ABOVE | FIGURE 59
Composition in jali-nasta’iq script mounted as an album page, "done by" al-Faqit' ʿImad al-Hassani, Iran, dated in accompanying specimen (fig. 58) in 1603-4 (1012 11), lacquer and opaque pigment on paper, 20.3 × 38.6 inches (51.6 × 98.2 cm) (sheet).

BELOW | FIGURE 60
Calligraphic composition in jali-nasta’iq script mounted as an album page, executed by ʿAli Quli Beg, Iran, dated 1603-4 (1012 11), lacquer and opaque pigment on paper, 20.1 × 32.6 inches (51.1 × 82.9 cm) (sheet).
were adopted by later calligraphers as models and were also selected by specialists of different media to be executed anew.

Here ‘Ali Quli Beg, expert maker of lacquer pieces, selected ‘Imad al-Hasani’s line of poetry written in jali-nasta’iq and made a monumental panel out of it. He has matched the mystical content of the poetry to the visual content of the letters. The long stretched-out ligatures and the rhombic points forming the diacriticals of the letters (the pyramid of three dots above a double hooked letter indicates a “sh” rather than an “s”) are filled with a variety of flowers and birds, transforming the letters of writing into the “orchard” (P. chaman) described in the poetry. Although remaking ‘Imad al-Hasani’s work by supplying a new symbolism to it in the form of pictorial elements, ‘Ali Quli Beg maintained the calligrapher’s layout, how the words had been spaced and arranged on the original paper. It is here that the visual dimension of the calligrapher’s work was especially manifest: ‘Imad al-Hasani arranged the first and second lines of poetry (figs. 59 and 60) in such a way as to pull the recurring letter nun (“n”) in each to a second lower line. The effect is one of repetition, of playing with the value of sound in purely visual terms. Though imitating a received work, ‘Ali Quli Beg remade it as calligraphers had done before him and would continue to do after him. This was a constant practice of even master calligraphers: they returned to precedents to refresh their skill by exercises in duplication and imitation and applied what they had learned to the making of their own works.


4. The "safely preserved tablet" is mentioned in the Qur’an, 85:21–22. The tablet recorded the entirety of Creation and all of human destinies before God created Creation.


11. Ibid., 99.


As an example of excruciating detail, Yazur describes and names the two halves of the nib once it has been split by the longitudinal cut (the shorter side is "tankt; the longer side is "wild"), and discusses on the proportions these sides should have for different scripts (Medeniyet alimdeh yazn, 171-73). Buried pens near the tomb of a renowned calligrapher is frequently mentioned. See Amnonie Schimmel, Calligraphy and Islam (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 85. For "losing the cut of the pen," see Yazur, Medeniyet alimdeh yazn, 170-71.


28 Yazur, Medeniyet alimdeh yazn, 175.


30 Linking the term depicted on the calligrapher's tool to a specific Sufi order can be somewhat problematic. The carvings are often simplified or stylized, and the representations of turbans in historical sources show considerable variation. Compare, for example, the turban at the top of the maula in fig. 9 with Mavlovi, Nasibshidi, and Qadiri turbans on tombstones illustrated in Helga Anstedenhofer and Hakon T. Kasenbe, Tomb Art of the Devisesmen (Kalei-i Ta'clvi) de Mieumont, 1884-96 (Stuttgart: sklearn, 2001), fgs. 96a, 99, and 104.

31 Qur'2:55:21-22. According to the hadith: "The Prophet said, 'A tent [in Paradise] is like a hollow pear which is sixty miles in height and on every corner of the tent the believer will have a family that cannot be seen by the others.'"

32 The pen knife could also be used to smooth the shaft of the reed by licking off bumps or nubs, or to sharpen pencils and cut paper (Yazur, Medeniyet alimdeh yazn, 175). The sixteenth-century Persian calligrapher Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi disapproved of making corrections with a penknife: "Calligraphers are not surgeons" (Minorsky, trans., Calligraphers and Painters, 121).

33 Wullf, Traditional Crafts of Persia, 56.

34 Ibid.

35 Cited in Floor, Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran, 356-357:12-19. Floor quotes from an 1800 British Trade Report for North-Western Persia: "Really good English penknives (not pocketknives) are much in request for mending the pen reeds with which all writing is done. It requires a very superior knife to mend these pens properly" (1806:30).

