

The Yemeni manuscripts of the Yahuda Collection at the University of Michigan: provenance and acquisition

Ewyn Kropf

The University of Michigan Library

ekropf@umich.edu

Introduction

The University of Michigan Library is privileged to hold three Yemeni manuscripts in its Islamic Manuscripts Collection, Isl. Ms. 564, Isl. Ms. 589, and Isl. Ms. 638. The manuscripts were identified by cataloguer Ewyn Kropf during the “Collaboration in cataloging: Islamic manuscripts at Michigan” project,¹ a grant-funded effort engaging established and emerging scholars by involving them in the detailed cataloguing of the collection. Full codicological descriptions of the manuscripts have been prepared in the course of the cataloguing project and these descriptions appear both in the Library’s online catalogue² and in the *Catalogue of the Yemeni manuscripts in the University of Michigan Library*, made available online by the Centre Français d’Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sanaa (CEFAS).³

This article discusses the manuscripts’ Yemenite provenance and the history of their acquisition by the University of Michigan, a subject which has remained little investigated⁴ since the manuscripts entered the Library in 1926. In the light of additional evidence recently unearthed in the University archives, it is now possible to provide a full account of the acquisition, and more importantly to clarify the role

¹ See <http://www.lib.umich.edu/special-collections-library/clir-islamic-manuscripts-project>. The project is supported by a “Cataloguing Hidden Special Collections and Archives” grant sponsored by the Council on Library and Information Resources with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

² Mirlyn, <http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/>.

³ See <http://www.cefas.com/ye/spip.php?article416>.

⁴ Prior to this point, the only significant investigation into the acquisition and cataloguing history of the Islamic Manuscripts Collection was the fine work carried out in 1992-1993 by Roberta Dougherty, currently Middle Eastern Studies Librarian at the University of Texas at Austin. See Roberta Dougherty, “Islamic manuscripts at the University of Michigan: Summary of collection history” http://www.lib.umich.edu/files/libraries/area/near_east/IslMssSummary.pdf and Roberta Dougherty, “Oriental manuscripts at the University of Michigan,” unpublished paper.

played by the Orientalist and manuscript collector Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877-1951).

Islamic Manuscripts at Michigan

The Islamic Manuscripts Collection at the University of Michigan contains roughly 1,090 manuscript volumes⁵ mainly in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish dating from the 9th century to the 20th century CE. The collection is housed in the Special Collections Library and is organized by acquisition and provenance into several subcollections – the Abdul Hamid, Tiflis, Yahuda, and McGregor Collections being the largest, with roughly 290, 163, 265, and 151 manuscripts respectively, alongside several smaller collections (201 manuscripts in the Walter Koelz, Nuttall, Richard Ford, Stephen Spaulding, Horace Miner, Heyworth-Dunne, Sulaiman, and Frank Schulte Collections and some 19 or so miscellaneous manuscripts of varied provenance). The three Yemeni manuscripts are held in the Yahuda Collection. The size of the collection places it among the largest such collections in North America (others including those at Princeton, University of California Los Angeles, Yale, Library of Congress, and Harvard).

A detailed picture of the coverage and significance of the collection is still being realized in the course of the current cataloguing work⁶ and subsequent study. Nevertheless, inventory data reveals coverage rich in: the sciences of the Qur’ān (*maṣāḥif*, exegesis [*tafsīr*], readings [*qirā’āt*], etc.), collections and works in the sciences of ḥadīth (*‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*), theology (*kalām*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*, particularly of the Ḥanafī school), Ṣūfism and philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, philology, poetry, belles lettres, history and geography. The Abdul Hamid manuscripts are also particularly rich in specimens of fine calligraphy and the Islamic book arts.⁷ Overall, the collection offers a vast range of raw material not only for editors of texts but for scholars of Islamic social history, knowledge transmission and acquisition, manuscript production and ownership, as well as Islamic codicology and paleography, book arts and calligraphy.

The Yemeni Manuscripts

The three Yemeni manuscripts found in the University of Michigan Library’s Islamic Manuscripts Collection are listed at shelfmarks Isl. Ms. 564, Isl. Ms. 589, and Isl. Ms. 638. The manuscripts date from the period of the Zaydī imāmate following the end of the

⁵ A great number of the manuscripts are multi-work codices, i.e. containing several titles within a single volume; thus, the number of manuscript titles far exceeds the number of volumes and will be difficult to accurately estimate until the cataloguing is complete.

⁶ As evidenced by the present article and the recent discovery within our collection of a holograph of the celebrated Mamlūk historian, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, d.1442. See Noah Gardiner and Frédéric Bauden, “A Recently Discovered Holograph Fair Copy of al-Maqrīzī’s *al-Mawā’iz wa-al-i’tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (Michigan Islamic MS 605),” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, 2 (2011), pp. 123-131.

⁷ See Muhittin Serin, “Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’ndeki Bazı Kütüphanelerde Bulunan İslam El Yazma Eserleri ve Michigan Üniversitesi II. Abdülhamid Koleksiyonu,” *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 2, 4-5, (2000), <http://www.academical.org/abddeki-bazi-kutuphanelerde-bulunan-islam-el-yazma-eserleri/makale1210.aspx>.

first Ottoman invasion in 1636 CE,⁸ and were copied within 20 years of each other, between 1660 and 1679 CE. Two of the manuscripts contain works addressing matters of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, in one case from the perspective of the Zaydī school and in the other from the perspective of the Ḥanafī school.⁹ The third manuscript contains Ibn Ḥiǧǧa al-Ḥamawī's commentary on his own poem in praise of the Prophet, *al-Badī'ya* or *Taqdīm Abī Bakr*.¹⁰

Establishing the manuscripts' Yemenite provenance requires detailed examination and analysis of the manuscripts themselves.¹¹ In the case of one manuscript, the place of copying is explicitly stated in the colophon. For the other two manuscripts, their Yemenite province is strongly suggested by the actors responsible for their production (patrons and copyists) and is corroborated by the gatherings (chiefly quaternions),¹² use of colored inks (especially green or yellow), use of larger bolded headings, content (particularly in the case of Isl. Ms. 589) and identities of other former owners. In addition, the hands of all manuscripts bear a certain resemblance,¹³ most significantly a tendency toward scarce pointing,¹⁴ and two of the manuscripts (Isl. Ms. 589 and Isl. Ms.

