A ROYAL PORTRAIT OF FATH ‘ALI SHAH QAJAR
BY MIHR ‘ALI

This magnificent painting adds one more to Mihr ‘Ali’s already impressive list of royal portraits. He was in the front rank of Persian court painters, together with Mirza Baba and ‘Abdallah Khan, from the very beginning of Fath ‘Ali Shah’s reign (1797-1834). As is usually the case, no biographical details are to be found in Persian sources, and we have to build up our knowledge of him from chance references in European travel books and from the evidence of his own work.

He was born probably about 1770, and his earliest work so far recorded is a large oil portrait of Fath ‘Ali Shah dated A.H. 1212/1798, now in the Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta (1). It seems likely that this portrait formed part of the spoils of the Sind War of 1843, for Sir John Malcolm relates how in 1800 he watched the embarkation of a large royal portrait at Abulshur, destined as a gift to the Amir of Sind, and how the local inhabitants, including the Governor, prostrated themselves as it passed, although it was “carefully packed in a deal box” (2). This was followed in 1803 and 1804 by two portraits of the King now high up on the walls of the Hall of the Marble Throne in the Golestan Palace, Tehran (3). In these three early paintings, all full length seated, Mihr ‘Ali gives the King a rather short neck and full face, but in his later work the monarch’s appearance is enhanced by a certain slimming down of face and neck. Of this later group the earliest, dated 1224/1808, is in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, and represents Fath ‘Ali Shah standing and holding his staff of majesty surmounted by jewelled figure of Solomon’s hoopoe (4). The artist repeated this composition, but giving the King a gorgeous robe of gold brocade dotted with sprays of roses, in 1813. This well-known painting, formerly in the Amery Collection and now in the Negarestan Museum, Tehran, is without doubt the finest of all Persian oil paintings, and could hold its own beside any European royal portrait (5). In the same year Mihr ‘Ali completed another fine portrait in the Hermitage (see page 77), showing the King seated by a window giving on to a finely painted landscape (6). His last recorded portrait, dated to 1818, is also perhaps the last successful, depicting Fath ‘Ali Shah standing, in armour, and holding a bow; the shortness of his legs seems to suggest that the artist had miscalculated the size of his canvas.

In addition to these dated portraits Mihr ‘Ali has left several others in which the dates are absent or illegible. Of these the most noteworthy is that in the Versailles Museum (7). Fath ‘Ali Shah is here seated on a chair-like throne (probably the Tidki i Nadir in the Golestan Palace treasury), and the upper part of the portrait was excellently engraved by L. C. Ruotte of Paris. The caption to this engraving gives the information that the original was brought from Persia as a gift from Fath ‘Ali Shah to Napoleon by the French envoy M. Joubert in 1807, which provides us with a terminus ante quem for the painting. Two other fine portraits of the King, one signed but with illegible date (8) and the other attributable to Mihr ‘Ali on stylistic grounds, are in private collections; the former is almost identical with the one now offered for sale, except that the King’s robe is dark green (see page 77). It may be mentioned here that the Carthon House day-book records the arrival of ‘three portraits of the Emperor of Persia’s family, including a portrait of the Emperor himself’ presented by George III’s ambassador, Sir Gore Ouseley, in April 1812. None of these is now to be found among the Royal Collections, and it may well be that the ‘portrait of the Emperor himself’ is to be identified as one of those mentioned above, or even as the one now offered for sale.

Of course Mihr ‘Ali’s oeuvre is by no means confined to single figure portraits of his royal master. He decorated the interior walls of the Imam i Nasir (‘New Building’), a palace at Isfahan built for Fath ‘Ali Shah about 1800, with a whole gallery of historical and legendary monarchs and heroes, as recorded by Sir William Ouseley (9). One or two of these have recently appeared on the London market. The huge (12 ft x 17 ft) painting of Fath ‘Ali Shah and his sons hunting, formerly in the India Office and now hanging on the ceiling (!) of Rashtrapati Bhavan (the former Viceroy’s residence), New Delhi, may well be his, though I have only a small photograph to go by. And one of the pictures of ladies from the Amery Collection in the Negarestan Museum, Tehran also seems to be Mihr ‘Ali’s work (10). That he was also an accomplished painter in lacquer is shown by a splendid binding in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, signed and dated 1218/1803 (11). It is of the traditional rose and nightshade (gul-bulbul) design.

