An Album of Calligraphy by Mir Ali with annotations in the hand of the Emperor Shah Jahan

ILLUSTRATED ALBUM OF NASTA’LIQ CALLIGRAPHY, COPIED BY MIR ALI BUKHARA, PERSIA, DATED A.H. 950/1643, FORMERLY IN THE ROYAL MUGHAL LIBRARY OF EMPERORS JAHANGIR AND SHAH JAHAN

6 leaves, 3 lines per page written horizontally, in fine large and small nasta’liq script within cloud bands reserved on a ground of gold foliate motifs on blue, cream and buff paper, opening heading written within a finely illuminated panel, tooled and stamped leather binding.

£25,000-30,000 €30,000-35,000

PROVENANCE
1. The album was written by Mir Ali at Bukhara in A.D.1643.
2. Probably entered the Mughal royal library of the emperor Akbar. A Mughal hand notes that it was seen on 8th of Bahman in the 42nd regnal year (28th January A.D.1697).
3. A librarian’s note records that it was transferred to a certain Mulla Ali on 6th Coldbehish in the 47th regnal year (27th April 1701).
4. Stated as present in the Mughal royal library, this time of the emperor Jahangir, on the 13th of the month of Bahman in the first year of Jahangir’s reign (22nd Remadan A.H.1014/1st February A.D.1606).
5. The note recording this information is in the hand of Jahangir himself.
6. Another librarian’s note records that it was transferred from a certain Mulla Salih to Chahar on 8th Shahrivar in the 3rd regnal year (30th September A.H.1608).
7. Stated as present in the Mughal royal library of the emperor Shah Jahan on the 5th of the month of Bahman in the first year of Shah Jahan’s reign (16th Jamadala al-A’la A.H.1022/7th February A.D.1618).
8. The note recording this information is in the hand of Shah Jahan himself.
9. A note in a Mughal hand records that it was seen on 4th Azar in the first regnal year of Shah Jahan’s reign (25th November A.D.1620).
10. A note in a Mughal hand records that it was seen on 2nd Rabi’ al-Awal in the 12th year of Shah Jahan’s reign (30th June A.D.1639).
11. A note records that it was seen on 4th Jamadala al-A’la A.H.1119/21st May A.D.1708.

There are traces of round and tear-drop shaped seal impressions on the same page. The round one probably dates from the Jahangir period, while the tear-shaped seal is that of Shah Jahan (exactly the same type of seal can be seen accompanying an inscription in Shah Jahan’s hand in a manuscript of the Hudud al-Nasr dated A.D.1599-1600, sold at Bonhams, London, 26th April 1995, lot 400). There is also a later (probably 18th century) square librarian’s seal.

EXHIBITED
International Exhibition of Persian Art, Burlington House, London, 1931

This album of fine calligraphy is interesting not only for its quality and the signature of the master Mir Ali, but also for the notes written on the opening blank page by the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan recording the dates on which they examined the pages in their royal libraries.

Mir Ali was one of the master calligraphers of the first half of the sixteenth century and is considered to be one of the greatest exponents of the nasta’liq script ever to have lived. He studied under Zayn al-Din Mubammad and Sultan Ali al-Mahdiri. He worked at Herat until 1528, when he was taken by the Uzbek wakil Ubayd Allah Khan to Bukhara, where he stayed until his death. The year of his death has not been established, but different sources mention 1533, 1544 and 1550 (the first being manifestly wrong since the current work is dated 1543). He was highly esteemed in his own day and Ghiyath Ahmed tells us that he ‘carried off the ball of pre-eminence and superiority, for in laying down the foundations of nasta’liq he was the initiator of new rules and of a praiseworthy canon’ (Moroysky 1959, p.126; see also pp.126-9).
ILLUMINATED ALBUM PAGE, SIGNED BY 'ALI BUKHARA, PERSIA.
DATED A.H. 933/A.D. 1526

ink, gosache and gold on paper, laid down on stout paper. 5 lines of 
calligraphy written in fine nasta'liq script in black ink within cloud bands
reserved against a ground of scrolling foliate motifs in colours and gold,
mounted with a blue border having a scrolling foliate motif in gold.
CENTRAL PANEL 12.9 W 20 CM

LEAF 19.4 H 28.5 CM.

