CHAPTER FIVE

The Imperial Qur’āns of Iran

The production of large-format, "luxury" Qur’āns was by no means confined to Iraq. From 1300 to 1315 a number of single- and multiple-volume copies of the Qur’ān survive which can be attributed to cities in Iran. They are of two kinds. First, the "royal" Qur’āns: large-format, multiple-volume copies, beautifully written and sumptuously illuminated for the Sultan or members of his immediate circle. Secondly, single- or multiple-volume manuscripts without a patron’s name. The quality of these ranges from mediocre to excellent.

In this chapter we deal with the first group. This comprises two Qur’āns, the first copied for Ōljaytu in Ḥamadān (Cat.45), and the second for the vizir Rashīd al-Dīn (Cat.46), almost certainly copied in the Rabī’i Rashīd at Tabriz. Both arc in the general tradition of the earlier Qur’āns made in Mosul and Baghdad for Ōljaytu, though the links between them and the later are closer than those between the Iraqi and Ḥamadān Qur’āns. The Ḥamadān manuscript is undoubtedly the best-known of all Ik-Khānīd Qur’āns and is the last known to have been commissioned by Ōljaytu.

The Ḥamadān Qur’ān of Ōljaytu

The city of Ḥamadān or Ḥamadān was one of the main centres of the province of Jihāl and lay immediately south of Sulṭānīyah. It was a thriving town until the Mongol invasion in the second decade of the thirteenth century. However, by the beginning of the next century it had recovered, and Mustawfī describes it as a city some two leagues across. It was here that the famous Rashīd al-Dīn was born.

Although we know little about the production of manuscripts in Ḥamadān, there is a well-known Qur’ān, now in Philadelphia, whose colophon states that it was copied in Ḥamadān in the year 1164. The Qur’ān produced there for Ōljaytu in the first two decades of the fourteenth century is the only one of the "royal" Ik-Khānīd Qur’āns to have survived intact. Soon after its completion it was sent, or taken, to Cairo, where it became the property of a Mamlūk amīr. Thus it survived the chaos and destruction in Iran at the final collapse of the Ik-Khānīd, and the invasion of Timūr later in the fourteenth century. The
ere fact that it escaped the dismemberment of those Qur’āns produced in Mosul and Baghdad, some of which were bequeathed to the tomb of ʿOlyajī at Sulṭāniyyah, would alone assure the manuscript a place in history. But, as we have seen, it is also believed to have played an important part in the development of Mamlūk Qur’ān illumination.9

Attention has been paid to the text of this manuscript’s wafiyah and to the way it may have come into the possession of its Mamlūk owner. Little has been said about it, however, as a work of art, nor has its effect on Mamlūk Qur’āns been properly evaluated. The one undoubted fact is that it is the only ʿīb-Khāniḍ Qur’ān whose existence in Cairo during the first half of the fourteenth century is attested by historical documentation.4

At the end of each juz’ in the manuscript there appears to have been a roundel bearing a colophon which was overpainted probably when the Qur’ān was brought to Cairo. Only the colophon on the final part is now visible, but this makes it clear that the copying and illumination took place in Hamādān during the reign of ʿOlyajī and that the calligrapher, evidently a native of Hamādān, was also the illuminator.5 The manuscript was commissioned by the ʿīb-Khāniḍ Sultan; of that there can be little doubt. At the end of most parts, and occasionally in other areas, there are elaborate certificates of commissioning. These vary somewhat from one juz’ to another. The fully edited version of this text, published by Wiet in 1933, reads: “Thanks be to God, Illuminator of the hearts of the world by the shining lights of the Qur’ān, Decorator of the affairs of the worlds by the
Whether all were written in 1313, when the entire project was complete, or whether this was done as each ‘ajza’ was illuminated, we cannot say as the other colophons have been painted over. Similarly, whether all three were endowed to the Sulṭāniyya mausoleum remains unknown as only the Baghdad Qur’ān (Cat.40) bears a saqafiyah to that effect. However, it is our belief that it was Ōljāyūtī’s intention to do so, and that this is the simplest explanation for the simultaneous creation of these three outstanding manuscripts.