⁸ Gerald R. Smith, "3. History. (a) From pre-Islamic times to 1962," in Adolf Grohmann, et al., "al-Yaman, Yemen," *EI2*, fascicule 181-186, pp.269-280.

⁹ Sa'd al-Dīn Mas'ūd ibn 'Umar al-Taftāzānī (d.1390), the author of the main text appearing in this manuscript (*al-Talwīḥ ilā kašf ḥaqā'iq al-Tanqīḥ*) certainly wrote on both Ḥanafī and Šāfi'ī law and is described as Šāfi'ī by some of his biographers. Madelung suggests that his remarks in *al-Talwīḥ* reveal that he personally adhered to the Ḥanafī school. See Wilferd Madelung, "al-Taftāzānī, Sa'd al-Dīn Mas'ūd b. 'Umar," *EI2*, fascicule 163-168, pp.88-89. The manuscript also contains the gloss on *al-Talwīḥ* by Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Šāh al-Fanārī (d.1481).

¹⁰ GAL, II 16.

¹¹ Again, full codicological descriptions for the three manuscripts appear in the online catalogue of the University of Michigan, Mirlyn, and in the *Catalogue of the Yemeni manuscripts in the University of Michigan Library*, recently made available online by the Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sanaa (CEFAS). The descriptions were prepared by the present author, with contributions from Alison Vacca (Doctoral candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) and Anne Regourd (CNRS, co-Editor of the *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* and supervisor of manuscripts projects for CEFAS).

¹² The use of quaternions in Yemeni manuscripts (as opposed to the quinions more typical of most Arabic manuscripts) has been reported by Déroche, et al. *Islamic codicology*, p.87 (i.e. citing *FIMMOD* 161) and by Adam Gacek, see p.641 in "A Yemeni codex from the library of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥaymī (d.1140/1727)," in *Essays in honour of Šalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (= Maqālāt wa-dirāsāt muhdāh ilā al-Duktūr Šalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid)*, London, Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2002, pp.643-657.

¹³ The primary texts of the manuscripts are each supplied in *nash* of four distinct hands. Full characterization of the hands is provided in Eryn Kropf, *Catalogue*, though in addition to the tendency toward very casual or even scarce pointing (with any pointing that does appear being in distinct dots as opposed to strokes) all exhibit a slight inclination to the left and mainly curvilinear descenders which are nonetheless quite stiff in some cases. See also m/h 26 (copied 1083/1673) in Anne Regourd, *Catalogue cumulé des bibliothèques de manuscrits de Zabīd, 1 Bibliothèque 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ḥadhrāmī, fascicule 2*, Sanaa, CEFAS, 2008. Thanks to Anne Regourd for sharing images of this ms.

¹⁴ Partial pointing of letters, use of green, yellow and black inks, and bolded headings and keywords are also attested in the Yemeni manuscript copied for Šaraf al-Dīn al-Ḥaymī in 1113/1701, which appears in the codex reported by Gacek (2002).

564) are on papers similar to those attested in other Yemeni manuscripts of the period.¹⁵

Isl. Ms. 638 (copied 1073/1663) has ties to the vicinity of Ibb¹⁶ in the southern highlands. In this manuscript the place of copying is specified – the residence of the copyist in qaryat al-Malḥukī (الملحكي),¹⁷ locale of the renowned Ġāmi‘ al-Mulaykī (جامع المليكي) to the east of the city of Ibb. The copyist is identified as ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Zubayr al-Mulaykī (علي بن عبد الله الزبير المليكي). Most headings are supplied in a larger bolded script and keywords are either executed in yellow ink or rubricated.

The patron for whom Isl. Ms. 589 was copied (1070/1660) is identified as Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Šāliḥ al-‘Ansī (محمد بن أحمد بن محمد بن صالح العنسي). His *nisba* suggests his belonging to the Yemeni tribe ‘Ans (of the great Maḍḥiġ group),¹⁸ with large numbers in the district of Ḍamār.¹⁹ The copyist of this manuscript is not identified, though most headings are supplied in a larger bolded script and are either fully rubricated, provided in yellow or green ink, or accented with one of these colored inks. Keywords too are either rubricated or accented with red, green or yellow ink. The contents of the manuscript further suggest its Yemenite provenance as it contains selections from al-Mahdī li-dīn Allāh Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyá ibn al-Murtaḍá’s commentary on his own *al-Azhār fī fiqh al-a’imma al-aṭḥār*, a textbook of Zaydī law.²⁰

Isl. Ms. 564 bears ties to the port of al-Muḥā’ (Mocha).²¹ The patron for whom the manuscript was copied (1090/1679) is identified as Faḥr al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Akwa’ (فخر الدين عبد الله بن علي بن عز الدين الاكوع). A well-respected *qāḍī* and scholar (particularly of *‘ilm al-uṣūl*) from the great Yemenite family al-Akwa’,²² he resided in several places before receiving an appointment in al-Muḥā’, then moved

¹⁵ That is, European papers featuring the three crescents watermark and the crown-star-crescent watermark in particular. Compare the composite codex reported by Adam Gacek (2002), pp.644-645 and nos. 147, 150 and 151 for a manuscript copied 1114/1702-1703 in Anne Regourd, *Catalogue cumulé des bibliothèques de manuscrits de Zabid, 1 Bibliothèque ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami, fascicule 1, Les papiers filigranés*, Sanaa, CEFAS, 2008. Mold and watermark measurements for the papers corresponding to the respective watermarks differ. Again for full details see Evyn Kropf, *Catalogue*.

