bands and clasps, omitted from the foregoing account. The bindings of early Christian Arabic manuscripts long adhered to a model that was closely akin to Greek bindings. A detailed exposition of their features can be found in specialised manuals.

On the other hand, there exist bookbindings from certain parts of the Muslim world that possess neither fore-edge nor envelope flap. They seem to have enjoyed a considerable vogue in Central Asia and Afghanistan up to relatively recent times (eleventh-thirteenth/eighteenth-nineteenth centuries). Bookbinders here kept to the techniques of their traditional craft, particularly as regards the manner of attaching text block to covers. Their decorative schemes, too, seem to have been rather idiosyncratic. Several are covered in paper, while the decoration of the boards – sometimes incorporating the bookbinder’s signature – also presents special features in respect of both overall form and ornamental motifs.

Evidence for the History of a Manuscript

Throughout this handbook, readers have been presented with various methods for assessing the age of a manuscript: analysis of the writing surface, the script employed, the way quires are collated, and so on. Sometimes these techniques provide the only clues – apart from any possible linguistic evidence – as to the date at which the copy under scrutiny was written. But a manuscript may also contain more precise clues to dating, such as a colophon, statement of patronage, or other mark of ownership.

Title page

In manuscripts written in Arabic script, the title of the work, sometimes accompanied by the name of the author and various notes that can guide the scholar in reconstructing their history, often appears on the recto of the first folio (see illus. 113a, 113b, 114a and 114b). Because this leaf is in a particularly vulnerable position, in many manuscripts it is no longer extant (or may have been replaced at a later date). Thus whenever a manuscript with a title page is being examined, special care must be taken to study the condition of this leaf, bearing in mind that the information found there, beginning with the title of the work, may be erroneous or falsified.

218 Such ov oid shapes were to evolve towards more diamond- or Kazan-like forms.
Kanzat al-Hakam al-Mu'ayyad al-Mahdiyyah
Firdaws al-Mustajjal

Suppl. n° 780
C. 13

114a. Title page with owners' inscriptions, seal impressions and library marks.
Paris, BNF arabe 1508, f. 2.

114b. Text opening.
Paris, BNF arabe 1508, f. 2v.
Title

In the early days, title pages were sober; many manuscripts present just the title inscribed in large, carefully traced letters, with no ornamentation whatsoever. MS. Vienna ÖNB Cod. A.F. 340, dated 447/1055-1056, provides an Oriental version of this type of presentation, while the title page of a volume of Al-Mukhtasar al-Walad given in endowment (wasiy) in 424/1033 by the Zirid monarch al-Mu‘izz ibn Badis, shows that Western Islam followed the same rules. This simple approach was long followed, in a more modest form, in copies made for ordinary use. In elaborate manuscripts, however, illumination soon began to enhance the basic information. For example, in two Vienna manuscripts (ÖNB Cod. A.F. 4 f. 1, dated 726/1324, and A.F. 75 f. 1, from the eighth/nineteenth century) a gilded border frames the area containing the title. Together with the title, one sometimes finds the name of the patron who commissioned the copy, according to more or less elaborate formulas; this combination plays a double role by linking the title to information that serves as an ex-libris. Such signs of ownership usually begin with traditional phrases: bi-rasm, bah ishara, b-snaya, tabatahu ysh, and so on. The first folio of MSS. Vienna ÖNB Cod. N.F. 278 and A.F. 84a, dated 785/1384, present two variants of the same arrangement: the title is set within an illumination, and an ex-libris of an unknown Mamlūk dignitary is written just below in gold lettering. On the first folio of an almost contemporary manuscript (Vienna ÖNB Cod. N.F. 381), both pieces of information are contained in a decoration that is integrated into an overall composition; it is perhaps significant that this copy of the Burda originally belonged to the library of the Mamlūk Sultan Qalāwūn. While this may appear a logical place for such information, the name of the patron who commissioned the copy, as well as the title of the work, may also be given in the colophon.

Copies of the Qur’ān bear no title page, strictly speaking. Instead, a quotation from the Qur’ān or, in the case of Qur’āns in several volumes, an indication of the number of the volume, may appear on the recto of the first folio. The first leaf of MS. Paris BNF arabe 6641, written at Bursa in Afghanistan in 1052/1161-1162, includes both the ordinal number ‘the seventh’ and verses LVI, 77-78 of the Qur’an. At that early date, folio 1 was still undecorated, but the following double page was followed, in some high-quality copies, by another containing decoration with no text, the text itself beginning on the next double page. Often the text simply started on the first double page, with no preceding announcement of any sort.

The title was not always placed on the recto of f. 1, however. The development of illuminations framing the beginning of the text on f. 1 v ̄ offered scribes and illuminators the possibility of devoting part of the decoration to a frieze containing the title of the work. Thus in a certain number of manuscripts the title appears on the verso of the first folio. MS. Vienna ÖNB N.F. 1459, written at Shiraz in 882/1477-1478, bears the heading ‘Masqala’llāh Yamin’ in the frieze adorning f. 1 v ̄. A more developed version of this practice can be seen in a copy of Ḥarrūs’s Mansūq al-ṭayr (Paris BNF persan 348, dated 897/1492), where the illumination on f. 1 v ̄ has a pendant on the opposite page, both friezes being used to advantage to feature the title of the work and the name of the author. In many books, however, the illuminated frieze on the verso of folio 1 features a pious invocation, very often the basmala.

