21 QUR'AN LEAF IN MUHAQQAQ SCRIPT ON PAPER, MAHLUK, EGYPT, 13TH CENTURY
SHA'BAHĀR. AH. 728/ A.D. 1328

Text: Surat Al-A'laa (33), vv. 1-2
12 lines per page of elegant black thuluth, single verse divisions marked by gold rosettes outlined in black and heightened with white. Terminal divisions marked in the margins by illuminated medallions, surah heading in gold outlined kufic on a blue cartouche set against an illuminated scrolling vine with associated marginal palmette 44.5 by 39.2 cm.

Provenance
Previously published as no. 24, Catalogue 185.
Philip C. Duschesne, New York as originating from a Qur'an written by Ahmad b. 'Abdullah b. al-Mansur Hashim al-'Abbasi, completed 7 Sha'ban 728.
£5,000-6,000 €6,000-7,000

22 QUR'AN BIFOLIUM IN MUHAQQAQ SCRIPT ON PAPER, PROBABLY ANATOLIA OR CENTRAL ASIA, CIRCA 1500-1550

Text: Surat Tawheed (I), vv. 21-28
9 lines per page written in strong muhaqqaq script in black ink on cream paper, single verse divisions marked with bold gold florals decorated in green and red, interlinear Persian translation written on the diagonal in small naskhi script 29.7 by 17.2 cm.

This bifolium of striking muhaqqaq originates from a well-known Qur'an thought to be of Anatolian or Central Asian origin. Other leaves from this Qur'an have been added to, in the form of border illumination and extracts from the hadith written in red and blue kufic. This bifolium however remains in its original untouched state, impacting on the reader with its stark contrasts and bold use of space.
£5,000-4,000 €4,000-3,000

23 QUR'AN JUZ', ILLUMINATED ARABIC MANUSCRIPT ON PAPER IN A CONTEMPORARY STAMPED AND TOOLED LEATHER BINDING, MAHLUK, EGYPT, 14TH CENTURY

Text: Juz' 15
16 leaves. 4 lines per page in elegant muhaqqaq script, single verse divisions marked by rosettes in colours and gold. Tenth verses marked by illuminated rounds bearing the word 'asr'. Surah headings of white kufic within a rectangular panel in colours and gold. A foliate palmette extending into the margin, frontispiece in colours and gold, with title in white kufic, and inscription in gold thuluth, contemporary stamped and tooled brown morocco leather binding 26.6 by 19.5 cm.
£6,000-10,000 €7,000-13,500
LEAF FROM THE 'FIVE SURAHs,' ILLUMINATED ARABIC MANUSCRIPT IN MUAAQQAQ SCRIPT ON PAPER, PERSIA OR MESOPOTAMIA, CIRCA 1350-1420

TEXT: SUARA 'SABA' (DOXON) V: 9-12

5 lines per page in magnificent muhaqqaq script in black ink outlined in gold, on buff paper, single verse division marked with geometric lines, borders ruled in red, blue, and gold, tenth verse division marked with large illuminated roundel inscribed with 'Alif' in chubuk and ringed with a stylizing floral motif in alternating blue and white on a blue ground 43.2 X 14.5CM.

£ 20,000-30,000  € 26,500-39,000

This magnificent folio formed part of a prayer-book known as the Five Surah Manuscript. As its name would suggest, the manuscript consisted of five surahs, and it is remarkable for its outstanding beauty and its highly accomplished gold-outlined muhaqqaq. David James observes that the calligrapher achieves "faultless perfection, equaled only by Ibn al-Sulami in the Qur'an he produced in Baghdad in the early years of the 14th Century." (James, D. 1990, p.16).

It is rare indeed to find a genuine example of work from the masters of this period, and the inclusion of a colophon bearing the signature of the scribe "copied by the weak slave who implores the Lord's mercy, Abu-Muhammad 'Abdul Qayyum, son of Mohamed, son of Kamal al-Din 'Abdu." This is another remarkable feature of this manuscript.

