THE IDENTIFICATION OF A MAGNIFICENT KORAN MANUSCRIPT

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"The identification of a Magnificent Koran Manuscript" discusses a manuscript often erroneously referred to as the Kamalishan Koran. Isolated folios occur in several European and American collections. The discovery of a nearly complete volume of this Koran manuscript in the Tipu Khan Naushahi Museum collection provides insight into the organization, division and production of this magnificent text. Comparative examination with dated Korans and secular manuscripts as well as comparison with ceramics of the tenth through the thirteenth centuries supports a more accurate later dating, and fresh insight to sources of artistic inspiration for both the script and elaborate decoration of this manuscript.

"The identification of a magnificent Koran manuscript" étudie un manuscrit communément sous-estimé comme le "Koran communi-
des". Des folios isolés existent dans plusieurs collections d’Europe et d’Amérique. La découverte d’un volume presque complet de ce manuscrit se trouve dans la collection de Tipu Khan Naushahi forme un apport pour l’organisation, de la division et de la production de ce texte supérieur. La comparaison avec des Korans et d’autres manuscrits des âges de bronze et des céramiques de l’est est particulièrement précieuse à une époque passée ou l’on recherche les sources de l’inspiration artistique, tout en l’excitant que pour la décoration élaborée de ce manuscrit.

A beautifully illuminated folio from a Koran manuscript is in a private collection (Pl. XV A). The page forms a vertical rectangle approximately thirty-one by twenty-one centimeters. The abruptly severed marginal decorative motifs indicate that the page was trimmed from its original size. The text is written in black ink on paper, four lines to a page.

The script’s graceful, slender verticals contrast sharply with the lower horizontal elements. The short sublinear elements descend on the diagonal, ending in horizontal strokes. Diacritical points in black appear above and below the letters and the text is vocalized in red and blue notations.

Each letter and diacritical point is carefully outlined in brown, highlighting the individual letters and adding breadth to the script’s delicate verticals. Surrounding the outlined text is a decorative background in brown consisting of an outlined arabesque of elaborate palmettes reserved from a ground of tightly coiled scrollwork. The arabesques are in four vertically superimposed levels corresponding to the number of textual lines. The text and background are contained by a gold scale patterned border enclosed on either side by double ruled margin lines. Extending from the upper and lower borders into the margins are half-roundels comprised of gilt foliate arabesque motifs. The text and decoration of the folio’s verso duplicate the recto except for the decoration’s light color and the addition of gilt rosettes.

Other folios similar to this Koran page exist in public and private collections in Europe and the United States. Twelve individual folios are in, among others, the Berlin, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Freer, and Minnesota collections. The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin also has a bound volume of eleven folios. Another part of this manuscript is in an Iraqi collection, and,

1. I would like to thank Prof. Anusmarie Schimmel for her guidance and assistance in this project. This folio was published by Anthony Welch, Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World (Austin, 1979), ill. 13. The dimensions of the text are 24 x 17 centimeters.

2. The folios in a list of folios in European and American collections and their place of publication. One is in the collection of the Berlin Staatliche Preussisch Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Ms. no. I.695, 31.7 x 21.3 cm; published by Ernst Kühnel, Islamische Künstler (Berlin, 1925), pl. 4; Kühnel, Islamische Schriftkunst (Berlin, 1942), fig. 12; and Anusmarie Schimmel, Islamic Calligraphy (Leiden, 1970), pl. 8; Schimmel, Fahren vom Farn, p. 63 (1985). One folio is in the collection of the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass., Ms. no. 1082. 40; one in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ms. no. 39.327, 31.7 x 21.3 cm; one folio in the Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ms. no. 1957.85, 32.8 x 21.6 cm; two folios in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Ms. no. 39.356, 32 x 21 cm, and one which is a recent addition to the collection from the Vose Collection, one folio in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Ms. no. 59.1. Many thanks to Dan Walker at the Cincinnati Art Museum, Eric All, formerly at the Freer, and Robert Jacobsen at Minneapolis for their assistance in locating these folios. The Cincinnati folio is illustrated in Islamic Art from the Collection of Edwin A. Moses, 3rd (Washington, D.C., 1966), cm. no. 6. To my knowledge, the Freer and Minneapolis folios are unillustrated. Three folios are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Ms. no. 19.160.25, 29.0x0.24, 29.160.25, one of which appears in Maurice Dandair, A Handbook of Muhammadan Art (New York, 1934), fig. 41. In private collections are two folios in the Kazi Collection, one of which is published in Basil Robinson, Islamic Painting and the Art of the Book (London, 1956), pl. 139; one folio in a private Swiss collection; one in the collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan in Geneva. The folio containing the last collection after Anthony Welch published the collection catalog, it does not appear therein, but was published in Anthony Welch and Stuart Cary Welch, Arts of the Islamic Book: the Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (New York, 1962), cat. no. 13, p. 47.

3. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Meth. no. 1086, 35 x 23 cm. Four of the twenty-two pages (11 folios) were published: Arthur Upham Pope, Survey of Persian Art (London, 1935), pls. 931b and 932a including an illustration of the frontispiece; Arthur Upham Pope, A Handlist of the Kores in the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin, 1967), pl. 26; Martin Lings, The Arabic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination (London, 1976), p. 17; David Jemison, Qu'ran and Illuminations from the Chester Beatty Library (London, 1980), p. 29, indicating that the folio had been rebound in a leather binding.

4. There are two known folios from the Iraqi Collection, Raveld al 'Abdillahi Ms. no. 620. These are published in Salih al-Din al-Munajjed, Le Manuscrit Arabi. Cairo, 1969, cat. no. 10, p. 2, as the collection Munajjed in Bagdad; and Naqi Zayn al-Din, Arts of Arab Calligraphy (Baghdad, 1968), cat. no. 76, p. 317 in a collection from Kufa. Additional folios are visible in the illustration published by Munajjed, but the number of folios in this collection at present is unknown.
Recent scholarship persists in calling both the script’s style and the manuscript Karmahan. Yasin Safadi refers to the manuscript as Karmahan suggesting that the foliate arabesque background decoration distinguishes the Karmahan from Eastern Kufic styles. Martin Lings referred to the style as a variant of Eastern Kufic (kal-kuf or kalifani), Eric Schroeder called the style ‘Kufic’, Basil Robinson, semi-Kufic, and A.J. Arberry, Persian Kufic which is sometimes called semi-Kufic, bent Kufic or East Persian Kufic, and Abdelmalek Khachi and Muhammad Siddiqi refer to the two completely different pages as in the Karmahan style without providing a definition.

For the most part, scholars have concentrated on attributing the manuscript to an Eastern Islamic tradition, though the Kühnel initially attributes the manuscript to Cairo (1929). The dating of the manuscript fluctuates between the eleventh and twelfth century.

Text identification reveals that all of the folios in European and American collections derive from chapters (suras) four and five of the Koran (Appendix A). The text of the manuscript in an Islamic collection from chapter 16 (Appendix B) and that in Topkapi is from chapters eighteen, nineteen and twenty (Appendix C).

The Topkapi manuscript’s title pages (sawasas) introduce volume (juz) six of the Koran by numbers (sura ‘other’) (PL XVI A). The fifty-five folios of this volume, with several lacunae (Appendix C), contain the entire text of volume six, comprised of one partial and two complete chapters. The frontispiece (safah) text pages are Koranic but not drawn from volume six, and thus serve only to enhance the volume’s introduction.

The Chester Beatty volume’s identical single page frontispiece includes illegible text panels, which are probably similarly drawn from the Koran. Following the frontispiece is a single title page with an illegible text panel followed by the introductory verses of volume six. Indeed, all folios in European and American collections are from volume six and thus were originally part of this volume. The text of the manuscript in the Iraqi collection is from volume fourteen. Thus, the manuscript was originally a multi-volume Koran, with parts of three volumes surviving in the previously mentioned collections.

