

A NOTE ON THE MEDIAEVAL INVENTORY
OF THE MANUSCRIPTS KEPT
IN THE GREAT MOSQUE OF KAIROUAN

FRANÇOIS DÉROCHE

The history of the Great Mosque in Kairouan goes back to the foundation of the city itself, but its present state results from the building activity carried out in Aghlabid times, at the beginning of the 4th/10th century. In the prayer hall, the Aghlabid *maqṣūrā* which was later replaced by a Zirid structure was turned into a library — or more precisely, a deposit of books — at an early date. At some point, the collection was moved to a room located in the *qiblā* wall, behind the *maqṣūrā*, since Henri Saladin reports that in the 19th century, boxes containing discarded bindings and Qur'ānic fragments in bad state were kept there.¹ It was later transferred to a room opening onto the courtyard located in the northern building, east of the minaret. Georges Marçais and Louis Poinssot think that this move was prescribed by the authorities because the old books were full of parasites and the space left was converted into a library.² Luckily enough, the lack of proper conservation measures did not prevent a large number of manuscripts, fragments or documents to escape a worse fate and to come down to our time. This almost unique heritage is now kept and preserved in the museum at Raqqādā.

The document which will be starting point of this note was found in this collection. It has been known for almost 50 years, following its publication by Ibrahim Chabbouh.³ It has the shape of a parchment

¹ H. SALADIN, *La mosquée de Sidi Okba* (Tunis, 1899), pp. 36-37 ; M. AN-NAYYĀL, *المسكينة الاثرية بالقبروان: عرض ودليل* (Tunis, 1963), pp. 8-10.

² G. MARÇAIS et L. POINSSOT, *Objets kairouanais, ix^{ème} au XIII^{ème} siècle. Reliures, verreries, cuivres et bronzes, bijoux* vol. I [Direction des antiquités et arts, Notes et documents, 11] (Tunis-Paris, 1948), p. 11.

³ I. CHABBOUH, *سجل قديم لمسكينة جامع القبروان*, *Revue de l'Institut des manuscrits arabes*, 2/2(1376/1956), pp. 339-372. More recently, two papers have been devoted to the document, the first one by Adam GACEK (The ancient 'sigill' of Qayrawān, *MELA notes* 46(1989), pp. 26-29) and the second one by Elise VOGUET (L'inventaire des manuscrits de la bibliothèque de la Grande mosquée de Kairouan [693/1293-4]. Une contribution à l'histoire du mālīkisme kairouanais, *Arabica* 50 (2003), pp. 532-544). See also F. DÉROCHE, La biblioteca medievale della moschea grande di Kairouan, in: *Le mille e*

quire in vertical format (32 x 23 cm) which contained originally eleven pages, that is to say six folios — this piece of information being provided by the copyist himself. We know that the second one has been lost from the lacuna between f. 1b and 2a⁴ and from the final description written by the scribe which mentions the first and last words of every single page.⁵ In its present state, the document contains only five folios, the first one being damaged. The text begins on f. 1b and the number of lines to the page varies slightly — between 26 and 28. The text is an inventory of the library of the Great Mosque in Kairouan. For convenience sake, the editor introduced a numeration of the items which are described. We are not dealing here with a catalogue, but rather with a legal document set down in the presence of the *qāḍī* of Kairouan and authenticated by witnesses who signed on the last page.⁶ Chabbouh's edition was illustrated with a picture of part of the last page, the date of the document: *Ġumādā* II 693/May 1294, and the signatures of the witnesses, among them that of 'Alī b. Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Ḥālidīnī who seems to have been responsible for the redaction of the inventory.

Additional information can be gleaned from Muḥammad an-Nayyāl's small book on the mosque library which includes two plates, one of the first page of the inventory and the other one of the last one (f. 5b according to Chabbouh).⁷ A large part of the former's upper right corner has been lost, with the exception of the remnants of the end of two lines of text which are separated from the descriptions by a space which seems to have been left blank. The same hand was responsible for both elements, the first one being probably a short introduction, now unfortunately almost entirely lost. On the second line, a few words can nevertheless be read: *Rabī' al-awwal talaṭūn* [...], in other words part of a date without the hundreds. It is quite unlikely to have any connection with the inventory itself: if we read it as <6>30, it would be predate the document by 63 *hiġri* years, a time span too important for an operation which dealt with a relatively small number of books.

una cultura. Scrittura e libri fra Oriente e Occidente, M. C. MISTRI (ed.) [Il Futuro del passato, 2] Bari, pp. 141-151.

4 I. CHABBOUH, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

5 I. CHABBOUH, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

6 I. CHABBOUH, *op. cit.*, fig. 2 b.

7 M. AN-NAYYĀL, *op. cit.*, p. 13 (a note about the inventory can be found on p. 12).

On the other hand, al-Ḥālidīnī quotes systematically an older document which he calls *siġill*, a list of manuscripts which he sometimes uses as a reference when it comes to establishing the state of some of the books kept in the mosque library. Is this list of the same nature as the inventory? Our scribe apparently finds there quite accurate data and refers to it in 38 cases.⁸ According to these quotations, the *siġill* seems to have been made up of two parts: the first one, covering the descriptions from the beginning up to n° 101 included, constituted an homogeneous group to which one should add notes located, according to al-Ḥālidīnī, "at the bottom" of the document he was looking at.⁹ The task undertaken in 693/1294 had as its main purpose establishing the state of the collection: the old descriptions were used as a basis for the new ones and the scribe added his own remarks when he had come across some discrepancy. Strangely enough, we frequently find additions: the author(s) of the *siġill* must have been working quickly, without looking closely in all places; for this reason, some of the volumes of sets escaped his/their attention. Al-Ḥālidīnī mentions such operations of putting together again the *membra disjecta*, but he also records missing volumes. In some cases, scattered *ġuz'* from various origins must have been put together in boxes: this seems to have been the case of n° 47 (previous state), made up of 77 "*ġuz'*" which are used in 693/1294 for the reconstitution of various multi-volume sets, from n° 47 (new state) to n° 52, the latter being constituted of pieces from various origins.¹⁰ Two descriptions, n°s 34 and 118, should probably be put together.

