

SHAIKH HAMDULLAH SCHOOL IN THE ART OF TURKISH CALLIGRAPHY: A CASE STUDY FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



METROPOLİTAN SANAT MÜZESİ ÖRNEĞİNDE TÜRK HAT SANATINDA ŞEYH HAMDULLAH EKOLÜ

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ABSTRACT: The art of calligraphy, also known as "hüsni hat" in Islamic culture, involves writing Islamic script in accordance with aesthetic principles. Executed using Arabic letters, this art form emphasizes the aesthetics and meaning of writing. The calligraphers, known as "hattat," adhere to rules to create Imagely pleasing scripts. The essence of calligraphy lies in expressing the aesthetics and essence of writing. Influenced by Islam's emphasis on writing and avoidance of imagery, calligraphy has become one of the most valued forms of Islamic art. This study aims to examine the contributions of the prominent Calligrapher Shaikh Hamdullah (1436-1520), a pioneer of Turkish Calligraphy, to the art through the example of a "thuluth and naskh hadith and poetry panel" Conducted through a literature review, this research delves into the Ottoman calligraphy, aklâm-ı sitte (six scripts), and the Shaikh Hamdullah school, focusing on his muraqqa at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. During the Ottoman era, aklâm-ı sitte styles like thuluth and naskh; muhaqqaq and rihani; tawqî and riq'a, evolved under Hamdullah's influence. His style of naskh calligraphy became the preferred method for transcribing the Quran across the Islamic world, giving rise to the Shaikh Hamdullah School. His contributions encompass Qur'an manuscripts, calligraphic panels, and muraqqas, held in prestigious collections worldwide. The tradition of granting, or certification, has preserved Shaikh's style, allowing his teachings to endure. The discussed artwork, a part of Shaikh's muraqqa album, features thuluth headings and naskh text lines drawn with ink and reed pen on marbled paper. In the work, which represents one of the most ideal examples of the thuluth and naskh styles in calligraphy, onyl gold-painted mini flowers and rulers were observed as elements of illumination.

Keywords: Shaikh Hamdullah, The Art Of Calligraphy, Ottoman Art Of Calligraphy, Turkish Art Of Calligraphy, Aklam-ı Sitte(Six Scripts)

ÖZ: Hat sanatı, İslam yazısını estetik ölçülere bağlı kalarak en güzel biçimde yazma sanatını ifade eder. Arap harflerini kullanarak icra edilen bu sanat, İslam kültüründe "hüsni hat" olarak adlandırılır, sanatkârlarına "hattat" adı verilir. Hat sanatının temel amacı, yazının estetiğini ve manasını en iyi şekilde ifade etmektir. İslam'ın yazıya verdiği önem ve tasvirde kaçınma gibi etmenler, hat sanatını İslam sanatının en değerli dallarından biri yapmıştır. Bu çalışma, Türk Hat Sanatı'nın ilk ve önde gelen ekolü olan Hattat Şeyh Hamdullah'ın (1436-1520) Türk Hat sanatına katkılarını, "sülüs-nesih hadis ve şiir levhası" örneği üzerinden incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Osmanlı hat sanatı, aklâm-ı sitte ve Şeyh Hamdullah ekolü hakkında alan yazın taraması yapılarak gerçekleştirilen bu araştırma, Şeyh Hamdullah'ın Metropolitan Sanat

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Müzesi'ndeki murakkası ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Osmanlı döneminde sülüs ve nesih yazı başta olmak üzere; muhakkak ve reyhani, tevkî ve rikâ olarak adlandırılan aklâm-ı sitte sitilleri Şeyh Hamdullah ile Osmanlı üslubuna kavuşmuştur. Kur'an yazılmasında şeyh üslubu olarak nesih hat yazısının kullanılması tüm İslam dünyasında benimsenerek Şeyh Hamdullah Ekolü doğmuştur. Şeyh Hamdullah'ın başta İstanbul olmak üzere dünya çapındaki koleksiyonlarda Kur'an, hat levhaları ve murakkalardan oluşan nadir sanat eserleri bulunmaktadır. Hat sanatı öğretimindeki icazet geleneği aracılığıyla Şeyh'in üslubu, eserleri ve öğrencileri sayesinde günümüze ulaşmıştır. Bu çalışmada kapsamında ele alınan Şeyh'in murakka albümünün parçası olan iki kıta, aharlı kâğıt ve ebru üzerine is mürekkebi ve kamış kalem ile çekilmiş sülüs başlık ve nesih metin satırlarıyla tasarlanmıştır. Hat sanatı açısından sülüs ve nesih sitilinin en ideal örneklerinden birini teşkil eden eserde tezhip öğesi olarak sadece altınla boyanmış pençler ve cetveller yer aldığı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şeyh Hamdullah Okulu, Hat Sanatı, Osmanlı Hat Sanatı, Türk Hat Sanatı, Aklâm-ı Sitte (Altı Kalem)

Introduction

The art of calligraphy is the practice of beautifully writing Islamic script derived from Arabic letters, adhering to established aesthetic standards. In Islamic culture, calligraphy, known as "hüsn-i hat," signifies both "writing" and "beautiful writing." Those who received certification and were authorized to sign their writings were initially referred to as "kâtib," "muharrir," and "verrak," with the term "hattat" being used since the 4th century (Özcan, 2017: 424, 425; Derman, 1997: 493). The fundamental purpose of calligraphy is not only physical beauty but also expressing meaning. Integrating the spiritual dimension of Islam with aesthetics, calligraphy possesses a unique elegance. While artistic elements of finesse characterize design, the expressive power of writing is equally valued (Maktal, 1999: 197). It constitutes one of the most esteemed and valuable branches of Islamic art. Calligraphy gained significance due to Islam's emphasis on the first command to read, importance given to reading and writing, and the desire to write the Quran in the most beautiful manner. This paved the way for the production of high-level works in calligraphy and related arts such as bookbinding, illumination, and miniature painting, while distancing from representational and pictorial arts. Muslim artists, with a devotion akin to worship, transcribed Allah's commandments onto paper. Through spiritually charged artistic creations, Islamic artists achieved a level in the art of books comparable to Western artists' achievements in plastic arts like painting and sculpture (Taşkale, 2000: 537). In the Ottoman Empire, the foundation and chief designers of book arts were the calligraphers. In the palace atelier, collaborative efforts led to the creation of manuscript works, Qurans, albums, or panels, all initially designed by calligraphers. The calligrapher determined the number of pages, placement of headings on which pages, and the positioning of illumination and miniatures. Calligraphers collaborated with illuminators and painters to produce manuscript works. Hence, not only in the Ottoman Empire but throughout the Islamic world, a standardized approach was followed in

producing works, making calligraphers the most revered and esteemed artisans.

