

CHAPTER THREE

THE MANUSCRIPTS OF *AL-AQWĀL* AND THE PLAN OF THE EDITION

There are four manuscripts of *al-Aqwāl* (henceforth *Aqwāl*). What follows is a detailed description of their most salient features. While all the four were utilized in this edition, two were sparingly used since they added little clarity to the text and represented a redundancy in the history of the transmission of the text. The remaining two copies, because of the peculiarity of each, and the relationship they exhibit, were essential for this edition. Eventually, a facsimile of the two copies used for the edition should be published, since they represent an important teaching tool for students of Arabic paleography.

Two of the four manuscripts are housed in the Egyptian National Library (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah). Since Dār al-Kutub does not allow the inspection of the originals, my analysis of these two manuscripts is based on microfilm copies. The other two remaining copies are housed in the Escorial Real Biblioteca. I am grateful to the director of the Escorial, Mr. José Luis del Valle Merino, for allowing me to inspect the manuscripts and for extending to me all the necessary help while working at the Escorial.

A Description of the Manuscripts

1) *Dār al-Kutub, tafṣīr 49*

Dated Saturday the 4th of Ramaḍān 873 Hijrī (18th of March 1469); the manuscript has no pagination, and consists of 56 folios and 5 insertions (the technical Arabic word for insertions is *al-farkhah*, which is actually used by al-Biqāʿī in this copy).¹⁰³ These insertions were added at folios: 4a, 11a, 18b, 19b and 46b. The Dār al-Kutub cataloger states

¹⁰³ For the term *al-farkhah*, see Adam Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition A Glossary of Technical Terms & Bibliography* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 108.

in the card of the microfilm—the only instance of any description of this manuscript from the Egyptian National Library—that it has 59 folios, which is erroneous; apparently some of the insertions have been counted as folios.¹⁰⁴ The total number of folios and insertions is thus 61. In my reference to this copy, I use the original number of folios (56) and refer to the insertions individually after the folio in which they are inserted. The insertions are detached from the binding and are different in size from the folios. Each folio has 25 lines, with an average of 12 words per line. The script is a clear scholarly *nashh* script, almost fully dotted, and sometimes complete vocalization is given for certain difficult words, especially non-Arabic words. The scribe was a certain Abū al-Luṭf, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī. The scribe was copying from the *musawwadah* (rough draft) of al-Biqā‘ī, which is of course an autograph. The colophon reads as follows:

Finished copying this work which was written by its scribe the neediest of creatures for God’s forgiveness, Abū al-Luṭf Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī, al-Khaṭīb (the preacher) on Saturday, the fourth of Ramaḍān in the year 873. I copied it from the draft (*musawwadah*) which was written by the hand of our Sheikh al-Biqā‘ī.¹⁰⁵

This copy has extensive marginalia, which spilled over five insertions for lack of space. The marginalia and the insertions were made by the hand of al-Biqā‘ī himself, who proofread the copy. In the last folio we have a proofreading remark (a standard practice in Arabic medieval proofread manuscripts) which states explicitly that it was done by the author himself (*katabahu mu’allifuhu*). Nowhere, however, do we have in the manuscript an explicit indication that the marginalia were by the author’s hand, but the matter is certain. The proofreading remark is in the same hand as the marginalia; moreover, there are many autograph works by al-Biqā‘ī, enabling us to compare the two scripts. The cataloguer of Dār al-Kutub was certain that the marginalia were written by al-Biqā‘ī himself, and states as much on the microfilm card.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Most of the manuscripts of Dār al-Kutub are not catalogued (only listed in the published catalogues); each microfilm however has a card that has some bibliographic information and basic descriptions of the manuscript.

¹⁰⁵ For the full Arabic version of the colophon see the footnote at the last page of the edition.

¹⁰⁶ Now that the Dār al-Kutub transfers the microfilm copies into digital copies, they omit the inclusion of the microfilm card, a rather unfortunate practice. Thus, when I obtained a copy of Dār al-Kutub tafsīr 49 from the National Library it was a digitized