Uzbek museums. Furthermore, it can be considered proven that the images and forms reflected in Central Asian tapestries influenced the aesthetics of Russian avant-garde.

Uzbek colleagues and friends have not only brought to St. Petersburg outstanding and yet little-known works of such famous Russian advance-guard artists as Yavlensky, Stenberg, Plyus, Stepanova, Rodchenko and Ester but also enriched the exhibition with admirable examples of traditional costume and jewellery as well as beautiful new dresses created by modern Taishkan designers.

The project was initiated by the "Forum of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan" Foundation and Russian Asiatic Society, organizations uniting scholars, journalists, politicians and businessmen eager to work on consistent and progressive development of cultural, political and economic relations between Russia and Uzbekistan.

Theorists predict a forthcoming change in basic scholarly paradigms. Basing on the achievements of the recent years, when the focus of the research has shifted, and new details which had been imperceptible have been revealed; when the main and the secondary have traded places and description has prevailed over interpretation, a new wave of universalization has grown ripe. We shall see. I am sure that, like before, our journal will reflect all important shifts in research practices.

On behalf of all members of our editorial board, I would like to say Happy New Year to you and to wish you success and well-being. We sincerely thank you for your letters and your constant interest in our journal. See you in the New Year!

E. Rezan
Editor-in-chief

---

MINGANA FOLIOS: WHEN AND WHY

In the previous issue of *Manuscripta Orientalia* we were pleased to publish Dr. Alba Fedeli’s article, entitled “Mingana and the manuscript of Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis, one century later” [1]. It was devoted to the re-examination and re-evaluation of the data obtained nearly a hundred years ago as a result of a thorough study of a palimpsest, whose scriptio inferior, containing part of the Qur’anic text, was written with three principal kinds of script [2]. List of the various readings, omissions and interpolations found in comparison with the established textus receptus seems to be still very important for the study of the early history of the Qur’anic text.

The Arabic Christian texts (selections from the Fathers, St. Athanasius, St. Chrysostom, etc.) date from the end of 9th—beginning of the 10th century. While thinking about the palimpsest in question one can easily ask: how could it happen that on the territory controlled by the Muslim authorities, somebody could destroy the holy text of the Muslim scripture with the goal of re-using the parchment and writing texts of Christian origin on it?

What is a palimpsest?

This was a period of growing disappointment in the state and in “official Islam”. The uprisings of the ninth—tenth centuries challenged the power of the caliphate: “the truth has appeared to the world, the mubd’ has risen, the power of the ‘Abbasids, the jurists, the readers of the Qur’an and the preachers of the tradition is coming to an end...”

The empire seethed. In 930, the Qarmatians spirited away the black stone of the Ka‘ba, in 939 the “concealment” (ghayba) of the Shi‘ite imam began, the message of the Ismā‘īlīs dwāt attracted thousands of followers, Ismā‘īlīs exegetes interpreted the hidden (hadīth) meaning of the Qur’an, and the dawn of the New Persian literary language, into which the Qur’an was translated, began. Finally, in 945 the Shi‘ite Buwayhids seized Baghdad. The power of the caliphate was abruptly diminished.

The study of extant Qur’ānic manuscripts shows that the tenth century was marked by fundamental changes in the history of the Qur’ānic text. By addition to the appearance of Ibn Mujāhid’s work, it was then that new forms of Qur’ānic script began to spread; they were distinguished by greater decorative embellishment in comparison to their predecessors. Primary among them were “Eastern kufi” (the oldest dated copy is from AD 972) and cursive naskhī (the oldest dated copy is from AD 1001) [3].

In the ninth century, the centre of scholarly activity shifted from al-Baṣra and al-Kūf to Baghdad, capital of the caliphate. The business of translation thrived there, famous philosophers, exegetes and lawyers worked there, a grammatical school which brought together elements of previous systems arose there, the eminent grammarians al-Muharrad (d. 900) and his pupil al-Sarrāj (d. 928) created there their famous works. And there, the beginning of the tenth century was marked by several attempts to achieve a new level of unification in the Qur’ānic text. Three works entitled Kitāb al-Muṣḥaf were dedicated to the problem of al-qurūb. Their authors were Ibn Abī Dūlād (d. 923) [4], Ibn Aḥrār (d. 938/9) and Ibn Ẓāha al-Isfahānī (d. 970/1). The main role, however, would fall to Ibn Muṣḥaf (859—935), a pupil of Ibn Abī Dūlād. A noted authority on the Qur’ānic sciences, who as the people believed, read the Qur’ān even in his grave, worked in Baghdad and enjoyed the successive protection of two extremely influential grand wazīrs, Ibn Maqīa (famous reformer of the Arabic calligraphy) and Ibn ʿĪṣā, whose power and influence can be likened to the power of a regent to the caliph.

