

# The Calligraphers' Craft

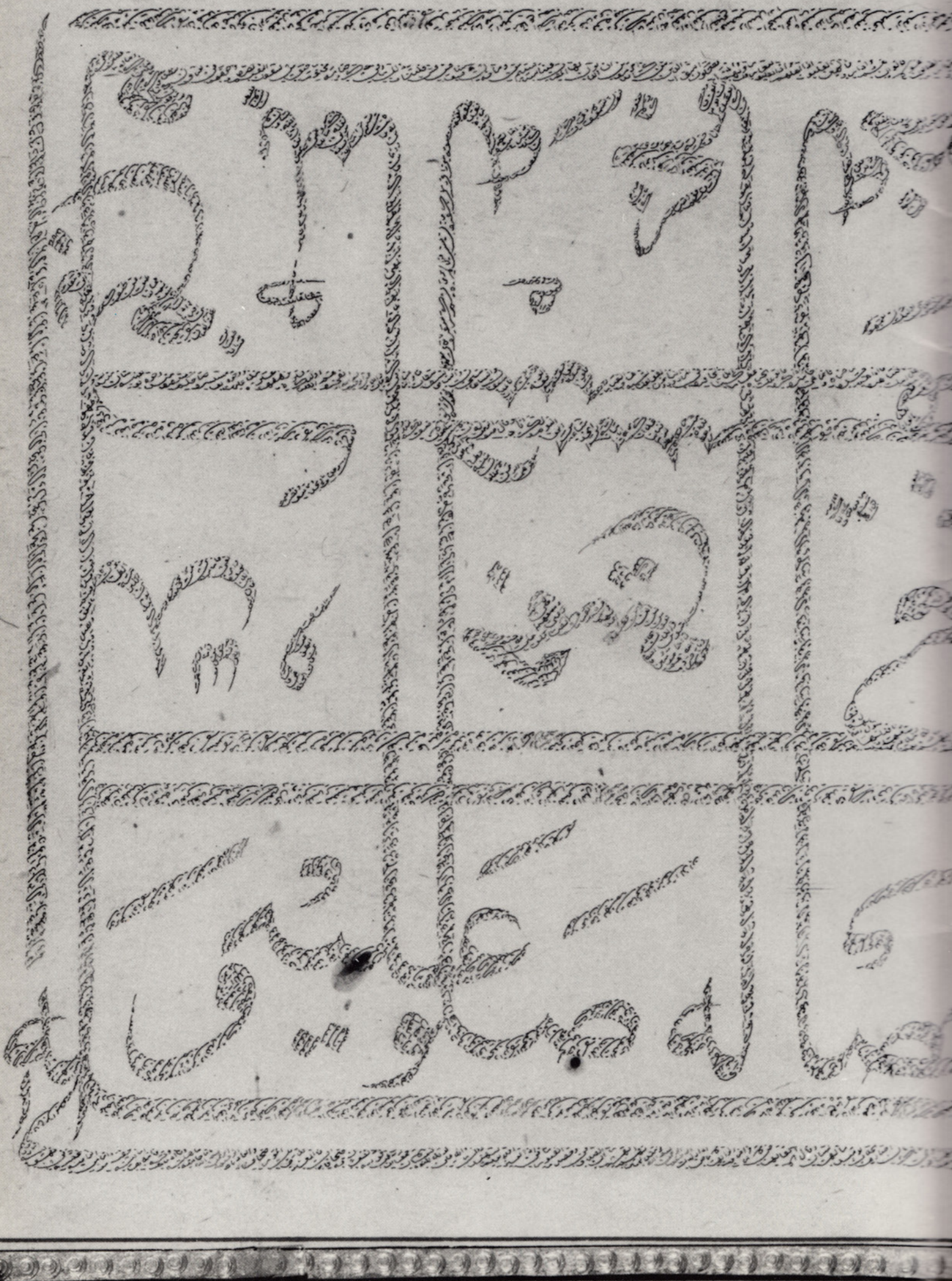


Summer Exhibition I — 27 June 1987

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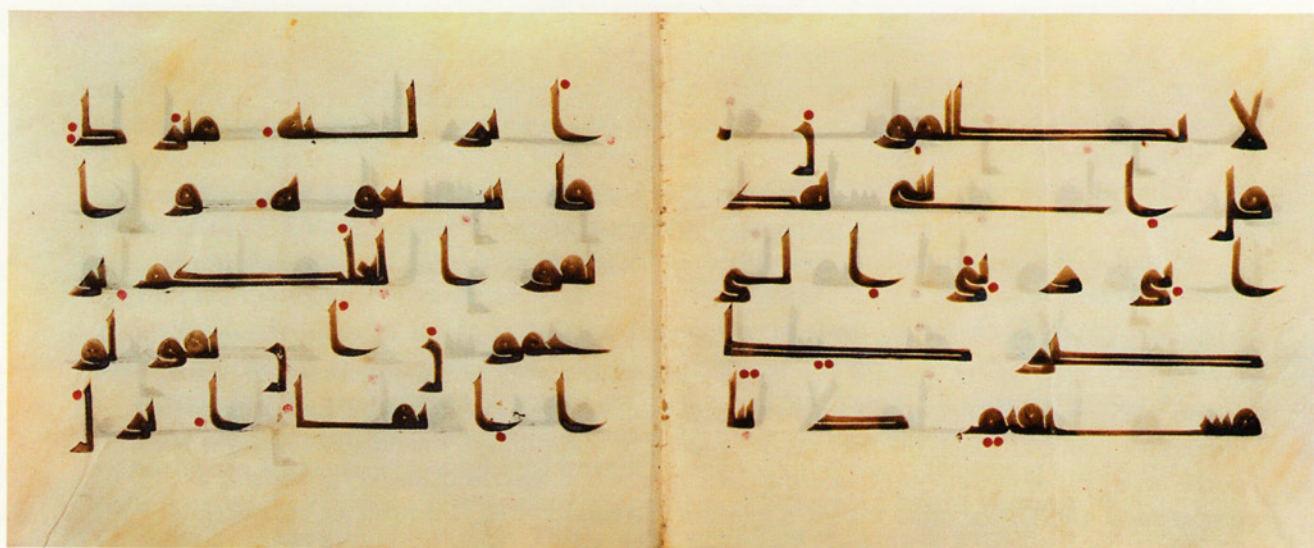






## THE CALLIGRAPHER'S CRAFT

The elegant inscription on a 10th century Nishapur bowl in the Louvre describes knowledge as being something which is bitter to the taste at first, but later is sweeter than honey. The same description could well be applied to Islamic calligraphy. It is certainly difficult to appreciate for anyone brought up outside the culture, but its study reveals an art-form of unusual fascination and refinement. It is the quintessential artistic expression of Islamic culture, and yet it also has many peculiarities not found in the other arts. The anonymity, which envelopes almost all other categories of Muslim artists, does not apply to calligraphers, whose lives and achievements are recorded in numerous detailed biographies. Signed works by many of the masters have survived. Literary treatises in both Arabic and Persian give an unparalleled insight into the ideas embodied by calligraphy. Unlike other Islamic art forms, it did not decay after the 17th century, but continued to be developed and refined right up until the beginning of this century. The sharpened tip of the calligrapher's pen was like the apex of a great pyramid of human endeavour. It involved, beyond the calligrapher and the tradition he inherited, many separate groups of specialised craftsmen, who made, dyed, varnished, polished and cut the paper, mixed the ink, ruled the margins and provided illuminations. A variety of implements relating to calligraphy also required the skills of craftsmen in metal, glass, ivory, wood, lacquer and leather. For Muslims, the Qur'an is literally the Word of God. This belief undoubtedly encouraged scribes to seek to develop suitably beautiful means of transmitting the Word in writing.

