

# The Ḥurūfī Moses: An Example of Late Medieval ‘Heterodox’ Interpretation of the Qur’an and Bible

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## Introduction

The Ḥurūfī movement emerged in Iran in the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century. At the heart of Ḥurūfī teaching is a philosophico-mystical conception of language, from whence probably came the name of the movement (*ḥarf*, pl. *ḥurūf*, meaning ‘word’ or ‘letter’ in Arabic).<sup>1</sup> The founder of Ḥurūfism, Faḍlallāh Astarābādī, was born in 740/1339–40 in Astarābād, an Iranian city to the south-east of the Caspian Sea.<sup>2</sup> Information concerning the spiritual and intellectual education and affiliation of Faḍlallāh is extremely rare. His works show some level of training in the traditional Islamic disciplines such as Qur’an, Ḥadīth and *fiqh*; he certainly had a good knowledge of classical Persian and Arabic, and at least a basic knowledge of Turkish. He also often quotes apocryphal *aḥādīth*, and passages from the Bible, from the Old as well as the New Testaments, which he probably learned through Persian and Arabic translations.<sup>3</sup> However, neither the names of his teachers, nor his possible affiliation to any particular school or dervish order are mentioned in the known sources. What his biographers insist upon is the fact that he received his teaching from a supernatural source, in particular from the initiatory dreams which he had during his travels through Iran and Central Asia and his pilgrimages to the holy places of Islam.<sup>4</sup> Faḍlallāh first becomes known as a dream interpreter, an activity which he continues to undertake until 775/1374, the year in which he experiences the most important revelation of his spiritual career.<sup>5</sup> According to the description of this experience in the works of his disciples, it is at this point that Faḍlallāh finds himself initiated into the secrets of ultimate meaning of the single letters which appear at the beginning of some suras of the Qur’an (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta‘āt*).<sup>6</sup> This knowledge unveils to Faḍlallāh the Book of Adam, the origin of all revelation and key to the esoteric level of all prophetic messages, in particular that of the mission of Muḥammad. He receives the title of ‘Master of Time’ (*sayyid al-zamān*).<sup>7</sup> This experience marks a turning point in Faḍlallāh’s career: from now on he becomes an independent spiritual master, holder of an original teaching obtained as a result of his personal spiritual search.<sup>8</sup>

Faḍlallāh was condemned to death by the ‘orthodox’ religious scholars of his time on the grounds of his ‘heretical’ views, but probably also because of his political

ambitions, and was executed, on the order of Timur, in 796/1394.<sup>9</sup> After Faḍlallāh's death, and probably under strong pressure from the Timurid government, the Ḥurūfī community split almost immediately into several branches which seem to henceforth evolve more or less independently in the different regions of Iran.<sup>10</sup> Although the Ḥurūfīs were certainly present in the struggle for the power in Iran, which involved a number of competing clans such as the Timurids, Jalā'irids, Muẓaffarids and the tribal confederations of the Qara- and Aqqoyunlu, during the troubled period between the death of Tamerlane and the rising of the Safavids, the available historical data concerning them is still too fragmentary to give any coherent presentation of their real role and political strategies.<sup>11</sup> However, it seems that the Ḥurūfīs belong to a cluster of similar heterodox movements – such as the Sarbadārs, the Nūrbakhshīs, the Musha'asha' and the early Ṣafawiyya – whose political ambitions relied on strong messianic expectations, and who were at this time seeking to associate themselves with an appropriate political force in order to bring their creed to the level of the state religion.<sup>12</sup>

The Nuḡṭawīs, a movement which stems from the Ḥurūfīs, was quite influential in Iran from the ninth/fifteenth century, and later in India,<sup>13</sup> and direct references to Ḥurūfīsm can also be found in the literature of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq.<sup>14</sup> The effort to bring together Islamic, Jewish and Christian elements within the framework of a single philosophico-religious system makes the Ḥurūfīs comparable to other movements with syncretistic ambitions in Islam, such as the Bābīs and the Bahā'īs during the modern and contemporary periods.<sup>15</sup>

The evolution of Ḥurūfīsm after the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century is mainly connected with the history of Turkey, where the Ḥurūfīs seem to be in line with various similar heterodox movements active in the Ottoman Empire at this period.<sup>16</sup> One of the most influential Ḥurūfī missionaries in Anatolia was 'Alī al-A'ālā (d. 822/1419), disciple and son-in-law of Faḍlallāh, who brought the Ḥurūfī teachings to the Baktāshī order of dervishes.<sup>17</sup> Following their usual strategies, the Ḥurūfīs attempted to establish connections with the Ottoman sultans. However, their open political activities seem not to have been any more successful in Turkey than they were in Iran, and descriptions of these attempts in the sources seem to reproduce roughly the same scenario: as soon as the Ḥurūfīs succeeded in attracting the attention and the favours of the sultan, they came into conflict with the 'ulamā' who denounced them as heretics and finally obtained from the sultan the order to expel or execute them.<sup>18</sup> From the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century, the Ḥurūfīs seem to renounce independent activity, choosing rather to merge with more 'convenient' orders, essentially the Baktāshīs, among whom they transmitted their teachings. When, suspected of supporting the rebellion of the Janissaries, the Baktāshī order was dissolved under Sultan Maḥmūd in 1240/1824–5, the Ḥurūfīs scattered among the

Naqshbandī, Qādirī, Rifāʿī, Saʿdī and other orders of dervishes who had taken over the Baktāshī *tekkes*.<sup>19</sup>

The Ḥurūfīs were also quite influential in the Balkans, particularly in Albania.<sup>20</sup> However, it is not quite clear whether there was an uninterrupted transmission of the Ḥurūfī teachings until the late Ottoman period. It is possible that by this time Ḥurūfism had undergone increasing popularisation and assimilated elements coming from various external sources, gradually losing connections with the core of the primitive doctrine. A thorough study of the sources would be needed to clarify the real identity of the groups known as ‘Ḥurūfīs’ at this period. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Ḥurūfī ideas are still in circulation nowadays, especially in Turkey. An example of Ḥurūfī influence on the religious minorities in contemporary Turkey is the translation into modern Turkish of the *ʿIshq-nāma* of Firishte Oglu, a Ḥurūfī author of the eighteenth century, published in an ʿAlawī edition.<sup>21</sup> An example of Ḥurūfī influence on contemporary Turkish literature can be seen in the *Black Book* of Orhan Pamuk. This novel contains some excursions into Ḥurūfī history and doctrines, but, what is more, the author applies, at several levels, the idea of ‘fragmentation’, which may be inspired by the specific ‘broken’ structure of some Ḥurūfī texts, and in particular the *Jāwdān-nāma*, with which we are concerned here.<sup>22</sup>

As indicated by the name of the movement, the ‘science of letters’ (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*), together with the ‘science of numbers’, constitutes one of the fundamental aspects of Ḥurūfī doctrine. However, the Ḥurūfīs as a sect founded by Faḍlallāh Astarābādī should not be confused with the general and much larger tendency of *ʿilm al-ḥurūf*, the discussion of sounds, letters and numbers which occupies a significant place in various branches of the Islamic cultural tradition, such as magic, alchemy, philosophical and mystical thought. The medieval literature concerning the science of letters is extremely abundant, and even a short account of its predominant figures and main trends would exceed the limits of our introduction.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, we cannot discuss in this article all aspects of the particular Ḥurūfī usage of the science of letters, and its possible connections with other similar currents. In what follows, we will mention only specific elements of Ḥurūfī theory relevant to the understanding of the interpretations relating to the story of Moses, the main topic of this contribution. Our presentation is founded essentially on the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the major work of Faḍlallāh Astarābādī which will be discussed with more detail later in this introduction.

The *Jāwdān-nāma* states that the divine Verb contains, from the very beginning, 28 and/or 32 abstract aspects, named Words (*kalimāt*). The numbers 28 and 32 with their components (submultiples, multiples, addends, sums) are used by the author throughout his work in order to support the theory according to which the entire universe is created by the 28/32 original Words and therefore organised in accordance with their numbers: time, with its divisions founded on the number 60 (28 and 32, as

in 60 minutes in one hour); the heavenly spheres divided into 360 degrees ( $6 \times 28$  and  $6 \times 32$ ); canonical rituals (the 17 *rak'āt* of prayer on weekdays and 15 *rak'āt* of that on Friday equal 32, while the 17 and the 11 *rak'āt* prescribed for travel are 28); man with his 360 bones; and so on.<sup>24</sup> We will see more detailed examples of the numerical interpretations and connections between the numbers and the original Words in the passages related to the Moses story, in particular to the symbol of the Tent of Meeting.

According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, in the state of divine unity before the universe was created these 28/32 Words were integrated within the single and undifferentiated Voice of God. Creation began with the utterance of the Imperative *kun* ('Be!'), the two components of which (*k* and *n*) represent the idea of differentiation. In the stages which follow, the 28/32 Words appear in a differentiated form, as 28/32 distinct phonemes. According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, these phonemes are the simple elements of the Meaning (*ma'na*) which underlies any existence. Their combinations constitute the Names, the principle of existence, the 'quiddity' (*māhiyya*) of material objects. At the same time, the 28/32 Letters (*hurūf*), the graphical expression of the first phonemes, are the first elements of Form (*ṣūra*). Just as the phonemes compose the names of the objects, the corresponding Letters compose their external shapes.

The *Jāwdān-nāma* states further that there is an essential correspondence between any unit of meaning, be it a single phoneme or a name, and the form of its visible expression. This correspondence is founded on the principles of 'divine convention' (*iṣtilāḥ-i ilāhī*), 'common measure' (*andāza*) and 'balance' (*istiwā'*), which we will discuss in further detail when commenting on relevant episodes of the Moses' story below.<sup>25</sup> According to this perspective, the bodily form of objects acquires the status of the 'locus of the manifestation' (*maẓhar*) of meaning. It is also the 'science' (*'ilm*), a means by which the inner signification of any existing thing can be grasped, in accordance with the principle of correspondence.

