THE PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN PRIVATE COLLECTOR

7
A QUR'AN BIFOLIUM IN KUFIC SCRIPT ON VELLUM FROM THE MUSHAF AL-HADINAN, THE 'NURSE'S QUR'AN', COPIED BY 'ALI AL-WARRAQ, QAIRAWAN, NORTH AFRICA. A.H. 410/A.D. 1020

TEXT: SURAT AL-TAWBA (IX) VV. 106-109
5 lines per page written in bold angular kufic script in brown ink on vellum, versals and diacritics in red blue and green
445 x 625CM.

Known as the Mushaf al-Hadinan (the Nurse's Qur'an), as it was commissioned by a former nurse of the Zirid Prince al-Mu'izz ibn Badis, this is arguably the most magnificent example of western kufic.

The calligraphic style in which the Nurse's Qur'an was written, broken kufic, is predominantly associated with the eastern Islamic lands. A number of signed manuscripts in this style, dating from the late ninth to the tenth centuries, place the script in Mesopotamia, and Persia (as evidenced by colophons naming Al-Naffari, a mystic from Naffari in Mesopotamia, and Ali ibn Shubuha al-Hudastari, a copyist from Rayy in central Persia). In addition to which a great number of manuscripts in broken kufic are stored in the shrine library at Mshahad, and the calligraphic style of tessals and ceramics produced in the eastern Islamic lands from the period exhibit closely comparable scriptural idiosyncrasies. The size of the inlaid fabric that was a specialty of Mesr, for example, and the Nekoupaq pottery of this period both exhibit the rising tails and the triangular medial letters of broken kufic. This then makes the Nurse's Qur'an a fascinating document pertaining to the international nature of the early Islamic empire.

The Nurse's Qur'an is remarkable not only for its idiosyncratic, highly mannerized broken kufic, but also because it is annotated with two interlinear copies providing fascinating documentary evidence for the contemporary social hierarchy and manuscript production. One note states that the nurse of the Zirid prince al-Mu'izz ibn Badis endowed it to the Great Marquis of Qairawan in Ramadan A.H.410/A.D.1020. While the other is a colophon recording that 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Warrag was responsible for its entire production, from writing, scribing, marking and gliding to binding.

The Zirid dynasty of Ifriqiya was the first great Berber dynasty of North Africa, established initially as a principality by the Egyptian Fatimids in an attempt to provide a military cushion against the hostile tribes of the region; the Zirids eventually took the reign of government entirely into their own hands. According to the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun, the reign of al-Mu'izz ibn Badis (405-454/1016-1062) was the most brilliant and contentious of all the Zirids. It was he who announced his vassalship to the Fatimids and proclaimed allegiance to the Abbasid Caliphate. It is hardly surprising given the culture of such wealth and confidence produced a manuscript of this size and quality. It is also interesting to speculate on the shifting political alliances of the period, and what influence this may have had on the manuscript production of the time and its choice of script.

Regardless of whether or not this manuscript was a political statement, it remains a unique and impressive legacy of the Zirids in North Africa, and is a remarkable historical document commissioned by a female servant of a medieval, royal household.

£50,000-80,000 €66,500-100,000
THE PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN PRIVATE COLLECTOR

8

A LARGE SAMARKAND CALLIGRAPHIC DISH, CENTRAL ASIA, 10TH CENTURY

of truncated conical form on a short foot, painted in coloured slips on a cream slip ground with a broad band of calligraphy in black/brown ink enclosed in red bordered rectangular panels against a stippled or dotted ground, the well with four tendrils radiating from the centre enclosed in a black-line roundel
25/26cm. Diam.
£8,000-12,000  €10,400-15,600

INSCRIPTIONS
of jet black calligraphy.

'Generosity is the guard to honour and wealth.'

A saying attributed to Imam Al-Mawardi.

A similarly decorated dish excavated at Al-Taymri (Samarqand) is published in Sir Henry St. John Hope, "Samarqand and Merv", London: John Murray, 1875, p.188, illustrated in colour. A further piece also from Samarqand bearing the same central circular design made up of four crescent-shaped lobes is reproduced in the same publication, pl.142, nos.142, p.188.

9

A RARE SAMARKAND CALLIGRAPHIC DISH PAINTED IN PRAWN-PINK, CENTRAL ASIA, 10TH CENTURY

of truncated conical form with steep flaring walls on a short foot, painted in prawn-pink and brown slip on a cream slip ground with a central palmette enclosed in a roundel on a stippled ground inscribed with a palmette inscription in bold pink. The interstices of the design are filled with shaped panels filled with brown stippling interspersed with larger pink dots, the back with bold stylised leaves
25/26cm. Diam.
£40,000-60,000  €53,800-75,800

INSCRIPTIONS:

(Imam Al-Mawardi) says: "Generosity is the guard to honour and wealth.

