10 Qur'an section, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper with a dedication in the name of Sultan Barqayn. It is a fine contemporary tooled and stamped leather binding. Egypt, Mamluk, late fourteenth century

Text: 'ix 12
36 lines, 5 lines per page written in fine, bold muskaping style on thick buff paper, gold fillets decorated with coloured dots between verses, fifth and ninth verses marked in margin with finely illuminated roundels containing the word khamsa or 'ashr, sura headings written in white thuluth on a finely illuminated panel with extending palmettes. Opening double page of illumination in colour and gold, few holes in opening double page, otherwise in good condition, semi-legible 90p inscription on opening page dedicated to Sultan Barqayn. Fine gold and blind-stamped brown morocco binding, the complex geometric framework based on a ten-pointed star, the interstices infilled with gilt-punched dots, doublures of stencilled brown morocco, the flap with tooled and stamped arabesques, inside of flap with a central cartouche containing illuminated pencilled and stamped motifs, slightly worn at edges, otherwise in good condition, 374 by 268mm.

Provenance:
1. The 90p inscription on the opening page, although not fully legible, indicates that the manuscript was dedicated either to the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Zahir Abu Sa'id Barqayn (reigned 1382-89 and 1396-99) himself, or to one of his religious foundations.
2. A late or post medieval seal impression, visible but barely legible on f.1a and 90a, includes the name Ali.

2. A pencil inscription at the top of f.2a reads U.F. Anderson Nov. 16, 1847
3. An inscription on a loose piece of brown paper inserted into the opening pages reads 1948 - 2134 Coran illuminated in m.m.s. of Portion of the Koran in Arabic. 3 vol. folios. (The number 1948-2134 may be an accession number for an institutional collection, possibly the philosophical society mentioned below.)

The binding is typical of high quality Mamluk work of the period. Although no other volumes of this series are recorded, three book covers in the collection of the Oriental Institute of Chicago (A12153, A12151) of exactly the same dimensions and design would appear to be detached from other volumes of the same thirty-section Qur'an (Bosch, Carsswell and Petherbridge, Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking exhibition catalogue, Chicago, 1981, nos.16-17, pp.108-11, 187) and another detached binding from the same series belonging to Baron von Oppenheim was in the Munich exhibition of 1910 (F. Sarre, F.R. Martin, Meisterwerken islamischer Kunst, Munich, 1910, reprinted London, 1985, cat.994, pl.15).

Other related bindings are illustrated as follows:
Bosch et al., op.cit. nos.4-19.
Sale in these rooms, 28th April 1993, lot 86.
£20,000-30,000
Qur’ān bifolium in fine rayhānī script on paper, attributed to ʿĀrish al-ʿAṣūrī, illumination attributed to Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd al-Ẓālabī, probably Baghdađ, c.1335

Text: Sūrat 46, vv.11-39

13 lines per page written in superb rayhānī script on finely polished cream paper, gold florals decorated with coloured blue dots between verses, fifth and tenth verses marked in margins with finely illuminated rondels in blue and gold containing the word khaṇūn or taḥīl in white eastern kufic script, catchwords in black, in good condition, 275 by 274mm.

This bifolium comes from a Qur’ān which has been attributed convincingly to ʿĀrish al-ʿAṣūrī, the great fourteenth century calligrapher, master of rayhānī script and pupil of Ḥaftal al-Mustaʿsim. The illumination has similarly been attributed to Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd al-Ṭālabī, the leading illuminator of the day (D. James, Qur’āns of the Manuscripts, London, 1988, cat.66, figs.100,113; D. James, Qur’āns and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library, London, 1980, no.45).

The majority of the Qur’āns is in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, while nineteen folios are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, a bifolium was sold at Christie’s, London, 26th April 1994, lot 36 and several more have been published as follows:

- The Unity of Islamic Art, exhibition catalogue, Riyadh, 1985, no.17,

35,000-8,800

Qur’ān, complete in thirty sections, illuminated Arabic manuscripts on paper, China, seventeenth/eighteenth century

30 volumes, approximately 55 leaves per volume, 5 lines per page written in bold, flowing naskhī script on cream paper, gold dots between verses, gold headings written in red in ruled panels, further text divisions and subheadings marked in margins with illuminated devices, each volume with opening and closing double page of illumination, contemporary brown leather bindings stamped with Chinese motifs, some slightly worn, with flaps, 275 by 186mm.

