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Islamic Calligraphy and Visions

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The visionary aspect of Islamic calligraphic art has most directly affected its formation, as well as the aesthetics itself. This art was often attributed a mystical dimension, as it was strictly under the influence of spirituality, the Divine message and the intensity of that message, and later through Sufism, it was immersed in deep symbolism too. Respecting holy people was one of the most important characteristics of Sufism, which reflected directly onto the art, to which they were prone, especially the Mawlawi and Bektashi Sufi orders. Sufis or mystics, as they are known in the West, were committed to cultivating this tradition of transmitting knowledge, so that many of them practiced rituals in calligraphic art. Many authors stress a characteristic Sufi meditation of "invoking God's names" (*dhikr*) as one of the important factors for reaching aesthetics, i.e. ability to 'see' its inner beauty and finally realise it. It is a little surprising that many eminent calligraphic artists were themselves Sufi teachers-mystics or their followers, disciples, who had set artistic standards that became canonical. Thus, characteristic calligraphic works were created, with unusual compositions and visual content, which became specific to Sufi calligraphic art. In this paper my aim is to present the calligraphic compositions, which possess some enigmatic quality, symbolism. It is believed that letters have a magical character, through the characteristic forms of the letters themselves, their separate meaning and symbolism, as well as their numeric value. Calligraphic art is by and large based on visions from the spiritual world, since its inception further through various forms of manifestation.

Keywords: Islam, Sufism, sacred art, calligraphy, visions

Forming Islamic calligraphy on the basis of sacred visions and their connection to Sufism

Since the very beginning of human existence, there has always been a tendency to express a thought and turn it into art. This is especially true of God's Word. Every religion created its own artistic particularity, as did Islam, which places the focus on the Word and turns it into an artistic creation. The art of Islamic calligraphy hails from Islamic religious teaching itself, i.e. it was initiated by the Holy text, the Quran.¹ This art, from its beginning was seen as a sacred art and therefore a science of letters of the Arabic alphabet developed too. Arabic letters were attached with a mystical dimension, so it is believed that letters possess powers and energy.² Every letter individually is a sign itself, it has a name³ and represents a symbol which not only has its own meaning and symbolism but also a numeric value. Certain interpretations went so far as to observe letters as beings, forces and amulets.⁴ "The letters are the expression of something of a higher order."⁵ A separate science of letters developed from this, called *Ilm al-huruf*. Some interpretations would go even further and it is believed that the first thing created was the Pen (Celestial) to write down what will happen and this is how the Heavenly Book or the Well-Preserved Tablet came into being, as a celestial archetype of calligraphic art. Thus, celestial calligraphy was considered a principle of plastic arts.⁶ Such an esoteric approach was especially favoured by ascetics and Sufis, or Islamic mystics, as they are known in the West.

This art was often attributed a mystical dimension, as it was strictly under the influence of spirituality, the divine message and intensity of that message, and later through Sufism it was immersed in deep symbolism too. Islamic mystics and Sufis in particular liked practicing calligraphic skill, which was believed to reflect the practi-

tioner's spiritual level, through aesthetics and the perfection of writing. We can observe that the largest number of artistic calligraphers were members of Sufi orders, if not spiritual teachers themselves, called *shaykhs*. The calligraphic art of Islam was defined as the crystallization of spirit, expressed through the beauty of letters. Purity and beauty of lines were considered as a parallel to the purity of the soul.

In order to understand "saintly"⁷ visions, realised through Islamic, therefore calligraphic art too, it is important to stress that what separates Sufism from the orthodox, dogmatic interpretation of religion is an esoteric approach, understanding the essence and interior dimension of Islam. Followers of Sufism in their spiritual perfecting and uplifting pass through different levels of perfecting their spirit, which is directly connected to a realisation of the essence of things. These spiritual cognitions are accompanied not only by cognition, which is achieved by thinking and learning-acquired knowledge, but also with spiritual and cognition by the heart. As a result, some people gained cognition through illumination, visions, revelations, or experience as it is known in Sufism. These visions or experiences can be not only visual but also sensible. Such experience or cognition and knowledge gained are considered true knowledge. Visions can appear while one is awake, most often in spiritual contemplation or through a dream, which is considered a kind of revelation, and a vision while awake. It should be stressed that people who achieve certain spiritual levels of purification are called *awliyya*, which means God's friends or holy people in the Western context.

Sufis were most often artists, calligraphers, poets, so we can find some of these visions or experiences described through poetry. In honour of God's letter, as the Arabic alphabet was considered, many words of praise were sung and their interpretations and meaning described, even on the very discipline of calligraphic art as a sacred skill or in glory of teachers of this sacred science.⁸ Poets thus speak about spiritual reality, which exists above the perception of all five senses. Thus, calligraphic art was considered sacred too and some groups of mystics used to contemplate for hours watching it. According to some traditions, this artistic skill is realised through spiritual visions, but also used as a medium for reaching spiritual realisation.

