Large illuminated bifolium from a Qur’an manuscript (Sura VIII vv.31-68), Persia or India, c.1550-60

Text in Arabic, 12 lines to the page written in fine naskhi script in black, decorative in black, horizontal decoration of floral motifs in colours on gold ground, gold florals decorated with coloured dots between verses, margins ruled in orange, blue and gold, fine border illumination in colours and gold, trimmed, spine repaired, 350 by 241mm.

From the same Qur’an as lot 10 in this sale.

This finely illuminated double page marks the beginning of the tenth juz. It would have been one of thirty similar double pages in a luxurious manuscript of the Qur’an. Just such a Qur’an was sold in these rooms 27th April 1994, lot 17.

£1,800-2,200

15 Qur’an bifolium in gold thuluth script on paper (Sura II vv.44-84), Ayyubid, Syria or Egypt, c.1200

19 lines to the page written in gold thuluth script outlined in black on brown paper, decorative in blue, voweled in gold, gold roundels between verses, large gold circular designs outlined in blue in margins, edges frayed, trimmed with slight loss of marginal devices, laid down on brown paper, in mould, 250 by 194mm.

This bifolium is an interesting example from the pre-Mamluk period in the Levant. The script is tight and regular and was produced by drawing the outline of the letters and then filling the space with gold. This was a laborious technique which required much skill and patience. The difficulty of keeping the script regular was immense. Another bifolium from the same Qur’an is in the Nasir D. Khali Collection (see D. James, The Master Scribes, London and Oxford 1992, no.3, p.30).

£1,000-1,500

16 Qur’an section (juz V), illuminated Arabic manuscript on pink paper, in a contemporary tooled binding, Egypt or Syria, Mamluk, c.1400

31 leaves, 7 lines to the page written in fine naskhi script in black ink on pink paper, ‘Allah’ spelled out in gold throughout, some grammatically unnecessary alifs picked out in gold, gold roundels decorated with coloured dots between verses, large gold roundels outlined in blue in margins marking textual divisions, folio 1a with large gold roundel containing title of juz and illuminated rectangular panel containing pusam phrase, folios 16-2a with intricate cross-hatching and text surrounded by illuminated panels with gold roundels extending into margins, very slight damp staining in top corners, slightly thumbed, fine contemporary brown morocco binding toolled and stamped in gold and blind with central roundel containing geometric motifs, triangular cornerpieces and border bands, some repairs to edges, contemporary stenciled brown leather doublures, with flap, 291 by 200mm.

The use of pink-dyed paper is an interesting feature. Another section from the same Qur’an was sold at Christie’s, 26th April 1994, lot 34. The binding is a fine example of Mamluk production. For comparative examples see D. Haldane, Islamic Bookbinding, London 1983, pp.44-58; and Bosch, Carnwell and Petherbridge, Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking, Chicago 1981, pp.114-55.

£4,000-6,000
17

Qur'an section (Sura VII v.171-Sura X v.60), illuminated Arabic manuscript in eastern kufic script on vellum, North Africa or Sicily, tenth century

73 leaves, 2 lines to the page written in fine eastern kufic script in brown ink on vellum, no decorative dots, orthographic and orthoepic markings in red with some use of yellow and green, flourishes decorated with gold and red or gold and green dots between verses, the letter ha in red kufic every five verses, divisions of ten verses marked by relevant alif-lam letters in gold kufic on red or green roundels decorated with coloured dots, sura headings (Sura Al-Kafirun, Sura Al-Rahma and Sura Yunus) in gold, opening double page with text surrounded by narrow band of scrolling motifs in gold decorated with red dots and with pomegranate in gold, green and red extending into margins, slight worming at beginning and end, final folio cut with no loss of text, generally good condition, 122 by 173mm.

This is an important vellum Qur’an section which can be attributed to Tunisia or Sicily through an examination of a variety of features. It is horizontal in format, a feature more often associated with western Islamic Qur’ans, and it is on vellum, the use of which ceased in the eastern Islamic lands earlier than in the west. The script comes under the general heading of eastern kufic, but the term eastern kufic is not a wholly effective description for a variety of scripts which were linked in style, but not necessarily in geographical area. F Déroche, in The Abbasid Tradition (London 1992, pp.135-7) describes them as ‘the new styles’. They were used by copy Qur’ans in North Africa as well as the eastern Islamic lands in the tenth century and the script in the present manuscript conforms exactly to the ‘N.S. III’ of Déroche’s discussion.

