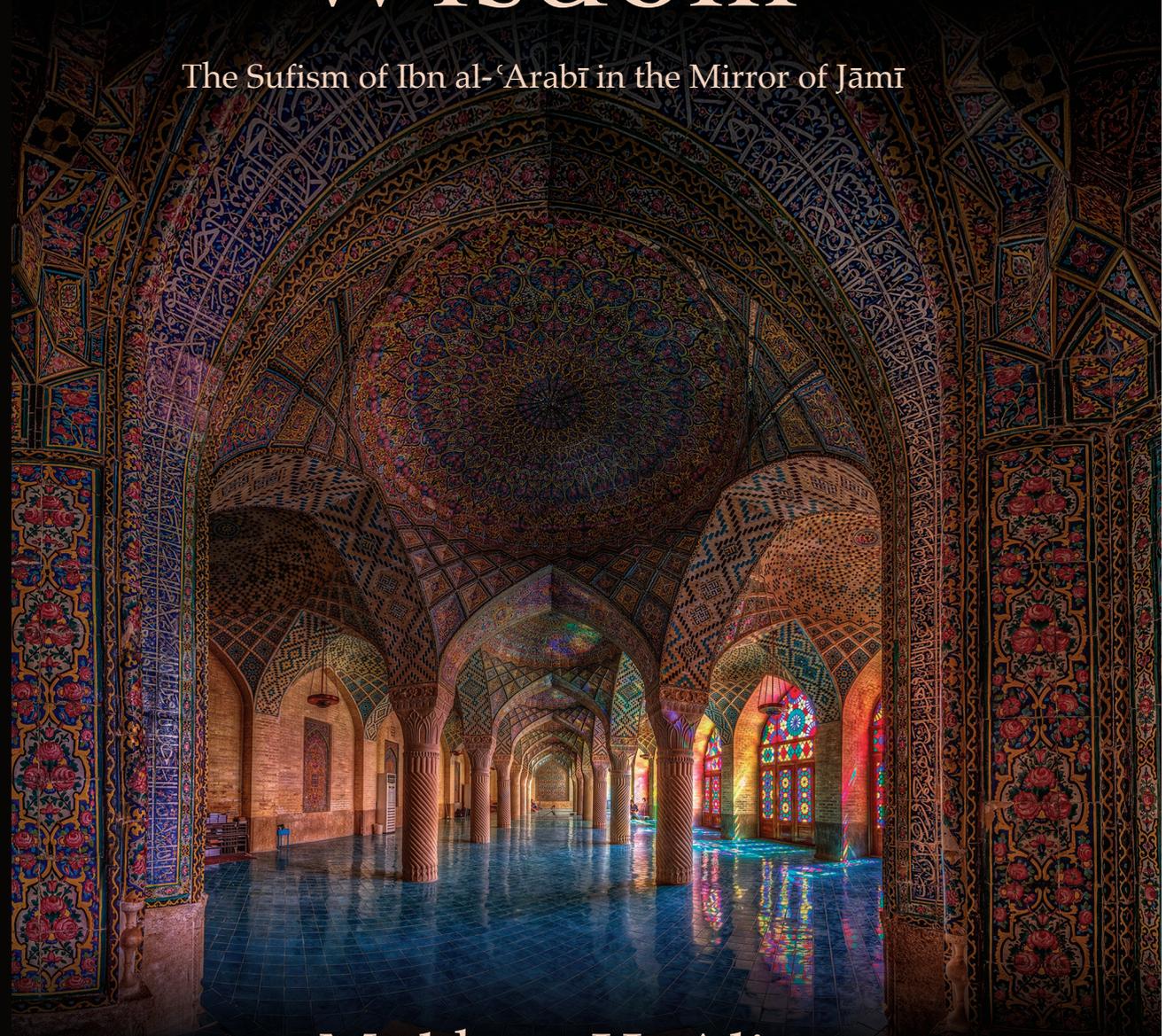


# Inscriptions of Wisdom

The Sufism of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the Mirror of Jāmī

Mukhtar H. Ali



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SUNY series in Islam  

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Seyyed Hossein Nasr, editor

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in the Mirror of Jāmī

MUKHTAR H. ALI

**SUNY  
PRESS**

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*For my teacher, Dr. Akram Almajid*



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## A Note on Names and Transliteration

For the sake of simplification, I have not used the definite article *al-* when referring to someone by their surname (*nisba*)—for example, Qūnawī, not al-Qūnawī. Arabic and Persian words, proper names, and book titles have been transliterated according to the standards set by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Translations of the Qurʾān are my own, unless stated otherwise.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



## Introduction

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s masterpiece, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, stands as a paramount text within Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam. This definitive work presents his key metaphysical and spiritual doctrines through the lens of twenty-seven prophetic figures. Recognizing its significance, Ibn al-‘Arabī distilled its essential themes in a brief treatise entitled *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (Inscription of the *Fuṣūṣ*), explored here through the writings of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), one of the most important medieval interpreters of his teachings. As the title suggests, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* represents the essence, imprint, or inscription (*naqsh*) of the book *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, a concise articulation of a divine principle reflected in prophetic archetypes. While hundreds of commentaries have been written on the *Fuṣūṣ*, only a handful exist on the *Naqsh*, the most notable being Jāmī’s *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (A selection of texts commenting on the *Inscription of the “Fuṣūṣ”*), the focus of the present study and translation. Jāmī also authored a full-length commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, completed near the end of his life in 896/1491, entitled *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ‘alā Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. His *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, completed much earlier, in 863/1459, was his first major prose work attempting to unravel the mysteries of the *Fuṣūṣ*. It offers direct commentary on Ibn al-‘Arabī’s abridgment, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, drawing heavily from the earliest and most authoritative commentators: Qūnawī, Jandī, Kāshānī, and Qayṣarī. Crafted as a bilingual work in Arabic and Persian prose, Jāmī envisioned *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* as a prelude, guiding readers toward a deeper engagement with the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.

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1       ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad Jāmī—poet, polymath, and  
 2 Sufi—was the culminating figure of Perso-Islamic culture of the  
 3 fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> He authored over fifty works spanning Arabic  
 4 and Persian grammar, music, the Prophet’s biography, Sufi meta-  
 5 physics, hagiography, and poetry. Known throughout his life by the  
 6 honorific title Nūr al-Dīn (“light of religion”), he is often referred  
 7 to by biographers as the “Seal of the Poets,” marking him as the  
 8 last of the great classical poets.<sup>2</sup> While this designation may be  
 9 open to debate, Jāmī’s profound and enduring commitment to the  
 10 teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī is beyond question. As Professor Hamid  
 11 Algar notes, “It is a significant measure of his lifelong devotion to  
 12 Ibn al-ʿArabī that his final, as well as his earliest, work in prose  
 13 was devoted to the analysis of *Fuṣṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.”<sup>3</sup>

14       In Sufism, Jāmī was affiliated with the Naqshbandī order, as a  
 15 disciple of the highly influential ʿUbaydullāh Aḥrār (d. 895/1490).  
 16 He played a pivotal role in the transmission of Ibn al-ʿArabī’s  
 17 teachings across Central Asia and into the Ottoman Empire, Iran,  
 18 India, China, and other parts of East Asia.<sup>4</sup> The recent volume  
 19 *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*<sup>5</sup> highlights this transregional and multi-  
 20 lingual reception, bringing together contributions from scholars of  
 21 Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Sanskrit, Pashto, Urdu, Bengali, Chinese,  
 22 and Malay studies. While research on Jāmī has primarily focused  
 23 on his literary corpus and poetic legacy, relatively few studies  
 24 have examined his engagement with Ibn al-ʿArabī’s writings, the  
 25 foundational theme of his prose works. Notable among these are  
 26 Hamid Algar’s article “Jāmī and Ibn ʿArabī: *Khātām al-Shuʿarāʾ*  
 27 and *Khātām al-Awliyāʾ*”; Ève Feuillebois-Pierunek’s chapter “Jāmī’s  
 28 *Sharḥ-i rubāʿiyyāt dar vaḥdat-i vujūd: Merging Akbarian Doctrine,*  
 29 *Naqshbandī Practice, and Persian Mystical Quatrain,*” in *Jāmī in*  
 30 *Regional Contexts*; and Marlene DuBois’s chapter “Jāmī and the  
 31 *Wine of Love: Akbarian Sparks of Divine Light,*” in *Islamic Thought*  
 32 *and the Art of Translation*.<sup>6</sup>

33       Early Orientalist scholarship on Jāmī includes E. H. Whinfield’s  
 34 1906 translation of *Lawāʾih*, which, according to the late Annemarie  
 35 Schimmel, was one of the most widely used manuals of later Sufi  
 36 teachings.<sup>7</sup> Other notable works include Edward Fitzgerald’s 1904  
 37 translation of *Salaman and Absal* and Nicholas Heer’s translation  
 38 of *al-Durrat al-Fākhira (The Precious Pearl)*.<sup>8</sup> Paul Losensky’s entry  
 39 in *Encyclopædia Iranica* provides helpful biographical information,<sup>9</sup>  
 40

though Hamid Algar's monograph *Jami* offers a more exhaustive account of his life and intellectual contributions. Jāmī's most famous prose work, the hagiographical tome *Nafahāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quḍs* (Intimate breezes from the sacred presence), is a collection of approximately six hundred Sufi biographies and forms the subject of Jawid A. Mojaddedi's study *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqāt Genre from al-Sulamī to Jāmī*.<sup>10</sup>

### Ibn al-ʿArabī

Before turning to the main subject of this book, it is fitting to offer a brief account of the Greatest Master (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*), Muḥyī-l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), known among his followers as the Seal of the Saints. He was born in the Andalusian city of Murcia, in the southeastern part of the Iberian Peninsula, in 560/1165 and died in 638/1240 in Damascus. The name *Ibn al-ʿArabī* indicates his pure Arab ancestry, said to descend from the legendary Arabian poet Ḥātim al-Ṭāʿī. Widely regarded as one of Islam's most influential thinkers and prolific writers, Ibn al-ʿArabī shaped the course of Islamic thought through a vast and profound body of work. Expanding the esoteric dimension of Islam into new horizons, he articulated a comprehensive system of mystical philosophy that has permeated a wide range of Islamic disciplines for over seven centuries. His enduring impact on the Muslim world is reflected in the immense body of scholarship following in his wake, spanning geographical, intellectual, and spiritual domains.

