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“At times like these, poetry is a virtue I wish I possessed—so I could convey the depth and beauty of what I feel. To put it as best as I can: when I was contacted about this project, I was going through one of the more difficult periods of my life. I agreed to be involved, despite that challenging time, thanks to the kindness in the approach and the dedication to his work of Tarık Tüten—a person whose character I deeply respect. During the time I spent immersed in this subject, I journeyed through time, driven by the age-old human desire “to know.” I met Hafız Ahmed Ağa and his son Fethi Paşa. The Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library became a place I felt emotionally connected to—a place I’ve never seen in person, yet could vividly imagine myself peacefully leafing through books in, just from the photographs. I thank Tarık Tüten for making this journey possible and congratulate him on his successful project.”

Naciye Detseli

Ottoman Heritage in Rhodes

A Qur’ān Manuscript Signed by Maksûd et-Tebrîzî

in the Collection of the Hafız Ahmet Ağa Library

Abstract

The Hafız Ahmet Ağa Library, located on the island of Rhodes, remains one of the cultural legacies of the Ottoman Empire and stands as a testament to the era’s artistic and scholarly endeavors. Established in 1207/1793 by Hafız Ahmet Ağa, an official of the Ottoman court, the library houses a significant collection of rare manuscripts of great artistic value. During the tenure of his son, Fethi Pasha, the collection expanded significantly. Among the rich manuscript collection, certain works stand out due to their ornamental qualities. One such example, and the focus of this study, is a Qur’ān manuscript signed by Maksûd et-Tebrîzî, which is highly esteemed for its calligraphy and illumination. The manuscript includes frontpiece pages, opening pages, chapter title areas, rectangular ornamentation areas, and roundels. Remarkably, it has survived to the present day in a complete and well-preserved state. As part of this study, the manuscript’s illuminations have been meticulously analyzed through photographs and illustrations, documenting its current condition. Comparative analysis suggests that the manuscript reflects characteristics of Safavid-era illumination.

Introduction

The Hafız Ahmet Ağa Library (1207/1793), one of the Ottoman cultural legacies in Rhodes, was founded during the reign of Sultan Selim III (1203/1789–1221/1807). This library, established by Hafız Ahmet Ağa, who rose to the rank of “*Rikapdâr-ı Şehriyârî*” during Selim III’s reign, became enriched with additional books brought from Istanbul by his son, Tophane Müşiri Fethi Pasha, following Hafız Ahmet Ağa’s passing. Currently, the library houses over 2,000 volumes, including 1,265¹ manuscripts, which encompass both handwritten and printed works. With contributions from TİKA and the Turkish Consulate General in Rhodes, the manuscripts have been restored and digitized² by a team comprising personnel from the Konya Regional Manuscripts Library and the Süleymaniye Manuscripts Library³. The collection includes Qur’ānic manuscripts, as well as works on exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence, literature, and various other subjects.

Among the Qur’ānic manuscripts, examples such as the manuscript inscribed by Muhammed bin Ahmed bin Yusuf al-Cüşşi (No. 04, Egypt, 831 AH) representing the Mamluk period, the manuscript signed by Ahmed bin Abdullah Hicâzî (No. 06, 859/1455) associated with the Fatih period⁴, a manuscript linked to the Seljuk period (No. 05), and another reflecting Safavid influences

1 <https://www.fethipasavakfi.com/hafiz-ahmed-aga-kutuphanesi.php>; <https://www.hafizahmedaga.com/>.
2 In the introduction of the catalogue prepared by Bekir Şahin, Faruk Ağartan and Selahattin Uygur, it is stated that there are 1288 volumes.
3 Bekir Şahin, Faruk Ağartan, Selahattin Uygur *Rodos Fethi Paşa Vakfı Hafız Ahmed Ağa Kütüphanesi Yazma Eserler Kataloğu* (İstanbul, 2013), XIII.
4 Naciye Detseli, Ali Fuat Baysal, “Rodos’ta 1455 Tarihli Bir Mushafın Tezhipleri ve Bulut Motifi”, *Sanat Tarihi Dergisi* 28/2 (2019), 440.

(No. 09)⁵ are particularly noteworthy. These illuminated manuscripts, each possessing research-worthy characteristics, contribute to the identification of stylistic trends of their respective periods.

The focus of this study is a Qur'ān manuscript registered as No. 01 in the library's collection, recognized as one of its most valuable works. This manuscript, inscribed by Maksûd et-Tebrîzî in 963/1555, consists of 228 folios, with external dimensions of 488x360 mm and a text area of 328x215 mm. The text area is organized into three large lines of thuluth script at the top, middle, and bottom, interspersed with six lines of naskh script. The thuluth lines are inscribed in gold, while the naskh lines are written in black ink.

The manuscript's burgundy binding features interlinear panels with gilded and inscribed *zencerek* designs, a central *şemse* medallion connected to *salbek* pendants, and cornerpieces positioned in the four corners of the rectangular central area. The *şemse*, cornerpieces, and gilded border panels are filled with applied gold. The binding exclusively features motifs from the *hatayi* group. The binding incorporates freeform designs for the medallions and cornerpieces, while the border panels exhibit a 1/2 reversed symmetrical design. Although the cover, spine (*sertap*), and fore-edge flap (*miklep*) are detached, the original craftsmanship is well-documented (FIGURE 1).



FIGURE 1: Binding of the Qur'ān Manuscript Signed by Maksûd et-Tebrîzî⁶

The exact origin of the manuscript's production is unknown, but given its transport to Rhodes from Istanbul, it is plausible that it was created in the Ottoman court's atelier (*nakışhane*). It might have arrived at the library either as war loot or as part of an exchange of gifts. The illuminated sections of the Qur'ān include the double-page frontpiece (*zahriye*) arranged as paired pages, ink-formed opening pages (*serlevha*), chapter headings, roundels (*güller*), rectangular ornamentation areas (*koltuklar*), and stop marks (*duraklar*).

