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JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC MANUSCRIPTS 16 (2025) 1–18



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The One That Got Away

A Fifteenth-Century Arabic Fragment from Hafsid Tunisia (WAM Ms. W.580)

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Received 27 February 2024 | Accepted 19 March 2024 |

Published online [UNKNOWN] 2025
■ to be inserted by typesetter

Abstract





The separation and dispersal of a four-volume luxury manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (Ar. “The Book of Healing”) by the Maghribi jurist Qādī 'Iyād (1083–1149 CE) offers a lens through which to explore the cognitive dissonance provoked by encountering fragmentation within a codex that once appeared complete. The separation of the third volume (Walters Art Museum, Ms. W.580) from its three companions occurred in the sixteenth century, within the imperial library of the Ottoman sultans in Istanbul. Already by the fifteenth century, Ottoman readers venerated the *Shifā'* as a work of pious Sunni literature about the life of the Prophet. Literary sources and the extant holdings in Istanbul document that, in the late fifteenth century, the imperial library owned multiple manuscripts with the *Shifā'*'s complete text. Against this backdrop, the independent circulation of an unusual textual fragment of the *Shifā'* suggests a pragmatic approach to library collection management at the imperial library—one in which literary content took precedence over material splendour: aesthetic opulence alone did not protect a textual fragment from being deaccessioned.

Keywords

Qādī 'Iyād b. Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī – Kitāb al-Shifā' – Hafsid – Tunis – Sultan Bayezid II – Ottoman empire – fragmentation – Walters Art Museum – Henry Walters – Baltimore – Istanbul – Ottoman book use – international book trade – imperial palace library

Between the 1460s and the 1930s, a beautiful Arabic manuscript moved from Hafsid Tunisia to Ottoman Istanbul, and, eventually, from there to Baltimore, Maryland (Walters Art Museum, Ms. W.580).¹ At its most general, this manuscript's itinerary illustrates how a codex, as a material artefact, can transcend linguistic, historical, and cultural differences. In societies shaped by book culture, codices—regardless of their original context of production—remain recognizable as books, even when they are experienced as unfamiliar or feel foreign, and their texts prove difficult if not impossible to decipher.² Since the material objects themselves remain recognizable as codices, book collectors routinely acquire and retain books whose contents they cannot read.

There is no external evidence (that is: documentary or literary sources) that records the manuscript's journeys to and from the Ottoman capital. However, the luxury codex carries internal written evidence (that is: paratexts) that attest to its sojourn in Istanbul where it lost its three companion volumes and became a fragment.³ My interpretation of WAM Ms. W.580 draws on Johanna Drucker's concept of books as "distributed and conditional documents," which posits that every act of reception is an instance of active engagement that alters a book's materiality.⁴

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- 1 The manuscript was digitized with the help of Preservation and Access grants awarded to the Walters Art Museum (WAM) by the National Endowment for the Humanities, 2008–2014. All illustrations accompanying this essay are courtesy of WAM under a Creative Commons CC0 licence. References to folios in WAM Ms. W.580 are abbreviated to folio number whenever the context is clear; all other manuscripts are cited with their full shelf-mark. The hands-on examination of WAM Ms. W.580 in November 2017 was supported by a Marie Curie fellowship: MSCA project *MASHQI* of the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant agreement No. 7066 
 - 2 For a survey of the state of transcultural  research on artefacts, see Troelenberg, "On the 'Objectscape' of Transculturality." Cross-cultural and transnational approaches in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, against the backdrop of a critical discourse about the failures of globalization in the twenty-first century, tend to privilege diachronic movement in space (that is: mobility of artefacts between cultures) over synchronic movement in time (that is: the cycle of the rejection of old-fashioned artefacts and their rediscovery as antiquities within cultures).
 - 3 For a recent example of the study of discarded fragments as the last stage of an artefact's life cycle, see the articles in D'Ottone, *Damascus Fragments*.
 - 4 Drucker, "Distributed and Conditional Documents": "Books, documents, textual artifacts can no longer be thought of as autonomous objects that circulate in a context, but must be reconceptualized as event spaces within an ecology of changing conditions" (html document  without page or paragraph numbers).


