مطهرة بالشيفرة دميرة فرق الإنسان أرضه
من بحلقه مرتفعة خلف ضرورة السبيل
بسرعة تنازله فأفرع فازارتة أشوك الأبيض
فقفز فنص لإنزال مطيعه باصون الامشاة
ورفعت الأرصفة لتنافها جماه ونصبها
ورينون من فرارها على وفاة وليستاء الغمر
لإنماله وإلقاءج أصلحة ومعة برانجية

فله من إحرام الألفتة وورق من الأذارات مرك
ربت في المصنف الأستاذ عن ومااءنحفرة
البندقية التي يهرودانه واثر وحلفاء
فاست خى المارين أهلا جرموه وموفل والضراعه
لا فضلتهم على الملاك يعده وفوكه أسفاده
a) the use in the illumination of a particular type of shaded globule that appears in other dated manuscripts would give us relatively wide parameters of c. 1304-14 in either Cairo or Damascus; b) the use of muḥaqqiq script for the main body of the text was certainly established by 1320 in Cairo and is likely to have been in use before that date; c) the particular style of naskh script used for the commentary provides parameters of c. 1300-25, since it compares closely to a Cairo manuscript of 1306-15; and d) the style of illumination and its relation to the work of Muhammad b. Mubadir would point to Cairo around the years 1298-1310. Among the distinctive stylistic traits in the illumination consonant with Muhammad b. Mubadir’s known work there is one particular feature which appears to be unique to his oeuvre and to the first decade of the fourteenth century, and that is the extension of the illuminated borders around all four sides of an illuminated page.

David James suggests that Muhammad b. Mubadir’s main patron was Rukn al-Din Baybars. Could the present manuscript, as the work of Muhammad b. Mubadir, have been made for the same patron? Unless another fragment of the manuscript containing a colophon or further information is discovered, we will probably never know the exact provenance of the manuscript. On the basis of analysis alone, however, it is more than probable that the inventive and technically brilliant illumination was the work of Muhammad b. Mubadir and was completed in Cairo around 1298-1310 CE, and very possible that the manuscript was produced under the patronage of Baybars, either as Vizier or as Sultan.

The above is an abridged version of a separate monograph devoted to the present manuscript section: see Fraser 2005. MF

1 For a description and discussion of Mubadir’s work and style see James 1998, pp. 49-47, 104.
Monumental Qur’an leaf in muhaqqaq script

Egypt or Syria, Mamluk
Mid-14th century
Surah 18 (Al-Kafir), vi. 26-12

Folio from an Arabic manuscript written in muhaqqaq script in black ink on cream paper with eleven lines of text per page. Letter-pointing and diacritics are also in black ink, with occasional additional marks in red or blue. Individual verse divisions are marked with gold rosettes decorated with green and blue dots. In the lower outer margin of the recto a half-line marker in the form of an illuminated oval medallion decorated in blue and gold containing the words maa hikb in white thuluth script.

The patronage of very large Qur’an manuscripts was popular among Mamluk sultans and viziers during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The largest Mamluk example in the world is a manuscript made for Sayf al-Din Sinibadh b. Abdallah al-Ashraf in Cairo in 1374 CE, which measures 105 x 77 cm. The largest Mamluk Qur’an in the British Isles measures 86 x 54 cm. At least ten Mamluk Qur’ans of this very large scale were produced in the Mamluk Empire during the second half of the fourteenth century, but the practice seems for the most part to have died out by the fifteenth century.

This phenomenon may have been due to specific political, financial, and military factors. The Mamluk dynasty was always robust militarily, but it was not until the second quarter of the fourteenth century that the major threats from outside receded. By the end of the thirteenth century the final remnants of the Crusader bases in Palestine and Syria had been taken by the Mamluks. In 1260 they had defeated Hulegu’s Mongol armies at Ain Jalut. The Ilkhanids continued to be a threat and a source of rivalry into the first decades of the fourteenth century, but with the passing of Sultan Abu Sa’id, the last great Ilkhanid ruler, in 1335 the threat from that dynasty significantly lessened. With the simultaneous gradual fragmentation of Mongol rule in Iraq and Iran the Mamluk dynasty was able to dominate the political scene in the Middle East for the following decades, and it was during this period (c. 1340-80) that the majority of very large Mamluk manuscripts were produced. The size and grandeur of these manuscripts may have been a reflection of the religious, political and military confidence of the dynasty. There may also have been a more direct response to the large royal Qur’ans and secular manuscripts produced by the Ilkhanids in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, which had no doubt come to the notice of the Mamluks. The very large Mamluk Qur’ans may therefore have been both a statement and affirmation of the power and religious steadfastness of the Mamluk dynasty in general and specifically a symbol of their emergence as the more enduring power in the region in comparison to the Ilkhanids. The reasons for the decline in the production of such large-scale Mamluk Qur’an manuscripts in the fifteenth century may be the general lessening of Mamluk prosperity and stability under the Burji line and the gradual emergence of the Ottomans as a growing threat.

