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A Christian Arab Gospel Book: Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl. 90 in its Mamluk Context

The illuminated manuscript of the Arabic Gospels (Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl. 90) (figs. 1–6), written and illuminated in Mamluk Damascus in 1340, is a major expression of Christian religious and artistic practice and scholarship in the Mamluk period. This contribution aims to draw attention to the insight the manuscript offers into Christian cultural, artistic, and intellectual concerns of the middle of the fourteenth century. This will be undertaken through an assessment of the information that is known or can be deduced about the book, and a discussion of aspects of its illumination, suggesting that its points of contact with both the Quran and other eastern Christian illuminated manuscripts indicate a discourse representing Arab Christian culture within, and sensitive to, its Islamic environment.

While the manuscript has been known through brief surveys in the catalogues of Marcus Simaika Pasha and Georg Graf before the mid-twentieth century, a fuller description of the illumination in the light of the text is timely (see appendix 1).¹ In

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¹ I am grateful to Madame Samiha Abd al-Shaheed, Chief Curator of Manuscripts of the Coptic Museum, Old Cairo, for facilitating my study of the manuscript. I am also grateful to Dr. Filiz Çağman and Dr. Banu Mahir at the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi as well as Dr. Michel Garel at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris for enabling my study of other manuscripts discussed here. The work in Istanbul was made possible through a British Academy Grant in the Humanities. For MS Bibl. 90 see: Georg Graf, *Catalogue de manuscrits arabes chrétiens conservés au Caire* (Vatican City, 1934), 77–80, no. 180; Marcus Simaika Pasha, assisted by Yassā ‘Abd al-Masih, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the Monasteries of Egypt* (Cairo, 1939), 1:10–11, no. 13, with pls. XVIII–XIX; Maria Cramer, *Koptische Buchmalerei: Illuminationen in Manuskripten des christlichen-koptischen Ägypten vom 4. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Recklinghausen, 1964), 40, with Abb. 26–27, no. 51 (misnumbered); Robert S. Nelson, “An Icon at Mt. Sinai and Christian Painting in Muslim Egypt During the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Art Bulletin* 65, no. 2 (1983): 214, with fig. 24; David James, *Qur’āns of the Mamlūks* (London, 1988), 149; Samir Khalil Samir, “La version arabe des évangiles d’al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl,” in *Actes du 4e congrès international d’études arabes chrétiennes (Cambridge, September 1992)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir = *Parole de l’Orient* 19 (1994): 465–67, no. 10; Lucy-Anne Hunt, “Introducing the Catalogue, in progress, of the illustrated Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum,” *Parole de l’Orient* 19 (1994): 405, with fig. 4, reprinted in idem, *Byzantium, Eastern Christianity and Islam: Art at the Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean* (London, 2000), 2:355, with fig. 4. The manuscript is included in Lucy-Anne Hunt and Leslie MacCoull, with the collaboration of Fr. Wadi Abullif and others, *Catalogue of the Illustrated Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, Old Cairo* (forthcoming, as part of the *Catalogue Général du Musée Copte*).



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addition to the four Gospels, the book contains an Introduction and Canon Tables, as well as a Prologue and Tables of Chapters accompanying each Gospel. Each section has illuminated headpieces, and there is a double frontispiece page before St. Matthew's Gospel. A large book (its folios measure 36 x 25 cm) and aniconic in its illumination, it represents a counterweight to the large display Qurans produced under the Mamluks. There is a unity to the book, its organization, and its calligraphy, which points to its purpose as a Christian Arab textual exemplar and work of art. Made of fine, smoothly prepared paper, there is a consistency and finesse to its calligraphy, with its titles in *thuluth*, *muḥaqqaaq*, and Kufic, with the vocalized text throughout in *naskh* against a red scrolled or hatched ground.

The manuscript is very informative (see appendix for description of folios 1–24r and pages numbered 1–624 following thereafter). The note at the end of the book (p. 624) records that it was copied during the primacy of Anbā Buṭrus, the metropolitan of the Copts of Jerusalem and Syria, by the priest Jirjis Abū al-Faḍl; the text was copied and collated with an autograph manuscript written by the Egyptian scribe al-Asʿad ibn al-ʿAssāl.² The copyist, Jirjis Abū al-Faḍl, points out that he has not included any of the words added in the Arabic manuscripts, as they do not appear in the Coptic, Greek, or Syriac. He goes on to say that the present manuscript was collated in the presence of this metropolitan and the monk Tūma, known as Ibn al-Ṣāʿigh. This monk is himself known as a copyist.³ The manuscript's frontispiece page (fol. 20r) also includes the information that the book was made for the library of the lord and shaykh al-Asʿad. Fr. Samir Khalil Samir has suggested that this shaykh al-Asʿad might in fact have been al-Asʿad ibn al-ʿAssāl himself, the scribe of the prototype manuscript, and that this is evidence that his own library was maintained and replenished nearly forty years after his death.⁴ This library would have been an important repository and resource for Coptic ecclesiastics and scholars and others, and it should be seen as comparable in importance and influence to the many Islamic libraries of the Mamluk period.

While the copyist's colophon provides, then, a clue to the variety of Christian books that al-Asʿad's library contained, it is necessary to step back to the thirteenth century to the formulation of this version of the Gospels and to the activity of al-Asʿad himself, his family, and intellectual circle. Al-Asʿad ibn al-ʿAssāl's critical version of the Gospels was completed during the course of 1253.⁵ Written as an

² Samir, "Version arabe," 466, identifies this metropolitan as Buṭrus II (1340–62).

³ Georg Graf, "Die koptische Gelehrtenfamilie der Aulād al-ʿAssāl und ihr Schrifttum," *Orientalia* 1 (1932): 54 with n. 1. Samir, "Version arabe," 466–67, 470–72, citing P. Khalil Marta's description of the Gospel book Jerusalem, Dayr Mar Jirgis of the Copts MS 2 of 1042 A.M./1326 A.D.

⁴ Samir, "Version arabe," 465 with n. 71.

⁵ Wadi Abullif, "Vita e opere del pensatore copto al-Ṣāfi Ibn al-ʿAssāl (sec. XIII)," *Studia Orientalia Christiana: Collectanea* 20 (1987): 137; Samir Khalil Samir, "Version arabe," 450–51.



alternative to the available Arabic version of his day, the so-called “Egyptian Vulgate,” al-As‘ad produced his version taking into account other Arabic versions, derived from Greek, Syriac, or Coptic, as well as returning to the original Greek, Syriac, and Coptic versions themselves.⁶ He worked as a copyist in Damascus, as in 1230, where he acquired manuscripts for his library.⁷ He was famed for his skill, and one of the brothers of the Awlād al-‘Assāl, or their father, is credited with developing *al-khatt al-as‘adi*, the script identified by Georg Graf as being used in Bibl. 90.⁸ The Coptic family Awlād al-‘Assāl played a major role as intellectuals and leaders within the minority Coptic community with a residence in Cairo. They combined a mastery of Arabic with their knowledge of Coptic, Greek, and Syriac.⁹ The commissioning of manuscripts for their libraries formed part of their intellectual activities. The scribe Gabriel (later Patriarch Gabriel III) wrote the bilingual text of a Copto-Arabic Gospel book (Cairo, Coptic Museum Bibl. 93) in 1257 in the household of shaykh al-Amjad ibn al-‘Assāl, al-As‘ad’s half brother, to which he had been attached, in Syria and Cairo, for the previous ten years.¹⁰

Bible translations were one aspect of the preservation of Coptic Christian culture in the face of the inevitable dominance of Arabic. This ran concurrently with the process of codification, including the writing of Copto-Arabic grammars and dictionaries to ensure the preservation of Coptic culture and also to ensure its future development through the medium of Arabic. An example of this type of synthesis is the *Nomocanon*, a work dealing with both canon and civil law written in ca. 1235 by al-Ṣafī Abū al-Faḍā’il ibn al-‘Assāl, another member of Awlād al-‘Assāl and brother of al-As‘ad, for the patriarch Kīrillus Ibn Laqlaq.¹¹ Such a description could as well be applied to the Gospel book Bibl. 90.

Al-As‘ad’s famous library in Cairo was enriched both from his acquisitions of manuscripts during his travels outside Egypt—including those to Syria—and the

⁶ Samir, “Version arabe,” 444. Recent work suggests that al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl’s version was closer to the Bohairic Coptic than others: see Hikmat Kachouh, “The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: A Case Study of John 1.1 and 1.18,” in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden and Boston, 2007), 35, where he refers to the version as “Family 11.”

⁷ Samir Khalil Samir, “Al-As‘ad Ibn al-‘Assāl copiste de Jean Damascène à Damas en 1230,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 44 (1978): 190–95.

⁸ Abullif, “Al-Ṣafī,” 136, with references, n. 35. Graf, *Catalogue*, 77, identifies it as “un très beau nashī (*sic*) as‘adi.”

⁹ Aziz S. Atiya, “Awlād al-‘Assāl,” in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1991), 1:309–11.

¹⁰ George William Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect* (Oxford, 1898–1905), 1:xcī–xcīi.

