One of the most interesting scholarly gatherings in the world during the past three decades has been the Mingana Symposium, held every four years at the Woodbrooke Study Centre in Birmingham, England. The gathering focuses on the writings of Christians who lived within the Arab Empire during the early centuries of the Muslim conquest and domination of the Middle East. Papers from the gatherings have been published in collections such as *Christians at the heart of Islamic rule* and *The Bible in Arab Christianity*.¹ A special feature of the symposium, besides taking place at peaceful Woodbrooke, is its proximity to the Mingana Collection, a collection of over 3,000 Middle Eastern manuscripts in over 20 languages brought together during the 1920s by the Iraqi Christian scholar Alphonse Mingana (1878–1937). At the most recent Symposium, for example, a special session on early Qur’anic manuscripts was held in the very room of the collection at the University of Birmingham where the Arabic manuscripts from the Mingana Collection are preserved. David Thomas has been involved with organizing the Mingana symposia since the second symposium in 1994. He has also edited the papers presented at the symposia into handsome volumes for the “History of Christian-Muslim Relations” book series or for the journal *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*.²

In the background of all of these gatherings and publications has been the shadow of Alphonse Mingana or perhaps, better expressed, his lingering glow. Among the considerable scholarly output of Mingana are a number of articles that were striking at the time of publication and are still mentioned regularly in academic discussions about the Qur’an.³ For example, Mingana’s work has been influential in shaping the field of early Islamic studies and his contributions continue to be recognized and celebrated. His legacy is a testament to the importance of his work and the enduring relevance of his research.

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² For example, the articles published in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22.2 (2011).

³ Samir Khalil Samir, “Alphonse Mingana, 1878–1937, and his contribution to early Christian-Muslim studies” (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1990), 53–60.
gana’s article, “Syriac influence on the style of the Kurʾān,”4 is still commonly cited and even reprinted in current discussions of a possible Urtext of the Qurʾān.5

The present essay focuses on another of Mingana’s articles, “The Transmission of the Kurʾān,” published in 1915. In this article Mingana questioned traditional Muslim accounts about the collection, editing and distribution of the Qurʾān. Mingana clearly interacted with contemporary scholarship on the Qurʾān written in Europe prior to the First World War. He was also responding to a kind of German scholarly hegemony on study of the Qurʾān that had much to do with the writings of Theodore Nöldeke. By expressing the new ideas in English, however, and by adding materials with which he had become familiar through his own research, Mingana produced an article that is still a touchstone of scholarly discussion and debate a century later.6 The issues which Mingana raised concerning Muslim tradition continue to the present: not only the question of evidence and the scholarly treatment of this evidence, but also the approach to the subject area in general.

This essay describes the content of Mingana’s article and situates it within the context of scholarly writings about the Qurʾān in the early twentieth century. The essay then traces the scholarly reception of Mingana’s article and its ideas up to the present.7 The discussion extends beyond Mingana to explore trajectories flowing from his way of thinking, that is, developments in recent years that Mingana may not have imagined but for which his thinking provided

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5 For example, Gabriel Said Reynolds, ed., The Qurʾān in its historical context (London: Routledge, 2008); and Ibn Warraq, ed., What the Koran really says: Language, text, and commentary (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2002).