No further oil paintings by Mihr ‘Ali are recorded after 1815, but we are given a last glimpse of this great artist in a small watercolour of a man’s head, inscribed as having been executed by him in 1829 as a model for his pupil Aba’i Hasan Gaffari (12). This latter, generally known by the title of Sani al-Mulk (‘Painter of the Kingdom’) conferred on him by Nasr al-Din Shah in 1861, was arguably the greatest of the later Qajar artists, and it is surely appropriate that he should have been a pupil of the greatest painter in the early years of the dynasty.

B.W. Robinson

Notes:
1. Will be reproduced in the last volume of the Cambridge History of Iran (forthcoming)
3. R. Eitingerhausen and E. Yarshater (editors), Highlights of Persian Art, Boulder(Col.) 1975, p. 335. (By a misprint this reproduction is captioned as being the Calcutta portrait).
4. S. J. Falk, Qajar Paintings, London 1972, fig. 14
5. Falk, pl. 15
6. Falk, fig. 13
8. Falk, fig. 13.
10. Falk, pl.18.
12. Reproduced by Yahya Zoka in his excellent pair of articles on Sani-al-Mulk in Namen va Mardom, Nos. 10 & 11.
The Property of a Lady

186 Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar (reigned 1797-1834), dressed in his full court costume kneeling before a window against a jewelled bolster set on a red pearl rug with gold border, his tall crown with a large ornament (jiqa) set with diamonds and a single emerald and three black feather aigrettes with pearls at the top, his long-sleeved robe with jewelled epaulettes and cuffs, the body set with large rubies, the arm-bands set with massive diamonds and rubies, a dagger stuck in the jewel-studded belt from which hangs his favourite sabre, his heavily-jewelled mace placed at his knees, a jewelled bottle in foreground, signed by Mihr 'Ali, Qajar, probably Tehran, dated A.H.1225 /A.D.1810.

Oil on canvas with use of gold for the jewels and their settings, the top corners canted as for an arched setting, titles of Fath 'Ali Shah and a four-line poem within gold cartouches in window opening, Mihr 'Ali’s signature written in black at bottom left corner (now slightly worn with partial loss of the figures of the date), refined and stretched, 2 metres 37cm. by 1 metre 20cm.

This is the most important Qajar painting to come onto the market since the sale of Mihr ‘Ali’s standing portrait of Fath ‘Ali Shah in 1969 as part of the Amery Collection, now in the Negarestan Museum, Tehran. A portrait of Fath ‘Ali Shah attributed to Mihr ‘Ali was sold in these rooms July 1975, lot 230. A portrait of an Indian prince, signed by Mihr Ali, was sold at Christie’s 11th April 1989, lot 41, and a pair of historical portraits signed by him were sold 4th July 1985, lots 197 and 198. A portrait of Fath 'Ali Shah signed by another celebrated artist, Mirza Baha, was sold in our rooms in New York 30th May 1986, lot 118.

Provenance:
2. Possibly brought from Persia by Sir Gore Ouseley (1770-1844), while King George III’s ambassador extraordinary in Persia in 1812 (see above).
3. Acquired by Monsieur Luc Gauthier, President of the French Chamber of Diamond Merchants from circa 1910 until 15th January 1912, and Mayor of the 3ème arrondissement of Paris between 1917 and 1932. It is thought that the acquisition was made circa 1910-12.
4. Sold here by order of the descendants of Luc Gauthier.
The Painting:

Many of Mîhr ‘Alî’s court portraits of his patron Fath ‘Alî Shah were produced for a definite political purpose. These pictures were invariably sent back with foreign missions and ambassadors who had visited the Persian court to be presented to their respective monarchs. The intention must have been that royalty and heads of state should be impressed by the imposing nature of these grand and dazzling depictions of the Shah. Accounts of European travellers who saw Fath ‘Alî Shah in his full court splendour tell us of the quantities of dazzling jewellery about his person which made it difficult to make out the features of the Shah’s face. From those descriptions it is possible to appreciate that these portraits are not as lavishly over-stated as may at first appear. Indeed the heavily-jewelled articles of court regalia depicted in this and other of Mîhr ‘Alî’s royal portraits are still to be seen amongst the Crown Jewels of Iran. See V. B. Meen and A. D. Tushima, Crown Jewels of Iran, Toronto, 1968, pp. 72 (the Crown with qipah), 74 (Fath ‘Alî Shah’s favourite sabre), 75 (the mace), 112 (the jewelled bottle), 53 (the Darya-i Nur diamond which features as the centrepiece of one of Fath ‘Alî Shah’s arm-bands).