The *siġill* seems to have been an older inventory which was probably mentioned in the mutilated introduction of the 693/1294 document. It is first referred to on the first page (description n° 8) as *as-siġill al-madkūr* ("mentioned"), which suggests that it has been already mentioned in the lost part of the same page, most probably in the first three lines. The mutilated date could therefore be that of the *siġill*. If such is the case, it seems highly doubtful that it has been set up at the beginning of the 7th/13th century since it would predate the inventory by al-Ḥālidīnī by only half a century. It could go back to the 5th/11th century at the earliest since three works are described as

8 In description n° 8 of Chabbouh's edition.

9 I. CHABBOUH, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

10 I. CHABBOUH, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

a *waqf* by as-Suyūrī, one of the great jurists of the Zirid period, who died in 462/1069 at the latest.¹¹ The date could therefore be read as: 430/1038. But this seems too early, the more so as a manuscript of the collection contains a work by al-Laḥmī, a pupil of as-Suyūrī who died in 478/1085 after leaving Kairouan in the aftermath of the Bānū Hilāl invasion.¹² Although we cannot be sure that this specific manuscript was not added to the collection at a later date, we suggest to read the mutilated date as *Rabīʿ I* 530/December 1135. The *siġill* would thus have been written in the course of an inspection of the library holdings after the invasion.

The lay-out of the inventory, as it can be observed on the plate published by an-Nayyāl, deserves attention: after the introduction, the text is continuous and the descriptions come one after another, without division into paragraphs, but the beginning of each of them is clearly recognizable by the way in which the first word is written with a large elongation. The script is not *maġribī*, but rather Oriental,¹³ with a tendency to connect letters which normally should not be connected.

In its present state, according to Chabbouh's numbering, the list contains descriptions of 125 items. If we surmise that the document in its pristine state was organized on a more or less thematic basis, we can estimate the number of descriptions which were present on the folio which has been lost. The first part of the inventory in its present state (Chabbouh's n^{os} 1 to 57, until his f. 4a) is entirely dedicated to the Qur'ānic manuscripts and an internal cross reference found in n^o 57 confirms that a Qur'ānic manuscript was actually described on p. 3 — now missing. On the basis of the space devoted to the description of a single copy of the Qur'ān, we can estimate that 20 to 25 descriptions are missing. This means that the inventory comprised originally between 145 and 150 descriptions; about 90 of those (namely 67 actu-

11 H. R. IDRIS, *Le crépuscule de l'école malikite kairouanaise, Les Cahiers de Tunisie* 16(1956), p. 500; the relevant manuscripts are n^{os} 76, 87 and 110 in Chabbouh's edition of the inventory.

12 H. R. IDRIS, *art. cit.*, pp. 500-502 (Chabbouh gives 498/1104-1105 as the date of his death). The description is listed as n^o 78 in Chabbouh's edition and the editor suggests that it could be identical with a manuscript dated 451/1059 in the Kairouan collection (*art. cit.*, p. 362, n. 3); see also n^{os} 79 and 116. Al-Laḥmī was also the owner of another manuscript still kept in Kairouan: see J. SCHACHT, *On some manuscripts in the libraries of Kairouan and Tunis, Arabica* 14(1967), p. 247, n^o 24 and n. 8.

13 I. CHABBOUH, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

ally found on the document, plus 20 to 25 present on the missing folio) were devoted to Qur'ānic manuscripts which made up about two thirds of the collection.¹⁴

The descriptions begin with the indication of the number of volumes which have been actually found during the collation of the collection; as a title for the Qur'ān, the scribe uses the periphrasis *al-kitāb al-'azīz*, "the Venerable Book." He then proceeds to indicate the original number of volumes, the format, the kind of script and writing material, the number of lines, the illuminations if any, the colours used in the notation of the short vowels and orthoepic signs, the binding and, if the case arises, the presence of a box in which the manuscript was kept.¹⁵ Many sets are singled out by a mark, in most cases, one or two letters and a word in four instances. Sometimes al-Ḥālidīnī states that the copy is a *waqf* made by an individual whose name he indicates. As a matter of fact, the descriptions are not so systematic and in many cases information about such or such point is lacking. The contents can be synthesized as in the following table.

14 An analysis of the titles and contents of the other manuscripts has been published by VOGUET (*art. cit.*).

15 The descriptions are of great value for the codicological vocabulary, as shown by GACEK (*art. cit.*).

A- CLASSIFICATION OF THE QUR'ĀNIC MANUSCRIPTS
ACCORDING TO SCRIPT AND WRITING MATERIAL¹⁶

I – "Kufic" script on parchment

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|-------|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|------------------------------------|
| 1 | ? | 5 | ? | | | | | x | RIMA 2, 2, fig. 3 |
| 1 bis | l | ? | 7 | x | x | | | | "Blue Qur'ān" |
| 5 | s | 7 | 30 | x | x | | | x | |
| 6 | s | ? | 30 | x | x | | | | binding in blue leather |
| 9 | l | 18 | 8 | | x | | | | RIMA 2, 2, fig. 5a |
| 10 | ? | ? | 8 | x | x | | | x | binding in blue leather |
| 24 | ? | 8 | 7 | x? | x | | | ع | |
| 25 | ? | 10 | 10 | | x | x | | ف | |
| 27 | ? | 8 | 14 | (x) | x | | | س | |
| 30 | ? | ? | 1 | | | | | خير | "half", in large format? |
| 31 | ? | 15 | 4 | x | | | | ما | |
| 32 | ? | 13 | 2 | | | | | با | in quires ("1 st half") |