Ex-libris and contents

As mentioned above, the name of the patron who commissioned the copy is sometimes given with the title on f. 1; in lavish manuscripts, it may even figure alone on that leaf (see ill. 47). Changes of ownership provided reasons for modifying this information – subsequent scraping and overwriting are usually easy to spot. One of the earliest known examples can be found in MS. Leiden BRL Or. 437, where the front page is overwritten with the name of a merchant, Muhammad ibn Shibli, partly covering the original inscription with the name of the Ghaznawid ruler ‘Abd al-Rashid (reigned 440-3/1049-52). Conversely, illuminators sometimes decorated f. 1 with a space in the middle apparently designed to receive the name of the patron, which was never added. Finally, mention should be made of indications of ownership that remain highly general, as when a phrase included in the decoration has been formulated in an anonymous fashion, as seen for example in MS. Vienna ÖNB Cod. A.F. 93 f. 1, dated 1379/1959 cc. Lī ṭūḥiḥu al-là Allāh bi-l-mašā’im. In this same manuscript – a copy of Nizārī’s Khamsa – as well as in other anthologies containing several works, the illumination includes a table of contents. Other examples include MSS. Paris BNF suppl. persan 1357 (f. 2), dated 865/1461; and Vienna ÖNB Cod. Mist. 914 (f. 1). In ordinary copies,
Colophons and dates

When the scribe completed the work of copying, he often took advantage of any space that remained at the end of the basic text to add information about the copy he had just completed. This text, called a colophon, was usually of limited length; and since it was not subject to strict rules, the information it contains varies from one manuscript to another. The scribe might identify himself, or perhaps note the date of completion or the place where the work was done, or even for whom the copy was executed. Colophons are therefore of great importance to scholars, since reliably dated manuscripts are crucial landmarks in the field of codicological scholarship. The information contained in a colophon must therefore be analysed all the more rigorously and checked for potentially erroneous data, whether inadvertent or deliberate.

Location and types of colophons

The preceding comment suggests that colophons are always found at the end of a work, or at least at the conclusion of a specific text. There are exceptions to this rule, however. In a few manuscripts, the colophon figures at the front, as seen for example in Istanbul Qur’ān Nurru’asmaniye 29. Sometimes codicologists are confronted with several colophons in a single manuscript. There are three main kinds of such manuscript: copies of the Qur’ān in several volumes, manuscripts containing several separate texts (although sometimes they have only a single colophon or even none); and texts such as an author’s collected poems in various verse forms - that are divided into sections either through convention or necessity (when the work is too large in size). Occasionally a single volume will contain a series of colophons, each marking the end of a section of text (which may not necessarily coincide with the end of a quire).

A colophon found in the normal location may immediately follow the text, with no sign to distinguish it from what precedes it (apart perhaps from a discreet dot). Often, however, the scribe would lay out the colophon in a special way, the most common being in the form of either a triangle or a triangle truncated at the base to form a trapezoid (Illustr. 69). This innovative form often replaced earlier layouts such as a column somewhat narrower than the main body of text or a series of rectangular panels of alternating width (Illustr. 68). Other copyists wrote their colophons in the form of a circle or in even more complex shapes. In illuminated manuscripts in particular (Illustr. 70 and 71), the colophon can be extremely elaborate. In some colophons the initial words are elongated, especially the phrase tanm al-khiḍah. It was not unusual for a scribe to drop the script used in the text – notably when it comes to Qur’āns – and adopt a different one for the colophon; at the tip of the colophon, he might write a series of the letters mīm (an abbreviation of tammā) or kāf (for mī’allah), often arranged in a triangle (Illustr. 69).

Formulas

The colophons in Arabic and Islamic manuscripts usually open with one of a number of time-honoured stock phrases. As a rule, they are composed in the

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18 Rosenfeld, op. cit. 19 Excellent introductions to the subject of colophons can be found in articles by R. Şeyh (L’essence d’une histoire du développement des colophons dans les manuscrits musulmans’, Scivias, pp. 189-231) and G. Tropeano (Les colophons des manuscrits arabes chrétiens’, Scivias, pp. 223-311), as well as the section on dated manuscripts in Fu’ud Sayyid, Makbūlī, pp. 402-415. 20 F. Déroche, ‘Cercles et enlacements: format et décor des cœurs maghrébins médiévaux’, Auscultatio des inscriptions et belle-lettres, Comptes rendus IFES, pp. 596-599, fig. 1 and 2a. MSS. Istanbul Selu’aynîye Murat Molla 6 and Feyzullah Ef. 1580 exhibit slightly different arrangements: the scribe’s name appears on the title page, but the date is found in the colophon at the end of the volume (Şeyh, op. cit., pp. 196-197, no. 11 and p. 199, no. 19). 21 See, for example, MSS. Paris, BNF arab. 561 to 566 or 583 to 540 (Déroche, Cat. 2, pp. 75-76, nos. 399-404, and pp. 77-81, nos. 409-425).
third person, although exceptions exist. The rest of the text is often extremely brief and limited to essentials, unlike in some other manuscript traditions where colophons gave the scribe a chance to address readers and to present more specific information about himself. As Ramazan Seçen has suggested, the amount of information nevertheless tended to increase over time, along with a growing tendency to adopt more literary phrasing. Eulogies also played an important role and might occur at various points in the text.