36 Reported by a seventeenth-century traveler to Safarid Iran, Adam Oemans, cited in Floor, Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran, 308. For a concise summary of ink production, see Zakariya, "Islamic Calligraphy: A Technical Overview," in Brede of the Pen, 31, and Zakariya, Calligraphy of Islam, 7. For further discussion, see Blair, Islamic Calligraphy, 61-63.

37 For a succinct discussion of different methods of putting gold on paper——gold leaf or ink made of pulverized gold in solution——see Zakariya, "Islamic Calligraphy: A Technical Overview," in Brede of the Pen, 4-5.

38 Zakariya, Calligraphy of Islam, 7.

39 Mustafa Ali, cited in Alan Fisher, "Mustafa Ali's Mesuk-b-i Hurwazan (Exploits of Calligraphers)," in Brede of the Pen, 47-54. Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi cited in Minorsky, trans., Calligraphers and Painters, 121. By the end of the 1800s, Western imports had made serious inroads into the paper market in the Middle East. Hans E. Wullf, writing in the 1940s, observed that "no paper has been manufactured in Persia for more than one hundred years. This is all the more regrettable as Persia played a key role in the transmission of the art of papermaking from China to the West" (Traditional Crafts of Persia, 236). For an exhaustive history of paper in Islamic lands, see Jonathan M. Bloom, Paper before Print (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

40 Yazur, Medeniyet alimdeh yazn, 200. For a summation of the quantities of paper needed for Islamic calligraphy, see Zakariya, "Islamic Calligraphy: A Technical Overview," in Brede of the Pen, 3.

41 Zakariya, Calligraphy of Islam, 7-8.
42 Yazir, Medzini aleminde yar, 192.
43 Unfortunately, Floor omits the source quoting a European observer in Qajar Iran, which mentions that Persians trimmed the paper before writing on it, "as etiquette and good luck require. Persians attach great importance to this: they cut it in the exact length they require. They are as particular about this as the English are about paper and envelopes matching" (Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran, 308).
44 Wolff, Traditional Craft of Persia, 72. As with the penknife, the craft of scissor making was challenged by European imports, so that by the end of the 1800s, "scissors of a special pattern to fit into the pen-case" were made in England for export to Iran. See Floor, Traditional Craft in Qajar Iran, 397-758.
45 Yazir, Medzini aleminde yar, 178. Another method of dealing with the inconsistent thickness of ink was to burnish the entire written page. To do this, one first placed a sheet of tracing paper between the writing and the paper burnisher (Yazir, Medzini aleminde yar, 202).
46 Bookbinders' tools changed little over the centuries. The list of tools given above is that of the twelfth-century author, Ibn Badis, as cited in Duncan Haldane, Islamic Bookbinding in the Victoria and Albert Museum (London: World of Islam Festival Trust in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983), 13.
47 Haldane, Islamic Bookbinding (1983), cites the observations of travelers to Ottoman Turkey between the 1500s and 1800s.
48 Haldane, Islamic Bookbinding, 185.
49 Khalili, Laquer of the Islamic Lands, 105.
50 Seven pen boxes decorated in the same manner are in the Nasir D. Khalili Collection. See Khalili, Laquer of the Islamic Lands, 122-25.
51 Tim Stanley describes the ornamental bands as "fleshy leaves" and the tiny gold circles as "engraving turning." Also published is the probable prototype for this style, a pen box signed and dated by the Isfahan artist Rahaj 'Ali in 1683-84 (1293 Hij). Another pen box decorated in the same style, signed and dated Abu Talib al-Madarris 1885 (1285 Hij), is in the Harvard University Art Museums, 1963-79A.
52 Schlimmels offers a lengthy discussion in Calligraphy and Islamic Culture.
54 The informality of even artists' studios — typically organized according to a number of specializations in materials or techniques — was surrounding commented upon by European visitors to Iran in the 1800s. See William Floor, "Art (Naqsh) and Artists (Naqshkhan) in Qajar Persia," Maqomir 16 (1999): 123-54: 127.
57 For a similar example with tornomeshell, see Omsi's, Islamic Art and Manuscripts, Tuesday 26 April 2005, lot 148. The entry lists other comparative examples. For another example inlaid with mother-of-pearl, see Rogers, Empire of the Silkst, cat. nos. 112-13.
58 For two comparative examples from the 1700s executed in the style of Usaid 'Ali Gidikdar, see Kjeld von Folsach, Art from the World of Islam in the David Collection (Copenhagen: David Collection, 2002), cat. nos. 94-95.
60 The technique and materials are described in Wolff, Traditional Crafts of Persia, 238-39.
63 Floor, "Art (Naqsh) and Artists (Naqshkhan)," 133-54.
64 Floor, "Art (Naqsh) and Artists (Naqshkhan)," 127-132.
65 A recent historical narrative about the arrival of low technologies in Turkey, the Middle East, and Iran has been written by Stephen Vernois, "The Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century Muslim Thought," in Islamic Art in the 19th Century, 19-35.
66 Additional examples of the same subject, signed by or attributed to Najaf 'Ali, are published in Khalili, Laquer of the Islamic Lands, vol. 2, cat. nos. 206-29. Khalili presents Najaf 'Ali's biography (22-29).
67 An identical visual program is found on a pen box published in Toby Joff, ed., Treasures of Eternity: Geneva: Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, 1995), cat. no. 173. It has a complete signature, legible date, and bears the number "737." The significance of these numerical annotations in Isfahan's works has yet to be elucidated.
68 A less closely related example is published in Khalili, Laquer of the Islamic Lands, vol. 2, cat. no. 454.


