

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Illuminated Qajar Qur'an

Qajar Iran, dated 1305 AH/1887-88 AD

Ink and gold on paper, lacquer binding

31cm high, 20cm wide

Provenance: UK private collection. Diplomatic gift, 1956, thence by descent.

Stock No.: A5427

This large-sized single volume Qur'an, written in Arabic on cream paper, has 245 leaves plus 4 fly-leaves. Written in a black naskh script, the manuscript has 15 lines to the page, ruled in blue, red, green and gold. Gold rosettes with polychrome dots separate verses, while the verse markers in the margins are delicately painted in gold, blue and green, creating highly stylised flower and leaf motifs. Surah headings are written in red cursive script against a gold ground within polychrome cartouches.

The manuscript opens with a lavishly illuminated double frontispiece (ff.2b-3a), painted largely in gold with polychrome embellishment. The central medallions contain prayers in golden cursive script on a cobalt blue ground, against a golden background embellished with polychrome flower and leaf designs.

The alternating gold and silver rectangles that enclose the central designs contain names of surahs written in red and black ink.

The opening pages (f.3b and 4a) containing the first two surahs are even more elaborately illuminated using gold and polychrome. Both pages contain headpieces of mirroring design, filled with delicately painted flowers on a gold and cobalt blue ground. Similar decorative scheme continues throughout the composition. The main texts are surrounded by gold cloudbands, on top of which are miniature polychrome flowers. The manuscript has a fine lacquer binding decorated with interlacing scrolls.

This Qur'an copy was commissioned by 'Ali Quli Khan Mukhbir al-Dawla (d.1315AH/1897AD), a Dar al-Funun-educated Qajar prince and the Minister of Science and Mines, and copied by Muhammad al-Musawi known as Hindi. It is dated both at the frontispiece and the colophon as 1305 AH/1887-88 AD. A note written by Reza Hekmat, the Speaker of Parliament, states that this Qur'an was presented to

Iskandar Mirza, the President of Pakistan on 12 *Aban* 1335 (23 October 1956).