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A QUR'ĀN MANUSCRIPT
IN HELSINKI

"FROM AL-QĀHIRA AL-MAHRŪSA TO HELSINKI
OF THE ESC"

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A QUR'ĀN MANUSCRIPT IN HELSINKI

"From al-Qāhira al-mahrūsa to Helsinki of the ESC"

This poor servant of God managed on October 3, 1977 to interpret a line in a Qur'ān manuscript he had been able to purchase on the previous day to his own immense joy and to his wife's and relatives' (who had to procure the money needed) despair. The line read: *"Waqf al-Sulṭān al-Nāṣir Faraj ibn Barqūq ^calā madrasatihi bil-ṣaḥrā"* — in translation something like: "Donated by a deed of waqf by al-Sulṭān al-Nāṣir Faraj ibn Barqūq to his madrasa in the desert plain".

This manuscript is part six of a Qur'ān in thirty volumes written in rīḥānī script. This sixth part contains *sūrat al-nisā'*, IV, 148-176, and *sūrat al-mā'ida*, V, 1-81; consists of 44 folios, three of which are unwritten, two in the beginning and one at the end. There are five lines on each page.

"al-Juz' al-sādīs min al-rub^ca al-sharīfa" is written on fol. 3r in white thuluth script over a gold foliar arabesque on a blue ground. The text in rīḥānī script is fully vocalized with orthographical signs in black and recital marks in red. The sūra heading on fol. 13r, *"sūrat al-mā'ida mi'a wa-^ciṣhrūna āya"*, is in white thuluth script over a gold foliar arabesque picked out with red on a blue ground (ill. VI).

The measures of the manuscript are 37 × 27 cm and it is a brown goatskin binding over paste board, with gold and blind tooling. An outer and inner border, with elaborately tooled corners, contains a large circular central ornament outlined in blind and gold with elongated gold fleurons at top and bottom and with scalloped edges offset with rays, blind strapwork tooling, and a gold six-pointed star in the centre. Inside the circle are rosettes and gold dots. The flap, filled with strapwork tooling, has a border and frames to match those of the cover, around a large centre circle with geometrical shapes tooled in gold and blind (ill. I, VIII).

At the exhibition of the Qur'ān manuscripts arranged by the British Library in co-operation with the World of Islam Festival Trust at the British Library in 1976, there seem to have been a few exhibits remarkably resembling the one described above. As I, unfortunately, did not have the opportunity to visit this exhibition, I have had to rely on the excellent catalogue prepared by Martin Lings and Yasin Hamid Safadi.¹ The two Qur'ān manuscripts in question were written for Amīr Aitamish al-Bajāsī and were numbers 159 and 160 in the exhibition. Without having seen these two bindings, British Library, Henry Davis Gift (159) and British Library, Or. 9671 (160), I would venture the guess that they are by the same craftsman as the one described above. Only some minor details in the ornaments are different. Lings and Safadi write about nr. 160: "...Part 7 of a Qur'ān copied, illuminated and bound for the Amir Aitmish al-Bajasī (d. 803/1400). A fine example of Egyptian binding of the Mamluk period, late 8th/14th century".²

Beside the Qur'ān text there are three other inscriptions in the manuscript that interests us. The first one is the already mentioned waqf-note by which the manuscript was endowed to al-Nāṣir Faraj ibn Barqūq's madrasa. It is written on ff. 4v-5r so, that the word *waqf* is on fol. 4v and the rest on fol. 5r (ill. IV, V).

Then on fol. 43v, otherwise blank, there are two more inscriptions. One written in red ink and beautiful Arabic hand without any diacritical marks reads: "*Ḥarrara hādihā al-juz' al-sharīf min al-rub^ca al-sharīfa Muḥammad al-Imām.*" The second one written in a childish un-Arabic hand with pencil reads: "*Jurjī Sb.nṣ.r Qautlī min faḍl al-... Miṣr 1846*" (ill. VII).

