The Written Transmission of the Qur'an in *Ḥijāzī* Script. A General Appraisal

The *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, with its complex history, gave us a first insight into the early history of the written transmission of the Qur'an. The text is still somewhat fluid in its orthography and in the way in which the verses are divided since, in both cases, the personal viewpoint of the various copyists has some bearing on its presentation. Although the manuscript provides us with a wide-ranging set of situations, one may wonder whether this specific copy is a good example of the contemporary practices in the transcription of the Revelation.

On a more important level, that of canonicity, the text found in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, in spite of some peculiarities in the division into verses or in the text itself, is consistent with the 'Uthmanic *rasm* since we can surmise for the moment that the differences in orthography and the lack of diacritical marks do not impair the possibility to read it according to the canon. On the basis of the observations made previously on this copy, I would like to explore a sample of manuscripts featuring the same variety of script, *ḥijāzī*,—which is for the moment the firmest basis in the identification of earliest copies—and try to determine if in spite of the idiosyncratic character of the contributions in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* there was something amounting to a “tradition” which was imposing some form of control over the copyists' apparent freedom.

The sixteen folios of the first fragment (§E 118; fig. 7) which I shall examine are now in Istanbul, in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum. Until the end of the nineteenth century, they were kept in the geniza-like depot of the Great mosque in Damascus among old manuscript fragments, mainly Qur'anic.¹ Before the fall of the Ottoman Empire, in 1911, the majority of what was kept there was brought to Istanbul in order to be preserved in the new Evkaf museum,

1 F. Déroche, La bibliothèque de la mosquée des Omeyyades. Les documents qui accompagnent les manuscrits, in *Ecrire l'histoire de Damas. Nouvelles données archéologiques et nouvelles sources sur une métropole arabe à l'époque médiévale*, J.M. Mouton ed. (forthcoming).

which was later renamed Türk ve Islam eserleri müzesi (TIEM).² Its parchment folios measure 31×24 cm and the written surface covers from 28 to 29×21 cm, with 21 to 26 lines to the page. The verses are separated by groups of six dashes in two vertical columns of three or of nine dashes in three vertical columns of three. Between the suras, a space has been left empty. The *basmala* is counted as a verse—although the verse divider found after the *basmala* of sura 23 is different from the usual shape.

The stroke is similar to that of Hands C or D in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. The copyist writes neatly, keeping some space between the upper extremities of the vertical strokes and the line above. In the fragment, the *alif* is bending to the right and its lower extremity has the shape of a tiny hook. The final or isolated *kāf* is recognisable by its lower horizontal stroke elongated beyond the point where the upper stroke of the letter turns upwards at an almost right angle.³ The final *mīm* is almost round; only a small protuberance is left as a reminder of the tail. The sickle-shaped *nūn* is not unlike that of Hand C. As was the case in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, the transcription complies with the rules of the *scriptio continua* adapted to the Arabic script and the text is spread out on the page in a rather regular manner.

The text examined on this fragment is a rather short one. It should be noted that the orthography seems rather conservative: *qāla* is always written in *scriptio defectiva*, whereas *shay'* and *bi-āyāt* are respectively written with the *alif* between *shīn* and *yā'* and with three denticles in all the occurrences found on the fragment. *Tbād* and *'adhāb* exhibit a less clear-cut situation: in both cases, it is an almost fifty-fifty situation with a slight majority of *scriptio defectiva* (respectively four against three and six against four). With the exception of these orthographic specificities, the text does not deviate in any significant way from that of the Cairo edition.

The codex London, British Library, Or. 2165 is the most important *ḥijāzī* copy as far as the extent of text preserved is concerned (fig. 8).⁴ It was found in Egypt,

2 A.S. Demirkol and S. Kutluay, Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi Kur'an-ı kerim koleksiyonu hakkında, in A.S. Demirkol et al., 1400. Yılında Kur'an-ı kerim, Istanbul, 2010, pp. 139–140.

3 F. Déroche, Un critère de datation des écritures coraniques anciennes: le *kāf* final ou isolé, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 11 (1999), pp. 87–94 and pl. 15–16 [*In memoriam M. Meinecke*].

4 The manuscript contains 122 folios. The text covers 7: 42–9: 95; 10: 9–39: 47; 40: 61–43: 71. A facsimile of the first half of the manuscript has been published by F. Déroche and S. Noja Nosedá (*Le manuscrit Or. 2165 (f. 1 à 61) de la British Library* [Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique, I: Les manuscrits de style *ḥijāzī*], Les, 2001). A complete edition of the text is currently prepared by Keith Small.

in the 'Amr mosque—like the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. Six folios were acquired at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the French Arabist and consular agent Jean-Louis Asselin de Cherville and are now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.⁵ However, the bulk of the manuscript was bought later by the English cleric and Egyptologist, Greville J. Chester, who paid various visits to Egypt; it is not known precisely how and where he got hold of the 122 folios which were later acquired by the British Museum and are now one of the best known Islamic manuscripts of the British Library. In addition, a bifolio is kept in the Kuwait Museum of Islamic Art.⁶ The manuscript has been reproduced various times since William Wright's *Facsimiles of manuscripts and inscriptions (Oriental series)* was published between 1875 and 1883.⁷ It has been widely known thanks to Josef von Karabacek as the reference manuscript for the so-called *mā'il* script, a name which he found in Gustav Flügel's edition of the *Fihrist* but was actually a copyist's emendation for *munābidh*.⁸

The size of these 130 parchment folios is quite close to that of the *ḥijāzī* copies we have seen so far. With 31,5 × 22 cm, it is a fair *quarto* volume. Twenty-one to 27, but most frequently 23 to 25 lines of script cover its pages, leaving almost no external margins, with a writing surface of 28,8 × 20 cm. In contrast to the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, there is evidence that the manuscript has been trimmed since: in some cases, the last letter of a line has been cut away when the manuscript has been rebound. As the other copies of this age, the text has been transcribed according to the rules of the *scriptio continua* adapted to the Arabic script.⁹ From what remains today of this manuscript, it is possible to establish that about 16 square meters of parchment were necessary for its production, that is to say about the same quantity as what was

5 Arabe 328 e, see F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran: Aux origines de la calligraphie coranique* [Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue des manuscrits arabes, 2^e partie, Manuscrits musulmans, I/1], Paris, 1983, p. 62, no 7. The six folios contain 5: 7–65 and 6: 39–112.

6 Dār al-Athar al-Islāmiyyah, The al-Sabah collection, LNS 19 CA.

7 W. Wright, *Facsimiles of manuscripts and inscriptions. Oriental series*, London, 1875–1883, pl. LIX.

8 J. von Karabacek (Julius Euting's Sinaïtische Inschriften, WZKM 5 [1891], p. 324) associated the script of Or. 2165 with this name found in Gustav Flügel's edition of al-Nadīm's *K. al-Fihrist* (*K. al-Fihrist*, G. Flügel ed., Leipzig, 1871, t. I, p. 6). The discrepancy with the reading of a better copy of the text, MS Chester Beatty Library 3315, used by R. Tajaddud in his edition of the text (*K. al-Fihrist*, R. Tajaddud ed., Tehran, 1350/1971, p. 9) has been noticed by G. Endress (Die arabische Schrift, *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie*, t. I, *Sprachwissenschaft*, W. Fischer ed., Wiesbaden, 1982, p. 173 et n. 66).

9 See ch. 1.

required for the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. However, the parchment seems to have been coated with chalk, which results in a whiter and almost glossy appearance.

The verses are separated either by two vertical columns of three oblong dots or by roughly circular clusters of ten or more such dots.¹⁰ Between the suras, a space has been left empty; the titles have been added by a later hand. The *basmala* is indicated as a verse and is written alone on the first line of the sura.

The stroke is similar to that of Hand D in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, but slightly thicker and neater than those of Hands A or B in its contours. There may have been more than one copyist involved in the copy, but as a whole the script is more homogeneous than in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. In a recent paper, Intisar A. Rabb established that it was transcribed by two copyists and that later, four to seven hands corrected the copy.¹¹ The main hand, A, is responsible for the largest part of the manuscript. Hand B was a minor contributor with f. 3 v^o to 8 r^o penned in his hand. Interestingly enough, the copyists of Or. 2165 abided by the same rule as those of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, starting their work on a verso and finishing their contribution on a recto so that no opening should exhibit a difference of hands on its two halves. Rabb's point on the verse dividers as an indication of a change of hand is probably correct: the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* shows that the copyists tended to favour a variety of verse dividers, even if all were basically relying on the same components.

In spite of the more homogeneous appearance of the copy, some details such as the frequent contact of the upper strokes with the line above suggest that the copyists were not as careful as Hand D in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, for instance. The *alif* in the manuscript is usually a mere stroke, without a lower hook to the right; in a few instances, the copyist seems to have started a movement to the right before checking himself.¹² The final or isolated *kāf* is basically identical with the shape found in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, with its lower stroke extending largely towards the left; one should however notice that the two branches on the right part of the letter are almost parallel.¹³ The final *mīm* is almost rounded—and the isolated letter even more. A very short vertical tail is sometimes found. The shape of the *nūn* looks very

10 I. Rabb, Non-Canonical Readings of the Qurʾān: Recognition and Authenticity (The Ḥimsī Reading), *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2006, p. 98.

11 Ibid., pp. 98–99.

12 See for instance London, BL, Or. 2165, f. 7a, for instance.

13 Ibid., f. 20a, l. 1, 4 or 7, for instance.

close to that favoured by Hand D of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*—with a somewhat shorter lower component.¹⁴ When comparing the diacritical dotting in Or. 2165 with that found in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, it becomes clear that the proportion of dotted letters is significantly larger. On a small portion of text transcribed by Hand A of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* (Saint Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 18, f. 2a to 3a, 8: 42–72), thirty-two letters have been dotted against 179 in Or. 2165. However, the process is not strictly cumulative as only eighteen of the latter are also dotted on the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*.

Since the publication of the facsimile of the first half of the manuscript,¹⁵ two papers have been devoted to the manuscript, a first one by Yasin Dutton,¹⁶ the second one—already mentioned—by Rabb. Dutton concluded, following the examination of both the original in the British Library and the facsimile, that it was produced in Syria,

written according to the reading of the Syrian reader Ibn ʿĀmir and showing a verse-marking pattern that most accords with the Syrian system of the Ḥimsīs.¹⁷

On the date of the copy, he suggested a timescale extending from 30 to 85 AH—that is to say between the “edition” of ʿUthmān and the beginning of al-Walid I reign which corresponds to the production of the famous copy in Sanaa.¹⁸ He added that “the latter end of this time scale [was] the safer, but not necessarily the more correct, guess.”¹⁹ Rabb’s conclusions somewhat challenged Dutton’s views. In addition to her remarks on the scribes, she stressed the fact that the copy was “definitively Ḥimsī in both its ‘skeletal text’ ... and verse-endings”,²⁰ although she acknowledged cases of divisions which did not accord with the tradition.²¹

14 Ibid., f. 22a, l. 1 and 7 for instance.

15 F. Déroche and S. Noja Nosedá, op. cit.

16 Y. Dutton, Some notes on the British Library’s “Oldest Qur’an manuscript” (Or. 2165), *Journal of Qur’anic studies* 6 (2004), pp. 43–71.

17 Ibid., p. 65.

18 Ibid., p. 66.

19 Ibid.

20 I. Rabb, op. cit., pp. 85–86. She first concludes that the manuscript “may well date back to the 1st/7th century, and definitely goes back to the early 2nd/8th century at least” (ibid., p. 98), then writes that it “goes back to the 1st/7th century” (ibid., p. 108).