£15,000-25,000

Qur’ān, fully illuminated Arabic manuscript in silver ink on green paper, North India or Afghanistan, dated A.H.1311/A.D.1893

702 leaves, 11 lines per page written in flowing naskhī script in silver ink on green paper, interleaved gold decoration throughout, verse divisions marked with a red dot surrounded by a gold ring, sura headings written in gold ink, margins ruled in silver and gold, borders fully illuminated with scrolling floral and foliate motifs in red and gold throughout, further text divisions (tenth verses, fiṭrah and juz’) written in margins in silver, catchwords in white, opening double page of fine, intricate illumination in gold and black, in good condition, green boards decorated with scrolling floral and foliate motifs in gold, gilt-linen spine, with flap, 365 by 196mm.

This is a most unusual and highly decorative manuscript of the Qur’ān. Although by the nineteenth century, especially in India, scribes and paper-makers were experimenting and producing immensely decorated manuscripts of unusual design (e.g. a Qur’ān sold in these rooms, 28th April 1993, lot 104), the present example, with its silver ink on deep green-coloured paper, is a most original production. There is a plethora of illumination and decoration - each page having interlinear gilt and fully illuminated borders.

£3,000-5,000
written in gold kufic with simple gold palmettes outlined in blue extending into margins, some headings of al-Fatiha and al-Baqara marked with illuminated panels, now worn, origin of swans (Makkan, Madaniyya) written in small gold kufic in margins adjacent to sura headings, occasional marginal commentary in red, opening page with a rectangular panel containing an oval head of eastern kufic script and four illuminated roundels, two seal impressions, several leaves defective at edges and repaired, probably lacking only 5 leaves (4 at beginning of al-Baqara and one at end, comprising final 7 suras), modern gilt-stamped brown leather, filled tan leather envelope case, 126 by 91mm.

This is an important single-volume Qur’an which relates to several other manuscripts of the tenth to twelfth centuries. The pertinent aspects are the size, relatively small at 126 by 91mm, the oval cartouche on the opening page containing a band of eastern kufic script recording verse and word counts, the format for sura headings of placing the first two (al-Fatiha and al-Baqara) in illuminated panels on the same page and the rest simply written in gold kufic with an accompanying palmette, but without any surrounding panels. The two closest parallels are a Qur’an in the British Library (Add. MS.7214), which is dated 427/1036/one in the Khalili Collection (Qur.284 see D. James, The Master Mss, London, 1992, no.1, pp.23-7). There is, however, one obvious difference between these two and the present Qur’an. Whereas the British Library and Khalili manuscripts are written in the new naskhi script, the present Qur’an is written in eastern kufic. This is an interesting factor, indicating that whichever script was chosen for the writing of the main text of the Qur’an at this period, the format and design of the manuscript, especially the aspects mentioned above, were more rigidly set. Other related manuscripts which have one or more of the above characteristics are as follows: Three Qur’ans in the Khalili Collection, London (Qur. 124, 94 and 36 — see D. James, op. cit., no.2, pp.28-9); F. Déroche, The Abbasid Tradition, London, 1992, nos. 87, 96, pp.168-9, 184-); a Qur’an sold at Christie’s, London, 11th April 1989, lot 62.

£50,000-50,000
Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Persia, probably Herat, late sixteenth century

287 leaves. 15 lines per page, first, eight and fifteenth lines written in fine thuluth script in gold, intervening lines written in neat naskhi script in black, gold florins decorated with coloured dots between verses, naskhi text area bordered by lateral panels containing illuminated cartouches and cornerpieces, some headings in white thuluth on illuminated panels, margins ruled in colours and gold, finely illuminated marginal devices marking fifth and tenth verses and further text divisions, three double pages (opening, flyleaf and closing) of fine illuminations in colours and gold, some worming, later red morocco with gilt-stamped medallions and cornerpieces, with flos, 362 by 246mm.