Examples of pages from this manuscript can be found in the Nasser D. Khalili collection, (James 1992, cat. 3, p.46); another was formerly part of the Art and History Trust Collection, (Souleimani 1992, cat. 18, p.50); and the David Collection (von Folsach 1990, cat.6).
QUR'AN, ILLUMINATED ARABIC MANUSCRIPT ON PAPER, QAJAR, PERSIA, CIRCA 1800

Five qibla script in black ink on paper, forming calligraphic designs in the form of a trellis with occasional religious phrases. Margins ruled in red, blue and gold, headpiece in colours and gold, red morocco leather cover attached at headpiece.

PROVENANCE
Formerly in the Cornelius J. Hauk collection.

£8,000-12,000 €10,600-16,000

QUR'AN, FINELY ILLUMINATED ARABIC MANUSCRIPT ON FINE VELLUM WITH A CONTEMPORARY LACQUER BINDING, ZAND OR EARLY QAJAR, PERSIA, LATE 19TH CENTURY

264 leaves, 19 lines per page, in miniature naskhi script in black ink on a gold ground throughout, on thin gesso skin, minute linear decoration of a vegetal motif in blue, verse markers of gold roundels with a central green dot, margins ruled in blue-green and gold, blue and red markers of gold cartouches in margins, marginal commentary in fine nasta'liq in black on silver cloud bands against gold ground. Richly illuminated double pages with fine border illumination in colours and gold comprising the names of the sawas on a geometric ground, followed by a prayer within radiating cartouches, following by the opening panels, lacquer binding decorated with flowers and butterflies, doubletons with gold vine on red ground.

£8,000-12,000 €10,600-16,000

The uncommon use of delicate, paper-thin vellum in Qur'ans production of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appears to have been restricted to only those of the highest calibre embellished with lavish illumination, as witnessed here.

The early date of this Qur'an is suggested by an ownership inscription on the final folio that records the date A.H. 1191 (A.D. 1778). This date coincides with the chancellors from Zand to Qajar rule in the final years of the eighteenth century, and it is possible that this Qur'an was written under either the Zand, who fell in 1794, or the Qajar who began their rule in 1794.

This early date is further supported by the floral lacquer binding that is closely comparable to a set of two panels signed YS Saliq al-Vedi and dated to 1782-1785 that exhibit a number of similar features to the present example. Namely, the style in which the blooming rose is depicted with radiating yellow dishes at its centre, and the distinctive large eye and butterflies with twin antennae that populate both flower scenes (Khalili et al 1996 cat 66, p.100-101).
A highly important manuscript of the Kitab al-Zij al-Ilkhan, or the Zij-i Ilkhan as it is known, copied four years after the death of the author, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and eight years after the original was completed in 1270.

Nasir al-Din al-Tusi was the leading Muslim philosopher-scientist of the thirteenth century. Born in Tus in A.H. 597/A.D. 1201, he studied in Baghdad and Mosul and later worked for the Ilkhan rulers at Guyin and Alamut and then, after the Mongol conquest in A.H. 654/A.D. 1256, for their Mongol successor Hulegu in Mervgah. He died in Baghdad in A.H. 672/A.D. 1274. Al-Tusi was a truly universal scholar and was perhaps the most prolific author of the Islamic world. He is best known in the history of science for his recensions of early Arabic translations of Greek works on astronomy and mathematics, various independent productions on aspects of theoretical and practical astronomy and mathematics and for this, the Persian astronomical handbook known as the Zij-i Ilkhan.
The Zij was one of over 150 works written by al-Tusi on subjects varying from religion and philosophy to pure mathematics and astronomy. It was this latter subject that brought him fame as a scientist. Yet he fame as a scholar was somewhat mitigated by an infamy achieved by a drift in allegiance from his Shī'ite brethren, to the Mongol invaders and the Emperor Hulegu. Raised by a Shī'ite scholar, and having spent twenty years in the nomad strongholds of Alemut and Maymar, al-Tusi was a committed and trusted disciple of the brethren, and in A.D. 632/ A.H. 1235 he was sent as chief negotiator to the shah of the invading Mongols. Faced with the inevitability of invasion, Tusi defected to the enemy camp. In this role he sought to prevent the destruction of all that had come before, and it is thanks to his efforts that many of the Shī'ite archives were not desecrated by the Mongol invaders. Sadly his efforts failed, and the sack of Alemut, not the raising of Baghdad, indeed he was a witness to the city's fall and the murder of the last Abbasid Caliph.

