PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

E. Rezvan

NEW FOLIOS FROM "UTHMĀNIC QUR’ĀN" I.
(LIBRARY OF ADMINISTRATION FOR MUSLIM AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN)

On the pages of our journal we have more than once written about the biṣṭāc Qurʾānic manuscript which throughout at least five centuries was considered by Middle East Muslims the original "Uṭhamānic Qurʾān"—a sacred relic stained with the blood of the third of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (644—55). The manuscript, which, as it was believed by generations of Muslims, was copied by Uṭhamān himself was considered the prototype for all copies of Qurʾān. The amazing history of this copy is connected with destinies of dynasties, states, Qiyṣyya brotherhoods [1].

In the end of the 19th century, about a half of the manuscript was sold in parts. The greater part of it was brought to St. Petersburg, the rest—scattered among private collectors in Biṣṭāc. The other half of the manuscript was still kept in the mausole of Katta-Langar qilīh. In 1983 Prof. B. Babajanov succeeded in seeing in Katta-Langar sixty three folios of the ancient Qurʾānic codex. The 1983 resolution of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party to combat folk Islamic beliefs [2] played a fatal role in the history of the manuscript. In mażārs and mosques throughout the republic, sacred relics were confiscated and the graves of saints were excavated. Fearing for the manuscript, the chairman of the local qilīḥ council brought it to his home, but was still unable to save it. The Katta-Langar holy relics were confiscated. According to eye-witnesses, on the very eve of the confiscation, one of the qilīḥi elder, Tukhlo-Baba Rajavuz, succeeded in taking several folios from the manuscript [3]. Ten years ago, in 1995, T. Qadirov, bašım of the Kulka Daryā wiliyāt returned the twelve folios to the mażār.

I was sure that the remaining folios, which could have been bought by a local collector in the end of the 19th century, confiscated by KGB or saved from this fate by a believer, are still kept somewhere in Uzbekistan. In the spring of 2003 during my trip to Uzbekistan to gether with students from Stanford University (USA), I again managed to visit the Library of Administration for Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. To my great surprise, on the exhibition of rare manuscripts of the Qurʾān, I found folios, which undoubtedly belonged to the Katta-Langar copy. I had been to this library a year before during the shooting of my film about the history of the "Uṭhamānic Qurʾān", but I had not seen these folios then. In reply to my question concerning the history of acquisition of the fragments I was interested in, the Director of the Library Mr. Abdulshukur Nabiev [4] explained that the folios had come into the library not long before that due to cooperation with customs authorities of the Republic.

The folios are in simple cardboard binding covered with cotton (alternating white-green and blue-white stripes). In the upper right corner of the inner surface of the upper cover of the binding, there is a stamp and a code attributed to the folios on their acquisition (fig. 1).

Under the binding there are four folios, two of which are fly-leaves (well-polished cream oriental paper), and the other two contain Qurʾānic texts. In the lower part of the fly-leaf (at the bottom and on the corner on the other side) there are Persian masāʾili inscriptions in black ink (figs. 2—3).

Two-line inscription at the bottom:

"Qīfī script. Holy autograph of the sovereign of believers hazrat Uṭhamān, the possessor of the two [sources or light] (5), let Allah the Most High bless him with it"

An inscription on the other side contains a distich:

"I gave several inanimate [coins, precious stones], I bought a soul! Glory to Allah! I bought it amazingly cheap!"

The next folio is a fragment of a, supposedly, 30-volume manuscript of the Qurʾān. The folio size is 48.2 × 34.0 cm, the text field’s size is 37.6 × 27.6 cm, high quality polished oriental paper, a complicated multi-colour frame, five lines written in gold, calligraphic masāʾili. Presumably — Iran, 14th—15th century.

The fragment contains the end of sûra 7: the front side (fig. 4) — the end of ayat 7:202 — the end of ayat 7:205; the other side (fig. 5) — the end of ayat 7:203 and up to the end of the sûra. The dividers between the ayāt are complicated golden rosettes outlined in blue in a form of a “gear-wheel”. On the reverse side one of such dividers is placed on the margin together with a long “tail” nīn, and
there is a gap in the frame. Because of this, along the left edge of the folio there is an additional golden frame with an “enclave” for a šın and the et al. divider. Along the perimeter of this frame bold red and blue lines were later made.

