Canonicity and Control:

The Sociopolitical Underpinnings

of Ibn Muqla's Reform

ABSTRACT

Paleographic studies on Ibn Muqla (886–940) have focused ex-
clusively on the mechanics of his calligraphic reform, disregard-
ing his role as an influential statesman who was directly involved
in the politics of the Abbasid state. In an earlier study, I have at-
tempted to demonstrate that Ibn Muqla's innovation of the pro-
portioned script for writing the Qurʾān reflected a contemporary
belief in the exoteric nature of the word of God. This essay re-
evaluates the political and sociological aspects of Ibn Muqla's re-
form, suggesting that, in addition to its well-established anti-Shiʿi
message, the reform was also intended to curtail the power of even
Sunni theologians by reformulating the Holy Book as an instru-
ment of Abbasid power. More generally, the essay attempts to
locate Ibn Muqla and his successor Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 1022)
within the fundamental literate expansion of the tenth and elev-
enth centuries.

FIG. 1.
Al-Aṣmaʿi, Taʿrīkh mulūk al-ʿArab, *243/957. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Arabe 6726, fol. 2v.*

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NEARLY EVERY HISTORICAL treatise on Arabic calligraphy begins with a similar history of writing, a historical narrative whose naïveté and repetetiveness veil its heuristic significance. Told sequentially as the solitary acts of saintly figures and calligraphers, the history of calligraphy highlights the role of individual calligraphers but provides minimal cultural context for their accomplishments. The canonical list of calligraphers includes legendary or near-legendary figures, among whom are the prophets Seth, Enoch, and Moses and the caliphs ʿAli and ʿUthmān. Calligraphers of the early Abbasid period tended to be high officials, such as al-Faḍl b. Sahl and al-Aḥwal, culminating in the vizier Ibn Muqla.[1] Under the Buyids and later Abbasids, calligraphers were professional scribes, such as Ibn al-Bawwāb and Yāqūt, who had demonstrated a special gift in the art of calligraphy.

This "history" is obligingly, but uncritically, included in most modern studies on Arabic calligraphy, or it is dismissed as lacking a factual basis. Approached on its own terms, however, this canonical narrative potentially raises a number of important issues that bear directly on the changing role of calligraphy and calligraphers in an evolving Islamic society. The first concerns the descending social status of calligraphers: the earliest calligraphers were men of high rank and religious learning; Ibn Muqla was a patrician who became a vizier; Ibn al-Bawwāb was a man of humble origin who rose to the rank of scribe and librarian; Yāqūt was a slave. The second has to do with the decreasing independence of calligraphers concomitant with their increasing reliance on patronage. Even disregarding such legendary calligraphers

as the caliphs ʿAli and ʿUthmān, evidence suggests that the first calligraphers—those who wrote the earliest Qurʾāns—were learned scholars who were not in the direct employ of sovereigns or princes.[2] Later calligraphers, on the other hand, particularly after Ibn al-Bawwāb, relied greatly or even exclusively on princely patronage, culminating in those calligraphers who were employed by the kitābkhana.[3] The third and most general observation about this hierarchical tale is that it is not so much a history as a mythology of Arabic writing, or, more specifically, a legend of the downward and outward spread of literacy from the elevated source of prophets and caliphs to the diversity and multiplicity of a complex multiethnic culture.

Ibn Muqla (886–940) stands in the chronological and ideological middle of this process as the first calligrapher to carry out a comprehensive reform of Qurʾānic calligraphy, conducted, as I have previously argued, at the behest of the Abbasid state.[4] His calligraphic reform entailed the creation of geometric templates for each letter of the alphabet, resulting in a system of proportional writing (al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb) that was then applied to the six main scripts of his time. The geometric precision of this process, combined with the systematization of orthographic and vocalization signs, produced clear and legible scripts that were deemed worthy of the Qurʾān. Often called semi-Kufic, although "new Abbasid Kufic" is perhaps more appropriate, these new script(s) were marked by a clarity and legibility that reflected the Ashʿari (or generally Sunni) belief in the exoteric nature of the word of God and the uncreated nature of the Qurʾān.

