

DIANA DARKE (1)

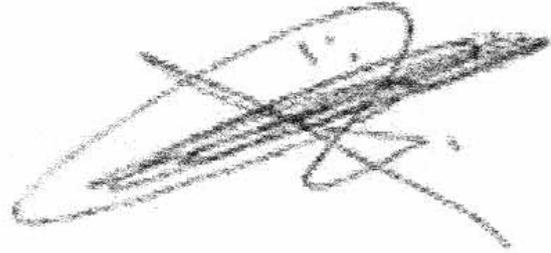
## THE ASSAD DYNASTY OF SYRIA father and son's signatures compared

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**Penny's intro: we are pleased to present our members and readers with ...**

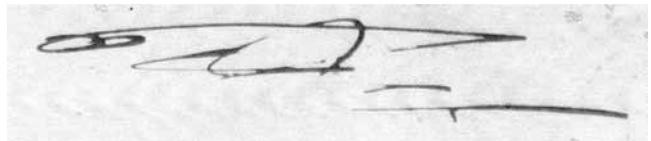
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### SON: Bashar Al-Assad's signature



### FATHER: Hafez Al-Assad's signature

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Born</b>	Hafez ibn 'Ali ibn Sulayman al-Assad 6 October 1930 Qardaha, French Mandate of Syria
<b>Died</b>	10 June 2000 (aged 69) Damascus, Syria



-> see author's comments opposite

(1) Diana Darke is an Arabic speaker and Middle East author and expert of 30 years' standing, who qualified as a graphologist in 2002. She has had extensive professional experience of Arabic handwritings, both in the private and public sectors, including acting as an Expert Witness on Arabic handwriting in a fraud court case in the UK.

From humble peasant origins in the mountains of north-west Syria, Hafez Al-Assad was the first person from his family to go to primary school. Through diligence and application, he then won a place at secondary school, from where he went on to the Military Academy in Homs, joined the air force, and rose through the ranks to become President of his country by the age of 40. He stayed in power till his death aged 69 in 2000.

Looking at his signature, the strength, vision and self-belief of Hafez Al-Assad is striking. Starting on the right (the direction of Arabic text flow is right to left), the thick pasty stroke moves in a succession of firm ascending letters and is clearly written at great speed with flourish, flair and dynamism. His choice of instrument is a thick ink nib which shows the speed well in the terminal thinning of each stroke as he starts to lift the nib from the page before making the next; the rules of when to join and when not to join letters in Arabic are fixed and immutable, so the flexibility afforded the writer is not in that aspect but in how the connections are made between the letters which are permitted to join up. The method of Hafez's letter connections show great intellect, ingenuity and clarity, a testimony to his overwhelming drive to succeed and to better himself.

When the mantle passed to his son, Bashar Al-Assad, who has now been president of Syria since 2000, he always seemed an unlikely successor. His older brother Basil had in fact been groomed for the role, but was tragically killed outright by crashing his car at speed one foggy night on the airport road in Damascus in 1994. From that point, Bashar was called back from his postgraduate ophthalmology studies in London, sent to the same Homs Military Academy as his father, and pushed through the ranks to reach colonel aged 34, just in time for his father's early death.

In terms of horizontal space taken up on the page, the signature of Hafez and Bashar are similar – but there the similarity ends. Bashar's thinner, less confident stroke starts by toing and froing almost on top of itself, as if trying to make a strong statement while in effect almost cancelling itself out. It finishes by attempting an upward flourish, but this flourish turns into a regressive and protective upper zone loop that then plunges down into the lower zone, before attempting another upward flourish that breaks through the protective upper zone loop briefly before making a final and dramatic regressive stab downwards right through the middle of itself, like a huge sharp spike.

The son is evidently struggling to 'big himself up', to live up to his father's expectations, but without the father's drive, vision or strength, despite his educational advantages. A final stroke that cuts the rest of the signature in half is in graphological terms a very significant dominant. It shows great underlying tensions, a split between what he is trying outwardly to be and what he is at core. It can be very thwarting and even self-destructive. With his greater emphasis on the vertical axis than his father's progressive horizontal sweep, Bashar is more concerned with how he appears to the world, while his father is not concerned by such trifles. Directly undermining his own attempts to project a dynamic front, Bashar ends by carefully placing the three individual dots of the 'sh' letter in the middle of his name within the protective loop of the upper zone, and then, as an even more cautious afterthought, adds a final full stop in the lower zone. In his father's confident and progressive signature, the two dots that should appear as part of his name are not visible at all. He does not need to bother. What a contrast between father and son. ■