Islamic Manuscripts

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Islamic Manuscripts
Introduction

The manuscripts written and copied by Muslim scholars and scribes over the past fourteen centuries lie at the heart of Islam’s illustrious history. Presented in this catalogue are forty-four works which chart this long and noble course of faith and scholarship, ranging from the vellum leaf of a ninth-century Kufic Qur’an to a nineteenth-century work of Zaydī exegesis. Moving from early examples of the Qur’an, whose leaves contain beautiful examples of Arabic calligraphy, to a vellum fragment from Sibawayhi’s eponymous grammar, one of only a handful known, this catalogue amply illustrates the rich blossoming of Muslim civilisation, encompassing alchemical, mystical, and medical texts, amongst them a notable, rare pseudo-Galenic pharmacopeia and the only known copy of a medieval work on prophecy and numerology, extensively illustrated with textual diagrams. Lastly, there is a major collection of Zaydī religious scholarship, including manuscripts from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century, whose very breadth evidences the vitality of Muslim scholarship and the Islamic manuscript tradition.

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References


Aya Sofya: Defter-i kütüphane-i Ayasofya, 1887.


1. [ANONYMOUS.] [History of the caliphs.] [North Africa], 981 AH [1573 AD].

Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 23 x 19.5 cm; ff. 199; 21 lines of brown maghribī per page; incomplete at beginning and end, poetry and prayers in a later hand to the front fly-leaves; marginal worming to ff. 167-196, text slightly affected, and a little marginal damp-staining, text unaffected; in later red and brown composite leather; repairs to spine and fore-edge.

An anonymous history of the caliphs, beginning in medias res with the reign of Abu Bakr and stretching to the waning days of the Abbasids, this sixteenth-century manuscript presents a chronologically arranged set of regnal narratives. An exemplar of Muslim historiographic practice, its driving concerns are the moral fitness of each ruler and the genealogical lines binding the caliphs together. From the early glory of the caliphate, to its dark period of political irrelevance, this chronicle is wide-ranging in its scope, encompassing almost six centuries of history. Despite its general accuracy in terms of chronology and succession, the presentation of the eleventh-century caliphs is curious; closing with the apparent succession of 'al-Ma'amūn', son of the previous caliph, al-Muqtāfi, rather than the bloody misrule of al-Mustanjid, whose gross offences lead to his assassination; in a particularly baroque tradition, he is said to have been sealed in the hot room of a bath and boiled alive.

*Arabic manuscript on burnished paper, 27 x 20.5 cm; ff. 125; 3-7 lines of black naskhī per page, reading marks and highlights in red; with extensive annotations and several ownership stamps and inscriptions; ff. 1-6 repaired at edges, a little marginal damp-staining, and some marginal fraying, text unaffected; in modern faux-leather.*

An early copy of Bahʿā al-Dīn al-ʿĀmili’s critical work of Shiʿa jurisprudence and its authorities, copied a mere twelve years after his death. Al-ʿĀmili, whose own father had been the first Sheikh al-Islam of Iran, was born in 1546 and died in 1621. His interests and literary activity spanned theology, literature, mathematics, and astronomy with equal ease, and he was one of the luminaries of the court of Shah Abbas the Great. He was most well-known for his compendium of Arabic anecdotes, *Al-kashkūl, ‘The begging-bowl*. The copyist’s hand is firm and legible, the annotations acrobatically embrace al-ʿĀmili’s text; this is a sound and compelling example of Shiʿa scholasticism.

*Berlin 4425; GAL S II, p. 597.*
3. **[COOKERY.] [An untitled recipe book.] [Iran, 19th century.]**

Persian manuscript on burnished paper, 19.5 x 12.3 cm; ff. 37; 12 lines per page of elegant black nasta’līq, with majuscule recipe titles and minuscule catchwords; an excellent copy in contemporary quarter leather over purple cloth; spine somewhat worn.

Unique; an anonymous nineteenth-century Persian cookbook, composed for a descendant of Fath Ali Shah, Muhammad Quli Khan-e Qajar Quyunlu, Majd al-Sultaneh. This austere but handsomely written work provides a fascinating insight into Persian culinary culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and includes not only the expected Persian dishes, but an array of recipes drawn from British, French, Italian, and Portuguese cooking.

The organisation of the recipes themselves is erratic — a pudding precedes a potato dish, and the range of dishes is wide, with soups, meats, desserts, and sauces all addressed — there is even a recipe for peacock. Where lard or wine is employed in the European recipes, the author suggests suitable alternatives, and even specifies which utensils, dishes, and cookware are best employed. In short, this is an unusual and interesting survival from a period of enormous change in Persian society.
[Content of the document written in Arabic script, not legible for transcription]

*Arabic manuscript on paper, 27 x 18.5 cm; ff. 278; 20 lines of brown maghribī per page, in various hands, sections of text in red or brown; signed by the copyist; some marginal staining, text unaffected; disbound, in phase box.*

An extensive commentary on the Dalā‘il al-khayrāt of al-Jazūlī, a manual of prayer which proved surpassingly popular, composed by the seventeenth-century Sufi Al-Fāṣī (d. 1698), who wrote two additional treatises on the same subject. Al-Jazūlī was a Maghrebi Sufi of the fifteenth century, whose Dalā‘il remains an important text for Muslims today. Al-Fāṣī’s text is important not only for his own observations but for his numerous textual-critical comparisons between the variant manuscripts of the Dalā‘il and extensive use of a copy of the Dalā‘il said to have been read through by al-Jazūlī before his death. Copied in several fine maghribī hands, this copy of al-Fāṣī’s critical opus includes an iteration of the various epithets of the divine.