⁵ Bekir Şahin, Faruk Ağartan, Selahattin Uygur, *Rodos Fethi Paşa Vakfı Hafız Ahmed Ağa Kütüphanesi Yazma Eserler Kataloğu*, 4, 5, 6, 7.

⁶ I would like to express my gratitude to Tarık Tüten, the deputy *Mütevelli* of the Hafız Ahmet Ağa Library, for re-photographing the work for this article.

Illumination Features of the Qur'ān Manuscript Signed by Maksûd et-Tebrîzî

This Qur'ān manuscript is exceptionally rich in terms of illumination art. It features a fully illuminated frontpiece designed as a double-page spread, as well as an illuminated opening page, also arranged as a double-page composition. Interestingly, the *zahriye* page is located at the end rather than at the beginning, as is common in many examples.

While all chapter headings are illuminated, they do not feature unique designs for each chapter. Instead, a few base designs were employed with slight variations in colors and motifs. All the roundels in the manuscript share the same design, with some pages featuring multiple roundels. They do not include inscriptions such as *cüz*, *hizip*, or *secde*. However, the roundels are thought to serve as *aşer* (one for every ten verses) and *hamse* (one for every five verses) markers. The *aşer* roundels are circular and lack *tığ* (ornamental extensions), while the *hamse* roundels are adorned with *tığ* on the top and bottom, giving them elongated forms.

This stylistic distinction—circular forms for *aşer* and elongated drop or spindle-like forms for *hamse*—can be seen as a continuation of Ilkhanid illumination styles carried into the Safavid period. The same design is consistently used for the markers (*durak*), with the exception of those in the opening section (*serlevha*), which feature distinct designs. In some chapters, markers were simply filled with gold and left plain.

The designs and motifs in the rectangular ornamentation areas (*koltuk*), frontpiece (*zahriye*), and opening pages (*serlevha*) exhibit a harmonious relationship. When considering the manuscript's illuminations as a whole, it is evident that a consistent stylistic unity is maintained throughout.

The Qur'ān manuscript under examination is believed to reflect the illumination characteristics of the 16th-century Safavid style. A notable feature of Safavid illumination is the preference for enlarging the dimensions of manuscripts, thereby creating more prominent and ornamented areas. This approach was highly favored by artisans of the period. Backgrounds for motifs were painted with gold or vibrant colors, with *hatayi*-style motifs featuring finely detailed patterns, particularly in the crown sections, being a common decorative choice⁷. In this context, the examined manuscript can be confidently associated with Safavid illumination characteristics.

Opening Page Illumination (*Serlevha Tezhibi*)

The *serlevha* illumination consists of the text area, rectangular ornamentation areas (*koltuklar*) on the right and left of the text area, chapter headings at the top and bottom, the foot section (*etek kısmı*), interlinear panels with *zencerek* designs, panels created with *rumi* motifs, border panels composed of *hatayi* group motifs, and an outermost edge with *halkârî* water-pattern designs. The designs of the two facing pages are identical (FIGURES 2-3, DRAWINGS 1-2). All these areas have been numbered within a schema and explained through these numbers (DRAWING 3)⁸.

⁷ Necati Sancaktutan, *Bir Safevi Devri Mushafının Tezyini Yönden Değerlendirilmesi* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Enstitüsü, 2010), 12.

⁸ Naciye Detseli, Ali Fuat Baysal, "Rodol Hafız Ahmet Ağa Kütüphanesinde Bulunan 01 Envanter Numaralı Kur'an-ı Kerim Tezhibi", *Konya Sanat Dergisi* 2 (2019), 33-52.



FIGURE 2 - DRAWING 1: Opening Page (Serlevha) of the Qur'an Manuscript No. 01, Folio 1b.

