
The Hamadan Qur'an of Öljaytü:

Vestiges of a Binding Tradition



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Abstract

Ilkhanid rule (1256–1353) heralded a period when the arts of the book flourished, with the production of both religious and secular texts. This article examines the binding of the Hamadan Qur'an (Dar al-Kutub, Cairo, Rasid 72), which was commissioned for the Ilkhanid Sultan Öljaytü (1303–1316) and completed in 1313. The Qur'an, composed of 30 parts, has remained intact in the Dar al-Kutub in Cairo since its arrival in Egypt sometime in the 1320s. The decoration of the binding is representative of the geometrical designs that formed part of the Persian binders' repertoire before being entirely discarded by the middle of the fourteenth century in favour of lobed and ogival medallions with pendants derived from cloud-collar profiles.¹

Keywords: Bookbinding; Ilkhanid; Öljaytü; geometrical; Mamluk

The Hamadan Qur'an copied for the Ilkhanid Sultan Öljaytü (1304–1316) in the Dar al-Kutub in Cairo is well-known for its exquisite illumination distinguished by a distinct palette of blue, gold, black, and white; masterful calligraphy; and large burnished sheets of fine paper (Figure 1).²

The illumination of the Hamadan Qur'an has been discussed in several publications, most extensively by David James in his seminal work on the illumination of Qur'ans of the Bahri Mamluk period (1250–1382). However, its bindings have not received the same attention.³ Ettinghausen published a rubbing of the roundel from the flap of one of the volumes of the Hamadan Qur'an in 1954, but since then the bindings of the 30 volumes (*juz'*, singular;

¹The term 'cloud-collar' is used to refer to the distinctive four-lobed profile borrowed from a term used to describe textile collars on Chinese robes from the Yuan period.

²Dar al-Kutub (DAK), Cairo, Rasid 72, 56 x 41 cm.

³A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman, *Survey of Persian Art*, Vol. 3, Pl. 934–5 (Oxford, 1938); R. Ettinghausen, "On the covers of the Morgan *Manafi'* manuscript and other early Persian bookbindings", in *Studies in the Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Green*, (ed.) D. Miner (Princeton, 1954), pp. 459–473; B. Gray, "The monumental Qur'ans of the Ilkhanid and Mamluk ateliers of the first quarter of the fourteenth century", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* LIX (1985), pp. 135–146; D. James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks* (London, 1988), Cat. 45, pp. 111–126; D. James, *Master Scribes, Qur'ans of the 10th to the 14th Centuries* (London, 1992), pp. 98–100.

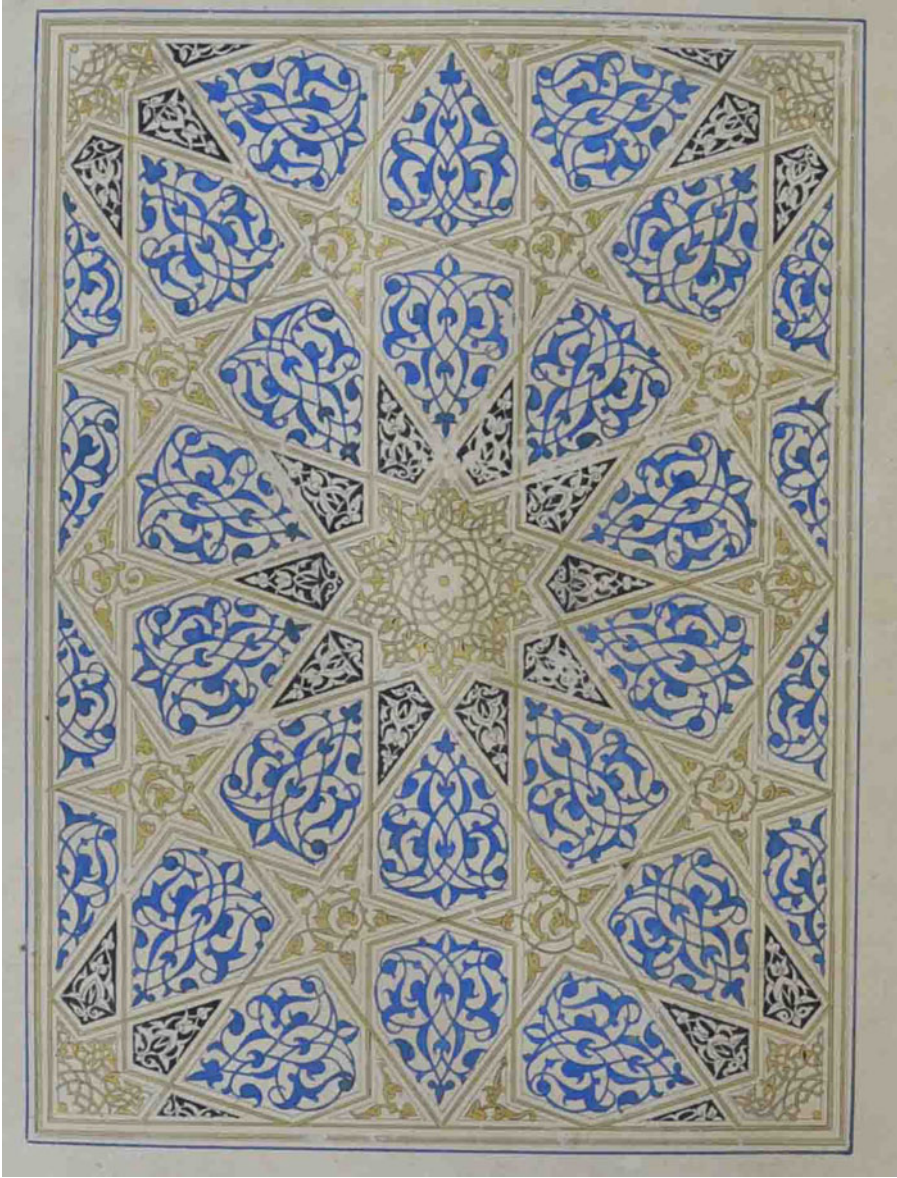


Figure 1. DAK Rasid 72, *Juz' 2*, fol. 2a.

ajzā, plural) of this remarkable Qur'an, along with the bindings of other Ilkhanid manuscripts, have attracted little scholarly attention.⁴ This article aims to discuss the bindings of this manuscript and explore its relationship with contemporary Mamluk and Ilkhanid examples.