Another interesting feature of the present manuscript is the particular use of alif-lam letters to indicate the divisions of ten verses and maintain a verse count at the same time. The letter wa appears after ten verses, the laf after twenty, the lam after thirty and so on. The use of alif-lam letters in this way is found in other Qur’ans of the same period, but the particular system found in the present Qur’an is the western alif-lam system, which was used only in North Africa, Beria and the Mediterranean islands.

We can be sure that it is the western system because the sixtieth verses of Sura Al-Kafirun and Sura Al- Raha’at are marked with the letter alif rather than the letter lam.

The closest comparative manuscripts are: a folio from a Qur’an ascribed to late tenth century Tunisia, in the Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait (see Fain Att (ed.), Islamic Art and Patronage, New York, 1990, no.4, pp.58-9), whose script is particularly close to that of the the present section; and a Qur’an on vellum in the Nuroumaniye Library, Istanbul, whose colophon records that it was completed at Palermo, Sicily in 982 AD. Twenty folios from the same manuscript are in the Naif D Khalbi Collection (see F Déroche, The Abbasid Tradition, London 1992, no.81, pp.146-51) and a close comparison between those leaves and the present manuscript shows strong similarities in the script, the illuminated borders between verses, the use of alif-lam letters to mark five and ten verses and in the orthographic and orthoepic markings.

£60,000-£80,000
Small Qur'an section (fz XV), Arabic manuscript in eastern kufic script on paper, in a contemporary brown morocco binding, Persia, c. eleventh century

41 leaves, 7 or 12 lines to the page written in three or four different hands in dark brown ink in eastern kufic script on buff paper, diacritics in black and red, no colophon, lacking one leaf (Sura XV vs.75-83), some staining, some leaves with frayed edges, contemporary blind-tooled brown morocco binding with central rectangular panel with single large trellis design surrounded by border bands of knotted rope motif, worn, 152 by 114mm.

This is a fascinating manuscript. Although not of the highest quality of production or calligraphy, it offers many important insights into the processes of manuscript production in eleventh-century Persia.

The text is written in a least three different hands and, rather unusually, has passages, or whole pages, of repetition of text. Folio 2b, the first page of text, has the opening few verses of Sura XV (Al-Hijr) in a small, neat eastern kufic hand with twelve lines to the page. The latter hand continues until folio 10b, at which point the original, smaller hand with twelve lines per page returns. This continues until folio 25b. Folio 25b is also a small hand of twelve lines per page, but is much less angular and neat. It may be the same scribe having suddenly got tired, or it may be a third scribe. At folio 24b the script changes yet again and reverts to a larger hand of seven lines per page. It is similar to that of ff.20-26, but is not quite the same and may well be the work of a different scribe. This script continues to the end, but deteriorates around folio 30. There also seem to be two or three different papers used. This would indicate that, although the different scripts date from approximately the same time (probably within a century of each other), some of the leaves are replacements. But this possibility is negated by the fact that the different scripts do not start and end on different leaves, but on the a and b sides of the same folios. This aspect would indicate that there were two or more scribes working on the manuscript at the same time. This in turn may account for the passages of repetition in the text.

The binding is also interesting and important. Bindings of this date are extremely rare and the present one, dateable to the eleventh century, must be one of the earliest known Persian bindings. Partly due to its state of disrepair, it shows many interesting aspects which would not normally visible. It is of brown leather with a central panel with a large cross-over design, surrounded by two hands of knotted-rope motifs. This design is typical of what is known of bindings of this date, whether of eastern or western Islamic origin.

continued

The closest comparisons can be found on the bindings of a small eastern kufic Qur'an section sold in these rooms, 30th April 1992, lot 351, which had an ownership inscription dated 1007 AD, and an eastern kufic Qur'an section offered at Christie's, 20th October 1992, lot 235, which was attributed to the early eleventh century. (For comparison to early western Islamic bindings see De Carourghe à Kairouan, 2000 ans d'art et d'histoire en Tunisie, Paris, 1985, pp.232-239). But one of the most interesting aspects of the present binding is that the fore-edge flap has torn off and the topmost sheet of paper covering the paste-board doubure of the lower cover has come away, revealing the four or five leaves of paper used in the paste-board. The topmost leaf is from a Qur'an written in eastern kufic script in black and comprises Sura II (Al- Baqara) vs.215-217 which dates from probably the tenth or eleventh century. It is also possible to see the edges of four other leaves. One is blank and the other three seem also to be Qur’an leaves, although it is not possible to identify the verses.

