

Outline of Annemarie Schimmel's *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam*

1 I Sacred Aspects of Nature and Culture

2 Inanimate Nature

- 2 Stones and rocks
- 3 Gems
- 4 Mountains
- 5 Earth and dust
- 6 Water
- 6 Springs and fountains
- 7 Water of life
- 7 Ocean, waves and foam
- 8 Rain
- 9 Deluge (flood)
- 9 Rivers
- 10 Fire
- 10 Burning Bush on Mount Sinai
- 11 Candles
- 11 Lightning and thunder
- 11 Wind
- 12 Light
- 13 Sun
- 14 Moon
- 15 Stars
- 16 Planets
- 16 Sky
- 16 Colours

17 Plants and Animals

- 17 Trees
- 20 Gardens
- 20 Plants and flowers
- 20 Wild rue, roses (gul), violets, tulips
- 21 Animals
- 21 Animal skin
- 22 Pigs and pork
- 22 Gnats
- 22 Bees
- 22 Ants
- 23 Spiders
- 23 Moths
- 23 Cows
- 23 Lions

24	Cats
24	Dogs
24	Camels
24	Donkeys
25	Horses
25	Buraq (from the Mi'raj)
25	Serpents, snakes and dragons
26	Birds
26	Soul birds
26	Nightingales (bulbul)
26	Falcons
26	Doves
26	Storks
27	Roosters
27	Peacocks
27	Parrots
27	Swans and ganders
27	Hoopoe (hudhud)
28	Crows and ravens
28	Mythical birds (Huma, 'Anqa, Simurgh)
28	Kindness to animals
28	Eschatological peace (the lion and the lamb)

29 Man-made Objects

29	Swords, weapons and armour
30	Rods and wands
30	Flags and banners
31	Mirrors
33	Idols
33	Coins
33	Paintings and pictures
35	Woven fabrics (tomb-covers)
36	Garments, clothes
37	Ihram (pilgrimage dress)
37	Hijab, Burqa (veil)
38	Headgear (taj, turbans)
39	Garments, robes and hems as a metaphor
41	<i>Notes</i>

47 II Sacred Space and Time

48 Sacred Space

48	Caves
49	Houses
50	Thresholds
50	Doors and gates (bab)

- 51 High and low seats (throne vs. 'place of the sandals')
- 51 Centre of the house
- 51 Carpets and rugs
- 51 Baths
- 51 Citadel, fortress, stronghold (metaphor)
- 51 Mosques (masjid, jami'), pulpits (minbar), minarets, niches (mihrab)
- 53 Burial places, tombs, shrines (maqam, dargah)
- 56 Other sacred places
- 56 Mecca and Medina (al-haramayn; the two sacred places)
- 57 The Kaaba
- 57 Qibla
- 59 Medina
- 61 Jerusalem
- 61 Right and left side
- 62 East and West
- 63 Hahut, Lahut, Jabarut, Malakut, Mithal, Nasut (worlds/realms)
- 63 Road, way, (straight) path
- 64 Pilgrimage (hajj)
- 65 Muhammad's Night Journey (Isra Mi'raj)
- 65 Journeys of the soul
- 65 Seven Valleys

66 **Sacred Time**

- 67 Lunar calendar
- 67 Hegira
- 67 Lunar years
- 67 Nawruz (Persian New Year)
- 67 Lunar months

- 68 Feasts
- 68 'Id ul-Fitr (end of Ramadan)
- 68 'Id al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice)
- 68 Ramadan (fasting; sawm)
- 69 Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Might)
- 69 Laylat al-Milad (Birth of Muhammad; Mawlid)
- 69 Laylat al-Bara'a (Mid-Sha'ban)
- 70 Shia sacred days
- 70 Muharram (Martyrdom of Husayn)
- 72 Saints' anniversaries ('urs)
- 72 Other special days
- 73 Days of the week
- 73 Auspicious days
- 74 Hours
- 74 Linear time and cyclical time
- 74 Arcs of ascent and descent