In the design of writing, the most significant indicator of an artist's skill is how they convey the meaning of the written text and aesthetically transfer this expression onto paper (Maktal, 1999: 97). In this context, various styles of writing have emerged in Islamic calligraphy, and six different styles referred to as "six scripts" have been defined as *aklâm-ı sitte*, signifying different styles and manners of the same script (Çetin, 1986: 276; Serin, 1999). Ibn Mukle (d. 940) was the first to codify the various styles of writing in calligraphy. His rules regulated the arrangement of writing styles, spacing between letters and words, as well as differences in letter size, orientation (upright, angular, or curved), making it easier to evaluate and teach calligraphy (Çetin, 1989: 277). Subsequently, Yakûtü'l-Musta'simî (d. 1298) further developed *aklâm-ı sitte*, and rules started to be established regarding which script style to use in fields such as Quranic script, literary writings, and daily scripts.

In the Ottoman Empire, "*aklâm-ı sitte*" (Six Scripts) reached its pinnacle of development with Shaikh Hamdullah (b. 1436-d. 1520). So much so that the rules for writing the Quran and various script styles that would spread throughout the Islamic world became deeply ingrained and gave rise to the Shaikh Hamdullah School. Apart from the fifty or so Qur'ans preserved in our museums and libraries that he wrote, there are numerous rare art pieces like calligraphic plates, *muraqqas*, and *meşk* works preserved in museums and libraries around the world. Through the tradition of *icazet*, Shaikh Hamdullah's disciples, adhering to his style, harmony, and composition, contributed to the continuity of the Shaikh school up to the present day. Among the schools that have contributed to the development of different script styles in Turkish Calligraphy, the Shaikh Hamdullah School holds a prominent place.

In this study, one of the most beautiful examples reflecting the school of Shaykh has been examined, which is the double panel "thuluth-naskh calligraphy" containing poetry and hadith, exhibited in the Islamic Art section of the New York Metropolitan Museum under inventory number 1982.120.3. This research, conducted through a qualitative method based on literature review, includes the historical development of calligraphy, the life and works of Shaykh Hamdullah, his school, and his students. The relevant artwork at the museum was accessed through the Metropolitan Art Museum's open-access page, and the inventory number 1982.120.3 *muraqqa* was incorporated into the text.

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative research method that involves literature review. Shaykh Hamdullah, considered the first and most important calligrapher of Turkish calligraphy, and his school are discussed in the context of the "thuluth-naskh calligraphy" example found in the

Metropolitan Art Museum. Accordingly, a literature review was conducted on Ottoman calligraphy, *aklâm-ı sitte*, Shaikh Hamdullah, and his school. The second part of the study involves the analysis of Shaikh's two calligraphy panels exhibited at the Metropolitan Art Museum. The scope of this work is limited to the two calligraphy panels (inventory number 1982.120.3) displayed by the calligrapher Shaikh Hamdullah in the Metropolitan Art Museum.

Objective

The aim of this study is to explore the contributions of Calligrapher Shaikh Hamdullah, who represents the first and most important school of Turkish Calligraphy, through the analysis of his two panels exhibited at the Metropolitan Art Museum. By doing so, the 1982.120.3 Shaykh Hamdullah Muraqqa displayed in the museum is introduced to the scholarly discourse, making this study a valuable resource for future research endeavors.

Findings

1. Ottoman Calligraphy Art

The term "hat" in Ottoman calligraphy originates from the Arabic root "hat mastar," encompassing meanings such as "writing, drawing, engraving, and marking." It also refers to "writing, line; path" (Derman, 1997a: 427). According to Serin (1999: 19), hat signifies a thin, long straight path formed by arranging multiple lines side by side. During the Ottoman period, various titles were given to individuals who practiced calligraphy, such as "katip," "hattât," and "hoş-nüvis." Derman (1997b) defines calligraphy as the art of writing Arabic script with adherence to aesthetic principles, also known as *Hüsn-i hat*. The fundamental characteristic that distinguishes calligraphy from other writings is that the letters are written based on a proportional system and must be learned through apprenticeship under the guidance of a master calligrapher. Upon completing their education, apprentice calligraphers would receive an *icazet* (certificate) from their teacher, granting them the title of a *hattat* (calligrapher) (Berk, 2013: 85). Licensed calligraphers were authorized to sign their works. This practice facilitated record-keeping, date verification, quality control, and the elevation of calligraphy as an art form (Memiş, 2018: 2564). The primary materials used in calligraphy are laid paper, reed pen, and ink (Derman, Çelebi, & Başar, 2021; Berk, 2013: 85). Besides the traditional master-apprentice method, calligraphy education was provided by the state through the *Hattat Mektebi* (Calligrapher School) during the late Ottoman period. Following the 1928 Turkish Alphabet Revolution, the school was closed, but it reopened in 1936 as part of the Turkish Ornamental Arts Department within the State Academy of Fine Arts (Derman, 2003: 14). Today, formal education in calligraphy continues through undergraduate programs offered in the Traditional Turkish Arts Department of various fine arts faculties.

