47 Qur'ān Section (Juz') 11.

31.5 x 23cm.
Marāgha, Iran, Shawwāl 738/April 1338.

A geometric roundel made up of twelve interlocking half-circles around a large one. In the centre is another circle with six points, linked to form a star which contains a gold floral spray. The main circle contains an inscription in white Kufic, Qur'ān, LVI Al-Waq'at 79-80. In the outer half-circles are floral fragments in green or white on black. Opposite are gold palmettes on blue or red-gold.

There are two other sections from this in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; see Hayward Catalogue, No. 532, according to which the calligrapher was in his seventy-seventh year. Also Welch, Calligraphy Catalogue, No. 47.

Published: SPA, pl. 946B.

CBI, Ms. 1470, fol. 1R (Arberry No. 137)

48 Two folios from the previous manuscript

Containing IX Al-Tawba (Repentance) 94-6

The text, in Nashī, lies on a bed of Chinese wave-diaper pattern in grey. Above and below are painted cartouches ending in circles bearing a whirling-petal motif in dark and light blue. Inside are white Kufic inscriptions giving the juz' number (incorrectly called the Twenty-first here) and LVI Al-Waq'at, 77-80, on arabesque scrolls. There is an outer border made up of three rows of blue petals, one behind the other. They are in dark and light blue, a popular colour combination at this time. Strapwork is absent.

Published: SPA, pl. 938A.

CBL Ms. 1470, fol. 1V-2R
49 Binding

Rear cover and flap of Qon, 47-8, 31.5 x 23cm.
Maragha, Iran, 738/1338

Brown leather. A central circle containing a ten-pointed star, whose arms are entwined with a decagon. All the intercos are filled with blind tooled knots and gold points. Around this is a blind tooled chain. The final outer border is made up of twenty semi-circles surmounted by gold points and filled with blind tooled knots. Above and below are pendant medallions of blind tooled knots finishing in palmettes. This decoration echoes the roundel on the opening page of the Qur'an (section), see No. 47. In the flap is a related piece of decoration, without the pendants and with three of the semi-circles converted into a hasp. This binding was examined by Ettinghausen along with other Ilkhani bindings and has been well-known since then.


CBL. Ms. 1470 (Arberry No. 137)

50 Qur'an

Two folios containing LXXX 'Abasa (He Frowned), 16-42, Kaseerat (The Folding Up) and Inflarat (The Cleaving), 1-14, 35 x 27cm.
Calligrapher: Yahya (al-Jamali) al-Safi.
Iran, 740/1339-40.

Fine Naslih script. Aqaa are indicated by golden circles divided into six parts. Surah titles are in gold Thuluth. All other decoration is Ottoman.

According to the colophon this manuscript is the work of Pir Yahya Jamali Safi, the famous pupil of Yahya. His best known work is the thirty-part Qur'an in the Paris Museum, Sharaz. See Lings and Safadi, No. 110, and Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 60. In the Turkish Islamic Museum, Istanbul, is a manuscript in a Naslih hand identical to this, also signed Yahya al-Safi.

CBL. Ms. 1475, fol. 207v-208r (Arberry No. 184)
Timurid Qur'ans

At the end of the 8th/14th century Iran was conquered by Timur and for the next hundred years his descendants controlled all or part of that country. By the end of the 9th/15th century their power was virtually confined to Khurasan in the north-east, while the west of Iran was dominated by the Aq Qoyunlu and Qara Qoyunlu Turkoman dynasties.

The Timurid period was one of outstanding calligraphers, including several of royal birth—Brahim-Sultan and Bayasunqur-Mirza. It was also one of the earliest periods for which we have ample written information.

Unlike the Ilkhani and Mamluk calligraphers who confined themselves to Manhaq, Nashk and Rayhun when copying the Qur'an, those of Timurid Iran made full use of Thuluth for the text and a wider use of Taqfi and Riq'i for colophons and inscriptions. Thuluth was used with other scripts on the same page for writing out the Qur'anic text. The combination of multiple scripts on the same page had occurred as early as the 6th/16th century (No. 20) and on a limited scale under the Ilkhans. Now we see this method widely practised. Although it may be considered that this gave an undue emphasis to the lines written in large script, this does not appear to have troubled the people of the time. It presented a much greater challenge to the calligrapher, and enabled him to show his mastery of numerous hands.

