THE QUR'AN AND CALLIGRAPHY
A SELECTION OF FINE MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL

BERNARD QUARITCH
Catalogue 1213
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The leaves and manuscripts assembled for this catalogue have been
chosen for reasons of historical importance and rarity, as well as
for their aesthetic appeal and for the quality of the condition in
which they have survived – in some cases for over a millennium.
Ranging from the 9th to the 14th century of the Islamic era (9th-20th cen-
tury AD), they were copied and illuminated in cities across the Islamic world
from Herat, Damascus, and Istanbul, to Cairo, Kairouan and Córdoba. These
are representative examples of a manuscript tradition where script and illu-
mination possess great visual impact and spiritual power but where many
complex historical questions remain unresolved. Hence our commissioning
a scholar, Tim Stanley, to write the entire catalogue; and our use of copious
colour illustrations to convey something of the freshness, poise and strength
of the original manuscripts.

Published here as work-in-progress, Mr Stanley’s introductory studies re-
examine codicological issues relating directly to items in the catalogue; manu-
scripts written in the ‘Kufic’ script, for example. What is the state of our
knowledge regarding the variety and development of this script, its classifi-
cation and the classification of its vocalisation and ornament; and to what
extent can dates of copying and places of production be identified? The
‘Blue Qur’an’ is reconsidered in the light of four previously unpublished
leaves, and a completely new theory suggests that its origins may lie in
Umayyad Córdoba at the outset of the caliphal period. The structure of the
Five-line Gold Qur’an on white vellum is reconstituted here for the first
time, as far as we are aware; the script is reconsidered; and we are reminded
that provenance should not be equated with place of production, which in
the case of this manuscript remains a mystery. Moving forward in time,
discussion turns to manuscript Qur’ans produced in the western Islamic world
during the Almohad period. Is it useful or even possible to insist on Andalusi
as opposed to North African origins for manuscripts copied without an iden-
tifying colophon during this period? Item 19, which is an exceptionally well
preserved example of just such a manuscript, is examined in detail; and,
without drawing any firm conclusion, its precise similarity to several manu-
scripts with colophons from the Iberian peninsula is acknowledged. Finally,
the lives and influence of four great Muslim scribes, examples of whose
works are present here, are reviewed through recourse to sources in oriental
languages that would otherwise be inaccessible to many of us.
A small selection such as this cannot make any claim to be comprehensive. But it indicates the quality of material that can still be found, responds well to academic enquiry, and may suggest avenues for further collecting and research. We are more than grateful to Tim Stanley for his imaginative contribution. For their comments on the text our thanks are also due to Dr Nadia Erzini, Dr Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge University), Dr Julian Raby (Oxford University), and Dr Stephen Verhoest, and to Dr Jan Just Wirkam (Leiden University Library), who has kindly arranged distribution of the catalogue to subscribers of the journal Manuscripts of the Middle East.

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The thirty-eight items chosen for this catalogue illustrate various stages in the history of Islamic calligraphy over a thousand years and more. A selection cannot, of course, tell the whole story, but the examples presented here certainly show the high standards that were achieved again and again during this immense period. The problems raised by these pieces are as different as the aesthetic effects achieved, and this is reflected in the varying approaches taken in this introductory essay. The circumstances of the production of items 1–11, Qur'an leaves written in varieties of the Kufic script, are unknown in all but the broadest terms; they cannot be dated with any accuracy, and no progress has been made in identifying regional styles, if these existed. It has therefore been necessary to approach the material through the system of letter-form analysis that has been developed by François Déroche, although this system can only be employed by a non-specialist 'outsider' with some caution.

As we progress towards our own time, questions of place and date become easier to answer. Two possible places of production have been suggested for items 12–14, which come from the celebrated Blue Qur'an, while the date and location of the production of the Maghribi material, items 18–20, presents far less of a problem, because of the existence of colophons and other documentation in comparative material. An attempt has been made to trace the biographies of Arghun al-Kamil, with whom item 25 has been associated, and Ahmad al-Qarahibi, who signed item 27, but our knowledge of the circumstances in which their work was produced is still rather thin. This is not the case with two other masters, Hasan Rida, the calligrapher of item 37, and Ahmad Kamil, who copied item 38. They flourished in the final years of the Ottoman empire and belonged to a calligraphic tradition that underwent an all but terminal crisis during the 1920s and 1930s.

Could there be a greater contrast between item 38 and item 1? The first is a complete manuscript, written on paper by a famous calligrapher for a member of the Egyptian royal family, it is preserved in mint condition. Item 1, on the other hand, is a single leaf of vellum inscribed in Kufic, its place of production is unknown, and it can only be dated in a very vague manner. But what unites them is the Muslim faith of their patrons, and the desire of these patrons to possess a holy text written in a fittingly elegant manner. They are both products of the same great cultural and religious enterprise.
CALLIGRAPHY IN THE KUFIC SCRIPT

O

ne of the outstanding achievements of Arab Muslim civiliza-

tion in the first centuries of its existence was the development of

an imposing and unequivocal style of writing that could be

used to record and transmit the text of the Holy Qur’

, the
divine revelation that stands at the very heart of Islam. This style has tra-

ditionally been called al-

khatt al-kufi or Kufic script in both Muslim and Western

sources, but the same name was applied to later Qur’

ic scripts, now

most commonly called Eastern Kufic, that are based on different aesthetic

principles. In general, the name Kufic has served primarily to distinguish

cardier scripts from naskhi and other varieties of Proportioned writing that

were not used until about AD 1000 to copy the text of the Qur’an. This

indiscriminate use of the term has prevented a proper appreciation of the

complex history of early Qur’

nic calligraphy, but the names invented as refinements or substitutes can be equally

misleading. The term Western Kufic, for example, was applied by Martin Lings and Yasin Safadi to a diverse range

of 9th- and 10th-century Qur’

ic scripts in their British Museum cata-

logue of 1976. The provenance of this material was Tunisia, and the authors of

the catalogue rather rashly presumed that provenance and region of pro-

duction were the same. They therefore felt free to coin a new term, whose

main advantage appears to have been that it balanced the ‘Eastern Kufic’ of

earlier scholarly literature (if in rather too neat a fashion).

Over the last decade or so the leading authority on the reclassification of

the different types of Kufic has been François Déroche, who has proposed

the name Early Abbasid for the first Kufic (items 1–15 below), and New Style

for the Eastern Kufic scripts that replaced it (items 16 and 17 below).3

But these innovations, too, are a little misleading, for some Early Abbasid

script is so early that it must be Umayyad, while the New Style was only

new insofar as Qur’

ic manuscripts were concerned, as Déroche himself has indicated.4 On the other hand, Kufic is a term that has been used in the West

for more than two hundred years, as the Latin inscription in item 23 shows.

More importantly, the same term has been used for far longer by Muslims,

whose reverence for the Qur’an is the very reason for the survival of ancient


1. The term was derived from the name of the
town of al-

Kufah, one of the most im-

portant urban centres in Iraq in the early Is-
lamic period.

2. See Déroche 1992, pp. 34–47, 132–37; his
ever earlier works are listed in the bibliography of

3. See the datings for styles n.a and n.b and c

for example (Déroche 1992, pp. 35, 42).

4. Déroche 1992, pp. 132–33. This has also

been noted by other scholars, such as Béatrice


Kufic material in the great repositories and libraries of North Africa and the

Middle East. The inventory of the library in the Great Mosque of al-

Qayrawan (Kairouan), for example, which was prepared in its current form in the last
ten days of Junadi 1-ul-Ukhr 693 (19–27 May 1394),2 shows that the name

kufi was used by those responsible for preserving this collection of ancient

manuscripts in the High Middle Ages. Surely, what was good enough for

the learned doctors of al-

Qayrawan at the end of the 13th century should be

good enough now, however much the use of the term might have to be

refined. Indeed, to study this material in a purely Orientalist manner, searching

for the original forms — the Unext — and ignoring the subsequent history

of the artefacts, is to behave as archaeologists of the Middle East once did,

digging through the Byzantine and Islamic levels on their sites without bolster-

ing to stop. No student of Islamic civilization can afford to behave in this

way, for the afterlife of Kufic as an important cultural relic is as worthy of

study as the Circumstance of its creation. This, then, is why the term is re-

tained here.

Déroche’s rejection of the term Kufic cannot, of course, detract from his

contribution as a whole, for his work on a series of analogous collections has

reduced an incoherent mass of material to a series of manageable types. The

two main varieties of Kufic he identified — Early Abbasid and New Style —

are themselves very diverse, and to reflect this diversity Déroche has divided

them into groups based on the forms of particular letters, a method em-

ployed previously by other scholars.3 The evidence for establishing the date

range and place or places of production of each group is very scant, and in

order not to prejudice the issue he found it necessary to invent a neutral

system for identifying them, in the form of a code based on letters and

numbers. He has so far created three main categories for the New Style

scripts (n.s.l, n.s.ii and n.s.iii) and six for the Early Abbasid scripts (a, b, c, d, e, f), while some of the latter have been divided into sub-categories (b.1, b.2, c.1, c.2, c.3, d.1, d.2, d.3, d.4, d.5). He has also found it necessary to

subdivide the Early Abbasid sub-categories yet further, producing styles n.a, n.b, c.1b, c.2b, d.1a, d.2a and d.2b. An example of how this system works

can be seen in the use of the independent form of the letter alf as a criterion

for deciding which Early Abbasid style a particular example belongs to.4 In

styles a, b, c, d and f this letter has a characteristic extension to the right at

the base of the letter, and this extension may be curved, or it may run parallel

to the base line, for instance. Style b, on the other hand, is distinguished by


6. See Flynn 1959 and Ory 1965, for

example.

the absence of the extension. The treatment of the shaft of this letter in the different styles also varies, so that in style n.a it leans to the right, while in n.b it is perpendicular to the base line. In most n styles the shaft is short and thick, but in n.v.b and n.v.c it is long and thin. In n.t the top of the letter is straight and ends with a flat angle, while in n.t it bends slightly and ends in a curved angle, or ‘chamfer’. Numerous other examples could be offered.

There are several problems with this system from the point of view of other potential users. One is the subtlety of some of the distinctions, which makes it difficult for the outsider to be sure that he or she is identifying the distinguishing traits correctly. Because of this, the categorization of the various examples of Kufic script offered below must be treated as very tentative, unless it relies on judgements made by Déroche himself about other leaves from the same manuscript. The second problem is that the system more or less ignores the broader codicological context in which the script was employed. Indeed, the same style of Kufic was used in manuscripts with such different formats that the aesthetic effects achieved are very different. This is clear from three of the items introduced below, all of which were written in Déroche’s style n.t.

The most obvious contrast is between item 4, whose two folios are rather large (241 × 330 mm) but bear only seven lines of text on each page, and item 7, which is smaller (185 × 256 mm) but has fifteen or sixteen lines on each page. In the two cases the overall size of the script and other factors, such as the width of the margins, have been adjusted to the size of the page and the density of the text. In item 4 the maximum width of the penstroke is just under 5 mm, while in item 7 it is around 1 mm, so that a pen with a much narrower nib must have been used. At the same time, the use of masla, that is, the capacity to increase the horizontal length of certain letters or the ligatures, is far more restrained in item 7 than it is in item 4, where one letter is no less than 137 mm long. As a result, the text in some lines of item 4 is very short — one contains only the words fi al-bahr, for example.

The text of item 7 is by no means cramped, but the reduced scale of the script means that each line contains at least five times as many words as in item 4. Neither version of script n.t can be dated with any certainty, and so it is impossible to say which came first, but it is notable that the same pattern of complementary large and small styles existed in many later systemizations of the Arabic script: the so-called Andalusi and Maghribi scripts of medieval Qur’an manuscripts from Spain and North-west Africa, for example, and the ḥurūf and ṣamā’ of the school of Shaykh Hamdallah, which originated in Istanbul in the late 13th century. In these later systems, however, the smaller
hand was the more common, while reduced versions of D.I appear to have been rarer than full-sized examples.8

If item 4 were an expanded version of D.I, and item 7 were a reduced version, it would be expected that a leaf such as item 6, which measures 140 × 200 mm, would represent some sort of norm, or half-way house, for although it is smaller than item 7, and of course even smaller than item 4, it has only five lines to the page. In some respects the relationship between items 4, 6 and 7 is as one would expect: the use of mashq in item 4 is more restrained than in item 6, but not as restrained as in item 7. Rather surprisingly, however, the apparent thickness of the penstrokes in item 6 is not an optical illusion — the result of placing the letters closer together — but was caused by the use of a broader nib, so that the penstrokes are about 2.5 mm wide. The variations within Déroche’s style of D.I are therefore more complex than a simple matching of the dimensions of the script to the page format.

Déroche saw the manuscripts copied in each type of script as forming a circle, with the best manuscripts — those that display ‘the greatest care, the greatest skill and the greatest regularity’ — at the centre, surrounded by others that show less and less of these features as one moves to the edge.9 Geoffrey Khan has explained this process in Sassanian terms, contrasting competence in writing a particular script (the *langue*) with actual performance (the *parole*).10 These concepts can also be usefully employed when incorporating new material into Déroche’s system of groups and sub-groups. Item 10, for example, was written in a script very close to those classified by Déroche as D.I and D.III. It seems plausible that D.II, D.III and the hand seen in item 10 all stand in the same relationship to an ideal form of script, which may have been represented by D.I. In other words, the scribes of these manuscripts thought that they were writing D.I, but certain mannerisms derived from scripts used in other contexts had contaminated their execution of it. These are, then, not independent types of script but evolved forms of D.I. This must not seem to imply, however, that they are somehow less fine than D.I, for all the D scripts were executed with remarkable care.


The Qur’an on Blue Vellum. Africa or Spain?

The overwhelming majority of the surviving Qur’anic material from the first three centuries of the Islamic era (7th–10th centuries AD) was executed in brownish-black ink on cream vellum. The great age of this material means that the ink may once have been darker, and the vellum lighter in colour, but the overall effect intended by the creators of these manuscripts has been blurred rather than erased by time. When resources permitted gold and other pigments were introduced, but in most cases these were used for incidentals such as surah headings, and not for the Qur’anic text itself. In a small number of cases, however, the type of gold Kufic used for surah headings and other short texts was exploited on a far broader scale, to produce whole copies of the Qur’an written in gold. Items 11–14 below come from two such manuscripts.

There is a tradition that traces the practice of copying the Word of God in gold back to the Umayyad period, to the short reign of ’Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (AD 717–20). According to Ibn al-Nadim, writing in the 10th century, the first person to write copies of the Qur’an at the very beginning of the Islamic era and to be praised for the beauty of his script was Khalid ibn Abi-l-Hayja. . . and he it was who composed the inscriptions on the qiblah [wall] of the Mosque of the Prophet . . . [in Medina] in gold, from Wo-l-chamni wa-dhubhi [‘By the sun and its morning light’], that is, xli, 1 to the end of the Qur’an. It is also related that ’Umar ibn ’Abd al-‘Aziz said, ‘I wish you to transcribe a copy of the Qur’an for me on the same lines’, and [Khalid] made him a copy, taking great pains about it. ’Umar began to leaf through it and to show his appreciation, but he found the price too high and returned it to [Khalid].1

Nothing more is known of the caliph’s commission, but its origin in the context of architectural decoration certainly fits the monumental character of the Kufic script, even when employed in manuscripts. The costs involved in producing so luxurious a book must have limited potential patrons to the caliph himself and other individuals of the highest rank, and this would suggest that the two manuscripts from which items 11–14 came were also made for such a person. However, their execution can probably be dated to the 9th or 10th rather than the 8th century AD.

Although both manuscripts were written in gold, the two differ markedly in two important and very obvious respects. One is their size. The source of item 11 had folios that measure 145 × 209 mm, and each page bears only five folios.

lines of text, while, in the case of items 12–14, the original size of the folios appears to have been at least 310 x 410 mm,³ and there are 13 lines to the page. The second distinguishing feature is their colour; for, whereas the vellum of item 11 is a white as medieval technology allowed, the vellum on which the source of items 12–14 were copied was first dyed a deep blue. As a consequence it is commonly known as the Blue Qur'an.

The dyeing of vellum appears to have been current in the early Islamic period, to judge by information recorded by al-Baladhrī in the 9th century AD. He reported that tax accounts presented to the caliph in the previous century were prepared on vellum dyed yellow with safron, a practice that had begun in pre-Islamic Iran, under the Sassanian king Khusrav II (reg. AD 590–628).³ But it has long been thought that the model for the deep-blue hue of the Blue Qur'an, and its gold lettering, was not the safron-stained tax accounts of the Sassanians but the Byzantine practice of writing in gold on vellum dyed purple with murex.⁴ Before Jonathan M. Bloom published his investigations of the Blue Qur'an in the 1980s,⁵ two contradictory theories had been offered to explain its origins.

The first theory was based on the statements of F. R. Martin, who had acquired some leaves in Istanbul before 1912. In that year Bernard Quaritch Ltd issued Martin's two-volume work on The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, which included the first published reference to the manuscript. Martin believed that this copy of the Qur'an had previously been in Iran, and that it had been commissioned by the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (reg. AD 813–33) for the tomb of his father, Harun al-Rashid, who was buried under the same dome in Mshhad as the Imam Riza. Martin accounted for the blue colour of the vellum as a token of mourning.

In 1956 Ibrahim Chabouh published the inventory for the library of the Great Mosque of al-Qayrawan in Tunisia, referred to above, which is dated 1294. The first entry, unfortunately incomplete because of damage to the first leaf of the inventory, refers to a large-format Qur'an in seven volumes, written in gold Kufic on blue-black (alhal) vellum,⁶ with five lines to the page.⁷ Chabouh pointed out in a footnote that only one example of this type of manuscript on dyed vellum had survived in al-Qayrawan, and he

If this translation is correct, then the problem about the number of lines disappears, for it is 13 that has five lines to the page, while 1b, the entry that seems to refer to the Blue Qur'an, makes no mention of the number of lines, presumably because this information has been lost.

One problem does remain, however, for the entry implies that the Qur'an manuscript in question had surah headings that consisted of the name of the surah and the number of verses, and that these were in silver. Only one page
from the Blue Qur'an on which one surah ends and another begins has been published, and this shows that the juncture was not marked by a text but by a decorative band and a marginal device based around a pomegranate, and that both band and marginal device are in gold. But close scrutiny of the black-and-white reproductions of this page suggest that there is an inscription above the marginal device, perhaps giving the title of the surah. This is confirmed by item 13 below, which is inscribed with the bismillah and verses 1–4 of surah xviii (al-Kahf, 'The cave'). In this case, the gold band and marginal palmette at the end of surah xviii must have been at the foot of the previous folio, for there is no sign of it on this leaf. Instead, an inscription in silver Kufic has been added in the outer margin of the recto, adjacent to lines 1–3; it reads, Al-Kahf / mu'ah wa-hul / sath ('The Cave; one hundred and eleven [verses]'). It seems, then, that the compiler of the inventory was referring to these 'marginal notes' when he wrote of surah headings in silver.

The Blue Qur'an is clearly 'in the large format', as it is described in the inventory; it is certainly in Kufic script, on blue-black vellum and was written in gold', and it has been established that 'the surahs and the verse-counts are indeed 'in silver'. But evidence that the manuscript was bound in seven sections and that these were covered in tooled leather over boards lined with silk has so far been lacking, although reasonable suppositions have been made regarding the number of volumes. There that there were indeed seven sections, each called a subh or marzil, is shown by item 14, which comes from the very end of the first seventh of the text. Item 14 also shows that there were full-page panels of illumination at the end, and presumably also at the beginning, of each section, as one would expect in a copy of the Qur'an as fine as this.

The division of the Qur'anic text into sevenths, thirtieths and other fractions was not precisely fixed, and in some traditions the first subh concludes with the last word of verse 61 of surah iv (al-A'ra'âm, 'The cattle'). In fact, the text on the recto of item 14 ends with the first word of verse 62, but this minor anomaly has been explained by an examination of the verso under ultraviolet light. This showed that the illuminated panel was applied over the top of a complete page of text (fifteen lines of gold Kufic script outlined in brown ink), and that the obliterated text is a continuation of that on the recto, namely, surah iv, verses 62–65. This discovery suggests either that the copyist made an error and continued the text after the end of surah iv, verse 61, where he should have stopped; or, more likely, that it was not originally intended to bind the manuscript in sevenths. As the text on the recto concluded more or less at the end of the first subh, it was acceptable merely to cover up the text on the verso, rather than recopy the whole leaf.