Calligraphy holds a significant and fundamental place within Islamic art. The Quran, the holy book in which Allah's revelations were transmitted

by Prophet Muhammad in Arabic, serves as the basis for calligraphy. The art of calligraphy uses Arabic letters, providing the potential for various aesthetic forms. Calligraphy is always significant as an instrument for conveying text in a decorative manner. Different designs and compositions can be observed in calligraphic works produced in various periods and regions, demonstrating the richness of calligraphy styles (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Islamic Art, 2001).

Calligraphy went through important stages during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods and underwent a long maturation process, with its true development reaching completion during the Ottoman era. The master of Ottoman calligraphers is Yakûtü'l-Musta'simî (d. 1298), who was born and lived in Baghdad during the Abbasid period. He introduced a significant innovation by cutting the reed pen, which was used flat until then, at an angle, thereby allowing for more aesthetic and dynamic writing. This slanted pen tip is still in use today. Until that time, Kufic script was prevalent and employed. However, Calligrapher Yakût introduced the "aklâm-ı sitte" (six types of writing or six scripts) and established the rules and techniques of the "thuluth, naskh, muhaqqaq, rihani, tawqi, and riq'a" scripts, thereby contributing to the art of calligraphy (Binark, 1975: 19; Derman, 1992).

In Ottoman calligraphy, although there were numerous master calligraphers, the foundational figures credited with shaping the art form were Shaikh Hamdullah during the reign of Sultan Bayezid II (d. 1520) and Ahmed Şemseddin Karahisari during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (Kanuni) (d. 1556) (Serin, 1991). Born in Amasya, Shaikh Hamdullah started to develop his own style with the support of Prince Bayezid, who was both the governor of Amasya and his student. When Bayezid ascended the throne, he appointed Shaikh Hamdullah as the calligrapher of the palace, the instructor of calligraphy, and the shaikh of the archers' lodge. While creating works in the Yakût style in Amasya, Shaikh Hamdullah developed his distinct style in Istanbul and mentored numerous students. Shaikh Hamdullah, departing from the conventional Yakût style, introduced a new approach by exclusively using naskh script for writing the Qur'an, which became known as the "shaikh style." This method was adopted in the Islamic world and became the tradition of writing the Qur'an in naskh script (Serin, 1999: 105, 106).

Ahmed Şemseddin Karahisari (d. 1556), regarded as one of the seven great masters of Anatolia, represented the Yakut school within the Ottoman territories and was known as Yâkût-ı Rum. He flourished during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and earned the nickname "shemsu'l hat" (the sun of calligraphy). Karahisari developed his own style in the müsenna, thuluth, and jeli thuluth scripts, which was widely adopted in the Islamic geography. In his Qur'an manuscripts, Karahisari combined the muhaqqaq script for the first line, naskh for the middle five lines, and muhaqqaq for the last line. His masterpiece is the Qur'an he wrote for Sultan Suleiman, which was fully decorated and bound in the palace's nakkaş hane. Numerous

Qur'an and muraqqas albums created by Karahisari are preserved in museums and libraries in Istanbul. Prominent representatives of the Karahisari style include Hasan Çelebi, Ferhat Paşa, and Derviş Mehmet (Serin, 1999: 109).

By the 20th century, Ottoman calligraphy faced challenges due to the alphabet change and other difficulties during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. During this period, calligraphy was often disregarded and marginalized. Nevertheless, students of renowned calligrapher Sami Efendi and subsequent prominent calligraphers made significant efforts to preserve and develop the art of calligraphy. As a result of these efforts, calligraphy has successfully endured to the present day and remains vibrant. The famous calligrapher Hâmid Aytaç and his students have played a crucial role in maintaining the importance of calligraphy in contemporary times (Memiş, 2018: 54).

Calligraphy examples are found prominently in religious books such as the Qur'an and its sections, as well as in various forms like kıt'a, muraqqa, tomar, levha, and hilye on paper; in the inscriptions of mosque interiors and the exterior plaques of buildings like mosques, fountains, palaces, and madrasa; and on official documents of the Ottoman court such as "sikke"(coins), edicts, berats, and land deeds. The forms of the aklâm-ı sitte (six scripts) (Çetin, 1989: 276) in calligraphy differ in layout, size, and usage. For instance, muhaqqaq script was preferred for Qur'an writing due to its readability and seriousness, while Nasta'lik script was favored for poetry for its elegance. Riq'a, an easily legible and writable script, was often used in personal correspondence (Kvernen, 2023). During the era of Shaikh Hamdullah, thuluth and naskh scripts were more commonly used compared to other styles, and a significant innovation introduced by Shaikh Hamdullah was the exclusive use of naskh script for writing Qur'an (Derman, 1997a: 429).

1.1. Aklâm-ı Sitte (Six Ccripts)

Before explaining the meaning of "aklâm-ı sitte," it is necessary to briefly mention the Kufic script. The Kufic script was used in the writing of Qur'ans from the inception of Islam until the 10th century, and later in architectural inscriptions until the 12th century (Images 1, 2). Described as "an Arabic script based on geometric lines with regular, angular, upright, and horizontal letters" (Zennûn and Serin, 2002: 342), the script was originally known as "cezm" before Islam. After its development in the city of Kufa, it came to be known as Kufic. Especially during the period when the Quran was first written, verses and hadiths were inscribed on ceramic pieces, white stones, leaves, and later on parchment. The Kufic script was preferred for writing on these hard surfaces due to its angular structure. Kufic script was drawn rather than written with a pen. With the transition to using parchment and paper in manuscripts and the preference for more rounded

script styles of aklâm-ı sitte in the 12th century, the use of Kufic script declined (Serin, 1999: 57, 77).

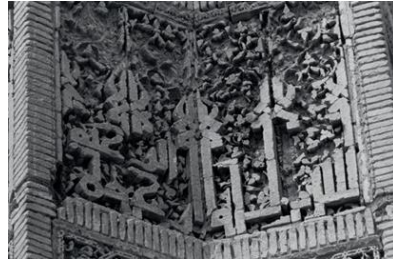


Image 1: Sura 72(el-Cin) Verses 14, Written in Kufic Script (9th-10th Century) (Left Image) (Eikhtar, 2018: 36)

Image 2: Example of Kufic Calligraphy in Architecture (Right Image) (Eikhtar, 2018: 36).

