Edited volume: The Historiography of Calligraphy in the Persianate World

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Overview

This volume offers a sustained, critical examination of how the history of calligraphy has been written, organized, and transmitted within the Persianate world. Its subject is not the history of calligraphy itself, but the historiography of calligraphy—the texts, objects, practices, and institutions through which historical knowledge about calligraphy has been produced, codified, and reproduced from the medieval period to the present.

Tazkiras, treatises, album prefaces (dībācha), manāqib, muraqqa□s, colophons, seals, ownership notes, and archival documents—alongside modern scholarship, Western academic studies, exhibitions, photography, and print culture—have all played active roles in shaping what counts as the history of Persian calligraphy. These sources did not merely record the past; they determined which masters entered the canon, how lineages (silsila) were constructed, which styles gained prominence, and which traditions were marginalized or forgotten.

The central question is: How has the history of Persian calligraphy been narrated, structured, legitimized, and rewritten across different periods and media?

The primary focus is Iran and the Persianate world. Comparative studies engaging Arabic, Ottoman/Turkish, or Indo-Persian traditions are welcome where they illuminate the historiography of Persian calligraphy.

Methodological Orientation

Contributors are invited to analyze the production of historical knowledge about calligraphy, engaging questions such as: narrative structure and strategies of inclusion/exclusion; canon formation and lineage construction; intertextuality, quotation, and rewriting of earlier traditions; the relationship between textual narratives and material evidence (muraqqa□s, inscriptions, seals, archival records); social and institutional contexts (court, workshop, market, museum, university); literary and rhetorical conventions; and the impact of print, photography, exhibitions, nationalism, Orientalism, and academic methodologies—both Iranian and Western—on premodern and modern historiography.

The volume seeks articles that ask not only what happened in the history of calligraphy, but how that history was constructed, by whom, and through what mechanisms. Descriptive studies are also considered, provided they serve a clearly articulated historiographical question.

Suggested Topics

Each article should focus on a specific text, author, textual family, or historiographical problem. The following are indicative, not exhaustive:
• Chancery manuals and didactic treatises (adab al-kitāba, āyīn-i dabīrī) and their historiographical dimensions; technical treatises with historical content (Majnūn Haravī, ☒ayrafī, Bābāshāh, Sul☒ān-☒Alī Mashhadī, Sirāj Shīrāzī, among others).
• Tazkiras, album prefaces, and memory-making: Dūst-Mu☒ammad's preface; Gulistān-i hunar; Manāqib-i hunarvārān; tazkiras by Mu☒ammad ☒āli☒ I☒fahānī, Mīrzā Sanglākh, Mīrzā ☒abīb, and others.
• Modern and contemporary historiography: Survey works and monographs (Bayānī, Fa☒ā☒ilī, Rafī☒ī Mihrābādī, Karīmzāda Tabrīzī, Rāhjarī, etc.); photography and visual archives (☒ishmat al-Mamālik, ☒Abdullāh Qājār); exhibition catalogues; oral history and interviews; calligraphy certificates; memoirs (Dawlatābādī, Mustawfī, A☒☒amī); museums and display practices.
• Comparative and transregional: Historiography in Afghanistan (☒abībī, Fūfalzā☒ī); Turkish/Ottoman scholarship (☒Ārif ☒ikmat, ☒abīb Efendi, İnal, Derman); Arabic scholarship (al-Kurdī, ☒Abbāda, Zayn al-Dīn, Hilāl Nājī); Indo-Persian sources (Ā☒īn-i Akbarī, Ma☒āthir-i Ra☒īmī); Western scholarship (Blair, Schimmel, Tabbaa, Soucek, etc.).

Submission Guidelines
Abstract: 300–500 words with a brief bio.
Full article: c. 10,000 words (excluding bibliography). Image and formatting guidelines will be provided upon acceptance.
Language: The volume will be published in Persian (Tehran). Non-Persian proposals are welcome; translation will be coordinated with the author.

Timeline
Abstract deadline: 20 October 2026
Notification of Acceptance: 10 November 2026
Full article deadline: 19 April 2027
Peer review feedback: 20 June 2027
Revised article deadline: 21 July 2027
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