Minorsky, trans., *Calligraphers and Painters,* 127.

Ibid.

Orthographic conventions of Arabic script are treated in Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy,* 7–16.

See James, "Commentaries," 174.


The prayer is translated and transcribed in Derman, *Letters in Gold,* 126. Other texts could be used by the calligrapher for the purposes of the "license." Examples are given in Derman, *Letters in Gold.*


The Arabic text reads: gilin rasul Allah sallala ala la takes al-aalim min retab al-bayyinat fi-jannatul-rahman la hukmu war al-aalim min retab al-bayyinat fi-jannatul-rahman.

For an example made seventeen years after the license was acquired, see Safwat, *Art of the Pen,* cat. no. 8.

For an illustration, see Derman, *Letters in Gold,* 4.

An example of the latter is an album by the Ottoman calligrapher Nazif Bey (1846–1912) in imitation of Yezirezade Mustafa Izzet Efendi (d. 1846). See Derman, *Letters in Gold,* 154–55. Nazif Bey emulates Yezirezade’s text and then annotates it with red rhombic points.

Relationships between the late Ottoman writers and early figures like Mihăițcu-Zade are treated by Stanley, "After Mătăcu-Zade," in *Istori; Art in the 19th Century,* 189. An overview of the structure of the Safavid chancellery is presented by Willem Flor, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda, 2001), 40–60. The terminology applied to the branches of the chancellery and its structure changed over time and in different regions.


Additional examples are illustrated in Verboort, *Orientalism,* cat. nos. 55, 57, 65 and 72. Verboort’s catalogue entries include translations of the conventional gold inscriptions.

Several Ottoman documents are illustrated in Derman, *Letters in Gold,* 166–83.

The term qur’s is used in Ottoman Turkish contexts (i.e., the) with a different sense. It refers to a regulated form of practice in which the calligrapher exercises his skill in fixed combinations of scripts. See Derman, *Letters in Gold,* 27–29.

This album page comes from one assembled by Antoine Polier. See Marcus Fraser and Will Kwanowski, *Bird and Gold: Islamic Calligraphy* (Berlin: Museum für Islamische Kunst, 2006), cat. no. 40.


Numerous specimens by ‘Imad al-Hassani were assembled in the St. Petersburg album. See *The St. Petersburg Manuscripts: Album of Indian and Persian Miniatures from the 18th through the 19th Century and Specimen of Persian Calligraphy* by ’Imad al-Hassani (Milan: Leonardo Arte, 1990).

A more detailed explanation of the process is described by Derman, *Letters in Gold,* 40–53. Also see Safwat, *Art of the Pen,* 144–85.

