

Arabic Calligraphy | Civilisation of the Word

‘Calligraphy appears on nearly every kind of media one can think of.’

Because the power of the word is respected in Islamic culture, whether verbal or transcribed, recitation and writing have been given a lot of attention both in Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic-speaking Islamic societies. This has encouraged an appreciation of calligraphy – meaning literally ‘beautiful writing’ – and in turn promoted the application of the art onto a variety of media, both for religious and secular use. Calligraphy appears on architecture, books, coinage and metal wares, official documents and tiraz textiles, ceramics, wood, ivory, stone and glass, and nearly every other kind of media one can think of.



Name:
Coin (dinar)

Dynasty:
Hegira 537 / AD 1142 Almoravid

Details:
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:
This Almoravid (454–541 / 1062–1147) dinar has kufic inscriptions, citing quotes from the Qur'an on one side, and giving the date, place and patron of the mint on the reverse.



Name:
Coin (dinar)

Dynasty:
Hegira 537 / AD 1142 Almoravid

Details:
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:
Almoravid dinar, reverse.



Name:
Measuring instrument (mudd)

Dynasty:
Between Hegira 731 and 749 / AD 1331 and 1348 Marinid

Details:
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:
The Maghrebi script on this small alms-giving measuring cup describes its use and gives the name of the Marinid (614–869 / 1217–1465) sovereign under whose command it was issued.



Name:
Measuring instrument (mudd)

Dynasty:
Between Hegira 731 and 749 / AD 1331 and 1348 Marinid

Details:

National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:

Detail of the calligraphic script on the side of the alms-giving measuring cup.

**Name:**

Jar-stand (kilga)

Dynasty:

Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Ethnography (Etnografiska museet)
Stockholm, Sweden

Justification:

A stand that was used to support a large unglazed earthenware jar, which has kufic script running round the rim.

**Name:**

Pot from Zamora

Dynasty:

Hegira 353 / AD 964 Umayyads of al-Andalus, Caliphate period

Details:

National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

Justification:

The kufic script around the lid of this pot gives the name of the patron (Caliph al-Hakam; r. 350–66 / 961–76), and the name of the woman for whom it was commissioned.

**Name:**

Drum

Dynasty:

Beginning hegira 7th century / AD 13th century Artuqid period

Details:

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:

The kufic letters of this inscription are crowned by human faces and dragon heads.

**Name:**

Drum

Dynasty:

Beginning hegira 7th century / AD 13th century Artuqid period

Details:

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:

Detail of the drum showing the human faces and dragon heads that crown the kufic characters in the inscription.
