

ISLAMICHERITAGE
LEADS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE UMMAH

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Editors

Hasan Bahrom
S. Salahudin Suyurno
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Prakata

Sejarah warisan Islam telah memberikan impak yang cukup besar kepada perkembangan dunia hari ini. Ia bukan sahaja memberi sumbangan kepada aspek kerohanian malah turut menyumbang kepada aspek ekonomi, politik, pendidikan, sosial, kesenian, kebudayaan, sains dan teknologi. Perkembangan ini memperlihatkan bahawa pentingnya ketamadunan ilmu kepada ketamadunan dunia. Perkara ini selaras dengan tuntutan al-Quran yang menyatakan dengan jelas bahawa Allah SWT memuji sesiapa yang berusaha menuntut ilmu dan juga bertaqwa kepadaNya. Namun sejak akhir-akhir ini, sumbangan hasil pensejarahan Islam sering dipandang sepi oleh generasi muda. Sejarah warisan Islam tidak lagi dijadikan panduan dan iktibar dalam melebarkan ketamadunan ilmu Islam. Mereka lebih tertumpu kepada ketamadunan Barat yang dikatakan ‘kaya’ dengan khazanah ilmu. Sedangkan kemajuan hari ini seharusnya berlandaskan kepada ketamadunan Islam.

Penelitian atau pengkajian mengenai warisan Islam perlu direncanakan sebagai ketamadunan dunia. Idea-idea baru mengenai sejarah warisan Islam perlu diketengahkan, Oleh yang demikian, menerusi *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015)* dilihat akan dapat membantu kepada perkembangan produksi seterusnya menjana idea-idea baru khususnya untuk memperkayakan kajian dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam kepada masyarakat. Dengan penganjuran seminar ini secara tidak langsung membantu untuk menjalinkan hubungan antara para sarjana dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam. Ini adalah satu cabaran dan membuka peluang baru untuk membina satu perpaduan intelektual merentas sempadan dunia.

Buku ini merupakan kompilasi diskusi ilmu antara para ilmuwan yang terlibat secara langsung dalam pembentangan kertas kerja mereka dalam *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015)* daripada pelbagai platform ilmu Islam antaranya Kesenian, Ketamadunan, Komunikasi, Pendidikan, Kewangan, Sains dan Teknologi dan lain-lain lagi. Semoga curahan ilmu melalui penulisan ini mampu memberi sumbangan dalam menambah khazanah ilmu Islam kepada masyarakat.

Editor,

1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015),

Akademi Pengajian Islam Kontemporari,

UiTM Melaka.

Kata Aluan Rektor UiTM Melaka

Dengan Nama Allah Yang Maha Pemurah Lagi Maha Pengasih
Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

Segala puji bagi Allah, Tuhan seru sekalian alam, dengan limpah kurniaNya serta keizinanNya, kejayaan penganjuran *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference 2015* yang berlangsung di Hotel Mahkota Melaka pada 11-12 November 2015, telah menghasilkan banyak kertas kerja yang amat bermutu. Justeru, buku ini mengumpulkan puluhan penulisan para ilmuan dan cendekiawan dari dalam dan luar negara untuk bacaan semua.

Pelbagai isu telah dikupas termasuklah perihal seni Islam, budaya, politik, gendar, pendidikan, sejarah, kemasyarakatan, sains dan teknologi, ekonomi, kewangan, falsafah, bahasa dan komunikasi, kedermawanan dan pengurusan. Pembaca juga akan mendapati buku ini memuatkan kajian-kajian yang komited melaksanakan usaha mengintegrasikan antara ilmu duniawi dan ukhrawi. Ini membuktikan kesegaran keilmuan tamadun Islam itu sendiri.

Semoga perkongsian ilmu ini dapat meningkatkan komitmen umat dalam memartabatkan perintah Ilahi dalam kehidupan duniawi sebagai jambatan ukhrawi. Sekaligus ia bakal memberi manfaat pada alam sejagat.

Pihak UiTM Melaka merakamkan setinggi-tinggi tahniah dan ucapan terima kasih atas segala sokongan dalam bentuk material, tenaga dan sebagainya dalam merialisasikan seminar ini. Buat semua penaja yang telah memberikan sumbangan kepada wacana ini, sekalung penghargaan diucapkan. Semoga seminar dwi tahunan ini akan terus diperkasakan demi mengangkat martabat umat melalui kecemerlangan tamadun Islam yang diakui telah terbukti diseluruh jagat.

