The principal source of Arabic calligraphy and its Development in the Muslim World

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Introduction

Until the advent of Islam, the Arab society considered writing as a weakness of manhood; therefore all the famous poets of the *Jahiliyya*[1] had produced their *divans*[2] verbally and remembered their poetry throughout their life. Towards the end of their life they transmitted their collection of poetry to the next generation orally. The holy Quran, having been revealed upon the holy Prophet Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years in Arabic[3], thereby brought the Arabic script into writing and then elevated it to an art form to the highest standard of calligraphy, which over a period of time has become the primary art form of the Islamic world. The evolution of Arabic script and its use in calligraphy is linked to the evolution of the Arabic language for the script transposes the phonetic sounds before being elevated into an art form. The variations of the form of calligraphy reflect both the evolution of the language and also various roots through which the script reached Arabia. Thus it will be necessary to consider the Arabic script before and after the advent of Islam in order to assess the developments in Arabic writing. All the important points shall be discussed with relevant figures as solid evidence of this paper for creating better understanding on the role of Quran as the only source towards the development of Arabic script and its elevation to an art form not only meeting the standards of calligraphy but giving many new dimensions to calligraphy itself.

The role of art of calligraphy must take into account a particular language in which the art is executed. For the subject case, the language is Arabic and its role in forming and development of calligraphy art. The holy Qur'an, which is the principal source behind the development of the Arabic language and its evolution to calligraphy

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[1] Rajput, S.A. 2009. 15-30; Period of ignorance/dark ages - just preceding the advent of Islam 6th c., is referred as *Jahiliyya* in Arabic.
[2] Poetical works, Anthologies.
[3] al-Qur'an, 12:2.

art, was revealed to the holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the form of speech through the archangel Gabriel at various intervals over a period of 23 years.

The evolution of the Arabic script and its use in calligraphy is linked to the evolution of the Arabic language, for the script transposes the phonetic sounds before being elevated into an art form. The variations of the form of calligraphy reflect both the evolution of the language and also various roots through which the script reached Arabia. Thus it will be necessary to consider briefly the Arabic script before the first century Hijra in order to assess the significance of the developments in language, script and calligraphy, or *Qalam*, after the advent of Islam. Being manifested through the revealed text of the Qur'an in the Arabic language, Quran thereby elevated the written word to a new status in Arab culture. It elevated the script into an art form through the development of calligraphy, or *Qalam*, which was to become the primary art form of the Islamic world. The *Qalam* of the Qur'anic Arabic thus was different from the script used for ordinary purposes. It also evolved in the different areas of the Islamic world according to the various calligraphic traditions of the lands in which Islam took root. For the purposes of better understanding the subject, the important aspects to be discussed are the evolution of the Arabic language and script prior to the advent of Islam, and the development of the Arabic script after the advent of Islam, and the evolution of the Qur'anic *Qalam* as art form.

All the important points as indicated above shall with relevant figures as solid evidence of the Research for creating better understanding on the role of Quran towards the development of Arabic script.

The Origin of the Arabic Script

The Arabic script evolved from a variety of sources. Oldest among these is Proto-western Semitic, the so-called parent script of all Western alphabets, of which the earliest comprehensible text is the epitaph, in the Phoenician language, on the sarcophagus of King Ahiram (variously dated between 1200 and 1000 BC)[4].

From West Semitic developed the North Semitic and South Semitic scripts. The latter is the younger of the two, from which various scripts in turn evolved but which are not directly connected with the subject under discussion. It is with the off-shoots of the

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[4] .   Coulmas 1980. 141 and FN. 7.

North Semitic script that we shall be concerned. The earliest was Phoenician, from which the Greek alphabet is derived, but around the tenth century B.C. two other forms can be distinguished: Canaanite and Aramaic. It is the evolution of Aramaic, which is of significance for the development of the Arabic script, and the Qur'anic *Qalam*, (Figure. 1).

The earliest known document in Aramaic script dates from the ninth century B.C. and was found in North Syria[5]. Aramaic became very important during the last Assyrian period (c. 1000 – 600 B.C) being the international lingua franca throughout the near and Middle East, Asia Minor, and also the Persian Empire where it was used as the language of administration. By the third century B.C. Aramaic had not only replaced Assyrian cuneiform but also had split into several new scripts namely Syriac, Palmyran, Hebrew and Nabatean.

The Nabateans, who were Arabs, primarily used Aramaic as a cultivated language. Their script, which is attested in many inscriptions between the first century BC and the third century AD., is important as the immediate fore bearer of the Arabic script. For example, the tombstone of (328 AD) of Emro'Al-Qais found in Namarah shows the derivation of Arabic from the Nabatean writing. Its most distinctive characteristic is that the letters are connected with each other, where as in Nabatean they are not. Another specimen is the Zebed inscription, which is dated (512 AD). This is written in three languages, Arabic, Greek and Syriac. And following this is the inscription of Harran dated (568 AD). This is the third known pre-Islamic inscription.[6]

The Arabic script is the youngest amongst the North-Semitic scripts and appeared during the fourth century A.D. Later it was to develop as the script of the Qur'an and spread as the medium of transmission of the liturgical language from the Arabian peninsula throughout the near East and in West, Central, and South Asia, as well as to many parts of Africa and some peripheral regions of Europe, indeed wherever Islam took root. It was also adapted to many languages belonging to families other than the Semitic groups, such as Turkish, Farsi, Urdu, Kashmiri, Malay, Uighur, Kazak, Somali, Swahili, Berber, Spanish and Slavonic. This list by no means exhausts the number of languages, which either use now, or have used in the past, some form of the Arabic orthography.

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[5] .   Ibid, 145.
[6] .   Hawari, H. M. Al 1930, 323-327.

Furthermore, it does not imply that each has borrowed the orthography directly from the Arabic language. In fact each language has its own history but we need not go into this detail here. [7]

Thus we can trace the root of Arabic script back to the proto west Semitic through Nabatean, Aramaic and North Semitic. However, the Semites were not the inventors of writing. Their contribution lies in the methods whereby the script was perfected by reducing phonetic sounds to visible symbols. Hence they provided the foundations for literature, to supplement the rich oral traditions, and brought the written and spoken languages closer together. The systems were simpler than the cuneiform and grew in such a manner as to enable great flexibility of expression. "The Semitic alphabets" says Coulmas "offered great potential for the spread and popularisation of the art of writing". [8]

The Arabic Alphabet

According to Al-Masrif writing earlier this century[9] the early Arabic alphabet was arranged in' the order of Abjad ‎د ج ‎= ا ب ‎الجبد (Figure. 2. B), as in the Greek and Roman alphabets: Alpha, Beta, Gama, Delta, (Figure. III). According to him the number of letters in the alphabet is twenty-two and their order and sound is exactly the same as that of Greek and Latin.