21 Ibid., p. 108.

An analysis of the orthography based on the five words I selected for the evaluation of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* shows that Or. 2165 reflects a slight evolution towards the *scriptio plena*. Of course, the spelling of *qāla* is largely defective in the part of the manuscript which has been published in facsimile since in 98 percent of the cases the verb is written *qāf* and *lām*, a situation largely similar to that found in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. On the other hand, *qālū* is comparatively more frequently written in *scriptio plena*: the copyists used it in 15 percent of the occurrences—against 85 percent for the *scriptio defectiva*. The proportion is equivalent for *ʿibād*, although the evidence is numerically more reduced. Turning now to *shayʿ*, things seem to have changed: the old spelling with the *alif* appears in only 64 percent of the cases. When it comes to *ʿadhāb*, the *scriptio plena* becomes dominant with 66 percent of the occurrences. As for the various forms of *bi-āyāt*, the *rasm* with three denticles is still dominant, with twenty-seven cases out of thirty-three (i.e. slightly more than 80 percent).

As a last example, I shall discuss the fragment Saint Petersburg, NLR Marcel 19 (fig. 9).²² In contrast to the previous manuscripts, the number of lines to the page (20) remains stable on the fifteen folios (29 × 25 cm) which I have been able to identify.²³ The script is regular, probably the work of a professional. It recalls Hand C of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, but the *alif* bending to the right has almost no trace of a hook. The final or isolated *kāf* has the characteristic shape with the lower horizontal stroke elongated beyond the point where the upper stroke of the letter turns upwards at an almost right angle. The final *mīm* is almost round; only a small protuberance is left as a reminder of the tail. The inverted L-shaped *nūn* is not unlike that of Hand D. A ruling with a dry point is visible. The copyist wanted to leave a thin margin around the writing surface (25,3 × 22,5 cm) and prepared the transcription with a ruling, drawn with a dry point. Diacritical marks are present: the original dashes, not very numerous, have been complemented by at least two hands. The verses are regularly indicated by groups of six dashes in two columns. The groups of ten have been marked later with crude circles in black ink. The *basmala*,

22 Thirteen folios are in the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg, two in Paris (BNF, Arabe 328 f. f. 96–97; see F. Déroche, op. cit. [1983], p. 61, no 5). The Parisian folios of the manuscript can be accessed on the Gallica website of the BnF (gallica.bnf.fr). An edition is currently prepared by Hassan Chahdi in the frame of the French-German project *Coranica*.

23 Marcel 19, f. 1–6: 18: 29 to 19: 98; Marcel 19, f. 7–Arabe 328, f. 96: 23: 75 to 26: 51; Arabe 328, f. 97: 28: 10–32.

indicated as a verse, is written alone on the first line of the sura. Coloured ornaments separate the suras. They do not include any title and have probably been added.

The text present on the fragment contains three places where a canonical variant is known. A first one, common to the Medinan, Meccan and Damascan codices, is found at 18: 36. The other two are not very significant: the text follows the majority at 23: 85, 87 and 89—against the Basran codex—and the Kufan variants at 23: 112 and 114 involve an opposition between the homographs *qāla* and *qul*.

The orthography can be defined as *scriptio defectiva*. The various forms of *qāla* are dominantly written defectively: this is actually the case for the seventeen occurrences of *qālū*, of seventy-five instances of *qāla* (against one in *scriptio plena* at 25: 8) and six of *qālat* against one (19: 18). The same situation is found for the various occurrences of *ʿibād* (eight in *scriptio defectiva*, one in *scriptio plena*), of *shayʿ* (the ten instances are all written according to the old orthography) and of *āyāt*, written with three denticles in four cases and only once in the modern orthography. Conversely, *ʿadhāb* appears in *scriptio plena* in thirteen occurrences; the *scriptio defectiva* has been used four times—three more when the word in the indefinite direct case is taken into account.

All the manuscripts and fragments discussed here so far are volumes in quarto size.²⁴ Actually, the literature devoted to the *ḥijāzī* copies has mainly paid attention to these larger volumes, although scattered evidence of smaller copies has been known for some time.²⁵ I shall now turn to the Qur'anic manuscripts of smaller size in order to examine their peculiarities if any in comparison with the larger copies. It is tempting to surmise that the latter were meant for public use, while the smaller ones were private copies, but once again no direct evidence supports this assumption. It may actually be that there is no link between size and use, but that it is only a matter of costs—more affluent patrons being

24 It proved impossible to have access to the manuscript Istanbul, TKS M. 1 (391f. measuring 32×24 cm) which may belong to this group (F.E. Kararay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi arapça yazmalar katalogu*, vol. 1, *Kur'an, Kur'an ilimleri, Tefsirler*. No 1–2171, Istanbul, 1962, pp. 1–2, no 3).

25 See for instance some of the fragments in the Chicago University collection (N. Abbott, *The Rise of the North Arabic script and its kur'anic development*, Chicago, 1939, pp. 60–63, pl. VIII–XIII), or in the national libraries of Paris (Seymour de Ricci collection, see F. Déroche, op. cit., pp. 151–155, nos 281–293) and Vienna (A Perg. 2, see H. Loebenstein, *Koranfragmente auf Pergament aus der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Wien, 1982, vol. 1, pp. 23–26, no 1 and vol. 2, pl. 1–2).

able to stand the expense of a greater amount of parchment. Information on such costs are actually available in the discussion of the lawfulness of the payment of a fee for the copy of the Qur'an, but there is no information about the format of the copy which is at the core of these accounts.²⁶ These are however slightly later and so are the cases of public patronage which could serve as a basis for the discussion of the public use of Qur'anic manuscripts, with the exception of the 'Uthmanic *ummahāt*.

A first example is a parchment fragment which is also part of the Damascus collection kept in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic art in Istanbul (ŞE 3687; fig. 10). It consists of ten folios measuring 24×16 cm, that is an octavo format. Its height (24 cm) actually corresponds to the width of the folios of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. There are from 22 to 29 lines to the page, most commonly 23, with a written surface of 21,5×14,6 cm, leaving almost no margin. Extrapolating from a portion of continuous text on five folios, I estimate that the manuscript had originally ca. 255 folios, in other words that 9,8 square meters of parchment were needed for its production. It also belongs to the *scriptio continua* tradition, with words cut at the end of the line when the space left would not accommodate them conveniently. The stroke is rather regular, evoking Hand C in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. The *alif* is bending to the right and its lower extremity has the shape of a more or less accentuated hook. There is usually a sharp contrast between the *alif* and the *lām*, the latter being often written as a vertical stroke. The final or isolated *kāf* is recognisable to its lower horizontal stroke elongated beyond the point where the upper part of the letter turns upwards at an almost right angle, although it tends to be

26 See 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaḡ*, ed. H. al-A'zami, Beirut, 1972, t. VIII, 114, n° 14530; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Kitāb al-muṣannaḡ*, ed. 'A. Khān al-Afghānī et al., Hyderabad-Bombay, 1980, t. IV, 294, *Buyū'*, n° 20228; Ibn Abī Dā'ud, *Kitāb al-maṣāḡif* = A. Jeffery, *Materials for the history of the text of the Qur'an*, Leiden, 1937, p. 133 Arabic. Also A. Gacek, The copying and handling of Qur'āns: Some observations on the *Kitāb al-Maṣāḡif* by Ibn Abī Dā'ud al-Sijistānī, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 59 (2006) [Actes de la conférence internationale sur les manuscrits du Coran (Bologne, 26–28 septembre 2002)], p. 240; A. George, *The rise of Islamic calligraphy*, London, 2010, pp. 52–53 and notes 112–116. Another indication in found in Ibn Muṭarrif al-Kinānī, *al-Qurṭayn*, Beirut, n.d., p. 171 (quoted by O. Hamdan, *Studien zur Kanonisierung des Korantextes. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrīs Beiträge zur Geschichte des Korans*, Wiesbaden, 2006, p. 170): in compensation for the destruction of divergent *muṣḡafs*, al-Ḥajjāj has sixty dirhams paid to the owners. It is interesting to observe that the value is in the same range (sixty to seventy dirhams), although little can be made of this information: we have no idea of the value of these dirhams, nor of the size of the manuscripts.

comparatively shorter than in other examples. The final *mīm* is almost round; in a few instances, a very short tail protrudes on the left side. The sickle-shaped *nūn* is not unlike the shape found in the portion of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, which has been transcribed by Hand C. The verses are separated by clusters of four to six dashes set vertically one above the other. There is no blank space left between the suras, but the end of the last line of a sura is filled with a crude decoration (for instance between suras 67 and 68 or 69 and 70). The end of sura 66 reached the end of the line; the copyist wrote the *basmala* on the next line and drew a simple headband into which he integrated the last three letters of *al-rahīm* (fig. 10). In the two other instances, the *basmala* is marked as a verse.

The fragment is too short to provide a large amount of evidence about the orthography. The *scriptio defectiva* of *qāla/qālū* is apparently still the rule, with twenty occurrences in the fragment. It is still dominant in the case of *bi-āyāt* written with three denticles: I have found four examples of this orthography against one with two denticles. The *scriptio defectiva* has been used for *ʿadhāb* in seven instances against three in *scriptio plena*, with the *alif*; however, as was the case in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, the word with the indefinite direct case ending is written without the medial *alif*. On the other hand, the copyist opted for the “modern” orthography of *shayʿ*, consistently written without *alif*, and opted more frequently for the *scriptio plena* of *ʿibād*, found in two places against one in the old spelling without the *alif*.

Turning to the division into verses, one notices that there is no verse ending at 41: 13, a feature proper to the Basran and Syrian schools.²⁷ On the other hand, a division known in the Meccan and Medinan traditions is indicated after *bi-shimālihi* in 69: 25.²⁸ As mentioned previously, the *basmala* is marked as a verse. The text departs from the ʿUthmanic *rasm* in a few places. In 9: 70, where *kānū* is lacking, it may be argued that it is due to a scribal mistake. In 67: 12, the situation may be different: the copyist has written *karīm* instead of *kabīr*.

Another parchment fragment found in the same collection as my previous example is ŠE 13316-1 (fig. 11). Its fifteen folios measure 24 × 17 cm today, but they have been damaged. The original number of folios can be estimated as ca. 340 and almost 14 square meters of parchment were required for the production

27 A. Spitaler, *Die Verszählung des Koran nach islamischer Überlieferung*, Munich, 1935 [Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-historische Abteilung. Jahrgang 1935, Heft 11], p. 56.

28 Ibid., p. 64.

of the manuscript. The 18 to 22 lines of text to the page cover a surface of 20,8/21,5 × 15 cm, leaving almost no margin. The stroke is rather regular and the lines are horizontal. They are also well separated from each other, a fact which suggests that the copyist had some training. The *alif* is bending to the right and its lower extremity has the shape of a hook which is usually almost flat. The final and isolated *kāf* has its lower stroke extending towards the left beyond the point where the upper stroke turns upward; the two branches of the letter are opened. The body of the final *mīm* is rounded and has a short hair-like tail, which is oriented towards the lower left. The crescent-shaped final *nūn* sometimes has a peculiar shape, its upper part being quite developed. The verse division is diversely indicated, although there is no sign that various copyists contributed to the transcription of these fifteen folios: clusters of three or six dots arranged in the shape of a triangle, columns of five dashes set vertically ... The *basmala* is not marked as a verse. The groups of five or ten verses are not singled out by a specific device. In the fragment, there is no blank line left between the suras; the end of the last line of a sura is filled with a crude decoration and the next one begins on the next line.