Paris 5389; GAL II, p. 328.

Arabic manuscript on paper, 20 x 13 cm; ff. 173; 17 lines of red-ruled black nastaʿlīq per page; sections of text and reading marks in red; with a blue, gold and orange illuminated headpiece; marginal annotations throughout, copious notes to front and back flyleaves, including a biographical note on the author and a table of contents; marginal damp-staining, text unaffected, and a little ink-staining to fore and upper edges, text and marginalia unaffected; in brown morocco with decorated medallions; guarded, re-sewn, re-backed, and re-edged.


Born in Aleppo, al-Halabī died in 1549 at Istanbul, aged over ninety. His quiet and scholarly life was marked by distinction in many fields of Islamic scholarship, from grammar to law, and service as an imam and preacher at the mosque of Sultan Mehemed II Fātih.

Gotha 1032; GAL II, p. 570.

Arabic manuscript on paper, 23 x 17.5 cm; ff. 40; 25 lines of neat brown maghribī per page, headings and certain words in red; signed by the copyist; table of contents at f. 2.r; f. 1 a later addition; a little foxed, else fine; in modern brown leather with a central medallion; a little rubbed.

A North African alchemical manual from the early nineteenth century, presenting earthly substances and their chemical operations according to the arrangement of al-Ḥāzī‘s ninth-century treatise Sirr al-āsrār. Turning easily from arsenic to the philosopher’s stone, the present copy is an excellent example of the enduring appeal of al-kimiyā‘. The treatise itself is likely an original compilation, drawn from earlier alchemical works, though, as is usually the case with such works, the author has made no effort to indicate his sources.

This work is neither listed in Sezgin nor in Brockelmann and the author appears to be unknown.
7. [HORSES.] Risālat al-khayl. Ottoman Turkey, 1150 AH [1738 AD].

Ottoman Turkish manuscript on paper, 19.5 x 12.5 cm; ff. 84; 19 lines of black nastālīq per page, certain words in red; with numerous annotations and later illustrations; edges trimmed and a little marginal staining, text unaffected; rebound in gold-tooled brown leather with central medallions; edges a little rubbed.

Rare; a collection of quotations and useful information on horses, presented in four chapters. The first provides hadith and other anecdotal authorities on horsemanship and its importance; the second, the attributes of a sound horse; the third, the veterinary treatments appropriate to a healthy horse, including a note on equine teeth; and the fourth addresses the different categories of horse suitable for different riders, variously soldiers, scholars, merchants, and farmers. The rear fly-leaves have a later sequence of elaborate drawings of equine anatomy, perhaps copied from a nineteenth or twentieth-century text, several within gilt frames.

Arabic manuscript on paper, 22 x 15 cm; ff. 167; 17 lines of black naskhī per page, some text in red; intermittent marginal annotations, ownership inscription to f.2.r and 167.v, some marginal staining, text unaffected, a handful of early repairs to marginal tears; in later quarter leather over red cloth; somewhat rubbed.

A sound copy of this important alchemical compilation of the fourteenth century. Al-Jaldakī (d. 1432) was the preeminent figure of later Islamic alchemy, and one of the last Islamic alchemists. A compiler and commentator par excellence, his works are renowned for their broad range of sources and their extensive citations, preserving and presenting the works of his predecessors for posterity. Al-Jaldakī is a reliable transmitter of his predecessors’ works, and the present text draws on Greek, Arab, and Persian sources. Though incomplete, this manuscript still presents a substantial portion of this vast and important work, in a clean, legible nineteenth-century hand.

The colophon appears to have been copied from an earlier manuscript, giving a date of 900 AH [1494 AD].

Vienna II 1495; GAL I, p. 654.
لا يمكنني قراءة النص العربي من الصورة．

Arabic manuscript on heavy paper, 34.5 x 22.5 cm; ff. 249; 14 lines of fully vocalised neat black naskhi per page, certain phrases in yellow, reading marks in red; title in 3 red and gold illuminated panels; fly-leaves annotated, with abundant marginal annotations and additional annotations on coloured paper leaves pasted in, the colophon in a different hand; paper a little tanned, some marginal stains; in a brown leather Islamic binding with flap, borders tooled and stamped central medallions; somewhat rubbed, and a handful of small holes to the spine; a letter from Carnig Kevorkian to 'Monsieur Rabbani' dated 21 September 1956, loosely inserted.

A grammatical commentary on the *Kāfiya* of Ibn al-Hājib, composed by the renowned Sufi polymath, Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān, known as al-Jāmi. Written for his son, to whom the work’s alternate title refers, the text deals, as the manuscript’s title suggests, with correcting errors in Ibn al-Hājib’s foundational Arabic grammar, *bi-hall mushkilāt al-Kāfiya*. Densely annotated throughout, with additional notations on paper inserts, this is a sound working copy of an important work, which the colophon states was copied from al-Jāmi’s own text, giving a date for the copy-text of 1473.

