

Troubled History of a Masterpiece. Notes on the Creation and Peregrinations of Öljejtü's Monumental Baghdad Qur'ān*

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فمن غير ذلك أو شيئاً منه أو قصر في حفظه
فقد باء بغضب من الله ومأواه جهنم وبئس المصير

'Whoever changes it or parts of it or falls short in its protection,
he is deserving of God's anger, his abode shall be the fire
and the worst of fortunes.'

Punitive formula from the endowment inscription, MS Leipzig B.or. 1, fol. 2^r

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Abstract

The patronage of Īlkhānid rulers and statesmen in the arts is characterized by a quest for monumentality in both architecture and manuscript production. The Qur'ān in particular was commissioned numerous times in unprecedented measurements and several such copies have survived. The fragments of one of them, known as Öljejtü's Baghdad Qur'ān, have some surprising insights to offer and may serve as a window to illuminate general aspects of the production of these monumental works of art. An investigation into the history and codicology of the surviving fragments gives hints to their fate after they were donated to their patron's tomb.

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Keywords

İlkhānīd manuscripts – manuscript production – war-booty – *Türkenbeute* – book history

Scattered throughout the World

David James called it “perhaps the most wonderful example of monumental Qur’ānic calligraphy in existence.”¹ He was referring to an ensemble of originally 30 volumes which the İlkhānīd Sultan Öljeytü commissioned shortly after his ascension to the throne in 703/1304 around the year 706/1307, eventually to be exhibited in his newly erected mausoleum in Sulṭāniyya and known today as Öljeytü’s Baghdad Qur’ān. Both would have been a testament to the İlkhān’s general fondness for monumentality;² the dome of the mausoleum would remain the largest in the Islamic world for centuries and the Baghdad Qur’ān as the greatest in size of the many İlkhānīd monumental manuscripts was a fitting complementary detail of the structure’s claim to awe-evoking grandness. The illuminations were executed by Muḥammad b. Aybak b. ‘Abdal-lāh and it is generally believed that the scribe was Aḥmad Ibn al-Suhrawardī al-Bakrī, a pupil of Yāqūt al-Musta‘şimī and a known collaborator of this illuminator on other similar projects. Both from the surviving endowment notes and the literature one gets the clear impression that there once indeed was a 30-part monumental Qur’ān to be seen in all of its splendor, at least for some period, at the grave of the deceased ruler. My examination of those parts of it preserved in European libraries did, however, lead me to question this assumption.

Only fragments from seven out of what was once conceived in a common division as thirty parts (*ajzā’*) have survived over the centuries and are to be found today in libraries in Turkey, Denmark, and Germany. Two leaves are held by the Royal Library of Copenhagen;³ the highest concentration with four volumes lies in Istanbul, three in the Topkapı⁴ and one in the Türk ve İslam

1 David James, *Qur’āns of the Mamlūks* (London 1988): 95.

2 Cf. Bernard O’Kane, “Monumentality in Mamluk and Mongol art and architecture” in: *Art History* 19 (1996): 499–522.

3 Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Cod.arab.XLIII; cf. *Codices Orientales Bibliothecae Regiae Hafniensis*, vol. II (Copenhagen 1851): 43–44; Irmeli Perho, *Catalogue of Arabic manuscripts. Codices Arabici & Codices Arabici Additamenta*, vol. I (Copenhagen 2007): 109–113.

4 MS Topkapı Sarayı EH 234, 243, 245; cf. F.E. Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi. Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, vol. I (Istanbul 1951): 51 (no. 171), 53 (no. 178), 57 (no. 195).

Eserleri Müsezi;⁵ one more leaf appeared on the art market only in 1998.⁶ The two volumes nowadays preserved in Germany are conspicuously centered in the modern state of Saxonia, more precisely its two major cities Dresden and Leipzig. One, now in the Sächsische Staats- und Landesbibliothek,⁷ was a treasure of the Royal Saxonian Library in Dresden since at least the early 18th and possibly already at the end of the 17th century.⁸ The other, now preserved in the University Library in Leipzig,⁹ was presented to the prestigious Senate Library of the rich city as early as 1692 by the important book-merchant and printer Johannes Friedrich Gleditsch (1653–1716), as is purported by a Latin inscription in the manuscript.¹⁰

5 MS TIEM 339.

6 Cf. David James, “More Qur’āns of the Mamlūks” in: *Manuscripta Orientalia* 13, No. 2 (2007): 3–16, here 11–12.

7 MS Dresden Eb. 444; H[einricus] O[rthobius] Fleischer, *Catalogus codicum manusciporum orientalium Bibliothecae Regiae Dresdensis* (Dresden 1831): 74. The volume is digitized and accessible online via: <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/113396/1/>.

8 The early date would rely on the assumption that the splendid Qur’ān presented to the learned Dutch traveler Jacob Tollius (d. 1696) in 1687 was in fact Öljejtü’s; cf. Johann Tollius, *Epistolae itinerariae*, ed. Henricus Christianus Henninus (Amsterdam 1700): 68. The description does not allow for a satisfactory identification, but at this time just any Qur’ān was certainly not something worth mentioning, since the book, as a spoil of war, was flooding into Europe to an extent that a manuscript copy was cheaper to obtain than Hinckelmann’s printed edition. And indeed, in the same year Tollius did not mention any Oriental manuscript from his visit to the Leipzig Senate Library which was to receive its part of the Öljejtü Qur’ān only seven years later. It is also interesting to note, that the classical philologist and alchemist Tollius was writing as a man who is known as possessor of at least one Arabic manuscript he took from the booty after the capture of Buda in 1686; cf. Carl Brockelmann, *Katalog der orientalischen Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek zu Hamburg mit Ausschluß der hebräischen*, Teil 1: *Die arabischen, persischen, türkischen, malaischen, koptischen, syrischen, äthiopischen Handschriften* (Hamburg 1908): 144.