But Ibn Muqla's calligraphic reform also had social and political dimensions that I did not sufficently emphasize in my earlier articles, for his reform was very likely intended to challenge the authority of the calligraphers of early Kufic Qurʾāns while insisting on the authority of the Abbasids in controlling this process. Engendered in an increasingly literate Islamic world, Ibn Muqla's reform acknowledges, even endorses, the inevitability of increased writing (especially of the Qurʾān) but places new limits on this fundamental change. In the following discussion, I would like to turn to these social and political aspects of the reform by focusing on Ibn Muqla's links with the Abbasid state and the new role created for calligraphy and calligraphers subsequent to this transformation. I shall therefore attempt to reconcile my theological interpretation of this phenomenon with sociological and political information about Ibn Muqla as calligrapher, reformer of the Qurʾānic script, and vizier to three caliphs. Since no works of Ibn Muqla have survived, I shall refer to his closest known successor, ʿAlī b. Shādhān al-Rāzī (active 972–86), a calligrapher who produced both secular and Qurʾānic manuscripts.[5]

Despite Ibn Muqla's well-known influence on Qurʾānic writing, it should be made clear from the start that he was neither a Qurʾānic calligrapher nor someone especially noted for his religious knowledge.[6] As a scribe and state official, he stands apart from early Qurʾānic calligraphers, who, according to Ibn Durustūyah, were men knowledgeable in the Qurʾān and other religious matters.[7] Calligraphically speaking, scribes (kuttāb) and early Qurʾānic calligraphers (khaṭṭaṭūn) were worlds apart. Whereas the former were keenly interested in clarity and legibility, the latter were more concerned with maintaining the integrity and sanctity of the sacred text, concerns that were better served by using a nearly illegible script.[8] It follows then that Ibn Muqla's encroachment on the world of Qurʾānic calligraphers and his decisive impact on the development of Qurʾānic calligraphy were not simply internal developments in the craft but ones necessarily motivated by external factors.

Before we attempt to describe these factors, it seems necessary to review the situation of writing around the time of Ibn Muqla's calligraphic reform. Concerning Qurʾānic writing, its great uniformity in

the first three centuries of Islam bespeaks a highly conservative and restrictive attitude toward the transcription of the Qurʾān.[9] With ambiguous and often undifferentiated letter forms and a scattered disposition on the page, Kufic Qurʾāns of the ninth and tenth centuries were practically illegible except to those who had already memorized the text (i.e., ḥuffaz).[10] In other words, these Qurʾāns were created not so much to be read but to validate the act of recitation and to venerate the word of God. The manuscripts speak of privilege and a restrictive attitude to the act of reading: rare materials, exquisite ornament, and a nearly indecipherable script.[11]

In contrast, secular scripts—which can be subdivided into scribal scripts and book scripts—were quite legible, despite their considerable variation.[12] Writing at the end of the ninth century, Ibn al-Nadīm listed twenty-six scripts used by the scribes of his time, ranging from large and angular to small and cursive.[13] The task of matching these scribal scripts to extant specimens has proved to be very difficult, not the least because so few early medieval documents and letters have survived.[14] Book scripts, on the other hand, ranging from semi-angular to cursive, were quite commonly used in literary and scientific manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries (fig. 1). Although some of these were copied by the author of the treatise himself, more commonly authors left the task of making clean copies to professional copyists.[15]

Interestingly, these "transitional" book scripts were also commonly used in a variety of Arabic Christian texts, including gospels, psalters, and monastic anthologies (fig. 2). A cursory survey of this little-known phenomenon suggests that Christian manuscripts were written in new Abbasid Kufic scripts as early as the last quarter of the ninth century, whereas those written in cursive scripts generally date to the second half of the tenth century.[16] In other words, the use of book scripts in Christian manuscripts long predates the transformation in Qurʾānic writing but is generally contemporary with their use in Arabic secular manuscripts. Indeed, the use of these scripts for Christian texts attests to their popularity and strengthens the case for their "secular" background, from an Islamic perspective.