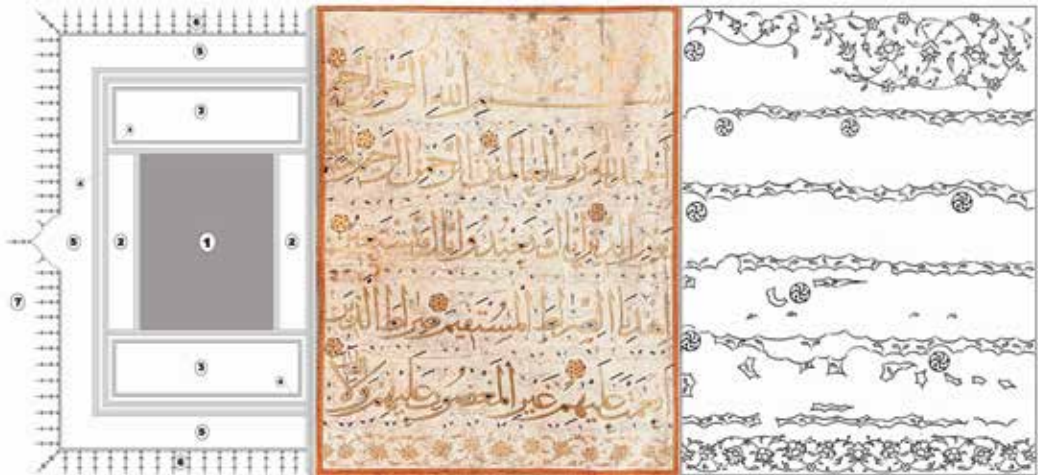


FIGURE 4 - DRAWING 4: Folio 1b - Opening Page Illumination and Details

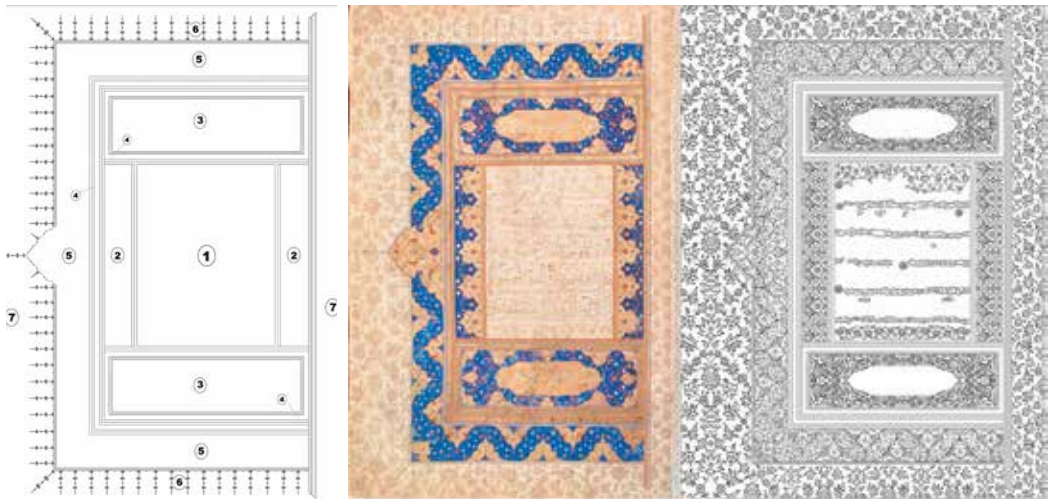


FIGURE 3 - DRAWING 2,3: Opening Page (Serlevha) of the Qur'an Manuscript No. 01, Folio 2a.

In a vertically rectangular area (Area 1), the *Fātiḥa* chapter and the first four verses of the *Baqarah* chapter are written across two facing pages using gold ink. To separate the text from the background, black ink outlines have been applied around the letters. In the spaces between the text lines, interlinear illumination (*beyne's-sütur*) featuring negative technique patterns composed of *hatayi*-style motifs has been added. To prevent the text from fading, the illumination is primarily applied in gold, with small sections featuring navy blue accents. The medallions (*durak*) employ a 1/6 rosette pattern with a *zencerek*-style design executed in black ink on gold leaves (FIGURE 4-5, DRAWINGS 4-5).

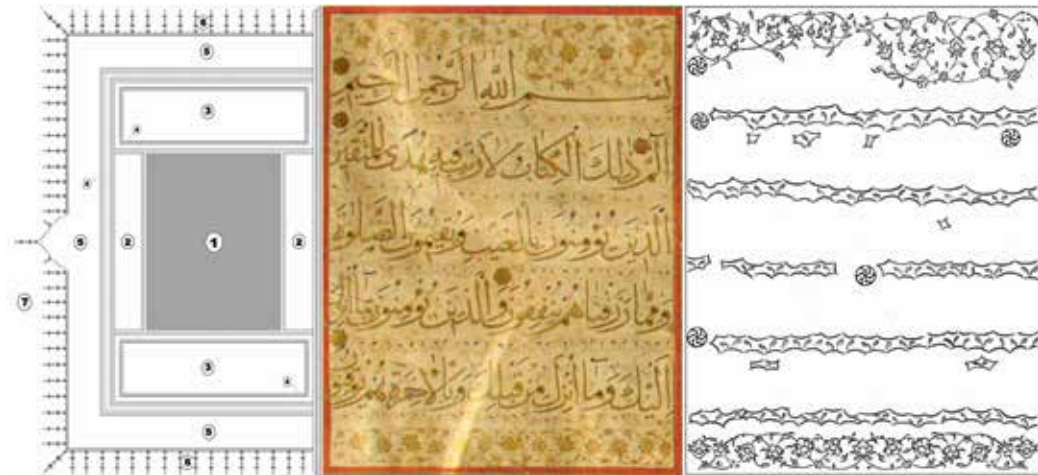


FIGURE 5 - DRAWING 5: Folio 2a - Opening Page Illumination and Details

The rectangular areas on the right and left sides of the text block (Area 2) are designed with repetitive closed forms created from *rumi* motifs. Between these forms, another system of panels with serrated orange-thread designs is interwoven. These areas measure 29 x 175 mm and are separated from the text block by 2 mm of sage green and 3 mm of orange threads. Gold and navy blue is used equally in the background, and classic illumination and *zer-enderzer* techniques are applied with *hatayi* and *rumi*-style motifs. The central *rumi* motif on the gold-filled background of the panels is painted in sage green with its interior filled in orange (FIGURE 6, DRAWING 6).



FIGURE 6 - DRAWING 6: Opening Page Margin Illumination.

Above the opening page, there are two chapter headings (*sūrah*), while below are two areas described as lower segments (*etek*) that feature both text and illumination (Area 3). The design and colors used in all four areas are identical. These regions are bordered with gold backgrounds and black *zencerek* outlines, with additional blue and orange threads. The horizontal rectangular areas measuring 53 x 189 mm are designed symmetrically in a ¼ layout. The central closed forms, bordered with serrations, have gold backgrounds with chapter information written in white/lead ink. The closed forms in orange *rumi* motifs are divided into gold and navy sections, featuring *hatayi* motifs applied using classical illumination and *zer-enderzer* techniques (FIGURE 7, DRAWING 7).

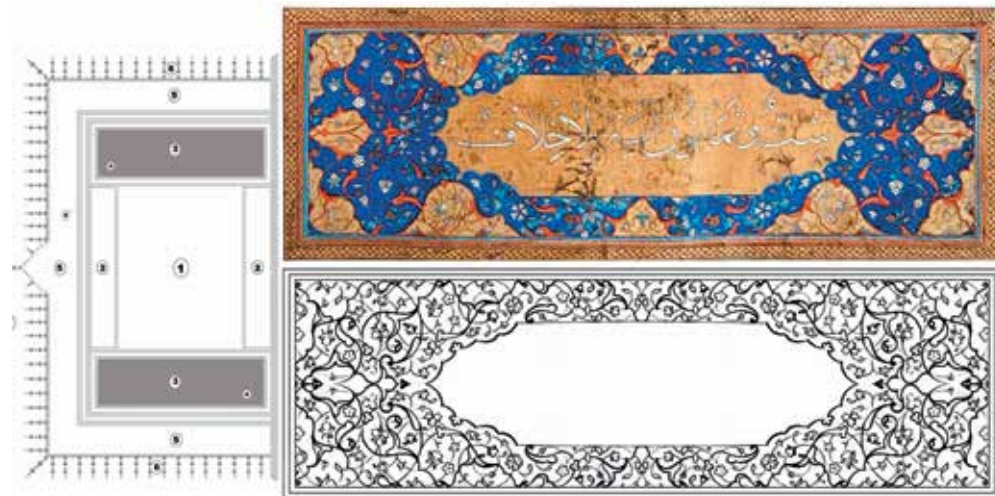


FIGURE 7 - DRAWING 7: Opening Page Chapter Heading Illumination.

