

The Arabic verses on these pages were composed by ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Born in 1181 in Cairo, °Umar memorized the traditions of the prophet Muhammad and studied Islamic mysticism and Arabic literature. Ibn al-Fāriḍ went on pilgrimage to Mecca and stayed there for some years before returning to Cairo. Then he took up residence at the Azhar mosque, teaching the traditions of the prophet Muhammad and poetry until his death in 1235. Ibn al-Fāriḍ was a master of the Arabic poetic tradition, composing poems in a number of forms including the quatrain, the *ghazal*, and the formal ode. Whether highly lyrical or occasionally didactic, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse takes up a number of religious themes revolving around the love between the human being and God. Generally, Ibn al-Fāriḍ embraces a mystical view of existence in which creation is lovingly intimate with its divine creator. This view is mirrored in the beauty and moving power of his verse, which has influenced generations of poets, and earned Ibn al-Fāriḍ the lasting reputation as *sultān al-‘āshshiqīn*, "the sultan of lovers."

In this manuscript, the large Arabic script and the Arabic in the "cloud" shapes on the left are verses 16-21 of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Khāmriyah* or "Wine Ode." This is the most famous mystical poem on wine in Arabic and Islam. The following verses describe the miraculous effects of the wine, including the powers of its name:

(16) Could the wizard write
 the letters of its name
 on the brow of one struck by the jinn,
 the tracings would cure and cleanse him,

(17) And were its name inscribed
 upon the army's standard,
 all beneath that banner

would fall drunk from the sign.

- (18) It refines the morals
of the tavern mates
and guides the irresolute
to resolution's path;
- (19) He who never knew munificence
is generous,
while one lacking in forbearance
bears the rage of anger,
- (20) And could the stupid one among the folk
win a kiss from its strainer,
he would sense the hidden sense
of its fine qualities.
- (21) They say to me: "Do describe it,
for you know its character well!"
Indeed, I have word
of its attributes.¹

¹ Translation by Th. Emil Homerin, *Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (New York, 2001), 49-50, where a complete translation may be found. For the *Wine Ode* and a commentary on it, also see Th. Emil Homerin, *The Wine of Love and Life* (Chicago, 2005).

The smaller Arabic verses in the boxes on the right of the manuscript are verses 5-16 of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Ḍālīyah* ("Ode Rhyming in Ḍ") another beautiful mystical poem. These verses from the ode, describe a caravan journey to the camp of the beloved.

(5) Fatigue has whittled [the camels] away
 and loosened their nose rings--
 let them quench themselves
 on the depressions' panic grass.

(6) Rapture will wear them away
 if you do not water them,
 so give them a drink on the run
 amid the lowland's large pools,

(7) And race with them
 but spare them,
 for they are your means of winning
 the best of valleys.

(8) May God lengthen your life!
 If you pass by Yanbu's valley,
 then Dahnā, then Badr--
 setting out early--

(9) And journey to Naqā,
 then to the wetlands

of Waddān, to Rābigh
with well-watered pools,

- (10) And cross the stony tacks
aiming for the tents
of Qudayd, the dwellings
of the glorious ones,
- (11) And draw near to Khulayṣ,
then ‘Uṣfān,
and Marr al-Ḍahrān,
the bedouins' meeting place,
- (12) And arrive to drink at Jumūm,
then Qaṣr and Daknā'--
one and all watering holes
for those coming for drink--
- (13) And come to Tanīm,
then to Zāhir,
radiant with blossoms
to its mountain tops,
- (14) And cross over to Hajūn
and pass through,
choosing to visit
the shrines of the saints,

(15) And reach the tents,
 then give my greetings carefully
 to the dear Arabs
 of that assembly.

(16) Be kind,
 and recall to them
 a part of my passion,
 never to be exhausted.²

² Translated by Th. Emil Homerin.