

Writing

For Muslims, writing is one of the most important of all skills. Because Muslims believe that the Qur'an contains the words of Allah, scribes wish to reproduce those words correctly and with as much beauty as possible. Many Muslims therefore practice calligraphy, the art of beautiful writing. Calligraphy does not only appear in books. It is also used to adorn buildings and other objects, providing decoration that carries a meaning.

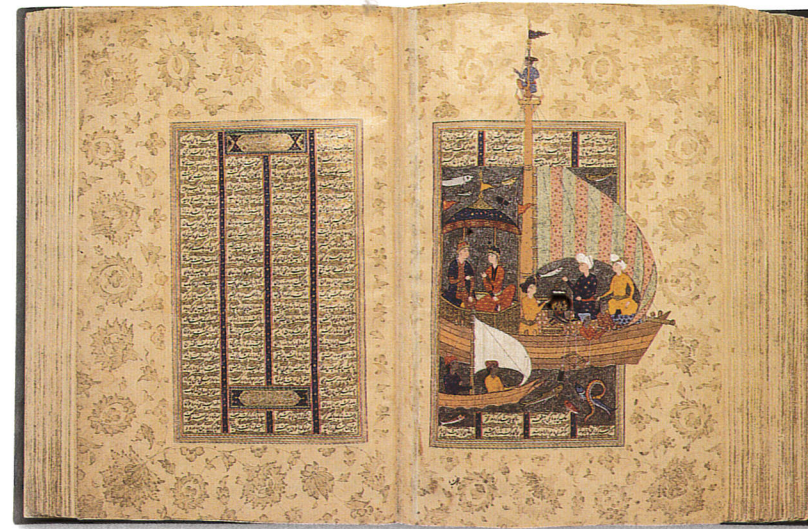


STUDENTS AT WORK
Some Muslim children, like these in Uzbekistan, still attend traditional Qur'anic schools. In many places, modern schooling has replaced this as the main type of education, though children may attend both kinds of school.

EARLY SCHOLARS
This illustration from a 16th-century Persian text shows two children at Qur'anic school. Here they would receive the traditional education of young Muslims, learning to read, write, and recite the text of the Qur'an by heart.

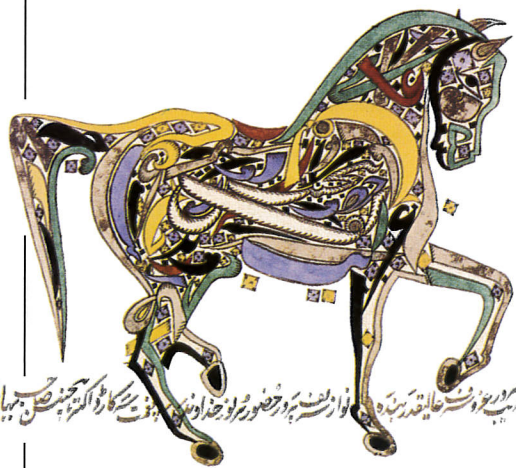
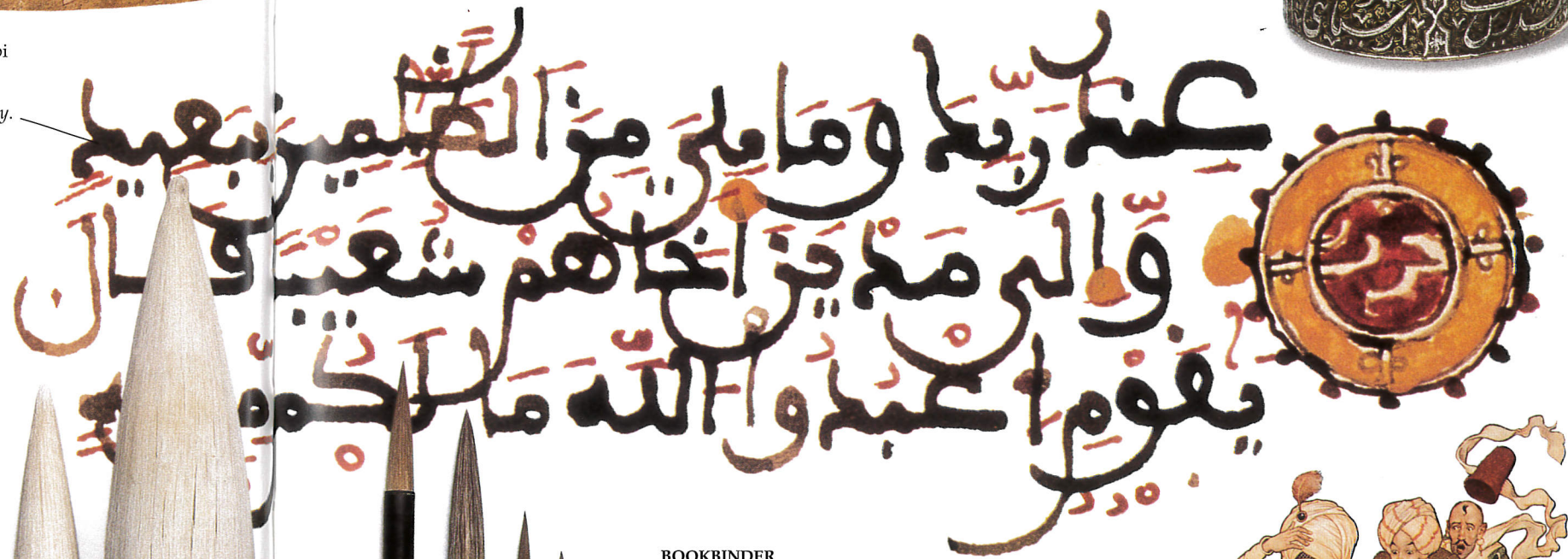


