
Research in Persian binding faces multiple challenges mostly related to dating. A calligrapher’s copying date is often confusing due to repeated re-binding for several reasons. The binding is the most vulnerable part of the book, first because its stitching was not intended to open fully (users were supposed to place the book on a special stand with an opening angle between 90 and 120 degrees). For the second, a calligrapher’s copy might remain unbound for one reason or another. Among the known cases are the early 16th-century works of the masters of Ilariz, taken out by the Safawids and Shihabids who conquered the town in turn. Moreover, with binding designs soon growing out of fashion, a new owner may wish to encase its “pearl” in a new style. The process was particularly vigorous during the second part of the 16th/17th century, namely between the 1570s and the 1580s (AH 980s—990s). Abundant bindings of this period for manuscripts copied earlier, widely representing contemporary developments in the art of the book, gave rise to confused views of their dates and place of production. In fact, bindings dating from the second half of the 16th century do occur, though rarely, in 17th- or even 18th-century books.

The 16th century, especially its second half, is the golden age for the art of the binding (and we may add—for the margin decoration as well). Indeed, in the 16th century one can find vanished bindings with miniature or ornament on black, gold or coloured background, the covers combining gold-ornamented varnished surface and a gold stamping, and the traditional stamped leather covers which are usually gilt [1].

Among this variety not very many book-covers are known decorated with gilt “stamped miniature” more often showing birds and animals in the Garden of Eden or in a forest. Their inner sides usually represent a leather gauze rectangular that is placed straight on the painted cardboard base. (In this technique, the artisan would at first stamp a decorative element on a scrap of leather, then remove odd leather fragments with a cutting tool, and encase the resulting gauze in the leather cover. Early in the 16th century considerable improvement in this openwork technique allowed binders to handle up to five layers of fine leather at once [2].)

One of such gilt-stamped covers is signed by the bookbinder Muhammad-Zamān b. Mīrzā- Beg Tabrizī. It belongs to “Ali Shīr Nawī’s Kulliyāt (“Collected Works”) copied by calligrapher Nāzar ‘Alī Fayṣī in Qīzīl-Aqash of Azarbājjan and Māghān (plate 2). The manuscript, which is located in St. Petersburg in the National Library of Russia, bears several dates between 1001 and 1004/1592 and 1596. It was ordered by Faraḥ-ul-Khān Qaramānī, a statesman and patron of art [3]. The name of the binder, Muhammad-Zamān b. Mīrzā- Beg Tabrizī, is indicated in gold at the bottom of the front cover (fig. 1). The signature was found out and firstly published by Anatol Ivanov [4].

Taking into account the fact that the margins of the Kulliyāt were obviously cut (a colophon is carefully saved) in accordance with the size of the covers, we may suppose that the last was made not especially for this book but at an earlier date and for another job, and then taken for the Kulliyāt.

The distinguishable features of the covers’ composition are a monkey sitting on a tree and a falcon (or hawk?) catching a stork (or crane?). The outside covers produced with the same or very similar metal panel can be found also in two more manuscripts:

(i) One set belongs to Nizām’s Ḥakams-nāma in the copy of 990/1582 from the National Library of Russia (fig. 2).

(ii) Another example—the back cover of the Khamsa by Khusraw Dihlavi in A. M. Sackler Gallery, Washington D. C. (S. 86.0472) [5]. Glenn D. Lowry and Milo Cleveland Beach described the binding and also a frontispiece (S. 86.0072) as made ca. 982—1008/1575—1600 in Qazwīn [6]. It’s interesting that the stamp is very similar to the previous ones but not exactly the same.

The front cover of the binding of the Khamsa from Washington is stamped with another metal plate of the same decorative style and represents birds in a forest. At least three bindings are known decorated with the same block-stamping:

(i) One of them belongs to the copy of Shīb-nāma by Firdawsi housed in the Top Kaps Museum, Istanbul (H.1513) [7].
(ii) The next example of cover which is produced with the same metal panel is housed in the Kuwait National Museum (LNS 11 L)[8]. Unfortunately, there is no other information except its height 37 cm, and conjectural dating by the first half of the 16th century.

(iii) The third one is the front cover of the murqua’-album from the National Library of Russia (fig. 6). The album contains calligraphic samples of the 15th- and 16th century (the latest dating from 971/1563–
64), as well as nine miniatures and pen drawings [9].