The inventory of 1294 records that the Blue Qur'an contained devices in silver that marked the sixtieths of the text, each called a hizb. The published material from the manuscript includes a page bearing verses 170–74 of surah ii (al-Imran, 'The family of Imran'), which was offered for sale at Sotheby's, London, on 22 October 1993 (lot 32). A large silver medallion in the right-hand margin clearly relates to a smaller gilt device at the end of verse 170, which coincides with the end of the seventh hizb and the beginning of the eighth. It would seem reasonable to presume from this that the device is one of these hizb markers referred to in the inventory, but the text in the medallion is not legible from the reproduction, and so it is not possible to confirm this. However, the medallion is of exactly the same type as those found throughout the manuscript, indicating the end of groups of ten verses. It was usual for devices marking different divisions of the text to have different forms (cf. item 10, for example), and one would have expected a hizb device to be more elaborate than one for a group of ten verses. It may be, then, that the hizb devices recorded in the inventory as published are in fact those employed to mark the end of every tenth verse.

Another element in the Blue Qur'an that was executed in silver is the rosettes that separate individual verses. But the evidence of item 14 challenges their status, for the only notable difference between the text on the verso and the verso of this leaf is the absence of these verse markers from the latter. As the text on the verso was subsequently obliterated by the panel of illumination, it has presumably been preserved in an earlier condition than that on the recto, and this would suggest that the illumination in silver was only added once all the gold-work had been completed. Indeed, there is no stylistic link between the decorative elements in gold and the ornaments in silver, and it seems likely that the silver-work was not part of the original production process and was added at some later date. This would explain why the silver surah headings were placed in the margin.

As for the tenth-verse markers, in many cases the silver is now so tarnished that it is difficult to decipher the design. However, it is clear from well-preserved examples, such as those adorning item 12, that they consist of...
a central disc surrounded by a frill of petals, set off with coloured dots. The whole device measures about 40 mm across, and the central disc contains a short text in a contrasting colour, which gives the number of verses, written out in Kufic. The smaller gilt disc that punctuates the end of the tenth verse in the text also contains a verse count, but this is given according to the abjad system, by which each letter of the Arabic alphabet was attributed a numerical value. Bloom noted that the device marking verse 66 of surah ii, which is found on one of three leaves in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, contained the letter ǧām, not the letter ʿāyn, as one would have expected. This observation was confirmed by the publication of a leaf bearing verse 66 of surah ii, and a ǧām was also employed at the end of verse 66 of surah iv on the recto of item 10. According to Bloom, this use of ǧām for sixty is a feature of the variant of the abjad system employed in the Maghrib, and so he was able to ascribe the production of the Blue Qur’an definitively to that area.

Another feature of the leaves from the Blue Qur’an that links them with the Muslim West is the presence of a rectangular grid of lines, which were scored into the vellum as a guide for the calligrapher. On item 12 the grid consists of fifteen horizontal lines, which are just over 280 mm long and are spaced at intervals of about 14 mm, and a vertical line at either end, about 190 mm long. Ruling is most unusual in copies of the Qur’an written in Kufic script on vellum, but ruling of the very same kind is not unusual in later copies written on vellum in the so-called Andalusi and Maghribi hands, which apparently originated in Spain and were disseminated through North-west Africa from the Almoravid period onwards by the migration there of Andalusi scribes (see below). In item 18, for example, the text is set out on a grid of seven horizontal lines, which are 266 mm long and are set apart at intervals of about 30 mm, and there is a vertical ruling at either end.

The script in which the Blue Qur’an was copied is that defined by François Déroche as d.d.4, a style that appears to have been current by the 880s AD and may have remained in use in the first half of the 10th century. During this period a major political change took place in the Maghrib. Until 909 the province of Ifriqiyyah, with its capital at al-Qarawiyah, was ruled by the Banu ‘l-Aghlab as hereditary governors for the Abbasid caliphs. But in that year they were overthrown, and the region became the centre of a new caliphate, that of the Fatimids. In AD 969 a Fatimid army conquered Egypt, and soon after the capital was transferred to the newly founded city of Cairo. Between 909 and 969, then, Ifriqiyyah was the residence of a dynasty of caliphs who had the means and the motive – promotion of their line as the rightful rulers of the Islamic world – to commission a work of art as fabulously expensive as the Blue Qur’an. Bloom has therefore proposed that this manuscript was prepared for one of the art-loving Fatimid caliphs of the mid-10th century, al-Manṣūr (reg. 945–53) or al-Mu‘izz (reg. 953–75).

Bloom supported his suggestion by citing to literary references to the presence of copies of the Qur’an written in gold on blue vellum in the Fatimid palace in Cairo in the 11th century. But the interpretation of these texts is far from clear. Ibn Zubayr, for example, wrote of ʿiddat khatamāt bi-khatṭītihimā makṭūbah bi-l-dhahab al-mukāḥal bi-l-lāzūward. The word khatṭītihimā (‘their two hands’) refers to the famous calligraphers mentioned in the previous sentence, Abu ‘Ali Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Muqlah (d. 939) and Ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022). As the first of the two men is credited with the invention of the Proportioned forms of naskh and other scripts, and the second is famous for having refined them to the point where they could be used for copying the Qur’an, it seems unlikely that the manuscripts in question would have been predominantly in Kufic. At the same time, the phrase al-mukāḥal bi-l-lāzūward, which Bloom presumably interpreted as meaning ‘darkened with lapsis lazuli’, refers to the gold letters and probably means that they were outlined in ultramarine (the pigment prepared from lapsis lazuli), as the verb kāhhab refers to the application of a line of kohl to the eyelids. The text can therefore be translated as ‘several copies of the Qur’an in the hands of the two [calligraphers], written in gold outlined in ultramarine’.

Some evidence to support this interpretation is found in the only manuscript known to have been copied by Ibn al-Bawwab, a single-volume copy of the Qur’an in the Chester Beatty Library, which is dated AH 391 (AD 1000–1). For the illumination of this work contains gold script outlined in black, white script outlined in gold, and blue script outlined in white. The existence of a Qur’an manuscript copied in gold script outlined in black is not, therefore, out of the question. In any case, copies of the Word of God made by Ibn Muqlah and Ibn al-Bawwab in Baghdad hardly indicate that the Blue Qur’an could have been produced in Fatimid Ifriqiyyah.

It might also be objected, with reference to the date proposed by Bloom,

14. This is, modern Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco and the parts of Spain under Muslim rule (al-Andalus).
17. Ifriqiyyah was the Roman province of Africa, roughly equivalent to modern Tunisia but also including the eastern part of Algeria.
20. Section 382 ends, ... wa-l-aslah min haššat.
that the Blue Qur'an displays a number of features that were archaic by the early or mid-10th century. One was the restricted use of diacritical strokes, which were employed consistently in item 11, for example, and another was the use of a decorative band with attached marginal device to separate two suras, in preference to an inscription containing the name of the following surah and other information – that is, of the type described above in connection with the beginning of surah xviii. It must be borne in mind, though, that a regime whose legitimacy was based on its links with an earlier golden age might well commission works of art in an archaic style, in order to recapture the lustre of that golden age. This may have been true of the Fatimid caliphs, whose claim to legitimacy was based on their descent from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was murdered in AD 661. But it was certainly true of some other Muslim regimes, including that of the Umayyad amirs of Córdoba, who also assumed the caliphal title in the 10th century. They were descended from the Umayyads who took power after 'Ali's murder and held it until their overthrow by the Abbasid in AD 750. In fact, the Umayyads of Córdoba cannot be discounted as possible patrons of copies of the Qur'an written in gold, especially if the story of the gold Qur'an 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz commissioned from Khalid ibn Abi l-Hayaj reached them in a rather more encouraging form. As generosity is an essential attribute of an Arab king such as 'Umar, the element involving his rejection of Khalid's work as being too expensive may be anti-Umayyad interpolation by their Abbasid enemies, for whom Ibn al-Nadim worked. Indeed, although the use of bands to mark the juncture between suras may have been consciously archaic in the 10th century AD, another feature of the manuscript, the grid of guidelines, was probably more of an unintentional modernism. If an Umayyad caliph had ordered the scribes of Córdoba to produce an archaizing copy of the Qur'an in gold script on blue or black parchment, then the local habit of ruling the page before writing out the text may well have crept in by the back door, as it were.

The most famous Umayyad monuments in Córdoba, the Great Mosque (now the cathedral), is in fact decorated with Kufic inscriptions in gold red and blue-black grounds and in blue-black on gold grounds. These form part of the 10th-century mosaic decoration of the domes and walls of the area around the mihrab. The gold script on blue-black is outlined in red, just as the text of the Blue Qur'an is outlined in a reddish ink, but the style

of script is quite different from the Diwān Kufic bookhand of the Blue Qur'an. Nevertheless, as the inscriptions in the mosaics have been seen as an attempt by their patron, al-Hakam II (reg. 961–76), to recapture the traditions embodied in the great Umayyad monuments of the Levant, there may well be a link with the commissioning of the Blue Qur'an, a possibility not weakened by the fact that al-Hakam was a famous bibliophile.

Nevertheless, a Spanish origin for the Blue Qur'an is not certain, and Ifriqiyyah remains the other possible location for its production. Perhaps its deep-blue colour was originally intended as black, as is suggested by the use of the term akhūf ('blue-black') in the register of 1294. In that case it may have indicated allegiance to the Abbasid caliphs, as when the Zirids, two years after having thrown off Fatimid power in 1049, ordered all fabric that was white (the Fatimid colour) to be dyed black (the Abbasid colour). Dyeing the material on which the text of the Qur'an was copied continued to be practised in Ifriqiyyah in later times. A particularly interesting example is a five-volume copy, donated in 1403 to the mosque of the Almohads (the Kasbah Mosque) in Tunis by the Hafsid ruler Abu Fari 'Abd al-'Aziz (reg. 1394–1434, as al-Mutawakkil). The text was written in silver ink on Oriental paper that had been dyed a reddish-brown to purple colour. This combination of colours may have been chosen for its own sake, but, given the existence of the Blue Qur'an, it is possible that the Hafsid caliph was, within the context of more limited resources, attempting to reproduce the effect of an ancient manuscript copied in silver on red or purple vellum.


23. Dodd 1952, pp.21–23. The next stage in this investigation must be an examination of the evidence from the Dome of the Rock, where there are indeed inscriptions in gold Kufic on a blue field.


25. Four volumes are in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Déroche 1985, nos 305-8; Paris 1987, no.14).

26. A further example is a 16th-century Qur'an manuscript on green paper in the Public Library in Béja (BDI 1.104; Paris 1990, no.514).
he rich effect of the Blue Qur'an leaves, partly achieved by their combination of gold and deep-blue and partly by their size, contrasts with that of most surviving Qur'anic material in Kufic scripts, which has a sombre, stately air. But an even greater contrast is provided by the almost cheerful beauty of the other example of Qur'anic calligraphy in gold presented here, item 11. This effect is due in part to the combination of white vellum and gold script, but it is heightened by the blue, red and green paint used for the vocalization and ornaments, whose colours are still bright and clear.

The manuscript from which these two leaves came has not been subject to the same level of scholarly investigation as the Blue Qur'an, and the main published references to it relate to sections in Tunisian public collections. Chabrouh published a page as an illustration to entry 13 in his edition of the al-Qarawan inventory of 1294. The entry refers to:

17 sections of a copy of a Qur'an in 30 sections, in Kufic script on vellum, in a small format, vocalized in red and green, with five lines to the page, the beginning and end of each section, the names of the surahs and the [accompanying] verse [counts], and the [devices marking] term [of verses] illuminated; [each section] covered in tooled red leather over boards...'

In almost every respect this could be a description of the manuscript from which item 11 came, although the entry does not mention that the text was written in gold, and the vocalization is in red, green and ultramarine (referred to elsewhere in the inventory as khwasadi), not just red and green.2

This copy of the Qur'an appears to have been bound in 30 separate sections (one for each day of the month), as opposed to the seven sections of the Blue Qur'an (one for each day of the week), and this probably indicates that the two were intended for different liturgical functions, but it also reflects their widely differing lengths. As the gold Qur'an on white vellum was arranged in five lines to the page, and there were only four or five words to the line, the text must have filled somewhere in the region of 2000 leaves, as opposed to Bloom's estimate of 650 leaves for the Blue Qur'an, which had fifteen lines to the page, also with roughly four or five words in each line. Indeed, the very large number of leaves that the 'Five-line Gold Qur'an'

1. Chabrouh 1936, pp. 333-34 and plate. 2. Chabrouh presumably intended the plate as an illustration, not an identification, as he reproduced an illumination from the same manuscript to illustrate entry 12.

contained means that there is no reason to doubt that it was the source of the many similar single folios, bifoliums and larger fragments that are now in public and private collections all over the world.

As it was bound in seven volumes, the illuminated pages at the beginning and end of the Blue Qur'an were always comparatively few in number, and indeed item 14 is the first of these to be published. But the Five-line Gold Qur'an, if it was indeed bound in thirtieths, would originally have had 120 such pages, although their position on the outside of the text block meant they would have been subject to greater wear and tear, and the number may quickly have shrunk to 60 or less. A number of these have been published: a double page from the National Library in Tunis, where it is bound in Ms. Buthri 198 with material from surahs XXI and XXII; another double page from the Museum of Islamic Arts in al-Qarawan, where it is associated with material from surahs LVIII and LIX;3 and a third example among the 48 leaves now in the possession of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education.4 Surahs XXI and XXII form section 17 of a 30-part Qur'an, while surahs LVIII and LIX occur at the beginning of section 28. In the third instance, however, no circumstantial information has been given as to its place in the text, but the author of the catalogue attributed the material to Iraq in the 9th century AD, as 'the method of illumination resembles that of Ibn al-Bawwâl's manuscript of the Qur'an'. Since this calligrapher flourished at the turn of the 11th century, the reasoning is hardly convincing, although such a dating cannot be ruled out.

Each of the published full-page compositions is different, but all three combine the same motifs and were executed in the same colours, predominately gold and brown. The main elements are strongly articulated, as each segment is outlined by a reserved band that takes up the ivory colour of the vellum; at the same time these bands lighten the overall effect. The simuous repeat pattern found in the border of the example belonging to the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education link these full-page compositions to the frames placed around the surah titles in the text,5 and at least one of the accompanying marginal devices contains one of the chequered designs used as fillers in the full-page illumination.6

When parts of this Qur'an were exhibited in London in 1976, Lings and Safadi dated them to the 10th century and named al-Qarawan as the probable place of production, on the basis of their provenance. This attribution

5. Riyahi 1985, no. 251.
6. Chesnais, 9 Oct 1996, lot 45, for example.
7. Lings & Safadi, no. 19, pls i; Paris 1981, no. 348.
has often been repeated, although Anthony Welch dated the manuscript to the previous century. In general, though, the current location of a manuscript is an unreliable indication of its place of production, given the portability of these objects. Furthermore, each tenth verse is marked by a small roundel giving the number of verses by means of a letter of the Arabic alphabet, as in the Blue Qur’an, but, whereas the ḍabādī system of numerical values employed in the Blue Qur’an contained a regional variant, in that sixty was represented by ʿalā in this case the standard system, in which sixty is represented by šīn was used. As we have seen, the presence of the ṣāf where one would have expected waw ḍal to ascribe the Blue Qur’an to the Maghrib, and this attribution is also supported by the presence on the leaves of the Blue Qur’an of grids of guidelines similar to those found on the leaves of Qur’an codices copied in the so-called Andalusí and Maghribi scripts. No such grid occurs on the leaves of the Five-line Gold Qur’an, and in view of this, and the use of ṣīn for sixty, there is no case for attributing this manuscript to any part of the Maghrib. It seems advisable, therefore, to avoid ascribing the Five-line Gold Qur’an to a particular region or centre of production until positive evidence emerges.

Two fragments of the Five-line Gold Qur’an – a leaf in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (ms.arabe 51781) and another in the Khalili Collection in London (inv.no. KdQ84) – have been published by François Déroche. He did not give a place of production, but he classified the script as style n.t and dated the manuscript to the 9th century ad, when this style was current. The evidence of item 11, however, indicates that the situation is not so simple. On the face of the two single leaves, for example, the independent form of the letter nūn has two different shapes. One is certainly that of style n.t, but the other is a tilted semicircle close to the independent nīn of Déroche’s style d.v.c. On the second of the two single leaves, moreover, one occurrence of the letters lām and dāl in combination has uprights that curve towards one another, in the manner of this digraph in Déroche’s style d.vb, and the resulting enclosed space has been filled in with ultramarine.

It may be concluded that, although the general proportions and letter forms seen in this copy of the Qur’an are in line with Déroche’s style n.t, the script employed is a hybrid that contains elements of other d styles, most notably the modes Déroche has termed d.vb and d.v.c. The little evidence available for dating these two styles is from the early 10th century, and so a dating to the 9th or 10th century seems reasonable. It should be borne in mind, however, that Kufic of this type written in gold may have survived in use longer than the same variety of Kufic written in ink, because it was used as part of the decorative repertoire in copies of the Qur’an written in later scripts. It is possible, then, that Qur’an manuscripts such as this, which were written in gold Kufic, were produced after the type of Kufic in which it was written had gone out of general use. Whatever the date or origin of the Blue Qur’an and of the Five-line Gold Qur’an, it must be admitted they are both works of great beauty and historical interest.

The 10th century AD was a time of great change and diversity in the history of Islamic calligraphy, and if the Blue Qur'an and the Five-line Gold Qur'an date from this period, then the type of Kufic script in which they were written was already becoming obsolete. In Fatimid Sicily in AH 372 (AD 982-83) a copyist wrote a Qur'an manuscript in an elegant version of the 'Eastern Kufic' or 'New Style' copyhand that François Déroche has labelled ns.ii.1 A decade later, in AH 383 (AD 993), a scribe in Isfahan was producing another copy in the mannered script that the same scholar has called ns.1.2 Both books are in the 'horizontal' format associated with copies of the Qur'an in the earlier type of Kufic, which were wider than they were high (cf. items 1-14 below), but the textblock of the Isfahan example is made of paper, while the Sicilian scribe wrote on the more traditional vellum. In Baghdad at the same time, as we have seen, Ibn al-Bawwab was developing Ibn Muslih's Proportioned masah into a script suitable for copying the Word of God, and his Qur'an codex of AH 391 is also on paper. By the 13th century the Proportioned scripts had completely eclipsed the other styles, at least in Egypt and the lands to the east. In fīrāqīyyah the ns.1 script was still being used in Qur'ānic contexts in the early 11th century, for in AH 410 (AD 1020) a celebrated copy of the Qur'an was made by 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Warrag for the nursemah (hadīfina) of the Zirid ruler Ibn Badis.3 But it is not known what scripts were employed for Qur'an codices in the Muslim provinces further west in the 10th and most of the 11th century.

The scribes of the Maghrib had long before divorced themselves from the main, Eastern tradition of script development.4 They employed a sharp, pointed nib that produced a line of even thickness, for example, while in the East scribes cut their nibs with a blunt end, like a chisel, to create a line of varying thickness.5 In a much-quoted passage Ibn Khaldūn described a further major difference between the Maghribi tradition and that of the East:

we are told about contemporary Cairo ... that there are teachers there who are specialized in the teaching of calligraphy. They teach the pupil by norms and laws how to write each letter... Writing is not learned that way in Spain and the Maghribi ... [but] by imitating complete words. The pupil repeats (these words).

The styles of bookhand developed in the Maghribi were also distinctive, being based on one of the varieties of Kufic, and this Maghribi script was certainly employed for non-Qur'ānic manuscripts during the 10th and 11th centuries, as is shown, for instance, by a copy of the Kitāb al-Muwaṭṭa' of Malik ibn Anas, made by 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Sa'id al-Warrag and completed in Rajab 391 (begun 27 May 1001).6 At some point before AD 1090 this local bookhand was adopted for copying the Qur'an, probably in Spain, from where the practice spread to the rest of the Maghribi and to the Western Sudan, which came temporarily under Maghribi control in the 11th century and again in the 16th.