¹⁶ In the Tables i to vii, the columns provide the following information — 1: description number according to Chabbouh; 2: format of the manuscript; 3: number of lines to the page; 4: number of volumes in the original state of the set; 5: illuminations; 6: binding on wooden boards (unless otherwise stated in the column "Remarks", the leather is described as "red"); 7: *waqfiyyā*; 8: inventory mark; 9: box or chest keeping together the volumes of a set; 10: other information. A question mark in columns 2-4 means that data about this point are lacking in the description; the format of n^{os} 57 and 123 is not indicated as both are a collection of disparate volumes and n^o 120 had disappeared. A cross in columns 5-7 and 9 means that the inventory provides information about these points.

Re. *Format*: Al-Ḥālīdīnī distinguishes three formats: small (s), medium (m) and large (l); n^o 30, described as a large volume (?), might be included in the latter group. No 12 corresponds to a quarter of a sheet of paper.

Re. *Remarks*: Complementary information of various origins and nature have been put together in this column. Some have been taken from the inventory itself, some are here for references sake. "RIMA 2,2" refers to the illustrations provided by Chabbouh when he suggested an identification with an actual manuscript of the collection. I also indicate here some hypotheses.

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|-----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|------|-----|--|
| 33 | ? | 14 | 2 | | | | عا | | in quires ("2 nd half") |
| 34 | ? | 6 | 30 | x | x | | ها | | cf. 118; S. I at the beginning of each vol |
| 35 | s | 5 | 30 | x | x | | صص | x | RIMA 2, 2, fig. 6a |
| 39 | l | 7 | 14 | x | x | | | | binding in blue leather |
| 42 | ? | 8 | 14 | | x | | لا | | |
| 45 | ? | 5 | ? | x | | | ى | | RIMA 2, 2, fig. 6b |
| 46 | ? | 6 | 30 | x | x | | لبث | | cf. 37? |
| 47 | s | 6 | 30 | x | x | x | | x | according to 693 descr.; box later |
| 49 | s | 7 | 12 | | | | | x | box later |
| 51 | ? | 9 | 15 | | | | حكيم | x | 2 nd box later |
| 57 | | ? | 2? | | | | كتب | | mixed, in quires |
| 69 | m | 17 | 7 | x | x | | ص | x | mixed |
| 70 | s | 9 | 14 | x | | | ك | x | box later |
| 71 | s | 6 | 30 | x | x | | | x | |
| 119 | ? | 6 | ? | | x | | | | |
| 120 | | 15 | ? | | x | | | | |
| 123 | | ? | ? | | x | | | x | mixed; 2 nd box later |

II – "Rayḥānī Kufic" script on parchment¹⁹

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|--|
| 8 | l | 5 | 60 | x | x | | | | cf. 40; covering in silk or silk & leather |

¹⁹ CHABBOUH (*op. cit.*, p. 346, n. 2) expressed his hesitancy about his reading. Based on an-Nayyāl's poor illustration of folio 1b, the reading of a *yā*' seems difficult.

III – "Kufic" script on paper

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|-----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|--|
| 8 | l | 5 | 60 | x | x | | | | cf. 40; covering in silk or silk & leather |
| 3 | l | 7 | 4 | ? | x | | | | RIMA 2, 2, fig. 4; covering in green silk |
| 4 | l | 7 | 4 | x | | | | | |
| 29 | ? | 5 | 30 | x | x | | | x | |
| 41 | s | 5 | 30 | x | | | و | x | later box? |
| 117 | ? | 7 | 7 | | | | | | |
| 125 | ? | 6 | 30 | x | | | | | doublure in green silk |

IV – "Eastern" script on paper

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|---|
| 2 | s | 20? | 1 | x | | | | x | |
| 7 | l | ? | 30 | x | x | | | | doublure in green silk |
| 43 | ? | 6 | 10 | x | | | ب | x | S. I at the beginning of each vol. box later |

V – Nabārī script on paper

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|------------------------------------|
| 12 | m? | ? | 30 | x | | | | x | RIMA 2, 2, fig. 5b; "1/4 of sheet" |

18 On Table VIII, one can find the same information as on the previous Tables, but in a slightly different order. 1: description number according to Chabbouh; 2: information about the script or the material, when available; 3: format; 4: number of lines to the page; 5: number of volumes in the original state of the set; 6: illuminations; 7: binding on wooden boards (unless otherwise stated in the column "Remarks", the leather is described as "red"); 8: *waqfiyyā*; 9: box or chest keeping together the volumes of a set; 10: other information and inventory marks.

VI – Ġalīz script on paper

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|---------|
| 36 | ? | ? | 14 | x | | | ? | x | |

VII – Unspecified script on parchment

| N° | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|-----------|
| 13 | s | ? | 14 | x | x | | ا | | |
| 14 | s | ? | 14 | x | | | ب | | |
| 15 | s | ? | 14 | | x | | ج | | |
| 16 | s | 9 | 30 | x | x | | د | x | box later |
| 17 | ? | 7 | 14 | x | x | | و | x | box later |
| 18 | ? | 6 | 3 | x | x | | ط | | |
| 19 | ? | 12 | 14 | x | x | | ك | | |
| 20 | ? | 7 | 30 | x | x | | ل | | |
| 21 | ? | 8 | 10 | x | x | | م | x | box later |
| 22 | ? | 16 | 7 | x | x | | ب | | |
| 23 | s | 7 | 14 | | ? | | ص | | |
| 44 | s | 6 | 30 | | x | | عم | x | |