Examination of the nearly complete Istanbul volume and the partial Dublin volume reveals significant information concerning the manuscript’s organization and division. By examining the amount of text allotted to a page, it is possible to determine the approximate number of folios contained in a single volume. The fifty-five folios of the sixteenth juz plus the additional folios of the lacuna (Appendix C) equal seventy-eight folios. Similarly, the fifteenth and fourteenth folios of the sixteenth juz plus approximately sixty missing folios equal a volume of seventy-three folios. Thus, the complete manuscript consisted of thirty equal volumes of approximately seventy-five folios each, a grand total of 2,250 folios.

The Topkapi volume is divided into neras with a heading, framed in rectangular panels. Pages indicating in white cursive script the title, number and place of origin of each sura (PL XVI A). Included in the margins introducing the volume are centrally placed points of paragraph (PL XVI A) announcing the morning prayer (salat al-jummah), the daily ritual division of the text. Three eight-pointed stars announce additional daily prayer times with the last included in the now missing portion of this volume. Thus, a volume of text was to be read each day, with one volume for each day of the month equaling thirty volumes.

A single six-pointed star marks one of the adab of Koran recitations (PL XVI C). Large marginal roundels in adab indicate the number of the decade (abad) of years covered by each roundel. The script consists of tall slender verticals which are five times the height of the horizontals, which are by comparison densely compact. The sublinear letters descend on a diagonal terminating in thick horizontal strokes. The delicate diagonal strokes emphasize the movement of the script from left to right across the page (see letter chart).

Of several characteristic letter features identified with this manuscript, the multiple forms of the letter haf is most striking (letter chart). A taller version is most utilized centrally within a text line, a short version at the beginning and end of a line. Both are used as well in relation to textual space, the taller version when horizontal space is limited. The third form rests atop a curved line, used for corrections in the text.

Three forms of combined lam-dal are an obvious letter feature of this text, the first forming nearly a perfect oval with a slightly flattened and elongated base, the second with a similar base to the first topped by two vertical shafts (letter chart). Also, two forms of the word Allah appear in the text, the first formed from the graceful arched letter forms, and the second combining a tall graceful alf with short diagonally placed geometric letter forms (letter chart).

When sublinear letters requiring a diagonal stroke to the left ended a line of text, the letters were squeezed in, altering the diagonal movement rather than violating the border, leading to the creation of a series of-de
furnished letter shapes with additional curves (PL. XV A, line 2).

Despite the slender gracefulness that characterizes the script, the letter forms for the most part are markedly angular. However, the gracefully curvilinear forms of some letters such as kaf, la, dal, ain and lam-ālif and the sublinear curved diagonals as in nun and alif makrans suggest a combination of angular Kufic features with curvilinear features.

The manuscript’s folios often exhibit compositional awkwardness, yet linear compositions display a virtuosity of design. Clearly, the scribe did not plan ahead. The last letters of a word or entire words very often appear in the interlinear spaces above the last letter in a line. There is ample evidence that the scribe considered linear composition in the selection of letter forms. For example, a single line of text contains three kaf, the first and third at the beginning and end of the line are of the low angular variety, and which is centrally placed, the elongated curvilinear type forming a triangular composition. In a second example, the horizontal portions of an initial kaf and a final zayn were extended to combine with a medially placed alif in a triangular composition. Thus, often, the horizontal and vertical letter elements were extended and compressed accommodating textual and compositional requirements.

Appropriate diacritical points are placed above or below letters. The text is fully vocalized in red, black and blue. Fathah, kahram, damma and tanwin are in red, while shadda, making, wa and others are in black. However, satis and marks above or below are occasionally in blue.

The same elegant angular script appears in the verse decade markers as well as in the gilt text panels of the frontispieces. However, the text panels of volume and chapter introduction panels and markers for every fifth verse are in white cursive script.

Existing evidence suggests that more than one scribe executed the manuscript. In every respect, the scriptural features of volumes six and sixteen are virtually identical, indicating that they were written by the same scribe. However, two elements of volume fourteen suggest that this volume was written by another scribe. Six with three sublinear dots appears nowhere else in the manuscript, nor does a single letter violate a text margin except in this same volume. Thus, one can conclude that at least two scribes wrote the Koran text.

Framing each letter and diacritical mark is an outline approximately two tenths of a centimeter from the letter forms, which serves to highlight individual letters and adds breadth to the script’s delicate verticals.

