

## **Calligraphy under the Deccan sultanates**

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Muslims entertained a very high regard for the Holy Qur'an. They paid special attention not only to its recitation but were meticulously careful about its script. They lavished as much care as they could to everything that pertained to the Holy Qur'an, its binding, its cover and above all the writing of its text. Illuminated copies of the Qur'an were greatly valued not only by kings but also by nobles and by those who could acquire them. This gave a great impetus to the development of calligraphy. Some of the kings and emperors considered it a religious duty. Among them, the name of "Aurangzeb" is outstanding. "Bahmani Sultan Mahmud Shah" was also a fine calligraphist and the inscription below the parapet of *Sherza Darwaza* at *Bidar* bears testimony to his attainment.

The art of calligraphy must have reached the Deccan long before the Khilji invasion. At present, it is difficult to determine the exact date but the Muslim contacts with the Deccan are definitely much earlier than their political advent. The early Muslim travelers have described many Muslim settlements all along the Western and Eastern coasts and there were quite a few such settlements in the interior as well. Further evidence of this is gradually coming to light, and treasure troves of Abbasid and even Umayyad Caliphs have been reported along with ten gold coins of the Umayyads which have been reported from Madurai. Twenty nine gold coins of the Umayyads have been reported from South Arcot, and two Umayyad and thirteen Abbasid coins are reported from Ganjam district. Sixty seven full coins and nine broken coins of the Abbasids have been reported from Malabar district. All these coins bear the names of Caliphs and are mostly in Kufic script of ornamental type. Unfortunately, other specimens of calligraphy contemporary with these coins have not been discovered so far. Hence, an attempt is made in this research paper to elaborate the calligraphic styles under the Deccan Sultanates.

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