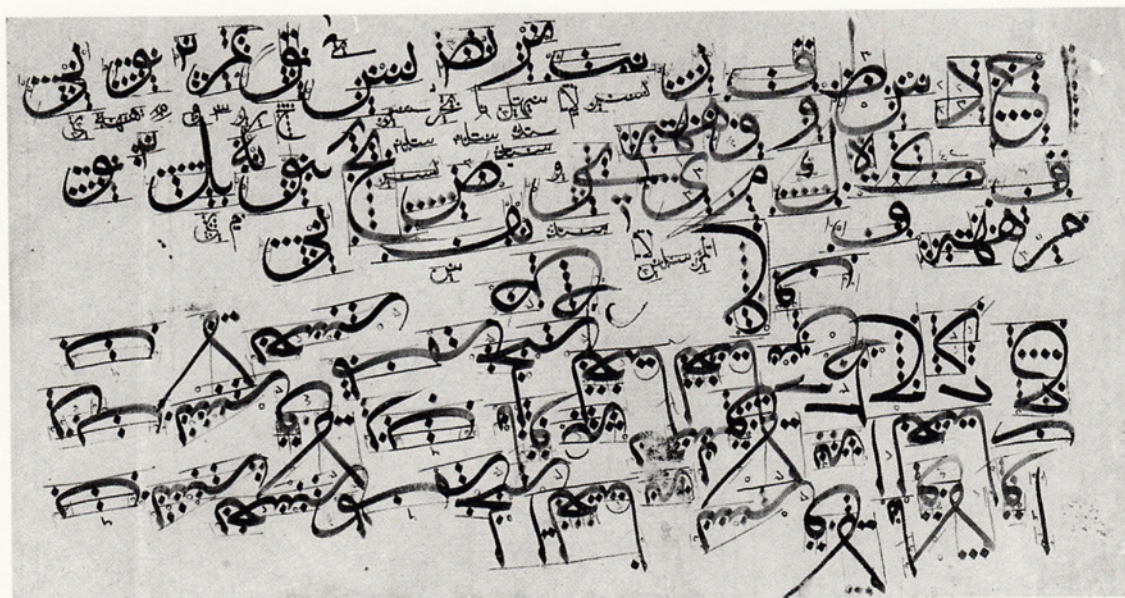


In the 9th century, Kufic emerged as the main Qur'anic script. The extraordinary accomplishment of some of the early calligraphers is illustrated by this double Qur'an page, originally part of a manuscript now in the Tunis National Library. The total control of line and draw of the ink, the immaculate shape of each letter and the overall composition of the page, are evidence of a calligrapher of the highest calibre.

(size of double page: 30cm x 88.6cm)



The most significant individual contribution to the development of written Arabic was made by Ibn Muqla, who served as vizir to several of the Abbasid caliphs in the early 10th century. Despite ending his life disgraced in prison, with his right hand cut off in punishment, the highest praises are heaped upon him in every tract on calligraphy. According to the 11th century author Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi: "Ibn Muqla is a prophet in the field of hand-writing; it was poured upon his hand even as it was revealed to the bees to make their honey cells hexagonal." His



IBN MUQLA'S ALPHABET

great achievement was to produce a geometric theory for the forms and proportions of Arabic letters. He defined the shape, size, curvature and positioning of each letter by applying a system of rhomboid dots, of which the size was determined by the width of the nib. The Alif was taken as the basic unit of measurement, and the circle of which it was the diameter, provided the proportional grid for the other letters. Using this system, Ibn Muqla defined six basic scripts - Thulth, Naskh, Muhaqqaq, Rayhani, Tauqi and Rika - each with its own set of proportions in relation to the Alif, and its own particular shapes to the letters. Thus, for the first time a total harmony was established, with all the letters relating to each other, as well as to the size of the nib. This codification of Arabic writing was built upon by successive generations of calligraphers, the greatest of whom produced enduring refinements. Most famous of all was Yaqut al-Musta'simi (d.1298), who lived in Baghdad and is credited with perfecting the six styles, adding the final elements of "grace and elegance." The schools of calligraphy established by his pupils had a decisive influence on the evolution of the art.

A number of other scripts were subsequently developed. In the early 15th century, Mir Ali of Tabriz invented Nastaliq, based on the chancery script, Taliq, and characterised by an incomparable swinging elegance. It seemed the perfect vehicle for expressing Persian poetry, and remained the preferred style of Iran and Moghul India. In Ottoman Turkey, the chancery script was Divani, a loose, liquid, looping style which achieved extraordinary excellence on the Imperial Ottoman fermans of the 16th century.

"A beautiful hand-writing is a fortune for the needy one, an adornment for the rich man and perfection for the administrator". This statement comes from Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi's "Treatise



on Penmanship" which gives a fascinating insight into the preoccupation with calligraphy in the early 11th century. Many accomplished calligraphers found employment in the court chancelleries, where they were at the hub of intellectual and artistic life. An idea constantly expressed is that good writing not only reflected clear thought, but was also evidence of a good character. There is even a hint of graphology in the reply given to a petitioner by Abdullah b. Tahir: "If you have been truthful in stating your case, the movement of your hand would have aided you. Or do you not know that a beautiful hand-writing speaks for the writer, makes his argument convincing, and enables him to obtain what he wants." Already at this time, the elements of calligraphy were defined with an almost incredible precision. Each type of stroke and flourish had its own terminology and such concerns as the ligatures between the letters, the inter-relation of the parts of the letters to the line, and the harmony between the black letters and the white spaces in between, were minutely calibrated. The last of these points is of particular interest, because harmony is essentially related to composition, which is the way of grouping letters on a line. It is this which gives the almost musical quality to a line of calligraphy, and the aspect in which the hand of a great calligrapher is most clearly discernable.



*From Hassan Massoudy, Calligraphie arabe vivante, Flammarion, Paris*

The relationship between calligraphy and religion is readily apparent. Apart from manuscripts, many of the panels of writings contain excerpts from the Qur'an, Traditions of the Prophet or sayings of spiritual teachers. Copying the Qur'an was considered a pious act, and the discipline required to achieve proficiency in writing, was deemed to produce results in the character of the person which were wholly compatible with the aims of religious life. "If a man writes Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim (the opening phrase of the Qur'an), and writes it very well and carefully, God will pardon him", is a Tradition attributed to the Prophet. And in the words of Sultan Ali Mashhadi "The foundation of the art of writing consists of the practice of virtue." Less obvious than this overtly religious aspect, is the close relationship between the art of calligraphy and Sufism. All the arts and crafts of Islam have been connected in some way with Sufism, but in the case of calligraphy, the evidence of, and to a certain extent the reasons for this relationship are much clearer. It is as if the traditional institution for the teaching and practice of this art was a mirror-image of the pattern of spiritual teaching employed in so many different guises by the Sufis. Firstly, there was the teacher-pupil relationship, characterised by the immense respect accorded by the pupil to his master. This was not some kind of typically Eastern peculiarity, as some would see it, but rather the way of aligning a pupil correctly to a situation in which he could learn. The respect implied in the actions of rulers, such as Abu Said b. Oljeytu, who went on foot to the house of the calligrapher Sharaf al-Din, and refused to let him stand in his presence, or Sultan Bayezid who sat holding Shaikh Hamdullah's inkwell, was surely respect paid to a spiritual man, rather than to an artist. "Purity of writing is purity of soul" seems to reflect the implicit recognition that real mastery of the art of writing required spiritual qualities also. The Sufi teacher who gathered students around him, traditionally orientated them around an activity which had nothing obviously spiritual about it, but was the vehicle by which much could be taught indirectly. This was perhaps the vessel in Rumi's phrase "To boil water you need an intermediary - the vessel." An artistic school was an ideal framework, and moreover fulfilled another essential criterion, which was to have a sufficient number of people involved together. Again, in the words of Rumi "The load that can be pulled by forty men cannot be sustained by one man alone." The concept of the Silsila, or chain of transmission through which the student was linked with previous masters to the founder of the order or school, was common to both Sufis and calligraphers. The intense discipline and constant practice were undoubtedly conducive to



