21 Seventh Part (Sab') 4 of a Qur'an

Two folios containing XXIII Al-Mu'awin (The Believers), 50. 5. 20 x 14.5cm.
Calligrapher: Abū Nu'aym b. Ḥanẓa al-Bayhaqi.
Iran, Muḥarram 592/December 1195.

Final folios. According to Kufic inscriptions at the top and bottom of each page they mark the end of the Seventh and Eighth Fourteenth parts and the Sixteenth Twenty-Eighth part of the Qur'an. The seven-fold division and its secondary segmentation is much rarer than the division into thirtieths (ajā'a).
The text is in fine small Thuluth script over a ground of scroll-palmettes. Āyāt are not marked though each fifth and tenth verse is indicated by a rossette in the text and the marginal ornaments like the one in the right-hand margin marking the fifteenth verse, and that opposite marking the fifty-fifth.
The panels above and below contain many ornamental motifs which occur in earlier and later Qur'an illuminations. The colour scheme is very delicate, and gold is entirely absent throughout.
The calligrapher states that he is the neighbour (Arabic, jir) of the Imām Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ridā. That is, he lived near to the shrine of the eighth Shi'a Imām, al-Ridā, who died in 203/818 and is buried in Meshhād, Iran.

CBL Ms. 1435, fol. 116v-117r (Arberry No. 64)

22 Two Sections (Ajā'a) of a Qur'an, 13 and 14

Opening folio of illumination. 21.2 x 16cm.
Iran, 6th/12th – 7th/13th cents.

Left-hand half of double frontispiece. The numbers of the sections (Thirteenth and Fourteenth of sixty) are written in white Thuluth over gold arabesque scrolls on a blue ground, decorated with a white treble-dot motif. The script is in an area formed by five interlocking circles surrounded by gold strapwork. The central area is bordered by gold chains broken by blue lozenges. In the margin is a circular palmette, gold on blue. The design of this frontispiece is close to that of No. 20, dated 582/1186.
The First Section (Juz') of this Qur'an is in the Archaeological Museum, Bursa, Turkey.
Published: Martin, pl. 237.

CBL Ms. 1448, fol. 1r (Arberry No. 55)
23 Qur'ān
Two folio containing XC Al-Balad (The City), 2-20, XCI Al-Shams (The Sun) and XCI Al-Layl (Night), 1-9. 39 x 33cm.  
Calligrapher: Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Jabali al-? .  
Illuminator: 'Abdull-Rahman b. Muhammad al-Shu.  
Iran or Iraq, circa 597/1200.  
Excellent Naskh Ayas indicated by gold rosette. Each fifth verse marked by a gold ha' with a half-palmette. Each tenth and twentieth verse is marked by a splendid circular ornament in the margin, containing the number in Kufic script over a golden floral scroll, with a border of fine 'ba'irs'.  
Sūra headings are exceptionally rich in colour and decoration. They are written in gold Kufic script to an unusual formula, "The sūra in which is mentioned ...", followed by the verse-count. Their marginal palmettes are richly coloured and finely modelled. Their colour schemes are decorated with a white treble-dot motif. The inscriptions have backgrounds of naturally drawn scrolls and plants.
Published: James, Celtic and Islamic Art, 1979

CRL Ms. 1409, fol. 360v-341R (Arberry No. 45)

Mamlūk Qur’āns

The Eighth/Fourteenth Century  
With the advent of the Mamlūk rulers of Egypt and Syria in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries we come to one of the truly great periods of Qur'ān production. The best Mamlūk manuscripts rival, and on many occasions, surpass anything produced in Iran and Turkey.  
Nothing appears to have survived from the early years of Mamlūk rule and the earliest dated Qur'ān comes from the beginning of the 8th/14th century. This is the famous manuscript copied for a high Mamlūk official, Baybars al-Jahangir, 705/1305-6 (British Library Ms. Add. 22406-13). This particularly fine work was produced by a team of craftsmen, who also produced several manuscripts in the Chester Beatty collection. The leader of the group was Abu Bakr, called 'Sandal' and he appears to have had an important influence on Qur'ān illumination until well into the century.  
The Chester Beatty Library, which has the largest number of signed and dated Mamlūk Qur'āns outside of the Middle East, possesses several manuscripts from the studio of 'Sandal' (Nos. 24, 25, 26, 27). Specific attention was paid to illumination in these manuscripts, especially to the frontispiece. The early frontispiece consisted of a geometric composition, often with a central star-polygon, or some other centrifugal device, surrounded by elaborate alternating palmettes.  
During the reign of Sultan Shāhīn (754/1353-778/1376) the Qur'ān frontispiece became a wondrous work of art, which was dominated by the star-polygon. Some of the greatest Qur'āns ever made were produced at this time. From just prior to the reign of Shāhīn is a fine single section of a Qur'ān (Nos. 31 and 32), which appears to date from the 740/1340s, and heralds the splendour of what was to come. It is instructive to compare this with No. 30. This is the work of a well-known calligrapher-illuminator, Ahmad al-Munqabib, by whom three other manuscripts exist. His style marks the very end of the Sandal studio tradition.

