

the east (oil, Cultural heritage, raw materials) knew that the East was giving the West a Western satisfaction or western direction. But these resources are plundering and moving between the West and eventually reaching out to the market and then sold back to the East itself. In the sense of this cycle, it can be the garlic of how to get raw materials from the east and turn them into commodities and sell them again by speculators (Bianca) to the East.

Conclusion. Edward Said: Most humanists (professional humanists) are not able to communicate between persistent and disgraceful acts such as slavery, colonialism, racial oppression and superpower domination with the poetry, story, and philosophy of the community involved in such acts (Fortier , 172: 1394). The issue at all is not whether Shakespeare himself had such a contemptuous attitude with his contemporary politics in the East. It is, however, a hidden Orientalism that continues from the past and present in the natural minds of all Westerners to the present. The present study claims that the reader of the Othello drama and the analysis of its overall structure, this influence of colonialism, slavery, and so on is quite visible to literature. The post-colonial theories open a new window to criticism and can expand the science of reading literature. The existence of these studies for a country like Iran, which has long been in the light of these colonialism, seems to be necessary. On the other hand, these new readings could be a new horizon in Iran's theater. The author hopes that this small study will be a prelude to the larger research that involves the Eshlian Iranian plays to the collection of Shakespeare's works to contemporary dramatic works.

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A CRITICAL APPROACH TO HISTORICISM'S VIEW ON ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY

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Abstract. There are two general approaches to the study of Islamic art, each of which explaining some aspects of the art of calligraphy. Underlying the Historicism approach is the assumption that calligraphy is a worldly phenomenon whose evolution depends on historical, geographical, social, and political circumstances. The traditionalism approach, on the other hand, holds that Islamic art and, in particular, Islamic calligraphy result from spiritual beliefs and originate in timeless and placeless facts. The followers of the latter believe that Islamic calligraphy has been developed and has evolved as a result of respect for God's word which is of a divine nature and which is never affected by human power. The present paper aims at a critical review of the Historicism approach to Islamic calligraphy. A investigation of this approach will indicate that calligraphy cannot be assigned to any Divine source and its evolution has become possible through later Islamic artists who, in contrast to early Muslims, have consciously tried to develop the art of calligraphy. In Islamic calligraphy, form and decoration dominate the content. It was the geographical expansion of Islam that made Muslim Arabs aware of the importance of handwriting and calligraphy. On closer inspection, however, it can be demonstrated that reductionism is inherent in the Historicism approach since it neglects the human component in the study of calligraphy.

Key words: calligraphy, Historicism approach, reductionism.

Introduction. Underlying the progress of human civilization throughout the history has been the invention of writing. This great phenomenon has been central to human life in all times and places. Research shows that behind the present form of current writing systems is a long history of change and evolution which has been in line with the pageant of human history ([10],p. 39). The alphabet alone, however, could not satisfy human sense of beauty and this why humans decided to bestow some grace and charm upon the written form of language.([7])

According to Historicism thinkers, the evolution of writing and the art of calligraphy is a historical phenomenon which depends on its geographical, cultural, political, and economic context. Nevertheless, the role of religious beliefs in the formation of art is only briefly considered in this approach. In other words, artistic phenomena arise from a specific historical context and, although religious factors may to some extent contribute to the development of calligraphy, not all aspects of it can be explained by these factors. Traditionalism investigations of Islamic calligraphy, on the other hand, tend to neglect the importance of historical, economic, political, and social context. They assume calligraphy to be rooted in spiritual beliefs, as opposed to everyday experiences, which are influenced by

timeless and placeless facts. The followers of this approach believe that the development and evolution of Islamic calligraphy was due to the grace of God's word which is of Divine nature and which has never been affected by human power. The reincarnation of the Divine through linguistic forms had to take a worldly appearance. But the word of God should not be displayed in an ordinary form. It deserved to be written beautifully and this is why calligraphy came into being and evolved into an enduring artistic form. Its growth was due to love, not due to the praise of kings or princes. Those who practiced calligraphy did not seek wealth or fame; rather they aimed at God's satisfaction. The followers of this viewpoint include some Islamic mystics and Horufis as well as traditionalists such as Titus Burckhardt, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Martin Lings, and Annemarie Schimmel. Obviously, it is not possible to compare these two approaches in detail in a single paper. This paper, therefore, attempts to elaborate on the first approach to Islamic calligraphy. For this purpose, a general description of this approach to Islamic art is presented in the beginning. This provides a context for discussing this approach with regard to calligraphy. In the next part, we shall deal more specifically with the ideas of these scholars about calligraphy. The paper is finished with a critical review of the Historicism approach.