eliminating many of the problems which Sufis have traditionally insisted must be dealt with before any progress can be made. The Sufi presence among calligraphers is underscored by many names, such as Pir Yahya Sufi, Shaikh Suhrawardi (son of the founder of the Sufi order of that name), Maulana Dervish Abdullah, Dervish Ali etc. In the remarkable versified treatise on calligraphy, written by the great 15th century master Sultan Ali Mashhadi, he describes how it was an encounter with an Abdal (a 'changed one' in Sufi parlance) who was a possessor of Hal (the mystical state) which put him on the path to mastering the art of writing. It is also interesting to note how many of the works of literature which exercised the talents of both painters and calligraphers, such as the poetry of Nizami, Saadi, Hafez, Rumi and Jami, are Sufi texts.

"Freedom is the absence of choice" is a Sufi saying which may appear contradictory, but which seems to indicate that when a deeper level of perception is open to a person, it is possible to know what to do and so be free from the uncertainties involved in the process of choosing. A similar shift in focus is helpful to understand calligraphy, because, far from being preoccupied with self-expression, so valued in our culture, the artist's aim was primarily self-perfection, in order to act as a channel to express something higher than 'himself'. This is not to say that there was no individuality in what a calligrapher wrote, but the development that he underwent, coupled with the discipline and technical mastery which he acquired, gave him access to the sacred and the ability to translate it.

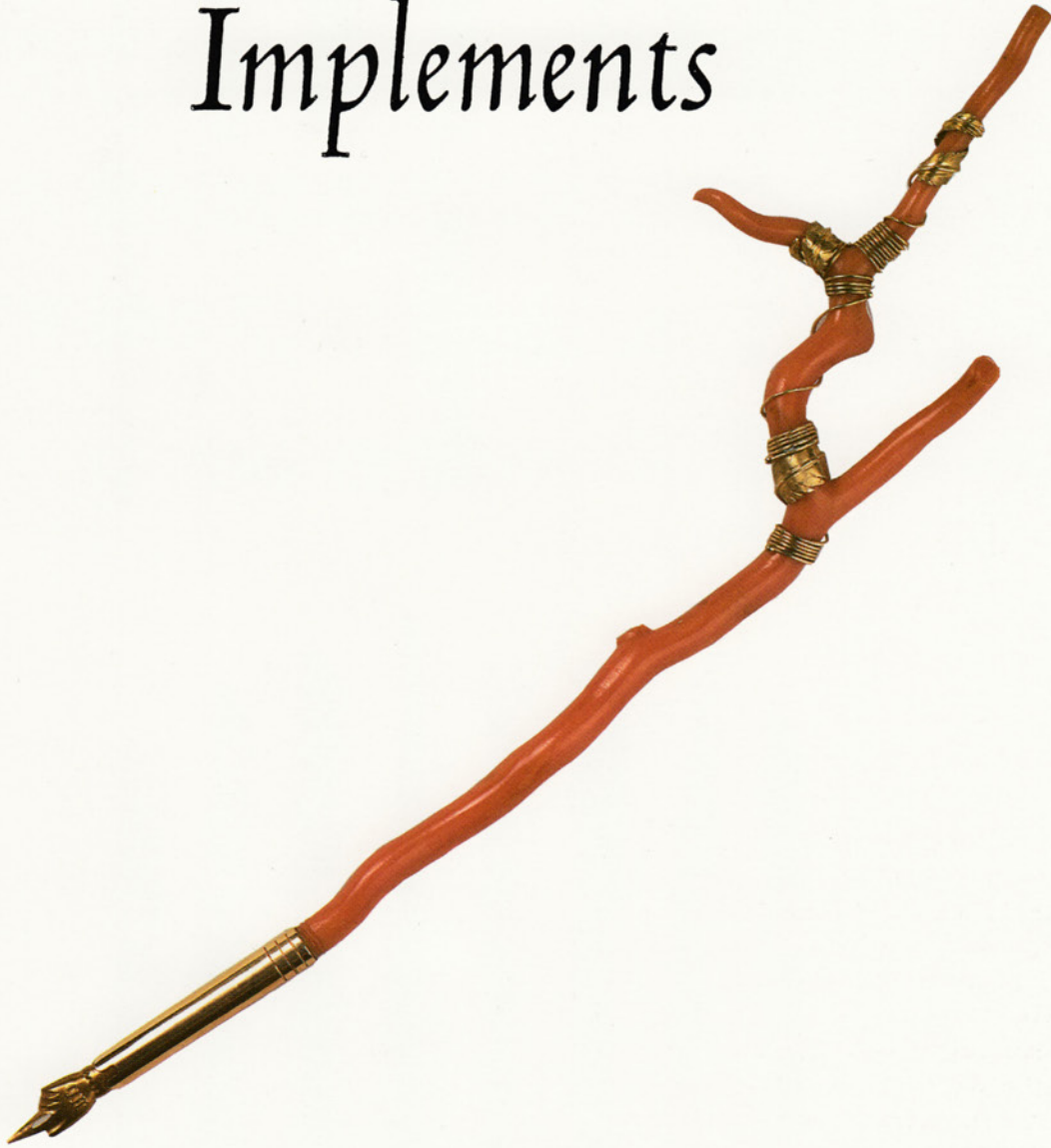
Oliver Hoare

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# Calligraphic Implements



‘The calligrapher needs five things—a fine temperament,  
understanding of calligraphy, a good hand, endurance of pain,  
and a perfect set of implements’

Mir Ali of Herat





## KNIVES

A good knife was important to the calligrapher, as its tempered steel blade needed to be razor sharp to cut with the required precision. The examples illustrated come from Istanbul, where in the 18th and 19th Centuries a whole street was occupied by the masters of this craft. The blades are usually stamped with the maker's signature, sometimes set into a gold or brass lozenge. The highly decorative handles are made of ivory, walrus tusk, horn, agate, jade, wood, tortoiseshell, steel or silver, and some are hollow to contain a much smaller knife for splitting the nib. The narrower blades were designed for cutting thin pens for very fine scripts.



## PENS



The Islamic calligrapher's most precious implement was his reed pen, and therefore the minutest variations of quality in reeds were of great interest. The best were brown reeds, fine and light, with a hard outer skin and tender inner fibre, which came from the marshes of Wasit in Iraq, India, Egypt and the shores of the Caspian. They needed to be firm to last throughout a long text. Each master had his own technique of cutting, which had four phases, and which varied slightly for writing different scripts. First, the reed was 'opened' with a diagonal cut, giving the basic shape to the nib, which was then split. The length of the split depended on the hardness of the reed and 'weight' of the writer's hand. The split was situated either centrally, or at four-tenths across to compensate for wear on one side. The sides were then trimmed and finally the nib-end was cut. This was done straight down or diagonally, either to let the hard skin overlap which increased clarity, or to allow the inner fibre to protrude which absorbed ink better. It is said that by cutting the nib obliquely instead of straight across, Yaqut al-Musta'simi added the final ingredients of grace and elegance to the perfect proportions of the letters established by Ibn Muqla. Reed pens were the subject of extravagant poetical metaphors ('cypresses in the garden of knowledge') and the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir, is said to have made a collection of the pens of famous calligraphers.