In the upper part of the folio a fragment (15.9 × 4.7 cm) of a bottom left corner of a handwritten page is glued on. It contains a nāzīr inscription in black ink (part of a complicated multi-color frame is also preserved). The inscription (fig. 6) represents 28 consonants of Arabic alphabet arranged according to phonemic principle (byjūd, voces memoriales)[6]. This combination was often used in magical acts, was part of talismans[7].

In the bottom left corner on the margin there is an inscription in black ink (fig. 7):

"Tūlāh, script of Jamāl al-Dīn Yāqūt [8], completed in the time of Muʿtasil b. Lāhīj[9]."

The front, as well as the reverse, sides of the folios contain brown stains on top (two) and at the bottom (one). The next folio presents the fragment of Qurʾānic manuscript from Katta-Langar in Ḥijāzī script. 52.5 × 34.0 cm, Northern Arabia or Syria, end of the 8th century. The front side (fig. 8) contains a fragment of a Qurʾānic text (2:126 – 2:140) (f.148r). On the reverse side (fig. 9) there is the end of an ayāt 2:140 (f.14a) – 2:144 (f.14b). The folio fills the gap in the fragment, which is today kept in St. Petersburg [10].

Qurʾānic fragments which were confiscated by Uzbekistan customs authorities and which are now kept in the Administration for Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan to some extent explain an idea, which belongs to M. E. Masson, an outstanding historian of Central Asia, who left us a detailed article on Katta-Langar and its architectural complex [11]. He noted that the sacred relics in the Katta-Langar contained an “ancient Qurʾān, presented, like a host of analogues throughout the Muslim world, as a genuine exemplar written in the seventh century, allegedly by ʿUthmān himself (644–56), above which he was killed by his enemies. As proof, on the page with the words ḥaṣābi fiya humāna... (towards the end of f.14) — ‘...but if they turn away, then they are clearly in schism’ God will suffice you from them...’ (fragment of āyat 2:137). According to al-Baladhurī, these were exactly the words covered by the blood drops of killed caliph — E. B.J.[12] they showed him a stain said to be the blood of the killed Caliph. Moreover, the text of the Qurʾān displayed was executed not in Kūfic script, but in a very elegant, ancient, but later, nāzīrī script[13]. Obviously, M. E. Masson, who did not know the Persian language and the basic principles of Arabic-Muslim calligraphy, could have seen analogous pages which had a text written in muḥaqqaq script. Prof. Babadzhanov in 1983 [14] also saw similar pages in the beginning and in the end of a manuscript and in a conversation with me he, from memory, determined the script as ḏabārūṭ.

According to our hypothesis, the manuscript of Qurʾān under discussion appeared in Māwār al-Nahr on the turn of the 15th and the 16th centuries. The folio with a text in muḥaqqaq script is presumably dated to the 14th—the 15th centuries and also has “blood stains”, however, unlike other folios in Ḥijāzī script, not on the edges, but at the bottom and on top. The edges of the folios are cut off, by the time it was “included” into the common structure with bījūtī folios, it was already quite tattered. The discovery of an inset with ḏabārūṭ is very interesting, as it proves the magical use of the manuscript.

The inscriptions in nāzīrī script were made much later. They fix the fact of the fragment’s acquisition, characterize and date it. However, the author of the inscription could not identify the script of the fragment, which dates to the 14th—15th centuries, correctly, ascribed it to the kalām of the legendary penman Jamāl al-Dīn Yāqūt, and made a mistake in his life dates, placing him in the time of Caliph Muʿtasil b. Lāhīj, which was four centuries earlier. In connection with this we may assume that the folio which came into the Library of the Administration for Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan could be sold to a private collector in the end of the 19th century, just like one folio was sold by Muḥammad Šafī-İbn Mujaddid Sād-dīn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Ḥāfīzī (supreme judge) to the last amīr of Būyāzār, and two folios — to Hīfī (1587–1597), son of the Būyāzār amīr Muzaffar al-Dīn. At the time it was quite an expensive purchase. Hīfī paid 30 suqs (Rus. 12 rubles) [15]. It is the expensiveness of the purchase which is commented on the reverse side in the corner of the fly-leaf. Such purchase could have been made only by a well-off noble man.