9 MS Leipzig B. or. 1; cf. H[einricus] O[rthobius] Fleischer, *Codices Orientalium Linguarum qui in Bibliotheca Senatoria Civitatis Lipsiensis asservantur* (Leipzig 1838): 352–353; Boris Liebreuz, *Arabische, persische und türkische Handschriften in Leipzig. Geschichte ihrer Sammlung und Erschließung von den Anfängen bis zu Karl Vollers* (Leipzig 2008): 15–17; Stefanie Brinkmann, “Mongolischer illuminiertes Prachtkoran mit Goldtinte” in: *Ein Garten im Ärmel. Islamische Buchkultur. Katalog zur Ausstellung in der Bibliotheca Albertina 10. Juli–27. September 2008*, ed. by Verena Klemm (Leipzig 2008): 11–12. The volume is digitized and accessible online via: http://www.islamic-manuscripts.net/receive/IslamHSBook_islamhs_00000491.

10 The small Latin inscription is found on the flyleaf of the Leipzig volume and reads in translation: “This codex, of great value as to the opulent style of script, together with a garment

Perfection and Negligence

Both of the Saxonian volumes are, without a doubt, among the showcase-items of their respective collections. This made it so much more intriguing when, during my work with the Leipzig manuscripts, I had to realize just how these masterpieces, executed with such extraordinary care and refinement, produced over the course of so many years with such lavish financial expenses, carried so obvious signs of neglect which I, unexperienced as I was with the mundane realities of manuscript transmission, simply did not expect to see with one of the most prestigious copies of Islam's holy book that was, on top of that, endowed as *waqf* for all eternity. The volume in Leipzig was not simply one of once thirty parts (*juzʿ*) and the same goes for Dresden. The catalogues of both collections rather described a confused mesh-up, containing an assemblage of fragments from several unrelated parts of the Qurʾān each. I have since come to have much less faith in the pious reverence for endowments and the restraining force of such notions as the sanctity of scripture or *waqf*.¹¹ The punitive formula of Öljejtü's endowment-note, reproduced at the beginning of this article, had evoked God's wrath upon those who would do exactly what we are now confronted with, "change it or a part of it or fall short in its protection". Obviously, at some point in its history, the threat to anyone daring to touch the sacred endowment was disregarded, the unity of the holy book severed, and fragments re-appropriated without any care for order. But when did this happen?

The high quality Leipzig binding at least did not have the appearance of serving as a simple container for somehow related leaves hastily and carelessly mashed up. To the contrary, the dignified binding with the pressure-moulded

of linen decorated with ornaments of Arabic letters and geometric figures, was donated to this library, together with two outstanding Turkish amulets, by the Excellence Johannes Friedrich Gleditsch, bookseller and extremely merited in the field of humanist studies the 9. May 1694." For the shirt mentioned here, cf. Boris Liebreuz, "Türkenhemd". Ein Hemd zum Schutz vor Unheil' in: *Ein Garten im Ärmel. Islamische Buchkultur*, ed. Verena Klemm (Leipzig 2008): 22–23. For Gleditsch's and other Leipzig booksellers' dealings with Oriental manuscripts taken from the booty of Vienna and the subsequent campaigns, cf. Liebreuz, *Arabische, persische und türkische Handschriften*: 21.

- 11 I would thus qualify the statement by James, *The master scribes*: 11: "The main reason for the survival of so many Qurʾān manuscripts over such a long period is the special protection that was accorded the sacred text they contain." Certainly the extraordinary number of copies of the text produced played no small part in the survival of such a great number of copies until today.

ornaments conveyed a monumental but modest elegance that complemented the general majestic impression of the calligraphy fittingly. Much of the cover's black leather is left unadorned and provides an impressive contrast to the stamped ornaments. In the center is a lobed almond-shaped panel with pendants accompanied by four corner pieces, all filled with flower scrolls and arabesques. These flowers are blind-stamped and then painted in red over the gilded background in the middle medallion, but they are simply painted on a red leather background in the pendants and corner-pieces.

The other five surviving bindings for multi-volume monumental Qur'āns of the period, namely one for the Anonymous Baghdad Qur'ān of 1304–1306 now in Tehran and four for Öljeytū's Hamadān Qur'ān of 1313 now in Cairo, are of a very different nature in technique and ornamentation of the outer covers.¹² Polylobed medallions and cloud-collar corner-pieces in Persian bookbinding are probably attested as early as the first half of the 14th century.¹³ The little we thus know about İlhānid and post-İlhānid Iranian binding may not exclude the shapes of the medallions and ornaments exhibited here, but using deep-impressed plate seals rather than building up complex ornaments by blind-tooling of individual stamps together with the use of the colors would seem to firmly exclude a date prior to the 15th century. In fact, with the probable exception of the rare choice of red on a gold ground for the impressed flowers in the central medallion,¹⁴ this represents quite a typical Ottoman binding as attested from the 10th/16th century onwards.¹⁵ The same basic type was used to