1 Provenance and Description

In 1931, following the death of its founder Henry Walters (1848–1931), the Walters Art Museum received WAM Ms. W.580 as part of his bequest. Walters had pencilled his initials, HW, on the top-left corner of the final fly-leaf, accompanied by a partially illegible note that appears to reference its price: “200 < f? >es” (fol. 141a). To date, no information has come to light as to when, how, or from whom Henry Walters acquired this manuscript.

The smallish folio (27×20 cm) has an envelope binding with flap, and its reddish-brown leather is decorated with gold (PLATE 1). The pattern is created from a combination of dots, tooled with gold leaf, and hand-painted gold lines. It is impossible to determine whether punch-cut onlays are also present. The covers form a flat-back binding that lies flush with the textblock, a feature typical of bindings from the Islamic lands.⁵

The manuscript is written on watermarked laid paper and is lavishly illuminated. A single left-hand title page (fol. 2a PLATE 2) precedes an abstract double-page illumination without any accompanying text (fols. 2b–3a PLATES 3–4). The beginning (fol. 3b PLATE 5) and the end (fol. 140a PLATE 6) of the Arabic text are marked by a headpiece and tailpiece, together with the formally required paratextual elements: the invocation of God and eulogies for the Prophet Muḥammad.⁶ Large marginal rosettes draw attention to these illuminated sections. The text is written in a calligraphic Maghribi script.⁷ The main text is black. Headings are chrysographed, rendered in large gold letters outlined in black. Textual dividers take the form of gold three-dot clusters. Keywords are rubricated in gold, red, green, and blue.

In the twenty-first century, housed in an American encyclopedic art museum, the Tunisian manuscript appears as a complete book in a foreign language. Yet, WAM Ms. W.580 contains only about a quarter of the Arabic text of the *Kitāb al-Shifā' bi-ta'rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā* (“The Book of Healing Concerning the Recognition of the Truths about the Chosen One”), and this portion does not

5 Many thanks are due to Jake Benson, Alison Ohta, and Kristine Rose-Beers for patiently explaining the binding to me.

6 The first line of fol. 3b (PLATE 6), above the headpiece, begins with the *basmala* (Ar. *bi-sm Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* “in the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful”) and continues with a variant of the *ṣabwala* (Ar. *ṣallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallama* “God bless him [the Prophet Muḥammad] and grant him salvation”). On fol. 140a (PLATE 6) the final *ṣabwala* is the tailpiece’s inscription.

7 In Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, the region between the Atlantic Ocean and Egypt is called Maghrib (Ar. “west”); until the 1492 defeat of the last Muslim ruler in Granada, the Islamic West included the Iberian Peninsula.