On the eve of the reforms of Ibn Muqla, Arabic was being written in an ambiguously majestic

Qurʾānic script and in an unwieldy variety of secular scripts, mostly used by scribes (*kuttāb*) for writing documents and letters and by booksellers or copyists (*warrāqūn*) for the copying of various manuscripts. Ibn Muqla's rules for proportional writing (*al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb*) did not emerge from Qurʾānic Kufic but were rather based on these multifarious book scripts, which were also initially the subject of the reform.[17] In other words, Qurʾānic Kufic, which by the tenth century had reached a very high standard, was not directly affected by the changes of Ibn Muqla; the reform was intended for the more mundane scripts used by scribes and copyists rather than calligraphers. The result of these reforms, therefore, was not the gradual softening of the angular Kufic script but its supplantation by the redesigned scripts of the copyists.

Ibn Muqla thus created order where disorder had been perceived within scribal writing, a feat that earned him heroic stature among later Muslim biog-

raphers. Since success is often equated with quality, the success of Ibn Muqla's proportional writing made him the father of the new Arabic calligraphy, despite the fact that he may not have been an especially gifted calligrapher himself. Indeed, the emphasis by connoisseurs from medieval times to the present on finding authentic specimens in the hand of Ibn Muqla has diverted attention from properly investigating the recipe and legacy of his success, which was certainly not entirely based on his calligraphic hand.

Although we lack any authentic specimens in Ibn Muqla's hand, there is little question that it would have resembled the earliest examples of new Abbasid Kufic Qurʾāns. I have presented this argument previously[18] and would like here simply to demonstrate the possible impact of Ibn Muqla's method on ʿAli b. Shādhān al-Rāzī, who is known to us both as a copyist of a literary tract and as a Qurʾānic calligrapher. The secular work is a book entitled *Kitāb akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn al-baṣriyyīn* (Tales of the Grammarians

FIG. 2.
*New Testament, Timothy
4:1f. Jerusalem 902. Paris,
Bibliothèque Nationale,
Arabe 6725, fol. 5v.*

95

of Basra), dated 376/986, a period from which we have several other related manuscripts (fig. 3). Written in a reasonably legible, fully vocalized Abbasid Kufic script, this manuscript probably represents the high end of secular manuscripts produced in the late tenth century. ʿAli b. Shādhān's Qurʾān, dated 361/972, is the earliest dated Qurʾān manuscript in the Abbasid Kufic script and also the first Qurʾān written on paper (fig. 4). Closely related to, if perhaps more conservative than, the calligrapher's later secular manuscript, this Qurʾān nevertheless demonstrates the close linkages between Qurʾānic and non-Qurʾānic calligraphy in the aftermath of Ibn Muqla's reforms. Written about one generation after the death of Ibn Muqla, this Qurʾān manuscript represents the direct influence of Ibn Muqla's calligraphic method,

the transmission of this method from secular to Qurʾānic manuscripts, and the impact of paper production on both processes.

Indeed, the widespread use of paper after the tenth century in chancery documents and secular manuscripts may have contributed to the speed of execution required by scribes and book copiers. Cheaper and more widely available than earlier parchment and papyrus, paper greatly facilitated the work of these scribes and promoted the expansion of literacy.[19] The growth in the number of scribes and the literate population seems to have been accompanied by the relaxation of calligraphic standards and a general decline in the quality of writing.[20] Some system was urgently needed for the reform of secular writing, and this was provided by Ibn Muqla in the

FIG. 3.
Al-Sirāfī, Kitāb akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn al-baṣriyyīn, *calligrapher* ʿAlī b. Shādhān al-Rāzī, *Iraq/Iran, dated 986. Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library (Šehid Ali 1642), fol. 191a.*

form of *al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb*. The switch from vellum to paper also led to the transfer of "differentiations in value from the medium itself to what was put on it,"[21] a point that is addressed below.

