

## The Composition and Writing of the Qur'ān: Old Explanations and New Evidence

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**Abstract:** This article challenges the view, common among Western academics since early last century, that the Qur'ān was left incomplete as a book and did not take final shape until well after the Prophet's death. Against this, it highlights an example of structural continuity: that of center-periphery connection between adjacent *sūras*. This type of connection is identified throughout the phases of revelation, from the early Meccan period to the late Medinan one. The structural consistency illuminated here indicates that one author or authority likely arranged the Qur'ān, a finding in accordance with recent stylometric analysis of the text carried out at Princeton University. It also accords with an examination of the theme of *jihād* in the Qur'ān, the conclusions of which were presented at the 2017 International Qur'anic Studies Association conference in Boston. Far from suggesting a multiplicity of voices, the doctrine of *jihād* is characterized by overall consistency and adherence to core principles, pointing to a likely single origin. Next, before the conclusion of the article, an updated hypothesis for the early writing and transmission of the Qur'ān is presented, taking into account the existence of minor variations in the old codices, the reports about an 'Uthmānic commission issuing a standard text, and the fact that no prototype manuscript has been discovered.

**Keywords:** Qur'anic composition; Center-periphery connection; *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*; Ṣan'ā' palimpsest; 'Uthmānic commission

### نظم القرآن وكتابه: بين أطروحات قديمة وأدلة جديدة

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**ملخص البحث:** يعارض هذا البحث الفكرة السائدة لدى الكثير من الباحثين الغربيين منذ مطلع القرن السابق بأن القرآن الكريم لم يكتمل ككتاب منزل خلال حياة النبي بل أخذ شكله النهائي بعد وفاته بفترة غير قصيرة. ومقابل هذه الفكرة يسلط الضوء على مثال بارز للاستمرارية في البناء، وهو الربط النصي بين الأوساط والأطراف في سور متعاقبة، إذ يظهر هذا النوع من الربط بين سور متعاقبة في كافة مراحل الوحي، من المكية المبكرة منه إلى المدنية المتأخرة. وهذه الملاحظة تؤدي بنا إلى الاستنتاج أن نظم القرآن يعود إلى مصدر واحد على الأرجح، ما يتفق مع نتائج تحليل حاسوبي لأسلوب القرآن أجري حديثاً في جامعة برنستون بالولايات المتحدة. والاستنتاج نفسه يتماشى مع نتائج بحث آخر في موضوع الجهاد تم تقديمه في المؤتمر السنوي للجمعية الدولية للدراسات القرآنية عام ٢٠١٧ في مدينة بوسطن. فكما يبين ذلك البحث، تتصف الدعوة إلى الجهاد في القرآن بالالتزام بمبادئ ثابتة وعدم التناقض، ما يدعم الاعتقاد بأن الدعوة جاءت من مصدر واحد وليست من مصادر أو أصوات مختلفة. ثم وقبل الختام لبحثنا تطرح فرضية مستحدثة أو معدلة حول كتابة القرآن كاملة في زمن مبكر جداً (أي خلال حياة الرسول) ونقله وانتشاره لاحقاً، أخذاً في الاعتبار وجود اختلافات بسيطة في أقدم المصحف وأخبار عن قيام لجنة في خلافة عثمان بن عفان بإصدار مصحف محقق وعدم العثور حتى الآن بين المخطوطات على المصحف الأصلي: مصحف النبي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظم القرآن، الربط النصي بين الأوساط والأطراف، مصحف باريس ومدن متعددة، مصحف

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## 1. Introduction and Literature Review<sup>(\*)</sup>

The view that the Qurʾān was not arranged by the Prophet Muḥammad, but rather assumed its permanent form sometime after his death in 11 AH/632 CE, has been adopted by many Western scholars. According to this position, the early Muslim community was involved in fixing the scripture to one extent or another. This article considers evidence, recently come to light, that in fact points in the other direction. The types of evidence discussed here—structural, stylometric, and thematic—suggest that one author or authority arranged the Qurʾān. The existing view, it would appear, thus needs revision. The article hence proposes, before its conclusion, an updated hypothesis for the writing and transmission of the Qurʾān.

Since its appearance in 2014, Angelika Neuwirth's *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qurʾān as a Literary Text* has been warmly received in the field<sup>(1)</sup>. D deservedly this is so, for the volume contains numerous insightful essays and overall makes a large contribution. It represents some of the best contemporary work on the Qurʾān, though Nicolai Sinai's *The Qurʾān: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (2017) perhaps exceeds it. Our reservation, however, relating to the topic of this essay, is Neuwirth's assessment of the later *sūras*' composition. She finds great difference between the cohesive, tripartite Meccan *sūras* and the long, supposedly incoherent Medinan *sūras*. These latter seem to be "collecting baskets for isolated groups of verses" and "cannot be described as structured compositions." They resulted, apparently, from a later collection process and were redacted at that time per "external, even mechanical criteria."<sup>(2)</sup>

In her skepticism regarding the early formation of the Qurʾān, Neuwirth follows a precedent among Western scholars. In 1916, Alphonse Mingana challenged the traditional reports attributing the production of a standard text to the caliphate of ʿUthmān (23-35/644-656). He argued instead that the Qurʾān was not codified as a book until the reign of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (65-86/685-705)<sup>(3)</sup>. In 1977, John Wansbrough went much further, proposing that the Qurʾān did not in fact take shape until well into Abbasid times, at the end of the eighth century CE at the earliest, almost two centuries after the Qurʾān was first proclaimed. He bases this supposition on its presumed loose arrangement ("independent pericopes to some extent unified by means of a limited number of rhetorical conventions"), evidently a sign of retrospective patchwork, noting also that the concern to establish the text only arose roughly when Qurʾānic commentaries (*tafsīr* literature) began to appear<sup>(4)</sup>. While Neuwirth places the arrangement further back, crediting the reports attributing it to an ʿUthmānic redaction committee (supposing not just that the committee issued a standardized text, but that it fundamentally shaped the book), she shares her predecessors' skepticism insofar as she finds the Qurʾān was left incomplete. To Neuwirth, the thesis that Muḥammad was the sole author of the Qurʾān is "highly problematic."<sup>(5)</sup>

### 2.1. Structural Evidence

In this article, as mentioned above, we review evidence that suggests a different conclusion. First, we will

(\*) Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Qurʾān between Late Antiquity and Middle Ages colloquium in Siena in May 2015 and at the Arab Crossroads Studies lecture series at NYU Abu Dhabi in September 2016. I am grateful for the feedback from colleagues on both occasions, especially from Giuliano Lancioni, Raoul Villano, Akeel Almarai, Rick Oakes, and Justin Stearns.

