Chapter Twelve

Other Styles and Centers

In 1492 Muslims were forced from the Iberian peninsula, but by that time they had carried Islam in other directions far beyond the traditional boundaries established in the eighth century. In India, Muslims ruled not only in the north, where the major power was the long line of Mughal emperors (1526–1858), but also in the Deccan, where several regional dynasties of shahs and sultans held sway. Muslim seafarers took advantage of the monsoon winds to ferry Islam across the Indian Ocean to south-east Asia and east Africa, and caravans also carried Islam overland from the Mediterranean coast of Africa southward across the Sahara to central Africa. Different styles of artistic production emerged in these newly Islamicized areas, and the calligraphic scripts that developed there confirm the traders’ origins, as those used in the Indian Ocean and sub-Saharan Africa are ultimately derived from India and North Africa, respectively. Surviving examples and documentation make it possible to write a history of Islamic calligraphy in India and the Maghrib during this age of empires (1500–1900), but this is impossible for the other two areas, where isolated examples poke up like atlols in a vast sea.

The Mughals and their contemporaries in India

The Mughals were great bibliophiles. The founder of the dynasty, Babur [r. 1526–30], was a man of letters who transported his private library with him when traveling and wrote his autobiography in Chaghatai Turkish. Already by the reign of his grandson Akbar (1556–1605), the Mughal emperors had amassed a substantial library that comprised 24,000 books and was valued at 6,463,731 rupees. The fact that the manuscripts were counted and appraised so carefully shows the Mughals took books as commodities. Yet, one should not overestimate the value of this collection to these potentates. The entire library was equivalent to the price of thirty of their finest rubies or sixty bejeweled daggers or prize elephants. The Mughals were, quite simply, super rich.

According to Akbar’s court chronicler Abu’l-Fadl ‘Ali Amri, the Mughal library included prose and poetic works in Hindi, Persian, Greek, Kashmiri, and Arabic, each housed in a separate section. The books covered a wide range of subjects ranging from philosophy, history, and science to literature, with many translations into Persian as well as other new works commissioned by the emperor. Seal impressions, notes, and glosses prove that these manuscripts were perused and appraised, if not as regularly as sometimes assumed. Those that survive show that the books produced for the Mughals, like the ones made for their Timurid and Safavid predecessors, were some of the finest ever made, with paper, writing, illustrations, illuminations, and binding carefully planned to create a harmonious whole.

Despite the unity of concept in the production of these de luxe codices, modern writers on the subject have preferred the paintings to the calligraphy. There are dozens of books on Mughal miniatures, but scarcely a handful of articles devoted to Mughal calligraphy. Catalogue entries on many of the major illustrated manuscripts describe the work of various painters, but sometimes ignore the colophon, let alone the calligrapher. The lack of critical studies means, moreover, that it is difficult to distinguish Indian calligraphy from its Persian brethren, a problem exacerbated by the movement of artists between and within the two areas.

Such an emphasis on painting is directly contradicted by Abu’l-Fadl, whose third volume comprises the administrative reports and statistics of the Mughal government c. 1590. His first section covers ninety aspects (a‘lin) of the royal household and court, naturally placing the emperor in the spotlight of every department ranging from the mint, the harem, the camp, the kitchen, and the wardrobe to the arsenal and the stables. Aspect 34 concerns the arts of writing and painting. Although scholars have long noted his discussion of painting, it is the second and least important part of the entry, less than one-third the length of the chronicler’s long exposition on writing. Abu’l-Fadl begins by distinguishing form from meaning, stating that:

But though it is true that painters, especially those of Europe, succeed in drawing figures expressive of the conceptions which the art has of any of the mental states, so much so, that people may mistake a picture for a reality; yet pictures are much inferior to the written letter, insomuch as the letter may embody the wisdom of bygone ages, and become a means to intellectual progress.

Abu’l-Fadl therefore turns first to writing, which he reiterates is the more important of the two arts. For him, a letter is the source from which light emanates, the world-reflecting cup, referring to Jamshid’s fabulous goblet that revealed the secrets of the seven heavens. The letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry emanating from the pen of invention. It represents articulate sound.

Abu’l-Fadl then addresses the alphabetic representations of sounds. He notes that Arabic uses eighteen signs (what modern grammarians call graphemes) to represent twenty-eight sounds. According
to Abū'l-Fadl, these letters assume various shapes in different scripts depending on the proportion of straight and round strokes. Among old scripts such as Coptic and Abyssinian, Abū'l-Fadl mentions *muʾiṣṣ, which is entirely composed of straight strokes, and kufic, which is five-sixths straight and one-sixth curved. Abū'l-Fadl next turns to the eight calligraphic styles used in the three empires. These are the Six Pens, which he sees as three pairs of mawṣura (*tali) and minuscule (*khāfī) scripts: muḥaqqaq/rayhan, which have three-quarter straight strokes and one-quarter curved, *thuluth/maṣbaha, which have two-thirds straight and one-third curved, and *tawqīj/riqa, the most curvilinear, with one-quarter straight strokes and three-quarters curved. Abū'l-Fadl then notes that the hanging scripts, *taʾliq, he notes, is a derivative of *tawqīj/riqa, with very few straight lines. He reserves his final and longest description for the entire round *nastaʿlīq, presumably because it was the most common script in India, as in contemporary Iran. In his entry on writing, Abū'l-Fadl thus drew upon the traditional Persian historiography of calligraphy, but organized the scripts hierarchically according to the percentage of straight and round lines, describing them in descending order from the entirely straight *muʾiṣṣ to the entirely curved *nastaʿlīq.

In addition to describing the various scripts, Abū'l-Fadl also traces the chains of calligraphers. In general, these too follow the standard Iranian model. The Six Pens, for example, descend from Ibn Muqla, Ibn al-Bawwab, and Yaqut, *taʾliq from Taj al-Dīn Salamī, and *nastaʿlīq from Mir 'Alī Tabrizī. As part of his standard rhetoric in praise of his patron, Abū'l-Fadl mentions that Akbar was interested in different styles of writing and encouraged many skilled calligraphers. Of all the scripts, Abū'l-Fadl singles out *nastaʿlīq, which according to the court chronicler, received a new impetus during Akbar's reign. As evidence, the chronicler includes a paragraph listing the names of eleven contemporary practitioners.