⁴Ettinghausen, "On the covers of the Morgan *Manafi'* manuscript", fig. 346; Z. Tanındı, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'nde Ortaçağ İslam Ciltleri", *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Yıllık 4* (Istanbul, 1990), pp. 102–149;

The Hamadan Qur'an is generally associated with three other Qur'an manuscripts that form an important group of Ilkhanid imperial commissions. The first is known as the 'Anonymous Baghdad Qur'an' because there is no commissioning certificate indicating the identity of the patron. David James speculated that it may have been commissioned by the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), or for the Ilkhanid sultan Ghazan Khan (1271–1304).⁵ It was copied by Ahmed ibn Al-Suhrawardi al-Bakri and illuminated by Ibn Aybak. Al-Suhrawardi was one of the pupils of Yaqut al-Mustasimi (d. 1298), responsible for categorising the six scripts and, according to Qadi Ahmed, the seventeenth-century chronicler of painters, for most of the texts inscribed on the buildings of Baghdad, although none have survived.⁶

The second, now known as the Baghdad Qur'an, was copied in Baghdad between 1306–1311⁷ for Öljaytü's funerary complex in his new capital at Sultaniyya, begun in 1305 and completed in 1314.⁸ The scribe is generally believed to be Ahmed ibn al-Suhrawardi al-Bakri as he only signs himself as 'the poor slave in need of God's mercy', and the illuminator was Ibn Aybak, who signed his name in *Juz'* 7.⁹ The third was copied in Mosul, commissioned in 1306, and completed in 1311 for Öljaytü. The colophons at the end of each volume provide the name of the scribe 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Zayd Al-Husayni who was most probably also the illuminator. However, there is no indication in the manuscript that this was destined for the mausoleum at Sultaniyya.¹⁰

These manuscripts were the productions of workshops that were initially founded during the reign of Öljaytü's brother Ghazan Khan at Baghdad and Tabriz; later Öljaytü established others at Sultaniyya, Hamadan, and Yazd.¹¹ However, many of the 30 volumes of the 'Anonymous Baghdad', Baghdad, and Mosul Qur'ans are now dispersed between collections in Iran, London, New York, Istanbul, Dresden, and Copenhagen, often with folios bound together haphazardly and placed within new bindings, having suffered troubled existences. Given that

A. Ohta, "The binding of the Sultan Uljaytu Qur'an copied in Hamadan and its relationship to other bindings of the Mamluk and Ilkhanid periods", in *Uluslarasi Cilt Sanati Bulusmasi* (Istanbul, 2012), pp. 67–74; S. Blair, "The Ilkhanid Qur'an: an example from Maragha", *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 6 (2015), pp. 174–195; N. Ben Azzoune, *Aux origines du classicisme, Calligraphes et bibliophiles au temps des dynasties mongoles (Les Ilkhanides et les Djalayirides 656–814/1258–1411)* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 488–524.

⁵James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 39, pp. 78–95.

⁶J. Bloom, "Paper: the transformative medium in Ilkhanid Art", *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, (ed.) L. Komaroff (Leiden, 2013), p. 290; Qadi Ahmed, *Calligraphers and Painters. A Treatise by Qādī Aḥmad, Son of Mīr Munshī*, (trans.) V. Minorsky (Washington, 1959), p. 60.

⁷James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 40; S. Blair, "Sultan Öljeitü's Baghdad Qur'an: A Life Story" (forthcoming). I would like to thank Sheila Blair for sending me this text which formed a section of her paper given at the symposium held at the Freer and Sackler Galleries in December 2016, as part of the exhibition entitled "The Art of the Qur'an: Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts".

⁸According to the Mamluk historian al-Yusufi, the building involved 5,000 stonecutters and the dome of the mausoleum was 25 m wide and 50 m high; it has often been commented that the monumentality reflected in his patronage of architecture is also seen in the Qur'ans that he commissioned. D. P. Little, "The founding of Sulṭāniyya, a Mamlūk version", *Iran* 16 (1978), p. 178; S. Blair, "The Mongol capital of Sulṭāniyya 'The Imperial'", *Iran* 24 (1986), pp. 139–151; B. O'Kane, "Monumentality in Mongol and Mamluk art and architecture", *Art History* (December 1996), pp. 499–522.

⁹S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 245–251.

¹⁰James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 40.

¹¹S. Blair, "Calligraphers, illuminators and painters in the Ilkhanid Scriptorium", in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, (ed.) L. Komaroff (Leiden, 2006), pp. 167–182.

the Hamadan Qur'an remains complete and relatively unscathed, it offers a unique insight into understanding aspects of manuscript production during the Ilkhanid period.¹²

The Hamadan Qur'an was copied in *rayhan*, a smaller version of the *muḥaqqaq* script which was used for the other imperial commissions, in black, gold, and blue ink in Jumādā I 713/September 1313 by ʿAbdallāh bin Muḥammad bin Mahmūd al-Hamadhānī. We know little of Hamadhani other than that he must have been employed in the scriptorium that had been established by Rashid al-Din, as the colophon states that he worked in the Dār al-Khayrāt al-Rashīdiyya in Hamadan (Figure 2).

Translation of the colophon:

*This Qur'an was written and illuminated in conformity with the one who propagandises for his kingdom from the bottom of his heart, with complete sincerity who aspires for the indulgence of the Eternal, the meanest of slaves, ʿAbdallāh bin Muḥammad bin Maḥmūd al-Ḥamadhānī, may God forgive him, in Jumādā I 713 of the Hijrah of the Prophet, blessings be upon him, in Dār al-Khayrāt al-Rashīdiyya in Hamadan, may God protect it from harm.*¹³

Another Qur'an of 30 parts, now in the King ʿAbdul Aziz Library in Medina, is also signed by him with a completion date of 1310 and has the same style of illumination, with frontispieces in various geometrical designs in the same palette of blue, gold, and black at the beginning of each *juzʿ*.¹⁴

Nothing is known of the history of the manuscript between its date of completion in 1313 and its subsequent arrival in Cairo when it was bequeathed in 1326 to the newly founded *khānqāh* of Amir Sayf al-Din Baktamur who was a brother-in-law of Sultan Nasir Muhammad (first reign 1293–1294, second reign 1299–1309, third reign 1310–1314) and the *atābak al-jaysh* (Commander-in-Chief) (Figure 3).¹⁵

On that occasion, a *waqf* (endowment) inscription was added in the name of Amir Sayf al-Din Baktamur to all the volumes (Figure 3), and the name of Sultan Al-Nasir Muhammad replaced that of Öljaytū in the original certificate of commissioning, suggesting that the manuscript was first in possession of the Sultan and then presented to his son-in-law, Sayf al-Din Baktamur, as a gift on the foundation of his *khānqāh*.

