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A.PERG.2: A NON PALIMPSEST AND THE CORRECTIONS IN QUR'ĀNIC MANUSCRIPTS

Present situation and unanswered questions

A.Perg.2 is a parchment kept at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [1] and it was described by H. Loebenstein in her catalogue [2]. It is a Qur'ānic fragment containing a portion of *sūrā al-Qaṣaṣ*, namely [3]:

on hair side, 28:61—75, written by hand A;
on flesh side, in the upper part 28:75—9, written by hand B;
and in the bottom of the page 28:75—7, written by hand A.

Loebenstein notes that the upper part of the flesh side is a palimpsest. The "alte Schrift" of the palimpsest is visible to the naked eye on the right margin of the page, at lines 3, 4, 8 and 9. On the basis of the remains of the *scriptio inferior*, feeble signs of the words, she assumes that this was the same as the handwriting A. In the opinion of Loebenstein, the fragment of the supposed *scriptio inferior* is the continuation of the text on the hair side, 28:75 (Table 1).

The peculiarity of this parchment is the reutilization only of the upper part of the page, I mean that from this point of view the existing situation is:

hand A: 28:61—75;
hand A: 28:75—9 (we have to note that A continues exactly the text of the hair side);

hand A: 28:75—7 (we suppose that the lacuna in the bottom of the page contains 28:77—9).

and, after the reutilization of the parchment:

hand A: 28:61—75;
hand B: 28:75—9 (we have to note that B writes *āya* 75 from the beginning);
hand A: 28:75—7 (79).

Given the above, the unanswered question put by Loebenstein is the reason why copyist A wrote twice the same text and copyist B wrote it again, for the third time. She suggests two explanations: 28:75—9 was written by copyist A with some errors, so it was written again correctly and then the defective text was rubbed out or washed and overwritten.

An alternative hypothesis could be that copyist A wrote 28:75—9 and, after a pause of his job, he started again writing twice the same text by mistake. Thereafter copyist B overwrote the same part of the *sūrā*.

Although all of the above explanations are simply unanswered questions put by Loebenstein, scholars have taken those hypothesis for granted [4].

Is A.Perg.2 really a palimpsest?

- Only the upper half of the flesh side has been erased and subsequently re-written.
- The supposed *scriptio inferior* is visible only on the right margin of the page, while on the rest of the page there is no trace of the old writing.
- The same text has been written three times.

It is natural to put some questions. Why only a part of the parchment has been re-used? Why the older writing is visible only in the margin and above all, why has it been written three times?

A hypothesis: Probably this parchment is an example of Qur'ānic text written by two hands, which is not unusual [5], where hand B is an apprentice and hand A is his supervisor amending text written by B.

Qur'ānic manuscripts and corrections

Written transmission of texts necessarily implies mistakes, if nothing else, due to errant human nature. In the knowledge transmission of the *ḥadīth*-literature, for example, we can notice that a standard typology of manuscript corrections took shape early.

As to what concerns Qur'ān, because it was a Holy Book, whose careful copying would attract many blessings for the believer, copies made of its *textus receptus*, i. e. the 'Uthmānic text, largely excluded the possibility of corruption [6].

