplets	4 couplets	6 couplets	4 couplets
<i>wāw</i>	<i>dāl</i>	<i>wāw</i>	<i>dāl</i>

These final four sections together therefore spell *w-d-w-d*, i.e. the divine Name *wadūd*, ‘the Constantly Loving’. In connection to this, it is no accident that the Quran directly links the principle of circularity to this Name: *It is He who initiates and brings back [to the beginning]. And He is the [Manifesting] Coverer (al-Ghafūr), the Constantly Loving (al-Wadūd) (Q 85:13–14).* We may note that the reduced numerical value of *ghafūr* is 7 ($25=7$), corresponding to the 25 couplets of section I (as well as the reduced value of the number of sentences in the first section which contains 52, $5+2=7$), and the value of *wadūd* is 20, corresponding to the number of couplets in the remaining four sections ($6+4+6+4$), indicating the letters of the Name *Wadūd*. Although at first sight this might seem an unlikely linkage of the structure of the Blessing-prayer to numbers and this Quranic verse, by looking more deeply into Ibn ‘Arabī’s and Bosnevi’s treatment of these Names, we can see that they should both be understood as expressing circularity.

The ‘initiating’ and ‘bringing-back’ of creation is linked to the existentiating quality inherent in the Name *Ghafūr*. As Ibn ‘Arabī defines it, *al-Ghafūr* is an intensive form that indicates that God is named ‘the [Manifesting] Coverer, because of the veils that He lets fall over created beings (*akwān*) and those that are not created’. This is not forgiveness in the ordinary sense of the term (as the Name is usually translated), because we are not dealing with actions of non-compliance or disobedience which are subsequent to existence itself. According to this understanding, a veiling or covering is required in order for there to be any kind of separate identity describable as ‘another’ from the One and Only. It is therefore directly related to the veil of manifesting, since veiling is necessary for the appearance of a separation of outer and inner, hidden and manifest. Hence *al-Ghafūr* denotes He who covers created and uncreated beings (by which we may understand all the Names) in the apparent ‘veil’ of a particularised identity that is separate from the Real Himself, at the same time as implicitly protectively covering them in forgiveness for this because ultimately separation is illusory. Or more succinctly, we may say that the Real ‘covers’ Himself with creation and ‘covers’ creation with Himself.

The existential nature of this veiling quality parallels that in the principle of Compassionate Mercy (*rahma*): according to Ibn ‘Arabī Mercy means primarily giving existence to beings, and only subsequently being merciful to them in a qualitative sense. It can also be found implied in a Quranic prayer which directly links *ghafr* with *rahma*: ‘My Lord, cover with forgiveness and mercify [me], for You are the best of Mercifiers (*khayr al-rāḥimīn*)’ (Q 23:118). We also find this existential aspect being emphasised when Bosnevi comments on Noah’s injunction to his people, usually translated as ‘Ask for your Lord’s forgiveness, for indeed He is Forgiving (*ghaffār*)’ (Q 71:10). He rephrases this sentence as:

‘Seek from your Lord covering (*ghafr*)’, so that He may veil you with the light of His Being from the veiling particularisations [of light] and from the veils of darkness, and so that you may be guided to the Oneness of the Real (*waḥdat al-ḥaqq*) and you become covered [by Him] (*maghfūr*); ‘for indeed He is One who

covers' (*ghaffār*) the misappropriations¹⁴ of your self-existence,
One who veils (*sattār*) the realities of your self-nature with the
light of His Manifesting and the revelation of His Being.¹⁵

We see here that this idea of 'covering' also has a meaning of a protective quality, which preserves from the illusion of separation. We may also note there is an important sense in which prayer (*ṣalāt*) itself means 'asking for God's covering/forgiveness' (*istighfār*): as the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, 'I was sent to the people of the Baqī' (the cemetery in Medina) to pray over them', or in another version, 'I was ordered to ask for God's covering/forgiveness for them.'¹⁶

On the other hand, the 'initiating' of creation relies on constantly loving what is being created, and the 'bringing back' is linked to the removal of any sense of 'distance' and the establishing of forgiveness for those who are loved by God, a love which is inherent in the Name *Wadūd*: 'He who maintains and establishes His love towards His servants... in such a way that forgiveness prevails for those who are beloved.'¹⁷ Another Quranic verse succinctly expresses this circularity: *He loves them and they love Him* (Q 5:54), something which Ibn 'Arabī sees implied by the repetition of the letters *w-d* in the Name *Wadūd* (*w-d-w-d*). He is very conscious of the special nature of these repeating letters: when he summarises the Name *Wadūd* in chapter 558 of the *Futūḥāt*, he refers to how love and forgiveness/covering permeate the duality of the divine decree (*qaḍā'*), made in God's eternal Knowledge, and destiny (*qadar*, the chaptering of this decree in space-time), as well as that which came before and that which is to come. He implies that loving truly is a matter of being loved: inasmuch as we are places of divine Love, we are 'forgiven/covered' and can participate in Love.

14 Ar: *dhunūb*, which could be translated as 'sins', 'faults', but as Lane observes (*Lexicon*, p. 986), are the things or imaginings of self-existence that preclude one from God's Presence.

15 Bosnevi, *Sharḥ al-Fuṣṣṣ*, fol. 138b.

16 Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9/63, cited in 'Umar b. Ṭā'-Hā' al-'Aṭṭār, *Kashf al-asrār li-ṣalāt sayyid al-abrār* (Beirut, 1971), p. 23.

17 *Fut.* IV.323 and 324. There is here an avenue of investigation that might prove fruitful in the future, concerning the possible significance of the order of the Names that are listed by Ibn 'Arabī in chapter 558 of the *Futūḥāt*. There is an interesting correspondence as regards circularity with these two Names: *al-Ghaffūr* (and its sisters) is the 16th Name (= 7, the value of 'ayn, the 'eye') and *al-Wadūd* the 50th Name (= *nūn*, the semi-circle that implies a whole circle). See the edition of Ibn 'Arabī's *Kashf al-ma'nā* by Pablo Beneito (Murcia, 1996), pp. 331, 343, with forthcoming English translation as *The Secret of God's Beautiful Names* by Anqa Publishing.

He also mentions the connection of love and existence in his longer discussion of ‘the Presence of Constant Love’ (*wadd*):

He never ceases to love [to be known] and remains Constantly Loving, so He is continually giving existence on behalf of us,¹⁸ and *is every day at work* (Q 55:29) – the Name *al-Wadūd* has no other meaning than this... God has informed [us] that He, exalted is He, is *the [Manifesting] Coverer (al-Ghafūr), the Constantly Loving (al-Wadūd)*, that is, the One whose love is established in His Unseen, so that He sees us, for He sees His beloved and He delights and takes pleasure in him. The whole cosmos is a single Human Being, who is the beloved; the individuals in the cosmos are the members of that Human Being... Those who love Him are in the same position in relation to the cosmos as the eye-pupil (‘the man in the eye’) is to the eye... He grants direct witnessing (*shuhūd*) to those who love Him because He knows they love Him.¹⁹

Bosnevi himself links the Name *Wadūd* to the Reality of Muhammad and to the degrees of existence in one of his treatises, *al-Qirā al-rūḥī al-mamdūd lil-adyāf al-wāridīn min marātib al-wujūd* (‘The Spiritual Hospitality extended to the guests that arrive from the degrees of Being’).²⁰ In this he provides a lengthy commentary on a poem by his contemporary and close friend Muḥammad Ghars al-Dīn al-Rifā‘ī, who in turn is commenting on al-Jīlī’s well-known work on the forty degrees of Being, *Marātib al-wujūd*. In both the title and the rhymes in the prologue (*khuṭba*) Bosnevi repeats the letters *wāw* (=6) and *dāl* (=4) as a central feature, indicating the essential Unity that is reflected in the terms *wad[d]* (‘Love’, =1) and *wujūd* (‘Being’, =19=1).²¹ The first

18 Ar: *fi haqqi-nā*. This could also be translated as: ‘with regard to our right/truth’.

19 Fut. IV.260, where he also relates both divine Names to the idea of veiling. See the translation of this section in Pablo Beneito, ‘The Servant of the Loving One: on the Adoption of the Character Traits of *al-Wadūd*’, *JMIAS* XXXII (2002), pp. 1–24.

20 Carullah MS 2129, fols. 1b–21a, dated at the end as 1036 (=1), with this copy made by the author in 27 Rabi‘ I, 1044 (which counting only the numbers, makes 9+1+9=19=1), so that both the original and the copy reflect the numerical structure of the name *Wadūd* (*wāw-dāl* =6+4=1, plus *wāw-dāl* =1). For the Arabic edition and Turkish study of this text, see <https://archive.org/details/AbdullahBosnevi> (accessed on 26 June 2021).

21 We note that among the 28 (=1) rhymes of the *khuṭba* (corresponding to the number of degrees of existence outlined by Ibn ‘Arabi), there are 15 (=6) in *-ūd* and 13 (=4) in other letters, precisely reflecting the letters *wāw* and *dāl*.

sentences of the *khutba* are most explicit in linking the three fundamental terms: ‘Praise be to God, the opener of the treasures of Gift-giving and Generosity (*jūd*), the unveiler of the secrets of the Unseen from the reality of His Name *Wadūd*, who causes the circles of His Most Holy Effusion to overflow from the Absolute Unseen upon the Presence of the Cloud, the first of the degrees of Being (*wujūd*)...’ The text continues with an extended contemplation of the Reality of Muhammad.

We may note here that the Names *Wadūd* (=20) and *Ghafūr* (=25) together equal 45 (the primordial sciences of Adam, =45). This is also in precise correlation with the expression *al-naḥs* (=20) *al-nāṭiqa* (=25), ‘the expressive self’ or ‘speaking self’ within the human being, which according to Bosnevi corresponds to Muhammad.²²

For our analysis and translation, we have given priority to two major perspectives on the Blessing-prayer as a whole: the Quranic pairing of the divine Names *Ghafūr*+*Wadūd*, and the divine Word *kun fa-yakūn*, which we can summarise in the following table:

I	II	III	IV	V
25 (+1) couplets	6 couplets	4 couplets	6 couplets	4 couplets
52 (= 5+2=7)	40 (= 12+8+12+8=40=4)			
<i>ghafūr</i> (25=7)	<i>wāw</i>	<i>dāl</i>	<i>wāw</i>	<i>dāl</i>
<i>kun</i> (= 7)	<i>fa-yakūn</i> (= 4)			
<i>ḥamd</i> (= 52) حمد	م mīm (= 40=4)			

As can be seen in the last line of the table, a third overall perspective is opened up by viewing the twenty couplets of the final four sections as 40 sentences (= *mīm*).²³ If we link this to the 52 sentences of the first section (the numerical value of *ḥamd*, ‘praise’), we arrive at 92, a total which is the (usually transmitted) numerical value of the name Muḥammad in script.²⁴

22 For this linkage, see Principle 6 in Bosnevi’s Introduction to *Sharḥ*, fol. 18a. We may note that the definite article *al-* (‘the’) may be counted (as here) in *abjad* calculations as 1+3=4.

23 We may also note that the final invocation *arḥam al-rāḥimīn* has a minor-system value of 40 (15+25). See Appendix D.

24 According to the major system, Muḥammad is 40+8+40+4=92. Confirmation of the significance of 92 can be found in al-Nābulusi’s commentary, when he explains the meaning of the encoded treasure mentioned in couplet I/7, and specifically deciphers ‘the numerical value of the letters’ (*‘adad al-jummal*) of the name Muḥammad as 92 (see fol. 21b).

None of these correspondences which we use in the numbering of the couplets are explicitly explained, either in the text or in any of the commentaries we have consulted. However, they are implied – or perhaps better, embedded – in the structure of the Blessing-prayer. In fact the key to this numerical approach has been suggested by the author himself when he explicitly mentions specific numbers at the beginning of the prayer: for example, ‘the First of the individuations’ in couplet 1, ‘a second’ in couplet 2, the mention of ‘Five Presences’ in sentence 5 and so on. These numerical correspondences are testimony to the inspired nature of its composition and the multi-faceted richness of the contemplation of the Truly Human Being hidden within it.



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ما في الصورة
 الحمد لله الذي جعلنا من عباده من يتبع ما في بطون وفتح أبواب ما أطلق من
 واصل على سبيل ما كتبت الأطلال بالنور وفضل القياض من
 عن قلوب المؤمنين على ما كتبت في بطون وفتح أبواب ما أطلق من
 المعارف الربانية التي تشرحها بطون وفتح أبواب ما أطلق من
 سائر الأرواح في كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من
 فيقول حمد الفطرة ومكة الفطرة حمد العنق الذي لم يترك في فطرته
 بالقبول والصدق بالتمام على ورد عيش وارزق بعيش الجين في بلادهم
 بشيخ الصلوة الحمد لله الذي جعلنا من عباده من يتبع ما في بطون وفتح أبواب ما أطلق من
 مدار القلوب في شرح الأسرار وصدق الأرواح في الدين محمد بن علي الأبي
 الطاهر شيخ الأئمة في شرح الأسرار وصدق الأرواح في الدين محمد بن علي الأبي
 شيرازي في شرح الأسرار وصدق الأرواح في الدين محمد بن علي الأبي
 الورود وفضل القياض من كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من
 انه لا يزال في كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من
 الداعي في جامع الصفات والاسماء والرحمة وفضل القياض من
 ورحمة وسعت كل شيء في رحمة الرحمن في كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من
 برحمة وسعت كل شيء في رحمة الرحمن في كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من
 في قلوب المؤمنين وفضل القياض من كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من
 في الدنيا والآخرة ما هو سعادته والرحمة وسعت كل شيء في رحمة الرحمن في كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من
 تنسحق بالأسرار من كرامات الأوصياء من أسرار الأرواح وفضل القياض من

و من الالهة عن الله

دقيق الفطرة

و من الالهة عن الله

Opening of al-Nābulusi's commentary, Istanbul University A552, fol. 17b.

CHAPTER 5

Authorship and Inspiration

Those who swear allegiance to you swear allegiance to God
(Q 48:10)

Who is the original author of the Blessing-prayer? A simple question, but one that is complex to answer. In all the manuscripts that we have consulted, the attribution of the prayer to Ibn ‘Arabī is affirmed, but this seems to have been done solely on the basis of the statement made by the great Damascene author ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) in his commentary on the Blessing-prayer, which is the first known copy of the text. Subsequent authors seem to have accepted this attribution, although al-Nābulusī qualified it in a certain way, as we shall see.

However, there are various reasons for investigating this further: firstly, all the known copies of the prayer are very late, i.e. 18th century or later, and there is no indication of it having been written or composed much earlier than this. If it were indeed a verifiable prayer by Ibn ‘Arabī, one might reasonably expect it to have surfaced before this or in other places, but so far we have found no evidence of this. The misattribution of texts to Ibn ‘Arabī is quite common, and has taken place for a variety of reasons: sometimes innocently, as no author was named and the text seemed to be ‘akbarian’ in content and language, and sometimes less so, where works have been passed off under the aegis of the most famous Sufi author to lend them credibility and value. Recent scholarship has shown several cases where Ibn ‘Arabī is named as the author, both in manuscripts and in modern printed editions, but based on internal and external evidence, could not possibly have been so.¹

¹ Three examples will suffice: *Tahrīr al-bayān* (RG 755, sometimes known as *Shu‘ab al-īmān*) is by Sa‘īd al-Farghānī (d. 700/1299) (see translation by William Chittick, ‘Tahrīr al-bayān’, *JMIAS* 66, 2019, pp. 1–32); *R. al-Ghawthiyya* (RG 194) is by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 560/1165) (see Yusuf Zaydan, *al-Mutawālīyāt*, Cairo, 1998, p. 34); and *Shajarat al-kawn* (RG 666) is by ‘Abd al-Salām al-Maqdisī (d. 678/1280) (see Michel Chodkiewicz, Book Reviews, *JMIAS* 13, p. 85).

The very first mention of the Blessing-prayer that we have found is in the commentary on the prayer by al-Nābulusī, who states in his introduction:

An inspiration (*wārid*) came to me from one of the lovers [of God] (*muḥibbūn*) of the land of Rūm [inviting me to write] a commentary on the Blessing-prayer upon Muhammad (*al-Ṣalāt al-Muḥammadiyya*) which is attributed to ... Muḥyī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Ḥātimī al-Andalusī, known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar... I have called this [commentary] “The Prayer of emerging Inspiration and the Overflowing of the manifested Sea” (*Wird al-wurūd wa-fayḍ al-baḥr al-mawrūd*).²

In this rather allusive and delicate fashion, al-Nābulusī clearly points to the Anatolian connection of this Blessing-prayer, and yet simultaneously attributes it to Ibn ‘Arabī. There is a clear ambiguity in his using the words ‘attributed to’ (*mansūb ilā*), which might indicate that ‘it is said to be by him’ or that ‘it is related to him’ in some respect, rather than simply affirming the authorship of Ibn ‘Arabī. At first sight it seems that al-Nābulusī did not know who the actual author was, and on the basis of the content and inspiration he referred it to Ibn ‘Arabī. This might be the case, as there is certainly no doubt that the thought and inspiration is fully ‘akbarian’ and absolutely in line with Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings. However, the conceptual universe appears in a much more explicit and systematic form, and clearly belongs to a later author than Ibn ‘Arabī. Al-Nābulusī does not mention the identity of this ‘lover’

2 University MS A522, fol. 17b. Note that the term *wird*, whose root appears three times in this title and is an image of water in correspondence with the image of *fayḍ*, can signify ‘arrival’, ‘inspiration’ (as in *wārid*), ‘water-source’ to which one comes to drink (as in *mawrid*) as well as the time of day for coming to drink, and therefore to the time in the evening or during the night for prayer, specifically linked to a supererogatory spiritual practice. It also contains an allusion to the word *ward*, the rose. The title alludes to two levels or semi-circles of the *Nūn*: the first (*wurūd*) hidden and emerging from the Absolute Unseen, and the second (*mawrūd*, with the additional mīm of space-time) overflowing into full manifestation. In his commentary *Kashf al-asrār li-ṣalāt sayyid al-abrār*, ‘Umar al-‘Aṭṭār here quotes a poem in praise of Ibn ‘Arabī that al-Nābulusī adapted into Arabic from a Turkish poem by ‘one of the virtuous among the people of Rūm’: the original is in fact by the famous poet Nabī (d. 1124/1712; see al-‘Aṭṭār, pp. 61–62). Thus we can see the deep appreciation and special connection that al-Nābulusī had with Ottoman authors who did not write exclusively or necessarily in Arabic (as is the case of Bosnevi himself).

(*muhibb*) from Rūm,³ nor does he specify the precise way in which he ‘met’ him, although one might take the word *wārid* to indicate a sudden heart-connection of some kind, possibly even in a visionary experience. Nor does al-Nābulusī state that this anonymous person *was* the actual author, perhaps because he might have come across the text within a collection or from an oral transmission without the authorship being specified. It may also have been that the important thing for him was that the Blessing-prayer was so clearly inspired by the Shaykh al-Akbar’s world-view and from his *baraka*. We might even speculate that it was because the actual ‘author’ did not wish to interpose his own identity, preferring to regard it not as a work of his own but as something directly ‘given’ as inspiration by Ibn ‘Arabī himself.⁴ Whatever the truth of the matter, al-Nābulusī’s lead in attributing the Blessing-prayer to Ibn ‘Arabī has been followed by all later authors and readers, who simply affirm that it is ‘by’ (*li-*) the Shaykh al-Akbar.

Linguistically the Blessing-Prayer of Effusion is an absolute tour de force in the fullest sense: it introduces a series of poetic images coupled with the most sublime reflections on the Reality of Muhammad drawn from the Quran and Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings. But let us now review the evidence that suggests that the Blessing-prayer might not be by Ibn ‘Arabī himself. There are a significant number of stylistic and terminological aspects of the text which may be considered significant. Stylistically, the Blessing-prayer is in rhymed prose couplets (*saj’*), but in addition to the final (external) rhyme, it also has consistent internal rhymes, which in some cases regularly repeat within and across different couplets.⁵ In addition, we find many rhymes with the *nisba* (*-iyya* or *-ī*). On the other

3 Geographically, the term Rūm can be understood in several ways: it was associated with the ‘Roman Empire’ of the Byzantine Christians, and by extension to Christian kingdoms further west; it can also linked to the land-mass of Anatolia (whose inhabitants predate Byzantine rule) or to the wider Ottoman region of Rumelia, including the modern Balkans.

4 There are some reasons for considering this to be the case. Certainly there are precedents for directly transmitted writings in the akbarian tradition, most notably al-Farghānī’s commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Tā’iyya*, which was said to be the lecture-notes of al-Qūnawī’s oral teachings, which themselves came from Ibn ‘Arabī’s post-mortem private expositions to al-Qūnawī, and since Ibn ‘Arabī himself states that all his words and compositions are inspired by God, one may wonder who the actual author really is (see al-Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, ed. Riḍā Marandī, Qumm, 1379 Sh./2000, p. 111; Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, ed. Maḥmūd ‘Abidī, Tehran, 1370 Sh./1991, p. 542).

5 For example, in couplets 8 and 9 there is an internal rhyme in *-amma* (repeated 4 times); in couplet 10 the phrase *al-qalam al-nūrānī al-jārī* in the first sentence is mirrored precisely by *al-naḥas al-raḥmānī al-sārī* in the second.

hand, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing (found in the *khuṭbas* of his works) we notice a very regular rhyming pattern in couplets (AA, BB, CC etc) that seems to be invariable: as one example among many, the lengthy *khuṭba* and the whole of chapter 1 of the *Futūḥāt* exhibit this pattern, without ever resorting to internal rhymes or the use of the *nisba* as a rhyme. We might add that in general terms, rhymed prose, which appears at the beginning of a text or in prayer or in an account of a theophanic experience, may be regarded as an intermediary style between poetry and prose: it is thus connected to inspiration and the imaginal realm (*khayāl*) between the realms of synthetic intuition (poetry) and of analytical detailing (prose), bringing together the apparent opposites and acting as a bridge between the forms of expression.⁶

As regards terminology, we have already mentioned that in Ibn ‘Arabī’s works there are only two or three examples of the phrase *al-fayḍ al-aqdas*, although the term was used much more frequently by later authors, and none of the contrast between *al-fayḍ al-aqdas* and *al-fayḍ al-muqaddas* (which appears in the Blessing-prayer in I/11). We also find only a single mention of *al-ta‘ayyun* (‘individuation’) in the *Futūḥāt*⁷, another term that was given prominence by al-Qūnawī and others (and appears in the Blessing-prayer in I/1): this specific noun is a later akbarian development, although it is based on the fundamental word *‘ayn* which is often used by Ibn ‘Arabī, along with its verbal form V (*ta‘ayyana*). In addition, there are several words or phrases in the Blessing-prayer which rarely appear in Ibn ‘Arabī, but feature prominently in the writings of ‘Abd Allāh al-Būsnawī (Bosnevi, d. 1054/1644), i.e. one century before al-Nābulusi’s time: for example, ‘the domains of the Five Presences’ (*‘awālim al-ḥaḍarāt al-khams*) and ‘the high Letters’ (*al-ḥurūf al-‘āliyāt*). Stylistically, the proliferation of the *nisba* qualification, even in the rhyming of certain couplets (as in *‘ubūdiyya/rubūbiyya, imkāniyya/wujūbiyya* in I/8a and b), is a later

6 The word *sajf* suggests, in its root meaning, pursuing an aim or path, and the cooing of a pigeon which is uniform and repeated in its utterance, and therefore the pattern of a rhyme without fixed measure. It also evokes following the path of the two-sided nature of the circle, each side mirroring the other. For more on the principle of poetry and its distinctiveness from prose, see Claude Addas, ‘The Ship of Stone’, *JMIAS* 19 (1996), pp. 5–24.

7 *Fut.* I.44.

feature not found so prominently in earlier Arabic.⁸ This should not be viewed as a later ‘loose’ development foreign to the Arabic language, but on the contrary, can be seen among akbarian authors as a sophisticated expression of the doctrine of the Names as ‘relationships’ (*nisab*). There is also a highly significant symbolic connection in numerical terms, since the formula *-iy[y]ah* may be treated either as 1 + 5 (=6), thus as a symbol of the secret of the *hā’* which contains a *wāw*, or simply as 5, the value of *hā’* and *nūn* (as found, for example, in Bosnevi’s poem in *tā’* in his *Qurrat ‘ayn al-shuhūd* – see below).

We also note the use, rarely found in Ibn ‘Arabī, of multiple adjectival structures in the prayer (for example, *al-fayḍ al-aqdas al-dhātī* and *al-fayḍ al-muqaddas al-ṣifātī* in I/11a and b) and the repeated use of three elements of *idāfa* (for example, *maṭla‘ shams al-dhāt* and *manba‘ nūr al-idāfāt* in I/12a and b) or even four elements (as in *rāḥimi sā’ilī isti‘dādātī-hā* in I/3b). Such features are, however, commonly found in Abdullah Bosnevi’s writing. In this chapter we will show the connection of this prayer to Bosnevi in terms of language and structure, drawing on multiple examples from his shorter treatises as well as his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.

Known simply as ‘Abdī Afandī (‘Mr Servant’, a name that combines both servanthood and lordship since Afandī is a traditional honorific for a master or gentleman), Bosnevi signs himself simply as: *al-faqīr ‘Abd Allāh al-Rūmī al-Būsnawī*.⁹ This name seems to us to be a very deliberate choice, pointing to the way in which he saw himself, firstly as ‘the poor one’ who is nothing but a servant, one who aspires to be and in reality is nothing but the true servant of the all-embracing Name, Allāh. Secondly, in referring to himself as ‘al-Rūmī’, Bosnevi not only indicates his connection to the physical land of the previously Byzantine territory but also to the spiritual ‘people’ (*ahl*) of Rūm, including Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn (popularly known as Rūmī despite his Balkhī origin), on whose

⁸ Note that in the Qur’ān there are hardly any examples of this feminine *nisba* ending (e.g. *raḥbāniyya*).

⁹ Chester Beatty MS 3474, fol. 514a, the holograph of Bosnevi’s Arabic commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Arabī, specifically dated *yawm al-‘Arafa* 1024/1615. As in other cases, this dating may well be significant in itself, since ‘Arafa is related to ‘direct knowledge’ (*ma‘rifā*), and the total comes to 2 (= *yawm*) + 25 (= *al-‘Arafat*), alluding to the 27 chapters of the *Fuṣūṣ*. The phrase ‘Abdī Afandī alludes to the Perfect Human through its *abjad* value (=86+145=5+1=6). His date of birth is not known, but if we consider the value of *al-faqīr* ‘Abd Allāh al-Būsnawī (421+142+405), it provides a possible dating of 968/1561.

Mathnawī he is said to have written a commentary, though it is lost.¹⁰ By calling himself ‘al-Būsnawī’ he not only indicates his physical origin in modern-day Bosnia, but also situates himself as a ‘Westerner’ within the Ottoman empire (in the same way that Ibn ‘Arabī was an Andalusian from the west of the Islamic world).¹¹ From a modern perspective, as a resident of Istanbul/Constantinople, Bosnevi might also be regarded as a ‘bridge’ between the West and the East. He spent most of his life in Anatolia, both in Bursa and Constantinople, and had an extremely close affinity with Ibn ‘Arabī and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (in accordance with his wishes, he was buried next to the latter’s tomb in Konya). He also made an extended journey to the Ḥijāz, Egypt and Syria between 1046/1636 and 1050/1641, spending a period of time in Damascus, near Ibn ‘Arabī’s tomb in the Ṣālihiyya district. There are few details about his life, and the little that is known comes mainly from the information he gives in his works in relation to visions and dreams.¹² He never provides biographical information as such, as if it is not really relevant to what he wishes to impart: the essential nature of his communications relates to insight and unveiling (*kashf*) connected to verses or suras of the Qur’ān and to Ibn ‘Arabī’s inspired works. It seems that he wished to erase himself in any personal sense in favour of pure servanthood, as expressed in his choice of the pen-name ‘Abdi (‘servant’). Bosnevi was best known for his superlative commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which he wrote in both Ottoman Turkish and Arabic and which was regarded

10 We may note that a lengthy commentary on the *Mathnawī* was written by one of Bosnevi’s Bayrāmī-Malāmī contemporary companions, Sari Abdullah, entitled *Jawāhir-i bawāhir-i Mathnawī* (‘The Dazzling Jewels of the Mathnawī’, holograph copy in Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed MS 740). Sari Abdullah signs his name in a similar way as ‘Abd Allāh b. al-sayyid Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh, but also as al-Qusṭanṭīnī (Constantinople) by birth and residence (*mawlidān wa-mawṭinan*), al-Bayrāmī by spiritual affiliation (*ṭariqatan*, subsequently also al-Jalwātī). The work was composed originally on Friday 28 Rabi’ al-awwal 1041/24 October 1631, which he copied out in his best hand and completed on the last Friday of Shawwāl 1050/8 February 1641. What is particularly interesting is the awareness of number and the shared terminology that Sari Abdullah displays: he discusses typical Sufi concepts such as the 5 Presences (fol. 4a), the Greatest Name (fol. 15a) and the Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*, fol. 58a). The connection of the 6 Books of the *Mathnawī* to the 6 days of the week (fol. 31a), which is implied in the wording of the title (*jawāhir + bawāhir = 17+16=33=6*), is also reflected in the dating: Friday is the 6th day, *yawm al-jumu’at* equals 33=6, and the year 1041 equals 6. The second date of copying is also significant: the expression *jumu’at ākhir Shawwāl al-mukarram* equals 60 (=6) and the year 1050 (= 6). Furthermore, the oneness of the ‘inclusive’ day (*jumu’a* from *jam*) is found in the date (28=1) and the month (Rabi’ al-awwal = 28).

11 We might wonder whether this would imply a link to the symbolical function of ‘the sun that rises in the West’ (*shams al-Maghrib*), as explained by Ibn ‘Arabī himself in his ‘*Anqā’ mughrīb*, for example.

12 On his connection to the Bayrāmī-Malāmī order (to which the later Nūr al-‘Arabī also belonged) and his own shaykh, see the article on al-Būsnawī by Stephen Hirtenstein in *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, vol. 5, pp. 230–39.

by Ḥājji Khalīfa as ‘a very good commentary, perhaps even the best of all’. However, he also wrote over 45 other treatises, all of which show features similar to the Blessing-prayer. In particular, apart from his *Fuṣūṣ* commentary in Arabic, we shall look at five other works that are closely related in both style and content to the Blessing-prayer, and which have provided specific insights we have taken into consideration for our critical edition and translation of the text:

1. *Qurrat ‘ayn al-shuhūd wa-mir’āt ‘arā’is ma‘ānī l-ghayb wa-l-jūd* (‘The Freshness of the Eye of Witnessing and the Mirror of the Bridal Beds of Meanings of the Unseen and the Generosity’), a commentary on the *Tā’iyya* (poem in the letter *tā’*, in this case always from *tā’ marbūṭa*) attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī;¹³
2. *Khal‘ al-na‘layn fī l-wuṣūl ilā ḥaḍrat al-jam‘ayn* (‘The Removing of the Sandals on arriving at the Presence of the two Unions’);¹⁴
3. *K. al-Ghafr al-muṭlaq ‘inda dhahāb ‘ālam al-farq* (‘The Unlimited Covering when the World of Separation departs’);¹⁵
4. *K. Rūḥ al-mutāba‘a fī bayān shurūṭ al-mubāya‘a* (‘The Spirit of Following in explaining the Conditions of Swearing Allegiance’);¹⁶
5. *K. Sirr al-fayḍ wa-l-‘aṣr/‘uṣr fī tafsīr Sūrat al-‘Aṣr* (‘The Secret of Effusion and Collection in the interpretation of the Sura of the Mid-Time’).¹⁷

What we wish to show in this chapter is the particular style and content that are found in these treatises of Bosnevi, and how they clearly relate to and illuminate the content and style of the Blessing-prayer. In terms of style, we have paid particular attention to the poetic rhymes of

13 Veliyuddin MS 1708, dated 1031H, fols. 1b–240b. We have also consulted the reliable critical edition, based on five manuscripts including one in the hand of the author, done by Amīn Yūsuf ‘Awda in Amman in 2015. The printed edition by Aḥmad Farīd Mazayadī (Beirut, 2010) misreads the title as ending in *wujūd*, and sadly has several errors in other parts including the *khuṭba*. The attribution of this *Tā’iyya* poem to Ibn ‘Arabī occurs in all the manuscripts that we have seen, the earliest of which is dated ca. 879/1474, i.e. over 200 years after Ibn ‘Arabī’s death, although it is not to be found in his *al-Diwan al-kabīr*. The rhyme appearing either as *tā’ marbūṭa* or as *-tī (tā’ + yā’)* always equals 5.

14 Carullah MS 2129, fols. 107a–114b.

15 Carullah MS 2129, fols. 120a–138b.

16 Carullah MS 2129, fols. 85a–88b.

17 Carullah MS 2129, fols. 99a–104b. We have already mentioned in Chapter 4 his *al-Qirā al-rūḥi al-mamdūd li-l-adyāf al-wāridin min marātib al-wujūd* (‘The Spiritual Hospitality extended to the guests that arrive from the degrees of Being’), Carullah MS 2129, fols. 1b–21a.

the prelude (*khuṭba*), which are always significant for the subject-matter, especially according to various subtle numerological considerations. As we have already shown, this interweaving of letter and number is also to be found in the poetry of Ibn ‘Arabī, as in the letter-poems of the *Futūḥāt*, some of which we have analysed as examples earlier. When we compare the above-mentioned texts by Bosnevi, especially their preludes in rhymed prose, with the Blessing-prayer of Effusion, there seems no doubt to us that the author of them all is the same. We provide here, for the first time in a Western language, a brief overview of each of these texts and a structural analysis of their *khuṭbas*.

Qurrat ‘ayn al-shuhūd wa-mir’āt ‘arā’is ma‘ānī l-ghayb wa-l-jūd

First of all, let us consider the *Qurrat ‘ayn al-shuhūd* text, which evokes the same central image of ‘the freshness of the eye’ in contemplation, and makes similar parallels involving the world of witnessing (*shuhūd*) and the divine generosity (*jūd*). This treatise is in certain ways very closely aligned in spirit and structure to the Blessing-prayer.

The primary subject of the treatise is the *Tā’iyya* poem attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī, on which Bosnevi has composed a line-by-line commentary. In his lengthy introduction Bosnevi begins with a rhyming *khuṭba* in *-ān* (*alif + nūn*, 1+5), and then outlines nine ‘spheres’ (*aflāk*), each devoted to a metaphysical level or presence (see below for the special relationship between the 5 and the 9). In the 9th sphere, to which he devotes a supplementary section (*takmila*), he gives a detailed description and analysis of the source of inspiration for his work: he refers to the famous 4-line poem that begins Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, ‘Would that my heart knew... (*layta shi‘rī...*)’, and he quotes this in full along with the interchange with the mysterious ‘maiden of Rūm’,¹⁸ who appeared at the time Ibn ‘Arabī extemporised these verses at the Ka‘ba, and who named herself *Qurrat al-‘Ayn* (literally, ‘the Freshness of the Eye’).

.....
18 Ar: *jāriya min banāt al-Rūm*, literally ‘a maiden from among the women of Rūm’. The term *jāriya* also suggests a special benefit or blessing bestowed by God. See Pablo Beneito, ‘Qurrat al-‘Ayn, the Maiden of the Ka‘ba’ (*Religions* 12: 158. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12030158>).



The opening page of *Qurrat ‘ayn al-shuhūd* in the author’s hand: Veliyuddin MS 1708, fol. 1b, and Leiden MS 312, fol. 1b

In an allusive passage Bosnevi, no doubt conscious of his Rūmī connection to this maiden, adds his own commentary on these four lines as an inspired parallel to *Qurrat al-Ayn*’s comments, as well as suggesting that his own commentary on the 436-verse *Tā’iyya* parallels the later prose commentary made by Ibn ‘Arabī on the *Tarjumān* poems, known as *Dhakhā’ir al-a’lāq*.¹⁹ Bosnevi makes a special point of ascribing his inspiration to the same source as Ibn ‘Arabī, i.e. *Qurrat al-Ayn* herself, whom he treats as the image of the spirit that inspires commentary upon mystical poetry, or the one who gives birth to prose commentary on poetry:

¹⁹ In both cases the prose commentaries were prompted by the request of their companions.

My view of this young maiden, who is the image of Muhammadian Sainthood and the all-inclusiveness of the divine Names, who reveals herself in the places of manifestation of the perfect ones among the people of Rûm²⁰, is that she is the place (*maḥall*) of divine sciences and sublime places of spiritual observation – or rather, that he [Ibn ‘Arabī] contemplated in her mirror the image of Muhammadian Sainthood and the form of the divine sciences which he included in his own writings. Thus he inspired the formulation of the copy of the commentary on this *qaṣīda*, which includes the divine sciences and secrets of knowledge that he wanted to bring about in a complete place of manifestation and an all-inclusive Muhammadian heart, through the tongue of ‘the son of her maternal uncle’ (*Ibn Khālī-hā*), who is the commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

He [Ibn ‘Arabī] said: ‘O daughter of the maternal aunt’ (*Bint al-Khāla*)²¹, because this *qaṣīda* is the sister of the *Fuṣūṣ*. So this copy has been born from that *qaṣīda*, which is the ‘aunt’ of its commentary, because even if it is Rūmiyya in terms of place of origin (*mansha*), beautiful appearance (*ḥusn*) and good manners (*adab*), it is Arabic by ultimate origin (*aṣl*), noble lineage (*maḥtid*) and genealogy (*nasab*). The ‘maternal aunt’ (*al-khālat*) is 1031 numerically (600+1+30+400, not counting the *al-*).²²

.....
20 The ‘people of Rûm’ might be taken to refer to Christian or Muslim mystics in Anatolia (Rûm) with a connection to Mary, mother of Jesus, who was buried according to tradition near Ephesus in what is now western Turkey.

21 Ibn ‘Arabī hails this woman as *bint al-khāla* (‘daughter of the maternal aunt’), since she is an imaginal figure from the presence of imagination (*ḥaḍrat al-khayāl*, related to *khāla*), and she is related to inspiration. Bosnevi here makes an implicit linkage between prose as masculine (‘uncle’) and poetry as feminine (‘aunt’), so that his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* is the ‘son of her uncle’, or is ‘born’ from the inspiration linked to prose, while Qurrat al-‘Ayn herself is the spirit that inspires comments on the *Tarjūmān* poem and also on the *Tā’iyya*, making the relationship between the poem and its inspired commentary one of indirect consanguinity (‘aunt’). Bosnevi is, therefore, suggesting that ultimately Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary on the *Tarjūmān* and his own commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* are related sources of inspiration for his commentary on the *Tā’iyya*.

22 Note that the author here gives the value of *tā’ marbūṭa* as 400, as Ibn ‘Arabī also does occasionally. In the text Bosnevi explains that he considers the *alif* and *lām* of the article as added letters that substitute for the *tanwīn* (or indefiniteness), so that *al-khāla* (‘the aunt’) becomes equivalent to *khālat* (‘an aunt’).

Then [Ibn ‘Arabī] asked her: ‘What is your name?’ – meaning, what is the sign²³ of your appearance? She replied [to him]: ‘Qurrat al-‘Ayn’, which has a numerical value of 1030 (100+200+200+400+70+10+50)²⁴, ... and this is the date of the first draft (*taswīd*, lit. ‘writing in black’) of this commentary [on the *Tā’iyya*].

Given that 1031 is the numerical value of Qurrat al-‘Ayn’s ‘mother’ (*khālat*), Bosnevi adds: ‘the resulting 1031 is the date of the completion and writing-out (*tabyīd*, lit. ‘writing in white’) of this commentary.’²⁵ Having depicted the relationship of the *Fuṣūṣ* and Bosnevi’s commentary to the *Tā’iyya* and its commentary in terms of family relationships, he goes on to explain:

That is to say, she described ‘the sign of my appearance’ (i.e. her name) in the total form of complete perfection and the ‘mark of my manifesting’ (i.e. her genealogy) in the sealing form of human being, since this commentary only came about on the date 1030, and it was completed and clearly written out in the year 1031. It is because of this correspondence (*munāsaba*) that I have entitled [this treatise] with her name [Qurrat al-‘Ayn].²⁶

In his introduction Bosnevi also brings out the very important principle of ‘the Complete Mirror’ (*al-mir’āt al-tāmma*). This is reflected in the Blessing-prayer in many different ways, such as the mirroring of sentences in the couplets, the mirroring of couplets within a section or the emphasis on the mirror-letters, and in the following passage the mirror is described in terms of its universal manifestation:

.....
23 Ar: ‘*alāma*, meaning the mark or sign by which someone is known.

24 Note that the author is counting the repetition of the letter *rā’* and also omitting the definite article as in the title of his work (*Qurrat ‘ayn [al-shuhūd]*).

25 It seems that writing a rough draft ‘in black’ and writing a final copy ‘in white’ is mentioned to reflect the esoteric principle that the world of the unseen (*ghayb*, ‘black’) has precedence over the world of the manifest (*shuhūd*, ‘white’).

26 Shehit Ali 1226, fol. 11b. *Qurrat*, ed. ‘Awda, 86–87.

The order of revelation (*tajallī*) never ceases to be in manifestation, and the order of clarity and clarification (*al-jalā' wa-l-istijlā'*) is never cut off,²⁷ in the unveiling [of God's Face] to the universal mission (*ba'tha*) of Muhammad and the total unitive form (*ṣūra*), which is the Complete Mirror [that is] in total facing and correspondence to the divine Form and the essential Unity of Uniqueness – which is the divine Intention from this descent and the Lordly aim behind the world of detailing (*tafṣīl*), because through this is obtained the divine Display (*'arḍ*), which is the perfection and completion of clarity and clarification...²⁸

This imagery goes back to a famous passage in Ibn 'Arabi's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which speaks of the created universe as an unpolished mirror with all the potential to receive the divine Effusion: 'the order required the polishing of the mirror of the world and Adam was the very clarity of that mirror and the spirit of that form'.²⁹ In one sense the principle of *tajallī* is universal, and there is nothing else in manifestation apart from it, but the sheer clarity of this is veiled from ordinary human perception. So from the perspective of the human being, there is a need for 'clarification', or polishing the mirror of the heart, which allows consciousness to realise the full extent and radiance of the disclosure. The other notable feature of this passage is that the Complete Mirror (*mir'āt*), the 'total unitive form' (*ṣūra*) and the 'universal mission' (*ba'tha*) are all feminine terms. This is another way of expressing the central imagery of the Universal Soul (*naḥs*, fem.) that is impregnated by the Universal Intellect (*'aql*, masc.), so that the world of existence is seen as the children of their union.³⁰ As we have remarked earlier, in akbarian

27 These two terms, *istijlā'* and *jalā'*, which occur frequently in Bosnevi's writings, are glossed in *Laṭā'if al-i'lām* (65) as: 'the manifesting of the Most Holy Essence for Itself in Its individuations which are called "other" [than God]', and 'Its manifesting for Itself in Its sanctified Essence', respectively.

28 Shehit Ali 1226, fol. 2a. *Qurrat*, ed. 'Awda, 55 (who reads *gharaḍ* here, involving an unnecessary repetition). We may note that the abjad value of 'the Complete Mirror' (*al-mir'āt al-tāmmat*) is 36 (=9), the number of the attestations of *tawḥīd* (as in *faṣl* 9 in ch. 198 of the *Futūḥāt*). This 9-ness is also found in the three key terms *ba'that*, *ṣūrah* and *'arḍ* (18=9).

29 Chapter of Adam, *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kılıç, 27.

30 We have tried to reflect this sensitivity to the gender relation of words and their meanings by marking the titles given to the Reality of Muhammad in the two parts of each couplet in the Blessing-prayer as masculine (m) or feminine (f).

teaching the receiver or receptacle is inherently pure and clear, and does not interpose itself as anything other than the Self-disclosure of Reality.³¹

The way in which Bosnevi relates the numerical value of names to dates shows his deep awareness of number and his way of working with them, something that is not often made explicit in his writing but features throughout his work. After describing the inspiration behind his commentary and before going into the commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tā’iyya* itself,³² Bosnevi appends his own 51-verse *Tā’iyya* poem, an untitled *qaṣīda* which acts as a bridge or isthmus (*barzakh*) between the introduction and the *Tā’iyya* commentary.³³ This poem, which follows exactly the same metre and numerical rhyming pattern as Ibn ‘Arabī’s, is like a summary version of it, echoing many of the same words and phrases. It could be argued that the fact that Bosnevi does not give any explanation of the authorship of this extra poem subtly alludes to an implicit parallel that he is drawing between his *Tā’iyya* and Ibn ‘Arabī’s 4-line *Tarjumān* poem (as related to Qurrat al-‘Ayn), on the one hand, and between his commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tā’iyya* and the *Dhakhā’ir al-a’lāq*, on the other, as well as to the parallel between his line-by-line commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tā’iyya* and his line-by-line commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which he had completed some years before. Bosnevi neither claims to be the author nor does he explain the function of this 51-verse *qaṣīda*. This is equally the case in the 4-line poem that introduces the *Tarjumān*, which is quoted in full in this treatise, where Ibn ‘Arabī specifies: ‘these verses presented themselves to me (*ḥaḍarat-nī*), and so

31 ‘So the whole affair is from Him, both its beginning and its end, and to Him the whole affair returns (Q 11:123), just as it begins with Him’ (*Fuṣūṣ*, 27).

32 In the critical edition of Bosnevi’s text (ed. ‘Awda, pp. 91–468), the number of verses of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tā’iyya* is 436 (=13, the number of the name *wāw*, which equals 4, the value of both *mīm* and *tā*). This is also, and most significantly, the value of the word *tā’iyyah* itself (400+1+10+10+5, which combines the two values 400 and 5 of the *tā’ marbūṭa*), suggesting that this word should be understood as the title of the *qaṣīda*. We may compare this with Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Tā’iyya* which has 761 verses (7+6+1=14=5, also the value of *tā’ marbūṭa*).

33 In this *qaṣīda* every verse shows a 5:5 rhyming relationship in the two hemistiches: the end rhyme is *tā’ marbūṭa* in its value of 5 or *-tī*, while the first hemistich sometimes has various alternative equivalent combinations that make up 5 (such as *-dā*, =4+1, or *-jib*, =3+2). We also note that the central line of this poem (verse 26) divides the whole into two equal parts of 25 verses each (=50 hemistiches=*nūn*): its first hemistich completes the initial 51 hemistiches, while its second hemistich begins the final 51 (=6=*wāw*). It reads: ‘so all that [mentioned before] is a complete description [of the perfect human form] within your being; and this [that follows] is without doubt the mystery of the fermentation of [Adamic] clay’ (fol. 12a; *Qurrat*, ed. ‘Awda, 89). This fulcrum or *barzakh* aspect of verse 26 expresses the link between two mirroring parts of the poem, the first referring to the Five Presences and the form of the Muhammadian Reality and the second to the mystery of the Adamic Form.

I started reciting them...³⁴ Just as Ibn ‘Arabī did not claim to be the ‘author’ of the 4 verses connected to Qurrat al-‘Ayn and to the Ka‘ba, nor did he explicitly reveal their function in the preface to the *Tarjumān*, in a similar way Bosnevi veils the ‘authorship’ of this 51-verse *Tā’iyya*, allusively suggesting that it has been inspired by, or in the same way as, the 4 verses, i. e. by the inspiring mediation and spiritual presence of Qurrat al-‘Ayn, who is no other than the epiphany of ‘witnessing’ (*shuhūd*). Precisely the same ‘concealment’ of authorship is to be found in the Blessing-prayer of Effusion.

The rhyming form is extremely significant for our purposes here. The overall rhyme in both *Tā’iyyas*, like that in Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s original,³⁵ is *-atī* ($4+1=5$), which is found in the poem as either *tā’ + yā’* (*ḥaḍratī*, *naẓratī*) or directly as a *tā’ marbūṭa* (*‘usrat[ī]*, *shubhat[ī]*). The letter *tā’ marbūṭa* (ة), which is not commonly used in earlier Arabic as a rhyming letter, has two numerical values and several interconnected meanings, and is particularly significant in Bosnevi’s writings. These two numerical values are expressed in the two dates ($1030=4$ and $1031=5$) that Bosnevi considers providential in the composition of his treatise. First of all, as a *tā’* it equals 400 ($=4$), and this fourness has a special connection to 10 ($=1+2+3+4=10$), which is reduced to 1.³⁶ Secondly, inasmuch as it is spoken and written in the form of a *hā’*, it equals 5 (the letter *hā’* of the *huwiyya*, He-ness). At the phonic level, the *tā’ marbūṭa* at the end of a word is articulated in pausal form as a *hā’* (for example, *Makkah*, not *Makkat*). The 5 is also the value of the name of the letter *tā’* ($4+1$), and if the definite article is added (*al-tā’*), it may be considered as 9. So the *tā’ marbūṭa* may be regarded as 4 or 5 or 9, indicating that the 4 (as in the four directions) is ‘tied’ (*marbūṭ*) to the 5 (*huwiyya*, He-ness), and that the number 5 is also ‘tied’ to 1 and 9.

34 *The Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, ed. Nicholson, p. 14. See Pablo Beneito, ‘Qurrat al-‘Ayn, the Maiden of the Ka‘ba’ (*Religions* 12: 158. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12030158>).

35 There seems no doubt that the *Tā’iyya* attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī is modelled in form on the very famous Sufi ode *al-Tā’iyya al-kubrā* (known as *Naẓm al-sulūk*) by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and in turn Bosnevi’s is modelled on Ibn ‘Arabī’s. This form of Sufi poetic writing, based on geometrical symbolism and akbarian terminology, is also found in the long *tā’iyya* poem in *tā’* (or *-āt*, not *tā’ marbūṭa*) by the Egyptian Khalwati shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Gulshānī (d. 940/1533) (see Topkapı Revan MS 709, fols. 1b–70a).

36 We may note that *al-fayḍ* $=4+9=13$ (the value of *ahad*) $=4$ (the value of *tā’*).

This meditation on the relation of 1 to 9 mediated by 5, which is implied in the *tā' marbūṭa*, can be found particularly in Bosnevi's explanation of the nine 'spheres': each high 'sphere' (*ḥalāk*) has a reflection in a 'low' sphere, a structural aspect which is not made explicit in the treatise but is clearly implicit in consideration of the mirror analogy. For example, the first section on the Absolute Unseen (*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*) and Non-Individuation (*lā ta'ayyun*) is reflected in the ninth section on Affirmation/Realisation of Unity (*tawḥīd*) in manifestation, which includes all the other spheres; the second sphere of the First Individuation (*al-ta'ayyun al-awwal*) is reflected in the eighth sphere of transcendence (*tanzīh*); and so on. The middle place belongs to the fifth sphere, which is an all-inclusive *barzakh* (isthmus), devoted to the Muhammadian Reality, and articulates the Five Presences.

Sphere (<i>falak</i>)			
1.	Absolute Unseen (<i>al-ghayb al-muṭlaq</i> , [<i>ghayn</i> =1]) Non-Individuation (<i>lā ta'ayyun</i>) Essential Unity (<i>al-waḥda al-dhātiyya</i>)	9.	Affirmation/Realisation of Unity (<i>al-tawḥīd</i> =9)
2.	First Individuation (<i>al-ta'ayyun al-awwal</i>)	8.	Transcendence (<i>al-tanzīh</i> =8)
3.	Cloud (' <i>āmā</i> ' =3) Uniqueness (<i>aḥadiyya</i>)	7.	Human Journeying (<i>al-sayr al-insānī</i> [<i>insānī</i> =7]) to the World of the Unseen (<i>al-ghayb</i>), the Presence of Unity (<i>wāḥidiyya</i> =7) and Uniqueness (<i>aḥadiyya</i>), and the Presence of the Cloud (' <i>āmā</i> ')
4.	Divinity (<i>ulūhiyya</i>) Presence of the Divine Names (<i>ḥaḍrat al-asmā' al- ilāhiyya</i> , <i>al-asmā'</i> =4) Presence of Necessity (<i>ḥaḍrat al-wujūb</i>)	6.	Divine Descent (<i>al- tanazzul al-ilāhī</i>) His Bringing into being of the world of Possibility (<i>ījādu-hu</i> [=6] ' <i>ālam al- imkān</i>)
5	The Muhammadian Perfect Universal Reality (<i>al-ḥaqīqa al-kulliyya al-kāmila al-Muḥammadiyya</i> , where <i>al-ḥaqīqah al-Muḥam[m]adiy[y]ah</i> =5)		

We may note that the reflection on the centrality of the number 5 as 'the arithmetic mean'³⁷ and its doubling to make 10 (=1) is also contemplated in the mirroring of 1+9 (=10), 2+8 (=10), 3+7 (=10) etc. This can be represented schematically as:

³⁷ See Iamblichus, *The Theology of Arithmetic*, pp.65–66. The Greeks represented this reflection on the number 5 as the arithmetic mean in a different manner:

1	4	7
2	5	8
3	6	9

Descent	1	2	3	4	5	
	9	8	7	6	5	Return
	10	10	10	10	10	

While the individual digits 1–9 were known to sum up to 45, Sufi authors linked this specifically to the Human Being (Ādam = 1+4+40). The above conception representing descent and return totals 50, the value of the *nūn* (conceived as a full circle) and the value of *al-ḥaqīqah al-Muḥam[m]adiyah[y]ah* (=20+30=50).³⁸ The value 1 of each column means that in effect there are only 5 ‘unitary’ Presences, with the Presence of the Muhammadian Reality acting as both the final in descent and the first in return and ascent.

We may also represent the numbers according to a full double sequence:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	=45
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	

As can be seen, the 1 with the 9 gives 10 = 1, the 2 with the 8 ... But the central figure, the 5, which is the number of the letter *hā'* symbolising the divine Ipseity, and of the letter *nūn*, which symbolises the two planes of Reality (interior and exterior), is the only one that reflects itself or adds to itself, resulting in Unity.

Here, however, the ‘nine spheres’ are conceived not as a linear sequence, but as a fivefold circling of effusion and return, where the fifth is what Bosnevi calls ‘the all-encompassing circumference’. Bosnevi discusses this fifth sphere as follows:

Know that the Muhammadian Reality has [five] eternal divine degrees: the first is the presence of the Cloud, since it is within the Cloud that the forms of the Names manifest; the second is the level of the First Individuation; the third is the presence of Divinity; the fourth is the First Intellect; and the fifth is the

.....
38 The final letter *hā'* may be counted as either 5 or 4 as both values of the *tā'* *marbūṭa* are permitted.

Muhammadian perfect human form. Through these levels this Reality brings together all the necessary divine Names that are active and manifest their effects, on the one hand, and all the possible places of created manifestation that are passive and receive their effects, on the other. The Real, exalted is He, by virtue of His Compassionate Breath and the Self-revelation of Being which is unfolded universally, becomes manifest through the forms of all the divine Names and the forms of all the places of created manifestation, and is revealed in every place of appearance in accordance with it and speaks with its tongue. Likewise, our master Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, by virtue of his total all-inclusive reality becomes manifest and individuated within every form in accordance with it and speaks with its tongue, because nothing has a form outside the all-encompassing circumference (*iḥāṭa*) of his reality. In the same way, the Perfect Muhammadian Human Being, who has been raised up to the presence of the Cloud and is individuated within It, and manifests in all the sublime images of the Names and all the lowly forms of manifestation, is speaking with the tongues of all these forms, be they images of divine Names or forms of created possibilities.³⁹

This passage presents Bosnevi's very special approach to the Five Presences, which he views as 'degrees' or 'levels' (*marātib*) within the Reality of Muhammad. As the Blessing-prayer (I/3) puts it, the Reality of Muhammad is 'the Recorder of the domains of the Five Presences within his being'.