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- 12 Cf. Richard Ettinghausen, "The covers of the Morgan *Manāfi'* manuscript and other early Persian bookbindings" in: *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene* (Princeton 1954): 459–473, figs. 348 and 350, here: 462 and figs. 348 and 350 [reprinted in Richard Ettinghausen, *Islamic art and archaeology. Collected papers*, ed. by M. Rosen-Ayalon (Berlin 1984): 524].
 - 13 Ettinghausen, "The covers of the Morgan *Manāfi'*", p. 464 [526], cites a Tabriz binding of 1334 as the first instance of the polylobed mandorla. Cf. also Elaine Wright, *The look of the book. Manuscript production in Shiraz, 1303–1452* (Seattle 2012): 262; Julian Raby/Zeren Tanindi, *Turkish bookbinding in the 15th century. The foundation of an Ottoman court style* (London 1993): 39–45.
 - 14 For another example of this colour-pattern on a black binding, albeit with the addition of blue stamps in the corners, cf. Friedrich Sarre, *Islamische Bucheinbände* (Berlin 1923): plate XXII. It is dated by Sarre to the 18th century. Here, the doublure is also made of reddish leather, but with a markedly different ornamentation from our Leipzig Qur'ān.
 - 15 Cf. the examples in François Déroche et al., *Islamic codicology. An introduction to the study of manuscripts in Arabic script* (London 2005): 300–309. Conceptually close parallels (block-pressed ornaments; central pointed lobed medallion with two pendants,

receive another fragment of yet another monumental Baghdad Qurʾān by one of Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī's students, Arghūn al-Kāmilī in this case, when it was donated to the Blue Mosque in Constantinople by the Ottoman Sultan at the beginning of the 17th century.¹⁶

But the doublure, a particularly understudied element of bindings,¹⁷ had a unique and intriguingly non-Ottoman, if not outright ancient look. While doublures in the Persian and early Ottoman tradition since the 14th century came to be heavily ornamented with matrices, filigrees and gilded ornaments, the Leipzig doublure, apart from a thin black border, is adorned with nothing but three square stamps on red leather arranged on top of each other in the center. The largest and central stamp contains the profession of faith, the *shahāda*—*lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*—in square Kufic and is flanked to its top and bottom by two smaller ones showing the name *ʿAlī* four times each, radiating from a central swastika to its four edges, a design known as *ḥehār ʿAlī*. The maze-like structure created by the script, while not exclusive to it, is certainly typical for Īlkhānid inscriptions on architectural monuments and coins. Square patterns with four repetitions of the name *ʿAlī* connected as in this binding through a swastika at the center can also be seen on the mausoleum of the book's patron, Öljeytū.¹⁸ The strong connection of this emphasis on the first imam with Shīʿī beliefs seems loaded with meaning when found in one of the major commissions of a ruler who converted to the Twelver-Shīʿī branch of Islam just after he had ordered the production of this manuscript to commence and, as our sources indicate, only after a visit to the shrine of

background gilded, floral scrolls in red; much space between central ornament and cloud-collared corner-pieces; very narrow borders) are described in Raby/Tanindi, *Turkish book-binding*: 202–203 (binding for Sultan Bayezid II in 906/1500); the introduction of this general outline in Istanbul is attributed by Raby and Tanindi to Ghīyāth al-Dīn *al-mujallid* al-*Iṣfahānī*, who came to the court of Meḥmed II around 1475–1480, cf. Raby/Tanindi, *Turkish bookbinding*: 182.

16 Cf. Almut von Gladiss, "Die Koraneinbände" in: François Déroche/Almut von Gladiss, *Buchkunst zur Ehre Allāhs. Der Prachtkoran im Museum für Islamische Kunst* (Berlin 1999): 75–93, here 93.

17 Cf. von Gladiss, "Die Koraneinbände": 82–86.

18 Sheila Blair, "The epigraphic program of the tomb of Uljaytu at Sultaniyya: Meaning in Mongol architecture" in: *Islamic Art* 2 (1987): 43–96, here 48, 87 (Fig. 15); cf. also recently Tehnyat Majeed, *The phenomenon of the square Kufic script: The cases of Īlkhānid Iṣfahān and Bahrī Mamlūk Cairo* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford 2006): 38. Unlike in the manuscript, the *ʿAlis* on the mausoleum are connected not by way of the *ʿayn* but the *yāʾ*.

‘Alī.¹⁹ In fact, in conjunction with the Sunnī *shahāda* in the central ornament, one is tempted to read in the other medallions a continuation to form the Shī‘ī *shahāda* which would add to it *‘Alī walī Allāh*. While the veneration of ‘Alī and even the twelve Shī‘ī imams is also a feature of pious practices in the Ottoman realm among otherwise Sunnī Muslims, given the history of this manuscript and its patron it is very tempting to see here a part of the original commission, possibly an update of the original Sunnī *shahāda* to the fact of the Sultan’s conversion to Shī‘ism in 709/1309–1310.

However, the reasons for the adoption of this most unusual decoration remain unclear, and as there is no hint that the original manuscript was ever bound while housed in Sulṭāniyya, there is also no evidence that the doublure would be the Ottoman reuse of an Īlkhānid original. In fact, despite our very scarce knowledge of Īlkhānid bindings nothing suggests that the Ottoman craftsman could even have imitated an existing model contemporary to the manuscript.²⁰ Might we rather regard these hints to the stylistic idiom of Īlkhānid monumental art as an historical reminiscence to the book’s famous patron on the part of the Ottoman binder?

