Miniature Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, in a fine jade binding inlaid with gold, rubies and emeralds, India, Mughal, dated A.H.1085/A.D.1674.

202 leaves, 19 lines to the page written in fine minute naskhi script in black ink on cream paper, small gold roundels between verses, margins ruled in gold, text divisions (pas, khuw etc.) marked in margins in gold and red naskhi, sura headings in small gold thuluth within ruled panels, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, thirty further double pages with gold floral decoration in margins, in good condition throughout, later grey jade covers with inlaid floral design of gold, rubies and emeralds, red morocco spine with gilt-painted floral motifs, 92 by 51mm.

This is a precious and jewel-like manuscript of the Qur'an, whose quality of paper, script and decoration is enhanced by the highly unusual addition of an late eighteenth century inlaid jade binding.

£50,000-10,000

Qur'an section (Juz 3), illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper in a fine contemporary gilt-stamped binding, Ottoman, sixteenth century.

28 leaves, 7 lines to the page written in elegant naskh script with diacritics and vowel points in black, 'Allah' and the 'basmalah' picked out in gold throughout, text interspersed with gold discs outlined in blue and decorated with orange dots, margins ruled in colours and gold, illuminated rectangular devices in wide margins, sura headings in thuluth in gold on illuminated panels, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold with alternating lines of black and gold makkanah, corners slightly thumbed, some pages robbed, some slight smudging, few repairs to edges not affecting text, contemporary brown morocco binding with central gilt-stamped rectangular panels containing oval medallions and extending flowers, the fields filled with arabesques and doneh-bands, borders consisting of a band of gold-stamped ovoid medallions with floral motifs, inner borders delineated by a ring of gold-stamped cabled work, doubletons of brown morocco with central medallions and cornerpieces of gilt filigree over coloured grounds, with flaps, 240 by 177mm.

£25,000-10,000

Five Qur'an sections (juz' 5,10,16,25,26) from a thirty-volume manuscript, Turkey, Ottoman, sixteenth century.

Each volume with 17-20 leaves of nine lines of fine naskh script in black ink on cream paper, gold flots between verses, sura headings in gold thuluth surrounded by panels of fine illumination in colours and gold, margins ruled in colours and gold, illuminated rondels in margins, each volume with a finely illuminated headpiece in colours and gold on the opening page of text with the juz' number written in white thuluth, some dampstaining and splits to margins, each with a contemporary brown morocco binding with gilt-stamped panels of floral and foliate motifs, worn in places, doubletons of brown morocco with central medallions, cornerpieces and border cartouches of black paper filigree over coloured grounds, with flaps, 240 by 177mm.

£25,000-7,000
Large Qur’an section (volume one of a two volume Qur’an), illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, probably Iran or Central Asia, circa thirteenth century

263 leaves excluding blanks, text incomplete, 9 lines to the page written in bold ornamental eastern Kufic script on thick brown paper, letter pointing in black, wounds marked using red and green dots, ‘shadās’ and other orthographic marks in green, ‘Allah’ picked out in gold throughout, gold rosettes decorated with red and green dots between verses, five verses marked in margins with a large illuminated roundel of ornamental rings, ten verses marked in margins with large illuminated triangular devices made up of a central roundel containing a gold floral motif with flowerlets extending above and below and partial extensions on either side, five divisions written in margins in red within illuminated rectangular panels, ‘sajda’ written in margins in red or green within illuminated triangular panels, occasional marginal glosses in a cursive hand in black, some headings written in thuluth script in red or blue on large and boldly illuminated rectangular panels with illuminated palmettes extending into margins, some leaves with repairs to edges, four leaves with repairs to text area, paper generally in good condition, trimmed, modern gilt-stamped brown morocco, with slip, in fitted cloth box, 410 by 320mm.

Until recently on long term loan to the British Library Oriental Collections, loan no.21.

This is an exceptional manuscript, whose script is truly singular and whose graphic display is so full of invention and variety that every page, almost every word, offers a different and striking visual experience.

The inspiration for the eclectic script is both calligraphic and epigraphic and falls loosely under the heading ‘eastern Kufic’. It draws not only on the classic eastern Kufic scripts of other Qur’ans, but also on the ornamental eastern Kufic of titles and headings and, interestingly, on a variety of epigraphy used on ceramics, architecture, tombs and carved wood panels. At first glance the script seems to have many original letter forms which bear no relation to known eastern Kufic examples. However, under closer examination it becomes apparent that almost all of the unusual letter forms appear in other eastern Kufic Qur’ans, or in eastern Kufic headings of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The scribe of the present manuscript has taken these more flamboyant letter forms and placed them side-by-side, creating a daring calligraphic display which not only challenges the eye of the reader, but also the bounds of legibility.

