

A CHALLENGE TO ISLAM FOR REFORMATION

*The Rediscovery and reliable Reconstruction of a
comprehensive pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal
hidden in the Koran under earliest Islamic
Reinterpretations*

FOR FAVOUR OF REVIEW

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Introduction

*Four Theses in Anticipation of the Results
of our Research in the Text of the Koran*



Thesis 1


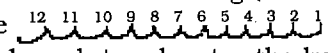
The text of the Koran as transmitted by Muslim Orthodoxy contains, hidden behind it as a ground layer and considerably scattered throughout it (together about one-third of the whole Koran text), an originally pre-Islamic Christian Text.

This thesis requires the following preliminary remarks:

a) Difficulties in interpreting the old Arabic script

Every Arabic text, - today as for more than one and a half millennia - , consists of three different layers: 1st the basic drawing (arab. رسم = *rasm*), 2nd the additional or diacritical points (arab. *nuqat* = points) the function of which is to differentiate letters of the basic *rasm* = drawing which have in the very early and pre-Islamic development of the Arabic script developed into a shape identical with or at least indistinguishable from the shape of other signs or drawings of one and the same Arabic script which originally designates only consonants as on principle all other Semitic scripts likewise do. And 3rd the final setting of signs for the vowels to be read with the consonants denoted by the basic drawing and the diacritical points.

First, we have to explain the relation between the *rasm* = drawing and the diacritical points, set to distinguish ambiguous characters of the fundamental drawings. We shall explain this by a theoretical and extreme example: The most ambiguous sign (drawing) of the Arabic script is the sign  the nucleus of which is the vertical stroke, the bend down to the left being part of the connection to the next following sign. Therefore this most ambiguous sign appears as  if connected also to the

right side with a preceding sign. If this sign is the last of a sequence, the final stroke mostly dives beneath the line: . So, if we write in Arabic this most ambiguous basic drawing (consonant letter) repeating it 12 times in a row, we get the picture  which looks like a sequence of twelve water waves of which each top denotes the kernel of an ambiguous sign for a consonant, or it is a part of a consonant-sign consisting in a compound of three water wave tops (see below). So nobody, except the writer himself, can discern what special consonant the writer of these twelve wave tops had intended with each of them, unless the meaning and reading of the twelve signs can be drawn as a conclusion from the clear words before and following this sequence of twelve ambiguous signs. Consequently, to make reading easier, diacritical points came into use, as a comparatively late phenomenon in the development of the Arabic script. For it is only by the diacritical points, set above or below every wave top (= ambiguous consonant), that the sequence of the different but otherwise ambiguous consonant signs can be read as they had been intended by the writer. The diacritical points are set to denote the following consonants: 1. n (1 wave top + 1 point above); 2. b (1 wave top + 1 point below); 3. t (1 wave top + 2 points above); 4. y (1 wave top + 2 points below); 5. t (= th; 1 wave top + 3 points above); 6. $\text{}$ (= the explosion of the larynx before the pronunciation of a vowel like in English, "in", "after", "on", "under" etc.; 1 wave top and above the miniature of the arab. guttural consonant ع); 7. s (the compound of 3 wave tops without points); 8. س (transcribed also as sh; the compound of 3 wave tops + 3 points). So if we write the theoretical, because meaningless, sequence (according to our numerical order just given) نبتتتتتتتتتتتتت there is no doubt that these twelve wave tops of the *rasm*-drawing are to be read as the sequence n-b-t-y-t'-s-s. But if we write (choosing another type of the Arabic typewriter) the same basic drawings consisting of 12 strokes with another likewise theoretical distribution of the points شبتتتتتتتتتتتتت we get, instead of the first given sequence, the other order: sh-b-t'-t'-s-y-n - and so forth ad libitum every possible order can be written. It is of great importance that there has been and still is in normal handwriting no difference in space and height between all these strokes looking like the tops of waves. See for instance our first given example of the 12 wave tops without points written by hand, since our computer is not able to write our exemplified sequence of 12 wave tops without the points, because the computer adds them automatically and without exception with every character of the basic drawing. Nevertheless, there are in Arabic calligraphy, and derived from it in the script of Arabic typewriters, differences in space and height between some of our ambiguous consonant signs displayed here. But if someone wants to read headstrongly another distribution of the given calligraphic consonants (without points) he can easily and plausibly argue that the slight differences in space and height of the given calligraphy text is caused by a trembling of the calligraphist's hand. The calligraphic differences do not therefore on principle prevent a deviating interpretation of a calligraphically written text. The only certain means of fixing the reading of a text is therefore the punctuation or pointing.

Indeed, every Arab when handwriting his script writes the ambiguous basic drawings of a word or even of a long sentence first, and only afterwards sets the additional diacritical points to differentiate the different consonants he intends with each wave top. Even today in the usual hurry of supplementary point setting he seldom assigns them exactly to the intended basic sign or he sometimes even overlooks or forgets to set a point at all. This is not to speak of the medieval

professional copyists of voluminous manuscripts who did in fact often omit diacritical points altogether to finish the work as quickly as possible since time was money even then. But the crucial point for our research in the Koran text is that in olden times, especially in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, these diacritical points were not set at all in everyday writing – because they were not yet known or, later on, not commonly accepted. In the Koran text itself, at least during the first century of its existence, out of pious reverence for the holy text, diacritical points were even forbidden. All the older Koran codices which have come down to us display the text without diacritical points and signs, not to speak of the strokes for the vowels which were introduced into the text of the Koran later even than the diacritical points for the distinction of the ambiguous signs of consonants. On the basis of our theoretical and extreme example of the 12 wave tops as basic drawings (*rasm*) without points, one can imagine that for someone confronted with such a line of undotted basic drawings in the shape of wavetops as given above, to find out the originally intended sequence of consonants becomes a lottery if one does not know what sequence of consonants the person had actually intended who originally wrote this sequence of undotted basic drawings.

We called our example theoretical and extreme because such a meaningless uninterrupted sequence of wavetop-like basic drawings will never be encountered. But there exists in the same Arabic script a lot of other ambiguous basic drawings undistinguishable from each other without diacritical points: ر (= r) and ز (= z);

ف (= f) and ق (= q; the given shapes are the shapes written at the end of a word. In the beginning or in the midst of a word there is no difference whatsoever between these two basic drawings ف and ق, the

difference of the letter consisting only in one or two points to be set); د (= d) and ذ (= d also transcribed

as dh; an aspirated d); ط (= emphatic t) and ظ (= emphatic z); ص (= emphatic s) and ض (=

emphatic d); ع (= ; emphatic explosion of the larynx) and غ (= g or transcribed as gh; an aspirated g).

And finally we have a basic drawing with triple distinction: ح (= emphatic h) and خ

(= h or transcribed as kh; a guttural h like in German "ach, Kuchen") and ج (= g, mostly but not everywhere pronounced like English g in "general"). The characters with a tail reaching beneath the line are endforms and lose this tail when written in the midst of a word:

فقصضجخطظ. Doubled consonants are never written with two identical consonants following each other. They are instead always written in the way that above

the one or first existing consonant a special sign ^u is set which designates that this

consonant counts double, for instance ^uخط means خطط but is never written with this doubling of the character itself in question as in the last instance. Of course, also this denoting of double consonants by only one consonant is a source of fundamental misunderstanding if the sign for duplication (as a sign of the third and last layer of the Arabic script) is, as is usual in olden texts, never set.¹

¹ At this point it should be understood that the existence of a script as sophisticated as the Arabic without (later invented) points, so difficult to read and so easy to misunderstand, is an indication for an

To give now finally a more practical and meaningful example of the ambiguity of the unpointed Arabic script: our word رسم *rasm* = drawing can in this its in any case rightly unpointed Arabic form of script رسم easily also be read as زبنتم *zanaytum* "you (plural) have fornicated", or likewise easily as زينتم *zayyantum* "you have adorned", or as ربنتم *rabbaytum* "you have educated", or رنتم *rannaytum* "you have delected", or رانتتم *rana`tum* "you have looked at" or else "you have walked heavily", or finally (but seldom) as رأيتهم *ra`aytum* "you have seen". These six possible different additional readings of the unpointed drawing رسم, denoting the word *rasm* "drawing", offer themselves at first sight and all of them display the final conjugation ending تم² *tum* "you (plural)", although further readings might be possible. Anyhow, from these examples, offering almost every time a past tense verb conjugated with the 2nd person plural, it is important to learn that the possibilities for reading another meaning into the original drawing are nonetheless limited. Therefore the conscious reinterpretation of the *rasm*-groundlayer of the erstwhile Christian Koran was in no way easy to perform. It is, so far as the *rasm*-text is a text of some length, always easier to reconstruct the original meaning of the Christian *rasm*-groundlayer of the Koran.

By these explanations it should have become clear that the ground layer of the Arabic script, that is, the basic drawings without diacritical points and signs, is very difficult to interpret and very easy to misinterpret. In Old Arabic literature there is a famous tale that once upon a time a ruler sent a courier with a message to another ruler. At the end of his letter to his colleague he asked that a present be given to the messenger. But since points had been wrongly or carelessly set the addressee understood himself to have been asked to deprive the messenger of the light of his eyes. Which is what he did. Nevertheless, even if written without diacritical points, – and in olden times one was accustomed to writing in this quick but defective way and to reading it –, every longer text could and can be understood from within the broader context, be it that at least part of the preceding and the following text could be understood or be it that the situation or the complex object the text was concerned with was clear. In any case, one has indeed to realize that every such defectively written Arabic *rasm*-text of some length can in the end be understood correctly, – in the last instance by professional decoders or trained scholars –, because by far not all characters of the context are ambiguous and this suffices indeed to decode finally how each ambiguous basic sign of the text has to be read, although sometimes one succeeds only after long deliberations about the whole context.