Born in 1414, al-Jāmi wrote prose and poetry with equal skill, touching on grammar, exegesis, mysticism, and enjoyed equal renown as mystic, scholar, and poet. At his death in 1492, he left behind a body of more than ninety works. His reputation endured long after his death, and the high praises paid him by his contemporaries lingered.

Gotha 259; GAL S I, p. 533; Browne, III, pp. 507-548.

Arabic manuscript on paper, 21 x 14.5 cm; ff. 272; 21 lines of red-ruled black nasta‘liq per page, ff. 1.v-2.r framed in gold, certain phrases and reading marks in red, illuminated headpiece on f.1.v in gold, silver and green; signed by the copyist; marginal annotations throughout, notes and table of contents to front fly-leaves; in a brown morocco binding, with decorated central medallions; corners and edges repaired.

An important commentary on a major compendium of Hanafi legal thought, al-Marghinani’s Hidaya, by Sadr al-Shari’a al-Thani al-Mahbubi (d. 1346), which is in fact a supercommentary upon the earlier commentary on the Hidaya by the author’s grandfather, Mahmud b. Sadr al-Shari’a al-Awwal al-Mahbubi (d. 1274). Hanafi jurisprudence had an enduring influence on legal codes in the Near East owing to its adoption by the Ottoman Empire.


Arabic manuscript on polished paper, 21 x 15 cm; ff. 146, 23 lines of fine brown maghribi per page, partially vocalised, certain words and sentences in red; incomplete at end; marginal annotations throughout, edges trimmed, with slight affect to marginalia, some marginal damp-staining, text unaffected, inner edges of ff. 1-3 reinforced with Japanese paper, and two tears to f. 2 with some affect to text; rebound in composite brown leather; somewhat wormed and worn.

An extensive commentary on the Alfiya, a versified gloss by the thirteenth century Andalucian grammarian, Ibn Mâlik (b. circa 1204, d. 1274), of his own earlier grammatical treatise, al-Kâfiyya al-Shâfiyya, written by Al-Makküdî, a North African grammarian of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who died at Fez in 1405. His commentary remained part of the Islamic curriculum in West Africa for centuries after his death.

GAL S II, p. 336.
MOLLĀ KHUSRAW, Mehmed b. Farāmurz b. ʿAlī. [Hanafi jurisprudence.] 988 AH [1580 AD].

Arabic manuscript on paper, 18 x 12.8 cm; ff. 185; 15 lines of red-ruled black naskhī, verging on thūlūth, per page, headings and reading marks in red; signed by the copyist; table of contents to front fly leaf, occasional marginalia; some damp-staining to the final 12 leaves, text affected but legible; in dark red morocco with a decorated central medallion; re-backed and re-edged.

An untitled work on Hanafi jurisprudence by the eminent Ottoman scholar of the fifteenth century, Mehmed b. Farāmurz b. ʿAlī, better known as Mollā Khusraw. The preamble includes a laudatory passage on the merits of Sultan Mehmed II, under whose patronage Mullā Khusraw had obtained the post of Sheikh al-Islam, and the colophon indicates that the present manuscript was transcribed from the author’s own copy. It further states that he completed this treatise in 1478, not long before his death in 1480. His legal works enjoyed an enduring reputation in Ottoman jurisprudence, and this treatise is a pleasing copy in a rakish naskhī hand, intermittently annotated.

GAL II, p. 292.

*Arabic manuscript on paper, 26 x 18 cm; ff. 106, 25 lines of crisp black naskhī per page. headings in red; elaborate textual diagrams throughout; signed by the copyist; approximately half of the leaves evenly toned, marginal annotations throughout, edges trimmed, with very slight loss to the marginalia, ff. 51-52 and 54 with small tears, with slight loss, a hole through one letter on f. 56, and a paper guard to the upper portion of f. 78; in later limp goatskin; with a modern patterned book-bag; a little worn but sound.*

The only known copy of this occult work on the secrets of letters and prophecy by a hitherto unknown author. Al-Murjānī draws on a wide range of material, from the Bible to Aristotle, to the great writers of Arabic occultism, al-Būnī and al-Rāzī, as well as the *İkhwān al-safā’,* the great medieval encyclopaedia of science. The occult sciences, though intermittently denounced by more orthodox authors, had an enduring appeal, from the first Arabic conception of prophecy as part of *djafr,* the gnostic awareness afforded to the descendants of Fatima, which came to encompass astrology, numerology, and the countless other elaborate systems developed to divine the future. Despite their pseudo-scientific nature, these practices developed a theoretical rigour which occasionally almost matched that brought to Arabic astronomy; indeed, astronomers did indulge in astrology and fortune-telling on occasion.

