


The Cosmic Script: Sacred Geometry and the Science of Arabic Penmanship

By Ahmed Moustafa, Stefan Sperl

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A fully illustrated, landmark study of Islamic calligraphy traced back to its deepest historical and cultural roots

- Explores the sacred geometry of each letter form of the Arabic alphabet as attributed to renowned 10th-century scribe Ibn Muqla
- Traces Ibn Muqla's system to the cross-cultural encounter between Greek learning and the scientific, artistic, and philosophical pursuits of classical Islam
- A richly illustrated, two-volume presentation of decades of research with more than 430 full-color illustrations

Calligraphy is the central visual art of Islam. At its core resides a perennial challenge: What letter shapes traced by human hands are rightful bearers of the divine message? The answer lies in the "Proportioned Script" of Ibn Muqla, renowned scribe, man of letters, and minister under the great Abbasid Caliphate in 10th-century Baghdad.

Emphasizing harmony and geometry, Ibn Muqla's system has governed the practice of Arabic scribal art up to the present day. In this two-volume, richly illustrated study, Ahmed Moustafa and Stefan Sperl analyze each letter form of Ibn Muqla's perfected penmanship and share their decades of research on Islamic letter shapes, revealing the history, linguistics, philosophy, theology, and sacred geometry that underlie this spiritual art form.

In volume one the authors reveal the trilogy of prophecy, penmanship, and geometry at the foundation of Ibn Muqla's Proportioned Script. Providing a fully illustrated analysis of Islamic calligraphy's geometrical principles as transmitted in surviving writings and key manuscript sources, they examine the geometric grid of square, circle, and hexagon that informs the pen strokes of each letter shape and explore how the golden ratio appears within the matrix of the grid. They examine the development of Ibn Muqla's system in the context of the sciences, arts, and penmanship of 10th-century Baghdad and trace its origins to

the cross-cultural encounter between Greek learning and the scientific, artistic, and philosophical pursuits of classical Islam. In volume two the authors analyze the calligraphic forms of each letter of the Arabic alphabet. They decode the sacred geometry of each form as it appears within the geometric grid, providing letter samples from ancient sources.

Unearthing the theoretical and scientific foundations of Arabic calligraphy, this landmark study examines the aesthetic implications of Ibn Muqla's theory for the visual, verbal, and aural arts of Islam as well as the Islamic mystical tradition.

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Editorial Review

Review

“This monumental work of Ahmed Moustafa and Stefan Sperl offers a comprehensive and convincing new account of the geometry of the Arabic script, accomplishing in the process a revolution at the intersection of art, mathematics, and spirituality. It is essential reading for anyone interested in Islamic art, calligraphy, and the beauty of geometry.” (*Carl W. Ernst, Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*)

“The script is spiritual geometry, though made perceptible by a physical instrument.” (*Euclid, cited by Abu Bakr as-Suli*)

About the Author

Ahmed Moustafa is an Islamic artist and Arabic master scribe who received his original training in Western art. His works are included in major museum collections in North America, Europe, and the Middle East. As chairman of the Research Centre in Arab Art and Design in London, he has acted as design consultant for major corporations in the Middle East. He has also lectured widely on the subject of Arabic penmanship. Stefan Sperl is senior lecturer in Arabic at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. He has published widely in the field of classical Arabic literature and Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies.

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