FORGOTTEN WITNESS: EVIDENCE FOR
THE EARLY CODIFICATION OF THE QURʾĀN*

Estelle Whelan[†]

Columbia University

Three kinds of historical evidence are examined here that have not previously been seriously considered in relation to the question of codification. The Umayyad inscriptions from the Dome of the Rock have generally been ignored or dismissed because of apparent departures from the "canonical" text, as represented by the Cairo edition; here they are analyzed for the evidence they nonetheless provide for the state of the Qurʾānic text toward the end of the first *hijrī* century. Equally informative are al-Walīd's inscriptions at the Great Mosque of al-Madīnah, datable about twenty years later; they were described by eyewitnesses in the first half of the tenth century, when they were still partly visible. Finally, from scattered indications it is suggested that there was a group of professional Qurʾān copyists at al-Madīnah at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century.

[†] Estelle Whelan died on 13 October 1997 (ed.).

In the last two decades a controversy has arisen over the period in which the text of Muslim scripture became codified. The traditional Islamic view can be summarized as follows.[1] Both Abū Bakr (A.H. 11–13/ A.D. 632–34) and ʿUmar (13–23/634–44) made efforts to gather together the scraps of revelation that had been written down by the faithful during the lifetime of the Prophet, on bones, on palm leaves, on potsherds, and on whatever other materials were at hand, as well as being preserved in "the breasts of men."[2] But it was the third caliph, ʿUthmān (23–35/644–61), who first charged a small group of men at al-Madīnah with codifying and standardizing the text. Alarmed by reported divergences in the recitation of the revelation, he commissioned one of the Prophet's former secretaries, Zayd b. Thābit, and several prominent members of Quraysh—ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith are those most often mentioned—to produce a standard copy of the text, based on the compilation in the keeping of Ḥafṣah, daughter of ʿUmar. If there was disagreement over language among members of the commission, it was to be resolved in accordance with the dialect spoken by Quraysh. Once the standard text had been established, several copies were made and sent to major cities in the Islamic domain, specifically Damascus, al-Baṣrah, al-Kūfah, and perhaps others. Although there are variations in detail, for example, in the list of names of those who served on ʿUthmān's commission and in the list of cities to which copies were sent, this basic outline is not in dispute within the Muslim world.

Oral recitation nevertheless remained the preferred mode of transmission, and, as time passed, variant versions of the text proliferated—the kind of organic change that is endemic to an oral tradition. In addition, because of the nature of the early Arabic script, in which short vowels were not indicated and consonants of similar form were only sometimes distinguished by pointing, writing, too, was subject to misunderstanding, copyist's error, and change over time. In the early tenth century, at Baghdad, Abū Bakr Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936) succeeded in reducing the number of acceptable readings to the seven that were predominant in the main Muslim centers of the time: al-Madīnah, Makkah, Damascus, al-Baṣrah, and al-Kūfah. Some Qurʾān readers who persisted in deviating from these seven readings were subjected to draconian punishments. Nevertheless, with the passage of time, additional variant readings were readmitted, first "the three after the seven," then "the four after the ten." The modern Cairo edition, prepared at al-Azhar in the 1920s, is based on one of the seven readings permitted

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[1] The classic Western study of the history of the text as preserved in Muslim tradition is T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 2nd ed., ed. F. Schwally, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1919). For useful brief summaries, with references, see W. M. Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh, 1970); A. T. Welch and J. D. Pearson, "al-Ḳurʾān," *EI²*, 5: 400–432.

[2] Nöldeke, 13.

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by Ibn Mujāhid, that of Abū Bakr ʿĀṣim (d. ca. 127/745) as transmitted by Ḥafṣ b. Sulaymān (d. 180/796).

Early efforts by Muslim scholars to establish the sequence of the revelation, particularly the verses revealed at Makkah and those revealed at al-Madīnah, were emulated by European scholars, who focused on similar problems, though often adopting somewhat different criteria for determining solutions.[3] Nevertheless, already in the early twentieth century Alphonse Mingana seriously challenged the entire historical framework outlined here.[4] Mingana, whose approach was patently tendentious,[5] argued that the Qurʾān had not been codified in book form until several decades later than was generally accepted, in the reign of the fifth Umayyad caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (65–86/685–705). In the 1970s John Wansbrough went much farther, concluding, on the basis of textual and linguistic analysis, that there is no evidence for a "canonical" version of the Qurʾānic text before the very end of the eighth century at the earliest.[6]

Wansbrough argued that the nature of the text itself presupposes "an organic development from originally independent traditions during a long period of transmission . . . juxtaposition of independent pericopes to some extent unified by means of a limited number of rhetorical conventions."[7] In support of his conclusion he noted that Muslim traditions about early revelation, indeed about the life of the Prophet and early Muslim history as a whole, are known only from later Islamic literature; Qurʾānic exegesis, for example, first evolved in the late eighth and ninth centuries.[8] Nor can most early Muslim traditions be confirmed in contemporary non-Muslim sources. Wansbrough's entire analysis was based on the assumption that the "canonization" of the Qurʾānic text and its role in the development of the Muslim community followed a trajectory similar to that of Hebrew scripture. For example, in connection with "exegetical" (Wansbrough's characterization of much of the content of the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq, ca. 85–150/704–67, edited by Ibn Hishām, d. 218/833) reports of material that also appears in the "canon," he declared: "For Hebrew scripture the priority in time of such reports over the actual reproduction in literary form of prophetical utterances has been established. To postulate a similar, if not identical, process for Muslim scripture seems to me not unjustified, though in this particular instance complicated by the redaction history of the Sira itself." He also cited "the likelihood of a Rabbinic model for the account of an authoritative text produced in committee, namely the Jamnia tradition on the canonization of Hebrew scripture."[9] The vastly different historical contexts in which these supposedly parallel processes took place were not explicitly recognized or taken into account in Wansbrough's literary analysis. In fact the results of this analysis were frequently cited as grounds for rejecting the supposed historical evidence presented in such texts as the *Sīrah*. By means of this reasoning Wansbrough arrived at the conclusion that "concern with the text of scripture did not precede by much the appearance of the masoretic [exegetical] literature as it has in fact been preserved": that is, in his view the Qurʾānic text assumed its canonical form more or less simultaneously with the appearance of commentaries on it (*tafsīr*).[10] He took as confirmation of this view Joseph Schacht's conclusion

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[3] See Welch and Pearson, 416–19, especially p. 411, referring to Gustav Flügel's edition of the Qurʾānic text.

[4] A. Mingana, "The Transmission of the Ḳurʾān," *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian & Oriental Society* (1915–16): 25–47.

[5] His bias is apparent in statements like the following: "In considering the question of the transmission of the Ḳurʾān according to Christian writers, the reader will feel that he is more in the domain of historical facts than in that of the precarious Ḥadīth . . ." (Mingana, 34).

[6] J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford, 1977); cf. J. Chabbi, "Histoire et tradition sacrée: La biographie impossible de Mahomet," *Arabica* 43.1 (1996): 190–94. In a recent article Y. D. Nevo ("Towards a Prehistory of Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 [1994]: 108–41) has attempted to confirm the interval suggested by Wansbrough by tracing the gradual evolution of rock-cut inscriptions in the Negev from "basic" (pre-Islamic) to "Muḥammadan" to "Muslim" religious texts. Aside from the fact that these terms are not clearly defined, Professor Donner has noted (personal communication) that Nevo's argument can be taken equally well to support the traditional view that early Islam and the Qurʾānic text evolved primarily in al-Madīnah and other urban centers, to which the Negev was entirely peripheral. The author is grateful to Professor Donner for calling this article to her attention.

[7] Wansbrough, 47; cf. pp. 12, 18–20, 44–45, 49.

[8] For recent efforts to identify fragments of original texts preserved by later writers, see S. Leder, "The Literary use of the *Khabar*: A Basic Form of Historical Writing," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I: *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad (Princeton, 1992), 227–315; and W. al-Qāḍī, "Early Islamic State Letters: The Question of Authenticity," in ibid., 215–75.

[9] Wansbrough, 42, 45.