The earliest dated Qur'ān codex in Maghribi script is now in the University Library in Uppsala.7 It was completed in AH 483 (AD 1090), and the text, which is arranged in eleven lines to the page, was written on vellum in lettering of medium size. However, in the 12th and 13th centuries copies of the Qur'an were produced not in this medium-sized Maghribi but in one of two sub-styles of the script, one of which was remarkably small in scale, and the other remarkably large. (Such a distinction is perhaps prefigured in earlier Maghribi manuscripts, such as the Kitāb al-Muwaṭṭa' of AD 1001, where the text is in a relatively small hand, but the headings are emphasized by being written in a larger script.) The smaller of the two, which was used to copy item 19 below, was written with an exceedingly thin nib, and there is a strong horizontal emphasis; certain letters were extended horizontally, while vertical elements are relatively short. As a result the text could be arranged in as many as twenty-nine lines to the page, forming a dense block.8 By comparison, manuscripts in the larger script have very few lines to the page: in item 18 below, for instance, there are seven, but other examples have only five.9 For this script a broad nib was used, and the lines were spaced in an open, well-proportioned manner, although letters from adjacent lines were allowed to cross one another.

It has become the custom to refer to the smaller script as Andalusī and to the larger as Maghribi, which is, confusingly, also the name for the whole family of scripts. These names would seem to indicate that the two originated in different parts of the Islamic West or that the use of the smaller script was confined to al-Andalus. But it is likely that both were invented in

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1. Déroche 1993, no.81; the dated material from this copy is in Istanbul, Numunnumiyah Library, ns.22;
3. Lings & Safadi, nos 23, 26; Paris 1982, no.128.
5. Van den Boogert 1989, p.36.
9. Quaritch, Jeddah 1991, no.10, for example.
10. Quaritch, Jeddah 1991, no.8, for example.
Spain, and it is certain that both were later employed across the Straits of Gibraltar in Africa, as well as in Spain. In fact, the two scripts can be seen as complementary, for in general the smaller type was used for single-volume copies of the Qur'an, and the larger type for multi-volume copies.

At present there is no evidence that the exaggerated differentiation between the two sizes of Qur'anic script had taken hold before the Almoravids arrived in Spain in 1086, four years before the Uppsala Qur'an was copied. But the smaller variety of Qur'anic Maghribi script was certainly in use two decades later, in AH 500 (AD 1106–7), and it continued to be employed for several centuries. A significant number of the earlier Qur'an manuscripts in the smaller hand have colophons that give the date or both the date and the place of production: one authority has recently published a list of sixteen from the 12th and 13th centuries, to which at least three more from the 12th century can be added. At least five of these manuscripts are from Valencia, while others were copied in Córdoba, Ceuta, Marrakesh and Seville, and it is presumed that the script continued to be employed for copying the Qur'an in Nasrid Granada, as well as in centres in Morocco.

Evidence for when and where the multi-volume copies of the Qur'an in the larger type of script were produced is much harder to come by. Single sections of two different 20-part copies, both kept in the Ben Yusuf Library in Marrakesh, were produced in Málaga in AH 620 (AD 1223) and in Seville in AH 632 (AD 1234) respectively, and a ten-part copy made by the penultimate Almohad caliph, al-Murtada, now in the British Library, was completed in Marrakesh in AH 654 (AD 1256). On this basis one might begin to suspect that this script, and the multi-volume Qur'an manuscripts for which it was used, were a product of a revival of artistic patronage under the later, and less puritan, Almohad caliphs, who ruled until AD 1269. However, the larger type of script was already in use in the 12th century, for a very fine copy of the Shihâb al-Akhbar of al-Qadi, now in the Royal Library in Rabat, was copied in this script in Valencia in AH 568 (AD 1172–3). The text of the manuscript is punctuated with illuminated devices of the type used to mark the divisions of the text of the Qur’an into verses and surahs. Taken together with the monumental character of the script, this suggests that the Shihâb al-Akhbar was modelled directly on the type of multi-volume Qur’an manuscript exemplified by item 18. Presumably, then, copies of the Qur’an in the larger form of script were already being produced in the second half of the 12th century.

The places mentioned in the colophons of the manuscripts written in these two scripts support the assumption that they and the codicological practices that went with them were first elaborated in Spain and were then diffused through North–West Africa. We have colophons from Córdoba in 1143, from Valencia in 1162, 1163, 1168, 1172 or 1173, 1182 and 1199, from Málaga in 1233 and from Seville in 1226 and 1234, but the earliest Moroccan colophon is from 1191 (from Ceuta) and the other three, from Marrakesh, are 13th-century (1202 or 1203, 1218 and 1260). What is more, when Ibn Khaldun, writing circa 1375, described the movement of the Muslim population from Spain to North–West Africa as the Christian conquest progressed, so that from the time of the Almoravids ‘they have spread over the coast of the Maghrib and Ifriqiyyah’, he also explained the effect this had on the way people wrote in Ifriqiyyah:

They permitted the people settled (there) to share in the crafts they possessed, and they attached themselves to the ruling dynasty (in Northwest Africa). In this way, their script replaced the Ifriqi script and wiped it out. The scripts of al-Qayrawan and al-Malidiyyah were forgotten, once the customs and crafts of (these two cities) were forgotten. All the various scripts of the inhabitants of Ifriqiyyah were assimilated to the Spanish script used in Tunis and adjacent regions, because there were so many Spaniards there after the exodus from eastern Spain. The (old script) has been preserved in the Jaridh [the remote oasis region of south-west Tunisia], where the people had no contact with those who wrote Spanish script ...

Ibn Khaldun was, of course, referring to writing styles in general, and not specifically to those used for copying the Qur’an, but it seems reasonable to presume that this process also affected Qur’an production. It also seems reasonable to presume that something similar had already occurred in the more westerly parts of the Maghrib, which were ruled by the same dynasties as al-Andalus from 1086. But wherever its origin may have lain, Maghribi Qur’an production of the 12th and 13th centuries provides a clear illustration of the mixture of conservatism and innovation within a restricted orbit that gave...
Maghribi culture of this and later periods such a distinctive character.

An example of this combination may be drawn from item 18, three leaves from a Qur'an manuscript written in the large Maghribi hand, probably some time in the 12th century.17 The system of reading marks employed is a distinctive blend of elements from two older systems. One of them is an elaboration of the most common type of vowel mark on some Kufic Qur'an leaves (see items 4–6, in the D'I script, for example). In this system large red dots were employed singly to represent the three short vowels of Arabic, by placing them above the base line for /a/, or on it for /o/ and below it for /i/, and in superposed pairs to indicate samain. In the Five-line Gold Qur'an (item 11) the vocalization in red dots is accompanied by blue dots marking a vowel combined with a geminated consonant and green dots showing a vowel combined with a glottal stop (hamza al-qat'). A similar system was clearly the origin of the colours of the reading marks in item 18, which has vocalisation in red, the signs for geminated consonants (shaddah) and for the absence of a following vowel (sukun) in blue, and the two types of hamza in yellow and green. Only these last two, however, have the form of large dots, while the remainder have the varying shapes supposedly given to them by al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi in the 8th century AD. Such 'mixed' systems can also be observed in items 15 and 16. In item 15, which is in a later variant of the D'I scripts, close to Déroche's D'Ia, and can therefore be dated to the 10th century AD, the symbols have the shapes attributed to al-Farahidi, but the vowels and sukun are in red, hamza al-qat' is green, and shaddah is blue. In item 16, which was copied in an MS 'Eastern Kufic' script and can be dated to the 11th century AD, a very similar system prevails, although hamza al-qat' is blue. By the time item 17 was copied, in the 12th century AD, the colour-coding element was no longer in general use in the eastern regions of the Muslim world, and from this time onwards it is characteristic of Maghribi production.

Other features of item 18 indicate the additive, non-canonical character of the surah headings in this and other Qur'an manuscripts. The two examples in item 18 are distinguished by their colouring, for, while the main text was written in brown ink, they are in gold, in a type of decorative Kufic similar to that of the 10th-century mosaic inscriptions in the Great Mosque of Córdoba, referred to above. This ornamental script had been in use for decorating luxury artefacts in al-Andalus and elsewhere since at least the 10th century.18 The use of this gold Kufic for the headings shows that they formed part of the ornament that helped the reader to find his or her way round the text, rather than part of the text itself. Any suspicion that the use of gold Kufic was intended to glorify the heading over the text is allayed by the arrangement of the text on the leaf bearing parts of surahs xxii and xxviii. In the fourth line on the verso the last word of surah xxii has been placed in the centre, and an abbreviated heading for surah xxviii has been fitted round it.19 The same factor can be seen at work in the placing of the surah headings in the margins of the Blue Qur'an, as discussed above, and the way that the heading on the recto of item 7 forms an anomalous sixteenth line at the foot of the page.

The survival of the Maghribi tradition over time is illustrated by item 20, a miniature Qur'an manuscript that was produced in Morocco in the later 16th century, while item 21 exemplifies its geographical spread. This manuscript was produced for a patron from Bornu, in what is now north-east Nigeria, in 1834, and it was written in the form of Maghribi script current in the Western Sudan at this time: comparable examples are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (MS. 1595, among others),20 the University Library, Leeds (Arabic MS. 301), and the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Arab. d. 141).21 A.D.H. Bivar has argued that this hand was a direct descendant of the script introduced to the Western Sudan by the Almoravids when they conquered the region in the 1070s and 1080s.22 As Ibn Khaldun, in the passage quoted above, appears to give the name Idrisi to the script in use in North-west Africa at this time, that is, before the arrival of large numbers of Muslim migrants from Spain, Bivar extended the term to cover the Bornu hands. This seems rather rash, as Ibn Khaldun glosses the term Idrisi by referring to the scripts of al-Qayrawan and al-Mahdiyyah, and these cities, along with the rest of Idrisiyyah, were never under Almoravid rule.

The oldest dated example of a West African Qur'an manuscript written in this style of script is from the 1660s,23 so Bivar had to leave more than half a millennium to be taken on trust. But he implied that the rise of the Almohads in the mid-12th century cut the Western Sudan off from influence from

17. For other material from the same codex, see Ryad, 1985, no. 11; Quätech, Jedhah, 1991, no. 9; Jones, 1992, no. 55. James cited two much larger seven-line Qur'an manuscripts in Maghribi, both now in Istanbul:


19. The same type of arrangement can be seen in the heading of surah xxviii in Quätech, Jedhah, 1991, no. 9.


Andalusia, so that the older form of script was preserved there.\textsuperscript{29} The physical characteristics of a Qur’ân manuscript copied on paper cannot have been derived in their entirety from the Almoravid period, when Qur’ân codices were written on vellum. Nevertheless, it is true that Bornu Qur’ân manuscripts, including the present example, exhibit a number of seemingly archaic features. For instance, there is an illuminated panel before the start of each quarter of the text, but the first is placed between surah 1 and surah 11, showing that surah 1 (al-Fatiha, ‘The opening’) was regarded as hors texte in a rather more definite way than is apparent in other contemporary traditions. Another such feature is their loose-leaf structure, and the pieces of hard leather with the same dimensions as the text block, which Adrian Brockent has likened to the daffatan of very early copies of the Qur’ân referred to in Hadiths.\textsuperscript{29}


The separation of the Maghribi cultural zone from the mainstream of Islamic civilization can be associated with a major cultural shift that occurred in the eastern heartlands of the Islamic world in the 13th century, as they absorbed the shock of the Mongol invasions. In the lands east of the Euphrates, Muslim sovereignty was temporarily extinguished, and by the time it was re-established at the end of the century a new court culture had emerged, which was strongly influenced by the Sincincized traditions of the Mongols’ homeland. By this time the rulers of Egypt and Syria were the Mamluks, former slaves whose origins, like those of the Mongols, lay in the steppes of Eurasia rather than the Middle East. Perhaps because they were Muslim converts of Inner Asian origin, the Mamluks were remarkably open to the hybrid civilization of Mongol Iran, and many features of it were grafted on to their own court culture. Only in the Maghrib did the Arab civilization of the Middle Ages evolve within its own terms. The development of two distinct cultural zones is easily observed in Qur’anic calligraphy, for the Kufic-based writing styles of the Maghribi, exemplified by items 18–20, continued in use until the present, whereas in Egypt and the lands to the east refined versions of the Proportioned scripts were employed in the best manuscripts, such as items 22 and 24, which were both produced in the Mamluk empire in the 14th century.

The increased refinement of these hands is attributed to Yaqut al-Musta‘imi, whose names indicate that he was a freedman of the last Abbasid caliph of Baghdad, al-Musta‘im (r. 1242–58). Yaqut survived the Mongol conquest of Baghdad and worked as a chancery scribe for the brothers ‘Alî al-Din and Shams al-Din Juvaini, members of the Persian vizieral class who served the new masters of the eastern Islamic world. According to a contemporary source, Yaqut lived until AH 698 (AD 1298–99).\textsuperscript{2} Many fine manuscripts bear colophons in Yaqut’s name or inscriptions attributing them to this master, but it is unlikely that more than a select few were actually copied by him or are accurate reproductions of his work.\textsuperscript{3} The attribution of the remainder to Yaqut is a reflection of his posthumous fame, which also gave rise to the epic quality of some accounts of his life. He was supposed to have lived to the age of 180, for example, and the number six appears rather too

\textsuperscript{1} The names of precious stones such as pâérî (‘bursum’) were usually borne only by slaves and former slaves.
\textsuperscript{2} Bayani 1953, iv. p. 1227.
\textsuperscript{3} A convincing case has been made for the four surviving sections of a copy of the Qur’ân in 30 parts, which was made in the 1280s (James 1992, pp. 58–69).
frequently: he perfected six scripts, and he had six pupils, although their exact identity varies from source to source. In most versions, however, the six pupils included Arghun ibn 'Abdallah al-Kamil, to whom item 25 has been attributed.

This calligrapher appears, like his master Yaqt, to have been a freedman, although his former owner, the al-Kamil from whom he presumably derived his surname, has not been identified. In fact, al-Malik al-Kamil was the regnal name of two Ayyubid rulers of parts of Diyar Bahr in the second half of the 13th century. One, al-Malik al-Kamil Nasir al-Din Muhammad, held Muyafarina until the final Mongol conquest in 1260, but his fall from power seems too early for there to be any connection with the calligrapher, who died more than eighty years later. The other, al-Malik al-Kamil Abu Bakr Muhammad, was an early member of the Ayyubid line that ruled Husn Kayfa until the 15th century; his accession occurred in AH 682 (AD 1283-84), and he may therefore have been the owner of Arghun in the calligrapher’s youth. At some point, probably before 1300, Arghun went or was brought to Baghdad, where he is said to have died in AH 744 (AD 1344-45), having completed 29 copies of the Qur'an.

The association with Baghdad is supported by the signature on an album page in Istanbul, in which the calligrapher gives his name as Arghun al-Baghdadi, while other signed works bear dates that show him to have been active between the turn of the 14th century and his death, which appears to have occurred a decade later than the literary tradition allows. According to Wheeler M. Thackston, the earliest surviving specimen of his work is a page in an Istanbul album, which is dated AH 700 (AD 1300-1) and signed as Arghun ibn 'Abdallah. Six years later he completed a manuscript, also in the Topkapi Palace Library, which contains the texts of suras 1, 6, 25, 49, 124, and xxxiv, signing himself simply as Arghun. His documented work from the 1340s includes a single-volume copy of the Qur’an in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul, signed Arghun al-Kamil and dated AH 741.

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2. Sallair 1927, p. 98.
6. Topkapi Palace Library, MS. H.2156, folio 92r; see Thackston 1989, p. 339, note 18. This early dated example was also noted by Bayur (1953, IV, pp. 104-44), who referred to yet others dated Monday, 18 Muharram 731 (1 November 1330), and Friday, 14 Shawwal 732, 9 July 1332.)
8. This manuscript was magnificently rebound in 1550 (see Tizandi 1986, p. 148, pl. 12-13; Aol 1985, no. 16 (binding illustrated on p. 77); Rogers & Ward, no. 222.

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11. MS. H.452, James 1988, cat. 65. A manuscript in the Suleymaniye Library (MS. Ayasofya 4110) was also signed by Arghun and dated AH 741 (Cetin 1996, p. 155).
12. Among the unnumbered plates at the end of his edition of 'Alawi Ahmad al-Gaziz al-hanun, this manuscript bears the word 'arab's (as a prefix) ligature.
14. See Huyn 1968, p. 88, for example.
17. Sinnet 1991, c. 1; Chardon 1972, p. 216, where he warns us that in the meaning 'weasel' the word is a cognate.
20. Riyadh 1986, no. 17; one page has also been published as Soudavar 1992, no. 12.
Ahmad al-Qarabisi

In his pamphlet about Ahmad al-Qarabisi, A.S. Özer provided a list of the calligrapher's works that is still of some value. The earliest he could locate was a copy of the Qur'an in Nîghte Library (ms. 400), which was dated AH 933 (AD 1526–27), but Unver had not seen the manuscript himself. The latest was a collection of surahs (Topkapi Palace Library, ms.E.1416), which was copied in AH 961 (AD 1554). The twenty-two other items he identified consisted of four copies of the Qur'an, four independent copies of surah 84 (al-An'am, “The cattle”; cf. item 38); a book of prayers for the seven days of the week, then in the collection of Ekrem Ayverdi (cf. item 18); a prayer to be said on finishing a complete reading of the Qur'an; two sets of model letter forms (hurufîr; cf. items 29, 34 and 35); four albums; and six album pages and other fragments.

1. Özer 1948, pp. 11–12.
2. In the entry on Ahmad al-Qarabisi in Bayani 1903 (vol. 9, p. 207), five examples of his work are listed. These include a large album now in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts dated AH 923 (AD 1517), but Bayani’s examples can only be matched to Özer’s in two cases (see Sileymaniye 2, 13), and there are problems with his description of these; for example, he referred to Sileymaniye 5, a copy of al-Furat, as the ‘first juz’ of the Qur’an, 3. One in Istanbul University Library and a copy in a private collection were dated AH 948 (AD 1541–42); the third, also in a private collection, was completed in 959/1553 (begun 6 August 1548), and the fourth, also in the Istanbul University Library, was undated.
4. For the copy dated AH 957 (AD 1550–51), then in the collection of East Fast Tygur, see Özer 1948, p. 18. For Sileymaniye Library, see Sileymaniye 3 (undated), see Unver 1948, p. 24; Unver 1952, no. 38. For Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, see Sileymaniye 1, 142; which was transferred from the Ayasofya Library (perhaps ms. 10), see Özer 1948, p. 16; Duran 1970, p. 92; Rado 1984, p. 721; Apirian 1981, pp. 35–36, 40; Ayt 1987, no. 10 (illu-
5. Suleymaniye Library was undated. Items of this type not listed by Unver include a page in Berlin (Schramm 1970, pl. 382); Frankfurter-Main 1985, ii, no. 17/77. Such pieces also make occasional appearances on the art market (Christie’s, London, 11 April 1989, lot 81, and 24 April 1990, lot 151, for example).
Two more copies of the Qur'an, both in the Topkapı Palace Library, and both decorated with splendid illumination, can be added to this list. The first, Ms. V. 999, was completed in AH 1553 (AD 1546–47) and was subsequently illuminated in the style of Kara Mehmed Celebi; 10 indeed, this manuscript is so outstandingly rich in its calligraphy and ornament that it was the subject of a facsimile reproduction in Rome in 1980. The second is Ms. H.S.5, which Qarshasiri left unfinished at the time of his death in 1566 and was completed by his adopted son Hasan. 11 Its dimensions are much larger (410 × 620 mm, as opposed to 290 × 185 mm), and its calligraphy and illumination are no less rich, to the extent that it has been called "possibly the most spectacular Koran in the history of Islam." 12 Unlike Arghun al-Kamili’s copies in nashîhî, discussed above, 13 both of these manuscripts were written in the same type of format as item 27, with different styles of script on the same page, occupying a sequence of panels of different dimensions. The composition of the first two pages of text in these two manuscripts show the variety of effects that could be achieved. In Ms. V. 999 the first and last lines are in gold thulth, similar to that used for the headings in item 27, while the intervening five lines are in naskh. In the larger copy, however, the first and last lines are in bold black muhaqqaq, and lines 2–5 are in nashîhî.