To begin with the waqf-note. al-Malik al-Zāhir Saif al-dīn Abū Sa^cīd Barqūq died on Friday, Shawwāl 15, 801/June 20, 1399. He was succeeded by his

1 The Qur'ān. Catalogue of an exhibition of Qur'ān manuscripts at the British Library 3 April - 15 August, 1976. (Westerham 1976).

2 The Qur'ān p. 93. Amīr Aitamish, however, died in 802/1400, cf. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wal-Qāhira, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vol. VI:1, ed. by William Popper (Berkeley 1915), p. 39, 143 / History of Egypt 1382-1469 A.D. (Part II, 1399-1411 A.D.), transl. from the Arabic Annals of Abu l-Maḥāsin ibn Taghrī Birdī by William Popper, same series, vol. 14 (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1954), p. 29, 104f.; Ibn Iyās, Badā'i^c al-zuhūr fī waqā'i^c al-duhūr, vol. I:2, Bibliotheca Islamica 5a2, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Wiesbaden 1974), p. 582.

eldest son Zain al-dīn Abū al-Sa^Cādāt Faraj ibn Barqūq according to the wish of the father, who had named him the heir-apparent. Faraj was the son of Barqūq and a Greek/Anatolian/Byzantine (*Rūmī*) slave girl named Shīrīn. He was born in Cairo in 791/1389 so he was only about ten years old on his ascension to the throne and his first sultanate. He was the 26th Mamlūk Sultan of Egypt and he was given the throne name al-Malik al-Nāṣir.

As can be understood, the ten years old Sultan was only a pawn in the power game of the Mamelukes, in a Cairo which "already with Barqūq, the first Circassian, ... began to be more like a nest of vipers than the city of a cultured sultanate court. Mameluke life in Cairo became almost literally a matter of dog eat dog, and the Mameluke soldiers of Greek and Turkish and Circassian and Tartar origin cut each other to pieces every day in the streets of the city".³ Thus we can read in Ibn Taghrī Birdī how the young Sultan had become weary of the frequent strife and had once confidentially told the historian's father: "I would that I might be anything as long as it was not a sultan".⁴ This episode took place on Tuesday, I Rabī^C 7, 808/September 1, 1405. On Sunday, I Rabī^C 25, 808 Faraj disappeared and hid in Cairo leaving the government of Cairo to the Mamelukes. al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj was dethroned, and the Mamelukes then summoned Amīr ^CAbd al-^CAzīz, Faraj's younger brother to the sultanate according to the provision made by Barqūq before his death.⁵

After a short interlude, the length of the sultanate of al-Malik al-Manṣūr ^CAbd al-^CAzīz was two months and ten days⁶, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj returned and took, with his partisans, control of the government and was restored to rule. But nothing had changed and he was still a puppet in the hands of the Mamelukes. According to contemporaneous historians, Faraj had become a drunkard and an alcoholic who continuously was seen intoxicated, so drunk that he was hardly able to hold himself on his horse.

al-Malik al-Nāṣir met his end at the hands of rebellious Mamelukes and he was strangled in the tower of the Damascus citadel on the eve of Saturday,

3 James Aldridge, Cairo (London 1969), p. 124.

4 Ibn Taghrī Birdī p. 129f. / 95.

5 ibid. p. 133ff. / 97f.; Ibn Iyās p. 733f.