¹⁶ See pp.5-6 in Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Mu‘ġam al-mudun wa-al-qabā’il al-Yamanīya*, Ṣan‘ā’, Dār al-Kalima, 1985; Yāqūt (p.15 in *al-Buldān al-Yamanīya* ed. Ismā‘īl b. ‘Alī al-Akwa’) and Adolf Grohmann, “Ibb,” *EI2*, fascicule 51-54, p.663.

¹⁷ See p.408 in Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Mu‘ġam*.

¹⁸ See pp.9 and 35-36 in al-Malik al-Ašraf ‘Umar b. Yūsuf, *Ṭurfat al-aṣḥāb fī ma’rifat al-ansāb*, ed. Karl V. Zetterstéén, Damascus 1949 and pp.298-299 in Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Mu‘ġam*.

¹⁹ See Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Mu‘ġam*, pp.167-168 and 299, Yāqūt (p.123 in *al-Buldān al-Yamanīya* ed. Ismā‘īl b. ‘Alī al-Akwa’) and Joel Schleifer, “ḌḤamār,” *EI2*, fascicule 24-26, p.218; for others from this family in the vicinity of Ḍamār see record 007 (old record 29), “al-mulāḥazāt,” in Ahmad Yahya al-Ghumari et al., *Catalogue partiel de la bibliothèque des Waqfs de la Grande mosque - Dhamar*, available online at http://www.cefas.com.ye/IMG/pdf/catalogue_dhamar.pdf.

²⁰ *GAL*, II 187.

²¹ See Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Mu‘ġam*, pp.267-268, Yāqūt (p.256 in *al-Buldān al-Yamanīya* ed. Ismā‘īl b. ‘Alī al-Akwa’) and Emeri van Donzel, “al-Muḥā’,” *EI2*, fascicule 123-130, pp.513-516.

²² See pp.16-21 in Ismā‘īl b. ‘Alī al-Akwa’, *Tārīḥ a’lām Āl al-Akwa’*, Bayrūt, Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1990.

to Ṣan'ā' where he remained until he died in 1127/1716.²³ Two copyists were involved in the production of this manuscript, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ṣalāḥ ibn 'Abd Ḥālīq ibn Ḡaḥḥāf al-Qāsimī (محمد بن عبد الله بن صلاح بن عبد الخالق بن جحاف القاسمي)²⁴ who supplied the main text (Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī's *al-Talwīḥ ilá kašf ḥaqā'iq al-Tanqīḥ*)²⁵ and al-Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥašr (الحسين بن احمد بن محمد بن احمد بن حشر), who supplied the gloss (Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Šāh al-Fanārī's commentary on *al-Talwīḥ*).²⁶ Most headings and many keywords are supplied in a larger bolded script. In addition, among the former owners' of this manuscript is one Muḥammad Sa'īd (محمد سعيد) who identifies himself as a former *qāḍī* of al-Muḥā' in his ownership statement, which together with his seal impression dated 1270 [1853 or 4] appears on the verso of the front flyleaf of the manuscript.

Acquisition of the Yahuda Collection

The three Yemeni manuscripts are held in a subset of the University of Michigan Library's Islamic Manuscripts Collection known as the Yahuda Collection. Though limited inventory cataloguing began some five years after the Yahuda manuscripts were acquired,²⁷ their provenance was scarcely investigated and a full account of their acquisition was not prepared in the course of the inventory cataloguing.²⁸

In the absence of further evidence, speculation arose²⁹ that the manuscripts constituted a portion of the exceptional personal collection of the famous Orientalist and manuscript collector Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877-1951), whose manuscripts were otherwise known to have been dispersed to the National Library of Medicine, Princeton University Library and the National Library of Israel (formerly the Jewish National and University Library). In 1992-1993, Roberta Dougherty³⁰ began an investigation into the

²³ See p.624 in vol.3 of Ibrāhīm b. al-Qāsim b. al-Mu'ayyad bi-llāh, *Ṭabaqāt al-Zaydiyya al-kubrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām b. 'Abbās al-Waḡīḥ, 'Ammān, Mu'assasat al-Imām Zayd ibn 'Alī al-Thaqāfiya, 2001. For further details and additional references to biographical notices for him in other standard works see entry on pp.87-88 in Ismā'īl b. 'Alī al-Akwa', *Tārīḥ a'lām Āl al-Akwa'*.

²⁴ Possibly a further tie to Mocha since his kinsman Sayyid Zayd b. 'Alī Ḡaḥḥāf was granted the Mocha governorship at the height of the Qāsimī expansion and held the post from 1066/1655 or 6-1080/1669 or 70. See pp.55-64 in Nancy Um, *The Merchant houses of Mocha*, Seattle/London, University of Washington, 2009.

²⁵ GAL, II 214, no. 3, cmtre. b.

²⁶ GAL, II 216, no. 15.

²⁷ See pp.166-167 in *The President's report for the year 1931-32*, (Ann Arbor, MI, 1932).

²⁸ Years later, with only limited information available, James D. Pearson (1971) and Stephan Roman (1990) could address the acquisition of the Yahuda manuscripts only vaguely. Pearson is especially conservative stating only "(...) the Yahuda collection, bought from the bookseller of that name Nos. 451-685 (...)" (see *Oriental manuscripts in Europe and North America: a survey*, pp.332-333).