The dated examples of his work establish that Ahmad al-Qarshasiri was active as a calligrapher between about 1527 and 1558, two years before his death, which was recorded on his tombstone as occurring in AH 963 (AD 1556). 14 But through his membership of the Khatwati brotherhood, a Sufi fraternity closely associated with the Ottoman calligraphic tradition, and through his relationships with older contemporaries his career can be traced well before the earlier date, perhaps as far back as the 1470s or 1480s.

Müstakim-zade related that the calligrapher’s tomb lay ‘near the grave of Cemal Halife (that is, Shaykh Ishaq Khatwati), who had initiated him as a dervish and who is buried in front of the Cafelabad tekbî in Sütülce.’ 15 Shaykh Jamal al-Din Ishaq al-Khatwati al-Qarshasiri was a member of the Cemalî-zade family that played an important role in the Khatwati brotherhood at the time that its headquarters were moved from Amasya to Istanbul at the request of Sultan Bayezid II. This family was also important in the history of Ottoman calligraphy, as it included the brothers Muhbî ‘l-Din and Jamal al-Din ibn Jalal al-Din al-Amisi, whom Ali Efendi counted as two of the seven great masters of Rum, 16 and these two were closely associated with their cousin Shaykh Hamdallah, although he seems to have been a Naqshbandi rather than a Khatwati. 17 Towards the end of his life Shaykh Ishaq became the first head of the Khatwati tekbî founded in Istanbul in AH 927 (AD 1521) by his relative Piri Mehmed Pasha. 18 The shaykh died six years later, in AH 933 (AD 1526–27). Given the obvious closeness of their personal ties, it is likely that Ahmad al-Qarshasiri’s relationship with Shaykh Ishaq developed many years earlier, and if Qarshasiri was in his nineties at the time of his own death in 1556, as is often related, this may well have occurred before Shaykh Ishaq returned to Istanbul after 1490.

An episode from Shaykh Ishaq’s career illustrates the high regard that Qarshasiri and his contemporaries had for the school of Yaqût as it had developed in Baghdad and Tabriz in the 14th century. According to Taşkıpârî-zade (d. 1561), Shaykh Ishaq received a madrasah education as a youth and then entered the service of Mawlawî Muallih al-Din al-Qustallâni, known as Molla Kestilî, who was one of the most important Ottoman legal authorities of the mid- to late 15th century. During this time Ishaq was commissioned by Sultan Mehmed III to make a copy of a standard work on grammar, the Kâfiyeh of Ibn al-Hajib, and with the fee he received the young man was able to perform the Hajj. One of his companions owned a copy of the Qur’an that had been made by Arghun al-Kamili, and Ishaq appears to have undertaken to sell it for him, as he took it to show to Molla Kestilî. The Molla asked the price, which, at 6,000 silver dirhams, he found too high, but he then proceeded to pay 10,000 silver dirhams for a horse from Karaman. Ishaq was so disgusted that he abandoned his career as a scholar and jurist and went off to study the Sufi path with the Khatwati shaykh Habib al-Qarshasiri. 19

Another figure with whom Qarshasiri has been connected is Şerbetçî-zade Ibrahim. Müstâkim-zade (d. 1588) wrote of Şerbetçî-zade that ‘When Ali Yetim … was resident in [Bursa], he encouraged [Ibrahim] to devote himself to thulth and naskh calligraphy, and [the young man] received his diploma in 889 [AD 1484–85]. For a long time recensions and retorts were

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13. But see Bard 1964, p.70, for a double page from a Qur’an manuscript in the Topkapı Library, written by Qarshasiri in nashîhî.
14. See Müstakim-zade, ed. Buğra Emin Mahmut Kenal, p.94, for example.
17. Baby & Tavânç, pp.96–100.
18. Kimlîn (1953), pp.259–60) identifies this tekbî with the one at Sütülce, but Zaik Kılıç
As Ibrahim died in AH 932 (AD 1524–26), this friendship would appear to have developed, and Qarahisi to have been in Istanbul, before this date. According to Uğur Derman, their earlier correspondence had included three lines of verse written by Qarahisi that appear on an album page later donated to the library of the Suleymaniye Mosque.23 The wording of these verses would certainly seem to fit the circumstance, with its mixture of irony, insult and self-praise:

O [you] who hold [your] head as high as the heavens because of [your] knowledge of calligraphy, know that my being is the earth beneath your feet! If these fresh examples of our script should reach you, do not stick [your] tongue out at them! Beware, [for] they are mixed with venom.

Each letter is a separate sea; like the sea, its lines are waves, and its dots are unblemished pearls.24

Nevertheless, some doubt is cast on the story by the reference to this calligrapher by Ali Efendi, who wrote in the mid-1580s, two hundred years before Mustafı̄zade. For, although Ali Efendi considered Şerbetçi-zade one of the seven great masters of Rum, all he was able to find out about him was that ‘he was from Bursa, but according to some he was from Edirne’.25

As well as the poem supposedly addressed to Şerbetçi-zade, which was written in black naksh in one corner, the album page from the Suleymaniye includes exercises in two sizes of black thulth and a type of muhaqaq in which the letters or words are alternately in black and gold, and there is also a signature in black-and-gold thulth and black naksh. The text in the larger type of thulth almost exactly reproduces that on an album page exhibited commercially in London in 1587, although the letters of the latter are alternately in black and gold.26 The only other script on this page is a signature of ‘Abdallah al-Sayrafi, in a smaller size of black-and-gold thulth.27 This calligrapher flourished in Tabriz circa 1310 to 1344,28 and he was famous for his monumental inscriptions, as well as for his works on paper.29 As such, he served as a model to generations of Ottoman calligraphers in the 15th and 16th centuries, including Qarahisi, and they were proud to trace their artistic lineages back to this pupil of pupils of Yaqut. It was no doubt in this context that Qarahisi came to repeat an exercise that had once been undertaken by al-Sayrafi.

While Şerbetçi-zade may have been a friend, and Shaykh Ishaq was his Sufi master, Qarahisi’s main instructor as a calligrapher was Sayyid Asadallah al-Kirmani, to whom he often referred in his colophons. The colophon in item 27, for example, reads,

Written by the weakest of the weak and the dust on the soles of the indigent and the poor, Ahmad al-Qarahisi, one of the pupils of Sayyid Asadallah al-Kirmani – May God allow him to attain the goal of his desires and to reach the object of his spiritual love!

Asadallah al-Kirmani is a somewhat shadowy figure, who is best known as Qarahisi’s teacher. A copy of the Qur’an signed by him and dated AH 878 (AD 1471 –74) is in the Topkapi Palace Library,30 and two other examples of his work were published by Ekrem Hakki Ayverdi.31 The two exhibit the mixture of scripts that was to characterize the work of his pupil, and one is signed in nasta’î."32


Copied by Asadallah ibn Bayazid al-Sadiq al-Sufi al-Kirmani – May God allow him to attain the goal of his desires!

The parallel with the wording used by Qarahisi in item 27 is striking, and it also suggests that Asadallah shared Qarahisi’s close connection with Sufism. Asadallah is thought to have died in AH 982 (AD 1486),33 and Qarahisi must have received his training as a calligrapher before that date. There is no evidence that Asadallah ever came to Istanbul, and in the period preceding Asadallah’s death Qarahisi’s spiritual master, Shaykh Ishaq, was also resident outside the city, as we have seen. This suggests that Qarahisi did not receive either form of training in the Ottoman capital but spent his formative years in Central Anatolia or even in Azerbaijan; together these regions constituted the heartlands of the Khlawati brotherhood, and they contained...
two great centres of calligraphy, namely, Ottoman Amasya and the Aqşoûnlu capital of Tabriz, while Asadallah's home town of Kirmanshah was nearby. Qarshisari may have gone to Istanbul under Bayezid II, but when this sultan was overthrown in 1512 the Khalwats suffered a fall from grace, and in view of his connections Qarshisari would have been most unlikely to receive commissions from Bayezid's son and successor, Sultan Selim I. But this impediment was removed in 1520, when Selim was succeeded by his son, Sultan Süleyman. The new sultan and his circle did not share his father's hostility to the Khalwats, and one of them, the grand vizier Piri Mehmed Pasha, was the founder of Shaykh Isaq's new tekke in 1521.

The combination of calligrapher and mystic can also be seen in the person of Yahya al-Suli, the earliest Ottoman monumental calligrapher known by name. As Yahya flourished between the 1440s and the beginning of the 1460s, Müstakim-zade's comment that Qarshisari took him 'as his model in thuluth and naşkî calligraphy' cannot be taken as referring to a master–pupil relationship. Yahya has been credited with the foundation inscription of the Üçerefebi Mosque in Edirne and with the lunette inscriptions in green and white stone that grace the exterior of the courtyard of the Fatih Mosque in Istanbul.31 Yahya was succeeded at the Fatih Mosque by his son 'Ali, who executed the three-part foundation inscription of Juma'da 'l-Ukhra 867 (began 21 February 1463), and 'Ali also created the magnificent inscription over the main gate of the Topkapi Palace, which is dated Ramadan 883 (began 20 November 1478). Following the accession of Bayezid II in 1481 the task of designing monumental inscriptions passed to Shaykh Hamdallah, and after the hiatus caused by the reign of Selim I the art form was taken up again by Ahmad al-Qarshisari and his adopted son, Hasan, who together created the inscriptions for the Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul.

After Hasan's time, however, the skills required for the creation of complex monumental inscriptions and of manuscripts such as item 27, in which the calligrapher had to move from one style and size of script to another while maintaining a coherent overall composition, went into abeyance in the Ottoman empire. The type of naşkî Ahmad and his son had practised also disappeared, replaced by that developed by Shaykh Hamdallah a hundred years before. In subsequent centuries scribes trained in the school of the Shaykh made Istanbul the home of the best naşkî calligraphy in the Islamic world, just as the various capitals of Iran were the home of the best nasta'liq (see item 29, for example).

31. Ayvasti 1951, pp.49-50. His other inscriptions at the Fatih Mosque were destroyed in the earthquake of 1765.
The naskh tradition of Shaykh Hamdallah was refined by Hafiz Osman (1642–98) and continued to flourish during the 18th and 19th centuries, when the other arts practised in Istanbul had been remodelled on European lines, as can be seen from the superb illuminated head-pieces in item 33. Two further albums of hawsh fih show the elegant refinement that continued to be achieved in this period. Item 34 was written in Ramadan 1205 (May 1791) by the court calligrapher Isma‘il al-Zuhdi (d. 1806), while item 35 was executed by Muhammad Shafiq in AH 1295 (AD 1878–79). In the 19th century the leading calligraphers were often employed in the expanding bureaucracy, and in 1845 Muhammad Shafiq succeeded his uncle Karagöz Mustafa Izkör Efendi as calligraphy tutor to the Sultan’s brass band. He held the post until his death in 1886, when it passed to his pupil Hasan Rida, the copyist of item 37. This fine Qur’an manuscript was made for Abügâlğa Ağa, the superintendent of the harem of the penultimate Ottoman sultan, Mehmed Reşad (rg. 1909–18), while item 38 was copied for an Egyptian princess by Ahmad Kamil, a retired member of the Ottoman bureaucracy, in AH 1349 (AD 1930–31). Together the two manuscripts show how strong the Ottoman calligraphic tradition remained in the first half of the 20th century.

As we have seen, reliable information on earlier masters is rare, but the life and work of Hasan Rida and Ahmad Kamil (who adopted the surname Akdik in 1935) are relatively well-documented. As Üçer Derman has pointed out,32 Melek Cella’s book on Ahmad Kamil, published in 1938, is the only monograph devoted to a calligrapher during his own lifetime, and in 1916 Ibnülemin Mahmud Kemal Bey (later Mahmud Kemal Inal) was able to obtain short accounts of their own lives directly from the two artists. When these were published in Mahmud Kemal Bey’s biographical dictionary, The Last Calligraphers, in 1955, the author appended to Hasan Rida’s entry a list of works that the calligrapher had provided (it includes item 37). As Hasan Rida was already in his late sixties in 1916, and he died four years later, both the biographical details he supplied and his list of works may be taken as more or less definitive.33 On the other hand, Ahmad Kamil lived on until 1941, but Mahmud Kemal Bey was able to extend the calligrapher’s account on the basis of his own experience,34 and his remarks can be confirmed and supplemented by reference to the writings of Melek Cella and others. The absence of a list of works from Mahmud Kemal Bey’s entry on Ahmad Kamil is made up for by one provided by Melek Cella, which includes item 38.

32. Derman 1971, no. 7, p. 36.
Hasan Rida was born in Uskudar in 1849. His father, Ahmed Nazif Efendi, was attached to the household of the former grand vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa (1800–58), and when Hasan Rida was three years old, the family moved to a house near Reşid Paşa’s mansion in Şehzadebaşı. During the Crimean War Hasan’s father was appointed to the post office opened at Silistra on the Danube, but after the War he returned to Istanbul, where Hasan began his primary education. His first instructor in calligraphy were his school masters, but he also took lessons from Such Hüsrev Efendi in Kemenler, from Yahya Hünфи Efendi, a former clerk in the Ministry of War, and from the Aksaray Türbescü (the pickle-vendor of Aksaray), a student of Hülüs Efendi.

Ahmed Nazif eventually became director of the post office in Trabzon in Bulgaria, the family’s home town, but he later returned to Istanbul, where he died in the cholera epidemic of 1863. Hasan’s future was assured by his father’s brother, Haci Hüseyin Efendi, who was an officer in the household of Pertevnıyal Valide Sultan, the mother of Sultan Abdülmecid. Through her intercession Hasan was enrolled in the M uzika-i Hümayûn, the Sultan’s brass band, where he began to take instruction from the corp’s calligraphy tutor, Muhammad Shaﬁq Bey (see item 35). Through the good offices of Muhammad Shaﬁq, he was also able to profit from a period of tuition by the great master Mustafa İzzet Efendi, and he is said to have studied nasta’liq with Sami Efendi.

In 1871, after the death of the imam of the M uzika-i Hümayûn, Hasan Rida was appointed in his place, and on the retirement of Muhammad Shaﬁq in 1879 he was also given the post of calligraphy tutor to the Muzika. He performed the Ḥajj in the winter of 1876–77. Hasan Rida’s post as calligraphy tutor was eventually abolished, but he was appointed tutor in naskh, thulth, and rayhâni at the School of Calligraphy when it was established in 1914. He died in 1920 and was buried in the Rumelîhisar Cemetery.

The list of work supplied by Hasan Rida to Mahmûd Keman Bey consists of a list of nineteen copies of the Qur’an and references to a number of inscriptions and calligraphic panels he designed for religious monuments. These included the Mosque of the Ka’bah in Medina and the Maqam Ibrahim in Mecca, the Cihangir Mosque in Beyoğlu, the main mosques of Kos and Prishtinë, and the mosque at Sogüt, the Ottomans’ ancestral home in north-west Anatolia. He was responsible, with Haci Nazif Efendi (1846–1913), for the design of a new cloth covering for the Prophet’s cloak, made when the apartments in the Topkapı Palace containing the holy relics were restored, and he also produced the model for the Kütahya tilework inscription recording the completion of the restoration work. In addition, Sultan Mehmed Reşad commissioned an eight-volume copy of the Sahih, al-Bukhari’s great collection of Hadith, from Hasan Rida and the illuminator Ali Nâzîm, to be placed in the same apartments. The manuscript, which is inscribed with a waqf notice dated 7 Rabi‘ al-Akhir 1331 (16 March 1913), contains 1067 pages of text, and its execution must have tested Hasan Rida’s reputation for writing quickly in a fine hand.

Another commission for this Sultan was the great Hilye – a copy of the caliph ‘Ali’s description of the Prophet, arranged within a standardized scheme of panels – that Hasan Rida made for the mosque of Sultan Selim in Istanbul. Mehmed Reşad was also the patron of the first of the nineteen copies of the Qur’an in the calligrapher’s own list of his work. This manuscript is no doubt to be identified with a single-volume copy of the Qur’an in the Topkapı Palace Library (ms. Y. 325), which was copied by Hasan Rida in AH 1330 (AD 1911) and illuminated, and probably bound, by Mısheqedin Efendi. Given its date, this cannot have been the first Qur’an manuscript completed by Hasan Rida, and it was probably given pride of place in the list because of the prestigious nature of a commission from the Sultan. The rest of the entries, however, seem to have been arranged in something approaching chronological order, for the next five were commissioned by Hasan Rida’s relatives or his colleagues in the Muzika, and nos 7–16 and 18 were produced for members of the court, presumably when Hasan Rida had established himself as a calligrapher of distinction. (The details of nos. 17 were omitted in error from the printed text, while no. 19 was not copied as the result of a specific commission.)

The formats of seventeen of the manuscripts are described. Two (nos 3, 4) were copies in thirty volumes. The other fifteen were single-volume copies in one of three sizes: two – those made for Sultan Mehmed Reşad and for Bahşâmbeyinci-zâde Cevat Bey (nos 1, 14) – were prepared in a large format; six were in a small format; and seven were in a format described as vezirî (‘vizirial’). One of these vezirî copies, no. 16, was made for Abdülgani Ağa, Ağa of the Abode of Felicity, that is, the black eunuch who acted as superintendant of the Sultan’s Harrem. This can be identified without difficulty with item 37 below, whose last folio bears a dedication to Abdülgani Ağa and whose dimensions (210 × 135 mm) therefore provide information on

what Hasan Rida meant by a vezir format. This is less than a quarter the size of the large-format Qur’an manuscript copied for Sultan Mehmed Reşad, which measures 488 x 300 mm.

Besides the eight-volume Şebii of al-Bukhari and the copy of the Qur’an, both made for the Sultan, the published examples of Hasan Rida’s work include another copy of the Hīye, dated 1878,8 a kitāb from an album in the Topkapı Palace Library, dated 1887,7 and a copy of the Qur’an left unfinished by Şevki Efendi at his death in the same year and completed by Hasan Rida in 1893.8 The exquisite quality of the hand seen in these published works, as well as in item 37, certainly justify the status Rida Efendi enjoys as the last great master of Ottoman naskh. Indeed, his rendition of this style of script became immensely influential throughout the Islamic world as the result of his undertaking to make the plates for a lithographed edition of the Qur’an, published in Istanbul in AH 1301 (AD 1884). The printing process demonstrated Hasan Rida’s great skill, for it involved copying the text on to a special type of paper using a quick-drying ink. There was no room for error, as he was reproducing the text of the Holy Qur’an, while the nature of the materials meant that there was no possibility of making corrections.9 This edition of the Qur’an has been repeatedly reprinted ever since, its popularity being due to the absolute clarity and completeness of its vowelisation and division into verses.10

A-Haji Ahmad Kamil's account of his own life, as published by Mahmud Kemal Bey, gives summary information about his education, his career in the Ottoman civil service, the recognition he received from his colleagues and his sovereign, and his work. It also includes a number of enlightening comments that make it clear that Ahmad Kamil was a committed artist whose main aim in life was the perfection of his craft and who regarded his career as a bureaucrat merely as a means to this end.

The future Ahmad Kamil was born in the Fındıklı district of Istanbul on 29 November 1861, the son of Haci Sıleyman Efendi, chief clerk of the provisions store in the Imperial Arsenal. The boy received his primary education at the Salîh Sultan School in Çukurçeşme, Zeyrek, and it was there that he first learned to write. He claims that even at this early age he had developed a profound interest in the art of calligraphy and devoted all his free time to it.

Ahmad Kamil received his primary certificate in 1872 and then proceeded to the Rüşdüye (High School) in Fatih, where he completed his formal education. In 1880 he became a trainee clerk in the accounts office of the Ministry of the Interior; it was at this time that he adopted the second name, or makhlas, Kamil. At the same time he was able to develop his calligraphic skills as a pupil of Sami Efendi (1857–1912), who had become calligraphy tutor to the Imperial Divan in 1878. In 1884 Sami Efendi and another great master of the period, Sevki Efendi (1829–87), granted Ahmad Kamil an iṣnad namâne for the thuluth and naskh scripts, and these ‘diplomas’ occur at the foot of a Hâlîye by Ahmad Kamil, now preserved in an album in the Topkapı Palace Museum. At some point after this Sami Efendi asked his pupil to change his second name from Kamil to Hashim, with the result that some of his work from the mid-1880s is signed Ahmad Hashim. Later, however, he changed his name back to Kamil.

