

**A MEDIAEVAL MYSTICAL GUIDEBOOK FOR THE VOYAGERS  
TOWARDS GOD: NAĞM AD-DĪN AL-KUBRĀ'S *FAWĀ'İH AL-ĞAMĀL  
WA-FAWĀTIH AL-ĞALĀL***

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**1** In a previous article (Iványi 2022) pieces of evidence were collected to prove that al-Kubrā's main objective in the the *Fawā'ih al-ğamāl* was to teach his disciples (*murīdūn*) whom he calls voyagers (*sayyārūn*) the voyage (*sayr*) on the path (*tarīqa*) to God by using simple devices to make them understand the complicated mystical notions and experiences.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, my aim was also to point out the orderliness of al-Kubrā's work against opinions on the contrary.<sup>2</sup> For this purpose I

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<sup>1</sup> The full title is: *Fawā'ih al-ğamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-ğalāl* ("The fragrance of the (divine) Beauty and the commencements of the (divine) Glory"). The edition of Yūsuf Zaydān, 1993, was used, the text of which overlaps with (or possibly was even taken over from) the first edition of Meier 1957. The text of Zaydān's edition, however, is more readable than Meier's and it has many useful explanations of the original text. There are some speculations, that al-Kubrā (died 1221) wrote his work originally in Persian, based on Ḥāğğī Ḥalīfa, *Kašf az-zunūn* II, 1292–1293, where he states that the *Fawātiḥ al-ğamāl* (a third version of the title) is an epistle written in Persian (*risāla fārisiyya*). He even says that it was al-Būnī who mentioned the full title of al-Kubrā's work – which is interesting since al-Būnī (died 1225), who lived in Egypt, died only five years later than al-Kubrā. It shows al-Kubrā's strong links with the Egyptian Ṣūfīs from whom he learned so much in his youth. However, this weak supposition of the original Persian version of the *Fawā'ih* was refuted in Iványi 2022:73. According to some opinions, e.g., DeWeese 1999:121, there are apparent Ṣūfite tendencies in al-Kubrā's works, but in the *Fawā'ih* I did not find any trace of this. See also Molé 1961.

<sup>2</sup> See Meier 1957:65: "Kubrā gibt yedoch keine systematische Darstellung und auch kein zusammenhangendes Bild der Weltanschauung, aus der er die Deutungen bezieht. *So ergibt sich für uns die Aufgabe, das Material in eine Ordnung zu bringen.*" (italics by T.I.). This is accepted without further discussion by Schimmel 1975:254 ff. This view is based on the false presumption that the ideal Ṣūfī handbook is that of al-Quṣayrī's *Risāla*. Corbin 1978:62, in contrast, recognises that al-Kubrā's book is a spiritual journey, but denies its didactic character, which was emphasised in Iványi 2022.

presented the similes and metaphors, the quotations from former Ṣūfī masters and Arab poets, pedagogical references and the author's personal mystical experiences.<sup>3</sup>

This article is intended to continue the presentation of the main characteristics of the *Fawā'ih al-ġamāl*. I assume, as a starting point, that it is basically a guidebook for beginners who naturally become themselves masters after voyaging together with the guidance of al-Kubrā to realise (*taḥqīq*) the dual purpose of acquiring the knowledge of God (*ma'rifa*) and the divine love (*maḥabba*). To reach this goal, an attempt is made to explore the fundamental structure of this mystical guidebook.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Nağm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā

The full name of our author is Aḥmad b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad Abū Ğannāb Nağm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā al-Ḥwārizmī al-Ḥīwaqī. His most important honorary name is Ṣāni' al-Awliyā' (maker of God's friends).<sup>5</sup> His most famous name is al-Kubrā,<sup>6</sup> which became the eponym of his later followers, the Kubrāwīs and the Kubrāwī Ṣūfī path or order (*tarīqa kubrāwiyya*).<sup>7</sup>

He was born in Ḥīva, in the district of Ḥwārizm (Khorezm, today Uzbekistan), about 540/1145, at that time a flourishing region of Central Asia, where he lived most of his life and died heroically in 618/1221 – thus receiving the attributive 'the

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<sup>3</sup> It is to be noted here that Nağm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā does not use the word Ṣūfī in the *Fawā'ih al-ġamāl* for earlier masters or for his disciples, the voyagers towards God. He uses it only once, in connection with the *ḥirqa*, the Ṣūfī cloak, which he calls the *libās aṣ-ṣūfī* (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 242). In my previous article, Iványi 2022 I had recourse to using the term Ṣūfī for the sake of simple reference. In this article, however, this term was avoided since in analysing the work I tried to stick to the vocabulary of the author. I only used the denomination Ṣūfī if it refers to Islamic mysticism in general or another mystical master in particular. al-Kubrā only differentiates between voyagers (*sayyārūn*) and common people (*al-'amma*).

<sup>4</sup> In the last two decades some scholars who made mention of the *Fawā'ih al-ġamāl*, recognised the special character of this work. See Waley 1999:289: "(It) is a kind of *didactic journal* of the author's spiritual experiences, written to inform and warn the Sufi seeker about the states, interior events (*waqā'i'*), and stations of the Path." Knysh 2000:236 is less decided in his definition of this work, but also recognises its *guide-book* character to help the mystical wayfarers. On the contrary, Ernst 1997 follows the footsteps of those who recognise some interesting details of the book, but do not consider it as a unified work. He mentions only the intensive concentration on *dīkr* as the main character of the *Fawā'ih*.

<sup>5</sup> This name also refers to the role which he considered the most important in his life, that is, teaching and guiding his disciples on the mystical path to God's proximity.

<sup>6</sup> According to the medieval sources, as a student his talent for theological disputation earned him the epithet al-Kubrā, an abbreviated form of the Qur'ānic phrase, *aṭ-ṭamma al-kubrā* "the greatest calamity" (Qur'ān 79:34) since he had always defeated his opponents in religious debates. See, e.g., al-Ḥwānsārī, *Rawḍāt* I, 295.

<sup>7</sup> For the *tarīqa kubrāwiyya*, see Gramlich 1965 and 1976, Trimmingham 1973:55–57, and Waley 1997:80–104.

Martyr' (aš-Šahīd) – fighting against the Mongol invaders of Genghis Khan together with his disciples.<sup>8</sup>

After having completed the usual elementary religious education in his homeland, he spent several years in travelling following the course of the *ṭalab al-'ilm* ('the quest for knowledge'), knowledge meaning the Prophetic tradition, *ḥadīth*, which had been his main interest in his early years. However, during his voyages to Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt,<sup>9</sup> he met several Šūfī masters whose teachings greatly impressed him, so after returning home his attention turned to transferring his mystical knowledge to the growing number of his disciples. This activity is reflected in his literary output, in which, in addition to his Qur'ān commentary, mystical teachings dominate.

### 3 The aim of al-Kubrā's book

The author defines the aim of his book when he praises God on the first page for teaching mankind the speech of the birds, that is, to be able to catch the meaning of the divine inspirations, for safeguarding against the calamities of everything outside the divine realm (*al-ġayr*), and for showing the signs of the voyage ('*alāmāt as-sayr*). al-Kubrā evades to call the voyager Šūfī, not because he would oppose the usage of the term, but because he considers this voyage and the following of God's signs as a voyager (*sayyār*) the only natural mode of true life. Even the term generally used for the disciple, 'seeker' (*murīd*), he uses only once at the beginning of his work when he emphasises that God is the one to whom we seek (*al-murād*), while the seeker is only a light from Him (*nūr minhu*).

In a short didactic treatise, al-Kubrā points out the difference between the way on which he starts his disciples and all the other ways of religious activity: There are three types of the path towards God: 1. Through formal religiosity, 2. through religious practice going beyond the prescriptions of Islam, 3. the path of the voyagers towards God who fly by the help of God. This is the path of the clever one among the lovers of God who is voyaging towards Him by way of His attraction (al-Kubrā, *Uṣūl* 15–16).

The structure of the book follows the voyage step by step from the beginning to the self-realisation of the voyager. Therefore the *Fawā'ih al-ġamāl* is not a taxonomically arranged work such as the Šūfī handbook of al-Quṣayrī (*ar-Risāla*)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See al-Ḥwānsārī, *Rawḍāt* I, 297, Trimmingham 1973:56, Waley 1997:81, Lewisohn 2019:25. For a summary of al-Kubrā's life, see Ḥanafī 2003:491–494.

<sup>9</sup> For details, see al-Ḥwānsārī, *Rawḍāt* I, 296, Trimmingham 1973:55 and Waley 1997:81–82.

<sup>10</sup> I mean by the taxonomical arrangement that al-Quṣayrī lists the different mystical states and stations presenting a wide circle of often contradictory sayings and opinions of Šūfī masters of previous ages, completing them sometimes with his own definitions. For a detailed analysis of al-Quṣayrī's *Risāla*, see Hartmann 1914. An even earlier work of similar

and its seemingly disarranged style deceived many scholars who dealt with the interpretation of the *Fawā'ih*<sup>11</sup> and praised the work for some of its innovations, but stated that its material is not organized and needs to be 'remediated', ie, rearranged according to the researcher's opinion.<sup>12</sup> al-Kubrā did not want to make his disciples and followers aware of the different, sometimes contradictory, opinions of the earlier generations of the Ṣūfīs regarding the stations of the mystical voyage. On the contrary, he gives the explanations of earlier mystics only in a very limited number and only if he sees it absolutely necessary. His main aim was practical, with the intention, by teaching to guide, to serve the spiritual education of those who aspire to achieve the realisation of their mystical goal. He followed the most important Ṣūfī instruction: Ṣūfism is not 'ilm (knowledge received from books), but 'amal (mystical practice).<sup>13</sup>

#### 4 The voyage (*sayr*) towards God – structure and stations

##### 4.1 Preparations for the voyage (tamhīd)

The work, naturally, begins with glorifying the omniscient God (*tanā'*), but as is usual in mediaeval Muslim mystical writings, the author has chosen the content of the glorification itself to refer to the objective of the book, that is, the divine guidance during the mystical voyage. The three key words are "teaching" (*ta'līm*), "ensuring" (*ta'mīn*) and "making see" (*tabṣīr*): God has taught us the speech of birds,<sup>14</sup> ensured us against the dangerous calamities of turning to other than God<sup>15</sup> and making see the landmarks of the voyage.<sup>16</sup> These are also important symbols of the mystical voyage.

At the beginning of the voyage the author explains to his disciples their place in connection with God. God is the final goal (*murād*) of the seekers, while the seeker (*murīd*) is the one who receives light from Him.<sup>17</sup> This anticipates at the same time

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arrangement, though much less known than the *Risāla* of al-Quṣayrī (died 1072), is the *Tahdīb* of al-Ḥarkūṣī (died 1016).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Meier 1957, Schimmel 1975 and Corbin 1978.

<sup>12</sup> It was 'committed' by Meier 1957, the result being the disruption of the original intention of the author in his, otherwise excellent and thoroughful, analysis.

<sup>13</sup> Written in the Arabic script this saying contains a paronomasia (*ġinās*).

<sup>14</sup> Qur'ān 27:16. This expression may refer to both the extraordinary knowledge of the prophet Solomon and the famous work of Farīd ud-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Manṭiq at-ṭayr*. See al-Kubrā, *Tafsīr* IV, 328: *ay al-ḥawāṭira l-malā'ikiyyatu wa-r-rūḥāniyya*, that is, the angelic and spiritual thoughts.

<sup>15</sup> Qur'ān 2:173. Cf. al-Kubrā, *Tafsīr* I, 248.

<sup>16</sup> Qur'ān 16:15, 16 *wa-alqā fī l-arḍ ... 'alāmātin wa-bi-n-naġmi hum yahtadūna*.

