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IBN AL-BAWWĀB
MANUSCRIPT
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BY
D. S. RICE

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FOREWORD

THE beautiful copy of the Koran, written by Ibn Bawwâb just over 950 years ago, which is analysed in this publication, is in some respects the most interesting in my collection of the Korans of various periods and countries, of which a catalogue is in course of preparation. It has been made the subject of this special illustrated monograph as it is the only known example of the work of one of the greatest of all calligraphers, exquisitely written, and also, as the following pages, I think, prove, illuminated by his hand. I am grateful to Dr. D. S. Rice for the trouble he has taken to bring out the many points of interest connected with this unique manuscript and I hope that his distinguished work of research will be useful not only to scholars but to lovers of the book arts in general.

A. CHESTER BEATTY
INTRODUCTION

THE text of the Qur'ān was recorded, in the Prophet’s lifetime, on a variety of writing materials. These included such diverse materials as papyrus, parchment, leather, limestone slabs, shoulder blades, ribs, saddle-boards, &c. The Qur'ān was first collected under the first caliph, Abū Bakr, and codified under the third caliph, ‘Uthmān. It was, in all likelihood, written on parchment on both occasions, although one source has it that papyrus was used on the first.

All the early Qur’āns which have so far come to light are on parchment, with the exception of a small fragment on papyrus which is attributed to the third Islamic century.

The earliest Qur’āns which have reached us are written in a variety of angular scripts commonly—but inappropriately—described as Kufic. No complete Kufic Qur’ān has, to my knowledge, survived and none is provided with a colophon. It is still a matter of controversy whether we possess any Qur’ān which can be dated to the first century of the Muslim era. There are a number of codices which bear ‘signatures’ of the caliphs ‘Uthmān and ‘Ali, but these have been shown to be later pious forgeries.

Thanks to the studies published in the course of the last fifty years, especially by B. Moritz, J. von Karabacek, G. Bergstrasser, O. Pretzl, A. Grohmann, N. Abbott, and G. Levi della Vida much progress has been made in the provisional dating of certain Kufic Qur’āns to the late first and to the second century of the Hijra. This was made possible only by the careful palaeographic analysis of extant specimens, by their comparison with dated inscriptions and by the elucidation of certain descriptive passages scattered in the works of Muslim writers. Among the latter the 'Catalogue', fihrist, of the famous tenth-century bibliophile and bookseller, Ibn an-Nadīm, has provided valuable information for the identification and classification of the oldest scripts.

3 B. Moritz, Arabic Palaeography, Cairo, 1905, pl. 43.
4 A. Jeffery in his review of N. Abbott’s book The Rise of the North Arabic Script (in The Moslem World, xxx, 1940, pp. 191-2) expresses doubts whether any surviving Qur’ān fragments are as old as the first century. He advanced, as grounds for rejecting the early dating, the absence of non-canonical variants of the textus receptus. G. Levi della Vida has rightly emphasized in his Frammenti Coranici in Carattere Cufico (= Studi e Testi 132) Città del Vaticano, 1947, pp. viii-ix, that we cannot expect to find non-canonical variants in the Qur’āns which were used in mosques and that the surviving fragments belong nearly all to mosque-Qur’āns.
6 A comprehensive bibliography will be found in N. Abbott, The Rise of the North Arabic Script, pp. xvi-xxi. To this should be added G. Levi della Vida’s publication of the fragments in the Vatican Library referred to above in note 4.
Some guidance for the dating of later Kufic Qur’ans can be derived from the waqf notices which are affixed to some of them. But these donors' notes enable us only to fix the terminus ante quem for a small number of manuscripts. In some instances the Qur’ans themselves may be older than the extreme dates thus obtained.

The oldest waqf notice of this kind, known to me, belongs to the latter half of the third century and bears the name of Amajur, who was governor of the province of Filastin during the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutamid. It cannot be later than 264/876. One part of this Qur’an is in the Egyptian Library in Cairo and a sample page from it has been reproduced by B. Moritz.\(^1\) Another part of the same manuscript was identified by the present writer in the Cambridge University Library.\(^2\)

The next three manuscripts with waqf notices are in Cairo and are dated 267/880, 268/881,\(^3\) 270/883-4.\(^4\) A manuscript bearing another such notice dated 297/909 is preserved in the Topkapu Sarayi Library.\(^5\) The Chester Beatty Library possesses a pair of Qur’an leaves with a waqf notice of the same year\(^6\) and a third manuscript of 297/909 is said to be in the National Museum, Damascus.\(^7\)

For the first half of the fourth century we also possess only a small number of Kufic Qur’ans with waqfs and these are divided between the libraries of Paris, Istanbul, and Cairo. They are dated 300/912-13,\(^8\) 307/919,\(^9\) 308/920,\(^10\) 329/950,\(^11\) 337/948-9.\(^12\)

Towards the middle of the fourth century there appears a novel kind of script with marked diagonal characteristics in some letters and with bold triangular heads in others. This script, which is highly decorative, is often referred to as ‘semi-Kufic’, ‘bent Kufic’, or ‘East-Persian Kufic’. The earliest Qur’an written in this hand is on paper—notion parchment.\(^13\) It is the work of ‘Ali ibn Shāhīn ar-Razi al-Bayyi and

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2. MS. Add. 11,116.
4. The date in this waqf notice has been misread 168/784-5. The donor's note mentions the jami' al-atlq, the ‘ancient mosque in Fustat’. It cannot, therefore, be earlier than the foundation of the new mosque of Ahmad ibn Tūlūn in 263-5/876-9. After that date, the mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-'Āṣ in Fustat became known as ‘the ancient mosque’. The mistaken reading was possible because the last, fragmentary, word of the date in the waqf notice could be read 222, 100, and also 200.
7. The recto of the folio which bears the waqf inscription is reproduced in F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, London, 1912, ii, pl. 2339 (the leaf to the right) where the date is wrongly given as 298/910. Another leaf of the manuscript is in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (MS. M 712).
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belongs to the University Library, Istanbul. Unlike the early Kufic Qur’ans written on parchment, it has a full colophon dated 361/972. Another volume of the same Qur’an manuscript, in which the illuminated frontispiece has been preserved, is in the Chester Beatty Library (MS. K. 17/1). The same Library also possesses the earliest dated manuscript in this type of ‘semi-Kufic’ script, the Mawaqif of Niffari dated 344/955–6.

To sum up: We may possess a few Qur’ans of the second half of the first century and almost certainly some of the second. None of these have colophons nor are they accompanied by waqf notices which permit a somewhat closer classification of the Qur’ans datable in the third and fourth centuries.

Until the middle of the fourth century, Qur’ans were written on parchment in various types of angular scripts known collectively as Kufic. The earliest surviving paper Qur’an is dated 361/972 and is written in a ‘semi-Kufic’ script. This Qur’an, and some undated Qur’ans which resemble it, represent a transitional phase between the Kufic Qur’ans on parchment (which preceded them) and the paper Qur’ans in cursive scripts (which were to follow). The appearance of this new script certainly does not represent a stage in a transformation of ‘Kufic’ script into cursive script. It is by now a well established fact that no such transformation ever took place. Cursive Arabic writing is at least as old as the lapidary ‘Kufic’ style. Both styles followed parallel developments, mutually influencing one another.

The Qur’an script which gained general acceptance with the turn of the fourth century is the cursive style known as naskhi. The earliest surviving naskhi Qur’an is the Chester Beatty manuscript K. 16 which is dated 391/1000–1. It is the work of ‘Ali ibn Hilal, better known as Ibn al-Bawwab, who may rightly be called the most illustrious Arab calligrapher.

The Chester Beatty Qur’an, which is the subject of the present monograph, is also—as will be shown—the only extant work of Ibn al-Bawwab and the earliest fully illuminated Arabic manuscript to be discovered so far.

I am deeply grateful to Sir Chester Beatty for making the publication of this monograph possible. I am indebted to Messrs. Aziz Berker, Director-General of

Caliph Harun ar-Rashid (A.D. 786-809) had given the order only to write on paper. . . . As a reason why paper was preferred, the fact is mentioned that parchment and other writing material can be scraped and written on once more, so that falsifications are possible, whereas, when one tries to efface something written on paper, the latter gets spoiled and in case one scrapes it, this can be clearly seen.’

See Fehmi Edhem Karatay, Istanbul Universitesi Kitaphanesi Araştırmalar Katalogu, cilt i, i, Istanbul, 1951, p. 3. No. A 6726 and pl. v. A secular text from the hand of the same scribe has also survived. It is Abu Sa‘id’s ‘History of the Basrian Grammarians’ copied in 376/986. The work has been edited by F. Krenkow, Biographies des grammairiens de l’école de Basra, Paris–Beirut, 1936, where sample pages are also reproduced.


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Libraries and Archives in Turkey; Tahsin Öz, then Director of the Topkapı Sarayı Museum; Kemal Çığ, Director of the Topkapı Sarayı Library, Elif Naci, Director of the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Museum, and Fehmi Edhem Karatay, Director of the University Library, Istanbul, for the facilities granted to me during my visits to Turkey.

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The photographs for the plates were in some cases taken under unfavourable conditions, and I am grateful to the collotypers for making the best of the material and in particular to Mr. Wilfred Merton for his personal supervision. I also wish to thank Mr. Charles Batey and his staff at the University Press, Oxford, for the beautifully and carefully set text.

London, August 1953.

D. S. R.
LITTLE is known of the life of Abu-l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Hilal. We are ignorant of where and when he was born, but he lived mainly at Baghdad. His father, Hilal, had been a doorkeeper (bawwāb) and 'Ali became known as 'the Son of the Doorkeeper', Ibn al-Bawwāb, and sometimes also as Ibn as-Sitīrī, which has the same connotation.\(^1\)

'Ali ibn Hilal began his career as a house-decorator (musawwir yusawwir ad-dār), then he illuminated books (sawwār al-kutub) and finally he took to calligraphy and 'excelled all those who had preceded him and confounded all those who came after him'.\(^2\)

He also used to preach at the Mosque of al-Manṣūr in Baghdad and when the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk, Abu Ghalib Muhammad ibn Khalaf assumed the governorship of that city on behalf of the Buwayhids (in 401/1010), he made Ibn al-Bawwāb one of his intimates.\(^3\) According to 'Ali ibn Hilal's own statement he was, for some time, in charge of the library of the Buwayhid Baha' ad-daula in Shiraz. Of Ibn al-Bawwāb's personal appearance we know only that he had an unusually long beard.\(^4\)

He died in Baghdad in 413/1022 and was buried near the tomb of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. This date, provided by a contemporary authority, Hilal ibn Muhassin as-Sābi (d. 448/1056) is to be preferred to the variant 423/1031 found in a later source.\(^5\) An elegy, of which some verses are preserved, was recited by his grave by the poet al-Murtada.\(^6\)

'Ali ibn Hilal is said to have known the Qur'an by heart and is reported to have copied it sixty-four times.\(^7\) Only one of these copies—the Chester Beatty MS. K 16—has so far come to light.

He composed an epistle on penmanship (of which the introduction only is preserved)\(^8\) and also a didactic poem on the same subject. The latter is available in several manuscripts\(^9\) and has been included in Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddima*.\(^10\) Though highly valued by Ibn Khaldūn, it contains only vague generalities and provides no information about Ibn al-Bawwāb’s personal method of writing.

His great accomplishment, and the one for which he has remained famous, was to have perfected the style of writing introduced, nearly a century earlier, by the celebrated vizier and calligrapher Ibn Muqla (d. 328/939).\(^11\)

Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwāb are often credited with the invention of new scripts.
including some, such as the muhappaq and rayhânî, which were in use well before their time. Neither of them invented new scripts, but Ibn Muqla devised a new method (farîqa) of writing which was later perfected by Ibn al-Bawwâb. Ibn Muqla may be aptly described as the architect of the khatt al-mansûb, the proportioned script. By this method, every letter was brought in relation (nisba) with the first letter alif, and the alphabet was rigorously systematized. An allusion to the geometric quality of his script may be found in the saying recorded by a tenth-century writer: ‘Ibn Muqla is a prophet in the field of writing. It was poured upon his hand, even as it was revealed to the bees to make their honey-cells hexagonal.”

In the introduction to his translation of a fifteenth-century treatise on calligraphy, published in 1920, E. Robertson has given an excellent summary of this development: Ibn Muqla ‘invented a new process of measurement by dots. Theoretically the dot was formed by placing the point of the pen on paper. Sufficient downward movement and pressure was then given to open the pen to its full extent, after which it was permitted to close as evenly and rapidly. This produced a square or rhombus. . . . Having introduced the point as a unit of measure (for this purpose the points were regarded as being placed vertex to vertex), Ibn Muqla made straight the Kufic Alif, which had been bent round to the right with a curve similar to that of a hockey-stick, and adopted it as his standard of measurement. . . . Ibn Muqla’s next step was to modify the individual letters, taken from the Kufic, and bring them into accord with geometric figures. By this means they were easily measured, and each letter was brought into relationship (nisba) to the Alif. If the letter was so shaped as to form a circle, for instance, as in the case of Râ, Nûn, &c., then the diameter of the circle was Alif, and so on.”

