PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

THE QUR'ÂN OF PĔTR STOLYPIN (?)

The Qur'ân is a unique monument in many respects. I have already written about the specific and multi-functional role that the Sacred Text have played in the Muslim world where the Qur'ân became the ubiquitous feature of life both for the individual and for the Islamic society. In particular the Qur'ânic manuscripts, handed down from generation to generation, served to register what we call today "items of public record" [1].

The manuscript of the Qur'ân as well as the text of the Sacred Book have been the most important ethno-cultural symbols for the Muslims. This has been, in particular, proved by recent research of St. Petersburg sociologists: in the system of modal images of Orthodox Church and Islam, the Qur'ân for the Muslims of St. Petersburg turned out to be much more important than the Bible for the Christians living in the city.

Quite naturally, the Qur'ân has been viewed as the most important symbol of the Islamic world as well as beyond the borders of this world — in Europe and America, in Black Africa and Russia. I have already written that the geopolitical location of the country and the course of Russian history laid the foundation for a special attitude toward the Sacred Book of Islam. Archival materials indicate that the Qur'ân was included in the personal libraries of such Russian Tsars as Ivan the Terrible (1530—1584), Peter the Great (1672—1725), and Catherine II (1729—1796). The fate of publications, translations, and rare manuscripts of the Qur'ân was also bound up with the personal decisions of the supreme rulers of Russia [3].

Quite recently I came across a manuscript of Qur'ân which can serve as a vivid illustration of what has been said above.

Not long ago Prof. A. A. Zhukov (Oriental Faculty, St. Petersburg State University) informed me that he owns a manuscript of the Qur'ân which could have belonged to Pĕtr Stolypin, an outstanding reformer and an important figure in Russian 20th century politics. I, of course, became interested in the manuscript and soon received it for work.

The manuscript represents a small codex (16.7×10.4 cm) of vertical format which consists of 276 folios (the first one is missing). The manuscript is copied in a sure calligraphic naskh (fig. 1) on glazed European paper (water signs could be traced). The text is written in black ink, for the headings of the sūras placed in golden frames red ink was used. Red ink is also used to mark out the tajwîd signs. Both red and black inks were used to indicate the tajwîd elements on the margins. Here, on the margins, the elements of liturgical division regularly appear: the juz' es are marked with floral rosettes of various forms (the colours — golden, light blue, pink, green). Pink ink was used to mark hizbs, dark red — to mark halves (niṣf). Golden circles present the āya separators, in one place an 'uṣhr — the tenth dīwān is marked in black on the margins.

The text is placed in a multi-colour frame (the order of lines from the outer edge of the pages to the text: a red, two black and a thick golden framed with a black line). There are 17 lines on a page. The size of the text is 12.7×7.1 cm.

The left part of a two-page 'unwān (fig. 2) is preserved. It is designed with the same set of four colours as the whole manuscript (golden, light blue, pink and red).

The manuscript is kept in the original Oriental brown leather binding moulded and gilt on the front part of the cover (four rosettes at the corners and one at the centre) and gold painting inside it (fig. 3).

Folio 275b presents a standard colophon (in red ink) without the mention of a date or the name of the copyist (fig. 4). On the free lower half of this page in non-calligraphic handwriting and with omitted words the first sūra is copied, which is missing from the codex in connection with the loss of the right part of the 'unwān. This, obviously, points to the fact that the first page of the manuscript had been lost before it was brought to Russia.

There are no waqf inscriptions. The manuscript, which is an example of serial production must have been copied in Tabriz and dates to the end of the 17th century [4].

On the folio 276a in a column the following numbers are written (fig. 5):

| ٠٦١ | ٦٠٠٧ | ٦٥٠٧ |
| ٠٦٨ | ٦٠٨٠ | ٦٤٨剪 |
| ٠٦٠٦ | ٥٠٦٠ | ٥٤٠٧ |
| ٠٦١٠ | ٥١٠٩ | ٥٤٢٠ |
| ٠٦٣٠ | ٦٣٠٥ | ٦٤٣٠ |
| ٠٦٩٣ | ٦٩٣٥ | ٦٩٣٥ |

This record could have had a practical, as well as a ritual (for example, magic) meaning (for example, accounting records important for the owner, or a code).

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Fig. 2
Fig. 3
On the folio 276b there are three owner's records which are of special interest to us (fig. 6). On top of the page (with a pencil inscription): “IN Kochugel 159 881 from 62”

Below (in black ink):

“In the year of 1828 during the capture of the town of Tebriz by field-marshall Paskevich this book was taken by his adjutant Minitski in a palace of the heir to the Persian throne Abbas-Mirza – presented to Nikolai Andreievich Marievich (…) Minitski”.

Under the line (in faded ink):

“To Petr Arkadievich as a sign of hearty devotion. Please, accept this book in memory from Mikhail Marievich. 29th of July”.