Several calligraphic themes recur throughout the manuscript: the sweeping tails of letters such as ρ, θ, φ, and terminal sin and nun, with the emphatic use of the angled kilwa to produce thin and thick strokes; the elongated and rounded γ, the piling up of horizontals when certain letters are combined; the emphatic alignment of verticals; the thin trailing diagonals which sweep off the top of the verticals, and the embellishment of the base of the ‘lam/aiﬁ’ combination with pseudo-geometric forms. It is the cumulative and repetitive effect of these individual motifs on the page which give the script its powerful graphic character.

The calligraphic motifs mentioned above can all be found in the following manuscripts:


Six other eastern Kufic Qur’ans (ibid., nos.11-19).

A fragment of the Qur’an sold in these rooms 28th April 1993, lot 78, another fragment of which is in the David Collection, Copenhagen (K von Fohrach, Islamic Art - The David Collection, Copenhagen, 1990, no.3, p.85).

Two Qur’ans leaves in eastern Kufic script sold in these rooms 8th July 1980, lot 158.


A Qur’an fragment sold in these rooms 18th October 1995, lot 21.

Further fragments from the same multi-volume
Qur’an, now in the Nasser D. Khalili collection, London (ibid., no.84, pp.154-65).
The illuminated headings in a manuscript of the Munarrat Mafadha sold in these rooms 26th April 1995, lot 54.

The ‘a’immadda’ at the beginning of every sura have a different character from the main body of text, taking their cue from epigraphy to be found on Sasanian epigraphic pottery of the 10th-11th centuries, Persian metalwork of the 12th century and architectural and tombstone inscriptions from the same period.

The sura titles themselves are written in a cursive script - chubbuth - and the coloured illumination surrounding them is of a style more associated with cursive Qur’ans of the thirteenth century than eastern kufic ones of the twelfth and earlier.

It is difficult to date accurately a Qur’an whose style is at once so eclectic and idiosyncratic. The flamboyant, playful character of the script would indicate a date at which the mainstream use of eastern kufic had been surpassed by cursive scripts such as muhaqqaq and naskhi for the writing of the Qur’an. It may be that this manuscript was conceived with a sense of nostalgia or archaism or in a province where the use of monumental curvy scripts was not yet fashionable or fully developed. This would account for the use of red dots for vowels, a system which had gone out of fashion by the eleventh century in eastern kufic Qur’ans. A thirteenth century origin seems most likely, possibly even later, but another explanation is hinted at in A. Schimmel, Calligraphy and Islamic Culture, New York, 1984, p.33, where a line drawing of a complex interwoven eastern kufic script not dissimilar from some parts of the present Qur’an is shown with the following explanation:

‘Kufic hajj from a Koran, Iran, ca. twelfth century. While other known pages of this Koran are written in normal Eastern Kufi, the Surat al-Ikhlas (Sure 112), which contains the profession of God's absolute Unity, is written in highly complicated Kufi reminiscent of succo decorations, and so is the name of the Prophet Muhammad. A late twelfth century date for the present manuscript cannot, therefore, be ruled out.

The text of the present manuscript is as follows:

Surat al-Baqara (2), v.15-41, 54-end.
Surat al-Mumin (3), v.1-Surat al-Nisa’, v.27.
Surat al-Nisa’(3), v.34-Surat al-Nahl (16), v.90.
Surat Bani Isra’il (17), v.102-Surat al-Kahf (18), v.57.

£120,000-160,000

Six very large Qur’an leaves on paper and a large wooden Qur’an box, North India, first half of nineteenth century

The six leaves with 7 lines per page of large, bold naskhi script written in black on blue, pink and yellow paper, interspersed Persian translation in red, double interlinear rules, margins ruled in colours and gold, seven pages with margins of cream paper decorated with bold scrolling flowers and leaves in gold, all framed, 675 by 490mm.

The gilded wood Qur’an box of rectangular form with velvet panels on all sides, folded-down legs of carved form, iron hinges, exterior dimensions 540 by 770 by 395mm.

These six leaves come from the very large mosque Qur’an of North Indian origin which was said to have been acquired at the siege of Delhi in 1857, was housed in Dublin for over a hundred years and was sold in these rooms 12th October 1990, lot 241.

It is now in the Qasr al-Qur’an, Bahrain. The large wooden box sold in the present lot is of the same interior dimensions as the Qur’an and would appear to be the original box made for it. It seems that the present six leaves and the box became separated from the rest of the manuscript before or during the siege of Delhi and were thus not with it when it was sold here in 1990.