Ancient writers held various opinions regarding the origin of writing and the alphabet. Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BC, expressed no view as to its origin, but remarked simply that the Phoenicians, who came to Greece with one Cadmus, introduced it there along with other arts. Dioclorus Siculus held that the Syrians were the inventors of the alphabets, and that the Phoenicians having had it from them modified the forms of some of the letters and Cadmus brought them to Greece. Other writers were divided into two schools of thought, the one favoring the Egyptian and the other the Phoenician claim[10].

As has been noted above, the Greek Alphabet is acknowledged to be of Phoenician origin, probably, being acquired by the Greeks through the Phoenician,

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[7].   Coulmas 1980, 150; C. Muhammad Naim n.d, 177.
[8].   Ibid., 155.
[9].   Al Masrif, 1972, 32
[10].   Driver 1948, 129-166

Aramaen or the Syriac trading centers (Circa. 12th-9th century Be). This suggestion is reinforced by the fact that not only does it share the names of the letters but also the order of the alphabet. Whcn Grecks took over the Semitic alphabet they also adapted it to the needs of an Indo-European Language[11].

Hitti agrees with Al-Masrif[12] and has given a chart of the alphabets of several scripts including Greek, Latin and-Arabic (Figure. 4). His chart shows twenty two letters in the Arabic alphabet and also that the order is *Abjad.* Although Dodge[13] has also identified the *Abjad* system in two different ways his explanation as to its origin is entirely different. According to him *Abjad* was the name of one of the six persons who created the Arabic alphabet. Both Dodge and Al-Masrif use the same source i.e. Al-Nadim but Al-Masrif seems to have grasped the principles more thoroughly. Further, since he was so thoroughly familiar with Arabic his argument is more convincing, particularly as Dodge himself admits that he could not follow all the orthography clearly[14].

Now, the question arises where and when were the final six letters (or in some cases seven which we shall discuss elsewhere) of the Arabic alphabet created and how did they come into being?

One possible answer to this question is that the earlier twenty two letter were not sufficient enough to represent all the sounds of the Arabic language, and that on the basis of *Abjad* last six letters were created i.e ثخذ = ث، خ، ذ and ضظغ= ض، ظ، غ .
The following four points can explain it:

1. None of them is original, each being formed by a diacritical mark added to an existing letter. This means that orthographically they do not have an origin as they seem to be based on the forms of ب، ح، د، ص، ط، عba, ha, dal, sad, ta, and a'in.

2. Consequently, they are not original letters but the Arabic phonemes representing special Arabic sounds.

11 . Ibid., 171 -178
12 . Hitti P.K (1976) 2005, 53
13 . Dodge (1871) 1990, 67.
14 . Ibid. 11, F.N .17&21.

3. These letters when transliterated cannot be represented by any single Roman letter, but need at least a combination of two letters or special diacritical marks as th ﺶ , kh خ , dh ذ , d ض , d ظ , and gh غ .

4. Their sounds are not totally original but record an accent particular to' Arabic e.g. و ش س ص i.e. th, s. s but this typical Arabic خ is very close to ح h, then ضظس are similar to ذ but with a different sound.

While explaining the origin and spread of the North Arabic script Al- Baladhuri, writing in the fourth century hijra[15] states that the Arabic alphabet was created by a certain group of four men at Bakkah, near Hirah and Hit, towards the end of the fifth century A.D. If this explanation is correct it would reinforce the proposal that Syriac is the root of both Greek/Latin and of Arabic, and the fact that they all share the same number, order and sound of the letters in their early form. Later the number and the arrangement of Arabic letters were to change quite considerably. Unfortunately, in this particular field, very little has been written. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that all these changes could have taken place in the first half of the seventh century A.D., since all the sources agree that serious attempts to write Arabic were first made only after the advent of Islam.

Among all the semitic scripts, Arabic has the richest inventory of consonants and comprises twenty eight basic letters. In addition, a ligature was formed of *lam* and *alif*, which is often counted as the twenty-ninth letter[16]. Muhammad Naim, in his article denotes that classical Arabic has twenty-nine graphemes[17], which are always used, and a few diacritics[18], which are used for special purposes. According to him traditional analysis of Arabic orthography usually presents an alphabet of twenty-eight letters, since *hamzah* and *alif* are often confused due to a special relationship between the two.

The characteristic feature of the outer form of Arabic script is that all letters except *alif, dal, dal, ra, za* and *waw* occur in four different forms depending on their

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[15] . Abbott 1939, 6-7.
[16] . Coulmas 1980, 150; Ahmad Mustafa 1989, 4.
[17] . C. Muhammad Naim n.d., 113, A grapheme is the smallest distinctive unit in the orthography of any language.
[18] . Ibid. Graphemes are linear; Diacritics are supersegmental and non-linear. A grapheme can occur without a diacritic but a diacritic can not occur without a grapheme.

position in the word: independent, initial, medial or final. (Figure.5), lists the form of twenty-eight letters and their sound values, and (Figure. 6), gives their names and variant forms.

Of the languages to which the Arabic alphabet was applied, some have a richer inventory of phonemes than Arabic. New or derived letter signs were invented to write these languages: the Persian alphabet, for example, has four additional letters for پ p, چ c, ژ z and گ g, and its extension to Urdu produced another four for ڈ d, ڑ r, ۓ and Ya-i-majhul[19]. In the Arabic alphabet the shape of the signs is a dominant factor, as ب ث ت (b-t-t), خ ح ج (j-h-h), ژ ر ز و (d-d-r-z); sometimes shape and/ or phonetic value both operate, as in س ش ص ض ط ظ (s-s s-d t-t-d) and ف ق ک (f-q-k) and similarity of use also play its part as in ھ و ی (h-w-y)[20]

The Evolution of Arabic Script in the Early Days of Islam

In its origin Arabic orthography was functional rather than being an art form. Nabatean script, the predecessor of Arabic, even at the zenith of the Nabatean state, could not be considered as a beautiful script even if a certain subtle elegance can be found in the elongated shape of the letters. However during its transition to Arabic script Nabatean lost such elegance and artistic refinement as it may have possessed. The earliest documents in Arabic exhibit a most ungainly type of script. In fact the history of the Semitic alphabet shows that decorative elaborations were shunned and that it was much less of a natural starting point for artistic development than were, for example, Egyptian or Chinese scripts.