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28. It is possible that the dark brown was originally black. If iron gall ink was used, the original black would have turned to dark brown in time. Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," p. 1952 suggested that the manuscript page decoration was brown. Examination of Topkapi’s volume and others indicates otherwise.
small gilt and black segmented roundels. All of these alter their form according to spatial restrictions.

On the pages containing introductions to sarar are gilt-framed rectangular panels containing an inscribed hexagon with a gilt foliate arabesque field (PL.XVI A). Also, gilt foliate arabesque fills the corner interstices outside the hexagon.

The Koran volumes’ introductory folios are the most elaborately illuminated in the manuscript. The double-page frontispiece in the Istanbul volume and the surviving frontispiece page of the Dublin volume consist of full-page illuminations. The decorative scheme of the first Istanbul page consists of a square panel containing an eight-pointed star defined by geometric interlace with the word Allah in gilt Kufic placed within the star (PL.XVIII B). Surrounding the star is a field of four gilt palmettes radiating from the central star motif. Above and below the square are rectangular text-containing panels of gilt Kufic and foliate arabesque. Framing these superimposed panels is a wide border of tightly braided geometric interlace, punctuated at intervals by blue cross and diamond motifs. Duplication of the decoration of the text pages are the same motif, framed by a wide border of tightly woven gilt interlace punctuated by blue floweret. The framing and amasse of this page is identical to the other Istanbul page.

The title pages of both the Topkapi and Chester Beatty volumes contain rectangular panels of gilt foliate arabesque surrounding the title of the volume. Rectangular panels of gilt foliate arabesque appear as well on the bottom of these pages. As in the frontispiece, two colors of gold are employed, one for the ground and one for the design. These superimposed panels containing gilt foliate arabesque project into the margins of each page.

Thus, the text of this magnificent Koran manuscript is written in an elegant Kufic script with some curvilinear features, illuminated titles and most text markers in a cursive script. Evidence from marginalia suggests that the original manuscript consisted of thirty volumes. The high quality of the illumination and decoration of the manuscript, the quality of the materials employed, and its careful execution suggest a commission from a wealthy patron.

The issue of style and reference to the manuscript as the Karnamath Koran is a problem. There is extreme lack of clarity in both the definition and the origin of the manuscript’s style, with no documentary supporting evidence for the application of the term Karnamath. Further, the basis of all scholarly discussion is a single manuscript — the Koran that is the subject of this study.

In his discussion of the manuscript, Safadi included two possible explanations for the origin of the term Karnamath in reference to this manuscript. First is a purely linguistic derivation from the Arabic word qarnas as part of the expression qarnas fil-khâlit meaning to make the letters finer and to write the ligatures closer together. His second suggested source is the possible relation-ship to the Karnamaths (al-qarnam)h, a ninth-century movement in Islam initially based in Egypt but later spreading to other parts of the Islamic world.

Elaboration of Safadi’s etymological pursuits provides plausible explanations for the origin of the term Karnamath for this Koran manuscript. Two scenarios emerge. In the first, a school targeting to distinguish this special manuscript from others ascribed a particular name to this Koran either relating it to a script that appeared in monumental inscriptions of Fatimid Egypt or defining it by its letter forms. Already by 1942, Kühnel noted the erroneous association of the Arabic Koran script with the Karnamath movement.

Later, Janine Sourdel suggests that the Karnamath style was a misnomer applied to Fatimid monumental inscriptions of the ninth to the eleventh century.

The second scenario might have unfolded in the following manner. Sometime in the late twelfth or early twentieth century, someone obtained a volume of this Koran manuscript parts of which then appeared in various European and American collections. The individual or individuals involved in the sale, interested in selling their manuscript, attempted to inflate its value by giving the manuscript a special name.

The likely source for such a name in either scenario would be an early Arabic-English lexicon, such as that of Edward Lane. Indeed, Lane’s definition is as follows: first is the Arabic root qarnas, then qarnas fil-khâlit or qarnas fil-khâlîth, meaning “He made the letters fine or projecting characters”.