The Calligrapher and Illuminator

We know nothing about the remarkable calligrapher ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ḥamadhānī, except that he was a native of Ḥamadhān working in Ḥamadhān. This much information is given in the colophon: “This Qur’ān was written and illuminated in conformity with the order by the one who propagandizes for His kingdom from the bottom of his heart, with complete sincerity, who aspires for the indulgence of the Eternal, the meaner of His slaves ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ḥamadhānī, may God forgive him, in Jumādā I 713 [September 1313] of the Hijrah of the Prophet, blessings be upon him, in the Abode of Orthodoxy Ḥamadhān, God protect it from harm.”

There must have already been a well-established atelier, able to produce high-quality manuscripts to which ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥamadhānī belonged, as his surviving work shows a very different style from that from the west of Iran and Iraq. The whole character of this manuscript is quite different, for example, from that of the two earlier Baghdadi ones (Cat.39 & 40), where every page, with its elaborately-conceived illumination, is a virtuoso performance, each more spectacular than the last. The script of this Ḥamadhānī Qur’ān is one of the earliest examples of a monumental rayhān, a type which became increasingly popular in the next century under the Timūrids. It is not to be confused with the delicate rayhān daqiq favoured by the “Yaqūt” Qur’āns. It is also larger, with more of the quality of sultūn than the excellent medium-sized rayhān used in the Qur’āns of the 1320s and 1330s which are associated with Arghūn al-Kāmilī. It is of some interest, and perhaps not without significance, that each of the Qur’āns commissioned by Ōljāyūtī should be in a different monumental script: that of Baghdad in muhaggag-sultūn, that of Mosul in muhaggag and that of Ḥamadhān in rayhān.

‘Abdallāh al-Ḥamadhānī was also the illuminator of the manuscript, and was thus able to conceive the work as a decorative unity from start to finish. Great economy of both style and colour is evident in the opening illuminated pages of each part. Instead of taking up most of the page, the illuminated area is confined to a rectangle in the middle, on a page measuring 36 × 41 cm. The impression made on anyone used to seeing manuscripts such as the earlier Baghdad Qur’āns must have been considerable. The designs of the opening pages of illuminations fall into three broad types:

1. A square panel with star-polygon whose arms extend to the four corners.
2. A rectangular panel of “infinite” pattern. (If we compare the thirty designs of this manuscript with those in the other three Ṭī-Khānīd “royal” Qur’āns, there is surprisingly little repetition. Although the same principles are often used, it is rare to find two similar designs. And there are no duplicates.)
3. Independent compositions, rather like the second type noted in the Qur’ān of Ōljāyūtī from Baghdad. These are few in number, only three in the twenty-eight ‘ajza’ examined.

The inscriptions which many of these panels contain are interesting for a number of reasons. So far as we can tell from earlier and contemporary manuscripts, inscriptions at the beginning of Qur’āns and Qur’ān sections consisted of specially-selected ‘ayāh, which are often repeated in the same manuscript. Four of these inscriptions in the Ḥamadhān manuscript are Qur’ānic ‘ayāh (al-Nahl, XVI, 97-98, 103; Bāqū’ al-Sūrat, XVII, 82; al-Saff, LXI, 79-80); the remainder are Prophetic Hadiths. This may not be a new departure, since we know nothing about earlier Qur’āns produced by al-Ḥamadhānī; but this is the first recorded occurrence in the fourteenth century.

The opening pages of text are perhaps the simplest of any fourteenth-century Qur’ān. Each is divided into five panels with two narrow strips at the sides, and in almost all cases the decoration is confined to the upper and lower panels. The arbitrary choice of the ‘ajza’ with decorated opening pages of text suggests that the manuscript may not be completely finished. Marginal ornaments, which in the earlier Baghdad manuscripts became glorious works of art, exceptional in their variety and splendour, are here by comparison subdued. In all of the decoration there is an almost total absence of chinoiserie and patterned borders that betray Chinese influence, such as we see in the two Baghdad Qur’āns. Almost all parts end with the certificate of commissioning, written in circular or polylobed medallions in a square and spread over two facing pages. In the Baghdad and Mosul manuscripts the certificates appear at the beginning. The colophon is written in a circle on the verso side of the certificate, which does not happen in the earlier Qur’āns.