The Ninth/Fifteenth Century  
The century closes with a superb example of illumination and calligraphy (No. 34). It contains numerous Ilkhanī elements which first occur much earlier in the century. So much so, that it was thought that the pages originated in Iran, though now they are accepted as Mamlūk.
Most Mamlūk manuscripts in Western collections are from Egypt, but it must not be forgotten that Syria was also ruled by the Mamlūk and that many Qur'āns must have been produced there, even though we are not so familiar with these. No. 29, according to its colophon was copied and illuminated in Tripoli in 723/ 1323, thus giving us an example of provincial illumination at this time.

Apart from Cairo, manuscripts continued to be produced in other centres. No. 41 is a late example from Tripoli. The calligrapher of this Qur'ān evidently emigrated to Istanbul, for a some years later he copied another one in the Ottoman capital which is now in Topkapı Library. At this time artists and calligraphers from the Arab World as well as from Iran and the Balkans were making their way to Istanbul which had become the new centre of patronage as the capital of the latest champions of Islam.
24 Portion of a Qur'an

Two folios containing LXXXIV Al-Istdāgh (The Rending Asunder), 25, and LXXXV Al-Burāq (The Zodiac), 1-3. Egypt, circa 700/1300.

A rare example of 'tāmūr script, three lines to a page, used in the Mamluk chancery. Sūra title and verse-count are in a fine gold script identical to that used for the 1305-6 Qur'an copied for Baybars al-Fāhshārī, called Thulūḥ by some but Ash'ar by Maqrizi who knew the manuscript (i.e. mixed Thulūḥ and Maḥṣaqaq). Ayas are indicated by gold rosettes. Each fifth verse is marked by the word khamsa in gold Kufic in a pointed medallion and each tenth verse by a circular one.

This manuscript may be another example of the work of Ibn al-Walid (640/1242 - 711/1311), calligrapher of the Baybars Qur'an above. The illumination is identical to that of the Sandal workshop which illuminated the same Qur'an and Nos. 25,26.

More of this manuscript is in the Kunstbibliothek der Stiftung preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. See Schimmel, Islamic Calligraphy, pl.XXIII.


CBL, Ms. 143(c), fols. 46V-47R (Arberry No. 15)

25 Qur'an

Opening folios of illumination. 33 x 25cm.
Calligrapher: unknown.
Illuminator: Abū Bakr, called Sandal, 'Sandalwood'.
Cairo, circa 700/1300 - 710/1310.

Fine double frontispiece from early 8th/14th cent. The central polygons bear Qur'ānic verses (XL.1 Fāsilat 42). They repeat in the corners and are linked to the central polygon by a geometric frame. The interices are filled with distinctive vegetal motifs in gold on red and black hatched grounds. Around the panel is a strapwork border and beyond, on outer border of alternating palmettes on a red and black hatched ground. Sandal's work is always characterised by strange bumps (nascent buds) on the foliage, much of which also has green, blue and orange 'tear-drop' motifs. The work is signed by the illuminator, who had a major influence on Mamluk illumination in the 8th/14th cent.

CBL, Ms. 1479, fols. 4V-28 (Arberry No. 59)
26 Qur'ān

One folio containing V Al-Ma'd/i (The Table), 114-123 and VI Al-As'ām (The Cattle), 1-6. 35 x 25 cm.
Cairo, circa 700 (11 th - 12 th century).

Superb Naskh. Ayān are marked with gold rosettes. Each fifth verse is marked by a pointed medallion in the margin similar to that in No. 34. Sūra title and verse-count are in gold Thuluth (or perhaps Jar'ah) on a blue ground decorated with a white treble-dot motif and red and gold leaves. There is a surrounding strapwork border in gold with a white line through it.

The scribe's name is painted over but can just be made out.

For another example of the work of this calligrapher, see Sotheby Catalogue 9.10.78, Lot 122.

CBL Ms. 1457, fols. 52V-53R (Arberry No. 60)

27 Final folios of illumination from the previous manuscript

Unusual double finispiece consisting of a solid block of pattern formed by intersecting curves forming repeating six-point stars. The interlaces contain simple fillers of various kinds. In the centre of each half is a hexagon with white Kufic inscriptions. That on the right has been repainted because the sūra title on the other side has been cut out and replaced. Beyond the bands of strapwork is a border of plain gold alternating palmettes with blue decoration. This work is by the artist responsible for the three unsigned compositions in the Baybars Qur'ān in the British Library; see No. 25 and Hayward Catalogue, No. 527.

Published: James, Celtic and Islamic Art, 1979.

CBL Ms. 1457, fols. 254V-259R
28 Qurʾān

Two folios containing CXIV Al-Nūr (Mankind) and the colophon. 48.4 x 35.4cm. Egypt, Rajab 720/August 1320.

Muḥaqqaq script. Each folio is illuminated in an identical manner. The script lies on a bed of red arabesque scrolls, roughly drawn but derived from those of the Şaṣāl group, see No. 25. At the top and bottom are rectangular panels with inscriptions in white Thulḥīr giving the title and verse-count, plus the number of words and letters of CXIV. These are in oval cartouches with single-lobed ends, flanked by gold half-palmettes on blue. All panels have a border of gold strapwork. In the margins are medallions and a large single-lobed hasp, containing two palmettes one above the other.

