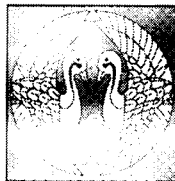


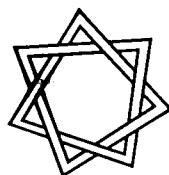
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PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT OF AN ILLUSTRATED PSALTER

The present publication aims to draw attention to one of the Christian Arabic manuscripts in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (call number A 187). Among numerous extant manuscripts, executed in the Arab Christian milieu, this one is of special interest because of miniatures it contains. Only few of such illustrated codices have come down to us. In addition, the miniatures were performed by the outstanding artist known as Yūsuf Muṣawwir.

The manuscript is written on white European paper with watermarks — three crescents and another one, which I was unable to identify. The folio dimensions are 18.0 X 13.2 cm, but the original folios were trimmed while binding. The text occupies a field of 14.7 X 9.4 cm. The manuscript contains 128 folios with 15 lines per page. Traces of the *mīstara* can be discerned. Structure of the quires [1]: 1 IX (IV + V), 2 X, 3 IX (V + IV, seventh folio is cut off, but there is no lacuna), 4—13 X. Quire marks are written into the upper corners of each first and last page both in words and numerals. There are catchwords in the lower left corner of each *verso* page.

The text is written in calligraphic *naskh* in black ink. The dividers and headings are in red ink, with the exception of Psalm 136, where the heading is in gold. The binding in yellow leather with a gilded border is European. The previous call number of the manuscript is impressed on the spine (part of the word is missing): P[...]auti A 7.

The manuscript contains the text of the Psalter employed in the service of Malkites, one of the four sects of the Syrian Church. The 150 canonical psalms are divided into seven *saḥars* in accordance with the days of the week. Each *saḥar* of the Psalter was to read in a certain day of the week. The psalms are also divided into 20 *kathismata*, or liturgical parts read on particular occasions. The feature of the codex is that it includes the non-canonical 151st psalm as well as ten prayers (*tasabih*).

The manuscript could hardly draw special attention if not the author of its miniatures, who is also its transcriber. The colophon on fol. 127a tells that the manuscript was copied by a well-known calligrapher, translator from Greek, and miniaturist, Yūsuf al-Muṣawwir (was alive in 1650). His full name was Yūsuf b. Anṭunīyus b. Suwaidān (Swidān) al-Ḥal-abī [2]. He was of Greek descent, and as his *nisba* shows,

was connected with Aleppo, one of the centres of culture in Syria. In one of the manuscripts copied by him in 1647, Yūsuf al-Muṣawwir calls himself the pupil of Patriarch Euphymius II (1634—1647). We know also that the artist collaborated later with another patriarch, Macarius (d. 1672). Yūsuf received his sobriquet al-Muṣawwir (“artist”) because of his profession. He was a man of numerous talents and abundantly translated from the Greek. Apart from the illustrated Psalter, another manuscript is known with miniatures performed by him, which is held in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. It is *al-Durr al-manzūr fī tā’rīkh mulūk al-Rūm* [3].

The miniatures of Yūsuf al-Muṣawwir, which adorn our Psalter, are extremely interesting. It is clear that the artist follows the tradition of Byzantine book illustrating. Illustrating Bibles and Psalters was a common practice in Byzantium; many copies have come down to us. The depiction of the well-known characters of the Bible in our Psalter are touched by the spirit of melancholy and calm dignity. They seem rather expressive and wholly reflecting the atmosphere of the Old Testament prophets wisdom and love for God. All indicate that the artist was an outstanding master of miniature painting who knew existing tradition perfectly well. Nearly all of the miniatures are well preserved and only a few display some minor crumbling.

The colophon states that the copy was made for a certain Mikhā’il b. al-Khūrī Yūsuf and was completed on 5 October 7158 from the birth of Adam, which corresponds to A.H. 1058/A.D. 1650. Now we can state that the artist, whose dates are unknown, was alive in 1650. The personality of this Mikhā’il b. al-Khūrī Yūsuf remains a puzzle. However, one can assume that the manuscript was not meant to be employed in the public service. Rather the Psalter was executed for the person who stood high in the Syrian Church hierarchy, and it seems that the book was intended to be used in personal worshipping.