In Arabic, colophons normally begin by a verb expressing completion (sannu, farağh min…) or a variant thereof (waqqa’ al-farağh, waqqa al-farağh, wa’af al-farağh, or kaytus al-farağh), or else by a verb for the act of copying itself (batasha, naska, naskha, karrara, nammuqa, ‘lalaq). In the former case, the verb will be accompanied by a word indicating the action that has just been completed: kūtba, intishāb, nasaq, tawzīd, tahrīr, tannīq, ta’laq, taqsim, or tāsir. In the latter case, the colophon will refer to the book, either by a generic term (mustaḥfa, mustakha, kūtba, risāla, juz‘, daftar) or a specific indication of the author or, more commonly, the title. The title is also usually given when the scribe decides to use the opening phrase hādha akhirī.

The scribe’s name does not always appear. A concise colophon sometimes gives only the year in which the text was copied. When the copyist did decide to reveal his identity, he might use any of the possibilities afforded by the Arabic and Islamic tradition of naming: some scribes wrote only their ism, others included not only genealogy but also their laqab, kunya, or other title or nickname. Very often, the name would be preceded by the ‘means employed, hand (‘ulad qa’d), script (br-kaṭṭā), fingers (bi-kaṇa‘). The same name might give more or less lengthy versions of his name in one copy than in another; examining the main lists of copyists may help one to identify an individual recorded elsewhere. As mentioned above, additional details about the scribe’s trade or training may also appear in the colophon; in Qur’āns from the later Ottoman period it was customary to include the name of one’s calligraphy teacher. All too rarely, a few words of a more personal


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nature offer a fleeting glimpse of the scribe’s character; their usefulness in understanding the world and mentality of makers of books has already been touched on in a few articles.27

The place where the manuscript was written is mentioned less frequently. Even when it is indicated, the location remains fairly vague; codicologists must often be content with the name of a city,28 only rarely learning the precise spot where the work of transcription was done. But MS. Tashkent IOB 3907/1, dated 544/1150, ends with a lengthy colophon (f. 91) in which the scribe not only noted that he worked in a cell (buğra) but also pinpointed its exact location in Samarqand.29 The same precision is found in MS. Paris BNF arabe 6690, copied in 581/1185 in a library next to a madrasa in Zanjan.30

The person who commissioned the volume (mustaḥfa, mu‘attal) would often be mentioned here as well, especially if the patron was of modest rank;31 grandees usually preferred to see their names placed in the front of the book, sometimes adorned with elaborate decoration. Where relevant, it was not unusual for a scribe to indicate by the use of the phrase li-nasīf,32 that he had copied the text for himself.

At an early date, the importance of high-quality copies was recognised by scholars, who offered profuse advice on the subject. Scribes, meanwhile, sometimes went to the trouble of briefly describing the original model (naskha’t al-aṣl) when the nature of that original conferred greater value on the copy; Franz Rosenthal has noted literary evidence which seems to indicate that autograph versions (bi-kaṭṭāt al-mu‘allal-fish al-muṣaffa‘) were held in high esteem,33 as confirmed by several colophons.34 A colophon might also contain bibliographic information; in multi-volume manuscripts, the order of each one in the series was often noted.

Dating

When the manuscript includes a colophon, the date (bi-‘aṣrīh) is given in most cases, although sometimes the date is lacking and the scribe mentions only his name. The information most usually given is the year, with no mention of

28 ‘Devises et vers traditionnels des copistes entre explicit et colophon des manuscrits persans’, MSS. de la M., pp. 79-87. 46 For example, in MS. Vatican BAV Vat. arab. 873, dated 580/1182, the scribe indicates on f. 101 v° that he copied the manuscript in Aleppo, adding no further details (FISMOD 85). 49 FISMOD 249. 50 FISMOD 55 (f. 87). See also MS. Cairo DAK 490 Fihl Hanafi (b.‘aṣrīh Suṣaydī, Makhbūt, fig. 53). 51 MSS. Paris BNF arabe 1006, 941, 2843 (FISMOD 42, 45, 124, 129, etc.). 52 MSS. Paris BNF arabe 718, 6690, 5883, 6602 (FISMOD 40), 55, 56, 57 etc. Other formulations have been attested by A. Fu‘ad Suṣaydī, who devotes a section of his study to these manuscripts (Makhbūt, pp. 455-458). 53 Rosenthal, op. cit., p. 23. 54 MSS. Istanbul Kurîfîli 1619, 949, 978 and 956 (Seçen, op. cit., pp. 202-203, nos. 24, 26, 27 and 29, figs. 8 and 9).
month or day, of the various chronological systems employed in the geographical regions that produced manuscripts in Arabic writing, the most commonly employed calendar took the year of the Hijra as its point of departure: the date 1 Muharram corresponds to Friday, 16 July 622. The use of concordance tables allows the corresponding date in the Gregorian calendar to be determined. Several automatic converters can be found on the Internet; they generally work reliably for the twentieth and present centuries, but do not always include all the parameters required to compute ancient dates. Before using them it is as well to test them on dates from different centuries.

The Hijra era

The year is usually spelled out, preceded by the word zana or, less often, ‘ilm- or šīr (in Persian), or yil (in Turkish). Scribes might nevertheless write the year in numerals on occasion, more conventionally in ayyād letter-numerals. Later on, chronograms and enigmatic formulas began to appear. Although, as a rule, only the year was given, Adolf Grohmann cited a manuscript which refers specifically to ‘the end of the year...’ (Jil hulūd zana...).

