
PRESENTING THE COLLECTION

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THE QUR'ĀNIC MSS OF THE ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS FUND OF THE DĀGHISTĀN INSTITUTE OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY: PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTION

Literary tradition and culture of Muslim peoples is in direct connection with the Holy Scripture of Islam — the Qur'ān. People used to learn to read and write with the help of the Qur'ān as there were no ABC books. The Qur'ān was the most widely read and copied book in Islamic world. To copy the text of the Qur'ān at least once was considered a piety and almost a duty of every believer if he was literate [1]. The study of the history of the Qur'ānic copies' circulation, its copying and formation of manuscript libraries in Dāghistān is subject to accumulation of factual material (discovery of dated manuscripts and documents) and perfection of research methods.

The corpus of Arabic-Muslim manuscripts of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of Dāghistān Scientific Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences (further IHAE DSC RAS) has been collected during half a century. *Ca.* 3500 manuscripts are accumulated here reflecting to a greater or lesser extent many directions and stages of Arabic-Muslim culture of Dāghistān from the 9th c. up to the beginning of the 20th c. Among them 43 copies of the Qur'ān are kept, complete text and its large fragments.

These copies contain no data to help study their design, ornamentation, binding, calligraphy, etc., so any information is necessary and useful.

It is highly possible that the oldest Arabic texts (inscriptions, separate fragments and whole books) which were copied on the earlier stage of Islam expansion in Dāghistān were texts of the Qur'ān. They are numerous. Old copies of the Qur'ān were written in a script close to *kūfī*. This must have been connected with the fact that the copyists did not yet master a perfect script. Most often in such manuscripts there is no indication of when or where the copy was made, but, judging by the paper, the script and other indirect evidence (for example, dated inscriptions) they can approximately be dated to the 13th—15th c. A. R. Shikhsaidov mentions the discovery of ancient copies of the Qur'ān copied in 626/1228—9 in the village of Penjik (Tabasarskiĭ region), dated by 815/1413 in Qumukh, dated by 889/1493 in the village of Shiri (Dakhadaevskiĭ region), dated by 922/1516—7 in the village of Tpig (Agul'skiĭ region), and also beautifully copied

fragments in the village of Duldug (Agul'skiĭ region) dated by 1150/1689 with the name of the copyist — Mūsā, son of 'Umar from Qumukh.

The collection of the Qur'ānic MSS was also replenished with copies brought to the Institute from South and Central Dāghistān (Lezghin, Laq, Dargin villages).

The reason for absence of old copies of the Qur'ān lies in the fact that in North and North-West Dāghistān mass appearance of epigraphical monuments, which are considered indicator of wide distribution of Islam, refer to a later period (16th—17th c.). The main centres where the greatest number of the earliest copies both in the form of the full Qur'ānic copies and its large fragments in *kūfī* script and decorated with various elegant ornaments, were preserved are Akhty, Tpig, Burhānkent, Derbend (Bāb al-Abwāb), Qumukh, Itsari, Kubachi, Urtsaki, Kalakoreĭsh (Qalaquraysh) and Jibakhni. It was in these settlements, where the greatest number of burials of local saints, preachers and readers of the Qur'ān was discovered. The burial monuments and manuscripts are dated to the period prior to 14th c.

In this small review eight manuscripts of the Qur'ān which are kept in the fund of oriental manuscripts of IHAE are presented. In their review and description we would like to give material for discussion of periodisation questions of Arabic-Muslim written language in Dāghistān and its peculiarities on the early stage of the Qur'ānic MSS circulation.

For example, the script of the Qur'ānic fragments (inventory No. 2578) can not be considered *kūfī* in the full sense of the word. This is rather semi-*kūfī*, and its later analogues in some cases are close to *naskh* or even the simple script. It would be wrong to assume that *kūfī* in pure form was not represented in Dāghistān. This script can be found in villages of South Dāghistān on stone plates and dedicatory inscriptions of the earliest period. Use of reading signs is typical of the Dāghistān Qur'āns.

A peculiarity of early the Qur'āns' script is a deviation from the *kūfī* standard (for example, roundness in the curves of several letters) as well as absence of strict horizontality of lines. This can be seen by the example of the Qur'ānic script (inventory No. 2478) where at the beginning of sev