Ibn al-ʿArabī received his education in the traditional Islamic sciences in the city of Seville, then a major cultural center of al-Andalus and a vibrant crossroads between the Islamic world and Europe. He remained there for some thirty years before migrating to the East.<sup>11</sup> His voluminous writings, of which his magnum opus, *al-Futuḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan openings), alone comprises 17,000 pages divided into 560 chapters, are replete with spiritual mysteries that can scarcely be understood without the aid of commentaries. Professor James Morris observes that students of Ibn al-ʿArabī, whether specialists or beginners, face four daunting obstacles to achieving an integrated and comprehensive appreciation of his work: first, the sheer volume and variety of his writings,

1 possibly unparalleled in Islamic civilization; second, the extreme  
 2 diversity of symbols, allusions, rhetorical forms, and subjects that  
 3 are brought together—often in radically new contexts—within his  
 4 works; third, his distinctive, inspired, and often nonlinear style,  
 5 with complex parallels to the Qur’ān itself; and fourth, the fact  
 6 that most of his works were addressed to a specialized audience  
 7 with a high degree of spiritual development and immersion in the  
 8 practice (and vocabulary) of the Sufi path.<sup>12</sup>

9 Another essential aspect of engaging with Ibn al-‘Arabī’s vast  
 10 body of work is recognizing that his ideas were not only conveyed  
 11 through his own writings, but also systematized and interpreted by  
 12 his earliest disciples and the generations that followed. The tradition  
 13 of commentary that emerged around his works played a central role  
 14 in shaping what came to be known as the school of Ibn al-‘Arabī.  
 15 This school was largely formed through the exegesis of his two  
 16 most influential texts: *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*.  
 17 Among the key early figures in this intellectual lineage were Ibn  
 18 al-‘Arabī’s foremost disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274),  
 19 about whom Jāmī declared, “It is impossible to understand Ibn  
 20 al-‘Arabī’s teachings concerning the oneness of Being in a manner  
 21 consistent with both intellect and sacred Law without studying  
 22 Qūnawī’s works”,<sup>13</sup> Mu’ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. ca. 700/1300);  
 23 ‘Affī al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d. 690/1291); Sa‘īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d.  
 24 ca. 699/1300); Fakhr al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (d. 688/1289); ‘Abd al-Razzāq  
 25 al-Kāshānī (d. ca. 730/1330); and Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350).

26 Although ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī lived more than two centuries  
 27 after Ibn al-‘Arabī, he stands among the foremost commentators  
 28 on his works. A lifelong devotee of his teachings, Jāmī composed  
 29 a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* that not only synthesizes the  
 30 views of his predecessors but also enriches them with his own  
 31 insights. His writings thus mark the most comprehensive con-  
 32 vergence of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s mystical metaphysics and the refined  
 33 sensibilities of the Persian literary tradition.

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### Jāmī’s Early Life and Times

38 Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī was born in the village of Khar-  
 39 jird, near Jām, on the 23rd of Sha‘bān 817/1414 and died on the  
 40 18th of Muharram 898/1492. His family was from Dasht, a village

on the outskirts of Isfahān. His father, Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad, was also a scholar based in Kharjird and conferred upon his son the honorific title ‘Imād al-Dīn (“pillar of religion”). Throughout his life, though, Jāmī was known as Nūr al-Dīn, a title he may have chosen for himself. When he began writing poetry, he adopted the penname (*takhallus*) “Jāmī.” He explains this choice in two lines of verse, offering several reasons for the name:

My birthplace is Jām, and the distillations of my pen,  
 Are but a drop from the goblet (*jām*) of the Shaykh  
 al-Islam.<sup>14</sup>  
 Hence, in the register of poems,  
 For twofold reason, my penname is Jāmī.<sup>15</sup>

Jāmī began his formal education in Jām, where he memorized the Qur’ān at an early age. His father, Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad, played a decisive role in his formative years, instructing him in Arabic grammar and syntax. Reflecting on this period, Jāmī later remarked, “In reality, I am the pupil of my father, for it was he who taught me language.”<sup>16</sup> Father and son eventually moved to Herat, where at the Nizāmiyya madrasa he showed rare talent in the literary sciences, studying works on Arabic grammar, logic, rhetoric, and prosody and reading advanced texts such as Sirāj al-Dīn Sakkākī’s (d. 626/1229) *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm* (The key to the sciences) and Sa‘d al-Dīn Taftazānī’s (d. 793/1390) *al-Muṭawwal ‘alā Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* (The extended [commentary] on the summary of the Key).<sup>17</sup> He then pursued the rational sciences, theology, and philosophy under scholars like Khwāja Shams al-Dīn Jajarmī and Khwāja ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Samarqandī, the latter a student of the eminent al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1414).<sup>18</sup> When he moved to Samarqand, Jāmī studied astronomy with Qāzizāde Rūmī and the renowned philosopher and astronomer ‘Alī Qushjī (d. 877/1473).<sup>19</sup> There he continued to study Ḥanafī *fiqh* with Faḍlallāh Samarqandī. After completing his education, Jāmī returned to Herat in 1452.

With respect to his literary output, Jāmī is often referred to as the “Seal of the Poets,” a phrase taken to mean either that he was the finest of his generation, bringing the tradition of Persian verse to its culmination, or that he was the last of the great classical poets. Algar notes that the latter view is “authoritatively rejected by literary historians . . . given the continued flourishing

1 of Persian poetry for several centuries in Iran, India and Central  
 2 Asia."<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Jāmī's acclaim reached far and wide during  
 3 his lifetime and beyond, even appearing in the memoirs of Timu-  
 4 rid Prince Babur (d. 937/1530), the first Mughal emperor of India,  
 5 who wrote, "In esoteric and exoteric knowledge, there was no one  
 6 like him at that time. His fame is such that it is beyond the need  
 7 of description."<sup>21</sup>

8 Among his most celebrated poetical contributions is the *Haft*  
 9 *Awrang* (Seven thrones), a cycle of seven *masnavī*-style works.<sup>22</sup> The  
 10 first, *Silsilat al-zahab* (The golden chain), a collection of didactic  
 11 anecdotes, was dedicated to the ruler of Herat Husayn Bayqarā  
 12 (d. 911/1506) and completed around 875/1470. This was followed  
 13 by *Salāmān va Absāl*, an epic romance of Greek origin.<sup>23</sup> The third,  
 14 *Tuhfat al-ahrār* (Gift of the free), was dedicated to the Naqshbandī  
 15 Sufi master Khwāja ʿUbaydullāh Ahrār and completed in 887/1482.  
 16 The fourth, *Subḥat al-abrār* (The rosary of the pious), continues in  
 17 a similar didactic and mystical tone. His fifth work, the *Yūsuf-o*  
 18 *Zulaikhā*, offers a Sufi interpretation of the Qurʾānic story of Joseph.<sup>24</sup>  
 19 The sixth, *Layla-o Majnūn*, retells the tragic Arabian tale Qays and  
 20 Layla, and the seventh, *Khīradnama-yi Iskandar* (The Alexandrian  
 21 book of wisdom), was completed in 890/1485.

22 Jāmī's poetry was inextricably shaped by his Sufism, although  
 23 his disciple ʿAbd al-Ghafūr Lārī (d. 912/1506),<sup>25</sup> a key source for  
 24 Jāmī's biographical details, comments that Jāmī intended two  
 25 activities as a veil for his inner states: the composition of poetry  
 26 and the cultivation of scholarship. In response, Algar questions  
 27 this characterization, stating, "This somewhat formulaic subordi-  
 28 nation of the two pursuits to the primary concerns of the Sufi is  
 29 questionable, for Jāmī had little choice in the matter: he was and  
 30 remained a scholar by temperament, and his lifelong devotion  
 31 to verse can fairly be called addictive. Far from being a cloak to  
 32 conceal his inner self from public awareness, Jāmī's poetry is, in  
 33 fact, highly revelatory of his tastes, predilections, and general cast  
 34 of mind, and for that reason alone justifies careful study."<sup>26</sup>

35 Jāmī's collections of poetry (*dīvāns*) span a wide range  
 36 of themes, reflecting his broad intellectual and spiritual con-  
 37 cerns—among them theosophy, mysticism, ethics, wayfaring,  
 38 love, beauty, wisdom, wine, and other Sufi motifs, many of which  
 39 contain clear allusions to Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrines. He composed  
 40

poetry from early youth until a year before his death, as evident from the titles of his three *ḍivāns*: *Fātiḥat al-shabāb* (The opening of youth), *Wāsiṭat al-‘iqd* (The middle of the necklace), and *Khātimat al-ḥayāt* (The end of life).<sup>27</sup>

One of Jāmī’s most significant contributions to the canon of Sufi literature is his encyclopedic hagiographical work, *Nafahāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quḍs* (Intimate breezes from the sacred presence), consisting of 567 biographies spanning from the eighth to the fifteenth century. *Nafahāt al-uns* draws heavily on earlier sources, particularly ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī’s (d. 412/1021) *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* (The ranks of the Sufis), which had been rendered into Persian by Khwāja ‘Abdullah Ansārī (d. 481/1089) of Herat, as well as Farīd al-Dīn ‘Attār’s (d. 618/1221) only surviving prose work, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā* (Memorial of the saints). Jāmī added entries on figures from the Naqshbandī order, several Sufi poets, and notable female saints, such as Rābi‘a al-‘Adwiyya (d. 185/801).<sup>28</sup> In the entry on Ibn al-‘Arabī, he writes, “He is the foremost among those who proclaim the oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*) . . . The criticism leveled against him by detractors either stems from blind conformity (*taqlīd*) and prejudice (*ta‘aṣṣub*), a misunderstanding of his terminology, or from the profundity of meanings and truths he has embedded in his writings. The sheer number of realities (*ḥaqā’iq*) and insights (*ma‘arif*) contained in his works, particularly in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and the *Futūḥāt*, cannot be found in any other book, nor have they been expressed by anyone in this group [Sufis].”<sup>29</sup>

### Jāmī, Cupbearer of the Ibn al-‘Arabī Tradition

From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, Sufi orders experienced significant consolidation through various means: the codification of teachings through written works, establishment of Sufi lodges, political patronage, formalization of organizational structures by centralizing authority, transmission of lineages, and integration of local customs to make them more accessible to local populations. Jāmī figured prominently in most, if not all, of these forms of Sufi activity. He authored numerous works that became central to Sufi literature, skillfully weaving together diverse cultural elements such as poetry, philosophy, theology, and mysticism. He also enjoyed

1 patronage from rulers and nobles, most notably the Timurid sul-  
 2 tan of Khurasan, Husayn Mirza Bayqara, who provided financial  
 3 support and protection for his scholarly endeavors. This patronage  
 4 not only facilitated his own literary output but also contributed to  
 5 the broader dissemination of Sufi teachings and practices across  
 6 the region.