The science of correspondence between form and its meaning was first taught by God to Adam: this is the Ḥurūfī interpretation of the famous Qur'anic aya *He taught Adam all the names* (Q. 2:31). Adam is a central point in the Ḥurūfī theory of creation. He is the only creature whose bodily form is the 'locus of manifestation' of the whole 'set' of the 28/32 first Letters, while all other objects and beings are brought into existence by the various combinations of a lesser number of elements. In addition, Adam is the only being able to establish the connection between the form of any Letter and the element of the divine reality which constitutes its *meaning*. While the bodily form of Adam is inherited by all his descendants, the knowledge of its meaning is transmitted only in the line of prophets. The missions of the consecutive prophets gradually disclose this knowledge, until the last prophetic mission accomplished by the Prophet Muḥammad seals the cycle of the revelation of primordial meaning and sums up the

contents of all previous revelations. The mission of Muḥammad achieves the period of *tanzīl*, the ‘descent’ of the knowledge of Letters in the created world. This *tanzīl* will be followed by the period of *taʿwīl*, the ‘return to the original source’, during which the full revelation of the 32 Letters will be accomplished. This, according to Ḥurūfī thought, is why the text of the Qurʾān is written with 28 letters, and contains four other letters latent within the ligature *lām-alīf*.<sup>26</sup> The revelation of the original divine Verb with its 28/32 aspects is nothing else than the manifestation of the bodily form of Adam, who is also the Saviour of the End of Time.<sup>27</sup>

*Taʿwīl* also means spiritual exegesis of the sacred texts, and especially Qurʾānic exegesis. In Ḥurūfī conception there is a close logical link between the idea of *taʿwīl* as a period when the full set of the 32 original Letters will be disclosed, and *taʿwīl* understood as the exegesis of the holy scriptures. Indeed, for the Ḥurūfīs the exegesis of the text is nothing like an abstract intellectual procedure: it is not concerned with the rational meaning of words and phrases as determined by the conventions of human language, but with the elements of absolute meaning which manifest themselves through the single Letters, in the sense that we specified above. Knowledge of the meaning of the single Letters thus gives the possibility of moving away from the conventional (*iṣṭilāḥ*) dimension of language and accessing the original, real meaning (*maʿnā*) of words and objects.<sup>28</sup> However, this knowledge cannot be complete before the meaning of all 32 original Letters is disclosed – whence the connection with the final period of the revelation.

As we will see in the example of the broken Tablets of Moses, the Ḥurūfī conception of *taʿwīl* is connected with the idea of fragmentation. This fragmentation is nothing other than the division of the text with a view to breaking through the rational, conventional meaning of the words and making the single letters appear, these being the most simple components of the text on which, as we have just mentioned, Ḥurūfī *taʿwīl* focuses. This is why, according to Ḥurūfī interpretation, the real meaning of the text is inaccessible *until the text is broken* – and this is the ultimate explanation of the action of Moses when he breaks the Tablets written by God’s own hand.

The fragmentation also expresses the idea of the *differentiation* of the divine Verb which was One at the beginning. Differentiation, as we have mentioned above, begins with the action of the divine Imperative *kun* (‘Be!’), which makes apparant the 28/32 aspects through which the Verb, unknowable in its Oneness, can be now perceived and known. According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, this is the meaning of the mountain exploding when Moses asks to see God: it explodes into the 28/32 parts which allow Moses to see what can be revealed of God. We will come back to these interpretations when discussing the correspondent episodes of Moses’ story.

Ḥurūfī doctrine clearly conceives itself as the adaptation of Islam to the period of *taʿwīl*, the last stage of existence of humanity which will follow the period of the

legislative prophecy (*nubuwwa*) closed by Muḥammad, and the period of the Shī'ī imāms (*walāya*), which will culminate with the coming of the Saviour and end with the dissolution of the material universe in the divine Verb from which it issued in the beginning. This is the rationale underlying the particular interest of the Ḥurūfī interpretations of the Qur'an and Ḥadīth. This strong messianic orientation, along with other characteristic features – the emphasis put on the importance of the human being as the 'locus of manifestation' (*maḥzar*) of God, elements of transmigration theory and the 'occult sciences', such as alchemy and astrology – bring the Ḥurūfīs close to the Islamic movements of Shī'ī obedience known as *ghulāt* ('extremist').<sup>29</sup> However, as we have already remarked when discussing the Ḥurūfī use of Ḥadīth, it seems precocious at the moment to make any definite conclusion concerning the situation of the Ḥurūfīs on the Sunnī/Shī'ī scale. The data found in the *Jāwdān-nāma* does not allow us to relate the Ḥurūfīs to any branch of Twelver or Ismā'īlī Shī'ism, nor does it contain specific reference to any Shī'ī imām, except 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and, very briefly, one of his sons, Ḥusayn.<sup>30</sup> It likewise contains no development on the affiliations and number of imāms, major points of controversy between the different Shī'ī sects. As to Ḥurūfī prophetology, it is founded on the conception of the *ummiyyūn*, the 'motherly' prophets and saints, which, as to my knowledge, has no analogy in either Shī'ī or Sunnī Islam.<sup>31</sup> Besides, Ḥurūfism seems to combine, without any visible conflict, Shī'ī and Sunnī views – a situation which is not without precedent in the history of Islamic mysticism, particularly in Iran between the Mongol invasion and the rising of the Safavids.<sup>32</sup>

Ḥurūfī works are still mostly only available as manuscripts (except for some short works by various authors published in 1909 in Cl. Huart's *Textes persans relatifs à la secte des Hourouffis*).<sup>33</sup> The major work of Faḍlallāh, the *Jāwdān-nāma*, (the 'Eternal Book'), on the study of which this paper is based, and which he would have written over the course of several years in different places, and completed by 788/1386, also remains unpublished.<sup>34</sup> The quotations from the *Jāwdān-nāma* below are made after the the British Library manuscript (MS Or. 5957), dating to the eighteenth or nineteenth century, and consisting of about 500 folios.

The *Jāwdān-nāma* is certainly the foundational work of the Ḥurūfī doctrine. Written in literary Persian mixed with the ancient Astārābādī dialect, it is a rich source of information on all aspects of the original Ḥurūfī teaching. However, direct access to the contents of the *Jāwdān-nāma* is rather difficult because of its cryptic composition. The cryptic aspect of the text manifests itself on several levels. One of these is the use of the little known Astārābādī dialect already mentioned, along with the use of specific abbreviations representing some recurrent expressions and formulae.<sup>35</sup> The other, and by far more effective one, is the 'fragmented' structure of the text. Indeed, the *Jāwdān-nāma* is deprived of any thematic arrangement: passages concerning any given subject are dissociated and scattered throughout the work.<sup>36</sup> The *Jāwdān-nāma*

was probably first written down by Faḍlallāh himself or by one of his children, and then copied and transmitted by his disciples. Copies of the work seem to have been best preserved within the Baktāshī order of dervishes, through which the first copies of this work came to Western libraries. The oldest available manuscript of the *Jāwdān-nāma* known to me is either that of Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, al-Ma<sup>c</sup>ārif Mutanawwi<sup>c</sup>a Fārsī Tal<sup>c</sup>a (dating to after 789/1386), or that of Millet Library, Istanbul, Ali Emiri Farsi, MS 920 (992/1584). The first description of the *Jāwdān-nāma* in the catalogue of a European library seems to be made in Leiden.<sup>37</sup> But the real rediscovery of the *Jāwdān-nāma* in Europe, as with other Ḥurūfī manuscripts, begins with the works of Cl. Huart and E. Browne, who acquired a number of Ḥurūfī works now preserved in the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cambridge University Library, and the British Library.<sup>38</sup>

The *Jāwdān-nāma* is often described as a Qur'an commentary.<sup>39</sup> Such is indeed the impression that one might receive on first contact with the text of the *Jāwdān-nāma*, because of the abundance of Qur'anic quotations. A closer examination allows us to specify the role of the Qur'anic text in the *Jāwdān-nāma*: this work does not undertake any systematic commentary, but quotes rather repeatedly a limited number of *āyas* selected from different *suras*, often accompanied by *aḥādīth* and quotations from the Bible, from the Old as well as the New Testaments. The Qur'anic quotations thus appear as the basis of a symbolic language which, in interaction with the symbolism of other scriptural sources, conveys the positions of the complex theologico-philosophical system elaborated by Faḍlallāh. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, according to evidence found in the *Jāwdān-nāma* itself and also in some later Ḥurūfī works, the characteristic 'fragmented' structure of the *Jāwdān-nāma* imitates the 'fragmented', logically discontinuous composition of the Qur'an. An anonymous note found on the last pages of the British Library manuscript (481b) states, for instance, that:

The Master of *ta'wīl* [i.e. Faḍlallāh] has founded the divine *Jāwdān-nāma* upon six 'beginnings'.<sup>40</sup> From the beginning to the end, the word of the divine *Jāwdān-nāma* is divided and contained within these six 'beginnings', and sealed by them. In the same manner, the inimitable word of the Master of *tanzīl* [i.e. the Qur'an revealed by the Prophet Muḥammad, the 'seal of the Prophets'] contains 29 *suras* introduced by the combinations of the single Letters, and is divided into 29 parts, which are the treasures sealed by the single Letters.