VIII – Defective description²⁰

| N° | Script | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|----|--------|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|------------|
| 11 | kufic | l | ? | 1 | | x | x | | | |
| 26 | kufic | ? | ? | 14 | x | x | | ق | | |
| 28 | ? | s | ? | 30 | | | | ه | x | mixed |
| 37 | kufic | ? | 15 | 4 | x | x | | صط | | cf. 46? |
| 38 | ? | ? | 20 | 7 | x | | | | | in quires; |

| N° | Script | Format | Lines | Volumes | Ill. | Binding | Waqf | M. | Box | Remarks |
|-----|-------------------------|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|----|-----|---|
| 40 | kufic <i>rayḥānī</i> | l | 5 | ? | | x | | | | binding in blue leather |
| 48 | kufic | s | 7 | 30 | | | | | x | مجيدة on parchment, as n° 47? box probably later; |
| 50 | ancient, parch. | | ? | ? | | | x | | x | box later |
| 52 | | ? | ? | ? | | | | | x | mixed; box later |
| 53 | ? | ? | ? | ? | | | | | x | 2 nd box later |
| 54 | ? | ? | ? | ? | | | | | x | بركة box later |
| 55 | ? | s | ? | ? | | | | | x | مهي mixed? 2 nd box later |
| 56 | ? | ? | ? | ? | | | | | x | mixed; 2 nd box later |
| 118 | kufic, parch. | ? | ? | 2? | x | | | | | cf. 34, in 30 <i>ḡuz</i> ' |

Many bindings of these Qur'ānic manuscripts are described as having wooden boards, a fact which suggests that they are of Type I — which looks like a casket.¹⁹ The leather is usually red, with the exception of a few sets covered with blue leather. No 8 is somewhat peculiar as in addition to the leather coverings, it also had coverings associating silk and leather as well as silk coverings — as is the case for n° 3. This textile is however normally used for doublures. Many boxes are mentioned in the inventory, but a distinction should be made between the old ones, probably contemporaneous with the Qur'ān sets they contain, and those which were prepared as protective measures at a later date and were at least in some instances meant to replace the original wooden box. The particularly elaborate nature of the box of n° 2 should be noted, the more so as it is one of the very few single volume Qur'ānic manuscripts in the collection — but also in “Eastern” script on paper.

The marks found on 30 of the sets are not shelf-marks: three of them (*bā'*, *ṣād* and *wāw*) have been used on two manuscripts with

¹⁹ F. DÉROCHE, *Islamic codicology, an introduction to the study of manuscripts in Arabic script*, with contributions by A. BERTHIER, M. G. GUESDON, B. GUINEAU, F. RICHARD, A. VERNAY-NOURI, J. VEZIN and M. I. WALEY (London, 2005), p. 286 and fig. 79.

clearly different features.²⁰

B- DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUR'ĀNIC MANUSCRIPTS ACCORDING TO THEIR NUMBER OF VOLUMES

| Number of vol. | Numbers in the inventory (according to I. Chabbouh) | Total |
|--------------------|--|-------|
| 1: | 2, 11, 30 | 3 |
| 2: | mixed volumes: 32, 33, 57 | 3 |
| 3: | 18 | 1 |
| 4: | 3, 4, 37, 31 | 4 |
| 7: | 1 bis, 22, 24, 38, 117 ; mixed volumes: 69 | 6 |
| 8: | 9, 10 | 2 |
| 10: | 21, 25, 43 | 3 |
| 12: | 49 | 1 |
| 14: | 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 23, 26, 27, 36, 39, 42, 70 | 12 |
| 15: | 51 | 1 |
| 30: | 5, 6, 7, 12, 16, 20, 29, 34+118, 35, 41, 44, 46, 47, 48, 71, 125 ; mixed volumes: 28 | 17 |
| 60: | 8 | 1 |
| No data available: | 1, 40, 45, 50, 52 (mixed), 53, 54, 55 (mixed), 56, 119, 120, 123 (mixed) | 12 |

Most of the descriptions of the Qur'ānic manuscripts kept in the Great Mosque library specify whether they were copies in one volume or multi-volume sets. Of the 67 descriptions, only three are devoted to a single volume copy. The 30 *ḡuz*' Qur'ānic manuscripts are the most common (17 instances), slightly more numerous than the 14 (12 items)

²⁰ Nos 17 and 41: *wāw*; n°s 14 and 22: *bā'*; n°s 23 and 69: *ṣād*.

and 7 volume sets (6 items) — both being closely related. The case of the three copies in two volumes should be considered closely: one of them (n° 57), is clearly the result of a putting together of various quires; as for the other two (n° 32 and 33), the inventory mentions quires, but without mentioning whether they are from different origins. Even the definition of a “half” can be understood as a vague indication of the contents. In any case, the Qur’ānic manuscripts in many volumes figure prominently within the collection. In addition, the number of lines to the page is usually lower than 10 (in three quarters of the cases), which means that these volumes were rather thick.

In order to complete this general overview of the Qur’ānic manuscripts according to the mediaeval inventory of the Great Mosque in Kairouan, it should be noted that the large majority of the copies were written on parchment (44 cases: sections I, II, VII and n° 50 and 118) and in the script which al-Ḥālidīnī calls “Kufic” (30 cases: section I and n° 118), to which might be added its variant “Kufic *rayḥānī*” (*sic*, 2 instances: section II and n° 40).²¹ Although material and script do not always coincide, they are so closely associated in the descriptions (30 cases) and so frequently connected with the bindings on wooden boards that we may surmise that the 12 copies on parchment without indication of the kind of script (our section VII) could be added to this group. The paper, termed “Oriental”, remains a rarity. All these features underline the fact that the collection of Qur’ānic manuscripts is ancient and goes back as a whole to the Aghlabid and Zirid periods. The 530/1135 *siḡill* already described incomplete or dilapidated copies and the paper was still a new material, which explains that it was called “Oriental”. There does not seem to be a copy in *maḡribī* script, or only very few, if we assume that the scribe designated this script either by the adjective *nabārī*²² or *ḡalīz*.²³ This fact points in the same direction: the collection did not go through any significant increase at a time when the *maḡribī* script, from the 5th/11th century onwards, was starting to play a more important role,²⁴ which once again suggests

²¹ See n. 19.