Nabia Abbott reached the same conclusions independently, some years later, and has attempted a reconstruction of the alphabet of the khatt al-mansûb in accordance with the instructions given by Ibn Muqla himself and partially preserved in the works of ‘Abd ar-Rahmân and Qalqashandî.

It is this khatt al-mansûb which Ibn al-Bawwâb perfected. It would be difficult to better E. Robertson’s estimate of his contribution: ‘Ibn Muqla no doubt beautified writing, but the beauty lay in geometric design and in mathematical accuracy of reproduction. His was the art of the mechanical draughtsman. Less than a century later it fell to Ibn al-Bawwâb to supply the artistic element that was lacking in the khatt al-mansûb of Ibn Muqla. Ibn al-Bawwâb was an artist with an artist’s eye for the rhythm and movement that find expression in flowing line and graceful curve. As Arab writers say, he “wove on the loom” of Ibn Muqla, but he wove a masterpiece of his own. Thus he could truthfully be described as “the author of the elegant mansûb writing” without requiring to be confused with Ibn Muqla or without detracting in any way from the latter’s fame as an originator.”

4 E. Robertson, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
hand of Ibn Muqla seems to have come down to us, but we possess in the Chester Beatty MS. K. 16 an entire Qur’an written by Ibn al-Bawwāb.

In a short risāla preserved, in what appears to be a unique manuscript, in Berlin (We 167, fol. 43–50), an anonymous author replies to a number of questions on the subject of calligraphy. The date of the epistle, like the name of the author, is unknown, but the clarity and simplicity of its style are signs of antiquity.

The author first explains that the khatt al-mansūb is a proportioned writing which gives as much pleasure to the eye (and for the same reasons) as harmonious musical composition gives to the ear. The great power of attraction possessed by the khatt al-mansūb is due, according to him, to the fact that its letters are proportioned in a natural manner, as the parts of plants and limbs of animals are proportioned. Perfect script, he says, cannot be obtained by ‘drawing the straight letters with a rule (mastara) nor the round ones with a compass (birkār).’ The art of calligraphy is a rare gift, hence there is only one great calligrapher to a generation (fol. 48v).

‘Ibn al-Bawwāb’, the same author goes on, ‘found that people before him had tried to reform the Kufic script (islāh al-kūfī) and that they had softened (lit. moistened) the writing.’

Ibn al-Bawwāb observed that the Banū Muqla had improved the taqi’āt and the naskh scripts, but had failed to attain his own degree of perfection. He completed their work. He also found that his master Ibn Asad was writing poetry in a naskhī hand which approximated to the muhaqqaq; he perfected this too. Ibn al-Bawwāb wrote a calligraphic hand (harrara) of the gold script (qalam adh-dhāhāb) and improved and embellished the style of the hawāshī script (washshā burd al-hawāshī wa-sayyānah). Then he became proficient in the thuluth and in the riqā’ scripts and in the khaṭṭī ar-rīqā’. He excelled in the rayḥān script and ennobled it. He gave distinction to Qur’ānic scripts (mayyaza qalam al-matn wa-l-masūḥ) and also wrote the Kufic (fol. 48v–49r). The anonymous writer concludes that Ibn al-Bawwāb eclipsed the preceding generations of calligraphers because of the uniqueness of his talent and his versatility in a great number of scripts. Later imitators only succeeded in mastering one or two scripts (fol. 49v).

‘All ibn Hilāl was the pupil of Muhammad as-Simsimānī and of Muhammad ibn Asad who, in turn, were pupils of Ibn Muqla. According to one account, he was taught calligraphy by Ibn Muqla’s daughter. Ibn al-Bawwāb himself has related how he successfully imitated Ibn Muqla’s hand. When he was in charge of Bahā’ ad-daula’s library in Shiraz, he found twenty-nine parts (ajzd) of a Qur’an written by Ibn Muqla. They were scattered among other manuscripts in the library and despite a prolonged and careful search he failed to locate the thirtieth, and last part, of the Qur’an he was examining. Cf. also N. Abbott in Ars Islamica, viii, 1941, pp. 80–8r and figs. 1–2.

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1 The Qur’ān of the Egyptian Library referred to by Ahmed Mousa (above p. 2, n. 11) has not been examined. Cf. also N. Abbott in Ars Islamica, viii, 1941, pp. 80–8r and figs. 1–2.

2 W. Ahlwardt, Verzeichniss der arabischen Hand- schriften, Berlin, 1887, i, no. 7.

3 Both the vizier Ibn Muqla and his brother were calligraphers of great renown. The khatt al-mansūb is generally attributed to the vizier.

4 The hawāshī script is also mentioned by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd ar-Rāḥmān. See E. Robertson, op. cit., p. 71, where it is vocalized ḫawāshī.

5 Qalqashandi, Subh al-a’shdā, Cairo, 1914, iii, p. 17; E. Robertson, op. cit., pp. 73–75.

set. He reproached Baha' ad-daula for having allowed the precious manuscript to be treated so carelessly, and the prince instructed him to write the missing part \((juz)\) and to imitate Ibn Muqla's hand. This Ibn al-Bawwab undertook to accomplish and Baha' ad-daula was to give him one hundred dinars and a robe of honour if he failed to detect the forged \(juz\).

Ibn al-Bawwab immediately wrote the missing part of the Qur'an, but nearly a year elapsed before Baha' ad-daula remembered the incident. He inquired whether Ibn al-Bawwab had fulfilled his promise and was shown the complete Qur'an manuscript in thirty parts. Baha' ad-daula carefully examined every \(juz\) but was unable to point out the one written by Ibn al-Bawwab. He kept the set and did not return it to the library but showed no haste in fulfilling his part of the bargain. Tired of waiting for his reward, Ibn al-Bawwab finally asked permission to help himself to the cut sheets of Chinese paper which were kept in the library. This request was granted and the proceeds kept him in paper—a very precious commodity in the tenth century—for a number of years.

The circumstantial account given by Ibn al-Bawwab of how he produced a perfect imitation of Ibn Muqla's writing deserves to be translated in full. 'I went to the library', he relates, 'and searched among the old paper for a paper resembling that of the Qur'an. There were several sorts of old Samarqand and China paper in the library; very fine and admirable papers. I took what suited me and wrote out the missing \(juz\). Then I illuminated it and gave the gold an antique appearance. Then I removed the binding of one of the parts and bound the part which I had written in it. Finally, I made a new binding for the genuine volume and made it appear old.' The anecdote shows not only that Ibn al-Bawwab could, if he wished, produce a convincing imitation of Ibn Muqla's hand, but also that he was an illuminator and bookbinder as well as a calligrapher.

Ibn al-Bawwab does not seem to have enjoyed in his lifetime the great esteem in which his work was held after his death. The geographer and historian Yaqut (d. A.D. 1229) records that he had seen a long petition written by Ibn al-Bawwab, seeking help for a friend and payment of the paltry sum of two dinars which the addressee had promised. The implication is clear: that if Ibn al-Bawwab had been wealthy he need not have bothered to ask for such a small sum or, alternatively, that he would have done so in a short note, not in a seventy-line-long petition. This same petition, always according to Yaqut, was later sold for seventeen dinars, as a calligraphic specimen, and again, on a second occasion, for as much as twenty-five dinars.

Examples of Ibn al-Bawwab's writing became rare at an early date and connoisseurs paid high prices for them. A scribe called Muhammed ibn Ahmad al-Barfaṭi was such a connoisseur. At his death in 625/1227, he left more than twenty pieces \((gifa)\) in Ibn al-Bawwab's hand 'more than any scribe of that time had been able to assemble'. Al-Barfaṭi started his career as a schoolmaster and rose to become a calligrapher \((muharrir)\). He had an almost religious veneration for Ibn al-Bawwab.

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1 Yaqut, op. cit., v, pp. 446 ff.  
2 Ibid., v, p. 447.  
3 Ibid., pp. 451-2. Cf. also Ibn al-'Imad, _shadharat adh-dhahab_, Cairo, s.d., iii, p. 199.  
4 On the definition of _muharrir_ see N. Abbott in _Ars Islamica_, viii, 1948, p. 68.
and was willing to pay exorbitant prices for his writing. Yaqūt, who knew al-Barfaṭī personally and who had seen his collection, has recorded how this enthusiastic collector had come by one of the specimens. ‘I heard’, said al-Barfaṭī, ‘that a certain man, a schoolmaster in one of the quarters of Baghdad, had many clippings (jazzāṣ) which he had inherited from his father. It occurred to me that he might have something in the fine scripts (al-khūṭāt al-mansūba). I called on him and said: “I should like you to show me what your father has left you, as I might be interested to acquire some of it.” He took me to an upper room and I sat down to search until I found a sheet (waraq) in the hand of Ibn al-Bawwāb in the riqā’ script... I added to this leaf some things which I did not really want and said: “How much for this?”

“Sir!” he said, “Is there nothing in all this that would suit you?”

“I am in a hurry”, I replied, “perhaps I shall return to you on another occasion.”

“What you have selected”, he went on, “is of no value. Take it as a gift from me!”

“This I will not do”, I retorted, and I gave him some piece of clipping (qurāda), which was worth half a dīnār (the smallest coin) and this he considered to be excessive.

“You have taken nothing that deserves this amount, Sir, take something else with it”, he insisted. But I replied that I required nothing else and took my leave. When I descended to the ground floor, I felt ashamed and said to myself: “There is no doubt that the man had no idea of the value of what he was selling me; by God! it will never do to acquire Ibn al-Bawwāb’s writing by an act of dishonesty.” So I returned to the man and said to him: “My brother! This leaf is in the hand of Ibn al-Bawwāb.”

“What can I do if it is in the hand of the ‘Doorkeeper’s Son’?” he replied.

“It is worth three imāmi dinārs”; I told him.

“Please do not joke”, was his reply. “Could it be that you wish to return it or find it too expensive?”

“No!” I said, “bring a pair of scales!” He brought them and I weighed out three dinārs and said: “Do you wish to sell me this paper for that amount?” He answered in the affirmative and I took the paper and went on my way.

Ibn al-Bawwāb’s method (fariqā) of writing found many imitators including some women. One was Fatimah bint al-Hasan ibn ‘All al-Attar known as Bint al-Aqrā’ (d. 480/1087) who was commissioned to make a copy of the Abbasid-Byzantine truce agreement, and who also worked for the Seljuq vizier al-Kundur. Her teacher was Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik who had been a pupil of Ibn al-Bawwāb.

Another famous follower of Ibn al-Bawwāb’s fariqā was the historian of Aleppo Kamāl ad-dīn Ibn ad-Adim (d. 660/1262). He was a precocious child and when he reached the age of seven his teacher predicted that he would become a great calligrapher. His wealthy father, though not skilled at the craft himself, had a good knowledge of the rules and a fine collection of specimens which included samples of Ibn al-Bawwāb’s writing. These Kamāl ad-din copied. He also met al-Barfaṭī, the enthusiastic collector of Ibn al-Bawwāb’s calligraphy mentioned above, when the...
latter passed through Aleppo. Kamāl al-dīn is said to have acquired a sheet in
the master's hand for which he paid only forty dirhams. He made a copy of it which
gave to a bookseller who sold it for sixty dirhams as a genuine Ibn al-Bawwāb
specimen. Autograph manuscripts of Kamāl ad-dīn have survived and, making due
allowance for their being in an ordinary bookhand, it is easy to see that he had been
strongly influenced by Ibn al-Bawwāb's example.

Another imitator, Mubārak ibn al-Mubārak Abū Ṭālib al-Karkhī (d. 585/1189), re-
quires special mention for he is said to have excelled Ibn al-Bawwāb himself,
especially in the thuluth script. He was a miser, and in order to prevent people from
selling his letters, he made a habit of intentionally breaking the nib of his calamus
when he attended to his routine correspondence, thus rendering the bulk of his writing
valueless as works of art. Specimens of his work were already rare in the thirteenth
century and none, as far as I am aware, are extant now.

Abū-l-Ḥasan 'Alā ad-dīn 'Alī ibn Ṭalḥa ar-Raḍī al-Baqashlān (born in Baghdad
515/1121, died in Cairo 599/1202) also followed Ibn al-Bawwāb's method and was
particularly famous for his Qurān script (qalam al-masāḥif). Others were ad-Fāḍl
ibn 'Umar ibn Maṣṭūr ibn 'Alī better known as Ibn ar-Raḍī (d. 633/1232-13) and
Yaqtūr ar-Rūmī of Mosul (d. 618/1221-2). The latter must not be confused with his
illustrious namesake Yaqtūr ar-Rūmī al-Mustaṣīmī who lived under the last Abbasid
caliph in Baghdad and died in 698/1298.

