16 Double Qur'an Page

Iraq, early 14th century
Ink, gold on paper
Page size: 43 cm x 27 cm

Text: Sura XXVIII, v. 57-71

Only a few folios survive from what must have been a most remarkable manuscript. Magnificent gold Muhaqqiq script is outlined in black, seven lines to the page, with the 1st, 4th and 7th lines in larger script. The margins are ruled in gold and the verse-ends marked by gold rosettes. Although the colophon is missing, the calligraphy is similar to that of Pir Yahya Sulh, who was trained in the tradition of Yaqut al-Mustasimi (d. 1299). It is eloquent evidence of the refinements introduced into the art of calligraphy from the 10th to the 13th centuries. During that period, three renowned masters – Ibn Muqla (d. 1042), Ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022) and Yaqut al-Mustasimi – established a new canon of proportion and regularized the various major scripts.

17 Fragment of a Qur'an

Copied by Arghun al-Kamili
Illuminated by Muhammad bin Sayf al-Din al-Naqqash

Iraq, early 14th century
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 37.5 cm x 27.5 cm

There are 28 folios with 13 lines of beautiful Rayhani calligraphy on polished paper. The verse-ends are marked by gold rosettes; the divisions of five verses by gold crested medallions with white Kufic on blue inside; and the divisions of 10 verses by similar gold discs. There are six Sura headings, each differently illuminated in colors and gold within a rectangular panel (headings of Suras LXXII, XLI, XXIX, LXI, LX, XL).

Arghun al-Kamili was one of the six principal pupils of Yaqut al-Mustasimi, and was considered to be the master of the Rayhani script. Nineteen folios of the same manuscript are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ms. 1408), and the remainder are in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul.
18 Qur'an Page

Egypt, mid-14th century
Ink, color, on paper
Page size: 41 cm x 32 cm
The text is written in black Thuluth script, with an illuminated Sura heading in gold, red and blue. This style of calligraphy was perfected and favored under the Mamluk dynasty in Egypt.
This is a page from a magnificent Qur'an of which the frontispiece and several illuminated pages are in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (see E. Atki, Art of the Arab World, Washington, D.C., 1975, pls. 41–42). Other pages are in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and in the al-Sabah Collection in the National Museum of Kuwait.

19 Qur'an Section
Copied by Amir Hajj bin Ahmad al-Saini
Egypt, Shawwal 734 AH: June 1334 AD
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 39 cm x 25 cm
Text: Juz XXVI
The manuscript has 46 leaves, with five lines to the page written on paper in elegant Rayhani script in gold. It has diacritical marks in blue, illuminated rosettes between verses and margins ruled in blue and gold. There is a fine double page of illumination in blue and gold, and folios 1b–2a have interlinear floral decoration in pink and blue. The original binding is of black morocco with stamped central medallions and cornerpieces.
A late 15th-century inscription on folio 1a states that the Qur'an was given in endowment to the Jamal al-Din Marjan Madrasa in Taiz, Yemen. Five other sections from this Qur'an (Juz VIII, XI, XVI, XX, XXVII) with the same inscription are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (see A. J. Arberry, The Koran Illuminated, Dublin, 1967, 69–73, Ms. 1469 a–e).

20 Illuminated Frontispiece from a Qur'an

Egypt, circa 1400
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 21 cm x 15 cm
This frontispiece design derives its aesthetic integrity from precise, inter-locking half and quarter circles. The various zones demarcated by this gold framework are painted alternately in red and blue. The composition is further unified by an overlay of gold arabesques. Showing a pleasing harmony, it is nonetheless relatively simple compared to some 14th-century examples. On the reverse, there are four lines of Muhattaq calligraphy beneath a rectangular heading. This panel, enclosing lotus palmettes on a red background, is outlined in gold.
21 Colophon from a Hadith
Egypt, 14th century
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 27 cm × 18.5 cm

The gold calligraphy is floating in 'clouds' against a red lined ground with scrolling vines. The calligraphy in the heading is reserved on gold against a blue background. This style of decoration can be found on Mamluk manuscripts such as Qur'an sections in the British Library, London, Or.5.48 and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms.1464.