Michael Rogers suggested that it was taken out of Iran during the negotiations between the Ilkhanids and Mamluks before 1326, and David James put forward that it might have been sent as a gift from the Ilkhanid Sultan Abu Saʿid (1305–1335) to the Mamluk Sultan in the course of the peace negotiations of 1324.¹⁶ We know, however, that it must have been valued and admired in Cairo as Ibn Iyas records its removal to the complex of Sultan Al-Ghuri (r. 1501–1516) on its completion in late 1504 along with sacred relics of the

¹²See N. Ben Azzouna and P. Roger-Puyo, "The question of manuscript production workshops in Iran according to Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh al-Ḥamadhānī's Majmūʿa Rashīdiyya", *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 7.2 (2016), pp. 153–191.

¹³James translated 'Dār al-Khayrāt' as the 'Abode of Orthodoxy', but, as Sheila Blair points out, this must refer to the scriptorium set up by Rashid al-Din. See Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, pp. 173–174.

¹⁴King ʿAbdul Aziz Library, Medina, Classification 38/39. I would like to thank Khaled Yossef for drawing my attention to this manuscript.

¹⁵James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, pp. 125–126. The Amir Baktamur met an untimely end as he was killed with his son in 731/1331 on his way to Mecca on the orders of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad who was under the impression that Baktamur intended to poison him. He was later buried with his son in the *khānqāh* he founded.

¹⁶J. M. Rogers, "Evidence for Mongol-Mamluke relations 1260–1360", in *Colloque Internationale sur l'Histoire du Caire* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1973), pp. 385–404; James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, p. 26.



Figure 2. DAK Rasid 72, Juz' 30, fol. 42b.



Figure 3. DAK Rasid 72, Juz' 10, fol. 1b-2a.

Prophet and the Qur'an of Uthman. He also mentions in his account that Baktamur acquired the Qur'an for a thousand dinars, suggesting that Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad may have sold it to Baktamur.¹⁷ The volumes in the Dar al-Kutub record their entry into the Khedival Library, which later became the National Library of Egypt, on 3 April 1880.

Each of the volumes opens with two pages of illumination with a geometrical design in the cool, stark colours of cobalt blue, ultramarine, turquoise, white, and black (Figure 4). The panels appear as if they are floating on the page but the addition of the *waqf* to Baktamur's *khānqāh* inserted below the panel on the first page of each volume unsettles the intended effect. On some of the frontispieces, verses from the Qur'an or sayings are placed in the upper and lower panels while others are left plain (Figure 4). For example, the upper and lower panels of the opening page (fol. 1b) from *Juz' 25* says: 'Reading the Qur'an brings happiness in the two abodes here and the hereafter as there is only knowledge in the Qur'an'.

The stark nature of the text pages is characterised by the absence of verse (*āyah*) markers. It is copied with five lines to a page in *rayḥan* script set within a panel which was added after the copying of the text.

However, on close examination, it is curious that the illumination of several *sūrah* headings appears unfinished throughout the volumes, and in some cases the letters have only been outlined, standing in striking contrast to others within the same volume that have been completed (Figure 5).

It is also surprising that this remained unnoticed as the Qur'an was certainly corrected after copying, as in this example from *Juz' 3* where the calligrapher has mistakenly repeated lines of verse 261 of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (Figure 6) and they have been crossed out.

Also, in the final *juz'*, several additions have been made to the illumination in a Mamluk style, including bright red backgrounds and the use of red combined with gold scrollwork, entirely out of keeping with the palette of the manuscript and most likely added in Cairo (Figure 7).

However, it seems this was not the only manuscript commissioned by Öljaytü to be left unfinished. Boris Liebreuz has pointed out that certain folios of what was once part of the Baghdad Qur'an of Öljaytü, commissioned in 1307 and exhibited in his funerary complex in Sultaniyya, now in the Royal Library in Copenhagen (two leaves) and the Sächsische Staats-und Landesbibliothek in Dresden, were left unfinished and were not completed sequentially.¹⁸ Liebreuz notes that the Dresden volume is only fully executed until folio 16 after which the illumination is discontinued, while the script at the end of the Dresden volume is incomplete, with only its outlines drawn.¹⁹ In addition, Liebreuz points to the non-linear approach to the work, as *Juz' 28* remains unfinished while *Juz' 29* is complete. James also alludes to this in his discussion of the completion dates of various *juz'* of the Mosul Qur'an whereby *Juz' 1–Juz' 15* were completed in one year in 1307, but the copying

¹⁷Ibn Iyas, *Journal d'un Bourgeois du Caire*, (trans.) G. Wiet (Paris, 1945), pp. 65–66.

¹⁸B. Liebreuz, "Troubled history of a masterpiece. Notes on the creation and peregrinations of Öljeytü's monumental Baghdad Qur'an", *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* (2016), pp. 217–238; Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Cod.ar-ab.XLIII; *Codices Orientales Bibliothecae Regiae Hafniensis*, Vol. II (Copenhagen, 1851), pp. 43–44; Ms.Dresden Eb.444 is accessible online: https://www.qalamos.net/servlets/solr/select?q=%2B%28mymss_msso1%3A*Eb.444*+mymss_msso1text%3A*Eb.444*+mymss_msso1shelfmark%3A*Eb.444*%29&facet.limit=-1&facet.field=category&facet.field=objectType&fq=objectType%3A%22manuscript%22&version=4.5&facet=on&start=0&fl=id,returnId&rows=1&XSL.Style=browse&origrows=1 (accessed 27 July 2022).

¹⁹Liebreuz, "Troubled history", p. 225.



Figure 4. DAK Rasid 72, *Juz'* 25, fol. 1b.

of *Juz'* 16 commenced three years later in 1310.²⁰ Likewise, Sheila Blair, in her article on the Maragha Qur'an written between 1338 and 1339, has also shown that the illumination was unfinished and that the volumes of the Qur'an were not decorated sequentially.²¹ In the

²⁰James, *Master Scribes*, p. 100.

