

## MANUSCRIPTS AND THE QUR'AN

the *ku ara*. Since the killing was unintentional, the *ku ara* is again based on the Qur'anic rule. And whoever kills a believer by mistake it is ordained that he should free a believing slave. And pay blood money to the deceased's family (4.92).

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The Qur'an, by virtue of its sacred nature in Islam, was the most copied Arabic text in the manuscript age. It was believed that copying the Qur'an would bring blessings on the scribe and the owner. For this reason it was often not copied to be read, but to be cherished as an object of reverence or to be used in instruction. Except for the first Muslim century or so, manuscript Qur'ans were richly decorated with vegetal and geometric motifs, and were characterized by their polychrome nature. The use of gold and silver, although originally frowned upon, had by the early 'Abbasid period become a widespread phenomenon.

Chrysography (writing in gold) and the use of coloured inks (especially rubrication, writing in red ink) flourished throughout the subsequent centuries. Rubrication was used in particular for chapter headings, for vocalization, for the superscript *alif* of prolongation, and for abbreviations of pause marks and the names of established reciters.

In the early period under the Umayyads (44/661–132/750), the Qur'an was copied not only by Muslims (often converts) but also by Christian scribes. In subsequent periods, practically every Muslim calligrapher of note tried his hand at its execution. Calligraphers were also sometimes illuminators, even book-binders. Some individuals made very many copies of the Qur'an: Yaqut al-

Musta'simi (d. 698/1298) is said to have made up to 1,001 copies. Exquisite calligraphy, illumination and book-cover designs accompanied the production of many medieval and post-medieval Qur'ans, and Qur'anic production had a profound influence on the making of non-Qur'anic manuscripts.

From the point of view of the history of the Qur'anic text, the most important manuscripts of the Qur'an are those that can be dated from the earliest period until the introduction (in the East) of the new, so-called proportioned scripts that are associated with the 'Abbasid vizier Ibn Muqla (d. 328/940). The period in question extends from the second quarter of the first/mid-seventh centuries to the last quarter of the fourth/tenth centuries; it embraces the reign of the Caliph 'Uthman (23/644–35/656), who was responsible for the first canonical edition of the Qur'an, as well as the Umayyad and early 'Abbasid rulers.

Towards the end of this formative period, the fully pointed and vocalized text (*scriptio plena*) of the Qur'anic text was finally established. Most of the fundamental reform took place under 'Abd al-Malik, the fifth Umayyad caliph (65/685–86/705), who is credited with, among other things, the re-editing of the 'Uthmanic text of the Qur'an with vowel-punctuation (a measure generally attributed to his governor al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf) and the construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in 72/691–92, complete with Qur'anic inscriptions. The inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock in fact represent the earliest known dated passages from the Qur'an. In these inscriptions, many letters are already provided with diacritical points.

As far as we know, there are no surviving manuscripts of the pre-'Uthmanic versions of the Qur'an. Manuscripts attributed to the rightly guided (orthodox) caliphs and other early personalities are

not authentic, but rather they are pious forgeries. All the so-called 'Uthmanic Qur'ans that have been examined were made after the reign of the caliph and it has been established on palaeographical grounds that most of them originated at least a century after his death.

There are no specific dates associated with the Umayyad and early 'Abbasid group of manuscripts. Only some thirteen codices are datable to the third/ninth century. Most of the codices and fragments of this period have no colophons, and even bequest statements (*waqf*), which act as *termini ante quem*, are rare. In most cases, their dating is based therefore on palaeographical and art-historical grounds. The majority of the manuscripts are single leaves and bifolia, and only a small number constitute substantial fragments. Among the better-known published fragments are the ones preserved in the British Library (BL Or 2165), the Bibliothèque nationale de France (arabe 328a), and the Institute of Oriental Studies, St Petersburg (E-20).

With the exception of perhaps one manuscript on papyrus, all the early known fragments are written on parchment. The exclusive use of parchment as a writing surface for the Qur'anic text may have its roots in the Jewish tradition. The Talmud, for instance, required that a copy of the Torah scroll (*Sefer Torah*) be written on kosher parchment. Parchment remained the preferred writing surface for Qur'anic codices for a number of centuries, so much so that Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406) commented that its use was an expression of respect for what was to be written down, and of desire that it should be correct and accurate. The first Qur'ans on paper appear only in the fourth/tenth century, and they are associated with a group of scripts known as the New Abbasid Style (see below).