The bindings of a scattered multi-volume manuscript like this one are an important indicator of when and where its individual sections may have parted ways. In this case, if both the Leipzig and Dresden copies had the same binding, its dating could serve as a sort of common link, a point up until which this manuscript was preserved together and previous to which the chaos in the pages must have occurred. In the opposite case, the several parts of the manuscript would have gone their individual ways already before they were separately bound.

The latter scenario proved to be the case here. Unfortunately, heavy water damage accrued when the manuscripts of Dresden were evacuated at the end of World War II and the doublure fell victim to these damages. Apart from this, the composition of the outer binding is overall alike with a lobed mandorla in the center accompanied by cloud-collared corner-pieces leaving much of the space to unadorned leather, in this case red one. So, here again, we are faced with an Ottoman binding type. But on the Dresden binding, the panels with their ornamental fillings are only outlined by gilded lines, not impressed with a stamp. And even apart from their differing ornamentation, the fact that

19 Cf. Judith Pfeiffer, “Conversion versions: Sultan Öljeytū’s conversion to Shī‘ism (709/1309) in Muslim narrative sources” in: *Mongolian Studies* 22 (1999): 35–67, here 39.

20 For a recent study of Īlkhānid-era bindings, although not concentrating on the production for the Īlkhānids proper, cf. Wright, *The look of the book*: 258–265.

the Dresden binding was not a sibling to the Leipzig one was clear already in the different format. While the Leipzig binding suits the monumental size of the folios perfectly and especially leaves ample space for the pointed floral medallions extending far into the margins to denote every fifth and tenth verse, these same markers are brutally cut in the Dresden codex. Certainly an odd choice given the impression that the size did not need to be trimmed to fit an already existing binding. If one planned to create a new binding at all, why not make it fit? Only on folios 7^r and 5^r are the medallions spared and folded into the text-block while this effort has been foregone further on. The binding was obviously new but not tailored to the original size of this manuscript. Therefore, one might speculate that trimming the edges would have happened before the binding was commissioned. To answer the question of where this might have been we must finally turn to the Copenhagen fragment for suggestions.

The Royal Library in Copenhagen holds no more than two leaves of Öljeytū's Qur'ān which Adam Olearius (1603–1671) must have taken to Gottorp (today Gottorf) unbound. The leaves are furthermore folded in the middle but this was not necessarily done by Olearius on his journey since parts of the Leipzig fragments, in fact up to fol. 5, are folded as well. The plane binding of brown marbled paper is clearly of European making using flyleaves of watermarked Danish paper and could be a 19th century addition after the library of the Dukes of Gottorp reached the Danish capital. Of more interest to our discussion of the fragment's history is the fact that here, too, the original size of the folios was trimmed, just as it was in Dresden, to a size of 59 × 44 cm from its original 73 × 50 cm. And, again, the only marginal ornament on fol. 2^v was cut away just like in Dresden. As this fragment had apparently never left its place in Sulṭāniyya prior to being taken by Olearius we have every reason to believe that the trimming took place there and that the Dresden fragments received the very same treatment while also still being at the mausoleum. Accordingly, we could now assume that the Leipzig fragments were taken from Sulṭāniyya to the Ottoman realm at an earlier date and the same could be true for the volume in the Topkapı Sarayı which also maintained its original size according to the catalogue.²¹

The trimming of the edges may conveniently order the surviving fragments into two distinct groups. But another material feature is shared by parts of the book that were trimmed as well as those left intact. Namely, these leaves were folded in the middle, a feature found in the Copenhagen leaves and not in the

21 Cf. F.E. Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi. Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, vol. 1 (Istanbul 1951): 51, no. 171.

Dresden codex but, curiously, also seen on the first five folios of the untrimmed Leipzig volume. It might thus appear that even back in Sultāniyya parts of the Qurʾān could have been stored differently than others, some were folded in the middle while others were not, and some had their edges trimmed while others had not.

Since it was already clear from the present locations of its surviving parts that they were once taken apart, the fact that they were also preserved in different bindings was in itself a minor surprise. Another aspect shared by the Dresden and Copenhagen specimens, on the other hand, came totally unexpected. This is the fact that large parts of both were never actually finished. Indeed, the Dresden volume is fully executed only until folio 16 after which the magnificent illumination is abruptly discontinued. All verse-markers, marginal medallions, and headings, splendidly and skillfully executed in the Leipzig exemplar, are only outlined here, sometimes even covered with a paper pasted over it or a rather ugly brownish color. The latter, as Sheila Blair pointed out to me, might be egg white used as a “ground preparation that makes the gold leaf look richer and yellower in color”.²² But the unfinished business does not end with the illumination. The only five lines of script per page are interchangeably written in gold and black ink which in turn are outlined in the opposite color. But at the end of the Dresden manuscript we find the black letters lacking this filling and having only the shape outlined in black and gold ink. Since this fragmentary piece contained parts of *juzʿ 28* the natural conclusion would seem to be that the work of illumination was completed until and discontinued after this sūra. The immediate impression of a linear work that was ended at some point, however, is impossible since the volume in Leipzig contains parts of *juzʿ 29* in all its lavish splendor! The notion of non-linear work is also corroborated by the Copenhagen leaves containing fragments from *juzʿ 24*. Here, unlike in Dresden, the letters are all complete. But just like in the latter parts of the Dresden volume the ornaments, marginal as well as in the text-block, are merely outlined in red ink and later covered with the aforementioned brown paste. The only marginal ornament, to be seen on fol. 2^v (therefore the last page), probably an *ʿushr* as a little *ʿayn* in red ink as a signal for the illuminator would suggest, is cut off just like in many instances in Dresden.

