

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

The learning of a foreign language proceeds on two major levels: recognition and production. Recognition is a receptive skill, production is an expressive skill. Receptive skills are more easily acquired than the expressive ones. This book deals with the receptive skill of reading the Qur'an. The student is neither required to write the Qur'anic *Naskh* nor to recite the Qur'an aloud. But since reading involves some sort of vocalization in the early stages of learning a foreign language, this book gives basic rules of pronunciation to make this vocalization possible. It is expected that teachers who know *tajwid* (the science of Qur'anic recitation) will supplement this book by providing the student with instruction in the technique of correct pronunciation.

Unlike the Latin script there is more than one form for each of the letters in Arabic depending on whether they occur at the beginning, the middle or at the end of the word. Thus a student needs to master a table of more than one hundred letter forms. The teaching of these forms has been simplified by emphasis on the salient part of each letter rather than its various forms in different positions in a word.

The splendour of the Arabic script which can be expressed in seven, if not in thirty, styles may overawe even the most enthusiastic student. The teacher therefore should pay attention to the essential features of the letter and not to the beauty of its curves, flourishes and embellishments.

While the artistic beauty of the Arabic script may overawe a learner, its economy too can be confusing. The teacher should remember that he is dealing with twelve basic signs and not twenty-eight characters. This feat of graphic

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economy has been achieved by the use of combinations of two of these basic signs and the diacritical dots. It is therefore necessary to lay stress on the salient features of each letter in combination rather than on its isolated form. The student will greatly profit from this study of writing isolated letters in combination with other letters. The twelve basic signs and the letters formed by their combinations are given below.

The Sign	The Combinations
1.   'alif	lām ل
2. ۛ bā'	ۛ tā' ۛ thā' ۛ nūn ن ۛ yā' ۛ sīn س ۛ shīn ش
3. ۜ jā'	ۜ ḥā' ۜ khā' ۜ
4. ۝ ṣād	۝ ḍād ۝ tā' ۝ zā' ظ
5. ۞ dāl	۞ dhāl ذ
6. ۟ rā'	۟ zā' ز
7. ۠ 'ayn	۠ ghayn غ
8. ۡ fā'	ۡ qāf ق
9. ۢ kāf	ۢ ک
10. ۣ mīm	ۣ
11. ۤ wāw	ۤ و
12. ۦ hā'	ۦ ه

These basic signs or the salient features of Arabic letters could provide the Arabs with a system of writing comparable to Latin or Devanagiri scripts. But their aesthetic sense rejected such a script. They developed Arabic writing into an art form worthy to play its role as the bearer of the Divine Revelation. They used vertical stems interlaced with circular and horizontal lines and rhombic points to give it an elegance and grace of mathematical perfection.

INTRODUCTION TO QUR'ANIC SCRIPT

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ  
 الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِیْنَ \* الْرَّحْمٰنِ الْرَّحِیْمِ \*  
 مَا لَیْكَ یَوْمَ الدِّیْنِ \* اِیَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِیَّاكَ نَسْتَعِیْنُ \*  
 اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِیْمَ \* صِرَاطَ الَّذِیْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ  
 عَلَیْهِمْ \* غَیْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَیْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّیْنَ \*

The opening chapter of the Qur'an written in the so-called 'unified' script which is composed of the basic signs of Arabic letters without their embellishments. *Basmalah* is written in the *Naskh* to show the difference between the two styles.

When teaching the letters it is important to lay stress on their shape in a word. For instance, a learner should remember from the very beginning that a dot below a tooth (ب) is always a *bā'* and if the dot is above the same tooth (ن) it is *nūn*, two dots above a tooth (ت) signify a *tā'* but two dots below the same tooth would mean *yā'* (پ).

To avoid confusion, letters having the same shape and distinguished by the number of dots are not taught together.

The conventional order of the Arabic alphabet is dictated by the requirements of calligraphy: letters having the same shape are grouped together. This order has been altered in the book, and each lesson introduces not more than four letters in such a way as to build up a vocabulary of Qur'anic words. The letter count of the Qur'an has been taken into consideration but has not been rigidly followed. A letter with low frequency may be absolutely indispensable at an early stage. For instance, *jīm* (3,273) and *sīn* (3,422), in spite of their low frequency, are introduced in the first lesson, but *'alif* (48,872) with very high frequency has been introduced in the twelfth lesson.

Non-connector letters have been introduced only after the connectors have been taught. A student accustomed to the Latin alphabet has learnt to join all letters in a word. At an early stage non-connectors are likely to confuse him and he may lose his bearings when confronted with the vertical strokes of *'alif* and *lām* in words like *khāfa* خَاف and *khalafa* خَلَفَ.

In addition, the similarity in shape between *dāl* and *rā'* may cause confusion. So a whole lesson has been devoted to explain the difference between these two letters.

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The teacher should not proceed to a following lesson until the student has thoroughly mastered the letters given in previous lessons, and can recognize them in contact without difficulty. Recognition of isolated forms alone is not sufficient.

Only one vowel sign is introduced in a lesson and words using that vowel are given in the same lesson with different contextual possibilities. Meaningless vowel drills have been avoided as counterproductive. The 8-page *Qawā'id Baghdādī* and Arabic primers of this type, unfortunately still in use in most of the *maktabs*, waste much of a child's year in teaching him the alphabet with *jāna-jūna-hāna-hūna* type drills. The result of such teaching even after a year is disappointing.

The Qur'ans printed in India generally employ Manẓūrī Naskḥ but none of the calligraphers has imitated Manẓūr Muḥammad's style with an intelligent understanding of his innovation. In their enthusiasm to improve on his style, they have again added embellishments, rounded the curves and modulated the pen which is kept at an even width in the original *Yassarnal-Qur'ān*.



Wāḥid ('One'), inscription on the wall of the Eski Jāmi', Edirne. (Courtesy, Turkish Embassy, New Delhi.)