

“Such a Koran no individual might own”: The Biography of a Mamluk Qur’an from Ottoman Jerusalem

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“Kimsenin sahip olamayacağı bir Kur’an”: Osmanlı Kudüs’ünden bir Memluk Kur’an’ının Biyografisi

Öz ■ 19. ve 20. yüzyılların Dünya Sergilerini sosyolojik, antropolojik, politik, teknolojik, ve endüstriyel açılardan inceleyen pek çok çalışma bulunmasına rağmen, bu etkinliklerde sergilenmiş olan eserler üzerinde bir çalışma yapılmamıştır. Bu makale, 1904 St. Louis Dünya Sergisi için Kudüs’ten St. Louis’e gönderildiği iddia edilen 15. yüzyıla ait bir Memluk Kur’an’ı ile ilgili bir araştırmadır.

1913 tarihinde William Eleazar Barton (1861-1930) tarafından Oberlin Koleji ve Konservatuar’ına emanet edilen bu Kur’an, yüz yılı aşkın bir süredir gözlerden uzak bir rafta korunmaktadır. Osmanlı ve Amerika hükümetleri arasında geçen yazışmalar, Kur’an’ı elinde bulundurmuş olan kişilerin şahsi mektupları, fotoğraflar, ve gazete raporları gibi belgeler yardımı ile bu Kur’an’ın biyografisini kurgulayan bu çalışma, mushafın kıtalar, ülkeler ve şehirler arası uzun yolculuğunun izlerini sürerken, güncelliğini koruyan kültür varlıklarını koruma meseleleri üzerinde odaklanmaktadır. Bu Memluk Kur’an’ının biyografisi, aynı zamanda, Osmanlı devletinin hakimiyeti altında bulunan Kudüs’te yaşayan Hristiyan ve Samiriye vatandaşları ile olan zorlu ilişkilerine de ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Memluk Kur’an’ı, 1904 St. Louis Dünya Sergisi, William E. Barton, Jacob ben Aaron, Lydia Mamreov, Kudüs, Kubbetü’s-Sahra, İslâm kültür varlıkları, Kudüs Yahudileri, Kudüs Samirileri, Filistin Amerikan Kolonisi, Clara Barton.

Described as the world’s greatest event by the period’s newspapers, the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair commemorated, with a one-year delay, the centennial of the massive land acquisitions known as “the Louisiana Purchase” that had doubled

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Fig. 1. Westward view of the Fair grounds with Jerusalem and the Ferris wheel

the territory of the United States.¹ The Fair was to serve as “a social encyclopedia in the most comprehensive and accurate sense, [in order to give] to the world, in revised and complete detail a living picture of the artistic and industrial development at which mankind has arrived.”² With fitting pomp, the organizers created a stage on which the “advanced” nations of the West displayed their scientific, technological, social, artistic, and cultural feats, while also mounting a comparatively forlorn, if romanticized, display of “less civilized” peoples of the world. The spectacular show stayed open for seven months and attracted roughly twenty million visitors from around the globe who marveled at Western nations’ progress in various aspects of “civilized life,” and viewed in awe the exotic peoples and animals of the world.³

1 For a discussion of and bibliography on the Exposition, see Astrid Böger, “St. Louis 1904,” in *Encyclopedia of World’s Fairs and Expositions*, eds. John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), 171-178. The ambitious project was not ready for the Centennial, and in order to achieve greater international participation, organizers delayed the opening by one year, until 30 April 1904. See, *The Minneapolis Journal*, 17 January 1902.

2 *World’s Fair Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1903-1904): II.

3 Böger, *St. Louis*, 176.

At the “heart”⁴ of the Fair grounds lay a replica of the Holy Land.⁵ Situated over an eleven-acre plot,⁶ next to the Machinery Building, with the towering Ferris wheel behind it, the “New Jerusalem”⁷ created a curious, if deliberate, geographical, historical, visual, and semantic incongruity (Fig. 1). With a budget of 1,400,000,000 US dollars,⁸ the American Jerusalem was an unprecedented enterprise built to “attract the attention of all Christendom,”⁹ and transplant “with wondrous success”¹⁰ such hallmarks as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Via Dolorosa, the Wailing Wall, the Dome of the Rock, and the Aqsa Mosque.¹¹ For increased verisimilitude, organizers brought in more than five-hundred¹² Palestinians whom they placed inside the houses on the “dirty, foul-smelling and unpaved”¹³ streets of the replica town so the natives could pursue their avocations, if they had them, “as at home.”¹⁴ As “the lame, halt and blind” asked for alms and “the cunning artificers practiced their art,” tourist-pilgrims could attend lectures on life in the Holy Land, and observe the faithful Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the act of prayer “in their tattered yet picturesque garments.”¹⁵

4 *World's Fair Bulletin* (August 1903): 36.

5 The laying of the cornerstone of “The New Jerusalem” occurred on 11 July 1903. The Exhibition was inaugurated on 17 May 1904, about two weeks after the opening of the Fair. See, Nancy J. Parezo and Don D. Fowler, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exhibition* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 260-261. For the dedication address delivered by U.S. Senator J. R. Burton, see *World's Fair Bulletin* (August 1903): 35-36.

6 According to *World's Fair Bulletin* (February 1904), the acreage was thirteen.

7 *World's Fair Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 10 (1903-1904): 38.

8 *The Advance*, No. 1939 (8 January 1903): 36.

9 *World's Fair Bulletin* (September 1902): 6.

10 *World's Fair Bulletin* (April 1904): 33.

11 For maps and diagrams of the Fair-grounds, see *Grandeur of the Universal Exposition at St. Louis: An Official Book of Beautiful Engravings Illustrating the World's Fair of 1904* (St. Louis: Official Photographic Company, 1904).

12 Mark Bennitt and Frank Parker Stockbridge, *History of the Louisiana purchase exposition: comprising the history of the Louisiana territory, the story of the Louisiana purchase and a full account of the great exposition, embracing the participation of the states and nations of the world, and other events of the St. Louis world's fair of 1904, compiled from official sources* (St. Louis: Universal Exposition Pub. Co., 1905), 720. *World's Fair Bulletin* (May 1904): 20 gives the number as one thousand.

13 *Jackson's Famous Photographs of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Chicago: Metropolitan Syndicate Press, [1904]), n.p.

14 *World's Fair Bulletin* (August 1903): 36, 112.

15 Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 215.

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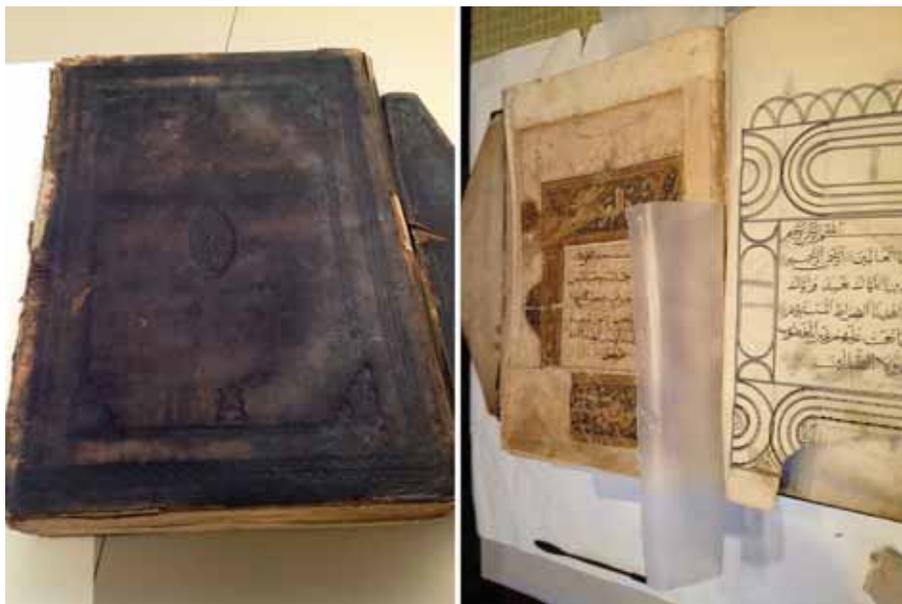


Fig. 2. Mamluk Qur’an, binding, incipit page, modern page

Never shy of making a claim to an authentic and complete experience of the Holy Land within the convenience of a modern city, the Fair’s organizers dismantled “Jerusalem in miniature”¹⁶ at the close of the Fair in December of the same year. Characteristic of World’s Expositions, however, many artifacts that had been brought from overseas on the occasion of this historic, if transitory, event were kept on American soil permanently, with or without the consent of their original owners. One such item, the topic of this article, was a 15th-century Mamluk Qur’an from Ottoman Jerusalem (Fig. 2).

Presently housed in the Special Collections of Oberlin College and Conservatory in Ohio,¹⁷ this Qur’an is a single volume *mushaf* with two hundred and forty-one leaves in a leather binding that is old but not contemporary with its composition. It is missing the recto side of its opening page, on which the *surah al-Fatiha* would have been written, as well as a few of its final leaves that would have contained the last five chapters and possibly a colophon, an endowment deed, or an imprint of a personal or institutional seal (Fig. 3). The Qur’an

¹⁶ *World’s Fair Bulletin* (September 1902), 5.

¹⁷ Special Collections, Oversized, 091.297 K 84. 295654. Koran. Arabic.