It is Yaqtūr al-Mustaṣīmī whose fame finally eclipsed even that of Ibn Muqla and
Ibn al-Bawwāb and who became known as 'The Qibla of Calligraphers'; 'The Sultan
of Calligraphers' (qiblat al-kuttāb, sūlān al-kuttāb). It is Yaqtūr's writing, thin and
delicate and traced with an obliquely cut nib, that future generations of calligraphers
strove to imitate. He is credited with having made 1,001 copies of the Qurān—a
figure which is certainly fanciful. There exist a number of manuscripts ascribed to
Yaqtūr in various libraries but many are palpably spurious.

For two centuries, however, before Yaqtūr's tarīqa became fashionable, the most
celebrated method of writing was incontestably that of Ibn al-Bawwāb, who had
embellished and perfected the proportioned script devised by Ibn Muqla.

1 Ibid. v, pp. 36, 39. 2 Yaqtūr, op. cit. vi, p. 41.
3 Cf. e.g. Sāmī ad-Dāhān, ed. Zubdat al-ḥalāb
fi-ha'rīkh halāb, i, Damascus, 1953, pl. iv.
4 Yaqtūr, op. cit. vi, pp. 230-1.
5 Ibid. v, p. 304.
6 Ibid. vi, p. 141.
7 Ibid. vii, p. 267; E. Robertson, op. cit., p. 75 and
note 63; Cl. Huart, op. cit., pp. 81 ff.
8 Cf. F. Krenkow in Islamic Culture, xxii, Hyder-
The Chester Beatty MS. K. 16 is a small volume of 286 folios measuring 17.5 × 13.5 cm. The written surface measures 13.5 × 9.0 cm. and there are 15 lines to each page. The first six folios of white, highly polished paper are a later addition. They contain a biographical note on Ibn al-Bawwāb in Persian, borrowed from Ibn Khallikān’s biographical dictionary.

The Qur’ān proper, together with its ornamental pages and tables, which are contemporary, covers fols. 6v–286r. The colophon indicates that it was written by ‘Alī ibn Hilāl in Baghdad in the year 391/1000–1 (fol. 284r) (Pl. VIIb).

The paper of the manuscript is of medium thickness and firm. In the course of time it has acquired a mellow brown tint which is characteristic of manuscripts of that period. The dark brown ink has produced ‘halos’ round the script in the places where it has infiltrated along the tissue. The binding is European and modern. The back of the manuscript was cut by the binder and it is no longer possible to determine how the codex was originally made up. Before the manuscript reached the Chester Beatty Library, its margins were unfortunately trimmed. This caused the loss of some parts of the marginal ornaments. Otherwise, however, this valuable manuscript has suffered practically no damage attributable to fungi, mildew, ‘foxing’, &c., and is remarkably well preserved for its great age.

Only one of the previous owners of the volume has recorded his name and a date—Khūshraumkhān Gujratī, 1155/1741. He did so with little respect for Ibn al-Bawwāb’s beautifully balanced and delicately ornamented final page (fol. 284r) (Pl. VIIb).

The Qur’ān is written in a regular bold naskhī hand. The letters are closely set and the intervals between the words and lines are reduced to a minimum without any loss of clarity. Clarity and unostentatious virtuosity are indeed the outstanding features of this masterpiece. The script has all the qualities which Ibn al-Bawwāb’s contemporary, the fastidious Abū Ḥayyān at-Tauhīdī (died after A.D. 1000–11), enumerates as the requisites of fine writing. The letters are accurately arranged so that they look ‘as if they smiled and showed front teeth’. The letters hā, kā, jīm are well balanced against the others so that ‘they are like wide open eye-balls’. The letters waw, fā, qāf, &c. are rounded in an elegant fashion and the letters ‘ayn and ghayn have clearly defined loops. The nūn and yā in the words mín, ‘alā, ‘an, matā, šāl are brought out ‘as if they are woven upon a single loom’. The letters sād, dād, kāf, fā and sā are well proportioned and in perfect equilibrium with the rest. Finally, the lines of the script are meticulously straight in the beginning, middle, and end. This is particularly remarkable as there are no traces of blind-tooled lines in this manuscript, such as were drawn by later calligraphers to guide their hand.

There are striking similarities of paper, format, and ink between the Chester Beatty MS. K. 16 and three other manuscripts of the same period. (i) The diwan of Mutanabbī in the British Museum, MS. Add. 19, 357, dated 393/1002 (format 19 × 14.2 cm.) (this was probably the size of MS. K. 16 before it was trimmed down to its present size 17.5 × 13.5 cm.); (ii) kitāb al-maqṣūr wa-l-mandūd, Yusuf Ağa Library MS. 254, Konya, dated 996–996–7 (format 20 × 14.4 cm.); and (iii) kitāb fī al-lāt as-sād al-lāt tuṣamā’ rukhāmāt, Koprulu Library, Istanbul, MS. 948, dated 370/1280 (format 21 × 18 cm.).

1 F. Rosenthal, op. cit., pp. 5f.
Ibn al-Bawwab

The regularity of the letters and their relation to the alif are a striking characteristics of this script. It may perhaps be described as a naskhi script influenced by 'proportioned writing'. Despite the regularity of the letters there is nothing drily mechanical about them and that, surely, was the essence of Ibn al-Bawwab’s stimulating contribution to the art of calligraphy. He achieved a gracefully flowing script while preserving a systematized and proportioned alphabet. It looks easy to imitate and yet defied imitation.

Ibn al-Bawwab made no use of artificially lengthened letters (dilatabiles) which are so common in Kufic Qur’ans with one exception: the sin in the basmalah at the beginning of each sura which he stretched for over half a line. It is known that he favoured a calamus whose nib had been cut absolutely straight. By this means he obtained strokes of unvarying width, a quality which is well illustrated by the Chester Beatty Qur’an. Two centuries later, another famous calligrapher, Yaqût, cut the nib of his calamus obliquely. As a result his script was thin in places and thicker in others, and was deemed to be more elegant. It certainly did not possess the almost lapidary quality, the vigour and mature charm of Ibn al-Bawwab’s hand.

The text of the Qur’an, as might be expected towards the end of the fourth Islamic century, is written in scriptio plena and fully vocalized. The vowels and consonants are written throughout in the same ink. The unpointed letters {mtihmala) ha, sad, ’ayn are nearly always distinguished by small letters which are written under them; the sin and râ by an inverted circumflex above them.

Other scripts are also used in this codex: (i) a type of thuluth for the first two sura headings (fol. 9v., Pl. VIa), and on the first two double pages (foll. 6v.-8r.) (Pls. I-II); (ii) a gold round script for the remaining sura headings and to indicate the division of the text into thirty and sixty ajsâ, (qalam adh-dhahab?); (iii) one variety of ‘semi-Kufic’ in the roundels which mark every tenth verse and the sajdas; (iv) another variety of ‘semi-Kufic’ for the alphabet in the tables on foll. 285v.-286r. (Pl. V) and, (v) a contracted script (perhaps rigâ) in the oblong narrow compartments of the same tables.

No intervals are left between the individual verses, but three blue dots, disposed in a triangle, mark the end of each. Small spaces are left after each fifth and each tenth verse. The former are marked by a gilt khâmisa-mark; a final hâ (whose numerical value corresponds to five), and each tenth verse by an ‘ashira-mark, a small roundel enclosing a Kufic letter whose value corresponds to the appropriate decimal; ya for ten, kaf for twenty, &c.

There are two corrections in the text and both are certainly due to the calligrapher himself. The first occurs on fol. 40r. (Pl. VIIIb) in sura III, verse 148. Here Ibn al-Bawwab must have made a mistake which he did not notice before he had turned the leaf and started to write on the verso. The mistake in all probability consisted of the repetition of the verse. It was impossible to erase the script without damage to the paper. He therefore chose to cover the redundant lines with an opaque orna-

1 V. N. Zakhoder, Kaz Ahmed, p. 65; Qalqashandi, op. cit. ii, p. 151. Cf. Rosenthal, op. cit., p. 4. ‘The calamus which is nibbed obliquely produces a weaker and more elegant handwriting; the one which is nibbed evenly a stronger and clearer

2 Cf. Cl. Huart, op. cit., pp. 84-85.
3 On the introduction of the scriptio plena see R. Blachere, op. cit. i, pp. 92ff.
4 Cf. above, note 21. On methods of obliteration
mental band which effectively concealed them. This ornamental band is filled with a scroll design consisting of five large leaves painted in gold on a sepia-tinted, gilt ground (fig. 4). In the course of time the pigment has worn thin in some places and the hidden lines can now be seen. This ornamental band is doubtless the work of Ibn al-Bawwab and is in keeping with other gilt ornamental bands in the same manuscript (see below, p. 18). Having made this obliteration the calligrapher inserted a few words in the margins of the recto and verso of fol. 40, in order to complete the text of verse 148.

The second correction is found on fol. 137v, where Ibn al-Bawwab had omitted the 100th verse of sura XVII altogether. He corrected the omission by inserting a rosette in the space originally reserved for an 'ashira-mark, then adding the missing verse in the margin, he framed it in a tabula ansata (Pl. VIIIa). That this correction is contemporary with the illumination of the manuscript is clear. Only the illuminator could have used the space reserved for the 'ashira-mark for the insertion of a rosette and a reference to the marginal addition.

The Chester Beatty Qur'an is clearly the work of one person. The text is throughout written in the same firm, regular hand and utterly devoid of pedantry and ostentatious display. The same applies to the last page of the text which contains the eulogy and colophon (fol. 284r) (Pl. IVb). That no attempt was made to give special prominence to the name of the calligrapher is a sign of the colophon's authenticity.  

The eulogy includes a reference to 'The Pure Family of the Prophet' (itratuhu at-tahirun) and indicates that Ibn al-Bawwab shared the Shi'ite persuasion of his patrons, the Buwayhids. So does the reference to Ali as amir al-mu'minin and the use of the formula as-salām 'alayhī (instead of radiya allāh 'anhu) in the verse-count at the beginning of the manuscript (Pl. IIIb).

The text of the colophon proper reads:

"Has written this complete (Qur'an) Ali ibn Hilāl in Madinat as-Salām (Baghdad) in the year 391 (1000-1) giving praise to God, may He be exalted, for His benefactions, praying upon His Prophet, Muḥammad, and upon his family and begging forgiveness for his own sins."  

The illumination of the Chester Beatty Qur'an is no less remarkable than its calligraphy and is, almost certainly, also the work of Ibn al-Bawwab. ‘Ali ibn Hilāl was used in Arabic MSS., cf. F. Rosenthal, The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship, Vatican City, 1947, p. 16.

1 By contrast, exaggerated emphasis on the name of the calligrapher and conspicuous, lavishly decorated colophons in some manuscripts attributed to Yāqūt al-Musta'simi indicate that they are forgeries.

2 Formulas of the tasliya which include reference to the ‘pure family of the Prophet’ (dhihi afṭahirān, itratuhu al-tahirun, dhurriyyatuhu afṭahirān) were favoured by the Shi'ites; cf. M. van Berchem, Materiaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabica- rum, Égypte I, Paris, 1923, p. 25, note; also I. Goldziher, ‘Über die Eulogien der Araber’, in ZDMG, l, 1866, pp. 97–128.

3 Yāqūt, op. cit. v, p. 51 reports that a manuscript of the kitāb man nusiba min ash-shur’ārā ila ummihī of Abū ‘Abdallāh ibn al-A’rābī written by Ibn al-Bawwab had a colophon which read:

‘كتب علي بن هلال في شهر ربيع الأول سنة ثمانين وثلاثة

على نبي محمد والله وسلما من ذئبه

نسبة لموطأ التاليف وقال أيضاً على نميه وصلماً

علي نبي محمد والله وسلما من ذئبه

That no attempt was made to give special prominence to the name of the calligrapher is a sign of the colophon's authenticity.
skilled in both arts (see above, p. 5). Reference has already been made to an ornamental band in the text which can only have been inserted by Ibn al-Bawwab, and to a marginal correction which must also be his work. Further confirmation of his authorship of the illumination can be derived from a curious detail in the marginal décor. Each sura-heading in this codex is marked in the margin by a large coloured palmette with black and blue outlines. These contours are drawn with the calamus, not with the brush, as is the remainder of the palmettes. In two places (sura LXXV, fol. 268v. and sura LXXVI, fol. 269r.) (Pl. IX, m, n)—obviously owing to an oversight—the illuminator did not use blue pigment for the contours but the brown ink which had been used for the text. Such a mistake could occur only if illuminator and calligrapher were one person.

The illuminations can be divided into three categories: (i) full-page ornaments (Pls. I–III), (ii) marginal ornaments consisting of sura-palmettes, verse marks and sajdas (Pl. IX), and (iii) ornamental bands, in the first two suras (Pl. VIa), on the last page (Pl. IVb), and on fol. 40r. (Pl. VIIIb).