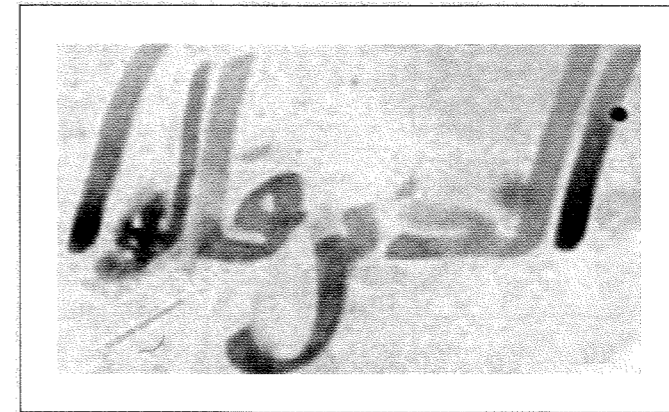


Fig. 1

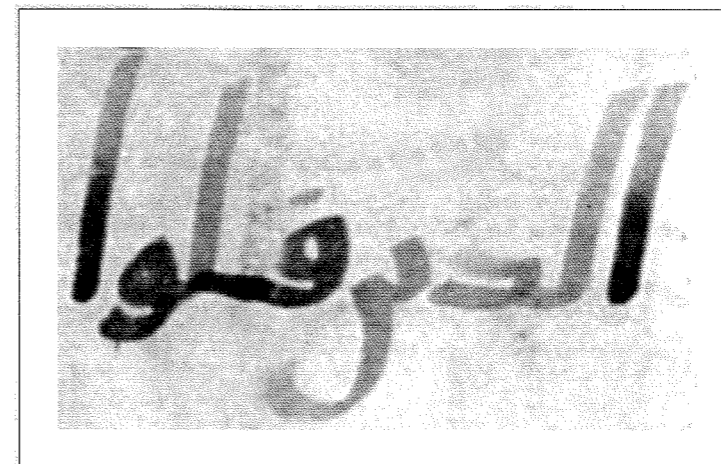


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

However human mistakes are unavoidable and so does a scribe hand [7], even if he is writing a copy of Qur'ānic text.

Mistakes, and above all their corrections, are very common, even in the Qur'ānic text, as it appears in some of the most ancient manuscripts.

There are two kinds of corrections added to the text. On one hand, we can find corrections due to different variants with textual significance, be they canonical readings or pre-'uthmānic (non canonical) variants [8]. On the other hand, corrections can be related to copyists' mistakes, be they due to the orthography of the Arabic writing and its reform [9] or corrections to a perhaps minor kind of mistake, scribe *lapsus calami* [10].

A classical example of corrections due to the orthographic reform is the tendency to spell long *ā* with *mater lectionis 'alif*.

The tradition of the two thousand *alif* added by the governor of Iraq, 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād, is reported by Ibn Abī Dāwūd in his *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* [11]. Even if two thousand letters are a remarkable quantity [12], the added *alif* present in the manuscripts are indeed a great number. We can find them in the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, kept in the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences [13], where missing *alifs* were added in red ink during the first stage of text's revision [14]. In the papyrus of Leiden [15] there seems to be a particular mix-up to correct the lack of the *alif* [16].

These early manuscripts are full of corrections [17], not only added words, but also rubbed out words. A funny example is in a manuscript of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin [18] where we can read *qālū* (5:14) without *alif*, *scriptio defectiva*, and few lines below, in the same folio [19] (3b), we can read *qālū* (5:17) with *alif*, *scriptio plena* [20]. But the first *qālū* was corrected and an *alif* was added (fig. 1), on the contrary the second *qālū* too was corrected and the *alif*

was rubbed out (fig. 2) [21]. This is a sign of a complete lack of a standard rule [22].

In the manuscripts that I could study, which will be published in the next volume [23] of the Amari project [24], I have come across corrections in the parchment kept in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (A.6959) [25], as on the verso, line 4, the *alif al-wiqāya* in *sh-r-k-w-*' (68:41) [26] was later added. A whole part of an *āya* (10:109) is added in black ink at the end of the *sūrā* in the parchment kept in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [27].

In the manuscript of Berlin we found some missing words later added, such as *li-llahi* (4:139) at line 3, fol. 1a; *'ilay-hi* (4:175) at line 7, fol. 2a; *dālikum fisqun al-yawma ya'isa alladhīna* (5:3) at lines 6—7, fol. 2b; *'illa alladhīna* (5:34) at line 13, fol. 4b; *allahu ('ilay-ka)* [28] (5:49) at line 18, fol. 5b; *min-hum yusāri'ūna* (5:62) at line 6, fol. 6a [29].

In the same manuscript we come across some letters rubbed out or added: in *yurā'ūna* (4:142; fol. 1a, l. 12) an original *yā'* as a bearer of the *hamza* was later rubbed out; in *suwā'* in (4:149; fol. 1b, l. 5) the *alif* was rubbed out; in *'ūtū* (5:5; fol. 2b, l. 14) the *alif al-wiqāya* was erased; in *w-sh-h-d-w-*' (5:8; fol. 3a, l. 9—10) the first *wāw* and the second one were rubbed out and the word was corrected as in the standard text *shuhadā'a*; in *ṣirāṭin* (5:16; fol. 3b, l. 13) the *yā'* to spell the long *ā* [30] was later erased; in *al-ghurābi* (5:31; fol. 4b, l. 5) the *alif* was later added; in *gazā'ū* (5:33; fol. 4b, l. 10) the final *wāw-alif* were added; in *maghlūlatun* (5:64; fol. 6a, l. 9) the final *lām* and *tā' marbūṭa* were later corrected; in *yā-banī* (5:72; fol. 7a, l. 10) the first *yā'* was later added; in *wa-rabbī* (5:72; fol. 7a, l. 11) the *wāw* was rubbed out and the word was corrected as in the standard text *rabbī*; in *yaqūlū* (5:73; fol. 7a, l. 14) the *alif al-wiqāya* was rubbed out and a *nūn* was added, so the word was corrected as in the standard text *yaqūlūna*.

