

Brief Reviews

Lapis and Gold: Exploring Chester Beatty's Ruzbihan Qur'an. By ELAINE WRIGHT. London: AD ILISSUM, 2018. Pp. xvi + 320, color illus. \$120, £90.00, €100.

This lavishly illustrated volume provides a detailed study of an exquisite manuscript preserved in the Chester Beatty Library under the shelfmark CBL Is 1558 (https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/object/Is_1558/6/LOG_0000/). Known as the Ruzbihan Quran, it was named after the sixteenth-century master Rūzbihān Muḥammad al-Ṭabṭī al-Shīrāzī, to whom the calligraphy is attributed in the colophon. The manuscript is sumptuously decorated, and the volume explores in meticulous detail its extensive decorative program along with the complex processes of its production. The in-depth investigation is the direct outcome of a conservation effort by the author—former Curator of Islamic Collections at the Chester Beatty Library—and a cadre of conservation specialists, including Kristine Rose Beers, who composed an incisive essay for the volume.

The volume is comprised of six chapters, nine appendices, and a bibliography of works cited. In the opening chapter Elaine Wright provides an essential introduction to the manuscript, what is currently understood of its place and date of production, and its need for conservation. She concludes with a brief overview of the historical context and discussion of the evidence suggesting that more than one artist working under the name Rūzbihān was active in sixteenth-century Shiraz. Signatures bearing this name reportedly appear in colophons identifying the calligrapher in seven manuscripts (appendix two) and with illuminations identifying the illuminator in eight manuscripts (appendix nine). However, the form of the name as calligrapher varies distinctly from the form as illuminator. Though it has been suggested by David James that the same individual could be responsible for both, there is no evidence to support this, particularly not within the colophon of CBL Is 1558 (pl. 10) where two synonyms for calligraphic transcription are employed.

Chapters two through five are devoted to the analytical treatment of the manuscript's writing and decorative elements, with a brief treatment of its binding. Chapter two opens with the preparation of the writing surface, consideration of the layout, utilization of scripts, and approaches to spacing text, accommodating omissions, and other scribal errors. Chapter three presents decorative approaches to indicating variant readings, places for pausing and resuming recitation, prostration, verse markers, and various divisions. Chapters four and five painstakingly address frontispieces, finispieces, side panels, chapter headings, frames, and the manipulation

of particular forms such as the ray (*tīgh*), lotus (and other blossoms), palmettes, and cloud bands. Another interesting discussion concerns the change in aesthetic that overtakes the manuscript near the close, where folios show signs of having been reworked in a completely different and somewhat experimental style.

Wright concludes that the manuscript is remarkable in the “combined quality, extent, complexity and diversity” (p. 115) of its decorative program and that a sizeable team of skilled artisans (rather than any single individual) was responsible. She is careful to situate approaches to contour, motif, and palette in the context of fifteenth-century Turcoman production, and in the final chapter assesses the Ruzbihan Quran as a product of sixteenth-century Shirazi production. She also traces its acquisition history.

A valuable essay by Beers, “Investigating the Palette of the Ruzbihan Qur'an,” highlights the selection and manipulation of media. Focusing on pigments, dyes, and binders, the essay represents a tremendous contribution to the growing body of knowledge on the colorants used to create painted decoration and painted illustration in Islamic manuscript cultures (reminiscent of a recent article by Penley Knipe et al., <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-018-0217-y>). For the most part, the pigments and dyes identified are consistent with those mentioned in contemporary treatises. An especially interesting finding concerns the presence of a fine layer of wax over areas of ultramarine—the most extensively utilized pigment in the manuscript, along with gold. Derived from lazurite (known for its gem form lapis lazuli), ultramarine is notoriously difficult to produce and to utilize. Typically it is not possible to paint over this pigment; adjacent colors must be painted first and ultramarine painted around them. However, the illuminators of CBL Is 1558 found another solution—applying first a layer of wax to the ultramarine ground before painting over.

This volume represents a model investigation into the materials and processes of sixteenth-century Shirazi luxury manuscript production by way of an extraordinary exemplar. The emphasis on typical features and deployment of comparanda help enrich the discussion and serve to establish the conformity or distinctiveness of the Ruzbihan Quran. The analysis is particularly valuable in its focus on the procedures and methods adopted by the calligrapher and illuminators, such as use of marginal notes to indicate the text to appear, approaches to correcting errors, impact of pigment selection on painting techniques, use of pasted panels, and so forth.

A number of guiding notes and explanations are included with the nonspecialist in mind, and the instanc-

es of otherwise imprecise terminology (e.g., “double-wide sheets” to introduce bifolios) may represent an interest in more relatable language. Specialists will appreciate the detailed presentation of data—elaborate discussion, copious high-quality illustrations (often at high magnification), tables, extensive footnotes, and rich appendices.

The outcome of this remarkably close scrutiny is most valuable as a compendium of codicological data and as a model for approaching future studies of painted decoration in Islamic manuscript cultures. It is highly recommended reading for anyone pursuing a deeper knowledge of Islamic manuscript production.

EVYN KROPF
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

Coming of Age in Medieval Egypt: Female Adolescence, Jewish Law, and Ordinary Culture. By EVE KRAKOWSKI. Princeton: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. xvi + 350. \$39.95, £32.95.

Volume three of *A Mediterranean Society*, S. D. Goitein’s magisterial study of the documents of the Cairo Geniza, appeared in 1978. It was dedicated to “The Family” and included chapters on betrothal and wedding, marriage, husband and wife, divorce, parents, and children. As was Goitein’s custom in “The World of Women,” the volume’s closing section, he offered conclusions and a social historian’s reflections on the significance of the material. Except for Mordechai Friedman’s Hebrew-language study of Jewish polygyny as reflected in the Geniza documents (1986) it would be forty years until another scholar ventured to author a book devoted principally to women in Geniza society (I exclude important but unpublished doctoral dissertations), in this case young women on the verge of young adulthood.

Eve Krakowski’s *Coming of Age* represents a surpassingly rich contribution to the social and legal history of the Jews in Fustat (Old Cairo), Egypt, during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods and especially to the study of Jewish women in an Islamicate society. The book’s introduction (pp. 1–32) provides an excellent primer on Geniza studies (for those less familiar with the field); surveys previous Geniza research on adolescent young women, the family, and legal history; and defines Krakowski’s interest in what she deems “ordinary” lives: “those parts of life that were not obvious religious flashpoints: the ideas, dispositions, and material practices that Geniza Jews took for granted when they were *not* praying, giving charity, or appearing before a rabbinic judge” (p. 19). Its eight chapters, divided into three parts (“Women in Patronage Culture” on kinship and family, “Unmarried Daughters” on the place

of adolescent girls in society, “Becoming a Wife” on the transition into a first marriage), engage the reader in close study and interpretation of Geniza material through the lens of prescriptive rabbinic legal rulings and their interplay with more complex social norms and practices evidenced in epistolary texts, community documents, court records, and responsa. The conclusion (pp. 294–303) briefly rehearses Krakowski’s findings regarding the centrality of kinship relationships in the lives of young women, in dialectical relationship with the dictates of rabbinic tradition and Jewish legal practice. She determines that while young women observed rabbinic law “women’s adolescence was not structured by” it (p. 299).

Digitalization and search engines enable Geniza scholars of Krakowski’s generation to sift through hundreds and thousands of documents, identify writings connected to their subjects, and then proceed to analyze the relevant documentary and literary record and present what is learned from this effort. The nature of the textual material Krakowski studies permits her to narrate select but compelling aspects of the lives of her subjects, that is, to tell the reader about young women from different urban economic strata and what resources and what agency, such as it was, were available to them (“In most cases the bride’s moment of active agency recorded in Geniza contacts was thus a pro forma legal performance directed and determined by her relatives and by court or communal officials” [p. 232]) while illuminating the social norms and practices regulating their transition from childhood to adulthood. In the process Krakowski offers an important informed corrective to Goitein’s picture of the “Geniza society” family and its young women, specifically his description of families “as cohesive extended patrilineal clans.” For Krakowski, family bonds rather than “the shape of the broader family group” were far more significant factors in young women’s lives (pp. 36–37).

Krakowski’s complete control of Geniza studies and the documentary material and her mastery of rabbinic tradition and its varied literary sources make for an exceptionally impressive marriage. For her reader she weds a portrait of life as it is lived in all its variety and complexity to the conservative prescriptions of Jewish law mediated by the more fluid judgments of jurists and their communities’ practices. For example, marriage rather than puberty in accordance with rabbinic law marks the achievement of adulthood in Geniza society. The classical rabbinic sources and their subsequent guardians in Geniza society, the Iraqi ge’onim as well as their luminous authorities such as al-Fāsī and Maimonides, “speak” in the dramas of individual, family, and communal life but they do not have the only say and do not always have the final say. Krakowski frames this tension as “Rabbinic law on the page and on the ground” (pp. 105–9).