For a third example, see Safwat, *Art of the Pen,* cat. no. 124.

The Persian texts read, from top to bottom, sukhi ki ya'fi zii baha’-ii wahi wa’ii ‘unhii zii dafa’-ii wahi wa’ii ‘unhii. alkif wa duhuk al-sinna hemmii al-kaab wu’u; wabii al-sinna hemmii al-kaab wu’u.

For his biography, see Oleg Akhmatshin, *“The Calligraphy of the St. Petersburg Album,”* in *The St. Petersburg Manuscripts,* 39–46.

"Abbas, "Abd al-“Al.

Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

For more on these albums, see *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 41–42 (over)


Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

For the biography, see Oleg Akhmatshin, *“The Calligraphy of the St. Petersburg Album,”* in *The St. Petersburg Manuscripts,* 39–46.

"Ali b. A. al-“Al.

Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

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Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.

Abu Tali in *The Persian Album: Calligraphy as Art,* 56.
INDEX

Abbas I (Safavid ruler), 85
Abdallah, al-Seydi: calligraphy exercises, 70-71;
calligraphy exercises (detail), 91
Abu Heyyan al-Tawhidi, 4
Abu Talib al-Madarej: bookbinding with eucalyptus fronds
in reds and gold, 42-43, 44; pen box, 43, 62-62, 61
album of calligraphy (Abu Haci al-Madarej), 76, 77
albums of calligraphy, practice sheets in, 72, 73, 80
`Ali b. Abi Talib: and artisans’ groups, 43; calligraphy of;
inscriptions, 54, 63; sajjada of, in practice exercises, 64; on writing, 3, 10
`Ali Quli Beg, calligraphic composition in jali-nameh script mounted as an album page, 65, 67, 85
Agah Muhammad Bibhilani, 63
`Ali al-Sittah ("the six scripts"), 67
Arabic letters: joining of, 68, 69, 72, 73, 78; measurement of letters, 76; shapes of individual letters, 67, 68, 69, 75
Arabic scripts: establishment of kanan, 67; large-scaled scripts, 60; for official correspondence, 78; paired scripts, 69, 72, 74-76; pen boxes, 54; and proportional systems, 75-78; saj Da al-Sittah, 67, 72; sussi, 63; six cursive scripts, 77, 78
artistic production, 87
artists' studies, informality of, 90-93

Architecture, 24, 84

Bebtashi order, 43
book, art of, 6, 78
bookbinders and bookbinding: book covers, 35-36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42-43; flap developed by, 33-35; specialists, 91; tools of, 33, 35, 36, 31426 bookbinding in red, green, and gold, allowing double-twine with flap folded inward, Turkey, late 1800s, 38, 39
bookbinding with eucalyptus fronds in reds and gold (Abu Talib al-Madarej), 42-43, 44; doublet of lower cover, 42-43, 65
bookbinding with flowers, birds, and butterflies, Iran, c. 1800, 41
bookbinding with heraldic inscription, Iran, early 1800s, 18, 17, 38
bookbinding with sprays of flowers against red ground, paperboard with opaque watercolor and gold underlaid, 40
borders, and finishing activities, 35
burnishers. See gold burnishers; paper burnishers
Calligraphic constitution of instruction, 68
calligraphers' association with religious orders, 45; and chains of transmission, 19, 76; and exercises in duplication and imitation, 54, 84; metaphor for bodies of, 54; and path of calligraphy, 64; and productivity in production, 78; training and practice of, 9, 10, 67, 68-69, 72, 74-76; working spaces of, 47
calligraphers' furniture: low tables as, 50-51; material legacy of, 6; pen boxes as, 51, 53-54, 56-58; pen cases as, 36, 61-63; and physical environment of writing, 47; storage chests as, 47-50
calligrapher's storage box, Turkey, 1700s (wood inlaid with tortoiseshell over gold leaf), ivory, brass, mender-of-pearl, and bone, 67, 90-94, 49
calligrapher's storage box, Turkey, 1700s (wood inlaid with tortoiseshell over gold leaf), ivory, brass, mender-of-pearl, and bone (detail), 50
calligraphers' storage chests and physical environment of writing, 5; visual effect of inlay in, 47-50. See also pen boxes
calligrapher's table, Turkey, late 1800s-1900s (wood inlaid with bone, ebony, stained woods, and metal), 50-51, 51
calligraphers' tools: material of, 9; material legacy of, 6; and physical environment of writing, 5, 19-20
tactile link with artist, 12. See also making; paper scissors; penhires; pens

