A MONUMENTAL SINGLE LINE FROM THE 'BAYSUNGHUR' QUR'AN, HERAT OR SAMARRQAND, CIRCA 1400-1405

TEXT: SURAT AL-MUHADAH (XL), PART OF VERSE 20

Arabic manuscript on thick cream paper, one line of text written in bold muhaqqaq script in dark brown ink with alternate readings in dark brown, verso blank, in mount

413 x 22 x 22 cm

This fragment originates from the famous Qur'an associated with the Timurid prince Baysunghur ibn Shahrukh. According to David James, the main cause for its fame is its vast size, for the complete pages that survive measure about 177 by 106 cm. The text of this Qur'an was copied in seven lines on one side of these enormous sheets, the other side being left blank. Assuming the entire text of the Qur'an was transcribed, approximately 180 bifolios would have been required to contain it. He adds that the association with Baysunghur dates back to the 19th century when the noted collector of Oriental manuscripts, James Biddle-Fraser, saw a section of this Qur'an in Qazvin, in north-east Iran. Although Baysunghur was a competent calligrapher, there is no historical evidence that he undertook so arduous a task as copying a Qur'an of this size since it would have taken between six and eight months to complete the work or the assumption that he was able to find the time to copy ten pages a day. The undertaking would certainly not have gone unnoticed by his contemporaries and would have been recorded in the chronicles of the time. James concludes that the attribution was probably based on circumstantial evidence since at one stage the manuscript was kept in the mausoleum of his grandfather, Timur in Samarqand (James, 1993, pp18-25).

In remained there until the city was captured by Nadir Shah in the 18th century. This Shah's troops dismantled the manuscript and stole many of its leaves, which were later lost or badly damaged. Moreover, in the exhibition catalogue, Timur and the Princeton Vision, it was suggested that the manuscript fitted more naturally under the patronage of Timur himself, and that the great marble stand commissioned by Libya, Bag after Timur's death, and originally located in the main chamber of the Friday Mosque of Samarqand was probably made specifically for this Qur'an.

Other pages or fragments are in the Asian Gallery, Library, Methad; the Gulbenkian Library, the Piers-Abbey Museum, the Makk Library, the Museum of Ancient Iran, and the National Library of Iran, Tehran, the Metropolitan Museum, New York, The Arthur and History Curto Collection, Washington DC; the David Collection, Copenhagen; the Nasir D. Khalili Collection, London.

Pages or fragments from this Qur'an were included in the following sales:

Sotheby's, Geneva, 25 June 1986, lot 18 (4 lines);
Christie's, London, 25 November 1985, lot 95 (1 line);
Sotheby's, London, 10 October 1988, lot 168 (1 page) and lot 169 (5 lines, including sura headings, baqara and part of verse 31);
Christie's, London, 21 October 1995, lot 46 (1 line);
Drouot, Paris, 25 April 1994, lot 34 (2 lines), Sotheby's, London, 22 April 1999, lot 15 (2 lines, same fragment as Paris sale),

£ 80,000-85,000 € 75,500-80,000
A LEAF FROM THE ‘FIVE SURAS’ IN KUHDIFFAQ SCRIPT COPIED BY ABU MUHAMMAD ABDUL QAYYUM IBN MUHAMMAD IBN KARANSHAHI TABRIZI. PERSIA OR MESOPOTAMIA, PROBABLY JALATRID BAGHDAD, CIRCA 1370

TEXT: SURAT SABA (XXXIV), V. 9-12

Arabic manuscript on paper. 5 lines to the page written in elegant muhaqqaq script in black ink outlined in gold, decorative and ruled in gold. One illuminated circular roundel decorated with a geometric knot and dotted border outlined in blue, inner margin ruled in red, blue and gold.

FOLIO: 431 BY 54CM

TEXT AREA: 35.8 BY 25.5CM.