Historicism. Historicism is rooted in eighteenth-century Europe, particularly in Germany, where it was first developed in the field of economic studies. Underlying Historicism are the ideas of two prominent German philosophers, i.e. Herder and Hegel, about the nature of reason and reasoning. According to Herder, there is no single entity which can be called 'the reason' and the reason of the enlightenment should not be taken as the reason of humanity. Instead of a single universal reason, there are many reasons each of which is the product of a certain context. Hegel, too, refers to 'reasons' instead of 'the reason.' Although Hegel believes in a single reason, he integrates it with the notion of history and calls it historical reason.

There is no doubt that Wilhelm Dilthey's ideas strongly influenced Historicism. The gist of his theory of Historicism is that humans make decisions by using their reason and human decisions take place in the context of history and on the basis of the historical reason. History, however, is not simply a container of human actions, but it also shapes the content of actions. To put it another way, history is not merely a measure against which to specify how and where an action has taken place. It is from their cultural and social milieu that humans learn what to do or not to do in which context. In other words, they cannot learn actions from nothing. Human actions, therefore, are: 1) based on reasoning, 2) culturally and historically oriented, and 3) specific. This means that a single action has different meanings in different cultures. Thus, we do not explain human phenomena; rather we can only perceive and interpret them. Other prominent figures of Historicism are Friedrich Meinecke and Ernst Troeltsch. These two, of course, represent classic German Historicism. According to Troeltsch, everything is conceived in the context of becoming. Given an ever-new and infinite individualism, politics, morality, religion, industry, and art are abolished in the becoming process of history and all of them are only comprehensible as the components of historical development ([3],p. 110). Philosophical Historicism which is represented by Gadamer, Margolis, Rorty, and McIntire puts forward a theory of the complete and necessary partiality of human reason (the act of human understanding). Here, the historical horizons not only make humans capable of understanding but also strongly constraint them. These are the ultimate borders that contain the act of cognition. Reason cannot go beyond its historical circumstances and the circumstances that surround reason are real ([3],p. 113). As a matter of fact, every phenomenon results from and is necessitated by certain actions and events that have taken place over time. The method of Historicism emphasizes a reading of the world according to which all social and cultural phenomena have been historically objectified and rely on themselves as well as on the social and cultural components of their time ([14],p. 141). In other words, every phenomenon is a specific event that is realized under certain temporal, social, and spatial circumstances. The only reason for the phenomenon is indeed history and all historical requirements. If we removed these circumstances from the course of history, we would never encounter this phenomenon. All phenomena, therefore, result from socio-historical circumstances. In a similar manner, every work and every instance of behavior are caused by a certain social context in which human identity is formed. In fact, every individual and every work are created by a certain history ([19],p. 74). As their name suggests, historicists consider history and nothing else in investigating the roots of a social, psychological, or artistic phenomenon and avoid addressing other possible reasons. They invoke only material reasons to explain the world and do not base their arguments on timeless and placeless facts. Where mankind is formed by his history, human artefacts are also bound to face such a destiny. In other words, Historicism promotes a linear and inflexible perspective which is always reductionist in nature.



Maghribi Koran 68: 49-69: 9, written for the Sharifi Sultan 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, Morocco, 1568 ([16],p.42)

The Historicism Approach to Islamic Art. Almost all art historians in the west adopt, whether implicitly or explicitly, a Historicism approach to Islamic art. Among the historians of Islamic art, André Godard, Oleg Grabar, Richard Ettinghausen, Terry Allen, Ernst Kühnel, and David Talbot Rice have used Historicism method in investigating the history of Islamic art. Their treatment of style and form in Islamic art is based on the analysis of historical circumstances. This approach assumes that Islamic art was influenced by Byzantine, Iranian, as well as Roman elements. Therefore, the components that resulted in the integration of these various elements into unique patterns and forms are not seriously considered. An instance of this treatment is discussed in *Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* by Gulru Necipoglu ([21],p. 122):

Islamic art faced critics who rejected the Islamic identity and considered this art as secular. Albert Gayet in his *Art Arabe* (1893) regards Islamic art as a racially-based art which is not influenced by religious teachings. In his *Stilfragen* (1893), Alois Riegl claims that arabesque patterns which replace icons and figures are of a merely decorative nature.