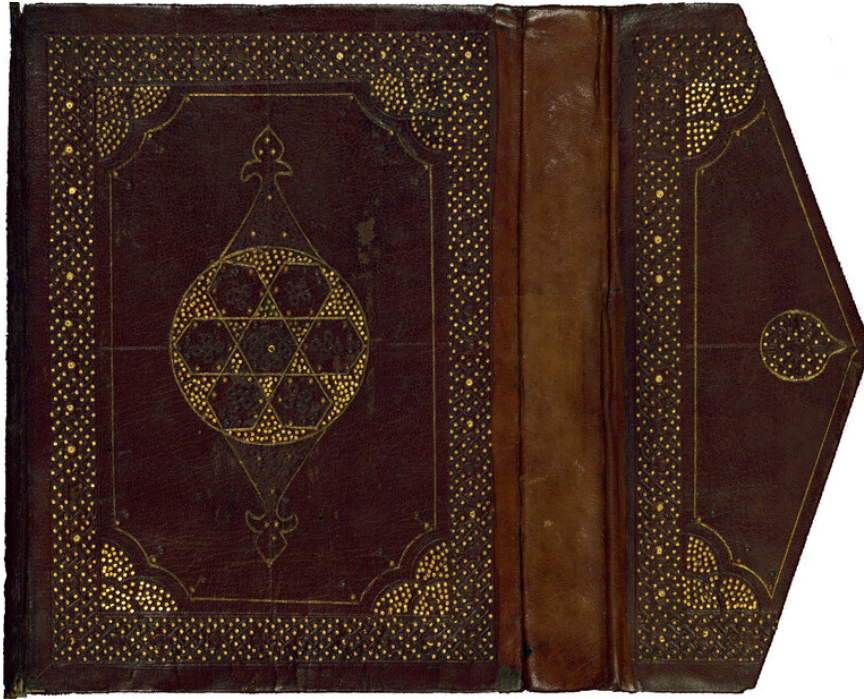


PLATE 1 Envelope binding. WAM Ms. W.580, lower board with flap

constitute a complete or self-contained part of the work.⁸ As it is not the final volume in the original set, the manuscript never had a concluding colophon and scribal note.⁹ Moreover, the textblock is incomplete, because WAM MS. W.580 has lost the complementary right-hand title page with the name of the first owner. The extant left-hand page (fol. 2a PLATE 2) originally faced a right-hand page, whose illumination mirrored that of the other page; the extant fol. 1 is one of the original flyleaves.¹⁰

8 The *Shifā*'s text is divided into four parts (Ar. sing. "qism"); WAM Ms. W.580 contains the complete second part (fols. 3b–90a: "al-qism al-thānī") and most of the first chapter of the third part (fols. 90b–140a: "al-qism al-thālith").

9 In luxury manuscripts that were manufactured to order, the presence of an opening double-page title page changes the role of the colophon to that of a closing formula with few concrete details, since information about author, work, patron, and workshop are already recorded in the opening pages.

10 For stylistically different examples of intact double-pages with information about the owner on the recto and about author and work on the verso, see these fifteenth-century Persian manuscripts: TSMK H.1417 (no date) in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 133 plate 10 [2]; and CBL Pers. 275 (852/began 7 March 1448) in Wright, *Look of the Book*, p. 60, fig. 37.



PLATE 2 Incomplete double-page title page of volume 3. WAM Ms. W,58o, fol. 2a



PLATES 3-4 Double-page frontispiece. WAM Ms. W.580, fols. 2b





PLATE 5 The illuminated heading for the beginning of the text's part 2. WAM Ms. W.580, fol. 3b



PLATE 6 End of volume 3, in the middle of the text's part 3. WAM Ms. W.580, fol. 140a

2 Cataloguing a Popular Work of Pious Literature in Baltimore

The *Shifā'*'s author 'Iyād b. Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī (1083–1149), also known as Qāḍī 'Iyād, is a celebrated jurist and Hadith scholar of the Maliki Sunni legal school.¹¹ He spent most of his life in Ceuta, a Mediterranean port city in North Africa.¹² In the *Shifā'*, Qāḍī 'Iyād links the explication of Islamic dogma to the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, as documented in Hadith. The work became a best-seller and has never dropped out of circulation. Today, the *Shifā'* continues to be studied as a theological treatise of the Maliki canon, while simultaneously transcending dogmatic disagreements as a work of pious literature about the Prophet, revered across Sunni legal traditions.¹³ The number of preserved *Shifā'* manuscripts in collections worldwide cannot be estimated.¹⁴ Most are only minimally catalogued, if at all, since *Shifā'* manuscripts are rarely deemed worthy of a cataloguer's close attention. Although the *Shifā'* is an important twelfth-century source for the history of Islam in Iberia and Morocco,¹⁵ within the arc of Arab-Islamic history, it is seen as a post-classical work from the western borders of the Islamic lands, written after the apogee of Abbasid Baghdad, between the eighth and the eleventh century.¹⁶ Although Maghribi *Shifā'* manuscripts are rare in European and North American collections,¹⁷ *Shifā'*

