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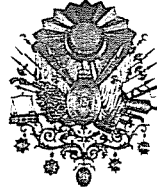
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THE “CELI” (JELI) CONCEPT IN TURKISH CALLIGRAPHY

PROF. h.c. M. UĞUR DERMAN
MİMAR SİNAN UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF FINE ARTS / TURKEY

In these pages, we will take up the *jeli* concept that has a distinguished place in development of calligraphy and its inseparable pillar *istif* starting from Ottoman Turks until our times-in the framework of an article.¹

There are mainly two explanations of “*jeli*” (*celi*) concept in the *Kāmās-ı Türki*: “1) Clear, evident, obvious, 2) Broad script that can be read in the distance (This second meaning is not available in the Arabic, meaning of the word. It is not used in our language with the meaning bright and shining).”²

Both meanings here took place differently-as will be explained below-in the art of calligraphy. The Arabs used the word “*celil*” for scripts written so broad that they could be written in the distance; when this word meaning “big, resolution” was used with a script type, the broad and big type of that script was meant: *Sülüsü'l-celil*, *muhakkaku'l-celil*, etc.³

Even though Ottoman Turks used the word *celil* with the meaning “great” in other fields (Rabb-i Celil (Great God), *Nezaret-i Celile* (Great Superintendence)), they did not adopt it in calligraphy; and attributed a meaning that had not existed in Arabic to the word “*celi*” (*jeli*) and preferred it to “*celil*”: Such as *Celi sülüs* (*jeli thuluth*), *sülüs celisi* (the *jeli* of *thuluth*), *celi yazi* (*jeli script*), *celi tal'ik*, etc.⁴

These script types have an exception; that is, the *celi* was not used in the meaning of broad, thick, big, but in the meaning of “clear, obvious”: *Celi divânî* (the *jeli* of *divani*). Leaving aside the explanation of the mentioned calligraphy for later paragraphs, let's add two significant notes about the scripts that have the *celil* peculiarity.

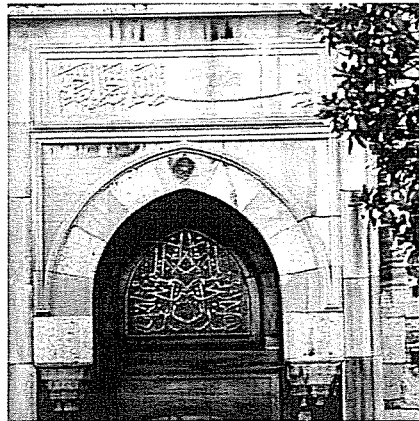
In the *Tuhfe-i Hattatin* (Istanbul 1928), an important source of histo-

ry of the calligraphy and calligraphers, Müstakîmzâde Süleyman Sâdeddin Efendi (1719-1788) also uses the phrase *kalem-i müsennâ* for the *jeli* calligraphy (p.49). The word “*müsennâ*” that means “folded into two” is in fact used for the scripts that are began both from the left and the right and met in the middle (Picture: 1) But it is also possible to interpret this expression in *Tuhfe* as “form of calligraphy folded into at least two-in accordance with its pen”. Müstakîmzâde mentions in the *Tuhfe* that *celi ta'lik* calligraphy was also called *kamış kalem* (reed pen) (p.750); but the source of this term could not be understood.

After this general introduction, we can convey information about the *jeli* concept in the art of calligraphy more comprehensively: Every script has a dimension peculiar to itself and this depends on the width of the pen's nib it is written. For example, the *nesihî* calligraphy is written by a reed pen having 1 mm nib, the *thuluth* and *tal'ik* with a reed pen having up to 2.5 mm nib. The more the width of the nib enlarges, the more the script enlarges; that is, it becomes a *jeli*. So, the *jelification* of the script depends on the possibilities and per-

mission of the hand and the eye. The *jeli* is not a type, but peculiarity of the calligraphy. However, when the word *jeli* is used alone by the Ottomans, it mostly refers to the *jeli thuluth*. But, the expression *jeli* will not take place with this meaning when it is used alone in our article.

But the examples of *jeli* given here have been reduced as much as necessary in size complying with the original with the concern to be fit into the pages of this book that's why, a script, let's say, with *celi sülüs* or *celi ta'lik* style turns into almost a *thuluth* or *tal'ik* with their width and length, if not with style of writing.



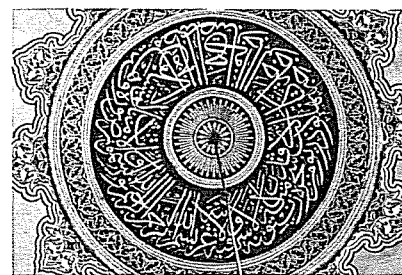
Picture 1: The *jeli thuluth* door inscription of Sultan Reşad tomb in Eyüb; it was written by Ömer Vasfi Efendi (1880-1928) in the beginning of the XX. century. Top: the formula Bismillahirrahmanirrahim in a line; bottom: A verse written as *müsennâ* (KK, XXXVIII, 50)



Picture 2: A *jeli thuluth istif* of Ferid Bey that would be enlarged by chess style.



Picture 4: A section (TIEM,2645) from a *jeli thuluth* belt (KK,VLVIII,6-7,10) written by Rakım Efendi with soot ink on white paper and corrected by carving.



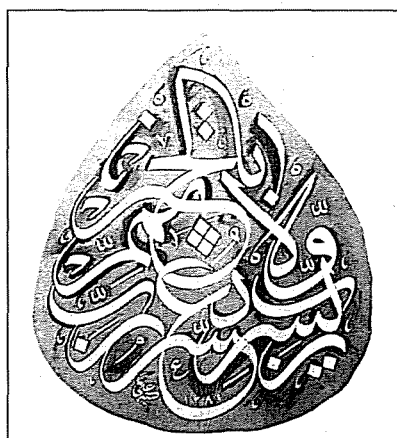
Picture 3: The calligraphy of Kadıasker Mustafa İzzet Efendi with *jeli thuluth istif* of the Sinan Pasha Mosque dome in Beşiktaş (XIX. century).

After pointing out that this issue should not be disregarded, let's start explaining the main issue. Of course it is very difficult to write the *jeli* scripts in accordance with the types of writings in their natural dimension, particularly in the *istif* forms-that would be explained in detail later. It is the final phase in the art of calligraphy. The defects that do not attract attention in thin letters disturb the person who has knowledge about in the *jeli*. That's why the *jelly* is the latest style of calligraphy that developed only in the beginning of nineteenth century. It is the time to quote the following remark of Sami Efendi (1838-1912), a well-known master of *jelly*, "Unless someone writes *jeli*, he can not grasp the secrets of calligraphy".