During the Timurid and later Safavid periods a large number of Qur'ans purporting to be by Yaquti and his pupils were made: not necessarily as conscious forgeries, but to fulfill an insatiable desire for copies by the great masters. Numbers of these may in fact have been calligraphic facsimiles of genuine Yaquti manuscripts. No. 34 may be one of these facsimiles. However it is shown not for its script but for its illumination, which reproduces a composition of the previous century, with fine filigree details added. In general, the emphasis had now shifted from the independent frontispiece to the opening pages of the text, the sura titles and other areas. One such was the area where the different sections (ajal) begin in the text (No. 51).

Timurid painters made use of bright greens, orange and pink in their colour schemes. Their compositions were often surrounded by medallions (55) and Chinese 'jin'-type motifs (53) and they developed a golden multi-branched flower with which they covered the grounds of panel, cartouches and medallions.

Artists and calligraphers showed great versatility with regard to scale. No. 52 is a tiny manuscript, perhaps used as a talisman. No. 57 in contrast has an exceptionally large format. As it has a simultaneous translation and a Persian commentary around each page it was probably intended for use in a madrasa by students. There are accounts of several huge Qur'ans being copied during this century. Part of one of these, reputedly written by the Timurid prince Baysunqur-Mirza, exists in Tehran divided among various public and private collections. For other pages, see Welch, Calligraphy Catalogue, No. 49.
52 Qur'an

Opening folios of illumination. 8.5cm.
Calligrapher: Ahmad ... Sirāj al-? Ahhari (of Abhar, near Qazvin).
Iran, 87/1466.

A self-contained geometric composition which made its first appearance in the early 8th/14th century, though its antecedents go back earlier. Superimposed oblong and oval shapes are filled with delicate gold and white arabesque scrolls on gold and blue. A semi-circular area on each side contains bright orange palmettes. Around the central area, in each corner are gold arabesques with red and white flowers. There is a fine border of alternating palmette and shield-shapes with brilliantly painted flowers. The palmettes are filled with gold to form 'jub' shapes. The border has a rich deep blue ground.

CBL Ms. 1533, fols. 1V-2R (Arberry No. 142)

53 Qur'an

Two folios containing I Al-Fātīha (The Opening Chapter) and II Al-Baqara (The Cow), 1-4. 13 x 9cm.
Calligrapher: Muhammad b. Muhammad b. 'Imrān al-Hanafi.
Iran, Dhu'l-Qa'da 868/July 1468.

Opening folios. The script is Ghārā on a plain panel. Above and below are oblong panels with gold Kufic inscriptions giving the surah titles and verse-counts over wiry arabesque scrolls with gold leaves. On either side of the text is a narrow panel with gold scrolls on blue. All these areas are surrounded by plain gold and green bands. There is a final outer border consisting of a series of floral sprays, gold and brown on a blue ground. In the outer margin are fine Chinese-type 'jub' motifs with gold floral sprays. At the top and bottom are pointed medallions with green, gold and brown lotuses.

CBL Ms. 1518, fols. 4V-5R (Arberry No. 149)
54 Qur'an

Opening folios of illumination. 25.8 x 19cm.
Iran, 9th/15th cent.
The centre of each page is a star-polygon with gold and white arabesque on a black ground. The middle of the polygon is covered with a net of green interlinked palmettes, each one surrounded by a blue shield-shape. The arms of the polygon extend in a geometric frame. The polygon appears to repeat in the corners. The intersec are fitted with delicate arabesques and palmette compositions adapted to fit the irregular shapes. There is an outer border of alternating arabesque palmettes in gold and silver with green and brown centres. Over this is a secondary 'jali'-type repeat design. The central part imitates Ilkhānid decoration of the previous century. The outer decoration of gold brush strokes is a later addition. The text, which is written in an archaic style, claims to be the hand of Yaqūt. The manuscript, evidently greatly prized in the past, and many owners, most of whose names have been obliterated or pasted over. See Moritz, pl. 89 for another Timurid 'Yaqūt' Qur'an.
Published SPA, p. 1959, note 8, pl. 947B.
CRL Ms. 1500, fol. 6v (Arberry No. 145)