(1) See, for example, the evaluation by Süleyman Dost in *Review of Qurʾānic Research*, 2.1 (2016), p. 1-5.

(2) Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qurʾān as a Literary Text*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2014, p. 32, 154, 158.

(3) Alphonse Mingana, "The Transmission of the Qurʾān," *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian & Oriental Society* (1915-1916), p. 25-47.

(4) John Wansbrough, *Qurʾanic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 1977, p. 45, 47; cf. p. 12, 49. Wansbrough's arguments have been challenged by numerous scholars. For a detailed rebuttal, see Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Princeton, Darwin, 1998, p. 35-61.

(5) Neuwirth, *Scripture*, p. 259.

consider examples of compositional consistency, ones that would indicate the same person or authority was indicating the arrangement of the Qur'ān. These are instances of center-periphery connection between adjacent *sūras*, such as repeated words or themes<sup>(1)</sup>. This type of connection, it may be pointed out, is not unique to the Qur'ān. In 1942, the Biblical scholar Nils Lund observed in the New Testament "many instances of ideas, occurring at the centre of one system and recurring in the extremes of a corresponding system, the second system evidently having been constructed to match the first."<sup>(2)</sup> Below we will discuss examples of this center-periphery connection in early and later Meccan *sūras* (following Sinai's modification of Nöldeke's chronology<sup>(3)</sup>), and similar examples in long Medinan *sūras* from the duration of the Prophet's residence at Medina. The variety considered here features a connection between the center of a last section and the extremes (or single extreme) of a subsequent, paired system.

Our first example comes from the paired *sūras* 87-88 of the early Meccan period<sup>(4)</sup>. These two *sūras* call on the Prophet to glorify the Creator and to remind people of Him, and offer descriptions of heavenly reward and punishment. In their centers, they assure the Prophet that God will teach him to recite and pose rhetorical questions about the majesty of creation. The opening unit of the pair, al-ʿAlā (The Most High), may be divided into three parts as follows:

A	1-5	Command to praise the Creator
B	6-8	Assurance that God will teach to recite
A'	9-19	Command to admonish people

The last section itself has a concentric form, a ring within the symmetrically arranged *sūra*, focusing on the unbeliever and his final punishment:

#### Section A' (9-19)

9

Command to Messenger: So remind, in case the reminder profits! \*

10

The God-fearing will take heed. \*

11-13

But the most unfortunate will avoid it, \* who will **burn in the Great Fire**, \* in which he will neither live nor die. \*

14-15

But the pure of heart will prosper, \* who recalls the name of his Lord and prays. \*

(1) For more on this connection, see Farrin, *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam's Holy Text*, Ashland, White Cloud, 2014, p. 10; Farrin, "The Pairing of Sūras 8-9," in *Studi del quarto convegno RBS: International Studies on Biblical & Semitic Rhetoric*, R. Meynet and J. Oniszczyk eds, Rome, Gregorian & Biblical, 2015, p. 254. Cf. Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2007, p. 35-38.

(2) He calls this "the law of shift from centre to the extremes." Nils Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte*, Chapel Hill, UNCP, 1942, p. 41.

(3) See Sinai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2017, p. 161-176.

(4) On these two as a pair, see Amīn Iṣlāḥī as cited in Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, Indianapolis, American Trust Publications, 1986, p. 76; Michel Cuypers, "Structures rhétoriques des sourates 85 à 90," *Annales Islamologiques*, 35 (2001), p. 48-63; Farrin, *Structure*, p. 110.

On pairing in general, see Mir, *Coherence*, p. 75-84; Michel Cuypers, *La composition du Coran: Naẓm al-Qur'ān*, Pendé, Gabalda, 2012, p. 27-34; Farrin, *Structure*, p. 22-47.

16-19

Message to people: But you prefer the life of this world! \* Yet the hereafter is better and more enduring. \* This is in the earliest Scrolls— \* the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses. \*

Turning to Sūra 88, al-Ghāshiyā (The Dark Covering), we find that it is also tripartite, with grim warnings occurring at each end:

A	1-16	People in Fire; people in Garden
	B	17-20 Rhetorical questions about creation
A'	21-26	Command to admonish people; those who ignore message will be punished

Within 88: A and A', the idea from the middle of the last section of 87 is restated in slightly different ways. To wit, the reference to the one who will "burn in the Great Fire" (*yaṣlā l-nāra l-kubrā*) from the center of 87:A' echoes in the references to faces "entering a hot Fire" (*taṣlā nāran ḥāmīya*) and "the Great Punishment" (*al-'adhāba l-akbar*). Below we represent the outer parts of this *sūra*, with these echoing references about hell underscored and boldfaced:

### Section A (1-16)

1-7

Rhetorical question to Messenger: Has the story of the Dark Covering reached you? \* On that Day, faces will be lowered, \* laboring, tired, \* **entering a hot Fire**. \* They will be given to drink from a boiling spring, \* and their only food will be a bitter, thorny shrub, \* one that neither fattens nor satisfies hunger. \*

8-16

On that Day, other faces will be soft and smooth, \* content with their striving, \* in a high Garden. \* Therein they will hear no trivial word. \* Therein will be a flowing spring, \* and raised thrones, \* and goblets placed, \* and cushions arranged, \* and fine carpets spread. \*

### Section A' (21-26)

Command to Messenger: So remind, for you are merely a reminder; \* you are not an overseer. \* Whoever turns away and does not believe— \* God will punish him with **the Great Punishment**. \* To God is their return, \* and up to God is their reckoning. \*