"aklâm-ı sitte" is a term used to define the fundamental rounded calligraphic styles employed in the art of calligraphy. The classification, rules, and training of students in these selected styles were first introduced by Yâkut, who is known as the pioneer of this field. Yâkut, an accomplished calligrapher, gained prominence during the reign of the last Abbasid caliph, Musta'sim-Billâh (1240-1258), when he was brought as a captive from Anatolia to Baghdad. Due to his connection with the caliph, he came to be known as "el-Musta'simî" (Gezgin, 2007: 624). After receiving a fine education in the caliph's palace, he developed an interest in poetry and literature, but his focus on calligraphy made him renowned globally as a distinguished calligrapher (Serin, 1999: 73). Yâkut-el Musta'simî introduced his own interpretation to the naskh script style and established the initial rules for achieving the ideal design features of calligraphy.

Yâkut, celebrated as the master of calligraphers, was praised in one of his colophons with the words, "Those who gaze upon his beautiful script will be blessed with light in their eyes and strength in their souls." His surviving works, which include mostly Quranic verses, hadiths, and eloquent sayings, form albums known as Muraqqa. The Yakut school of calligraphy evolved, gaining further refinement during the period of the Anatolian Seljuks and continuing its influence until the early years of the Ottoman Empire. Calligraphy in the Ottoman era flourished primarily in Edirne and Amasya until the conquest of Istanbul. The most prominent calligrapher of this era was Shaikh Hamdullah (Gezgin, 2007: 624). While Shaikh Hamdullah followed the Yakut school during his time in Amasya, he developed his own style during the mature period after the conquest of Istanbul. Yakût trained six distinct disciples, each mastering one of the six calligraphic styles, facilitating their teaching and dissemination. These styles share the common feature of rounded characters and are categorized based on the size of the letters (Serin, 1999: 80). The styles are thuluth, naskh, tawqi, riq'a, muhaqqaq and rihani (Derman, 1998: 6; Çetin, 1986: 276). Among Yakût's created styles, the tawqi script stands out (Serin, 1999: 80). Tawqi and riq'a styles share similar traits, with riq'a being a smaller version of the same

characters, and tawqi being the larger version. The same principle applies to thuluth and naskh scripts; naskh is the smaller version of thuluth, and rihani is the smaller version of muhaqqaq. The essence of these script types lies in their variation in letter size and the way the pen is used (Image 3). If the pen is thinner and used for fine lines, it is called "hurde." If larger letters are used, it is termed "celi (Jeli)" (Derman, 1997a: 432). Generally, thuluth and naskh, muhaqqaq and rihani, tawqi and riq'a can be classified as paired styles with similar designs. Muhaqqaq, thuluth, and tawqi are written with a reed pen that has a thicker tip. Naskh, riq'a, and rihani are written with a reed pen that has a finer tip. In terms of writing characteristics, muhaqqaq shares similarities with rihani, and tawqi with riq'a, with minor differences in the arrangement of letters (Binark, 1975: 19-21).



Image 3: Pens Used for Calligraphy (Derman, 1998: 7)

1.1.1. Sülüs (Thuluth) and Nesih (Naskh)

"Aklâm-ı sitte" includes the oldest and most preferred calligraphic style. Thuluth script is written with a reed pen that has a nib of approximately 3 to 5 mm. The length of the letter "alif" is around 40 mm. and naskh calligraphy reached an excellent level primarily through the work of Shaikh Hamdullah, followed by Ahmed Karahisârî (d. 1556) and Mustafa Râkım (d. 1825) (Çetin, 1989: 280). Even today, the most widely used script style in the Islamic world is thuluth (Image 4).



Image 4: Basmala written in Jeli Thuluth, Sabancı collection (Derman, 1998: 2)

Naskh script, a form of calligraphy derived from thuluth, is written with a reed pen that has an average nib thickness of 1 mm. While thuluth script gained its distinctive features within the Yakut school, it is known that its true evolution was completed by Shaikh Hamdullah. Until the 16th century, the rihani script was preferred for book and Mushaf writing, but after the 16th century, naskh became the most favored script style. In the present-day Islamic world, naskh script is preferred for book printing due to its easy legibility and writing (Image 5) (Çetin, 1989: 280).

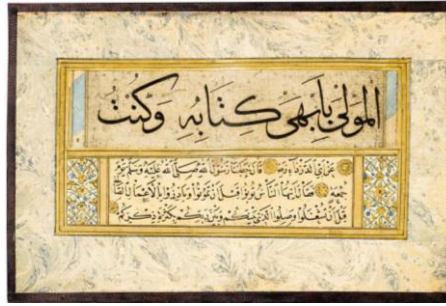


Image 5: Written by Shaikh Hamdullah in thuluth (title) and naskh (text) calligraphy (Inventory: 120-0045-SH) (URL-1)

1.1.2. Muhakkak (Muhaqqaq) and Reyhanî (Rihani) Script

As a general characteristic, the bowls of the letters are flatter and wider. It has been used for writing large-sized Qur'ans and other books (Image 6). Muhaqqaq script was also used in architectural inscriptions and bands until the 16th century. muhaqqaq is as thick as thuluth script but its letter bowls are flatter and wider, making it a more extended form of thuluth (Çetin, 1989: 277). The term "muhaqqaq" implies precision, verification, and proven accuracy (Serin, 1999: 83).

Rihani script, on the other hand, is a thinner and smaller version of the muhaqqaq script. In other words, rihani script is the script written with a naskh pen. This script was predominantly used for inscribing Qur'an panels and manuscripts. Compared to naskh script, rihani script's letters are wider and larger (Image 6) (Serin, 1999: 85).



Image 6: Written by Shaikh Hamdullah in muhaqqaq (title) and rihani (text) calligraphy (Serin, 1999: 85).