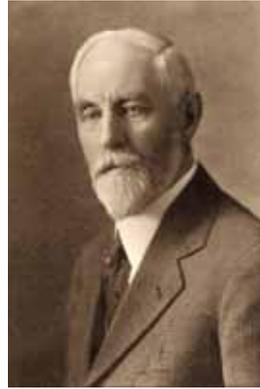


Fig. 4. William E. Barton (1861-1930)

Fig. 3. Mamluk Qur'an, final page ending with *surah al-Kafirun*

was deposited at Oberlin College in 1913¹⁸ by the Reverend William Eleazar Barton (1861-1930)—an alumnus (1890) of Oberlin’s Theological Seminary, an American Congregational Minister, and one of the 20th century’s most prominent writers and lecturers on the life of Abraham Lincoln¹⁹ (Fig. 4). Reverend Barton officially donated the *mushaf* to Oberlin College in 1926, where it was preserved with care for over a century, though it never became the subject of scholarly research.²⁰

18 22 November 1928 issue of *Lorain County News* records the “Gifts of Korans, Pentateuchs” on its first page. A more detailed account of the donation is found in *Annual Reports of the President and the Treasurer of Oberlin College for 1927-28* (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1928), 73-74. *The Oberlin Ohio News* (Vol. LXVIII, no. 47, 3) also records the gift: “Mention was made of valuable gifts by Dr. William E. Barton of Oak Park, Ill., who contributed a manuscript copy of the Koran from the Mosque of Omar, of the Pentateuch in Hebrew from the Mount Zion Synagogue in Jerusalem and the Pentateuch in Samaritan from Nableus, Palestine.”

19 For an account of Barton’s life, see *The Autobiography of William E. Barton* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1931, 1932), *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1908-1984), Vol. 23, No. 4 (January 1931): 685-686, and *The Oberlin Alumni Magazine* (January 1931): 121.

20 A handwritten note (later typed on a catalog card) in Oberlin College’s Special Collections gives this information: “Professor [Joseph] Eliash [1932-1981] was interested in this Qur’an and planned to date it. However, his death intervened [sic.], and no one has been interested since

My initial interest in this *mushaf* was limited to identifying its date and provenance. Intrigued by a short note that William E. Barton inscribed in black ink on the Qur’an’s inner cover, however, I soon found myself immersed in research on its fascinating history. The biggest challenge to my quest was that many details of the *mushaf*’s journey from Ottoman Jerusalem to American Jerusalem—details that I believe make this particular *mushaf* more interesting than many others from the same era and geographical region—were deliberately erased from its history by one or more of its several owners. Regardless, my research has revealed adequate evidence that helped construct a cohesive narrative about the *mushaf*’s past, although, it seems, none of the theories I propose below might be established with certainty any time soon.

Much compelling work has been produced on World’s Fairs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with meticulous analyses of their commercial, sociological, cultural, political, anthropological, technological, and industrial aspects perspectives.²¹ However, to my knowledge, there exists no study to date dedicated solely to a work of art that was on display at one of these fairs, though lists of such items are not entirely lost.²² It is, therefore, with great excitement that I present this Qur’an to the attention of researchers and specialists with various interests. I must add immediately, however, that, despite the existence of an object at its very center, this study refrains from sustaining the “back to the object” trend that has been regaining currency (in the literal sense of the word) in the field of Islamic art over the past decade primarily as a result of a proliferation of Arab, European, and American museums and galleries with a revived interest in Islamic material culture. To offer a counterpoint, the article focuses on the object’s sociocultural contexts through a study of its biography. The complexity of the landscape within which the last hundred years of this *mushaf*’s biography was shaped is attested in the variety, if not the number, of the surviving records (ranging from correspondence between the governments of the Ottoman Empire and the United States

so far as I know.” Born in Jerusalem, Professor Eliash (d. 1981) taught Arabic, Hebrew, Islamic studies, and history of Judaism.

21 For Ottoman perspectives, see Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth Century World’s Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), and Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

22 A recent work on display items is Jason T. Busch, Catherine Futter, Regina Lee Blasczyk et. al., *Inventing the Modern World: Decorative Arts at the World’s Fairs, 1851-1939* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art, 2012).

to newspaper reports, personal letters, business inventories, photographs, and diagrams), the languages in which they were disseminated (Ottoman Turkish, English, Arabic, and Samaritan), as well as the places where they were dispersed across continents (Istanbul, Jerusalem, Nablus, St. Louis, Boston, Washington, and Oberlin).

In *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*, Finbarr B. Flood examines practices of circulation, displacement, and translation in South Asia under Muslim rule, and deconstructs teleological approaches to art and culture that "collapse all possible identities into a single monolithic identification, producing as singular, static, and undifferentiated what was often multiple, protean, and highly contested."²³ Within the framework of this study, a subsidiary object of Flood's pioneering work, exploration of the "constitutive relationships between subjects, objects, and political formations, and the ways in which these relationships were implicated in process of transculturation," is particularly relevant.²⁴ Working towards similar goals, as it traces the history of this Qur'an, this article transcends a much-too familiar story of an equivocal antiquities transaction and, displacing attention away from the object, points toward the object's shifting functions, meanings, and value within the framework of its reappropriation process. Accordingly, the narratives below examine the intercultural transmissions, the "routes" that the *mushaf* traveled across "interlocking and overlapping zones and networks," rather than its "roots" within fixed geographical or cultural territories.²⁵

On these routes, a small, yet influential group of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Samaritan men and women crossed paths in Ottoman Jerusalem at the dawn of the 20th century thanks to their interest in or possession of this *mushaf*. An exploration of their professional activities, aspirations, and frustrations leads us to an account of this Qur'an that is entangled with the political, economic, social, and religious anxieties of a "rising" United States, a Muslim empire in transformation, and a Palestine caught in between. This ultimately is an account that illustrates a sacred text's commoditization process—an episode in the course of so many objects' lives that we rarely acknowledge, let alone delineate, in exhibition catalogs or on

23 Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

24 *Ibid.*, 12.

25 James Clifford, *Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

museum wall labels. As it traces the *mushaf's* movements and transformations, and reveals the intentional and convenient blurring of the line between the sacred and commodity, I hope that this study will contribute to existing conversations on objects' active lives, making evident the futility of art-historical debates that confine artifacts within imagined moments when they were frozen in time and in space.

The article begins with a discussion of William Barton's ownership narrative regarding this Qur'an. This leads to an exploration of the activities of and interactions among people within Barton's professional circles, who, in one way or another, might have played a role in the transmission of this *mushaf*. The accounts that seek to reconstruct this Qur'an's biography start in Oberlin and St. Louis, continue in Van, New York, Istanbul, Jerusalem, and Nablus, and, making full circle, end in St. Louis and Oberlin. In addition to this biographical account, the article presents for the specialists a description and analysis of the *mushaf's* physical and aesthetic qualities.

From Scripture to commodity In "Commodities and the Politics of Value," Arjun Appadurai argues that in order to understand "the human and social contexts of things," specifically, the transactions and calculations that enliven them, "[W]e have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories."²⁶ Because of the lapses in pertinent records, it is easier to trace this Qur'an's past backwards, starting from its current location.

The written history of the *mushaf* begins with an ownership record dated 24 March 1913, signed by the Reverend William E. Barton.²⁷ Typed on the letterhead of the First Church of Oak Park, Illinois, where Barton served as pastor until his retirement in 1924, the letter was submitted to the Oberlin College Library at the time Barton had deposited the *mushaf* there. In his statement, Barton declares that the Qur'an was brought to the United States "as part of the Jerusalem exhibit in St. Louis." This information is repeated in a handwritten note that Barton penned on the inside of the Qur'an's cover upside down (suggesting his illiteracy in Arabic), which identifies the specific display venue within St. Louis as the "Mosque of Omar."

²⁶ Appadurai Arjun, "Commodities and the politics of value," in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. idem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.

²⁷ William E. Barton files, Oberlin College Library Special Collections.

As is well known, “Mosque of Omar” was a common misnomer that Westerners used in reference to the Dome of the Rock. A diagram of the American Jerusalem attached to a letter dated 10 *Şevval* 1321 [30 December 1903] and sent from Washington to Istanbul testifies to the exhibition organizers’ confusion: within the replica city titled “The New Jerusalem” stands the Dome of the Rock, mislabeled in capital letters as the “Mosque of Omar.”²⁸ An interesting unofficial source, a widely disseminated article by Helen H. Hoffman entitled, “Must Do As Moslems When They Worship,” is proof of that mix-up at popular level: discussed in detail, with its location, history, as well as architectural plan and decoration, the monument to which the author refers as the Mosque of Omar is, again, the Dome.²⁹ Hoffman’s reference to a minaret whose spiral stairway, she writes, the *müezzin* will climb to make the call to prayer, reveals her further confusion since her reference must have been to the minaret of the Aqsa Mosque, a replica of which was also created inside the American Jerusalem.³⁰ Because of these erroneous designations, it is not possible to determine with certainty whether this Qur’an was displayed (or read) inside the “mimic mosque”³¹ or the replica of the Dome in St. Louis.³²

Regardless, how was the *mushaf* taken out of its home in Jerusalem in the first place? Partial answers to this question come from Reverend Barton’s above-mentioned letter to Oberlin College:

[The] exquisite copy of the Qur’an manuscript...I am afraid was obtained through some misrepresentation. The sheiks of the Mosque of Omar were asked to send genuine articles from that mosque, and sent some banners, a brass candlestick and some other articles to be placed in the reproduction of that building. I am afraid, [the sheiks] did it under the impression that the building thus erected was to have been a place of worship. The other treasure which they contributed was this rare old Koran. At the close of the Fair, these articles were sold and I was able to procure this fine book (Fig. 5).³³

28 BOA.YA.HUS.00463.00037.001.

29 *St. Paul Globe* (2 January 1904): 6, *Salt Lake Herald* (2 January 1904): 6.