Calligraphers' tools, from Turkey, Iran, and India, 6
calligraphers' tools, set of, Turkey, 1800s, 11
calligraphic composition in jali-nameh script mounted as an album page (Ali Quli Beg), 85, 87, 88
calligraphic composition in thuluth script forming part of Qur'an, Iran, early 1800s, 85
calligraphic composition in thuluth script forming part of Qur'an, Iran, early 1800s (detail), 2
calligraphic composition in kufic script forming part of Qur'an (Ustad Kaziin Khayat Bashi), 54
calligraphy exercises (al-Seyyid 'Abdallah), 70-71
calligraphy exercises (details) (al-Seyyid 'Abdallah), 16, 21
Calligraphy exercises (Iqra' script) in kufic script (attributed to Mir Damadi), 83
calligraphy exercises (Iqra' script) in 799/1400 script (attributed to Mir Damadi), 66
calligraphy exercises (Iqra' script) in 1199/1790 script (attributed to Mir Damadi), 83
calligraphy exercises (Iqra' script) in 1199/1790 script (attributed to Mir Damadi), 66
Certificate to practice calligraphy (Muhammad Sadig Kamal Efendi), 74
certificate to practice calligraphy (Kuwaiti Guide Efendi), 74
chains of transmission, and training, 10, 26
Charid, Isba, 63
composition in jali-naskh script normed as an album page (Ustad Al-Husaini), 83, 85, 86, 87
coral, for penknife handles, 21-22
cypress tree, 43
dervishes, pen boxes, 43, 63-64
domed iwail, Turkey, 87 (arabesque with brass mounts), 25-26
doubles, 38, 47-48, 56
Durr 'Ali Khan, 84, 99-93
Esaid, 3
Farid al-Din 'Attar, 64-65
Farid al-Din 'Attar (Qajar ruler), 63
finishing activities: and borders, 35; and gold burnishers, 30; and sand sharers, 30
Firuz Mirza Nusrat al-Dawla, 10, 30
Firuz Mirza Nusrat al-Dawla (attributed), practice exercises in 799/1400 script, 82
folios of a Qur'an (copied by Yahya Hilmi and illuminated by Nusr al-Din), 8
gold burnishers, and finishing activities, 30
gold burnishers, Turkey, Iznik tiles of agate or jade; silver stems connecting tips to handles made of ivory or ebony, 31
gold burnishers, Turkey, 87 (tips of agate or tiger's eye; silver or base metal sleeves connecting tips to handles made of fruit wood, chestnut, and ivory), 34
Ghulam Riza, three calligraphic compositions in jali-naskh script, 83, 85, 91-93
Hafiz 'Alauddin, album of calligraphy, 76, 77
Hafiz Nur Allah, print album, 81
Hafez Mehmmed, 74
Hafiz Osman, 79
Harvard University Art Museums, objects in the collection of: 2, 8, 12, 24, 37, 38, 44, 45, 66, 77, 83, 83, 85
Husayn Mirza, Sultan (Timurid ruler), 41
Ibn al-Haitham, 67
Ibn al-Rawdah, 4, 67
Ibn al-Wahid, 67
Ibn Faris, 5
Ibn Khaldun, 58
Ibn Majid, 97, 97-98
isseet, be to calligraphy practice, illumination as embellishment, 91; in imperial decrees, 76; in millefleurs, 73
Islamicism, 42
'Istal al-Husaini, composition in jali-naskh script normed as an album page, 83, 85, 87
imperial decree in naskh, Tehran, 1849-1850, 79
imperial decree (Izmir), 78
iranshahr, 66
India: album making in, 80; British rule over, 6; insks from, 8; paper from, 16
inks: blackening paper with, 85; inconsistent thickness of, 30, 91-94; and preparatory activities, 12, 24-27
Iznik: in pen cases, 25, 56; and preparatory activities, 24-25; and the Arabic letter ran in the Qur'an, 24-25
Iznik: in calligraphers' storage boxes, 47-50; in low tables, 50-52; in pen boxes, 51, 52
Iran, 5, 80
Islamic calligraphy: Arabic literary tradition on, 3-9; changing aesthetic of, 6-7; craftsmen skilled in, 41; decorative, 7; cultural identifier, 7; 43; functions and connotations of, 28, 48, 81, 83, 85, 91-92; reproduction of, 83; social status of, 5, 6, 47; transmission of, 97-98; translation on, 10, 67, 68; visual contemplation of, 67, 68
Ivory: for inlaid, 16, 28; for pen cases, 58; for penknife handles, 22
Jalal al-Din Rumî, 16, 65
Jerusalem, 80
Kham, in reference to calligraphy, 5
Kherbani (the proportioned script), 67
Kievskii, 4-5
Jasper, 42-43, 55, 56-65, 85, 87
keb, 80, 83-84
low tables, inlay on, 50-51
Mehmed Esmen, as Celebi, 73