76 **Sacred Numbers**

76	Odd numbers and even numbers
76	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 40, 72, 99, 1001
83	<i>Notes</i>
89	III Sacred Action
90	Inherited values and traditions
90	Via Purgativa (Purification)
90	Customs for protection against evil spirits or the Evil Eye
91	Noise
91	Fumigation
91	Scents
91	Salt
91	Drawing a circle or walking around a (sick) person
92	Tying knot and loosening them again
92	Gestures (Hand of Fatima)
92	Henna (mehndi), turmeric and betel
92	Little boats of straw
93	Removing one's shoes
93	Pilgrim's dress (Ihram)
94	Covering the head and hair (women and men; veils, caps, fez, turbans, prayer caps)
94	Purification
94	Sweeping shrines
94	Washing sacred buildings and shrines
95	Ritual purity
95	Purification by fire (includes alchemy)
95	Ablutions (water) and full bath (wudu and ghusl)
97	Blood
97	Tears
98	Abstinence
98	Nightly superogative prayer
98	Asceticism
98	Ramadan (fasting; sawm)
99	Animal sacrifice
100	Self-sacrifice
100	Hair shaving
100	Circumcision
101	Offering and distributing flowers and sweets
101	Alms-giving (zakat)
102	Via Illuminativa

- 102 Intention (niyya)
- 103 Touching a sacred object or saintly person for blessing (baraka)
- 103 - Hands, peacock feathers, kissing, breathing
- 104 Music and dance (wirling dance in Sufism)
- 104 Ecstasy

- 105 **Via Unitiva**

- 105 Love and union with God
- 107 Eating and drinking blessed food and drink
- 107 Communal meals
- 107 Wine and intoxicating drink as a metaphor

- 109 *Notes*

- 113 **IV The Word and the Script**

- 114 **The Word – About God, and from God**

- 114 Recitation
- 114 Popular religious songs
- 115 Repetition and rhyme
- 116 Dhikr (recollection of God)
- 116 Arabic language
- 117 Translation and commentaries of the Qu’ran
- 117 Islamic literature in other languages
- 119 Inspiration (ilham)
- 119 Divine revelation (wahy)
- 119 Interpretation and translation
- 119 Ninety-nine most beautiful Names of God and the greatest Name of God
- 120 Dhikr (recollection of God)
- 121 Personal names and titles (children, converts, rulers)
- 122 Divination (Qur’an, Mathnavi of Rumi, Divan of Hafiz)
- 123 Dreams
- 124 Astrology
- 124 Revelation and teachings of Muhammad
- 125 Mythology
- 125 Creation
- 125 Adam and Eve
- 126 Building of the Kaaba
- 126 Kербela (martyrdom of Imam Husayn)
- 126 Pilgrimage, prayer and fasting
- 126 Last judgment (the Books, the Scales, the Bridge, the Mahdi, the second coming of Jesus)
- 126 Muhammad’s heavenly journey (isra mi’raj)
- 127 Demythologization and rationalization
- 127 Saga’s, fairy tales, fables, legends, proverbs and poetry

- 129 Hadith
- 130 Oral instruction
- 130 Esoteric interpretation
- 131 Madrasa (theological colleges)
- 131 Use of paradoxes and riddles
- 132 Ta'lim (theoretical dictation by the Shiam Imams)
- 132 Khutba (sermons)
- 133 Allegories
- 133 Shahada (profession of faith; seven words, twenty four letters)
- 134 Knowledge ('Ilm) and wisdom ('irfan)
- 135 Shari'a (Islamic law; 'ulama, imams and mujahids)

135 **The Word to God**

- 135 Greetings (as-salamu 'alaykum)
- 136 Blessing and cursing
- 137 Oaths and vows
- 137 - Children's names, meals, tomb covers, little rags hanging in trees or window grills
- 138 Exorcism (zar ritual)
- 138 Invocations (takbir: Allahu Akbar)
- 138 Ablutions (purification with water)
- 138 Prayer
- 138 Forgiveness
- 139 Call to prayer (adhan)
- 139 Ritual prayer (obligatory prayer, salat, namaz)
- 140 Community prayer (congregational prayer)
- 141 Rak'a (17 cycles of bodily movements, like standing, genuflexions and prostration)
- 142 Supererogatory prayers
- 143 Praise of God (Subhan Allah) and hymnic poetry
- 145 Personal prayers (du'a, munajat)
- 147 Dhikr and tasbih (repeating short prayers or phrases)
- 149 Silence