The mystical dimension of calligraphic art was brought into connection with Venerable Ali ('Ali b. Abi Talib), the greatest *wali* or *Lord of Sainthood*, not only in Sufism but in Shia circles too, who was considered the patron of calligraphic art because he came up with calligraphic style "Qufi" and set the rules to this sacred art. So it is considered that the calligraphic art of Venerable Ali was a reflection of a primordial, heavenly calligraphy, i.e. the Heavenly Book (Well-Preserved Tablet) and the Pen. In this honour, many have glorified his holiness through poetry, such as in the following verse: *And if his gem-scattering pen began to move/at every minute it would obtain bounty from the origin of the tablet and pen.*⁹

The visionary aspect of Islamic calligraphic art has most directly affected its formation, as well as the aesthetics itself. In some treatises on calligraphic art we can see that important individuals who marked milestones in calligraphic art were taught how to improve calligraphic writing by Ali, through visions. First traces of this can be seen in the records of Ibn Muqla (10th century), who is believed to have discovered three new calligraphic styles (Thuluth, Muhaqqaq and Nesh). He was instructed by Venerable Ali on the rules of the three new styles in a dream.¹⁰ Later there is Ibn Bawwab (11th century) who also made a great contribution to the development of calligraphic art, and who writes in his treatise *Ode to calligraphy*: "Then turn your attention towards making the point/for the point is crux of the task/Do not ask me to reveal it/It is a secret to which I shall hold."¹¹

The eminent calligrapher of his age Yakut Mustakim, who practiced the Sufi ritual of a forty-day seclusion - *halwah*, meditation and contemplation, to achieve purification and establish a connection with the spiritual world, is an example of an artist, *wali*, saint. Yakut Mustakim practiced this ritual to gain instructions from Venerable Ali, so an even more significant reform hails from his pen. Yakut Mustakim said Venerable Ali ordered him: "Cut your pen diagonally!"¹² so that his calligraphy would be even more purified. There is also a well-known story about a "Turkish calligrapher who saw himself practicing with the great master Rasim. The dream-lesson ended with the letters *alif*, *sin*, and *he* was interpreted in complicated ways to mean that on the sixty-ninth day he would become the calligraphy teacher to the sultan, which, of course, came true."¹³ To dream of meaningful letters that

would then be explained according to their literal, mystical and numerical value by a mystical guide was apparently quite common among calligraphers. Calligraphic art reached its peak in the Ottoman period when Sufi orders were widespread and the rise of this art is connected to Sufism itself. Many authors stress a characteristic Sufi meditation of "invoking God's names" (*dhikr*)¹⁴ as one of the important factors for reaching aesthetics, i.e. ability to 'see' its inner beauty and finally realise it.

Respecting holy people was one of the most important characteristics of Sufism, which was reflected directly in the art, to which they were prone, especially the Mawlawi and Bektashi Sufi orders. Sufis or mystics, as they are known in the West, were committed to cultivating this tradition of transmitting knowledge, so many of them practiced rituals in calligraphic art. Calligraphic art, which originated within Sufi orders, formed a specific genre or a selection of calligraphic topics, i.e. messages, which became its specificum. The 15th century marks the development of a special calligraphic style we meet most often in places where Sufis gather - *tekkes*, the tombs of their master, saints. This calligraphic style was often called "calligraphic painting" in Turkish art, and sometimes, aside from calligraphic elements, it also included painted elements of material patterns or a calligraphic inscription made according to some material pattern. Artists who were also travellers of spiritual realisation were in this way potential *ewliya* or saints who did not start their calligraphic work before they had a vision about what they should make. There are many such historical traditions which speak about the artist's ability to experience holy visions which they then realised through art.

Visions of divine revelations and secrets in calligraphic works

If the very formation and development of calligraphic art is based on spirituality and visions from the spiritual world, it can be assumed that many typical calligraphic compositions, which were repeated and copied through the centuries, considered to be almost at the level of a relic, were made on the basis of spiritual visions. It seems that spiritual visions or experiences were most described through poetry but they could also be sought in calligraphic art - ideas that were put on paper as a result of meditative visions. From this point of view, a calligrapher, who could potentially be a holy man himself, "goes beyond his art to a perception of the visible inner nature that is partly revealed in script".¹⁵ One illustrative example of visions of the Arabic letter is a vision of a well-known mystic and philosopher Ibn Arabi,¹⁶ and great saint in Islam, who in his vision saw the Arabic letter *H* (he) (fig. 1): "in pure light, stretching its arms, and bearing the word *huwa* (fig. 2), *He* - symbol of the Divine beyond names and words."¹⁷ Calligraphic works with the inscription *Huwa* are the most characteristic and favourite symbols of the mystic Sufi circles.