The colophon on the left gives the date – Rajab 720/August 1320 – but no scribe’s name.

CBL Ms. 1481, fols. 309V-310R (Arberry No. 56)

29 Qurʾān in two parts

Two folios containing X Yūnus (Jonah), 98-109, XI Iḥlās (The Prophets Ḥiḍr), 1-3. 34 x 24.3cm. Calligrapher: Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī b. Ṣaḥāb al-Mulk.

Tripoli, Jumādā il 723/June 1323.

Thulḥīr/Naṣīḥ on pinkish paper. The script is rather idiosyncratic, having the stroke of the ḥāʾ greatly exaggerated and making use of the ‘bent’ form (Arabic, ṭāʾ) of the letter ʿāṣ. Ayas are marked by gold rosettes. Each fifth verse is indicated by a gold pointed medallion in the margin and each tenth verse by a circular one, having a blue border with ‘hairs’; This latter feature is unusual in Manṣūrī manuscripts.

The suṣūf title and verse-count is written in gold Thulḥīr over a band of vividly coloured arabesque scrolls. This has a gold circle bearing a palmette in the margin and is surrounded by a network of blue lines. In the margin is the word juz’ meaning that this point marks the beginning of Section Twelve of the Qurʾān.

CBL Ms. 1473, fols. 159V-160R (Arberry No. 63)
30 Qur'ān Section (Juz') 27

Opening folio of illumination. 29 x 21cm. Cairo, circa 732/1332.

Illuminated double frontispiece. The central octagons contain the section (juz') number in white Kufic over gold arabesque scrolls with blue and white 'tear-drops'. These are set into geometric frames bearing vegetal motifs on blue, or hatched, grounds in the interstices. Above and below are panels with gold Thuluth inscriptions (XXVI Al-Sharif 192-196). There is a final outer border of alternating palmettes with blue and brown 'tear-drops' over finely hatched grounds.

This is the work of Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Anqiri al-Muttablī, calligrapher and illuminator of several manuscripts in Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, and the Ambrosian Library, Milan. This frontispiece is very similar to that in one of his manuscripts in Cairo (No. 714), dated Cairo, 732/1332; see Ahmed Mousa, *Islamischen Buchmalerei*, Cairo, 1939, pl. 43, also Lings and Safadi, No. 13.


CBL Ms. 1476, folio IV-2R (Arberry No. 78).

31 Qur'ān Section (Juz') 12

Opening folio of illumination. 26.3 x 11cm. Cairo, circa 745/1345.

A geometric composition divides the central rectangle of each half into circular segments. The outer corners are filled with delicately painted scrolls, turquoise and gold on blue. the central circle is flanked mauve, blue and red flowers on a black ground. Its centre is divided into two lozenge-shapes with floral sprays in gold on red gold, with triangular areas containing white arabesque scrolls over shield-shapes. There is a border of gold strapwork broken by blue squares. The outer border consists of alternating palmettes in gold and white with green or mauve leaves on a black ground.

There is another section in the Chester Beatty Library and one in the British Library. For the latter, see Lings and Safadi, No. 125; Lings, *Qur'anic Art*, Nos. 37-9. Another section sold in Sotheby's in 1975, see Sotheby's Catalogue, 8.4.75, Lot 200.

CBL Ms. 1465, folio IV-2R (Arberry No. 76).
32 Two folios from the previous manuscript
Containing XI Hād (The Prophet Hād), 1-2

Rayḥān script written in clouds over a bed of floral scrolls on a cross-hatched ground. Each ḍiyā is indicated by a gold circle containing the word ḍiyā. Above and below are panels with a central cartouche bearing inscriptions in white Kufic over gold scrolls on a blue ground. On each side are almond shapes with confronted palmettes in gold, green and pink on a blue ground. All panels are surrounded with gold strapwork broken by orange squares. The final outer border of alternating palmettes are identical to those in the almond shapes. In the outer margin are two medallions with floral compositions, green and gold on blue. In the other Chester Beatty section (Ms. 1464) there is a very distinctive petalled border which occurs for the first time in Mamluk manuscripts in one copied in Cairo in 744/1345 and now in Topkapi.

CBL. Ms. 1465, fols. 2V-3R

33 Binding

Rear cover and flap of No. 32. 26.3 x 11 cm.
Cairo, circa 744/1345.

Light brown leather. In the centre is a five-pointed star in a circle. The interces are filled with blind tooled knots and gold points. Around the circle is a strapwork border in blind tooing with gold points. There is an outer border of semi-circles in blind tooled interlace and gold points. In the corners of the main rectangular area are triangular pieces of blind tooled interlace and gold points divided by an almond shape. Around this is a narrow border of rope-work made up of S-shaped stamps. The doublures of some of the qair (sections) of this Qur’an are covered in sheets of leather bearing the name Mahmid. The decoration of the flap is almost identical to that of the main section.

Published: Van Regemorter, Oriental Bindings, Dublin, 1961, pl. 15.
CBL. Ms. 1465 (Arberry No. 76)