[10] Wansbrough, 45.

that the Qur'ānic text did not serve as a basis for Muslim law before the ninth century.[11]

Particularly crucial to Wansbrough's argument is the term "canonical," for which he assumes a high standard of precision. It is clear that even in the Muslim tradition the fact was acknowledged that readings of the Qur'ān continually diverged from a supposed original; it is clear also that steps had repeatedly to be taken to impose or protect a unitary text of revelation—in the time of ʿUthmān, again in the time of Ibn Mujāhid, and even as recently as the 1920s, when scholars at al-Azhar prepared the currently most widely used edition. This edition is nonetheless not treated as uniquely "canonical" in parts of India and North Africa, where versions that differ in titles of the *sūrah*s, divisions between *āyāt*, and occasionally vocalizations are in use; furthermore, it is clear from surviving manuscripts that such variants have persisted through the history of Islam.[12] Wansbrough's difficulty appears to be that these divergences are not substantive but rather involve details that he perceives as formalistic, perhaps even trivial.[13] Yet there is abundant evidence from the relatively well-documented period of the ninth and tenth centuries that such divergences were not perceived as trivial within Islam itself.

Perhaps the most valuable results of Wansbrough's study for the historian are his analyses of aspects of the text that, though already familiar, had not previously been so carefully delineated or explored in all their implications. One of these aspects is the polemical character of much of the Qur'ān, which, as Wansbrough convincingly demonstrates, was focused on Jewish scripture and tradition, implying an important Jewish opposition as one of the motivations behind the "canonization" of Islamic scripture. A second is the nature of the text itself, a series of "independent pericopes" placed side by side but expressed in a unified language and style.

The essential challenge to historians of the early Islamic period is to reconcile these undeniably useful observations with historical evidence that Wansbrough has not admitted into his analysis. Because of the relentless

opacity of his own writing style it is tempting to ignore this challenge, but the implications of his argument are too far-reaching to permit such self-indulgence. It is important to recognize that his analysis was guided predominantly by generalizations drawn from the history of the biblical text, which were then applied to Muslim scripture. Most formidable is the conclusion, not stated explicitly but inescapable from Wansbrough's analysis, that the entire Muslim tradition about the early history of the text of the Qur'ān is a pious forgery, a forgery so immediately effective and so all-pervasive in its acceptance that no trace of independent contemporary evidence has survived to betray it. An important related issue involves the dating of early manuscripts of the Qur'ān. If Wansbrough is correct that approximately a century and a half elapsed before Muslim scripture was established in "canonical" form, then none of the surviving manuscripts can be attributed to the Umayyad or even the very early ʿAbbāsid period; particularly, one controversial manuscript discovered in Ṣanʿāʾ in the 1970s, no. 20-33.1, for which a date around the turn of the eighth century has been proposed,[14] would have to have been copied at a much later period.

The purpose of the present study is to call attention to some types of evidence that Wansbrough did not take into account and that seem to contradict the historical conclusions that he has drawn from his essentially ahistorical analysis.

QUR'ĀNIC INSCRIPTIONS

Primary documents for the condition of the Qur'ānic text in the first century of Islam are ʿAbd al-Malik's two long inscriptions in blue-and-gold glass mosaic, which encircle respectively the inner and outer faces of the octagonal arcade at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. They are still preserved in their entirety, except for the substitution of the name of the ʿAbbāsid al-Maʾmūn (198–218/813–33) for that of ʿAbd al-Malik; al-Maʾmūn did not, however, change the foundation date included by his predecessor, 72/691–92, which thus ensures that the inscriptions were actually executed in the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik. The main inscription consists of brief invocations combined with a series of passages taken from what are now various parts of the Qur'ān, all concerned

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[11] Wansbrough, 44.

[12] See, e.g., Welch and Pearson, 409–11; A. Jeffery and I. Mendelsohn, "The Orthography of the Samarqand Qur'ān Codex," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62 (1942): 175–95; A. Brockett, "Aspects of the Physical Transmission of the Qur'ān in the 19th-Century Sudan: Script, Decoration, Binding and Paper," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 2 (1987): 45, 52, nn. 2–3.

[13] See, e.g., Wansbrough, 45.

[14] H. C. von Bothmer, "Architekturbilder im Koran: Eine Prachthandschrift der Umayyadenzeit aus dem Yemen," *Pantheon* 45 (1987): 4–20.

with a single theme—challenging Christian dogma in the main Christian pilgrimage city.[15]

The text was originally read as a single inscription by Max van Berchem, who began with the outer face of the arcade and thus located the foundation notice in the middle, supposedly followed by the Qurʾānic verses on the inner face of the same arcade; this sequence has been accepted without question by most subsequent scholars.[16] Van Berchem's arrangement contradicts the normal sequence of Islamic foundation inscriptions, in which the foundation notice occurs at the end. In fact, this mosaic text should be recognized as comprising two distinct inscriptions. As Christel Kessler has transcribed them, it is clear that the band on the inner face of the arcade contains the main message. The outer inscription is experienced first by those entering the building, who may read only the proximate segment, but the main text, on the inner face of the arcade, was meant to be read in its entirety by those who were returning as they had entered, which involved circumambulation of the middle ambulatory.[17]

It begins on the south side of the octagon with part of the *shahādah*, the declaration of faith, in the same form in which it appears on the reform coinage of ʿAbd al-Malik introduced five years later, and is followed by a series of excerpts from different parts of the Qurʾān as it is now constituted:[18]

> "In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate" [beginning of the *shahādah*]. "Unto Him belongeth sovereignty and unto Him belongeth praise. He quickeneth and He giveth death; and He is Able to do all things" [a conflation of 64:1 and 57:2]. "Muḥammad is the servant of God and His messenger" [variant completion of the *shahādah*], "L//o! God and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation" [33:56 complete]. "The blessing of God be on him and peace be on him, and may God have mercy" [blessing, not in the Qurʾānic text]. "O, people of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your // religion (*dīni//kum*) nor utter aught concerning God save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of God, and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not 'Three'—Ce//ase! (it is) better for you!—God is only One God. Far be it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And God is sufficient as Defender. The Messiah will never scorn to b//e a servant[19] unto God, nor will the favoured angels. Whoso scorneth His service and is proud, all such will He assemble unto Him" [4:171–72 complete]. "Oh God, bless Your messenger and Your servant Je//sus son of Mary" (interjection introducing the following passage). "Peace

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[15] For a full exploration of the polemical function of this building, expressed not only through the inscriptions but also through the choice of site and the architectural form, see O. Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 33–62; cf. H. Busse, "Monotheismus und islamische Christologie in der Bauinschrift des Felsendoms in Jerusalem," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 161 (1981): 168–78. More recently N. Rabat, "The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock," *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 12–26, has provided some refinements and modifications to Grabar's interpretation. M. Rosen-Ayalon has cited references in the inscriptions to angels and to the cycle of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection out of context in support of her interpretation of the building as a representation of paradise (*The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf: An Iconographic Study* [Jerusalem, 1989], 67–68). These references are, however, merely details in clearly antitrinitarian messages that would be unlikely to put the reader in mind of paradise.

[16] M. van Berchem, *Jérusalem "Ḥaram",* Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, pt. 2, Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 154.1–2 (Cairo, 1925–27): 229–46, no. 215. Cf. Busse, "Die arabischen Inschriften in und am Felsendom in Jerusalem," *Das Heilige Land* 109 (1977): 12–14, cf. 22–23; Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton, 1996), 58–61.

[17] C. Kessler, "ʿAbd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970): 2–64. The sequence of Qurʾānic excerpts is garbled in E. C. Dodd and S. Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture* (Bei-

rut, 1981), 1: 21–24. For the sequence in which the inscriptions are intended to be read, see S. Blair, "What Is the Date of the Dome of the Rock?" in *Bayt al-Maqdis: ʿAbd al-Malik's Jerusalem,* ed. J. Raby and J. Johns (Oxford, 1992), 1: 86–87.

[18] The basic text presented here is that given by Kessler. The recent publication for the first time of a complete and clearly readable set of photographs (though misidentified and presented in incorrect order) has, however, necessitated a few corrections and alterations in her version; for the photographs, see S. Nuseibeh and O. Grabar, *The Dome of the Rock* (New York, 1996), 82–105. The translations of the Qurʾānic passages are those of M. M. Pickthall, with substitution of "God" for "Allāh" and "Book" for "Scripture."

