In Islamic decorative arts, the page occupies a most honoured place. In the Qur’an, the structure of a page may vary from the richly illuminated double-page "qalam" and those decorated with Sifrah headings and marginal ornaments to others which are without decoration except for a ruled border containing the text. Secular manuscripts display a much more varied page-structure. The text may be divided into compartments by the ornamentation. It may be written multi-directionally, and cover the entire page area without any margins or be framed in rich illumination. The text is frequently accompanied by commentary and supercommentary. Whatever the subject - a literary epic, an anthology, or a scientific subject such as astronomy or medicine (1056, 1077) - the page is frequently embellished with both ornamental calligraphy and decorative designs, with the emphasis always on artistic elegance. The artistic format of the single calligraphic page was a later development which flourished particularly in Persia under the Timurids and Safavids, and to a lesser extent in Turkey and the Arab countries during the Ottoman period.

108 Three words in Muqhayqiq on a page of a Mamluk Qur’an. They translate as ‘God has spoken the truth’, a formula which is used when a Quranic text has been recited

109 [top right] Page copied in elegant Nasta’liq by Mir ‘Ali Sultân in Herat, in 1492. The text is from the Khamsa of Mir ‘Ali Shâh Nâvâ’î

110 Composite page with texts in Nasta’liq and Ta’liq contributed by Sultân Muhammad, Kamal al-Du’âjândî and Mir ‘Ali Hârâwî, probably in Herat, about 1514

111 [opposite] Page of Persian Nasta’liq by Mir ‘Ali Hârâwî [d. c. 1518], illuminated at a later date by a Mughul painter of Jahângîr’s court, 1606-27
112. Bands of script written in different sizes alternated for decorative effect, using large Thuluth and smaller Naskhi, with large Muhaqqiq at the centre. Page with Quranic inscriptions by the Ottoman calligrapher Ahmad Qarahju, 1754.

114 Calligraphic page in Ta‘liq, set in clouds on a Dental ground. by Jawhar Isaq
Thani. Persia. 17th century

115 Calligraphic page in Ta‘liq written by Mir‘ Imād al-Dīn al-Jussuynī. Persia. c. 1610

116 (right) Calligraphic page of Shī‘ah poetry by Dawrīn Abd al-Majīd Ṭātīqī, the celebrated Persian calligrapher who is considered by most to be the founder of this script.
Dated ash 1207 [1792]
Composite styles and techniques

The splendid effect of Islamic calligraphy is enhanced by the deliberate juxtaposition of different scripts and the intricate interweaving of script and decoration.

117 Composite calligraphic panels of Andalusion Thuluth and ornamental Kufic on a wall of the Alhambra, Granada. The text of the central Thuluth band is the famous battle-cry of the Nasrid rulers of Granada: huwa ghalīha illā-lābīb – ‘There is no Victor but God’, and the knotted Kufic inscription translates: ‘O God, praise be to Thee always’, and ‘O God, to Thee thanksgivings everlasting’.