Now to the third layer of the Arabic script. We have until now spoken only about the first two layers of the Arabic script, namely the basic drawing and the diacritical points. The third layer to be mentioned is the writing of vowels which is actually also historically the last device to complete the early Arabic script. As in many other immense early Arabic literature in pre-Islamic times. A new literature, developed only shortly before the rise of Islam, would not have had a script of such sophistication, or, what is the same, such wear and tear in a long tradition of writing. The immense Old Arabic literature written in the two or three centuries before the rise of Islam is lost, or rather, has been done away with, because it would have testified against the picture of the pre- and early history of Islam as forged by Muslim orthodoxy early on after the passing away of their prophet Muhammad.

2 Since the kernel of this ambiguous consonant sign (as of the other resembling ones) is the vertical stroke, the connecting stroke to the following sign م can calligraphically be drawn bending first upwards and only then down.

Semitic scripts (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac etc.) vowels were originally never written. These last invented Arabic signs for vowels consist of separate strokes (in Arabic named *harakāt* = "movements") set below or above the consonant after which they are to be pronounced. If a consonant has no movement (that is: produces or "bears" no consonant) another sign is set (named *sukūn* = "quietude" or "silence"; in shape similar to our numeric sign "zero"). If we take the word رَسْمٌ *rasm*^{un} (= drawing; ^{un} means the undefined article in the nominative)

the middle consonant is quiet or silent. On the other hand the verb رَسَمَ = *rasama* signifies "he or it drew" but رُسِمَ = *rusima* signifies "he or it was drawn". That means that whether a verb is intended in the passive or in the active voice cannot be detected from the basic writing of the verb (first and second layer of the Arabic script) if the strokes for the vowels are not set, as is generally the case. Such grammatical differences can become discernable only from the broader context of the sentence. So even today when listening to an Arabic news broadcast one can become aware of the fact that the newscaster needs always, before continuing his reading of a new section, a brief but recognizable moment to cast his eyes over the broader context to understand it in advance, otherwise he would not be able to start reading his on principle unvocalized text. So nobody can read the beginning of an Arabic sentence, - written with points for consonants but practically never with signs for the vowels - , unless he grasps beforehand the general content of the following sentence or section. This accounts for the prevalent opinion that Arabic, per se a language easy to learn, is a language extremely difficult to make oneself master of: one cannot read an Arabic text before knowing first its broader context. And this is on the other hand the reason that nations with Arabic script as their official medium of communication (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan etc. are included here) suffer from a high percentage of illiteracy. Nevertheless even today all Arabic books and newspapers do not give the vowels since to every erudite Arabic or Muslim reader it is sufficient, - and a source of pride - , that Arabic is only written with the two first layers of the Arabic script: the basic drawings and, to differentiate the so extremely ambiguous consonants clearly, with diacritical points - but on principle never with vowel-strokes.

We have not displayed all the extant difficulties of the Arabic script, but by the above examples it should have become clear that such a script can easily be misunderstood, especially by persons who were once and are still today unacquainted with the situation and the specific subject of interest of the person or persons who once wrote a special text according to their specific intention. And it becomes conceivable that someone who wants to read into a longer text, - written in the defective way we have intimated - , just what he, on the basis of a prejudice, wants to get out of it, can succeed for a while. But the longer he continues the more difficult becomes this deviating interpretation since the originally intended text, however defectively it had been written, demands its nonetheless powerful right: The self-willed interpreter must soon give up and, if he wants to continue his opinionated reading, has to start afresh just with those clear words he at last could not press into his purpose. Taking this undisfigurable phrase as the key word of a wrongly supposed new text section with an alleged new theme, he again leaps step by step astray until the given original *rasm*-text again does not further allow ideas alien to

its original meaning to be read into it, so that he again has to start anew his opinionated reading with an imaginary third new theme, and so forth. This is the way in which early Muslim Koran redactors proceeded when reinterpreting to pieces of totally different and incoherent purport an originally large and in its meaning coherent text of the pre-Islamic Koran anchored in its basic drawing, that is in its undotted and unvocalized script. We shall later on demonstrate this phenomenon on the basis of several old Koranic Suras.

Vis-à-vis this undoubtedly extraordinary ambiguity of the undotted and unvocalized Arabic script, especially of old Arabic manuscripts and quite particularly of old Muslim Koran codices, it is absolutely incomprehensible and unacceptable that the modern Western scholars in the field of Islamistics in unison refrain from or even reject questioning the transmitted texts both of the earliest Islamic tradition about the origin of Islam as well as of the text of the Koran as transmitted by Muslim Orthodoxy – whereas it is as well comprehensible as excusable when Muslim scholarship on the Koran and Islam stick, out of religious reasons, to its “historical” and holy texts. Even recently (in 1993) the well-known American Islamicist James Bellamy states this phenomenon: “Whatever the reasons, Western scholarship, with very few exceptions,¹ has chosen to follow the Muslim commentators in not emending the text (of the Koran).”³ It seems that the countless emendations of the Koran text published already in 1974 in my book “Über den Urkoran” now being here revised and translated into English, – as well as the emendations of the historical Muslim texts on the earliest history of Islam elaborated in my book “Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad” (1981, hopefully to be published in English under the title “The Rediscovery of the Prophet Muhammad”) – , have escaped the attention of James Bellamy, unless he himself prefers to avoid these publications for not opposing the great reluctance of both the Occidental and the Oriental Islamicists to question the texts of the Koran and the early history of Islam. We hope that the reader of our explication of the difficulties of the old Arabic manuscripts and the old Koran codices will understand that the prevailing reluctance against attempts to emend them, wherever they seem dubious, is for serious scholars an untenable attitude.

b) The Differences between strophe poetical Structures and prose Texts in the Koran as a very important Key to the Reconstruction of the pre-Islamic Koran hidden in the present Koran transmitted by Muslim Orthodoxy.

It has always been uncontestedly accepted that in the traditional Koran some Suras contain very clearly strophic refrains, although the répétition of these refrains mostly does not follow a perceptible strict metric measure. This fact has for a long time been taken by some Islamicists as an indication that the Koran originally contained strophic structures the strict order of which had been destroyed by later

³ James A. Bellamy, Some proposed emendations to the text of the Koran, JAOS 113 (1993), 562. The text of his note 1 reads: “In the *crucis* discussed below I have found only one proposed emendation, that of Richard Bell, who wanted to read *t’rāf* for *a’rāf*; see section 11; this does not effect the *rasm*.” From his last statement we can see that Bellamy even and rightly has in his mind that also the *rasm* has to be questioned and eventually to be emendated because of its having often been “improved” by Muslim Orthodoxy.

redaction of the text of the Koran. This converted the old strophic or hymnodic speech into prose and changed the wording and meaning of the texts of the old hymnody. The clue given by the erratic refrains in some Suras of the Koran has never been followed up by intensive research, obviously because such a quest for an earlier regular strophic structure contained in the transmitted orthodox Koran cannot be accomplished as an issue of metrical hymnology per se. There must rather be included a research in all subtleties of the dogmatical problems of early Jewish and Christian religious phraseology of the texts of this obviously pre-Islamic Koranic hymnody formerly contained in the transmitted Islamic Koran. But these theological fields of dogma criticism have since the early 20th century no longer been a sphere of Western Islamics because Western Islamicists are not any longer theologically interested and therefore also no longer capable to carry out with competence the inevitably complicated research in the dogmatically complicated textual problems of the pre-Islamic hymnody of the Koran to restore the undoubtedly once existing structure and the textual content of this pre-Islamic hymnody, which must have totally been disturbed by a very early Muslim redaction of the Koran when it was collected to serve as the "Bible" or the "Holy Book" for the Islamic community which had just come into being.

In our textual criticism of the Koran it is just this combination of (1) philological, (2) strophe-metrical and (3) dogma-critical methods, that is of three different categories of method, which yields our results. Although the last two methods have in principle been neglected by Western Islamics since the 1920s, the drawing upon these two categories of method seems to be the *conditio sine qua non* for the solution of the fundamental problems of the Koran text made out more than enough times since the origin of Islam. Our conception of a threefold textanalysis is destined to clear away the textual problems of the Koran by the consistent alternating play of all these three methods, simultaneously focussed on a certain problem to throw light on this specific problem from different perspectives at the same time. One method might provide mere suspicions and hints, while the other might supply stronger confirmation from another direction which the third perspective finally corroborates together with the entire preliminary suggestion. For example, we might confidently restore an undoubtedly lost rhyme ending, knowing that its sound must correspond with the line endings preceding and following it; and this might bring to light a hitherto unsuspected meaning, perhaps a theological or phraseological topos from Jewish or Christian literature fitting the Koranic context in question. Or from the opposite direction, the lack of a consistent meaning could provoke a reasonable proposal for an emendation which, once realized, brings to light a hitherto lacking rhyme-word or/and a hitherto disregarded but better vernacular-grammatical construction of the text in question. Or an uneven or unequal grammatical construction crying for emendation might bring to the fore a well known theological phrase. And as far as this alternate play of reciprocal and mutual elucidation is concerned, one must keep in mind the above explained uncertainty of the Arabic script when written only with the basic *rasm*-layer without diacritical points to discern ambivalent consonants and without diacritical strokes for vowels as has been the common custom with the old Koran codices at least during the first century of Islam.