In sum, a center-periphery connection exists between the two *sūras*, between the center of 87:A' and the boundaries of 88, emphasizing the horrible fate of the unbeliever. The connection may be indicated in this way:

87	A'	
	9-10	
		(11, 12, 13)
	14-19	
88	A	
	(4)	
		B
	A'	
	(24)	

Two other examples from the Meccan time of revelation have been discussed in our *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation*, so we will only briefly note them here. The first occurs in the early Meccan pair 54-55, al-Qamar and al-Raḥmān (The Moon and The Merciful). At the middle of the last section of 54, there occurs a statement that God has created all things in measure (verse 49), what may not seem to relate to the surrounding ideas of God's punishment of unbelievers and reward of believers. The statement is found to connect to the periphery of 55, wherein examples of the harmony and proportion of His creation are given (verses 7-9 and the parallel verses 19-20). Likewise, one finds an example of this connection in the later Meccan pair 12-13, Yūsuf and al-Ra'd (Joseph and Thunder). At the middle of the last section of 12, there is an unexpected rhetorical turn to God's manifest signs in the heavens and on earth (verse 105)—not the emphasis of this *sūra*, which relates an inspiring human story. A connection is discovered in the opening section of 13, where one encounters examples of God's signs in nature and an indication of His punishment from above (verses 2-4 and 12-13, 17)<sup>(1)</sup>. The compositional feature of center-periphery connection, therefore, exists in both early and later Meccan *sūras*.

In the transition to Medinan *sūras*, organizing principles supposedly loosen or break down. The *sūras* tend to lengthen and include legislative themes, of course, and so are distinguishable from their earlier Meccan counterparts. Yet structurally, with respect to center-periphery connection of paired *sūras*, one finds a continuation. Our first example is from the early Medinan *sūras* 2-3, al-Baqara and Āl 'Imrān (The Cow and The Family of 'Imrān). This example has also been discussed in *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation*<sup>(2)</sup>. In brief, there is a connection between the majestic Throne Verse (255) at the middle of 2:A' and the repeat of "God: there is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal" in 3: 2. The repetition in verse 2 of Āl 'Imrān comes after the opening letters ALM and precedes the statement about the revelation of scripture. Significantly, this is one of only three occasions—out of 29 in the Qur'ān—where opening letters (*fawātih*) are not immediately followed by reference to scriptural revelation<sup>(3)</sup>. It would seem that the phrase is interjected here at the periphery of the *sūra* for structural reason: to connect to the emphatic center of the preceding section.

The next two examples occurring in postdating Medinan pairs—in 8-9, al-Anfāl and al-Tawba (The Spoils and Repentance) from relatively early and late in the Medinan phase of revelation, and 4-5, al-Nisā' and al-Mā'ida (Women and The Table) from roughly the middle and probably the end of the Medinan phase—similarly have been discussed in recent publications<sup>(4)</sup>. To summarize: in the center of 8:A' there are references to breaking of treaties and the unbelievers' inability to frustrate God (verses 56, 59), and then at the beginning of 9 one finds a release from treaties with polytheists and affirmation that unbelievers such as them will never frustrate God (verses 1-2)—a center-periphery connection. Lastly, one notices such a connection in the reference at the center of 4:A' to certain wholesome foods that were made unlawful to the Israelites because of their transgression (verse 160), and in the opening clarification about certain foods being lawful to the believers at the beginning of Sūra 5 (verse 2).

Hence this feature of ties between paired *sūras*, their center-periphery connection, is found to occur throughout the Qur'anic revelation. It indicates compositional consistency.

## 2.2. Stylometric Evidence

In 2011, Behnam Sadeghi published a striking article based on research carried out at Princeton University. There is not adequate space here to go into the details of Sadeghi's impressive work; the reader is referred to his article. Suffice it to say that he applies the methods of stylometry to analyze the Qur'ān in order to

(1) Farrin, *Structure*, p. 44, 68.

(2) Farrin, *Structure*, p. 25-26.

(3) The other two being 29: 1 and 30: 1. These two locations do not include a following reference to scriptural revelation. Hence 3: 1 is the only instance of 27 where opening letters and subsequent reference to scriptural revelation are interrupted.

(4) See Farrin, "The Pairing of Sūras 8-9," p. 251; Farrin, "Sūrat al-Nisā' and the Centrality of Justice," *Al-Bayān – Journal of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth Studies*, 14 (2016), p. 13.

answer questions about the chronology of the text and its stylistic unity. Like our review of structure, both above and earlier in our monograph, his study points to textual continuity. Through computer analysis of such factors as verse length and incidence of common and uncommon morphemes, Sadeghi outlines a smooth stylistic trajectory. Variances in the observed factors occur according to a gradual sequence of phases, not disruptively or haphazardly. The study concludes that the Qurʾān has one author<sup>(1)</sup>.

### 2.3. Thematic Evidence

The third type of evidence to consider here is thematic, specifically regarding the principle of *jihād*. While the traditional view holds that there is a progression in the Qurʾān from pacifist passages to warlike passages, the former canceled by *naskh* or abrogation, numerous Western scholars have argued for a polyvalent understanding. Reuven Firestone, for instance, who inherited the familiar premise in 1999 that the Qurʾān is a jumbled text, proposed that the Qurʾān includes the views of various factions within the early community. Thus, the text is found to 1) urge non-militancy, 2) call for restrictions on fighting, 3) express conflict between God's command and the reaction of Muḥammad's followers, and 4) advocate war; these were the positions of factions that ensured that their views were incorporated prior to the Qurʾān's composition<sup>(2)</sup>.

