Şeyh Hamdullah was born in the north-central Anatolian town of Amasya. According to one source, his birth occurred in 833/1429; another source has it as 840/1436. To judge by the features of an undated Qur'an (now in the collection of the Süleymaniye Library [Pertevniyal K.], Istanbul) that we know he wrote at the age of eighty-nine, the first source is probably the more accurate. His father, Mustafa Deci, was a sheikh of the Sürekverdi order and a member of the Turkish community of Bukhara, in Central Asia, who had migrated to Amasya. Şeyh Hamdullah Efendi signed his works Ibnî-Şeyh (Son of the Sheikh) or Hamdullah—never Şeyh (Sheikh) Hamdullah. (Şeyh Hamdullah was also an accomplished archer, and acquired his title as sheikh of the Aticalar Tekkesi [marksmen’s lodge] then located in Ok Meydani, the archers’ grounds reserved for this purpose after the conquest of Constantinople.)

In addition to studying the traditional curriculum in Amasya, he learned the six scripts there under the tutelage of Hayreddin Mar’î, a follower of the style of Yaqû âl-Mustasîmi (Yaqû, d. 698/1298). Şeyh Hamdullah also studied the calligraphic works of Abdullah al-Sayrafi (active 14th century). When he was governor of Amasya, Bayezid (1450–1512), son of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1451–81), befriended Şeyh Hamdullah and studied calligraphy with him. When the sultan died and Bayezid succeeded to the throne in Istanbul in 886/1481, he invited his calligraphy master to the capital. Şeyh Hamdullah accepted the invitation and became master calligrapher at the Ottoman palace. This was the beginning of a new phase in his artistic career. Sultan Bayezid II esteemed his teacher so highly that he would hold the sheikh’s inkwell and put a pillow behind his back as he wrote.
Ismullah was born in the north-central own of Amasya. According to one source, he occurred in 833/1429; another source has 1436. To judge by the features of an manuscript (now in the collection of the Pirtiviye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul) of the Qur’an (collection of rare books, Istanbul) of the Qur’an, the manuscript that was also noted in the catalogue of rare books, Istanbul, is probably more accurate. His name Dede, was a sheikh of the Süleymaniye community of Central Asia, who had migrated to the Hamdullah Efendi signed his works (Son of the Sheikh) or Hamdullah—(Sheikh) Hamdullah. (Sheyh Hamdullah) accomplished archer, and acquired his title of the Atte Karabul (makers of a) located in Ok Meydan, the archers' served for this purpose after the conquest of Timur.)

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The sultan wished that Yaquí's style be developed and, for this purpose, gave Şeyh Hamdullah the most beautiful of Yaquí's works kept at the court so that he might study them carefully. This event probably took place in 890/1485. After careful scrutiny of these works, Şeyh Hamdullah was able to elaborate a style of his own; thereafter, he became known as the calligrapher's lodestar (kibeh-i hanab).

Şeyh Hamdullah was a master of all six scripts. He spent the better portion of his life copying the Qur'an, producing forty-seven copies in all. He also produced a large number of Evlim-i Seferi (special collections of Qur'anic chapters), separate cih of the Qur'an, collections of prayers, tawar scrolis, kitâb, muraçbuus, collections of meqâhs (exercises), and so forth.

He was also responsible for the inscriptions in the Beyazit, Firuzaga, and Davud Paşa mosques in Istanbul, and in the Beyazit Mosque in Edirne. Although these inscriptions illustrate his achievement in cih-sâvis, they are rather primitive in comparison with the cih that was to appear after him.

It is impossible to say exactly how many students learned calligraphy from Şeyh Hamdullah, but the most prominent of his students were his son, Mustafa Dede (900/1495-945/1538), whom he named after his own father, and his son-in-law, Şükûllah Halife. Their children and grandchildren also learned the art and taught it to succeeding generations, thereby making Şeyh Hamdullah's family the most prolific in the number of master calligraphers it produced. Şeyh Hamdullah died toward the end of 926/1520 and was buried in the Karacahmet Cemetery, in the Üskûdar quarter of Istanbul. Later calligraphers considered burial near his grave a great honor. They called the area around his grave Şeyh Sofan, or Hall of the Sheikh. Some novice calligraphers buried their pens for a week in the soil near his grave, hoping for a blessing from his spiritual power.
2. MURAKKAA

Istanbul, 15th–16th centuries
ink, colors, and gold on paper mounted on cardboard
Each kit: 21.4 x 15.2 cm
SM 115–1154, 960

