

Kaytlin Butler/Stuart Kay

CH 108: Codicological Survey

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Given the presence of the term “waqf” on the inside cover, the original owner dedicated the manuscript to an Islamic endowment following his/her death. “Waqf” refers to a compulsory donation of a portion of an individual’s wealth to a religious institution.¹ Written in English on the inside cover, the text is labeled, “Qur’an Commandments for Islam,” which is theoretically the title of the commentary. Further, the manuscript itself is likely of Ottoman origin given the style of binding and the cover art. The outside cover itself is made of wood though it is wrapped in a decorative paper. The marbled design on the decorative paper is likely characteristic of its Ottoman origins. The text, however, is also unique in that, unlike manuscripts of a similar era, the binding and pages are cropped to be of even dimensions (7.8” and 5.5”).²

Speculation that the text is of Ottoman origin is further supported given the presence of the word “teke.” The manuscript was likely given by the original owner to a Sufi monastery to which the term refers. The term itself, as compared to other terms for similar Islamic monastic institutions, was first used in the Ottoman Turkish context and may be idiosyncratic to it. Teke derives from the term taqiyya, an important concept in Twelver Shiism. The term “teke” therefore may indicate that it was donated to a Sufi dervish monastery. The term began to take precedence over the more common term “zawiya” in Turkey around the 10th/16th centuries when it began to refer more specifically to an Ottoman network of brotherhoods, more stable and permanent institutions, that was responsible for the needs of mystic communities and controlled

¹ Riedel, Dagmar. Interviewed by Stewart Kay. Manuscript Interview. Burke Library, New York City. February 25, 2015

² *Ibid.*

by the state.³ Though, it is worth noting that there is currently no certainty regarding the distinction between “tekke” and other terms for Sufi monastic communities beyond this geographical and historical knowledge. The text further has an original “call number” written on the underside of book such that it could be identified if it was stacked with others when it was laid flat. This tells the modern observer how the Sufi community in which it was originally kept stored and organized their texts.⁴

The interior of the text is comprised of an assortment of pages and handwriting styles some of which were cut from other books and added to this manuscript. This becomes particularly clear given the small flaps of material that are folded into the text. These portions of the pages were likely originally cut from a physically larger text. Because it contained information that the original compiler or compilers of the text wished to preserve, these portions were carefully cropped so that they could be incorporated into the new document. These borrowed pages were likely taken from other Qu’ranic commentaries which the compiler wanted to include in his/her own work. This further accounts for the inconsistency in the age, size, handwriting styles, and Arabic tashkeel or vowel demarcations found throughout the text.

Given the type of paper found within the compiled document, we can ascertain that the pages within it originated in different geographical regions with different styles of paper making.⁵ A large middle portion of the text is written on a white paper with dark red lines drawn around the body of the text. When examined, the paper contains both chains and lines congruent with a European style of papermaking. The more yellowed portions of the text, however, contain only

³ Clayer, Nathalie. "Tekke." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2015. Reference. Columbia University. 08 March 2015 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/tekke-SIM_7486>

⁴ Riedel, Dagmar.

⁵ Riedel, Dagmar.

laid lines and no chains congruent with the papermaking style of Ottoman Islamic communities. The European paper further leaves intentional space to add personal notes perhaps denoting that its original source was intended for personal use.

The different styles of paper in the text are made more interesting by the presence of a table of contents located in the middle of the document. The table of contents is written on one of the yellowed, Ottoman folios, specifically Folio 140.⁶ The list of sections on the table of contents corresponds to headings of different sections of the text. Specifically, one of the sections on the table of contents corresponds to Folio 80A which appears to begin that section of the text as it is written at the top of a blank page which may serve as a sort of cover sheet.⁷ However, Folio 80A, unlike Folio 140, is written on the European style white paper. This indicates that the original compiler intentionally organized the manuscript by labeling each of the sections of the commentary.