The gold-stamped front cover in the murqua’ is identical to the previous ones, meanwhile its back cover and flap have a clear difference in the bottom left corner (figs. 4 – 5). Closer examination reveals different plates of slightly different size. The album covers also differ in their interior decoration, even in using different leather colour. (Apparently, they preferred to use new single boards still in stock, rather than re-using old covers from another book.)

Taking into account the obvious closeness of the covers we may suppose that they were made in one workshop, or even by one bookbinder, namely, Muhammad-Zağan b. Mîrzâ Tabrîzî.

There is one more manuscript, connected with Muhammad-Zağan-beg. The third volume of Habbîh al-siyâr (“Lover of Biographies”) by Ghâyûb al-Dîn Khânderamî (which is kept in the Sackler Gallery, S 86.0047[10]) was copied in 987/1579-80 by Diya al-Dîn Muhammad al-Ahmûdî for Mîrzâ Abu Tîhîb b. Mîrzâ ‘Alî al-Dawla, probably, in Qazvin. Later the manuscript belonged to Rustam b. Husayn b. Bahram, the grandson of Bahram Mîrzâ. The miniatures of this manuscript are ascribed to well-known artists Sîdîq b. Sâfî, the librarian, and Mir Mûsawwir Yazdi. The inscriptions are made by one hand, by which on the doublure of the upper cover is written: Muhammed-Zağan b. Sâd-sâfî, a scribe of the Sîhîn’s private domain). As the scholars have nothing against the attributions of miniatures, we may suppose that the binder’s name was also given correct, we will try to find other arguments to attribute the binding to Muhammad-Zağan.

The central field of the exterior covers represents gilt stamped surface with a traditional structure — lemon-shape centre-piece–turquoise with pendants–sarturunî and corner-pieces. As usually the central field is made with double-stamped “half-plate”. Such are the bindings for books originated from the Sîhîn as early as in the 1520s.

In our case there is one innovation, namely, the form of the corner-piece represents one quarter of the central oval added with the half of sarturunî. As a result, in one quarter of the central field one can see the diagonal-mirror symmetry, which was quite common for inner (but not for outer) sides beginning from the 1520s.

On the contrary, the design of the doublures attributed to Muhammad-Zağan is very new for the arts of the book. Although the binder uses the well-known openwork technique when leather gauze is placed straight on the painted cardboard base, he fills the central field with the gilt gauze completely. In the case of Habbîh al-siyâr three rectangular pieces of leather net were used for all the surface, placed horizontally. The background is painted in four colours: blue, red-orange, bright green and black.

Absolutely the same decoration can be found in the inner covers of the above mentioned Iskandar-nâma of 990/1582 (fig. 6). In addition the cartouches on pink background in the Iskandar-nâma and in the Habbîh al-siyâr are the same. Such identity can be considered as a supplementary argument to ascribe these bindings to Muhammad-Zağan.

In the group of “gilt stamped miniatures” only one pair has a small similarity in the inside decoration. The first binding from the Sackler gallery (S.86.0472) is a single one among others, as its doublures are decorated according to the traditional scheme center- and corner-pieces. It is interesting that the direct analogues for them are found in the doublures of the Divan by ‘Amîr Khurram Dihlîwî dated 974/1567, the outer sides of which are extremely close in decoration to the inner (!) side of the lower cover of the NLR Murqua’-album. (The inner side of its upper cover (fig. 7) has analogues in manuscripts from other collections. For example, in: (i) Kûlîyât of Jâmî dated 974/1567 which is kept in the Top Kapı Museum with the number A. 1585 (37.4×24.5 cm) [11] and (ii) Rawdat al-safâ (“Paradise of Purity”) of Mirîh-wâdîn in Victoria and Albert Museum (London) which has a date 978/1580-81 (N. 1876-674, 36.1×24.6 cm) [12]. This information gives us additional arguments for dating of covers.)

The covers of Kûlîyât by Nâw’î, signed by Muhammad-Zağan, are also decorated from inside with a rectangular field where gilt gauze is glued upon multi-coloured background (fig. 8). Again we see the same four colours, as in the second Sackler binding and in Iskandar-nâma of 990/1582: blue, red-orange, bright green and black.

Both the same colours and the same stamp were used in the doublures of two other manuscripts that are kept in the National Library of Russia.