The title 'Master of *ta'wīl*' (*ṣāḥib-i ta'wīl*) mentioned in this quotation signifies both 'Master of Spiritual Exegesis', and 'the one who brings the revelation back to its origin' (after the Prophet Muḥammad who 'sealed' its 'descent' (*tanzīl*)).<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that the *Jāwdān-nāma* itself contains no obvious explicit claim to

be a 'divine' text, and nowhere in the text does Faḍlallāh name himself 'the Master of *ta'wīl*'. However, later Ḥurūfī works generally admit that the *Jāwdān-nāma* is an inspired text containing the only true exegesis of the Qur'an, and that Faḍlallāh himself is the depository of the divine science of *ta'wīl*. The great charismatic authority of Faḍlallāh among his followers is also attested by the rituals imitating the pilgrimage to Mecca performed around his grave.<sup>42</sup>

According to Ḥurūfī prophetology, the original divine Verb reveals itself gradually through the successive missions of the prophets. This revelation begins and ends with Adam, the depository of the entire divine Verb. Comments on the Qur'anic and Biblical episodes related to different prophets mentioned in the *Jāwdān-nāma* (the prophetic figures most frequently commented on are Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, Jesus and Muḥammad) can thus be relatively easily put together, so that a structure can be divined within the overall fragmentary structure of the *Jāwdān-nāma* if one views the text in terms of its treatment of prophets. Among the prophets of the Old Testament mentioned in the *Jāwdān-nāma*, Moses is without doubt the one to receive the most comment. Discussion of the episodes of Moses' story gives us an example of how the author of the *Jāwdān-nāma* uses scriptural materials in order to express a number of the important positions of his doctrine.

## 1. The Tent of Meeting

### 1.1 *The Tent of Meeting as a Representation of the Divine Verb*

The Tent of Meeting erected by Moses at the place where the Temple of Jerusalem is later to be built is the symbol most widely commented on in the *Jāwdān-nāma* which relates to Moses. According to one interpretation, the Tent represents the divine Verb, the origin of creation. The proportions of the Tent of Meeting built by Moses are based on the numbers 28 and 32 which, as we saw in the introduction, represent, according to the Ḥurūfīs, the entire Verb. The Tent is thus an embodiment of the Verb, essentially identical to the Torah, another manifestation of the Verb. Orientation towards the Verb of God is the signification which underlies the role of the Tent, and later of the Temple of Jerusalem, as a direction of spiritual orientation.<sup>43</sup>

- [1] God gave to Moses the instructions to build the Tent of Meeting, so that Moses and those who follow him would turn themselves in direction of this tent to worship God ... The length of each curtain is 28 cubits, the 28 original Words being identical in their essence<sup>44</sup> ... Each curtain is 4 cubits wide, in order to suggest the 32 [original Words]. Such is the direction of [spiritual] orientation established in accordance with the orders of the Eternal. (298a)
- [2] *Glory to (God) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts*



*We did bless* [Q. 17:1], i.e. to the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, the ancient location of the Tent of Meeting, receptacle of the Torah. This is why it is said: *Moreover, We gave Moses the Book, completing (Our favour) to those who would do right, and explaining all things in detail – and a guide and a mercy, that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord* [Q. 6:154]. The ‘complete’ [is given for] ‘the right’ which is the Tent of Meeting. (352b)

### 1.2. *The Tent as an Equivalent to the Human Bodily Form*

As we saw in the introduction, the human bodily form has an exceptional importance in the doctrine of the *Jāwdān-nāma*, due in particular to the fact that it is the ‘locus of manifestation’ *par excellence* of the entire original Verb. The ‘locus of manifestation’ is nothing other than a particular form, or body, by means of which the invisible reality of the Verb makes itself accessible to empirical, sensitive perception, and thus makes itself known. In Ḥurūfī terminology, the form of any existing material object is the ‘science’ (*‘ilm*) of the Verb. However, the science of any particular object generally includes only a few aspects of the Verb. Only the human bodily form includes all the 28/32 original aspects, the complete science of the Verb. As we saw in the previous passages, the proportions of the Tent represent the Verb as well. Whence the analogy between the Tent of Meeting and the human body:

- [3] The Tent of Meeting was made with 11 curtains, each of which was 28 cubits long. Along the edge of each curtain, there were 50 loops, in order to suggest that the two arms and the two legs of Adam, situated on each side of his back are [shaped as the counterpart of the] 28 original Words, the science of which is expressed by the 50 Letters and Points.<sup>45</sup> The chest and the back of Adam are created between his two arms and his two legs. The two hands and the two feet of Adam contain 28 bones. (137b)
- [4] The right hand and the right foot together [contain] 28 [phalanges], in accordance with the number of the 28 divine words. The Science of these 28 divine Words is expressed by the 50 letters and points [of the Arabic alphabet], counterparts of the 28 divine Words. This is why, in the Torah, God orders Moses to make the Tent of Meeting with 11 curtains, each of which is 28 cubits long and 4 cubits wide, with 50 loops on each side ... the Eternal orders [the community of Moses] to turn their faces in this direction and to worship God. It is there that the Tablets of Moses and the Torah were placed. (137b–138a)

- [5] Each curtain of the Tent is furnished with 50 loops, featuring the 50 letters and points, counterparts of the 28 phalanges of the fingers of the hands and feet located on each side of the face ... [Each curtain of] the Tent measures 28 cubits of length and 4 cubits of width, [reproducing] the shape of the [human] face ... The 28 [original Words] correspond to the 50 letters and points [of the Arabic alphabet]. Their original form of expression is the [human] face. The 28 and 28 [Words which underlie the 50 letters and points] appear subsequently in the form of [the phalanges] of the fingers of the hands and the feet, 28 on each side of the body. The 50 letters and points are their science.<sup>46</sup> And each side of the Tent contained 50 loops attached to the Tent. (180a–b)

### 1.3. *The Proportions of the Tent Contain the Measure of Time*

According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, Time, like Adam, is a result of the differentiation brought about within the originally One Verb by the divine Imperative *kun*. While the 28/32 separate letters resulting from this operation shape the body of Adam, the six Letters produced in the spelling of the two letters – *k* and *n* – of the Imperative, *kāf* and *nūn*, are related to the six days of creation mentioned in the Bible and in the Qur'an. From this point of view, time, like Adam, is a counterpart of the original Verb as a whole. While Adam is the *form* of the Verb, Time is its *receptacle* (*ẓarf*). Measurement of Time is founded on the cycle of the week, a reproduction of the 'six days of creation' during which the world was created, repeated until the end of time: the week is composed of  $7 \times 24$  hours, or  $6 \times 28$  hours. According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the latter presentation is an expression of the fact that Time is divided in conformity with the 28/32 original Words; and that each object is encompassed from the six directions (four cardinal points, zenith and nadir) by a 'complete set' of the 28 parts of Time connected to the 28 original Words. The proportions of the Tent of Meeting convey also the measure of Time:

- [6] A night and a day contain 24 hours. The Jews recognise 7 days and nights, or  $6 \times 28$  hours, in accordance with the proportions of the Tent of Meeting. (5b)
- [7] Admitting that the days are equal to the nights, the 'six days' contain 72 hours, the number of the letters contained in the names of the 28 letters of the alphabet in the language of the Prophet; and 28 cubits is the length of the curtains of the Tent of Meeting. (298b)

#### 1.4. The Tent of Meeting and the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba

According to a well-known *ḥadīth*, God took the clay which served for the creation of the head and face of Adam from the place corresponding to the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba, and from the place corresponding to the Temple of Jerusalem He took the clay for the back and the chest. The *Jāwdān-nāma* refers to this *ḥadīth* when determining the values of the two spiritual orientations: the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba represents the face of the man, where appears in a condensed form the divine Writing, the Science of the Verb; while the Temple of Jerusalem, built on the place where formerly was the Tent of Meeting, represents the back of Adam, the origin of humanity, and his chest, which contains prophetic Science. Notwithstanding this interpretation, which ascribes a distinct meaning to Jerusalem and to the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba, the Tent of Meeting of Moses contains, according to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, a number of features which connect it to the values of the face characteristic to the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba:

- [8] Moses turned his face [towards the location of the] Temple of Jerusalem to worship God. [The Temple of Jerusalem] is the place of the chest and the back of Adam. The chest is the receptacle of the divine Science: *Nay, here are Signs self-evident in the chests of those endowed with knowledge* [Q. 29:49]. As to the back, it is the place of the original nature (*khilqa*) of all the prophets and saints ... Whosoever turns his face in the direction of the place corresponding to the back and the chest of Adam honours by so doing the germs of all the prophets and saints entrusted in deposit to the back of Adam, but not Adam himself. Orientation towards the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba expresses another idea. [The Ka<sup>°</sup>ba is the location corresponding to the face and the head of Adam], and the lines of the divine Writing are written on the face of Adam, and not on his chest or back. (41b)
- [9] Concerning pilgrimage to the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba: the Ka<sup>°</sup>ba is an indication of the perfect soul. What Moses built, i.e. the Tent of Meeting, is also an indication (*dalāla*) of the 50 distinctive features of the bodily form of the perfect man. From this point of view, [Moses] attained his own Ka<sup>°</sup>ba, [and he attained the realisation of the fact] that the 32 [lines of the human face and body] are the Science mentioned in [the aya]: *taught man that which he knew not* [Q. 96:5], i.e. [taught man the meaning] of his own bodily form contained in the 32 [original Words]. Thus, [the meaning of the saying] ‘he who knows himself [knows his Lord]’ was really realised for him. (215a)

- [10] In the Tent of Meeting, which is the Temple of Jerusalem, Moses received the Tablets containing the 10 ayas which represent the face. There he included them in the Torah to be used as a guide towards the chest and the Science [contained in the chest]. Moses asked to see the face [of God], but he saw the back, because [this place is] the locus of manifestation of the back. (250b)
- [11] The saying 'the heart of the faithful is the house of God' indicates the Temple of Jerusalem and the heart [of Adam]. God ordered Moses to turn his face in direction of the heart of Adam. Before Moses, He ordered Abraham to turn his face in direction of the Ka'ba, the place of the head, the forehead and the face [of Adam]. Indeed, it is on the face that it is possible to distinguish the divine Science and scripture. The 10 ayas and the Tablets [of Moses] hold the place of this scripture and of this face ... It is said in the Torah that Moses asked God to see His face. God answered him that he will see only His back. The place of His back and His chest is [the location] of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem.<sup>47</sup> (251b–252a)
- [12] God told Moses to make 11 curtains to evoke the lines of the face of Adam ... He said that these 11 curtains must be 28 cubits long and four cubits wide to evoke the 32 [original] sounds. And it is there [in the Tent] that he [Moses] laid down the Tablets ... [The Tent of Meeting] is similar to the Ka'ba. (364a)
- [13] When Moses read the Science of the 28 and 32 Words on the face of Adam, he built, in accordance with the order of God, the *qibla* of his religion at the place corresponding to the back and the chest of Adam. It was the Tent of Meeting, and later the Temple of Jerusalem. (414b–415a)