At the age of sixty, a recently appointed retainer of the Mongol emperors, al-Tusi was entrusted with responsibility for the empire's religious foundations and its finances, as well as the construction of an observatory at Maragha. On completion the observatory's library was second to none, filled with the books of Mesopotamia and the Levant, and had become a magnet for some of the greatest scientific thinkers of the age. Built for scientific purposes, the observatory was primarily viewed by Hulegu as a means to obtain answers on astrology. This required accurate astronomical tables from which an astrologer could answer his patron's questions. For this an entire Library and a highly technological observatory were built; new research was undertaken, various treaties were written and new instruments constructed; all this came to fruition in the Zij of Maragha.

A Zij however is more than just a means to predict the future; it provides the astronomer with the theory and tables to calculate the position of the sun, moon and five naked-eye planets. It can predict eclipses, the lunar crescent and planetary visibility. It can be used to tell the length of daylight, the altitude of the sun at midday and the exact times of prayer. The Zij was an important handbook for any astronomer, and indeed any Muslim for these reasons. A typical Zij will contain various chapters, tables devoted to the definition of contemporary calendars, trigonometric tables, formulae for deriving time from solar or stellar altitude (spherical astronomy), planetary mean motions, equations and latitudes, their stations and visibility, lunar visibility, geographical tables to facilitate planetary tables for other meridians and computing the direction of prayer: star catalogues and of course the necessary tables for drawing up a horoscope.

An early copy of the Khwarizmi Zij dated A.H. 692/A.D. 1292 can be found in Cairo. Other important copies of the Zij of Khwarizmi can be found in the following libraries, Baku (1492), Beirut (1266), Bombay (46, 307), Cambridge (Browne 22), Florence (U.x. 269), Hyderbad (Jayda 306), Istanbul (Yucel 21), London (572), Paris (169, 179, 256), Rome (Vat. 86), Tehran (Univ. Addab. 165) and Yezd (Yadi 285).

This fascinating manuscript is the result of years of work by one of the foremost scientific thinkers of the golden age of Arab astronomy. It was completed only a year after his death and is a rare document of the Khwarizmi school.
A rare dated addition to the corpus of the Rasa’il Ikhwan al-Safa, the philosophical-scientific handbook of one of the most illustrious societies of early-median Islam, the Ikhwan al-Safa.

The Ikhwan al-Safa was a secret brotherhood thought to have been affiliated to the Isma’ili movement. Their true identity was so thoroughly hidden that scholars can only speculate as to their real associations. The Rasa’il Ikhwan were considered to be central to Isma’ili doctrine, and have been attributed to the authorship of various different Shi’ite imams, and scholars from the eleventh century. These two scientific chapters are from a heretical unknown version of the Rasa’il, one of only a handful of dated medieval copies of the work. Among dated copies it only appears to be annotated by the famous copy in the Hafiz Pasha Library, Istanbul, 1587, dated A.H. 549/A.D. 1152, the copy formerly in the British Museum, now in the British Library (Cn. 6639), dated A.H. 646/A.D. 1249-50, and a copy in the Mofij-i Shari‘ah, M.T. Tehran 1470/1951, dated A.H. 1276/A.D. 1859.

The text appears to be an abridgment of the epistles, though it does not correspond to any of the known abridged versions, such as the Malikite Rasa’il Ikhwan al-Safa, or the al-Rasa‘l al-Jami‘ah frequently attributed to Abu‘l Qasim Madama al-Majita. A comparison of the early manuscripts of the Rasa’il has yet to be accomplished, and critical editions of the work are based almost entirely on late copies of the work. The present version differs substantially from these later copies, and provides important evidence for the medieval collocation, editing and propagation of the Rasa’il. The Rasa’il has always been loosely composed, consisting of either 51 or 52 chapters, there does not seem to be a formal structure to the manuscript as far as the succession of chapters is concerned. So these previously undiscovered chapters, although remarkable, are not abnormal.