In 1894 Ahmad Kamil was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Office of Important Affairs (Mühimmâ Kâlemi), one of the bureaux of the Imperial Divan. A year later he was appointed nahiencilik, a post in the same bureau that involved writing the official correspondence of the Sultan with foreign powers. The political events of 1908-9, which led to the re-establishment of constitutional rule in Turkey and the deposition of Sultan

1. MS.O.Y. 324; see Demir 1971, p. 37.
2. Demir 1971, p. 37. ‘Ahmed Hashim’ was recorded by Mahmud Kemal Bey as a separate calligrapher (final 1955, p. 130).
Abdülmecit II, brought about a considerable reorganization of the functions of the state, and Ahmad Kamal's activities as nhime-i nişiş were subsequently confined to writing two letters at the time of the Hajj each year to the amir of Mecca, one in Turkish, the other in Arabic. At the same time, however, his former master Sami Efendi retired from his post as supervisor in the Decorations Office (Nişan Kalemi), another bureau of the Imperial Divan, and calligraphy tutor to the Imperial Divan, and Ahmad Kamal succeeded him in both.

Now in his fifties, Ahmad Kamal had established himself as the foremost calligrapher of his generation, and this was recognized when, on 23 Rabi' al-Awwal 1333 (10 February 1915), he received the Arabic title of Râ't al-Khattâtîn, or Chief Calligrapher, he was the last person to hold this title. By this time he had risen to grade 1, class 2, within the Ottoman bureaucratic hierarchy, and the Sultan had rewarded his 'skill and ability' with the Osmanî and Meçidî orders, 3rd class.

By this point in his career Ahmad Kamal had copied only excerpts from the Qur'anic text, as well as a number of Hîlîyes, albums and calligraphic specimens (let'û). A much larger proportion of his work consisted of imperial correspondence and other official documents. His own preference is made clear, for he says that 'if it had not been for the inconvenience of working for a living, and if it had been possible to get by solely by working as a calligrapher, ... over a period of forty years it would have been possible to produce hundreds of copies of the Qur'an and other rare works'. Indeed, for Ahmad Kamal calligraphy was so absorbing 'that a man may not describe this passion any more than he may describe his heart.'

He also remarked that the calligrapher's first task was 'to study and copy the work of his predecessors'. In his own efforts to achieve perfection, he had striven day and night, sparing nothing in the process, so that the expenses he had incurred were equivalent to almost half the pay he had received. Even so, he considered he was only half-way to his goal, although he was now 55 years old: only a full 100 years devoted to calligraphy would allow one to reach perfection, and that was in God's hands. In fact, Ahmad Kamal was to live into his 80s, dying in 1941, and he remained active to the end. Mahmud Kemal Bey remarked on the robust health the calligrapher enjoyed even in old age, when 'he walked without a stick and wrote without spectacles. His hand did not tremble, and he did not tire, no matter how much he wrote.' Item 38 below, completed at a time when Ahmad Kamal

3. Pakaln 1983, s.v. 'Nîme-i nişiş'. On the posts occupied by Ahmad Kamal, see also Finlay 1980.

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was entering on his seventh decade, it proved of the excellence he was able to achieve in his later years.

The rise to power of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha in the years 1919–24 and the establishment of the Turkish Republic brought about the dissolution of the Ottoman bureaucracy, which had provided Ahmad Kamil with his livelihood. As a result he had to quit his employment at the Sublime Porte, but he continued teaching. He had given instruction in thuluth and naskh at the School of Calligraphy since it was founded in 1914 and at the Galatasaray Lyceum since 1918. In 1928, however, a fatal disaster overcame Turkish calligraphy, when Mustafa Kemal replaced the Arabic script with a version of the Latin alphabet as part of a deliberate process of Westernization. As a result the School of Calligraphy was closed, but it subsequently reopened as the School of Oriental Decorative Arts, with Ahmad Kamil on its staff, and in 1936 it was incorporated in the Academy of Fine Arts (now Mimar Sinan University).  

The world to which Ahmad Kamil’s skills belonged dissolved with the reforms of Mustafa Kemal, and he and his colleagues were marginalized; they were the practitioners of an art form from the past whose inspiration was profoundly religious, but they lived in an increasingly secular society that had turned its attention towards relentless modernism. In other parts of the former empire, however, the great Ottoman tradition still had its admirers. The most prestigious source of patronage for calligraphers such as Ahmad Kamil was now members of the ruling family of Egypt, who were Ottoman by descent and culture. One of these patrons was Princess Ziba, the daughter of Hasan Pasha and granddaughter of the khedive Isma‘il. According to the list of Ahmad Kamil’s works published by Melek Celîl (entry no. 22), in 1928 she owned a copy of the Qur’an, separate copies of the surah al-An‘âm and Ayat al-Kurîs, and ten suras. The Qur’an manuscript was the only complete copy of the holy text that Ahmad Kamil ever made, while the An‘âm is no doubt item 38, which was copied for her in AH 1349 (AD 1930–31).

In 1933 Ahmad Kamil went to Egypt at the invitation of another member of the Egyptian royal family, Prince Muhammad ‘Alî, who had commissioned from him the inscriptions for the mosque he had built to one side of his residence in Cairo. Unfortunately, his work in Egypt suffered from attacks by his detractors at home. Some time later, when Mahmud Kemal Bey was paying a short visit to Egypt on his way to the Hijaz, he was shown the inscriptions by the Prince, who told him that he had received letters from

5. These are illustrated in Celîl 1938.
Istanbul telling him that Ahmad Kamil had not composed the inscriptions himself but had 'copied' them from a variety of sources. The Prince was annoyed and had held back the last installment of the calligrapher's fee. But Mahmud Kemal was able to explain to him that 'copying' (naplı) was a respectable practice even for a calligrapher of Ahmad Kamil's status, and the Prince dispatched the outstanding payment.

On the other side of his residence Prince Muhammad 'Ali built a museum on the model of the Evkaf Museum, now the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, in Istanbul. In 1940 the Prince invited Mahmud Kemal Bey, who had been one of the founders of the Istanbul museum, to Cairo, to study and catalogue the calligraphic specimens he intended to place in this museum, and Ahmad Kamil went with him. Towards the end of their stay Ahmad Kamil developed a throat ailment, which continued to afflict him after their return to Istanbul. He died in his house in the Fatih district of the city on 23 July 1941 and was buried in the cemetery on the Behariye Hill in Eyüp, in a spot which Süheyl Ünver described as having one of the finest views of Istanbul. His tombstone is by his son, the painter Şerif Akkik.

Besides his own work, Ahmad Kamil left a collection of calligraphy by earlier masters, which passed to the Topkapi Palace Museum. He had used the pieces he collected as models for improving his own work, describing them as 'his second master' after Sami Efendi. Mahmud Kemal Bey described how, if a piece by a famous calligrapher came into his possession, 'he would become as happy as if he had found a buried treasure'. One day he saw Ahmad Kamil near the Nurúsmaniye Mosque in Istanbul. The calligrapher had something clapped to his breast, and he was hurrying along as though someone was pursuing him. A few days later the two met, and Mahmud Kemal Bey asked him what he had been doing. It turned out that Ahmad Kamil had found an album by Shaykh Hamdullah in the part of the Bazaar devoted to second-hand books and had managed to buy it at a low price. He was extremely pleased with his purchase and was slipping away as quickly as possible; he was afraid that if he showed his pleasure by smiling the vendor would demand the album back!

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7. Ünver 1954.
8. For examples, see Coll 1938; Ünver 1954; İnal 1955, pp. 172–73; Derani 1971; Derani 1984, nos. 44, 65; İnal 1955, p. 44.
لا يوجد نص قابل للقراءة在这种情况下。
A single leaf from a copy of the Qur'an on vellum, bearing verses 4-19 of surah xxvii (al-Naml, 'The ant'). The leaf measures 189 × 250 mm, and there are seventeen lines of text on each page. The script, written in brown ink, shows many similarities with the hand that François Déroche used to define his style C.18, not least the triangular endings to letters such as final م and ﻝ (cf. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. arabe 3348; Déroche 1983, no. 51). On this basis the present leaf may be tentatively dated to the 8th century AD.

The end of a verse is occasionally marked by two oblique strokes, one above the other, and at some stage symbols marking the end of groups of five verses (a letter ﱪ in green) and ten verses (a roughly drawn red disc outlined in ink) were added, as was a relatively complex system of reading marks. The latter includes red dots for vowels and a range of marks in green: a segment of a circle placed around the relevant vowel point to mark hamza at qaf', a line between two words where wajd takes place; a small alif to mark alif maghrib and scriptio defectiva of /ā/; and a version of the modern marks for sukun and shadda.

A single leaf from a remarkably large copy of the Qur'an on vellum. It measures no less than 450 × 353 mm, and the manuscript from which it came must therefore have been one of the largest copies of the Qur'an made in the early centuries of Islam. Its dimensions come about half-way between those of the famous Blue Qur'an, which must have measured at least 310 × 410 mm in its original form (see above, p. 8), and those of a copy in Kufic preserved in Tashkent, which measures 530 × 680 mm (al-Munajjid 1972, p. 59).

There are 18 lines on each page, and the text, which is written in mid-brown ink, consists of the end of surah xvi (Bani Isra'il, 'The children of Israel'; verses 103-111) and the beginning of surah xviii (al-Kahf, 'The cave'; to verse 21). At some point in the early history of the manuscript another scribe went through it, adding reading marks according to the same system as item 1 but in red ink. Using red ink, the same scribe also added a heading at the beginning of surah xixi and corrected the text at a number of points.

On the recto the words wa-hi-ll-haqqi inzalahih have been scored through in line 2 because they have been repeated in error, while on the verso the word nabbiy had been added in line 7. In addition, on the end of line 11 and the first half of line 12 on the verso have been scraped off and scored through, and the correct text has been inserted above the line. The emendations were made in an untidy copyhand, and it is clear from this that the person who added the reading marks and corrected the text was not a calligrapher: he was presumably an expert in Qur'an recitation.

The original text appears to have been copied quickly by a scribe with a sure knowledge of the script he was employing, for the path of the pen can be followed with ease. A notable mannerism is that when a final letter ended with a stroke to the left the scribe often turned his pen to produce a thin tail. The letter forms are close to those of François Déroche's c. and d groups (compare especially style c.1a and the reduced versions of style d). The presentation of the text on this leaf is archaic. There are no diacritical dots, and there was no vocalization until it was added at a later date. There was no punctuation between the verses, except for a single dot at the end of surah xvii, verse 10, around which the corrector scrawled a red circle. And the end of surah xvii was marked only by leaving the remainder of line 9 and the whole of line 10 blank (the corrector used this space to add the title for surah xviii: al-Kahf; māt ʾayāh wa-khams ʾayāt, 'The cave; 105 verses'). Taken together with the character of the script employed, this indicates that the manuscript was produced in the second or perhaps the third century of the Islamic era (8th or 9th century AD).

Two leaves from a copy of the Qur'an on vellum. Each page has sixteen lines to the page, written in brown ink and with red dots marking the vowels. The script is in a style that François Déroche (1992, no. 15) has described as 'close to c.1'. He therefore dated the manuscript from which these leaves came to the 9th century AD. But, when material from the same source were offered for sale at Christie's in London on 18 October 1994 (lot 37), they were dated to the 8th century AD on the basis of the decoration.

In the first of the two leaves measures 202 × 294 mm and contains part of surah vi (al-An'am, 'The cattle'), verses 93-107, according to the modern standard edition of the Qur'an, but verses 94-108 according to the verse count employed by the copyst. The second leaf measures 210 × 294 mm, and the text consists of verses 21-37 of surah xxx (al-Ra'm, 'The Romans'). Most verses are punctuated by a group of three oblique strokes, but fifth and tenth verses are marked by more elaborate devices. On the first leaf, for
example, verses 95 and 105 are followed by a letter alif in red, and verse 100 by an ornament composed of four linked circles arranged in a square and superimposed on a lozenge, which was executed in red, brown and ink. As a space was left for this marker, it is probably contemporary with the copying of the manuscript, and the lack of gold also suggests an early date.

Item 4

Two folios from a copy of the Qur’an on vellum. The text was written in brown ink, in a fine 9th-century Qur’anic hand of the type that François Déroche has classified as n.1. There are only seven lines to the page, although the folios are larger than usual, measuring 241 × 330 mm. The margins around the text area are wide (about 45 mm at the top and bottom and between 60 and 70 mm on the outer side), and the overall effect is one of spaciousness and calm. An unhurried note is also evident in the extensive use of mashq, that is, the exaggerated elongation of certain letters and ligatures. The letter dâd is always rather elongated in Kufic scripts, but in the word diya’an in line 5, for example, it is no less than 177 mm long, while the final yâ of alladhi in the line above is 130 mm long, and the kâf of yakiffarsâs in the line above that is 90 mm long.

Despite the radical manipulation of the length of the groups of letters, there is remarkable regularity in the spacing between them, such that no extra emphasis has been given to the breaks between words or even between verses. Both leaves bear parts of surah x (Yusûs, ‘Joseph’), viz. verses 4–6 and 21–32, and the ends of the verses are marked by a group of six dots arranged as a triangular ‘caim’. This motif was executed in gold with outlines and central points in ink and was inserted into a space that was roughly the same as that between any two other groups of letters, ranging between 11 and 18 mm but averaging out at about 16 mm. The same goes for the special marker placed after surah x, verse 5, which consists of a gold letter lâ outlined in ink. The vowels are indicated by red dots, and some diacritical strokes have been added in green and red paint.

Item 5

A single leaf from a copy of the Qur’an on vellum. It measures 200 × 288 mm and contains verses 84–87 of surah xv (al-Hijr, ‘The rocky tract’), written in five lines, in a script very close to François Déroche’s style n.1. The leaf may therefore be dated to the 9th century AD.

The end of each verse is marked by a motif in the shape of a tear drop, executed in ink and gold, except in the case of verse 85, which is followed by a larger circular device containing the word khaums (‘fifty’) in gold Kufic on a red ground.

Item 6

A single leaf from a copy of the Qur’an on vellum, containing verses 52–54 of surah xxii (al-Hajj, ‘The pilgrimage’). Each page measures 140 × 200 mm and has five lines of text, written in dark-brown ink, in the n.1 script. As in the case of item 5, the version of n.1 employed here is slightly reduced in height as compared to that used for item 4; the independent form of alif ranges in height between 18 and 23 mm, whereas it occasionally reaches 26 mm in item 4. At the same time, the use of mashq is more moderate: the dâd in the word al-zâlimas on the verso is a mere 15 mm long, while the yâ in al-shaytan on the recto is 39 mm in length, and the dâd in maradn on the verso has been stretched horizontally to 50 mm.

The end of the first verse is marked by a gold rosette, while the end of the second verse falls at the end of a line, and a polychrome roundel has been placed in the margin at the beginning of the next line; it contains the word khaums (‘fifty’), written in gold on a red ground. This shows that, although the verses on this leaf are numbered 52–54 in modern editions of the text, they were numbered 49–51 in the verse count in use when the verse markers were executed.

Item 7

A single leaf from a copy of the Qur’an on vellum. The folio measures 187 × 256 mm and bears the end of surah xviii (al-Kahf, ‘The cave’), viz. verses 95–110. The text, which is arranged in fifteen lines to the page was written in ink that is now brown in colour, in a Qur’anic hand of a type that François
Déroche has classified as a 'reduced version of D.I.' The leaf can therefore be dated to the 9th century AD.

The manuscript from which this leaf came appears to have undergone modifications in line with later practice. Originally it seems to have lacked surah headings, and the heading of surah xix at the bottom of the verso of this leaf is probably a later addition. Not only does the heading, written in gold Kufic and outlined in ink, form an anomalous sixteenth line on this page, but it breaks the regularity of the outer margins, which are otherwise all 33 mm deep. The surah in question is now usually called Maryam, or 'Mary', but here it is identified by an alternative title, which consists of the group of five letters with which it starts (ٱٰٯٮٯ). The verse markers are restricted to a gold letter 'ha' after each fifth verse and a complex circular device after each tenth verse; this was first executed in ink but was then obscured by boldly applied red and green dots and gilding. The vowels are indicated by red dots, and there are traces of green and yellow paint, but these do not seem to be part of reading marks, and they may have offset from adjacent material during the long period of storage. This leaf comes from the same copy of the Qur’an as a folio in the Khalili Collection (Déroche 1992, no.23). Although the Khalili example is in very poor condition, and only fourteen lines survive because of the loss of the bottom and right-hand side of the leaf, the script in both is very close, to the extent that a number of mannerisms are repeated, and the verse markers for groups of five verses are identical.

Item 9

A single leaf from a copy of the Qur’an on vellum, bearing verses 108–11 of surah iv (al-Nisa’, ‘The women’). Each page has six lines of text, written in brown ink. The diacritical strokes, also in brown ink, are a later addition, and the vocalization is shown by a system of red dots. The individual verses are not marked, but the end of verse 110 on the verso is indicated by a polychrome device, which appears to contain the letter ‘ayn.

The script of this folio is remarkably close to the hand that François Déroche used to define his style D.II (cf. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. arabe 3496; Déroche 1983, no.114). The same scholar has identified other material from the same copy of the Qur’an in Copenhagen, Istanbul and London (Déroche 1992, no.24), but, although this leaf also has six lines to the page, it is much smaller (only 120 × 180 mm, as opposed to 211 × 268 mm).

Item 10

Two bifoliums and three single leaves from a Qur’an manuscript on vellum. Each leaf measures 134 × 200 mm, and there are seven lines to the page. The text was written in brown ink, in a 9th- or 10th-century Qur’anic script very close to those classified by François Déroche as D.II and D.III. The letter forms are clearly articulated, and the text gives an overall impression of great regularity. This is partly because the calligrapher used dashes to make up short lines rather than 'stretching' the letters to fill the line, as is the case in items 4–6, for example.

Each of the three single leaves has a guard, the narrow extension on the inside edge that allowed the leaf to be sewn into the manuscript. This shows that these leaves are not detached halves of bifolia but were part of quires made up of a mixture of bifolia and pairs of single leaves. An initial impression is that, as in item 11, these quires were quarterions consisting of two bifolia enclosing two pairs of single folios enclosing a bifolium. One of the single leaves bears verses 52–55 of surah vi (al-An’âm, ‘The cattle’). The other two are inscribed with parts of surah xxxiv (Sahih, ‘Sheba’); the basmalah and verses 1–3 appear on first, and verses 13–15 on the second. One bifolium contains verses 42–45 and 58–62 of surah xli (al-Mu‘min, ‘The believer’), while the other contains verses 7–11 of surah lxiii (al-Jum‘ah, ‘The assembly’) and the heading of surah lxiii (al-Munafiqun, ‘The hypocrites’), written in gold Kufic and outlined in ink, with a gold palmette in the margin.
Each verse is punctuated by a rosette drawn in ink and enhanced with gold and coloured dots. The ends of surah x, verse 61 (here counted as verse 60), and surah lxii, verse 10, are marked by a small illuminated medallion in the margin, inscribed in gold Kufic with the words šiḫūn (‘sixty’) and Šáhr (‘ten’) respectively. There is a larger medallion, executed in gold, sepia and blue and with a rosette at its centre, in the left-hand margin of the first page of the bifolium from surah xi. The vocalization is indicated by a system of red dots, while green, blue and yellow dots were occasionally employed to indicate other features of pronunciation.