²⁹ Roman's brief account of the Yahuda acquisition (see *The Development of Islamic library collections in Western Europe and North America*, p.235) seems to imply that the manuscripts came from Yahuda's personal collection: "Two hundred and thirty manuscripts were bought from A.S. Yahuda the oriental scholar. Many of his other manuscripts went to Princeton and the National Library of Medicine. The texts obtained by Michigan include (...)"

³⁰ Currently Middle Eastern Studies Librarian at the University of Texas at Austin, to whom the present author is most indebted for her preliminary work on the acquisition and cataloguing history of the

acquisition history of the Islamic Manuscripts Collection and unearthed in the Special Collections Library administrative files a brief account of the Yahuda acquisition.³¹

“In 1925, A. S. Yahuda of Heidelberg offered to the British Museum a collection of more than two hundred Arabic manuscripts, carefully catalogued. The examination was made by Mr. Edwards, who in 1924 had gone to Cairo for the Museum in order to examine the Abdul Hamid collection, and had recommended that purchase; later he was instrumental in arranging that the Museum would turn over to the University of Michigan at nominal price a considerable number of duplicate copies of Arabic Manuscripts, and these form a valuable supplement to the collection of Abdul Hamid MSS. received by the University. Mr. Edwards found the Yahuda collection of much value, containing some manuscripts not in the British Museum, and not a few MSS. of which the market value is about £20 each. However, the British Museum was not in a position to make the purchase. Mr. Edwards noticed that the Yahuda collection to a remarkable degree supplements the list of Arabic MSS. previously sent to the University of Michigan, and called Mr. Kelsey’s attention to it, advising the purchase. Mr. Kelsey obtained from Dr. Yahuda the catalogue slips of the collection, and these were carefully checked over by W.H. Worrell, who found only four MSS. that would need to be rejected as duplicates of the present University Collection. These four Dr. Yahuda offered to replace. As the result of negotiations extending over a number of months, Dr. Yahuda agreed to accept the sum of \$5,500 in payment, and to deliver the collection to the British Museum, there to await Mr. Kelsey’s arrival (...). Mr. Kelsey on his personal credit arranged to pay to Dr. Yahuda the sum of \$5,500 though he has had as yet not opportunity to take up this subject with President Little (...). The words ‘now or never’ are applicable to Institutions having need of such material, and an opportunity such as this for the University of Michigan should not let slip provided the acquisition can in any way be arranged.”³²

In addition to roughly dating the events to ca. 1925, this account confirms that the acquisition of the Yahuda manuscripts, as with the other significant early acquisitions,³³ was facilitated by the University’s own Professor Francis W. Kelsey (1858-1927). In fact, Kelsey is the author of the account. A classicist and archeologist as well as an admired and progressive instructor, Kelsey continually involved himself in visionary projects in the service of scholarship (particularly classics and archeology) and general humanitarian aims. As director of Near East research (1919-1921) he raised funds for

Islamic Manuscripts Collection.

³¹ See her unpublished paper, “Oriental manuscripts at the University of Michigan.”

³² See pp.13-15 in “University of Michigan Near East Research Memorandum no.14, June 1, 1925 to August 31, 1926, Rome, September 3, 1926” housed in Special Collections administrative files, drawer labeled “Kelsey Material | Sanders’ Papers,” file box labeled “Kelsey Memoranda.”

³³ For more on these acquisitions, i.e. of the Abdul Hamid and Tiflis Collections, see Roberta Dougherty, “Islamic manuscripts at the University of Michigan: Summary of collection history” and her unpublished paper, “Oriental manuscripts at the University of Michigan.”

the University's first archeological expedition to the Near East, and thereafter supervised each year's expedition, including the excavations at Antioch of Pisidia, Karanis in Egypt, and Carthage in 1924-1926. His passion for collecting antiquities and his tireless fundraising efforts allowed him to build a remarkable collection now housed by the museum that bears his name. In addition, Kelsey was responsible for the initial purchases that now form the basis of the University's world renowned papyrus collection and of course its Islamic Manuscripts Collection.³⁴

Kelsey's account also introduces the significant role played by the British Museum in facilitating the acquisition, particularly one "Mr. Edwards," that is, Edward Edwards (d.1944),³⁵ a distinguished former pupil of E.G. Browne and noted Persian scholar in his own right who served for 31 years (1904-1935) in the Museum's Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts and contributed to the preparation of several of its catalogues.³⁶ With regard to manuscript purchases, it was primarily this "Mr. Edwards" who kept Kelsey apprised of notable opportunities,³⁷ reviewing the manuscripts in advance and comparing them against Michigan's holdings.

Perhaps most significantly Kelsey's account also establishes the involvement in the acquisition of one "A.S. Yahuda," that is, the well-known Orientalist and manuscript collector Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877-1951).³⁸ An avid manuscript collector, Yahuda amassed an exceptional collection of books and manuscripts in the course of his travels and eventually bequeathed a large number of them to the National Library of Israel.³⁹ He reportedly sold other manuscripts from his collection to the U.S. National Library of

³⁴ See "Finding Aid for Francis Willey Kelsey papers, 1894-1928," Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, The University of Michigan; Ward W. Briggs, "Kelsey, Francis Willey," *American National Biography Online* (Feb. 2000), accessed 19 Nov 2011 from <http://www.anb.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/articles/20/20-00535.html>; and "Francis Kelsey," History. The Kelsey Museum of Archeology, accessed 19 Nov 2011 from <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/aboutus/history/franciskelsey>.

³⁵ See his obituary in *The Times* of London, "Mr. E. Edwards," *The Times*, Saturday, May 27, 1944, pg. 7.