7 Jāmī's primary affiliation with Sufism was the Naqshbandī  
 8 Sufi order. As a child, he met with Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d.  
 9 822/1420), the disciple and successor of the eponymous Khwāja  
 10 Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389). However, it was Sa'ad  
 11 al-Dīn Kāshgīrī (d. 860/1456) who became his master on the path.  
 12 During this time, he was also in close contact with the Naqshbandī  
 13 master Khwāja 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār. Jāmī's writings on the Naqsh-  
 14 bandiyya are scattered throughout his poetry, though he produced  
 15 only a single work, *Sar-rishta-yi ṭarīq-i khwājagān* (The method of  
 16 the path of the masters), also known as the *Risāla adab-i muraqa*  
 17 *va dhikr*, exclusively devoted to the practices of the order, namely,  
 18 invocation (*dhikr*), vigilance (*murāqaba*), and the bond (*rābiṭa*) with  
 19 the preceptor (*pīr*). He also composed a brief treatise as tribute  
 20 to Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā called *Sukhanān-i Khwāja Pārsā* (The  
 21 utterances of Khwāja Pārsā), which, somewhat ironically, did not  
 22 contain Naqshbandī principles but rather explores themes such as  
 23 the degrees and modalities of divine manifestation characteristic  
 24 of Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysics.

25 In addition to his Naqshbandī affiliation, Jāmī had a strong  
 26 affinity toward Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, whom he regarded as "the apex  
 27 of all Sufi expression in Persian."<sup>30</sup> He composed a treatise com-  
 28 menting on Rūmī's *Mathnawī* entitled *Risāla-yi Na'iyya* (Treatise  
 29 on the reedpipe), a reference to the famous opening verse of the  
 30 *Mathnawī*, "listen to the reedpipe as it tells its tale / complaining  
 31 of separation."

32 Among all forms of scholarly engagement, none captivated  
 33 Jāmī's interest more than the writings of Ibn al-'Arabī. He was  
 34 deeply committed to defending and disseminating his ideas in Herat  
 35 and the wider Persian-speaking world. As noted earlier, Jāmī's first  
 36 prose work, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, is a commentary  
 37 on Ibn al-'Arabī's own distillation of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, while his  
 38 final prose work is a full commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* itself.  
 39 His determination to grasp the meanings of the *Fuṣūṣ* is especially  
 40

evident in the prologue to his commentary, a passage that, to a certain extent, reveals his own hermeneutical orientation.

I devoted much time to the study of [the *Fuṣūṣ*] and meditated upon it, but did not find a master who would grant me its benefit by clarifying its difficulties nor a guide who could direct his disciples to unveil its complexities. So, I turned to all its commentaries, treating them as keys to the gates of its understanding. I studied them one after another, returning to them repeatedly, until I resolved to set down my own opinion—drawing from what I had selected among them that assisted me in explaining the text and sufficed for understanding its meanings. To this, I added what came to me during my study, along with what my states and moments permitted.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to his two commentaries related to the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Jāmī wrote several works on Ibn al-‘Arabī’s teachings. These include (1) *Lawā’ih* (Gleams),<sup>32</sup> completed around 870/1465—a series of thirty-six meditations in rhymed prose and verse on themes such as divine unity and the relationship between the attributes and the Essence; (2) *Sharḥ-i ba‘dī az abyāt-i qaṣīda-yi tā’iyya-yi fāriḍiyya* (An explanation of a few verses of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poem in *tā’*);<sup>33</sup> (3) *Sharḥ-i rubā’iyyāt*, (Explanations of the quatrains), a work on the oneness of Being; (4) *Lawāmi‘* (Sparks of inspiration), a commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Khamriyya* (Wine poem) completed in 883/1478, which explores the theme of love; (5) *Ashi‘at al-lama‘āt* (Rays of the *Flashes*),<sup>34</sup> completed in 886/1481—a commentary on Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī’s (d. 688/1289) *Lama‘āt* (Flashes), itself a classic of Persian literature inspired by Qūnawī’s lectures; (6) *Durrat al-fākhira* (*The precious pearl*), also completed in 886/1481, a polemical work comparing the views of the theologians, philosophers, and Sufis, particularly those of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s school.

Among his Persian works, only *Lawā’ih* is not a commentary on a specific text, as Professor Sachiko Murata observes: “*Lawā’ih*, somewhat like *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, brings together texts written by earlier authors. . . . The work demonstrates self-confidence and mastery of the subject matter. He acts as a ‘speaker’ for this school of thought by thoroughly rewriting original passages, if not by composing his

1 own essays on well-known issues. Moreover, his quatrains, which  
 2 make up a good portion of the texts, are especially well-suited to  
 3 bringing out the point of the technical discussions in non-technical  
 4 language.”<sup>35</sup>

5 In his efforts to understand the complex teachings of Ibn  
 6 al-‘Arabī, Jāmī drew extensively from the earliest commentators,  
 7 such as Ibn al-‘Arabī’s foremost disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.  
 8 673/1234), as well as Mu’ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. ca. 700/1300),  
 9 ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d. 690/1291), Sa‘īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d.  
 10 ca. 699/1300), Fakhr al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (d. 688/1289), ‘Abd al-Razzāq  
 11 al-Kāshānī (d. ca. 730/1330), and Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350).  
 12 He also regularly consulted with his contemporaries, most notably  
 13 Khwāja ‘Ubaydullāh Aḥrār, and Amīr Aḥmad Bāb al-Abvābī (Dar-  
 14 bandī) Lāla of Tabriz (d. 947/1540), an adherent of the Dhahabī  
 15 offshoot of the Kubraviyya.<sup>36</sup> While remaining a lifelong devotee  
 16 to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s teachings, Jāmī found no inconsistency between  
 17 this allegiance and his spiritual commitment to the Naqshbandiyya,  
 18 both of which are represented in his poetry.

19 With respect to the Naqshbandī Sufi order, the influence of  
 20 Ibn al-‘Arabī’s teachings appears as early as the writings of Khwāja  
 21 Muḥammad Pārsā,<sup>37</sup> who succeeded the order’s eponymous founder,  
 22 Khwāja Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband. Pārsā’s son remarked that “for  
 23 his father the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* was like the soul, and the *Futūḥat*  
 24 *al-Makkiyya* like the heart.”<sup>38</sup> Although a short commentary on the  
 25 *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is attributed to Pārsā, it does not seem to have been  
 26 one of the sources Jāmī consulted in composing *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*. It  
 27 may have been authored instead by the Kubravī saint Sayyid ‘Alī  
 28 Hamadānī (d. 787/1385), as Jāmī biographer Najīb Māyel Heravī  
 29 suggests, or it may have contained material that was simply a  
 30 recasting of earlier commentaries, contributing little in the way of  
 31 original insight. Jāmī did, however, cite select treatises by Pārsā  
 32 in the *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*.<sup>39</sup>

33 The fifteenth century witnessed a pivotal moment in the  
 34 reception of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought, as his influence expanded  
 35 across Sufi networks and provoked a range of responses, from  
 36 veneration to critique. Two major currents thus distinguish this  
 37 period of Sufism: first, the florescence of a textual and commentarial  
 38 tradition centered on the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabī; and second,  
 39 the ongoing controversy surrounding his ideas. Many prominent  
 40 Sufi masters, including those affiliated with the Naqshbandī order,

embraced Ibn al-‘Arabī’s metaphysical vision. Among them were 1  
 Sayyid ‘Alī Ḥamadānī, the second founder of the Kubravī order, 2  
 and Shah Ni‘matullah Valī (d. 834/1431), founder of the Ni‘mat- 3  
 ullahī order. The latter composed a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* and 4  
 selections of the *Futuḥāt*.<sup>40</sup> 5

Among the Naqshbandīs, Jāmī’s role during this period was 6  
 by far the most substantial, kindled by the spiritual grace bestowed 7  
 upon him by Pārsā in his youth, and sustained by the guidance 8  
 of ‘Ubaydullah Aḥrār in his adulthood. In addition to his pro- 9  
 lific scholarly output, Jāmī engaged in public debates defending 10  
 Ibn al-‘Arabī’s doctrines and central teachings among the Sufis, 11  
 such as the oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Algar notes, “This 12  
 earned him the epithet of *wujudi* (an adherent of *wahdat al-wujūd*), 13  
 a term that locally carried some opprobrium, but Jami ascribed the 14  
 hostility of those who so used it to a deficient comprehension of 15  
 what ‘certain well-known Sufis have said concerning the essence 16  
 of being.’”<sup>41</sup> 17

Such polemics with exoterically minded scholars in Herat 18  
 were emblematic of the broader intellectual climate of the time. 19  
 Similar controversies had already emerged a few decades earlier, 20  
 when another proponent of Ibn al-‘Arabī, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 21  
 790/1388), faced similar resistance within the Shī‘ī context while 22  
 aspiring to promote Ibn al-‘Arabī’s metaphysics as the esoteric 23  
 interpretation of Shī‘ī doctrine. 24

### The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*: Origins and Significance 27

Let us turn our attention to the singularly influential text of Sufism 29  
 and the basis of the present work, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. 30  
 Regarded as the essence of his writings, Ibn al-‘Arabī reports having 31  
 received it directly from the Prophet in a dream. Because of this 32  
 eminence, he forbade it to be bound with any other work. Describ- 33  
 ing the spiritual origins of this work, he writes in the introduction: 34

I saw the Messenger of God in a visitation granted to 36  
 me during the latter part of the month of Muharram in 37  
 the year 627, in the city of Damascus. In his hand was a 38  
 book, and he said to me, “This is the book *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; 39  
 take it and deliver it to the people so that they might 40