Malat' Sultân 'Ali Mustafâ, on, 20; as calligraphers' tools, 91; description of, 14-45; and preparatory activities, 24-25; turban on, 16, 26, 67, 94-95
Malat' Turkey, 1700-1800 (elephant ivory and walrus tusk), 35
Malat' Turkey, 1700-1800 (elephant ivory and walrus tusk) (detail), 18
Malat' Turkey, 1700-1800 (elephant ivory and walrus tusk) (details), 19
Malat' Turkey, 1800 (ivory), 17
Malat' Turkey, 1800 (ivory) (detail), 18
Malat' Turkey, 1800 (ivory), 17
Malat' Turkey, 1800 (ivory), 17
Mehrabi, pen case with inlaid, Turkey, c. 1853-64, 80
Mehravi (Izmir ruler), 16, 26
Mir Damadi (attributed): calligraphy exercise (Iqra' script) in naskh script, 83; calligraphy exercise (Iqra' script) in naskh script (detail), 86
Mira Huseyn Khan Tabardar, 22
mistakes: pen nibs used for, 20, 90-93; and soon tips, 24
modernism, 7
mosal characters: adornments for, 10; and artisans' guilds, 43; calligraphy as embodiment of, 5; and cutting of, 13
mother-of-pearl, 6; nacre
Msafir (merchant), 69, 71, 72
Mughal dynasty, 6
Muhammad, Prophet, 1-2, 25-75
Muhammad Ali, print album, 81
Muhammad b. Husain al-Tabi', 67
Muhammad Bajir Samman, 97, 98-99
Muhammad Bajir Samman (possibly, print box, 65
Muhammad Sadig Kusmi Efendi, certificate to practice calligraphy, 75
musheq script, and calligraphy exercises, 69
Murad III (Ottoman ruler), 51
millefleurs exercises, 72, 74-75, 76
Musavi mosque
Musavat mosque
name: in book, 51-53
Mujahid 'Abd Allah, 131
Mustafâ Efendi, 137-31
Nasir al-Din (Izmir ruler), 91
Nasir al-Din (Izmir ruler), 91
Nasir al-Din (Izmir ruler), 91
official
Ottoman
Ottoman
overview
Palavi
painting
palimpsest
paper: a folded
paper b
paper c
paper d
paper e
paper f
paper g
paper h
paper i
paper j
paper k
paper l
paper m
paper n
paper o
paper p
paper q
paper r
paper s
paper t
paper u
paper v
paper w
paper x
paper y
paper z
paper a
paper b
paper c
paper d
paper e
paper f
paper g
paper h
paper i
paper j
paper k
paper l
paper m
paper n
paper o
paper p
Murasait, Shihab al-Din 'Abd Allah, 4, 5
museum, 80
Mashaf (known as Heikkilkeste), 75
Muzaffar al-Din Shah (Qajar ruler), 78
mythical practices, 20, 43
nazar: in calligraphy’s storage boxes, 48–50; in lacquer bookbinding, 42; for mizhar, 18–29; in pen boxes, 51, 53; and tips in parallel, 19, 90–91
Nāṭīʿ Ali, 61, 65, 91, 165
Nasr al-Din Shah (Qajar ruler), 10
nask script, and calligraphic exercises, 69, 72, 74
naskī script, 76, 80
Nīʿmānī’s order, 83
Nur al-Din: followers of a Qūʾain, 24; followers of a Qurban (detail), 6
Nur ‘Ali Shah, 83
official correspondence, script for, 78
Ottoman dynasty, 6, 78
Ottoman Empire, power of, 18
overlay: in mixto, 75; in paper scrolls, 28, 30; in pen boxes, 94, 96
Pahlavi dynasty, 6
painting, in lacquer bookbinding, 42
pamphlet, 80
paper aging of, 36; staining of, 88; παρθένον for, 26; flaked with gold or silver, 28; and preparatory activities, 26, 72
paper burnisher (glass egg-shaped burnisher), Turkey, 1700s–1800s, 27
paper burnisher (jade burnisher set into wooden handle), Turkey, 1600s–1700s, 27
paper burnishers: end of period used as, 22; and preparatory activities, 26, 28
paper marbling, 35
paper scrolls: as calligraphers’ tools, 92; handles of, 28, 30; and preparatory activities, 28, 30; and trade relations, 92
paper scissors, Iran and Turkey, 1800s (tool overlaid with gold; steel chiselled and pierced), 29
paper scissors, Iran and Turkey, 1800s (tool overlaid with gold; steel chiselled and pierced) (detail), 31
papier-mâché, for pen cases, 56, 61–65
painting instrument, Iran, 1700s (tool overlaid with gold, with ivory handle), 36
painting instruments, 35
pens, on pen boxes, 63–65
pen box, Iftihām, 1843–44 (papier-mâché covered with compartiment and rounded ends), 61, 63
pen box, Iftihām, 1840–47 (possibly Muhammad Baqir Samā’i), 64–65
pen box, Iftihām, late 1800s–early 1900s (papier-mâché cover with compartiment and rounded ends), 63, 64
pen box, Turkey, late 1700s (wood inlaid with tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, bone, and colored wood), 32