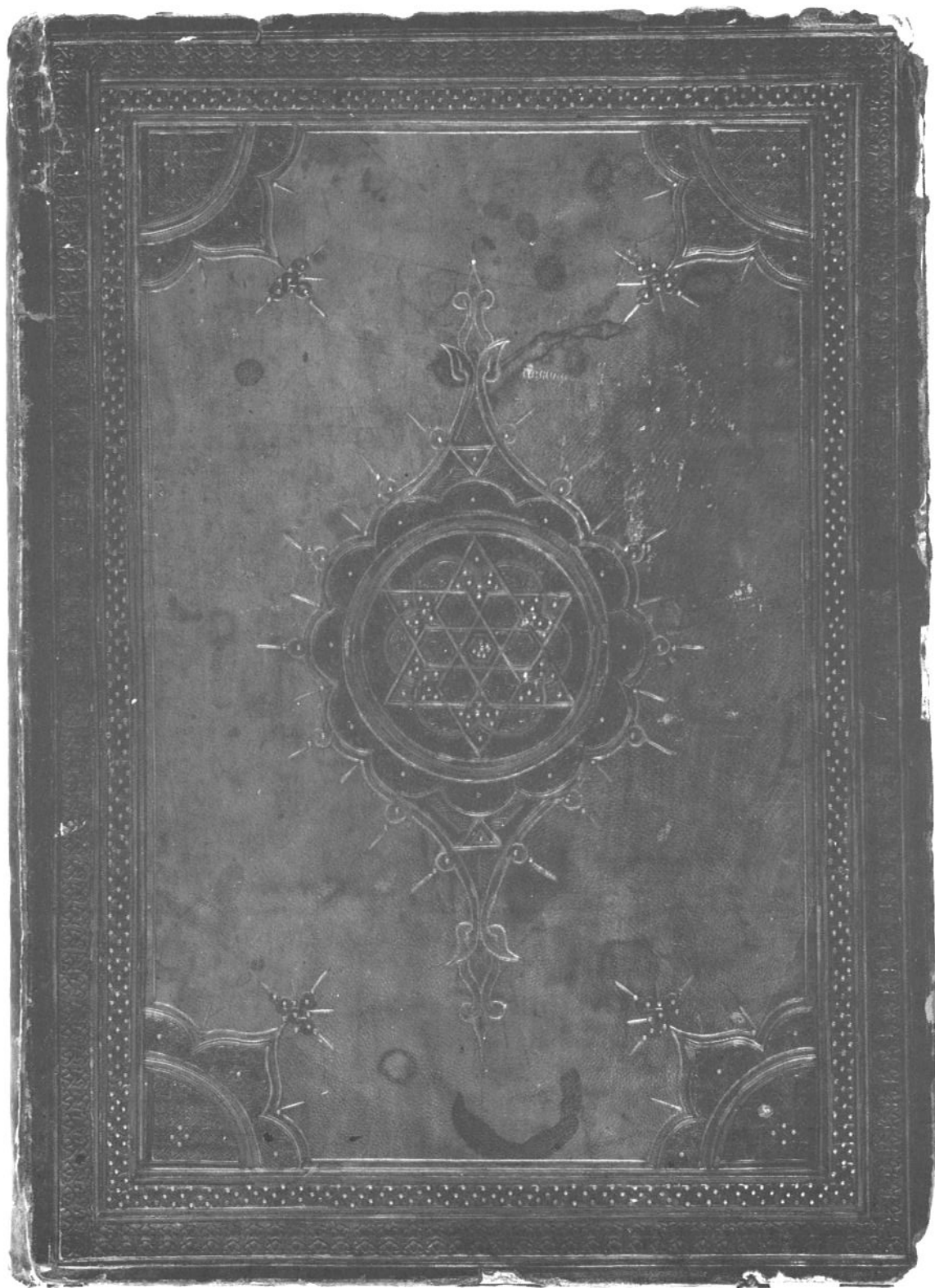
6 Ibn Taghrī Birdī p. 172 / 124; Ibn Iyās p. 740: "seventy days".