## MAKTA

The 'open' reed pen was laid on a plaque called a Makta, where a raised groove held it in place while the nib was cut. They are usually made of ivory, walrus tusk, tortoiseshell or mother-of-pearl, materials which are hard but will not damage the blade of the knife. Many of the makers were affiliated to the Dervish Orders, as is shown in these Turkish examples by the presence of Mevlevi and Bektashi turbans in the decoration, and inscriptions invoking Jalaluddin Rumi. Some bear the signatures of makers, the best known being Fikri, Rasmi and Dede.



## INK

*'The stars of wise sayings shine in the darkness of ink'  
The Caliph al-Ma'mun*



INKWELL, Iran or Afghanistan, circa 1200  
Bronze inlaid with silver

A variety of different recipes existed for producing lustrous black ink which did not fade. The basic ingredient was soot, added to a heated mixture of water, salt, gum-arabic, grilled gall nuts, iron sulphate and honey. When honey was used to help dissolve the soot, the addition of myrrh was recommended to repel insects. In Turkey, the most prized ink was made with soot from the vents of the Suleymaniyya Mosque, which apart from its fine quality, was considered to bring with it the Baraka of the place itself. Coloured inks were made with the addition of different metal oxides or arsenic in the case of yellow, while the so-called recipe of 'Kufa' produced dried ink pellets which were suitable for travel. A wad of raw silk or cotton was placed in the inkwell to absorb the ink and prevent the pen from overfilling. Great artistry was lavished on the production of inkwells, as indeed on everything to do with calligraphy. Glass, pottery, precious metals and jade were used, but particularly of note are the cylindrical bronze inkwells inlaid with silver and sometimes with gold, which appear from the 13th Century onwards.



INKWELL SET AND SILVER TRAY, Turkey, 19th Century

The central spouted pot contained water for adding to the different coloured inks in the four pots flanking it. The two outer pots were for fine sand to be sprinkled on a finished script.

*Abdullah b. Tahir made the following note to a memorandum handed him by someone who used too much sand on it: 'if he had enclosed enough soap for us to clean our clothes from the sand in his memorandum, we would have complied with his request'*



## PAPER

Samarqand became the first centre of paper production in the Islamic world, after the battle of Thalus in 751 AD, where the Arabic forces captured some Chinese paper makers. Before that, vellum and papyrus were more commonly used, although a restricted amount of paper was imported from China. The Barmekid vizirs of Harun al-Rashid established paper mills near Baghdad in the late 9th Century and the industry spread to Cairo, Sana'a and Spain in the course of the next century. Linen and hemp in the form of rags and rope formed the basis of all Islamic paper making. Inevitably, the requirements of calligraphy lead to the manufacture of extraordinarily fine paper, which provides one of the delights of perusing an Islamic manuscript. The highly burnished surface was achieved by sizing the paper with vegetable starch or gum to fill in the pores and by polishing on a board. In Moghul India, a broad ended pestle was used, while in Turkey a glass egg or a bar with a stone fixed to it were preferred. The sizing and burnishing was mainly carried out by the paper dealer or the calligrapher himself. Faint lines to guide the scribe were impressed into the paper by a device called a mastar, a sheet of card stretched with fine silk threads at the desired intervals. The high value given to paper is shown by accounts of calligraphers being rewarded for fine work, by gifts of paper.



JADE PAPER BURNISHER SET INTO A WOODEN HANDLE  
Turkey, 17th-18th Century



SCISSORS FOR CUTTING PAPER  
Turkey 18th-19th century





## BURNISHING TOOLS

Gold burnishers are among the most attractive implements, remarkable for the way they fit into the hand. These examples from Turkey, of the 17th-19th Centuries, are in agate, glass, jade or cornelian, and the handles are of equally diverse materials. The curved agates of the three tools on the upper left, are designed to curl round the tip of the index finger. The lower part of the cornelian and silver tool (bottom line, third from right), has a sharp point for pricking gold to texture its surface, while its upper tip is cut obliquely to provide a minute burnishing surface. The two illuminator's pestles (bottom right) are for crushing gold.





#### SCRIBE'S TABLE

Turkey, 17th Century

Wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, ivory, ebony and tortoiseshell laid over gold leaf.

Size: 26cm high, 30cm wide, 62cm long

Sitting cross-legged on the ground, the calligrapher rested the paper either against his knee or on a low table.



#### PEN AND INK HOLDER

Turkey, dated 1139 AH 1727 AD

Silver and gold with engraved and niello decoration inset with a cabuchon ruby.

Size 36.5cm long

Marked with the Tugra of Sultan Ahmed III



Lacquer pen box painted by Muhammed Ism'ail showing "the battle of Sultan Murad Ism'ail Mirza Salar" dated 1268 AH/1851AD

Size 25cm long.



# Calligraphy



‘Writing is the geometry of the spirit’  
attributed to Plato





#### PANEL OF CALLIGRAPHY

Written by Adbullah al-Sayrafi

Iran, early 14th Century

Ink, colour and gold on paper

Page size: 23.4cm x 51.8cm

Text: "When I play with her, she is shy, until she sees the benefit."

Taught by the great Yaqut al-Musta'simi and his pupil Sayyid Haydar, Abdullah al-Sayrafi was renowned as one of the outstanding masters of Naskh and Muhaqqaq scripts. Born in Shiraz, son of Khoja Mahmud the money-changer, he spent most of his life in Tabriz, where he designed many superb monumental inscriptions for the buildings erected by Sultan Abu Sa'id ibn Oljeytu, to whom he also taught the art of writing. He wrote a treatise on calligraphy, and is credited with completing 36 copies of the Qur'an. His most famous pupil was Pir Yahya Sufi.

The great esteem in which Abdullah al-Sayrafi was held is attested by numerous stories. Prince Ibrahim Sultan, when governor of Shiraz (1523-35), sent stone cutters to Tabriz to bring back a stone inscription worked on by the calligrapher, to adorn his new building in the main mosque courtyard. The great Ottoman vizir and art patron Rustem Pasha celebrated his return to favour in 1555, by commissioning the decoration of a Qur'an of Abdullah al-Sayrafi, by the leading court artist Kara Memi (Topkapi Serai Muzesi E.H. 49). He was certainly extremely influential in Turkey, and both Sheikh Hamdullah and Ahmed Kara Hisari traced their pedigrees specifically back to him, and through him to Yaqut.