The Shah’s titles, written within the cartouche against the window opening, are appended with a four-line poem which further glorifies the royal personage of the King. These verses are identical to those found on Mîhr ‘Alî’s standing portrait of Fath ‘Alî Shah now in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad (see details on page 78), and read:

As-sultan fals’alî shah qajar.
be-kam-e khud yi pak paurshedegar,
vidi nagh-e in namaz shahriyar,
che in afarineh bar anzati,
chahar afaride ke khod khati,

“The Sultan, Fath ‘Alî Shah Qajar,
As You desired, O Pure Omnipotence,
You created this celebrated king,
As You embellished this creation,
You created as You wished”

(Reading and translation courtesy of Manijeh Bayani-Wolpert)

Note on Conservation:
The painting has been recently relined and conserved under the supervision of Sotheby’s conservation department. In addition to some flaking at the edges of the picture, particularly of the brown pigment at the bottom, a vertical tear ran down the Shah’s beard from below his left cheek almost to the level of the top of the bolster. It is possible that the red pigment overlaying gold to represent rubies has reduced in intensity with the passage of time. These things considered, the condition of this portrait is very good for a Qajar picture of this period. The pre-conservation condition of the painting has been documented.

See also cover illustrations for details

£150,000-200,000
Other Properties

187  Portrait of a girl musician playing the kamanchah, she kneels within a chamber, Qajar, early nineteenth century

oil on canvas, repaired, relined, 90 by 97cm.

£3,500-4,500
Portrait of a girl musician with a small drum under her arm, she kneels within a chamber, Qajar, early nineteenth century

Oil on canvas, repaired, relined, 86 by 97 cm.

£3,500-4,500

PRINTED BOOKS

189 Robinson, B.W. (editor). Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book

Some colour illustrations, original cloth, dust jacket, 4to, London, 1976

£80-100

190 Pope (Arthur Upham) A Survey of Persian Art, vols. I-VI, with index volume

Text with numerous line drawings, black and white and colour plates, original blue cloth, faded, each volume with bookplate, folio, Oxford University Press, 1938 and 1939

£2,000-2,500


(11)

£150-200


(9)

£120-180


(7)

£120-180
**CALLIGRAPHY AND ILLUMINATION**

196 Two leaves from a manuscript of Firdausi's Shahnama known as the “Small Shahnama”, Persia, probably Shiraz, c.1240

29 lines to the page written in six columns of naskh script, double intercolumnar rules in red, margins ruled in red and gold, remarqued in the nineteenth century with a commentary in nasta‘liq, discolouration, in mounts, test area 155 by 120mm.; and four other illuminated leaves

(4)

£600-800

197 Two illuminated leaves from a manuscript of Amir Khusru’s Khamsa, with a fine headpiece in colours and gold, probably Herat, mid-fifteenth century

21 lines to the page written in four columns of nasta‘liq script, double intercolumnar rules in gold, margins ruled in blue and gold, heading in gold within a panel hatched in gold, one illuminated headpiece in colours and gold, edges badly foxed, dampstaining, in mounts, leaf 230 by 156mm.; and three other illuminated leaves from same manuscript

(5)

£300-500

198 A legal document in scroll form, Arabic manuscript on paper, Mamhuk, written at Damascus, dated A.H.857/A.D.1453

text written in a hurried mamluki naskh script in black ink, significant sentences picked out in gold naskh script, numerous inscriptions written by various witnesses at end of text, badly waterstained and creased, browned, edges foxed, approximately 3 metres by 32cm.

£300-500

199 Two illuminated leaves from a manuscript of Nizami’s Khamsa with the headings for Haft Paikar and Sharafnama Ishkandari, text copied by the scribe Ali al-Ratib, Turkman, c.1490

text written in four columns of elegant nasta‘liq script, double intercolumnar rules in gold, margins ruled in blue and gold, catchwords in wide margins, slight discolouration, in mounts, 270 by 170mm.

(2)

£400-600

200 An illuminated leaf from a manuscript of Firdausi’s Shahnama, Persia, c.1500

text written in four columns of elegant nasta‘liq script, double intercolumnar rules in gold, margins ruled in gold, catchword in wide margin, one illuminated headpiece in colours and gold, corner rather thumbed, waterstaining restricted to outer border, in mount, 326 by 290mm.

