

# Arabic Calligraphy | Kufic Script

'Kufic characters had stems and leafs growing out of them creating an elaborate network of vegetation.'

Calligraphers endeavoured to decorate the kufic characters with ornamental designs, accumulating an entire range of decorative motifs. With time, the ornamental decoration became more elaborate and complicated, and by the beginning of the 4th / 10th century, kufic characters had stems and leafs growing out of them creating an elaborate network of vegetation known as foliated kufic script.



**Name:**

Cenotaph of Badr al-Sharafi

**Dynasty:**

Hegira Dhu'l Qa'da 514 / AD 1121 Atabeg

**Details:**

Damascus, Syria

**Justification:**

The balanced design of the two inscription bands in kufic script, together with the proportions of the letters and words, renders this an excellent example of the foliated kufic style.



**Name:**

Column with kufic inscription

**Dynasty:**

Around Hegira 5th / AD 11th century Fatimid

**Details:**

Regional Gallery of Sicilia, Abatellis Palace  
Palermo, Italy

**Justification:**

An Islamic-period Sicilian column that may originally have furnished a mosque that was then converted into an oratory. There is a resemblance between the style of kufic script used here and that commonly seen in North Africa.



**Name:**

Funerary stele fragment

**Dynasty:**

Hegira late 4th–5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

**Details:**

National Museums of Scotland (NMS)  
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**

A Fatimid tombstone embellished with foliated kufic calligraphy, whereby stems and leaves emerge from the lettering.



**Name:**

Frieze with calligraphy

**Dynasty:**

Hegira, first half of the 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid–Zirid

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art  
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**

A Fatimid inscription with foliated kufic calligraphy.

**Name:**

Fragment of a commemorative plaque

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 437 / AD 1046 Fatimid-Zirid

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art  
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**

Another beautiful example of foliated kufic calligraphy from the Fatimid period.

**Name:**

Fragment of an inscription plaque

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 4th–5th century / AD 10th–11th century Fatimid

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum  
Berlin, Germany

**Justification:**

Another beautiful example of foliated kufic calligraphy from the Fatimid period.

**Name:**

Filter for a water-jar

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 4th–5th century / AD 10th–11th century Fatimid

**Details:**

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow Museums  
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**

A filter that is perforated with the Arabic kufic characters, Alif (A) and Lam (L). The elongated parts of the letters are embellished with geometrical shapes and decoration.

**Name:**

Fragment (from a wooden frieze) with an inscription in kufic script

**Dynasty:**

Hegira, late 2nd–5th century / late AD 9th–11th century Tulunid or Fatimid

**Details:**

National Museums of Scotland (NMS)  
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**

A Tulunid-period (254–92 / 868–905) frieze fragment that displays a foliated kufic inscription.

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