As Rosenthal argues that it is hardly a satisfactory answer to say that since all forms of pictorial representation were greatly curbed in Islam, art took refuge in calligraphy; nor is it convincing that calligraphy developed as a response to the needs of a bureaucracy even though in due course the latter was to develop its own forms and

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[19]. Coulmas 1980, 151; Schimmel. A.M. 1970, xiii-xiv.
[20]. Driver 1948, 185

decorations[21]. Rather, the starting point for the phenomenal development of calligraphy in Muslim culture is directly related to the origins of Islam in the text of the Qur'an, revealed to The Prophet Muhammad through divine intervention. The sacred character of the text elevated the status of recording it into an art form, and thus an aspect of Arabic script, namely that used to transcribe the language of the Qur'an and that used for religious texts in general, evolved into calligraphy (which here will be referred to as *Qalam*). Islam not only demanded the careful and exact execution of religious documents, but also led Muslims to see the script as an expression of the Living Word, a manifestation of the beauty of the Divine and of Divine creation.

From this perception Qur'anic calligraphy, and subsequently calligraphy in general, attained the position as an artistic medium on every level of Islamic civilization. It maintained this position, favoured by the increasing religious intensity of the later Muslim history. It was stimulated, perhaps, by non Arab artistic impulses inhibited at certain times by rigid interpretations of sunnah and which thus encouraged the use of calligraphy as decorative elements in architecture, for example in Persia and Central Asia and the Indian Sub-continent.

Al-Masrif[22] holds that both Muslim scholars and Orientalists agree that calligraphy reached the status of an established art form towards the end of the ninth century, by which time the principles of this art, its constituent elements, postulation of its theories, classification of its types, the variation of styles, discrimination between its various elements, detection of unity and diversity, and the terminology related to it had been developed. The origin of many of these factors could be traced back into pre-Islamic times. The art of book illustration with botanical and mathematical designs, which also flourished during this century, also had its roots in ancient cultures such as Sumerians, Ashurians, Babylonians and Kaldanians. What was different was the primary status not so much of the art of the book, but the Art of Qur'anic calligraphy, in whatever medium it was expressed, whether on vellum or paper, as the Divine Text, or in excerpts on buildings, on ceramics, whether as part of the architectural decoration or individual artefacts on metalwork, wood and so on.

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[21]. Rosenthal F. (1948) 1971, 57-58; Martin Lings 1976, 12; Ahmad Moustafa's thesis 1989, 7-8.
[22]. Al-Masrif, 29.

Arab historians agree that the Arabic script was not invented with the advent of Islam, but had existed in certain areas of the Arabic-speaking world. It was practised in Kufah, from where the Kufic script took its name. The people of al-Hirah and al-Anbar were known for their skill in writing and education and it was through them that the practice of Arabic script had reached Mecca and Medina even before the advent of Islam[23]. In Medina the tribes of al-Aws, al-Khazraj and al-Thaqif were known for their literacy.

The Arabic script before Islam had different stages of evolution as already discussed above. The letters were arranged in the order of he *Abjad* alphabet, but there were many orthographic variations. (Figure. 2.A), for example shows the various forms of *Alif* used from before the advent of Islam until the seventh century Hijra (c. 622 – 1400 AD)[24]. The second line shows the first twenty-two letters of Arabic alphabet which had evolved through Nabatean, Kufic and Arabic.

The figure of tree, (Figure. 7), illustrates the development of Arabic scripts from the advent of Islam to the end of the Abbasid dynasty. In the year 633 when a number of Huffaz were killed in the battles following the death of the Prophet, Omar urged the first Caliph Abu Bakr to commit the Qur'an to writing. The Prophet's secretary, Zayd ibn Thabit, was ordered to compile and collate the revelation into a book, which was later codified by the third caliph Uthman in 651 AD. This canonized edition was later copied into four or five identical editions and sent to the four Muslim regions (Kufah, Basra, Syria and Damascus) to be used as standard codices from which henceforward all manuscripts of the Qur'an were to be copied.[25]

The first scripts, Makki and Madani, employed for the execution of these codices were the local variations of the Jazm script[26]. Subsequently, Kufic script was used (which was to be the basis of most of the Qur'anic calligraphy which developed in the Muslim world). In fact several calligraphic variants were developed from the Jazm script, each being called by an epithet relating them to their place of origin, such as the

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[23] . Ibid., 32; Abbott 1939, 6-7

[24] . The forms of Alif are: 1. Safaitic and and Thamudi, 2. Nasturi, 3&4 Ancient Arabic, 5. Sinai, 6. Ancient Kufic (from Qur'an), 7. From the tomb of Al Jubair, 8. From papyrus folios, 9. From an Indian copy of Qur'an, 10. Qur'an copied in fourth Hijra, 11. Manuscript of eighth Hijra, 12. Frorn Al Muhkam Subh'l Asha, 13. and al- Fihrist As cited by al-Masrif, 32.

[25] . All sources.

[26] . Safadi 1978, 9

Anbari of Anbar, the Hiri from Hira, the Makki from Mecca, the Madani from Medina, the Kufic from Kufah, and so on as illustrated in (Figure. 7).

