THE OTTOMANS AND THE ART OF CALLIGRAPHY

The Kayı tribe of the Oğuz Turks came from Central Asia to Anatolia and, under the leadership of Osman Bey, the son of Ertugrul Gazi, founded the Ottoman principality in 1299. After 1360 the principality expanded into southern Europe, quickly becoming a state. The invasion of the Central Asian warlord Timur (Tamerlane) in 1402 put the state’s existence in jeopardy. In 1453, however, the Ottomans conquered Constantinople, and under Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1451–81), the Ottoman Empire became a world power. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the empire’s fortunes declined, and, in 1923, after a bitter war of independence, the Ottomans ceded to the victorious new Turkish Republic the land that had been the site of their history.

To understand why Ottoman calligraphy is so little known in the West, compared with the calligraphy of the Arabs, Persians, and Central Asians, one must understand something of the relationship between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. From the end of the fourteenth century, the European states attempted by political and military means to prevent the expansion of the Ottoman state. For almost four hundred years (from 1299 to 1683), however, the Ottoman domain continued to grow. To the Europeans, the Ottomans were nothing more than armed invaders on horseback—invasions who followed a religion different from their own. The Christian church encouraged this hostility, fueling the anti-Ottoman alarms that followed the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683. With their own land and way of life threatened, the Europeans did not look beyond that threat to see the Ottomans’ powerful state legal system or their refined culture, art, and architecture. Ottoman art was assumed to be primitive and the Ottomans, barbarians. Not until the nineteenth century was the value of Turkish art recognized in Europe. Joseph von Hammer (1774–1856) was the first Westerner to explain the special place of calligraphy in Ottoman culture, in his ten-volume Geschicht der Osmanischen Reiches (1827–35). Clément Huart (1854–1926) continued this line of scholarship, in Les Calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l'Orient musulman (1908).

Following the conquest of Constantinople, a succession of Ottoman master calligraphers shaped the practice of their art by building on the work of their predecessors and altering the shapes of letters, changing the relationship of words to the line, and reconfiguring the internal geometry of letters and words.

The first great calligrapher in this period, Şeyh Hamdullah (833/1429–926/1520; see cat. nos. 1–2) began by emulating the best works executed in the style of Yağut al-Mustasimi (Yaği). Encouraged by his patron and student Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), however, he went on to subject the works of Yaği to critical scrutiny. He developed a new style of calligraphy about 890/1485, incorporating his own artistic values. Known as Şeyh’s Manner, the new style brought the Yağut period of Ottoman calligraphy to a close. In the age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (or the Lawgiver; r. 1520–66), the calligrapher Ahmed Karahasîrî (875/1470–28 May 1555; see cat. no. 6) revived the Yağut school with unsurpassed brilliance, but it fell into oblivion after his death and could not prevail against the method of Şeyh Hamdullah.

Şeyh’s Manner continued in use for more than
150 years, during which sîlas and necih spread rapidly. Finally, Hafiz Osman (1552/1642–1110/1698; see cat. nos. 16–18), another genius of the art, streamlined the style of Şeyh Hamdullah, in the process developing his own style of writing. The Şeyh style was soon abandoned for that of Hafiz Osman, which remained in the ascendant for a century.

The next important Ottoman calligraphers were Ismail Zühdi (d. 1221/1806; see cat. no. 31) and his brother, Mustafa Rakım (1171/1758–1241/1826; see cat. no. 33), who developed their own styles, inspired by the finest work of Hafiz Osman. Although masterful work had been written in sîlas, calligraphers had been unable to achieve an aesthetically satisfying version of celi sîlas. Even the celi sîlas of Hafiz Osman was not worthy of an artist of his caliber. It was in the hands of Mustafa Rakım that celi sîlas, as well as sîlas and necih, reached a level of excellence, with regard to both the letters themselves and the design of complex compositions. Mustafa Rakım’s approach was to apply to celi sîlas the principles Hafiz Osman developed for sîlas. Rakım also perfected the imperial tagăı (calligraphic emblem), which is why both celi sîlas and the tagıı can be classified as ‘pre-Rakım’ or ‘post-Rakım’.

Another master of celi and a successor to Rakım was Sami Efendi (1259/1848–1330/1912; see cat. nos. 59–62), who, in a variation on Rakım’s style, applied the sîlas letters of Ismail Zühdi to celi. Sami Efendi also designed the most attractive forms for the vowel signs and other reading aids, and for the teğnası (decoration) and numbers, which were used to fill in the empty areas of an isıt. Today, Sami Efendi’s style still predominates.

Mahmud Çelaleddin (1163/1750–1245/1829; see cat. nos. 38–39), who was Rakım’s contemporary, adapted the style of Hafiz Osman to his own taste; in his sîlas and necih he achieved firm and confident writing. His celi, however, was rigid and static. For this reason, Çelaleddin’s style was abandoned, and Rakım’s prevailed.

Although the great calligrapher and musician Kadiasker Mustafa İzzet Efendi (1216/1801–1293/1876; see cat. nos. 44–45) and his students all adopted a style that included characteristics of the writing of Hafiz Osman, Çelaleddin, and Rakım, it was their contemporary Şekî Efendi (1245/1829–1304/1887; see cat. nos. 50–51) who developed sîlas and necih to a height of perfection never attained previously or surpassed since.

