



Fig. 7 Detached folio from a thirteenth-century north African Qur'an, containing a portion of Q 5:12–13 (F1929.69b). Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC

7 From palm leaves to the Internet

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From its beginnings the Qur'an was first and foremost an oral text. When the prophet Muḥammad received a revelation, he spoke or recited the revealed text. It is not clear how long these original, spoken units of revelation were, or whether their length was variant or invariant. The relation between these spoken units and qur'anic sūras is also unknown. According to the Islamic tradition, however, the revelation of the different sūras followed a chronology of roughly shorter to longer. The earlier ones were rather short and they tended to become longer as Muḥammad's mission and prophetic preaching continued.

CODIFICATION AND RECITATION

In addition to being memorised and transmitted orally, these revealed texts were written down during the life of Muḥammad, a process that probably began at an early stage. At least, that is what reports about the collection of the Qur'an after the Prophet's death relate. The commission under Zayd b. Thābit (d. 32/652–3), which provided the edition of the qur'anic text that subsequently became known as the 'Uthmānic codex, based its work on oral material, and on all kinds of written material, such as texts on scraps of wood, palm leaves, bark and bones. Zayd himself is said to have been ordered by Muḥammad to record verses of the Qur'an on the shoulder blade of a camel immediately after a revelation. An older Companion of Muḥammad, 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd, is reported to have said that he had already written down seventy sūras from the mouth of the Prophet when Zayd was still playing with other little boys.

Although the reports about the collection of the Qur'an are conflicting, it appears that soon after the death of Muḥammad one or more *muṣḥafs* or codices of the Qur'an existed. These were manuscript books of which the individual leaves were collected between two boards. Although some old

manuscript scrolls of the Qurʾān – originally from the Umayyad mosque of Damascus but now housed in Istanbul¹ – are known, it is chiefly in the conventional book form that the written text of the Qurʾān was recorded and propagated. Only in modern times has the written text of the Qurʾān become available in new formats like the CD-ROM and various online versions.

From the beginning of its codification, the oral tradition about how the Qurʾān was to be recited played an important part. This may have been for theological reasons, but also for compelling practical reasons. The old Arabic script did not notate vowels and it distinguished only eighteen different characters, whereas the full alphabet has twenty-eight consonants. It should be borne in mind that this limitation applies to all the early graphic representations of the text of the Qurʾān, the ʿUthmānic redaction, as well as alternative redactions, like Ibn Masʿūd's. In general, this would not have been a serious problem as long as a written text was used as a kind of aide-memoire to reproduce the contents of a text, be it a message or a poem. In the case of the Qurʾān, however, this became a problem, because its text was not only meant to be read for its contents, its meaning, but also to be accurately reproduced in liturgical recitation. That mandate was complicated by the fact that there was not only one common form of Arabic in which the Qurʾān could be read and recited. Although precise knowledge of the elevated style of Arabic in the early period of Islam is unclear, it is certain that there were different accents and pronunciations. A case in point is the word for a written copy of the Qurʾān. The pronunciations *muṣṣḥaf*, *miṣḥaf* and *maṣḥaf* are all recorded.

Exactly what the earliest copies of the Qurʾān looked like is hard to say, because there is no agreement among specialist scholars about the dating of early Qurʾān manuscripts. A fairly large number of early manuscript fragments, many of them quite extensive, are known. There have been many attempts to date these, mainly on the basis of palaeographical evidence or with respect to the development of their decoration. Thus a few qurʾānic manuscripts have been attributed by some specialists to the seventh century, but as yet no extant manuscript has been unequivocally dated to a period before the ninth century on the basis of firm external evidence. Such external evidence would provide a powerful argument in the controversy that exists in Western scholarship about when the codification of the Qurʾān took place, whether this was at the beginning of Islamic history, as postulated by the traditional view, or about two centuries later, according to John Wansbrough's hypothesis.