However, these different names did not imply that the variants had developed highly distinctive characteristics; on the contrary, the available evidence points to the existence of three main styles, known as Mudawwar (rounded), Muthallath (triangular), and Ta'im (twin, i.e. composed of both the triangular and the rounded). These appear in various forms in different areas, principally Mecca and Medina, and to the west al Kufah and al Basra. The various forms found in the latter two cities have been given different names such as Mashq, Tajawid, Salwati, Masnu, Ma'il, Rasif, Isfahani, Jali and Qiramuz[27] although the precise definitions and identity of each is far from clear. Of the three early forms identified above only two were maintained, each with distinct features; one was cursive and easy to write, called Muqawwar and the other, called Mabsut, was angular and consisted of thick straight strokes. These two main features governed the development of early Makki and Madani scripts and led to the formation of a few styles, most important of which were Ma'il (slanting), Mashq (extended) and Naskh (inscriptional). While these three styles were current in Hijaz, Kufic was developing in Kufah. The Mashq and Naskh continued to be used after considerable improvements, but the Ma'il died out being replaced by the monumental and hieratic Kufic.[28]

The Arabic orthography, in which Uthman first preserved the Qur'an, is known as Rasm al Mushaf or Rasm al Uthman. It establishes the basic text, which was maintained as the dots, diacritics, and punctuation developed. Ibn Khaldun remarked that early Qur'anic script was slightly crude and deviated from the principles of calligraphy but since it was by the hand of the Prophet's companion it was held in great esteem. The earlier, and the later styles of transcribing the Qur'an have been distinguished by Ibn Durustawaih as Khatt-i-Mushaf and Khatt-i-Taqti-i-Uruz,[29] i.e.

خطِ تقطیع عـروض

In the early years there was a certain reluctance to accept the more evolved forms of calligraphy. When Malik was asked which he would prefer, he answered "earlier". He did not like to elucidate certain vowels by adding waw or alif. Even a waw or alif

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[27] . All Sources; al Masrif 444; Dodge mentions the same names in his book but with some difference of spelling, 11.

[28] . Safadi, 9.

[29] . Al Kitab, 7, as cited by Ramyar in "Turikh-i-Quran", 521.

did not like to elucidate certain vowels by adding waw or alif. Even a waw or alif coming at the end as in اولى الالباب اولاك and الـــربوا which are not even pronounced were not accepted with great pleasure.[30]

It should also be noted that since the orthographic signs marking short vowels were not yet invented, the large vowels were used instead, namely ا alif for Fatha, � waw for Dammah and ى Ya for kasrah. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal further restricted development through his decision that any departure or deviation from Khatt-al-Uthman was haram.[31]

The copy of the Qur'an transcribed by Uthman ibn 'Affan in the tradition of Zaid bin Thabit has been distinguished by Casanova[32]. The original tradition was familiar to the Arabs but as Islam was extended beyond the Arab world every possible assistance was necessary to ensure the correct recitation by people who were essentially non-Arabic speakers. The Khatt-al-Uthman did not have other marks of accent like Tashdeed and jazm etc, for example,

ويدع الانسان ويمح الله الباطل ويوم يدع الداع

Verse of Qur'an according to Uthman's tradition followed by the modern.

وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَيَمْحُ اللهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَ يَوْمَ يَدْعُ الدَّاعِ

The scholarly opinions concerning the various origins of Qur'anic script can be placed in the three following groups:

1. The first are those who believed that the earliest written Qur'an was in accordance with the instructions which were given by God at the revelation of any part of the Qur'an and which were seen by the Prophet Muhammad to have been carried out by the scribe.

2. The second group held that the script of the Qur'an was part of the Revelation and was therefore traditional. Ibn Khaldun and Abu Baqar Baqillani have discussed this point of view with the argument that in the Qur'an itself God did not made any conditions or suggestions regarding the way it was to be recorded and did not

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[30]. Abu Umar al Dani, Al Mqna, 10 as cited by Ramyar, 521.
[31]. al-Itqan II, 168; Ramyar, 521.
[32]. Casanova, Muhammad et la fin du monde, 139 as cited by Ramyar, 523.

prescribe any particular style for its scribe. There is nothing explicit or implicit in either the Qur'an or the Sunnah, which restricted the Ummah from improving its script or calligraphy.[33]

3. In the third group Badr-ud-Din Zarkashi (d.794 AH) and later the author of Tibyan and Izz-ud-Din bin Abdusalam came forward to argue that writing the Qur'an in its pristine script would no more be advisable because a number of persons would not be able to read it thus written while (in other walks of life) they are getting used to a changing script. It was also experienced that most people in such circumstances, not being familiar with the Khatt-i-Uthmani were not able to read the Qur'an either correct or beautifully, a most important obstacle for the pious since it is stated in the Qur'an that it should be read both beautifully and accurately.

<div dir="rtl">وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا</div> *(al-Muzammil:4)*

If such difficulties were being faced by Arabs, how much more intense were they for the many non-Arabic – speaking peoples who had converted to Islam. It was therefore, of the greatest importance and urgency to establish a style of script, which would protect its originality and accuracy. However, this was not to be interpreted as a licence to incorporate any change however small it might be. It was within this spirit that Badr-ud-Din Zarkashi discouraged the transliteration of Qur'an in any script other than Arabic[34] since it could make room for errors. Serious orthographical attention was paid to this issue and some important books were contributed, for example:

1. Badr al Din Zarkashi:

   "Al Burhan Fi Ulum al-Qur'an"

2. Abu Umar al Dani:

   (a)   "Al Muhkam Fi Nuqat"

   (b)   "Al Maqna Fi Rasm al-Masahif al Amsar"

3. Abul Abbas Maqakashi:

   "Unwan al Dalil fi Khatt al Tanzil"

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[33] .   Manah-al-Irfan I, 373 as cited by Ramyar, 521.
[34] .   al-Burahan I, 380, cited by Ramyar, 525.

The main difficulty in reading the original script accurately was because of the absence of dots for both the short and long vowels[35];

It was felt highly necessary to provide every possible assistance to the reader, and particularly the non-Arabs, to enable all Muslims to read the Qur'an accurately, particularly important since it was deemed sinful to read the Qur'an incorrectly[36]. Moreover the non-Arabs were unfamiliar with several of the Arabic sounds. Thus the system of orthographic signs was introduced to indicate vocalisation b adding the dots and accent marks. At first only the dots were added, principally in order to distinguish those letters, which had a similar shape such as .
They were also added to indicate vowel sounds, for example one dot above the letter بَ being equal to Fatah, one dot below بِ equal to Kasrah and one dot on the side of a letter بٌ equal to Dammah.