The calligraphic works of *Hu* were written in many forms, from simple linear inscriptions, which beside the simplicity, with its very complex form, appears abstract, mystical and puzzling (fig. 3), as the entire Arabic alphabet, all the way to complicated splices of calligraphic compositions and different material patterns on which they are written or symbolic forms such as characteristic hats (*tajs*)¹⁸ worn by the founders of Sufi orders (fig. 4). The word *Hu*, with minor number of letters (*he* and *waw*) and very few diacritical marks, shows a cosmic space, abstract, which symbolizes Divine ineffability. The word *Hu* first and foremost is in the holy text of Muslims, where Sufis, most often artists, found a confirmation for its writing and adopted it as their *credo*, motto and also visually recognisable feature. Since this is one of the most characteristic and most recognisable visual symbols of the Sufis, the word *Hu* is directly connected and associated with Sufism. In almost every Sufi building we can find this characteristic sign, on the facades of *tekkes* (fig. 5), the tombs of saints or spiritual leaders, tombstones - the Bosnian *nišan* (fig. 6) etc., with more or less skilful calligraphy. We can also find these calligraphic works in the interiors of buildings, *mihirabs* (fig. 7), on the walls, in Sufi books, on musical instruments, as well as on various items for everyday usage, utensils etc. As it is believed that the letters of Arabic alphabet possess their own powers and strength¹⁹ so these letters can, inter alia, be found on amulets.²⁰

The calligraphic art of Islam is deeply permeated with spirituality, so calligraphic images of *Hu* are more than an expression of respect to God, given that it is a personal pronoun for God and also one of God's names. The "name which points but not defines", because it is "logically impossible, the Divine Essence"²¹ to be expressed. *Hu* is one of the indispensable names, which are mentioned in the rituals of *dhikr*, after witnessing His oneness (La ilahe ilallah)²² as a first level of *dhikr*, followed by invoking God's great name "Allah", after which *Hu* - He follows, which symbolizes the state of Love and immersion in the Divine. Sufis who invoke the word *Hu* in *dhikr*, do it with meditative repetition and movements of the head from right to left, constantly repeating, reciting and accelerating the rhythm of pronunciation and head movement, to the level that they get detached from all that is material and immerse themselves in the very essence of invocation. "In the mystical tradition, the letter *he* plays a particularly important role. It is the last letter of the word Allah, hence the letter of *huwiyya*, the Divine He-ness or Ipseity. In the Sufi *dhikr*, especially in the *dhikr of shahad*,²³ the name Allah is finally dissolved until only the *h* remains, which is also the sound of human breathing."²⁴ It is considered that a man does *dhikrullah* unconsciously, while breathing he is invoking and remembering God. "... The *he* is, as almost everywhere, the Essence that rests in its Ipseity and is absolutely non-manifest."²⁵ The word *Hu* is a derivation from God's Great Name Allah, and represents God's shortest Name. So Sufis at various occasions, when greeting etc. say the word *Hu*, i.e. remember Him constantly.

We meet an example of visual *dhikr*, i.e. depicting *dhikr* in calligraphic art, in a somewhat more complicated composition (fig. 8). *Hu* is written in a circle, and between every inscription there is one letter - *waw*. The letter *waw* is copula and a mark for the voice in the Arabic language, symbolizing the connection of God and man. The composition is not incidentally made in a circular form, it is there to symbolize the ritual of *dhikr*, to remind one of the infinite repetition and the circular movement and rhythm of composition are an association to the ritual's choreography, right to left, like a cosmic movement. This visual *dhikr*, which, upon seeing calligraphy, prevents one from oblivion and brings him back to the state of consciousness, is a symbolism of the movement of the cosmos and the planets, because, according to Sufi teaching, everything is in movement. So every letter *Hu* represents a dervish²⁶ who is performing *dhikr*, and the connecting *waw* is a symbol of connecting with the Divine. Calligraphy for a Sufi becomes an image of the ritual of *dhikr*, which he reads but also observes. "In some cases such modality is somehow synthetically played by the pronunciation of the only letter "he", vocalized with in "Haa", which is considered to point to the hidden essence of the Name "Allah" already present in it as the final letter."²⁷ The letter *h* (*he*) is one among several letters which stand out in their visual identity, with multi form and flexibility (fig. 9), having different forms when it appears independently, in the middle, the beginning or the end of the word. This gave calligraphic art the opportunity to achieve different creative and aesthetic qualities. The second letter of word *Huwa* is the letter *waw*, which is the "mystical content of the he" which "was undisputed through the centuries". However "the letter *waw*" was called "the letter of connection between man and God"²⁸ (fig. 10).