Abū'l-Fadl thus expounds a well-articulated but traditional overview of calligraphy that shows its importance in the eyes of the early Mughal court. Other documentatations supports this view and reveals that the Mughals were keen critics of writing and the book arts. Not only librarians, but even the emperors themselves appraised fine manuscripts according to a five-class system. In 1616, for example, Jahangir added a note on the dedicatory frontispiece in a now-lost copy of Anvari's *Divan saying that the writing (*khāfī) was first class (*awwali) as were three paintings, with the rest second or third class by the Safavid painter *Riza Abbāsī. Akbar, moreover, he valued the whole manuscript at ten thousand rupees. Reviewing these appraisals inscribed on the manuscripts, John Seyller delineated three factors that determined a high valuation. One consideration was subject matter, with literary classics more highly prized than historical, linguistic, and religious texts. Manuscripts with illuminations and illustrations also commanded higher appraisals. But the third and most important factor was the status of the calligrapher, with by far the highest appraisals for manuscripts penned by the Persian masters Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi (Figure 7.17) and Mir 'Alī Haravi (Figures 7.3 and 10.6). Works by Mughal calligraphers themselves were considered less valuable.

Calligraphers, like painters, were employers in the vast Mughal bureaucracy. Painters received twenty rupees per month, but calligraphers probably got more. Both calligraphers and painters, like scribes and illuminators in medieval Europe, were paid at a piecework rate, as shown by the breakdown in expenses on several Mughal manuscripts. According to a note on a provincial copy of Nizami's *Khamsa dated 1036-7/1626-8, for example, of the total cost of 357 rupees, the calligrapher received about half (180 rupees) for copying 36,000 couplets at five rupees per thousand couplets, whereas the fourteen rather simple paintings cost a mere three rupees apiece.

The piecework payment is confirmed by one of the finest manuscripts made for the emperor – a de luxe copy of Nizami's *Khamsa completed on 24 Azar of his fortieth regnal year/14 December 1595 (Figure 12.1). The calligrapher 'Abd al-Rahim, known as 'Anbarin Qalam (Amber Pen), copied the text in four columns on sheets of light-brown polished paper, using a fine, balanced *nastaʿlīq of the type perfected in late Timurid times under Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi (Figure 7.17), whose manuscripts are known to have been in the Mughal library. Marks in the text show that 'Abd al-Rahim penned a set thirty-three couplets (or sixteen and a half lines of text) – less than a single page – per day, taking three years to complete the 370-folio manuscript. 'Abd al-Rahim therefore worked at about the same span as Shah Ahmad Nishapuri, who had taken six months more to pen his slightly longer (365-folio) copy of the same text. The meticulous counting of the unusual number of thirty-three verses in the Mughal copy, which required 'Abd al-Rahim to stop mid-line, proves that he was paid per couplet and shows that he did not want to write even one extra per day.

Court calligraphers could also supplement their salaries with prizes for a particularly fine work. According to another note that Jahangir added to an illustrated copy of Sādī's *Gulistan dated 992/1584 when the manuscript entered the royal library on 9 Jumada II 993/8 June 1585, Akbar had rewarded the calligrapher, the renowned Muhammad Hussain al-Kashmiri, the sum of one thousand gold mohurs. While generous, this bonus was by no means extraordinary: in 1615, the poet Hakim Masih al-Zaman received the same sum for composing a short poem, and in the 1560s the musician Husain had received twelve mohurs for his first performance at court. Princes got far bigger allowances: in 1609 Prince Parviz received fifty rupees that amount (500,000 rupees) for personal expenses, an amount matched again a few months later. And according to his court historian 'Abd al-Hamid Lahwī, Shah Jahan spent five million rupees, or five hundred times as much, on the Taj Mahal.
Despite the importance of writing, pictures became increasingly important to the later Mughals. Abu'l-Fadl's insistence on the importance of writing over painting is already somewhat defensive and suggests that at least some people at court were already smitten by the impact of figural imagery. As in Safavid Iran, the role of pictures increased over time. Under Akbar's son and successor Jahangir, paintings were sometimes added to earlier manuscripts, such as the de luxe copy of Nizami's Khamsa made for Akbar, which has fine illumination and illustration alongside 'Abd al-Rahim's exquisite calligraphy. The written areas are set in margins painted in various tones of gold, with modeling and shading used to depict lively animals and birds in landscapes. The illuminations, notably the headpieces and medallions, are brilliant and varied, and the forty-two paintings in the manuscript are attributed to master artists in the imperial studio. Most are contemporary with the calligraphy, but the last one on the final page with the colophon [Figure 12.1] was added at Jahangir's insistence on 14 Shawwal 1018/10 January 1610, fifteen years after the manuscript had been completed. The painting shows the calligrapher 'Abd al-Rahim and the painter Dawlat at work in the imperial studio. In front of them are the tools of their trade, including a pen box, pens, and a roll of gold-sprinkled paper. Although interesting for the history of calligraphy and its tools, the painting was a topos, for a similar one around the colophon to a copy of Salari's Gulistan transcribed at Fatehpur Sikri in 990/1582–3 depicts the calligrapher Muhammad Husayn seated beside the painter Manohar. There, the calligrapher's larger size, position at the left under the fly-whisk, and steadfast gaze over the youthful painter, who hunches over a piece of paper inscribed with his name, suggest the importance of writing over painting. In this image done almost two decades later, however, the artist Dawlat, now a larger figure shown gazing outward, is equal to, if not more important than, the introspective calligrapher 'Abd al-Rahim.