55 For converting dates, the best work is G.S.P. Freeman-Greene, *The Islamic and Christian calendars, AD622–2222 (AH 1–1600): a complete guide for converting Christian and Islamic dates and dates of festivals* (Renditions, 1995), previously published as *The Muslim and Christian calendars: being the conversion of Muslim and Christian dates from the Hijra to the year 2000* (Oxford, 1963; repr. 1977). Less convenient but more wide-ranging is V.V. Trubetsky, *Calendar of Middie East countries: conversion tables and explanatory notes* (Moscow, 1979), which covers the Arab, Turkish, Iranian, Afghan, Israeli and Coptic calendars. F. Wiesenhfeld’s book of tables, revised by B. Spuler, remains a useful reference work (see the bibliography, which also lists the concordance tables by Cattroet and Hag). Further information on these technical tables can be found in A. Grohmann, *Arabic Chronology* [Handbuch der Orientistik, I] (Leiden/Cologne, 1966) and in articles by R. Abdolhadi (Enc. Ir., vol. IV, s.v. ‘calendars in Islamic period’, pp. 668–674) and F.C. de Blau and B. van Dalen (EF I' X, p. 238–271, s.v. ‘Hijra’). 56 Websites are extremely susceptible to change; in order to locate relevant ones, readers should use a search engine, entering the keywords ‘Islamic calendar’. 57 This latter term is well attested in the Maghrib, as demonstrated by MSS. Paris BN Alf 2960, dated 562/1566, and BNF arabe 2793, dated 720/1221 (FAMMAD 91, 103, 73 and 33); MS. Paris BN arabe 1087, dated 776/1374, probably of Egyptian origin (FAMMAD 53), suggests that its use was widespread. 58 MSS. Paris BN arabe 1686, f. 30, dated 583/1190 (FAMMAD 173); Berlin SB Or. 432, dated 1240/1824 (Selbst, Materials 2, p. 32 and fig. 37); Berlin SB Or. 900, dated 1023/1614 (op. cit., p. 34 and fig. 19), and Berlin SB Or. 1803, dated 968/1560 (op. cit., p. 66 and fig. 36). For the types of numerals, see R. Lema’s entry on ‘Arabic Numerals’ in *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. I, pp. 382–398. 59 See MSS. Istanbul Kütüphanesi 1388–1386 (Seipen, op. cit., p. 213, no. 49). Folio 302 of MS. Paris BN arabe 1685, reads: ‘Sony Y37538, 3 represents one, Y term, 5 hundreds, and S1 thousands, so that 5 + 10 = 300 + 1000 = 13131905–1906’. 60 See below. 61 Grohmann, op. cit., p. 17.

Month (shahr; Persian mah, Turkish ayl)

It is not unusual for the year of completion to be accompanied by the name of the month. There are twelve months in the Islamic calendar, occurring in the order given below. The name of the month is often accompanied by an honorific epithet (indicated on the right in the chart below), and such epithets can be precious aids when the colophon has been damaged and the name of the month itself has been effaced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of month</th>
<th>Epithet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Muharram</td>
<td>al-harîm²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Safar</td>
<td>al-bhaṣṣām⁵, al-mussafir, al-mubâhah, al-at’azza⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Raḥî al-arṭûn</td>
<td>al-shâfir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Raḥî al-ʼaḥdâr al-shâhirī</td>
<td>al-mubâhah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Jumâ al- ʼaḥdâr al-arṭûn</td>
<td>al-mubâhah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Shukrân</td>
<td>al-muṣâqâmah, al-muharram, al-shâfir, al-mubâhah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ramadân</td>
<td>al-mubâhah¹⁰, al-muṣâqâmah¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Shawârûl</td>
<td>al-muṣâqâmah, al-mubâhah¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Dhî-L-Qa’dâ</td>
<td>al-shâfir, al-harîm¹²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of historical chronology, dates are normally converted on the basis that the odd months have thirty days and the even months twenty-nine, except Dhu l-Hijja, to which a day must be added several times over the space of a thirty-year cycle in order to keep the synodic month in synchrony with the calendar year. In orientalist usage, dates in the first and second months of Rabi'I and Jumada are often abbreviated by using the Roman numerals I and II: e.g. 12 Rabi'I 1200.

Divisions of the month

Day of the month
Calculation of the exact day (yom, nahiyy; Persian mīr; Turkish gün) of the month was often done by counting from the first day of that month, as is done in modern times: for example, Wednesday, 29 Rabi'I 1037. Another method involved dividing the month in half and counting the days within each half; during the first part of the month, the scribe would use the verb bašā (or mašā) and count the number of nights (or days) that had elapsed, whereas from the middle of the month (mīr) onward, the exact day was calculated according to the number of nights remaining until the end of the second half (using the verb bašā). To judge from the manuscripts, this method enjoyed a certain popularity. Whatever the case, a scribe was free to specify (or not) the day of the week. In a few manuscripts, the name of the day, the like the name of the month, is accompanied by an epithet (al-muharrak). With days of the week, slight discrepancies may arise, conversion tables sometimes proving at odds with the day stated in the manuscript for the date in question.

Chronograms
Sometimes scribes employed dating methods, such as chronograms and series of fractions, that have to be decoded. A chronogram is a word (or short phrase) composed of letters whose numerical values add up to the figure for the year in

by Grohmann, involved dating events by reference to major religious festivals, but only two examples of such datings are known in manuscripts. Such references are in any case insufficient for dating every single day of a given month.