In art, Muslims "developed a great love for the *waw* and used it from about 1700 onwards for decorative purposes. They may have been inspired by numerous *waws* in the longer profession of faith, which was often calligraphically represented as a boat of salvation, with the *waws* serving as its oars (*Amnetü gemisi*; fig. 12)."²⁹ Compositions with the letter *waw* are differently interpreted to this day: look at the observer with large eyes, mirror style, embrace each other, etc. (fig. 11). The numeric value of this letter is the number 6, so the paired *waw* with addition amounts to 12, which symbolizes twelve imams, similarly to the twelve apostles in Christianity. It can also be interpreted as the number 66, which is the numeric value of God's Great Name Allah. Thus, the two paired letters *waw* or God's Great Name Allah, with the same numeric value actually have the same meaning (fig. 13).

Letters in Islamic art are deemed not only sacred, but as all other beings, as a living entity, which, doubtlessly, stems from mystical visions. Thus calligraphic works, made in the form of human faces and bodies, were created, because, as we had the opportunity to learn, some individuals were able to see letters written on human faces, which is also considered to be an experience - a vision. Seeing the letter *He* as eyes filled with tears in calligraphic art was often presented within complex symbolic compositions, which for mystics represent a breath or yearning for the Divine, symbolically called "The Sight of Love" (fig. 14). *He* with two eyes indicates the Divine

Ipseity³⁰ In those calligraphic compositions “the letter *he*... is called “two-eyed” in its initial and central shape and was therefore interpreted... as weeping.”... the word *Ah*, with an enormous *alif*, beside which a sad-looking *he* sits and sheds tears profusely, whilst in minute script is written at some point (*Ah min al-ashq wa halatihi* (Woe upon love and its states!)...³¹ Calligraphic compositions “The Sight of Love” are most frequently set in landscapes, with seven volcanoes, symbolizing seven levels of spiritual ascension. A volcano’s fire is a symbol of love, which gives strength to the heart in the spiritual ascension, in the path to realisation. One of the great Sufi mystics Niyaz Misiri, known for his experiences or revelations, in his vision-inspired verses narrates: ... *Day and night/my heart was moaning “Ahhh!”/I don’t know how it happened/now no “Ahhh” remains...*³² *Alif* is the first letter of Arabic alphabet whose numeric value is the number 1, and it is widely accepted that all other letters emerged from this one, which is taken to be a symbol relating to God or could be interpreted as a perfect man who achieved all spiritual levels and reached God (fig. 15). “... *Alif* has a deep religious significance, but as it is related to God as expressing His Unity... It is also related to man, since it represents the slender stature of a beloved, true man.”³³ Both these letters *alif* and *he*, which make the main framework of calligraphic compositions “The Sight of Love” (fig. 16), are contained in the Great God’s Name, Allah, *alif* as the first letter and *he* as the last, and in between two letters *lam* (fig. 17). This sigh *Ah* is the sigh of the yearning for God. Maybe the letter *he* could be understood as a symbol of man, i.e. his heart so it was presented as crying eyes. It is possible that one of the most famous mystic poets Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, who says: “I have emptied my side from both worlds,/I am sitting like an *h* beside the *lam* of Allah”³⁴ had a similar experience. From a numerical point of interpretation, the summation of these two letters, the letter *alif* with the numeric value of 1 and *he* with the numeric value of 5, amounts to the number 6, which further leads to the letter *waw*, i.e. God’s Great Name Allah, which was previously explained. While the letter *alif* represents Universal Intellect,³⁵ the letter *he* represents Universal Soul³⁶ and the letter *waw* represents the all-embracing rank.³⁷ Sufis are inclined to say that letter *waw* contains the whole macro and micro cosmos, recognising the form of this letter in the spiral shape of galaxies or in the form of a human spiral of DNK, shaped like the letter *waw*.