The special genre of religious hymnody detectable in the ground layer of the transmitted Koran text belongs form-historically and clearly recognizable to a chain

or international web of strophe-poetical traditions reaching from Old Egyptian, Old Testament, pre-Islamic Old Arabian, and Old Jewish models across the equivalent Byzantine, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic (of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times), and Ethiopian hymnody more or less simultaneous to early Islamic times, to spread finally even right up to the late medieval and modern Arabic strophic poetry (named *zagal* or *nabati*). These form-historical connections, especially between the Jewish and Christian strophe-technical traditions, make it very likely that these common traditions of poetic form correspond with common traditions of content or, in other words, there is a common literary tradition linked to this strophe poetical form. Today it stands beyond question (details for corroboration will be given later) that the rich Christian Ethiopian hymnody of the early sixth century (one century before Muhammad) goes back in the main to Christian Coptic originals, sometimes corresponding word for word across hundreds of strophes, the sequence of which is neatly maintained. Frequent misunderstandings of the Coptic original in the Ethiopic translations result without any possible doubt from typical misunderstandings of an ambiguous Arabic text minus its diacritical consonant-points and vowel-strokes. This indicates that these voluminous Ethiopian strophic texts of circa 500 CE which stem from Coptic sources must have passed through the Central Arabian stage of a likewise voluminous but lost pre-Islamic Christian Arabic strophic hymnody. The unquestionable former existence of such pre- and early Arabic strophic poetry is denied by Muslim scholarly tradition and all vestiges of it have been destroyed as consequently as possible. But in spite of this some Old Arabic strophical poetry from major or minor poets, even from the famous Kindite prince and poet Imru l-Qais (living around 550 CE), has nonetheless been handed down to us. It is therefore clear that the untenable denial of the existence of pre- and early Islamic strophic poetry by Muslim scholarly tradition is only a consequence of the elimination of the pre-Islamic Christian strophic hymnody from the Koran by the earliest Muslim Koran text collectors and redactors, casting this poetry into prose and altering in the same process its original meaning. Often the original meaning is actually reversed into the opposite by a deviating reinterpretation of the ambiguous defective Arabic script. To conceal these manipulations and to prevent a rediscovery of the erstwhile Christian strophical poetry of the Koran, the established Islamic Orthodoxy has had to deny completely the existence of pre- and early Islamic Arabic strophic poetry in Old Arabian literature of pre- and early Islamic times.

Because of all this it is, out of our three categories of method (1st the philological, 2nd the strophe-technical, and 3rd the theological or dogma-critical solution of problems), especially this method of restoring the Koranic strophic poetry (according to the well-known techniques of rhyme building, poetic licence concerning grammar, specialities of lexicography etc.) which is the most effective category when we are focussing all the three categories of method simultaneously on every textual problem of the Koran to disentangle the distortions of the Koran text produced by the early Muslim collectors and redactors of the Koran. Without this most important 2nd category of method, namely the strophe poetical perspective on the Koran text, it would be almost impossible to rediscover and reconstruct the earliest and pre-Islamic form and content of the historical nucleus of the Koran, and thereby to understand the spiritual starting point of the factual origin and early history of Islam – and not least to rediscover the original ideas of the Prophet Muhammad which were so horribly garbled and replaced by the ideas

of the post-Muhammadan Koran editors.

c) *Different Languages in the Koran*

The Arabic language of the erstwhile Christian strophic texts hidden in the early (without diacritical points for the differentiation of ambiguous consonants and without strokes for the designation of vowels) written ground layer of the Koran is, – despite of its distance from the Old Arabian high standard or classical language, best known from the Old Arabian (non strophical) poetry with its quantitative metres (as in classical Greek and Latin poetry), and in spite of its nearness to the vernacular Arabic (everyday language of the illiterate people) – , nevertheless in itself undoubtedly an elevated standard literary language, the lexical, orthographical, morphological, and syntactical peculiarities of which indicate a remarkable tradition of literate education and erudition and its conventions.

In this non-classical, vernacular though nevertheless literary Christian Arabic language of the ur-Koran there are naturally many grammatical equivalents to the language of early Christian literature, which has actually been a middle-standard, educational and literate Arabic language with wide application as an inter-tribal-Arab lingua franca or koine all over the Arabian peninsula.

On account of the fact that the ur-Koran in the ground layer of the Islamic Koran is composed in the special literary form of the vernacular Arabic strophic hymnody, one is entitled to demand also for the language of this erstwhile strophic ur-Koran on principle such grammatical licence as has been transmitted to us by the medieval Arabic philologists as rules for medieval Arabic strophic poetry. Because a series of rhyme problems in the ur-Koranic text can be conclusively solved by the application of these rules of the medieval Arabic strophic poetry, the appropriateness of the programmatic application of these medieval rules on the text of the pre-Islamic and erstwhile Christian strophic texts of the Koran can be classed as certain. But the exact dimension of the equivalence between the rules of the ur-Koranic hymnody on the one hand and the rules of the language licence of the medieval Arabic strophe poetry on the other must for now be left an open question.

d) *The Techniques of the Muslim Reinterpretation of the erstwhile Christian Koran hidden in the Ground Layer of the transmitted orthodox Koran*

The techniques used in the deviating Islamic reinterpretation of the ur-Koran are:

1. The deviating reading of vowels, – which would later mean the deviating setting of vowel strokes – , but nevertheless maintaining correctly the original ground layer of the Arabic script (*rasm*).
2. The deviating reading of consonants, – which would later mean the deviating setting of diacritical points for ambiguous consonant signs – , but nevertheless, out of piety, correctly retaining the *rasm*-groundlayer.

3. The slight alteration or deformation of the consonantal signs of the ground layer (*rasm*), eventually while simultaneously reading alternative consonants and vowels, respectively changing the diacritical points and the vowel strokes.

4. The omission, addition or replacement of single characters of the consonantal text of the ground layer (*rasm*), of single words, sentences and sections.

Furthermore an important role is played by:

5. Taking advantage of varying or different (vernacular or high standard language) orthography.

6. Taking advantage of the concurrence of different meanings of one and the same word or word-root within Hebrew, Aramaic (Syriac), vernacular and high standard Arabic.

7. Giving a deviating new meaning to single words on the basis of vague associations, so that a series of Koranic lexical meanings must be classed as invented. These ad hoc invented meanings have not been accepted by or applied to the vast secular Arabic literature and are preserved within the comparatively narrow sphere of Koranic and Islamic religious writings.

8. The disregard of grammatical and particularly syntactic rules during the initial deviating reinterpretation of the erstwhile Christian hymnody contained in the Koran. This technique led practically to the outcome that in the time to come the Muslim grammarians had to be ready to establish ad hoc very dubious grammatical rules to defend by them the deviating Islamic readings pressed on the ground layer (*rasm*) of the erstwhile Christian texts of the Koran and thereby to prevent a return to the original reading of that Christian strophical hymnody contained in the ground layer. These newly and for that special purpose invented grammatical rules remained through all ages controversial because neither necessary nor valid for the normal and secular Arabic of the vast literature beyond the comparatively narrow Koranic and Islamic religious sphere. At least, the Koran commentators had and have to justify hair-splittingly such grammatical peculiarities which had arisen from the earlier reinterpretation of the Koranic *rasm*-groundlayer. In the most inexplicable cases the excuse was and is put forward that the irregularities of these by reinterpretation grammatically distorted texts are due to the ecstatic utterance of the Prophet when receiving revelations. An explanation as to how technically and why intentionally ecstatic utterances were brought into a scriptural form has never been given.

The most general and fundamental statement of orthodox Arabic grammarians defending the, by reinterpretation, distorted texts of the Koran has from earliest Islamic times until today been the claim that the content of the Koran is not defined by Arabic grammar but that instead Arabic grammar is defined by the content of the Koran.⁴ The Koran itself, – or the Prophet Muhammad, if one prefers to put it this way – , contradicts this attitude of the orthodox Islamic Arab grammarians, because the Koran reads in Sura 14,4 : "We (God) never sent any messenger but with the speech of his people, that he might make (things) clear to them" and in Sura 16,103 it is said: "This is clear Arabic language", and a lot of similar sayings are scattered throughout the Koran text. The aforementioned attitude of the early, middle, late and present

⁴ Accordingly, there has recently been presented the well researched thesis that the terminology of Arabic grammar was developed out of the exegetical terminology of earliest Islamic Koran scholarship. See C.H.M. Versteegh, Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics vol. 19, Leiden 1993.

orthodox Islamic Arabic grammarians is therefore untenable. We have to read the Koran and to unravel distortions by later Koran collectors and redactors according to the clear rules of common secular Arabic, be it in its high standard or in its vernacular version. As things stand, one can be sure that the Prophet Muhammad did not read the traditional text of the Koran as we have it before us, since this transmitted text has been shaped, at least mainly, by early Muslim theologians, grammarians and lexicographers, and this only decades after the death of Islam's Prophet Muhammad or, as far as single details are concerned, even later still.

Thesis 2

According to the statements of Thesis 1 the transmitted text of the Koran contains four different kinds or layers of text.

These four kinds of text are:

First, – because also historically oldest – , the text of the pre-Islamic Christian strophic hymnody hidden in the ground layer (*rasm* without diacritical points and without strokes to indicate the vowels) covered up by a new opinionated Islamic reinterpretation pressed on the ambiguous *rasm*/ground layer of the "erstwhile Christian texts" as we shall call them for brevity.

Second and historically later there is the layer of the texts of the wilful new Islamic interpretation pressed on the ground layer of the erstwhile Christian strophic texts. We shall call them henceforth "second sense Koranic texts".

