

A page from a Qur'an on peach coloured paper
Spain, probably Granada or Valencia
13th century



33.2 × 26 cm; single folio from an Arabic manuscript on peach-coloured paper, five lines of brown Maghribi script per page; vocalization and letter-pointing in gold; *sukun* and *shaddah* in blue; *hamzat al-qat'* and *hamzat al-wasl* marked with yellow and brown dots; further vocalization in silver; single verse divisions marked with gold roundels containing the exact verse count according to the *abjad* system; illuminated medallion on verso marking 20th verso in gold Kufic script; inscription recording *hubs* (endowment) made with pin pricks in top right margin of verso

Sura 20 (*Taha*) vs. 130 (middle) - 132 (middle)

So be patient over what they say and exalt [Allah] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and during periods of the night [exalt Him] and at the ends of the day, that you may be satisfied.

And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them, [its being but] the splendour of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring.

And enjoin prayer upon your family [and people] and be steadfast therein. We ask you not for provision; We provide for you, and the [best] outcome is for [those of] righteousness.

Provenance

Private collection, England, acquired 1985

The Qur'an from which this leaf originates was probably produced for a royal or noble patron in either Granada or Valencia (see *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, exhibition catalogue, New York, 1992, no. 81). Though parchment was the standard material for Qur'an manuscripts in the period, paper was occasionally used, particularly in the production of luxury copies. Another example, possibly from Tunisia and now in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, is in silver ink on chocolate paper (*L'art du livre Arabe*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, 2001, no. 25).

Traditionally, this pink-coloured paper has been associated with Játiva (Shatiba), where high-quality

paper was made that was exported all over the Mediterranean. While it is possible that it was made there before or after James I of Aragon's conquest of the city in 1244, it could also have been made in the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada, where coloured paper was used by the sultans for official correspondence (Jonathan Bloom, *Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*, New Haven, 2001, p. 88).

An unusual feature and an indication of the care and expense with which the manuscript was illuminated are the *abjad* letters in gold roundels giving the verse count for each verse. *Abjad* numerals were normally given only for tenth verse divisions.

A partially complete volume from the same manuscript is in the Bibliothèque Ben Youssef, Marrakesh (New York 1992, no. 81). Further leaves are in, among other collections, the David Collection, Copenhagen (Kjeld von Folsach, *Art from the World of Islam in the David Collection*, Copenhagen, 2001, no. 5) and the Agha Khan Museum (*Treasures of Islam*, exhibition catalogue, Geneva 1985, no. 7).