[19] This rendering seems more appropriate than "slave," given by Pickthall.

be on him the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he shall be raised alive!" [19:33 complete, with change from first to third person]. "Such was Jesus, son of Mary, (this is) a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It befitteth not (the Majesty of) God that He should take unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him! Wh//en He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is" [19:34–35 complete]. Lo! God is my Lord and your Lord. So serve Him. That is the right path" [19:36 complete, except for initial "and"]. "God (Himself) is witness that there is no God save H//im. And the angels and the men of learning (too are witness). Maintaining His creation in justice, there is no God save Him, the Almighty, the Wise. Lo! religion with God (is) The Surrender (to His will and guidance). Those who (formerly) received the Book differed only after knowledge came unto them, through transgression among themselves. Whoso disbelieveth the revelations of God (will find that) lo! God is swift at reckoning" [3:18–19 complete].

The outer inscription also begins on the south side:

"In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate" [beginning of the *shahādah*]. "Say: He is God, the One! God, the eternally Besought of all! He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him" [112 complete except for the introductory *basmalah*]. "Muhammad is the Messenger of God" [completion of the *shahādah*], "the blessing of God be on him" [blessing]. //

"In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate. Muhammad is the Messenger of God" [*shahādah*, complete]. "Lo! God and His angels shower blessings on the Pro//phet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation" [33:56 complete].

"In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One" [beginning of the *shahādah*]. "Pra//ise be to God, Who hath not taken unto Himself a son, and Who hath no partner in the Sovereignty, nor hath He any protecting friend through dependence. And magnify Him with all magnificence" [17:111 complete except for the initial "And say"]. "Muhammad is the Messenger of G//od" [completion of the *shahādah*], "the blessing of God be on him and the angels and His prophets, and peace be on him, and may God have mercy" [blessing].

"In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One. He has no asso-

ciate" [beginning of the *shahādah*]. "Unto // Him belongeth sovereignty and unto Him belongeth praise. He quickeneth and He giveth death; and He is Able to do all things" [conflation of 64:1 and 57:2]. "Muhammad is the Messenger of God" [completion of the *shahādah*], "the blessing of God be on him. May He accept his intercession on the Day of Judgment on behalf of his people" [blessing and prayer]. //

"In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate. Muhammad is the Messenger of God" [the *shahādah* complete], "the blessing of God be on him" [blessing].

"The servant of God ʿA//bd [Allāh the Imām al-Maʾmūn, Commander][20] of the Faithful, built this dome in the year two and seventy. May God accept from him and be content with him. Amen, Lord of the worlds, praise be to God" [foundation notice].

With minor variations, these Qurʾānic passages reflect the text as known from the standard Cairo edition, and it is possibly the existence of these inscriptions that led Mingana to propose that the original codification of the Qurʾān had taken place during the caliphate, not of ʿUthmān, but of ʿAbd al-Malik.

It is, in fact, puzzling that, although the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock have been known to scholars for more than a century and have repeatedly been the subject of interpretation, little attention has been paid to the elements from which they were composed. On the inner face of the octagon the declaration of faith is followed by conflated verses describing the powers of God. Next the Prophet is introduced, with a blessing that, though not directly quoted from the Qurʾān, was clearly already in use in 72/694. Then comes an exhortation to Christians that Jesus was also a prophet and mortal, followed by the claim that God is sufficient unto Himself. Finally comes a command to bend to His will and the threat of reckoning for those who do not. The inscription on the outer face consists, as Kessler[21] has pointed out, of six sections set apart by ornaments, the last being the actual foundation notice. Each of the other five sections begins with the *basmalah*. In each of the first four it is followed by the Umayyad *shahādah* and a Qurʾānic verse arrayed in such a way as to form a self-contained and coherent statement, followed by a blessing on the Prophet. The fifth section is the complete *shahādah* alone. Each of these

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[20] Brackets enclose the substitution by al-Maʾmūn.
[21] Kessler, 11.

sections is thus a miniature composition encapsulating the major themes of the inscription on the inner face.

Within this context it is clear that the minor textual variations noted have been introduced to fit the sense. Such alteration of the standard Qur³ānic text in order to express a particular theme seems always to have been acceptable in Islamic inscriptions, however rigidly the actual recitation of the Qur³ān may have been regulated; even inscriptions of much later dates, when there is no question that a "canonical" text of the Qur³ān had been established, embody such variations.[22] It is difficult to believe that the selection and coherent arrangement of passages in the time of ᶜAbd al-Malik would not have influenced the "canonical" arrangement of the text had codification taken place in his reign or later. It seems particularly unlikely that the combination of phrases from 64:1 and 57:2, repeated twice, could originally have been a unitary statement that was then "deconstructed" and incorporated into different parts of the Qur³ān.

Nevertheless, the types of minor variation mentioned, juxtaposition of disparate passages, conflation, shift of

person, and occasional omission of brief phrases, led Patricia Crone and Michael Cook to question the value of the mosaic inscriptions at the Dome of the Rock as evidence for the "literary form" of the text as a whole at that early date.[23] Their skepticism appears to have been engendered rather by two contemporary inscriptions on hammered copper plaques installed on the exterior faces of the lintels over the inner doors in the eastern and northern entrances respectively: "There is extensive agreement with our text in [the mosaic inscriptions] . . . ; on the other hand, there is extensive deviance from our text in [the copper plaques]. . . ."[24] Closer scrutiny of the two copper plaques suggests that the question is not one of "extensive deviance"; rather, one inscription is not primarily Qur³ānic in character, and the other is a combination of Qur³ānic fragments and paraphrases that makes sense only as a manipulation of a recognized standard text. The copper plaques include, respectively, seven and four lines of the Umayyad originals; in each instance the remainder of the text, no doubt including an original foundation inscription in the name of ᶜAbd al-Malik, was replaced by an attached sheet of copper inscribed in the name of al-Ma³mūn—substitutions comparable to that at the end of the outer mosaic inscription.[25]

In the first instance, the plaque over the eastern entrance, the remaining lines (indicated below by paragraph breaks) of the original inscription contain the following text:

> "In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate" [*basmalah*], "praise be to God than Whom there is no god but He" [*taḥmīd*], "the Living, the Eternal,[26] the Originator of the heavens and the earth and the Light of the heavens

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[22] Pace Busse, "Inschriften," 10. One example is an inscribed stone block dated 10 Jumādā II 550/11 August 1155, set into the north wall of the Great Mosque in the town of Cizre (Jazīrat ibn ᶜUmar), on the Tigris in southeastern Turkey; for an illustration, see E. Whelan, "The Public Figure: Political Iconography in Medieval Mesopotamia" (Ph.D. diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1979), fig. 407. Of the eight lines inscribed on it the first is unreadable. The second introduces the main theme of the inscription, the Day of Judgment. Lines 6–8 include an invocation of blessing for the anonymous donor and the date. Lines 3–5 contain the following fragments from the Qur³ān, run together to express a single, coherent message: "On the Day when every soul will find itself confronted with all that it hath done of good . . ." [the introduction to 3:30] "On the Day when We say unto hell: Art thou filled? and it saith: Can there be more to come?" [50:30 complete] "On the day when the wrong-doer gnaweth his hands . . ." [introduction to 25:27] "the Day of the approaching (doom), when the hearts will be choking the throats . . ." [excerpts from 40:18]. Professor Annemarie Schimmel very kindly helped in deciphering this inscription. See also A. Welch, "Qur³ān and Tomb: The Religious Epigraphs of Two Early Sultanate Tombs in Delhi," in *Indian Epigraphy: Its Bearing on the History of Art*, ed. F. M. Asher and G. S. Gai (New Delhi, 1985), 257–67. Professor Bellamy very kindly supplied the reference to Jalāl al-Dīn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭi, *al-Itqān fī ᶜulūm al-Qur³ān*, 2nd ed., ed. M. A. Ibrāhīm (n.p. [Cairo?], 1363/1984), 1: 378–80, a fifteenth-century work in which recitation of the Qur³ān out of order and in mixed selection is generally condemned.

[23] P. Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977), 18; 167, n. 18.

[24] Crone and Cook, 167, n. 18.

[25] For a complete publication and analysis of these plaques and their inscriptions, see van Berchem, 247–53, nos. 216–17.