30 According to *World’s Fair Bulletin* (August 1903), 37, the Aqsa Mosque was going to be reserved for the worship of Jews and Christians.

31 *Louisiana and the Fair: An Exposition of the World, Its People and their Achievements*, Vol. 9 (1905): 3476.

32 *Ibid.*, published a year after the Fair, gives the contradictory information that, “In neither of these edifices was worship held, for the reason that no Mahommedan priest could be found in St. Louis.”

33 William E. Barton files, Oberlin College Library Special Collections. In the original document, the word “sold” is underlined and followed by a check mark, presumably at a later time.

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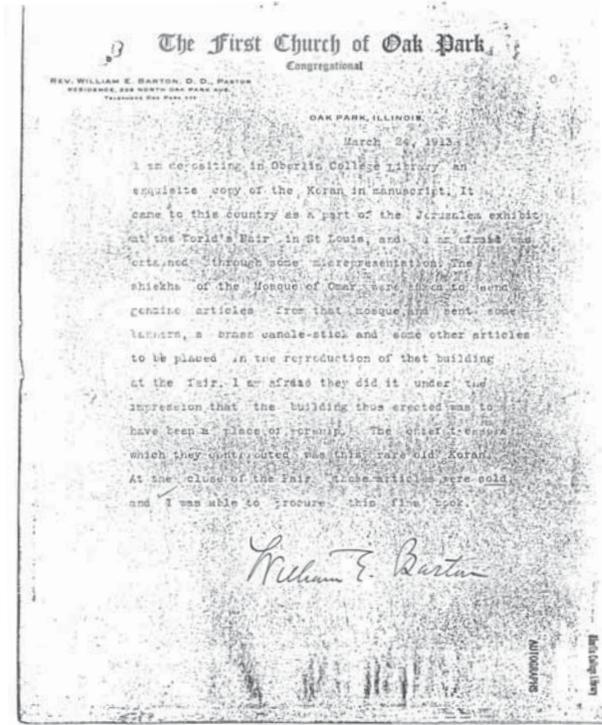


Fig. 5. William E. Barton’s letter to Oberlin College Library, dated 1913

These statements, which convey that a good fortunate, if compunctious, collector had purchased the old Qur’an, raise a number of questions about the authenticity of their author’s claims. Why, for instance, would the sheikhs choose to send to St. Louis a nearly four-hundred-year old Qur’an, rather than a more contemporary one, even if they had seriously thought that their American friends were erecting a real and permanent mosque in the middle of the city? If the sheikhs were so beneficent as to “contribute” overseas this fine “treasure” as souvenir, did they keep its first and final pages, which possibly contained some sort of ownership record, as memorabilia for themselves? And if they did send the Qur’an abroad in their naiveté, as William Barton claimed, why was it not returned to Jerusalem at the end of the Fair along with various other items, but “sold” instead? Last but not least, had Barton really procured the *mushaf* through this alleged sale? Surviving evidence does not provide conclusive answers to these questions. It does, however, prompt us to look one step further back in history, towards the places and events outside of St. Louis that marked the beginning of the *mushaf*’s commoditization process.

Records in Ottoman archives suggest that communication regarding Ottoman participation at the Fair was initiated in 1903 by Alexander Konta, General Manager of The Jerusalem Exhibition Co., through the Ottoman embassy in Washington. A banker and broker from St. Louis, Konta was a frequent visitor to Jerusalem, spoke the native languages of the region, and was “intimately acquainted with high Turkish officials at Jerusalem and Constantinople.”³⁴ Correspondence between Konta and Şekip Bey, Ottoman ambassador to Washington, reveals the former’s determination to succeed at the ambitious Jerusalem project, and the Ottoman government’s belated response. On 27 *Receb* 1321 [29 September 1903], in response to Konta’s request for Ottoman participation, the *Ticaret ve Nafia Nezareti* (Ministry of Commerce) had appointed Şekip Bey “Honorary Commissioner of the St. Louis Exhibition.”³⁵ It is clear from a letter dated 7 *Şevval* 1321 [30 December 1903], however, that, despite taking this initial step, Istanbul had not followed through on Konta’s request for delivery of such items as “Hereke rugs, porcelains from the royal factories, and products and textiles from the *Tophane-i Amire*” to be displayed and sold at the Ottoman concessions.³⁶ Unmoved by Konta’s assurance that participation in the Fair would reinforce “the excellent prestige of the caliphate within the Islamic world,” and indifferent to his threat of a call to the governments of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco should the Ottomans refrain from participation, Istanbul, it appears from these early correspondences, shared neither the Americans’ enthusiasm nor their sense of urgency to celebrate the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase.³⁷

In a lengthy telegram addressed to Şekip Bey, which the ambassador translated and forwarded to Istanbul on 4 *Zilhicce* 1321 [21 February 1904], a frustrated Konta demanded an immediate response to a letter he had sent nearly two months earlier. Added to Konta’s renewed invitation was an extended and enumerated list of requests: antiquities from the *Müze-i Hümayun* (Imperial Museum) and a military band to perform daily in the American Jerusalem “in order to demonstrate the Ottomans’ advancement in the sciences and industry.” The products delivered, Konta reassured, would be fully insured and safely returned to Istanbul.³⁸ Failing

34 *Prospectus of The Jerusalem Exhibit Co.* (St. Louis: n.p., 1904), 9-10.

35 BOA.YA.HUS.00459.00115.001.

36 BOA.YA.HUS.463.37.

37 For details of the rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Egyptians “who did not know their proper station,” within the context of World’s Fairs, see Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, Chapter 6, “Ottoman Image Management and Damage Control.”

38 BOA.YA.RES.00124.00059.003.

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again to persuade Istanbul, Konta had to wait until 24 *Muharrem* 1322 [10 April 1904], when Şekib Bey would send yet another letter of reminder to the *sadaret* to win the government's approval.³⁹

The active, if belated, participation of the Ottomans in the Fair was announced only in passing in Ottoman newspapers, but with commotion in American media.⁴⁰ While *Servet-i Fünun* published six photographs from the Fair site with no accompanying text, American papers, especially keen to highlight the reasons for the sultan's apparent reluctance that caused delay, reported that Abdülhamid II "[G]ave his official sanction to participation in and representation of his country at the world's fair, [but] did so upon one distinct condition: that visitors to the Mosque of Omar remove their shoes before entering the sanctuary."⁴¹ In addition to this "strange request," papers stated, the Sultan "also objected to the inclusion of 'several dances' that [had] been credited to his people in earlier international shows," referring no doubt to the infamously popular component of such events: belly dancers.⁴² Americans were especially intrigued by Muslim religious practices: the five-time daily prayers, papers reported, were going to be held by "two high priests who [were] known personally to the sultan of Turkey."⁴³ A letter from the Office of the Grand Vizier to the Sublime Porte Foreign Ministry dated 4 *Zilhicca* 1321 [21 February 1904] confirms the appointment of an imam and a *müezzin* for the needs of the Muslim attendees of the Fair, but suggests that the detail about the Sultan's personal acquaintance with the imams was an elaboration of American journalists.⁴⁴

Such matters as shoes, belly dancers, and imams were no doubt germane to the image of a dignified empire, which Selim Deringil demonstrates, the Hamidian state aimed to deliver abroad through carefully crafted "fairs policies." The government's "image management and damage control"⁴⁵ efforts, Deringil

39 BOA.BEO.2310.173185.001. For the response to the letter, see BEO.2311.173290.001.

40 *Servet-i Fünun*, 15 July 1320 [1903], cover page.

41 *Rock Island Argus* (29 December 1903), 3. For other news of the Sultan's pre-conditions for participation in the Fair, see *Sunday Morning Star* (28 February 1904), *Salt Lake Herald* (3 January 1904), Last Edition, 6, and *St. Paul Globe* (2 January 1904), 6.

42 For the *Rock Island Argus* (29 December 1903), 3 quotes the Sultan as saying, "Whatever represents my country and subjects at the fair, I want to be an exact and faithful representation."

43 *St. Paul Globe* (2 January 1904), 6.

44 BOA.YA.RES.00124.00059.

45 Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 154.

states, aimed to “present the Ottoman Empire as the leader of the Islamic world yet a modern member of the civilized community of nations... [and to] repel any slight or insult to the Sublime State’s prestige.”⁴⁶ Documents exchanged among the Ottoman Embassy in Washington, Ottoman Foreign Ministry, and Ottoman Ministry of Commerce between 1903 and 1904 indicate that an important component of these policies related to the Fair’s commercial activities. The beginning of a series of stringent efforts to achieve successful representation through first-hand management of resources is marked by an order that appoints Matief, a mercantile agent from Edirne, as commissioner of the Exposition’s affairs.⁴⁷ Activities following Matief’s appointment demonstrate strategic planning: while an order issued by the Sublime Porte Foreign Ministry declared participation at the conference of raw edibles and the conference of dentistry unnecessary,⁴⁸ the Ministry of Commerce released a call to “male and female producers” in the provinces to urge contribution of “hand-made crafts and products” to be sold at the Ottoman pavilions. The formation of an organization dedicated exclusively to the activities and needs of craftswomen was assigned directly to the highest-ranking Ottoman representative, Şekib Bey.⁴⁹ A lengthy discussion of the question of the applicability of custom’s tax on exhibition items involved twenty-three members of the Ministry of Commerce. The Ministry’s significant decision that items “exported to” and “imported from” St. Louis be tax-exempt both testifies to the government’s judicious efforts to encourage participation, and serves as proof that at least some of the exhibition items were expected to be “imported back,” either as surplus or because they had not been intended for sale.⁵⁰ The question that arises here is whether an old Qur’an from Jerusalem was among the items to which these correspondences refer.

