



Lahore Museum

*Introduction
to
Manuscripts
Gallery*

Dr. Anjum Rehmani

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INTRODUCTION
TO
MANUSCRIPTS GALLERY
OF
LAHORE MUSEUM

BY
Dr. Anjum Rebmani



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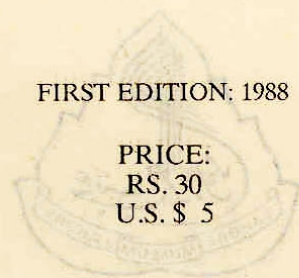
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BY
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ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

The evolution and development of Islamic Calligraphy stemmed from the need to preserve the Holy Quran in its original, unaltered form and to propagate Islamic teachings, and its learned work. Islamic calligraphy has, therefore, been regarded as a sacred art and an essential component of Islamic culture. Mighty kings, princes, princesses, nobles of the court and other eminent persons of the Islamic world cultivated it with pride and considered it an honour to be proficient in it.

Arabic script was a derivation of the Nabataean script which itself had its origin in the Aramaic script. This Arabic script was first established in the north-eastern Arabia and flourished particularly in the fifth century A.D. among the Arabian tribes of Hira and Anbar (Iraq) and was called *Hiri*. From there it spread in the late fifth and the early sixth century A.D. to *Hijaz* in (Western Arabia) and was called *Hijazi* script. In the early days of Islam, it was known as *Makki* and then *Madani* script.

During the caliphate of Umar (13-24 A.H./634-44 A.D.) two military stations were established at Basrah and Kufah which soon became cultural centres. In Kufah the Arabic or *Hiri* script was refined and standardized which eventually was known as Kufic script. Soon after, this newly evolved script became the principal script for writing the Holy Quran and for general purposes.



With the inclusion of non-Arabic speaking countries in the Muslim Empire and in the absence of diacritical marks in the Quranic text, pronunciation difficulties arose. Abul-Aswad al- Dua'li (d.69 A.H./688 A.D.) solved the problem to some extent by inserting red dots to depict short vowels. In the reign of Omayyid caliph, Abdul Malik bin Marwan (65-86 A.H./ 685-705 A.D.) the Governor of Iraq, Hajjaj bin Yousaf (75-95 A.H./694-714 A.D.) deputed Nasr Ibn-i-Asim (d.707 A.D.) and Yahya Ibn-i-Ya'mur (d.708 A.D.) to facilitate the recitation further, which they did by substituting black dots for red for short vowels and adding red dots to distinguish between similar letters. The present more elaborate and convenient system of diacritical marks was evolved later mostly by Khalil Ibn-i-Ahmad (d.170 A.H./786 A.D.)

Kufic script remained in use in one or the other form upto the fifth century *Hijrah* or twelfth century A.D. Thereafter it began to fall from general usage. However, one of its forms known as *Maghribi*, had spread over North Africa where it still survives.

Another Arabic script known as *Naskh* had existed in a somewhat coarse form since the beginning of Islam but it was left to Ibn-i-Muqla (d.328 A.H./ 940 A.D.) in the fourth century A.H./tenth century A.D. to refine it and establish its principles and rules. This relatively cursive script, being easier to write, soon replaced the angular Kufic for the writing of the Holy Quran and other purposes. Apart from *Naskh*, Ibn-i-Muqla also invented and standardised five other scripts i.e. *Thulth*, *Tawqi*, *Riqa*, *Rayhan* and *Mubaqqaq*. Including *Naskh*, the six are collectively known as *Sitta-Qalam*. After Ibn-i-Muqla, the great master calligraphist, Ibn-al-Bawwab (d.413 A.H. / 1022 A.D. or 423 A.H./1032 A.D.) excelled in *Naskh*. He elaborated Ibn-i-Muqla's rules and added to their mathematical perfection more elegance and grace. Yaqut al-Musta'simi (d.698 A.H./1298 A.D.), a court calligrapher to the last Abbasid caliph, Musta'sim Billah was another *Naskh* exponent. In fact, he completed the work of Ibn-i-Muqla and Ibn-al-Bawwab by giving final touches to the six styles.