It is because of this difficulty that a *jeli* script written by the calligrapher is reproduced from this main text that is considered as a mold. When a person wants the same script, it is not written all over, and it is repeated and the first text is copied. The *jelis* (Picture: 1, 11) that are inscribed on marble in order to put onto the monuments such as mosques, schools, and fountains and those reproductions are not necessary are prepared with the same method.

The *jeli* calligraphy that are so broad and that human hand would be insufficient to write, are written in small scales, then they are brought to the desired scale with *chess method*. In accordance with this squaring method that we all used to enlarge a map or picture when we

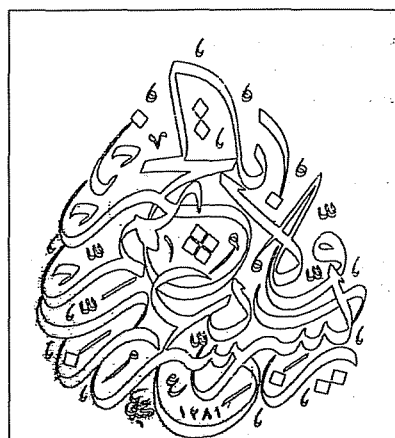
were students, the model of the calligraphy that was written in small scale is divided into squares. (Because the squares resemble a chessboard, the name chess method was given during the Ottoman period). The script is transferred square by square to another big paper that is separated into big squares in the dimension the artist has preferred by drawing the contours of the script smoothly and delicately. Late Mahmud Bedreddin Yazir (1895-1952) explains the process of enlargement of the script in detail in his work the *Kalem Güzeli* (The Pen Beauty) (Ankara 1972-1989) (vol. II, p. 312-319), and includes such examples of calligraphy to the classification of "Figurative Writings"-because they are not written with *reed pen*. As an example to the scripts that are ready to be enlarged, we give the *jeli thuluth istif* draft (Picture: 2) "Yâ Hazret-i Pir e'ş-Şeyh Sultan Seyyid Aziz Mahmud Hüddâyi kaddesallahü sürrehü, 1333/1915" that was written in *zirnik* (arsenic ink) on a black paper, and shaped as *Celveti taci* (a crown used in ceremonies because of a coming out of retreat after a period of seclusion) and separated into squares by Calligrapher Ferid Bey (1858-1930?). As a more comprehensive sample, the *jeli thuluth* calligraphy on the dome of Ayasofya Mosque written by Kadıasker Mustafa İzzet Efendi (1801-1876) can be shown.⁵ This part of verse (Koran, XXIV "Nur", 35) embroidered with gold leaves on the dome whose original was written in small scale and enlarged with the *chess method*, was also embroidered inside the domes of *Hurka-i Sherif*, Büyük Kasimpasha, and Sinan Pasha (Picture: 3) and Yahya Efendi mosques-by being



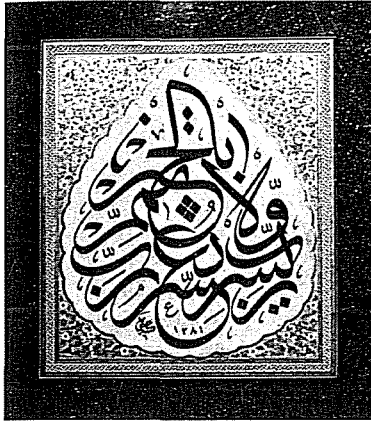
Picture 5: "Rabbi yessir..." The *jeli thuluth istif* of Çırçırılı Ali Efendi written with arsenic ink on brown paper and corrected with soot ink



Picture 7: Shaken from "Rabbi yessir" mold with chalk powder on black cardboard.



Picture 6: Shaken from "Rabbi yessir" mold with willow coal powder on white paper.



Picture 8:
The plate sample shaken from the mold of "Rabbi yessir" istif and written with soot ink



Picture 9:
The plate made as zer endüd from "Rabbi yessir" mold.



Picture 10: From the plates that extend to four sides of Ayasofya Mosque, the name Hz. Hüseyin; on the bottom, the signature istif (1275/1859) of Kadiasker Mustafa İzzet Efendi which he formed as multi-layered.

enlarged with the same method according to the dimensions of the domes.

In the periods when the *jeli* was not yet mature, such scripts were written on resistant white papers with black soot ink, and the required corrections were made with a sharp small tool called *tashih kalemtası* (correction pencil-sharpener) or by covering the defect with white lead ink. Anyway, the *jeli* calligraphy was considered better in the way it was first written, just like *thuluth*, *nesih*, and *tal'ik*, and it was hardly corrected. The habit of embellishing the back ground of *jeli* script inscribed onto a marble or embroidered on a china with supporting elements such as *rûmî*, *hatâyî*, and *penç* had develop until the second half of the sixteenth century (Picture: 18).

But, the end of the eighteenth century, had developed the method of writing with yellow ink towards made of arsenic on papers painted black had become popular and it continued until the twentieth century (Picture: 2, 5). Mustafa Râkım Efendi (1758-1826) who blazed a trail in *jeli thuluth* is an exception concerning this issue. The magnificent *jeli thuluth* scripts he wrote on white strong papers with soot ink and corrected when necessary with *correction pencil-sharpener*, are still protected in the depots (inv. no. 2510,2645,2646) of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Works (Picture: 4).

Zirnik (Persian original: *Zirnih*) is natural "arsenic sulfur". Its yellow (*zirnih-i asfar*, orpiment) or red (*altunbaş zirnigi*, *zirnih-i ahner*, realgar) types exist in nature. Because it is very hard, it is roughly beaten and thinned on a marble plate with the help of *dest-teng* (a special mar-

ble stone that is used to squeeze a substance by hand) until it gains a watery structure *Arab glue* is then added and turned into a yellow ink.