²¹Blair, "The Ilkhanid Qur'an", pp. 174–195

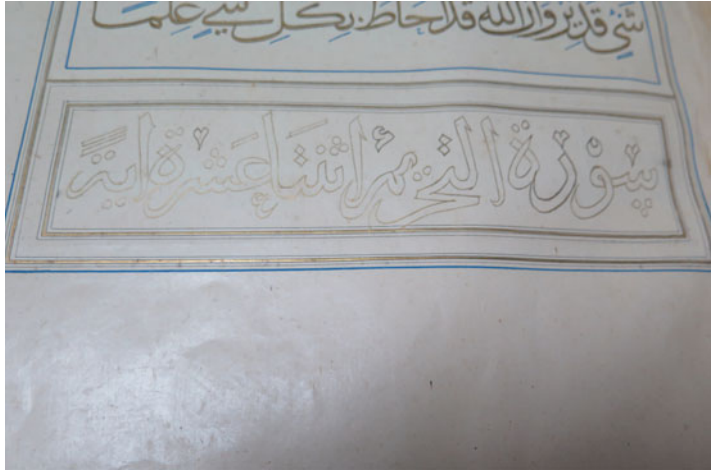


Figure 5. DAK Rasid 72, Juz' 28, fol. 37a.

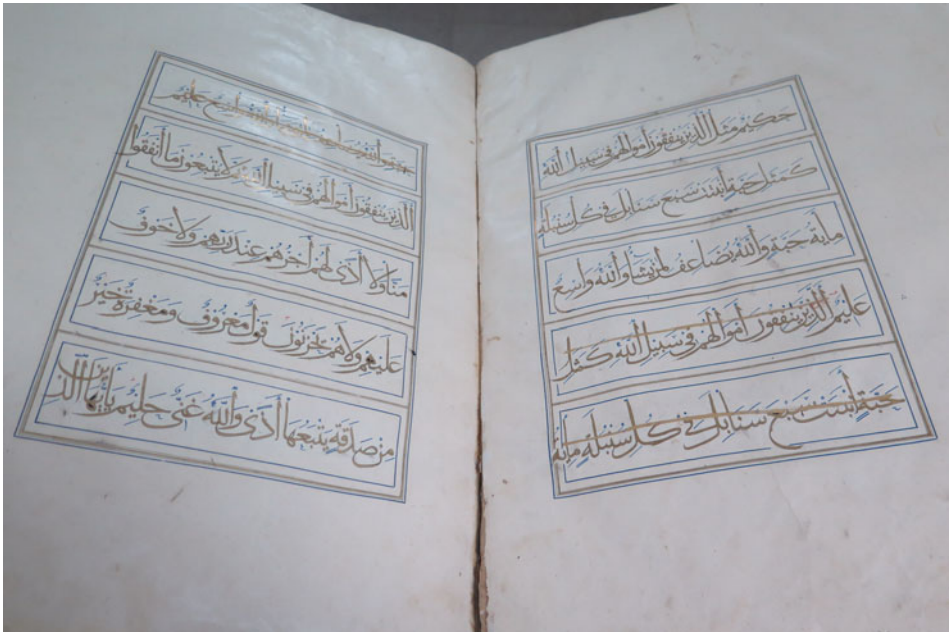


Figure 6. DAK Rasid 72, Juz' 3, fol. 16b.

Hamadan Qur'an, the only parts of the manuscript that can be considered complete are the text, illuminated frontispieces, the certificates of commissioning, and the colophons. In seeking explanations for this haphazard approach, one can only surmise that although Hamadhani is named in the colophon as having both written and illuminated it, many of the tasks



Figure 7. DAK Rasid 72, *Juz'* 30, fol. 19a.

may have been carried out by a team who were not overseen in an organised fashion.²² Also, as the colophons were obscured during the Mamluk period and only *Juz'* 30 has been uncovered, we cannot ascertain if there are individual dates of completion for each *juz'*.

However, in the light of these anomalies outlined in the discussion above, the questions arise of why the volumes were bound unfinished and whether they were bound before or after their arrival in Cairo. This question was also addressed by Richard Ettinghausen and Basil Gray but not for the reasons outlined above. Ettinghausen rejected the possibility of an Egyptian origin because 'Egyptian bindings would show more complex design and dazzling execution' and Gray because 'it is inconceivable that such great books should have travelled to Egypt unbound or required rebinding soon after their arrival' (Figure 8).²³

The binding of each *juz'* is decorated in exactly the same manner, which very probably indicates they were all bound at the same time and by the same binder. Each volume is provided with the same block-pressed leather doublures with floral leafy designs. The upper and lower covers are tooled with a central roundel with a ten-pointed star at the centre of which is a ten-petalled rosette whose arms interweave with a decagon (Figure 9).

The polygonal cells created by the geometrical pattern in the central roundel are tooled with small five-armed swastikas with green punches at their centres and gilt ones marking the design. The narrow borders of the central panel are decorated with a cable pattern with gilt punches at the corners, and knotted projections extend into the central field from the upper and lower borders. The roundel is repeated on the flap, but in this case, an eight-pointed star is used in conjunction with an octagon set within a medallion (Figure 10).

²²Blair, "Sultan Öljeitū's Baghdad Qur'an" notes that this variation in quality is also found in the Baghdad Qur'an and Rashid al-Din's *Majmū'a Rashīdiyya*; see Azzouna and Puyo, "The question of manuscript production workshops".

²³Ettinghausen, "On the covers of the Morgan *Manafi'* manuscript", p. 462, note 7; Gray, "The monumental Qur'ans", pp. 144–145.

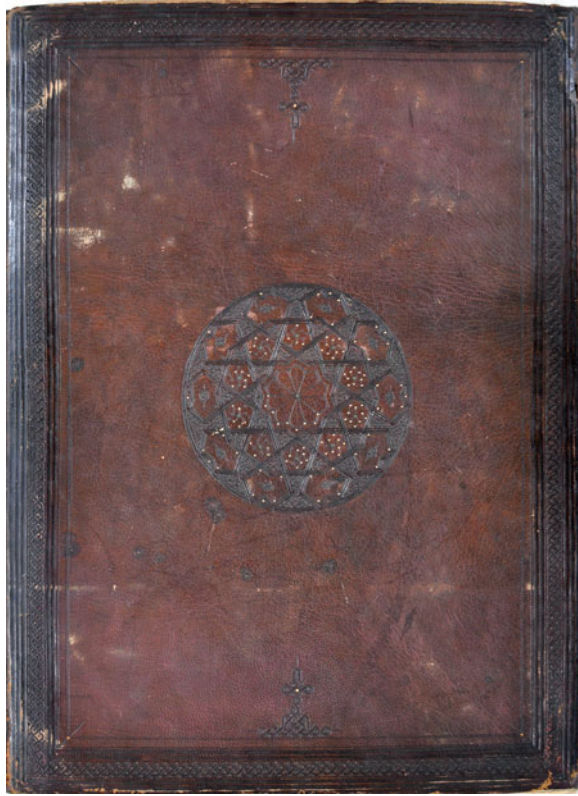


Figure 8. DAK Rasid 72, lower cover, *Juz' 2*, 56 x 41 cm.