Sekian, terima kasih. Wassalam

PROF. MADYA DR MOHD ADNAN BIN HASHIM

Rektor ,
UiTM Melaka.

QUR'AN AND SPLENDOR OF ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY: DEVELOPMENT OF IRANIAN CALLIGRAPHY UNDER INFLUENCE OF QUR'AN TRANSCRIBING

Mahdi Sahragard⁵⁵

ABSTRACT

It is safe to claim that the emergence of calligraphy as one of the most important art in the Islamic era had a direct relationship with the utmost importance of Qur'an for Muslims. In this line, there are numerous quotations from the Holy Prophet and the Imams about the crucial importance of beautiful transcribing of Qur'an. Therefore, calligraphy quickly spread throughout the world of Islam and developed by artists in different regions. Iranian artists played a significant role in developing of Islamic calligraphy amongst were Ahval-e Moharrar, Ibrāhim sejzi, Ibn-e moqlah-the rule-governor of six scripts- Ibn-e bavvab, and etc. Additionally, a large number of survived manuscripts of Qur'an produced in Iran demonstrate the developing of calligraphy in relation with Qur'an. In this article we reviewed the evolution of the Qur'anic scripts in Iran up to the end of Qajar period (14th / 19th century) and discussed about the importance of Qur'an in developing of Iranian calligraphy.

Keywords: *Islamic arts, Qur'an, transcribing of Qur'an, Iranian calligraphy, Iranian calligraphers, Kufic script, six scripts.*

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an enjoys utmost importance amongst the Muslims because it is the book of God's revelations to Prophet Muhammad, for the same reason, calligraphy, as a means of transcribing the Holy Qur'an, has had a special and superior status amongst the Muslims. The issue of transcribing, thus, became an art of spiritual value and those active in this field were also esteemed and revered accordingly.

In this line, there are numerous quotations from the Holy Prophet and the Imams about the highly-revered position of calligraphy and the art of beautiful writing; calligraphy was referred to as the "key to blessings" by Imam Ali, "the Geometry of the Soul" by Plato The language of the hand" by Imam Ali, and "half of knowledge" by Prophet Muhammad (Seyrafi 1993:15 ; Amoli, 1993:35).It has repeatedly been mention, upon a famous quotation from the Holy Prophet that "those who script "bismillah" beautifully will go to heaven without judgment" (Seraj Shirāzi, 1997: 40).

The necessity of transcribing Quran beautifully induced scribes to modify their handwriting. Thereupon, calligraphy is assumed as the most important art in the world of Islam.

In this article the evolution of Iranian calligraphy in transcribing Quran from the historical-descriptive approach is reviewed. Because, transcribing of Quran have been the origin of all inventions in Islamic calligraphy. Additionally, Iran has been choose because the history of Iranian calligraphy is continues and uninterrupted and also many of the main innovations occurred by Iranian calligraphers.

Many scholars have demonstrated the history of calligraphy in Iran or in the world of Islam: Habib-allah Fazaili (1983) have separately showed formal evolution of all important scripts in Iran. Sheila S. Blair (2006) has done a detailed study on the history of calligraphy in all around the world of Islam. Yāsin Hamid Safaddi, have also illustrated the main features of

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Islamic scripts. But, all of them paid attention to the calligraphy history as a general phenomenon without emphasizing on the Quran transcribing and its significant role in developing Islamic calligraphy. Francoise Deroche (1992), David James (1992a; 1992b), and Tim Stanley and others (1998) have studied history of calligraphy on the basis of Qur'anic manuscripts in khalili collection. Firstly, their studies are limited to one collection. Secondly, these studies have been done with different methods and viewpoints.

THE RISE OF CALLIGRAPHY IN ISLAM

Today, we know little about calligraphy in the early days of Islam. What we all know is that the issue of transcribing and calligraphy started with the need to script the Holy Qur'an. The number of scribes of the revelations at the Prophet's time varies from 23 to 43 (Heravi 2001:78). It is believed that the first person to transcribe Qur'an in manuscript was *Sālem Ibn-e Ma'qal* (13th AH/ 634/635 AD). (orsatti, 1993).

There is also little known about the types of scripts used in copying the first Qura'ns; Ibn-e Nadim believes the first Arabic scripts were respectively: *Makki*, *Madani*, *Basri* and *Kufic*. The order of the script-types reflects the priority and order in which the Qur'an was revealed to the prophet and also the city to which the caliphate moved, i.e. from *Mecca* to *Madinna* and *Kufa*. Muslims originally named their scripts after the name of the cities.

