72 Sūra of the Qur'ān

Two folios containing VI Al- An'am (Cattle), 161 - 5, 16.8 × 11.7 cm.
Calligrapher: Mustafa-Dede.
Turkey, first quarter of the 16th/16th cent.

Naskh script on a plain ground. Ayas are marked by a rosette. At the end of the text (bottom left) is a panel containing the colophon in three pointed cartouches with gold and red arabesques on gold. Each page is surrounded by a border of gold scrolls, leaves and blossoms.

Mustafa-Dede (died 945/1538-9) was the son the Hamdallah b. al-Shaykh, the greatest Turkish calligrapher, and his pupil. He was also taught by Abdallah of Amasya. See Huart.

CIL Ms. 1533, fol. 24v-28r (Arberry No. 201)

73 Qur'ān

Opening page of illumination. 20 × 13.3 cm.
Calligrapher: Hasan b. Ahmad Qaraüşirî, called 'Hasan Chelebi'.
Turkey, Ramadhan 977/February 1570.
The centre of each page is gold medallion surrounded by gold palmettes with blue interiors. These form a repeat pattern across the page. In between is another pattern which is the same, but with the colours reversed, and the axis altered. Within the latter are rosettes in the form of white carnations. All palmettes are linked by gold floral scrolls. Beyond is a border of confronted 'jāl'-type shapes, in gold and blue made up of palmettes and floral scrolls. This is contained within a double line of orange and green. The final outer border comprises blue spikes based on palmettes and delicately painted blossoms.
The calligrapher was the Circassian slave of the famous Ahmad Qaraüşirî, (died 963/1556). Many of the inscriptions in the Sülümaniye Mosque in Istanbul are by Hasan Chelebi. See Huart p. 127, Ašlanaqua, Turkish Art, 1971, p. 325. The manuscript was commissioned by Tawil-Muhammadd Sokollû Pasha, the Grand Vizier of both Süleyman I (926/1520-974/1566) and Selim II (974/1566-982/1574).
Published: Lings, Qur'anic Art, No. 31.

CIL Ms. 1527, fol. IV-2R (Arberry No. 195)
74 Two folios from the previous manuscript

Two folios containing CXII Al-Ikhkār (Purity) to the end of the Qurʾān. The text is in fine Ruhm. Āyas are marked by gold rosettes. Sūra titles are in white Naskh on plain gold surrounded by floral scrolls on gold and blue. On the left-hand folio in superb large Ruhm is an invocation of the Prophet and his descendants. This is in white clouds over floral fragments on gold. In the margin of each page are fine gold, blue and orange medallions, joined by blue spikes bearing blossoms.

CBL Ms. 1527, fols. 35v-35r

75 Qurʾān

Two folios containing I Al-Fātihā (The Opening Chapter) and II Al-Baqara (The Cow) 1-4, 13 × 7.7 cm. Calligrapher: Darwish ‘Ali, pupil of Ismaʿili Efendi. Turkey, 1096/1685.

Ghābir script on a plain gold ground. Āyas are indicated by gold rosettes. Above and below are panels with faded white inscriptions giving the sūra titles and verse-counts. These are in plain gold cartouches which culminate on each side in gold palmettes surrounded by pink flowers. The text is flanked by blue flower chains in narrow panels. All panels are surrounded by a band of gold strapwork with a green and orange line. Beyond is a border of palmettes alternating with flower heads within interlocking triangular shapes. This is surrounded by an undulating blue line with red and blue fronds. Next to the manuscript is its leather case with painted decoration in gold.

CBL Ms. 1564, fols. 1v-2r (Arberry No. 204)
76 Qur'an

Two folios containing I Al-Fatiha (The Opening Chapter) and II Al-Baqara (The Cow) 1-4. 15 x 9.8 cm. 
Turkey, 1119/1707-8.

The text is written in Ghalār. Ayāt are marked by gold rosettes. On either side are white floral scrolls in narrow gold panels. Above and below are panels bearing the sura heading and verse counts in white Rūqā'. These are in plain gold cartouches containing in blue ones. Over the latter are gold arabesques scrolls with pink and white flowers. There is a final outer border of alternating large and small gold palmettes over blue triangles on gold. From the border grow red flowers and grey spikes.

This calligrapher (died 1127/1724-5), who was also a musician, had the honour of sharpening the pen of the great Hāfiz 'Uthmān at the end of the latter's life. See Huard p. 155.