Al-Murjānī’s treatise is a rich, lavishly illustrated example of this genre. Textual diagrams abound, and his range of subjects is comprehensive, touching on the secrets of the alphabet and their relation to planets and horoscopes, the mystic significance of the *Bismallah,* the names of God and their significance, whether found singly, in pairs, or even threes, and lastly, the matter of time – the significance of days and weeks, the planets and stars, and the association of certain stones with certain planets.
No known author corresponds to al-Murjānī. Brockelmann gives a handful of works with titles beginning *simt al-la’alī*, but none of these correspond to the present text, and indeed several have rather different topics and full titles. None of the *nisba* accorded al-Murjānī are conclusive – he may have descended from the Quraysh, or been resident on the Arabian peninsula, but this is only speculation. The single, curious point is that the scribe named in the colophon shares al-Murjānī’s *nisba*, though the patrilineal descent given for him is different from that of al-Murjānī. Though unlikely to be an autograph manuscript, the present text was almost certainly copied by a relation or descendant of al-Murjānī. The date of composition may be estimated from the sources as between 1200 and the date of the present copy.
لا يمكنني قراءة النص العربي من الصورة.

*Arabic manuscript on paper, 20.5 x 14.5 cm; ff. 240; 21 lines of red-ruled black naskhī per page, mostly vocalised, illuminated headpiece in gold and polychrome; signed by copyist; in a blue roan binding, gold-tooled decoration to upper and lower boards; spine and edges slightly rubbed.*

An untitled but identifiable commentary composed by the distinguished Arabic grammarian, al-Mutarrizī, on the *Maqāmāt* of al-Harīrī (b. 1054), that stylistic exemplar of the prose-poetical style created by al-Hamadānī, a major literary figure of the tenth century. Despite its imitative form and content, the *Maqāmāt* enjoyed enormous popularity, and was translated with varying faithfulness into Syriac, Persian, and Hebrew, spawning a legion of imitative works. Unsurprisingly, it was also extensively commented upon by later authors, among them al-Mutarrizī.

Paris 3937; GAL I, p. 327.
15. **NūR ALLĀH, Mahmūd b. Muhammad ‘Abd Allah b. Mahmūd. Kitāb tuhfa-i-khānī al-tībb.** [Iran, 18th century.]

Persian manuscript on gold-sprinkled, polished paper, 24.5 x 14.7 cm; ff. 326 (with contemporary Persian foliation); 19 lines of black nasta‘īq in gold and black compartments per page, certain words in red; gold, blue, black and orange illuminated headpiece, and a gold-on-blue floreated lozenge with calligraphic title to f. 1.r; some marginal damp-staining; in a contemporary brown morocco Islamic binding, with flap, with gilt rules and elaborate gilt-stamped medallion; lightly worn.

A sixteenth-century Persian medical work by an otherwise unknown writer. In the preamble, the author, Nūr Allāh, attributes the present text to years of study at Shiraz, initially under the renowned Persian philosopher and physician Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad al-Siddiqī al-Dawānī (d. 1501). He states that he first went to Shiraz in 1496, and remained there for a further thirty years. The resulting work is an intriguing combination of memoir and medical treatise.
16. [PROPHETIC MISCELLANY.] 988 AH [1581 AD].


b. AL-BUSTĀMĪ. Sīhat al-būm fī hiwādīth al-rūm.


Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 22.5 x 17 cm; ff. 17; 29 lines of minuscule black naskhi per page, partially vocalised, certain words and passages outlined in red; some marginal annotations, a bit damp-stained and spotted, edges frayed; in modern purple leather, blind-tooled, with stamped central medallions.

Unusual; an early copy of a very rare prophetic work together with a commentary on the Shajara and a prophetic work attributed to the illustrious Sufi Ibn ‘Arabī. These three examples of Arabic prophecy and numerology, complete with diagrams and annotations, were all copied in 1581 on the Arabian peninsula, according to their respective colophons, and all are supplied with titles. All three titles are known examples of false attributions of prophetic texts to established authorities, with Ibn ‘Arabī a particularly popular name to appropriate, but the first work, a commentary on the Shajara, presents a particular conundrum. The commentary whose title, Kitāb al-namat al-akmal fī dhikr al-mustaqbal, is supplied both by the copyist on f. 1.v and in a later hand on f. 1.r has been ascribed to al-Maqqarī, the North African compiler and historian, albeit with reservations. The present treatise’s colophon renders this already questionable authorial attribution absurd, as al-Maqqarī was only four years old in 1581. Whether the author supplied on f. 1.r is in fact the true author or merely another pseudonym is unclear, though his name makes for a rather less eminent disguise than that of al-Maqqarī.

There are only a handful of copies of the Shajara commentary extant. The preamble of the present text corresponds to that of an anonymous commentary on the Shajara under a variant title noted in Brockelmann (GAL I, p. 580), no. 4216 in Ahlwardt’s catalogue of the holdings of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, and Yahya’s 1964 survey of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works notes two additional copies in Turkey under the same title.

Arabic manuscript on polished paper, 18.5 x 13.5; ff. 19; 19 lines of elegant black nastā'liq per page, certain words and rubrication in red, some marginal Arabic and Persian annotation, slight marginal damp-staining, text unaffected; in recently re-backed brown leather.

