TRANSLATION

EPIC DEEDS OF ARTISTS

Preface

The book begins with prayers of praise and thanks [to God] with whose 6b pen [the verse], “Kind and honorable, writing down [your deeds], they [the recording angels] know all that ye do,”¹ was made evident and mani-

fest. [This] section is a preamble of gratitude and adoration, a transcription of the true religion and a woven [tapestry] of natural intelligence, penned in conformity with the [Qur’anic] ordinance, “A written record, attested by those who are brought near unto [their Lord].”²

Verse by the author

O Pen! Never has your wisdom executed on the pages of the universe A faulty sketch or a faulty line.
Your page, [bright] as the day, [is] made of camphor,
Your ink, [dark] as the night, is made of musk.
The pupil [of the eye] is a single dot on white
As is your cover that is [like] one hundred unnoticed gifts.

How wondrous is the Scribe of the school of creation and power [i.e., 7a God], who adorned the tulip-cheeked pages [of the Qur’an] with perfect embellishments in rayhani³ script! He inscribed a history of beauty and splendor with two lines of thuluth⁴ that [He] engraven on rose-

¹ Qur’an, 82:11–12.
² Qur’an, 83:20–21. The reference is to a’lā-ʾi ʿiliyyīn, the name of the highest of the eight paradises where the Register of the righteous is kept. Qur’an, 83:18–21.
³ rayhani (reyhānī), literally, “the aromatic plant basil,” “having a fragrance.” A smaller version of muḥaqqaq, this script was used for copying the Qur’an. Like muḥaqqaq, it started to go out of use after the eleventh/seventeenth century and was eventually replaced by naskh, a cursive script. Because of its poetic name, reyhānī was the favorite script poets used in their puns.
⁴ thuluth (ṣūlūṣ), literally, “one-third.” This script is generally said to have derived its name from being based on the principle of a third of each letter being sloping. Among the Six Styles, this is the longest surviving.