THREE EARLY QUR’AN FOLIOS ON PARCHMENT

Iran
10th-11th centuries
14.5 x 11 cm (5 1/2 x 4 3/8)
Kufic-Arabic

These excellent folios from an early Kufic-Abbasid Qur’an display a script, formerly identified as Eastern Kufic, which has a rhythmic effect, particularly in the swaying letters above the baseline such as kaf and alif-lam. This script exhibits all the hallmarks of the new Kufic-Abbasid style. The diacritical marks can be seen in red ink. The illuminated frontispiece and the two folios illustrated give a good indication of the magnificence of this Qur’an. The folios are from Sura al-Anfal (XXXIII), verses 30 to 31, 41 to 44, and 51 to 52.
Three Early Qur'an Folios on Parchment

IRON
10th-11th centuries
14.5 x 11 cm
Kufic-Abbasid

A sample from an early Kufic-Abbasid Qur'an displays a script, formerly identified as Eastern Kufic, which has a particularity in the swaying letters above the baseline such as haf and aliflam. This script exhibits all the respectful marks in red ink. The illuminated frontispiece and folios illustrated give a good indication of the magnificence of this Qur'an. The folios are from Surat al-Falaq (XXXIII), verses 30 to 31, 41 to 44, and 51 to 52.

A Kufic-Abbasid Qur'an Folio

North Africa
10th century
24 x 30.5 cm
Kufic-Abbasid

This Qur'an from North Africa has only three lines to a page, written with fine black ink. The script shows the Maghribi style in the rendering of nas (in the first line). The red dots indicate vocalization; the green dots indicate the hamza (a grammatical character). There are delicate oblique strokes indicating diacritical marks. The page is part of the 10th verse of the Surat al-Mulk (XXXIII).

Notice the effective form of the letter nun which curves clockwise below the baseline. Also, the vertical stroke of the letters alif and lam almost touch the base of the line above.
A COMPLETE QUR‘AN ON PARCHMENT

NORTH AFRICA
Dated AH 393/CE 1002
12.8 x 19 cm (one folio)
Kufic-Abbasid

An exceedingly important two-volume Qur’an which was probably written in
North Africa or by a Maghribi calligrapher in another country.
A complete Qur’an in this state of preservation is unique.
It is dated AH 393/CE 1002 and is worthy of close attention for both
its strong and consistent calligraphy and for its completeness.

The Kufic-Abbasid script is written in light brown ink, with diacritical marks in
red. Verse endings are indicated by three triangular dots. The rubus is
indicated by a blue circle. Other technical divisions of the Qur’an are
indicated by red circles and the letter ‘al’ in gold.

The Qur’an is written in the horizontal format. This format was very popular
in early Qur’ans for a rather neglected, if not unknown reason.
Due to the shortage of old Qur’ans, particularly those written on parchment,
the horizontal format allowed two or sometimes three students sitting close
together to read the Holy Recital. The vertical format became
more popular with the convenient arrival of paper.
A COMPLETE QUR'AN ON PARCHMENT

NORTH AFRICA
DATED AH 393/CE 1002
12.8 x 19 cm (ONE VOLUME)

RARE AND IMPORTANT

An exceedingly important two-volume Qur'an which was probably written in North Africa or by a Maghribi calligrapher in another country.

A complete Qur'an in this state of preservation is unique.

It is dated AH 393/CE 1002 and is worthy of close attention for both its strong and consistent calligraphy and for its completeness.

The Kufic-Maghribi script is written in light brown ink, with diacritical marks in red. Verse endings are indicated by three triangular dots. The sukun is indicated by a blue circle. Other technical divisions of the Qur'an are indicated by red circles and the letter 'al' in gold.