Very rare; one half of a pseudo-Galenic text. An erotic pharmacopeia, 'The secrets of women', attributed to Galen, ostensibly composed at the behest of a 'Queen Filanus', this work provides a series of paired recipes, ranging from treatments to inflame or suppress desire to those which shrivel or engorge the bodies of one's rivals. The preamble describes it as the second of two sections - the other section is entitled 'The secrets of men', the two halves together forming a comprehensive collection of prescriptions for an array of amorous dilemmas.

Similar pseudo-Galenic material and titles appear in later Arabic pharmacopeia, albeit with different authorial attributions.

المراجعة

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة أنا داني الزعبي وعلي ولد الحاج أسعد في ترجمة

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الحمد لله المبارك
Single vellum leaf, 37 x 27 cm; 7 lines of brown kūfī per page, vocalised in red and yellow, verse divisions marked in gold; verso text rather rubbed, edges frayed and worn.


A handsome example of Kufic calligraphy.
Single paper leaf, 41 x 30 cm; 12 lines of superb brown rayhani per page, with single, five, and ten verse counts indicated by an arrangement of illuminated marginal cartouches with interlinear gold rosettes and kāfī lettering, the precise verse indicated by an illuminated marginal medallion; a handful of minute wormholes and perforations, else fine.

Sūrat al-A'raf (7): 81-96.

A fine example of rayhani, a cursive script first developed in the late Abbasid and Ilkhanid period. For a comparable Qur’an, see fig. 67 in Safadi’s *Islamic Calligraphy* (London, 1978).
20. [QUR'ÂN LEAF.] [North Africa or Spain, 13\textsuperscript{th} or 14\textsuperscript{th} century.]

Single vellum leaf, 10.9 x 18.5 cm; verso with 6 lines of brown maghribi per page, red, green, and blue vocalisation, a white and red headpiece containing the sūra title in gold kūfī, and an illuminated marginal medallion in blue and gold; recto with an extensive ornamental frontispiece to a geometric design in gold and red, gold borders; a little worn, loss to top inside corner repaired with blank vellum.

Sūrat al-‘Isrā’ (17): 1.

A handsome leaf, including a geometrically complex illumination, likely half of a double-page frontispiece. Qur’ans on vellum of this size and type were widespread in both North Africa and Muslim Spain, making precise identification exceedingly difficult, as the present leaf has similarities to Spanish and North African Qur’ans, though it is most probably of Andalucian origin. For a comparable Andalucian example, see Paris 385.
لا أستطيع قراءة النص العربي المكتوب على الصفحة.
21. [QUR'ÄN LEAF.] [14th or 15th century.]

Single polished paper leaf, 37 x 27 cm; 5 lines per page of magnificent black muhaqqaq, outlined in gold and fully vocalised, bordered in red, gold and blue, with verse-markers of geometric knotwork; lightly browned, inner margin and corners restored.


A superb leaf from a prayer-book described by James as ‘one of the finest of its type to have been produced in the late 14th century or the early 15th...’ It consists of those surahs beginning ‘al-hamdu li-llāh’. A handful of leaves are extant, all in the same masterfully controlled hand. James cautiously dates the prayer-book to the turn of the fourteenth century, and suggests that any more precise date and attribution must await comprehensive analysis of the known fragments.

The parent manuscript has been attributed to one Karamshah Tabrizi, though there are no corroborating sources.

Khalili III, 1.
في يسأ لله من الشريك
أو فت أولاً إلا شريك وهب
لبرد وهو ولباسه وابنه دينهم
لو أسأ الله ما فلاوا ولا إله
وامكترون وقاوا هذه أنجام
22. [QUR’AN LEAF.] [Possibly Persia, 14th century.]

Single paper leaf, 48 x 30.5 cm, with 14 lines per page of black thuluth, red and occasional black diacritics, headings in blue tawqui’ verging on riqa’ script, verses marked by gold rosettes, illuminated marginal medallions illuminated in blue, gold and red; lightly soiled, some faint marginal staining, corners strengthened.


A well-presented leaf from a Qur’an in a pleasing hand.
A handsomely illuminated Qur’an from North Africa.

*Arabic manuscript on paper, 21 x 15.5 cm; ff. 96; 18 lines of black naskhī per page, sections of text in red; signed by the copyist; occasional marginalia, f. 1 crudely attached to the upper board; the first half rather damp-stained; in tooled brown leather; rubbed.*

Sajawandī remains a biographical cipher of the eleventh century but his *Kitāb al-farʿāid* is the standard work on inheritance in Islamic jurisprudence, here in a sound eighteenth-century copy. It has been translated into Turkish, Persian, and English, amongst others, put into verse, as recently as the twentieth century, truncated, glossed, commented upon, and generally enjoyed a long and prosperous textual afterlife, far outstripping its author’s own lifespan.

Berlin 4701-2; GAL S I, p. 650.

a. Al-Risāla al-wujūdiya.

b. An untitled treatise.

c. Al-nâmūs al-huwalā qadm tafsīr al-qabūs.

An interesting compendium of treatises on mysticism and numerology, attributed to al-Shinnawi, an Egyptian who rose to prominence in Medina, part of the sudden flourishing of the Naqshbandiya order there in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Ottoman donations created a scholastic coterie of eminent Islamic teachers during this period, and this munificence drew increasing numbers of scholars to the Haramayn, among them al-Shinnawi.