Interpreting the internal values of this alphabet is infinite and available only to mystics but the visual effect expressed through artistic forms seems as though it is saying that everything is contained “in the word.”³⁸ “In a mysterious way letters are connected with human beings. This feeling works in two ways. On the one hand, man is the great alphabet in which the meaning of creation is expressed; on the other hand, letters resemble human beings, as was taught by the calligraphers. Letters may therefore reflect the writer’s state of mind.”³⁹

In Islamic art, the unification of human faces and the Holy Letter or messages represents “a fascinating artistic phenomenon” and “fundamental conviction that a human being is essentially composed of spiritual elements”⁴⁰ (fig. 18). In this way artists connected figurativeness with spiritual context. “The lines engraved on man’s face could then be interpreted as telling of his fate, as constituting, as it were, the title of his destiny, which could be deciphered by those with insight.”⁴¹ “Those who have insight and have been granted *‘ilm ul kitab* (the knowledge of the book) can understand the secrets written on the human face.”⁴² Calligraphic compositions in the form of a face or figure represent a perfect man, one who knows his being, but they also bear a message for a man that he should aspire to perfection, become the perfect man with all good manners and virtues. These depictions almost always have compositions in the form of a mirror or “double style”- *muthanna*. The calligraphic composition’s double style, especially favoured in Sufi art, was born as the fruit of gnosis and the visions of the transcendent or material world, as a mirror reflection of the already existing one, interpreted with the symbolic observation of the heart as a mirror in which a pure truth is reflected; as the famous Rumi says: “*When the mirror of your heart becomes clear and pure, you’ll behold images which are outside this world. You will see the image and the image-Maker...*” (Mesnevija). Sufis interpret that visual manifestation of the Divine Word as the closest approximation to seeing God’s face. “The equation of the human face with the Quran itself is both a spiritual understanding of human nature and a calligraphic illustration of *hadith*⁴³ of Prophet. Do not disfigure the face, for God created Adam in his own image”⁴⁴



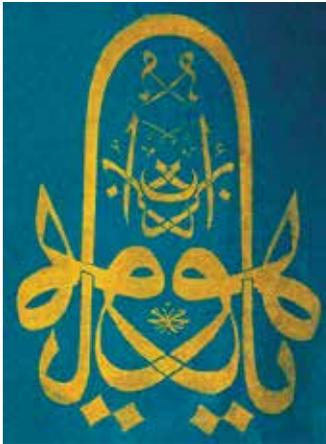
1. Letter „He“



2. Word „Hu“, which consists of letters He and waw, meaning „He“; calligraphic work on the wall of a tekke Potok, Sarajevo (photo: M. Teparić)



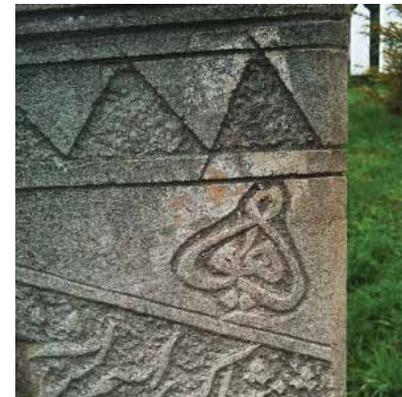
3. Calligraphic work „Hu“ with different form of letter *he* (characteristic for writing in the middle of the word); calligraphic work in Gazi Husrev-bey mosque in Sarajevo (photo: S. Kühn)



4. „Ya Hu“ calligraphic composition of double writing in a mirror – *muthana*, in form of a hat in Mawlawi order; calligraphic work in the tekke Mesudija, Kacuni, Bosnia and Herzegovina (photo: S. Kühn)



5. „Hu“ on the facade of Sirri-baba tomb in Oglavak near Fojnica, Bosnia and Herzegovina (photo: S. Kühn)



6. „Hu“ on a dervish's tombstone, Oglavak, Bosnia and Herzegovina (photo: S. Kühn)



7. Calligraphic writing „Hu“ on the top of mihrab niche under the symbol of dervish hat-taj, inscription on the right side reads Allah and on the left Muhammad (photo: S. Kühn)



9. „Hu Allah Hu“, *Tal'ik* letter, letter H in this writing differs in relation to *sulus* writing style, likewise, the shape of the letter „He“ differs in the beginning and in the end; author of calligraphy Prof Ćazim Hadžimejlić



8. Calligraphic composition with inscription Hu, waw in circular repetition, symbolizing dervish ritual of *dhikr* in which dervishes sit in a circle and pronounce „HU“; author of calligraphy Prof Ćazim Hadžimejlić



10. Letter „Waw“, inscription on a stone pillar of Beyazit mosque in Istanbul (photo: D. Tatlić)



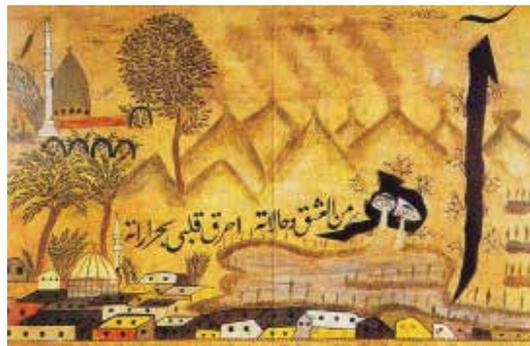
11. Calligraphic composition comprising large format waw letter and a smaller text, Mevlana Museum Library, Calligraphy collection, Konya, Turkey