The celi and celi divanı scripts reached their peak at the end of the nineteenth century as well (see cat. no. 82). The Ottomans in Istanbul had used these scripts since the second half of the fifteenth century. After the Persian nasta’lík master Mir Imâd al-Haasan (961/1554–1024/1615) devised the best system for writing nasta’slík, the Turkish calligraphers adopted his style in great numbers. A Turkish style of nasta’slík was born when Mehmed Es’ad Efendi (d. 1213/1798; see cat. no. 34) integrated the most beautiful letters of Mir Imâd into his own style. (Mehmed Es’ad Efendi, it should be noted, was a remarkable calligrapher who was known by the epitaph Yesârî, or the Left-Handed, because the right side of his body was paralyzed, obliging him to write with his left hand.) His son, Yesârîzâde Mustafa İzzet Efendi (d. 1265/1849), elaborated detailed rules for this style and in Istanbul developed a style of celi ta’llık that had no match even in Persia. Sami Efendi, who was as much a master of ta’llık and celi ta’llık as he was of celi sîlası, passed the Turkish style of ta’llık down to our day in its most perfect form.
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Two scripts, it should be noted, were not 
recognized by the Ottomans as being worthy of 
artistic consideration. The first was nk'a. Despite the 
similarity of their names, nk'a bears no resemblance to 
rk'a, the sixth of the six scripts. Rk'a was the script 
for daily use by every literate Ottoman subject. It was 
always written with a reed pen whose nib was less than 
1 millimeter wide. In earlier times, the script was 
written differently by different calligraphers, with 
no rules or conventions. Mûmtaz Efendi 
(1225/1801–1287/1872) devised a style of writing 
rk'a called bahâli rk'a, for use in government offices. 
Mehmed Izzet Efendi (1257/1841–1302/1909) 
developed a rk'a script that had strict rules of 
execution and could be written very quickly, with 
some letters simplified in comparison to bahâli rk'a.

The second script that did not merit artistic 
treatment was sjukâ, which was reserved for treasury 
documents and title deeds. This script was so 
difficult to read and write, in fact, that it was almost 
a cipher script.

Clearly, Ottoman calligraphers did not use 
unchanged the writing that they had originally 
borrowed from other Islamic countries. Rather, 
the stylistic evolution of Ottoman calligraphy involved 
a continual process of sifting, refining, and 
and elaborating new styles according to the calligraphers' 
own tastes, without disturbing the essential forms 
of the letters. Moreover, unlike Ottoman architecture, 
music, and fine and decorative arts, calligraphy did 
not degenerate under Western influence. 
Calligraphy was spared this decline for three 
reasons: the absence in Europe of a comparable art 
that could exert an influence on calligraphy; the 
continuation of the master–apprentice system 
among classically trained calligraphers, in which 
established principles were transmitted from 
generation to generation; and calligraphy's capacity 
for self-renewal.

In the Islamic world, there is a widespread adage 
that 'the Qur'an was revealed in the Hijaz; it was best 
recited in Egypt and best written in Istanbul'. 
Indeed, taking into account the length of time that 
the Ottomans maintained this art in its highest 
form, one cannot label it chauvinism to celebrate 
the 'Turkish art of calligraphy'. There is no denying 
that in Ottoman Istanbul the miraculous Qur'an was 
made art on paper. The pearls of the Prophet of 
Islam's words and deeds, the hadith, became pearls of 
calligraphy. Examples of such works will be found 
in this catalogue. Here, too, the reader will find other 
works of art by calligraphers too numerous to 
mention individually here—artists whose works 
include everything from collections of poetry to 
ferman (imperial edicts), from inscriptions carved in 
marble on public fountains to gravestones.

CALLIGRAPHY DECORATION

Although calligraphy arose as an independent 
art, a great deal of attention was soon paid to 
decorating it with tehâp (gold illumination) or 
ebru (Turkish paper marbling), or both. These colorful 
decorations added to the attractiveness of the 
calligraphy, with its limited color range.

The word tehâp (or tehâb) refers primarily to 
the application of pure gold with a special brush, but 
it also encompasses the use of a varied palette of colors 
accompanying the gold. Both yellow (23- to 24-
karat) gold and green (18-karat) gold are used, with 
different burnishing techniques employed to 
achieve different effects, such as brilliant or matte 
gold. Another style of ornamentation, halâhî 
(dissolved-gold work), uses no color except for the
The art of illumination was developed to a high degree in Iran in the early fifteenth century, during the Timurid period (1370–1507). By the end of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans began to take the art to further heights, using stylized images from the animal and vegetable kingdoms to develop a classic style of ornamentation marked by flat surfaces and, often, brilliant color. At the end of the seventeenth century, Ottoman illumination entered a period of stagnation, and in the eighteenth century, under the influence of Western art, it began to lose its identity altogether. By the nineteenth century, the borders of calligraphic works were decorated with derivative designs that gave the illumination a strange quality. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, however, artists seeking to revive the classic styles have brought about a renaissance in the art.

Illumination is a costly process, because of the gold and the labor involved. An economical alternative to an illuminated border is a border made of ebru paper (cat. nos. 2, 15, 18, 23, 25, 28, 39, 66, 70). Ebru—the word comes from the Persian abri, meaning ‘cloud’—is made with a bath of water thickened with gum tragacanth (tīr) and contained in a special trough. Pigments from natural earths and other sources are ground and mixed with water and ox gall, which causes them to float and expand when sprinkled on the surface of the tragacanth bath. Designs are made by drawing a stylus through the pigments. When a piece of paper is laid on the bath, the pigments adhere to it. When the paper is raised, the design is lifted off the water. The paper is then dried. Later, it is cut and pasted onto the desired areas of the work.