Terry Allen disagrees with the idea that the arabesque "expresses the spiritual and some Islamic ideas" and goes as far as to claim that "there is nothing Islamic in Islamic art" ([2]).

Some of these scholars such as Riegl, Herzfeld, Gombrich, and Grabar believe that ornamentation is the only purpose of these patterns. According to them, avoidance of nature geometric abstraction of the arabesques which are characterized by infinite repetition and similarity to fill the entire surface may reflect the psychological phobia about empty space that prevails in the Islamic world. This opinion is also echoed by Ettinghausen and Maurice Dimand. As Dimand puts it, "Muhammadist art is essentially ornamental and the empty space is not tolerated by Muslims" ([21],p.105). Characteristic of Historicism thinkers is that they limit themselves to a description of art works and suffice to establish a relation between these works and the context of their production. There is always, of course, some causations inherent in the claims of these scholars so that some of them also believe that Islamic works of art have been definitely produced on the basis of Islamic ideas and beliefs ([16],p. 24).

In a Historicism approach, in general, we cannot isolate a work of art from historical factors and motivations. If these factors and motivations are usually neglected and cannot be invoked in other situations, a work of art cannot be understood. In ahistorical study of Islamic art, the major questions are as following: How is art positively defined in Islam so that we could recognize an independent Islamic art? In which sources can we find the characteristics of the architecture of mosques and how they should be built? In reply to these questions, Historicism thinkers mention that the term 'Islamic' does not have a religious denotation because most of these works are not directly related to Islamic notions and many craftsmen who lived in the Islamic world were not Muslim. Moreover, those works of art that were obviously created by non-Muslims to be used by Muslims can be rightly included in Islamic art. Consequently, if Islamic craftsmanship is used to refer to any aspect of Islamic culture, it will be deceptively specific and only superficially unique. To understand how Islamic art can be a valid notion requires an accurate explanation of the common characteristics that have in different times and places resulted in changes in the art of different cultural entities ([13],pp. 1-3). As Terry Allen puts it, "I have never been able to find an explanation in Islamic texts as to why a mosque, apart from its solid building, was regarded as beautiful" ([2]). Grabar believes that no substantial evidence can be found in the text of Quran or Hadith concerning the negative statements such as prohibition of illustrating figures and making sculptures and all these beliefs began to appear from the second century A.H onward. Thus, we cannot ascertain whether an Islamic architect used a certain hadith of Quranic verse in his works ([2]). From a Historicism point of view, therefore, the art that evolved in the Islamic civilization is called 'Islamic' because it evolved in the context of Islamic thought. Here, thought does not refer to Islamic ideology, but it is a specifically Historicism term that refers to a meaningful act of reasoning which is the source of decisions and which is specific to a certain cultural period that can be understood within the context of the very period. In answer to the question as to why an element was borrowed from a certain civilization, these scholars build upon thought and thinking. Why only some elements of the source culture were selected? Because human thought is historical and belongs to a culture in a certain temporal context. So, a culture decides to select and adopt a number of elements from among the entirety of the elements of the source culture. The question still remains: Why?

Because mankind is not a being, but a being-there, a *Dasein*. The only reason for this selection is that he is affected by the thought and culture of his time. Culture is always related to action. The culture of the time does not accept everything. For example, Seljuk culture did not entail creation and use of *Haft-rang* tiles, i.e. a type of Islamic tiling. It is social circumstances that determine the possible and the impossible. For historicists, this determining power which is the main characteristic of culture is *Zeitgeist*. *Zeitgeist* does not refer to the individual thoughts in a time period. It does not refer to the thought of a certain scientist or artist. Rather it refers to entirety of these individuals. *Zeitgeist* is the very fundamental element that determines the acts of civilization in each age. Why did modern Persian poetry come into being? The answer to this question should be formulated by drawing upon the *zeitgeist* of the end of Qajar period and the beginning of Pahlavi period. It is the *zeitgeist* of each period that determines what poem must be composed and what style of painting or calligraphy must prevail. Therefore political thought and action, religious interpretation, as well as artistic acts result from the *zeitgeist* ([17], audio file).