Some historians of the 9th and 10th AH/ 15th and 16th AD centuries who have penned about the origins of scripts, considered the *Kufic* and *Moaqqali* scripts as the earliest forms of scripts used in copying the Qura'n (Seyrafi, 1993; Amoli, 1993; Heravi, 1993), yet this claim does not seem to be right. Ibn-e Nadim in his book *Al-fihrist* mentions 12 scripts as the scripts used to copy Qur'an, amongst were *Pir-Amūz* and *Isfahāni* scripts which were invented by the Iranians and used by them (Ibn-e Nadim, 1988). But the Quality of these scripts is still unknown.

KUFIC SCRIPT AND ITS DIFFERENT STYLES

When the center of the caliphate moved to the city of *Kufa*, many scripts developed which were all called *Kufic*. But Deroche (1992) believe that the hand writings used to copy Qur'ans from the stylistics viewpoint are totally different. He generally called them *Abbāssid Style* and divided to two categories: the "*Early Abbāssid*" script was the true and authentic *Kufic* script in its all various forms, while "*New Abbāssid*" included different types of eastern *Kufic*. The 16 types of scripts mentioned in *Al-Fihrest*, presumably, must fall under these categories, though the exact form of these scripts is still unknown to us.

Opinions about the true origins of the *Kufic* script are divided: some believe it stemmed from the *Jazm* script (an ancient script derived from *Nabati* script), some others believe it was originated from *Satranjili* and *Soriyāni* scripts (Yussefi, 2006), recent findings of Manichaeanscripts by Iranian immigrants in *Turpan*, China have revealed traces of similarities between the *Manichaeanscript* and the *Kufic* one: the similarities in the forms of enlarged-rounded shapes in letters "ج" and "ا", and the elongated horizontal forms in the early *Kufic* script bear out this hypothesis. A glance at a page written in *Manichaeanscript* looks very much like a page of the Qur'an written in the first century of islamic era (see: *Amir-Khani*, 2008).

Another case in point to strengthen this hypothesis is the historical evidence in historical records which speak of the presence of *Manicheans* in *Baqdād*, which is proof to the point that the Muslims were familiar with Manichaeans' ways of scripting and manuscript making (Heravi, 2001).

Most writers concur that the *Kufic* script was invented during the *Umayyad* period, some name Ya'rab- ibn-e Qahtān as the inventor of this script while few others attribute it to Imam Ali (*Mashhadi*, 1993). Imam Ali is generally believed to be the best scribe in *Kufic* script.

It seems that despite all that is said about the origin and the founder of this script, not one single person has been the inventor and founder of it, because not one scribe would follow established rules of writing in this script and thus there is a variety of different ways in which this script was written.

The *Kufic* script was originally void of dots and diacritics and was called “Old *Kufic*”. This made the reading in this script almost impossible for the non-Arabs, so attempts were made to improve this script: the first to make an attempt in the improvement of this script was Abul-Aswa-ed Do’eli who upon suggestions by Imam Ali modified the *Kufic* script by adding round dots to certain letters, two of his students; Yahyāand Nāssr added round diacritics to the dotted letters. As there was a need to differentiate between the round dots and round diacritics, others made modifications to differentiate between the two. Ultimately, it was Khalil- ibn-e Ahmad-e Arūzi who devised eight diacritics in form of narrow lines, and dots in round shapes to differentiate between the two and finalized the current form of the script (Fazailli, 1983).

In the some collections, there are copies of the Qur’an copied by the Holy Imams, each in a different style which speaks of different periods of the development of this script; for example, fig 1. Which are attributed to Imam Hussayn belong to the 3th period of the development of the *Kufic* script when dots represented diacritics and lines represented dots. In another Qur’an attributed to Imam Hassan- ibn-e Ali, there are dots in scarlet serving as diacritics. This sample belongs to the second period of the development of the *Kufic* script.



Fig1. Quran attributed to Imam Hussayn, probably 3th AH/ 10th century, Astan Quds collection, Reg No. 14.

In Iran, other than *Pir-Amūz* and *Isfahūni* scripts which were used in transcribing the Qur’an, there are traces of a script similar to the early *Kufic* which shares common features with it such as letter size, and length and height in the “*alif*” (الف) letters. In general, scripts which were used in Iran to copy the Qur’an up to the end of the 6th century AH/ 12th and 13th AD were all called the *Iranian* or *eastern Kufic*, while it differs much with the *Kufic* script in letter forms and shapes.