EARLY QURʾĀN MANUSCRIPTS

The past decades have witnessed ever-increasing work on the earliest manuscripts of the Qurʾān and there is an emerging consensus on a rough, relative chronology of these first qurʾānic manuscripts. The significant quantity of early qurʾānic fragments that were discovered in 1973 in a cache of manuscripts under the roof of the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ in Yemen has certainly furthered the art-historical analysis. An important feature, the transitions between sūras, is regarded as perhaps a more convincing marker of their antiquity than palaeographic arguments. These transitions evolved from rather simple markings of sūra endings to ever more elaborate and colourful headings, which included the names of the sūras and other data such as the number of verses. Also different types of codices could be distinguished, with their own peculiarities of script, sūra headings, verse markings, etc. Of two such groups that were identified by Estelle Whelan, it appears that a rather large, vertical format without features such as sūra titles, liturgical and verse-group markings, can be associated with the earlier strata of qurʾānic manuscripts.²

The style or styles of the script used for these early manuscripts seems to have been or to have become more or less specific for manuscripts of the Qurʾān and appears to be different both from the more cursive styles that are known from early papyri and from the lapidary ones that were used in most inscriptions incised in stone. In this early qurʾānic style of writing additional signs were introduced to distinguish characters that were used for more than one consonant. Little dashes or dots were added above or under the letters to identify them. The system that is found in the early qurʾānic manuscripts is basically the same as the one still in use, except for the treatment of the two letters *fāʾ* and *qāf*, which have the same initial and medial form. For some time three methods existed: (1) one dash above for the *fāʾ* and two for the *qāf*; (2) one dash underneath for the *fāʾ* and one above for the *qāf*; and (3) one dash above for the *fāʾ* and one underneath for the *qāf*. The first method has become the standard for eastern styles of Arabic and for its printed forms. The second became the norm in the Arab west and can still be found in lithographed editions of the Qurʾān in use in the Maghrib.

The third method did not survive and probably was followed for only a short time, possibly in the Ḥijāz and Yemen. It is, however, significant because it was also used in the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The mosaic inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock, which consist

mainly of qur'ānic quotations, quite clearly imitate a style of writing that is very close to the style we know from early qur'ānic manuscripts. Where *fā'* and *qāf* are punctuated, they have their dashes exactly according to this third method. This external evidence leads to the conclusion that early Qur'an manuscripts with the same method of punctuation date roughly from the same short period, i.e., from around 692 CE when the Dome of the Rock was built.

To date, I am aware of only four manuscripts in which this method is adopted. They are preserved in Istanbul (Saray, Medina 1a³), Şan'ā' (Dār al-Makḥṭūṭāt, Inv. No. 01-29.2⁴), St Petersburg (Inv. No. E-20⁵) and Vienna (Fig. 5; Cod. Mixt. 917⁶). Two of these manuscripts are fairly long; of the Viennese codex 104 leaves are extant, and of the St Petersburg one, 81 leaves. As all early qur'ānic manuscripts appear to do, these two manuscripts also represent the 'Uthmānic redaction. This suggests that the 'Uthmānic redaction already enjoyed a degree of acceptance at that early period. The redaction of Ibn Mas'ūd, which had probably been a rival of the 'Uthmānic redaction only in Iraq, disappeared after Ibn Mujaḥid's proposal at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century that only seven ways of reciting the Qur'an were to be accepted. As far as is known, no manuscript containing Ibn Mas'ūd's redaction has been preserved, although there are some early manuscripts – for example, some among those discovered in the Great Mosque of Şan'ā' – that partially agree with the different order of the sūras that Ibn Mas'ūd's codex is reputed to have had.⁷

In addition to signs that distinguish letters used for more than one consonant, vowel signs were also introduced. Initially, coloured dots were employed to indicate *a*, *i* and *u*, respectively, by putting the dot above, under or after the consonant with which they were to be pronounced. It is not clear whether the introduction of these vowel signs happened at about the same time as the distinction of consonants. There are manuscripts without vowel signs, but with consonant punctuation, but the opposite is also true. Interestingly, in quite a few early manuscripts different possible readings are indicated by dots of different colour. Most of these alternative readings appear to conform to readings that were later acknowledged as readings fit for recitation, but readings which later became known as *shadhdh*, 'solitary, isolated', i.e., not validated by a sufficient number of authoritative transmission chains, also appear.⁸ Besides vowel signs, *ālifs* were added, usually in red, to make up for a consonantal skeleton that did not denote a long *a* as well as signs to indicate the pronunciation of a glottal stop where the Meccan pronunciation would not have had one, but

where they were required according to a more normative pronunciation of Arabic.