Although generally discussed in aesthetic terms, Ibn Muqla's innovations were primarily concerned with clarity and legibility, concerns that seem consistent with his role as a state official.[22] While Ibn Muqla's reform grew out of earlier trends toward clarity in scribal and manuscript writing, his reform was the most systematic and pervasive. This reform was engendered within an atmosphere of increasing literacy—brought about by paper—and was intended to remedy a situation resulting from this burgeoning of the literate population. It resulted in the creation of a series of templates for the canonical calligraphic scripts, which guaran-

teed quality and consistency. But this standardization came at a price: a relatively small number of scripts formed the canon of reformed scripts, while others were neglected and slipped into oblivion.[23]

The power implications of this standardization and canonicity are, I think, fairly straightforward. Brinkley Messick in his recent book *The Calligraphic State* expatiates on the links between the introduction of new writing systems in Yemen at the beginning of the twentieth century and the rise of a new power structure.[24] Specifically, he argues that the switch that took place from organically formed spiral texts to texts with a standardized linear format implied enforced changes in the relation between form and content and between the state and the population. Although the change in modern Yemen from
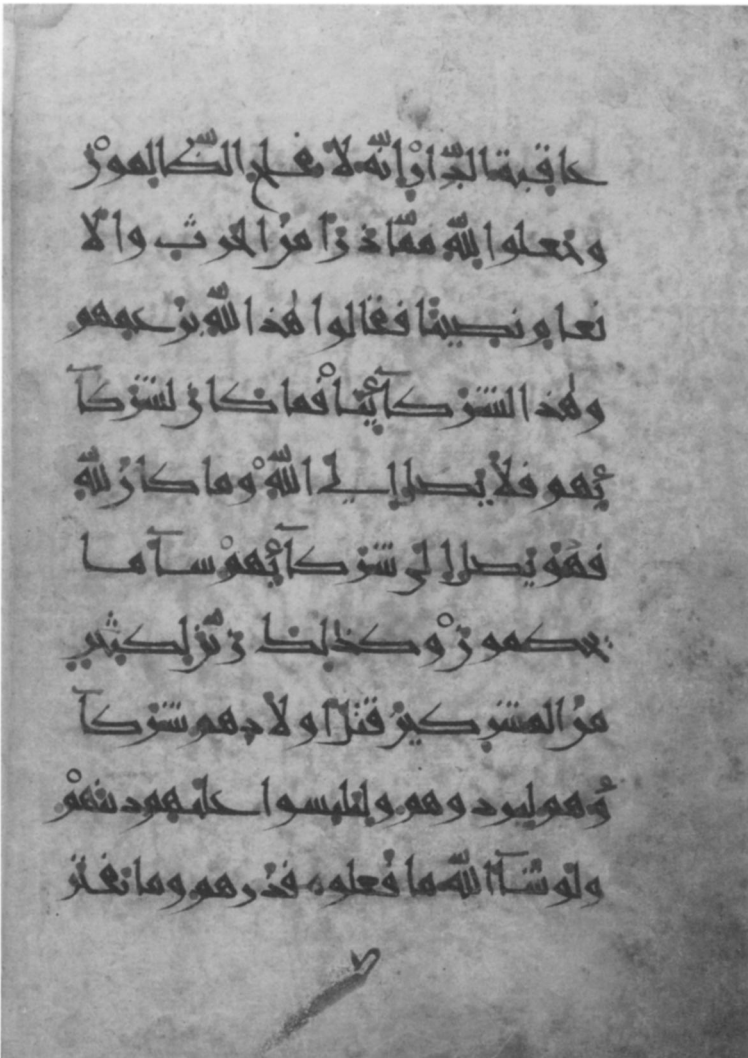

FIG. 4.
Qurʾān, Iran (other part of same ms. at the University Library in Istanbul [A6758] is dated 361/972), calligrapher ʿAlī b. Shādhān al-Rāzī. Dublin, The Chester Beatty Library, 1434, fol. 164b.

manuscript to print culture is more abrupt and the sources on it more ample, both situations describe a process by which new writing systems are deployed for affirming power and asserting control. Indeed, the Abbasid reforms entailed control of the scripts, control of the scribes who had to be retrained in these scripts, and ultimately control of the content, the texts for which these scripts were to be used.