Although early Qur'ans were mostly written in codex form, there are surviving early fragments in parchment rolls of the type known as *rotulus*, which are unrolled vertically (as opposed to a *volumen* such as the Jewish Torah which is unrolled horizontally). The earliest codices of the Qur'an associated with the Umayyad period were most likely made in single volumes. This can be judged from the large fragments that have survived (London, Paris, St Petersburg). By contrast, many of the early 'Abbasid manuscripts were copied in a number of volumes. This is evident from the large scripts employed and the smaller number of lines per page. The making of these codices must have necessitated the slaughter of a large number of animals: for instance, during the second/eighth century, a complete manuscript of the Qur'an required between 500 and 700 parchment skins.

Originally the format of the codex was vertical, but it changed to horizontal at the beginning of the second/eighth century. The preference for horizontal formats and thick/heavy-looking scripts may have been dictated by, on the one hand, the desire to show the superiority of the Qur'anic revelation and, on the other, to distinguish the Islamic from the Jewish and Christian traditions of using rolls and vertical formats for their scriptures. The change in script and format (from vertical to horizontal) coincides with the Christian Muslim polemic of the first 'Abbasid century. It is, therefore, possible that the early 'Abbasid Qur'ans had an apologetic dimension, effectively proclaiming the superiority of the Qur'anic revelation over Jewish and Christian scriptures.

Until fairly recently, most scholars referred to the Qur'ans of this early period as Kufic or Kufic Qur'ans, sometimes distinguishing between Kufic and Hijazi. The Kufic/Kufic appellation is,

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however, misleading, as it embraces under one name a great variety of scripts and styles that were in use in those days. Recent research groups the scripts used predominantly for the copying of Qur'ans during the first three to four centuries into three main categories: Hijazi scripts, Early Abbasid scripts, and New Abbasid Style or, more briefly, New Style (NS).

The earliest known manuscripts of the Qur'an, copied in scripts used in Mecca and Medina, are called collectively by their regional name of Hijazi, and most of them are associated with the Umayyad period. They appear to follow no particular rules for the script and even within a single volume one may encounter a diversity of styles. Nevertheless, these scripts are characterized by their distinct ductus with the elongated shafts of the free-standing *alif* and other ascenders slanting to the right, and by the right-sided tail (foot) of the isolated *alif*. The right-sided foot on the isolated *alif* can be either very pronounced or barely perceptible (e.g. BL Or 2165, the so-called *ma'il Qur'an*). A good example of a Hijazi codex is the Paris manuscript (arabe 328a), which was written by two different scribes and is believed to have originated in the second half of the first/seventh century.

Although it is likely that by the end of the first Muslim century a fully developed system of letter-pointing and vocalization was already in place, it was not necessarily used systematically, especially the vocalization. Indeed, the scripts of these manuscripts exhibit sporadic use of diacritics (in order to distinguish homographs), the absence of the *alif* of prolongation, as well as a total lack of vocalization. Vocalization and orthoepic signs (such as *hamza* and *shadda*) in the form of multicoloured dots, a hallmark of many manuscripts of the early 'Abbasid period, were

often added by later scribes and/or scholars. Likewise, the *alif* of prolongation was often added or inscribed (even in the late Middle Ages) superscript in red ink.

In the earliest manuscripts, headings of chapters (*suras*) were not indicated. Instead, a blank space was left at the end of one *sura* and the beginning of another. This blank space (originally one line) was subsequently filled in by very primitive (crude) panels, with geometrical or vegetal designs, most likely borrowed from architectural and textile forms and patterns. These panels often had, at one or both ends, devices that resemble the shape of the Roman writing tablet (*tabula ansata*). Verses were originally separated by means of slanted (oblique) strokes, and dots arranged in various forms, either clustered or in groups of three, four, six and the like.

With the coming of the 'Abbasids, a completely new set of scripts gradually emerged, currently known as Early 'Abbasid scripts. The old scripts originally inelegant and irregular were, in the space of a few decades, transformed completely. The best example of this transformation may be the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock. During the third/ninth century these large scripts reached a high degree of perfection and complexity, although at the cost of separation from current practice. It was this separation that led to their being almost completely abandoned after the fourth/tenth century. The main characteristic of these scripts was again their ductus. This time, however, it was the heavy-looking, relatively short and horizontally elongated strokes that found favour. The slanted isolated form of the *alif* completely disappeared and was replaced by a straight shaft, with a pronounced right-sided foot, set at a considerable distance from the following letter.

