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The Art of Islamic Calligraphy: A Journey through Time
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Key Works:

- Tiraz Fragment, Iran, Khurasan, dated A.H. 266 / A.D. 879–80 (MMA 31.106.27)
- Folio from the “Blue Qur’an, Tunisia, probably Qairawan, second half 9th–mid-10th century (MMA 2004.88)
- Bowl with Arabic Inscription, Northeastern Iran, approx. 900–1000 (SFAAM B60P6+)
- Bifolium from the “Nurse’s Qur’an” (Mushaf al-Hadina), Tunisia, probably Qairawan, ca. A.H. 410 / A.D. 1019–20 (MMA 2007.191)
- Incense Burner of Amir Saif al-Dunya wa’l-Din ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi, Iran, dated A.H. 577 / A. D. 1181–82 (MMA 51.56)
- Folio from a Qur’an Manuscript, Spain, late 13th–early 14th century (MMA 42.63)
- The hero Rustam kills the White Demon, from a manuscript of the Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran, possibly Shiraz, approx. 1580 (SFAAM 2005.64.162)
- Lamp stand, Iran, approx. 1575–1625 (SFAAM B62B34)
- Illuminated folio with poetic verses from the Shah Jahan Album (verso), Sultan ‘Ali al-Mashhadi (active late 15th–early 16th century), India, ca. 1500 (MMA 55.121.10.32v)
- Page of Calligraphy, Abd al-Majid Taleqani, Iran, dated A.H. 1176/A.D. 1763 (MMA 46.126.4)
- *Tughra* (Official Signature) of Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1555–60 (MMA 38.149.2)
- Fragmentary Cenotaph Cover with Qur’anic Calligraphy, Turkey, 17th–18th century (MMA 32.100.460)
- Calligraphic Disc, India, Deccan, Bijapur, ca. 1600 (MMA 1983.227)
- Calligraphic Composition in Shape of a Peacock, Folio from the Bellini Album, Turkey, ca. 1600 (67.266.7.8r)

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Glossary of Terms

Bismillah: the phrase, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,” repeated before all but one chapter of the Qur’an (also sometimes spelled *basmla*)

Dawat: portable inkwell and penholder

Illumination: the practice of embellishing manuscript pages with gold. In Islamic art, it refers to gold decoration applied to paintings, calligraphy pages, and manuscripts of the Qur’an

Khatt: calligraphy

Khattat: calligrapher

Liq: wad of silk used in an inkwell to absorb ink

Mashq: lesson or practice work

Qalam: reed pen

Qalamdan: inkwell

Qit’a: small calligraphic work, generally rectangular and generally using two different scripts

Tiraz: Means “embroidery” in Persian; describes both inscribed textiles and the royal textile workshops where they were produced

Tughra: a stylized royal insignia containing the name of the Ottoman rule, names associated with his lineage, and the phrase “May he reign forever”

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
naskh

USES
Manuscripts, ceramics, tiles

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
thuluth

USES
Qur’ans, architecture, metalwork, ceramics, manuscripts

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
muhaqqaq

USES
Qur’ans, architectural decoration, ceramics

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
rayhani

USES
Chancellery script for letters, missives, edicts, architecture

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
tawqi’

USES
Qur’ans, missives, edicts, architecture

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

FIG. 14. Examples of regional scripts, both reading *bismillah*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
maghribi

USES
Qur’ans and other manuscripts

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
nasta’liq

USES
Poetry (in manuscripts or on objects), album pages, textiles, carpets

FIG. 11. Kufic script variations, all reading *bismillah*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
kufic

USES
Qur’ans, architectural decoration, textiles, carpets

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
floriated kufic

USES
Qur’ans, ceramics, metalwork

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
Knotted/plaited kufic

USES
Qur’ans, architectural decoration

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SCRIPT NAME
“New style” script

USES
Qur’ans, architectural decoration