The existence of a document released from the Sublime Porte Foreign Ministry on 10 *Şevval* 1321 [30 December 1903], mentioned earlier, instructing producers outside of the capital to send their merchandise to Istanbul to be shipped by boat to St. Louis, hints at a hitherto undiscovered list (or lists) of items that had

46 Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 154.

47 A.MTZ.(04).00110.00061.001.

48 BEO.002373.177936 and BEO.002370.177676.

49 For details of this women’s organization, see, BEO.002389.179172, BEO002369.177636, BEO.002331.174820.003, DH.MKT.00884.00004.004.

50 BEO.002308.173058, BEO.002319.173911, ŞD.OI221.00025. BEO.002350.176234 orders that in lieu of taxation, “export items” be subjected to escrow money or registered with a guarantor.

been delivered to the United States.⁵¹ Even in the absence of such a list, however, the government’s scrutiny of the Fair’s affairs as attested in these records make unconvincing the proposition that an official of the “Mosque of Omar” would be allowed to offer a precious Qur’an for sale. The unsustainability of Barton’s claim thus leads to two suppositions: either the alleged sale had been conducted illegitimately, or it actually never took place. Research that examines these possibilities brings us close to a group of men and women whose personal interests and professional activities altered this *mushaf*’s course of life and transformed it into a “sacred commodity.”⁵²

Trajectories in and out of Palestine Igor Kopytoff, author of “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” describes commoditization as “a process of becoming rather than as an all-or-none state of being.”⁵³ In this process, Kopytoff argues, commoditization of things such as public lands, monuments, state art collections, and ritual objects that are “publicly precluded from being commoditized” occurs when power “asserts itself symbolically by insisting on its right to singularize an object or a set or class of objects.”⁵⁴ The case of this *mushaf*, because of the involvement of multiple powers (individuals, institutions, and states) and the fluidity of their positions at once as possessors, donors, and brokers, adds a new dimension to Kopytoff’s theory of singularization and his discussion of how “power” operates. The relationships of these powers to the *mushaf* are best substantiated through a study of their engagements in Ottoman Jerusalem.

In his autobiography, William Barton makes no mention of a visit to the St. Louis Exposition. Yet, based on a brief reference to an invitation that he received to the 1898 Tennessee World’s Fair, as well as a note about a heart attack that his wife Esther Barton suffered in St. Louis in 1904, it is possible to conjecture that Barton was present in St. Louis at the time of, if not prior to, the Fair.⁵⁵ Though a critical part of the *mushaf*’s transaction narrative, however, Barton’s possible

51 BOA.Y.A.HUS.463.37.

52 Patrick Geary, “Sacred Commodities: the circulation of medieval relics,” in Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*, 169.

53 Igor Kopytoff, “The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process,” in Appadurai, *ibid.*, 73.

54 *Ibid.*, 73.

55 William E. Barton, *Autobiography*, 310.



Fig. 6. William E. Barton's handwritten note on the inside of the Qur'an's cover

presence on the Fair grounds, before or during the exhibition, does not necessarily verify his statement about his purchase of the Qur'an on that site.

A significant piece of information that challenges Barton's claims in his 1913 letter is the above-mentioned note that he inscribed upside down on the inside of the Qur'an's front cover. In ornate handwriting, Barton records these words:

This exquisite old Ms. Koran is from the Mosque of Omar, procured with great difficulty from a high sheikh of that mosque for the reproduction of that building at the World's Fair, St. Louis, 1904. Such a Koran no individual, even a Mohammedan, might own in Turkey, and no Christian could lawfully procure it (Fig. 6).

The discrepancy between a remorseful official statement submitted to Oberlin College and a handwritten note of triumphal ownership suggests that the transmission of the Qur'an from Muslim hands to a private owner involved more maneuvering than William Barton had wanted to reveal. The implication of these staggering contradictions is that the Qur'an was not sent to St. Louis voluntarily or as a result of a misunderstanding on the part of the sheikhs. Furthermore, the note suggests the *mushaf* was procured prior to the opening of the Fair, rather than through a sale at the end of it. If Barton had not purchased this Qur'an at the Fair though, but rather prior to it, where had he acquired it? Precisely what was that "great difficulty," which he felt the need to record on the *mushaf*, and how did he overcome it? Answers to these questions bring to light the dynamics of the type of commoditization that brings together, as Appadurai expounds, "actors from quite different cultural systems" who share "only the most minimal understanding (from the conceptual point of view) about the objects in question and agree *only*

about the terms of trade.”⁵⁶ What follows is an account of each of these actors’ interactions with, or rather interference in, the social life of this *mushaf*.

William Barton came from a humble background. Despite this, like his elder cousin and close friend Clara Barton (1821-1912), founder of the American Red Cross, he aspired to a life and career that would leave a mark on history. The close relationship between the two cousins is attested in the letters they exchanged between 1901 and 1929, with occasional interruptions because of both of their demanding careers. In letters penned with deference and warmth, Clara and William Barton discussed various family matters, but their exchanges more often concerned professional activities and future plans.⁵⁷ The Bartons’ tight relationship is also evident in Clara Barton’s visit to Oberlin in 1868 to deliver a lecture on the Civil War.⁵⁸ Several years later, after earning his degree from the Theological Seminary, William Barton gave speeches at various Red Cross events and campaigns, and in his old age, wrote a biography of Clara Barton.⁵⁹

Among Clara Barton’s extraordinary deeds was a missionary visit to the Ottoman Empire in 1895. Cable dispatches that the legendary nurse sent from the towns of Van and Bitlis to the Red Cross headquarters in New York, as well as the reports that she submitted to American newspapers, shed light on the period’s events from her perspective.⁶⁰ In these reports, as well as William Barton’s account of her activities in Ottoman lands, Clara Barton emerges as a woman fully preoccupied with a humanitarian, rather than a bibliophilic, agenda, though she did own a quite extensive library.⁶¹ Although she received from the Sultan the

56 Appadurai, “Commodities and the politics of value,” 15.

57 Library of Congress, Clara Barton Papers; 1901-1929.

58 *Lorain County News* (8 January 1868), 3.

59 William E. Barton, *The Life of Clara Barton: Founder of The American Red Cross* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922).

60 For a report dated 3 *Muharrem* 1314 [14 June 1896] relating to a statement that Clara Barton gave to an American newspaper about her efforts to distribute humanitarian aid in Ottoman lands and the aid she stated Ottoman officials provided to her, see BOA.DH.TMIK.M.7.24. Another document (Y.A.HUS.00349.00037.001) released from the *sadaret* on 21 *Şevval* 1313 [5 April 1896] contains a commentary on Clara Barton’s statements to American papers about the events in Anatolia and Russia’s involvement. For articles announcing her return to New York and reporting her activities in Anatolia, see *Washington Times* (13 September 1896), *St. Paul Daily Globe* (12 December 1895), and *Morning Times* (13 September 1896).

61 For an account of Clara Barton’s activities in the Ottoman Empire, see, William E. Barton, *ibid.* 256-57.



Fig. 7. Lilian von Finkelstein Mountford (Lydia Mamreov) with her siblings or members of her troupe

prestigious *şefakat nişanı*⁶² for her relief work in Anatolia, presentation to her in Istanbul of a 15th-century Qur'an from Jerusalem as an honorary gift appears quite unlikely. For these reasons, Clara Barton's name cannot be directly associated with this Qur'an. She does lead us, however, to a more likely agent, the Mamreov family.

The Mamreovs were a renowned Russian family. The father, a colonel in the Russian army, had fled his native land due to political troubles, and settled in Jerusalem where his four children, Bruce, Peter, Anna, and Lillian, were born. According to the introduction of *Iesät Nassar: The Story of the Life of Jesus The Nazarene*, authored by Bruce, Peter, and Anna Mamreov, the family held privileges in Palestine: in 1840, Sultan Abdülmecid granted the father "a *firman*, a decree that gave him and his family prestige, not only with the ruling Mohamedan families, but also with the leading Oriental Christian and Moslem ecclesiastics."⁶³ Furthermore, two of the siblings (presumably Peter and Anna) were connected with the United States Consulate in Jerusalem, and one of them also worked with the representative of the Palestine Exploration Society in that city (Fig. 7).⁶⁴

62 A medal of honor given exclusively to women who conduct charitable work. For a photograph of the *şefakat nişanı*, see William E. Barton, *ibid.*, 257.

63 *Iesät Nassar: The Story of the Life of Jesus the Nazarene* (New York: Sunrise Publishing Company, 1895), introduction.

