

TOWARD THE ANALYSIS OF THE EARLY MONUMENTAL QUR'ĀNIC SCRIPTS: ATTRIBUTION OF THE QUR'ĀNIC FOLIOS FROM THE ARCHIVE OF E. E. HERZFELD (DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC ART, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)*

The two parallel tendencies in the development of early Arabic writing point out impossibility of transformation of the cursive script from the monumental. On the contrary, pre-cursive and pre-monumental had many features in common, including the shapes of certain letters and horizontality. Fragments from Ernst Emil Herzfeld's Archive (Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) represent several types of early Qur'ānic scripts, from cursive archaic (on fol. 7, *figs. 13, 14, 21*) to a distinctive form of monumental *kūfī* or the proportional *kūfī* (on fols. 3, 6, *figs. 5, 6, 17; 11, 12, 20ab*). The parchment has no watermarks, but almost all of the folios contain the supporting lines. Pages are in a horizontal format with some pages having the diacritical marks and all of them having vocalization. Special order, proportion of letters and, especially, of words, use of *mashq* (a calligraphic technique which stretched horizontal elements of the letters), number of lines per page (there is usually no such limit for cursive) are the main attributes of a particular style of writing and help distinguish monumental *kūfī* from cursive *kūfī*. A new classification of *kūfī* based on a composite list of terms and interpretations of early Arabic scripts is proposed. Formation of calligraphic, specifically of the Qur'ānic, writing canon can be observed from our study of non-illuminated manuscripts.

Ernst Emil Herzfeld (1879–1948) was among the most famous archaeologists and scholars of Near Eastern and Islamic art in the first half of the 20th century. In 1943, The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired a collection of notes, sketches and travel diaries which contained watercolours, pencil drawings, architectural plans and photographs of the places Herzfeld had visited and worked at. Significant portion of the archive came from the excavations in Samarra, an interim capital of the

‘Abbāsīd caliphs, which excavation Herzfeld supervised from 1911 through 1913.

In summer and fall of 2001, I had an internship with The Metropolitan Museum of Art. During our work with the Samarra portion of Herzfeld's archive, between the pages of one of his albums, my colleague Francesca Leoni (currently a post-doctoral fellow at Rice University, Department of Art History) discovered seven separate folios from the early Qur'āns. These pages needed attribution and since part of my internship with the MET had been spent attributing non-illuminated manuscripts from the Qur'ānic collection of the Islamic Department, these seven folios drew my attention. All of them are fragments from different manuscripts belonging to the earliest stages in the development of Arabic calligraphy, with a preliminary dating in the 9th century AD.

Each folio is an example of early Arabic script with observable variations in the style of writing and in size. While the fragments contain no illuminations, such possibility cannot be excluded as we do not have access to the complete set. In addition, there are no *sūra* headings (no any fragment starts from the beginning of a chapter) in the fragments which could be filled with ornaments at a later stage. For this reason, information gleaned from the fragments may be important for the study of the *kūfī* script in the context of the Early ‘Abbāsīd writing tradition.

The writing material for all seven fragments is parchment. Also a portion of a paper Qur'ān, an example of later calligraphy from the 10th century AD was discovered in the archive. In this paper I will not touch on these ten unbound pages from a leather container. The seven fragments that are a subject of my current research are all examples of an archaic script. All folios are in a horizontal format, which points to an early stage of production. An immediate problem was how to identify the

* Supported by a research grant from the Russian Scientific Foundation for Humanities under the Project No. 03-04-12004b. First published in Russian: A. S. Grib, “Atributsiia otdel'nykh listov rukopisei Korana iz arkhiva Ė. Khertsfel'da (Otdel islamskogo iskusstva Metropoliten-muzeia)” (“Attribution of individual Qur'ān pages from E. Herzfeld's Archive (Department of Islamic Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art)), *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka* II (5) (Moscow, 2006), pp. 232–48.