The definition continues: qarnas, one of the qarnas or Karnamath, i.e. the people so-called. The first part of this definition clearly defines the script to this Koran, but also demonstrates that the term is used, according to Annemarie Schimmel, “without inner meaning. Therefore, the use of the term Karnamath in reference to this Koran manuscript is at best duplicative and inappropriate and should be abandoned.

The script and decoration of this Koran, consisting of a combination of Kufic and curvilinear features, relate most closely to manuscripts executed in a calligraphic style known to us as Eastern Kufic. The style is marked by the disappearance of the long, thick horizontal lines of the earlier rectilinear Kufic, and the use of curvilinear elements, diagonals and triangularly-shaped letters. Scholars generally agree that the introduction of curvilinear elements to create Eastern Kufic certainly does not represent a transformation of that earlier linear Kufic. It is known that curvilinear and the more angular scripts experienced parallel developments, mutually influ-encing each other through time.

Comparative manuscript examination with dated Eastern Kufic manuscripts reveals both similarities and differences in script style as well as providing documentary evidence for the establishment of the date and provenance of our manuscript. The script of a Koran volume in the Imam Reza Shrine Library in Mashhad dated 466 H. (1073) is similar to our text. While the Mashhad text is inscribed in elegant and elaborated and delicate Kufic features, the vertical letter forms are not as tall as those in our text. Especially notable is the use of the geometric forms of the word Allah. The tightly coiled scrollwork decoration, gilt borders and marginal anas are clearly similar to our text. What is absent is the arabesque decorative background of the regular text pages, replaced by scrollwork.

Another Koran volume in the private Teheran collection of Aqa Mahdi Kazemi dated 463 H. (1092) features similar Kufic script, the geometric form of the word Allah, vocalization and letter notation, scrollwork background, gilt anas, lamp motifs, roundels and frames that are clearly similar to our text. Notably dissimilar features are that the verticals are not proportionally as tall and the text pages include no decorative background.

Even more similar is a third Koran text in the Topkapi Sarayi Collection (manuscript number E H. 42) dated 573 H. (1177-78). The arabesque background of the regular text pages, gold letters, formal scriptural division, gilt braided borders, and marginal anas link the manuscript to our text as well as to the other above mentioned manuscripts. Significantly, the proportions of the vertical letter forms are very similar to our text and dissimilar to all others. However, the foliate elaboration of letter forms, superimposed foliation of the scrollwork background and differing marginal notations are features unique to this manuscript.

Thus, Koran manuscripts that are very similar in both scriptural style and decorative features date from the late eleventh to the late twelfth century. Based on the evidence from these manuscripts, it is suggested that a date of late eleventh to late twelfth century for our manuscript, which is indeed where most scholars place the manuscript.

Evidence from dated secular manuscripts indicates that the script known as Eastern Kufic employed in Koran manuscripts of the late eleventh to the twelfth cen-