64 *New-York Tribune* (16 August 1900), 9. Peter Mamreov's service as U.S. Vice Consul in Palestine is also noted in his obituary in *New-York Tribune* (10 January 1902), 9.

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The Mamreovs’ connections with Palestine were most visible in their activities at the Chautauqua Institution in New York, which, incidentally, housed for many years a model of Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Upon emigrating to the United States, the young Peter von Finkelstein Mamreov (1855?-1902), a linguist well versed in English, French, Russian, Italian, German, Spanish, and Arabic, settled in New York where he began to work for *The New York Times*.⁶⁶ His lectures on the Holy Land, often accompanied by an entertaining troupe dressed in native Palestinian clothes, were highly popular in Chautauqua circles.⁶⁷ On more than one occasion, Peter Mamreov’s active career brought him into the company of Clara Barton at Glen Echo.⁶⁸

Also active participants at the Chautauqua, the two Mamreov sisters, Anna Mamreov (d. ?) and Lilian (more commonly known as Lydia) von Finkelstein Mountford (1855-1917), were likewise dedicated to teaching on Palestine. Like her brother Peter, in her personal and professional life, Lydia had a theatrical side to her: as she promoted the life in the Holy Land, “the Oriental lecturess” loved to dress up in native garb and made frequent public appearances in costume.⁶⁹ On a more significant note, both Lydia and Anna were present in the American Jerusalem in 1904, Anna as translator and spokeswoman, Lydia as director of displays and exhibitions.⁷⁰

Of the two sisters, Lydia attracted more attention from the media. The “Daily Notes” section of the *Star*, dated 9 February 1904, lauds her appointment, only a few months before the inauguration of the Fair, with the words: “[T]he celebrated delineator of the manners and customs of the mysterious East, has been appointed director of displays and exhibits.” At the time of the paper’s publication, Lydia was in Jerusalem, “gathering specimens of the different nationalities which inhabit the Holy Land, and forming a collection of costumes, curios and other objects of interest.”⁷¹ Given the specific purpose of her visit, it is possible that the Mamluk Qur’an was among those objects of interest that Lydia had brought to St.

65 *World’s Fair Bulletin* (September 1902): 5.

66 *New York Tribune* (16 August 1900), 9, *The Evening World* (16 March 1895), 4.

67 For narratives of Peter Mamreov’s lectures, see, *Belmont Chronicle* (24 August 1893), np., *The Evening World* (16 March 1895), 4, and *Shenandoah Herald* (26 June 1891), n.p.

68 *The Sunday Herald* (12 July 1891), 2, and (28 June 1891), 2.

69 *Star, Daily Notes* (9 February 1904), issue 7931, 2.

70 *World’s Fair Bulletin* (August 1903): 38.

71 *Star, Daily Notes* (9 February 1904), issue 7931, 2.

Louis. Assuming this was the case, one wonders whether she might have acquired the *mushaf* through purchase or through personal contact with the sheikhs of “Mosque of Omar,” assuming William Barton’s handwritten note on the Qur’an’s cover is truthful, at least in this regard.

Americans’ preparatory activities in Jerusalem are attested in two documents preserved in Ottoman archives. Of these, the first is a telegram that the Governor of Syria sent to the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Istanbul on 1 *Zilkâde* 1321 [19 January 1904], reporting the visit of one Monsieur Batur, “a member of the St. Louis Exhibition,” to Jerusalem “on invitation from the *mutasarrıf*.” The telegram informs the Ministry that M. Batur was visiting “to observe the environs of the Valley of Moses” and was in the company of local gendarmerie.⁷² Though it is tempting to think that the name Batur is a badly misspelled form of Peter, which would suggest a visit by Peter Mamreov, the identity of this guest remains to be discovered.

The second piece of correspondence, a letter sent by the *Nezaret-i Evkaf Hümayunu* (Ministry of Imperial Religious Foundations) on 3 *Rebiülevvel* 1322 [16 May 1904] is more revealing. The letter reports intelligence from Ben Halek, Keeper of Pious Endowments in Jerusalem, about “an American woman contacting the workers of the Noble Sanctuary regarding antiquities.” As investigation of the report continues, in the face of the “increasing numbers of foreign travelers who visit the Holy Land each year,” and who “try every method to gain possession of these antiquities,” the Ministry orders the Customs Office to search the belongings of foreign visitors at departure points for stolen artifacts. For added security measures, the Ministry orders that, with assistance from the sheikh of the Sanctuary, and under the supervision of the Pious Endowments, such items as “exalted Qur’ans, prayer rugs, candle sticks, and similar items that are not in constant use be gathered and protected in a special area within the premises of the Noble Sanctuary,” and that “a well-organized inventory of these items be prepared.”⁷³

The earnestness with which officials of the Noble Sanctuary responded to this order did not quite match the government’s expectations. In fact, Istanbul’s challenges in protecting and managing the holy sites and their relics only escalated thereafter, reaching an embarrassing climax in 1911 when Khalil Danaf, the chief sheikh and guardian of the Dome, was accused of accepting bribery from the

72 BOA.DH.MKT.00811.00047.001 and 002.

73 BOA.BEO.002333.174972.

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Fig. 8. Sheikh Khalil Danaf in his living room

British to facilitate secret excavations at the Haram enclosure.⁷⁴ Khalil Danaf’s name appears frequently in contemporary British and American newspapers reporting the incident, but his only photograph comes from an unexpected source. At the center of this undated and now yellow picture, the self-confident sheikh appears seated cross-legged at ease on the floor in what appears to be his living room. He wears a dark-colored turban that matches his dark, long, curly beard, and a light-colored heavy robe with a long embroidered scarf that touches softly the old, cushioned floor *kilims*. In his right hand, the sheikh holds loosely what appear to be two large and thick metal keys, while he secures a *tespih* between his left thumb and index finger. Because his eyes under a deeply wrinkled forehead look slightly above the center of the camera, the sheikh’s gaze transcends the viewer. To his left is a floor bed made of the same torn *kilims*, and a pillow that is laid against a closet fitted inside a niche on the bare wall. On the shelves of an open cupboard to his right are scattered cups and plates. The only articles of distinction inside the otherwise modest room are two pairs of metal keys, similar to the two in his hand, presumably those of the Dome, that hang prominently

⁷⁴ For detailed accounts of the incident, including Khalil Danaf’s removal from his position, see, BOA.DH.İD.23. For similar events of 1911, see *The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*, Vol. XXXIII, 1911 (Michigan: The Antiquarian Publishing Co.): 60.



Fig. 9. Sheikh Khalil Danaf and Lydia Mamreov under the Rock, Jerusalem

from a high shelf behind the sheikh. From his outfit and the items in his hand, Khalil Danaf appears to have just returned from outside. The powerful image of the sheikh becomes all the more arresting with knowledge that the photograph was once part of Lydia Mamreov’s private library (Fig. 8).⁷⁵

The clandestine amity between Lydia Mamreov and Sheikh Danaf did not remain entirely undocumented: a photograph published in 1910 in *The Juvenile Instructor*, the organ of the Deseret Sunday School Union, shows the two within the chamber beneath the Rock inside the Dome (Fig. 9). The accompanying text by Charles E. Johnson of Iowa (1859-1939) is intriguing for both what it discloses and its triumphal tone that echoes that of Barton’s note on the inside of the Qur’an’s cover: “Through his [i.e., the sheikh’s] friendship for Madam Mountford [i.e., Mamreov], I was enabled to secure many photographs which are impossible ordinarily to obtain. On one occasion, I made a picture by flashlight of Madam

⁷⁵ Library of Congress, *Miscellaneous material relating to the career of Lydia Mamreov von Finkelstein Mountford*, LCCN 2005692663, LOT 5918.

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Mountford standing on the Rock, a thing which has probably never been allowed before. The rank and file of the Moslems would have considered it sacrilege and desecration of the Rock, and would have doubtless made it extremely unpleasant for us had it become known."⁷⁶ "The American woman" in Jerusalem reported by the intelligence was, then, almost certainly, Lydia Mamreov.

If the Qur'an was indeed brought to St. Louis by Lydia Mamreov through the agency of Sheikh Danaf, though, how did it come into William Barton's possession? The Reverend's close involvement in Clara Barton's circles and in various Red Cross and Chautauqua events suggests that he might have met the Mamreovs prior to the World's Fair. Regardless of the time of their acquaintance, it is reasonable to think that, with her authority as Director of Exhibitions, Lydia Mamreov might have gifted, or more likely sold, the Qur'an to William Barton, either directly or through Clara Barton, with whom her brother (and possibly also she herself) was acquainted. Although this explanation is plausible, since the Mamreovs' purchase or sale of the *mushaf* cannot be documented, it is necessary to consider other actors as well, especially because the Mamreovs were not the only visitors from the United States to Palestine prior to the Fair.

As someone who traveled extensively in his own country, touring every state in the Union, and as a religious figure connected to a group of learned people with similar interests in the Holy Land, it seems only natural that William Barton visited Palestine himself. It is quite a coincidence, however, that his first overseas visit took place in 1902, only one year before the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase and the original date intended for the Fair's inauguration.⁷⁷ Despite the length of his tour and the variety of locations he visited, in his autobiography, Barton writes only this of his trip to the Holy Land: "We camped in Palestine, in those days when we traveled on horseback and dwelt in tents."⁷⁸ His nostalgic words notwithstanding, the Reverend's activities in Palestine were anything but an Orientalist fantasy.