Third, and historically contemporary to this second layer, the texts which are, from their coming into existence onward, pure Islamic texts, that is, texts the ground layer (*rasm*) of which have been written directly and solely for the expression of the revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. We shall call them henceforth "single sense Koranic texts". These Islamic texts without an erstwhile Christian sense in the ground layer make approximately up about two thirds of the whole Koran text, while the texts with the double meaning (erstwhile Christian + Islamic second-sense texts) constitute the other and historically oldest one third of the transmitted Koran text. This third category of Koranic texts (comprising about two thirds of the total text of the Koran) must further be subdivided into the subcategories 3 and 3a as will be pointed out in the next paragraph.

Fourth. Unfortunately also these single-sense texts (= third text-category) conveying the revelations to the Prophet Muhammad have often been essentially reinterpreted by post-Muhammadan Koran editors in such a way that the originally intended ideas of the Prophet got totally lost and that often a horrible, almost incomprehensibly distorted text was the result. We shall call these texts the texts of the post-Muhammadan Koran editors. Since our research is focussed on the rediscovery of the pre-Islamic Christian hymnody contained in the Koran, these post-Muhammadan

editorial distortions of the single-sense texts containing the revelations to the Prophet do in principle not concern us. But sometimes during our analysis of the erstwhile Christian strophic texts, when we urgently need to clear up the original meaning of an Arabic word by a comparison of all references to it throughout the Koran, then we have to deal with them. The reader will then most probably get a glimpse of the fact that the restoration of the authentic revelations to the Prophet and the concomitant unmasking of the dogma-political intentions of the post-Muhammadan Koran editors annihilating the ideas of their Prophet is historically and dogma-critically much more interesting than our main task, the recovery of the erstwhile Christian hymns which are of timeless religious significance with almost no dogma-political connotation as this is also the case with the content of Christian or Jewish hymns all over the centuries. **End of the enumeration 1st- 4th.**

a) *The Islamic scholarly Terminology for the different Layers of the Koran text*

It turns out that Muslim Koran scholarship has three textual categories which, since the orthodox Islamic denial of the early manipulations of the Koran text, have no longer a comprehensible meaning, at least no plausible one.

1. There is first the expression *al-mutasābihāt* (التشابهات) which denotes in its first, pure and simple sense "(texts) which are similar to something else". This its normal and obviously original meaning is even transmitted by Islamic scholarship as "texts which contain different aspects of interpretation" (*mā yahtamil min at-ta'wīl 'auguhan*; Suyūṭī, Itqān, II, 2). However, Islamic Koran scholarship dropped this original meaning and shifted away to a new interpretation by the claim that this expression *al-mutasābihāt* had originally meant "the anthropomorphic expressions of the Koran (= what is said of God although being similar to man)". Apart from the fact that this new explanation did not spread easily and uncontestedly to become a common and generally accepted term of this meaning in Islamic Koran scholarship, it stands also out of question that the Islamic theological pro and contra discussion about anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Koran is a late dogmatic phenomenon so that this new interpretation of the term *al-mutasābihāt* must indeed be a late one, invented to suppress the old meaning so much quarrel-generating and therefore awkward for the newly-established Islamic Orthodoxy.⁵

2. Islamic Koran scholarship applies furthermore as a term for a special kind of Koranic text the expression *al-muḥkam* (singular) or *al-muḥkamāt* (plural) which means "(Koranic texts) which are decided, firm, unambiguous". Because this designation is positive and not inconsistent with the orthodox Islamic image of the Koran, this term held its position uncontested throughout the history of Islamic

⁵ For the theories concerning the *mutasābihāt* see Josef Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin-Leipzig 1926, p.65; I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranlegung*, Leiden 1920, p.128; EI² Vol. I, p. 409 and Muhammad 'Alī Hasan al-Hillī, *al-Mutasābihāt min al Qur'an*, Beyrouth 1966. The book "*Mutasābih al-Qur'an*" of al-Quta'ī (died 509 H./1115 CE; see F. Sezgin, GAS, vol. 1, p. 13) seems not to have come down to us, most probably because it would have guided the way back to the original meaning of that term designating a category of texts which essentially and on principle contain a double content, an older Christian and a newer Islamic one.

Koran scholarship. But on the other hand, after orthodox Islamic scholars had classified the entire text of the Koran as being from beginning to end a homogeneous text, as if produced in one and the same casting, the peculiar and formerly specific meaning of this term *muhkam* as the designation for a special kind of text among others within the Koran consequently became vague and indefinite. However, seen from the viewpoint of the evidence of our research and hence in the perspective of our theses, this term *al-muhkam* (المحكم) designates the above circumscribed third category of Koran texts (see the here preceding page), namely those which never had an erstwhile Christian sense in their ground layer and which make up at least two thirds of the whole Koran text.

3. The third term assigned by Muslim Koran scholarship to specific Koran texts is *al-mufassal* (الفضل) which means "(Koranic texts) which are commentary". This term must obviously be a subcategory (2a) of the term *al-muhkam* (2) since not all *muhkam*-texts are *mufassal* but a *mufassal*-text is always also *muhkam*. Within orthodox Muslim Koran scholarship this term *al-mufassal* is again not at all clear; because if the whole Koran text is classified as homogeneous it is difficult to decide which bits should be designated as mere "commentary". But again, from the point of view of our findings this peculiar identity of and distinction between *muhkam* and *mufassal* gets easily a conclusive significance: If *muhkam* designates our extensive third layer (see the here preceding page) within the Koran (written directly and solely as Islamic texts and therefore without a previous Christian text hidden in its *rasm*-groundlayer), *mufassal* denotes the Islamic glosses and commentaries (therefore having likewise no previous Christian text hidden in its *rasm* and for that reason being in addition classed as *muhkam*) inserted into the texts of our first and third layers of the Koran text (see the here preceding page), that is, into the original texts of the pre-Islamic Christian hymns as well as into the texts rendering the original revelations to the Prophet. These commenting insertions have indeed often been inserted into texts of a, as a result of reinterpretation, factually double meaning, in order the better to fasten the secondary meaning to the *rasm*-text and so to prevent a return to the original meaning of the ground layer. Such insertions had been so much the more indispensable in the time when diacritical points and vowel strokes were not yet allowed to be used in the Koran as at that time the intended deviating second meaning could not be pinned down to the *rasm*-text except by the insertion of glosses and commentaries. A clear example of such an inserted commentary is the verse 16 in Surah 96 (see here Chapter I, 1, p. 91-95).

End of the enumeration 1st- 3rd.

The suggestion, that early Islamic scholars were familiar with the different layers of the Koran text as we have detected them in our research and as we are outlining them in this introduction, is well-founded. The circumstances in which these Koran-textual terms were applied suggest it. And what is more, our research was not triggered by the discovery of these terms, they merely, and to our astonishment, corroborated what we had already found.

b) On the characteristically distinct Contents of the different Kinds of Koranic Text

The Islamic intellectual content which has been pressed on the erstwhile Christian *rasm*-groundlayer by certain editorial devices leaves no room for doubt that it is determined by pagan Arabian conceptions, in the last instance by the old Arabian tribal religion of pre-Islamic times, and that it is from this position that these texts are turned against Christian (and Jewish) dogmatics.

This classification of these earliest Islamic texts as pagan is from our historico-critical and theologico-dogmatical viewpoint not a slight on them but on the contrary a positive evaluation. Original Christianiy, or better: the revolutionary belligerent movement of Jesus of Nazareth (see our précis given in the Preface to this book p. XLV ff) was nothing else than the resurfacing of popular pagan/tribal religion from the underground of peasant religion or, in other words, the revival of the old Semitic and old Israelite tribal religion at the High Places or Holy Groves where the cult at the shrines of the primeval Messianic Heroes of the tribes had blossomed. This old Israelite pagan/tribal religion had with all-consuming hate been persecuted and stamped out by the Jewish imperialistic Yahwe religion (2 Kings 23,4-20; Deut. 12,1-3) and has then, soon after its revival in the movement of Jesus, again been eliminated by the developing Hellenistic and (East- und West-)Roman "Christianity" in the course of its magico-sacramental trinitarian and therefore totally disfiguring transformation of the spirit of the movement of Jesus (as the resuscitation of the Old Semitic and Old Israelite popular and pagan/tribal religion) into a juggernaut of world imperialism, so that the ur-Christianity of the movement of Jesus, rooted in the laic pagan/tribal messianism and eschatology of Palestinian peasant-religion, had only for a short time been a passing phenomenon. It should be clear, that Semitic pagan/tribal ur-Christianity, having spread very early into the tribal society all over Arabia with its main tribal characteristics, - still alive there even down to our 20th century - , had found in far away "Arabia haeretica" the requisite tribal environment and therefore its best and probably only chance to resist und to continue under what adjustments and re-and deformations so ever. It is this honourable "heretic" Arabian ur-Christian pagan/tribal spirit, - hated by the imperialist Church - , which was destined finally to flow into the new main stream of "heretic" Arabia, "Islam".