¹¹ See the comments of Samir Khalil Samir, “Rôle des Chrétiens dans la civilisation arabe,” in *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy (Proceedings of the 1st International Congress on Eastern Christianity, University of Cordova 2005)*, ed. Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (Piscataway, NJ, 2007), 16.



production of manuscripts in his own house, and it remained a reference point for later writers.¹² It was not unique. An example of another Christian library of the fourteenth century is that of the son of the late Fakhr al-Dīn Abū al-‘Alā’, for which the Istanbul Gospel book Topkapı Sarayı MS Ahmet III 3159 was made. Although undated, the colophon states that the Istanbul Gospels were made for this “old, Christian and venerable” library.¹³ We do not know where this library was located, but either Damascus or Cairo is likely in the light of the present discussion. The manuscript has been attributed to Egypt or Syria in the middle or second half of the fourteenth century, with the middle to third quarter being the most likely.¹⁴ It is a smaller manuscript than the Cairo Gospels (18.7 x 13.7 cm) and was surely made as a private prayer book for the inheritor of the library.¹⁵

The similarity of Bibl. 90 to Quran manuscripts raises the question of the parallel, and even inter-related functions, of Muslim and Christian libraries. This is dependent on contacts between Christians and Muslims, especially through the Mamluk administration, in the service of which Copts were useful as scribes, administrators, and intermediaries with foreign powers.¹⁶ The educational function of Islamic libraries—including those of madrasahs and other institutions—has been highlighted, as has the role of the madrasah in upholding the supremacy of Sunni orthodoxy, not least in the light of Christian attempts to retain the independence

¹² Graf, “Die koptische Gelehertenfamilie,” 54 with n. 2; Samir, “Al-As‘ad,” 190–95; Abullif, “Al-Şafi,” 136 with n. 36. .

¹³ Jules Leroy, “Un évangélaire arabe de la bibliothèque de Topqapi Sarayi à décor byzantin et islamique,” *Syria* 44 (1967): 123 with fig. 2 (colophon fol. 178r).

¹⁴ Yildiz Demiriz, “Topkapı Sarayı III: Ahmed Kütüphanesinde bir arapça incil,” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 2 (1966–68): 94, attributed the manuscript to mid-fourteenth century Syria; Nelson, “Icon,” 216, attributed it to Egypt or Syria in the middle or second half of the fourteenth century. Features of its illuminated frontispieces are comparable with some of those from the undated Cairene Quran, planned in thirty parts, which was later donated to a mosque in Cairo by Sultan Faraj ibn Barqūq, with surviving sections now in various locations. See, for example, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library MS 1465, for which see David James, *Qurʾans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library: A Facsimile Exhibition* (Catalogue of a photographic exhibition, The British Library, 1976) (London, 1980), 47, no. 31 with plate, where it is dated ca. 745/1345, and idem, *Qurʾāns of the Mamlūks*, 211, fig. 145 (cat. 35), where it is dated ca. 1370–75.

¹⁵ Lucy-Anne Hunt, “Cultural Transmission: Illustrated Biblical Manuscripts from the medieval Eastern Christian and Arab Worlds,” in *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. John L. Sharpe III and Kimberly Van Kampen (London and New Castle, DE, 1998), reprinted in idem, *Byzantium, Eastern Christendom and Islam: Art at the Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean* (London, 2000), 2:20–21, with pl. 7.

¹⁶ The attacks on Christians in the fourteenth century, including inciting the mob to violence, were not official Mamluk policy: see, recently, Johannes Pahlitzsch, “Mediators between East and West: Christians under Mamluk Rule,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (2005): esp. 38–39 with bibliographical summary, n. 24.



they enjoyed under the Ayyubids.¹⁷ The presence of a wide variety of books, including Qurans, in a Muslim Mamluk scholar's library is attested by the books itemized in the estate sale of the Sufi scholar and qādi Burhān al-Dīn al-Nāṣirī, who died in 790/1388.¹⁸ But Christian books also found their way into Muslim libraries. When the library of the Bayt al-Māl of the Great Mosque of Damascus was finally reopened in 1317/1899 by the Ottoman sultan Abd al-Hamid II, it was reported that, in addition to Qurans, there were fragments with “[Biblical] hymns in the old Palestinian Aramaic language . . . treatises on [Christian] theology, literature, and stories dealing with monasticism—all transcribed in the Greek handwriting . . . full copies of the Bible and the Torah. . . . Even poems dating back to the Crusades were also located. These items were variously written in the Coptic, Kurji, Armenian, Hebrew, Samaritan, Latin, and French vernaculars.”¹⁹

THE ILLUMINATION OF MS CAIRO, COPTIC MUSEUM BIBL. 90 (WITH REFERENCE TO APPENDIX AND FIGS. 1–6)

The close similarity between the illustration of Bibl. 90 and Quran manuscripts is evident. The large size of the manuscript, the script, type of geometric illumination, and use of gold, as well as ornamental features, penmanship, and bordering are all features in common. David James has even described the manuscript as “almost Islamic in conception” and pointed out that Coptic manuscripts with “Islamic” illumination “can be used to fill gaps in our knowledge of Islamic manuscript illumination, for there are no Qurans from the first fifty years of Mamlūk rule in Egypt.”²⁰ He draws particular attention to a comparison with a Quran in the National (Iran Bastan) Museum in Tehran, written in 739/1338–39 by a named scribe, particularly in the appearance of gold strapwork, blossom design, and “gold-on-gold” decoration, the use of concave cartouches, and the accuracy of workmanship.²¹ Indeed, it is on the basis of this comparison that he attributes this Quran, the earliest in the “classical” style following the dominance of the master-illuminator Abū Bakr known as Ṣandal, to Damascus. James also makes comparisons with two Qurans in the Nasser D. Khalili collection of Islamic art,

¹⁷ Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992), 24, 123, 131–32.

¹⁸ Ulrich Haarmann, “The Library of a Fourteenth-Century Jerusalem Scholar,” *Der Islam* 61 (1984): 327–33.

¹⁹ Mohamed Makki Sibai, *Mosque Libraries: An Historical Study* (London and New York, 1987), 74 with n. 120, citing Muhammad Kurd Ali, *Khīṭaṭ al-Shām* (Damascus, 1944), 6:199–200; and Jirji Zaydān, *Tārīkh Adab al-Lughah al-‘Arabīyah* (Cairo, 1965), 4:117–18.

²⁰ James, *Qur’āns of the Mamlūks*, 149.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 149. For the Quran, see *ibid.*, 138–49, 217, 227 (cat. 20) with figs. 98–99.



one of which was written in Damascus by a scribe with an Iranian background.²² Bibl. 90 is, therefore, a major plank in James' argument for the productivity and superiority of Damascus in relation to Cairo in the production of Quran manuscripts at the time.

And yet, there are also elements comparable with the work of the illuminator Muḥammad ibn Mubādir working in Cairo at the turn of the fourteenth century, again with Coptic links.²³ A section of a Quran, formerly attributed to Damascus in the 1340s, has recently been re-attributed to the hand of Ibn Mubādir working in Cairo for Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnakīr, either as vizier or sultan, in ca. 1298–1310.²⁴ If correct, the rounded cartouches, strapwork, and use of white beading here all preempt their appearance in Bibl. 90 by thirty to forty years.

Furthermore, alongside the inquiry into the close association with Quran manuscripts, it is also important to view this symbiosis in the light of the Copto-Arabic tradition, and to point to the internal structure and illumination of the manuscript and its decoration as a Christian Arab document. The case needs to be made for a more nuanced discourse to include awareness of Arab Christian visual culture in its own right, rather than assuming that it was merely subsumed into Islamic art. The close links between Cairo and Damascus of the al-ʿAssāl family, and subsequently of the Christian community in general, argue against thinking in terms of a dichotomy between manuscript production in Damascus and Cairo. Instead, it may well be that productivity in these centers was interconnected through family and institutional library networks with their origins in Ayyubid workmanship and scholarship, as well as absorbing Iranian and Iraqi innovations.

Illumination and enlightenment according to a Christian interpretation are stressed in the inscriptions and complement the golden illumination of Bibl. 90. The Kufic inscriptions in white in cartouches at the top and bottom of each of fols. 23v–24r, the dual frontispieces to St. Matthew's Gospel, read "The pure Gospel, the shining lamp which is the source of life and the ship of salvation according to the Holy Apostles" (fig. 4). The Quran terms itself as light, a theme which is borne out in Quranic illumination, including the verse numbering in the margins ringed in gold with golden rays, with examples in the Tehran Quran and another from 600/1203–4 in Istanbul (Turkish and Islamic Museum T 107).²⁵ This echoes the

²² David James, *The Master Scribes: Qurʾāns of the 10th to 14th centuries* (Oxford, 1992), no. 43 (The Umayyad Mosque, Damascus ca. 1330–1340, Accession no. QUR 807), 176 with plates pp. 177–78; no. 44 (Accession no. QUR 187), 180 with plates pp. 181–82.

²³ James, *Qurʾāns of the Mamlūks*, 47.

²⁴ Marcus Fraser, *Geometry in Gold: An Illuminated Mamlūk Qurʾān Section* (London, 2005), *passim*, esp. 6, 34–35, 41 with references. See also n. 42 below.

²⁵ Martin Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination* (London, 1976), 74 with plates 23 and 34 respectively.



divine light illumination suffused from Mamluk mosque lamps, especially of the late thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century, inscribed with the *ayat al-nūr* (Verse of Light, 34:35), and the appearance of the symbol of the lamp in prayer rugs and architectural sculpture and other forms of decoration.²⁶

However, the idea of a lamp providing clarity and illumination is also central to Christian thought in the fourteenth century. This is exemplified in the work of the encyclopedist Abū al-Barakāt, known as Ibn Kabar (d. 1324), who codified canon law and church services in his twenty-four-volume work “The Lamp of Darkness for the Elucidation of the Service (of the Church).”²⁷ A priest at the church of al-Mu‘allaqah in Old Cairo, as well as historian and secretary in Sultan Baybars al-Jāshnakīr’s administration, Ibn Kabar’s writing in the first quarter of the fourteenth century has been seen to typify the elegant use of Arabic by arabophone Christians who were determined, from the end of the twelfth century, to wrest the use of elegant literary Arabic from the sole domain of Muslim writers.²⁸ His work has been shown to draw directly on al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl’s work.²⁹ It is not unreasonable to assume, therefore, that he for one had access to al-As‘ad’s library.