Safar 16, 815/May 28, 1412. Afterwards his corpse was thrown upon a pile of refuse to the enjoyment of the rabble.⁷

In other words, if we are to date the endowment of this manuscript as a waqf, then it must have taken place between the years 801-815/1399-1412. If we wish to come nearer the exact date of the endowment then the next clue is in the words "... *alā madrasatihi*...". There are in fact two buildings in Cairo with surroundings constructed by order of Faraj and during his time that could come in question, but the ending of the waqf-note "... *bil-ṣaḥrā*", puts down beyond cavil which one of these two constructions is intended. When al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq fell ill he decreed by will that he should be buried in the desert plain and he bequeathed 80.000 dinars for the construction of a *turba* for him. He died, however, before the work had been undertaken.⁸ The building of the turba was thus left to his son Faraj. It is obvious that the construction should have begun immediately after the death of Barqūq in Shawwāl 15, 801/June 20, 1399. The building as left by Faraj was completed, according to an inscription in the entrance niche of the northern façade, at the end of the year 813 (= April 1411).⁹ The turba was, however, taken into use as a tomb-mosque and *khānqāh* already before this when Ṣadr al-dīn Aḥmad ibn Maḥmūd al-^cAjamī was appointed to be its shaikh and forty sufis were established with him. This took place on Tuesday, I Rabī^c 5, 813/July 8, 1410.¹⁰

As we have noticed above the construction of Faraj in the desert plain was most frequently called turba. Other designations used in our sources for

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- 7 Ibn Taghrī Birdī p. 268ff. / 194f.; Ibn Iyās p. 819ff., but he gives the date of the death as on the eve of Sunday, Ṣafar 6, 815; anyhow Faraj was not publicly killed as stated by J. Wansbrough, "Faradj", EI²II, p. 781f.
- 8 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā^ciḏ wal-i^ctibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wal-athār* (ed. Bū-lāq 1270/1854), II, p. 464; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, op. cit., vol. V (Berkeley 1933), p. 595 / (Part I, 1382-1399 A.D.), vol. 13, p. 171; Ibn Iyās p. 525.
- 9 As quoted by Saleh Lamei Mostafa, *Kloster und Mausoleum des Farağ ibn Barqūq in Kairo*. Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe, Bd. 2 (Glückstadt 1968), p. 139, nr. 591.
- 10 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, vol. VI:1, p. 228f. / vol. 14, p. 166. Mostafa, op. cit., p. 6 note 31, misreads Ibn Taghrī Birdī (due to the translation) when he says that this event took place on I Rabī^c 15. The Arabic original is, however, unambiguous "*fī yawm al-thalāthā' khāmis shahr Rabī^c al-awwal*".



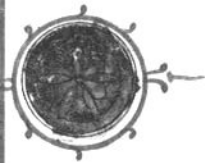
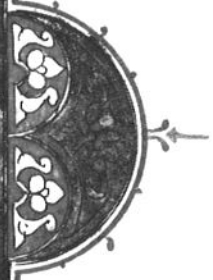
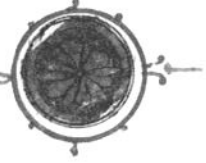
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