Contrary to the portrayal of the central motive of the ur-Islamic movement by the later established Islamic Orthodoxy, - depicting it as the defeat of Central Arabian paganism - , the ur-Islamic movement led by the Prophet Muhammad was, - under the slogan "Return to the religion of Ishmael and the Tribes"⁶ - , a movement away from Central Arabian Christian, especially trinitarian, conceptions towards the Old Semitic pagan/tribal religion. And we have to imagine that the Prophet Muhammad brought by this decision of his a trend to the breakthrough which was growing already long before his lifetime. This shift towards tribal religion can clearly be detected from a lot of ur-Islamic reinterpretations of the Hellenistic Christian ground layer of the Koranic text, because a considerable number of Christian groundlayer-texts

⁶ For this see G.Lüling, Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad (1981),257-303, the chapter "The Koranic Formula 'Ishmael and the Tribes' as a program: Return to the Pagan Religion of Central Arabian tribal society, to the original religion of the Abrahamitic Kaaba."

fight against the "Garden" (الجنة) as the pagan-Arabic Grove of Fertility (condemned by Jewish religion as the sinful Ishmael Cult at the High Places of the Old Testament). These Hellenistic Christian anti-pagan passages, originally contained in the *rasm*-text of the Koran, had each (with the exception of Sura 18,40) been reinterpreted by early orthodox Islamic redactional devices (reading ازلقت instead of the erstwhile ازلقت) so that the pagan "Garden", hated by Judaism and Christianity, from now on appears as the revered Islamic "Paradise", by its pagan-religious erotic pleasures differing markedly from its Hellenistic imperialist Christian conception (for this see here Chapter III as a whole).

Another example for the ur-Islamic shift away from Christian conceptions is that texts of the Christian ground layer referring to salvation in Christ were reworked from now on to apply to the Koran (instead of Jesus Christ) or, supplied by editorially added negative signs, were interpreted as turned towards foes of the Prophet (see for instance Sura 74,11-15; here p. 440-450).

The Islamic single-sense Koranic texts (= without an erstwhile Christian meaning in its groundlayer) are to a considerable degree swayed by those pagan-Arabic (but at the same time Old Semitic, Old Israelite, and ur-Christian) conceptions of tribal-religious origin. They can clearly be identified above all in the ur-Islamic prose texts pressed on the *rasm*-groundlayer of the erstwhile Christian hymnody contained in the Koran.

These originally Islamic and therefore single-sense Koran texts are in content heavily related to the content of the Islamic texts wilfully pressed on the *rasm*-groundlayer of the erstwhile Christian strophic texts. Such Islamic single-sense texts were often inserted as glosses and commentaries into the reinterpretation of the Christian texts, or, as they also appear, as new, textually neat versions or doublets of lexically and grammatically clumsy texts resulting from the opinionated reinterpretation of Christian strophic texts. Such new text versions or doublets are in principle located at some distance from their clumsy text versions which they are repeating in a linguistically neat form. This gives rise to the suspicion that these new neat text versions are not only located far from their clumsy counterparts in the Koran but they are also remote in time from them, that is, they have been composed much later after the reinterpretation of the Christian strophic texts of the *rasm*-groundlayer of the Koran.

At any rate, the original Islamic single-sense texts (the main body, approximately two thirds, of the Koran text) excel, - as far as they have received no post-Muhammadian reinterpretation - , principally by their absence of lexicographical and grammatical problems.

c) On the literary Form of the different Kinds of Koranic Text

The Islamic second-sense and the single-sense texts of the Koran were originally designed and then handed down as prose texts.

In the second-sense Koranic texts, as a consequence of the disregard or dropping of the internal rhymes of what was once a Christian strophe, a type of verse or sentence has been developed for which the term "Koranic rhymed prose" came into use in Western-Islamic scholarship. The later originally Islamic single-sense Koranic

texts emulate this type of early "Koranic rhymed prose" which had come into being in consequence of the neglect of the original internal rhymes of the strophe, that is of the congruent rhymes of each verse within the strophe: From the time of the Islamic reinterpretation and elimination of the strophic hymnody onward, each Koranic prose "verse" (better: prose "sentence") now rhymes with its last word though now far remote from the preceding and next last words of its surrounding long prose "verses" (prose-"sentences"). These are now long and monotonous because of the annulment of the internal rhymes of the formerly strophic verse now having become a mere "sentence" except for its remote last "rhyme-word". Especially in the late and latest single-sense texts of the Koran, emulating to the oldest so-called "Koranic rhymed prose" which had emerged from the annulment of the internally rhyming structure of the erstwhile metric Christian strophe of limited length, these late and latest Islamic single sense sentences, now written intentionally as prose, eventually became so long that, although each of them finishes with a remote rhyme word, one can hardly speak any longer of a rhyming effect. This underlines the fact that the so-called "rhymed prose" of the Koran is not a genuine form of poetic art but a peculiar technique developed from the levelling out of the sophisticated Christian strophic poetry and the necessity of disguising the strophical structure of the Christian hymnody.

The equation of the terms "rhymed prose" and *sag'* (سجع) which has been made here and there in Western Koran scholarship, must be rejected on account of the results of our research. The *sag'* is a longer, emphatically pronounced sentence (usually uttered by the pagan soothsayer), consisting of very short syntactic parts, the endings of which are not arranged to rhyme according to a proper strophe-metrical order, although the *sag'* shows alliterations and unsystematically-scattered rhymes.

In the Koran the *sag'* comes across only as Islamic single-sense text, often placed before or after an erstwhile Christian strophic ground layer on which had been pressed a new Islamic interpretation. See for instance, with reference to its enigmatic content, the typical *sag'* in Sura 89,1-5:⁷ "By the dawn, And ten nights, By the even and the odd, By the night when it runs its course; Is there in that an oath for a man of sense? (R.Bell)" which is placed, so to speak, as an introduction immediately before the neat Christian hymnody in the following verses 89,6-14 (see here Chapter 2 Section 1). This circumstance, that the Prophet Muhammad made use of the *sag'* in the form of a typical emphatic utterance of a pagan soothsayer, contributes to our general thesis that the ur-Islamic movement led by the prophet Muhammad had actually been a movement away from Western (Hellenistic trinitarian) Christian world-imperialistic religion towards the ur-Semitic tribal religion symbolized by its progenitors Abraham and Ishmael.

Anyhow, from the Prophet's use of this *kāhīn-sag'* and from the fact that the originally Islamic Koran texts (second-sense and single-sense texts) are considerably influenced by the Central Arabian pagan religion (akin to ur-Christianity and ur-Israelitism), it is understandable that the Prophet Muhammad, - at least in the early period of his activity - , was considered by his Meccan trinitarian Christian foes to be a *kāhīn* (pagan soothsayer). And there is now no contradiction between the fact that the Prophet is

7 Recently Omar Hamdan has gathered all these oaths uttered in the form of *sag'* contained in the Koran (see his article "Schwüre in den mekkanischen Suren" in: S.Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text*, Leiden 1996,41-57). This exhausting collection is meritorious. But we cannot but refuse his judgement on the significance and function of these *sag'*-texts within the context of the Koran.

said to have been hostile to the poets (*su'arā* شاعر) while being a poet (*sā'ir*) himself and having profane-political poets (*su'arā*) in his service. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that the ambiguity of the term *sā'ir* has not been borne in mind: the Koranic verses Sura 26,224-226, so often cited in this respect, are as pre-Islamic strophic verses (see below p. 293f) Christian invectives against the people of the pagan Holy Groves or High Places (see for this here page 204ff) so that in this Koranic place the term *sā'ir* is synonymous with *kāhin* (soothsayer = *sāgi*) and does not designate the profane and secular political verse-maker. But in so far as the prophet Muhammad uttered religious ideas sometimes in *sag'* and behaved like a pagan *kāhin* (shrouding himself for his revelations) he could be seen as a *sā'ir* in the old pagan-religious sense. At the same time one could say that he was not a *sā'ir* in the profane and political sense, because he could not and did not compose poetry, – tradition about that is in agreement – , whether quantitative (similar to the Greek and Latin poetry) or strophic (similar to the Christian hymnody composed in different Semitic languages). He was at least in this respect not erudite, although, when Islamic tradition declares the Prophet to have been an illiterate (analphabetic) rendering the wonder of the Koran as great as possible, this last opinion is false: he certainly could write and read.

d) *On the linguistic Aspects of the different Texts of the Koran*

Our linguistic analysis (combined with our discerning strophe technical and dogma-critical methods for the purpose of bringing them together for a consistent alternating play of all these three different perspectives to throw simultaneously light on each and every textual problem from different perspectives) yields the result that in the Koran, as handed down by orthodox Islam and today written without any exception in high standard or classical Arabic (renowned by the pre-Islamic–Old Arabian high standard quantitative poetry), there are contrary to the orthodox Islamic view actually four different types or standards of Arabic language to be met with, which, in so far as they can be recognized as following one another in time, can be labelled as language strata (or language layers):

1. The oldest language layer is the Arabic language of the erstwhile Christian strophic hymnody hidden in the original *rasm*-groundlayer of the Koran because of being blanketed over by a new ur-Islamic prose text usually with a totally different meaning. This Arabic of the eliminated but nevertheless reconstructable pre-Islamic Christian strophic texts, in itself a highly literary vernacular, differs considerably and in several respects from the high standard classical Arabic best known from the pre-Islamic Old Arabic quantitative poetry, which as such had been the model of early Islamic high standard classical Arabic prose. First of all, the grammatical case-endings of nouns and the grammatical modal endings of verbs are in this rediscovered language either missing at all, – what brings this language very close to the vernacular Arabic of old and modern times which knows no grammatical case- and modal-endings – , or else this vernacular language picks up these classic grammatical word-endings and uses them to fill gaps of rhythm and build up otherwise missing rhyme endings

in the flow of its rhythmic and rhyming vernacular speech. And very often these case-endings, as different vocal final sounds, are used to produce necessary rhymes at the ends of the strophic verse-lines although without any regard to whether these ending vowels are grammatically right or wrong. On the contrary, it very often seems that the rhyme-composer misuses classic-grammatical endings intentionally and humourously as a skillful poetical device, a trait which is not alien to any vernacular and popular poetry in any language at any time. Even this underlines that this on principle vernacular language of the pre-Islamic strophe poetry in the Koran is nonetheless a highly literary issue.

