A MANUSCRIPT CONTAINING THE 99 ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

NORTH AFRICA
18th/19th CENTURIES
9 x 9 cm (ONE PAGE)
Marocco

Al-Asma' al-Husna (The Beautiful Names) are the 99 attributes of God. The script in which this manuscript is written is clear and has a character all its own. There are various geometrical designs and arabesques packed into this tiny manuscript (the page above is reproduced actual size). A particularly attractive feature is the use of yellow on red and blue grounds. Each attribute is written in the centre of a square surrounded by geometrical designs, with some explanatory notes written in Maghribi zigzagged across the margins.
A Manuscript Containing the 99 Attributes of God

North Africa
16th-17th centuries
9 x 5 cm (one folio)
Maghribi

Al-أسماء al-Hayy (The Beautiful Names) are the 99 attributes of God.
The script in which this manuscript is written is clear and has a character all its own. There are various geometrical designs and arabesques packed into this tiny manuscript (the page above is reproduced actual size). A particularly attractive feature is the use of yellow on red and blue grounds. Each attribute is written in the centre of a square surrounded by geometrical designs, with some explanatory notes written in Maghribi zigzagged across the margins.
A Qur'an Written in
Mehmaq

This is one of the rare Qur'ans written in the now obsolete mehmaq script.
The calligraphy is of exceptional quality.
This illuminated double page has three lines to a page. Notice that the baasalah
is also written in mehmaq. Above and
below these lines, there are decorative
and framed Kufic-Abbasid writings on a
blue ground. Verses are indicated by
round medallions in gold outlined in
blue with the text enclosed within cloud
formations in gold. The ground is
dotted in black with various leaf
designs. The margins are decorated with
two medallions on each page. The
diacritical marks are modern, written
with a fine nib in black and red ink.
A Qur'ān Folio Written in 'Unquivocal' Jali Muhāqqiq

15th century
55 x 101 cm

A Qur'ānic page attributed to the great Muslim bibliophile and master calligrapher, the Timurid Prince Bayanbagh (d. 1483), son of Shah Rojk. Only a few fragments are known to have survived of this important work.

The Arabic name for this script is muhāqqiq, which can be translated as the 'unequivocal', 'unmistakable' or 'distinct' script. It is also possible, and probably more accurate, to call this writing al'far script. Al'far is a hybrid script which combines features of muhāqqiq, naskh, and thulūd. This page is from Surat Ghafir (or al-Mu'min) from the middle of verse 18 to the end of verse 39; two words at the beginning of verse 20 are merged — this is indicated by the decorative circle on top of the word al-sālihā. The muhāqqiq script has particularly impressive word and alif letters — they are the three parallel, sword-like, descending letters towards the end of the second line. Also worth observing is the meticulous rendering of the letter alif, with its slender tāwāsik (a short stroke at the top of a letter resembling the head of a fishhook). The diacritical marks are rendered with a very fine pen.

The Qur'ānic text reads:

The old men have one loyal friend, no intercessor to be heard:
He knows the treachery of the eyes and what the heart conceals. God shall decide... (1)

A Qur'an Folio Written in 'Unequivocal' Jali Muqaddar

Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bakhtari (d. AH 250/CE 870) was the author of al-Jami' al-Suhfik, thought to be one of the six most authentic traditions collected on the Prophet Muhammad. This manuscript also includes the famous long poem in Arabic, Qasida al-Bashri (roughly translated as The Mantle), written in adoration of the Prophet by the great poet al-Busti (d. 1296).

The poem appears here in gold riyasah.

The frontispiece (above) displays superb illumination and decoration. On the right-hand page, written in white ink in 'ufsh script and outlined in gold on a turquoise ground is the title al-Kawabib al-Daraysh. The two folds of this illumination state that this manuscript was written for the royal treasury, in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and features the name of the Manhul Sultan Chalapi (c. 1438-53), who must have commissioned the work.

The manuscript (right) was written by Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Selim, known as Ibn al-Khabbez al-Kasheh al-Dimashq al-Shafi'i, and dated 27th Ramadhan AH 800/CE 1403. Apart from its great historical and literary importance, the calligraphy in this manuscript is superb. The riyasah in gold on a white and turquoise ground, the muqaddar outlined in fine black ink, and the fine riyasah scripts are remarkable.

The folio measures 29 x 19 cm (9 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches) and is written inJali (meaning 'clear' or 'unambiguous') washakq" script.

The exhaustively learned compiler of this manuscript was the great Muslim bibliophile, Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bakhtari (d. AH 250/CE 870), known for his meticulous and detailed catalogues of books and manuscripts. The manuscript is an example of the high quality of Islamic illumination and calligraphy, which were highly valued and collected by the elite of the Islamic world.

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**Footnotes:**

(1) Muhammad, The Calligraphy of Islam, edition of the Islamic Centre, University of Technology, p. 28.