The moderate one preserves his wealth, while the generous one sees [many] possibilities in his wealth.

There is no one so fortunate in obtaining wealth, while the generous one sees [many] possibilities in his wealth.

The difference one person in obtaining wealth, while the generous one sees [many] possibilities in his wealth.

The moderate one preserves his wealth, while the generous one sees [many] possibilities in his wealth.

Related calligraphic wares are known from Al-Taymri (Samarqand), see Timms, "Samarqand and Merv", London: John Murray, 1875, nos.182, 183, 184, 186 and 187, p.188. The prawn-pink inscriptions are the same as those found in the prayer-stones.
A SMALL NISHAPUR CALLIGRAPHIC DISH, CENTRAL ASIA, 10TH CENTURY

INSRIPTIONS
A suggested reading:
الشافعي المكتوب
"Beauty is in... and patience is its dignified conduct"
£ 10,000-15,000 € 15,100-22,700

QUR'AN LEAF IN KUFIC SCRIPT ON VELLUM, NORTH AFRICA OR NEAR EAST, 10TH CENTURY

TEXT: SURAH AL-HADIYAH (69) VV. 3-4
3 lines per page written in bold kufic script in brown ink on vellum, letter pointing of thin brown dashes, vocalisation of red, green and yellow dots, single verse divisions marked with a triangular arrangement of six gold dots.
23.6 by 32 ACM.
£ 12,000-18,000 € 15,900-23,900

This leaf comes from an important Qur'an notable for its unusually extensive and elegant script. The pertinent feature which sets it apart from normal Qur'ans is the very tall verticals, the wide curving terminal nun and the thin, trailing tail of the terminal mim. This particular script is only found on two other known Qur'ans. Examples of these can be found in the National Library, Tunis (Linge and Safadi, no.246) and the Museum des arts islamiques, Qur'an 71 (Cantegril, no.318). With only these leaves per page as opposed to the five or seven of the aforementioned examples, the present leaf presents a particularly spacious and clear arrangement of script upon the page.
TWO CONSECUTIVE KUFIQ QUR'AN LEAVES ON VELLUM FORMING A DOUBLE PAGE FINISPIECE, NORTH AFRICA OR NEAR EAST, 9TH-10TH CENTURY

TEXT: SURAT AL-NAS (CXXV) VA 2-6

two leaves, one leaf with 7 lines of elegant kufic script in brown ink on vellum with later interlinear Persian translation, vocalization of red dots, single verse divisions marked by a pyramidal composition of 6 gold dots, fifth verse marked by a stylised gold 'nas'; the other leaf with three lines.

£70,000-90,000 €85,000-110,000

In his essay Manuscript illumination in the Survey of Persian Art, Richard Ettinghausen draws a comparison with the format of the ancient Roman tabula ansata that consisted of a horizantal oblong field with a keystone-shaped handle at either end. This form was the basic shape of Hebrew, pre-Islamic and Egyptian writing tablets, and arguably influenced the manuscript producers of early Islam in the format of these illuminated panels, with their rectangular composition and the extending palmate referencing the key-stone handle of the writing tablet (Pope, vol II, 1957, p.186).

The colophon which mistakenly records the script as 'Abū 'Ali Abū Ta'lab, was a common addition to early kufic manuscripts. It is not an attempt to mislead, rather it is in honour of both the man and the book.
This superb leaf exhibits a particularly beautiful kufic hand, with its elegant
meandering in the extended style of the word in the top right corner of the
recto, and the elegant sweep of the upright letters that balance the
exaggerated horizontals.

Most remarkable of course are the two surah headings. Kufic leaves
without surah headings are comparatively more plentiful, and it is
extremely rare to find a pair of headings on the same leaf. This provides us
with a rare opportunity to undertake a stylistic assessment, shedding light
on the illumination of the Abbasid period.

The colour scheme of green and red reserved on gold recalls the
illumination of earlier Coptic texts, which are likely to have influenced
Muslim manuscript production in its formative years. Another feature that
is Coptic in format is the combination of the rectangular field of the sura
heading itself, with the marginal decoration in the form of a palmette,
recalling the Coptic shoulder band with its terminal rosettes (Upham

These features may have been drawn from an earlier tradition, but they
are conceptually distinctly Islamic. The foliate and the geometric motif
intrinsic to the design of the surah heading are vehicles with which the
Divine is made manifest. The geometric motif and its repetition is
reminiscent of the Khurasanian florals and arborescent elements recall Qur'anic
reference to the word of God as a good tree, with firm roots and branches
in heaven, and perhaps even more obviously reference the description of
heaven as a verdant garden. In choosing to highlight the Qur'an with
these elements, the Qur'anic illumination exposed the word of God with
a subtle yet profound visual vocabulary.