Given the conservatism of fourteenth-century illuminators and calligraphers, ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥamadhānī’s approach may seem almost revolutionary. The absence of bands of heavy gold strapwork, the extensive use of blue and the device of painting much of the decoration in silhouette, give the manuscript a delicate, almost ethereal quality, completely different from the other Qur’āns commissioned by Ōljāyūtī, where a sense of barbaric splendour is the overwhelming impression made. The underlying principles of his opening compositions are however similar to those of the work of earlier Baghdadi and Mosul artists. For example, only two of the opening compositions have borders; these run all the way round the composition, in the style of Muḥammad ibn Aybak. In each case, in ‘ajza’ 19 and 20, the borders are based on knots and tri-lobed leaves. It is interesting that several Ṭī-Khānīd Qur’āns, such as the Mosul Qur’ān of Ōljāyūtī and a multi-part Qur’ān dated 1310 (Cat.44), omit the outer borders.

Within the body of the text there are a number of noteworthy features: the organization of the pages into panels; the absence of ‘ayāh divisions; and the extreme economy of decoration. Some of these features may be associated with an atelier in
Hamadân which, as we shall see, produced Cat. 41 which was the work of a calligrapher whose *nusbah*, like that of the calligrapher of the 1313 Qur'ān, is *al-Hamadânī*. Portions of the text are written in blue panels, just as we see in the Hamadân manuscript of 1313, a feature which is not found in either the Baghdad or Mosul Qur'āns.

The Hamadân manuscript is also remarkable for its uniformity. It is difficult to find pages which could be the work of anyone other than the main artist. Rogers, who has also had the opportunity to examine the manuscript in detail, suggests that at least one other hand is detectable. He points out that the right-hand half of the opening composition in *Jaz* 23 is finer than the opposite one, which was probably the work of an assistant. The artist may well have had one or more assistants, of course, and so it is even more remarkable that he was able to exercise such close control that differences in style are almost invisible.

**The Subsequent History of the Manuscript in Cairo**

We know nothing of what happened to the manuscript after its completion in 1313 until 1326 when it was bequeathed to the newly-founded *khiwâḥ* of an important Mamlûk amir. Each part of the manuscript was inscribed on that occasion with a *waqf*âyâh: The fortress of the Muslims and the refuge of those devoting themselves to the Almighty, Abû Sa'id Saiyid al-Dîn Bakhtamur ibn 'Abdallah al-Sâqî al-Malkî al-Nâṣîrî, may God make him profit by the August Qur'ān, has endowed in perpetuity all of this Noble, Venerated and Magnificent Qur'ān comprising thirty parts for all Muslims, as a true and legal endowment for reading, consulting, copying and studying, and has placed it in the tomb known as his foundation in Lesser Qarâfûh near to the enclosure of al-Malk al-Zâhir. He will be responsible for it during his lifetime and after him his descendants and their descendants. If one of them does not conduct himself properly, then the responsibility will pass to the most worthy. Should the line die out then the responsibility will pass to the shaikh of the tomb and that will continue until God inherits the earth and those upon it, and He is the best of inheritors. He has declared that the above-mentioned Qur'ān should not be taken out of the tomb ever, except for repair. Woe to anyone who changes or alters these stipulations! 'If anyone changes the bequest after hearing it, the guilt shall be on those who make the change. For God hears and knows all things.' [al-Baqarah, II, 185]. The reward of the above-mentioned endower is in the hands of God, glorify and magnify Him, who never fails to reward him who does good works. Dated from 7 *Jumâdâ* I to 27 *Jumâdâ* II 726 [1021 AD; 10 April 1326].

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**Fig. 75** (Cat. 41). Oğuzîâ's Hamadân Qur'ân, *Jaz* 30, detail of right-hand frontispiece, folio 1v.

A centrifugal design with star-polygon. This and the other star-shapes are covered with a delicate net of gold knots and palmettes which mesh at the centre to form a multi-pointed nucleus. The remaining intervening spaces have fine black palmettes. Above and below are inscription panels.
Marginal ornaments:

a) device to indicate each fifth ayah. These medallions are the only place in the manuscript where kufi appears;

b) medallion indicating a decade of ayahs;

c) alfah-palmette in the form of a medallion;

d) medallion with the word 'thirty' indicating the third decade of ayahs. The thirteenth decoration which appears here is rarely found in this manuscript.

Fig. 77 (Cat. 45). Oljajtut’s Hamadan Qur’an, juz’ 30, text-page. Sura LXXXVIII, al-Nabi (The Great New), ayat. 39–40.

A typical example of the calligrapher al-Hamaduth’s fine thuluth-nastaliq hand. At the bottom is the title of the next alfah.

Overleaf left

Fig. 78 (Cat. 45). Oljajtut’s Hamadan Qur’an, frontispiece, folio 1v.