#### QUR'AN FRAGMENT

Written by Prince Baysunghur ibn Shahrukh ibn Timur

Iran, early 15th Century

Ink, colour and gold on paper

Page size: 49cm x 101cm

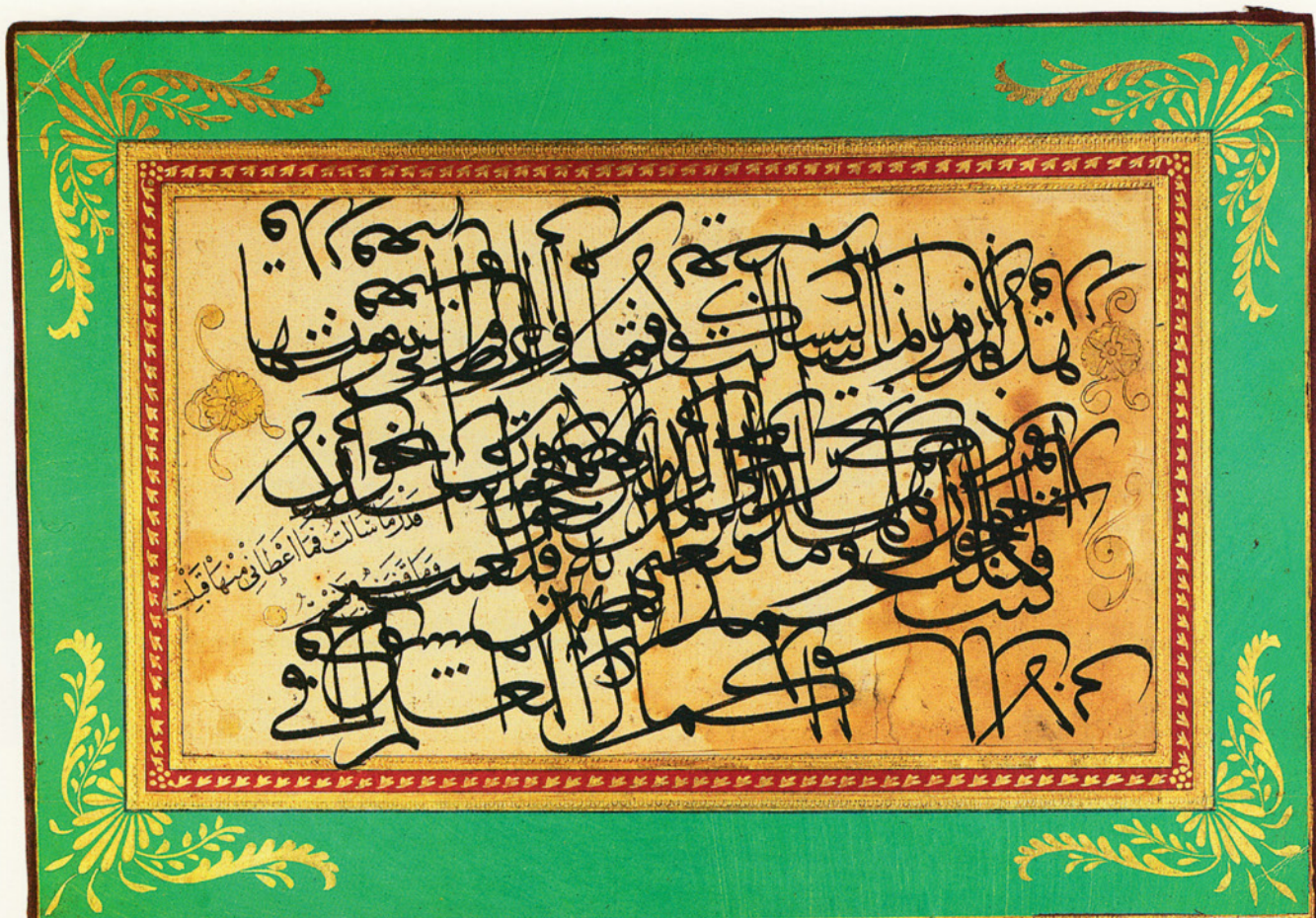
Text: Sura al-Rum (Chapter XXX)

'In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate.'

The Timurid Baysunghur Mirza (d. 1433) was the most famous of princely patrons, who played an important role in the development of the arts of the book. Grandson of the great conqueror Tamerlane, and son of Shahrukh who ruled Iran between 1405 and 1444, he surrounded himself with painters, calligraphers, poets and writers at his court in Herat. Forty calligraphers were employed full-time copying texts in his library, under the supervision of Maulana Jafar Tabrizi. He excelled in calligraphy, which he learnt from Maulana Shams Baysunghuri.

This Sura heading and Bismillah come from an extraordinary large Qur'an, part of which is preserved in the Gulestan Museum in Tehran. The full page has seven lines of script and measures 1m 77cm x 1m 1cm. Baysunghur's reputation as a 'Master of the Age' is fully justified by the majestic quality of this Jalil al-Muhaqqaq script, which, with its clarity, rhythm and composition, seems to embody the ideals of Islamic calligraphy.







*'Collect the writings of masters,  
Look at this one and that one.  
Concentrate on those for whom  
You feel a natural attraction,  
So that your eyes become saturated with his writing,  
And each of your letters becomes a pearl as a result'  
Sultan Ali Mashadi*

## TWO PAGES OF CALLIGRAPHIC EXERCISES

Top panel written by Shaikh Hamdullah (1436-1520)

Lower panel written by Hafiz Osman (1642-98)

Turkey, 15th-16th Century and 17th Century

Ink and gold on paper; in coloured card mounts with leather hinge and marbled exterior

Page size: 20cm x 28.4cm

Text.

Top Panel: "Hisham ibn Abdu'l-Malik said to Abi Hazim: Appeal to me for your needs, and thereupon he (Abi Hazim) said: I have appealed to the One (God) for whom the amount I have asked is of no importance, thus I accept what I am given and am content with what I have been provided with. The perfection of knowledge at this time is silence, and to stay at home and the praise of the Ever-Living who does not die. The friends of this time are the spies of faults. Hamdullah ibn Shaikh wrote it."

Lower Panel: The same text, with the added inscription:

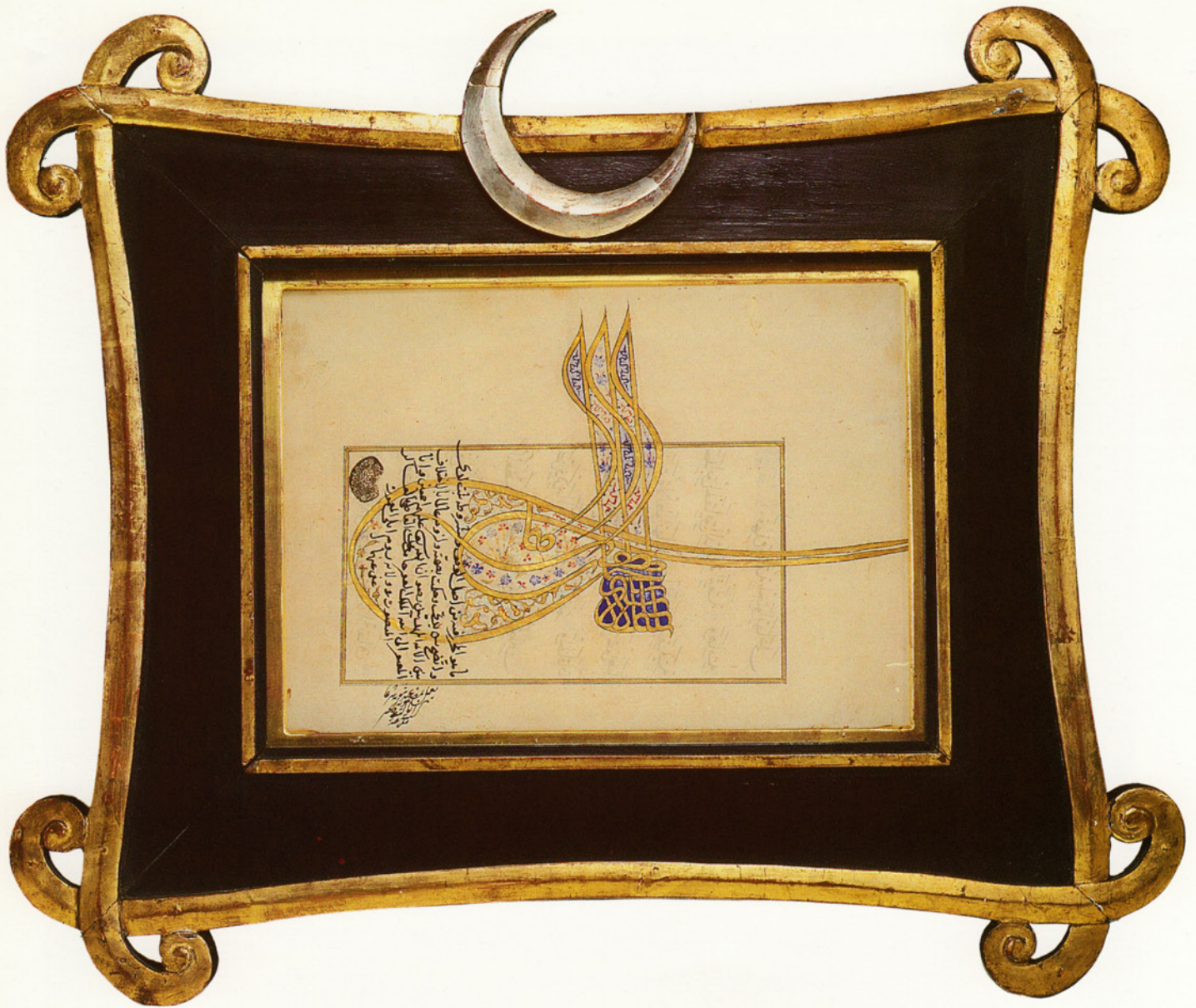
"Uthman al-Hafiz copied it from the writing of al-Shaikh."

