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# PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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## NEW FOLIOS FROM “‘UTHMĀNIC QUR’ĀN” I. (LIBRARY OF ADMINISTRATION FOR MUSLIM AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN)

On the pages of our journal we have more than once written about the *hijāzī* Qur’ānic manuscript which throughout at least five centuries was considered by Middle East Muslims the original “‘Uthmān’s Qur’ān” — a sacred relic stained with the blood of the third of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (644—55). The manuscript, which, as it was believed by generations of Muslims, was copied by ‘Uthmān himself was considered the prototype for all copies of Qur’ān. The amazing history of this copy is connected with destinies of dynasties, states, ‘Iṣqiyya brotherhoods [1].

In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, about a half of the manuscript was sold in parts. The greater part of it was brought to St. Petersburg, the rest — scattered among private collectors in Buḥārā. The other half of the manuscript was still kept in the *mazār* of Katta-Langar *qīṣlāq*. In 1983 Prof. B. Babajanov succeeded in seeing in Katta-Langar sixty three folios of the ancient Qur’ānic codex. The 1983 resolution of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party to combat folk Islamic beliefs [2] played a fateful role in the history of the manuscript. In *mazārs* and mosques throughout the republic, sacred relics were confiscated and the graves of saints were excavated. Fearing for the manuscript, the chairman of the local *qīṣlāq* council brought it to his home, but was still unable to save it. The Katta-Langar holy relics were confiscated. According to eye-witnesses, on the very eve of the confiscation, one of the *qīṣlāqs*’ elders, Tukhto-Baba Rajazov, succeeded in taking several folios from the manuscript [3]. Ten years ago, in 1993, T. Qadirov, *hakīm* of the Kaška Daryā *wilāyat* returned the twelve folios to the *mazār*.

I was sure that the remaining folios, which could have been bought by a local collector in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, confiscated by KGB or saved from this fate by a believer, are still kept somewhere in Uzbekistan.

In the spring of 2003 during my trip to Uzbekistan together with students from Stanford University (USA), I again managed to visit the Library of Administration for Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. To my great surprise, on the exhibition of rare manuscripts of the Qur’ān, I found folios, which undoubtedly belonged to the Katta-Langar copy. I had been to this library a year be-

fore during the shooting of my film about the history of the “‘Uthmānic Qur’ān”, but I had not seen these folios then. In reply to my question concerning the history of acquisition of the fragments I was interested in, the Director of the Library Mr. Abdulshukur Nabiev [4] explained that the folios had come into the library not long before that due to cooperation with customs authorities of the Republic.

The folios are in simple cardboard binding covered with cotton (alternating white-green and blue-white stripes). In the upper right corner of the inner surface of the upper cover of the binding, there is a stamp and a code attributed to the folios on their acquisition (*fig. 1*).

Under the binding there are four folios, two of which are fly-leaves (well-polished cream oriental paper), and the other two contain Qur’ānic texts. In the lower part of the fly-leaf (at the bottom and in the corner on the other side) there are Persian *nasta‘līq* inscriptions in black ink (*figs. 2—3*).

Two-line inscription at the bottom:

“*Kūfī* script. Holy autograph of the sovereign of believers *hazrat* ‘Uthmān, the possessor of the two [sources] of light [5], let Allah the Most High be pleased with him!”

An inscription on the other side contains a distich:

“I gave several inanimate [coins, precious stones],  
I bought a soul // Glory to Allah! I bought it amazingly  
cheap!”

The next folio is a fragment of a, supposedly, 30-volume manuscript of the Qur’ān. The folio size is 48.2 × 34.0 cm, the text field’s size is 37.6 × 27.6 cm, high quality polished oriental paper, a complicated multi-colour frame, five lines written in gold, calligraphic *muḥaqqaaq*. Presumably — Iran, 14<sup>th</sup>—15<sup>th</sup> century.

The fragment contains the end of *sūra* 7: the front side (*fig. 4*) — the end of *āyat* 7:202 — the end of *āyat* 7:203; the other side (*fig. 5*) — the end of *āyat* 7:203 and up to the end of the *sūra*. The dividers between the *āyāt* are complicated golden rosettes outlined in blue in a form of a “gear-wheel”. On the reverse side one of such dividers is placed on the margin together with a long “tail” *nūn*, and