[26] The end of the *taḥmīd* and these two epithets have been interpreted by van Berchem and subsequent scholars as a quotation from 2:255 or the identical passage in 3:11; nevertheless, though most of the "beautiful names" of God can be found in the Qur³ān, it seems a mistake to attempt to identify every use of such an epithet as a Qur³ānic quotation. The epithets in this inscription, including the subsequent series of three in construct with "the heavens and the earth," can, like the *taḥmīd*, be considered to have had an independent existence and need not be regarded as quotations wherever they occur.

and the earth and the Pillar of the heavens and the earth, the One, the eternally Besought of all" [a series of epithets]—"He begotteth not nor was begotten and there is none comparable unto Him" [112:3–4], "Owner of Sovereignty!²⁷ Thou givest sovereignty unto whom Thou wilt, and Thou

withdrawest sovereignty from whom Thou wilt" [3:26]; "all sovereignty belongs to You and is from You, and its fate is (determined) by You, Lord of glory

the Merciful, the Compassionate" [words of praise]. "He hath prescribed for Himself mercy" [6:12], "and His mercy embraceth all things" [7:156, with shift from first to third person], "may He be glorified and exalted" [words of praise]. "As for what the polytheists associate (with You), we ask You, oh God by

Your mercy and by Your beautiful names and by Your noble face and Your awesome power and Your perfect word, on which are based the heavens and the earth and

through which we are preserved by Your mercy from Satan and are saved from Your punishment (on) the Day of Judgment and by Your abundant favor and by Your great grace and forbearance and omnipotence

and forgiveness and liberality, that You bless Muḥammad Your servant, Your prophet, and that You accept his intercession for his people, the blessing of God be upon him and peace be upon him and the mercy of God and" [prayer] . . . .

The northern portal inscription begins in a fashion identical to that on the eastern portal but incorporates more passages from the Qur'ānic text:

"In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate" [*basmalah*], "praise be to God than Whom there is no god but He" [*taḥmīd*], "the Living, the Eternal";²⁸ "He has no associate,²⁹ the One, the eternally Besought of all" [epithets]—"He

begetteth not nor was begotten, and there is none comparable unto Him" [112:3–4, as in the eastern portal inscription]—"Muḥammad is the servant of God" [introductory statement] "and His messenger, whom He sent with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religion,

however much idolators may be averse" [61:9, with an adjustment at the beginning to introduce Muḥammad]; "we believe in God and that which was revealed unto Muḥammad and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him

we have surrendered" [2:136 or 3:84, with change of person and omission of the central section, where Ibrāhīm, Ismāᶜīl, Isḥāq, Yaᶜqūb, the "tribes," Mūsā, and ᶜĪsā are mentioned individually],³⁰ "the blessing of God be upon Muḥammad, His servant and His prophet, and peace be upon him and the mercy of God and His blessing and His forgiveness and His acceptance . . ." [blessing].

The copper inscriptions do not appear to represent "deviations" from the current standard text; rather, they belong to a tradition of using Qur'ānic and other familiar phrases, paraphrases, and allusions in persuasive messages, in fact sermons, whether actual *khuṭbah*s or not.³¹ Of a number of such texts two examples cited by al-Ṭabarī should suffice to demonstrate the point.

In a sermon supposedly delivered to the people of Khunāṣirah in northern Syria in 101/719–20, ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz included the phrase "nor will you be left aimless,"³² a clear reference to Qur'ān 75:36: "Thinketh man that he will be left aimless?"³³ A more extended example, involving some of the same passages used at the Dome of the Rock, is the first part of a sermon

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²⁷ This extract follows two epithets, "the One" and "the eternally Besought of all," that also occur, in declarative sentences, in 112:1–2 but need not be considered a "deviation" from the Qur'ānic text; it is clear, however, that their inclusion in the series of "beautiful names" was meant to introduce the Qur'ānic passage.

²⁸ Up to this point the inscription exactly duplicates that on the eastern portal.

²⁹ Perhaps from 6:163, though again it seems unnecessary to seek a Qur'ānic origin for such a standard phrase.

³⁰ In these passages of the Qur'ān the words are those of Muḥammad, expressed in the first-person plural; in this inscription ᶜAbd al-Malik speaks for the community of believers, and Muḥammad is thus referred to in the third-person singular.

³¹ For a similar idea, developed in a different direction, see H. Edwards, "Text, Context, Architext: The Qur'an as Architectural Inscription," in *Brocade of the Pen: The Art of Islamic Writing*, ed. C. G. Fisher (East Lansing, Mich., 1991), 67–68, 69.

³² Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, Leiden ed., 2: 1368; Cairo ed., 6: 570.

³³ Identified by D. S. Powers, in *The Empire in Transition: The Caliphates of Sulaymān, ᶜUmar, and Yazīd, A.D. 715–724/ A.H. 97–105*, The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation, vol. 24 (Albany, 1989), 98, n. 347.

delivered by Dāʾūd b. ʿĪsā, governor of Makkah, in 196/ 811–12.[34]

> "Praise be to God, Owner of Sovereignty unto whom He wills and withdraws sovereignty from whom He wills, who exalts whom He wills and abases whom He wills. In His hand is the good; He is Able to do all things" [3:26, with change from direct address to God to the descriptive third-person singular]. "I bear witness that there is no God save Him . . . there is no God save Him, the Almighty, the Wise" [3:18, with shift from the third-person plural to the first-person singular and concomitant omission of references to angels and men of learning as bearing witness]. "And I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger, whom He sent to bring the religion, through whom He sealed the prophets" [further declaration of faith] "and whom He made a mercy for the peoples" [21:107, with shift from first-person plural to third-person singular].[35]

A narrow focus on the Qurʾānic text and continued efforts to establish and preserve a standard version without deviation have persisted throughout the history of Islam, but side by side with that concern there has been a tradition of drawing upon and modifying that text for a variety of rhetorical purposes. Such creative use of familiar scriptural associations was hardly unique to Islam, and indeed it would be more surprising if no such tradition had developed. The tradition was, however, dependent upon recognition of the text by the listeners, or readers—a strong indication that the Qurʾān was already the common property of the community in the last decade of the seventh century. The inscriptions at the Dome of the Rock should not be viewed as evidence of a precise adherence to or deviation from the "literary form" of the Qurʾānic text; rather they are little sermons or parts of a single sermon addressed to an audience that could be expected to understand the allusions and abbreviated references by which ʿAbd al-Malik's particular message was conveyed.[36] They thus appear at the begin-

ning of a long tradition of creative use of the Qurʾānic text for polemical purposes. The brief Qurʾānic passages on coins issued from the time of ʿAbd al-Malik's reform[37] in 77/697 to the end of the dynasty in 132/750 are additional examples of such use; these passages include, in addition to the *shahādah*, verses 112:1–3 (or 4) complete (except for the initial *basmalah* and the introductory word "say") and part of 9:33, with slight variations in the reading of the latter, so that it makes sense by itself: "He sent him with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion. . . ." In parallel to the contemporary inscriptions at the Dome of the Rock these extracts are clearly intended to declare the primacy of the new religion of Islam over Christianity, in particular.

More instructive in relation to the literary form of the Qurʾānic text is the inscription on the *qiblah* wall of the Mosque of the Prophet at al-Madīnah, long since lost but observed and described by Abū ʿAlī Ibn Rustah during the pilgrimage of 290/903.[38] According to him, this inscription, which extended from the Bāb Marwān (Bāb al-Salām) in the western wall around the southwestern corner and across the *qiblah* wall, then around the southeastern corner to the Bāb ʿAlī Bāb Jibrīl),[39] began with Umm al-Qurʾān, that is, *sūrah* 1, complete, then continued with "wa-al-Shams wa- duḥāhā" through "Qul: Aʿūdhu birabb al-nās" to the end, thus the complete text of *sūrah*s 91–114.[40] Ibn Rustah's report was confirmed by the eyewitness account of an anonymous

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richs and G. Schoeler (Beirut, 1994), 162–81 (p. 179: ". . . early Arabic poetry, like its counterpart Arabic prose . . . tends to reformulate Qurʾānic materials more than to quote them literally"); idem, "The Impact of the Qurʾān on the Arabic Epistolography of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd," in *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, ed. G. R. Hawting and A. Shareef (London, 1993), 205–313 (p. 307: ". . . no one could be a master at drawing from the Qurʾān in the manner that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is without having full control . . . of the text of the Qurʾān . . . he could appeal to what is familiar to his audience"). Professor van Ess kindly supplied references to al-Qāḍī's work.

[37] The essence of this reform was the adoption of purely epigraphic coinage without imagery.