22 Personal communication by Sheila Blair.

The Creation of a Multi-Volume Monumental Qurʾān

Unfortunate as its fragmentary state is, it also allows us to use this masterpiece as a window into the mechanisms of its production. Especially notable is the non-linear advance of the work: later parts were already complete while earlier still lacked gilding or illumination or both. It is no surprise that illuminator and scribe would not be the same person but separate professions. But it would seem that even the necessary steps to achieve the calligraphy might have been divided in cases like this. Writing down the black and gold letters, applying the black outlines of the golden and the golden outlines of the black script, and also applying the gold leaf in cases where it was used (*tahdhib*) were distinct processes not done at the same time and therefore probably not by one and the same person. This might also help to explain, why the copyist ran out of space so surprisingly often at the end of a line and had to cramp his words into heaps of letters or otherwise even continue well into the margins. Once the words of one color were fixed on the page, the other artist simply had to make do with the space left between them. A great deal of coordination and planning was obviously necessary to achieve a balanced design on the page and the artist or artists were not always successful in carrying it out.²³

Sheila Blair has already pointed out that the verb *zammaka* would describe the work of outlining done by a distinct professional who could be referred to by the *nisba* al-Zammakī.²⁴ The instances she referred to from the colophons of magnificent Mamluk Qurʾān copies were of a different nature, though. The outlining in these cases was done after the calligrapher had done his work and this was the necessary progression since the original calligraphy was in most cases “painted with adhesive and then covered with gold leaf so that the gilt letters had rough edges.”²⁵ This, however, was not necessary for Öljejtü’s Baghdad Qurʾān since the İlhānīd Sultan did treat his commission to the much more expensive gold ink. And the hollow black lines in the Dresden fragment confirm the interesting observation that in this case the outline came first, in other words that the outliner was actually doing the calligrapher’s work.

We might also speculate about a parallel work by more than one artist of the same specialty which in turn would point to the existence of a full-

23 Examples of continued use of the margins may be seen in Leipzig fol. 6^r, 9^r, 9^v, 20^r, 22^v, 23^r, 27^r and more often.

24 Cf. Sheila Blair, “Place, space and style: craftsmen’s signatures in Medieval Islamic art” in: *Viewing inscriptions in the late antique and Medieval world*, ed. by Antony Eastmond (Cambridge 2015): 230–248, here 242.

25 Ibid.

fledged workshop. In this scenario, scribe and illuminator would oversee several apprentices working in parallel on different parts of the book.²⁶ When the project was suspended, any one group might leave an unfinished fragment at the end of their specific allotment and this could explain why later parts were fully executed and earlier ones not. This is of no small consequence for our understanding of other fragmentary multi-volume Qurʾāns of the time.

Both the colophons of the first and the seventh *juzʿ* are preserved. A conventional way of reading could use them to calculate the scribe's and illuminator's speed. In this manner and judging from the dates given—the years 706/1306–1307 for *juzʿ* 1 and 707/1307–1308 for *juzʿ* 7 respectively—it took the unnamed scribe between one and two years for the completion of these first seven volumes. Had he continued at this pace, the whole set of 30 *ajzāʿ* would have been finished well before the death of the Sultan in 716/1316 or even the initial inauguration of the mausoleum in 713/1312–1313,²⁷ probably in the year 1310.²⁸ Based on the same logic, the illumination would have taken rather longer and *juzʿ* 7 would have had to wait no less than three years, until 710/1310–1311, for its completion. For the question of whether this would leave enough room for completion before the patron's demise, here again there is no need to see any time constraints on the side of the illuminator. This illuminator, Aḥmad b. Aybak b. ʿAbdallāh, was a busy artist employed in other Īlkhānid monumental Qurʾān projects. He used to work with Aḥmad Ibn al-Suhrawardī on the so-called Anonymous Baghdad Qurʾān where the illumination of what was most probably the final volume was completed in 707/1308 and therefore well after copying of Öljeytū's Baghdad Qurʾān had commenced. The conventional view could see the calligrapher start work on Öljeytū's Baghdad Qurʾān right after completing the Anonymous Qurʾān, which would have been handed over to the illuminator who in turn took over the consecutive parts of Öljeytū Baghdad Qurʾān after the presumed calligrapher Ibn al-Suhrawardī completed his work on them.

This, however, is based on the assumption of straightforward scribal work progressing from the first to the last sura in a linear way. But the witness of these manuscripts would render somewhat obsolete any attempts to calculate

26 James already suggests the probability of an assistant to the illuminator Ibn Aybak, cf. James, *Qurʾāns of the Mamluks*: 90.

27 For a discussion of the several possible dates of completion see Blair, "The epigraphic program": 62–63. The sources she cites would seem to confirm that the tomb was indeed dedicated in 713/1313, albeit in a preliminary state with much of the decoration program as it is currently visible still to come.