33. Schimmel, p. 5.
34. David Rice, The Unique Ibn al-Bawwab Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin, 1953), p. 3.
35. This manuscript was published by Mihadi Barakos, Justinian Art Treasures from the Imperial Collections and Museums of Italy (New York, 1949), Cat. pl. viii; A. Meislah, Guide to the singled works of Mikhail Saleh (Mashhad, 1980), Cat. no. 21. The calligrapher is Ulumain ibn Husayn al-Wajari. In the collection of the Teheran Archaeological Museum is a Koran fragment which is almost identical to the Mashhad volume, having similar dimensions (28 x 20 cm), differing only in the curvilinear tracery and rectangular panels above the text. The Mashhad and our manuscript have similar introductory title pages suggesting that these two volumes are from the same manuscript.
36. This manuscript was published by Barakos, Babak and Georgios Vardakas: Quan’s al-Mushtarak Futuwa: Guide to the Koran in the National Collections. This manuscript was published by Babakos, Babak, Georgios Vardakas, and Michael Fischer, Quan’s al-Mushtarak Futuwa: Guide to the Koran in the National Collections (Paris, Teheran, 1993), Cat. no. 3; Pope, Sarayi, p. 903; Lugs, p. 1034. Lugs published two pages of this manuscript as the Mashhad Shire Library manuscript Ms. no. 3316, indicating that it was one and the same manuscript dated 1073.
37. This manuscript was published by Lugs, Quan’s, p. 16. A partial signature appears ‘Ali ibn… Another Koran fragment in the collection of Sudradhun Aqa Khais displays features of script and decoration closely similar to the 1002 volume. This manuscript was published by Ando Uchida, Calendar of the 10th-12th Kufic Manuscripts of the National Library of Japan and Sugita, H. 2, 42, Enzoaichuy, “Manuscript”, p. 194, in 1946, pl. 97, 943, discussing another volume of the mashhad written on the same script and dated 531 H. (1137 A.D.). Since the dimensions of both volumes are identical (19 x 15 cm), it seems likely that these two volumes are part of the same manuscript. Further, Anthony Welch, Calendar of the Arabic Script and its Quan’s Development (Chicago, 1939), p. 54. Alston indicates that the text employed red for decorative notation, while the West used red colors. While some red text appears in the Eastern Kufic manuscripts cited here, red is the color that primarily is employed.
38. This manuscript written and illuminated by Abu Bakr ibn Abd Allah al-Ghamari is contained in Krakut, Topkapi Sarayi. Cat. no. 605. Stylistic similarities with Khalisi’s ‘Karnamath’ page (see fn. 15) to this manuscript suggest that it is part of this script’s arena. Khalisi, p. 252, identifies the location of the folio as Turk ve Islam Milli Hafta Istanbul. The folio is perhaps part of Topkapi’s Ms. no. E. 42, Enzoaichuy, “Manuscript”, p. 194, in 1946, pl. 97, 943, discussing another volume of the mashhad, written on the same script and dated 531 H. (1137 A.D.). Since the dimensions of both volumes are identical (19 x 15 cm), it seems likely that these two volumes are part of the same manuscript. Further, Anthony Welch, Calendar of the Arabic Script and its Quan’s Development (Chicago, 1939), p. 12, attributes this folio from the Cairo, published in the Encyclopedia of Islam, first edition, 1:1. It is to our manuscript. Since the dimensions and calligraphic style and decoration substantially from our manuscript, this is an erroneous attribution.
tury existed as early as the mid-ninth century. The titles of two manuscripts, the Ashkal al-mubakharat al-’Iraqiyya wa’l-maratibin wa’l-dhikr wa’l-fawz al-Hassani ibn Ali Allah Sirfu’ 376 H. (956) and the Mu’ajjejat of Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Nabhas dated 371 H. (981) clearly feature the extended vertical letter forms and diagonal descending lines of the Eastern Kufic style. While the text of the earlier manuscript is in Kufic, that of the later is in cursive. Also, the manuscript of 956 predated by six-teen years the text cited as the earliest in Eastern Kufic in previous scholarship.

Two additional dated texts — the title page of the Kifk al-mubakharat al-’Iraqiyya wa’l-maratibin wa’l-dhikr wa’l-fawz al-Hassani ibn Ali al-Hassawi dated 447 H. (1056) and the introductory folio of a Diwan of Salama ibn Jandal dated 1063 — demonstrate that Eastern Kufic enjoyed continued usage in secular manuscripts during the eleventh century. The former includes letter verticals which are proportionally as tall as those in our manuscript. Similarly, the latter includes the extended verticals, the owed form of law-all and the geometric form of Allah. The titles of the two manuscripts are in Kufic but the texts are in cursive script. The reverse is true in our text. Therefore, secular and religious manuscripts of the tenth through the twelfth century employ both Kufic and cursive scripts, both separately and in various combinations.

It would also be tempting to suggest a linear development of this style from a simple undecorated script to an elongated decoratively embellished one — placing our text at the end of that range. This is not possible because dated Koran manuscripts exist dictating against such a conclusion. In a single volume of a Koran in the collection of the National Library in Cairo dated 1177 and written by the same scribe as Topkapi’s manuscript, the number E. H. 42 includes two types of Kufic script on separate pages — one clearly displaying features of rectilinear Kufic; the other incorporates the elongated Kufic and cursive features of the Eastern Kufic style. In addition, the same scribe in the same year embellished his letters with foliation (see footnote 37). Moreover, another Koran text in foliated Kufic, a decoratively elaborated form of Eastern Kufic, is dated 1054, more than a century earlier than Topkapi’s foliated text of 1177. This suggests that, rather than a linear stylistic development, a broad repertoire of Kufic script was in popular usage for Koran manuscripts and that there is no discernible evolutionary trend, at least for this period.