From another perspective, in his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, he speaks of these Presences in a more traditional manner in terms of the Invisible, Spirit, Unlimited Images, Limited Images and Sensory worlds, adding that: 'The Presence of unitive Human Perfection integrates all these five Presences, and is the fruit of all of them. Hence the degree of complete Human Being is the sixth Presence.' Just as the number 6 (which we have seen stands for the *wāw* and *al-insān al-kāmil*) contains

.....
39 Shehit Ali 1226, fol. 5a. *Qurrat*, ed. 'Awda, 65–6.

the number 5 within itself ($6=5+1$), so too does the Muhammadian Reality contain five presences within Itself.

But let us return to the particular pattern in the *Tā'iyya* poems of Ibn 'Arabī and Bosnevi: not only is the rhyming letter of the second hemistich a *tā'* *marbūṭa* in both cases, but the first hemistich also ends in a letter or letters with a value of 5 (with very few exceptions). This produces a basic poetic structure of $5+5=10=1$. This is reflected in the metre *ṭawīl* ($=1$), which has 14 ($=5$) syllables in each hemistich, so that each line totals $28=10=1$.⁴⁰ This can be understood as a reference to the two halves of the *nūn* ($=5$) united as an expression of the ultimate Unity. The relationship of Unity (*alif*, Pen, 1) and Multiplicity (*nūn*, Inkwell, 5/50) is also expressed in the rhyming letters of the *khuṭba* of this treatise (*-ān*, $=1+5$) as well as in the total number (51) of verses in Bosnevi's *Tā'iyya*.⁴¹

The 5:5 rhyming structure of Bosnevi's *Tā'iyya* poem is not only found in that attributed to Ibn 'Arabī: it is also found in the Blessing-prayer, which equally reflects this mirroring relation of the Five Presences of divine descent and human journeying in return (see Appendix C and D). As we shall see, the Blessing-prayer itself can be understood, through its 9/*dād*-structure as well as through the doubled-*nūn* structure, as a contemplation on the Five Presences, where the Reality of Muhammad forms the axis of two movements or 'arcs': it can be no accident that the mention of the Prophet's ascension to the Lote-tree of the Extreme Limit (*al-muntahā* $=5$, in sentence 50 of the prayer, at the exact centre of 99) and his going beyond to the level of 'joining of the arcs or even closer' occurs precisely in the middle of the Blessing-prayer (I/24). On the basis of the very close similarity between this text and the Blessing-prayer, it even seems quite plausible to suggest that they not only have the same author but might even have been composed around the same time.

.....
40 The number 28 here is significant as the second 'perfect number' after 6, and as a symbol of all the degrees of Being. This 5:5 relation to 10 is also found in the sum of the numbers 1–10 ($1+2+3+...$), which equals 55 ($=10$).

41 Here we may think of 51 as 50 (*nūn*) linking or joining itself to 1 (*alif*), and/or as totalling 6, which is the numerical value of the word Ka'bat ($2+7+2+4=15=6$), as well as its six sides, and also the value of the name of the letter *hā'* $=5+1$, as well as the relationship of the 5 to the 6 in the name *Huwa* ($5+6$). Again the interrelationship between the numbers 4, 5 and 6 reflects our previous discussion of the letters *mīm*, *nūn* and *wāw*.

The similarity to the Blessing-prayer can equally be seen in the prelude (*khuṭba*) of the *Qurrat ‘ayn al-shuhūd* treatise, which starts with very similar rhyming terms in *alif-nūn* (for example, *imkān*, *akwān*, *‘irfān*, *furqān*, *raḥmān*), with extra rhyming pairs within the main sentences, and includes phrasing that appears throughout the Blessing-prayer.⁴² In the text itself we find the *ṣalāt* on the Prophet followed by the phrase ‘O Most Merciful of the Mercifiers’ (*yā arḥam al-rāḥimīn*), exactly as in the Blessing-prayer. However, it is in the numerical structure of the prelude that we can begin to see Bosnevi’s unique approach. There are two parts rhyming in *-ān*: the first has 18 rhymes (the value of *ḥayd*, which occurs several times in different forms) and the second has 7 (the value of *‘ayn*, the ‘eye’ of the title, and of *shuhūd*, the ‘witnessing’ of the title). Added together, these *-ān* rhymes total 25 (=7+18 = *‘ayn*). When we count the rhyme value (=6 = *-ān*) of all the lines together, we get $25 \times 6 = 150 = 6$ (the rhyme value again).

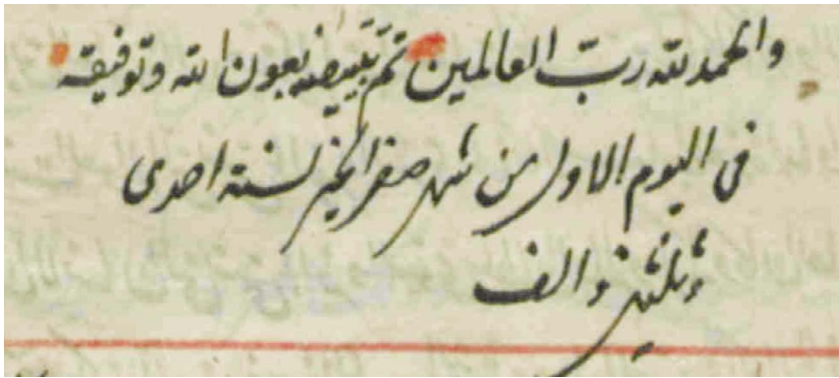
A second approach is to count the number of the total rhymes, including not only the major rhyme in *-ān* but also all the other rhymes. The first part contains 24 rhymes, ending with the word *insān* (=6, the value of the rhyme itself, *alif* + *nūn*, 1+5); and the second, which begins with the word *ṣalli* (=10=1), contains 19 rhymes (=1). The two parts together (24+19= 43=7) again reflect a 7-ness, found in the *‘ayn* (eye, =7) and *shuhūd* (witnessing, =16=7) mentioned in the title of the work.

A third approach is to consider the numerical value of the rhymes up to the mentioning of the name Muhammad: the rhymes in the first part are *-ān* (6) + *-ā* (1) + *-iyyah* (6) =13=4 (the value of the name *‘ayn*, 7+1+5=13=4); the rhymes in the second part are *-lī* (4) + *-s* (3) + *-ūn* (11) + *-ān* (6) + *-ūd* (10) =34=7 (the value of *shuhūd*, 1+5+6+4=16=7). These two parts together may again be understood to allude to two of the major terms in the title of the work *Qurrat ‘ayn al-shuhūd*.⁴³

42 For example, typical akbarian phrasing such as *al-ta‘ayyun al-awwal* or *al-isti‘ādā al-azālī min al-ḥayd al-aqdas*. Also, compare: *yaẓharu al-far‘ ‘an ṣūrat al-aṣl* (‘who made the branch appear from the form of the root’) with II/1 in the Blessing-prayer. Many other similar examples can be found in Bosnevi’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*: for example, the imagery of *minaṣṣa* (bridal beds) in the title of his *Sharḥ* and in I/26.

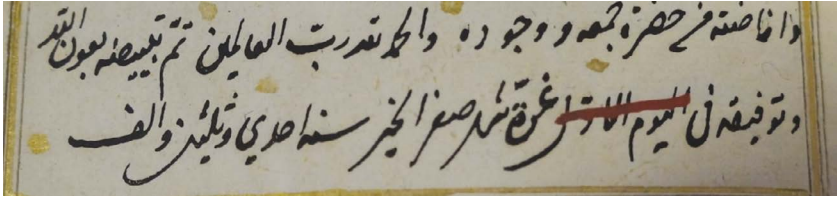
43 When we consider the first part of the title, the value is *Qurrat* (8) + *‘ayn* (13) + *al-shuhūd* (Eastern 22/Western 20), which equals either 43 (Eastern system, the number of the total rhyming sentences in the *khuṭba*) or 41 (=5, the value of the main rhyme-letter *nūn*). If we follow the Western system usually favoured by akbarians, the 20 sentences of the first part, which contains 20 rhymes in *nūn* (*-ān* / *-ūn*), correspond to *al-shuhūd* (=20, with the article *al-*). The eight sentences that rhyme differently (in *-lī*, *-s*, *-ūn* and *-ūd*) correspond to the *Qurrat* (=8). Overall, we can observe a six-fold interplay between *‘ayn al-shuhūd* (4+20=24=6) and the value of the rhyme *alif-nūn* (=6) as well as a recurrence of value 7, the value of the letter *‘ayn* and the word *shuhūd*.

There is one fascinating example of Bosnevi's method in the two holograph manuscripts of the *Qurrat 'ayn al-shuhūd*, which as far as we can tell were both written in the year 1031/1621 (where 1031=5, symbolising the *nūn*). In the Veliyuddin MS 1708 original, he gives the precise date as: 'on the first day of the month of Šafar the good' (*fi l-yawm al-awwal min shahr Šafar al-khayr*). In the beautifully written copy of this original made by Bosnevi himself (Leiden MS Or. 312), where he gives the same date presumably because of its symbolical significance, the words are written in the same way, but there is a distinctive red line through the words *al-yawm al-awwal* (so that they can still be read) and the word *min* (من) has been delicately amended and overwritten to read *ghurrat* (غرة), so that the expression comes to mean: 'at the very beginning of Šafar' (*fi ghurrat Šafar*).⁴⁴



The original dating in the author's hand: Veliyuddin MS 1708, fol. 240b

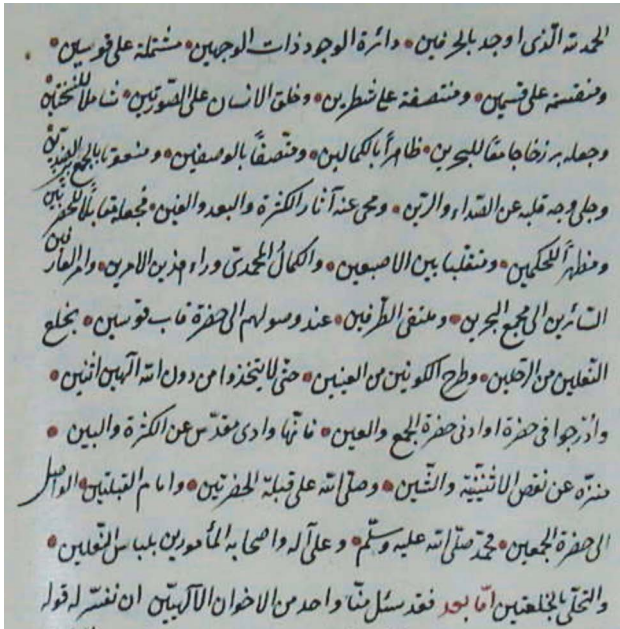
.....
44 This change also signifies that the Leiden copy was made subsequently, and other manuscripts do not have this alteration. *Ghurrat* not only means 'the first day' (and therefore the same as *al-yawm al-awwal*) but also 'the first brilliance of the new moon'. From a numerical perspective, we can observe that *al-yawm al-aw[w]al* and *Šafar al-khayr* both equal 29 (=2, Šafar being the second month of the lunar calendar). In addition, the 'first day' is mirrored in the value of *shahr Šafar al-khayr* (=37=1). The whole expression with *ghurrat shahr Šafar al-khayr* comes to 9, the number of sections in the first part of the treatise and suggesting the meaning of full manifestation and completion. See Ibn 'Arabi's use of the term for the time when he was told he was the Seal of Sainthood (*ghurrat al-shahr*, *Dīwān*, p. 332) and his discussion of the Prophet fasting for three days from the beginning (*ghurra*) of each month (*Fut.* I.639, hadith from Abū Dā'ūd 14:67, al-Tirmidhi 6:40, and al-Nasā'i 22:70).



The ‘corrected’ dating in the author’s hand: Leiden MS 312, fol. 251b

This highly significant change apparently reflects the author’s spontaneous realisation that his book on the *Qurrah* (=10=1, where the *qāf* =1) was finished in the rhyming word *Ghurrah* (=18=9, where the *ghayn* =9). Here we may note that the word *ghurrah* also occurs (in the meaning of ‘shining mark’) at the close of the Blessing-prayer, as a sealing just before the word *Āmīn*.

Khal‘ al-na‘layn fī l-wuṣūl ilā ḥaḍrat al-jam‘ ayn



The opening of *Khal‘ al-na‘layn* in Bosnevi’s hand, Carullah MS 2129 fol. 107b

The second text uses the Quranic image of ‘the removing of the two sandals’ associated with Moses at the Burning Bush, being addressed by God in the valley of Ṭuwā (Q 20:12) as well as with the popular tradition regarding the sandals of the Prophet Muhammad.⁴⁵ The treatise is a commentary on this verse of ‘the two sandals’, which Bosnevi identifies as the Book (*kitāb*) and the Sunna (fol. 5a): these two dimensions of revealed book – as a ‘descent’ – and prophetic model – as a mirroring ‘ascent’ – correspond to the two halves of the circle, which the traveller (*musāfir*) has to traverse, and they are needed until he reaches the closeness of ‘the holy valley Ṭuwā’,⁴⁶ where the two realms are re-integrated, or enfolded together: at this point he has to remove the sandals because all apparent ‘opposites’ are gone beyond in the self-disclosure (*tajallī*) of the central point. This meditation on two-ness being resolved in the face of Oneness begins with the *khuṭba*:

Praise be to God who brought into being (*awjada*) through the two letters (*ḥarfayn*)⁴⁷ the circle of existence which possesses two faces (*wajhayn*), which includes two arcs (*qawsayn*) and is divided into two sides (*qismayn*) and balanced in two halves (*shaṭrayn*); and who created the human being (Q 55:3) according to two forms (*ṣūratayn*), so that he includes the two transcripts (*nuskhatayn*); and who made him an isthmus uniting the two seas (*baḥrayn*), manifesting the two perfections (*kamālayn*), characterised by the two attributes (*waṣfayn*) and described as bringing together the two opposites (*ḍiddayn*)...⁴⁸

The first verb *awjada* has a numerical value of 14 (=5), the value of the rhyming letter of this prelude (*nūn*). It is made up of two sevens (*awjada* = *alif-wāw* = 7, + *jīm-dāl* = 7), implying the repeated seven verses of the Fātiḥa and indicating the seven (or seventy) levels of understanding the Quran in general and the particular verse that he discusses in the seven

45 For an overview of the way that the relics of the Prophet were treated in the various sources, see Tayeb al-Hibri, ‘The Abbasids and the Relics of the Prophet’, pp. 62–96; Sarah Mirza, ‘The People’s Hadith’, p. 32; and Joseph Meri, ‘Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam’, pp. 108–9.

46 The word Ṭuwā comes from a root suggesting ‘folding’ or ‘doubling’, alluding to the mirroring union of opposites.

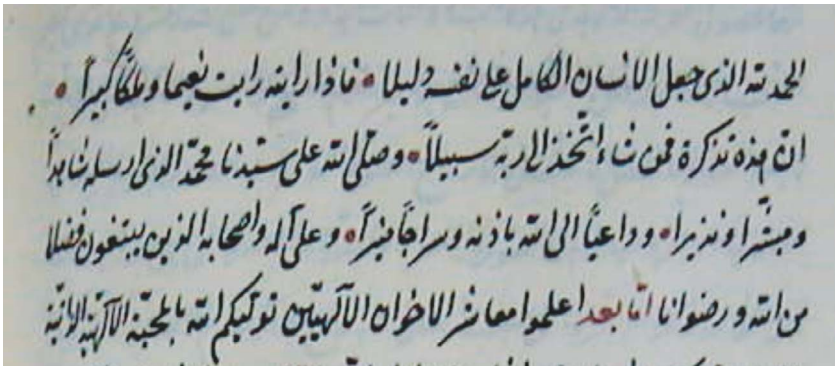
47 Primarily ‘the two letters’ refers to the *kāf* and *nūn* of *kun* (‘Be’). But it can also be understood as the two *nūns*, one non-manifest and one manifest, or the *alif* of the Pen and the *nūn* of the Inkwell.

48 Carullah MS 2129, fol. 107b.

sections of the treatise. Seven is also the value of *ḥamd* ('praise', =16=7)⁴⁹ and of the word 'seven' itself (*sab'at*, =16=7), and in this *khuṭba* there are precisely seven verbs within the praise depicting seven divine actions. In addition, there are 16 (=7) couplets rhyming in *-ayn* including the closing *ṣalāt* on the Prophet, which makes a total of 32 lines (= 5, the value of the rhyme letter *nūn*). Furthermore, the value of the full rhyme is the dual form (*-ayn*, =1+5=6), referring to the *wāw* which symbolises the Perfect Human Being uniting the two sides of being.

In the Blessing-prayer this two-ness is reflected in the mirroring of the two sentences within each couplet, and the seven-fold way of interpreting the Quran is found mirrored in the first and second halves of the prayer, which are made up of 49 sentences (7x7) each, with sentence 50 as the fulcrum between the two sides (see the *Dād* structure). Furthermore, in the *Nūn* structure, the first section of 25 couplets can be viewed as a seven(ty) in itself, as *kāf* (=20) + *nūn* (=50).⁵⁰

K. al-Ghafr al-muṭlaq 'inda dhahāb 'ālam al-farq



The opening of *al-Ghafr al-muṭlaq* in Bosnevi's hand, Carullah MS 2129 fol. 118b

The third text, on 'the Unlimited Covering' (*al-ghafr al-muṭlaq*), discusses how the two-ness of separation disappears within the oneness of His Covering Veil. Here 'covering' (*ghafr*) is understood as a way of

49 Note that the initial word *al-ḥamd* (with the article 'the') equals 20, the value of the name Muḥammad. See also the *muqaddima* of the *Awṛād al-usbū'* (*Prayers for the Week*, pp. 25–6) which is added in certain copies, and reflects precisely the same correspondence of 16 sentences beginning with the term *ḥamd*, in relation to the seven days and nights.

50 See Appendix D.

revealing as well as veiling, and comes to mean manifestation itself in the sense of the whole created world being the revelation/veil of God. This may help to explain the rhyme in $\bar{a}f = 1+8 = 9$, which is the last of the numerals and therefore stands for the whole of manifestation. This is reflected in the initial iteration of all the manifold degrees of existence in the prelude (*khuṭba*):

Praise be to God who opened up the storehouses of the *nūn* and the *kāf*, and the concealed treasures of the realities of the Names and of subtle gifts (*alṭāf*), with the keys of the orientations of Essential Desire and the scents of Intimacy and the Heights (*aʿrāf*)⁵¹; and who brought the spirits out of the darkness of non-existence and the constriction of being annihilated within Uniqueness and non-differentiated synthesis (*istiḥṣāf*), into the presences of Witnessing (*shuhūd*) and the degrees of Being (*wujūd*), like pearls hidden in the depths of the ocean within the oyster-shells (*aṣḍāf*); and who then strung them [as in a rosary (*subḥa*)] in the degrees of the spiritual covenants according to what their unseen realities demand in terms of accepting closeness or refusing it (*istinkāf*), in accordance with the harmony between them or their divergence (*ikhtilāf*), in the ranks of spiritual light and the species of the degrees and their classes (*aṣnāf*); and who then sent them down to the lowest of the world of low elemental Nature from those high eminences (*ashrāf*)...⁵²

This 9-ness also corresponds to the value of *ghayn* (=9), the first letter in *ghafr*. The other major word in the title is *farq* ('separation', =11=2), i.e. duality/polarity. When we compare the two words *ghafr* and *farq*, we find that there are two shared letters, *fā*' and *rā*' (=8+2=10=1), indicating Unity. The only difference between the two words in terms of letters is the initial *ghayn* of the *ghafr* and the final *qāf* of the *farq*.

51 The term *aʿrāf* refers to Q 7:46 ('Between the two groups is a veil (*hijāb*); and on the Heights are men who recognise (*yaʿrifūna*, from the root '*arafa*') everyone by their marks'). It also alludes to the word 'perfume' ('*arf*, from the same root).

52 Carullah MS 2129, fol. 118b. There are clear Quranic references embedded in the text here: firstly to the testifying of human beings to their own selves when the covenant (*mithāq*) was made between God and human beings, and He asked: 'Am I not your Lord?', to which they replied 'Yes indeed' (Q 7:172); and secondly, to the verse: 'then We sent [the human being] down to the lowest of the low' (Q 95:5).

The letter *qāf* (=1) appears in the separation (*farq* =11=2), signifying the illusion of separate identity in opposition to Unity, so that there is a kind of imagined two-ness. However, when this illusory separation disappears, it is transformed into the *ghayn* (=9) that appears in the ‘covering/uncovering’ (*ghafr* =19=1), where there is no movement outside Unity, and in which there is only the mercy of His Individuation as the innumerable numbers of manifestation.

In total the *khuṭba* contains 28 rhymes in *-āf*, symbolising the whole of creation (28 letters, 28 lunar mansions, the second perfect number etc.), including six rhymes that follow the name Muhammad indicating his role as the Perfect Human Being (6 being the first perfect number). Thus the meaning of *ghafr* should not only be understood as ‘forgiveness’ in the ordinary sense of the term (as we have already seen), but also points to the total manifesting as 1 and 9, a dualitude that no longer implies separation but a full realisation and celebration of oneness in multiplicity and multiplicity in oneness through the human being. As Bosnevi states at the beginning of this treatise:

The Presence of Divinity, in order to [bring about] total manifesting and the supreme unitive witnessing, requires the universal all-embracing place of revelation (*majlā*) and the manifesting place (*maẓhar*) of the noble character that brings together the spiritual and the physical.⁵³

In this sense we may understand *al-ghafr al-muṭlaq* as ‘the Covering Veil of Absolute Unity that totally liberates’ from separation, and is therefore fully veiled and unveiled in total manifestation. So it also comes to mean the absolute liberation (*iṭlāq*) from the veils and chains of limitation and concatenation (*taqyīd*, from *qayd*, ‘chain’).⁵⁴

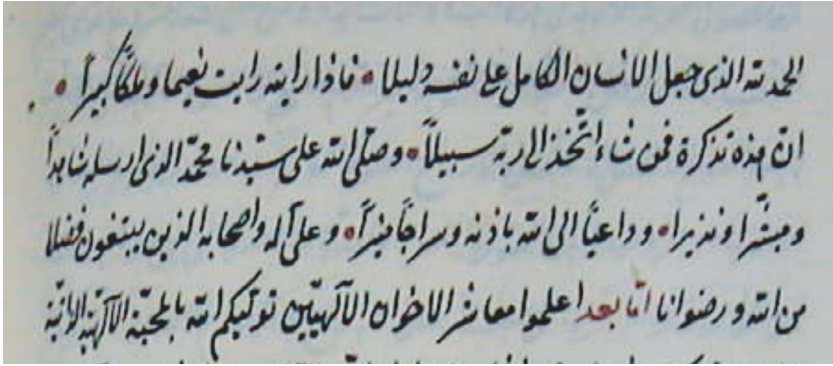
Through all this we may come to understand the significance of the Name *al-Ghaḥūr* in relation to the structure of the Blessing-prayer,

53 Carullah MS 2129, fol. 121a. We may see here a correspondence between *majlā* with the upper 5 semi-circle (i.e. 1–5) and the *maẓhar* with the lower 5 semi-circle (i.e. 5–9).

54 A similar point is made when Bosnevi comments on the chapter of Noah in the *Fuṣūṣ* with regard to the Quranic prayer of Noah ‘Ask your Lord to cover/forgive you’ (Q 71:10): ‘[Noah] told his people: “ask your Lord for covering (*ghafr*), so that He may veil you with the Light of His Being from the veiling individuations [of light] and the veils of darkness, and that He may guide you to the Oneness of the Real, and that you may be wholly covered (*maghfūr*)”’ (see *Sharḥ*, fol. 138b; *Fusus al-hikam*, trans. Rauf, 287; *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kılıç, 48).

as a Name that combines both aspects of descent and re-ascent, and symbolises the Reality of Muhammad most directly.⁵⁵

K. *Rūḥ al-mutāba‘a fi bayān shurūṭ al-mubāya‘a*



The opening of *Rūḥ al-mutāba‘a* in Bosnevi's hand, Carullah MS 2129 fol. 85b

The fourth text we are considering is a deep meditation on the Quranic verse: 'Those who swear allegiance to you swear allegiance (*yubāyi‘ūna*) to God' (48:10), referring to the famous pledge made by the Prophet's Companions to Muhammad underneath a tree. Two terms are used in the title of the treatise: *mutāba‘ah* = 23 = 5 (*nūn*) and *mubāya‘ah* = 20 (*kāf*, and equivalent to the name Muḥammad = 2). Both of these appear linked together in the Blessing-prayer (see II/4–5). The short prelude provides a very rich contemplation on the nature of the Human Being, by linking every mention of the human to a Quranic verse and establishing revealing alpha-numerical relationships:

‘Praise be to God who made the Perfect Human Being an indicator of Himself,⁵⁶ so that *when you see him, you see a blessed abode and a great kingdom* (Q 76:20)⁵⁷ – *this is a reminder, so whoever wishes will take a way to his Lord* (73:19).⁵⁸ May God bless our master Muhammad whom *He sent as a witness and*

55 See Section I in the GW structure in Appendix D. On the correlation of the Names *Ghafūr* (=25) and *Wadūd* (=20) with the expression *al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā*, see chapter 4.

56 Ar: *dalīlā*, first sentence with a single element introducing general rhyme in *alif* (=1), signifying unity.

57 Ar: *na‘īman wa-mulka kabīrā*, second sentence with two elements corresponding to two domains (heavenly and earthly) introducing the rhyme in *rā‘* (=2).

58 Ar: *sabīlā*, third sentence introducing a rhyme in *lām* (=3).

*a bringer of good tidings and a warner;*⁵⁹ *and as a summoner to God by His permission and as an illuminating lamp* (33:45–46);⁶⁰ *and [may He bless] his Family and his Companions who desired bounty from God and satisfaction*⁶¹ (48:29, 59:8).⁶²

The six sentences together, three following the praise of God and three following the blessing on the Prophet, are indications of the six-fold nature of the human being, echoing the symbol of the six-faced Ka‘ba as the heart. So the two-ness implied in the word *mubāya‘ah* (=20) can be understood as referring to the twofold nature of swearing allegiance to both God and the Prophet simultaneously, as mentioned in the Quranic verse. This twofold-ness can be seen reflected in the nature of a cube, where each ‘side’ is paired with its opposite (top to bottom, front to back etc). The special correlation of these two terms in this treatise supports our reading of couplet 29 in the Blessing-prayer (see Section II/4–5), where the term *mubāya‘a* has been misread as *mutāba‘a* in the manuscripts since both terms look the same without the diacritical points (despite the fact that this would have involved an unfelicitous and inappropriate repetition in couplet 30).

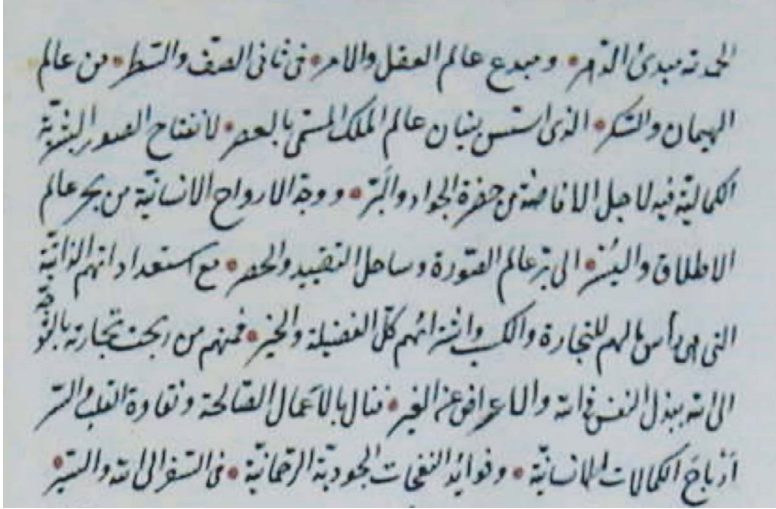
We may note here that the first term after the *ḥamd* is significant numerically: *al-insān al-kāmil* (=33=6) as well as *insān* (=6) corresponding to *al-mubāya‘ah* (=24=6). The twofold nature of swearing allegiance also evokes the twofoldness of ‘blessing’ (*ṣalāt*) itself.

59 Ar: *nadhīrā*, rhyming in *rā’*.

60 Ar: *munīrā*, rhyming in *rā’*. The fourth and fifth sentences contain, respectively, three and two epithets of the Prophet (3+2=5), corresponding to the final rhyme letters (*lām*, *rā’*).

61 Ar: *riḍwānā*. This final sixth sentence ends uniquely without a pair, in *nūn-alif* (5+1=6), as if to emphasise the special nature of the human being, reflecting the sixfold nature of *al-insān al-kāmil*. There are six rhymes in *alif*, which is the main constant rhyme. At the same time, the six sentences also rhyme three times in *rā’* (3x2=6) and twice in *lām* (2x3=6) and end in *-nā* (=6). All rhyming letters are not only followed by the final *alif* of the rhyme, but are also preceded by either an *alif* or a *yā’* (=1). This 1:1 correspondence directly mirrors the main subject of the treatise: ‘those who swear allegiance to you swear allegiance to God’.

62 Carullah MS 2129, fol. 85a.

K. *Sirr al-fayḍ wa-l-‘aṣr/‘aṣr fī tafsīr Sūrat al-‘Aṣr*The opening of *Sirr al-fayḍ* in Bosnevi's hand, Carullah MS 2129 fol. 99b

The fifth text we are going to consider is a meditation on the symbolic polyvalence of the term ‘*aṣr* based on the 103rd Sura entitled ‘The Mid-Time’ (*al-‘aṣr*), whose three verses read:

‘By the mid-time!

The human being is indeed in a [state of] loss –

but that will not be the case for those who have faith and do good works, and who counsel each other to truth and counsel each other to patience.’

The word ‘*aṣr* contains several interrelated meanings. In the ordinary sense of a period of time, it means ‘mid-afternoon’, as well as the time for prayer between the prayer-time of midday (*zuhr*) and the prayer-time of sunset (*maghrib*). This is the centre of the five ritual prayers, a middle position which is regarded as lying between manifestation (*zuhūr*) and non-manifestation (*ghurūb*). The *barzakhī* nature of this period of time, which according to Ibn ‘Arabī is the only one of the prayer-times not to have a fixed beginning, is analogous in Bosnevi’s explanation to the position of the human being in between two acts of cosmic prayer:

The ‘*aṣr*’ prayer occupies the middle position between the *ẓuhr* prayer and the *maghrib* prayer... and unites the properties and qualities of both prayers. Likewise, the Perfect Human Being is in full realisation through the form of the Divine Names and the form of the created places of manifestation, and is individuated in the supreme isthmuseity (*barzakhiyya*) and the grandest delegation (*niyāba*), bringing together the prayer of the Real and the prayer of the universe.⁶³

‘*Asr* may also refer to ‘time/Time’ in a more general sense, whether of night or of day, whether conditioned or unconditioned. Hence Bosnevi primarily relates ‘*aṣr*’ to the notion of ‘effusion’ (*ḡayḡ*) and the whole process of coming into existence, and therefore to the idea of Time (*dahr*, =11=2, which expresses the relationship of 1 to 1). From a numerical point of view we may note that the value of ‘*aṣr*’ is 6, which is the central number of the series 1–11 (i.e. there are five numbers before the number 6 and five after).⁶⁴ This pattern precisely mirrors the numerical sequence in the value of the name *nūn*: 5–6–5, where the *wāw* as the middle letter includes the 5s on either side. This is the same principle we have already seen in the number 9, where the central number of the series 1–9 is 5, just as 4 is the centre of 7, and 3 the centre of 5, and 2 the centre of 3.⁶⁵ These two sides of the *nūnic* circle of Being are expressed in temporal terms as eternity and temporality.⁶⁶

.....
63 Carullah MS 2129, fol. 101b. Bosnevi here cites Ibn ‘Arabi’s discussion of the eminence of the ‘*aṣr*’ prayer as having no fixed beginning. See chapter 281 in the *Futūḡhāt* (II.614–615, a chapter which corresponds to the *Sūrat al-‘Aṣr*), where we can observe Ibn ‘Arabi’s emphasis on the nature of the circle (*dawr*) as an inclusive form that has no visible centre nor even two sides for one who possesses essential unitive knowledge: the opening poem states ‘the ‘*aṣr*’ prayer has no nadir (*naẓīr*)...’, showing that the prayer is performed as the middle of the five prayers, without having any other to be paired or contrasted with, like the sun at its zenith or the circle in itself. In the poem the intimate relationship of the station of hidden containing (*ḡam[m]* =13) with the Singular Beloved (*ḡabīb*, *aḡad* =13) is reflected in the four verses (1+3=4), while the rhyme letters -ib (=3) express the mid-point of 3 in the sequence 1–5.

64 We note the extraordinary presence of the number 6 at the beginning of this Sura: *Wa* (=6) [*l-’*]‘*aṣr*’ (=6) in [*n*] *a* (=6) [*l-jinsān*] (=6) *la-ḡi khusr* (=3 x 11=33=6, reading *ḡi* as ‘multiplied by’).

65 See, for example, the 5 Presences mentioned in couplet 3, or the 4th day as the centre of the 7-day week (see *Prayers for the Week*).

66 See the Blessing-prayer I/13, which speaks of the ‘heaven’ of eternity (*azal*) and the ‘earth’ of endlessness (*abad*). See also the opening poem of chapter 316 in the *Futūḡhāt*, which corresponds to *Sūrat al-Qalam* (The Pen), where Ibn ‘Arabi states: ‘the secret of the inkwell (*nūn*) and of the pen (*alif*) is the knowledge of the temporal (*al-ḡudūḡh* =27) and the eternal (*al-ḡidam* =13)’ (*Fut.* III.360), where 27+13=40, the value of the poem’s rhyming letter *mim*.

From the title of this treatise we can find a further central meaning of ‘*aşr*/‘*uşr*, ‘collection’, as contrasted to the idea of ‘effusion’ (*fayḍ*) which precedes it in the title of the treatise. This is related to a Quranic verse in which the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) is interpreting the final outcome of the Pharaoh’s dream about two sets of seven cows: ‘after that there will come a year in which the people will have abundant rain (*yughāthu*) and in which they will collect [the earth’s produce] (*ya‘şirūn*)’ (Q 12:49).⁶⁷ The implied correlation of *fayḍ* and ‘*aşr* to abundant rain and collecting/gathering equally reflects a hidden/manifest contrast, where the rain of effusion comes from the heaven of the Unseen and is collected in earthly containers. The same contrast of non-manifest and manifest is reflected or mirrored in the title of this treatise as a whole: the hidden aspect of ‘the secret of effusion and collection’ is revealed in the manifest explanation of the Sura (*sūra*, related to *sūr*, a circular surrounding wall in form, with the same letters *sīn-rā*’ as *sirr*) of the Mid-Time. There are many extraordinary contemplations embedded in this apparently simple title: for example, the contrasting of *sirr* (‘secret/mystery’) with *tafsīr* (‘interpretation’), where the only difference in the roots of the two words is in the added *fā*’ (*f-s-r*) in *tafsīr*, a letter which symbolises splitting and opening up and speaking, i.e. 2-ness.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the word *fī*, which links the two sides of the title, equally has two meanings: ‘in/concerning’ and/or ‘multiplied by’, suggesting the first part is not only visible and revealed in the second, but is also pluralised through it.⁶⁹

This fourfold hidden/manifest contrast is alluded to in Bosnevi’s *khuṭba* itself, which in a typically condensed style, begins:

67 This verse is also alluded to by Ibn ‘Arabī in his *K. al-‘Abādila* in section 103, which corresponds to Sūrat al-‘Aşr, which is devoted to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Isā b. ‘Abd al-Mughīth (*mughīth* being from the same root as the Quranic *yughāthu*).

68 In some sense, then, *tafsīr* indicates the opening up of mystery. In the title there is also the mirroring of *sīn-rā*’ (in *sirr/tafsīr*) and *şād-rā*’ (‘*uşr*/‘*aşr*).

69 The nature of *fī* was clearly very important to Ibn ‘Arabī, who describes a vision in which it presents itself to him as ‘a person, and in it I was given a divine secret pointing to its eminence and the grandeur that God has placed in it’ (Ibn ‘Arabī, *K. al-Bā’*, trans. Hirtenstein and Küçük, *JMIAS* 65 (2019), p. 23).

‘Praise be to God, the initiator of Time (*dahr*) and the innovating creator of the world of Intellect and Order (*amr*), in the doubling [presence] of [hidden] alignment and [manifested] line (*saṭr*),⁷⁰ from the world of rapturous love and pure inebriation (*sukr*);⁷¹ who establishes the building of the world of possession, which is called ‘time-collection’ (*‘aṣr*),⁷² for the opening-up of complete human forms within it because of the overflowing from the presence of the Generous and the Beneficent (*barr*); and who turned the human spirits from the ocean of the world of unlimitedness and release (*yusr*) towards the amplitude of the world of form and the shore of limitation and containment (*ḥaṣr*), along with their essential enumerated aptitudes, which are the peak of their assets for trading and acquiring and their purchase of every bounty and good (*khayr*)...’⁷³

Throughout this *khuṭba* Bosnevi makes great play on pairing or doubling: for example, ‘Intellect and Order’, ‘alignment and line’, ‘the Generous and the Beneficent’, ‘bounty and good’. This not only reflects the two-ness of the rhyme-letter (*rā’*) but also the very nature of Time (which in Indo-European languages derives from the idea of ‘cutting into two’, di-/ti-) itself, the two effusions of creation and the two sides of the circle of Being. If we analyse the first eight words of the *khuṭba*, we find:

.....
70 Ar: *thāni l-ṣaff wa-l-saṭr*. This very allusive expression can be considered in different ways: *ṣaff* refers to the extending of a bird’s two wings in a line (see Q 24:41) as well as in reference to writing, the ordering of letters in a line, while *saṭr* refers to the drawing of a line from point A to point B and to written lines (for the connection to the *Nūn*, see Q 68:1, which reads *Nūn wa-l-qalam wa-mā yaṣturūn*). This would suggest in both cases a 2-ness, one heavenly (*ṣaff*, see Q 89:22) and one earthly (*saṭr*). The word *ṣaff* also suggests rows of men in prayer or the ranks of all beings displayed before the Lord (see Q 18:48, 37:1). Given the idea of building (*bunyān*) mentioned in the next sentence, it also echoes the verse: ‘God loves those who fight in His Way in ranks (*ṣaffan*), as though they are a solid building’ (Q 61:4), which according to tradition is said to be the work that God loves most. This sentence can also be read as: ‘the second [One unfolding as] alignment and line’ (see *K. al-Bā’*, p. 17).

71 Each of the terms *mubdi’* (‘initiator’), *dahr* (‘Time’), *‘aql* (‘intellect’), *al-amr* (‘the Order’) and *al-sukr* (‘inebriation’) equal 11, a number which shows the linkage of the first ‘1’ to a second ‘1’. This is reflected in the eleven couplets rhyming in *rā’* (=2) in this *khuṭba*, reflecting the rhyme of the Sura itself (‘*aṣr*, *khusr*, *ṣabr*). Note that this initial 2-ness coupled with the 5-ness of *ṣaff* and *saṭr* equals the value of the two letters of *kun* (2+5). The specific connection of the *rā’* to Time is found in earlier Sufi masters such as Ibn Masarra, who refers to this letter as ‘the substance of time’ (*jawhar al-zamān*) (which may refer to the letter’s durative aspect, the rolling ‘r’ being prolonged in speech) (*K. Khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*, Chester Beatty MS 3168, p. 141).

72 This may refer to both time-actualisation and the imagery of collecting the ‘juice’ of effusion within the receptacles of manifestation.

73 Carullah MS 2129, fol. 99b. The rhyme-structure of this *khuṭba* of 32 (=5) sentences or 16 (=7) couplets is highly complex: *dahr*, *amr* // *saṭr*, *sukr* // ‘*aṣr*, *barr* // *yusr*, *ḥuṣr* // *khayr*, *ghayr* // *insāniyyah*, *raḥmāniyyah* // *sayr*, *makr* // *khusr* – *akwān*, *arkān* // *kawr* – *ilāhiyyah*, *kawniyyah* // *ṣabr* – *ṭabī‘iyyah*, *bashariyyah* // ‘*aṣr* – *khalqīyyah*, *kawniyyah* // *amr*, [ṣalli] *barr* // *naṣr* [Muḥammad], *dhikr* // *badr*, *ṣabr* // . There are 11 couplets rhyming in *rā’* (=2), 4 in *tā’ marbūṭa* (=4/5) and 1 in *-ān* (=5/6).

al-ḥamd (=20) *li-l[lā]h* (=11) *mubdī* (=11) [*al-*]*dahr* (=11); [*wa-*]*mubdī* ' *ālam* (=6+17+15=38=11) [*al-*]'*aql* (=11) [*wa-*]*l-amr* (=11). The 2-ness is clearly emphasised as the 'pairing' of 1 in 11. While from this point of view there are two aspects, Bosnevi is careful in this *khuṭba* to reiterate that there is an inclusive principle that embraces both sides: Allāh⁷⁴ who is both creator and originator, 'the world' of Intellect and Order or of rapturous love and inebriation, 'the presence' of the Generous and the Beneficent and so on. This 2-ness of polarity or opposition is always embraced by a third principle that includes both sides – reflecting the nature of the rhyme letter *rā'*, whose value is 2 and whose name value is 2+1=3 (by virtue of being *rā'* + *alif*).

This polarity can be found in the following lines where four worlds are contrasted in two pairs: '*ālam al-hayamān wa-l-sukr*, the world of being possessed by rapturous love and inebriation, is opposed to the '*ālam al-mulk/al-ʿaṣr*, the world of possession and drinking the must of time-actualisation; and '*ālam al-iṭlāq wa-l-yusr*, the world of unlimited freedom and release, opposed to the '*ālam al-taqyīd wa-l-ḥaṣr*, the world of concatenation and containment. We may observe here a very important feature of these two pairs of worlds: they are not only opposed to each other, but also divided within themselves into two internal principles. These binary aspects with each world may be understood as one hidden, one manifest: for example, being possessed by the rapture of love (*hayamān*) and inebriation (*sukr*) refer to different levels of existence, the first an angelic rapture, the second a drunkenness in God 'from the wine of Self-disclosure';⁷⁵ likewise, 'the one who possesses' in the world of the manifest kingdom is a hidden aspect, while 'the one who drinks' the moment-by-moment wine of life from the cup of time is a manifest aspect. This 4-ness can be seen in the very name of the letter *nūn*, which contains two *nūns* connected by a *barzakhī wāw*: hence *nūn*

74 Allāh is the supreme all-inclusive Name, symbolised by the complete circle, but from a numerical point of view its value points to the inherent triadic nature of His potential manifestation (=66=3). As Ibn 'Arabi says in his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (poem 12 v. 4): 'My Beloved made Himself Three, and yet He has always been One' (ed. Nicholson, p. 20). This all-embracing Name can be contrasted with the ordinary word for 'God' (*ilāh*), the One who possesses divinity (*ulūhiyya*), whose value is 9 (or the subsequent triadic expression of the original 3-ness) and which is contrasted with the one over whom divinity is exercised (*ma'lūh*).

75 For this distinction, see *Qurrat 'ayn al-shuhūd*, Shehit Ali 1226, fol. 1b ([*ḥamdān*] *muqaddasan* 'an *idrāki* l-'uqūli l-mujarradati min 'ālamī l-hayamān) and 32a (*sukrī fi Allāh min khamri l-tajallī*); *Qurrat*, ed. Awda, 53, 152. One cannot help but notice strong echoes of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem in many of these images.

+ *wāw* + *nūn* = [*nūn*-*wāw*-*nūn*] + [*wāw*-*alif*-*wāw*] + [*nūn*-*wāw*-*nūn*]. Within the letter *nūn* there are thus 4 *nūns*, two upper and two lower, two ‘unseen’ (*ghaybī*) and two ‘seen’ (*shuhūdī*).

Titles can of course be very significant in many different respects, including from the perspective of arithmosophy. Here we shall analyse this particular case as an example of possible procedures. The full title can be seen as having two parts: *Kitāb sirr al-fayḍ wa-l-‘uṣr* (first part) [*fī*] *tafsīr sūrat al-‘Aṣr* (second part). There are two scriptural references at the beginning of each part: *kitāb* (=9)... *tafsīr* (=18=9)... These two 9s correspond to the two *fayḍ*s or the two semi-circles: the *kitāb* refers to the original synthetic scripture of the hidden *nūn* of non-manifestation, while the *tafsīr* refers to its analytic explanation in the visible *nūn* of manifestation. Each part of the title can also be viewed as a whole *nūn* in itself: the *nūn* of the Book that contains the semi-circles of *fayḍ* and ‘*uṣr*, and the *nūn* of the *Tafsīr* that contains the Sura and the ‘*Aṣr*. The total value of the title can be understood as: 16 (*Kitāb* + *sirr*[*r*] *al-fayḍ wa-l-‘aṣr* = 9+7, first part) + 16 (*tafsīr sūrat al-‘aṣr*, second part) = 32 (the number of sentences in the *khuṭba*).⁷⁶ This value can also be understood in its reduced form as: 7 (first part) + 7 (second part) = 14 = 5, the value of *nūn*;⁷⁷ or as 9 (first part including the second *rā’* of *sirr*) + 7 (second part) = 16 = 7, the value of the expression *Sūrat al-‘Aṣr*.⁷⁸ Given that the value of the name *nūn* is 16 (5+6+5), we can see how the complete circle made up of two *nūns* (16+16) constitutes one aspect of the ‘secret of effusion’.⁷⁹

All these opposing and complementary aspects are implied within the intermediary ‘in-between’ character of ‘*aṣr*, ‘the middle prayer’, which in this sense is identical to the *wāw* mentioned at the very beginning of

76 We may also note that the word *fī* means both ‘in’ and ‘multiplied by’ – in this second meaning the title numerically is 16 x 16 = 256, the value of the Name *Nūr* (‘Light’).

77 If the particle *fī* (=9) is included, the total remains 5 (14+9=23).

78 *Kitāb* + *sirr*[*r*] *al-fayḍ* = 9+27=9+9=18=9; *Kitāb* + *sirr* *al-fayḍ wa-l-‘aṣr* = 9+54=9+9.

79 We may also note the numerical underpinning of ‘aptitude’ or ‘preparedness to receive’ (*isti’dād*, =6), deriving from ‘*adad*’ (‘number’, =6), which is linked, in the passage above, to the idea of existence as a place of buying and selling and to relative time as a realm of quantification (for a similar linkage of ‘number’ and ‘preparedness to receive’, see the Blessing-prayer I.11).

the Sura: *Wa-l-‘aṣr*, which could also be understood allusively as the *wāw* (=6) of the ‘*Aṣr* (=6).⁸⁰

As long as these two perspectives remain uncombined or unintegrated, this means that ‘the human being is in a condition of suffering loss and deviation’ (*khusr*, =11=2) described in the second Quranic verse, because of the sense of separation in duality (‘me’ and ‘other’). This imagined separation has to be re-united as the dualitude, rather than duality, of Unity through human realisation. This is analogous to the way in which the two individual letters of His He-ness (هو, *huwa*) are conjoined (*hā’* + *wāw* =11). Such realisation takes place in the integration of knowledge (‘*ilm*) and action (‘*amal*) by ‘following the Way to God through God, not through oneself’ (*sulūku-hu ilā Allāh bi-Llāh lā bi-naḥsi-hi*).⁸¹ This entails the extinction of the illusion of separate identity in the realm of ‘the distinctive properties of the two handfuls’ (*aḥkām al-qabḍatayn*), ‘perishing in the disclosures of the Essence (*al-istiḥlāk fī l-tajalliyāt al-dhātiyya*) and dissolving into His singular handful (*al-iḍmiḥlāl fī qabḍati-Hi al-aḥadiyya*).’⁸²

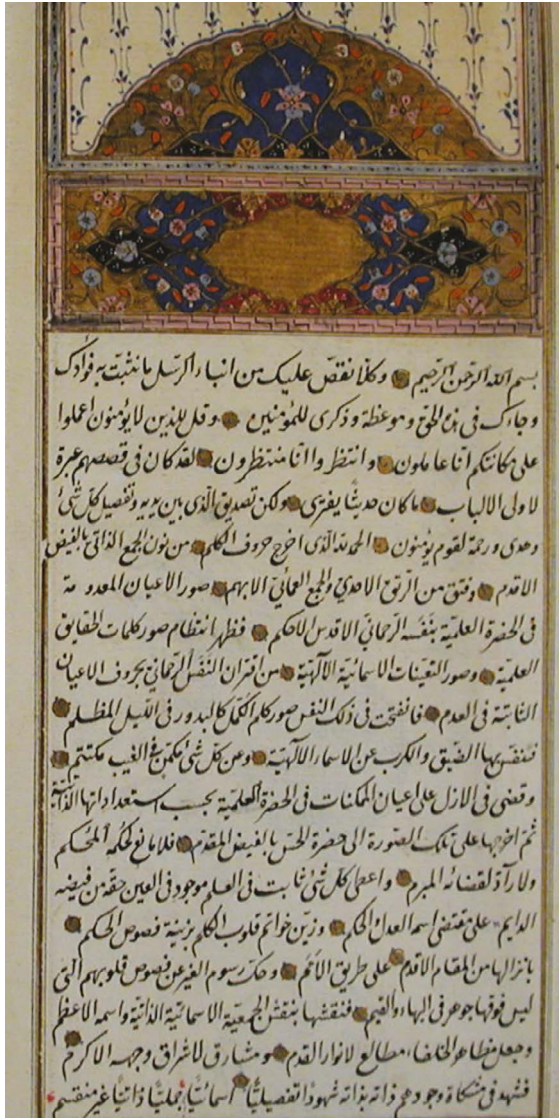
The image of two handfuls ‘dissolving into His singular handful’ is a wonderfully graphic explanation of the coupling of the two sides of the circle of creation, the spiritual and the material, inner and outer, the Divine Form and the created form, as one coherent whole. As Bosnevi notes in his commentary, the word ‘*aṣr* has a meaning of pressing, extracting juice (from grapes, olives etc), which is akin to the contracting (*qabḍ*) of a fist (*qabḍa*), and is a symbol of the combining of the two forms within the Human Being.⁸³ The fist is equally an image of containment: ‘*aṣr* also suggests a place of refuge, protection and concealment (as in ‘*aṣar* or ‘*uṣr*), implying that the integrated wholeness of Unity protects and conceals Its true nature from all otherness.

80 As is the case in Ibn ‘Arabi’s poem on the *wāw* which begins with *wāw iyyā-Ka* (‘the *wāw* of You alone’) – see chapter 2.

81 This ambivalence can be found in another important Quranic verse (Q 22:11), in which *khusr* can be read in two ways, as getting lost from Truth or getting lost in Truth.

82 Carullah MS 2129, fol. 104b.

83 There is a subtle allusion to this in the third phrase of the *khuṭba*, which speaks of ‘row’ or ‘upper line’ (*ṣaff*, =14=5) and ‘line’ or ‘lower script’ (*ṣaṭr*, =14=5), which add up to 28 (the all-inclusive degrees of the universe or the bones of two hands) or to 10 or 1 (the fingers of two hands or Unity). The reunion of the ‘two handfuls’, therefore, results in a single unified handful (*qabḍa*).

Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikamThe opening of Bosnevi's Arabic *Sharḥ*, Yusuf Ağa 5464 fol. 1b

If we had more space and time, we would also give a detailed analysis of some of the terminology to be found in Bosnevi's *Sharḥ*, which is allusively entitled: 'The Unveilings of the Brides of the Truth-declarations

on the Bridal Beds of the Wisdoms of the Bezels' (*Tajalliyāt 'arā'is al-nuṣūṣ fī mināṣṣāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ*).⁸⁴ The imagery of the unveiling of the bride on the bridal bed as a symbol of mystical union and vision is particularly beloved of Bosnevi, and we find exactly the same in the Blessing-prayer in the *ḥabīb* part of the first section, 'through whom you have revealed the Beauty of Your Essence on the [elevated] bridal bed of Your [intimate] unveilings' (I/21). The *Fuṣūṣ* commentary begins with a long *khuṭba* in very poetic rhyming prose, where the main rhyming letter is *mīm* (mirroring and echoing the rhyme in the *Fuṣūṣ* itself):

All praise be to God who brought out the letters of the Words (*kalim*) from the *nūn* of essential Union (*nūn al-jam' al-dhātī*) through the Most Ancient (*aqdam*) Effusion, and who opened up what was enclosed within Uniqueness and the non-distinct (*abham*) unity of the Cloud, [which were] the forms of the non-existent potential realities in the Presence of Knowledge through His most Holy and Wise (*aḥkam*) Breath of Compassion... and who then brought them out to the Presence of sense-perception through the Foremost (*muqaddam*) Effusion... who made Adam a seal and keeper of the storehouse (*amīn 'alā khizāna*) of the universe (*'ālam*), and for the office of being His representative gave him the keys of the storehouses of Generosity and Honour (*karam*)...⁸⁵

It is worth noting the mention of 'the *nūn* of essential Union' (i.e. the *nūn* in its reality as a full circle), the reworking of the notion of the two Effusions (*aqdas* and *muqaddas*) so that they rhyme in *mīm* (*aqdam* and *muqaddam*), and the idea of the storehouse of divine bounty (see Blessing-prayer I/6). In this *khuṭba* there are 28 rhymes in *mīm* in

84 This is the Ottoman version of the title (see *Fusus al-hikam*, p. 49). We may note that in the closing section of chapter 178 (on Love) in the *Futūḥāt* (II.350 ff.), Ibn 'Arabī comments on the *majāli l-ḥaqq li-l-'arīfīn al-muḥibbīn fī mināṣṣāt al-a'rās li-i'tā' nu'ūt al-muḥibbīn fī l-maḥabba* ('the places of the Real's Self-disclosure to the loving knowers in the nuptial beds of the brides, which provide the characterisations of lovers in Love'), using three special terms which we find reiterated here, *majlā*, *mināṣṣa* and *arā'is*. From Bosnevi's subtitle and Ibn 'Arabī's section in chapter 178, we may understand that each chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* corresponds to a self-disclosure or unveiling, *majlā* (= *ḥikma*), that takes place on a bridal bed, *mināṣṣa* (= *kalima*, since the word *mināṣṣa* suggests the 'place' where the *naṣṣ*, truth-declaration, occurs, i.e. the message of a prophet). Nevertheless, the Arabic version of the commentary is titled differently as *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ 'alā lisān ahl al-lubb wa-l-khuṣūṣ* (author's holograph copy dated 1024H, Chester Beatty MS 3474).

