

Design Course

## Lucknow Calligraphy

The decorative art of writing

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Antony William and

Anushree Kumar

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/course/lucknow-calligraphy>



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2. Tools and Raw Materials
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## Introduction

Calligraphy is one of the most ancient arts in the world. It is the art of writing words or phrases in a captivating form and style. Quitabat is a highly eminent form of artistic expression in the Muslim culture. It is important because it is derived from the holy book of Quran. Calligraphy became an instrument for expressing God's words which were recorded in Arabic script. Since the craft is inclined towards Muslim culture and tradition, therefore, it is practiced mainly by Muslim communities and mainly by men. A number of Muslim artists, such as calligraphers, paper makers, illustrators and binders are involved in this art. Islam was introduced as a religion in the country after the coming of the Mughal Empire. They used various ways and mediums to decorate their buildings, manuscripts, paintings, textiles, metal and ceramic ware, carpets etc.

In Lucknow, the art form flourished during the period of the Nawabs. Different verses from Qurans were written on either paper or precious/ semi-precious stones in artistic form and decorated in palaces, homes etc. It is believed that a person wearing such kind of stone having verses written on it in calligraphy will face no misfortune in life. He will gain the ultimate position in the society. Presently the craft is practiced by a few people settled in different places in and around Lucknow. Artisans are creating artistic pieces in Quitabat in Jarnailganj, Lucknow.

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An artist at work and he uses few tools for the purpose. Arabic script illustrating tiger's face.

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A Calligraphy artist in Quitabat.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

**Raw Material:** Quitabat is mainly done on paper or stone. Therefore artists use different handmade paper and precious and semi-precious stone to do the calligraphy. The main used stone is Jade, this stone is good for the heart, and therefore, verses written on it are highly respected. Artists use fine handmade paper which is either imported from different countries or made in India using different techniques and materials.

**Tools:** Calligraphy is done either by carving on stone or by writing on paper. For carving various carving tools like chisels and hammers are used. These tools were traditionally made by the artists themselves according to their needs. With the change in time and with easy availability calligraphers now use industrial tools which are either hand or machine operated. For writing on paper traditionally the artist uses a stylus made out of Sarkanda, (Saccharum spontaneus) also called as elephant grass. These styluses are traditionally called as Qulam, which are useful in achieving desired results. It helps in obtaining a perfect balance between the structure and flow of various circular word forms. Different types of Qulam used are:

- *Kamish Qulam (made out of Sarkanda)*
- *Java Qulam (after the name of the island Java)*
- *Dashti Qulam*
- *Jali Qulam*

The tip of the Sarkanda is cut at an angle mostly at 45 degrees. The angle decides the thickness of the lines. Sarkanda pens were replaced by G-nibs and now with the availability of different calligraphy pens the traditional Qulams are losing their hold.

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## Making Process

The process of calligraphy is simple yet intricate. It has the following main steps:

- Processing of stone/paper
- Writing
- Finishing

**Processing of stone/paper:** The paper or stone is cut into desired shapes. Thereafter the surface is smoothened.

**Writing:** Artists use calligraphy styles to write and paint different verses of the holy Quran. The art of Quitabat has been taught along with religious texts since childhood in Madrasas and advanced schools.

**Finishing:** Once the writing or painting is done on the paper, it is turned over and burnished with a piece of stone called Hakik ka Pathar. This gives a shine on the surface.

The stone pieces are smoothened using different buffs.



Creating the script on stone using automated drilling tool.