### 1.5. *The Tent of Meeting and the Meeting between Muḥammad and Adam*

The connection between the Tent of Meeting and the Ka'ba stated in the previous passages is further developed within the interpretation of the symbol of the Tent, interpretation which establishes a connection between the Tent and the prophetic mission of Muḥammad. The latter is indeed associated in the prophetology of the *Jāwdān-nāma* with the revelation of the divine scripture contained on the human face. As we have seen, the Tent of Moses is made in accordance with the proportions of the human body and face. The structure of Islamic prayer and the number of the letters of the Arabic alphabet are also reflected in the proportions of the Tent.<sup>48</sup> According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, this is the meaning of Q. 7:157, *those who follow the apostle, the ummī Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures), in the Torah and*

*the Gospel*. But what is more, the Tent contains some elements which announce a period of the revelation subsequent to the mission of Muḥammad. The realities which are to be disclosed during this final period of revelation were shown to Muḥammad during his heavenly ascension, which is significantly preceded by a journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, the place of the Tent of Moses. According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the four cubits which make up the width of the curtains of the Tent, announce four original Words missing from the revelation of Muḥammad (represented by the 28 Letters with which the Qur'an is written). These four Words are necessary in order to restore the total number of the 32 aspects of the original Verb. During his ascension, which takes place above the ancient location of the Tent of Meeting, Muḥammad meets Adam, holder of the complete set of the 32 original Words, of the 'names of all things'.<sup>49</sup> From this point of view, the Tent of Moses prefigures the accomplishment of the entire cycle of the prophetic revelation, the final return of the Verb to its source (*ta'wīl*), which will follow the phase of its descent into the created world (*tanzīl*) which is brought to a close by Muḥammad:

[14] [The Jews] say that the Eternal One has His face turned in the direction of the Tent of Meeting. The latter is made with 11 curtains, each of which measures 28 cubits in length. This means that it is necessary to turn one's face in the direction of Muḥammad [whose mission was announced by this number]. Any object has 6 directions, and each direction faces the 28 hours.<sup>50</sup> In this way, the division [of Time] prefigures the 28 Words of Muḥammad, which proves the perfection of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, *the ummī Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures), in the Torah and the Gospel (Q. 7:157)*. Muḥammad prayed with his face turned in the direction of the occident which is that of the Temple of Jerusalem. (5b)

[15] In the Torah, God orders Moses to make the Tent of Meeting with 11 curtains, each of which must measure 28 cubits in length and 4 cubits in width, with 50 loops on each edge. [These measurements] are the counterpart of the 28 Words of Muḥammad which are the Mother of the Book. The 50 loops represent the 50 letters and points of the [28] Letters [which compose] the Qur'an ... [Moses] had employed 11 curtains because Muḥammad, peace be upon him, received, on the night of his heavenly ascension, 17 [*rak'at*] of the prayer [to be performed when] in fixed residence and 11 for the [prayer accomplished] in travel ... The 28 and 4 [cubits which are part of the measurements of the Tent] give [being added up, the number] 32, [the number of the names of the

aya] *He taught Adam all the names* [Q. 2:31]. [The 28 cubits evoke Q. 7:157]: *the apostle, the ummī Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures), in the Torah and the Gospel.* (137b–138a)

- [16] The first and the last curtain of the Tent [of Moses] were furnished with 50 loops each, in accordance with the number of letters and diacritical points of the Words of the Prophet [Muḥammad]. There were 11 curtains, each of them 28 cubits long, in accordance with the number of the 28 words of prayer in travel [which contains 11 *rakʿāt*], and 4 cubits wide, [in order to produce the number] 32, number of the 32 original Words. This tent is named in the Torah ‘the Tent of Meeting’ [*Exodus* 39 ff.] because it represents the 28 Words of the Prophet [Muḥammad] and the 32 Words of Adam. This number [32] governs the prayer established by Muḥammad, which comprises 17 *rakʿāt* every weekday and 15 *rakʿāt* on Friday. (286b)
- [17] The journey of Muḥammad from Mecca to Jerusalem, which is the location of the Tent of Meeting [of Moses] ... The Temple of Jerusalem represents the words absent from the Arabic [language].<sup>51</sup> It is named ‘the Land of the Gathering’ because the Land of the Gathering is the locus of manifestation of the [complete] Verb. (333b)

## 2. Moses’ Meeting with God on Mount Sinai

The idea of the complete cycle of time has already been mentioned in connection with the proportions of the Tent of Meeting. The 40 days appointed for Moses by God on Mount Sinai are another representation of a complete cycle correspondent to the complete number of the original Words. According to tradition, 40 days is also the time during which God shaped the clay of Adam. For this reason, the entire bodily form of Adam cannot be seen before the 40 days have passed. As mentioned above, the human bodily form has, in the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the status of locus of manifestation of the divine Verb. To the extent that the Verb, the first emanation of the divine essence, represents the knowledgeable aspect of God, the shape of Adam is the shape of God. In this context, the vision of God cannot take place before the period of 40 days is over. This is the meaning of Moses’ ‘appointment’ according to the *Jāwdān-nāma*:

- [18] ‘I have shaped the clay of Adam with My two hands over 40 days’, *We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed (the period) with ten (more)* [Q. 7:142], *We appointed forty*

*nights for Moses* [Q. 2:51]. 10 indicates the face of Adam ... (254b)

- [19] ‘I have shaped the clay of Adam with My two hands over 40 days’ ... *We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed (the period) with ten (more): thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord, forty nights* [Q. 7:142] ... ‘God the Almighty created Adam in His shape’. [Adam] is created in the shape of God, and ‘I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form, that of the beardless youth’. Moses asked to see God at the end of 40 days: *O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee* [Q. 7:143]. The meeting with God must be requested after 40 [days]. The divine appointment and the clay of Adam, father of all the prophets and saints, are subject to the 40 days’ duration, in order to facilitate the meeting with God and the possibility of seeing Him. (380b–381a)

The next extract shows the quantitative connection between the 40 day period and the 28/32 original Words:

- [20] Be aware that the 30 nights are accompanied by 30 days. One month contains  $2 \times 360$  hours, and 360 hours contain  $[6 \times] 28$  and 32 hours. 10 nights were added to the appointment [of Moses], or 240 hours,  $4 \times 28$  and 32 hours. The 40 nights contain  $16 \times 28$  hours and  $16 \times 32$  hours. The time of the last Gathering is divided in accordance with the number of the 28 and 32 divine Words. All things that exist in time have been the subject of this same division. This is the reason why, at the time of the Gathering, Time and all that exist in Time will be brought together. The saying ‘I have shaped the clay of Adam with My two hands over 40 days’ relates to this same subject. (413b)

The explosion of the Mount which follows Moses’ demand to see God refers, according to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, to another condition which must be filled before sight of God becomes possible. Indeed, God cannot be seen in His original state of absolute unity. To become visible, He must appear in a differentiated form. Therefore, the explosion of the Mount is related in the *Jāwdān-nāma* to the idea of differentiation:

- [21] *If it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me* [Q. 7:143]. The ‘place’ [of the Mount], is the Word, the Imperative *kun* uttered by Him [God]<sup>32</sup> ... *He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon* [Q. 7:143]. The 11 curtains of the Tent of Meeting indicate

the explosion of the Mount, each curtain measuring 28 cubits in length. The broken Tablets [of law] refer to this same [reality]: as long as they were not broken, the vision [of God] was impossible. (350b–351a)

- [22] *When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him ...* [Q. 7:143]. When Moses heard the word of God, he asked to see Him: *O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee* [Q. 7:143]. The object of his vision has to be the essence or the face of God. The Torah says indeed that Moses asked to see the face of God.<sup>53</sup> God answered: *By no means canst thou see Me (direct) – i.e., ‘you will never be able to see Me’ – But look upon the Mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me* [Q. 7:143]. The word ‘Mount’ indicates here the head and the face [of a man] ... This means, if the Mount holds its place, you will see God. The place ‘held’ by the Mount is the body of Adam or of any other [human being]. The Mount exists by means of the Imperative *kun*. [The aya quoted above] means that if the Mount of your body and face holds in place when confronted with the Imperative *kun* and the 32 [original Words contained in it], which contain [in their turn] in their essence all the possible meanings – if it holds when confronted with the Science of the divine Verb and of the 32 divine Words, *then shalt thou see Me ... but when his Lord manifested His glory on the Mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon* [Q. 7:143]. The Mount of the face, of the head and of the forehead split into a number of pieces corresponding to the 32 and 28 Sciences of the divine Words ... (413b–414a)

### 3. The Broken Tablets of Moses

The last passages mention the broken Tablets of Moses in relation with the idea of differentiation. Written by God's own hand, the Tablets of Moses are, to a certain extent, the prototype of any holy scripture. According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, any written text can be perceived from two diametrically opposite perspectives. The first corresponds to the conventional meaning (*iṣṭilāḥ*), conveyed by words, composite units of ordinary language. The second corresponds to absolute meaning (*ma'nā*), and is founded not on the meaning of words, but on the meaning of single letters, or phonemes, which are simple entities. In order to pass from the conventional to the absolute meaning of a text, one has to dissociate, or to ‘break’ the words into single letters. As we mentioned in the introduction, this ‘breaking’ is the very basis of Ḥurūfī *ta'wīl*, spiritual exegesis by which any word (or object, given that any object



is a part of God's scripture) can be 'brought back' to its absolute meaning as a part of the original Verb. According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, when Moses broke the Tablets, he did so in order to reveal the 28/32 original Letters contained in them. From this point of view, the action of Moses is a perfect model of *ta'wīl*, exegesis of divine scripture:<sup>54</sup>