QUR'AN LEAF IN KUFIC SCRIPT WITH TWO SURAH HEADINGS ON VELLUM, NORTH AFRICA OR NEAR EAST, 9TH/10TH
CENTURY
TEXT: SURAT AL-SAMH (CXX), VS. SURAT AL-IXLAS (CXXI) VV. 4 AND
SURAT AL-FALAQ (CXXII) V 1
3 lines of text per page, excluding sura headings, in elegant kufic script in
brown ink on vellum; illumination of red and green dots, single verses
marked by a paradigmatic composition of 6 gold dots, fifth verse marked by
a stylized gold 'ye', two illuminated sura headings with kufic script in gold
in reserve against a foliate motif in alternating white and gold, decorated
in red and green, framed within a brocaded gold motif, the first with a
palmette of leaves or buds against a spangled green ground, the second
with open flowers interspersed in a lattice, the whole with interleaved
Persian translation
22.7 x 33.2CM
£ 40,000-60,000 £ 53,000-75,000
LARGE QUR'AN LEAF IN KUFIC SCRIPT ON VELLUM, NORTH AFRICA OR NEAR EAST, 9TH CENTURY

TEXT: SURAH AL-NASR, (xvi) vv. 28-30
18 lines per page written in kufic script in brown ink on vellum, letter pointing in red, vocalization of red dots, single verse divisions marked with a brown circle within a red, additions in red
41 BY 34CM.

The script on this unusually large Qur'anic folio is close to styles D1-D2b of Déroche's categorization (Déroche 1992, p.44-45), but there are certain idiosyncrasies that mark this script apart from most other examples of kufic. Calligraphically, the scribe has traced the nib of the stylus at the end of many of the letters, creating a thin tail, especially on the letters that drop below the line in the terminal form. This is a motif that is present on several types of kufic script, but to such an obvious extent as here. In addition, the script has a square feel that is different from the open sweeping curves and horizontals of more standard kufic scripts. These are two other Qur'ans that have related scripts, both in the Great Mosque at Qairawan (Carthage, nos. 340 and 353).

Ornographically, the system used for vocalization is unusual, being a mixture of traditional red dots, as used on most kufic scripts of the eighth to the tenth centuries, and an unusual series of additional reading marks consisting of dashes, circumflexes and vertical marks. Interestingly, the two Qur'ans in Qairawan mentioned above also employ similar vocalization marks. It is possible that the script and the vocalization marks were applied at different stages of the Qur'ans early history (see Fraser and Kwiatkowski, p.35; Stanley in Qur'ans 199, p.100-101).

Two other folios from this Qur'an were exhibited in the exhibition Ink and Gold in Berlin in 2006 (bid., opcit., nos.8). Another sold in these rooms, 24 October 1997, lot 5.

£25,000-35,000  $33,000-46,600
THE PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN PRIVATE COLLECTOR

15
QUR'AN LEAF IN KUFIC SCRIPT ON VELLUM, NORTH AFRICA OR
NEAR EAST, 9TH CENTURY

TEXT: SURAH AL-BAQARA (2) VV: 6-11
7 lines per page written in bold kufic script in brown ink on vellum,
with a combination of red and green dots, single verses marked by pyramidal
compositions of 4 gold dots
23.2 by 17.1 cm.
£ 8,000-12,000 £ 10,600-15,600

This leaf originates from the same manuscript as those that were
displayed in the exhibition Ink and Gold at the Museum für Islamische
Kunst in Berlin (see Freer and Kisiel-Sadler 2006, cat. 8, pp. 60-61). A
lesser manuscript, made in North Africa when Qur'anic production in the
region around Qairawan was at its apogee.

The folios are recognizable from their strong and disciplined hand, as
well as the exaggerated readability that can be seen here in the final line.
They are also distinguishable by the numbering of the folios at the top
and bottom centres, and in the lower corner, as seen here, and in those
displayed at the Museum für Islamische Kunst.

Other folios from this Qur'an displaying these features have come to
auction, including a leaf bearing the illuminated heading of Surat al-
Al-Masadik sold in these rooms 18 April 2003, lot 6, and 15 October
2004, lot 1.

16
AN ABBASID TIN-GLAZED POTTERY BOWL, PERSIA OR
MEISIBANJUZ, 9TH-10TH CENTURY

Inscribed on the handle with the name of a donor, decorated on the
interior with red lustre-painted inscription.