Barton's days in Palestine are recorded in his post-visit communication. Among the individuals with whom the Reverend exchanged letters upon his

76 Charles E. Johnson, "The Mosque of Omar (Kubbet es-Sakhra, The Dome of the Rock," in *The Juvenile Instructor Organ of the Deseret Sunday School Union*, Vol. XLV, No. 11 (November 1910): 581.

77 Barton, *Ibid.*, 308-09. The date 1902 is misprinted as 1920.

78 Barton, *Ibid.*, 309.



Fig. 10. American Colony Store

return to the United States two stand out: Samuel Johnson (d. ?), an antique dealer, and Jacob ben Aaron, High Priest of the Samaritans (1840-1918). The contents as well as the frequency of the correspondence between Barton and these men shed light on two of Barton's interests: collecting old books, especially scriptures, and his commitment to help protect the small community of Samaritans.⁷⁹

Samuel Johnson was an independent book dealer who operated the American Colony Store in Jerusalem. Established in 1881 for philanthropic work, the American Colony was popular among the local Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. In around 1899, at the same time as it began to function as a hostel for visitors to the Holy Land, the society opened Vester and Co.—The American Colony Store. Established near the Jaffa Gate in the Old City in order to support the Colony's economy, the Colony Store offered to a clientele of tourists from America and Europe rugs, embroidery, costumes, jewelry and, although not recorded in the Colony's official publications, old manuscripts as well (Fig. 10).⁸⁰

Samuel Johnson's letters to William Barton from Palestine and Cairo between 1903 and 1904 do not include any references to a Qur'an. They do, however,

⁷⁹ Samaritans claim descent from the Northern Tribes of Israel. They were persecuted by Greeks and Romans, and their numbers diminished significantly in the 6th century under Justinian. For a history of the Samaritans, see Alan D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989), and Alan D. Crown, Reinhard Pummer and Abraham Tal, *A Companion to Samaritan Studies* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993).

⁸⁰ <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/americancolony/timeline05.html>. Accessed on 15 November 2015.

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Fig. 11. Jacob ben Aaron with his sons, holding the “oldest Pentateuch”

attest to the Reverend’s penchant for accumulating religious and historical manuscripts. In these letters, Johnson offers Barton several Torahs, with “most reasonable” asking prices, and reminds the Reverend of his first viewing of the scrolls at the Colony Store “while [he was] visiting with his group.”⁸¹ At least one of these Torahs, which Johnson identifies as Yemeni and dates to the early 14th century, is also housed at Oberlin College today. Of greater significance, however, is a Pentateuch in the same collection. Described in the Library’s “Gifts and Souvenirs” report as “a very old manuscript...from the Mount Zion synagogue of Jerusalem,” the manuscript is noted to have been “sent from that synagogue for display in the reproduction of the synagogue at the World’s Fair, St. Louis.”⁸² The emergence

81 Samuel Johnson’s letter dated 6 April 1903 is in the William E. Barton files at Oberlin’s Special Collections. Barton announces his plan to donate some manuscripts to the College in a letter he sent on 7 December 1912 to President King of Oberlin College. Barton explicitly requests not to be “thanked publicly.”

82 Incorrectly recorded as being from the 19th century. Accession number 091.222.1 / B 471.2 / 243808. In a handwritten note today preserved at Boston University (William E. Barton papers, nu. 17), Barton records, “This copy of the Samaritan Torah was purchased by me March 11, 1902, from one of the priests, Abu Hassan, son of the High Priest of the Samaritans, in Nablus, Palestine. It is complete and a good copy.” For his purchase narrative and analysis of the codex, see William Eleazar Barton, *The Samaritan Pentateuch: The Story of Survival Among the Sects* (Oberlin: The Bibliotheca Sacra Company, 1903).

of this sacred text within close proximity to the Mamluk Qur'an strengthens the conjecture that the *mushaf*, like the Pentateuch, had changed hands prior to the opening of the Fair.

A brief letter of ownership dated 1913, the same year Barton deposited the *mushaf* at the College, introduces a most interesting figure into the narrative, Jacob ben Aaron. In this letter written in Samaritan with an abbreviated translation in Arabic, the High Priest informs the Oberlin College of Barton's notice to him about his donation of the Pentateuch to the College (Fig. 11).⁸³ Barton had met Jacob ben Aaron in Nablus and, upon his return back home, exchanged numerous letters with him until 1912.⁸⁴ With help from his son Abu Hasan, who was literate in Arabic, the High Priest wrote in Arabic, and the Reverend responded in English.⁸⁵ During the course of his friendship with the High Priest (and after the Priest's death, with his son), Barton committed a great amount of time to helping the nearly vanishing community of Samaritans. Passionate to promote the significance of Samaritan heritage for Christianity and, as he would later mention in passing, also to convert the Samaritans,⁸⁶ Barton wrote essays on their religion, history, and culture, and prepared for publication a number of papers that the High Priest had authored.⁸⁷ As part of his efforts to help improve the Samaritans' financial state, Barton also purchased from Jacob ben Aaron at least a dozen manuscripts penned in Arabic on the lives, beliefs, and practices of Samaritans.⁸⁸

83 Informing the Library that he had copied the manuscript in his own hand, the High Priest assures the College that the codex is "complete and correct." He also adds that he had copied the book from an original in his synagogue to present it to his "brother and beloved friend Dr. Barton." William E. Barton files, Oberlin Library Special Collections.

84 About a year after his acquaintance with Barton, the High Priest sends a letter to the *sadaret*, requesting permission to travel to the healing thermal waters in Vienna. It is unknown whether the High Priest extended his trip to other places. For his letter and the subsequent permission from the government, see BEO.002130.159742.001 and DH.MKT.00749.00055.001.

85 Letters are today in the Barton collection at Boston University. For a study of this collection, see, James D. Purvis, "Studies on Samaritan Materials in the W. E. Barton Collection in the Boston University Library," in *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1972): 134-143.

86 William E. Barton, *Bibliotheca Sacra: The War and the Samaritan Colony* (1903) in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 78, No. 309 (1921): 3. Barton mentions his discussion with E. K. Warren of an appropriate strategy for the Samaritans' hoped-for conversion.

87 William E. Barton, *ibid.*

88 This collection is today housed at Boston University.

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Exposed in the early years of the 20th century to a wave of avid American and European pilgrim-tourist-collectors, the Samaritans, it seems, found the sale of old manuscripts, mostly copies but originals as well (in "pretentious secrecy," as Barton described it in an account of one of his own bargainings),⁸⁹ to be a quick and effective remedy for their dire living conditions under Ottoman rule. The most significant group of visitors that the Samaritans hosted in that period was the participants in the World's Sunday School during its Convention in the Holy Land.⁹⁰ Under the leadership of such affluent members as E. K. Warren, the eight hundred members of the Convention's American branch arrived in the real Jerusalem in April 1904, just as their less fortunate fellows had begun to stroll the streets of the imitation town in St. Louis.⁹¹

The Cruise of the Eight Hundred: To and Through Palestine is a richly illustrated and collectively authored official publication of the 1904 Convention. Of particular interest in the book is an essay titled, "How We Dined as Guests of Abou Hassan," an eyewitness account of a dinner in honor of some of the Convention's participants. The author's account begins with the words, "Some of us were bidden to dine with Abou Hassan, officially attached to the Mosque of Omar." He remembers the arrival of the host "fresh from his duties at the Mosque," and "all smiles." The author then elaborates on how, initially startled by absence of plates, silverware, and napkins, the guests then followed their host, and "rolled up their sleeves and seized the lamb dish." Another memorable moment of the dinner was the viewing of the Mount of Olives: "From our point of observation, we could almost look into Gethsemane, while yonder all the while lay the foundation stone of Zion, elect, precious, but surmounted these many years by the dome of Mohammed. 'How long, O Lord? How Long?'" At the end of the evening, as "Abou Hassan, having dispensed a gracious hospitality," bid goodbye to his hosts, the author concludes, "his father, Brother Jacob, kissed him good-bye."⁹²

89 For a fascinating account of Barton's visit to the High Priest's house to purchase manuscripts, see, William E. Barton, *The Samaritan Pentateuch*, 10-13.

90 For announcement of the Convention, see *World's Fair Bulletin* (September 1902): 6.

91 After Warren's death, the manuscripts were transferred to the Warren family museum. In 1950, when the Warrens closed the museum, the collection was given to Michigan State University. For more on the history of the collection, see, Robert T. Anderson, "The Museum Trail," in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (March 1984): 41-43.

92 *The Cruise of the Eight Hundred: To and through Palestine* (New York City: The Christian Herald Press, 1905), 199-204.

This account of a lamb-dish dinner further reveals the complexity of the network of people and events within which the *mushaf* was circulated. Could it be Abu Hasan whom William Barton called “the high sheikh of Mosque of Omar” on the inside of the Qur’an’s cover? Barton’s friendship with the High Priest’s son strengthens this supposition, especially in light of Abu Hasan’s prominent rank within the local community and the privileges that he held as a mosque official. At the same time, Abu Hasan’s friendship with E. K. Warren, the likely author of the essay on the sumptuous dinner, prompts one to also consider Warren’s role in this transaction.

