PRESENTING THE COLLECTION

THE QUR'ANIC MSS OF THE ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS FUND OF THE DĄGHİSTĀN INSTITUTE OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY: PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTION

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Literary tradition and culture of Muslim peoples is in direct connection with the Holy Scripture of Islam — the Qur’ān. People used to learn to read and write with the help of the Qur’ān as there were no ABC books. The Qur’ān was the most widely read and copied book in Islamic world. To copy the text of the Qur’ān at least once was considered a piety and almost a duty of every believer if he was literate [1]. The study of the history of the Qur’ānic copies’ circulation, its copying and formation of manuscript libraries in Dāghistān is subject to accumulation of factual material (discovery of dated manuscripts and documents) and perfection of research methods.

The corpus of Arabic-Muslim manuscripts of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of Dāghistān (further IHAE DSC RAS) has been collected during half a century. Ca. 3500 manuscripts are accumulated here reflecting to a greater or lesser extent many directions and stages of Arabic-Muslim culture of Dāghistān from the 9th c. up to the beginning of the 20th c. Among them 43 copies of the Qur’ān are kept, complete text and its large fragments.

These copies contain no data to help study their design, ornamentation, binding, calligraphy, etc., so any information is necessary and useful.

It is highly possible that the oldest Arabic texts (inscriptions, separate fragments and whole books) which were copied on the earlier stage of Islam expansion in Dāghistān were texts of the Qur’ān. They are numerous. Old copies of the Qur’ān were written in a script close to kāfi. This must have been connected with the fact that the copyists did not yet master a perfect script. Most often in such manuscripts there is no indication of when or where the copy was made, but, judging by the paper, the script and other indirect evidence (for example, dated inscriptions) they can approximately be dated to the 13th—15th c. A.R. Sībirbaudojov mentions the discovery of ancient copies of the Qur’ān copied in 626/1228—9 in the village of Penjik (Tabasaran region), dated by 815/1413 in Qumāḵh, dated by 889/1435 in the village of Shīr (Dāghistān region), dated by 922/1516—7 in the village of Tipp (Aguard’ skin region), and also beautifully copied fragments in the village of Daldug (Aguard’ skin region) dated by 1150/1693 with the name of the copyist — Māsh, son of ʻUmar from Qumāḵh.

The collection of the Qur’ānic MSS was also replenished with copies brought to the Institute from South and Central Dāghistān (Lergān, Laga, Dargin villages). The reason for absence of old copies of the Qur’ān lies in the fact that in North and North-West Dāghistān mass appearance of epigraphical monuments, which are considered indicator of wide distribution of Islam, refer to a later period (16th—17th c.). The main centres where the greatest number of the earliest copies both in the form of the full Qur’ānic copies and its large fragments in kāfi script and decorated with various elegant ornaments, were preserved are Akhān, Tipp, Būrānistanek, Derbend (Bāb al-Abwāb), Qumāḵh, Isar, Kubaḵi, Urtsi, Khaloeser (Qalawārāyil) and Jibīglān. It was in these settlements, where the greatest number of burials of local saints, preachers and readers of the Qur’ān was discovered. The burial monuments and manuscripts are dated to the period prior to 14th c.

In this small review eight manuscripts of the Qur’ān which are kept in the fund of oriental manuscripts of IHAE are presented. In their review and description we would like to give material for periodisation questions of Arabic-Muslim written language in Dāghistān and its peculiarities on the early stage of the Qur’ānic MSS circulation.

For example, the script of the Qur’ānic fragments (inventory No. 2578) can not be considered kāfi in the full sense of the word. This is rather semi-kāfi, and its later analogues in some cases are close to muqāf or even the simple script. It would be wrong to assume that kāfi script in pure form was not represented in Dāghistān. This script can be found in villages of South Dāghistān on stone plates and dedicatory inscriptions of the earliest period. Use of readings signs is typical of the Dāghistān Qur’āns.

A peculiarity of early the Qur’ān’s script is a deviation from the kāfi standard (for example, roundness in the curves of several letters) as well as absence of strict horizontality of lines. This can be seen by the example of the Qur’ānic script (inventory No. 2478) where at the beginning of sev
eral sūrā we can find a more or less consistent common horizontal line of mostly low, rectangular letters.

Allāh has a wedge-shaped thickening on top or (more often) a lower end bent to the left or right; a wedge-like widening is also characteristic of the ālām stems. However, when combined with aššāf these thickenings are not pointed to different directions which is typical of kāfī script. Division of an unfinished letter or leaving a single letter at the end of a line is a peculiar feature of these Qur'āns copied at the earliest stage of Islam expansion in Dīghistān. We should admit that because of the lack of the kāfī Qur'āns we can not yet speak with confidence about the display of rich graphical means of kāfī script in the Dīghistān book art which can be observed in the history of this script in other Muslim regions, such as, for example, Azerbaijan.