READING TRADITIONS

In the beginning of the tenth century, readings which were based on the 'Uthmānic redaction finally eclipsed the alternative redaction of Ibn Mas'ūd. This was largely due to the activities of Ibn Mujaḥid (244-324/859-936) whose view on the admissibility of variant readings was enforced by the 'Abbāsid authorities. An opponent of Ibn Mujaḥid, Ibn Shanabūdh, who in public worship had confidently recited readings of Ibn Mas'ūd and other early reciters that were not in accordance with the 'Uthmānic redaction, was brought to trial and punished with flogging, whereupon he recanted his defence of the non-'Uthmānic readings. From then on the codified text in the form of the 'Uthmānic redaction was *de facto* the primary text and the only one admissible for reciting the Qur'an. In other words, the written text of the Qur'an became more than an aide-memoire for its recitation; it became the official score for the performance of its recitation. This did not mean that only one way of reciting the Qur'an was accepted. Ibn Mujaḥid approved of seven systems of reciting the Qur'an that were based on the 'Uthmānic text. These seven systems of reading were allowed in recitation because Ibn Mujaḥid considered them authoritatively transmitted and broadly authenticated. At the same time, he took care to identify these seven reading systems with the transmitted readings of famous readers who had lived in the second Islamic century and who were associated with the places that had received the first five copies of the 'Uthmānic codex: from Medina, Nāfi' b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 169/785); from Mecca, 'Abdallāh b. Kathir (d. 120/738); from Kūfa, 'Aṣim b. Abi l-Najūd (d. 127/745), Ḥamza b. Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt (d. 156/773) and 'Alī b. Ḥamza al-Kisā'i (d. 189/805); from Baṣra, Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' (d. 154/770); and from Damascus, 'Abdallāh b. 'Amir (d. 118/736).

In the course of time, three additional systems of reading also became widely accepted because they too were considered to satisfy Ibn Mujaḥid's criteria. Less widely accepted, but still enjoying some authority are another four systems, each of which, however, could be viewed as a subset of one of the other ten. These systems of reciting the Qur'an became known as the 'readings of the seven', of the 'three after the seven' and the 'four after the ten'. The knowledge of the other ways of reading the Qur'an did not disappear. They were not allowed in recitation of the Qur'an, but they survived

in specialists' works, especially when these readings had a bearing on the meaning of the text of the Qur'an. Ibn Mujāhid himself is reported to have composed a large work about these so-called *shadhdh*-readings, but it has not survived.

After Ibn Mujāhid's intervention, a copy of the Qur'an would normally render one of the accepted readings. Increasingly, copies of the Qur'an were produced with complete punctuation and full vocalisation. Additional signs were created to record the chosen reading as precisely as possible and to prescribe how it should be recited. Besides vowel signs, a whole range of signs was developed to indicate doubling of consonants, nasal pronunciation of case endings, prolonged pronunciation of vowels and where it was permissible to pause in reciting, where it was not and where it was obligatory. The development of signs to indicate peculiarities of the recitation actually continues today. For example, a recent edition of the Qur'an published in Syria indicates vowels subject to prolongation by printing the letters in different colours. Other specifics of Qur'an reciting, such as words where the vowel *a* should be pronounced more like an *e*, were not, however, indicated by signs. Although copies of the Qur'an increasingly acquired the characteristics of a full musical score, the oral tradition remained important for teaching the finer points of recitation.

Not much can be said with certainty about the actual utilisation of the different readings and whether most of them had anything more than theoretical significance. At first, most readings appear to have been favoured by the regions where they originated, and more is known about some regions than others. In north-west Africa, Ḥamza's reading was supplanted by Nāfi's which was also the favoured reading in Muslim Spain. Nowadays, the most widespread reading in west and north Africa, except Egypt, is Warsh's transmission of Nāfi. In Libya and in parts of Tunisia and Algeria, Qālūn's transmission of Nāfi also has some following. In Egypt the reading of Nāfi according to Warsh's transmission was equally well spread until about the sixteenth century, but also the reading of Abū 'Amr was not unknown. For example, the famous Qur'an commentary *al-Jalālayn* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 864/1459) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) follows this reading. The reading of Abū 'Amr is said to have been dominant in the Ḥijāz, Syria and Yemen from the eleventh century when it superseded Ibn 'Āmir's until it, in turn, was superseded by Ḥafṣ on the authority of 'Āṣim. Yet Ibn 'Āmir's reading is still reported to be followed in some parts of Yemen. Nowadays one of the Abū 'Amr readings appears to be used in parts of west Africa, Sudan, Somalia and Ḥaḍramawt. Specific data are not really known, however, because almost no research has been done to establish

the distribution in time and space of the different readings that can be found in the enormous mass of historical Qur'an manuscripts of a known origin.