(i) One couple of the inner covers belongs to the untitled poem which was copied in 947/1540-1 by Dîst Muhammad al-khîthîb al-qâbîhî, but decorated and bound later (fig. 9). At the same time the central field of the outer covers is very close (although not identical) to ones of the second Sackler binding that is attributed to Muhammad-Zağan. And moreover, the small frame is absolutely the same in both cases. Here the bottom of the relief is chloroacetate.

(ii) Another couple of the inner covers produced with the same tool belongs to Divan by ‘All Sîr Nâw’î, copied in the 1st half of the 16th century (fig. 10). Not only the central field is identical to one from the previous manuscript, but cartouches of the frame as well. The framework of the outer covers of the Divan bears impressions of the same tool with which the outside cartouches of the previous binding were stamped. The covers are characterized by deep double-level stamping, grayish green and claret painting and tinted gilding (fig. 11).
The outer covers of the same type (although of another size) belong to another copy of Dīwān by ‘Alī-Shir Nāvīl (fig. 12). Its calligrapher, Shūlān-Muḥammat-i Nūr, died in 940/1534, so this year serves as a top limit for copying but not for binding. Meanwhile the outer sides have no direct analogues in the group, the inside frame (fig. 13) is identical by stamping and colours with one very important manuscript from St. Petersburg.

It is Gūš-i shaqūnū ("The Ball and the Mallet") of 'Arīf copied in Harat by Mir ‘Alī al-Kāthīr before his departure to Bukhārā in 937/1529, but the miniature and the binding belong to the late period (fig. 14). The central field is made of two gauze pieces, placed vertically on the multicoloured background. It is very close, if not similar, to the doublures of Shāh-nāma from Istanbul.

The same openwork set, but placed horizontally in three levels, decorates the inner covers of Khamsa by Nīṣārī in the copy of 884/1479 (fig. 15).

Moreover, the outer covers of both manuscripts (figs. 16–17) are made with the same metal desk, which was also used for the poem with a call No. Dorn 354 (fig. 18). Besides, the small frame is the same in PNS 106, Dorn 354 and in the second Sackler binding attributed to Muḥammat-Za’in (S. 86.0047).

The results of the comparison are shown in the Table 1.

The idea of attributing all eleven bindings [13], not only ones with girt "stamped miniatures", to the same binder, Muḥammat-Za’in Tabrīzī, and dating them back to the 960s—990s/1570s—1580s, seems both enticing and consistent. However, the ornamental designer made the sketch and the metalworker made the plate, so that the binder had only to handle the available plate prudently and in conjunction with other decorative elements. Thus, one can suggest that tools could be made and used in one workshop although by different binders. Anyway, an artisan venturing to sign his work obviously played an important role in this culminating phase of the art of binding.

What do we know about Muḥammat-Za’in b. Mīrza-beg Tabrīzī? According to his full name his father came from Tabrīz and his family was of noble Turkic, probably Turkmén origin.

His name is mentioned among five Iranian binders by the well known Turkish author Mustafa ‘Alī Chelebi in his treatise Manāṣib-i harnwarvarān ("Eulogy of Artisans") which was composed in 995/1587. They are (i) Mīr Ḥusayn Qazvīni; (ii) his disciple Shahīd Qāsim-beg Tabrīzī; (iii) Mīrza-beg Tabrīzī, who was the pupil of Qāsim-beg; (iv) Muḥammat-Za’in Tabrīzī, "the famous son" of Mīrza-beg and (v) Mustafa Qāsim ‘Alī who also was a student of a master, mentioned above, but of which one is still unclear. (At least Qāsim ‘Alī moved to Istanbul, and he was the friend of Muḥammad Ḥasan-beg and maq’tavār Wāhil) [14]. Then, in this list four generations of bookbinders are presented — the whole sibilla (chain of discipleship), of which three binders are of Tabriz origin:

Qādí Ahmad mentioned only one binder in his Gulisti-n-i humar ("Rosary of Arts"), namely, movālvā Qāsim-beg Tabrīzī:

Owing to the disorders caused by the evil Othomans and the ruin of Tabriz he came to (Persian) Iraq and settled in Qazvin where he worked as a bookbinder. Finally, he adopted Ardabīl as his residence... He died during the epidemic of plague in 1000/1591—92 in Qazvin... [15]

Obviously, it is his name listed by ‘Alī Chelebi as the disciple of Mīr Ḥusayn Qazvīni and as the mentor of Mīrza-beg Tabrīzī.