Figure 9. DAK Rasid 72, detail of the cover.



Figure 10. DAK Rasid 72, Detail of flap of *Juz'* 2.

The first points of interest are the green punches of what may be small leather onlays at the centre of the swastikas, which in several cases have fallen off.²⁴ On a few of the covers, they are also placed in the corners of the outer border of the binding. This use of coloured leather to highlight aspects of the decoration is unusual and has not been noted on any other Ilkhanid binding to date (Figure 11).

Furthermore, the tooling style employed on the binding of the Hamadan Qur'an differs substantially from the bindings of the three other imperial Ilkhanid Qur'ans. Each is decorated using small tools of arcs, punches, and pallets to create a densely hatched surface with little or no use of gold. The thick borders around the central panel feature the same densely hatched surfaces. The tooling style is typical of many Islamic bindings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries found in North Africa, Egypt, and Syria.²⁵ Rosettes, stars or squares placed at the centre of the cover were filled with dense tooling, or the field was covered with geometrical patterns emanating from a central star using thick strapwork. Ben Azzouna

²⁴It is difficult to establish if these are onlays or delamination effects of what was a leather punch.

²⁵See, for numerous examples, G. Bosch, J. Carswell and G. Petherbridge, *Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking* (Chicago, 1981); A. Ohta, "Covering the Book: Bindings of the Mamluk Period, 1250–1516 CE", (unpublished PhD thesis, SOAS University of London, 2012), pp. 113–157, 176–185.

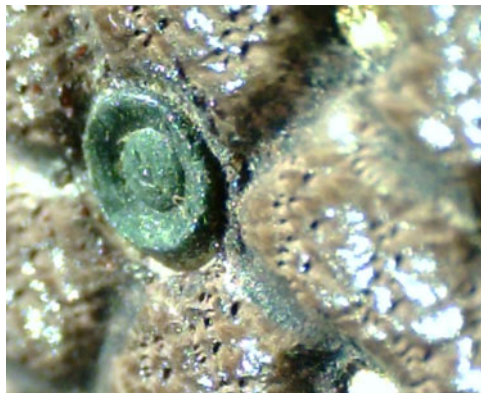


Figure 11. DAK Rasid 72, detail of green leather punch at the centre of the swastikas of *Juz*' 2.

also records this tooling method on other Ilkhanid bindings of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.²⁶

The binding of the 'Anonymous Baghdad Qur'an', for example, is decorated with an elongated cloud collar profile and segmented borders filled with densely tooled hatchwork with small gilded punches and reserved squares appearing as part of the textured pattern. Several of the *juz*' and fragments of folios are scattered in various collections but the Topkapı Palace Library (TSK) contains three volumes that retain their original bindings: *Juz*' 2 dated Ramadan 702/April 1303 (TSK.EH. 250); *Juz*' 4 which is undated (TSK.EH. 247), and *Juz*' 13 dated Rabi' I 705/November 1305 (TSK.EH. 249).²⁷ The binding of *Juz*' 4 is stamped with the name of 'Abd al-Rahman in small diapers in the border (Figure 12).

The second of this group, now known as the Baghdad Qur'an, was copied between 1306–1311²⁸ for Öljaytū's funerary complex in his new capital at Sultaniyya (Figure 13).²⁹ The cover of *Juz*' 7 (TSK.EH. 243) is decorated with an interlace repeat pattern of ten-pointed stars with broadly tooled strapwork and the same technique of reserving small squares is found in the tooling of the borders and the interstices of the strap work.

The third comparative imperial Qur'an was copied in Mosul, commissioned in 1306, and completed in 1311.³⁰ The parts are also scattered in various collections. Some volumes retain

²⁶Azzouna, *Aux origines du classicisme*, pp. 494–495, Pl. 76 and 77.

²⁷*Juz*' 2, TSK.EH. 250, 50 x 35cm, illuminated in Ramadan 702/April 1303, F. E. Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu* (Istanbul, 1962), no. 169; *Juz*' 4, TSK.EH. 247, 52 x 35cm, undated, no. 198; Gray, "The monumental Qur'ans", Pl. VI a and b; Tanındı, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'nde Ortaçağ İslam Ciltleri", p. 108; *Juz*' 13, TSK.EH. 249, 50.1 x 35.5cm illuminated in Rabi' I 705/November 1305, Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, no. 166. Ettinghausen, "On the covers of the Morgan *Manafi*' manuscript", fig. 350, illustrated *Juz*' 10 but does not indicate the accession number. See James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 39 with a full listing of the fragments and other parts of this Qur'an.

²⁸James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 40; Blair, "Sultan Öljeitū's Baghdad Qur'an".

²⁹*Juz*' 7, TSK.EH. 243, 73 x 50cm, Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, no. 171 copied in 707/1307–1308 and illuminated in Dhu al-Hijjah 710/April 1311; *Juz*' 20, TSK.EH. 245, 71 x 49.5cm, Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, no. 195; Gray, "The monumental Qur'ans", Pl. 6c; Tanındı, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'nde Ortaçağ İslam Ciltleri", p. 107, fig. 16; *Juz*' 21, TSK.EH. 234, 73 x 50cm, Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, no. 178. All fragments listed in James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 40.

³⁰James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 40.