Illustrated here are the thirteenth and fourteenth books, in the and neo. From a manuscript composed of fourteen books by Seyh Hamdullah. Early books were often restored to preserve their value. Most such restorations date to the reign of Sultan Ahmed III (1703–30) and the years following his reign. The s is often covered with gold leaf. The outer borders were decorated with a marbled paper, often referred to as cloud-curtain (style of illumination). The gold frames (atomb) were redrawn, and the gold between them was illuminated in the style of the period. The outer borders were decorated with a marbled paper called (atomb), which was decorated with or gray, or flecks of gold ink or gold leaf. The outer borders of the frames are normally equal in width. The borders here, however, are not equal, probably because the pieces were adapted to fit the text. The周五 sermon in a congregational mosque. Haib Mehmed Efendi studied the

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Ebu’l-Hayr Mehmed Korkut was born in Amasya, the son of then Prince Bayezid (r. 1450–1512) and the second of eight brothers. He was the most beloved grandchild of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1451–81), who saw to it that Prince Korkut received the most rigorous education in his palace. After Bayezid became sultan in 1481, Prince Korkut intermittently held the governorship of Manisa, Antalya, and, again, Manisa between 1484 and 1512.

In the last days of his father’s reign, Prince Korkut wished to succeed him to the throne. In 1512, when his brother Prince Selim became Sultan Selim I, the Grim, Korkut would not oppose him and returned to Manisa as governor. Concerned about the possible fragmentation of the empire, Selim I (r. 1512–20) had his brother captured and strangled. He died on Muharram 5, 919/March 13, 1513, and was buried next to the tomb of Sultan Orhan Gazi (r. 1326–62), in Bursa.

Prince Korkut wrote six highly regarded works on religious subjects and, under the pen name Harimi, a collection of poems. This talented prince also composed musical works and zealously promoted the development of Ottoman scholarship.
Hayr Mehmed Korkut was born in the son of then Prince Bayezid (r.,) and the second of eight brothers. He was beloved grandson of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451–81), who saw to it that Korkut received the most rigorous education. After Bayezid became sultan in 1481, Korkut intermittently held the governorship of Antalya, and, again, Manisa between 1512.

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3. QUR'AN

ISTANBUL, 2nd HALF CENTURY
INK, COLORS, AND GOLD ON PAPER
BINDING XX, 3395. 3 ON
SM 100-0129-58

Many members of the Ottoman dynasty were trained in the arts. A number of sultans, in fact, had a serious interest in poetry, music, and calligraphy. Sehikide (Prince) Korkut Celaleddin wrote the Qur'an whose teksh (illuminated opening spread) folios 117 and 113 is shown here. The son of a family that distinguished itself in science and culture, Prince Korkut studied calligraphy with Seyh Hamsullah (see cat. nos. 1–2) while the sheikh still lived in Amasya. This Qur'an is the only known extant example of the prince's work. It is written in an amateurish script, thirteen lines per page, on 350 folios. Had Prince Korkut lived longer, he would undoubtedly have become one of Seyh Hamsullah's most followers. This undated Qur'an is a fine example of the art of Ottoman illumination in the late fifteenth century.
A native of Istanbul, Hüseyin Şah was always close to Şeyh Hamdullah (see cat. nos. 1–2) and received calligraphy training from him alongside the sheikh's own son, Mustafa Dede. The prayer handbook shown here provides evidence that Hüseyin Şah was Şeyh Hamdullah's slave. (Any discussion of slavery is problematic, but it is worth noting that most faithful Muslims tried to bring a measure of humanity to the practice.)

The child could already have been named Şah (Shah), implying kingship, when he was purchased, or Şeyh Hamdullah could have given Hüseyin the name Şah afterward. In any event, he took the child under his wing and raised him as an elder brother to his own son. He not only taught the boy his art but considered him to be his successor. (Other slaves also learned calligraphy from their masters. Two Caucasian slaves stand out: the sixteenth-century Hasan Çelebi [d. after 1602/1594], the slave of Ahmed Karahişârî [see cat. no. 6], and Mehmed Hâşim [d. 1261/1845], the slave of Mustafa Rakım [see cat. no. 33]. After being emancipated, both were adopted by their former owners and were taught calligraphy and became masters of the art.)

It is reported that when he liked a particular work by Hüseyin Şah, Şeyh Hamdullah would sign it with his own name, a mark of high esteem. After the sheikh's death, Hüseyin Şah was known as Husemeddin Halife and wrote primarily in the nashīh script. He lived a long life and died sometime after 965/1557. His burial place is unknown.
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