We can suppose that Mīrza-beg Tabrīzī was not only the father of "the famous son" Muḥammat-Za’in but also his tutor.

On the cover of Habib al-sīyār by Qawqāz al-Dīn Khāndānīrī copied in 987/1579—80 from the Sackler gallery (S. 86.0047) Muḥammat-Za’in is named as sābīḥīh-i khāndānīrī sharīfī, ("the binder of the Sackler private domain"), so he worked for (or in the Sackler's workshop. Which Shāh? The binder could begin his work at the end of Tāhmasp's time (d. 1576) and continue during the reign of his sons Kamāl-Il and, who was a Shāh, for only eighteen months, and in the time of Muḥammat-Khūdbābā (984–993/1577–1587).

Anyway, the master was very active in the time of the last Shāh, mentioned above. It is known that Muḥammat-Khūdbābā being half-blind, showed no special interest in books, and in his reign the royal kūshghānā was on the decline. But was it so indeed? Let us have a look on the Table 2.

Six of eleven manuscripts listed (Dorn 558, 354, 337, 148, 563, 562) belonged to the royal library till the beginning of the 17th century when Shāh Abbas I donated them to the shrine of Shāhīd Ṣafī ibn Ardašīr [16]. It is more or less obvious that five of them (with the exception of Nāwī's Kūshghānā Dorn 558) were decorated in the royal workshop of Qazvin, meanwhile none of them was copied there. Indeed, old copies just received new bindings and sometimes — new margins of the covers' size. On the other hand there are two dated manuscripts listed, their bindings being contemporary to the copying date. One of them is Habib al-sīyār from the Sackler gallery, copied in 987/1580 for a certain Mīrza Abu Tālib, and another one is Ḥusainnāma of 900/1592 of unknown owner. At least the first one of these two books was produced not by the Shah's order.

We can suppose that Muḥammat-Za’in as well as other artisans of the royal workshop worked both for the Shah and for the market. It is obvious also that bookbinders and decorators were very active in remaking and repairing old books in the royal library in Qazvin.

Taking into account several characteristic features we found out twelve bindings produced by the same master or, at least, in the same workshop. Although they belong to the manuscripts the text of which was copied from the late 15th till the late 16th century we have reasons to say that the covers were made in 1580s in Qazvin royal workshop where many old books where restored by adding ornamented coloured margins and new bindings.

Now let us turn to another set of covers which were produced in the same workshop although, perhaps, a bit later.
i) The first one is the copy Khamsa by Jàami' dated 1507 (Top Kapri Saray Muzeesi, R.888) [17]. Its doublures are made with the same leather net which is used in two previous manuscripts from St. Petersburg. The centre field of the outside cover is decorated with another "stamped miniature" with birds and animals, this time with a combat of lion and Caucasian goat. This binding is very close to the group which we just have discussed, and could be add to it.

(ii) The same centre field can be found in the covers of the muraqu'a-album (Fig. 19), which was finally assembled in the mid 18th century. Meanwhile, the stamping in the frame is of another type than in the previous group, as well as the inside decoration. Here the leather gauze is very thick, with deep relief, the background is not multicoloured but blue only (Plate 3).

(iii) One can see the doublure made with the same leather gauze in the small binding of Haydar-i mulkabani-yi Siyéh Tahrir-i hâ-i liyân ("A Book of Siyéh Tahrir-I Conversations with Ambassadors") copied in 1710/1610-62 (Fig. 20). The book is stitched horizontally, pad-like. The covers were probably made earlier and intended for another manuscript. The doublures are somewhat bewildering because of the disproportional ornamental overwork in the central field, and the small, elongated framing cartouches.

The outer covers are all gold stamped in a very intricate and elegant pattern: birds and animals in cartouche and corners against the floral ground (Fig. 21).

(iv) Identical stamping is found in the binding for the copy of Khamsa and Siyéh from Victoria and Albert museum in London (V&A 364-1885) [18]. The book includes the miniatures of 'Ali Rûdä 'Abbâs, one dated 20 Safar 1042 / 6 September 1632. However, the covers, no doubt, were produced earlier, in the last quarter of the 16th or in the early 17th century.