The most important feature of the Iranian *Kufic*, particularly the *Khurāsānid Kufic* style, is the slender and taller “*alef*” (الف) letters which makes it easily distinguishable. Another feature of this scrip is the variety of form.

A factor that much contributed to variety in the Iranian *Kufic* script was the invention of the paper. Before the advent of the paper, scripts were written on parchment which limited writing to often a horizontal direction, with the advent of paper, which started in *Khurāsān*, and the possibility of making 4 and 8-fold leaflets, it became possible to write vertically and this new possibility helped calligraphers of *Khurāsān* to devise a variety of forms in the *Kufic* script to an extent to make it completely different from its original Arabic form (Fig 2.).



Fig 2. A page from Quran copied by Othman Ibn Warraq Qaznavi, 464-466 AH/ 1072-1074 AD, Mashhad, Astan Quds collection, Reg No. 3053.

Along with the expansion of the paper-making craft from *Samarqand* to *Baqdād*, the Iranian *Kufic* script and style of copying also spanned large geographical expanses of the Islamic world and left a deep influence on it, amongst which one can mention the narrow horizontal strips which provided for more vertical space to write in, and subsequently more margins on the flanks for illuminations and ornamentations. From then on, more ornamentation could be seen on Surah headings.

It is noteworthy to mention that the vestige of Qur'ans scripted in the Iranian *Kufic* are in form of loose leafs and fragmentary Qur'an s dating back to the 4th century (AH)/ 10th AD, mostly written on paper. Some of these samples are kept in the library of Astan-e Quds; for instance, the oldest dated sample to bear a donation date is a Qur'an in Iranian *Kufic* style donated by Kashwād Ibn Amlās in 327 AH/ 939 AD (See: Sahragard, Fadaeian, and Ebadi, 2013).

One of the most noteworthy samples of Iranian *Kufic* script left from the 5th century is a Qur'an copied by Abu Omar Othmān Ibn Hussayn Warrāq Qaznavi in 464 - 466 AH/ 1072-1074 AD. This copy was executed in the original style of 30-volume, common at that time, and bears a unique writing style and illumination. So, it can truly be considered a standard sample of manuscript-making in the *Khurāsānid* style. The form of the letters in this sample and other samples of the *Khurāsānid* style, other than the usual vertical and horizontal styles of the original *Kufic*, are at times, slanted, rounded, and varied in thickness and size. All the 30-volumes of this manuscript are preserved in Astan-e Quds collection (Fig 2.).

Another noteworthy feature of this manuscript is that Othman-ibn-e Husseyn, following the tradition of *Ibn-e Muqlah*, has signed and dated the colophon of the manuscript in his handwriting in *Riqa'* and *Thuluth* script. This is evidence to the presence of six types of scripts in Iranian copying of the Holy Qur'an and manuscripts and texts enclosed to it; prior to these, scripts with more round forms such as a disproportioned *Naskh* were used for casual writings. For example, in the many manuscripts donated to Astan-e Quds, such as the one donated by Mansūr-ibn-e Muhammad-ibn-e Kathir, there are samples of disproportioned *Naskh* script.

The use of Thuluth and more proportioned, *mansub*, scripts in the copying of the Qur'an are evidence to the beginning of a new era in the issue of Qur'an copying which initiated as of the 4th AH/ 10th and 11th AD century in *Baqdad*, worked its way to Iran and then spread all over the Islamic world since the 6th AH/ 12 and 13th AD century.

Six Scripts; Rising and Developing

There is proof that this expansion had much to owe to the Iranian calligraphers and scribes. In fact, it was the premier of the *Abbāsids*, Ibn Muqlah Beyzā'i (known as *Shirāzi*) who rule-governed six common scripts which were derivatives of the *Kufic* and made them fit for the copying of the Qur'an (Fazaili, 1983).

Amongst the oldest remaining samples of manuscripts in the six common styles is a manuscript by Ali-ibn-e Hilāl (*Ibn-e al-Bawwab*) in a script between *Naskh* and *Reyhān* dating back to 390 AH/ 1000 AD (See: Lings 2004; Rice, 1995).

The oldest sample in the *Muhaqqaq* style is a manuscript dating back to 555 AH/ 1160 AD, scripted in Iran (*James, 1992a*). During the *Ghaznavid* and *Saljuqid* periods, many of the *Sūrah* headings and signature pages were written in one of the six common script-styles, so the role of Iranian calligraphers in the expansion of the six-common scripts is undeniable.