(2) Archivists' transcription of the Qur'an.
A MONUMENTAL MAMLUK QUR'AN

THE USE OF THE Kuran in the Mamluk period

The magnificence of this script cannot be easily described. The elegance of the kufic script (following the surah headings) lends a rare sense of clarity to the reading. The distinctive marks in this Qur'an are written in a fine-shab pen in the modern form. Other technical instructions are in red. For example, in this surah (al-Jāhiyya, XIV), the first word, Ha'w, has a word stop above it. This is to aid correct pronunciation, as well as to avoid confusion. Verse endings are in the shape of a six-petalled rose rendered in gold, with red at the center, and green and red dots between each petal. The chapter headings are drawn in gold and outlined in fine black ink.
The magnificent of this script cannot be easily described. The elegance of the bismillah (following the surah headings) lends a rare sense of clarity to the reading. The diacritical marks in this Qur'an are written in a fine-nib pen in the modern form. Other technical instructions are in red. For example, in this surah (al-jami'a, xlv), the first word, Ha'mam, has a word stop above it. This is to aid correct pronunciation, as well as to avoid confusion. Verse endings are in the shape of a six-petalled rose rendered in gold, with red at the centre, and green and red dots between each petal. The chapter headings are drawn in gold and outlined in fine black ink.

This Qur'an is clearly written in thick black ink in muhaqqiq with diacritical marks in fine black ink. Chapter headings are in white gold shahih on a plant and floral ground, complete with a frame in gold, red and green.

This Qur'an has a further attribute: every word is translated into Persian, written in clear red ink. Sometimes the translation took up more space than the original, in which case two lines appear one underneath the other. The unusually large space between lines of Qur'anic text was designed to hold the translation. The verse endings can be seen as gold circles on a red ground, outlined in turquoise. It is useful to compare this muhaqqiq with that seen opposite. Although both texts follow the calligraphic rules of the script, each calligrapher demonstrates his individuality and personality in his writing.
A QIT'AH WRITTEN IN MASHAQI'A by AHMET AL-KARAHISARI

TURKEY, OTTOMAN PERIOD
6TH CENTURY
11.5 x 25.5 cm (WITH FRAME)
MASHAQI'A AND KURDI

This qit'ah (small calligraphic piece) is in mashaqi'a with the companion script in the lower panel in rayhan. It was written by one of the greatest of all Ottoman calligraphers, Ahmet al-Karahisari (d. 1556). Al-Karahisari's way of writing the kaitifah is distinctive and requires careful study. The rayhan script below has all the perfection, beauty and care that we find in Hamudallah's naskh (see pages 62-3). The signature is written diagonally in the lower left panel, with the lower right panel left blank - in contrast to the use of decoration generally found in qit'ahs (see page 5). The four lines in rayhan contain sayings of the Prophet:

The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "
O son of Adam, you house in this world is in ruins, and what you own at the day of judgement will be closely accounted for.

You start from dust.

And you will end in dust.

How long will you remain hopeful in this ruin?

And how long will you remain unworried and pensively in this mire?

Will you not be ashamed before the great King?

When you need to answer before Him, a poor prisoner.

On that day of travel.

When you will be under dust and ashes of dust?"

A PAGE FROM MASHAQI'A

Exhibit number AH 840/CE 1496
12.5 x 25.3 cm
MASHAQI'A AND RUSI

The Arabic word rusi means 'a patch', thus the mashaqi'a is a collection of fragments, or a patchwork.

This page is part of a mashaqi'a written in excellently bold rusi script, featuring the colophon of the calligrapher, Muhammad al-Hakim al-Hafez al-Turkay al-Safi and the year AH 840, written in rusi script on a ground of scrolls in gold. This is one of the finest existing examples of rusi script. The illumination is particularly interesting because it uses two tones of gold most effectively and mixes a touch of red into the gold (particularly in the lower right-hand corner). A mixture of 38 karat red gold alloy (gold mixed with copper) gives the reddish tone.
A Qīţāh Written in Muraqqa by Ahmad Al-Karāhīšārī

Turkey, Ottoman period
16th century
11.5 x 23.8 cm (total area)
Muraqqa and Qīţāh

Muraqqa (small calligraphic piece) is in muraqqa, with the companion script in the lower panel in was written by one of the greatest of all Ottoman calligraphers, Ahmad al-Karāhīšārī (d. 1536). An ayya's way of writing the house of four is distinctive and requires careful study. The muraqqa script below perfects, beauty and care that we find in the handwriting (see pages 62-3). The signature is generally found in muraqqa (see page 5). The four lines in muraqqa contain sayings of the Prophet:

The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, said *
O son of Adam, your house in this world is in ruin, and what you own at the
day of judgement will be clearly accounted for.
You start from dust,
And you will end in dust.
How long will you remain happy in this ruin?
And how long will you remain satisfied and prosperous in this muraqqa?
Will you not be ashamed before the great King?
When you need to answer before Him, a poor prisoner;
On that day of turmoil.
When you will be under shot and rain of stones?

A Page from a Muraqqa

Illum
Dated AH 848/CE 1446
12.5 x 23.6 cm
Tanzīr and Calligraphy

The word muraqqa means 'a patch', thus the muraqqa is a collection of fragments, or a patchwork. It is part of a muraqqa written in excellent bold tanziq script, featuring the colophon of the Muḥammad al-Makīn al-Hūlī (Turk) al-Yazdi and the year AH 848, written in riq' script on f. scrols in gold. This is one of the finest existing examples of tanziq script. The illumination is clearly interesting because it uses two tones of gold most effectively and mixes a touch of lume into the gold (particularly in the lower right-hand corner). A mixture of 38 karat red gold alloy (gold mixed with copper) gives the reddish tone.