The insides, at first glance, are decorated in the ornamental style very close to the works of Muhammed-Zamân circle, but in fact the technique is more complicate. The binding is signed by (or ascribed to) Muhammed-Mulâyyn Tâbrîzî. This is a new name of Tabrizi bookbinder to be added to the list of the Persian masters active in this period. Probably, he was younger than others, nevertheless, he worked in the same traditions refreshing them.

Conclusion

All in all we have examined 15 books copied or composed during the long period between the late 15th till the mid 18th centuries. The books are bound in covers of one type and style, covers, which where made in the last quarter of the 16th century in one circle of artisans, more likely in the royal workshop in Qazvin. Thus, we answered two main questions: "when?" and "where?" We may also say "who?"? Muhammed-Zamân Tâbrîzî, Muhammed-Mulâyyn Tâbrîzî and, probably somebody else from the list of 'Ali Chelebi. Besides, we can answer the question "why?" Why did they bind old books? Because in that time not so many new books of the highest level were copied and because large, effective bindings and margins came into fashion, and the owners wanted to rebound their books in accordance with the new mode. Why in the 17th and even 18th centuries did they use old covers? First, they had them in stock in the royal workshop, and second, such fine covers were valued highly. Taking into account the fact that four of six bookbinders had shaken Tabrizî, we may make one more conclusion. Even in the last quarter of the 16th century the artisans of Tâbrîz origin, who were the heirs to the traditions of tâbrizbana of Tâbrîz I, played very important role in the arts of the book.

Addenda

Table 1

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Outer Sides:
1 — first type (with monkey and falcon)
2 — second type (birds)
3 — third type (centre- and corner-pieces)
[3] — third type, but not identical tool
sf — small frame

Inner Sides:
4 — forth type (thombases)
5 — fifth type ("hands")
6 — sixth type ("schrats")
sf — identity in cartouches of frame
### Table 2

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### Notes

9. The description can be found in: Catalogue des manuscrits et xéyographes orientaux de la Bibliothèque Impériale Publique de St. Petersburg, ed. B. Dorn (St. Petersburg, 1852), pp. 143—5.  
10. See: Lowey et al., An Illustrated and Illustrated Checklist, pp. 180—6, No. 209.  

### Illustrations

#### Front cover:

**Plate 1.** Marquaq-album. Inner cover. 428 × 244 mm. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. National Library of Russia, call No. Dorn 489. Courtesy of the Library.

#### Back cover:


#### Inside the text:

**Fig. 1.** The same. Detail. The binder, Muhammad-Zamin b. Mirzâ-beg Tabrizi, is indicated in gold at the bottom. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 2.** Nizamī, Ikāndūr-nāma. Outer cover. 353 × 228 mm. Pastebord, gilt stamped leather. 990/1582. National Library of Russia, call No. Dorn 547. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 3.** Marquaq-album. Outer cover with a flap. 350 × 232 mm. Pastebord, gilt stamped leather. National Library of Russia, call No. Dorn 148. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 4.** The same cover. Detail. Left lower corner. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 5.** The same binding. The flap. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 6.** Nizamī, Ikāndūr-nāma. Inner cover. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. Call No. Dorn 347. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 7.** Marquaq-album. Inner cover. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. Call No. Dorn 148. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 8.** All Şīr Nāvī’s, Kūrīyat. Inner cover. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. Call No. Dorn 558. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 9.** Untitled poem. Inner cover. 330 × 222 mm. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. 947/1540—41. Calligrapher: Dīn Muhammad al-šāhīr al-mashī. National Library of Russia, call No. Dorn 354. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 10.** All ‘Arif Nāwī’s, Dīwan. Inner cover. 335 × 224 mm. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. 1st half of the 16th century. National Library of Russia, call No. Dorn 562. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 11.** The same. Outer cover. Pastebord, gilt stamped leather. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 12.** All Şīr Nāvī’s, Dīwan. 272 × 172 mm (width with an open flap 284 mm). Pastebord, gilt stamped leather. Before 1534. National Library of Russia, call No. Dorn 563. Courtesy of the Library.