£ 10,000 - 20,000 € 13,800 - 28,000

This leaf originates from a manuscript of selected chapters from the Qur’an known as the ‘Five Suras’ which begins with the phrase al-kifratu bi-
Nabat (chapters I, XXVIII, XXXV and XXXXVII). The calligraphy of the manuscript, now in a private collection, is given the name of the scribe as Abu Muhammad ‘Abdul Qayyum ibn Muhammad ibn Karanshahi Tabrizi. Absolutely Sounder has suggested on stylistic grounds that the completion of Qur’anic verses from which this leaf originated was made for the Jalatid ruler Shams al-Dawla (Souda 1992, no. 76, pp.50-51).

The extremely fine illumination looks back to that of the Ilkhanid imperial Qur’ans, such as Ujirak’s Mosul Qur’an, and the superb muhaqqaq scripts copied for the monumental Qur’an attributed to Baysunghur but most likely commissioned by his grandfather Timur (reigned 1370-1445). One line of text from this Qur’an is included in this sale at lot 17. Moreover, David James observes that the calligrapher achieves “a masterful perfection... equalled only by Ibn Suhayr in the Qur’an produced in Baghdad in the early years of the 14th century” (James 1992, p.16).

Other leaves from this manuscript are in the Nasir D. Khalili Collection, The Art and Trust Collection, now on loan to the Suida Foundation, Washington; The David Collection, Copenhagen; the Ribat Sheikh El-
Aisl Collection, Riyadh.

Two leaves were exhibited in Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, Geneva, 2003: Islamic Calligraphy: Sacred and Secular Writings, Geneva, 1988, nos. 236 and 238, pp.100-104.

Other leaves from the same manuscript are published in:


A leaf from this Qur'an was sold in these rooms on 9th April 2006, lot 24.
A BIFOLIUM FROM THE 'FIVE SURAS', IN MUHAQQAQ SCRIPT, PERSIA OR MESOPOTAMIA, PROBABLY JALAL AL-DIN BAGHDAD, CIRCA 1370

Arabic manuscript on paper, consecutive text, 2 leaves, 7 lines to the page written in elegant muhaqqaq script in black ink outlined in gold, diacritics and vowel points in black ink outlined in gold, illuminated circular markers decorated with geometric knots and dotted border outlined in blue, inner margins ruled in red, blue and gold-illuminated pear-shaped device in outer border including the word Hullu (fhū) in a central roundel decorated with intertwining swastika leaves in gold and some black on blue ground.

BIFOLIUM: 48.5 x 42.5cm.

See footnote to the previous lot.

£50,000-70,000 €63,000-88,500
20
A LARGE ILLUMINATED QUR’AN, CENTRAL ASIA, PROBABLY BUKHARA, LATE 16TH CENTURY

Arabic manuscript on paper, 284 leaves, first, eighth and fifteenth line on each page written in large thuluth in gold with diacritics and vowel points in black, remainder of text written in smaller naskhi script in black ink with diacritics and vowel points in black, gold rounded decorated with red and blue dots between verses, inner margins ruled in colours and gold, side panels on each page decorated with intertwining vegetal motifs in blue and red, wax headings in black on gold panels, illuminated circular devices in outer margins, illuminated double-page frontispiece in colours and gold, text panels painted over in gold and text rewritten, seal impression of Arslan Jakh dated A.H. 1212 / A.D. 1799, brown morocco with stamped central medallions and border panels decorated with floral motifs, with flap.

56 BY 24CM.

£ 6,000-10,000 € 8,000-12,000

21
FOUR FOLIOS FROM A QUR’AN IN BIHARI SCRIPT, INDIA, SULTANATE, CIRCA 16TH CENTURY

12 lines per page written in Bihari script in alternating lines of blue, black and gold ink, verse divisions marked with illuminated rosette, tenth verses marked with large illuminated roundels in the margins containing the letter ‘yin’ (‘yaf’), ruled margin, marginal notes written diagonally in black and red ink.