In addition to the *zencerek* border surrounding the chapter headings and endings, another inner *zencerek* border separates the central area from the outer border (Area 4), both of which measure 5 mm in width. The *zencerek* patterns in these areas differ, and the design is applied using black ink on gold plaster (FIGURES 8-9, DRAWINGS 8-9).

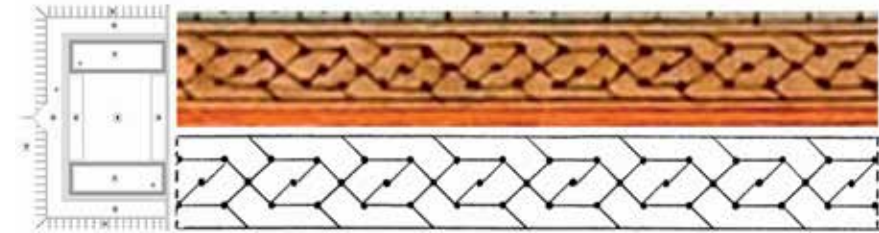


FIGURE 8 - DRAWING 8: Zencerek Border Surrounding Chapter Headings.

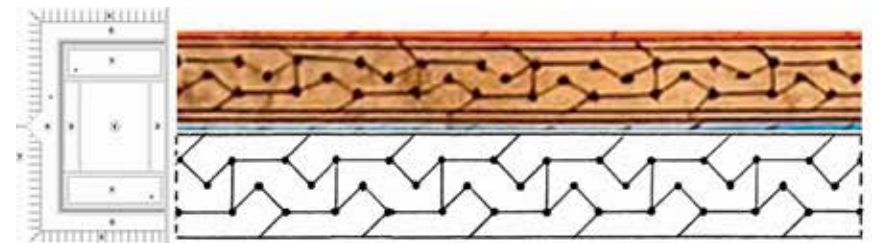


FIGURE 9 - DRAWING 9: Inner Zencerek Border Surrounding the Central Area.

The outer border is in the form of a “combined opening page” (*müreккеp serlevha*⁹), designed symmetrically (Area 5). A domed section is created at the vertical axis and separated by orange threads. The border area measures 36 mm in width, increasing to 68 mm in the domed section. The domed section is filled with gold, and the ½ symmetrical *rumi* motif is outlined in black and filled with orange. The remaining area features *hatayi* motifs applied using the *zer-enderzer* technique. The horizontally symmetrical outer border displays gold and orange closed forms of *rumi* motifs, with gold and navy blue alternating in their backgrounds. Classical illumination techniques are evident in this area. The border is decorated with *hatayi*-style motifs arranged in a ½ symmetrical plan (FIGURE 10, DRAWING 10).

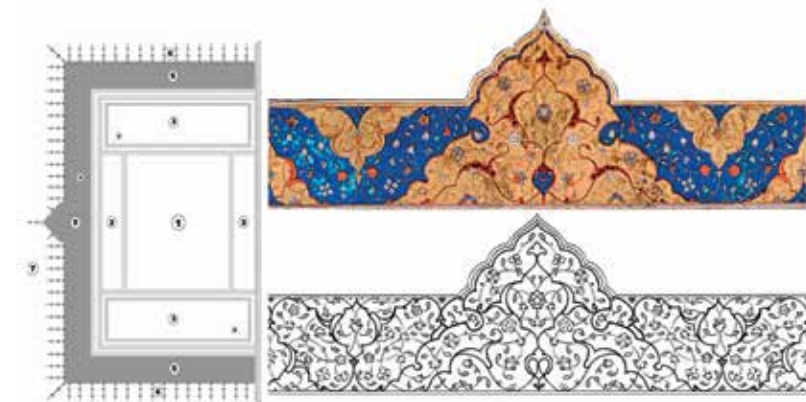


FIGURE 10 - DRAWING 10: Opening Page Outer Border Illumination.

⁹ *Serlevha* pages are categorised as “rectangular *iklil*”, “domed”, and “combined”, i.e. ‘combined *serlevha*’, which is a combination of *iklil* and domed (indicating that both are present).

¹⁰ Gülnur Duran, “Serlevha”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* 36 (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2009), 567-569.

The illuminated area is bordered with straight lines of gold threads and navy-blue edging from the inside outward. These threads are accompanied by adjoining straight lines in the same color, designed as *tığs*, with navy-blue dots placed in the spaces between them (Area 6). The *tığs* measure 26 mm in length, although some sections show signs of fading (FIGURE 11, DRAWING 11).

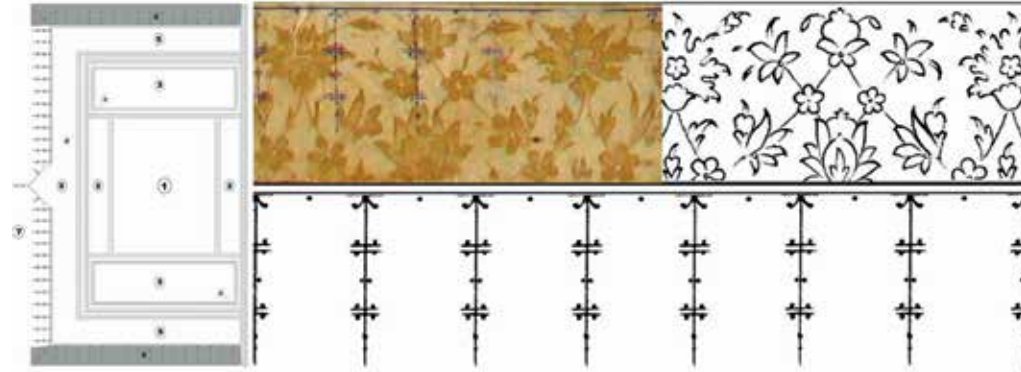


FIGURE 11 - DRAWING 11: *Tığs* of the Opening Page.

