Arabic Calligraphy | Calligraphic Schools

‘Calligraphers prepared their own ink compounds and cut their own reed pens.’

Arabic calligraphy was applied to a wide range of media, including parchment and paper. Calligraphers prepared their own ink compounds and cut their own reed pens. The inscriptions included many topics. Although calligraphy was a profession, private citizens practiced it too, regardless of social background. In Islamic societies calligraphic works by famous masters were not treated lightly, but were collected and preserved as cultural treasures.

Name: Inkstand
Dynasty: Hegira second half of the 7th century / AD second half of the 13th century Ayyubid
Details: Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany
Justification: This highly decorated metal inkpot and reed-pen holder would have belonged to an affluent person. But every calligrapher would have owned his own instruments and tools.

Name: Stand
Dynasty: Hegira 6th–7th century / AD 12th–13th century Ayyubid
Details: The British Museum
London, England, United Kingdom
Justification: This ceramic stand is most probably an inkpot and reed-pen holder.

Name: Writing set
Dynasty: Pen-cutting slab (makta), burnishing tool (mühre) and knife (kalemtra#:) hegira 12th–13th century / AD 18th–19th century; Scissors (makas): hegira 13th / AD 19th century; case (kubur): dated hegira 1131 (AD 1718) Ottoman
Details: Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey
Justification: Calligraphy reached its Golden Age during the Ottoman period, reflected in the great artistry afforded to the tools and instruments of the art.
Pen-cutting slab (makta), burnishing tool (mühre) and knife (kalemtra#): hegira 12th–13th century / AD 18th–19th century; Scissors (makas): hegira 13th / AD 19th century; case (kubur): dated hegira 1131 (AD 1718) Ottoman

**Details:**
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

**Justification:**
Cutting slab; part of a calligrapher's set.

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Pen-cutting slab (makta), burnishing tool (mühre) and knife (kalemtra#): hegira 12th–13th century / AD 18th–19th century; Scissors (makas): hegira 13th / AD 19th century; case (kubur): dated hegira 1131 (AD 1718) Ottoman

**Details:**
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

**Justification:**
A polishing tool used to smooth the surface of the paper; part of a calligrapher's set.

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Pen-cutting slab (makta), burnishing tool (mühre) and knife (kalemtra#): hegira 12th–13th century / AD 18th–19th century; Scissors (makas): hegira 13th / AD 19th century; case (kubur): dated hegira 1131 (AD 1718) Ottoman

**Details:**
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

**Justification:**
Paper case; part of a calligrapher's set.

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Name: Writing box

**Dynasty:**
Reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I (r. Hegira 1255–78 / AD 1839–61) Ottoman

**Details:**
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

**Justification:**
This writing box would held all the instruments needed to practice calligraphy within its purpose-made compartments. This box belonged to Sultan Abdülmecid who was himself a calligrapher.