There are five pairs of fully decorated pages, three double pages at the beginning of the manuscript and two at the end. Two pairs of pages contain only ornaments, the others both ornaments and script. The layout of the designs and their relation to each other show that they were planned as an ensemble and executed according to a pre-arranged scheme.

The manuscript opens with two decorative, rectangular panels (foll. 6v–7r.) (Pl. I) which are divided into seven sections each. The grounds of these sections are tinted in different colours. The central section in each panel has a black ground and the remaining six are alternately blue or covered with an almost imperceptible, faint, criss-cross hatching of light sepia lines. The script is alternately gold (with thin black outlines) and reserved in white (with gold contours). Winding scrolls with delicate palmettes, half-palmettes, and leaves, fill the ground of each section behind the script. These scrolls (see an example in Fig. 1) stem from the lower frames of the sections and are treated individually. They are coloured brown in the central sections which have black backgrounds, sepia and sepia, edged in white, in the others. In all but the central sections, the ornament is lightened by a profusion of white dots, grouped in threes in the form of triangles, and distributed irregularly over the backgrounds. Two palmettes in the margins—very similar to those which accompany the sura headings—are attached to the long sides of the gilt, interlaced, frames which enclose the full-page ornaments.

The text conveys the information that the Qur’an consists of 114 suras, 6,236 āyas made up of 77,460 words, or 321,250 letters and 156,051 points.

The double pages which follow (foll. 7v–8r.) (Pl. II) are also fully decorated. Two rectangular frames are divided by an interlaced design into large and small octagons and other geometrical compartments. The large octagons have gilt backgrounds decorated with individually treated floral sprays and white-edged, gilt inscriptions.
The small octagons enclose single lotus flowers in graduated tints of sepia, on blue grounds lightened with white dots. Oblong compartments are disposed in cruciform fashion round the small octagons. The oblong compartments enclose elongated floral ornaments painted in a reddish, white-edged sepia on gold grounds. The text in the large octagons completes the verse count on the preceding pages: 'After the counting of the Kufans, on the authority of 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, Greetings upon him and upon our Prophet Muhammad.'

The contrast in the layout of the first two pairs of large ornamental designs is immediately apparent. In the first pair (Pl. I) the division of the pages is obtained by horizontal sections; in the second pair (Pl. II) the large octagons are aligned perpendicularly and are separated by a spine-like row of small octagons and oblong geometrical compartments. In the first pair of ornaments the emphasis is on the central sections. Their backgrounds are black and their scrolls and palmettes dark brown. In the second pair of pages, the emphasis is on the upper and lower register of octagons whose backgrounds are covered with a close, black, criss-cross hatching which brings the floral sprays and script into relief. The central register of octagons on these pages has a markedly subdued colouring; both the background and lettering are executed in gold. The contrast noted in this arrangement is not due to accident but to a predetermined plan, as will be evident from the examination of the next two pairs of full-page illuminations.

Foll. 8v.–9r. (Pl. III) are purely ornamental and contain no script. The decorated surfaces are enclosed in interlaced golden frames, studded with tiny dots of white, green, and sepia. The rectangles thus formed are divided into compartments by three pairs of intersecting circles of varying widths. The circles with the largest diameters are based on the long sides of the rectangles, the medium ones on the long axis, and the small ones on the transverse, short axis. Each circle has a central ring of black-hatched chevrons on gold ground and two paper-coloured rings. The principal decorative device occupies a medallion on the horizontal axis of the pages. It consists of an exquisite arabesque, coloured crimson and white on gold ground (Fig. 2). Other ornaments include lotus flowers pointing towards the centre and smaller lotus flowers, added, like barbs, to the central medallions. They are executed in gold and sepia on blue grounds. The remaining surfaces of the designs are covered by a carpet pattern of small hexagonal stars and Y-shaped and oblong elements (white, crimson, green, and gold). In the margins are, again, palmettes similar to those of the sura-headings.

The pendant to this pair of ornamental pages is found in the double pages which follow at the end of the codex (foll. 284v.–285r.) (Pl. IV). Instead of interlaced gilt

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1 There existed several methods by which the Qur'an was divided into verses. They took their names from various cities; Kufa, Basra, Damascus, Mecca, and Medina. The verse-count which gained the widest acceptance was that of Kufa. This was partly due to the fact that it claimed the high authority of the caliph 'Ali and partly because of the predominant position of Kufa as a seat of learning. Cf. A. Spitaler, Die Verszählung des Koran (Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil-hist. Abt., Jahrgang 1935, Heft 11), Munich, 1935, p. 18.
strands, the frames of these ornaments imitate wicker-work. They are paper-coloured and drawn in black outlines to produce a plastic effect. The decorated rectangles enclosed in them are again divided by three pairs of circles of varying widths. These circles have central rings made up of overlapping petals and diamonds (white, black, and crimson) and are bordered by gold and paper-coloured rings. In contrast with the opening pages (Pl. III) the principal ornament is arranged not horizontally, but on the vertical axis. It is represented by an admirably balanced tree-shaped design, coloured a sober, deep brown on a ground of pale criss-cross sepia lines (Fig. 3). There are two of these torch-like ‘tree’ ornaments per page; one points upwards, the other down. Two lotus flowers in graduated sepia tints on blue grounds fill the segments created by the intersection of the largest pairs of circles. The remaining surfaces are covered with a pattern made up of small hexagonal stars arranged to give a kaleidoscopic effect. These are tinted crimson in the segments of the largest circles; green and brown in the others. Two elaborate crown-shaped palmettes in the margins are perfectly matched to suit the plastic character of the wicker-work frames and contrast with the two-dimensional palmettes of the opening pages.

The last pair of framed pages (foll. 285v–286r) (Pl. V) is divided into narrow horizontal sections completely filled with script. To the right, on each page, is a register of the Arabic alphabet in dark blue Kufic script edged with white, on gold ground. Then follow fourteen narrow compartments alternately covered with the faint sepia criss-cross hatching and with faint grey floral scrolls and blue dots. The text, in a contracted script (perhaps rigā), is written in gold and gives the count of the individual letters in the Qurān: lām-ālīf appears as the twenty-eighth letter and the count for yā, the last letter of the alphabet, is given in the marginal ornament on fol. 286r. (Pl. Vb).1

The second category of illuminations in the Chester Beatty Qurān consists of marginal decorations. There are, in the first place, 114 large palmettes which accompany the sūra-headings. They are similar but no two are identical. Great ingenuity, loving care, and perfect taste are displayed in their execution. The pigments are delicately and thinly applied with a brush and are limited to gold, two shades of sepia, and blue. The familiar groups of white dots arranged in triangles are used to break the monotony of the dark surfaces. All the sūra-palmettes but two (see above, p. 14) are surrounded by black and blue outlines drawn with the calamus.

The palmettes consist of large fleurons made up of lotus flowers and combinations of differently shaped leaves. Some enclose roundels or oblong medallions which, in turn, are decorated with sprays and palmettes (e.g. foll. 199v, 276r, i) (Pl. IX, d, g), and strings of Sasanian pearls (e.g. foll. 128r, 282r, ii) (Pl. IX, b, f). Some leaves are used as foils for other floral designs (e.g. foll. 237r, 258r, 273v, 283v, ii) (Pl. IX, h, i, o, t). The largest single elements used in the sūra-palmettes are the lotus flower and the peony (foll. 281v, i, 282r, ii) (Pl. IX, s, f).

1 The sequence in the alphabet of taw-hā rather than hā-taw, as in later works, is further confirmation of the manuscript’s antiquity; cf. P. Schwarz, ‘Die Anordnung des arabischen Alphabets’, in ZDMG, lxxix, Leipzig, 1915, p. 61.
The great majority of these ornaments are symmetrical and organized round a central core with various foliate elements bending toward it, or away from it, in pairs. There are only a few instances of somewhat asymmetrical grouping (e.g. foll. 228v., 278v.) (Pl. IX, g, r). The leaves of these ornaments are nearly always executed in gold, occasionally tinted with a sepia wash. At times they are treated 'realistically' with lines converging towards a central stalk (e.g. fol. 237r.) (Pl. IX h) but more often they are striped and filled with dark and light sepia strokes which make them look like basketwork (esp. fol. 167r.) (Pl. IX o). Occasionally the leaves are covered with scales (e.g. foll. 259r., 273v.) (Pl. IX, j, o) or assume (unintentionally, of course, in a Qur'anic manuscript) zoomorphic shapes with tips ending in bird-heads (e.g. foll. 202r., 259r., 274r., i, 283r., ii) (Pl. IX, e, j, p, u).

The spaces between the leaves are nearly always coloured blue and lightened with white dots, but criss-cross hatched grounds, similar to those observed in the full-page illuminations, also occur (e.g. foll. 274r., 276r.) (Pl. IX, p, q) and on such backgrounds the edges of the superimposed palmettes are picked out in white (cf. the treatment of the floral elements on foll. 7v.–8r.) (Pl. II).

In addition to the ornamental palmettes which accompany every sura-heading, the margins of the manuscript show illuminated 'ashira-roundels (to indicate every tenth verse) and sajdas (to mark the passages after which prostrations should be performed). The verse-marks show little variety. Nearly all consist of gold roundels formed by flat edged petals, enclosing blue coloured disks which spell out the 'ashira numbers in gold letters (e.g. fol. 146v.) (Pl. IX w). When a sura palmette coincides with the last 'ashira-mark of the preceding chapter, the latter is incorporated in the former, more important, ornament (e.g. fol. 266r.) (Pl. IX). Sometimes sajda and 'ashira-marks are shown as overlapping circles (e.g. fol. 130r.) (Pl. IX v). The sajda-marks are more elaborate. They consist of roundels (decorated with floral scrolls, palmettes, &c), interlaced squares and hexagonal stars. In the centre of each mark the word sajda is written in gold Kufic letters on sepia, blue, or brown ground (e.g. fol. 220v) (Pl. IX x).

The third category of illuminations comprises the decorative bands. Two bands in dotted and interlaced frames head the first two suras (Pl. VI a). All the remaining sura-titles are written in gold letters without either frames or tinted backgrounds. The title of the opening chapter is written in gold letters on a black ground enlivened with white-edged sepi a palmettes and serrated half-palmettes which recall those of the verse-count tables (Pl. I). The ground of the second band, heading the Sūra of the Cow, is decorated with a leafy, white-edged scroll painted in sepi a on a sepi a-tinted gold ground. The scrolls—like those in the opening pages (Pls. I–II)—sprout from the lower bars of the frames, not from the letters. They form complete and self-contained decorative units.

Special attention was devoted by Ibn al-Bawwāb to the embellishment of the

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1 According to al-Bayhaqi (d. 452/1060) the indicating of sajdas was forbidden (see the reference in Bergsträsser–Preztl, op. cit. iii, p. 260, note 1), a clear sign that such markings (which he considered to be irreverent additions to the holy text) were not uncommon in his time.
opening page of the Holy Book, but there is as yet no attempt to produce the carpet-like patterns which, from the third decade of the eleventh century onwards, cover the whole marginal surfaces in the opening pages of Qur'an manuscripts. The marginal sūra-palmettes on this page are more compact and more carefully executed but also more subdued in colouring. Only two tints of sepia are used and the grounds between the various elements of the ornaments are painted gold, not blue as in the remaining sūras. Roundels, similar to those of the 'āshira-marks, are used to indicate every fifth verse in the margin. In the text proper, a small leaf-shaped ornament, instead of the customary ḥā sign, is used to mark each fifth verse. The same leaf-shaped sign also appears at the end of the colophon on fol. 285r. (Pl. VIIb).

Further band-ornaments are found on the last page of the text (fol. 285r) (Pl. VIIb). This page is decorated with an elegant interlaced rectangular gold frame, which is divided by a braided bar into two unequal parts. The upper part encloses a eulogy of six lines, and is bordered on top by a large band. (Fig. 5). The lower part contains the colophon of three and a half lines and is underlined by a narrower band. Both bands are decorated with foliate scrolls painted in gold and sepia on a sepia-tinted ground.

The script on the colophon page is in the same hand as the remainder of the text. A carpet-pattern of scrolls and leaves, drawn in delicate faint gray lines and triangular groups of blue dots, fills the spaces between the lines of the text. The script is surrounded by cloud-shaped reserved contours.

Mention has already been made of the decorative band used by Ibn al-Bawwāb to conceal two lines of redundant script (see above, p. 12f, Fig. 4 and Pl. VIIIb). The pigments and technique used in that instance are identical with those employed for the decorative bands in the frame of the colophon page.