Copied only four years after al-Shinnawi’s death in 1619 these works do not appear in Brockelmann, where even his known works are given in only a handful of extant copies.

GAL II, p. 514.
26. [SIBAWAYHĪ] [Kitāb Sibawāyhi] [10th to 11th century AD.]

Arabic manuscript on thick vellum, 27 x 17 cm; ff. 6; 17 to 18 lines of an Abbasid scribal hand per page, majuscule chapter headings; a little light soiling and a few spots, a few words traced over by a later hand; in modern oatmeal-coloured cloth.

Rare; one of three known Sibawayhi manuscripts on vellum. This unusual fragment from Sibawāyhi’s eponymous text, the foundation-stone of Arabic grammar, is an important early survival of the text, one of only a handful of early copies, roughly corresponding to chapters 546 to 549 in Derenbourg, Vol. II. Beyond his name, and this single work, little is known of Sibawayhi. That he studied at Basra is almost certain, and this single fact, coupled with an approximate death date of 796, provides a useful context for the composition of the Kitāb Sibawāyhi, setting him in the heady period when the Arabic grammatical sciences were in their infancy. The work touches on almost every aspect of grammar, ranging from phonology to morphology, building from a broad sample of written Arabic, albeit one which excludes the proverbial. Sibawāyhi’s text remains the touchstone of Arabic grammar, though later grammars did supplant it.

The Parisian manuscript cited here consists of vellum and paper leaves, while that of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana consists of vellum leaves alone.


*Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 19.2 x 15.5 cm; ff. 20 (later Western pagination); 26 lines of minute brown maghribi per page, rubrication, with several geometrical diagrams; signed by the copyist; Arabic ownership stamps to f. 1.r, some marginal notes and corrections; some damp-staining; in later quarter leather; rubbed.*

An eighteenth-century copy of the commentary of the astronomer al-Tājūrī (b. 1590) on Sibt al-Maridīnī’s treatise on the sine quadrant, an important work of Mamluk science addressing the theory underlying the use of such quadrants to solve astronomical and trigonometrical problems.

Sibt al-Maridīnī (1423-1506) was the grandson of another accomplished astronomer known as al-Maridīnī, a disciple of Ibn al-Majdī, and rose to the office of timekeeper at the Azhar Mosque in Cairo.

Berlin 5820; GAL S II, pp. 216, 485.
28. WAFĀ, Muhammad. Al-ʿUrūsh [or:] Kitāb al-ʿurūsh wa hisāb al-ghalab wa al-maghlūb l-Āristūtilis... 992 AH [1584 AD].

Arabic manuscript on laid paper, 20 x 14 cm; ff. 84; 21 lines of neat black naskhī per page, headings in red and green; signed by the copyist; some marginal annotations; a little marginal staining, otherwise in fine condition; in later half leather.

A late sixteenth-century copy of a Sufi treatise on Aristotelian causation, attributed to Muhammad Wafā (1302-1363), who was a prominent Cairo Sufi, the first in a long line of scholastic mystics, and the founder of the Sufi order which bore his name, the Wafāʿiyya.

Brockelmann gives no copy of this work, but a recent work on Mamluk Sufism gives four copies of the Kitāb al-ʿurūsh, though none under the longer title given here.

Futūh al-shām.

[14th century.]

An early copy of an important history of the Muslim conquest of Syria, charting the explosive campaigns which propelled early Islam from the Arabian peninsula into the heartlands of the eastern empire. Attributed, falsely, to the great historian Al-Wāqidī and citing traditions common to all of the major Futūh narratives, this historical compilation nonetheless postdates al-Wāqidī by centuries, citing major Islamic figures of the thirteenth century and employing several distinctive, anachronistic phrases when speaking of non-Muslims. The likely date of composition during the Crusades places the Futūh al-shām squarely in the middle of a resurgence of Muslim interest in such early sources.

The Futūh al-shām remains an important piece in the tangled historiography of Muslim conquest narratives, whose historical worth and reliability have benefited from a major shift in scholastic thought in the last fifty years, recognising their importance to Byzantine and Islamic historians alike. The very fact of its compilation and arrangement of earlier accounts provides valuable insight into medieval Muslim perspectives on this pivotal moment in Islamic history.


Arabic manuscript on European paper, 21 x 15 cm; ff. 130 (Arabic foliation); 21 lines of black naskhī per page, red headings and keywords, with an extensive table of contents; ff. 2.v-3.r and 34.r left blank, some marginal annotation; in Islamic brown leather with flap, ruled and ornamented; flap reinforced with green cloth.

A late sixteenth-century copy of an Arabic cosmography attributed to various authors, but most probably the work of the Ibn al-Wardi given above, who died circa 1457. The text itself is a compilation from the work of earlier cosmographers, chief among them Najm al-Dīn al-Harrānī al-Hanbālī, albeit one without explicit citations. Despite the issues of source, authorship, generally unscientific approach, and dating, the Kharīdat has proved popular, perhaps owing to its very lack of scientific rigour.