Evidences and hypothesis

It is possible to put forward the hypothesis about the corrections in A.Perg.2 by a series of evidences as follows: the remains of the supposed "alte Schrift" are only on the right margin of the page, namely at line 3 we can read *f-b-gh-y*, at line 4 *n*, at line 6 *'-n*, *'-w*, at line 8 *'-l*', at line 9 '.

At line 3 *fabaghā* as 28:76 would suggest that the *scriptio inferior* coincides with the *scriptio superior* of hand B. Other traces, meaningless remains of old words, are difficult to read. Consequently, only on the basis of *fabaghā* and of the sameness between the two handwritings we can suppose that the text of the earlier script on the flesh side is the continuation of the text on the hair side, i. e. 28:61—75.

In the following paragraphs we try to cast new light on some details of the handwriting B.

At line 2, the parchment is damaged before *'alayhim*, just next to *fabaghā*.

At line 4, the scribe wrote *ṣībaka* instead of the Vulgate *naṣībaka* (28:77). In the margin we can observe *nūn*, exactly the correction of the lapse.

At line 6, the text of 28:78 is transmitted as *'aw lam ya'lam 'aw allāh qad 'ahlaka* rather than *'aw lam ya'lam 'anna allāha qad 'ahlaka*, which is the standard reading, simply a scribal error due to the proximity of *'aw*. In the margin, hand A wrote *'-n*-*'-w*, precisely *'anna* as amendment of *'aw*.

At line 8, the spelling of *yus'alu* (28:78) is without a bearer of the *hamza*, whereas in the margin hand A noted *alif lam*, which can be read as the spelling of *yus'alu* with *alif*. Furthermore an *alif* was added in the body of the word, between *sīn* and *lām*.

From the above it can be seen that the remains on the margin are corrections to the text written by copyist B. Consequently, if hand A wrote the emendations to the text written by hand B, it follows that hand A could not be earlier than hand B and that it is not the old writing, even if it is the continuation of hand A from the hair side.

Therefore we are able to give an answer to the question, or rather to the enigma, why the same portion of Qur'ānic text has been written three times. Hand A wrote on the hair side, hand B continued the same text on the first half of the flesh side, subsequently hand A read it and wrote

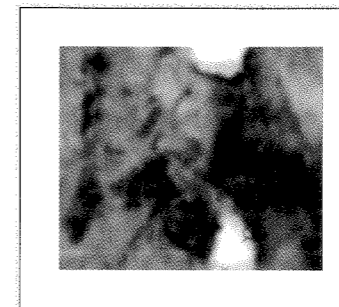


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

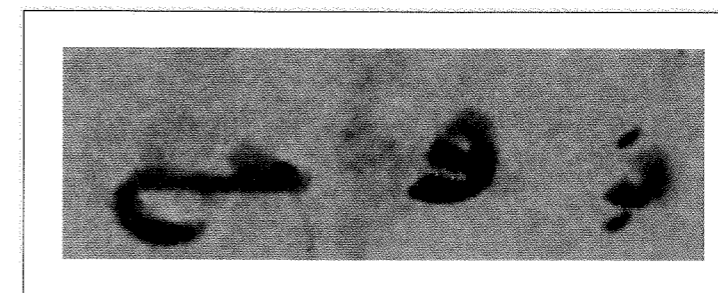


Fig. 6

the corrections in the right margin and finally rewrote the same text correctly on the second half of the page (Table 2).

Before closing our discussion about manuscript corrections, it is relevant to draw your attention also to another detail of our parchment: corrections of characters shape. The shape and moreover its corrections may provide us with information about the manuscript. At line 8 on the flesh side the shape of 'ayn in 'an *dhunūbihim* was later corrected, as the shape written the first time looks like Syriac writing and the shape added above the main line is the more rounded form preponderant in Arabic (fig. 3) [31]. At the same line, the *dhāl* of *dhunūbihim* was amended with an added vertical stroke (fig. 3). The former shape is similar to the half-circle of the *dalath* in Syriac writing, without the vertical stroke [32]. The corrected types — in a dark ink, different from the one used by hand A — and the characteristic shape of the *alif* [33], such as the one at line 5 in the word *kamā* (fig. 4) or at line 9 in the word *al-dunyā* (fig. 5), revealed the shape of the Syriac writing.

