The calligrapher and his page

93. The calligrapher at work, seated on the floor in the traditional posture with one knee drawn up to support the paper. Writing implements arranged on a table in front of him include scissors, a knife for cutting the pens, brush and reed pens (chalifes), ink pot (Davud) and probably a sharpening stone. From a 16th-century Turkish manuscript of 'Ajīb al-Mahjūlāt (‘The Wonders of Creation’) by al-Qazwini.

94. Set of calligrapher’s tools. The pen rest is ivory, the ink pot and pen case are silver, the pen box is ‘Persian’ lacquer. Turkey, probably 17th century.

95. ‘Persian’ lacquer pen rest of the kind generally used with the brush type of qalam, most favoured by Chinese Muslim calligraphers. It is in the shape of a five-peaked mountain with an inscription in Naskhi reading al-Qalam qabīl kull shay – ‘There was first the pen’. China, Cheng-te period 1522–31.

96. (centre right) Mortar for grinding the various ingredients used to make ink, of bronze with silver inlay, in the shape of a bird. Persia, probably late 12th century.

97. (far right) Qalam – the reed pens preferred for Islamic calligraphy at all periods, and still an essential tool for the true calligrapher. The traditional way to hold the pen is with middle finger, forefinger and thumb well spaced out along the shaft. Only the lightest possible pressure is applied. Examples from Turkey, late 17th or early 18th century.

98. (below) Pen box of brass inlaid with gold and silver, inscribed with Kufic on the edge of the lid. Mamluk Thuluth inside. The Thuluth translates: ‘Cleer to our Lord the reigning Sultan, the victorious King, the learned, the holy warrior...’ The Sultan referred to is al-Malik al-Mansur Muhammad, who ruled in Egypt 1261–8.
99 A young prince receiving instruction in calligraphy, while around him artists are seated, painting. From an Indian Moghul manuscript, Akhbar-e-Majid ("The Ethics of Nabi al-Din Tu`si"). Illustrated by Sanja for the great Emperor Akbar, c. 1595

100 Instruction sheet in Nasta`liq by the hand of the famous calligrapher Mir 'lsmad al-Huseyni. The examples are mainly the letters sh, s, and 3 combined with others. Early 17th century

101 A calligrapher's practice sheet in Nasta`liq. 17th century
102. Calligraphy, book-binding and paper-polishing in progress, watched by a seated noble. The Ta’liq script in the triangle is the colophon of the book containing the illustration, an anthology of Persian poems dated 1570–1.

103. Colophon containing the words: "Written by Ali ibn Misl..." – namely the calligrapher better known as Ibn al-Rawdštā (see p. 18). From an early Thuluth Qur’an copied in Baghdad in 1000.

104. Colophon containing the words: "Written by Yaqūt al-Muṣṭaṣīm..." (see p. 18). From a Thuluth Qur’an copied in Baghdad in 1282.

105. The signatures of calligraphers: (a) Mīr ‘Alī Ḥarrūnī (d. c. 1538); (b) Mīr ‘Alī al-Kūthī al-Sulṭānī (d. 1558); (c) Shāh Muḥammad al-Nihāyī, called Zarīn Qalam, or ‘Golden Pen’ (see p. 28); (d) Mīr ‘Alī al-Shīrāzī, who was annotated by Shāh ‘Abbās (see p. 28); (e) Ḥāfīz ‘Uthmān (see p. 38).