<sup>17</sup> The interpretation of these two terms reflects a totally new approach by al-Kubrā. The traditional interpretations are found in the *Risāla* of al-Quṣayrī: "When someone asked al-Junayd about the *murīd* and the *murād*, he answered: 'The *murīd* is governed by religious

the fundamental teaching of the *Fawā'ih* about the significance of the lights that accompany the voyager throughout his path. Light leads, while darkness (*zalām*) misleads, causing vices. “But God did not do wrong (*mā zalama*) to anyone”, al-Kubrā says, making use of the twofold meaning of the word. On the contrary, God “gave him hearing and sights, and heart”.<sup>18</sup> This would fill the prospective seeker, whom the author addresses as ‘my dear’ (*ḥabībī*),<sup>19</sup> with hope and good expectations. The prospective seekers are now blind and waiting for God to remove the cover from their eyes. It will happen only during their spiritual mystical voyage, since “the cover is not external from them, but it is a part of them. It darkens their existence” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 122).

al-Kubrā gives a sincere advice to the disciple who begins the voyage: “Close your eyes and see what you see, and if you said: I do not see anything – it is your mistake and if you want to find (God), behold him in front of you, even if your eyes are closed” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 122). At the same time, he considers it important that his disciples, who may still have been in their youth, can have the agreement of their parents in joining his circle of mystical practice.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4.2 Pious endeavours needed at the start of the voyage on the path<sup>21</sup>

The master points out to the disciple the ways of striving for the repulsion of everything that is ‘other’ (*ḡayr*), rather than God. This means ‘killing the (individual) existence, the lower soul (*nafs*) and the devil (living in him)’.<sup>22</sup> The ways of striving are as follows: (i) Continuous decrease in eating. (ii) Leaving his own choice of action, that is, his free will (*iḥtiyār*) and its annihilation, submitting himself to the divine choice with the direction of a reliable Ṣayḥ. (iii) Following al-Ḡunayd’s method which has eight conditions: constant ablution, fasting, silence, seclusion (*ḥalwa*), and remembrance (*dīkr*), attachment of the heart to the Ṣayḥ. making use of knowledge of the events that occurred to him, refusing the despicable thoughts and

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science (*ilm*), whereas the *murād* stays under God’s protection – praise be to Him’. Therefore, the *murād* walks, while the *murād* flies” (al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla*, English tr. by Knysh, 217). See also al-Kalābādī, *Ta’arruf* 107, who explains these two terms similarly to al-Quṣayrī.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Qur’ān 46:26, with a small alteration that the pronoun, instead of the plural, is in the singular.

<sup>19</sup> This intimate address attracted the attention of the writer of a modern Ṣūfī encyclopaedia, who otherwise did not remark the special didactic character of the *Fawā'ih*. See Ḥanafī 2003:493.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. al-Kubrā, *Ādāb* 73: “The first condition of this voyage is the permission of the parents.” It also means that the voyage is used here in two senses: the voyage in the heart of the seeker and an actual voyage seeking knowledge from other masters.

<sup>21</sup> I.e., self-exertion: *muḡāhada*.

<sup>22</sup> *ma'nā l-muḡāhadati qatlu l-aḡyāra wa-l-aḡyāra l-wuḡūdi wa-n-nafsi wa-š-šayṭān* (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 122).

finally, repudiating the objection to anything received from God, either good or bad<sup>23</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 123–124).

There is a substantial point in al-Ġunayd's method described above which formed the basis and guideline of the *Fawā'ih* throughout the work: acquiring the knowledge of the personal experiences of the master and making benefit and profit from them. That is the reason why al-Kubrā included in his book the description of his twenty events and visions, which can be described as direct contemplation of God and divine realities by the voyager.<sup>24</sup> This approach differs largely from the usual impersonal way of teachings found in the Ṣūfī manuals, and it shows how deeply the psychological and mystical guidance of his disciples concerned him. He regarded them as his spiritual children which is manifested by several similes related to small children and their behaviour in different situations.<sup>25</sup>

### 4.3 *His existence defines the endeavours of the seeker*

The author prepares his disciples for the tiring voyage full of hardships and difficulties. The preparatory section described above promotes the different kinds of hallucinations and visions that form the different stations of the mystical path. He advises the seeker before beginning his wayfaring to the depths of the heart that he should investigate thoroughly the first station of his voyage, the true vision (*mušāhada*),<sup>26</sup> in order to clarify his concept of the three notions that are 'other than God' and their differences: his existence, his soul, and the devil that wants to enter him. As a result of his contemplation, his existence may move from the darkness towards light. Then he explains the difference between the soul and the devil by

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<sup>23</sup> This saying cannot be found in the well-known sources. The closest to it is what al-Quṣayrī cites in his *Risāla* (English tr. by Knysh 43, Arabic ed. 79): "I heard al-Junayd say: 'We learned Sufism not through words but through hunger, the renunciation of this world, and through depriving ourselves from the things which we are accustomed to and in which we take delight'". Kubrā's quotations are either not found in the extant written sources of Ṣūfism or they are found in different versions. This can only be explained by assuming that he had learnt these stories and teachings from his mystical masters in Baghdad and Alexandria through oral communication. He did not quote al-Quṣayrī's work despite the note in his biography by al-Ḥwānsārī, *Rawḍāt* I. 298–299, where he said that al-Kubrā had read the *Risāla* continuously from the beginning (of his mystical teachings) till the end (of his life) and he had even written a four-line poem on the cover of his copy praising the work and its author.

<sup>24</sup> Whether the mystical term *mušāhada* is best translated as vision or contemplation depends on the context. One may think that the two words, put together, reflect the real meaning of this term, like 'contemplation by vision'.

<sup>25</sup> For this see Iványi 2022: 62 ff., subchapter 3.3 on similes and metaphors.

<sup>26</sup> I.e., contemplation.

means of the different colours<sup>27</sup> and by similes of the springs<sup>28</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 125–126). The colours alternate in the existence of the seeker according to his progress, starting from dark colours and becoming clearer and clearer through contemplation.<sup>29</sup> He states that the existence is compounded from four pillars: the earth, the water, the fire, and the air, following the classical teaching which can already be found in ‘the father of Arab philosophy’, al-Kindī,<sup>30</sup> though the source of al-Kubrā is not known<sup>31</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 128). However, he considers these elements as “darkness above darkness”,<sup>32</sup> which make pressure on the seeker, and he can only depart from their attachment if he finds connection (*t̄ṣāl*) to whom He deserves it (*al-mustahiqq*, God). The second part of this sentence shows that he only needed this philosophical summarisation of the worldly elements to encourage the disciples to refuse everything material.

#### 4.4 Taking a rest by remembrance (*ḍikr*)

In cutting the bonds that connect him to this world, al-Kubrā emphasises from time to time the significance of the remembrance to God (*ḍikr*) which must accompany the voyager throughout the mystical path and describes its characteristics. These descriptions, however, never mean repetition but rather deeper and deeper analyses of the effects of the remembrance on the rememberer (*ḍākir*), following the way of the well-known mystical spiral. In the struggle against darkness, it is also the remembrance that can help the seeker, but this time it is a stronger and overwhelming remembrance according to the author, describing it by way of a vivid metaphor: The remembrance enters the house of the rememberer, and its fire burns in his heart

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<sup>27</sup> Not excluding the possibility of external, mainly ancient Iranian influence on al-Kubrā’s light and colour theories as stated by Corbin 1978, one should also take into consideration the natural experiences of lights and colours appearing, for instance, on the verge of sleep and wakefulness or in a feverish state. al-Kubrā frequently makes use of everyday phenomena in his work for explaining his experiences and those of his disciples.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., the simile of the *fayaḍān*: “The deluge of the soul springs forth on his existence, and either the good or the wrong will grow from it” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 126).

<sup>29</sup> See in detail in Iványi 2022:54.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., al-Kindī, *Rasā'il* II, 40, 45, 67–68. Cf Adamson 2007:66, 86, 170.

<sup>31</sup> The early mediaeval Ṣūfī literature does not deal with the four elements, but in the 14th century, al-Ġilī, *Šarḥ muškilāt* 210 ff, speaks about them although they are not found in Ibn ʿArabī’s *Futūḥāt*. However, al-Kubrā was an eminent *ḥadīṭ* scholar, too, and in the *ḥadīṭ* literature one can find similar statements. See, e.g., Ibn Raḡab, *Latā'if* 59, where he quotes the 9th century *ḥadīṭ* scholar, al-Ġūzaḡānī speaking about the elements of which the created beings are composed.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Qur’ān 24:40.

similarly as the fire burns in the dry wood with pure flames. This fire (*nār*) turns the darkness in the house into light (*nūr*)<sup>33</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 127).

In this state of mind, after the exhausting and thorough remembrance ritual, the voyager is immersed in the true contemplations of God (*mušāhadāt*). al-Kubrā characterises them by natural images. Their origin is not mentioned in the book. They may have come from the author's own experience or his pedagogical vein, but I guess these natural similes may have been told by his disciples as their visions during contemplation. All these images refer to the difference in the (worldly) existence between appearance and (true) reality. First, a Qur'ānic *āya* is quoted about this phenomenon:<sup>34</sup> "And you (*sing.*) will see the mountains that you supposed to be firm passing by like clouds – the work of God, who has perfected everything". al-Kubrā then cites further similes: "If you travel on a ship, you think the bank of the sea is moving, not you. When you are in the well, you see as if the well descended upon you from above, although it is you who went up. If you go by a tugboat on the seaside and drop in it, it seems as if the sea would sink into it not you" (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 129). These similes are supplemented with the theory of 'degrees of existence' (*marātib al-wuḡūd*), according to which there are several types of existence one above the other, at the bottom of the created world and at the top God's uncreated and eternal universe<sup>35</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 134). True contemplation of these can be

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<sup>33</sup> al-Kubrā adds, in his usual pragmatic way: "as one can observe." The *nūr* – *nār* type of paronomasia is also one of his favourite means of teaching. He cites Qur'ān 24:35, which mentions the blessed tree which lights even though it was not touched by fire (*nār*), gives light upon light, *nūrun 'alā n-nūr*.

<sup>34</sup> Qur'ān, 27:88, tr. by Jones 2007. This image is similar to what al-Ġunayd said in connection with his behaviour during the *samā'* ritual (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 192). Cf. al-Kubrā, *Tafsīr* IV, 351: 'You see the persons in the state of their attributes and then their characters and their stations will be changed.'

<sup>35</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḡhāt* ed. by Yahyā III. 56, chapter 17, and many other places, contain similar notions concerning the grades of existence, but here he mentions only four degrees. The same topic is also dealt with in great detail in his *Inšā' ad-dawā'ir*, where the existence is always connected with the non-existence ('*adam*'). Ibn 'Arabī mentions the four degrees of the existence for the human being (*Inšā' ad-dawā'ir*, 7): *li-kulli šay'in fī l-wuḡūdi arba'u marātiba illā llāha ta'ālā fa-inna lahu fī l-wuḡūdi l-mudāfi talāta marātib*. See also aṣ-Šādiqī, *Iškāliyyāt* chapter 4: *Marātib al-wuḡūd*, 447 ff, where the author could refer only to different places in Ibn 'Arabī's works without finding similar notions in the previous Šūfī literature. Chittick (1989:xviii, 3, 12, 36) deals exhaustively with the different usages of the term *wuḡūd* in the works of Ibn 'Arabī, but he did not find any external reference either. al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidī, whose writings frequently gave inspiration to Ibn 'Arabī, did not deal with *wuḡūd*. al-Kubrā might have had a common source with Ibn 'Arabī, but I could not find it. However, Corbin (1993:296) states: "This central Asian Sufism was dominated at that time by the great figure of Najm al-Din al-Kubra, and the encounter of his followers with the followers of Ibn al-'Arabī is of capital and decisive importance for the spiritual future of Oriental Islam."



achieved for the voyager only with the help of four angels who raise him to this elevated station (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 135).

#### 4.5 *The first visions: The interpretation of the colours and the lights*

When the voyager reached this step in his endeavours, he would receive the first visions containing different colours and lights.<sup>36</sup> Mystical meanings are communicated to the seeker through two ‘tongues’: tasting and contemplation. Tasting means experiencing the way, while contemplation is used to absorb this experience. After some theosophical explanation of the meaning of the different colours and lights, the author helps his disciples understand the mystical phenomena by giving examples from the life of plants that have different colours in the different phases of their life.<sup>37</sup> Two states overwhelm him at this station: the (spiritual) wakefulness (*yaqza*) and the absence from this world (*ḡayba*). These are characterised with sensual images of ‘the well which surrounds you’ from every direction causing the state of intimacy (*uns*) in wakefulness awe-inspiring appearance in the state of absence. “You see at the bottom of this well the existence as a green light, which means that it is the end of temporal and incidental existence (*al-wuḡūd wa-l-ḥudūt*) and the beginning of God’s infinite pre-existence (*al-qidam*)” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 133). This vision of different colours, aside from having mystical relevance, can easily be accepted by the disciple as a natural result of his being in a disturbed state of mind as a consequence of the mystical practices described above: constant insomnia, hunger, and continuous remembrance. al-Kubrā describes the diversity of colours in these ecstatic states of the seeker as ‘tasting the contradictory states in one state’ (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 134).

While the voyager is in the depth of the well (which symbolises his heart), he witnesses another vision, when the angels descend in his heart and their descent causes relaxation and calm in his heart. Furthermore, at this moment you feel the presence of the Prophet with you since his greeting (*at-taṣliya*) runs on your tongue unwillingly (*min ḡayri iḥtiyārik*). The description of this vision is intended to illustrate that the voyage happens in the heart of the voyager without the necessity of appearing external signs on him (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 136).