£200-300

201 An illuminated leaf from a manuscript of Persian poetry, Persia, sixteenth century

12 lines to the page written in two columns of elegant nasta‘liq script, on gold-sprinkled paper, double intercolumnar rules decorated with intertwining floral motifs in gold, heading in white on illuminated panel, borders of stencilled paper, waterstaining, in mount, 266 by 170mm.; and three other leaves with stencilled borders

(4)

£200-300

202 Ten illuminated leaves from a manuscript of Persian prose, Persia, seventeenth century

9 lines to the page written in elegant nasta‘liq script, significant words picked out in blue, margins ruled in colours and gold, inner borders decorated with floral motifs in colours and gold, outer borders richly decorated with floral motifs in gold, one leaf in mounts, 280 by 177mm.

(10)

£200-300
203  Sixty-four manuscript text leaves, Middle East, fifteenth to nineteenth century

including leaves from a Mamluk Qur’an, Maghribi Qur’an, manuscript of Persian poetry, an Armenian hymnal, and an Ethiopic manuscript, each leaf in mount, 390 by 295mm, and smaller

£400-600

204  An illuminated leaf from a manuscript of Persian poetry, Persia, early seventeenth century

16 lines to the page written horizontally and diagonally in four columns of elegant nasta’liq script, illuminated cornerpieces, margins ruled in colours and gold, catchword in wide margin, heading in white on illuminated panel, waterstaining restricted to borders, in mount, 374 by 239mm; and a collection of illuminated leaves

(a collection)

£1,000-1,500

205  Eleven album pages of calligraphy in nasta’liq script signed by the scribes Musaffar Ali, Muhammed Bagir, Hidaratullah, and Abul-Bapa’i al-Musavi, Mughal, one album page dated A.H.1099/A.D.1687

text written horizontally and diagonally in elegant nasta’liq script, borders richly decorated with various floral patterns in colours and gold, album page 353 by 215mm.

£800-1,200

206  Album page of nasta’liq calligraphy signed by the scribe Muhammad Karimuddin Muhammad, Mughal, late eighteenth century

7 lines to the page written diagonally in nasta’liq script in black, each line contained within a cloud-band, margins ruled in red and gold, in mount, 237 by 149mm; and four other album pages

£300-500

207  Hilye (description of the personality of the Prophet), signed by Muhammad Tahir, Ottoman, c.1800-20

central circle with 9 lines written in neat naskhi script, gold rosettes between sentences, interspersed with gold and coloured decorative designs, the four corners containing the names of the four Psious Caliphs written in black script against a floral design, two panels of thuluth script and a lower section written in naskhi script, illuminated panels to either side with floral sprays in colours and gold, blue and gold decorative borders, slight waterstaining, 481 by 322mm.

£1,000-1,500

208  Prayer scroll on gazzelle skin with text incorporated in figures of Imams, Qajar, second half of nineteenth century

text written in cursive script in red, black and gold ink, text forming various shapes of Imams, mythological animals and birds, numerous tables, crossed, edges frayed, approximately 2 metres by 9cm.

£800-1,000
210 Album of calligraphy, Arabic manuscript on paper commissioned for Mirza Sayyid Ali, and copied by various scribes including Mirza Kujak Shirazi, Muhammad Shafi' al-Shirazi, Zayn al-Abidin, and Muhammad Hadi, Qajar, dated between A.H. 1222 and 1230/A.D. 1807-1814

26 album pages, text written in naskhi script in black on coloured paper, margins ruled in colours and gold, coloured borders, slight discolament and waterstaining otherwise in good condition, lacquer binding with central medallions and outer borders decorated with Qur'anic verses copied by Muhammad Shafi', some flaking, rebound, 300 by 192mm.
£1,000-1,500

211 Two album pages of naskhi calligraphy written in gold, signed by Ali al-Tabataba'i, Qajar, dated A.H. 1274/A.D. 1857

8 lines to the page written in naskhi script in gold on black paper, double interlinear rules in gold, laid down on an album page with borders richly decorated with interwining floral motifs in colours and gold, album page 295 by 195mm.; and three Qur'an leaves, two album pages of découpé ornamental calligraphy, and a Persian miniature
£600-800

FIRMANS

212 Berat (letters patent) of Sultan Mustafa III (reigned 1757-1774), Constantinople, dated A.H. 12th Jumada I 1175/A.D. 9th December 1761

on three sheets of paper glued together end to end, text written in 19 lines of divani script in gold, red and black ink, first and second lines are in gold, the remaining lines are divided into thirds and each third is written in a contrasting colour: red/gold/red, gold/black/gold, black/gold/red, gold/red/gold, or red/gold/black, each line rising to the left in sefine style, gold inserted commas in alternate rows of three and four arranged to form seven columns down the text, creased, framed, broad 1 metre 20 by 52cm.