Although these reforms are attributed by contemporary writers directly to the creative genius of Ibn Muqla,[25] there is no question that their success and quick impact resulted from their adoption by the Abbasid state. As vizier to three successive Abbasid caliphs—al-Muqtadir, al-Qāhir and al-Rāḍi—Ibn Muqla was embroiled in the politics and intrigue of the Abbasid state. I have previously explored his involvement under al-Muqtadir with the creation of a canonical body of Qurʾānic recensions (qirāʾāt) that were intended to put an end to discord while forever abolishing the legitimacy of aberrant recensions, particularly that of Ibn Masʿūd.[26] Indeed, Ibn Muqla was certainly involved in the trials of two of the variant readers, Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shanabūdh, the latter of whom was beaten and tortured into acquiescence.[27]

In essence, therefore, the Abbasid state used trusted members of its administration to try, judge, and punish Qurʾānic scholars who were deemed divergent. Although state functionaries with no particular claim to religious knowledge, Ibn Muqla and his cohorts were placed in a position to enforce a particular religious dogma and to punish those who persisted in departing from it. This is a curious situation, though not the first time that the Abbasid state had resorted to such repressive measures: the miḥna of Ibn Ḥanbal presents a similar, though ideologically opposite, case.[28] In effect, the trials ordered by al-Muqtadir and conducted by Ibn Muqla demoted traditional Qurʾānic readers and valorized a state version of the Qurʾān that was promoted and even copied by men of the administration. The fact that calligraphers of the Kufic Qurʾān were probably drawn from ʿulamaʾ circles may have contributed to the ultimate supplanting of their style and manner of writing by the newly canonized calligraphic modes.

Thus, Ibn Muqla created a new calligraphic system, eventually applied to the Qurʾān, and was the vizier who enforced the caliphal order to establish a body of canonical Qurʾānic readings. The two roles are undoubtedly related: the adoption of al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb for copying the Qurʾān was inspired by the canonization of the text of the Qurʾān. The new script, with its improved orthography and the correct numeration, would have left no doubt in the mind of Muslims that they were reading one of the new orthodox recensions, certainly not a Qurʾān with an aberrant reading. The canonization of the text is made clear and visible by the new canonical script, and the two processes conjoin to reaffirm the absolute control of the content and the form of the Sacred Book by the Abbasid state.

Control is therefore essential to the creation of proportional writing and its application to the Qurʾān, thereby ending three centuries of Kufic writing. Although exactly how scripts were transferred from the secular to the religious domain remains incompletely known, the highlights are fairly clear. Three main processes were at work: the reform of scribal writing, the canonization of the Qurʾānic text, and the application of proportional writing to the Qurʾān. Linked together by webs of power, these processes led to the transformation of the form of the Qurʾān. Although little discussed by most modern writers, this was perhaps the most significant "artistic" innovation of the middle Abbasid period, instigated by the Abbasid state.

Finally, it is curious that the rise of calligraphy as an art form, one that becomes the object of criticism and collecting, only begins after the reforms of Ibn Muqla and the creation of the new Abbasid scripts. Oleg Grabar has proposed two explanations for this curious phenomenon, which in fact goes counter to contemporary preference for the Kufic script over later cursive scripts. The first is that as paper replaced vellum in the tenth century, there was a shift in value from the medium to what was written upon it, hence to calligraphy. The second is that the spread of literacy, also related to the availability of paper, would have created a market in which calligraphic products circulated as objects of cultural value.[29] To these, I can add a third factor: name recognition. Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwāb are not simply the first calligraphers known to us by name, but

their names were also associated with the caliphs and princes for whom they worked. They become rubrics of recognition: later calligraphers imitate their style, and even forgers attribute works to their names. The two initiate the genealogy of calligraphers with whom I began this paper, but they were not the lone actors impied by the sources. They were rather part of an intricate social, political, and theological construction that shaped their careers and gave meaning to their creative efforts. □