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<sup>36</sup> Here the author also uses paronomasia to enlighten the understanding of the quasi-philosophical speculations: *qalb – qalīb – tataqallab* (heart, well, and to be altered), *alwān – talwīn – tatalawwan* (colours, changing the colours and variation of the colours). The words *talwīn* and *tatalawwan* are also used in the meaning ‘altering’, ‘alteration’ without referring to colours. Similar paronomasias are used by al-Kubrā to describe the mental state of the lover of God: “The lover, fearing of the blame of the blamer, seeking (*tālib*) (God) in his heart (*qalb*) and fleeing (*hārib*) (from the world) in his outward form (*qālab*), is still strengthening God’s light in his heart” al-Kubrā, *Hā'im* 23.

<sup>37</sup> For details, see Iványi 2022:54.

Then al-Kubrā supplements his teaching with three experiences of his,<sup>38</sup> all dealing with different visions (not clear whether in a dream or awake) the aim of which is, as in all similar cases, to make his teachings clearer and more personal, and to bring the disciples closer to their comprehension. All three personal experiences are related to God's glorification and are complemented with similes from everyday life, for example, the fear of angels is made similar to the child's fear of his father (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 137). He also emphasises the role of the master in difficult situations, such too deep immersion in the remembrance of God.<sup>39</sup> He may have used at this point his small treatise, which contains the strict rules and usages of conduct for the voyagers towards God to make sure the sincerity of their visions. This can be reached only by acknowledging the attributes of their souls.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.6 *The two worlds of absence and presence*

At this stage of the voyage, the disciple succeeds in transgressing the boundaries of the world of witnessing (*šahāda*), in which he lives as a seeker and enters the world of absence, God's unseen world (*gayb*). This state can only be reached by leaving the earthly existence<sup>41</sup> and receiving divine inspiration (*ilhām*). When the voyager is absent from his existence, that is, he reaches the state of intoxication (*sukr*), he can taste the noble spirits (*al-arwāh aš-šarīfa*) that live there. He may receive inspiration when he is present in his presence in the state of sobriety (*ṣahw*), too, but it is more concealed than the first state. However, in both cases, the same utmost tranquility would be felt in his heart (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 139). This last remark is meant to reassure the disciples that their inner consistence is not in danger, and they should not feel disturbed by their experience. He also emphasises that the wide range of feelings which fill the heart of the voyager – desire, longing, yearning, recklessness, the feeling of flying, fierce intention, love, utter confusion, ardour, passion, and the craziness in the Real One (God) – raise him above the level of the angels and give him preference before God.<sup>42</sup> Then al-Kubrā cites a vision by al-Ḥaraqānī, in which

<sup>38</sup> See Iványi 2022:58 ff.

<sup>39</sup> See Iványi 2022:58 and fn. 43.

<sup>40</sup> al-Kubrā, *Ādāb* 72. He uses a paronomasia to illuminate the significance of the voyage in this respect, too. At the same time there is a metaphor in this sentence, since the original meaning of the verb *saḡara* refers to the the unveiled women: *wa-s-saḡaru innamā tusammā saḡaran li-'annahu yasfiru 'ani l-aḡlāq*, "The voyage is only called voyage (*saḡar*) since it removes the veil (*saḡara*) from the attributes."

<sup>41</sup> The underlying idea by 'leaving the earthly existence' is that there is no real existence, only the existence of God. Cf. al-Ġīlī, *Insān kāmil* 266: *fa-mā fī l-wuḡūd šay'un illā llāhu ta'ālā*. Cf. Morrissey 2021:8.

<sup>42</sup> Reference to the Qur'an 2:34 where the angels are ordered to adore Ādam. al-Ḥaraqānī explains why the angels could not follow him in his visionary circumambulation: "Because my quickness is the result of the fire of yearning (*nār aš-šawq*), and the angels have no

the angels could not follow him in his rapid circumambulation around the throne of God (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 140). The explanation lies, according to the author, in the utmost longing of mystics for the divine love in which the angels cannot take part.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4.7 *The different kinds of passing secret thoughts (ḥawāṭir), which visit the voyager*

At this stage of the mystical voyage, when the disciple reaches an ecstatic state of feeling overwhelming excitement, he is easily assaulted by blameworthy and distracting thoughts originating from his soul (*nafs*) or by the Satan,<sup>44</sup> which he cannot differentiate from those of the Real One (al-Ḥaqq). al-Kubrā, however, puts forward his views on the soul, which is, generally speaking, attracted to earthly things, but his views are much subtler than usual in the Ṣūfī literature. He accepts that if the soul becomes pure and clean (*ṭaharat wa-zakat*), its thoughts can lead to relaxation (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 141). In that case, this relaxation promotes the performance of religious duties and good deeds, but if it remains dirty (*ḥabīṭa*) the soul always engages in wrongdoing (*ammāra bi-s-sū'*).<sup>45</sup> This state of the soul causes pain and fear in the heart. This feeling is likened to the horror of a small boy (*ṣabī*), who had stolen an egg and ran away, since the soul is considered in the whole mystical literature as a child.<sup>46</sup> That means that in this case the disciple cannot find his station in the way and feels he is errant.

The disciple can only be supported by his master from whom he must ask advice in case an external secret thought descends in his heart, trusting in him sincerely,<sup>47</sup> but never trusting the cheating Satan. Each thought must be tasted to realise whether it is sweet like the honeycomb (*ṣahd*), or bitter like the colocynth (*ḥanzal*).<sup>48</sup>

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yearning.” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 140) The same opinion is treated in detail in several places in Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt*, where he uses the word *ṣahwa* instead of *ṣawq*, e.g., XI, 76: *wa-lammā kānat al-malā'ika lā ṣahwata lahum kānū muḥī'ina bi-d-dāti wa-lam yaqum bihim māni'u ṣahwatīn yaṣrifuhum 'an ṭā'ati rabbihim*. These are summarised (and partly refuted) by al-Ġīlī in his *Muṣkilāt* (chapter x, and esp. 224–225).

<sup>43</sup> The description of this vision cannot be found in any written source before al-Kubrā's time. Although 'Aṭṭār, *Taḍkira*, dedicates a long chapter to al-Ḥaraqānī, it only contains a similar story but not this one. Cf. Iványi 2022:72.

<sup>44</sup> On the *nafs* and Satan in al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih*, see Meier, 1957:155 ff.

<sup>45</sup> See Qur'ān 12:53. The first part of the saying, when the soul becomes pure, is also based on the same Qur'ānic *āya*, since it continues: “except so far as my Lord has mercy”, and the purification of the soul can only be done by God's mercy.

<sup>46</sup> In the 12th–13th centuries we find frequent mentions of this, using different words for the child, such as *ḡulām* or *ṭifl*. See Ibn al-Fārīd, *Tā'iyya*, line 715: *qataltu ḡulāma nafsī*, and al-Būṣīrī, *Burda*, line 19: *wa-n-nafsu ka-ṭ-ṭiflī*.

<sup>47</sup> *fa-kun yā ḥabībī muḥliṣan* (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 142).

<sup>48</sup> The colocynth is a frequently used cliché in the early Arabic poetry, which seems to be well known by al-Kubrā. See, e.g., the *Mu'allaqa* poem of Imru' al-Qays, line 4, where the

However, this requires right practice during the long spiritual voyage, because if one's taste becomes corrupted (*fasada*) he will find even the sweet bitter (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 145). He cites for this an example from a poem of al-Mutanabbī: “Whoever has a sick bitter mouth, tastes even the sweet water bitter in his mouth”.<sup>49</sup>

The seclusion forms one of the most important mystical practices, but at the same time it also poses a threat and danger of the appearance of the Satan which lures the voyager. Therefore, he needs most of all to follow the advice of his master. This is supported by two personal experiences of the author, when Satan demanded him to write a book with the title “The ruses of the sick against the seeker” (*Hiyal al-marīd 'alā l-murīd*) without the permission of his Šayḥ. al-Kubrā mentions here for the first time his *šayḥ fī l-ġayb* (master in God's unseen world) who helps him when his earthly master is absent in seclusion<sup>50</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 143–145).

#### 4.8 *The service of God* (‘ibāda, ta‘abbud)

The primary task of the voyager must be the service of God, his Lord and Lover. al-Kubrā emphasises that the service of God may be tasted by continuous remembrances. The essence of this service is immersion (*ingimās*) in it and complete renunciation (*zuhd*) of everything other than God. In the tradition of Islamic mysticism, it is Jesus (‘Īsā bnu Maryam) who is considered the ideal of poverty and renunciation of this world, but according to a story, even he committed a fault once, of which Satan immediately tried to take advantage.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, the author calls the attention of his disciples to the fact that after a while the hardship disappears from the service of God and only the pleasure remains.<sup>52</sup>

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bitterness of the colocynth symbolises the sorrow and confusion of the poet felt because of the departure of the tribe of his beloved one (az-Zawzanī, *Šarḥ al-Mu‘allaqāt* 19–20).

<sup>49</sup> al-‘Uqbarī, *Šarḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, III 228. (*qāfiya: al-ġamālā*): *wa-man yaku dā famin murrin marīdīn – yaġidu murrān bihi l-mā’a z-zulālā*.

<sup>50</sup> Corbin translates *šayḥ fī l-ġayb* as ‘maître intérieur’ or ‘témoin dans le ciel’. The first translation seems to be suitable, while the second is too interpretative. The *šayḥ fī l-ġayb* may have been thought by al-Kubrā to dwell in the innermost heart (*sirr*) of the mystic (see below). Corbin (1972:297–298) deals with this master whom he translates as ‘le Guide supra-sensible’. He sees a parallel view in the teaching of ‘Alā’ ad-Dawla as-Samnānī (died in 1336), a Persian follower of the Kubrāwiyya order, about the *ustād ḡaybī*, *le maître et guide invisible*. See also Lewisohn, 2019:182.

<sup>51</sup> See the story of Jesus and Satan in Iványi 2022:56, fn. 30.

<sup>52</sup> “The secret conversation with Satan is hard and troublesome, whilst the secret conversation with God (i.e., the prayer) is the most delightful occupation” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 146–147).

#### 4.9 Tasting by alteration (tabdīl ad-dawq)<sup>53</sup>

In the following, the Master, al-Kubrā, explains the connection and difference between two very important states of existence which the voyager meets in this phase of his voyage. These are the vision (*mušāhada*)<sup>54</sup> and the tasting (*dawq*), which are 'stable together', that is, they form a strong connection, although they are obtained by different means (*sabab*). Vision can be obtained when one opens his mental perception (*baṣīra*) by pulling the cover from it, while tasting can be obtained by altering the existence and the spirits (*arwāḥ*). "Tasting comes to you with a passionate excitement (*wiḡdān*)". Then the five senses, which formed the previous existence, are changed to other kind of sensations (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 150).

The author exemplifies all this through sleep, which is stable in reality for the common people (*al- 'amma*), but whenever they sleep, they remove the burdens of their existence, their senses become blocked in the seas of existence and new senses open up for them in the direction of the (invisible world of) absence, and by this they reach a more perfect existence. They can do in their sleep and dream everything that would be impossible in awakesness: they walk on the water, fly in the air, enter the fire, eat, and find the delight of the food after awakening. For them, in dream, there are no distances, and they can speak to anyone who ever existed. The sleepers do not find this new existence haphazard or random but a sensible reality. That's why dream is the brother (likeness) of death.

This detailed presentation serves twofold aim: on the one hand, it brings the mystical vision closer to the beginner in his voyage (*sayr*), on the other hand, it makes it easier to make acceptable his vision for "what the common man finds in his sleep the voyager finds when he is between sleep and awakening, 'dreaming awake',<sup>55</sup> because of the weakness of his bodily existence and the strength of this new noble and precious existence" This explanation gives another well-perceptible example of the educational method of al-Kubrā in guiding his disciples and helping the interpretation of their experiences. The voyager, in this intermediate existence, finds the same things that ordinary people find in sleep and dream and feels real (*yadūqu ḥaqqan*) and enters the world of vision (*mušāhada*), which has different degrees: first images and imaginations, then essences (*dawāt*), and finally they also disappear and immerse themselves in the Only Essence (Being), God.<sup>56</sup> This elucidation is topped by an extraordinarily graphic simile, that of the hunter and

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<sup>53</sup> This is one of the few parts of the book which bear the divisions of the author and not the editor. He calls it *faṣl*, section. This title means: 'How tasting can be obtained by alteration'.

<sup>54</sup> By another interpretation 'contemplation'.

<sup>55</sup> This idea is comparable to the famous monologue of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:112, (Act 3, Scene 1).

<sup>56</sup> On dream and mystical experience in al-Kubrā's *Fawā'ih*, see Meier 1957:98 ff.

hunting<sup>57</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 150–151). In this simile the visions, experienced by the voyager, appear in the form of different animals (dog, lion, etc.) moulded by the 'shaper of ideas' (*muṣawwira*) and the power of imagination (*muḥayyila*). All this means denying the previous perception (*al-ḥiss al-awwal*) which works in the world of presence<sup>58</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 152). Reaching this stage in his path, the voyager feels ease after the troubles of his previous (spiritual) efforts (*muḡāhada*) and it manifests itself also in the green colour seen by him<sup>59</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 153). But if this colour appears when the heart is absent from this world (*ḡayba*),<sup>60</sup> being in the divine world, this means that he is no more a beginner, but has reached the final stage of his voyage (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 154).