Ibn Muṣḥaf’s work bore the title al-Qurūb al-sabū’ ("The Seven Readings"), pretended to near official status and established a system of permissible Qur’ānic “readings". The system proposed in the work relied on the consonantal basis of the "Uṯmānic version" and limited the number of systems of variant readings of the text to seven; these belonged, correspondingly, to seven authorities of the eighth century. All of them were ac-
It is really important to note that earliest “full” MSS of which such are dated by the end of 8th century [7]. For example: both “Uighuric Qur’an” [9] from Katta-Langar/St. Petersburg and Taqījīnī can serve as a fine example of the standardisation of the text that the community had achieved by the end of the eighth century (figs. 1–3). Both manuscripts are documents which mark the end of the period of the Qur’an’s written-oral existence. This period, which began in the lifetime of Muhammad with the recording of his first sermons and ended in the tenth century, was marked by a constant struggle, conducted at first by the Prophet himself, later by the community, to preserve the exact text rather than a generalized variant [8].

Knowing the difficulties that had to be overcome, one must concede that an enormous project was completed in the 100–150 years that passed after the death of the Prophet. For this reason, it seems that the discovery of significant manuscript fragments from the turn of the eighth—ninth centuries cannot be overestimated. The new standard—a compromise in between “the exact text” and a “generalized variant”—appeared.

It was this new standard that became the base of the series of works like that of Ibn Mājah and that was implemented with the aid of court decisions in the 10th century. This was evidently the important period when older copies that contained by then unacceptable number of variant readings were being actively removed from circulation. In most cases, they made their way to special repositories in large mosques where they slowly decayed. They could also be “burned” with a special ritual [9].

In our view, the widespread disappearance of early copies took place not under the caliph ‘Umayr (at that time there were only a few full copies of the Qur’an), but at the cusp of the ninth and tenth centuries. The removal from circulation of the venerated old copies was met by resistance, and the process was at least a century long. Finally the ijma approved the “new standard,” and copies created at the end of the eighth century with a minimal number of variant readings were preserved by the community for many centuries. Such was the fate of the two “Uighuric Qur’ans” (from Katta-Langar/St. Petersburg and Taqījīnī).

Let us return to the beginning of our article. The Arabic Christian texts of the palimpsest date back to the end of 9th—beginning of the 10th century. This was the period when older “variant readings copies” were being actively removed from circulation. This was a period of political instability marked by uprisings, unsteadiness and

It is not possible to state this from the text going back to “Uqbaqīnī and approved by companions of the Prophet. I see clearly now that they were wrong. I am not saying and not meaning, for the text of “Uqbaqīnī is the right text which no one should reject or call into question” [5].

Such persistence in the struggle against “non-canonical” readings can be explained by the fact that the idea or invention of textual or orthographic variants of the Qur’anic text is inextricably linked with the development of Muslim exegesis and, finally, with ideological conflicts within Arab-Muslim society.

In 1007–8, an incident involving the makhṣūṣ of Ibn Masʿūd, which once again raised the question of the “Uṣūlī version of the Qur’an,” led to unrest in Baghdād and clashes between Sunnis and Shiites.

On the night of Shaʿbān 14—15, 398/April 24—25, 1007, a certain Šīʿite in Baghdad publicly denounced the “person who burned the makhṣūṣ,” meaning by this, as is quite evident, the caliph ʿUmmīnīn, whom the Shiites rebuke for supplanting the muhāḥalī “Ahl,” persecuting “Abdallāh b. Masʿūd,” and ordering the destruction by fire of Qur’anic texts which differed from his own. The caliph ordered the arrest and execution of the heretic. The ensuing unrest was halted only after the caliph and the Bawāyhid ʿamr intervened at the request of prominent individuals in Baghdād. A special commission appointed by the caliph came to the conclusion that the version of Ibn Masʿūd represents an unacceptable distortion of the Qur’anic text [6].

It is really important to note that earliest “full” MSS of which such are dated by the end of 8th century [7]. For example: both “Uighuric Qur’an” [9] from Katta-Langar/St. Petersburg and Taqījīnī can serve as a fine example of the standardisation of the text that the community had achieved by the end of the eighth century (figs. 1–3). Both manuscripts are documents which mark the end of the period of the Qur’an’s written-oral existence. This period, which began in the lifetime of Muhammad with the recording of his first sermons and ended in the tenth century, was marked by a constant struggle, conducted at first by the Prophet himself, later by the community, to preserve the exact text rather than a generalized variant [8].