1 benefit from it." I replied, "Obedience is due to God  
 2 and His Messenger; it shall be as we are commanded."  
 3 I thus carried out the wish, purified my intention, and  
 4 devoted myself wholly to the publishing of this book,  
 5 exactly as the Messenger had prescribed, without any  
 6 addition or omission.<sup>42</sup>

7  
 8 Because Ibn al-ʿArabī received the meanings of the *Fuṣūṣ* in a  
 9 true dream and composed it exactly "as the Messenger prescribed,  
 10 without any addition or omission," he is not, in one sense, the  
 11 true author of the *Fuṣūṣ* any more than the Prophet is the author  
 12 of the Qurʾān. And yet, we may still regard Ibn al-ʿArabī as its  
 13 author, since the words themselves are not the verbatim speech of  
 14 the Prophet in the way that the Qurʾān is the direct word of God.  
 15 Without delving into the subtleties of unveiling, it remains unclear  
 16 where the boundary lies between the book he received from the  
 17 Prophet and the one he penned by his hand. He is, on one hand,  
 18 an author and, on the other, a transmitter of meanings impressed  
 19 upon him. This is important in evaluating the epistemic value of  
 20 such a text or mystical experience more broadly: To what extent  
 21 do we trust the claims made in the *Fuṣūṣ*? It is essential to account  
 22 for both aspects of reception and production, for they reveal the  
 23 nuanced threshold between revelatory knowledge of divine origin  
 24 and its human reception, interpretation, and expression. If the  
 25 veracity of the speaker is established, then the veracity of their  
 26 claims follows more readily. But even if doubt remains, the teach-  
 27 ings may still be appreciated for their inherent worth, as part of  
 28 the intellectual and spiritual heritage of mysticism and philosophy.  
 29 In either case, the *Fuṣūṣ* should be evaluated on the strength of its  
 30 insights, even if their full meaning eludes us.

31 *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is arranged into twenty-seven chapters, each  
 32 dedicated to a prophet who is the divine vicegerent, the univer-  
 33 sal or Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) of his time. Ibn al-ʿArabī  
 34 describes the centrality of the Perfect Human through the term  
 35 *quṭb*, meaning "pole" or "pivot." He writes, "The Pole (*quṭb*) is both  
 36 the center and the circumference of the circle; he is the mirror of  
 37 God and the pivot of the world. Subtle connections extend from  
 38 him to the hearts of all created beings, both for good and for evil,  
 39 equally, without either predominating. In his sight, there is neither  
 40

good nor evil; rather, it is existence that manifests them as good or evil in the receptive vessel.”<sup>43</sup> The doctrine of the Perfect Human lies at the heart of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, for each prophet embodies the highest spiritual realization and greatest share of God’s self-disclosure within creation. The Perfect Human embodies the summit of human spiritual potential, transcending the limitations of human nature to become a true locus of divinity. The Perfect Human not only serves as a vessel of divine attributes but also acts as a mirror in which the totality of creation is reflected.

### The Architecture of the Book: *Faṣṣ*, *Ḥikma*, and *Kalima*

The enigmatic title of this work, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, may be explained as follows: *Fuṣūṣ* is the plural of *faṣṣ* (also vocalized as *fuṣṣ* or *fiṣṣ*),<sup>44</sup> which refers to the gemstone set in the bezel of a ring. The value of a ring is determined by the central stone, which not only adorns it but bears the signet—the seal or imprint signifying the owner’s authentication. Similarly, the *faṣṣ* is likened to the heart of a prophet, upon which is inscribed the quintessential knowledge of the divine principle.

*Faṣṣ* has several meanings: reality (*ḥaqīqā*), innermost reality (*kunh*), essence (*jawhar*), kernel (*lubb*), and the center stone of a ring. According to Qayṣarī, “The *faṣṣ* of a thing is its quintessence (*khilāṣa*) or essence (*zubda*). The *faṣṣ* of a ring is the element that adorns it, [typically] bearing the inscription of its owner’s name, allowing him to seal his treasure.”<sup>45</sup>

Thus, the combination of *faṣṣ* with *ḥikma* — *faṣṣ al-ḥikma*—denotes the epitome or essence of wisdom. Each chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is called a *faṣṣ* because it encapsulates the essential reality and the divine principle of the prophet who is its subject. For example, the title of every chapter follows this formula: “the *faṣṣ* of the *ḥikma* of *x* in the *kalima* of *y*.” The first chapter, “The Quintessence (*faṣṣ*) of the Wisdom (*ḥikma*) of Divinity (*ilāhiyya*) in the Adamic Word (*kalima*),” refers to the essential knowledge of the principle of divinity as embodied in the Adamic reality. *Faṣṣ al-ḥikma* can also be understood as the distillation of knowledge, or the exclusive theophany of the forms of knowledge received by the spirit of a prophet or saint. This knowledge accords with the divine name

1 (or names) that govern their reality and concord with their indi-  
 2 vidual receptivity. Qayṣarī writes, “The *faṣṣ* of every wisdom, if  
 3 taken to mean quintessence, refers to the epitome of knowledge  
 4 received by that prophet’s spirit. It is determined by the divine  
 5 name that governs [each prophet], so it effuses upon the spirit of  
 6 that prophet in accordance with their capacity and receptivity. If  
 7 it is taken to mean center stone [i.e., of a signet ring], then it is  
 8 the heart within which the knowledge specific to each prophet is  
 9 inscribed—as [the Shaykh] says, “The *faṣṣ* of each wisdom is the  
 10 Word (*kalima*) to which that wisdom is attributed.”<sup>46</sup>

11 The quintessence of this knowledge, or divine wisdom, is  
 12 inscribed in the heart of the Perfect Human. As Ibn al-‘Arabī  
 13 says, “The heart of the gnostic (‘*arif*) or the Perfect Human is like  
 14 the setting (*maḥall*) for the center stone (*faṣṣ*) of a ring.”<sup>47</sup> Kāshānī  
 15 further elaborates, “Since the world is like a ring and the human  
 16 is its center stone, the heart of every Perfect Human who knows  
 17 God is the *faṣṣ*, the repository (*maḥall*) of His wisdom, which is  
 18 specific to him.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, each *faṣṣ* in the book represents the heart,  
 19 the locus where the quintessential knowledge and principle of wis-  
 20 dom unique to each prophet in their archetypal reality is revealed.

21 *Hikam* is the plural of *ḥikma*, a term that encompasses wisdom,  
 22 knowledge, and understanding. According to the lexicographers,  
 23 these meanings span both cognitive and practical dimensions.  
 24 Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) writes, “Wisdom is the  
 25 knowledge that investigates the realities of things as they truly  
 26 are in existence, according to human capacity.”<sup>49</sup> It refers to the  
 27 ability to perceive things as they truly are without delusion or  
 28 conjecture. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Tahānawī (d. 1185/1745) expands  
 29 the definition to include action, stating that wisdom is “the skillful  
 30 execution and mastery of actions and speech” (“*itqān al-fi‘l wa-l-*  
 31 *qawl wa-iḥkāmuhumā*”).<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108)  
 32 writes, “*Hikma* is the attainment of that which is true by knowl-  
 33 edge and intellect (*iṣābat al-haqq bi-l-‘ilm wa-l-‘aql*). With respect  
 34 to God, it refers to the superlative knowledge and origination of  
 35 things (*ma‘rifat al-ashyā’ wa-ṭjādihā ‘alā ghāyat al-iḥkām*), and with  
 36 respect to the human being, it means knowledge of creation and  
 37 doing good (*ma‘rifat al-mawjūdāt wa fi‘l al-khayrāt*).”<sup>51</sup> Al-Ḥakīm  
 38 al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 300/910), in his *Tahṣīl nazā’ir al-Qur’ān*, offers  
 39 four meanings for the word *ḥikma*: comprehension (*fiqh*), knowl-  
 40

edge (*‘ilm*), prophethood (*nubuwwah*), and judging between people 1  
 (*al-qaḍā’ bayn al-khalq*),<sup>52</sup> asserting that *ḥikma* represents the esoteric 2  
 dimension of knowledge. 3

The Sufi saint of Herat, Khwāja ‘Abdullah al-Anṣārī (d. 4  
 481/1089), writes, “*Ḥikma* is a term that denotes the mastery of 5  
 placing things in their appropriate place (*li-iḥkām wadh‘ al-shay‘ fi* 6  
*mawḍi‘ihī*).”<sup>53</sup> In his *Manāzil al-sā’irīn* (Stations of the wayfarers), 7  
 he places *ḥikma* in the seventy-second station in the section of the 8  
 text known as “The Valleys,”<sup>54</sup> positioning it just after the station of 9  
 knowledge. In his earlier work on the stages of spiritual wayfaring, 10  
*Ṣad maydān* (The hundred fields), he writes, “Wisdom is seeing 11  
 things as they truly are. It is a noble rank between intelligence 12  
 and knowledge, and it is bestowed upon and shared among the 13  
 prophets and saints.”<sup>55</sup> 14

The salient feature of wisdom is that it resides in the heart, 15  
 which is the inward dimension of the intellect and, as such, a 16  
 faculty of cognition. According to hadith sources, Jesus is reported 17  
 to have said, “Verily, wisdom is the light of every heart.”<sup>56</sup> The 18  
 Prophet’s cousin ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), renowned for his 19  
 sagacity, said, “Wisdom is a tree that grows in the heart and pro- 20  
 duces fruit on the tongue.”<sup>57</sup> Regarding the reciprocal relationship 21  
 between wisdom and intelligence, he also remarked, “The depths of 22  
 wisdom are mined through the intellect; the depths of the intellect 23  
 are mined through wisdom.”<sup>58</sup> 24

While both *ḥikma* and *ma‘rifa* denote the recognition of reality, 25  
*ḥikma* encompasses practical wisdom, manifested through action 26  
 and speech, whereas *ma‘rifa* emphasizes the cognitive and intu- 27  
 itive dimensions of knowledge. The Arabic word *ma‘rifa* means 28  
 “knowledge,” but in the Sufi tradition, it refers to direct, experi- 29  
 ential or esoteric knowledge; gnosis; mystical insight; intuition; or 30  
 recognition. Translated here as “gnosis” and “gnostic” for the one 31  
 who possesses it, *ma‘rifa* is distinguished from *‘ilm* (knowledge) 32  
 insofar as it refers to an awareness rooted in spirituality, differing 33  
 from the more conventional forms of rational, literary, or scientific 34  
 knowledge implied by *‘ilm*.<sup>59</sup> Hujwīrī draws the distinction clearly, 35  
 stating, “The Sufi shaykhs use the term *ma‘rifa* for any knowledge 36  
 that is joined with action and state . . . one who possesses such 37  
 knowledge is called an *‘arif*. By contrast, they use the term *‘ilm* 38  
 for any knowledge that lacks spiritual meaning and is devoid of 39  
 40