As the painting added to Akbar's Khamsa suggests, under the ruler's successors, paintings became bigger, often full-size and sometimes designed independently for albums. Some of the most sumptuous ever made, these albums typically comprise a double page of calligraphy followed by a double page of painting, with each double page framed by decorated borders. Borders with figural scenes surround calligraphic pages [Figure 2.3], geometric and floral borders surround figural scenes. The arrangement suggests parity between calligraphy and painting, yet most of the calligraphic specimens in these albums were not penned by Mughal artists, but heirlooms by earlier Persian masters such as Mir 'Ali Haravi [Figure 10.6] and Mir 'Ali Haqiqi [Figure 10.5]. The paintings, by contrast, depict the Mughal court as seen by Mughal artists. Jahangir, in particular, was well disposed toward painting. In assessing manuscripts, he showed a pronounced preferences for the work of his own artists.

The large size and increasing prominence of paintings forced Mughal calligraphers to go to lengths to coordinate text and illustrations in de
DYNASTIC STYLES IN THE AGE OF EMPIRES

In the age of Akbar's reign (March 1556–March 1605), calligraphers and manuscript illuminators continued to develop and refine their craft. The patronage of the Mughal court provided a platform for the flourishing of these arts, with calligraphers and artists working in various styles to adorn the pages of manuscripts with intricate designs and vibrant colors. This period saw the emergence of a new style, the so-called "Mughal style," which combined elements of Persian, Indian, and Central Asian art traditions. The Mughal emperors were known for their patronage of the arts, and their court became a hub for artistic innovation and cultural exchange. The use of calligraphy and illumination in manuscripts was not only decorative but also served to convey the prestige and authority of the ruler. The manuscripts produced during this time were often presented as gifts to important figures, and were highly valued for their artistic and literary merit. As the Mughal Empire expanded, so too did its influence on the art of manuscript illumination, with styles and techniques being adapted and spread across the region. This period was a time of great artistic achievement, and the works produced during this time continue to be admired and studied to this day.
Akbar, his contemporary and more famous neighbor to the north, Muhammad Quli also established a new capital (his was at Hyderabad), which he embellished with many fine monuments. Zealous Twelver Shi'ites, the Qutbshahis had many ties to Iran: they donated several manuscripts to the shrine of Imam Riza at Mashhad, and their court in the Deccan became a center for Persian literature. The link to Iran is clear from the Qutbshahi album, which contains calligraphic specimens from famous Safavid calligraphers as well as new ones written at the Deccani court. The most unusual are found in the second half of the album (fols. 7v–15). These folios contain fifteen poems composed by the ruler himself in the southern dialect of Urdu known as Dakhni Urdu or simply Dakhni, meaning 'southerner' and from the same root as the English 'Deccan.' Assembled in the form known in Persian as wassali, in which the individual strips are mounted on a larger sheet, each poem occupies either a full or a half page. The poems are all religious in content, with a strong Shi'ite emphasis. Some deal with 'Ali, others with the imams, and several with a Shi'ite festival especially enjoyed by Indian Muslims called Shab-i Barat, a night two weeks before Ramadan that is celebrated with merrymaking. Studying the contents and styles of the folios, David James concluded that the second half comprising the ruler's poems in Urdu belonged to an album compiled for Muhammad Quli in 1604/1605 at his new court in Hyderabad.35

To pen these poems, calligraphers at the Qutbshahi court used traditional scripts but new arrangements and colors. Like calligraphers elsewhere, they penned the poems in lines of alternating size and script, but they followed an unusual format. The opening two hemistiches are written horizontally in large thuluth or muhaqqaq; the second two are also written horizontally but in a small naskh in a single line sandwiched between the first two. The final lines are written diagonally at the bottom in tawqi' and riqa'. Calligraphers also expanded the color range used in these calligraphic specimens. Whereas religious verses or pious sayings were traditionally written in black on a plain ground,36 Deccani calligraphers opted for a boldly colored ground, particularly brick red or gold and sometimes marbled, and scripts of different colors—black, white, gold and blue—occasionally with each word in a line written in a different color.

This page (Figure 12.3) contains the same poem by Muhammad Quli about the Shab-i Barat copied by two different court calligraphers. The upper one is signed and dated in the lower left corner by Zayn al-Din 'Ali, with his epiteth Qutbshahi added at the top of the diagonal lines in white on a gold ground. The lower version is similarly signed in nishagi script by Muhammad Riza. Zayn al-Din was the better known of the pair, and his biography can be put together from signed works.37 Son of Darvish Muhammad, Zayn al-Din became an important calligrapher at the Qutbshahi court around the turn of the sixteenth to seventeenth century (1591–1660). While there, he penned a lavish copy of the poems composed by the ruler margins decorated with peony arabesques in gold. In addition, this elaborate double page (Figure 12.2) marks the middle of the manuscript, just before the beginning of Chapter 19 (Surat Maryam). Illuminated middle pages were standard in India, used already in Koran manuscripts in bihari script (Figure 9.8).38

Calligraphers elsewhere in India used the same juxtaposition of different scripts in different sizes for calligraphic specimens. Good examples are found in an album prepared in Golconda for the poet-ruler Muhammad Quli (r. 1580–1613), fifth in the line of Qutbshahi rulers of the east and central Deccan.39 Immensely wealthy like
himself, the first great Urdu poet.\textsuperscript{43} With its splendid double page of illumination and eight illustrations including pricked gold surfaces, iridescent colors, and areas of applied marbled paper, this manuscript is one of the most richly illustrated books produced in India.\textsuperscript{48} It must have been the ruler's personal copy. In its colophon, Zayn al-Din signed himself al-Shirazi, showing that he or his family emigrated from southern Iran. To judge from the calligraphic styles he used in the album, Zayn al-Din probably also designed architectural inscriptions for the ruler's new capital, although none has survived.\textsuperscript{43} After Muhammad Quli's death, Zayn al-Din apparently went to work for the Mughals, for he penned another manuscript for Jahanṣir's courtier Muradā Khan.\textsuperscript{44}

Muhammad Riza, by contrast, is known only from works in this album. They show that he too was a court calligrapher for the Qutbshahīs, for he once signed his work 

\textit{bandah-i dargah} (servant of the court) and elsewhere adds that it was carried out in the city of Hyderabad, Muhammad Quli's new capital. Despite their similar positions in the court atelier, the two calligraphers used different verbs in their colophons. Zayn al-Din signed his work 

\textit{katabahu} (literally, he wrote it), meaning that he composed the arrangement of verses. Muhammad Riza used the verb 

\textit{mashaqahu} (literally, he copied it), meaning that he copied the work of his contemporary. Comparing the two specimens affords us a rare opportunity to see the difference between composition and copying done at the same time.