The manuscripts written in Early 'Abbasid scripts, unlike their Hijazi predecessors, are often richly illuminated in gold and colours. *Sura* headings are often clearly marked and enclosed in rectangular panels with marginal vignettes or palmettes protruding into outer margins. Elegant discs and rosettes separate individual verses, as well as groups of five and ten verses. Here we encounter the use of the alpha-numerical system (*abjad*) placed within discs to indicate verse-counts (e.g. *ya* 10; *kaf* 20; *lam* 30). A typical device to mark the end of a group of five verses was the letter *ha* (representing 5), and its stylized versions in the form of teardrops or pear-shaped devices, as well as an *alif* executed in two or more colours. On the other hand, groups of ten verses were indicated by means of elegant roundels or medallions.

During the early 'Abbasid period, in the third/ninth century, there began to appear manuscripts written in a different style, which in earlier Western literature is variously referred to as semi-Ku'ic, bent Ku'ic, Eastern Ku'ic, Persian Ku'ic and the like. These New Style (NS) scripts represent a dressed-up version of the 'Abbasid bookhand, i.e. the scripts used for the copying of non-Qur'anic texts. The NS was used for copying the Qur'an until the sixth/twelfth centuries, even as late as the seventh/thirteenth century. Unlike manuscripts copied in Early 'Abbasid scripts, NS manuscripts had vertical formats. By the seventh/thirteenth century, however, the NS had been relegated to book titles, *sura*-headings and other ornamental purposes. Quite a number of extant codices and fragments written in the New Style are on paper, as opposed to parchment.

At the same time as the NS began to be used in the production of Qur'anic manuscripts in the East, Maghribi scribes

developed their own style of handwriting based on the 'Abbasid bookhand. This development was already clearly visible at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. Medieval Maghribi Qur'ans, with their characteristic square-like formats, followed the old 'Abbasid tradition of using multi-coloured vowel and orthoepic signs, and a path of development unaffected by the proportioned scripts of the East. A fine example of a late fourth/tenth century Maghribi copy is the Sultan Muley Zaydan Qur'an, which is preserved in the Escorial Library, Madrid (ár. 1340) and has been recently published in facsimile.

It appears, from surviving evidence, that single volume Qur'ans had no title pages and that the recto of the first folio was usually left blank. It was only when the Qur'an began to be copied in a number of volumes that we begin to see the introduction of statements relating to the volume number, albeit still without specifying the nature of the work. The reference to the nature of the work (i.e. that it is the Qur'an) is sometimes found later on double-page illuminated frontispieces, the most common inscription being the quote from 56.77-80: It is surely a noble Qur'an, in a preserved Book, none shall touch it but the ritually pure, sent from the Lord of all beings.

Qur'ans of the early 'Abbasid period were bound in wooden boards, structured like a box enclosed on all sides, and having a movable upper cover that was fastened to the rest of the structure with leather thongs. There are very few surviving examples of these so-called boxed books, and even these examples have only partially survived. The best known are those of Qayrawan and San'a. Clasps (*qu*) made of gold for closing the volume appear to have been a later development, as was the introduction of

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the characteristic fore-edge and pentagonal aps, as an extension of the lower cover.

Around the middle of the fourth/tenth century, a completely new set of formal scripts appeared. These new scripts, known from later Arabic literature as proportioned scripts, are associated in Arabic tradition with Ibn Muqla's reform of writing. Their use for the copying of the Qur'an is attested already by the end of the century. The best surviving example is a medium-sized copy of the Qur'an executed in Baghdad in 391/1000-01 by the celebrated calligrapher 'Ali ibn Hilal, known as Ibn al-Bawwab. This codex (Ms 1431), preserved in Chester Beatty Library (Dublin), was reproduced in facsimile in Graz (Austria) in 1983.

Although referred to as *naskh* or *naskhi* in earlier Western writings, the main text of the Qur'an of Ibn al-Bawwab was copied in a script that is either a type of old *naskh* or most probably a script mentioned in later Arabic sources as *masahif*, that is a script from the *muhaqqaq* family used for medium-sized Qur'ans. The text is fully vocalized and the unpointed (*muhmal*) letters are distinguished from their pointed counterparts by a superscript *v* and a miniature version of the relevant letter (e.g. *ha* and *ayn*). The codex opens with six preliminary pages of illumination, four of which contain inscriptions relating to the computation of *suras*, verses, words, letters and diacritical points, given on the authority of the caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 40/661). Other full-page illuminations include a tailpiece and two double-page nispieces. The last two pages give an alphabetical listing of individual letter-counts in the text. Following an earlier tradition, Ibn al-Bawwab uses a stylized Kufic *ha* for groups of five verses and

the alpha-numerical system (*abjad*) for verse-counts.