£8,000-10,000
Large Qur'an, finely illuminated Arabic manuscript in Andalusian script on vellum, Southern Spain or North West Africa, c.1200.

**THE TEXT IS COMPLETE.** 151 brown, 20 lines to the page written in fine Andalusian script in brown ink on vellum, decorated in brown, orthographic and orthoepic marks in red, orange, green and blue/green, the phrase 'la illaha illa Huwa' pickled in gold throughout, gold trefoi devices decorated with blue and red dots between verses, gold device based on the letter ha every five verses, gold floral or quatrefoil device every ten verses, margins profusely illuminated with a variety of designs, with small devices in red, blue and gold referring to textual divisions or pictorial instructions (some slightly trimmed), sawn headings in elaborate western kufic script in gold with edges shaded in red and illuminated palmettes of interwoven strapwork extending into margins, five sawn headings (al-Ifāhā, al-Abharat, al-Ārāf, Maryam, Sad) written in elaborate western kufic script in white, blue or gold on large panels of fine illumination in colours and gold, three further large panels of illumination with text in gold western kufic marking completed quarters of the Qur'an, opening double page with large square panels of fine illumination in colours and gold, and gold, folio 1-5 with edges framed and repaired slightly affecting text, folio 7-8 and 150-1 with edges repaired not affecting text, modern red leather binding, 315 by 250mm.

This is the largest known single-volume Andalusian/Maghribi Qur'an. It is remarkable not only for its size, but also for the profusion, variety and quality of illumination and the consistently fine script.

The only Qur'anic manuscript from this region and period which is larger is a two-volume Qur'an in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul (Ms. 1009), of which single leaves are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Cleveland Museum of Art (see Al-Andalus, exhibition catalogue, New York, 1992, no.35; p.314; and The Islamic World, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1987, pp.56-7; and A. Welch, *Calligraphy in the Art of the Muslim World*, New York 1979, pp.78-1). The size of the present manuscript is 315 by 250mm, but it has been trimmed, and using the marginal illumination as a guide, it is possible to estimate that before being trimmed it measured approximately 360 by 340mm.

After its size, the most striking aspect of the Qur'an is the illumination. It is extraordinary in its quantity, in the size of the panels, in the intricacy of the work and in the variety of designs. The marginal devices are predominantly rounded or scallop-shaped, but there are also large trefoil and quatrefoil devices and many large niche-shaped designs. The dominant colour scheme is red, blue and gold and all devices are surrounded by a serrated outline in blue. The scallop-shaped marginal devices occur every five verses and their shape echoes that of the kufic devices amongst the text. The circular marginal devices occur every ten verses. The palmettes extending from sawn headings are typical of western Islamic illumination, consisting of interwoven foliate strapwork, mostly in red and gold with serrated outlines in blue. Most of the sawn headings, which are written in fine kufic in gold, blue or white with edges shaded in red, stand alone, but five of them are surrounded by panels of elaborate illumination. In addition there are three panels which mark the divisions of each of the quarters of the text and are remarkable for their size. The panel marking the end of the first quarter contains large western kufic script in gold which states the completion of this part and praises God. The panel measures 110 by 110mm, and the vertical letters of the kufic are 55mm in height. The half-page panel of illumination is even larger at 151 by 195mm, and the panel for the heading of Sam Sad, which marks the beginning of the final quarter of the text, measures 90 by 200mm. There is an opening double page with large square panels of illumination in white, red, blue and gold, each measuring 200 by 185mm. (both now rubbed with repairs to the edges).

