Myriad<sup>®</sup> Arabic

# Presented by John D. Berry

Myriad Arabic is an extension of Adobe's popular humanist sans-serif typeface Myriad, bringing the sensibility of Myriad into another language and another writing system. Myriad Arabic is one of the first Arabic sans serif typefaces suitable for use in text. The family comprises five weights, from Light to Black, each with an accompanying italic. Myriad Arabic was designed by Robert Slimbach, with the help of Adobe's technical team as well as outside Arabic experts. The principal outside consultant was Dr. Mamoun Sakkal.



## Myriad: a neutral humanist sans

Myriad is a humanist sans serif typeface, with clean, simple lines. Its roots are in the typographic and calligraphic tradition of the Renaissance, but it was designed to have the neutral functionality of a contemporary sans serif.

# abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz & 1234567890 ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz & 1234567890 ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

The original Myriad family was designed jointly by Robert Slimbach and Carol Twombly, with input from Sumner Stone and Fred Brady, and released in 1992 by Adobe. The brief was for a typeface that would "maintain a clear, objective quality, without the idiosyncrasies of any one designer's style." To achieve this, Slimbach and Twombly exchanged work back and forth, polishing away each other's most noticeable individual styles, to give the Myriad family a unified appearance. The production took two years.

In 2000, with the the conversion to OpenType<sup>®</sup> and the introduction of Myriad Pro, the Myriad family expanded to include an extended Latin character set, with old-style figures as well as support for Central and Eastern European languages, and support for Greek and Cyrillic. The extended accents and old-style figures were provided by Christopher Slye; Myriad Greek was largely the work of Carol Twombly, with Slimbach providing some design assistance; and Myriad Cyrillic was done by Fred Brady, with Maxim Zhukov serving as primary consultant.

#### Latin

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz & 1234567890 ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890

<sup>Суrillic</sup> абвгдежзийклмнопрстуфхцчшщъыьэюя АБВГДЕЖЗИЙКЛМНОПРСТУФХЦЧШЩЪЫЬЭЮЯ

> <sub>Greek</sub> αβγδεζηθικλμνξοπρςστυφχψω ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΛΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ

> > Hebrew

אבגדהוזחטיךכלםמןנסעףפץצקרשתוווייי 1234567890

Arabic

ا ا آ آ أ أ إ ب ببب ت تتت ة ة ث ثثث ج ججج ح ححح
د د ذ ذ ر ر ز ز س سسس ش ششش خ خخخ ص صصص
ض ضضض ط ططط ظ ظظظ ع ععع غ غغغ ف
ففف ق ققق ك ككك ل للل مر مممر ن ننن ه ههه
و و ؤ ؤ ي يي ئ ئئ ﴿ ٢٢٥٤٣٢١٠ ٢٥٤٣٢ ﴾

# Myriad Latin & Arabic

The Arabic alphabet, which developed in the Arabian peninsula from the Nabataean script, an earlier North Semitic writing system, was originally used for recording texts in a mostly oral culture. With the spread of Islam, however, Arabic became the language of religion as well as the language of administration, and the writing system was formalized and adapted for both these purposes. First and foremost, Arabic script is used to transmit the text of the Qur'an, in Arabic. But like most influential writing systems, the Arabic script is used far beyond its original scope, both for everyday Arabic and for other languages spoken in the Islamic world. Today, the Arabic alphabet is used to write Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu, as well as Kazakh, Kirghiz, and Uighur; until the end of the Ottoman Empire and the reforms of Atatürk, it was also used to write Turkish.

Page of a handwritten Quran. Isfahan, 1846. Collection of Dr. Mamoun Sakkal. Used with permission.

Most Western languages, from English to Polish, from Spanish to Hungarian, are written in the Latin alphabet. Even German blackletter is a version of standard Latin letterforms. The Cyrillic alphabet, which is used for Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and several other languages, and the Greek alphabet, used for both ancient and modern Greek, are closely related to the Latin letterforms, especially in modern typography. But Arabic, although it shares distant historical roots with the Latin and Greek alphabets, takes a very different form and demands very different treatment as a digital font.