The orthography of the fragment evidences a move towards the *scriptio plena*. Of course, as for the former fragment, we would need more material in order to get a more accurate view. Anyhow, the *scriptio defectiva* of *qāla/qālū* is slightly down—to 82 percent of the thirty-three occurrences found in this fragment. The defective spelling is still dominant for the plural *ʿibād* (three occurrences) and for *bi-āyāt* written with three denticles (four examples). But the *scriptio plena* has become the norm for *ʿadhāb* (twelve cases) and *shayʿ* is written in five cases against one in the old spelling with *alif*. The old orthography of *ilāh* in 23: 91, with a denticle indicating the long /ā/, has been used by the copyist. To sum up, the few folios of this fragment reflect an evolution towards a slightly more developed orthography than was the case in Or. 2165.

The verse division exhibits a few specificities: the copyist did not indicate the verse ending between 21: 66 and 67 which is specific to the Kufan school,²⁹ nor that between 22: 63 and 64.³⁰ Conversely, he marked a verse ending after *wa-yaʿbudūn* in 22: 71, which is clearly a scribal mistake as the verse would be reduced to that verb alone. The text is certainly the most puzzling of those I have been able to examine. I shall mention here a few examples. On the first folio, in 20: 121, the copyist wrote *yakhfidān* instead of *yakhṣifān* (l. 7) and in 123 (l. 10) a third person plural instead of the dual *ahbitā*. In the same verse,

29 Ibid., p. 47.

30 Spitaler does not mention any disagreement about that division (see *ibid.*, p. 48).

taba'a stands for *attaba'a* (l. 11) and *fa-man* instead of *fa-lā* (l. 12). In the same line, *a'araḍa* is replaced by *yu'riḍū* (20: 124). On f. 9 verso, in 22: 77, there is a dittography with a repetition of *alif* and *wāw* (l. 1). In the next verse, the scribe perhaps wrote *sammākum*, instead of *ajtabakum* (l. 2). The copyist does not seem very reliable, although he may have been transcribing from a copy containing variant readings which were not fully understood.

Before I turn to other examples, I shall attempt a brief comparison of the orthography of these five textual witnesses, based on the five words which were singled out for the analysis of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. The results appearing in the following table have of course to be taken with caution since the corpus is somewhat heterogeneous in size, a manuscript with more than a third of the text (Or. 2165) being compared with fragments with a few folios.³¹

TABLE 1 *A comparative table of the orthography**

	Qāla		‘ibād		shay’		bi-āyāt		‘adhāb		‘adhāb ^{an}	
	Def.	Pl.	Def.	Pl.	<i>alif</i>	‘mod.’	3d	2d	Def.	Pl.	Def.	Pl.
ŞE 118	23	0	4	3	2	0	4	0	5	3	1	1
ŞE 13316	27	6	3	0	1	5	4	0	0	12	0	0
ŞE 3687	20	0	1	2	0	6	4	1	7	3	1	0
Or. 2165	211	4	19	3	29	16	27	6	27	52	5	3
Marcel 19	75	1	8	1	10	0	4	1	13	4	3	0

* Def. = defective; Pl. = *scriptio plena*; ‘mod.’ = ‘modern’ orthography; 3d = three denticles; 2d = two denticles

The evolution illustrated by the table above is far from homogeneous. As a whole, the rendering of *qāla* does not evolve dramatically. When looking more closely at the details, *qālū* seems however more frequently written in *scriptio plena* in Or. 2165 (15 percent of the occurrences) than in ŞE 118, another quarto copy. In the former manuscript, *shay’* is written without an *alif* in 36 percent of the cases, whereas conversely *‘adhāb* in *scriptio plena* is representing 66 percent of the occurrences, thus suggesting a slight tendency towards an “updated” orthography. Turning to the smaller copies, ŞE 13316 points to the

³¹ London, BL Or. 2165 actually contains more than a third of the text, but our study is based on the portion published as a facsimile.

same direction: the *scriptio plena* is more frequent in the case of *qāla*; ‘*adhāb* and *shay*’ are preferably written without *alif*. Both copies would therefore have to be dated slightly later than the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* or, to express things in a more cautious way, would reflect a more developed stage of Qur’anic orthography.

A mention should be made here of a manuscript in *ḥijāzī* script which has been the subject of much debate, the *Codex Ṣan‘ā’ I*, the famous palimpsest (fig. 12).³² In a recent paper, Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi recounted the media excitement which has been surrounding this manuscript since its existence was made public.³³ The parchment folios measuring ca. 36,5×28,5 cm were discovered in the roof of the Great mosque and forty folios have been found.³⁴ Most of them are kept in Sanaa, with the inventory number Inv. 01–27.1. I had myself the opportunity to look briefly at the folios kept in Sanaa a few years ago and I shall use some notes taken then in combination with the information published in the various papers which have been devoted to this fragment. A new development occurred in 2012 with the “discovery” of forty folios which had been kept in the Maktaba al-Sharqiyya of the Great mosque of Sanaa.³⁵ We are now dealing with eighty folios, that is to say a fragment nearing the size of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*.

32 B. Sadeghi and U. Bergmann suggested to call it *Ṣan‘ā’ I* (The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qur’ān of the Prophet, *Arabica* 57 [2010], p. 347; also in B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, *San‘a’ 1 and the origins of the Qur’ān*, *Der Islam* 87 [2010], pp. 10–11). However, since the manuscript is scattered among various collections, I shall use the various references in order to refer to a specific folio.

33 B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, *op. cit.*, pp. 31–36.

34 Elisabeth Puin considers that 38f. are outright part of Inv. 01–27.1 and that the folios in the David collection (Copenhagen) and in a private collection in the United States could eventually be part of the manuscript (E. Puin, Ein früherer Koranpalimpsest aus Ṣan‘ā’ (DAM 01–27.1)—Teil III: Ein nicht-‘uṭmānischer Koran, in *Die Entstehung einer Weltreligion I: Von der koranischen Bewegung zum Frühislam*, M. Groß and K.-H. Ohlig eds., Berlin, 2010, p. 248). B. Sadeghi and U. Bergmann give a total of thirty-six folios (*op. cit.*, p. 354; four folios auctioned between 1992 and 2008 and thirty-two in Sanaa). A description of the contents can be found in Puin (*op. cit.*, pp. 249–250) or in Sadeghi and Moudarzi (*op. cit.*, pp. 37–39).

35 These forty folios, which are slightly smaller than those of Inv. 01–27.1, have been the subject of a master thesis by Razān Ghassān Ḥamdūn submitted in 2004 (*al-Makhtūṭāt al-Qur’āniyya fī Ṣan‘ā’ mundhu al-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī*). However, the relationship between this portion and the *Codex Ṣan‘ā’ I* was discovered only in 2012 (see the website Islamic Awareness: <http://www.islamicawareness.org/Quran/Text/Mss/soth.html>). Ms. Ḥamdūn provides a transcription of the *scriptio superior* indicating the orthographical variants.

A first text, the *scriptio inferior*, has been erased and the parchment used again for the transcription of a second text. Both are decidedly Qur'anic, although the first one exhibits some peculiarities in the sequence of the suras as well as in the text itself to which I shall return. The second one is a canonical copy, with a few orthographic specificities. In an auction house catalogue, a folio has been described as part of a pre-ʿUthmanic *muṣḥaf* on the assumption that the second text was also in ḥijāzī script, from the first/seventh century, which meant that the first one should have been written before ca. 50AH.³⁶ A C14 dating has been performed on a parchment sample taken from a folio now in a private collection in the United States: it concluded with 95 percent possibility that the parchment was produced between 578 and 669AD and with 68 percent possibility that it belongs to a period between 614 and 656AD.³⁷

The parchment used for the *Codex Ṣan'ā'* I seems to have been of a lower quality than that of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* or London, BL Or. 2165. Actually, some of its folios exhibit wounds and in one instance the upper corner of a folio was lacking from the beginning—which means that the copyist used a damaged piece of parchment.³⁸ When the manuscript was rebound after completion of the upper level of text, the folios were slightly trimmed, but it does not seem that the margins of the original codex were significantly broader than those of other ḥijāzī copies of the earliest period. The text is very irregularly transcribed, with some folios having as little as the equivalent of 18,5 lines of the Cairo edition, on f. Stanford recto for instance, while up to 37 lines of this edition have been transcribed on f. SG 15A.³⁹ This makes the estimate of the original size of the manuscript tentative—the more so because the size of the text as a whole may have been at variance with that of the ʿUthmanic *rasm*; however, its production may have required slightly more than 20 square meters, in other words more than the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*.

36 Sotheby's, sale of 22–23 October 1992, lot 551.

37 B. Sadeghi and U. Bergmann, op. cit., p. 348. The folio was sold in 1993 by Sotheby's (sale of 22 October 1993, lot 31).

38 E. Puin, op. cit., p. 240 and fig.; B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 57, n. 170 and 173 (f. SG 6b).

39 We refer to the folio number according to the edition of the *scriptio inferior* by Sadeghi and Goudarzi (B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., pp. 41–115). When a folio also appears on Puin's list (E. Puin, op. cit., pp. 249–250), with her own numbering, we give the two references, e.g. f. SG 2a/P 2a.

The upper level will not detain me: it could be dated to the second/eighth century as suggested by the orthography of *ʿalā* with final *alif* instead of *alif maqṣūra*,⁴⁰ or by the script itself, which has been repeatedly characterised as *ḥijāzī*, although it exhibits some letter shapes which can be related to the C group—with a somewhat ungainly appearance.⁴¹

The *scriptio inferior*, that is to say the text which is chronologically the first one written on the parchment, is difficult to observe as the letters are erased and partly covered by the second text. The number of lines to the page varies from 25 to 30 on folios which are slightly larger than the quarto copies seen so far. The script is somewhat irregular, with the lines sometimes straying away from the horizontal and some variable letter shapes—for instance a *hāʾ* with a straight back, sometimes bending to the left, emerging from an almost semi-circular belly which slightly straddles the base line, found next to a heart-shaped *hāʾ*, with its point on the line to the left and its lower part below the line. Final *mīm* is sometimes close to a perfectly rounded shape, with only a tiny sting protruding to the left, sometimes exhibiting a flat tail—a feature, which recalls that of Hand D of the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* (fig. 4). The final *kāf* is close to the shape found in that manuscript, but with a shorter lower horizontal stroke. Diacritical dots are not very numerous. Sadeghi and Bergmann noted one instance of dotting which might be for a short vowel.⁴² The script of the *scriptio inferior* does not seem to be the work of a skilled professional and includes elements which could be dated to the second half of the first/seventh century.

The suras are not separated by a blank line, but by a crude ornament which is contemporaneous with the script itself:⁴³ as in the smaller copies, it either fills the end of the last line, or, when the beginning of the line is only occupied by a few letters, it covers part of the remaining space and is followed by the beginning of the *basmala* written at the end of the same line (fig. 12). Elisabeth Puin was able to observe that a final formula with the title of the preceding

40 Sadeghi and Bergmann note that there is a difference in this respect between the two layers (B. Sadeghi and U. Bergmann, op. cit., p. 356). In the folios studied by Ms. Ḥamdūn, two hands are present, one writing *ʿalā* with *alif maqṣūra* (see R. Gh. Ḥamdūn, op. cit., pl. 27, l. 2 and 20), the other preferring instead the orthography with *alif mamdūda* (*passim*, for instance pl. 43, l. 3 and 11).