150 **Sacred Scripture**

- 150 The Koran (Qur'an)
- 151 Letters, pen, tablet
- 152 Adjad system (numerical value of letters)
- 152 Unconnected, disconnected or isolated letters of the Koran
- 152 Talismans, amulets and tomb covers etc.
- 153 Arabic alphabet
- 154 Calligraphy
- 155 The Well-preserved Tablet (lawh mahfuz; Koran 85:22)
- 155 The illiteracy of Muhammad
- 156 Alteration of the Torah and the Gospel
- 156 Audio recordings of the Koran

- 156 I'jaz (unsurpassible style of the Koran)
- 157 Other aspects of the Koran
- 157 Suras or verses with special blessing (baraka; Fatiha, Sura 36 Ya Sin, the Throne verse (2:255), Sura 122)
- 158 Khatma (a complete recitation of the Koran)
- 158 Abrogated verses in Islamic law
- 158 Copying and printing the Koran
- 158 Reverence for copies of the Koran (mushaf)
- 159 Compilation of the text of the Koran (caliph 'Othman, r. 644-656)
- 160 Arrangement by length of the Suras (long to short)
- 160 History of Islamic exegesis (interpretation)
- 161 Tafsir (conventional) and ta'wil (esoteric interpretation)
- 165 Translation
- 165 Hadith (Divine words revealed outside the Koran)
- 168 Secondary literature (poetry, philosophy etc.)

169 *Notes*

177 **V Individual and Society**

178 **The Human Being**

- 178 Dual nature of man (spiritual and material)
- 179 'Abd (slave, servant), the highest station of man
- 180 The Perfect Man (al-insan al-kamil) in Sufism
- 180 The story of creation (Adam and Eve)
- 180 Spirit (ruh) and soul (nafs)
- 181 The body (carries power (baraka):
- 181 - Hair, beard, nails, nose, breathing, saliva, perspiration, blood, head, feet, eyes
- 183 Purification after losing 'power'
- 184 The heart, a pure mirror
- 184 Spirit and soul
- 184 Parents
- 184 Family, fathers, mothers, children
- 185 Caliphate (Sunni Islam)
- 186 Imamate (Shia Islam)
- 186 - Twelver Shia and the Hidden Imam
- 186 ' Ulama (lawyer-divines in Sunni Islam)
- 186 Mujtahid (clerics in Twelver Shia)
- 187 The Prophet Muhammad
- 187 Two kinds of prophets: nabi (receives a revelation) and rasul (must preach the message)
- 187 Illiteracy and sinlessness of the prophet
- 188 Twenty-eight prophets mentioned in the Koran
- 188 Muhammad as the 'Seal of the Prophets' (khatam an-nabiyyin) and the Paraclete (from the Bible)
- 188 Descendants of Muhammad (sayyids and sharifs)

188	Non-acceptance of new revelations (e.g. Babi-Bahai movement and Ahmadiyya)
189	The spiritual station of Muhammad
192	Asceticism
192	Meditation and dhikr
192	Saints (shaykhs, pirs etc.)
194	Praying at tombs, shrines and graves
195	Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn
196	Martyrdom
196	Renovators (mujaddid)
197	Position of women in Islam
197	Polygamy, marriage, divorce
198	Prominent women in the Koran and in the Islamic world
199	Veils
200	Other aspects
201	Society
201	Umma (the community)
202	The middle way
202	Ijma' (consensus)
203	Jihad (striving in the way of God)
203	Umma is not limited to nation or state
204	Right government
204	Non-Arab converts (mawali)
204	People of the Book (Jews, Christians, Sabians, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists)
205	Jihad (striving in the way of God)
205	Non-Arab converts (Jews, Christians, Sabians, Zoroastrians)
206	Jihad
206	Legal schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'I, Hanbali)
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223	God in the Koran
225	Hidden treasure

225	Unity of Existence (wahdat al-wujud)
225	Oneness of God
225	Other aspects of God (including His majesty (jalal) and beauty (jamal))
227	God's Creation (including emanation, 'Be! and it is', change, signs (ayat), duality, polarity)
229	The meaning of this world
229	Angels (including the four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Israfil, 'Azra'il)
232	Djinn (spirits)
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