- [23] The first person to whom God gave the 10 ayas written by the hand of His power was Moses, who received them engraved on the emerald Tablets. Moses broke [the Tablets], and so appeared the 28 [original Words]. (201a)
- [24] *And We ordained laws for him in the Tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things* [Q. 7:145]. [This explanation] manifested itself when the Tablets had been broken. (260a–b)
- [25] If Moses had not broken the black Tablet on which God had written with His own hand the 10 verses, the image of the Totality (*tāmm*) would not manifest itself. The fact of breaking is thus the equivalent of perfection (*kamāl*). (368a–b)

The Tablets of Moses are a token of the very first divine scripture, of the Table, which is the bodily shape and face of Adam:

- [26] *And We ordained laws for him in the Tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): 'Take and hold these with firmness, and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts: soon shall I show you the homes of the wicked'* [Q. 7:145]. The commands written by God on the Tablets refer to the Table of the face of Adam, peace be upon him. These Tablets came from heaven, and Paradise from whence Adam came is located in heaven. The Prophet said that there are three things which God created with His own hands. The first is Adam ... The second thing that God created with His own hands is Paradise, and the third – the Tablets of Moses, peace be upon him, that God wrote with His own hand. It is said in the Torah [*Exodus* 34:28] that these Tablets contained 10 verses corresponding to the Table of the body ...<sup>55</sup> Moses threw these Tablets and broke them, because perfection is in what is broken, in such a way that the science of the 28 Words manifests itself. (414a–415a)

The manner in which the Tablets are broken is not arbitrary. The break is accomplished in accordance with the same principle which governs the division of the

human body, making the characteristic pattern of the members of the body and of the features of the face appear. This principle is named the 'principle of balance' (*istiwāʿ*) in the *Jāwdān-nāma*, and expresses the essential correspondence between 'shapeless realities', 'meanings' (*maʿānī*) and 'sensitive forms' (*ṣuwar*). Conformity with the principle of balance makes the breaking of the Tablets *meaningful*:

[27] These Tablets that God has given to Moses and that Moses broke: [the act of breaking corresponds], to some extent, to the division of the human face. As long as it is not divided by the line of balance, as long as it is not 'broken', the distinctive marks of the 32 divine Words do not appear on him. The fact of breaking appears here as an extreme degree of perfection, and not a defect. (275a)

[28] It is said in the Torah that Moses broke the Tablets written by God's own hand. He broke them because the face of Adam, the Table of God, does not reveal the 32 divine lines, counterparts of the 32 Words articulated by the tongue of Adam, before it is 'split' and divided by his line of balance. The words which God taught Adam and about which the Messiah said: 'I am this Word' would not [otherwise] manifest themselves. The fact that Moses broke the Tablets is a sign of perfection, [he did so] in order to reveal the marks of the 32 Words on the Table. For the same reason, the Messiah made himself flesh. (326a)

[29] The bodily shape of the Messiah is the shape of Adam. The 32 lines [proper to the shape] of Adam are divided on the face of the Messiah by the line of balance, following the example of the broken Tablets of Moses. [This division] makes it possible to distinguish the 32 lines [of Writing], the counterpart of the 32 Words taught to Adam. The Messiah said: 'I am this Word' ... The 28 Words divided by the line of balance and broken as the Table [of Moses] become 32 lines, counterpart of the 28 divine Words taught to Adam. (327b–328a)

#### 4. The Rod of Moses

The Rod of Moses is one of the main symbols which the *Jāwdān-nāma* uses to translate the idea of division and differentiation. More precisely, the Rod represents the 'line of balance' already mentioned in the previous passage. As we have seen in the introduction above, according to the *Jāwdān-nāma* the first forms obtained as a result of differentiation are the forms of the 28/32 original Words, the first Letters, whence the identification of the Rod of Moses with the instrument of differentiation

and therefore of writing. The following quotation is also representative of the manner in which the *Jāwdān-nāma* uses Qur'anic ayas. From the beginning to the end of this long passage, the author is in permanent dialogue with the Qur'anic text, developing his ideas in what appears to be an associative rather than a systematic way:

- [30] [Question: what does the Rod of Moses represent?] The answer is that [the Rod] is a representation of the Pen (*qalam*). It is indeed said: 'the first thing created by God was the Pen'. When God wrote the 10 verses on the Tablets *and We ordained laws for him in the Tablets in all matters* [Q. 7:145], Moses, peace be upon him, heard the creaking of the Pen, the creaking coming from the Tablet being divided by the line of balance of the Throne: *the Merciful is established in balance on the Throne* [Q. 20:5] ... God established an analogy, by saying 'Rod' to indicate the Pen. This similarity is partly due to the fact that the rod is held in the hand, as is the pen. Secondly, the Rod of Moses was split in its higher part, as is [the end of] the Pen. Thirdly, when He said [God to Moses]: *Strike the sea with thy rod!* [Q. 26:63] – it is an allusion to the Pen immersed in the sea of ink, which is water, in accordance with: *and if the Ocean (were ink), with seven Oceans behind it to add to its (supply)* [Q. 31:27] [and] *strike a dry path for them through the sea* [Q. 20:77] – writing represents the act by which the 'dry path' is realised ... *He turned back in retreat, and retraced not his steps* [Q. 27:10]: this [event] happened at the beginning of the writing, the appearance of which resembles a snake ... Just like the Rod with which [Moses] strikes the sea, the Pen is immersed in the sea of ink and of blackness. *A part of the night* [Q. 11:81] is the line of writing. Also, the Rod, during the time it was transformed into a snake, had 72 teeth. This is because the Tent of Meeting [made by Moses] measured 28 cubits [in length], representing the Science of the 28 original Words, the names of which contain 72 Letters<sup>56</sup> ... Also, it is the snake which, [alone] among all animals, God created with a split tongue, following the example of the Pen. This is why God, at the moment of spiritual disclosure, showed to Moses his Rod in the form of a snake ... Another proof that the Rod indicates the line of writing and the Pen is [the aya] *and what is that in thy right hand, O Moses?* [Q. 20:17] – it is said 'right', and not 'left', because of *those who are given their record in their right hand* [Q. 17:71]. '*Strike the rock with thy staff.*' *Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs* [Q. 2:60]. *The number of months in the*

*sight of Allah is twelve (in a year)* [Q. 9:36] – is an allusion to the fact that *each group knew its own place for water* [Q. 2:60]. They knew their place for water by the line of writing.<sup>57</sup> Concerning Pharaoh, [who represents the tyranny] exerted by his own [carnal] soul: Moses initially saw his Rod, in the universe of spiritual disclosure, in the shape of a snake, and he saw a miracle [of transformation]. Then he bent his soul, with all its magicians represented by the Pharaoh and his servants. The Prophet [Muhammad] said in connection with a similar achievement: ‘I subdued my demon with my hand.’ The conversion of Pharaoh and his magicians happened afterwards ... the ‘Well Preserved Table’ is the tongue of the snake, split in two halves, which expresses the divergence *row by row of the angels* [Q. 89:22], which produced *two* words in the [original] unity [of God].<sup>58</sup> The tongue [of the snake] is made following the example of the tongue of Adam, locus of manifestation of divine Unity. The line of balance and the ‘straight way’ are represented by the line under the tongue. The tongue [of Adam] is thus divided into two parts by the line of balance without being split. ‘The first thing created by God was the Pen. He said to it: Write! – [the Pen] asked: What should I write? – [the answer was]: What has been and what is to come’. The two letters of the Imperative *kun* produced the two tongues of the split end of the Pen. The [divine] Science manifested itself through the [names of] the two letters of *k-n*, because these two words<sup>59</sup> contain the 32 and the 72 Words ... (*Moses*) said: ‘O my Lord! Open me my breast’ [Q. 20:25], and also God, the Almighty, said: *have We not opened thee thy breast?* [Q. 94:1], because of the line of balance<sup>60</sup> ... Although the snake has two tongues, when a movement occurs in its entrails, concerning the power of which it is said: ‘there is no force and no power but in God’, [when] this unified power attains its entrails, only one voice and one word comes out from the two sides of its tongue, just as happens in the case of a human language. The word issued by one half of the tongue is identical to the [word issued by] the second half. In the same way, the [divine] Science of pre- and post-eternity is contained in one single point, which is the beginning of the movement of the scribe’s [hand]. (107a–108b)

The parting of the waters which Moses realised by means of his Rod represents the ‘alchemical’ aspect of the differentiation operated by the line of balance. Indeed, in the

*Jāwdān-nāma*, water is the element associated with the state of divine unity before differentiation and before the category of Form has emerged. The latter is, in connection with the element earth, the only element capable of preserving a given shape. The parting of the waters under the action of Moses' Rod symbolises, according to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the effect of the line of balance introducing the 'dry path' of form into the originally undifferentiated and shapeless universe:

- [31] The waters of the sea which parted [to give passage to the people of Moses]: the parting and the manifestation are produced in the same manner.<sup>61</sup> The magic and the Rod [of Moses refer to] this same [reality]. (201a)
- [32] It is the water of the sea which parted and let a dry path appear, and which drowned Pharaoh. The 'dry path' [Q. 20:77] is earth, the cause of Satan's rebellion, earth which has the capacity to be moulded and to preserve a given form. (209a)