A further step toward accuracy could be made by using the old division of a lunar month into ten groups of three nights; the only known example is in Leiden BRU Or. 704, completed in 404/1014.

Evidence for the History of a Manuscript
question. This system was used in the Orient, but was also very popular in Morocco for dating inscriptions, historical texts and manuscripts from the Sa’dian period onward. Chronograms are also often found in manuscripts from Sub-Saharan Africa. Folio 214 of MS. Paris BNF arabe 6851 reads: “ṣm bi-šarq min hijrati al-Nabī; according to the numerical values of letters used in the Maghrībi (see chart p. 104), bi-šarq equals 100 + 200 + 1000 + 2, giving a total of 1302 (the year 1302/1884-85).

Dating by fractions

Dating by fractions was a less common method, but occurs in Arabic and Turkish manuscripts. According to Albert Dietrich, Kamal Pasha Khda (Kemalpasazade, d. 940/1533) was the first to use this system. The following passage occurs in MS. Rabat BGA D 2046 (Illus. 115): toa kāmā l-farāgh min tanāṣṣ fi l-ṣahar al-wād min al-thulūb al-aṣwad min al-sādī al-labāni min al-naṣf al-thāmī min al-ṣahar al-sāsī min al-ṣahar al-thāmī min al-sawā al-sātī min al-nisf al-thāmī min al-kifr al-nahāsīyya ("the end of the composition of it occurred on the sixth tenth of the first third of the second sixth of the second half of the Hijra"). The decipherment starts from the end: the second half of the Hijra era is divisible into sevenths, which implies that the total is 1400, the second half running from 701 to 1400, and the seventh seventh from 1301 to 1400, which thereby establishes the century in question. The century in turn divided into tenths (decades), the second one being 1311-1320; the decade itself can be divided into tenths (years), the sixth tenth corresponding to 1316. This date is confirmed by another manuscript in the same library, copied in the presence of the author when he happened to be in Marrakech, in 1316/1898-99. In the second half of that year, the second sixth corresponds to the month of Sha’ban, itself divided into three ten-day periods; the sixth day of the first tenth therefore corresponds to 6 Sha’ban 1316/20 December 1898.


Depending on the community, the year might begin at different points. The Coptic year began on 29 or 30 August, and comprised the following months:

1) Ţut
2) Bībī
3) Hītūr
4) Kiyyūk
5) Tuba
6) Amūbūr
7) Baranādūt
8) Barnūs
9) Bashans
10) Ba’ūna
11) Abīb
12) Misrā, plus the epagomenal days (nāṣī).

In Persian, the months are:

1) Farnārdīn
2) Urdbhīshīt
3) Khurākād
4) Tīr
5) Mūradād
6) Shāfīrānār
7) Mān
8) Ābān
9) Ādhar
10) Day
11) Bahman
12) Isfand (or Isfandānād) plus the epagomenal days.

Signatures of illuminators and artists

As already mentioned, only rarely did illuminators – and, somewhat more often, artists – sign their work. Furthermore, even when they did so, they deliberately made their signature as discreet as possible, skillfully integrating it into the decoration. It is therefore necessary to examine illumination and miniatures attentively in an effort to discover the name of the artist (see ibid., 70).

Many of the apparent signatures below miniature paintings are in fact attributions to artists and were written by librarians or owners of the manuscripts in question.
The earliest attestations of illuminators' signatures are found in Qur'anic manuscripts; perhaps the first known example figures in a restored section of the Amīrīj Qur'an, dated 262/876.108 Around that time or shortly afterwards, several Qur'āns, such as Istanbul TIEM 455109 and London BL Add. 7214,110 suggest that this practice became more widespread. In both cases, the signatures are clearly separated from the rest of the text.

Sources concerning the history of a manuscript

In the absence of a colophon, the date of a manuscript may be indirectly inferred by way of the dated notes that may have been added to it. The interest of these notes – to be discussed briefly below – is not limited to their help in dating a copy, for they also constitute an irreplaceable source of information concerning the history of a manuscript and, more generally, of the history of collections of manuscripts (the topic discussed in the next chapter). Caution must be used when dating a manuscript from such notes, because by definition they post-date the copy; it is essential to estimate carefully the time that elapsed between the copying of the text and the addition of a note – or possibly to detect where certificates have been copied from an older manuscript, or even forged.

Deeds of endowment (waqf)

Islamic legal scholars were divided as to whether books could be the object of a waqf, or deed of endowment.111 In practice, waqfs/fayyāms appeared on books as early as the third/ninth century; the earliest surviving examples concern Qur'āns, but it is possible that other books were also involved at that date.112

Subsequently, the practice spread widely, to such an extent that a waqf sometimes applied to entire libraries.113 The acts of endowment written on manuscripts vary substantially in length and in phrasing. The shortest simply indicate the recipient institution and the fact that the volume is waqf or, to use a term whose use became increasingly restricted to the Maghrib, habās (or habāfi).114 Other details sometimes included are the name of the donor, the date, and a description of the volume(s) endowed. More detailed texts, such as the two Almohad habās published by Gaston Deverdun and Mohammedi b. A. Ghiali,115 also incorporate legal phrasing that defines the aim of the bequest and the conditions of application, describing the manuscript and the location where it is kept, and forbidding that the book be removed from that place.116 In endowment texts drafted in Damascus, the sale, loan and destruction of the manuscript are also forbidden.117 These prescriptions were sometimes accompanied by a quotation from the Qur'an. Sūra xxi, verse 89. In some instances, deeds were renewed and the condition of the manuscripts was checked, especially when multivolume Qur'āns were involved.118