This completes the description of the illuminations found in the Qur'an of Ibn al-Bawwāb. An analysis of the ornaments and an evaluation of their place in the history of Islamic manuscript illumination will be attempted in the concluding chapter. The illuminations of the Chester Beatty Qur'an are remarkably homogeneous and executed with great finesse. Their subdued colour-scheme and delicately balanced designs make a fitting foil for Ibn al-Bawwāb's calligraphic masterpiece. While they bear some resemblance to the illuminations of the few surviving manuscripts of the late tenth and early eleventh century, they by far excel most of them in originality and quality. In many ways they anticipate future developments in the art of book illumination; in many ways—like Ibn al-Bawwāb's superb calligraphy—they remain unique.

1 The earliest example of such cloud-shaped contours round scripts known to me occurs in a manuscript of Shirāfi’s kitāb al-muqtaḍab, Köprülü, no. 1397, which is dated 347/958; cf. H. Ritter, "Autographs in Turkish Libraries", in Orisen, vi, 1953, pl. 11. Similar light-coloured contours are found even earlier in Islamic pottery.
AMONG the treasures of the Bağdat Köşk preserved in the Topkapu Sarayi Museum in Istanbul is a splendid manuscript (Bağdat 125) which contains the diwan of the pre-Islamic poet Salama ibn Jandal.

The manuscript consists of 34 folios of thick, cream-coloured paper measuring 42.2 x 32.5 cm. The rectos of folios 1 and 2 are sumptuously illuminated; the first with a sarlaugh (Pl. Xa), the second with the title of the work (Pl. Xa). The text of the diwan follows, headed by a most beautifully executed basmalah in black and gold (fol. 2r) (Pl. XIa). The verses are written in thuluth script, the commentary in naskhi; both are in deep black ink but for the opening words: 'Quoth Salama bin Jandal' which are gilt.

The title-page on fol. 2r. (Pl. Xa) begins with a line in large, black thuluth script bordered with gold. Then follow three inscribed roundels exquisitely decorated with floral ornaments. The bottom of the page is filled by an oblong, pedestal-shaped panel which contains the remainder of the text written partly on a black and partly on a paper-coloured ground. The latter is strewn with leaf- and bud-shaped ornaments and black dots linked by an almost imperceptible grey scroll.

The text (Pl. Xa) reads:

فيه شعر سلامة بن جندل الصغير عن أبي سعيد الاسمي ونفس الرواية عن أبي عمر الشيباني وقري

على عمامة روامة أبي الاباس محمد بن الحسن بن دنار الأحول

'In it is the poetry of Salama bin Jandal as-Sa’dî after Abu Sa’îd al-Asma’î and the same transmission after Abu ‘Amr ash-Shaybani which was read before ‘Umara. Transmission of Abu-la-‘Abbas Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Dinâr al-Aḥwâl.'

There is a colophon on fol. 43r. (Pl. XIb) which reads:

كتبه على بن هلال في شهر رمضان من سنة ثمان واربع ماه حامدا الله ومسلمًا على بنه محمد وآله

'Has written it 'Ali ibn Hilâl in the month of Ramadan 408 (1017) giving praise to God and praying upon His Prophet Muḥammad and his family.'

This manuscript, however, cannot be the work of Ibn al-Bawwâb as will become clear if we examine the sarlaugh on fol. 1r. (Pl. Xa) more closely. In the centre of the page is an ornament shaped like a scalloped diamond which measures 28.7 x 22.7 cm. It is divided into two halves by a pair of oblong medallions meeting in the centre like a buckle. Above and below these oblong medallions are pairs of small, octagonal ones, placed like studs on a belt. The remaining parts of the décor fill two large areas which are shaped like fans of palm-leaves; one turned up, the other down.1 Gracefully

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1 The text of the diwan was published twice independently by Cl. Huart, ʻLe diwan de Selâma ben Djandalʻ in Journal Asiatique, 2ème série, tome xvi, 1910, pp. 71-105, and by L. Cheikho, Divân Salâma ibn Jandal, Beirut, 1910. Both editors used the manuscript which is now in the Topkapu Sarayi Museum and which was then in the Aya Sofya Library (No. 4904). Cheikho also used a copy of a manuscript in the Library of Alexandria prepared for him by I. Kratchkovsky. For an account of the discovery of the Alexandrian manuscript cf. I. V. Kratchkovsky, Among Arabic Manuscripts, translated by T. Minorsky, Leiden, 1953, pp. 25 ff.

2 For similarly shaped leaves of ‘éventails polylobés’ cf. G. Wiet, Soirées persanes (Mémoires de lʼInstitut dʼEgypte, tome iii), Cairo, 1948, pl. vi; also
undulating scrolls fill each of these compartments. Delicate palmettes and half-
palmettes emerge from their stems. The scrolls are thin and white, the palmettes are
tinted grey and sepia. The colours of the backgrounds in the sarlauk vary. In the
large, palm-leaf compartments they are a metallic sepia lightened in places by white
dots. The clasp-shaped medallions in the centre have blue backgrounds and the
octagonal compartments black ones.

There is nothing repetitive or stereotyped about their arabesques. The floral
ornament in each compartment is treated independently and springs from a different
point in the frame. Two different ‘solutions’ for the furnishing of the same surface
were chosen for the arabesques in the ‘palm-leaf’ compartments. In the upper one,
the scroll springs from the thin end of the ‘leaf’; from there it is drawn gracefully,
coiling over itself in untamed exuberance, until it fills the large lobe. A different
‘solution’ was adopted in the lower ‘leaf’. Here the arabesque begins in the large lobe
and follows its individual course until it is hemmed in by the narrowing contours of
the ‘leaf’ at the point where it is fixed between the ‘buckle’-medallions. Even in
the absence of any text, there can be no doubt as to which is ‘the right way up’ in
this ornament.

But this is not a purely decorative sarlauk. It also contains the ex-libris of the first
owner of the manuscript. His full name and titles are written in white letters, partly
in cursive and partly in angular, Kufic script. Cursive script is used in the leaf-shaped
and octagonal compartments and Kufic in the oblong clasp-shaped medallions. At
some unknown date, an attempt was made to obliterate the cursive script, but the
Kufic text (possibly considered harmless by a person unable to decipher it) was left
intact. Even the rubbed and mutilated parts, however, can be easily reconstructed
and the whole text reads:

baha' al-alam wa-khidmat

‘For His Excellency, our lord, the Imām, the august lord, Jamal al-Islam, Sayf as-
Sunna, Abū Sahl Muhammad ibn Hibatallah al-Muwaffaq. May God prolong his
life and may He perpetuate his dignity and prostrate his enemies.’

This person can be identified. Abū Sahl ibn Hibatallah was the son of the Qādi
Abū 'Umar, Jamāl al-Islām al-Bistāmi of Nishāpur, known as al-Muwaffaq. He was
born at Nishāpur in 423/1031 and studied under the leading authorities of the Shāfi‘ite
rite in Khurāsān and Iraq. His father, al-Muwaffaq, who was the leader of the
Shāfi‘ite communities in the Eastern provinces of the caliphate, died in 440/1048-9.
Abū Sahl, despite his youth, was elected to succeed him, and assumed at the same
time the honorific Jamāl al-Islām. His position was officially recognized by the
Seljuq sultan, Tughril bek, who bestowed a ceremonial robe upon him.

reproduced in A. C. Weibel, Two Thousand Years
of Textiles, New York, 1952, pl. 104.

1 For the title as-sayyid al-ajal which was first
borne by the Buwayhid Sharaf-ad-daula (376-9/956-
91) see G. Wiet, CIA, Egypte ii, Cairo, 1939, p. 147.
2 The formula kitāb ‘umārah, seems to have been
favoured in Persia in the early eleventh century.
Cf. the frontispiece of the manuscript of Ibn Miskawa-
wi’s Jāvōdšān-i-Khirad in the Bodleian Library
(Marsh 662) which is dated 439/1047.
3 The granting of titles to sheikhs came into use at
the beginning of the eleventh century. The first
Abū Sahl’s election to high office met with general approval but excited the jealousy of the fanatical Ḥanafite vizier al-Kundur. By order of the vizier, the Shāfi‘ites in general and the Ash‘arites (their most ‘progressive’ branch) in particular were molested and humiliated and sometimes expelled from their homes and driven into exile. They were cursed from the pulpits in the same breath as the arch-enemies of the Seljuqs—the Shī‘ites. There followed an edict banishing the leaders of the Asharite School. Four of them, al-Juwaynī, al-Furātī, al-Qushayrī and Abu Sahl ibn al-Muwaffaq were to be arrested. Al-Juwaynī made good his escape to Arabia, settled in Mecca, and became famous as Imām al-Ḥaramain. Al-Furātī and al-Qushayrī were seized and taken to the citadel of Ṣan`ā‘.

Abu Sahl, who was out of town, escaped arrest and determined to free his friends, by force of arms if need be. He recruited a private army and appeared before the gates of Ṣan`ā‘. After some street fighting with the town’s garrison, he negotiated the release of his friends with the prefect. The Ash‘arite leaders realized the gravity of their offence in flouting the authority of the state and went into hiding. Abu Sahl was caught at Mu‘askar, near Rayy, and imprisoned for several months. His movable property was confiscated and his domains were sold, but he recovered part of his considerable fortune after his release. He received a complete pardon from the sultan, and his gallant action in support of his brethren earned him the title ‘Sword of Orthodoxy’ (sayf as-sunna).

After the death of Tughril bek in 455/1063 and the accession of Alp Arslan, the circumstances of Abu Sahl underwent a complete change. He stood very high in the esteem of the new ruler and it is said that he was offered the vizierate when this sultan put al-Kunduri to death on suspicion of treason in 456/1064. But in the same year Abu Sahl himself met with a mysterious death. According to one account, he was poisoned, according to another, he is said to have died on his way to Bagdad as emissary of the sultan.

Abū Sahl was fabulously wealthy and renowned for his generosity. His gifts are said to have amounted at times to one thousand dinārs. It is well in keeping with the princely state in which he lived that his library should have contained a de-luxe manuscript such as the ḍīwān of Salāma bin Ḫandal which is now in the Topkapu Sarayi. This manuscript can be dated with considerable accuracy with the help of the titles mentioned in the sarlah. Abū Sahl succeeded to his father’s title ‘Jamāl al-Islām’ in 440/1048—9. He received the laqab Sayf as-Sunna for his armed resistance to al-Kunduri’s persecution (fitna) which started in 445/1053. The terminus ante quem is, to have such a title is said to have been Rukn ad-dīn al-Neṣā‘ī of Ṣan`ā‘ (d. 418/1027), cf. A. Mez, Die Renaissance des Islam, Heidelberg, 1910, p. 179.

1 By an irony of fate al-Kunduri owed his appointment to the vizierate to Abu Sahl’s father al-Muwaffaq; see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, ed. Tornberg, Leiden, 1864, v, p. 20.


An extensive biography of Abū Sahl together with an account of the persecution of the Shāfi‘ites and also some pamphlets and fatwās written in their support will be found in Subki, Tabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘iyah, Cairo, s.d., pp. 269-301 and iii, pp. 85f. Another biography of Abū Sahl appears in Dabābī’s Ta’rikh (M.S. BM. Or. 50, fol. 61v-62r). Both these accounts are based largely on that of Abū-l-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Ḡāfīr whose kitāb as-siyāq li-ta’rikh nishāpjūr is available only in an abridged form (cf. Köprüli Library, M.S. 1152, fol. 19r). For al-Kunduri’s biography see Ibn Khalikān, op. cit. ii, pp. 103ff.
of course, Abū Sahḥ’s death in 456/1064. It is unlikely that such a magnificent volume should have been written for him during the period of his fall from grace, when most of his property was confiscated. It was probably executed in the short period between his elevation to great honours by Alp Arslān and his death, viz. 455-6/1063-4. On no account can it be earlier than 445/1053 in view of the combination of titles given to him in the sarlauh.

Ibn al-Bawwāb died in 413/1022, ten years before Abū Sahḥ’s birth. The colophon purporting to have been written in Ramadān 408/1017 is, therefore, clearly a forgery. This is confirmed by a comparison of the gold letters of the colophon (Pl. XIb)—spreading over the whole width of the page to catch the reader’s eye—with the gold letters (gīlā Salāma bin Jandal) at the beginning of the manuscript (fol. 2v) (Pl. XIa).

While MS. Bagdat 125 cannot be accepted as a work of Ibn al-Bawwāb it is nevertheless an authentic eleventh-century manuscript, written and illuminated in all probability at Nishāpūr not later than 456/1063, and one of the finest examples of early Islamic manuscript illumination in existence.

The second manuscript attributed to Ibn al-Bawwāb is yet another copy of the dīwān of Salāma bin Jandal contained in MS. 2015 of the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (previously Evkaf Museum No. 1615). The volume consists of a total of 69 folios, measuring 38.5 x 28.0 cm., and contains three works written on different kinds of paper.