The Qur'an is written in the horizontal format. This format was very popular in early Qur'ans for a rather neglected, if not unknown reason. Due to the shortage of old Qur'ans, particularly those written on parchment, the horizontal format allowed two or sometimes three students sitting close together to read the Holy Recital. The vertical format became more popular with the convenient arrival of paper.
A QUR'AN FRAGMENT

Iran
10th-11th centuries
8 x 13 cm (3¼ x 5¼ in.)
Kufic-Abjad

There are five lines to the page in this attractive horizontal format Qur'an from Iran. The Kufic-Abjad script (also known as Eastern Kufic) is well written, can be easily read, and has very generous margins with occasional illuminations indicating technical Qur'anic divisions within chapters.

The diacritical marks are written in red, verse endings appear as medallions drawn in gold and red ink. The thick, handmade paper is of excellent quality, with a surface expertly prepared by application of special sealants.

This treatment allows the ink to sit and shimmer on the surface of the paper rather than be absorbed. Hundreds of years later, the script still shines as bright as ever. The text is from Sura Al-Mulk (67), verses 81 to 84.

One may compare this Persian hand with that seen in the Qur'an opposite, particularly when noting the different treatments of the letter alif and of the word 'Allah'. The work of the calligrapher on this page has an elegance and confidence all its own.
A QU'AR'AN FRAGMENT

Iran
10th-11th centuries
8 x 15 cm (one folio)
K Gregorson

There are five lines to the page in this attractive horizontal format Qur'an from Iran. The Kufic-Arabic script (also known as Eastern Kufic) is well written, can be easily read, and has very generous margins with occasional illuminations indicating technical Qur'anic divisions within chapters.

The diacritical marks are written in red, verse endings appear as medallions drawn in gold and red ink. The thick, handmade paper is of excellent quality, with a surface expertly prepared by application of special sealants. This treatment allows the ink to sit and shimmer on the surface of the paper rather than be absorbed. Hundreds of years later, the script still shines as bright as ever. The text is from Surat Haid (X), verses 83 to 84.

One may compare this Persian hand with that seen in the Qur'an opposite, particularly when noting the different treatments of the letter alif and of the word 'Allah'. The work of the calligrapher on this page has an elegance and confidence all its own.

A QU'AR'ANIC FOLIO

Iran
11th century
24 x 19.5 cm
K Gregorson

This is a typical example of a Qur'an written in Iran during the 11th century. In place of the previously used Eastern Kufic, this Kufic-Arabic script retains the old form of diacritical marks, written in red dots, which indicate vocalization.

Tiny strokes indicate the dots above the Arabic letters.

The form of the script reminds us of the very old Arabic description 'qabita', meaning dry, which sums up the rather stiff, rigid impression made by this script. However, this script has a strong character, a distinctive charm of its own, and is very legible. The text is from Surat al-Tawbah (IX), from the middle of verse 38 to nearly the end of verse 40.
A Qur'an Folio

Iron
11th Century
34.4 x 24.3 cm
Kufic-Arabic

Four lines of text, from Surat al-Nas (ChvIV), verses 1 to the penultimate word of verse 9, are shown on this Qur'anic page. It should be mentioned that this is the last surah in the Qur'an. The end-mark after the first verse contains the word ayah (verse), written in gold and outlined in black ink on a blue ground (above). Other verse endings have varied coloured grounds. The direction marks are in fine red ink. The script is unusually large. The text has four lines to the page written in black ink with vowels written in red. The illumination is interesting, particularly the circles between the two kolonqas or chosphuses, and the ornamental design extending to the right margin. The outer frame has floral designs which are well integrated with the decoration within: no area is left unembellished.

This surah is very rhythmic; its name, al-Nas, means 'the people'. This word is repeated five times in six verses. When the text is spoken – and, as mentioned earlier, we should never forget that Qur'anic texts are principally intended to be spoken and heard, rather than looked at – the sibilant sound of the final "Y" in al-Nas, repeated so many times in such a rhythmic way, creates a dramatic, almost hypnotic, effect on the listener.
A Qur'an Folio

Iran
11th century
34.4 x 24.4 cm
Kashan

Four lines of text, from Surat-al-Nisaa (IV.4), verses 1 to the penultimate word of verse 4, are shown on this Qur'anic page. It should be mentioned that this is the last surah in the Qur'an. The end-mark after the first verse contains the word waad (verse), written in gold and outlined in black ink on a blue ground (above). Other verse endings have varied coloured grounds. The calligraphic marks are in fine red.

