



Press Release

Koran manuscript from early period of Islam

Tübingen University fragment written 20-40 years after the death of the Prophet, analysis shows

Tübingen, 10 Nov 14

A Koran fragment from the University of Tübingen Library has been dated to the 7th century - the earliest phase of Islam - making it at least a century older than previously thought. Expert analysis of three samples of the manuscript parchment concluded that it was more than 95 percent likely to have originated in the period 649-675 AD - 20 to 40 years after the death of the Prophet Mohammed. Such scientific dating of early Koran manuscripts is rare.

The Tübingen fragment was tested by the *Coranica* project, a collaboration between the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres Paris and the Berlin-Brandenburgischen Academy of the Sciences and Humanities, sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and France's Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR). The project investigates the Koran in the context of its historical background using documents such as manuscripts and information derived from archaeological excavations.

The project carries out palaeographic analyses to determine the age of a text via its special characteristics. The carbon-14 analysis of the Tübingen fragment was carried out by the Ion Beam Physics Laboratory at ETH Zürich.

The fragment in question is one of more than 20 in the University Library Collection written in Kufic script, one of the oldest forms of Arabic writing. The manuscript came to the University in 1864 as part of the collection of the Prussian consul Johann Gottfried Wetzstein. You can view it online at: <http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/diglit/MaVI165>

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Taking a sample from the
manuscript for dating.
Photo: Dr. Wilfried Lagler/
Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen

Projekt Coranica: <http://www.coranica.de/>

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