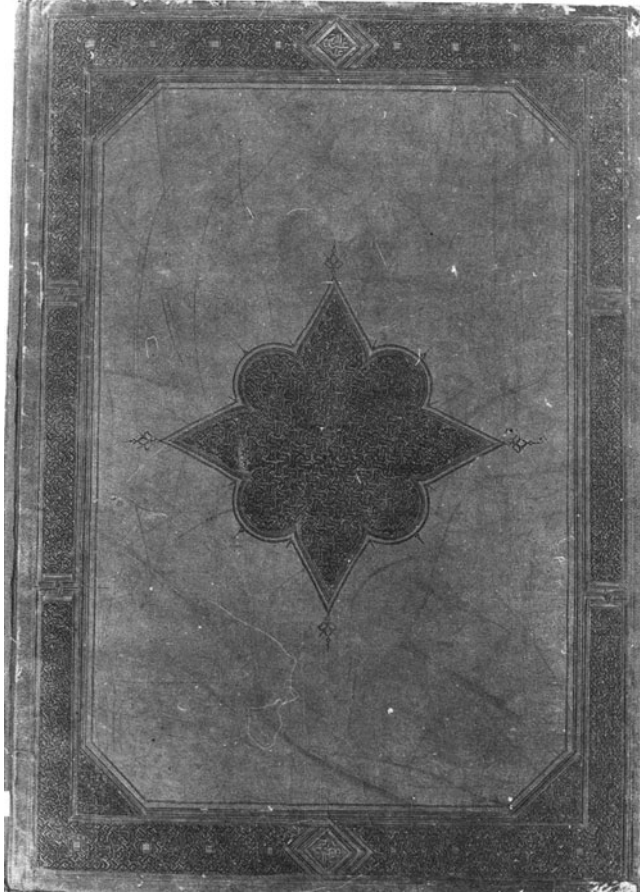


Figure 12. Upper cover of *Juz' 4*, of the 'Anonymous Baghdad Qur'an' copied in Baghdad 701–707/1302–1308, TSK.EH. 247, 52 x 37cm. After Tanındı, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'nde Ortaçağ İslam Ciltleri", fig. 18.

their original bindings, which are all the same: two in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (TIEM 539, 540) and one volume in the Topkapı Palace Library (TSK.EH. 232).³¹ The bindings of the Qur'an have a large eight-armed geometrical rosette or star polygons contained within a central panel by tooled multiple borders (Figure 14a and b). The tooling is again made up of arcs and pallets which produced a textured surface with small, reserved squares.

In returning to the Hamadan Qur'an, the tooling is mainly defined by line without the creation of densely hatched leather for parts of the design and the thin borders are made up

³¹Museum for Turkish and Islamic Art (TIEM) 540, *Juz' 2*, dated 706/1306–1307; A. Sakisian, "La reliure dans la Perse occidentale, sous les Mongols, au XIVe siècle au début du XVe siècle", *Ars Islamica I* (1934), pp. 180–191; TIEM 539, *Juz' 10* dated 706/1306–1307; TSK.EH. 232, *Juz' 15*, dated 706/1306–1307; Tanındı, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'nde Ortaçağ İslam Ciltleri", p. 108, fig. 17. See James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 42 for the list of all fragments of this Qur'an.

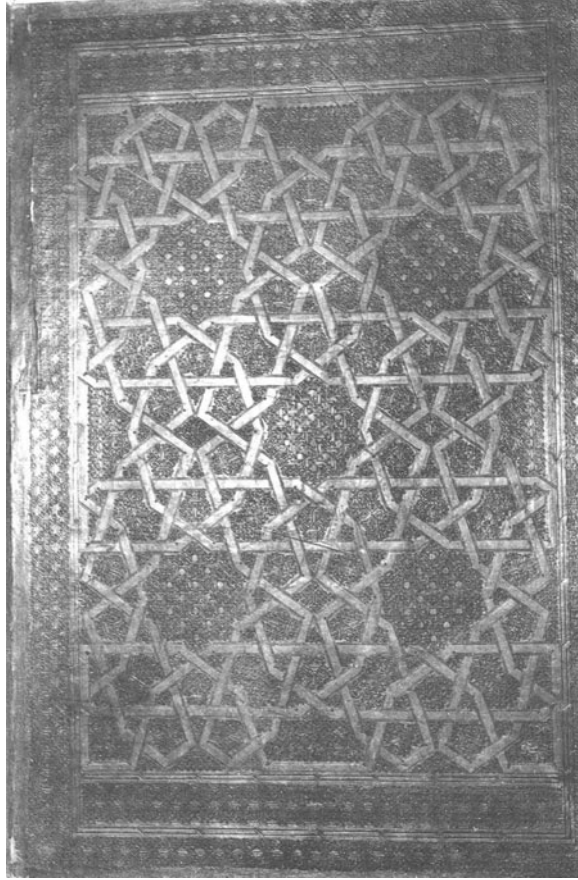


Figure 13. Upper cover of *Juz' 20* of a Qur'an copied in Baghdad between 706–8/1306–1308, TSK.EH. 245, 71 x 49.5cm. After Tanındı, “Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi’nde Ortaçağ İslam Ciltleri”, fig. 16.

of impressions of single tools to create a braided pattern. The ten-pointed star with the decagon and use of small five-armed swastikas and five-fold knots are a more sophisticated, complicated combination. It is also found on later Ilkhanid examples such as the binding of a Qur'an manuscript copied in 30 volumes in Maragha between 1338–1339³² (Figure 15), another dated 1365,³³ and the covers of a Jalayirid binding dated by manuscript to 1373–

³²See Blair, “The Ilkhanid Qur'an”, p. 177 for colour images of the Maragha Qur'an; Etnoğrafya Müzesi, Ankara, 10115–10137, *Juz' 1–6*, 8–9, 12, 14–23, 25–27 and 30; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 29.58, *Juz' 13* and 29.57, *Juz' 24*; Chester Beatty Library. Ms.1470, *Juz' 11*, 33 x 24 cm, Pope and Ackerman (eds), *Survey of Persian Art*, Pls. 938a and b; B. van Regemorter, *Some Oriental Bindings in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin, 1958), Pl. 15; A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Illuminated: A Handlist of Qur'ans in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin, 1967), no. 137; D. James, *Qur'ans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty* (Dublin, 1980), no. 49; James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 61; TSK.EH. 1171, 70 x 50cm.

³³TSK.EH. 1171, F. E. Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu* (Istanbul, 1966), No. 6007; Tanındı, “Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi’nde Ortaçağ İslam Ciltleri”, p. 109, fig. 19.

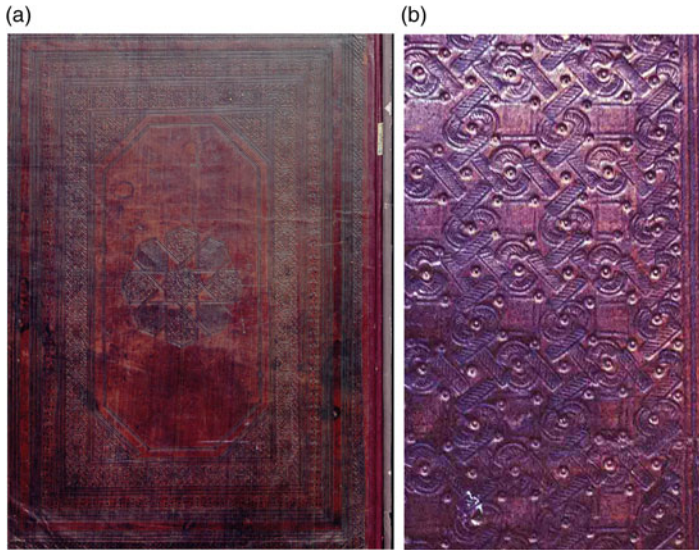


Figure 14a. Upper cover, TIEM 540, *Juz'* 2, copied in Mosul between 705–10/1306–1311, 57 x 40 cm. 14b. Detail of tooling of upper cover.