#### 4.10 The complete immersion<sup>61</sup> in the remembrance of God (*ḍikr*)

The first degree of immersion is the immersion of the existence in remembrance. It is always accompanied by disturbing musical voices in the head of the rememberer, which causes fright and fear of death (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 155). This remark is followed by a description of a relevant personal experience of al-Kubrā. He writes: "Once when doing remembrance (*ḍikr*) in seclusion (*ḥalwa*), my head was filled with frightening sounds of musical instruments, and therefore I was scared. Thus, my master advised me to stop remembrance to avoid death"<sup>62</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 155–156). Even so, he notes that in true remembrance, everything other than God must be driven away from the heart. The influence of remembrance, if perfect, continues after it has ended, mainly by means of hearing different kinds of frightening voice.

The second degree of immersion follows immediately after the first when the rememberer (*dākir*) feels as if his head was open, a round hole became created in his temple and descended upon him from above, first the darkness of existence, then the fire of remembrance, and finally the greenness of the heart, since remembrance means 'good word' (*kalima ṭayyiba*) which is immersed in the heart (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 157). Remembrance endures for a long time and needs to be interrupted.

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<sup>57</sup> For a detailed description of the hunting simile, see Iványi 2022:57, fn. 37, and p. 67 in the subchapter 3.3, on the similes.

<sup>58</sup> Here al-Kubrā uses an interesting simile for the acknowledgement of reality: It resembles the way in which the Sophist is forced to acknowledge the realities by experiencing the pain when beating his head and cutting his stomach. This might have been at his time a customary way of characterising the Sophists who did not care about the truth till they themselves did not feel it.

<sup>59</sup> On the significance and meaning of the colours in the *Fawā'ih* see Iványi 2022 subchapter 3.1 and especially 54, fn. 22.

<sup>60</sup> For the use of this term see Iványi 2022:54, fn. 24.

<sup>61</sup> *faṣl al-istiḡrāq*, one of the few chapters which were made by the author in his book.

<sup>62</sup> See Iványi 2022:58 and fn. 43.

Whenever the voyager stops in it, his heart moves in his breast, like the child moves in the belly of his mother, demanding the continuation of the remembrance.

Then, al-Kubrā says,<sup>63</sup> the sign<sup>64</sup> of the immersion of the remembrance into the heart of the voyager, which is the third immersion, is that he sees a spring in front of him of which a light emerges, which causes great ease and tranquillity for him, since he becomes aware that the remembrance reached the innermost secret depth of his heart (*sirr*), the abode of the divine attributes, first of all Unity. In this state, he loses his consciousness of the remembrance and finds in his heart only the remembered (i.e., God). Finally, the voyager perceives the effect of his remembrance inside himself and in the outside world, as if everything has changed around him, because of the lights of the remembrance (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 159). He finds that there are three kinds of remembrance: remembrance of the tongue by sounds (*hurūf*) without the presence of God, remembrance of the heart feeling the presence of God in it, and finally remembrance of the inner heart without consciousness of the presence of the remembered, which means perfect immersion in the remembrance of God.

#### 4.11 *The degrees of the lower soul (nafs)*

At this stage, the author finds it necessary to interpolate a long explication of the three types or rather degrees of the behaviour and nature of the soul that are, as usual, based on the Qur'ān: the soul that participates in wrong doing (*an-nafs al-ammāra bi-s-sū'*, Qur'ān 12:53), the self-reproaching soul (*an-nafs al-lawwāma*, Qur'ān 75:2), and finally the peaceful soul (*an-nafs al-muṭma'inna*, Qur'ān 89:27) (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 161). These three categories are then relevant in relation to remembrance. The soul that involves wrongdoing is the soul of the common people.<sup>65</sup> al-Kubrā likens the soul to a house in which the remembrance serves like a lamp that makes light in the darkness. At that point the soul becomes reproaching soul, since it perceives that his house is full of dirt and reprehensible animals (dog, donkey, bull, lion, and other similar beasts), which symbolise the blameworthy human characters. Then the rememberer makes efforts to deliberate his house from these ugly inhabitants, transforming his bad attributes to good ones, and this way he can incessantly adhere to the remembrance of God, returning (*ināba*) to him. In the end, the power of remembrance triumphs over these animals, expelling them from his house.<sup>66</sup> After this, his soul is approaching the peaceful state by rearranging the

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<sup>63</sup> I mean the word 'says' *verbatim*, since I suppose that the composition of the *Fawā'ih* is the result of several sessions of dictations in the presence of his disciples.

<sup>64</sup> The author calls the attention of his disciples to the various signs (*'alāma*), which God sends them to follow in their voyage reassuring them about their progress.

<sup>65</sup> *nafs al-'amma* – but as it becomes clear from the following lines the beginners in the voyage also belong to them.

<sup>66</sup> This simple simile also points to the pedagogical character of this work, which uses abundantly similar similes borrowed from everyday life. All these activities of the voyager

furniture of his house decorating it with commendable ones. In this way, his house becomes suitable for the Sulṭān to house it – so God has appeared<sup>67</sup> and the soul reached the peaceful degree.

At this point, al-Kubrā supports his teaching with another simile. Every degree of the soul has its signs: changes in the colour of the face, different colours appearing during his vision (*mušāhada*), and towards the end of the voyage, circles appear on the face. “When your soul is in the state of peace, the circle on your face will be of pure light, like a polished looking glass (*saḡanḡal*). But when the light ascends to your face, it would vanish in this light. Sometimes you may observe it from a distance as if it were in the absent world, and between you and the light there are a thousand stations (*manzila*) and if you tried to approach any one of them, you would be burned” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 162–163). After presenting the different circles and their respective meanings, the author inserts a personal experience which happened in his seclusion (*ḥalwa*), when he felt he had become absent and finally annihilated in a circle of light. But before that he had had the vision that he had been led up to the Sun and entered it. Then he told his experience to his master, who, interestingly enough, had a parallel vision and was very glad for the coincidence of the two events. The author interprets this vision in two different ways. First: In his opinion, the spirit (*rūḥ*), which inhabits the voyager and the heavens, is one and the same, so their encounter and merger is not to be considered curious. Second: If the human being is sincere in his yearning and search for the truth, he will eventually find his heavenly roots (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 164). The primary aim of this passage is, however, to show the relevance of the strict connection between the disciple and the Šayḫ, which can lead to parallel dreams at night.

#### 4.12 *The vision of the Divine Attributes* (ṣifāt)

Since the continuous remembrance of God influences the consciousness of the voyager to a great extent and has a significant pressure on his senses, it is by no means surprising that in this stage of the mystical practices the voyager frequently has visions. Thus, al-Kubrā explains and classifies here the different varieties of visions. The important thing for the reader (or originally, the listener) is, however, the personal character of these explanations and admonitions, the way he calls the attention of his disciple to the mystical realities, saying ‘know!’, ‘you’, or ‘from you’ (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 171). Of course, one should say that ‘you’ (*anta*) is the so-called general subject in Arabic, but here the context is always very personal, and the author does not speak in the general sense.

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are put into the second person singular which emphasises that it is about a master–disciple relation.

<sup>67</sup> There is a triple pun (*ḡinās*) here: *taḥallā* (got rid of), *tahallā* (became decorated) and *taḡallā* (appeared), which also helps to understand the situation for the disciples.



Then al-Kubrā speaks about the presences (*maḥādīr*) of the different attributes of God, which are the essential elements of the visions in this stage of the voyage. He explains the two types of visions: one is the so called ‘lower’ (*adnā*) vision, which is linked to earthly phenomena. But what are seen in the state of absence from his senses (*ḡayb*), is not identical with the ones seen in the state of conscious witnessing (*ṣahāda*). These are similar to the mirages: images, colours, seas, lights, deserts, villages, wells, castles, and the like. The second type is the ‘upper’ (*a’lā*) vision, which is linked to heaven: the Sun, the Moon, the stars, the constellations of the stars and the lunar mansions. The principle of the visions, of which al-Kubrā gives a detailed presentation, is that in every human being there are jewels from every metal and the seeker (*tālib*) finds these metals and the jewels made from them by his pure volition and truthfulness. During his upper vision he can perceive only those celestial bodies of which he found in himself the appropriate metals, i.e., jewels. When he sees more and more celestial bodies, he becomes gradually purer and purer. The meaning of this explanation is that visions must be acquired by previous spiritual activities of the voyager (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 165–166).

These visions help the voyager to become in possession of divine attributes. God, al-Kubrā says, has several presences and each of them differs from all the others, since these are the presences of the divine attributes. These attributes manifest themselves (*taḡalliyāt*) one by one for the voyager if he glorifies the Lord by different kinds of glorification (*tasbīḥāt*), that is, it means a higher degree of the usual remembrance. The rapid and long-lasting repetition of the *tasbīḥāt* assures him of the manifestation of the attributes, saying: *subḥāna l-’alī, subḥāna l-a’lā, rabbī wa-qādirī, aḥadun aḥad*.<sup>68</sup> The use of the *misbaḥa* for this purpose, though not mentioned by al-Kubrā, has always been a well-known practice of the Sūfīs in their private remembrances up to our time.

The author then explains why these manifestations may become possible. Because the heart of the seeker has a share of every divine attribute, although the possessors (i.e., the friends of God) of the hearts are dissimilar in this respect, everyone has his own share according to his endeavours. This explanatory model is intended to show the disciples how to interpret two basic mystical teachings: (i) The (mystical) path leads to God in the depth of the heart (*sirr* or *sarīra*) and (ii) the friends of God must strive to strip one’s worldly attributes (*taḡrīd*) and replace them (*tabdīl*) with divine attributes, exclusively concentrating on them (*tafrīd*). Consequently, all this is only possible because the human heart is so created as to be capable of taking in the manifestation of the divine presences, which contain the

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<sup>68</sup> “The High be praised, the Most High be praised, My Lord and My Possessing Power, (the) One, One (be praised)”. According to a *ḥadīṭ*, it was Bilāl, the first *mu’addīn* of Islam, who used the expression “One, One” every time when he was tortured by the pagan Meccans. See, e.g., Ibn Raḡab, *Ġāmi’* 934.

divine attributes. The manifestation is first through knowledge, by knowing the worlds, their beginnings, and the return to God in the paradise, then by means of vision, and finally by way of getting into the possession of the given attribute (*ittiṣāf*). This happens as if the heart melted into the divine presence, gradually acknowledging the character of his attributes and the supremacy of God's attributes (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 167).

At this point, as in some other parts of the *Fawā'ih*, the train of the thought is incomplete, and the author does not explain *verbatim* the purpose of the description of one or more mystical visions and their correlation with the previous part. However, we may suppose that the listeners<sup>69</sup> of al-Kubrā's teaching put questions asking for clarification, which had not been inserted into the book. That is why some modern scholars consider the *Fawā'ih*, although it contains valuable thoughts and rare descriptions, unordered and inconsequent.

After explaining the character and modes of the divine manifestation, the author continues, without any introductory notes, with the description of the lights which ascend and descend, the ascending lights coming from the heart, and the descending ones coming from the divine throne (*'arṣ*).

The encounter of the two types of light realises what the Qur'ān says: *nūr 'alā nūr*.<sup>70</sup> This is meant to interpret the previous discussion about the possibility of the divine manifestation and the reception of the divine attributes – all of this is the result of the activities of these divine lights. The encounter of the lights also means the reality (*ḥaqīqa*), that “a state of merging with God' (*ḡam 'iyya*)<sup>71</sup> comes into being on the basis of mutual longing between the friend of God and God”, because “a door opens from the heart to the Throne and as the heart longs for the Throne, the Throne longs for the heart”. This term refers to the state when the voyager refuses to accept

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<sup>69</sup> I also suppose, as mentioned above, that the book was put in writing during one or more *imlā'* sessions.

<sup>70</sup> Qur'ān 24:35: “God is the light of the heavens and the earth. ... Light upon light. God guides to his light those whom He wishes, and God coins parallels for the people. God knows everything.” Jones's translation. al-Quṣayrī (*Laṭā'if* II, 368) gives the following mystical interpretation of the three words: “*nūr 'alā nūr*: there is a (human) light what they received by their endeavours (*ḡuhūd*), reasoning (*nazar*) and argumentation (*istidlāl*), and there is a (divine) light what they found by the grace of God. It is an explanation (*bayān*) which He added to their argument (*burhān*), or insight (*'iyān*) which He added to their explanation. So, it is (the meaning of) light upon light”.