CANON TABLES

While the Introduction is opened (fol. 1v) with the *bismillāh* phrase in black and title in gold, the main illustrative process of the manuscript starts with the Eusebian canon tables. The preliminaries to the canon tables are headed by titling which employs three scripts (fol. 14v, fig. 1). The *bismillāh* phrase is in golden *thuluth* on a white-dotted blue ground, with the title below in *muḥaqqaq*, followed by the vocalized *naskh* text written in black ink and contained in cloud shapes on a red-hatched ground. A similar bold headpiece appears in the fourteenth-century Arabic book in Istanbul (Topkapı Sarayı Library Ahmet III 3519 fol. 176v) containing the *bismillāh* above the introduction to St. John’s Gospel (fig. 9), even

²⁶ Esin Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (Catalogue of an exhibition circulated by the Smithsonian Institution) (Washington D.C., 1981), 120 with nos. 52 (lamp), 53 (lamp made in ca. 1310–20 for Karim al-Dīn, a convert from Christianity), and 111 (plaque in the shape of a mihrab).

²⁷ Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar, *Miṣbāḥ al-Ẓulmah fī Ḍāḥ al-Khidmah*, vol. 1, ed. Samir Khalil Samir (Cairo, 1971) (Arabic text); vol. 2, ed. Bishop Samuel (Cairo, 1992) (Arabic text). See Samir Khalil Samir, “L’Encyclopédie liturgique d’Ibn Kabar (+ 1324) et son apologie d’usages coptes,” in *Crossroad of Cultures: Studies in Liturgy and Patristics in Honor of Gabriele Winkler*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Feulner, Elena Velkovska, and Robert F. Taft (Rome, 2000), 619–55.

²⁸ See the comments of Samir, “Rôle de chrétiens,” 15–16. For Ibn Kabar see also Aziz S. Atiya, “Ibn Kabar,” in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, 4:1267–68.

²⁹ Samir, “Version arabe,” 448 with n. 4, 457.



though *muḥaqqaq* is used and the cloud shapes surrounding the text itself are in beige.³⁰ Described as an “hieratic” ornamental script, it has been noted that *thuluth* is rarely used for the text of Qurans; it is rather used in titles, colophons, and headpieces, although a particular example of its use is found in the golden text of the seven-volume Quran in the British Library, written by the scribe Muḥammad ibn al-Waḥīd for Baybars al-Jāshnakīr in 704–5/1304–6.³¹ So, while it does not appear again in Bibl. 90, its appearance here is an impressive statement early in the manuscript’s illumination.

The canon tables of Bibl. 90 are gilded with lotuses in blue in the spandrels (fig. 1). There are several examples of the appearance of lotuses in Mamluk manuscripts, a feature which is often ascribed to Ilkhanid influence.³² However, they appear considerably earlier, in thirteenth-century eastern Christian painting, including Copto-Arabic and Syriac manuscript painting. The curtain suspended above the head of St. Luke in the portrait of the evangelist in the mid-thirteenth century Copto-Arabic New Testament (now divided between Cairo and Paris), written by the aforementioned scribe Gabriel, displays a lotus design, as does the cloth draped over the table in the scene of the Supper at Emmaus in a thirteenth-century Syriac lectionary.³³ The lotus design also appears in a double frontispiece in the Istanbul Gospels, at the end of the chapter titles and the beginning of St. John’s Gospel (fols. 10v–11r, fig. 8).³⁴ Relations between eastern Christians—especially Syrians and Armenians—and the Mongols might well explain the introduction

³⁰ Leroy, “Évangélaire arabe,” 122–23 with pl. X, 2; Demiriz, “Topkapı Sarayı,” 92 with fig. 8.

³¹ Yasin Hamid Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy* (London, 1978), 19, 52 with pl. 34 for London, BL Add. 22406; see also Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy*, 119 with color plate 62, and James, *Qurʾāns of the Mamlūks*, 41–42, figs. 18–19 (cat. 1). For the British Library Quran (BL Additional MSS 22406–22413) as a whole, see also recently Colin F. Baker, *Qurʾan Manuscripts: Calligraphy, Illumination, Design* (London, 2007), 43–56 with color plates, and http://www.bl.uk/collections/treasures/quran/quran_broadband.htm?top (Turning the Pages).

³² Martin Lings and Yasin Hamid Safadi, *The Qurʾān* (Catalogue of the exhibition at the British Library 3 April–15 August 1976) (London, 1976), nos 79–80 reproduced in color, plates XII–XIII of the frontispieces of two Qurans, the first donated in 769/1368 and the other attributed to the late fourteenth century. James, *Qurʾāns of the Mamlūks*, points out that the Ilkhanid elements in Mamluk manuscripts precedes 1326, the usually ascribed date.

³³ Paris, Institut Catholique Copte-Arabe 1, fol. 105v (St. Luke), and London BL Add. 7171, fol. 163v (Supper at Emmaus), both conveniently reproduced in Lucy-Anne Hunt, “Christian-Muslim Relations in Painting in Egypt of the Twelfth to mid-Thirteenth Centuries: Sources of Wallpainting at Deir es-Suriani and the Illustration of the New Testament MS Paris, Copte-Arabe 1/Cairo Bibl. 94,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 33 (1985), reprinted in Lucy-Anne Hunt, *Byzantium, Eastern Christendom and Islam: Art at the Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean* (London, 1998), respectively 1:261 with fig. 11 and 263 with fig. 23.

³⁴ Leroy, “Évangélaire arabe,” 121, 127 with pl. XI, 1; Dimiriz, “Topkapı Sarayı,” 93 with fig. 13.



of this motif in advance of its appearance in Quran manuscripts.³⁵ Other eastern Christian parallels are apparent. The rounded arches of the canon tables in Bibl. 90 (fig. 1) give way to ogive-shaped arches on fol. 17v. A parallel for these more pointed arches is in the canon tables of an Armenian manuscript illustration of the thirteenth century, now Erevan, Matenadaran MS 9422.³⁶

FRONTISPIECES

The frontispiece preceding the prologue to St. Matthew's Gospel (fol. 20r, fig. 2) continues the tripartite sequence established in fol. 14v. The phrase "The Holy Gospel and the Shining Star" is in gold *muḥaqqaq* on a blue ground with white foliage scrolls. This is followed by the phrase below introducing the four Gospels, with Matthew as the first, against the red scrollwork arabesque, with pointed medallions with a lotus design indicating the text. The latter are not unlike the floral motifs "floating" above the text of fol. 1v of a Quran produced in Cairo in 744/1344.³⁷ The statement that the manuscript was made for al-As'ad's library comes at the bottom in gold *muḥaqqaq*, with the later inscriptions of patriarchal ownership above and below it.

The double-page frontispiece to St. Matthew's Gospel (fols. 23v–24r, fig. 4) with its structure of four octagons in the central field converging in a star-shaped center, Kufic text of "the pure Gospel, the shining lamp," is appropriately golden, with blue as the secondary color with some green. It is ambitious in its associations. A parallel for the geometric structure of the central field, as well as the floral border beyond the strapwork, is the double frontispiece to the second volume fols. 1v–2r of the Quran of Baybars al-Jāshnakir illuminated by Ibn Mubādir in Cairo in 704–5/1304–6.³⁸ A nearer-contemporary example is the left-hand frontispiece of a Quran in Istanbul (Topkapı Sarayı Library 138.M5) dated 741/1341 and attributed to Damascus, in which four eight-pointed stars occupy the main field with Kufic inscription in cartouches above and below, surrounded by strapwork

³⁵ For artistic relations between eastern Christians and the Mongols in the thirteenth century see Lucy-Anne Hunt, "Artistic Interchange in Old Cairo in the Thirteenth to Early Fourteenth Century: The Role of Painted and Carved Icons," in *Interactions: Artistic Interchange between The Eastern and Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (University Park, PA, 2007), 59; and idem, "Eastern Christian Art and Culture in the Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Periods: Cultural Convergence between Jerusalem, Greater Syria and Egypt," in *Ayyubid Jerusalem: The Holy City 1187–1250*, ed. Sylvia Auld and Robert Hillenbrand (London, 2009), 339–44.

³⁶ Sirape Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies*, vol. 31 (Washington, 1993), vol. 2, figs. 510–11.

³⁷ Topkapı Sarayı Y 365: James, *Qur'āns of the Mamlūks*, 151 with fig. 102 (cat. 67).

³⁸ London BL Add. 22406–13, fols. 1v–2r: see James, *Qur'āns of the Mamlūks*, 44, fig. 22. For this manuscript see also above, n. 31. Nelson, "Icon at Mt. Sinai," 214 with figs. 24 and 27, draws a parallel between the Bibl. 90 frontispiece and London, BL Or. 848.



and a floral border.³⁹ Eight-pointed stars are also the main motif of the illuminated left-hand frontispiece to the Istanbul Gospels Topkapı Sarayı Library Ahmet III 3519 (fol. 2r, fig. 7 here), the inscriptions of which also refer to the pure Gospel and the shining lamp.⁴⁰ Here, too, there is elaborate bordering, white beading, and blue outlining, and Kufic inscriptions above and below, albeit in gold in the Istanbul Gospels. Also similar is the color balance. While the predominant colors are gold and blue, there is a noticeable mid-green presence in the petals of the eight-pointed stars and octagonal. Another Christian manuscript may be drawn into the discussion. The white Kufic text in blue cartouches and the strapwork with squares and floral border are also found in an Arabic Pentateuch of 1353 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Arabe 12).⁴¹ This manuscript was written by the priest Abū al-Mufaḍḍal collating Greek, Hebrew, and Coptic against a manuscript written by Ibn Kabar.

PROLOGUES

The text of St. Matthew's Prologue (fols. 20v–21v) does not have a titlepiece at the start of the text, but the tripartite formula of rectangular titlepiece with *muḥaqqaq* text on a blue background with gilded scrolls is followed across the openings of the Prologues of Mark (p. 162) and John (p. 470). These have rectangular frames at the top with the *bismillāh* phrase, the title below in gold *muḥaqqaq* against the red foliage scrollwork, and the text below in a cloud pattern against a red hatched ground. Luke (p. 276) reverses the upper and middle fields, with the rectangular blue title band in the center of the page.