The Psalter was acquired in the late eighteenth century by J.-L. Rousseau (1780—1831), the well-known collector and French consul in Aleppo and Tripoli. It was purchased by the Russian government in 1825 as part of the so-called Second Rousseau collection and given to the Asiatic Museum (at present, the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) [4].



Fig. 1

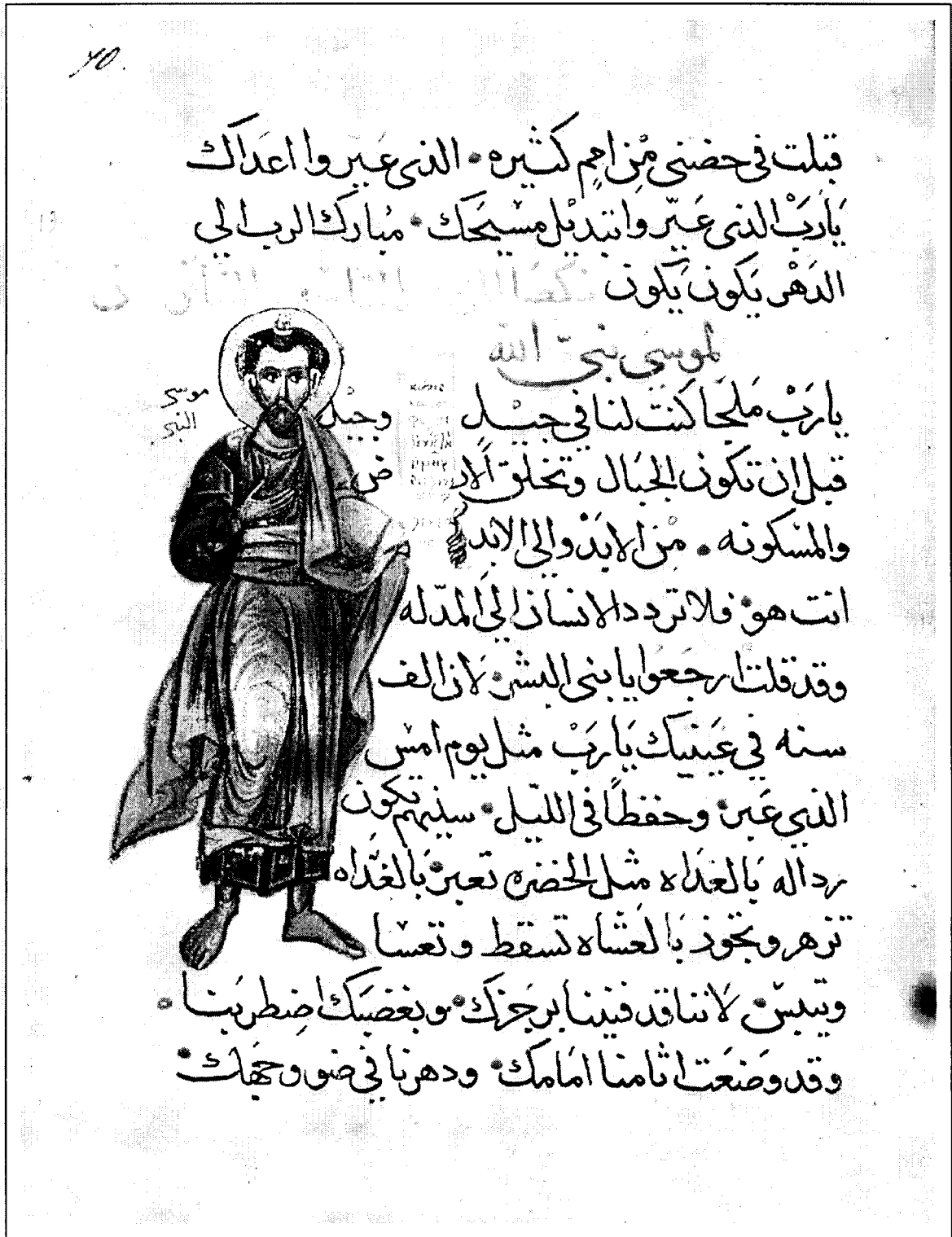


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

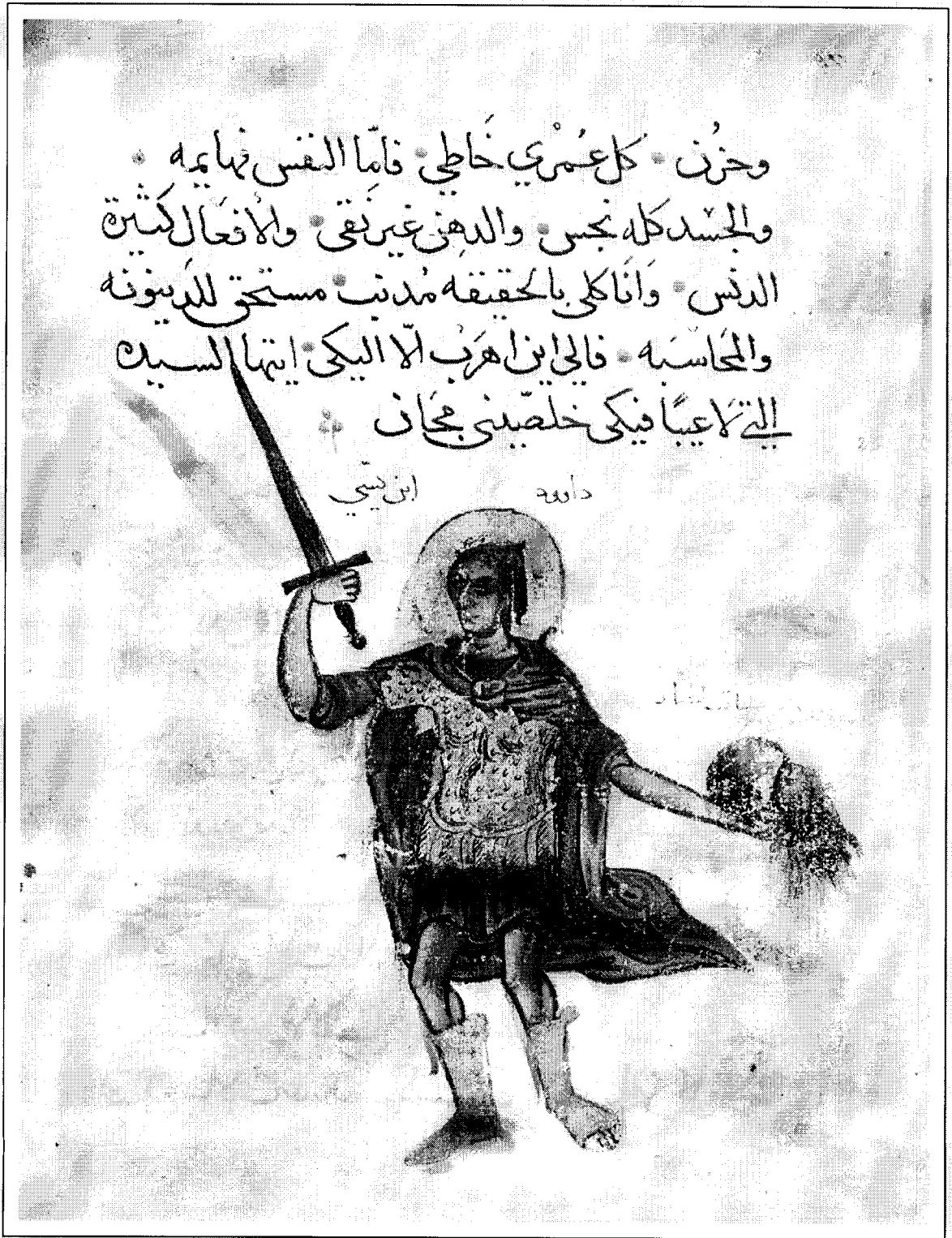


Fig. 5

Contents

Fols. 1b—5a: psalms 1—8; 5b—16b: 9—23 (*saḥar* for Sunday); 17a—35a: 24—45 (*saḥar* for Monday); 35a—52a: 46—69 (*saḥar* for Tuesday); 52a—72a: 70—90 (*saḥar* for Wednesday); 72b—88b: 91—108 (*saḥar* for Thursday); 89a—99b: 109—118 (*saḥar* for Saturday); 100a—115b: 119—150 (*saḥar* for Friday) (thus in MS, Saturday before Friday); 116a: 151; 116b—117b: First Cantic of Moses (Exod. XV, 1—18); 117b—119b: Second Cantic of Moses (Deut. XXXII, 1—43); 120a—120b: Cantic of Hanna, mother of Samuel (1 Sam. II,