Flowing maghribi script is one popular style of Islamic calligraphy.

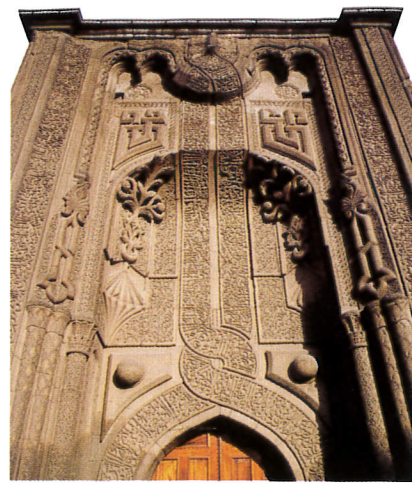


BOOK OF KINGS
This book is an epic poem composed in Iran. It is written in a flowing form of Arabic script called *nasta'liq*. The long curves in the script are said to look like birds' wings.

INKWELL
Two bands of calligraphy decorate this inkwell, which was made in Iran in the 16th century. It would have inspired its user to produce writing of beauty and elegance.



HORSE CALLIGRAPHY
Some Muslim calligraphers can make beautiful pictures using the curving forms of Arabic script. This horse is made up entirely of Arabic script, adorned with different colored inks.



STONE BANNERS
Calligraphy is used on many Islamic buildings. At this *madrasah* in Konya, Turkey, bands of carved calligraphy curve around the doorway and cross in a knot-like form above it, like fabric banners.

Inscription written in legible form

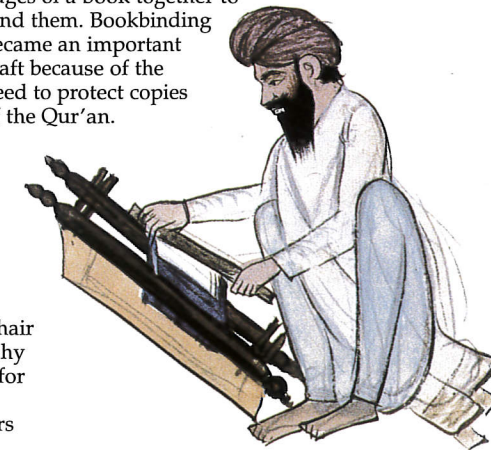


PEN AND INK
Early calligraphers used pens made out of pieces of reed (left), cut to a point with a sharp knife. Black ink was made from soot, mixed with a little water to make it flow.

Animal-hair calligraphy brushes for larger characters

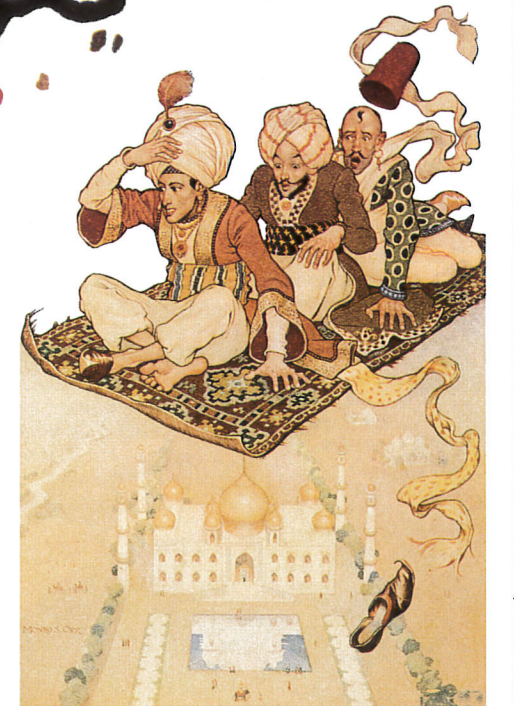


BOOKBINDER
An Indian craftsman holds the pages of a book together to bind them. Bookbinding became an important craft because of the need to protect copies of the Qur'an.



Animal-hair calligraphy brushes for smaller characters

BROAD-BRUSH EFFECTS
Although a lot of calligraphy is done with pen and ink, an animal-hair brush is another useful tool for broad strokes and for filling in colors between black outlines. These brushes are made with goat and wolf hair.



ARABIAN NIGHTS
The Thousand and One Nights, or *Arabian Nights*, is a collection of stories said to have been told to a king, Shahryar, by his wife Shahrazad. Full of adventure, these magical stories are still entertaining readers today.