When the present book was in preparation for publication, I found out from a trustworthy source that a private collector living in one of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States possesses several dozen folios in Ḥijāzī script from the manuscript we are interested in. I was promised that photos of these folios would be sent to me. If this story is true, we will then have an almost complete codex of Qurʾān of the 2nd century after hijra. The appearance of the last large fragment (and this can only be the fragment confiscated by the KGB) will allow us to identify precisely the place of all the fragments which have been discovered in the history of the codex. That is why I permitted myself to add figure “I” in the title of the article. I really hope that it will be followed by another article on the subject.

**Notes**

E. R. Z. New Photos from “Uljanin’s Qur’ān” 1

2002), pp. 34—41. The next article in the series is by Dr. B. Aaminov (Tashkent); it analyzes a fāṭiha of the Bāṣīrāt, a tafsir of the Qur′ānic keywords discovered in Tashkent.
2. The path of these resolutions as well as of fāṭihs of the Administration for Muslims Affairs of the Central Asia and Kazakhstan was often in tune with the main theses of Wahhabī propaganda. Folk beliefs, customs, and rites connected with Sufi tradition which could not be controlled by the state, were viewed as deeply heretical by communist ideologues who controlled the Soviet “official Islam” as well as by theorists of export of Wahhabī model of Islam.
3. Tukhtina-Baba died in 2001 and is buried close to Katta-Langar mazaar.
4. I am very grateful to Mr. A. Nadir for his kind assistance in photographing and preliminary study of the Qur′ānic folios to which the present article is dedicated.
5. Dīn al-Ḥāji al-Muṣṭafī is an honorable sīlahi (sūra) of ‘Uthma Mūsā b. ‘Affan which he received in connection with his marrying two daughters of the Prophet, first Raqqaysa and, after her death, Umm Kalthūm.
6. This combination differs from a usual one by the presence in its end of a lām alif combination.
7. I am thankful to Dr. Maryam Rezvan for information connected with this fragment and for her assistance in translation of Persian texts.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Collection of Qur′ānic fragments. No. 39. Library of Administration for Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent. Shelf-mark of the library.
Fig. 2. The same item. First nastaʿlīq inscription on fly-leaf.
Fig. 3. The same item. Second nastaʿlīq inscription on fly-leaf.
Fig. 4. The same item. Recto of the Qur′ānic folio in muḥaqqaq script, 48.2 x 34.0 cm, Iran, 14th—15th centuries.
Fig. 5. The same item. Verso of the Qur′ānic folio in muḥaqqaq script, 48.2 x 34.0 cm, Iran, 14th—15th centuries.
Fig. 6. The same item. Alifājad fragment attached to recto of the Qur′ānic folio in muḥaqqaq script.
Fig. 7. The same item. Marginia on recto of the Qur′ānic folio in muḥaqqaq script, 15.9 x 4.7 cm.
Fig. 8. The same item. Recto of the Qur′ānic folio in kāf-i jāzīl script, 52.5 x 34.0 cm. Northern Arabia or Syria, end of the 8th century.
Fig. 9. The same item. Verso of the Qur′ānic folio in kāf-i jāzīl script, 52.5 x 34.0 cm. Northern Arabia or Syria, end of the 8th century.
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Plate 1. No. 13-24. Kawahara Keiga, “A view of a highway station”, Nikon Fukuju (Views of Japan). Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted, colour on silk, gold, 73.2 × 74.3 cm (whole), 52.5 × 62.5 cm (painting), no seal, no signature.

Back cover:
Plate 2. No. 13-34/39(8). Idem, “A visit to a Shinto shrine”, Life of Japanese people. Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted (album folio), colour on silk, gold, 35.1 × 44.3 cm (whole), 32.3 × 44.3 cm (painting), no seal, no signature.


Plate 4. No. 13-34/39(17). Idem, “A greeting of the bridegroom’s family by a representative of the house of the bride”, ibid. Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted (album folio), colour on silk, gold, 32.2 × 44.0 cm, no seal, no signature.