The Reform of Arabic Script or the Diacritical

The attempts made to reform of Arabic script in order to ensure the correct pronunciation and interpretation of the Qur'an can be classified into three groups.[37]

1. First abu'1 Aswad ad Du'ali (d. 69/688) formulated a system using coloured dots as diacritics to represent the short vowels and other orthographical signs such as the Hamzah, the Shaddah, the Maddah, the Sukun and the Tanwin etc.[38]

2. Second came the establishment of a basic system of a basic system of "letter pointing" to distinguish the consonants which were exactly alike in character, achieved by the use of certain vowel signs which were adopted from the Syriac.

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[35]. 	Ramyar, 527.
[36]. 	Guest R. "A Tablet in Kufic from Kufa, 104.
[37]. 	Lings and Safadi1976, 19; Ramyar, 530.
[38]. 	Ramyar, 536, Abu al Aswad was a close associate of Ali ibn Abi Talib and the inventor of Arabic grammar.

This establishment is attributed to the famous Hajjaj in Yusuf al Thaqafi (d. 96 / 714).

3. The third reform was the modification and extension of the first two basic systems, until they were superseded by the system formulated by al Khalil ibn Ahmad (d. 170 / 786), which is more or less the conventional system, used today.

While this last system was hardly used in the early Kufic script, developed in the Arabic – speaking world, it appears at an early date in eastern Kufic script, which evolved largely in the eastern Islamic lands among non-Arabic speaking peoples. Professor Arberry, in his article "A Qur'an in the 'Persian' Kufic", has pointed to the diacriticals of a Qur'an in an eastern Kufic script whose colophon suggests the 3rd / 9th century date.[39] Many scholars agree that by the 5th / 11th century the orthographic system of diacriticals developed in the Eastern Kufic script became generally accepted for Qur'anic calligraphy throughout the Muslim world.

There remains some controversy about the actual date when the dots were introduced[40]. Other traditions are cited in support of *I'rab* (diacriticals). Someone reported that the Prophet said, "anyone who assigns *I'rab* to the Qur'an and reads it, will be rewarded with the merits of a martyr". Abdullah bin Mas'ud said "read the Qur'an correctly and with a beautiful voice and assign it *I'rab* for its Arabic" [41]. Kutaibah said first assign dots to the Qur'an after every fifth and tenth verse (ayat) and leave them as marks (of division), although it appears that such traditions were forged in support of modernising the script of Qur'an.

Rafi'i holds that dots and other marks already existed in Arabia and the people of Mecca had a different system of dots to those of Medina. It appears that both renounce their own practices after Abu'l Aswad introduced his system in Basrah.[42]

Regarding those persons who first introduced the dots and I'rabs we find four names which include those of Hasan Basry (d. 110 A.H), although he is unlikely to have contributed to this system. Abu'l Aswad Du'ali is supposed to have learnt grammatical syntax from Ali ibn Abi Talib and to have earned a good reputation for his expertise in this discipline. Among his students were Yahya bin Ya'mar Adwani, the Qadi of

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[39]. Arberry n.d., "Quran in the 'Persian' Kufic", 9-16.
[40]. Dani, al-Muhkam, 2, as cited by Ramyar, 531.
[41]. Ramyar, 531.
[42]. Dani, al-Muhkam, 7-9, as cited by Ramyar, 532.

Khorasan and Nasr bin Asim Laithi. He has been identified as the one who first added the dots and diacriticals at the order of Abd al Malik bin Marwan[43]. There is also a report that Muhammad bin Sirin was the first to introduce the dots in the Qur'an although according to Blachere that proposal is unlikely to be correct. Finally the person whose name has been mentioned as the first to introduce dots is Nasr bin Asim who was the student of both Ab'l Aswad and Yahya bin Ya'mar.[44]

According to Ibn Khalliqan, Nasr ibn Asim, under certain circumstances introduced the dots and other marks at the order of Hajjaj bin Yusuf. Ahmad Askari in his "Kitab al Tashif" has further confirmed this but al-Dani comments that the reports about Nasr bin Asim might be true to the extant of the copies prepared in Basrah and argues that Abul Aswad was really the first.[45]

Format and Dating of Early Copies of Quran

The earliest extant copy of the Qur'an is held by the British Library, London, and is believed to have been copied in Makkah or Madinah in the late second century Hijra. The script is Ma'il. The format is vertical, an interesting feature since other early copies of the Qur'an are in horizontal format. Lings and Safadi suggest that the oblong formal of early Qur'ans is the result of the inf1uence of horizontal Qur'anic inscriptional panels in the mosques[46]. Other reasons could be that the oblong format followed that of papyri, used for general documents at this period.

Also, the horizontal format was more suited to the sweeping motion of the *Qalam* or pen. The vertical format of the page was that found in the Byzantine Empire or could be regarded as a section of a scroll as used in the Judaic tradition. In any case the horizontal seems to have been developed as the preferred format for the religious texts for the first time by the Muslims.

The precise dating of the early Kufic Qur'ans has not yet been decided upon due to lack of evidence for the great Arab libraries in Baghdad, Cairo, Madinah and Tripoli were destroyed by the Abbasids, circa 750 AD leaving no known manuscript with colophon. Some indication for the dates of later Qur'ans can be gathered through the

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[43] .   Ramyar, 533-5.
[44] .   Ramyar, 535.
[45] .   Ramyar, 537.
[46] .   Ling and Safadi, 17; Ettinghausen 1942, " Survey of Persian Art, III.

waqf notations. The oldest of these bears a date 866 AD, while three others are dated to the 880 AD and eight fall within the first half of the tenth century[47].

Early Calligraphers and their Calligraphic Styles

The outstanding figure associated with the origin of Arabic calligraphy was Abu Ali Muhammad Ibn Ali ibn Muqla, born in 272/866 in Baghdad and who died there in 328/940. Ibn Muqlah was the inventor of six styles of writing. In 310 AH, he took the circle for the basis of writing, introduced 'this invention instead of Kufic and taught it to the others[48]. His six styles are ***Thulth or Thuluth, Naskhi, Muhaqqaq, Rayhani, Tauqi*** and ***Riqa*** [49]which we shall discuss elsewhere. He was the first to have formulated the idea that the proportions of Arabic letters and their relations to one another are based on geometric principles.