THE USES OF CALLIGRAPHY

BOOKS

Before the invention of the printing press, the most important use of calligraphy was to make a copy (mushaf, or codex) of the Qur’an (fig. 13; see also cat. nos. 3, 5–7, 10, 13, 16, 24, 50, 53, 55–58). Prayer handbooks (see cat. nos. 4 and 52) and scientific and literary works were of secondary importance. The earliest Qur’ans were written in ḥijāf; later, such scripts as muḥākkak, ṭāḥhānī, and nasīḥ were used. By the sixteenth century, muḥākkak were being written in combinations of scripts—muḥākkak with nāṣīh or ṭāḥhānī, for example, or even three scripts per page: muḥākkak, sūfīsīs, and nasīḥ. According to Ottoman taste, nasīḥ was the most suitable script for the sacred task of copying the Qur’an. And in the hands of the Ottomans, over the course of four centuries from Şeyh Hamdullah on, nasīḥ developed an easy readability.

Although there are no comprehensive historical sources that give the exact dimensions of the different types of Qur’ans, various references yield the following standard sizes:

1. ʿamī muḥāṣf: the mosque Qur’an; the largest Qur’an, written for and donated to a specific mosque
2. ʿaṣṣirī thuṣ̄ af: the large Qur’an; onehalf the size of the mosque Qur’an
3. ʿaṣṣirī kūṭ af: the small Qur’an; onehalf the size of the ṣirī Qur’an
4. kūṭ af (rūdū) kūṭ af: the small Qur’an;
THE USES OF CALLIGRAPHY

BOOKS

Before the invention of the printing press, the most important use of calligraphy was to make a copy (mushaf, or codes) of the Qur'an (Fig. 13; see also cat. nos. 3, 5–7, 10, 13, 16, 24, 50, 53, 55, 57–58).

Prayer handbooks (see cat. nos. 4 and 52) and scientific and literary works were of secondary importance. The earliest Qur’ans were written in kufi; later, such scripts as muhaqqaq, riyahi, and nasī were used. By the sixteenth century, mushafers were being written in combinations of scripts—muhaqqaq with naskh or riyahi, for example, or even three scripts per page: muhaqqaq, sūsī, and nāshī. According to Ottoman taste, nāshī was the most suitable script for the sacred task of copying the Qur’an. And in the hands of the Ottomans, over the course of four centuries from Sehzeddin Hamdullah on, nāshī developed an easy readability.

Although there are no comprehensive historical sources that give the exact dimensions of the different types of Qur’ans, various references yield the following standard sizes:

1. ānmi mushaf; the mosque Quran; the largest Quran, written for and donated to a specific mosque
2. biyik (kabri) kit’a mushaf; the large Quran; one-half the size of the mosque Quran
3. sarpki kit’a mushaf; the sarp (naskh) Quran; one-half the size of the biyik Quran
4. kuçuk (rubu’) kit’a mushaf; the small Quran;

one-half the size of the sarp (naskh) Quran and one-quarter the size of the biyik Quran

5. jumla kit’a mushaf; the one-eighth-size Quran; one-half the size of the kuçuk Quran and one-eighth the size of the biyik Quran

6. sanak mushaf; the emblem Quran; the smallest Quran, of no fixed size, but usually hexagonal or octagonal in format; affixed to the top of the pole of a military standard.

Qur’ans are encountered that do not conform to this classification, of course. But regardless of their proportions, Ottoman Qur’ans were always vertical in orientation. Use of the mutar ruler allowed the calligrapher to lay out and repeat perfect guidelines for the text, page after page, cleanly and simply.

Before the printing press was introduced into the Ottoman world, large numbers of calligraphers earned their living by copying the Quran, which has more than six hundred pages. Everyone wanted his own Quran—by an outstanding calligrapher or by an ordinary one, according to the commissioner’s financial means. A person who could afford more than one Quran at all could read one at a mosque or Sufi lodge where a charitable donor had paid for a sanak mushaf.

Many calligraphers could write quickly: Čemşir Hafiz Salih (d. 1236/1820) completed a record 454 muhafās in his lifetime, and Râman bin Ismail (d. 1091/1680; see cat. no. 10) made 400. These masters and others could be thought of as living printing presses, given the swiftness of their work. In general, however, meticulously prepared Qur’ans with high artistic value took a long time to complete. The length of time depended on the speed and mood of the calligrapher, which could vary not only from calligrapher to calligrapher but even from moment to moment in the same calligrapher’s life, as illustrated by the story of

FIGURE 13.

Hafiz Osman (1092/1682–1110/1690).

Dīwān (Qur’an 112:4–122) and (Fātih) from a collection of chapters from the Qur’an. 1086/1675.

Nisîr, ink, colors, and gold on white paper. 72:52:4.8 cm

SM 112-0284-1902

Yahya Hilmi Efendi (1249/1833–1325/1907; see the entry for cat. no. 57).

Traditionally, calligraphers who copied Qur’ans would begin at the tenth section, or ānmi; (there are thirty sections in all, generally twenty pages each), write to the end, and then return to the Fâtih (opening chapter) and finish the first nine sections. By this means, the calligrapher was able to work out any difficulties with the script in section 10 through section 30, ensuring a perfect nāshī for the opening sections.

After finishing the lettering of each page, the calligrapher would go back and, using a smaller pen, write in the vowel signs and reading signs. Finally, using red (lif) ink, the calligrapher would add the sawarwd (stop, pause, and other instructions for
recitation, whether informally by the individual or formally in the mosque). During these final operations, the calligrapher would check for mistakes, removing any page on which there was an error and substituting a correct page. The extracted page, known as a muhacṣ rhayf, was given to an illuminator to use as a sample to display his gilding talent to potential customers.