Additionally, there are many portions of the document which contain copious notes in the margins of the page as well as bright underlining of the text in red ink. These are likely the original owner or perhaps even the original compilers personal commentary on portions of the document. It is unclear whether these are personal notes as a result of individual use or those of a compiler or author who intended to circulate his/her ideas. In any case, the presence of written commentary certainly indicates that this is not a Qur'anic manuscript as Qu'rans were typically not marked up by those of their readership who are devout believers due to the sacred nature of the text. Further, there is some amount of poetry written in these margins and on extra paper scattered throughout the commentary, a significant medium of Islamic art through the present day. One of these pages includes poetry written to the right side of the page that appears to be

⁶ Riedel, Dagmar.

⁷ Riedel, Dagmar.

signed by its author by the name of Dmiri Isfahani. Isfahani/ صد فهيا is a Persian surname which further locates the manuscript to the Ottoman family. More commentary is written to the left of the poem, perhaps the author's reflection on its content or relevance.⁸

On the final page of the document, there is a small symbol on the bottom left hand corner which indicates that there is something missing from the document.⁹ The denoting of the text as being incomplete may refer to a variety of different things. It is possible that this a left-over marking from the text that this page may have originally come from indicating that it was somehow incomplete. It could also mean that there was some amount of information missing from the content of this single page. However, theoretically it could also indicate that the text as a whole was incomplete in that perhaps it was only a partial commentary on the Qur'an referencing a select number of chapters or surahs. Following this line of thought, it could be that this document is one volume out of a larger collection of commentaries. This could be a possible explanation of the table of contents located in the middle of the document. It is possible that the front half of the text is the end of a previous commentary with the table of contents in the middle beginning the second section of commentary.

At the top of the table of contents, there are the remnants of a label that may have been the seal of its original owner or in some way revealed its original source possibly before reaching the Ottoman Sufi libraries.¹⁰ This seal, however, has possibly been intentionally smudged out in order to hide the origin of the text for some unknown reason. Another possibility is that the application of this seal and its subsequent removal occurred in the monastery to remove the name

⁸ Riedel, Dagmar.

⁹ Riedel, Dagmar.

¹⁰ Riedel, Dagmar.

of their benefactor. It may have also occurred after the text's time in the monastery for any number of reasons.

Though it was catalogued as a Qur'an manuscript in the original 1980's Byrnes catalog of the Burke Library, ARAB 7 is actually a Qur'an commentary. This is readily evident when the ARAB 7 manuscript is compared to other Qur'ans produced in similar eras like the Burke Library's MS 4.¹¹ Like the ARAB 7 commentary, this Qur'an is also believed to have been produced during the Ottoman era. The book is distinct in its consistency of format. The handwriting is consistent throughout the entirety of the text and likely written by the same scribe. The text is further evenly situated within the margins of the pages indicating the care and craftsmanship that went into its drafting. The size of the font in the Qur'an is also slightly larger making it easier to read for various purposes.

However, unlike the commentary, the cover (7.57"x5.51") has not been cropped and is slightly bigger than the pages it contains. It further contains a full collection of all the surahs without any idle markings. Rather than the stray writings found throughout the commentary, the various pages of the Qur'an have decorative images as compared to the columns of the commentary. These images in the text add to its grandeur making its holy nature more obvious. The paper used for the book further appears to be Ottoman as there are not visible laid lines but chain lines with pulp similar to the Ottoman pages in the commentary. The Qur'an does not contain European paper and appears to have been bound once as compared to the commentary which is an amalgamation of various texts written on different types of paper potentially from different periods of time.

¹¹ "Quran, sura 1 and sura 2, section of the surat al-Kahf, colophon," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed March 7, 2015, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/items/show/6096>.