Challenging both the traditional view and the polyvalent one is the recent scholarship by Javad Hashmi. Based on a close reading of the Qurʾānic passages on *jihād*, Hashmi instead argues for a coherent doctrine of *jihād*. This doctrine follows five principles and revolves around the third, *qiṣāṣ*: 1) the sanctity of life (*ḥurmat al-nafs*), 2) the non-aggression principle (*lā taʿadū*), 3) the proportionality principle (*qiṣāṣ*), 4) the principle of covenant (*mīthāq*) and collective defense (*nuṣra*), and 5) the principle of peacemaking (*ṣulḥ*) and warning (*waʿīd*). Reconsidering the *sīra* or Prophet's biography, he also notes that the Prophet's final disposition toward the Meccan polytheists was one of amnesty and reconciliation, not aggression, which leads him to suggest that the Qurʾān's just war theory was only militarized by later medieval exegetes seeking to justify imperial doctrine. Finally, as he observes, inasmuch as the Qurʾān espouses a coherent doctrine with respect to *jihād*, the scripture likely emerges from a single source<sup>(3)</sup>.

Hence, from three angles we reach the same conclusion about the Qurʾān's provenance. We might add that the inference about solo arrangement (whether or not by inspiration), based on our structural finding of consistency, does not contradict the early reports. According to tradition, the ʿUthmānic committee produced the first codex, and opinion has split as to whether it arranged the already-complete *sūras* (in their set verse order) following the recitation of the Prophet, or whether the members themselves determined the *sūra* order<sup>(4)</sup>. Our research aligns with the first opinion. The existence of verses placed within *sūras*,

(1) Behnam Sadeghi, "The Chronology of the Qurʾān: A Stylometric Research Program," *Arabica*, 58 (2011), p. 210-299.

On stylometry, a good starting point is Anthony Kenny's *The Computation of Style: An Introduction to Statistics for Students of Literature and Humanities*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1982.

(2) Firestone, *Jihād: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999, p. 44-46, 69-91.

(3) From Javad Hashmi, *On the Origin of Jihād: The Ethics of War and Peace in the Qurʾān and Early Islam* (forthcoming). A summary of this research, delivered at the 2017 International Qurʾānic Studies Association annual meeting in Boston, can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK-f9Bes5AA>.

(4) Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Abū l-Faḍl al-Dimyāṭī, Cairo, Dār al-ḥadīth, 2006, p. 181-183. Cf. Fahd al-Rūmī, *Dirāsāt fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, Riyadh, Maktabat al-Malik Fahd al-waṭaniyya, 2003, p. 108-112, on the preponderance of the opinion that the Prophet also dictated the *sūra* order.

Moving back one step, study of the Ṣanʿāʾ manuscript (discussed further below) has lately confirmed that the verse orders within *sūras* were set prior to ʿUthmān. This Ṣanʿāʾ codex precedes that of ʿUthmān, yet at the level of sentences and verses it is identical (differences between them are smaller, such as at the level of morphemes and words). Since here a pre-ʿUthmānic manuscript already contains *sūras* in forms that would be disseminated later, it follows that the *sūras* were constituted prior to the ʿUthmānic text. Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, "Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins of the Qurʾān," *Der Islam*, 87 (2012), p. 1-129.

connecting to verses in adjoining *sūras*, is clear evidence of a plan that transcends the individual *sūra*. And as Mustansir Mir has asked pointedly, "if Muhammad took care to give a certain arrangement to verses in *surahs*, how could he have remained indifferent to the arrangement of the *surahs* themselves?"<sup>(1)</sup> Indeed, the full probability is that the same author or authority indicated the arrangement of the Qur'ān, from the early period to the late stage. We are speaking here of a lengthy process spanning more than two decades, by which the chronological order of revelations was recast in a literary order. Due to the inclusion of late passages, this literary order did not take final shape until a short time before the Prophet's death in 11/632<sup>(2)</sup>.

### 3. An Updated Hypothesis for the Writing and Transmission of the Qur'ān

We begin this section by mentioning another important book that appeared in the past decade, *Les traditions sur la constitution du muṣḥaf de 'Uthmān* by Viviane Comerro<sup>(3)</sup>. On the general idea of the Qur'ān's preservation, namely that it was preserved orally (besides on pieces of leather, on shoulder blades of camels, on palm branches, as well as on other materials) until 'Uthmān's committee convened and issued the first codex, Comerro points out that the general idea lacked consensus. In fact, as late as the fifth century AH/eleventh century CE, scholars such as al-Dānī and Ibn Ḥazm in al-Andalus held that the Qur'ān was collected and written during the Prophet's lifetime. She shows that it is al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) who deserves most credit for establishing the mainstream story. Out of the body of circulating traditions, he selects certain ones, giving each of the first three caliphs a role and thereby affirming the initial succession. According to the assembled traditions, either Abū Bakr (r. 11-13/632-634) or 'Umar (r. 13-23/634-644) initiated the gathering of the Qur'ān—or they both had a hand in it—and then 'Uthmān officially took up the matter and completed it. Eventually, the narrative al-Bukhārī promoted became dominant<sup>(4)</sup>.

On the other hand, the traditions about the Qur'ān's origin probably contain an element of truth, rather than being outright fabrications<sup>(5)</sup>. Harald Motzki has shown, in this regard, that Muslim accounts of the Qur'ān's formation recorded by al-Bukhārī date back, at least, to the end of the first century AH, that is, from about two generations after the caliphate of 'Uthmān; they were not merely invented by al-Bukhārī<sup>(6)</sup>. It may be that oral tradition can be reconsidered taking account of new findings. Below, then, we propose a hypothesis on the transmission of the Qur'ān based on literary, paleographic, and historical evidence while incorporating the traditional narrative to an extent.

(1) Mir, *Coherence*, p. 101.

(2) Among Western scholars, John Burton has also proposed that the Qur'ān was left complete by the Prophet (*Collection of the Qur'ān*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1979). However, his methods and arguments differ significantly from those above. For a critical evaluation of Burton, see Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'ān: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam*, 78 (2001), p. 11-15.

(3) Viviane Comerro, *Les traditions sur la constitution du muṣḥaf de 'Uthmān*, Beirut, Orient-Institut, 2012.

(4) It was further strengthened long after al-Bukhārī by the commentary of al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505) in *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Comerro, *Les traditions*, p. 137-158.