On the outermost section of the page, a three-strand *halkâr* pattern consisting of *hatayi*-style motifs is applied in gold and measures 64 mm in width (Area 7). As the design extends into the area of the *tığs*, it often runs beneath them. The contrasting colors of gold and navy blue make the *tığs* and design easily distinguishable. However, to avoid a cluttered appearance in the drawing, the *tığs* have been depicted in a separate illustration (FIGURE 12, DRAWING 12).



FIGURE 12 - DRAWING 12: *Halkâr* Design of the Opening Page.

The *halkâr* border interwoven with the *tığs* resembles the pattern and technique of the *halkâr* design found on folio 10a of the *Şehname-i Firdevsî*, an important Safavid-era illuminated manuscript produced in Shiraz around the late 16th century (c. 1590) (FIGURE 13).



FIGURE 13: *Halkâr* Decoration from Folio 10a of the Safavid “*Şahname-i Firdevsî*”¹¹

The compound-form opening page (serlevha) of this manuscript shares similar layout and color balance features with the opening pages of the Safavid Qur’ân manuscript registered under number 135 at the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts and the Qur’ân in the Topkapı Palace Library’s Koğuşlar Collection (catalog number 01) (FIGURE 14). Except for minor flaking on the dark blue sections, the gilding on the opening page appears well-preserved with minimal signs of wear.



FIGURE 14: TİEM 135¹², TSK Koğuşlar 01¹³, TSK Koğuşlar 40¹⁴ Opening Pages.

11 Lale Uluç, *Türkmen Valiler, Şirazlı Ustalar, Osmanlı Okurlar, XVI. Yüzyıl Şiraz Elyazmaları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 282.

12 Zeren Tanındı, “Kur’an-ı Kerim Nüshalarının Ciltleri ve Tezhipleri”, *1400. Yılında Kur’an-ı Kerim*, ed. Müjde Unustası, 2010, 294.

13 Ayla Güleç, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesindeki Seçilmiş Klasik Şemse Cilt Kapakları* (İstanbul: Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2007), 74.

14 Zeren Tanındı, “Kur’ani El Yazmalarda Tezhip ve Tezyini Sanatları”, *Kur’an Sanatı* (Washington DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2016).

Sûrah/Chapter Title Areas (*Sûre Başı Tezhipleri*)

All chapter titles in this Qur'an manuscript are adorned with gilding. Excluding the titles on the opening pages (serlevha), there are 112 chapter title gildings throughout the manuscript. These chapter title decorations do not vary in design but differ slightly in color. For instance, a motif painted in orange/sülyen in one chapter may appear in another chapter in the same design but rendered in gold or white. Some of these designs have been examined as examples.

The chapter title decorations are symmetrically designed in ¼ proportions and executed using classical gilding techniques. The compositions skillfully integrate motifs from both the rumi and hatayi design groups. Gold, white, and orange colors are applied over a dark blue background. Occasionally, white and orange are interchanged in the motifs. Inside the closed forms created with gold serrations (dendan), chapter titles are written in thuluth script in gold, outlined in black, with the remaining blank spaces filled with beyne's-sütür gilding. The rectangular area is bordered from the inside out with gold, sage green, and another layer of gold thread. In some designs, the sage green thread is replaced with orange thread. With minor differences in design and color, the chapter title decorations exhibit consistent characteristics (FIGURES 15-16-17-18, DRAWINGS 13-14-15-16).



FIGURE 15 - DRAWING 13: Chapter Title Decoration for Surah al-Imrân



FIGURE 16 - DRAWING 14: Chapter Title Decoration for Surah al-Inshirâh



FIGURE 17 - DRAWING 15: Chapter Title Decoration for Surah al-Kâfirûn



FIGURE 18 - DRAWING 16: Chapter Title Decoration for Surah al-Nâs

The chapter title decorations of this manuscript resemble those of the Safavid Qur'an registered under number 503 at the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts and the chapter title gilding on folio 325b of the Qur'an in the Topkapı Palace Library's Koğuşlar Collection (catalog number 183) (FIGURES 19-20)

FIGURE 19: Chapter Title Decoration from TiEM 503, Folio 317a¹⁵FIGURE 20: Chapter Title Decoration from TSK Koğuşlar 183, Folio 325b¹⁶

15 Tanındı, "Kur'an-ı Kerim Nüshalarının Ciltleri ve Tezhipleri", 332.

16 Ayla Güleç, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesindeki Seçilmiş Klasik Şemse Cilt Kapakları*, 6.

Margin Roundels-Medallion/Badge

Almost every page of this Qur'an manuscript features one or more roundel designs. These roundels appear to have been placed following the aşer (one roundel every ten verses) and hamse (one roundel every five verses) structure. While the designs remain identical in terms of color, pattern, and execution, additional *tığ* (elongated decorative elements) are added above and below the hamse roundels to distinguish their function.

Each roundel consists of three concentric circles, with the central circle housing a symmetrical ½ design crafted using classical gilding and incorporating *rumi* and *hatayi* motifs. The background is dark blue, while the designs are executed in gold, white, and orange. Surrounding the central design is a gold outline, with an outermost dark blue thread that carries the *tığ* decorations (FIGURE 21, DRAWING 17).