These two epistles are from the first section of the Rasa’il, which concerns the mathematical sciences, and deal with astronomy, geography and geometry. Astronomy and geography appear to have been conflated into a single chapter here, which explains why the number of chapters in the first section is given as 13, rather than the 14 found in later copies and critical editions of the work. This is followed by the chapter on geometry, normally the fourth chapter in later editions, though here the second. After a description of the planetary spheres, follows a Seet al-Ard, a description of the earth, which divides into seven times according to the Greek tradition. This is followed by a description of each one, listing the coordinates, countries and cities of each. The chapter on geometry begins with a discussion of the division of the sciences according to the Greek masters (mathematical, logical, natural and divine), and is followed by an introduction to geometry with numerous diagrams of shapes, angles, lines and intersections. The predominance of Greek masters in these chapters is not exceptional; the text draws on the concepts of the Ancient Greek philosophers-scientists, particularly Aristotle, Plato and the Neoplatonists.

The Encyclopedia of Islam remarks that “The epistles of the Ikhwan occupy a place in the first rank of Arabic literature, ... their influence endures, not only in Shi‘ism, but also in the mystic movements.” (EI, vol.1, p.106).
The Ottoman manuscript is remarkable for its elegant marbled or ebru binding. Meaning "clouded paper" in Farsi, the ebru technique was used extensively under the Ottomans for album leaves, in calligraphy and in the binding of books, as both end papers and binding.

The art of marbling is thought to have begun in China during the Tang dynasty (618-907), a document dating from this period mentions a process of decorating paper using five colours in water, and whilst this is not conclusive evidence, it is nevertheless thought to mark the beginnings of the art form. The technique was then transmitted along the silk routes through Central Asia and to the Islamic lands where it was taken up with enthusiasm in Safavid Persia, Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul. Based on this, Turkish marblers have associated the art with sultans for centuries, although there is no direct evidence for this.

This link to the sultans is pertinent in this case, where the marbling itself is an early genealogy of the Nakkashbanu order in marbling. Although the Nakkashbanu order had its beginnings in Persia, it was in Ottoman Turkey that the order really took hold thanks to its strong sultan identity and close adherence to sharia law. The first Ottoman nakkashban was Mullah Ali Alibey Ali of Sinaw who brought the philosophy to Turkey in the late fifteenth century, less then a hundred years before the manuscript was written.
This beautifully illuminated manuscript copy of Nizami's Makhzan al-Awsat is remarkable not only for its elegant illumination, but also the iconic image of the mi`raj of the Prophet Muhammad on the fourth folio.

The mi`raj is the Prophet's miraculous night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, guided by the angel Gabriel and carried on the back of the winged steed Buraq. Traditionally, the western Islamic lands did not approve of the representation of the Prophet, where he is depicted; his face is often obscured by a white veil or a wreath of flames. Not so in Persia; the approach was more mystical and less pedestrian: the miracle of the mi`raj was often represented both in images and prose. For the opening of many poems included a proclamation of the Prophet's Ascension, as Sir Thomas Arnold remarks: 'It was a frequent practice of the poets... to include in the Preface... a lyrical outburst on the theme of Muhammad's Ascention.' (El, VII, p.304).

Interestingly, the depiction of the mi`raj is often found at the beginning of the Khamsa of Nizami in particular; even if the copy is otherwise un-illustrated (Sims, E., 2002, p151). The mi`raj itself and the representation of the Prophet, was viewed as a mystical symbol of the human link between the divine and the mundane, God’s great universe and the physical world. As such the image was invested with a profundity that is generally reserved for sacred and religious relics.

Considered to be one of the most influential and important poems of the Persian language, Nizami refused attachment to a court for fear of losing his artistic integrity, and as a result his poems are executed with a veracity impossible had he been constrained by a patron. His work is both lyrical and insightful, with characters that mature and develop with a realism that is paralleled more in theatrical than poetry.

The Makhzan al-Awsat is the first poem in Nizami's epic quintet, the Khamsa. It is a didactic philosophical work with mystical overtones that champions the poor and humble. The work is religious, and takes pains to remind the reader of the transience of this life and the eternity of the next. The poetry is lyric ballad, and is imbued with a depth and gravity appropriate for an illustration of the mi`raj.