1 National Library, Cairo, Ms. 125; James 1988, no. 24.
2 John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Ms. 704; Mongana 1934, no. 42.
3 National Library, Cairo, Ms. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 54; Museums of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, Ms. 445 (other fragments Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, inv. no. 1679; Keir Collection, Ham, inv. no. vi. II); see James 1988, nos. 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33: the present folio, Sotheby’s, 13 April 2000, lot 6.
4 There are, however, two notable examples from the late fifteenth century, a Qur’an made for Sultan Qutb Bey in 1488 that measured 66.7 x 46.7 cm (see Sotheby’s, 26 April 1982, lot 37) and the aforementioned manuscript in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, which, though undated, stylistically relates to fifteenth-century manuscript production.
5 The largest Ilkhanid Qur’an was made for Sultan Qubays in Baghdad in 1306-13 and measured 72 x 50 cm. Others typically measured between 45 and 60 cm in height and around 35 cm wide. Several of these are published in James 1988, nos. 39, 40, 44, 43, 45, 46, and New York 2002, figs. 121, 125, 158, 245. Secular royal and court manuscripts produced under the Ilkhanids were also often on a large scale: the Kitab Jam‘ al-Tawarikh al-Radu, produced in 1307-10, measures 55.5 x 38.5 cm (Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, Ms. or. Arabe 2724); see New York 2002, cat. 6, fig. 24); the two sections of the famous Jam‘ al-Tawarikh of Rashid al-Din of 1314-15 measure 43 x 52 cm (Edinburgh University Library, Ms. Arab 20, and Khalili Collection, Ms. 727); see New York 2002, cat. 6 and 7, figs. 130, 172, 172, 174); and the folios of the Great Mongol Shahnman must have measured around 50 x 35 cm, since the dimensions of the written area were 41 x 29 cm (New York 2002, cat. 36, p. 254).

6 The very large Mamluk Qur’ans are almost all larger than the equivalent Ilkhanid manuscripts.
لا يمكنني قراءة النص العربي في الصورة.
29  Decree of Iskandar Sultan

Iran, probably Isfahan
Dated 816 AH / 1414 CE

Persian manuscript on highly burnished cream paper, 6.5 m x 43 cm. ‘Three lines of monumental zawij’ script in gold with vocalization in blue, followed by thirty-nine lines of gold itäf. Two gold seals on lines 40 and 41. cm seals in black ink on the bottom of the verso. Dated 816
AH/1414 CE on line 40. Few two lines of opening Qur’ānic text, fragmentary, otherwise complete. Scroll around modern wooden roller.

SCROLL 6 m x 50 cm

This huge royal decree, over six metres in length, was issued at the court of one of the leading patrons of the arts of fifteenth-century Persia, Iskandar Sultan b. ‘Umar Shaykh. The grandson of Timur, Iskandar Sultan was governor of Shiraz from 1409 to 1414, at which point he was removed from his position and blinded by his overlord and uncle, Shahrukh. When Iskandar continued to foment trouble by joining forces with his brother Bayqara, hoping to seize Shiraz, Shahrukh eventually had him captured and executed.

The root of Shahrukh’s quarrel with Iskandar Sultan lay in the latter’s territorial ambitions and repeated unauthorized campaigns. Already during Timur’s lifetime a raid into the Mughulistan region resulted in his being brought before his irate grandfather and subjected to the bastinado. In 1414, the year in which this decree was issued, Iskandar Sultan had extended his control over Hamadan, Yazd, Kerman and Isfahan, making the last his capital. This unauthorized expansion, as well as his use of his own name on coinage and in the khutba, the sermon preceding Friday prayers, was tantamount to open rebellion against Shahrukh.

Iskandar’s territorial ambitions were matched by an ambitious and daring artistic vision. Shiraz was much less affected by the Mongol invasions than other parts of Iran, one factor which lead to its prominence as a centre of book production and architectural design. Iskandar also seems to have used the opportunity to attract artists from the Jala’rid domains, who were no doubt in search of employment following the demise of that dynasty. He succeeded in attracting calligraphers such as Ma‘ruf al-Baghdadi and
Mahmud al-Husayni to his court, and the extraordinary anthologies produced under his patronage showed a cosmopolitan taste that drew on Ilkhaniid and Jala’irid models. It has been noted that a desire to stress royal might underpinned the choice of many of the subjects for illustration in the anthologies. In fact, Iskandar Sultan must be credited as one of the chief pioneers of the princely model that equated royal glory with artistic patronage—a model that was to be one of the enduring legacies of the Timurid dynasty.1