1374.³⁴ Other examples of this geometrical configuration also appear on bindings in the Mamluk realm and are dateable to the middle of the fourteenth century.³⁵

The Hamadan and Maragha bindings appear to represent a different style of tooling when compared to the other three imperial commissions relying on more complex geometrical configurations and a combination of single tools for borders achieving a lighter, more elegant effect. It is decorated in a more delicate fashion, with the incorporation of spidery swastikas and five-fold knots representing the emergence of a new style. As a firm comparison can be drawn between the Hamadan Qur'an and the other comparative Ilkhanid bindings of the fourteenth century, it must be assumed that the Qur'an was most probably bound in Hamadan.

Other examples of this geometrical configuration also appear on bindings in the Mamluk realm and are dateable to the middle of the fourteenth century.³⁶ These two Qur'ans—DAK Rasid 60 and Rasid 61—originally of 30 parts use the same geometrical combination of a ten-pointed star combined with a decagon (except *Juz'* 1 and 30 of Rasid 60).

Both these Qur'an manuscripts contain *waqf* endowments to the *madrasa* of the Amir Sirghatnish dated Jumādā I 757/16 May 1356.³⁷ Rasid 60 consists of 29 volumes, as volume 14

³⁴TSK.A. 656, 37.8 x 22cm; F. Çağman and Z. Tanındı, "Selections from Jalayirid books in the libraries of Istanbul", *Muqarnas* XXVIII (2011), pp. 223–224, figs. 2, 3, 4.

³⁵DAK Rasid 60, *Juz'* 2–29, 27 x 38 cm; Rasid 61, *Juz'* 1–29, 30 x 38 cm; Rasid 70, *Juz'* 2, 4, 7–13, 15–23, 27–30, 28 x 37 cm; Rasid 71, *Juz'* 1, 5–6, 28 x 37cm.

³⁶DAK Rasid 60, *Juz'* 1–30 (*Juz'* 14 is missing), 27 x 38 cm; Rasid 61, *Juz'* 1–29, 30 x 38 cm.

³⁷The Amir Sirghatnish was one of the *mamluks* of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad; in 755/1354 he was one of the main supporters for the reinstatement of Sultan Hasan. He was appointed Amir Kabir under Sultan Hasan who became resentful of his power and he was subsequently sent to jail where he died in 759/1358. He was known to be very fond of Iranians and the *madrasa* was dedicated to students from Iran, although Behrens-Abouseif



Figure 15. Front cover of *Juz' 13* of Qur'an, Maragha, 738–739/1338–1339, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 29.58, 33 x 24cm. Source: Image Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

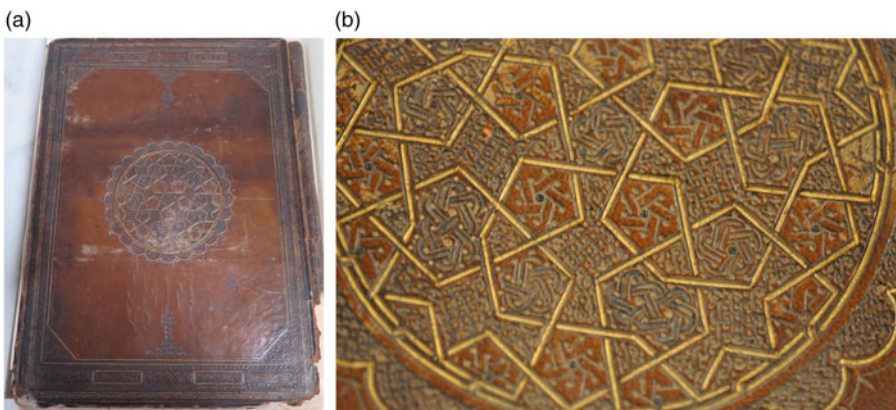


Figure 16a. DAK Rasid 60, *Juz' 1*, upper cover, 30 x 38 cm. 16b. Detail of upper cover.



Figure 17a. DAK Rasid 60, *Juz'* 2, upper cover, DAK Rasid 60, 27 x 38 cm. 17b. Detail of upper cover.

is missing, and was copied in fine *muḥaqqaq* script by Mubarak Shah ^cAbdullah whose name appears on fol. 54a of *Juz'* 30. David James has suggested he was trained in Baghdad as his hand bears a striking resemblance to that of Ibn al-Suhrawardi (d. 1320–1321) who copied the ‘Anonymous Baghdad Qur’an’. Based on the style of the illumination and calligraphy he has attributed this Qur’an to the first quarter of the fourteenth century and place of copying to Tabriz or Baghdad.³⁸ The illumination of the Qur’an has many Ilkhanid elements and so one might assume that this Qur’an was copied and illuminated in Persia. Abou-Khatwa has also pointed to the striking resemblance of the illumination to other Ilkhanid manuscripts; she has suggested two possibilities for this: either these volumes were an Ilkhanid gift to the Amir or they were produced in Cairo by Persian craftsmen as Sirghatmish had many in his service.³⁹ She notes the addition of several peculiar marginal medallions in a different hand, suggesting that they were added in Cairo.

The first and last *juz'* of Rasid 60, however, differ from the others in terms of their binding decoration. They are decorated with large rosettes whose centres are tooled in a complex geometrical configuration with five-armed swastikas and five-fold knots (Figure 15).

The borders also contain tooled five-armed swastikas, and knotted projections extend into the central panel (as on the Hamadan Qur’an) and are quite unlike any bindings produced in Mamluk Cairo. The similarity with the Hamadan Qur’an in the use of swastikas and knotted finials projecting into the central field would indicate that the covers of Rasid 60 (*Juz'* 1 and 30) were most probably bound in Iran.⁴⁰ Abou-Khatwa refers to Sirghatmish as the ‘Master

notes that word ^c*ajam* may refer to students from Anatolia. See D. Behrens Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks* (London, 2007), pp. 197–198 for an account of his *madrassa*.