³⁶ Hermann Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, Oxford, Hart, 1903-1937. 2 vols. (vol. 2 revised and completed by Edward Edwards). Reprinted London, India Office Library & Records, 1980; Alexander G. Ellis and Edward Edwards, *Descriptive list of the Arabic manuscripts acquired by the Trustees of the British Museum since 1894*, London, British Museum, 1912; Edward Edwards, *Catalogue of the Persian printed books in the British Museum*, London, British Museum, 1922.

³⁷ In fact, Kelsey apparently requested that Edwards keep him informed, see Edward Edwards to Francis W. Kelsey, 14 July 1925, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, which opens "You asked me to let you know if I heard of any collection of Moslem Mss. that were good and obtainable at a reasonable price. Such a collection has been brought to my notice earlier than I expected (...)."

³⁸ Born in Jerusalem to a Baghdad family, Yahuda was taught by his elder brother Isaac Benjamin S.E. Yahuda and studied Semitics at Heidelberg and Strasbourg before lecturing at the Berlin Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (1904 to 1914) and holding the position of professor at the University of Madrid (until 1922). He spent the following twenty years traveling in his quest for rare manuscripts before becoming professor at the New School for Social Research in New York in 1942. He died in New Haven, Connecticut in 1951. See Martin Plessner, "Yahuda, Abraham Shalom (1877-1951)," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (2007) v.21, p.272 and Reeva S. Simon, Michael M. Laskier, and Sara Reguer (eds.), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in modern times*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, p.87.

Medicine (then the Army Medical Library) in 1940-1941⁴⁰ and to Princeton University Library in 1942.⁴¹

According to Kelsey's account, A.S. Yahuda was clearly the main broker of the purchase, offering the manuscripts, finalizing their selection and accepting payment for them. Given Yahuda's reputation⁴² and circulating accounts of the dispersal of his personal collection,⁴³ it is perhaps not surprising that (in the absence of further evidence) Yahuda's involvement was taken to imply his former ownership or that the manuscripts were part of his personal collection.⁴⁴ The account includes considerable detail (though it leaves a few points unclear), and yet invites any confirming, clarifying evidence that might be available in further records of the acquisition in the administrative files and archives.

The vague references to the acquisition that appear in the contemporary records of the proceedings of the University's Board of Regents (1926-1929)⁴⁵ and the General Library

³⁹ Formerly the Jewish National and University Library, see Martin Plessner, "Yahuda, Abraham Shalom (1877-1951)"; pp.173-174 in Richard H. Popkin, *The third force in seventeenth-century thought*, Leiden, Brill, 1992; and "Abraham Shalom Yahuda and the Yahuda Collection," accessed 31 August 2011 from http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/Newton/yahuda_eng.html.

⁴⁰ For more on the purchase by the U.S. National Library of Medicine, see p.[1] in Emilie Savage-Smith, *Islamic culture and the medical arts : a brochure to accompany an exhibition in celebration of the 900th anniversary of the oldest Arabic medical manuscript in the collections of the National Library of Medicine* (Bethesda, MD: National Library of Medicine, 1994) and pp.13-14 in Thomas Conuel, "Treasures from the Collection: the Islamic Medical Manuscript Collection," *NLM Newslines*, vol.58, no.1 (January-March 2003), pp.10-11, 13-14, 18-19; Savage-Smith gives 1941 for the date of purchase; Conuel gives 1940; Yahuda's correspondence file gives "2876. US Army medical (33), 1940-1947."

⁴¹ For more on the Princeton acquisition see "Introduction" in Rudolf Mach, *Catalogue of Arabic manuscripts (Yahuda Section) in the Garret Collection Princeton University Library*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1977, and pp.120-122 in Philip K. Hitti, "The Arabic and Islamic manuscripts," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, vol.3 (June 1942), pp.116-122.

⁴² Whether the manuscripts he sold could be considered part of his "personal collection" or not, Yahuda was certainly recognized as a manuscript dealer of exceptional quality; his personal archive now housed at the National Library of Israel contains files of "3447a. Arabic letters re book dealing" and "3778. Book lists, mainly Arabic," see the online records for "Abraham Shalom Yahuda Archive, 1898-1951. Sub-Series 7.2: Various 2 (letters, mss, photos etc) 3719-3734. Appendices: correspondence."

⁴³ Yahuda (albeit toward the end of his life) had reportedly sold vast portions of "the collection that originally belonged to [him]" (see "Introduction" in Rudolph Mach, *Catalogue* and Stephan Roman, p.235) to the National Library of Medicine and Princeton University (according to Hitti's (1942) account "It was reputedly the largest and most valuable collection of Arabic manuscripts in private possession"); he even reportedly had success selling a part of the "valuable collection" he had acquired to the British Museum (see Martin Plessner, "Yahuda, Abraham Shalom (1877-1951)") and "according to unconfirmed reports, the greater part of the Chester Beatty Collection was acquired from Yahuda" (see "Introduction" in Mach, *Catalogue*).

⁴⁴ Again see Stephan Roman p.235 and Roberta Dougherty, "Oriental manuscripts at the University of Michigan."

⁴⁵ See p.91 in University of Michigan, Board of Regents, *Proceedings of the Board of Regents (1926-1929)*, Ann Arbor, MI: The University, 1929, "November 19, 1926. Present, President Little, Regent Beal, and Regent Sawyer. The committee approved the proposal of Mr. Horace Rackham that the University advance \$10,000 for the purchase of additional manuscripts which the University, through Doctor F.W. Kelsey

report to the president⁴⁶ do not mention Yahuda but neither do they introduce any information contradicting his involvement. The accounts in these records do confirm the approximate date of purchase (1926), as well as the role of Kelsey in orchestrating the purchase, the number of the received manuscripts (263), and the approximate date of receipt (1926-1927). These records also highlight the role played in the funding by Horace H. Rackham (1858-1933) a Detroit lawyer and generous benefactor of the University of Michigan who made his fortune as an early investor in Henry Ford's then fledgling enterprise,⁴⁷ and with whom Kelsey was on intimate terms.