The script is unusually large. The text has four lines to the page written in black ink with wrinkles written in red. The illumination is interesting, particularly the circles between the two sentient of rhombuses, and the ornamental design extending to the right margin. The outer frame has floral designs which are well integrated with the decoration within: no area is left unembellished.

This surah is very rhythmic: its name, al-Nisaa, means 'the people'. This word is repeated five times in six verses. When the text is spoken - and, as mentioned earlier, we should never forget that Qur'anic texts are principally intended to be spoken and heard, rather than looked at - the syllable sound of the final 'n' in al-Nisaa, repeated so many times in such a rhythmic way, creates a dramatic, almost hypnotic, effect on the listener.
Explanations of the text, which is from the Ahdals, are added in the margins—seen here written in the shape of the letter 'M'.

The first four sayings on the left-hand page read:

A good fulfillment of a task is from true faith.
Thinking well of someone comes from praying well.
Men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets.
Religion is comfort.
This manuscript is a joy to behold. Close study of this book shows that the calligrapher of this early Mālaghi script was of the highest caliber. It was completed in Valencia, in the tenth month of AH 568/CE 1172. The city of Valencia was the Moorish (Arabic) capital of the Kingdom of Valencia (CE 1211-1238), which was the third largest city in Eastern Spain on the Mediterranean. An important aspect of this script is the treatment of the letters that descend below the baseline. For example, when two letters happen to be in close proximity, they flow into each other. The arcs formed by these letters seem to support and cushion the writing above the baseline.

From the technical point of view, the particular character of this script arises in part from the distinctive way in which the nib is cut, and from the way that the pen is held. This enables the calligrapher to achieve special effects, such as the variation in the ink supply, very capricious in some places, yet tapering away in the curves of the letters, such as su, below the baseline.
A Qur'an Written in Gold Maghribi

Primarily from North Africa
12th century
24.5 x 19 cm (out folio)

Maghribi

An exquisite example of both calligraphy and illumination. The gold Maghribi script is outlined in fine black ink, which gives the script greater legibility and clarity. The surah headings extend to the side margins and feature attractively illuminated arabesque designs. There are 11 lines to the page, with generous margins all round. The gold remains in excellent condition, which gives some indication of how advanced the North-African Muslims became in the art of illumination.
A Qur'an Written in Gold Maghribi

A Qur'an written in a rare style called Gold Maghribi, originating from North Africa in the 12th century. The script is characterized by gold inking that adds a decorative and regal touch to the text. The folio measures 24.5 x 19 cm. This style is indicative of the high artistry and sophistication of Islamic art during that period.

Two Andalusi Qur'anic Folios

Andalusian Qur'anic folios, specifically a 13th-century example measuring 19.2 x 15.4 cm, offer insights into the calligraphic artistry of the Andalusian period. The text is written in gold, a practice often reserved for the most sacred or important manuscripts. The colophon notes the folios were written on parchment and are no longer in their original condition, reflecting the historical and cultural significance of these texts.

Written on parchment, this Maghribi script has seven lines to the page. Diacritical marks are in the modern form and are written in fine red ink; the akhbah and the sutun are in blue; the kufic and kufic al-wall (a joining kufic) are indicated by a green circle. The verse endings are marked by decorative trefolos in yellow. This Maghribi script is semi-monumenal, highly disciplined and well dispersed on the page. The script is extremely clear and legible and the overall impression is one of simple beauty. This fine specimen bears all the characteristics of the great Andalusi Qur'ans produced in Granada. Andalus was the contemporary name for Islamic Spain and the term Andalusi is used here in that sense, rather than its modern Spanish usage. The Qur'anic text shown is from Surat al-Nisa' (4), verses 126 to 128.