85 *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, fol. 1b–2a. For the expression *nūn al-jam'*, see chapter 2.

the initial section, followed by the *ṣalawāt* on the Prophet which has 6 rhymes up to the mention of the name Muhammad and 6 further rhymes encompassing his epithets, family and companions. We have already seen the significance of the numbers 6 and 28 (the first and second perfect numbers, the human being and cosmos, respectively). The total of 40 rhymes (28+6+6) is the value of the letter *mīm*, which is not only the rhyming letter but of course the first letter of Muhammad's name.

This sensitivity to alpha-numerical values is equally implicit in Bosnevi's lengthy introduction (*muqaddima*) to his commentary, in which he sets down 12 fundamental principles (*aṣl*), each of which has a term that expresses the same numerical value as its place in the order.⁸⁶ For example, Principle 1 is related to a discussion of the Seal of Sainthood (*khātim li-l-walāya/wilāya*, =15+22=37=1; *walī*, 10=1); Principle 2 to a series of pairs, including Non-Individuation (*lā ta'ayyun*, =21=3) and the First Individuation (*al-ta'ayyun al-awwal*, =21+14=35=8), which together total 3+8=11=2, as well as 'the joining of two arcs' (*qāba qawsayn*, =20=2); Principle 3 to the Divine Names (*al-ism*, =12=3); Principle 4 to the potential realities ('*ayn*=13=4); Principle 5 to the Five Presences; Principle 6 to the Human Being (*insān*=15=6); Principle 7 to the Command (*amr/kun*=7), and so on.⁸⁷

One further passage deserves to be explored here in relation to the imagery of a circle that contains two halves, which are in themselves circles containing two halves, and so on ad infinitum. The two halves of a circle represent the constant inherent relationship of two-ness in any degree: within the succession of degrees, each degree points both to a previous one, towards which it is second, receptive, feminine, and to a following one, towards which it is first, active, masculine.⁸⁸ In commenting on a passage in the chapter of Noah, Bosnevi observes:

86 It is interesting to compare Bosnevi's numerical approach through 'principles' (*aṣl*, =10=1) with his predecessor al-Qayṣarī, whose *Muqaddima* lays out 12 'sections' (*faṣl*). See al-Qayṣarī, *The Horizons of Being: the Metaphysics of Ibn al-'Arabi in the Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī*, translation and commentary by Mukhtar H. Ali (Leiden, 2020).

87 The 12 Principles summed up together (1+2+3...+12) make a total of 78, the number of the Divine Name *Ḥakīm* ('the Wise'), in correspondence with all the Wisdoms (*ḥikam*) expounded in the *Fuṣūṣ*. Furthermore, 7+8=15=6, the number of the letter *wāw*, symbolising the Complete Human Being as the very expression of Wisdom.

88 Every couplet in the Blessing Prayer signifies the particular two-ness of degrees: in a sense this opposition of two complementary principles is always the same, as in a mirror relation, but from another perspective, each of them shows a unique contrast within the circle of the degrees of existence.

In everything that is worshipped, be it stone or tree, sun or moon, the Real has a private face that remains when the veiling quality of things is removed. Whoever recognises the face of the Real in each thing worshipped is in recognition of the Real who is individuated in the place of manifestation of that object of worship, and whoever is ignorant of this face has not known the Real who is individuated in that object of worship and who is theophanically revealed from its reality. God the Exalted says: ‘you did not throw when you threw, but it was God that threw’ (Q 8:7). Thus being Divine (*ulūhiyya*) and receiving the Divine (*ma’lūhiyya*), worshipping (*‘ābidiyya*) and being worshipped (*ma’būdiyya*), are manifest in every eye-entity. Whoever worships the veiledness of that essence and its idolisation, or worships his own imagining in that object of worship – which is a god that is imagined within it – is worshipping his own passion (*hawā*): he is worshipping a false god (*tāghūt*) and the idolisations of the veil of the true Divinity (*lāhūt*). Whoever is not veiled by the individuation from [seeing] the One which is individuated, indeed worships Allāh, the One and Unique (*al-wāḥid al-aḥad*) in all that is worshipped: he worships without circumscribing Him in one form rather than another or individuating Him in one thing rather than another. Such a person is the knowing who realises through unveiling (*al-‘ārif al-mukāshif*) and the knower who actualises attributes (*al-‘ālim al-wāṣif*).⁸⁹

The four qualities at the end of this passage are arranged in two rhyming pairs, and at first sight this seems to simply be a poetical expression for two kinds of ‘knowing’, one directly experiential (*ma’rifā*) and one intellectual (*‘ilm*). However, a numerical perspective reveals much deeper meanings for contemplation: the first part (*al-‘ārif al-mukāshif*, =22+20=42), when combined with the second part (*wa-l-‘ālim al-wāṣif*, =6+19+25=50, the value of *nūn*), makes a total of 92, the value of the name Muhammad. Furthermore, the first reveals the value of the *wāw* (4+2=6, symbol of the Perfect Human), while the second reveals the value of the *hā*’ (=5), so that the combination of the two (5+6) provides

89 *Sharḥ*, fol. 147b.

Huwa ('He'). Bearing this in mind, we can understand that Bosnevi is also alluding to two knowledges that are united in the Perfect Human. The linking 'and' (*wāw*) denotes not only a joining of the two pairs but also a contrast between them, just as the two halves of a circle may be regarded as joined but distinct.⁹⁰

We may also observe a parallel four-ness in what is 'manifest in every eye-entity', i.e. the exercise of Divinity (*ulūhiyya*) complemented by the receptivity of the place where It is exercised (*ma'lūhiyya*), and actively worshipping (*ābidiyya*) complemented by the condition of being worshipped (*ma'būdiyya*). These pairs may be understood as two separate circles, each of which has an 'upper' and a 'lower' half, or as a single circle from an all-inclusive perspective, where the first pair together form the 'upper' half and the second pair the 'lower' half of a single circle, describing the two aspects (active and receptive, total and particular) of the Perfect Human.⁹¹

The *Sharḥ* ends with a 'divine ode' (*qaṣīda ilāhiyya*), which contains 100 verses spread over two pairs of facing pages, with precisely 50 verses on each opening (in certain copies). This corresponds directly to the main rhyming letter *-n* (*nūn*, =50). On the other hand, the extended rhyme is *-ān* (=1+5), which also expresses the relationship of the Pen (*Alif*=1) to the Inkwell (*Nūn*=5). Furthermore, Bosnevi alludes to the specific nature of this poem by describing the Prophet Muhammad in the final blessing (*ṣalawāt*, immediately after the poem and the date of the copy), as 'the one who was taken by night to the station of the joining of two arcs or even closer (*maqām qāba qawsayn aw adnā*)'. Thus each 'arc' is expressed in 50 poetic verses, while the final unity of the two arcs, which is at the point of 'even closer', is mirrored in the 100 (=1) verses of the poem as a whole. Although Bosnevi more often uses rhyming prose, he occasionally employs poetry, and this poem, together with his own *Tā'iyya*, show the significance he attached to poetry as an expression of sealing: while his *Tā'iyya* seals the first part of the *Qurrat*

90 This is precisely the same sense in which the 'and' (*wāw*) unites and distinguishes the two sentences in couplets 1–20 of the Blessing-prayer.

91 These five elements can also be seen in the verse: 'He (*huwa*) is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden' (Q 57:3). See also couplet 20 in the Blessing-prayer.

‘*ayn al-shuhūd* and his experience of inspiration, this 100-verse *qaṣīda* seals his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

As can be seen from all these examples above, Bosnevi (who seems to hardly ever mention his own authorship directly) not only employs a particular technical vocabulary, but is also highly conscious of the numerical value of letters and words, particularly in relation to the symbolism of the *nūn*.⁹² He constructs his rhyming prose in a very distinctive, rhythmical and structured manner, where the interplay of rhyme-letters, their values and meanings, is part of a kaleidoscopic contemplation. All of these features are to be found in a very similar fashion within the Blessing-prayer of Effusion.

.....
 92 Whenever he records dates at the end of his treatises, they are significant in numerical terms.

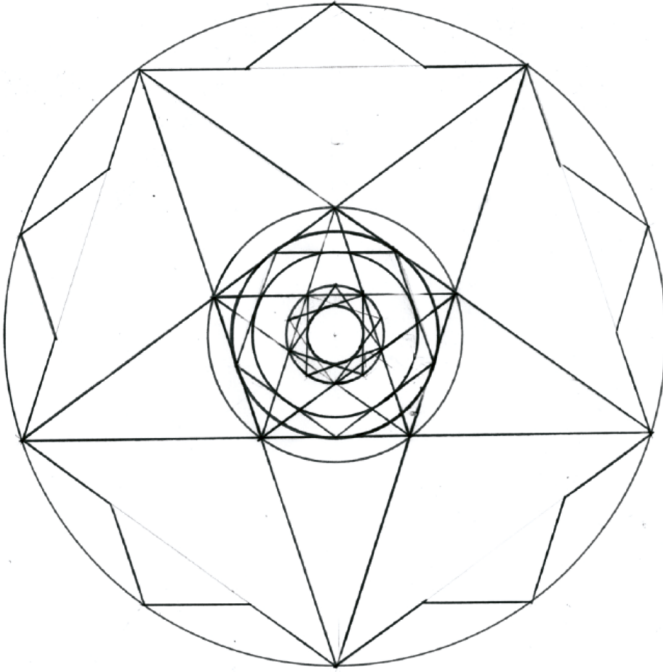


بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ٥

وبعد فيقول العبد الذليل محمد بن الشيخ عبدكبير هذه الفاتحة في بعض الصلوات التي
 انشاها في المولايه المحمديه شيخنا الشيخ الامير سيد السادات الصوفي قدس سراره وافاض
 عليه انظاره لما كان ما قصد الشيخ ابراهيم الرافعي من ابراهيم الامور الدينية والجاهلية
 يصنع السالك على الظاهر في العلم في الدنيا المكنة العلية وقد قال عمر كل امرئ ما بالي
 في الدنيا عظيم بان يكون من الامور الغير المشهورة بالافاض النفسانية بل قصد بها
 وجه الله لا يبداه بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قطع الى التوسيع فيه بانه اذا لم يعلم
 المسمى عند السادات الصوفية بل يختلف بينهم على النفس لا يبرك فيه ولا يخرج لا يحد
 عن مخاض وهيام الفاضل غير ما كثر عند اهل الله صفة الشيخ المحقق باسمه فقال **بسم**
الرحمن الرحيم اي بالله اوصلي واواظف لان نفسي وهذا من باب قرب النوازل والافاض
 ان الله يصلي كما قال في ان الله روي عليه بان الله يقدر المعاني وقع التاليف واظهر
 ويجعل الاسم عبادة عن الشيخ لان الاسم ما دل على الذات والصفة والشيخ والاعبادهما
 كل ذرة من ذرات الكون والاعبادهما فاما المكن بجسمه ونفسه وروحه كاللفظ واكن في
 المعنى الكليات رقة وانت المعنى والاحول والاشياء كما لا يحل المعنى اللفظ وعلى هذا يكون
 من باب قرب الفاضل وهذا هو مقام المؤلف قدس سره او هو الوارث لافاض الشيخ
 للمولايه المحمديه **الكل** والله علم ذات الحق باعتبار مرتبة الالوهية المفسرة بالصفات
 عن جميع الاغيار واستناد الكل اليه بالافقار والرحمن مختص بالله لا يستعمل في غيره
 بحسب الوضع اما قد ايضا علم اولاده لاهلهم من حيث انه لا يوصف بغيره لانها لا ينمو
 كحقيق الباق في الرحمة غايته هو ذلك لا يصدق على غيره نعم لانه من الصفات العلية
 لان هذا يقتضي جواز استعماله في غيره نعم بحسب الوضع وليس كذلك والمشهد وان وصفت
 الله بالرحمة مجاز لانها من الاغراض النفسانية التي تستعمل على الله فاذ وصفت
 بشي منها وجب ان يوصف الكلام عن ظاهره وذلك فيما نحن فيه اما ان يحمل الرحمة
 مجازا تبعا عن ارادة الانعام فتكون الرحمة من الصفات الذاتية او عن الانعام فتكون

CHAPTER 6

The Blessing-Prayer of Divine Effusion upon [the Reality of] Muhammad



الصَّلَاةُ الْفَيْضِيَّةُ الْكُبْرَى عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ الْمُحَمَّدِيَّةِ الْعُظْمَى¹

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[I] اللَّهُمَّ

[A] أَفِضْ صَلَةً صَلَوَاتِكَ ☆ وَسَلَامَةً تَسْلِيمَاتِكَ ☆ عَلَيَّ

[1] أَوَّلِ التَّعِينَاتِ ° الْمُقَاصَّةِ مِنَ الْعَمَاءِ الرَّبَّانِيِّ ☆ وَآخِرِ
التَّنَزُّلَاتِ ° الْمُضَافَةِ² إِلَى النَّوْعِ الْإِنْسَانِيِّ ☆

[2] الْمُهَاجِرِ مِنْ مَكَّةِ ° ﴿كَانَ اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ مَعَهُ شَيْءٌ﴾³
ثَانٍ ☆ إِلَى مَدِينَةِ {وَهُوَ الْآنَ عَلَى مَا عَلَيْهِ كَانَ} ☆

[3] مُحْصِي عَوَالِمِ الْحَضَرَاتِ³ الْخَمْسِ فِي وُجُودِهِ ° ﴿وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ
أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ ☆ وَرَاحِمٍ سَائِلِي أَسْتِعْدَادَاتِهَا
بِنْدَاءٍ⁴ جُودِهِ⁵ ° ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾ ☆

هذا العنوان الكامل لنا، أتمننا انطلاقاً من العناوين المختلفة الموجودة في المخطوطات ومعاني النص
الصَّلَاةُ الْفَيْضِيَّةُ الْكُبْرَى [عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ] الْمُحَمَّدِيَّةِ [الْعُظْمَى]

2 P = الْمُقَاصَّةُ

3 N + الإِلَهِيَّةُ

4 N = بِنْدَاءُ

5 H, P, N = وُجُودِهِ

The Blessing-Prayer of Divine Effusion upon [the Reality of] Muhammad

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

[I.] **O God!**

[A] Effuse the freely given bestowing of Your blessing-prayers, and the health-giving security of Your peace-greetings upon:

[1] the First of the individuations overflowing from the Lordly Cloud, and the Last of the revelations descending to the human species;

[2] the Emigrant from the Mecca of ‘God is and there is not a thing with Him’ as second to the Medina of ‘He is now as He [always] is’;

[3] the Recorder of the domains of the Five Presences within his being – *and We have recorded everything in a clear leader*, and the Mercifier of those who ask for the actualising of the numbered contents [of these Presences] by calling upon his munificence – *and We have only sent you as a mercy to the worlds*;

[4] نُقْطَةُ الْبَسْمَلَةِ ° الْجَامِعَةُ لِمَا يَكُونُ وَكَانَ ☆ ° وَنُقْطَةُ
الْأَمْرِ الْجَوَّالَةِ ° بِدَوَائِرِ الْأَكْوَانِ ☆

[5] سِرُّ الْهُوِّيَّةِ ° الَّتِي فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ° سَارِيَّةٌ ☆ ° وَعَنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ °
مُجَرَّدَةٌ ° وَعَارِيَّةٌ ☆

[6] أَمِينِ اللَّهِ عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْفَوَاضِلِ ° وَمُسْتَوْدَعِهَا ☆ ° وَمُقَسِّمِهَا
عَلَى ° حَسَبِ الْقَوَابِلِ ° وَمُوزِعِهَا ☆

[7] كَلِمَةُ ° الْأِسْمِ ° الْأَعْظَمِ ☆ ° وَفَاتِحَةِ ° الْكَنْزِ ° الْمُطْلَسَمِ ☆

[8] الْمَظْهَرِ ° الْأَتَمِّ ° الْجَامِعِ ° بَيْنَ الْعُبُودِيَّةِ ° وَالرُّبُوبِيَّةِ ☆ ° وَالْمَنْشَأِ
الْأَعَمِّ ° الشَّامِلِ ° لِلْإِمْكَانِيَّةِ ° وَالْوُجُوبِيَّةِ ☆

[9] الطُّورِ ° الْأَشْمِ ° الَّذِي لَمْ يُزَحْزَحْهُ ° التَّجَلِّيُّ ° عَنْ ° مَقَامِ
الْتَّمَكِينِ ☆ ° وَالْبَحْرِ ° الْخِضَمِّ ° الَّذِي لَمْ تُعَكِّرْهُ ° حَيْفُ
الْغَفَلَاتِ ° عَنْ ° صَفَاءِ ° الْيَقِينِ ☆

6 N = ولما كان

7 I = النِّشَاءُ ; N = النُّشْءُ ; SB = النُّشْءُ ; H, K, P, SA, SN = النِّشَاءُ

8 A, G, H, K, SA, SN, I = الطُّورُ ; P = الطُّورُ

9 SB, I, P = تَجَلَّى ; N = تَجَلَّى التَّعَيُّنَاتِ

- [4] the Dot of the *basma* that brings together all that is to be and has been, and the Dot of the Order [Be!] that constantly circulates through the circles of created beings;
- [5] the Secret of the He-ness that permeates [unseen] into each thing, and that remains [utterly] free from everything and naked;
- [6] God's trusted Keeper of the storehouses of bounties and their Depositary, and the Apportioner who divides them up in accordance with the [needs of the] receivers and their Distributor;
- [7] the Word of the Supreme Name, and the Opener of the sealed encoded treasure;
- [8] the most complete Place of Manifestation that unites servanthood and Lordship, and the most inclusive Source of Emergence that comprises both possibility and necessity;
- [9] the Grandest Mountain unmoved by Divine Self-revelation away from the station of stability, and the Vastest Ocean unsullied by any polluting negligence away from the purity of certainty;

[10] الْقَلَمِ التُّورَانِيِّ ° الْجَارِي بِمَدَادِ ° الْحُرُوفِ الْعَالِيَاتِ ☆
وَالنَّفْسِ الرَّحْمَانِيِّ¹⁰ ° السَّارِي بِمَوَادِّ ° الْكَلِمَاتِ التَّامَّاتِ ☆

[11] الْفَيْضُ الْأَقْدَسُ ° الذَّاتِي ° الَّذِي تَعَيَّنَتْ بِهِ ° الْأَعْيَانُ °
وَأُسْتَعْدَادَاتُهَا ☆ وَالْفَيْضُ الْمُقَدَّسُ ° الصِّفَاتِي ° الَّذِي
تَكُونَتْ بِهِ ° الْأَكْوَانُ ° وَأُسْتِمْدَادَاتُهَا ☆

[12] مَطْلَعُ ° شَمْسِ ° الذَّاتِ ° فِي سَمَاءِ ° الْأَسْمَاءِ ° وَالصِّفَاتِ ☆
وَمَنْبَعُ ° نُورِ ° الْإِفَاضَاتِ ° فِي رِيَاضِ ° النَّسَبِ ° وَالْإِضَافَاتِ ☆

[13] خَطُّ ° الْوَحْدَةِ ° بَيْنَ ° قَوْسِي ° الْأَحَدِيَّةِ ° وَالْوَحِيدِيَّةِ ☆ وَوَاسِطَةُ °
° التَّنْزِيلِ ° الْإِلَهِيِّ¹¹ ° مِنْ ° سَمَاءِ ° الْأَزَلِيَّةِ ° إِلَى ° الْأَرْضِ ° الْأَبَدِيَّةِ ☆

[14] ° النُّسخَةِ ° الصُّغْرَى ° الَّتِي ° تَفَرَّعَتْ ° عَنْهَا °¹² ° الْكُبْرَى ☆
° وَالْدَّرَةِ ° الْبَيْضَا ° الَّتِي ° تَنْزَلَتْ ° إِلَى ° الْيَافُوتَةِ ° لَحْمًا ☆

.....
النَّفْسِ = P ; الرَّحْمَانِيِّ - H, SA, SN

التَّنْزِيلِ = SB ; الْإِلَهِيِّ - A, K, N, SA

عَنْهُ = H, P, SB

- [10] the Pen of Light that flows with the ink of the high Letters, and the Breath of Compassion that permeates the components of the complete Words;
- [11] the Most Holy Effusion of the Essence through which potential realities and their predispositions are individuated, and the Holy Effusion of the Qualities by which created beings and their extension in forms are brought into existence;
- [12] the Rising-place of the sun of the Essence in the sky of the Names and Qualities, and the Wellspring of the light of effusions abundantly irrigating the gardens of primary relationships and secondary connections;
- [13] the Line of Unity [that lies] between the two arcs of Uniqueness and Oneness, and the Intermediary of the divine descending from the heaven of beginningless Eternity to the earth of Endlessness;
- [14] the Minor Transcript [of the Real] from whom derives the major [transcript], and the White Pearl that descends to the red ruby;

[15] جَوْهَرٌ¹³ الْحَوَادِثِ الْإِمْكَانِيَّةِ[◊] الَّتِي لَا تَخْلُو¹⁴ عَنِ الْحَرَكَةِ[◊]
وَالسُّكُونِ ☆ وَمَادَّةُ الْكَلِمَةِ الْفَهْوَانِيَّةِ[◊] الطَّالِعَةِ مِنْ
كُنَّ[◊] (كُنْ) إِلَى شَهَادَةِ[◊] (فَيَكُونُ) ☆

[16] هَيُولَى[◊] الصُّورِ الَّتِي لَا تَتَجَلَّى بِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا[◊] مَرَّةً لَا أَثْنَتَيْنِ¹⁵
☆ وَلَا بِصُورَةٍ مِنْهَا لِأَحَدٍ مَرَّتَيْنِ ☆

[17] قُرْآنٍ[◊] الْجَمْعِ الشَّامِلِ[◊] لِلْمُمْتَنِعِ وَالْعَدِيمِ ☆ وَفُرْقَانٍ[◊]
الْفَرْقِ الْفَاصِلِ[◊] بَيْنَ الْحَادِثِ وَالْقَدِيمِ ☆

[18] صَائِمٍ[◊] نَهَارٍ (إِنِّي أَبِيْتُ عِنْدَ رَبِّي) ☆ وَقَائِمٍ[◊] لَيْلٍ
(تَنَامُ عَيْنَايَ وَلَا يَنَامُ قَلْبِي) ☆

[19] وَاسِطَةٍ[◊] مَا بَيْنَ الوجودِ وَالْعَدَمِ[◊] (مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ)
يَلْتَقِيَانِ ☆ وَرَابِطَةٍ[◊] تَعْلُقُ الْحُدُوثَ بِالْقَدِيمِ[◊] (بَيْنَهُمَا)
بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ ☆

[20] فَذَلِكَ[◊] 16 دَفْتَرِ الْأَوَّلِ وَالْآخِرِ ☆ وَمَرْكَزِ إِحَاطَةٍ[◊]
الْبَاطِنِ وَالظَّاهِرِ ☆

.....
13 N = جَوْهَرٌ

14 H = يَخْلُو

15 N = بِإِحْدَاهَا مَرَّةً لِاثْنَيْنِ

16 H, SN, SB = فَذَلِكَ

- [15] the [Precious] Substance of potential utterances which cannot but imply movement and rest, and the Matter of the spoken word that arises from the concealment of *Be* into the witnessing of *and so it becomes*;
- [16] the Materia Prima of forms that is only disclosed in one [reality] once, never two times, nor is it disclosed in one of those forms to someone twice;
- [17] the Quran of integration embracing the pure [Transcendence] that rejects all limitation and the latent [possibilities] that remain non-existent, and the Furqan of separation differentiating the newly arrived from the ancient;
- [18] the Abstinent who fasts in the day-time of ‘I spend the night with my Lord’, and the Awake who stands in the night-time of ‘my eyes are asleep but my heart does not sleep’;
- [19] the Centrepiece of all that lies between being and not-being – *He has released the two seas that meet together*, and the Clasp that links the phenomenal to the eternal – *between the two a barrier which they do not go beyond*;
- [20] the Epitome of the logbook of the first and the last, and the Centre [of the circle] that encompasses the interior and the exterior;

حَبِيبِكَ^٥

[21] الَّذِي أَسْتَجَلَيْتَ بِهِ جَمَالَ ذَاتِكَ^٥ عَلَى مَنْصَةِ تَجَلِّيَاتِكَ^{١٧} ☆
وَنَصَبْتُهُ قَبْلَهُ لِتَوَجُّهَاتِكَ^٥ فِي جَامِعِ تَجَلِّيَاتِكَ ☆

[22] وَخَلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِ خِلْعَةَ الصِّفَاتِ وَالْأَسْمَاءِ ☆ وَتَوَجَّهْتُهُ
بِتَاجِ الْخِلَافَةِ الْعُظْمَى ☆

[23] وَأَسْرَيْتَ بِجَسَدِهِ يَقْظَةً ☆ ﴿مِنْ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى
الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى﴾ حَتَّى ☆

[24] انْتَهَى إِلَى ☆ ﴿سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى﴾ ☆ وَتَرَفَّى إِلَى ☆ ﴿قَابِ
قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى﴾ ☆

[25] فَأَسِرَّ فُؤَادُهُ بِشُهُودِكَ^٥ حَيْثُ لَا صَبَاحَ وَلَا مَسَاءَ^٥ ﴿مَا
كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى﴾ ☆ وَأُقِرَّ^{١٨} بَصَرُهُ بِوُجُودِكَ^٥ حَيْثُ
لَا خَلَاءَ وَلَا مَلَأَ^٥ ﴿مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى﴾ ☆

.....
١٧ A, K, P, SN = تَجَلِّيَاتِكَ
١٨ N = وَقُرَّ ; SN = وَاقَرُّ هَرَّةً

Your Beloved-Lover:

- [21] through whom You have revealed the beauty of Your Essence in the [elevated] bridal pavilion of Your [intimate] unveilings, and whom You have appointed as the qibla for all who face You in the mosque [of manifestation] where Your [manifold] disclosures congregate;
- [22] and whom You have invested with the robe of [Your] Qualities and Names, and whom You have crowned with the diadem of the supreme Representative;
- [23] and whose body You made to travel by night in [full] wakefulness *from the Sacred Mosque to the Furthest Mosque*, until
- [24] he was brought to *the Lote-Tree of the [Highest] Limit*, and taken up to *the distance of two arcs or even closer*;
- [25] and so his heart was delighted by witnessing You, where there is no morning or evening, *and his heart did not deny what it saw*; and his eye was refreshed by finding You, where there is no emptiness or fullness, *his eye did not swerve nor go beyond*.

[II] صَلِّ اللَّهُمَّ عَلَيْهِ صَلَاةً °

[1] يَصِلُ¹⁹ بِهَا فَرْعِي ° إِلَى أَصْلِي ° وَبَعْضِي ° إِلَى كُلِّ ° ☆

[2] لَتَتَّحِدَ ذَاتِي ° بِذَاتِهِ ° ☆ وَصِفَاتِي ° بِصِفَاتِهِ ° ☆

[3] وَتَقَرَّرَ أَلْعَيْنُ ° بِالْعَيْنِ ° ☆ وَيَفِرَّ أَلْبَيْنُ ° مِنْ أَلْبَيْنِ ° ☆

[4] وَسَلَّم عَلَيْهِ سَلَامًا ° أَسْلَمُ بِهِ فِي مُبَايَعَتِهِ²⁰ ° مِنْ أَلتَّخَلُّفِ °
☆ وَفِي²¹ طَرِيقِ شَرِيعَتِهِ ° مِنْ أَلتَّعَسُّفِ ° ☆

[5] لَا فَتُتَحَ²² بَابَ مَحَبَّتِكَ ° إِيَّايَ ° بِمِفْتَاحِ مُتَابَعَتِهِ ° وَأَشْهَدَكَ °
فِي حَوَاسِي وَأَعْضَائِي ° مِنْ مِشْكَاتِ شَرْعِهِ ° وَطَاعَتِهِ ° ☆

[6] وَأَدْخُلْ وَرَاءَهُ إِلَى²³ حِصْنٍ ° ﴿لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾ ° ☆ وَفِي أَثَرِهِ °
إِلَى ° خَلْوَةٍ ° ﴿لِي وَقْتُ مَعَ اللَّهِ﴾ ° ☆

[B] إِذْ هُوَ بَابُكَ الَّذِي مَنْ لَمْ يَقْصِدْكَ مِنْهُ سُدَّتْ عَلَيْهِ
الطُّرُقُ وَالْأَبْوَابُ²⁵ ° وَرَدَّ بَعْصَا الْأَدَبِ إِلَى إِصْطَبْلِ
الدَّوَابِ ° ☆

.....
19 I, P, SB = تَصِلُ

20 All mss = مُتَابَعَتِهِ

21 N = وَأَسْلَمُ فِي

22 N = لَا فَتُتَحَ

23 A, SN, SB = وَأَدْخُلْ إِلَى وَرَاءِ °; G = وَأَدْخُلْ وَرَاءَ °

24 G = وَفِي أَثَرِهِ خَلْعُهُ

25 P - الطُّرُقُ

[II.] **O God**, bless him with a blessing-prayer

- [1] through which my branch joins up with my root,
and my part with my whole,
- [2] so that my essence may be united with his essence,
my qualities with his qualities,
- [3] and so that the eye may be refreshed by the source,
and between-ness may escape from separation;
- [4] and greet him with salutations of peace by which I
may be fully committed in pledging allegiance to him,
preserved from holding back, and secure in walking
the path of his revealed way, safe from deviating,
- [5] so that I may open the door of Your Love for me
with the key of following him, and that I may witness
You in my senses and organs from the niche of his
revelatory guidance and conformity,
- [6] and that I may enter behind him into the citadel of
'there is no god but God', and be allowed to follow in
his footsteps into the retreat-cell of 'I have a moment
with God'.
- [B] For he is Your gateway: anyone who aspires to reach
You without him will find [all] paths and doors shut
to them, and will be driven back with the staff of
courtesy to the animals' stable.

[III] اللَّهُمَّ يَا رَبَّ

[C] يَا مَنْ لَيْسَ حِجَابُهُ إِلَّا النُّورُ ☆ وَلَا خَفَاؤُهُ إِلَّا شِدَّةُ
الظُّهُورِ ☆

[1] أَسْأَلُكَ بِكَ ° فِي مَرْتَبَةِ إِطْلَاقِكَ ° عَنْ كُلِّ تَقْيِيدِ ☆
الَّتِي تَفْعَلُ بِهَا ° مَا تَشَاءُ وَتُرِيدُ ☆²⁶

[2] وَبِكَشْفِكَ ° عَنْ ذَاتِكَ ° بِالْعِلْمِ الثُّورِيِّ ☆ وَتَحَوُّلِكَ °
فِي صُورِ أَسْمَائِكَ وَصِفَاتِكَ ° بِالْوُجُودِ الصُّورِيِّ ☆

[3] أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَاةً ° تَكْحُلُ بِهَا ° بَصِيرَتِي
بِالنُّورِ الْمَرْشُوشِ فِي الْأَزْلِ ☆ لِأَشْهَدَ فَنَاءً ° ﴿مَا لَمْ
يَكُنْ﴾ وَبَقَاءً ° ﴿مَا لَمْ يَزَلْ﴾ ☆

[4] وَأَرَى الْأَشْيَاءَ ° كَمَا هِيَ فِي أَصْلِهَا ° مَعْدُومَةً
مَفْقُودَةً ☆ وَكَوْنَهَا ²⁷ لَمْ تَشَمَّ رَاحِجَةَ الْوُجُودِ فَضْلاً
عَنْ كَوْنِهَا ° مَوْجُودَةً ☆

الطَّرِيقُ وَ - P²⁵

وَمَا تُرِيدُ = G²⁶

وَعَنْ كَوْنِهَا = H, P²⁷

[III.] O God! O my Lord!

[C] O You whose veil is nothing but Light, whose hiddenness is nothing but the intensity of Manifestation! I ask of You:

[1] through You [alone] at the level of Your Absoluteness, free of all limitation, by which You do whatever You wish and desire;

[2] and through Your unveiling of Your Essence with the light of knowledge, and Your [constant] transmutation in the forms of Your Names and Qualities within the images of existence;

[3] [I ask] that You bless our master Muhammad with a blessing-prayer by which You refresh my inner eye, anointing it with the light that is sprinkled in beginningless eternity, so that I may witness the passing-away of 'what has never been' and the remaining of 'what has never ceased to be';

[4] and that I may see things as they are in their root, non-existent and absent, and [perceive] that they never smell the fragrance of Being, beyond their being present.

[IV] وَأَخْرِجْنِي بِاللَّهِمَّ بِالصَّلَاةِ عَلَيْهِ

[1] مِنْ ظُلْمَةِ أَنَانِيَّتِي ° إِلَى التُّورِ ° وَمِنْ قَبْرِ جُسْمَانِيَّتِي °²⁸
إِلَى جَمْعِ الْحَشْرِ وَفَرَقِ النَّشُورِ °

[2] وَأَفِضْ عَلَيَّ مِنْ سَمَاءِ ° تَوْحِيدِكَ ° إِيَّاكَ ° مَا تُطَهِّرُنِي بِهِ °
مِنْ رَجَسِ الشَّرِّكَ ° وَالْإِشْرَاكَ °

[3] وَأَنْعِشْنِي ° بِالْمَوْتَةِ الْأُولَى ° وَالْوِلَادَةِ الثَّانِيَةِ ° وَأَحْيِنِي °
بِالْحَيَاةِ الْبَاقِيَةِ ° فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا ° الْفَانِيَةِ °

[4] وَأَجْعَلْ لِي ° ﴿نُورًا﴾ ° أَمْشِي ° ﴿بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ﴾ ° فَارَى °
وَجْهَكَ ° ﴿أَيْنَمَا ° تَوَلَّيْتُ﴾ ° بِدُونِ أَشْتَبَاهٍ ° وَلَا أَلْتَبَّاسٍ °

[5] نَاطِرًا ° بَعَيْنِي ° الْجَمْعِ ° وَالْفَرَقِ ° فَاصِلًا ° بَيْنَ الْبَاطِلِ °
وَالْحَقِّ °

[6] دَالًا °³⁰ ° بِكَ ° عَلَيْكَ ° وَهَادِيًا ° بِإِذْنِكَ ° إِلَيْكَ °

28 N = جُسْمَانِيَّتِي °

29 P, H = أَسْمَاءُ °

30 SA = مُسْتَدَلًا °

[IV.] O God! With this blessing-prayer upon him,

- [1] bring me out, from the darkness of my I-ness into the Light, and from the grave of my bodiliness to the reunion of the Gathering [in the next world] and the differentiation of the Unfurling;
- [2] bathe me from the heaven of Your proclamation of Your own Unity, with the [merciful rain] that purifies me from the foulness of associating [anything with You] and worshipping others;
- [3] restore me to life with the first death and the second birth, and revive me with enduring Life in this passing world;
- [4] grant me *a light by which I walk among the people* , and so let me see Your Face *wherever I turn* , without any illusion or confusion,
- [5] observing with the two eyes of uniting and separating, distinguishing clearly between the unreal and the Real,
- [6] pointing to You with Yourself, and guiding to You by Your permission.

[V] ﴿يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ﴾ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ

[1] عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَاةٌ تَقْبَلُ بِهَا دُعَائِي ☆ وَتُحَقِّقُ بِهَا رَجَائِي ☆

[2] وَعَلَى آلِهِ آلِ الشُّهُودِ وَالْعِرْفَانِ ☆ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَصْحَابِ الذَّوْقِ وَالْوَجْدَانِ ☆

[3] مَا أَنْتَشَرْتَ طَرَّةً³¹ لَيْلِ الْكِيَانِ ☆ وَأَسْفَرْتَ غُرَّةً³² جَبِينِ الْعِيَانِ ☆

[4] آمِينَ ☆ ﴿وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ ☆ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ ☆

[V.] O Most Merciful of mercifiers, may blessings and peace be

[1] upon our master Muhammad with a blessing by which You accept my supplication and by which You realise my hopes;

[2] and upon his Family, the people of visionary witnessing and immediate knowledge, and upon his Companions, the possessors of experiential taste and direct perceiving,

[3] [without interruption] as long as the veiling fringe of the night of creation is extended, and the shining mark on the daytime brow of eye-witnessing is unveiled!

[4] Amen – *and peace be upon the messengers. And all praise to God, Lord of the worlds.*

The Blessing-Prayer of Divine Effusion upon [the Reality of] Muhammad

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

[I.] O God!¹

[A] Effuse² the freely given bestowing of Your blessing-prayers,³
and the health-giving security of Your peace-greetings⁴ upon:⁵

[1] the First of the individuations overflowing from the Lordly
Cloud,⁶

1 According to al-Nābulūsī, the two *mims* of *Allāhumma* not only indicate the vocative form of addressing Allāh (= *yā Allāh*), but also refer to the two written *mims* of Muḥa[m]mad (fol. 18a).

2 Al-Nābulūsī interprets this initial imperative 'effuse' (*afiḍ*, from the same root as *fayḍ*) as meaning 'manifest Your primordial effusion' (*fayḍu-Ka l-qadīm*, fol. 18a), pointing to a link with the Most Holy Effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*). The numerical value of *afiḍ* (=1+8+9=18=9) is significant as it points to the full expression of all possibilities (see chapter 3). The Form IV imperative can also be interpreted as meaning: 'pronounce clearly'.

3 Al-Baghdādī regards the blessing-prayer from God (*al-ṣalāt min Allāh*) as divine mercy (*al-raḥma*). We may note the lexical interplay between the roots *w-ṣ-l* (*ṣila*) and *ṣ-l-w* (*ṣalawāt*), which share the same three letters, just as the next two terms (*salāma* and *taslimāt*) come from the same root *s-l-m*. Here *ṣila*, which we translate as 'freely given bestowing', also means 'uniting link', implying the blessing-prayer (*ṣalāt*) is a mutual communication between God Himself and His servant (for the expression *al-ṣalāt muwāṣala*, see Bosnevi, *Tajallī al-nūr al-mubīn*, Carullah MS 2129, fol. 49b).

4 Our translation follows the comments of al-Nābulūsī (repeated by al-Baghdādī), who emphasises *ṣila* (linking, connecting) as 'gift' (*'aṭiyya*, *hadiyya*) and *salāma* (security) as 'health' (*ṣiḥḥa*) and 'strength' (*quwwa*) (fols. 2a, 18a). The linguistic parallelism of the two expressions (*ṣilata ṣalawāti-Ka* and *salāmata taslimāti-Ka*) introduces from the very beginning the mirroring pattern that is found through the prayer. There is also a numerical parallelism: *ṣalawāt* and *taslimāt* both equal 20, and their sum equals the 40 sentences of Section I-A. Furthermore, *ṣilah* =5 (the value of *hā*) and *salāmat* =6 (the value of *wāw*), so that their sum comes to the value of the word *Huwa* ('He', 5+6). From another perspective, *ṣilat* =13 and *salāmat* =15, so that their sum comes to 28 (the number of all letters of expression, where 2+8=1, the value of the sum of all letters). In addition, *ṣilata ṣalawāt* =6 and *salāmata taslimāt* =8, making a total of 14=5 (the value of the letter *nūn*, corresponding to the *Nūn* structure), and if the final pronoun *-ka* (=2) is counted in both expressions, the final result is 8+10=18=9 (corresponding to the *Dād* structure), which is also the value of the initial imperative *afiḍ*.

5 The preposition '*alā*' (=2) means both 'over/upon' and 'divided by'. As it initiates the actual sequence of the 40 (=mim) attributes of the Muhammadian Reality, it not only signifies blessings and peace 'over' or 'upon' him but also implies a 2-ness of aspects distributed within each of the 20 couplets. This distributive property can be clearly seen in its two occurrences in couplet 6 (see below).

6 Referring to the response of the Prophet who, when asked 'Where was your Lord before He created creation?', replied: 'He was in the Cloud, above which and below which there was no air' (see *The Secrets of Voyaging*, p. 50). We may also observe the correspondence of the 'First' (*awwal*, =10=1) and the rhyme letter *-ī* (=1) appearing in sentence 1 and couplet 1 (in these notes we have provided examples of correspondences in the first twenty couplets; see Appendix C for a full table).

and the Last of the revelations descending to the human species;⁷

- [2] the Emigrant from the Mecca of ‘God is and there is not a thing with Him’ as second⁸
to the Medina of ‘He is now as He [always] is’;⁹

7 The *alif*, which symbolises the One, appears in both the word ‘first’ (*awwal*) and the word ‘last’ (*ākhir*). The numerical value of *ākhir* (=9) symbolises the last of the numbers (in contrast to the first, 1). We may also observe the correspondence of the final term *al-insānī* (‘human’, =20=2) appearing in sentence 2. There is a delicate but untranslatable play in the terms *mufaḍa* (‘overflowing from’) and *muḍāfa* (lit. ‘connected to’): these two passive participles share the same three letters in their root (f-y-d and ḍ-y-f) in a precise reverse mirroring. The first indicates that the individuations are receiving the overflowing from the Cloud, while the second indicates that the descending revelations are connected to and being received by the human being. In both cases the initial *mim* alludes to the receptive condition expressed by the name Muhammad (also a passive participle). This pairing of coupled terms is mentioned by al-Nābulusi, who commonly uses the term *ma’ṭūf* in his commentary, stating that ‘The Last is coupled (*ma’ṭūf*) with the First’ (18b). This alludes to the fact that the curvature of the manifested side of the *nūn* is connected in a continuous line with its hidden side. We may also observe that the copulative ‘and’ (*wāw*) is not only linking the sentences in the couplet (both ... and) but also distinguishing two levels in a complementary contrast (... and yet/but also ...) – see chapter 5.

8 The term ‘Emigrant’ (*muhājir*), deriving from the same root as *hijra*, indicates the beginning of the Muhammadian era, corresponding to the Prophet’s journey from Mecca to Medina. This is one of only three couplets which has a single term involving two attributes or faces of the Reality of Muhammad (see couplets 5 and 16), and the emphasis here is on the journeying ‘from’ and ‘to’. The numerical value of Mecca can be counted in several ways: as Mak[k]at (4+2+4=1), alluding to the stage of *aḥadiyya* (Uniqueness) and the value of *awwal* (‘First’) in the previous couplet; or as Mak[k]ah (4+2+5=2), in correspondence to the number of this couplet, emphasising the symbology of the physical appearance of Muḥam[m]ad (=2) in contrast to the first couplet’s non-temporality. We may note that the first mention of the Name Allāh (66=3) occurs here in sentence 3 (which is the value of Makkat when the duplication of the letter *kāf* is counted, =12=3). The Arabic word *shay’* (‘thing’, =2) has the same numerical value as the word *thān* (‘second’, =2), and comes from the same root as *mashī’a* (divine Will). This line (‘there is not with Him a second’) indicates that at this stage of pure Unity there is no differentiation of attributes and no ‘withness’.

9 The two sayings in couplet 2 are, firstly, a hadith often quoted by Ibn ‘Arabī, and secondly, an additional saying sometimes attributed to Imam ‘Alī or al-Junayd. In his discussion of these (*Fut.* I.41), Ibn ‘Arabī makes a very similar distinction between two levels (singleness of ‘*ayn*, and multiplicity of aspects and properties) to the one being made here (see Chittick, *SPK*, 393 n. 13): Mecca thus becomes a symbol of Uniqueness (*aḥadiyya*) and Medina exemplifies Oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) and multiplicity (*kathra*). The value of Medina can also be counted in two ways: as *Madīnat* (=18), mirroring the value of *ākhir* (=9); or as *Madīnah* (=19=1), signifying Oneness. So this ‘emigration’ (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina can be understood in two ways: as the movement from the One to the Nine, from the First to the Last, from Unity to Multiplicity, as well as from Uniqueness (beyond number) to Oneness (implying number). Since Medina signifies ‘town’, it always alludes to the arena of multiplicity: al-Baghdādī (fol. 3a) explains that *al-muhājir*, the Emigrant, is here the one who travels (*muṣāfir*) from the Real to the created, since the socialisation (*al-tamaddun*) implied in the name of Medina (*madīna*, from the same root) points to manyness. This is echoed by Nūr al-‘Arabī (p. 7): ‘the *hijra* [of the Prophet] from the Mecca of the Essence to the Medina of the Qualities is from the condition of Unity to that of multiplicity, and this is why they faced Jerusalem (*al-bayt al-muqaddas*) [in prayer] after the *hijra*, as it symbolises facing the [divine] Acts.’ The numerical value of the last part of the sentence is also significant: like the word *huwa* which precedes it, the word *al-ān* equals 11 (=2), in contrast to the previous sentence which denies any ‘withness’ or duality, and therefore points to division like the following preposition ‘*alā*’ (=11). Furthermore, the expression ‘and there is not a thing with Him’ (*wa-lam yakun ma’a-hu shay’*) in the 3rd sentence equals 39 (=3), while the expression ‘[is] as He always is’ (*‘alā mā ‘alay-hi kān*) in the 4th sentence equals 40 (=4). In the hadith in sentence 3 there appears the Name Allāh (=66=3) in correlation with the expression *huwa l-ān* (=22=4) in sentence 4. It is therefore as if the sentences can be read numerically as: ‘66 (the value of *All[ā]h*, 6+6=12=1+2) is 3’, to which the response is: ‘and 22 (the value of *huwa l-ān*, 2+2) is 4’. We may observe the correspondence of the rhyme letters (-h + -ān =5+6=11=2) with couplet 2.

- [3] the Recorder of the domains of the Five Presences¹⁰ within his being – *and We have recorded everything in a clear leader*,¹¹ and the Mercifier of those who ask for the actualising of the numbered contents [of these Presences] by calling upon his munificence¹² – *and We have only sent you as a mercy to the worlds*;¹³

10 The term 'Recorder' (*muḥṣī*, =19), whose action is reiterated in the Quranic verse mentioned at the end of the sentence, suggests that the Muhammadian Reality not only 'counts' or 'records' the number of Presences but also 'collects them into an aggregate' (see the root *ḥ-ṣ-y* in Lane, p.590). On the Divine Name *al-muḥṣī* ('The One who records and keeps count, the Enumerator, He who comprehends all in His Knowledge'), see Ibn 'Arabi's *Kashf al-ma'nā* no. 58 (English translation as *Unveiling the Meaning...* forthcoming). The word 'domains' or 'worlds' ('*awālim*, plural of '*ālam*') is directly related to the idea of 'knowledge' ('*ilm*'), alluding to the fact that this aspect is at the *aqdas* level of the Divine Knowledge, as well as to 'signs' ('*alāmāt*'). As Ibn 'Arabi explains: 'The term "world" is derived from [the word] "sign". Every reality in the world is a sign pointing to a divine reality, which supports its existence and is the ultimate meaning to which it refers' (K. *al-'Abādila*, *Rasā'il*, 1/123). The mention of 'five' (*khamis*) here is significant in at least three separate ways: firstly, this is the fifth sentence describing the Reality of Muhammad; secondly, the Arabic word for 'three' (*thalāth*, =14), associated with couplet 3, has a numerical value of 5 (1+4=5); thirdly, in relation to the well-known akbarian doctrine of the Five Presences, a number that is significantly connected with the value of the *nūn* and to the five sections of the Blessing-prayer. For Nūr al-'Arabi (p. 8), the Five Presences signify the Essence, the Attributes, the Names, the Acts and the Rulings of Law. Bosnevi discusses the Five Presences (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-khams*, =42=6) in different ways, but specifically as degrees or levels contained within the Muhammadian Reality (within 'his being', *wujūdi-hi*, =24=6, which is for him the sixth all-inclusive Presence; see chapter 5). Given that the number 5 is the centre of the sequence 1–9, and in its interior summation it reveals the number 6 (1+2+3+4+5=15=6), in this sense this fifth sentence alludes to the fact that the *hā'* (=5) of 'He' (*huwa*) contains a hidden *wāw* (=6) in its written form, as well as to the triad of aspects (corresponding to this couplet 3) implied in the *hā'* of His 'He-ness', the expressed *wāw* of the Perfect Human Being, and their interrelationship in being joined together in *huwa* (see chapter 5).

11 Q 36:12. This can also be understood as 'We have counted everything in a clear record' or 'matrix' (*imām* is connected to *umm*, 'mother'). The word *imām* may also signify a model or prototype, who records the 'signs'. According to a numerical reading of this verse, 'We have recorded 10 (= *kullā shay'*) in 4 (= *imām mubīn*)', alluding to the tetraktys or the interior sum of 4 (1+2+3+4=10=1). We may observe the significant repetition of the ambivalent pronoun *-hu/hi* (=5) in couplet 5, suggesting both the divine He-ness (*Huwa*) and the Muhammadian Reality, so that some of the terms in the sentences can be read as 'His/his'.

12 That is to say, munificence is generosity (*jūd*) as relating to provision ('*udda*', which is from the same root as the term *isti'dād*). In this case we understand *isti'dād* as the readiness not only to receive but also to actualise the inherent possibilities of manifestation.

13 Q 21:107. The initial term *raḥīm* (=6), which appears at the beginning of sentence 6, suggests 'mercification', which signifies bestowing existence on all existent beings, consequent to the 'recording' of the thing in Knowledge. 'H/his munificence' (*jūdi-hi*, =18=9) in this bestowal is contrasted with 'H/his being' (*wujūdi-hi*, 24=6), and as 9-ness is the fullest expression of number, this line suggests that either God or the Reality of Muhammad is being called upon to be 'munificent' and 'merciful' in manifesting 9-ness, i.e. in actualising all the possibilities of manifestation and of the divine Names and their effects. We have opted to translate *isti'dādāt* as 'numbered contents' to maintain the linguistic connection with the idea of 'number' ('*adad*, from the same root) as well as to allude to the *muqaddas* level of expression in the second part of this couplet. The expression 'mercy to the universes' (*rahmat li-l-'ālamīn*, =45) sums up to 9, and corresponds numerically to the 45 primordial Adamic sciences as well as to the sum of all the digits 1–9 (1+2+3...+9=45). We may observe the correspondence of the rhyme letters (*-ūdhī + -īn* =15+6=21=3) with couplet 3.

[4^{f/f}] the Dot of the *basmala* that brings together all that is to be and has been,¹⁴
and the Dot of the Order [Be!] that constantly circulates through the circles of created beings;¹⁵

14 'The Dot of the *basmala*' is the initial point or dot under the first letter (*bā'*) of the expression *Bismi Llāh al-rahmān al-rahīm* which initiates all revelation: as Ibn 'Arabī observes, 'the *Bismi Llāh* [by itself] is the opener of the Opening (*ġātiḥat al-Fātiḥa*)' (*Fut.* I.101). The expression alludes to the famous saying attributed to Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946) (see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 3/342): 'everything that is in the revealed Book [of the universe] is in the Quran; everything that is in the Quran is in the Fātiḥa; everything that is in the Fātiḥa is in the *Bismi Llāh al-rahmān al-rahīm*; everything that is in the *Bismi Llāh al-rahmān al-rahīm* is in the *bā'*'; and everything that is in the *bā'* is in the dot under the *bā'*. And I am the dot under the *bā'*.' As Nūr al-'Arabī (p. 8) mentions in citing this, 'the dot is the origin of letters; letters are the origin of words; words are the origin of speech'. The dot (*nuqṭat* = 19=1) of the *basmala* (which contains 19 letters) is here depicted as uniting 'all that is to be and has been' (*yakūnu*, =14, *wa-kān* =14), which can be understood as the whole circle of the degrees of Being (=28=1) or as two 5s, signifying the two halves of the *Nūn*, the hidden and the manifest. The circularity is also emphasised in viewing the term *basmalat* (=2+3+4+3+4=16=7) as having the same value as the letter '*ayn*' (=7), which also means 'eye', in sentence 7: in this understanding the 'dot' is the pupil or 'the human being of the eye' (*insān al-'ayn*). We may also observe the correspondence of *nuqṭat al-basmalah* (=40=4) and the rhyme letters (-*lah* + -*n* = 8+5=13=4) with couplet 4.

15 This meditation on the feminine dot (*nuqṭa*) comprises both the initiating of the first circle and the subsequent expansion of an infinite number of circles, as any point on the circumference becomes the centre of a new circle (see Keith Critchlow, *Islamic Patterns*, pp. 9–23). Each existent being is thus regarded as a new universe, with its own centre and circle. To understand the imagery of the two dots, we should note that while the Dot of the *basmala* refers to the graphic point under the letter *bā'* (ٓ), which is the first letter of the Quran (and of each Sura), the Dot of the divine command (ڪُ , *kun*) refers to the point on the final letter *nūn* (ن). The numerical value of these two letters together (*bā'* = 2 + *nūn* = 5) mirrors *k* + *n* (*kun*), the creative Order itself ('Be'), as well as the Pen (symbolised by the *bā'*) and the Inkwell (symbolised by the *nūn*). There is a contrast between the qualifications of the two Dots: the first is synthetic and unitive (*jāmi'*), corresponding to the centre, while the second is in constant motion (*jawwāla*) depicting the details of the circumferences.

[5^{m/f}] the Secret of the He-ness¹⁶ that permeates [unseen] into each thing,¹⁷ and that remains [utterly] free from everything and naked;¹⁸

[6] God's trusted Keeper¹⁹ of the storehouses of bounties and their Depositary,²⁰

16 Couplet 5 is the second to qualify the Reality of Muhammad with a single term which has two aspects or faces: 'the secret of He-ness' (*sirr al-huwiyya*), which permeates and yet remains free of all manifestation. According to Bosnevi, 'the Perfect Human Being, for whom the *wāw* is a symbolic allusion, becomes the secret of the unseen He-ness, because the *wāw* brings together the special properties of all the letters.' (*Sharḥ*, fol. 27a-b) The term *huwiyya* is a feminine word that refers to a masculine meaning ('He-ness'), alluding to the mystery that Reality is simultaneously both 'He' and 'She'. The importance of the feminine can also be seen in the feminine terms *al-dhāt* (the Essence) and *al-haqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* (the Reality of Muhammad), as well as in the concept of 'the complete mirror' (*al-mir'āt al-tāmma*). We might also regard the curvature of the manifest feminine (as Eve is created from the curved rib hidden with Adam) as symbolically connected to the curvature of the letter *nūn*. From the perspective of letters, bearing in mind the special relationship of 5 with 3 (the central number of 1-5), the (masculine) 'secret' of the (feminine) *huwiyya* can be understood in terms of the number of letters: from one point of view, *huwiyyah* has three different individual letters (*hā'*, *wāw* and *yā'*), and from another point of view, five separate letters (*h-w-y-y-h*). It also includes all three vowels (u, i, a), and it begins and ends in the same letter *hā'*. This polyvalent circularity does not apply to the (masculine) *huwa* ('He'), which only has two letters and two vowels. Al-Nābulusī understands 'the secret of *huwiyya*' to be connected to the image of 'a Glorious Quran on a Preserved Tablet' (fol. 21a). Nūr al-'Arabī (p. 9) explains that Muhammad 'is the substance of everything through his light, so he permeates into each thing without incarnation (*ḥulūl*), unification (*ittiḥād*) or natural imprinting (*inṭibā'*)', three aspects which he relates to Christian doctrine on the Trinity, and emphasises the unknowability of the Essence by adding: 'the He-ness is the Essence of the Real in respect of [things] interiors, so It is the Sustainer of everything without a how (*bi-lā kayf*), because only He knows how.' In addition, 'the secret of He-ness' (*sirr* [r] *al-huwiyyah*, =5+13=18=9) can be seen as hidden in 9-ness (*huwiyyah*=18=9, counting the implicit duplication of the *yā'*), corresponding to sentence 9.