The hypothesis of Syriac origin [34] for the writing overlaps with the Syriac influence on the written transmission of texts. In fact the Arabs hired non-Muslim copyists

from Syria to write the Qur'ān, because of their great technical experience [35]. This overlap seems to be perfectly embodied in parchment A.Perg.2, which I suppose to be a writing exercise [36] by two scribes, an experienced one and an unpractised one, the writing of the latter reveals the likelihood of his Syriac origin [37].

As regards this Syriac origin, it would seem to be interesting a little detail that I have noticed in the photograph of a parchment kept in Leiden University Library [38]. On the recto, at line 12, the *rā'* in *rīhu* (16:102) is written with two diacritical points (fig. 6), one above the line and the other below, revealing a confusion between the opposition *dalath* (with a diacritical point below) vs. *resh* (with a diacritical point above) in the Syriac writing and the opposition *rā'* (with no diacritics) vs. *zāy* (with a diacritical above) in the Arabic writing.

A great philologist said that regarding the most sibylline and enigmatic passage in Virgil we have to write no more, unless a small and simple suggestion clears up a mystery. It is unlikely to say that the parchment A.Perg.2 is famous and debated, but surely a little shift in the point of view may give an answer to some open questions.

Addenda

Table 1

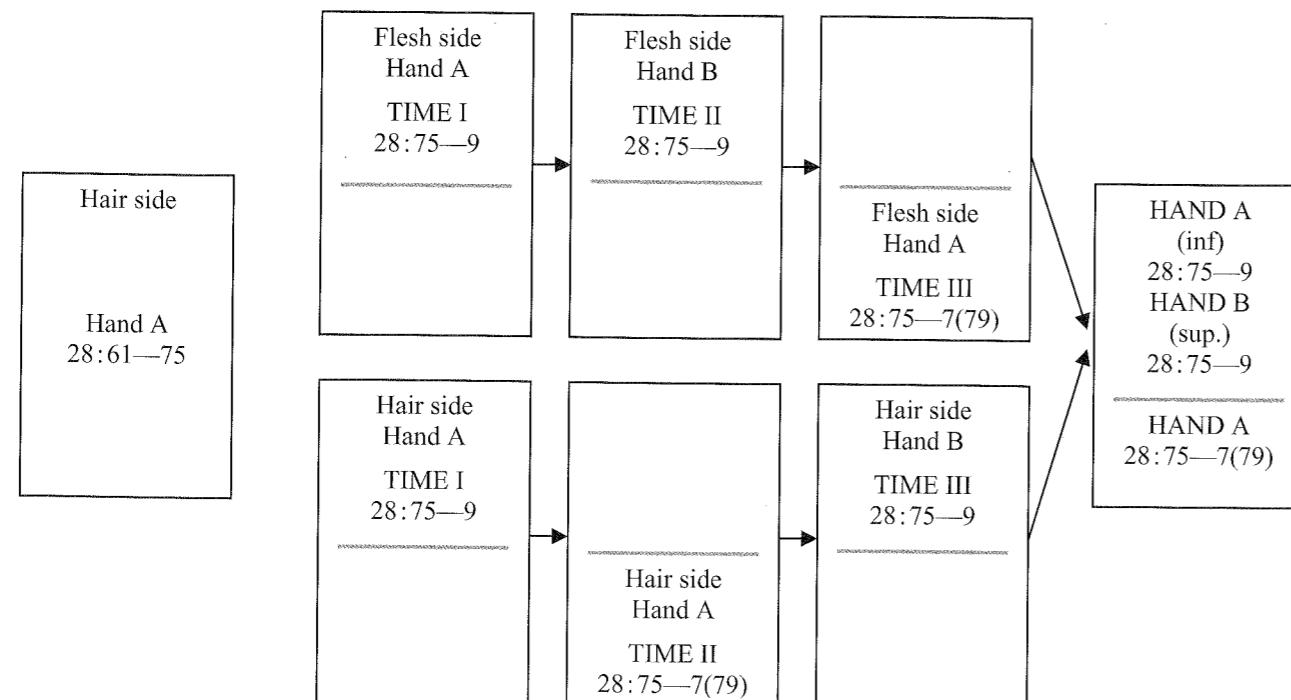
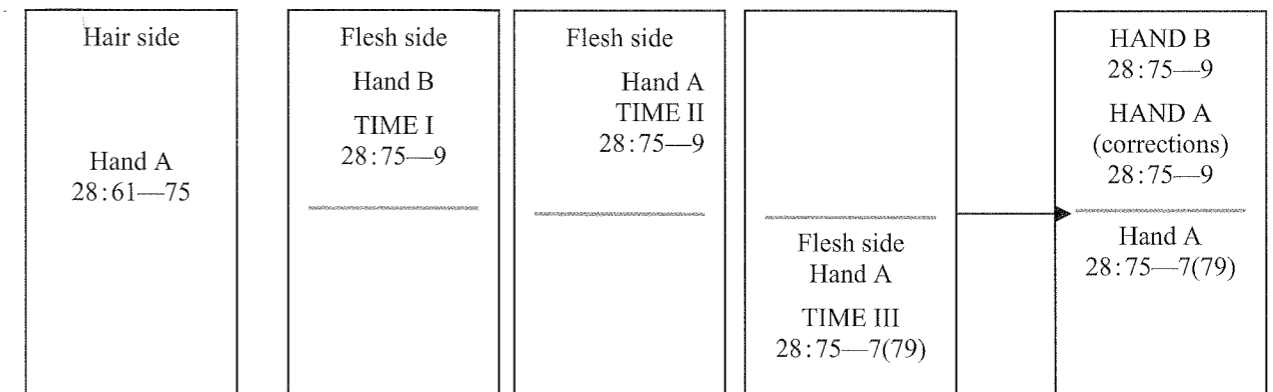