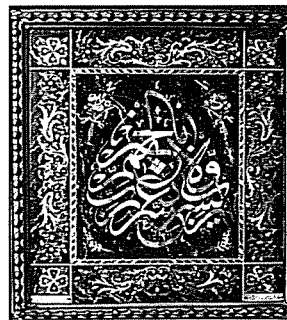
When it is used, a little water is added to the cup, in which it remains until drying. Because the yellow color is hardly seen on white paper, it is always used on dark colored (especially black) papers. Its only deficiency is that it may fade away in time under the sun, and even in daylight. But it is preferred because it did not form a thickness on the black paper when it is used, and it can be easily covered with soot ink for correction. The covered parts can be rewritten with *zirnik* again and this process can be repeated several times without damaging the paper. This method which gives an opportunity for correction several times to the *jeli* calligraphy recalled us a joke of Sami Efendi who was mentioned in the beginning of the article: Omer Vasfi Efendi (1880-1928), one of his students shows his teacher a script that he corrected several times with the method we mentioned, Sami Efendi looks it over his eye glasses and says: "Write with *zirnik*, cover with ink; again write with *zirnik*, and cover it again with ink when you do not like... Dear, did you weigh this paper before you started writing?"

As we can see, there are masters of calligraphy such as Ali Haydar Bey (1802-1870) and Nazif Bey (1846-1913) who sometimes wrote with *white lead ink* on black paper instead of using *zirnik ink*. But because this ink is not absorbed by the paper as much as *zirnik ink*, cracks and scattered parts can be seen on the samples of calligraphy written with this ink.

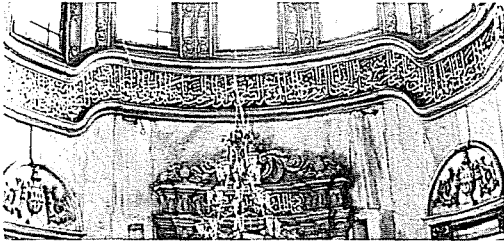
As an example to *jeli thuluth* written with *zirnik*, you may see the *top mold*



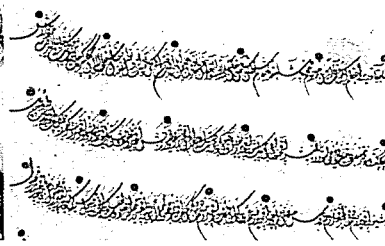
Picture 11: The repair inscription (1235/1820) of Kubbealtı in Topkapı Palace with *jeli ta'lik* calligraphy by Yesârîzâde Mustafa İzzet Efendi.



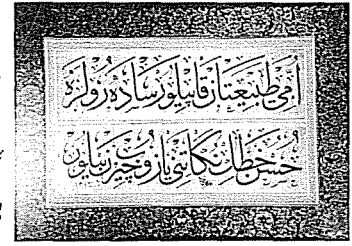
Picture 12: The implementation of "Rabbi yessir" istif with mother of pearl.



Picture 13:
The *jeli thuluth* belt (KK, LXXVIII)
carved (1241/1826) on the marble inside
Nusretiye Mosque by Mustafa Râkım.



Picture 14:
Some *jeli divani* lines from the title of privilege
(1004/1596)
of Sultan Mehmed III.



Picture 15: A *jeli thuluth* Turkish couplet
(1316/1899) written in accordance with line
order by Bakkal Arif Efendi (1837-1909)
calligraphy, without having the peculiarity of *istif*.

(Picture: 5) of "*Rabbi yessir*" *istif* written by Haydarli Ali Efendi (died in 1902) on a brown paper with *zirnik ink* in 1281/1265. The black spots around the characters are parts covered with soot ink for correction. Again, if one is careful enough, he can also realize the pin holes. Before trying to explain this work having the dimension of 20x16.5 cm. with respect to implementation, we have to give necessary information about the calligraphy and the calligrapher: Ali Efendi who wrote this prayer that was very popular as a composition of symmetry and balance in *jeli thuluth*; "*Rabbi yessir velâ tuassir, Rabbi temmim bi'l-hayr*" (My God, make it easy, not difficult; My God, make it end with your blessing), was born in a place called Haydar or Çircir of Fatih district, he is called "Haydarlı" or "Çircirli". He is among the great masters of *jeli* of the last century, and student of Şefik Bey (1819-1880). Also, his teacher sometimes took him to his own master Kadiasker Mustafa İzzet Efendi (1801-1876). After Ali Efendi finished this "*Rabbi yessir*" composition (we have difficulty in estimating how many days-or weeks-it took to bringg the script to this stage), he visited Kadiasker Efendi and showed his work to him. The man was very pleased and he told Sefik Bey who visited him after a short while: "*Look Sefik! This is an apprentice of yours who follows you blindly! How successfully he accomplished this composition (istif) neither you nor I had created.*" It is necessary to add that Sefik Bey enjoyed these words very much and embraced his student.

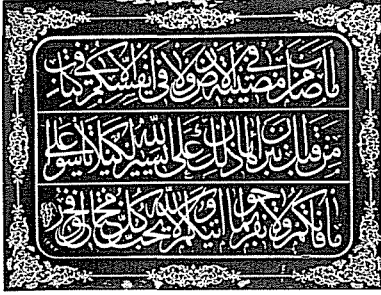
To make numerous copies of a *jali* script after it was written, the characters have to be pinned in the sides. Before starting this process, a few sheets of white strong paper is placed under the written paper with the same dimension and they are all slightly glued to each other in the corner to prevent them from slipping. After that, the needle is tapped vertically and closely with the help of a thin sewing needle fixed by a clock repairman's clamp right from the sides of the characters. If the needling process is done with a slope, not vertically, the holes of the needle on the papers on the bottom can be swerved; and this leads the writing to deviate from its original course. The needle has to be pinned into dry soap from time to time to make it slide more easily, and this process continues on a smooth piece of wood-preferably boxwood. When a piece of fabric is placed between the paper and the wood, the needle is brushed off the paper scraps every time when it passes from the fabric.

Mold needling can be made with three methods:

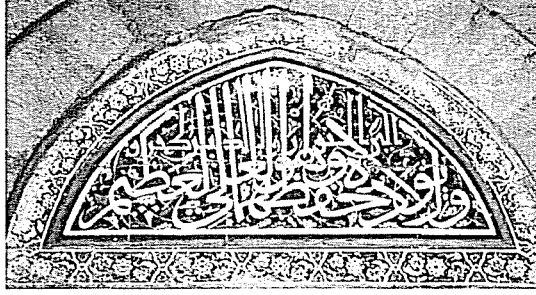
- 1) Needling from inside: The needle holes have to touch to the sides of the characters and signs from inside of the contours.
- 2) Needling from outside: The needle holes have to touch to the sides of the characters and signs from outside of the contours.
- 3) Needling from above: The needle holes have to be right on the contour, not outside or inside.

