A Qur'an from 17th-Century India

The opening pages of this Qur'an illustrate the mastery of both illumination and calligraphy. The naskh is small, very legible and was written with a sensitive and competent hand.

The chapter headings are rich in gold with some decorative additions in colour. There are two tones of gold used here. Chapter headings are written in naskh script in red ink over a gold ground; they are rendered with a great deal of thought and a good understanding of design. The opening page of the first chapter of the Qur'an, which has seven verses, is usually illuminated or decorated. Here the calligrapher needed five lines to complete the surah. However, for reasons of symmetry and order, the first four lines of the second chapter, which has 280 verses, are written on the second page on the left. This illumination is truly impressive.
The opening pages are written in fine black ink on a gold ground. The verse endings consist of a variety of circular medallions in red and blue. Under each line there is a translation into Persian written in fine naskhī script. The side panels contain diagonal writing in naskh; these texts are the sayings of the Prophet and his grandchildren. The elaborate illuminations on the margins are in blue and white ink on a gold ground and feature impressive geometric patterns. When we view the two pages together the basic lozenge shape, which extends to the margins, becomes obvious. Additional decorative patterns, outlined in white, extend to the outer corners of the pages.
A MUSRAHAT BY THE GREAT HAFIZ OSMAN

Turkey, Ottoman period
Dated AH 1095/CE 1685
24.5 x 17 cm (one folio)

This is a page from a manuscript that contains a work by Hafiz Osman, a renowned calligrapher whose artistry is celebrated in the Ottoman period. The manuscript is of particular interest for its art and the skill of the calligrapher.

The term 'musrahat' in the title refers to an exercise in calligraphy, often used by calligraphers to practice and refine their skills. This particular work was likely used by students of calligraphy as a model or a guide for their own practice.

The calligraphy is of high quality, with the use of beautiful and elegant letterforms. The work is presented in a style that is typical of the period, with intricate designs and decorative elements that enhance the aesthetic appeal.

Hafiz Osman's work is known for its beauty and the precision of his calligraphy. This manuscript is a testament to his skill and the importance of such art forms in the cultural and educational practices of his time.

The dimensions of the manuscript, with its size of 24.5 x 17 cm, indicate it was likely intended for personal use or presentation, rather than for public display.

Overall, this manuscript offers a glimpse into the art of calligraphy and the cultural heritage of the Ottoman period, highlighting the significance of such works in the development of art and education.
**A Mufradat by the Great Hafiz Osman**

**Turkey, Ottoman Period**

**Dated AH 1085/CE 1675**

**24.5 x 17 cm (one page)**

*Twelfth and thirteenth centuries.*

A mufradat is an exercise in calligraphy practiced by master calligraphers and students of calligraphy alike. The term mufradat comes from the word *mufra，“* which indicates singularity; hence the treatment of individual letters as used in their various combinations. This mufradat follows the typical format of two lines of chahih followed by one or two lines of Nash. This book is an excellent example of Hafiz Osman’s work. Both the chahih and Nash scripts radiate elegance and power; their exceptional skill is further noted in the way Hafiz Osman forms the tawwakah so that it gives a dignified and formal appearance to certain letters, particularly the letter *t* which is the first letter of the word ‘Allah’. Dho Muqab, the greatest calligrapher of the time, used the letter *tawwakah* as the basis for his calligraphic system, partly because it is the first letter in vertical extent so its size could be used to calibrate the sizes of the others. The illuminations are of an equally excellent quality. Hafiz Osman has signed his name in a side panel by using the word *sawad* which means ‘rendered’ rather than *wasm* as this indicates that this mufradat passage was intended as an exercise rather than as a piece of finished calligraphy.

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**A Section of a Mufradat by Dariush ‘Ali**

**Ottoman Period**

**Dated AH 1152/CE 1748**

**24.5 x 17 cm (one page)**

*Twelfth and thirteenth centuries.*

This piece is part of a mufradat book. Mufradat books usually end with a quasid, a well-known ancient poem, or sometimes with a proverbial phrase. The lower page has one line in chahih followed by four lines in Nash, ending with the signature of Dariush ‘Ali. The illumination on the side-panel of this page are unique and very attractive.
AN IJAZAH GIVEN BY AL-HAJ AHMED KAMIL TO HIS STUDENT HAFIZ MUSTAFA ISHAN EFE

This is a magnificent and complete example of a truly well-deserved ijaza, the certificate of professional competence awarded to a calligrapher on completion of his long and arduous training. Among the signatures are those of the great calligraphers Mohammad Nazif and Hassan Riza Efendi. The additional value of this ijaza is that the excellent Ottoman illuminator Osman Yumus Efendi has illuminated, signed and dated his work. This is highly unusual: the illuminator's role was typically much less emphasized in the ijaza, which is fundamentally a celebration of calligraphy.

On the first line is a magnificently written hirak calligraph in thuluth script. In the upper right-hand corner a cloud formation descends to emphasize the traditional prelude to the buq'ulah, written in naskh. The following three lines of naskh show the accomplishment of this newly qualified calligrapher. The text is a saying of the Prophet, emphasizing the importance of writing. The third section is again written in a suph thuluth, followed by the three allotted places for the signatures, which are written in naskh (also known as juzuk) script.

In this ijaza we have a wonderful opportunity to see how three great calligraphers render the same script and the splendid illumination by Osman Yumus demonstrates the genius of Ottoman illumination: no trouble, care or expense has been spared here.
A HEYÂH WRITTEN BY MEHMET FU'AD AL-ARZURUMI

This hilyâh is written by the contemporary Turkish calligrapher and teacher Mehmed Fu’ad al-Arzurumi. He is a teacher of both calligraphy and nurbling. Both he and the contemporary Turkish calligrapher Hasan Celebi, were students of the late Ilham Ayaz. Hilyâh is an Arabic name for the verbal image of the Prophet Muhammad, as related by his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the third of the four orthodox caliphs of Islam. ‘Ali’s name is written, in thuluth, on the lower left-hand corner of the upper square on a blue ground. The names of the other caliphs – ‘Umar, Abu Bakr and ‘Uthman – occupy the other three corners. The text of the hilyâh is written in a ring-shaped area, enclosed within a decorated crescent surrounding the name of the Prophet, within the central circle. The hilyâh starts with the bismillah in thuluth (above the square), below is a reference to the Prophet Muhammad in thuluth.