Table 2



Notes

1. I am very grateful to the Director of the Papyrussammlung, Hermann Harrauer, who let me study the parchment in Vienna with warm hospitality and great kindness. I am grateful to Dr. Harald Froschauer for giving me the permission to insert some photos of details of the parchment A.Perg.2. The facsimile of the parchment will be published in the volume V/1 of *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique*, see n. 23 and 24.

2. H. Loebenstein, *Koranfragmente auf Pergament aus der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek* (Vienna, 1982), pp. 23—6.

3. With regard to what H. Loebenstein wrote in her Catalogue, I would like to add the contents of the vertical side strip of the parchment remaining. On the basis of the remains of the damaged page on flesh side (lines 1—9, 11, 14—7), it would seem to be conjectured the portion of the text, 26:115—45, namely the end of *āya* 116 and the beginning of *āya* 117 at line 2: [*al-margū*]*mīna *qāla*; part of *āya* 118 at line 3: *ma'ī min [al-mu'minīna]*; part of *āya* 120 at line 4: [*aghra*]*qnā ba'du*; *āya* 122 at line 5: *rabbaka*; the end of *āya* 126 at line 7: *wa-'atī [ūna]*; the end of *āya* 127 at line 8: [*a*]-[*ālamīna*]; *āya* 129 at line 9: *la'a[llakum]*; *āya* 133 at line 11: *bi-'an[āmin]*; *āya* 139 at line 14: *fa-'ahlak[nāhum]*; the beginning of *āya* 140 at line 15: *wa-'inna rabbaka*; *āya* 142 at line 16: *la-hum*; the end of *āya* 144 at line 17: [*a*]*llaha wa-'atī [ūmī]*.

The remains of the strip of parchment on the hair side are difficult to read and the only possible conjecture is at line 15: *nūn* followed by an *āyā* divider and '-n-y, as the end of *āya* 177 (26) and the beginning of *āya* 178.

We can suppose that the parchment was a *bifeuillet*, part of an octonion (see: F. Déroche, *Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe* (Paris 2000), pp. 71—91), containing 26:115—28:79, assuming that the order of the *sūrā* was the same as the standard text.

4. A.Perg.2 is considered an example of palimpsest due to the need to correct one's own mistakes, see Déroche, "L'emploi du parchemin dans les manuscrits islamiques. Quelques remarques liminaires", *The Codicology of Islamic Manuscripts*, ed. by Y. Dutton (London 1995), pp. 17—47 and *idem*, *Manuel de codicologie*, pp. 49—50.

5. "Dès les débuts de l'islam, des cas de manuscrits réalisés par plusieurs copistes ne manquent pas. Les fragments de deux très anciens corans de la seconde moitié du Ier/VIIe siècle, Paris, BNF arabe 328a et Şan'ā', DaM Inv. 01-25-1, ont été copiés le premier par trois mains, le second par deux" (*ibid.*, pp. 211—2).