It is the *zeitgeist* that makes us use the label of 'Islamic' for the art and culture of a certain era in which all people think highly of being a Muslim, consider the script of Quran as holy, and respect the hadiths of the Prophet. This civilization revolves around Islamic texts. In other words, this conception of being Islamic results from a certain *zeitgeist* and, obviously enough, it will continue to be Islamic as long as this *zeitgeist* continues to exist. With this

definition of the nature of Islamic art, Historicism evades any judgment as to the originality of Islamic art because it is the *zeitgeist* that determines what is included in Islamic art and what is not. The Historicism approach does not consider a work of art out of its historical context, arguing that the motivations behind the creation of a certain work are not traceable in other contexts. Thus, for studying a work of art we have to locate it in its historical context and recognize the historical, economic, as well as environmental factors surrounding it ([20,p. 198).



Calligraphy in Muḥaqqaq style with *sūrah* headings in ornamental Eastern Kūfī, written by Mubārak Shāh, 1320-1330([6],p.53)

Historicist Approach to Calligraphy. The proponents of the Historicism approach regard calligraphy, like other art products, as being influenced by the social life and its sociopolitical context. Thus, the history of calligraphy and its evolution has aroused out of the history. Calligraphy should be conceived of like architecture, miniature painting, and other Islamic arts. It has come to flourish whenever the conditions were favorable. Among the most prominent thinkers who have applied a Historicism approach to Islamic art and calligraphy are Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, Jonathan Bloom, Sheila Blair, Talbot Rice, and Oliver Lehman. Figures such as Ibn Khaldoun, Yasin Hamid Safadi, Ehsan Yarshater, Aidin Aghdashlou, and Zabihollah Safa have also adopted similar approaches although they have not made explicit mention of their theoretical framework. What follows is a discussion of a number of historical studies about calligraphy with the aim explaining the ideas of the abovementioned scholars.

Emphasis on the Advent and Origins of Islamic Calligraphy. In this approach, writing is a mundane human-born creature and it has not been revealed to any prophet in form of a divine inspiration. This art has evolved in the same way as architecture. Just as the dwelling of mankind has evolved from primary caves into skyscrapers, his primary pictograms which were once his only instrument of written communication have developed into complex writing systems. Therefore, traces of history are found almost everywhere. In other words, calligraphy is a human handicraft and one of the achievements of human intellect. In every city, the beauty and perfection of handwriting depends on how developed they have been and they are, for it is among the crafts and the development of crafts depends on the state of the development of a civilization; this is why most Bedouins are illiterate and those among them who are literate are not much able and skillful in reading and writing ([15],pp.111-112). Since script is a handicraft, its evolution entails teaching and learning over time and is related to the spiritual evolution of individuals. Therefore, literacy and learning to write can be acquired through practice and its necessity should not be taken into account as a deficiency for the *Owliaa-Allah*, i.e. close disciples of the Prophet. According to Ibn Khaldoun, the *Owliaa-Allah* wrote down Quranic verses without regard to their calligraphic beauty and, as a result, their manuscripts do not conform to the principles of the craft of handwriting. The disciples of the *Owliaa-Allah*, in turn, tended to imitate the very handwriting of them due to a belief that this handwriting would be *mutibarrik*, i.e. propitious and holy. Even now, some people try to imitate the handwriting of holy men, be it according to the principles of calligraphy or not. In this regard, we should not rely on those credulous people who state that the *Owliaa-Allah* had a perfect command of the art of calligraphy. In fact, their handwriting was not among their perfect traits because calligraphy is both an art and a craft which is a civil act used to earn money. Perfection in crafts is relative and its deficiency *per se* is not related to one's religion but to one's techniques of earning money which can be improved by practice and cooperation ([15],p. 116).

From what was discussed above it can be inferred that the advent of writing systems, whether we attribute it to Sumerians or to other civilizations such as Jiroft or ancient Egypt, was almost similar in all civilizations but its evolution varied from one place to another according to the geographical and linguistic context. Most probably, the first efforts of mankind to develop a writing system was the drawings of the primary cave-dwellers that aimed at expressing their needs. It is difficult to imagine a script being developed all of a sudden in a vacuum by a single nation and then propagated to other nations. Similarly, it is quite impossible that every nation would have adopted its own writing system in the beginning taught it to others. The origins of handwriting can be essentially attributed to the human desire to depict ideas and imaginations and its stages of development have been described in many sources.

It should be noted that the Historicism approach to the origins of calligraphy is in a clear contrast to the viewpoint of those who attribute calligraphy to the *Owliaa-Allah* and, thus, neglect the entire historical context.

The Influence of Other Nations on Arabic Calligraphy. The role of non-Arab nations in the formation of Islamic calligraphy has been widely mentioned by many Historicism scholars as an important fact. Most of these scholars particularly emphasize the fact that Iranian scribes in the Abbasid court contributed enormously to the invention of different Islamic calligraphic forms and played a central role in the evolution of Islamic calligraphy. A

comparison of some of the scripts which came into vogue in Iran and the western Islamic world, not least Kufi script, has led contemporary scholars to conclude that, having learned the principles of Arabic language, the artists would introduce innovations in Arabic scripts based on previous scripts as well as their own taste. The innovations of Iranian artists would take the form of scripts such as Taliq, Shekasteh Taliq, Nastaliq, and Shekasteh Nastaliq ([25],p. 21). It is obvious that Kufi script was not so various and complicated in the early Islamic era. Its different forms gradually appeared over time up to a point that in the late 5th century AD there were almost 42 types of Kufi script most of which were prevalent in the Iranian province of Khorasan ([24],p. 27).

According to the Historicism approach, one of the sources of innovation in Islamic calligraphic forms was the presence of Iranians in high positions of the Islamic state who usually enjoyed support from the governments. Until the end of the Umayyad period no particular variety appeared in the Arabic script and it was only under the Abbasid dynasty where Iranian scribes were employed in governmental institutions that different scripts were invented and many well-known calligraphers were began their career ([23],p. 155):

"When the Arabs began their rule and conquered a multitude of cities and countries, they established their administration center in Basra and Kufa and felt an urgent need for writing; thus, they sought to develop and promote their art and craft of writing and succeeded in excelling at this art. It was so that their script obtained ultimate beauty in Kufa and Basra" ([15],p. 117).

The historical development of the Arabic script in Iran reached a point where a number of scripts were invented which were totally different from the basic principles of Kufi script. Almost all contemporary art historians agree that Taliq, Nastaliq, and Shekasteh Nastaliq are Iranian scripts . It is obvious that the variety in scripts resulted from historical necessities as well as rising aesthetic standards. For instance, it has been widely said that Nastaliq and ShekastehTaliq were developed as they enabled scribes to write more quickly. This claim, of course, totally conforms to reality. The emphasis of the Historicism scholars on the role of other nations in the evolution of Islamic calligraphy is due to the fact that they believe that Islamic thought has not been supportive of art in general and calligraphy in particular, which is why Arab Muslims became interested in art and calligraphy when they encountered other peoples. This belief stands in contradiction to those who claim that the principles of art can be inferred from Islamic teachings.



Page from the “Blue Quran” with visible elements of layout. Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.([21],p.5)

Centrality of Form and Ornamentation in Calligraphy. With regard to calligraphy, many Historicism scholars believe that forms and ornaments are more important than the content. Some believe that Nastaliq is rooted in the soft and harmonious curves of nature. This can be supported by the fact that human qualities and traits were major inspirations for the development of forms in Nastaliq because the beauty of the beloved in classical Persian poetry is sometimes likened to the form of alphabet letters ([25],p. 76). The role of forms and ornaments in calligraphy has been variously explained by other scholars. These explanations are against the view that the development of calligraphy depends directly upon Quran and Islamic spirituality. Although the Historicism scholars do not deny the importance of Quran in the development of calligraphy, they do not associate this development solely with the sacredness of Quran and believe that Arabic letters, like any other alphabet, would undergo a formal development even though the text of Quran did not make such development possible: "Should the letter 'kaaf' not be underlined by the word of God, the development is due to the formal aspect rather than the sacred and spiritual essence. The formal development of Arabic letters resembles the formal development of the decorative patterns in manuscript illuminations, tile-works, and stuccoworks." ([1],p. 75)

Some historicists tend to explain the ornamental function of calligraphy by arguing that the use of inscriptions in Islamic architecture aimed at a rivalry with the church architecture which would utilize icons and imagery for ornamentation. The oldest surviving Islamic work of architecture, i.e. Qubbat al-Sakhrāh in Jerusalem, makes liberal use of calligraphy. It was built as a symbol of monotheist mastery in the Islamic worldview as well as of the victory over the Persian and Roman Empire. With a length of 240 meters and an apparently ornamental function, this enormous inscription has golden cubic tiles on a cyan background and was most probably considered as important as its magnificence suggests. ([4],p. 22)

From its very beginnings, Islam replaced the iconic and symbolic representations of Christian and Buddhist art with written inscriptions of Quranic verses. Handwriting and inscription-writing, therefore, not only became an

inseparable element of ornamentation in architecture and artworks but also turned into an instrument for expressing the artistic intentions. Moreover, Quranic verses were reproduced with the highest accuracy possible. As a result, calligraphy came to be used for books other than Quran and was regarded as the most important type of art ([9],p.9). The downplaying of iconography resulted in increased attention to the personality traits of Prophet Muhammad who, in contrast to Christ, was not perceived as a mysterious and symbolic character. It also led Muslims to practice the art of calligraphy to the extent that inscriptions replaced iconic representations in Islamic architecture ([9],p. 8). In other words, the prohibition of representation of animate beings by Quran and religious teachings, on the one hand, and the Muslims' need for ornamentation, on the other hand, led Muslims to develop abstract decorative patterns. Muslims' interest in calligraphy is indeed due to its ornamental nature rather than other causes such as God's remembrance. As evidence of the ornamental and secular nature of calligraphy, the Historicism scholars cite the pottery ornamentations of the 4th century AD. The Kufi scripts on these works have a secular and merely ornamental function. Sometimes narrow and austere Kufi scripts transform into animal patterns, particularly seagulls with long beaks and necks. As the earliest instances of animal inscriptions in the history of Islamic art, these patterns were most probably produced with a secular motivation. Although floral scrolls and, less frequently, animal patterns were used to decorate glazed pottery, calligraphic inscription were apparently more important than any other patterns. The artists tended to use one or more letters in repetitive patterns. Whether original or imitative, these inscriptions were likely to possess an immense and sometimes magical charm for their owners ([8],p. 236). Thus, the Arabic script that was initially regarded as holy due to being used to record the Prophet's teachings was soon admired for the sake of itself and Arabic calligraphy became such an elite and ostentatious art that it was sometimes even difficult to read ([8],p. 64).

As a major figure of Historicism, Lehman believes that, aesthetically speaking, calligraphy is different from writing. If calligraphy had been only intended to record written texts, there would have been no reason for this considerable variety in Islamic calligraphy. The very attempt on the part of calligraphers to invent more beautiful styles indicates that their attention was mainly focused on the form of words. Understanding the meaning of the text is not related to enjoying the text as a work of art because a beautiful calligraphic work may only consist of a number of single letters. A letter is above all a line; a line drawn on anything, even in the air, possesses a form apart from what it represents ([16],p. 82). The beauty of the script has separated over time from the meaning of the text, in our case the Holy Quran. Surprisingly enough, the masters of calligraphy seemed to attempt to unravel the relation between form and text meaning, i.e. the word of God. There is no plausible reason to confirm this hypothesis, but it can be assumed that they gradually understood the value of their work to the extent that they tended to neglect the legibility of their writing ([16],pp. 13, 48).

Some of the most beautiful pieces of calligraphy on the utensils do not have a profound meaning. Most of these sentences are wishes for the owner's luck, good health, prosperity, or forgiveness and sometimes the name of the artist or the commissioner as well as the date of production. What deserves admiration today, or even in the past, is the mere beauty of the work. The meaning of the texts is not even of secondary importance because they do not influence the aesthetics of the object ([16],p.68). This is opposed to the view that Islamic art is not essentially ornamental and form-oriented and any variety in patterns is not aimed at the pleasure of the audience. The latter assumes that a Muslim artist takes on the duty of conveying a knowledge that can only be expressed through abstract and sometimes ornamental forms ([12],p.67). What is important for the Muslim artist is a truth which has been revealed to him and which should be expressed by means of abstract and reasonable forms in order to evade naturalism.

Early Muslims' Disregard of Calligraphy. According to some historicists, the reason why the Arabic script had not made any significant progress before the rise of Islam was the Arabs' reliance on their memory in spite of the fact that they were already familiar with writing and used it as a means of communication in their commercial transactions. Furthermore, the Arabic alphabet has 18 basic forms while the language has 28 phonemes. For instance the letters "ب", "ت", "ث", "ن", and "ى" have the same basic form but are pronounced differently. Also, they take different forms depending on whether they appear in the beginning, in the middle, or in the end of the word. After the rise of Islam and the prevalence of writing among the Arabs and non-Arab Muslims, some problems arose from this lack of correspondence and the threat of different readings of Quranic verses led the caliphate to find a solution. Since the Arabic script did not have any points or diacritics yet, similar letters were likely to change the words and, accordingly, the meaning of the text. In the early Islamic period, the persons who could protect the original text of Quran against any distortion were those who knew it by heart. Over time, in the absence of these persons orthographic problems would occur. As evidence of the non-divine nature of calligraphy, the Historicism scholars refer to the fact that Quran was not even compiled in a single volume during the life of the prophet and the historical necessity of encountering other nations was the main reason for the invention of calligraphy. It should be noted that Quran was not compiled in a single volume until the rule of Uthman although it had been sporadically inscribed on various objects. Given that pre-Islamic Arabic literature was oral, lack of attempts to compile Quran and the timeless and placeless conception of calligraphy is quite understandable. Therefore, if the geographic territory of Islam was limited to the Arabian Peninsula, development of calligraphy would seem impossible.([5],p.124)

In general, the historicists believe that geographic expansion of the Islamic state, which was a historical and political event, would reveal the importance of writing and calligraphy to the Arab Muslims. This is opposed to the widely held view that Islamic calligraphy was developed as a Divine art and revolved around revelation and God's remembrance.

Conclusion. What has been so far discussed in this paper can be summarized by the following four points:

1) Script is a man-made and mundane craft that was not revealed to any prophet through divine inspirations. This art has evolved just like architecture and its evolution depends upon the progress and prosperity of civilizations.

2) In the early Islamic period, there was a general disregard of calligraphy, which is indicative of the fact that calligraphy is not essentially an Islamic art. If it had been an Islamic art, it would have been highly regarded from the very beginning of the Islamic period. It was only after the expansion of the Islamic territory and the rulers' patronage for calligraphy that this art was developed and a variety of styles were invented.

3) In Islamic calligraphy, form and ornamentation dominate the content. Evidence of this claim is the complicated and illegible Kufi inscriptions in mosques, the illegible and form-oriented works of *Siah-mashq* of Muslim calligraphers, as well as the calligraphic paintings on the works of pottery. Even if the Quranic verses were in the beginning the focus of calligraphy, forms and ornaments gradually came to dominate the content.

4) Before the rise of Islam, Arabic literature was entirely oral and Arabic script did not have points and diacritics. The spread of Islam in non-Arab countries and the need for unification of Quran manuscripts marked a dramatic progress in writing and calligraphy. If Islam had been restricted to Arabic countries, Islamic calligraphy would not have achieved its current excellence.

Undoubtedly Historicism has provided humanities with fruitful techniques of research. One should note, however, that it suffers from a strict type of reductionism which resembles the methodologies that are prevalent in natural sciences. As argued above, this school of thought tends to study a certain branch of art in its social, political, and economic contexts. In fact, a Historicism method of analysis reduces its object to the contextual factors surrounding it. Religious faith is not taken into account itself but is reduced to a set of historical and religious facts. For example, from a Historicism point of view it is argued that the conversion of Iranians to Islam and the necessity of establishing communication with the Arabs as well as with the word of God resulted in the flourishing of calligraphy. But there is a tendency to disregard the fact that Muslim Iranians felt a religious duty to exalt the word of God by practicing the art of calligraphy. Historicism does not take into account the human factor and the power of human will. It is mostly concerned with reducing human beings to their circumstances and disregards human free will that may transcend historical circumstances. This sort of reductionism clearly prevails in the study of Islamic calligraphy. In what follows we shall have brief comment on the Historicism approach to the study of Islamic calligraphy.

As we know, Islam sought to invite the people of the Arabian Peninsula to monotheism and *tawhid*. Thus, the main aim of Islam was to fight against idolatory and atheism. As evidenced by the history of Islam, this duty was assumed by the Prophet and all early Muslims. It is quite obvious that in this period no emphasis was put on the art of calligraphy. But the question remains as to whether we can take this as a proof that Islam does not have a high regard for calligraphy. The oral nature of pre-Islamic Arabic literature is also an inadequate reason for claiming that calligraphy was not approved by Islam. By way of analogy, other branches of Islamic knowledge such as mysticism and philosophy were not directly addressed by the Prophet and his early followers, but later on their principles were inferred by Muslim thinkers from the principles of Islamic faith as well as the tradition of the Prophet. It may be asked if, for this reason, we could exclude these areas of knowledge from the scope of Islam. The same can be claimed for calligraphy. The emphasis on reading and God's remembrance in the first verses revealed to Prophet Muhammad as well as numerous hadiths which state that a mere sight of written Quranic verses are beneficial even for an illiterate person is indicative of the high regard for calligraphy in Islamic thought. It may be the reason why some Quranic inscriptions are illegible and have been mistakenly interpreted as form-oriented.

We may be unable to attribute calligraphy to one of the prophets, imams, or their disciples and to find historical documents proving their beautiful handwriting, but it does not mean that we should neglect the Divine aspect of Islamic calligraphy. As mentioned above, the centrality of revelation and God's remembrance in Islamic thought is indicative of the holiness of calligraphy.

Of course we should not neglect social, political, and historical factors in the study of the development of Islamic calligraphy. In the meanwhile, however, religious faith plays a crucial role in the evolution of any form of art. Iranians who contributed to the development of calligraphy were primarily Muslims who practiced calligraphy with a strong belief in God's word and God's remembrance. That some branches of calligraphy have turned in the course of history into ornamental styles has not negatively affected the importance of calligraphy in the Islamic thought. The ornamental dimension of calligraphy should not be excluded from Islamic art because the calligrapher uses the script to create a piece of non-naturalist art and tries to convey abstract notions through abstract forms. Those works that were created for praising somebody or for exhibiting the name of the commissioner can be safely excluded from Islamic art since they have resulted from the mundane development of the art of calligraphy.

¹Terry Allen, a historicist thinker, does not reject the profound effect of Islamic thought on Islamic arts, but in one of his papers he considers the issue from a different point of view. He believes that we cannot deny the historical manifestation of Islamic art even if we regard this art as a symbol of profound, timeless and placeless truths. Conversely, it is wrong if we restrict our understanding of this art to its material appearance and the course of time. Another group of scholars believe that works of Islamic art depend on revelation and mystic contemplation which cannot be contained within the frame of time and place and which are non-historical or meta-historical. This is also true to some extent, but they neglect the fact that the relation between art and timeless facts can only be shown through historical contexts. A third group believe that an understanding of a work of art is only bound to formal criteria and avoid any reference to the historical context or to any transcendental element. According to this group, Islamic art is not related to the religion of Islam but to the Islamic culture. The term 'Islamic art' bears comparison with terms such as 'Gothic art' or 'Renaissance art'

and not with 'Christian art' or 'Buddhist art'. If we liken Islamic art to a building, a fair approach is to consider both the interior and exterior at the same time and to seek meaning by constantly moving inside and outside the building ([2])

¹Pictogram refers to the drawing of objects, animals, or humans and is most typically represented by ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. 2) Ideograms are more abstract signs to refer to the real-world objects. As the number of objects is almost infinite, ideograms are potentially numerous and difficult to learn. A prime example of ideograms is Chinese writing system. 3) In syllabic systems, every character represents a syllable. In fact, Chinese writing system is a combination of ideograms and syllabic characters. 4) Alphabetical writing systems are composed of characters that represent single sounds. The invention of this system was so important that it has been compared with the development of language itself. ([11],p 22)

¹See also: ([22]).

¹See also:([18], pp. 59-74)

¹See also: ([22])

¹See also: Michon, J.-L. Art: The Way of Remembrance in the Mysterious Book of Religious Art. Edited by Mahdi Forouzan.

Tehran: Soroush. pp. 59-74,2001

¹*Siah-mashq* which literally means 'black etude' refers to a style of calligraphy which usually makes use of Nastaliq script. In *siah-mashq*, letters and words are densely written close to each other so that it is usually difficult to understand the text. It aims chiefly at creating a beautiful formal impression.

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