But this vernacular and nonetheless artistic language does not only differ from high standard classical Arabic by its grammar. It also differs lexically. First of all, there are, as in every language of every culture, differences in the choice and meaning of words between the vernacular and the high standard language. But in addition to these what might be called inner-national lexical differences of standard, one encounters understandably a lot of Semitic words which have intruded into this pre-Islamic Central Arabian Christian-Arabic from neighbouring Semitic-Christian literatures, especially from contemporary biblical Aramaic, Syriac and less frequently from Biblical Hebrew. These are words which, although stemming from the same Semitic word-root, had in the long-term separate development of these different Semitic languages assumed more or less divergent meanings, but sometimes even essentially different ones.

To sum up: The language of the Christian hymnody in the ground layer of the Koran is grammatically a vernacular Arabic and moreover a vernacular language the lexicography of which is thoroughly impregnated by neighbouring Semitic Christian literatures. It is therefore absolutely indispensable for research into this ur-Koranic Christian hymnody to use both a grammar of early Christian Arabic⁸ (which is per se an early Arabic vernacular or lingua franca of Arabia altogether) as well as to consult all available lexica of all neighbouring Semitic-Christian literatures linguistically more or less akin to the Arabic-Christian one.

2. Second comes the language of the second sense texts in the Koran, i.e. the language of the texts which had been headstrongly enforced on the erstwhile Christian *rasm*-groundlayer of the Koran. This language is actually not a language in the true sense of the word, because it is only a selective and unique conception of "speech for the occasion" as the consequence of the attempt to force a new interpretation on a rather ambiguous but in the last instance (the longer the text the more) decisive script. The erratic nature of this speech has been and is still being excused unconvincingly by orthodox Islamic Koran scholarship and by most Western Islamicists as resulting from the ecstatic state of the Prophet during the revelations unto him. To repeat: The necessary plausible explanation as to how ecstatic speech was transformed on the spot into scriptural form is still missing.
3. The third language is the language of the early editorial glosses and commentaries which have been inserted into or added to the second sense texts which

⁸ First and foremost Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic*, based mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium, Louvain 1966, but compare also Georg Graf (see the Bibliography of this book).

were pressed on the erstwhile Christian *rasm*-groundlayer the better to fasten this new reinterpretation to the given *rasm*-groundlayer. This language, with its conspicuous preference of nominal instead of verbal constructions for its sentences, forms a striking contrast to the literate language both of the erstwhile Christian hymnody as well as the old and present high standard classical Arabic, which apply preferably elegant verbal constructions for their sentences. This mostly nominal language discloses by its lack of elegance its identity as a non-literate language, at least as a language without a discernible distinct literary tradition.

4. The fourth language is the language of the late and latest single-sense texts, that is those originally Islamic texts which are neither immediately nor directly related to the erstwhile Christian *rasm*-groundlayer but which present larger cohesive complexes of prose texts of unconstrained and on principle classical Arabic. This language in its phraseology and grammatical sophistication and in its skilful and therefore elegant appearance is to be thoroughly distinguished from the language defined in the preceding paragraph. Multifarious bits of information transmitted by the Islamic tradition suggest that the language of these large text complexes are to be attributed, – how could the linguistic difference be otherwise explained? – , to the Prophet himself and to the literate secretaries who were charged with the first recording of the revelations to the Prophet.⁹

While for the languages 1), 2) and 3) it is beyond question that they do not present high standard classical Arabic and should originally not have been read as such, it remains for the time being a still open question as to whether the fourth and last type of language in the Koran was originally intended to be read as high standard classical Arabic (with case-endings etc.). Presumably not.¹⁰ But, as has already been explained, this language of the Prophet and his literate secretaries has also been distorted as far as even these text were reinterpreted by post-Muhammadan Koran editors who in this way again created a language for the occasion.

This fourth and last layer of Koranic language has been the least object of our research because our linguistic and dogma-critical endeavour was essentially concentrated on the reconstruction of the vernacular Christian hymnody hidden in the transmitted Koran.

⁹ See for instance the tradition about the influence of the Koran writer Abdallah b. Abi Sarh on the Koran; Th. Nöldeke, GdQ, I, 46f; Julius Wellhausen, Muhammed in Medina, p. 345f.; I. Goldziher, Richtungen d. I. Koranauslegung, p. 35; Ibn Hisham, ed. Wüstenfeld, I, 818f, were Abdallah is spoken of under the name b. Sa'ad.

¹⁰ As to the problems of the reading of the Koran with *irāb* (case-endings) or without, already half a century ago Paul Kahle (The Qur'an and the 'Arabiya, in: I. Goldziher Memorial Volume, I, p. 163-182) has given the necessary hints, with good reasons complaining about the uncritical attitude of Theodor Nöldeke and the overwhelming majority of Western Islamicists who have uncritically succumbed to his dogmatic influence until today.

Thesis 3

The transmitted Islamic Koran text is the final result of several successive editorial revisions.

Three essential motives for the different successive Koran-text-editorial processes can be discerned. These processes went obviously on over several decades and designate in all probability three successive essential periods of editorial work on the Koran.

1. The first and main motive for the editorial reworking of the Koran is dogmatic. It is the motive both for the Islamic reinterpretation of the erstwhile Christian hymnodies (approximately one third of the Koran text) and for the collection and recording of the original Islamic revelation texts (about two thirds of the Koran text). It has its cause in a national-Arabian/pagan-Arabian antagonism¹¹ towards the Central Arabian and especially the Meccan Hellenistic trinitarian Christianity of the prophet's time which had kept good relations to the trinitarian Christianity of all the neighbouring nations with their different special dogmas so that also this Central Arabian Christianity had been split into parties and confessions (*ahzāb* أحزاب) fallen out with each other. The Muslim tradition informs us of circumstances which advise us not to judge *a priori* this national-Arabian/tribal-Arabian countermovement against the foreign-dominated Christianity of Central Arabia as only beginning with the Prophet Muhammad. We would rather suggest in a critical manner that this countermovement probably started at least with the Prophet's grandfather Abd al-Muttalib.¹² It would seem advisable, not to exclude the possibility that the reinterpretation and editorial reworking of the Christian hymnody started even some time before the Prophet Muhammad and was not initiated by him. And these early reinterpreted texts could quite possibly have been added to the Koran much later and only after the Prophet's death.

This pagan- or tribal-Arabian ur-Islamic movement at the time of the Prophet Muhammad seems to have been incited by discord between the different factions and confessions of Christendom in Mecca, rooted there for at least two centuries during which the Kaaba of Mecca had been a Christian church.¹³ We might judge this ur-Islamic movement as part of the internal Christian quarrels between stout trinitarian-orthodox on the one hand and more or less heretical Christian factions on the other.¹⁴ However, we have to imagine that all the different politically influential

11 In a poem of the Prophet's Poet Laureate Hassān b. Tābit this striving for Arabian patriotism is uttered expressis verbis: "If you have come to save your lives and your property lest you be divided among the booty, then admit no rival to God and become Muslims and wear not a similar attire to that of foreigners"; see for this M.J.Kister, Mecca and Tamim, JESHO 8 (1965), p.150 below (Diwan, ed. Hirschfeld, XXV, 12).

12 See for example Ta'riḥ al-Ya'qūbi, ed. M.Th.Houtsma, Vol. II, 108f (edition Beirut 1374-76=1955-56, vol. II, 6f).

13 See for this G.Lüling, Der christliche Kult an der vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und christlichen Theologie, Erlangen 1977¹, 1992², and G.Lüling, Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten M., Erlangen 1981, especially the chapter II, 2.a: "The traditions about the pre- and early Islamic Kaaba as evidence for its use as a church-building".

14 The theologian and Islamicist Friedrich Schwally wrote already in 1909 quite appropriately: "The theologians have not yet sufficiently become conscious of the fact that Islam belongs to Church History" (Nöldeke-Schwally, Gesch. d. Qorans, 1909², II, 209).

Christian denominations of the different neighbouring countries Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Ethiopia maintained their peculiar quarrelsome dependencies in Mecca as they did elsewhere (and today at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem). The Christian ground layer of the Koran, – at the lifetime of the Prophet most probably two hundred years old – , indisputably advocates an archaic ur-Christian angel-Christology which had meanwhile been classified as heresy and therefore been condemned by all politically influential Christian confessions extant in Mecca. These foreign-backed Central Arabian trinitarian Christian factions continued to be fostered by their Hellenistic mother churches, and so we have to imagine that at the lifetime of the Prophet they all had, long ago, abandoned the ur-Christian angel-Christological doctrine which is still clearly recognizable in the Christian hymnody contained in the ground layer of the Koran. Only the Central-Arabian heretics (*hanīfs*), the few descendants of the earliest ur-Christian and therefore angel-Christological communities in Central Arabia, continued to stick to their creed. All over the world the defenders of the archaic nontrinitarian angel-Christology, the Semitic or Judaic (or even better: Ebionitic)¹⁵ and the Arian Christians, had in the 6th, 7th and finally in the 8th century lost the battle for their beliefs, so that also in Central Arabia and in Mecca their unshakable holding unto their conviction, that Christ is an angelic and therefore a created being, meant their extinction. In this Central-Arabian situation the essential feature of the ur-Islamic decision for a fundamental reformation and adjustment of the Central-Arabian ur-Christian faith, having become inescapable, lies in the fact that ur-Islam also did abandon, it is true (and this slowly step by step and possibly starting decades before the activities of the prophet Muhammad), the ur-Christian dogmatical position discernable in the rediscovered hymnody of the ground layer of the Koran. Regarding its remarkable long history in Central Arabia, the nontrinitarian ur-Christian dogma contained in the ur-Koranic hymnody can be labelled as the former “national Arabian” dogmatic Christian position. But Islam did not abandon it in the direction of one of the different imperialistic-dogmatic straitjackets offering themselves from the surrounding neighbourhood of Arabia. Instead Islam reverted to its own tribal-religious traditions diplomatically labelled as “the religion of Abraham, Ishmael and the Tribes” (see here above note 6). Only from this point of view the curiosity can be explained that the prophet Muhammad certainly and rightly maintained to defend the religion of the Central Arabian Hanīfs (antitrinitarian Christian heretics), the oldest form of Arabian Christianity, but that at the same time and in spite of that he was bitterly accused by distinguished representatives of this Hanīfdom¹⁶ – apparently because of his falling back into the tribal-religious and in some respects cruel and belligerent traditions of Central Arabia.