All but one of the thirty frontispieces of this Qur’an are designed without palmette or arabesque borders, giving them a rather stark yet elegant appearance. The inscriptions above and below are the traditional alfah, al-Waj’ah (The Inevitable Event), ayat. 77–80.

Overleaf right

Fig. 79 (Cat. 45). Oljajtut’s Hamadan Qur’an, juz’ 6, right-hand frontispiece, folio 1v.

A design scheme typical of this manuscript, consisting of a rectangular block of repeat pattern without inscriptions, strapwork or borders. The interstices are filled with blue, black and gold arabesque motifs, with the white paper underneath being used, in effect, as a unifying colour.
THE IMPERIAL QUR'ANS OF IRAN
Fig. 80 (Cat. 42). Ólýajýü's Hamadan Qur'an, Juz' 15, opening page of text, folio 2v. Sûrât XVII, Bûnî b. Isrâ'îl (The Children of Israel), Ýâyâh 1.

The script is a large naskh, in gold outlined in black with blue vocalization. There are five lines of script to a page apart from the opening pages, shown here, where there are only three. The Ýâyâhs are not marked and each line is framed; both features were unique at this time. Above and below the text are panels bearing the titles, verse-count and a pious saying in white thuluth on a scroll-work background.

Fig. 81 (Cat. 43). Ólýajýü's Hamadan Qur'an, Juz' 20, opening page of text, folio 3v. Sûrât LXVII, al-Mulk (Domination), Ýâyâhs 1–3.

The text is written in panels with the hamshâhî in the decorated panel on the top right. The actual Ýâtâh heading is in the decorated panel at the bottom of the same page. On the opposite page the decorated panels contain a Prophetic hadîth stating the virtue of reading this surah. There are many such inscriptions throughout this Qur'an. The five panels are surrounded by a black border with floral decoration. On many opening pages these areas are left blank.

Fig. 83 (Cat. 45). Ólýajýü’s Hamadan Qur’an, Juz’ 15, right-hand frontispiece, folio 1v.

The manuscript was copied and illuminated in Hamadan by a highly original artist, 'AbdAllâh ibn Muhammad al-Hâmâdânî. Colour is restricted throughout to blue, black, white and gold, with the occasional detail in pink or some other shade. There is similar evidence of economy in the design of frontispieces, as this one illustrates. There is only a simple rectangular panel containing a block of repeat pattern. Underneath the illumination is the sâfâqûb endowment certificate of a McMâlîk amîr, Ibbâzûnûr al-Sâjî, dated 726/1326. These certificates are found on all thirty volumes of the Qur'an.
An interesting aspect is that the Qur’ān was bequested for the purposes of copying, naql. But whether this is related to its aesthetic worth is not clear. Nevertheless, the specific mention of copying in an endowment document is rare. Wāqīyyahs from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries show that Muslims were expected to benefit from reading aloud, qira‘ah, and recitation, tilwah, but hardly ever from copying. We have come across only one other manuscript (Cat.72), which refers to copying. In the wasfiyyah dated 1356, we read that Muslims may benefit from intiqāl wa‘l-kitāb, copying and writing. Cat.72 is another fine Il-Khānīd manuscript, and it may be that its beauty prompted the idea of making copies. But a more technical explanation seems likelier since both manuscripts are in thirty parts, a format which was relatively uncommon. Perhaps the format and layout of these manuscripts were to be taken as models, rather than their calligraphy and illumination.

Scholars who have examined the Ḥamādān Qur’ān have speculated on its provenance. Rogers concludes that it was somehow spirited out of Iran before 1326, possibly in the course of negotiations between the Mamlūk and Il-Khānīds. He wonders how it came into the possession of Baktamur rather than to the Sultan himself, and has to admit: ‘...we know nothing of Baktamur, except that he was cup-bearer to al-Nāṣir and that he was rich enough to endow a memorial foundation and provide it with various treasuries.’

