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ARABIC WRITING TYPES AND CALLIGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

This article provides detailed information about the variety of Arabic writing styles and the art of calligraphy. It describes the types of Arabic writing styles — Naskh, Thuluth, Kufic, Rayhani, Muhaqqaq, and Ruq'ah. At the same time, it discusses the role of calligraphy in Arab culture and its religious and cultural importance, as well as the use of Arabic writing in modern technologies.

Keywords and phrases: Rayhani, Naskh, Thuluth, Ruq'ah, Muhaqqaq, calligraphy, beautiful handwriting, calligraphy, Khira, Nabataean, Musnad.

Calligraphy is one of the important artistic and scientific forms of art in Eastern, especially Islamic civilization, where writing is shown not only as a way of transmitting information, but also as a high aesthetic and spiritual value. The art of calligraphy based on Arabic writing developed closely with the need to copy, decorate, and preserve the texts of the Holy Qur'an. Today, the art of calligraphy is important not only for copying religious texts, but also in architecture, book decoration, official documents, and artistic creation. Therefore, studying Arabic writing styles and calligraphic traditions on a scientific basis is important for deeply understanding the cultural heritage of the East and the historical development of Islam.

1. The Origin of Arabic Writing

It is known that the Arabic alphabet did not appear by itself. Its creation has a long history. Ancient Egyptian writing is considered the first source in the development of Arabic writing. The person who wrote the first Arabic writing is considered to be Zayd Ibn Hamman. The history of the origin of Arabic writing is shown below in order[1]:

Ancient Egyptian writing;
Phoenician writing;
Musnad (Himyarite writing — 2nd–3rd centuries BC);
Thamudic, Safaitic, Lihyanite, and Sabaean writing;
Nabataean writing (3rd century AD — 270);
Hira and Hijazi writing;
Namara (4th century — 328), Zayd (512), Hiran (568);
Maqili writing;
Kufic writing (4th–5th–7th–9th centuries AD).

From the 7th century AD, “Khat al-Ma‘qili” was replaced by “Khat al-Kufi”, which is considered the oldest and most famous type of Arabic writing[2].

The use of Kufic writing decreased significantly by the 10th century. During this period, Naskh and Thuluth writing styles were mainly used. Six writing styles developed based on Kufic writing.

2. Types of Arabic Writing

1. Kufic writing كوفى

Kufic writing is a writing style with a geometric and angular appearance. It appeared in the city of Kufa in the 4th century and is considered a type of writing developed in the 7th century. It was widely used in Southern Arabia until the 10th century and was replaced by Naskh in the 14th century. Later, it was used for decoration.

2. Muhaqqaq writing محقق

In Muhaqqaq writing, most of the letters are straight. Vertical lines are written long. The ends of the curves finish thinly.

3. Rayhani writing ريحاني

This type of writing developed from Muhaqqaq writing, and its practitioner was Ibn Wahhab. This writing is relatively larger than Thuluth, and the letters م (mim), ر (ra), and و (waw) are written longer.

4. Thuluth writing ثلث

Thuluth means “one-third or the third part of something” in Arabic. In this writing, the letters make up one-third or two-sixths in relation to the straight-line part of the curve. In this style, ا (alif), د (dal), and ل (lam) are curved.

5. Ruq’ah writing رقاع

This writing style was widely used in Turkey during the Ottoman Empire, and the letters in this style are written connected to each other. It was used for writing ordinary letters quickly.

6. Naskh writing نسخ

The Arabic translation of Naskh is “erasing”, and calligraphers continue to use this writing style to this day. Many handwritten works have been written in this style until today.

3. The Art of Calligraphy

The art of calligraphy has been very important in the culture of Eastern peoples for a long time. This art has traditionally been called “husnixat” and “xattotlik” in the East, while in the West it is called “calligraphy”.

One of the main reasons for the development of calligraphy was the Holy Qur’an. At that time, it was copied in order to prevent it from being lost and to pass it on to future generations. In the Middle Ages, when book-printing technologies had not yet developed, the importance of calligraphy was much higher. In addition, the art of calligraphy was widely used in architecture and in all areas of folk applied art.

In conclusion, Arabic writing was formed through a long process of historical development and became the basis for the creation of different writing styles in different periods. Writing styles such as Kufic, Naskh, Thuluth, Rayhani, Muhaqqaq, and Ruq’ah played an important role in the development of Arab culture and written heritage. The art of calligraphy became an integral part of Eastern culture through preserving the texts of the Holy Qur’an, book writing, and decorating architecture. Today, Arabic writing and calligraphic traditions continue to maintain their aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual importance and are used in modern technologies and various fields of art.

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