²² No 12. I. CHABBOUH (*op. cit.*, p. 347, n. 2) remarks that it is derived from *Nabārā*, a Tripolitan place name.

²³ No 36. In his description, al-Ḥālidīnī does not use as usual the word *ḥattī*, but *qalam*; since *ḡalīz* means “thick, coarse, rough”, he may have been describing in the case of this manuscript the kind of calamus used by its copyist, not the script itself.

²⁴ On the chronology of this script on the basis of recent findings, see F. DÉROCHE,

that the holdings of the library were largely composed of older copies of the Qur’ān.

The contrast between the latter and the other manuscripts is striking. Their descriptions are far shorter: a title and in some cases the name of the author, sometimes an indication that there is a *waqfiyyā* and a note about the material appearance. In most of the cases, we are not dealing with bound manuscripts, but isolated pamphlets (*daftar* or *ḡuz’*), written on parchment or on paper, probably ‘monobibles’.²⁵ A distribution of these works according to their contents shows that *fiqh* is by far dominant (45 works) and *ḥadīth* as well as exegesis almost lacking (3 cases in each field). Al-Ḥālidīnī states in ten instances that the copy is a *waqf*.

One of the most interesting features of the Kairouan collection is its permanency. Chabbouh already noted that the description of some of the items in the inventory fits actual manuscripts, which means that at least part of the library described in the 693/1294 and perhaps already in 530/1135 has come down to us. In his edition of the text, some of the plates amount to such identifications for n° 1, 3, 9, 12, 35, 45 and 75;²⁶ among the works belonging to the scholarly library, Chabbouh sometimes provides in the notes a reference to a call number of the collection, for instance for n° 58, 66 or 75. His n° 1 is the “Blue Qur’an”,²⁷ but it has been noted for some time that the number of lines, as they appear in the text he published, does not match that of the manuscript. In our Section I above, there is a “n° 1 bis” which is not present in Chabbouh’s edition of the inventory. As already noted by Tim Stanley²⁸ and as is clear on the illustration of f. 1b published by an-Nayyāl, Chabbouh’s n° 1 is actually located on a part of the folio which has been cut and should be divided into two parts. The text

Tradition et innovation dans la pratique de l’écriture au Maghreb pendant les IV^e/X^e et V^e/XI^e siècles, in: *Numismatique, langues, écritures et arts du livre, spécificité des arts figurés*, S. LANCEL (ed.), (Paris, 1999), pp. 233-247. Future research should establish whether the diffusion of this script occurred at the same pace in Tunisia as in other areas of the Maghrib.

²⁵ The scribe seems to single out bound manuscripts, as for instance in description n° 86 (I. CHABBOUH, *op. cit.*, p. 363). For ‘monobible’, see F. DÉROCHE *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 69 and n. 8.

²⁶ *Idem*, *op. cit.*, respectively pl. 3, 4, 5 (a and b), 6 (a and b) and 7.

²⁷ *Idem* *op. cit.*, pl. 3.

²⁸ *The Qur’an and calligraphy, a selection of fine manuscript material*, catalogue Bernard Quaritch 1213 (London, 1996), p. 9.

appears as follows:

- 1 ... in Kufic script (on parchment), five lines; at the beginning of each of its volumes
- 2 ... in a wooden chest decorated with gold-plated copper.
- 3 ... in seven volumes of large size, in chrysography, in Kufic script on blue parchment
- 4 ... of the *suwar* and the number of the verses and the *aḥāzb* in silver, covered with tooled leather on boards, with silk doublure ...

The first two lines belong to a first description (n° 1) which stopped either at the end of line 2, or at the beginning of the next one if the manuscript was kept in a box, as this element is the last one which the scribe mentions (when such a box exists). On line 3 was the beginning of a second description (n° 1 bis) which probably corresponds to the "Blue Qur'ān." Its number of lines was indicated at the beginning of the next line, on the piece of parchment which has been lost.²⁹ The fact that this manuscript was described among the first items in the inventory suggests that the nicest copies were assembled at the beginning of the inventory. Description n° 1 could therefore present an outstanding manuscript, with five lines to the page and kept in an elaborate chest. If it was a multi-volume set, it could correspond, according to Marie-Geneviève Guesdon,³⁰ to the series which Stanley called "the Qur'ān on white vellum" and "the Five-line Gold Qur'ān"³¹ which Chabbouh identified previously with n° 35.³² As already noted by T. Stanley and M. G. Guesdon,³³ chrysography is not mentioned in n° 35 description whereas in n° 1 bis ("Blue Qur'ān") this detail appears immediately after the indication of the number of volumes; n° 35 does not use blue

29 Chabbouh identified the "Blue Qur'ān" in his description n° 1 — which is artificial, as we have seen. Later, J. BLOOM suggested a correction of the text in order to make the number of lines consistent with the actual manuscript (Al-Ma'mun's blue Koran?, *RÉI* 54(1986) [Mélanges D. Sourdel], pp. 59-65; The Blue Koran, An early Fatimid kufic manuscript from the Maghrib, in *Les Manuscrits du Moyen-Orient. Essais de codicologie et de paléographie. Actes du Colloque d'Istanbul (Istanbul, 26-29 mai 1986)*, F. DÉROCHE (ed.), (Istanbul-Paris, 1989), pp. 95-99). However, this is hardly convincing as this piece of information belongs to another manuscript.