1.1.3. Tevkî (tawqî) and Rikâ(Riq'a) Script

Tawqî is the official script used in documents related to the Ottoman sultans. Later on, this script was replaced by the divani script. The most significant feature of this script is that half of the letters are straight while the other half are rounded (Serin, 1999: 80). The title in (Image 7) is written in this script style (Çetin, 1989: 277). The term "tevkî (tawqî)" refers to signs, symbols, imperial seal, decrees, and charters (Merçil, 2012: 35).

Riq'a script features letters that are often interconnected, making it suitable for rapid writing. Due to this characteristic, it was preferred for daily correspondence such as letters, recitation, narrations, calligrapher's certificates, diplomas, and foundation records. Riq'a script is the smaller and finer version of tawqi script, written with a thin pen (Image 7) (Serin, 1999: 82).

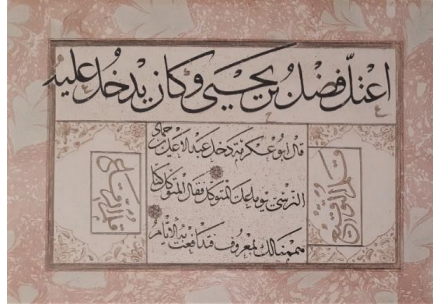


Image 7: Written by Shaikh Hamdullah in thuluth (title) and naskh (text) calligraphy (Serin, 1999: 83).

In addition to these scripts, other script styles that the Ottomans developed are divani, celi (Jeli) divani, and siyakat. Another matter is the "celi" description, which is not a script style itself but defines the way of writing in larger characters. In contrast to celi, another term used is "gubari," referring to the practice of writing naskh script in such a small size that it becomes as tiny as a grain of rice and is unreadable. Another feature in calligraphy is "müsenna," signifying symmetric or mirrored writing (Serin, 1999: 86). "Tughra" is another element in calligraphy that represents a distinct form rather than a script style. It is the signature or emblem of Ottoman sultans. It consists of the sultan's name, his father's name, and the phrase "el muzaffer daima" (ever victorious) written in a unique composition style (Image 8) (Serin, 1999: 86).

2. Shaikh Hamdullah

Shaikh Hamdullah is considered the first prominent calligrapher of the Ottoman period after the conquest. He is credited with developing and standardizing the Naskh script, which became the most readable script for copying the Qur'an manuscripts. According to sources, Shaikh Hamdullah was born in Amasya in 1436. His family belonged to the Suhrawardiyya Sufi order, which had migrated from Bukhara to Amasya. His father, Mustafa Dede, was the shaikh of the Suhrawardi order, which led to him being known as "Ibn al-Shaikh" (Serin, 1997, s. 449). As a Sufi, Hamdullah was nurtured by his father, who was a shaikh in the order, and by scholars, artists, and mystics within the order. After his father's death, he became affiliated with the Naqshbandi order. Additionally, Hamdullah had connections to the Halveti order, which converged with the Suhrawardi order at one point (Serin, 1999: 101). Many of his disciples and relatives were associated with the Halveti order, and during the reign of Sultan Süleyman, the bond

between Hamdullah and the Halveti order was a characteristic of the calligrapher tradition (URL-2).

In addition to his exceptional artistic talent, Shaikh Hamdullah was an accomplished archer and a skilled athlete. He received his "icazet" (calligraphy license) from Hayreddin Mar'ashi, a follower of Yakût and a student of Abdullah Sayrafi. His specialization in the aklâm-ı sitte was a result of extensive study of the works of his mentors' mentors (Serin, 1999: 102). During his time, Amasya's governor, Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512), was one of his calligraphy students. Bayezid invited Hamdullah to Istanbul and employed him as a palace scribe. It is said that the future Sultan had immense respect for the calligrapher and even held his inkwell while he was writing. Bayezid ensured that Hamdullah received a substantial salary and additional income from two villages near Üsküdar, along with a daily wage of 30 akçes. Furthermore, he paid Hamdullah for designing calligraphy panels for his mosque's mihrab and dome (URL- 2) Hamdullah's relationship with Sultan Bayezid, who appointed him as the shaikh of the Archers' Lodge, played a crucial role in shaping his style (Serin, 1999: 103). Sultan Bayezid's deep interest in knowledge and the arts, particularly calligraphy, provided Hamdullah with limitless opportunities. The Sultan even allowed Hamdullah to study and improve the original calligraphy pieces by Yakut, stored in the treasury. As a result, Hamdullah meticulously studied many copies of the Qur'an, mushafs, sections, muraqqas, verses, and books. Some of Hamdullah's most exquisite works are found among the aklâm-ı sitte muraqqas, including the ones with inventory numbers 2083, 2184, and 2186, preserved at Topkapı Palace Museum (Serin, 1999: 104).

Throughout his career, Shaikh Hamdullah spent much of his time transcribing the Qur'an. He is known to have written forty-seven copies of the Qur'an and engaged in other religious writings and calligraphy exercises. His son, Mustafa Dede, who was also his student, became a renowned calligrapher as well. As he aged, Shaikh Hamdullah continued to produce remarkable work, even when his hands began to tremble, demonstrating remarkable steadiness in his writing. An anecdote about him writing a Qur'anic inscription at the age of eighty highlights his exceptional skills despite his age. After Sultan Selim's death, Shaikh Hamdullah was invited to the palace during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, where he was honored and respected. Although Sultan Suleiman requested Hamdullah to write a Qur'an for him, the accomplished calligrapher passed away in Istanbul in the year 1520 (Serin, 1999: 104).