17 The word 'secret' (*sirr*) is related by its lexical root to ideas of happiness or 'joy' (*surūr*), the 'bed' (*sarīr*) and 'primordial allusive language' (*suryāniyya*), as well as to the related root (*s-r-y*) found in 'permeating' (*sarayān*) and expressed here in the word *sāriya*, which al-Nābulusī (fol. 21a) interprets as 'all-encompassing' (*muḥīṭa*). For al-Baghdādī (fol. 5a) 'the secret of the He-ness' means its manifestation (*ẓuhūr al-huwiyya*), because the hidden 'secret' (*sirr*) comes to signify 'permeating' (*sarayān*). The term *sāriya* ('permeating joyfully') implies 'night-journeying' (as in *isrā'*), i.e. voyaging in an unseen hidden way, as well as 'circulating' like water, blood, planetary orbits and so on. We may observe the correspondence of *sirr* [r] ('secret', =5) with couplet 5.

18 Al-Baghdādī comments: 'the first [sentence] refers to the world of Command, and the second to the world of Creation' (fol. 5a), which suggests that He is permeating within each thing in transcendence and free from everything in manifestation. In another respect, the secret is invisibly present in the spiritual *Nūn* and disrobes itself as 'naked' in the manifest *Nūn* as visibly absent. This is another way of saying that He is transcendent in immanence and immanent in transcendence. We may observe the correspondence of 'from everything' ('*an kull* [l] *i shay'*, =19=10) with sentence 10.

19 Both al-Nābulusī (fol. 21a) and al-Baghdādī (fol. 5b) state that the term *Amin* ('trusted Keeper') comes from the idea of *amāna*, alluding to the 'sacred trust' entrusted to the human being (see Q 33:72). They both emphasise that the Prophet not only exemplifies the one who is the trustworthy keeper (*amin*) of the divine trust, and is also the keeper of the all-inclusive unitive Name Allāh (*al-ism al-jāmi'*). Nūr al-'Arabī (p. 9) quotes here a hadith of the Prophet saying: 'I am the *Amin* on earth and in the heaven' and mentions the Quranic verse that names the Prophet as 'completely obedient and trustworthy' (*muṭā' in thumma amin*) (Q 81:21). We may observe the correspondence of *amin* (=11) with sentence 11 and of *amin* Allāh (=78=15=6) with couplet 6.

20 The 'bounties' (*ḥawāḍil*, lit: 'superabundant benefactions, excellent gifts') indicate the divine Names, which are preserved by the Perfect Human Being. The imagery recalls the prophet Joseph as the keeper of the Pharaoh's granaries. The related term *mustawda'* ('depository') occurs twice in the Quran, and is usually understood to refer to a place: 'It is He who has produced you from a single soul. [There is] a lodging place (*mustaqarr*) and a place of deposit (*mustawda'*)' (Q 6:98). 'There is no beast on the earth but its sustenance depends on God. He knows its lodging place and its deposit. Everything is in a clear record' (Q 11:6). According to the commentators, however, the word here indicates a person to whom things are given for safekeeping (depository) rather than a place (repository).

and the Apportioner who divides them up²¹ in accordance with the [needs of the] receivers and their Distributor;

[7^{f/f}] the Word²² of the Supreme Name,²³
and the Opener of the sealed encoded treasure;²⁴

.....
21 Alluding to the Prophet's saying: 'I am Abū l-Qāsim. God gives to me, and I divide it up' (Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* 9597). The use of 'We' in the verse: 'Is it they who divide up (*yaqsimūna*) your Lord's mercy? [No,] it is We who have divided out (*qasamnā*) their livelihood among them in the life of this world and We have raised some of them above others in rank...' (Q 43:32) implies the 'plurality' of the divine Actor, referring either to the Names or the mediation of the Reality of Muhammad. We note here the repeated use of the preposition '*alā*' (=11), in the first sentence meaning 'over', emphasising that the unitive Reality of Muhammad is 'above' and in charge of the storehouses, and in the second sentence meaning 'divided by' to emphasise the idea of apportioning and distributing (from 1 to 2, 3 etc). We may observe the correspondence of the 'Apportioner' (*muqassim*, =12) with sentence 12 and of the 'Distributor' (*muwaz[zi]*, =24=6) with couplet 6.

22 The term *kalima* (=13, corresponding to sentence 13), which we have translated as 'Word', suggests the first inner expression or 'Verb' of the inexpressible. There is an implied correspondence between Muhammad as the 'Word' of the Supreme Name and Jesus as 'His Word' (see Q 4:171), since both are 'the [manifest] Word of the Real Unseen (*al-ghayb al-ḥaqq*)' (al-Nābulusī, fol. 21b). We may also note that the word *kalima* relates to the idea of 'wound' or 'incision' (*kalm*): as Ibn 'Arabī explains, 'speaking (*kalām*) is the attribute that brings about effects in the Compassionate Breath. It is derived from the word "wound" (*kalm*), which means injuring someone by cutting (*jarḥ*). This is why we say [speaking] brings about an effect, like the mark of a wound on a body that is cut open. The first word to cleave through the hearing of possible things is the word "Be". The world only manifests through the attribute of speech' (Fut. II.181; see Hirtenstein, 'The Healer of Wounds', *JMIAS* 70, 2021).

23 Ar: *al-ism al-a'zam*. The question of the Supreme Name is often treated in Islamic treatises in symbolical encoded terms including mysterious alphabets, an aspect connected here to the use of the term *muṭalsam* (see next note). Ibn 'Arabī takes it as indicating the 100th Name of the 99 Most Beautiful Names and relates it to the fullness of Mercy (*shumūl al-raḥma*) (Fut.4/158), suggesting that it lies beyond the reach of number (since 99=18=9, whereas 100 returns to 1). For a discussion of the hadiths and explanations on the Supreme Name, see Daniel Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, pp. 85–94.

24 The 'Opener' (*fātiha*), with all its Quranic associations as the first chapter (containing 7 verses in correspondence with the number of this couplet, and the 14 of *al-sab' al-mathānī* in sentence 14) and summary of the whole Book, is contrasted with the 'Word' (*kalima*) of the first part of the couplet, indicating its nature as bringing into manifestation. We may note that both terms (*kalima* and *fātiha*) are feminine, and that the initial *kāf* of *kalima* expresses the hidden *kun*, and the *fā* of *fātiha* expresses the manifest *fahwāniyya* (verbalisation) of the *fā-yakūn*. The *fā* (=8) also suggests an allusion to the eight points of the cube (Ka'ba), which is the 'sealed treasure', around which seven circumambulations are performed. As an 'encoded treasure' (*kanz*, =14), it may be taken to refer to the 14 'enigmatic' letters, those that appear isolated at the beginning of particular suras. The 'treasure' also alludes to the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī*: 'I was an unknown treasure and I loved to be known...' (see Fut. II.112, 232, 310 etc.). From a numerical perspective, *kanz* (=14=5) equates to the letter *hā*, suggesting that the 'unknown treasure' is hidden in the unseen of the Ipeity (*huwiyya*). Bearing in mind A'isha's statement that the Prophet's character was the Qur'ān, this sentence indicates that as the Fātiha, he is both the synthesis and the opener of the 'Book', whose secrets are encoded. Both al-Nābulusī (fol. 21b) and al-Baghdādī (fol. 6a) comment on *muṭalsam* ('encoded') as deriving from *ḥilasm* (the origin of the word talisman), a 'non-Arabic' word (*kalima a'jamiyya*) that signifies for Arabs 'hiddenness' (*khafā*). In his discussion of the Hidden Treasure al-Nābulusī quotes a version of the hadith that ends: '...so that I may be known to them, and so through Me they recognise Me (*fa-ta'arraḥtu ilay-him fa-bī 'arāfū-nī*)'. He shows his deep awareness of the procedures of arithmosophy when explaining that the expression *fa-bī* ('so through Me') equals 92 in the major system (=80+2+10=92), which is also the value of the name Muhammad (in the same system). Al-Nābulusī comments that: 'therefore they know God through [Muhammad], since he is a hidden treasure in the worlds of possibility', suggesting that He can only be known through the hidden treasure of Muhammad. He also uses a different hermeneutical procedure when regarding the letters of the term *ḥilasm* in precise reverse mirror order as meaning *musallīṭ* ('the one who gives power or authority [over things]'). These words both have the same letters and therefore the same numerical value. Al-Nābulusī's debt here to Ibn 'Arabī with regard to the letter-reversal of these two terms can be seen in Chapter 352 of the *Futūḥāt* on the secrets of the talisman (3/242). It would be possible, therefore, to translate the expression as 'the talismanic treasure'.

- [8] the most complete Place of Manifestation²⁵ that unites
servanthood and Lordship,
and the most inclusive Source of Emergence²⁶ that comprises
both possibility and necessity;
- [9] the Grandest Mountain unmoved by Divine Self-revelation away
from the station of stability,²⁷
and the Vastest Ocean unsullied by any polluting negligence away
from the purity of certainty;²⁸

25 Ar: *al-maẓhar al-atamm*, an expression also found referring to the Reality of Muhammad in Bosnevi's *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, fol. 113b: 'his most complete and all-inclusive place of manifestation in the interior is the Seal of Sainthood'. Here begins a sequence of 4 inner rhymes in *-ammi*, which are found in couplets 8 and 9: these resonate with the ending of *Allāhumma* in two *mims* (=2x4) as well as alluding to the name Muḥammad. Couplet 8 incorporates a deep meditation on 4 pairs (4x2=8) of major terms, the first manifesting at the *aqdas* level and the second at the *muqaddas* level: *al-maẓhar al-atamm* (most complete place of manifestation) + *al-mansha'* *al-a'amm* (most universal source); *jāmi'* (uniting) + *shāmil* (comprising, including); *rubūbiyya* (lordship) + *'ubūdiyya* (servanthood); and *wujūbiyya* (necessity) + *imkāniyya* (possibility). On the structure of pairs of terms within semicircles, see chapter 1. We may also observe the correspondence of 'uniting' (*jāmi'*, =15) with sentence 15, and of 'most complete' (*al-atamm*, =17=8) with couplet 8.

26 Ar: *al-mansha'* *al-a'amm* (=15+20=35=8, in correspondence with couplet 8). The term *mansha'* ('source') is used by Ibn 'Arabi in subtly different contexts: 'the interior (*bāṭin*) is the source from which the exterior (*ẓāhir*) emerges' (*Fut.* II.563); 'Gabriel descended from the Presence of the Real to the Prophet, even though inclination (*mayl*) has no rightful place in the reality of the angel – for he is the source where equilibrium emerges (*mansha'* *al-i'tidāl*) between the two' (*Fut.* I.54). The designation of the Reality of Muhammad as 'the most universal source' here suggests that he includes all the possible and necessary positive qualities that are found in existence. We find the same combination of the two terms used in this couplet, *maẓhar* and *mansha'*, in Bosnevi's *Sharḥ* (chapter of Moses, fol. 458a): 'The perfect gnostic (*'arif*) is the place (*maẓhar*) where the Muhammadian Divine Religion manifests... and the source (*mansha'*) where Divine Knowledge emerges.'

27 This is a clear reference to the mountain (*tūr*) which was shown to Moses as perishing when God revealed Himself (see Q 7:143), whose crumbling into dust is contrasted with this 'mountain' of the Reality of Muhammad, which remains 'unmoved' by the divine revelation. For Nūr al-'Arabi (p. 11) the station of stability (*tamkin*) indicates 'the station of sealhood (*khitām*): the Prophet seals both prophethood and sainthood, for he is the [ultimate] Seal, while others, such as Jesus as the Seal of Universal Sainthood, are his deputies.' Some manuscripts give another word for mountain here (*tawd*=1), which is referred to in the context of the two sides of the sea parted by Moses with his staff (for this *nūmic* image, see *al-tawd al-'aẓīm*, Q 26:63), there being only a slight difference in Arabic script between the two final letters (, *dāl* instead of , *rā'*). There is also a Quranic reference in the word *yuzahẓiḥu* ('moved', 2:96, 3:185). We may observe the numerical correspondence of the 'mountain' (*tūr*, =17) with sentence 17, and of the first letter (*tā'*, =9) of the first term (*tūr*) with couplet 9.

28 The term translated as 'pollution', *jīyaf* (plural of *jīfa*), literally means 'corpses', dead bodies floating in the sea (for example, after a sea-battle). This suggests that negligence is associated with the dead, while certainty is the mark of the living. The imagery here also suggests that the elevated mountain is unmoved by manifesting as the visible lower ocean: the two images come together in the image of a high mountain reflected in the water of a lake. Nothing that happens on the surface of the lake can alter the stability of the mountain, and nothing that happens in the ocean can alter its essential purity. In contrast to couplet 8, which is marked by a positive affirmation of two opposing pairs (servanthood vs lordship, possibility vs necessity), couplet 9 emphasises the negation of the effect of accidents on the qualities of the Essence.

- [10] the Pen of Light that flows with the ink of the high Letters,²⁹
and the Breath of Compassion that permeates the components of
the complete Words;³⁰
- [11] the Most Holy Effusion of the Essence through which potential
realities and their predispositions are individuated,³¹
and the Holy Effusion of the Qualities by which created beings
and their extension in forms are brought into existence;³²

.....
29 Ar: *al-hurūf al-‘āliyāt* ('high letters'): the use of this plural feminine adjective, normally related to women, (instead of *‘āliya*) suggests that they are regarded as 'personal realities', not things. This phrase also appears in a famous poem attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī (and to others): 'We were lofty letters unuttered / held latent within the highest mountain-peaks / I am you in Him and we are you and you are He / and all is He in Him – ask those who have attained' (Bodleian Pococke 275, fol. 35b; see *JMIAS*, vol. 54, 2013). The 'high letters' could signify all the letters of the alphabet as they are the latent constituent elements of all manifesting 'words' (for the distribution of the letters in the circle, see the diagram in Titus Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology according to Ibn ‘Arabī*, pp. 32–33). They may also allude to the fourteen luminous spiritual letters mentioned at the beginning of certain suras, which might be understood as belonging to the unseen semi-circle of the *nūn* – the other fourteen letters of the Arabic alphabet would then be the manifest semi-circle. The terms *jāri* ('flows') and *sāri* ('permeates') denote circular movement, recalling the imagery of the variable leg of the compass (the Pen) circulating round the circle of existence (the *nūn*) through the degrees of the letters (see chapter 1). We may also observe the correspondence of the initial *qāf* (=1) of the first term *qalam* ('Pen') with sentence 19 (=1), of both *qalam nūrānī* ('luminous Pen', =28) and *al-hurūf* ('letters', =28) which equal 10 (2+8), and the inner rhyme of *yā*’ (=10) with couplet 10.

30 The full form *al-naḥas al-raḥmānī* ('the Breath of Compassion', =20+25=45) is typically preferred by Bosnevi over the more common form of the hadith as used by Ibn ‘Arabī (*naḥas al-raḥmān*, =16+24=40). In this form there is an allusion, inter alia, to the primordial Adamic sciences (see note 12). The phrase *al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt* ('the complete Words', =18+18=36=9, also 'personal realities' like *al-hurūf al-‘āliyāt*) is an allusion to the Prophet's prayer: 'I seek refuge in God's complete Words', and whose numerical value as 9 points to all manifestation as the inexhaustible words of God (see Q 18:109, 31:27). There is an important contrast in this couplet between the Pen that writes the voiceless 'letters' in the hidden realm and the Breath that articulates the vocalised 'words' in the manifest realm. The two terms *midād* ('ink') and *mawādd* ('components') mirror each other and come from the same root *m-d-d* (see note 32). We may also observe the correspondence of 'breath' (*al-naḥas*, =20) and 'compassion' (*raḥm[ā]nī*, =20) with sentence 20.

31 This couplet 11 is a deep contemplation on the nature of the two effusions (*ḥayḍ*), and the various mirroring contrasts between them: the first *aqdas* level is related to the One Essence (*dhāt*), the second *muqaddas* level to the many Qualities (*ṣifāt*) and the realm of created existence where all forms are composed of a plurality of attributes, letters and so on (see chapter 3). This can be seen in the emphatic repetition of the letter 'ayn in the first part (*ta‘ayyanat*, *a‘yān*, *istī‘dād*), alluding to the One Eye-entity ('ayn *wāḥida*, =1), contrasted with the repetition of the letter *kāf* (=2) in the second part (*takawwanat*, *akwān*).

32 The term *istimdādāt* ('extension in forms', from the root *m-d-d*) suggests the imagery of ink being drawn from an inkwell in order to write letters or numbers that are pronounced as words or are manifested as shapes. The 'created beings' (*akwān*), contrasted with 'potential immutable realities', *a‘yān* are those which have received the command 'Be' (*kun*) and are therefore 'pronounced' as words. In this couplet the 'predisposition' (*istī‘dād*, from the same root as *‘adad*, 'number' and *‘udda*, 'readiness') corresponds to the 'extension' (*istimdād*, from the same root as *midād*, 'ink', *mudda*, 'period', or *mādda*, 'matter'), meaning 'extension in time and space' or 'expanse'. Thus numbers, which order the potential nature of things, rule over all patterns and their extension into the space-time dimension. It is also possible to understand the contrast of *istī‘dād* and *istimdād* by considering the grammatical Form X of the verb, which implies 'seeking', 'asking for': in this sense *istī‘dād* suggests 'being in a condition of readiness to be brought into existence', and *istimdād* means 'seeking to be assisted (from *madad*, help, assistance) in manifestation'. We may observe the correspondence of *al-ḥayḍ* (=22) with sentence 22, and *al-ḥayḍ al-muqaddas* (=38=11) with couplet 11.

[12^{m/f}] the Rising-place of the sun of the Essence in the sky of the Names and Qualities,³³

and the Wellspring of the light of effusions abundantly irrigating the gardens of primary relationships and secondary connections;³⁴

[13^{m/f}] the Line of Unity [that lies] between the two arcs of Uniqueness and Oneness,³⁵

.....
33 Couplet 12 focuses primarily on the Essence (*dhāt*, =12) and its relationship as a rising sun and a source of light. Nūr al-‘Arabī (p. 12) glosses this line as: ‘Know that the place of manifestation of the Essence is the Qualities, and the place of manifestation of the Qualities is the Names, and the place of manifestation of the Names is the Acts. So he, peace and blessings be upon him, is the manifestation of the Names... because he is the first to be created by His Light and in this likeness.’ We may observe the correspondence of *maṭlaʿ* (‘rising-place’, =23) with sentence 23.

34 Ar: *al-nisab wa-l-iḍāfāt*, literally ‘kin or family relationships’ and ‘limiting ascriptions’, both of which are affirmative conceptions. Grammatically the *nisba* implies two nouns that come into a relationship, whether it is a matter of origin and lineage (as in ‘son of so-and-so’ or referring to a tribe, town or place) or characterisation (as in describing the beloved in the *nasīb* of a *qaṣida* as being characterised by beauty, youth and so on). The *iḍāfa* is a genitive construction, where one noun depends upon another, such as ‘the shepherd’s stone’ or ‘a number of people’. In the circle imagery, the *nisab* correspond to the primary relationship that the centre has to the points on the circumference, while the *iḍāfāt* correspond to the secondary connection between one point and another on the circumference. In terms of the divine Names, on the one hand, a Name is a ‘relationship’ (*nisba*) which God has with Himself; on the other hand, it has a particular ‘ascription’ (*iḍāfa*) to places of manifestation, i.e. the servant (‘*abd*’), as in the phrase ‘Abd al-Karīm (‘the Servant of the Generous’), for example. This second part of the couplet can be viewed imaginatively as flowing water being used to irrigate the fields through irrigation channels, so that the main channels are ‘primary relationships’ (*nisab*), and the ‘secondary connections’ (*iḍāfāt*) are tributaries. The term *riyāḍ* (‘gardens’, from the same root as *riyāḍa*, ‘mathematics’) is used for the geometrically laid-out gardens and orchards with their irrigation channels. We may observe the mirroring inversion of *iḍāfāt* (‘effusions’, from the same root as *ḥayḍ*, =24) and *iḍāfāt* (‘connections’, from the same root as *ḍayf*, ‘guest’, =24), where implicitly the first term is the one who provides hospitality and the second term is the guest or visitor who receives this provision, as well as their correspondence with sentence 24.

35 The geometrical imagery in couplet 13 is amplified in the commentaries. For al-Nābulusī, ‘essential self-revelation is a circle’ and ‘the arc is half of a circle’ (fol. 20a). For al-Baghdādī, who follows al-Nābulusī in interpreting that ‘line’ refers in the first instance to ‘script’ (*kitāba*), ‘it is the line that goes through the [central] point of the circle dividing it into two [semi-circular] arcs’, as well as the line ‘differentiating (*farq*) between Uniqueness, Oneness and Divinity (*ulūhiyya*)’ (see fol. 8a). For Nūr al-‘Arabī (p. 12), the line ‘is the uniting isthmus (*al-barzakh al-jāmiʿ*) between the Unity of Essence and the plurality of individuations.’ We may also note a remarkable contemplation on the interrelatedness of 1 and 3 (as in 13): the first line emphasises a primordial distinction in, or line between, the unitive pair *al-aḥadiyya* and *al-wāḥidiyya* (i.e. three-ness within the One), while the second suggests a unitive descent between the opposites of heaven and earth (i.e. One-ness within the three) and of non-manifest eternity and manifest endlessness. In the second principle (*al-aṣl al-thānī*) of the introduction to his *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ* (fol. 14b), Bosnevi describes the two aspects thus: ‘this Reality which preserves the two halves [of Absolute non-manifest Uniqueness and manifest Oneness of Names] is the degree of the most complete Perfect Human Being (*al-insān al-kāmil al-akmal*), who brings together the place of manifestation of the Absolute Essence by virtue of being unlimited in primordial receiving, and the place of manifestation of the Names and Qualities and Actions by virtue of the integration and equilibrium contained in his universal constitution and the scope, breadth and perfection that his manifestation contains.’ There is an interesting contrast in the particles of the two sentences: the first contains ‘between’ (*bayna*), which suggests an established two-ness of separation and clarification (as in milk and cream), while the second suggests a step-by-step journey ‘from’ (*min*) and ‘to’ (*ilā*). We may observe the correspondence of *wāḥidiyya* (=25) with sentence 25 and of *aḥad* (=13) with couplet 13.

and the Intermediary of the divine descending from the heaven
of beginningless Eternity to the earth of Endlessness;³⁶

[14^{ff}] the Minor Transcript [of the Real] from whom derives the major
[transcript],³⁷

and the White Pearl that descends to the red ruby;³⁸

[15^{mf}] the [Precious] Substance of potential utterances which cannot
but imply [the] movement [of a vowel] and [unvowelled] rest,³⁹
and the Matter of the spoken word that arises from the
concealment of *Be* into the witnessing of *and so it becomes*;⁴⁰

.....
36 The term *wāsiṭa*, translated her as ‘mediating means’, suggests both an ‘intermediary, go-between’ and ‘that which is in the middle’. It can also refer to the jewel that is at the centre of a necklace, i.e. the best (for a similar meditation on that which lies between two aspects and simultaneously unites them, see couplet 19). The sentences of this couplet reveal the full imagery of the *Nūn* as a circle containing two other circles. The all-encompassing circle of the couplet is divided between the relationship of the ‘Line of Unity’ and the ‘mediating Means’. Each sentence in itself is also a circle with two halves: the upper half (sentence 25) contains the two non-manifest arcs of Uniqueness and Oneness, and this is mirrored in the lower half (sentence 26) which contains the manifest polarity of heaven-earth and eternity-endlessness (*azal-abad*). We may observe the correspondence of *tanazzul* (‘descending’, =26) with sentence 26.

37 The term *al-nuskha al-ṣuḡhrā* (‘Minor Transcript’) literally means ‘the smaller copy’ or the nano-transcription of the Real, i.e. the microcosm, who is here the origin of the macrocosm (*al-nuskha al-kubrā*). In his treatise entitled *Nuskhat al-ḥaqq* (RG. 551), Ibn ‘Arabi discusses the special nature of the Human Being as created with His Two Hands and as God’s representative (*khalīfa*) on earth (see *Rasā’il*, ed. al-Manṣūb, 3/279–297). Both initial terms in this couplet (*nuskha* and *durra*) are feminine. We may observe the correspondence of *al-nuskha al-ṣuḡhrā* (=45, the number of the Adamic sciences, =9), with sentence 27 (=9), as well as *al-nuskha* (=23=5) with couplet 14 (=5).

38 These two precious stones have various symbolic meanings. The white pearl (*al-durra al-bayḍā’*) symbolises the First Intellect (see Ibn ‘Arabi’s *al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, *Rasā’il*, 3/74) or Muhammadian Light, while the ruby or red jacinth (*al-yāqūta al-ḥamrā’*) represents the Universal Soul (see al-Baghdādī, fol. 8a). The white pearl is described by Ibn ‘Arabi as ‘the ultimate degree of incapacity (*ghāyat al-’ajz*) or the knowledge of one who stands at the door of Inaccessible Might (‘izz), i.e. in the face of the unknowability of the Essence as articulated by the Prophet: ‘I cannot enumerate Your Praises as You have praised Yourself’ (see ‘*Anqā’ muḡhrib*, p. 213; Gerald Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, pp. 335–336). He also uses it as a specific epithet of the Prophet at the end of his *Mawāqī’ al-nujūm* (Tehran Majlis 594, fol. 82b), ‘the White Pearl who brings us to the supreme holy stations through submission and handing over [oneself] to the arrival of [His] Decree (*wārid al-qaḍā’*)’). We may observe the remarkable correspondence of the composite terms of the two inner rhymes (*al-durra al-bayḍā’*, =32=5, and *al-yāqūta al-ḥamrā’*, =41=5) with couplet 14 (=5).

39 The phrase *al-ḥawāḍith al-imkāniyya* (‘potential utterances’) literally means ‘possible happenings, accidents, occurrences’, but also suggests in linguistic terms the elements of ‘words, speech’ (*ḥadīth*) at the level of potentiality. Here it refers to what modern linguists would call ‘phonemes’, the fundamental units of articulation which imply vowelising (*ḥaraka*, movement) and [unvowelled] silence (*sukūn*, rest). So this could be understood as: ‘upon the substance of phonemes, which necessarily imply vowelising and silence/surd.’ Given that this term is used in the first half of the couplet at the *aqdas* level, we do not consider the idea of ‘newly arrived’ or ‘temporally originated’ things as pertinent here, even though that might be relevant in other contexts.

40 Q 36:82. The idea of ‘the spoken word’ (*al-kalima al-fahwāniyya*) indicates ‘verbalised expression’ in general, and includes a correspondence between the term *fahwāniyya* (from the word *fū*, ‘mouth’) and the *fā’* of *fa-yakūn*. The command *kun*, which combines one vowel-movement (*ḍamma*) and a pausal rest on the *nūn*, is the catalyst for the manifesting of all words (and therefore all beings). It is interesting to note that the numerical value of the two main phrases (*jawhar al-ḥawāḍith al-imkāniyya*), =66, and *mād[d]at al-kalimah al-fahwāniyya*), =66) is identical, and equals the value of the Name All[ā]h. We may also observe the correspondence of *fahwāniyya*), =30) with sentence 30, and of *shahādat* (‘manifest testimony’, =15) with couplet 15. The number 15 is also prominent in the sum of the rhyme-letters (*tā’* and *wāw-nūn*, =4+6+5=15).

- [16] the Materia Prima of forms that is only disclosed in one [reality]
 once, never two times,⁴¹
 nor is it disclosed in one of those forms to someone twice;⁴²
- [17] the Quran of integration embracing the pure [Transcendence]
 that rejects all limitation and the latent [possibilities] that remain
 non-existent,⁴³
 and the Furqan of separation differentiating the newly arrived
 from the ancient;⁴⁴

41 This epithet, 'the Materia Prima of forms', is the third to refer to both sentences in the couplet (see couplets 3 and 5). The first sentence can be understood, among other things, as referring to the eternal reality of the Pole (*quṭb*), the axis of all manifestation, who is identified with the Reality of Muhammad. We may observe the correspondence of *lā* ('not', =31), with sentence 31, and the repetition of *lā* four times here (as in the four words of *lā ilāha illā Llah*, 4x4=16), with couplet 16. The two final letters of *hayūlā* ('materia prima', =16), -*lā*, suggests that negation, which is insisted on and is the reverse of the definite article (*al-*), is the central characteristic of this couplet.

42 The second sentence of this couplet refers to that which is manifested in space-time, in contrast to the eternal aspect mentioned in the first part. We may note that both aspects are mentioned in a similar form by Ibn 'Arabī in the *Futūḥāt*, ascribing this idea to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī and other Men of God: 'God never reveals Himself in one form to two [different] people, nor in the same form twice [to the same person]' (*Fut.* I.266). The whole phrase 'to someone twice' (*li-aḥad mar[r]atayn*) has a value of 32, corresponding to sentence 32.

43 This couplet 17 contemplates the classic polarity of Qur'ān (=9) and Furqān (=17=8), which together also total 9+8=17. These terms both refer to the Sacred Book under opposing aspects: the first as synthesis or unitiveness, the second as discrimination or separativeness. A further polarity of levels can be seen in the fact that the first sentence has a repeated '*ayn* (*jam*', *mumtani*', '*adīm*', symbol of interior vision and latency corresponding to the *aqdas* level, and the second a repeated *fā*' (=8, *furqān*, *farq*, *fāṣil*), symbol of speaking and expression corresponding to the *muqaddas* level. The term *mumtani*' (=6, corresponding to sentence 33) is discussed in ch. 385 of the *Futūḥāt* in connection with the Divine Name *al-Māni*' ('the One who prevents, rejects'), which is contrasted with the absolute Generosity that is showered upon the possible things who receive according to their capacity (*isti'dād*), like the effusion of the sun (*faḍl al-shams*) which turns textiles white and textile-washers black with the same light. Everything that happens in the world is through the Desire or Will (*irāda*) of the Real, since He 'rejects (*mumtani*') by His Essence that anything in existence should become existent through the will of the servant' (*Fut.* II.530). At its highest level, this rejecting quality means that the infinity of His Essence makes Him utterly inaccessible as He is beyond limitation (al-Baghdādī, fol. 9a). Nūr al-'Arabī (p. 17) understands it as meaning 'that which rejects existing in the exterior', because it is infinite, in contrast to 'that which is inexistent' ('*adīm*') because of its latency.

44 The numerical value of Furqān as 8 is significant, since as Iamblichus notes, 'we describe the octad as the first actual cube, and as the only number within the decad to be even-times-even' (p. 101): this can be understood in Islamic terms not only as the 8 points on the cube of the Ka'ba, but also as the 8 carriers of the Throne, meaning that 2-ness generates the square, which generates the cube (2x2x2). Bearing in mind the correspondence between the terms on the two sides of the couplet, we may note the circularity of the four elements of this couplet: the One who rejects all limitation (*mumtani*') is contrasted with that which accepts limitation in existence, the 'newly arrived' (*ḥādith*), while the latent possibility which remains in atemporal non-existence ('*adīm*') is contrasted with the Ancient Primordality (*qadīm*) which remains eternal. We may observe the correspondence of the key word *furqān* (=17) with couplet 17, as well as the three inner and outer rhyming letters (*lām*, =3, *yā*', =1, and *mīm*, =4) making a total of 8 (=1+7).

- [18] the Abstinent who fasts in the day-time of ‘I spend the night with my Lord’,⁴⁵
and the Awake who stands in the night-time of ‘my eyes are asleep but my heart does not sleep’,⁴⁶
- [19^{off}] the Centrepiece of all that lies between being and not-being – *He has released the two seas that meet together*,⁴⁷
and the Clasp that links the phenomenal to the eternal – *between the two a barrier which they do not go beyond*,⁴⁸

45 Couplet 18 (=9) corresponds to the value of the prophetic hadith *in[n]i abītu ‘inda rab[b]i (=36=9; for a similar expression, see Q 25:64). Nūr al-‘Arabī (p. 17) describes this as ‘the uninterrupted fasting of two lovers being together’ (ṣawm al-wiṣāl), where God is the One who gives food and drink and the person obtains the capacity not to eat normal food for many days. This couplet presents a series of contrasts for contemplation: ṣā’im (fasting) + qā’im (standing), nahār (day) + layl (night), innī (I) + ‘aynā-ya (my eyes), rabbī (my Lord) + qalbī (my heart).*

46 ‘Standing’ (qā’im), translated here as ‘Awake’ but which can also mean ‘Existent’, is usually understood in the sense of getting up at night to recite the Quran or pray. Nūr al-‘Arabī (p. 18) describes the context of this saying of the Prophet: when he and his companions had been fully occupied with fighting their enemies one night, they went to sleep and nobody woke him up when the sun rose, so that they missed the time for prayer, something that would normally be reprehensible. When someone observed that he had been asleep, Muhammad replied with this saying. We may observe the correspondence of the value of ‘the night-time of my eyes are asleep’ (layl tanāmu ‘aynā-ya, =36) with sentence 36.

47 Q 55:19. This couplet 19 is a further contemplation of the meeting of two apparently opposed or complementary aspects (being/not-being, phenomenal/eternal). The initial rhyming terms (wāsiṭa and rābiṭa) in the couplet are both feminine, and as general terms would signify ‘intermediary’ and ‘bond’. However, we understand this couplet in terms of the circular imagery of a necklace, since wāsiṭa also designates the jewel at the centre of a necklace, i.e. the centrepiece, and rābiṭa means a tie or clasp which makes the necklace into a circle. The idea here is that the two seas are made to flow freely so that they meet but do not mix, just as one side of the necklace does not mix with the other (for *marāja* in this meaning, see Lane, p. 2762). The number 19 also appears in several of the major words in the first sentence (*wujūd, al-‘adam*) and in the second (*rābiṭah, yabghiyān*), and the three rhyming letters are *mīm* (=4), *alif* (=1) and *nūn* (=5) (4+1+5=10=1+9). The relationship of being/existence with not-being/non-existence can be found expressed in the first line of the *Futūḥāt* (I.2): ‘Praise be to God who brings things into existence from non-existence and from its non-existence...’ (see couplet 13), and is also synonymous with wāsiṭ (without the tā’ *marbūṭa*, =19).

48 Q 55:20. This Quranic line is cited in a similar context in Bosnevi’s commentary on the chapter of Noah: ‘[The Shaykh] says: ‘if He had brought them out to the shore, the shore of Nature...’, implying also that Nature can be likened to a sea and establishing the isthmus or barrier (*barzakh*) between the sea of Nature and the sea of the knowledge of God – which is the shoreline. This *barzakh* is the place where divine created beings (*al-khalā’iq al-ilāhiyya*) descend. As He says, “between the two a barrier that they do not go beyond” (fol. 150b). We may note how being (*wujūd*) is here paired with the phenomenal or newly arrived (*ḥudūth*), and not-being (*‘adam*) with the eternal or ancient (*qidam*). We may observe the correspondence of the main rhyming letters of the couplet (-h, -dam and -ān =5+8+6=19) with couplet 19.

[20^{f/m}] the Epitome of the logbook of the first and the last,⁴⁹
and the Centre [of the circle] that encompasses the interior and
the exterior;⁵⁰

Your Beloved-Lover:⁵¹

[21] through whom You have revealed the beauty of Your Essence in
the [elevated] bridal pavilion⁵² of Your [intimate] unveilings,⁵³
and whom You have appointed as the qibla for all who face
You⁵⁴ in the mosque [of manifestation] where Your [manifold]
disclosures congregate;⁵⁵

49 We have already remarked on the implicit 5-ness contained in the verse that underlies the twentieth couplet: 'He (*huwa*) is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden' (Q 57:3) (see chapter 5). The four terms in this couplet can be understood as the four Divine Names or as anything qualified by them. Given that the value of 'the first and the last' (*al-awwal wa-l-ākhir*) is 39, corresponding to sentence 39, this suggests that the 'logbook' (*daftar*) might have the title 'The First and the Last'. The inversion of the last two terms ('Interior and Exterior') is significant, not simply to provide a rhyme (in *rā'*: *ākhir/zāhir*), but to emphasise the principle that the first sentence of each couplet of the Blessing-prayer focuses on the non-manifest realm (*aqdas*) and the second sentence on the manifest (*muqaddas*).

50 The imagery in couplet 20 is circular, suggesting a ship circumnavigating the oceanic circle of the *nūn* (see Pablo Beneito, 'The Ark of Creation', *JMIAS* 40, 2006, pp. 21–57). This emphasis on circularity echoes the phrasing in couplet 1, so that this initial 20-couplet section, which began with the 'first' (*awwal*) and 'last' (*ākhir*), is ended with the 'the hidden interior' (*bāṭin*) and 'manifest exterior' (*zāhir*). We may observe the correspondence of the final word *al-zāhir* (=20) and the rhyme-letter *rā'* (=200) with couplet 20, as well as the initial *mīm* of the first term *markaz* ('centre', =40) in sentence 40.

51 The term *ḥabibu-Ka*, which we have translated as 'Your Beloved-Lover' since it has both active and passive meanings, marks an important break from the previous 20 couplets, and begins a new part of Section 1, which contains a further 5 couplets, one rhyming in *kāf* (couplet 21) and four in *-ā* (couplets 22–25). It can be viewed either as the bridge between the first 20 couplets (=40 sentences) and the last 20 (=40 sentences) (Sections 2–5), making a total of 45 couplets, or as the central part of the Blessing-prayer (see Appendix D for further details and approaches).

52 The term *minaṣṣa* or *manaṣṣa* ('bridal pavilion') means a place of elevation, ceremonial bed or seat of honour, where the bride sits and is first unveiled to her husband. The commentators usually explain this term as the bridal chair (*kursi*) where the bride and groom meet in front of the assembled guests, but we might also understand this in the more intimate setting of the bridal bed, where only the bride and groom are present, as the expression is found in the *aqdas* level of the couplet. The term also contains an allusion to the revealed Book, since the word comes from the same root as *naṣṣ* ('text') (see chapter 5). For more detail on the term, see Pablo Beneito, 'The Servant of the Loving One', *JMIAS* XXXII (2002), pp. 1–24. See also ch. 178 of the *Futūḥāt* (II.359–62) for the 44 *minaṣṣāt* corresponding to various degrees of love.

53 Ar: *tajlīyāti-Ka*. Although the manuscripts do not always vowel this rhyming word, and some add a *shadda* to read *tajlīyāti-Ka*, we view the repetition of a word in the two rhymes of a couplet as stylistically unacceptable. According to the rules of rhyme in Arabic, it is only acceptable to repeat a rhyme within a poem, so long as the word is used in a different meaning and properly separate from its first mention (not in two consecutive sentences). The use of *tajlīyāt* reinforces the imagery of intimate personal contact, because it specifically refers to lifting the veil from the face of the beloved, in contrast to the plurality of *tajalliyāt* in the public setting of the mosque.

54 Ar: *tawajjuhātu-Ka*, lit: 'all Your facings', which can mean both 'all who face You' and 'all that You face' (see Nūr al-'Arabī, p. 20).

55 There are two triads expressed in this couplet 21 (=3): (*aqdas*, private) lover, beloved and bridal bed; (*muqaddas*, public) worshippers, qibla and mosque. In terms of letters, we note the presence, three times in the first line and three times in the second line, of the letters *jīm* (3) and *lām* (30) in the major terms: *istajlayta*, *jamāl*, *tajlīyāt*; *qibla*, *tajalliyāt*, *tawajf[j]uḥāt*, *jāmi'*, making a total of 3x3 + 3x30=99. There is also an elegant poetic alliteration in the terms *minaṣṣa* and *naṣabta*, both of which include the circular letters *nūn* (ن) and *ṣād* (ص), as well as in the repeated rhymes of *tā'* and *kāf*.

- [22] and whom You have invested with the robe of [Your] Qualities
and Names,⁵⁶
and whom You have crowned with the diadem of the supreme
Representative;⁵⁷
- [23] and whose body You made to travel by night in [full] wakefulness
*from the Sacred Mosque to the Furthest Mosque*⁵⁸, until

.....
56 The imagery in this couplet indicates the royal robe (*khil'a*) which a ruler bestows upon his favourite as a mark of honour. Al-Baghdādī provides a lengthy description of the realisation (*tahabbuq*) and adoption (*takhalluq*) of the divine Names and Qualities by the 'pure servant' (*al-'abd al-ṣīf*), in which he refers to the classification of the Names according to the Presences of Essence, Qualities and Acts in Ibn 'Arabī's *Inshā' al-dawā'ir* (see fols. 10b–11a). Nūr al-'Arabī (p. 21) describes this first sentence as referring to Adam, who was appointed as a divine Representative (*khalīfa*) on earth and before whom the angels were told to prostrate, and who was invested with all the Qualities which manifest through the Names that he was taught by God (see Q 2:31).

57 Ar: *al-khilāfa al-'uẓmā*, which is the caliphate that includes that of the other prophets such as Adam and David, and is only bestowed in its fullness upon the person of Muhammad: 'I am the lord of the sons of Adam on the Day of Resurrection – without boasting. The Banner of Praise will be in my hand – without boasting. There will not be a prophet on that day, neither Adam nor anyone else, who will not be under my banner' (al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi'* 49, 3975). We may note the alliteration of *khil'a* ('robe') at the *aqdas* level (with 'ayn) and *khilāfa* at the *muqaddas* level (with fā') of the couplet. The rhyme of this couplet 22 (=4) is in *mīm* (4), and the same numbering can also be seen in the terms *al-asmā'* (13=4) and *tawajjahtu* (22).

58 Q 17:1. This and the following sentences refer to the episode of the ascension (*isrā'* and *mi'rāj*) of the Prophet (for Ibn 'Arabī's description, see ch. 367 of the *Futūḥāt*; for further discussion, see Appendix D).

- [24] he was brought to *the Lote-Tree of the [Highest] Limit*⁵⁹, and taken up to *the distance of two arcs or even closer*;⁶⁰
- [25] and so his heart was delighted by witnessing You, where there is no morning or evening⁶¹, *and his heart did not deny what it saw*;⁶²

.....

59 Q 53:14. These verbs would more commonly be translated as ‘he reached’ or ‘he ended up at the Lote-Tree...’, and ‘he ascended’ or ‘climbed to...’, as they are usually understood in an active sense. However, we have chosen to emphasise the passive alternative in both cases in reference to the verb found in traditional sources, which literally means ‘He made His servant travel by night’ (*asrā bi-‘abdi-Hi*) (as in Q 17:1 or al-Bukhārī, 3887), which clearly show that Muhammad was taken on the journey rather than actively travelled through his own aspiration. For the Lote-Tree (*sidrat al-muntahā*), see *The Alchemy of Human Happiness*, pp. 123–5. Alternatively, the couplet ends here (TS) and the following words ‘and was taken up’ becomes part of couplet 25 (see Appendix D).

60 Q 53:9. Ar: *qāb qawsayn*, which can also be translated as ‘two bows’ length away’. This important image has many different interpretations, depending on how one understands the term *qaws*. The root *q-w-s*, which is directly connected to *q-y-s* (as in *qiyās*, ‘scale, analogy’), has a primary meaning of ‘measure’, that is, ‘measuring a thing by another thing like it’ (Lane, p. 2632). As measuring is conceived of in geometrical patterns based on a circle, a further meaning of *qaws* is to be bowed or bent, i.e. like a bow or an arch or an arc. As Lane points out, this expression can mean both ‘the distance of two Arabian bows or two cubits’, as well the distance between ‘the two portions between the part of a bow that is grasped by the hand and each of the curved extremities.’ In the first sense, the expression designates a physical distance of two semi-circles, equal to the distance of two arches in a temple or a palace. In the second sense, the expression refers to the meeting-place of two curves, thus the joining of arcs: here the commentators describe the *qāb* as the distance between the bow handle or riser (the midpoint of the semicircle where the archer grips the curved bow) and the place on the bowstring held by the drawing hand (the mid-point of the line or cord connecting the two ends of the bow or semicircle). This distance represents the distinction between manifest and hidden, first and last. So one arc is hidden, corresponding to divine knowledge, and one is manifest, corresponding to the shadow cast by divine Light, which is the written *nūn*. According to al-Nabulūsi, ‘every bow (*qaws*) has two extensions (*qābān*): one low and one high, like the heavens and the earth. This is the station of witnessing God the Exalted, which is the vision of the Prophet’ (fol. 29b). It is primarily an expression for the closeness between the human and the Divine as experienced during the Prophet’s ascension (see Q 53:9). The imagery also suggests that the *alif*-like arrow, in whichever direction it is facing, points beyond the circle of Being. Elsewhere Bosnevi uses this imagery of two arcs to explain *wujūb* and *imkān*, when discussing the interpenetration of Abraham into the Presence of Divinity: ‘this Presence is the higher arc of the circle of Being, which includes two arcs: one is the arc of necessity (*wujūb*), wherein the divine Names and Qualities are individuated – and this is the higher arc; and the other is the arc of possibility (*imkān*), wherein the created places of manifestation and qualities of the possible are individuated – and this is the lower arc’ (*Sharḥ*, fol. 173b). The expression ‘or even closer’ (*aw adnā*) is understood to refer to the complete annihilation of the two-ness of the arcs in the Uniqueness (*aḥadiyya*), within which there is no plurality. Bosnevi describes this as ‘the degree of super-perfection (*akmaliyya*) and the Presence of Uniqueness, which is the station of Muhammadian annihilation: this is the station of Muhammad by origin, and the station of the perfect ones (*kummal*) among his heirs’ (*Sharḥ*, fol. 18a).

61 An allusion to the famous comment of Abū Yazid al-Bisṭāmī: ‘I have no morning or evening. Morning and evening belong to those who are delimited by an attribute, and I have no attribute’ (cited in *Fut.* II.73; see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Sufis*, Oxford, 2014, p. 42).

62 Q 53:11. The expression *mā kadhaba* (lit. ‘did not lie about’) indicates two aspects: the heart did not imagine what it saw to be anything other than real and true, and did not alter it, taking it exactly as it was shown.

and his eye was refreshed by finding You⁶³, where there is no emptiness or fullness, *his eye did not swerve nor go beyond*.⁶⁴

[II.] O God, bless him with a blessing-prayer⁶⁵

- [1] through which my branch joins up with my root,
and my part with my whole,⁶⁶
- [2] so that my essence may be united with his essence,⁶⁷
my qualities with his qualities,
- [3] and so that the eye may be refreshed by the source,⁶⁸
and between-ness escape from separation,⁶⁹
and greet him with salutations of peace

63 This complex sentence can also be translated in different ways: 'his sight/eye (*baṣar*) was established/confirmed by Your Being (or: by finding You)'. The phrase clearly alludes to the expression *qurraṭ al-‘ayn* ('freshness of the eyes') as in the hadith already referred to. There is also an allusion to the hadith of the *nawāfil*: 'and when I love him, I become the eye (*baṣar*) with which he sees...' We may note the pairing of 'heart' (*fu'ād*) and 'witnessing' (*shuhūd*), on the one hand, and 'outer eye/vision' (*baṣar*) and 'finding' (*wujūd*), on the other. A further contrast is provided between Being (*wujūd*), unconditioned by the ordinary sense of 'emptiness or fullness' of space and containment, and Witnessing (*shuhūd*), unconditioned by the lineal passage of time and light, in the previous line. In both aspects the mystic's pure consciousness is filled with joy. We may note the correspondence of the initial phrase *wa-uqirra baṣaru-hu* ('his eye was refreshed', =25) with couplet 25.

64 Q 53:17. This final part of the first section consists of 5 rhyming couplets rhyming in a long -ā, with 14 (=5) major internal and external rhymes, suggesting a correspondence to the two letters *nūn* and *hā'*.

65 We note that this second section begins with the letter *ṣād* (=6) of the word *ṣallī* ('bless'), pointing to the 6 couplets of this section (corresponding to the first *wāw* of the Name *Wadūd*), just as section IV (corresponding to the second *wāw* of the Name *Wadūd*) starts with a *wāw* (=6) and also has 6 couplets (see Appendix D).

66 This introduces for the first time the 'I' of the reciter in relation to the blessing-prayer upon Muhammad. This expression of 'joining' is primarily a matter of consciousness as the branch is already joined to its root and the part is already an aspect of the whole. The blessing itself is thus linked to the grace of consciousness.

67 This uniting (*ittiḥād*) should be understood in the light of Bosnevi's understanding of the Reality of the Human Being, which is both unique and inclusive and free from particularisation (see *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, fol. 103a).

68 Ar: *taqarra al-‘ayn bi-l-‘ayn*. There is an untranslatable play on the meanings of the word '*ayn* here: 'eye', 'source', 'potential reality', 'entity', 'disk' (of the sun). There is an allusion here to the idea of *qurraṭ al-‘ayn*, which comes from the famous hadith 'the freshness of my eye is given to me in prayer' (for the full version and references, see *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kılıç, pp. 216–17). An alternative translation would be: 'so that the [external] entity remains firmly established in the [essential] entity' – on the use of the letter '*ayn* in this section, see also Appendix D. There is a resonance here between couplets 2 and 3, where the term *dhāt* ('essence') resonates with the term '*ayn* ('source, eye'), and *ṣifāt* ('qualities', where attribution implies distance) resonates with *bayn* ('between-ness, separation'). Each of these terms are repeated as in a mirror, and in this sense this couplet could be translated as: 'the eye may be refreshed by the Eye, and separation flee from separation'.

69 Ar: *yafirra al-bayn min al-bayn*, another untranslatable play on the word *bayn*, which primarily means 'between', or the relationship between two. It therefore includes meanings of 'separating', 'distinguishing', 'making evident'. *Al-bayn* is a classic example of the complexity of the Arabic language in indicating opposites, signifying both the disunion of lovers or companions and the union they enjoy. While the first *bayn* implies *bayān* ('clarity'), the second implies distance. In this rhyming couplet there is also the image of the *nūn* (2 semi-circles of the letter), making an 'eye', and the letter *nūn* as composed of three internal letters where the *wāw* is both uniting and separating the two *nūns*: this suggests an equivalence between the dot-pupil of the eye and the central *wāw* as symbols of the Perfect Human. Note also the contrast between the preposition 'from' (*min*), which suggests 'distance', and the 'by/through' (*bi*) of the previous line, which suggests closeness.

- [4] by which I may be fully committed in pledging allegiance to him⁷⁰, preserved from holding back, and secure in walking the path of his revealed way, safe from deviating,
- [5] so that I may open the door of Your Love for me with the key of following him,⁷¹ and that I may witness You in my senses and organs from the niche⁷² of his revelatory guidance and conformity,⁷³
- [6] and that I may enter behind him into the citadel of ‘there is no god but God’,⁷⁴

.....

70 Ar: *mubāya’ati-hi*, where all manuscripts read *mutāba’ati-hi* (these terms are very easily confused when their only distinguishing marks, the diacritical points which are often left out in writing, are not clearly written). Our reading is based on two factors: stylistically, the author does not repeat a term so closely unless it has a different meaning or appears within a quotation; and secondly, the complementarity of these two terms can be found in a special treatise *K. Rūḥ al-mutāba’a fī bayān shurūṭ al-mubāya’a*, which Bosnevi devoted to the meaning of following and allegiance (see chapter 5). The term refers historically to the oath of allegiance sworn by the Companions prior to the Treaty of Hudaibiyya in the year 6/628: ‘God was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts. So He sent down reassurance to them and rewarded them with a victory near at hand’ (Q 48:18). The imagery of this episode suggests a central ‘point’ represented by the Prophet and the tree, surrounded by the ‘circle’ of his Companions.

71 Following the Prophet is referred to in the Quranic verse: ‘If you love God, follow me so that God may love you’ (3:31). In the second part, there is also a reference to the hadith of the *nawāfil*: ‘when I love him, I become the eye...’ (Divine Sayings, Hadith 91, p. 88).

72 Ar: *mishkāt*. The image here of a niche (drawn from the Light verse, Q 24:35) that is semi-circular in shape, suggests that the two following elements of ‘revelatory guidance’ (*shar’*) and ‘conformity, obedience’ (*ṭā’a*) can be understood as an upper hidden circle and a lower manifest one, reflecting the distinction between envoyship (*risāla*) and sainthood (*walāya*). In Bosnevi’s *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ* (fols. 102b–107b), there is a lengthy explanation of the two niches mentioned by Ibn ‘Arabi (*Fuṣūṣ*, 38): the first is that of the Envoy who is Seal (*al-rasūl al-khatam*); and the second is that of the Friend who seals (*al-walī al-khātīm*). On fol. 110a, Bosnevi explicitly uses the expression *taba’iyyatu-hu li-shar’ khātīm al-rusul* (‘following him in the revealed guidance of the Seal of the envoys’) in connection with the vision of the silver brick that Ibn ‘Arabi saw in his dream-vision (described in the chapter of Seth in the *Fuṣūṣ*).

73 Ar: *ṭā’atu-hu*, literally ‘his conformity’, an expression that can mean both ‘his conformity [to God’s direction]’ and ‘[our] conformity to him (the Prophet’s instructions and example)’. In the second meaning this phrase could also be understood more literally as: ‘from the niche of his revelatory path (*shar’*) and from obedience [to him] (*ṭā’a*)’, echoing ‘Those who obey the messenger obey God’ (Q 4:80). This ‘obedience’ (from Latin *ob audire*) should be understood as ‘acting in conformity to what has been heard or revealed’. The first meaning would refer to the ordering of the three elements of the niche (*mishkāt*), lamp (*miṣbāḥ*) and glass (*zuḡāja*) in the well-known Light verse (Q 24:35). See Ismā’il Anqarawī, *The Lamp of Mysteries* (Oxford, 2011). At the same time, this refers to the obedience of the bodily organs during prayer in bearing witness to God (the term *ashhada* meaning ‘to make someone contemplate and bear witness to’).

74 There is a fourness in this phrase (*lā + ilāha + illā + Allāh*) which is reflected in the following phrase (*lī + waqtun + ma’a + Allāh*). This fourness can also be found in the notion of the citadel or fortress (*ḥiṣn*) and the retreat-cell (*khalwa*), which are both buildings that evoke a four-sided image (as a cube within a sphere). We may also note that *ḥiṣn* = 19 (=1), a fortress of Unity, while *khalwah* = 20 (=2), a retreat-cell of Intimacy, where the phrase *lī waqtun* (5 letters) *ma’a Allāh* (6 letters, totalling 11, =2) reflects the dualitude of the servant-‘I’ and ‘Allāh’. This is the only couplet where there is a repetition of the rhyming word, precisely with the Divine Name Allāh (=66): the two Allāhs together make 132, the same value as *qalb* (100+30+2, ‘heart’) and Muḥammad (40+8+40+40+4), and total 6, in correspondence with the number of the couplet in this section.

and be allowed to follow in his footsteps into the retreat-cell of 'I have a moment with God'.⁷⁵

- [B] For he⁷⁶ is Your gateway: anyone who aspires to reach You without him will find [all] paths and doors shut to them,⁷⁷ and will be driven back with the staff of courtesy to the animals' stable.⁷⁸

[III.] O God! O my Lord!⁷⁹

- [C] O You whose veil is nothing but Light, whose hiddenness is nothing but the intensity of Manifestation!⁸⁰

75 This is part of a hadith not found in the canonical sources but frequently cited in Sufi literature: 'I have a sacred moment with God, when no angel brought night or prophet sent embraces me' (see Böwering, 'Ideas of Time in Persian Sufism', *Iran* 30, 1992, p. 89 n. 119). Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī also linked this statement to the *ṣalawāt* blessing upon the Prophet, in response to someone's claim that their mystical 'moment' leaves no room even for Muhammad (see *Fi-hi mā fi-hi*, chapter 63). We may observe a parallel between the first triad (1–3) and the second triad (4–6): for example, the level of initial integration (II.1) corresponds to conformity to the Prophetic way (II.4).