An oval medallion on fol. 21v (fig. 3) marks the end of the Prologue to Matthew and the start of a new section. It takes up the bottom third of the page and is ornamented with a foliage scroll design in red penmanship, surrounded by borders of white strapwork and beading, completed by the ubiquitous blue frame. Similar oval section dividers are found in the margins of fourteenth-century Mamluk Quran manuscripts.⁴² Another shaped motif, similar although in three parts, is

³⁹ Fol. 2r: James, *Qur'āns of the Mamlūks*, 143 fig. 95 (cat. 21), where, despite the attribution to Damascus, he makes a comparison with a Cairene Quran of 731/1132 (cat. 16).

⁴⁰ Leroy, "Évangélaire arabe," 128 with pl. IX, 1. The parallel between the two frontispieces was noted by Nelson, "Icon," 214 with figs 24–25.

⁴¹ Marie-Geneviève Guesdon entry in *L'Art Copte en Égypte: 2000 ans de christianisme* (Catalogue of an exhibition, Institut du monde arabe Paris, 15 May to 3 September 2000 and the Musée de l'Éphèbe au Cap d'Agde, 30 September to 7 January 2001) (Paris, 2000), 85 no. 63 with 57, color reproduction.

⁴² Lings and Safadi, *The Qur'ān*, 55 no. 78, reproduces an example from a fourteenth-century Quran in a private collection, which was probably made in Egypt. An oval marking the beginning of a new section of the Quran text (*nisf hizb*) placed vertically at the beginning of a surah in London BL Or 848, fol. 27r, is described and reproduced by Baker, *Qur'an Manuscripts*, 65–66 with fig. 34.



found on page 163 marking the end of the Prologue to St. Mark's Gospel.

TITLES OF THE TABLES OF CHAPTERS

The title of the tables of chapters to St. Matthew's Gospel (fols. 21v–22r, fig. 3) is written in a rectangular frame in white *muḥaqqaq* on a gold ground, with small dark crosses in a checkered design at either end. This headpiece is marked with a gilded medallion, surrounded with blue, in the left margin. Thereafter, in the headpieces to the other Gospels, Kufic texts (mostly white) are the norm, in more colorful cartouches of different shapes. Page 164 (table of the chapters of St. Mark's Gospel) sees the introduction of a white Kufic title in a rounded-ended cartouche. Green is used with blue for the scrolled ground, with gilded foliage on a gilded ground at the four edges in the spandrels. A blue, green, and gold hasp extends into the left margin. The color scheme changes again for the headpiece to the table of chapters of St. Luke's Gospel (p. 278), which displays a red Kufic title with green and red foliage scrolls on a gold ground in an oval-ended cartouche. There is gold foliage on a red ground in the corners and the hasp is in gold, red, and blue. Finally, the title of the table of chapters of St. John's Gospel (p. 473, fig. 6) is in white Kufic contained in a cartouche of interlocking semicircular shapes drawn in white, blue, and gold. Behind the script are gold foliage scrolls on a blue ground. At the four corners of the rectangular frame is a design of gold foliage on a red ground, as in St. Luke, suggesting the same illuminator's hand. A blue and white hasp, with a triple leaf tinged with red, extends into the right margin. The interlocking shapes of this last headpiece are also found in the headpieces to the books of Exodus and Leviticus in the Paris Pentateuch, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 12.⁴³ Such interlocking shapes reappear in the Eastern Kufic surah headings in a Quran illuminated in Cairo in 734/1334.⁴⁴

GOSPEL TEXTS

The opening to St. Matthew's Gospel (pp. 1–2, fig. 5) displays white Kufic inscriptions against a blue ground with gilded foliage scrolls which compare with headpieces in the Pentateuch in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 12 of 1358.⁴⁵ It also very closely resembles a folio from the Quran in Tehran, National

Oval marginal markers are a special feature of the section of a Quran recently re-attributed to the workmanship of Muḥammad ibn Mubādir, ca. 1298–1310; see Fraser, *Geometry in Gold*, 16 with diagram F in color. See also n. 24 above.

⁴³ Fols. 72v–73r; 132v–133r.

⁴⁴ Cairo, National Library 81, fols. 375v–376r; Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy*, 119 with color plate 63.

⁴⁵ *L'Art Copte en Egypte*, no. 63 with 57, color plate of fols. 2v–3r, the titlepiece and beginning of Genesis.



(Bastan) Museum MS 2061 of 739/1339–39 in several further respects. These include the white Kufic inscriptions in rounded-ended cartouches linked to a floral medallion on either side, the strapwork border with intermittent squares, the framing of white beading and blue outlining, and medallions in the outer margins.⁴⁶ As noted earlier, very similar features appear in a Quran of contemporary date in the Nasser D. Khalili collection.⁴⁷ The use of color is also paralleled elsewhere, including the mid-green, with the white, blue, and gold in the frontispiece page in the fourteenth-century Quran in London (British Library Or. 848), later donated to a mosque in Cairo during the reign of Sultan Faraj ibn Barqūq.⁴⁸

As with the titles to the table of chapters, a wider range of colors make an appearance in the headpieces preceding the Gospels of Saints Mark, Luke, and John. The gold *bismillāh* text in *muḥaqqaq* preceding St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels (pp. 166 and 281) is set against colorful red scrolls on a blue ground. The text numbering below, on a gray scrolled ground, has a pendant floral marker very similar to those in fol. 20r (fig. 2). The white *bismillāh* text preceding John (p. 475) reverts to the gold foliage scrolls on a blue ground, but the circles of the letters are filled in red, and the text below is in blue Kufic against beige foliage scrolls. The floral motif in the center of the gilded numbering text harks back to those at the center of the octagons in fols 23v–24r (fig. 4), and that in the circular medallion in the margin is similarly drawn and colored to the spandrels of the canon tables (fol. 15r, fig. 1). This similarity suggests that despite variety in the illumination—including the varied colored scheme of the titles of the tables of chapters—it probably represents the work of one illuminator, who was probably the scribe, the priest Jirjis Abū al-Faḍl ibn Luṭf Allāh.

CONCLUSION

The Gospel book Bibl. 90 raises a number of issues. Its colophon elucidates the planning and production of a major Christian Arab manuscript—the copy of al-As'ad's autograph manuscript of the four Gospels—for the important library that bore his name. This is not unlike the combined effort of the production of a Mamluk Quran. Its illumination then provides an insight into the articulation of Christian Arabic calligraphy and illumination, subtly engaging with its Quranic counterparts while remaining distinct from them. The book itself emerges as an

⁴⁶ James, *Qur'āns of the Mamlūks*, 147, fig. 99.

⁴⁷ Idem, *The Master Scribes*, 180 with color plates, 181–82.5 (cat. 44). James related the manuscript to that produced from the Great Mosque in Damascus from the same collection: *ibid.*, 176 with plates, pp. 177–79 (cat. 43.)

⁴⁸ Lings and Safadi, *The Qur'ān*, 55 no. 75 with cover plate in color; Baker, *Qur'an Manuscripts*, 65 with fig. 33 in color. This manuscript was part of the same Quran as Dublin, Chester Beatty Library MS 1465, for which see n. 14 above.



instrument of Christian-Muslim debate and exchange in the Mamluk period.

The large size of the book and its pristine state (apart from the addition of the printed illustrations in 1915, for which see the appendix here) indicate that it was intended to stand as an exemplar, a definitive version, a display copy. Qurans too were designated to be copied.⁴⁹ Several people were also often involved in their making. Such a lavish Gospel book as Bibl. 90 must have been intended to impress, and it can be suggested that one of its purposes may also have been to dissuade those who may have been tempted to convert to Islam.

The fact that the three men—the copyist/priest, the monk, and the metropolitan of the Copts of Jerusalem and Syria—came together in Damascus for the purpose of copying and collating this manuscript indicates the importance of the project. One may speculate as to why this took place in Damascus. It may well have been due to the availability of books and libraries there; the copyist's note (p. 624) suggests that Coptic, Greek, and Syriac manuscripts were on hand. It may also be attributed to the presence of diverse Christian groups and their respective manuscript collections in Damascus in the fourteenth century.⁵⁰ Given their similarities with Bibl. 90, it is possible that the Paris Pentateuch and Istanbul Gospels may also have been made in Damascus, an avenue which needs further exploration, taking into account the Istanbul Gospel's figural evangelist portraits as well. The scribal tradition in Damascus may also have played a part; or perhaps it was for political reasons. However, given that both individuals and books can and did travel, and also given that close associations existed between Cairo and Damascus (as well as other centers such as Jerusalem), it may well be that artistic practices were similar in both places. Above all, Bibl. 90 demonstrates the role of the visual within our growing knowledge of Arab Christian culture operating within the Islamic Mamluk state.

⁴⁹ Cairo, National Library 72 part 19, made in 713/1313 for a royal patron al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was given as *waqf* in 726/1326 to a funerary foundation in Cairo with the intention that it be used as a model for copying; see Lings, *Quranic Art*, 119 with pl. 54.

⁵⁰ The existence of these groups is touched on by Juan Pedro Montferrer-Sala, "An Arabic-Muslim quotation of a biblical text: Ibn Kathīr's al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya and the construction of the arc of the covenant," in *Studies in the Christian Arabic Heritage in Honour of Father Prof. Dr Samir Khalil Samir S. J. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Rifaat Ebied and Herman Teule (Louvain, 2004), 265 with n. 5, 277. Johannes Pahlitzsch, "The Translation of the Byzantine *Procheiros Nomos* into Arabic: Techniques and Cultural Context," *Byzantinoslavica* 65 (2007): 19–29, esp. 22–23, points to Damascus as a center of Melkite Arabic learning in the thirteenth century on the grounds that several manuscripts of the *Procheiros nomos* were copied there anew by collating different Arabic and Greek manuscripts.



APPENDIX

Cairo, Coptic Museum Library MS Bibl. 90.