28 Estimate by James, *Qurʾāns of the Mamluks*: 95.

the speed of a manuscript's production by extrapolating from some surviving colophons. Calligrapher and illuminator may have even worked on two commissions like the Anonymous and the Öljejtü Baghdad Qur'āns in parallel. And while engaged with one work they certainly did not adhere to a straightforward linear progression. The un-chronological sequence of copying some multi-volume Qur'āns of the period was already noted by James and explained as a "slightly eccentric" and "unusual method".²⁹ Rather, it may have been a common practice.

In light of this evidence, calculations as that undertaken by James for Öljejtü's Mosul Qur'ān are harder to uphold. Here, we have *juz'* 1 finished in 706 and *juz'* 15 within a year of that date. But then *juz'* 16 commenced only after three years from there, explained by James as the time needed for the calligrapher to also execute the illumination of the 15 volumes.³⁰ This might be the case. However, it might also be that other earlier or later volumes were written between volumes 15 and 16, or even before volume 1 for that matter, in an irregular fashion.

Thus, when James writes that Öljejtü's Baghdad Qur'ān was endowed "after completion" to its patron's mausoleum, he seems to have all the evidence of the surviving endowment deeds to make that claim. They explicitly proclaim that "this [volume] and what precedes it and what follows it of its thirty parts" were to be endowed to Öljejtü's mausoleum.³¹ This is called into question by the witness of the torsos that are the fragments in Dresden and Copenhagen. We rather have to ask whether a "completion" of any kind, i.e. a thirty-part Qur'ān ready to be consulted, albeit in an incomplete form, in Sulṭāniyya, was ever achieved.

But however the circumstances, the completion of the manuscript was definitely discontinued at some point. Just why a project as prestigious as this would have been abandoned so close to its end, though, remains a mystery. One might suspect a lack of funding in a time of dwindling resources and great demands in other projects. The death of one of the major actors might have been another reason, although this could only mean the Sultan as the commissioner. There is no reason to believe that the loss of the illuminator or the scribe could have halted the work, their particular skills were certainly not irreplace-

29 David James, *The Master scribes. Qur'ans of the 10th to 14th centuries AD* (London 1992): 120 (a rare miniature 30-part Qur'ān of 735/1352–1353); cf. also James, *Qur'āns of the Mamluks*: cat. no. 69 (a 30-part Qur'ān of 745–746/1344–1346).

30 Cf. James, *The Master scribes*: 100.

31 The text of the endowment statement can be seen in Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, *al-Kitāb al-'arabī al-makḥṭūṭ wa-'ilm al-makḥṭūṭāt*, vol. II (Cairo 1997): 431; James, *Qur'āns of the Mamluks*: 236.

able. The notorious changes in the religious affiliations of the Sultan³²—the born Christian later on changed his allegiance from the Sunni to the Shi'ite school of Islam—could not explain why copying the Qurʾān generally or in this specific form would suddenly have lost its appeal.

Sulṭāniyya to Saxony: Charting the Path of a Book

The present whereabouts of the many parts of this manuscript show that at some point or rather at several points in its long history many larger parts and smaller fragments were taken away from their original endowment. The Saxonian and Copenhagen fragments in particular show some parts reaching Europe already in the 17th century.

This early appearance so far away from its original resting place need not surprise us. Collecting Oriental manuscripts for various reasons was in high fashion in Europe during the 17th and 18th century, both at the centers of political power³³ and in the Republic of letters.³⁴ In the particular cases of Dresden and Leipzig, both the conspicuous timing of these two volumes' entry in their libraries shortly after the ill-fated Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 as also the overall regional distribution of the surviving parts in Istanbul on the one hand and in Saxonia—whose troops were the first to storm and loot the tent city of the Ottoman Grand Vizier after the relief of Vienna—on the other, led me to believe that major parts of Öljejtü's Qurʾān at some point found their way to the center of the Ottoman Empire and were part of the luxurious camp carried by the Grand Vizier to the battlefield in 1683. That the Saxonian parts were indeed "Türkenbeute" is furthermore suggested by the overall provenance history of the Oriental manuscript collections in Leipzig and Dresden, which for the most part consisted of spoils of war from the military confrontations with the Ottoman Empire in Southeast Europe and were built up in a relatively short period of time at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century.³⁵ The camp of the Grand Vizier Kara Muṣṭafā Köprülü (1634–1683) at

32 Cf. Pfeiffer, "Conversion versions".

33 Cf. Robert Jones, "Piracy, war and the acquisition of Arabic manuscripts in Renaissance Europe" in: *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 2 (1987): 96–110; J.M. Rogers, *Empire of the sultans. Ottoman art from the Khalili Collection* (London 2002): 18–22.

34 Cf. recently Jan Loop, *Johann Heinrich Hottinger. Arabic and Islamic studies in the seventeenth century* (Oxford 2013): 137–151.

35 Cf. Liebreuz, *Arabische, persische und türkische Handschriften*: 17 with more literature on the role of Saxonian armies in these battles and examples of "Türkenbeute".

Vienna is, therefore, the most plausible origin of both volumes.³⁶ A provenance from the battlefield at Vienna was explicitly suggested as early as the middle of the 19th century by Robert Naumann.³⁷ As the librarian of the Leipzig Senate and later Municipal Library Naumann might have had access to information now lost, but he rather seems to have repeated local hearsay without being able to verify this—nonetheless very plausible—suspicion.