76 Ar: *huwa*. The pronoun here is highly ambiguous and may refer to the Prophet as in our translation, or to the citadel (*ḥiṣn*) of *lā ilāha illā Llāh*, or to God Himself in the Name *Huwa* (= 'He'), in which case 'for *Huwa* is Your gateway', and the whole passage becomes a contemplation of the interaction of the 'He' and the 'You'. These are various aspects of the single '*ayn*' appearing in different forms.

77 The plurality of 'paths' (*ṭuruq*) and 'doors' (*abwāb*) is contrasted with the singular 'gateway' or 'door' (*bāb*) of the Prophet or the Human Reality in relation to the most intimate presence of God. There is also an implicit reference to the principle of the Muhammadian Reality as the first to open the door of universal intercession: according to Ibn 'Arabī, 'Muhammad is the head of the community and lord of the sons of Adam in opening the door of intercession' (*Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kiliç, 40; for the *ḥadīth*, see Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2278, and Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 4308; for the five types of Muhammadian intercession, see Bosnevi, *Sharḥ*, fols. 113b–115b).

78 The staff ('*aṣā*') recalls Moses using a staff to lean on, feeding his flock and casting it down so that it became a living serpent, an image of animal life (Q 20: 17–20; see *The Alchemy of Human Happiness*, pp. 107–8). There is also an allusion to the staff as the *alif*. The animals' stable, which would normally be outside the city-walls, represents the field of multiplicity, and the term 'animals' (*dawābb*, pl. of *dābba*), normally referring to those which move on the earth, contains an allusion to the Quranic verse: 'There is no moving creature (*dābba*) except that He holds it by its forelock' (Q 11:56). Ibn 'Arabī often emphasises the distinction between the fully human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and ordinary 'animal' humans (*al-insān al-ḥayawān*) (see *Futūḥāt*, III.266, 315, 370 et passim).

We suggest that the author did not regard this couplet as included in the numerical GW structure because it is an explanatory statement. The same applies to the following couplet after the next *Allāhumma*, which expands the mode of address (see Appendix D).

79 The addition of the Name *rab[b]* (=4) here is significant, since it suggests the intimacy of the relationship between Lord and servant as well as the 4-couplet structure in this section 3. The section opens with 2 affirmations of Lordship through the *bā'* (*bi-Ka*, *bi-kashfi-Ka*, 2 + 2 = 4), and two requests from the servant through the *dāl* (= 4) of *maḥjūd* and *mawjūd*. We also note the rhyming repetitions in *rā'* (2) and *dāl* (4).

80 Ar: *shiddat al-zuhūr*, indicating a dazzling, blinding brilliance. It also implies the term *shadda* ('intensity', but also meaning 'duplication', i.e. having the same visual form), alluding to the fact that He, as the Lord in the upper semi-circle, is hidden in the lower semicircle of the 'duplication of manifestation', just as a doubled letter only appears singly with the *shadda* mark above it (as in the two *mims* of Allāhum[m]a and Muḥam[m]ad). His veil is thus 'light upon light' (*nūr 'alā nūr*, Q 24:35). Exactly the same phrase and meaning is found in *K. al-'Abādilah* no. 111, where the Servant of God, son of Seth, son of the Servant of the Manifest, states: 'The intensity of Manifestation (*shiddat al-zuhūr*) is hidden due to the weakness of the eyes' (*Rasā'il*, 1/298). The word 'veil' (*ḥijāb*) alludes to the hadith of the 70,000 veils of light and darkness, while the word 'hiddenness' (*khafā'*) may contain an allusion to the 'hidden treasure' of the *ḥadīth qudsī*.

I ask of You:⁸¹

- [1] through You [alone] at the level of Your Absoluteness, free of all limitation,
by which You do whatever You wish and desire;
- [2] and through Your unveiling of Your Essence with the light of knowledge,
and Your [constant] transmutation in the forms of Your Names and Qualities within the images of existence;⁸²
- [3] [I ask] that You bless our master Muhammad with a blessing-prayer by which You refresh my inner eye, anointing it with the light that is sprinkled in beginningless eternity,⁸³
so that I may witness the passing-away of ‘what has never been’ and the remaining of ‘what has never ceased to be’;⁸⁴
- [4] and that I may see things as they are in their root, non-existent and absent,

81 This is the first place in the prayer where the servant specifically asks, and this request for the blessing-prayer to be made upon Muhammad is followed by more specific requests in this section and the next.

82 Literally, ‘lucent knowledge’ (*al-‘ilm al-nūrī*) and ‘formal existence’ (*al-wujūd al-ṣūfī*).

83 For the image of the kohl of the eye, see two poems by Ibn ‘Arabī: ‘[those who circumambulate] are the kohl of the eye of unveiling (*kuhl ‘ayn al-kashf*)...’ (ch. 1, *Fut.* 1.47); ‘the adoption of [beautiful] character-traits and the virtuous traits themselves in the human being are like the painting of kohl on the two eyes and the kohl itself’ (ch. 149, *Fut.* II.241; see also *Fut.* II.510). When the eye-lids are painted with kohl, it traces a curved line similar to the *nūn*. According to a *ḥadīth*, ‘God created the creatures in darkness, then He sprinkled (or: cast, *rashsha* from the same root as *marshūsh*) some of His Light upon them. Those whom it reached took the right path, while those whom it missed went astray’ (see al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2642). According to Rūmī, ‘God sprinkled His Light over all spirits, but only the blest held up their skirts to receive it; / and having gained that largesse of light, they turned their faces away from all but God’ (*Mathnawī*, Book I, 760–761, trans. R. A. Nicholson, or 764–766, trans. Williams). The whole expression *al-nūr al-marshūsh fī l-azal* appears in precisely the same form in a commentary by Muḥammad al-Dāmūnī (d. 1208/1794?) on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya*, entitled *al-Nafahāt al-qudsiyya*, suggesting that he may also have been familiar with the wording of this Blessing-prayer (p. 121, ed. Aḥmad Farid Mazyadī, Beirut, n.d.).

84 Referring to the saying of Ibn al-‘Arif (d. 536/1141): ‘That which never was passes away, while He who ever is remains.’ This is quoted by Ibn ‘Arabī in his *Rūḥ al-quds*, ed. Abrar Ahmed, p. 222; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 66. For more on Ibn al-‘Arif, see Abrahamov, pp. 139–44.

and [perceive] that they never smell the fragrance of Being⁸⁵
beyond their being present.⁸⁶

[IV.] O God!

With this blessing-prayer upon him,

- [1] bring me out, from the darkness of my I-ness into the Light,⁸⁷
and from the grave of my bodiliness⁸⁸ to the reunion of the
Gathering [in the next world] and the differentiation of the
Unfurling;⁸⁹
- [2] bathe⁹⁰ me from the heaven of Your proclamation of Your own
Unity,

85 This alludes to the doctrine of the 'established entities' or 'essential realities' (*al-a'yān al-thābita*) described by Ibn 'Arabī in the following passage: 'the essential realities, which are of non-existence and are established there, do not smell the fragrance of Being, and they remain in that condition despite the multiplicity of forms among existent things. Essential Reality ('*ayn*') is one' (*Fuṣūṣ*, chapter of Idrīs, p. 55).

86 These lines contrast the idea of 'absent, missing' (*mafqūd*) with 'present, found' (*mawjūd*), which also means 'existent', a distinction that goes back at least to the spiritual writings of al-Junayd: for example, 'by being wholly present in God, he becomes lost to self. And thus he is present before God, absent in himself, absent (*mafqūd*) and present (*mawjūd*) at the same time' (Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, London, 1976, p. 172, Arabic text 51). There is thus a contrast between the principle of Being (*wujūd*), which only applies to God and is connected to the *aqdas* level, and the presence of the manifested existent (*mawjūd*), which implies that things are the place of the manifestation of His Being in the *muqaddas* level.

87 We may note the clear correspondence of this line with: 'It is He who bestows blessings upon you all, as do His angels, to bring you out of darkness into the light' (Q 33:43). See Appendix D.

88 Ar: *jismāniyyatī*. The vowelism in the manuscripts is given as the less grammatical *jismāniyyatī*.

89 Ar: *nushūr* ('Unfurling'), lit. 'spreading out, scattering, raising to life, becoming verdant after rain', usually translated simply as Resurrection. It is often coupled with other terms denoting the stages of resurrection, such as *ba'th* ('sending') or *ḥashr* ('gathering, assembling', bringing individual souls together with the Universal Soul), although each have their particular association with a stage of the next life. For example, *nushūr* often denotes the quickening of the dead: 'Then He caused him to die and to be buried; then when He wishes, He will raise him again (*anshara-hu*)' (Q 80:21–22). Ibn 'Arabī describes the 'Day of *nushūr* as the manifestation that has no opposite' (*Fut.* III.109), and particularly associates *nushūr* with the unfurling of Truth, distinguishing those destined for paradise from those bound for hell (*Fut.* I.37) and what is recognised from what is not recognised in every belief-system (*Fut.* IV.386). See Maurice Gloton, *Ibn 'Arabī: De la mort à la resurrection* (Beirut, 2009), pp. 172–3, and Ibn al-'Arabī, *The Openings Revealed at Makkah*, trans. Eric Winkel, Books 3 & 4 (Pir Press, 2020), pp. 661–93, for a translation of *Fut.* I.311 (chapter 64). We may also understand that *jam'* ('reunion') corresponds to the central point, to which all beings are brought back and reunited, while *farq* ('differentiation') corresponds to the place on the circumference of Life which a person has in reality in God's Knowledge (*maqām ma'lūm*), according to the various degrees and abodes. The terms 'Gathering/Assembly' (*ḥashr*) and 'Unfurling' (*nushūr*) may also suggest the image of being gathered back into the primordial 'seed' or 'bud' of the Origin and then being unfurled into the new life of different leaves and flowers in the next world.

90 Ar: *afīd*, from the same root and form as *faḍl*. This second mention of the key imperative in the prayer is here translated with the imagery of water as 'bathe', a cleansing effusion upon the 'me' of the servant who recites. It may be contrasted with the first mention at the very beginning of the prayer, where it is translated as 'effuse', in the sense of 'bring into manifestation', upon the Muhammadian Reality. In both cases it implies the image of pouring water or light upon the servant.

with the [merciful rain]⁹¹ that purifies me from the foulness of associating [anything with You] and worshipping others;⁹²

[3] restore me to life with the first death and the second birth⁹³,
and revive me with enduring Life in this passing world;⁹⁴

[4] grant me a *light by which I walk among the people*,⁹⁵
and so let me see Your Face *wherever I turn*⁹⁶, without any
illusion or confusion,⁹⁷

[5] observing with the two eyes of uniting and separating,⁹⁸
distinguishing clearly between the unreal and the Real,⁹⁹

91 The context here suggests an allusion to the Rabbinic doctrine of 'the morning dew of the resurrection', which revives the dead (see Isaiah 26:19, Hosea 14:6; <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5156-dew>).

92 Ar: *al-shirk wa-l-ishrāk*, two related terms which suggest different aspects of human ignorance: firstly, any polytheistic dualism that asserts that there is anything else besides God (*shirk*), and secondly, the idolatry of making partners with Him and declaring them objects of worship (*ishrāk*). The root of *rijs* ('foulness') has an original meaning of a very frightening or upsetting sound such as a thunder-clap or a camel braying loudly, which provokes commotion and uproar. This gives the idea of being unclean or filthy or doing a foul, abominable act, and particularly refers to Q 33:33: 'Do not adorn yourselves with the adornment of the age of ignorance of old... God desires to remove the foulness from you, o people of the House, and to purify you fully.' We may note in these lines the repetition of the preposition 'from' (*min*) three times in the sense of 'away from' (darkness, grave, shameful) coupled with 'to' (*ilā*) (light, union), and once in a positive meaning of 'coming from' (heaven).

93 This implicitly refers to: 'It is God who has created you and provided for you. Then He will cause you to die; then He will give you life' (Q 30:40).

94 In this sentence the Quranic polarity of *fanā* ('passing-away') and *baqā* ('remaining, enduring') may be observed. We may infer that 'the enduring Life' is the life of the One who endures (*al-Bāqī*).

95 Referring to: 'Is the one who was dead and to whom We gave life and whom We made a light by which he walks among the people...' (Q 6:122). This also echoes the famous light-prayer of the Prophet, which mentions the 6 directions and then states the words: *wa-j'al-ni nūra*.

96 Referring to: 'Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God' (Q 2:115).

97 The two terms here, *ishtibāh* and *iltibās*, are subtle allusions to two kinds of confusion: firstly, someone or something who appears to be similar to someone or something else (*ishtibāh*, from *shibh*, 'similar') but is not actually the same; and secondly, someone who is unrecognised because they are dressed in different clothing (*iltibās*, from *lib*, 'clothing'). We may note in these lines the repetition of the preposition *bi* ('with') three times in the positive sense of 'by means of' (the second birth, everlasting Life, light) – and once in the negative sense as 'with[out]' (illusion) – as well as three times in the remaining couplets (with two eyes, Yourself, Your permission). This reflects the initial phrasing *bi-l-ṣalāt 'alay-hi* ('with this blessing-prayer upon him'), which begins with the letter *bā*.

98 At the physical level of sight, the eyes see the whole of something ('uniting') and its many parts ('separating'). At the level of inner vision, the eyes contemplate the all-inclusive oneness and the differentiation of multiplicity. '[The Perfect Human Being] has two visions of the Real, which is why He appointed two eyes for him. With one eye he looks upon Him with regard to Him being independent of the worlds, so that he does not see Him in a thing or in himself. Through the other eye he looks upon Him with regard to His name All-Compassionate, which seeks and is sought by the cosmos, so that he sees Him as permeating everything with His Being' (Fut. III.151). For the principle of seeing with two eyes, see William Chittick, *SPK*, pp. 356–81.

99 On the terms *bāṭil* and *ḥaqq* as opposites, see the famous verse 'And say: the Real has come and unreality has vanished. Unreality will always vanish' (Q 17:81). This contrast is also stressed in: 'Do not confuse (*talabbasā*, from *lib*, see above) unreality with the Real' (Q 2:42). The terms are sometimes also translated as 'false' and 'true'.

- [6] pointing to You with Yourself,
and guiding to You by Your permission.¹⁰⁰

[V.] O Most Merciful of mercifiers,¹⁰¹

may blessings and peace be

- [1] upon our master Muhammad with a blessing by which You
accept my supplication
and by which You fulfil my hopes;
- [2] and upon his Family, the people of visionary witnessing and
immediate knowledge,
and upon his Companions, the possessors of experiential taste
and direct perceiving,¹⁰²
- [3] [without interruption] as long as the veiling fringe of the night of
creation is extended,
and the shining mark on the daytime brow of eye-witnessing is
unveiled!¹⁰³

[4/D4] Amen – *and peace be upon the messengers.*
*And all praise to God, Lord of the worlds.*¹⁰⁴

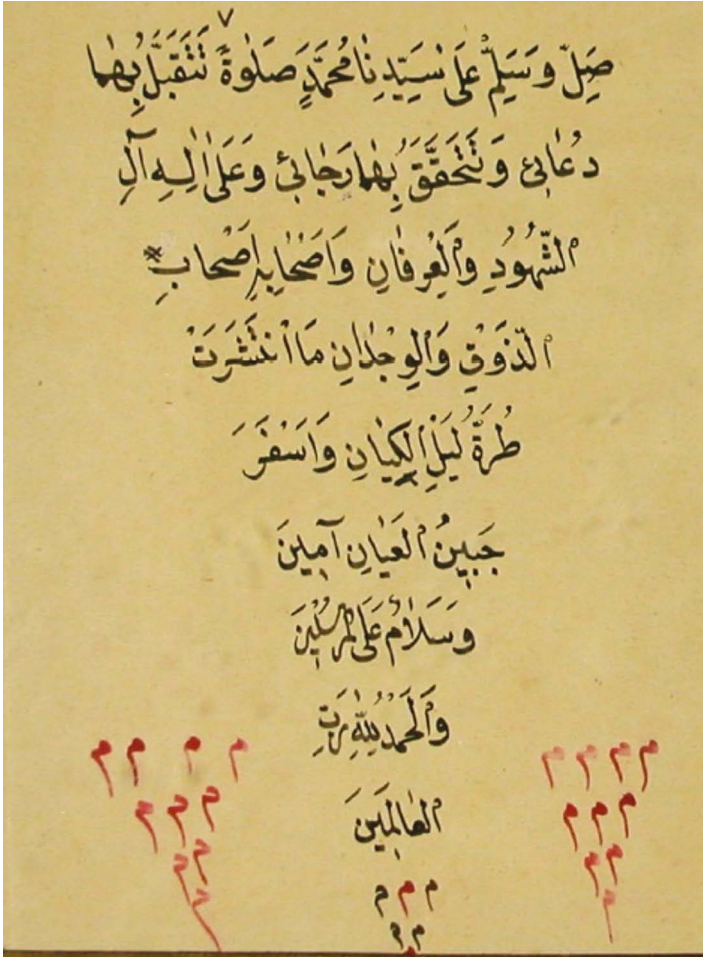
.....
100 In section IV there are six elements: 6 requests from the side of the servant (couplets 1–4), where all the verbs begin with the connective *wāw* (=6), and 6 aspects of the vision of the divine Face (couplets 4–6).

101 The introduction of this invocation (*arḥam al-rāḥimīn*, =15+25=4[0]) is significant in the fourfold structure of this final section: the blessings and peace are invoked upon four (Muhammad, Family, Companions, Messengers), with four rhymes in *-ān*. The number 40 also evokes the *mīm* of Muhammad.

102 As we see here – and this is a common feature in Bosnevi's writings – the idea of 'family' and 'companions' of the Prophet is not understood only in the ordinary historical sense, but also signifies the esoteric dimension of those close to him. The term *wijdān* literally means 'finding' in the sense of perceiving directly, and is used by Ibn 'Arabi in his definition of *wujūd* as 'the direct perception of the Real in joyful consciousness' (*wijdān al-ḥaqq fi l-wajd*).

103 The word *ghurra* ('shining mark') is highly suggestive: it designates the white blaze or star on the forehead of a horse as well as the brilliance of the new crescent moon, which determines the beginning of the lunar month (see chapter 5, section on *Qurrat 'ayn al-shuhūd*). It is not simply perceived as a beginning but as a mark of the written curve of the letter *nūn*: thus the first hidden *nūn* is beginning to be manifested as the second visible one, announcing the day of manifestation, the light of manifestation proceeding from the night of occultation. As the Blessing-prayer opens with the 'first of individuations' (*awwal al-ta'ayyunāt*), implying the primordial latency of the eye-entity (*ayn*) that initiates the process of individuation (*ta'ayyun*, from the same root), so it closes with the *ghayn* of direct vision in the phrase *ghurra jabin al-'iyān* (=17+11+18=46=1), signifying the light of full vision of the eye-entity. Paradoxically the *ghayn* (=9) appears here both as the day-manifestation of 'otherness' (*ghayr*) in things and as the night-occultation (*ghayb*) of the Essence. These two aspects are noted by Ibn 'Arabi in his poem on the *ghayn*, 'the *ghayn* is like the 'ayn in its states... so recognise the reality of its effusion (*fayḍ*) and maintain the veil' (*Fut.* I.67). The word 'eye-witnessing' ('*iyān*') signifies seeing through the eye ('*ayn*') of the One Entity once the apparent otherness of the dot of the *ghayn* is removed (see the Thursday Eve Prayer in *Prayers for the Week*, p. 65).

104 Q 37:182–3. This final section ends with a rhyme in *nūn*, just as the Blessing-prayer began with a rhyme in *nūn* (after the initial rhyming *kāf*), pointing to the two sides of the *nūn*.



The closing of the *Ṣalāt al-fayḍiyya*, Hacı Mahmud 2717 fol. 20a¹⁰⁵

.....
105 We may note the triangular pattern of the final section in nine lines, and the three patterns of *mims*, in two triangles of 10 and one of 6, making a total of 26 *mims*. If the value of *mim* (40) is multiplied by 26, it gives a total of 1040 – it is tempting to imagine that this might have come from an original copy of the prayer, in which case might this be a graphic allusion to the hijri date of the Blessing-prayer? This date, for example, is given in some of Bosnevi's other writings, such as *al-Ghafr al-muṭlaq* (Carullah MS 2129), and alludes to the importance of 5 (1040 = 5).

Arabic edition of *al-Ṣalāt al-fayḍiyya*

The following manuscript and printed sources have been consulted for our edition of the Blessing-prayer:

A = Ankara Milli 9297 (n.d.), fols. 1b–6b

E = Esad Ef. 3651 (n.d.), fols. 131a–180b

G = Gümüşhanevi, *Majmūʿat aḥzāb wa-awrād al-Shaykh al-akbar* (Istanbul, 1880), vol. 1, pp. 21–23

H = Hacı Mahmud 4154 (n.d.), fols. 11b–17b

HM = Hacı Mahmud 2717 (1281H), fols. 1b–26a (Ottoman commentary), 28a–30a

HM1 = Hacı Mahmud 3026 (1281H), fols. 1b–3a

I = İzmirli Hakki 3635 (1272H), fols. 48b–51a

K = Kayseri Reshid Ef. 21473 (n.d.), fols. 1b–10a

KR = Kayseri Reshid Ef. 664 (n.d.), fols. 24b–26a

KR1 = Kayseri Reshid Ef. 1323 (n.d.), fols. 64b–68a

N = Yūsuf al-Nabhānī, *Afḍal al-ṣalawāt* (Beirut, 1417/1996), pp. 50–52

P = Nafiz Pasha 685 (n.d.), pp. 259–262

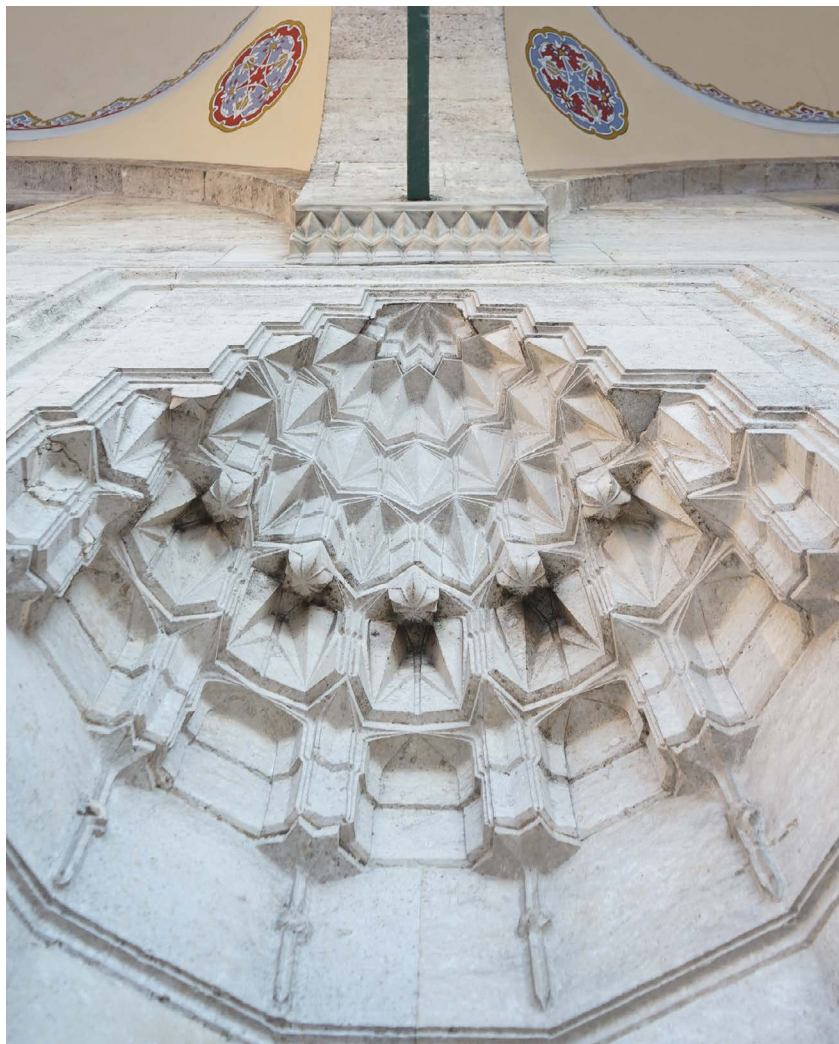
P1 = Nafiz Pasha 760 (n.d.), fols. 1b–3a

SA = Nūr al-ʿArabī, *al-Majāli al-zahrāʾ* (1283H), pp. 1–28 (private copy)

SB = University A552 (1261H), fols. 1b–16a, *Sharḥ al-Baghdādī* (composed 1193H)

SN = University A522 (1261H), fols. 17b–36b, *Sharḥ al-Nābulusī* (composed 1141H)

Z = Zuhdu Bey 491 (n.d.), fols. 1b–5a



Detail from the interior of the Sokollu Mehmet Pasha Mosque, Istanbul
(courtesy of Adem Murphy)

APPENDIX A:

TRANSLITERATION

We present here a full technical transliteration of the Arabic text of the prayer. It has been conceived so that readers of the prayer who do not know Arabic writing may read it in two different ways: as a normal reading or as a formal recitation. We have also marked the rhymes and resonances of the text so that the reader can appreciate them more easily. In addition, we have given the couplet's reference number corresponding to the KY/GW structure in order to facilitate location for comparison with the translations and notes.

Upper case indicates key heading words in the division of sections. Apart from the standard transliteration system, we are using some special technical marks.

Special marks used in the transliteration

1. **Italic** (-ā, -ī, -ū) is used to mark ending vowels in resonating pairs that would be brief in common speech or normal reading, but can be made long in formal recitation. These vowels may be either brief or long according to the reciter.
2. **Brackets** indicate that the long vowel inside the bracket is part of a resonating rhyming pair, and may be pronounced as long or omitted (the same has to be done in the corresponding pair of the couplet). In normal reading they are omitted.
3. **Bold** marks the part of words that resonate in pairs as an inner or final rhyme, or just as an inner resonance.
4. **Two points** after a long vowel (as in -ā:) indicate that it can be read either as a long vowel with a pause (as it appears in our transliteration) or as **-an** (with the *nūn* of its grammatical *tanwīn*).
5. The **sign *** marks a possible end to a sentence. It is found only in couplets 24–25 of sub-section I-B (indicating either 5 or 6 couplets),

and sentence D in section V (see Appendix D for the difference between the KY/GW and TS/TC structures).

6. The **long dash sign** (–) between words indicates a place where the formal reciter can extend the pronunciation of the preceding vowel (generally in resonance with an inner rhyming pair within the couplet). For ordinary reading, this sign should not be taken into account.

7. The **hyphen** (–) in the middle of a word indicates the way one word or particle is connected together in writing with the following: for example, the ending of an initial definite article and the beginning of the main noun (*at-ta‘ayyun*), or of the main word and the addition of a pronoun suffix (*ṣalawāti-k*), or linkers and prepositions (*wa-ākhir*, *bi-nidā’*). In all cases, it plays no part in speech and the two parts should be read together.

EXAMPLE OF TRANSLITERATION EXPLAINED

Couplets I.A and I.1 may be enough to understand how the transliteration works and takes into account the possible alternative pauses and extensions in recitation.

أَفِذْ صَلَاتَةً صَلَوَاتِكَ
وَسَلَامَةً تَسْلِيمَاتِكَ

afīḏ ṣilatā ṣalawāti-k(ā) * wa-salāmatā taslīmāti-k(ā) *

In normal reading, the –ā ending is pronounced as brief, and the (ā) is omitted:

afīḏ ṣilata ṣalawāti-k * wa-salāmata taslīmāti-k *

Formal recitation may follow the normal reading (as above), or alternatively is akin to chanting, in which the –ā ending and the (ā) are both pronounced as long:

afīḏ ṣilatā ṣalawāti-kā * wa-salāmatā taslīmāti-kā *

عَلَى أَوَّلِ التَّعْيِنَاتِ الْمُفَاضَةِ مِنَ الْعَمَاءِ الرَّبَّانِيِّ
وَأَخِرِ التَّنَزُّلَاتِ الْمُضَافَةِ إِلَى النَّوعِ الْإِنْسَانِيِّ

‘alā awwali t-ta‘ayyūnātī l-mufaḍat(i) – mina l-‘amā’i r-rabbānī *
wa-ākhirī t-tanazzulātī l-muḍāfat(i) – ilā n-naw‘i l-insānī *

Normal reading:

‘alā awwali t-ta‘ayyūnātī l-mufaḍat – mina l-‘amā’i r-rabbānī * wa-ākhirī
t-tanazzulātī l-muḍāfat – ilā n-naw‘i l-insānī *

Formal recitation:

‘alā awwali t-ta‘ayyūnātī l-mufaḍatī – mina l-‘amā’i r-rabbānī * wa-ākhirī
t-tanazzulātī l-muḍāfatī – ilā n-naw‘i l-insānī *

TRANSLITERATION

Bismi Llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm

[I-A] Allāhumma afīḍ

[A] ṣilatā ṣalawāti-k(ā) * wa-salāmatā taslīmāti-k(ā) *

[1] ‘alā awwali t-ta‘ayyunātī l-mufaḍḍatī – mina l-‘amā’i r-rabbānī *
wa-ākhirī t-tanazzulatī l-muḍḍafatī – ilā n-naw‘i l-insānī *

[2] al-muhājiri min Makkatī – kān Allāhu wa-lam yakun ma‘a-hū
shay’un thān * ilā Madīnatī – wa-huwa l-āna ‘alā mā ‘alay-hi kān *

[3] muḥṣī ‘awālimī l-ḥaḍarātī l-khamṣi fī wujūdi-h(i) – wa-kulla shay’in
aḥṣaynā-hu fī imāmin mubīn * wa-rāḥimī sā’ilī sti‘dādātī-hā bi-nidā’i
jūdi-h(i) – wa-mā arsalnā-ka illā raḥmatan li-l-‘ālamīn *

[4] nuḡṭati l-basmatatī – l-jāmi‘ati li-mā yakūnu wa-kān * wa-nuḡṭati
l-amri l-jawwālatī – bi-dawā’iri l-akwān *

[5] sirri l-huwiyyati llatī fī kulli shay’in sāriyah * wa-‘an kulli shay’in
mujarradatun wa-‘āriyah *

[6] amīni Llāhi ‘alā khazā’ini l-fawāḍil(i) – wa-mustawda‘i-hā *
wa-muqassimi-hā ‘alā ḥasabi l-qawābil(i) – wa-muwazzi‘i-hā *

[7] kalimatī – l-ismi l-a‘zam(i) * wa-fātiḥatī – l-kanzi l-muṭalsam(i) *

[8] al-maḡhari l-atammī – l-jāmi‘i bayna l-‘ubūdiyyatī wa-r-rubūbiyyah
* wa-l-mansha’i l-a‘ammī sh-shāmili li-l-imkāniyyatī wa-l-wujūbiyyah *

[9] aṭ-ṭūri l-ashammī – lladhī lam yuzaḡziḡ-hu t-tajallī ‘an maqāmi
t-tamkīn(i) * wa-l-bahri l-khiḍammī – lladhī lam tu‘akkir-hu jiyafu
l-ghafalāti ‘an ṣafā’i l-yaqīn(i) *

[10] al-qalami n-nūrāniyyi l-jārī – bi-midādī l-ḡurūfi l-‘āliyāt(i) *
wa-n-nafasi r-raḥmāniyyi s-sārī – bi-mawāddi l-kalimāti t-tāmmāt(i) *

[11] al-fayḍi l-aqdasī – dh-dhātīyyi – lladhī ta‘ayyanat bi-hi l-a‘yānu
– wa-sti‘dādātu-hā * wa-l-fayḍi l-muqaddasī – ṣ-ṣifātīyyi – lladhī
takawwanat bi-hi l-akwānu – wa-stimdādātu-hā *

[12] maṭla‘ī – shamsi dh-dhāt(i) – fī samā‘i l-asmā‘i wa-l-ṣifāt(i) *
wa-manba‘ī – nūri l-ifāḍāt(i) – fī riyāḍi n-nisabi wa-l-iḍāfāt(i) *

[13] khaṭṭi l-waḥdatī – bayna qawsayi l-aḥadiyyatī wa-l-wāḥidiyyah
* wa-wāsiṭati t-tanazzuli l-ilāhī – min samā‘i l-azaliyyatī ilā l-arḍi
l-abadiyyah *

[14] an-nuskhatī – ṣ-ṣughrā – llatī tafarra‘at ‘an-hā – l-kubrā *
wa-d-durratī – l-bayḍā – illatī tanazzalat ilā – l-yāqūtātī – l-ḥamrā *

[15] jawhari l-ḥawādithi l-imakāniyyatī – llatī lā takhlū ‘ani l-ḥarakatī –
wa-s-sukūn * wa-māddati l-kalimati l-fahwāniyyatī – ṭ-ṭālī‘ati min kinni
kun ilā shahādatī – fa-yakūn *

[16] hayūlā – ṣ-ṣuwari llatī lā tatajallā bi-aḥadin illā – marratā: lā
thnatayn(i) * wa-lā – bi-ṣuratin min-hā – li-aḥadin marratayn(i) *

[17] qur‘ānī – l-jam‘i sh-shāmilī – li-l-mumtani‘i wa-l-‘adīm(i) *
wa-furqānī – l-farqi l-fāṣilī – bayna l-ḥādithi wa-l-qadīm(i) *

[18] ṣā‘imī – nahāri inni abītu ‘inda rabbī * wa-qā‘imī – layli tanāmu
‘aynā-ya wa-lā yanāmu qalbī *

[19] wāsiṭatī – mā bayna l-wujūdi wa-l-‘adamī – maraja l-baḥrayni
yaltaqiyān(i) * wa-rābiṭatī – ta‘alluqi l-ḥudūthi bi-l-qidamī – bayna-
humā barzakhul lā yabghiyān(i) *

[20] fadhlakatī – daftari l-awwali wa-l-ākhir(i) * wa-markazi ihāṭatī –
l-bāṭini wa-ṣ-ṣāḥir(i) *

[I-B] ḥabībi-kā

[21] lladhī stjlayta bi-hi jamāla dhāti-kā – ‘alā minaṣṣati tajliyāti-k(ā)
* wa-naṣabta-hu qiblatā: – li-tawajjuhāti-kā – fī jāmi‘i tajalliyāti-k(ā) *

[22] wa-khala‘ta ‘alay-hi khil‘ata ṣ-ṣifāti wa-l-asmā * wa-tawwajta-hu
bi-tāji l-khilāfati l-‘uzmā *

[23] wa-asraytā – bi-jasadi-hī – yaqazatā: * mina l-masjidī - l-ḥarāmi ilā
l-masjidi l-aqṣā ḥattā *

[24] intahā ilā * sidrati l-muntahā *

[24b-25] wa-taraqqa ilā * qābi qawsayni aw adnā *

[25/26] fa-usirrā – fu’ādu-hū – bi-shuhūdi-kā – ḥaythu lā ṣabāḥa wa-lā masā – mā kadhaba l-fu’ādu mā ra’ā * wa-uqirrā – baṣaru-hū – bi-wujūdi-kā – ḥaythu lā khalā’a wa-lā malā – mā zāgha l-baṣaru wa-mā ṭaghā *

[II-A] ṣalli Llāhumma ‘alay-hi ṣalātā:

[1] yaṣilu bi-hā far‘ī – ilā aṣlī * wa-ba‘dī – ilā kullī *

[2] li-tattaḥida dhātī – bi-dhāti-h(i) * wa-ṣifātī – bi-ṣifāti-h(i) *

[3] wa-taqarrā – l-‘aynū – bi-l-‘ayn(i) * wa-yafirrā – l-baynū – mina l-bayn(i) *

[II-B] wa-sallim ‘alay-hī salāmā:

[4] aslamu bi-hī fī mubāya‘ati-hī – mina t-takhalluf(i) * wa-fī ṭarīqi sharī‘ati-hī – mina t-ta‘assuf(i) *

[5] li-aftatiḥa bāba maḥabbati-kā – iyyā-ya bi-miftāḥi mutāba‘ati-h(i) * wa-ashhada-kā – fī ḥawāssī wa-a‘dā’i min mishkāti shar‘i-hi wa-ṭā‘ati-h(i) *

[6] wa-adkhula warā’a-hu ilā – ḥisni lā ilāha illā Llāh * wa-fī athari-hi ilā – khalwati lī waqtun ma‘ Allāh *

[B/7] idh huwa bābu-kā – lladhī man lam yaqṣidu-kā min-hu suddat ‘alay-hi ṭ-ṭuruqu wa-l-abwāb * wa-rudda bi-‘aṣā – l-adabi ilā – iṣṭabli d-dawāb *

[III-A] Allāhumma yā Rabb(i)

[C] yā man laysa ḥijābu-hū – illā n-nūr * wa-lā khafā’u-hū – illā shiddata ṣ-ṣuhūr *

[1] as’alu-ka bi-kā – fī martabati iṭlāqi-kā – ‘an kulli taqyīd * allatī taf‘alu bi-hā mā tashā’u wa-turīd *

[2] wa-bi-kashfi-kā – ‘an dhāti-kā – bi-l-‘ilmi n-nūrī * wa-taḥawwuli-kā – fī ṣuwari asmā’i-kā – wa-ṣifāti-kā – bi-l-wujūdi ṣ-ṣūrī *

[III-B] an tuṣalliya ‘alā sayyidi-nā Muḥammadin ṣalātā:

[3] takḥalu bi-hā baṣīratī bi-n-nūrī l-marshūshi fī l-azal * li-ashhada fanā’a mā lam yakun wa-baqā’a mā lam yazal *

[4] wa-arā l-ashyā – kamā hiya fī aṣli-hā – ma‘dūmatā: – mafqūdatā *
wa-kawna-hā – lam tashamma rā’iḥatā – l-wujūdi faqlā: ‘an kawni-hā
- mawjūdatā *

[IV-A] wa-akhrij-nī Llāhumma bi-ṣ-ṣalāti ‘alay-h(i)

[1] **min** zulmati anāniyyatī – ilā n-nūr(i) * wa-**min** qabri jismāniyyatī
– ilā jam‘i l-ḥashri wa-farqī n-nushūr(i) *

[2] wa-afīd ‘alay-ya **min** samā’i tawḥīdi-ka iyyā-k * mā tuṭahhiru-nī –
bi-hi **min** rijsi sh-shirki wa-l-ishrāk *

[3] wa-an‘ish-nī – bi-l-mawtati l-ūlā wa-l-wilādati th-thāniyah *
wa-aḥyi-nī – bi-l-ḥayāti l-bāqiyati fī hādhihi d-dunyā l-fāniyah *

[4a] wa-j‘al lī nūrā: – amshī bi-hi fī n-nās *

[IV-B]

[4b] fa-arā wajha-kā – ayna-mā tawallaytu bi-dūni shtibāhin wa-lā ltibās
*

[5] nāzirā: – bi-‘aynayi l-jam‘i wa-l-farq(i) * fāṣilā: – bayna l-bāṭili
wa-l-ḥaqq(i) *

[6] dāllā: – bi-kā – ‘alay-k(ā) * wa-hādiyā: – bi-idhni-kā – ilay-k(ā) *

[V.] yā Arḥama r-rāḥimīn

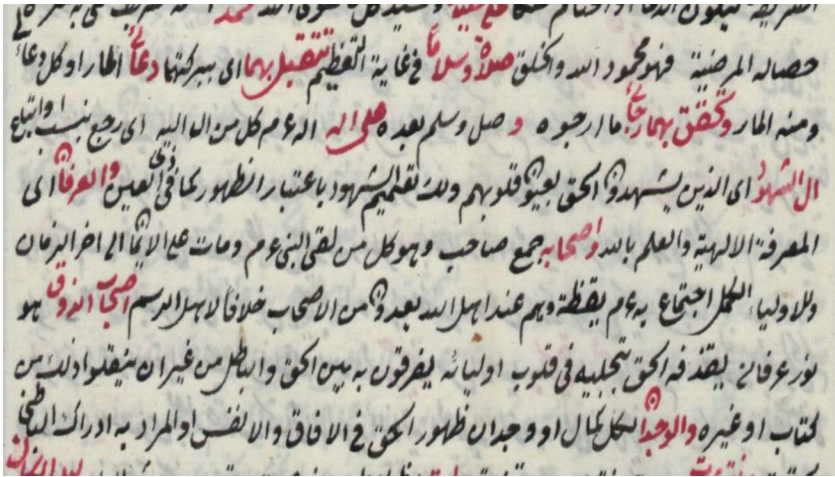
ṣalli wa-sallim ‘alā sayyidi-nā Muḥammadin ṣalātā:

[1] tataqabbalu **bi-hā** du‘ā’i * wa-tuḥaqqiqu **bi-hā** rajā’i *

[2] wa-‘alā āli-hī – āli sh-shuhūdi wa-l-‘irfān(i) * wa-aṣḥābi-hī – aṣḥābi
dh-dhawqi wa-l-wijdān(i) *

[3] mā ntasharat – ṭurratū – layli l-kiyān(i) * wa-asfarat – ghurratū –
jabīni l-‘iyān(i) *

[4/D-4] āmīn * wa-salāmūn ‘alā l-mursalīn * wa-l-ḥamdu li-llāhi rabbi
l-‘ālamīn *



Detail from al-Baghdādī's commentary, Istanbul University A552, fol. 15b.

APPENDIX B:

ORACIÓN MAYOR DE LA DIVINA EFUSIÓN SOBRE LA SUPREMA REALIDAD DE MUHAMMAD

En el nombre de Dios, el Compasivo, el Misericordioso

[I.] ¡Oh Dios!

[A] Infunde la gracia de Tus bendiciones
y la paz de Tus saludos

[1] al Primero de las individuaciones surgidas de la Nube Señorial
y el Último de las revelaciones dirigidas al género humano;

[2] el Emigrante desde La Meca de ‘Dios es y no hay con Él
cosa’ segunda alguna
a la Medina de ‘Él es ahora como [siempre] es’;

[3] el Consignador de los dominios de las Cinco Presencias en su ser
- *y todo lo hemos consignado en un guía claro* -
y el Agraciador de quienes, su munificencia invocando, piden que
se disponga lo que está en ellas cifrado - *y solo te hemos enviado como
gracia para los mundos*;

[4] el Punto de la *basimala*, que aúna cuanto ha sido y será,
y el Punto de la orden [*¡sé!*] que por los círculos de los seres creados
circula sin cesar;

[5] el Secreto de la Identidad esencial que todas las cosas [ocultamente]
permea
y libre de todas las cosas permanece desnudo;

[6] el Fidedigno Guardián de Dios, a cargo de las reservas de Sus
almacenes, y su Depositario,

y el Repartidor que las divide en virtud [de las necesidades] de los destinatarios, y su Distribuidor;

[7] la Palabra del Nombre Supremo
y la *Fātiḥa* que abre el cifrado Tesoro;

[8] el más perfecto Lugar de manifestación, que aúna las presencias de siervo y Señor,
y la más inclusiva Constitución original que contiene posibilidad y necesidad;

[9] el Monte Altivo, erguido en la morada de la estabilidad, que la revelación teofánica no mueve,
y el Vasto Océano en que los despojos de las negligencias no contaminan la pureza de la certidumbre;

[10] el Luminoso Cálamo que fluye con la tinta de las Letras sublimes
y el Compasivo Hálito que se insufla en los elementos de las Palabras plenas;

[11] la Santísima Efusión de la Esencia, por la cual se individualizan las realidades potenciales y sus predisposiciones,
y la Santificada Efusión de los Atributos, por la cual cobran existencia los seres creados y sus plasmaciones,

[12] el Levante del sol de la Esencia en el cielo de los Nombres y Atributos
y el Manantial de la luz de las efusiones que riegan con profusión los huertos [por las acequias] de las relaciones y las atribuciones;

[13] la Línea de la unidad entre los dos arcos de las presencias del Único y del Uno
y el Intermediario del divino descenso desde el firmamento de la Eternidad [sin principio] a la tierra de la Perpetuidad [sin fin];

[14] la Transcripción Menor [del Verdadero] de la que procede la transcripción mayor
y la Perla Blanca que desciende hasta el rojo rubí;

[15] la [Preciosa] Sustancia de las articulaciones potenciales del habla que requieren del movimiento [vocálico] y el reposo

y la Materia de la palabra proferida que emerge desde la ocultación de Sé hasta el testimonio de *y cobra existencia*;

[16] la Materia Prima de las formas que solo se revela a través de una [individuación] una única vez, no dos,

y que jamás a alguien en una de esas formas se revela dos veces;

[17] el Corán de la síntesis que abraza a los que están compelidos [a manifestarse] y a los desprovistos,

y el Furqán de la distinción que separa lo primordial de lo recién llegado;

[18] el Abstinente que ayuna durante el día de ‘yo paso la noche con mi Señor’

y el Vigilante que se mantiene levantado durante la noche de ‘duermen mis ojos, pero no mi corazón’;

[19] el Intermediario entre el ser y el no ser – *Él ha separado los dos mares que se encuentran* –

y el Broche que conecta lo efímero a lo eterno – *entre ambos hay una barrera que no traspasan*;

[20] el Sumario del cuaderno de bitácora, que consigna lo primero y lo último,

y el Centro [del círculo] que abarca lo manifiesto y lo oculto;

Tu Amado-Amador

[21] por quien has revelado la belleza de Tu Esencia en el tálamo nupcial de Tus [íntimas] revelaciones

y a quien has señalado como alquibla para los que vuelven su faz hacia Ti en la aljama que congrega las revelaciones;

[22] a quien has investido con el manto de [Tus] Nombres y Atributos y has coronado con la diadema del máximo representante;

[23] cuyo cuerpo hiciste viajar de noche [enteramente] despierto *desde la Mezquita Sagrada a la Mezquita más Alejada* hasta que

[24] llegó al Árbol de Loto del [Supremo] Límite
y fue elevado a *la distancia de dos arcos o más cerca*¹,

[25] de modo que su corazón se regocijó al contemplarte donde no hay
mañana ni tarde – *y su corazón no desmintió lo que veía*;
y su visión se deleitó al encontrarte donde no hay plenitud o vacío – *su
vista no se apartó, ni más allá se extendía*.

[II.] ¡Oh Dios!

Bendícelo con una oración de gracia

[1] por la cual mi rama se conecte a mi raíz,
y mi parte a mi todo,

[2] de modo que mi esencia se una con su esencia
y mis atributos con sus atributos,

[3] y pueda el ojo en la fuente refrescarse
y la intermediación liberarse de la separación,
y bendícelo con un saludo de paz

[4] por el cual pueda yo ser íntegramente fiel al pacto de lealtad a él,
preservado de la disidencia,
y seguir con seguridad el camino de su vía revelada, a salvo del
extravío,

[5] de modo que me sea dado abrir la puerta de Tu Amor a mí con la
llave de seguirlo a él
y pueda contemplarte en mis sentidos y órganos desde el nicho de su
guía reveladora y su conformidad,

[6] y logre así entrar tras él a la ciudadela de ‘no hay dios sino Dios’
y llegar siguiendo sus huellas hasta el interior retiro [en la celda] de
‘tengo un momento [de recogimiento] con Dios’,

[B] pues él es Tu puerta: quien se proponga llegar a Ti sin él, todo
camino y toda puerta encontrará cerrado,
y con el cayado de la cortesía será conducido de vuelta al establo de los
animales.

.....
1 Alternativamente este pareado puede dividirse en dos pareados en correspondencia con la estructura TS/
TC, en la cual tienen también una numeración alternativa: [24/25] llegó al Árbol de Loto del [Supremo] Límite
[25/26] y fue elevado a *la distancia de dos arcos o más cerca*...

[III.] ¡Oh Dios! ¡Oh Señor mío!

[C] ¡Oh Tú cuyo único velo es la Luz
y cuya sola ocultación es la intensidad de la manifestación!

Te pido

[1] por Ti [solamente] en el grado de Tu Absolutidad, libre de toda limitación,

en virtud de la cual Tú haces cuanto quieres y cuanto deseas;

[2] y por Tu [propia] develación de Tu Esencia con la luz del conocimiento

y Tu [incesante] transmutación bajo las formas de Tus Nombres y Atributos en las imágenes de la existencia;

[3] que bendigas a nuestro señor Muhammad con una oración de gracia por la cual refresques [el ojo de] mi visión interior, alcoholándolo con la luz rociada en la eternidad sin principio, de modo que yo sea testigo del desvanecerse de ‘lo que nunca ha sido’ y la permanencia de ‘lo que jamás ha dejado de ser’;

[4] y vea las cosas como verdaderamente son en su raíz, sin existencia, ausentes,

y [perciba] que nunca la fragancia del Ser han aspirado más allá del hallarse presentes.

[IV.] ¡Oh Dios!

Con esta bendición de gracia dirigida a él,

[1] sácame de la oscuridad de mi condición de ‘yo’ [separado] a la Luz, y de la tumba de mi corporeidad a la reunión de la Asamblea [en el Más Allá] y al despliegue de la Distribución,

[2] y báñame desde el cielo de Tu propia proclamación de Tu Unidad con la [lluvia de gracia] que me purifique de la inmundicia de asociar [a Dios con otros] y adorar lo que no es Él;

[3] revíveme con la primera muerte y el segundo nacimiento, y vivifícame con la Vida perdurable en este mundo efímero;

[4] dame ‘una luz con la cual’ yo ‘camine entre las gentes’,

y déjame así ver Tu faz *adondequiera que me vuelva*, libre de la ilusión de apariencias y disfraces,

[5] contemplando a la par con los dos ojos de la unión y la separación, claramente distinguiendo lo irreal de lo Real,

[6] por medio de Ti indicándote a Ti,
y guiando hacia Ti con Tu permiso.

[V.] ¡Oh [Tú] el Más Compasivo de los compasivos!

¡Bendice y saluda

[1] a nuestro señor Muhammad con una oración de gracia por la cual aceptes mi súplica
y hagas realidad mis esperanzas,

[2] y a su Familia, la gente del testimonio visionario y el conocimiento inmediato,
y a sus Compañeros, los poseedores de experiencia gustativa y directa percepción,

[3] [bendiciéndolos por siempre] en tanto que el velo de la noche de la existencia primordial caiga como el cabello [que oculta la mirada]
y la brillante marca en la frente del día de la visión directa [al descubrirse los ojos] se revele!

[4] ¡Amén! – ¡y [sea la] paz sobre los mensajeros,
y alabado sea Dios, Señor de los mundos!

APPENDIX C:

LETTERS AND NUMBERS, RHYMES AND KEY WORDS IN THE BLESSING-PRAYER

Gabriel came to the Prophet and said: ‘God orders you that your community should read the Qur’ān according to one mode (ḥarf)’. To this he replied: ‘I ask God for His pardon and forgiveness. My community are not capable of doing this.’ He then came for the second time and told him the same thing until he reached seven modes. Finally, he said: ‘God commands you to make your community read in seven modes: in whichever mode they read, they will hit the mark.’¹

In this appendix we examine the numerical structures that underpin the rhymes and key words in the Blessing-prayer. In order for this to be comprehensible, it is necessary to outline the different approaches to letter and number that are employed as modes of contemplation by Ibn ‘Arabī and other akbarian authors, which were particularly marked in the Bayrāmī-Malāmī tradition to which Bosnevi belonged.

The distinction between speech (*lafẓ*) and writing (*abjad*) leads to different arithmosophical approaches to the order and value of letters in Arabic, which are perceived as divinely inspired rather than humanly constructed. In contrast, the alphabetical order used in dictionaries was developed by early grammarians as a didactic tool and is based on the

¹ Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan* 8/63. The word *ḥarf* has many meanings apart from ‘letter’ or ‘particle’, including ‘limit’, ‘edge’, ‘mountain ridge’, suggesting that letters are to be understood as a limitation of the writing line or of the breath. The ‘mode of reciting’ is a particular determination: to recite in a single ‘letter-mode’ as commanded by God and taught by Gabriel would presumably mean to recite in full consciousness of Oneness, and may be related to Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of *alif* as the single primordial shape from which all the letters derive. Other similar *ḥadīths* emphasise the seven modes of recitation that are considered ‘restorative and sufficient’ (*shāfi kāfi*) and how this plurality was to make things easy for the community (for example, see al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan* 11/66; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 66/13; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 6/330).

affinity of letter shapes, but this way of classifying is not considered particularly significant in arithmosophy. Even though Ibn ‘Arabī refers to this conventional alphabetical order of *alif* to *yā*’ as a way of describing the series from Alpha to Omega, what he has in mind is the *abjad* value of these letters, which is 1 in both cases.³

Ibn ‘Arabī utilises four major approaches in the *Futūḥāt* and other works. He distinguishes two variants of phonic order:

- a) Phonic order of letter-poems in Chapter 2 (P1), based on what he describes as *hurūf al-mu‘jam* (‘letters of the alphabet’), according to which he differentiates *alif* from *hamza* (although in terms of numerical value *hamza* is not counted);⁴
- b) Phonic order of letters in Chapter 198 (P2), which Ibn ‘Arabī employs in the context of the divine Breath of Compassion (*naḥās al-raḥmān*);⁵

Both of these orders begin with the glottal stop (*hamza*), which is articulated in the most interior point of the throat (‘chest’, *ṣadr*), and proceed towards the *wāw*, the most exterior point of articulation on the lips. Four letters (*dād*, *rā*’, *ṣād*, *dhāl*) are given different places in the two orders, causing other letters to be displaced. What phonic perception leads to this variation and the grammatical sources inspiring Ibn ‘Arabī’s conceptions are still to be fully studied.⁶

- c) *Abjad* value (Eastern) (E), the system that underlies the ordering of works in part of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fihrist*;⁷
- d) *Abjad* value (Western) (W), the system that underlies the letter-

3 See the poem in *Ayyām al-sha‘n*, in *Rasā’il*, ed. al-Manṣūb, 2/57; *Mawāqif al-nujūm* (Cairo, 1954), p. 21. This poem is discussed in Pablo Beneito, ‘The Ark of Creation: the *Markab* Motif in Sufism’, *JMIAS* 40 (2006), pp. 39–57.

4 From a phonic point of view, *alif* is a graphic sign without any sound in itself, and ‘is not one of the letters according to those who smell a scent of the realities, even though it is generally regarded as a letter’ (*Fut.* I.65). The first actual phonic letter is *hamza*, but it counts as 1 if its written support is *alif* (which has a numerical value of 1 independently of the *hamza*). In this particular case there is an overlapping of phonic order (*hamza*) and graphic support (*alif*), which might lead a reader to confuse the two levels. See Eric Winkel, ‘Geometry and Number: Alif is not a Letter and 1 is not a Number’.

5 In chapter 198 the phonic place-value of a letter is directly linked by Ibn ‘Arabī to the ‘speech’ of the Divine in the Compassionate Breath: the letter is articulated in the degrees of Being, just as speech is articulated in the human throat. There are thus correspondences between a letter, a mansion of the moon and the zodiacal constellations. See the listing in Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Alchemy of Human Happiness* (Oxford, 2017), appendix A, pp. 170–2, based on *Fut.* II.397 ff.