25.5 BY 21.5CM.

(4)

£ 3,000-5,000 € 4,000-6,000

22
AN ILLUMINATED MINIATURE QUR’AN WITH METAL CASE, PERSIA, QAJAR, 18TH/19TH CENTURY

Arabic manuscript on paper, 125 leaves, 16 lines to the page written in minute naskhi script in black ink, gold dots between verses, inner margins ruled in green and gold catchwords, one illuminated double-page frontispiece in colours and gold, later brown morocco, cover of metal case inscribed with the Bismillah in gold.

5.2 BY 5CM.

£ 5,000-7,000 € 6,500-8,500
23 A SMALL ILLUMINATED QUR’AN. PERSIA, DATED A.H. 1128 / A.D. 1715
Arabic manuscript on paper, 452 leaves, 19 lines to the page written in small naskhi script in black ink with diacritics and vowel points in black, gold borders between verses, inner margins ruled in gold, catchwords, commentaries in naskhi script in outer margins, some headings and rubrics in rubhikh script in gold within illuminated panels, two doubles pages of fine illumination at beginning and end of the Qur’an text followed by prayers, dugas and a list of ulama dated A.H. 1176 and 1274 / A.D. 1764 and 1868 respectively, black sheepskin with stamped central medallion decorated with floral motifs, borders painted in gold, red doublains with gilt borders
9.4 BY 5.5CM.

The names at the end of the Qur’an list the genealogy of Sayyid Muhammad, titled Sultan al-Ulama (probably an influential and wealthy Shi‘i cleric), back to Imam ‘Ali. A Qur’an was sold at Sotheby’s on 19th April 2000, lot 10, in which his name was written in an illuminated cartouche, something usually reserved for Qajar kings. The Qur’an must have been restored by Sultan al-Ulama or at least came to his possession in A.H. 1254. The numbers and letters at the end are a magic inscription.
£ 5,000-7,000 | $ 6,500-8,900

24 AN ILLUMINATED QUR’AN COPIED BY AL-SHA’YKH ABDULLAH. OTTOMAN TURKEY, 18TH/19TH CENTURY
Arabic manuscript on paper, 474 leaves, 17 lines to the page written in clear naskhi script in black ink with diacritics and vowel points in black, large gold dots between verses, inner margins ruled in red catchwords and rubrics in rubhikh script in red, illuminated double-page frontispiece in colours and gold, contemporary dark brown morocco with stamped central medallion and cornerpieces of gilt paper overlay decorated with floral motifs, with flap
30.5 BY 20.5CM
£ 3,000-4,000 | $ 3,800-5,100

25 A POEM IN PRAISE OF THE PROPHET, MAMLUK, PROBABLY EGYPT OR THE YEMEN, DATED A.H. 932 / A.D. 1526
Arabic manuscript on cream-coloured paper, 28 leaves, approximately 15 lines to the page, first, fifth and ninth lines of each page written in bold mubakka script in black ink, 9 lines written in smaller naskhi script in red and 5 lines written diagonally in rubhikh script in blue, interlinear and intercolumnar double rules in orange, text interspersed with large gold rosettes decorated with alternating orange and blue dots, inner margins ruled in orange, catchwords, illuminated title-page with a shamsa incorporating the full name of the author, side-panel with an inscription written in gold gives the name of a Bahmani ruler, brown morocco with stamped paper overlay decorated with floral motifs, with flap
25.3 BY 15.2CM
INSCRIPTIONS
The quatrain of Jumāl al-Dīn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman B. ‘Abd al-Gasīr
Commissioned by Sultan Shahab al-Dīn Ahmad III (son of Muhammad) (924-977/1518-1570), the Bahmani ruler of the Deccan.
Dated: The end of Rabi’ al-awwal 932 (15 February 1526).
This manuscript might have been in the library of the Bahmani ruler of the Deccan, Sultan Shahab al-Dīn Ahmad III (924-977/1518-1570).
£ 6,000-8,000 | $ 7,600-10,100
AN ALBUM-PAGE OF TA'LIQ DÉCOUPAGE CALLIGRAPHY SIGNED BY THE ILLUMINATOR NAQSHI. OTTOMAN TURKEY, FIRST HALF OF 18TH CENTURY

Arabic and Ottoman Turkish text cut-out ta'liq laid down diagonally and horizontally on cream paper with exquisite appliqué floral decoration

11.4 x 10.5 cm.