Like the other Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic), Arabic is written from right to left, and it is a monocase alphabet (that is, it has no majuscule and minuscule forms of each letter, such as A and a). To a greater degree than any of the others, Arabic came to be a highly connected script: letters seldom stand alone, and their form varies considerably depending on their context. Multiple forms of the same letter are not optional but required.

Traditional Arabic writing has a rather low profile, with very obvious ascending strokes and descending strokes. There is no equivalent to the "x-height" of Latin lowercase letters, and Arabic script can look small next to Latin script of the same nominal size.

The challenge facing Robert Slimbach in designing Myriad Arabic was to create a readable sans-serif Arabic typeface, suitable for both text and display in print and on screen, and to make this typeface work not only on its own but also in multilingual texts alongside the existing Myriad.

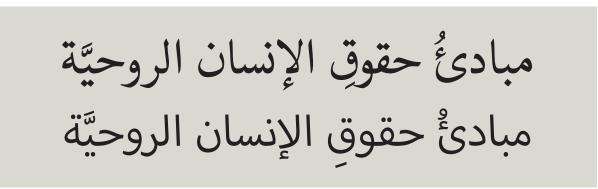
## A sans-serif Arabic text face

The original Myriad has clean, simple lines that give it a warm but neutral look. Creating an Arabic complement meant finding expressive equivalents in a very different writing system, and pioneering the development of a "sans serif" style of text type for the languages that use the Arabic script. (As Arabic letters don't have true serifs, to say that an Arabic typeface is "sans serif" is more a statement about modernity and stripped-down simplicity than a literal description.) There are Arabic typefaces today that are inspired by Western sans-serif styles, but very few of them are text faces; they are mostly display faces, meant for headlines and titles and posters and logos. Many of them are inspired by the highly geometric Kufic style, rather than by the Naskh style that is used most often in books and other kinds of extended text.

Historically, the development of Arabic typefaces that could be called "sans serif" has frequently accompanied efforts to simplify Arabic script – somewhat like the efforts of Modernists in the West to "rationalize" the written language, which often went hand in hand with attempts to create "geometric" sans serif typeface designs. One of the first was the Unified Arabic designed in 1947 by Nasri Khattar, a Lebanese-born architect and artist, who wanted to create an easily learned style in which the letters were disconnected, not attached as they usually are, and unvarying.

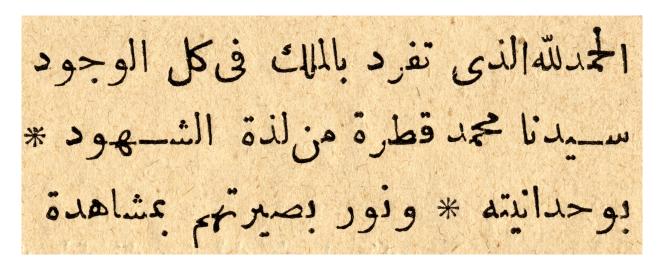
"Most Arabic typefaces," says Arabic type scholar Mamoun Sakkal, "fall either into cursive designs with modulated stroke width, inspired by reed-written cursive calligraphy, or Kufic-inspired designs with more or less uniform stroke thickness. However, there are a number of Arabic sans-serif typefaces which were inspired by cursive book types."

One of the best recent examples is Linotype's Palatino Sans Arabic, designed by Nahine Chahine and Hermann Zapf. Like Zapf's Palatino Sans, however, it takes a markedly rounded and informal approach. Myriad Arabic is a more formal sans-serif design that is firmly rooted in calligraphic book types. Just as the underlying foundation of Myriad, within its sans-serif structure, comes from classical European book faces, the Arabic portion of the family similarly contains qualities derived from classical Arabic book hands – particularly the Naskh style.



Adobe Naskh (top) & Myriad Arabic

The Naskh style was developed in the 10th century and eventually replaced Kufic as the script of choice for the Koran. It was considered the best calligraphic style for written books, legible, clear, and quick to write, with a small "middle zone," long ascenders that angle to the left, and balanced letter shapes. In type, it is still the dominant style used in printing today.



Naskh sample from the book *Jala al-Quloub*. Printed in Istanbul in 1881. Collection of Dr.Mamoun Sakkal. Used with permission.