After the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 656 A.H./1258 A.D., *Naskh* script split into numerous local variants in Egypt, Iran, Turkey and the Sub-continent. In the Sub-continent, an innovation was *Khat-i-Babar*, an easily readable and well-spaced script used mainly for writing the Holy Quran.

A script called *Ta'liq* had been in use in Iran for sometime. In the eighth century A.H./fourteenth century A.D., Mir Ali Tabrezi combined it with *Naskh* to produce what came to be known as *Nasta'liq*. Being fully cursive and more elegant, it soon gained

popularity in Iran, Turkey, Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Sub-continent. In Iran, Sultan Ali Mashadi, Shah Mahmood Nishapuri and Mir Imad-al-Husaini were its leading exponents.

In the Sub-continent, the personal interest taken by the Mughal rulers and their nobles made *Nasta'liq* the dominant script both for writing books and embellishing monuments. A number of recognized masterpieces still existing all over the world, belong to this period. The famous Mughal calligraphists were Khawajah Abdul Samad Shirin Qalam, Abdul Rahim Ambrin Qalam, Abdullah al-Husaini, Muhammad Husain Kashmiri, Abdul Rashid Delmi Shahjahani, Muhammad Afzal Lahori and Mir Panjah Kash of Delhi.

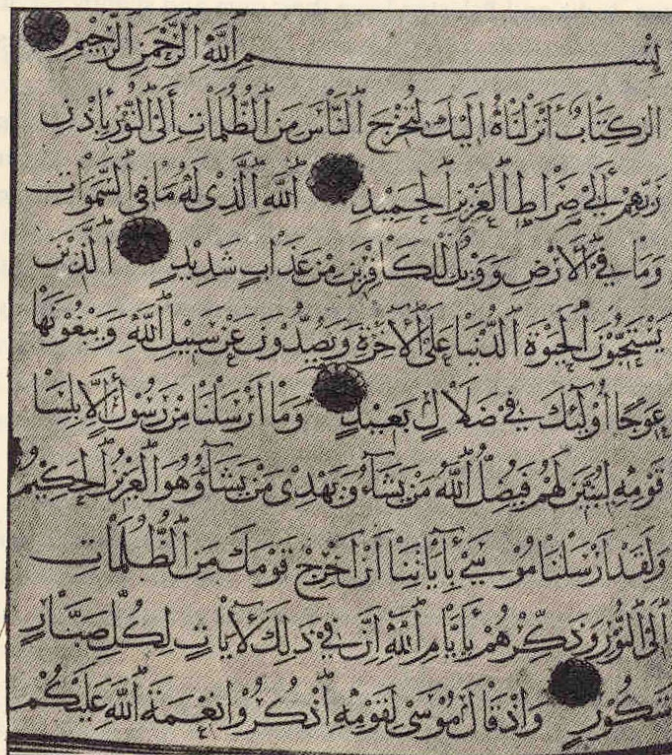
During the English period Imam Verdi (d.1888 A.D.) made *Nasta'liq* even more graceful. Muhammad Yousaf of the Punjab who went over to Delhi in the twentieth century, introduced an innovated style of *Nasta'liq* which was named as *Dabistan-i-Delhi*. After independence, Yousaf Dehlvi migrated to Karachi where his style was called *Karachi Dabistani-i-Khat*. About the same time, Abdul Majeed Perwin Raqam of Lahore and others carried out the refining process further to shape the present Lahori School of *Nasta'liq*. At present, Iran, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan have their own and slightly varying styles of *Nasta'liq*. *Shikastah*, *Shafiyah* and *Diwani* are other forms of the script. In the Arab countries, *Riqa* is in general use.

During the early part of the twentieth century, painterly calligraphy was introduced in Lahore by Professor Shakir Ali and Hanif Ramey. The style soon became popular. Sadequain, Gulji, Aslam Kamal and some others have evolved numerous forms and colour compositions. This innovation is so far confined to the decorative panels, the book titles, etc. and this trend has now spread almost all over the Islamic world.





Naski Quran dated 391 A.H./1000 A.D. Qur'an in Nasta'liq Calligraphed by
Calligraphed by Ibn-al Bawwab Imad-al-Husaini



Qur'an in Rayhani Script Calligraphed
by Yaqut-al-Musta' Simi.