30 *L'art du livre arabe, Du manuscrit au livre d'artiste*, M. G. GUESDON and A. VERNAY-NOURI (edd.), (Paris, 2001), p. 91.

31 *Op. cit.*, p. 16-19.

32 *Op. cit.*, pl. 6 a.

33 *Ibid.*

for the vowels either. Besides, the "Five-line Gold Qur'ān" seems to have been a rather unusual set of 28 volumes and n° 35 is described as a copy in 30 *ḡuz*'.

No 8 in Chabbouh's edition is a Qur'ānic manuscript of large size in sixty volumes, written on parchment in a script which is called, according to Chabbouh's reading, "*rayḥānī kufic*", with five lines to the page. The beginning of each "*ḡuz*'" (meaning here "volume"³⁴) is illuminated as well as the end of some of the volumes. Dots are red, green and blue. Various kinds of bindings are found. This manuscript stands alone in the collection since it is the only one divided into *ḥizb* — the sixtieth part of the Qur'ān. As far as I know, there is only one manuscript among those which have been at least partly published which could fit this description, namely the "Qur'ān of the Nurse."³⁵ Its dimensions are impressive: a folio measures 45 x 30 cm. In a recent auction catalogue, two items which were once part of this manuscript provide us with an important piece of information.³⁶ The second folio offered for sale bears on its recto size an illumination typical of this specific copy,³⁷ with three medial vignettes located each on one of the sides of the illumination facing the outside. On the verso side, the text is barely legible; next to the beginning of the first of the five lines of the highly recognizable script of the "Qur'ān of the Nurse" is a vignette of the same type as those found on the recto, but in this case highlighting the beginning of a section. The latter starts at Q5:27, in other words the beginning of the 13th *ḥizb* of the Qur'ān.³⁸ The various details

34 See G. HUMBERT's remarks on the non-Qur'ānic *ḡuz*' which would accord nicely here with a Qur'ānic manuscript (Le *ḡuz*' dans les manuscrits arabes médiévaux, in *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, F. DÉROCHE and F. RICHARD (edd.), (Paris, 1997), pp. 77-86).

35 See B. ROY et P. POINSSOT, *Inscriptions arabes de Kairouan*, [Publications de l'Institut des Hautes études de Tunis, II/1] (Paris, 1950), pp. 27-32 and figg. 7-8.

36 SAM FOGG, *Islamic Calligraphy*, cat. 27, (London, 2003) pp. 44-47, n°s 20 and 21.

37 See for instance the folio Tunis, Bardo Museum, P 116.

38 Chabbouh read: *rayḥānī*, but expressed some doubts about it. On the other hand, he does not seem to have identified the manuscript since, although he reproduced one of its bifolios in his edition of the inventory (fig. 1a), he did not relate it to any description as he did in other instances. In a paper devoted to the bindings of the collection, M. Rammāh comments on the script of another manuscript which he defines as connected to the *rayḥānī* which could imply that he has identified the description n° 8 with the "Qur'ān of the Nurse" (تسافر مكتبة القيروان العتيقة. دراسات المخطوطات) (R. AL-INĀNĪ ed., London, 1417/1997, p. 144). In the literature about the "Qur'ān of the Nurse", the type of division used is not discussed.

given in the description accord with the features of the manuscript. There is however a detail which has not been recorded by al-Ḥālidīnī: each of the 60 volumes contains a *waqfiyyā* mentioning the name of the patron, but this element has been left aside by the scribe. Another description may belong here: n° 40 deals with an isolated “*ḡuz*” of large format, with five lines to the page *بقلم ريحاني، بخط كوفي*, containing a *hizb* and the half of a *hizb*. It may be a volume which originally belonged to the “Qur’ān of the Nurse”, but later went astray. Although a catalogue is still a desideratum, papers, books and exhibition catalogues provide a preliminary glimpse into its contents³⁹ and allow us up to a certain point to identify some of the manuscripts which are now in the museum in Raqqādā with their mediaeval descriptions.⁴⁰ It should nevertheless be noted that there also seem to be books which, for some reason, have not been mentioned by the scribe.

A closer examination of the actual manuscripts leads to the conclusion that the layout of the inventory, with its two main parts, corresponds exactly to two sets of books which do not share any other peculiarity besides their actual location within the *maqṣūra*. The first one is a library exclusively containing Qur’ānic manuscripts, many of which have been produced without any regard for the cost: parchment has been used lavishly and illumination as well as bindings were expensive. If we compare the amount of parchment needed for the production of the most sumptuous copies, like the “Qur’an of the Nurse” or that of Umm Malāl, with more down-to-earth Qur’ānic manuscripts, it turns out that it may be as much as a hundred times more. Commonly, it will be at least ten times that amount.⁴¹

The second set of books constitutes a study library. Parchment pamphlets are prominent, as this kind of book was cheaper (the cost

The only beginning of one of the volumes of this manuscript I was able to examine in Raqqādā was that of an “uneven” *hizb* which of course is equivalent to the beginning of a *ḡuz*; my previous comments on the “Qur’ān of the Nurse” should therefore be corrected (for instance in *Le livre manuscrit arabe, préludes à une histoire* (Paris, 2004), p. 71).

³⁹ Relevant information has been published by M. AN-NAYYĀL (*op. cit.*) and in the following catalogues: *De Carthage à Kairouan* (Paris, 1982); *Itinéraire du savoir en Tunisie* (Paris, 1995); M. RAMMAH, *De Kairouan à Carthage: Esprit des lois et tolérance* (Tunis, 1995); *Tunisie: Du christianisme à l’islam, IV^{ème}-XIV^{ème} siècle* (Lattes, 2001).