22 Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad
Copied by Shaikh Hamdullah
Turkey, second half of 15th or early 16th century
Ink, gold and color on paper; mounted and backed in dark green silk and hinged with leather
Page size: 24 cm × 17 cm

This album page has 16 lines of calligraphy written in black ink interspersed with gold rosettes, dotted in blue and yellow. The signature is in the last line. The panel is set within an illuminated border of gold foliage, with the illuminator's mark in the upper left hand corner. The facing page is decorated with an all-over marbleized design in pale blue, orange, yellow and green.

Shaikh Hamdullah (1436–1520) was one of the most renowned and influential of the Ottoman calligraphers. He studied under Hayreddin Marashi, and was summoned to Istanbul by Sultan Bayezid II, who had studied calligraphy under him when he was governor of Amasya. It is related that even when Sultan Bayezid sat for long periods holding Shaikh Hamdullah's inkstand as he wrote. Shaikh Hamdullah followed the model of Yaquf al-Mustasimi, but developed his own style which remained the determining influence on Turkish calligraphers until the late 17th century. He trained many remarkable students, such as Muhiyuddin Amasi and Abdullah.

23 Two Qur'an Sections
Turkey, second quarter 16th century
Ink, color, gold on polished paper
Page size: 24 cm × 17.3 cm

Text: a. Juz III
b. Juz XXIV

These are two of the 20 surviving sections of a 30-part Qur'an. Each consists of 25 folios with seven lines of black Naskhi script per page. The writing follows closely the stylistic tradition of Shaikh Hamdullah. Gold discs indicate the ends of individual verses, and gold and blue circles in the margins mark every ten verses. Such Qur'ans were usually commissioned by patrons for new buildings, and were intended for public use in a mosque or madrasa. An inscription on folio 14 of each section indicates that this Qur'an was commissioned in the memory of a certain Fatima, by her brother Osman Pasha (d. 1571), a dignitary of the court of Suleyman the Magnificent. It was destined for use in the mosque of Mehmed Pasha in the city of Amida.
24 Prayer on the Sword of ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib

Turkey, mid-16th century
Ink, gold on paper; tooled and gilt leather binding
Page size: 25.3 cm x 17.3 cm

This manuscript is the text of the prayer traditionally associated with the famous weapon of Ali. The manuscript has seven folios of thick, polished buff paper and four end folios. The text is written in Tahir (outlined) style, four lines to the page, floated in ‘clouds’ reserved on a gold background, and decorated with flowers in another tone of gold. The loops of the letters are filled in red and blue. The margins are ruled in green, blue and gold.

Folio 1a. The plain buff text area contains an oval blue medallion with gold pendants. The illumination is of outstanding quality, composed of gold cloud bands interwoven with delicate curling vines bearing flowers of pink, turquoise, yellow, green, white and orange. The gold outline is pricked. In the center, a medallion bears the title of the manuscript written in gold on gold. The border of the page is scattered with small gold flowers.

Folio 1b. The text is surmounted by an illuminated headpiece of remarkable delicacy, in colors and three tones of gold. The border is decorated with lotus flowers in golds, pink and green on swaying stems, matched on the facing page.

The borders of the following double pages alternate between lotus pattern and flecks of gold. On the final folio, the calligraphy is filled in with pale pink and green. The colophon, written in yellow gold on green gold states that the manuscript was made for the Treasury of Feridun Pasha.

The leather binding is tooled and gilded with a sunken medallion and spandrel design filled with finely defined lotus and fern stems. The colophon gives no calligrapher’s name or date. The patron, Feridun Pasha, was a statesman known for his literary tastes, who died in 1583. The unusual style of calligraphy appears to be in the style of Ahmed Karahiari (1468–1550), who was famous for his decorative writing.

25 Miniature Qur’an

Iran or India, 17th century
Ink, color, gold on paper, leather binding
Page size: 4.3 cm across

This manuscript, copied on paper of octagonal format, has 220 folios and 23 lines of minute Ghubari script on each page. It is in a stamped and gilded leather binding. Such Qur’ans were often provided with silver covers, while what was perhaps the tiniest copy, a gift to the ruler Timur, fitted into the bevel of a signet ring. The Ghubari script, used for messages carried by pigeon, was well suited for exacting work on such a small scale.
26 Album of Calligraphy
Copied by al-Faqir Osman al-Aruf Hafiz al-Qur'an
Turkey, second half 17th century
Ink and color on paper; leather binding
Page size: 25 cm x 17 cm
This album consists of eight pages which are identical in format, enlivened with varying detail. Each individual page has a large single line of calligraphy above two shorter lines of smaller script, bracketed by illuminated designs in the lower corners. Each pair of pages has matching borders. Four have marbleized designs, two have a floral trellis and two are splashed with gold. The leather binding has illuminated gold medallions on each flap.