This Qur'an is typical of the high quality commercial manuscripts produced in Herat in the second half of the sixteenth century. It compares closely with three other manuscripts: a Qur'an in the British Library (Or.13987) copied at Herat in 1565 (M. Lings and Y. Safadi, The Qur'an, exhibition catalogue, London, 1976, no.138, pp.78-80), a Qur'an sold in these rooms 27th April 1994, lot 16 and a Qur'an sold at Christie’s, 9th October 1990, lot 56. Another example of Herati work of the period is a Qur’an lot 16 in this sale.

£12,000-18,000

Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Persia, probably Herat, mid-sixteenth century

234 leaves. 15 lines per page, first, seventh and fifteenth lines written in elegant gold thuluth script, intervening lines written in neat naskhi script, gold florins between verses, text area bordered by lateral panels containing illuminated cartouches, some headings in white thuluth on illuminated panels, margins ruled in blue and gold, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, remarqued throughout, letters and notes relating to provenance pasted to opening flyleaves, later red morocco with gilt-stamped central medallions, cornerpieces and border cartouches, 334 by 230mm.

This Qur'an is typical of Herati work of the third quarter of the sixteenth century and closely resembles three other manuscripts: a Qur'an in the British Library (Or.13987) copied at Herat in 1565 (M. Lings and Y. Safadi, The Qur’an, exhibition catalogue, London, 1976, no.138, pp.78-80), a Qur’an sold in these rooms 27th April 1994, lot 16 and a Qur’an sold at Christie’s, 9th October 1990, lot 56. Another example of Herati work of the period is lot 15 in this sale.

The present manuscript has an unusual and interesting 20th century provenance. A note in ink pasted to the opening flyleaf gives the following information:

This Persian Ms. Koran was carried everywhere at sea by a man who died on board a merchant ship about 1943/1945.

The effects of the dead man were distributed among the crew and when the ship docked at Portishead early in 1943 this book was bought there and sold to H.E. Matthews for £1. It was then in bad repair having no back and some of the pages damaged. Also the two frontispieces were torn and ugly yellow paper interleaved. Brysiewicz of Bath had the book for restoration in 1943 and returned it with its present back and carefully repaired facinginges with suitable interleaving and Mr Fulton’s letter from B.M. suitably mounted, in 1945. The charge was £6.75.

Memorandum made 21/10/45 Harold E. Matthews.

Opposite is a descriptive letter dated 18 February 1943 from A.S. Fulton, Keeper of the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts at the British Museum.

£1,500-2,500
Qu'ran section, Arabic manuscript on Spanish paper, copied by Ubayd Allah Sa'd ibn Ahmad, Southern Spain, dated A.H.903/A.D.1498

Text: the fourth quarter of the Qu'ran

124 leaves, 15 lines per page written in maghribi script on watermarked Spanish paper, fifth verses marked with stylized kufic ha in yellow or red, small verses marked with a roundel decorated with coloured dots, suras headings in yellow, opening headpiece and marginal roundel decorated with abstract designs in yellow and red, edges of pages with bullion, plain brown leather binding, repaired, with flap, in a fitted, stamped, brown leather box, 215 by 152mm.

This is a rare and interesting survival from post-Islamic Spain. The colophon gives the exact date, using both the Islamic and Christian months, as Wednesday 18th Shaban equivalent to 11th April of the year 903. When these dates are checked against conversion tables of the Islamic and Christian calendars it can be verified that the 18th Shaban 903 is indeed the 11th April 1498. Interestingly however, the scribe has recorded the year according to the Islamic system only.

The paper on which the manuscript is written is very interesting as it bears a watermark which is known to have been used for printed books in Christian Spain in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The design is a gloved hand surmounted by a star or heraldic periwinkle. Although the general design of this watermark was in wide use in Southern Europe by this date and is thought to have originated in Italy, the specific design present here is fairly distinctive and can be seen on the very high quality paper of an incunabula dated 1474 in Valencia University Library. For an interesting discussion and illustrations of these watermarks see Otrials (Subirà), The History of Paper in Spain, Madrid, 1980, vol.II, no.159-151, pp.152,153.