It is from records of Kelsey's own correspondence that the details of the acquisition are better resolved. An account follows.

In July 1925, Kelsey receives a letter from Edwards notifying him of the opportunity to make a notable manuscript purchase. "Professor S. [sic] Yahuda, the brother of J. B. Yahuda of Cairo" had called upon the Museum and shown Edwards a list of Arabic, Turkish and Persian manuscripts that *his brother* had for sale.⁴⁸ Edwards had declined the purchase for the Museum given the presence of "copies of nearly all of them" already in their collection.⁴⁹ Still, he would recommend the purchase to Kelsey, for:

“(...) it appears to me from the lists that they are a most useful lot of works – many of them being rare indeed, and a goodly number of old copies. We have dealt with Yahuda for many years, having bought about 200 Mss. during the last three years, and we found him very reasonable in his prices and his books of good literary value and of scientific importance. I am advising him to send on the lists to you so that your expert may judge and advise you regarding them. I am inclined to think that they are very well worth considering.”⁵⁰

Most strikingly, Edwards' letter indicates that Yahuda was not offering a selection from his own collection of manuscripts, or even his own sales inventories, but from the manuscripts that his elder brother, Isaac Benjamin Shlomo Ezekiel Yahuda, a bookseller

wishes to buy for its collection, with the understanding that Mr. Rackham will reimburse the Treasurer of the University at the rate of \$1,000 per month until a total of \$10,000 has been paid. November 19, 1926.”

⁴⁶ See p.188 in *The President's report for the year 1926-27*, Ann Arbor, MI: The University, 1928, “The Oriental collections were enriched by important purchases of manuscripts, chiefly Arabic, bought by Professor Kelsey. They number 263 in all.”

⁴⁷ See the University of Michigan Rackham Graduate School's "Horace and Mary Rackham," accessed 19 November 2011 from http://www.rackham.umich.edu/about_us/what_is_rackham/horace_and_mary/.

⁴⁸ “Professor S. [sic] Yahuda, the brother of J. B. Yahuda of Cairo, has called here and shown me a list of Arabic (with a few Turkish (?) and Persian) Mss. that his brother has for sale,” Edward Edwards to Francis W. Kelsey, 14 July 1925, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁴⁹ Edward Edwards to Francis W. Kelsey, 14 July 1925, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁵⁰ Edward Edwards to Francis W. Kelsey, 14 July 1925, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

in Cairo,⁵¹ was offering for sale.⁵² Edwards' letter also claims that the British Museum had regular dealings with "Yahuda" and purchased a number of manuscripts from him (presumably between 1923-1925), though whether he refers to I.B. Yahuda or to A.S. Yahuda serving as an agent for his brother⁵³ is unclear. This suggests that in addition to building his own personal collection, Yahuda's travels may have been engaged with collecting manuscripts to be sold through his brother's enterprise and even his own manuscript dealings.⁵⁴

Kelsey replies to Edwards the following month (August 1925), indicating that he has received a letter from Yahuda "containing a description of the collection of oriental manuscripts which he offers, and also a registered package containing detailed data"⁵⁵

⁵¹ See the entry for "Buchhändler J. B. Yahuda in Kairo (1427)" in the listing of members of the German Oriental Society (DMG) for the years 1909, etc. for example "Verzeichnis der Mitglieder der D. M. Gesellschaft." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 63 (1909), XXXIX; Isaac Benjamin (or Isaac Ezekiel) Yahuda was 13 years his brother's senior and an accomplished Arabist, having been a professor of Arabic literature and editing several volumes of proverbs and poetry. See the review by Thomas Arnold, "An anthology of Arabic verse," *Asian review*, ser.4 v.13-14 (1918), p.80; p.170 in Shelomo D. Goitein, "The Origin and historical significance of the present-day Arabic proverb," *Islamic culture*, pp.25-26 (1952), pp.169-179; and opening of Martin Plessner, "Yahuda, Abraham Shalom (1877-1951)."

⁵² That I.B. (or J.B.) Yahuda was offering manuscripts to other libraries around this time is attested in his correspondence of 1908-1909 with John Christopher Schwab, Librarian of Yale University from 1905 to 1916, see p.17 and p.20 in Daniel Hartwig, *Guide to the Librarian, Yale University, Records, RU 120*, New Haven, CT: The Yale University Library, 2008; revised 2011,

<http://drs.library.yale.edu:8083/fedora/get/mssa:ru.0120/PDF>.

⁵³ Though further research is required to determine exactly which are the manuscripts that "Yahuda" sold to the British Museum, the notion that A.S. Yahuda had sold manuscripts to the British Museum is attested elsewhere; descriptive records for his papers at the National Library of Israel reveal that 59 letters passed between him and the British Museum between the years 1921 and 1941. See Abraham Shalom Yahuda Archive 1898-1951, Sub-Series 1.35: Correspondence of Abraham Shalom Yahuda. Lon-Ly, 1578. London British Museum (59), 1921-1940, National Library of Israel; see also the brief biography provided by the National Library of Israel (then JNUL) "Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877-1951) and the Yahuda collection" retrieved 13 August 2011 from http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/Newton/yahuda_eng.html and Martin Plessner, "Yahuda, Abraham Shalom (1877-1951)."

⁵⁴ As mentioned earlier, Yahuda had a reputation as a bookseller and his papers at the National Library of Israel would seem to confirm that, cf. "3447a. Arabic letters re book dealing" and "3778. Book lists, mainly Arabic" in the online records for "Abraham Shalom Yahuda Archive, 1898-1951. Sub-Series 7.2: Various 2 (letters, mss, photos etc) 3719-3734. Appendices: correspondence."