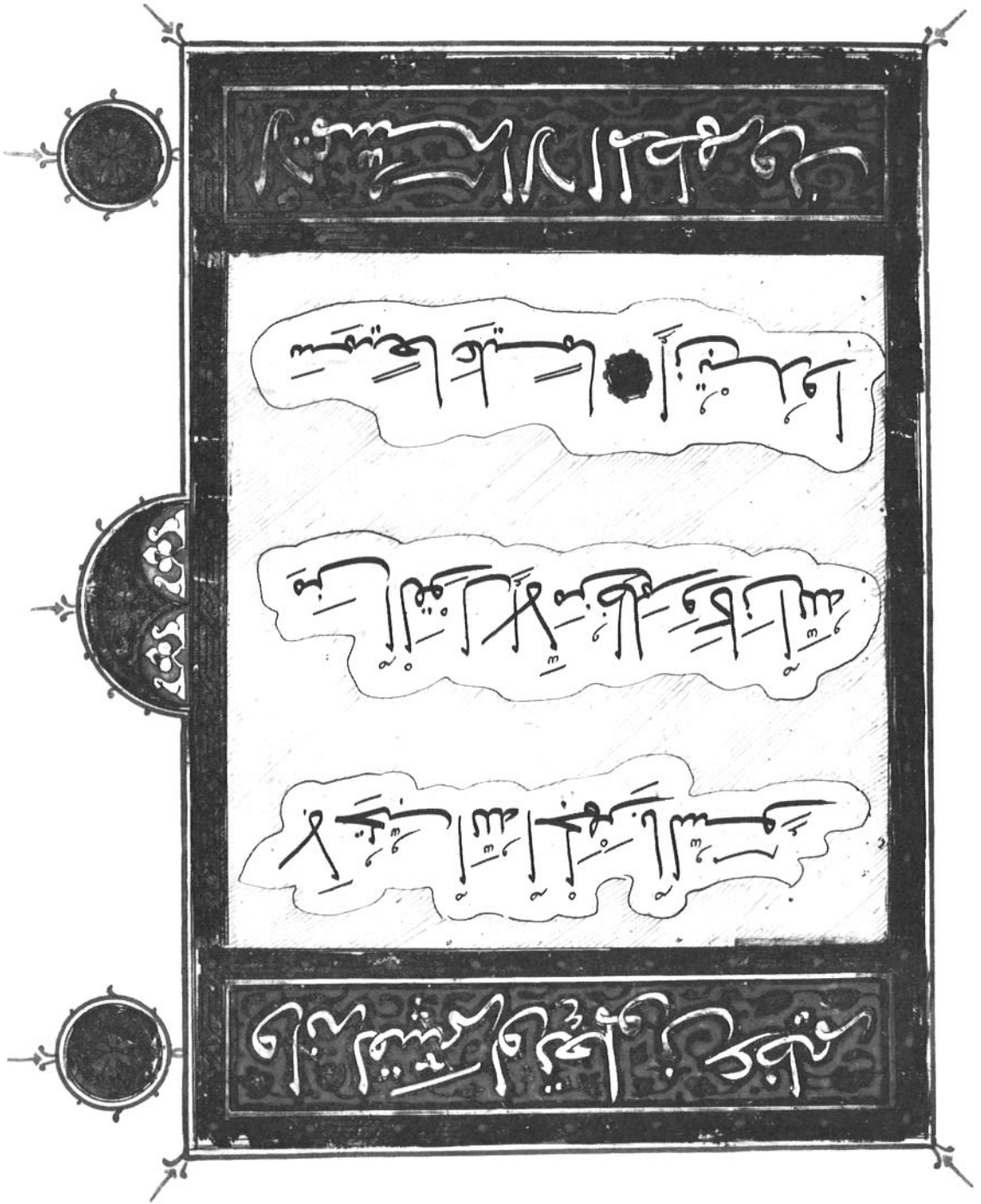
أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِكَ أَنْبِيَاً وَسُلْطَانًا

مُتَّبَعًا وَمَا نُرِيدُكَ أَنْتَ

وَمَا نُرِيدُكَ أَنْتَ وَنُرِيدُكَ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ سُبُلًا

لَا تَرَوْنَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ

يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ

وَيَخْتَارُ مَا يُؤْتِيهِ اللَّهُ

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا

بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ أُولَئِكَ سَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِمْ

أُجُورَهُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا  بَيْتِكَ

أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تَنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا

مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا مُوسَىٰ أَكْبَرًا مِنْ

وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ

اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضِ

وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا

بَيْنَكَ وَاللَّهِ سَبِيلًا • أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُونَ

حَقًّا وَاعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا •

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

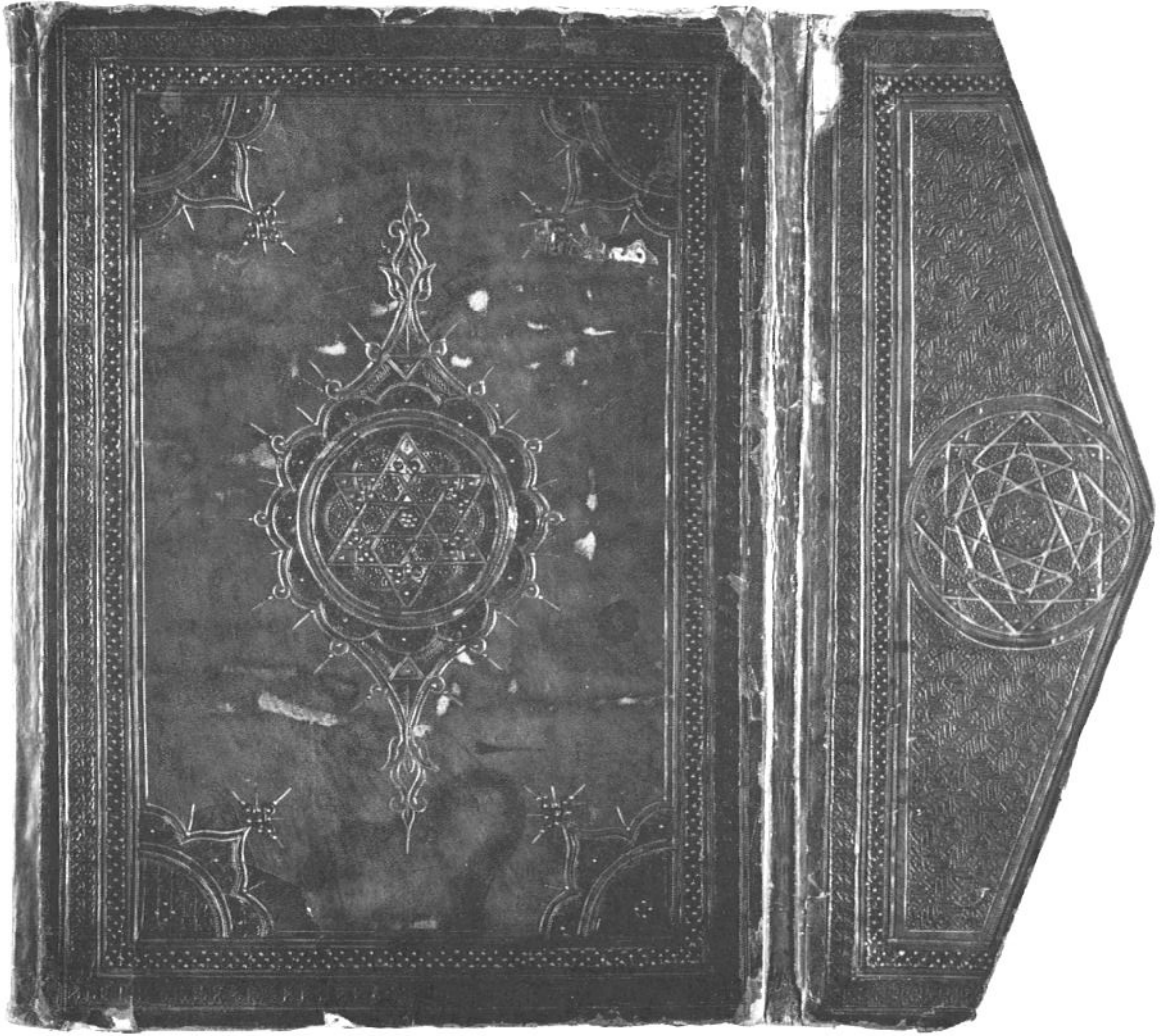
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ أُحِلَّتْ

جرجي سبتصر قوتلي

من فضل ال

مصر ١٨٢٦

حرره الخالصة
مراد الورد محمد الامام.



