

Conservation treatment and codicological examination of an encyclopedic work consisting of 62 volumes from 15th century: *Kashf al-Bayān an Sifāt al-Hayawān*

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Abstract

Kashf al-Bayān an Sifāt al-Hayawān which is an encyclopedic work consisting of 62 volumes was written by an Alexandrian scholar, Abū al Fath Mohammed bin Sheikh Bedreddin (Mohammed bin Atiyah al-İskenderi al-Afvi) (d. 1534). The unique manuscript was written by the author himself over a period of 14 years. In the first volume the author gives some information about himself, how he prepared his work, which books he had read in order to write this encyclopedia and the authors of the books he studied. After this first volume which is said to be a preface, the contents of the volumes are arranged in alphabetical order. The work comprises 62 volumes in total which were gathered together by Sheikh al-Islam Seyyid Feyzullah Efendi and his son Sheikh al-Islam Seyyid Mustafa Efendi. The work is now a recorded item in the Feyzullah Efendi Collection at Millet Manuscript Library in Istanbul.

The manuscript was brought to Şifahane because of its poor condition, caused by the deterioration of ink corrosion, microorganism damage and blocked leaves. Successful conservation treatment of the manuscript was accomplished between 2014 and 2016. Apart from being a unique item, the manuscript is a wondrous example in terms of codicology since it was prepared by its own author. While only a small number of manuscripts in the set retain their original binding, the manuscript with its intact structure makes technical observations that are of great importance. By keeping this in mind, the basic principle of the conservation treatment of this item was to maintain its original structure as much as possible and record all details about the item through thorough documentation. After treatment the volumes were digitized, and the areas of ink corrosion were photographed using IR screening techniques. These photographs were attached to all volumes' documentation files.

In this study the technical details observed during the conservation treatment of this unique and large item, as well as the ethical approach to the treatments which were carried out over more than one year, will be explained.