## 5. The Burning Bush

Finally, according to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the Burning Bush out of which God spoke to Moses represents the human bodily form, which is the visible aspect of the entire divine Verb and therefore of God himself. We have already noted above that, in the context of the Ḥurūfī theory of creation, the form of the human body is the only form composed with the whole 'alphabet' of the 28/32 original Letters and therefore the unique locus of manifestation of the entire divine Verb. The forms of all other existing objects and beings are made out of a lesser number of Letters, and express only fragments of the Verb. The human body constitutes thus the higher 'limit' of the expressive capacity of all existing forms, whence the comparison between the Burning Bush and the Tree of the Limit of Muḥammad's heavenly ascension. After water and earth, the fire of the Burning Bush is also a part of the alchemical symbolism of the *Jāwdān-nāma*. The black smoke which accompanies the fire represents the black lines of the scripture, the first Letters, the Science of the 28/32 original Words:<sup>62</sup>

- [33] *Then watch thou for the Day that the sky will bring forth a kind of smoke (or mist) plainly visible* [Q. 44:10] which is [identical to the] 50 [Letters and Points]. At the time when His secret will appear, will come the smoke. From another point of view, this plainly visible smoke [represents] the seven features of the mother's face, the same [features] that the houris and other people of Paradise bear on their faces.<sup>63</sup> This smoke is the Science [of these features], and is compared to smoke because smoke is black. This smoke accompanies the fire seen by Moses at the

moment when God spoke to him [saying]: *O Moses! Verily I am God ...* [Q. 28:30]. This blackness will mark forever the faces of the houris, because the smoke is a seal. (49b)

- [34] Moses heard the Word of God coming from the fire and from the tree. The good word is a tree.<sup>64</sup> As for the Tree of the Limit to which Muḥammad came during the night of his heavenly ascension, it indicates Adam; and the fire [of Moses] is the fire [which is a part] of Adam. (72a)
- [35] The fire out of which Moses heard the voice of God was the shape of God, the same shape that the Prophet [Muḥammad] contemplated during his heavenly ascension and which he mentioned in his saying: 'I saw my Lord in the most beautiful shape, in the shape of the beardless youth'. [God] said [to Moses] *establish regular prayer to remember Me* [Q. 20:14]. It is the shape of the House of God, the Inhabited House and the Tree of the Limit. The Qur'an is in the Preserved Table, which is the shape of God and whose name is Adam. (265b)
- [36] Moses heard the voice of God coming from the fire, which is a representation (*dīm*) of the 28 and 32 original Words. Otherwise, the fire could not produce a voice. Such is the fire which speaks to the prophets. (377b–378a)

## 6. Conclusion

The interpretation of the story of Moses in the *Jāwdān-nāma* is an example of the assimilation of the Qur'anic text by the late medieval Persian 'heterodox' milieu. From the passages quoted above we can observe that this assimilation goes far beyond a purely illustrative purpose: the rich stock of Qur'anic ayas and images constitutes the very language that the author of the *Jāwdān-nāma* has chosen to express his ideas. This is how a number of statements related to cosmogony, ontology, anthropology, prophetology, alchemy and other aspects of the Ḥurūfī doctrine come to be formulated through such symbols of Moses' story as the Tent of Meeting, Mount Sinai, the Broken Tablets of the Law, the Rod of Moses, the Parting of the Waters and the Burning Bush. The discourse of the *Jāwdān-nāma*, like the Qur'anic discourse, is based on a complex network of symbolic connections and implicit references which are not necessarily logically connected, rather than on a logically coherent plan. This may also partly explain the fragmented structure of the *Jāwdān-nāma* which, as we have already mentioned at the beginning of this article, imitates the logically irregular structure of the Qur'an. However, although the Qur'an is the main scriptural source underlying the doctrinal developments of the *Jāwdān-nāma*, it is not the only one.

Qur'anic passages are often accompanied in the *Jāwdān-nāma* by *aḥādīth* and implicit or explicit quotations from the Bible. In relation to the story of Moses, we have mostly encountered references to the Old Testament, in particular the Book of Exodus. Passages related to other topics contain references to, and sometimes direct quotations from, other books of the Old and New Testaments, especially the Book of Genesis, the Gospels and the Apocalypse of John. In combination with the Qur'anic quotations, this scriptural material allows the author of the *Jāwdān-nāma* to create a context destined to support the development of his ideas, to confer on them the authority of a Qur'anic exegesis, and to show their pertinence in the light of earlier holy scriptures. It also furnishes some extra details, absent from the Qur'an, which acquire particular significance within the framework of Ḥurūfī teachings. This syncretistic approach with a permanent dialogue between the sacred texts issued from different religious traditions as a support of a heterodox doctrine is one of the most interesting particularities of Qur'anic exegesis in the *Jāwdān-nāma*.

#### NOTES

1 For general information about the history and the doctrines of the Ḥurūfīs, see S. Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), and the following articles: H. Algar, art. 'Astarābādī, Faḏlallāh' in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (12 vols to date. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. 2, pp. 841–4; H. Algar, art. 'Horufism' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 12, pp. 483–90; A. Bausani, art. 'Ḥurūfiyya' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn; A. Gölpınarlı, art. 'Faḏl Allāh Ḥurūfī' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; H. Aksu, art. 'Fazlullah-i Ḥurūfī' in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (35 vols to date, Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988–), vol. 12, pp. 277–9; H. Aksu, art. 'Ḥurūfīlik' in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18, pp. 408–12.

2 One of the main sources on the biography of Faḏlallāh is the 'Books of Dreams' (*Kitāb-i khwāb-nāma*) of the Ḥurūfī authors °Alī Nafajī (MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Pers. 17) and Sayyid Iṣḥāq Astarābādī (MS Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri Farsça, no. 1042). See also a very thorough study by Helmut Ritter, 'Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frömmigkeit – II, Die Anfänge der Ḥurūfisekte', *Oriens* 7:1 (1954), pp. 1–54.

3 The only source on the *aḥādīth* mentioned in the *Jāwdān-nāma*, Faḏlallāh's major work, is a *Maṣābīḥ*, which probably refers to the *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna* of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122). However, the *aḥādīth* used by Faḏlallāh range in a large spectrum from the most conventional ones attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, to the 'theopatical sayings' attributed to °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and particularly popular in Shī'ī circles. The *aḥādīth* most frequently commented on by Faḏlallāh are not to be found in any of the major Sunnī compilations. It is interesting that along with the rather Shī'ī oriented *aḥādīth* Faḏlallāh also quotes some *aḥādīth* under the authority of the Prophet's wife °Ā'isha, who was disliked in the Shī'ī milieu. We would therefore abstain for the moment from coming to any premature conclusion about the Sunnī or Shī'ī connections of Faḏlallāh. We will come back to this question, from another point of view, a few pages further on. As to quotations and discussions of Biblical materials (in Arabic and in Persian), these occupy a notable part of Faḏlallāh's work, and some of them are exact enough to allow us to locate them in the text of the Bible. This is the reason why I suppose that Faḏlallāh studied more or less complete translations of the Bible rather than the fragmentary episodes circulating in the Islamic tradition under the name *Isrā'īliyyāt*.

4 Mystics who claim no affiliation to any living and physically present master, referring rather to spiritual contact with the outstanding figures of the past as source of their initiation, are known in Islamic tradition under the name of the Uwaysīs, after Uways al-Qaranī (d. 37/657) who, according to legend, communicated with Prophet Muḥammad by telepathy. For the Uwaysīs, see, for instance, J. Baldick, *Imaginary Muslims: The Uwaysi Sufis of Central Asia* (New York: New York University Press, 1993). In one of his dreams, Faḍlallāh was given the names of the four famous mystics of the past: Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 162/778), Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmī (d. third/ninth century), Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) and Buhlūl (Majnūn?, d. second/eighth–ninth century) – see °Alī Nafajī, *Khwāb-nāma*, f. 11b.

5 This date seems to be the most plausible, though the sources are not always explicit as to either the description or the dating of this event (cf. Ritter, 'Die Anfänge', pp. 22–3). Two other dates mentioned in connection with the second revelation of Faḍlallāh are 778/1376 and 788/1386: see Ritter, 'Die Anfänge', p. 23; Shahzad Bashir, 'Enshrining Divinity: The Death and Memorialization of Fazlallāh Astarābādī in Ḥurūfī Thought', *Muslim World* 90:3–4 (2000), pp. 289–308, p. 291; Shahzad Bashir, 'Deciphering the Cosmos from Creation to Apocalypse: The Ḥurūfīyya Movement and Medieval Islamic Esotericism' in A. Amanat and M. Bernardsson (eds), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 168–84, p. 174; p. 373, n. 23; A. Gölpınarlı, *Ḥurūfīlik metinleri kataloğu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1970), p. 7; Y. Āzhand, *Ḥurūfīya dar tārikh* (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1369/1990), pp. 15–16 and pp. 18–19).

6 For the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭa'a* see, for instance, A.T. Welch, art. 'al-Ḳur'ān' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.

7 This title is to be distinguished from *ṣāhib al-zamān* (or *ṣāhib-i zamān* in Persian) which generally designates (especially in the Shi'ī context), the Maḥdī, the Saviour expected at the end of time; see, for instance, M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin dans le shī'isme originel: aux sources de l'ésotérisme en Islam* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1992), p. 227. The two titles can be translated as 'Master of Time'; but *sayyid-i zamān* means rather 'Master of the Present Time', with the meaning close to the notions of 'Maḥdī of the Intermediary Stage' or 'Master of the Hour', which indicates, in Sunnī Islam, the person who comes before the end of time in order to deliver the community from some temporary disaster and to restore justice for the time being. On this topic, see W. Madelung, art. 'al-Mahdi' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn; M. Garcia-Arenal, 'Introduction' in *Mahdisme et millénarisme en Islam, Revue des mondes musulmans et de la méditerranée*, 91–4 (2000), pp. 7–15, p. 10.

8 The description of the second revelation of Faḍlallāh can be found in the 'Books of Dreams' already mentioned above (note 2): °Alī Nafajī, f. 69a–b, and Sayyid Ishāq Astarābādī f. 19b.