⁵⁵ Several references are made to this correspondence between Kelsey and Yahuda including "the letter of Dr. Yahuda dated July 27, 1925" in Kelsey's letter to Edwards dated October 11, 1926. Unfortunately, it appears that no such correspondence has been retained in the Kelsey papers housed in the University of Michigan archives at the Bentley Historical Library. Likewise, Kelsey is not among the correspondents listed in online records for Yahuda's papers at the National Library of Israel. While references to the correspondence in Kelsey's letters do seem to indicate that the exchanges took place directly between him and Yahuda, it could be that Yahuda addressed letters to him in care of the British Museum (for which many letters are found in the Yahuda papers). It is also possible that Kelsey turned over this correspondence to Professor William H. Worrell, who was conducting the examination of the slips and manuscripts themselves, and that they have been kept with the papers of William Warner Bishop, who was University Librarian at the time.

and expressing his intent to reply directly to Yahuda to confirm consideration of the purchase though review of the material will take some time.⁵⁶

After a delay of some months, Kelsey writes Edwards the following spring (April 1926) confirming that the offered collection has been reviewed and “so well supplements what we already have that Mr. Worrell recommended the substitution of four only, and these titles I sent to Mr. Yahuda, who said he would replace them by manuscripts of equal value.”⁵⁷ He goes to say that a payment of \$5,500 had been agreed upon, but would be delayed “on the account of the absence of a man who needs to be consulted,” perhaps referring to Horace H. Rackham to whom he would write on the matter in November of the same year. In the meantime, arrangements are made for Yahuda to deliver the manuscripts to Edwards at the Museum so that Kelsey can call for them there. With his letter to Edwards, Kelsey had apparently also included the slips received from Yahuda, asking that Edwards compare them with the manuscripts and “write me what the number of the manuscripts is, and ask Dr. Yahuda to correct anything which may need to be corrected on account of the substitution referred to.”⁵⁸

Edwards replies the following month (May 1926), disclosing that further substitute manuscripts were being offered by Yahuda due to nine having been lost or damaged in transit.⁵⁹ He also confirms that the manuscripts are waiting for Kelsey at the Museum and offers to receive and hand the payment to Yahuda.⁶⁰ Kelsey eventually decides to send Yahuda the payment directly, however, “one-half of the amount due, or \$2,750,” which he confirms for Edwards in a letter the following month (June 1926).⁶¹

Again after some months have passed, Kelsey writes Edwards in October 1926⁶² to confirm that he had been able to collect a portion of the Yahuda manuscripts by this time, some 167 volumes representing 135 works, and that they had been inspected and approved enthusiastically.⁶³ However, the rest had been unreachable. He presumed

⁵⁶ Francis W. Kelsey to Edward Edwards, 22 August 1925, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁵⁷ Francis W. Kelsey to Edward Edwards, 15 April 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Some of the slips involved in this substitution are housed in the Special Collections Islamic Manuscripts administrative files.

⁵⁸ Francis W. Kelsey to Edward Edwards, 15 April 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁵⁹ Again, these slips are housed in the Special Collections Islamic Manuscripts administrative files.

⁶⁰ Edward Edwards to Francis W. Kelsey, 31 May 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁶¹ Francis W. Kelsey to Edward Edwards, 30 June 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁶² Francis W. Kelsey to Edward Edwards, 11 October 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁶³ I.e. inspected by Professor W.H. William who confirmed this in a letter to Kelsey dated October 8, 1926. William H. Worrell to Francis W. Kelsey, 8 October 1926, “from Bishop files on MSS,” Special Collections Islamic Manuscripts Administrative files. A letter to Kelsey from Librarian William Warner Bishop further confirms that the manuscripts had reached the Library, but that they would not be formally added to the collection until he received “definite instructions from you that they have become the

they were locked in Edwards' room (who had been away at the time of his coming) and he asked that the rest be turned over to one "Mr. Lamacraft" who could hold them for Kelsey until he was able to come collect them as well.

Presumably sometime in the early days of the following month (November 1926), Kelsey approaches Rackham in person with a request that he cover the expense of the purchase. Quite soon afterward, on November 4, he sends a very cordial letter to Rackham reminding him of the request:

"President Little is disappointed not to have seen you, and would send his regard did he know that I am writing. We both hope that you will find it possible to add to the wonderful collection of manuscripts of permanent value which your contributions have brought to us by providing the ten thousand dollars need to pay for those supplementing the former collection already paid for on which we have the refusal."⁶⁴

That Rackham agreed to fund the purchase is confirmed in a letter to Kelsey from Rackham's secretary dated just four days later, i.e. November 10, 1926.⁶⁵ Letters of thanks from Kelsey to the secretary and to Rackham himself, as well as from President Little to Rackham, provide further confirmation. These letters also corroborate the details of the arrangement as described in the *Proceedings of the Board of Regents (1926-1929)*.

From Yemen to Yahuda?

At this time, it is only possible to speculate on how I.B. Yahuda, through his brother A.S. Yahuda, came to offer these Yemeni manuscripts for purchase. He had been active in bookselling for some years by the time of this sale,⁶⁶ and therefore likely had quite an inventory. The "catalogue slips"⁶⁷ which Kelsey references in his account of the

property of the University," see William W. Bishop to Francis W. Kelsey, 6 November 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁶⁴ Francis W. Kelsey to Mr. & Mrs. Horace H. Rackham, 4 November 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁶⁵ Mabel Cameron [Rackham secretary] to Francis W. Kelsey, 10 November 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Francis W. Kelsey to Mabel Cameron [Rackham secretary], 13 November 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Francis W. Kelsey to William W. Bishop, 13 November 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Francis W. Kelsey to Horace H. Rackham, 13 November 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Clarence C. Little to Horace H. Rackham, 15 November 1926, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁶⁶ At least since 1909, cf. his entry in the listing of members of the German Oriental Society (DMG) for the year 1909 and his correspondence of 1908-1909 with John Christopher Schwab, Librarian of Yale University.