CONTENTS:

Four Gospels in Arabic, written in Damascus in 1340 according to the recension of al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl. Prefaced by an introduction and canon tables, with a prologue and tables of chapters accompanying each Gospel.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fols. 1v–13r: Introduction to the Gospels, headed with the *bismillāh* phrase in black ink, and gilded title. Punctuation: blue rosettes.

2. CANON TABLES

Fol. 14v (fig. 1): Preliminaries to the Eusebian canon tables. The tables are headed (fol. 14v) by the *bismillāh* phrase in *thuluth* script, gilded, on a blue ground with white dots in a rectangular frame. Below this, against a red cross-hatched ground, is the title in gold in *muḥaqqaq* script and explanatory text in vocalized black *naskh*. The page is completed by a survey of the ten canons, in tabular form, written in gold and black. The page is bordered with white beading, completed with a thin line of blue, with finials at the four corners. This framing is characteristic of the illuminated pages of the manuscript as a whole.

Fols. 15r (fig. 1)–18v: Canon tables. Each page is headed by the title in gold in *muḥaqqaq* in a rectangular cross-hatched red frame. Below this stands the framing device of the canons, with gilded columns with gilded capitals and column bases supporting spandrels of a lotus design on a blue ground, between which the names of the evangelists appear in gold. This structure is doubled up on fols. 17r, 18r, and 18v, while the arches of fol. 17v are ogive rather than rounded.

Base of fol. 18r–fol. 19r: Tabulated lists of texts particular to specific Gospels, with the title for each Gospel in *muḥaqqaq* in gold in a rectangular frame on a red cross-hatched ground.

3. 20R FRONTISPIECE PAGE (FIG. 2)

The folio is divided into three: (1) At the top, written in *muḥaqqaq* in gold against white foliage scrolls on a blue ground, is the text “The Holy Gospel and the shining star.” (2) Below, in *naskh* in black ink and drawn around with a fine red scrollwork arabesque, flanked by two pointed medallion lotus-style markers, acting as text markers, the text continues: “legislation of help and the source of



life, written by the four pure disciples in far-away countries and at different times, and they are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the first of these good tidings is that of the apostle Matthew.” (3) At the bottom, written in *muḥaqqaq* in gold, is the text “For the sublime library of the lord and master, the shaykh al-As‘ad, may God conserve it.”

Above and below this third text are later statements of ownership, in black ink (see below, Inscriptions and Stamps).

4. ST. MATTHEW’S GOSPEL

Fols. 20v–21v: Prologue to Matthew, written against a red-hatched ground, scattered with triple black dots, with gold rosette punctuation marks finished in red and blue, completed by an elliptical shape at the base of fol. 21v (fig. 3) containing a delicate foliage design in red and bordered with bands of white interlace and white beading.

Fols. 22r–23r: Table of chapters (85), written in three series in black ink, numbered in gold. Fol. 22r (fig. 3): title written in white *muḥaqqaq* on a gold ground within rectangular frame with decorative end pieces in gold and blue forming small crosses, and a circular medallion in the margin.

Fols. 23v–24r (fig. 4): Dual frontispieces to Matthew’s Gospel. The Kufic inscriptions in white in cartouches at top and bottom of each page, against a blue ground with gold foliage tendrils, read “The pure Gospel, the shining lamp which is the source of life and the ship of salvation according to the Holy Apostles.” At the heart of the page four large octagons and a smaller central one interlock. Each contain floral motifs and the whole design comes to rest at a central, floral-filled star.

Fol. 24v, modern Arabic page 1–page 161: Text of St. Matthew’s Gospel.

Pages 1–2 (fig. 5): Beginning of text of St. Matthew’s Gospel with white Kufic headings in blue cartouches with gold floral scrolling. These are linked, with white beading banding, to roundels which each contain a flower, with blue outer petals and green inner ones. The text is bordered with strapwork interspersed with small blue squares. Initial chapter numbering (Coptic) “a” is in dark red.

5. ST. MARK’S GOSPEL

Page 162–163: Prologue to St. Mark’s Gospel.

Page 162 (recto page): The *bismillāh* phrase in gold *muḥaqqaq* at the top of the page is contained within a blue rectangular frame with gilded foliage scrolls. The title



of Mark's Gospel below is in gold *muḥaqqaq* on a red foliage scrollwork ground with small triple black dots. A floral marker stands to the left side of the rectangle. The main text below is written in black *naskh* in cloud patterning between red cross-hatching. Page 163 (verso page): completion of the text between the red cross-hatching with black dots. There is a tripartite shape at the bottom of the page in a rectangular band, with scrollwork arabesques in red.

Pages 164–165: Table of chapters (52).

Page 164 (recto page): In a cartouche, a white Kufic title (“translation of the divisions of Mark the Apostle”) to the Prologue is written against blue-green scrolls, bordered with gold foliage on a red ground. A hasp in gold, green, and blue is attached to the left of the rectangular frame.

Pages 166–275: Text of St. Mark's Gospel.

Page 166 (recto page): The *bismillāh* phrase at the top appears in gold *muḥaqqaq* against a red and blue ground, with a gold and blue hasp to the left of the rectangular frame beaded in white. The *muḥaqqaq* title below is in gold against a gray finely scrolled, dotted ground, with a green, blue, and gold marker, with an initial (Coptic) “A” in the margin. Gilded rosettes encircled in red, gold, and blue form the punctuation in the text of Mark's Gospel.

6. ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL

Pages 276–277: Prologue to St. Luke's Gospel.

Page 276 (recto page): The *bismillāh* phrase is in gold *muḥaqqaq* against a red scrollwork arabesque ground. In a band in the middle of the page is the title in red *muḥaqqaq* against a background of blue scrolls on a gold ground. The text, in *naskh* black ink against the red hatched, black dotted ground, completes the lower part of the page, and the next, between red hatching. Blue floral punctuation marks.

Pages 278r–280: Table of chapters.

Page 278 (recto page): At the top, the red Kufic title is in a gold ground, against green foliage scrolls in an oval-ended cartouche. Gold leaves on a red ground complete the rectangular frame, which is a simple blue line rather than the beading. Hasp in blue, gold, and red to the left.

Pages 281–468: Text of St. Luke's Gospel.

Page 281 (verso page): The *bismillāh* phrase at the top is in gold *muḥaqqaq*, against a background of red scrolls on a blue ground. The heading below is also in gold *muḥaqqaq*, against a red scrolled ground, with white beaded and blue bordering.



The gold rosette punctuation in Luke is sometimes encircled in red, gold, and blue.

7. ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

Pages 470–472: Prologue to St. John's Gospel.

Page 470 (recto page): The *bismillāh* phrase at the top is in a rectangular frame in red *muḥaqqaq* behind which are gold foliage scrolls on a blue ground, and a hasp to the left in gold, blue, and red. Below this is the title in gold *muḥaqqaq* against red scrollwork arabesque. Below and subsequent text of the table of chapters is written in black *naskh* in cloud patterning between red hatching with triple black dots.

Pages 473 (fig. 6)–474: Table of chapters (45).

Page 473 (verso page): Title written in white Kufic in interlocking shapes in a rectangular band with golden scrolls behind on a blue ground. In the corners are gold foliage motifs on a red ground. The tables have the same format as the tables preceding the other Gospels, also written in gold and black ink.

Pages 475–624: Text of St. John's Gospel.

Page 475: The *bismillāh* text is in white *muḥaqqaq* in a rectangular panel against gold scrolls on a blue ground, with some of the “eyes” of the letters filled in red. The heading below is in blue Kufic against beige scrollwork arabesque. The chapter numbering heading is in gold, with a floral star design in the centre, and there is an A marker in the margin. A circular hasp in the margin is in blue, red, and gold. Gold/blue bordering. Punctuation marks are ringed in red, gold, and blue.

FOLIOS:

345 folios. Paper. Folios measure 36 x 25 cm. There are 9 binding pages in front, with one marbled page (opposite the binding) and the same in the back of the book. European numbering (which actually starts on the original second page of the manuscript) exists to fol. 24. The manuscript is thereafter (from fol. 24v to the end) numbered consecutively in modern Arabic numbering, pages 1 to 624. The earlier Arabic numbering, on the rectos, is partially preserved. Graf's correct numbering is followed in this description.

RULING:

Ruled on verso, 11 lines of text in a single central column (26 x 17 cm), written through the ruled line, with an additional margin of 2.6 cm to contain numberings



SCRIPT:

Vocalized *naskh* in black ink, elegant, regular, and vocalized, with gilded rosettes as punctuation. There are blue rosettes as punctuation in the Introduction.

QUIRING:

Quires are numbered in Arabic in red on the top left of rectos. The quiring is in quinions: 34 x 5 + 5 folios (this excludes binding folios).

BINDING:

Twentieth-century binding of red leather stamped with a gold decorated cross within two gilded borders.

INSCRIPTIONS AND STAMPS:

Fol. 1r: titles and stamps of the Patriarch Cyril V.

Fol. 13v: The book is signed and sealed to left and right by the patriarch Cyril V A.D. 1915. The signature above the left seal reads “the 112th Patriarch of Alexandria.”

Fol. 20r (fig. 2): In the centre of the lower part of the page is the original gilded dedication to the library of Shaykh al-As‘ad (see above, fol. 20r). Below it is a later inscription recording that the manuscript came into the possession of the patriarchal library in the month of Hatūr 1127 A.M. (November 1410 A.D.) and asserting that no one has the authority to remove it. Above it, with the stamps of Patriarch Cyril V and dated 15 Baramūda 1631 A.M. (23 April 1915 A.D.), is another inscription asserting that the book is the pious endowment of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo and Alexandria.⁵¹

Page 624: A scribal note at the bottom of the page, at the end of St. John’s Gospel, gives the information that the manuscript was completed in 1056 (era of the Martyrs), 1652 (Alexandrian era), 751 (A.H.), equivalent to 18 October 1340 A.D., during the primacy of Buṭrus, metropolitan of the Copts in Jerusalem and Syria. It was copied by the priest Jirjis Abu al-Faḍl ibn Luṭf Allāh and collated with the original manuscript written by the hand of the shaykh, the venerable master al-As‘ad Abū al-Faraj Hibat Allāh, the Egyptian scribe known as Ibn al-‘Assāl. He here asks that everyone who uses the book beseech for him the mercy and pardon of God. He also notes that he has not included words added in Arabic manuscripts because these are not found in the Coptic, Greek, or Syriac.

