



Religion

Qur'an Stand

Northern India, 18th century

Jade

Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, 41.36

A folding book stand such as this was used to support the Qur'an as it was read. Blossoms and leaves framed by serpentine leaves ornament the exterior while the interior, where the manuscript would lie, is plain. The stand is made of two interlocking sides that originate from a single piece of jade. Jade is a relatively hard gemstone and so cannot be "carved," only worn away with a harder material such as diamond fragments. The ornamentation on the stand, and the stand itself, were both fashioned in this manner.

Illuminated Manuscript of the Qur'an

Probably Turkey, A.H. 1270 (A.D. 1853–54)

Ink, gold, and opaque watercolor on paper, leather binding

Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, 10.16

Folio from the Qur'an

Sura 9, "Repentance" (*al-Tauba*), verses 31–32

Near East or North Africa, ca. 900

Ink and pigment on vellum

Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, 11.25

Calligraphy has been a preeminent Islamic art since the seventh century when the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad and recorded in the Arabic language. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the literal Word of God and the written word, because of its association with this sacred text, has acquired a special significance. Highly controlled, angular lettering called Kufic script was commonly used to copy the Qur'an in early periods.

Mosque Lamp

Syria, 19th century

Glass, gilding

Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, 47.132

Lamps not only provide light, but may also serve a symbolic function in Islam. In the Qur'an, God (Allah) is likened to the presence of a lustrous lamp in a niche. Hence lamps are often placed in niches in mosques and, similarly, they are depicted in niches on tile panels and prayer carpets, as seen elsewhere in this gallery.