But more information has emerged since Rogers wrote in 1969. Baktamur was a leading figure at the court of al-Nāṣir and his career and death at the hands of his sovereign form one of those tragedies all too familiar in the annals of the Mamlūk Sultanate. Ibn Iyās, Māqrīzī, Ibn Ḥajar and al-Ṣafadī all furnish details of Baktamur’s life and death, and suggest the most probable explanation for his acquisition of the Ḥamādān Qur’ān. Abū Sa‘īd Sayf al-Dīn Baktamur ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Sāqqī was a Mamlūk of Baybars al-Jāshnāghī. After his death Baktamur became the property of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who made him his cup-bearer (ṣāqī). He was promoted to one of the highest offices in the state, atiḥak al-jayyish, commander-in-chief, and became the close confidant of the Sultan; no one else was ever as close. The two were always in each other’s company and al-Nāṣir often visited Baktamur to spend the night at his house. He acted as a restraining influence on the Sultan and intervened on behalf of the Sultan’s subjects whenever he thought about to commit some injustice. The Sultan was said to make no move without seeking the advice of Baktamur. The two eventually became related by marriage when the amir married the Sultan’s sister, and al-

Fig. 83 (Cat. 46). The Qur’ān of Rashīd al-Dīn, left-hand frontispiece, folio 25, probably Tabriz, 1315

This is the only known section from a thirty-part Qur’ān commissioned by Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318). The illumination and layout of this juz’, number 26, have points in common with manuscripts from Ḥamādān and Tabriz. The calligrapher, probably also the illuminator, came from a small town south of Ḥamādān and may have spent some time in that city before going to Tabriz. The opening page of illumination has a block of pattern based on a familiar contemporary tile design, and is identical to that used for the frontispiece of a manuscript made for Rashīd al-Dīn in Tabriz a few years earlier. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Arabe 2314). The colour scheme and narrow border of palmettes are close to those of Qur’āns produced in the western part of the Il-Khānīd empire, i.e. Baghdad and Mosul.
Nāṣir’s son Ānūk married Baktamur’s daughter. Unfortunately the Sultan came to believe that Baktamur was planning to poison him on their way to Mekka, where al-Nāṣir intended to present a new door to the Ka‘bah. In 1331 during the return journey he had both the amir and his son Ahmad murdered and buried by the roadside. Their bodies were later exhumed and laid to rest in the mausoleum attached to the khānqāh which Baktamur had built.18

The foundation of the khānqāh had been completed by 1326 and in June of that year it was inhabited by its Sūfī brethren. In the same year the Ḥamādān Qur‘ān was bequeathed to the tomb of the khānqāh. Its numerous treasures included carpets, copper vessels, books, multi-volume Qur‘āns (rab‘āt), lamps of inlaid brass, and of enamelled glass, all of which were in the charge of a custodian.19 Both Ibn Lyās and Maqrizī tell us that the amir received gifts from numerous sources and that al-Nāṣir himself gave many presents (which he took back after Baktamur’s untimely end). It would thus seem most likely that the Ḥamādān Qur‘ān was given by al-Nāṣir to his favourite on the opening of his foundation.

When the Sultan’s own khānqāh was opened some years before, we know that the ruler of Hamā sent him a present of books for it.20 It would thus have been quite appropriate for al-Nāṣir to have made the amir a present of a beautiful Qur‘ān. It is also likely that al-Nāṣir could have received the Qur‘ān as a gift from the Ṣūfis of Abū Sa‘īd, in the course of the negotiations in 1324. We know that al-Nāṣir did receive gifts from Abū Sa‘īd because the prince-historian Abū‘l-Fidā‘ī was a witness to the reception of the 1324 embassy.21 Unfortunately, he does not mention the arrival of any books or Qur‘āns, though these may have been overlooked. There were also other exchanges, and this Qur‘ān may have been presented on some other occasion. In any case, Qur‘āns were always popular presents, and it would have been quite natural for the Ṣūfis of the Ṣūfis, Abū Sa‘īd to have sent to al-Nāṣir the Ḥamādān Qur‘ān which he had inherited from Ǧālījūt. When the Qur‘ān was in the hands of al-Nāṣir the certificate of commissioning must have been altered. The Sultan then passed it on to Baktamur along with other gifts in 1326 for the new tomb of the khānqāh.

The Influence of the Ḥamādān Qur‘ān

As we have seen, the influence of this Qur‘ān is usually considered to be exceptionally important.22 In fact it was minimal. In terms of calligraphy it had no influence at all. Rayḥān was simply not a popular script with the Mamlūks, nor, apart from one or two examples, was any monumental script in gold. No Mamlūk artist adopted the unfamiliar division of the page, nor, as far as we know, are there any Mamlūk Qur‘āns written without āyāh-markers. The delicate colour-schemes were quite foreign to Mamlūk tastes, as was the absence of heavy gold swirlwork. Finally, the large-format thirty-part Qur‘ān was never popular with the Mamlūks. The only area where any possible influence can be detected is in the opening pages of illumination, where there are parallels with compositions in some Mamlūk Qur‘āns. But even this is doubtful, since some of the designs demonstrably belonged to the Mamlūk painters’ repertoire before 1326, or even before 1313.