Ibn Muqla also invented the script known as Khutt-al-Marisub (proportioned writing). This script became central not only to Arabic orthography but also to the history of Islam since it has been used for the majority of the Qur'anic manuscripts. Ibn Muqla wished to subject calligraphy to the strict method of scientific discipline and to make practice dependent upon a theory. It is probable that, Arabic translations of Euclid and Aristotle were at his disposal and that he was inspired in his geometrical letter Construction by Euclid's elements. It is also likely that Aristotle's writing on logic supplied him with the discipline, which he followed in his treatise *Rasala fi Ilm al Khatt*[50]. Furthermore ibn Muqla's descriptions aim to define each letter and thus constitute an essential precondition to correct execution of any letter shape. He felt that the actual practice of writing any of the letters is similar to laying muscles on a skeleton. It is a process in which the reed pen plays an essential role which cannot be fully understood through theoretical knowledge alone.' Lacking practical experience in the use of the *qalam* and its essential role in shaping the skeleton is similar to a process whereby a person writes blindfold.

In his doctoral dissertation on Ibn Muqla, Ahmad Moustafa argues that many western and oriental scholars who studied ibn Muqla's theory have missed the very

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[47] .   Atil E. 1972, 12; Rice D.S. 1955, 2.
[48] .   Qadi Ahmad, "Calligraphers and Painters" 56, tr. by Minorsky1959.
[49] .   Rajput, S.A. 2009, 126-128; 1992, (LMB),V, 70-93; Wink, 2002, I, 109-92.
[50] .   Ahmad Mustafa, Ph.D. thesis CNAA, 9.

important fact that it contrasts with the theory of al-Mansub who based his study on the detached letterforms of the Arabic script. Consequently wrong conclusions were drawn for it is not correct that Ibn Muqla had in mind a type of Kufic script. Ahmad Mustafa finds the reasons for this erroneous interpretation of the theory of *Khatt al Mansub* in the fact that these scholars were art critics or historians, not professional calligraphers; in other words they had knowledge of but no practical training in, the field of calligraphy. Thus they failed to understand that the description given by Ibn Muqla represented geometrical axes of the lines traced by the reed pen. Ibn Muqla almost certainly omitted to mention this fact because he considered it self-evident[51].

Ibn Muqla was a statesman and administrator as well as a calligrapher and held the position of a *Vazir* under the Abbasid Caliphs. Nonetheless his career came to a tragic end, for he fell into disgrace, was imprisoned, and finally was executed. In prison his right hand was cut-off but according to tradition he continued writing with his left hand-and produced an equally beautiful calligraphy[52].

After Ibn Muqla's death, his art of calligraphy was taught by his daughter to a famous Ali ibn Hilal, "better known as Ibn al Bawwab[53] ". The latter elaborated the strict rules of Ibn Muqla and became famous as the first master to write admirably. He too enjoyed favour and high rank. None equalled him either in his time or later. Down to the time of Al Musta'sm and the rise of Yaqut, writing and copying was followed the canons of Ibn Muqla.

Yaqut Al-Musta'simi, was slave of Abbasid Calip Al-Musta'sim from whom he received his name. In the art of calligraphy he followed the traditions of Ibn al Bawwab, but altered the methods of the old masters in trimming of the *qalam* and in the clipping of the nib. Yaqut cut the end of the *qalam*. His calligraphy is preferred to that of Ibn al Bawwab on account of its finesse and elegance, and he is renowned for his artistry rather than for a contribution to the principles of calligraphy. Like the former two masters he was also the master of six styles of scripts[54].

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[51] .   Ibid. 10-14.
[52] .   Tajarib al salaf, 210-211, cited by Qadi Ahmad, tr. by Minorsky, 56; Schimmel, 18.
[53] .   Minorsky, 56; Schimmel, 19.
[54] .   Minorsky, 56.

Six Styles of Writing according to Ibn Muqla

As mentioned above Ibn Muqla's basis of writing was the circle. These cursive styles, known as *al-Aqlam al-Sittah* or *Shish Qalam* (the six pen) are Thuluth, Naskhi, Muhaqqaq, Rayhani, Tauqi and Riqa'.

Thuluth is a static and somewhat monumental script, which was mainly used for decorative purposes, in manuscripts and inscriptions (Figure. 8). An ornamental variety of Thuluth was developed by Ibn al Bawwab and Yaqut and this became so closely associated with the Qur'an that it rightly assumed the status of hieratic script. It was mostly used in Surah headings, titles and colophons. Qur'ans copied entirely in Thuluth are extremely rare.

For the practical purposes of daily life a rounder and lighter script was used. This was called Naskhi, the date of which can be traced to its use on papyri for whose texture it was well suited. It is also found on paper being used for books and letters.

Since Naskhi script lacked strict conformity, it could be improved the most by application of ibn Muqla's system. Ibn Muqla himself formulated perfect proportional Naskhi characters, which dramatically elevated it to the rank of a major script. The final touches were provided by the hand of Ibn al Bawwab, who had marked a preference for Naskhi, and transformed it into a script worthy of the Qur'an, (Figure. 9). There are more Qur'ans copied in Naskhi than in all other scripts together.

Muhaqqaq was a name given to an early script in which the letters were less angular than Kufic. After the discovery of paper in 750 AD and the rapid spread of its use, Muhaqqaq also became more widely practised. During the Caliphate of Al-Mamun (813-33) the form acquired a certain roundness which made it easier to write. It was modified by Ibn Muqla when subjected to his Mansub system, while retaining main features of extended upstrokes with almost no down strokes or deep sub-linear flourishes. It was perfected by the hand of Ibn al Bawwab, who gave it shallow and sweeping horizontal-sub-linear flourishes for impetus and more extended strokes for grandeur. This made it, for more than four centuries the most favourite script for large Qur'ans, throughout the Islamic east and most particularly during the 13th and 14th centuries in Egypt under the Mamluk rule and in Iraq and Persia under the Il-Khanid Mongols (Figure. 10).

The Rayhani, so-called after a certain Ali ibn Ubaydah al Rayhani (d. 834 AD) developed a close affinity with Muhaqqaq, to which it may be considered a sister script. It was also preferred in Persia under the Il-Khanid Sultans (Figure. 11).

