

individual politicians' perceptions. Arat's problem is compounded by the meagerness of the numbers of women interviewed.

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ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1984; paperback, 1990). Pp. 264.

Books on Islamic calligraphy tend to fall into three broad categories: paleographic studies that deal with the development of the Arabic script and its later varieties; biographic essays that attempt to view Islamic calligraphy through the lives and works of its famous makers; and connoisseurs and epigraphic works that generally deal with the content of inscriptions on monuments and objects. Of these types, the first two have a very long history in traditional Muslim scholarship, represented respectively by such works as al-Ṭibī, *Kitāb mahāsin kitābat al-kuttāb*, ed. S. al-Munajjid (Beirut, 1972) and Qādī Aḥmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, trans. V. Minorsky (Washington, D.C., 1959). The third type is entirely new, and may represent the influence of iconographic studies on Islamic art. Professor Schimmel's book, first given as the Kevorkian Lectures at New York University in 1982, is probably closest to the second, or biographical group, but it is enriched by numerous references to paleography and embellished by photographs and exquisite calligraphic drawings.

The first chapter, entitled "Styles of Calligraphy," begins with what would seem to be a straightforward history and classification of Islamic calligraphy, but that level of discourse is penetrated after just a few pages by many other strains, including materials and techniques (p. 15), aesthetics, and even the iconography of some common calligraphic formulae (pp. 9–10). Instead of enriching the central theme, the sheer number of these external strains—which are not without interest of their own—tend to completely dissociate it by dissolving any separation between argument and evidence and removing any critical distance between the author and her sources.

The result is a rich and interesting mosaic made up of references and allusions to calligraphy and the author's occasional attempts at broad statements and conclusions, some of which do not derive from the evidence. There is, for example, little support for her claim that "The development of Kufic epigraphy was largely due to the material used" (p. 11) or that "Eastern Kufic seems to have developed out of an apparently innate tendency of the Persians to use a slightly slanting script" (p. 6) except of course on the most essentialist level. Curiously, such central issues in Islamic calligraphy as the switch from Kufic to cursive script in Qur'anic manuscripts and monuments, the role of Ibn Muqla as vizier and reformer of the Arabic script, and the consequent problem of the impact of religious and political discord on the development of certain scripts receive hardly any discussion when clearly they could have benefited from the author's unmatched knowledge of the sources. For these reasons this book is not especially useful for anyone looking for a history of Islamic calligraphy or a detailed analysis of its many varieties. In fact, the author's earlier book on the subject, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Leiden, 1982), though briefer, addresses those subjects somewhat more adequately. Far more useful than either for this purpose is Y. Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Boulder, 1978).

Three more chapters complete the book, entitled respectively "Calligraphers, Dervishes and Kings," "Calligraphy and Mysticism," and "Calligraphy and Poetry." Intended by the author to elucidate such central topics as "the position of the calligrapher and his training" and "the religious significance of calligraphy in Muslim culture" and the more curious one of "wordplays and puns based on the terminology of calligraphy" (p. ix), these essays are

by far the more valuable and personal sections of the book. One looks in vain for a work plan or a statement of purpose in these essays, which instead seem to have been very broadly and loosely construed to function as a repository for the author's vast knowledge of the sources. To say that Professor Schimmel's working method in these essays is primarily anecdotal is merely to state the obvious, since the author has built an enormous and illustrious oeuvre on this methodology. It is far more difficult to describe the level of erudition to which this very traditional method has been taken. One page after another is illuminated with the widest variety of tales, poems, jokes, and riddles in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Turkish, and drawn from ancient, medieval, and modern sources alike. More than by their sheer quantity—they must account for about one-third of the total text—these anecdotes delight the reader by their appropriateness and by their often unexpected nature. It is unlikely, for example, that any other medieval scholar would have been aware of a couplet by the 20th-century Egyptian poet Ahmad Shauqi in which he compares the pillars of the Alhambra to the *alifs* written by Ibn Muqla (p. 19).

An essentialist perspective—a belief in the sameness and unchangeability of the various emanations of Islamic culture—seems to stand behind Schimmel's disinclination to engage in any historical discussion of the ideas hinted at in her book, and this perspective may explain the absence of any visible structure in the essays. In fact, the only perceptible structure seems to derive from the particular arrangement of the anecdotes, which go beyond their normal function of fleshing out the discourse to actually directing it. One anecdote invites the mentioning of another in a seamless flow that cuts across time and geography. Examples on pages 117 through 120, which are meant to discuss the significance of the pen, contain the following succession of topics: "the Sufi idea of the obedient pen," "the connection of the pen with the 'country of infidelity,'" "the pen and the sword," "the reed pen [and] the reed flute," the "musical quality" of good calligraphy, "the education of calligraphers and musicians," and so on. The process continues unabated to the very end of each of the four chapters, which terminate, not with the usual conclusive remarks, but with yet another poem or tale that provide an elegant if not fulfilling closure.

The outcome is neither tedious nor confusing, provided one is willing to approach the book on its own terms and with the right expectations. That means putting aside any preconditions of historical continuity or critical evaluation of the sources, and abandoning oneself to the impressionistic flow of ideas and images. If one is able to do that—and this is not within everyone's capacity—the book may be enjoyed in the same way that one would enjoy reading later medieval *adab* compendiums, such as Ibshihi's, *al-Mustatraf*.

A book that deals critically and problematically with the history of Islamic calligraphy can and should be written. The specimens are there, and Dr. Schimmel has demonstrated that the sources are also there. It is hoped, therefore, that her rich compendium of tales and poems relating to calligraphy to different aspects of Islamic culture can serve as an important resource and an inspiration for future studies on Islamic calligraphy.

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URI BIALER, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation 1948–1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Pp. 291.

It is now evident that we are witnessing serious movement toward a profound reevaluation of the social and political history of the Yishuv after World War II and of Israel in the early years after 1948. A growing body of new publications has already contributed to this reevaluation.