The general character and certain specific features of the script would point to an Andalusian, rather than North African origin, although it is difficult to determine the geographical origin of a manuscript purely on the basis of the script. Scribes were often very experimental at this period, so that a scribal working in Andalusian style, who was a native of, say, Valencia, could have been resident in Morocco. The salient features of Andalusian script have been pointed out by David James in *The Masa‘e Script*, London 1992, pp.86-8, and the script of the present manuscript conforms to them: the script is angular, neat and relatively small for the size of the folios; the shape of the letters sād, dāl, ṣād and kāf are emphatically elongated; the hamza above is indicated by a red dot and the hamza below by a green dot and the terminal qaf, fā and sūn have their diacritical dots.


£200,000-300,000
Large Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper in Bihari script, India, Sultanate, fifteenth century

436 leaves, 11 lines to the page written in bold Bihari script on buff paper, ‘Allah’ picked out in gold, first line of most sections picked out in gold, interlinear Persian translation in red, gold florals decorated with coloured dots, gold or blue rounds between verses, margins ruled in red and blue, aroid rectangular devices in margins marking section divisions, sura headings in gold, red or blue thuluth or wughayq scripts on coloured or plain panels, four double pages of illumination in colours and gold, dampstaining mostly restricted to upper margins, few leaves with holes or tears, some pigment loss or retouching on panels of sura headings, later red morocco with stamped central medallion and cornerpieces of floral motifs, 461 by 292mm.

£12,000-18,000
**22**  
Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript in scroll form written in minute script on gold-sprinkled paper, Turkey, Ottoman, c.1500

Text of the Qur'an written in fine ghubari script on gold-sprinkled paper arranged in a micrographic design in form of prayers (including names of Turkic emirs) in large thuluth script, sura headings in red ghubari, distinctive of large thuluth in gold, significant phrases of prayers repeated in smaller gold thuluth, interstices of large thuluth occasionally infilled with illumination in colours and gold, margins ruled in blue and gold, one headpiece and two rounds of five illumination in colours and gold at beginning, modern gers leather endpiece, fitted cloth box, length 10.25 metres, width 12.3cm.

**PROVENANCE**

Edward E Ayer.
Acquired by the Newberry Library, Chicago, from Edward E Ayer in 1920, de-accessioned 1994.

Edward E Ayer was a Chicago industrialist who made his fortune from railway engineering. In 1911 he donated part of his collection (which was predominantly of western medieval manuscripts) to the Newberry Library, along with an endowment. In 1920 the Library purchased the remainder from him, including the present manuscript and lots 30 and 74 in this sale.

Although manuscripts of the Qur'an in scroll form have been popular for several centuries, examples of the date and quality of the present scroll are very rare. The illumination at the beginning is very fine, and the script, both the ghubari and large thuluth, is a calligraphic feat of the highest order. The scribe has maintained a startling consistency in the quality of both scripts throughout the length of the text and has infused the design with great inventiveness. At one point the tail of a terminal ya extends back under the main script for sixty-five centimetres. The nearest comparative piece was a fifteenth-century Mamluk prayer scroll sold in these rooms 13th October 1980, lot 92.

£12,000-16,000

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**23**  
Qur'an fragment (parts of Suras II, III, XVIII), illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Egypt, Mamluk, c.1400

57 leaves, 5 lines to the page written in neat muhajjag script in black on cream-coloured paper, text interspersed with gold vauties decorated with coloured dots, illuminated circular devices in margins, sura heading (Surat al-Imran), written in neat thuluth script in gold, slightly damaged, most leaves with repairs in margins, some dampstaining, modern brown leather binding, with flap, 365 by 171mm.

£1,200-1,800
Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, copied by Hafiz Udman, Ottoman, dated A.H.1095/A.D.1683

318 leaves including 2 flyleaves, 15 lines to the page written in fine naskhi script in black ink on buff paper, gold roundels decorated with coloured dots between verses, sura headings in gold thuluth script in ruled panels, margins ruled in blue and gold, goldwork in black, tracery divisions marked in margins in gold, finely illuminated marginal devices of foliate motifs in colours and gold, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, gilt edges, good condition, nineteenth-century brown morocco binding with central medallion of gilt-stamped floral motifs, with flap, 192 by 119mm.

After Sheikh Hamzah, Hafiz Udman is considered the greatest Ottoman calligrapher. He was born in Istanbul in 1645 and died in 1688. He perfected his own particular style of naskhi script, which was to influence future generations of Ottoman calligraphers. He was also a great teacher and numbered the Sultans Mustafa II (reigned 1657-1703) and Ahmad III (reigned 1703-30) among his pupils.