The copyists could share the work: see E. Rezvan, "The Qur'ān and its world: VI. Emergence of the canon: the struggle for uniformity", *Manuscripta Orientalia*, IV/2 (1998), p. 24 ("the surviving fragment reveals the hands of two copyists — handwriting A and B — who shared the work evenly. The first copied the first half of the text; the other — the second"). Otherwise the copyists could alternate in their work: see manuscript BNF arabe 328a, Déroche, *Catalogue des manuscrits Arabes. Manuscrits Musulmans. V/1: Les manuscrits du Coran* (Paris 1983), p. 59 ("deux mains s'y reconnaissent: A aux ff^o 1 à 28 r^o, 30 v^o à 32 r^o, 38 v^o à 56, B aux ff^o 28 v^o à 30 r^o, 32 v^o à 38 r^o).

6. A. Gacek, "Technical practices and recommendations recorded by classical and post-classical Arabic scholars concerning the copying and correction of manuscripts", *Les Manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, ed. by F. Déroche (Istanbul—Paris, 1986), pp. 51—60.

7. See the analysis of the orthography in A. Jeffery and I. Mendelsohn, "The orthography of the Samarqand Qur'ān codex", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXII/3 (1942), pp. 175—95 and the frequent remarks such as "and in any case would be a scribal error without textual significance" (p. 183), or "this is probably merely a scribal error, if not due to a mistake on a paper patch in the folio" (*ibid.*) or "there is no known variant here, so possibly this is to be taken as a mistake" (p. 184) and also "it must be merely a scribal error" (p. 185) and "the words are omitted by the scribe, obviously by error, thinking he had already written them" (*ibid.*).

8. As to what concerns corrections due to different variants of Qur'ān, we can find many in Sam Fogg's palimpsest (Catalogue 27, *Islamic Calligraphy* (London, 2003), pp. 6—11), see my lecture "Pre-othmanic variants in manuscripts?", *29. Deutscher Orientalistentag, "Barrieren-Passagen"*, 20.—24. September 2004 (Halle, forthcoming) and my contribution in *Die dunklen Anfänge. Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam*, ed. by K. H. Ohlig and G. R. Puin (forthcoming). The palimpsest will be published in *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique*, V/1.

9. C. J. Robin, *La réforme de l'écriture arabe, à l'époque du califat méridional* (forthcoming). Furthermore, an example of this kind of corrections is in the manuscript kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale du Paris, 328a, see Y. Dutton, "An Early *Muṣḥaf* According to the Reading of Ibn 'Āmir", *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies*, III/1 (2001), pp. 72—4.

10. See also, as to what concerns the orthography of early Arabic papyri and papers (and inscriptions), some examples of scribal lapses, dittographies, haplographies, etc. in S. Hopkins, *Studies in the Grammar of Early Arabic, Based upon Papyri Datable to before A.H.300 / A.D.912* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 60—1.

11. *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān*, ed. by A. Jeffery (Leiden, 1937), pp. 116—7; see: G. Khan, "Standardisation and variation in the orthography of Hebrew Bible and Arabic Qur'ān Manuscripts", *Manuscripts of the Middle East, V: The Role of the Book in the Civilisations of the Near East* (Leiden, 1990—1), pp. 53—8.

12. M. M. Al-Azami, *The History of Qur'anic Text, from Revelation to Compilation* (Leicester, 2003), p. 134.

13. The intriguing story of this manuscript (E 20) that was bought by I. Iu. Krachkovskii is narrated by E. Rezvan, *The Qur'ān of 'Uthmān* (St. Petersburg, 2004), pp. 17—8 and *idem*, "The Qur'ān and its world: VI. Emergence of the canon", p. 23.

14. *Idem*, *The Qur'ān of 'Uthmān*, p. 66 and Table 11.

15. Or.8264, see S. Noja Nosedà, "A third Koranic fragment on papyrus: an opportunity for a revision", *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Accademia di Scienze e Lettere*, CXXXVII/1 (2003), pp. 313—26.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

17. See also G. R. Puin, "Observations on early Qur'ān manuscripts in Ṣan'ā'", *The Qur'ān as Text*, ed. by S. Wild (Leiden, 1996), p. 109.

18. Ms.or.fol. 4313 (ff. 1—7), see W. Ahlwardt, *Die Handschriften-verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin, Verzeichniss der Arabischen Handschriften*, i (Berlin, 1887), pp. 110—1; R. Sellheim, *Arabische Handschriften, materialien zur arabischen literaturgeschichte*, i (Wiesbaden, 1976). I am grateful to Dr. Hartmut-Ortwin Feistel for giving me the permission to insert some photos of details of this manuscript. It will be published with other fragments in *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique*, V/I. Ms.or.fol. 4313 (ff. 1—7) is part of the same codex as the facsimile, plate 44, in B. Moritz, *Arabic Palaeography. A collection of Arabic Texts from the First Century of the Hidjra till the Year 1000* (Cairo, 1905).