The scribe Hafiz Osman (1642-98) developed his own distinctive style of calligraphy, based on the models of Yaqut al-Mustasimi and Sharik Hamdullah, which was taken as the canon of perfection by succeeding generations of calligraphers. The Qur'an in his hand were used as models for printing in the 19th century. Another page of his calligraphy, bearing an identical signature is in the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul (EH 2209, folio 6a, illustrated in M. Uğur Derman, Türk Harizmaları ve Şaheserleri, Istanbul, 1951, p. 11). His great piety was legendary, and he instructed both Sultan Mustafa II and Sultan Ahmed III in the art of writing. His biography is given by C. Huart, Les Calligraphes et les Miniaturistes de l'Orient Musulman, Paris, 1908, p. 143-45.

27 Qur'an
India, late 18th century
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 26 cm x 15.5 cm

The manuscript is copied on paper with 393 folios and 11 lines to the page. The text is in Naskhi script within gold and red margins. The verse-ends are marked by gold discs, and border illuminations indicate the divisions of verses and sections. There are three double pages of illumination.

This remarkable "symmetrical" Qur'an has been organized in such a way that on every page the first letter of line 1 is the same as the first letter of line 11, the first letter of line 2 the same as in line 10, the first letter of line 3 the same as line 9, and so on. These symmetrical letters are picked out in red, as is the entire word where it occurs symmetrically.
28 Waqfname

Bearing the Tughra of Süleyman the Magnificent

Turkey, 20 Rabi II 943 AH/6 October 1536 AD
Ink, gold on buff polished paper
Length: 211 cm
Width: 27.4 cm

This scroll of 82 lines of elegant black Naskhi records the Waqf (deed of endowment) of Hanzade Sultan, daughter of the late Sultan Mahmud, verified in the court of Mevleva Hamza Chelebi bin Ibrahim, Qadi of Bursa, and witnessed by six other otherwise unknown persons. It was copied by Pir Mehmed ibn Shukrullah, the pupil and son-in-law of one of the greatest of all Ottoman calligraphers, Shaikh Hamdullah. At the top is the impromptu of Ebu's-Saud Efendi, Qadi of Istanbul, and to the side is the Tughra of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66) finely drawn in gold.

According to the Waqf, Princess Hanzade Sultan endowed the village of Abu Toder so that its income should be spent in two ways: to provide the livelihood for 20 persons well-versed in the Qur'an; and to provide for the Madrasa in Bursa. For this purpose she nominated herself as the first Mutavelli (administrator) for her lifetime together with Shaikh ibn Aqa Abdullah. The endowment was made in accordance with the Hanafite school of Islamic jurisprudence.

Dated Tughras of Süleyman the Magnificent are rare. This example is similar to those dating from the beginning of his reign and recalls the one on the letter sent to Francis I in 1536, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (See Suha Umur, Osmanlı Padişah Tughraları, Istanbul, 1980, p.158, for other examples in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.)
Firman

Bearing the Tughra of Süleyman the Magnificent

Ink, color and gold on polished paper
Turkey, 10 Rabi’i II 973 AH/4th November 1565 AD
Size of Tughra: 19 cm × 33.4 cm
Size of Firman: 77.5 cm × 37.5 cm

The paper of the Firman (imperial edict) is sprinkled with gold and has seven lines of fine Diwani calligraphy. The top line is written in gold, and the lower lines in black, speckled with gold and with gold vocalization marks. The Tughra is painted in blue with gold outlines, and illuminated with exquisite floral designs. The outer horizontal loop is filled with a pattern of gold spiralling and flowering vines, superimposed on a blue flowering vine. Arabesques and carnation sprays adorn the inner loop. The spaces between the interlaced letters are filled in gold and pale pink, with flowers and gold between the vertical bows.