2. Historically the next motive for a renewed editorial overworking and enlargement of the Koran arises with the victory of Islam over the Meccan *musrikūn* (مشركون)

15 For the Ebionites see Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Das Judenchristentum*, Bern und München, 1964, 37-94.

16 See for this for example Julius Wellhausen, *Muhammed in Medina*, p.103 about the Hanīf Abu ʿĀmir and his 50 men; see also about this Abu ʿĀmir Ibn Hishām, ed. Wüstenfeld, I, 411f. and 561s; and recently Uri Rubin, *Hanīfiyya and Kaʿba. An inquiry into the Arabian pre-Islamic background of din Ibrāhīm*, JSAI 13 (1990) and Claude Gilliot, *Muhammad, le Coran et les “Contraintes de l’Histoire”*, in: S.Wild (ed.), *The Qurʾān as Text*, Leiden 1996, 3-26 espec. p.16 where he stressed the point, – and we join his opinion –, that the Hanīfs stood in opposition to Muhammad because of his politics of *ghīhād* and bloodshed. We shall point to this change of politics in the course of our reconstructing text-interpretations because this change of politics is seizable in the change of the meaning of the term *ghīhād* (see here p. 88 with note 93 as well as p. 242 with commentary about Sura 25,48-52 and p. 354f).

= associators), the Christians of "Western" trinitarian theology which associated Jesus to God as his son and deifying him in this way.¹⁷ This second motive worked in three different directions:

First it is effective in the intention to tone down the pivotal motivation (defection from Central Arabian Christianity and the turn towards Central Arabian tribal religion under the label "Abraham, Ishmael and the Tribes") vigorous in the earliest movement of Islam and essential for the victory (two years before the death of the Prophet) over the Meccan *musrikūn* and to try from now on, after the decisive victory had been gained, for internal political reasons to win back the hearts of the defeated (تأليف قلوبهم) and therefore to give up at least partially the early resolute and hostile principles against the once bitterly combatted Meccan "associators" who had beforehand in the main been the Prophet's own clan and, at least, his former compatriots.

On the other hand these later appeasement politics include the intention to make the defeated Meccans forget the formerly propagated and in some respects even by Koranic revelations sanctified dubious and shady expedients, applied for a victory at all costs. Koran texts of such early rigorous propaganda for and instigation to dubious actions have therefore been editorially overworked (see for example here p. 163f with note 14 the reinterpretation of Sura 47,4 and its reconstruction).

And finally, these internal politics of appeasement turned into the concern, dictated by foreign policy interests, at first to disguise the veritable original motives of the ur-Islamic movement and then even to convert its early essential concept into the contrary: From now on, - and that is in post-Muhammadan times - , the image starts to be insinuated that, in spite of contradicting traditions extant until today,¹⁸ no institutionally established Christian community had existed before Islam in Central Arabia, and least of all in Mecca. It is now merely conceded that there existed in pre-Islamic Central Arabia, otherwise allegedly totally polytheistic, only some isolated devotees questing for the One God without any backing up by any Central Arabian Christian community, which allegedly never existed in Central Arabia. And the prophet Muhammad is from now on considered, - again in spite of contradicting old traditions - , to have been the first and only antagonist of the allegedly unrivalled and absolutely ruling Central Arabian pagan polytheism, he himself for the first time having brought to this land the unadulterated teachings of the Judaic and Christian Book-Religions which on their part had been falsified (throughout in accordance with the judgement of modern Christian and Jewish Bible critics). A concomitant of the (by reinterpretation of the Koran and early historical sources) new but faintly founded image of the rise of Islam is the "Old Muslim Opposition against Interpretation of the Koran".¹⁹

17 For the identification of these *musrikūn* see my books "Der christliche Kult an der vorislamischen Kaaba", 2.ed. Erlangen 1992 and "Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad", Erlangen 1981. My view is agreed with by Raimund Köbert, Frühe und spätere Koranexegese, *Orientalia N.S.* 55 (1986), 174-176 *expressis verbis* quoting my position. There is indeed a massive number of references in the writings of early Muslim scholars which plainly show that they took *musrikūn* and the synonyms of this word as "Christians" of the trinitarian creed. A voluminous book could and should be written to gather these passages.

18 These contradicting traditions are in part gathered in C.D.G.Müller, *Kirche und Mission unter den Arabern in vorislamischer Zeit*, Tübingen 1967, and in John Spencer Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, London-New York-Beirut 1979.

19 This is the title of the important treatise of the Norwegian Islamicist Harris Birkeland. See for this subject also I.Goldziher, *Richtungen der Islamischen Koranlegung*, p.55f. But the early Islamic reluctance to dealing dogma-critically and linguistico-critically with the Koran text cannot plausibly be explained, - as Goldziher did - , by a general disapproval of the *qussās* ("story-tellers" predominantly telling Biblical stories!)

3. The third fundamental motive for the editorial reworking of the Koran derives secondarily from the national-Arabian/tribal-Arabian motivation (here Thesis 3,1) and becomes gradually autonomous: the motive of the linguistic overworking of the Koran text in order to become from now on to be read from beginning to end as a high standard classical Arabic prose text. This relatively late linguistic redaction consists therefore on the one hand in the removal of the strophic structure of the original Christian text of the *rasm*-groundlayer of the Koran, and on the other hand in the linguistic reworking of the entire Islamic Koran text (all second sense and single sense texts) to replace the hitherto vernacular reading (without case-endings) by a high standard classic Arabic reading. The time when this linguistic redaction of the Koran came to be finally accomplished would have been the time when the diacritical points (to discern the numerous ambiguous characters of consonants of the *rasm*-groundlayer of the Koranic text) as well as the diacritical strokes (to indicate the vowels to be read with the consonants) had become successively accepted and finally cogent after they had formerly been prohibited for use in Koran codices, although we probably have to differentiate between on the one hand aged and therefore revered official Koran codices, which were preserved and copied in their old unpointed and unvocalized form for a long time, and on the other hand the personal copies of private or professional Koran experts for whom pointation and vocalization became more and more usual and finally natural.

The psalmodic performance of vernacular, but nonetheless highly literate, strophic hymnody, – often in the form of responsories – , had been a characteristic of common as well as of public ritual devotion. This strophe-poetic form of devotional performance must, as an encroachment from foreign countries, in the national- and tribal-Arabian earliest Islam per se have aroused antipathy. But an additional and probably by far more important motive for the early Islamic disapproval of hymnody and responsories must have been the mnemotechnical value of every strophic performance: rhythm and rhyme have always been and still remain the most important support for the preservation and oral transmission of a voluminous text. So when memory of the originally Christian contents of the Koranic *rasm*-groundlayer was to be erased because new Islamic contents in prose had been enforced on that *rasm*, first of all the pillars of memory had to be dislodged, i.e. the mnemotechnical devices of rhythm and rhyme. The intention to impede the recollection of the former content of the Koran can be regarded as one of the reasons why the whole Koran was recast as a high standard classical Arabic prose text (the remaining end-rhymes of the overlong prose sentences can be neglected).

Nevertheless, the difficult question as to whether the prophet Muhammad and his inner circle had in the earliest period of the Islamic movement themselves still cultivated the Old Arabian popular art of vernacular strophic poetry and hymnody, – and that means for instance that he had known and even performed or sung for instance the Christian hymn Sura 96 as we have reconstructed it (see here p. 91-95) – , this question must, at the time being, be left open and will possibly never be answered with conclusive evidence. But our general opinion is: Yes – and the Prophet did not know at all the version of Sura 96 still valid today which is in all because of their untrustworthiness. At most there can be an indirect connection: because these *qussās* still knew the original Biblical stories best they were disapproved and classed as untrustworthy. Connected to this, despite of the *qussās*, is the denigration of the *qurrā* "the Readers (better: the professionally trained commemorators) of the Koran" as incompetent by the newly established guild of the Islamic grammarians and creators of the orthodox Islamic conception of "Koran" (see for this C.H.M.Versteegh, Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam, Leiden 1993, 192-198 et passim; see his Index).

probability the product of post-Muhammadan orthodox Islamic reinterpretation. He knew and quite possibly also read it only in the originally Christian form we have reconstructed it (s. here Chapter 1 Section 1).