(5) This position follows that of W. Montgomery Watt and others before him. Watt, *Muhammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 1988, p. 1; Richard Bell, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān, completely revised and enlarged by W. Montgomery Watt*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 1970, p. 42-44. Cf. Nöldeke *et al.*, *The History of the Qur'ān*, ed. and trans. Wolfgang H. Behn, Leiden, Brill, 2013, p. 230, 256-263.

(6) Motzki, "Collection," p. 1-34. Cf. Donner, *Narratives*, p. 203-212, 275-290. Note also the remarks by Sean W. Anthony and Catherine L. Bronson: "Historians would be well advised not to dismiss these stories as mere concoctions even if the historical truth of the event in all its details may not find vindication in the methods of modern historical and literary criticism. The picture such stories paint is not merely plausible in a general sense; these stories are historically informed by, and deeply ensconced in, the world the accounts depict." "Did Ḥafṣah Edit the Qur'ān? A Response with Notes on the Codices of the Prophet's Wives," *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association*, 1 (2016), p. 117.

With respect to the traditions, our main difficulty is with their nostalgic evocation of the past. Evident is pastoral longing, a hankering for a simpler time, characteristic of the Umayyad era and the rapid expansion of empire<sup>(1)</sup>. In truth, the Arabian Peninsula at Islam's formation was not so isolated and culturally limited as is commonly thought. Arabic had been spoken there for many centuries, and by the seventh century CE it was becoming widely written, as Robert G. Hoyland has demonstrated from epigraphic analysis. Christian missionaries to the Peninsula, and the courts of Arab kings subservient to Byzantium, such as that of the Ghassānids or Jafnids, were probably two key factors in the development of the Arabic script<sup>(2)</sup>. From Egypt comes further evidence of Arabic usage, in the form of a tax receipt on papyrus recorded in Greek and Arabic and dated to 22/643. The Arabic is written quite competently under the Greek, from which one can infer, following Hoyland, that an Arabic administrative tradition existed before the seventh century<sup>(3)</sup>.

Considering the time of revelation, one finds reports about writing and indications of administrative activity in Arabic. The Prophet is said to have dispatched letters to various peoples and leaders during his last years in Medina<sup>(4)</sup>. Furthermore, oral reports mention an official scribe for the Prophet in Mecca engaged in preserving revelations, and many of them in Medina, Zayd ibn Thābit being the chief one<sup>(5)</sup>. Finally, the Qur'ān itself contains numerous references to writing or recitation from text. For example, the Prophet is said to recite from leaves (*ṣuhuf*; 98: 2). Also, the *fawātih* occurring at the beginning of Qur'ānic *sūras* at various stages of revelation are Arabic letters. And in Medina, debtors are instructed to have scribes document what they owe, so that the amount will be repaid in full (2: 282). Could it be that something so important as the Qur'ān was not written also? Such a way of proceeding, when writing was apparently practiced, seems hard to imagine. And if the Qur'ān was recorded at all, why would it not be recorded fully? Here we restate our finding above of literary consistency in center-periphery connection, suggesting one author or authority arranging the Qur'ān, and affirm once more our position that the chronological revelations were gradually recast in a literary order resulting in a complete written Qur'ān before the Prophet's death.

However, several problems arise regarding this hypothesis. If the Qur'ān was left complete, what happened to the original? No prototype has been discovered. In addition, why do copies exist containing slight variations in orthography, verse counting, etc.?<sup>(6)</sup> Does not their existence imply the lack of a fixed text? And why is 'Uthmān so often credited with distributing the written Qur'ān? In the remainder of this section, we will attempt to provide answers to these questions.

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- (1) On feelings of nostalgia in this time, felt especially by those who left Arabia as the new religion spread, see the chapter about Jamīl ibn Ma'mar in Farrin, *Abundance from the Desert: Classical Arabic Poetry*, Syracuse, Syracuse UP, 2011, p. 92-114; *Tharwa min al-bādiya: al-shi'r al-'arabī al-qadīm*, Beirut, Dār al-Farābi, 2013, p. 129-150.
  - (2) Robert Hoyland, "Epigraphy and the Linguistic Background to the Qur'ān," in *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 51-69. In this regard, one can make a distinction between societal groups in early Arabia: the nomadic Bedouins on the one hand, who did not carry writing instruments or texts (they relied on memory to preserve their heritage, *i.e.* poetry and tribal histories) and the people of settled areas on the other, who increasingly became accustomed to written documentation (supplementing the faculty of memory).
  - (3) Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2015, p. 100-101.
  - (4) Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834), *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2001, p. 602, 611, 633-634, 637. He is also said to have sent proselytizing letters to kings further afield (p. 643), though the *Sīra* does not include these texts, unlike the other missives. A purported diplomatic letter from the Prophet to Kisrā, by the way, has lately been shown to date from at least 700 years later (see Alan Jones, "The Word Made Visible: Arabic Script and the Committing of the Qur'ān to Writing," in *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards*, ed. Chase F. Robinson, Leiden, Brill, 2003, p. 7, n. 26). This result may be contrasted with the radiocarbon dating of early Qur'ānic manuscripts, discussed further below.
  - (5) See M. M. al-A'zamī, *The History of the Qur'ānic Text from Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments*, Leicester, UK Islamic Academy, 2003, p. 68.
  - (6) On these variations, see Keith E. Small, *Textual Criticism and Qur'ān Manuscripts*, Lanham, Lexington, 2011, p. 77-94.