Because waqf/fayyāms were customarily written at the front of the volume, a highly vulnerable zone, it was probably partly as a safety measure that in some manuscripts the word waqf (or habāf) was added in the margins (usually the top margin) of every few folios. This inscription, sometimes the only surviving record of the waqf, was usually written in ink (sometimes gilded), although in certain parchment manuscripts it was done with a series of tiny perforations, a practice that might have been a Maghribi habit.119 This system was taken to an

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extreme in the Amāliṭ Qurʾān, by no means unique in this respect, in which each recto bears the phrase waqafahā Amāliṭ or waqafahā Amāliṭ, an abbreviation of a deed inscribed at the front of the volumes, dated 362/876.  

The use of stamps is an extension of this practice, perhaps being an adaptation spurred by the increasing tendency to endow entire libraries. The deed itself thus became an autonomous text, too long to figure in full on each manuscript. 

An early, famous example of such stamps is the one from the library of Rashid al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, discovered by Francis Richard on f.178 v of Paris manuscript BNF persan 121 (illus. 117). During the Ottoman period, stamps were used to print an abridged version of the deed on the relevant volumes, as seen for example in the ones used by the Köprüli Library.  

The chaos provided by these deeds are highly important in establishing the history of manuscripts and collections, but once again they must be treated carefully when used to date a copy itself, especially if it lacks a dated colophon. At best they provide a terminus ad quem, and the scholar must assess the time that elapsed between the writing of the manuscript and its endowment as waqf. 

In addition to such texts of endowment, mention must be made of notes indicating that a given person commissioned a glorious manuscript – which would often be subsequently endowed to a mosque or mausoleum. Significant documentation on this subject, focusing on the eighth/eleventh century, has been published by David James.

Certificates[24] 

A reading certificate, or samāʿ, may appear on a manuscript to attest to the fact that a reader (qārī) has read the text before a listener (musārī), who might be the author himself or one of his authorised transmitters; in the latter case, the chain of transmission back to the author must be given. This reading was done in the presence of witnesses, whose names were also cited. The certificate would be written by a writer (kāhī) who also indicated the place and date of the session. If several sessions were required, their number was sometimes mentioned.

An ijāza is an ‘authorisation to transmit’ the text, delivered by an authorised transmitter forming part of the chain back to the author or an initial transmitter. Samāʿ and ijāza relate to a system of transmission of texts used in


122 R. Seven, C. Iši and C. Akşam, Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Köprüli Library III (İstanbul, 1406/1986), colour pl. (MS. no. 1); Several examples of Egyptian origin have been published by A. Fu’ad Sayyid (Mabkhûr, pl. 156). See also below. 123 James, op. cit. 124 This section was written by Marie-Geneviève Guadon. 125 R. Sethheim, EP VIII, pp. 1019–1020, s.v. ‘samāʿ’. 126 G. Vida, EP III, pp. 1030–1031, s.v. ‘ijāza’.

Marks of ownership

Alongside the very formal inscriptions of ex-libris described above, which generally refer to the first owner of the manuscript, other marks of ownership often appear in spaces originally left blank in the front or back of the volume. When such marks have not been erased or excised, they indicate the name of a person who possessed the book and wanted to leave a written record of that ownership. The written formulas (sometimes referred to as tamalluk) vary a great deal and include highly diverse details; they frequent begin with bi-... fi malk...; sura il... (or fi mala/min hutul)...; min hutub...; fi naskh...; al-mabkh... or other expressions of the same type.135 The name of the owner then follows, often accompanied by a date. Given the more compact nature of these notes, the year is often indicated in numerals above or below the word swa (year); sometimes the month is given in abridged form.136 In addition to these basic details of ownership, the name of the city or other information that the writer wanted to add might be included. They can therefore be of great use to codicologists, providing evidence for assigning a date to a manuscript with no colophon,137 or for reconstructing its provenance, etc. Very often, a mention of ownership is accompanied by a stamp.

Births, deaths and other events

The practice of recording births and deaths of family members were recorded on the flyleaves of some copies of the Qur'ān. Just like other notations, these records can prove highly useful in dating a manuscript. Several copies from the third/ninth century, when this practice is first attested, were in fact dated thanks to information of this type. Other comments may record extraordinary natural phenomena.

Stamps138

The flyleaves of a manuscript frequently play host to marks of ownership or authenticity in the form of stamps and printed seals (bišta'am in Persian the term mshir is more commonly used, referring to the piece of stone or metal where the seal was etched in reverse, which also gives the Turkish term milhir). This practice stemmed from a long tradition; the Islamic Middle East merely adopted Byzantine and Sassanid habits. At some unknown date, the physical

Seal normally attached to chancery documents was replaced by a 'stamp', that is to say a print of the seal in black ink (or sometimes red ink, as in China), applied to the document itself. An early example of a printed seal appears on f. 1r of BNF arabe 3337 (Egypt, probably circa 1250).