12. Calligraphic composition Boat (*Boat of salvation*) with manifold inscription of „waw“ letter, calligraphic painting from Şevket rado, *Türk Hattatlar*, Istanbul, s.a., p. 237



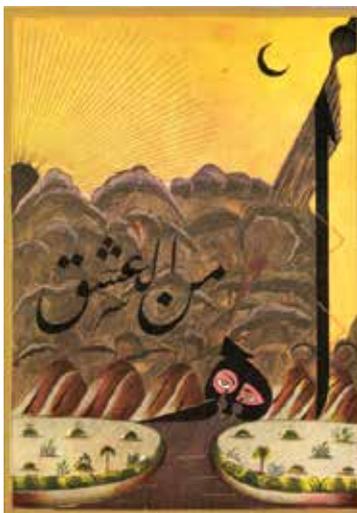
13. Calligraphic work of paired „waws“, Ulu mosque, Bursa, Turkey (Č. HADŽIMEJLIĆ, *Umjetnost islamske kaligrafije*, Sarajevo, 2009, str. 71)



14. Calligraphic composition „Ah minel ashq“ with crying eyes, printed calligraphy, private collection



15. „Alif“ first letter of Arabic alphabet, this letter is most commonly pronounced as a, e, i, depending on vocalization



16. „Ah minel ashq“ (M. AKSEL, *Religious Pictures in Turkish Art*, Istanbul, 1967, p. 137)



17. Calligraphic writing of the Great God's Name, Allah, author of calligraphy Prof Čazim Hadžimejlić



18. Calligraphic writing of Holy Letters and human face (M. AKSEL, 1967, p. 106)

Many calligraphic compositions can be interpreted from the aspect of a visionary narrative because they represent the symbolic interpretation of the experienced and perceived reality. They were repeated and massively reproduced throughout the centuries. However, artists did not only copy the works of old masters, their efforts were not only in achieving the most perfect calligraphic writing as the final goal. Calligraphic artists had to invest creative efforts to reach "imaginative creation", contemplating to prepare for that act, in order to be inspired by a holy vision: "... calligraphic concentration is to focus on the visual contemplation of God's beauty as conveyed by the intricate shapes of black letters on white paper, and the aesthetic basis for this contemplation appears to be closely bound up with Sufi mysticism".⁴⁵ The mystical experiences calligraphic artists had were happening in the state of their spiritual purification, when they were ready to receive holy experiences and visions. It is not only the case with calligraphic art, but with other forms of art as well, such as architecture, bookbinding and other applied arts.

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- 1 There are many sentences from the Holy Text of Muslims which confirm significance of word in general and the written word too, such as: "He taught man with the pen", Quran, 96:3.
 - 2 A. SCHIMMEL, *Odgonetanje Božjih znakova*, Sarajevo, 2004, p. 257.
 - 3 Every letter of Arabic alphabet, aside from denoting a sound, has its name: *Alif, Ba, Ta, Tha, Dal, Dhal, Ra, Za, Ha, Hi, Jim, Sin, Shin, Sad, Dad, Ta, Za, Ayn, Ghayn, Fa, Qaf, Kaf, Lam, Nun, Mim, Waw, Ha, Ya*.
 - 4 F. SCHUON, *Understanding Islam*, London, 1963, p. 60.
 - 5 A. SCHIMMEL, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*, New York, 1984, p. 90.
 - 6 S.H. NASR, *Islamska umjetnost i duhovnost*, Sarajevo, 2009, pp. 29-30.
 - 7 In Islam there are *ewliya*, God's friends or holy people.
 - 8 "Well done, O scribe, who with a flowing pen/draws letters, beautiful as Mani's art!/A skilled calligrapher, whose radiant eye/has scattered musk upon a camphor-sheet!/He showed an *alif* first, so straight and tall,/its shape was like a graceful cypress tree./The *alif* is well honored in the world,/and everywhere it takes the highest seat,/And it clasps nothing closely to its breast-/its crown is therefore higher than the sky./..." (Idrak Beglari in *Praise of a Calligraphy*), A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 155.
 - 9 D.J. ROXBURGH, *Prefacing the Image, The writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 90.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, p. 97. An interesting thing about Ibn Muqla is that the hand he was doing calligraphy with was cut off, after orthodox khalifs who were Ali's sworn enemies, heard that his vision came from Venerable Ali.
 - 11 *Ibid.*, p. 148; D.J. ROXBURGH, *On the Transmission and Reconstruction of Arab calligraphy: Ibn al-Bawwab and History*, in: *Studia Islamica*, no. 96, Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003, p. 48.
 - 12 *Idem, op. cit.*, 2000, p. 155.
 - 13 A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 83.
 - 14 *Dhikr* is meditative remembrance of God, invoking His Sublime Names. In Islam, God has 99 names and attributes He uses to describe Himself, such as Merciful, Alive, True, Omnipotent...
 - 15 C.W. ERNST, *The Spirit of Islamic Calligraphy: Baba Shah Isfahani's Adab al-mashq*, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 112, no. 2 (April - June 1992), American Oriental Society, p. 284.
 - 16 Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn 'Arabi (1164-1240) was an Arab Andalusian Sufi mystic and philosopher. He was also known for his explanation of *Tawhid* (Oneness of God) through the concept of *Wahdat ul Wujood* (Oneness of being). He is renowned in the Muslim and non-Muslim world as *Sheik ul Akbar* (Doctor Maximus), *Sultan al-Arifin* (The greatest Master) and also as a genuine *Wali* (friend of Allah) as attested by 9th century scholar called Jalal ad-din-Suyuti, he analyzed verdicts of different scholars and gave final conclusion that he was a true *Wali* of Allah (friend of Lord Almighty). Ibn 'Arabi was about sixteen when he went into seclusion. Important cause of this retreat was a vision of the three great prophets Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. While visiting the dying saint al-Qabā'ili in Cordoba, Ibn 'Arabi had a vi-