<sup>71</sup> This term was coined by al-Kubrā instead of the usual Sūfī term *ḡam'*, perhaps to evade the possibility of confusing it with the everyday meaning of the word *ḡam'*, or even more possibly, to emphasise the special reference given to the word by him.

everything – human creatures, this world, and the afterlife - except for God.<sup>72</sup> It is explained as the state of being in the presence of God (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 168).

The driving force, ‘the secret of voyage and attraction’,<sup>73</sup> behind the endeavour to approach God, to be near Him (*qurb*) is divine love, so not surprisingly al-Kubrā discusses at this point the role and possibility of love:<sup>74</sup> “There is a precious jewel in you and it grants you a state in which you can see its likeness in the heaven: the fire of yearning (*šawq*), love (*maḥabba*) and passion (‘*išq*’).<sup>75</sup> Every time a light ascends from you, another light descends upon you (from the heaven)”<sup>76</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 168–169). That means, according to the author, that the aim of the mystical journey is nothing more than to purify this jewel to repair its imperfection to be suitable for the attraction of the heavenly jewel, which is stronger and more perfect (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 169).

Then al-Kubrā addresses his pupils: “You have to know that the soul, the Satan, and the angel are not (existing) outside of you but within you.”<sup>77</sup> Then he adds: “The heavens, the earth and the Divine Footstall (*al-kursī*)<sup>78</sup> are also not things (*ašyā'*) (existing) outside of you,<sup>79</sup> as well as the Paradise and Hell, death and life are all

<sup>72</sup> It is stated by many mediaeval authorities that the basis of this term and its usage is a Qur'ānic *āya* (3:18): *šahida llāhu annahu lā ilāha illā huwa*, “God bears witness that there is no god but Him”, considering that caring for anything else is unbelief (*širk*). The Šūfis contrast this state with the ‘departure’ (*tafriqa*), which necessarily follows immediately after the former state. See as-Sarrāğ, *Luma'* 283 ff.

<sup>73</sup> *sirru s-sayri wa-l-ğaqḍb*, (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 168).

<sup>74</sup> On the relation of ‘*išq* and *maḥabba*, see ad-Daylamī, ‘*Atf al-alif* 49 ff.

<sup>75</sup> On the relation of the two terms, see ad-Daylamī, ‘*Atf al-alif* 12–14, chapter 2: *hal yağūz iṭlāq al-'išq 'alā llāh wa-min Allāh?* Bell, English tr. 8–9: “May the word ‘*išq* be applied to love for God and from God?”

<sup>76</sup> *nūr 'alā nūr*.

<sup>77</sup> Literally: “but you are them (*bal anta hum*)”. This is the basic idea and *leitmotif* that directs Ibn al-Ğawzī throughout his famous work, *Talbīs Iblīs*. See, e.g., *Talbīs* 32: *ḍikr al-'ilāmi bi-'anna ma'a kulli insānin šayṭānan* (‘Mentioning the information that each human has a devil accompanying him’), or *Talbīs* 33: (*innahu*) *bayānun anna š-šayṭāna yağrī min ibni ādama mağrā d-dam*. (‘It is obvious that the devil flows through the human being like blood’). Although the *Talbīs* had been written in the youth of al-Kubrā, so he may have read it when he stayed in Baghdad, there is no evidence that he actually did it.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. al-Ğilī, *Insān kāmīl* 145: *al-kursiyyu 'ibāratun 'an tağallī ğumlati š-šifāti l-fi'liyyati fa-huwa mağharu l-iqtidāri l-ilāhī ... markazu l-farqi wa-l-ğam'*. ‘The Footstall means the revelation of all the active divine attributes. It is the manifestation of the divine might ... and the centre of gathering and separation.’ Cf. Qur'an 2:255: “His Footstall extends over the heavens and the earth” (T.I.’s translation). See also Miftāḥ 2019:34. Cf. also Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt* I, 289: *kursī aš-šifāt*. For a summary of the use of the term *kursī* in Šūfism, see al-'Ağam, 1999: 789. Cf. Morrissey 2020:39.

<sup>79</sup> Since it surrounds everything in the created world. See al-Kubrā, *Tafsīr* I, 330.

things within you. When you make your voyage and become pure, you will see all these things clearly”<sup>80</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 171).

#### 4.13 *The lights of the heavens and the earth*

About these lights, al-Kubrā says the following: “When the circle of the face has become pure, the lights pour out as the water bubbles from the spring, and the voyager feels that these lights are gushing forth from the circles of his face. The lights are coming and going, like the Sun during the day or the seesaw of the children. This outpouring takes place between the two eyes and between the eyebrows. Finally, it spreads to cover the whole face. At that moment, before you, before your face, there is another face also of light, irradiating lights, while behind its translucent veil a sun becomes visible, seemingly animated by a movement to and fro in the body of the voyager. He has the sensory perception of this irradiation of lights that proceed through the whole of his person. Often the veil falls, and the total reality of the person is revealed, and then with the whole of his body, he perceives it. The opening of the inner sight, the visual organ of light (*baṣīra*) begins in the eyes, then in the face, then in the chest, and then in the entire body. Next, the whole of his person is immersed in purity, and suddenly he senses the emergence of the light of the man of light, who is his supervisor (*muqaddam*), and the master in the (divine) unseen world, his ‘suprasensory personal Guide’ (*ṣayḥ al-ġayb*),<sup>81</sup> or in another name, the balance of the unseen world” (*mīzān al-ġayb*).<sup>82</sup>

“He is an inner guide”, al-Kubrā continues, “whose existence is in the voyager from the beginning of his voyage. But then he is black as an African (*zanġī*), because darkness dominates the voyager “since the clothes of existence are dark”. Then he seemingly disappears from the side of the voyager, but in reality “you are him; he enters you and becomes united with you (*yattaḥidu bika*)”<sup>83</sup> (al-Kubrā *Fawā’ih* 170–171).

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. al-Ġīlī, *Insān kāmil* 61: *taġallī l-ḥaqq subḥānahu wa-ta’ālā fī af’ālihi ‘ibāratun ‘an maṣḥadin yarā fīhi l-‘abdu ḡarayāna l-qudrati fī l-aṣyā’* “The revelation of God in His Activities corresponds to a contemplative state (*maṣḥad*) where the servant sees the Divine Power (*qudra*) evolve in things.”, tr. by Burckhardt 1983:35.

<sup>81</sup> See Corbin 1978:10.

<sup>82</sup> This name refers to his role of one who weighs the activities and the feelings of the voyager.

<sup>83</sup> According to Corbin (1978:10): “(The wayfarer), accompanied by the *shaykh al-ghayb*, his ‘suprasensory personal Guide’, is led and directed toward his own center.” Thus, he unequivocally regards this guide as existing outside the ‘seeker’ (*murīd*), though al-Kubrā, in my interpretation, considers this master (Ṣayḥ) identical with the seeker, united with him in his inner heart – in common language we should call it ‘his better half’ whom he attained through a rough journey. This *ṣayḥ al-ġayb* may be identical with the *imām mubīn* at al-Ġīlī, *Marātib* 28–29, which is interpreted by Nicholson 1921:83–84 as the ‘human spirit’. Cf.

Then he continues: “(This inner guide) is only black because of the clothes of the dark (worldly) existence. When you had annihilated the existence (removing it) from him, and the lights of remembrance and yearning had burnt his (black) clothes, the essence took off its (outer) clothes and also became luminous” (al-Kubrā *Fawā’ih* 171). The author emphasises the importance and origin of these lights. For this purpose, he uses several Qur’ānic verses. In Qur’ān 24:35 God is called the light of the heavens and the earth, and this light is identical to the source of the light of the Prophet through the power of God.<sup>84</sup> al-Kubrā says that the friends of God and all the believers receive light<sup>85</sup> from this power<sup>86</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 172).

This absent master is no one other than his innermost self, who develops together with his spiritual development during his voyage. The author says: “Know, that the voyager has a witness who is called ‘the master in absence’. He raises the voyager towards the heaven, so that he (finally) emerges into the heaven. This is the proof that he is his witness, and is even identical with him, since the voyager moves with his movement, reposes with his reposing, his heart overflows (*yafīḍu*)<sup>87</sup> with divine emanation with his overflowing (*fayaḍān*), he becomes in the state of ‘extension’ (*bast*),<sup>88</sup> because of his appearance, and becomes in the state of ‘constriction’ (*qabḍ*)<sup>89</sup> because of his disappearance.<sup>90</sup> This, when (the hidden master) became clear and illuminated (*tanawwara*), indicates that the scale of the balance had inclined towards him. But when he blackened or disappeared or hid behind the

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Morrissey 2020:39. The expression goes back to Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, ed. by Yaḥyā, III, 149 ff., where a whole sub-chapter bears the title “*Fī manzil al-manāzil aw al-imām al-mubīn*”.

<sup>84</sup> *‘izza*, see Qur’ān 35:10.

<sup>85</sup> Although European scholars have always sought for external influences, in the case of the light theory of al-Kubrā ‘the neo-Zoroastrian Platonism’ (Corbin 1978:6), there are no positive facts which would support these views. On the contrary, there is the Light verse of the Qur’ān which may have been the sole source of al-Kubrā’s theory as he states. Furthermore, the concepts of the black light and the light of night are natural phenomena and hardly need to be traced back to old Iranian origin. See Corbin 1978:5.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Qur’ān 63:8: *li-llāhi l-‘izzatu wa-li-rasūlihi*. Muḥāsibī (*Ādāb an-nufūs* 76 ff.) treats *‘izz* and *‘izza* in detail, saying that attributing power or glory (*‘izz*) to the soul (*nafs*) causes illness in the heart (*qalb*) and only real truthfulness (*ṣidq*) can fight against it, since, as the Qur’ānic *āya* 35:10 states, all the power belongs exclusively to God.

<sup>87</sup> See Aḡam, 1999:741: *al-fayḍu (huwa) t-taḡallī d-dā’imu llaḡī lam yazal wa-lā yazāl*, “the overflowing (emanation) is the constant manifestation (of God), which did not cease and will not cease”. Cf. al-Ġilānī, *Fuyūḍāt* 5, where God is the one who is present in every movement and reposing of the ‘Greatest Succour’, i.e., ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġilānī.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Elation’ or ‘expansion’, psychologically ‘extroversion’.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Contraction’, psychologically ‘introversion’. See in detail Iványi 2012.

<sup>90</sup> The two words originate from the Qur’ān 2:245: *wa-llāhu yaqbiḍu wa-yabsuṭu*. “God straitens and is bountiful”, tr. by Jones 2007.

curtain (*hiğāb*), it indicates that the scale of the balance had decreased in weight” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 172).

When the voyager reaches this state, he can visualise the books of God’s unseen world (*ğayb*), which God has written partly with letter points (*naqt*), partly with vowel signs (*aškāl*), and partly simply with letter forms (*hurūf*). These have strange names, such as ‘the spring of the pious’, or ‘the collection of secrets’. In the beginning, he sees books which are understandable and reasonable, written fully vocalised, like the Qur’ān. Then he arrives at the innermost secret (*sirr*) which he may understand, or he may not, because of the darkness of the forgotten material existence, which may retract him. Then he sees books written with points and quadrangle vowel signs and finds with joy that he reads them and understands them and gets acquainted with the knowledge imparted by God (*‘ilm ladunī*).<sup>91</sup> After returning to the material existence, he forgets all this, but the sweetness of understanding will remain in his heart. He believes in it and this causes him to wish, and yearn for love, and passion in his heart (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 173).

#### 4.14 Visions seen in heaven during remembrance (*ḍikr*)

Then during the remembrance of God, heaven with its planets may appear to him as the Qur’ān which he can read and understand from the meaning of the points of the letters (*naqt*) (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 174). The *ḍikr* is never mentioned in the *Fawā’ih* as a congregational event or as an individual function, prescribed to the disciple by his master at certain definite times. Such remembrance rituals may have possibly been performed during the ‘voyage’ of the disciple, but what al-Kubrā mentions here and earlier is the remembrance of God, which is caused by visions experienced during his ecstatic states. That kind of remembrance can be called spontaneous or automatic *ḍikr*. Now looking at heaven, he can receive mystical knowledge: “Perhaps the most luminous star, the Canopus of the remembrance will appear for him from a distance and the Venus of the joy by God.”<sup>92</sup> This leads to the final aim of the voyager, the love of God.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>91</sup> On the significance of this divine knowledge, see the near contemporary Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*, III, 275, where he considers it equal to a prophetic revelation. (*fa-innahu kāna yanbağī lahu an lā yağma’a bayna l-ḥaqqi wa-l-ḥalqi fī ḍamīrin wāḥidin illā bi-ḍin ilāhiyyin min rasūlin aw ‘ilmin ladunī*.)

<sup>92</sup> In this passage of his work al-Kubrā may have been influenced by the great Muslim astronomer, the Persian ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān aṣ-Ṣūfī (died 986) and his book written in Arabic *Ṣuwar al-kawākib at-tamāniya wa-l-arba’in*.