This remarkable document brings together the two greatest calligraphers of Ottoman Turkey. Shaikh Hamdullah not only achieved perfection in the tradition of Yaqt al-Musta'simi but also, at the instigation of Sultan Bayezid II to whom he taught the art of writing, produced refinements which revolutionised the development of calligraphy in Turkey. He remained the model for every calligrapher until Hafiz Osman arrived at the synthesis of his and Yaqt's styles, which has remained unsurpassed down to the present day. The Qur'ans of Hafiz Osman were used as models for printing in the 19th Century.

It is fascinating to compare the hands of the two masters. At first there seems to be a grandeur and sweep to the letters of Shaikh Hamdullah, which is missing from Hafiz Osman's copy. Yet considering the difficulty of reproducing such a complex calligraphic form as this, written in two directions, Hafiz Osman's achievement is obviously extraordinary.

Calligraphic specimens of the great masters were of importance in the teaching process. Aspiring students were given them as models to copy over and over again, once they had achieved competence in forming the letters correctly. As the ink was soluble, students washed the paper once it was full, to use again. Only the practice sheets of great calligraphers were kept and treasured as works of art.





# TUGHRA OF SULEYMAN THE MAGNIFICENT

Turkey, mid 16th Century

Ink, colour and gold on polished paper; framed

Page size: 18.5cm x 26cm

"Suleyman Shah son of Selim Shah Khan, the Ever Victorious" is drawn in gold, outlined in black, with cobalt blue filling in its base, and flowers adorning the 'loops' and 'masts'.

This Tughra comes from the opening page of an Imperial Waqf, approved by Sultan Suleyman himself. The Arabic text written across the Tughra is a corroborative statement by Hamid ibn Muhammad, in his capacity of Kazasker or Chief Judge of Rumeli. Molla Hamid occupied this post from 1557-66 and thus this document was drawn up in the last 9 years of Suleyman's reign. The seal of Molla Hamid is stamped below his inscription. The inscription in the lower margin is the Fiat of Ebussud Effendi (d. 1574), who was the greatest jurist of the period.

The Tughra is a calligraphic device incorporating the Sultan's name which acted as his official signature, and was attached to state documents to confirm their legality. It is peculiar to the Turks, and a document dated 1324 issued in the name of Orhan Ghazi bears the earliest known example. Tughras were first decorated during the reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512) but, it was in the time of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-66) that they were turned into an extraordinary and original art form



# DECOUPAGE CALLIGRAPHY

Signed by Fakhri of Bursa

Turkey, circa 1600

Paper, ink, colour and gold on paper; tooled and gilt leather binding

Page size: 16.5cm x 10.5cm



## Text:

A youth was smelling a violet,  
he was asked: O hunch back  
in a blue gown;  
what has happened to you in  
your youth;  
that you are bent so soon  
before becoming old?  
The youth answered: the old  
are bent by time;  
One should be bent at youth.

## Seals:

The top right hand seal in Kufic characters, within a gold surround, is supposedly the seal of the Prophet Muhammad, while the top left hand seal has the name of his grandson, Hussein ibn Ali. Four seals bear dates: Nurullah ibn Muhammad 933 AH/1585 AD, Muhammad 1003 AH/1594-5 AD the preacher Muhammad Hashimi 1007 AH/1598-9 AD. The three apricot coloured seals are all rendered in decoupage, presumably by Fakhri. The significance of this unusual border is obscure.

Fakhri of Bursa (d. 1618) specialised in cut-out calligraphy and flowers, and was considered the greatest exponent of the art. In Turkish biographies, he is given the title of 'The Unique'. The invention of this technique is attributed to Abdullah of Herat, the son of the great calligrapher Mir Ali, around the year 1500. The Nastaliq calligraphy, and the floral decoration on the blue field and pink border, are all cut-out, and demonstrates an astounding skill. Works by Fakhri are very rare. He is recorded as having given a complete version of Saadi's "Gulistan" to Sultan Ahmed I (1603-17) which is today in the Topkapi Saray. A Murakka of his work is in the Suleymaniyya Mosque library.





