Arabic Calligraphy | The Holy Qur’an

‘Multi-volume Qur’ans were divided into two, four or 30 parts, following an established convention.’

The Qur’an’s layout follows a fixed system of markings that indicate chapter titles and verse numbers. While in more elaborate copies of the Qur’an these markings are lavishly designed, in simpler less expensive versions, they are plainly marked. Gilding and other pigments were used generously in decorating title pages, chapter headings and verse-markings. Qur’anic manuscripts were copied in a variety of Arabic calligraphic scripts including kufic, naskhi and thuluth. Multi-volume Qur’ans were divided into two, four or 30 parts, following an established convention. These multi-volume sets are bound in high-quality covers and encased in beautifully made boxes or chests. Special bookstands were made to hold Qur’ans in an open position to aid both recitation and display.



Name:
Page from a Qur'an

Dynasty:
Hegira 410 / AD 1020 Fatimid-Zirid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
This Qur'an was the effort of two artisans: the script written by a woman, 'Dura al-Katiba' – 'Dura the lady-scribe', and the gilding, decoration and binding by Ali Ibn Ahmad al-Waraq.



Name:
Qur'an binding

Dynasty:
Hegira late 8th century / AD late 14th century Mamluk (Bahri)

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
The central area of this Qur'an-binding is framed by a thin braided border, which encapsulates the 'Throne' verse (2: 255). A calligrapher and a painter would have collaborated in decorating it.



Name:
Qur'an box

Dynasty:
Around Hegira 730 / AD 1330 Mamluk

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
This box was made to hold a Qur'an made up of 30 volumes. Such a Qur'an was suitable for use in a religious foundation, and would have been commissioned by a wealthy patron.



Name:
Qur'an stand

Dynasty:
Hegira mid-7th century / AD mid-13th century Seljuqs of Rum (Anatolian Seljuq)

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
Made from a single piece of wood, this Qur'an-stand is decorated appropriately with calligraphic scripts in the classic kufic style. The 'Throne' verse from the Qur'an is engraved on the underside.



Name:
Qur'an leaf

Dynasty:
Hegira 8th–9th centuries / AD 14th–15th centuries Mamluk

Details:
Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities (Medelhavsmuseet)
Stockholm, Sweden

Justification:
This Qur'an leaf is written using the muhaqqaq style of Arabic script, and decorated with gilded rosettes to indicate the verses.