Subject:
Upon his accession in 1757, Sultan Mustafa had ordered that all berats be renewed, a useful way of filling his treasury with fees charged upon the issue of such documents. As a consequence, the Swedish ambassador at the Sublime Porte had requested that a new berat be issued to the bearer, "Nikolou Franco velvedi Mihail" (Niccolo Franco, son of Michele), the Swedish consul at the port of Narda in Epirus (now Arta, Greece). He had held this post since A.H. 176th Rajab 1155/A.D. 17th September 1742, when a berat had been issued to him by the Sultan's late cousin, Sultan Mahmud I (reigned 1730-54).
By virtue of this document Niccolo Franco was empowered to act as consul at
Norda, where he was to supervise the affairs of Swedish merchants and “those
sailing under the Swedish flag”, an important point as the consul and many
of the merchants under his jurisdiction were Swedish by adoption rather than
by birth. The consul was to give assistance to those merchants who found
themselves in difficulties, while the merchants were to pay him the fees due to
him. The relationship between the consul and the merchants under Swedish
protection on one side and Ottoman subjects on the other was to be regulated
by the capitulations signed by Sweden and the Porte. These allowed the consul
a number of privileges. For example, he was not to be imprisoned by the local
authorities and any case brought against him was to be referred to the Porte.
In legal cases where both parties were Swedes the consul was to adjudicate in
accordance with their own law, but he could, if he so wished, refer any case
to the Islamic court, where it was to be settled in accordance with the shari’a.
Any slave he could prove to be a Swedish subject was to be freed, whether or
not he or she had become a Muslim, and any Swedish ship seized by pirates
was to be handed over to him along with its crew and its cargo. In addition,
he was free to make enough wine for his own needs and for those of his men.
£2,000-2,500

213 Wasiyta of Shems Bey Fenarizade, Turkish and Arabic manuscript on
paper, with tugra of Sultan Selim I (reigned 1512-1520), Ottoman, dated
A.H.923/A.D.1517

123 leaves, 9 lines to the page written in elegant divani script in black ink, gold discs between verses, margins ruled in gold, catchwords in wide margins, tugra of Sultan in black outlined
in gold, waterstained throughout, discoloredation, brown morocco with central medallions and
borders tooled in blind, slightly worn, rebound, with flap, 264 by 171mm.

The Fenarizade Family:
Shems Bey belonged to the prominent Ottoman family of Fenarizade, the
descendants of the celebrated jurist Molla Shemsuddin Muhammad el-Fenari,
who lived between about 1350 and 1431 and was traditionally regarded as the
first chief mufti of the Ottoman empire, a post later known as the Shafi’i imam.
The descendants of Molla Fenari’s young son, Yusuf Bali, also held high judicial
office. The latter’s son, Ali ibn Yusuf Bali, held the post of Kazalar on a number
of occasions, while Ali’s two sons, both called Muhammad, became qadi of
Istanbul. The elder brother, usually known as Muhammad ibn Chelebi, is
thought to have held the post between 1515 and 1517, and the younger brother,
known as Muhyyiddin Chelebi, is thought to have held it between 1520 and 1522;
they both went on to higher office, and Muhyyiddin was Shafi’i imam between
1545 and 1565. It is a curious fact that both brothers signed themselves
“Muhammad ibn Ali al-Fanari”.

213
The descendants of Molla Feniari's elder son, Muhammadshah, also distinguished themselves in the service of the Ottoman state. One of his grandsons, Fenarizade Zeyneddin Chelebi, became qa'di of Damascus in 1516 and died as qa'di of Aleppo in 1520. Another was Shems Bey himself, who rose through the ranks of the Ottoman bureaucracy to become Chief Registrar of the Imperial Treasury. A Shems Bey or Shemsuddin Pasha is listed in the standard sources as serving in this post between 1514 and 1516; this waqfiyya shows him to have been Fenarizade Shems Bey, and also demonstrates that he was still in the post in 1517. By 1522, when a supplementary waqfiyya was drawn up, Shems Bey was acting as governor of the sanjak of Teke-ili in southern Anatolia.

The manuscript:
The manuscript contains two separate documents, the main waqfiyya dated 1517 (pages 20-124) being preceded by the supplementary deed dated 1522 (pages 1-16); page 19 is blank. When the manuscript was re-assembled one of the leaves was misplaced, so that pages 15 and 16 should read immediately after page 2. The main deed begins with a certification of its conformity with the Shari'ah signed by "Muhammad ibn Ali al-Fanari", who describes himself as "mael at Constantinople" (page 25). The supplementary endowment deed begins with a similar certificate by "Muhammad ibn Ali al-Fanari", who describes himself as "qa'di at the Aboele of the Sultanate, the city of Constantinople" (page 1). As the dates of the two documents (1517 and 1522) make it clear that the signatory of the certificate on the main deed is Muhammadshah Chelebi, and the signatory of that on the supplementary deed is Muhyiddin Chelebi, this manuscript offers us an excellent means of distinguishing between the signatures of the two brothers.