41 See the typology in F. Déroche, op. cit. (1983), pp. 39–41, pl. XII–XV; id., *The Abbasid tradition, Qurʾans of the 8th to the 10th centuries* [The Nasser D. Khalili collection of Islamic art, I], London, 1992, pp. 40–41; A. George, op. cit., pp. 152–153.

42 B. Sadeghi and U. Bergmann, op. cit., p. 359.

43 E. Puin, op. cit., p. 246; B. Sadeghi and U. Bergmann, op. cit., p. 348.

sura was found in some cases.⁴⁴ Verse endings are visible in some places, and Sadeghi and Goudarzi noticed a special shape for the hundredth and two-hundredth verses of sura 2.⁴⁵ They consist of dots arranged in various ways, which might imply another case of team-work: single or double columns as well as triangle disposition have been observed on the folios. In some places at least, the *basmala* is marked as a verse.⁴⁶

The Qur'anic text is transcribed in *scriptio defectiva*, although here and there cases of *scriptio plena* appear: *kāna/kānū* is systematically written according to the latter (see for instance on Inv. 01–27.1, f. SG 9a/P 7a and SG 23b/P 19b, *passim*),⁴⁷ while *qālū* appears sometimes with the medial *alif* as on Inv. 01–27.1, f. SG 2a/P 2a, l. 5 et 14 (2:88 and 91, but perhaps defectively on l. 21, 2:93), f. SG 15b (l. 12 and 16) and f. SG 20a/P 16a, l. 10 (twice in 9:74). I have also found instances of *'adhāb* in *scriptio plena* on Inv. 01–27.1, f. SG 2a/P 2a, l. 13 (2:90), f. SG 2b/P 2b, l. 1 (2: 96) and perhaps l. 25 (2:104), f. SG 18b/P 14b, l. 12 (but next to it *'adh(ā)bī* is written defectively in 15:50) and f. SG 20a/P 16a, l. 22 (9:79).

For many years, the nature and extent of the textual variants of the *Codex Šan'ā' I* have been the subject of speculations based on rumours and although various attempts have been made during the last decade to publish either parts of the *scriptio inferior*⁴⁸ or its entirety,⁴⁹ a scientific edition based on good

44 Ibid.; also in B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., transcription of Inv. 01–27.1, f. 5a, l. 8; 22a, l. 22–23; 26b, l. 14; Christie's 2008, v^o, l. 19 and r^o, l. 3 and 23.

45 B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 43 and n. 98, and p. 46 and n. 114. This feature may be indicative of a more recent date.

46 A verse ending is indicated after the *basmala* of s. 63 (f. Christie's 2008, l. 1), but not after that of s. 19 (Inv. 01–27.1, f. 22a, l. 24). The beginning of s. 9 (Inv. 01–27.1, f. 5a, l. 8) is a special case; the *basmala* with a verse ending is followed by the comment: *lā taqul bi-smi Allāhi* (B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 53 and n. 157).

47 As mentioned above, reference is made to the two numberings of the *Codex Šan'ā' I*, first that of Sadeghi and Goudarzi with their initials (SG) followed by the folio number, then that of Puin (P) according to the same principle.

48 E. Puin, Ein früher Koranpalimpsest aus Šan'ā' (DAM 01–27.1), in *Schlaglichter: Die beiden ersten islamischen Jahrhunderte*, M. Groß and K.-H. Ohlig eds., Berlin, 2008, pp. 461–493; id., Ein früher Koranpalimpsest aus Šan'ā' (DAM 01–27.1)—Teil II, in *Vom Koran zum Islam*, M. Groß and K.-H. Ohlig eds., Berlin, 2009, pp. 523–581; id., op. cit., pp. 233–305; A. Fedeli, Early Evidences of Variant Readings in Qur'anic Manuscripts, in *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam*, K.-H. Ohlig and G.-R. Puin, Berlin, 2007, pp. 298–316.

49 B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., pp. 41–115. A transcription is currently being prepared by Hediye Gurtmann in the frame of the French-German project *Coranica*.

photographs is still lacking.⁵⁰ For this reason, I shall limit myself to a few general remarks on this matter. At the more general level of variation, the order of the suras differs from the standard text: s. 8 comes after s. 11, s. 19 after s. 9, s. 18 after s. 12, s. 25 after s. 15, s. 13 after s. 34, s. 62 after s. 63 and s. 89 after s. 62.⁵¹ As noted by Sadeghi and Goudarzi, there is a broad agreement with Ubayy's codex ... Other Qur'anic manuscripts found in Sanaa similarly reveal a different sequence of the suras.⁵²

The defective orthography has been mentioned above and its peculiarities should be analysed in detail, but it does not seem very different from the situation prevailing in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. When it comes to the text itself, the variants cover a wide range of situations which Puin tried to sum up in her presentation.⁵³ As for the other manuscripts, the possibility of scribal errors cannot be discarded, but this explanation may only be valid for a limited number of cases. Close to a scribal mistake are the transpositions which imply moving an element from one place to another within the same verse. A variety of synonyms is found in the *Codex Şan'ā' I*, ranging from a copula to a group of words.⁵⁴ The former case can be compared to a situation encountered in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* for instance.⁵⁵ Synonyms are also known in the Islamic tradition to have been used during the early period by those who recited the Qur'an according to the meaning.⁵⁶

The influence of the other variants on the meaning itself varies greatly. Puin notes for instance an interesting case in Inv. 01–27.1, f. SG 11b/P 9b, l. 16–17 where the stereotyped final formula of 24:35 is completely different from that found in the 'Uthmanic version, without altering the meaning of the rest of the verse.⁵⁷ Things may be different when the changes concern the verbal forms or the person(s) involved (verbs or pronouns).⁵⁸ The same applies to the

50 The recent "discovery" of forty additional folios (which have been the subject of Razan Ghassan Hamdoun's master thesis) should also be taken into account.

51 B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 25, Table 2.

52 G. Puin, Observations on early Qur'an manuscripts in San'a', in *The Qur'an as text*, S. Wild ed., Leiden-New York-Köln, 1996, p. 109.

53 E. Puin, op. cit. (2010), pp. 262–275 offers a synthesis of the various situations she identified.

54 Ibid., p. 264 for instance.

55 F. Déroche, op. cit. (2009), pp. 106–107.

56 G. Schoeler, *The genesis of literature in Islam. From the aural to the read*, Revised edition, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 33.

57 E. Puin, op. cit. (2010), p. 263. This should be compared with the "short verses" found in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, although in this case there is no difference with the canonical version of the Qur'an (see ch. 1).

58 E. Puin, op. cit. (2010), p. 267.

various omissions and additions, which can be found in the *Codex Ṣan'ā' I*. A comparison of the latter with the 'Uthmanic version shows for instance that some textual elements are missing. In various instances, a single word is lacking but in sura 9 verse 85 was left out in its entirety (Inv. 01–27.1, f. SG 20b/P 16b).⁵⁹ Conversely, the *Codex Ṣan'ā' I* also contains additional material, from articles to words or groups of words which, in some cases, help making the sense of the verse more explicit. This is especially clear in verse 24:10: the apodosis which is missing in the 'Uthmanic version appears in Inv. 01–27.1, f. SG 10a/P 8r, l. 20–21.⁶⁰

In a paper devoted to two folios from the *Codex Ṣan'ā' I*, Alba Fedeli noted a coincidence with the reading of Ibn Mas'ūd.⁶¹ In her last study of Inv. 01–27.1, Puin underlined on the other hand that the text sometimes agreed with Ibn Mas'ūd or Ubayy readings, but sometimes took another stand. She concluded that it is “another Qur'an” (“ein ‘anderer Koran’”).⁶² Sadeghi and Goudarzi reached the same conclusion: “the lower writing of Ṣan'ā' I clearly falls outside the standard text type. It belongs to a different text type, which we call C-I.”⁶³

The variants found in this copy prompted wild speculations about its date. The assumption that the upper layer of script (*scriptio superior*) was added shortly after the completion of the lower level led to an attribution of the first text transcription to an early date in the first/seventh century. As Puin wrote, the two layers of script “liegen ... zeitlich eng beisammen; beide sind in demselben ... Duktus geschrieben, der im 1. Jahrhundert der Higraph ... in Gebrauch war.”⁶⁴ The C14 dating was another strong argument in the same direction.

Fedeli concluded cautiously that

the non-standard *lectio* found in the palimpsest is not to be considered as proof of the pre-'Uthmānic (*sic*) period, because it was just in the fourth century that Abū Bakr b. Muḡāhid (*sic*) ... accepted only the readings based on a fairly uniform consonantal text.⁶⁵

59 Ibid., p. 269 and 299. See B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 23 and 61, n. 203, who suggest a “saut du même au même.”

60 E. Puin, op. cit. (2010), p. 273.

61 A. Fedeli, op. cit., p. 305 and 315.

62 E. Puin, op. cit. (2010), p. 235.

63 B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 17.

64 E. Puin, op. cit. (2010), p. 233.

65 A. Fedeli, op. cit., p. 315 (wrongly understood by Sadeghi and Bergmann, op. cit., p. 363, n. 31).

Sadeghi and Goudarzi rightly stressed that the question of the date of the manuscript should not be confused with that of the text itself.⁶⁶ As I suggested previously, some features of the *scriptio superior* are more in tune with second/eighth century copies and should therefore not compel us to “age” the *Codex Šan‘ā’ I*. A few cases of *scriptio plena* in the earliest level of text, although insufficient to be taken as a support for a later date, suggest that it was written while the enhancement of the Qur’anic orthography was under way. The presence of sura titles and of decorative devices between the suras point to a later date in the first/seventh century, since those elements were not found originally in copies like the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, but were added later.⁶⁷ If Sadeghi and Bergmann’s finding about short vowel marks is correct, it could become an additional argument for a late date for the original codex. The C14 dating has nevertheless weighed heavily in the attribution of the original codex, corresponding to the *scriptio inferior*, to an early period. However, I have suggested in the introduction that these results have to be considered carefully. Other analysis of the parchment performed on samples taken from two folios of Inv. 01–27.1 (f. 2 and 8) gave respectively a date between 543 and 643AD and between 433 and 599AD, with 95 percent possibility.⁶⁸ I would therefore suggest on the basis of the various points I enumerated that the *Codex Šan‘ā’ I* was written during the second half of the first/seventh century and erased at the earliest by the middle of the following century.

The *scriptio inferior* of the *Codex Šan‘ā’ I* has been transcribed in a milieu which adhered to a text of the Qur’an different from the ‘Uthmanic tradition as well as from the Qur’anic codices of Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ubayy. The very gauche and irregular script should not hide the fact that the person(s) who

66 B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 18.

67 According to a source going back to the second/eighth century, the copy transcribed by Mālik b. Abi ‘Āmir al-Asbahī (d. 74/693) had ornamental bands in black ink as sura dividers (M. Cook, A Koranic codex inherited by Malik from his grandfather, in *Proceedings of the Sixth International congress on Graeco-Oriental and African studies*, V. Christides and Th. Papadopoulos eds., *Graeco-Arabica* 7–8 [1999–2000], p. 95; also M.M. al-Azami, *The history of the Qur’anic text from revelation to compilation. A comparative study with the Old and New Testaments*, Leicester, 2003, p. 100 and 170–172). The use of ornaments as sura dividers may actually go back to the reign of ‘Uthmān, when Mālik’s grandfather transcribed his copy, according to Mālik himself. On the other hand, there is a tradition of leaving a blank line, which seems dominant, and the ornamental bands may have been added at a later date to Mālik’s copy.