Item 11

A bifolium and two single leaves with guards from the ‘Five-line Gold Qur’an’, a copy of the Qur’an on vellum, each page of which is inscribed with five lines of gold Kufic. Each folio measures 145 × 209 mm. The bifolium contains verses 73–75 and 93–94 of surah x (Yūsūs, ‘Jonah’). As the text between verse 73 and verse 93 would fill about six leaves of this Qur’an, and, as examination of thirteen leaves from juz’ 28 of this Qur’an (Christie’s, London, 9 October 1990, lot 45) suggests that the leaves were arranged in quaternions (quires of ten folios), as was standard in Kufic Qur’an manuscripts, it appears that the bifolium was the outermost element but one of a quaternion. The two single leaves bear verses 32–42 of surah xv (al-Hijr, ‘The rocky tract’), and, as the text is continuous, the two leaves must have been bound next to one another in the same quire. This confirms the evidence of the thirteen leaves already referred to, that at least some quaternions consisted of two bifolia enclosing two pairs of single folios with guards enclosing a central bifolium.

As discussed above, the script of this manuscript has previously been classified as François Déroche’s D.I., but the evidence of item 11 indicates that, although the general proportions and letter forms are in line with François Déroche’s style D.I., the script is actually a hybrid that contains elements of other D styles, most notably the modes Déroche has termed D.I. and D.IV. The manuscript may therefore be dated to the 9th or 10th century AD.

The red dots used for the vocalization of many early Kufic Qur’ans are supplemented here by blue dots representing vowels after doubled consonants and green dots representing vowels after glottal stops (hamzat al-qiy’). The same colours, together with gold and sepia, were used for the ornamental devices marking the ends of verses. The usual form is a rosette with nine gold petals, surrounded by a blue circle, but the ends of verses 35 and 40 of surah xv are marked by a polychrome roundel. In the first case it consists of the word khams (‘five’), written in gold on a blue ground and set within a fill of gold petals, while the second has the word arba’ān (‘forty’) written in gold on a brown ground and framed by a similar device.

Item 12

A bifolium from the famous Blue Qur’an, written in gold Kufic on vellum dyed dark-blue with indigo. The two folios each measure 286 × 183 mm, and there are fifteen lines of text to the page, each group of letters being written in gold and outlined in reddish-brown ink. There are occasional diacritical strokes, but no vocalization. A ruled grid, measuring 281 × 192 mm, acted as guide to the抄写者. As discussed above, the script of this manuscript has been classified by Jonathan M. Bloom and François Déroche as style D.IV, and its production may be attributed to Hifjyyah or Spain in the 10th century AD.

The text consists of verses 3–10 and 28–31 of surah xiii (al-Ra’d, ‘The thunder’). The intervening text is sufficient to fill two leaves, and so item 12 must have formed the central bifolium but one of a quire. The manuscript was bound in seven sections, and this part of surah xiii would have come near the end of the third section.

The verses are punctuated by silver rosettes. At the end of groups of ten verses the rosette is replaced by a device containing an abjad numeral. The division of the text into verses differs from that in general use today, so that the device at the end of verse 9 contains the letter ẓay, representing ‘ten’, while that at the end of verse 26 contains a symbol for ‘thirty’. The first device was executed in gold, green, red and perhaps blue, and the second in gold and silver, the latter now tarnished to black. Both devices are accompanied in the margin by a larger ornamental roundel (diameter approximately 40 mm), with the number of verses written out in the centre: ‘laḥab ẓay’, written in gold on silver, in the first, and thuluth, written in silver on gold, in the second. These roundels are also tarnished, but their condition is superior to that of other published examples.
Item 13

A single leaf from the Blue Qur’an. It is inscribed with the kufic and verses 1–14 of surah xxi (al-Kahf, “The cave”). Its most significant feature is the inscription in silver Kufic, which was added in the left-hand margin of the recto, adjacent to lines 1–3. This gives the name of the surah and the number of verses (111), and, as has been argued above, its presence on this leaf is important evidence that the Blue Qur’an is the manuscript referred to in the inventory of the Great Mosque of al-Qayrawan, drawn up in AD 1294.

The leaf is between 401 mm wide and 299 mm and 333 mm high, and it has the standard features of other material from this manuscript, including the grid of lines within which the fifteen lines of text were arranged, the style of script, the colour of the vellum, and the use of gold and a sepia outline for the lettering.

Item 14

A single leaf from the Blue Qur’an, with text on the recto and a full-page illumination on the verso. The Blue Qur’an was bound in sevenths, and this leaf is from the end of the first seventh, al-sub’ al-mdwld. As discussed above, this was probably meant to end with the last word of verse 61 of surah iv (al-An’âm, “The cattle”), but the text on the recto actually runs from verse 59 to the first word of verse 62. Nevertheless, the design on the verso must be all or part of the finispiece of this volume, and it is the first published example of full-page illumination from the Blue Qur’an.

The leaf, which measures 272 x 368 mm, has been dyed dark-blue on both sides. The text on the recto is presented in the same manner as in items 12 and 13. The ends of verses 59 and 60 are marked by silver rosettes, while verse 61 is followed by a device marking the end of a sixteenth verse. This consists of a gold letter sâd framed by a small medallion, and it is accompanied in the margin by a larger circular device, which has now tarnished to a black disc. Examination under ultraviolet light has revealed that the marginal device is of the same type as those that appear in the margins of item 12, and that it contains the word sittim (‘sixty’).

As Jonathan M. Bloom has pointed out, the use of the letter sâd for the number sixty was a feature of the abjad system employed in the Maghrib, and the manuscript from which this leaf came may therefore be attributed to that region. Bloom concluded that the Blue Qur’an was produced in Fatimid

[Note: The text continues with information about the illumination and full-page design, but is cut off at this point.]

Ifriqiyyah in the 10th century AD, but further evidence has been adduced above to support an attribution to Umayyad Spain in the same period.

The illumination on the verso consists of a large rectangular panel (159 x 290 mm), with a large palmette in the outer margin. The palmette is a relatively loose composition, in which tendrils and small, stylized plant-based motifs are combined, and in terms of its components and its structure, it is comparable with the only other published example of a marginal palmette from the Blue Qur’an (Lings & Safadi, no. 11; Paris 1982, no. 350). The main panel has a gold ground, and the design, which was executed in brown, consists of a central field (84 x 178 mm) surrounded by a triple border, each element being separated from the next by a plain gold band. The centre is filled with a pattern of diagonal interlace, in the manner of wickerwork, while the innermost register of the border, the widest of the three, contains a continuous pattern of scrolling stems, each of which ends in a large, fleshy leaf. In the middle register there are two bands of interlace, one rounded and one angular, and the outermost register is filled with an undulating stem between reciprocating leaf motifs.

As discussed above, examination under ultraviolet light has shown that the illuminated panel was applied over the top of a complete page of text (sura ii, verses 62–63). This was either the result of an error by the copyist, or of a change in plan that led to the manuscript being bound in sevenths: as the text on the verso more or less coincided with the end of the first sub’, the text on the verso was overlaid with the concluding illumination.

Item 15

A single leaf from a copy of the Qur’an on vellum. The text consists of verses 186–90 of surah xlii (Al Imran, ‘The family of ’Imran’) and was written in 11 lines. The script is one of the later versions of the naskh script, with many similarities to Déroche’s style xvi, and the leaf can therefore be dated to the 10th century AD. Like some examples of naskh, such as Ms. arabe 342a in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Déroche 1981, no. 158), the pages are in the vertical format, measuring 218 x 170 mm. In other respects, too, this leaf is close to Eastern Kufic material (see items 16 and 17 below): the diacritics are given in full, in the form of ink strokes; and the reading marks are given according to the system attributed to al-Farahib. The differences in shape between the marks were reinforced by the use of colour coding: vowel signs and shaddah in green, hamza at-qiy’ is in red, hamza at-tashid in blue.
A leaf from a copy of the Qur'an on paper written in an 'Eastern Kufic' hand (a version of Déroche's n.16). The text it bears is verses 35-50 of surah xxiv (al-Nur, 'The light'); as the other published leaves from this manuscript also contain excerpts from this surah or from surah xxiii (see Déroche 1992, no.92), it is possible that they all come from part 28 of a copy of the Qur'an in thirty sections, which would have contained surahs xxiii-xxv. This material has been dated to the 12th century (Déroche 1992, loc.cit.), but a Qur'anic manuscript in a very similar hand, preserved in the library of the Aṣṭān-i Quds-i Rāzavi in Mashhad (Ms.84; Mszumi 1347, no.45; Lings 1976, no.21), has a colophon that gives the name of the calligrapher, Abū ʿl-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad, and the date, mid-Ramadan 620 (October 1223). A dating to the early 13th century for this material is therefore not out of the question.

The leaf, which measures 354 × 303 mm, is of buff paper, and there are fifteen lines of text to the page. The letter forms and the diacritic dots that distinguish letters of the same shape were written in black ink. The vocalization and the signs for unwelowered and geminated consonants (ṣuqūn, shaddah) and for the two types of hamzah were also written in black ink and have the shapes supposedly devised for them by al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī. A third level of symbols, those representing the phrasing to be employed in reciting the Qur'an aloud (taṣwīd), are shown in red and have forms that resemble musical notation.

Relatively large spaces were left by the抄写者 after verses 35, 40 and 45, and those after verses 35 and 45 are filled by a gilt device with a pointed oval outline, and that after verse 40 by a gilt roundel (Déroche's 3.4.ii). The smaller space left after verse 36 contains a group of four red dots, while those after verses 38, 39, 41, 42, 44 and 46–48 contain a small circle in red that appears to be related to the ṭaṣwīd notation. No space was left after verses 37, 43 and 49, and the small circle was placed above the end of the verse. The same variations appear on the other material from this manuscript.
approximately 30 mm, and there are vertical rulings running the full height of the text area, at either end of the lines. The general characteristics of the material suggest a dating to the 13th century AD.

Two of the leaves bear a continuous text, which consists of the last three verses of surah l.xxvi (al-Dahr, ‘Time’), and the title and first fifteen verses of surah l.xxxvii (al-Mursalat, ‘Those sent forth’). The single leaf bears the last three verses of surah lxxii (al-Layl, ‘The night’) and the heading and first nine verses of surah lxxiii (al-Duha, ‘The morning light’). The two surah headings are in a decorative form of Kufic and were executed in gold and outlined in ink. In the left-hand margin beside each heading there is an elaborate ornament of circular form, painted in gold, red and blue. The heading of surah l.xxxvii fills a whole line and includes the name of the surah (here given in the form Sūrah Wa-l-mursalāt), the number of verses (fifty) and the place of revelation (Mecca). The heading of surah l.xxxii, however, occupies only part of a line, for the last word of surah l.xxxi (yrihūt) has been placed in the centre of the line, and the abbreviated text of the heading (Wa-l-duhā, ashad ‘ahār dybi) has been fitted round it.

Gold, red and blue were also used for the rest of the illumination, which consists of the devices that mark the end of each verse and related marginal ornaments. In most cases the verse markers take the form of a triple-lobed knot, but groups of ten verses are followed by a rosette, with a large roundel in the outer margin of the page. This contains an eccentric disc with the word ‘ashr (‘ten’) written in white Kufic. Groups of five verses, on the other hand, conclude with a crested roundel whose form was derived from the independent form of ‘ad, the letter that represents five in the abjad system. Another, larger stylized ‘ad was placed in the left-hand margin and has the word ‘khamis (‘five’), in gold Kufic, at its centre. The extensive reading marks are mostly in red, but shaddah and sukān are indicated by symbols in blue, and the two types of hamza by large yellow and large green dots.

Item 19

A fine copy of the Qurʾan in two volumes, bound as one, produced in Almohadi Spain or North-west Africa by a scribe employing the reduced Maghribi script known as Andalusi. It displays all the features associated with a number of dated Qurʾan manuscripts in the Andalusi script that were produced in this region in the 12th and 13th centuries AD (see above, The Maghribi School). In addition to the script itself, these features include the use of vellum, the almost-square page format, the style of illumination, the ruling of the text area and the distinctive system of reading marks.

In all there are 188 leaves of vellum (187 × 170 mm). The first volume consists of fourteen gatherings of six leaves and one gathering of eight leaves (92 leaves in all), and the second volume is made up of sixteen gatherings of six leaves (96 leaves in all). In both cases the fourth and eleventh gatherings consist of two bifolia followed by two single leaves attached by guard strips, and the last gathering of the first volume is made up of three bifolia followed by two single leaves attached in the same manner. The remaining gatherings consist of three bifolia. Each page bears 21 lines of script, written in brown ink within a text area (115 × 108 mm) ruled in the same manner as item 18. A horizontal line has been scored for each line of text, and there is a vertical line on either side. The reading marks follow the standard Maghribi system, also employed in item 18, except in one respect, for the elision of an initial vowel (hamza at-waṣīt) is not marked by a green dot. However, this symbol is also omitted in other copies of the Qurʾan in the reduced Andalusi script, including one copied in Seville in 1226 (Granada & New York 1992, no.86).

Both volumes begin with a double-page frontispiece. The panel on each page is square but has been extended top and bottom by a narrow band of gold pearls so that they match the format of the page. The main motif consists of a geometric design in white strapwork. On folios 1b and 2a this consists principally of twelve intersecting circles attached to a double square frame, with triangles of gold interlace between. The compartments formed by these designs are filled with palmette-based motifs in gold or silver on brown, black and blue grounds, sometimes enhanced with black and white dots. The whole is surrounded by a band of gold interlace and then by a band of blue set with silver dots, which are now so tarnished they have all but disappeared. On folios 3b and 4a the central motif is based on a six-pointed star, intersecting with two circular devices, one cusped and one lobed, and framed by a single white band. The fill includes designs executed in black on gold and white on red.

The surah titles on the first page of text of the first and second volumes — those of surahs 1, 6 and 23 — are set within illuminated panels of varied character. In the case of surahs 1 and 23 the title was written in black donāth on a gold ground, while that of surah 6 was written in a stylized form of Kufic, in gold on red. These headings, and those of other surahs, which were also written in gold Kufic but without the illuminated panels, are accompanied by a large circular device in the adjacent margin. These were executed primarily in gold and blue on a natural ground and consist of a
variety of 'tree' motifs, which are composed of rotating stems, leaves and palmette elements, all enclosed by a looped blue fillet. Similar devices with a gold ground accompany the main illuminated elements in the manuscript.

Decoration similar to that of the frontispieces occurs at the end of both volumes. On folio 92a the end of surah xviii is set within an illuminated frame that combines rows of gold palmettes and white strapwork, and an inscription marking the end of the first half of the text, written in black thuluth on gold, runs above and below the text. On folios 187b and 188a the short text of surah cxiv, again written in black thuluth on gold, occupies the centre of two illuminated panels.

Individual verses are punctuated by a group of three gold dots, arranged in a 'caim', while every fifth verse is marked by a gold pyriform motif derived from the letter hā', and every tenth verse by a gold disc or rosette. These last are accompanied in the margin by a circular device with a segmented gold border and the word 'sahir ('ten') written in white Kufic on the blue or red centre. There are many other fine marginal devices of circular, sub-triangular, rectangular, arched and other forms that mark the division of the Qur'anic text into sixties, thritieths, tenths, eighths, sevenths and other fractions. The binding, of dark-brown morocco, is restored. It is decorated in the Ottoman manner and may date from the late 16th century or the 17th. The outer covers have narrow tooled borders and recessed centre-pieces, with idealized floral motifs in the zig style reserved against a gilt ground. The doubleves are of plain morocco.

**Item 20**

A miniature copy of the Qur'an from the Maghribi, probably late 16th-century. The manuscript contains 190 leaves of a polished European laid paper, each measuring 16 x 58 mm. It opens with a double-page illuminated frontispiece, which consists of a pair of square panels with half-medallions attached to the outside edges. Executed in gold, red and blue, the panels contain a 'saltire' design in strapwork. The four arms of the 'saltire' are filled with arabesque elements, and a pattern of arabesque also fills the two half-medallions. Marginal medallions containing ornament of the same type accompany the surah headings on the first page of text. These headings were written in ornamental gold Kufic on grounds of red and blue, set with fragments of arabesque in white.

The text is arranged in nineteen lines, within a framework of double red and single blue rules (35 x 34 mm). It is written in a minute Maghribi script, in brown ink, while the surah headings are in gold. At the end of the manuscript, below the last half-page of text, there is a panel illuminated in the same manner as the headings of the opening surahs; the inscription it contains reads, hamma al-mushaf al-muhdan bi-hand Allah ta'allā ('The blessed mushaf was completed in praise of God – May He be exalted!'). The page opposite has a spray of stylized flowers in the Ottoman manner, executed in gold on a plain ground and surrounded by a gold frame.

Most of the illumination is in the Maghribi tradition and can be attributed to the Sa'di period (1521–1569), since the illuminated headings are in ornamental Kufic rather than the regional variant of thuluth employed in later times (cf. Lévi-Provençal & Dérèbourg, pl.i). By contrast, the floral spray on the last page derives from Ottoman illumination of the second half of the 16th century, which was introduced to Morocco under the Sa'di ruler Ahmad al-Mansur (reg. 1578–1603). As the style soon lost its integrity, this miniature Qur'an manuscript may well have been produced during Ahmad's reign (cf. Sjöman 1987, p.228).

The binding is of dark-brown leather, with a centre-and-corner composition and border stamped in gilt. The motif in the centre-pieces is a centralised arabesque design. The covers have suffered some damage through wear and have been rebacked.

This manuscript was formerly in the Newberry Library, Chicago (08.MS.222). It was acquired by the Library from the estate of Edward E. Ayer in December 1920.

**Item 21**

A loose-leaf Qur'an manuscript in the Maghribi script of the Western Sudan. The manuscript was written by a scribe called Sayyallah for Malik al-Qadi ibn al-Husayn of Bornu and is dated thamaniyyat Rabi' I Nafs sallā Allāh 'alayhi wa-sallama 'ibn al-mahsurī; that is, 8 Rabi' al-Awwal 1250 (i.e. July 1834). The colophon is followed by some curious information: 'but the scribe is in Tunis, in Bah Suwayqah. He wrote it in the village (balad) of W. z.k., the village of W.zq'. (The name of the village is repeated in the two different spellings.)

There are 511 loose leaves of European laid paper, each measuring approximately 220 x 140 mm. As in other manuscripts from West Africa, the leaves were not intended to be sewn into gatherings and are held together by
leaves were not intended to be sewn into gatherings and are held together by the binding in the manner of a portfolio. The first folio is blank. On the recto of the second there are two roundels in a red and green frame, which contain a caption for the coloured diagram on the verso, ‘a representation of al-Rawdah al-Mubarakah, where the Prophet of God and his two companions, Abu Bakr and Umar, are buried’. In the diagram the three tombs are seen through an opening with a horseshoe arch, with a lamp hanging from its apex. A similar design appears on folio 3a, but here the arched opening frames a representation of the minbar in the mosque of the Prophet in Medina. These two diagrams resemble the type of illustration found in contemporary copies of the Dal'il al-Khayrat, the Kitab al-Shifa' and other works devoted to the person of the Prophet.

The text begins on folio 3b, where surah 1 is followed by a panel of interface in black, red and green and the title of surah 1. Similar punch precede surahs vii, xix and xxxviii. In the outer margin of folio 3b there are five roundels of different design, also painted in black, red and green. Subsequent leaves have 15 lines of text in black ink, contained within a frame of double red rules (approximately 165 x 90 mm). The vocalization is in red and is of modern form, while the other reading marks are in red, green or yellow; those in red are in the modern form; those in green consist of sukun and shaddah of modern form and a dot representing hamza al-ashr; while hamza al-qi'a is represented by a dot in yellow. Single verses are punctuated by a group of three yellow dots outlined in red, groups of five verses by a stylized letter 'a', and groups of ten verses by roundels.

The surah headings are in the same hand, in greens, while the division of the text into sixteenth ('hizb') is indicated by marginal roundels, containing a chequerboard design in red, green and white. The roundel is outlined in green and is surrounded by a black circle. Each 'hizb' is divided into eighths, and these are marked by a letter in the margin, surrounded by a rectilinear device in red and yellow.

The binding is of mid-brown leather, and the back cover is extended by an articulated, five-sided flap, with a leather thong threaded through it, near the point. The covers are stamped with an octagonal centre-piece, which contains a centralized arabesque design. The octagon has eight ‘finsals’ of four tooled rosettes, arranged lozenge-fashion, and the same tool and a cable motif were used to decorate the ruled borders. The covers and the outer section of the flap are lined with brown marbled paper, while the spine, the inner surface of which is exposed because the manuscript is loose-leaf, and the fore-edge section of the flap are lined with leather. There is a piece of hard leather, roughly the same size as the leaves of the manuscript, at either end of the text block. According to Adrian Brockett, these end-pieces were used to grasp the text block when knocking it back into shape after use.