sion in which he met all the Prophets from the time of Adam to Muhammad in their spiritual reality. Hud spoke to him and explained him the reason for their gathering: "We came to visit Abu Muhammad Makhluḥ al-Qaba'ili". However, according to a tradition among the closest disciples of Ibn'Arabi, Hud explained that the real reason for their gathering was to welcome him (Ibn'Arabi) as the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood (khatm al-wilaya al-muhammadiyya), the supreme heir. Ibn'Arabi wrote over 350 works including the *Fusūs al-Hikam*, an exposition of the inner meaning of the wisdom of the prophets in the Judaic/Christian/Islamic line, and the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, a vast encyclopaedia of spiritual knowledge which distinguishes and unites the three strands of tradition, reason and mystical insight. In his *Diwān* and *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* he also wrote some of the finest poetry in the Arabic language. These extensive writings provide a beautiful exposition of the Unity of Being, the single and indivisible reality which simultaneously transcends and is manifested in all the images of the world. Ibn'Arabi shows how man, in perfection, is the complete image of this reality and how those, who truly know their essential self, know God. *It is He who is revealed in every face, sought in every sign, gazed upon by every eye, worshipped in every object of worship, and pursued in the unseen and the visible. Not a single one of His creatures can fail to find Him in its primordial and original nature* (Ibn'Arabi, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*; <http://www.ibn-arabi-society.org/>)

- 17 A. SCHIMMEL, *Islamic Calligraphy*, Leiden, Brill, 1970, p. 13.
- 18 Sufi hats or *tajs* have a special meaning and symbolism, so that they have become favourite shapes in calligraphic art. On the hats names of certain founders of Sufi orders were written or hats could be shaped in the form of letters.
- 19 A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 257.
- 20 "The written word is a talisman, and the process of writing is a magical art connected not only with the master's technique, skill and art, but also with his spiritual and moral character." Annemarie Schimmel quotes Vladimir Monorsky's *Calligrapher and Painters, A Treatise by Qādā Ahmad son of Mīr-Munshī* (ca A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606; translated from the Persian with an introduction by B. N. Zakhoder, Washington, Smithsonian Institut, Freer Gallery of Art, 1959). A SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1970, p. 14.
- 21 H.F. AGOSTINI, *His Enchanting Names*, Kelamu'l'Sifa, s. 13, 2007, pp. 84-85.
- 22 La lilahe ilallah - No god but God (Allah).
- 23 Schimmel mentions *shahadah*, which is wrong, it should say *tawhid*, because *shahadah* is a longer way of testifying one's faith: *Ashadu an la ilaha illa'llah wa Allah Ashad anna Muhammadan Rasululu'llah* (I testify that there is no god but God (Allah), and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God). In *dhikr*, only a part of this sentence is pronounced *La ilahe ilallah*, and it is called *tawhid*, testifying God's Unity.
- 24 A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 99.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 26 Dervish is follower of the sufies, whose aim is self-knowledge which is the way to achieve knowledge of God.
- 27 H.F. AGOSTINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.
- 28 Annemarie Schimmel quotes Johan Carl Teufel's *Eine Lebensbeschreibung des Scheichs 'Ali-i-Hamadani* (Leiden, 1962, p. 87, n. 2) in: A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 100.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 149-150.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- 32 N. MISIRI, *Now No Trace Remains* (translated in English from Turkish by J. FERRARO-L. BOLAT), <http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/M/MisriNiyazi/NowNoTraceRe.htm>
- 33 A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 106.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- 35 "This attribute is special to God Most High and is the origin of the capacity to create from nothing, which is direct to the Universal Intellect, which is also called the Pen and is the locus of manifestation for *'ibda*, creating from nothing, because from the Pen the word *kun*, 'Be!' comes into existence without the previous existence of matter, time, and likeness." *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- 36 "*Ba'ith*, points to the evoking capacity by which the Universal Intellect works on the bodies by mediation of the soul. From the Universal Intellect, the Divine Order, that is 'Be!', has come into existence. The Universal Soul is also called the Well-Preserved Tablet; that is the first thing created, which was existentialized through the Universal Intellect." *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