[38] Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-aʿlāq al-nafīsah*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1892; repr. Leiden, 1967), 70; cf. J. Sauvaget, *La Mosquée omeyyade de Médine* (Paris, 1947), 79.

[39] For a reconstructed plan of the mosque, see Sauvaget, 91.

[40] Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. R. Tajaddud (Tehran, 1871), 6; Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn al-Najjār (578–643/ 1183–1245), *Kitāb al-durrah al-thamīnah fī akhbār al-Madīnah*, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, MS Ar. 1630, fol. 32a. Ibn al-

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[34] Al-Ṭabarī, Leiden ed., 3: 861–62; Cairo ed., 8: 439.

[35] These passages have been identified by M. Fishbein, *The War between Brothers: The Caliphate of Muḥammad al-Amīn, A.D. 809–813/A.H. 193–198*, The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation, vol. 31 (Albany, 1992), 126, nn. 477–79.

[36] For parallel evidence of adaptation of familiar Qurʾānic passages in early Arabic literature, see W. al-Qāḍī, "The Limitations of Qurʾānic Usage in Early Arabic Poetry: The Example of a Khārijite Poem," in *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag*, vol. 2: *Studien zur arabischen Dichtung*, ed. W. Hein-

Spanish traveler, who visited the Ḥaramayn between 307/ 920 and 317/929 and reported that the inscriptions consisted of "the short chapters" of the Qur'ān.[41] According to this traveler, the inscription was written in five lines of gold on a blue ground contained within a marble panel; it was thus probably executed in gold-and-blue glass mosaic, as at the Dome of the Rock. This conjecture is confirmed by a report given by al-Ṭabarī: "[I]t was as if I had entered the mosque of the Prophet of God and I raised my head and looked at the writing in mosaic that was in the mosque and there was what the Commander of the Faithful al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik had ordered."[42] Another parallel to the Dome of the Rock was the inscription's characters, described as squat and thick, in a stroke the width of a finger. The inscription belonged to the reconstruction of the mosque sponsored by ʿAbd al-Malik's son al-Walīd I (86–96/705–15) and carried out between 88/706 and 91/710 by his governor in the city, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. Because of this early date it is particularly significant, for three reasons. First, it suggests that the sequence of the Qur'ānic text from *sūrah*s 91 to 114 had already been established by 91/710. Sec-

ond, the clustering of the short *sūrah*s in this sequence probably means that the arrangement of the entire Qur'ān generally in the order of the length of the *sūrah*s had already been adopted. Finally, *sūrah*s 1 and 113–14, which the compiler of one pre-ʿUthmānic codex, ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/653), had supposedly refused to accept as part of the revelation,[43] had already been incorporated into the text. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the one Umayyad whose piety was respected even by the ʿAbbāsid enemies of his family, is unlikely to have admitted anything but the officially recognized version of the Qur'ānic text; indeed, the inclusion of these passages at the Prophet's own mosque may have constituted official recognition.

The choice of this extended passage for the *qiblah* wall is difficult to explain in terms of a single coherent message. It appears from a study of reports by Ibn Rustah and other observers that there had been an inscription of al-Walīd on the southern facade of the courtyard, which had been destroyed by Khārijites in 130/747, during the reign of Marwān II (127–32/744–50).[44] It would have been appropriate in the Prophet's own mosque to adorn the entire courtyard, as well as the surrounding arcades and those of the sanctuary, with the complete text of the revelation, which the faithful could theoretically follow in sequence as they progressed through the building, finishing with the text on the *qiblah* wall, and several sources seem to support that conclusion. The fifteenth-century Egyptian historian Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Samhūdī cited the early-ninth-century informants Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823) and Ibn Zabālah to the effect that there were inscriptions inside and outside and on the doors of the mosque.[45] It

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Najjār apparently wrote his book during a stay in al-Madīnah, probably relying on manuscripts in local collections and his own observations of the mosque (C. E. Farah, "Ibn al-Najjār: A Neglected Arabic Historian," *JAOS* 84 [1964]: 222, 223, 226–27). His sources included Ibn Zabālah (d. 199/814), Abū'l-Qāsim al-Muẓaffarī, and al-Ajzī. The identities of the latter two are uncertain (Sauvaget, 26).

[41] Cited without attribution by Abū Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (246–328/860–940), *Kitāb al-ʿiqd al-farīd*, ed. A. Amīn, I. al-Abyārī, and ʿA. Hārūn (Cairo, 1368/1949), 6: 261; cf. M. Shafī, "A Description of the Two Sanctuaries of Islam by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi († 940)," in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne on His 60th Birthday*, ed. T. W. Arnold and R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1922), 420–21. There is no evidence that Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi ever left Spain; cf. W. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih: Ein Beitrag zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte* (Berlin, 1983), 22–23. It is clear from the details of this report and references to the Great Mosque at Córdoba that the informant who traveled to al-Madīnah was also familiar with monuments in Spain. The observer described the Black Stone of the Kaʿbah, which the Qarmaṭians removed in 317/929, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the visit (Shafī, 422).

[42] Al-Ṭabarī, Leiden ed., 3: 535, Cairo ed., 8: 178; tr. H. Kennedy, *Al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī: A.D. 763–786/A.H. 146–169*, The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation, vol. 29 (Albany, 1990): 254. The report was attributed to a descendant of ʿAlī's brother Jaʿfar in the line of al-Mahdī.

[43] The earliest source for this story appears to have been Abū Muḥammad al-Faḍl b. Shādhān (d. 260/874), but even by his time the actual facts about Ibn Masʿūd's version had become blurred; see A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān: The Old Codices* (Leiden, 1937), 21.

[44] Ibn Rustah, 70. For a reconstruction of the inscriptions reported by Ibn Rustah, see Sauvaget, 78–80; on the Khārijite rebellion, see C. Pellat, "al-Mukhtār b. ʿAwf al-Azdī," *EI²*, 7: 524–25. Ibn Rustah's date of 128/745 for the restoration of the mosaics by Ibn ʿAṭiyyah appears to be incorrect, however. According to al-Ṭabarī, the Khārijites entered al-Madīnah in 130/ 747; ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. ʿAṭiyyah retook the city a short time later and appointed his nephew al-Walīd b. ʿUrwah b. Muḥammad b. ʿAṭiyyah as deputy governor over the city (ed. Leiden, 2: 2008, 2014; 3: 11; ed. Cairo, 7: 394, 399, 410–11).

[45] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafā' al-wafā bi akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. M. M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1374/1955), 1: 371.

might also be possible to interpret Ibn Rustah's report, "ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz is the one who ordered to be written the inscription that is in the mosque and the one who ordered to be written the inscription that is on the *qiblah* wall of the mosque of the Messenger of God, the blessing of God and peace be on him," as evidence that there were inscriptions throughout the building.

The expression of political claims through Qurᵓānic quotations and allusions suggests wide familiarity with these verses and their implications in the early Islamic community, between 72/691–92 and 132/750. In fact, although Wansbrough has noted, in his argument for a late compilation of the Qurᵓān, that the text was not used as a basis for legal decisions before the ninth century, there is abundant evidence from the Umayyad period that it was already sufficiently familiar to the community at large to provide easily recognizable claims to political legitimation and for religious propaganda.[46]

COPYING THE QURᵓĀN

There is additional, more oblique evidence bearing on the issue of the Qurᵓānic text. The aforementioned inscription in the mosque at al-Madīnah provides a starting point. Ibn al-Nadīm reported in the late tenth century (before 380/990) that one Khālid b. Abī al-Hayyāj, *ṣāḥib* ᶜAlī, had been responsible for executing it.[47] Khālid was in all probability a younger brother of Hayyāj b. Abī Hayyāj (*sic*), named in another source as one of those who witnessed the testament of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in 39/660.[48] Khālid also made copies of the Qurᵓānic text and

other manuscripts for al-Walīd and ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz.[49] It was Saᶜd, a scribe in the employ of al-Walīd, who initially recruited him; in fact, Abū ᶜAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643/1245) credited the inscription at the Great Mosque of al-Madīnah to Saᶜd himself, whom he identified as a *mawlā* of Ḥuwayṭib b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜUzzā,[50] a member of Quraysh and a Companion, who died at al-Madīnah in 54/674, in the caliphate of Muᶜāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (41–60/661–80). Saᶜd is also mentioned in the dictionary of *nisbah*s compiled by Abū

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[46] From an extensive analysis of exegesis on *sūrat* Quraysh, Patricia Crone has concluded that "the exegetes had no better knowledge of what this sura meant than we have today. . . . What they are offering is . . . so many guesses based on the verses themselves. The original meaning of these verses was unknown to them or else there had been a gradual drift away from it. In any case, it was lost to the tradition. . . ." *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Oxford, 1987), 210. Her observations suggest a substantial interval between establishment of the Qurᵓānic text and the development of exegetical tradition at the end of the eighth century. They thus contradict Wansbrough's notion that codification of the text and the introduction of exegesis occurred at approximately the same time.