1 religious practice. One who possesses such knowledge is called  
2 an *‘ālim*.”<sup>60</sup>

3 In the context of the *Fuṣūṣ*, *ḥikma* refers to the quintessential  
4 knowledge, the governing principle, and the overarching reality  
5 embodied by each prophet. Commentators typically begin with  
6 normative definitions rooted, nonetheless, in the Sufi tradition to  
7 frame their interpretations. Kāshānī defines *ḥikma* as “awareness  
8 of the mysteries of things, their causal relationships, their condi-  
9 tions and what ought to be. . . . It means mastering knowledge  
10 of the realities of things, their states, and specifics, inwardly and  
11 outwardly.”<sup>61</sup> Likewise, Qayṣarī defines it as “the knowledge of the  
12 realities of things as they are in themselves and action in keeping  
13 with that knowledge.”<sup>62</sup>

14 However, *ḥikma* is not simply knowing things as they are  
15 but grasping their very essence, in a unified and comprehensive  
16 way. In this sense, it is the quintessence of knowledge and closely  
17 parallels the meaning of *faṣṣ*. Thus, *ḥikma* is superior to knowledge  
18 and distinct from revelation. It represents a rank even among  
19 prophets, for not every prophet was granted wisdom, as Qūnawī  
20 explains: “Know that wisdom is more specific than knowledge.  
21 Every wise person has knowledge but not every knowledgeable  
22 person is wise. Wisdom is higher than knowledge; therefore God  
23 granted David wisdom in addition to prophecy and scripture.  
24 *Hikma* is decisive speech (*faṣl al-khiṭāb*), which is the wondrous  
25 speech (*i‘jāz fi-l-kalām*) of an intelligent person delivered at the  
26 appropriate time. Sometimes it includes repetition, which is why  
27 the prophet used to repeat things three times. The sage is called  
28 *ḥakīm*.”<sup>63</sup> Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī also emphasizes that *ḥikma* is not  
29 acquired but conferred by divine grace, stating, “The reality of  
30 wisdom is attained from divine knowledge (*ladunnī*). If the soul  
31 has not attained this level, it does not have wisdom because wis-  
32 dom is a divine gift.”<sup>64</sup>

33 As for the specific chapter headings, each chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*  
34 *al-ḥikam* is called a *faṣṣ*: a seal or setting that articulates a divine  
35 principle embodied in a *kalima*, or Word (*Logos*).<sup>65</sup> The *kalima* refers  
36 to the individual prophet, the Perfect Human who is both the *faṣṣ*  
37 and the subject of each chapter. The prophets are called the Words  
38 of God because their realities encompass all levels of existence,  
39 spanning both material and spiritual planes.

40

Ibn al-‘Arabī begins by defining these “words” as entities that emanate from the Breath of the Merciful (*naḥās al-Raḥmān*). He writes: “Know that existent beings are the words of God that do not cease. God said with respect to Jesus, ‘His Word which He has cast into Mary’ (4:171). For this reason, we say that existent beings are the words of God. Words are customarily known through the arrangement of letters in the breath of one who articulates them.”<sup>66</sup> Kāshānī defines *kalima* as “the reality (*ḥaqīqa*), quiddity (*māhiyya*), Permanent Archetype (*‘ayn al-thābita*),<sup>67</sup> or any other individuation of God. The existential words of God, then, are the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon, and all that exists in creation.”<sup>68</sup> Qayṣarī adds that the *kalima* also refers to the spirit “because of its manifesting in the Breath of the Merciful, like the word manifesting in human breath.”<sup>69</sup> In the *Fuṣūṣ*, it specifically designates the Perfect Human who is the subject of each chapter. They are the “complete words” (*al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*) referred to in the Prophet’s prayer: “I seek refuge in God’s complete words.”<sup>70</sup>

The Qur’ān explicitly refers to Jesus as the Word, stating, “The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger of God, His Word that He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him” (4:171), and elsewhere, “O Mary, God gives you the good news of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, distinguished in the world and the hereafter, and one who was brought near to God” (3:45). In *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, Jāmī explains: “What is meant by the word (*kalima*) of each prophet is the path and qualities that God has specified for him and his community. . . . The entities become individuated in the Breath of the Merciful which is the expansion of Being and its extension by passing through its degrees, in the same way that [words] acquire form in human breath through its articulations.”<sup>71</sup>

### The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* Commentarial Tradition

Given the profundity and complexity of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, a vibrant commentarial tradition emerged from among the earliest and closest disciples of Ibn al-‘Arabī.<sup>72</sup> The late bibliographer of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s works Osman Yahya (1919 to 1997) lists 195 commentaries produced between the seventh and eleventh centuries alone.

1 In addition to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own summary, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, Ṣadr  
 2 al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, the foremost of his students and the greatest  
 3 expositor of his works, was the first to articulate the overarching  
 4 themes of the *Fuṣūṣ* in his *al-Fukūk fī asrār mustanadāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ*  
 5 (Unlocking the mysteries behind the underlying principles of the  
 6 *Fuṣūṣ*). Although not a systematic commentary, this work provides  
 7 an esoteric exposition of the chapter heading of each *faṣṣ*. Qūnawī  
 8 regarded the *Fuṣūṣ* as the most important of his master’s writings  
 9 and offered the following description.

10

11 The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is among the most precious distillations  
 12 (*mukhtaṣarāt*) of the writings of our master, the perfect  
 13 imam, the exemplar of the perfected, the guide of the  
 14 community, the leader of the leaders, and the reviver of  
 15 truth and religion: Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī  
 16 b. al-‘Arabī al-Ṭā’ī. May God be pleased with him and  
 17 grant him contentment through it. It is among the final  
 18 seals of his writings and one of the last disclosures to  
 19 descend (*tanazzulāt*) from the Muḥammadan station and  
 20 wellspring of the Essence and comprehensive Singularity.  
 21 It thus comprises the quintessence of our Prophet’s tast-  
 22 ing (*dhawq*)<sup>73</sup>—peace and blessings be upon him—of the  
 23 knowledge of God, and alludes to the source of tasting  
 24 of the great saints (*awliyā’*) and prophets mentioned  
 25 therein, guiding every insightful, aware person to the  
 26 quintessence (*khilāṣa*) of their tasting, the outcome of  
 27 their aspirations (*himam*) and longings (*ashwāq*), the sum  
 28 of their attainments, and the seal of their perfections.  
 29 It is like a stamp signifying what each one’s station of  
 30 perfection comprises, drawing attention to the principle  
 31 (*aṣl*) they embody and become manifest through them.  
 32 Undoubtedly, an awareness of the mysteries of a book  
 33 of this stature whose source of knowledge is this [Pro-  
 34 phetic] origin, depends upon realizing (*al-taḥaqquq*) that  
 35 each inherits from one who has tasted all of that [i.e.,  
 36 the Prophet], having it opened for him, unveiled for  
 37 him, and sent to him.<sup>74</sup>

38

39 Qūnawī recited the manuscript of the *Futūḥāt* for one of his earli-  
 40 est students, ‘Affīf al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d. 690/1291), who had also

studied directly with Ibn al-‘Arabī and was the first to write a commentary on the whole text of the *Fuṣūṣ*. Tilmisānī later became Qūnawī’s closest companion after the master’s death.

Qūnawī’s circle also included Sa‘īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 699/1300),<sup>75</sup> who attended Qūnawī’s lectures on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poem *Tā’iyyah*, also known as *Naẓm al-sulūk* (Poem of the way), and went on to write one of the most influential commentaries on the poem. Farghānī first wrote his commentary *Mashāriq al-darārī* (The rising of radiant stars) in Persian, for which Qūnawī himself wrote a foreword. He later reworked this text into Arabic under the title *Muntahā-l-madārik* (The furthest perceptions). Remarking on its prolegomenon (*muqaddima*), Jāmī observes, “No one has been able to explain the knowledge of reality in a more systematic way.”<sup>76</sup>

Jāmī’s *Sharḥ-i ba‘dī az abyāt-i qaṣīda-yi tā’iyya-yi fāriḍiyya* (An explanation of a few verses of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poem in *tā’*) is a commentary on select verses from Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s renowned mystical ode, and his *Lawāmi‘* (Sparks) serves as a commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Khamriyya* (Wine ode). Among Qūnawī’s students was also Persian poet Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Iraqī, author of *Lama‘āt* (Flashes), a masterpiece of Persian Sufi literature inspired by Qūnawī’s lectures on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and the subject of Jāmī’s commentary *Ashī‘at al-lama‘āt* (Rays of the *Flashes*).<sup>77</sup>

Mu‘ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. 700/1300), the most influential of Qūnawī’s students, authored one of the most extensive and philosophically rich commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ*. A close disciple of Qūnawī for ten years, Jandī later traveled to Baghdad following his teacher’s death and assumed his role as spiritual successor. Jandī’s commentary is marked by intricate philosophical analysis, emphasizing the metaphysical implications of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s teachings while giving relatively little attention to the literal meanings of the text. According to Jāmī, all subsequent commentaries ultimately draw upon Jandī’s foundational work.<sup>78</sup> Jandī gives an account of how the meanings of the *Fuṣūṣ* were unveiled for him.

Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn—may God sanctify his secret—elucidated for me the opening (*khuṭba*) of the *Fuṣūṣ*, and while doing so, signs of an arrival from the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) appeared upon him, the effects of which pervaded me both inwardly and outwardly. . . . At that moment he exercised a mysterious influence within me, by virtue of

1 his agency (*taṣarruf*),<sup>79</sup> God granted me an immediate and  
 2 comprehensive understanding of the entire book, solely  
 3 through his elucidation of the *khuṭba*. Realizing what  
 4 had occurred, the Shaykh told me that he too had once  
 5 asked his master, the author of the *Fuṣūṣ*—may God be  
 6 pleased with him—to disclose its mysteries. As he began  
 7 to elucidate the *khuṭba*, he exerted a wondrous influence  
 8 upon him, and by virtue of his agency, he came to grasp  
 9 all that the book contained.<sup>80</sup>

10  
 11 Jandī's student, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 730/1330) was  
 12 one of the most eminent and prolific figures in the school of Ibn  
 13 al-ʿArabī and the teacher of Dawūd al-Qayṣarī. His commentary on  
 14 the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, composed several decades after Jandī's, draws  
 15 heavily on the works of both Jandī and Qūnawī yet presents a  
 16 much more structured and systematic framework for engaging  
 17 with Ibn al-ʿArabī's ideas. Among Kāshānī's contributions was his  
 18 effort to codify and clarify Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysical terminol-  
 19 ogy. His *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* (Sufi nomenclature)<sup>81</sup> was written for  
 20 the scholars of the traditional and intellectual sciences unfamiliar  
 21 with the technical terms of Sufism.<sup>82</sup> As Morris has noted, Kāshānī  
 22 wrote on Sufism principally for mystically inclined intellectuals  
 23 and scholars trained in the Avicennan philosophical tradition. By  
 24 adopting a philosophical approach, Kāshānī made his dictionary  
 25 an intellectual commentary on Sufi vocabulary for non-Sufis.<sup>83</sup>  
 26 Another important lexicon attributed to Kāshānī is *Laṭāʾif al-iʿlām*  
 27 *fi ishārāt ahl al-ilhām* (Subtleties of nomenclature in the allusions  
 28 of the people of inspiration).<sup>84</sup> Following in Kāshānī's footsteps,  
 29 ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) composed *Kitāb*  
 30 *al-taʾrīfāt* (The book of definitions), which became one of the most  
 31 influential works of its kind. In addition to his work on terminol-  
 32 ogy, Kāshānī authored an important Sufi exegesis of the Qurʾān  
 33 entitled *al-Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, published under the title *Tafsīr Ibn*  
 34 *al-ʿArabī*, though it is now widely attributed to Kāshānī himself.

35 Kāshānī's student Dawūd al-Qayṣarī authored one of the  
 36 most popular and accessible commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.  
 37 The title of this work is *Maṭlaʿ khuṣūṣ al-kilam fi sharḥ maʿānī Fuṣūṣ*  
 38 *al-ḥikam* (The emergence of select discourse upon the meanings of  
 39 the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*).<sup>85</sup> Qayṣarī's commentary synthesizes the views  
 40

of his predecessors, tracing a direct lineage back to Ibn al-‘Arabī 1  
 through Kāshānī, Jandī, and Qūnawī. As Chittick observes, Qayṣarī’s 2  
 commentary appears to have been the most influential in the east- 3  
 ern lands of Islam from the fourteenth century onward.<sup>86</sup> The late 4  
 Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (d. 1426/2005) similarly notes, “We have 5  
 compared Qayṣarī’s commentary with those of other commenta- 6  
 tors and found Qayṣarī’s to be the best in many respects, even if 7  
 Kāshānī’s is more profound.”<sup>87</sup> Qayṣarī’s work adheres closely to 8  
 the structure of the *Fuṣūṣ*, explaining each phrase philologically 9  
 and philosophically. 10

Qayṣarī composed an exquisite prolegomenon (*Muqaddima*) 11  
 to his *Sharḥ Fūṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which Āshtiyānī regarded as the finest 12  
 of his writings. The *Muqaddima* is often treated as an independent 13  
 work in its own right and has thus become the focus of careful 14  
 and sustained study. If the *Futūḥāt* encapsulates the entirety of Ibn 15  
 al-‘Arabī’s metaphysical system, distilled in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 16  
 then Qayṣarī’s *Muqaddima* may be read not merely as a précis of 17  
 the *Fuṣūṣ* but also as a comprehensive exposition of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s 18  
 doctrine as a whole. 19

In the opening of the *Muqaddima*, Qayṣarī recounts his own 20  
 spiritual reception of the *Fuṣūṣ* from his teacher, ‘Abd al-Razzāq 21  
 al-Kāshānī. 22

God granted me an understanding of meanings imbued 24  
 with brilliant luminosity and inspired within me signifi- 25  
 cances rich in lofty mysteries. He revealed to me, within 26  
 my innermost secret, a bearer of good tidings who would 27  
 lead me to my gnosis of this book. Among my compan- 28  
 ions, I was singled out to have received knowledge and 29  
 to acquire meanings without prior reflection or learning. 30  
 This was assistance from God, the Generous, and a grace 31  
 from the Merciful Lord, who affirms by His support 32  
 whomever He wills among His servants, forging success 33  
 in the mystery of their origin and return.<sup>88</sup> 34

This rich tradition of interpretation continued to evolve across 36  
 diverse intellectual and geographical contexts. Within the Shī‘ī tra- 37  
 dition, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1385) composed one of the 38  
 most extensive commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, entitled *Naṣṣ* 39  
 40

1 *al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (The definitive text commenting  
 2 on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*). In the broader Shīʿī intellectual milieu, the  
 3 Illuminationist interpreter of Peripatetic philosophy Ṣāʿin al-Dīn  
 4 Ibn Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 830/1427) also authored a commentary on  
 5 the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, in which he synthesized insights from various  
 6 philosophical traditions, including Avicennan, Illuminationist, and  
 7 Sufi metaphysics.

8 Jāmī also authored a full-length Arabic commentary on the  
 9 *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which was his final prose work, completed in  
 10 896/1491, some two years before his death. In the prologue, he notes  
 11 that he was never able to find a master fully capable of explaining  
 12 the complexities of the text.<sup>89</sup> Yet, as Algar observes, “Although  
 13 dependent on those predecessors to a considerable degree, this  
 14 late work of Jāmī succeeded in establishing itself among the most  
 15 authoritative commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.”<sup>90</sup> The tradition  
 16 of commentary did not end with Jāmī. The *Fuṣūṣ* continued to  
 17 inspire later Sufi scholars, including ʿAbd al-Ghanī Nābulusī (d.  
 18 1143/1731),<sup>91</sup> the eminent Sufi saint of Ottoman Syria, who authored  
 19 *Jawāhir al-nuṣūṣ fī ḥall kalimāt al-Fuṣūṣ* (Precious texts in resolving  
 20 the words of the *Fuṣūṣ*).

### 23 Ibn al-ʿArabī’s *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*

25 Because of the importance of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Ibn al-ʿArabī  
 26 wrote a ten-page abridgment, entitled *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (Inscription  
 27 of the *Fuṣūṣ*), on which the present work, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ*  
 28 *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (Selected texts commenting on Inscription of the  
 29 *Fuṣūṣ*), is a commentary. Osman Yahya notes that there are ten  
 30 known commentaries on the *Naqsh*, one of which is by Qūnawī;  
 31 however, the most famous is Jāmī’s *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, preserved in at  
 32 least seventy-five manuscripts.<sup>92</sup> Chittick observes, “*Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*  
 33 was published in the *Rasāʾil* of Ibn ʿArabī in Hyderabad-Deccan,  
 34 1361/1948, but I have followed the far better text which has been  
 35 established through a critical edition of Jāmī’s *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* based  
 36 on six manuscripts (five of which were written during Jāmī’s  
 37 lifetime).”<sup>93</sup>

38 In the terminology of Sufism, *naqsh* refers to an inscription,  
 39 engraving, or embellishment, like the engraving on a signet ring. It  
 40

relates to two other concepts: the throne (‘*arsh*) and the ringstone (*faṣṣ*), both of which derive their significance through engraving and inscriptions. The throne’s beauty lies in its adorned engraving, while the ring’s authority rests upon its inscription and the seal it bears. If the throne corresponds to the human heart, according to the hadith, “The heart of the believer is the Throne of the Merciful,”<sup>94</sup> then its adornment is the knowledge of God and the reflection of divine attributes. Similarly, that which gives authority and meaning to the *faṣṣ* is its inscription, which signifies its spirit and mystery (*sirr*).

The relationship between the *Naqsh* and the *Fuṣūṣ* may be understood through these very symbols: as engraving is to adornment, the seal is to the ring, or the mirror is to the face it reflects. The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* offers a detailed articulation of the divine principles embodied in each prophet, while *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* is its very heart and inner mystery. If the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* represents the summation of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought, then the *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* is its quintessence.

The *Naqsh* can also be seen as a mirror of the *Fuṣūṣ* in the way that the Perfect Human is the mirror of God, or that divinity is reflected in the human heart. Each prophet, according to Ibn al-‘Arabī, is a word in the book of existence, mirroring a universal divine principle, and each chapter is “The *ḥikma* of *x* in the *kalīma* of *y*.” It was therefore necessary for Ibn al-‘Arabī to write the *Naqsh*, for, as he admits, “the vision a thing has of itself, through itself, is not the same as the vision it has of itself through something else that serves as a mirror.”<sup>95</sup> In this sense, Ibn al-‘Arabī is both the author of the *Naqsh* and, through it, the commentator of the *Fuṣūṣ*. The *Naqsh* is thus the inscription of divine wisdom mirrored in the author’s own heart.

Jāmi’s Commentary: *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*

Jāmi’s first prose work explicating Ibn al-‘Arabī’s doctrines was *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, completed in 863/1459, when he was forty-six years old. Composed in clear and elegant style punctuated with verse, it is an Arabic-Persian commentary on Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*. Though ostensibly a commentary

1 on the *Naqsh*, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* draws extensively from the earliest  
 2 commentaries on *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Through his careful selection  
 3 and arrangement of key passages, Jāmī uses these earlier sources  
 4 to illuminate the *Naqsh*. Designed as a pedagogical text, *Naqd*  
 5 *al-nuṣūṣ* contrasts with his more expansive *Sharḥ al-Jāmī ‘alā Fuṣūṣ*  
 6 *al-ḥikam*, a full-length commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* and his final  
 7 major Sufi work, composed approximately two years before his  
 8 death.

9 While the study of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought has traditionally  
 10 focused on *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* in conjunction with a select number of  
 11 commentaries, the *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* has remained largely overlooked  
 12 as a key source for unlocking the mysteries of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.  
 13 Beyond its intrinsic value as a detailed discussion of one of Ibn  
 14 al-‘Arabī’s central works, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* is a compendium of the  
 15 insights drawn from the major figures of his school. It represents  
 16 Jāmī’s first significant engagement with Sufi metaphysics and forms  
 17 the foundation for his seven later prose works on the subject. As  
 18 such, it is an indispensable study for any comprehensive scholar-  
 19 ship on Jāmī’s intellectual and spiritual legacy.