1—10); 120b—121b: Cantic of the Prophet Habakkuk (Hab. III); 121b—122b: Cantic of the Prophet Isaiah (Is. XXVI, 9—20); 122b—123a: Cantic of the Prophet Jonah (Jon. II, 1—9); 123a—125a: First Cantic of the three young men (*mubārak anta yā rabb*) (Dan. III, 25—45); 125a—126a: Second Cantic of the three young men (*bārakū yā jamī'a a'māla 'l-Rabb*) (Dan. III, 52—90); 126a—126b: The Magnificat (Lk. I, 46—55); 126b—127a: The Song of Zacharias (Benedictus; Lk. 68—79).

Miniatures

Fol. 1b: *'unwān* and Prophet David (see *Plate 2* on the back cover); 2a: a bird on a tree; 5a: Mary and John of Damascus; 14b: Jesus Christ; 17a: the Prophet David; 28a: Joseph and Mary; 37b: David and Natan; 52a: the Prophet David (see *fig. 1*); 53a: Solomon the Wise; 61b: the Prophet David (see *Plate 1* on the front cover of the present issue); 67a: Mary; 70a: the Prophet Moses (see *fig. 2*); 72b: David; 79b: Gabriel, Raphael, and Mikhael (see *fig. 4*); 81b: Abraham, Isaak and Jacob (see *fig. 3*); 82a: Joseph (son of Jacob?); 93a: Jesus Christ, the good thief, and the

apostle Peter (see *Plate 3* on the back cover); 103b: Onofrius, Sabas, Euthymius, Antonius, Jesus Christ, Basil, John, Gregorius and Nicholas; 104a: Aaron; 109b: David in the cave; 112b: the Prophet Zakharyā (see *Plate 4* on the back cover); 115b: David and Goliath (see *fig. 5*); 116b: the Prophet Moses; 117b: the Prophet Moses; 120a: Hanna, mother of Samuel; 120b: the Prophet Habakkuk; 122a: Isaiah; 122b: the Prophet Yohah; 123a: Hananyah, Azariah, and Mishael; 126a: the Annunciation; 126b: Zakhariya; 127a: John the Baptist (see *Plate 1* on the back cover).

Notes

1. Roman numerals indicate the number of the quire; Latin numerals indicate the number of folios.
2. The full name is given in the colophon of an autograph manuscript by Yūsuf in J. Nasrallah's *Catalogue des manuscrits du Liban* (Harissa, 1958), i, p. 104.
3. For Yūsuf al-Muṣawwir, see A. I. Mikhaylova, "An illustrated Arabic Manuscript of a Translation of a seventeenth-century Greek chronograph", *Manuscripta Orientalia*, IV/1 (1998), pp. 58—64.
4. The manuscript has been described previously in the following works: V. Rosen, *Notices sommaires des manuscrits arabes du Musée Asiatique*, Première livraison (Saint-Petersbourg, 1881), No. 1; also I. Kratchkovsky, *al-Mashriq*, XXIII, p. 684; Graf I, p. 118 (28).

Illustrations**Front cover:**

"The Prophet David and a flock", miniature from the Arabic Psalter (A 187) in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 61b.

Back cover:

- Plate 1.** "John the Baptist", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 127a.
Plate 2. *'Unwān* with the depiction of Prophet David, the same manuscript, fol. 1b.
Plate 3. "Jesus Christ, the good thief, and the Apostle Peter", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 93a.
Plate 4. "The Prophet Zakharyā", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 112b.

Inside the text:

- Fig. 1.** "The Prophet David", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 52a.
Fig. 2. "The Prophet Moses", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 70a.
Fig. 3. "Abraham, Isaak and Jacob", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 81b.
Fig. 4. "Gabriel, Raphael, and Mikhael", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 79b.
Fig. 5. "David and Goliath", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 115b.