6 For further references, see Dunja Rašić, *The Written World of God* (Oxford, 2021).

7 See the edition of *al-Fihrist wa-l-Ijāza* by Bakri Aladdin (Damascus, 2020), pp. 87–97.

poems in chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*, where Ibn ‘Arabī refers to it as the one that he prefers for the contemplation of the secrets of the letters.⁸

The following table classifies the letters according to two phonic orders and two numerical *abjad* values:

P1		P2		O/V	Abjad (E)		Abjad (W)	
<i>alif-hamza</i>	أ	<i>alif-hamza</i>	أ	1/1	<i>alif</i>	ا	<i>alif</i>	ا
<i>hā’</i>	ه	<i>hā’</i>	ه	2/2	<i>bā’</i>	ب	<i>bā’</i>	ب
<i>‘ayn</i>	ع	<i>‘ayn</i>	ع	3/3	<i>jīm</i>	ج	<i>jīm</i>	ج
<i>ḥā’</i>	ح	<i>ḥā’</i>	ح	4/4	<i>dāl</i>	د	<i>dāl</i>	د
<i>ghayn</i>	غ	<i>ghayn</i>	غ	5/5	<i>hā’</i>	ه	<i>hā’</i>	ه
<i>khā’</i>	خ	<i>khā’</i>	خ	6/6	<i>wāw</i>	و	<i>wāw</i>	و
<i>qāf</i>	ق	<i>qāf</i>	ق	7/7	<i>zāy</i>	ز	<i>zāy</i>	ز
<i>kāf</i>	ك	<i>kāf</i>	ك	8/8	<i>ḥā’</i>	ح	<i>ḥā’</i>	ح
<i>ḍād</i>	ض	<i>jīm</i>	ج	9/9	<i>ṭā’</i>	ط	<i>ṭā’</i>	ط
<i>jīm</i>	ج	<i>shīn</i>	ش	10/10	<i>yā’</i>	ي	<i>yā’</i>	ي
<i>shīn</i>	ش	<i>yā’</i>	ي	11/20	<i>kāf</i>	ك	<i>kāf</i>	ك
<i>yā’</i>	ي	<i>ḍād</i>	ض	12/30	<i>lām</i>	ل	<i>lām</i>	ل
<i>lām</i>	ل	<i>lām</i>	ل	13/40	<i>mīm</i>	م	<i>mīm</i>	م
<i>rā’</i>	ر	<i>nūn</i>	ن	14/50	<i>nūn</i>	ن	<i>nūn</i>	ن
<i>nūn</i>	ن	<i>rā’</i>	ر	15/60	<i>sīn</i>	س	<i>ṣād</i>	ص
<i>ṭā’</i>	ط	<i>ṭā’</i>	ط	16/70	<i>‘ayn</i>	ع	<i>‘ayn</i>	ع
<i>dāl</i>	د	<i>dāl</i>	د	17/80	<i>fā’</i>	ف	<i>fā’</i>	ف
<i>tā’</i>	ت	<i>tā’</i>	ت	18/90	<i>ṣād</i>	ص	<i>ḍād</i>	ض
<i>ṣād</i>	ص	<i>zāy</i>	ز	19/100	<i>qāf</i>	ق	<i>qāf</i>	ق
<i>zāy</i>	ز	<i>sīn</i>	س	20/200	<i>rā’</i>	ر	<i>rā’</i>	ر
<i>sīn</i>	س	<i>ṣād</i>	ص	21/300	<i>shīn</i>	ش	<i>sīn</i>	س
<i>ẓā’</i>	ظ	<i>ẓā’</i>	ظ	22/400	<i>tā’</i>	ت	<i>tā’</i>	ت

8 See *Fut.* 1.67. We may note that Ibn ‘Arabī’s subtle expression here (‘*inda-nā ... wa-‘inda ahl al-asrār*’) suggests that in his inclusive view he is not limiting himself only to being one of the people of the secrets, even if he privileges their approach to knowledge.

<i>dhāl</i>	ذ	<i>thā'</i>	ث	23/500	<i>thā'</i>	ث	<i>thā'</i>	ث
<i>thā'</i>	ث	<i>dhāl</i>	ذ	24/600	<i>khā'</i>	خ	<i>khā'</i>	خ
<i>fā'</i>	ف	<i>fā'</i>	ف	25/700	<i>dhāl</i>	ذ	<i>dhāl</i>	ذ
<i>bā'</i>	ب	<i>bā'</i>	ب	26/800	<i>ḍād</i>	ض	<i>ḡā'</i>	ظ
<i>mīm</i>	م	<i>mīm</i>	م	27/900	<i>ḡā'</i>	ظ	<i>ghayn</i>	غ
<i>wāw</i>	و	<i>wāw</i>	و	28/1000	<i>ghayn</i>	غ	<i>shīn</i>	ش

The central O/V column indicates the order (O) of the letter (1-28) in the phonic alphabet and its numerical value (V) in the *abjad* series (1-1000). We have not included here the important distinction between the major and minor values (where 0 is not regarded as a number and only units are considered): for example, 20 (major) can be reduced to 2 (minor), 30 to 3 and so on. As can be seen from the shaded boxes, which indicate the letters whose order changes in the parallel systems (phonic and *abjad*), there are basically four main letter 'movements' occurring in the two phonic orders (*ḍād*, *rā'*, *ṣād* and *dhāl*) and the two *abjad* orders (*sīn*, *ṣād*, *shīn* and *ḍād*), causing a displacement of other letters (for example, in the *abjad* order *ḡā'* and *ghayn* are displaced).⁹ We may also notice the following: the initial letter, which has an order-value of 1, can be viewed as either *hamza* (speech) or *alif* (writing).¹⁰ The middle letter in both phonic and *abjad* systems is always *nūn*: although apparently different in P1, the *nūn* still occupies a medial position because of the inclusion of the *lām-alif* as the 29th letter.¹¹

The table of letters and numerical values can be arranged according to sequences of 9 (1–9, 10–90, 100–900, + 1000), so that the numbers and letters are displayed as the three dimensions of a cube.¹² Some authors also employ this 9-base system to take account of the *abjad* series (the order of letters from 1 to 28), as well as the value (from 1 to 1000). While the *abjad* value and order are the same for the units (*alif*=1, *bā'*

⁹ We may deduce that an original 22-letter *abjad* system may have been employed prior to the Arabic *abjad* which has a total of 28 letters, i.e. with Arabic there is an addition of 6 letters. At some point there seem to have been two variants in this addition, giving rise to the two systems of Eastern and Western.

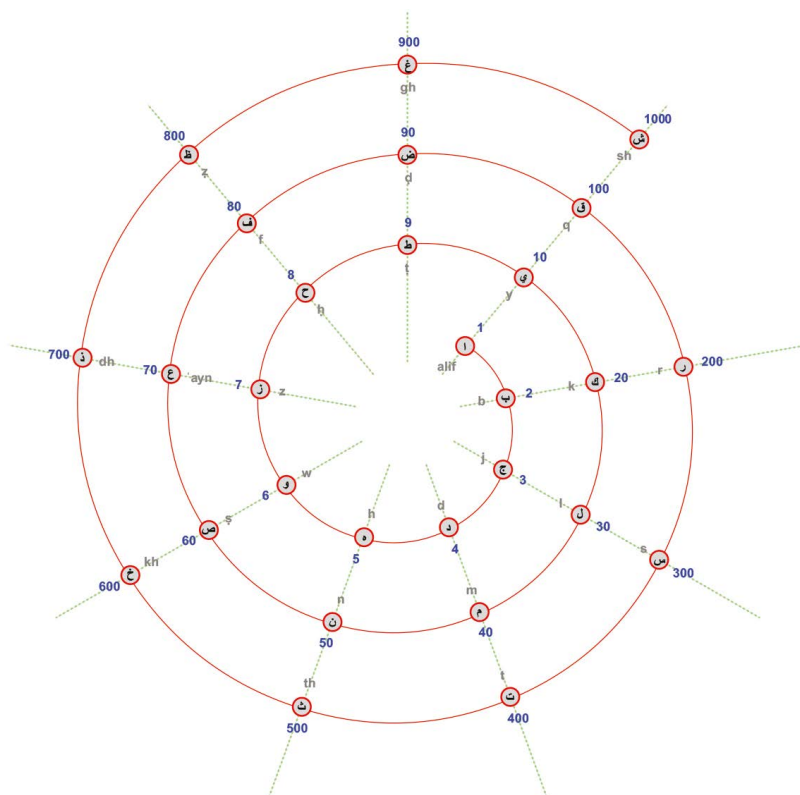
¹⁰ The *hamza* actually has no value in itself in writing, and is only counted according to its 'carrier' (*alif* or *yā'* or *wāw*).

¹¹ In chapter 2, Ibn 'Arabī also respects a prophetic tradition that *lām-alif* is a letter in its own right, by adding four extra poems in a separate section on *lām-alif* and *alif-lām* (Fut. I.75–77).

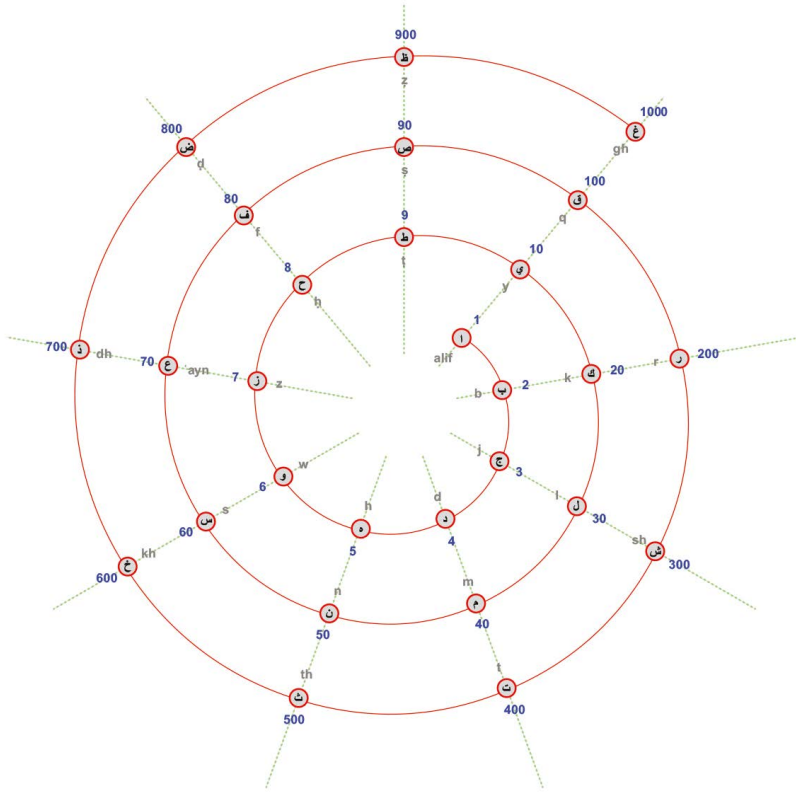
¹² See *The Cosmic Script: sacred geometry and the science of Arabic penmanship* by Ahmed Moustafa and Stefan Sperl (London, 2014), and Ahmed Moustafa's artwork 'The Cube of cubes'.

=2 and so on), they apparently diverge from the letter *kāf* onwards. For example, *kāf* has a value of 20 and an order of 11 – however, both can be numerically simplified to 2; *lām* has a value of 30 (=3) and an order of 12 (=3); *mīm* has a value of 40 (=4) and an order of 13 (=4); *nūn* has a value of 50 (=5) and an order of 14 (=5), and so on.

We can also represent the relationship of letter and number in a visual form as a spiral diagram, depicting a 3-dimensional helicoidal structure rather like a flight of circular stairs (as found in a minaret, for example). Julian Cook has provided us with the following diagrams which he conceived and designed as a fruitful way of representing the interactive dynamic between the 9-digit system and the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet:



The Western abjad spiral



The Eastern abjad spiral

These approaches mean that each Arabic letter can be considered in several different numerological ways, and just as an individual letter has connections to certain other letters that make it up (for example, *alif* is made up of *alif-hamza*, *lām* and *fā'*, 'l-f), so it can be linked to different numerical values that similarly 'constitute' it. There is a distinction between the direct value of the letter (as counted above in the four ways) and that of the name of the letter in consideration of its 'constituent elements' (according to two levels of calculation, considering the immediate spoken letters of the name or the element-letters that compose the letters of the name). Throughout the book we have given various examples of how these overlap in striking ways, and produce linkages to other numbers and letters. Thus we may regard *wāw* as

having a value of 6 in itself as well as a value of 4 through its constituents $w+\bar{a}+w$ ($6+1+6=13=4$), or *mīm* as having a value of 40 or 4 as well as 90 or 9 ($m+\bar{i}+m$), or *nūn* as having a value of 50 or 5 as well as 106 or $1+6=7$ ($n+\bar{u}+n$). Even more complex numerical patterns are given by considering the element-letters: for example, *wāw* is made up of *wāw* and *alif*, to which are added *lām*, *fā'* and *hamza*, which are the constituents of the letter *alif*.¹³

When we investigate different aspects of numbers, letters and words, whether in relation to the Blessing-prayer or to poetry, we may consider three main interrelated but distinct levels of number in relation to the meanings:

- i) the numerical value of the Arabic letters in themselves;
- ii) the numerical value of certain words and expressions;
- iii) the value of the ordering and structure of sentences and sections.

This may include, for example, the number of verses in a poem, of rhyme letter(s) and even of the syllables of the metre. We may then come to understand that all the elements and dimensions within a text, and especially within a poem, are significant in different ways and at different levels, establishing correlations that are not explicit.

In the following analysis of the Blessing-prayer in terms of its constituent couplets and sentences, and how these relate to the overall structure, it may be useful to have in mind the value of the letters in the minor Western system, which is most favoured by Ibn 'Arabī:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
units	<i>alif</i>	<i>bā'</i>	<i>jīm</i>	<i>dāl</i>	<i>hā'</i>	<i>wāw</i>	<i>zāy</i>	<i>ḥā'</i>	<i>ṭā'</i>
tens	<i>yā'</i>	<i>kāf</i>	<i>lām</i>	<i>mīm</i>	<i>nūn</i>	<i>ṣād</i>	<i>‘ayn</i>	<i>fā'</i>	<i>dād</i>
hundreds	<i>qāf</i>	<i>rā'</i>	<i>sīn</i>	<i>tā'</i>	<i>thā'</i>	<i>khā'</i>	<i>dhāl</i>	<i>zā'</i>	<i>ghayn</i>
thousand	<i>shīn</i>								

.....
 13 When Ibn 'Arabī considers the letters that make up the name, the name-letter itself is not included. For example, when discussing the constituents of the letter *alif*, he specifies two levels: '[firstly] in terms of spoken letters (*al-ḥurūf al-laḥẓiyya*) it has *hamza*, *lām* and *fā'* (= *alif*); [secondly] in terms of elements (*baṣā'it*), it has *zāy*, *mīm* and *hā'* (= *hamza*, backwards), *fā'*, *lām* and *hamza* (= *alif*, backwards)' (*Fut.* I.65). It is unclear to us why he mentions the latter in an inverse order.

In our understanding of the structure of the Blessing-prayer, we call **sentence** each of the two lines composing a rhyming **couplet**, which are usually joined together with a linking *wāw* ('and'). The two sentences of a couplet, as is characteristic of rhymed prose, share the same final rhyme, but often also contain one or more inner rhymes. We call **section** a coherent sequence of couplets that share a common pattern of features and style.

Here we will particularly focus on examples in Section 1, where we are presented with 20 couplets or 40 sentences.¹⁴ Each of these couplets and sentences in the first section contains a noun or pair of nouns naming or depicting the Reality of Muhammad, who is the subject of the Blessing-prayer (in the other sections they normally begin with a verb).

The general features of Section 1 can be described as follows:

1. Every couplet has a word or expression corresponding to the value of its ordinal number. The 'first' couplet begins with the word *awwal* ('first', value $1+6+3=10=1$). The 'second' couplet has the word *thān* ('second', value $5+1+5=11=2$). These two examples at the very beginning of the prayer provide the key to understanding the general procedure. However, this is left implicit rather than explicit, and has not drawn the attention of any previous commentators.

Within each couplet the numerical value of one or more major terms or of initial key words corresponds to this couplet numbering system. For example, in couplet 3 the final word *mubīn* has a value of $4+2+1+5=12=3$; in couplet 5 the first word *sir[r]* has a value of $3+2=5$; in couplet 8 the first letter *ṭā* of *ṭūr* ('Mountain') has a value of 8; in couplet 10 the letter *qāf* of *qalam* ('Pen') has a value of $100=1$.

2. In addition, in a parallel way, every sentence (from 1 to 40) has a key expression, often the first word, that contains the value of the number of the sentence. This is first announced explicitly in sentence 5, with the mention of 'the Five Presences' (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-khams*), and is implicit throughout the prayer. For example, in sentence 6

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 14 See Appendix D for details of the overall structure (GW and KY).

the first word *rāḥim* ('Mercifier') has a value of $2+1+8+4=15=6$; in sentence 11 the first word *amīn* ('Trusted Keeper') has a value of $1+4+1+5=11$; in sentence 22 the first word *al-fayḍ* ('Effusion') has a value of $4+18=22$. This is such an extensive feature that we have presented our findings in table 2 below.

3. Each of the 20 couplets usually consists of two major noun expressions as the subject of the two sentences: for example, in couplet 3 'Recorder ... Mercifier' (*muḥṣī ... rāḥim*) or couplet 7 ('Word ... Opener', *kalima ... fātiḥa*).¹⁵ These noun expressions have been indicated with capital letters in our translation. We regard the first sentence in each couplet as referring to the interior level of the Most Holy Effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) and the second sentence as indicating the exterior level of the Holy Effusion (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*). This is made explicit in couplet 11, where the primordial individuation of potential realities (*a'yān*) in the first sentence is contrasted with the extension of created being (*akwān*) in space-time. The other couplets embody the same contrast between the two levels of existence, potential (*aynī*) and actualised (*kawnī*). In some cases there is a very evident use of alliteration, which also corresponds to the two levels. For example, in couplet 17 we find an insistence on the letter '*ayn*' in the first sentence, symbolising interior vision, and a repetition of the letter '*fā*' in the second, symbolising speaking and expression. This distinction between two levels has informed our translation throughout the Blessing-prayer.
4. Both sentences within a couplet mirror each other formally in terms of vocabulary, syntax and grammatical forms. For example, we find repeated terms in couplet 4 ('dot', *nuqṭa*) and in couplet 11 ('effusion', *al-fayḍ*); polarities in couplet 1 ('first ... last', *awwal ... ākhir*), couplet 2 ('Mecca ... Medina') and couplet 13 ('eternity... endlessness', *azaliyya... abadiyya*); rhyming contrasts in couplet 3 ('his being ... his generosity', *wujūdi-hi ... jūdi-hi*) and in couplet 8 ('most complete ... most universal', *atamm ... a'amm*).

.....
 15 In three cases there is only one major term that covers both sentences in the couplet: in couplet 2 'Emigrant' (*muḥājir*), in couplet 5 'Secret of the He-ness' (*sirr al-huwiyya*), and in couplet 16 'the Materia Prima of forms' (*hayūlā al-ṣuwar*). However, there is an implicit repetition of the term in two aspects: for example, the Emigrant 'from' (*min*) and the Emigrant 'to' (*ilā*).

5. The two sentences of each couplet not only rhyme with each other at the end but also share an inner rhyme or rhymes with each other. One of many examples can be found in the four rhyming pairs of couplet 10: *al-qalam al-nūrānī al-jārī bi-midād al-ḥurūf al-‘āliyāt; al-naḥās al-raḥmānī al-sārī bi-mawādd al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*. In this example, there is also the syllabic parallelism of the words *qalam* and *naḥās* and the semantic contrast between *ḥurūf* (‘letters’) and *kalimāt* (‘words’). These interior mirroring rhymes are indicated in the Arabic text with two pausal signs (◊ and ♣), while the 99 full sentence end-rhymes of the prayer are marked with the symbol ☆.
6. Each sentence conforms to a general pattern of rhyme values 5:5 (containing a 5 in the inner rhyme and a 5 in the ending rhyme). In couplet 10 cited above, for example, the main end-rhyme is *-āt* (=1+4=5) and the inner rhyme is *-n* (=5), as in *nūrānī/raḥmānī*. Thus each sentence has an internal 5:5 structure as well as forming one part of the 5:5 rhyming structure of the couplet. This provides a total value for each sentence rhyme and each couplet rhyme of 10 (=1), suggesting that this rhyming structure is akin to two halves of a circle that are constantly resolving themselves into the essential oneness of the circle.¹⁶

This mirror structure appears throughout the Blessing-prayer, and we have provided three tables below showing some of the correspondences within the first Section and the rhyming patterns within the prayer as a whole. Our object here is to demonstrate the arithmosophical and symbolical underpinning of the Blessing-prayer, where each element is significant in terms of contemplation, including the choice of words for addressing the Divine and making a request. For example, the opening word of address (*Allāhumma*) in the first Section has a value of 16 or 7, a number that is reflected in the collective value of the other forms of address in the four later Sections (*Allāhumma* x3 + *Arḥam al-rāḥimīn*, =21+40=61=7), suggesting that the Blessing-prayer can be viewed as

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 16 This might also be understood as one of the hidden meanings in ‘God created Adam according to His Form’ (*‘alā ṣūratī-Hī*), where the pronoun *hā’* (=5) of He-ness is repeated in its reflected human form (as a second 5), and returns to Unity. We may also observe that if each sentence sums to 10, the whole couplet can be viewed as 10+1 (=11, the value of *Huwa*) or as 10+10=20 (the value of *kāf*, i.e. the *kāf* of the second person or the *kawn* as the manifest world as a whole).

having two major equal parts and a correlation to ‘the Seven Repeated’ (*al-sab‘ al-mathānī*) of the Fātiḥa (see Appendix D).

The brief opening request consists of only five terms (*afīḍ / ṣilata / ṣalawāti-k / wa-salāmata / taslīmāti-k*), and is designated as [A] rather than with a number because it prefaces the descriptions of the Muhammadian Reality and is not part of them. Nonetheless, these five written terms can be treated as a rhyming couplet with two pairs linked by a *wāw*: the rhyming letter (*rāwī*) of *kāf* (=20=2, *ṣalawāti-k*, *taslīmāti-k*) is not only the form of address (‘You’) but also reflects by its numerical association the dual nature of the blessing and greeting, i.e. the blessing of the One upon His own Self and the greeting that He gives to Himself. This ‘dualitude’, i.e. the relationship of the One with Himself, is reinforced by the identical numerical value of both *ṣalawāt* (=20) and *taslīmāt* (=20). It is equally remarkable that the whole phrase *afīḍ ṣilata ṣalawāti[k] wa-salāmata taslīmāti[k]* totals 92, which not only reduces to the same value of 2 but constitutes the value of the name Muḥammad.¹⁷

The first table examines the intricate rhyming patterns and their values in the first ten couplets of the Blessing-prayer. This is correlated with the prominent letter in each couplet, as found in certain words, and its numerical value. We have only included some of the words with this letter, to show the principle. We may note the remarkable consistency of the rhyme and letter value with the number of the couplet, which extends at least throughout the first Section. This pattern of correspondences between rhyme value and couplets can be extended to the other sections of the Blessing-prayer in accordance with the numbering of the GW structure.

.....
17 If the two *kāfs* are included, the total is 96 (9+6=6), equivalent to the letter *wāw* (=6). If the *Allāhumma* invocation is counted (without the *kāfs*), the total is 99. These numbers, 92, 96 and 99, are all significant in terms of the structure of the Blessing-prayer (see Appendix D). We may also note that the two underlying words *ṣalāt* (=15) and *salām* (=11) together equal 26, which is the complete number of couplets (this one + 25) of this first section. With their respective articles, *al-ṣalāt* (=19) and *al-salām* (=15) together equal 34 or 7, the value of *kun* (2+5) and the number of the 25 (2+5) succeeding couplets, as well as the value of the full rhyming letters *-ātīk* (=1+4+2=7).

Table 1: Rhyming patterns and letters in the first 10 couplets¹⁸

Couplet	[minor rhyme] (major rhyme)	Full rhyme (reading)	Rhyme Value	Prominent letter	Letter value
1	[tā'] (nūn-yā') (yā')	-t -nī -ī	4+6=10=1 1	alif (awwal, ākhir)	1
2	[hā'] (alif-nūn)	-tī -ān	5+6=11=2	kāf (kāna, yakun)	2
3	[hā'] (yā-nūn)	-hī -īn	6+6=12=3	jīm (wujūd, jūd) sīn (khamṣ, sā'il) lām ('awālīm)	3 3 3
4	[lām-tā'] (alif-nūn)	-lat -ān	7+6=13=4	mīm (basmala, amr) kāf (kān) + rā' (amr)	4 2+2=4
5	[lām-shīn- yā'] (hā')	kul[l] shay' -āriyah	3+1+1=5 5	hā' (huwiyya, 'āriyah sāriyah)	5
6	[lām] (‘ayn-hā') (hā'-alif)	-l -i' hā -hā	3+12=15=6 5+1=6	wāw (huwiyya) khā' (khazā'in)	6
7	[hā'] (sīn-mīm)	-sm/sam	3+4=7	zāy (kanz) 'ayn (a'zam)	7
8	[mīm] (hā')	-ammi -biy[y]ah	4+4=8 2+1+5=8	zā' (maẓhar)	8
9	[mīm] (yā'-nūn)	-am[m]i -īn	4+5=9	ṭā' (ṭūr)	9
10	[yā'] [alif-dāl] (alif-tā')	-ānī -ād -āt	10 5+5=10	qāf (qalam) yā' (nūrānī) alif (jārī, sārī)	1(00) 10 1

.....
18 Further examples of this arithmosophical rhyming pattern can also be seen in couplets 11–20:
(couplet 11) -ātuḥā =1+4+5+1=11; (12) -‘ayn + -āt =7+1+4=12; (13) -abadiyy[ah] (last rhyme) =13; (14) -h +
-al[l]atī =5+1+3+4+1=14; (15) -h + -n =5+5+5=15; (16) -ūlā + -yn =16; (17) -n + -l + -dim =5+3+9=17; (18)
-ā'im + -bī =1+1+4+2+10=18; (19) -h + -dam + -ān =5+8+6=19; (20) -r =2[00].

The following table gives an indication of the relation between key words and the order of the sentences and couplets. What is remarkable here is the consistent hidden numerical pattern that underlies the first 20 couplets and 40 sentences.

Table 2: Key words in the first 20 couplets

Sentence	Key word(s)	Value	Couplet	Key word(s)	Value
1	<i>awwal</i>	10=1	1	<i>awwal</i> / <i>awwal+ākhir</i>	10=1
2	<i>al-insānī</i>	20=2			19=1
3	<i>Allāh</i> / <i>wa-lam</i> <i>yakun</i> <i>ma‘a-hu</i> <i>shay’</i>	66=3 39=3	2	<i>thān</i>	5+1+5=11=2
4	<i>‘alā mā</i> <i>‘alay-hi kān</i>	40=4			
5	<i>ḥaḍarāt al-</i> <i>kham̄s</i> / <i>[wujūdi]-</i> <i>Ḥi</i> / <i>kul[l]</i>	41=5 5 5	3	<i>‘awālim</i> / <i>mubīn</i> / <i>lām (repeated)</i>	21=3 12=3 3
6	<i>rāḥim</i>	15=6			
7	<i>basmalat</i>	16=7	4	<i>nuḡtat al-</i> <i>basmalah</i> / <i>dāl [of</i> <i>dawā’ir]</i>	19+21=40=4
8	<i>jaw[w]ālat</i>	17=8			4
9	<i>huwīyyah</i> / <i>ḡi</i>	18=9 / 9	5	<i>sir[r]</i> / <i>hā’ [of</i> <i>huwīyya]</i>	3+2=5 5
10	<i>‘an kul[l]i</i> <i>shay’</i> / <i>kullī shay’</i>	19=10 10			
11	<i>amīn</i>	11	6	<i>wāw [of huwa] /</i> <i>amīn Allāh</i> / <i>khā’ [of</i> <i>khazā’in]</i> <i>muwaz[z]i‘</i>	6 11+67=78=15=6 6 24=6
12	<i>muqas[s]im</i>	12			

PATTERNS OF CONTEMPLATION

13	<i>kalimat / kalimat al-ism al- a'zam</i>	13 / 49=13	7	<i>kalimat al- ism / fātiḥat</i>	25=7 25=7
14	<i>kanz</i>	14			
15	<i>jāmi'</i>	15	8	<i>mīm x2 [in atamm and a'amm] al-atamm al-mansha' al-a'amm</i>	4x2=8 17=8 15+20=35=8
16	<i>al-a'amm[m]</i>	16			
17	<i>ṭūr</i>	17	9	<i>ṭā' [of ṭūr]/ al-khiḍamm / lam tu'ak[k] iru-h / ṣafā' al- yaqīn</i>	9 27=9 27=9 27=9
18	<i>al-khiḍamm / lam tu'ak[k] iru-h / ṣafā' al- yaqīn</i>	27=9 27=9 27=9			
19	<i>qāf [of qalam] al-ḥurūf</i>	1 28=1	10	<i>qāf [of qalam] al-ḥurūf</i>	100=1 28=10
20	<i>al-naḥas raḥm[ā]nī</i>	20 20			
21	<i>al-aqdas al- dhātī / ta'ay[y]anat</i>	30=3 21	11	<i>al-fayḍ al- muqaddas</i>	22+16=38=11
22	<i>al-fayḍ</i>	22			
23	<i>maṭla'</i>	23	12	<i>dhāt</i>	12
24	<i>wa-manba' / ifāḍāt / iḍāfāt</i>	24 24 24			
25	<i>qawsay[y] al- aḥadiy[y]ah wāḥidiy[y]ah</i>	34=7 25	13	<i>waḥdat aḥad</i>	22=4 13
26	<i>tanazzul / azaliy[y]ah / al-abadiy[y]ah</i>	26 17=8 17=8			

27	<i>nuskhat / al-nuskhah al-ṣughrā / tafarrāʿat</i>	18=9 45=9 27	14	<i>al-nuskhah / al-dur[r]ah al-bayḍā / al-yāqūtah al-ḥamrā</i>	23=5 15+17=32=5 22+19=41=5
28	<i>dur[r]at / dur[r]ah al- bayḍā / al-ḥamrā</i>	10=1 28 19=1			
29	<i>imkāniyyah / al-ḥarakat / al-sukūn</i>	20=2 20=2 20=2	15	<i>shahādat</i>	15
30	<i>mād[d]at al- kalimat / fahwāniyyat</i>	30 30			
31	<i>lā / aḥad</i>	31 13=4	16	<i>hayūlā</i>	16
32	<i>li-aḥad mar[r]atayn</i>	32			
33	<i>mumtaniʿ</i>	24=6	17	<i>furqān</i>	17
34	<i>al-fāṣil bayn al-ḥādith</i>	52=7			
35	<i>in[n]i abītu ʿinda rab[bī]</i>	35	18	<i>in[n]i abītu ʿinda rab[b]i</i>	36=9
36	<i>layl tanāmu ʿaynā-ya</i>	36			
37	<i>rābiṭah / wujūd / al-ʿadam</i>	19=1 19=1 19=1	19	<i>rābiṭah / wujūd / al-ʿadam / yabghiyān</i>	19 19 19 19
38	<i>rāʾ [of rābiṭa]</i>	2			

39	<i>al-awwal wa-l-ākhir / fadhlakati daftar al-aw[w]al wa-l-ākhir</i>	39 75=3	20	<i>al-ẓāhir</i>	20
40	<i>mīm [of markaz] / markaz ihāṭat al-bāṭin wa- l-ẓāhir</i>	40 85=4			

Such associations of rhyme letters and order can be found throughout the Blessing-prayer, implying a very subtle appreciation of number underlying the structure.

Perhaps the most significant feature, as we have mentioned, is the 5:5 value of each sentence and couplet. This five-ness is usually found in the letters *hā'* (including the *tā'* *marbūṭa* which is written as a final *hā'*) and *nūn*, but may be found in other words or letter combinations (e.g. *ilā* or *ī + lī*). As we have seen, the number 5 is highly significant as the value of the letter *nūn*, which depicts a semi-circle. Hence the 5:5 rhyme may be understood as the two semicircles that make up a whole circle ($5+5=10=1$). In some couplets the number 10 or 1 is emphasised. The following table gives the full breakdown of these 5:5 rhymes by sentence and couplet over the whole structure of the prayer. In this context we are counting the total sentences and couplets (TS and TC respectively), which include the special sentences (A, B, C, D),¹⁹ in order to show the consistency of the rhyming pattern (5:5). In addition, a significant number of sentences also reveal rhymes with the value 2 (*bā'*, *kāf*, *rā'*) or the value 1 (*alif*, *yā'*, *qāf*), which appear as a reference to the oneness and twoness of the circle inherent in the *nūn*.²⁰

.....
19 See Appendix D for these special sentences (A, B, C, D) which include modes of address or explanatory concluding sentences.

20 The *nūn* may be understood as a doubling of 5 (the two semi-circles) and as a pointer to Unity ($5+5=1$). In addition, it alludes to the interaction of the first (*ana*, -i) and the second (-k) persons.

Table 3: Rhyming 5 in the whole prayer

TS	TC	5:5 (nūn)	1 or 2	TS	TC	5:5 (nūn)	1 or 2
1/A	1a	<i>h/āt</i> 5:5	<i>k</i> 2	51	26a	<i>wa-taraqqa/ilā</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1
2/A	1b	<i>h/āt</i> 5:5	<i>k</i> 2	52	26b	<i>n/n</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1
3	2a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1	53	27a	<i>h/mā</i> ¹ 5:5	<i>k</i> 2/ <i>ā</i> 1
4	2b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1	54	27b	<i>h/mā</i> 5:5	<i>k</i> 2/ <i>ā</i> 1
5	3a	<i>h/n</i> :5		55	28a	<i>ilā/ī+lī</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1
6	3b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		56	28b	<i>ilā/ī+lī</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1
7	4a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		57	29a	<i>tī/h</i> :5	<i>ī</i> 1
8	4b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		58	29b	<i>tī/h</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1
9	5a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		59	30a	<i>n/n</i> 5:5	
10	5b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		60	30b	<i>n/n</i> 5:5	
11	6a	<i>h/h</i> 5:5		61	31a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	<i>luf</i> 2
12	6b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5		62	31b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	<i>suf</i> 2
13	7a	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	63	32a	<i>k+yāy</i> ² / <i>h</i> 5:5	
14	7b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	64	32b	<i>k+ā</i> ³ / <i>ī/h</i> 5:5	
15	8a	<i>h</i> ³ 5		65	33a	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	
16	8b	<i>h</i> 5		66 ⁴	33b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	
17	9a	<i>h/h</i> 5:5		67	34a/B	<i>bāb</i> ⁵ 5	<i>b</i> 2
18	9b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5		68	34b/B	<i>‘aṣā</i> 5	<i>b</i> 2
19	10a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		69	35a/C	<i>h/il[l]ā</i> 5:5	<i>r</i> 2
20	10b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		70	35b/C	<i>h/il[l]ā</i> 5:5	<i>r</i> 2
21	11a	<i>n/āt</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1	71	36a	<i>h/īd</i> 5:5	
22	11b	<i>n/āt</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1	72	36b	<i>h/īd</i> 5:5	
23	12a	<i>n/h</i> 5:5		73	37a	<i>āt</i> ⁶ 5	<i>k</i> 2/ <i>r</i> 2/ <i>ī</i> 1

1 Or alternatively -*ra* + -*ūdika*.

2 Alternately, *bāb* or *īyyāyu* and final *h* in this sentence and *h/h* in the following.

3 In this couplet the 5:5 pattern might be implemented by counting the final vowel of the rhyme in -*m* as long (-*mī* = 5).

4 Sentence 66 corresponds to the value of the name Allāh mentioned in it.

5 In this couplet the 5:5 pattern may be implemented by counting the final *nūn* or the double final *hā*’ in this first sentence and counting the *ilā* (=5) of the final letters *bā*’-*lām* (=5) of the word *īṣṭabl* in the second sentence.

6 In this couplet the 5:5 pattern may be implemented by counting the final *nūn* (*min*) in the first sentence or the double final *kāf* plus the final *yā*’ together (=5) in both sentences and counting the final -*lika* (=5) or the value of *ṣuwar* (=5) in the following sentence.

PATTERNS OF CONTEMPLATION

24	12b	<i>n/h</i> 5:5		74	37b	<i>āt</i> 5	<i>k</i> 2/ <i>r</i> 2/ <i>ī</i> 1
25	13a	<i>āt/āt</i> 5:5		75	38a	<i>h/tī</i> 5:5	<i>zal</i> 1
26	13b	<i>āt/āt</i> 5:5		76	38b	<i>n/n¹</i> 5:5	<i>zal</i> 1
27	14a	<i>h/h</i> 5:5		77	39a	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	
28	14b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5		78	39b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	
29	15a	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	<i>r</i> 2/ <i>ā</i> 1	79	40a	<i>n/tī</i> 5:5	<i>r</i> 2
30	15b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	<i>r</i> 2/ <i>ā</i> 1	80	40b	<i>n/tī</i> :5	<i>r</i> 2
31	16a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		81	41a	<i>n/iy[y]āka</i> 5:5	<i>k</i> 2
32	16b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		82	41b	<i>n/rāka</i> 5:5	<i>k</i> 2
33	17a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		83	42a	<i>n/h</i> 5:5	
34	17b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		84	42b	<i>n/h</i> 5:5	
35	18a	<i>n/īm</i> 5:5		85	43a	<i>nūrā/h</i> 5:5	
36	18b	<i>n/īm</i> 5:5		86	43b	<i>mā/h²</i> 5:5	
37	19a	<i>'im/n</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1	87	44a	<i>n³</i> 5	<i>q</i> 1
38	19b	<i>'im/n</i> 5:5	<i>ī</i> 1	88	44b	<i>n</i> 5	<i>q</i> 1
39	20a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		89	45a	<i>ā+k+k</i> 5	<i>k</i> 2
40	20b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5		90	45b	<i>ā+k+k</i> 5	<i>k</i> 2
41	21a	<i>h⁴</i> 5	<i>r</i> 2	91	46a	<i>h</i> 5	<i>ī</i> 1
42	21b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	<i>r</i> 2	92	46b	<i>h</i> 5	<i>ī</i> 1
43	22a	<i>āt/āt⁵</i> 5:5	<i>k</i> 2	93	47a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	
44	22b	<i>āt/āt</i> 5:5	<i>k</i> 2	94	47b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	
45	23a	<i>h/mā</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	95	48a	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	
46	23b	<i>h/mā</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	96	48b	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	

.....
1 Or alternatively, *-māl-mā*.

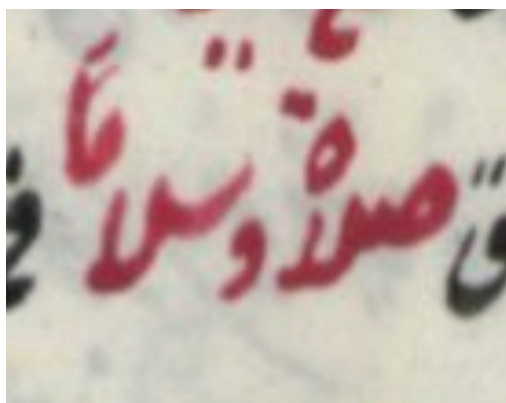
2 Or alternatively, counting final *-ā* plus final *-ās* in this and the previous sentences, or *-ās[ī]* as final rhyme in both.

3 In this couplet the 5:5 pattern may be implemented by counting '*aynay*' (=5) and '*jam*' (=5) in the first sentence or the final *-lā* plus the final *-q* in the second sentence.

4 Here there is only one explicit 5, but a second one may be considered if the final *-l* and *-r* are counted together as 5.

5 We may note that the rhyme structure of this couplet, the first of section I.B, coincides with the one in couplet A.

47	24a	<i>h/tā³¹</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	97	49a/D	<i>ām/n</i> 5:5	
48	24b	<i>ilā/tā</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	98	49b/D	<i>ām/n</i> 5:5	
49	25a	<i>h/ilā</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	99	49c/D	<i>h/n</i> 5:5	
50	25b	<i>h/h</i> 5:5	<i>ā</i> 1	91Q	46aQ	<i>rḥam/n</i> 5:5	



The elevated 5:5 final letters (*-h* and *-mā* in *ṣalātan wa-salāman*) found in the fifth section of the Blessing-prayer in al-Baghdādī's commentary (University MS A522, fol. 15b), showing that al-Baghdādī clearly understood this underlying structure in the Blessing-prayer.

.....
31 Counting the *alif* implicit in the reading of *yaqḥatā*.

EXAMPLE OF THE PRESENCE OF LETTERS WITH THE SAME VALUE OF THE COUPLET'S NUMBER (GW STRUCTURE)

Couplet I.21 (=3), with the three letters *jīm*, *lām*, *sīn*, whose value is 3:

حَبِيبِكَ الَّذِي اسْتَجَلَيْتَ بِهِ جَمَالَ ذَاتِكَ عَلَى مَنَصَّةِ
تَجَلِّيَاتِكَ

وَنَصَبْتَهُ قَبْلَةَ لِتَوَجُّهَاتِكَ فِي جَامِعِ
تَجَلِّيَاتِكَ

EXAMPLES OF THE RHYME CORRESPONDING TO THE SAME VALUE OF THE COUPLET'S NUMBER (GW STRUCTURE)

Couplet I.8, with final rhyme *-biy[y]ah* (2+1+5 = 8). If we add inner rhymes *-m* (4) and *-h* (5), the total is 8 as well. The rhyming 5:5 structure can be seen in the inner and final *-h* (=5).

الْمَظْهَرِ الْأَتَمِّ الْجَامِعِ بَيْنَ الْعُبُودِيَّةِ وَالرُّبُوبِيَّةِ
وَالْمُنْشَأِ الْأَعَمِّ الشَّامِلِ لِلْإِمْكَانِيَّةِ وَالْوُجُوبِيَّةِ

Couplet I.17 (where the inner rhyme in *-n* =5 and final rhyme in *-īm* =1+4=5 reproduce the general 5:5 pattern) shows how the sum of the two inner rhymes plus the extended final rhyme equal the number of the couplet (in GW): hence, *-n* (5) + *-l* (3) + *-dim* (4+1+4) =17, and *-l* + *-īm* =3+1+4 =8.

قُرْآنِ الْجَمْعِ الشَّامِلِ لِلْمُتَنِيعِ وَالْعَدِيمِ
وَفُرْقَانِ الْفَرْقِ الْفَاصِلِ بَيْنَ الْحَادِثِ وَالْقَدِيمِ

EXAMPLES OF THE INNER AND FINAL RHYMES CORRESPONDING TO 5:5 and 5:5:2 STRUCTURE

Couplet I.21, where the inner rhyme in *-h* (=5, in two possible combinations) or *-āt* (=1+4=5) and final rhyme in *-jliyātika* (=14=5) reproduce in either way the general 5:5 pattern, completed as a 5:5:2 sequence by final *-k* (=2).

حَبِيبِكَ
الَّذِي أُسْتَجَلِّيتَ بِهِ جَمَالَ ذَاتِكَ عَلَى مَنَصَّةِ
تَجَلِّيَاتِكَ
وَنَصَبْتَهُ قَبْلَةً لِتَوَجُّهَاتِكَ فِي جَامِعِ
تَجَلِّيَاتِكَ

Couplet IV.1, where the inner rhyme in *-n* (=5), *-tī* (=5) [and even *ilā* (=5)] reproduce the general 5:5 pattern, and final *-r* (=2) completes the 5:5:2 sequence:

وَأَخْرِجْنِي (...) مِنْ ظُلْمَةٍ أَنَانِيَّتِي إِلَى النُّورِ
وَمِنْ قَبْرِ جُسْمَانِيَّتِي إِلَى جَمْعِ الْحُشْرِ وَفَرْقِ التُّشُورِ

EXAMPLE OF TWO SENTENCES OF A
MIRRORING COUPLET IN WHICH ALL WORDS
MATCH IN GRAMMATICAL FORM OR AFFINITY

Couplet I.11 offers an example of a perfect match, where terms with the same grammatical form or affinity pair and contrast the meanings of lexical roots ‘-y-n/k-w-n and ‘-d-d/m-d-d:

الْفَيْضُ الْأَقْدَسُ الذَّاتِي الَّذِي تَعَيَّنَتْ بِهِ
الْأَعْيَانُ وَأُسْتَعْدَادَاتُهَا
وَالْفَيْضُ الْمُقَدَّسُ الصِّفَاتِي الَّذِي تَكَوَّنَتْ بِهِ
الْأَكْوَانُ وَأُسْتِمْدَادَاتُهَا

Couplet I-B (24-26), of a triadic textual nature (three segments with three rhymes), provides a rich example of mirroring connections:

فَأَسِرَّ فُؤَادُهُ بِشُهُودِكَ حَيْثُ لَا صَبَاحَ وَلَا مَسَاءَ
﴿مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى﴾
وَأُقِرَّ بَصَرُهُ بِوُجُودِكَ حَيْثُ لَا خَلَاءَ وَلَا مَلَأَ
﴿مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى﴾

APPENDIX D: STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE BLESSING-PRAYER

The reading of this complex appendix might be difficult for a general reader, and it is mainly recommended for those who are specifically interested in the possibilities it offers for a deeper understanding of the dynamic of the text. The Blessing-prayer, most certainly, can also be approached and interiorised directly without the intricacies of the kaleidoscopic perspective explained here. Our advice in this respect is that the reader should follow his immediate inclination and not necessarily force himself to study this very technical appendix.

In general we can say that the Blessing-prayer is a circular mirroring text, in particular correspondence with the nature of the mirror letters *nūn*, *mīm* and *wāw* and the *qād*, all of which, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, include a circular representation in their graphic form. We take the text as a highly expressive literary example of what we may call a kaleidoscopic structure, whose inner geometry manifests a different pattern according to the perspective from which it is viewed. The aim of this appendix is to show how this overall pattern works and how it provides different insights into the meanings of the text. The structure should be understood from the perspective of symbolical transitivity in akbarian discourse, where any expression is in itself a polyvalent symbol within a kaleidoscopic interplay of transitional, fluid living symbols. These cannot simply be reduced to mental concepts, since they are related to each other in many different ways and are connected to a dynamic of underlying images, numbers and patterns. Since they are not contradictory or exclusive, different structural approaches may operate simultaneously in the dynamic contemplation of the text. A certain flexibility of mind together with the necessary rigour are needed to approach this rich and complex universe of interactions and resonances in the realm of what we may call an ‘art of contemplation’.

The reader might not be familiar with such an approach: in a sense it is the first time that a text of the akbarian tradition has been analysed in this multiple interactive way, and this is why we have had to give a very detailed explanation.

Key Abbreviations:

TS: Total sentences²

TC: Total couplets³

KY: *Kun fa-yakūn* structure

GW: *Ghafūr-Wadūd* structure

A, B, C, D: Couplets A, B and C in the KY/GW structures correspond to invocational beginnings (A/C) or explanatory concluding sentences (B), allowing different numerical perspectives depending on whether they are counted or not. Letter D marks the single word/sentence *Āmīn* or the whole final triad which it initiates.

M: *Mīm* structure

N: *Nūn* structure

W: *Wāw* structure

D: *Dād* structure

Q: *Qāf* structure

.....
2 Counting KY/GW couplet 25 as two different couplets (25-26), plus A, B, C, D.

3 Counting the final triad as a single couplet (49a, b, c).

THE PARTS AND SECTIONS OF THE BLESSING-PRAYER

First of all, we have seen in Appendix C that there are 99 sentences in total (TS), or if we consider the rhyming pairs there are 45 couplets in total (TC).

Depending on the perspective and according to our reading of the text after meticulous analysis, the Blessing-prayer can be divided in four major ways, into 4 or 5 or 6 or 9 sections. Each of these possible divisions is linked to a special letter in terms of the structure of the prayer, and thus to two sets of numbers because of the two values related to the letter (the letter itself and the name of the letter). We will look at each of these possible divisions in turn.

The *Mīm* Structure: 40/4 or 90/9 (*M*)

The Blessing-prayer can be regarded as having four primary sections which begin with the invocational expression of address *Allāhumma*, along with a final closure that directly asks for the traditional blessing upon Muhammad. This fourness is in correspondence with the value of the letter *mīm* (signifying the name Muhammad). The four primary sections contain a total of 90 sentences, corresponding to the value of the name *mīm* ($40+10+40=90$). The final part, which may be considered separately because of its different invocational expression, contains a further 9 sentences (the reduced value of the name *mīm*), so that in total the Blessing-prayer is made up of two *mīms*. In this perspective the Blessing-prayer corresponds to the double *mīm* of Muḥam[m]ad and of *Allāhumma*.

The *Nūn* Structure: 50/5 or 7 (*N*)

This appears to be the most self-evident way of dividing the Blessing-prayer, in which each of the invocational expressions of address are treated separately: four beginning with *Allāhumma* and the last starting

with *yā Arḥam al-rāḥimīn*. In this case the prayer's five sections correspond to the value of the letter *nūn*. Numerically the sum of these five invocations also reflects the *nūn*: *Allāhumma* ($=7 \times 4 = 28$), plus *Arḥam al-rāḥimīn* ($15 + 25 = 4$), makes $28 + 4 = 32 = 5$.

On the other hand, if the letter *nūn* is regarded in terms of the three letters of its name ($nūn + wāw + nūn = 5 + 6 + 5 = 16 = 7$), we can view the Blessing-prayer as having 7 sections by splitting section I into three sub-sections: the single introductory couplet (A in KY), then the 20 mirroring couplets (1–20 in KY) and finally the series of couplets following the mention of *ḥabīb* (couplets 21–25 in KY). Such a sevenfold division is also in correspondence with the value of the letter 'ayn (and its symbolic implications).

In this structure the 99 total sentences (TS) are counted as two mirroring sequences of 49 sentences culminating in sentence 50 (which ends with the specific mention of 'the limit', *muntahā*). In this sense, we have two series of 50, corresponding to the two *nūns* (visible and hidden) completing the circle of the letter *nūn*. According to a *ḥadīth*,⁴ the number of the divine Names is 100 minus 1, which implies that they can be understood as both 99 and 100, where the 100th Name can be regarded as 'the Greatest Name' (*al-ism al-a'ẓam*), gathering all into Unity (1).⁵

The Wāw Structure: 6 or 4 (W)

In addition to the five sections of the *Nūn* structure, the series of couplets following the mention of *ḥabīb* (in couplet 21 of KY) may be regarded as a separate section, since it has very distinctive stylistic features. This means that the preceding 20 couplets would constitute section I-A, and the following couplets section I-B, making a total of six sections. The key term Beloved-Lover that introduces this section is *ḥabīb* ($=13=4$) or *ḥabību-Ka* ($=6$), whose numerical values are connected to the name of

4 'God has 99 Names, 100 minus 1, and whoever enumerates/comprehends them enters Paradise'. For a discussion of the different versions of this *ḥadīth*, see Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, pp. 51–68.

5 It is worth noting that the only reference to the Greatest Name occurs in couplet 7 in the Blessing-prayer, again reflecting the value of the name *nūn* ($=16=7$).

the letter *wāw* ($6+1+6=13=4$) as well as to the value of the letter *wāw* itself ($=6$). This section I-B is a unique turning-point in the Blessing-prayer and can be considered as having 5 or 6 couplets, depending upon how the rhymes are counted; it also emphatically repeats the rhyme in *-ā*, reflecting the culmination of the Prophet's ascension and the assonance found in the related Quranic passage in *Sūrat al-Najm* (Q 53:1–17).

Here the sum of the 42 ($4+2=6$) sentences of the first part (section I-A), plus the 10 ($=1$) sentences of section I-B, plus the 42 ($=6$) sentences of the second part (II-V, up to the closing *āmīn*) precisely mirrors the numerical structure of the name of the *wāw* ($w+ā+w = 6+1+6=13=4$). In this structure, the sentences from D to the end are not counted as part of the prayer in the 94 ($=13=4$) sentences, but simply as an additional closure. Alternatively, if the final couplet is counted as 2 extra sentences, the total is 96 ($9+6=15=6=wāw$) sentences.⁶

The *Ḍād* Structure: 90/9 or 5 (*Ḍ*)

A further very distinctive structure is symbolised by the letter *ḍād* ($=9$). According to this, the Blessing-prayer will have 9 sections, in which all the four sections beginning with *Allāhumma* (I–IV) are divided into two, plus the final closure (V) beginning with *Arḥam al-rāḥimīn*.

We have already seen how section I may be regarded as having two subsections: A (20 couplets) and B (a further series after the term *ḥabīb*). Section II may also be divided into two subsections, corresponding to the *ṣalāt* (6 sentences) and the *salām* (6 sentences); likewise, sections III (two affirmations of Lordship and two requests) and IV (six requests and six aspects of vision) are also divisible into two. This total of 9 corresponds not only to the value of the letter *ḍād* ($=90=9$) but also to the value of the term *ḥayḍ* ($=18=9$), as well as the name of the *mīm* ($=90$). In addition, the name of the letter *ḍād* ($9+1+4=14=5$) also corresponds to the value of the *nūn*.

.....
⁶ 15 is also both the combined value of the *mīm* (4), *nūn* (5) and *wāw* (6), and the sum of the series 1–5 ($1+2+3+4+5=15$).

Apart from being reflected in the overall 99-sentence structure (TS/TC), the 9 value of *D* recurs in many ways: Section I has 54 (=9) sentences or 27 (=9) couplets. From the beginning to the end of sections II-IV there are 36 (=9) sentences or 18 (=9) couplets. From the beginning of section I to the end of section IV there are 90 sentences and 45 (=9) couplets. In section V there are 9 sentences. Taken together, sections II-V equal 45 (=9) sentences.

The *Qāf* Structure: 100/10 (Q)

As a closely related alternative there is also the *Qāf* (=100) structure, where the final invocation, *yā arḥam al-rāhimīn* at the beginning of section V, is counted as a separate sentence (99+1). This phrase not only rhymes with *amīn* and with the final words of the prayer, *Rabbi l-‘ālamīn*, but also the extended rhyme *-mīn* precisely equals 100 (40+10+50). In this approach, considering section V as divided into two subsections, the Blessing-prayer has a total of 10 subsections (= *nūn* + *nūn*). As each couplet and section may be regarded as a circular *nūn* with an *aqdas* side and *muqaddas* side, the whole Blessing-prayer can also be thought of as a double-sided *nūn*, i.e. as a complete circle. The *Qāf* structure (whether considered as a letter with value of 100 or as $q+\bar{a}+f=10$) emphasises the expression of Unity and alludes to the Muhammadian Reality as ‘the Luminous Pen’ (see couplet 10): the term *qalam nūrānī* totals 28 (=10), alluding to the letters of the alphabet and all their associations, and if the articles are counted (28+8) equals 36, the number of the attestations of divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) in the Quran.⁷

DIVISIONS OF THE PRAYER

While the prayer may be viewed simply in terms of sections, we can also consider the following divisions into two or more parts.

.....
7 Note the significance of the letter *qāf* appearing as an isolated luminous letter in the Sura which bears its name (Q 50:1). See chapter 5 for the relationship between 5(0) and 1(00).