20 Algar captures the significance of *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* in a particu-  
 21 larly insightful passage.

22  
 23 This work is essentially an anthology of comments and  
 24 clarifications made by his illustrious predecessors in the  
 25 study of Ibn ‘Arabī, but significant too, is Jāmī’s inclusion  
 26 of citations from poets and other not directly linked to  
 27 Ibn ‘Arabī and his school: Sanā’ī, ‘Attar, Jalāl al-Dīn  
 28 Rūmī, and Sultan Valad. Jāmī frequently took delight  
 29 in intermingling poetry with prose in his writings, his  
 30 purpose on this occasion may have been implicitly to  
 31 present Ibn ‘Arabī as a culminating figure in the Sufi  
 32 tradition, one who integrated into a single complex whole  
 33 the fragmented insights of those who had preceded  
 34 him . . . *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* may be described as simultane-  
 35 ously autodidactic and pedagogical in nature: first Jāmī  
 36 conveniently assembled in one volume material he had  
 37 found useful in understanding the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, and  
 38 then he made it available to others aspiring to a fuller  
 39 comprehension of that challenging text.<sup>96</sup>

40

Situating himself within the venerable lineage of *Fuṣūṣ* commentators, Jāmī likens *Naqḍ al-nuṣūṣ* to the patched cloak of the Sufis, implicitly signaling his place among the spiritual inheritors emblematic of the Sufi path.

These are a few words gleaned from the texts of the spiritual elite which comment upon the meaning of the *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, [in] which the perfect Shaykh Ibn al-‘Arabī . . . summarized and abridged the principles and essential elements of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, the seal of his writings. . . . [The present work] is like the patchwork cloak of the Sufis, each patch acquired from a different place and sewn to the others with the thread of compatibility and the tie of harmony. . . . Some (of these texts) are the blessed words of the magnanimous Shaykh himself, and some are the sacred sciences expounded by his followers, among the great Masters: such as . . . Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Qūnawī and his disciples and beneficiaries, including the perfect gnostic, Mu‘ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī, who is the first commentator of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, and Shaykh Sa‘d al-Dīn Sa‘īd al-Farghānī, who is the commentator of the Poem of the Way of Ibn al-Fāriḍ; and others who are the people of tasting and experience, and those of unveiling and gnosis, especially the commentators of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.<sup>97</sup>

Piecing together the writings of several key figures from Ibn al-‘Arabī’s school, Chittick, in his critical edition, enumerates five hundred quotations, covering about 65 percent of the work; the work as a whole is 65 percent Arabic and 35 percent Persian. This includes passages from Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī’s *al-Fukūk* and *I‘jāz al-bayān*; ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī’s *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī’s *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥamza Fanārī’s (d. 834/1431) *Miftāḥ al-ghayb*; twenty-one pages from Mu‘ayyid al-Dīn Jandī’s *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; four pages from Sa‘d al-Dīn Farghānī’s *Commentary on Nazm al-Sulūk of Ibn Farid*; five pages from the Arabic version of the same; one page from *Manāḥij al-‘ibād ila-l ma‘ād*; ‘Izz al-Dīn Kāshānī’s *Miṣbāḥ al-hidāya* (an adaptation of Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī’s *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif*);

1 and Abu Hāmid Muḥammad Isfahānī's *Qawā'id al-tawḥīd*, which  
 2 was later commented on by Ibn Turka as *Tamḥīd al-qawā'id*. Jāmī  
 3 also quotes several Persian poets including Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Farīd  
 4 al-Dīn 'Attār, Maḥmūd Shabistarī, and Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī.<sup>98</sup>

5 In his introduction to the *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, Jāmī addresses  
 6 essential metaphysical topics such as existence and its degrees,  
 7 the first and second individuations (*ta'ayyunāt*), the Permanent  
 8 Archetypes, the world of spirits, the Imaginal World, the world  
 9 of bodies, the Perfect Human, and the doctrine of the oneness of  
 10 Being. As expected, he quotes extensively from the earliest masters,  
 11 frequently translating selections into Persian.

12 The main body of the work follows the structure of *Naqsh*  
 13 *al-Fuṣūṣ*, beginning with Adam and concluding with Muḥammad.  
 14 Since much of the material covered in Jāmī's prolegomena parallels  
 15 that found in Qayṣarī's *Muqaddima*, which I have translated as *The*  
 16 *Horizons of Being: The Metaphysics of Ibn al-'Arabī in the Muqaddimat*  
 17 *al-Qayṣarī*, I have not included a translation of Jāmī's introduction  
 18 here, as it covers similar ground.

19

20

## 21 The Universal Degrees of Being and the Perfect Human

22

23 Turning to the major themes in Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics, we  
 24 encounter two intricately interwoven concepts that permeate his  
 25 writings: divinity and the human being. Jāmī's commentary, like  
 26 Qayṣarī's *Muqaddima*, examines Being and its manifestations, unity  
 27 within multiplicity, the universal worlds, and the doctrine of the  
 28 oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*).

29 With respect to divinity, it examines divine unity, the divine  
 30 names and their classifications, the positive and privative attri-  
 31 butes, the names of Beauty and Majesty, the Mothers of the Names,  
 32 the Keys of the Unseen and the names of the Essence, Attributes,  
 33 and Acts. It also addresses the engendering of the names, both  
 34 universal and particular, along with their governance and rela-  
 35 tionship to creation.

36 According to Ibn al-'Arabī, there are five universal planes of  
 37 existence known as the Five Divine Presences (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyya*  
 38 *al-khams*), a doctrine that Qūnawī's student Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī  
 39 (d. ca. 699/1300) skillfully outlines as follows:

40

There is nothing in existence except a single Reality (*‘ayn wāḥida*),<sup>99</sup> which is the very Identity (*‘ayn*) and Essence (*ḥaqīqa*) of the Absolute Real (*al-Ḥaqq al-muṭlaq*).<sup>100</sup> He alone is the witnessed Being—there is no other. Yet this single Reality and singular Source (*‘ayn al-aḥadiyya*) has infinite degrees of manifestation through individuation (*ta‘ayyun*) and particularization (*tashakhkhuṣ*).<sup>101</sup> However, the universals of these degrees are limited to five: two are ascribed to God Almighty, and three to engendered existence (*kawn*),<sup>102</sup> and the sixth encompasses them all (*jāmi‘ baynahā*).

This is because these degrees, given that they are manifestations (*zuhūr*) and theophanies (*majāli*),<sup>103</sup> must be either a theophany in which what is revealed appears to God alone, and not to the entities of engendered existence (*kawn*), or one in which what appears is manifest to both God and those entities. The first is called the degree of the Unseen, because every engendered thing is hidden within it from itself, and from others like it. There is no manifestation of anything within it except to God Almighty.

The absence of manifestation for things occurs in one of two ways: the first is through the total absence of their Archetypes (*a‘yān*), as in the state when “God was, and nothing was with Him.” In this case, their manifestation is negated both in knowledge (*‘ilm*) and actuality (*wujūdān*)<sup>104</sup> due to the complete nonexistence of their Archetype. This theophany corresponds to the first individuation and the first degree of the Unseen.

The second way is through the absence of the attribute of manifestation from the Archetypes, even though they are themselves realized, distinct, and permanent within the eternal divine knowledge, manifest to their Knower, though not to themselves or their likes. This is akin to the fixed images that exist in our minds. This theophany or manifestation corresponds to the second individuation, the world of meanings (*‘ālam al-ma‘ānī*), and the second degree. It too is encompassed by the name the Unseen (*al-ghayb*), for the reasons mentioned above.

1           As for the theophany in which what appears is also  
 2           manifest to the entities of engendered things, both in  
 3           knowledge and actuality, it falls into three types. The first  
 4           is a manifestation and theophany in which what appears  
 5           is manifest to entities that are simple in essence; this is  
 6           called the degree of the spirits (*arwāḥ*). The second is a  
 7           manifestation and theophany in which what appears is  
 8           manifest for compound entities. These compound entities  
 9           are either subtle, such that they do not admit to separation,  
 10          perforation, or cohesion. Their theophany and locus  
 11          of manifestation is called the degree of the Imagination  
 12          (*khayāl*). Or they are dense in relation to those subtle  
 13          entities, such that they do admit of division, separation,  
 14          perforation, and cohesion. Their theophany and locus of  
 15          manifestation is called the degree of the senses (*ḥiss*), the  
 16          visible world, and the world of bodies.

17          The true, complete human encompasses all of these.  
 18          We have now summarized the division of the universal  
 19          degrees, with God's help.<sup>105</sup>

21          Since the subject of this book revolves around the spiritual  
 22          principle embodied by twenty-seven prophets mentioned in scrip-  
 23          tural sources, it is worthwhile to examine Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine of  
 24          the human being, particularly as it pertains to the Perfect Human  
 25          (*al-insān al-kāmil*). According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Perfect Human  
 26          represents the summit of human potential and the pinnacle of  
 27          divine realization. The Perfect Human is the fullest manifestation  
 28          of divine attributes in existence, the mirror of both God and the  
 29          cosmos, the comprehensive divine plane, and the very essence  
 30          of creation. The Perfect Human is the intermediary between God  
 31          and creation, serving as a conduit through which divine grace and  
 32          guidance flow into the world and facilitating the spiritual journeys  
 33          of others, guiding them toward their own realization.

