Ornamental Kufic evolves, after the 12th century, into increasingly intricate patterns, contrived to astonish and delight rather than to communicate facts or ideas.

25. Plaited and knotted Kufic inscription on a wall of Keykavus hospital, Sivas, Turkey, probably early 13th century.

26. Plaited and foliated Kufic on one of the columns of Yeni Cami, Bursa, Turkey, 16th century.

27. Square Kufic on a glazed tile. The darker overlay is the word *Allâh* (Allah) repeated four times, the white pattern reads *Allâh, îslâm bîslâm hânum* - "Allâh, there is no God but He". The tile is said to have come from the Royal Mosque (Manjü-i Shâh) built by Shah Abbas in Isfahan in the early 17th century.
Eastern Kufic script is more delicate than the standard Kufic, and was developed by the Abbāsid calligraphers in the late 11th century. Its main characteristic is that its long strokes remain vertical with left-facing barbed heads, while its short strokes are bent to the left. Its lower flourishes extend into the sublinear area.

28 Bold Eastern Kufic, fully ‘vocalised’ according to the system of Khalīl (see p. 14). Detail of a Qur’ān, Sūrat al-Nisā’, ‘Women’ (IV, 122), copied in Iraq or Persia during the Abbāsid caliphate, probably in the late 11th century.


THE 'SIX STYLES' OF CURSIVE WRITING

The 'six styles' known in Arabic as al-Aqūlah al-Sītah, and in Persian and Turkish as Shish Qalam, are cursive scripts which were first raised to the status of major scripts when they were subjected to strict calligraphic rules by Ibn Muqlah (d. 940). They gained grace and beauty at the hands of succeeding master calligraphers, and in particular with Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 1023), the great Yaqūt al-Mustaṣfi (d. 1296), Shaykh Ḥamdullāh al-Amanī (d. 1320) and Ḥāfir ʿUthmān (d. 1098). The names of these classical cursive scripts are Thuluth, Naskhī, Muhaqqaq, Rayhānī, Tawqīʿ and Riṣāqa.

THULUTH

31 One of the extremely rare Qurʾāns in Thuluth, copied in 1337 by Muhammad ibn Vāsun al-Ahlayn, probably in Iraq. The word 'Allah' is picked out in gold. The Thuluth here verges on Rayhānī, and the commentary between the lines is in Turkish: Nashī. From Sīrat al-Fath, 'Victory' (XXVIII, 1–3)

32 (opposite page) Ornamental Thuluth in the hand of the great calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwāb, from a Qurʾān copied in Baghdad, dated 1000. The text is the heading of Sīrat al-Fath, 'The Daybreak' (CSIII)

33 Thuluth from a calligraphic page which translates: ‘The Lightning almost takes away their sight’ (Qurʾān, Sūrat al-Baqarah, 'The Cow', II, 30). Attributed to Ḥāfir ʿUthmān, Turkey, probably 17th century

34 Thuluth in a Qurʾān copied by the great Mamluk calligrapher Muḥammad ibn al-Wajih for Baybars II in 1304. From Sīrat al-Shuʿara', 'The Poets' (XXVI, 161)

35 Detail in the hand of the most famous of all Ottoman calligraphers, Shaykh Ḥamdullāh. The text is part of an anecdote and translates: ‘A wise man was asked: What is humility?’ Istanbul, early 16th century
36 Thuluth set in clouds, from a Qur’an, Surat al-Anfal, "The Spoils" [XVIII, 41], copied in Persia in 1306.

37 Ornamental Thuluth used for the title of a 17th-century Arabic copy of Kīūb al-Āshār, a text by the famous astronomer Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muhammad ibn Abī ʿAyyāsh, copied in Syria in 1668.

38 Thuluth on a ground decorated with arabesque and floral designs, with a Persian translation in Nastāʿīq script set in clouds. Probably early 16th century.
39 Thuluth for the baniom of the
Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf
Qaytbay on a brass candlestick
presented to the shrine of the
Prophet in Medina in 1482

40 Elegant Thuluth carved on a
glasied earthenware panel, with the
ground richly decorated with
arabesque. The basilalah on the right
is followed by a Quranic inscription.
From a tomb dated 1538, near
Bukhara, eastern Persia

41 A poem in Andalussian Thuluth,
carved on a stucco-work roundel in
the Hall of the Two Sultans in the
royal palace of the Alhambra,
Granada. The inscription, by the
illustrious Arab poet and statesman
Ibn Zamrak (d. 1353), is a celebration
of the beauty of the Alhambra itself.
The poem may be translated:
The twin breeches for a friendly
hand in greeting to her.
The celestial moon draws near
whispering affection.