Muhammad Riza imitated Zayn al-Din's layout, but varied the color, decoration, spacing, and script. Muhammad Riza's copy is flashier in color and design. In both, the calligraphy is set against a brick-red ground, but his is deeper and has an elaborate gold scroll. In this way, Muhammad Riza was paying homage to the tradition of 

\textit{thuluth} set against a scrolling ground that had been a hallmark of Yaqūt's followers in fourteenth-century Iran [Figure 7.5]. By the fifteenth century the style had passed to the Deccan, where it was used for the finest inscriptions from the Bahmani period, those carved in black basalt in the tomb of Shaykh Khalilallah dated 1430 in nearby Bidar.\textsuperscript{49} The red ground too was further embellished by calligraphers working in the Deccan. A quatrain about eyebrows penned in 

\textit{nastaʿlīq} by Mullā 'Arab Shirazi, another Iranian scribe who worked at the Qutbshahi court in the early seventeenth century, is written on a brilliant paper marbled in orange and green and decorated with gold arabesques with touches of blue.\textsuperscript{46} These are some of the earliest examples of marbled paper to survive from the region.\textsuperscript{47}

Muhammad Riza also embellished the colors of ink. Zayn al-Din had used black ink for the first two lines written horizontally and then added two colors in the diagonal line: blue for the final hemistich in the five-line poem and white for an additional line introducing another two-line verse. Muhammad Riza added gold, blue, and white to the top line, penning each word in a different color so that the central word [and subject of the poem], Shah-i Barat,
stands out in black. He switched to white for the second hemistic, a contrast to the black used for the second and third lines. He then continued alternating white and black in the diagonal lines, but also inserted blue for the final hemistic of the first poem, as Zayn al-Din had, and introduced another color—green—for non-poetic texts, both the additional line introducing the second poem and for his signature at the end. To balance the blue in middle, he included the invocation to God (huwa al-‘aziz; He is the Dear One) at the far left in place of Zayn al-Din’s epithet Quitbshahi. Both calligraphers used color to enhance meaning, but Muhammad Riza’s example is a more complex arrangement derived from the earlier one.

Both calligraphers also juxtaposed different scripts. Zayn al-Din juxtaposed the two large scripts, thuluth and muhaqqaq, for the first two hemistiches, both written in black. Muhammad Riza, in contrast, used thuluth for both hemistiches but contrasted the colors. Both calligraphers also wrote the intervening horizontal line in a smaller naskh, but these vary in detail. Zayn al-Din’s is slightly larger and more sloping, Muhammad Riza’s smaller and flatter. In the second hemistic, he also added long swinging tails on the final ya, a feature typical of the style formed in fifteenth-century Shiraz. Both calligraphers used tawqīʿ for the diagonal lines, with upturned tails that mirror those used in thuluth, but Zayn al-Din added his name in its smaller counterpart riqa’. These small changes are variations on a theme. Specimen and copy form point and counterpoint and show the inventive and rich (to some eyes, even gaudy) tradition of Arabic calligraphy practiced in the Deccan at the turn of the sixteenth to seventeenth century.

Thuluth, the script used in three of the four large horizontal bands in the calligraphic specimens from the Quitbshahi album, was standard throughout India, as in Iran (Figure 10.2), as the architectural script par excellence, used for monumental inscriptions, some containing Koranic texts. The most famous examples, and indeed some of the most majestic Koranic texts ever written, are those designed for the Taj Mahal, the tomb that the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan had erected outside of Agra in memory of his favorite wife Mumtaz Mahal.46 Koranic bands frame the gateways, archways, and cenotaphs. The largest (Figure 12.2) encircles the arches on the exterior of the building. It begins on the south side, the one seen upon entering through the main gateway, and continues around the west, north, and east sides to contain all eighty-three verses of Sura 36 (Ya Sin).47

Another large inscription band with familiar Koranic passages—Suras 67 (al-Mulk), 48 (al-Fath), 76 (al-Insan), and verses 53–4 of Sura 39 (al-Zunar) —circumscribes the interior. Beginning on the southeast, it encircles the base of the dome and then runs around the eight arches. The interior inscription is signed twice by the designer. A small signature and date are inscribed in cartouches tucked in at the end of the part ringing the dome. The text there says that the son of Qasim al-Shirazi, ‘Abd al-Haqq Shirazi, titled (al-mukhatab bi-)

Amanat Khan, composed it [katabahu] in 1043/1633–6. The second signature at the end of the part framing the arches is more prominent (Figure 12.4a). Written in the same size and script as the rest of the Koranic band, it states that the work, finished with God’s help, was composed by Amanat Khan al-Shirazi. The date is inserted in smaller letters between the tall verticals: it gives both the hijra year 1043 and the twelfth year of the reign of Shah Jahan. Together, these dates delimit a seven-month period from October 1632 to April 1633.