Every calligrapher needles the script in accordance with one of these three methods according to his familiarity. When the needling process is finished, the white papers on the bottom are removed and separated. These are called *bottom mold* so that when they are examined carefully, or a light is held from behind the paper, it is seen that the calligraphy is formed only with needle holes. The black paper on the top with the script is called *top mold*. The *bottom mold* is used to transfer the calligraphy sample to another place. If the script is prepared with ink on a white or light colored paper, a small bundle of cloth filled with willow coal powder pounded very thin is meandered on the pin holes of the bottom mold. The coal powder passes through the holes, forming black points on the paper below, and thus, the calligraphy is transferred here (Picture: 6). For the *jeli* scripts to be prepared on dark backgrounds, a broad-cloth with chalk is meandered on the holes of the mold; the chalk powder passes below leaving no traces as white spots (Picture: 7). But to transfer the script properly, the *top mold* should be taken into consideration, and it must be known through method it was pinned. Otherwise, at the stage of drawing with a thin point pen or reed pen, the calligraphy can get swollen and thick or it can become thinner. This process is called *shaking the script*. The *top mold* is not used in *script-shaking* in order to prevent it from getting dirty unless it is necessary. The *bottom mold* is used with this purpose.

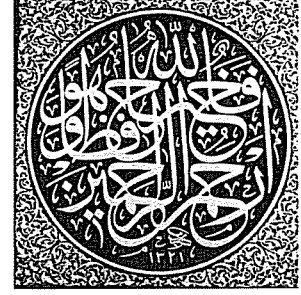
The scripts that are *shaken* and written personally by their calligrapher from the script mold are very valuable. The calligrapher can firstly fix the contours of the script first as a thin line with a thin point pen and soot ink and then fill inside the contours with ink, or else, he can directly write it with the reed pen that he used for writing the main mold-if he trusts his hand. A copy of the mold that is seen in Picture: 7 personally written by Calligrapher Ali Efendi in 1281/1865 with soot ink



Picture 16:
A jeli thuluth zerendûd plate
(1273/1857) by Abdullah Zühdi with complex istif
(KK, LVII, 22-23)



Picture 18:
The window pediment with jeli
thuluth embroidered on the courtyard tile
of Fatih Mosque by Yahya Sofi (XV century)



Picture 17: The zerendûd plate with
complex jeli thuluth istif by Sâmi
Efendi, which he formed by four haa
letters with cube (1321/1903).

on a light chickpea color and finished paper is in Picture: 8. This calligraphy was again pasted on cardboard 111 years after it had been written and its surrounding was illuminated by F. Çiçek Derman in 1976. If the *jeli* scripts made from mold are processed by someone who is not an expert in this profession, then, the “disasters of art” begin to emerge! That’s why the old calligraphers were very anxious about that their script molds could fall into the hands of ignorant people.

Now, let’s see another sample of “*Rabbi yessir*” prepared as *zerendûd* (=overlaid with gold, gilded) (Picture: 9). It is of course not possible to see the bright yellow of gold in this printed sample of “*Rabbi yessir*” composition prepared by Gilder Trabzonlu Osman Yümni Efendi (died in 1919) in 1326/1908 as a *zerendûd* from its mold 43 years after it was written. In the decoration of the surrounding of the script, green gold-made by adding a certain amount of silver to gold-along with the yellow gold was also used. Such *zerendûd jeli* scripts in fact rather have a splendid look and made by *müzehhibs* (gilders). It must not be forgotten that the gilders of the Ottoman period had the culture of calligraphy and knew how to transfer the script from its mold without spoiling it. In fact, there was a habit of leaving the molds of *jeli* plates that were demanded from the calligraphers as *zerendûd* to the trusted gilders. Because the old gilders were at the same time bookbinders with classical style, the shops they worked were called “book-binding shops”, not “gilder shops”. It will be appropriate to transfer a story of Sami Efendi whom we mentioned before because of his mastery in his art: Sami Efendi had given the mold of a *jeli* plate to be processed as *zerendûd* to *gilder* and *bookbinder* Bahaddin Efendi (Tokatlioglu, 1866-1939) instead of needling it by himself. Bahaddin Efendi was used to pin the script from outside to be able to see the chalk powder while

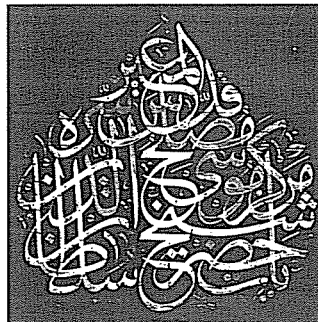
processing with gold. Sami Efendi who used to needle script from inside saw that the mold had been pinned from outside, and complained with the concern that the script would be swollen and its beauty would be lost: “He wished he had pinned.” When Bahaddin Efendi finished the writing with his method very beautifully, Sami Efendi who was passing in front of his bookbinding shop in Vezneciler saw his plate and expressed his appreciation with phrases peculiar to himself.⁶

We can now explain how the gold ink called *zermührek* is prepared: The 23 karat Ottoman gold pounded and thinned like a membrane is put on arab glue solution or honey in a china cup and squeezed by fingers-with difficulty, and separated into molecules. It is washed by water and separated from glue and then mixed with gelatin solution whose density is regulated. It is spread over dark color cardboard when necessary with the help of a brush. The top of this cardboard is painted beforehand to the desired color (black, dark green, duck-head green, wine red...) by mixing insoluble paint and gelatin solution in certain ratios and then spreading the mixture when it was warm on the cardboard. If the ratio of gelatin is much, cracks occur on the base later, if it is less, the paint sticks onto the hand. The script should be shaken first with chalk in order to prepare *zerendûd* as in Picture: 7.

The gold ink was first drawn in very thin lines called *tahrir* with a very thin brush in order to determine the contours of the script. Again, inside of these contours is filled with gold ink with the help of a thick brush. After it is dried, it is polished with a bright stone called *zermühre* and shaped like a pen that is used only in polishing gold. The *zerendûd* “*Rabbi yessir*” seen in Picture: 8, was successfully transferred to a black background by Osman Yümni Efendi, and its surrounding was also



Picture 19: “*Aman Mürüvvet*” istif of Şefik Bey with jeli thuluth shaped like a pear.



Picture 20: The complex jeli thuluth of Sâmi Efendi designed for Merkez Efendi in the form of a dervish’s headgear, letters with cubes are placed on top of each other (1317/1900).



illuminated. Such *jelis* prepared by master gilders are considered as valuable as their original.