[47] Ibn al-Nadīm, 9; cf. Sauvaget, 79–80, where this man is referred to as Khālid b. Abī al-Sayyāj without further explanation.

[48] Abū Zayd ᶜUmar Ibn Shabbah al-Nuwayrī, *Taᵓrīkh al-Madīnah al-munawwarah (Akhbār al-Madīnah al-nabawiyyah)*, ed. F. M. Shaltūt (Beirut, 1410/1990), 1: 225–28. Ibn Shabbah's source for the "testament of ᶜAlī," which he reproduced, was

Abū Ghassān Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, who claimed to have the document in his possession, having received it from his father, a scribe, who had, in turn, received it from al-Ḥasan b. Zayd (d. 167/783), a great-grandson of ᶜAlī; according to another source cited by Ibn Shabbah, it was Abū Hayyāj himself who witnessed the testament. The document cannot be assumed to have been genuine, but internal evidence suggests that, if it was a forgery, it was a forgery of the Umayyad period or the first twenty years of the ᶜAbbāsid period. For example, the testator called himself only ᶜAbd Allāh ᶜAlī Amīr al-Muᵓminīn. The ᶜAbbāsids adopted regnal names, though there is at least one instance in which al-Manṣūr called himself ᶜAbd Allāh ᶜAbd Allāh Amīr al-Muᵓminīn; see al-Ṭabarī, Leiden ed., 3: 208; Cairo ed., 7: 566. (Thanks are owing to Dr. Bates for this reference and his views on this point.) Ibn Shabbah himself complained of errors in the language and spoke of having copied the "letter forms" exactly as he saw them, implying that the document already seemed archaic in the early ninth century. For a summary of Abū Ghassān's background and career, see Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Hyderabad, 1326; repr. Beirut, 1968), 9: 517–18, no. 846; cf. T. Nagel, "Ein früher Bericht über den Aufstand von Muḥammad b. ᶜAbdallāh im Jahre 145 H.," *Der Islam* 46 (1970): 236–38.

[49] Ibn al-Nadīm, 9. N. Abbott (*The Rise of the North Arabic Script and Its Ḳurᵓānic Development, with a Full Description of the Ḳurᵓān Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute* [Chicago, 1939], 54, n. 83) had some reservations about Khālid, noting that he "must have been a very young companion of ᶜAlī and an elderly scribe of al-Walīd" and calling attention to the omission of his name from the list of al-Walīd's scribes assembled by W. Björkman (*Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten* [Hamburg, 1928], 57–58). Björkman listed only al-Walīd's state secretaries in Damascus, however, whereas Khālid was working in al-Madīnah. Furthermore, it should be noted that *ṣāḥib* means not only "companion" but also "disciple, follower" and that the context is Ibn al-Nadīm's discussion of books collected by a Shiᶜite bibliophile of his own time, implying that he identified Khālid as a Shiᶜite. It seems from Ibn Shabbah's report about ᶜAlī's will that Khālid's family was close to ᶜAlī.

[50] Ibn al-Najjār, fol. 32a.

Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Abī Bakr al-Samʿānī (d. after 562/1167), where he is identified as *ṣāḥib al-maṣāḥif*, from which the *nisbah* of his own *mawlā*, Ziyād al-maṣāḥifī, was taken. The authority cited was Ibn Abī Ḥātim (240–327/854–938), who in turn cited his father (d. 277/890). Ziyād was supposed to have transmitted *aḥādīth* to Bukayr b. Mismār al-Zuhrī (d. 153/770) in al-Madīnah, which is consistent with the chronological position of Saʿd.[51]

Although none of these reports can be traced back earlier than the mid-ninth century, it is nonetheless possible to pursue the matter farther. To begin with, Ḥuwayṭib was a member of the clan of ʿĀmir b. Luʾayy and converted to Islam only after the battle of Ḥunayn. He was said to be one of sixteen Quraysh who knew how to write in the time of the Prophet.[52] He was allied by marriage to a number of important early Muslim figures, and his family connections can be traced through several branches over many generations;[53] despite certain legendary as-

pects of his biography,[54] it is thus certain that he was a historical personage. Several anecdotes suggest that Ḥuwayṭib was known for his avarice; the most important of them for present purposes is the story that at some indeterminate date he sold his house in Makkah to Muʿāwiyah for the enormous sum of 40,000 dirhams and moved to al-Madīnah, where he settled "on the Balāṭ near the *ashāb al-maṣāḥif*," a group with which his *mawlā* Saʿd was linked.[55]

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[51] Al-Samʿānī, *Kitāb al-ansāb*, facs. ed., ed. D. S. Margouliouth (London, 1912), fol. 531b, s.v. *al-maṣāḥifī*. On Bukayr, see Ibn Ḥajar, 1: 495, no. 914; idem, *Kitāb lisān al-mīzān* (Hyderabad, 1330/1912), 2: 62, no. 236. Y. Eche, *Les Bibliothèques arabes publiques et semi-publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Égypte au Moyen Age* (Damascus, 1967), 18, has interpreted the term *ṣāḥib al-maṣāḥif* as "librarian" and has identified Saʿd as al-Walīd's librarian in Damascus. It is clear from the context of all these reports, however, that Saʿd lived in al-Madīnah and that he was not a librarian but one who copied *maṣāḥif*; cf. especially al-Samʿānī, fol. 120a, s.v. *al-jāmiʿī*: "Perhaps it is the *nisbah* related to the collection, that is, the *muṣḥaf*. The most famous [person] with this *nisbah* is Abū Ḥabīb Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Jāmiʿī al-Maṣāḥifī, who used to copy the *jāmiʿ*."

[52] Ibn Shabbah, cited in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (Cairo, 1363/1944), 4: 157–58. The specific source may have been the lost *Kitāb Makkah*.

[53] He was one of two full brothers, the other being Abū Ruhm, who was married to Barrah bt. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, a paternal aunt of the Prophet; another of Abū Ruhm's wives was Maymūnah bt. al-Ḥārith, who married the Prophet after Abū Ruhm's death. Ḥuwayṭib's sister was married to Sufyān (or Aswad) b. ʿAbd al-Asad. There were also two half-brothers, Makhramah and Abū Sabrah (perhaps, rather, a nephew). A descendant of Makhramah in the sixth generation, Saʿd or Saʿīd, served as chief *qāḍī* of al-Madīnah in the reign of al-Mahdī; his son ʿAbd al-Jabbār subsequently served as governor and then as *qāḍī* of al-Madīnah in the time of al-Maʾmūn. Abū Sabrah served briefly as governor of al-Baṣrah in 17/638–39 and was commander-in-chief of the army that invaded Khūzistān in that year. His son Muḥam-

mad was chief *qāḍī* of al-Madīnah, as was Muḥammad's grandson Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh. The latter's half-brother Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh supported the revolt of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan, "the Pure Soul," in 145/762. He was imprisoned in al-Madīnah by ʿĪsā b. Mūsā but released on the orders of al-Manṣūr.

Ḥuwayṭib himself was married to Āminah (or Amīnah or Umaymah) bt. Abī Sufyān b. Ḥarb, daughter of the supreme commander of the Meccan forces against the Prophet. Āminah was thus a half-sister of the caliphs Muʿāwiyah and Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān (60–64/680–83). She bore Ḥuwayṭib a son, Abū Sufyān, but was subsequently divorced. Abū Sufyān's grandson Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was chief *qāḍī* of al-Madīnah in the time of the caliph Hishām (105–25/724–43). Abū Bakr's grandson Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was killed at Nahr Abī Fuṭrus in Palestine in 132/748–49. Finally, this Muḥammad's own grandson Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm transmitted *aḥādīth* at Ḥarrān in northern Syria.