The Qur‘ān of the Vizir Rashīd al-Dīn

The major, perhaps decisive, role of Rashīd al-Dīn in encouraging the arts of the book has been known for a century or more. To immortalize his literary works he had copies made in Arabic and Persian for dispatch to the main centres of the Il-Khānīd domains.23 This was done annually, but only a fraction of the copies produced has survived. These manuscripts were made in the quarter established by the vizir in Tabrīz, and called after him the Rab‘ī Rashīdī, of which now nothing remains, for it was sacked after his death and again after the death of his son Ghīyāth al-Dīn in 1336. To the once thriving ateliers of the Rab‘ī Rashīdī we can attribute only two fragments of the minister’s fa‘īl al-Tawārikh and a copy of Majmū‘ al-Rashīdiyya‘, a collection of tracts.24 The first two are of enormous importance for the study of manuscript painting, while the latter has some fine illumination, signed by the painters on the opening pages, together with the important preface giving details on the production of manuscripts at the Rab‘ī Rashīdī.

The appearance of a new manuscript commissioned by Rashīd is therefore of considerable importance. A single section from a thirty-part Qur‘ān made for the vizir towards the end of his career is in the Topkapi Library (Cat.46), and is mentioned in the catalogue of Arabic manuscripts; however, the all-important certificate of commissioning was missed by the catalogue, almost certainly because it comes at the end of the work.

The manuscript consists of Ǧuz‘ 26, and is in large format, 52 x 37 cm, almost the same size as the Ḥamādān Qur‘ān, and is copied on fifty-four folios in a rather unusual script resembling the thulḥīt-rayḥān of the Ḥamādān manuscript. On the final folio the date is given: Ǧīl jumāt Ǧāmūs 713 (the beginning of April 1315), when Rashīd was at the height of his power, and some sixteen months before the death of his master Ǧālījūt. At the end of the Ǧuz‘ on the final double-page opening, on otherwise blank pages, there are two confronted poly-lobed medallions bearing the certificate of commissioning in Arabic. This reads:25

“Copied26 for the well-established library of the servant, the lord, the greatest, the undulating sea, the light, the revealer of secrets of truth and the Qur‘ān, divinely-guided exponent of inquiry and explanation, possessor of the hallowed soul, in whom all human qualities are conjointed, sun of the firmament of wisdom, pole of the heaven of knowledge, most brilliant and perfect of the first and the last, favoured with the grace of the Lord of the worlds, predestined for vizir when even Adam was yet unformed, Sultan of ministers and sages in the worlds, Rashīd al-Haqq wa‘l-Dunya wa‘l-Dīn, Fadlallūh, son of the Lord, the master, the greatest, the late ‘Imād al-Dawlah, Abī‘l-Khayr, may God glorify his victories and increase his good fortune and may the suns of his glory blaze forth and shine...”

Although historians disagree about his exact name, there can be no doubt that the person referred to is the great statesman-historian, and that the manuscript is the only surviving example of a Qur‘ān, no doubt one of hundreds, commissioned by him. The certificate makes it clear that the Qur‘ān was made not for a mosque but for Rashīd’s library, khīzānāt.27 This presumably was in the Rab‘ī Rashīdī, since as far as we know he had no other. Concerning this, or the part of it that contained the Qur‘ān, we have some
information from Rashid himself. In his will he mentions the Qur'an collection in the Tabriz suburb near his tomb: "Two book-stores, bayt al-kutub, which I have built to the right and left of my tomb, containing one thousand copies of the Qur'an that I have deposited therein, I bequeath to the Rab'î Rashid." The details of these are as follows:

Those written in gold: 400,
Those in the hand of Yâqût: 10,
Those in the hand of Abû al-Manâar: 2,
Those in the hand of Ahmad (ibn al-) Subravardi: 20,25
Those written by well-known calligraphers: 20,
Those which are beautifully written: 548. 25 26

Rashid was interested in collecting Qur'âns, probably for the use of students and pilgrims visiting his tomb. The use of the word khâṣî'ah in the certificate of commissioning at the end of the manuscript indicates that it was for them that the Topkapî Qur'an was made, rather than for another city, which was the destination of most Qur'âns produced in the Rab'î Rashîd.