68 Personal communication of Ch. Robin. Folio numbers according to the table in Puin (op. cit., p. 249).

wanted this specific version of the Qur'anic text spent probably as much money on the parchment as the patrons behind such copies as the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*—although it was of lesser quality. However, in spite of its size, its layout has more to do with the group of smaller Qur'anic codices which may have been produced for individuals than with the larger manuscripts like the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* we suggested to have been officially supported. The way in which the suras are separated points in the same direction.

The fact that the manuscript is a palimpsest should also be examined in a history of the book perspective. It is actually an almost unique case in the Islamic manuscript tradition. Another purported example of Qur'anic palimpsest turned to be a correction⁶⁹ and all the other cases of Arabic palimpsests, including the Cambridge palimpsest (Or. 1287.13),⁷⁰ belong to the Christian Arabic tradition. If “recycling parchment in this manner was not uncommon” in the Western tradition,⁷¹ this was apparently not the case in the Islamic world. Although other Qur'anic palimpsests are said to be preserved among the parchments found in the Great mosque of Sanaa,⁷² this procedure seems quite exceptional and should be seen as a significant element in the history of the *Codex Ṣan'ā' I* in its radical implementation—quite different from the situation of the Cambridge palimpsest. According to my direct knowledge of three large collections of early Qur'anic copies, those of Damascus, Fustat and Kairouan, there is no parallel to the situation found in Sanaa. Sadeghi and Goudarzi suggest various explanations for the recycling of the manuscript. The first one relies on the hypothesis that the manuscript was worn out, but, judging from the folios which have come down to us, the state of the parchment is quite satisfactory. Of course, parts of it (one thinks of the beginning or the end) may have been more damaged, either as a result of intensive use or by accident. But this would not

69 Vienna, ÖNB, fragment A. Perg. 2; see H. Loebenstein, op. cit., p. vol. 1, pp. 23–26, no 1 and vol. 2, pl. 1–2; A. Fedeli, A. Perg. 2: A Non Palimpsest and the Corrections in Qur'anic Manuscripts, *Manuscripta Orientalia* 11.1 (2005), pp. 20–27.

70 A.S. Lewis and A. Mingana, *Leaves from three ancient Qur'āns, possibly pre-'Othmānic*, Cambridge, 1914. See also A. Fedeli (Early Evidences of Variant Readings in Qur'anic Manuscripts, in *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam*, K.-H. Ohlig and G.-R. Puin, Berlin, 2007, pp. 293–296, about the history of the palimpsest) and A. George (Le palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, témoin ancien de l'histoire du Coran, *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Comptes rendus des séances de l'année 2011* [2012], sous presse).

71 B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 9.

72 Ibid., p. 6, n. 9; the authors quote Ursula Dreiholz who informed them that the collection included “several other palimpsests ... all relatively late.”

entail the erasure of the entire manuscript. Actually, we do have examples of old Qur'anic copies completed by replacements (sometimes in paper) of worn out or lost folios. Erasing the text was an exceptional procedure which has to be taken as such. In the case of (possibly) non-'Uthmanic textual witnesses of the Qur'an, the Muslim tradition knows actually another procedure: 'Uthmān himself is reported to have ordered the destruction of earlier Qur'anic codices.⁷³ The *Codex Šan'ā'* I illustrates the weight of the economy vs. the ideological perspective: during the second/eighth century, its owner(s) may have decided to recycle the parchment and have a copy conforming with the mainstream text rather than destroying a costly material. It is perfectly natural on the other hand that the parchment with an erased Qur'anic text could have been used for a copy of the Qur'an.

Leaving aside the *Codex Šan'ā'* I which has not yet been properly described from a codicological point of view, the *ḥijāzī muṣḥafs* which have been discussed above as well as the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* share a few material features as far as their script and their lay out is concerned. However, when going through the evidence on the basis of the definition of the *ḥijāzī* style of script, other fragments provide a more complex picture of this stage of Qur'anic manuscript production.

A fragment from the 'Amr mosque in Fustat provides us with a first example (Saint Petersburg, NLR Marcel 18/2; fig. 13).⁷⁴ This copy of the Qur'an in vertical format (33×25 cm), written on parchment in a variety of *ḥijāzī*, reminds us strongly at first glance of the usual features found in the previous examples. The 23 to 26 lines to the page have been prepared by a ruling with a lead pencil. The divisions into verses are usually marked out by triangular clusters of six dots and the groups of ten by a circular device in red, surrounded by dots; the latter seems to have been added. At the end of a sura, the verse end mark is expanded into a larger triangular cluster, with seven dots on each side. The *basmala* is indicated as a verse in most of the cases. A line has been left blank between the suras; a later hand has added the title and the number of verses in red, preceded by "*fātiḥa*". The orthography is mostly in keeping with the *scriptio defectiva*—*qāla* was originally written without the *alif* on Marcel 18, f. 30b, l. 2, 4, 6, 17 and 20, but with *alif* on l. 13, as is also the case for *qālat* (l. 8–9 and

73 See for instance V. Comerro, *Les traditions sur la constitution du muṣḥaf de 'Uthman*, Beirut, 2012, pp. 86–88.

74 20 f. are in Saint Petersburg (25: 72–32: 16). 2 f. are in Paris, BnF Arabe 328d (F. Déroche, op. cit. (1983), p. 67, no 14, with 42: 6–43: 17).

13–14) and *qālū* (l. 19 and 22). On the other hand, a few elements of the lay out suggest that a change has taken place. The script in particular distinguishes itself from that of the manuscripts seen so far: the *alif* bending to the right has a far more conspicuous lower hook—although its size varies notably—and the final or isolated *kāf* contrasts with the shape of the letter found previously: its horizontal strokes have almost the same length, the lower one stopping at the level of the vertical shaft. In the typology of the early Qur'anic scripts, it can be defined as B Ia.⁷⁵ Interestingly enough, there are real margins on the three outer sides of the page and the copyist draws a short horizontal stroke at the end of the lines when he fails to reach the left hand edge of the justification with the text (on l. 3, 7 and 10).

Another fragment, slightly bigger than the previous one (39,8×27,9 cm, 27 lines to the page), was formerly kept in the deposit of old manuscripts in the Great mosque in Damascus (Istanbul, TIEM ŞE 56).⁷⁶ Here again, the script squares with al-Nadīm's description of the *ḥijāzī* style, notably the bending to the right of the shafts. On the other hand, some of its features are not consistent with those of the first group of manuscripts and can also be defined as B Ia. The *alif*, as in the previous example, has a larger lower hook and the two horizontal and parallel strokes of the final or isolated *kāf* have the same length. As for the final *mūm*, it terminates with a horizontal tail and the medial *hā'* looks like a half circle straddling the line. The verses are separated by clusters of dots and a very simple device drawn with ink has been inserted between the two suras. There is not much evidence for the orthography: we can note the old orthography of *shay'* written with an *alif* after the *shīn*. As in the previous example, margins surround the justification and a line end filling device is found on l. 3. After the last word of sura 28, a wavy line drawn with the same ink as the text fills the rest of the space and reaches the outer margin. The latter is less conspicuous as in the former instance.

A third example is a large folio (50×36 cm) with 31 to 32 lines to the page from the Sanaa trove which was exhibited in Kuwait (Inv. 00–30.1).⁷⁷ For the author of the catalogue, there is no doubt that the fragment is “late *ḥijāzī*”. The

75 F. Déroche, op. cit. (1983), p. 37 and pl. IX. The inscription of Mecca dated 80/700 exhibits palaeographical features related to this group, although here with vertical shafts (see S. al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmīyya min Makka al-Mukarrama. Dirāsa wa-taḥqīq*, Riyadh, 1416/1995, pp. 26–29 and fig. 66; reproduced in M.M. al-Azami, op. cit., fig. 9.13, and A. George, op. cit., fig. 14).

76 Reproduced in A.S. Demirkol et al., op. cit., p. 146.

77 *Maṣāḥif San'a'*, Kuwait, 1985, p. 53, no 24.

description provides little detail about the fragment and the information I have derives mainly from the picture. Once again, features of the *ḥijāzī* style appear quite clearly, with the *alif* slightly slanting to the right, but with a lower hook which closely resembles the former example. The same applies to the final *mīm* or to the medial *hāʾ*, whereas both shapes of final *kāf* are present. As for the orthography, the *scriptio plena* is used for *qālū* (l. 27), but *ʿadhāb* (l. 2 and 17) is written without *alif*—it was later corrected. *Shayʾ* and *bi-āyāt* are written with “modern” orthography. The margins which surround the justification on the three outer sides are important and the left hand extremity of various lines is occupied by a filling device. The size of the folios indicates that the manuscript was a folio volume, but the amount of text to the page suggests that it had only about 150 folios.

The conception of the page reflected by these examples is clearly different from that of the first examples of this chapter. Greater attention was paid to the overall presentation—as indicated by the wider margins or the devices used in order to get a neater vertical left side of justification. The format remained unchanged, which is not the case of another group of copies which are transcribed on oblong codices.

It is widely thought that the oblong format was introduced at a later date, for reasons which are disputed and do not need to detain us here. However, a few fragments on this format have an air of antiquity about them and could be dated to the first/seventh century. The proportions vary and in some cases the width of the volume was quite important and contrasted with its height (fig. 14).⁷⁸ Two of them were once in the deposit of the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. The first one (Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 9052) is a small copy (9×15,7 cm) written on parchment, sharing many features with the first group of *ḥijāzī* Qurʾanic copies (fig. 15). The script has a distinct *ḥijāzī* appearance with the *alif* slanting to the right and the specific shape of the final *kāf* (l. 4). There is a fair amount of diacritical marks—the *qāf* being recognisable by the dot set below the head of the letter. As a whole, the chirodictic presentation which can be found in *Allāh* or in the ductus of the medial *ʿayn* remind us of Hand B in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*. The verses are separated by groups of four dots. The orthography is an example of *scriptio defectiva*, with omission of the *alif* in *mutajānif* (l. 3), *al-jawāriḥ* (l. 5), then *taʿām* (l. 10 and 11). I shall lastly mention the almost complete lack of margins. On the other hand, the 11 lines to the page imply that the complete copy was probably a multivolume set since

78 Istanbul, TIEM ŞE 3702 can be compared to Sanaa, Inv. 00–18.3 (ibid., p. 54, no. 23).

a single volume would have had too many folios. If this was the case, it would contrast with what has been observed previously.

The second example, also from Damascus (Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 12827/1), is even more puzzling (fig. 16). The copy is written on larger oblong parchment folios (15,3×21 cm) which are entirely covered with the script, without any margins. The first line was actually so close to the upper edge of the folio that the copyist had to write *al-kitāb* at the beginning of l. 2 because the space left at the end of l. 1, although sufficient to accommodate the word horizontally, was not high enough for its shafts. The main features of the ḥijāzī script—the *alif* slanting to the right or the final *kāf* on l. 3—are present and the diacriticals are few. The division into verses is systematically indicated. The orthography seems quite archaic. Examples of *scriptio defectiva* abound, with the omission of the *alif* in noting the long /ā/, and are similar to those found in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*: *li-l-abrār* (l. 1), *wa-ṣābirū wa-rābiṭū* (l. 5), or in s. 4 *riḡālan* (l. 9) and *wa-l-arḡām* (l. 10). On l. 3, the three denticles orthography of *bi-āyāt* has been used by the copyist. The transition from s. 3 to s. 4 is very peculiar. On l. 6, the last two words of s. 3 are followed by a crude ornament which occupies part of the space left; the end of the line is filled up by the beginning of the *basmala* until the first letter of *raḡīm*. The rest of the word is found at the beginning of next line. It is separated from the first verse of s. 4 by the title: *hadhihi sūrat al-nisā'*. It is so closely combined with the text itself that we can exclude a later addition, but it seems a rather “modern” feature when compared with the Qur'anic copies examined so far, with the exception of the *Codex Ṣan'ā' I*. It is one of the earliest examples of sura titles included from the beginning in the copy.