<sup>93</sup> al-Huğwīrī says explaining a saying of aṣ-Ṣiblī (died 946) on poverty and trouble: “Their spiritual state (is changed) into love and their love into contemplation, so that finally the brain of the aspirant becomes wholly a centre of vision through the predominance of his imagination: he sees without eye, and hears without ear” (al-Huğwīrī, *Kaṣf* 27).

At this stage, each and every voyager receives one of the names of God, while His secret Greatest Name would spring from their hearts.<sup>94</sup> The author now presents his disciples with the miracles of knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and love (*maḥabba*), signifying the end of their destination (*nihāyat al-amr*) (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 177). He writes: “Love is the yield of knowledge, since whoever does not have knowledge cannot love. But His love for us precedes our love for Him. Who loves a thing remembers it constantly, as God the Sublime says:<sup>95</sup> “He had lied, who had claimed that he had loved Me, then when the night descended, forgot Me”, that is, falling asleep.

The miracles of love are made more personal and understandable for the voyagers by mystical love stories, like that of Samnūn al-Muḥibb (‘the Lover’)<sup>96</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 177–178). Another similar story is quoted from al-Ġunayd about a blind man and a boy (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 180–181).<sup>97</sup> At the end of this section, the author tells his own love story to characterise the fire of passion: “The passionate lover may become (totally) absorbed in (his) passionate love, so that the lover will become the same as his love, then this passionate love will become (totally) absorbed in the beloved one (that is, God)”<sup>98</sup> al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 182–183). “Passionate love of God

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<sup>94</sup> On the Greatest Name of God (*al-ism al-a'zam*) in the *Fawā'ih*, see Iványi 2022:61–62. Cf. Meier 1957:150 ff.

<sup>95</sup> al-Kubrā presents this saying as a *ḥadīṭ qudsī*: *yaqūlu subḥānahu wa-ta'ālā “kaḍība man idda'ā maḥabbatī tumma idā ḡannahu l-laylu nāma 'annī”*. It is, however, not included into the known collections and not accepted by the religious scholars as one. See al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla*, tr. by Knysh 394: ‘They say that God Most High revealed to David – peace be upon him: “Whoever falls asleep when the night comes, lies when he claims that he loves Me.”’ This translation, however, omits the most important word, ‘*annī*’. In Arabic, see al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla*, ed. by Maḥmūd et al. 609: The saying there corresponds with al-Kubrā’s text but it is introduced with “It is said” (*qīla*). This saying has often been attributed to such early Sūfīs as al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ and Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī. See, e.g., Abū Nu’aym, *Ḥilya* VIII, 99–100. Also in Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Buġya* 1455: *qāla (al-Fuḍaylu) yanzilu llāhu kulla laylatin ilā s-samā'ī d-dunyā wa yaqūlu (ilā āḥirihi)*. Cf. aṭ-Tuyūrī, *Tuyūrīyyāt* 1034, where it is also ad-Dārānī who quotes God’s saying but with a small change in the sentence: *idā nāmati l-'uyūnu kaḍība man idda'ā maḥabbatī idā ḡannahu l-laylu nāma 'annī*. In both works the saying continues with a detailed explanation from God of what the behaviour of the true lover should be like, together with a reference to the Last Judgement. Something similar can be found in al-Ġilānī, *Ġunya* II. 99

<sup>96</sup> Abū l-Ḥasan Samnūn b. Ḥamza al-Ḥawwāṣ (died between 909 and 912) was called ‘The Lover’ because he wrote several love poems to God. See the story in Iványi 2022:70. Cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, ed. by ‘Aṭā 158–162.

<sup>97</sup> See Iványi 2022:71.

<sup>98</sup> *qad yafnā l-'āšiqu fi l-'išqi fa-yakūnu l-'āšiqu huwa l-'išqa tumma yafnā l-'išqu fi l-ma'šūq.*

may result in annihilation of the consciousness of the voyager, since God raises him to Himself” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 179).

#### 4.15 Explanation of the terms station and state

At this stage of the voyage the author feels necessary to explain the essence of the mystical states and stations,<sup>99</sup> their roles and their connections.<sup>100</sup> Here, I want to highlight only the simplest and most easily comprehensible definition ever given to these two fundamental categories of the mystical voyage, proving at the same time the basic teaching intention why the *Fawā’ih* was written: “State means food provisions and beverages, and vessel of the voyage, while station means alighting and rest from the fatigue of the voyage” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 185–186). The author here presents the states and stations with descriptions, which are always of pedagogical character and are quite different from those found in the well-known Šūfī handbooks. His short characterisations contain mainly similes and metaphors taken from everyday life<sup>101</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 181 ff).

At this point, the author explains how he interprets the two divine attributes<sup>102</sup> in the title of his book, Beauty or Kindness (*ḡamāl*) and Glory or Majesty (*ḡalāl*): the first is equal to mercy (*raḥma*) and favour (*faḍl*), while the second is equal to respect (*hayba*) and might (*ḡabarūt*) (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 190–191). The divine Beauty comes necessarily first in the title<sup>103</sup> since this attribute encourages the voyager to start on his way and ensures him during the voyage of the loving providence and benevolence of God. However, al-Kubrā says, he must always be aware of the fact that it is God the Almighty who arranges and directs his voyage and it is He who decides on the fortune of his endeavours (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 191).

The author then makes a comparison in his customary way by simile between knowledge and love on the one hand and the annihilation of consciousness (*fanā’*)<sup>104</sup>

<sup>99</sup> *ḥāl wa-maqām*.

<sup>100</sup> See details in Iványi, 2022:67 ff.

<sup>101</sup> See Iványi 2022:66.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. al-Qušayrī, *Risāla*, ed. by Maḥmūd et al. 245.

<sup>103</sup> Although there are manuscripts with the reverse order of the divine names, that is, *al-ḡalāl wa-l-ḡamāl*, or with the reverse order of the modified nouns (*al-muḍāf*): *Fawātiḥ al-ḡamāl wa-fawā’ih al-ḡalāl*. This order of the title is found in Hāḡḡī Ḥalīfā, *Kašf az-zunūn* II, 1293, and al-Ḥwānsārī, *Rawḍāt* I. 297, as well.

<sup>104</sup> There are scholars, in the East and the West, who consider that the term *fanā’* reflects the influence of Buddhism. There may be two objections to this view: First, *fanā’* always occurs together with its counterpart, *baqā’*, so its meaning is not ‘total annihilation’ but only that of the worldly attributes, second, it is unnecessary to search always for outside influences, when the Qur’ān itself contains this pair of terms, see 55:26–27: *kullu man ‘alayhā fānin wa yabqā waḡhu rabbika*. “Everyone on it (on earth) perishes, but the face of your (sing.) Lord.” Tr. by Jones. Cf. al-Ḡīlānī, *Futūḥ* 12, where the author defines *fanā’* as the annihilation of the worldly connections and the annihilation of the worldly passion and



and its survival in God (*baqā'*) on the other: “The wings of knowledge and love do not stay firm together. Indeed, the wing of knowledge precedes the wing of love, although knowledge is always inseparable from love, like the shadow of a thing that joins it in its increase and decrease. The same holds true for annihilation and survival as well. Every time he becomes annihilated from others than Him, he survives by Him. Every time he becomes separated from others than Him, he becomes united with Him.” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 194–195). But there are prerequisites to reach the final stations of annihilation of the self and survival in God: the stations of effacement and fixing (*maqāmāt al-maḥw wa-l-iṭbāt*) and the stations of sobriety and inebriety (*aṣ-ṣaḥw wa-s-sukr*). “Every time the voyager becomes sober from others than God, he becomes inebriated by the drink of witnessing His presence (*ṣuhūd*). Every time the Truth effaces him, that is, his worldly attributes, He fixes him in the state of being in his intimate proximity” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 195).

The disciples may have asked their Master, al-Kubrā, about the nature of their desire to reach divine love and intimacy, since the author writes the following explanation: “If someone asked: What is the pair of the longing from among the wings? Or is it a wing having no pair? We would answer: It is in the position (*manzila*)<sup>105</sup> of love, so its pair is the knowledge (*'irfān*), since the voyager longs according to the degree of his knowledge”. Then the different degrees of knowledge are presented by easily understandable similes<sup>106</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 195–196).

#### 4.16 The Divine Love

After reaching the station of knowledge of God, al-Kubrā makes the voyager turn his attention to the Divine love.<sup>107</sup> His most important teaching for him is the generally accepted idea that he can only reach the station of the love of God by His love of him, not as a result of his own endeavour – but the prerequisite is that he should feel a true love for God and become annihilated in this love. Only then would his love and the love of the Beloved (God) be united<sup>108</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 196).

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human will. He explains the expression by a parable taken from the life of the royal courts. See *ibid.* 97. See also Ritter 2003 in many places under the terms ‘extinction’ and ‘immersion’.

<sup>105</sup> This term had been first used by al-Harawī, *Manāzil*, and it did not occur in another work before al-Kubrā’s time, although it cannot be taken for sure that al-Kubrā knew al-Harawī’s work.

<sup>106</sup> See Iványi 2022:67, fn. 103. Ibn ‘Arabī calls it *al-'irfānu l-ilāhī*, which can be reached through Divine Unification (*at-tawḥīd*). See *Futūḥāt*, ed. by Yaḥyā, XI, 460.

<sup>107</sup> Since I presented all his examples and similes related to the term ‘love’ in Iványi 2022, I do not wish to repeat them here.

<sup>108</sup> Worded with a nice paronomasia: *fa-iḍā fanā l-muḥibbu fī l-maḥabbati ttaḥadat maḥabbatuhu bi-maḥabbati l-ḥabīb*. Similar notions can be found in the following century in Rūmī’s love poetry, see Chittick 1983:179–180.

The Divine love can only be achieved if the heart of the voyager is exclusively occupied and concentrated on God on his voyage.<sup>109</sup> This concentration has a beginning and an end. Its beginning is volition (*irāda*), then quest for the Real One, (*ṭalab al-Ḥaqq*), then binding the heart to its innermost part (*marār*),<sup>110</sup> then free disposal (*taṣarruf*) of the volition over the world of things perceptible through the senses. The next step is ‘being’ (*kawn*), that is, the creation of concentration power to allow it to percept sensible images<sup>111</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 199).

The author states that concentration is the fruit of gathering in love with God (*ḡam ‘iyya*) and also forms its deepest secret (*sirr*), in contrast to separation from God (*tafriqa*).<sup>112</sup> “There is no greater blessing than gathering and no greater torture than separation, since the heart reaches the Divine Throne (*al- ‘arṣ*) through gathering, or the Divine Throne reaches the heart, or they may meet in the middle of the road. The even higher rank of gathering<sup>113</sup> means that both the heart and the Throne vanish in The Real One”. The time God settles on the Throne is like the time he settles on the heart. The difference is that while His settling on the Throne comes from His Glory (*ḡalāl*), His settling himself in the heart comes from His Grace (*ḡamāl*). This is the meaning of the attributes *ar-raḥmān ar-raḥīm*:<sup>114</sup> the first means ‘He is settled on His Throne’, while the second means ‘He is manifested in the hearts’<sup>115</sup> (al-Kubrā,

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<sup>109</sup> The words ‘occupation’ or ‘concentration’ are meant here to be the translation or rather paraphrasing of the term *himma* (resolution).

<sup>110</sup> That means, the quest for the Divine secret hidden by God.

<sup>111</sup> The following event from the life of the author is related here to explain this term (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 199–200): In his early youth he spent the night alone in their house and was trusted with keeping an eye on the household material against the thieves. At night the devil did not cease to speak to him, and his soul (*nafs*) was also telling him that the door might have been opened and a thief had entered the house, till his (disquieting) concern created a non-existent thief through his deceived senses, fear, and false imagination. Later, he found the door closed and there was no sign of the presence of a thief in the house this night, thus it was his resolution (*himma*) that created these things. Although according to this story, his concentration deceived him in his youth, the narration of this event serves to emphasise the creative power of the concentration and concern. This narrative can be considered unique in that it tells a story of a childhood experience for the explanation of a mystical notion. It also confirms the greatly pedagogical character of the *Fawā’ih*.

<sup>112</sup> These terms of al-Kubrā correspond to the usual Ṣūfī terms *ḡam’* and *farq*, cf. al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla*, ed. by Maḥmūd et al., 144 ff.

<sup>113</sup> ‘The gathering of the gathering’, *ḡam ‘iyyatu l-ḡam ‘iyya*. Cf. al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla*, ed. by Maḥmūd et al., 146 ff., where he uses the term *ḡam ‘u l-ḡam’* in a similar meaning.

<sup>114</sup> ‘The Merciful and the Compassionate’.