Musʿab b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh wa'l-ʿasabah*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo, 1953), 426–30; al-Ṭabarī, Leiden ed., 1: 1184, 1773, 2498, 2549–50, 2552–53, 2556–57, 2564–67; 3: 2326–29, 2453–53; Cairo ed. 2: 331; 3: 166; 4: 50, 81–84, 86, 91–93; 11: 517–19, 611; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (ed. M. Ḥamīd Allāh, Beirut, 1400/1979), 1: 220, 228, 292, 312, 349, 350, 352, 362, 363, 404, 441, 444–46; (ed. I. ʿAbbās, Wiesbaden, 1979), 4.1: 6 and n. 2; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣafwān Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (ed. E. Sachau, Leiden, 1904), 3: 293–94; 8: 174, 192–93; Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1403/1983), 1: 169. For Ḥuwayṭib's other offspring, see al-Zubayrī, 430; Ibn Saʿd, 5: 128–29, 335–36. Dr. Ella Landau-Tasseron kindly provided additional references to Ḥuwayṭib.

[54] For example, he was one of those said to have lived sixty years in the Jāhiliyyah and sixty years under Islam. Al-Ṭabarī, Leiden ed., 3: 2326–29; Cairo ed., 11: 517–19; cf. Ibn Saʿd, 5: 335.

[55] Al-Ṭabarī, Leiden ed., 3: 2329; Cairo ed., 11: 518–19. This story, which was also reported by al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 292/905), can be traced to al-Wāqidī; cf. W. G. Millward, "The Adaptation of Men to Their Time: An Historical Essay by al-Yaʿqūbī," *JAOS* 84 (1964): 330, 336, where, according to the translation, Ḥuwayṭib bought, rather than sold, the house. Cf. Ibn Ḥazm,

From this report it seems that already in the seventh cen-
tury there may have been a specific area of al-Madīnah
where manuscripts of the Qurʾān were copied and sold.
A large fragment of an early history of the city, by Abū
Zayd ʿUmar Ibn Shabbah al-Numayrī (173–262/789–
875), a descendent of a prominent Madīnan family, has
been preserved.[56] Although his descriptions of the to-
pography of al-Madīnah are not always perfectly lucid,
they are invaluable for their detail; of particular concern
here is his mapping of the area surrounding the Balāṭ al-
Aʿẓam, the paved street extending west from the Proph-
et's mosque to al-Muṣallā. Among the residences facing
onto the north side of the Balāṭ al-Aʿẓam was one near
its western end belonging to Ḥuwayṭib.[57] Ibn Shabbah did

not explicitly mention the *aṣḥāb al-maṣāḥif* near whom
Ḥuwayṭib was reported to have settled, though he did use
the term *aṣḥāb* for various occupational groups. Particu-
larly intriguing are the *aṣḥāb al-rabbāʿ*, whom he located
at the eastern end of the Balāṭ al-Aʿẓam, near the north-
western corner of the Great Mosque.[58] It is not clear what
they did; in fact, they were already problematic in the
fifteenth century, when al-Samhūdī, who was drawing
upon Ibn Shabbah's text, speculated that they might have
been those who made and sold copies of the Qurʾān,
which were sometimes known as *rubaʿ*.[59] Even if he was
correct, however, it is clear that the ninth-century *aṣḥāb
al-rabbāʿ* of Ibn Shabbah were not the *aṣḥāb al-maṣāḥif*
mentioned by al-Ṭabarī, for they were not located near
Ḥuwayṭib's house on the Balāṭ.

There is growing evidence that al-Madīnah functioned
as an Islamic intellectual center in the Umayyad period,
before the rise of the cities of Iraq. For example, M. S.
Belguedj and Rafael Talmon have presented evidence for
the existence of a distinct "school" of grammarians at
al-Madīnah in the first half of the eighth century, an-
ticipating the emergence of the better-known schools
of al-Baṣrah and al-Kūfah;[60] Talmon also claims that a
number of men in this group earned their livings by
copying the Qurʾān, but he has documented only one ex-
ample, Abū Ḥāzim (or Abū Dāʾūd) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b.
Hurmuz b. Kaysān al-Aʿraj, classified as one of the
tābiʿūn of al-Madīnah, who died at Alexandria in 117/735
or 119/737.[61] He was a *mawlā* of the Banū Hāshim and
used to copy *maṣāḥif.*

1: 168–69. The detail about the *aṣḥāb al-maṣāḥif* does not seem
to have been preserved by al-Yaʿqūbī, however; al-Samhūdī, 2:
746, cited it from the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Saʿd. There were appar-
ently at least four recensions of Ibn Saʿd's text, the latest of
which, that by Ibn Ḥayyawayh (d. 381/991), was used by Sa-
chau for his edition; that by al-Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma (d. 282/895)
was used by al-Ṭabarī (J. W. Fück, "Ibn Saʿd," *EI²*, 3: 922). As
the reference to the *aṣḥab al-maṣāḥif* is not given in Sachau's
edition, al-Samhūdī must have been quoting it from one of the
other recensions.

[56] Ibn Shabbah, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1410/1990). It seems to have
been composed in al-Baṣrah, but there is little doubt that the au-
thor was intimately familiar with al-Madīnah. Large segments
of the text were reproduced by al-Samhūdī, but it is only re-
cently that the original has been published, apparently from a
copy in the hand of the fourteenth-century author Ibn Ḥajar al-
ʿAsqalānī (Ibn Shabbah, I: *nūn-alif*). Certain details, including
similar variations and errors in spelling, suggest that al-Samhūdī
worked from this same manuscript.

[57] It was located between the compounds of al-Rabīʿ, *mawlā*
of the Commander of the Faithful (al-Manṣūr, 136–58/759–75)
on the west (an anachronism of a kind not uncommon in Ibn
Shabbah's text) and of ʿĀmir b. Abī Waqqāṣ on the east. It was
separated from the former by a lane that led to the house of
Āminah, daughter of Abū Ṣarḥ; the context suggests that Āmi-
nah's house may have stood to the north of Ḥuwayṭib's com-
pound. Across the Balāṭ to the south was the quarter of the Banū
Zurayq, a tribal group originally from Yemen; Ḥuwayṭib's com-
pound apparently faced Dār Ḥafṣah, owned successively in his
lifetime by ʿUthmān b. Abī al-ʿĀṣ, Muʿāwiyah, and the latter's
mawlā Ḥafṣah, and the compound of Abū Hurayrah (Yāqūt b.
ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld as
Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch [1866], 1: 245–46, 251–
52; Ibn Shabbah, 1: 240–41, 252, 255–56). Ḥuwayṭib owned
two other houses in al-Madīnah, one of them in the quarter of
the Banū Zurayq well away from the Balāṭ, the other, known as

Dār Ṣubḥ, situated between the house of al-Muṭṭalib and the
square before the Majlis al-Ḥukm (Ibn Shabbah, 1: 252–53). The
precise location of this third house has not yet been established,
but it seems not to have been on the Balāṭ.

[58] Ibn Shabbah, 1: 231.

[59] Al-Samhūdī, 2: 745–46.

[60] M. S. Belguedj, "La démarche des premiers grammaires
arabes dans le domaine de la syntaxe," *Arabica* 20 (1973): 168–
85; R. Talmon, "An Eighth-Century Grammatical School in
Medina: The Collection and Evaluation of the Available Mate-
rial," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48
(1985): 225, 228.

[61] Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī [first half of the tenth cen-
tury], *Kitāb mashāhīr ʿulamāʾ al-amṣār*, ed. M. Fleischhammer
(Wiesbaden, 1959), 77, no. 559; al-Samʿānī, fol. 44b, s.v. *al-
aʿraj*. Ibn Ḥibbān's source was again the ninth-century biogra-
pher Abū Ḥātim. Talmon erroneously cites Belguedj, 172–73,
as the source for his larger conclusion that several grammarians
concerned themselves with "Qurʾānic scripts."

It has been demonstrated that at least three individuals in al-Madīnah copied the Qur'ān professionally in the last quarter of the first *hijrī* century and the beginning of the second. It thus seems not at all impossible that there was already a concentration of such an occupational group in the city.[62] In those early years there must have been sufficient demand for the newly codified scriptures, both for public use in mosques and schools and for private study by wealthy or pious patrons, to ensure employment for such a group.