The manuscript is kept in a satchel of soft, light brown leather, decorated on the front with two roundels of green leather above three of green and brown leather. The latter are fitted with loops designed to take the three leather toggles attached to the flap, which constitutes the means for securing the satchel. There is a plaited strap for carrying the satchel on the shoulder.

This manuscript was formerly in the Newberry Library, Chicago (08.MS.233), which acquired it from the collection of Henry Probasco; his bookplate is dated ‘Dec. 1, 1890’.

Two folios from a two-volume copy of the Qur’an made in the Mamluk empire in the second quarter of the 14th century. This material comes from the dispersed second volume. The first volume, which is preserved in the National Museum in Damascus (inv.no.13,615), bears a notice recording the donation of the manuscript to a religious institution by a man whose name has been given as Ibrahim ibn Mahmud al-Sayfi Manjak (London 1776, no.539) and Sayf al-Din Manjak (Geneva 1988, no.10). In the Geneva catalogue David James noted that Amir Manjak was governor of Damascus for a few months in 1350, and he therefore argued that the manuscript dated from 1343–50. He considered the illumination to be in a rather archaic style for this period, which he explained by its production in Damascus rather than Cairo: he presumed that Damascus was provincial, and Cairo metropolitan. However, it appears that the full name of the donor was actually Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Sayfi Manjak (al-Ush, Jouidi & Zouhdi, p.257; English edition, p.211). As Ibrahim was a great-grandson of Amir Manjak and may well have made the donation in the 13th rather than the 14th century, his connection with the manuscript is irrelevant to its dating, which must therefore be based on stylistic grounds.

A first pointer is that the text was copied in muhaggag, a script that was not used for Mamluk Qur’an manuscripts until the 1320s (James 1988, p.38). The hand seen here is not unlike that of Ahmad al-Mutatabib, who flourished in Cairo in the 1330s (James 1988, pp.132–38), but the illumination of the two-volume Qur’an manuscript is quite different from that of Ahmad al-Mutatabib’s manuscripts, which he is thought to have executed himself.
The reason for this disparity may be that the two-volume copy was indeed produced in Syria, as James suggested. Early 14th-century material from Syria is scarce (James 1988, pp. 73–75), and it is only with the emergence of a new and magnificent style of illumination in Damascus in the late 1330s that the importance of the region becomes clear (James 1992, pp. 172–73). If the two-volume copy under discussion is of Syrian origin, then it is important evidence of the type of fine manuscript produced there before 1340.

Despite the poor reproductions of the volume in Damascus, it appears that the basic design of the major areas of illumination in this manuscript can be compared with that of the frontispieces of volumes 4 and 6 of the seven-part Qur’an manuscript made for the future Sultan Baybars ii in 1304–6 (London, British Library, MSS 22,409, 22,411) in the use of small geometric figures defined by segments of a circle (James 1988, fig. 31; compare also fig. 32). These frontispieces were the work of Muhammad ibn Mubadir, who appears to have had no influence on Cairo illumination executed after 1306 (James 1988, pp. 34–47): it may have survived in Syria, or it may have been re-imported from Iraq, where Muhammad ibn Mubadir probably received his training, at a later date.

Another feature of this material marks obvious parallels. This is the band that defines the most important illuminated elements, including the surah heading in this material: it contains a chain of arabesque motifs reserved against a gold field and filled with smaller arabesque motifs, in white on a blue field. Despite its unusual character, this design can be seen as a development of Mamluk illumination of the first three decades of the 14th century, as in a copy of the Qur’an produced, perhaps in Damascus, in AH 727 (AD 1326) and now preserved in the National Library, Sofia (89. MS. 2022, folio 3b; Stoilova & Ivanova, no. 3). It is also free of the Chinese-style elements that appeared in the new style current from the end of the 1330s.

The two leaves are of polished cream paper and measure 473 x 335 mm. They were consecutive, for the first contains surah xiv (al-Jathiyah, ‘The crouching down’), verses 21–29, and the second, the remainder of this surah (verses 29–33) and the illuminated heading of surah xvi (al-Isra’, ‘The sand dunes’). The text was arranged in seven lines to the page and was copied in black ink, with the word Allāh and variations such as fa-‘l-lāh in gold, with an outline in black and vocalization in blue. The end of each verse is marked by a knot motif within a gold disc, set off by blue and red-brown dots. In the case of verses 25, 30 and 35, the markers within the text are complemented by illuminated devices in the outer margin, executed in the same colours. The surah heading is in blue thulth, outlined in gold and set within a sumptuous panel of illumination in gold, blue, white and red-brown, with an accompanying palette in the margin.

On the recto of the second page, adjacent to the end of verses 32 and 33, there is a large pointed-oval ornament containing an ordinal number – probably al-khamis wa-shitha (‘the twenty-fifth’) – in gold Kufic. It would appear to relate to the end of the twenty-fifth juz’, which coincides with the end of surah xiv in the modern standard division of the Qur’anic text and may have occurred a few verses earlier in others. In addition, the word hizb has been written in red ink adjacent to the end of surah xiv, to mark the end of the fifteenth hizb (and of the twenty-fifth juz’) in the standard system.

The broad margins of each leaf have been impressed with a pattern of lines to provide a guide for the addition of a number of supplementary texts, which made this manuscript a veritable encyclopedia of the Qur’anic sciences. The lines are arranged in five blocks, and in theory as many as five texts could have been added. On the first leaf relevant excerpts from a commentary on the Qur’an, or taṣfīr, were placed at the top of each page, and notices on variant readings, or qinā‘īt, at the side. On the second leaf only excerpts from the taṣfīr were provided, presumably because there was no dispute over the reading of the text at this point. The distinction between the subsidiary texts was not only maintained by their orientation but also by the use of different coloured inks to write them. Thus the taṣfīr notice on the recto of the first page is in blue, while the qinā‘īt notice is in black, while on the verso they are in red and blue respectively.

These notices appear to have been added after the main text and the illumination, but the main text must have been checked at the same time, for the omission of the last two words in surah xiv was noted, and they were supplied in a naskh hand, with the same type of gilt marker as occurs in the marginal texts.

Item 23

A miniature copy of the Qur’an, dated AH 751 (AD 1350). The text is in a minute hand notable for the way in which the vertical stroke of final alif descends below the base line. This had been a feature of some ‘Eastern Kufic’ or ‘New Style’ scripts that were in use from the 10th century to the first half of the 13th century, but by the 14th century it was confined to the relatively conservative copyhands of the Western Islamic world. In other respects, though, this manuscript is typical of Mamluk production of this period, and
it may have been copied in Syria or Egypt by a scribe of Maghribi origin. An origin in the Mediterranean coastlands is supported by the early date at which it entered a Western collection, for it has been rebound in Venice in the 18th century in fine gilt-tooled red morocco covers, lined with paper block-printed in red and green, and the three flyleaves at the back are inscribed with an account of the book in Latin.

The manuscript contains 185 folios of cream laid paper. Each leaf measures 70 x 45 mm and is inscribed with 19 lines of text. The surah headings, written in gold and outlined in black, are in a larger version of the same script as the main text, and each verse is punctuated by a gold dot. Otherwise the illumination is confined to the first two pages of text (folios 1b and 2a), which have ornamental frames in gold, white and blue, and the last two pages (folios 182b and 183a), which are ruled in gold and blue. The ornamental frames on folios 1b and 2a include illuminated panels above and below the text, which contain the headings and verse counts for the first two surahs in white Kufic. On folio 183a, after the end of the text of the Qur’an, there is a short doxology concluding with the date, ‘in the last ten days of the month of Rajab al-Fard of the year 751 (24 September-3 October 1350).”

The manuscript was still in Muslim hands a century later, for a fragmentary inscription in Arabic on folio 181b contains a date in the 850s (AD 1446-55), but it was later acquired by the Western European owner who had it foliated in the local manner, from back to front in Islamic terms, and rebound. The short Latin text bound into the book at this time reads:

*His Codex homunculus spurium auro exornatus, dente afflor expolitus, perexiguus litteris, sed elegantissime conscriptus, omnes Alcorani Sutus (capita) ad unguem complcterunt. Anno Hegirae 751; reperatur salutis 1382; exartatus fuit. Antiquitatem hujus Codici nonnulli in dubium revocarii illorum haerentes opinioni, qui exequos characteres ad nonum usus superioris Hegirae seculum [sic!] referendos esse arbitrabantur; cum videntur, qui extant Alcorani Codices in beato Evreuus Bibliothecis ministratis conscripti, omnes Hegire seculum [sic!] nonum ducentvax pertingere. Sed epyge falluntur. Epota enim ad calorem evosi calamen, endemque prius nonu exartata, qua integer codex elaboratus; capita fontis litteris Caffici depicti; characteres indole, et natura, quae paulo distat ab ea, qua in minus antiquis inscriptur; capita omnia materia tantum, non autem scinti in ceritis aliiis. Sumne nomine unciputa inceptia facta propter codice indicium aprimre compendiam.*

This may be translated as follows: “This codex of fine paper, decorated here and there with gold, skilfully polished with ivory, and written in a minute but most elegant script, encompasses all the surahs (chapters) of the Qur’an, to the last detail. It was copied in the year of the Hijrah 751, equivalent to AD 1382 [sic!]. Some who maintain the opinion that micrography is to be attributed to the 9th century AH and no earlier have called the antiquity of this manuscript into doubt, since they have observed that all the Qur’an manuscripts copied in micrographic script that there are in the richer libraries [of the West] belong precisely to the 9th century AH. But they are quite wrong. For the date inscribed at the end entirely with the same pen and by the same hand as the manuscript as a whole; the initial chapter headings written out in Kufic letters; the nature of the script, and its character, which is a little different from that seen in less ancient examples; and the headings that include all the information but are not called by the name of surah, as in all other cases, make an unanswerable argument that more than corroborates the date given in the manuscript.”

**Item 24**

Part 23 of a miniature copy of the Qur’an bound in thirteenth (juz); it was produced in the 14th century, probably in the Mamluk empire. The manuscript has a fine contemporary binding, whose main feature is the gilt strapwork design in the central panels of the outer covers. The interstices of the strapwork are filled with a variety of independent motifs rather than the overall texturing seen in later examples. The use of individual accents in this way is said to have disappeared ‘about the middle of the 14th century’ (Raby & Tanoudi, pp. 8-9), although it is still seen on the binding of a Manuk manuscript copied in 1373 (Tanoudi 1990, fig.30). At the same time, the bluish-green pigment used for the ground of the frontispiece formed part of the variegated palette employed by the court illuminator Ibrahim al-Amidi, who flourished circa 1368 to 1376 (James 1988, pp. 197-214, figs 135, 137, 141-44).

There are 62 folios of dark-cream Oriental paper, each 57 x 45 mm. The double-page frontispiece on folios 1b and 2a consists of an elegant, self-contained arabesque design, symmetrical on two axes and executed in gold on the bluish-green ground referred to above. Folios 2b and 3a each have a single line of text between illuminated panels containing the title of the juz’, in gold thuluth on a red ground. Beside the single lines of text, in the two outer margins, are a pair of medallions, each containing a fleshy leaf motif, in gold on a red ground. Similar marginal medallions mark the three surah headings, which are in gold thuluth on a plain ground, and others, which contain the word ‘subn’ (‘ten’) in gold Kufic, mark every tenth verse. The
text was written in five lines of a small ṣubqā qualifier and framed by gold and blue rules (10 × 25 mm). The text is fully vocalized in black, and the verses are punctuated by gold discs outlined in red.

The binding is made of dark-brown leather, and the outer covers are decorated with tooling in gold and in blind and with paint. The strapwork composition of the central panels is self-contained, and the motifs that fill the interstices are quarter-rosettes in the corners, cruciform knotwork in the centre, and five-lobed knotwork 'stars' in the other spaces. These motifs are set off by tooling dots, some gilt, and others showing traces of blue paint. The surrounding border is narrower at the sides, where it is filled by a simple chain motif, and broader at the top and bottom, where a more complex pattern of interlace was employed; both are set off with gold dots. The whole composition is framed by a single gold line painted over a series of plain rules. A part of the design on the covers was repeated on the envelope flap, while the double-flaps were cut from sheets of mid-brown leather that had been block-pressed with an arabesque design.

Juz' 22 from the same Qur'an was sold at Sotheby’s in London on 22 October 1993 (lot 77), when a date in the late 13th or early 14th century was suggested. The presentation of the text is more or less identical with that in the present example, as is the binding, but the design and colours of the frontispiece are different.

Item 25

A bifolium from a copy of the Qur’an, written in an exquisite naskh hand on polished Oriental paper of a mid-cream colour. Each folio measures 175 × 275 mm, and there are thirteen lines to the page, written in a deep-black ink. The text comprises surah xxviii (al-Qiyas, The story’), verses 64–78, and surah xxiv (al-'Ankabut, 'The spider’), verses 17–30. The end of each verse is marked by a gold rosette with ten petals, and where these mark a fifth or tenth verse there is an illuminated device in the adjacent outer margin. The device marking every fifth verse is a gold disc with a pointed crest; it has an ornamented black outline and a blue centre bearing the word khamshah ('five’) in white Kufic. The device marking every tenth verse is very similar, but it is larger, it lacks the crest and the word it contains is 'aṭbaqāh ('ten’).

As discussed above, the splendid single-volume Qur’an manuscript from which this bifolium came has been attributed to the Baghdadi scribe Arghun al-Kamilī, a pupil of Yaqūt al-Mustas'imī, and it has been dated to the 1330s. The illumination has been ascribed to Muḥammad ibn Sayf al-Dīn al-Naqqash, who collaborated with Arghun on at least two other copies of the Qur’an. In the other examples of their work gold frames have been added around the text, probably by a later hand, but in the dispersed material from this manuscript the calligraphy appears as originally intended, complemented rather than confined by the illumination.

Item 26

A superb illuminated head-piece from a monumental Timurid copy of the Khamsah of Nizamī, remade as a calligrapher's hand-rest (alild) for the Ottoman sultan Abdullahīm II (reg. 1576–1909). The central panel and upper border are from the 15th-century Nizamī manuscript, while the lower border is later, Safavid work. The two fragments were laid on to a piece of card (152 × 240 mm), and a coating of lacquer was applied, to protect the decoration. The inscription in the central panel reads,

Bi’ān Allāh ar-Rehman ar-Raḥīm
Hast kild-i dar-i ḵanj-i Ḥakim
In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate;
[This invocation is the key to the door of the treasury of the All-wise’.

These are the first two hemistichs of the Makhzan al-Aṣrīr, the first of the five verse romances that Nizamī included in his Khamsah ('Five romances') and the head-piece must therefore have stood at the top of the first page of text in a large-format copy of this work. The inscription is in gold Kufic of the exaggeratedly mannered type in use in the 15th century, the last period when this script was regularly employed.

The inscription is set against green and orange arabesques on a dark-blue ground and is surrounded by a complex frame defined by interlacing gold bands. This type of design, made by superimposing cartouches with different outlines, was popular in Timurid Iran, especially towards the end of the 15th century, when it became a cliché of the Herat style (e.g. Gray 1979, pl. vi). But exquisite examples were also produced in Shiraz earlier in the century (e.g. Gray 1979, fig. 28; Lentz & Lowry, pp. 72–73).

Two Ottoman Turkish inscriptions on the back of the object record that it was once in the Imperial Treasury (Hazine-i ḥumayyûdan molând; oldûhâ sêth buyûnûsûrû) and that it is the hand-rest used by the late Sultan Abdullahīm (Cevânetmekâr Sultan Abdullahîm Han hazzetléri hatt-i hümâyûn iştâmîn)
eyledikleri altıkır - [sic]). Sultan Abdülhamid showed a great interest in the uniquely rich collection of Islamic manuscripts he had inherited from his ancestors, and he had many of them repaired and rebound when he wished to include them in his personal library. It was probably as a result of this process that these impressive fragments of illumination were assembled in their present form. The inscriptions and the green cloth folder in which this item was previously preserved suggest that shortly after the Sultan’s death in 1918 the hand-test was presented to an American citizen.

**Item 27**

A prayer book in Arabic, the Adīʼyyat Ayūm al-Uṣbaʼ ('Prayers for the days of the week'), signed by the great 16th-century Ottoman calligrapher Ahmad al-Qarabisi. This short manuscript – it contains seven leaves, each measuring 225 × 160 mm – was written in a combination of five of the six canonical scripts as established by Yaqut al-Mustā‘īm in the 13th century. It therefore demonstrates Qarabisi’s continued adherence to the school of Yaqut, which in the Ottoman empire was subsequently superseded by the school of Ahmad’s older contemporary, Shaykh Hamdallah.

The first page (folio 1a) has the title in four lines of gold nāšī', set within a central roundel. Arranged above and below this are six lines of black naskh. These contain a Hadith that sets out the advantages to be gained by saying the prayers that follow, on the authority of the caliph ‘Ali. The source of this Hadith – the Kitāb al-Musāhāt – is set out in rayhānā at the top of the page. A layout with a central circular panel is seen in similar works by this calligrapher, including a copy of the surah al-An‘ām in the Topkapı Palace Library (MS.EM.2112; see Ünver 1948, p.18).

The main text, folios 1b–6a, was written in three different styles of script within a five-part page format. The format takes precedence over the sequence of seven prayers, so that their titles, written in gold thuluth, vary in size according to the demands of the layout. Thus the heading for Friday (folio 1b, line 1) is 107 mm long and has alif that are 20 mm high, whereas the heading for Saturday (folio 2a, line 7), which, all things being equal, should be slightly longer, is only 68 mm long and has alif only 12 mm high. The rest of the text is in black, and there are nine lines to the page: lines 2–4 and 6–8 are in naskh, except where a heading in gold thuluth interrupts them, and lines 1, 5, and 9 are in one of the larger hands. In most cases lines 1 and 9 are in muhaqqaq, and line 5 is in thuluth, but where a title in thuluth occurs in the first line, as on folios 1b and 4b, the modulation has been altered, so that the ninth line is also in thuluth, and the fifth line is in muhaqqaq. Such sophistication cannot have been easy to achieve.

The last page of the text, folio 6b, has the end of the prayer for Thursday in four lines of muhaqqaq, and folio 7a contains the colophon, written in five lines of nāšī'. The text of the colophon is that used by Ahmad al-Qarabisi on other occasions. He describes himself as 'the weakest of the weak, the dust on the soul of the indigent and the poor', and as 'one of the pupils of Sayyid Asadullah al-Kirmani'.

The manuscript was remarqued and illuminated in the early or mid–20th century, and the size of the original paper varies from leaf to leaf. At the same time the manuscript was rebound with brocade-covered boards with gilt-tooled trim.

**Item 28**

Twenty-one leaves from a magnificently illuminated Qur’an section in muhaqqaq script, produced in Iran, perhaps in Tabriz, in the first half of the 16th century. This material constituted folios 2–7 and 10–24 of part 29 of a copy in thirty volumes (juz'). The original extent of the manuscript is suggested by the pagination, which was added before the loss of folios 1, 8, 9 and 25. The employment of the muhaqqaq script on its own appears to have been unusual in 16th-century Iran, where most fine copies of the Qur’an were written in a combination of scripts of different sizes, but this impression is probably due to the underrrepresentation of thirty-part copies in the published material.