9 The quotations concerning the accusation and the execution of Faḍlallāh from the historical sources, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-°Asqalānī, *al-Inbā' al-ghumr fī abnā' al-°umr*, and Shams al-Dīn Sakhawī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'*, can be found for instance in Ritter, 'Die Anfänge', pp. 7–8. According to °Asqalānī, Faḍlallāh would have invited Tamerlane himself to embrace his teaching. Some sources give 804/1401–2 as the date of Faḍlallāh's execution.

10 Elsewhere ('Notes sur deux textes ḥurūfī: le *Jāwdān-nāma* de Faḍlallāh Astarābādī et l'un de ses commentaires, le *Maḥram-nāma* de Sayyid Ishāq', *Studia Iranica* 35:2 (2006), pp. 203–35, and in the introduction to my doctoral dissertation, 'Etude de textes Ḥurūfī anciens: l'oeuvre fondatrice de Faḍlallāh Astarābādī' (Paris: École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2007)), I have drawn attention to the deviations from the original doctrine of Faḍlallāh already found in the works of his direct disciples. Indeed, since this division of the original community, there existed not one, but many 'Ḥurūfisms', because each of the regional branches followed its own path



of historical as well as doctrinal evolution. The divergence between the Ḥurūfī communities is attested as early as in the ninth/fifteenth century, in the *Istiwā-nāma* of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Astarābādī (d. 852/1449).

11 In the early stages of the movement the Ḥurūfīs probably contemplated an association with Tamerlane. After this attempt failed, they probably supported Iskandar Qaraqoyunlu in his struggle with Shāhrukh, one of the sons of Tamerlane. It is not impossible that the attempt to assassinate Shāhrukh at the mosque of Herat, perpetrated by Aḥmad Lor, a Ḥurūfī adept, in 830/1427, was part of a larger plan by which the Ḥurūfīs hoped to insure the victory of Iskandar in exchange for recognition of the official status of the Ḥurūfī creed. However Jahānshāh Qaraqoyunlu, who eliminated his brother Iskandar with the support of Shāhrukh, seems to have been less favourable to the Ḥurūfīs. Under the government of Shāhrukh the Ḥurūfīs were executed in Herat, and a Ḥurūfī rebellion was relentlessly crushed in Iṣfāhān in 835/1432–3. During the reign of Jahānshāh another Ḥurūfī rebellion was defeated in Tabrīz (845/1441–2), and hundreds of rebels put to death. On the Ḥurūfī rebellions in Iran see Āzhand, *Ḥurūfiya dar tārikh*, pp. 70–6, pp. 87–8 (after the *Aḥsan al-tawārikh* of Ḥasan Rūmlū), and pp. 96–102 (after the *Rawḍāt al-jinān wa-jannāt al-janān* of Ḥāfiẓ Ḥusayn Karbalā'ī); E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (4 vols. Curzon Press: London, 1999), vol. 3, p. 365 (after the *Mujmal of Faṣṣihī Khwāfī*); and Ş. Kiyā, 'Agāhīhā-yi tāza az ḥurūfiyān', *Majalla-yi dānishkada-yi adabiyyāt-i Tihrān* 2:2 (1333/1954), pp. 40–2 (after *Mazārāt-i Tabrīz* (Library of the Historical Faculty, Ankara University, MS 1297, another copy at the National Library of Tehran, MS 131)), and the *Rawḍa-yi athār* of Hashrī Tabrīzī. It appears that the Ḥurūfīs never recovered after these massive executions and the loss of their leaders. To our knowledge, there is no document attesting any political activity of the Ḥurūfīs in Iran after the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century.

12 H.R. Roehmer, 'The Jalayirids, Muzaffarids and Sarbadārs' in P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (eds), *The Cambridge History of Iran* (7 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968–91), vol. 6, pp. 1–41; J.M. Smith, *The History of the Sarbadār Dynasty 1336–1381 A.D. and its Sources* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970); J. Aubin, 'Aux origines d'un mouvement populaire médiéval: le cheykhisme du Bayhaq et du Nichāpour', *Studia Iranica* 5:2 (1976), pp. 213–24; D. Aigle, 'Les Sarbedars: un mouvement politico-religieux au Khorassan au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* (Section sciences religieuses) 109 (2002), pp. 299–307; Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbaḥshīya Between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003); K. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2002); M. Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids. Si'ism, Sufism, and the Gulat*, *Freiburger Islamstudien*, 3 (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1972); M. Mazzaoui, 'From Tabriz to Qazwin to Isfahan: Three Phases of Safavid History', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Supplement 3:1, pp. 514–22; P. Luft, art. 'Musha<sup>c</sup>sha<sup>c</sup>' in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.

13 Ş. Kiyā, *Nuḡṭawiyān yā Pasīkhāniyān*, Irān Kūda, 13 (Tehran, n.p., 1320/1941).

14 W. Ivanow, *The Truth Worshippers of Kurdistan: Ahl-e Haqq Texts* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1953), p. 198 of the Persian text, and the comment by the author, p. 64.

15 E.G. Browne, 'Some Notes on the Literature and the Doctrines of the Ḥurūfī Sect', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1898, pp. 87–9, a similar point is made in Ş. Kiyā, *Wāzhā-nāma-yi Gurgānī* (Tehran: Intisharāt-i Danishgāh, 1330/1952), p. 33. Bābism and Bahā'ism are the movements founded respectively by Sayyid °Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī (d. 1266/1850), known as 'Bāb' ('the Gate'), and by one of his disciples, Mīrẓā Ḥusayn °Alī Nūrī (Bahā' Allāh, d. 1309/1892).

16 For example, the movement led by Badr al-Dīn Samāwnā (d. 819/1416) and his two disciples, Burklūja Muṣṭafa and Torlāq Hū Kamāl. This movement would be in connection with

the movement of the Bābā'īs in the Saljukid period (seventh/thirteenth century). For more on the rebellion of Badr al-Dīn Samāwnā and its possible connection with the Bābā'ī movement, see H.J. Kissling, art. 'Badr al-Dīn ibn Kāḍī Samāwnā' in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn; Āzhand, *Ḥurūfiya dar tāriḵh*, pp. 105–12. The latter also contains a discussion of the similarities between the movement of Badr al-Dīn and the Iranian heterodox movements, such as the Sarbadārs, the Mar'ashīs (the movement founded by Sayyid Qawām al-Dīn al-Mar'ashī (d. 781/1379)), and the Ḥurūfīs (p. 111). Concerning the Bābā'ī movement and the identity of its leader, see A.Y. Ocak, *La révolte de Bābā Resul ou la formation de l'hétérodoxie musulmane en Anatolie au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Ankara: Société Turque d'Histoire, 1989). After the death of Badr al-Dīn his followers scattered among such movements as the Baktāshīs and the Şafawīs (Āzhand, *Ḥurūfiya dar tāriḵh*, pp. 111–12), i.e. in the same milieu where evolved the remains of the Ḥurūfī community at this period.

17 One of the major Turkish dervish orders, founded in the seventh/thirteenth century by Ḥājī Bektash Walī (d. ca 669/1270), known also because of its influence among the Janissaries, the elite military units of the Ottoman army. Concerning the history of the order, see, for instance N. Clayer, 'La Bektachiyya' in A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds), *Les Voies d'Allāh: Les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1996), pp. 468–74; J.K. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Hartford, 1937); A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds), *Bektachiyya: Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach* (Istanbul: Isis, 1995). For the connection between the Baktāshīs and the Bābā'īs, see Ocak, *La révolte de Bābā Resul*, pp. 87–96. According to another version, it was not 'Alī al-A'īlā, but another disciple of Faḍlallāh, Mīr Sharīf, who, accompanied by his brother, brought the Ḥurūfī books to Turkey (see A. Gölpınarlı, *Ḥurūfīlik metinler: kataloğu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), p. 28, after the *Ḥājī-nāma* of Mīr Sharīf (MS Istanbul Millet Kütüphanes: Farsça 1035)). Let us also remember that the first Ḥurūfī manuscripts came to European libraries from the Baktāshīs: for the history of the acquisition of Ḥurūfī manuscripts and the connection between the Ḥurūfīs and the Baktāshīs, see Browne, 'Some Notes', pp. 61–94, and E.J. Browne, 'Further Notes on the Literature and the Doctrines of the Ḥurūfī Sect', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1907, pp. 533–81.

18 In 879/1444 the Ḥurūfīs were slain in Edirne, at the command of Sultan Muḥammad Fātiḥ (see Birge, *The Bektashi Order*, p. 62; Āzhand, *Ḥurūfiya dar tāriḵh*, p. 116–19, after the *Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniyya* of Tāshköprüzāda). The Ḥurūfīs would also be active at the time of the sultans Bāyazīd (886/1481–918/1512) and Süleymān the Magnificent (926/1520–974/1566) (Browne, 'Some Notes', pp. 92–4, after the *Tadhkīra* of Laṭīfī; Gölpınarlı, *Katalog*, p. 29, after the *Tāriḵh* of Nishānjī and an anonymous manuscript, Istanbul University Library, Turkish Manuscripts Department, MS 2418, ff. 102b–103a).

19 Browne, 'Further Notes', pp. 537–8, after the *Kāshif al-asrār wa-dāfi' al-ashrār* of Ishāq Effendi.

20 Cf. Browne, 'Further Notes', p. 539.

21 R. Tanrıku (tr.), *Ilmi Cavidan* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Yayınları, 1998).

22 For more on the Ḥurūfī references in Orhan Pamuk's *Black Book*, see Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis*, pp. 123–7.