34          In Qur'ānic terms, it is called vicegerency, where God says,  
 35          "I am going to place a vicegerent on the earth" (2:30). Summariz-  
 36          ing this doctrine in the opening paragraph of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*,  
 37          Ibn al-ʿArabī states that the human being is necessary for God's  
 38          perfect self-disclosure: "God wished to see the identities (*a'yān*)  
 39          of His Beautiful Names, which are infinite, or, if you will, to see  
 40

Himself in a comprehensive being (*kawn jāmi‘*) who embraces the 1  
 divine order so that His mystery would be revealed to Himself. 2  
 This is because the vision a thing has of itself is not the same as 3  
 the vision it has through something else that acts like a mirror.”<sup>106</sup> 4

Accordingly, God created a being that would perfectly and 5  
 comprehensively reflect divinity. Ibn al-‘Arabī writes: “No one 6  
 was entitled to be the vicegerent except the Perfect Human, for 7  
 God created his outward form from all the realities and forms of 8  
 the world, and his inward form on the model of His own form. 9  
 Nothing in the world possesses the comprehensiveness that the 10  
 vicegerent possesses. In fact, he obtained (his vicegerency) only 11  
 because of his comprehensiveness.”<sup>107</sup> 12

Thus, the prophet who is the subject of every *faṣṣ* is the 13  
 Perfect Human of his time, the divine vicegerent and the com- 14  
 prehensive isthmus between God and creation. Qūnawī explains 15  
 that this human comprehensiveness is a reflection of the divine 16  
 name Allah, which encompasses all the divine names, “Just as 17  
 the divine Presence, referred to by the name Allah, contains all 18  
 the specific attributes, their particular properties, and their inter- 19  
 relations, such that there is no intermediary between the Essence 20  
 and the attributes, likewise, from the perspective of the human 21  
 reality and station, there is no intermediary between the human 22  
 and God. The human reality constitutes the comprehensive isthmus 23  
 (*al-barzakhīyya al-jāmi‘a*) between the properties of necessity and 24  
 those of possibility, for it encompasses both.”<sup>108</sup> 25

Although the Perfect Human encompasses the totality of the 26  
 divine names, their expression in each prophet varies according 27  
 to his distinctive reality. This applies more broadly to all human 28  
 beings, for each person bears the divine spirit, yet some attain 29  
 felicity, while others become wretched. Adam’s vicegerency, which 30  
 is introduced in the first chapter is emblematic of all subsequent 31  
 vicegerencies and establishes the foundation for the entire book. 32  
 The doctrine of the Perfect Human is elaborated in detail in that 33  
 chapter. 34

While the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* focuses on individual prophets drawn 35  
 from traditional sources, the Perfect Human refers more generally 36  
 to the fully realized human being and not limited to the prophets 37  
 alone. Some Sufis have articulated three degrees of this realization: 38  
 one who possesses intellect (*dhū-l-‘aql*) sees creation outwardly 39  
 40

1 and God inwardly, such that God becomes the mirror of creation,  
 2 due to the mirror being concealed by the image within it, just as  
 3 the Absolute is veiled by the limited. One who possesses vision  
 4 (*dhū-l-‘ayn*) sees God outwardly and creation inwardly, such that  
 5 creation becomes the mirror of God, because God is manifest  
 6 to him, while creation is hidden within Him, just as the mirror  
 7 is concealed by the image. One who possess both intellect and  
 8 vision (*dhū-l-‘aql wa-l-‘ayn*) sees God in creation and creation in  
 9 God, without being veiled by one from the other. Rather, he sees  
 10 the one existence as God from one perspective and creation from  
 11 another. Multiplicity does not veil him from seeing the one and  
 12 only, singular Face (*wajh al-wāḥid al-aḥad*), nor does it encroach  
 13 upon his vision of the singularity of the Essence (*aḥadiyat al-dhāt*)  
 14 whose multiplicity is disclosed (*al-mutajaliyya*) through theophany  
 15 in its various loci (*majāli*).<sup>109</sup>

16 Qaysarī’s preamble to the *Muqaddima* offers perhaps the most  
 17 concise and illuminating treatment of the two Akbarian themes  
 18 mentioned earlier: divinity and the human being.

19  
 20 All praise be to God, who individuated the Archetypes  
 21 (*a‘yān*) through the eternal, Holiest Emanation, and  
 22 determined and completed them with His knowledge  
 23 in His unseen Essence. He blessed and graced them by  
 24 sprinkling upon them the light of theophany. He mani-  
 25 fested them through the keys of the treasuries of bounty  
 26 and generosity from the depths of the Unseen and the  
 27 abode of non-being. He bestowed generously to each  
 28 according to its receptivity, engendering the possible  
 29 entities, decreeing their manifestation in the raiment of  
 30 the divine names, arranging them through His wisdom,  
 31 and perfecting and establishing them. So, glory be to  
 32 Him who revealed His Essence to Himself. Then, He  
 33 manifested Adam and appointed him vicegerent over the  
 34 manifestations of His names, described as the world. He  
 35 summarized and concealed in him every reality so that  
 36 he would be the form of His comprehensive name, the  
 37 Mighty and Magnanimous, and the bearer of mysteries of  
 38 the Omniscient, the All-knowing, so He reveals [Himself]  
 39 through him and thus becomes known.  
 40

Blessings upon him who is the Supreme Name, 1  
 who speaks from his station, "I am the master of the 2  
 children of Adam,"<sup>110</sup> and has been sent with the message 3  
 to the best of nations; and [blessings] upon his progeny 4  
 and his chosen companions among both the Arab and 5  
 the non-Arab, those who lifted the curtains of darkness 6  
 through their lights; and upon their inheritors among the 7  
 perfected saints, the wayfarers on the clear path, who are 8  
 aware of the Truth by way of mysteries and wisdom.<sup>111</sup> 9

### Navigating the Present Work 12

This book comprises twenty-seven chapters, each corresponding 14  
 to a prophetic figure featured in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Each chapter 15  
 begins with a summary and analysis of the principal themes, 16  
 followed by a translation of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, and 17  
 then an annotated translation of Jāmī’s commentary, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*. 18  
*Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* is an extremely dense text in which Ibn al-‘Arabī 19  
 broaches only a few key ideas related to each *faṣṣ*. Jāmī then 20  
 expands upon these concepts, drawing heavily from the earliest 21  
 commentators, most notably Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī. However, 22  
 since *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* represents the inaugural commentary upon 23  
 the *Fuṣūṣ* by Ibn al-‘Arabī himself, Jāmī’s *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* may be 24  
 regarded not only as a commentary on the *Naqsh* but as a super- 25  
 commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*. 26

The book’s format is likewise intended to evoke the reading 27  
 culture of classical Islamic scholarship, particularly as it developed 28  
 within the commentarial tradition surrounding *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. 29  
 The main text (*matn*), typically composed in a dense and elliptical 30  
 style laden with technical terms, was traditionally studied with 31  
 the author or a qualified master. Students would annotate the 32  
 margins with glosses, which often formed the basis for their own 33  
 commentaries or supercommentaries. In our case, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* 34  
 functions as the *matn*, and Jāmī’s *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* serves as the 35  
 commentary. Yet when *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* is viewed as an anthology 36  
 of insights drawn from earlier authorities, it becomes clear that 37  
 Jāmī is not only elucidating the thought of Ibn al-‘Arabī but also 38  
 that of Qūnawī and his intellectual heirs. Following Ibn al-‘Arabī, 39

40

1 Qūnawī stands as the most authoritative figure in this school,  
 2 having studied directly with the master. The tradition continued  
 3 with his student Jandī, then Jandī's student Kāshānī, and subse-  
 4 quently his student Qayṣarī.

5 The present work is thus more than a translation; it is also an  
 6 exposition of the material, functioning as a third (or even fourth)  
 7 level of commentary, shaped through my study with my teacher,  
 8 Dr. Akram Almajid. I have endeavored to preserve these distinct  
 9 layers of the text, encouraging the reader to discern the voices of the  
 10 various authors and to appreciate the depth of this living tradition.

11

12

13

### About the Translation and Glosses

14

15 For the translations of both the *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* and the *Naqd*  
 16 *al-nuṣūṣ*, I rely on William C. Chittick's critical edition, originally  
 17 published in Tehran in 1977 by the Iranian Institute of Philosophy;  
 18 all references here are to the 2001 reprint. According to Chittick,  
 19 his edition was based on six manuscripts, five of which were cop-  
 20 ied during Jāmī's lifetime.<sup>112</sup> In terms of translated terminology, I  
 21 have maintained consistency with the choices made in my edition  
 22 of the *Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī*. Many passages already translated in  
 23 my book *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction to the School of Ibn*  
 24 *al-ʿArabī* are incorporated into the glosses. As this book represents  
 25 my third installment in the study of Ibn al-ʿArabī, I have previously  
 26 addressed many of the central challenges involved in translating  
 27 this genre of literature. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that  
 28 any translation remains an approximation to the meanings conveyed  
 29 in the original language. Arabic and Persian contain subtleties that  
 30 resist full capture in translation, no matter how nuanced and rich  
 31 the target language. Still, because language is ultimately a vehicle  
 32 for meaning, it is indeed possible to attain the intended meanings  
 33 despite the inherent limitations of expression. Moreover, given that  
 34 *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is rooted in spiritual experience, it often describes  
 35 realities in a language appropriate to their origin. For example,  
 36 when addressing divine degrees, we encounter terms such as *tajallī*  
 37 (theophany) or *fayḍ* (emanation). When discussing the spirit and  
 38 heart, we come across terms such as *ilhām* (inspiration) and *maʿrifa*  
 39 (gnosis). Ultimately, these concepts elude complete comprehension  
 40

by the intellect alone and must be instead realized through unveiling 1  
 (*kashf*) or “tasted” through direct experience (*dhawq*). 2

Two particularly valuable works have been Chittick’s partial 3  
 translation of the *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, which covers about 15 percent of 4  
 the text, and his “Chapter Headings,” which offers a summary of 5  
 the views of the earliest commentators, Qūnawī, Jandī, Kāshānī, 6  
 and Qayṣarī.<sup>113</sup> My glosses are informed first by the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 7  
 followed by the commentaries. The reader will find that I draw 8  
 extensively from the Qayṣarī’s *Muqaddima* and Qūnawī’s *Fukūk*, 9  
 both of which are frequently cited by Jāmī in *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*. I 10  
 also benefited greatly from two major English translations, Caner 11  
 Dagli’s *The Ringstones of Wisdom* and R. W. J. Austin’s *The Bezels*  
*of Wisdom*.<sup>114</sup> While the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* may be a logical entry point 13  
 for some, the present work is intended to help prepare readers for 14  
 their encounter with the *Fuṣūṣ*. It is also hoped that they will also 15  
 consult the *Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī*, a masterpiece of philosophical 16  
 Sufism and a comprehensive framework for understanding the 17  
 principal doctrines of Ibn al-‘Arabī. As a systematic exposition 18  
 enriched with profound insight, it is, in my view, the key to 19  
 unlocking every other work produced within this school. 20