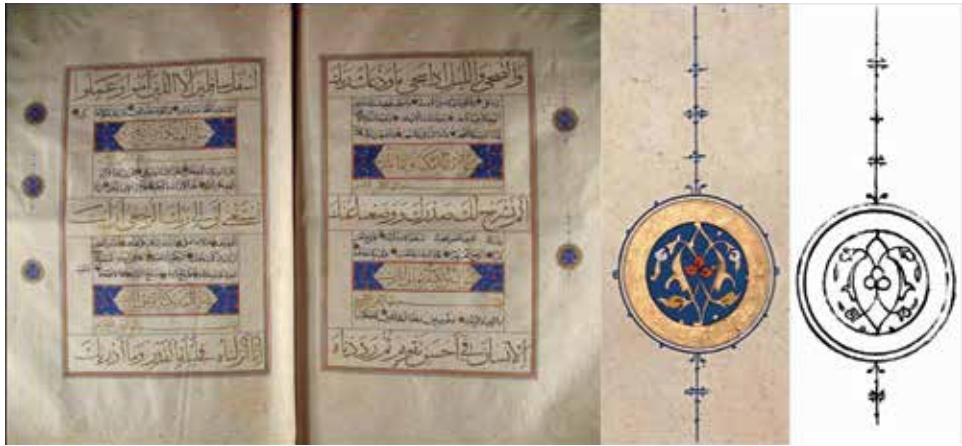


FIGURE 21 - DRAWING 17: A Page Featuring Roundels and a Hamse Roundel Example

The roundels in this manuscript are almost identical in design to those in the Qur'an registered under catalog number 1 in the Topkapı Palace Library's *Koğuşlar* Collection (FIGURE 22). Additionally, the roundels closely resemble those in the Qur'an registered under catalog number 14734 in the Library of the Ankara Ethnography Museum¹⁷.



FIGURE 22: Roundel from TSK Koğuşlar 1, Folio 296a¹⁸

17 Serpil Aydın Demirağ, *Ankara Etnografya Müzesindeki Beş Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Tezhip Süsleme Özellikleri* (Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, 2007), 199.

18 Ayla Güleç, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesindeki Seçilmiş Klasik Şemse Cilt Kapakları*, 75.

Rectangular Decoration Areas (*Koltuk Tezhibi*)

Each page of the manuscript includes four rectangular decoration areas (*koltuk tezhibi*) (FIGURE 23). While all these areas are gilded on the opening pages, many remain undecorated on subsequent pages, suggesting that the gilding work might have been left incomplete.

The rectangular decoration areas are executed using the negative or "*havalı*" technique, which incorporates a double-outline method. The designs are composed of *hatayi* motifs and applied exclusively in gold (FIGURE 23).



FIGURE 23: A Page Featuring Rectangular Decoration Areas and an Example of the Design.

These rectangular decorations resemble the technical and ornamental aspects of the gilded areas in the Qur'an manuscripts registered under numbers 40 and 183 in the Topkapı Palace Library's *Koğuşlar* Collection. Furthermore, the page layouts, chapter titles in thuluth script written in gold, and body text written in black ink also align closely with the manuscript under study (FIGURES 24-25).



FIGURES 24, 25: Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Koğuşlar 183, 325b¹⁹ (left) 40, 26a²⁰ (right)

19 Ayla Güleç, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesindeki Seçilmiş Klasik Şemse Cilt Kapakları*, Resimler Bölümü 6.

20 Ayla Güleç, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesindeki Seçilmiş Klasik Şemse Cilt Kapakları*, 24.

The Safavid-style ornamentation of the Qur'ān located in the TSK Treasury (Emanet Hazinesi) under inventory number 48 is significant in that it demonstrates similarities in motif forms and the use of negative technique, despite differences in the background color.

Pause Marks

The manuscript contains two distinct pause mark designs. The first appears exclusively on the opening pages (serlevha) and features a unique design distinct from the other pause marks (FIGURE 26). The second design is present at the end of almost all verses, except for a few chapters (FIGURE 27). Compared to the pause marks on the opening pages, this design is simpler. The application was executed with black ink over gold. In shorter chapters such as Sūrat al-Kāfirūn and Sūrat al-Nās, the pause marks were left undecorated, with the background merely filled with gold (FIGURE 28). The designs are not intricate and consist of plain lines.



FIGURE 26: Pause Mark Design on the Opening Pages.



FIGURE 27: Pause Mark Design in Sūrat al-Kawthar.



FIGURE 28: Unadorned Pause Mark in Sūrat al-Kāfirūn.

The pause marks bear similarities to the rectangular illuminated areas (*koltuk tezhibi*) seen in the Qur'āns cataloged as *Koğuşlar* 40 and *Koğuşlar* 183 in the Topkapı Palace Library (see FIGURE 24-25).

Zahriye Page (Frontpiece Page)

The *zahriye* page is in the form of a full-page, double-spread design, where both pages mirror each other and are symmetrically divided into four quadrants (FIGURES 30–31; DRAWINGS 21–22). The design employs a harmonious combination of gold and navy blue in a classical style. Within a rectangular frame measuring 260x390 mm, two concentric circular forms were placed in the center. The innermost circle, with a diameter of 90 mm, features the 81st verse of Sūrat al-Isrā: “Say: Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Indeed, falsehood is bound to perish.” The verse is inscribed in white lead ink over gold and is divided between two pages: the first part (“Say: Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished”) is on folio 227b, while the second part (“Indeed, falsehood is bound to perish”) is on folio 228a. The area filled with gold transitions into the outer circle, which is 198 mm in diameter, through a white thread-like line that separates the navy blue and gold. The outer circle’s background is filled with navy blue, adorned symmetrically with four classic-style crenellated cartouches filled with gold. The design surrounding the cartouches is also symmetrically divided into four quadrants, drawn in gold outlines over the navy blue background. Each corner of the rectangular frame features a cartouche filled with motifs from the hatayi and rumi styles, rendered in gold. The remaining space within the frame is designed using hatayi-style motifs, executed in gold with the double-outline (*havalı*) technique. The rectangular illuminated area is bordered with alternating lines of gold, orange, and black. What makes this *zahriye* particularly noteworthy is its placement at the end of the manuscript, unlike the typical location at the beginning.

The *zahriye* page of Qur'ān No. 211 housed in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum (TİEM) differs in form and cartouche design but demonstrates similarities in motif and technique. This highlights its connection with Safavid-style illumination (FIGURE 29).