As was the case for the copies in vertical format, there are also oblong format codices in ḥijāzī style which exhibit characteristics suggesting a later date in the Umayyad period. I shall adduce three examples to illustrate this point. The first one is kept in Kairouan and has been recently exhibited (fig. 17).⁷⁹ It contains 86 parchment folios of 17,5×28,5 cm, with 12 lines of text to the page (13,8×25,2 cm). In contrast to the two previous fragments, the justification left some space on its three outer sides in order to have a small margin. The *alif* slanting to the right and the final *kāf* with a lower horizontal extension (which is however shorter than in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*) are clearly related to the ḥijāzī style of script, but the overall appearance is more regular. Actually,

79 Kairouan, Musée des arts islamiques, R 119; see *Lumières de Kairouan*, Tunis, 2009, p. 34. The contents of the volume are not available.

the ruling is more sophisticated than the simple outline found in other copies discussed previously; here a complete grid has been drawn on each folio, which explains that the number of lines to the page remains stable. The diacritics are scant, but many short vowels are marked—although this may be an addition. The verse divisions are systematically indicated and the *basmala* is punctuated as a verse.

The orthography does not differ much from that of older copies: *bi-āyāt* is still written with the three denticles as in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* and an *alif* is still found in *shay*. The *scriptio defectiva* of *‘adhāb* would point to a rather conservative orthography, but *qāla* and *qālū* appear to be frequently in *scriptio plena*.

The thirty-nine folios of the second fragment were in the ‘Amr mosque in Fustat before they reached European collections (fig. 18).⁸⁰ In terms of its size, this copy is close to Kairouan, Musée des arts islamiques, R 119 (18 × 28,5 cm). Its original number of folios can be estimated at ca. 350, corresponding to ca. 18 square meters of parchment. As in R 119, a grid has been drawn with a dry point on the parchment. In the quires, the hair sides of the parchment face the hair sides (and conversely flesh sides face flesh sides). The 12 lines of script to the page are carefully written by a professional hand who sometimes does not hesitate to end a letter like final *qāf* or *yā*’ on the last line of text by a flourish or an extension into the lower margin—like in Paris, BnF Arabe 326, f. 5b for instance. In this manuscript, the two horizontal strokes of the final *kāf* are of equal length—the lower one may in some cases be slightly extended. A small margin has been left on the three outer sides of the leaves. The space between the top of the ascenders and the line above tends to be more important than in previous examples.

The orthography is complex, with variations between the *scriptio defectiva* and *plena*. As a rule, *qāla* seems to be consistently written without *alif* (see for instance at 10: 28, 71 or 77), but *qālū* appears sometimes with its defective orthography (e.g. 10: 68 and 76), sometimes in *scriptio plena* (e.g. 8: 21, 31, 32).

80 Saint Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 9 (32f.); Paris, BnF, Arabe 326 a (six folios); London, The Nasser D. Khalili collection of Islamic art, KFQ 34 (one folio). To these folios can be added the thirty-six folios which were sold in Rennes (Cabinet d’expertise M.C. David, *Collection d’un Antiquaire de la première moitié du XXe siècle*, Rennes Enchères, 19 September 2011, lot no 152). See F. Déroche, op. cit. (1983), p. 59, no 1; id., op. cit. (1992), p. 32 and fig. p. 31; A. George, op. cit., p. 92 and fig. 62. The Parisian folios of the manuscript can be accessed on the Gallica website of the BnF (gallica.bnf.fr). An edition is currently prepared by Eléonore Cellard in the frame of the French-German project *Coranica*.

The same applies to *ʿadhāb*—written defectively at 8: 50 or 9: 39 and 115, but with the *alif* at 8: 14, 32, or 10: 52, 54 or 70—or *bi-āyāt*, with the “three denticles” orthography at 8: 41 (twice), 9: 9 or 10: 17, but with an *alif* after the *yāʾ* at 10: 71, 73 and 75.⁸¹ On Saint Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 9, f. 6a, *shayʾ* is written first with its “modern” orthography (8: 72), then with the *alif* (8: 75); elsewhere in the fragment, both old and new versions are found (9: 32 and 115, for instance, against 8: 14 or 32). At 9: 129, the old orthography of *ilāh* with a *yāʾ* indicating the /ā/ has been corrected by an erasure of the denticle. Verbs like *raʾa* in the third person plural of the past tense are still written without the *alif al-wiqāyah* (e.g. 10: 54 or 8: 72), whereas *dhū* keeps its final *alif* (10: 60 or 57: 21).

Two canonical variant readings are found in this fragment: the first one, at 9: 107, is in accordance with the Medina and Damascus tradition, but the fragment does not follow the specific Damascan reading at 10: 22, which would suggest that the text was in keeping with the Medina codex. However, peculiarities in the verse division should be noted. Interestingly enough, this fragment knows the “short” verse in 9: 115, like the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, although it fails to indicate another one in 10: 10.⁸² The *basmala* is marked as a verse. The last word of a sura is sometimes followed by a series of groups of dots, contemporaneous with the copy.

The third example takes us back to Kairouan where two folios of the manuscript have been preserved.⁸³ Their size (17,3 × 28,6 cm) and the number of lines to the page (12; writing surface: 14,1 × 23,8 cm) are similar to the two previous copies. Similarly, there is a small margin on the three outer sides of the leaves and the space between the top of the ascenders and the line above is still more important than in Saint Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 9—actually the size of the script is quite reduced.

As we have seen, the copies of the Qurʾan written in the *ḥijāzī* style of script exhibit a diversity of situations. In addition to the idiosyncratic appearance of the script itself in the various copies, the lay out and the orthography reflect various orientations. We therefore have to distinguish between a few groups of manuscripts, corresponding to different stages of the transmission of the Qurʾanic text. Copies like the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* exemplify a first step (not necessarily the oldest one, since they include details which show

81 Note also *ʿibād*: 9: 104, written defectively.

82 It contains another “short verse” in 10: 4 (Saint Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 9, f. 18a). It should be noted that the division into verses is idiosyncratic and requires a thorough study.

83 Kairouan, Musée des arts islamiques, P 511. Information kindly provided by Dr. M. Ram-mah.

that they result from the transcription of an older original). Other manuscripts reflect a more sophisticated level of lay out and orthography: this is the case of the vertical copies with large margins and line end filling devices. The oblong format manuscripts are more difficult to date: some of them may be dated to the first/seventh century, like Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 9052, but the group of three 12-lines-to-the-page copies may be later (first half of the second/eighth century). Writing about the second one, Alain George concludes that it “suggests a conscious reference to the Hijazi past and the oldest written form of the Qur’an.”⁸⁴

The description of the *ḥijāzī* style of script provided by al-Nadīm,⁸⁵ short and tantalising as it may be has been the criterion for the selection of the various manuscripts discussed here. The clues it offers coincide fairly well with most of the examples. Or. 2165 or Marcel 19 would be for instance among the few instances of *alif* devoid of the lower hook mentioned by al-Nadīm.⁸⁶ On the other hand, this description seems to have the status of lowest common denominator when we put the various manuscripts or fragments side by side and start to figure out how a more precise definition could be reached. The variable ability of the copyists, ranging from professional to unskilful, tends to complicate matters, so that the diversity of the general appearance of the page and of the individual letters actually makes such an attempt overambitious. It seems therefore more prudent to speak of *ḥijāzī* style rather than *ḥijāzī* script—in the same way as will be the case with later scripts of Abbasid times. This heterogeneity reflects a moment of the history of Islam when the importance of a control over the script had not yet been perceived—or only imperfectly—by those who held power. At the beginning, the *ḥijāzī* style still reflects individual use and is at the same time very closely related to the documentary script found on the papyri, for instance. I can only quote again the words of the papyrologist Adolf Grohmann, who wrote that “it [was] quite important to state that this style of writing (= *ḥijāzī*) is ... a secular script.”⁸⁷ The *ḥijāzī* style predates the emergence of the concept of Qur’anic script, that is to say scripts exclusively used for the transcription of the Qur’an. Every single copyist has his own version of the style, although some basic features are common to all of them. In addition to the *alif* and the vertical lengthening of the strokes described by al-Nadīm, I would suggest to include the shape of the

84 A. George, op. cit., p. 92.

85 See Introduction.

86 This explains why J. von Karabacek (op. cit., p. 324) suggested to identify this script with the *mā’il* he found in Flügel’s edition of the *Fihrist*.

87 A. Grohmann, The problem of dating early Qur’āns, *Der Islam* 33 (1958), pp. 221–222.

final or isolated *kāf* with its hairpin-like body with the horizontal lower stroke on the base line extending towards the left, beyond the point whence the upper horizontal stroke makes a sharp turn upwards.⁸⁸ The preceding remarks should however be qualified: a few manuscripts do not fit this description. First, a group of copies is characterised by a final or isolated *kāf* with its two horizontal strokes of equal length. How should we understand this situation? Is this shape of *kāf* typical of a region or is it a chronological marker? Second, a few examples of the B Ia style are found among them: their situation contradicts to some extent what has been said of the variability of the *ḥijāzī* style since a graphic repertoire is repeated by various copyists. In this case again, the same questions arise. I shall turn back to them below.

According to the meagre information we have at hand, all the copies discussed here seem to be one volume *muṣḥaf*—with the possible exception of some of the oblong manuscripts. In spite of the fragmentary state of the evidence, with no complete copy of the Qur'an preserved, multivolume sets—from two to thirty or sixty—seem to have been the exception at that time. In the case of the London manuscript Or. 2165, a division into sevenths has been added by a later hand but the copy is obviously unitary and in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* various places where one might expect a division into volumes point into the same direction. The situation is more difficult to assess when only a small fraction of the manuscript has come down to us, but the number of lines to the page may be taken as an indication of the unitary character of the copies.

Although the following remark should be taken with care in view of the provisional state of our knowledge of the material, it seems that a comparatively large amount of fair size copies, very often quarto volumes, has been preserved, a fact which might be related to the concern expressed in various early accounts that Qur'anic manuscripts should be large. In at least one case, Sanaa, DaM Inv. 00–30.1, the volume was a folio copy of the text.⁸⁹

There is unanimity among the manuscripts in the choice of the single column of text. In the Near Eastern manuscript traditions of that period, variations on that point can be observed. The Syriac manuscripts, for instance, know both

88 See F. Déroche, op. cit. (1999).

89 *Maṣāḥif Ṣan'ā'*, op. cit., p. 53, no 24. Another folio volume is Paris, BnF Arabe 331 (41,3 × 34,8 cm, with 19 lines of text to the page), written in B Ia script. It was thicker than the Sanaa manuscript, with probably ca. 300 folios (see F. Déroche, op. cit. [1983], p. 67 and pl. IX). The margins are smaller than in Sanaa, DaM Inv. 00–30.1 and the use of line end fillers is limited. The *scriptio plena* dominates.

the single column and the two-column disposition for the text.⁹⁰ The oldest copy with a single column is dated 510–511⁹¹ and from the seventh to the tenth century, it appears almost as often as the two-column disposition.⁹² The *ḥijāzī* copies of the Qur'an opt for the single column, a decision which was of momentous importance for the later Arabic manuscript tradition.