According to one tradition, Abū Bakr was the first to put the Qurʾān between two covers, making of the ordered leaves a *muṣḥaf*<sup>(1)</sup>. This surely might have been the case, but given the administrative activity around the Prophet formerly, it would seem just as likely that this had already happened. At Abū Bakr's death in 13/634, the first Qurʾān would necessarily have passed into the hands of the new caliph ʿUmar. Conquests followed during his caliphate, one after another, and we posit that it was the great expansion of the state in his rule and after that drove the production of Qurʾān copies. This brings us to a key manuscript collection, the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, among Qurʾānic fragments in the ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ Mosque in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, Egypt, parchment folios were found in the rightward-slanting *ḥijāzī* script, the style of writing of the papyrus described above<sup>(2)</sup>. A sizable number of leaves were acquired for the French Royal Library in 1833, and today parts of the codex, containing about 45 percent of the Qurʾān, exist in Paris, Saint Petersburg, the Vatican, and London. Meanwhile, an apparently similar manuscript, the Birmingham Qurʾān, was recently radiocarbon dated to 568-645 CE (95.4 percent probability)<sup>(3)</sup>. With regard to the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, we suppose that the parchment was prepared from animal skin during the initial phase of expansion, and that the *muṣḥaf* was copied shortly after the conquest of Egypt in 20/641. Study of the manuscript shows that five copyists were involved, implying a necessity for speed. Egypt had then been conquered, according to our estimated time of the work, and its first mosque needed a Qurʾān. Evident as well is that the copy was made for public use. It furthermore shows signs of an evolving Arabic script, which is characteristic of the first years. As François Déroche concludes, "the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus* was transcribed from an older exemplar written in a more defective orthography that the five scribes were trying to improve while they were copying."<sup>(4)</sup>

There is a similar Qurʾānic fragment in the *ḥijāzī* script displayed in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum in Istanbul. Its folios were found in the Great Mosque in Damascus and brought to Istanbul in 1911, before the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Clearly this is another very early Qurʾān manuscript; besides some irregularities, the writing does not differ significantly from that of the Cairo edition<sup>(5)</sup>. Given that Syria was conquered prior to Egypt (in 15/636), it may be that this codex predates the Egyptian copy slightly, making it perhaps the oldest Qurʾānic text. Carbon dating of the fragment could help clarify the matter. Other *muṣḥafs* lately have been dated, as in the case of Birmingham, to the early period: a *muṣḥaf* held in the Dār al-kutub al-Miṣriyya in Cairo and the Berlin State Library (Ms. Or. Fol. 4313) has been dated to 606-652; the Tübingen Qurʾān, which was discovered too in Damascus, has been dated most probably to 649-675; while the Ṣanʿāʾ *muṣḥaf* has been dated to 630-650<sup>(6)</sup>.

(1) Cited in Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, ed. Arthur Jeffrey, Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-turāth, 2007, p. 5.

(2) Cf. Keith Small: "the earliest scripts found in the Qurʾān manuscripts are of the same quality and level of development as the Arabic used in business and administrative papyri." Small, *Textual Criticism*, p. 143.

(3) <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/TheBirminghamQuranManuscript.aspx>, accessed in June 2017.

(4) François Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads: A First Overview*, Leiden, Brill, 2014, p. 17-19, 32; see also Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l'islam: Le codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 51-75. Note, too, Hoyland's key observations about a system of diacritical marks—used only to prevent confusion, rather than appearing consistently, as later—on papyri and inscriptions already in the 20s/640s. Significantly, such marks do not appear on a sample of sixth-century Arabic inscriptions from Syria. "The most reasonable conclusion," states Hoyland, "is that these marks were introduced as part of the reform of the Arabic script by the early Medinan caliphate." Hoyland, "New Documentary Texts and the Early Islamic State," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 69/3 (2006), p. 403.

(5) Déroche, *Qurʾāns*, p. 37-38; Small, *Textual Criticism*, p. 16.

(6) <http://corpuscoranicum.de/handschriften/index/sure/4/vers/137/handschrift/15>, accessed in February 2018; <https://www.uni-tuebingen.de/en/news/press-releases/press-releases/article/raritaet-entdeckt-koranhandschrift-stammt-aus-der-fruehzeit-des-islam.html>, accessed in June 2017; Behnam Sadeghi and Uwe Bergmann, "The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet," *Arabica* 57 (2010), p. 353. See below and p. 11, n. 6 for further discussion of the Ṣanʿāʾ *muṣḥaf*.

Initially at least, these copies would have been made in Medina, political center and location of the original *muṣḥaf*<sup>(1)</sup>.

At 'Umar's death in 23/644, tradition maintains that the original collection passed to the caliph's daughter, Ḥafṣa, who had been married to the Prophet and was said to have been literate<sup>(2)</sup>. Such an occurrence seems perfectly natural. By this time, 12 years after the Prophet's death, the Arabic script had undergone development and the state's resources expanded considerably. We imagine that a visually improved, calligraphically more regular *muṣḥaf* had already replaced the first in the congregational mosque (or perhaps one did now upon bruising of a new destination for the original). The Qur'an had always been memorized, doubtless, and from the beginning the leaves had been no more than a fixed record, a prompt to memory. One does not suppose that they were especially valued in and of themselves, at least in the early period, or that the community would have been troubled at this transference to Ḥafṣa, particularly if the replacement leaves displayed clearer orthography or were in some fashion enhanced. We are speaking here, by the way, of a general situation of limited copies, whereby the congregational mosque of each city or garrison town housed a *muṣḥaf* that was used as the basis for teaching, recitation, and memorization<sup>(3)</sup>. Certainly, the rich and powerful soon began keeping their own copies too. Yet the mosque copy served everyone.

As study of the manuscripts makes clear, an element of human error crept into the process. Though Islamic culture has right to be proud of the accuracy of transcription, nevertheless scribes did commit errors due to fatigue or momentary lapses<sup>(4)</sup>. At some point, a somber realization set in that the *muṣḥafs* contained differences. According to the tradition recorded by al-Bukhārī, this evidently happened c. 30/650 when the