A seal may contain a brief phrase in Arabic (or Persian), a person's name, or simply a pious expression (more rarely, a short poem or riddle). Relatively often, a date is also included – often the date the owner of the seal assumed his duties, the seal being an emblem of power. In Mughal India, this date might be expressed in terms of the jılı, or year of the monarch's reign. Most often, the words on a seal are read upwards from the bottom line. The name of the owner is often preceded by the phrase al-‘udh ('the slave'; in Persian: band) or al-faqir ('the poor'). Brief poems or Arabic expressions often embody an allusion to the owner's role (personal name), but not the name itself.

The fact that the forms of seals varied sometimes provides a useful indication of their approximate date. The seal of the library founded at Tabriz in the early eighth/fourteenth century by Rashid al-Din was printed in black ink on several folios of the manuscripts held by the library. Its rectangular shape is similar to certain stamps used in Fatimid Egypt, and the Kufic script reads, waqf-i Kūfīkhāna-i Rashidyya (see illus. 117). It is not known whether this was an innovation – at a time when the influence of China's chancery was visible in Persia – or a practice that was already a tradition among waqf libraries. Inclusion of the word waqf is nevertheless fairly rare. There are a few Egyptian and, later, Ottoman examples (e.g. madrasa-i Muṣafī Pāshā-yi ʿilāq in Istanbul) but very few Persian ones (except for the famous shrine of Sufi al-Din at Ardabil).119

The large seals belonging to monarchs were rarely stamped on the manuscripts in their library, although a few exceptions exist, notably the collection of the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed III in the twelfth/eighteenth century, the stamp of the famous Timurid patron Sultan Husayn Mirza Bāγarā of Herat, and the stamp of Sultan Brāḥīm of Bāṣpur in the late tenth/sixteenth century. Rulers generally used a smaller, more attractive seal for such purposes.

119 In manuscripts at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, for instance on f. 2, 4, 5, 178, etc. of MS. persan 121 and on f. 376 recto of MS. arabe 2324. 140 Many of the manuscripts belonging to this shrine later found their way to the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg.

Evidence for the History of a Manuscript

(illus. 118). Starting with Bayezid II (late ninth/eleventh century), Ottoman sultans marked their manuscripts with an almond-shaped seal bearing their ṭūfa (illus. 119). Books in the library of Shah 'Abbas I of Persia boasted oval seals with the motto 'Abbas band-i Shāh-i taļīyat and a date. Shah Rukh, the Timurid sultan of Persia in the early ninetyninth century, well known for his collections of historical manuscripts, had a special seal engraved for his library; it was found in shape, nearly two centimetres in diameter, and bore a motto in naskhi script: min kutub khāzīna al-Sulṭān al-Aʿṣam Shāhrukh Bahādur (illus. 122).141

118. Seal stamp bearing the ṭūfa of Sultan 'Abdillāh I (reg. 1774-89); 16th century oval Ottoman stamp with floral ornamentation surrounded by a motto in Arabic playing on the word khitām (seal-ing). Paris, BNF arabe 1648, f. 1 (detail).


141 As seen, for example, on f. 55 of BNF arabe 2494 and in BNF suppl. persan 1113. See Firdawsi Tavakoli, Mahbūrān, pp. 448-450 and pl. 156.
The use of seals was widespread in Iran, Muslim India, and the Ottoman empire. Manuscripts prove this, but do not always provide clues as to whether the seal belonged to the owner or just a reader of the book. Each of the civil servants mentioned in Sirriya’s biographical compilation Siqilli-i ‘Ornārī, for example, had one or several seals. It is often interesting to compare the dates given there with other bibliographical data. Some Europeans who lived in the Orient also had their names in Arabic letters engraved on a seal, employing it like an ex-libris. As regards the Maghrib, little has been established with certainty, except that the use of printed seals spread from the tenth/sixteenth century onward, concurrent with the Ottoman presence there.

Archive documents and the flyleaves of manuscripts contain a considerable number of seals belonging to both Hindu and Muslim dignitaries. Beginning with the reign of Akbar in the late tenth/sixteenth century, seals generally became large and round, bearing the name of the owner and a standard phrase which was usually ʿservant to the king’ (fudūs-i Shāhī), followed by the name of the monarch. This practice survived into the early twelfth/eighteenth century. Dates were usually given in two forms: the year of the Hijra and the year of the current monarch’s reign. In the twelfth/eighteenth century, grandees would often have all of their honorary titles engraved on their seal along with their own name, not the name of the reigning Mughal. Inscriptions (ʿard-dīda) recording the inspection and valuation (ʿard) of the fabulous library of the Great Mughals from Akbar to the late twelfth/eighteenth century are accompanied by the seals of the important people who had owned the book (illus. 143).\footnote{On this subject, see the definitive study by John Seyller, “The inspection and valuation of the manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library”, Archivum Asiaticum 57 (1997), pp. 243–349.}

Despite the variety of forms of seals, unfortunately they must be analysed empirically, given the absence of publications that might constitute a corpus sigilorum. It can nevertheless be noted that the Mamluk period favoured round seals. Similarly, Timurid Persia left us a great number of printed seals, almost always round, with naskhī calligraphic inscriptions, usually two centimetres in diameter. The Mughal Timurid rulers Bābur and Humāyūn still used round seals of this type. The seal of Humāyūn’s wife, Princess Ḥamīda Bint, was applied on all the books in her library, and took the form of a star with her name in the middle (illus. 143).\footnote{As seen, for example, on the flyleaf of MS. Paris E N 31 suppl. persan 140 C.} Whereas round seals were also used in the Ottoman empire until the tenth/sixteenth century, they often became oval toward the end of that century and adopted discreet floral patterns (illus. 121). Persian seals from the tenth/sixteenth century initially took the form of a pomegranate, laden with pious phrases; by the end of that century, they were becoming simpler and less dense. In eleventh/seventeenth-century India, the pomegranate-shaped seals from the days of Akbar were steadily abandoned in favour of large, round