£ 9,000-12,000 € 10,600-15,900

ILLUMINATED PAGE OF FINE CALLIGRAPHY, SIGNED TWICE BY
MUHAMMAD AS AR BIN MANSUR AL-HUSAYNI, ALSO AS MIR
MUNSHI, MECCA, ARABIA, DATED JUMADIL AWRAL A.H. 964/A.D.
1558

panels of various inscriptions in thuluth, nasta'liq in black or
blue ink, the various panels decorated in colours and gold, with scrolling
vegetal and foliate motifs, laid down on paper, laid down on stout paper
with blue-gold sprinkled border in modern times.
CENTRAL PANEL 20.8 W 20 CM

LEAF 19.3 H 25.5 CM.

£ 15,000-18,000 € 19,000-23,400

This fascinating and beautiful document is a rare example of a Mughal
master calligrapher working in Mecca.

Muhammad Asghar bin Mansur al-Husayni is recorded as Muhammad
Asghar Saberai (Mashhadi), who was a Mir Munshi, a chancellery clerk
for the amir and titles of Khan by Abbas in
A.H. 948/A.H. 1540-1541), and held a mansab of 2000 (see H. Ashad Ali,
The Apparatus of Persian Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles in the Mughal
Nabaul (154-154), Delhi, 1995, p.25, no. 47 and p.26, no.32).
Indeed his work is so highly regarded that a Qur'an copied by him and
dated A.H 966 (1560), and held in these rooms 8 July 1980, lot 275, was
inscribed by Shah Jihan himself, identifying the scribe as Asad Khan Mir
Munshi.
CALLIGRAPHIC LEAF. OTTOMAN, TURKEY. 19TH CENTURY
25 BY 17.5CM.

INSRIPTIONS
The shahada

The art of producing calligraphic using dried leaves is one that was practiced mostly in Ottoman Turkey during the nineteenth century. Viewed largely in an artistic light, the production is nevertheless painstaking and the results charming. A leaf is placed between two sheets of glass and left to dry away from direct sunlight; a sharp implement is used to delicately prise away the body of the leaf from its skeleton leaving the required design. The art form was largely associated with the sufi, who saw in the deterioration of the leaf a metaphor for the transience of life and the eternity of the spiritual world.

£3,000-5,000

CALLIGRAPHIC DECORATION PANEL. DATED A.H. 1320/ A.D. 1902-03. OTTOMAN, TURKEY

CALLIGRAPHIC LEAF. OTTOMAN, TURKEY. 19TH CENTURY
25 BY 17.5CM. (FRAMED)

INSRIPTIONS
Possibly Muhammed chosen by God

£5,000-8,000

CALLIGRAPHIC LEAF. OTTOMAN, TURKEY. 19TH CENTURY
25 BY 17.5CM. (FRAMED)

INSRIPTIONS
Quran, Sura al-Ikhlas (112), parts of vv. 157

£3,000-5,000

CALLIGRAPHIC DECORATION PANEL. OTTOMAN, TURKEY.
DATED A.H. 1223/ A.D. 1808-1809

gouache heightened with gold on green marbled paper; the text divided into 4 sections, 2 roundels inscribed with the words Allah and Muhammad, a top rectangular section with the Bismillah, the main text in a central square panel, margins delineated in orange
CENTRAL PANEL: 32.5 BY 67CM.
LEAF: 48 BY 71CM.

£4,000-8,000

£6,000-10,000
AN OTTOMAN SILK AND METAL-THREAD CALLIGRAPHIC
ROUNDEL, MOROCCO, 17TH-18TH CENTURY

Of cusped form with a central medallion with the name of Allah on a
crimson silk ground enframed by further inscriptions in radial petal
panels on a green cotton ground, mounted on green silk.
54CM. DIAM.

PANEL: 65.5CM SQUARE

INSCRIPTIONS
Qur'an surah al-Mulk (CXII)

£8,000-12,000  €10,600-15,900
AN IMPORTANT CURTAIN FROM THE TAMASSUL AT MEDINA,
OTTOMAN, 19TH CENTURY

of rectangular form, the silver and silver-gilt metal threads
embroidered on a black and coloured silk ground with a calligraphic
cartouche on a red silk ground with further calligraphic roundels
surrounded by wreaths, garlands and ribbons, with foliate "C" scroll
borders.

36X BY 75CM.