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- (1) On Medina as Islam's first intellectual center, a location for Qur'anic study and transcription, before the rise of the cities of Iraq, see Estelle Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'an," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118/1 (1998), p. 10-14; cf. Whelan, "Writing the Word of God: Some Early Qur'an Manuscripts and Their Milieux, Part 1," *Ars Orientalis*, 20 (1990), p. 114-115.
- (2) Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, p. 9. Cf. Nöldeke *et al.*, *History*, p. 231-232 on the credibility of this bequest. A story about Ḥafṣa reading, related by Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), is found in 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī, Beirut, al-Majlis al-'ilmī, 1972, vol. 6, p. 113. On her literacy, see also Anthony and Bronson, "Did Ḥafṣah Edit the Qur'an?" p. 106.
- (3) Note Donner's remark that in the first century AH "it was only in the towns that large communities of Believers were to be found." Donner, *Narratives*, p. 217. Meanwhile, Gregor Schoeler reminds us in *The Genesis of Literature in Islam* that the practice of keeping important texts in special places was very widespread in antiquity, including in the Arabian context. He observes: "The purpose of depositing an important document in a temple or in any other revered site is clear: it draws attention to the nature and character of its content and, more importantly, it confers on the document the status of an authentic, perdurable, reproducible original, one that can be consulted by anyone, at any time." Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, trans. Shawkat M. Toorawa, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2009, p. 18. In addition, supporting the idea of few copies widely separated at select urban centers and towns is the fact that early believers, when carving rock inscriptions away from these places, sometimes deviated slightly from the text; it follows that they did not have it in front of them. Indeed, two graffiti in the environs of Mecca dated 80/699 and 84/703 (of 38: 26 and 2: 21) contain subtle variations from the Qur'anic verses, suggesting minor faults of recollection. See Hoyland, "New Documentary Texts," p. 407. On early inscriptions, including Qur'anic paraphrasing, see also Hoyland, "The Content and Context of Early Arabic Inscriptions," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 21 (1997), p. 77-102, and Jouni Harjumäki and Ilkka Lindstedt, "The Ancient North Arabian and Early Islamic Arabic Graffiti: A Comparison of Formal and Thematic Features," in *Cross-Cultural Studies in Near Eastern History and Literature*, Saana Svärd and Robert Rollinger eds, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2016, p. 59-94.
- (4) On textual fidelity, Keith Small points out that "occurrences of different words in extant manuscripts are extremely rare." He distinguishes between unintentional variants (which were "usually easily identifiable, comprising a letter, a combination of letters, or an omission that did not make sense in the immediate context") and intentional variants ("the major category was the improvement of the orthography, which included standardizing and supplementing the use of *alifs*, adding diacritical marks to distinguish consonants, adding colored dots to indicate placement and pronunciation of short vowels and *hamza* ..."). Concluding, he writes that "the variants that can be observed in extant manuscripts are relatively minor revolving around a consonantal text that even at the time of the earliest manuscripts, including the palimpsests, shows a remarkable degree of fixation." Small, *Textual Criticism*, p. 95, 134-135, 173.

Syrian and Iraqi Arab armies were campaigning in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Muslim sides feuded over their respective readings, and back in Medina ʿUthmān was apprised of this and counseled to act. He secured the leaves from Ḥafṣa and appointed a commission made up of Zayd ibn Thābit and three respected men of Quraysh. This committee had for its task to establish a definitive text based on Ḥafṣa's leaves. It did so, and afterward the collection returned to Ḥafṣa. The ʿUthmānic standard codex was hence promulgated throughout the state, and all Qurʾānic leaves and codices exhibiting variations from it were burnt<sup>(1)</sup>.

While the report perhaps can be taken as broadly accurate (the establishment of a standard codex from Ḥafṣa's collection, the main step of action described, for instance, follows simple logic), it would seem to contain exaggeration about the fate of old copies. Codices were expensive; by way of example, Déroche estimates that a herd of 185 animals was required to produce the ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ mosque *muṣḥaf* of Egypt<sup>(2)</sup>. Why would they be burnt? Contrary to this, reports speak of hot water and vinegar being used to wash away the old script<sup>(3)</sup>. We are told of a *muṣḥaf* being carried from Syria to Medina for checking, and of a team traveling to inspect the one held by ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ<sup>(4)</sup>. Indeed, Déroche notices in the latter that a small number of non-canonical verse endings were erased, and that some canonical ones were added by later hands<sup>(5)</sup>. In short, the codices underwent a process of correction. This would seem to be the case, by the way, with the Ṣanʿāʾ manuscript, the codex offering further evidence of what happened generally. We recall that the Ṣanʿāʾ manuscript did not end up at a key outpost during the period of expansion, but at a strategically less important city as campaigns proceeded against Byzantium and Persia. At some time in the early years, one person transcribed the lower text—the manuscript is a palimpsest—in an irregular manner on parchment of inferior quality (he may not have been the best-trained scribe, from appearances, and perhaps he worked in a somewhat idiosyncratic way). For one folio at least, the person used a damaged piece of material. Later, the text was completely erased, and then two scribes wrote the ʿUthmānic standard codex onto the parchment. The manuscript has remained thus<sup>(6)</sup>.

(1) Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Beirut, Dār ṣādir, n.d., no. 4987, p. 920. Cf. this reported exchange between critics of the caliph, and ʿUthmān:

"You have burned the book of God." He replied: "People read (the Qurʾān) in different ways. One would say: 'My Qurʾān is better than yours.' The other would say: 'No, mine is better.'" [ . . . ] They said: "But why did you burn the (other) collections?" [ . . . ] He replied: "I wanted nothing else to exist except what had been written in front of the Messenger of God, and was contained in the pages (*ṣuḥuf*) of Ḥafṣa."

Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Wiesbaden, Verlag, 1979, vol. 4.1, p. 550-551. Cited in Schoeler, "The Codification of the Qurʾān: A Comment on the Hypotheses of Burton and Wansbrough," in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx eds., Leiden, Brill, 2010, p. 787.

Regarding this standardizing intervention, Sadeghi fixes its *terminus ante quem* within the rule of ʿUthmān. He notes: "The murder of ʿUṯmān in AD 656 occasioned what came to be known as the 'First Civil War' in the historical memory of Muslims. It polarized and fractured the community irrevocably. Had empire-wide standardization been attempted at any moment after this point, it would have been a hopeless undertaking." Sadeghi and Bergmann, "Codex," p. 414.

(2) Déroche, *Qurʾāns*, p. 112.

(3) Ibn Wādīḥ al-Yaʿqūbī, cited in Nöldeke *et al.*, *History*, p. 309, n. 27; cf. al-Aʿẓamī, *Qurʾānic Text*, p. 96.

(4) Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, p. 155-156.