The calligraphy is excellent, but once again we have no information about the calligrapher apart from what the manuscript tells us. The colophon is on the final folio in a circle surrounded by a poly-lobed medallion and gives the calligrapher's name as follows:

"(Written) at the hands of the meanest of God's creatures 'Abdallâh ibn 'Abîl-Qâsim ibn 'Abdallâh al-Tavî al-Râdrâvari, may God reform and forgive him (at the beginning) of Şafar [April], sealed with grace and victory, in the year 715 [1315] of the Hijrah, with Your mercy, O Most Merciful." We may assume that the two final words refer to the calligrapher's place of origin. "al-Râdrâvari" means "of the district of Rûdrâvar," or Rûdrâvar, or Rûdûrdâvar, as it was also called. "al-Tavî" means "of the town of Tavî".

Rashid al-Dîn's manuscript is the only copy other than the Hâmadân Qur'an in "royal" format, with a border and blue panels around the text. This similarity can be explained in two ways, either by the manuscript having been made in Hâmadân, or by the
calligrapher, and probably the artist, having worked there at some stage. It is improbable
that a small town like Tüvi could have supported a manuscript atelier capable of producing
Qur’āns of the luxury type. But Hamadān was one of the places where Rashīd had
established a foundation which produced copies of his writings, and the calligrapher of the
Topkapi manuscript perhaps spent some time there.31

In this context it is worth pointing out that there is another early fourteenth-century
Qur’ān which employs the same technique of dividing the text into panels, which also has a
connection with Hamadān. It is dated 1309-10 and was copied by Māmūd ibn Yūsuf,
known as “Fakhr al-Hamadhānī” (Cat.41).

However, the decoration of the opening folios of the Rashīd al-Dīn Qur’ān, and the
illumination throughout, bear little relation to those of Olijayī’s Hamadān Qur’ān
(Cat.45). There is no signature on the Rashīd al-Dīn manuscript except the calligrapher’s.
Because of the addition of a border to each page and the panelled layout of the opening
pages, we would suggest that the calligrapher was also the illuminator. The same thing
occurs in Olijayī’s Hamadān Qur’ān of 1313 where we know the scribe and illuminator are
one man, and this calligrapher came from the same area of Iran, where he may also have
received some of his training. We can also presume that the calligrapher/illuminator of the
Rashīd al-Dīn Qur’ān received some of his training in Hamadān which was the nearest
major city to his birthplace.

The frontispiece is one of the few that we have found in which a repeat pattern of the
type used in the central area of each page is truncated at the top and bottom by panels of
text. Qur’ān illuminators, as far as we can tell from the surviving manuscripts, usually used
panels of text only with star-polygon designs or semi-independent compositions. The only
other example we know in an Il-Khānīdīn manuscript is in Majmū‘ah Rashīdīyyah made at the
Rab‘ī Rashīdī.32 Since the Topkapi Qur’ān (Cat.46) was commissioned by Rashīd al-Dīn,
and since the only other example of this opening frontispiece technique appears in another
manuscript made for him, we suggest that this Qur’ān was probably made at the Rab‘ī
Rashīdī too. Any Qur’ān made for Rashīd would, one presumes, have been produced at the
special Qur’ān scripторium in the Rab‘ī Rashīdī, the Dār al-Maṣāḥif. The Waqf-namah
drawn up by the great vizir before his death gives details of this establishment. According to
this, the waqf alwaqf was to hire scribes whose task was to produce, each year, a
copy of the Qur‘ān and one of Ibn Aḥṭār’s work on Ḥādīth, Jām‘ al-Uṣūl fi Ḥādīth al-Rasūl,
for dispatch to various centres, where they were to be placed in the main mosque. They
contained special prayers for the donor and for recital upon installation. The details of the
Qur‘ān given are as follows: “A Qur‘ān in thirty parts in elegant script, fully indented and
pointed and suitable for any of the seven authorized readings, on large-size Baghdadī paper,
illuminated to indicate each fifth and tenth āyāh and the beginning of each āyāh and bound in
goodskin.” 33

The Topkapi Qur’ān corresponds in every way with this description. But as its
certificate of commissioning states that it was made for Rashīd’s khizānah, or library, we
must assume that it was not one of those copies, together with Jām‘ al-Uṣūl, which he

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85

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83