

Sub-project A11

The Leipzig Manuscript B. or. 227: Paratexts as Witnesses of Islamic Ḥadīth Scholarship

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Summary of the project

The prophetic traditions (Ḥadīth) are reports about the words, deeds and habits of the Prophet Muḥammad and are regarded as the second most important source of religious knowledge in Islam besides the Qur'an. They were written down in the 8th to 9th century, put in a systematic order and then studied and classified in the framework of the gradually developing Ḥadīth sciences. The genre of writing commentaries on the Ḥadīth reached a peak in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The aim of this project is to investigate the extent to which medieval Islamic Ḥadīth scholarship can be reconstructed using paratexts found in Ḥadīth manuscripts. The focus is on one manuscript of the Ḥadīth collection *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Ju'fī al-Bukhārī, who died in 870 CE. The copying of this manuscript was finished in the year 1398, most probably in Shiraz. User entries reveal that it was used in study sessions in Timurid Iran in the first half of the 15th century and later on in 17th century Ottoman Egypt. In addition to such entries, the numerous marginal commentaries make this manuscript an ideal example for a case study. Nowadays, the manuscript is kept at Leipzig University Library, which it came to after a long journey starting in Iran, crossing Egypt and passing through Vienna at the time the Ottomans laid siege to the city.



Leipzig University Library, B.or.227, fol. 690 v

Objectives

With the manuscript serving as its focal point, this project aims to undertake a thorough analysis concerning codicological aspects of the manuscript, evidence of its actual use, and the marginal commentaries. It is likely to provide new impulses in Islamic studies by concentrating on the Ḥadīth commentaries, an aspect that has received little attention to date, and by focusing on a geographical area that has been rather neglected as far as such commentaries are concerned: Iran during the Timurid era. Within this scope, it will be investigated in how far local features existed in the study of the Arabic Ḥadīth texts in a Persian context (the city of Shiraz) under the rule of a Turkic dynasty. The commentary practices and its methods will be analysed on the basis of the Bukhārī manuscript. The results will be compared with other Ḥadīth manuscripts from a similar period and locality, thus forming the basis for an examination of Ḥadīth scholarship in Iran during the Timurid era.

Islamic manuscript culture with special reference to Iran

In the 7th century, the border regions around the Arabian Peninsula were gradually Islamicised in the course of the Arab and Islamic conquest, Arabic being the dominant language of the new religion. From the 10th century onwards, cursive script styles came to be used, with *naskh* being the common script for religious and non-religious texts. In Iran, Farsi became the established language in which poetry and secular texts were written in the 9th to 10th centuries. The Arabic alphabet was adopted



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and then supplemented by adding a number of extra letters. From the 14th century onwards, however, new calligraphic styles such as *nasta'liq* and *ṣekaste* developed in Iran. This was accompanied by special styles used for ornamentation, special types of bindings, and a great interest in painting miniatures, a form of art that blossomed in the 15th and 16th centuries. This Persian manuscript culture had a great influence on the neighbouring Ottoman Empire.

The Arabic text of the Bukhārī manuscript kept at Leipzig University Library is written in the popular and widespread *naskh* style, and the manuscript shows the common vertical format. Apart from the information given in the colophon, at least two features indicate its Iranian provenance: the blue and gold headpiece and the paper. While regionally manufactured paper in the Arab world was replaced by European paper from the 14th century onwards, the local production of paper in Iran continued until the 18th and 19th centuries.



Leipzig University Library, B.or.227, fol. 167 r (Detail)