⁵¹ The Coptic Museum was founded in 1910 by Marcus Simaika Pasha. It is now under the authority of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture but was until 1931 under the control of the Coptic Patriarchate (http://www.copticmuseum.gov/english/internal/brief_history.asp).



The present manuscript was copied and collated in the presence of the above mentioned Buṭrus, metropolitan of Jerusalem, and the monk Tūmā, known as the monk Ibn al-Ṣā'igh.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY NEW TESTAMENT RUSSIAN PRINTED ILLUSTRATIONS ADDED TO THE TEXT, 1915:

Last binding page verso: Nativity.

Fol. 19v: Crucifixion.

Page 275: Annunciation; Angels.

Page 469: Baptism; Last Supper.

Some of these accompany later inscriptions, e.g., Fol. 19v: the image of the Crucifixion is pasted onto the folio below the added text “In the name of the One God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, this book is read by the most miserable and shameful of servants.” This and the other Russian images were added in 1915.



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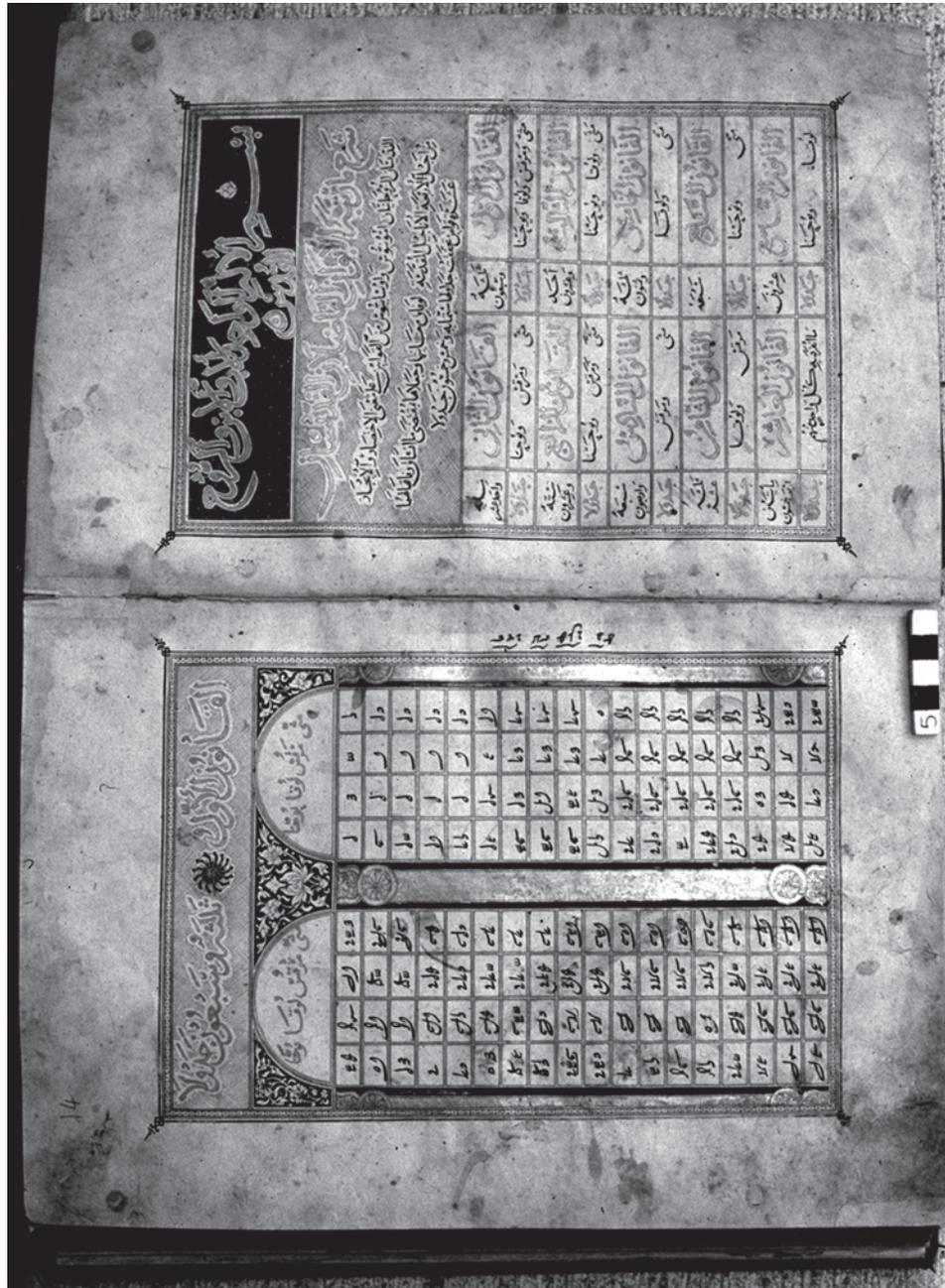


Fig. 1. Old Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl. 90, fols. 14v–15r. Opening to canons and first canon table page. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Coptic Museum).



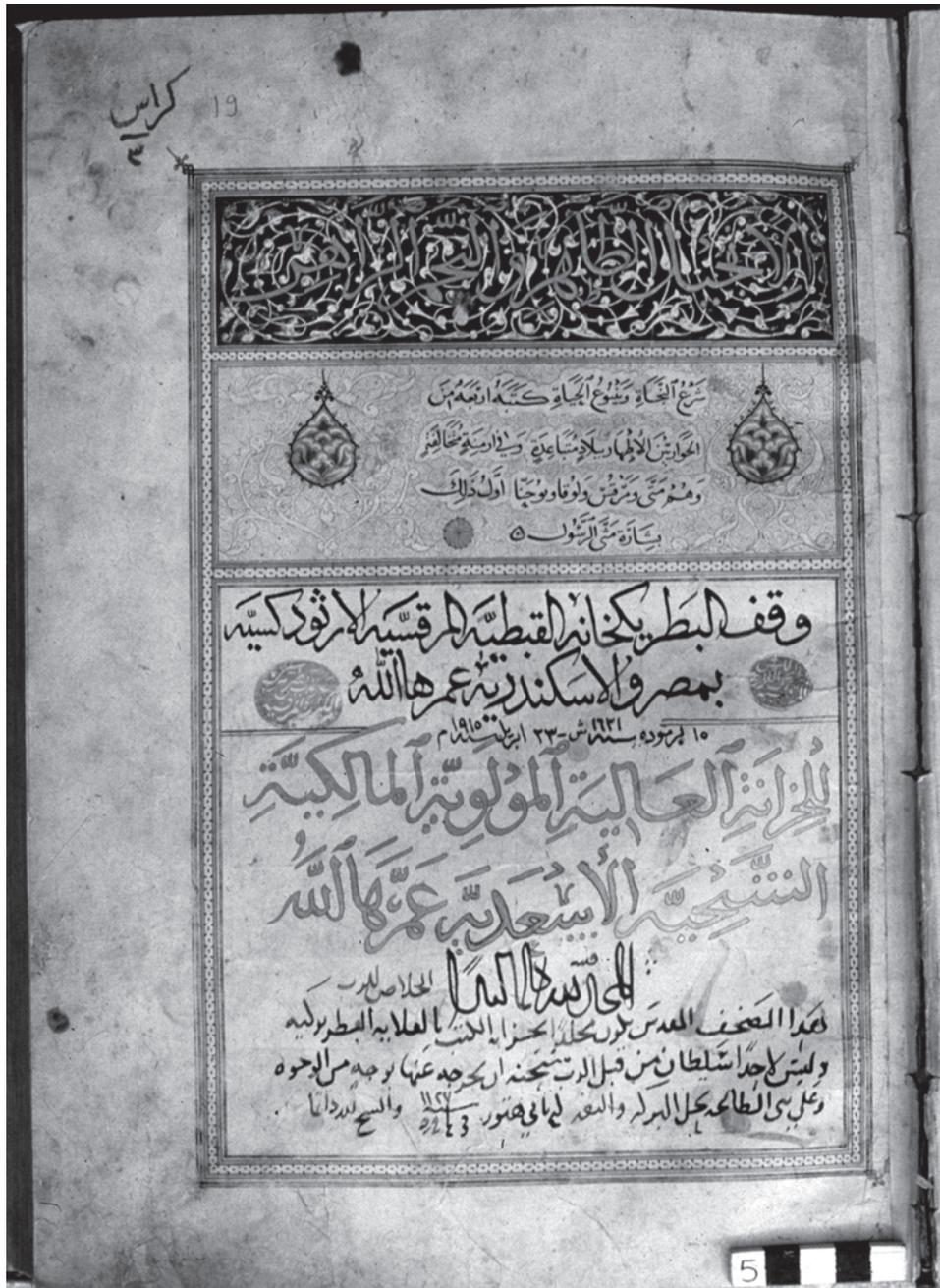


Fig. 2. Old Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl., 90 fol. 20r. Frontispiece. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Coptic Museum).