There is also an old tradition in Arabic calligraphy of almost monoline written forms, which is not derived from Naskh but looks surprisingly modern. As Mamoun Sakkal explains, "This is the Maghribi style (North African/Andalusi). It is a development of Kufi style in the western part of the Islamic world (Tunisia-Morocco-Spain) and written with a pen that is different from that used in the eastern parts. Consequently the lines are uniform in thickness." In this respect, the Maghribi

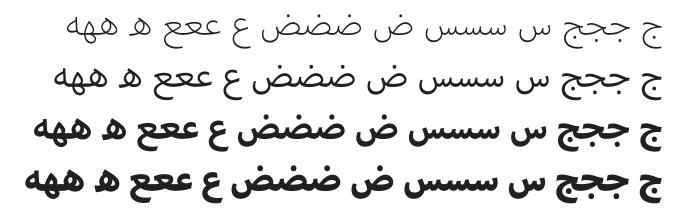
style anticipated the development of sans-serif Arabic printing type.

#### Characteristics

Since traditional Arabic is highly calligraphic by nature, and most contemporary Arabic text faces follow this tradition (more so than most contemporary Latin typefaces), Slimbach wanted Myriad Arabic to have a "subtle calligraphic flavor" that would "enhance its readability without betraying the more rational structure of the Latin design." This calligraphic quality in the Arabic parallels the humanist writing tradition that underlies Myriad's Latin fonts. At the same time, the sans-serif sensibility of Myriad Arabic means that it has much less contrast of thick and thin in its strokes than the majority of Arabic text typefaces. It gives the impression of being monoline, with all the strokes having the same width, even though a close examination will prove that this isn't really so.



Slimbach gave Myriad Arabic clean, open counters, in order to keep it readable in general screen and print use at various sizes and in various weights.



Like the humanist sans serif of the Myriad Latin, the strokes in Myriad Arabic modulate subtly; very few of the strokes are truly monoline, even if they give that impression. The overall effect is of simplicity and clarity, without the classical calligraphic swoop from thick to thin that characterizes most modern Arabic text faces. Yet the underlying letter shapes are traditional and calligraphic. This tension gives Myriad Arabic its distinctive appearance.

As Sakkal describes it, Myriad Arabic has soft, cursive letterforms, with rounded connections between the letters at the baseline. "This results in less obtrusive shapes and smoother reading experience, important factors in a text typeface. The gentle slant of the verticals in Myriad gives it a familiar look and in my estimation aids in ease of reading." The typeface's "natural-looking ligatures play an important role in making the font look traditional and closer to typical Naskh typography, despite its modern forms and proportions." The short teeth of the letters and balanced spacing between words also reflect the Naskh tradition. Myriad Arabic's round dots, however, which reinforce the soft quality, are less traditional: "Naskh fonts always have diamond-shaped dots."

#### An Arabic italic?

Although there is no historical tradition of italics in the Arabic script, today's software often allows the creation of artificially slanted "italics" for fonts that don't have any such design variant. In order to avoid this artificial manipulation, Myriad Arabic includes a full set of designed italic fonts. They will work seamlessly with the normal, upright style at any weight; and they provide a useful variation for bilingual or translated texts that use italic for emphasis or titles or other kinds of textual differentiation. Reflecting the right-to-left reading direction of Arabic script, the Myriad Arabic italics slant to the left, rather than to the right like most Latin italics.

تعليمات الاستخدام الرجاء قراءة كل التعليمات بعناية قبل الاستخدام ، وملاحظة كل التحذيرات ، والاحتياطات ، وأقسام طرق الاستخدام المقترحة المدونة في هذا الكتيب الخاص بتعليمات الاستخدام ؛



#### The design process

Myriad Arabic was the first Arabic design produced in-house at Adobe, which meant that Slimbach and the technical team had "many hurdles to overcome" as they learned the intricacies of Arabic type design and became proficient in the technical aspects of producing a contemporary Arabic font family.

"Given that Arabic script has little in common structurally with Latin," Slimbach said, he had to strike a balance between maintaining compatibility (between Latin and Arabic) and preserving the essential Arabic design characteristics that make Arabic text readable. In addition, while the design needed to be as clear and readable as possible at text sizes, it also had to be compelling and useful for display settings.