Two parts: From He-ness to I-ness

‘I have divided prayer (*al-ṣalāt*) into two halves between Me and My servant...’⁸

Part I: section I in *N* structure, consisting of 25 couplets. It contains the use of the second/third persons relating the divine Presence to the Muhammadian Reality, without any reference to the first person of the reader of the prayer.

Part II: sections II-V in *N* structure, consisting of 20 couplets. This part expresses the manifest I-ness of the reader by using the first person in all these sections.

We will take each of these parts in turn, and consider them in more detail.

Part I

The first rhyming pair in section I consists of the request for the divine blessing (‘O God, effuse... upon:’), and therefore, not being a couplet, it is designated as A. The rhyme is in *kāf* (*ṣalawāti-ka*, *taslīmāti-ka*), with a value of 2, or in *-āti-ka*, with a value of 7.

The numbering of the couplets begins with ‘the First of the Individuations...’ (couplet 1) up to ‘the Centre that encompasses the hidden and the manifest’ (20), and then continues with the *ḥabīb* section (21) which ends with the Quranic verse ‘*his eye did not swerve nor go beyond*’ (25). We may therefore treat this part as having:

- a) an initial pair (Aa, Ab) + 50 sentences, corresponding to the letters *kāf* (=2) and *nūn* (=50), which make the word *kun*;
- b) an initial pair (not counted) + 25 couplets, corresponding to the value of the letters of the Name *Ghafūr* (‘The One who covers with forgiveness’, 9+8+6+2=25);

.....
⁸ This famous *ḥadīth qudsī*, which refers to the Fātiḥa, is found in Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Mishkāt al-anwār*, no 31 (see *Divine Sayings*, p. 49).

- c) a sevenfold pattern ($2+5=7$) corresponding to the letter ‘*ayn*’ ($=7$), with all its associations.

Part II

The remaining four sections have the following:

Section II: 6 couplets + an extra descriptive pairing (‘he is your gateway’, B)

Section III: an extra invocational pairing (‘O my Lord...’, C) + 4 couplets

Section IV: 6 couplets

Section V: 4 couplets (including the sealing word *āmīn*, D)

We may therefore treat this second part as having:

- a) a series of 40 sentences, corresponding to the value of the letter *mīm* ($=40$) and the phrase *fa-yakūn* ($8+1+2+6+5=22=4$);
- b) a series of 20 couplets, precisely corresponding in sequential order to the individual letters of the Name *Wadūd* (‘the Constantly Loving’, $6+4+6+4=20$);
- c) a series of 44 sentences (including B and C pairs) + one extra sealing word in the final pair (*āmīn*, counted separately as D), totalling 45, corresponding to the value of Ādam ($1+4+40=45$), as well as to the ninefold *D* structure.

There are other perspectives which can be explored in terms of division:

The twofold Door of Lordship-Servanthood

Part I: starting at couplet A and ending with B (sections I-II).

Part II: starting at C and ending with D (sections III-V).

In this case, Part I has 68 sentences ($=14=5=$ *bāb*) and Part II has 31 ($=4=$ *Rabb*). Part I has 34 couplets ($=7$, coinciding with $B/7 =$ *bābu-Ka*), and Part II has 15 couplets ($=6=$ *yā Rabb*). The centre of the prayer would here be the twofold Door of Lordship-Servanthood.

From the *mīm* of *Allāhumma* to the *nūn* of '*ālamīn*

Part I: four sections I-IV, all introduced by *Allāhumma*, with 90 sentences in TS, corresponding to the two values of the *mīm* (=4 or 90).

Part II: the fifth section V, with 9 sentences in TS, corresponding to the value of the rhyme in *nūn* (=5): the fact that there are eight rhymes (*rāḥīmīn*, '*irfān*, *wijdān*, *kiyān*, '*iyān*, *āmīn*, *mursalīn*, '*ālamīn*) also indicates a correspondence to the *mīm* ($8 \times 5 = 40$).

The *isrā'*-*mi' rāj* of the Beloved-Lover

The important *ḥabīb* section I-B may be regarded as the epicentre of the prayer, as it contains the description of the Prophetic ascension to '*the distance of two arcs or nearer*'.

Part I: section I-A.

Part II: section I-B.

Part III: sections II-V.

This division into 3 parts corresponds to the two halves of the circle of the *nūn* with the intermediary *barzakh* of I-B. It provides a *Mīm* structure (*M*) of 40+10 (or 12) +40 sentences (KY), totalling 90 (the value of the name of the *mīm* designating Muḥammad) or 92 (the value of the name Muḥam[m]ad), or a structure of 20+5+20 couplets (GW), totalling 45 (the number of the primordial human sciences).

The following table provides a comprehensive overview to the different perspectives.

Table 1: The Ninefold Structure of the Blessing-prayer

TS	TC	KY	GW	M	N	W	D	Q
1	1a	Aa	Aa	Aa	1	1	1	1
2	1b	Ab	Ab	Ab	2	2	2	2
3	2a	1	1a	1	3	3	3	3
4	2b	2	1b	2	4	4	4	4
5	3a	3	2a	3	5	5	5	5
6	3b	4	2b	4	6	6	6	6
7	4a	5	3a	5	7	7	7	7
8	4b	6	3b	6	8	8	8	8
9	5a	7	4a	7	9	9	9	9
10	5b	8	4b	8	10	10	10	10
11	6a	9	5a	9	11	11	11	11
12	6b	10	5b	10	12	12	12	12
13	7a	11	6a	11	13	13	13	13
14	7b	12	6b	12	14	14	14	14
15	8a	13	7a	13	15	15	15	15
16	8b	14	7b	14	16	16	16	16
17	9a	15	8a	15	17	17	17	17
18	9b	16	8b	16	18	18	18	18
19	10a	17	9a	17	19	19	19	19
20	10b	18	9b	18	20	20	20	20
21	11a	19	10a	19	21	21	21	21
22	11b	20	10b	20	22	22	22	22
23	12a	21	11a	21	23	23	23	23
24	12b	22	11b	22	24	24	24	24
25	13a	23	12a	23	25	25	25	25
26	13b	24	12b	24	26	26	26	26
27	14a	25	13a	25	27	27	27	27
28	14b	26	13b	26	28	28	28	28
29	15a	27	14a	27	29	29	29	29
30	15b	28	14b	28	30	30	30	30

Appendix D: Structural Analysis of the Blessing-prayer

31	16a	29	15a	29	31	31	31	31
32	16b	30	15b	30	32	32	32	32
33	17a	31	16a	31	33	33	33	33
34	17b	32	16b	32	34	34	34	34
35	18a	33	17a	33	35	35	35	35
36	18b	34	17b	34	36	36	36	36
37	19a	35	18a	35	37	37	37	37
38	19b	36	18b	36	38	38	38	38
39	20a	37	19a	37	39	39	39	39
40	20b	38	19b	38	40	40	40	40
41	21a	39	20a	39	41	41	41	41
42	21b	40	20b	40	42	42/6	42	42

SECTION 1-B

43	22a/1	41	21a/1	1	43	1	43	43
44	22b	42	21b	2	44	2	44	44
45	23a/2	43	22a/2	3	45	3	45	45
46	23b	44	22b	4	46	4	46	46
47	24a/3	45	23a/3	5	47	5	47	47
48	24b	46	23b	6	48	6	48	48
49	25a/4	47	24a/4	7a/7	49	7a	49	49
50	25b	[47b]	[24a]	7b/8	50	7b	50	50
51	26a/5	48	24b	8a/9	49	8a	51	51
52	26b	[48b]	[24b]	8b/10	48	8b	52	52
53	27a/6	49	25a/5	9/11	47	9	53	53
54	27b	50	[25b]	10/12	46	10/12	54/27	54

SECTION II

55/1	28a/1	1	1a	1	45	1	55	55
56/2	28b	2	1b	2	44	2	56	56
57/3	29a/2	3	2a	3	43	3	57	57
58/4	29b	4	2b	4	42	4	58	58
59/5	30a/3	5	3a	5	41	5	59	59
60/5	30b	6	3b	6	40	6	60	60

II-B

61/7	31a/4	7	4a	7	39	7	61	61
62/8	31b	8	4b	8	38	8	62	62
63/9	32a/5	9	5a	9	37	9	63	63
64/10	32b	10	5b	10	36	10	64	64
65/11	33a/6	11	6a	11	35	11	65	65
66/12	33b	12	6b	12	34	12	66	66
67/13	34a/7	Ba	Ba	Ba	33	13	67	67
68/14	34b	Bb	Bb	Bb	32	14	68	68

SECTION III

69/15	35a/1	Ca	Ca	Ca	31	15	69	69
70/16	35b	Cb	Cb	Cb	30	16	70	70
71/17	36a/2	1	1a	13	29	17	71	71
72/18	36b	2	1b	14	28	18	72	72
73/19	37a/3	3	2a	15	27	19	73	73
74/20	37b	4	2b	16	26	20	74	74

III-B

75/21	38a/4	5	3a	17	25	21	75	75
76/22	38b	6	3b	18	24	22	76	76
77/23	39a/5	7	4a	19	23	23	77	77
78/24	39b	8	4b	20	22	24	78	78

SECTION IV

79/25	40a	1	1a	21	21	25	79	79
80/26	40b	2	1b	22	20	26	80	80
81/27	41a	3	2a	23	19	27	81	81
82/28	41b	4	2b	24	18	28	82	82
83/29	42a	5	3a	25	17	29	83	83
84/30	42b	6	3b	26	16	30	84	84

IV-B

85/31	43a	7	4a	27	15	31	85	85
86/32	43b	8	4b	28	14	32	86	86
87/33	44a	9	5a	29	13	33	87	87

88/34	44b	10	5b	30	12	34	88	88
89/35	45a	11	6a	31	11	35	89	89
90/36	45b	12	6b	32	10	36	90/36/45	90

SECTION V

91/37	46a	1	1a	33	9	37	1	91+92 ⁹
92/38	46b	2	1b	34	8	38	2	93
93/39	47a	3	2a	35	7	39	3	94
94/40	47b	4	2b	36	6	40	4	95
95/41	48a	5	3a	37	5	41	5	96
96/42	48b	6	3b	38	4	42/6	6	97
97/43	49a	D	D	D	3	[D]	7	98
98/44	49b	7	4a	39	2	[D]	8	99
99/45	49c	8	4b	40	1	[D]	9/99/45	100

We have already discussed the significance of the two structures of *kun fa-yakūn* (KY) and *Ghafūr-Wadūd* (GW) in chapter 4. We have chosen to follow the GW structure in our translation because we regard it as the one that best fits the numerical indications provided, as in the words ‘first’ (*awwal*) and ‘second’ (*thānī*) in couplets 1 and 2. As we have seen, couplets A, B and C are of a different nature, and can be treated separately or included according to the different approaches.

We may summarise these perspectives as follows:

- Parts I and II may be regarded as 50 sentences (*nūn*) and 40 sentences (*mīm*), with an implicit *wāw* (‘and’) linking them (KY);
- total sentences may be regarded as 54 (section 1) + 45 (sections II–IV), i.e. *nūn-mīm* + *mīm-nūn* (TS) or as 45 (section 1-A) + 54 (sections 1-B–IV), i.e. *mīm-nūn* + *nūn-mīm* (D);
- total sentences may be regarded as 52(A)+40 or as 50+42(B), in both cases =92, the value of the name Muḥam[m]ad (M/W);
- total sentences including A (2) and B (2) =94=4 (*mīm*)

.....
⁹ In this consideration, the invocation (*yā arḥam al-rāḥimīn*, 91) is treated as the pair of D (*āmin*, 98), each being a sentence in their own right. The following blessing *ṣalli wa-sallim*... becomes 92.

- as above, with C (2) =96=6 (*wāw*)
- as above, with D (1) =97=7 (‘*ayn*/name of the *nūn*)¹⁰
- as above, with couplet 25 divided into two couplets (rhyming in -ā) =99 (divine Names of the theomorphic Human) (*D*)
- as above, with the final invocation *yā Arḥam al-rāḥimīn* as separate =100 (the expression of Unity) (*Q*)

THE FIVE SECTIONS

The opening word or phrase in all the five sections has a numerical value of either 18 or 9 (*fayḍ* =18; *ḍād* =9).

Section I: *afīḍ* = 1+8+9=18 (=9)

Section II: *ṣalli* =6+3=9

Section III: *Allāhumma yā*... 16+2=18

Section IV: *akhrij-nī* =1+6+2+3+5+1=18

Section V: *ṣalli* =9

The first word of section I, after *Allāhumma*, is the key verb *afīḍ* (= *alif*+*fā*+*ḍād*, 1+8+9=18) in relation to the Muhammadian Reality: the first letter is 1 and the last letter is 9. Numerically, it is thus a summary of the relation of the First (1) and the Last (9) in the Blessing-prayer. When the *alif* (1) is connected to the *fā* (8) of speech (*fahwāniyya* as in the *fā*’ of *fa-yakūn*), it results in all the units/letters up to 9 (= *ḍād*) appearing in the realm of manifestation. *Alif-fā*’ may also be symbolically connected to the 8 carriers of the divine Throne, which can be represented as an octagon inscribed within a circle plus its central dot, or as the 8 corners of the Ka’ba plus its centre. The resulting circle of the *ḍād* equates to the endless procession of circumambulation around the central point.

.....
10 This conception of the Blessing-prayer may be related to the heart, i.e. the mystic’s ‘Ka’ba’, whose major value is 97, and whose two minor values (15/6 and 16/7) correspond to the *W* structure or the ‘*ayn* or the name of the *nūn*. The four corners (*mīm* / 4 x *Allāhumma*), six faces (*wāw* / 6 sections with *ḥabibu-ka*), seven cycles of circumambulation... (*nūn* =7), among other references, can be viewed as part of this inspiration.

The word *afīd* appears a second time in relation to the individual reciter in sentence IV.2a (GW) or 81/27 [=9] (in TS) in a sequence of 5 demands in the imperative. In this sense these two mentions correspond to the two *fayḍ*s, the *aqdas* level of the Muhammadian Reality and *muqaddas* level of the individual reciter. In a similar way, the two *ṣallis* also reflect these levels: the first *ṣalli* is ‘upon him’ alone (‘*alay-hi*’), while the second is upon ‘our master’ (‘*alā sayyidi-nā*’), including the ‘we’ of plurality.

SECTION I: THE 40 EPITHETS OF MUHAMMAD AND THE ASCENSION OF THE ENVOY

*‘God and His angels bless the Prophet. [O you who have faith,
bless him and greet him with greetings of peace]’¹¹*

Subsection I-A: The 40 epithets of Muhammad, the First and the Last

Couplets 1-20 (KY) contain in principle 40 (= *mīm*) epithets, so that every sentence would correspond to one of them. Most couplets contain two distinct epithets: the first referring to the invisible *aqdas* side of the *nūn* and the second referring to the manifest *muqaddas* side of the *nūn*. This distinction is made explicit in couplet 11, and can be applied throughout the Blessing-prayer. Methodologically, our translation aims to maintain this inherent principle of two-ness through the prayer. In addition, this two-ness is treated in a number of couplets as a circular four-ness, in correspondence with the fourfold pairing of ‘the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden’ (Q 57:3).¹² In some couplets the sentences include expressions that mirror the other level: for example, couplet 5, 18, 19 and 20 (see below).

.....
11 Q 33:56.

12 See chapter 1 for a discussion of this verse in terms of a circle.

Couplet 1 provides a key to viewing these epithets in terms of ‘the First...’ and ‘the Last...’, a pattern which clearly informs the circular conception of the couplets in correspondence with the *aqdas* and *muqaddas*, Qur’ān and Furqān levels.

Table 2: Firstness and Lastness, Interiority and Exteriority

Couplet	Initiating/Interior	Concluding/Exterior
1	‘First’ (<i>awwal</i>)	‘Last’ (<i>ākhir</i>)
2	‘... from’ (<i>min</i>)	‘... to’ (<i>ilā</i>)
3	‘Recorder’ (<i>muḥṣī</i>)	‘Mercifier’ (<i>rāḥim</i>)
4	<i>bā</i> ’ of <i>basmala</i>	<i>nūn</i> of <i>kun</i>
5	‘... permeates’ (<i>sāriya</i>)	‘... disrobes’ (‘ <i>āriya</i>)
6	‘Keeper’ (<i>amīn</i>)	‘Apportioner’ (<i>muqassim</i>)
7	‘Word’ (<i>kalima</i>)	‘Opener’ (<i>fātiḥa</i>)
8	‘Manifestation’ (<i>maẓhar</i>)	‘Source’ (<i>mansha</i>)
9	‘Mountain’ (<i>tūr</i>)	‘Ocean’ (<i>baḥr</i>)
10	‘Pen’ (<i>qalam</i>)	‘Breath’ (<i>naḥas</i>)
11	‘Most Holy’ (<i>aqdas</i>)	‘Holy’ (<i>muqaddas</i>)
12	‘Rising-place’ (<i>maṭla</i>) ‘sun’ (<i>shams</i>)	‘Wellspring’ (<i>manba</i>) ‘light’ (<i>nūr</i>)
13	‘Line’ (<i>khaṭṭ</i>)	‘Intermediary’ (<i>wāsiṭa</i>)
14	Major/minor ‘Transcript’ (<i>nuskha</i>)	‘Pearl’ (<i>durra</i>) / ‘Ruby’ (<i>yāqūta</i>)
15	‘Substance’ (<i>jawhar</i>)	‘Matter’ (<i>mādda</i>)
16	‘... through’ (<i>bi-</i>)	‘... to’ (<i>li-</i>)
17	‘Qur’ān’	‘Furqān’
18	‘Abstinent’ (<i>ṣā’im</i>)	‘Awake’ (<i>qā’im</i>)
19	‘Centrepiece’ (<i>wāsiṭa</i>)	‘Clasp’ (<i>rābiṭa</i>)
20	‘Sum Total’ (<i>fadhla</i>)	‘Centre’ (<i>markaz</i>)

In addition, there are some special couplets that deserve particular description, since our interpretation of them determines how many epithets are taken account of.

First of all, there are three couplets where only one epithet is explicitly mentioned, each followed by two different prepositional phrases:

- (2) *al-Muhājir min... / ilā...* ('The Emigrant from... / to...')
- (5) *Sirr al-huwiyya... fī... / 'an...* ('The Secret of the He-ness ... into... / from...')
- (16) *Hayūlā al-ṣuwar... bi... / li...* ('The Materia Prima of forms... through... / to...')

The two sentences may therefore be counted as two epithets or only one.

Secondly, there are two 'double' couplets where both the first and the second sentence contain two epithets each (four in total):

- (6) *Amīn Allāh 'alā l-khazā'in ... Mustawḍi' [al-khazā'in] / Muqassim [al-khazā'in] ... Muwazzi' [al-khazā'in]* ('God's trusted Keeper ... Depositary' / 'the Apportioner ... the Distributor')
- (14) *al-Nuskha al-kubrā ... [al-Nuskha] al-ṣuḡhrā / al-Durra al-bayḍā' ... al-Yaqūta al-ḥamrā'* ('the Minor Transcript ... the major transcript' / 'the White Pearl ... the red ruby')

These sentences (separated by *wa-* like the others) are most unusual, since the two terms within each sentence can be understood to refer respectively to the *aqdas* and the *muqaddas* levels. For example, the Minor Transcript (of the Human Being) designates the *aqdas* level, and the major transcript (of the universe) the *muqaddas* level, and in this case we might count these as two separate epithets or as only one.

If the single epithets (in couplets 2, 5 and 16) are counted as only one and the double ones (in couplets 6 and 14) as two x two, the whole section contains a total of 41 (=5) epithets (corresponding to the Five Presences).¹³ They may be considered to be completed by the unique terms 'Your Beloved-Lover' (*ḥabību-Ka* =6) as the sixth, and 'Your Door' (*bābu-Ka* =7) as the seventh.

As we shall see below, these 40 explicit epithets are different to any of the following ones, because the remainder are deduced from verbs or

.....
13 If couplet 14 is regarded as having only three epithets, then again the whole section returns to a total of 40.

other expressions. If the whole Blessing-prayer is regarded as 99 names/epithets of Muhammad (see below), such alternative considerations as we have considered above may come into play.

Subsection I-B: the ascension of the Beloved-Lover

There is nothing incidental or casual about the centrality of this section in relation to the number of sentences in the Blessing-prayer, and its structure reflects the crucial importance of its contents. It is introduced by the all-important epithet of the Prophet as *ḥabību-Ka*, which we translate as ‘Your Beloved-Lover’ to capture both the active and passive aspects of the word. This is the first mention of Love in the Blessing-prayer.

After a single couplet (21) rhyming in *-Ka*, echoing the *-Ka* of the introductory couplet (A), this complex sub-section is notable for a change from the regular couplet structure of the previous sub-section, to one in which the divine ‘You’ is the subject of all the actions leading up to the ‘until’ (*ḥattā*) (couplets 21–23, corresponding to the *isrā’*), when the ‘he’ of the Envoy becomes the subject in the visionary meeting (couplets 24–25, corresponding to the *mi’rāj*). There is a repeated *wa-* (‘and’) leading to a linking *fā’* (‘so’) at the beginning of couplet 25 (GW structure). This suggests that all these sentences in couplets 22 to 25 are really to be viewed as amplifications and clarifications of couplet 21. In addition, there is a rhyming crescendo in *-ā* (=1), repeated 11 times up to *adnā* (‘closer’, =11), and a further four times in the final couplet 25 ending with the word *ṭaghā* (‘overflow’ =19=1). These 15 (=6) rhymes in *-ā* suggest the sixfold perfection of the encounter.

This subsection specifically introduces, as a *barzakhī* theme, the Prophet’s Night-journey (*isrā’* =7) and Spiritual Ascension (*mi’rāj* = 17). We may note that 24 (=7+17) is the very number of the couplet in which the ascension culminates in the prayer. As the experience of the Ascension was a journey between the earth and the heavens, this axial passage in one respect divides and unites the two halves of the Blessing-prayer.

In the total of 99 sentences, the *isrā'* appears from couplet 23 (sentence 47 in TS) to couplet 25, where the two mosques of the ascension are mentioned. This means that the very centre of the prayer is couplet 24 referring precisely to Muhammad ascending to 'the Lote-tree of the Limit' (the end of all realms, where *muntahā* =1). This takes place in sentence 50 (TS), i.e. at the very centre of the 99 sentences (49 on either side). Sentence 50 thus represents the fullness of one *nūn* as well as the beginning of the other. The closeness of 'two arcs or nearer', where the integration of the two halves of the circle are gathered within the central point, takes place in sentence 51 (TS), thus initiating the second half of the prayer. So the *nūn* is completed in its centre.

We can therefore regard the epicentre of the Blessing-prayer as sentences 49-51, which depict the *mi'rāj*. The numerical values of these three central sentences correspond directly to the values of the three mirror-letters that underpin the prayer's structure: 49=13=4 (*mīm*); 50 (*nūn*) and 51=6 (*wāw*). Precisely because these are the three central sentences, they are structurally complex and can be regarded in several different ways, articulating the various perspectives of the prayer.

Subsection I-B (couplets 21-24) introduces 5 perfective verbs of actions done by God ('You have revealed / appointed / invested / crowned / made to travel...'), followed by 2 perfectives of actions done by Muhammad ('he arrived / rose up...'), a distinction which is related to the *isrā'* and *mi'rāj*, repeating in reverse the combination of 2+5 (=kun). Couplet 25 follows with two triads of parallel elements: two passive verbs (*usirra/uqirra*) in form IV relating to the inner heart (*fu'ād*) and the outer vision (*baṣar*), followed by two negations concerning time and space. These can be viewed as forming a hexagon: the triangle of the heart connected to contemplation and non-temporality, and the triangle of the eye connected to existence and non-spatiality. The 'beating' of the heart, with its systolic and diastolic functions, and the two eyes of vision thus correspond to the two semicircles of the *nūn*.

In couplet 23 (=5) we also find a double mention of *masjid* (=14=5), whose repetition (5+5=1), like other repeated terms in the Blessing-prayer, indicates the full return to Unity. Because of the number of potential rhymes, couplets 23-24 can be divided in three separate ways

according to the 5:5 structure:

a) as a single couplet:

*wa-asrayta bi-jasadi-hi yaqazatā mina l-masjidi l-ḥarāmi ilā l-masjidi
l-aqṣā ḥattā **

*intahā ilā sidrati l-muntahā wa-taraqqa ilā qābi qawsayni aw adnā **

b) or as two couplets:

*wa-asrayta bi-jasadi-hi yaqazatā / mina l-masjidi l-ḥarāmi ilā l-masjidi
l-aqṣā ḥattā **

*intahā ilā sidrati l-muntahā / wa-taraqqa ilā qābi qawsayni aw adnā **

c) or as three couplets:

*wa-asrayta bi-jasadi-hi yaqazatā / mina l-masjidi l-ḥarāmi ilā l-masjidi
l-aqṣā ḥattā **

*intahā ilā / sidrati l-muntahā **

*wa-taraqqa ilā / qābi qawsayni aw adnā **

To end the couplet with *ḥattā* ('until') might seem odd at first sight, but it fits perfectly into the 5:5 rhyming structure which we perceive to be the basis of the Blessing-prayer. Furthermore, it produces an important open-endedness of meaning, as the reader waits for the completion of the phrase. The same fluidity can be noted in the rhyming word *ilā* (=5), which calls for its completing noun.¹⁴

This open-ended fluidity is also reflected in the word *ḥattā* itself, since we may also treat the word *aqṣā* as the rhyming word in versions (b) and (c) rather than *ḥattā*. Under this consideration we may view these as

b) two couplets:

*wa-asrayta bi-jasadi-hi yaqazatā / mina l-masjidi l-ḥarāmi ilā l-masjidi
l-aqṣā **

*ḥatta -ntahā ilā sidrati l-muntahā / wa-taraqqa ilā qābi qawsayni aw
adnā *¹⁵*

14 We should note both the phrases that follow the word *ilā* are Quranic.

15 We note the parallelism of the rhyme words *aqṣā* and *adnā* which are both comparatives.

c) or three couplets:

*wa-asrayta bi-jasadi-hi yaqazatā / mina l-masjidi l-ḥarāmi ilā l-masjidi
l-aqṣā **

*ḥatta -ntahā ilā / sidrati l-muntahā **

*wa-taraqqa ilā / qābi qawsayni aw adnā *¹⁶*

This subsection determines the different possibilities of counting sentences and couplets from KY/GW to TS/TC structures, since the text in 1-B can be divided into 4, 5 or even 6 couplets, all within the 5:5 structure. This means that in itself this sub-section reflects the values of *mīm*, *wāw* and *nūn*, as well as the numerical value and letters of *ḥabīb* (=13=4) and *ḥabību-Ka* (=15=6). Whether we count 5 or 6 couplets, couplets 22–25/26 (GW structure) always rhyme in *-ā*. If we count 5 couplets in total in this sub-section, the sum of the rhymes comes to 1x2 (-k) + 4x1 (-ā) = 6 = *ḥabību-Ka*. If we count 6 couplets, the sum would be 2+5 = 7, the name of the *nūn* (or if we count 6 sentences, the sum of the rhymes would be 4+10 = 14 = 5, the value of *nūn*).

For our numbering, we have chosen a final structure of 5 couplets in section I-B (according to alternative b) both in our edition and translation, because of the importance of the 5 (*nūn*) and 9 (*ḍād*) structures.

.....
¹⁶ In (c) there is a clear syllabic pattern in *ḥattā -ntahā ilā* + *wa-taraqqa ilā* (6+6) and *sidrati l-muntahā* + *qawsayni aw adnā* (6+6).

SECTION II: THE TWO FACES OF THE DOOR OF DIVINE LOVE

‘Say: if you love God, follow me, and God will love you’¹⁷

Up to the end of section I, the Blessing-prayer exclusively refers to the Reality of Muhammad or the Singular truly Human Being, either in all the aspects of his metaphysical reality (I-A) or in the love-relationship with the Divine (I-B). From the beginning of section II until the end of the Blessing-prayer, the third element, the individual ‘I’ of the reciter, becomes explicit, as the requests directly involve the servant.

This Section comprises 6 couplets with 1 extra couplet of clarification (B) (GW structure), or 14 sentences (TS). It can be divided in two parts or sub-sections, corresponding to the *ṣalāt* (II-A, 6 sentences, three verbs after *li-*) and the *salām* (II-B, 6 sentences, three verbs after *li-*).

Subsection II-A (3 couplets): The *ṣalāt* as integration

In the first couplet there are two contrasting pairs (four terms) which are to be joined (*yaṣīl bi-hā*), all referring to aspects of the servant. Once these aspects are joined up within the integrated being of the servant, there can be a proper reciprocity between the servant and the Reality of Muhammad, through the mirroring pairs of four repeated terms, where *dhāt* (‘essence’) and ‘*ayn* (‘eye-entity, source’) are implicitly linked, as are *ṣifāt* (‘qualities’) and *bayn* (‘between-ness, relationship’).

Subsection II-B (3 couplets): The *salām* as commitment and following

The first couplet explains the commitment of pledging allegiance (*bay‘a*) and following the revealed way (*sharī‘a*). Each of the three verbs after

.....
17 Q 3:31.

‘so that’ (*li-*), *aftatiḥ* [5] / *ashhad* [5] / *adkhul* [6], starts a sentence with a contrasting pair of elements.

We may note that the inner rhymes -‘*atihi* (in *mubāya‘ati-hi* and *sharī‘ati-hi*) pair with the following external rhymes *mutāba‘ati-hi* and *tā‘ati-hi*. The value of -‘*atihi* (=16=7) suggests the letter ‘*ayn* (=7) which appears in all four words, as well as the value of the name of the *nūn* (=16). On the other hand, the doubling of the -‘*atihi* in each sentence comes to a value of 5 (2x7=14=5), so that again a double *nūn* appears.

Couplet B/7: The door of love and gateway of guidance

The repetition of the mirror word *bāb* (door or gateway) seems to us to be highly significant.¹⁸ While the first mention in couplet 5 suggests an intimate loving openness (‘the door of Your love for me’), the second in couplet 7 (‘Your gateway’) implies it may be shut to those who do not follow the revelation. It is for this reason that we have given different senses of the word in our translation. We may observe that the double mention of the word *bāb* (=5 x 2 =10), one as a door that opens, and the other as a door that shuts, also mirrors the imagery of the two halves of the *nūn* in forming a whole unit or circle.

In couplet 5 (*bāb* =5) we note that *bāb maḥabbati-Ka* =25=7; *miṭṭāḥ* =25=7, *miṭṭāḥ mutāba‘ati-hi* =7+9=16=7. In couplet B/7 (*bābu-Ka* =7), we note that ‘*aṣā l-adab* =14+11=25=7; *adab* =7. Couplet B may therefore be regarded as number 7 within the section, in correspondence with the value 7 of its key term (*bābu-Ka* =5+2).

The fiveness and sevenness can be seen in the letters which constitute the ‘citadel’ of *lā ilāha* (5 written letters) *illa Llāh* (7 written letters) in couplet II.6.

This sevenfoldness is also reflected in the abundance of the letter ‘*ayn* (=7) in II-A (5 ‘*ayn*), II-B (9 ‘*ayn*) and couplet B (2 ‘*ayn*), making a total of 16 (=7). This suggests that this whole section refers to the mirror realisation of the self (‘*ayn*) as the ‘door’ to the Self, so that ‘the

18 This is also true of the other repeating terms in the Blessing-prayer: *aḥīd*, *ṣallī/sallim*, *arā*, *kawn*, *shay’*, *dhāt*, *ṣifāt*, *nūr*, *sayyidinā Muḥammad*, *maṣjid*, ‘*ālamīn*, *ifādāt*.

eye (*al-‘ayn*) is refreshed by the source (*al-‘ayn*)’ (Couplet II.3). As Ibn ‘Arabī states in the chapter of Seth in the *Fuṣūṣ*, ‘He is your mirror in which you see yourself, and you are His mirror in which He sees His Names and the manifesting of their properties. There is nothing but His ‘ayn’.¹⁹

SECTION III: LIGHT AND VISION IN THE LORD-SERVANT RELATIONSHIP

*‘Light upon Light, God guides to His Light whoever He
wishes’²⁰*

Section III contains one extra address couplet (C) beginning with the Name Lord (*rab[b]* = 4; *yā rab[b]* = 6), which emphasises the presence of light in manifestation. It then consists of two couplets [1–2] of requesting by affirming means (‘through’, *bi-*), which are linked through the blessing upon Muhammad with two couplets [3–4] of vision, in a mirroring structure of human asking and divine blessing. This 2+2 pattern reflects the value of the letters of *Rabb* (*rā*’ = 2, *bā*’ = 2). As the central section of five (2+1+2), this section can also be regarded as the very centre of the Blessing-prayer, describing the interplay between Lord and servant, culminating in the final couplet with the vision of ‘things as they truly are’.

Couplet C

‘We have bestowed upon you the Abundance (*kawthar*). So pray to your Lord (*fa-ṣalli li-rabbi-ka*)...’²¹

This begins with the invocation of the Lord (*Rab[b]* = 4), introducing the fourfold section. It has a unique character, as it is the only couplet in

19 *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 37.

20 Q 24:35.

21 Q 108:1–2.

the prayer fully devoted to a formula of invocation. The two sentences have two apparently opposed elements that show the paradox of contemplation: Light is all that veils Him, and Manifesting is all that conceals Him.

Subsection III-A (2 couplets): I ask of You...

Couplets 1 and 2 express two affirmations that act as means by (*bi-*) which the reciter of the prayer requests of the divine ‘You’ (*as’alu-Ka*): directly in couplet 1 ‘through You’ (*bi-Ka*, =4), in the unconditioned and unlimited level of absoluteness (*iṭlāq*), and indirectly in couplet 2 through ‘Your unveiling’ (*kashfi-Ka*, =13=4), which naturally takes place after the mediation of veils. This corresponds to the distinction made in the Qur’ān between ‘direct inspiration’ (*wahy*) and ‘speech from behind a veil’.²²

In couplet 1 the two opposing pairs, *iṭlāq* / *taqyīd* (‘non-limitation’ / ‘limitation’) and *tashā’* / *turīd* (‘wish’ / ‘desire/will’), suggest that the *iṭlāq* correlates with the ontological degree of the divine Wish (*mashī’a*) and the *taqyīd* correlates with the degree of Will (*irāda*).²³ The rhyme in *dāl* (=4) again emphasises fourfoldness.

Couplet 2 contrasts the unveiling of ‘Your Essence’ through Light-Knowledge (*aqdas* level) with the changing forms of ‘Your Names and Qualities’ that are manifested through the forms of existence (*muqaddas* level).

Subsection III-B (2 couplets): ... that You bless our master Muhammad with...

In couplet 3, the first sentence introduces the object of the request: a *ṣalāt* upon Muhammad by which the ‘inner vision’ of the praying servant

.....
22 ‘It has not been granted to any mortal human being to be spoken to by God except by direct inspiration or from behind a veil’ (Q 42:51).

23 The first implies what is inherent in the nature of God, a ‘wishing to be so’, while the second implies a self-limitation in accordance with the thing that is desired or willed. For more on this distinction, see the chapter on David in the *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Kılıç, p. 152.

may be filled with light (*nūr* =4). The second sentence and the whole of couplet 4 describe the two resulting enlightenments (*li-*) of this divine blessing, which allows the servant to witness (*ashhad*) and see (*arā*, =4). Each of these two goals has two contrasting aspects: *fanā* ' ('passing-away') / *baqā* ' (=4, 'remaining') at the level of *azal* ('eternity') in couplet 3, and *ma'dūm* ('absent') / *mawjūd* ('present') as well as *mafqūd* ('lost') / *mawjūd* ('found') at the [implicit] level of *abad* ('endlessness') in couplet 4.

SECTION IV: JOURNEYING INTO LIFE AND VISION OF THE FACE

*'It is He who bestows blessings upon you all, as do His angels,
to bring you out of darkness into the light'*²⁴

While the previous section expressed the intermediary of no-intermediary (*bi-Ka*, 'through You alone'), this section expresses the intermediary nature of the Blessing-prayer itself (*bi-l-ṣalāt* 'alay-hi, 'with/through this blessing upon him') and the sixfold nature of the Human Being as the uniting of opposites.

Section IV is the only one to open with an explicit phrase of request: *wa-akhrij-nī* ('And bring me out...'). The value of the verb (*akhrij-nī* =18=9) mirrors the value of the other introductory words (*afīḍ*, 18, and *ṣallī*, 9) – all of these being the distinctive mark at the beginning of the sections according to the *dād* structure. Its full numerical value with the initial *wāw* (6+18=24=6) mirrors the 6 couplets of this section, as well as the value of the word *ṣalāh* (=15=6), which is mentioned immediately after *Allāhumma* (but without any corresponding *salām*). If we include the verb that begins subsection IV-B, the five organising imperatives

.....
24 Q 33:43. This may also be translated more emphatically as: 'It is 'He' (*Huwa*) who performs the blessing-prayer (*yusallī*, the verbal form of *ṣalāt*) upon you all...' We may note that the three phrases here, 'bring you out' (*li-yukhrija-hum*) 'from the darknesses' (*min al-ẓulumāt*) 'into Light' (*ilā l-nūr*), are precisely echoed in the first couplet of Section IV.

(*akhrij-nī / afiḍ ‘alayya / an‘ish-nī / aḥyi-nī / ij‘al lī*) are all introduced by the connective *wāw* (= 6). These 5 requests in the imperative occur in the first 7 sentences, followed by a sequence of 5 expressions related to seeing the divine Face ‘wherever I turn’, in the final 5 sentences. Again the 5 requests and 5 expressions of vision indicate the overarching Unity of the hidden and visible *nūn*.

It may be divided in two sub-sections as follows:

Subsection IV-A (3 couplets): Journeying from darkness to Light, from death to Life

The first three couplets articulate the polar opposites through which the idea of separate identity passes away and is transformed.

Couplet 1 contains two sentences made up of four contrasting pairs of nouns (darkness/Light; ‘I’-ness/bodily nature; union/differentiation; gathering/rising) linked by a pair of prepositions (*min*/from... *ilā*/to...), making 10 elements in total.

Couplets 2 and 3 also contain three contrasting double pairs: affirming the Unity of You alone/associating and worshipping others (*tawḥīdi-ka iyyāka/shirk wa-ishrāk*); first death/second birth (*mawt ūlā/wilāda thāniya*); everlasting Life/passing world (*ḥayāt bāqiya/dunyā fāniya*). We may note that the last word is *fāniya*, ‘passing’, implicitly referring to the verse: ‘Everything on it is passing (*fānī*) except the Face (*wajh*) of your Lord’ (Q 55: 26–27) in correlation with ‘Everything perishes (*hālik*) except His Face (*wajh*)’ (28:88).

These dualities are emphasised by the rhyme letters: *-r* (=2, couplet 1), *-k* (=20, couplet 2) and *-niyah* (=11=2, couplet 3). The fact that the first three couplets revolve around dualities reflects the nature of 6 being composed of 2 and 3.

Subsection IV-B (3 couplets): becoming Light and seeing God's Face with two eyes

This subsection shifts in style by the first person being made into light (*nūrā*, =14=5)²⁵ and becoming the subject of 'walking' and 'seeing' (*amshī/arā*). Following the words 'so that I may see Your Face...' (*wajh*=6+3+5=14=5), there are 5 verbal expressions detailing the kind of vision asked for, a vision 'wherever I turn...' (*aynamā tawallaytu*), 'observing' (*nāẓiran*), 'distinguishing' (*fāṣīlan*), 'pointing' (*dāllan*), 'guiding' (*hādiyan*). These introduce 5 oppositions of contrasting pairs ('without any illusion or confusion', 'union and separation', 'false and true', 'to You / with Yourself', and 'to You / by Your permission'). Again we can see the combination of three couplets articulating dualities, as well as 10 paired elements and 15 (=6) terms.

SECTION V: MUHAMMAD, HIS PEOPLE AND COMPANIONS, THE MESSENGERS AND THE LORD OF THE WORLDS

*'[God and His angels bless the Prophet.] O you who believe,
bless him and greet him with peace'*²⁶

Although this final section has 4 couplets in correspondence with the GW structure, it also presents us with complex contemplations of the numbers 5, 6, 7 and 9. The number V of the section corresponds to both the final *nūn* of the rhyme (-n) and the epithet *sayyidi-nā* (=8+6=14=5) which qualifies the name Muhammad in the first line. This second mention of the term *sayyidi-nā* (see also III.3) again seems to us to be significant: it not only has the value of 5, whose doubling effects a return to Unity (5+5=10=1), but is also characterised by the first person plural

25 Echoing the wording of the famous light-prayer of the Prophet, which mentions the 6 directions and then states: *wa-j' al-nī nūrā*.

26 Q 33:56.

(‘our’, -*nā*), pointing to the Mercy-relationship of the Prophet to the human community as well as to all beings,²⁷ and particularly to the singularity of the Muhammadian Reality in relation to the plurality of human manifestation.

The multi-faceted complexity of this section derives from the nature of the initial invocation and of the final couplet, which may be viewed as containing two sentences or three.

The four couplets (46–49 TC) correspond directly to the value of the special invocation that opens this section, *arḥam al-rāḥimīn* (=15+25=40=4), and its association with the letter *mīm*, as well as the final *dāl* of *Wadūd* (GW structure). If the invocatory *yā*’ (=2) is included, the total is 42=6, which corresponds to the value of the final rhyme-letters of all potential sentences (*rāḥimīn*, *du‘ā’ī*, *rajā’ī*, ‘*irfān*, *wijdān*, *kiyān*, ‘*iyān*, *āmīn*, *mursalīn*, ‘*ālamīn*, =42),²⁸ as well as to the key word *ṣalāt* (=6+3+1+5=15=6) in the first line.

This is the only place in the Blessing-prayer where the invocation is followed by the words: *ṣalli wa-sallim* (=9+6+10=25=7) upon ‘our Master Muhammad’ (=14+20=34=7). The rhyme of the 8 sentences of these 4 couplets (=34=7) and the extended rhyme letters in the 8 sentences (-’ī =2x2, -ān =6x4, -īn =6x4, total =52=7)²⁹ and the rhyme of the last letter of the 4 couplets (=16=7) all reveal the same sevenfold pattern.

The sixfold nature of this fifth section (which would in fact become the sixth section if section 1-B were counted as separate) is embedded in the grammatical structure of its sentences. Couplets 1 and 2 introduce three referents, each connected to a contrasting pair, hence **6 aspects**: me-reciter (‘my supplication’ / ‘my hopes’) / his family (the people of *shuhūd* / the people of ‘*irfān*) / his companions (possessors of *dhawq* / possessors of *wijdān*). Bearing in mind that the number 6 is a combination of 2 and 3, the three pairs of reciter, family and companions are completed by and contained within the seventh element in the expression ‘our Master Muhammad’ (=7) (also an allusion to the ‘*ayn*).

27 ‘And We have only sent you as a Mercy to the worlds’ (Q 21:107; see couplet I:3).

28 Including the word *āmīn* as a sentence in itself. See below.

29 An *alif* of the extended rhyme in the first pair (*du‘ā’ī*, *rajā’ī*) could be also considered, in which case the total is 54, reflecting the ninefold perspective.

Couplet 3 contains two parallel verbs (*intasharat/asfarat*), whose subject consists of three nouns in a genitive construction (*iḍāfa*), so **6 nouns** in total. Allusive in nature, the first three nouns may be understood to relate to primordial existence (*kiyān*, the original state of ‘being’), described as a ‘veiling fringe’ (*ṭurra*) and dark like the ‘night’ (*layl*). The second three relate to the vision of the unseen or ‘eye-witnessing’ (*‘iyān*) through the unveiled ‘shining mark’ (*ghurra*) on the forehead or brow (*jabīn*, i.e. just above the physical eyes). This seems to be a poetic allusion to the dot of the *nūn* above its semicircle, pointing to the unseen half of its circle and the hidden *alif*.

Couplet 4 contains three actions of prayer (*āmīn*, *salām*, *ḥamd*) and three ‘personal’ designations (*al-mursalīn* / *Allāh* / *Rabb al-‘ālamīn*). So again there are 2 sets of three, or **6 elements** interacting.

If we consider this sixfold connection over all 4 couplets (6 aspects, 6 nouns, 6 elements), there are $3 \times 6 = 18$ (the value of *fayḍ*, echoing the very beginning word of the Blessing-prayer *afīḍ*) = 9. A total of 9 can also be found in the number of sentences in this final section by regarding the term *āmīn* as a rhyming sentence in its own right. In the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ‘Arabī comments on the significance of this expression as it appears at the end of the Fātiḥa: according to him, when the recitation of the Sura is complete, the Lord says to the soul ‘*āmīn*’, responding to her requests by granting the firm ground of security (*amn*) through the angels, followed by the security of the Spirit (*ta’mīn al-rūḥ*). Once she has articulated the prayer of the Fātiḥa, she is named *al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā* (‘the speaking soul’), ‘which is the throne of the Spirit, while the Intellect (‘*aql*) is the image of this seatedness (*istiwā*)’.³⁰

These reflections on 9 here correspond to the number of sentences in TS and to the 9/D structure of the prayer. Furthermore, we might even consider the invocation *Yā arḥam al-rāḥimīn* exceptionally as a separate sentence rhyming (six sentences later) with *āmīn*, where the extended rhyme of both (as well as the final word of the Blessing-prayer, ‘*ālamīn*)

.....
30 *Fut.* I.115. The following pages to the end of this chapter are all a commentary on the notion of *īmān* (faith), which comes from the same root as *amn* and *āmīn*. The importance of this word *āmīn* in its own right in Bayrāmī-Malāmī thought is reflected in Sari Abdullah’s commentary on the *Mathnawī*, where he gives a special section to *taḥqīq āmīn wa-ba’d asrāri-hi*, quoting from the Prophet and various masters such as al-Junayd (Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed MS 740, fol. 14b).

is precisely $-m\bar{in} (40+10+50) = 100$ (the total number of sentences according to this way of counting in *Q* structure).

Finally, we may also consider this final section as having two subsections:

V-A ('Asking for the Blessing upon Muhammad') with couplets 1-3 expressing the request for the *ṣalāt* upon Muhammad, his family and companions for as long as the world is in existence;

V-B ('So be it and peace upon the messengers...'), with couplet 4 as a closure with the *salām*.

In total, this would provide ten subsections within the whole Blessing-prayer, in correspondence with the value of two *nūns*, the visible and the hidden, whose combination brings the reciter back to the original Unity. Under this consideration, section III would be at the centre of the Blessing-prayer, with its theme of the vision of things as they truly are; in terms of total sentences, the centre would be at sentences 50-51 (out of a total of 100) with the mention of 'two arcs or nearer'.

Nevertheless, we may prefer to consider *āmīn* (=101) as the 'odd' (*witr*) sentence which makes the whole Blessing-prayer *witr*.³¹ In this way we also privilege the *ḥayḍ* nine-fold approach to the structure of TS and *D*, in which sentence D entails that the final section is composed of 9 sentences, with three triads (Muhammad + family + companions; three terms in *idāfa*; Envoys + Allāh + Lord), bringing the previous 90 sentences to a conclusion as 99.

The 99 names of the Prophet

We may therefore here consider the whole Blessing-prayer in terms of 99 sentences and epithets of the Muhammadian Reality. As we have seen, Section I-A is specifically connected to 40 sentences, which contain 40 or 41 epithets, such as 'First' and 'Last'. We have also observed how other epithets are later made explicit, such as the Beloved-Lover (*ḥabīb*, =5) and the Door (*bāb*, = 6) as well as the name Muḥammad itself.

.....
³¹ In a similar way, the *witr* prayer of the night is composed of an odd number of prostrations, making the total number of cycles of prayer (*raka'āt*) odd rather than even.

There is a long tradition of calling to mind the different names of the Prophet, where some authors follow specific prophetic traditions that state: 'I have five names' or 'I have ten names'. The Maghribian author who was of the generation before Ibn 'Arabī, al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ enumerates a large number of names and attributes in his *K. al-Shifā'*, giving impetus to a whole genre of calling down blessings on the Prophet in these various modes. For example, al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465) in his *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* records 201 attributes for recitation (*asmā' al-nabī*), while 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jilī (d. 832/1424) in his *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya* treats the Names of God as attributes of the Prophet.³² In a much later development, the akbarian author 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī (d. 1300/1883) comments on 39 epithets of the Muhammadian Reality, such as 'the degree of the Image of the Real and the Perfect Human without any enumeration', where the title of 'the Muhammadian Reality' itself makes the 40th epithet (the number of *mīm*).³³

If the whole structure may be viewed as 99 sentences, each mentioning or alluding to a particular name for the Muhammadian Human Reality, the Blessing-prayer may be contemplated as a recitation or remembrance of these 99 epithets. For example, in the first couplet, the terms *ṣilat al-ṣalawāt* or *salāmat al-taslīmāt* may be understood as epithets, such that the request is that God should effuse the inclusive Muhammadian Reality as *ṣalāt* and as *salām*. Equally, at the end of the prayer, Muhammad may be referred to as *Āmin*, and *Salām 'alā l-mursalīn*, and *al-Ḥamdu li-Llāh*.

The Structural Correspondence between the Blessing-prayer and the Fātiḥa

Finally, we may conclude this analysis by relating the structure of the whole Blessing-prayer to that of the Fātiḥa. As we have alluded to

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32 See chapter 3 entitled 'the qualification of Muḥammad with the Divine Names and Qualities' in *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya* (Cairo, 1997), where Huwa is explained as the name of his interior and Allāh as the name of his exterior. The Maghribian connection of this genre of reflecting on the Prophet's names and epithets is also emphasised by the fact that the *K. al-Shifā'* by al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ is mentioned many times as a highly significant reference. On this book, see Claudio Marzullo, *I nomi divini e il Profeta all luce del sufismo: al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya fī al-ṣifāt al-Muḥammadiyya* (Turin, 2015).

33 *Mawqif* 89, in *K. al-Mawāqif*, ed. Aṣim Ibrāhīm Kayyālī (Beirut, 1425/2004), 1/160–08.

earlier, this Sura would appear to be a highly significant foundation for its conception. Indeed couplet 7 (reflecting the seven verses of the Sura) alludes to this Quranic connection by referring to the Prophet as ‘the *fātiḥa* (‘Opener’) of the sealed encoded treasure’.

The 40 sentences in Section I-A depicting the Reality of Muhammad are mirrored by the 40 sentences in Sections II-V which relate directly to the reciter of the prayer. In the middle, between the two sides, there are 10 (5) in Section I-B under the rubric of the term *ḥabību-Ka* (‘Your beloved-lover’). Overall, this may be conceived of in terms of the name of the letter *mīm*, i.e. *m* (40) + *y* (10) + *m* (40). Similarly, the first part of the *Fātiḥa* relates to the praise (*ḥamd*) of God, just as the first 40 sentences of the Blessing-prayer relates to the praise of the Reality of the Human Being. The final part of the *Fātiḥa* relates to the guidance (*hudā*) requested by the servant, as is the case in the last 40 sentences of the Blessing-prayer. The middle verse of the *Fātiḥa* which is shared between God and His servant would then correspond to Section I-B, with its description of the ascension of the Perfect Human, who is ‘Your beloved-lover’ (*ḥabību-Ka*).³³

In this sense the whole Blessing-prayer can be said to reflect the spirit and structure of the *Fātiḥa*, both as a whole and in each of its sections. For further contemplation we suggest the following general correspondences:

Bismi Llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm: mirrored in the initial *basmalah* and couplet A

Al-ḥamdu li-Llāhi rabbi l-‘ālamīn: mirrored in Section I-A

ar-raḥmāni r-raḥīm: mirrored in Section I-B

maliki yawmi d-dīn: mirrored in Section II

Iyyā-Ka (=5) *na‘budu wa-ıyyā-Ka nasta‘īn*: mirrored in Section III

Ihdinā ṣ-ṣirāṭa l-mustaḳīm ṣirāṭa l-ladhīna an‘amta ‘alay-him ghayri l-maghḍūbi ‘alay-him wa-lā d-ḍāllīn: mirrored in Section IV

Āmīn: mirrored in Section V

.....
33 We may view this as two 5s linked by 6, just as the letter *nūn* is a *n* (5) + *w* (6) + *n* (5).

As an example of the profound nature of this interrelationship, we observe that *ıyyā-Ka na‘budu* corresponds to Section III-A (where the emphasis is on the Light of His Essence and His Names); *ıyyā-Ka nastā‘ın* corresponds to Section III-B (the witnessing of things as they truly are). The linking *wāw* (=6) that appears as the central word of this central line in the Fātiḥa directly relates to ‘the blessing upon our master Muhammad’ (*‘alā sayyidi-nā Muḥammad ṣalāt* =6, where *ṣalāt* also equals 6) in Section III, the only place in the Blessing-prayer where the *ṣalāt* on the Prophet appears in the middle of a section, or rather, in the centre of this central section. This would imply that the Muhammadian Reality actually *is Ṣalāt*.

In this respect the Blessing-prayer can be considered not only as a commentary on the Fātiḥa or inspired by it, but perhaps also as an epiphanic manifestation of the Sura, an ‘opening key’ (*fātiḥa*) in itself.

In addition, as we have seen in Appendix C, the 5:5 rhyming structure underlies the Blessing-prayer. This appears to be directly inspired by the Fātiḥa itself, since astonishingly each of its verses and even its title can be seen to reflect the same resonance through its end-letters (marked in bold). Thus,

Sūrat (=5) *al-Fātiḥah* (=5)

Bismi Llāh (=5) *ir-raḥmāni r-raḥīm* (=5)

Al-ḥamdu li-Llāh (=5) *rabbi l-‘ālamīn* (=5)

ar-raḥmān (=5) *ir-raḥīm* (=5)

maliki (=5) *yawmi d-dīn* (=5)

Iy[y]ā-Ka (=5) *na‘budu wa-ıyyā-Ka nastā‘ın* (=5)

Ihdinā ṣ-ṣirāṭa l-mustaḳīm (=5) *ṣirāṭa lladhīna an‘amta ‘alay-him ḡhayri l-maḡḥḍūbi ‘alay-him wa-lā d-ḡāllīn* (=5)

Ām- (=5) *ī-n* (=5)

APPENDIX E: THE PRAYER OF BLESSING (*AL-ṢALĀT AL-MUBĀRAKA*) [UPON THE LIGHT OF MUHAMMAD]

BY ‘ABD AL-‘AZĪZ AL-MAHDAWĪ

In the Name of God, the All-Compassionate and Most Merciful

May God bless our master and lord Muhammad, his family and his companions, and greet them with peace.

May God grant us benefit through this [prayer] and through the shaykh’s knowledge, amen; may He be satisfied with him and grant us benefit through the blessing of his spiritual grace, amen.¹

- 1) **O God, bless the tablet of Your all-embracing Compassion** (*rahmāniyya*), upon which You have written with the pen of Your sheer Mercifulness (*rahīmiyya*), and the ink-supply of Your superlative Compassion (*raḥamūtiyya*) for [You have said]: *God would not punish them while you are amongst them.*²
- 2) **O God, bless the Throne upon which Your Unity is mounted,**³ by virtue of being encompassed by⁴ Your Divinity, Your inclusive Mercy and your Perfect Blessing, through Your saying: *We have sent you only as a Mercy to all beings.*⁵ **O Lord of all beings, bless the [one**

1 In B this opening reads: ‘Let us seal these biographical notices with the prayer upon the Master of masters, with which Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī used to pray, so that I [the copyist] may walk under his guidance, and from his well I may drink.’