E. K. Warren (1847-1919) was a wealthy manufacturer from Michigan. After his visit to Palestine, like William Barton, he had become a guardian of the Samaritan heritage. In order to help the financial state of the Samaritans, he purchased manuscripts from them, and even envisioned a Samaritan museum in Palestine.⁹³ Though he was not able to realize his dream of a museum, Warren helped establish the American Samaritan Community, a charitable organization run by prominent religious figures, including William Barton. Warren’s plausible acquaintance with Abu Hasan and his friendship with Barton through the Community have implications, though faint, that might shift the outlines of this Qur’an’s journey: If Abu Hasan had indeed been instrumental in the *mushaf*’s departure from “the Mosque,” and if it was to Warren that he had delivered the book, then the *mushaf* would have been a later addition, if it was present at all, to the display in the American Jerusalem. In this case, one might surmise that Warren presented the *mushaf* to Barton upon his return to the United States (at which time the Jerusalem exhibition had already been inaugurated) or at a later date. The Fair, then, would simply have served as a convenient pretext to legitimize Barton’s latest addition to his collection.

The active journey of the *mushaf* came to a halt in the year 1926, when William Barton officially donated the Qur’an to Oberlin College. Interestingly, this date corresponds to the year when the Reverend visited Nablus, for a second and last time, to distribute what remained of the treasury of the American Samaritan Community after Warren’s death. With its disposition, the Community had ceased to exist, also bringing to an end Barton’s relationship with the Samaritans.⁹⁴ It was perhaps no coincidence that Barton decided this was time to officially separate from his Jerusalem treasury.

⁹³ A Samaritan museum was established in 1997.

⁹⁴ James D. Purvis, “Studies on Samaritan Materials,” 143.

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These names and events offer us possibilities that might account for this Qur'an's journey from Jerusalem to St. Louis, and thence to its final destination in Oberlin. Despite the ambiguities of their cases, the possible roles that Sheikh Danaf and Abu Hasan played in the biography of this *mushaf*, much like the involvement of the highly religious community of the Samaritans in transactions of their own sacred texts, complicate the operations of power as they have been delineated by Kopytoff. In cases where objects are commoditized by the very power(s) entrusted with their protection, as the world witnesses with ever-increasing frequency in geographies where traditional political systems are disintegrating and being replaced by erratic, if potent, forms of governance, terms of commoditization are becoming dangerously elusive, imposing a whole new array of challenges on issues of protection of Islamic cultural heritage. The story of this *mushaf* illustrates that circulation of sacred objects through exchange, sale, gift, or theft, as it transforms the holy into mundane, also results in the reconstruction at each stage of reappropriation a new value and meaning for the object. This, I believe, is all the more reason why objects' social lives, which surely will not fit on a museum wall label, should be acknowledged as an essential part of their art-historical narratives. It seems more likely to me that the challenges that we face today as art historians and museum experts could be rallied through scholarship that brings to the fore the itinerant lives of objects, rather than through practices that confine them within impervious glass cases.

Finally, Appudurai's emphasis on the form of objects, within which, he argues, their meanings are inscribed, redirects attention to the importance of analytical approaches to formal issues. As I discuss in detail below, this *mushaf* bears the marks in several places of a number of intentional damages: its opening and final folios were removed and replaced at a later date with European leaves and a page salvaged possibly from another Mamluk Qur'an (further complicating this codex's biographical narrative), and its inner cover and several pages are disfigured with scribbles in pencil and ink. Coupled with unintentional damage (trimming of the text on the edges during the rebinding process, and water damage), the long-lasting effects of the abuses the *mushaf* has suffered are nonetheless helpful in documenting the various stages of its life from its creation, active use, displacement, and circulation, to its nascent state in a storage room. Though specific details of each of these stages might escape us, the current physical condition of the codex testifies in tangible terms to the alterations and mutilations that its long journey inflicted on it. Regardless of how he acquired this Qur'an, from the Mamreovs,

from Samuel Johnson, Jacob ben Aaron, Abu Hasan, or E. K. Warren, William Barton played an important role in its history. An ambitious collector though he was, Barton was not a diligent cataloguer, and left us with little information about the individual items in his collection. I, therefore, conclude this article with a description and analysis of the Qur'an.

The codex The Qur'an is a single volume *mushaf* with two hundred and forty-one leaves, abruptly ending on f. 241b with *surah al-Kafiruun*. The pages are not foliated. A rectangular Oberlin College Library sticker on the inside of the back cover identifies the codex as a gift of William E. Barton and contains the information, "Accession number 295654, Class 091.297, Book K84." A pencil notation on the front cover of the Qur'an, written upside down, reads, "091 K 84 (on deposit)." In addition, f. 241a bears the imprint of a stamp in blue ink with the numbers 295654. An embossed Oberlin College stamp is visible on the right lower corner of the Qur'an's last page. A notation written upside down on the same page and inscribed and signed by Barton in black ink has been noted above. The only other evidence of ownership is a notation in Arabic found on the recto side of the opening page, scribbled faintly in pencil, presumably by a child. It reads, "*hadha al-mushaf li-shaykh ...*[illegible word]" (this *mushaf* belongs to sheikh ...).

The Qur'an, which is missing the recto side of its original illuminated opening page as well as its final folios that would have contained the last five *surahs*, bears no internal evidence for exact dating. The word *waqf*, inscribed on its numerous pages in brownish ink by a scribe and in pencil by the later childish hand mentioned above, certifies that the Qur'an once belonged to a pious institution (Fig. 12). However, no colophon, impression of a seal, or indication of an endowment deed is visible.

The leather binding of the Qur'an measures 27 cm. x 38.5 cm. It is composed of pressed board and covered possibly with goatskin. The leather is glued to the back and no liner cords are sewn in. Both the front and back covers are blind-stamped at the center with a plain, oval *semse* composed of a thick circle surrounding ten thinner rings that make the background to a sun motif with teardrop-shaped arms diminishing in size toward the center. The area between the outer border of the *semse* and the sun motif is filled with two symmetrical plant motifs whose arabesque leaves spring from a double-leaved root. The *semse* on

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Fig. 12. Page from the Mamluk Qur’an showing scribbles in pencil

both the front and back covers is surrounded first by a single and then, toward the edges of the cover, by a double frame of small heart motifs. The inner single frame is blind-stamped on four corners with a fan-like arabesque pattern. The fan-like patterns at the corners flank a different arabesque motif found at the center of the top and the bottom of the inner frame. The binding has a tuck flap decorated with a frame composed of the same small heart motifs and two arabesques facing one another at the center. The fore-edge flap lining contains a chain of black diamonds that run its length. The spine and the tuck flap are heavily worn. The Qur’an has been rebound at least twice. During the process, pages were re-trimmed and some of the marginalia was lost (Fig. 13).

The unpolished, thick, creamish, and unwatermarked paper is one-quarter *Baghdadi*. Page dimensions are 35 cm. x 25 cm. The text block measures 22 cm. x 30 cm. Catchwords are added in black ink in a later hand. Laid lines are inconsistent, and even the more pronounced ones are visible only under powerful light. The number of folios nested in each gathering varies between three and six: while the first gatherings show a pattern of fours and sixes (with the exception of the first gathering, which has folios of threes), the final gatherings have folios of five, with the exception of the last gathering, which has folios of four, and the second to the last gathering, which has folios of three. The first and the final gatherings are sown in white thread, while in the remainder of the book red thread is used.



Fig. 13. Page from the Mamluk Qur'an showing lost edges as a result of trimming

The original flyleaf is replaced with European paper, possibly Italian. The recto side of the flyleaf is firmly glued to the inside of the cover, and its verso side is blank except for two large letters (*kaf* and *alif*) scribbled in pencil, presumably by a child. The backside of the flyleaf contains *surah al-Fatiha*, inscribed at a later time. Close examination of the folios during partial separation of the binding from its pages revealed that the next page that follows the flyleaf is a single European sheet tipped in with generously applied adhesive. Laid on and consolidated firmly with glue on the verso side of this single sheet is the Qur'an's only illuminated page, salvaged possibly from another Mamluk Qur'an, containing the first four verses of *surah al-Baqarah*. This side is further consolidated on the edges and on the left bottom corner with patches of European paper, creating a paper surface with several uneven layers. *Surah al-Baqarah* continues on the backside of the single European sheet.

The replacement with European paper is done casually, as attested by the non-matching direction of the chain lines; while the flyleaf is laid out so that the chain lines appear vertically, the single sheet tipped in with adhesive has chain lines that appear horizontally. Three different watermarks are visible on the European paper used for replacement or repair. Of the three, the one found on the verso side of the flyleaf is especially helpful since its recto side is glued to the inside of the front cover, which indicates that it was replaced at the same time the



Fig. 14. Watermark on the modern page

Qur’an was rebound. This watermark contains in capital letters the word FRATELLI, showing the paper’s Italian origin, specifically, as being produced by the Fratelli Andreoli Cartiera Company. Two other watermarks by the same company, a three crescent motif on f. 135b and a watermark composed of capital letters A and C topped by the letter F to form a triangle on f. 152b (following verse 38 of *surah al-Qisas*), allow us to propose a late 18th-century *terminus post quem* for the Qur’an’s present binding as well as its major repair (and, possibly, concurrent infringement) (Fig. 14).⁹⁵

Other pages bear repairs done with lower quality white or yellowish scrap paper used either to cover a hole or to consolidate a decaying surface. Many of the folios are in need of restoration for tears and decomposed edges. A pre-modern reconstruction attempt that used excessive adhesive on the hinges caused some of the pages to stick together, making it unsafe to flip the pages without the help of a conservator. Hinges that create resistance to turning pages pose a danger of fissure, and call for an urgent need for restoration.