Such a prominent signature is unusual. The calligrapher’s name was typically placed at the end of an inscription band, but was usually distinguished from the main text by placement, size, or color. Ali Riza ‘Abbasi’s signature at the end of the foundation inscription over the doorway of the Mosque of Shaykh Lutfallah in Isfahan (Figure 10.2), for example, is set vertically; Zayn al-Din ‘Ali’s signature at the end of his calligraphic specimen (Figure 12.3) was written in a small tawqīʿ; and Amanat Khan’s signature at the base of the dome is given in small script in cartouches. In the second signature, dated three years later, however, Amanat Khan is given full-status, testifying to his increased prominence at the court of the affluent Mughals.48

Like many contemporary calligraphers, Amanat Khan and his older brother had emigrated from Shiraz, where they had belonged to

Figure 12.4 View of the Taj Mahal from the south showing Sura 36:21 designed by Amanat Khan and dated between October 1632 and April 1633.
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a noted family of calligraphers, to India, where they rose in the Mughal bureaucracy. Amanat Khan's brother, who was awarded the title Aldal Khan, became prime minister, the highest rank held by someone outside the princely line. Amanat Khan served as calligrapher in the court workshop. In 1601-2/1613-4 he designed the inscriptions on the tomb that Shah Jahan built for his father Akbar at Sikandra.8 Two decades later, the calligrapher designed those for the Taj Mahal, for which he was awarded the title Amanat Khan and an elephant. Like many other calligraphers such as Zayn al-Din 'Ali, Amanat Khan not only designed monumental inscriptions, but also penned manuscripts. The only one surviving in his hand is a small single-volume Koran dated 1056/1646-7, the year before his death.80 Pocket-sized (9 × 14 cm), it is written in a rough naskh, perhaps the personal copy for an old man.

In designing the nearly one thousand meters of Koranic inscription bands around the Taj Mahal, Amanat Khan used a tall elongated thuluth in which alif measures some sixteen dots in height. The tall verticals, which are capped with short thick hooks, are arranged to march across the band. The rhythm is emphasized by the vocalization set at the bottom. The tall verticals allow space for two tiers of text, which are often divided by the long returning tail of final ya'. This split thuluth, devised in Iran (Figure 10.2), was then adopted for monumental inscriptions from Anatolia to India.80 Amanat Khan exaggerated the style, playing particularly with the returning tail of final ya'. He extended it so that it stretches backwards across one-third, one-half, or even the entire length of the side. Visually it neatly divides the inscription into two tiers and juxtaposes the many tall verticals that poke up like trees. In his main signature on the Taj Mahal (Figure 12.4a), he repeated the form, once in the final ya' of his epithet 'al-Shirazi and a second time in the word fi (in) introducing the date. These two horizontal strokes demarcate his signature. He filled the space between the verticals in the middle tier with diacritical marks and the top tier with smaller words making up the date. In his signature, the final ya' thus functions both semantically and visually. In the Koranic texts, however, the long horizontal strokes seem to play a purely visual function as they do not set off pasages or verses. Presumably the viewer was supposed to know the Koran by heart so that a few key words would trigger recognition. He did not need to read the text literally.

The inscription bands on the Taj Mahal show the hand of an expert calligrapher. The link to a calligraphic style is emphasized by color. Whereas 'Ali Riza's inscriptions in Safavid Isfahan (Figure 10.3) were executed in white against a blue ground, Amanat Khan's are done in black marble that is inset into white. Compared to the Safavid prototype, the Mughal materials are more expensive and the technique more labor-intensive. The contrast of black on white, the one praised by Abu'l-Fadl as the best in preventing ambiguity, recalls polished paper and ink and makes the text stand out from afar.84 On the

Taj Mahal, color is reserved for the floral decoration in the spandrels, which is executed in the pietra dura technique of inlay with semi-precious stones such as carnelian, jasper, and topaz. The text, by contrast, is pristine black on white. It trumpets the glory of God.

Most of the Koranic texts on the Taj Mahal and surrounding buildings are chapters that emphasize eschatological themes, notably the Day of Judgement. Wayne Begley suggested that they were designed as an epigrammatic program meant to drive home the message implicit in the building's form and location that the tomb was an allegorical representation of the Throne of God set above the gardens of Paradise on Judgment Day.85 Begley's interpretation, however, overlooks the fact that manuscripts containing such selections of Koranic texts, clearly made without any reference to the Throne of God, were popular across the three great empires.86 The Ottomans favored the thirtieth juz' (Suras 78-114) as well as other well-known suras including 6 [al-An'am], 36 [Ya Sin], 55 [al-Rahman], and 67 [al-Mulk].87 A different set was preferred in Iran and India, as shown by a handful of manuscripts that contain the same five suras: 36 [Ya Sin], 48 [al-Fath], 56 [al-Waqi'a], 67 [al-Mulk], and 78 [al-Naba'].88 These suras, like those inscribed prominently on the Taj Mahal, were among the most popular, and manuscripts containing Koranic selections must have been deemed collectibles, desirable not only for content and calligraphy but also cost. Smaller, shorter, and therefore cheaper than manuscripts with the complete Koran texts, these ones with selections were nonetheless penned in the same format and scripts. The earliest of this group with five suras, for example, was penned by 'Abd al-Qadir ibn Sayyid 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Shirazi, another scribe from southern Iran who had close links to the Qutbshahs and may have even emigrated to their court in the Deccan.89 Comprising only 24 folios of small size (17 × 11 cm), it follows the format used in many contemporary Koran manuscripts, with lines of large muhakqqaq and thuluth sandwiching smaller panels of naskh, as in the copy penned by Ruzbahan al-Shirazi [Figure 10.1]. 'Abd al-Qadir's selected text, however, is one-twentieth the length of Ruzbahan's complete copy, and each page only one-seventh the size of the earlier one. This smaller format function as they do not set off passages or verses. Presumably the viewer was supposed to know the Koran by heart so that a few key words would trigger recognition. He did not need to read the text literally.