this building were *madrasa* and *khānqāh*.¹¹ *Turba* and *khānqāh* are the designations we find in most of the accounts of the historians of the Mamluke period. The fact that in the manuscript in question the word *madrasa* is used can be explained by the general tendency during the *burjī*-period to subsume *khānqāhs* under *madrāsas*.¹² Moreover, according to Janine Sourdel-Thomine "On sait enfin que des confusions ont toujours existé, au niveau du programme architectural, entre les bâtiments répondant aux appellations diverses de *madrasa*, *khānqāh*, *ribāṭ*, *dār al-ḥadīth*, *zāwiya*, *māristān*, etc. ...".¹³

But as mentioned above, there is also another construction from Faraj's time that could come in question, had it not been for the designation "... *bil-ṣaḥrā*" at the end of the waqf-note. And this one is, as it happens, throughout in our sources called *madrasa*. On Thursday, I Jumādā 3, 810/October 6, 1407 "Jamāl al-dīn the major-domo consulted the Sultan on the subject of building for him a *madrasa* in the quarter of the Festival Gate Square, the Sultan gave his permission, and the same day Jamāl al-dīn broke ground for the foundations and began construction".¹⁴ The building of this *madrasa* was completed the next year, but it unfortunately became known under its constructor's name, or as Ibn Taghrī Birdī writes on events that took place on Muḥarram 19, 814/May 13, 1411: "... the Sultan alighted at his *madrasa*, which Jamāl al-dīn the major-domo had constructed for him on the Square of the Festival Gate and which is known as the *Jamālīya*; the Cadis, however, had established that it was Faraj's mosque, and it was therefore named *al-Nāṣiriya*".¹⁵ Despite the Cadis decision the mosque, which is situated on Shāri^c *al-Jamālīya* in a part of Cairo known

11 *Khānqāh* is a Persian loan-word, as al-Maqrīzī, II, p. 414, states. About the etymology and meaning of this composite word of Persian origin, see J. Chabbi, "*Khānqāh*", EI²IV, p. 1025f.

12 J. M. Rogers, "*al-ḳāhira*", EI²IV, p. 433; J. Chabbi, "*Khānqāh*", EI²IV, p. 1026.

13 "Locaux d'enseignement et *madrāsas* dans l'islam médiéval", in *Colloques Internationaux de La Napoule. Islam et Occident au Moyen Age I. L'Enseignement en Islam et en Occident au Moyen Age*. (Revue des Études Islamiques XLIV, 1976), p. 194.

14 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, vol. VI:1, p. 193 / vol. 14, p. 140.

15 *ibid.* p. 244f. / p. 177.

as Jamāliya, is still today known as the mosque of Jamāl al-dīn.¹⁶ It is, however, not our major-domo, who was slain in disgrace on the eve of Tuesday, II Jumādā 11, 812/September 24, 1409, who has given the name to this illustrious quarter of Fatimide Cairo. It might have had its name from Badr al-Jamālī, the Armenian constructor of Bāb al-Futūḥ and Bāb al-Naṣr.¹⁷

What has been said about the madrasa *intra muros* goes also for the turba built by Faraj for his father in the desert plain. Both buildings are today better known under other names. The madrasa without exception as the mosque of Jamāl al-dīn, and the khānqāh both under his and his father's name, even though at large Barqūq's name solely is associated with it. But as Ibn Taghrī Birdī writes: "Many men think that this great turba was erected by al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq before his death, and they call it 'al-Zāhirīya'; this is not the case, for it was built by al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj several years after his father's death".¹⁸

In other words, the history of the construction and taking into use of these two buildings, and, of course, especially of the khānqāh in the desert plain, indicate, in my opinion, that the actual endowment of this Qur'ān manuscript as a waqf can be dated to Tuesday, I Rabī^c 5, 813/July 8, 1410, when a shaikh was appointed to it. The endowment could, of course, have been made earlier, because we know from Ibn Taghrī Birdī that the turba was in use as early as Tuesday, Muḥarram 21, 802/September 23, 1399, when "Sultan al-Nāṣir rode from the Citadel..., and went down to visit his father's turba in the desert plain...".¹⁹ But I think the most obvious moment to endow this Qur'ān (and supposedly also its 29 companion-volumes) as a waqf to have been in connection with the appointment of the shaikh to the madrasa.