55 Qur'an Section (Juz') 3

Two folios containing II Al-Baqara (The Cow), 253-255. 38.4 x 30cm.
Iran, (probably Tabriz), 888/1483.
The text is in four lines of black Nashk with a line of Thulūd between them, making five in all. The text is in clouds and lies on a hatched ground decorated with floral fragments. The lines of Nashk are in panels which end in rectangles containing complete medallions and half-medallions above and below. These have gold floral decoration on blue on a black ground. At the top and bottom are oblong panels with a central multi-pointed cartouche bearing the 'nūr' number and LVII Al-Waq'ā' at, 79-80, in gold Tetap' over wavy floral scrolls and a treble-dot motif in red and blue. These are on a blue ground decorated with gold flower-chains. At each end are bright green medallions with blue diamonds and gold floral sprays. Black and salmon-pink segments cut into the blue ground on all sides. All panels and the text are surrounded with a gold line, except the line of Thulūd which has a turquoise border. There is a narrow outer border of delicate gold palmettes on blue with a white medallion in the centre of each of the three sides. These have floral decoration in gold, purple and green.

There is another section from this manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library and others in the Meshed Shrine Library, one of which ends in a benediction for Al-Muwaqqar Ya'qūb Beg, the Āq Qovinīš Turkmēn ruler of Tabriz, 833/1478 - 896/1490, see Fāḍal'ī, p. 332-3. A fine page from this manuscript was sold in Sotheby's in July 1980 (8.7.80, Lot 161).
Exhibited: Baroda House 1939, Catalogue No. 28.
CRL Ms. 1502, fol. IV-2R (Arberry No. 147)
56 Section (Juz') 26 from the same Qur'an

Two folios containing LI Al-Dhurjat (The Winds That Scatter), 15-30. 38.4 x 30cm.

The text at the top and bottom of each page is in fine black A'zifqiqqiyq. In the centre of each page is a line of gold Thuluth. Between, the text is in Naskh. Ayas are indicated by gold rosettes, larger for the bigger scripts. Each type of script is located on a separate panel, those containing the Naskh being shorter in length.

The final panel on the left contains the colophon. The top line is in Tamiq, the lower in Riq'. Here we have five of the 'classic' types of cursive script. In the margins are medallions with floral sprays indicating each fifth verse.

CBL Ms. 1501, fol. 23v-24r (Arberry No. 148)

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57 Fragment of a Qur'an

Opening folio of illumination. 52.3 x 36cm.

Calligrapher: Sadr b. Bayzid b. Ibrahim, called 'Farsa' (of Fars in southern Iran).

Iran, 903/1497-8

Two large roundels, tapered at the top and bottom and culminating in pointed medallions. They bear Qur'anic verses in majestic Thuluth (right) XVII Al-Imra', 80: (left) 88. The script lies in a bed of fine gold arabesque scrolls on a deep blue ground. The 'eyes' of the letters are filled in with black, green or orange. Around the main roundel, between plain orange bands are gold oval cartouche shapes with floral scrolls alternating with white knots in a black circle. There is an outer border of gold and white floral scrolls on blue with a palmette also made up of floral scrolls, in the printed areas above and below. In the pendant medallions are gold floral sprays. Both roundels are within a gold rectangle, on a ground splashed with pink and gold. The manuscript which contains a Persian translation and commentary, was made a sa'af by the Ottoman Sultan Mahumid II, 1223/1806 - 1255/1839. Another complete Qur'an by this calligrapher, dated 898/1492 is in The Garret Coll., Princeton.

CBL Ms. 1546, fol. 1v-2r (Arberry No. 152)
Qur'āns of the Safavid Period and Later

The Safavid period produced several illuminators of outstanding ability, who rank with the best miniature painters of the time. Nos. 58-9 is a particularly splendid example of early 10th/16th century illumination. The artist, Rūzbihān al-Shirazi, is almost totally unknown, though there is a manuscript illuminated by him in the Bodleian, Oxford. The pages shown here illustrate that the double frontispiece had by now been dispensed with. Artists concentrated on the opening folio of text and began the manuscript with a simple roundel containing appropriate Qur'ānic verses. Such roundels had already appeared in Ilkhānid times, as we see in No. 47.