Notes

This article was first presented as a conference paper at "Inscription as Art in the World of Islam," Hofstra University, 25–27 April 1996. I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Habibeh Rahim for organizing the conference and for allowing me to publish this paper outside its projected format. I also thank the two anonymous readers, who have helped me tighten the argument of this paper and expand on some of its historical dimensions. I regret that I was not always able to follow the many excellent suggestions made by the second reader. Readers of *Ars Orientalis* will note that this article is related to my two earlier articles in this journal (1991 and 1994), in which I dealt with the transformation of Arabic writing, Qurʾānic and epigraphic, from angular to cursive scripts.

1. See, for example, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 8–12; Qalqashandi, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʾshā* (Cairo, 1962), 3:10–14; and Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭibi, *Jāmiʾ maḥāsin kitābat al-kuttāb*, ed. Salahuddin al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1962), 13. See also *Calligraphers and Painters. A Treatise by Qāḍi Aḥmad, son of Mir Munshi (ca. A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)*, trans. T. Minorsky (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1959), 52–55, for a genealogy that also includes ancient Persian kings and Shiʿi imams. For the early history of Arabic writing, see Salahuddin al-Munajjid, *Dirāsāt fi tārikh al-khaṭṭ al-ʿarabī mundhu bidāyatihi ilā nihāyat al-ʿaṣr al-umawiyy* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1972), 23; and Yasin Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Boulder: Shambhalla, 1979), 7–8.

2. On the distinction between scribe (*nassākh* or *warrāq*) and calligrapher (*khaṭṭāṭ*) see Johannes Pedersen, *The Arabic Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 43ff. and 83ff. See also Estelle Whelan, "Early Islam, Emerging Patterns, 622–1050," in *Islamic Art and Patronage: Treasures from Kuwait*, ed. Esin Atil (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1990), 27–40.

3. Yāqūt al-Mustaʿṣimī, for example, was an Abyssinian slave in the court of the last Abbasid caliph, al-Mustaʿṣim. The patronage of calligraphers by princes is amply demonstrated for later periods. For example, Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1989), 159ff.

4. Yasser Tabbaa, "The Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part I, Qurʾānic Calligraphy," *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1991): 119–48.

5. Holly C. Edwards, "A Study of Eastern Kufic Calligraphy" (M.A. thesis, University of Michigan, 1981). This excellent thesis meticulously analyzes a group of tenth- and eleventh-century secular and Qurʾānic manuscripts, while highlighting the work of ʿAli b. Shādhān al-Rāzi.

6. For a summary of Ibn Muqla's entirely bureaucratic and administrative career, see Dominique Sourdel, "Ibn Mukla," *EP²*, 3:886-87.

7. Estelle Whelan, "Writing the Word of God: Some Early Qurʾān Manuscripts and Their Milieux, Part I," *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990): 122, where the author suggests that "Ibn Durustūyah included copyists of the Qurʾān among the ʿulamāʾ, which is also confirmed by the manuscripts themselves." See Ibn Durustūyah, *Kitāb al-kuttāb*, ed. Ibrahim al-Samarraʿi (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992), 20, where the author expressly exempts Qurʾānic calligraphers from the rules of orthography discussed in his book.

8. On the connservatism of Qurʾānic scripts and calligraphers, see Nabia Abbott, "Arabic Paleography: The Development of Early Islamic Scripts," *Ars Islamica* 8 (1941): 83, who proposes that Qurʾānic "writing, including spelling rules and scripts, became established as a Sunna or sacred practice, as one learns from Ibn Durustuya and others."

9. François Déroche, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes, Les manuscrits du Coran, I: Aux origines de la calligraphie coranique* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1983). The author has attempted further to subdivide the well-known categories of *Māʿil* (slanted script) and early Kufic into smaller and more precise groups or families of manuscripts. But keeping within the central Kufic groups one notices a remarkable degree of consistency in the letter forms and the overall appearance of the scripts.