16 For example in Baedeker's Egypt 1929 and Les guides bleus: Égypte. S. Lane-Poole in his A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages (4th ed., s.l. 1968) mentions on p. 323 erroneously a madrasa for both Jamāl al-dīn and Faraj.

17 See Jacques Berque & Mustafa al-Shakaa, "La Gamāliya depuis un siècle" in Colloque Internationale sur l'Histoire du Caire (Gräfenhainichen 1972), p. 67, 90 note 8. The authors' practice of writing "Vieux Caire" for the Fatimide Cairo is to be condemned. Vieux Caire, Old Cairo has arisen from Miṣr al-qadīma and Miṣr al-Catīqa, that is to say from designations of al-Fustāṭ. Although an anachronism it still should be maintained for this purpose only.

18 Vol. VI:1, p. 228f. / vol. 14, p. 166. | 19 ibid. p. 11 / p. 8.

About the calligraph, Muḥammad al-Imām, I have so far not been able to find any information. The identification of him might prove impossible, given that he has such a commonplace name. There might, perhaps, be other manuscripts written by him where more precise data about him and his work could be found, but unfortunately I have not come across anything that could throw light upon him. This is a crucial point considering the dating of the manuscript.

Then there is a long gap between 1410 and 1846 when George Spencer Cautley received this manuscript as a gift from someone whose name was not to be mentioned. During this time the manuscript seems to have remained in Cairo, as the inscription on fol. 43v, most probably in Cautley's own writing, is dated in Cairo. But this is, I think, all we can say about this period of more than four centuries.

This George Spencer Cautley is almost as an enigmatic figure as the scribe Muḥammad al-Imām. He lived between the years 1807-1880 and wrote three books of poetry; although no literary history of England seems to know about him or his books, not even among the "minor poets". The three books attributed to him are (the two first were written anonymously): *The afterglow: Songs and sonnets for my friends* (London 1867), *The three fountains: A faery epic of Euboea* (London 1869), and *A century of emblems* (London 1878).²⁰ He might also have been a book illustrator, if he is identical with "The Rev. Spencer Cautley" who *cum aliis* appears as illustrator of "Woodland Gossip" (London 1864).²¹ I have tried to get some information concerning him from England but so far without success. After having leafed through biographical dictionaries I would venture the guess that he was the son of Rev. Thomas Cautley and brother of Sir Proby Thomas Cautley (1802-1871). But this is pure guesswork.

20 This information is gathered from The National Union Catalogue pre-1956 Imprints, vol. 100, and British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books, vol. XXXV. The first book was also one time ascribed to Matthew Boyle, cf. S. Halkett & J. Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature*, new and enlarged edition by J. Kennedy & W. A. Smith & A. F. Johnson, vol. I (Edinburgh 1926), p. 47. A second edition of *The afterglow* appeared in 1869.

21 British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books, vol. LXXXIX, col. 462. I am indebted for this observation to Prof. C. E. Bosworth.

To summarize: The manuscript in question was written at the end of the 8th/14th century for the Amīr Aitamish al-Bajāsī by Muḥammad al-Imām; after the death of Aitamish in 802/1400 it was confiscated by al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj ibn Barqūq and on I Rabī^c 5, 813/July 8, 1410, donated as a waqf to the madrasa, i.e. to the khānqāh of Faraj ibn Barqūq in the desert plain. Then in 1846 it was given to George Spencer Cautley in Egypt and presumably reached England with him. Then by and through several persons, both known and unknown, it arrived in Finland; from Cairo the Protected to Helsinki of the European Security Council. But, of course, *Allāhu a^clam.*