Among the kāfī Qur'āns copied in Dīghistān or brought from neighbouring regions there remained elements of the old Qur'ānic orthography which reflects pronunciation without a "glottal stop". Spelling aššāfī is totally absent. Particle išān is written in the original form in two particles which is formed of, išān (in order not to), in these Qur'āns there is also no substitution of fiśān with āšīd.

In Dīghistān, as it can be seen from our review, up to the 16th c. there circulated copies and inscriptions from the Qur'ān where early orthography was preserved.

**Description**

1. **Inventory No. 1970 (fīgs. 1—2)**

A full Qur'ān with parallel (word-for-word) translation into Persian and partial comments up to the 91st sūrā. The short sūrās have neither translation nor comments. On the folios 1b and 2a (beginning of the 1st and the 2nd sūrās) there is an "amānī" in the form of a dome in red, green and blue, half the size of the page. After the "amānī", the field is divided with arcs and lines coloured in red, yellow and blue and is furnished with symmetrical vegetative patterns in different combinations and is framed from three sides. Some pages have colour vignettes on the left and right margins in the form of round rosettes in blue frames with golden background. The pauses (breaks or āqāt endings) are designed in the form of circles in yellow and orange shades. Number of leaves — 262; number of lines — 10, size — 57 × 46 cm, text borders — 47 × 32 cm.

2. **Inventory Nos. 283—288 (fig. 3)**

Seven richly ornamented front parts of the same big Qur'ān (al-sāfī). The text occupies the middle area of the page and is put in a frame of golden stripes and blue lines (fols. 1b—2a). This frame consists of broad stripes with a vegetative ornament and the gaps between the lines are also filled with colour patterns on golden background. The sūra names are written in cinnabar and are decorated with small rectangles; the background is painted with gold. On the margins there are tear-shaped rosettes with six-petalled flowers in the middle and a colour pattern on golden background. The pauses are marked by the small golden solar signs.

The copyist is Muhāmmad b. Muhāmmad b. Ahmad, āqāt of the Sāwī province. The number of lines — 6, size — 61 × 41 cm, text borders — 48 × 31 cm. The copying date of the first copy of the seventh part of the Qur'ān is: shawwāl 704 AH / bw. 19.05 and 17.06.1303 AD. The end of the seventh book of the seventh part of the Qur'ān is: shawwāl 704 AH / bw. 27.04 and 26.05.1305.
3. Inventory No. 2822 (fig. 4)

A large (169 folios) fragment of the Qur'ān manuscript. The sûra titles are designed with a golden line with black inking with images of flowers in golden paint and blue inking. On the outer margins there are 2—3 miniatures in the form of conventionalized pitchers and round rosettes circled with a blue line. The miniatures themselves are decorated with gold. Round rosettes on the inner golden circle have an inscription in a line of kufī letters circled with a blue line. The pauses are marked with signs — miniature snails drawn by a golden line with blue outline. The letters are decorated with large dots in cinnabar. The peculiarity of this Qur'ān is that throughout the whole text there is no (in the length is not marked (with a vertical fā'āl), 2 yās is not marked (with a small fā’āl); there is no conjunct yā (in order not to), and the number of āyāt does not coincide with the standard Qur'ān copies.

The number of folios — 169, the number of lines — 17, size — 28×18.5 cm, text borders — 22×11.5 cm. The text is large, semi-kufi. The paper is dark, thick, Chinese. The binding is dark brown, made of leather, with boards and stamping on the sides and in the middle.

There is a legend about this copy, which was told us by M.-S. Sadiq: during the rule of Chalil Surjahlī, a delegation of Qarnahjans with presents went to the shâh of Iran. The shāh, in his turn, sent back to Surjahlī a miniature Qur'ān as a present. Surjahlī expressed his surprise: how could such a great ruler give such a small present? Surjahlī's words were told to the shâh and he sent him the Qur'ānic copy of seven parts, extremely rare in the Muslim world (the parts are divided conditionally). Since Surjahlī's time until 1956 the Qur'ān was kept in the Qarnah masjid al-jum'a. Then the mosque was closed, the library was destroyed and the Qur'āns were thrown away to the street. Prof. G. B. Mukhlingskii, who at the time lived in Mashhadi, brought this beautiful "from" Qur'ān to the Institute.