Once the text was finished, the Qur’an was illuminated. Especially rich designs were used on the first two pages, which consist of the first chapter (Fatihah) and the beginning of the second chapter (Bakara). These two most imposing pages of a hand-written Qur’an are called the serleho (cat. nos. 3, 5, 50, 53, and 58). Exceptional Qur’ans aside, the remaining pages are not illuminated but decorated with a ruled frame around the text. The frame, called the cedfel, is gold, outlined with delicate black or colored lines called tahrs, which are also used to enhance other gilded designs.

The illuminator filled the spaces between each ayet, or verse, with a rosette-type decoration called a durah, or stop. The most inventive illuminators came up with a large number of designs for these decorations so they would not be repeated too often—quite a feat, considering that there are more than six thousand stops in a single Qur’an. In addition, the illuminator put various section marks in the border. A cíc gálí (one-thirty-section rosette) appeared every twenty pages, and a híh gálí (one-quarter-section rosette) every five pages. A súç gálí (prostration rosette) was placed in the border next to each place in the text where the reader must prostrate himself. After each ten ayets came a special marker called the aqre gálí (ten rosette), and at the beginning of each chapter, or sûre, is a sûre bap tecbib (chapter-head illumination; see especially cat. nos. 24 and 57).

Two of these headings appear in the serleho, and there are 112 more in the text. At the end of the mushaf, a page called the hátîne tecbib was also illuminated, giving the artist an opportunity to demonstrate his skill. The calligrapher’s signature is found on this page.

Following the illumination, the calligrapher used white-lead ink (wârayn) to write in, on the gilded areas and rosettes, the titles of the chapters, as well as the cic, hih, súce, and aqre titles.

The finest mushafs were joint productions, especially in the sixteenth century. Designs and motifs were conceived and planned by a group of artists called taranah, or planners. The gold cedels were prepared by artists called cedelkey, or frame drawers. A separate group was responsible for putting the black outlines, or tahrs, around the gold illumination. Still other artists would produce the duraha. One group would supply the gold ink; a second would apply the gold ink in the designs, and a third would apply the colors. This was the method used to illuminate precious manuscripts at the palace nakshâm, or department of illuminators and miniaturists. The most delicate work was done by young artists whose eyes were not yet weakened, under the supervision of master illuminators. In later centuries, however, a master illuminator would undertake all these tasks with a few pupils in what was, at best, a slow process.

The final step was binding the volume. Many illuminators were also bookbinders who produced the classic bindings called jense bâps. In this style of binding, carved dies are used to stamp the jense (sunburst design) and other motifs into the leather binding, according to formal design rules. The embossed leather was generally decorated with gilding (fig. 14). A unique feature of an Islamic binding is the envelope flap, or mabkh, on the left side of the back cover. This flap can be tucked
whether informally by the individual or in the mosque). During these final s, the calligrapher would check for removing any page on which there was an substituting a correct page. The extracted vn as a muhreṣa tihfe, was given to an r to use as a sample to display his gilding otential customers.

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Two of these headings appear in the serešeha, and there are 112 more in the text. At the end of the muhaf, a page called the kitiṣe tihfe was also illuminated, giving the artist an opportunity to demonstrate his skill. The calligrapher’s signature is found on this page.

Following the illumination, the calligrapher used white-lead ink (tikāb) to write in, on the gilded areas and rosettes, the titles of the chapters, as well as the cīc, hāsh, sures, and qura titles.

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In addition to the Qur’an, other popular religious books are the Dulala’s-Hayrât (cat. no. 37), a prayer book that often contains miniatures of Mecca and Medina, and the Evlî-yi Serif, which includes special prayers for use in Sufi orders. These books do not have an illuminated double-page spread like
the Qur’anic serifda. Rather, only the right-hand
ūnun serifi (title or opening page) is heavily
illuminated (see cat. nos. 1, 17, and 47).

For books written in the Turkish language, nesih
script without vowels, and the naturally unvocalized
small ta’liq, was preferred (fig. 21). It would not be an
exaggeration to say that huruf ta’liq raises the level of a
work, such as a collection of the poetry of a single
poet, called a diwan.

Fihus (opinions on Islamic canon law) and waqfās
(endowment deeds; cat. no. 26) were also bound into
books.
The word *kitāb*, which means 'piece' or 'section', has come to be used as a technical term to describe a specific type of calligraphic work that is rectangular in shape, is oriented either vertically or horizontally, and has writing on one side of the paper only (cat. nos. 2, 12, 14–15, 16, 23, 25, 28, 30–31, 34–35, 39, 45, 51, 63–64, and 66). (Square kitābs are made occasionally when there is no other choice—when, for instance, the amount of text alters the border proportions, or when the kitāb needs to be fitted into an album [see cat. no. 12].) Commonly, the paper on which the calligrapher writes is pasted in the center of a cardboard backing, leaving four equal margins for later decoration with illumination, edge paper, or even plain polished paper. The narrow band surrounding the writing is called the *iq pears*, or inner border; outside of it is the *aṣ pears*, or outer border. In place of the *iq pears*, there can be one or two *aṣ pears*, or interval borders. The entire border area is also called the *bānū sayu*.

Kitābs are classified according to the kinds of scripts used in them. There are *sūlūs*-and-*nesh* kitābs, *muhākkah*-and-*rūḥāni* kitābs, and so forth. Among the Ottoman calligraphers, the most widespread kind of kitāb is the *sūlūs*-and-*nesh* kitāb, which typically has a line of text in *sūlūs* and three to five lines of *nesh* underneath. Sometimes the *nesh* lines are written on a slant, from upper right to lower left.

