A HISTORY OF CALLIGRAPHY

Albertine Gaur

THE CALLIGRAPHER NEEDS FIVE THINGS —

A Good Hand

Endurance of Pain

and a Perfect Set of Implements

A Fine Temperament

Understanding of calligraphy

The Calligraphy, Menu of Calligraphy

Acceptance of theWORK OF ART

John and a Perfect Set of Implements

A Fine Temperament

Understanding of Calligraphy

THE CALLIGRAPHER NEEDS FIVE THINGS —

A Good Hand

Endurance of Pain

and a Perfect Set of Implements

A Fine Temperament

Understanding of Calligraphy

THE CALLIGRAPHER NEEDS FIVE THINGS —

A Good Hand

Endurance of Pain

and a Perfect Set of Implements

A Fine Temperament

Understanding of Calligraphy
A History of CALLIGRAPHY

Albertine Gaur

The history of calligraphy spans over five thousand years. It is intimately connected with the history of writing—the earliest examples of a coherent writing system, found in China inscribed on bones, have been dated to 3000-2500 BC—and yet it is more than simply "beautiful writing". Calligraphy makes a statement about a particular society, about the sum total of its cultural and historical heritage. It requires the interaction of several essential elements, including, most importantly, the availability of suitable calligraphic tools and materials, and it demands insight and individuality on the part of the calligrapher, though expressed within strictly prescribed boundaries. To a large extent calligraphy is an expression of harmony as perceived by the particular civilization from which it springs—the calligrapher in harmony with his or her script, text, tools, and spiritual heritage.

True calligraphy can be said to have developed among only three of the world's major civilizations: the Arabs (and those who use the Arabic script), whose tradition centres on the preservation of the divine revelation through the Koran; the Chinese (and those who use the Chinese script); and the Europeans who adopted the Roman script and laws within a Christian tradition. In this wide-ranging study, Albertine Gaur provides the first full-scale exploration of the history of calligraphy, and the place of calligraphers, from the earliest times to the present day, within all three of these very different cultures. In addition she discusses the tools for writing and the development of calligraphy in relation to printing and typography, and examines current trends and the work of contemporary calligraphers.

With over 160 illustrations in colour and black-and-white, drawn from an enormous range of material, A History of Calligraphy provides a fascinating and authoritative survey of the subject for today's practitioners and anyone with an interest in the history of art, writing and printing.
ALBERTINE GAUR received her doctorate from the University of Vienna, where she specialised in ethnology and philosophy. She studied Tamil and Hindi at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and spent five years in India, two of them teaching at a rural university in Rajasthan. After a short time at the India Office Library and Records she joined the British Library as Assistant Keeper in charge of South Indian materials, going on to become Deputy Keeper of the Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books until 1990. She is the author of many books including the widely acclaimed A History of Writing (The British Library, 1984; third, revised edition, 1993).
A History of Calligraphy
C. 1994 Albertine Gaur

First published by
The British Library
Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data for this title is available from The British Library
ISBN 0 7123 0346 0

Designed by Gillian Greenwood
Typeset in Monotype Zephyr by Augustus Filmsetting
Haydock, St Helens. Colour origination by
York House Graphics, Hamwell
Printed in Italy by
Arti Grafiche Ricordi
Milan

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 6
Abbreviations used in the text 7
List of colour plates 8
Colour plates 9
Preface 19

1 THE TOOLS FOR WRITING

Pen, brush and ink 23
Parchment and paper 37

2 THE THREE GREAT TRADITIONS

Western calligraphy 47
Western calligraphers 72
Upholding the Law 72
Mona, 'secretaries' and writing masters 72
Women Calligraphers 83
Arabic calligraphy 86
Arabic calligraphers 109
Guarding the Revelation 109
callighs, mystics, statesmen and scholars 109
Women Calligraphers 109
Chinese calligraphy 109
Korea 115
Japan 120
Chinese calligraphers 127
A Mark of Distinction 127
courtiers, warriors, priests, poets and painters 127
Women Calligraphers 136

3 'beautiful writing'

4 PRINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY

Far Eastern block printing 163
Western typography 166
The rise of computers 178

5 CALLIGRAPHY NOW

Western revival 183
Continental Europe 195
North America 199
Eastern continuation 207
Syndicato? 216
Select bibliography 224
Index 226
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following for valuable assistance with the preparation of this book: Michelle Brown, British Library Manuscript Collections; Yu-Ying Brown, British Library Oriental Collections; Ken Gardner, formerly of British Library Oriental Collections; Beth MacKillop, British Library Oriental Collections; Yasmin Safadi, British Library Oriental Collections; Peter Stocks, British Library Oriental Collections; Frances Wood, British Library Oriental Collections; and Karyn Gilman, editor of Calligraphy Review.

The British Library is also grateful to the institutions and individuals cited in the caption references for permission to reproduce the illustrations.

Albertine Gaur, 1994

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

AS: ANNAMARIE SCHIMMEL Calligraphy and Islamic Culture 2nd edn., London, 1999
AW: ANTHONY WHEELS Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World, New York, 1979
CAM: C. ANN WATERS Futures, Inks, their Composition and Manufacture, London, 1937
CSS: CHIEN CHIA-MEI Chinese Calligraphers and their Art, New York, 1986
DC: DAVID CRIBBETT The History of Japanese Printing and Book Illustration, Tokyo, 1977
DK: DA HEE KIM Chinese Brushwork in Calligraphy and Painting, its History Aesthetics and Techniques, Montclair, 1981
DK: DA KEE The unique Ibn al-Bawwab Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, 1955
KSA/MS: AHMADZIEH MAHIY AND MOHAMED SHELQAMI The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy, London, 1976
M: MARI BROWN Medieval Calligraphy, its History and Technique, London, 1980
MB: MICHAEL HARVEY Calligraphy and the Graphic Arts, London, 1988
SM: STEWART MORRIS American Catechisms, an Outline of their History. Philadelphia, 1951
WW: W.L. WILLIAMS Monumental Islamic Calligraphy from India, Villa Park, 1985
LIST OF COLOUR PLATES

Western Calligraphy

PLATE I The Musa calligraphiae monumenta, J. Paul Getty Trust, MS 20, f. 94, 86.M.V.227
PLATE II The Lindisfarne Gospels, British Library, Cotton MS Nero D.IV, f.90 (detail)
PLATE III St Ambrose, De Mysteriis, British Library, Royal MS 6 B.VI, f.2 (detail)
PLATE IV Autograph manuscript of the works of Christine de Pisan, British Library, Harl. MS 4431, f.4 (detail)
PLATE V Gutenberg’s 42-line Bible, British Library, C.9.D.4

Arabic Calligraphy

PLATE VI The Dīwān of Hafiz, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, Add. MS 7759, f. 60/61
PLATE VII Opening in a Koran copied by Muhammad ibn al-Wahid, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, Add. MS 23406
PLATE VIII Page from a Koran copied in Maghrebi script, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, Or.17706, ff.64v–65
PLATE IX Calligraphy in architecture, from a) Samarkand and b) Edirne, Turkey, photographed 1978 and 1991
PLATE X Koran written in Bihari script, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, Add. MS 5551, f.136

Chinese Calligraphy

PLATE XII One of a group of manjado panels from Korea, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections

Calligraphy Today

PLATE XI In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie, by Donald Jackson, reproduced with Mr Jackson’s permission from The Calligraphy of Donald Jackson (1988)
PLATE XII Polyleine calligraphy, from Rene Schall’s Moving Line III Series, reproduced with Ms Schall’s permission
PLATE XIII Contemporary sign painting, photographed at Martha’s Vineyard, Mass., USA, 1993