4. Inventory No. 2573 (fig. 5)

A manuscript of the Qur'ān (from the beginning and up to sûra Maryam). Folios 1b and 2a are designed as a frames with broad margins decorated with "clump ornament" and covered with blessings. There are ten lines of text inside each frame. The other folios are decorated with simple pitchers on the outer margins. The names of sûras are written in red cinnabar in large naskh script.

Number of folios — 138, number of lines — 17, size — 34.2×23 cm, text borders — 27.5×18 cm. Script — semi-kufi, names of sûras — naskh. The paper is white and thick. From the binding only the right cover has preserved leather with ornamental linear stamping.

The manuscript was brought from the mosque of Jihkhani village (Kaitagskii region) in 1982.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sûra Name</th>
<th>Number of Ayāt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tāhâ</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Anfâl</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Mukâtâ</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Mîninî</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Inventory No. 2576 (fig. 6)

The copyist is Hājjī Rajab from the village of Shârî (Agulskii region). The number of folios — 411, number of lines — 11, size — 36×28 cm, text borders — 26×17 cm. Script — naskh. The ink is black (the names of sûras are written in colour ink). White, glazed, oriental paper. The binding is dark brown, leather with stamping.

The Qur'ān was restored by Hâjjî Rajab, son of Hâjjî Ibrahim from Shârî. The manuscript was brought from Tîg (Agulskii region) in 1982.

6. Inventory No. 2326 (fig. 7)

Folio is missing in the beginning (1b), folios 2a—5b from sûra al-Baqara are restored. Parallel (word for word) translation into Persian begins on the folio 6a. The manuscript finishes with the sûra al-Lâmm. The text is put in a colour frame, the words of ayât in the beginning and the end of pages are written in big bold letters. The text field and the area around it are filled with glosses — comments in Persian.

On the folio 193a after the first ayât of sûra al-Îrâ'î there is a legend about Muhammed and his associates. On the folios 202b—204a after the tenth ayât of sûra al-Kahf there is a legend about the "Seven Sleepers" (aswâb al-kahf).

On the folio 208b—209a between the ayât of the al-Kahf sûra there is a story about Alexander the Great in Persian.

The number of folios — 426, number of lines — 10, size — 23×34 cm, text borders — 16×25 cm. Script — naskh, the letters of the text are big; the Persian translation is also written in naskh script, but in a small letters. The pa
الحمد لله الذي نعماً بالتعالى،
الذين لا يعدهم سوء توجه.
لا يظلمون ولا ضلواً.
وَلَا يَنفِعُ الشَّفَعَةَ
per is oriental, darkened with the time. The binding is dark brown, leather with stamping. The manuscript was brought from Ashy village (Dakhadaevskij region) in 1975.

7. Inventory No. 1, fund 30 (fig. 8)

A calligraphic copy with the 'arūṣān and ornament in paints and gold. The text has a parallel translation into Persian written in a small script. There are two blank folios in the beginning and two in the end.

Translation date — 19th century. Number of folios — 456, number of lines — 12, size — 16×27, text borders — 11×22 cm. The script — naskh. Black ink, the Persian text — red ink. The paper is manufactured, thin and lined. The binding is made of red cardboard, glued over with green velvet, the cover — with yellow velvet.

8. Inventory No. 2597 (fig. 9)

The beginning of the manuscript is missing as well as the folios with the last ṣūra of sura al-Mu'minūn. A calligraphic copy, 'arūṣān, decorations in paints and gold. The manuscript is worn-out, many pages have been restored, the last five sūras are written on different, white manufactured paper. The original text of the Qur'an has parallel (word for word) translation into Persian. The restored folios do not have a translation. Around the colophon there are inscriptions in the Darghin language.

Notes


Illustrations

Fig. 1. Manuscript of the Qur'an No. 1970 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, fol. 2a, 57×46 cm.
Fig. 2. A folio of the same manuscript.
Fig. 3. Manuscript of the Qur'an Nas. 283–288 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, colophon of al-sab' al-dhahir, 61×41 cm.
Fig. 4. A folio from the manuscript of the Qur'an No. 2822 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, 28×18.5 cm.
Fig. 5. A folio from the manuscript of the Qur'an No. 2573 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, 34×27 cm.
Fig. 6. A folio from the manuscript of the Qur'an No. 2576 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, 26×28 cm.
Fig. 7. A folio from the manuscript of the Qur'an No. 2326 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, 23×34 cm.
Fig. 8. A folio from the manuscript of the Qur'an No. 1, fund 30 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, 16×27 cm.
Fig. 9. A folio from the manuscript of the Qur'an No. 2579 from the collection of IHAE DSC RAS, 17×27.5 cm.