£ 10,000-12,000 £ 13,000-15,000
LARGE QUR’AN LEAF IN KUFIC SCRIPT ON VELLUM, NORTH AFRICA OR NEAR EAST, CIRCA A.D. 900

TEXT: SURAT AL- AHQAF (XVIII) V: 9-10
7 lines per page written in bold and considered kufic script in brown ink on vellum, vocalization in red, green and orange dots, single verse divisions marked with pyramidal composition of 6 gold dots.

26.4 X 56.7CM
£ 10,000-15,000 - €13,000-19,000

This impressive kufic leaf is an excellent example of the mature stage of Qur’anic manuscript production during the ninth and early tenth centuries. The vellum is of high quality, and the script attains fully the “saber beauty” expressed by Déroche in the catalogue of the Nasser D. Khalili Collection (Déroche 1992, no. 20) when describing the high script of the period. The letter spacing is well-considered, the hand is confident and the overall effect is solemn and dignified.

A leaf from a similar Qur’an is in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection, London (Déroche 1992, no.20). Other related leaves and manuscripts are as follows: Qsaroen, Musée des arts islamiques (Cantagay, no.528); Nasser D. Khalili Collections, London (Déroche 1992, no.21); Sotheby’s, London 28 April 1991, lot 87; 15 October 1997, lots 2-7; 29 April 1998, lots 5 and 6; Christie’s London, 28 April 1992, lot 34; Bernard Quatrefages catalogue 121, no.4. Most recently a leaf from this Qur’an was sold in these rooms, 18 April 2003, lot 4.

QUR’AN LEAF IN BOLD MAGHRIBI SCRIPT ON PINK PAPER, SOUTHERN SPAIN, 13TH CENTURY

TEXT: SURAT AL-A’IMRAN (IV) V: 22-25, AND THE HEADING FOR SURAT AL- NEKHAF (XI) 3000
5 lines of fine large maghribi script in brown ink on pink paper, letter-pointing in gold, vocalization of gold, blue, brown and yellow dots, single verse divisions marked with large illuminated roundels containing aljaz letters in white and blue, squarish heading of a rectangular panel in gold outlined in blue with circular palmette extending into margins, heading in gold kufic against a swirling background.

5 ½ by 25CM

This is a fine large example of Islamic manuscript production from the Muslim west, and is remarkable for various features. It is written on paper, an unusual material for contemporary Umayyad Spain and it is dyed pink, a rare luxury aspect.

Other leaves and sections from this Qur’an are in various public and private collections. For example, Falk, T. (ed.) Treasures of Islam, Geneva, London, 1985, p36

£ 4,000-6,000 - €5,000-8,000

THE PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN PRIVATE COLLECTOR

QUR’AN LEAF IN BOLD MAGHRIBI SCRIPT ON PINK PAPER, SOUTHERN SPAIN, 13TH CENTURY

TEXT: SURAT AL- JUNUS (XV) V: 45-47
5 lines of fine large maghribi script in brown ink on pink paper, letter-pointing in gold, vocalization of gold, blue, brown and yellow dots, single verse divisions marked with large illuminated roundels containing aljaz letters in white and blue, fifth verse marked with large illuminated device containing the word "alms" written in gold kufic

3.7 by 25CM

This leaf originates from the same manuscript as the previous lot. Please see lot 18 for references.

£ 4,000-6,000 - €5,000-8,000
The beautifully executed Qur'an section is written in the elegant broken curvilinear script prevalent in the Eastern Islamic lands in the ninth to the eleventh centuries. Discussed briefly in reference to its unusual use in the Maghribi Mushaf al-Nadail, lot 7 in this sale, this type of script was used particularly in Qur'anic manuscripts. The very essence of the script, with its large letters, extended horizontals and wide spacing makes for a lavishly appointed and necessarily multi-part manuscript.

Interestingly, unlike the Kufic 'Qur'ans of an earlier period, the broken curvilinear (or Eastern Kufic as it is otherwise known) of this period was meant to be read and understood despite the mannerist aspect of the script itself. The spaces, for instance, are located between words, indicating a shift in tradition from learning by rote to reading the text itself.

Eastern Kufic had reached its peak stylistically by the time this manuscript was written. From the ninth century onwards, this script was used predominantly in headings and marginal ornament, with the occasional sections of text highlighted in the hand that we see here. But by the sixteenth century, it had become stiff and increasingly mannered, until eventually it went out of fashion.

Here, however, in this manuscript dating to the eleventh century, the elegantly attenuated verticals, the triangular form of the medial letters, and the polished curve of the alif-lam are all beautifully proportioned and well executed.