Figure 15 shows common kitāb layouts. In diagram A, the area where the text appears resembles a human torso. For that reason, the rectangular spaces that are left open for decoration (marked K) are called *kol투* or *armits*. On a vertical layout, such as in diagram B, the preference is to write the first and last lines in *sūlūs*, with eight to ten lines of *nesh* in between. Sometimes an additional line of *sūlūs* (or, in early kitābs, *muhākkah*) is written in the middle, as in diagram C. Some nineteenth-century kitābs were made by putting two *sūlūs*-and-*nesh* kitābs together, one on top of the other (see diagram D). In these double kitābs, the lower nesh section was sometimes written on a slant to break the visual uniformity.

A special form of *kitāb* was used for a student exercise (sing.). In this format (diagram E), there is one line of *sūlūs*, followed by two lines of *nesh*, followed by one more line of *sūlūs*. As in all formats, the *nesh* lines are shorter than the *sūlūs* lines to leave room for the *kol투*. There are also kitābs written only in *nesh* or only in *sūlūs*.

Although the dimensions of *sūlūs*-and-*nesh* kitābs vary, most are in the range of 4 to 6 inches in height; the widths range from 1.5 to 2 times the height. (Proportions differ for vertical kitābs.) The *sūlūs-*-and-*nesh* kitābs in this exhibition will give an idea of both common and not-so-common dimensions (cat. nos. 2, 12, 14–15, 23, 25, 28 30–31, 39, 45, 51, and 66).

The *taṭik* *kitāb* was usually used for poetry. In general, the text of a *taṭik* *kitāb* is two or three lines of verse, written one under the other. The verses can be separated by a gilded rule, or *cedāl*. When the writing slants upward, from the lower right to the upper left, as in diagram F, the work is called a *māt* *kitāb*, or inclining *kitāb* (see also figs. 10 and 22). The smaller the angle of inclination of the text, the wider the *kitāb* will be. The preferred angle is forty degrees. The triangular areas marked K in diagram F are called *muṣку* *koltucks* (triangular *koltucks*) or *köşėliks* (corner pieces). These areas can be illuminated. (Occasionally, there are *taṭik* *kitābs* with no illumination at all—not even border lines.) In those
tuğluk kat'as that were laid out with the mutar, triangular areas were always right angled triangles. Later on, however, this rule was not always followed, except in the four corners of the piece. It was the practice of the Persian (Herat) school to make the top margin of the tuğluk kat'a twice as wide as the side and bottom margins. This practice was adopted in some Ottoman kat'as (see fig. 15, diagram F; and cat. no. 34).

When the lines of text in a tuğluk kat'a are horizontal, it is called a diş tuğluk kat'a, or level tuğluk kat'a. Most of these were written by the calligraphy teacher (baca, muallim, or inidal) for the student to study and copy; they are called meşkat kat'as, or exercise kat'as (cat. nos. 34–35, 63, and 64).

Another form of kat'a is the kovaloma (blackening), a practice piece filled with line after line of calligraphy, complete with measuring dots (fig. 7). A calligrapher would work on a kovaloma in his spare time, to maintain his technique. Today, many collectors prize these handsome pieces and consider them akin to abstract art.

Until the fourteenth century, kat'as were pasted not to boards but edge to edge so they could be rolled up like a scroll (tomer) and kept in an accompanying leather case. (Some calligraphic works are actually made as scrolls.) The edge-to-edge arrangement was later abandoned in favor of calligraphy albums called murakkas. Most kat'as were originally part of such an album and, after coming loose from the album, would be framed and hung on a wall.

**MURAKKAS**

To make a calligraphy album, all the kat'as to be included are pasted on specially prepared pieces of cardboard, then trimmed to the same dimensions. Pairs of kat'as are placed back to back and bound at all four edges with thin strips of leather or cloth, which not only hold the pieces together but also protect the edges from wear and tear. The attached pairs are then bound between covers. This kind of album is called a diş murakkas (simple album), kitap murakkas (book-type album), or simply murakkas. The oldest examples of the book-type album date from the end of the fifteenth century. This format had two advantages: besides protecting the edges of the pages, it allowed different works by different calligraphers and even from different eras to be compiled into a single unit. Although miniatures or illuminations were sometimes made into albums, the majority of murakkas consisted of calligraphy.

In the kirâdî murakkas (bellow album), the pairs of kat'as are bound at one edge only. Then the pairs are joined together so that they can be opened out accordion-fashion and viewed all at once. All four edges are protected by leather strips. In this type of album, only the first page is attached to the binding (fig. 16; see also cat. no. 12).

Another kind of murakkas is made up of teaching exercises. Albums could be made from lessons on single or double letters, which are called mu'fjedât (singles; cat. nos. 34 and 51), or from lessons consisting of sentences, usually from poetic odes, prayers, Qur'anic verses, or hadîs (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), which are called mu'afkhabât (compounds; cat. nos. 35, 63–64). If the kat'as were created especially for a meşkat murakkas (exercise album), the calligrapher signed only the final kat'a of the series.

When a series of kat'as is written in a specific order for a murakkas, the text of each script runs from kat'a to kat'a. In other words, one reads the wâsîn lines continuously through the entire murakkas, and then the nasîh lines. For that reason, murakkas kat'as that have
Pairs of k’t’as are placed back to back and bound at all four edges with thin strips of leather or cloth, which not only hold the pieces together but also protect the edges from wear and tear. The attached pairs are then bound between covers. This kind of album is called a dīw murakkāb (simple album), khitb murakkāb (book-type album), or simply murakkāb. The oldest examples of the book-type album date from the end of the fifteenth century. This format had two advantages: besides protecting the edges of the pages, it allowed different works by different calligraphers and even from different eras to be compiled into a single unit. Although miniatures or illuminations were sometimes made into albums, the majority of murakkāb consisted of calligraphy.