Tauqi, which is also known as Tauiaqi has great affinity with Thuluth although its letters are more rounded (Figure. 12). It shares many characteristics with Riqa'. The lines in Tauqi, however, arc thicker than in Riqa and its curves are less rounded, which gives it the appearance of a much heavier script. It is also a larger and much more elegant script than Riqa. It did not develop fully until late in the eleventh century and was established by one Ahmad ibn Muhammad called Ibn al Khazin (d. 1124). He was a second-generation pupil of Ibn al Bawwab whom he admired and emulated. The same calligrapher is credited with the invention of Riqa, and was responsible for its development into a major script closely related to Tauqi, indeed regarded as its twin. Towards the end of the fifteenth century with a further development, Tauqi became much favoured by the Turks but was not as popular among the Arabs as Riqa'.

The Riqa' script also called Ruqah (small sheet), from which it takes its name was derived both from Naskhi and Thuluth. The geometric forms of its letters, particularly the flourishes of the final letters, resemble those of Thuluth in many respects, but it is much smaller and has more rounded curves. An important feature is that the *Alifs* are never written with barbed heads. Other characteristics are that the centres of the loops of its letters are invariably filled in; its horizontal lines are very short and its ligatures are densely structured with the final letters of the preceding words often linked to the first letters of the following words. Riqa' was one of the favourite scripts of the Ottoman calligraphers and received many improvements from the famous calligrapher Shaykh Hamdullah al Amasi (d. 1520). It was progressively simplified by later calligraphers until it eventually became one of the most popular and widely used scripts; it is extensively used today as the preferred script throughout the Arab world[55].

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[55] .   Minorsky, 56-84; Pederson, 72-89; Ling and Safadi,19-20; Ziauddin, 55-60; Schimmel, 18-31; and all sources.

Conclusion

By the end of the Sixth century AD a distinct Arabic script was in use in various major cities in the Hijaz, Kufa and Basra. While there were local differences in the forms, the variants were not of sufficient importance to amount to a, specific and identifiable style. However, the principal use of script was ordinary and had not evolved into calligraphy. It was the advent of Islam which transformed the status of Arabic script elevating the written word into a primary art form, a position achieved by virtue of the fact that the Qur'an is a text, revealed through Divine Intervention, each word of which should be preserved unaltered for posterity. The very act of writing became an act of worship. The written word in due course became a manifestation of the Living Word, the Qur'an having a central position in the Muslim religion, as does the figure of Christ in Christianity.

Whereas during the early days the transcription of the Qur'an was principally for Arabic speakers, as Islam spread beyond Arabia the Qur'an had to be read by peoples from the non-Arab world. Orthographic signs, and vocalisation marks, were therefore developed to ensure the correct distinction and pronunciation of the text, considered so essential and indeed specifically enjoined upon believers by the Qur'an itself. Thus whereas the early Qur'ans were in the script evolved in the city of Kufa, or in Kufic script, an eastern version of Kufic incorporating the extensive vocalization and diacritical was developed in the lands of Eastern Islam by the non-Arabic speaking Musims. By the eleventh century this had become the established orthographic system for transcribing Quranic Arabic

Thereafter various calligraphic forms for transcribing Qur'anic Arabic were developed, of whom the principal exponents were Ibn Muqla, ibn al Bawwab and Yaqut Musta'sirni. The emphasis in this paper has been upon Qur'anic Arabic, as ordinary Arabic developed in different ways with many local variations, as did the language also. However, the role of the Qur'an in Islam gave to the written word in general a status in Islamic culture, which it continues to hold. In the lands of Eastern Islam, and in those of Western Islam also, other forms of calligraphy were developed, which are beyond the scope of this paper, but which evolved as a result of the spread of Qur'anic calligraphy and its use in monumental architecture as well as the Qur'an itself. To conclude our

discussion, the role of Qur'an towards the development of calligraphy art is thus summarised in one line as follows:

"Had it not been for the Holy Qur'an the Arabic script could not have reached to the status of calligraphy and the word calligraphy itself for Arabic script could not have acquired the meaning as we understand it today".

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Figure
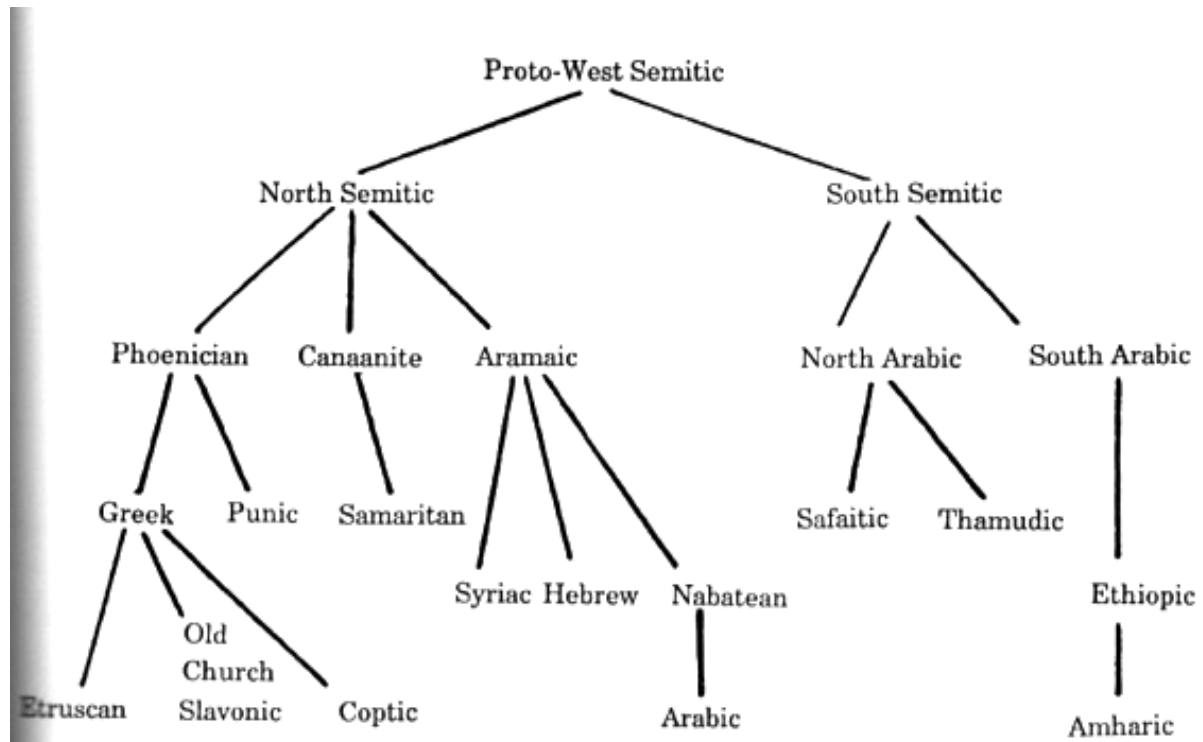
Figure 1. West Semitic derived scripts