Each folio of polished cream paper measures 362 × 244 mm, and the text is presented in eight lines written alternately in black ink and gold. The pointing is in black in both cases. The text area is defined by a frame of multiple coloured rules that measures 230 × 147 mm. The verses are marked by an eternal-knot motif in gold, set off by stepping and coloured dots, and in the case of every fifth and tenth verse the marker in the text is complemented by a splendid marginal device executed in gold and colours. The devices are distinguished by their shape – a lobed roundel for each tenth verse, and lobed roundel with a slight point at the top for each fifth verse – and by the design in the centre. Folios 2–7 contains surah lxvii, verse 3 to surah lxix, verse 14, while folios 10–24 contain surah lx, verse 10 to surah lxvii, verse 40. There are therefore nine surah headings, on folios 4b, 7a,
Illumination using the same range of colours and ornamental motifs appears on Qur'anic manuscripts made in Herat and in centres under Herati influence in the first half of the 16th century. An example is a copy in the Keir Collection that was made for Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz of Bukhara in 1545 by a scribe of Herati origin (Robinson & others, no. VII.46; see also James 1992a, p. 124). But this Qur'an section stands apart because of the quality of the materials used, which have ensured the enduring brilliance of the script and illumination, the high standard of the execution, and the manner in which the ornamental idiom of the 15th century has been recast to produce designs of some originality, as in the case of the markers for groups of five and ten verses. Such a combination of circumstances could only have occurred in the scriptorium of a sovereign who was prepared to devote enormous resources to the arts of the book. The most likely candidate is the scriptorium of Shah Tahmasp I (r. 1524–76) in Tabriz, and this attribution is supported by the close parallels that can be found in the details of the illumination in the Shah's personal books: examples are the opening page of his copy of the Khamshah of Nizami, preserved in the British Library (MS. 2265, folio 2b; see Brend 1989, p. 242, fig. 17), and the fine ex-libris of his copy of the Shihjminah of Firdawsi, now dispersed (Welch 1972, p. 78). However, the illumination in the juz' is distinguished from these and other contemporary examples by the use of relatively large areas of plain gold, for the background of the surah headings and the lobed frames of the marginal devices marking groups of five and ten verses.

Eleven other sections from this copy of the Qur'an are in the National Library in Sofia (MS. 2712; Stoilova & Ivanova, no. 9), and, although none of these appears to contain any historical information, some have retained their bindings, the character of which confirms the attribution to Iran in the 16th century.

An album of model letter forms, copied by 'Imad al-Hasani in the early 17th century and bound as a concertina album. 'Imad al-Hasani, who died in 1615, is the most famous master of Persian nasta'liq, and the calligraphy in this album shows this script at one of its highpoints. The seven boards (15 x 215 mm) have a central panel (43 x 115 mm) containing two lines of superb nasta'liq calligraphy, in black. The text on the first board, below a richly illuminated head-piece, consists of the bu'na'ah and a Hadith of the caliph 'Ali. The remaining boards bear twenty-four letter forms written separately and in combination and the letters of the Arabic alphabet in the abjad order. On the seventh board they are followed by a short prayer and the colophon.

The Oriental paper on which the text was written was scattered with gold, and each board has a double border made of paper of contrasting colours and decorated in gilt. The narrower inner borders have chains of flowers, while charming compositions of trees, beasts and flowers fill the broad outer borders. The outer covers and flap of the binding are of lacquered brown morocco, with a gilt centre-piece and borders. The doublets are of lacquered red morocco sprinkled with gold.

Item 30

A talismanic scroll from Safavid Iran, produced circa 1660. Scrolls of this type were rolled up tightly and inserted in metal amulets, so that they could be worn when the owner was in danger. Their protective force came from the type of text inscribed on them, often in micrography. On this example, which has particularly rich illumination, reduced forms of muhalaq, thuluth and nastaliq were also employed.

The scroll measures 500 x 90 mm and consists of a series of strips of paper pasted end to end and backed with cloth. There are double gilt borders on either side of a central band (50 mm wide), which is divided into thirty-eight panels. The first panel contains a series of devices of varying outline, illuminated in dark and light blue, orange, gold and white, and these are accompanied by patterns formed from micrography. The remaining panels all have a title written in white thuluth on a rectangular gold head-piece, and they are framed by an illumination border, 10 mm wide, which contains surah xxvii (Yasin), written in gold and blue muhalaq within cartouches. Panels 3 and 4 are filled with grids of squares containing the ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God and forty invocations to God respectively. Other texts are similarly arranged in panels 24, 25 and 26, while in panel 23 the grid is filled with numbers. Panels 4 and 7 contain micrography arranged in the form of the two swords of the caliph 'Ali. In panels 5, 6, 8, 14 and 15 there are all-over abstract patterns formed from prayers and other apotropaic texts.
written in micrography. In 9, 10, 11 and 13 the micrography is arranged in the form of inscriptions. Panel 12 is blank. Panels 16 to 22 contain the magical seals of the Prophet Muhammad, the caliphs ‘Ali and others. And panels 27 to 38 have surahs and other texts written perpendicularly to the length of the scroll, in fine miniature naskh. This scroll was formerly in the Newberry Library, Chicago (OR.MS.209).

Item 31

A talismanic scroll from 19th-century Iran, inscribed with a variety of apotropaic texts in micrography and a reduced form of thuluth. The scroll measures 3450 x 95 mm and is made of six sheets of polished Oriental paper, cut from a sheet that was at least 590 mm long.

A small illuminated head-piece and a table of contents are followed by eleven panels of various lengths. Seven contain texts written in micrography to form the shape of a Qajar seal standard (panel 1), of roses and other flowering plants (panels 1, 4, 6, 8 and 11), and of a basmalah that is itself arranged in the form of a fish (panel 7). Three are divided into small squares by grids of lines, and the squares are filled with the words of surahs XIX (al-Ikhlas, ‘Pure religion’; panel 2), the words of surah 1 (al-Fatiha, ‘The opening’; panel 3) and the basmalah repeated one thousand times (panel 9). Panel 10 is filled with a text written in thuluth on ruled lines.

The first panel is framed by an inner border that contains the beginning of surah XXXVI (Ya’uq), written in gold, black, blue and red thuluth, and the remainder of this surah fills a similar outer border that also surrounds panels 2–9. The border of panels 10 and 11, on the other hand, are filled with the beginning of a prayer, the Du‘ā’-i sayfi, the rest of which fills panel 10.

Item 32

A prayer book in Arabic made for presentation to the Qajar ruler of Iran by Muhammad ‘Ali ibn Ahmad al-Iṣfahani in Muharram 1305 (began 19 September 1887). The first part of the manuscript, folios 1b–5b, contains the Ad‘yayat Ayām al-Ushr (‘Prayers for the days of the week’), the same text as appears in item 27 above. This is followed, on folios 6b–10b, by five supplementary prayers to be said after the five daily prayers, and, on folios 10b–12b, by the morning prayer handed down from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. The long colophon, which fills folios 17b–18a, is presented in an unusual manner. The main text records inter alia that the book was intended as ‘an offering to the throne-like court of the sultan of sultans and emperor of emperors, the sultan son of the sultan son of the sultan, and emperor son of the emperor of the emperor [...] and may God make his reign eternal’. The missing part of the text is written in gold in the upper margin of the two pages: ‘the Sultan Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar – may God make his dominion last for ever’. The placing of the name of the monarch above the level of the text in which he was mentioned was a practice of long standing in the Islamic Middle East and may have been derived from Chinese chancery practice (Menage 1985).

The calligrapher, Muhammad ‘Ali al-Iṣfahani, was recorded by Mehdi Bayani (1163, p.1187, no.591) as the copyist of two copies of the Qur’an. The first is dated Rab‘ al-Thani 1287 (began 13 March 1860) and is preserved in the former Imperial Library in Tehran. The second is dated Rajab 1302 (began 16 April 1885) and was in the collection of Muhammad Riza Shah Pahlavi, having been presented to him by the Physical Education Association of Iran in AH solar 1343 (AD 1965).

The manuscript was written in black ink, in seven lines of a fine Qajar naskh. The text appears on panels of mounted wove paper (115 x 70 mm) set within margins of dark cream wove paper (108 x 120 mm). The text area is surrounded by a frame of gold rules, and gilding was applied between the lines of text to create reserved ‘clouds’ around the script. The first heading, which is in black nisq, appears in the illuminated head-piece on folio 1b. The decoration of this head-piece and of the margins of folios 1b and 2a was based on a vine motif and was executed in several shades of gold. The other headings are in white nisq on gold.

The manuscript has a flexible binding of burgundy leather that has been impressed with a diagonal grid of fine lines and painted in gilt with a frame design. The covers are lined and edged in black leather with the same type of texturing.

Item 33

A finely illuminated copy of an important work in Turkish on the biography of the Prophet Muhammad. It was copied in Ottoman naskh by a derived of the Jalwati brotherhood and was completed on 24 Dhu ‘l-Qa‘dah 1221 (31 January 1809). The scribe, whose name was Darwish ‘Umar, was chief

The manuscript has 239 leaves of polished European paper, measuring 215 × 185 mm. There are twenty-five lines to the page, written in black, with the headings in red, and surrounded by a gold frame. The principal text, which occupies folios 7b–249b, is the Durwāl al-tāj fi istābat sāhib al-mi'raj of the Ottoman belletrist Veyis Efendi (1561–1628). This biography of the Prophet was left unfinished by the author on his death, and it was completed by Yusuf Nabi and, on his death, by Nazmi-zade, whose continuations are found on folios 250b–267a and 268b–328a respectively.

Although the manuscripts as a whole is remarkable for its sumptuous quality, its chief glory is the five illuminated head-pieces that occur on folios 7b, 37b, 110b, 250b and 268b. These are a late but nonetheless magnificent example of the eclectic decorative style known as Turkish Rococo, in which elements derived from European art of the 18th century were adapted to Ottoman forms. Here the head-pieces have their traditional form of a crest with an elaborate profile, set at the top of the page, within a frame of three coloured rules. But the motifs are based on European mouldings, the palette has been radically reduced, and what colour contrasts there were employed mainly for modelling, a concept foreign to illumination in the Islamic tradition. The colours chosen — bluish-green for the first; yellow and brown for the second; two shades of blue for the third; purple and two shades of mauve for the fourth; and two shades of pink for the fifth — also reflect European court taste of the 18th century.

The outlines and some of the modelling is in black, and all five head-pieces have small areas of gilt that have been stippled with a needle. Above the main composition the artist set a row of independent motifs, following the complex profile of the crest. On folio 8b they are seven sprays of flowers of different types, naturalistically drawn and coloured. On folio 52b a vase of flowers in the centre has been integrated into the main design, but it is flanked by two sprays of frilly gilly and two miniaturized pots containing examples of European-style topiary. More topiary appears on folios 110b and 250b, while the illumination on folio 267b is surrounded by five complex finials in pale blue.

A central feature of the first four designs is one or more blank spaces, painted white. On folio 250b there are nine such spaces in the illumination, and their shapes and the way they are arranged suggest that the whole composition was inspired by the 18th-century European habit of setting small pieces of mirror into frames and mouldings (Roche 1957, passim).

The binding of the manuscript is also very fine. The leather of the covers was dyed black for the borders, red for the main field and blue for the centre-piece, which were richly tooled in gilt with an arabesque design. The end-papers were sprinkled with silver.

**Item 34**

A set of model letter forms and texts, written by Isma'il al-Zuhdi in Ramadan 1205 (May 1791) and bound as a concertina album. Whereas item 39 below was intended for someone learning the Persian tradition of nastaʿlīq calligraphy, these models were prepared for a student of the Ottoman tradition of thuluth and naskh calligraphy established by Shaykh Hamdallah. The master who produced these models, Isma'il al-Zuhdi (d. 1806), was the younger of two leading Ottoman calligraphers of the 18th century to bear this name. He was also the elder brother of the great calligrapher Mustafa Ra'ûm. Their father was a ship’s captain in the Black Sea port of Ünye, where they were both born. As a young man Isma'il moved to Istanbul to train as a scholar, and at the same time he began to study with leading calligraphers of the period. Isma'il outstripped his masters in the quality of his work, and his skill led to his being appointed ‘scribe of the Imperial Palace’, as he was described on his tombstone (Inal 1955, pp.472–76). In view of the fine quality of the album and Isma'il’s court connections, it must have been made for a young man or woman of the highest rank.

The album is composed of a set of fourteen boards (315 × 240 mm). The first bears an illuminated frontispiece, in which the main motif is a centre-and-corner composition with gold and blue parti-coloured grounds. This is set on a brown field filled with rotating floral scrolls. On the remaining boards panels of text (135 × 209 mm) are surrounded by ornamental borders, which are either illuminated in one of two styles or are overlaid with coloured paper sprinkled with gold. Each panel contains four lines of text, the first and fourth lines in an elegant thuluth hand and the second and third in an equally elegant naskh. The lines of naskh, which are set in ‘clouds’ against a gold ground, are shorter, and the spaces at either end are filled with illumination. The last panel is an exception, in that the first and third lines are in thuluth, and the second and fourth in naskh, while the calligrapher has written his signature to the left of the main text, and almost perpendicular to it.

The twenty-six lines of thuluth form a continuous text, that is, lines 1–18 of a celebrated Arabic poem written in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, the
Qesidat al-Burda of al-Busayri. The first line of naṣīḥah contains a prayer that would have been appropriate for a student commencing his studies, 'My Lord, make it easy and do not make it hard!...' The second line consists of twenty-four letter forms written separately, while the third to twentieth lines contain these letter forms in combination, followed by a short prayer. Most of the twenty-first line contains the letters of the Arabic alphabet in the alif jamma sequence. The remaining text consists of a series of prayers.

The album is held together by hinges of brown leather, and the same material was used as a trim and to cover the backs of the first and last boards, which form the binding. These covers have borders blind-stamped with floral cartouches, whose form suggests that the leatherwork is later than the calligraphy. The remaining boards are backed with fine marbled paper.

Item 35

A set of model letter forms, executed by al-Sayyid Muhammad Shafiq in AH 1295 (AD 1878–79) and bound as a concertina album. Muhammad Shafiq was born in 1819 in the Istanbul suburb of Beşiktaş. His father and grandfather had been scribes in the imperial service, but he chose to devote himself to calligraphy, studying firstly with Ali Wafisi, and, after his death, with Kazaik Serif Mustafa Efendi, who was his aunt’s husband. In 1845 he succeeded his uncle as calligraphy tutor to the Sultan’s brass band, and he held this post until his retirement in 1879, when it passed to his pupil Hasan al-Rida, the copyist of Item 37 below. Muhammad Shafiq was employed by Sultan Abdulmejid for a number of important commissions. After the earthquake of 1855, for example, he spent three years in Bursa restoring and extending the inscriptions in the Great Mosque, whose walls became a veritable showcase of late Ottoman decorative calligraphy. The exquisite quality of the script in the present album more than justifies the Sultan’s choice.

The letter forms are inscribed on a set of fourteen boards (240 × 311 mm), on which the panels of text (200 × 140 mm) are framed by marbled papers of different types and colours. In each case the panel contains five lines of text, the first, third and fifth lines in a thuluth hand, and the second and fourth in naṣīḥah. The last panel also bears the calligrapher’s signature, in miniature nūšūf, to the left of the main text and at an angle to it.

The lines of thuluth and naṣīḥah both contain the letter forms written singly (al-huruf al-minfuḥūh), then in combination with other letters, and thirdly in the adja order. At the beginning and after each of the three sequences there are short prayers, which vary slightly between the two versions, and the last board bears a Hadith of the Prophet (‘Scribes and calligraphers excrete the very depths of their eyes [in their work]. May God curse anyone who harms them!’). Apart from the concluding Hadith, the texts in this album are very close to those in naṣīḥah in item 34, but in this case the calligrapher has taken great care to ensure that the text on each board is self-contained: all the letter combinations beginning with ʾimm are on the same board, for example.

The album is bound in brown morocco, and the same material was used for the trim and hinges. The covers, which have centre-pieces stamped in gold, and the boards of the album are all backed with marbled paper.

Item 36

A rare complete copy of the Qur’an in thirty parts, bound in pairs in fifteen volumes. It was copied in AH 1302 (AD 1884–85) by al-Sayyid Mustafa Nazif, a native of the seaport district of Kadın in Istanbul and a pupil of Husays Efendi, according to the colophon at the end of part 30. Unlike his contemporary Hasan Rida, who was responsible for item 37 below, Mustafa Nazif is not listed in the standard 20th-century sources on Ottoman calligraphy, but he was evidently a celebrated figure in the 1880s and 1890s, for Mehmed Süreyya included an entry on him in his biographical dictionary of notable Ottomans, the Siyass-i Osmani (1905–n.d., IV, p.489): ‘Mustafa Efendi. He is from Kadın. He was a celebrated calligrapher and passed away in Rajab 1313 [began 28 December 1895]. He made a number of copies of the Noble Qur’an, and they were published by means of photography. He was a good and pious man.’ He may also be the Mustafa Efendi who was recorded by Habib (1305, p.181) among the ‘calligraphers who are alive at the present time’ in 1888.

In most cases the text of the second juz’ in each volume is followed only by the Arabic phrase ṣallāhu Allāhu al-ʿĀlīm (‘God the Most Mighty has spoken truly’) in red ink and an ornamental motif painted in gold. But at the end of parts 14, 16, 18 and 22 (volumes 7, 8, 9 and 11) there is also an Ottoman Turkish inscription in black that reads, ‘The most excellent and most chaste Valide Sultan—may glory be hers!’ The Valide Sultan was the mother of the reigning sultan and, like the Agha of the Abode of Felicity (see item 37), she was one of the most important figures in the Ottoman polity from the late 16th century onwards. Given the date of the manuscript, the Valide Sultan in question ought to be Tirimğaga, the mother of Sultan Abdulhamid
this time Hasan Rida was also a celebrated master of Ottoman nakhl, whose work was in demand among members of the Ottoman court, including Sultan Mehmed Reşad himself. Abdülgani Ağa, the patron of this manuscript, was the most important member of this Sultan’s household: he was the black eunuch who acted as superintendent of his harems, and he had a number of other roles, such as supervising the pious endowments that benefited the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina.

The manuscript is preserved in immaculate condition. It contains 349 leaves of polished light-brown Oriental paper, each measuring 210 × 135 mm. The fully vocalized text is written in an exceptionally neat and regular nakhl, arranged in thirteen lines to the page. The verses are separated by small polychrome discs of varying design, and the text area is surrounded by a gold frame (110 × 78 mm). The first pages of text have very fine illumination, executed in gold, blue, red and green. The same colours were used for the illuminated panels containing the surah headings, which were written in thulth, and the marginal medallions that mark other divisions of the text. There are gilt floral motifs in the margins of the final page of the Qur’anic text and the pages that follow, which contain prayers, the colophon and a reference to the patron. The light-blue end-papers and paper doublures have similar decoration.

The binding, also in excellent condition, is of dark-brown morocco, and the outer covers have a centre- and corner composition, painted in gilt, with some tooling. There is a matching slip-case.

Item 38

An independent copy of surah vi, al-An‘ām, commissioned by Princess Ziba Khanum, granddaughter of the khedive Isma‘il I. The text was written in AH 1349 (AD 1930–31) by al-Hājī Ahmad Kamāl, the last Chief Calligrapher of the Ottoman empire, and the illumination was executed the following year by Sāmi ibn Naṣr al-Dīn, a pupil of Baha‘ al-Din ibn Nūr al-Dīn. Ziba Khanum must have been an enthusiastic admirer of Ahmad Kamāl’s work, for in 1938 Melek Ėlāl recorded that she possessed fourteen examples of his work, including this copy of surah vi and the only full copy of the Qur’an the calligrapher ever completed.

The manuscript is in mint condition. It contains thirty folios of polished cream Oriental paper, each measuring 240 × 175 mm. The text is fully vocalized and was executed in a fine calligraphic nakhl, arranged in eight lines to
the page. The verses are separated by small polychrome devices, each one of different design, and the text area (150 x 102 mm) is surrounded by a gold frame. There is a very fine head-piece on folio 1r, and two illuminated hands on folio 28b mark the end of the text and the short invocation that follows. On folios 29a–30a there are a colophon and details of the patron ('the lady Ziba Khanum, wife of As'ad Fu’ad Bey, daughter of Hasan Pasha, requested me to make this copy of the Noble Aṭṭār'). These are followed, in the lower half of folio 30a, by a decorative panel containing the date 1350 and the name of the illuminator, who was probably also the binder.

The binding is also in very fine condition. The outer covers are of dark-brown leather, with a block-stamped border and centre-and-corner composition. The fields of these sunken areas are gilt, with the motifs, consisting of stylized leaf and flower forms, in reserve. The doublures are of light-brown leather, and the recessed border panels, corner-pieces and central medallion are embellished with delicate designs of black leather filigree on a medium-blue paper ground. There are end-papers of brown and blue marbled paper.
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