(a) Foll. 1-22, on white glossy paper, contain (i) kitāb būzugh al-hilāl fi-l-khīsāl al-mujiba aẓ-ẓalāl and (ii) kitāb muṣla’ al-badrayfī man yu’tā aṣrāyn, both compositions of the polygrapher Jalāl ad-dīn as-Suyūtī (849-911/1445-1505). On fol. 1r. is a sarlauh with a dedication to the Mamlūk sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy (873-901/1468-95). The colophon on fol. 22r. states that the manuscript was written by a Mamlūk Mughulbay ibn Birdibek of the Mamlūks of the Jaušan.

(b) The second work in the volume, foll. 23-35, is written on brown paper by a scribe who gives his name (fol. 35v.) as Yusufshāh al-Herevī and claims to have used the style of the ‘Sultan of Calligraphers’, Yaqūt. It contains the aphorisms of ‘Alī.

(c) The last part, foll. 37-69 on stout, light-cream coloured, highly polished paper, contains the dīwān of Salāma bin Jandal. It begins on fol. 37r. with the first verse.

The introduction and title-page are missing. An ornate and prominently displayed colophon concludes the text (fol. 69r.) (Pl. XIIb):

 Kawāba bi-‘Alī ibn Hil(a)l, in the month of Ramadān of the year 408 (1017), giving praise to God for His benefactions; praying upon His prophet Muḥammad and his family.

It will be noted at once that the wording of the colophon, and its division into two

1 Cf. C. Brockelmann, GAL, ii, p. 147, Supplement, ii, p. 182 (35).
The paper of TIE MS. 2015, its script, the illuminations in the text, in the colophon and on the verso of the last leaf (Pl. XII a, b) will not allow us to accept it as a work of Ibn al-Bawwab or as an eleventh-century manuscript. There is little doubt, however, that the manuscript was held in high esteem, and was probably considered genuine, at a comparatively early date. On the verso of fol. 69 (Pl. XIIb) there are the signatures of four readers carefully aligned in a manner which denotes the respect in which the manuscript was held. They read from left to right:

2. Ibrahim ibn Duqmaq (died in 819/1416-7).
3. Muhammad ibn Ahmad ash-Shirimsahi—779 (1367).

The first of these signatories is probably Taql ad-dīn 'Abd al-Wahhab bin 'Abdallah al-Qibṭī al-Miṣrī who died in 819/1416. The second is the well-known amir and historian Ibrahim ibn Duqmaq who died in the same year. And, indeed, his signature corresponds to that found on his autograph biographical dictionary *tarjumān az-zamān fi tarājim al-dīn* in the Topkapu Sarayi library (Ahmet III, 2927). The third and fourth readers are unknown to me.

The terminus ante quem of this part of TIE MS. 2015 is that of the oldest signature, 769/1367. The style of the large pointed palmettes executed in bright blues, gold, and black, the eclectic ornaments on the hatched ground of the colophon, the brightly coloured (red, green, and orange) flowers on black ground (Pl. XIIb) which decorate the roundel on the verso of the last leaf (Pl. XIIb)—are all typical of the illuminations of the mid-fourteenth century. The manuscript and its colophon cannot, therefore, be much older than the earliest reader’s signature, 769/1367.

It is obviously more than a coincidence that the layout of the text of the *diwan* of Salāmā bin Jandal should be almost identical in both manuscripts and that both should bear colophons dated to the month of Ramaḍān 408/1017. A close comparison of the two colophons (Pl. XIb, XIia) yields some interesting results. The ya of fi in both manuscripts is bent under. There is a ligature between rā of shahr and rā of Ramaḍān in Bağdat 125 which was not ‘understood’ by the scribe of TIE, 2015. The alif māksūra of ala is completely lost in the side stroke of lām. The ‘eyes’ of the letters ha, fa, ‘ayn, mim, and saw are blackened in both colophons.

It is perhaps permissible to speculate on the process of events. The TKS MS. Bağdat 125 was written not earlier than 445/1053 and not later than 456/1064. A colophon was added to it at an unknown date but probably not later than the middle of the fourteenth century, making it appear to be a work of Ibn al-Bawwāb written in 408/1017. This manuscript may have served as model for the scribe of MS. TIE 2015 who, perhaps, believed it to be a genuine work of the great calligrapher and who

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copied it, colophon and all, with only slight alterations. This new copy seems, in turn, to have been accepted as genuine as early as 769/1367. It is also possible that both the TKS and the TIE MSS. were copied from an authentic MS. of Ibn al-Bawwab dated 408/1017.

The third manuscript allegedly written by Ibn al-Bawwab is a small Qur'an which belongs to the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (No. 449 = Evkaf No. 1916). It is written on buff paper and consists of 286 folios measuring 17.1 x 12.5 cm. The written surface occupies 13.5 x 9.3 cm. and there are 23 lines to each page. Full-page illuminations appear at the beginning and at the end of the manuscript. There is an interlaced lattice ornament (white on gold ground) on the opening page (Pl. XIVb). In the geometrical compartments formed by it are palmettes (gold, on blue- and sepia-tinted gilt grounds). Mosaic patterns, made up of minute *tesserae* (red, green, brown, blue, and gold), reminiscent of the decoration of certain frontispieces of tenth-century parchment Qur'ans, are also used as filling. Three roundels enclosing the word *allah* are disposed in hexagonal stars along the vertical axis of the ornament. In the four corners of the broad frame are squares formed by the repetition of the words *al-mulk lillah*, ‘The Kingdom is God’s’. In the centre of the squares are the words *rasūl allah*, ‘The messenger of God’. The sides of the frame are formed by gold interlaced strands which enclose small diaper panels containing eulogies and some of ‘The Beautiful Names of Allah’.

The ornament which fills the last page (fol. 286v.) (Pl. XIVc) is treated in a similar manner. In the centre of the interlaced pattern is a roundel enclosing one word: *'amal, opus*. This suggests that it was originally followed by another illuminated page which contained the name of the illuminator. The main features of the design are four composite palmettes on blue grounds. The squares in the corners are made up of the words *al-mulk lillah*, ‘The Kingdom is God’s, and the word *Muhammad* repeated diagonally. The interlaced frames have small insets with the word *lillah* on blue ground and are reminiscent of certain gem-studded frames of Byzantine manuscripts.

The remaining illuminations in this Qur’an, the *sūra* palmettes, the verse-marks and *sajdas*, are executed in the same style and colour scheme.

The colophon on fol. 286v. (Pl. XIVd), which has clearly been tampered with, reads:

كتَبَهُ ابِنُ القَسمِ عِلْيُ بنِ هِلَالِ البِغْدَادِيِّ بَغْدَادَ دَارَ الرَّسُولِ الَّذِيْنِ فِي نَهْرِ الْمِصْرِ قَرْنِ حَتِّی وَأَلِفَ مَايَةَ غَفَرْتُ مَعَهُ وَلَوْلَدَهُ وَبَعْضِ أَمَّهُ مُحَمَّدَ صلى الله عليه وَآيَاتُهُ وَأَصِبَبَ وَلَمْ يَكْبِرُ

‘Has written it Abū-l-Q(ā)sim ‘Alī ibn Hilāl al-Baghdādi Baghdadī (sic) Dār as-Sal(ā)m in the months of the year 401 (1010). May God forgive him and his parents

1 This manuscript which previously belonged to the Laleli Library bears seals of a wafq by Selim III dated 1217/1802. This is the manuscript mistakenly connected with Selim 1 by Cl. Huart, op cit., p. 80, n. 1, also idem., ‘Ibn al-Bawwāb’ in *EL*, ii, p. 391.

2 This formula though not specifically Shi’ite was greatly favoured by the Fāṭimid. This may have some connexion with the fact that *al-mulk lillah* was said to have been the motto on *Allī’s* seal, cf. Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Marzūq, *az-zakhrafa al-mansūja fi-l-aqmisha al-fātimiya*, Cairo, 1943, pp. 104-5.

3 Cf. e.g. J. Ebersolt, *La Miniature byzantine*, Paris, 1926, pl. xxiii.
and all the community of Muhammad. May God bless him (Muḥammad), his family, and companions and greet them.’

It is not difficult to eliminate the words which have been inserted in the otherwise genuine colophon, after part of it had been scratched. The remaining authentic part reads:

‘Has written it Abū-l-Q(ā)sīm ‘A (or ‘U). . . . In the months of the year . . . (fo)r hundred’, &c.

The last two letters of the word arba‘ are part of the original text and leave no doubt that the manuscript was written in the fifth Islamic century. There is room for two words after sanat to indicate the units and decimals.

The person who ‘amended’ this colophon has shown little ingenuity. His mistakes are many. In the first place Ibn al-Bawwāb’s kunya was Abū-l-Ḥasan and not Abū-l-Qāsim. The latter was the kunya of the actual writer of the manuscript whose name—like that of ‘All ibn Hilāl—began with the letter ‘ayn. Another error of the clumsy forger was to write Hilāl in scriptio plena instead of Hilāl as in the Chester Beatty Qur’ān and in the two pseudo-Ibn al-Bawwāb manuscripts containing the ḍawān of Salām b. Jandal. This is particularly incongruous as the kunya Abū-l-Q(ā)sīm is written in scriptio defectiva. Over the word salām in dār as-salām (written ‘correctly’ without alif) the forger forgot to efface a damma vowel which belonged to a word which he had erased. Baghdād after Dār as-Salām is redundant; the preposition fī has been carelessly omitted, and the tail of the mim is written over the hatched background.

Nevertheless this clumsy forgery and the unconvincing attempt to attribute the manuscript to Ibn al-Bawwāb, the Qur’ān, TIE 449, remains a rare and valuable manuscript. It belongs to a small group of early-eleventh-century Qur’āns of which only two others are known: MS. Add. 7214 in the British Museum and MS. K. 16(1) in the Chester Beatty Library.

Both these manuscripts have full-page illuminations made up mainly of interlaced gilt lattice designs with the repetition of the words allāh and lillāh (Pl. XIIIa–b, XIVc–f). MS. BM. Add. 7214, of which some sample pages were first reproduced by R. Ettinghausen,1 was written according to its colophon (Pl. XIIIb) by Abū-l-Q(ā)sīm Sa‘d ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘All ibn Ibr(ā)hīm ibn S(ā)lih ibn ʿAlī al-Tauhāl in Jumāda I 427/ March 1036.

The illuminator, who is not identical with the copyist, has left a discreet signature in the second pair of opening pages, fol. 2v–3v (Pl. XIIIa):2


2 This inscription was overlooked by R. Ettinghausen, op. cit. iii, p. 1946, who believed the illuminator to be identical with the scribe.
IBN AL-BAWWĀB

'In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate, has made the illumination (tadhīb) of this complete (Qurʾān) Abu Mansūr, Najī (?) ibn 'Abdallāh. May God forgive him and the whole people of Muḥammad, may God bless Muḥammad and his family and companions and his progeny (?) all together.'

The third manuscript belonging to this group of Qurʾāns has not been published so far. It is MS. K. 16(1) of the Chester Beatty Collection (Pl. XIIIc-f). This is a miniature volume of 175 folios measuring 9.5 × 7.5 cm. The written surface occupies only 7.2 × 5.2 cm. and there are 25 lines of small script to each page. The colophon on fol. 175r. (Pl. XIIIc) is anonymous:

Has written it a sinning, self-indulging slave. He finished writing it in the district of . . . on Monday the 21st of Rajab of the year 428/1037. May God have mercy on whoever invokes His pardon for the writer, for his parents and for those who use it in prayer and for the whole community of Muḥammad, may God bless him and greet him.'

More tantalizing than the anonymity of this self-abasing scribe is the lacuna after the word nahiyah, 'district,' for it would have permitted an accurate localization of three important manuscripts, TIE 499, BM. Add. 2714 and Chester Beatty K. 16(1). Unfortunately the word has been scratched out or was accidentally effaced in the course of time and one word has been substituted in a different black ink. The word as it stands may be read Bayhaq, but this reading is by no means certain. Even if we were to accept this reading, however, it would not be possible to affirm that the word faithfully reproduces the missing place-name, traces of which may or may not have been visible to the person who made the amendment.

The first and last pages of manuscript K 16(1), which, unfortunately, is no longer in good condition, are decorated in the same style as the corresponding pages of TIE MS. 499. The opening page shows an interlaced pattern (white on gold ground) with the word Allāh in the centre. The broad frames have square insets with borders repeating the word illāh or allāh. On the last page fol. 175r. (Pl. XIVc) is a circle of illāhs which encloses a hexagonal star. In the centre of the hexagon are the words rasūl allāh 'The Messenger of God' divided in the same unconventional but decorative manner as in the square insets of the Istanbul MS. TIE 499 PL XIVb; the last letter of rasūl, lām, being placed in the second line.

From the foregoing descriptions it will be clear that the Qurʾān manuscript TIE 499 very closely resembles the dated manuscripts in the British Museum and in the Chester Beatty Library. It was probably also written in the third decade of the fifth Islamic century.