(5) Déroche, *Qurʾāns*, p. 32.

(6) Déroche, *Qurʾāns*, p. 49-50; cf. Sadeghi and Bergmann, "Codex," p. 354-357. The lower text was retrieved using X-Ray fluorescence imaging.

It is possible that the Ṣanʿāʾ manuscript was sent to Yemen during or just after the *rida* (secession or apostasy) campaigns of 11/632-633 in the caliphate of Abū Bakr. Accordingly, it might have been dictated from the original in Medina and dispatched to an early outpost of believers in Ṣanʿāʾ. This could explain the lesser quality of parchment and inferiority of script: state resources being more limited at that time and copying skills and Arabic writing less developed. Later, such as after the conquest of Egypt, better parchment could have been obtained, more skilled and trained scribes employed, and a more regular Arabic script (in a discernible *ḥijāzī* style) used.

Incidentally, if this last scenario were the case, it would make the Ṣanʿāʾ manuscript the oldest parchment on which the Qurʾān was written (lower text), though the initial script was later erased and replaced by the ʿUthmānic standard.

We might mention here as well that no non-ʿUthmānic manuscript exists today; none survived or endured uncorrected.

So far, we have provided answers to two of the three questions above regarding the fact of early textual variants (arising from human error) and the role of ʿUthmān in establishing a standard text. What, then, happened to the prototype? Tradition informs us that Ḥafṣa kept it in her possession. When Marwān, future caliph in Damascus (r. 64–65/684–685) and cousin of ʿUthmān, was Umayyad governor of Medina in the early 40s/660s, he demanded the collection<sup>(1)</sup>. The codex apparently contained very minor deviation from what was promulgated as the ʿUthmānic standard<sup>(2)</sup>. Ibn Abī Dāwūd cites two words of one verse (the addition of the afternoon prayer following the middle prayer in 2: 238), and Arthur Jeffrey has located nine other variants mentioned. Five of these deviations are not reported in any other codex. At least one is a mistake (*al-arwāḥ*, the spirits, instead of *al-riyāḥ*, the winds, in 2: 164; cf. 45: 5), and none has a significant bearing on the meaning of the verse<sup>(3)</sup>. They were likely minute scribal errors and determined as such, not harmonizing with how the Qurʾān was memorized and recited in Medina. Still their existence, this collection in fact, might pose a threat to Umayyad legitimacy. If it could be shown that the ʿUthmānic standard differed from the original, however slightly, this would open a Pandora’s box. ʿUthmān belonged to the Umayya clan, of course, and now in the decade after him the Umayyads were endeavoring to extinguish flames and establish their rule. They certainly did not need anyone going back to the source text and questioning ʿUthmān’s initiative (indeed, the emergence of any discrepancy was Marwān’s fear, according to the sources). Ḥafṣa, meanwhile, resisted the pressure applied on her. At her death in 45/665, though, Marwān tried again and managed to obtain the leaves from her brother. He thereupon destroyed them<sup>(4)</sup>.

Here the story ends, with political considerations of the moment being put above any historical ones. Yet if a precious artifact was lost to future generations, the Qurʾānic text nevertheless had been faithfully preserved.

(1) Another, divergent tradition holds that Ḥafṣa in fact died during the caliphate of ʿUthmān, and that it was ʿUthmān who demanded the codex from Ḥafṣa’s brother. See the discussion in Anthony and Bronson, "Did Ḥafṣah Edit the Qurʾān?" p. 111–112. Were this the case, it would still not materially affect the scenario outlined below, entailing only a substitution of names and a slight advancement in dates.

(2) Marwān had served as ʿUthmān’s secretary, so he probably was aware of any existing difference.

(3) Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, p. 85; Arthur Jeffrey, ed., *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān: The Old Codices*, Leiden, Brill, 1937, p. 214.

The addition of the afternoon prayer following the middle prayer in 2: 238, by the way, would mean that "the middle prayer" designates the one at midday (not the afternoon prayer, the middle of five daily prayers, as the verse is often construed). But this meaning is already tenable in the canonical version. It is the interpretation of Zayd ibn Thābit and ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿUmar (son of the caliph), among others. They stated that the noon prayer is intended in the verse, mentioned here specifically besides the other prayers, because it most challenged the believers, taking place in midday heat. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālīdī, Damascus, Dār al-qalam, 1997, vol. 2, p. 70.

Furthermore, if the midday prayer is intended here, it would seem superfluous to mention the afternoon prayer too (the meaning being in this case: "Keep up your prayers, including the one at the hottest hour of the day"). Rhetorically, adding a less challenging prayer at this place to the hardest one does not strengthen the command. On the other hand, if the afternoon prayer is intended by "the middle prayer," as other commentators believe, then there is no sense to mentioning the afternoon prayer in the next words. In either case, the reported deviation gives a less satisfactory sense to the verse.

(4) This occurred on the day of her funeral. The standoff between Marwān and Ḥafṣa is reported in Ibn Shabba, *Tarikh al-Madina al-munawwara*, ed. Fahīm Shaltūt, Beirut, Dār al-turāth, 1990, vol. 3, p. 1004; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, p. 21.

#### 4. Conclusion

In summary, this article has challenged the idea that the Qur'ān was left incomplete at the Prophet's death. It highlights an example of compositional consistency occurring throughout the phases of revelation, suggesting one source for the Qur'ān rather than numerous contributors or arrangers. It also points to two recent studies, one stylometric and one thematic, that reach similar conclusions about the Qur'ān's origin. These findings seem to call for a revisitation of existing assumptions about the writing and transmission of the Qur'ān.

In a supplementary section, we have proposed an updated hypothesis for this process. The main points of the hypothesis may be recalled here, ones that form a simple narrative: from a complete text left at the Prophet's death, to a proliferation of copies in the years after, to a recognition of the existence of variants and a correction of them during the caliphate of 'Uthmān, to a destruction of the original during the early Umayyad period. Using Ockham's razor, one cuts away more involved explanations of how the Qur'ān came to us. Presently at least, the above hypothesis would appear best to fit the evidence.

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