A preliminary investigation of a group of manuscript fragments found in the ruins of Ḍawrān Anis suggests that the historical situation was not so clear that sweeping statements about readings favoured by certain regions can be sustained. This little town about 60 kilometres south of Ṣan'a' was destroyed in the earthquake of 1983 and the manuscripts were found in the ruined mosque.⁹ The manuscripts all appear to be late, probably from later than the sixteenth century. Among them, three have the reading of Nāfi; one Ḥamza's, one 'Āṣim's and one is perhaps a mixture of two readings.¹⁰

Some not yet published leaves of a Qur'an manuscript that were found during emergency excavations in the little town of al-Qaṣr in the Dakhla oasis in the western desert of Egypt show an interesting, and apparently eclectic, reading. In a number of cases, this manuscript – which generally follows Abū 'Amr – adopts a Meccan¹¹ reading for the pronunciation of the *hamza* or glottal stop. This manuscript was probably in use before or during the nineteenth century.

The great unifying change came in the sixteenth century with the hegemony of the Ottoman empire which had adopted the transmission of Ḥafṣ from 'Āṣim's reading. In the course of time this reading became the most widespread and has remained so. Only at the fringes of the Ottoman empire or beyond it, as in north-west Africa, have other readings remained in use.

THE QUR'ĀN IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Printing

For a long time after printing had become the normal form of book production in Europe, the Islamic world continued to produce handwritten copies of books. Printing in Arabic had begun in Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century and the first Qur'an was printed in Venice in 1537 CE, but apparently this was not a great success. In 1694 Abraham Hinckelmann in Hamburg published a complete edition of the Qur'an in Arabic. Later, Russian editions appeared and in 1834 the first edition of Gustav Flügel's Qur'an was published, a text used by Western scholars until well into the twentieth century.

In the Islamic world religious motives played their part in the initial aversion to printing, but social motives were probably at least as important. The industrial production of books by manual copying continued to

employ a large number of people. In the late fifteenth century the Ottoman sultan forbade Muslims to print texts in Arabic. This prohibition lasted until 1726 when an official press was established. The printing of Qur'āns in the Ottoman empire, however, began only in the second half of the nineteenth century both in Egypt and Istanbul. At about the same time Qur'āns were also printed in India. Some of the early Muslim printings of the Qur'ān were done with movable type, but most were lithographed. Often they were accompanied by the commentary of al-Bayḍāwī (d. prob. 716/1316–17) or that known as *al-Jalālayn*. The advantage of these lithographed editions was not only that they had the look and feel of manuscripts, but also that all the special recitational signs that had been developed could be included. Apart from the fact that the Flügel Qur'ān did not reproduce the readings dominant in the Ottoman empire, for Muslims its major deficit was the lack of the special signs that had been developed for the Qur'ān text, such as those for nasalisation and pauses.

The Egyptian-government edition of the Qur'ān, which was typeset in Cairo and printed in Gizeh in 1923 and which followed the dominant Ottoman reading of Ḥafṣ' transmission of 'Āṣim, greatly advanced the spread of this reading, even after the fall of the empire. This text, which was typeset from a movable typeface for which a number of special signs were developed, adhered to both the written and the oral tradition and could rightly be acclaimed as a scholarly achievement, a fact that was acknowledged by some of the leading non-Muslim, European Qur'ān scholars, such as Gothelf Bergsträsser.¹² Until the present day, this text has been reprinted and copied numerous times in the whole Islamic world and nearly everywhere it has more or less eclipsed other readings. The only exception is north-west Africa, where the Nāfi' reading, available in printed form according to both of its transmissions, has been embedded strongly enough to resist being supplanted.