INSCRIPTIONS
In the top cartouche:

hadr al-ustas al-sharif li-bab al-tamassul

"This noble cover is for the noble Tamassul door."

In the horizontal cartouche: Qur'an, surah al-Baqara (2), verses 191.

In the two roundels: The shafads

In the centre: Qur'an, surah al-Baqara (2), 255.

In the small roundels: The names of the Orthodox Caliphs as well as the
Imams Hasan and Husayn

£ 100,000-150,000  € 150,000-190,000

of rectangular form, the black silk ground with applied red and pistacho-green cartouches and roundels embroidered with silver and silver-gilt threads framed by wreaths, garlands and ribbons, the lower section embroidered with the tughrā and signature of Sultan Mahmud II, with foliate palmette and ribbed borders

266 BY 166CM.

INSCRIPTIONS
In the top cartouche:
hadha al-istana al-sharifah l-bab al-minares al-as'siyah
'This noble cover is for the door of the Ra'isiah minaret'
In the cartouche below it: Qur'an, surah sad (XCVIII), 50.
In the two roundels: The shahada
In the centre: Qur'an, surah al-Baqara (2), 205.
In the roundels: The names of the Orthodox Caliphs as well as the Imams Hasan and Husayn.
With the tughrā of Sultan Mahmud (A.H. 1225-1255/A.D. 1808-1838).
The tughrā-like inscription between the two roundels:
'latithu al-qahira ma'mur bi 'abd al-hamid'
'The Holy-warrior Mahmud ibn 'Abd al-Hamid wrote it'
That means, Mahmud II (A.H. 1225-1255/A.D. 1808-1838)

£ 80,000 - 120,000 € 106,000 - 159,000
AN IMPORTANT CURTAIN FROM THE TOMB OF THE PROPHET (HUJURAT AL-GABI AL-NABAWI AL-SHARIF) IN MEDINA, OTTOMAN, WITH THE TUGHRA OF SULTAN MAHMUD (A.H. 1223-1255/A.D. 1808-1839)

of rectangular form, the black silk ground applied with red and pistachio silk panels embroidered with silver and silver-gilt metallic threads with a central calligraphic mosaic lamp flanked by an arch with wreaths and garlanded spandrels supported by twisted columns, enclosing wreaths and inscriptions with the tugha of Sultan Mahmud, further calligraphic cartouches above, scrolling palmette borders 248 by 132cm.

INSCRIPTIONS
On the top three bands: Qur’an, surah al-Fatiha (1).

In the two cartouches above the arch:

amasa bi jamal hadha al-shahr al-sharif husna mewfendi al-sultan mahmud khan dhn. Abd al-hamid khan khalilullah allah khaliqisti

“this noble cover was ordered to be made by him, who is our lord Sultan Mahmud Khan son of Sultan Abd al-Hamid Khan, may God make his caliphate eternal”

In the corners of the arch: The sheikhs.

In the hanging lamp, in mirrored form: “O The Opener [of all gates]!”

In the niche: Qur’an, surah al-Nissa (2). 255.

With the tugha of Sultan Mahmud (A.H. 1223-1255/A.D. 1808-1839)

£ 80,000-120,000 € 106,000-159,000
A MAGNIFICENT OTTOMAN VELVET, SILK AND METAL THREAD CALLIGRAPHIC BAND (HZAM) FROM THE HOLY KA’BA AT MECCA, EARLY 20TH CENTURY

of rectangular form, the black ground embroidered with silver and silver-gilt metal threads with a monumental Hzam bordered by minor bands of scrolling tendrils, applied pistachio green silk spandrels with a calligraphic keyfoil roundel and foliate forms

740 BY 107CM

INSCRIPTIONS
In the roundel: Invocations to God.
In the band: Qur’an, surah Al-Fajr (89), 26-27.
In the roundel: Invocations to God.

Similar roundels are in the Hzams ordered by ‘Abd al-Hamid II (with a different Qur’anic text), and Muhammad V (also with a different text), (Hızam 1996, cat. 45 & 44).