2.1. Artistic Style of Shaikh Hamdullah

Shaikh Hamdullah's artistic journey can be divided into two distinct phases: His time in Amasya and later in Istanbul. During the period when Sultan Bayezid was a prince in Amasya, Hamdullah produced works influenced by the style of Yakut. Upon arriving in Istanbul with the support of Sultan Bayezid, he entered a mature phase of his career, creating works in

his own distinctive style. One of the most significant innovations introduced by Shaikh Hamdullah in calligraphy was the exclusive use of the Naskh script instead of the rihani script for transcribing Qur'an manuscripts. He achieved the most ideal page layout and line spacing, infusing elegance, simplicity, continuity, and charm into Qur'anic script. Thanks to Hamdullah's contributions, the Naskh script gained grace, simplicity, readability, and became the preferred choice for writing books and Qur'anic manuscripts. While the Yakut style used a mixture of muhaqqaq, rihani, and other scripts in Qur'anic text, Shaikh Hamdullah's style was adopted across the entire Islamic world, leading to the abandonment of the previous method.

Another innovation introduced by Shaikh Hamdullah was presenting his works mostly in the form of muraqqa albums. In these multi-paneled compositions, he typically used Sulus and Naskh scripts to write hadiths, poetry, or wise sayings. He perfected the Sulus and Naskh scripts according to Turkish taste, setting a standard for all calligraphers who followed him. In fact, subsequent calligraphers imitated Shaikh Hamdullah's style, including the choice of paper, marbling, illumination, dimensions, form, and content in these compositions. The term "muraqqa" refers to albums composed of calligraphy panels affixed to thick paper or cardboard and has been used as a term in Islamic arts (Image 8).



Image 8: The example of muraqqa (1849, tuluth - naskh) (Derman, 2000: 28)

These album collections of calligraphy are often named according to the script style or type used, such as aklâm-ı sitte albums, tuluth-naskh albums, rihani or tawqi-riq'a muraqqa albums. In these muraqqa albums, a long line of tuluth, muhaqqaq, or tawqi text is typically used as a header, followed by eight or ten lines of naskh, rihani, or riq'a script written in straight or slanted manner. The empty spaces and panels on the sides of the writing area are adorned with marbling, illuminated with zerefshan, or decorated with illumination to enhance their aesthetic appeal. Finally, the panels with the compositions are traditionally bound in a classical manner.

In the tradition of Shaikh Hamdullah's school, these panel-based muraqqa albums initially featured predominantly tuluth-naskh scripts, but later transitioned to rihani and tawqi scripts for further compositions (Image 8). Muhaqqaq script was commonly used in Basmala inscriptions, calligraphic panels, and scholarly certificates. About 250 years before Shaikh

Hamdullah, the stiffness in Yakut's style had ended, and under Shaikh Hamdullah's influence, the arrangement of Arabic letters, their spacing, and the alignment of words on lines were restructured. The calligraphy style adopted a slightly left-leaning arrangement, fluid strokes, and penmanship, resulting in fluency, liveliness, charm, and dynamism in the script (Serin, 1999: 104).

2.3. Works of Shaikh Hamdullah

Shaikh Hamdullah's most significant works include Qur'ans and calligraphic panels. Apart from the 47 Qur'ans attributed to Shaikh Hamdullah that have survived to the present day, there are thousands of muraqqa panels containing hadiths, aphorisms, poems, and prayers. Among these, the most notable are the Mushaf al-Sharif manuscripts with inventory numbers A. 6567, 6662, 6552, 6667, and 6565 preserved at Istanbul University Library. Additionally, there are Qur'ans recorded as inventory numbers 402 in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, 10 in the Ayasofya Library, and 5 in the Topkapi Palace Museum's Ahmed III Library (Serin, 1999: 106). Furthermore the Qur'an and muraqqa collections in the Sabancı Museum are among his other significant works (Derman, 2000: 47-48).

One of the most significant works where the calligrapher showcases his aesthetic understanding of script styles is the "aklâm-ı sitte" compilation with inventory number 2086 in the III. Ahmet Library of Topkapi Palace Museum (Serin, 1999: 106). The calligrapher's creations are not only exhibited in various museums and libraries in our country but also around the world. One of these is the collection of calligraphic panels in the Islamic Art collection of the New York Metropolitan Museum, which is also covered within the scope of this study.

2.4. Students of Shaikh Hamdullah

The Shaikh Hamdullah school continued through his son Mustafa Dede and son-in-law Şükrullah Halife. Records indicate that Shaikh Hamdullah trained a total of 43 students. Notable among them are Mehmet Handan, Ali b. Mustafa, Behram b. Abdullah, Hayrettin El-Kudsi (d. 1536), Hüseyin Şah Çelebi, Sultan Korkut (d. 1513), Mehmet b. Ramazan (d. 1571), Recep b. Mustafa (d. 1551), Mahmut Defteri (d. 1546), and Mustafa b. Nasuh.

The development of Turkish calligraphy stemming from the Shaikh Hamdullah school progressed through subsequent generations. Figures like Şükrullah Halife, his son Derviş Mehmet b. Şükrullah (d. 1580), Hamza b. Üsküdari (d. 1614), Halit Erzurum (d. 1630), Derviş Ali (d. 1637), Mustafa Suyolcuzaade (d. 1685), Hafız Osman (d. 1698), Seyyid Abdullah (d. 1731), and Hoca Ahmet Rasim (d. 1755) played key roles. By the 19th century, sulus and naskh scripts had matured into distinctive Ottoman styles, reaching the pinnacle of their artistic expression. This trend continued until the 20th century, when the Ottoman script style persisted (Serin, 1999: 106). Shaikh Hamdullah stands as one of the seven master calligraphers of Anatolia recognized by the Islamic world. Others include his son Mustafa Dede, close

relative Abdullah Amasi, Celalettin Amasi, Celalzade Muhyittin Amasi, contemporaries Ahmet Şemsettin Karahisari and Bursalı Şerbetçizade İbrahim Efendi. These artists, with their works and the students they trained, laid the foundation of Ottoman and Turkish calligraphy.

3. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Calligraphy Collection

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is one of the leading museums with one of the richest collections in the world. The museum showcases millions of objects in categories such as musical instruments, arms and armor, the Robert Lehman Collection, European sculpture and decorative arts, European paintings, Costume Institute, drawings and prints, and more. Additionally, the museum serves various departments categorized by geographical location, including Africa, America, Ancient America, Ancient Near East, Asia, Egypt, Medieval, Greek and Roman, Modern and Contemporary, Oceanic Art, and Islamic Art.