The Late Antique tradition of *scriptio continua* has been taken over by the copyists of the early Qur'ans.⁹³ It has, however, been adapted to the specificity of the Arabic alphabet: unlike Greek or Latin where the letters are all written one after the other with the same space separating them, be they part of the same word or belonging to two different words, the Arabic letters which are connected within a word are still joined. The difference with the modern approach lies in the fact that when a word consists of two or more segments because one or more of its letters cannot be connected, the space separating the segments will be of the same importance as that which will divide the word from those which precedes and follows it. Actually, in many instances, the space between the segments of a word may even be larger than the space between two separate words. Another feature of this way of writing is the possibility to divide a word at the end of a line when it consists of two segments. The copyists can avail themselves of this option in order to manage more easily the line setting and get a nicer looking left hand alignment. Although they also know the *mashq* technique,⁹⁴ that is to say the elongation of some of the horizontal components of the script which may also help in controlling the justification, they use it rather infrequently. In the material I have been examining, I did not find instances of words divided between two pages—between the last line of a verso and the first one of the next recto or between the last line of a recto and the first one of the verso of the same folio.

The scribal practices involved in the transcription of the text deserve a few additional comments. The *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, which involved five

90 See for instance W. Hatch, *An album of dated Syriac manuscripts*, Boston, 1946, pl. XL (MS Milan, Bibl. Ambrosiana No 20, dated 613–614), XLII (MS London, BL Add. 14478, dated 621–622), XLIII (MS Add. 14666, dated 682) and XLV (MS Add. 12134, dated 697).

91 Ibid., p. 13.

92 Ibid.

93 See W. Diem, *Untersuchungen zur frühen Geschichte der arabischen Orthographie*. IV. Die Schreibung der zusammenhängenden Rede. Zusammenfassung, *Orientalia* NS 52 (1983), pp. 386–387 (§ 242).

94 The word may be understood in various ways; for a recent presentation of the question, see A. Gacek, *op. cit.*, pp. 234–238.

copyists, is not an isolated case. A few contemporary *ḥijāzī* copies written by two hands have been found. In the Sanaa collection, the fragment DaM Inv. 01–25.1 has been transcribed by two copyists who are easily recognisable through the specificities of each hand and the distinct kinds of verse dividers.⁹⁵ In her paper on the manuscript Or. 2165, Rabb made a few interesting comments on the script and suggested to identify two hands involved in the transcription of the text, one being the main copyist, while the other one was in charge of only five folios.⁹⁶ A fragment from Fustat—now in the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg—Marcel 17, seems to be the result of the cooperation of three copyists. In this case, the organisation of the work is less rigorous than in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, as some changes of hand occur between the verso of a folio and the recto of the next one. A few folios formerly in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus and now kept in Istanbul were also transcribed by two copyists whose script and verse dividers are obviously different. The same situation seems to exist in the oblong fragment, Kairouan, Musée des arts islamiques, R 119. With the exception of Or. 2165, the number of folios of these early witnesses is too small to allow a relevant analysis of the orthography which would identify the options the various scribes took in this matter—if any. In the case of Or. 2165, the disproportionate amount of evidence between the two copyists makes such an analysis pointless. However, the visual components, script and verse dividers, manifest plainly in all the cases the identity of each of the contributors.

An accurate evaluation of the importance of this procedure within the handwritten production of the beginnings of Islam still eludes us. The identification of such collaborations relies entirely on the physical vicinity of two scripts in one of the surviving fragments of a manuscript, in other words on the discovery of either a folio with a recto by one hand and the verso by another or a bifolio with a different hand on each folio. Unless such evidence surfaces, two fragments with a different hand on each of them but actually originating from the same manuscript may be considered as two different copies. However, in spite of this caveat and of the small number of fragments in the *ḥijāzī* style of script that has been preserved, the comparatively elevated number of instances of team-work shows that it was common practice at the time. Why was it so? The text of the Qur'an is not of such a considerable size, like the Bible, that it would be better to divide the transcription work between various copyists in order to

95 See *Maṣāḥif Ṣan'ā'*, op. cit., pp. 60–61, no 3; U. Dreibholz, *Frühe Koranfragmente aus der Großen Moschee in Sanaa. Early Quran fragments from the Great mosque in Sanaa*, Sanaa, 2003, p. 28, no 7; F. Déroche, op. cit. (2009), p. 127 and pl. 18–19.

96 I. Rabb, op. cit., p. 98.

finish the copy more rapidly. On the other hand, the copies of the Qur'an were perhaps much in demand and the people with some writing ability not very numerous. The lack of uniformity in the appearance of the script dominates the production in *ḥijāzī* style, although the three 12-lines-to-the-page oblong fragments indicate some measure of homogenisation.

The common features of the manuscripts which have been analysed should not hide their differences. The various fragments which we suggest to relate to the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, that is to say the first five examples and probably the *Codex Şan'ā' I*, tend to present very strong similarities in their page setting. These vertical format codices share the same way of using most of the space available on the page for the transcription of the text, leaving almost no outer margins. I can only stress again that this is not the consequence of repeated trimming operations which would have resulted in the disappearance of the margins. In many instances when the natural edge of the parchment has not been eliminated when the sheet was cut into bifolios, the text stops in close contact with it. This was clearly not a way of sparing the costly material since the size of the lines, at least in the quarto copies which have been discussed previously, could have been reduced without losing legibility. Actually, the letters are of fair size and the words are rather generously spaced. This layout cannot be traced back to other manuscript traditions of this area, margins being a common feature of their books. The lack of margins is obviously the result of a decision, the rationale of which eludes us. Two oblong fragments, Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 9052 and 12827/1, could reflect the same position.

On the other hand, the group of vertical copies of the Qur'an, like Saint Petersburg, NLR Marcel 18/2, with conspicuous margins seems more in agreement with the other manuscript traditions of the region. Did the use of line-end fillers develop within this group of copies in *ḥijāzī* style or was it borrowed from another source? The three 12-lines-to-the-page oblong fragments indicate a kind of intermediary position: the margins are small and their copyists apparently ignore the line-end fillers.

The number of lines to the page within the same manuscript is far from invariable. It is actually quite common to have variations from one folio to the next, even if a frame had previously ruled the page. However, there is a tendency in favour of around 25 lines to the page, not only in the larger quarto copies, but also in the smaller vertical Qur'anic copies—although the number of lines to the page may in some cases be lower. The oblong copies are a clear exception to this trend, although the 12-lines-to-the-page copies might be understood as “half” of this number.

There is likewise an evolution in the way in which the beginning and/or end of the suras are singled out. In the first examples, they are separated from

each other by a blank space, usually a full line but sometimes only the end of the last line of the sura. The titles found in those copies were added later, with the exception of the *Codex Şan'ā' I* and the oblong fragment Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 12827/1 (fig. 16). A difference appears between the larger copies which do not include any decorative device at all between the suras, and the smaller ones with a crude divider in black ink; in the *Codex Şan'ā' I*, the suras are also separated, at least in a few cases, by an ornamental band.⁹⁷ In two of the copies with margins, Saint Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 19 (fig. 9) and Istanbul, TIEM ŞE 56, an ornamental device separates the suras. In the former, the colourful sura headbands are probably an addition. Another procedure is to punctuate in a specific and usually more emphatic way the end of the last verse of a sura.

Turning to the text itself, one notes that the verses are quite coherently indicated, usually by clusters of dots organised according to various schemes that required a few seconds in their implementation—a fact I suggest to understand as a measure in favour of some control. The groups of tens are not identified as such, or only by later hands. The division of the text into verses is especially relevant in the study of the *qirā'āt*. As Rabb underlined in her study of Or. 2165, it is certainly through this aspect that we can perceive the existence of various readings:

Compared to a much smaller number of major orthographical variants, the large amount of variants in this area makes them a better gauge for assessing the variant reading tradition of this manuscript.⁹⁸

Although the size of the fragments usually precludes any serious analysis of the orientation of a manuscript in this field, there is enough evidence to show that the systems of the various schools as they were later known were either not yet fixed or coexisting with other systems, preserved in the manuscripts, but later completely forgotten. The occurrence in Saint Petersburg, NLR Marcel 9 of a “short verse” identical with one of those found in the *Codex Parisinopetropolitanus* strengthens the idea that they are by no means a scribal mistake and that they deserve further investigation. The *basmala* is usually marked as a verse.

97 See also Sanaa, DaM 00–29.1 (*Maṣāḥif Şan'ā'*, op. cit., p. 58, no 11; H.-C. von Bothmer, *Frühislamische Koran-Illuminationen: Meisterwerke aus dem Handschriftenfund der Großen Moschee in Sanaa/Yemen, Kunst und Antiquitäten* (1986/1), p. 27, fig. 3).

98 I. Rabb, op. cit., p. 87.

The orthography is one of the features which may help us in establishing the chronology of the manuscripts, but also in understanding the history of the text itself. The copyists did not content themselves with a mere transcription of an original; they enhanced the *rasm* and eliminated the ambiguity between *kāna* and *kun*, but not between *qāla* and *qul*. The few manuscripts which I analysed here show that an evolution was under way. When going through them, one notes the difference between the first group of textual witnesses and the materially more developed copies like Saint Petersburg, NLR Marcel 18/2 or 9. What do we know of the actual process of orthographic improvement? The *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* provides us with arguments for stating that it was still largely a matter of personal choice—as was the case for the script.⁹⁹ In this copy, the *repentir* of Hand B in 7: 146 and 148 shows an almost live process of orthographic enhancement which was probably a common procedure at that time when the transcription was based on some older and more defective exemplar. The copyists were entrusted with the changes which had to be brought to the text or which they thought fit to make—to its orthography, but also probably to its division into verses. In many copies in *scriptio defectiva*, the orthography was modified by later readers who added for instance the *alif* after the *qāf* in *qāla*. However, the evolution was not a continuous progress and the manuscript Dublin CBL Is 1615 demonstrates that some readers clung to the “old” orthography.¹⁰⁰ In this case, the copyist(s) had written *shay*’ in the “modern” orthography, leaving only in a few cases the form with an *alif*.¹⁰¹ A reader corrected the text and added an *alif* in most of the cases.¹⁰² Conversely, he corrected *qāla* and *qālū* when the copyist(s) had used the *scriptio defectiva*.¹⁰³

The Muslim tradition only records the addition of letters to the *rasm* during this process,¹⁰⁴ but suppressions were also the rule as can be seen with two of

99 See F. Déroche, op. cit. (2009), pp. 54–59.

100 The manuscript contains thirty-six parchment folios (36,3×29 cm; writing surface: 28,3–30×26 cm) arranged in quaternions with sides of same nature facing each other according to Gregory’s rule. The script is not *ḥijāzī* and is probably from the second/eighth century. The text covers 28: 6 to 48: 24 (f. 1–32) and 85: 3 to 110: 1 (f. 33–36). See A.J. Arberry, *The Koran illuminated. A handlist of the Korans in the Chester Beatty Library*, Dublin, 1967, p. 15, no 40; D. James, *Qur’ans and bindings from the Chester Beatty Library*, London, 1980, p. 14, no 1.