The fragment now preserved in Copenhagen travelled a different path, but has a little Saxonian pre-history of its own. This interesting little specimen of only two leafs was transferred to Copenhagen from the Library of the Dukes of Schleswig-Gottorp, then under Danish administration. They most certainly reached Gottorp, however, by way of the court's librarian, none other than the famous traveler Adam Olearius (1599–1671).³⁸ Olearius completed his studies in the University of Leipzig and later went on to become—just like his Orientalist successor Johann Jacob Reiske (1716–1774) more than a century later—teacher and dean of the city's two major burger-schools before entering the service of the Duke of Schleswig-Gottorp that would lead him on a journey via Moscow to Iran. There he visited Sulṭāniyya and the tomb of Sultan Öljejtü and his account conspicuously includes the display of a monumental Qurʾān the description of which fits perfectly the one discussed here. Several leaves of this Qurʾān “ended up in my hands”, as the traveler laconically informs us. “It was separated by a metal grid in such a way that it would form a peculiar kind of choir. On it rested many old Arabic books, a great number of them being five quarter cubits long and nearly a cubit wide. The letters were as long as a finger and every other line was painstakingly written intermittently in gold or black ink. Several of those leafs passed into my hands and I still keep them in my gracious Master's library.”³⁹ This immediately raises the question

36 On the luxuries present in and spoils from this camp cf. Liebreuz, *Arabische, persische und türkische Handschriften*: 17–19.

37 Robert Naumann, *Führer durch die Ausstellung von Handschriften und Druckwerken auf der Stadtbibliothek zu Leipzig* (Leipzig 1856): 14.

38 Cf. Stig T. Rasmussen, “Les études arabes et sémitiques au Danemark” in: François Déroche/Francis Richard (eds.), *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen Orient* (Paris 1997): 377–392, here 383; cf. also Olearius' description of the Qurʾān manuscript he deposited in the library in the next following note.

39 Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte Moscovitische und Persianische Reisebeschreibung* (Schleswig 1656): 477: “War oben mit einem Metallen Gitter unterscheiden/daß es gleichsam einen absonderlichen Chor gab. Auff demselben lagen viel alte Arabische Bücher/deren ettliche fünf vierthel Ellen lang und fast eine Elle breit/die Buchstaben waren Fingers lang/und eine Zeile umb die ander mit Gold und Schwartz sehr fleissig geschrieben/von selbigen

of how such precious items, after surviving more than 300 tumultuous years in Sulṭāniyya, could just “pass into the hands” of a traveler who happened to take some interest in them. Were the guardians of the tomb prepared to let go of these leafs, probably against pecuniary incentive or as a diplomatic favor?

In light of the above-mentioned theory of the Saxonian parts being “Türkenbeute” and Olearius’ account for the Copenhagen leafs it would follow—if both assumptions were true—that while a major part of Öljejtü’s Baghdad Qur’ān definitely ended up in the center of the Ottoman state like so many other manuscripts from its vast domains, some of it might have stayed in Iran at its designated place at least until the 17th century. But it might also suggest that the transfer of some of those volumes that ended up in Istanbul, Dresden, and Leipzig happened at a later stage.

There are several scenarios how this could have played out. Books, and among them very precious copies of the Qur’ān, were a usual item of the diplomatic gift basket exchanged between Safavid and Ottoman embassies and rulers.⁴⁰ But manuscripts were also, as they were in Southeast Europe, a spoil of war in the numerous conflicts in this case between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, “Perserbeute” as it might be called with a nod to the established term “Türkenbeute”. Several recorded military interventions into western Iran, especially the region around Tabrīz, might have provided the opportunity for Ottoman troops to capture parts of Öljejtü’s Qur’ān. In particular, the military campaigns of Sultan Süleyman “the Magnificent” against Iran can be imagined to be such an opportunity. Süleyman visited Sulṭāniyya on his first Persian

seynd mir etliche Blätter zukommen/welche ich noch jetzo in meines gnädigsten Herrn Bibliothec verwahre.”

40 For manuscripts, and especially copies of the Qur’ān, as diplomatic gifts between the two powers, see Almut von Gladiss, “Der Koran als Geschenk und Handelsgut” in: François Déroche/Almut von Gladiss, *Buchkunst zu Ehren Allāhs. Der Prachtkoran im Museum für Islamische Kunst* (Berlin 1999): 99–110; Henning Sievert, *Zwischen arabischer Provinz und Hoher Pforte. Beziehungen, Bildung und Politik des osmanischen Bürokraten Rāḡīb Meḥmed Paşa* (Würzburg 2008): 117. Interestingly, in the 65 diplomatic embassies between the Mamluk and Ottoman court as collected by Muhanna a Qur’ān is mentioned only once, the one in question being sent from Egypt to Constantinople (but no less than a volume purportedly in the hand of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān), cf. Elias Muhanna, “The sultan’s new clothes: Ottoman-Mamluk gift exchange in the fifteenth century” in: *Muqarnas* xxvii (2010): 189–207, here 192. For a Qur’ān as a gift of the Safavid Shāh to the Mamluk Sultan cf. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān wa-wafayāt al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān*, ed. by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Fayyāḍ Ḥarfūsh (Beirut 2000): 472.

campaign on 15 Rabi' II 941/13 October 1534.⁴¹ This date is especially probable since the Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha reendowed *juz'* 17, now in the TIEM, in Sha'bān 951/October 1544 to the tomb of Suleyman's son Mehmed,⁴² several years before the second campaign against the Safavids in 1547.