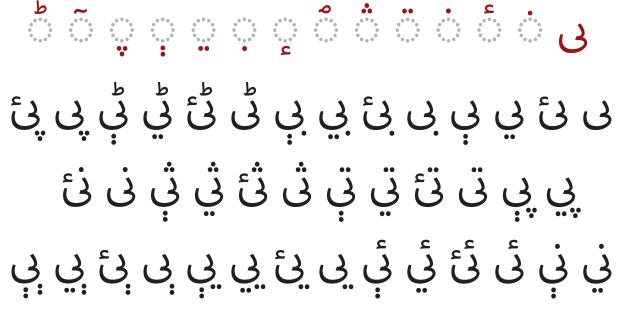
Slimbach used the existing Adobe Arabic as a starting point – not so much as design inspiration but as an accepted set of standard letter forms that a non-Arabic-speaking type designer could rely on. "I proceeded to deconstruct and manipulate the outlines," says Slimbach, "to be more in line with the design principles of Myriad as well as the general requirements for on-screen viewing. While I had studied and been influenced by a number of other Arabic fonts (both traditional and sans serif) during the course of designing the font, I initially relied on Adobe Arabic for the general rules of glyph construction. I had also studied guides on Arabic handwriting, which helped me understand how the strokes are formed." But Adobe Arabic is a "serif" typeface, more traditional in its look than what Slimbach was after. "Over time, the design evolved toward a more rational open-countered sans serif form, retaining some of the calligraphic attributes – and hopefully the readability – of traditional text-oriented Arabic forms. Once I was satisfied with a basic set of glyphs, I propagated the design throughout the glyph set, then Paul Hunt positioned accents."

كان في بغداد، في عصر هارون الرشيد، رجلٌ فقيرٌ اسمه "الهندباء". مر في يومر شديد الحر أمامر باب قصر عظيمر، فسمع أصواتاً جميلةً، وموسيقا حسنة

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Myriad Arabic (top) & Adobe Arabic

Among the technical problems that had to be overcome was finding a practical way to place the various marks (dots, vowel markers, consonant enhancers) that can occur above and below Arabic letters, while respecting the complex syntax of the ways in which adjacent letters combine and alter their form when they occur in certain combinations. At first Adobe's technical team tried using OpenType's contextual alternates as a method, but this conflicted with the way kashidas (lengthened horizontal strokes) are inserted to justify Arabic text. In the end, they found that using OpenType mark positioning worked best, and it had the advantage of keeping the number of glyphs in the font to a manageable number.



Sequences that will result in ligature formation are broken into letter parts and marks (*ijam*). The letter parts form a generic ligature to which the ijam are then attached using mark positioning. All of the sequences below the first line are assembled on the fly using the components show in the first line.

Myriad Arabic also includes alternate forms of some glyphs, to match the preferred practices in different language regions. With these additions, Myriad Arabic supports not only Arabic but Farsi, Urdu, Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Uighur.

#### Arabic

- لما كان الاعتراف بالكرامة المتأصلة في جميع أعضاء الأسرة البشرية وبحقوقهم المتساوية الثابتة هو أساس الحرية والعدل والسلام في العالم ، ولما كان تناسي حقوق الإنسان وازدراؤها قد أفضيا
- Persian از آنجاکه شناسائی حیثیت ذاتی کلیهٔ اعضای خانواده بشری وحقوق یکسان وانتقال ناپذیر آنان اساس آزادی وعدالت وصلح را در جهان تشکیل میدهد، از آنجاکه عدم شناسائی وتحقیر حقوق
- چونکه ہر انسان کی ذاتی عزت اور حرمت اور انسانوں کے مساوی اور نا قابل انتقال حقوق کو تسلیم کرنا دنیا ھیں آزادی انصاف اورا من کی بنیاد ہے، چونکه انسانی حقوق سے لا پروائی اوران Uighur
- ئىتسانلار ئائىلىسىنىڭ بارلىق ئەزالىرىنىڭ ئۆزىگە<sup>ّ</sup> خاس ئىززەت-ھۆرمىتىنى شۇنىگدەك ئۇلارنىڭ باراۋەر ۋە تەۋرەنمەس ھوقۈقىنى ئىتىراپ قىلىشنىىڭ دۇنياۋى ئەركىنلىك، ھەققانىيەت ۋە

The production team included Robert Slimbach, as type designer; Paul Hunt, who handled the bulk of the production issues, with technical assistance from Miguel Sousa; and David Lemon, who managed the project. A number of Arabic type consultants leant their expertise, in particular Dr. Mamoun Sakkal.