£3,000-4,000

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£3,000-4,000
Large Qur’an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Egypt or Syria, Mamluk, c.1330-50

365 leaves, 11 lines to the page written in bold muhaqqaq script in black ink on thick cream paper, ‘Allah’ picked out in gold throughout, gold rules decorated with coloured dots between verses, further text divisions (quarter, half and full hizb) marked in margins in white thuluth on illuminated roundels and avoid devices, sura headings written in white, blue, red and black thuluth on panels of bold foliate illumination in orange, red, blue and gold, five boldly illuminated pages (four double, one single) in colours and gold, some pages with staining and rubbing, edges slightly frayed, modern brown morocco stamped and tooled in Mamluk style, 483 by 338mm.

This is a fine Mamluk Qur’an of the second quarter of the fourteenth century. It is of large dimensions, a characteristic which the Mamluks and Il-Khanids seem to have preferred. It is written in a strong, flowing muhaqqaq script, which along with the style of illumination compares closely with several dated Mamluk Qur’ans of the period: the first section of a thirty-volume Qur’an from Cairo dated 1332/3 in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ms.1476) (see D. James, Qur’ans of the Mamluks, London, 1988, cat.18, pp.140-45); another Cairo Qur’an dated 1334 in the National Library, Cairo (Ms.61) (ibid., cat.17, pp.133-4) and M.Lang, The Qur’anic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination, Westminster, 1976, no.63); a Qur’an, probably from Damascus, dated 1341 in the Topkapı Sarayi Library (138/4D) (ibid., cat.21, pp.143 and 146) and a Qur’an dated 1346 in the Al-Salih Collection, Kuwait (LSN 47 MB) (ibid., cat.22, p.137).

The illuminated pages are:
1. Single page illuminated frontispiece.
4-5. Final illuminated double page with text of Surat al-Falaq and Surat al-Nas in gold muhaqqaq script.

£40,000-60,000
Property from the George McMaster Jones Collection

16
Qu’ran, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Persia, Qajar, 19th century.
269 leaves, 15 lines to the page written in naskh script on cream paper, small gold flourishes decorated with coloured dots between verses, margins ruled in blue and gold, illuminated marginal devices, some headings written in red ink with illuminated panels, two opening double pages of fine illumination in colours and gold, contemporary floral lacquer binding, 239 by 135mm.

Provenance:
Charles Sessler, Bookbinder, Philadelphia.
The George McMaster Jones Collection, acquired c.1970.
£1,500-2,000

17
Qu’ran section (jas 18) in Arabic in découpé rayhani script on coloured paper, Turkey or Levant, nineteenth century.
24 leaves including one blank, 11 lines to the page in découpé rayhani script on coloured paper, opening folio with juz heading and scrolling découpé decoration, modern brown morocco stamped and tooled in blind and gold, 250 by 159mm.
£1,000-1,500

18
Miniature Qu’ran written in gold gnoubi script on green leaf-shaped paper, Turkey or Levant, nineteenth century.
Approximately 170 leaves, 22-23 lines to the page written in miniature gnoubi script in gold on green paper cut to a leaf shape, some headings in blue, one double and one single page of illumination in colours and gold, green morocco binding with gold-tooled leaf skeleton design, string ties, 43 by 21mm.
A similar volume of the Qu’ran was sold in these rooms 19th October 1994, lot 57.
£1,500-2,000
Qur’ans from South East Asia are still relatively rare. Only five South East Asian Qur’ans have ever appeared at auction, all sold in these rooms, most recently 18th October 1995, lot 24 and 19th October 1994, lot 44 (see footnote for further references). While the colophon claims that this manuscript was produced at Khani in AH 950 (AD 1543) the general character and the specific style of script and decoration, with its predominant use of simple coloured rounds and thinly-applied water-based pigments, is more consistent with Qur’ans of Malaysia and Indonesia in the nineteenth century.

18 leaves, 3 registers of gold divani jali script per page, modern brown morocco with gilt-stamped central cartouche of scrolling arabesques, 157 by 212mm.

£1,000-1,500

ARABIC, TURKISH AND PERSIAN MANUSCRIPTS AND CALLIGRAPHY

21

Prayers of Ali Ibn al-Husain, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Persia, seventeenth/eighteenth century

16 leaves including one blank, 7 lines to the page written in fine naskhi script on paper, interlinear gold throughout, headings in blue or red stylized on gold grounds, margins ruled in colours and gold, one finely illuminated headpiece in colours and gold, final folio with inscription 'hayabaha al-tah', Ahmad al-Nayrizi 1401; later brown morocco with gilt border bands, 180 by 110mm.

£1,500-2,000