101 The old orthography is original in 29: 42 and 62; 33: 27; 34: 39; 35: 44; 36: 12 and 15.

102 He forgot to correct the word in 29: 12; 32: 7 and 36: 83.

103 For instance on f. 1b, in 28: 27 and 28.

104 Ibn Abī Dā’ūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif* = A. Jeffery, op. cit., p. 117 Arabic. Mālik b. Anas expressed his opposition to this modification (see A. Jāhdani, *Du fiqh à la codicologie*. Quelques

the five words that I used in the evaluation of the orthography. This is the case of the *alif* in *shay'*, although it is not mentioned as such. Interestingly enough, the common old orthography is explained as a reading of the *rasm* of Ibn Mas'ūd's or Ubayy's *muṣḥaf*.¹⁰⁵ The denticle in *bi-āyāt* disappeared unnoticed and the final *alif* in *dhū* gave birth to a reading which was discarded by later authorities: at 5: 95, the early *rasm dhal/wāw/alif*, common in the early manuscripts for *dhū*, was misread as *dhawā*.¹⁰⁶

The manuscripts also indicate small variations in the 'Uthmanic *rasm*. In addition to what I said about the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, a few further examples found in the copies and fragments examined above were adduced in support of this observation. In addition to them, I shall add two instances found in the two fragments Paris, BnF Arabe 328 c and Arabe 6140 a which can be related on the same grounds to the group of *ḥijāzī* copies.¹⁰⁷ These variants are typologically close to some of those, which are said by the tradition to be characteristic of the *maṣāḥif al-amṣār*, for instance *law* instead of *wa-law* or *alladhīna* instead of *wa-alladhīna*.¹⁰⁸ The typology of a quarter of the canonical variants is similar, for instance the Syrian reading *qālū* instead of *wa-qālū* (2: 116) or the Medinan and Syrian *alladhīna* instead of *wa-alladhīna* (9: 107). As the lists of variants also include cases in which *qāla* is a reading against *qul* (17: 93; 21: 4; 23: 112 and 114),¹⁰⁹ one wonders whether these lists reflect a later stage of transmission, when the orthographic difference between *qāla* and *qul* was completely established. And it is only the growing use of diacritics which could make the difference in Q 27: 67 between a *hamza* and a *nūn*. The still defective state of the script, with few diacritics and no vowels and orthoepic marks, and

opinions de Mālik (m. 179/796) sur le Coran-codex, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 56 (2006) [Actes de la conférence internationale sur les manuscrits du Coran (Bologna, 26–28 septembre 2002)], p. 273).

105 See al-Dānī, *al-Muqni' fī ma'rifa marsūm maṣāḥif ahl al-amṣār*, ed. M.A. Dahmān, Damas, s.d., p. 42 (quoted by G. Bergsträsser and O. Pretzl, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, vol. 3, 2nd edition, Leipzig, 1938, p. 49, n. 4 et p. 255, n. 1). However, G. Bergsträsser had already noted, after examining the Lewis-Migana palimpsest, that it was a fairly common orthography (ibid., p. 57).

106 See E. Kohlberg and A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and falsification. The Kitāb al-qirā'āt of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī*, Leiden-Boston, 2009, p. 25 Arabic and pp. 86–87.

107 See F. Déroche, op. cit. (1983), pp. 60–61, n. 4 and 6; id., op. cit. (2009), p. 121, 122, 144 and pl. 14 and 16.

108 F. Déroche, op. cit. (2009), p. 144.

109 Al-Dānī, op. cit., pp. 108–113; a list derived from this information can be found in G. Bergsträsser and O. Pretzl, op. cit., pp. 11–14.

the old orthography are quite certainly at the root of variant readings. The distinction between what can be a genuine variant and a mistake is especially difficult in the *Codex Şan'ā' I*.¹¹⁰ In contrast, the case of ŞE 13316-1 is in this respect relatively clear, although like the Sanaa palimpsest it raises the issue of possible handwritten transmission outside of the mainstream.

The chronology and the *modus operandi* of the canonisation process would have to be reconsidered, as well as its relationship with the recitation. The first works devoted to the variants in the 'Uthmanic *rasm* were probably written towards the middle of the second/eighth century.¹¹¹ Edmund Beck showed that an evolution occurred in the presentation of the imam or Qur'anic codex of reference in the various cities: whereas the oldest sources, like al-Farrā', refer to "some of the *maṣāḥif*", the later authors write about "the *muṣḥaf* of such and such place", that is a more abstract presentation.¹¹² The implication would be that the earlier sources were aware of more local variants than what was later considered as canonical. It may be that some of the variants found in the manuscripts were precisely among these extra variants. With some exceptions, they are usually similar to those which were included in the canonical lists of variants. The testimony of al-Farrā' and the situation found in the oldest copies provide us with the vision of a complex situation with many variants circulating in written form.

A research about the introduction of the collation in the transmission of the Qur'an would contribute to a better understanding of this phase of the history of the text. According to the Islamic tradition, it has been applied since the beginning: as a last step in the writing down of the Qur'an under 'Uthmān, Zayd b. Thābit compared the text he had compiled with Ḥaḥṣa's *ṣaḥīfa* (*fa-'araḍa al-muṣḥaf 'alayhā*).¹¹³ Viviane Comerro notes that the insistence on the conformity of the canon with a text miraculously kept or found again is a *topos* encountered in religious literature dealing with the passage from oral to written transmission.¹¹⁴

110 See for instance B. Sadeghi and M. Goudarzi, op. cit., p. 49, n. 138; p. 51, n. 144; p. 64, n. 222; p. 69, n. 257; p. 70, n. 271, etc.

111 See E. Beck, Die Kodizesvarianten der Amsār, *Orientalia* 16 (1947), p. 371.

112 Ibid., p. 354.

113 Tabari, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. M.M. Shākir and A.M. Shākir, Cairo-Alexandria, 2005, vol. I, p. 81. Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 156–157. A. Gacek (op. cit., p. 240, n. 64) recalls that "Muslim tradition traces the practice of *mu'araḍa* back to the Archangel Gabriel who presented the revealed text to Muḥammad and made him recite it back to him." See V. Comerro, op. cit., p. 34 and 36.

114 V. Comerro, op. cit., p. 59.

On the other hand, independently from the specific issue of the verses, the still somewhat fluid state of the text as found in the earliest manuscripts and the variants of the *rasm* attributed to the *maṣāḥif al-amṣār* are hardly compatible with a collation procedure. Theodor Nöldeke did not take into account the couple *qāla/qul*—involving a difference which would not escape the attention of the collators when the text was read aloud—in his list of the *rasm* variants.¹¹⁵ The early copies of the Qur'an which have been examined indicate clearly that the graphic distinction between the two verbal forms began only in a systematic way by the end of the first/seventh century. The *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, although transmitting a text which is certainly not Kufan, has in places like 23: 112 and 114 (where the Kufan reading is *qul* instead of *qāla* as in the other traditions), *qāf+lām* which can be read both ways, *qāla* or *qul*. At that moment, neither the Kufan variant nor the majority reading could be effectively recognised in the *rasm*. In the same way, the couple *Allāh/li-Llāh* (23: 87 and 89) can hardly remain unnoticed during the collation process.

Were the *qāla/qul* variants added to the lists afterwards? There is no reason to think so. Quite the contrary, the lists were compiled once the two forms were differentiated both in oral and written form, at the earliest in middle Umayyad times. This entails that collation probably came into use at about the same moment when the graphic accuracy had made headway and the transmission techniques started developing. The small variants found in the 'Uthmanic *rasm* were detected and this procedure of control over the transmission was incorporated anachronistically into the account about the collection of the Qur'an itself in order to stress the fidelity of the text to its source and its stability. Similarly, the etiological account of the origins of the canonical variants provided a justification for the actual state of the text.

With the important exception of the *Codex Ṣan'ā' I*, the *rasm* found in the handwritten witnesses of that period corresponds to the 'Uthmanic vulgate if we admit that, in spite of the orthographic peculiarities, a lack of most of the required diacritics and of any orthoepic signs, the text the copyists had in mind coincided with the canonical version as we know it today. At the moment of the written transmission, it reflected an archaic state that still included traces of the history of the revelations.¹¹⁶ The comparison of the various witnesses in *ḥijāzī*

¹¹⁵ Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, Göttingen, 1860, pp. 240–241.

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 1. The “short verses” are a good example of this situation.

style suggests that the corpus was not completely closed and that the “Uthmanic” transmission was still running along parallel tracks. By the beginning of the Umayyad period, the relative lack of concern about the use of diacritics evidenced by the manuscripts can be taken as an argument against the historicity of the worries expressed in the traditional account of the origins of ‘Uthmān’s decision. Moreover, other reports about al-Ḥajjāj’s “*Maṣāḥif* project”—to adopt Omar Hamdan’s phrase¹¹⁷—show that their “introduction” was a move seen as crucial for the clarity and reliability of the text. The later account by al-Dānī about the dotting of initial *yā’* and *tā’* in verbal forms, although probably being a later rationalisation of the early *maṣāḥif* evolution, also goes in the same direction.¹¹⁸ The manuscripts tell us another story. Although the copyists were familiar with the diacritics and started using them before al-Ḥajjāj’s time, they did not use them in places where they could have made the text easier to read.

Harald Motzki’s study of the two traditions which are the basis of the accounts of the writing down of the Qur’an during ‘Uthmān’s reign has demonstrated that they were probably circulating by the extreme end of the seventh or early eighth century AD and could at any rate be dated to the first quarter of the second/eighth century.¹¹⁹ A comparison between the proclaimed aims of the caliph and the state of the written transmission of the text at that moment shows the anachronistic nature of the most “technical” part of the account. The caliph’s role may thus have been less far-reaching than the tradition reports, since in the early Umayyad period the manuscripts were unable to safeguard the text and non-canonical variants were still circulating (not to speak of different texts like that of the *Codex Šan‘ā’ I* which were in principle eliminated). The caliph may have been involved in the diffusion of a visual identity for the text he supported, eventually paying for the production and diffusion of copies—a move that was essential to safeguard the vulgate.¹²⁰ The writing down of the Qur’an was an important undertaking and the Muslim tradition, although it may disagree on some points, is unanimous in providing the same strong

117 O. Hamdan, op. cit., p. 135.

118 Al-Dānī, *Muḥkam fī naqṭ al-maṣāḥif*, éd. ‘I. Ḥasan, Damas, 1379/1960, p. 2 and 17. See O. Hamdan, op. cit., p. 147.

119 H. Motzki, The collection of the Qur’an, A reconsideration of Western views in light of recent methodological development, *Der Islam* 78 (2001), pp. 30–31.

120 ‘Uthmān’s move was imitated by other figures from an early date. According to al-Samhūdī, al-Ḥajjāj would actually have been the first to send codices to the large cities of the empire (*Wafā’ al-wafā’ bi-akhbār dār al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamid, Beirut, 1984, vol. II, p. 668).

argument in favour of recording the Revelation in written form.¹²¹ In spite of the later position which will give the recited Qur'an the first place, in both accounts—the first one about Abū Bakr, the second one about 'Uthmān—a point is clearly made: the written text is the basis of a safe preservation of the revelation. The later science of the *qirā'āt* did actually recognise, albeit in a subdued tone, the importance of the written version of the Qur'an: one of the three basic requirements for the acknowledgement of a reading is its conformity with the 'Uthmanic *rasm*.

The material which can be termed *ḥijāzī* on the basis of al-Nadīm's description covers a variety of situations. A group which can be assembled around the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, disregarding their format, vertical or oblong, corresponds to the earliest period of the manuscript tradition and would probably predate the last quarter of the first century (before ca. 695), under the reign of 'Abd al-Malik. However, copyists trained in this style may have remained active beyond this moment. Some of the manuscripts like the 12-lines-to-the-page oblong fragments are more regular and probably influenced by developments, which will be explored in the next chapter.

121 See the presentation of these accounts in W.M. Watt and R. Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'an*, Edinburgh, 1977, pp. 40–42. Also in V. Comerro, op. cit., pp. 32–36 (Arabic text and French translation).