The blanks left at ff. 2.v-3.r and 34.r suggest that this copy was to be illustrated, as other extant copies are, with a world map and a diagram of the Kaʿba.

Gotha 1515-16; GAL II, p. 163.
31. [ZAYDIYA.] A collection of fourteen Zaydi manuscripts. [1470 to 1897 AD.]

This manuscript collection, spanning more than six centuries of Zaydi scholastic activity, exhibits the vitality intrinsic to the Islamic manuscript tradition, including a collection of the works of Imam al-Hādī ilā al-Haqq (d. 911 AD), the first Imam in Yemen, and a fine sequence of manuscripts demonstrating the chain of interlocked text, commentary, and super-commentary which binds these Muslim scholars together across centuries. Like al-Hādī ilā al-Haqq, Ibn al-Murtadā (1362-1436 AD) was an Imam, and though his period of rule was both brief and ineffective, his scholarly work, particularly his writings on Islamic jurisprudence, remained important long after his death. The set of manuscripts charting the lifespan of his treatises included in this collection are ample demonstration of this vibrant scholastic tradition. These texts together trace the course of a single Islamic tradition.

Arabian Peninsula, 1232 AH [1817 AD].

Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 25.5 x 19.5 cm; ff. 247; 17 lines of black naskhī per page, partially vocalised, certain words and sentences in red and occasional black naskhī verging on thuluth; signed by the copyist; occasional marginalia; some faint marginal staining; in contemporary Islamic brown leather with flap; rubbed.


GAL I, p. 508.

Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 29 x 21 cm; ff. 321; 19 to 25 lines of black naskhī; signed repeatedly by the copyist; ff. 1-3 supplied on later paper, occasional marginalia, extensive later annotation to ff. 314.v-315.r, numerous ownership inscriptions to the front and rear fly-leaves, several rubbed out, and the edges trimmed, marginalia somewhat affected; in Islamic brown leather with flap, tooled borders and central medallions; misbound, a little rubbed.

A sixteenth-century compendium containing the majority of the works of the Imam al-Hādī ilā al-Haqq (d. 911), who founded the Zaydi imamate in Yemen and whose writings subsequently became the main authority for Yemeni Zaydis. Ranging from long commentaries to brief treatises addressed to individuals on single topics, this is a handsome copy of an important corpus, with copious marginal annotations in various hands.

GAL S I, pp. 315-316.


Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 29 x 22 cm; ff. 208; copied on thick, dark buff paper, with 32 lines black naskhī per page, certain words and passages in red, others in black majuscule; marginal annotations throughout, flyleaves heavily annotated; edges trimmed and a little marginal staining, text unaffected; in contemporary brown leather, elaborately tooled; crudely re-backed, all edges repaired.

An early copy of a late fourteenth-century commentary on al-Zamakhshari’s al-Kashshāf, a comprehensive work of Quranic exegesis, by ‘Alī b. Muhammad b. Abī al-Qāsim, one of the line of Zaydi imams who ruled Yemen.

Ambrosiana H 47; GAL S I, p. 509.
IBN MIFTĀH, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Qasim. Kitāb sharh al-azhār al-muntaza’ al-mukhtār min al-ghayth al-midrār. 1004 or 1104 AH [1595 or 1692 AD].

Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 30.5 x 21.5 cm; ff. 303 [later Arabic foliation]; 32 lines of black naskhī, rubricated in red-outlined black naskhī, certain words and sentences in red; signed by the copyist; extensive marginal and interlinear annotation throughout, ownership inscriptions to front and rear fly-leaves; in contemporary Islamic brown morocco with flap, central medallions; some crude early repairs.

An early modern copy of Ibn al-Murtadā’s own commentary, Al-bahr al-zakhkhār, on his definitive work of Zaydi jurisprudence, Kitāb al-azhār, in an abridged form with profuse marginalia and the commentary of Ibn Miftāh.

GAL II, p. 239.


Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 30 x 21.5 cm; ff. 375; 33 lines of black naskhī per page, certain words and passages in red, others in a black majuscule, red reading marks; signed by the copyist; extensive annotation throughout, with further commentary on slips of tipped-in paper; in modern brown morocco with flap, tooled borders.

An abridged and extensively annotated seventeenth-century copy of the commentary of Ibn al-Murtadā (1362-1436 AD) on his own Al-bahr al-zakhkhār, together with Ibn Miftāh’s later commentary.

GAL II, p. 239.

Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 35.5 x 26 cm; ff. 306; 22 to 25 lines of black naskhī per page, certain words and passages in red, others in bold black majuscule, and some in yellow, outlined in black or red; signed by the copyist; abundant marginal annotation; occasional staining; in contemporary Islamic red leather with flap, blind-tooled, embossed paper medallions; a little rubbed.

The last part of Ibn Miṭāh’s commentary on Ibn al-Murtadā’s Al-bahr al-zakhkhār.

GAL II, p. 239.


Arabic manuscript on thick burnished paper, 32 x 24 cm, ff. 390; 27 to 28 lines of black naskhi per page, double red-ruled but for ff. 1.v-2.r, which are gold-banded, certain words and passages in red, others black or yellow, headings in yellow majuscule; signed by the copyist; extensive marginal annotation, a handful of ownership inscriptions to f. 1.r, some edges repaired, occasional infilling; in modern brown leather with flap, tooled borders.