The signature is illegible.

The marginal notes preserved in the manuscript allow us to reconstruct its history during the most part of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Ivan Fedorovich Paskevich (1782—1856) was one of the heroes of the war of 1812 against Napoleon. Since 1827 he was the governor-general of the Caucasus and the commander of the Russian army in the wars against Persia and Turkey. After replacing Ermolov both as the ruler of the Caucasus and commander of the troops, Paskevich continued the struggle against Persia. In the autumn of 1827 his army set out on a difficult mountain campaign to the Yerevan khanate which was under the rule of Persia. After taking Yerevan Paskevich seized Tabriz, the capital of southern Azerbaijan and the residence of the heir to the shah's throne ‘Abbáš-Mirzá (1789—1833) who was in charge of the country’s foreign policy and advocated its pro-English orientation.

Paskevich was ready for a march on the Persian capital, that is why Tebran agreed to make peace. According to the Turkmenchay peace treaty signed in February 1828, Russia received the Yerevan and the Nakhchiván khanates as well as an exclusive right to maintain a military presence on the Caspian Sea. The government of Persia promised not to put obstacles in the way of Armenians migration into Russia. Simultaneously with the peace treaty there was signed a trade agreement according to which Russian merchants received the right to free trade on the whole territory of the country. The record must have mentioned Iliodor Osipovich Minitski — the field-captain of Life Guards Uhlan regiment who was one of the adjutants of Paskevich in this campaign. Later he served in the Caucasus.

I. O. Minitski who took the manuscript as a military trophy presented it to Nikolai Andreievich Marievich who we have been unable to find out anything about. From the next record it follows that Mikhail Marievich, who must have been the son or grandson of Nikolai Andreievich presented it “on the 29th of July” to someone “Petr Arkadievich”. Simple calculations show that this event could have happened in the end of the 19th—beginning of the 20th century.

The name “Petr Arkadievich” in the mind of a Russian person immediately evokes an association with Petr Arkadievich Stolypin (1862—1911), a state figure (from 1906 he was Minister of Home Affairs and the Head of the Council of Ministers), a reformer and initiator of military-field courts to suppress the revolutionary movement as well as of a large-scale agricultural reform. Under Stolypins' supervision a number of important laws were introduced, including the reform of the local government, the introduction of primary education and tolerance of faith.

On the other hand after the revolution of 1905 in his struggle against revolutionary and liberation movements P. A. Stolypin proved himself to be a harsh proponent of Russification. The authorities shut down national schools and newspapers, hounding even moderate nationalists. The Special Commission summoned by Stolypin in 1910 decided to ban the teaching of non-theological disciplines in Muslim religious schools. The government supported the conservatives against the jadid movement, accusing the latter of pan-Islamism. This policy naturally provoked an upswing of nationalism in the outlying regions of the Empire.

At the same time, for the sake of being fare, we must note that in a difficult time Stolypin gave his support to the committee which dealt with the building of a mosque in St. Petersburg by approving, despite influential opposition, the decision on its construction near the Peter and Paul’s cathedral, the graveyard of the Romanovs family [5].

Of course, Stolypin was not the only “Petr Arkadievich” who lived in Russia at the turn of the 19th—20th centuries. Only the identification of the personalities of Nikolai Andreievich and Mikhail Marievich can clarify whether our manuscript belonged to the outstanding political figure of Russia. I am sure, however, that the Qur’an could have been kept in his library as well as in a library of any important Russian politician. Sooner or later we will be able to learn the full history of this manuscript. It is important for us, first of all, as another proof of the symbolic role of the Qur’an manuscripts which even for non-Muslims have been symbolic of Muslim civilization on the whole.

Obviously, the history of another Qur’anic manuscript from St. Petersburg academic collection is connected with the Eastern campaigns of the Russian armies of the first third of the 19th century. Two pages of that manuscript pasted together contain a beautiful multi-colour miniature which represents an emblem of a Russian noble dynasty. We plan to dedicate a separate article to this manuscript which, إن شاء الله, will be published in one of the nearest issues of our journal.

Notes


Fig. 6


**Illustrations**

Fig. 1. Two folios from the Qurʾānic manuscript (end of the sūra 57 and beginning of the sūra 58) copied most probably in Tabrīz and dates to the end of the 17th century. 16.7×10.4 cm, the collection of Prof. A. A. Zhukov, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Fig. 2. The left part of a two-page 'unwān (beginning of the sūra 2) from the same manuscript.

Fig. 3. Standard colophon on folio 275b of the same manuscript.

Fig. 4. The front cover of the leather binding of the same manuscript.

Fig. 5. Folio 276a of the same manuscript with a series of numbers of obscure character.

Fig. 6. Folio 276b of the same manuscript containing the owner's records.