The predilection of rising Islam for the national-Arabian disposition brought about a preference for high standard classical Arabic over the international Arabic vernacular spoken also beyond Central Arabia in the surrounding non-tribal countries with an urban culture. This "national" high standard Arabic had in a steadily increasing process of grammatical and orthographical reworking been pressed on the rasm-groundlayer of the Koran.²⁰

While in the earliest phase of developing Islam the lexical and grammatical differences extant between the Christian Arabic koine and the Old Arabian high standard language had in detail been used for the reinterpretation of the Koran, - whereas one has to realize these differences' own productivity independent of the intentions and aims of the reinterpreters (we shall repeatedly return to this issue later) - , it seems that the high standard Arabic reworking of the Koran as a general principle only relatively late came to full efficiency and validity, probably long after the death of the Prophet.

The exclusively linguistic reworking of the Koran text per se is chronologically the last, and in its effect on the meaning of the Koran text, the most insignificant general motive for the reworking of the Koran.

Thesis 4

The findings within the Koran text are confirmed by an abundance of Muslim traditions and useful information apart from and beyond the Koran text itself. These important traditions and information have hitherto either not been understood in their original meaning or they have remained unexamined.

Seen from the basis of our findings in the Koran text there is no apparent contradiction between the existence of Koranic ideas, thoughts and expressions in the pre-Islamic Old Arabian poets, even though the Islamic Koran came into being

²⁰ Already in 1905 this thesis was brought forward by the German theologian and Arabist Karl Vollers at the International Congress of Orientalists at Algier (attended by a lot of distinguished Muslim scholars) and then was published in the form of his book "Volkssprache und Schriftsprache im alten Arabien, Straßburg 1906". The reason why his thesis has not been assimilated and evolved by scholars of the following generations seems obviously to be that since the 1920s when Wellhausen, Goldziher, Schwally, Vollers et simili had passed away, Western Islamicists adopted the attitude, "to wear" - as my friend, the Arabist Götz Schregle, used to say with regard to the German Islamicists - , "spiritually in their mind a turban", from now on practicing Islamic scholarship and no longer scholarship on Islam. Vis à vis the menacing death penalty imposed by *Shari'a* on Muslims substantially criticising Islam and in consequence being classed as having fallen away from Islam (*irtidād*) it is not to be expected that Muslim scholars would be keen to march at the top of the front assimilating and developing, for example, the already well founded thesis of Vollers, while Western Islamicists behave uninterested or fearful although the *Shari'a*-law with its death-sentence against defection from Islam does not concern Western non-Muslim Islamicists legally.

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much later. Because it was, rightly, held unthinkable that the Islamic Koran should have drawn from these poets; the authenticity of this poetry, composed long before the Islamic Koran, was thrown into doubt. But now it appears that these pre-Islamic Arabian poets were indeed influenced by the Koran, but it was the much older Christian ur-Koran fragmentarily contained in the *rasm*-groundlayer of the Islamic Koran. And they were also influenced by Christian texts (hymnody and prose) parallel to or even much older than this rediscovered pre-Islamic ur-Koran. These extra-Koranic Christian Arabic hymnodies and prose texts of pre-Islamic times are lost because rooted out by the orthodox Islamic tradition in earliest Islamic times in order not to become at any later time evidence for the rediscovery of the Christian hymnody hidden in the ground layer of the Islamic Koran. The discussions within Western Islam-scholarship about the authenticity of the pre-Islamic Old Arabian poetry have meanwhile long since concluded that this poetry is in the main authentic. The thesis of Louis Cheikho²¹ also receives a decisive support from our findings in the *rasm*-groundlayer of the orthodox Islamic Koran. He holds that the pre-Islamic Old Arabian poetry is largely Christian or, -- as we should add because Cheikho could not yet see that --, had been Christian. "Had been", because innumerable pre-Islamic Christian poems were Islamically reinterpreted using the same editorial techniques which we have already explained as having been applied in the editorial reinterpretation of the erstwhile Christian ur-Koran.²²

Furthermore, orthodox Muslim traditions on the circumstances of the rise of Islam can now, starting from the essential features of our findings as to the ground layer of the most authentic source of Islam, the Koran, be exposed to a historico-critical analysis. From the viewpoint of this ur-Koranic basis one can then clearly make out the retouches of the later orthodox Muslim historians in the documents of their early historiography on the rise of Islam.²³

21 For the thesis of Louis Cheikho see my chapter "The authenticity of the pre-Islamic Old Arabian Poetry as evidence for the strength of the Christian influence in pre-Islamic Central Arabia" in my book "Der christliche Kult an der vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und christlichen Theologie, Erlangen 1977 (1.ed.) and 1992 (2.ed.), where I am also dealing with the orthodox-reactionary book of Camille Hechaimé, Louis Cheikho et son livre "Le christianisme et la littérature chrétienne en Arabie avant l'Islam", Beyrouth 1967.

22 For a typical example of such Islamic reinterpretation of a pre-Islamic Christian poem composed in a high standard Arabic quantitating metre, see G.Lülling, Die einzigartige Perle des Suwaid b. Abi Kähil al-Yaskuri (second part). Über die eindeutige Christlichkeit dieses in der vorislamischen "Heidenzeit" hochgerühmten Gedichtes, Erlangen 1973. For some verses of the reconstructed Christian "Yatima" (*yafima* = "einzigartige Perle" = "unique pearl") see here p. 455ff with notes 22-24. For reconstructions of further Old Arabic Christian poems see p. 454f and 482-486.

23 The results of my first attempt at reconstructing the dogmatically distorted Islamic historiography on the rise of Islam have been put forward in my book "Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad, Erlangen 1981". Among many other things we have also reconstructed there (p. 283ff) the original text about the dispute between the Prophet and Waraqa b. Naufal, a cousin of the Prophet's first wife Hadiga who obviously was Christian and famous for his erudition in Biblical literatures. Islamic tradition interprets this text (see Ibn Hishâm, Sira, ed. Wüstenfeld, I,153f, Cairo-edition, I,254) to have the meaning as if Waraqa eulogized the prophetship of Muhammad. But on account of serious linguistic inconsistencies of the text in this positive traditional interpretation one can still conclusively reconstruct the original meaning of that text which was an emphatic rejection of the Prophets prophetship. Islamic tradition has it that Waraqa was until the end of his life *ā'mā* "blind". But this term "blind" means in the Koran itself as well as in Muslim religious literature predominantly "unbelieving" (in the Koran by 30 occurrences against two with the meaning "blind" in the medical sense). Waraqa had never accepted Islam, but after the death of the prophet Muhammad orthodox Islam eliminated this unpleasant story reinterpreting it into the diametrical opposite.

Chapter 1

The Phenomenon of Ambiguity to be found in many Sections of the Koran Text exemplified by the Text of Sura 96 and 80

In the Koran as transmitted by Muslim Orthodoxy one can find a series of text sections the interpretation of which lives by or is inspired by a much more legendary than historical incident assigned to these text sections by very early Muslim editors to give the relevant text section a particular meaning, which to deduce from the wording of such a Koranic text section alone and in itself could and would never have been possible, because in the wording of such a text section there is not given the faintest indication for such an allegedly historical incident. And moreover, the interpretation founded on such an allegedly historical incident adduced from beyond the given Koranic text appears, from the point of view of grammar and lexicography, so unusual or simply wrong that one can barely furnish any parallel, neither from contemporary non-Koranic nor even from pre-Koranic Arabic texts, for the linguistic usage and the grammatical constructions applied in such text sections remarkable by such "frame-narratives" (Rahmenerzählung) imputed to by Islamic tradition.

A word for word interpretation of such texts, relying on nothing else than on the transmitted *rasm*-text and even disregarding the traditional orthodox Islamic commentaries, – and naturally neglecting also the transmitted pointation which is in itself already a doubtful commentary on the given *rasm*-text – , yields astonishingly, and contrary to the hypertrophic traditional interpretation, as to its content, a cohesive and self-contained word for word text, which needs no supplementary commentary and certainly no vague, allegedly historical incident to be the core of the text section, because the text section is by itself really significant enough. As a rule the acribic analysis of the broader *rasm*-text per se, – the text sections before and after the dubious section being taken into consideration – , uncovers one long line of thought running through all these sections, whereas the traditional Islamic interpretation yields several short sections with, as to their content, independent and extremely short lines of thought, usually with totally disconnected ideas.

Thus far, we are speaking of ambiguity in certain sections of the Koran text in a provisional sense: We cannot expect to have made our case after the presentation of the evidence in only one chapter but certainly we anticipate having done so after the display of all our research and especially an analysis of Sura 74 (fifth and last Chapter). There is enough data to have conveyed the fact that these oldest text sections of the Koran contained and still contain an unmistakable meaning different

from the meaning pressed on the original Koranic *rasm*-text by orthodox Muslim Koran redactors using an allegedly historical frame-narrative. Such frame narratives were not part of the Koran and are without doubt wholly alien to that original ground layer (*rasm*) of the Koran sections in question.

We begin this long way to final certainty with the critico-exegetical analysis of the Suras 96 and 80 because on the one hand this entry corresponds to the factual way of our discovery of this ambiguity of sections of the Koran text and because on the other hand just this Sura 96 in particular is also a very suitable example for an introduction into the problems, since in Sura 96 the original pre-Islamic Christian word for word sense of the Koranic *rasm*-groundlayer can be uncovered without the necessity of changing any character of the transmitted *rasm*-text (ground layer). Sura 80 will then be one of the next most suitable objects to present a first exemplary reconstruction of a Koran text section where, in addition to the change of diacritical points and vowel-signs, the *rasm*-groundlayer itself had been slightly altered by Muslim Koran redactors to establish their interpretation deviating from the original Christian meaning of that text which is certainly about 200 years older than the rise of Islam. We shall adduce plenty of evidence that these Islamic editorial alterations of the *rasm*-text have to be cancelled to restore the original pre-Islamic Koran text.