The principal formal scripts that established themselves in the East from the fifth/eleventh century onwards were, on the one hand, *muhaqqaq*, *rayhan* and *naskh*, and, on the other, *thuluth*, *tawqi* and *riqa*. These scripts, with some later modifications, survived in manuscript production until the end of the manuscript age. The first three are associated with book production and the other three with state administration. The old scripts, however, were not entirely abandoned. The New Style or stylized Kufic, for instance, were often used as incidentals such as *sura* headings. Indeed, the Qur'ans of this period often display two or more scripts, not just within a chapter but also on the same page.

The Qur'anic production in the period after Ibn al-Bawwab is associated with famous names of calligraphers and patrons, the most celebrated of whom is the aforementioned Yaqut al-Musta'simi, whose extant Qur'ans are, unfortunately, notoriously difficult to authenticate. A number of lavish Qur'ans from this period are now (fully or partially) available in facsimile or on CD-ROM. They include the British Library's large, seven-volume Sultan Baybars Qur'an (Add 22406 13), calligraphed by Ibn al-Wahid in 705/1305-6; a small but exquisite copy executed by Shaykh Hamd Allah al-Amasi (Şeyh Hamdullah) (d. 926/1520), preserved in the Ankara Etnografya Müzesi; and the largest Ottoman Qur'an, which was made for Sulayman the Magnificent in the tenth/sixteenth century by Ahmad Qarahisari (Ahmed Karahisari) and is preserved in the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul (H.S. 158). The text of this last-mentioned Qur'an is executed in four scripts: *muhaqqaq*, *rayhan*, *naskh* and *thuluth*.

Like the early 'Abbasid Qur'ans, these Qur'ans continued to be richly decorated in gold and colours. The letter shapes in such scripts as *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *tawqi* were outlined and the text was vocalized. The outlining and vocalization were often done in a colour different from the colour of the main letter shape (often in blue or black if the main script was in gold). In many extant copies, we encounter the writing of the superscript *alif* of prolongation in red, as well as verse-counts and prostrations indicated in exquisite marginal roundels and medallions.

In contrast to the often large and deluxe copies, Qur'ans were also made as amulets in the form of rolls and small octagon-shaped books. Miniature octagon Qur'ans are usually between 3.5 and 7.5cm in diameter. A number of these Qur'ans have survived from between the tenth/sixteenth and thirteenth/nineteenth centuries. Both roll and octagon Qur'ans are written in micrography, in miniature versions of either a *naskh* or *ghubar* script.

#### Further reading

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- Déroche, François (1992) *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'ans of the 8th to 10th centuries AD*, London: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press.
- Gacek, Adam (1991) A collection of Qur'anic codices, *Fontanus: From the collections of McGill University* 4: 35-53.
- James, David (1988) *Qur'ans of the Mamluks*, London: Thames & Hudson.

see also: **calligraphy and the Qur'an; language and the Qur'an**

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## MARRIAGE

The Qur'anic discussion of marriage is extensive and varied, including both general statements and detailed regulations. Considered together, the verses exhibit an unresolved tension between mutuality and hierarchy. Marriage is for purposes of love and intimacy, and is characterized by mercy. It furthers the divine creative plan through procreation and establishes the kin relationships that are the basis of social organization. Marriage bestows rights and obligations on spouses. However, the reciprocity of claims does not imply sameness of husbands and wives. Husbands have greater rights in certain areas, including divorce, polygamy and the settlement of marital conflicts.

### Creation and pairing

God created the first human being and its mate (*zawj*) out of a single soul (*nafs*) (4.1; 7.189; 39.6). Drawing on biblical and *hadith* accounts, traditional exegesis assumes that the first human being was male, and that its mate was female, but this is not explicitly indicated in the Qur'an. The term *zawj* is grammatically masculine, but can apply equally to a specifically male or female spouse; likewise, its plural, *azwaj*, is used for both wives and husbands (2.232; 21.90; 33.28). Amina Wadud (1992), among others, has convincingly argued that most scriptural usages of these terms should be read as gender-neutral.

The pairing of man and woman in marriage has both individual and social aims, including the safeguarding of chastity and the protection of lineage. God created spouses from the same nature (16.72), and placed love and mercy between them, in order for them to dwell together in tranquillity (7.189; 30.21). Spouses are garments for one