Because more gold would be spent when the *jeli* scripts were broadened, the leaf gold this time is used with pasting method in order to prevent extravagance. The script is again shaken from its mold with chalk powder (in big plates, oilcloth or painted wood or zinc plate is required), and inside of them are filled with the substance called *lika* (nowadays: *mixon*) carefully and smoothly. *Lika* is a kind of glue obtained by boiling linseed oil. After a few hours (that is called *annealing the lika*) it is spread, the leaf gold is left with a single line hard-hair brush called *sakal* (beard) to the field where *lika* was applied and it is pasted smoothly to the base. It has turned into a custom to add yellow paint to *lika* beforehand in order to prevent any blank space in the area where leaf gold is pasted. The big plates in the mosques (the circular *jelis* with a diameter of 7.5 m by Kadiasker Mustafa Izzet Efendi which he enlarged with chess method and increased the width of the pen's nib to 33 cm in Ayasofya Mosque; Picture: 10) or the inscriptions engraved on marble in the form of relief (Picture: 11) are all gilded in this way because the pasted gold is capable of resisting weather conditions. The dome (Picture: 3) and the belt scripts written as on-plaster embroidery in the mosques are also prepared by being shaken from the mold and pasting the leaf gold to the base with *lika*.

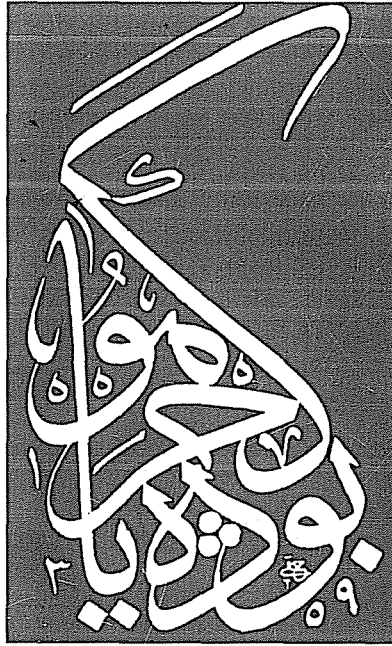
Now, let's present another pleasant example of the same "*Rabbi yessir*" prepared with mother of pearl in Topkapı Palace Museum Library: The plate of the Ali Efendi's composition (*istif*) that we mentioned above cut out from mother of pearl by Vasif Sedef (1876-1940) in 1322/1904. The small signature with *istif* "*Ketebehû Ali*" (=this was written by Ali) could not be placed here because of the impossibility of cutting out the mother of pearl so thin with fret saws of that period. From the phrase "*Tâmirhâne-i Hümayûn mâmulâtı-Mülâzım Vâsıf kulları*" (produced in palace repair house-slaves of *Mülâzım Vâsıf*) on the two sub-corners of the plate carved on the mother of pearl, it had been understood that the script had been produced for Sultan Abdulhamid II. Sedefkâr Vâsif Bey had skillfully cut out the letters with a fret saw, and opened a slot in the base right at the thickness of the mother of pearl, and he placed the script into that hole and pasted it. It is not easy to use

with such mastery since *the mother of pearl* can easily be broken.

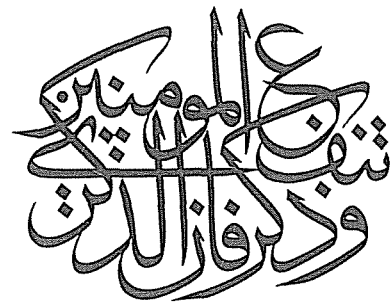
The scripts which will be engraved on marble for inner or outside decorations are drawn with a very thin pen after it is shaken from its mold by coal powder. The rest depends on the skill of the craftsman who will carve the marble like a relief (Picture: 1,13). Müstakîmzâde mentions an unsuccessful implementation in the eighteenth century in his *Tuhfe-i Hattâtîn* as follows (p. 467-468): As a *celî sülûs* (*jeli thuluth*) script of Eğrikapılı Hattat Râsim Efendi (1688-1756) was being engraved on marble on the door of Nuruosmaniye Mosque that was being constructed at that time, the inscription was spoiled because the workers had worked very carelessly. Müstakîmzâde who said that he had another sample of the script shaken from the pinned mold, sadly stated that the script was so different that it was as if written by another calligrapher. With this statement, we have learned that the word *sûzenzede* had been used

for the "pinned mold" and the word *terzîz* had been used for "shaking the script".

Now it is the time to mention the *celî divânî* calligraphy that we have mentioned in the beginning of our article: When the *kadîm ta'lik* that had been used in official correspondence of the Islamic states that had taken place in the field of Iran reached Istanbul by Aq Qoyunlus (1467-1501) after Otlukbeli War (1473), it changed significantly in a short period of time and was used in the official correspondence by the Dîvân-ı Hümayûn; and that's why, it was called *divânî*.⁷ Against the *divânî* script that was written without the vowel points, the new type of calligraphy with significant differences in the shapes of the letters, that were seen since the beginning of the sixteenth century as a channel filled with signs with decorative and vowel points in the same thickness of pen, called *celî divânî*; but the *celî* here had the meaning "obvious, and revealed", not "large, and big" (Picture: 14). Both scripts were assigned to the Dîvân-ı Hümayûn, and were not permitted to be used outside-with rare exceptions. Because the *celî divânî* is written intricately in respect to its bodily constitution, it cannot be read by everybody and does not permit people with bad intentions to make additions between the letters or the words. Thus, the state correspondence has been taken under guarantee in the Ottomans.



Picture 21: A different *istif* area with *jeli thuluth* calligraphy: İsmail Hakki Altunbezer "Bu da geçer Yâ Hü" (1359/1941)



Picture 22: Spreading of *jeli thuluth istif* with calligraphy of Halim Özyazıcı without vowel points and marks on an oval area (KK, LI, 55)



It is necessary to examine the “*istif*” (composition) which was complementary in introducing the *celî* (*jeli*) script in the context of this article: The word “*istif*” which is used to describe piling up the things in an orderly row on top of each other or inside each other, is valid for the typesetting prepared with script types suitable to be placed neatly on top of each other in the calligraphy. The word *terkîb* is also used instead of *istif*, but the common expression is the *istif*.