pen box, Turkey, 1700s (wood with tamarisk shell and mother-of-pearl inlay, interior lined with leather), 32
pen box, Turkey, 1700s (wood with tamarisk shell and mother-of-pearl inlay, interior lined with leather) (detail), 32
pen box, Turkey, 1700s (wood inlaid with silver, bone, and colored wood), 48
pen boxes: derivishes of, 43, 63–64; inlay in, 51, 53–54; lacquered papier-mâché, 61–65; metal pen boxes, 54, 56; and working space, 47
pen box with hinged inlaid, Turkey, c. 1850 (wood overlaid with silver and gold), 54
pen box with hinged inlaid, Turkey, c. 1850 (wood overlaid with silver and gold) (detail), 46, 57–59
pen box with sharpening strip, Turkey, late 1700s (wood with tortoiseshell, gold leaf, and bone inlay, leather, interior lined with red velvet), 48
pen case, India, c. 1800 (wood), 57
pen case, Turkey, 1700s–1800s (metal lining covered in papier-mâché and varnish), 59
pen case, Turkey, 1800s (silver with gilt ornament over cardboard), 58
pen cases: inlaid with gold, 25, 56; inlaid with lacquered papier-mâché, 56, 64–65; makers of, 90; and physical environment of writing, 51, 54–portable, 58
pen cases, from Turkey, Iran, and India, 5
pen case with built-in inkwell and container for sand, Turkey, 1700s–1800s (wood and brass with mother-of-pearl inlay), 58
pen case with inkwell, India, 1700s–1800s (silver and niello), 61
pen case with inkwell, Turkey, c. 1834–35 (Mahmud), 50
penknife, Turkey, 1700s or 1800s, (steel blade with corn handle), 21
penknife, Turkey, 1700s or 1800s, (steel blade with silver and ivory handle), 33
penknives: as calligraphers’ tools, 92; handles of, 28, 30; mistakes covered with, 20, 90; and preparatory activities, 28–29; shape of blade, 19–20
penknife, Turkey, 1700s and 1800s (steel blades, brass mounts, handle materials include ivory and agate), 19
penknives, Turkey, 1700s and 1800s (steel blades with brass and silver mounts; handle materials include steel, gold, bone, horn, ivory, ebony, and coral), 20
penmanship: as calligraphers’ tools, 92; practice of, 29, 31, 72, 108; importance of, 9, 26, 72; and preparatory activities, 12–13; need pens, 12–13, 15, 90–91; steel pens, 13
poetry, and artistic production, 70
Polish alphabet (Hilal Nur Allah and Muhammad ‘Ali), 55
Polish, Arabic, qaf/dh
practice exercises in nasta’īn (attributed to Firdaws Hina Nasar-e-Dawlab, 81
practice modes: calligraphy exercises (30th nasta’īn), 56, 72, 80; by the pen, 66, 69; and preparatory activities, 72; and qaf/dh, 78, 80; visual study of practice, 72; visual study of specimens, 68–69, 72
prepared nut (nabāt al-bakatāb), 65; and ink, 22, 24, 27, and inkwells, 24–25; and nibs, 12–15; and paper, 26, 72; and paper inks, 26, 30, and penknives, 28–29; and pens, 12–13; writing in, 72
preserved tablets, 3, 89
proportional systems: nabs (nabat al-bakatāb), 65; and training and practice, 75–76; and visual study, 68–69
Qajar dynasty, 6, 70
quill, 6–7
quills, 6–7
quills, and paper pens, good pens, 91–92
quills, fine pens, 91–92
quills, pens, and quills, 91–92
quills and calligraphy practice, 72, 83; status of, 9; references to pens, 3, 12, 25, 49
read pens, 21–23, 90–91
read pens, India, 1800s, 12
religious orders, calligraphers’ associated with, 43
riga script, 36
Rīāds Shah (Pahlavi ruler), 6
Russie غليت إفريقي, certificate to practice calligraphy, 74
Sackler Museum, Arthur M. Sackler University Art
Index 95
Sufrūd dynasty, 6, 78
sand, storage for, in pen cases, 56
sand shakers, and finishing activities, 30
sand shakers, Turkey and Europe, 1700–1800 (often with overglaze and underglaze painting, with gilding), 31
sea serpent, on mamluk, 16, 19
şerif Osman al-Valshshar, 56
shears, 26, 35
shoot, Iran, 1700s (steel, chiselled and overlaid with gold), 35
skilful script, 80
six scripts (azlans al-ain), 67, 78
slippers, 38
stamp, Iran or Turkey, 1600s–1700s (copper and steel engraved), 16
stamps and stamping, 35–36, 38
steel produced, and trade relations, 9
Sultan al-Hasan, 47
Sultan ‘Ali Moshkhadi, 5, 16, 68, 71, 90, 93
Sultanate, 78