<sup>115</sup> Here al-Kubrā refers to a Qur’ānic *āya* (20:5) the interpretation of which caused problems for both the Qur’ān exegesists and the theologians: “The Merciful [who] settled himself on the throne.” (tr. by Jones) or according to another translation: “The Beneficent who is established on the Throne” (tr. by Pickthall). The verb in the Qurān is *istawā* and this

*Fawā'ih* 200–201). Then he turns to his disciples and interprets this for them: “If you mention, or remember, the word *ar-rahmān* or hear it from someone else, you taste all the attributes of the Divine Glory (*ġalāl*). ... If you mention, or remember, the word *ar-rahīm* or hear it from someone else, you taste all the attributes of the Divine Grace (*ġamāl*).” The cause of this difference, he continues, lies in the fact that “... the *alif*<sup>116</sup> is heavenly while the *yā*<sup>117</sup> is earthly. God, in His heavens, represents grandeur, majesty, power, might, sublimeness, high degree of force and strength.<sup>118</sup> On the contrary, God, when He turns towards the earth and fills the heart of His friend, represents mercy, benevolence, affection, peace and blessing”<sup>119</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 201). To exemplify his instructions, al-Kubrā speaks about his youthful vision when the words of the *basmala*<sup>120</sup> were written for him in his spiritual tablet and these were the signs of knowledge he had obtained in his heart (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 205).

#### 4.17 *The secrets of the letters*

The above explication induces the author to enter into a long section about the letters of the Arabic alphabet, their significance on the mystical voyage and their secrets, the knowledge of which is incumbent on the voyager (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 202). This passage introduces the disciples to the symbolic allusions that bind the shape of the letters to some natural and supernatural beings. For instance, the sun and the moon and other celestial bodies and the seven heavens the first of which consists of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, in form and meaning.

He says that the circle of the letter '*ayn*<sup>121</sup> which symbolises the moon, does not appear at once but only slowly, it grows slowly as the new moon grows from the first day to the middle of the month.<sup>122</sup> The voyager can taste, when writing this letter, the taste of the moon and the lunar mansions the number of which is 28 just like the number of Arabic letters. This circle – the circle of the letter '*ayn* and the moon – does not remain in the same state; it changes its colour and size depending on the extent of the voyage.

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same verb is used by al-Kubrā here twice in its infinitive form *istiwā'*. Cf. al-Kubrā, *Tafsīr* IV, 186: *ay 'alā 'arši qalbika*.

<sup>116</sup> In the word *rahmān*, since the *alif*, a straight line, points upwards to the heaven.

<sup>117</sup> In the word *rahīm*, since the *yā*', with two points under the line of the script, points downwards to the earth.

<sup>118</sup> The Arabic terms of these divine attributes are *kibriyā'*, '*aẓma*, *qudra*, '*izza*, *ta'ālā*, *šiddatu l-baṣ* and *quwwa*, respectively.

<sup>119</sup> The Arabic terms of these divine attributes are *rahma*, *karam*, '*atf*, *salām* and *ni'ma*, respectively.

<sup>120</sup> *bismi llāhi r-rahmāni r-rahīm*, “In the name of the Merciful and Compassionate God”.

<sup>121</sup> He may mean here the independent form of the letter, which contains two circles.

<sup>122</sup> He may refer here to the process of writing the letter.

The letters (*hurūf*) are connected with everything in the life of the voyager: the number of the letters are 28 or 29<sup>123</sup> as the number of the days in the Islamic month, the number of the declination<sup>124</sup> of the moon in its house<sup>125</sup>, the 32 teeth in his mouth which is the pivot of the letters. This passage reminds at the same time the disciples to their study in Arabic, which is not their mother tongue. The author says: “God writes His volition and decisions with His pen on the well-preserved tablet<sup>126</sup> (written in Arabic) which are fixed and are not voluntary”. These words of God appear in the spirit (*rūh*) and when the voyager is in the mystic state of the knowledge of the secret of the letters these inscriptions may even take visible shapes for him. The final result of knowing the secrets of these divine letters is that the voyager discovers the deep sense of what the prophet Muḥammad said, on the authority of God: “Then he speaks by Me”, that is, the friend of God (*walī Allāh*) can always speak, walk, practice strength only by God’s volition and power<sup>127</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 214).

#### 4.18 *The extension (bast) of the heart of the voyager after a long constriction (qabd)*<sup>128</sup>

Then the voyager’s efforts result in reaching the apex, but not the end, of his voyage: “When the voyager reaches this station he drives away the worries of his voyage and relaxes,<sup>129</sup> the respect (*hayba*) changes to the joy of intimacy (*uns*)<sup>130</sup> with the Real One, instead of the previous constriction, that is, distress, the heart becomes the place of extension, that is, relief. When the voyager completely submerges in this new feeling, he is obliged to say such expressions as like al-Biṣṭāmī: *subḥānī, subḥānī, mā a’zama ša’nī*, ‘my majesty, my majesty, how great is my rank’.<sup>131</sup> But if he

<sup>123</sup> The 29th letter is the *lāmaliḥ*, not always considered an independent letter.

<sup>124</sup> In Arabic *inḥirāf*, a paronomasia for the letters, *hurūf*, since both words originate from the same consonantal stem.

<sup>125</sup> Another reference to the correspondence between the number of the Arabic letters and the number of the days in the lunar calendar.

<sup>126</sup> *al-lawḥu l-maḥfūz*.

<sup>127</sup> This is a so called *ḥadīṭ qudsī*, i.e., when the Prophet is only the mouth which utters the words of God – but its authenticity does not reach that of the text of the Qur’ān.

<sup>128</sup> For the use of the two terms, see Iványi 2012.

<sup>129</sup> *farāḡun ba’da š-šidda*.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. al-Ġazālī, *Iḥyā’* IV, 329: “Intimacy and fear are both signs of the (divine) love.”

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Badawī, *Šataḥāt* 143. This saying was not known by the great encyclopaedias of Ṣūfism, like as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, as-Sulamī, *Muqaddima*, al-Kalābādī, *Ta’arruf*, al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla*, or al-Huḡwīrī, *Kašf*, and it is not contained in Baqlī’s *Šarḥ*, either. as-Sarrāḡ, *Luma’* 472 contains only the first part of this saying: *subḥānī, subḥānī*, while the whole saying can be found in Aṭṭār, *Taḍkira*, (English tr. by Arberry 141, Persian text, ed. by Nicholson, vol. I, 140. Badawī’s quotation is based on Abū Ṭayfūr as-Saḥlaḡr’s *Manāqib Abī Yazīd*. We cannot know, however, al-Kubrā’s source, since Aṭṭār’s work was finished in 1221 shortly

abstains, he only says: *subḥānahu, subḥānahu, mā a'zama ša'nuhu*, 'His majesty, His majesty, how great is His rank' (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 206).

#### 4.19 *The fires of remembrance*<sup>132</sup>

At this station of relaxation and joy the voyager should submerge in continuous remembrance. If he starts remembering God, the soldiers of remembrance attack him from every direction like a swarm of locusts, and the noise made by them sounds like the reverberation of his voice repeating God's names. The remembrance falls in his heart, his power of mental perception opens up, and he takes a liking to seclusion (*ḥalwa*). Then, at this stage, his heart becomes the hiding place of the fires of remembrance<sup>133</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 207). Remembrance must not be interrupted and if it has reached the highest degree<sup>134</sup> it continues in the heart even when the rememberer falls asleep. It happens when the heart and spirit succeeded in eliminating their earthly parts (*ağzā' turābiyya*), that is, the earthly attachments, and becoming strong in spirituality (*rūḥāniyya*). al-Kubrā then gives instructions to his disciple how to perform this last great remembrance, when he prepares for sleeping by lying on his side. He feels, without doubt, as if he were sitting when remembering God,<sup>135</sup> although he is still lying on the earth. It will be such an unconscious act that it surprises even him. al-Kubrā, however, gives again a simile of everyday life: A man who had been accustomed to being always in an upright position when he once sat down would feel the sensation of being still in an upright position. Thus, when he lies down during his remembrance, he continues it without noticing the change of his position and he can remember God even in his sleep (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 209).

#### 4.20 *The secrets of seclusion* (*ḥalwa*)

After this final remembrance, the voyager should enter seclusion according to the instructions of his Šayḫ. The adherent of the seclusion, who is separated from the world to God, must be in the state of constant perception of everything that he was associated with outside his seclusion by way of imagination and vision. If he proved to be weak, the outside world would attract him and pull him out of his seclusion.

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after al-Kubrā's death in the same year. It may have been, as in other cases, one of his teachers' oral communications.

<sup>132</sup> *nīrānu ḡ-ḡikr*. It is an unusual description of the remembrance.

<sup>133</sup> The description of the remembrance is followed by an episode of a personal experience told for teaching purpose, related in detail in Iványi 2022:59.

<sup>134</sup> There are degrees of the remembrance, *marāqī ḡ-ḡikr*. Although this kind of systematic view of the remembrance of God can be first found in al-Harawī, *Manāzil* 70–71. (See fn. 101)

<sup>135</sup> According to al-Kubrā, the obligatory position in remembrance is sitting.

But if he proved to be strong, he would be separated from the past by his strength.<sup>136</sup> Then al-Kubrā explains how important the role of the Šayḥ is: If the voyager can remain in his seclusion, it shows the strength of his Šayḥ. But if he comes out of it before the end of the prescribed period, it proves the weakness of the Šayḥ, since he made his disciple, the voyager, enter seclusion without separating him from the worldly attractions (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 209–210).

At this point of his instructions, al-Kubrā inserts the relation of his first experience with seclusion.<sup>137</sup> This story, without a doubt, serves the encouragement and exhortation of the disciples and shows them the tribulations and spiritual exultations of seclusion. “When I first entered seclusion, there was a kind of hypocrisy and reputation in my heart. I searched for a speech that was appropriate to my way (*tariq*) to be able to admonish people from the top of the pulpits. I had thought I was right, but it became clear later that my imagery of the seclusion had been false because my aim had not been right, and my intention had not been sincere. After eleven days, my wish to look at some books of mine drove me out of my seclusion without the permission of the Šayḥ. Then I remained outside the seclusion until the pain imposed on me by it had ceased. Afterwards, when I returned to the seclusion and entered with pure soul and sincere intention, I succeeded in purifying and humiliating myself in the eyes of the people and I reached the real goals through my seclusion. All this was the consequence of my strong yearning to seek release (*nağāt*). So, when I entered the seclusion this way, I did not leave it only with the permission of my Šayḥ” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 210–211).

Remembrance should continue incessantly during and after seclusion, until the voyager becomes “immersed in his remembrance in such a way that the remembrance could be heard from his heart (*şadr*). But when he hears a voice or sees something from the outside world, the remembrance becomes confused for him, his heart becomes anguished, he becomes vexed, and he refuses to do anything with the remembrance” After telling this story to his disciples, the Šayḥ (i.e., al-Kubrā) continued: “Do not be similar to him”, that is, rectify your intimacy with God so that nothing could confuse your remembrance<sup>138</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 213–214).

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<sup>136</sup> As al-Makkī says, *Qūt* II, 819: “It means the necessity of the absolute detachedness (from this world)” (*darūratu t-tağarrudi t-tāmm*).

<sup>137</sup> al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 210, missing from the list of personal experiences in Iványi 2022.

<sup>138</sup> A quotation in the *Fawā'ih* from as-Suhrawardī, not found in his only mystical work, *Ādāb*. Cf. Iványi 2022:72. It is to be noted that the aforementioned work does not deal with the Šūfī rituals, like remembrance (*dīkr*), since its main focus is the appropriate behaviour (*ādāb*) of the disciples, with the exception of the audition (*samā'*), but even this is treated only from the point of view of good behaviour.

#### 4.21 *The secrets of remembrance (asrār aḡ-ḡikr)*

The voyager after a long remembrance of the tongue reaches the station called ‘do not remember’, “for the remembrance may see how it remembers you”, because the voyager is the remembered, not the rememberer. He is remembered by God, but only he has no knowledge of this because of the multitude of sins and the thickness of the veils, he does not see and find this. When he is submerged in the remembrance, the Šayḡ orders him to stop the remembrance so that nothing will stand in the way of his separation from everything except for God. This is a customary way of mystical thinking – even the most important religious and mystical practices can form a barrier in the path towards God if they become self-serving and not serving the approach to God. At this point the heart dislikes the remembrance of the tongue because it disturbs it, so the heart prevents the remembrance of the tongue, and the remembrance continues incessantly in the heart (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 215–216).