⁶⁷ These carry mainly typed data with diacritics supplied by hand, consisting of Romanized title, author (with dates), summary, extent, date of composition and copying, inventory mark and citation in Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*. In addition to the slips, all the manuscripts carry inscriptions and typically spine labels, perhaps in the hand of I.B. or A.S. Yahuda, with the assigned

acquisition,⁶⁸ typically indicate an age for each manuscript, presumably at the time the slip was prepared, and calculations on the basis of these ages and the corresponding dates of copying may suggest rough dates of acquisition for the manuscripts,⁶⁹ i.e. 1923 for Isl. Ms. 638 and 1924 for Isl. Ms. 589.⁷⁰ Whether I.B. Yahuda traveled extensively in order to acquire manuscripts (as his famous brother later did) remains to be more thoroughly investigated, but according to S.D. Goiten, “as a dealer in Arabic books, he had connections all over the Arab world”⁷¹ which he undoubtedly leveraged to expand his stock. Still, that he traveled to Yemen to acquire these manuscripts is plausible, though an inspection stamp dated 1313 [1895 or 6] for the port of Tripoli (on the Levantine Mediterranean) suggests that this would not have been necessary for at least one of the manuscripts,⁷² not to mention that the presence of Yemeni merchants selling manuscripts in Cairo is attested from the late 19th century.⁷³

It is also possible that A.S. Yahuda collected the manuscripts for his brother. The details of his peregrinations around the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe have not yet been established, but reportedly he spent a full twenty years traveling in his quest for manuscripts beginning in 1922,⁷⁴ just a year before the first of these Yemeni manuscripts was inventoried.⁷⁵ While he was certainly working to build his own collection⁷⁶ and selling from it, it is not inconceivable that he also gathered manuscripts

inventory mark, extent, title and even citation in Brockelmann’s *GAL* on the upper cover or front flyleaf.

⁶⁸ Again, the account appearing in the Near East Research Memorandum no.14 of 1926; the slips are also referenced in the Kelsey-Edwards correspondence, e.g. Francis W. Kelsey to Edward Edwards, 22 August 1925, Box 2, Francis Willey Kelsey papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

⁶⁹ It is certainly also possible that the inventory cataloguing did not immediately follow the acquisition, or that the inventory cataloguing simply took several years to complete.

⁷⁰ The slip for Isl. Ms. 564 lacks an age.

⁷¹ See p.170 in Shelomo D. Goiten, “The Origin and historical significance of the present-day Arabic proverb,” *Islamic culture*, 25-26 (1952), pp.169-179.

⁷² This stamp appears in purple ink on the verso of the front flyleaf of Isl. Ms. 564. The inscription within reads: “معينة اولنمشدر طرابلس شام ١٣١٣” in Ottoman Turkish. That this manuscript traveled with one of the former owners’ whose marks appear in the manuscript is not implausible, and it may be that it was Muḥammad Saʿīd, the former *qāḍī* of al-Muḥā’ whose statement and seal impression (dated 1270/1853-1854) appear on the verso of the front flyleaf of the manuscript, or a subsequent owner who traveled with the book.

⁷³ See p.10 in Adalbert Merx, *Documents de paléographie hébraïque et arabe*, Leiden, Brill, 1894. Thanks to Anne Regourd for bringing this point to my attention.

⁷⁴ I.e. following retirement from his post at the University of Madrid until he became professor at the New School for Social Research in New York in 1942. In his biographical notice for A.S. Yahuda, Benjamin J. Yahuda notes that Yahuda’s travels followed a disappointing turn of events in which an appointment for him at the new Hebrew University in Jerusalem never materialized. Instead, he devoted himself to itinerant research and lecturing, see pp.58-59 in Benjamin J. Yahuda, “Abraham Shalom Jahuda [or “Abaraham Shalom Yehuda”], *Zion*, vol.II, nos.8-9 (1951), pp.55-60.

⁷⁵ A.S. Yahuda apparently had Yemeni interests; he possessed a collection of Yemeni stories, poetry and proverbs as early as 1912 (See opening of Abraham S. Yahuda, “Jemenische Sprichwörter aus Sanaa,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Bd. XXVI (1912), pp.345-358, and it is not implausible that he had connections to sources of Yemeni material (if not through his own brother).

⁷⁶ One of his more remarkable acquisitions of this period was a portion of the non-scientific papers of Isaac Newton in 1936. See “The Newton Collection at the JNUL”

for his brother's bookselling enterprise. The details of the two brothers' collecting and sales activities, including their source for Yemeni acquisitions, deserve to be investigated further and could likely be worked out in significant measure via detailed examination of A.S. Yahuda's papers housed at the National Library of Israel.⁷⁷

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http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/Newton/collection_eng.html. Yahuda also collected many Hebrew manuscripts. See pp.205-206 in Benjamin Richler, *Guide to Hebrew manuscript collections*, Jerusalem, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994. Thanks to Anne Regourd for bringing this reference to my attention.

⁷⁷ As well as Yahuda's published writings, including his essays published in Abraham S. Yahuda, *'Ever ya-'Arav : osef meḥkarim u-ma'amarim, shirat ha-'Arvim, zikhronot u-reshamim*, New York, 'Ogen, 1946. Thanks to Anne Regourd for bringing this reference to my attention.

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