FIGURE 29: Zahriye Page of Qur'ān No. 211, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum.²¹

21 Tanındı, “Kur'an-ı Kerim Nüshalarının Ciltleri ve Tezhipleri”, 308.

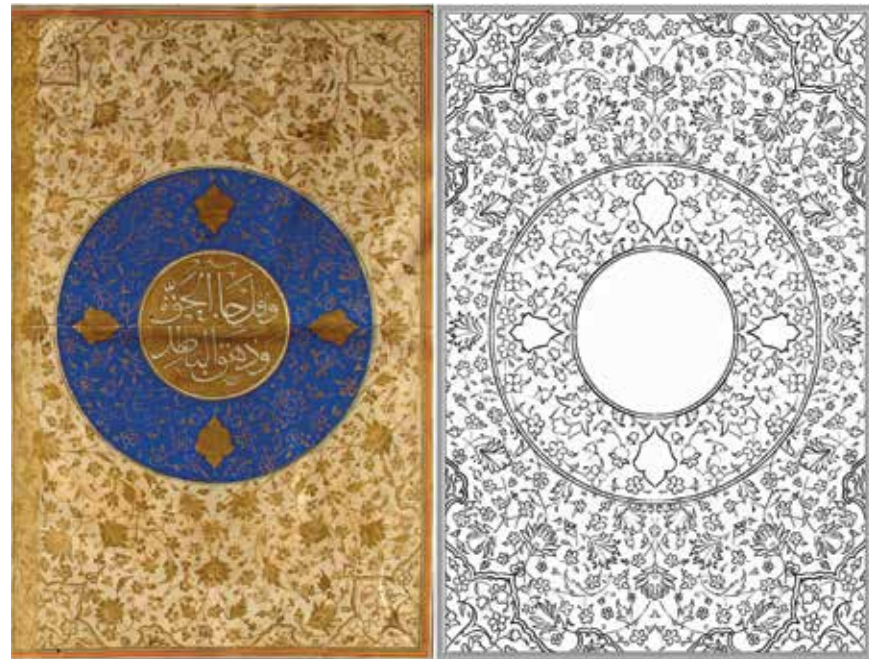


FIGURE 30 - DRAWING 21: Zahriye Page of Qur'an No. 01, Folio 227b.

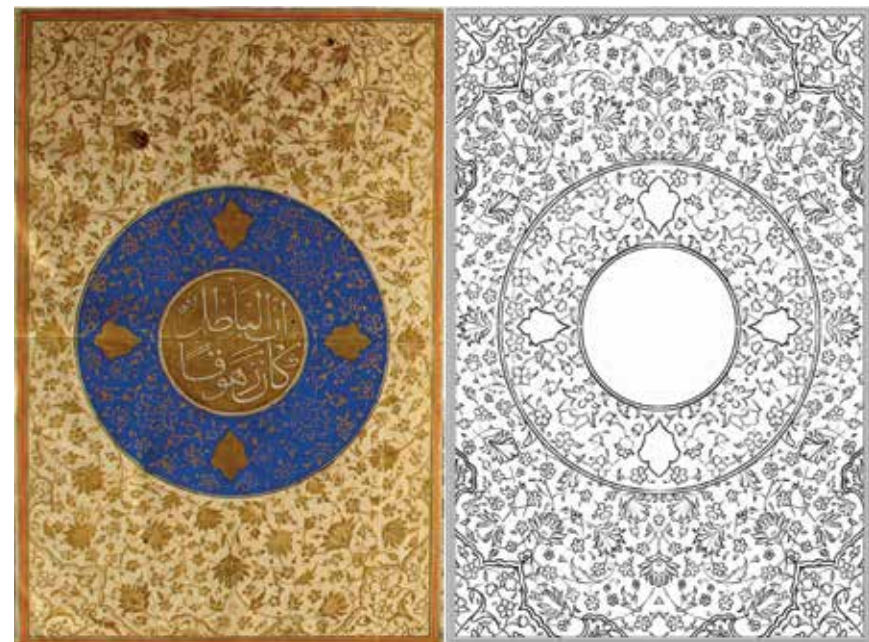


FIGURE 31 - DRAWING 22: Zahriye Page of Qur'an No. 01, Folio 228a.

Conclusion

The colophon page indicates the manuscript's date of completion as 1555/963 AH. The manuscript's illuminations were analyzed by comparing them to other works from the 16th century Ottoman and Safavid periods. Given the political, cultural, and artistic interactions between the two states, certain similarities arising from the blending of the two styles are apparent. However, Ottoman illuminations of the 16th century, known as the classical period, exhibit a simpler design approach compared to the more intricate Safavid illuminations.

The similarity of the motifs to those in Safavid illuminations and the techniques employed suggest that the manuscript's illuminations may have been produced during the Safavid period. It is well known that illuminated sections such as zahriye, opening pages, roundels, chapter titles, and rectangular panels enhance the value of any manuscript or Qur'an. Since all these illuminated sections are present in this manuscript, it holds significant importance in the art of illumination. In addition to this, the craftsmanship and materials appear to be of exceptional quality.

The manuscript reflects the characteristics of Safavid-style illuminations through its motifs, color schemes, composition, and meticulous workmanship. Particularly noteworthy are the shaded "halkar" designs executed in gold using the halkâr technique and the negative technique used in the hatayi-style designs in the rectangular panels.

Our examination revealed that the illuminations predominantly feature gold and navy blue, with an extensive use of vermilion/orange. Additionally, white, pale green, blue, pink, and black are among the other colors used in the designs. The composition incorporates motifs from the rumi and hatayi groups, with some sections featuring chains (zencerek). Interestingly, the cloud motif, commonly found in Safavid-style illuminations, was not employed in this manuscript. Technically, zerenderzer, classical illumination, halkâr, and negative techniques were utilized.