Taming process, 35, 38
three calligraphic compositions in jali–naskh script
Ghulam Rumal, 84, 85, 90, 91
Stabilisation script and calligraphy exercises, 69, 72, 74, in pen boxes, 54
symbolic shell in calligraphers’ storage boxes, 48–49, 50; in decorative work, 15–16; in pen boxes, 52, 13
trace, concept of, in context of calligraphy, 4–5
trade relations and bookbinding, 38; and calligraphers’ tools, 51; and Ottoman Empire, 18; and paper, 26, 90, 93; and paper scissors, 29; and pens, 22; and read pens, 12
Taj, 56, 80
Turkmen on calligraphers’ tools, 43; on mamluk, 16, 16, 18, 20; on pens, 22; as symbol of teacher, 26
Turkey, 5, 80
Usam al-Khazin Khayyat Rashid, calligraphic composition in ni‘ali script forming part of Qur’an, 84
varnish making, 62, 245b

Western European culture, effect on Islamic calligraphy, 7
writing, art of, and concept of trace, 4; cultural attitudes about, 4; formal aspects of writing, 56; importance of, 5; 7, 16, 43; physical apparatus associated with, 51; role of specimens of writing, 68
Yazan, Muhammad Bedreddin; on burnishing paper, 30; on calligraphers’ materials, 9; on cutting nih, 90; on gold burnishers, 30; on ivory, 16; on pens, 26; on pensknives, 9; 20; on read pens, qanun
Zakariya, Mohammad, 16, 90, 93, 18, 36, 37, 40
Zand dynasty, 78
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