Thus, as early as the mid-ninth century, the Eastern Kufic script is employed not only as a preferred script for emphasis, but also for the text itself. Hence the single-century range for dating manuscripts suggested by Koran evidence expands to a two and a half century period, from the middle of the tenth to the end of the twelfth century. However, the Koran calligraphic tradition was conservative, employing older scripts abandoned by scribes for secular texts. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the popular script for secular manuscripts during the tenth century, scribes probably did not use for Koran manuscripts until much later and continued to favor it long after it disappeared from secular manuscripts.

In the definitions of the Karmathian style, two features isolated this style from other Eastern Kufic texts — greater letter verticality and the inclusion of background text decoration. Clearly a number of manuscripts share these palaeographic and decorative features, thus our manuscript should be classified as Eastern Kufic rather than placed in a separate category.

Both the calligraphic style and decorative vocabulary of our manuscript and other Eastern Kufic manuscripts are strikingly similar to those favored in the ceramics of eastern Iran, both so-called Sasanian ware and the later production of the Seljuks. Included in the repertoire of Sasanian ware are rectangular, Eastern, foliated and plated Kufic. Similar to our manuscript, the text was set on a ground of foliation. Furthermore, surrounding each letter was a reserve border highlighting the calligraphy (Pl. XVII C). These shared features demonstrate that ceramists and scribes shared a common body of calligraphic styles and decorative vocabularies. In establishing the date of our manuscript, most scholars cite the close relationship to Sasanian ware.

However, certain decorative features of our manuscript are not part of the Sasanian repertoire, but clearly have parallels in Seljuk pottery of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. The scrollwork decoration that is integral part of the text pages of our Koran manuscript plays a significant role in the decorative vocabulary of Seljuk pottery, for example, the plate in the Freer Gallery in Washington, which is dated 607 H. (1210) (pl. XVIII A). Filling the plate’s background, both behind the people and in the water, and forming part of the clothing decoration is scrollwork identical to that of our manuscript. Also, the scale border marking the division between land and water on the plate is identical to the scale borders of our manuscript.

The palmette arabesques which characterize the text background of our manuscript are also found in Seljuk pottery of the same period. In one example, the shoulder of a jug bears a panel of unfurling palmette arabesque very similar to those found in our manuscript. Decorative ceramic parallels also exist for the pointed anneal and gilt foliation of our manuscript.

Hence, the decoration of our manuscript clearly displays features of Seljuk ceramics. All of the above-mentioned pottery dates from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, suggesting a similar date for our Koran’s decoration.

Thus, the script and decoration of our manuscript are most similar to a Koran manuscript in Topkapi Sarayi dated 1177 and to the Seljuk plate in the Freer dated 1210, suggesting a Seljuk origin for our manuscript written and illuminated during the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.

30. Musaeus, Cat. nos. 23 and 22. The fresco is in an Iranian collection, Shahid 83, and the later is in Topkapi Sarayi, Ahmet III Kütüphanesi. The script of the latter bears a close resemblance to that employed in the Koran in the private collection, dated 992. The earliest previously cited manuscript was mentioned by Rieh, p. 2. The 956 manuscript is in the Istanbul University Library and is cited by Karayi, Avukatlar name-i Kütüphanesi ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve
ON THE TRACK OF THE "DEMOTTE" SHÄHNAMA MANUSCRIPT

Sheila S. Blair

In 1980 Oleg Grabar and I published a monograph on one of the most important Persian manuscripts, the "Demotte" Shahnama; further work allows me to refine our original conclusions. Examining the folios once in the Veever Collection and not available for our original publication confirms our suggestion of page splitting and our original reconstruction. However, I can correct and refine our hypotheses about the original format and show that the entire manuscript must have had approximately 190 miniatures (not the 120 we had previously postulated) and was done in two volumes.