The basic element in the scripts that had the peculiarity of calligraphy is that the letters or the letter groups have to be lined up in the direction of an even line called “*satir*” (line). (Picture: 1, the formula Bismillahirrahmanirrahim seen above). But the head, body, or top/bottom extensions of the letter might take place on the top or the bottom of this line, and this matter had been determined by the rules according to the order of the line, and it had been formed in a long period of time. The *nesîh*, *reyhânî*, and *rik* types of the *aklâm-ı sitte* are written in lines in conformity with this order and it is called *placing the calligraphy on the line*. If a few letters had been placed a little higher or lower than its original place because of necessity in the line order, this implementation is not considered an *istif* (Picture: 15).

The *muhakkak* and *tevkî* types of calligraphy of the *aklâm-ı sitte*, which are written with pens having a broader nib, shows a greater harmony with the line order in respect to their bodily constitution. But the *thuluth* style attracts attention with its structure very suitable for both the line and the *istif*. Particularly, with the *jeli thuluth* style, which is a broader type of this script, the most perfect samples of the *istif* had been given. The script type that starts from opposite sides and meets in the middle and called *müsen-nâ* (Picture: 1) is also as suitable as these for *istif*.

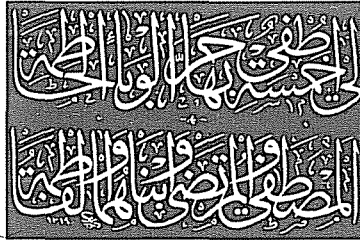
While preparing *istif* with *thuluth* or its *jeli* form, the artists pay attention to arrange the letters or letter groups neatly on top of each other like rising flats on top of each other starting from the foundation in the construction of a building. In such *istifs* with layers, every letter is placed with the order of its pronunciation within the limits of the possibilities. When the area where the letters or letter groups are placed has been filled, the artist continues to place them in the layer above in the same direction. In old expression, this is called *yazının teşrifâtı* (the protocol of the script) or *harflerin takdîm ve tehrîne riâyet*

(obeying the placement of the letters). Because the Ottoman Turkish calligraphers had refrained from the difficulties which increased in reading along with aesthetics problems such as extreme extension of the perpendicular letters such as *alif* and *lam*, they did not prefer writing more than three layers in *istif* (Picture: 4, 13). But, the short phrases with a special *istif* form, the names of the sect leaders (Picture: 2, 20), and the signature forms are exception. The signature of Mustafa Izzet Efendi seen below the plate in (Picture 10) is an example to multi-layer *istif*.

The script protocol that was meticulously applied by the Ottomans, may not be given much importance by the Muslim communities whose mother tongue is Arabic. Because they know lining up the elements of this language, they do not have difficulty in reading. But, the majority whose mother tongue is Turkish were extraordinarily successful in writing the *istif* while reading to prevent mistaken pronunciation of the Koran

without speaking Arabic. But decoding and reading the complex *istifs* with *jeli thuluth* written by esteemed master Abdullah Zühdi Efendi (died on 1879) of Arabic origin from the family Temîmü'd-dârî although he was a member of the Ottomans, who learned calligraphy in Istanbul, is quite difficult for those who do not remember the original of the verses because the calligrapher does not feel the necessity to obey this rule, due to his mother tongue. The *jeli thuluth* samples which he had written with a style admired by the spectators upon the order of Sultan Abdulmecid in the third quarter of the nineteenth century in the mosque of the Prophet in Medina are like this. But this should not be considered a drawback in a country where the Arabic is the mother tongue. Again as a sensitivity of the Ottomans, it is seen that if the name of God existed in the first words of the verse, the calligraphers had tried to keep the name of Him on top by starting the *istif* from above on the contrary to the routine implementation (Picture: 17).

Istif is a separate expertise in calligraphy for those who deal with *jeli* and especially *jeli thuluth*, and it is the final stage in learning this art as the complementary of *jeli thuluth*. Although it is a reasonable possibility that the *istif* started with *kalemü'l-celîl*, a primitive form of *jeli* script, in the period of Omayyad-Abbasid dynasties, it is impossible to reach a definite conclusion because no such work has remained from that period



Picture 23: *Jeli thuluth istif* lines (1319/1902) by Sâmî Efendi that show the bodily connections of the letters into each other.



Picture 24: An *istif* (1361/1943) of İsmail Hakki Altunbezer which shows the situation *tetâbuk* in *jeli thuluth* (KK, II, 20).



Picture 25: *Thuluth istif* lines (1339/1921) of Neyzen Emin Dede (1883-1945), showing how some letters are connected part from writing rules.



until today. But successful or unsuccessful examples of ancient *jeli thuluth* on stone or marble are seen and a style bringing the perpendicular letters such as alif-laam insofar (Picture: 18).

Because there is not an established practice of explaining the first artist in the signature sentence when a calligrapher had rewritten an *istif*, written by another calligrapher without any change, it is true that this is an unjust implementation for the calligrapher who had first written the *istif*. Although some calligraphers had been very skilled in writing, they could not be successful in developing new *istifs*, and entirely repeated the old *istifs*. This shows that *istif* requires an exceptional skill. It must be remembered that the great masters of calligraphy such as Mustafa Rakim, Abdullah Zühdi, Mehmed Fehmi (1860-1915), and Ismail Hakkı Altunbezer (1873-1946) who had been actively involved in oil paintings, had also been extremely successful in *jeli thuluth istifs*. In *jeli thuluth*, rectangular, square, circular, triangle, oval, or semi-oval forms had been commonly used as the *istif* area. Apart from the belt scripts (Picture: 13) that are seen in the mosques and sometimes tombs, the *istifs* that turn all over the dome, and the beginning letter and the final letter of the verse or the *sura* are brought together are other variations worth remembering (Picture: 3). Also as the *istif* area, some animal and plant shapes were also used, and the silhouettes of samples from the nature such as birds (parrot, stork), animal (lion), flower (tulip, chrysanthemum), and fruit (pear), were used as different *istif* areas. For similar implementations, apart from the shapes of dervish's head-gear (Picture: 2, 20), or coin, mosque, or galleon, etc., some abstract fields were used (Picture: 21).

It is necessary to correct a common-unreal-misunderstanding about the picture-scripts: There is an unbiased claim that "the members of Islam had satisfied their taste of painting art with picture-script works of the calligraphers because the Islam remained at a distance with the art of painting in order not to pave the way for paganism again. But, if the simple samples prepared for those who do not have art culture and reproduced by printing are left aside, the picture-scripts by the master calligraphers who were sometimes actively involved in painting and consequently aware of the rules of perspective, were born as a result of the searches for different fields of *istif*."