An eighteenth-century copy of Ibn Murtadā’s own commentary on his definitive work of Zaydi jurisprudence, Kitāb al-azhār, here in an abridged form with profuse marginalia, and accompanied by Ibn Miṭāh’s commentary, the most notable of the the many written in subsequent centuries.

GAL II, p. 239.
Al-bahr al-zakhkhār. [Parts II-III.] Yemen, 1075 AH [1664 AD].

Arabic manuscript on paper, 30.5 x 21 cm; ff. 299; 31 lines of black naskhī per page, certain words and passages in red, headings in a black majuscule; incomplete at beginning, occasional marginalia, several ownership inscriptions, damp-stained, with some affect to text, a little marginal fraying to initial leaves, slight affect to text, and a few repaired tears; in modern imitation leather.

The final sections of Ibn al-Murtadā’s authoritative work Al-bahr al-zakhkhār.

GAL II, p. 239.


Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 28 x 20 cm; ff. 241; 23 to 24 lines of black naskhī per page, majuscule rubrication, reading marks and sections of text in red; copyist’s signature and date of copy erased; occasional marginalia, ownership inscriptions, some in Persian, to the front fly-leaves; a handful of edges with old repairs, marginalia unaffected; in Islamic red leather with flap, tooled.

An early copy of the most important work of the Zaydi imam and scholar, Ibn al-Murtadā, Al-bahr al-zakhkhār, a compendious encyclopaedia of theology and law, drawing on numerous previous works. Ibn al-Murtadā was a mediocre ruler but a sound scholar. A prolific author, he wrote on grammar and logic in addition to jurisprudence, and made forays into poetry. The present work, together with his Kitāb al-azhār, remains an important legal text.

GAL II, p. 239.
31.x  IBN AL-MURTADĀ, al-Mahdi li-Din Allāh Ahmad b. Yahya. Al-sifr al-tāni fī kitāb aghāyāt al-afkār... 875 AH [1470 AD].

Arabic manuscript on thick polished paper, 28.5 x 22.5 cm; ff. 315; 28 to 29 lines of black naskhī per page, majuscule rubrication, some words and passages in red; a few marginal annotations, numerous ownership inscriptions to f. 1.r; a little damp-staining and some spotting; in contemporary Islamic red leather with flap, elaborately tooled; re-backed, all corners and edges repaired.

An early copy of Ibn al-Murtadā’s own commentary on Al-bahr al-zakhkhār, one of his most important works, copied mere decades after his death in 1436 AD.

GAL II, p. 239.


Arabic manuscript on paper, 31.5 x 22.5 cm; ff. 257; varying number of lines per page of black naskhī, certain words and phrases in red, others in a red-outlined black majuscule; incomplete at beginning (missing text supplied on front fly-leaves in another hand) and end, ff. 210-256 in another hand, marginal annotations throughout, notes and verses to the front and rear fly-leaves, a little damp-staining and some spotting, text unaffected, edges of f. 1 repaired; in later Islamic red leather with flap, blind-tooled, with embossed paper medallions; a bit rubbed.

An abridgement of the Kitāb al-āthmār of Ibn al-Murtadā (1362-1436 AD), an important text in Zaydi jurisprudence, by Imam Yahyā Sharaf al-Din (1472-1557 AD).

Arabic manuscript on thick paper, ff. 104, 31 x 22.5 cm, copied on thick, buff paper, with 28 lines of black naskhī verging on riqa‘, some words and passages in red; occasional marginalia, ownership inscriptions to front fly-leaves; ff. 1-2 damp-stained, marginal staining and some insect damage throughout, and old crude repairs to f. 207; in modern brown faux-leather.

The first part of a Zaydi commentary on the Qur’ān by Najm al-Din al-Yamanī (d. 1428 AD).

Berlin 4888; GAL S II, p. 250.


Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 24.5 x 18.5 cm; ff. 200; 25 lines of black naskhī per page, certain words and phrases in red, chapter headings in black majuscule; old repairs to edges of f. 6, ff. 8-11 and 199-200 supplied on different paper in a later hand, occasional staining, text unaffected; in modern brown leather with flap, blind-tooled, incorporating the original medallions.

A sound copy of this early Zaydi legal text, composed and compiled by the eleventh-century Yemeni Imam al-Nātiq b-il-Haqq (d. 1032 AD). His work draws extensively on the twin pillars of Zaydi jurisprudence, al-Rassi and al-Hādī.

b. [Miscellany of Zaydi texts.]

Arabic manuscript on thick paper, 26 x 18.5 cm; ff. 161; 24 lines of black naskhī verging on riqa’ per page, certain words and phrases in red, others in green; signed repeatedly by the copyist; marginal annotations throughout, occasional damp-stains and some marginal soiling; in contemporary Islamic red leather with flap, blind-tooled and gold painted with embossed paper medallions; a few small wormholes, repaired.

A nineteenth-century miscellany of Zaydi texts, heavily annotated, with a detailed almanac across two of the rear fly-leaves.