Both deeds begin with a preface written in praise of God, His Prophet Muhammad and the Prophet's family (pages 20-23 and 2 and 15). In the main waqfiyya this is followed by the tughra of Sultan Selim I, which reads "Selim Shah, son of Bayezid Khan, the ever victorious" (page 24), and then the certificate of Muhammadshah Chelebi (page 25). The main text begins with an introduction setting out the reasons for a good Muslim to devote his worldly goods to charitable causes (page 26-29). The fact that the act of endowment enshrined in the waqfiyya took place in the reign of "Sultan Selimshah Bey" is introduced; his encomia occupy three pages (29-32). Then Shems Bey is introduced; his encomia occupy another three pages (33-35).

The act of endowment is then recorded and the property endowed is listed (pages 35-36). The latter included nine watermills containing twenty grindstones, all in the city of Bursa or nearby districts (pages 30-34); four saltmills in the village of Yenisehir (pages 46-50); and a great deal of urban property in Bursa that had either been bought or developed by Shems Bey himself (pages 50-72). Most of pages 72 and 73 have been left blank, presumably to allow for additions.

The revenue from these properties were to be used in a number of ways. The first, and most touching, was that ten Qur'an reciters were to be paid one atche per day to recite one thirtieth of the Qur'an at the grave of the founder's wife, Aische Hatun, daughter of Muhammad Bey, who lay near the mausoleum of Molla Shemsuddin Muhammad el-Fenari in Bursa (pages 75-84). The second pious purpose on which the endowments' revenues were to be spent was the school he had erected at the village of Aksu in the mountains between Inegol and Bursa (pages 84-86). The third purpose was the maintenance of the endowed buildings and the payment of ground rents (pages 86-94).

The next section (pages 95-105) deals with a number of practical matters, such as the collection of rents, the maintenance of buildings and the appointment of an attendant for the lavatory Shems Bey had built near the tomb of Emir Sultan in Bursa. The founder also set aside a large daily payment for the victualing of the madrasa of his great-grandfather, Molla Feniari, in Bursa (pages 105-111) and another for the support of his family (pages 111-114). The exact size of the latter sum is difficult to judge, since wording of the deed has been tampered with on all four occasions that the sum is mentioned. The appointment of the officials who were to administer the endowments is regulated (pages 114-117), and the document concludes with a description of the actual establishment of the waqf (pages 117-123). This took place in the last days of Ramadan A.H.929/7-16th October A.D.1527 in the presence of the Grand Vizier, Piri Muhammad Pasha, of Kemal Bey, the commander of the Istanbul garrison, of Abdulsselam Bey, the Sultan's commissioner for the capital, who was also the first administrator of the endowments, and of a number of treasury clerks and other dignitaries. On page 124 there is also a list of witnesses, who include Molla Sheherif Ibn Ivaç, the qa'di of Galata.

The drawing of the supplementary deed on pages 1-18 seems to have been occasioned by the death of Asaf Chelebi, a son of Shems Bey. It is concerned with the addition of one mill with four grindstones on the sea shore in the district of Yalova, two mills with four grindstones in the district of Mishalich and 30 shops in Bursa to the endowments of Shems Bey, but its main purpose is to direct that three Qur'an reciters were to be paid to recite one thirtieth of the Qur'an per day for the souls of his son Asaf Chelebi and his wife Anise Hatun.


Sotheby's are indebted to Mr. T. Stanley for assisting in the cataloguing of this lot.

16,000-8,000
Illuminated firman of Sultan Ahmed II (reigned 1691-1695), Ottoman, written at Edirne, dated A.H.1105/A.D.1693

on three sheets of paper glued together end to end, text written in 17 lines of elegant divani script in black except for first line which is written in gold, each line of text sprinkled in gold and rising to the left in reffine style, text interspersed with gold discs, tugra of Sultan written in red above text, slight waterstaining and creasing otherwise in good condition, 1 metre 82 by 46cm.