- 11 The English and Arabic bibliography about Qāḍī 'Iyād is extensive. The most recent handbook articles in Western languages are Serrano, "Iyād"; and Gómez-Rivas, "Qāḍī 'Iyād." The most recent article about his life as recorded in Arabic biographical dictionaries is Noguchi, "Communicating a Biography."
- 12 Today Ceuta (Ar. Sabta) is a Spanish enclave (that is: an autonomous Spanish city) in Morocco.
- 13 The *Shifā'*'s continuing importance in popular Sunni piety can be gauged by its role in Schimmel, *And Muḥammad is His Messenger*; cf. the survey of art and piety by Gruber, *Praiseworthy One*.
- 14 The *Shifā'*'s rich manuscript tradition is something of an elephant in the room within Islamic studies: it is, for example, not even mentioned in Serrano, "Iyād"; and Gómez-Rivas, "Qāḍī 'Iyād." Two recent dissertations have employed *Shifā'* manuscripts as comparanda in studies of other Arabic works of pious literature: Daub, *Formen und Funktionen des Layouts*; Abid, "Vénération du Prophète." I could not obtain access to Abid's embargoed dissertation; Daub does not discuss WAM Ms. W.580.
- 15 Serrano and Gómez-Rivas, the authors of the aforementioned handbook entries, are historians of Islam in medieval Iberia and Morocco.
- 16 In Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (5 vols., 1898–1942), which continues to serve as the bio-bibliographical backbone of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies (published in 2017 in English translation), Qāḍī 'Iyād is treated as a post-classical Spanish author of Hadith literature during the late Abbasid era (1000–1258). For a recent reflection of the state of research about the relationship between the western and the eastern lands of Islam before 1500, see Fierro, "The Other Edge."
- 17 An analysis of this bias in European and North American collections is beyond the limits of

manuscripts from the eastern Islamic lands are so ubiquitous that the work appears to have been widely known and circulated.

Against this backdrop, it was perhaps unsurprising that WAM Ms. W.580 received only minimal attention when it was catalogued between 2008 and 2014 as part of the Walters Art Museum's digitization campaign.¹⁸ In the official cataloguing record, the codex is described as an eighteenth-century Maghribi manuscript in its original binding.¹⁹ While WAM Ms. W.580 is correctly identified as the third volume of a four-volume set, it is not clear whether the cataloguing team realized that a four-volume set of the *Shifā'* is highly unusual. Nor does the record provide the important information that the manuscript contains the text of the *Shifā'*'s second part and the first half of its third part.²⁰ For a pious Muslim reader, this precious manuscript is a textual *Shifā'* fragment of little practical value. Beyond the opening pages, the manuscript is pristine, without the telltale greasy corners caused by intensive reading. Its exquisite illumination and Maghribi calligraphy did not spur any investigation of the laid paper's fifteenth-century Italian watermark²¹ or the seal impression of the Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566),²² nor any of the other paratexts. Evidence of restoration further confirms that the binding is not origi-

this essay. Large numbers of *Shifā'* manuscripts are held in African collections, from Libya and Morocco to South Africa. In addition to WAM Ms. W.580, I am aware of two important Maghribi fragments in European collections: a formal manuscript with the *Shifā'*'s second part, dated Jumādā I 804/ began 7 December 1401 (h = 30 cm), perhaps written in Nasrid Granada: UCM BH MSS 554; see Pérez Alcalde, "Manuscritos árabes," pp. 15–19. I thank Benito Rial Costas for bringing this manuscript to my attention. An illuminated manuscript with the *Shifā'*'s first part, dated Sha'bān 1103/began 18 April 1692 (h = 29.5 cm), was written for the Alaouite sultan Ismā'il b. Sharif (r. 1672–1727): Khalili MSS 359; see Rogers, *Arts of Islam*, p. 238. The current owner of a fourth fragment is unknown; the illuminated manuscript with the *Shifā'*'s fourth part, undated and written on parchment (h = 20.5 cm), was sold by Sotheby's in 2016. I thank Umberto Bongianino for sharing this information with me.

18 The lead cataloguer, Adam Gacek, is a highly renowned specialist of Islamic codicology. His pragmatic approach to WAM Ms. W.580 reflects the challenges of remote gig work with digital images and limited opportunity for autopsy, as Gacek worked as an outside contractor in Montreal for an NEH funded project in Baltimore.

19 Gacek, "Walters Ms. W.580."

20 The complete second part (fols. 3b–90a) is followed by the incomplete first chapter of the third part (fols. 90b–140a).

21 On the final flyleaf (fol. 141), vertical chain lines and a watermark at the centre of the page are visible to the naked eye. The watermark shows a cup-shaped, patterned flower with two leaves and stipe; it is similar to Piccard 127160 and 127161, which are watermarks found in paper used for notarial records from Como, Italy, between 1470 and 1473.

22 The inscription reads "Sulaymān Shāh b. Salīm"; I am much indebted to Lâle Uluç, Bora Keskiner, and Guy Burak for their help with understanding the seal impression.

nal to the textblock. The textblock was trimmed, because the marginal rosettes have lost most of their vertical lines extending into the outside margins. The edges of the current binding were hemmed in leather (PLATE 1).

3 A Four-Volume Copy of the *Shifā'* from Tunis in Late Fifteenth-Century Istanbul

Luckily, the three companion volumes of WAM Ms. W.580 have survived in Istanbul; today, they are held in the Süleymaniye Library.²³ The set's fourth and final volume ends with a scribal note that highlights the lavish uses of gold,²⁴ and which gives 17 March 1462 as the set's completion date.²⁵ The note confirms the approximate date gleaned from the watermarked laid paper, and locates the four-volume *Shifā'* in Hafsid Tunisia during the reign of 'Uthmān (r. 1435–1488).²⁶ It is salient that the three volumes in Istanbul have also lost their right-hand title-page with the name of their first owner.²⁷ The absence of this information from all volumes suggests that these four pages were removed at the same time. On its own, the intentional obliteration of provenance does

23 SK Ayasofya 757, 758, and 760. In the winter of 2021, I unexpectedly learned of the set's remaining three volumes in Istanbul when I attended Laura Hinrichsen's webinar about her dissertation, a study of Hafsid manuscripts, supervised by Jeremy Jones and Umberto Bongianino (University of Oxford 2021). I am very grateful that Laura generously shared images and details; she discusses the entire set in her dissertation which I have not seen.

24 SK Ayasofya 760, fol. 161a: "kataba hādhā al-ākhir wa-dhahaba jamī' al-ta'lif ma'a al-'amal" ("he wrote this conclusion and gilded the entire work with care"). On fol. 160b, the colophon is presented as the tailpiece's inscription, and merely confirms the conclusion of the fourth and final volume; it does not even identify the title of the work.

25 SK Ayasofya 760, fol. 161a: The scribe identifies himself as Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abīd al-Ṣanhājī al-Ḥimyarī al-'Arabī, known as al-Tūnisi by country ("shuhratu-hu al-Tūnisi baladan"); the Hijra date is 15 Jumādā II 866.

26 The available images of SK Ayasofya 757, 758, and 760 do not include the bindings, though SK Ayasofya 758 and 760 include the bottom edges with their respective volume numbers. The photographic frames do not show the full margins; and rulers were not placed in any of the images. However, as in WAM Ms. W.580, the horizontal extensions of the marginal rosettes are cut off, indicating these three textblocks were also trimmed.

27 The collation of the textblock of WAM Ms. W.580 reveals that the first gathering, a sexternion, is missing its first leaf, which probably contained the missing right-hand page of the double title page for the *Shifā'*'s third volume. The messy appearance of the gutter of fol. 2a (PLATE 2) reveals tiny stubs of this missing leaf. The microfilms of three companion volumes in Istanbul also show traces of a missing right-hand page of the double title page at the beginning. This codicological evidence is further supported by the set's visual programme, which should be understood as a reflection of North African Hafsid traditions for the design of high-end copies of important works of religious literature. A reader accesses



not yield any additional insight, since names and other details are routinely removed from books for a variety of reasons.²⁸ Without additional external sources, it is not only impossible to identify the first owner of this four-volume *Shifā'*, but also to determine why the set eventually left the Hafsid kingdom and entered the Ottoman imperial library at Topkapı Palace.

There is, however, evidence that the four-volume *Shifā'* was still a complete set upon arrival in Istanbul, since each volume bears the same marginal note, written in the same Ottoman hand, in the top margin of its title-page.²⁹ These four inscriptions indicate that the entire set was catalogued by the librarians of Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), likely during the early years of the sixteenth century, when a new inventory of the imperial library in Topkapı Palace was compiled at the sultan's order.³⁰ At this point, the *Shifā'* was already a much-beloved work about the life of the Prophet,³¹ and its popularity in the Ottoman Empire is confirmed by fourteen entries in the inventory.³² Indeed, the *Shifā'* is among the ten most popular works in the inventory's Hadith section.³³ While the inventory records little in the way of copy-specific information, it lists a single *Shifā'* manuscript in four volumes.³⁴ Moreover, the cataloguing inscriptions on the title pages correspond to the work's entry in the inventory.³⁵ There are, however, no other paratexts that associate the set with Bayezid II, such as impressions of

these works through two double-pages, and then encounters the text: a double title-page is followed by an abstract double frontispiece before an illuminated headpiece marks the beginning of the pious reading. However, there is no discussion of incompletely preserved double-page title pages, which, at a first glance, may appear as single-page title pages, in Wright, *Look of the Book*.

28 Pearson, *Provenance Research*.

29 W.580, fol. 2a: *Al-mujallad al-thālith min Kitāb al-Shifā' fī al-ḥadīth* ("The Third Volume of the Book of Healing, Concerning Hadith"). The same inscription, with the correctly adjusted volume number, appears on the title pages of SK Ayasofya 757, 758, and 760.

30 On the challenges of identifying, with a modicum of probability, extant manuscripts as books from the inventory, see Gülrü Necipoğlu's explication of her methodology in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, pp. 33–42.

31 For the *Shifā'*'s public recitation in the Ottoman Empire, in particular during moments of crisis, see Recep Gürkan Göktaş in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, pp. 312 and 317, n. 28.

32 MTA Török F. 59, pp. 37, 54; the entry for the *Shifā'* is split because of a binding error. For the text's transliteration and the manuscript's facsimile, see Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 2. For a summary of the *Shifā'* section, see Recep Gürkan Göktaş, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 332.

33 Recep Gürkan Göktaş in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 311.

34 MTA Török F. 59, p. 54: *Kitāb al-Shifā' fī arba' mujalladāt fī al-ḥadīth* ("The Book of Healing in Four Volumes, Concerning Hadith").

35 Gülrü Necipoğlu in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 21. The inscriptions and the inventory entry use the abbreviated title: *Kitāb al-Shifā'* ("Book of Healing") and add the classification *fī al-ḥadīth* ("Concerning Hadith").

his seal or his hand-written ex-libris. Their absence is a reminder that there are limits to the gleaning of historical facts from administrative library protocols.³⁶

4 Losing a Book in the Ottoman Palace

At some point during the subsequent decades, WAM Ms. W.580 was separated from its three companions in the imperial library. Indeed, it is the only volume of the set to be stamped with the seal (fol. 3b) of Bayezid II's grandson and later successor to the throne, Süleyman the Magnificent. This separation turned the lone third volume into a *Shifā'* fragment, which henceforth circulated as an independent book. Although WAM Ms. W.580 has not preserved any evidence as to when it eventually left Topkapı Palace, crudely scratched-out inscriptions on the first flyleaf (fol. 1a) document that the fragment was given as an endowment to a library outside the palace.³⁷ The monetary and utilitarian logic of this transaction is universal: anyone who has ever donated a few leftover pieces of a once-complete china set to a charity shop will understand the rationale. When storage space is limited, fragments, however attractive, are of little value, as long as a sufficient supply of equally nice but complete copies of the same work are readily available.³⁸

For the next two centuries, the three companion volumes of WAM Ms. W.580 remained as an incomplete *Shifā'* manuscript in Topkapı Palace. In 1740, they were among the books that Sultan Mahmud I (r. 1730–1754) moved to a new purpose-built library in the Ayasofya mosque.³⁹ There, the librarians who as-

³⁶ For observations about seal impressions, see the studies of the inventory in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, *passim*. At this state of the research, the meaning of both the presence and the absence of seal impressions is inconclusive. Not only is their preservation subject to contingency but errors and variations happen and thus not every newly acquired volume would have been registered in exactly the same manner. The situation is further complicated by the need for constant collection culling, as not even the Ottoman imperial library had unlimited storage space. Consequently, over the centuries, books were continually deaccessioned to libraries outside the palace, in Istanbul and beyond.

³⁷ There are three paratexts on the first flyleaf (fol. 1a): the small Arabic letters “ayn” and “nūn” at the very top; below are traces of the erased Arabic term for endowment (“waqf”); in the centre is erased number x95 (the illegible first numeral is 1 or 2).

³⁸ In the 1960s, Topkapı Palace Library held 81 Arabic manuscripts of the *Shifā'* (nos. 2733–2804), as well as another thirteen Arabic works related to the *Shifā'*, including glosses and commentaries (nos. 2905–2017); see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu*, pp. 166–185. Their oldest *Shifā'* manuscripts are dated to the fourteenth century.

³⁹ Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 23 (Gülrü Necipoğlu), and p. 234 n. 1 (Zeren Tanındı); for the seal impression of Mahmud's endowment (“waqf”) and the inscription and seal of its

signed shelf-marks to the three volumes, of course, noticed the missing third volume. They decided, however, to treat it as misplaced and not as lost. They added a note “out of four” to the three incomplete title pages, beneath the earlier cataloguing inscription, and reserved the proper sequential shelf-mark for the missing third volume.⁴⁰ After 1918, when the Süleymaniye Library was established as the national manuscript library, the incomplete *Shifāʾ* set was transferred to its current depository.

The backdrop of this interpretation of the circumstantial evidence for the fragmentation that created WAM Ms. W.580 is the Ottoman court’s vibrant book culture, which flowered at the sultan’s new palace after the Ottoman conquest of Byzantine Constantinople in 1453. The construction of Topkapı Palace allowed the victorious Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror (r. 1451–1481), the father of Bayezid II, to have purpose-built rooms for the imperial treasury, which comprised books, documents, and a wide range of artefacts.⁴¹ By 1500, when the four-volume *Shifāʾ* manuscript had arrived in Istanbul, Topkapı Palace accommodated a complex network of book collections. Men and women working in the palace were given access to working libraries as part of their training. Courtiers were granted lending privileges for books in the treasury, while keeping their own private libraries.⁴² In addition to the circulation of books within the palace, there were constant streams of books coming into the palace as well as well-established channels for dispatching books to imperial palaces and to libraries at religious institutions across the empire. It was the need to impose order on the palace’s sprawling book collections that led Bayezid II to request a new inventory of his imperial library.

In this environment, the break-up of the four-volume *Shifāʾ* manuscript requires little speculation: books go missing from their shelves as a routine feature of any working library. The final twist in this story of the separation of WAM Ms. W.580 from its three companion volumes is the impact of the Maghribi script on its fragmentation and the later removal from the imperial palace. For much of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman **Empire** competed with the Habsburg **Empire** for control of the western Mediterranean. After the final Ottoman

inspector, which SK Ayasofya 757, 758, and 760 received in 1740, see the reproduced title page of an unrelated manuscript in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 25, fig. 11.

40 The Arabic phrase “min arbaʿa” does not occur in WAM Ms. W.580. The shelf-mark SK Ayasofya 759 was never assigned to a manuscript.

41 For an architectural analysis of the rooms for book storage in the new palace, see Gülrü Necipoğlu in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, pp. 3–9.

42 For observations about the uses of the sultan’s imperial book collection as the palace’s lending library, see the studies of the inventory, collected in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, *passim*.

conquest of Tunis and the demise of the Hafsid dynasty in 1574, Tunisia became an Ottoman province. But the political ambition to control North Africa did not affect the aesthetic preferences of the Ottoman elites for luxury manuscripts in the Turco-Persian style, which had emerged in the Iranian lands from the fourteenth century onwards.⁴³ This cultural orientation towards the east extended to an Ottoman preference for eastern scripts, such as Nastaliq. In contrast, the Maghribi script of WAM Ms. W.580 was less familiar to readers with an Ottoman education.⁴⁴ As already mentioned, only the illuminated opening leaves show the wear and tear caused by readers eagerly turning pages. Despite its unquestionable beauty, the Maghribi script of WAM Ms. W.580 further diminished the practical value of this *Shifā'* fragment as religious literature, as it did not even offer a complete, self-contained section of its text.

Manuscripts in Arabic Scri



**Baltimore, Walters Art Museum
(WAM).**

Ms. W.580, <https://thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W580/>.

**Budapest, Magyar Tudományos
Akadémia (MTA, Hungarian Academy
of Sciences), Library.**

Török F. 59, <http://real-ms.mtak.hu/50/>; bound out of order, paginated, but not foliated, after the erroneous rebinding.

Dublin, Chester Beatty Library (CBL).
Pers. 275.

**Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi
(SK, Süleymaniye Library).**

Ayasofya 757.

Ayasofya 758; the call number Ayasofya 759 was never assigned to a volume.

Ayasofya 760.

43 For the Turco-Persian style favoured at the Ottoman court, see Wright, *Look of the Book*. For a remark about the usual style of Maghribi arts of the book, see Cemal Kafadar in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 89. Since the studies in Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, follow the systematic arrangement of the inventory, there is no essay or appendix that explores the representation of Maghribi authors as well as manuscripts in Maghribi script in the imperial library.

44 Of the 81 Arabic *Shifā'* manuscripts in the Topkapı Palace Library, only three are written in Maghribi script: Karatay nos. 2733 (A. 310), 2740 (A. 314), and 2752 (A. 650). According to Recep Gürkan Göktaş (Necipoğlu, *Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 332), none of these carries an impression of Bayezid II's seal.

Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi
Kütüphanesi (ТSMК, Topkapı Palace
Library).

A. 310.
A. 314.
A. 650.
H. 1417.

London, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of
Islamic Art.

MSS 359.

Madrid, Universidad Complutense de
Madrid (UCM), Biblioteca Histórica
“Marqués de Valdecilla” (BH).

MSS 554, [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/
ucm.5329499517](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5329499517).

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L16223, London, 19 October 2016.

Lot 157, [https://www.sothebys.com/
en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/a
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28/http://iduc.uc.pt/index.php/matlit/article/view/1891/1270](http://web.archive.org/web/20141224231228/http://iduc.uc.pt/index.php/matlit/article/view/1891/1270).
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