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126. Seal stamp of Firdawsī and Jāhān al-Dīn, probably the same individual. Paris, BNF suppl. persan 1399, f. 87v.
132. Large circular seal stamp of Sultan Mustaṣṣī Illī, with motto and a quotation from the Qur‘ān (Surah 7, verse 42). Paris, BNF arab. 1648, f. 1.
133. Seal stamps of the Ottoman bibliophile, collector and poet Ḥṣayn Mustaṣṣī Sīlāfī (d. 1183/1776-7). One, in “Kūhī” script, contains a Qur‘ānic phrase (Surah 18, verse 39); the other is dated 1179/1765-6. Paris, BNF suppl. persan 727, f. 1.
134. Note recording that at Isfahan in 1619 the MS. was given by Mr. Hama Harandi to Muhammad ibn ‘Abī Ḥamīd’ al-Fāżī (who later emigrated to Cochinda, in India, where he died after 1658); and the latter’s seal stamp, dated 1020/1611-12. Paris, BNF suppl. persan 517, f. 1.
137. Seal stamps accompanying the eulogy of Muhammad ibn Jafar ibn ‘Abī Mūsā al-Iskandarī. The one on the left, dated 1047/1637-8, records that its owner was employed at the shrine in Ardashī; the other is that of a Shī‘ī named Jafar who was saved in both worlds, for “Allah save!” Paris, BNF suppl. persan 221, f. 1.


141. Seal stamp of 'Abd al-Wahhāb Ablas known as Mut'amam al-Dawla, Manṣūr al-Mansūr (d. 1244/1828); found together with an inscription recording the inspection (ṣerj) of the MS. at the Gājār royal library in 1232/1816-17. Paris, BNF suppl. persan 815, f. 1.


144. Seal stamp of Shāh Bāqir Khan, Muhammad Bāqir, dated 1011/1602-3.


146. Seal stamp of Amīrāt Khan Shāh-i-Jahanī, a librarian (kitabkān) to Shāh Jahan, dated 1042/1633-4.


148. Seal stamp of Ahmad Shāhī, known as "Sincere but follower" of Shāh Jahan, dated 1054/1644.

149. Seal stamp of 'Abd al-Rahmān Dīwānī, "servant of Shāh Jahan" and later librarian to Aurangzēb. Paris, BNF suppl. persan 177, f. 8.


151. Seal stamp of 'Aśūr, described as "skilled in true obedience" (wāqif dar istibad-e aṣūr).

152. Waqf seal stamp, dated 1255/1839-40; "one of the books of Khwāja Muhammad Fārsī.


seals, whereas in the twelfth/eighteenth century most seals became rectangular. Persian seals of the eleventh/seventeenth century were often oval and rather small; by the twelfth/eighteenth century, however, they became rectangular or square, and very small in size (like the seal of Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarabâdi, the famous book lover and munshi to Nâdir Shâh; see illus. 139). In Qâjâr Iran (thirteenth/nineteenth and early fourteenth/twentieth century) there were many large seals of oval or rectangular shape (illus. 138 and 141), most of which featured inscriptions in nastaʿliq script.

Reading the mottoes on the seals and the dates found there, as well as identifying their owners when possible, can provide important clues to the itinerary followed by a manuscript, thereby complementing study of any handwritten notations and ex-libris that may be found along with them.

Codicology and the History of Collections

Theoretical approach

The field of application

Alongside the analysis of the material conditions of the production of manuscript books, another function of codicology is to establish the history of libraries and collections. That is, to gather data on how books circulated after they were made, reconstructing as far as possible the chain of owners of a manuscript or set of manuscripts, and determining the provenance or places where the volumes were kept. These questions directly concern Oriental manuscripts—especially those in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish—in public and private libraries and collections in both East and West.

The need for a history of collections: a multidisciplinary field

The history of collections is part of a broad field of scholarly endeavour. By progressively reconstructing the history of a volume or set of volumes, by seeking to learn which text (or group of texts) entered and became known in, say, France—along with when and by whom, and based on which copies—codicology can provide keys to the history of ideas and their dissemination, to the inter-relationship of cultures, and to a better knowledge of Oriental studies in Europe and of the heritage of the Oriental countries.

1 Most of this chapter was written by Annie Berthier, with a final section by Marie- Geneviève Gourdon. 2 'Library' is used here in the general sense of an organised assemblage of books held either by a public institution or private individual, while 'collection' refers to a particular group. Thus 'the history of collections' refers to sets of manuscripts and documents artificially united on the basis of shared features (language, script, matter, etc.); a collection might be assembled from a variety of sources and is generally held by an institution, whether public or private. 3 Charles Samarrai's L'Histoire et ses méthodes (Paris, 1964) refers to a field of study of sets of manuscripts having a shared origin or provenance, which mutually explain one another. Samarrai closely relates this field to codicology, 'which, for lack of a better term, will be called the "archivistology" of manuscripts.' Nowadays the term 'history of collections' is more appropriate.