The museum's Islamic art collection boasts the most comprehensive compilation in the world, containing over fifteen thousand works spanning from the 7th to the 21st century. The Islamic art pieces within the museum hail from a wide geographic range, including the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, South Asia, Spain, Morocco, and Indonesia. Established in New York in 1870, the museum operates across four separate buildings, continually enriching its collections. The museum displays both sacred and secular objects that reflect the cultural traditions of the Islamic world. Notable among these are carpets, kilims, ceramics, illuminated manuscripts, Qur'ans, calligraphy panels, and the Tughra of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Beyond its role as a physical exhibit space, the museum also engages in restoration work, produces numerous art bulletins and books, and organizes artistic and scholarly events. Through its website, the museum provides access to digital catalogs, enabling millions of people each year to engage with the artworks and acquire academic knowledge (Lindsey, 2012; metmuseum, 2023). Among the collection of Turkish Islamic art, one of the most significant pieces is the "Poems and Hadiths" Album (inventory number 1982.120.3) created by the calligrapher Shaikh Hamdullah.

3.1. The Muraqqa of Shaikh Hamdullah: poems and hadiths from the Metropolitan Museum of Art



Image 9: The Muraqqa of Shaikh Hamdullah: poems and hadiths from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (URL-3)

Calligrapher: Shaikh Hamdullah

Date: Approximately 1500

Geography: Istanbul

Material: Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper mounted on pasteboard, margins: ink, watercolor, and gold on marbled paper

Binding: Leather and gold

Dimensions: 32,1 x 23,8 cm

Purchase: Edwin Binney 3rd and Edward Ablat Gifts, 1982

Accession Number: 1982.120.3

Description: This artwork consists of two separate calligraphy panels written by Shaikh Hamdullah, containing hadiths and poetry (Image 9).

3.1.1. Poetry in Tuluth Calligraphy



Image 10: Upper portion of the muraqqa (Image 9 Detail) (URL-3)

In the calligraphic panel, the title is written in tuluth script (Image 10)

"Indeed, high ranks are a portion of blessings, and high ranks are only attained through serious effort."

In the calligraphic panel, the text is written in naksh script (Image 10)

"Indeed, lofty heights are reached like mountains with determination (repeated twice).

So, leave behind the hesitation of the past and step forth for lofty goals,
And do not content yourself with what you have gained from it, even
if they are the most precious blessings.

For what is settled in a place is not bad; the settled place is of equal
value." (URL- 2)

The text contains hadiths. The first two of these hadiths have been
explained below.

Narrated from Muawiyah: "I heard from the Prophet (S) saying: 'A
group from my Ummah will continue to uphold Allah's commands. Those
who oppose and abstain from supporting them will not be able to harm them
until Allah's decree (the Day of Judgment) comes to them. They will remain
dominant and triumphant.'" (Bukhari, Menakib, 27).

According to the narration from Abu Umama (may Allah be pleased
with him), the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The most beloved of my
friends to me are those with little wealth and few burdens, who are constant
and sensitive in their prayers, who perfect their worship of their Lord,
whether openly or in secret, and who obey Allah in every situation, without
being known in public or pointed out by others. They have sufficient
livelihood to live, yet they are patient with their provisions and all things."
Then, he struck his hands together to draw the attention of the listeners and
continued: "Quick is their death, they weep, and they have little inheritance."
(Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 35).

According to a narration from Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (may Allah be
pleased with him), the Prophet (peace be upon him) said as follows: "The
one who harms or deceives a believer is cursed, meaning they have
distanced themselves from Allah's mercy." (Tirmidhi, Bir, 27).

Narrated from Muawiyah: I heard this from the Messenger of Allah
(peace be upon him). He said: "A group from my nation will continue to
uphold Allah's commandments. Those who avoid helping them and oppose
them will not be able to harm this group. They will remain triumphant and
dominant until Allah's decree (the Day of Judgment) comes to them."
(Bukhari, Menakib, 27).

Narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him): I heard
from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) who said: "All of my nation
has been forgiven by Allah, not only those who openly commit sins. There
are among the openly sinful individuals those who say: 'Last night, I did such
and such,' even though Allah had concealed their sins and they spent the
night under His cover. But in the morning, this individual unveils what Allah
had concealed and declared his wrongdoing."

3.1.2. A hadith of Prophet Muhammad



Image 11 : The panel with a seated couplet containing a hadith of Prophet Muhammad, lower section (Detail of Image 9). (URL-3)

In the title section of the calligraphy panel, the inscription "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful)" is written in Thuluth script (Image 11).

In the central text area of the calligraphy panel, the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is inscribed in Naskh script: "Our Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Straighten your rows, draw close to each other, and align your necks. By Allah, I swear to my Lord, I see that Satan passes through your rows.'" (Image 11).

At the bottom line, the following is written in Thuluth script: "From the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) (Regarding this, our Prophet (peace be upon him) said), Written by the humble Hamdullah son of Mustafa Dede" (Image 11). (URL- 3)

The example of "muraqqa" seen in this work is a prominent artistic practice that developed in the Islamic world, particularly in regions such as Iran and the Ottoman Empire. This practice can be defined as albums that bring together various artistic elements, such as miniatures, paintings, calligraphy examples, illumination art, marbled papers, and borders. Emerging in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century, these albums, known as "muraqqas," became more widespread in subsequent periods and came to represent similar collections of art. While muraqqas can consist of works by different artists, they can also include works by the same artist, featuring Arabic poetry, prayers, Quranic verses, and other texts. Due to their inclusion of works by early Ottoman calligraphy masters, these muraqqas have made significant contributions to art history and cultural heritage. While many of these Ottoman calligraphy albums have survived to the present day, the calligraphy panels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art hold special significance as they contain the works of the calligrapher Shaikh Hamdullah ibn Mustafa Dede (URL-4).