While the folios did not suffer from insect damage, a number of pages through one third of the Qur’an contain large water stains and patches of mold that are eating into the paper. Also damaging is the ink that is penetrating through the paper in places, creating holes and weakening it. Further damage to the book, though removable, is done carelessly, as if accidentally, in pencil and ink by the hand of a child. Among the words scribbled in this hand are *waqf* (anywhere from one to

⁹⁵ Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 291-92.

eleven times on a double page), *haqq*, Allah, and praises of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. In addition, f. 12a (*surah al-Baqarah*: 196) contains on top three drawings of David's star (one in pencil and two in black ink) and three drawings on the left margin that together resemble the Seal of Solomon, a talismanic mark intended to protect the Holy Book from worms and insects. In a few *surah* headings, the eyes of the letters are filled in pencil. Pencil is also used to scribble on several folios circular *ayah* dividers. Doodles in pencil (and, in one case, in purple crayon) are visible on a few folios. In addition, f. 12a bears a drawing in yellowish brown ink of what resembles a magic square.⁹⁶

In the absence of internal written evidence, the dating of the Qur'an to the Mamluk period, and specifically to the 15th century, is possible through an analysis of its formal and stylistic features. As noted earlier, the paper used is one-quarter *Baghdadi*, frequently seen in Mamluk Qur'ans of the period. Unlike a typical Ilkhanid Qur'an (as this *mushaf* is erroneously recorded to be) with few lines to a page, this *mushaf* contains thirteen lines to a page, except for f. 1b (the single European sheet tipped in with adhesive), which has twelve lines, and f. 241b, which has fourteen lines. A striking feature of the Qur'an is the six-line division of the main text on its incipit pages.

96 For magic squares, see, Gacek, *ibid.*, 137.

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Fig. 15. The only illuminated page of the Mamluk Qur’an

Another interesting feature of this Qur’an is the text block found on its only illuminated page (the salvaged page that contains the opening verses of *surah al-Baqarah*) that is framed on all four sides, creating a self-contained illumination. The square format of the text block is contrasted above and below with a central oval cartouche with semi-circular ends filled with free-floating arabesques in gold finely outlined in black ink and set against a blue background. While the upper oval cartouche contains the name of the *surah* and place of revelation, the lower cartouche indicates the number of *ayahs*. Unlike most Qur’ans from this period, which have titles in stylized Kufic, inscriptions in the oval cartouches are penned in *naskh* in white with a thick gold outline. Vertical panels forming the right and left side of the border contain medium-sized flower motifs resembling carnations painted in gold with black outlines and lightly touched with blue on the inside. The background is also painted gold. The upper and lower panels end with a circular medallion on the left margin. The upper medallion is partially smashed and trimmed, the lower one is entirely lost, and its place is patched with a square of now soiled and worn European scrap paper. To the left of the frame is a characteristically Mamluk hemisphere filled with golden arabesques set against a blue background. The six lines of calligraphy inside the text block are framed by cloud motifs joined by lively arabesques (Figs. 15 and 15a).



Fig. 16. The modern page facing the illuminated page

The recto side of the incipit pages (the backside of the European flyleaf) replicates the salvaged verso side in two aspects—in its square text block with an even number (six) of lines, and in its four-sided frame—but otherwise bears no similarity to it. Both the text and the frame are in black ink and unilluminated. All four panels forming the rectangular frame block contain oval cartouches that end in semi-circles, but the cartouches contain no inscription. As opposed to the small spikes that surround the frame and the medallions on the verso side, the frame of the recto side is crowned by eight interlocking semi-circles and does not have any medallions on the edge. Overall, the design that is created by use of a regular or a bullseye compass appears very modern, rigid, amateurish, and out of place (Fig. 16).

The discrepancy between the recto and verso sides of the opening pages raises questions about the book's physical integrity and motivations for its restoration. Why, for instance, was only the verso side of the opening pages salvaged? Was *surah al-Baqarah*, written in a different hand, reinscribed on a new page because the lines originally on the backside of the salvaged page did not match this Qur'an? If the salvaged page was part of the original Qur'an, where is the other half of the folio? The fact that the illumination appears on a single sheet detached

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Fig. 17. The first three pages of the Mamluk Qur’an inscribed in different calligraphic hands

from its other half (which should have been sewn into the same gathering) and is tipped into the gathering by use of adhesive increases the likelihood that this illuminated page once belonged to another Qur’an. The presence on each of these three pages of three different calligraphic hands that do not appear again in the rest of the Qur’an also supports this argument (Fig. 17). I contend, therefore, that the opening and final folios of the Qur’an were removed intentionally, in order to obliterate evidence of ownership, or to increase profit by selling the removed pages separately. Either at the time of this damage or at a later date, these leaves were then replaced with modern European paper and with a single page salvaged from another Mamluk Qur’an.

As is the case with a prominent group of Mamluk Qur’ans, this Qur’an’s pages are not framed, nor do they have any decorative elements other than the red ink used in *surah* headings, *ayah* separations, and orthographic marks. *Surah* headings include the name of the chapter, place of revelation, and the number of *ayahs* inscribed in large *thuluth* extending the length of a line, and at times bracketing the final words of the preceding *surah*. The main text is written in bright and intense black ink, which has faded on several folios toward the bottom of the page as a result of frequent physical contact. *Ayahs* are separated in an archaic manner by upturned apostrophes arranged in clusters of three. The text is divided into *ajza* and each *nisf* and *rub*’ is indicated in the margins in large letters in red ink, often trimmed during a rebinding process. Other marginal notations include



Fig. 18. Page showing water damage

editorial corrections in different hands and various scribbling in the childish hand mentioned above.

Five major and at least a couple of minor different calligraphic hands are visible. Both of the minor hands are in *riq'ā*, and are used to make interlinear corrections in pencil and in felt red ink. The recto side of the opening page with *surah al-Fatiha* is penned in an elegant and well-proportioned *naskh* in black ink without punctuation marks. The hand in the facing illuminated page containing the first four verses of the *surah al-Baqarah* is written with a thicker pen using darker black ink in a hand that verges on Mamluk *naskh*: letters are smaller, *kaf* is written in two-strokes, the swooping curve of the final *nun* ends before it forms a full bowl. There are no punctuation marks. The *surah* continues on the backside of this consolidated page and is inscribed in a third different hand writing in a small and spread-out *naskh*. The calligrapher uses the archaic, S-curved *kaf*, and his single-stroke *lam-alif* is circular at the bottom. Punctuation marks are indicated in red ink in the form of three unfilled teardrops creating a triangle. A handful of orthographic marks in red ink indicate elongated pronunciation. The fourth hand is the major corrective hand in a neat and vibrant *naskh*. This scribe's *ayns* are slightly curved up and elongated on top, and his single-stroke *lam-alifs* are gently tipped to the left and flat at the bottom. His archaic, single-stroke *kafs* are likewise curved up, bringing a subtle and attractive dynamism to his writing. His corrections are found more often on scrap paper that is whiter than the paper

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used by the original scribe of the *mushaf*. Finally, the fifth hand, the hand of the original scribe, is a neat and legible *naskh* with slightly elongated forms. He uses both the archaic, S-curved *kaf* and the two-stroke *kaf*. His *alifs* are a stroke without a serif. The tail of his *mims* curve up, and the curve of his *nuns* do not extend to complete a bowl. Typical of Mamluk writing, the scribe marks the otiose *alif* and other orthographic marks in red ink (Fig. 18).

The Qur'an has been preserved reasonably well by its past owners, and given its age and the distances it traveled, it did not deteriorate as might be expected. Future research and display do call for, however, comprehensive conservation and preservation plans.

"Such a Koran no individual might own": The Biography of a Mamluk Qur'an from Ottoman Jerusalem

Abstract ■ Much compelling work has been produced on World's Fairs of the 19th and 20th centuries that discusses the sociological, anthropological, political, technological, and industrial aspects of these ventures. While some catalogs remain, individual objects that were on display at these expositions have received no scholarly attention. This article presents the research findings on such an item, a 15th-century Mamluk Qur'an from Jerusalem that was brought to the United States, alleged to have been displayed at the World's Fair of 1904 in St. Louis.

Since its donation to Oberlin College and Conservatory in 1926 by the Reverend William Eleazar Barton (1861-1930), the celebrated biographer of Abraham Lincoln, this Qur'an has never been the subject of scholarly research. This study places the Mamluk Qur'an at its center, but avoids the recent "back to the object" trend in the field of Islamic art history. Rather, using primary sources (such as written correspondence between the United States and Ottoman governments, personal letters of the Qur'an's past owners, photographs, and newspaper reports), the article works to contribute to scholarship that explores the "routes" that objects travel, rather than their "roots." Instead of focusing on a much too familiar story of illicit antiquities transaction, the article explores the Mamluk Qur'an's biography that testifies to issues of protection of cultural heritage in the early-modern period. Furthermore, the distances that this Qur'an traveled and its fragile state provide an insight into the Ottoman government's complicated relationships with its Christian and Samaritan subjects at the dawn of the 20th century.

Keywords: Mamluk Qur'an, 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, William E. Barton, Jacob ben Aaron, Lydia Mamreov, Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock, cultural heritage protection, Jews in Jerusalem, Samaritans in Jerusalem, American Colony in Palestine, Clara Barton.

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