The date of the manuscript is significant. The last Islamic dynasty in Spain, the Nasrids of Granada, were finally defeated and expelled in 1492, the year Columbus sailed for the New World. However, Muslim citizens continued to live in Spain until 1609, when the remaining Moslems and Jews were expelled. This manuscript shows how radically the fortunes of the Moslem inhabitants had changed in a few short years. It is a very simple book. Gone are the sumptuous vellum manuscripts with fine maghribi calligraphy and extensive geometric and arabesque illumination. Instead a yellow pigment is used to imitate gold, the sura headings are written in a poor imitation of kufic, the fifth verse division markers are barely recognisable as a kufic letter ha, the decoration of the opening headpiece is a simple arrangement of lines and squiggles and the script is a sad reminder of the glories of maghribi script. Yet it is a relic of an era when Moslems in Spain were suddenly dispossessed, living in a hostile environment but continuing to write the Qu'ran, even buying expensive paper to write on, and possibly courting persecution by doing so.

£8,000-12,000
19 Qur’an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Persia, Safavid, 16th century

276 leaves, 13 lines per page written in neat kufic script in black on cream paper, gold rounds decorated with coloured dots between verses, sorta headings written in gold thuluth on illuminated panels, margins ruled in colours and gold, illuminated devices in margins, jam’ divisions written in margins in blue thuluth, opening double page of illuminations in colours and gold, slightly worn, corners repaired, modern red boards, 228 by 218mm.

£2,500-3,500

20 Qur’an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Persia, sixteenth century and later

316 leaves, 13 lines per page written in small, neat naskhi script on paper, interlinear gold decoration throughout, small gold rounds decorated with coloured dots between verses, sorta headings in white thuluth on illuminated panels, margins ruled in colours and gold with band of blue arabesque, unmarginated, nineteenth century illuminated devices in margins, opening double page of sixteenth century illuminations, fictitious cadelop of Yaqut al-Misri, with date 673 (A.D.1274), black shaggers with gilt-stamped central medallion and cornerpieces, 160 by 103mm.

£1,000-1,500

21 Qur’an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, Turkey, Ottoman, late seventeenth century

469 leaves including one blank, 11 lines per page written in fine naskhi script on cream paper, gold rounds decorated with coloured dots between verses, sorta headings in white thuluth on illuminated panels, margins ruled in gold, finely illuminated marginal devices marking juz divisions, further text divisions (tenth verses and half) written in margins in red or blue, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, folia 464v with a fictitious cadelop of the scribe Hamadallah, nineteenth century brown morocco with gilt-stamped and painted trellis pattern, red morocco doublures with gilt-painted central floral motif, 251 by 164mm.

£1,000-1,500

22 Qur’an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, copied by Hussain Hafiz al-Qur’an, a pupil of the royal scribe Abd al-Halim Amir Ehadzadeh, Turkey, Ottoman, dated A.H.1108/A.D.1744

325 leaves, 13 lines per page written in neat naskhi script on buff paper, gold rounds decorated with coloured dots between verses, margins ruled in colours and gold, certain textual divisions marked in margins in red, illuminated marginal devices, catchwords in black, sorta headings written in blue on illuminated panels, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, brown morocco with gilt-stamped central medallion and cornerpieces, with flap, 119 by 88mm.

£1,500-2,000
23

Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, copied by Ramadan bin Ima'il, a pupil of Abdullah, Turkey, Ottoman, dated A.H.1065/A.D.1654

392 leaves, 12 lines per page written in neat naskhi script on buff paper; gold florals decorated with coloured dots between verses, margins ruled in blue and gold; tenth verses marked in margins with the word 'alai in gold; finely illuminated marginal devices, catchwords in black, verse headings written in white ibn alshay on illuminated panels, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, red morocco binding with central medallion, corner panels and border band of gilt-stamped foliate motifs, red morocco doublures, with flap, 22.5 by 151 mm.

£3,000-4,000

24

Qur'an, illuminated Arabic manuscript on paper, dedicated to the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1715-1748), copied by Muhammad Reza bin Muhammad Taj al-Tahiriz, India, Shahjahanabad, Mughal, dated A.H.1145/A.D.1730

250 leaves, 17 lines per page written in fine naskhi script in black on cream paper, interlinear rules in gold throughout, gold roundels between verses, verse headings in red ibn alshay on illuminated panels, margins ruled in gold, juz and hikailis marked in margins in gold, opening double page of fine illumination in colours and gold, modern gilt-stamped brown leather binding, with flap, 326 by 210 mm.

£3,000-4,000