Sound media

Today, of course, the oral tradition is surviving in a totally different way, because it can be captured on a sound-recording medium. This started in the 1920s with recordings of Qur'ān recitation on gramophone records. The first complete recording of the Qur'ān in the *murattal*, or formal, recitation style according to both the Ḥafṣ transmission of 'Āṣim and the Warsh transmission of Nāfi' was executed in the 1960s by the Egyptian *shaykh* of Qur'ān readers Maḥmūd Khalīl al-Ḥuṣarī (d. 1980). Since then, numerous recitations of the Qur'ān have become available, especially on audiocassettes and

compact discs. By far the majority of these recordings follow the reading of the Ḥafṣ transmission of 'Āṣim, but recitations according to the readings of both transmissions of Nāfi' and of both transmissions of Abū 'Amr also exist. In addition to their transmission on general radio and television stations, Qur'ān recitations are also broadcast on special radio stations, like the Egyptian *Idhā'at al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, which started in 1964. And now there is, of course, the Internet which offers an enormous number of sites dealing with things Islamic and qur'ānic.¹³ Many sites offer a searchable text of the Qur'ān, various translations, recitations in different styles (and from a growing number of reciters) and even courses on how to recite.¹⁴ This contemporary development is reviving the diversity of what is essentially an oral tradition.

Epigraphy

Apart from its manifestation as a recited text, the Qur'ān in its written form figured largely in Muslim society from a very early time and it still does. Many copies of the holy text were produced in a remarkable variety of formats. Paper and parchment were used in this production but other materials as well. Passages from the Qur'ān of varying lengths were also written or inscribed on a variety of media. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is probably the earliest example of a religious building with extensive quotations from the Qur'ān and, interestingly, it clearly shows that the inscription is the monumental imitation of an early qur'ānic script. As such, it set an example for many Islamic buildings and monuments. Somewhat later, between 87/706 and 91/710, the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina was reconstructed and provided with a long qur'ānic inscription, possibly containing the whole text of the Qur'ān.¹⁵ In the history of Islam all kinds of buildings, religious or otherwise, have been adorned with qur'ānic quotations, usually in a script that derives from a book script, be it the angular Kūfic or the cursive styles like *naskhī* or *thuluth*.

Amulets and talismanic uses

The text of the Qur'ān was also considered to have potent magical qualities. Especially the two last sūras, known as *al-mu'awwidhatān*, 'the two sūras of taking refuge', have, since the time of the Prophet, been used as incantations and protective formulas to avert evil influences or bad luck. Although they may be pronounced aloud in appropriate situations, like other formulas they were (and still are) ordinarily written on pieces of paper to be worn as amulets. Such amulets could even take the form of

complete garments, e.g., for warriors to wear below their armour for superior protection. A special characteristic of this use of written text from the Qur'an is that these apotropaic texts are often written with unconnected letters.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN

The Qur'an is an Arabic text and from a very early period the question was asked: How should the Qur'an, God's revelation in Arabic to the 'seal of the prophets', be made known to those who did not understand it? In the early days of Islam some Arab Muslims held the opinion that this most recent version of God's revelation was addressed only to them, the Arabs. They did not mean that non-Arabs need not take notice of God's message. Rather, these groups were to observe the uncorrupted version of the revelations that had been directed to them. Of course, this view was based on the Qur'an itself, on passages like Q 14:4: 'We have sent no messenger save with the tongue of his people, that he might make all clear to them.' Q 5:44-8, as part of one of the last sūras to be revealed, appeared to suggest the same; it could be taken to mean that Jews and Christians had to adhere to the uncorrupted Torah and Gospel, respectively.

If they just did that, they could, according to some early authorities, even be called Muslims. This view is expressed in two traditions which go back to Mujāhid (d. 104/722) and which are mentioned in al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) commentary on Q 5:66, where the Qur'an says about the People of the Book: 'Among them there are people who are moderate, but many of them are of evil conduct.'¹⁶ In interpreting the expression 'people who are moderate' these two traditions state: 'these are the Muslims of the People of the Book'. One of the two traditions defines them as those who say that Jesus is God's servant and his spirit and who do not claim that he is God or the son of God.

Nevertheless, the idea that the message of God that was given to Muḥammad was intended for the whole of humankind became generally accepted. Many qur'ānic passages were considered to have a universal scope, especially passages like Q 7:158: 'Say [O Muḥammad]: "O humankind, I am the messenger of God to you all"' and Q 14:52: 'This is a message to be delivered to humankind.'

