Giovanni Maria Martini, ed. *Visualizing Sufism: Studies on Graphic Representations in Sufi Literature (13th to 16th Century).* Leiden: Brill, 2023. Pp. xvi+308. Hardcover. ISBN: 9789004516083. Price: €126.14.

This collective volume is an outcome of the workshop which was convened at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, on May 14, 2018, by Giovanni Maria Martini in order to understand the significance and diffusion of such visual devices in Sufi literature, involving both traditional "manuscriptological" disciplines such as codicology, history of the book, and philology on the one hand, and intellectual history and the history of ideas on the other hand.

The workshop aimed at investigating to which extent the diffusion of visual elements was one of the chief novelties and specific features of Sufi literature to develop in the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods. Papers dealt with Arab, Persian, and Turkish Sufi authors, covering a time spanning from the thirteenth to the sixteenth/early seventeenth century CE, and the seventh to tenth/early eleventh century AH. From the Late Medieval Period onwards, many Sufi treatises began to display an increasing amount of visual elements, mainly in the form of diagrams, which can either have an auxiliary function, i.e., to help explain the contents of specific written passages or be themselves at the very core of the text. A comprehensive study aiming to understand the significance and diffusion of such visual devices in Sufi literature—involving such disparate disciplines as philology, history of the book and codicology on the one hand, and Intellectual history and the history of ideas on the other—had never been systematically undertaken. With special regard to the development of Islamicate intellectual history, it would seem that the qualitative and quantitative leap in the diffusion of diagrams in Sufi literature was paralleled by the spread and reception of Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) works in which diagrams are often employed.

Acquiring a clear and detailed understanding of this phenomenon would also help investigate the dialogical interactions between Sufism and philosophical, alchemical, and magical literature in which analogous
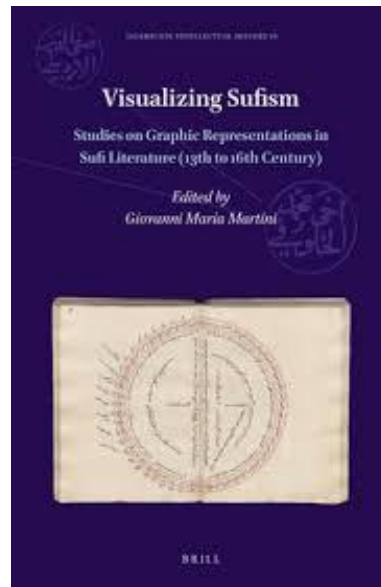
diagrams were often employed. Obtaining a better knowledge of the phenomenon would also permit scholars to address the question of possible intellectual osmosis, in particular with the Jewish Kabbalah, in which similar visual tools started to flourish at almost the same time in works by authors who in many cases acted in an Islamicate environment, knew Arabic and were acquainted with Islamic philosophical literature.

The event aimed at bringing together for the first time a group of specialists in the field to contribute to a workshop and collected volume on the theme of "Visual Sufism," which would be investigated from different angles through the lens of multiple authors who employed images and diagrams within their Sufi works. Preliminary questions for the workshop included the following: Which hypotheses can be suggested about the use of diagrams in Sufi literature? Was this trend linked to specific historical contexts, the rise of new disciplines, or the appearance of new styles, ideas, and theories in Sufism? Did the authors provide any theory (even embryonic) for the utilization of diagrams in their texts? To what extent did the texts refer to the social environment to justify the use of diagrams? Was the use of diagrams related to specific topics and, if so, which were they? What could be said about the specific use each author made of diagrams? Were there various typologies of diagrams? Was the use of diagrams consistent in different works of an author? Was it possible to individuate interdependences between diagrams found in different works written by one or more authors (i.e., can we discern a shared visual language here)? Did the presence of diagrams play any role in the reception of the texts at issue? Could we assess the evolution and development of the use of diagrams in time and space?

The workshop was opened by the papers by Noah Gardiner (University of South Carolina) on "Diagrams as Keys to the Kingdom in Aḥmad al-Būnī's (d. 622/1225) *Laṭā'īf al-Ishārāt fi al-Ḥurūf al-'Ulwiyāt*" and Elizabeth Alexandrin (University of Manitoba) on "Secret Alphabets and Sealed Texts in Three Unedited Works of Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyeh (d. 649/1252)."

Two talks examined symbols used in his treatise by Ibn al-'Arabī: Sophie Tyser (École Pratique des Hautes Études) on "'Visualizing the Order of the Universe': The Cosmological Diagrams in Chapter 371 of Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) *Meccan Openings*" and Ali Karjoo-Ravary (University of Pennsylvania) on "Illustrating the Forms: Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) Images in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*."

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (The Institute of Ismaili Studies) spoke of the "Use of Digrams in the Ḥurūfi and Nuqṭavi Manuscripts, and Possible Links between the Ḥurūfi "Verbal" and the Bektashi Visual

Iconographies," while Eliza Tasbihi (McGill University) focused on the "Esoteric Deliberations on Visionary Unveiling: Mystical Knowledge from Ḥaydar Āmulī's (d. after 787/1385) *Naṣṣ al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam.*"

Giovanni Maria Martini (University of Bonn), the convener of the workshop and editor of the book, presented on "Shīrīn Maghribī's (d. 810/1407) Visual Sufism: Diagrams, Intellectual Networks and the Transmission of the Spiritual Knowledge in 14th-Century Tabriz and Beyond" and Evyn Kropf (University of Michigan) talked on "'Sensible Metaphors": Pictograms in the Transmission of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī's (d. 973/1565) *al-Mīzān al-Kubrā*"

Side Emre (Texas A&M University) presented a "Comparative Study in 16th-Century Sufi Images and Diagrams: Bāyezīd Ḫalīfe's (d. after 921/1516) *Sirr i-Canān* and Muḫyīyi Gülşenī's (d. c. 1014/1606) *Devā ʾIruʾl-Maʾarīf*.

Except for the papers by Side Emre and Eliza Tasbihi, all other presentations were published in this *Visualizing Sufism*, approaching the question of the presence of graphic materials in Islamic mystical literature from a comprehensive perspective. To this goal, an international group of specialists in the field worked on largely manuscript and unpublished sources to analyse the use of visual elements in the works of some key figures of Islamic mysticism, in intellectual networks and their connections. The result is the most extensive collection of specimens of Sufi graphic materials ever brought together and discussed in a single, profusely illustrated volume.

By virtue of the object of study investigated in the chapters of this book, in addition to the history of Sufism, questions are raised that touch upon numerous areas in the field of Islamic studies, including intellectual history, codicology, and art history. All those interested in the history of Sufism and the art of the Islamic book, and anyone concerned with the role of visual materials in the history of religions, will find this book invaluable.

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