Another Qur'an by Hafiz Udman, of similar style and dimensions, was sold in these rooms 29th November 1986, lot 326.

The present Qur'an is notable not only for its fine quality, but also for its generally good condition. An interesting aspect of the functional side of fine Qur'ans is demonstrated by the present manuscript. On the whole there is very little thumbing of the corners of the pages, with hardly any staining. But the six pages which constitute Surah Yasin are noticeably more thumbed, giving physical evidence of the popularity of this particular chapter.

£15,000-20,000

Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, in a contemporary gilt-stamped binding with gold filigree doublures, Persia, late sixteenth century

324 leaves, 15 lines to the page, first middle and last lines written in fine large rohani script in gold, intervening lines in smaller naskhi script in black, diacritics in black, gold roundels decorated with coloured dots between verses, lateral panels of gold foliate decoration throughout, margins ruled in green, orange and gold, illuminated circular marginal devices, sura headings in gold thuluth script within finely illuminated panels of floral motifs in colours and gold, three double pages of fine illumination in colours and gold, opening double page with text in fine black washstyle on a gold ground with interliner decoration of foliate motifs in green, yellow, orange and white, contemporary brown morocco binding with rectangular panel of gold-stamped foliate motifs and cloud-scrolls, gilt-stamped border cartouches of fine washstyle, doublures of gold filigree over coloured grounds, worn, repaired, re-helked, with flap, 331 by 229mm.

£18,000-22,000
Qur'an section (Juz XV), illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Persia, mid-fifteenth century

19 leaves, 11 lines to the page in brown ink on paper, first, fifth and eleventh lines written in fine large naskhi script, interlinear floral illumination throughout, gold florets decorated with coloured dots between verses, lateral panels with foliate devices in gold, margins ruled in blue and gold, illuminated circular devices in margins with the word 'asir in eastern kufic script in small ten verses, one finely illuminated headpiece in colours and gold, red impressions, stamped brown morocco binding by Muhammad Salaj, dated 1278/1861, rebound, 352 by 212mm.

Contemporary seal impressions on the first and last pages are those of 'Abu Bakr Hassan Ibn Ali' and one with pious phrases in kufic.

£1,500-2,500

Small Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, copied at Mecca, dated A.H.947/A.D.1540

449 leaves, 11 lines to the page written in neat naskhi script on thin paper, gold markers between verses, margins ruled in gold, marginal notations in blue, red and gold, circular and oblong coloured devices in margins, some headings in gold thuluth, one double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, brown morocco binding with stamped central medallion of foliate motifs, rebound, with flap, fitted red leather case, 109 by 78mm.

Manuscripts produced at Mecca are rare and this Qur'an shows an interesting combination of influences. The opening double page of illumination and the naskhi script of the text are typical of contemporary Ottoman Qur'ans. But the bold marginal devices, with their simple design and strong colours, are more reminiscent of the fifteenth-century Qur'ans of Sultanate India.

£1,000-1,500

Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, copied by the female scribe Bint Maqquad Ali, in a contemporary stamped binding, Persia, dated A.H.976/A.D.1568

361 leaves, 12 lines to the page written in fine naskhi script on cream paper, gold florets decorated with coloured dots between verses, margins ruled in colours and gold, occasional marginal commentary in black naskhi script, finely illuminated marginal devices throughout, some headings in white thuluth on panels of fine illumination, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, slight damp staining at edges, some leaves with edges repaired, contemporary gilt-stamped brown morocco binding with floral motifs and cloud-scrolls, gilt now mostly worn, doublures of red morocco with central cartouches of gold filigree over coloured grounds, edges repaired, rebound, 260 by 170mm.

This Qur'an is remarkable because it was written by a female scribe, whose father was a calligrapher of some note in his own right. Maqquad Maqquad is mentioned in Qadi Ahmad’s treatise as having been responsible for inscriptions on the Mir Mafufi band building in Tabriz. He was the copyist of a manuscript of Jami’s Tafsir wa Zad al-Hakim dated 1554 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Ms. Ousey 77) and under the name Maqquad Ali was the copyist of a manuscript of the Diwan of Hafiz copied at Qazvin and dated 1576 sold in these rooms, 190 July 1955, lot 9. Under his full name of Maqquad Ali Shafi Tabrizi he copied two Qur’ans; one dated 1554, now in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ms.1540) and one dated 1566, now in the Asani-Quds Library (Ms. 119). The present manuscript is dated 1568, so his daughter is likely to have been working directly under her father’s guidance. The existence of a father-daughter team of scribes is a very rare phenomenon in both the eastern and western traditions of the arts of the book.