Commonly, calligraphy works written in the aklâm-ı sitte script on rectangular papers with book dimensions are referred to as "kita" (Alpaslan, 2022: 502). The term "kita," meaning "part" or "section," has evolved to denote the specific type of calligraphy used; for instance, a kita written in

Thuluth script is called a "thuluth kita," and a kita combining Thuluth and Naskh scripts is called a "thuluth-naskh kita" (Aksoy, 2022: 504).

In the same manner as seen in Shaikh Hamdullah's work in this study, the application style in other Thuluth-Naskh couplets is as follows: At the top, there is a line written in Thuluth letters serving as the title (Image 11). Below it, the text is presented in three or more lines written in Naskh letters. The Naskh lines are aligned slightly inside from the left and right edges of the Thuluth line. To enhance the harmony of the calligraphy, the bottom line is repeated in Thuluth script. This structure creates a Thuluth-Naskh couplet where Naskh lines are placed between two Thuluth lines. The area to the right and left of the Naskh-written text is bordered by squares or rectangles using rulers, and these areas are referred to as "koltuk" (Image 11). The couplets are later affixed to a thin cardboard, and if illumination work is to be done, it is carried out at this stage. In some couplets, the text is inclined from the upper right to the lower left using an inclined Naskh script, as seen in the hadith panel in this study (Image 10) (Alpaslan, 2022: 502). The koltuk areas of the couplets are typically adorned with illumination patterns painted in gold. In this example, there are no decorative elements in the koltuk area. This example could be described as a "panel from a muraqqa containing Shaikh Hamdullah's Thuluth-Naskh couplet."

These two couplets at the Metropolitan Museum of Art are part of a six-page leather-bound muraqqa album. Both calligraphy panels measure 32,1 cm x 23,8 cm (Dyke, 2015). Each page is structurally similar, with a large, horizontally positioned Thuluth script serving as the title, while smaller Naskh lines are arranged horizontally or diagonally. Created by drawing black ink with a reed pen on aherli paper, the calligraphy panel represents one of the most significant examples of the Shaikh Hamdullah school. The flowing, flexible, curved, and oval structure of Thuluth and Naskh script, along with the harmony and cohesion in the arrangement, has reached a level of maturity in the hands of the artist. This style of writing became popular across the Islamic world with the influence of Shaikh Hamdullah.

Aside from calligraphy, as an element of illumination, it can be observed that tiny golden dots (flowers) are placed in the areas designated for punctuation marks within the text. Each petal of these small flowers is colored with green and blue. The petals' calyxes are adorned with red dots (Image 12).



Image 12: Penç (flower) design details (URL-3)

Image 13: Marbling pattern and ruler detail (URL-3)

Around the writing area, black ink, orange, and yellow colors have been used to draw gold frames, enclosing the text within a frame (Image 13). Inside these frames, there are no illumination patterns. The backgrounds of the frames are subtly colored with marbled paper. The outermost edges of the page are surrounded by a wider marbled paper with pastel tones of green, pink, brown, and cream, which are slightly darker but harmonious with the writing, preserving the aesthetic balance.

These panels showcase Shaikh Hamdullah's exquisite calligraphic artistry. As seen in these examples, Shaikh Hamdullah developed the Naskh and Thuluth calligraphic styles in a manner that adhered to Ottoman aesthetics. These pages exude a sense of control in expression, precise lines, and gentle flow. Through emphasized forms of certain letters, they create a vibrant and rhythmic pattern, reflecting the mature period of the artist's career.

Conclusion and Discussion

Shaikh Hamdullah, the founder of the first school of Ottoman calligraphy known as the "shaikh school," lived during the 15th century in Amasya, within the Ottoman Empire. He was not only a renowned calligrapher but also the teacher of calligraphy to Prince Bayezid, the son of Sultan Mehmed II and the governor of Amasya. When Prince Bayezid ascended to the Ottoman throne in 1481, Shaikh Hamdullah became the head calligrapher at Topkapı Palace, where he served until the end of his life. Apart from his duties at the palace as a calligrapher and a secretary, Shaikh Hamdullah is known to have trained 43 students, and these students further contributed to the development of Ottoman calligraphy, establishing it as a significant art form worldwide. His artistic career is divided into two phases: the Amasya phase, where he followed the style of the great calligrapher Yâkut-el Musta'sımî, and the Istanbul phase, where he developed his own style while adhering to the Ottoman aesthetics.

During his time as a calligrapher, Shaikh Hamdullah significantly contributed to the advancement of the Ottoman calligraphic tradition. He refined the Naskh and Thuluth scripts, and he developed the styles of Tawqî and Riq'a. Notably, he introduced a new approach to writing the Quran using

only the Naskh script, deviating from the previous practice of using multiple scripts. This innovation enhanced readability and writing flow, resulting in more harmonious and coherent pages. His influence extended beyond Ottoman territories, making this style widely adopted in Islamic calligraphy.

Among his remarkable achievements, Shaikh Hamdullah produced 47 copies of the Quran as his notable works. Additionally, he created thousands of calligraphic panels containing hadiths, poems, verses, and supplications. His unique muraqqa compositions, where he combined different calligraphic styles in separate sections, have been treasured across generations and are showcased in numerous museums and libraries worldwide, notably in Istanbul. The featured thuluth-naskh muraqqa in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a significant example of his legacy. This leather-bound composition consists of six sections and includes two calligraphic panels measuring 32,1 cm x 23,8 cm each. The structural arrangement is consistent across the pages: a large Thuluth title line is followed by smaller Naskh lines, either horizontally or diagonally placed. The calligraphy is framed with gold, orange, and yellow lines, and the edges are adorned with pastel-toned marbled paper. The first panel features a "mail" composition, while the second uses a "koltuklu kita" design. Apart from the calligraphy, the use of miniature gold elements adds a touch of illumination to punctuation marks within the text. These two calligraphic panels are significant representatives of Shaikh Hamdullah's mastery, particularly in Thuluth and Naskh scripts, showcasing the legacy of his artistic school.

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