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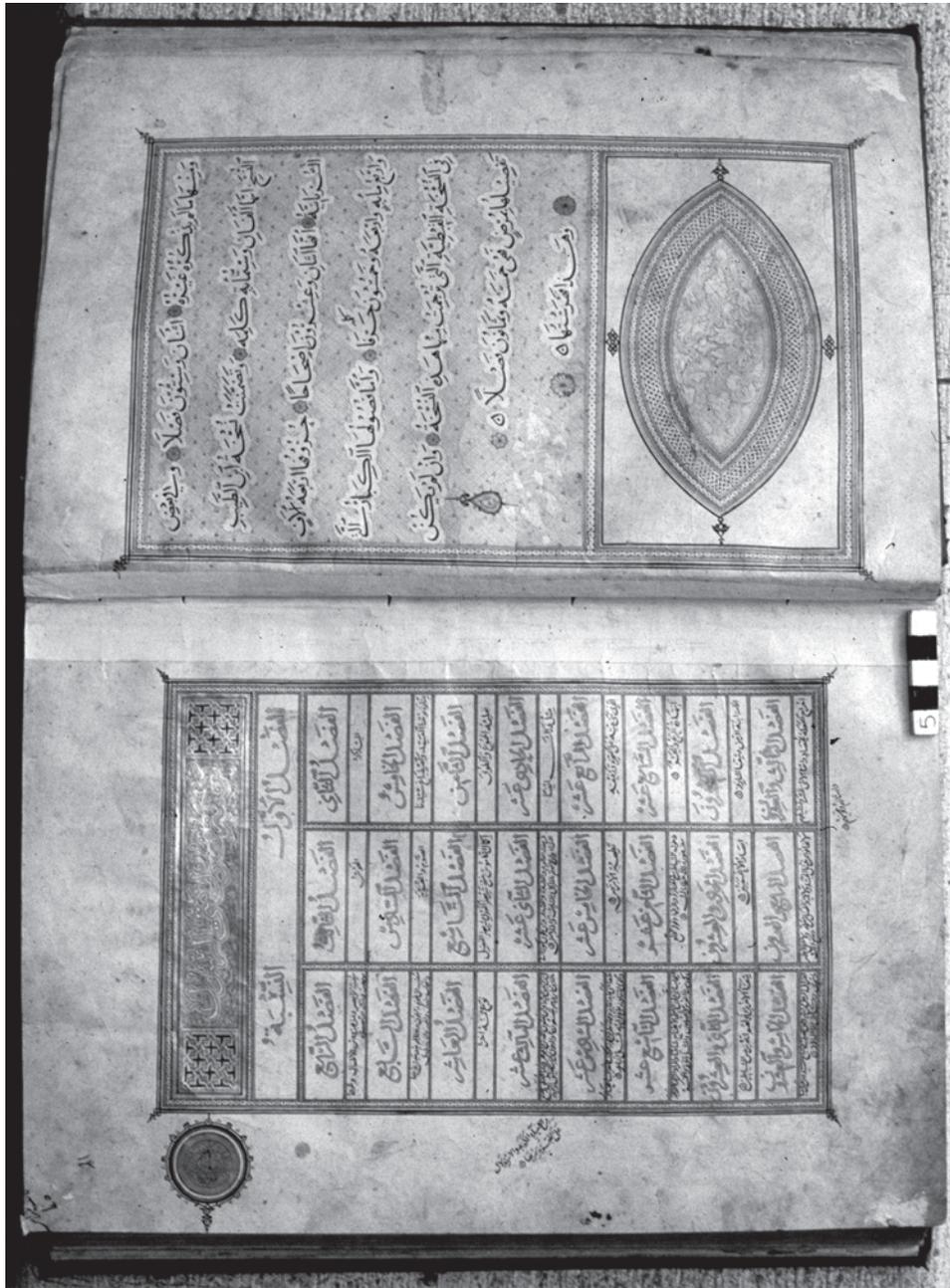


Fig. 3. Old Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl. 90, fols. 21v–22r. End of prologue of St. Matthew and start of table of chapters. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Coptic Museum).





Fig. 4. Old Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl. 90, fols. 23v–24r. Dual frontispieces to St. Matthew's Gospel. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Coptic Museum).



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Fig. 5. Old Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl. 90, pages 1–2. Opening of the Gospel of St. Matthew . (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Coptic Museum).



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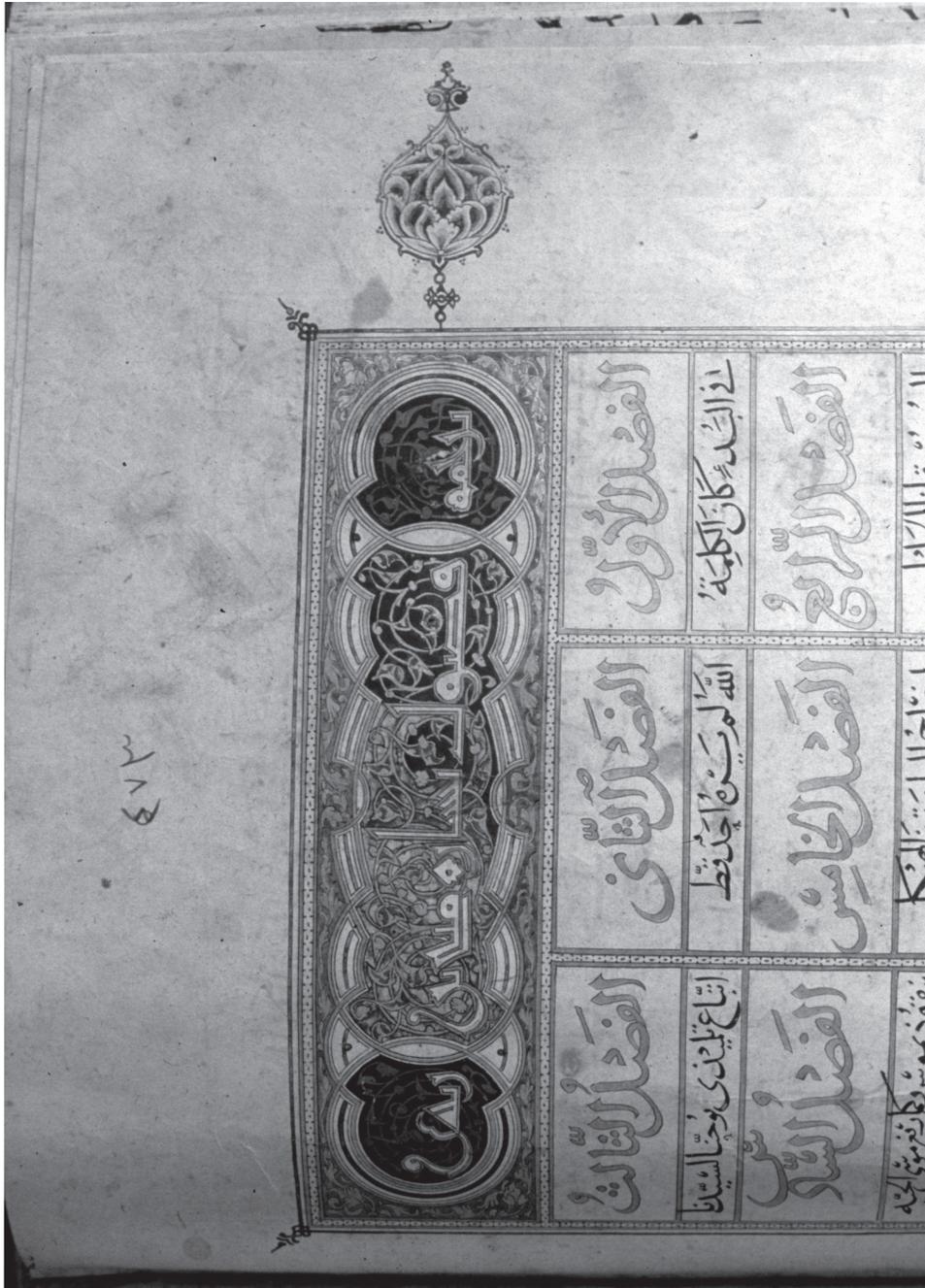


Fig. 6. Old Cairo, Coptic Museum MS Bibl. 90, page 473. Titlepiece to the table of chapters of St. John (detail). (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Coptic Museum).



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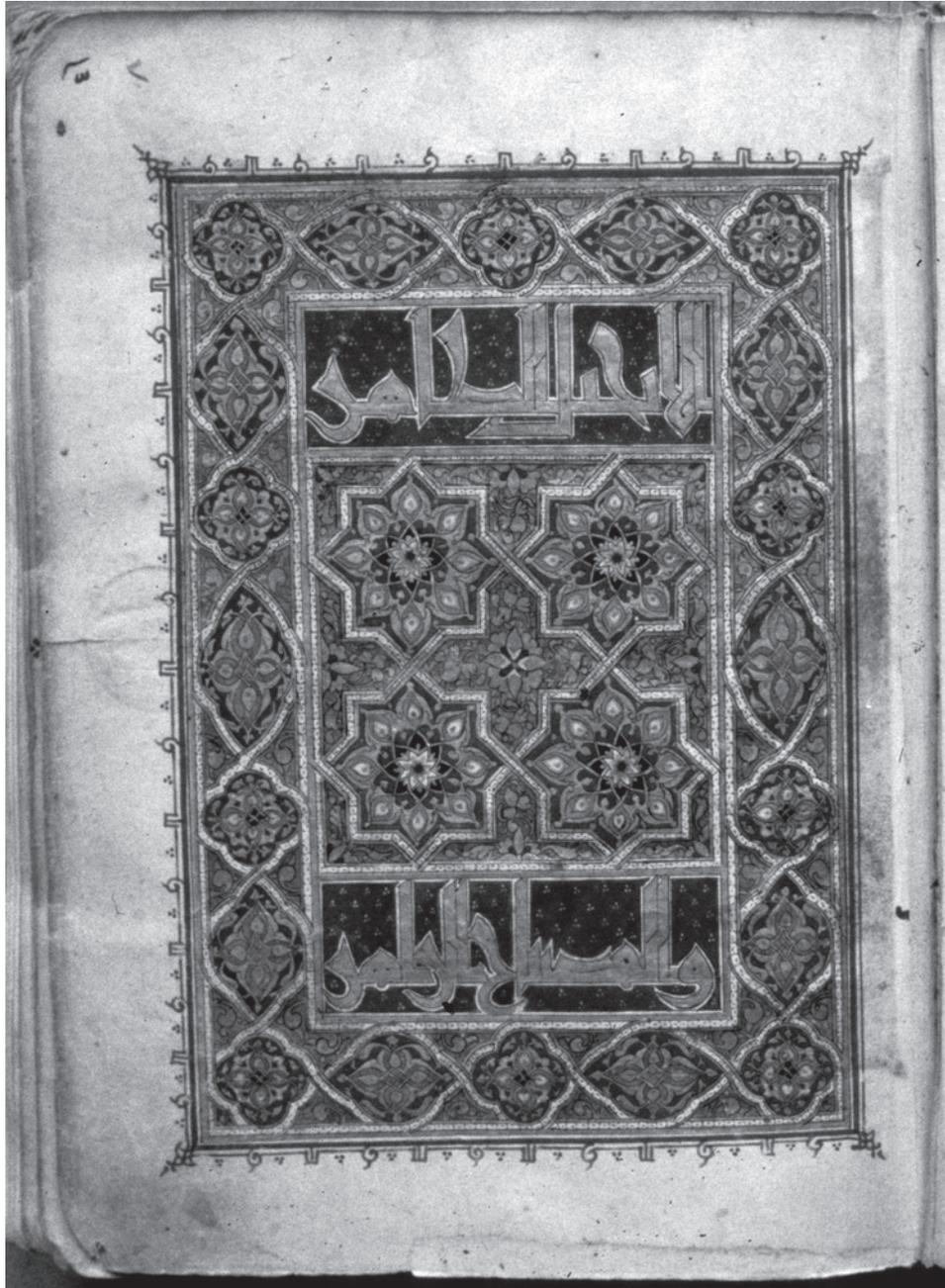