£2,000-3,000
Quran, illuminated Arabic manuscript on cloth-covered and gold-decorated Chinese paper, copied by Bayezid bin Sudeq, Persia, Timurid or Aqqoyunlu, c. 1490.

242 leaves, 15 lines to the page written in fine naskhi script over Chinese paper sprinkled with gold and painted with landscape scenes in gold, numerous lines written in fine naskhi script, divaricata in black, small gold medallions decorated with red or white dots between verses, margins ruled in black and gold, numerous circular and dumbbell-shaped devices in margins throughout, opening double page of illuminated, left-hand page fully illuminated in gold and red, folio 1 later replacement, two further leaves early replacements, some creasing and flaking of paper surface, edges repainted on leaves at beginning and end, final folio somewhat rubbed, modern brown morocco binding, with flap, in fitted leather case.

This Quran is a very rare manuscript written on Chinese treated and decorated paper, of which only nine similar examples exist, eight of which are in public collections. It is a fascinating example of the originality of the ateliers of fifteenth century Persia and it represents the physical evidence of the cultural and diplomatic relations between Ming China and Timurid Persia.

The colophon records that the manuscript was copied by a certain Bayezid bin Sadeq, but unfortunately the rest of the colophon is badly rubbed, preventing the accurate reading of further details. After lengthy examination of the colophon the following words vaguely suggest themselves:... alDubayri... Jurradi, Rama... sa... shama... According to a report from the British Library prepared for the present owner in 1991, the colophon contains the date 896/1491, but it is no longer possible to read this clearly. Further examination of the colophon may confirm the exact date. The text is written in fine naskhi script in black with many lines emphasised in elegant naskhi. The illumination is typical of the Timurid or Aqqoyunlu style of the third quarter of the fifteenth century.

THE PAPER

The paper has been covered with a thick layer of a grey gesso-like substance, which, according to the report from the British Library, is a mixture of lead white and indigo on a clay base. The paper has then been painted with Chinese landscapes, waves and arborescent scenes in gold, or simply sprinkled with large flecks of gold. As a result of the lead white the paper is very heavy, indeed it is possible to feel the weight of even a single sheet when turning the pages. The weight of the manuscript as a whole is almost a kilogram (2.2 lbs). Another feature of the paper is that it is extremely supple.

The treated and painted Chinese paper links the present manuscript with the following small group.

2. Another volume of the same work, probably a companion volume to no. 1. (Turk and Islam Ercleri Muzei, 1624).
7. Another Aqqoyunlu period Quran (Detroit Institute of Arts, Acc. no.36.325).

Within this group there is a subgroup in which the painted landscape and arborescent scenes on the paper are extremely similar. They are: the present Quran manuscript and numbers 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9 above. The manuscripts listed above are described as being written on 'sawd' paper. The exact substance covering these papers is not known, but it may be that the present manuscript differs from them in the ingredients of its surface layer. This may explain the fact that all of the above mentioned manuscripts include many different coloured papers, whereas this Quran is written on the same coloured paper throughout.

It is likely that all the paper used in these manuscripts originated from the same workshop, possibly situated at Shaoxing on the coast of China, which was associated with the production of such paper. The paper must have started life as large sheets, of which only one side was painted with scenes. In the present manuscript 16 fourteen pages feature scenes or large gold flecks, or both. The gold flecks must have formed an integral part of the decorative scheme of the Chinese artists, since often the flecks appear amongst the landscape or waves. At no point does the 19th and 20th of the same leaf feature the gold decoration. There must have been a further process of much finer gold powder-sprinkling after the completion of the copying of the text, since the shiny gold spots lie on top of the ink. The late fifteenth century calligrapher Sultan Ali Mashhadi commented that Chinese paper was the most suitable for high quality calligraphic work since it made an excellent background for the ink and the gold.