1 The reading of the illuminator's name—Nāji— is not certain; dhūriyyathī in the plural instead of the normal dhūriyyathī is unusual but no other reading is possible.
The most prominent feature in all three manuscripts is the large interlaced geometrical design. Contemporary interlaced designs of this kind are found in the rectangular panels executed in brick which were recently discovered behind the audience-chamber of the eleventh-century Ghaznavid residence at Lashkari Bazar, in Afghanistan. The colour-scheme favoured by the illuminators of the three Qur'ān manuscripts under discussion is also encountered in the manuscript of a secular work—probably executed in eastern Persia—the manuscript of Ibn Miskawaih's Ḫawīḍhān Khirāt in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Marsh 662), which is dated 439/1047.

The sombre palette and the closely knit interlaced designs with small crumpled palmettes which are so characteristic of the group of early-eleventh-century Qur'āns present a sharp contrast with the bright colour-schemes and the freely undulating foliated scrolls which have been noted in the ḍiwdān of Salāma bin Jandal (probably executed at Nīshāpūr) and in Ibn al-Bawwāb's Qur'ān (illuminated at Baghdad). Thus even judging on stylistic grounds alone, the TIE Qur'ān MS. 499 cannot be the work of Ibn al-Bawwāb.

There remain two other manuscripts which are falsely attributed to Ibn al-Bawwāb and which may be described briefly.

The first of these belongs to the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (No. 1024). This is a slender volume of 26 folios of thick salmon-coloured paper measuring 24.7 × 16.8 cm. (written surface 17.9 × 9.0 cm., 5 lines per page). The ink used for the thuluth letters is thick and brown and the vowels and diacritical signs are black. The manuscript purports to contain an epistle on bibliophily by al-Jāḥīz (d. 255/869) but is in fact a selection of passages from the kitāb al-hayawān by the same author.

The colophon on fol. 26r (Pl. XVb) reads:

‘Has written it 'Ali ibn Hilāl praising God, may He be exalted, for His benefactions and praying upon His Prophet Muhammad and his family and his progeny.'

The paper, ink, and script indicate that the manuscript is probably a Mamlūk forgery attributable to the fourteenth century. On the opening page are some owners' marks (Pl. XVa) the earliest of which is by the well-known historian Khalīl ibn Aybak as-Safadī (d. 764/1363). It is dated Damascus 761/1360. This constitutes a terminus ante quem. The manuscript itself is probably not much earlier.

The second blatant forgery is a fragmentary poetical collection of al-Ḥādira's poems.

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3 The text gives a somewhat abbreviated and garbled version of certain passages of the kitāb al-hayawān and corresponds to pp. 50 ff. in vol. i of the edition of 'Abd as-Salām Muhammad ibn Hārūn, Cairo, 1947.
4 For the life of this historian and Mamlūk state, official see G. Wiet, Les Biographies du Manhal Safi, p. 142, No. 199.
in the British Museum (MS. Add. 26, 126). The beginning of the manuscript is missing. The colophon on fol. 17v. (Pl. XVc) reads:

'Has written it 'All ibn Hil(a)l praising God for His benefactions and praying upon His Prophet Muhammad and his family and greeting them.'

The paper, script, and ink cannot be earlier than the fourteenth century. There is a reader's mark dated 973/1565.

1 Cf. Catalogus Codd. mss. qui in Musaeo Britannico asservantur, London, 1876-9, p. 1525.
IV

FROM the foregoing it will be clear that we possess only one manuscript from the hand of Ibn al-Bawwab: the Qur'an K. 16 in the Chester Beatty Library, written in Baghdad in 391/1000-1 and illuminated, in all probability, by the master himself.

The five other manuscripts falsely attributed to Ibn al-Bawwab fall into two categories: (a) genuine eleventh-century manuscripts to which false colophons were added at a later date (TKS, Bağdat 125 and TIE 490) and (b) complete fabrications in which colophons and texts are by the same hand and which cannot be earlier than the fourteenth century (TIE, 2015, TIE. 1024 and BM. Add. 26, 126).^1

The genuineness of the Chester Beatty manuscript is not in doubt. The format of the volume, the paper and ink correspond to what is known of manuscripts of similar age (see above, p. 11, note i). While there are no other examples of Ibn al-Bawwab's handwriting with which to compare that of this manuscript, it tallies with the descriptions given by Muslim writers. Ibn al-Bawwab's major achievement was to have perfected the khatt al-ḥarṣ introduced by Ibn Muqla. The script of the Chester Beatty Qur'an shows that it is derived from a strictly controlled and mathematically proportioned script. Ibn al-Bawwab is known to have favoured a calamus whose nib was cut perfectly straight and the thickness of his letters was even throughout. This is a dominant feature of the script in the Chester Beatty codex. The colophon is in the same script and ink as the Qur'ānic text and obviously by the same hand. The genuineness of the manuscript will be further confirmed by an analysis of its illuminations. The ornaments of the Chester Beatty Qur'ān are, as will be shown, in accord with what is known of Islamic manuscript illumination of the late tenth and early eleventh century.

Strict believers and purists did not approve of the addition of ornaments to the holy text and the development of Qur'ānic illumination was subject to a slow and gradual process. The earliest ornaments were rosettes inserted in the text for the division of groups of verses. Then came ornamental bands above the basmalahs of the sūras, but these bands included no lettering. In the ninth century A.D., there followed embellished sūra-headings with titles and these were accompanied by marginal palmettes, executed nearly always in gold, sepia, and blue. The importance given to marginal ornaments increased in the course of that century and, in addition to the sūra-palmettes, there appeared ornaments to mark the place of each fifth and tenth verse, sajdās and the various divisions of the Qur'ān into seven, thirty, and sixty parts (ajza').

Full-page ornaments which decorate the opening and closing pages of some Qur'ānic manuscripts were not introduced until the tenth century. Several fine examples of such fully illuminated pages have survived, sometimes torn from the manuscripts and scattered over many public and private collections.^2 These full-

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^1 It is not surprising to note that only very short texts were chosen for these forgeries.

page ornaments invariably consist of rectangles divided into a number of compartments and decorated with dots, interlaced designs and formal repetitive scrolls. They have much in common with contemporary bookbindings from which they may well have been derived.  

The course of development adopted by Qur'anic illuminations is remarkably similar to that observed in Christian manuscript illuminations. Late antiquity considered the decoration to be an enrichment of the book itself, an idea which could be encouraged in so far as it did not encroach upon the clarity of the text. The Middle Ages, on the other hand, regarded ornamentation as a medium for emphasizing the sacred text—clothing the word as it were in a precious garb in the same manner as a relic was encased in a casket of gold and precious stones. In Gospel illuminations, the ornamentation of canon-tables preceded that of full-page ornaments. The latter seem to have been greatly influenced—like the full-page ornaments of Qur'ans—by book bindings.  

The adoption of full-page ornaments by Muslim illuminators was long delayed by their reluctance to associate any extraneous matter with the Holy Book. The first relaxation of this rigid attitude took place in respect of verse- and sura-divisions which are primarily functional in scope. No such practical functions can be attributed to full-page ornaments and these were the last to gain acceptance.  

Later still there appeared illuminated verse-counts. I know of only one Kufic Qur'an on parchment which opens with a verse-count. This is an undated manuscript in the British Museum (Add. 11, 735) (Pl. XIIIc-d) in which S. Flury thought to recognize the only surviving Fatimid Qur'an. The script of this parchment Qur'an is strongly influenced by the so-called semi-Kufic, or east Persian Kufic with marked diagonal characteristics (cf. above, p. 3). It cannot consequently be earlier than the latter half of the tenth century. One leaf of the manuscript is missing at the beginning and several at the end. Only half the verse-count is preserved and appears in a square inset in the centre of a full-page ornament (Pl. XIIId). The next manuscript, in chronological order, which begins with a verse-count is the earliest known paper Qur'an of which two volumes have survived. This manuscript is written in a bold variety of 'diagonal' Kufic script and its sura-headings, marginal palmettes, and full-page ornaments are very similar in style and colour-scheme to those of the British Museum parchment Qur'an. The verse-count in this manuscript, written by 'Ali ibn National Library; A. Grohmann, 'Beiträge zur Früh-islamischen Kunstgeschichte', Archiv Orientální, i, Prag, 1929, pl. vi; J. von Karabacek, Führer durch die Ausstellung Papyrus Rainer, Vienna, 1894, pp. 26, 244 who mistakenly dates the full-page ornaments to the ninth century. The polychrome and more complex frontispiece reproduced by F. R. Martin, op. cit. ii, pl. 235 and palmettes which accompany the sura-headings in the same Qur'an (ibid. pl. 236) belong to a Qur'an (now in the Chester Beatty Library, No. K. 9) which is part of a manuscript in the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi. This manuscript is almost certainly of Spanish or North African origin and not earlier than the eleventh century. Both the use of Kufic script and of parchment for Qur'an manuscripts continued in the western part of the Muslim world, and only there, well into the fourteenth century.  

1 Cf. G. Marçais and L. Poinssot, op. cit. i, p. 143, fig. 28.  
Shadhan ar-Razi al-Bayyi' in 361/972, appears in the volume which belongs to the Chester Beatty Library (K. 17/1). The whole text of the verse-count is preserved and is distributed over two circular insets placed in the centres of full-page ornaments. The colours used in both manuscripts are the traditional three: gold, sepia, and blue.

Ibn al-Bawwab's Qur'an, written and illuminated a third of a century after these two manuscripts, takes us a step further. The verse-count which in the late tenth-century manuscripts occupied only limited space, is spread here over two pairs of beautifully illuminated pages which are decorated with a variety of freely drawn and lively ornaments (Pls. I-II). As in the Kufic Qur'an in the British Museum (which can be dated by analogy with the earliest paper Qur'an to c. A.D. 950), the verse-count is separated from the text of the Holy Book by full-page ornaments without script (cf. Pl. XIIIa' and Pl. III).

A striking new feature in Ibn al-Bawwab's Qur'an is the arrangement of the latter half of the verse-count in a series of octagonal compartments (Pl. II). An almost identical arrangement, but with circular inscribed medallions taking the place of octagons, is encountered also in tenth- and early-eleventh-century Byzantine manuscripts. This arrangement has its parallels earlier still in Syriac manuscripts and is reflected, in the West, in Insular art. A verse-count distributed over eighteen roundels is partly preserved in the east Persian Qur'an in the British Museum (Add. 7214) dated 427/1036 and similar arrangements persist well into the thirteenth century. The increased allocation of space to the verse-count—which is neither functional nor purely ornamental—reflects the greater freedom acquired by Qur'an illuminators with the turn of the millennium.

Yet another innovation, first found in the work of Ibn al-Bawwab, is the extension of the palette to include a number of new colours (brown, green, crimson, and white), together with the traditional pigments (gold, sepia, and blue). Significantly, these new tints appear only in the verse-count tables, which were not confined to rigid traditional patterns, and in the full-page decorations which were organized into well-balanced and interrelated compositions and were no longer limited to linear ornaments.

It may well be that Ibn al-Bawwab was as much of an innovator in the field of manuscript illumination as he was in that of calligraphy. The introduction, about the year A.D. 1000, of multiple, polychrome, full-page illuminations with expanded verse-counts, seems to have gained rapid acceptance. All the known Qur'ans of the first half of the eleventh century are provided with multiple full-page illuminations, some of which are inscribed. These are, in chronological order: (i) a Qur'an dedicated to 'Ali ibn Muḥammad, the Şulaibid ruler of the Yemen, which is preserved in the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi in İstanbul (TIE No. 431) (Pl. XVI, a–d). The manuscript is dated 417/1026, but the full-page decorations which precede the text contain a reference

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4 Ibid., pl. 933, a Qur'an dated 697-22/1210-25.
5 For other reproductions from this Qur'an see A. Sakiasian, La Miniature persane du XIIe au XVIIe siècle, Brussels, 1929, pl. xiv, 16-17; idem in Ars Islamica, vi, 1939, figs. 7-9 and idem, Pages d'art arménien, Paris, 1940, figs. 41-43.
to the Fatimid al-Mustansir (who did not succeed to the caliphate until 427/1036) and a mention of the Sulayhid's title *umdat al-khilafa* (support of the caliphate). The founder of the Sulayhid dynasty, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, however, did not seize power in the Yemen on behalf of the Isma'ili movement until 429/1038 and the title of *umdat al-khilafa* was not bestowed on him by his Fatimid master, al-Mustansir, until 456/1061. It seems, therefore, that the opening pages of this manuscript were added in or after 1061 to a manuscript written in 1026.

The remaining eleventh-century Qur’ans have already been described (above, pp. 24-6); they are: (2) the British Museum manuscript dated 427/1036 (Add. 7214) (Pl. XIIIa–b), (3) the Chester Beatty manuscript dated 428/1037 (K. 16/1) (Pl. XIVc–f) and (4) the Istanbul manuscript of 4../10.. (TIE 499) (Pl. XIVa, b and g). The last two codices have lost some leaves but were originally adorned with more than one set of full-page decorations.