#### 4.22 *The fruits of seclusion*

al-Kubrā values seclusion, putting it on the same level with the basic tenets of Islam, and describes it with metaphors: “Its benefit becomes clear, since it is seclusion that moves out the mirror of the heart from the various forms that have been carved in it since the time it had reason and became associated with the world and what it contains. These forms are darknesses (*ẓulumāt*), which are in conform with each other and are superimposed one upon the other. They cause rustiness (*šada’*) of the heart, which is negligence (*ḡafla*). However, with the help of seclusion, remembrance, fasting, ritual purity, keeping silence, refusal of erroneous inner thoughts, establishing ties (*rabṭ*) (with God) and the unification of the quest (*tawḥīd al-maṭlab*), the mirror of the heart can be removed from the rust. Seclusion is the smelting furnace (*kūra*), fasting and purity are the instrument of polishing (*tašqīl*), silence and refusal of wrong thoughts mean the refusal of the inspirations of darkness, the establishment of the ties is (the task of) the pupil, while the unification of the quest (*maṭlab*) is (the task of) the teacher” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 220).

After the seclusion and final remembrance had ended, al-Kubrā introduced two new terms for the instruction of his disciples, not found in the earlier Šūfī literature or in the later one: *al-ḡumūd* and *al-ḡumūd*.<sup>139</sup> These are not really ‘technical terms’, but rather form a sensitive description of the state in and after seclusion. al-Kubrā says: “The revelation is the fruit of seclusion” (*at-taḡallī tamratu l-ḡalwa*). The voyager at this state of the voyage has two distinct but strictly intertwined feelings: A freezing, frozen state (*aḡwālu l-ḡumūd*) and the extinction of the fire (*wa-l-*

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<sup>139</sup> The editor of the *Fawā’ih*, Yūsuf Zaydān thinks that *ḡumūd* is the closest to these two terms of al-Kubrā which occurs in one of the sayings in Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh, *Ḥikam*, comm. Zarrūq 36: *idfin wuḡūdak fī arḡi l-ḡumūd*, meaning ‘inactivity, indifference’. See al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 217 fn. 1.

*ḥumūd*). He was the first to use these two expressions: When the fire extincts, its place freezes, these are two consecutive stations, which refer to the benefits of seclusion (*ḥalwa*). It helps to avoid negligence (*ḡafla*) together with continuous remembrance of God (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 217).

The extinction here means the extinction of the blameworthy fires, such as “the fire of the carnal passion, the doggish insatiable hunger and thirst,<sup>140</sup> and the fire of the Satan and the fire of the carnal soul, and all other blameworthy characteristics (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 217–218).

#### 4.23 God's name 'Allāh'

The author considered this topic so important that it is one of the few chapters which is denoted by him as such. There may be two possible causes for this. First, it is the most frequently used name of God during remembrance. Second, since the ending of this name (*-hu*) is very appropriate for the use in loud inhalation and exhalation during remembrance, it is frequently used this way. However, it has always evoked opposition by the men of religion, and so the Ṣūfīs have always tried to give a rational explanation for this usage. al-Kubrā says: “Remembrance, which flows in the soul of every living creature, whether it is wanted or not, consists of two different kinds of breath. One is ascending, the other is descending. In every breath, the name of Allāh ascends and descends, and it is the *hā'*. The source of ascending *hā'* is the heart, while the source of the descending *hā'* is the Divine Throne. The *wāw* in the word *huwa* is the name of the spirit (*rūḥ*), because it is one of the servants of the presence of the Divine Essence (*huwiyya*), so it was made to gain this communion (of lovers of divine love)”<sup>141</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 223).

#### 4.24 Wearing the Ṣūfī cloak (*ḥirqa*)

Approaching the end of his mystical education, al-Kubrā calls the attention of his disciples to the importance of proper dressing and the true meaning of the Ṣūfī cloak. The author first describes his cloak: “The cloak that I have weared all my life consists of different kinds of patches sewn together (*muraqqa'a*). I sew my patch cloak out of incapacity and brokenheartedness, not for the sake of ostentation and demonstration of power and excellence” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 242).

Then he continues to give general instruction to his disciples regarding the proper wear of the right clothes in the appropriate place: “This is the secret of wearing the *ḥirqa* among the Ṣūfīs and this is its true meaning. Human beings only wear clothes that suit them. As for Muslims and believers, they are God's choice (among people,

<sup>140</sup> The mediaeval Muslim doctors considered it a grave illness.

<sup>141</sup> On Sahl at-Tustarī's famous saying about the different usages and forms of this *hā'*, see Iványi 2022:70.



'*uyūn*) on Earth. So, if one of them is seen in the Šūfī cloak in a tavern (*ḥarāba*),<sup>142</sup> even if he was a godless, sinful person, he would be severely criticised and reproached (as if he were a Šūfī), or he could be beaten and ejected from the place, although he was in reality a regular guest at the tavern. However, if he was dressed in ordinary clothes, even if he was in secret a friend of God, he was forgiven – considering that the outward shape is more decisive than the inward meaning” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 243).

## 5 Conclusion of the voyage

### 5.1 Reaching the degree of friendship with God (*darağat ḥuṣūli l-walāya*)

al-Kubrā summarises the different phases of the mystical path, which he calls ‘degrees’ (*darağāt*), as his spiritual book of instruction is nearing the end. The degree of ‘friendship with God’ (*walāya*) is the third degree that the voyager can reach, the first degree being the ‘inconstancy’ (*talwīn*),<sup>143</sup> the second the ‘stability’ (*tamkīn*).<sup>144</sup> This third degree is the final formation (*takwīn*) of the spiritual state of the voyager.

Then he adds that there are other ways of characterising these degrees. The first is the degree of knowledge, or stripping of the worldly attributes (*tağrīd*), or fear and hope (*ḥawf* and *rağā'*) or the vision of the outer forms (*ṣuwar*). The second is the exclusive concentration on God’s attributes (*tafrīd*), or the distress and relief (*qabḍ* and *bast*), or the vision of the inner essences (*ma'ānī*). The third is the degree of unification of God (*tawhīd*), respect and intimacy (*hayba* and *uns*), or annihilation (*fanā'*) of the vision. In short: First, the renunciation of this world (*taḥallī*), then the revelation (*tağallī*) and finally the friendship or protection of God (*tawallī*)<sup>145</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 248–249).

The above descriptions do not contain abstract mystical terms; they are based on the long-term observation of the states of mind of the disciples, whom the master has introduced to the sometimes exhausting mystical practices, such as the long lasting remembrances and seclusions.

At the end of their voyage, the voyagers must be prepared to meet the requirements of God’s benevolent friendship and protection. As Prophet Muḥammad says according to the Qur’ān 7:196: “My protecting friend / my protector is God”.<sup>146</sup> The continuation of the *āya* illuminates what is required of God’s friends: “He

<sup>142</sup> A Persian word.

<sup>143</sup> *Verbatim* the changing of the colours.

<sup>144</sup> *Verbatim* strengthening one’s state.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* tr. by Maḥmūd and al. 198, where the saying of Abū ‘Alī ad-Daqqāq is cited about the same thoughts.

<sup>146</sup> *inna waliyyiya llāhu*. The first is Pickthall’s translation, the second is that of Jones, which is the generally accepted interpretation of the word *waliyyun*, although in a mystical text the first counts as appropriate.

befriendeth the righteous / He gives protection to the righteous”<sup>147</sup> (*huwa yatawallā ṣ-ṣāliḥīna*)<sup>148</sup>

## 5.2 *The highest degree of the voyage* (muntahā s-sayr)

### 5.2.1 *The highest degree of remembrance* (muntahā d-ḍikr)

“When the remembrance finally arrives in the innermost heart (*sirr*), it continues incessantly even if the voyager remains silent, as if the needle stitches were fixed on his tongue. Or as if the whole of his face were a tongue that remembers God by the light that pours forth from it” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 255). That is, at this high state, the rememberer unconsciously performs the remembering of God.

### 5.2.2 *The highest degree of the voyage* (muntahā s-sayr)

“When the voyager became pure and the power of resolution grew in him,<sup>149</sup> he always finds another power, the power of the heart (*yad al-qalb*), by which he performs every activity in God’s unseen world” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 255). All this results from the highest degree of remembrance.<sup>150</sup>

### 5.2.3 *The veils of God*

“God (al-Ḥaqq) is veiled in both the visible world (*‘ālam aš-šahāda*) by discernible signs (*dalā’il zāhira*) and the unseen world (*ḡayb*) by hidden miraculous indications (*āyāt bāṭina*). The visible world contains light and darkness, both of which form veils, as well as the unseen world contains light and darkness, both of which form veils.<sup>151</sup> However, light and darkness in the visible world are only the names of light and darkness, while light and darkness in the unseen world are the spiritual contents of these two (material) names of the visible world. ... The knowledge of the voyager grows by the appearance of hidden indications of the unseen world. Then his knowledge grows again by the annihilation of these indications” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā’ih* 256–257).

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<sup>147</sup> This metaphor means that the remembrance, similarly to the needle in the clothes, is fixed in the tongue of the rememberer.

<sup>148</sup> The two translations correspond to those mentioned in fn. 141. The interpretation of this portion of the *āya* in al-Kubrā, *Tafsīr* III, 100: “They can do righteous acts by His (friendly) protection. Were they all left to their own will, they could only do wrong things.”

<sup>149</sup> I.e., the energy for concentrating exclusively on God.

<sup>150</sup> Since al-Kubrā’s book is one of the earliest (or possibly the earliest) Ṣūfī work which lays such an overwhelming importance on remembrance (*ḍikr*), some Western scholars consider it the principal characteristics of the *Fawā’ih al-ḡamāl*. See, e.g., Ernst, 1997:114 “(al-Kubrā) combined intensive concentration on *dhikr* recitation as a purification of the heart.”

<sup>151</sup> As the *ḥadīṭ* says: *inna li-llāhi ta’ālā sab’īna ḥiḡāban min nūrin wa-ḡulma*. See ar-Rāzī, *Tafsīr* XXIII, 231 ff.

al-Kubrā here pointed out the significance of annihilation for the last time in the final phase of his voyage to God, when the seeker or voyager should forget everything, even his previous praiseworthy practices and give way to submerging into the blessed effects of God's nearness.

#### 5.2.4 *The basis of the mystical tasting* (qā'ida dawqiyya)

The author then emphasises the essential message of his didactic handbook for the seekers of divine knowledge and divine love: The instruction and guidance of the Šayḥ only turn out to be useful if the disciple enters upon the voyage and goes along the way leading to the proximity of God. He should perceive during his voyage the blameworthy and praiseworthy things in God's unseen world. Even those who are attracted to (*mağdūb*) God by God and so taste what is aimed at (*maqṣūd*) in their endeavours, must taste the way and the stations of the voyage. It is an important conclusion: Although there is no mystical voyage without a master, the master is not enough alone. As in every form of teaching, there should be a symmetric relationship between teacher and pupil (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 257–258).

#### 5.2.5 *Confusion near the end of the voyage* (taḥayyur)

al-Kubrā gives the following description of this confusion: “When the voyager reached near the end of the way, after he had reached his goal of gaining knowledge of discernible and hidden miraculous indications, and the Divine attributes and essence had been revealed to him, and his desire to reach Him had become violent, heaven and earth became prison, jail, deep well, and forest for him in which he was imprisoned. Every time he had tried to escape from it he was confronted with signs and miraculous indications from the earth and the heaven. Sometimes these heavenly indications suited him in his confusion, some other times suited him in his sorrow so much that he started to weep” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 258–260).

#### 5.2.6 *The final station*

The author describes the last steps of the voyage as follows: “If the voyager reached the station called *qif* (stop!) on the way to connection and disjunction (*waṣl wa-faṣl*), and got as far as the most respected power of the Oneness (*'izzat al-waḥdāniyya*) and became disjuncted from human rules, this would be an event that a human being cannot bear, and even tongues cannot bear its description. In this spiritual state, there are things that no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard, and which did not occur to the human heart” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 260).

## 6 The author's final words

### 6.1 *The termination of the book*

“All those signs, indications and manifestations that we have mentioned (earlier in this book) have been the blameworthy or praiseworthy results of the mutual relationship of the worshipper and his worshipped. These (signs) also form the rules of the worshipper's association with Him. They may serve as a model for those who are moving towards God and who are willing to know the taste of the tasters, the ardour of the passionate lovers, the light of those who have known God, the fire of the lovers, the speed of those who are yearning, the ecstasy of those who are in ecstatic love, the fruits of those who reveal God's manifestations, the secrets of those who make intimate conversation with God, and the method of those who will be saved” (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 261).

### 6.2 *Explanation of the title*

The author asks: “Why did I call my book ‘The fragrance of the (divine) Beauty and the commencements of the (divine) Glory’? I used this title to remind those who succeeded in cutting their worldly bindings and to instruct the sincere”<sup>152</sup> (al-Kubrā, *Fawā'ih* 262).

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<sup>152</sup> *wa-samaytu l-kitāb: Fawā'ih al-ḡamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-ḡalāl tadkīratan li-l-munqaṭi'īna wa-tabṣīratan li-l-muḥliṣīn.*

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