CBL Me. 1565, fols. 1V-2R (Arberry No. 209)

77 Qur'an

Final folios. 19 x 11.7 cm. 
Illuminator: Muṣṭafā al-Uṣkudārī (of Uṣkudār on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus). 
Turkey, 1202/1787-8.

These pages follow the end of the Qur'ān text and are written in fine Ta'līq in the shape of cypress trees. The right-hand page begins with XVII Al-Inā' 88, and ends with an invocation of God and His Prophet. The other page has the colophon. The script is surrounded by realistically drawn roses and flowers in red, blue and purple on a deep blue ground.

CBL Ms. 1570, fols. 29V-29R (Arberry No. 229)
78 Qur’ān

Two folios containing I Al-Fārūq (The Opening Chapter) and II Al-Baqara (The Cow), I - 4, 28.5 × 18.
Calligrapher: Muḥammad Amin, called ‘Izzatī’.
Turkey, Rajab 1221/September 1806.

Fine Nasīkh. Each Ayā is marked by elaborate rosettes of knots and flowers. Above the sin of the Basmalla is suspended a garland of flowers. Above and below are panels with sûra titles and verse-counts in black Riq‘ in white cartouches. These are surrounded by fronds in a French rococo style. Panels with similar multi-coloured decoration occur on either side of the text. Around all panels are borders of flowers. The final border is in a magnificent rococo style with alternating bunches of flowers, one above the other.

This manuscript was made for Sultan Selim II (1205/1793-1222/1808) at the request of a person whose name is not given, but who may have been the Grand Vizier Ḥāfiz Ismā‘īl.

CBL. Ms. 1581, folios 1v-2r (Arberry No. 217)

79 Qur’ān

Two folios containing I Al-Fārūq (The Opening Chapter) and II Al-Baqara (The Cow) I - 4, 18.2 × 15 cm.
Illuminator: Sayyid Muhammad Mudḥahhīb al-Sultānī (The Royal Illuminator)
Turkey, Jumāda I 1264/May 1848.

Fine delicate Nasīkh. Ayās are indicated by rosettes in the form of geometric knots. The text is written in clouds over a ground of stippled gold. On either side are panels with gold palmettes on a gold ground. Above and below are sûra titles and verse-counts in white Riq‘ in plain gold cartouches with confronted palmettes at each end. Around the panels are borders of green and orange strapwork. This is repeated in a slightly different form in another border containing all panels. There is a final outer border of green and gold palmettes and scrolls of most delicate drawing and colouring. The border culminates in floral and geometric spikes. The overall impression is one of feather-like delicacy.

The manuscript was commissioned by Sultan ‘Abdul-Majīd (1255/1839-1277/1861). It was this calligrapher who wrote the huge circular inscriptions in Ayā Sofia. For Muṣṭafā ‘Izzat, see Huart p. 200, Sun Hattaşlar p. 158.

CBL. Ms. 151586, folios 1v-2r (Arberry No. 223)
80 Binding

Front cover and flap of No. 79, 18.2 × 15 cm.
Painted decoration by Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ (The Royal Illuminator).
Turkey, 1264/1844.

Gilt binding with painted decoration. The central panel, rectangular in shape, is divided into five sections by a diamond which fills it. Around the main panel is a border containing twelve painted cartouches. All of these shapes are in the form of a cut-out panel stuck down on to the binding proper. All the inter-areas are decorated with painted palmette motifs, all confronting one another and interwoven with floral arabesques. The raised areas are both painted and stamped. All the inset portions are covered with a protective transparent foil. The painted decoration is identical to that found in the interior of the manuscript. Although the binder may not have been the illuminator, the latter was responsible for all painted parts, both in the manuscript and on this cover. The result is one of total cohesion.

CBL Ms. 1586 (Arberry No. 223)

81 Binding

Doubtless and interior of flap of previous binding.
Linked palmette decoration, echoing that in the central diamond on the outer cover. Over this is a repeat diamond pattern with flour heads at each point and in the centre of alternate diamonds. There is a narrow double border in gold which is stamped, or embossed, with flowers. The interior of the flap and its edge have similar decoration. All this is most probably the work of the illuminator of the manuscript.