The inscription bands on the Taj Mahal show the hand of an expert calligrapher. The link to a calligraphic style is emphasized by color. Whereas 'Ali Riza's inscriptions in Safavid Isfahan (Figure 10.3) were executed in white against a blue ground, Amanat Khan's are done in black marble that is inset into white. Compared to the Safavid prototype, the Mughal materials are more expensive and the technique more labor-intensive. The contrast of black on white, the one praised by Abu'l-Fadl as the best in preventing ambiguity, recalls polished paper and ink and makes the text stand out from afar. On the
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Demand for Koran manuscripts in naskh peaked during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1558-1605), a fiercely pious Muslim. According to the nineteenth-century chronicler Hajiqalami, during Akbar's reign, the calligrapher 'Abd al-Baqi Haddad emigrated to India from Iran, where in recent times he had borne off the polo ball of precedence among writers of naskh and made naskh the bride of calligraphy by embellishing and adorning it in a new manner. The calligrapher is said to have presented Akbar with a Koran manuscript containing the complete text on a mere thirty folios. For this feat he was awarded the title Yaqut Raqam (Yaqut Writer). Before returning to Iran, 'Abd al-Baqi trained several pupils, most of whom were also known as Yaqut Raqam. The tradition of the Six Pens begun in Baghdad at the end of the thirteenth century thus persisted for four hundred years across thousands of miles.

The Mughals, like their Safavid and Qajar counterparts, were trained not only to appreciate but also to produce calligraphy. While Akbar, who may have been dyslexic, could only write laboriously, his son and grandson Jahangir and Shah Jahan, had better hands, and Akbar's chief calligrapher was widely known as naskh. The royal family also collected calligraphy. Shah Jahan's wife Mumtaz Mahal gave a fine Koran manuscript to their eldest son Dara Shikoh, himself a calligrapher who left an album of calligraphic specimens and individuals of his work. A group of children also collected naskh manuscripts, but the only copy known is that of the Koran. His daughter Zainat al-Nisa, who owned a magnificent copy made for the Safavids, penned a small personal copy. Her elder sister Zib al-Nisa, who is said to have memorized the Koran, collected not only books but also their authors. She invited the theologian Mulla Safi al-Din Ardabili to reside in Kashmir, where he made a Persian translation of the Koranic commentary that came to be known as Zib al-Tafsir (The Ornament of Commentaries) after his patron. These Mughal women were the latest in a long line of female calligraphers and patrons stretching back some seven centuries and a quarter of the way around the globe.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Kashmir emerged as a new center for the production of fine manuscripts, most of them written in naskh. In the sixteenth century, many Kashmiri calligraphers emigrated to the Mughal court, especially after Akbar annexed the territory in 1586, but local production in Kashmir revived a century or two later. According to the French traveler Victor Jacquemont, in 1811 some seven to eight hundred copyists worked there, filling commissions for manuscripts of the Koran, the Shahnama, and a small number of other texts. Many of these have survived, but it is difficult to establish a chronological sequence or a group by an individual hand, for the dates in the colophons of many illustrated codices have been altered and most of the Koran manuscripts are unsigned.

The key manuscript in anchoring the Koran codices made in Kashmir (Figure 12.5) is a copy in Tehran whose colophon says that
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it was transcribed in the land of Kashmir in 1173/1759–60. It is transcribed in a neat bold naskh, with verses marked by gold disks outlined in black. The text on the opening and closing pages is set in cloud bands. Sura headings are done in blue ziqqa' over gold, with alif often linked to lam and a distinctive knot like the seal of Solomon in place of a final letter, such as the ta' marbūta of mukkattās [Figure 13.5a] at the end of the heading for Chapter 114 (Surat al-Nas). Between each line of Koranic text is a Persian translation written in red nasta'liq. The margins are filled with a commentary in Persian, written with unusual density in diagonal lines set in cloud bands. The Arabic phrase to be glossed is written in red naskh, followed by lengthy commentary in black nasta'liq. All of this is crammed into a small page that measures only 23 × 14 cm.

This Koran manuscript bears many similarities to illustrated codices. The Lynch-pin of Adel Adamova and T. Giek's delineation of the Kashmiri style of illustrated manuscripts is a copy of the Mahbūr al-Qulūb, a collection of moral tales and anecdotes by Barkhurdar ibn Mahmud Turkman Farahi, known as Mumtaz, made in Kashmir in Rabi' II 1211/October–November 1796. Like the Koran manuscripts, it has a double frontispiece with marginal text in nasta'liq set in cloud bands and floral illumination. Taken together with other undated copies, these manuscripts document a flourishing provincial school that may have been in operation since the seventeenth century, for other larger and finer Koran manuscripts share similar features and may have been made there as well.

In addition to the Six Pens, Mughal scribes, like their Safavid counterparts, used the two hanging scripts. In India, as in Iran, the most important one for transcribing Persian literature was nasta'liq. Of the eleven experts practicing during Akbar's reign – a time when, according to Abu'l-Fadl, the script received a new impetus – the first mentioned was Muhammad Husayn al-Kashmiri, known as zarin qalam [Golden Pen]. A native of Kashmir, he came to work for Mughals, where he calligraphed the most splendid manuscripts of the age, including the copy of Amir Khusraw's Khamsa made for Akbar [Figure 12.6]. Like its contemporary, the copy of Nizami's Khamsa penned by 'Abd al-Rahim [Figure 13.1], this manuscript is medium-sized, with text written on biscuit-colored polished paper in four columns and twenty-one lines of exquisite nasta'liq with different colors of nasta'liq used for headings and rubrics.

Mughal calligraphers followed the style of nasta'liq perfected at the Safavid court. Abu'l-Fadl praises Muhammad Husayn's hand specifically for its balanced proportion of extensions (muda'dat) and curvatures (dawā'ir), a judgment in keeping with the chronicler's enumeration of scripts hierarchically from the straight mu'ālī to the curved nasta'liq. According to Abu'l-Fadl, Muhammad Husayn was so good that critics considered him the equal of Mir 'Ali, referring to the Safavid master Mir 'Ali Haravi whose work was especially prized by the Mughals and often mounted in albums [Figures 2.3 and 10.6].

OTHER STYLES AND CENTERS

Figure 13.6 Page from a copy of Amir Khusrow Dihlavī's Khamsa with twenty-one lines per page penned by Muhammad Husayn al-Kashmiri (known as zarin qalam) and finished in the forty-second year of Akbar's reign (March 1577–March 1578).