**Fig. 13.** The same. Inner cover. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. Courtesy of the Library.


**Fig. 15.** Nizamī, Khamsa. Inner cover. 325 × 206 mm. Openwork leather upon coloured pastebord. 884/1479. National Library of Russia, call No. Dorn 337. Courtesy of the Library.
A LOST WORK BY IBN AL-QITTIYYA

Abi Bakr Mu‘ammad b. ’Umar b. ’Abd al-‘Aziz called Ibn al-Qit’iyya, “the son of the Gothic Woman” was born in Cordova probably in the final decade of the 3rd/9th century and died there in 367/977 [1]. He was a descendant of one of the last Visigothic princes of Spain his ancestor being the daughter of one of the sons of King Wifza (AD 702 – 710), penultimate monarch of the Visigothic kingdom. Despite this he was a loyal client and servant of the Umayyad amirs of al-Andalus. He is most famous for his history of Islamic Spain and Portugal, the Ta’rikh iṭtiḥād al-Andalus (“The History of Conquest of Andalus”), which gives an account of the arrival of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula, the flight there of the fugitive Umayyad prince ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Mu‘awiyah (138 – 172 / 756 – 758), the re-establishment of Umayyad rule and the lives of the amirs down to the reign of ‘Abd Allah b. ’Abd al-Rahman (275 – 300 / 888 – 912) [2]. He is considered an adīb rather than a ma’arrithī, that is a recliter of anecdotes rather than a true historian, although the “science” of Arab history only began to develop in al-Andalus during his lifetime. His own “History” is a fascinating collection of accounts of life in Muslim al-Andalus, embracing not just the Arabic-speaking hierarchy, but all classes and creeds of society.

He was a scholar and teacher at the Great Mosque of Cordova for most of his life, where he taught fiqh, hadith, and adībī. His classes on the latter were enjoyed by many students who were to become servants of the state in later years. It was possibly one of these who put his master’s anecdotal oral accounts into written form, which survive in a unique manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France [3]. This, however, is only a summary of his oral — possibly also written — accounts for others appear in the Maqālib (“The Spark”) of Ibn Hayyān (377 – 462 / 987 – 1071) and elsewhere, which are not mentioned in the “History.”

Among his contemporaries Ibn al-Qit’iyya was revered not so much for his expertise in any of the above disciplines — indeed his teaching of fiqh and hadith was condemned as deficient, too liberal, and not sticking to the letter — but for his immense knowledge of Arabic. When Abi ‘Ali al-Qall (d. 356/956) visited al-Andalus in 330/952, the caliph al-Hakam II (350 – 366 / 961 – 976) asked him whom he thought was the greatest scholar of Arabic and without hesitation he answered “Mu‘ammad b. al-Qit’iyya”.

Ibn al-Qit’iyya wrote several works on Arabic but only the titles of two were recorded. The first was the Qit’ir wa al-ṣafā (“The Conjunction of Verbs”) which was edited many years ago by the Italian scholar Ignazio Guido (1844 – 1935) and published by Brill in 1894 under the title “Il Libro dei Verbi”. Guido based his edition on a manuscript in the Lucchesiana Library, Gergenti, dated 534/1139. The existence of another copy was recorded by the French orientalist Auguste Charbonneau (1813 – 1882) in the library of Sidi El Ferkous in Constantine, Algeria in the mid-19th century, though this was not examined by Guido, and in fact seems to have disappeared [5].

His second work had also disappeared and was long thought to have been lost. This is the Kifāt al-maqālib wa al-mandāubah (“Book of the Shortened and Lengthened [Alif]”) dealing with words ending in alf maqṣūra and alf madda which is mentioned by Ibn al-Faraj [6]. However in the autumn of 2009 a solitary copy emerged from the mists of history and came into the possession of the London dealers Bernard Quaritch. This was correctly identified by Dr. Meis al-Kasi of Quaritch as the lost work of Ibn al-Qit’iyya [7].

The manuscript is in excellent condition and consists of 105 folios measuring 25.5 x 18 cm. According to the colophon on fol. 105v, it was copied in al-Qi’ira in 650/1252 and is therefore late Ayyubid. The text, seventy-some lines to the page, is written on thick cream-specked brown Arab paper. The script is an excellent scribal naskhī hand, fully vocalized, in black with headings in red. The text is accompanied by glosses on almost every page with each note giving, in red, the name of the author from whose work it has been copied. Importantly on fol. 105v there is a note to say that the text has been collated with the original, which may possibly have been in the hand of the author: baḥṣuṭat al-maqāliba hassaḥ... (?)...bi- ṭaṣṣalut al-aqal... (7) The binding is later, brown morocco covers, of 19th century date.
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