23 A general presentation of the science of letters in Islam, and essential bibliographical references can be found, for example, in the chapter on the science of the letters translated by D. Gril in M. Chodkiewicz (ed.), *Les Illuminations de la Mecque* (Paris: Sindbad, 1988), pp. 385–438; P. Lory, *La science des lettres en Islam* (Paris: Dervy, 2004); Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 114–76; K.M. al-Shaybī, *al-Şīla bayn al-taşawwuf wa'l-taşayyu'* (2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1982), vol. 2, pp. 165–74; T. Fahd, art. 'Ḥurūf

(‘ilm al-’ in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn; D.B. Macdonald [T. Fahd], art. ‘Simiyā’ in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.

24 Quotation of the *ḥadīth* according to which the body of Adam is made with 360 bones, 360 pieces of fat, skin, veins, nerves, etc. is frequent in the *Jāwdān-nāma*, with reference to the *Maṣābiḥ* (cf. note 3).

25 In particular when commenting the passages related to the episode of the ‘broken Tablets’, pp. 28–31.

26 The four letters composing the ligature are *alif*, *fāʾ*, *lām* and *mīm*. According to the Ḥurūfīs, the ligature prefigures the four letters which are absent from the Arabic alphabet and which will be disclosed during the period of the *Taʾwīl*, achieving thus the entire cycle of the revelation of the divine Verb.

27 The *Jāwdān-nāma* contains some allusions on the full realisation of the 32 Letters in the Persian language, whose alphabet contains four additional letters, and which would be thus the language of the apocalyptic Saviour – but this idea seems not quite explicit in the *Jāwdān-nāma* itself, and is rather developed by the disciples of Faḍlallāh at the later periods.

28 This theory of the intuitive perception of the ultimate meaning of things probably explains the importance of the dreams and dream interpretation in Ḥurūfī tradition.

29 On these movements, see the works of Heinz Halm, in particular *Die Islamische Gnosis: die extreme Schia und die ‘Alawiten* (Zurich and Munich: Artemis, 1982); Moosa Mattī, *Extremist Shiites: the Ghulat Sects* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988); al-Shaybī, *al-Ṣīla*, vol. 2, p. 174–86. For the particular aspects and the bibliographical references, see Mercedes Garcia-Arenal (ed.), *Mahdisme et millénarisme en Islam*, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la méditerranée*, 91–4 (2000), a collection of the excellent contributions of several authors. For the definition of the term *ghulāt*, see Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin*, pp. 313–17; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète, croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l’islam shi’ite* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), p. 169; Lory, *La science des lettres*, p. 62; M.G.S. Hodgson, art. ‘Ghulāt’ in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.

30 Killed in Karbalā in 61/680.

31 According to Ḥurūfī doctrine as it appears in the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the cycle of ‘motherly’ prophets and saints begins with Jesus, includes Muḥammad, and continues in the line of imāms (the word *imām* being derived from the same Arabic root as *ummī*, the ‘motherly’ one).

32 See for instance M. Molé, ‘Les Kubrawiya entre sunnisme et shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l’hégire’, *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 29 (1961), pp. 61–142, and the introduction of P. Ballanfat to the French translation of the *Fawātiḥ al-jamal wa-fawāʾiḥ al-jalāl* of N. Kubrā (Nîmes: Editions de l’éclat, 2001), pp. 11–13.

33 Gibb Memorial Series, 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill and London: Lusac & Co, 1909).

34 We transcribe *Jāwdān* and not *Jāwīdān*. This choice is intended to reflect the difference in Arabic script between the form *Jāwīdān*, with a *yāʾ* after the *wāw*, which is more frequent in the Persian, and the form without *yāʾ* which is usually employed by Ḥurūfī authors. We are referring here to the longer version of the *Jāwdān-nāma* written in Persian in the Astārābādī dialect, and known also as the *Jāwdān-nāma-yi kabīr*, the ‘Big *Jāwdān-nāma*’. It is not to be confounded with a shorter text known under the title of the *Jāwdān-nāma-yi ṣaghīr*, the ‘Small *Jāwdān-nāma*’, which is probably a later adaptation of this work in classical Persian. The manuscripts of the *Jāwdān-nāma-yi kabīr* are available in many European and Near-Eastern libraries (see the discussion on the following pages). Some quotations from the *Jāwdān-nāma* can be found in Kiyā, *Wāḥā-nāma*, pp. 42–6. My doctoral dissertation, ‘Etude de textes ḥurūfī

anciens: l'oeuvre fondatrice de Faḍlallāh Astarābādī', contains the text and the French translation of an important selection of passages from the *Jāwdān-nāma*, which I hope to include in the future in a critical edition of this text.

35 Kiyā's *Wāzhā-nāma* includes a substantial study of this dialect, as well as a detailed Astarābādī-Persian vocabulary which is a precious help to reading ancient Ḥurūfī texts.

36 The use of encryption can be explained by the fact that the Ḥurūfīs, as we have seen, were often considered as dangerous heretics, and could therefore use these techniques, as did many other marginal sects, in order to hide their doctrines from the religious 'orthodoxy'. More particularly, for the techniques of 'fragmentation' and 'dispersion of science' (*tabdīd al-'ilm*) see Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin*, index, *taqiyya* and *tabdīd al-'ilm*, especially p. 307. But the fragmentation may be also an expression of the Ḥurūfī conception of *ta'wīl* which we discussed above. The two possibilities are discussed in my doctoral dissertation (already mentioned above), which is essentially an attempt to solve the problem of the fragmentation of the *Jāwdān-nāma* and to propose a coherent presentation of its contents.

37 MS 2107, cod. 478 Warn., P. De Jong et M. J. De Goeje, *Catalogus codicum orientalium bibliothecae academiae lugduno batavae* (Lugduni Batavorum: E.J. Brill, 1866), vol. 4, p. 298.

38 British Library MS Or. 5957, Cambridge Library Ee.1.27.

39 See, for instance, Kiyā, *Wāzhā-nāma*, p. 34; A. Munzawī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-yi fārsī* (6 vols. Tehran: Regional Cultural Institute, 1349/1969), vol. 1, p. 1111. The acquisition note in Cambridge Library's exemplar of the *Jāwdān-nāma* (Ee.1.27) reads: 'Commentarius Persicus in Alcoranum dictus Jawidān-cabīr'.

40 The word *ibtidā'* ('beginning'), repeated six times, introduces the text of the *Jāwdān-nāma*.

41 The power of *ta'wīl* is traditionally ascribed to the Shī'ī imāms. In a well-known *ḥadīth*, the Prophet Muḥammad says that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib fights for the *ta'wīl* in the same manner as he himself has fought for the *tanzīl*. See for instance Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin*, p. 42; A. Amir-Moezzi, "'Le combattant du *ta'wīl*," un poème de Mollā Ṣadra sur 'Alī' (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine IX), *Journal Asiatique* 292:1-2 (2004), pp. 331-59. For the Arabic text and references for the *ḥadīth*, see the same article, p. 341, n. 30.

42 For these rituals see for instance Bashir, 'Enshrining Divinity', pp. 289-308.

43 All quotations from the Qur'an are given according to Yusuf Ali's translation, slightly modified when necessary.

44 For the description of the Tabernacle and the Tent, see *Exodus* 26.

45 Allusion to the fourteen phalanges of each hand and each foot. The two hands and the two feet contain 28 phalanges. 50 is the sum of the letters and diacritical points of the Arabic alphabet.

46 Let us remember that 'science' in the context of the Ḥurūfī doctrine means generally 'locus of manifestation'. In this quotation the author seems willing to demonstrate, through numerical relationships, that the human face, hands and feet are the locus of manifestation of the primordial Letters.

47 Cf. *Exodus* 33:23, 'And I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen'.

48 The 28 cubits of the Tent indicate the 17 *rak'āt* of the weekday prayer and the 11 *rak'āt* of the prayer in travel. With the 4 additional cubits the proportions of the Tent correspond to the 17 *rak'āt* of the weekday prayer and the 15 *rak'āt* of the Friday prayer.

49 This is the Ḥurūfī interpretation of Q. 2:31 and *He taught Adam the names of all things*.

50 According to the *Jāwdān-nāma*, the number of the hours in the week ( $7 \times 24 = 6 \times 28$ ) expresses, firstly, the concept that the structure of Time is determined by the 28 original Words; and, secondly, that each of the six spacial directions of any object (i.e. the nadir, zenith, and four cardinal points) faces the complete 'set' of 28 original Words and the complete measure of Time.

51 The idea of this passage seems to be that Muḥammad's journey from Mecca to Jerusalem covers the gap between the 29 original Words expressed by the letters of the Arabic alphabet and the 32 Words of the complete Verb represented by the proportions of the Temple of Jerusalem.

52 We have already seen above the close connection the *Jāwdān-nāma* establishes between the idea of differentiation and the Imperative.

53 Cf. *Exodus* (33:18–20) in which Moses asks to see the 'Glory' of God, but God answers him: 'You will not be able to see My *face*, because man cannot see Me and live' (my emphasis).

54 It is possible that this idea of a 'revealing' break underlies the fragmented structure of the *Jāwdān-nāma* itself.

55 The Biblical text mentions ten *words* of Alliance.

56 The number of letters contained in the names of the 28 phonemes of the Arabic alphabet.

57 It is probably an allusion to the arithmetic relationship between the number of the days in the 12 months (one year) and the number of the original Words:  $360 = 6 \times 60 = 6 \times (28 + 32)$ .

58 Apparently, allusion to the repetition of the word 'row' in the mentioned Qur'anic aya.

59 The two words corresponding to the two letters, that is, the words *kāf* and *nūn*.

60 The 'opening of the breast' is another Qur'anic expression associated, in the *Jāwdān-nāma*, with the action of the line of balance.

61 Probably an allusion to the view according to which the differentiation (parting) is the basis of any manifestation.

62 For the definition of Science (*ʿilm*) in the Ḥurūfī context, as a 'locus of manifestation' (*maḥzar*), see the introduction above.

63 As the hairs of the hair, eyelashes and eyebrows which constitute the seven 'motherly' features of the face.

64 An allusion to Q. 14:24, *a goodly Word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens*.