

Memory of the World Register - Nomination Form Uzbekistan - Holy Koran Mushaf of Othman

Abstract

This manuscript, held by the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, is the earliest existent written version of the Koran. It is the definitive version, known as the Mushaf of Othman, superseding all other versions. The third Caliph Othman, who ordered its compilation, was assassinated while reading it.

Identity and Location

Name of the Documentary Heritage: Holy Koran of Othman (Mushaf of Othman)

Country: The Republic of Uzbekistan

State, Province or Region: Tashkent city

Address: 103, Zarkaynar street, 700002, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Name of Institution: The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan

Legal Information

Owner: The Republic of Uzbekistan

Custodian: The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, 103, Zarkaynar street, 700002 Tashkent, UZBEKISTAN, Tel: (7+3712) 40.08.41/ 40.39.33..

Legal Status:

Category of ownership: Public Property

Details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage: No specific legal provisions.

Accessibility: The original manuscript is kept securely locked in a glass-fronted safe but is available for consultation by specialists on permission from the Muslim Board.

However, users have free access to a facsimile copy in the reading room and three photocopies are also available for consultation.

Copyright status: The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan is the copyright holder. 50 facsimile copies of the Koran were printed in St Petersburg in 1905, of which 25 were sold and the remainder presented to London, Afghanistan, Iran and other countries.

Responsible administration: The Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.

Identification

Description: The Holy Koran of Othman is written on animal skins.

Dimensions: 53x62 cm.

No of pages: approx. 250.

The manuscript is written in Kufi script in large black characters

Bibliographic details: Inventory No 1 in library catalogue.

Two other partially complete contemporary manuscript copies of Othman's Koran are conserved in Sana'a and in Cairo.

50 pages belonging to this manuscript found their way into a private collection in London 200 years ago.

Visual documentation: Slides

History: The Koran, revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad, was committed to memory by the early Muslims and recorded by scribes on various materials such as scraps of wood or camel bones. After the death of Muhammad, the first Khalif Abu Bakr (632-34) had all known suras recorded in writing by scribes such as the calligrapher Zayd bin Thabit, secretary of Prophet Muhammad. Later, the third Khalif Othman (644-56) ordered the suras (verses) to be gathered into a book with the help of the four best Koranic scholars of the time. The definitive version of the Koran prepared in Medinah in 651, known as the Mushaf of Othman, was declared as a standard, superseding all other versions. Khalif Othman was assassinated while reading the Aya "And if they believe even as ye believe, then are they rightly guided. But if they turn away, then are they in schism, and Allah will be thy protection against them" from this very manuscript, which is stained with his blood.

According to popular tradition, there are two accounts of how the Koran of Othman was brought from Medinah to the territory of present-day Uzbekistan:

Version 1: A relative of Khalif Othman brought the Koran to Maverannahr during a period of internal disorders in the Medinah.

Version 2: Ali Ibn Abi Taleb brought the Koran to Kufa, from where Amir Temur brought it to Samarkand on his return from his conquest of Iraq.

In 1868 the Koran of Othman was delivered to the Russian Emperor by General Von Kaufman and kept in the Imperial Public Library in St Petersburg. After the Revolution of October 1917 the Muslims of Kazan brought Othman's Koran to their city. There were several quarrels between the Muslims of Kazan and the Muslims of Uzbekistan. As a result, the manuscript Koran was returned to Tashkent in 1924. It was stored in the museum of history until 1989, when it was given to the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.

Bibliography:

A.F. Shubunin, "Kufi style Koran", St Petersburg, 1891.

Muso Djarullo Rostow Don, "History of the Koran and Mushaf", St Petersburg, in Arab language, 1905.

Ilyas Buragoniy, "Sura of Yasin", St Petersburg, in Arab language, 1905.
Ismoil Makhdum Sattiev, "The History of Mushaf of Othman", Uzbekistan, in Arab language, 1971.

"Photocopy of the Holy Koran of Caliph Othman", Edited by Dr. Muhammad Khamidullo, publisher Ms. Aysha Begum, US., 1980.

Khabibullo Saliev, "The Adventure of Mushaf of Othman", Tashkent, 1994.
Ismoil Abdulla, Translation of the "History of the Koran Othman" into Uzbek Language, Tashkent, 1996.

Management Plan

Access policy and procedures: Full responsibility is given to the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan and the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Users who want to have access to the original Koran should have permission from these bodies.

Details of preservation budget: A special budget for the preservation of the Koran does not exist. The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan has a charitable fund for its activities of which a small sum is allocated for preservation of the manuscript collections.

Number of Preservation staff, their qualification and opportunities for their continued training: The one librarian working in the library where the Koran is stored is not a professional expert in the field of preservation, but carries out simple preventative maintenance.

Assessment against the Selection Criteria

The Holy Qur'an of Othman meets following criteria:

Influence: As the earliest and definitive version of the Qur'an, this document has exerted a major influence on the history of the world.

Time: The murder of Caliph Othman while reading from this manuscript precipitated the deep Sunni-Shia schism which has divided the Muslim community since then.

Place: The Koran was written in Medinah, birthplace of the first Muslim community.

People: This manuscript is the earliest extant written version of the Koran reviewed to Prophet Muhammed. It is specially associated with the third Caliph Othman, who ordered its compilation, who was assassinated while reading it.

Subject/Theme: The Koran contains a universal code of human conduct. It recounts the creation of the World, the stages of the divine revelation, the place of mankind in the universe and in relation to the Creator.

Form and Style: The Koran is acknowledged to be an inimitable masterpiece of Arabic literature.

Social Value: The Koran played a significant role in shaping world history and is regarded as profoundly significant by large numbers of people throughout the world.

Consultation

The owner and custodian were consulted concerning the training or retraining of specialists in the field of conservation of documentary heritage and launching joint preservation/conservation projects.

Independent institutions and experts:

Mr. Khabibullo Saliev
Senior Scientific Expert
The International Center for Islamic Studies
103, Zarkaynar street
Tashkent, 700002
UZBEKISTAN
Tel: (7+3712) 40.36.59/ 40.19.21

Nominator

Name: Muslim Board of Uzbekistan

Relationship to documentary heritage: Custodian

Contact person:

Mr. Alisher Ikramov Secretary-General
The National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO
54, Buyuk Ipak Yuli street
Tashkent, 700137
Uzbekistan
Tel: (7+3712) 67.05.42 / 67.05.46 / 67.05.49 / 67.05.61
Fax: (7+3712) 67.05.38
E-mail: UNESCO@natcom.org.uz

Assessment of Risk

Environmental conditions: The manuscript is kept in locked case without any special climatic control for temperature and for humidity. It is not usually exposed to daylight.

Physical conditions: The pages are fragile and brittle, necessitating extreme caution in turning the pages.

Preservation budget: No special budget or qualified personnel is available.

Extent and nature of use: Access to the original of the manuscript is severely restricted.

Facsimile copy is available for the consultation by readers.

Preservation Assessment

Present physical state: The parchment is brittle with age.

History of preservation: Some restoration were carried by the scholar Umuz Aymani c. 1840.

Current preservation policy in relation to proposed documentary heritage:

Restriction on free access and protection from light.

Person or persons responsible for preservation: The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.