10. On the problem of legibility, see in particular Richard Ettinghausen, "Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation," in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. Dickran Kouymijian (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974), 297–318; Erika Dodd, "The Image of the Word: Notes on the Religious Iconography of Islam," *Berytus* 18 (1969): 35–62; and Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 60–68.

11. Oleg Grabar has recently dealt with complex writing systems as emblems of privilege in the medieval world, proposing that the acquisition of objects with nearly indecipherable scripts became one of the criteria for justifying and sustaining the power basis of a social and political elite. See *Mediation of Ornament*, chap. 2.

12. Whelan, in "Early Islam," expanding on Abbott, was the first to make a cogent case for subdividing non-Qurʾānic writing into scribal or secretarial and book scripts. See also Nabia Abbott, "Arabic Paleography," *Ars Islamica* 8 (1941): 76f.

13. *Fihrist*, 13-15.

14. In *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and Its Kurʾānic Development* (Chicago, 1938), Nabia Abbott did in fact succeed in identifying one script, *al-musalsal*. But, overall, her efforts in this regard were not successful.

15. Pedersen, *Arabic Book*, 45: "it was not uncommon in the time of the early ʿAbbāsids for an author to have his special *warrāq*."

16. For other specimens, see Georges Vajda, *La palaeographie arabe* (Paris, 1953), pl. 4; and especially Evgenivs Tisserant, *Specimina Codicvm Orientalivm* (Rome, 1914):
> pl. 54: Vat. ar. 7: *Florilegium Monasticum*, dated 885; new Abbasid Kufic script with elaborate letter forms;
> pl. 55: Borg. ar. 71: *Evangelia*, ninth century; new Abbasid Kufic script;
> pl. 45a: Vat. ar. 18: *Evangelium, sec Lucam*, dated 993; cursive (*naskh*) script.

17. The canon of proportions in the treatise of Ibn Muqla has been graphically reproduced by Ahmad Mustafa in his unpublished M.A. thesis, "The Scientific Construction of Arabic Alphabets" (The University of London, 1979). Though the thesis is unavailable for consultation, a splendid full-color plate from it has been reproduced in Priscilla P. Soucek, "The Arts of Calligraphy," in *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia*, ed. Basil Gray (UNESCO: Serindia Publications, 1979), 21.

18. Tabbaa, "Qurʾānic Writing," 122-25.

19. The relation between paper production and the expansion of literacy has not been sufficiently explored in the Islamic world. For medieval Europe, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretations in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

20. It is perhaps in this period that the seeds of discord between scribes and Qurʾān copyists were first sown, the latter perhaps feeling threatened by the unprecedented spread of literacy. See Pedersen, *Arabic Book*, 43ff.

21. Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, 77.

22. According to Anthony Welch, *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 29, "good writing was the indispensable tool for anyone aspiring to high governmental rank."

23. Tabbaa, "Qurʾānic Writing," 122.

24. Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), esp. p. 3 and chaps. 6 and 12.

25. Ibn Muqla's geometricization of Arabic writing is often compared to the way God inspired the honeybees to make their cells hexagonal. Cited in Franz Rosenthal, "Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī on Penmanship," *Ars Islamica* 13/14 (1948): 9.

26. Tabbaa, "Qurʾānic Writing," 141-42.

27. A. T. Welch, "Al-Kurʾān," *EI²*, 5:409; Arthur Jeffery, ed., *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937), 9-10; and esp. Henri Laoust, "La pensée et l'action politique d'al-Māwardi (364/450-974/1058)," *Revue d'Études Islamiques* 36 (1968): 64-66.

28. On the *miḥna* see Henri Laoust, *Les schismes dans l'Islam* (Paris: Payot, 1983), 107-11; or Henri Laoust, "Ahmad b. Hanbal," *EI²*, 1:272-77.

29. Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, 76f.