Muhammad Husayn was one of the finest calligraphers working for the Mughal emperor Akbar. He penned a superb nasta'liq in the style of Mir 'Ali Haravi, with a balance between extended and close strokes. His hand, however, is not as fine as his Safavid predecessors, and he did not use an alternative display script, but rather penned headings and rubrics in different colors of nasta'liq.
Dynamic Styles in the Age of Empires

Indeed, the Mughal calligrapher’s hand is very close to its Safavid prototypes: compare, for example, the basmalah from Muhammad Husain’s Khamsa for Akbar [Figure 12.6a] with one penned by the Safavid calligrapher Shah Mahmud Nishapuri in the Koran manuscript he made for Shah Abbas in 945/1538 [Figure 10.7a]: both share the same sweeping strokes and proportions.

Shah Mahmud’s hand, however, is finer, showing a greater control of the pen. The contrast between thick and thin strokes is more marked, as in the razor thin connector between ya’ and final mim in al-rahim. His alifs are slightly taller and his tails to final mim slightly longer and more vertical. These strokes lend more elegance to his hand. The endings to his letters are also smoother. Those of Muhammad Husayn, by contrast, trail off. Note, for example, the ungeminated final har in allah and the long undotted nun in al-rahman that impinges on the rā’ of al-rahim.

In addition to manuscripts, the Mughals also adopted the hanging nastalīq for inscriptions on various types of objects. One is coins, and those minted for the Mughals, especially the large gold ones known as mohurs (from the Persian muhr, seal), have always been the loveliest of all Islamic coinages. Their designs of finely shaped lines and large flowing letters silhouetted against a delicate floral scroll are superb, probably because the dies were prepared under the auspices of the leading calligraphers of the day. ‘Abd al-Samad al-Shirazi, the Iranian-born calligrapher and artist who emigrated to India, where he became a leading artist in the Mughal scriptorium, for example, was appointed director of the imperial mint in 985/1577–8. In the later years of Akbar’s reign, both the shape of the coins and their legends changed, with the imperial mint issuing square as well as round coins, some with poetry, others dated to the regnal year, and still others including punning references to the monarch.79

The mohurs issued under Akbar’s son Jahangir, ‘a prince of monarchs,’ are even more refined [Figure 12.7]. The obverse [left] contains the profession of faith, or kalima, saying that there is no god but God and Muhammad is His prophet; the date in hijrah years [in this case, 1015/1606–7], and the mint [Lahore]. The reverse [right] has the emperor’s name and titles and his regnal year. The design is based upon that introduced under his father Akbar, but the calligraphy is more graceful and the circular field is divided by long flowing strokes into five lines that read from bottom to top: sana, irādah al-dīn, muhammad al-jahangir padshah, ghazi (year 1, Nur al-Din, Muhammad, Emperor Jahangir, the warrior). The regnal date is inscribed at the bottom, with the flowing stroke of sīn in sana’ (year) serving as the bed for the numeral 1. Written as a single digit, it is inserted neatly between the paired verticals of al- in al-dīn in the line above, which contains the ruler’s honorific (laqab), Nur al-Din (literally, light of the faith). The middle line has the ruler’s Muslim name, Muhammad, the same one used by his father. The connector between ha’ and the second mim in the middle of the word muham- mad has been extended to form a seat for the ruler’s Persian names and titles given in the fourth line above: Jahangir (literally, world-conqueror) padshah [emperor]. The top line contains a final title ghazi [warrior], set off from the line below by the long returning tail of final ya’. The letters are written with swelling strokes that create a dynamic and organic quality, enhanced by the naturalistic ground.

The arrangement of horizontal strokes to divide the field into tiers became a hallmark, used on most coins issued later not only in India but also in Iran. In 1626/1617, Jahangir’s rival, the Safavid shah ‘Abbas, reformed the minting process in Iran, adopting the script and layout used by the Mughals and adapting the text to include visual as well as verbal puns. As on Mughal coins, both obverse and reverse on ‘Abbas’ post-reform coinage are written with long swinging strokes. The obverse bears the Shī‘ite profession of faith written in a similar style of nastalīq used for the name and titles of the Mughal ruler, including the extended muhammad. But the Safavids replaced the returning tail of final ya’ in the title ghazi with the tail of ‘ali, so that the field is divided by the names Muhammad and ‘Ali. In doing so, the Safavids created a verbal as well as a visual pun. The exchange of calligraphic designs on coins was one part of the artistic competition between India and Iran in the early seventeenth century, a rivalry that was expressed not only in words but also in pictures.80

The Mughals adopted the same style of elongated nastalīq for imperial seals.81 The earliest had been written in a thick thuluth surrounding heraldic devices that connected the Mughals to their Mongol forebears.82 Under Humayun, perhaps after his exile in Iran in the 1540s and 1550s, a new style of flowing nastalīq was introduced. It continued to be used under his successors, becoming more graceful and pendant according to the various round, oval, and cartouche shapes of the seal. According to Abu’l-Fadl, these seals were stamped on official documents (farman), including vouchers (sajad), royal grants (sayyarah), and stipends (parwanchah). Very few of these documents have survived, due not only to the vicissitudes of weather and time but also to the destruction of the Mughal chancellery.83
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One rare example from the early period is an edict issued by Akbar, probably in the 1590s, ordering the ruler of Cambay to allow the Jesuit fathers in Surat to build a house of worship [ibadatkhana] there, a subject akin to that covered in the earlier Fatimid (Figure 6.7) and Tughluq (Figure 9.7) decrees. Like them, the Mughal edict is written in ink on paper, but with more colorful red, blue, and gold highlights. The top line begins with the word farman [edict] and then gives Akbar's official titles. The text proper is written below in several lines of the hanging ta'il script of the type used in Iran, with lines ascending to the left and hook-like kis. The most striking innovation of this document is not the calligraphy, which is rather rough, but the exquisite illumination. The text is set in cloud bands, and the spaces between the lines are filled with flowering plants and animals, including a peacock with a large tail.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, documents issued by the Mughal chancery became increasingly stylized and written in nasta'iq, as shown by the much finer decree sent to Jaswant Singh, Raja of Marwar, during Aurangzeb's fourth regnal year (Figure 12.8). It was issued in response to a petition [zaradashi] that the Raja had sent the emperor earlier that month from Awrangabad. In the responding decree Aurangzeb ordered Jaswant Singh to remain in the city and gather his troops, including musketeers. Jaswant Singh played an important role in the Mughal war of succession that broke out among Shah Jahan's sons following the emperor's illness in 1647. Despite Aurangzeb's favor (as shown by this decree), the Raja changed sides several times, and following his death in 1678, Aurangzeb seized Marwar, the foremost Hindu state in the region, and placed it under Mughal rule.

Unlike the earlier decree issued under Akbar, this one issued under his great-grandson Aurangzeb is intact and shows the full panoply of Mughal epistolary style. At the top the basmala is written in gold thuluth with red diacriticals, sandwiched between attention-getting red slashes. Below is the tughra of Aurangzeb (Figure 12.8a), written in the same script and colors, but with much taller verticals. In contrast to Akbar's tughra, the one for Aurangzeb is divided rigidly into horizontal bands formed by the returning tails of the letters that juxtapose the tall upright verticals. In style, it recalls the monumental calligraphy used for several centuries for official texts throughout the subcontinent. It also echoes the seals in square kufic issued three centuries earlier by the Ilkhanids (Figure 7.13a). To the right of the tughra is an impression of the emperor's seal, modeled on that of his great-grandfather: the emperor's name in the center is surrounded by smaller medallions giving the date of his accession (1666/1665-6) and his back to Timur. Both tughra and seal evince the Mughals' pride of lineage.

The text of Aurangzeb's edict is written below. It begins with the title—decrees (hukum) obeyed by all the world, etc.—and the emperor's lengthy epithets, written first vertically and then horizontally across the top three lines. This part is usually written separately from the

Figure 12.8 Decree with fourteen lines issued on 25 Jamada II 1072/19 February 1663 by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb ordering the Raja of Mawar to stay in Awrangabad.

This is one of the few edicts to survive from Mughal India. Transcribed in a fluid nasta'iq in flat lines with the emperor's seal and emblem [tughra] at the top, the text orders Jaswant Singh, Raja of Marwar, to remain in Awrangabad. It shows the full glory of the Mughal epistolary style.
The Indian Ocean

During the late thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, merchants and missionaries from India and Arabia had brought Islam east across the Indian Ocean to the Malay Peninsula, the Indonesian archipelago, and the coast of China as well as south along the eastern coast of Africa. Manuscripts were needed for proselytizing and instruction, but no examples dating before the seventeenth or eighteenth century have survived, probably because of the hot and damp climate in the region. Some may still be preserved there, but the ones that scholar-administrators and gentlemen collectors took back to Europe are better known.

The oldest document preserved from the region is a letter (Figure 13.10) written in 1362/745 to King James I by Iskandar Muda, Sultan of Aceh (r. 1607–36). The meter-long scroll is preserved in its entirety in its original yellow silk envelope. Written along the very top edge in tiny letters, but cropped in this reproduction, is the Arabic invocation bawwala allah ‘ali (He is God, the Exalted). The main text, written in a rectangular block, begins mid-way down the document. The initial letters describes the sultan’s majesty, his wealth, and the extent of his domains. The remainder refuses the British permission to settle and trade in Tiku and Pareman, restricting them to Aceh.

Unlike the documents issued by the Safavids and Mughals, which are written in the hanging nastaliq in black and gold, this one is penned in a legible naskh solely in black. The letters slant noticeably

rest of the document, but the vertical layout is unusual and may be a quirk on the part of the scribe. The text proper begins on the fourth line with the name of the recipient, Maharaja Jaswant Singh, and ends on line fourteen with the date. The scribe’s nastaliq hand is much more uniform than his predecessor’s ta’liq. The lines are written on a flat baseline, with a few words piled at the left to prevent additions. The flat baseline contrasts with the hanging syllables in the nastaliq script. In style, the document recalls the contemporary one written in the name of the Safavid shah Abbas (Figure 10.17), but the script is more fluid and the individual words and dots slope more dramatically.

The Mughals and their contemporaries in India also enjoyed examples of the various decorative scripts developed in Safavid Iran. They too practiced micrography, using the miniature ghubar (dust) script to spell out sacred names or phrases such as the basmala. These calligraphic specimens are often so close in style to those penned in Iran that their Indian provenance is suggested only by the illumination. Calligraphers in India also used zoomorphic script for calligraphic pictures, many based on Iranian models. The Shi’ite poem invoking the aid of ‘Ali [Nad ‘Ali], for example, was copied in the shape of a hawk composed of thuluth letters. This example executed in gilded copper (Figure 13.9) was meant to be carried as a standard in religious processions. The text begins at the hawk’s neck and descends around its body and tail, ending at its breast. The poem, which had been used first on metalwares made in Herat and coins struck under the first Safavid shah Isma’il in the opening decade of the sixteenth century, was soon copied in zoomorphic shapes by famous Safavid calligraphers, such as Mir ‘Ali Haravi (Figure 10.15). This copper example has been attributed to the Deccan in the late seventeenth century because of its materials and technique. It was made from a paper copy, and other, probably later, examples on paper are known.

Zoomorphic calligraphy seems to have been particularly popular in the Deccan, perhaps as early as the late sixteenth century. One of the earliest examples contains the Throne Verse (Koran 3:233) designed in the shape of a horse. As in other examples, the text begins at the animal’s head. His nose and mouth form the word allah [God] as though the horse was evoking the divine name through his lips. Astride the horse is a small bearded figure surrounded by plants, all drawn in a calligraphic style typical of India in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mughal albums contain many drawings and paintings of single animals, showing the Mughals’ interest in natural history. In this case, the word and picture together evoke divine omnipotence, realized as a mighty horse bearing a minuscule figure representing the human soul.