19. It is not so unusual to come across the same word written in two different ways in the same page, see Al-Azami, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

20. As regards forms of *verba mediae infirmae*, see Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 83 and the interesting remark to long and short forms that may even occur together in the same text.

About the lack of the *alif*, see Nosedà, *Introduction to Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique*, II/1 (n. 24).

21. At line 7, an *alif* was added and we can see the remains of the former ligature of *lām* with *qāf*. At line 13 there are the signs of the former *alif*.

22. The manuscripts "présentent une orthographe qui paraît erratique et contradictoire" because of "l'embarass des scribes": see Robin, *op. cit.*

23. *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique*, V/1, containing fragments of manuscripts scattered among various libraries.

24. The aim of the Amari Project is to publish the facsimiles of all the earliest manuscripts of the Qur'ānic text, and to put them at every scholar's disposal. The first volume of the series *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique* is "Les manuscrits de style *hiǧāzī*. i: Le manuscrit arabe 328(a) de la Bibliothèque nationale de France" (Lesa, 1998) and the second one is "Les manuscrits de style *hiǧāzī*. ii: Le manuscrit Or.2165 (f. 1 à 61) de la British Library" (Lesa, 2001). See: Nosedà, "Note esterne in margine al 1° volume dei 'Materiali per un'edizione critica del Corano'", *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Accademia di Scienze e Lettere*, CXXXIV/1 (2000) pp. 3—38 and Déroche, "Les manuscrits du Coran en caractères *hiǧāzī*. Position du problème et éléments préliminaires pour une enquête", *Quinterni I* (Lesa 1996).

25. See the Catalogue: N. Abbott, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and its Qur'anic Development, with a Full Description of the Qur'ān Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute* (Chicago, 1939), p. 60 and plates VIII—IX.

26. The standard text is *shurakā'u*, without the *wāw*. The tradition does not report the different spelling; see 'Abd al-'Āl Sālim Makram, Aḥmad Mukhtār 'Umar, "Mu'gam al-qirā'āt al-Qur'āniyya", *al-Kuwait* (1402—5/1982—5) (see the review in Nosedà, "AIUON", LVIII/1—2, (1998), pp. 289—91). N. Abbot noted the difference and reported to have found no comment on this, but she did not mention the former spelling *sh-r-k-w* and the added *alif*.

27. Vat.Ar.1605.1; see the Catalogue, G. Levi Della Vida, *Frammenti coranici in carattere cufico, nella Biblioteca Vaticana* (Città del Vaticano, 1947), pp. 1—2 and plate I. The page following this one is in the Collection of Nour Foundation, see F. Déroche, *The 'Abbāsīd Tradition: Qur'āns of the 8th to the 10th centuries AD* [The N. D. Khalili collection of Islamic art, ed. by Julian Raby, i] (London, 1992), p. 32 and plate I. Both fragments will be published in *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique*, V/I.

28. We can presume that the former text was *mā 'anzala 'ilay-ka*, and later the word *allāh* was added. Two words were re-written in the space of one word.

29. We have to note that the folio marked as 6a is the verso, not the recto.

30. The long *ā* may be written with *yā'* in final position (*alif maqṣūra*), but also in middle position: see R. Blachère, *Introduction au Coran* (Paris, 1947), p. 91; Robin, *op. cit.*; see the fragment sold at Bonhams in 2000 (Fedeli, "Pre-othmanic variants in manuscripts?"; the facsimile of the parchment will be published in *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique*, V/1) and many other examples in the same manuscript of Berlin. C. J. Robin says that "d'un point de vue chronologique, toutes les graphies avec un *yā'* pour noter le *ā* dans un mot remontent incontestablement à la période où le *alif* n'était pas encore utilisé, c'est-à-dire avant 40 h".

I would like to stress the interesting observation about the use of the *alif* in G. R. Puin, "Observations on early Qur'ān", p. 109: "On the other hand, does *k-y-l-dh-ī ka-lladhī* imply that the second letter *Yā'* should not be pronounced at all?"

My conjecture is that the *yā'* to spell the long *ā*, be it in middle position or in final position, is due to the influence of the avestan writing, where "the Avestan letter *ā* is also derived from the Pahlawi script, where this sign was used for 'y' at the end of a word (already in the Istanbul sarcophagus inscription). However, as early as in Middle Persian inscriptions from the third century AD, 'y' was used to represent the final *-ā* of foreign names" (K. Hoffmann, "Avestan Language I. The Avestan Script", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, pp. 47—51). About the origin of the Arabic writing, see Nosedà, "From Syriac to Pahlavik: the contribution of the Sassanian Irak to the beginning of the Arabic writing", *Die dunklen Anfänge. Neue Forschungen*, ed. by K. H. Ohlig and G. R. Puin.