CBL Ms. 1586 (Arberry No. 223)
Qur'āns from India and the Far East

Islam arrived in India in the 2nd/8th century, but it was not until the 5th/11th century after the conquest of Northern India by the Ghaznavid Turks that it made any significant headway. Qur'āns, however, survive only from the period of the Delhi Sultanate - the 8th/14th century - before it was brought to an end by the invasion of Timur. The two manuscripts shown here (No. 82 and No. 83) both date from the 9th/15th century. They are copied in Rūhāni, a script resembling a very angular Naskh, the origins of which appear to be found in Ghaznavid Afghanistan. The illumination, though not necessarily the colour, owes much to the art of Ilkhānid and Timurid Iran which exerted an enormous influence on Indian Qur'ānic art. Other influences did intrude, even from as far away as Mamluk Egypt, whose rulers sent presents of Qur'āns to the sultans and princes of India. A recently discovered Qur'ān (Hayward Cat. No. 65) shows the heights which could be reached by Indian Qur'ān illuminators, though sadly this seems to be a solitary example.

The great period of manuscript illumination and calligraphy, including Qur'ānic calligraphy, begins with the return from exile of the Mughal emperor Humāyūn at the court of the Shah of Iran in the mid-10th/16th century. From then onwards large numbers of Iranians came to the Mughal court and these included both painters and calligraphers. No. 84 is a magnificent copy from the late 10th/16th century and may well have been produced by Iranians working in India, perhaps in combination, as was often the case, with local Muslim craftsmen. It contains several features, such as the dots around the letters, the decoration of the 'eyes', or loops of the characters, the use of grey with subtle greens and red-browns, which are foreign to Iranian illumination. No. 85 is a rare example of the Nastaliq script used for the text of the Qur'ān, while No. 87 was written in Shīni, a script derived from Naskh. The latter was used by Chinese Muslims and shows the influence of the Chinese written characters. Often - though not in Qur'āns - this script is extremely complex and distorted.

82 Qur'ān Fragment

Two folios containing XIII Al-Re‘d (Thunder), 37-43, and XIV Abūkīm (Abraham) 1-4. 29.5 x 23.5 cm. North India 9th/15th cent.

Gold Rūhāni script with vowels in blue, fifteen lines to the page. Āyās indicated by gold rosettes. Sūra titles and verse-count are in similar script within a narrow cartouche, decorated with pink hatching. There is a surrounding band of blue with white crowns. Beyond is a wider border of dark yellow with an undulating gold scroll interwoven with blossoms. In the margin is a gold palmette in a yellow triangular shape and another in a blue circle. Above are the remains of a medallion.

CBL, Ms. Additional
83 Qur'an Fragment

Two folios containing VII 'Al-Asif (The Heights), 1, 3, 29 × 18 cm. North India, 15th cent.

Black Bihari script with the Hamsa in gold Nashk. There is an interlinear commentary in red and black Nashk. Ayat are indicated by gold rosettes. The text is in a square decorated panel. At the top and bottom are panels with inscriptions in white Tawq'; sura title and verse-count and (below) LVI Al-'Asif's 79–80. These are in cartouches on blue ground divided into minute hexagons. There is a final outer border of alternating palmettes in gold, red and green on blue. All this illumination is influenced by the art of Timurid Iran. In the margin are reading notes and comments.

CBL Ms. Additional

84 Qur'an

Two folios containing I Al-Fatiha (The Opening Chapter) and II Al-Baqara (The Cow) 1–4, 42.4 × 3.0 cm. Iran or Mughal India, late 10th/11th early 11th/16th cent.

The text of Al-Fatiha (right) is written in Mubaqqaq, that of Al-Baqara opposite in Thuluth. All letters are outlined in black and gold dots and the interiors of many letters are filled in with pink, in some cases being made into eyes. Each line is extensively decorated with a treble-dot motif. The text is on a bed of arabesque scrolls on a ground painted in two types of gold. At the top and bottom are panels with oval cartouches containing the sura titles and verse-counts in white Thuluth over grey arabesques. There are narrow side panels with palmettes painted gold and blue to make interlocking triangles. All panels are surrounded by a border of cloud scrolls separated by grey palmettes in an unusual dark green ovoid. The final border has gold arabesque scrolls and palmettes filled with blue and gold to make interlocking triangular shapes with tiny palmettes. The overall effect is one of unbridled magnificence.

Although this is basically Iranian workmanship there are numerous features and colours quite foreign to Iran at this time and which may be due to Indian influence. The artist could have been one of the many Iranians working for the Mughals. The manuscript contains the seal of the Mughal Emperor Muhammad-Shah 1131/1718–1161/1748.

CBL Ms. 1547, fols. IV–2R (Arberry No. 163)