By the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566) the Ottomans had developed a theory of the state that held that all the land they had taken from the Byzantine empire and the other Christian states of South-East and Eastern Europe belonged to the sultan quas sultan. This theory seems to have cast (convenient) doubt over the right of a particular sultan to give his land away. As a result it became the custom for sultans to re-issue their predecessors’ deeds of gift, known as mülkname or timlîname, upon their accession. The fact that the recipient had to pay a fee for the privilege may have given some impetus to the practice. It may have been viewed as a way of taxing the select band of well-born landowners who held their estates as mülk (private property), thereby helping to balance the drain on the treasury caused by another part of the accession rites - the presentation of gifts to the Janissaries and other servants of the state. In some cases this custom led to the creation of a series of fine fermandas that stretched over several centuries. These documents known as mukarrarname, repeated the wording of the last in almost every detail.

This firman of Sultan Ahmed II is part of such a series. It repeats the wording of a mülkname granted by Sultan Selim II (reigned 1566-1574) to his Grand Vizier, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha died (1579).

In this particular case the land to which the document mainly refers was not granted directly by the Sultan to his Grand Vizier. It consisted principally of land that the vizier had purchased from a person named Piri Agha; the mülkname was the sultan’s confirmation of that purchase. The estate involved was the village of Armanagh-shahu in the district of Ruskastro in the sanjak of Silistra, an area now in eastern Bulgaria, near Varna. Together with the village, Mehmed Pasha bought the rent from the meadows, reed-beds, winter pastures, empty land and fisheries in the village. The document also ratified the vizier’s acquisition of a large number of plots of “forested and infertile” land in the same region.

This firman of Sultan Selim II is also known from another mukarrarname. This is in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul and was issued by Selim’s son Sultan Murad III (reigned 1574-1595). See Aysegül Nadir, ed., Imperial Ottoman Fermanda, no. 21.

Sotheby’s are indebted to Mr. T. Stanley for assisting in the cataloguing of this lot. £6,000-8,000
QUR'AN LEAVES

215 Vellum Qur'an leaf in kufic, Egypt or Arabia, ninth/tenth century

16 lines to the page written in kufic script with diacritics in red, three strokes in brown between verses, sunk heading in red contained within a panel decorated with an interlace design filled with colours, holes affecting text crudely repaired, browned, waterstaining, in mount, 185 by 230mm.

£800-1,200

216 Large vellum Qur'an leaf in kufic, North Africa, ninth/tenth century

16 lines to the page written in elongated kufic script with diacritics in red and green, one coloured circular device in margin, lower part of folio missing with loss of last line of text and lower margin, torn affecting some words, edges frayed, cutted, browned, 305 by 344mm.

£2,000-3,000

For other leaves from same Qur'an see P. Pal (editor), Islamic Art, LACMA, 1973, nos. 141b-h, p.84 which were sold in our rooms on 15/16th April 1985, lots 40-44; 28th April 1981, lot 177, and 21/22 November 1985, lots 284-285.

218 Two conjugate vellum Qur'an leaves in kufic, Abbasid, tenth century

7 lines to the page written in kufic script with diacritics in red and green, damaged, 85 by 125mm.; and another leaf from same manuscript, and a collection of Qur'an and manuscript leaves on paper

(a collection)

£300-500

219 Vellum Qur'an leaf in kufic, Abbasid, tenth century

7 lines to the page written in kufic script with diacritics in red, small roundels between verses, illuminated rosette in margin, sunk heading in gold, defects to margins not affecting text, slightly creased, 104 by 165mm.; and another vellum Qur'an leaf in kufic. (2)

£300-500

220 Two conjugate vellum Qur'an leaves in kufic, Abbasid, tenth century

7 lines to the page written in clear kufic script with diacritics in red, illuminated markers between verses, waterstaining affecting some words, edges frayed, browned, 113 by 177mm.

£500-800

221 Vellum Qur'an leaf in kufic, Persia, tenth century

14 lines to the page written in elongated kufic script with diacritics in red, small holes affecting text, skilfully repaired, waterstaining, 137 by 201mm.

£500-800

222 Large Qur'an leaf in naskhi on paper, Mamluk, fourteenth century

13 lines to the page written in clear naskhi script with diacritics in black, gold rosettes decorated with alternating red and blue dots between verses, illuminated circular device in margin, trimmed with loss of part of illuminated device, slightly creased, some rubbing, in mount, 368 by 279mm.; and thirty-three other Qur'an leaves

(33)

£1,000-1,500

223 Large Qur'an leaf in naskhi on paper, Persia, fourteenth century

11 lines to the page written in large naskhi script with diacritics in black, interlinear Persian translation in red, gold rosettes decorated with red and blue dots between verses, illuminated circular device in wide margin, edges slightly frayed, browned, 485 by 340mm.

£200-300
224 Two conjugate Qur’an leaves in naskh on paper, Persia, fourteenth century
7 lines to the page written in clear naskh script with diacritics in black, gold florets decorated with red and green dots between verses, illuminated circular devices in wide margins, some discoloration, in mount, leaf 176 by 110mm.
£200-300

225 Large Qur’an leaf in muhaqqaq on paper, Mamluk, fourteenth century
13 lines to the page written in elegant muhaqqaq script with diacritics in black, text interspersed with gold rosettes decorated with blue dots, illuminated circular devices in margins, sura headings in thuluth in gold, trimmed with loss of small area of illumination of one of the illuminated devices, 461 by 390mm.
£200-300

226 Qur’an leaf in naskh on paper, Mamluk, fourteenth century
13 lines to the page written in clear naskh script with diacritics in black, gold rosettes decorated with alternating red and blue dots between verses, sura headings in gold, waterstained, creased, margins skilfully repaired, 360 by 237mm; and eight other Qur’an leaves (9)
£400-600

227 Two Qur’an leaves in muhaqqaq on paper, Mamluk, Egypt, second half of fourteenth century
12 lines to the page written in elegant muhaqqaq script with diacritics in black, significant words picked out in gold, gold rosettes decorated with alternating blue and red dots between verses, margins ruled in blue and gold, illuminated devices in margins, sura headings in thuluth in white on illuminated panels in colours and gold, one folio smudged, 407 by 317mm.
(2)
Other leaves from this now dispersed Qur’an were sold in these rooms on 28th April 1981, lot 190 and 13th October 1981, lot 145. Two other leaves are in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, see Esin Atil, Art of the Arab World, Washington 1975, pp.96-99
£1,000-1,500

228 Qur’an leaf in naskh on paper, Ottoman, second half of fifteenth century
9 lines to the page written in naskh script with diacritics in black, interlinear Persian translation in black, gold colab-hands between verses, margins ruled in gold, catchwords in margins, waterstaining restricted mainly to borders, in mount, 340 by 240mm.
Compare with a Qur’an written for Sultan Mehmed Fatih in the third quarter of the fifteenth century sold in these rooms on the 8th April 1975, lot 202.
£300-500

229 Album page with surat al-Fatiha written in nasta’liq, signed by Muhammad Rahim, Mughal, c.1680
Text written in elegant nasta’liq script, each line within a cloud-band, ground and borders richly decorated with intertwining floral motifs in colours and gold, waterstaining with loss of areas of painted surface, album page 356 by 221mm.
Qur’an texts written in nasta’liq are very rare.
£600-800
230 Qur'an leaf in muhaqqaq on paper, Shiraz, second half of sixteenth century

12 lines to the page written in alternating black and gold muhaqqaq script, each line of text on a separate panel of coloured paper, illuminated markers between verses, margins ruled in colours and gold, illuminated devices in wide margins, crowned, wormholes mostly restricted to margins, some crude repairs, edges slightly frayed, 441 by 293mm.

Other leaves from same Qur'an were sold in our rooms on 17/18th July 1978, lots 177-179, and 9th October 1978, lots 3-4

£600-800

231 Qur'an leaf in naskhi on paper, Persia, sixteenth century

11 lines to the page written in clear naskhi script with diacritics with black, gold discs decorated with blue dots between verses, margins ruled in colours and gold, illuminated circular devices in margins, slight discoloration, in mount, 337 by 227mm.; and eight other Qur'an leaves

£200-300

232 Qur'an leaf in maghribi on paper, North Africa, late seventeenth/early eighteenth century

8 lines to the page written in large maghribi script with diacritics and vowel points in red, green and yellow, worming restricted to margins, waterstaining, in mount, 266 by 198mm.; and fourteen other Qur'an leaves

£300-400

233 Qur'an, Arabic manuscript on paper, Seljuk, Anatolia, thirteenth century

268 leaves, folios 1-9 and 206-268 later replacements, 16 lines to the page, first and last lines on each page written in large naskhi script with diacritics in black, remainder of text written in smaller naskhi script with diacritics in black, gold frames between verses, catchwords, illuminated devices of various shapes in margins, sun headings in gold on illuminated panels in gold and some colour, defective with loss of areas of text and illumination, crudely repaired throughout, nineteenth century brown morocco tooled in blind, crudely rebound and repaired, with flap, 324 by 285mm.

£20,000-25,000