The text incorporates the famous verses in praise of the Imam 'Ali:

Call upon 'Ali who causes wonders
You will find him helpful in misfortunes
All angels, all sowers will disappear
Through your friendship (with God), O 'Ali, O 'Ali, O 'Ali.

Naqshī, whose real name is not known, was a celebrated Ottoman painter, illuminator, and lacquer artist who specialized in the art of découpage. He was from Edirne since a lacquered pen-box in the Victoria and Albert Museum is signed by him as Naqshī Edirne and dated A.H. 1160 / A.D. 1747. Another composition is in Istanbul University Library (Bayanı 1545-59, vol. 4, p. 268), and Kamravand 2000, vol. 2, p. 396.

A composition with similar appliqué floral decoration signed by Naqshī and dated A.H. 1133 / A.D. 1720-21 is in the Nasir D. Khaki Collection (Safvat 1996, no. 337, pp. 196-7).

£7,000-10,000 / €8,000-12,000

AN ILLUMINATED DOUBLE-PAGE WITH DIAGRAMS OF THE HOLY CITIES OF MECCA AND MEDINA, INDIA, LATE 18TH/19TH CENTURY

Gouache with use of gold on paper, framed

14.5 x 23.5 cm.

This illuminated double-page probably originates from a travel guide to the pilgrimage (hajj), produced for Muslim pilgrims of India. During the sixteenth century several new guides were written based on the earlier hajj guidebook tradition. One of the most popular accounts was by Mahsuri, who dedicated his Futuū al-Janam (The Conquest of the Two Holy Sites) to his patron, Sultan Mustafa I bin Mahmud Shah of Gujarat in 1505-1506 (Schmitz 1992, no. 13, pp. 42-46).

£5,000-7,000 / €6,000-8,000
A SILK AND METAL THREAD CALLIGRAPHIC BAND (HIZAM) FOR THE HOLY KA'BA AT MECCA DESIGNED BY THE OTTOMAN CALLIGRAPHER ABDULLAH BEK ZUHDI, CIRCA 1870

of elongated rectangular form, the blue silk ground embroidered with silver metal threads with a monumental calligraphic frieze in thuluth framed by a narrow border of scrolling tendrils, with split palmette spandrels.

532. BY BRCM.

LITERATURE

INSCRIPTION
Qur'an, surah Al-'Imran (III), verse 94, 95 and parts of 96.

The four walls of the Ka'ba are covered with a curtain (khaima) with the shahads outlined in the weave. About two thirds of the way up run a gold embroidered band (hizam) covered with Qur'anic verses. Each year when the new khaima arrives, the guardians of the Ka'ba, the Bani Shaybah, divide the old khaima up and distribute the pieces to honoured pilgrims.

This piece was documented by Ibrahim Rifat Parsa in his book Mist Al-Haramain, published in 1975 (Ibrahim Rifat, Mist Al-Haramain, Dar Al-Kitab al-Misri, Cairo, 1975, p.298, illus. no.110). Rifat wrote: "The famous [Egyptian] calligrapher Abdullah Bek Zuhdi designed this fine calligraphy in the thuluth style, during the reign of Khedive Ismail Pasha of Egypt (1863-1879)."

Other examples of the khaima have sold in these rooms, 31 October 1993, lot 255; 5 April 2006, lot 21; 5 April 2006, lot 21; 18 April 2007, lot 184; 24 October 2007, lot 45, and 9 April 2008, lot 41.

£60,000-100,000

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