31. B. Gruendler, *The Development of the Arabic Scripts: from the Nabatean Era to the First Islamic Century according to Dated Texts* (Atlanta, 1993), pp. 76—9 (see the review in G. Lacerenza, "Nabateo e origini della scrittura araba. A proposito di una recente pubblicazione", *Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente Antico*, XIII (1996), pp. 109—20).

32. The former shape is similar to P15 in Gruendler, *op. cit.*, p. 55, whereas the latter looks like E3, E9, E10, E15, E18, E22, P4, P9, P14, P22 and P23.

33. The *alif* has a vertical stroke, a return because of its junction at right, and a third stroke, a tail on the left, exactly like in Syriac (see G. Troupeau, "Réflexions sur l'origine syriaque de l'écriture arabe", *Semitic Studies, in Honour of Wolf Leslau*, ed. by A. S. Kaye (Wiesbaden 1991), pp. 1562—70). In A.Perg.2 there is no curvature of the *alif*, see Loebenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 25 ("Die Schrift weist groß Ähnlichkeit mit der Schrift der Papyri des 1. Jhs.H. auf. Das *alif* ist teilweise von rechts oben nach links unten geneigt — Charakteristikum des Mekkanischen — teilweise auch senkrecht, sein Fuß ist nicht gebogen, was mit dem im *Fihrist* beschriebenen *Alif* der mekkanischen Schrift nicht, wohl aber mit der Schrift der frühen Papyri übereinstimmt") and see P1, P14, P15, P16 and P22 in Gruendler, *op. cit.*, p. 35. I hope that finally we will not speak about the *alif bouclé* and its return considering the origin of the Arabic writing, but about the "tailed" *alif*. As regards the *alif bouclé* see V. Colombo, "Une hypothèse sur le retour de l'*alif* dans l'écriture *hiǧāzī*", *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, ed. by F. Déroche and F. Richard (Paris, 1997), pp. 151—9.

34. Nosedà, "Parerga to the volumes of Sources de la Transmission manuscrite du Texte coranique thus far published and in course of publication", *Proceedings of the First World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies* (University of Mainz, September 8—13, 2002, forthcoming); *idem*, "La mia visita a Sanaa e il Corano palinsesto", *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Accademia di Scienze e Lettere*, CXXXVII/1, pp. 48—52; F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "De l'araméen à l'arabe: quelques réflexions sur la genèse de l'écriture arabe", *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, pp. 135—49; J. Sourdel-Thomine, "Aspects de l'écriture arabe et de son développement", *Revue des Études Islamiques*, XLVIII/1 (1980), pp. 9—23; Troupeau, *op. cit.*

35. "...la question des influences qui ont pesé sur la genèse du livre — Coran. L'Arabie, à cette époque, ne dispose pas de tradition livresque propre, en langue et écriture arabes, mais elle a connaissance de celles qui sont constituées dans les régions situées à sa périphérie — en Mésopotamie, en Syrie ou en Égypte. Quand il faut mettre par écrit un texte... l'absence d'expérience locale peut inciter à faire appel à des compétences techniques extérieures" (Déroche, *Le livre manuscrite arabe. Préludes à une histoire* (Paris, 2004), p. 15).

36. See the description of the Leiden papyrus by P. Sijpesteijn, *A Third Koranic Fragment*, ed. by S. Noja Nosedà, p. 317.

37. The Arabic tradition reports that two Christian copyists from al-Ḥīra wrote a copy of the Qur'ān, for which they were paid for, see Ibn Abī Dāwūd, "Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif", *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān*, p. 133; Déroche, *Le livre manuscrite*, p. 18; Nosedà, "La mia visita a Sanaa", p. 52.

38. Cod.or.14.545 b; see Colombo, "Frammenti coranici antichi conservati presso la Rijksuniversiteit di Leida", *I primi sessanta anni di scuola. Studi dedicati dagli amici a Sergio Noja Nosedà nel suo 65° compleanno, 7 luglio 1996* (Lesa, 2005).

I am grateful to Professor Jan Just Witkam, Interpres Legati Warneriani, for giving me the permission to reproduce this interesting detail of the parchment kept in the Leiden University Library.

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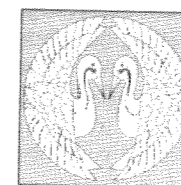
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