- 37 „The letter *waw*, which its grammatical role as the conjunction ‘and’, well expresses the position of the *haqiqa muhammediyya* as forming the link between the Divine and created beings“. Ibid., p. 154.
- 38 L. MOZZATI, *Islamska umjetnost*, Sarajevo-Zagreb-Beograd, 2010, p. 53.
- 39 A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 133.
- 40 C.W. ERNST, *op. cit.*, p. 285.
- 41 A. SCHIMMEL, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 79.
- 42 Ibid., p. 106.
- 43 *Hadith* - sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.
- 44 C.W. ERNST, *op. cit.*, p. 285.
- 45 Ibid., p. 285.

Meliha Teparić

Islamska kaligrafija i vizije

Vizionarski oblik islamske kaligrafske umjetnosti izravno je utjecao i na njezino formiranje i na njezinu estetiku. Ovoj umjetnosti često je pripisivana mistična dimenzija, budući da je bila pod strogim utjecajem duhovnosti i snage božanske poruke. U sufijskim krugovima smatraju da se umjetnost islamske kaligrafije začela i razvijala preko časnog ‘Alija (‘Ali b. Abi Talib), „kralja svetaca“, kako ga nazivaju u mističnim redovima, zaštitnika umjetnosti (kaligrafije i iluminacije). Smatra se da je kaligrafska umjetnost časnog ‘Alija refleksija primordijalne, nebeske kaligrafije, odnosno Nebeske Knjige i primordijalnog Pera. Poštivanje svetih ljudi jedna je od najvažnijih karakteristika sufizma, koja je izravno utjecala na umjetnost, posebice u redovima Mevlevija i Bekatšija. Sufiji ili mistici, kako su poznatiji na Zapadu, posebno su njegovali kaligrafsku umjetnost, u kojoj su ponekad prakticirali ritualne obrede. Mnogi autori navode karakterističnu sufijsku meditaciju „spominjanja Božjih Imena“ (zikir) kao jedan od bitnih faktora za postizanje spoznaje i sposobnosti da „vide“ unutrašnju bit stvari. Pojedini sufiji - kaligrafi prakticirali su i religijsko osamljivanje (halvet) uza zahtjevno i intenzivno meditiranje, kako bi kroz spiritualno pročišćenje postigli pročišćen izraz i u umjetnosti, zasnovan na vizionarskoj metodi koncentracije. Tako je kaligrafska umjetnost smatrana i svetom, te su pojedine skupine duhovnih mistika kontemplirale satima zagledane u nju. Prema predajama, ova je umjetnička vještina realizirana kroz duhovne vizije, ali i korištena kao medij za postizanje duhovnih spoznaja. Ilustrativni primjer vizija arapskoga slova jest vizija mistika i filozofa Ibn Arebija-Šejhu'l Ekber (Doctor Maximus), koji je u svojoj viziji vidio arapsko slovo H (he) „u čistom svjetlu kako isteže svoje ruke i postaje riječ Huwa - On, božanski simbol ponad ostalih imena i riječi“. Kaligrafski radovi s ispisom Huwa najkarakterističniji su simboli mističnih sufijskih krugova i pojavljuju se u različitim likovnim oblicima. Slova su u islamskoj umjetnosti smatrana ne samo svetima već i živim bićima, živim organizmima, što nesumnjivo proizlazi iz mističnih vizija. Ovakvi radovi posjeduju nešto od enigmatskog simbolizma, koji se može beskrajno iznova tumačiti. Kaligrafska umjetnost najvećim je dijelom zasnovana na vizijama iz duhovnoga svijeta, od njezina formiranja kroz različite forme manifestacije.

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