In the kārakātākī murakkāb (bel lows album), the pairs of k’t’as are bound at one edge only. Then the pairs are joined together so that they can be opened out accordion-fashion and viewed all at once. All four edges are protected by leather strips. In this type of album, only the first page is attached to the binding (fig. 16; see also cat. no. 12).

Another kind of murakkāb is made up of teaching exercises. Albums could be made from lessons on single or double letters, which are called mifṣād (singles; cat. nos. 34 and 51), or from lessons consisting of sentences, usually from poetic odes, prayers, Qur’ānic verses, or hadīt (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), which are called mū الآبسط (com pounds; cat. nos. 35, 63–64). If the k’t’as were created especially for a maṣl murakkāb (exercise album), the calligrapher signed only the final k’t’a of the series.

When a series of k’t’as is written in a specific order for a murakkāb, the text of each script runs from k’t’a to k’t’a. In other words, one reads the sūra lines continuously through the entire murakkāb, and then the neṣa lines. For that reason, murakkāb k’t’as that have
been unbound often include sentences with no beginning or end. In such a mīteselāt muraḥḥa, or sequential album, only the final kitāb is signed (cat. no. 15).

In an album composed of independent kitābs, each kitāb is signed by its calligrapher. Such an album, which may include works by a number of calligraphers, is called a toplama muraḥḥa, or collection album. If one kitāb in a toplama muraḥḥa is smaller than the others, the inner border may be widened, or an extra strip of paper, illumination, or ebru called a tokos (chock) may be pasted on one or more edges of the inner border. There are also muraḥḥas in which the kitābs have not been assembled in a scrupulous a fashion (cat. no. 2).

LEVIES

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially among the Ottomans, a demand for the leḥba, or panel, an art form that (with some exceptions) uses the ṣūl sizes of scripts (cat. nos. 33, 38, 42, 54, 56, 59, 61-62, 67, and 70). The resulting work is framed and hung on the wall, to be appreciated as a whole composition as well as read for its text. (A special category of leḥba, the ḥijār, is discussed below.)

Successful ṣūl-writing large enough to be read from a distance—requires skill in both hand and eye. (In order to print examples of ṣūl writing in a book, they must be reduced from their original size. And when a ṣūl size work is a ṣūl ta’lik work is reduced for publication, it is nearly indistinguishable from regular-size ṣūl or ta’liks.) In comparison with normal-size writing, ṣūl writing—especially the istif, a composition of superimposed and interlaced letters and words—is very difficult and represents the ultimate achievement in calligraphy.

Calligraphers could choose various formats for their compositions in ṣūl alaṣ: the writing area could be square, nearly square (cat. no. 33), rectangular (fig. 11 and cat. no. 42), circular (cat. no. 67), or elliptical (cat. no. 56). In rarer cases, the composition took the shape of a bird, flower, or fruit.

The difficulty of producing ṣūl compositions led to a practical way of obtaining multiple copies from a single original. First, the calligrapher practiced a passage over and over to get the composition just right. Then, using the final work, the calligrapher makes a hánp, or stencil. If the inscription is too large to be executed directly by hand, it is first written on a smaller scale, then enlarged by squaring. That is, the calligrapher writes the inscription in a convenient size, then divides the work into squares, as on graph paper. Next, he divides a piece of paper the same size as the desired finished inscription into an equivalent number of squares, proportionally larger. Then he copies the calligraphy from the original work, square by square, to the larger paper and from it makes the stencil. (This is the same method used to embellish mosques, teaching institutions, and fountains with inscriptions carved in marble.)

In the early days, before the ṣūl scripts were perfected, stencils were written on white paper with lamplblack ink, and any necessary corrections were made by scraping with the correction knife. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, calligraphers had begun to write their stencils with orpiment ink on black or dark brown paper (fig. 17; for a leḥba prepared from this stencil, see cat. no. 61). This method was preferable for two reasons. First, orpiment ink does not cause a thick buildup of ink on the paper; and second, corrections can be made by covering the mistake with lamplblack ink and then writing over it with orpiment ink. It is possible
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for a leko prepared from this stencil, see cat. no.
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First, orpiment ink does not cause a thick buildup
of ink on the paper; and, second, corrections can be
made by covering the mistake with lampblack ink and
then writing over it with orpiment ink. It is possible
to perform this operation several times over without
damaging the paper.

The stencil is made by placing a few sheets of
white paper the same size as the original under the
composition and securing them lightly with paste.
The calligrapher then uses a fine needle, held in a
watchmaker’s pin vise, to pierce holes all along the
borders of the letters and other elements of the
composition. When all the parts of the
composition have been outlined with tiny holes,
the white papers underneath the original are
separated from each other. These alt kalips (bottom
stencils) are inspected carefully to be sure the holes
faithfully represent the calligraphy. The original
copy, on black or brown paper, is called the 1st
kalip, or top stencil.

To transfer the calligraphy to another piece of
paper or to marble or some other surface, the
calligrapher places an alt kalip on the new surface. If
the background is light in color, the calligrapher
uses a small cotton bag filled with finely powdered
willow charcoal to transfer the design. As the bag is
moved over the alt kalip and patted, the charcoal
filters through the bag and through the holes of the
stencil, leaving small black dots on the light
background. If the calligrapher wishes to transfer
the composition to a dark background, for
subsequent reproduction with gold ink, he uses a
bag filled with chalk powder, which leaves small
white dots. This operation is called 3â€œ silmek or 3â€œ
silkelenmek (to pounce the writing). (The top stencil is
never used for this purpose, because it will get
soiled with charcoal or chalk. Instead, the top
stencil is used as a guide, so that the calligraphy can
be transferred and reproduced perfectly. Unless
the exact relation of the perforations to the
original writing is understood, the reproduced
writing can be too thick or too thin.)