The details cited here are scattered almost at random through texts of different character and period, and the references are too peripheral to the main accounts and the individuals too insignificant to have been part of a conscious, however pious, forgery of early Islamic history concocted at the end of the eighth century. All point to the active production of copies of the Qur'ān from the late seventh century, coinciding with and confirming the inscriptional evidence of the established text itself. In fact, from the time of Muʿāwiyah through the reign of al-Walīd the Umayyad caliphs were actively engaged in codifying every aspect of Muslim religious practice. Muʿāwiyah turned Muhammad's *minbar* into a symbol of authority and ordered the construction of *maqṣūrah*s in the major congregational mosques. ʿAbd al-Malik made sophisticated use of Qur'ānic quotations, on coinage and public monuments, to announce the new Islamic world order. Al-Walīd gave monumental form to the Muslim house of worship and the service conducted in it.[63] It seems beyond the bounds of credibility that such efforts would have preceded interest in codifying the text itself.

The different types of evidence cited here all thus lead to the conclusion that the Muslim tradition is reliable, at least in broad outline, in attributing the first codification of the Qur'ānic text to ʿUthmān and his appointed commission. The Qur'ān was available to his successors as an instrument to help weld the diverse peoples of the rapidly expanding empire into a relatively unified polity.

It is also possible to speculate that the inscriptions at the Dome of the Rock, so distinct in paleographic style from earlier examples of Arabic writing in any medium, owed something to this background as well.[64] As al-Walīd called upon a Qur'ān copyist to design his inscriptions at the Great Mosque in al-Madīnah, it seems that fifteen or twenty years earlier ʿAbd al-Malik would have had to turn to a similar source. The only pool of such experienced writers that has left a trace, however faint, in the historical sources, is the *aṣḥāb al-maṣāḥif* at al-Madīnah. As professional copyists of the Qur'ānic text, these men must very early have developed a standard script with its own conventions—for example, horizontal extensions, hollow rounded letters, the use of strokes for diacriticals on certain letters, and the marking of text divisions with simple ornaments.[65] Where else could ʿAbd al-Malik have found an artist capable of laying out his beautiful inscriptions at the Dome of the Rock?[66]

APPENDIX: THE GROWTH OF THE MUṢHAF TRADITION

With the expansion of the empire, the professional copying of the Qur'ān also spread from al-Madīnah to other cities. In the late Umayyad period, Malik b. Dīnār (d. probably before 131/748), a *mawlā* of the Banū

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[62] According to two reports from Mālik b. Anas, on the authority of Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/753), ʿAmr b. Rāfiʿ and Abū Yūnus copied the *muṣḥaf* for the Prophet's wives Hafṣah bt. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 45/665) and ʿĀʾishah bt. Abī Bakr al-Siddīq (d. 58/678), respectively; *Muwaṭṭah al-Imām Malik* (Cairo, 1386/1967), 2: 344, nos. 999–1000. Ibn Saʿd reported that ʿAmr was the son of a *mawlā* of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and that Hafṣah herself was the source of the story about the *muṣḥaf* (5: 220); Abū Yūnus was ʿĀʾishah's own *mawlā*, but Ibn Saʿd does not mention his having copied a *muṣḥaf* for her (5: 218).

[63] E. Whelan, "The Origins of the *Miḥrāb Mujawwaf*: A Reinterpretation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18.2 (1986): 205–24.

[64] See, e.g., Abbott, pls. II–V.

[65] For more elaborated versions of these conventions, see Whelan, "Writing the Word of God: Some Early Qur'ān Copyists and Their Milieux," part I, *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990): 113–47.

[66] Cf. R. Blachère, *Introduction au Coran*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1959), 88. Recently Rabbat, "The Dome of the Rock Revisited: Some Remarks on al-Wasiti's Account," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 70–71, has suggested that the designer of the inscriptions may have been one of two men charged with supervising work on the Dome of the Rock, according to an eleventh-century report by Ahmad al-Wāsiṭī in *Faḍāʾil al-bayt al-muqaddas* (Jerusalem, 1979): 80–81. He was Rajāʾ b. Haywah, a prominent figure in the employ of several Umayyad caliphs, who was at the beginning of his career in the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik. Although Rajāʾ may have functioned as a secretary under the caliphs Sulaymān (96–99/715–17) and ʿUmar II (99–101/717–20; according to C. E. Bosworth, "Rajāʾ ibn Haywa al-Kindī and the Umayyad Caliphs," *Islamic Quarterly* 16 [1972]: 43 and n. 5, the sources vary), there is no evidence that he was ever a copyist, adhering to a specific set of stylizations of the sort visible at the Dome of the Rock, or that a group of such copyists flourished in Palestine in the time of ʿAbd al-Malik.

Najiyyah b. Sāmah b. Luʾayy, was said to have supported himself by making copies at al-Baṣrah.[67] Al-Aṣbagh b. Zayd al-Warrāq al-Juhanī (d. 159/776), a *mawlā* of Juhaynah, was a bookseller who copied the Qurʾān text at Wāsiṭ.[68] Ibn al-Nadīm distinguished copyists of *maṣāḥif* from those who copied the Qurʾān in scripts like *muḥaqqaq* and *mashq*.[69] From the former group, Khushnām al-Baṣrī and al-Mahdī al-Kūfī copied the Qurʾān during the reign of the ʿAbbāsid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (170–93/786–809). Khushnām was reported to have written his *alif*s one cubit high with a single stroke; although this report is obviously an exaggeration,[70] it does imply that he impressed by means of a monumental style. Beginning in the reign of al-Mahdī, all the *muṣḥaf* copyists in Ibn al-Nadīm's list were from al-Kūfah, and the implication is that they wrote in a style distinct from cursive. They were Abū Jarī (or Ḥadī or Juday), who was active in the time of al-Muʿtaṣim (218–27/833–42), Ibn Umm Shaybān, al-Mashūr, Abū Khamīrah, Ibn Khamīrah (or Ḥumayrah or Ibn Ḥumayrah), and Abū'l-Faraj, the last "in our own time."

Of these names the most famous is Ibn Umm Shaybān, which belonged to the Malikite *qāḍī* of Baghdad, Abū'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Hāshimī, who died in 369/979. He was a descendant of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā, designated by the first ʿAbbāsid caliph, al-Saffāḥ (132–36/749–54), as heir to al-Manṣūr (136–58/754–75) but forced by the latter to renounce his succession to the throne and exiled to al-Kūfah. Abū'l-Ḥasan's family was thus ultimately descended from the Companion of the Prophet ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. In no other extant report is it mentioned that Ibn Umm Shaybān copied the Qurʾān (though he is said to have recited it in the version of Abū Bakr b. Mujāhid, the great reformer of the text), and his social status sets him apart from the earlier known copyists, most of whom appear to have been *mawālī*.[71] If he was the man whom Ibn al-Nadīm had in mind, rather than some other member of the same family, it is possible that he did such work early in his career. Abū'l-Faraj ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿUmar al-Maṣāḥifī died in 401/1011, about twenty years after Ibn al-Nadīm himself, and thus was probably working just at the time that the latter was compiling his book.[72] It has not yet been possible to identify the other named *muṣḥaf* copyists, but it should be noted that the readings of their names are ambiguous. Nor can any of the copyists mentioned or their contemporaries be connected with surviving manuscript fragments. At present there is no convincing evidence for the survival of any Qurʾān datable earlier than the ninth century. All that can be stated with any certainty is that the earliest manuscripts that do survive, though the names of the men who copied them are totally unknown, represent part of a long, evolving tradition rooted in al-Madīnah in the seventh century.

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[67] Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ waʾl-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ* (Cairo, 1351/1932), 1: 357–89; Ibn Saʿd, 7.2: 11.

[68] Al-Samʿānī, fol. 579r, s.v. *al-warrāq*; cf. Ibn Saʿd, 7.2: 61.

[69] Ibn al-Nadīm, 9–10.

[70] Ibn al-Nadīm, 9–10; for the various cubit measures in use in early Islam, all of them rather large for the present context, see W. Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte umgerechnet ins metrische System* (Leiden, 1970), 55–62. The smallest was 49.875 cm.

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[71] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* (Beirut, n.d.), 5: 363–64, no. 2889, cf. 362, no. 2888; Ibn Ḥazm, 1: 32; Abū ʿUmar Muḥammad al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-wulāh waʾl-quḍāh*, ed. R. Guest as *The Governors and Judges of Egypt . . .* (Leiden and London, 1912), 573.

[72] Al-Khaṭīb, 10: 380 no. 5548.