Even at the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century, however, this kind of exegesis was not entirely self-evident as is demonstrated by its discussion in the important theological compendium of the great Mu'tazili thinker 'Abd

al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1025). He felt it necessary to remonstrate against the view that if Muḥammad had been sent to all humanity, he should have addressed them all in their own languages.¹⁷

Qur'an translations within the Islamic world

The question, however, remained. How should non-Arabs become acquainted with the message of the Qur'an? There are two reasons why a wholly satisfactory solution was not found. In the first place, the doctrine of the inimitability of the Qur'an was, from an early period, coupled with a belief in the singular qualities of Arabic. The Qur'an was thought to demonstrate and employ all the superior peculiarities of the Arabic language and thus it could not be rendered into another language, as the Gospel had been rendered from Syriac into Ethiopic and Latin, and as the Torah and the Psalms had been rendered into Arabic. An accurate rendering was thought to be impossible because it was believed that non-Arabic languages did not have at their disposal such extensive possibilities for the use of figurative language.¹⁸

In the second place, the Arabic word for 'translation' (*tarjama*) apparently meant a literal translation. If one were able to make a literal translation of the Qur'an, a translation that manifested all the subtleties of the original Arabic text, then the miracle of the Qur'an would be equalled. This was impossible because the Qur'an declares, for instance in Q 17:88: 'Say: "If humans and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they would never produce its like, even though they backed one another."' It could not be done and thus it should not be done.

Of course, practical solutions were found and over the centuries many translations of the Qur'an have been made by both Muslims and non-Muslims. If a translation could be considered a kind of commentary, 'an exegesis' in another language that was not meant to replicate the original text, but was only to aid understanding, then it was permitted.

The whole discussion about the admissibility of translating the Qur'an flared up again in the second decade of the twentieth century, because the Turkish leader Atatürk wanted to nationalise Islam in Turkey. Nationalisation in this respect meant 'turbification': the text of the ritual prayer, the *ṣalāt*, had to be pronounced in Turkish and translations of the Qur'an in Turkish were to replace the original text. The challenge was taken up mainly by Egyptian Muslim leaders and old arguments were dug up and repeated but with different emphases. The classical position was asserted by Muḥammad al-Zurqānī (d. 1122/1710). In the 1943 edition of his handbook

for students at al-Azhar, a long section is devoted to the problem.¹⁹ He concluded that a translation of the Qurʾān in the sense of a rendering of all its meanings and intentions is impossible and should not be attempted. In his view it does not matter whether it claims to be a literal or an explanatory translation. A translator may not aspire to produce the equivalent of the Qurʾān in another language, but only the equivalent of a *tafsir* of the Qurʾān in another language. As such it is not a translation of the Qurʾān, but a translation of a *tafsir* of the Qurʾān and that is acceptable because it is not meant to be a substitution for the original text.

Al-Zurqānī was reacting to the more inflexible view taken by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) in the *Tafsir al-Manār*. In connection with Q 7:158 Rashīd Riḍā had stated that the language of Islam should be Arabic and that, accordingly, the Turkish government must decide that the Qurʾān is untranslatable. The message of Islam could and might be rendered in another language for missionary purposes, but at the same time, Arabic should be compulsory in all schools of the Muslims in order to reinstate the unity of Islam. For Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, translation meant only a literal translation, which he considered always to be wrong because it was impossible and thus forbidden. He did not consider a 'translation pertaining to meaning' (*tarjama ma'nawi*) to be forbidden.

In the end, the view of authoritative scholars like Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (d. 1945) and Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d. 1963), both of whom had been *shaykh al-Azhar*, won the day. They considered it unrealistic to expect that the vast majority of Muslims had to learn Arabic in order to understand the Qurʾān and thus acknowledged the appropriateness of translations of the Qurʾān. Although a translation of the Qurʾān is not the Qurʾān and cannot be the Qurʾān, this did not mean, as Maḥmūd Shaltūt stated, 'that the translation of the Qurʾān, in the sense of an enunciation into a language other than Arabic of its meanings and of the morals and guidance that it contains, should be forbidden. On the contrary, it could, in our view, perhaps even be a necessary means to spread the dogmas, the morals and the precepts that it contains.'²⁰

The present view of mainstream Islam appears to be in agreement with these principles. At most, we find that in non-Arabic Muslim countries there is a tendency to be somewhat less strict about the rule that the Arabic text should be printed alongside the translation. There seems to be no disagreement, however, about the rule that a translation can never be a source of legislation. Finally, only the Ḥanafis allow the text of the Fātiḥa, the first sūra of the Qurʾān, to be recited in a language other than Arabic.