#### PANEL OF CALLIGRAPHY

Written by Sultan Ahmed III

Turkey, 1703-30

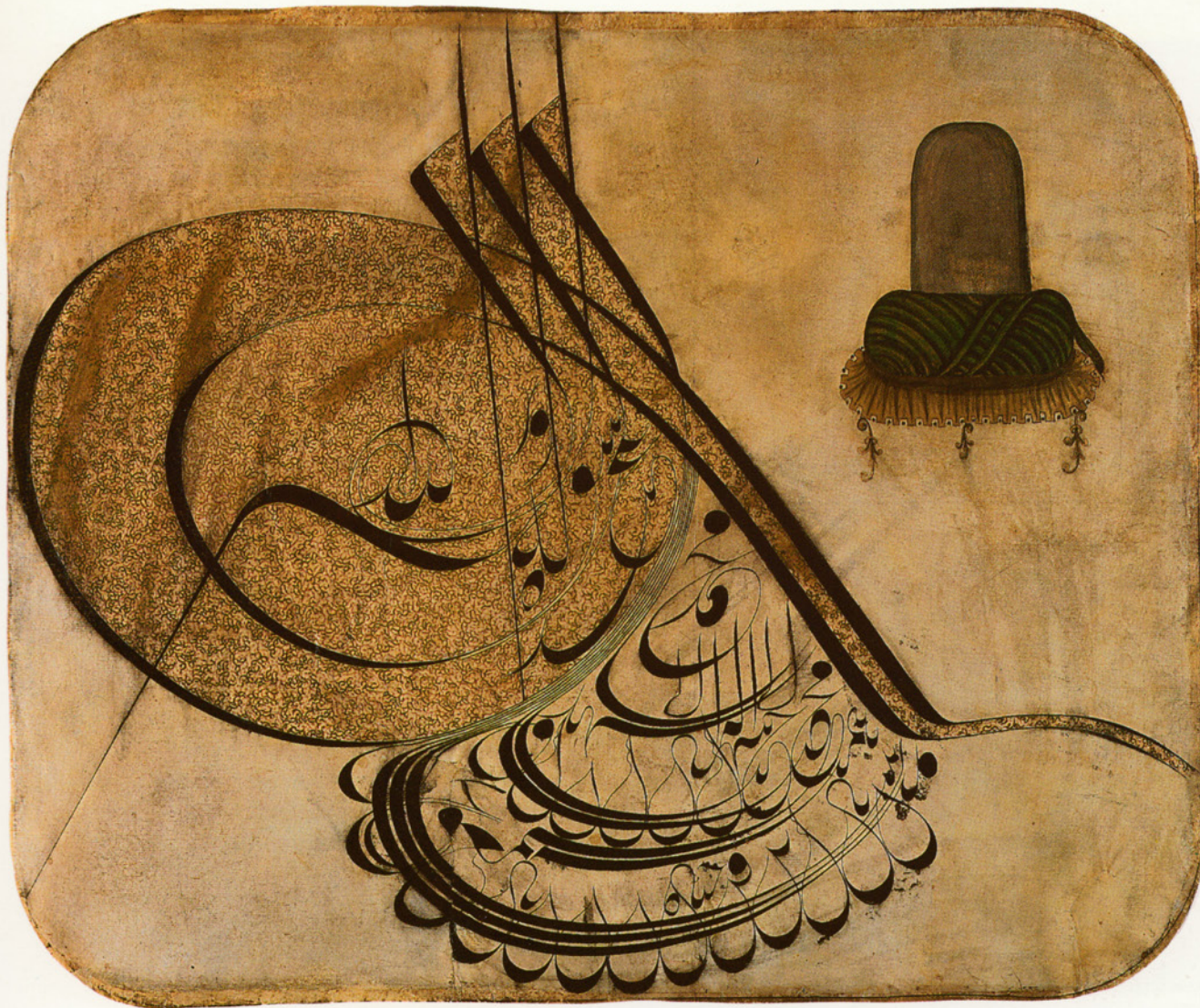
Gold and black on wood panel

Size: 41cm x 56cm

Inscription: 'Muhammad the Guide'

Sultan Ahmad III, like many of the Ottoman Sultans and Princes, was a highly accomplished calligrapher. He and his brother, Sultan Mustafa II, both had the privilege of studying under the celebrated Hafiz Osman, and after the master's death in 1698, they continued with his pupil, Yedikuleli Abdullah. Accounts of the period show that Ahmed presided over a circle of poets and artists, and employed many notable calligraphers, such as Ahmed ibn Hasan and Yaqub 'the Indian' in his immediate entourage. He sent Qur'ans in his own hand to the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and to various religious foundations in Istanbul, as well as inscriptions in Jeli script to each of the main mosques of his capital. He also designed inscriptions for monuments, such as the fountain by the Babi Humayum, and wrote poetry under the pseudonym of Najib.





#### PANEL OF CALLIGRAPHY

Written by: Shaikh Omer al-Wasif Sivasi

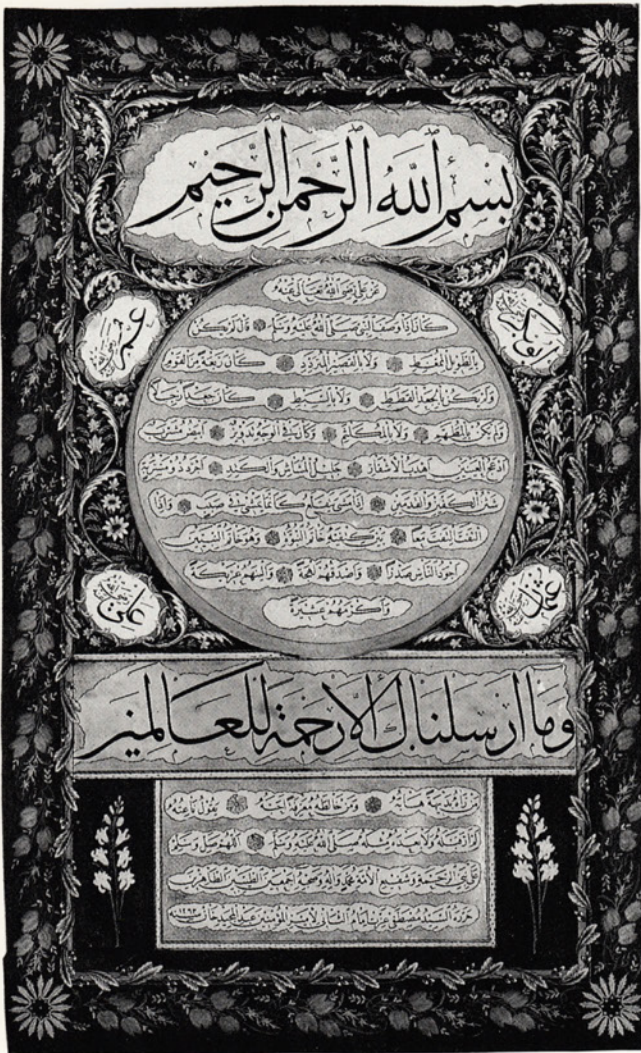
Istanbul, circa 1845

Ink and colours on paper.

Size: 54cm x 65.5cm

The text is a prayer composed in Tughra form, with individual letters and letter-groups rearranged according to their shapes. This "visionary" Nastaliq seems to have been the invention of Shaikh Omer al-Wasif, who, while not mentioned in any of the standard biographies, was surely one of the most original of all calligraphers. Four of his works are known: the two in this catalogue (see also page 13), and two which were sold at Sotheby's (22nd November, 1985, lots 249, 250), both dated 1262 A.H./1845 A.D. Perhaps, like Sayyid Haydar, one of Yaqut's six pupils, when he wrote "he was possessed and used to be rapt in ecstasy." The motif in the top right hand corner is the Sikke, or headgear of a Shaikh of the Mevlevi order of dervishes, placed on what is probably meant to be a Post, the small rug of sheepskin which marked the Shaikh's seat at a dervish assembly. This panel must have been made to hang in a Tekke, or dervish meeting-place, and quite possibly Shaikh Omer was head of the Mevlevi order in Istanbul at this time.





#### HILYE-I SHERIF

Written by Kazasker Mustafa 'Izzet  
Turkey, dated 1263 AH/1847 AD  
Ink, colour and gold on paper laid down  
on card

Page size: 56cm x 34.3cm

Text: Description of the physical  
appearance and moral qualities of  
the Prophet Muhammad, attributed  
to his son-in-law the Caliph Ali.

The great 17th Century calligrapher,  
Hafiz Osman, is credited with inventing  
this formal composition of the  
description of the Prophet Muhammad,  
which is known as the Hilye-i Sherif.  
It became extremely popular in Turkey.  
Kazasker Mustafa Izzet (1801-76)  
who wrote this example, is considered  
to be the finest 19th Century  
calligrapher. He is often cited to  
show that unlike other art forms,  
calligraphy did not lose its vigour  
but was constantly refined and developed  
to the end of the last century.

#### PANEL OF CALLIGRAPHY

Written by Mehmed Shefiq  
Turkey, dated 1283 AH/1866 AD  
Ink on paper  
Page size: 35cm x 29.5cm  
Text: 'Ya Hazrat Muhammad Bahaudin  
Shah Naqshband al-Bukhari'  
This invocation of the great  
mystic, Bahaudin Naqshband  
(d.c.1389) was written by the most  
accomplished of 19th Century  
calligraphers, Mehmed Shefiq (d. 1879).  
He designed and wrote the astonishing  
large inscriptions on the walls and  
pillars of the Ulu Cami in Bursa.