Figure 2. Early Arabic Alphabet arranged in the order of *Abjad*. Twenty two in number with their order and sound corresponding to those of Greek and Latin

Old Phoenician				Classical Greek	
Letter	Sound	Name	Meaning of Name	Letter	Name
𐤀	'	'aleph	ox	A	alpha
𐤁	b	beth	house	B	beta
𐤂	g	gimel	camel	Γ	gamma
𐤃	d	daleth	door	Δ	delta
𐤄	h	hē		E	epsilon
𐤆	z	zain	weapon	Z	zēta
𐤇	ḥ	ḥeth		H	ēta
𐤈	ṭ	thet		Θ	thēta
𐤉	j	yodh	arm	I	iōta
𐤊	k	kaph	palm of hand	K	kappa
𐤋	l	lamed	goad	Λ	la(m)bda
𐤌	m	mem	water	M	mȳ
𐤍	n	nun	fish	N	nȳ
𐤎	s	sāmekh	fish	Ξ	xī
𐤏	'	'ain	eye	O	omikron
𐤐	p	pe	mouth	Π	pī
𐤑	ṣ	ṣan			
𐤒	q	qoppa			
𐤓	r	resh	head	P	rhō
𐤔	š	shin	tooth	Σ	sī ma
𐤕	t	tau	cross mark	T	tau
𐤅	w	waw		Y	ypsilon

Figure 3. The Old Phoenician Models for some of the letters of the Classical Greek Alphabet

Constructed with the aid of G. Vinton Duffield

Figure 4- Table of Alphabets, Including Ra's Alshamrah Cuneiform

Figure 5. The Arabic Alphbet; independent letters forms and sound values to be readin Arabic Fashion from right to left

Figure 6. The Arabic Alphabet: Names and variant letters forms
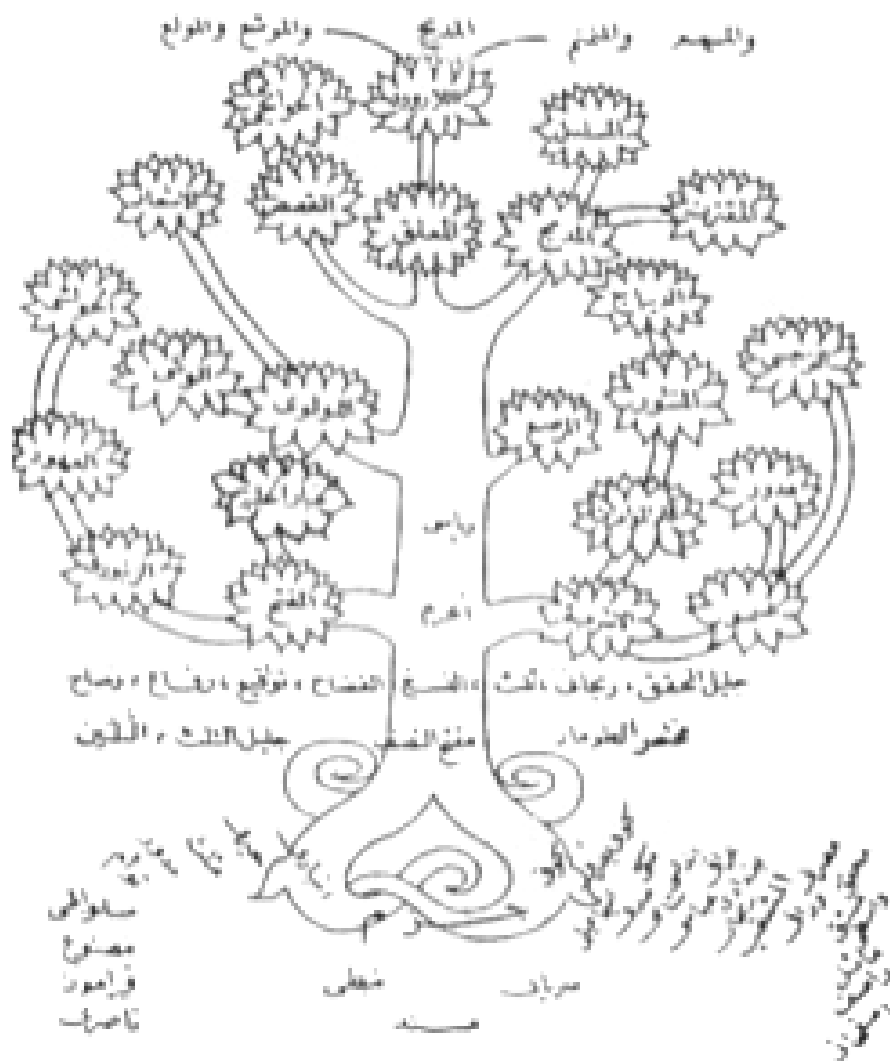
[Evenness of the characters in Jazm writing/Nibbing of reed pen].

AnBari	Kufi
Hairi	Basri
Muthaluth	Isma'ili
Mudawwar	Makki
Ta'lm	Madani
Salwati	Andalusi
Masnu	Shami/Syriac
Quiramuz	Iraqi
Nasari	Abbasi
	Baghdadi
	Rayhani
	Al Mash'ab
	Misri/Egyptain
	Waraqi
	Muhaqqaq
	Mashq
	Waseti
	Ma'il
	Wasif
	Isfahani

Figure 7.

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11. Tawqi verging on Thuluth, detail from a calligraphic page, probably by the hand of Hafiz 'Uthrnan, Turkery, 17th century. The text translates: 'The Prophet of mercy and savior of the Muslim community'

فال يكون مع معاذ نجبل بلغنا ان الله

تعالى كلّم موسى ثلاثة آلاف وخمس مائة

اية فكان آخر كلاه يا ربّ اوصني قال

اوصيك بامّك حتّى قاله سبع مرّات

ثمّ قال يا موسى الارّضا ما رضانى وسخط

Figure 12