Many of the decorative elements which occurred in the previous century continue into this one, though some, particularly the geometric have been discontinued. Floral arabesques with multi-coloured blossoms are now increasingly important. These frequently overlap one another, as do carpet patterns, at various levels. Another important feature is the cloud-scroll which occurs frequently in illumination, in borders and bindings (Nos. 62-5). It was in colour schemes that the greatest break was made with the past. These became brighter and more vivid than ever before, with effects that can be quite startling at times.

Single volume Qur'āns were produced far more often than thirty-part manuscripts. Within these the textual divisions were clearly indicated and these pages were fully illuminated (No. 64).

The standard of calligraphy continued to be very high and Safavid calligraphers even surpassed their Timurid predecessors. The tri-partite division of the page continued as did the use of Thulūd, Muhāqqaq and Nashk in juxtaposition. Nastalīq, the original contribution of Iran to calligraphy, was used for commentaries on the Qur'ānic text and often written alongside it in the margin. It was rarely used for the Qur'ānic text itself. There is only one known example, see Lings, Qur'ānic Art, No. 91. Kufic which had been so popular in the past now ceased altogether for new titles and inscriptions. Qur'āns often ended with a special prayer, to be recited on completing the text. As No. 65 shows this was sometimes fully illuminated like other areas of the manuscript.

In the following two centuries illumination underwent a gradual change, with artists concentrating on minute feather-like detail, often naturalistically painted. The traditional blue and gold colour schemes tended to be played down in favour of greens, purples and black.

58 Qur'ān

Opening folio of illumination. 42.7 x 29 cm.
Calligrapher and illuminator: Rūzbihān Muhmmad al-Tabbī al-Shirāzī (of Shiraz).
Iran, circa 927/1520.

Double roundel with verses in white Tānqīq, XVII Al-'Ināṣ, 88, over delicate with bright naturalistically painted flowers on a gold ground. The blue eight-pointed outer border is decorated with gold tri-lobed shapes surrounded by blue cloud-scrolls. Knotted cloud-scrolls in orange, pink and green intervene between gold shapes. Interweaving with all elements are arabesque scrolls with delicate blossoms. Blue spikes and sprays protrude from the roundel into the surrounding page which is undecorated.

This is one of the finest Qur'āns of the Safavid period. The same artist was also the illuminator of a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. See Hayward Catalogue, 592. For Rūzbihān, see Minorsky.

Published: James, Celtic and Islamic Art, 1979.

CBL. Ms. 1558, fols. 1-23 (Arberry No. 156).
59 Opening folios of text from the previous manuscript

The opening sīra is written over two pages in white Rayhān, inside oval medallions with floral scrolls. Above and below are cartouches bearing the sīra title and verse count and LVI, Al-Wāqāt, 77-80, in blue Riṣāq. These are set into a pattern composed of superimposed clouds and floral scrolls in numerous colours on a deep blue ground. The central area is surrounded by a border of interlocking 'iṣīr' motifs with decoration similar to that in the main section. From the border protrude blue sprays and spikes. For an identical composition, probably by the same artist, see Vever, Miniatures Porsones, 1912, pl. XXXII.

CBL. Ms. 1558, fols. 2V-3R

60 Two folios from the previous manuscript

The text of LVIII Al-Mujāidila (The Woman Who Pleads), 9-19, is written in three types of script. At the top and bottom are panels of gold Muṣḥaff, in the centre is a panel of Thulūd and between are four lines of Nashk, thirteen lines in all. The larger script is on a pinkish ground and the smaller on white. Aṣṣān are marked by red and gold rosettes in two sizes. The panels of Nashk are bordered by vertical areas containing gold arabesques with blue lotos-like blossoms. Each fifth and tenth verse is marked by a medallion in the margin.

The relatively restrained decoration of these pages contrasts with the sumptuousness of the opening illumination.

CBL. Ms. 1558, fols. 39V-39R