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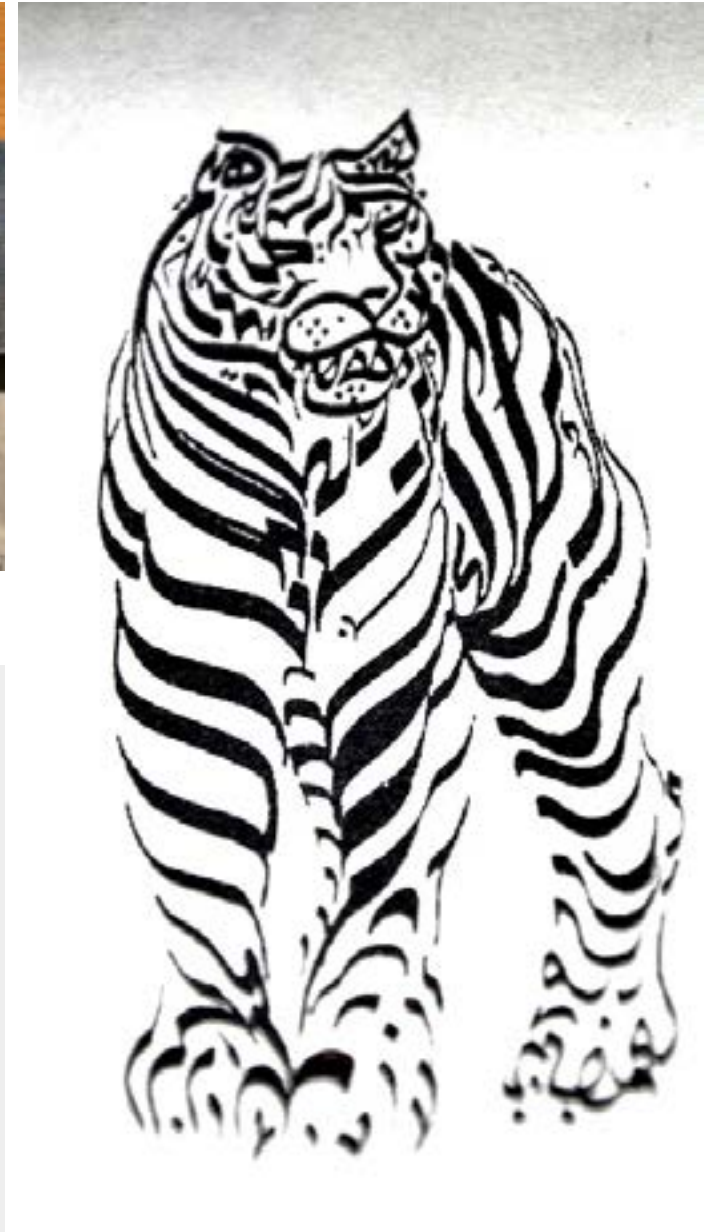
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The precious stone is smoothed finally.



Script used as reference to be carved on stone.



Script written on paper illustrating a tiger form.

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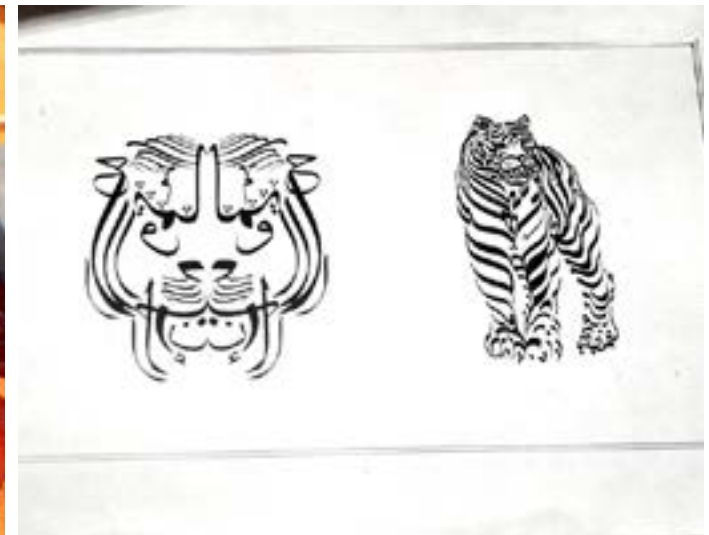
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## Products

Quitabat was mainly used to ornament the building during the earlier times. It was also done on jewellerys like rings, pendants, and armlets. Since it was believed that the art had the power to repel bad vibes therefore it was also engraved on weapons like swords, daggers, handles etc. Artists also made monograms and seals using Quitabat. To save people (kings, warriors and kids) from bad luck, verses were written on small papers and packed in worn ornament like pendent. These were called as Taveez



Semi-precious stone with verses written on it.



Creative design on a paper in animal form.



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## Video



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