£ 120,000–160,000
€ 150,000–200,000
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AN IMPORTANT CURTAIN FROM THE TOMB OF THE PROPHET
(NOJRAY AT-UL QABR AL-HABAIY AL-SHARIH) IN MEDINA,
OTTOMAN, DATED A.H. 12[0]2/1219-1794

Of rectangular form, the black silk ground applied with red and green
panels, embroidered with silver and silver-gilt metal threads, with a
central calligraphic mosque lamp with pendant flanked by half
columns and framed by an archway with arabesque spandrels,
bordered by calligraphic cartouches and roundels with an arcade of
palmettes to the upper border
500 by 159cm

£ 100,000-150,000 £ 130,000-190,000

INSCRIPTIONS
In the top cartouche: Qur’an, surah al-Fatihah (XLIX), 3.
In the second cartouche: A hadith of the Prophet.
In the long border cartouches: Qur’an, surah al-Fatihah (LVIII), 2-4.
In the roundels, including the one in the middle of the lower band
of them’
In the lamps in mirrored form: ‘O The Opener [of all gates]’
In the tear-drop hanging:
manfara al-sultan sâlih kha’m “azza allah nasruhu fi sana” (Gl. 1206)

‘Our Lord, Sultan Salim Khan - may God glorify his victory - in the year
12[0]2[9] (A.D.1795-96)’ [N.B. the dot between the 1 and 2 seems to refer to
the letter nun in sana]
In the two long cartouches in the lower border:
manfa’â al-‘amal ba’d al-‘adlah al-mubâsirah/ manfara al-malik al-a’dâm
sultan sâlih kha’m
‘Our Lord, the Most Great King, Sultan Salim Khan ordered this blessed
covering to be made’
Sultan Selim III reigned from A.H. 1202-1222 (A.D. 1796-1807)

A similar curtain dated A.H. 1206 (A.D.1794-1795) sold at Christie’s, 17 April
2007, lot 21. A curtain of related design in the Topkapı Palace Museum is
from the reign of Muhammad IV (see Tetzian 1998, pp.111-120, no.47).
AN IMPORTANT CURTAIN FROM THE TOMB OF THE PROPHET
(HUJRAH AL-QABR AL-NABAWI AL-SHARIF) IN MEDINA
WITH THE TUGHRAS OF SULTAN ABDULHAMID, OTTOMAN,
DATED A.H. 1297/1879-1880

of rectangular form, the silver and silver-gilt metal threads
embroidered on a black and coloured silk ground, the upper section
with four bands of calligraphy on alternating red and green grounds,
both narrow bands below on a black ground and a large red and
green equal cartouche at the bottom with further inscriptions, the
interruptions filled with scrolls, the border with rosettes in red medallions
separated by leaf scrolls.

172 BY 152CM.

INSCRIPTIONS
In the top three bands: Qur'an, surah al-An'am (VII), 54.

In the black cartouche:

amana bi-amal hadha al-sitara al-sharif hadrat masihah al-salam al-sultan
Abd al-Hamid Khan nasabani alal asim

'His Majesty, our Most great Lord Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid Khan - may God
help him, Amen! - ordered the making of this noble covering.'

In the middle (3 bands):

jadda hadha al-sitara al-sharif hadrat masihah al-lama efendi 'Abbas
pasha Hanifi Efendi in his royal name 'Abd al-Hamid muhammed tevfik pasha
edina efendi Hzahran year 1297

'His Excellency our Most great Lord Efendi 'Abbas Pasha Hني, the
Viceroy of the Protected Egypt, son of the late Muhammad Tevfik Pasha
- may God make his glory everlasting! - willed this Noble cover [k] in the
year A.H. 1297/A.D. 1879-1880.'

A piece with similar inscriptions is in the Topkapı Palace Museum, dated
1325 (A.D. 1907-1908) (Leccon 1966, cat. 15, p46).

£ 70,000-90,000
€ 95,000-120,000.
A MAGNIFICENT SILK AND METAL THREAD CALLIGRAPHIC BAND (HIZAM) FROM MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA, 20TH CENTURY

The black silk ground embroidered with silver and silver-gilt metal threads, with a monumental calligraphic frieze in thuluth bordered by a solid gilt metal band of scrolling flower-heads terminating in a calligraphic roundel enclosed by foliate forms on a solid gilt metal ground

622 BY 222CM.

INSCRIPTIONS

Qur'an, surah al-Naj (XXXII), 26.

In the roundels: Invocations to God

A cover most probably for the building near Ka`ba in Mecca, where Abraham built it. It is known as masjam al-wahin.

£120,000-160,000 €150,000-200,000