The document was issued in Istanbul the year before Sultan Süleyman’s death, and its text, which is incomplete, concerns a grant in the name of Mevlana Nurreddin. The decoration of the Tughra underwent a considerable evolution in the course of Süleyman’s reign, achieving an extraordinary blend of monumentality and delicacy. While the basic shape of the Tughra remained constant throughout the Ottoman period, each Sultan had his own form dictated by the letters of his name. They were added to imperial edicts by an officer in charge of this function, and prevented forgeries.

Waqfname
Bearing the Tughra of Sultan Mustafa I
Turkey, circa 1617–18 or 1622–23
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 28.8 cm × 15.7 cm

The manuscript has 31 folios, written in Diwani script in black and red, and 13 lines, within gold margins, to the page. The black Tughra of Sultan Mustafa I sprinkled with gold appears on folio 2a. This provides alternate dates for the document, since he was in power on two separate occasions, from 1617 to 1618 and from 1622 to 1623. Where his name appears in the text, it is written in gold. There are also various marginal notes. Waqfnames were bound as books, with the Sultan’s Tughra included, when they were destined for the State Archive in the Topkapı Palace. This manuscript deals with the allocation of state funds for the upkeep of mosques and public fountains in Istanbul, for the maintenance of public baths and guest-houses, and for the administration of bakeries and shops. In considerable detail, it specifies how they should be administered for the public good, gives the names of those in charge of their administration, and indicates from where the funds should be drawn.

Firman
Bearing the Tughra of Sultan Mustafa II
Turkey, 1106 AH/1695 AD
Ink, color, gold, silver on paper
Length: 1.17 m
Width: 42 cm

The Firman has 12 lines of Diwani script, with gold discs interspersed between the lines of text. The Tughra of Sultan Mustafa II (1695–1723) is framed in an exquisitely illuminated triangle of floral patterns and vegetal motifs. The royal effect of generous gold and silver elements in the design has been somewhat diminished by the oxidation of the silver, but it remains a beautiful example of the typical triangular format of 17th century Tughras.

Firman
Issued by Emperor Jalal al-Din
India, 21 Jamadi II 24th Regnal Year/13 February, 1783 AD
Ink on paper
Length: 112 cm
Width: 36 cm

This decree was issued by the Mughal ruler, Jalal al-Din, (1760–88 and 1788–1806), in the 24th year of his first reign. It exempts Karapshikaz, son of Chahauram Munajim, and his children from paying taxes on the proceeds of four villages, including their agricultural produce, livestock, fish and game. On the back there are a number of notations and seals which are contemporary with the document. They include that of the Vizir, Shuja al-Dawla Yahya Khan.
33 Illuminated Double Frontispiece

Afghanistan, circa 1530
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 22 cm x 13 cm

This double page of illumination originally enhanced a volume of poetry by the great mystic poet Nizami (1140-1209). His five romantic epics which made up the Khamsa remain among the most highly-regarded poems in the Persian language. They include the remarkable story of Laila and Majnun, which has been compared to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

The illumination is typical of a style of manuscript decoration developed in Herat in the 15th and 16th century. The very formal arrangement of panels encloses complex and detailed patterns rendered with incredible precision in glowing colours.

34 Collection of Hadith

Copied by Qadi Abu 'l-Farid Ayad bin Musa

Morocco, 18th century
Ink, color, gold on paper; tooled and gilded leather binding
Page size: 22.5 cm x 18 cm

The manuscript has 287 folios written in neat black Maghribi script, with significant words picked out in gold, red and blue. There are a fine illuminated frontispiece and extensive marginal notes in a later hand throughout. It has its original tooled and gilded leather binding.

35 Prayer Book

Copied by al-Hajj Ahmed

Turkey, 1223 AH/1808 AD
Ink and color on paper; tooled and gilded leather binding
Page size: 15 cm x 10 cm

This manuscript is written in Arabic on buff polished paper. It contains 132 folios, with 11 lines of fine black Naskhi script within gold margins. There is an illuminated double page frontispiece and illuminated headings throughout the text. Gold rosettes mark the verses.

There are 20 full page illuminations. These include the names of Allah and Muhammad and descriptions of the Prophet. Each diagram is finely painted in two tones of gold with pricked detail and color.
Calligraphers' Implements