#### Uses

Myriad Arabic should function well both in print and on screen, thanks to its open counters and simple but not simplified forms. The Arabic and Latin portions of the font were designed to harmonize in terms of their glyph shapes, their weighting, and the relationships between the sizes of the counters in the two alphabets. This is intended to make Myriad Arabic work well in bilingual documents that use both Latin and Arabic scripts.

Just as, from the very first, Myriad proved itself useful in all kinds of information design, Myriad Arabic will find a home in official forms, informational brochures, schedules, charts, and signage large and small.

John D. Berry is a typographer, book designer, editor, and design writer living in Seattle. He is the former editor & publisher of *U&lc* (*Upper and lower case*) and a former program manager with the Fonts team at Microsoft. He has edited several books on design and has won numerous awards for his book designs. He writes and consults extensively on typography. He is president of ATypl (Association Typographique Internationale).

#### Sample art and text settings

<u>View a PDF of the sample art shown below.</u> (PDF, 290 KB) <u>View a PDF of the text settings shown below.</u> (PDF, 72 KB) <u>View a PDF of the the other illustrations on this page.</u> (PDF, 1473 KB)



عند الذيبية فنفيتٌ من هذه الحجارة شيئا كثيراً وأدخلته في جيبي وين تيايي وحبرت القي أوادخل في جيري وحرامي وعمامي وين Bartsina التجار لا يقدرون على مجيء شيء منه إلا بحيلة مثل الذي ذكره ثمر قال فلما نظرت إلى تلك الذيبية تذكرت هذه الحكاية قص وجنت عند الذيبية فنفيت من هذه الحجارة شيئا كثيراً وأدخلته في جيبي ويين ثياي وصرت ألقي وأدخل في جيري وحزامي Bartsina قالت: بلففي أيها الملك السعيد أن السندباد البحري صار يحكي لأصحابه جميع ما حمل له في جبل العاس ويخبرهم أن التجار لا يقدرون على مجيء شيء منه إلا بحيلة مثل الذي ذكره ثمر قال فلما نظرت إلى تلك الذيبية تذكرت هذه الحكاية Bartsina Bartsina في عنه الذيبية فنفيت من هذه الحجارة شيئا كثيراً وأدخلته في جيبي ويين ثياي وصرت ألقي وأدخل في جيوي وحزامي التجار لا يقدرون على مجيء شيء منه إلا بحيلة مثل الذي ذكره ثمر قال فلما نظرت إلى تلك الذيبية تذكرت هذه الحكاية التجار لا يقدرون على مجيء شيء منه إلا بحيلة مثل الذي ذكره ثمر قال فلما نظرت إلى تلك الذيبية المراحي وحرامي منه منه المثلين عنه الديبية المحالة والمراحية في تعاري أوادخلة في جيبي وين ثياي وصرت ألقي وأدخل في جيري وحزامي التجار لا يقدرون على مجيء شيء منه إلا بحيلة مثل الذي ذكره ثمر قال فلما نظرت إلى تلك الذيبية تذكرت هذه الحكاية قالت: بلفغي أيها الملك السعيد أن السندباد البحري صار يحكي لأصحابه جميع ما حمل له في جبل الماس ويخبرهمر أن وحرامي من مع مجي شيء منه إلا والديبية مثل الذي ذكره ثمر قال فلما نظرت إلى تلك الذيبية تذكرت هذه الحكاية قص وجنت عند الذيبية فنقيت من هذه الحجارة شيئا كثيراً وأدخلته في جيبي وين ثياي وصرت ألقي وأدخل في جيوي وحزامي