The grand nature of this decree is consistent with the biography of Iskandar that has come down to us. The monumental tawqi’ script of the verse from the Qur’an at the head of the roll, the gold ink, and the huge length of the scroll, all bespeak imperial ambitions. Though the format of such decrees, distinguished by the upward curve of the line and the large spaces between the lines, has a pedigree in the Islamic world stretching back to the Fatimids, this roll would have been modelled on Ilkhaniid and early Timurid precedents. Though the invention of ta’liq script is commonly attributed to Taj al-Din Salmani, a scribe working at the court of Timur, a decree issued by Ilkhan Guykhatu, dated 1292, shows that a form of the script was already in use in the Ilkhaniid period. The use of shorthand features, such as the joining of ligatures between certain letters and words, as well as the compact nature of the script, probably intended to preclude later additions to the text, reflect the origins of ta’liq in the chanceries of the Turco-Mongol dynasties of Iran. The rise of chancery scripts such as ta’liq and nasta’liq in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries reflects the important roles assumed by Persian administrators and secretaries in Mongol and post-Mongol Iran.2 It was not unusual for imperial decrees such as this one to bear the name or seal of the head of the administration along with those of the ruler; in the right-hand margin, parallel to line 41, is a note validating the document, accompanied by the seal of the Iskandar’s chief minister, or sadr, Ghuyyath al-Din Muhammad, also known as Hafiz Ra’i. Hafiz Ra’i himself was a patron of the arts and a sponsor of public buildings.3

The presumptuous titles taken by Iskandar in the decree betray the spirit of audacity that must have led Shahrukh to take action against his nephew. In line 4, Iskandar is described as “He who takes charge of the affairs of the Muslimeen” (Al Qa’in bi-tamur al-Muslimeen), “Sultan”, and “Commander of the Faithful”, titles that carry imperial and even caliphal overtones. The gold seal impression that has been stamped over the date bears the name Iskandar b.

“Umar Shaykh” and the legend Rasti Rasti, or “Rectitude is Deliverance”, the very legend used by Timur and Shahrukh—further evidence of Iskandar Sultan’s aspirations to pre-eminence in the Timurid dynasty. The use of gold for the entire text of the document is another indication of Iskandar Sultan’s regal pretensions, and a practice that also seems to have drawn on Ilkhaniid imperial models.4

The text of the decree confirms the immunity of sayyids, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, from paying poll tax, and orders state officials to offer them protection and assistance. An unusually high number of royal decrees from the Mongol and post-Mongol period are concerned with protecting the interests of local, usually religious, figureheads, who were probably frequently menaced by predatory government officials.5 That this was the case here is suggested by the detail that the “Head of All Sayyids” and his two sons had made a visit to the royal court, presumably with some complaint of maltreatment. It is thought that the Mongol and Timurid rulers of Iran extended protection and immunities from taxation to religious figureheads, especially the heads of Sufi orders, in return for their providing the ruling dynasty with some sort of legitimacy. Iskandar Sultan is known to have been an associate and supporter of Shah Nematullah Vali Kirmani, to whom he granted land revenues for the construction of a khanqah. Religious figureheads, in theory at least, were able to offer a degree of protection to the mass of the population, who probably bore the brunt of often oppressive taxation and frequent warfare. The period saw a marked rise in the veneration of descendants of the Prophets as well as of the Twelve Shi’i Imams among a population that was Sunni at large. After his initial removal from power, Iskandar is known to have spent a period of ascetic retirement at an imamzada, the shrine of the descendant of a Shi’i imam, outside Isfahan.6

1 For an account of Iskandar’s reign, see Sourouj 1996.
2 For Iskandar’s patronage of the arts, see Sourouj 1992; Gray 1979, pp. 133-36. For Iskandar’s use of Jala’irid artists, see Gray 1979, p. 122. Lentz and Lowry 1986, p. 114. For Iskandar’s use of royal myth, see ibid., pp. 116-17.
3 See ibid., p. 35; Sourouj 1979, pp. 18-32.
4 Sourouj 1996, p. 83.
5 On imperial Ilkhaniid jahans, see Soudavar 1992, p. 79.
6 For a jahans of comparable nature, see ibid., no. 20, pp. 79-80.
7 For the veneration of sayyids in this period and for the relationship between rulers and the leaders of Sufi and other religious organizations, see Aubin 1956; Lentz and Lowry 1986, pp. 28-30. For Shahrukh and Iskandar’s involvement with Sufi and spiritual movements, see ibid., pp. 93-94.
لا يوجد نص يمكن قراءته بشكل طبيعي من الصورة.