⁴⁰ If some of the volumes actually do bear the inventory marks recorded in the inventory, this could lead to the identification of other manuscripts.

⁴¹ See F. DÉROCHE and M. RAMMAH, *Format et coût des livres. Les manuscrits coraniques de la Grande mosquée et leurs enseignements (in print)*.

of binding is avoided) and more handy. In many instances, the pamphlets seem to be made from parchment which constitute left-overs from the process of quire production. The size of the script is quite small. As many of them bear ‘certificates of hearing’, we may suppose that these manuscripts were integrated into the teaching which took place within the precincts of the mosque.⁴²

Many of the Qur’ānic manuscripts were presented as *waqf* endowments. Although the first folios of the manuscripts, which customarily bear the deed recording the name of the patron and that of the mosque which was the recipient of the manuscript, are more subject to disappearance due to wear and tear, a number of *taḥbīs*⁴³ and notes briefly recording the *waqf* have been preserved. Still, the inventory only records a *taḥbīs* on 7% of the Qur’ānic manuscripts while 17% of the other books are said to bear them. As we have already seen, the “Qur’an of the Nurse” is described by al-Ḥālidīnī without any mention of the deed which was nevertheless quite visible. The same can be said about the copies which were presented to the Great Mosque by the Zirid al-Mu‘izz b. Bādīs⁴⁴ or by his aunt, the princess Umm Malāl⁴⁵ — which cannot be identified in the inventory, but are still present in the collection. As for the latter, we do not have a picture of the *taḥbīs*, nor a modern and accurate publication of its text — we are therefore ignorant as to whether this manuscript had been originally presented to the Great Mosque or was brought there later. In addition, the script and what can be gleaned from the illumination suggests that both could be dated to the 3rd/9th century, which means that the manuscript is older and probably was located elsewhere previously.

It is, however, puzzling that so few copies of the Qur’ān are reported by al-Ḥālidīnī as bearing a *taḥbīs*. It might be explained by the fact that the document does not describe all the manuscripts which are now part of the collection: as suggested previously, some of them may have been brought there from other places at a later date or have been

⁴² J. SCHACHT published various certificates found on some volumes kept in the collection (*op. cit., passim*).

⁴³ The word *تحسيس* is used in the inventory for *waqfiyyā*.

⁴⁴ This specific manuscript was presented to the Great Mosque between 431/1041 and 441/1049-50 (see B. ROY and P. POINSSOT, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38, n° 10 and fig. 9; M. RAMMAH, *op. cit.*, p. 43; *Itinéraire du savoir en Tunisie* (Paris, 1995), p. 45).

⁴⁵ Sayyidā Umm Malāl donated a copy of the Qur’ān at the beginning of the 5th/11th century (*De Carthage à Kairouan*, p. 245, n° 328; *Tunisie: Du christianisme à l’islam*, p. 194, n° 113 and ill. pp. 210 and 220).

kept in the Great Mosque only because the mosque where they were originally kept was no longer in use in the aftermath of the Bānū Hilāl invasion. On the other hand, the certificates found on the copies presented by al-Mu'izz and by Fāṭima the Nurse state clearly that they had been entrusted to the Great Mosque. The silence of the inventory on this point can only be the result of a decision which could be explained by a legal consideration. The *taḥbīs* is only valid when the money used for its institution was earned legally by the donor. The scribe may have decided to forgo a point which might prove open to debate. Conversely, he seems to have been of the opinion that *taḥbīs* instituted by scholars or religious authorities were not subject to such uncertainties. It is actually reported that a Kairouanese scholar, as-Suyūrī, who appears in the inventory as a donor of a few books, decided to use exclusively palimpsest or parchment produced with the skin of wild animals since the Bānū Hilāl invasion brought so much trouble to the region that the legal property of the herds could no longer be established in a satisfactory way.⁴⁶ It may well be that it was expected from those who had a knowledge of *fiqh* to act accordingly and to only own books which were unimpeachably acquired.

Al-Ḥālidīnī may have also believed that the names of these scholars were important in the transmission of knowledge at Kairouan and that the books which they once gave to the library should be singled out in the inventory — they may have been specifically provided with *samā'āt*.⁴⁷ One expects to find Qur'ānic sciences well represented. This is the case in Kairouan, but *fiqh* greatly outweighs exegesis, for instance. True, one should take into account the fact, which has already been stressed previously, that there may be discrepancies between the inventory and the modern collection: books on philology, which strangely enough are not mentioned in the inventory, are present in the collection as it is today.

The Qur'ānic manuscripts which comprise the majority of the books found in the collection require a more detailed study, particularly as far as their function is concerned. They are obviously not in the mosque as a support for the learning of the sacred text by heart,

⁴⁶ According to an opinion found in al-Wanšārīsī (see V. LAGARDÈRE, *Histoire et société en Occident musulman au Moyen Âge, Analyse du Mi'yār d'al-Wanšārīsī* [Collection de la Casa de Velazquez, 53] (Madrid, 1995), p. 124). Also in H.R. IDRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

⁴⁷ See n. 42.

nor as a component of a service — there is no reading of passages of the Qur'ān in the course of the prayer. Some of the *taḥbīs* state that the copies are to be read by the faithful, but this can also be understood as a legal provision in order to give the deed validity. The issue of the readership should nevertheless be addressed and it can be dealt with primarily from a material point of view. The inventory shows that in most of the cases, the Qur'ānic manuscripts are actually sets of many volumes. From the data collected in this document, we can calculate the total number of volumes at 883 items, plus 8 manuscripts comprising an unspecified number of volumes and n° 28 which is made of fragments from various origins. If we then take into account the copies which were described on the missing folio, we can estimate the total number of Qur'ānic volumes (with a content ranging from the complete text to a sixtieth part or *ḥizb*) between 1000 and 1500 items which were theoretically fit to cater to an equivalent number of readers. At this point, a more precise knowledge of the number of inhabitants of Kairouan in the 4th/10th century or at the beginning of the next one would be of great help in understanding this figure. Although the estimates at hand vary greatly from 36,000 to 300,000 inhabitants,⁴⁸ it seems highly unlikely that this large Qur'ānic library ever drew so many readers, who were furthermore able to decipher copies written in the scripts traditionally known as "Kufic."