I can also chronicle the manuscript's later provenances. A recently-discovered photograph taken at the Qu'air court shows the bound manuscript, suggesting that the Qu'air librarian had damaged the Shahnama manuscript repair, removing some of the miniatures and conflating the two volumes in one. Around 1910, the manuscript was brought from Iran to the West, where, if it is as a whole, Demotte broke it up. In addition to having split pages, the manuscript is also classified as a manuscript with illustrated pages. Demotte quickly tired of this time-consuming process of splitting, re-upholstering, and reassembling folios by 1915 turned to the more profitable business of selling.

In 1980, O. Grabar and I wrote a short notice sur l'art des plus prestigieux manuscrits persans, the Shahnama of Demotte, of the recherches ultérieures mentionne sous nos conclusions originales. L'examen des feuillets Judas dans la collection Veever, qui n'avaient pas été accessibles pour notre publication précédente confirme encore une suggestion selon laquelle les pages avaient été altérées et notre reconstruction originale. Elles sont aujourd'hui publiées sous notre hypothèse à propos du format primitif et de l'état dont le manuscrit complet a été composé environ 190 miniatures (et non 120 initialement supposées) et se présentent en deux volumes.

Le plus que faire l'histoire ultérieure du manuscrit. Une photographie prise à la cour Qu'air, récemment découverte, montre le volume tel qu'il était entre les mains de Demotte le détaillant, quelque peu refusant de le vendre. En outre, il est évident que le manuscrit était composé de deux volumes. Vers 1910, il a été vendu à un marchand Qu'air le détaillant, puis refusant de le vendre. En outre, il est évident que les pages de texte étaient intactes, la reconstruction des cahiers originaux était faite pour que les pages étaient dessinées à être vendues comme des pièces de collection.

One of the most important manuscripts produced in Iran in a dispersed copy of the Persian national epic, the Shahnama, probably made at Tabriz in the first half of the 14th century and generally known after the French dealer G. J. Demotte who first offered its miniatures for sale in the West. Ten of the manuscript's surviving 58 miniatures were first published in Shulé's 1914 study of Islamic miniature painting, and 22 were included in the major exhibition of Persian art held at Burlington House, London in 1931. The miniatures were soon entered in the scholarly literature, with experts identifying the subjects illustrated and debating hands, provenance, and date. Most of these earlier studies concentrated on art historical questions concerning the paintings, and it was only in a 1975 seminar at Harvard University that attention turned from the miniatures to the manuscript. Oleg Grabar and I published the rather startling results in the first monograph on the manuscript.

In examining the manuscript as a whole, we uncovered two sorts of problems: split and pasted pages. In reading the text, we found three continuous sides of text (e.g. 20, 19, and 33) on miniatures located in three separate museums (respectively, the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, Missouri; the Harvard University Art Museums in Cambridge, Mass.; and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts). While two continuous sides could simply be explained as the verso of one folio and the recto of the succeeding folio, this explanation was inadequate for three continuous text sides. Scutinating the watermarks, stains, creases and other features of each side, we detected that two of the sides (20 and 19) had originally been recto and verso of the same folio but had been split apart and had irrelevant text sides pasted on the backs. Altogether, we encountered six such split folios, making a total of 12 illustrated sides with irrelevant text sides pasted on the backs. Such splitting was obviously a dangerous process and in one case (35-36) damaged a large triangular area.

Splitting of folios was not the only irregularity in the manuscript. We also uncovered 8 illustrations which were pasted on irrelevant texts. It seems that the miniatures had been pasted on complete text folios, as in all cases the miniatures overlapped the columnar rulings and the text was missing the appropriate number of hemistichs covered by the miniatures. Surprisingly, however, examination showed that there was no text underneath the miniatures, rather each of the text folios omitted exactly the right number of lines to make blank spaces the size of each of the illustrations.

On paleographic grounds we were able to divide the text into two hands. Type 1 occurred on all the "altered" sides, that is, the irrelevant text sides pasted to the back.  