Non-Muslim translations of the Qurʾān

If Muslim translators have been concerned about rendering the message of the Qurʾān for those who do not master Arabic, the concern of non-Muslim translators of the Qurʾān has been different. The first Latin translation was commissioned by Peter the Venerable in the twelfth century and a number of early west European translations seem to be derived from it. They all appear to serve the purpose of facilitating its refutation. Later on, and especially after the publication of the Dutch scholar Adrian Reland's famous book, *De Religione Mohammedica*, in 1705, other motives came into play. From that time on, according to the German scholar Rudi Paret who published his own translation of the Qurʾān in 1962, serious European scholars aimed at 'tracing back the individual Qurʾānic utterances of Muḥammad to specific historical situations and from these to understand them in their entire liveliness and actuality'.²¹ In this vein most European Arabists have studied and translated the Qurʾān in order to reconstruct the genesis and development of the religious concepts of what Paret called 'the astonishing and, at the same time, the respect- and awe-commanding phenomenon of a religious genius'.²² It is from that perspective that the translations of scholars like Bell, Blachère, Kramers and Paret should be viewed.

Scholars in the European philological tradition generally set great store by the philological insights of the Muslim commentaries, but attached much less value to later dogmatic developments. Thus, many of these translations fail to convey what, in the minds and hearts of Muslims, the Qurʾān means as holy scripture. It is nevertheless interesting that in the later European Arabist tradition someone like the great August Fischer felt bound to remark in 1937 that it had been wrong not to take the 'indigenous Qurʾān commentaries' sufficiently into account. He believed that European scholarship could not dispense with them, notwithstanding their shortcomings. Even more interesting is his view that 'one will never be able to understand the Qurʾān in all its details with certainty',²³ a view that could have come from the mouth of al-Zurqānī, even if the reasons why this should be so were certainly not the same for both.

Notes

1. S. Ory, 'Un nouveau type de muṣḥaf: Les Corans en rouleaux conservés à Istanbul', *Revue des études islamiques* 33 (1965), 87-149.
2. E. Whelan, 'Writing the word of God: Some early Qurʾān manuscripts and their milieux', *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990), 113-47.
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9. J. J. Witkam, 'Qur'an fragments from Dawrān (Yemen)', *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 4 (1989), 155–74.
10. The photographs published by Witkam ('Qur'an fragments') show enough to determine the following six fragments: no. 1, the transmission of Ḥaḥḥ from 'Āṣim; no. 7, Qālūn from Nāfi'; no. 16, Ḥamza; no. 22, Qālūn from Nāfi'; no. 31, Nāfi' or Abū Ja'far, one of the 'three after the seven'; and no. 32, Qālūn from Nāfi' except for one place where the reading of the other six is followed.
11. Ibn Kathīr of the 'seven' and Ibn Muḥayyin of the 'four after the ten'.
12. See his 'Plan eines Apparatus Criticus zum Qur'an', repr. in R. Paret (ed.), *Der Koran* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), pp. 389–97.
13. On 5 June 2005 'Koran' gave 6,440,000 Google hits, 'Quran' 3,890,000, 'Qur'an' 1,400,000, and 'Qur'an' 864,000. At the same time 'Bible' scored 34,800,000 hits.
14. It is not feasible to give a balanced opinion about the usefulness of all Internet sites that deal with the text or translations of the Qur'an. Nevertheless, the sites mentioned in the bibliography appear to offer material of a good quality and/or useful links. The caveat expressed by A. Rippin in 'The study of tafsīr in the 21st century: E-texts and their scholarly use', *MELA Notes* 69–70, on <http://www.lib.umich.edu/area/Near.East/MELANotes6970/tafsir.html> about e-texts of qur'anic commentaries (sing. *tafsīr*), at least in a number of cases holds true for e-texts of the Qur'an as well.
15. See E. Whelan, 'Forgotten witness: Evidence for the early codification of the Qur'an', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (1998), 1–14.
16. Cf. J. D. McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An analysis of classical and modern exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ch. 6.
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Mekka bis zur Mitte des 2./8. Jahrhunderts (1991; Eng. trans. *The origins of Islamic jurisprudence: Meccan fiqh before the classical schools* (2002)), *The biography of Muhammad: The issue of the sources* (2000) and *Hadith: Origins and developments* (2004).

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