The differences in the choice of designs and colour-schemes in these Qur’ans manuscripts seem to be due to differences in regional tastes. Ibn al-Bawwab’s Qur’an was written in Baghdad and is the only manuscript for which the geographical attribution is absolutely certain. The Sulayhid Qur’an was probably written in the Yemen. The remaining three codices constitute, as has been shown above (p. 27), a compact group and probably originated in eastern Persia.

The refined and exquisitely balanced illuminations of Ibn al-Bawwab’s Qur’an remain unequalled and in a class apart, yet they show some common features with the much cruder ornaments of the Sulayhid Qur’an. In both manuscripts we find designs with intersecting circles, multicoloured tile-patterns made up of minute hexagonal and ‘Y’-shaped elements, as well as gold inscriptions on vividly coloured blue grounds (cf. Pls. III–IV and Pl. XVla–b). In both manuscripts we encounter the same types of palmettes—though those of the Sulayhid Qur’an are less shapely, simpler, and flatter, and betray their provincial origin. Furthermore, in both the Baghdadi and the Yemeni manuscripts we observe the use of white dots (arranged in small triangles) for the lightening of dark surfaces and faint background patterns which cover whole pages of script and leave cloud-shaped contours round the letters (cf. Pl. VIIb and Pl. XVlc).

It is not surprising that such affinities should exist between the illuminations executed in Baghdad and those which adorn the Qur’an from the Yemen. It seems indeed likely, as the studies of R. Ettinghausen and U. Monneret de Villard have shown, that Fatimid painting was strongly influenced by the art of Iraq. Such an influence would naturally be reflected in the provincial art of the Sulayhids of the

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1 Cf. e.g. H. A. R. Gibb and P. Kraus, ‘al-Mustansir billah’ in Enc. Islam, iii, pp. 768 ff.
4 This device is, as far as my knowledge goes, completely absent from Kufic parchment Qur’ans. For a similar use of triangles of dots in post-Sasanian metal work, cf. the silver dishes reproduced in K. Erdmann, Die Kunst Iran's zur Zeit der Sasaniden, Berlin, 1943, pl. 66–69, which are regarded as Islamic copies of Sasanian vessels (ibid. pp. 97 f.).
Yemen who were tributaries of the Egyptian dynasty and who recognized the temporal and spiritual sovereignty of the Fatimid caliphs.

As might be expected, there are fewer resemblances between the illuminations of Ibn al-Bawwâb's Qur'ân and those of the east Persian group of manuscripts. The latter appear to be more conservative in the choice of designs and colour-schemes. The most conspicuous features of their full-page illuminations are the closely knit lattice designs (Pl. XIIIa and Pl. XIVa–d) which are found neither in the manuscript from Baghdad nor in that from the Yemen. The sūra-headings of the Qur'âns in the east Persian group are all written in Kufic letters but they are occasionally provided with blue backgrounds dotted with white dots. The palmettes of the winding scrolls are more formal and monotonous and the colour-scheme is severer and more restricted.

On the other hand, certain affinities can be noted between the illuminations of Ibn al-Bawwâb's Qur'ân and those of the dīwān of Salâma ibn Jandal in the Topkapu Sarayi collection, which were probably executed at Nishâpur some sixty years later (see above, pp. 18–22). It must be borne in mind, however, that the latter manuscript contains a secular work and the former the Holy Revelations of Islam. The illuminator of the dīwān doubtless enjoyed more freedom in the choice of his decorative themes than was given to Ibn al-Bawwâb, whose work was governed by a long-standing and rather rigid tradition. Similarities between the two manuscripts are, therefore, largely confined to the colour-scheme and to certain decorative motives. In both the dīwān and the Qur'ân we find bands decorated with brown palmette scrolls on black grounds—an unusual and strikingly effective decorative feature. This combination of colours occurs in the central, horizontal sections of the verse-count of the Qur'ân (Pl. I a–b) and in the oblong pedestal-shaped ornament on the title-page of the dīwān (Pl. Xb). Both manuscripts also show octagonal compartments inscribed with cursive script on grounds decorated with individually treated floral sprays. A comparison of these decorative devices selected from both manuscripts (after omission of the letters) will clearly demonstrate their identity (cf. Figs. 6a–b taken from Pl. IIa with Fig. 6c taken from Pl. Xb).

Furthermore, in both manuscripts we find varieties of elongated palmettes with more than the five basic petals. The uppermost petals are drawn out and curl sharply at the tips (cf. e.g. the first sūra-heading on Pl. VIa and the pedestal-shaped panel on Pl. Xb). Similarly shaped palmettes are also found on the painted niches from Sabz Pūshān near Nishâpur1 which are slightly earlier than the work of Ibn al-Bawwâb. In the decorative wall-paintings of another monument at Nishâpur, the Tepeh Madrasah, we may observe the use of octagonal compartments aligned in rows2 as well.

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as designs with intersecting circles, carpet patterns, and foliage whose edges are emphasized by lighter colouring.¹

Such affinities between the illuminations executed at Baghdad and the wall paintings and illuminations from Nishāpūr reflect the very close relations which existed between the Abbasid capital and the province of Khurāsān in which Nishāpūr is situated.

Further parallels for the elongated palmettes with multiple petals and inturned tips can be seen in the illuminated pages of a Hebrew Bible dated A.D. 1010 (written in Egypt during the Fatimid period), in the eleventh-century painted tie-beams of the Great Mosque of Qayruwan² and also, to some extent, in the painted tie-beams of the Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem which date to the same century.³ The typical scroll-palmettes are also found on the cenotaph of Fatima bint Ahmad in Damascus which bears the date 439/1048.⁴

It is interesting to note that Ibn al-Bawwāb used this type of elongated palmette very sparingly in the marginal sūra-ornaments of his Qurʾān and then only as secondary elements in the decoration of traditionally shaped leaves (cf. Pl. IX, n). This is explained by the historical development of Qurʾānic illumination as outlined above (pp. 20 ff). Long before full-page decorations were introduced there existed a well-established set of marginal ornaments. Some of the earliest extant examples are fashioned like trees, but the vast majority are shaped like large fleurons. The basic designs underlying these ornaments are the Sasanian lotus-palmette and the Sasanian winged palmette, which both enjoyed almost universal popularity over a period of several centuries.⁵ In the execution of these marginal ornaments Ibn al-Bawwāb closely followed traditional patterns and used only the three-colour scheme (gold, sepia, and blue). He made use of the stock elements: lotus flowers, pearl strings, five-petalled palmettes, wings, ‘wicker-work’ leaves and ‘scaled’ leaves all of which are found in parchment Qurʾāns of the ninth and tenth centuries. But he succeeded in enlivening even these stereotyped ornaments by introducing some new features. Mention has already been made of the occasional use of elongated multi-petalled palmettes as subsidiary elements. Ibn al Bawwāb also coloured blue the spaces between the various parts of the sūra-ornaments and sprinkled them with white dots.

¹ Hauser and Wilkinson, xxxvii, 1942, pp. 104–5, figs. 28–29.
In 31 out of 114 palmettes he used small rosettes to join the leaves which form the ‘chalice’ or ‘wings’ of the sūra-ornaments (cf. e.g. Pl. IXa, b, h, I, g, s). To the best of my knowledge, neither the white dots nor the rosettes are found in any Qurʾān on parchment, and blue crowded grounds are encountered only in the paper Qurʾān dated A.D. 972 (ACB K. 17/1 and University Library, Istanbul, No. A 6778) and, in a rudimentary fashion, in the parchment Qurʾān of the British Museum, which comes very close to it in date and style (Add. 11,735) (cf. Pl. XIIIc–d). The small rosettes, similarly used at the base of palmette designs, are also found in the painted squinches from Nishapur.

Two features in the illuminations of Ibn al-Bawwāb’s Qurʾān are somewhat surprising at first sight: the winding scrolls in which leaves curl over the stems (thus creating the impression of depth) and the graduated tinting of certain palmettes. Both these features have been hitherto associated with much later stylistic developments. However, the ‘three-dimensional’ scrolls are found also in the diwān of Salāma ibn Jandal of c. 1060 and in the décor of the cenotaph of Fāṭima bint Ahmad in Damascus which is dated 439/1048. Ibn al-Bawwāb’s work merely precedes that monument by less than half a century.

The second apparently ‘precocious’ stylistic feature, the graduated tinting, is limited to certain elements. It is found only in the lotus flowers of the full-page decorations (Pls. II and IV), exceptionally, in some of the ‘non-traditional’ sūra-palmettes (e.g. Pl. IXa'), and in the verse-marks of the first two sūras (Pl. VIa–b). The unified tinting of the foliage and the highlighting of the contours is by far more frequent. Highlighted contours are already found in the wall-paintings from Nishapur which are somewhat earlier than Ibn al-Bawwāb’s Qurʾān. The highlighting of the contours must be regarded as the first step towards the application of graduated tints which appear, already fully developed, in the diwān of Salāma ibn Jandal (Pl. Xb). The ornaments of Ibn al-Bawwāb’s Qurʾān which is dated 391/1000–1 provide us, therefore, with the earliest examples of both ‘three dimensional’ scrolls and graduated tinting.

The largest single decorative elements in the Chester Beatty Qurʾān are the arabesques which occupy the central medallions on foll. 8v–9r. (Pl. IIIa–b) and the ‘palmette-tree’ designs on foll. 284v–285r. (Pl. IVa–b.)

The first pair of ornaments (Fig. 2) is painted crimson and has highlighted contours and stems. In the centres of the arabesques are cruciform flowers with double rings of four petals. From the centres emerge two straight stalks which culminate in lotus buds, one pointing upwards and the other down. Two pairs of volute-like scrolls also spring from the centres of the designs and coil in opposite directions. Similarly self-contained designs with large coils (but treated flatly and uniformly gilt) are to be seen in the Sulayhid Qurʾān (Pl. XVlc) and, outside the field of Islamic art, a parallel may be quoted from an Armenian manuscript (Cod. S. Lazzaro 1400) which is attributed to the eleventh century.1 The arabesques in Ibn al-Bawwāb’s Qurʾān (Fig. 2),

4 Cf. K. Weitzmann, Die armenische Buchmalerei des 10. und beginnenden 11. Jahrhunderts (Istanbuler Forschungen, Bd. 4), Bamberg, 1933, pl. xi, fig. 36.
the background scrolls (Fig. 1), and the floral sprays (Fig. 6 a–d) all form self-contained, closed units. They possess the ‘finality’ characteristic of the arabesque designs in the earlier stages of their development, a quality which tends to disappear in later centuries, as Islamic ornaments become more abstract, ‘infinite’, and asymmetrical.¹

The second large decorative element is a ‘palmette-tree’ executed in dark brown with paper-coloured contours. This design—the familiar ‘tree-of-life’ motive—occurs frequently in various media in Islamic art and seems to have enjoyed a renewal of popularity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Parallel designs—sometimes executed in the same dark-brown shade—are found in near-contemporary Persian silks.²

The foregoing analytical remarks will suffice to show that the illuminations of the Chester Beatty Qur’an, though unparalleled in beauty and quality of execution, are in line with what little is known of Islamic manuscript illumination in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.

In part, Ibn al-Bawwâb’s ornaments follow traditional patterns, with small but significant variations as is the case in the marginal sūra-ornaments (elongated palmettes, rosettes and coloured backgrounds). In other respects they amplify existing features and foreshadow the developments which were to take place in the eleventh century. These new features include expanded verse-counts (from small insets to four pages), vividly coloured full-page decorations, and the use of ‘three-dimensional’ scrolls and graduated tinting in some designs. Ibn al-Bawwâb blended these new and old elements with perfect taste and great restraint, thus providing a homogeneous setting for his superb calligraphy.

The Chester Beatty codex, written at Baghdad in 391/1000–1, is the earliest known Qur’an in naskhī script and the only surviving work of the great calligrapher and illuminator, ‘All ibn Hilāl, better known as Ibn al-Bawwâb. It is the only fully illuminated manuscript of the Buwayhid period which—judging by literary evidence—produced some of the most brilliant achievements of Islamic art.³ The manuscript is all the more important as no architectural remains and only a few textiles and precious-metal vessels of the Buwayhid period have survived.

² Cf. G. Wiet, Soieries persanes, pl. vi; a silk in the Textile Museum, Washington, reproduced in Ars Islamica, iv, 1937, fig. 16; a silk in the Read Collection reproduced in An Illustrated Souvenir of the Exhibition of Persian Art, London, 1931, pl. 38a, and A. C. Weibel, Two Thousand Years of Textiles, pl. 104.
PLATES
THE IBN AL-BAWWAB QUR'AN

folio 28 verso
MS. ADD. 7214

MS. ADD. 11, 735

QUR'ANS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM