

"Lot 69" – Another Precious Arabic Manuscript from Iraq Auctioned Off

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International auction houses regularly offer precious Islamic manuscripts of uncertain provenance. These are often purchased by public libraries, in which case they are accessible to the scholarly community. A recent example is a collection of fourteen manuscripts from Yemen that were purchased in 2018 by the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin from the London-based rare books and manuscripts dealer Bernard Quaritch Ltd. and will soon be available online.¹ Other manuscripts rather end up in private hands and are thus no longer within reach of scholars.

A remarkable manuscript was offered a short while ago by the UK auctioneer Dreweatts. The slim codex, identified as "Lot 69" on Dreweatts web-based catalogue² and sold on October 22, 2019 to an unidentified buyer for £2,500, consists of 10 leaves, three pages of which are displayed on Dreweatts's website (title page, as well as pages 16 and 17; see figs 1 and 2). To judge from the scant paleographical evidence provided by the digital images, "Lot 69" is only the first quire of an originally much larger codex. This is suggested by the title page (fig. 1) that is marked as *awwal* ("first") in the upper outer corner, a typical way to identify quires. Moreover, the second tract of "Lot 69" the beginning of which is located on page 17, seems to be incompletely preserved in the truncated codex. "Lot 69" was evidently rebound at some stage. This is suggested by the auctioneer's description: "nineteenth-century leather, covers stamped in blind with Mamluk-style central circular medallion, ruled in blind with additional gilt ruling to outer edges of covers, rebaked, covers a little rubbed".

According to the title page of "Lot 69" the codex comprised a work of two parts: *Kitāb Talkhīṣ Lubāb al-manṭiq wa-Khulāṣat al-ḥikma*. The author is not identified here but is described as its "author and scribe" (*li-mu'allifihi kātibihi 'afā llāh 'anhu*), suggesting that the codex comprised holographs of both tracts. Dreweatts's web description correctly identifies the Jewish philosopher Sa'd b. Manṣūr Ibn Kammūna (d. in or after 1284)³ to have been involved in its compilation but mistakenly states that "[t]he present volume discusses logic and philosophy and is therefore most probably a short extract from Ibn Kammūna's *Talwihat* commentary". The tract is certainly not an excerpt from Ibn Kammūna's renowned commentary on the *K. al-Talwihāt* of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, the twelfth-

¹ <https://blog.sbb.berlin/handschriften-aus-dem-jemen-digitalisiert/> [consulted November 27, 2019]

² <https://bid.dreweatts.com/m/lot-details/index/catalog/962/lot/16022/result/Thank%20you,%20your%20question%20has%20been%20submitted%20and%20we%20will%20respond%20to%20you%20as%20quickly%20as%20we%20can> [consulted November 27, 2019].

³ While 1215 is given as the year of his birth, this is in fact unknown. See R. Pourjavady and S. Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: 'Izz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, p. 8.

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<https://albert.ias.edu/handle/20.500.12111/7875>

century founder of Illuminationist philosophy. It is rather an epitome of *Lubāb al-mantiq wa-khulāṣat al-ḥikma*, a work on logic and philosophy by the little-known Muslim philosopher Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Nakhjawānī (d. after 1229 CE) who displayed a critical attitude towards Avicenna in his few extant writings. Apart from a work on medicine that seems to have come down to us in two manuscripts,⁴ al-Nakhjawānī's writings on logic and metaphysics are exclusively preserved through the transcriptions, epitomes and refutations prepared by Ibn Kammūna. These include a copy of al-Nakhjawānī's *Lubāb al-mantiq wa-khulāṣat al-ḥikma*, as well as the already mentioned *Talkhīṣ Lubāb al-mantiq*, a summary of al-Nakhjawānī's *Lubāb al-mantiq wa-khulāṣat al-ḥikma*. The latter work is an abbreviation of his more extensive critique of Avicenna, *Naqḍ qawā'id al-Ishārāt wa-kashf tamwīh al-Shifā' wa-l-Najāt* which seems to be lost.

The only known extant manuscript of Ibn Kammūna's epitome of al-Nakhjawānī's *Lubāb al-mantiq* is preserved in a multi-text volume that contains several other pieces by Ibn Kammūna, including his excerpts from two works on astronomy, *al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī* by Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī and the *Kitāb al-Hay'a*, of Mu'ayyad al-Dīn al-'Urḍī, all in his own hand. The codex was inspected in 1911 in Najaf by the Iraqi scholar Muḥammad Riḍā al-Shabībī (b. 1889, d. 1965) who described it in detail.⁵

"Lot 69" is evidently related to the codex described by al-Shabībī. Page 16, lines 1 to 8 contain the final lines of Ibn Kammūna's *Talkhīṣ Lubāb al-mantiq*, which is concluded by Ibn Kammūna's extended colophon (page 16 line 8 until page 17 line 5). In it, he mentions the date Dhū l-Qa'da 675 AH, i.e., April-May 1277 CE, to indicate when he completed the epitome. The wording of the colophon in "Lot 69" agrees verbatim with that of the Najaf codex which is cited in full by al-Shabībī. While the Najaf codex was transcribed in Shawwāl 679 AH / January-February 1281 CE, it is unknown when "Lot 69" was copied.

On page 17 line 6 of "Lot 69" begins the second tract of this codex which is entitled "*Ta'liq min Lubāb al-mantiq min al-kātib al-mu'allif Najm al-Dīn al-Nakhjawānī wa-huwa muqaddam fī l-aṣl 'alā l-Khulāṣa al-madhkūra*". It is possible that this *ta'liq* is again by Ibn Kammūna but this cannot be verified on the basis of the available information. However, the remark that this tract preceded the *Khulāṣa* (most certainly referring to *Talkhīṣ Lubāb al-mantiq*) in the antigraph indicates that "Lot 69" is not Ibn Kammūna's autograph of 675/1277. When the copy was prepared and by whom cannot be decided at present, although the remote possibility that "Lot 69" is in fact part of the Najaf codex that was inspected by al-Shabībī 1911 cannot be excluded.

The short description of "Lot 69" shows the fragment's immense value for scholarship. It is deplorable that it is unavailable at present for further study, especially as it may well be possible that additional

⁴ Pourjavady and Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher*, p. 27 n. 122.

⁵ Muḥammad Riḍā al-Shabībī, *Turāthunā al-falsafī: Ḥājatuḥu ilā l-naqḍ wa-l-tamhīṣ*, Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-'Ānī, 1385/1965, pp. 101-109; idem, *Mu'arrikh al-'Irāq Ibn al-Fuwaṭī*, Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1378/1958, vol. 2, pp. 121-125. Unfortunately, Shabībī's descriptions do not include images of selected pages of the codex.

portions of the original codex may surface in the future that would help elucidate its relation to the Najaf codex.

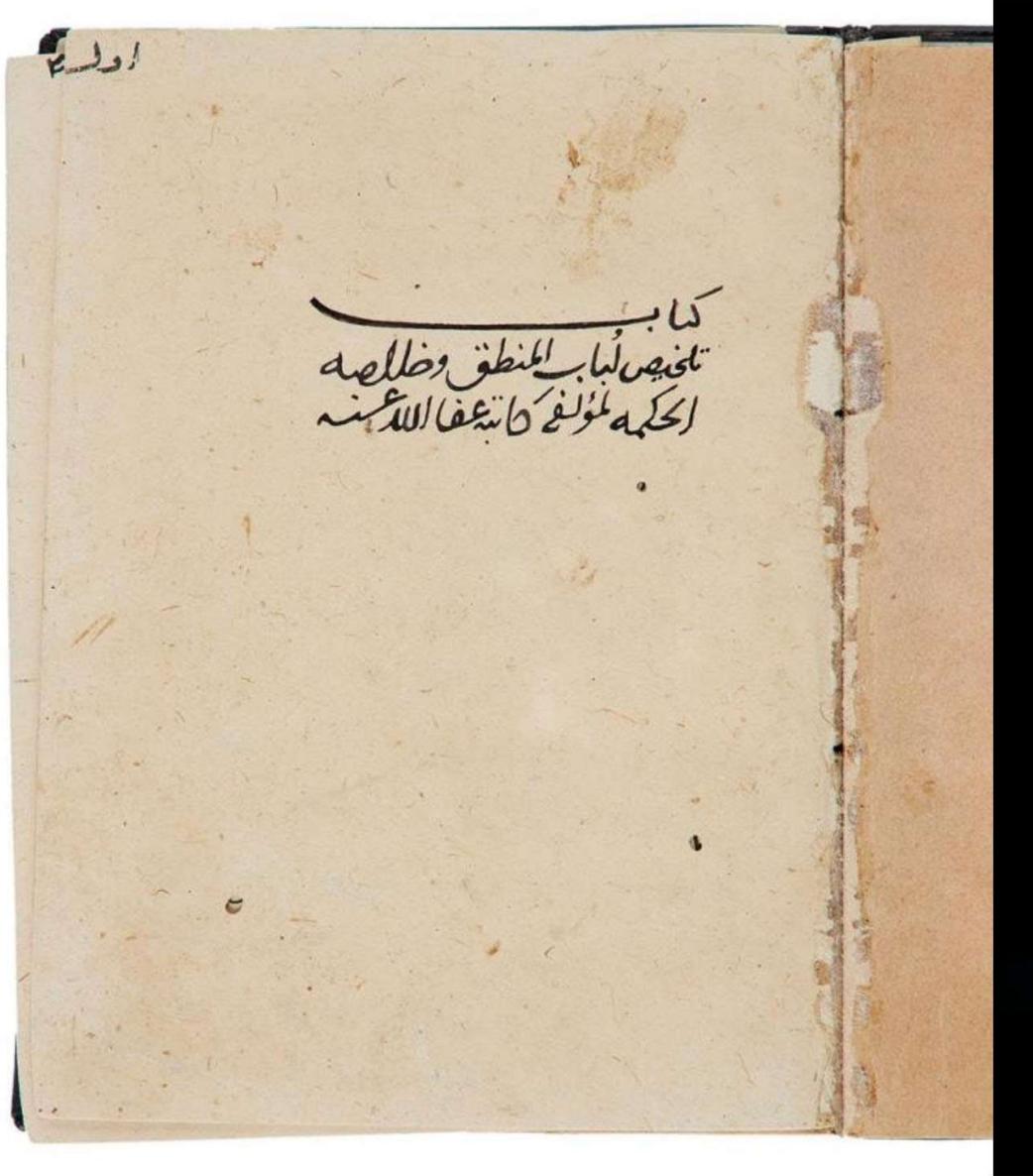


Fig. 1

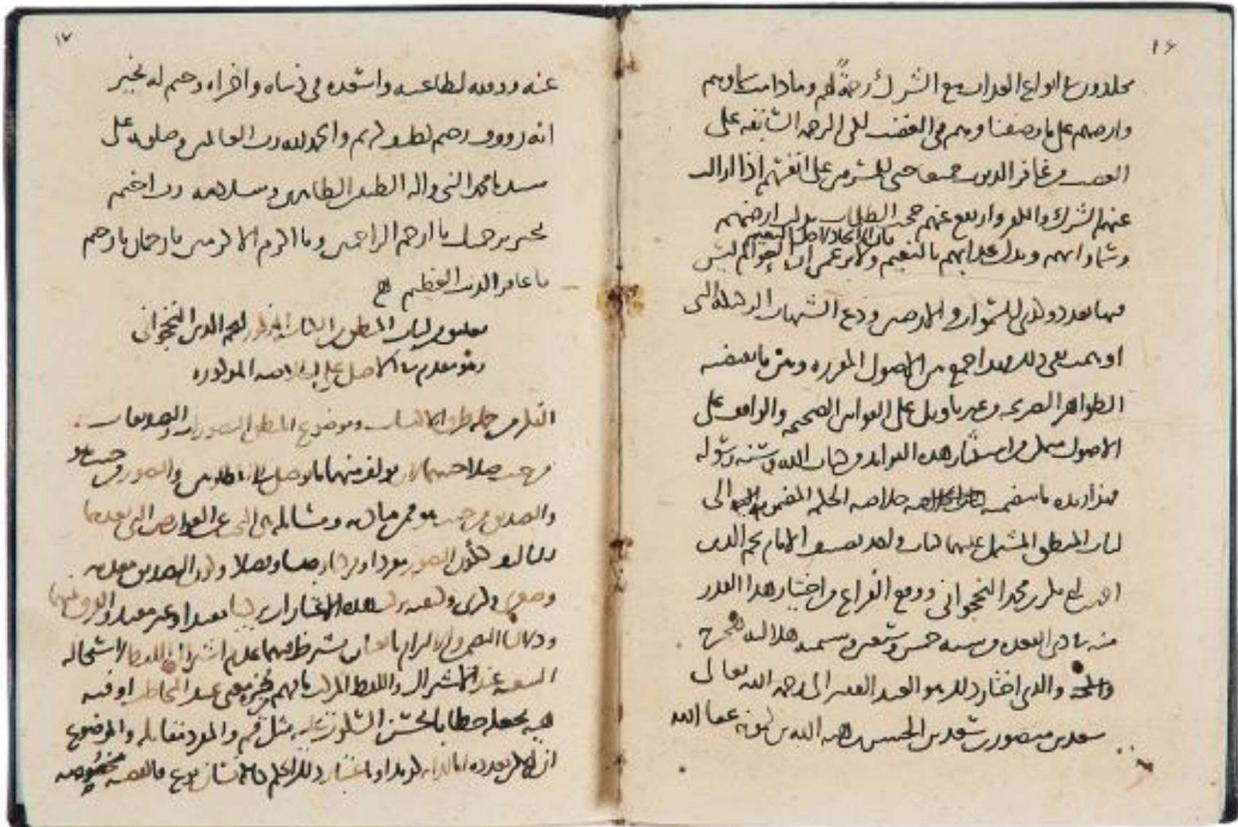


Fig. 2