Fig. 7. Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Library MS Ahmet III 3519, fol. 2r. Left-hand frontispiece. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt with permission of the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi).



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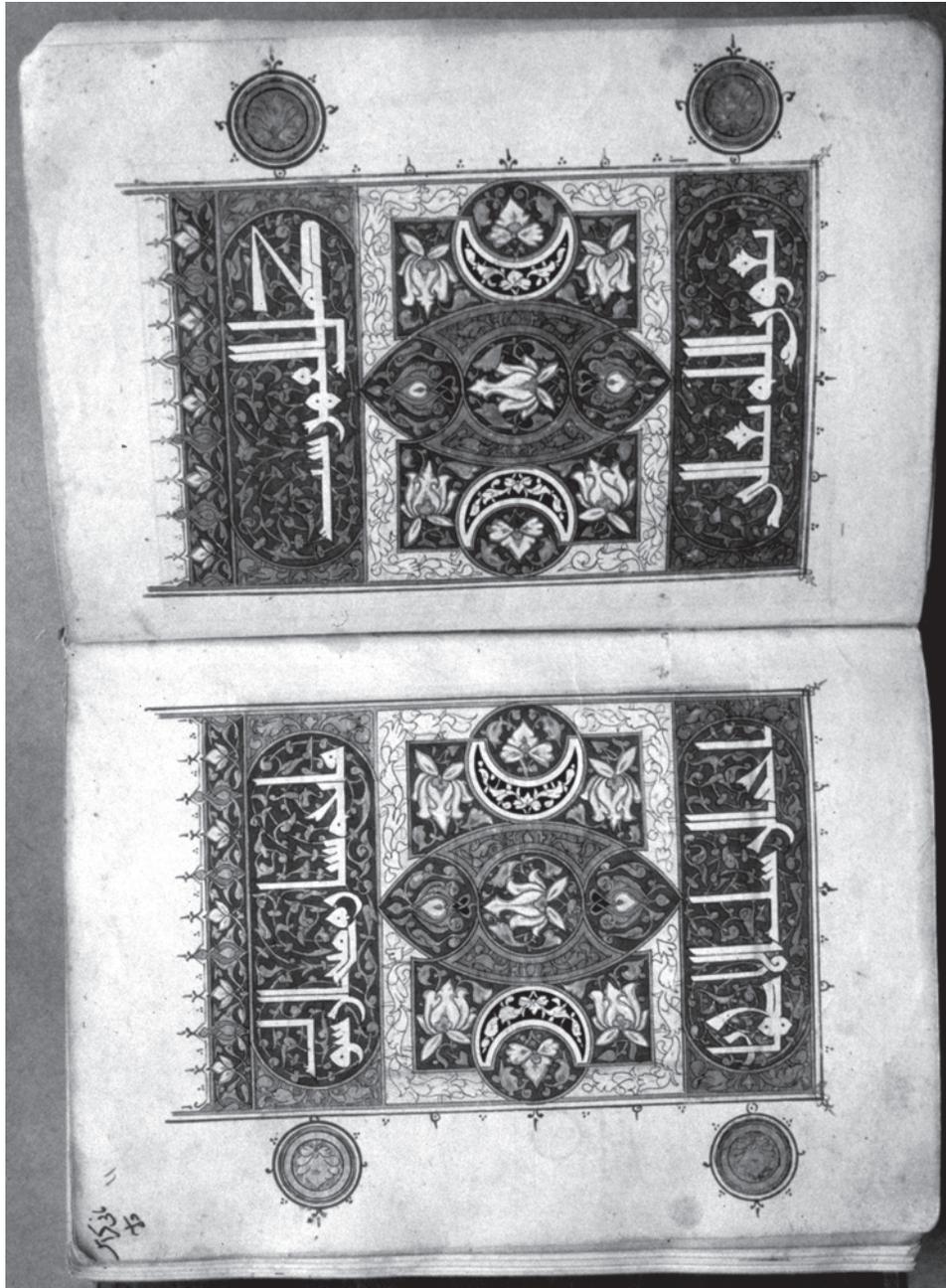


Fig. 8. Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Library MS Ahmet III 3519, fols. 10v–11r. Dual frontispieces marking the end of chapter titles and the opening of St. Matthew's Gospel. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi).



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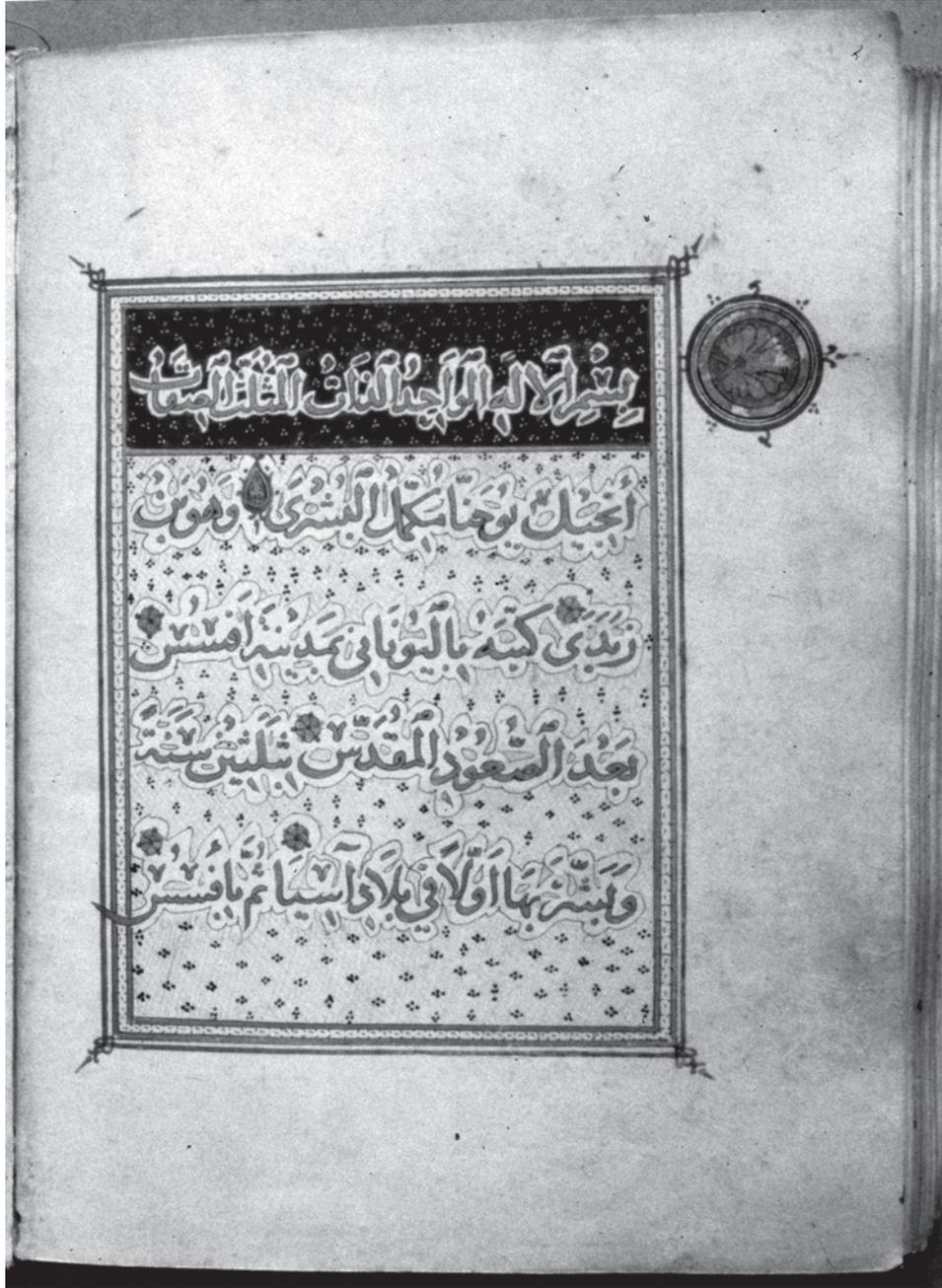


Fig. 9. Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Library MS Ahmet III 3519, fol. 176v. Introduction to St. John's Gospel. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt by permission of the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi).



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