The colophon bears the signature "*Ketebehû Maksûd et-Tebrîzî*", clearly identifying the calligrapher as an artisan from Tabriz. In light of this, it is plausible that the manuscript's illuminations were also created by illuminators from Tabriz. The fact that this Qur'an was transported to Rhodes from Istanbul, coupled with the meticulous workmanship of its high-quality illuminations, raises the possibility that these illuminations were executed in the royal workshop (nakkaşhane) in Istanbul. It is a well-documented fact that talented artists from other regions were often brought to Ottoman court workshops, where they were sometimes appointed to high-ranking positions such as chief illuminator (*sernakkaş*). The movement of itinerant artists facilitated interregional communication and mutual artistic influences²². The manuscript's date of completion recorded in the colophon points to the 16th century, making it likely that its illuminations were also created during the same period. The abundance of illuminated sections, the quality of materials and craftsmanship, and the motifs and techniques used in this manuscript serve as strong indicators that it belongs to the Safavid-style illuminations of the 16th century.

In conclusion, the Qur'an bearing the signature of "*Maksûd et-Tebrîzî*" in the Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library in Rhodes was thoroughly examined in terms of its craftsmanship, color schemes, motifs, and compositional structure, and its designs were analyzed in detail. While the manuscript does not include specific information about the illuminators or the date of illumination, the calligrapher's signature and the completion date recorded in the colophon strongly suggest that this richly decorated Qur'an belongs to the 16th-century Safavid illumination style.

²² Tanındı, "Kur'an-ı Kerim Nüshalarının Ciltleri ve Tezhipleri".

The Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library in Rhodes, which houses this illuminated Qurʾān, contains numerous other valuable manuscripts. Despite limited resources for its maintenance, it is our hope that this and similar libraries will receive greater support to ensure the careful preservation of their invaluable collections. Additionally, documenting and recording such works through articles, theses, and similar academic studies remains a critical endeavor.

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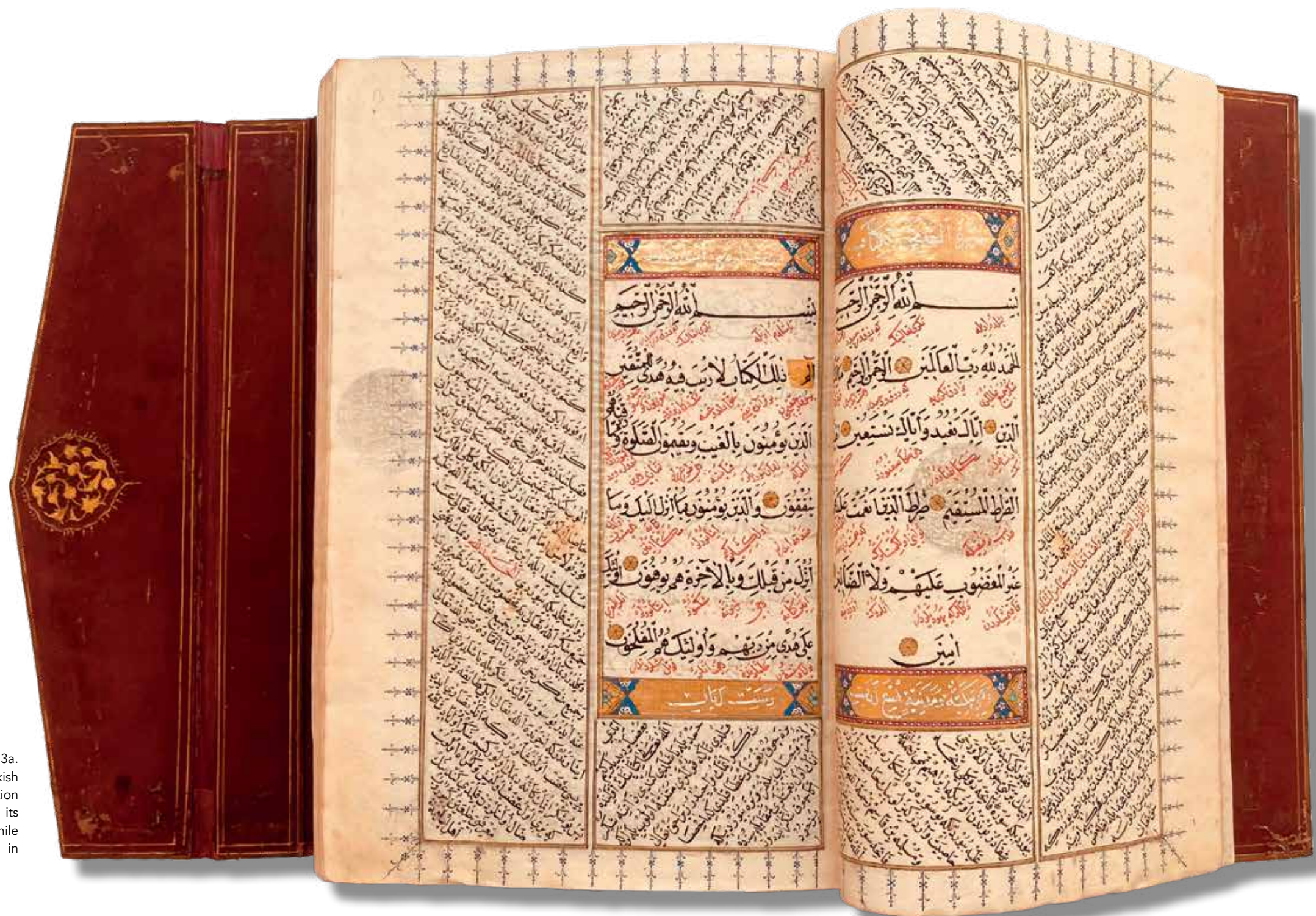


Qurʾān manuscript inscribed by Maksûd et-Tebrîzî in 963/1555,
Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library, reading room, Rhodes.
Photo: T. Tuten



Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library 5, 151b-152a. A Mamluk-style Qur'ān of unknown date, featuring the use of naskh (*nesih*), thuluth (*sülüs*), and kufic (*kûfî*) scripts together.

Photo: T. Tuten



Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 2, 12b-13a.
Qur'an with an interlinear Turkish
translation, accompanied by a translation
of Abū al-Layth's tafsīr. The Qur'an and its
translation were copied in 1077/1666, while
the marginal commentary was copied in
1088/1677. Photo: T. Tuten