It is almost impossible to write the *istif* scripts at once; if it is written, it is very natural that there may be some absent or faulty parts. We should remember these distinguished persons who had managed to decrease the faults to minimum although they had written very rapidly: Among them are Sefik Bey who had been mentioned above and the master calligrapher of the last period Halim Özyazıcı (1898-1964). These two masters, as our teacher Necmeddin Okyay (1883-1976) had said, are among those who would be remembered the first with their identities "who have captured the pen as slave and beaten the script".⁸

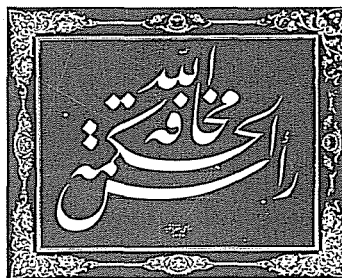
A calligrapher can fit the letters into their proper places by pinning them as a mold, as stated above-or moving them up and down or to the left and right inside the *istif* using a desk illuminated inside. The vowel points or other signs are used sufficiently in filling the blank parts of the *istif*. But the principle is spreading the letters to the *istif* field with their homogenous look. For that, before filling the *istif* with signs, only the distribution of letters should be taken into consideration (Picture: 22). The placement of the signs had started in a widely set style with Mustafa Rakim, the standard-bearer of the *jeli thuluth*, and it became more frequent in time, and reached the peak especially with Sami Efendi and *istif* masters who were dependent on him. For the congested *istifs* whose letters are extremely intermingled, the word *girift* (complex) is used. In such *istifs*, the points⁹ which are in fact a square that had to be jammed between the letters, have been put in a round form to prevent a sharp look when necessary (Picture: 2, 17, 20). It is a tradition to embellish the *jeli thuluth istifs* with vowel points or *hurûf-ı mühmele* (undotted letters) signs put above or below the letters. Using another reed pen that is called *hareke kalemi* (pen for vowel points) which has the one third thickness (one fourth at most) of the pen that is used in the main calligraphy has been considered appropriate; and it is permitted to put the *fetha* (superior) sign that seems to be suitable to extent with the main pen of the calligraphy to fill empty spaces only when necessary. Sometimes, the *cezmi* (the sign which, placed over a consonant, showing that no vowel follows in Arabic script), *zamme* (*ötre*) (the vowel sign for o, ö, u, ü in Arabic script), *turnak* (quotation marks) or *tenvin* (in Arabic grammar,



Picture 26: Two *istifs* of the same phrase but combined differently by Halim Özyazıcı: "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti"



Picture 27: A *jeli thuluth-thuluth* implementation by Mustafa Râkım with different pens (1213/1798).



Picture 28: A *jeli ta'lik istif* by Sami Efendi (1328/1910).



nunation (an indefinite noun-ending-*an,-in* or-*un*) signs, may also be placed widely with the pen of the calligraphy.

The lines that form the letter in *thuluth* or *jeli* may exactly fit into another part of another letter; that is, a certain part of a letter may be seen in another letter as the same, and this is called *tetâbuk* (conformity). For this, if it is possible in *istifs*, the artist tries to create an impression as if a letter continues in the following letter like an extension of the preceding letter (Picture: 23) or else a part of the letter that is thought to be *tetâbuk*, is considered valid for two different letters (Picture: 24). The empty spaces between the letters-those letters that could be extended when necessary or reverse forms such as the *mâkûs yâ* (reversed yaa) letter-provide the harmonious balance of the *istif*.

The lines formed by the letters or the parts forming the letters in *thuluth* or *jeli thuluth*, must be spread to the *istif* area in a homogeneous form and ratio. Spreading the *istif* structure with the same density everywhere, providing a bodily unity in the appearance of the letters, and balance and harmony between the lines are the main elements of a perfect *istif*. It is necessary not to form a heavy and dense mass that will spoil the general balance and harmony of the *istif* where the letters have intersected. Also, if missing intersections that will spoil the character of the letter, existence of an empty or loose space is inevitable, it must be placed on the top side, and the perpendicular letters such as *alif-laam* must be spread in a balanced way and these letters must lean to the top border in the *istif*. It is very rare that the mentioned letters remained in the below layers without any extensions above. Because of the difference in width, the tips of the ends of body parts called *çanak* (bowl) in *kaaf* and *yaa* letters, and called *kâse* in *ra*, *nun* and *waaw* letters have definitely touched the following letter, and thus, they are prevented to stay in emptiness (Picture: 2, 17, 20). The basic principle in intersections of the letters is that it must occur only at the even places between the elbows (that is, the parts of the letter with a sharp turn); and not to touch the head or elbow parts of the eyed letters such as *faa*, *qaaf*, *mîim*, *waaw*, and *haa*.

The bodies of the *jîim*, *xaa*, *thaa*, *haa*, *ayn*, and *ghayn* letters called *kûip* (jar), are elements that brought a space to breath in the *istif* and that's why they are commonly used (Picture: 2, 17, 20), but these must

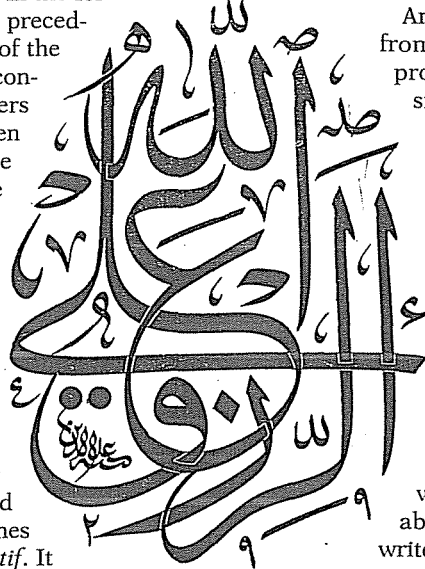
be spread in the area in a balanced way. Also, capturing new looks without creating difficulty in reading except the connection places of the letters according to the determined grammar rules, can also be seen in *istif* (Picture: 25). Sometimes, the usual forms have been left to make a letter fit into an *istif*. The column of *kaaf* which is extremely low-lying in (Picture 3), the broken *laam alif* in the right top of (Picture: 5), and the *alif* broken in the middle in (Picture: 18) are all examples for this.