# PANEL OF CALLIGRAPHY

Written by Muhammad Ali Samirami

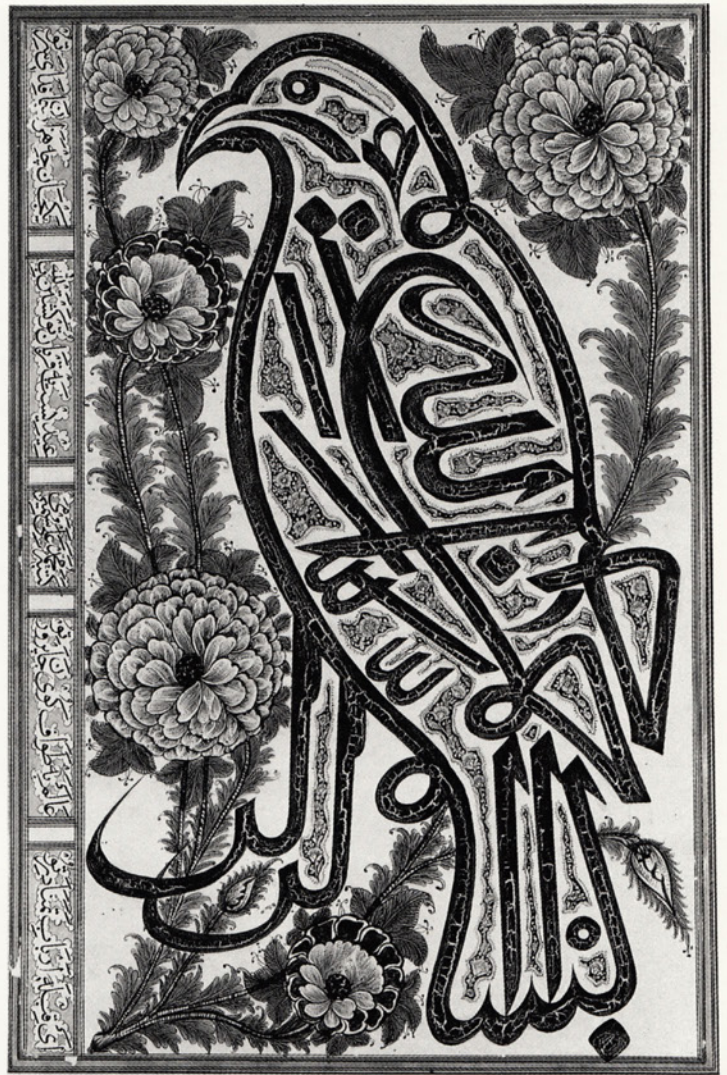
Iran 18th-19th Century

Ink, colour and gold on paper

Page size: 41cm x 28cm

Text: 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.'

The Bismillah is written in the form of a falcon. This type of figurative calligraphic design was popular in the 19th Century, although examples are known from as early as the 16th Century.



# PANEL OF CALLIGRAPHY

Written by Hasan al-Hazin

Turkey, dated 1305 AH/1887-8 AD

Ink on paper

Page size: 33cm x 26cm

Text:

The Tughra:

'O His Highness, the greatest Help.

1305

Above the Mihrab:

'Whenever Zacharias entered the sanctuary to see her.'

From the Qur'an, III, 37.

Under the Mihrab:

'God is my Lord, and Muhammad my Prophet.'

In between lines:

Allah, Muhammad, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali.

Underneath:

'The Great Mosque of Aya Sophia.'

'al-Hazin Hasan wrote it. 1305'





# CALLIGRAPHER'S CERTIFICATE

Written by Mustafa al-Akif al-Mevlevi  
Turkey, dated 1291 AH/1874-5 AD  
Ink, colours and gold on paper, laid down  
on card

Page size: 41cm x 19cm

Text: Hilye-i Sherif (description of the  
physical appearance and character  
of the Prophet Muhammad).

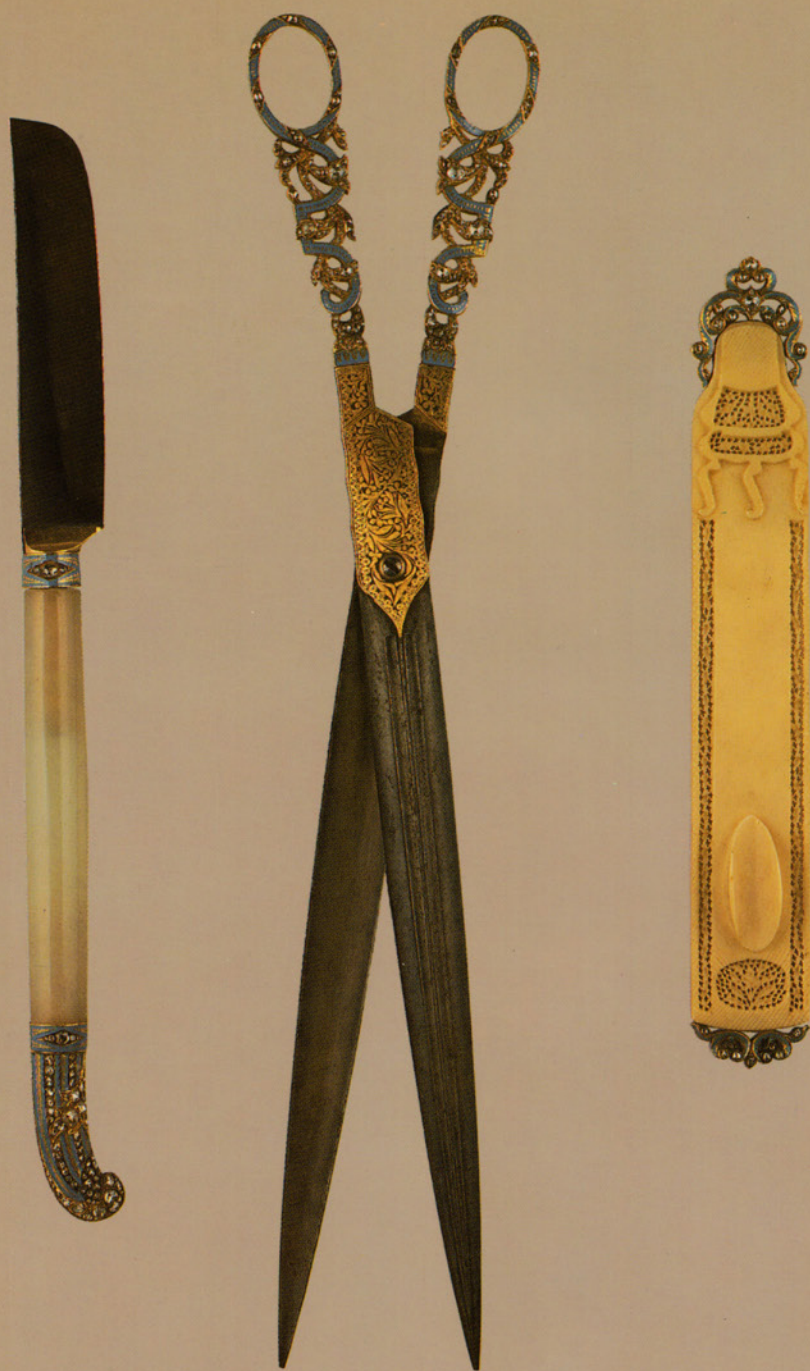
The four lower panels contain autograph  
certificates in Tawqi script by Mustafa  
al-Akif's teacher, Khalil Safi Effendi,  
Muhammad al-Hamdi and Abdullah  
al-Hilmi. 'I have given permission for the  
for the use of the *Katababu* by the writer  
of this noble Hilye Mustafa al-Akif  
al-Mevlevi, and I am his master, the  
the insignificant Khalil al-Safi, in the  
year 91.'

The issuing of the Ijazet or certificate  
represented an important moment in the  
life of the calligrapher. It marked his  
transition from student to fully-fledged  
calligrapher, with the right to sign his  
own name, preceded by the *Katababu*  
(‘he wrote it’). This type of certificate  
was common in Turkey, with the graduate  
calligrapher’s sample certified by his  
teacher. The incorporation of the tall  
Mevlevi hats into the decoration shows  
that Mustafa al-Akif was a member of  
the Mevlevi Order, and is a reminder of  
how closely the discipline of calligraphy  
was linked to the Sufi tradition.









ROYAL CALLIGRAPHER'S SET OF KNIFE, SCISSORS AND MAKTA

*Turkey, 19th Century*

Jade, steel, ivory, enamel and diamonds on gold