2 Q 8:33. This could also be translated as ‘while you are within them’, alluding to the Presence of the Muhammadian grace within the human being.

3 According to the Quran (20:5) it is the All-Compassionate (*Raḥmān*) who is seated upon the Throne, but here the emphasis appears to be upon the unifying Essence of God, whether that be in terms of Divinity or Mercy. B reads ‘Your Names’ (*asmā’i-ka*) instead of ‘Your Unity’ (*waḥdāniyyati-ka*).

4 B reads ‘the Uniqueness of Your Divinity’ (*aḥadiyyat ulūhiyyati-ka*).

5 Q 21:107.

who is] Mercy to all beings!⁷

- 3) **O God, bless the eye-pupil of the whole⁸** in the presence of Your Oneness (*waḥdāniyya*) and the integral union of Your Uniqueness (*aḥadiyya*), by virtue of the encompassing of Your saying: *O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner, and as a summoner to God by His permission and as an illuminating lamp. Give to the people of faith the good tidings that they will have great bounty from God.*⁹

[As] he who announced the good tidings is the same as what he indicated by them, so let us attain [the degree of being] his mouth-piece.¹⁰ Open up, O God, the padlocks on our hearts with the key of his love, anoint the eyes of our insight with the antimony of his light, and purify the mysteries of our innermost hearts with his contemplation and closeness. Thus may we see naught in existence except You through it, and thus may we awaken from the sleep of our forgetfulness.

- 4) **O God, bless the *kāf*¹¹** of Your Satisfying Sufficiency (*kifāya*), upon the *hā*’ of Your Infallible Guidance (*hidāya*), upon the *yā*’ of Your Benevolent Bestowal (*yumn*), upon the ‘*ayn* of Your Protective Safeguarding (‘*ishma*) and upon the *ṣād* of Your Path (*ṣirāṭ*), *the Path of God, to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the*

7 We may observe that in this second blessing two blessings (*ṣalli ‘alā...*) are specified, while the first only contains one, suggesting a numerical correspondence between the number of the blessing and its contents.

8 Literally, ‘the man of the eye of the whole’ (*insān ‘ayn al-kull*). In Arabic the term for the eye-pupil is literally ‘man of the eye’. The expression here could also be translated as ‘the man of the Essence of Totality’. See ‘The Servant of the Loving One’, *JMIAS* 32, 2002, a translation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary on the Divine Name *al-Wadūd*, where he speaks of how the lovers of God are the eye-pupils of the cosmos (pp. 10–11): ‘The cosmos as a whole is a single Man: this one man is the beloved’.

9 Q 33:45–47.

10 In other words, ‘let us attain the station of the Divine Address’. In correspondence with the previous image of the ‘eye’ through which witnessing happens, we are maintaining here the literal mention of the ‘mouth’ through which announcement takes place. *Fāh* comes from the same lexical root as the term specific to Ibn ‘Arabī’s teaching, *fahwāniyya*. See *Fut.* II.128 for his definition of this term as ‘the Address of God, by way of direct encounter, in the world of imagination’.

11 Here begins an allusive explanation of the five letters at the beginning of the 19th Sura, entitled Maryam. This is the fourth blessing reflecting the value of the prominent term *al-ṣirāṭ* (22=4). The roots of the terms used here all relate to Quranic expressions: for example, sufficiency refers to ‘Is not God sufficient for His servant?’ (39:36); guidance to ‘He will guide you to a straight path’ (48:2); safeguarding to ‘God will safeguard you from the people’ (5:67). In the *Ḥizb al-baḥr* of al-Shādhilī we find the same letters with the *kāf* explained also as the *kāf* of ‘our sufficiency’ (*kifāyati-nā*) (see *Al-Mafākhir al-‘aliyya fi l-ma’āṭir al-Shādhiliyya*, by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Ayyād al-Shāfi‘ī, Cairo, n. d., p. 173).

*earth. Is it not to God that everything journeys?;*¹² indeed it is *the Path of those to whom You have granted Your Favour, not of those who have incurred anger or those who have gone astray.*¹³

- 5) **O God, bless** Your most sublime¹⁴ light, who is asked by the Names to intercede¹⁵ in the Presence of the Named. For he is the essence of their places of appearance in the realm of Being (*wujūd*), as comprehended by Your Knowledge; and the essence of their hidden reality in the plenitude (*jūd*) [of the Unseen], as contained in Your Generosity; and the source of their universal origination in the realm of creation (*kawn*), as encompassed by Your Will; and the essential potency of their particular capabilities in the realm of Uniting Power (*jabarūt*),¹⁶ as grasped by Your Ordaining Power and Might; and the essence of their productions¹⁷ in the realm of perfect realisation (*iḥsān*), as embraced by the [all-inclusive] extent of Your Compassion.¹⁸
- 6) **O God, bless** the *mīm*¹⁹ of Your Kingdom (*mulk*), the *ḥā*’ of Your Ruling Wisdom (*ḥikma*), the *mīm* of Your Kingship (*malakūt*) and the *dāl* of Your Everlasting Permanence (*daymūmiyya*), in a blessing that submerges [all] enumeration, and that encompasses [every] limitation.

.....
12 Q 42:53.

13 Q 1:7. B reads these two Quranic extracts in reverse order.

14 B reads ‘the most resplendent’ (*al-asnā*).

15 B reads ‘who intercedes for the Names in the Presence of the Named’.

16 This term refers to the place where Divine Power or Omnipotence is demonstrated, in which form and meaning unite. See our translation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Awṛād* entitled *Prayers for the Week*, pp. 116–7, where the root of the Divine Name *al-Jabbār* is discussed.

17 T reads ‘their indications’ (*ishārāti-hā*).

18 Allusion to Q 7:156: ‘My Compassion embraces all things.’ See also Q 40:7: ‘You embrace everything in compassion and knowledge’.

19 The letters M-ḥ-m-d spell the name Muḥammad, which means both ‘the one who is highly praised’ and ‘the place of praise’. In the *Ḥizb al-baḥr* (*Mafākhir*, p. 174) we find a similar explanation for the letters *mīm* and *dāl* (*mīm al-mulk wa-dāl al-dawām*). There are two ways to consider the number 6 in this sixth blessing: firstly, the letters of the name Muḥammad if the repetition of the second *mīm* is included, =132=6; and secondly, the values of the expressions *mulki-ka* (2), *ḥikmati-ka* (2), *malakūti-ka* (3) and *daymūmi[y]yati-ka* (8), which total 15=6.

- 7) O God, bless the ‘second One’ (*al-wāḥid al-thānī*),²⁰ who has been distinguished with the gift of the Seven Repeated,²¹ the secret pervading the [cosmic] mansions (*manāzil*) of the All-Compassionate’s [global] horizon,²² the pen flowing with the ink of lordly support over Mount Mind of humankind,²³ in a blessing that is renewed through the renewal of Your Mercy upon him, and through the culmination of Your Light and Mystery in him, O Lord of all beings!

20 This daring formulation, apparently the very antithesis of the Divine Unity, can be understood as alluding to the identity of the Divine Form with the Origin. Man is created ‘according to His Form’, which is identified with the Muhammadian Reality. Compare this with Ibn ‘Arabī’s later formulation of Man as ‘the second Actor’ (*al-fā’il al-thānī*), where God, the first Actor, finds His place of manifestation and activity (*Fuṣūṣ*, chapter on Muhammad, ed. Kiliç, p. 209). It could also be translated as ‘the One who is second’ or ‘the One who doubles’. We may note a numerical progression in this blessing, from One to the numbers 2, 7 and 14 (and 28 as implied in the ‘mansions’ or divisions of the lunar cycle). The root *th-n-y* carries meanings of folding (*thiny*), doubling, being second or doubling up (*thany*), repetition (*thinā*) and praise (*thanā*). This suggests that the physical act of doubling up one’s body is associated with the act of bowing in praise, so that praise itself is a ‘doubling’. The doubling of praise may also be understood as the essence of the interrelationship between Lord and servant. Ibn ‘Arabī cites the *ḥadīth qudsī*, ‘Repeat My praises, o My servant’ (*athnī ‘alayya ‘abdi*), which contains the same root *th-n-y*, to show the primacy of the Lord and the lastness of the servant (*Fut.* III.567). In a similar way, he sometimes explains the meaning of the term *muṣallī* (the second one) as one who prays by following the Divine order to pray, and is hence ‘second’, as well as the horse that comes second in a race (another meaning of *muṣallī*) – for example, see *Fuṣūṣ*, chapter on Muhammad, ed. Kiliç, p. 214; *Wisdom of the Prophets* pp. 131–2.

21 A reference to Q 15:87: ‘We have given you seven of the Repeated and the mighty Quran’. The Seven Repeated (*al-sab’ al-mathānī*), is often, though not exclusively, taken to refer to the Fātiḥa, opening chapter of the Quran, whose seven verses are repeated as part of the ritual prayer. In his *Tanazzulāt al-Mawṣiliyya* (quoted in Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without shore*, p. 111), Ibn ‘Arabī writes: ‘[The Fātiḥa] is the Doubled One (*muthammā*) for it contains the meanings of Lordship and servitude at the same time... It is the Seven Doubled Ones, for it includes the [seven] attributes [of the Essence].’ The word *mathānī* comes from the same root as *thānī* (second), and may also be understood as ‘praisings’ or ‘places of praise or doubling’. As Ibn ‘Arabī declares in the *Awrād* (*Prayers for the Week*, p. 33), ‘Deserving of all praise (*thanā*) and glorification, He is such that He extols (*athnā*) Himself, for He is both Praiser (*ḥāmid*) and Praised (*maḥmūd*).’ The Seven Repeated can also be understood here in a temporal sense, as the whole cycle of the seven days of the week: these days, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, all belong to Muhammad as ‘his subtleties (*daqā’iq*, =7) permeate every day’ (*Ayyām al-sha’n*, 2/53, discussed in *Prayers for the Week*, p. 18). We may also note that during his first stay with Mahdawī, Ibn ‘Arabī composed his famous poem which begins: ‘I am the Quran and the Seven Repeated...’ (see *The Unlimited Mercifier*, p. 88).

22 The ‘horizon’ is the furthest extent to which God’s creative Compassion extends, and therefore it denotes the entire circle of existence (*dā’irat al-wujūd*), which can be divided into 28 lunar mansions (*manāzil*), corresponding to the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet as explained by Ibn ‘Arabī. For a symbolic representation of this circle, see the diagram in Titus Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology according to Ibn ‘Arabī*, pp. 32–3.

23 For the relationship between the Mount (*tūr*) and scripture, see Q 52:1: ‘By the Mount and the Book inscribed.’ The expression here, literally ‘Mount Intellect’ (*‘Aql*) or Apex Mentis, parallels Mount Sinai, where Moses was spoken to by God in the Burning Bush. It also recalls the famous ḥadīth: ‘The first thing God created was the Intellect.’ Ibn ‘Arabī himself uses a very similar expression in the *Futūḥāt* – for example, ‘it is said that the sciences of the prophets and the friends of God are beyond ‘the stage of reason’ (*warā’ ʿawr al-‘aql*)’ (*Fut.* I.261, trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 169). There is an implicit play on words, with the use of *tūr* (mount) also referring to the word *ṭawr* (stage). The use of the word *insānī* (of humankind) here may also be taken as a subtle allusion to the Mountain of Moses: it is written with the same letters (*alif-nūn-sīn-yā*) as the word *Saynā* (Sinai).

- 8) **O God, bless the *alif*²⁴ of Your Uniqueness (*aḥadiyya*), the *ḥā'* of Your Oneness (*waḥdāniyya*), the *mīm* of Your Kingdom (*mulk*) and the *dāl* of Your Religion (*dīn*). Truly pure religion belongs to God.**²⁵ For You have singled out the pure for the one who performs the pure religion and You have ascribed it to Yourself. So, **O my Lord, bless the one who truly performs what You have ascribed to Yourself, in every source and every path, performing Your Religion, proclaiming Your Message, clarifying Your Way, discharging Your Trust, bringing proofs of Your Unity and establishing Your Uniqueness in the hearts - for he is Your Secret, safeguarded by Your Awesomeness and Majesty, crowned with the light of Your Names and Beauty.**

O my Lord, bless him in accord with his glorious station with You and with his cherished rank with You.

- 9) **O God, bless the depositary of Your Sight,**²⁶ the place of Your Seeing, the discloser of the treasures of Your Generosity, the jewelled necklace of Your Might, the key of Your Power, the place where Your Mercy is released, and the bearer of Your Supreme Magnificence,²⁷ the one whom You have singled out from the very core of Your creation, the one whom You have selected from among those whom You have graciously chosen, the unlettered prophet and the Arab messenger, from the noblest quarter of Mecca²⁸ and the Sacred Precinct, of the tribe of Quraysh, the most praising (*aḥmad*) of the

24 The letters A-ḥ-m-d (1+8+4+4=17=8) spell the name Aḥmad, understood by tradition to refer to Muhammad, whose coming is announced by Jesus in Q 61:6: 'And when Jesus son of Mary said: "Children of Israel, I am the messenger of God to you, confirming the Torah that was revealed before me, and giving you good tidings of a messenger who will come after me, whose name will be Aḥmad".' Aḥmad literally means 'the one who is most praising or praiseworthy'. There is also a famous *ḥadīth qudsī* where God says: 'I am Aḥmad without the 'm' [i.e. Aḥad = One]' – see Schimmel, *And Muhammad*, pp. 116–7.

25 Q 39:3.

26 Here begins a series of nine epithets of the Prophet, followed by nine terms describing Muhammad (as prophet, unlettered, messenger, Arab etc) and nine letters, making a total of 27 (=9) in correspondence with this ninth blessing. There are also nine *kāf* suffixes ('Your'), which are 9x2=18=9, so that the total would equal 36, corresponding to the degrees of the circle and to the completeness of 9. This expression, *mawdi' nazārīka*, appears in Ibn 'Arabi's work, written after his first visit to Tunis and Mahdawī, *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries (Mashāhid al-asrār)*, Oxford, 2001, p. 56 ('you are the place of My Seeing'); see also *Prayers for the Week*, p. 34.

27 Literally, 'the litter of Your Magnificence' (*maḥmal 'aẓamati-ka*). The *maḥmal* is a richly decorated litter, sent by rulers to Mecca at the time of the hajj.

28 Literally 'from al-Baṭḥā' (*abṭaḥī*). Al-Baṭḥā was the name of the aristocratic area in the flat part of Mecca, in whose hollow lies the Sacred Precinct and the Ka'ba, and all the important Meccan families lived there. It was surrounded by sloping streets where the common people lived, with foreigners and refugees living out on the outskirts.

praisers within the high pavilions²⁹ of Your Majesty, and the most praised (*muḥammad*) of the praised in the wide expanses³⁰ of Your Beauty, the *alif*³¹ of Your wondrous conceiving (*ibdāʿ*), the *bāʾ* of the beginning (*bidāya*) of Your originating, the *wāw* of Your constant Love (*wadd*) for Your productions, the *alif* of Your display (*ibrāz*) within what You have created,³² the *lām* of Your Benevolence (*lutf*) towards what You govern, the *qāf* of Your Power (*qudra*) which encompasses the creation of Your earth and heavens, the *sīn* of Your Mystery (*sirr*) which lies between the coming-together of the opposites of what You have created, and the *mīm* of Your Sovereignty (*mamlaka*) which extends over all the objects of Your knowledge.

- 10) O God, bless the secret of Your Generosity (*jūd*), the place of manifestation of Your Being (*wujūd*) and the storehouse of Your Existence (*mawjūd*).³³

29 The term pavilion or canopy (*surādiq*) is Quranic: 'We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire, whose pavilion encloses them' (Q 18:29). The image is often used in Ibn 'Arabi's writings: 'I saw a pavilion pitched there, whose [central] support was of fire... He said to me: 'Enter the pavilion and its fire will revert to light'.' (*Contemplations*, pp. 101 and 104). 'Know that this [Cloud] is the Divine Canopy, and the tremendous obstacle that prevents creation from joining the Divinity and prevents the Divinity from joining the creation' (*The Secrets of Voyaging*, p. 50).

30 The word *mubāsaṭāt* (expanses) here suggests the imagery of carpets (*bisāṭ*) within a tent, as well as the meaning of open communication. The active name Aḥmad is thus connected to transcendence (*tanzih*), while the passive name Muḥammad is connected to immanence (*tashbih*).

31 Allusion to the letters of the Prophet's name or agnomen (*kunya*), Abū l-Qāsim (there appears to be a missing *alif* after the *qāf* in the text as we have it). According to a hadith (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2.510), the Prophet forbade the use of his *kunya*. His *kunya* literally means 'father of the distributor', in other words, the one who apportions, divides up or allots. According to another hadith (al-Bukhārī, 5.8), the Prophet said: 'God is the One who gives, while I am the one who distributes (*al-qāsim*)'. This is the ninth blessing, and both the words *Abū* (father) and *Qāsim* (distributor) have a numerical value of 9. It is worth noting that the only explicit mention of individual letters occurs in the first nine blessings (4th, 6th, 8th and 9th, whose sum equals 27=9), suggesting a correspondence between the numerical digits and the letters (in possible allusion to the *Suryāniyya* language). A total of 14 letters, i.e. half the alphabet, are referred to. According to Ibn 'Arabi, 'Adam is the father of human bodies, while Muhammad is the father of the inheritors, from Adam to the one who seals the matter among the inheritors [i.e. Jesus in his Second Coming], for every law that manifests and every knowledge is inherited from Muhammad, in every time, for every envoy and prophet from Adam to the Day of Resurrection. This is why he was given the all-embracing words (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*).' (*Fut.* III.457)

32 B reads 'the *alif* of Your Lights (*anwār*) that shine on what You have created'.

33 This line is a beautiful example of Sufi word-play in Arabic, as the three terms have the same root letters, and the first word is contained within the second, and the second within the third. The first is the primordial Divine Generosity (*jūd*); with the addition of the letter *wāw*, it becomes Being (*w-jūd*), in all its fullness; with the further addition of the letter *mīm*, it becomes that which is Existent (*m-w-jūd*), which denotes the place of manifestation. These three letters equal 13+19+23=55=10 (corresponding to the tenth blessing). These ontological degrees reflect the three aspects of the Muhammadian Reality: secret (*sirr*), place of manifestation (*mazhar*) and treasury or storehouse (*khizāna*).

- 11) **O God, bless the imam of the Presence of Uniting Power,**³⁴ the one who follows the prayer³⁵ in the *miḥrāb* of two bows' length or nearer³⁶ through the uniqueness of his reunion. For he was reunited with You in his prayer, so that You gathered him to Yourself, specially favoured him with contemplating You, purified him through prostration before You,³⁷ and granted him freshness of the eye³⁸ in the prayer devoted to You. For he is the one who ravishes the virginal secrets of Your witnessing, the one who catches the sparkling fragrances of Your company.
- 12) **O God, bless Your highest Word,**³⁹ in respect of the heavenly food (*manḥa*)⁴⁰ of wondrous invention and creation, and Your *firmest bond*,⁴¹ in respect of continuous adherence,⁴² and Your *rope*⁴³ which is clung to in times of constriction and in times of expansion, and Your *straight Path*⁴⁴ leading to true guidance and following.

.....
34 In this eleventh blessing the word *imām*, spelt *alif-mīm + alif-mīm*, perfectly mirrors the uniting of 1 + 1 to make 11. In addition, the imam who leads the prayer is the equal to the community who pray behind him, all of whom are united in the prayer.

35 The one who prays (*al-muṣallī*) is the second, following the Divine order to pray, and also the horse which comes second in a race – see note 18. The *miḥrāb* is both a niche in the mosque-wall, which determines the direction of prayer, and also a technical term in horse-racing, meaning the lance which is set up to determine the racing circuit – racing, like prayer, follows this setting-up.

36 The summit of the Prophet's night-journey and ascension (*mi'rāj*) to the Divine Proximity - see Q 53:9.

37 Literally, 'between Your Two Hands'.

38 As the Prophet is reported to have told 'Ā'isha: 'The freshness of my eye is given to me in prayer'.

39 See Q 9:40: '... God sent upon him His Peace (*sakīna*) and helped him with hosts whom you did not see; and He made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, and the Word of God is the highest; God is Mighty and Wise.'

40 See Q 2:57.

41 Q 2:256.

42 Literally, 'the succession of successors (*tatābu' al-atbā'*)', a phrase which has echoes in the detailed tradition of *ḥadīth* scholarship, where the 'successors of the successors' (*atbā' al-tābi'in*) referred to pupils of the 'Followers', who learned from the Prophet's Companions.

43 Q 3:103.

44 Q 1:6.

*Alif-Lām-Mīm Ḥā'-Mīm Adumma Ḥamma Qāf Ṭā'-Sīn-Mīm*⁴⁵

*Muhammad is the messenger of God. Those who are with him are hard on the unbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating, seeking bounty and approval from God. Their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration. That is their likeness in the Torah, and in the Gospel they are compared to a seed that puts forth its shoot and strengthens it, so that it grows stout and rises firm on its stalk, delighting the sowers, that through them He may enrage the unbelievers. God has promised those of them who believe and act righteously forgiveness and a great wage.*⁴⁶

*Alif-Ḥā'-Wāw-Mīm*⁴⁷ *Wāw-Dāl-Wāw-Dāl*⁴⁸ *Ṭā'-Ḥā' Yā' Sīn Qāf*⁴⁹ *Nūn. By the Pen and by what they write. Through your Lord's blessing,*

45 Here begins a series of 14 separate letters (beginning with *alif* and ending in *mīm*), which correspond to a second sequence of 14 below (beginning in *alif* and ending in *nūn*) – collectively these numerically correspond to the 5 (*alif* + *mīm*) and the 6 (*alif* + *nūn*) of the Name *Huwa* (5+6=11). This Name is also alluded to in the addition of the first eight letters from *alif* to *adumma* (=28, the second perfect number and the letters of the alphabet) and the six letters from *ḥā'* to *mīm* (=28), making a total of 56 or 11. All these enigmatic letters can be found at the beginning of the following Suras: (a-l-m) 2/3/29/30/31/32; (ḥ-m) 40/46; (q) 50; (ṭ-s-m) 26/28. We read here *Adumma* as in the Tunis copy, instead of the equally possible *Alif-dāl-mīm*, which forms the name Adam, as given in the Berlin text. We may note that this group of letters also includes the letters *M-H-M-D*, making up the name Muhammad. We are also reading *ḥamma* here, instead of a repeated *ḥā'-mīm*, following the indications given in the *Mafākhīr*, where the letters *alif-dāl-mīm ḥā'-mīm* appear as *adumma ḥamma*: this latter vowelism is discussed in the commentary on the *Khatm al-Shādhilī* (*Mafākhīr*, pp. 233–234), where these names are also associated with the last verse of *Sūrat al-Faṭḥ*, which follows the letters here. On pp. 174, 207, 225 (where this formula, including the words *adumma ḥamma*, is said to be the Supreme Name and should be repeated 70 times), 227, 230 and 233–236, there appears the following sequence of letters: *aḥūn(un) qāf (un) adumma ḥamma ḥā'(un) amīn*. The author calls these names *asmā' jabarūtiyya*, in other words, names which are part of the language of the *Jabarūt* and in which secret tongue God may be praised. This language is said to be only known to the Pole (*quṭb*). The *Mafākhīr*'s fifth chapter is a collection of al-Shādhilī's prayers with commentaries by later writers such as Ibn al-Sabbāgh (Muḥammad b. Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥimyarī, the author of *Durrat al-asrār* in c. 1320CE) or 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454). See also Eva Pajares Vinardell, *Las enseñanzas de Abū l-Ḥasan al-Sādhilī según la Durrat al-asrār de Ibn al-Ḍabbāg*, Doctoral Thesis, Facultad de Filología, Universidad de Sevilla, 2003, containing a full critical edition and translation into Spanish of this early treatise on the life and teachings of al-Shādhilī. In the *Durrat al-asrār* (pp. 198–99), we find the letters *ḥā'-mīm* with the recommendation that they be repeated eight times during the recitation. On these two letters see Pajares, p. 173 and 223, n.1, and also A. Jones, 'The Mystical Letters of the Qur'ān', pp. 5–11.

46 Q 48:29.

47 This could also be read as: *alif huwa mīm* (*alif* is *mīm*). In Ibn 'Arabī's *K. al-Wāw wa-l-Mīm wa-l-Nūn* (*Rasā'il*, 2/84–5), the letter *mīm* denotes Muhammad as well as Adam. We may also note that *alif* is the first letter of Adam.

48 These letters spell the Divine Name *wadūd*, which is mentioned with the article (*al-*) in Q 85:14 and without the article in Q 11:90. This doubling of the letters *w-d* (which form the word *wadd*, meaning love) suggests the mutual loving relationship of God and man, Lord and servant. See Beneito, 'The Servant of the Loving One', p. 3, n.7.

49 These letter-groups give the opening letters of Suras 20, 36, 50 and 68, the first two of which are given as names of the Prophet by Ibn 'Arabī in his *Ikhtīṣār sirat rasūl Allāh* (see Beneito, 'Life of the Prophet', p. 81). The values of the 14 letters make a total of 63 (=9). On the other hand, the two sequences of 14 (=5) letters in this blessing may be regarded as two halves of a circle, corresponding to the two *nūns* of effusion and the unity of 5+5 and of 28 (=1).

*you are not possessed. You will have a reward unfailing. Surely you are according to a mighty character.*⁵⁰

- 13) **O God**, bless the one who took on Your Qualities⁵¹, who was utterly immersed in contemplating Your Essence, the truth who was created by Truth⁵², inner reality of truth⁵³.

*Is it true? Say: Yes, by my Lord, it is indeed true.*⁵⁴ *God and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe, bless him, and greet him with salutations of peace.*⁵⁵

- 14) **O God**, because of the limited grasp of our intellect, the limitation of our understanding, the ending of our desire, and the outstripping of our aspiration, we have been rendered incapable of blessing him according to what he really is. How could we do that when You Yourself have made Your own Speech his character⁵⁶ and Your own Names his appearance? The genesis of Your creation is from him, and You are his shelter and support, and Your Highest Assembly is for his companionship and his assistance. Thus **bless him**, o God, by the connection of Your Power to Your works, and the realisation of Your Names through Your Will. From him You have created all that is known; through him You provide the proof against all that is created; and in him You have placed the end of all endings.⁵⁷ For he is

50 Q 68:1–4.

51 The taking on of Divine qualities (*takhalluq*) is here contrasted with the following blessing, which mentions the related terms of connection (*ta'alluq*) and realisation (*taḥaqquq*). It appears that these terms were first expounded by al-Mahdawi's teacher, Abū Madyan, in his *Uns al-wahid*. See Ibn 'Arabī's *Kashf al-ma'nā* where the Divine Names are explained in terms of these three principles (for further details, see *El Secreto de los Nombres de Dios*, trans. Beneito, especially p. xvi).

52 Allusion to Q 10:5: 'God did not create that except by/through the Truth (*bi-l-ḥaqq*)'. This idea is reminiscent of the technical term coined by Ibn Barrajān, 'the truth by which [reality] is created' (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*) – see, for example, *Fut.* I.297; II.60, 104, 577; III.77.

53 Allusion to the Prophet's response to one of his Companions (Ḥāritha who said: 'I am truly [*ḥaqqān*] a person of faith'): 'For every truth there is a deeper reality (*li-kulli ḥaqq ḥaqīqa*), so what is the reality of your faith?' Cited by Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id*, 1/57–8, from al-Ṭabarānī and al-Bazzār.

54 Q 10:53.

55 Q 33:56.

56 'God says: 'Surely you are according to a mighty character (*khuluq 'aẓīm*).' (Q 68:4). When 'Ā'isha was asked about the character of the Messenger of God, she answered: 'his character was the Quran'. She said that because he was unique in character, and that unique character had to bring together all noble character traits (*makārim al-akhlaq*).' (*Fut.* IV.60, trans. SPK, p. 241)

57 B adds 'and through him rests the Argument against all created beings'. This alludes to the Day of Judgment when the Divine Argument is pronounced against each person.

the keeper of Your Trust (*amīn*),⁵⁸ the treasurer of Your Knowledge, bearer of the banner of Your Praise,⁵⁹ true source of Your Mystery, manifestation of Your Ineffable Might, the central point of the circle of Your Kingdom and its circumference,⁶⁰ the compound of its elements and its simple principle.

- 15) O God, bless the one who stands alone⁶¹ in the highest contemplation, the sweetest watering-place and the brightest light, who was distinguished in the Presence of the Names with the most eminent station and the most protective luminance.⁶²
- 16) O God, bless the original formation of Love.⁶³
- 17) O God, bless *the good tree*⁶⁴ of the highest, *whose root* is established deep in the ground of Your Awesomeness, and *whose branches* rise high in the pavilions of Your Magnificence.
- 18) O God, bless the *enwrapped*⁶⁵, the *enshrouded*⁶⁶, the *warner*⁶⁷, the *bringer of good tidings*⁶⁸, the *praise-magnifier*⁶⁹, the *victorious revealer*⁷⁰, one most affectionate and gentle.

.....
58 This well-known epithet of the Prophet is also an allusion to the sacred trust spoken of in Q 33:72: 'We offered the trust (*amāna*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; Man carried it, and he became a great wrongdoer, unknowing.'

59 Allusion to *ḥadīth*, see al-Tirmidhī, *Manāqib* 1; al-Bukhārī, *Tawḥīd* 19 and 3; see also Michel Chodkiewicz's article, 'The Banner of Praise', in *Praise, JMIAS*, 1997, pp. 45–58.

60 This phrase is exactly the same as that found at the beginning of the famous Theophany of Perfection (*tajallī al-kamāl*, no: 81) in Ibn 'Arabī's *K. al-Tajalliyāt*: 'I am the centre of the circle and its circumference; I am the compound of its elements and its simple principle (*or its complexity and its simplicity*).'

61 Or: 'the one who was singled out alone (*al-munfarid*)'. In one sense, this standing alone may refer to the final stages of the Prophet's ascension.

62 This could also be read, following a variant of B, as: 'the best-protected secret'.

63 This, the most succinct of the blessings, alludes to the creation of all things out of Divine Love, as stated in the *ḥadīth*: 'I was a Hidden (or unknown) Treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the world that I might be known'. The word 'formation' (*nash'a*) carries the sense of coming into being, emergence and growth.

64 See Q 14:24: 'Have you not seen how God has coined a comparison? A good word is like a good tree – its roots are firm and its branches reaching into the sky; it gives its fruit every season by permission of its Lord.'

65 Q 73:1: 'O you who are enwrapped in a robe (*muzammal*), stay up during the night...'

66 Q 74:1: 'O you who are enshrouded in a cloak (*muddaththir*), arise and warn (*andhir*), and magnify your Lord (*kabbir*), purify your clothes (*tahhir*) and shun defilement!'

67 Apart from the above verse, see also, for example, Q 38:65: 'Say: I am only a warner. There is no god but God, the One, the Victorious, Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, the Mighty, the Forgiving.'

68 Q 17:105: '... We have not sent you except as a bringer of good tidings and a warner.'

69 See note 63.

70 See Q 9:33 (and 48:28 and 61:9): 'It is He who has sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, to cause it to prevail over all [other] religion.' B reads 'the purifier' (*al-muṭahhir*), alluding to Q 74:4 (see note 64).

*A messenger has come to you from among yourselves: what you suffer is grievous to him, he is anxious for you, gentle and extremely merciful to the believers. If they turn away, say: God is sufficient for me. There is no God but He. In Him I put my trust. He is the Lord of the mighty Throne.*⁷¹

- 19) *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth: His Light is like a niche, in which there is a lamp – the lamp in a glass, the glass like a brilliant star – lit from a blessed tree, an olive-tree that is neither from the East nor from the West, whose oil almost glows, even though no fire has touched it – Light upon Light; God guides to His Light those whom He wishes, and God strikes similitudes for men, and God knows all things.*⁷²

O God, bless the *niche* of his body, the *lamp* of his heart, the *glass* of his mind, the *star* of his secret heart, *lit from a tree* whose origin is light, which pours upon him from the light of his Lord, *light upon light; God guides to His Light those whom He wishes*. Verily blessings be upon the outstanding pronoun,⁷³ concealed within that second Light, and the last to be struck as similitude in the world of images.⁷⁴

71 Q 9:128–9.

72 Q 24:35. The next three blessings are all connected to this Light verse. The following interpretations by al-Mahdawi of this famous verse can be compared with the traditional exegesis reported by al-Ṭabarī, on the authority of ‘Ubayy b. Ka’b:

‘Ibn ‘Abbās [the Prophet’s cousin] came to see Ka’b al-Aḥbār and asked him: ‘Tell me about God’s words ‘the symbol of His Light is as a niche’, to which Ka’b replied: ‘The niche is a hole in the wall which God has given as a symbol of Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him; ‘wherein is a lamp’, the lamp designates his heart; ‘the lamp in a glass’, the glass is his chest...’ (Jāmi’ al-bayān, XVIII, 104–111).

73 In other words, the personal pronoun specified in the words ‘God guides to **His Light**’, which is identified with Muhammad. The word *damir* (pronoun) also has the meaning of the hidden, the innermost consciousness, which is therefore concealed within the original Light, while the word *bāriz* (outstanding) also means that which emerges or stands out, referring to the appearance and eminence of Muhammad in the world.

74 It is interesting to compare this with Ibn ‘Arabi’s treatment, which as here allows for multiple points of view. At the level of the individual, the niche can be taken as an image of the external covering of the heart, protecting from the passions (*ahwā’*), while the glass symbolises the heart which has attained the station of purity (*ṣafā’*) – its transparency allows the light of the heart’s lamp to shine forth, finding its fullest degree in the person of the Prophet (see *Fut.* I.434). The tree can be taken as a symbol of the Ipseity (*huwiyya*), within which all oppositions are implicitly contained, though Itself ‘neither of the East nor the West’ (see, for example, *Fut.* III.198). The olive may symbolise the gnostic (*‘arif*) who has reached the supreme station, which is in fact the station of no-station (*Fut.* II.646). For further details, see the excellent article by Denis Gril ‘Le commentaire du verset de la lumière d’après Ibn ‘Arabi’, *Bulletin d’études orientales*, XXIX (Damascus, 1977), pp. 179–87.

- 20) **O God**, bless the one with whose light You have illuminated the dominion of Your heavens and earth⁷⁵ – *his light is like the niche of Your Throne*,⁷⁶ *in which there is a lamp of his light, the lamp in the glass of the bodies of Your prophets, angels and envoys like a brilliant star*, whose secret is *lit from the tree of his luminous origin*, which shines upon him out of the effusion of Your Names. *God guides to the Light of Muhammad*⁷⁷ *those whom He wishes of His creatures, and God strikes similitudes for men and God knows all things.*
- 21) **O God**, You are the One who knows⁷⁸ this light, emerging yet concealed, dazzling yet diffused, by which You beautify everything in the two worlds, and embroider the two weighty ones [mankind and jinn], and adorn the pillars of Your Throne and the angels of Your Holiness. You brought him even closer⁷⁹ to the Presence of Your Uniting Power and Grandeur. You made him the one who intercedes with You, amongst Your angels, prophets and envoys, for he is the door to [Your] Satisfaction, and the envoy with whom You are satisfied; the essential reality of Your Truth and the purest quintessence of Your Creation. By his light have the bearers of Your Throne been beautified; by his secret have Your heavens been raised and Your earth spread out.⁸⁰ He is the firmament of Your Names, the model of your Perfect Benefaction, and the manifestation of Your Ineffable Might and Authority. You are the One who knows him [as he is] in truth and reality – so, O my Lord, **bless him** according to the reality of Your Knowledge of all this, and through his real connection⁸¹ with that.

.....
75 Q 7:185: 'Have they not considered the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and the things that God has created, and that it may be that their term has drawn near?' See also Q 6:75.

76 The Throne is represented as the circumference encompassing the whole of existence, within which the heavenly spheres and their corresponding prophetic spirits revolve. The Throne is also the seat of the All-Compassionate (*raḥmān*) (Q 20:5), whose Breath effuses upon all the Divine Names.

77 This is the first explicit mention of the term, Light of Muhammad.

78 This blessing is specifically connected to the Name *al-ʿalīm*, the All-Knowing, which appears in the final phrase of the Light verse.

79 Allusion to Q 53:4–9: 'This is simply a revelation that is being revealed, taught to him by one great in power, possessed of strength; he stood straight on the highest horizon, then he drew near and came down, until he was two bows' length away or even nearer (*aw adnā*)'.

80 See Q 88:17–20: 'Do they not consider camels and how they were created, and the heaven and how it was raised, and the mountains and how they were set up, and the earth and how it was spread out?'

81 B reads 'his realisation' (*tahaqquqa-hu*).

- 22) **O God, bless the *lamp* of Your Religion, the *star* of Your Certainty, the *moon* of Your Unity, the *sun* of the contemplation of Your Beneficence in Your bringing Your human being into existence.**⁸²

O my Lord, bless him, in a blessing-prayer that ascends through You from You to him, so that it is known in the Highest Assembly that it is purely devoted to him - a blessing-prayer (*ṣalāt*) whose extent is the knowledge that embraces everything, the reality of the whole, and which is renewed by the wholeness of that whole, and is reiterated so that it includes the illustrious companions, his wives, stars of the time, and his family, spiritual masters and poles. May salutations of peace be upon him and upon them from his special station, with a peace-greeting (*salām*) of equal extent.⁸³

All praise be to God for this! And praise be to God for the illumination by which He has opened the vision of our insight, and which was opened up with the prayer upon the most noble in existence, through whom existence has been completed. Through God, glory to Him, success is granted, and through Him we seek the completion of our perfection according to reality.

- 23) **O God, by his illustrious companion, the Confirmer of Truth,⁸⁴ and by the Discriminator,⁸⁵ who was revered for truthfulness, and by the Master of the two lights,⁸⁶ and by the Seal of succession,⁸⁷ his paternal cousin ‘Alī, as has been verified: O God, reunite us through You with You; bring us back from You to You! Let us witness You in the Presence of integral Union (*jam‘ al-jam‘*), wherein there**

82 This blessing delineates four elements (corresponding to the 22=4 of the blessing) and makes allusion to two Quranic verses that mention illumination, the first microcosmically among humankind, and the second macrocosmically within the universe: ‘O Prophet, We have sent thee as a witness, and a bringer of good tidings and a warner, and a summoner to God by His permission, and as an illuminating lamp (*sirāj munīr*)’ (Q 33:45–6); and ‘Blessed is He who has set constellations in the sky, and has placed among them a lamp and an illuminating moon (*qamar munīr*)’ (Q 25:61). In addition, the mention of the three heavenly bodies, the star, moon and sun, recalls the story of Abraham’s illumination (see Q 6:75–9).

83 This marks the final blessing and salutation on the Prophet, since the next two prayers concern the four successors and the salvation and unity of the community, including the one who recites the prayer.

84 *Al-Ṣiddiq*, i.e. Abū Bakr, the first caliph.

85 *Al-Fāriq*, i.e. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph. The mention of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar clearly indicates the Sunni character of the prayer.

86 *Dhū l-nūrayn*, i.e. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, the third caliph.

87 Literally, ‘the seal of *khilāfa*’ – in other words, the caliphate of the four rightly-guided (*rāshidūn*) comes to an end with ‘Alī. According to a hadith (Ibn Ḥanbal 5.221), ‘the *khilāfa* lasts 30 years. After that, there will be rulership (*mulk*).’ See also Ibn Ḥanbal 5.44: ‘Succession to the prophet (*khilāfat al-nubuwwa*) lasts 30 years.’

is no separateness or withholding. Indeed You are the Giver, the Opener, who bestows whatever gifts of your Lordliness You wish upon whomsoever You wish, of those whom You have specialised for Your devoted service (*rahbāniyya*).⁸⁸

- 24) **O God**, we ask of You that You gather us in his group, that You include us among the followers of his tradition, and never let us stray from his creed or his way. You are the Hearer of prayer, responding to whoever calls [upon You] *or gives ear [to You] and is a witness*.⁸⁹ *There is no power or strength save through God, the High, the Magnificent*.⁹⁰

.....
88 See Q 57:27: 'We sent Jesus, son of Mary, and gave him the Gospel, and We placed in the hearts of those who followed him tenderness and compassion, and devoted service (*rahbāniyya*). They instituted that – We did not prescribe it for them – only out of desire to satisfy God, but they did not observe it as it should be observed.' Most translators read the word *rahbāniyya* as different to the previous terms, a practice which the followers of Jesus instituted, i.e. monasticism, but given that *rahbāniyya* has the same lexical root as *rahba* (reverent awe), the verse can be read as this being a characteristic that God placed in their hearts and which they developed. In Ibn 'Arabi's commentary on this verse in his *Kashf al-ma'nā*, this practice of *rahbāniyya*, usually understood to mean the monastic life, is understood as a good invention, in the light of the *ḥadīth* 'One who establishes a good tradition (*sunna*) will receive his corresponding reward as well as the equivalent of the reward of those who put it into practice' (*Kashf* 95.3, pp. 302–3). We should note that al-Mahdawi himself lived in a light-house just outside Tunis, taking care of it and acting as head of a spiritual community of men, whose way of life can readily be compared to the monastic life among the medieval Christian orders. See Faris Abdel-hadi, 'Unexplored Concepts: *Rahbāniyya* as sagehood', *JMIAS* 61 (2017), pp. 43–78.

89 Q 50:37.

90 The Tunis copyist ends with the following: 'And may the blessings of God be upon our master Muhammad, and upon his family and companions, forever and ever. O God, through the blessing-prayer upon him, let us reach the degrees of the righteous and Your Good-Pleasure. O Lord of all beings. 'Indeed You are capable of all things.' (Q 3:26) Here ends the prayer in praise of God and through the best of His help and His granting of success. May God bless our lord and master, Muhammad, and his family and companions. Salutations of peace be upon them all. And all praise be to God, Lord of all beings.'

الصلاة المباركة

THE PRAYER OF BLESSING

للشيخ
عبد العزيز المهدي

BY 'ABD AL-'AZĪZ AL-MAHDAWĪ

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
وصلّى الله على سيّدنا ومولانا محمّد
وآله وصحبه وسلّم

هذه الصلاة المباركة لسيّد عبد العزيز المهدويّ

نفعنا الله بها وبعلمه آمين
ورضي عنه ونفعنا ببركاته آمين

(١) اللهم صلّ على لوح رحمانيتك الذي كتبت فيه بقلم رحيميتك ومداد مدد رحموتيتك ﴿وما كان الله ليعذبهم وأنت فيهم﴾.

(٢) اللهم صلّ على عرش استواء وحدانيتك من حيث إحاطة ألوهيتك ورحمتك الشاملة وبركتك الكاملة من قولك ﴿وما أرسلناك إلا رحمة للعالمين﴾ صلّ يا ربّ العالمين على رحمة العالمين .

(٣) اللهم صلّ على إنسان عين الكلّ في حضرة وحدانيتك وجمع جمع أحديتك من حيث إحاطة قولك ﴿يأيّها النبيّ إنّنا أرسلناك شاهداً ومبشّراً ونذيراً وداعياً إلى الله بإذنه وسراجاً منيراً وبشّر المؤمنين بأنّ لهم من الله فضلاً كبيراً﴾ فكان المبشّر عين المبشّر به فألنا فاه وافتح اللهم أفقال قلوبنا بمفتاح حبه وكحلّ أبصار بصائرنا بأئمد نوره وطهر أسرار سرائرنا بمشاهدته وقربه حتّى لا نرى في الوجود إلا أنّت به ومن نوم غفلتنا ننّتبه.

(٤) اللهم صلّ على ﴿كاف﴾ كفايتك و﴿هاء﴾ هدايتك و﴿ياء﴾ يُمنك و﴿عين﴾ عصمتك و﴿صاد﴾ صراطك ﴿صراط الله الذي له ما في السموات وما في الأرض ألا إلى الله تصير الأمور﴾ بل ﴿صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالّين﴾.

(٥) اللهم صلّ على نورك الأسمى المستشفع بالأسماء في حضرة المسمّى فكان عين مظاهرها الوجوديّة من حيث إحاطة علمك وعين أسرارها الجوديّة من حيث إحاطة كرمك وعين اختراعاتها الكليّة الكونيّة من حيث إحاطة إرادتك وعين مقدوراتها الجبروتيّة من حيث إحاطة

قدرتك وقهرك وعين إنشاءاتها الإحسانية من حيث إحاطة سعة رحمتك.

(٦) اللهم صلّ على {ميم} ملكك و{حاء} حكمتك و{ميم} ملكوتك و{دال} ديموميّتك صلاةً تستغرق العدّ وتحيط بالحدّ.

(٧) اللهم صلّ على الواحد الثاني المخصوص بالسبع المثاني السرّ الساري في منازل الأفق الرحانيّ القلم الجاري بمداد المدد الربّانيّ على طور العقل الإنسانيّ صلاةً تتجدّد بتجدّد رحمتك عليه وانتهاء نورك وسرّك إليه يا ربّ العالمين.

(٨) اللهم صلّ على {ألف} أحديّتك و{حاء} وحدانيّتك و{ميم} ملكك و{دال} دينك ﴿ألا لله الدين الخالص﴾ فقد أخلصت الخالص للقائم بالدين الخالص وأضفته إليك فصلّ ربّ على من قام بما أضفت إليك على التحقيق في كلّ معدن وطريق قام بدينك وبلغ رسالتك وأوضح سبيلك وأدى أمانتك وأقام البراهين على وحدانيّتك وأثبت في القلوب أحديّتك فهو سرّك المصون بهيبتك وجلالك المتوّج بنور أسرارك وجمالك صلّ ربّ عليه على قدر مقامه العظيم لديك وعلى قدر عزّته عليك.

(٩) اللهم صلّ على موضع نظرك ومظهر منظرك ومظهر خزائن كرمك عقد عزّتك ومفتاح قدرتك محلّ رحمتك ومحمل عظمتك خلاصتك من كنه كونه وصفوتك ممّن خصصته باصطفائيّتك النبيّ الأُمّيّ الرسول العربيّ الأبطحيّ الحرّميّ القرشيّ أحمد الحامدين في سرادقات جلالك ومحمّد المحمودين في مباسطات جمالك ﴿ألف﴾ إيداعك

و﴿باء﴾ بداية اختراعاتك و﴿واو﴾ ودّك في إنشاءاتك و﴿ألف﴾ إبرازك في مخلوقاتك و﴿لام﴾ لطفك في تدبيراتك و﴿قاف﴾ إحاطة قدرتك على خلق أرضك وسماواتك و﴿سين﴾ سرّك بين جمع أضداد مبدعاتك و﴿ميم﴾ مملكتك المحيطة بمعلوماتك.

(١٠) اللهم صلّ على سرّ جودك ومظهر وجودك وخزانة موجودك .

(١١) اللهم صلّ على إمام حضرة جبروتك المصليّ في محراب ﴿قاب قوسين أو أدني﴾ بأحدية جمعه فانجمع بك في صلاته فجمعه عليك وخصصته بالنظر إليك وأخلصته بالسجود بين يديك وجعلت قرّة عينه في الصلاة الخالصة لديك فهو المقتنص أبكار أسرار مشاهدتك المفننص للمعات نفحات مجالستك.

(١٢) اللهم صلّ على كلمتك ﴿العليا﴾ من حيث منّ الاختراع والإبداع وعروتك ﴿الوثقى﴾ من حيث تتابع الاتّباع وحبلك المعتصم به عند الضيق والاتّساع وصراطك ﴿المستقيم﴾ للهداية والانتباع ﴿الم﴾ ﴿حم﴾ آدم حم ﴿ق﴾ ﴿طسم﴾ ﴿محمد رسول الله والذين معه أشدّاء على الكفار رحماء بينهم تراهم ركعاً سجّداً يبتغون فضلاً من الله ورضواناً سيماهم في وجوههم من أثر السجود ذلك مثلهم في التوراة ومثلهم في الإنجيل كزرع أخرج شطأه فآزره فاستغلظ فاستوى على سوقه يعجب الزراع ليغيظ بهم الكفار وعد الله الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات منهم مغفرة وأجرًا عظيمًا﴾ اهوم ودود، ﴿طه﴾ ﴿يس﴾ ﴿ق﴾، ﴿ن والقلم وما يسطرون ما أنت بنعمة ربّك بمجنون وإنّ لك لأجرًا غير ممنون وإنّك لعلی خلق عظیم﴾

(١٣) اللهم صلّ على المتخلّق بصفاتك المستغرق في مشاهدة ذاتك الحقّ المخلوق بالحقّ حقيقة الحقّ ﴿أحقّ هو قل إي وربيّ إنّهُ لحقّ﴾
﴿إن الله وملائكته يصلّون على النبيّ يا أيّها الذين آمنوا صلّوا عليه وسلّموا تسليماً﴾.

(١٤) اللهم إنّنا قد عجزنا من حيث إحاطة عقولنا وغاية أفهامنا ومنتهى إرادتنا وسوابق هممنا أن نصليّ عليه من حيث هو وكيف نقدر على ذلك وقد جعلت كلامك خُلّقه وأسماءك مظهره ومنشأ كونك منه وأنت ملجؤه وركنه وملاءك الأعلى على عصابته ونصرته صلّ اللهم عليه من حيث تعلّق قدرتك بمصنوعاتك وتحقّق أسمائك بإرادتك منه ابتدأت المعلومات وبه أقمت الحجب على المخلوقات وإليه جعلت غاية الغايات فهو أمينك خازن علمك حامل لواء حمدك معدن سرّك مظهر عزّك نقطة دائرة ملكك ومحيطه ومرّكبه وبسيطه.

(١٥) اللهم صلّ على المنفرد بالمشهد الأعلى والمورد الأحلى والنور الأجلّ المختصّ في حضرة الأسماء بالمقام الأسمى والنور الأحمى.

(١٦) اللهم صلّ على النشأة الحيّة .

(١٧) اللهم صلّ على ﴿الشجرة الطيبة﴾ العلوّية الثابت ﴿أصلها﴾ في معادن هيبتك السامي ﴿فرعها في﴾ سرادقات عظمتك.

(١٨) اللهم صلّ على المزمّل المدّثر المنذر المبشّر المكبّر المظهر عطوف حلیم ﴿لقد جاءكم رسول من أنفسكم عزيز عليه ما عنتم

حريص عليكم بالمؤمنين رؤوف رحيم فإن تولّوا فقل حسبي الله لا إله إلا هو عليه توكلت وهو ربّ العرش العظيم».

(١٩) ﴿الله نور السموات والأرض مثل نوره كمشكاة فيها مصباح المصباح في زجاجة الزجاج كأنها كوكب دريّ يوقد من شجرة مباركة زيتونة لا شرقية ولا غربية يكاد زيتها يضيء ولو لم تمسسه نار نور على نور يهدي الله لنوره من يشاء ويضرب الله الأمثال للناس والله بكلّ شيء عليم﴾. اللهم صلّ على مشكاة جسمه ومصباح قلبه وزجاجة عقله وكوكب سرّه الموقد من شجرة أصله النور الذي هو المفيض عليه من نور ربّه ﴿نور على نور يهدي الله لنوره من يشاء﴾، بل صلّ على الضمير البارز المستور في النور الثاني والأخير المضروب به الأمثال في عالم المثال.

(٢٠) اللهم صلّ على من نورّت بنوره ملكوت سمواتك وأرضك ﴿مثل نوره كمشكاة﴾ عرشك ﴿فيها مصباح﴾ من نوره ﴿المصباح في زجاجة﴾ أجسام أنبيائك وملائكتك ورسلك ﴿كأنها كوكب دريّ﴾ سرّه ﴿يوقد من شجرة﴾ أصله النوريّ الذي هو المفيض عليه من فيض أسمائك ﴿يهدي الله لنور﴾ محمّد ﴿من يشاء﴾ من خلقه ﴿ويضرب الله الأمثال للناس والله بكلّ شيء عليم﴾.

(٢١) اللهم إنّك عليم بهذا النور البارز المستور الباهر المنشور الذي بهوت به كليات الكونين وطرزت به الثقلين وزيّنت به أركان عرشك وملائكة قدسك وأدنيته من حضرة جبروتك وكبريائك وجعلته المتشفّع إليك في ملائكتك وأنبيائك ورسلك فهو باب

الرضى والرسول المرتضى حقيقة حقك وصفوتك من خلقك بنوره
جمّلت حملة عرشك ووسرّه رفعت سمواتك ووسّطت أرضك فهو سماء
أسمائك وعنوان إحسانك ومظهر عزّك وسلطانك فأنت العليم به
من حيث الحقّ والحقيقة فصلّ يا ربّ عليه من حيث حقيقة علمك
بذلك وتعلّقه بما هنالك.

(٢٢) اللهم صلّ على سراج دينك وكوكب يقينك وقمر توحيدك
وشمس مشاهدة إحسانك في إيجادك إنسانك. صلّ يا ربّ عليه صلاة
تصعد بك منك إليه وتعرف في الملا الأعلى أنّها خالصة لديه صلاة
مبلغها العلم المحيط بالكلّ حقيقة الكلّ تتجدّد بكليّة ذلك الكلّ
وتنشئ فتعمّ الجلّة الأصحاب وأزواجه الكواكب الأتراب وآله السادة
الأقطاب وسلّم عليه وعليهم من المقام المختصّ به سلاما مبلغه ذلك
كذلك والحمد لله على ذلك والحمد لله على ما فتح من الفتح الذي
فتح به أبصار بصائرنا قد فتح بالصلاة على أشرف موجود وبه كمل
الوجود وبالله سبحانه التوفيق وبه نطلب كمال إكمالنا على التحقيق.

(٢٣) اللهم بجاه صاحبه الصديق وبالفاروق الموقر بالتصديق وبذي
النورين وبخاتم الخلافة ابن عمّه عليّ على التحقيق اللهم اجمعنا بك
عليك وارددنا منك إليك وأشهدنا إياه في حضرة جمع الجمع حيث لا
فرقة ولا منع إنّك المانح الفاتح تمنح ما شئت من مواهب ربّانيّتك
لمن شئت ممّن خصصته برهبانيّتك.

(٢٤) اللهم إنّنا نسألك أن تحشرنا في زمرة وأن تجعلنا من أهل سنّته
ولا تخالف بنا عن ملّته ولا عن طريقته إنّك سميع الدعاء مجيب

لمن دعا ﴿أو ألقى السمع وهو شهيد﴾ ﴿ولا حول ولا قوّة إلاّ بالله
العليّ العظيم﴾.

[نهاية ﴿ت﴾:]

وصلّى الله على سيّدنا ومولانا محمّد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلّم تسليمًا
دائمًا أبد الآبدين وبلغنا اللهمّ بالصلاة عليه مراتب الصالحين
ورضوانك يا ربّ العالمين ﴿إنك على كلّ شيء قدير﴾.

انتهى بحمد الله وحسن عونه وتوفيقه وصلّى الله على سيّدنا ومولانا
محمّد وآله وصحبه وسلّم تسليمًا كثيرًا والحمد لله ربّ العالمين.

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مَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ
مَنْجَرًا وَنَزْلًا
لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنْ
الْمُتَّقِينَ
وَمَنْ كُنْ مِنْ
الْمُتَّقِينَ
الَّذِينَ
أَسْتَغْنِي عَنْهُمْ
فِي
كُلِّ مَقَامٍ