Any part of *istif* must not look separate from the other parts, and unity must be provided. The vowel points and other signs used to fill the empty spaces are not spread arbitrarily, but homogeneously like the *istif* itself. Some parts of the signs might intersect with the letters. But, when they can touch into each other, they do not intersect. Sometimes, if a convenient *istif* cannot be made because of the lack of harmony or insufficiency of the phrase in respect to the letters or the words, the calligrapher can do nothing but beautifully writing the letters. That's why the old masters of calligraphy preferred to select and write the verses, hadis, and sayings suitable to *istif* unless they were ordered to write a special calligraphy.

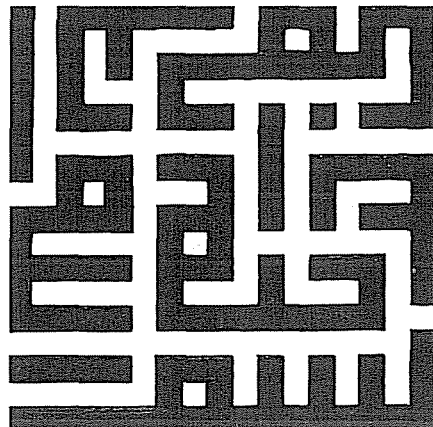
It is possible to make numerous *istifs* which are not similar to each other with the same phrase. This is a situation that depends on the artistic inspiration of the calligrapher (Picture: 26). There is no tradition of making combinations by using pens with different size nibs in *jeli thuluth istifs*. But some attractive experimental works of Mustafa Rakim, who is a genius in calligraphy and considered as the standard-bearer of *jeli thuluth* cannot be disregarded (Picture: 27). Let us state that Rakim Efendi was aware of perspective thus he asked in what height the *jeli thuluth* would be placed and made changes in the dimensions of the letters accordingly.

Yesârîzâde Mustafa İzzet Efendi (1770?-1849) who is known by his speed in writing *jeli ta'lik*, is among the masters who arranged the dimensions of the letters according to the altitude of the place the inscription would be placed (Picture: 11).

Due to the fact that *jeli divani* is written in a different line implementation like a canal whose end elevates above, *istif* is implemented compulsorily inside this canal (Picture: 14). In the rare unofficial samples of the *jeli divani* (like the *jeli divani* big plate of Sefik Bey in Bursa Ulu Mosque), the same established practice is valid.



Picture 30: A *jeli thuluth* implementation of Alaaddin Bey as an example to piercing each other of the letters when they are cut out (1299/1882).



Picture 29: The formula *istif* with *satrançlı (chess) küfi (ma'kilî, bennâî)* calligraphy.



The combinations of *jeli istif*s with *ta'lik* calligraphy written only according to line order are also rare. Because this script is written without marks like vowel points and other signs, it does not meet the necessities of *istif*, and empty spaces occur between the letters. Also, because making *istifs* by intersecting each other does not suit the structure of *ta'lik* letters, there is a limited number of samples with these conditions (Picture: 28).

Ma'kûlî (other names: *satrançlı* or *hendesî kûfî*, *ben-nâî*) that is considered among classical writing types is also written with *istif* (Picture: 29). But because the script is not written with pen, and prepared with a geometrical implementation, it is not necessary to explain it in the topic of *istif*.

In *istif*, the passing of a letter through another is described by leaving a very small openness in the side of the piercing letter (Picture: 30). This implementation was turned into a tradition by well known calligraphers such as Şefik Bey, Abdullah Zühdi Efendi, Muhsinzâde Abdullah Hamdi Bey (1832-1899), Çırçırılı Ali Efendi, and Alâeddin Bey (died 1887) who were members of Kadiasker Mustafa Izzet Efendi School in the nineteenth century when the *jeli thuluth* had reached maturity and it was rarely used by those who belonged to the Mustafa Rakim Efendi School only when it was necessary.

It is seen that the *jeli* types other than *jeli divani* are an abundant branch of art that provide many artists with the possibility to show their skill although its main mold is written by a calligrapher.

NOTES

(*) Translated by Ahmet Özcan

- 1 In the writing of this article, the author depended muchly on his calligraphy experiences of more than 45 years and verbal information derived from the most shrewd calligraphy masters of the last period such as Macid Ayrıl (1891-1961), Halim Özyazıcı (1898-1964), and especially Necmeddin Okyay (1883-1976) The article "Celi Yazılar" (ref/29, May 1980, p. 30-35) that we had prepared years ago has been rewritten and developed; and a larger original of the "istif" article (XXIII, 330-332) that we have first written for TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi has been added to this article with new additions. The limited numbers of written sources that have been used are given inside the text or as a footnote. A part of the pictures in these pages is explained in the text if required; and some of them are explained in the captions of the pictures.
- 2 Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kâmâs-ı Türkî*, İstanbul 1317, p. 480.
- 3 Çetin, Nihad M., "İslâm Hat San'atının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi", *İslâm Kültür Mirâsında Hat San'atı*, İstanbul 1992, p. 21-22.
- 4 Derman, M. Uğur, "Hat San'atında Osmanlı Devri", *İslâm Kültür Mirâsında Hat San'atı*, İstanbul 1992, p. 34-38.
- 5 For the photograph of this writing, see: "Hat", *Türk Ansiklopedisi*, XIX, 55, Ankara 1971.
- 6 Yazır, Mahmud Bedreddin, *Medeniyet Âleminde Yazı ve İslâm Medeniyetinde Kalem Güzeli*, Ankara 1989, footnote at vol. III, p. 316-317 (U. D.).
- 7 For detailed information, see: Derman, M. Uğur, "Hat San'atında Osmanlı Devri", *İslâm Kültür Mirâsında Hat San'atı*, İstanbul 1992, p. 37, 15. footnote; Derman M. Uğur, *Osmanlı Hat Sanatı*, Berlin 2001, p. 17, 166 etc.
- 8 For detailed information, see: I was one of those who personally saw and admired how fast Halim Hoca wrote calligraphy whether hafi or jeli; and sometimes, he did not even feel the need to prepare a mold. For a story of Sefik Bey that shows his place in this issue, whom I cannot reach to the period he lived, see: Ergin, Osman Nuri, *Muallim Cevdet, Hayâtı, Eserleri ve Kütübhânesi*, İstanbul 1937, p. 257-259 and he was quoted by Derman, M. Uğur, *Osmanlı Hat Sanatı*, Berlin 2001, p. 122.
- 9 About the calculations of points, see: Yazır, Mahmud Bedreddin, *Medeniyet Âleminde Yazı ve İslâm Medeniyetinde Kalem Güzeli*, Ankara 1989, vol. III, footnote in p. 359 (U. D.).