Kaytlin Butler: Manuscript Reflection and the Ottoman-Turkish Sufi Orders

First and foremost, Sufism is a mystical practice within the Islamic tradition that explores human capacity for direct connection with the divine beyond the human-made, institutionalized, doctrine-oriented, etc. religious categorizations of religion. However, as mystical or spiritually oriented praxis so often falls into the trope of anti-intellectualism, it is important to make the distinction that Sufi mysticism is intended to “run parallel to the mainstream Islamic consciousness.”¹² Sufi mystics through their various and unique practices seek to better understand the “underlying mystery” of the Qu’ran, God’s final revelation.¹³ The different Sufi orders where members of the order may live in community further often possessed large collections of books including copies of the Qu’ran, theological texts, and commentaries such as the manuscript that Bill and I wrote about above.

Though they possess many organizational and methodological differences, these Sufi orders are not unlike many Christian monastic orders. Just as Christian monastic orders vary with their geographical location and theological heritage, so too do the myriad of Sufi orders and traditions found through the course of Islamic history. Sufi orders can be roughly divided geographically as they originated with one local saint or the “cult of the saints” who passed on his knowledge and wisdom to a collection of pupils who do the same over time.¹⁴ These saints and the teachers that followed them were known as sheikhs, a title which was often hereditary. These regions include: Egypt, the Mahgreb, Mesopotamia, Persia (comprised of Iranian and Turkish spheres of influence), and India. As stated above, this manuscript originates from a

¹² Trimingham, J. Spencer. *Sufi Orders in Islam*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, USA, 1998. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 25 April 2015.

¹³ Trimingham, Spencer, p. 2

¹⁴ Trimingham, Spencer, p. 31

Persian Sufi order and more specifically a Turkish order given the distinctively Ottoman features of the binding itself as indicated by Professor Dagmar Riedel.

Information gathered from the codicological survey and particularly the presence of the term “tekke” written on the inside binding provides a door for a large body of historical speculation with regard to the owners of this text and their historical narrative during the time of the Ottoman Empire. Though the exact age of this manuscript remains uncertain, knowledge of the historical experience and evolution of the Sufi tekkes in Turkey under the Ottomans provides some historical illumination of the circumstances that may have produced and housed it. The Sufi tekkes, one of which likely ultimately possessed this manuscript, were instrumental in the early days of the Ottoman Empire. As the Ottoman Empire expanded, relative stability was achieved in Turkey through the cooperation and acceptance of three religious groups: official Sunni legalism, the Sufi tekke cult, and the Folk cult. As Shi’ism was not an acceptable religious persuasion, Turkish Shi’ite persons within the empire found refuge in the Sufi tekke cult.¹⁵ Ottoman officials further relied on these religious orders and their scholars to form the “backbone” of the empire and to preserve a sense of social cohesion.¹⁶ While the Ottomans also created state-sponsored madrasas or Islamic schools to this end that were uniform and “catered to the formal requirements of Islam”, state-sponsored Sufi tekkes ultimately became much more common throughout the region as they had their own personalities and “catered to every religious need.”¹⁷ The tekkes were more than just places of learning. They housed travelers and the poor and were seen as locations set apart for spiritual rest and divine connection.

¹⁵ Trimingham, Spencer, p. 69

¹⁶ Trimingham, Spencer, p. 70

¹⁷ Ibid.

Dervish Sufi tekkes, the speculated origin of this manuscript, could potentially house between twenty and forty monks who lived together in community.¹⁸ In addition to poverty, many orders took a vow of abstinence with the exception of those who were married before entering the brotherhood. Stipulations regarding marital relationships varied with most orders allowing for their members to be married with the expectation that they spent two or three nights per week with the remainder of the brotherhood in the tekke. Other orders did not allow married brothers to sleep in the tekke at all. Further, though there was some distinction between the sheikhs and dervishes, the brotherhoods were non-hierarchical with the leaders being of equal status with all dervishes or members.¹⁹ Perhaps unlike the scholars of the madrassas, they valued connection with the needs of the people over and above the status accrued by spiritual knowledge and existential holiness.

¹⁸ Trimingham, Spencer, p. 178

¹⁹ Trimingham, Spencer, p.231