The number of Qur'ānic volumes available in the Great Mosque is not the only element which draws our attention. Al-Ḥālidīnī's carefulness in the description of these manuscripts is relevant with regard to their price. As we have seen before, the estimation of the amount of parchment required to prepare a manuscript shows that most of the sets consumed more parchment than what was strictly necessary.⁴⁹ Such expenditure can be understood as a mark of respect for the text which was transcribed according to what amounted to a rite involving script and materials. However, the Qur'ān also possessed a symbolic function as was not the case with scientific texts. The *mushaf* or *rab'ā* is placed in the mosque as an image of the revealed word and contributes to its effective presence. The Qur'ānic codex as a mediation offers a special opportunity for the ruler who can put it to good use,

⁴⁸ M. SAKLY, Kairouan, in *Grandes villes méditerranéennes du monde musulman médiéval*, J.C. GARCIN (ed.), (Rome, 2000), p. 61 (quoting A. Lézine and M. Talbi).

⁴⁹ See n. 41.

the *tahbīs* associating his name with a pious deed in the eyes of the community in a highly significant place. It can even be turned into a political signal and serve as the record of a public statement: the Zirid ruler, al-Mu'izz b. Bādīs, expresses his loathing of the Fāṭimids and his siding with Sunni orthodoxy in the *tahbīs* of a Qur'ānic manuscript given to the Great Mosque in Kairouan.⁵⁰

Although the mediaeval inventory of the Great Mosque library unfortunately remains an isolated witness, its value is immense, all the more so because a number of the manuscripts described therein have come down to us and are still preserved at Kairouan. It is therefore very significant as it allows us to trace the history of this library through the ages. But it also enables us to understand the role of the book in a mediaeval Islamic community because it provides us a picture of the collection not only as it stood in 693/1294, but already during the Zirid period, as we suggested. However, our conclusions must remain provisional in the absence of a comprehensive catalogue of the collection, which must take into account -as much as possible- the items which were dispersed from the middle of the 19th century onwards. Only then will the importance of the inventory for the history of the book in the mediaeval Maghrib will become clear.

⁵⁰ B. ROY and P. POINSSOT, *op. cit.*, p. 37-38, n° 10 and fig. 9; M. RAMMAH, *op. cit.*, p. 43 (in the French text).

QUANDOQUE BONUS DORMITAT HOMERUS

A note on Ibn Rustah in De Goeje's BGA

EMERI VAN DONZEL & ROBERT M. KERR

It is a privilege as well as an act of gratitude for us to contribute to this *Festschrift* in honour of professor J. J. Witkam. His well-known admiration for M. J. De Goeje (1836-1909) – a distant predecessor of his as *Interpres Legati Warneriani* of the Leyden University Library Oriental Collections – will not be shown to be detrimentally misplaced when our contribution to this *liber amicorum* concerns a somewhat remarkable editorial procedure employed by the latter in one of the volumes of his still unsurpassed *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* (BGA; 1870-1894). Volume VIII (Leyden, 1892) contains the '*Kitāb al-A'lāq an-Nafīsā*'¹ by the Persian astronomer and geographer Abu 'Ali Ahmad ibn 'Umar ibn Rustah, a native of Iṣfahān.² The only extant volume of his geographical compendium contains, besides numerous other subjects, the narrative of the journey undertaken by Sallām 'the Interpreter'³ at the behest of the Abassid Caliph al-Wāṭiq (reg. 842-847 AD/227-232 AH). In a dream, the Caliph had seen that the barrier built by Alexander the Great (الاسكندر) 'the two-horned'⁴ against 'Gog and Magog' (يا جوج وما جوج) had been breached. He sent Sallām, in all likelihood a Khazarian Jew, on a mission to investigate the veracity of the matter. He travelled via Tiflis (modern Tbilisi/თბილისი Georgia), Igu (modern Hāmi / 哈密 or Uyghur *Qumul* / قۇمۇل in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China), probably Dūnhuáng (燉煌, Gansu Province PRC) and Ispigāb (ايسپغاب; modern Sayram/Сайрам, Southern Kazakhstan) whereupon he returned to the caliphal court at Sāmarrā'. Here he drew up a report of his travels and

¹ Translations: G. WIET, *Les atours précieux* (Cairo, 1955); A. MIQUEL, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle, tome 1 : Géographie et géographie humaine dans la littérature arabe des origines à 1050*, (Paris, 1973, 2001); H. GÖCKENJAN-I. ZIMONYI, *Orientalische Berichte über die Völker Osteuropas und Zentralasiens im Mittelalter. Die Gayhānī-Tradition (Ibn Rusta, Gardīzī, Hudūd al-'Ālam, al-Bakrī und al-Marwazī)* (Wiesbaden, 2001).

² Cf. S. MAQBUL in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition s.v.

³ Cf. E. VAN DONZEL, *op. cit.* sub 'Sallām al-tarḡumān'.

⁴ Cf. Qur'ān 28: 83-98 and note E. VAN DONZEL-C. OTT, *op. cit.* s.v. and R. KERR, *Latino-Punic Epigraphy* (Tübingen, 2010), p. 144 esp. n12.