
PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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THE MANUSCRIPT OF AL-SHARĪF AL-MURTAḌĀ KITĀB AL-DHAKHĪRA AL-‘ĀLIM WĀ BAṢĪRA AL-MUTA‘ALLIM FROM THE COLLECTION OF A. S. FIRKOVICH

Two articles of A. Ia. Borisov were published in the 30s in Leningrad (1903—1942) [1]. In these articles he describes fragments of Mu‘tazilite manuscripts and their analysis from the standpoint of Islamic studies. These pieces were discovered by him in the second collection of the Karaite traveller and archaeologist, A. S. Firkovich [2]. It refers to 13 pieces, combining about 1,100 pages of Arabic text. The majority of the fragments is damaged by decay and beetles. According to Borisov, on account of the poor condition of the majority of the manuscripts he could not describe them in accordance with all the requirements of a strict scientific description. Of the 13 pieces only three have titles and names of authors. All texts are written on old oriental paper; seven of them — in large square Jewish writing, typical for old Karaite manuscripts, the remaining six — in hasty and hardly legible *naskh*, practically void of diacritics. Ten pieces may be attributed to the first quarter of the 11th century AD, whereas each of them mentions *qāḍī al-quḍat*, i. e. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadānī (d. AD 1023/5) [3].

In regards to the place where Firkovich acquired his second collection, it is:

(i) evident that Firkovich acquired the larger part of the manuscripts of the Second collection in *geniza* of the Karaite synagogue in Miṣr (A. Ia. Borisov believes that the hiding places of Karaite houses of prayer in Palestine and Egypt served the purpose of a shelter for the splinters of Muslim Mu‘tazilite written language. The rather long stay of Firkovich in Miṣr (six months) and the fragmentary state of the majority of the manuscripts of the Second collection may be regarded as convincing arguments in favour of the speculation adduced;

(ii) possible that he acquired the fragments of the manuscript that interest us from private owners of manuscripts and antiquities;

(iii) hardly probable, but it should not be ruled out that some fragments of the manuscripts in Arabic language were given by representatives of Karaite community from Hīt (‘Irāq). There is no question about the fact

that the fragments of the Mu‘tazilite manuscripts of Firkovich's collection and the Mu‘tazilite manuscripts kept in the British library had one and the same source. These particular Karaite copies of Mu‘tazilite treatises eluded destruction from the Orthodox Islamists and came to us, even if in fragmentary condition only.

The treatise of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra al-‘ālim wa baṣīra al-muta‘allim* [4] is the only piece of 13 Mu‘tazilite manuscripts that is dated [5]. The fragment was written by a known Shī‘ī activist al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā [6]. He was an Imāmī theologian, grammarian, interpreter, philologist, writer and poet, and bibliophile, which can be summed up with one word *adīb*. In Baghdād he held the office of an ‘Alid *naqīb* of the Imāmī community. This fragment, or rather this copy, to be more accurate, is titled: كتاب ذخيرة العالم و بصيرة المتعلم [7]. A more accurate translation should be yielded after the reading of the whole manuscript. At the current stage of the study we are ready to offer three versions for the title: “The Treasury of the World and the Conviction of the Educated”, “The Treasury of the Scholar and the Understanding of the One Being Educated”, or “The Treasury of the World and the Comprehension of the Scholar”.

Currently this manuscript is kept under the following library code II Firk.arab. No. 111, Ms. No. 21 (fund 946, inv. 4, part 4) in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg [8]. Earlier it was known under a different reference number: II Firk.arab. No. 11, Ms. No. 21 (*fig. 1*).

In the list of works of al-Murtaḍā [9], reported by K. Brockelmann [10] and Kh. Khalifa, the title of *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra* is missing. This is why the manuscript in question provokes peculiar research interest and may be examined as a unique object. The manuscript is precisely dated and localized: Fuṣṭāt, the month of Rajab of AH 472, which corresponds to the end of November — beginning of December of AD 1083.

There is no doubt that the fragment is of great value for the study of the Mu‘tazilite dogmatics. Its signifi-