After pouncing, the calligrapher uses a small-
tipped pen and lampblack ink to trace the dots and

FIGURE 17.
Suni Efendi (1585/1589–1630/1631)
Celi silas kalip for a leko, 1628/1629. Detail.
Orpiment ink on dark brown paper.
Turkisedet Foundation, Istanbul.
establish the outline of the writing, which will be filled in with ink. Or, if he trusts his hand, he will use a pen of the same width as that used to produce the original work and simply rewrite the text by following the dots. (The charcoal or chalk can be brushed away later.) Copies made from a stencil are most highly esteemed if they are made by the calligrapher himself. Sometimes, however, inferior celi copies were made by people whose skills were not up to the task. For this reason, calligraphers kept their stencils away from unskilled copyists.

Copies made in gold ink, rather than lamblack ink, were often executed by illuminators rather than calligraphers. The process for producing a lehoa of this kind is called zer-endid (painted in gold; fig. 11). In this method, a panel of high-quality cardboard is coated with a non-water-soluble mineral pigment bound with gelatin and applied while hot. Among the colors used are black, ultramarine, 'duck's-head green', 'fes red', and brown. After the panel is prepared, the design is transferred via the stencil and chalk powder. Then the contours (tahrin) are carefully drawn with a thin gold ink and a fine brush. The area within these lines is filled with a full-strength gold ink. After the work is dry, it is burnished to a matte finish using the zerinhir, or gold burnisher (fig. 8), a highly polished, specially shaped stone, usually agate, set in a handle. This tool is used only for burnishing gold. The resulting work can be truly magnificent. Indeed, when the gilding was done by master illuminators, these zer-endid lehoas were as valuable as the originals. Some of the lehoas in the Sarp Sabanci Collection were made in this way (cat. nos. 33, 42, 59, 61–62, and 67).

As the size of gold celi works increases, so does the expense of the gold ink. To keep costs at a reasonable level, very large zer-endid lehoas are produced by applying gold leaf directly to the panel, rather than making it into ink. The background material for such pieces may be a special cloth, called nujumna (originally, nujumma', a cloth coated with colored beeswax), or it may be a painted wooden or zinc panel. The writing is transferred to the background material by pouncing the stencil with chalk powder. The letters and other elements are painted with an adhesive varnish size. In Ottoman times, this size was called lha or lāk and was made from linseed oil; today, a substance called mixtion is used. After the size has reached the desired tack, the gold leaf is laid on it. The gold leaf adheres to the size, producing an attractive matte appearance. Gold leaf applied in this way is resistant to every weather condition. All the large gold inscriptions in mosques, as well as those cut in marble in low relief, are prepared in this way.

The celi forms of sīla and sūlī are the most dazzling. After the advances made by Mustafa Rakım, celi sīla—above all in the zer-endid style—gained a magnificence no other writing can match. Whether executed with a pen or enlarged by squaring, the forms of celi writing are not exactly the same as those of normal-size writing. The smaller scripts have been likened to a child, the larger ones to a mature adult. Just as the proportions of a child's limbs differ from those of an adult, normal-size writing, too, differs from celi. The great writers of celi were aware of the principles of perspective. While composing their inscriptions, they took into account the height at which the writing was to be placed and adjusted the dimensions of the letters accordingly, to ensure the correct visual effect.
The outline of the writing, which will be th ink. Or, if he trusts his hand, he will f the same width as that used to produce il work and simply rewrite the text by he dots. (The charcoal or chalk can be ray later.) Copies made from a stencil ighly esteemed if they are made by the r himself. Sometimes, however, t copies were made by people whose skills up to the task. For this reason, rs kept their stencils away from opsists.

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The mosque contains the Qur'an and hadi literature, which are in Arabic. The preferred text for these texts is written in a refined script called kufic script. A band of writing called the kufic 3 means winds around the upper part of the mosque walls and around the drum of the dome (or, when there is more than one, around the drums of all the domes). The crowns of the domes and semi-domes are decorated with special circular or semicircular compositions called hahie 3, or dome writing. All these inscriptions are in cili sula.

The mosque inscriptions are done by a professional painter called a naskh, or decorator, who specializes in calligraphy and decoration. The work is executed in gold leaf against a dark background and carved in marble in low relief, which is more durable. An attractive way of finishing a marble relief is to paint the recessed background a dark color and gild the writing with gold leaf. Until the seventeenth century, the bands of writing were generally done in glazed tile; subsequently, the preferred method has been to paint or gild them.

Inscriptions in domes and over windows are also done either in paint or in gold leaf. The customary script for inscriptions is the 3, the name of God; the 3, the name of the Prophet; the 3, the names of the Four Friends, that is, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, the first four caliphs; and the Haasanayn, the names of Hasan and Husayn, grandsons of the Prophet.
Islam rejects the depiction of anyone who could be idolized. For this reason, aside from a few insignificant miniatures, there have been no pictures of the Prophet Muhammad. Nevertheless, in reliable original sources contemporaries of the Prophet of Islam vividly describe him in words, allowing each believer to picture the Prophet in his own heart and mind—an approach that is clearly more in keeping with an iconoclastic faith than depicting the Prophet in drawings or paintings would be. These descriptions are called hilye, as are calligraphic works made from the descriptions (fig. 18; see also cat. nos. 19, 43, and 65). In addition to meaning ‘description’, the word hilye (Arabic hilya) means ‘ornament’ and ‘adornment’.

The most commonly used hilye is that of the Prophet’s son-in-law Ali, which can be translated as follows:

Transmitted from Ali, may God be pleased with him, who, when asked to describe the Prophet, peace be upon him, would say: He was not too tall or too short. He was medium-size. His hair was not short and curly, nor was it lank, but in between. His face was not narrow, nor was it fully round, but there was a roundness to it. His skin was white. His eyes were black. He had long eyelashes. He was big-boned and had wide shoulders. He had no body hair except in the middle of his chest. He had thick hands and feet. When he walked, he walked inclined, as if descending a slope. When he looked at someone, he looked at them full-face. [Part A]

Between his shoulders was the seal of prophecy, the sign that he was the last of the prophets. He was the most generous-hearted of men, the most truthful of them in speech, the most mild-tempered of them, and the noblest of them in lineage. Whoever saw him unexpectedly was in awe of him. And whoever associated with him familiarly, loved him. Anyone who would describe him would say, I never saw, before him or after him, the like of him. Peace be upon him. [Part B]

(A number of other hilye texts are also available, taken from hadis literature.)

In its complete form, this text is called the hilye-i şerif (the illustrious hilye), hilye-i mustaf (the felicitous hilye), and hilye-i Nebeti (the hilye concerning the Prophet), terms that imbue the concept with a deeper meaning. Since the early days of Islam, this text has been written in tiny nash in a small format for carrying in the breast pocket as a sign of love and esteem for the Prophet. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Hafiz Osman developed the stunning graphic form of the hilye that is familiar to us today.

Figure 18 shows the various sections of the hilye:

1. boy makam (the head station): The koçel is always written here.
2. gębek (the belly): Part A of the hilye text is written in this central cartouche, which is usually circular, oval, or square in shape.
3. hırlı (the crescent): The Prophet Muhammad, who illuminated this world with his light, is often likened to the sun and moon. The gębek symbolizes the sun and the hırlı the crescent moon that surrounds it. The hırlı is not a requisite part of the hilye, however; the gębek can appear without it. When it is used, the crescent can be decorated with gold or gold-illuminated designs.
4. 5. 6. 7. From the standpoint of embellishment, the richest part of the hilye is the square that contains the gębek and the hırlı. In the
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(A number of other ḥīṣa texts are also available, taken from ḥadīth literature.)

In its complete form, this text is called the ḥīṣa-i serif (the illustrious hīṣa), ḥīṣa-i saudet (the felicitous hīṣa), and ḥīṣa-i Nebeti (the hīṣa concerning the Prophet), terms that imbue the concept with a deeper meaning. Since the early days of Islam, this text has been written in tiny nisīh in a small format for carrying in the breast pocket as a sign of love and esteem for the Prophet. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Hafiz Osman developed the stunning graphic form of the hīṣa that is familiar to us today.

Figure 18 shows the various sections of the hīṣa:

1. bay mahom (the head station): The kamalet is always written here.
2. gībek (the belly): Part A of the hīṣa text is written in this central cartouche, which is usually circular, oval, or square in shape.
3. ḥilāl (the crescent): The Prophet Muhammad, who illuminated this world with his light, is often likened to the sun and moon. The gībek symbolizes the sun and the ḥilāl the crescent moon that surrounds it. The ḥilāl is not a requisite part of the hīṣa, however, the gībek can appear without it. When it is used, the crescent can be decorated with gold or gold-illuminated designs.
4. 5, 6, 7. From the standpoint of embellishment, the richest part of the hīṣa is the square that contains the gībek and the ḥilāl. In the four corners, it also contains the names of the ẓāhiryār, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. In place of the four caliphs’ names, four names of the Prophet can be written instead: Ahmīd, Mahmūd, Hamīd, and Hamīd. On some hīṣa, this area is used for the names of the quera-i mubareq, that is, the ten companions of the Prophet who were promised eternal life in heaven. (On occasion, some of their names are found in the koltus, areas 10 and 11 in the diagram.)
5. 6. 7. From the standpoint of embellishment, the richest part of the hīṣa is the square that contains the gībek and the ḥilāl. In the four corners, it also contains the names of the ẓāhiryār, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. In place of the four caliphs’ names, four names of the Prophet can be written instead: Ahmīd, Mahmūd, Hamīd, and Hamīd. On some hīṣa, this area is used for the names of the quera-i mubareq, that is, the ten companions of the Prophet who were promised eternal life in heaven. (On occasion, some of their names are found in the koltus, areas 10 and 11 in the diagram.)

8. qayy (Qur’anic verse): In this section, a Qur’anic verse about the Prophet is written. The most common is: ‘And We [God] did not send you [Muhammad] except to be a mercy to the universe’ (Qur’an 21:107). Two other verses are also used: ‘Truly, you [Muhammad] are of a tremendous nature’ (Qur’an 68:1); or ‘And God is significant witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God’ (Qur’an 48:28–29).
9. etek (the skirt, or lower part): This area contains Part B of the hīṣa text, along with a prayer for the Prophet and the calligrapher’s signature.
10, 11. koltus (armpits): On either side of the etek are empty spaces called koltus, which may be illuminated.

FIGURE 18.
Hīṣa, 1369/1950
Mahlakat, sīr, and nīsīh, ink, colors, and gold on paper, 55.7 x 47.7 cm
The illumination is by Mahsin Demircioğlu (5525/1907–1405/1985).
SSM 140-05915-14A