Knowing the difficulties that had to be overcome, one must concede that an enormous project was completed in the 100–150 years that passed after the death of the Prophet. For this reason, it seems that the discovery of significant manuscript fragments from the turn of the eighth—ninth centuries cannot be overestimated. The new standard—a compromise in between “the exact text” and a “generalized variant”—appeared.

It was this new standard that became the base of the series of works like that of Ibn Mājah and that was implemented with the aid of court decisions in the 10th century. This was evidently the important period when older copies that contained by then unacceptable number of variant readings were being actively removed from circulation. In most cases, they made their way to special repositories in large mosques where they slowly decayed. They could also be “burned” with a special ritual [9].

In our view, the widespread disappearance of early copies took place not under the caliph ʿUmayr (at that time there were only a few full copies of the Qur’an), but at the cusp of the ninth and tenth centuries. The removal from circulation of the venerated old copies was met by resistance, and the process was at least a century long. Finally the ijma approved the “new standard,” and copies created at the end of the eighth century with a minimal number of variant readings were preserved by the community for many centuries. Such was the fate of the two “Uighuric Qur’ans” (from Katta-Langar/St. Petersburg and Taqījīnī).

Let us return to the beginning of our article. The Arabic Christian texts of the palimpsest date back to the end of 9th—beginning of the 10th century. This was the period when older “variant readings copies” were being actively removed from circulation. This was a period of political instability marked by uprisings, unsteadiness and

rippling in the religious sphere and by the rise of the “new teachings”. That is why exactly in this period one could easily obtain several Qur’anic manuscripts of the “old type” and re-use the parchment for writing texts of Christian origin on it.

***

Notes


2. A. Mingana, A. Smith Lewis, Leaves from Three Ancient Qur’ans, Possibly Pre-Ommānid, with a List of Their Variants (Cambridge, 1914).


E. REZVAN, Mingana Folios: When and Why


8. Discourses inevitably multiply the course of time because of the nature of the right-hemisphere memorization mechanisms that determine how oral information is stored. For the special characteristics of information storage in early-writing and non-writing societies, see V. I. Ivanov, “Nechot i chel. Assimilacija mozga i dinamika znakovskich sistem” (“Old and even. The symmetry of the cerebrum” 9. J. Sadan, “Genabat and genabat-like practices in Islamic and Jewish traditions”, Bibliotheca Orientalis XLIII(1—2) (1986), pp. 36—58.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Verso of the Qur’ānic folio in bījālā script. Collection of Qur’ānic fragments. No. 39, Library of Administration for Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent. 52.5×34 cm. North-east part of Syria, end of the 8th century (the reverse side there is the end of an ayat 2:2140 (18A)—1:244 (24A, 25A)).

Fig. 2. Page from a facsimile traced from the “Uighuric Qur’an manuscript kept in St. Petersburg (now in Tashkent)” which was published as a gigantic, full-size foliant, see Komissarzhevskii Izleycheshii Koran po pervodui pisannui terenu Khudob Khan Omomnen (644—656) (Samanjud Kūfī Qur’ān Written According to the Tradition by the Hand of the Third Caliph ‘Ummānī), published through the St. Petersburg Archeological Institute by V. I. Uspenskii and S. I. Pisarev (St. Petersburg, 1905).

Fig. 3. Solemn ceremony of dedication of the manuscript of the “Uighuric Qur’an” to the Muslims community (Tashkent, 1902). It is kept now in the Library of Administration for Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as the fragments of the Qur’ān in bījālā script.
CONTENTS

EDITORIAL BOARD ........................................ 3
E. Rezvan. Peter the Great Kunstkamera — 290 years ....................... 3

TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH ............ 6
K. Vasileyev. Aqf al-Din Kâbiî and His Treaties “The Book of Everlasting” (Based on the MS B 2496 from the SPOS Collection) ....................... 6

TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION .................................. 20
M. Reisner. The Life of the Text and the Fate of Tradition. V: Method of Allegorical Interpretation of the Qur‘ān (‘a‘wāf) and the Symbolic Language of Persian Poetry of the 11th—12th Centuries .......................... 27
M. Rezvan. “If somebody dreams about reading the Qur‘ān, it is a good dream” (On the Modern Interpretation of the Medieval Tradition) ....................... 34

PRESENTING THE COLLECTION ........................................ 40
S. Chernetsov. Ethiopian “Magic Scrolls” from the MAE Collection. ................. 40

BOOK REVIEWS ........................................ 69

Front cover:

Back cover: