



## Art of Bahari Qur'an Manuscripts from MJRL

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### Abstract

Islamic art, enjoying the fundamentals of religious intellectual in different forms, expresses the modes of its spiritual nature in Islamic civilizations as well as in Muslim art. Appearance of Qur'anic manuscript concepts in perspectives of Muslim arts in different creative periods. Multiplicity of artistic approaches in Islamic culture, through its exceptional element expressing the principles derived from the Allah's words, leads to living Muslim artist for the establishment of masterpieces of Islamic art, the most glorious artistic reflections, that it has established at an extensive level which can be observed in book compositioning, illumination, embellishment and planning. This article discusses the illumination of Bahari Qur'anic manuscripts in the collection of Masvd Jhandher research library, privately run at the small town sardarpur Jhandher in tehsil mailsi, district vehari (Punjab, Pakistan). This paper compares the illuminative styles of the particular script comparing it with other contemporary to this calligraphy style, and the evolutionary phase of the calligraphy style and the paper used specially for these manuscripts. Bahari manuscripts are mostly written in the 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century, lesser efforts are applied to adorn the manuscript but visually the script of the manuscript was composed and stylized in an expressive tone, as the illuminative elements are quite simpler than the later manuscripts.

### Keywords

Qur'anic Manuscript, Illumination, Bahari, Embellishment and Planning, Illuminative Styles, Expressive Tone.

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## Introduction

The prominent copies of Quranic manuscripts and the Qur'ān is mostly covered in creative illumination in different areas of Pakistan. Most Quranic manuscripts are assembled in double decorated frames which makes them stand apart from the rest of the manuscripts of all religions. The illuminations not only represent the message of the Divine Revelation but also tells us about the creativity of the artist behind this artistry. Illustration appears to play a crucial role in the finest Quranic manuscripts. All facets of the calligraphic style of Bahari Quran in MJRL will be covered in this paper. If we analyze the external features of Quran manuscripts, then we will get to know that it showcases extraordinary level of technical and critical excellence as compared to other research papers from different regions of South Asia especially in terms of illuminative and calligraphy styles. These various styles compare us to appreciate the Indo-Persian Islamic book arts which are widely known throughout South Asia.

## Origin of Bāhāri Style

Calligraphy is an important art form in the Islamic manuscripts. It is comprised of various styles depending on the area and the era in which each style flourished over time, the most used being the Kufi style. Other various styles include Nāskh, thulath, Mūhaqqaq, Rehān, Riqāh, Nāstaliq and many more calligraphy styles. Ibn-e- Muqla (886-940, Baghdad) was the one who sorted, categorized and organized the six calligraphy styles in the eleventh century. He also set some calligraphic rules for the generations to come which is the sole reason that his name is taken in high regard in the Islamic calligraphy.

If we look at the Bāhāri script, first of all this style is not been considered as the khatt, it's a style of writing and this style is originated in the South Asia (India), where the local Arabic khattāt were more interested that their local writing style should be developed and had some reservations regarding the rest of calligraphy styles. To make the local writing style common and easy to read, this style was originated on paper that was made by hand and it was called as wasli, because wasli page was known as bāhār, so the specific writing style was coined as bāhār style, bāhār is given name to the page (wasli) , this style possess numerous variations of different Khatts, bāhāri is not possessed their own rules and regulation, according to bāhāri is the evolutionary period style between the Kufic and the Thuluth ,and according to Khurshid 'Alām Gauhār Qalām, that time, the Nāskh was developing, and Yes, this bāhāri style is more closer to Nāskh, somewhere purely we find the complete letters of Khatt-I Nāskh, than Thuluth is more prominent as we can easily differentiate the min and wa of the Thuluth, and the insertions of the Khatt-I Mūhaqqaq, while Mūhaqqaq is much followed in Maghrabi Aundlasi, which can be better compare with the bāhāri style, the rules which followed in other Khatts, are missing in bāhāri styles, suggest that this is a “kamzōr” Khat,

Calligraphy development (1022-1526 C second era), during which the bāhāri style prospered along with Nāskh, during the Khilji sultanate, under the reign of Sultan Mehmud Ghaznavi. This style of bāhāri script is actually belongs to Central Asia. This style was mostly used for the architectural buildings and Qur'ān manuscripts, this can be said that this is not proper any

reformed style just an evolutionary development of Thuluth from Khatt-I Kūfi, and during this era Khatt-I Nāskh was established properly .

“The calligraphy of the dedication panel is strikingly origin style, although it bears some resemblance to the so called Bāhāri manuscripts styles found in a fair number of 14th and 15th century Qur’ān. A chief characteristic of Bāhāri style is the thick end terminal endings of

Certain extended letter”.

This time period belongs to Ibn ul-Bawwāb (died, 1022 AD), and was called as calligraphy second era, because Ibn-i Muqla (885-940 A.D) dominate the first period of calligraphy and it was under his influence.

Bāhāri script manuscripts are in fifty-five (55) total in number, but described and analyzed in this article are only 05 Qur’ān manuscripts from MJRL, these manuscripts are related between 14th 18th century.

Personal observation and available catalogue descriptions based on manuscripts studied of bāhāri script and comparing these manuscripts calligraphy and illumination with rest of the manuscripts in Kūfi, Nāskh, Thuluth, and Mūhaqqaq style, the following five (05) of fifty-five (55) bāhāri manuscripts are at least under discussion in this article.

All toxicological aspects of these 5 Qur’ān manuscripts will be analyzed below, first the binding aspect will be discussed then the paper quality along with its page size and graphic layout will be thoroughly examined. The calligraphy and illustrations on the manuscripts will be specially ponder upon. In order to deeply understand the illuminative styles, the Quran manuscripts from South Asia will be compared with those in other corners of the Islamic world. A deep analysis of the MJRL bahari manuscripts will help us to understand whether they have been derived from Islamic traditions or they follow a particular unique pattern from South Asia or Central Asia. On the premise of this talk, a few conclusions will be drawn around the craftsmanship of the bāhāri Qur’ān from MJRL.

### **Bāhāri Manuscripts**

Illuminated Qurāns documented from MJRL are all single- volume muṣḥāf. As distant as can be set up, all the original copies are composed on high quality paper. All the research papers that belong to different part of South Asia looks like wasli; the Indian paper. If we consider page size and page layout then we will get to know that the Qurans are segregated into the two different groups.

The first classification of this compositions is in "huge folio" arrange. The Qur’āns in this bunch are (BM.27, BM.53, BM.52 and BM.54 have the paper size which extend from 37 x 53 cm to 30 x 45 cm. Such large no of Qur’āns hav barely has been observed in the South Asia, and similar kind of examples are found in Punjab University central library Lahore Pakistan. In these Qur’āns each page contains seventeen lines; one document found in MJRL contain lines for translation that was in persian language. (Fig.4.3).

**Figure 4.3: Translated folio of bāhāri script location MJRL**



Photograph by: Author

The large folio of MJRL Qur'āns are related with an ordinary fashion of page format. In these compositions, there are ruled outlines encasing the content square, and the edges are exceptionally limit, with the composing prolonging quite close to the edges of paper on all sides. It is quite unusual that the text frames in bahari Qurans including the Quran manuscripts from the fifteenth and sixteenth century are missing. Even though ruled frames were rarely used in MamlukQur'ān, the 14th century saw a rise in the usage of ruled frames in Turks and Irani Qur'āns. In fact, the closest known similar page layout in these MJRL Qur'āns is found in a Qur'ān dated 1068AH (1657/8AD), conceivably from Afghanistan, that was shown as much brightening "the survival into the 17th century of a pre-Ottoman convention of book generation, for it has numerous of the highlights of a Mamluk original copy, such as the need of a ruled outline around the content". This Quran has commonality with the large folio group of MJRL Qurans: each page consists of 17 lines; the surah headings are highlighted in the red without frames and a full set of the different readings in the margins but it is quite small in folia size measuring 28.2 x 19.6 cm. Non-Quranic Arabic manuscripts from the MJRL are also available in the large format quite similar to the Quranic texts including four copies of the prayer book *Dalā'il-khayrāt* (M.78-M.81). They are illustrated with the same standards of content format: no content outlines and negligible edges (Fig. 4.6). Minimal space between the lines is illustrated in these non-Qur'ānic, with the 23 lines per page.

The moment set of four Qur'āns is in a littler "folio" arrange, with size of paper extending from 25x39 cm to 18 x6.5 cm. The "folio" format MJRL Qurans displays the same page layout arrange from South Asia Qurans. All the original copies separated from BM.27, the Qur'ānic content is enveloped inside the arrangement of ruled outlines of diverse colored inks, with generally wide edges on the three external sides, and a contract internal edge along the canal of book observed in (Figure.4.2). The composition of the outlines in each original copy is given underneath.

### **The Calligraphy**

Calligraphy in Qur'anic texts can be divided into four categories:

- Qur'anic texts

- Qur'anic titles
- marginal writings such as signs of parts of Qur'anic texts, many readings, recitations. Symbols, translations and other inscriptions
- Preceding the text of the Qur'anic Scripture, including prayer, copyright page and proprietary form. Each category of text has its own special characteristics, which it must be a different calligraphic process, so a special request of each category has shaped the skills of the Qur'ānskātibs and Khṭṭāts.

**Figure 4.5: Yellow dotted roundels for ayah markers Location MJRL**



Photograph by: Author

### **Text of the holy Qur'ān**

Through-out of the Islam'ic world, the most of the used form of the Qur'anic text to date is Nāskīh, with several other forms emerging. This selection is easy to understand because Nāskīh is the most readable text and the main function of the Quran text is to read. However, other writings have been found besides the early Kufic, Tihlutih, Mūhaqqaq and Rehāniand Nāsta'īq in particularly used and practiced in South Asia, but with some difference, and also evolved in resemblance with the Maghrabi style of scripts, it has been utilized in different Islamic regions of the world for many centuries. However, these later texts seem limited to special copies of the Qur'an for the royal guard, as writing them required dedication and skill, as has so often happened. as we know, a particular style was developed in South Asian Qur'ān manuscripts were written in bāhāri script with the title of "bāhāri" script named because of the region, while this is nothing with the Bihār in Bengal, not true because, there at MJRL, found number of Qur'āns manuscripts with the signatures of the calligraphers along with native origin Fig.4.3).

While according to Dr. 'Abdullah Chuḡṭā'i describes in his writings about the region of this word South Asia, but not exactly bihār or bāhār but the word which was used that was "bāhār", and it is right word for these Qur'ānic manuscripts , He also pointed out the probability that calligrapher may belong to central Asia as at that time South Asia was conquered by the Sultan of Central Asia and they settled many calligrapher in the different regions of conquered land then these calligrapher may signed with name of their mother land i.e Central Asia. This has been further practiced and was called as bāhāri Qur'āns in this region of South Asia. With some exceptions, the bāhāri style found in the Qur'an is straightforward throughout. This bāhāri form is not "standard" according to the teachings of the calligraphy masters (khṭṭāt). But most of the Moors allowed, demonstrating the style and talent of the individual illuminators. There are of direction exceptions to this rule, and under we are able to take a look at the form of bāhāri script determined in MJRL, which will be depicted as it is. The bāhāri observed in Qur'āns from MJRL is of a calligraphic nature no longer observed in Qur'ān manuscripts from

another South Asian area. On the basis of the bāhāri Qur'ān manuscripts analyzed, it won't be wrong to say that there's a "South Asian fashion" found in the calligraphy. The writing of the bāhāri was thoroughly studied and examined and it was observed that this bāhāri found in different compositions held in different particular places has also been utilized to its maximum potential. As Qur'ān is always held under special care away from the eyes of replicators, it could be the reason of regret that so small is caught around the time period when original copies are being replicated in South Asia. Present South Asian Qur'āns depict an unusual calligraphic style which affirms to the careful preservation of calligraphic culture.

A study of the five bāhāri scripts of the MJRL Qur'an reveals two slightly different differences of Maghrabi script utilized partially and influenced; bāhāri style reflects the maximum influence of Nāskh and Maghrabi inclined towards the Aundlasi, and Thuluth, and Mūhaqqaq too are in this style of calligraphy, but common between both styles are the elements of the Thuluth and the Mūhaqqaq, these two are somewhere makes the similarities in between the bāhāri and the Maghrabi.

The most important feature in the first group is that the tails of the letters waw and rā don't as it were expand downwards, somewhat bend upwards. The final dāl and dāl are as a rule drawn from the beat rather than the bottom of the vertical pen, as shown by general rules. This is particularly associated with Mūhaqqaq and is somewhat stylized with Moorish in Morocco (Africa). The shape of rā in its stand-alone shape is bizarre, conjointly takes after with African fashion of calligraphy. Other unmistakable characteristics are the way that the letter hāin the development murmur takes after a half

Type of script MJRL bāhāri with Indo-Persian influences and Maghrabi with Mūhaqqaq influences Indo-Persian forms Manuscript number stated dal/dhal circle. The letter Hā is found in Persian calligraphy as well as in Ta'lik script. The similarity of the letter image above and (Fig. 12) shows the influence of Maghrabi kīphaṭṭ on MJRL bāhāri. Naturally, there are some differences; but all the writings are similar in shape and form and a lot in inspiration.

The second style of MJRL bāhāri is that found in BM. 50, and BM.51. In fact, this letter is not much different from the letters in the first group above in terms of its general characteristics. There are many obvious comparisons, but there are also some differences, notably the way the ending tails of waw, rā, and finally mīm are drawn. With the tails of the same paper in the group, these differences are flattened above or shown slightly upwards. The second style of bāhāri is close to Mūhaqqaq, and one of its main features is the white tail of the letters waw, rā and finally mīm. For centuries, the Mūhaqqaq was widely used to copy the Qur'an, especially in India, Iran, Iraq, and Egypt.

Coming from two different styles, one inspired by the Nāskih and the Moors, the other closer to Mūhaqqaq, bāhāri style seems to have been used frequently in the MJRL for some time to produce religious texts, Clarify the received Manuscript to write specific rules. No known example of bāhāri achieves a level of clarity to function as a standard grammar unless the context is set to the letter. Later, other differences in bāhāri writing depended on the skill and interest of the Khattāt that could have been and had taken place.

## Calligraphic features of Qur'āns

In the MJRL Qur'āns manuscript find a distinctive style of *Khatt-ibāhār*, which is known "bāhāri script". There are two differences. In the first, the tails of wāw and rā are drawn upwards in Moorish writing, secondly tails of rā and wāw shows similarity to the Mūhaqqaq. Most significantly the ending or last letters are in bold and thick form which indicate the vibrant differences from other styles.

### The Illumination

Lighting is a very broad term used to describe decorative components, usually colored and/or metallic, intended to improve the appearance of text; this can include margins as well as footnotes and punctuation. Calligraphy juz in sign BM. 52 is written in gold ink. However, describing the text as "pictorial" often means that there are decorative elements such as friezes and decorative frames or even marginal medallions. The "Ready Illuminated" Qur'an, MJRL's best illuminated Qur'an, is probably BM.50; A Quran from the MJRL Main Library, with the inscription on the first page of a member of the Jīnhandīhir family.

**Figure 4. 1 BM 52: Illuminated opening folios of bāhāri manuscript from MJRL**



Photograph by: Author

The most important thing about this Quran book is that every page of the text is well designed as part of the picture, with beautiful flowers covering whole page including the text and edges shown in (fig. 4.9). The constant use of light is one of the best unusual features of Islamic calligraphy. In most manuscripts, ornamentation is strong on one or two pages of the text; the remaining inscription is partially decorated.

The best manuscript embellishments are found in Qur'anic texts, but even in this illumination it is usually limited to two beautiful frames around key openings in the text, such as at the start, sometimes in the middle and at the end. The text of the Qur'an also has small details such as medallions to select chapters and sometimes elaborate surah titles. But the solution is often found in the MJRL bāhāri writings; this is that in all these cases the light is only at the edge of the page and is not forced on blocks of text or the surface of the text. This situation is very different in writings from many other Islamic cultures. It is not easy to find the Qur'an in Turkey, Iran and Southeast Asia, every page is illuminated, the text is embroidered with gold ribbon and even the material is written on a gold background<sup>15</sup>.

**Figure 4.10: Doubled Frame bāhāri manuscript from MJRL**



Photograph by: Author

In writing, particularly within the Iranian convention, each page of the content is enhanced with overlaying or botanical themes. Hence, at to begin with look, MJRL bāhāri Qur'ān appears to be affected by the book of craftsmanship within the Islamic locale for the Moorish, there might be the reason that mostly of these manuscripts are donated and purchased from the Afghanistan, which shows the strong influence of central Asia. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that this Qur'an is not a "true" text in the sense of a book decorated by Khattāt himself; rather, the Qur'ān is written on paper which was already illuminated or gold-plated (gilded), and especially in the South Asia the paper was used for the writing of Qur'ān were wasli, other than that of wasli, this paper is familiar as a type of South Asian gilded paper usually referred to in early sources in Gujrat(now in India ), on the north-west coast of South Asia<sup>16</sup>.

#### **Double frames Qur'an with illumination**

The first two pages of the manuscript are decorated with two frames (picture 4.11). Lowercase letters are surrounded by a gold-faced border with many features of unconnected botanical motifs in green and fresh blue opaque petals are designed with double thin outlined in black colour, on brilliant yellow surface, doubled inside and outside the thick frame outlined in thick black colour inner frame with red filling and outer with some very different green colors used in bāhāri Manuscripts, which actually differentiate the aesthetic values of these manuscripts with others. Fashioned at their center, a petalled yellow flower, with buds were placed randomly in the petals, on this main border, there are cartridges with gold inscriptions on a dark green background with black dots at the top and bottom. These gold borders are delimited by thin borders extending from the three outer edges of the blocks, defined by red, gold, green and light blue lines, each color group drawn in black.

The gold is present in the center of each arc. The background of the arch is a pale blue color that is clearly distorted and is now uneven in color. The three sides of the arch sit on a wide rectangular border with a black spotted gold base surrounded by a thin green border. The vertical line in the double petal flower frame is the yellow border on the double black grid line that goes all the way to the top of the paper. Manuscripts from MJRL represent the very simple color based filled in rectangular double frame, there was vertical bands which were extended



in the upward direction, and these patterns were not present inside the frames, this MJRL manuscript also shows double decorated folios in the center (fig.4.12), and these two folios are considered as original, that the illuminator or Khaṭṭāt designed with the whole manuscript, while the folios (Fig. 10), were missing and was replaced letter on because they have different color composition and are incomplete. They are only presenting the format and not presenting the illuminations.

**Figure 4.2: Illuminated Doubled frame bāhāri manuscript from MJRL**



Photograph by: Author

The organic motives are used, illumination in double frame is rich in colour, geometrical elements are not embedded, whereas the black text block is used, but according to the tradition of the bāhāri manuscripts, Surah headings written in red ink can be finds here. The text in the inner frame is decorated with the motif (six small arranged circle), use of pale blue motif is very frequent in these folios, whereas facing folio differ from others as it make an arch pattern on the bottom and head and decorated with the linear motive, and illumination in both folios comprises of yellow and pale blue color.

There are also features rarely seen in South Asian Islamic lighting, such as the use of gold as a backdrop for additional decorative techniques and the unusual color of pale-yellow blue. Another highlight is the inner vertical yellow border that runs up and down. The edges of the page are like "hinges" that support the beautiful image. This is the pattern of both structures in many Ottoman, Persian, and South Asian Qur'ans.

**Figure 4.3: Illuminated Doubled Frame bāhāri manuscript from MJRL**



Photograph by: Author

## **Qur'an manuscripts from MJRL**

This MJRL manuscript collection was purchased from Afghans as the Afghan America war initiated as the American started to destroy the history of Afghans. The manuscript was actually first in bāhāri script and later on damaged pages were written in other scripts which represents the mixed letters of Naskh, and Rehān.

As the bahari Qur'anic manuscripts are given shelf marks with BM. The manuscripts in the MJRL are restricted only to shelf mark, no. of pages and title. In the following description, the following information is given as available; Whether the Qur'an is complete; NO. number of rolls; NO. number of pages/sheets; the size of the foil, height x width in centimeters; Definition; NO. Number of lines per blank page; color color; block size; letter; writing (from the inside to the outside); expression marks; Quranic sentences; juz and the other margins Text; Lighting; packaging; Other notes; Book List (If the Qur'an is copied, page pictures are given in parentheses).

### **Conclusion**

It can be assumed that the bāhāri manuscripts Quran described mostly from the 15th century. These are older than most of the other texts studied, and this is important to explain some of the differences between the aforementioned Quran manuscripts and texts from other Islamic cultural sources. In particular, it would reflect the degree of Indo-Persian impact apparent within the official, composing and drawings of the manuscript compositions, to a degree not seen in Islamic original copies in other parts of the Moorish. For case, the word Allah, composed in ruddy, is related with South Asian Qurans, especially from the Sultans and later, while the calligraphic rectangular juz signs are reminiscent of the monograms of Mughal emperors. All these features remind of South Asia's role as a center of diversity.

This talk of chronology actually raises the address of whether the two groups of MJRL Qur'anic manuscript original copies depicted over may speak to diverse time periods. There are numerous references to exchange between Maghrib and South Asia, and to the nearness of South Asian shippers in Maghrib. The important thing was such a change; for example, the use of gold, which has turned into a stylized flower, in poetic symbols is also seen in two groups, such as the two differences in Bahari's writings. If both groups are graduates, a better outlook can be assumed to be "residents" of each group. One of the most important of these will be the dimensions, the regularity of the beautiful writings and pictures, the balanced quality of the first group of Qur'an, the features that show that these large manuscripts were specially ordered for use by public institutions and even correct. In a palace or in a mosque or other church. The regularity of its letters and presentation, and the large sheets of quality European paper required after production; shows a well written text, one can be supported by the Royal Patron Era. In this group (BM.52-54) is also a text and study for Qur'anic texts designed for use in religious education. This theory is based on the claim that in the 16th and 17th centuries, religious practices in South Asia were centered in palaces and great mosques (Van Bruinessen 1995).

A second group of smaller manuscripts includes other bāhāri Qurans, as well as those dealing with more personal use than the palace. While the sources are still recognizable by their spelling and arrangement, this group demonstrates that there are always many expected

differences from the writings of different sources and works, and that these are often rare when there are different readings in these manuscripts. and thorough rather than carefully.

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