³⁸James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, pp. 153–155.

³⁹N. Abou-Khatwa, ‘Shaping the material culture of Cairo in the second half of the fourteenth century: a case in the patronage of Amir Sirghatmish al Nasiri’, in *Living with Nature and Things*, (eds) Bethany Walker and Abdelkader Al Ghouz (Bonn, 2020), pp. 333–337.

⁴⁰M. Lings and Y. Safadi, *The Qur'an: Catalogue of an Exhibition of Qur'an Manuscripts at the British Library*, 3 April–15 August 1976 (London, 1976), No. 74; James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, Cat. 72, pp. 311–349.

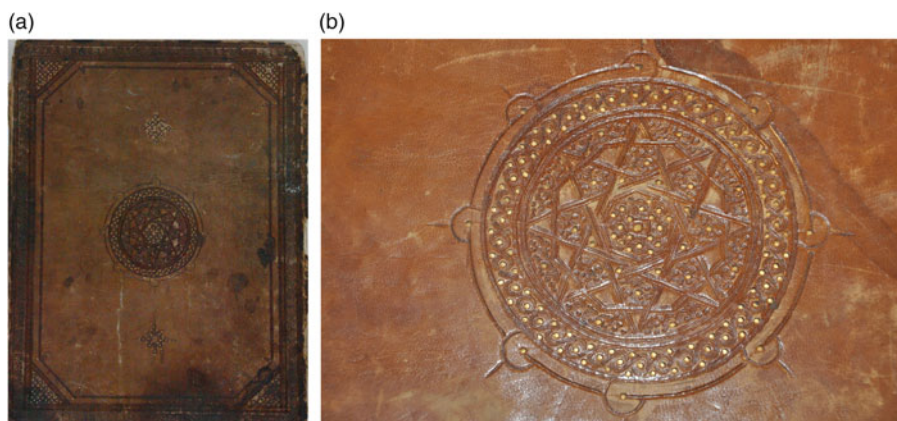


Figure 18a. DAK Rasid 61, upper cover, 29 x 38.4. 18b. Detail of upper cover.

of Reuse' so, given that the lower cover of *Juz'* 30 is today badly damaged, one might surmise that Sirghatmish commissioned the remaining volumes to be rebound in a Persian style (perhaps using the design of the Hamadan Qur'an as inspiration), while leaving the covers of *Juz'* 1 and 30 as a reference to the original binding.⁴¹ The other volumes are all bound in the same manner, with a central roundel in which a ten-pointed star overlays a decagon. The borders have the same type of cable design as those of the Hamadan Qur'an, also with projections into the central field from the upper and lower borders of the central panel. The extant flaps of the bindings are tooled with a roundel with a six-pointed star at the centre whose tips extend, creating triangles meeting the perimeter of the circle. The compartments created by the design include five-armed swastikas and knots (Figure 17a and b). The use of a small reserved square in the tooling of the knotted projections into the central field can be clearly seen.⁴² These bindings incorporate so many of the elements found on the Hamadan Qur'an that they must have been bound in Persia or by a Persian binder in Cairo.

The illumination of Rasid 61 also has several Ilkhanid features, but Abou-Khatwa has pointed out that it was most probably done by illuminators in Cairo. The bindings of Rasid 61 are also decorated with a roundel which contains a ten-pointed star/decagon combination, but the decoration of the compartments is composed of hatched arcs without any swastikas. Knotted finials float above and below the roundel, and the borders of Rasid 61 are made up of a segmented square tool with a central punch, a pattern which is found on several other Mamluk bindings of the period and is a clear indication that Rasid 61 was bound in Cairo (Figure 18a and 18b).⁴³

In 1985, in his discussion of the relationship between Mamluk and Ilkhanid bindings, Basil Gray suggested that the geometrical patterns found on Ilkhanid bindings were transferred into Mamluk Egypt. He notes that they appear first on architectural decoration and then,

⁴¹Abou-Khatwa, "Shaping the material culture of Cairo", p. 327.

⁴²Other bindings in the series only have one knotted projection into the central field, for example, *Juz'* 2.

⁴³Ohta, 'Covering the Book: Bindings of the Mamluk Period', pp. 444–449.

in the fourteenth century, make their appearance on Mamluk bindings.⁴⁴ Gray's comments were a spirited response to those of Richard Ettinghausen who, some 30 years earlier, compared the Hamadan and Maragha Qur'ans, which have been discussed above, to a Mamluk Qur'an⁴⁵ which is dateable to the end of the fourteenth century. He declared 'None of the Persian examples of this century, so far discovered, has a field which is completely covered with geometric configuration.'⁴⁶ This was not a fair comparison as the Mamluk Qur'an was bound at least 70 years after the two Persian examples he chose for comparison. However, the central rosette of this binding includes an octagon with two overlapping squares which carries a clear resonance to its Ilkhanid forebears, which Ettinghausen chose not to acknowledge.

Ilkhanid bindings and those of the Hamadan Qur'an represent the vestiges of this vibrant geometrical tradition which was discarded by Persian binders in the middle of the fourteenth century in favour of a new aesthetic derived from Chinese art with the particular employment of the cloud-collar motif.⁴⁷ Why these configurations were wholeheartedly rejected for binding decoration but maintained in architecture, one can only guess. It may be that the development of stamps sometime in the middle of the fourteenth century facilitated this change as stamps based on cloud-collar profiles could be easily produced to decorate bindings without any need for time-consuming hand tooling. Complex geometrical designs needed to be conceived to fit different sizes of covers and then tooled by hand, with each element drawn to fit the pattern. Mamluk binders continued to employ these complex designs, creating a storehouse of geometrical patterns which were also reflected in the architectural decoration and woodwork of the period. However, the aesthetic that had attracted Persian binders from the middle of the fourteenth century soon found its way into the repertoire of the designs of Mamluk binders in the middle of the fifteenth century and subsequently spread to Ottoman Turkey, India, and Southeast Asia, dominating Islamic binding decoration to the present day.

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⁴⁴Gray, "The monumental Qur'ans", p. 140.

⁴⁵See the cover of the second *juz*' of this Qur'an for the Amir Aytmiş al-Bajasi (d. 1400), The Walters Art Museum, W.56, <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/25339> (accessed 12 July 2022).

⁴⁶Ettinghausen, "On the covers of the Morgan *Manqī*' manuscript", p. 469.

⁴⁷E. Wright, *The Look of the Book* (Washington, 2012), pp. 258–282.