It is noteworthy that from the six common scripts, *Muhaqqaq*, *Naskh* and *Reyhān* were the most frequently used in copying the Qur'an. *Thuluth* was also used at times. *Riqā* and *Taw'qi* scripts were mostly used to write the dedication page, the signature page, the *Surah* headings and the name of the calligrapher or the scribe, the *Kufic* script was also used for *Sūrah* headings and titles.

After *Ibn-e Muqlah*, the most leading figure who made efforts to modify and develop the six scripts was *Ali-ibn-e Hillal* known as *Ibn al-Bawwab* (death 410 AH/ 1031 AD) for transcribing the Qur'an. Besides being a renowned calligrapher, he was a poet, Qur'an reciter and librarian of *Baha'al-dowle Deylami*. He also had the support of the *Buyid* (*A'ile Būye*) court through his father's closeness to the court.

He modified the shape of the letters and standardized letter sizes through measuring the length of them by the size and number of dots, this method of measuring is still in use and is an effective didactic method in calligraphy (*Bayāni, 1973*).

Ibn al-Bawwab became a pioneer of calligraphy and his method of writing spread to Iran, Egypt and all over the Islamic world. His style reached Egypt via calligraphers such as *Amin-al-Din Yaqūt*, *Walli-ye Ajami*, *Affif*, *Sheykh Emād-al-Din* (*Affif's son*), *Sheykh Shams-al-Din ibn-e Abi Roqeybe*, and *Shams-al-Din Muhammad-ibn-e Ali Raftāwi* (*Qalqashandi, 1922, Vol 3*).

Although most calligrapher at that time were using *Muhaqqaq*, *Reyhān* and *Naskh* scripts in transcribing the Qur'an, the *Kufic* survived up to the 7th century AH/ 13th and 14th AD, yet due to the sporadic geographical locations of the rulers of Iran, their synchrony, and lack of accurate historical documents, we do not have a clear idea of how calligraphers of the time were supported by the court or the state and our studies are mainly based on single samples and documents at hand.

There is evidence of the *Saljuq* court to show their support for Qur'an transcribing. Toqrol who himself was receiving calligraphy lessons from the uncle of Najm-al-Din Rāwandi (calligrapher of the famous *Rawandy* Qur'an manuscript), had ordered the transcribing of a thirty volume Qur'an; this shows the interest and support of his court in calligraphy, calligraphers and the transcribing of the Qur'an (*Sahragard et al, 2013*).

The final development in the six common scripts in the 7th AH/ 13 AD century was made by *Yaqūt al- Mosta'simi* (death 697 AH/ 1318 AD), he narrows down the various existing styles into these six scripts and by making them rule-governed, made them the final version of the six commonly used styles of writing of the day (*Bayāni 1963; Afandi, 1990*).

Yaqut al-Mosta'simi lived a long life and made many manuscripts of the Qur'an (Monshi Qumi 2004). His pupils known as the "Sextet Masters" also made efforts to spread Yaqūt's established style by copying Qur'an s and teach other calligraphers in the 8th AH/ 14th and 15th AD century throughout Iran.

Amongst the oldest Qur'ans in *Naskh* script in Astan-e Quds' collection, is one attributed to Yaqūt which bears the date of 604 AH/ 1208 AD. Apart from this sample, there are two more manuscripts in this collection which are also attributed to Yaqūt and are of high artistry in calligraphy and illumination.

Most of Yaqūt's pupils lived during the *Ilkhanid* period. In this period, many of the wise Ilkhanid Premiers, such as Khāje Rashid al-din Fazl-allah-e Hamedāni, were patrons of artists and art workshops at the court, thus art movements had a forward leap and it was a period of prosperity for the Iranian art (Blair, 1996).

This kind of patronage also had its positive impact on Qur'an producing, as a case in point, apart from the Qur'an scripted in *Musul* in the period between 706 and 710 AH/ 1307 and 1311 AD, there is the Qur'an scripted and illuminated in thirty-volume by Abdullah ibn-e Muhammad ibn-e Mahmud-e Hamedani upon the order of Uljaitu (The *Ilkhanid* ruler) in 713 AH/ 1314 AD (James, 1992a).

Khāje Rashid al-Din Fazl-allah-e Hamedāni personally saw to the making of these Qur'ans. There is much evidence that the city of *Hamedan* was one of the main centers of Qur'an scripting in this period, same as it was during the *Saljuq* period (Blair, 1996).

The biggest change in Qur'an producing which happened in the *Ilkhanid* period was in the size of the Qur'ans. In this period there was a tendency to make large-size Qur'ans; this was due to the extravagant fees paid to the copyists and the availability of paper sheets of larger sizes. This change also had its impact on the style of transcribing; when transcribing on larger sheets and at a larger scale, the calligrapher could no longer use small scripts such as *Naskh* or *Rayhān* which are suitable for small-size manuscripts, so the large size of sheets and the large dimensions which came into fashion in this period called for bolder and larger script types such as *Muhaqqaq* and *Thuluth*.

This shift to larger sizes also had a dark side to it. The larger and bolder letters were not so aesthetically pleasing nor were they easy to read. So, calligraphers started to look for a remedy to this problem and came up with a new style in transcribing which was writing a number of lines in bold script and then use the smaller scripts of *Naskh* or *Rayhān* in a number of other lines to add beauty to the writings.

This style had its origin in *Saljuq* writings, but was finalized into an established form in the 8th and 9th AH/ 15th and 16th AD centuries. Since the change in letter size and page size also demanded changes in the ornaments and illuminations, there are new styles in page layout, illumination and ornaments in page headings and *Sūrah* headings in this period.

Apart from the transcribing of the Qur'an, Yāqūt's pupils were also busily expanding Yāqūt's style in transcribing of architectural inscriptions. One of the most outstanding of his pupils was Abdullah Seyraffi who was the pioneer of *Khurāsān* calligraphers who influenced the next generation of *Khurāsān* calligraphers (Mahmud Ibn-e Mohammad 1993). There are very few works left from him, but there is a sample in Astān-e Quds' collection dating back to 720 AH/ 1320 AD.

Like the *Ilkhanids*, the last of the *Atābakān* dynasty were also patrons of the arts; from the *All-e Injū* and *All-e Muzaffar* families there are great samples of artworks left in the central parts and southern parts of Iran in the 8th AH/ 15th AD century. The most renowned artist of this period was Pir Yahyā Sufi Jamāli from whom there are left at least three Qur'ans in *Thuluth* and *Naskh* and a number of tablets on buildings in the Fars province. He was a courtier and all-time companion to Shaykh Abu Ishāq and had written this Qur'an upon the order of the family of the court of *All-e Injū* (*Sahragard, 2008*).

From another angle, The *Timurid* Dynasty saw a boom in the art of Qur'an scripting in Iran. It was during this period and with the patronage of the *Timurid* kings that the calligraphy styles of the previous generations was stabilized into stable styles and methods of transcribing and the eclectic use of small and large writing scripts found a fixed form.

With the patronage of the *Timurid* court, the writing of Qur'an in thirty-sections and in larger page sized was fostered. The tendency towards large-size scriptures was on the one hand made possible with the invention of techniques in producing paper sheets of larger sized and on the other hand was a way to boast the grandness of the *Timurid* Dynasty.

The *Timurid*'s passion for enlarged scriptures made them and especially *Timur* himself ignore manuscripts of small size or small copying styles; e.g. the Qur'an written in *Qubar* script (miniature size of cane) by *Omar Aqta'* was totally overlooked at his time and served as an impetus for him to copy the largest Qur'an in the Islamic world that had ever been penned (*kavusi, 2004*). This Qur'an must be the one that today is referred to as *Bāysonqor's* Qur'an. This large copy, besides its extraordinary style, bears one of the best remaining samples of *Muhaqqaq* script.

Calligraphy was not the monopoly of calligraphers, many kings and princes also were actively pursuing this art; for example the sons of *Shāhrokh* and *Gowharshād*: "Ibrahim Sultān" and "Bāysonqor" were amongst the best calligraphers of their times. *Bāysonqor's* inscription on the walls of *Maqsure Iwan* of *Goharshad* Mosque in *Thuluth* script and a part of Qur'an in large "Sultāni" size, by *Ibrāhim Sultān Timurid* in *Thuluth* and *Rayhān* styles preserved in *Astān-e Quds* museum are samples of the works of these two great calligraphers. There are at least three Qur'ans in different scripts and three inscriptions by *Ibrahim Sultān* along with some other works, recorded in history books (*Sahragard, 2008(a)*).

The 9th AH/ 16th AD century, saw a number of Qur'an calligraphers such as *Maruf-e Baqdādi*, *Jaffar Bāysonqori* & *Abdullah Tabbākh Heravi*. These calligraphers are amongst the best Iranian calligraphers in a way that many prefer *Tabbakh's* hand-writings to those of *Yaqūt* (*Bayani, 1984*). An example to bear this claim out is the sample No. 157, of *Astān-e Quds* collection, which shows a manuscript written in three lines in *Jalli* (big size) style in *Muhaqqaq* and two columns of quatrains in *Naskh*, this mode of page lay-out and writing was established after long years in the final years of the 9th century, and passed over to the calligraphers of the Ottoman Empire and the *Gūrkanid* Dynasty of India through migrating calligraphers (*james, 1992a*).

While this mode was strongly popular and wide-spread in the Ottoman Empire, it declined in Iran due to the advent of the *Nasta'liq* script and the negligence of the court to the issue of Qur'an scripting. Of the six common scripts which were on the decline, only *Naskh* remained in the end of the 10th AH/ 16th and 17th century.

With the sovereignty of *Safavid* taking place in Iran at 10th AH/ 16th AD century, although a new era of social, political and religious reformation had begun, the routine course of Qur'an transcribing didn't go through any significant changes or improvements and the same old *Timurid* and *Turkmen* page layout, illumination and decoration techniques and transcribing styles continued. The cities of *Tabriz*, *Mashhad*, *Shirāz*, *Bukhara* and *Herat* were considered the most important sources of Qur'an manuscripts production (*sahragard, 2013*).

Despite the visual diversity of 10th AH/ 16th AD century Qur'ans, two distinctive styles can be determined for the work pieces of this era: One is the style developed in 14th century in which two small and large scripts (*Khafī* and *Jalī*) like *Thuluth* and *Rayhan*, or *Muhaqqaq* and *Naskh* were used and most of the royal and luxurious manuscripts were transcribed with this style.

The other is the ancient style of producing single-volume manuscripts (*Moshafi Jāme*) of Qur'an which were mostly transcribed with small or medium pen and it would usually cost less than the other style.

The first style reached a permanent and distinct structure in 10th AH/ 16th AD century after a vast variety of experimentations taken place in 9th AH/ 15th AD century. In this style, the text was usually transcribed in blue, black and gold in a page with three larger lines at the top, middle and bottom. Two sections containing a few lines in small *Naskh* or *Rayhan* scripts were placed interlinear with larger lines.

This tradition only managed to continue until the beginning of 11th AH/ 17th AD century, because producing such manuscripts required royal financial support, and ironically, towards the end of the pervious century, the royal family taste slowly distanced itself from such products. They found albums of calligraphy and painting works (*Moraqa`*) more interesting (see: Mayel Heravi, 1993).

However the old tradition of producing single-volume manuscripts which had stood its ground on alongside the newer style continued to live on in this century. This tradition which had been surprisingly kept alive throughout the next centuries began in *Shirāz* much earlier than the other cities. The reason for this was that since the fall of *Timurid* and *Turkmen* domination on this city (850 AH/ 1447 AD), the royal supports were considerably scaled down and the new advocates which were mostly merchants were unable to afford the enormous expenses of producing multi-volume manuscripts. Single-volume manuscripts of Qur'an were mostly transcribed in *Naskh* script and the opening page usually had a detailed epigraph and illumination, also the surah headers and border markings would go under illumination as well. (Fig 3) However, the manuscripts with medium size were transcribed with other script such as *Thuluth* and *Muhaqqaq*, but in order to reduce the number of pages, scribes would prevent using large pen.

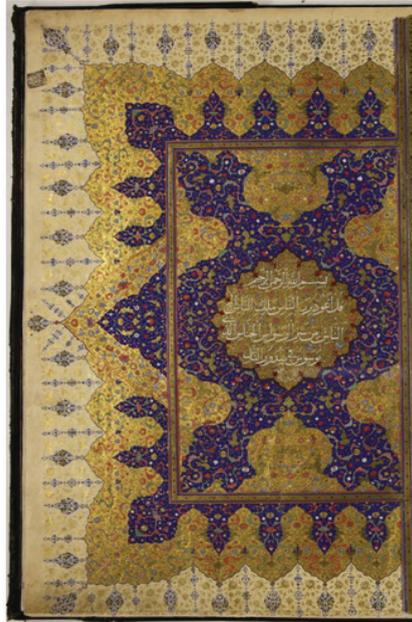


Fig 3. An illuminated page from the beginning of a Quran, un known artist, 11th / 17th century, Iran, probably Shiraz, Astan Quds collection, Reg. No: 262.

One of the few innovations made by 16th century illuminators was combining arabesque and *Khatā-ī* figures in combination. Heretofore, these figures would have been worked on separately and in different surfaces. But some changes, such as addition of a few texts to the opening and the end of the manuscript, were also made in books' general structure. These additions included plainsong prayers, transcribed in an illuminated bergamot in the

opening and ending pages of the manuscript, highly decorated horoscope texts and *surahs* index placed in the ending pages of Qur'an (James, 1992b).

Yet one of the noticeable evolutions of the late 11th and 12th AH/ 17th and 18th AD century occurred in production of single-volume manuscripts of Qur'an, was the addition of Persian translation in a thin strip under each line written in *Nasta'liq* script. Heretofore, the translation would have been written between the lines in *Naskh* script without any cadre and usually no space would have been assigned for such purpose. But hereafter, a thin strip was earmarked under each line and the Farsi translation would have been written in *Nasta'liq* script inside (Stanley et al, 1998). Aqā Mohammad Ibrāhīm Qūmi's works (1107 AH/ 1696 AD) are one of the best examples of this style.

The other innovation made was in the category of *Naskh* script. Mirza Ahmad Nayrizi created a new style titled Iranian *Naskh* by making slight changes in the prevalent transcription style. Although it is unknown what was the source of Ahmad Nayrizi's style and what kind of evolution in this era's calligraphy produced such a result, based on the similar style in his penmanship and related works created by other artists from Shirāz such as Mohammad Reza Shirāzi, Nasir Kāteb Shirāzi and Mohammad Hossayn Kāzerūni, some experts consider Shirāz as the origin of this style. However, some other experts do consider Aqā Mohammad Ibrāhīm Qūmi as the forefather of this style (Bayani and Bahrami, 1949). Despite the importance of this style, there is little information handed down about the circumstances or the recognizable and outstanding traits of this style. Generally the main trait in Nayrizi's *Naskh* style is the fairly large size of the letters and the thick space between the lines (Stanly et al, 1998).

A closer look at this transcription style reveals even more differences. One of them is the manner of the pen strokes. Generally pen stroke in Nayrizi's style requires lesser effort and this is characterized by the difference witnessed in transcription of some letters in his works such as "س". In Yaqt Al Mosta`semi style the transcription of "س" was done by the sharp tip of the pen, but in Nayrizi's style, this letter is written with the whole tip of the pen and its smooth stroke.

Also the thickness of «ن» beginning and similar letters indicate the same specificity. Additionally, the singular letter «و» is eyeless in this method and the circles are slightly larger than Yaqt's style. Therefore, it seems that the most important factor leading to such a change in transcription is dependent on the pen nib style.

The change in pen nib from oblique (*Muharrarf*) in Yaqt style towards upright (*Jazm*) led to the facilities in transcribing that resulted in more convenient transcription and the sturdiness of the letters.

Nayrizi's *Naskh* style along with Farsi *Nasta'liq* translation that was popularized in transcription works of this era was continued by the transcribers of the next era. Nineteenth century transcription was flourished with the aid of the royal families and the merchants support and the outcome was the hundreds of exquisite manuscripts that were created using Nayrizi's *Naskh* style and produced with a rather equal structure. Also during this era, innovations such as writing verses renditions in page margins became widely prevalent. Sometimes two or more renditions were transcribed in separate cadres and written in the margins, with majority of them being written in *Nasta'liq* and cursive *Nasta'liq* (*Shikasta*).

Another of the calligraphy categories worth mentioning is Qur'an transcription on cloth and occasionally wood tablets. A number of such works are in Astan Quds collection (see: sahragard et al, 2014).

Also the spread of Qur'an transcription amongst women is another aspect of 13th AH/ 19th AD century calligraphy. Omme Sallameh the daughter of Fath Ali Shāh and Maryam Bānū Nāini are a couple of the renowned female transcribers of this era that a few *Naskh* work pieces are germane to them. Calligraphers households had a significant role in

flourishing of Qur'an transcribing in this era. Visal Shirāzi family and Arsanjani family are from this bunch (Bayani, 1984).

Since the late *Qajarid* era, with the spread and the improvement of printing industry, production of exquisite manuscripts cease to exist and the remaining completed pieces from the early years of 14th century are considered the final attempts to continue a some hundred year old dying-out tradition that fell into total depression. A few scattered around pieces that were produced some time later, were mostly meant to be given away as consecrations and were produced at their creators' expense.

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