But although in one way or the other some parts of the set had thus definitely left their designated place at the tomb of their patron at the beginning of the 16th century, some other parts must have remained there to be seen, described, and taken by Adam Olearius in 1638. Furthermore, unlike the volume in the TIEM, the volumes now in Saxonia do not bear any signs of a further re-endowment. It would seem that at least at this point any unity between the thirty parts of this Qur'ān would have been dissolved, if indeed there ever was one.

41 Cf. Franz Taeschner, "Das Itinerar des ersten Persienfeldzuges des Sultans Süleyman Kanuni 1534/35 nach Matrakçi Nasuh. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Landeskunde Anadolien und der Nachbargebiete" in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 112 (1962): 50–93, here 51, 54, 80.

42 I thank Sheila Blair for providing me with this important information.



FIGURE 1 *University of Leipzig, MS B. or. 1, front board: The fragment in Leipzig is outfitted with an Ottoman binding*

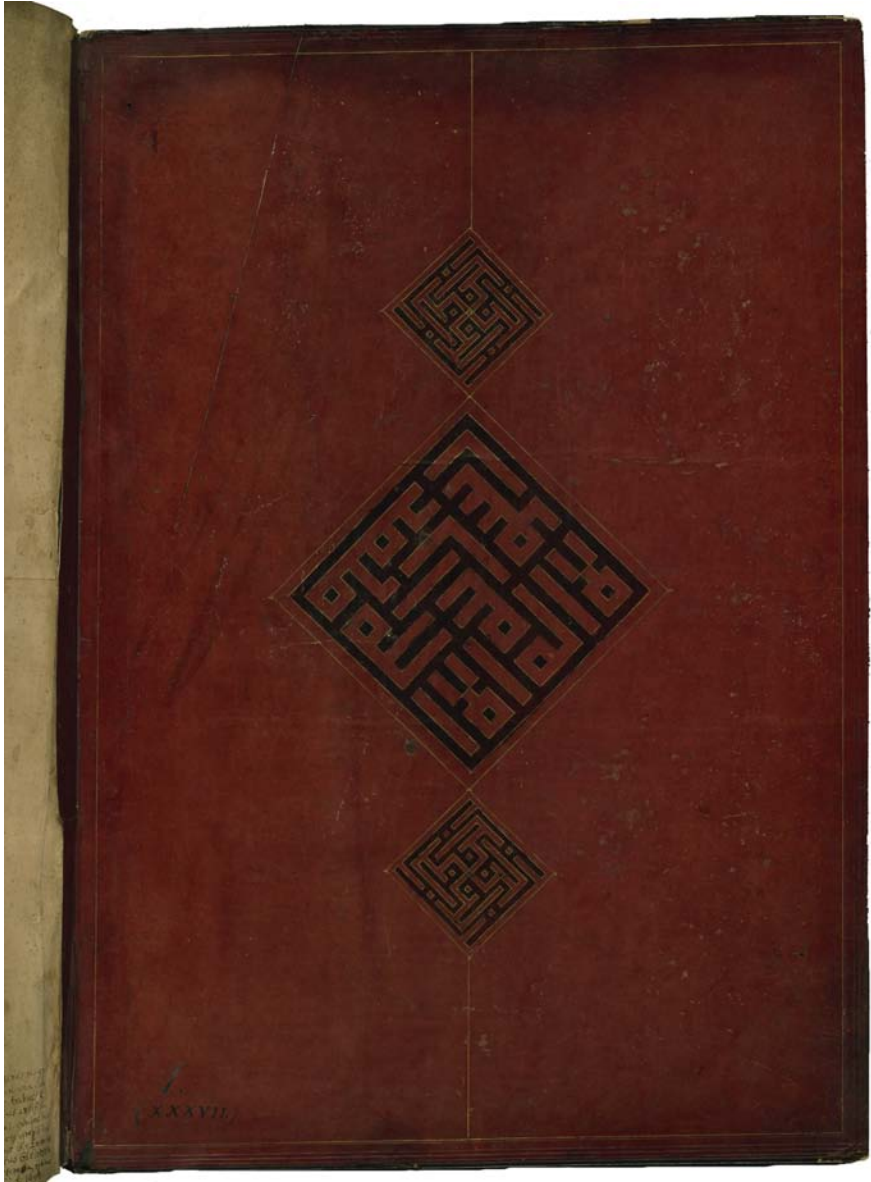


FIGURE 2 *University of Leipzig, MS B. or. 1, front doublure: The doublure of the Leipzig volume shows a peculiar design of square Kufic stamps containing the shahāda and the name 'Alī*



FIGURE 3 *Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, MS Eb. 444, front board: The Dresden binding is of a different design and smaller proportions than the Leipzig one*



FIGURE 4 *Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, MS Eb. 444, fol. 7r: Some marginal ornaments in Dresden have been fully executed, then cut out and folded into the textblock to preserve them*



FIGURE 5 Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, MS Eb. 444, fol. 21r: Due probably to the different lines of gold and black script being executed separately, the writing was occasionally condensed and even spilled over into the margins



FIGURE 6 *Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, MS Eb. 444, fol. 27^v: Most ornaments in the Dresden volume have not been finished and those in the margins were cut away*