uniquely shielded from the guiles of anyone attempting to bypass oral scholarship and learn the Qur’an on his own; such a person would be readily detected if he ever dared to recite in public. In his reluctance to incorporate extraneous material into the Muḥāfāz, ‘Uthmān was not alone: Ibn Maʿṣūd was of a similar mind. At a later date Ibrāhīm an-Nakhaʾī (d. 96 A.H.), once noticing a Muḥāfāz with added headings such as “The Beginning of [such-and-such] Sūrat”, found it distasteful and ordered that they be erased.76 Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr (d. 132 A.H.) notes,

Dots were the first thing incorporated by Muslims into the Muḥāfāz, an act which they said brought light to the text (i.e. clarified it). Subsequently they added dots at the end of each verse to separate it from the next, and after that, information showing the beginning and end of each Sūrat.77

Recently I came across a harsh comment on Qur’ānic orthography, by an Arab writer insisting that we follow the modern Arabic layout and discard the conventions of those who scripted the ‘Uthmānī Muḥāfāz as the folly of illiterates. I wholly disagree. It is sheer folly, on the part of this person and such giants as Ibn Khālid, to forget the inevitable evolution of language over time; do they believe that, after the passing of a few centuries, others would not step forward to denounce their efforts as the work of illiterates? A Book that has resisted any universal alterations for fourteen centuries is living proof that the text within belongs to Allāh, Who has appointed Himself as Guardian. The inviolability of the original, immaculately preserved for so long, is not to be suffered the tampering and adjustments meted out to the biblical Scriptures.78

Chapter Eleven

STUDIES OF EXISTING MUḤĀFĀS AScribed to ‘UThmĀN

As mentioned earlier, once Caliph ‘Uthmān endorsed the Muḥāfāz official copies were dispatched to different regions of the Muslim world. The most favored opinion is six copies: Madinah, Makka, Kūfa, Bayza and Syria (Skām) in addition to the one which ‘Uthmān kept for himself.1

Almost concurrently ‘Uthmān’s contemporaries quickly began scrutinizing these Muḥāfās, trekking to the various locales which had received copies and undertaking a word-by-word (in fact a letter-by-letter) inspection, to uncover any disparities between the copies he had sent forth. In this chapter we will cover the differences between the officially prepared Muḥāfās, a private copy by a noted Companion, two of the most ancient extant Muḥāfās in the Ḥijāzī script, and finally five Muḥāfās that have been traditionally linked to the third caliph, scattered across half the globe.

1. Differences Among ‘Uthmān’s Six Official Muḥāfās

Many scholars expended their time and fatigue in comparing ‘Uthmān’s Muḥāfās, reporting what they found with sincerity and attempting to hide nothing. Abū ad-Dārī (d. c. 35 A.H.),2 a noted Companion, worked extensively on this subject before passing away within a decade of their dispatch, leaving his widow to transmit his findings.3 Khalīl b. Iyās b. Ṣakhb b. Abī al-Jahm, in examining the Muḥāfāz in ‘Uthmān’s personal possession (Muḥāfāz al-Imām), noticed that this particular copy differed from the Muḥāfāz of Madinah in twelve instances.4 Overall, their findings,

76 Ad-Dīnār, al-Mubahhām, p. 16.
77 See Ibn Kathīr, Fadā’il, vii:467.
78 See Chapters 16 and 18.

1 Refer back to p. 102.
2 There is some disagreement as to the year he died. It was either towards the end of ‘Uthmān’s reign or slightly afterwards [Ibn Ḥaṣaṣ, Taʿrīkh as-Tābiʿīn, entry nr. 5228].
3 See Abū Ubaid, Fadā’il, p. 330.
4 The fact is that the Muḥāfāz of Madinah was lost (or destroyed) during the civil strife (fīna) which ensued the day ‘Uthmān was assassinated, [Ibn Shabba, Taʿrīkh al-Madīnah, pp. 7-8]. How then were various scholars able to examine the Muḥāfāz reserved for Madinah? The answer is two-fold: Firstly, Abū ad-Dārī, a highly renowned Companion who died the same year as ‘Uthmān, carried out extensive studies on the Muḥāfās dispatched by ‘Uthmān including the one kept in Madinah. His findings, tabulated before the Muḥāfāz of Madinah had disappeared, served as a
when taken together, are startling. All differences in the Mushaf of Makkah, Madinah, Kifā, Basra, Syria, and 'Uthmān's master copy involve single letters, such as ٛ, ٛ, ٛ, ٛ, ٛ, ٛ, the only exception being the exclusion of ٛ (he) in a verse and ٛ (from) in another where the meaning is in no way affected. These skeletal variations amount to slightly over forty characters scattered throughout six Mushaf, as listed below. For the sake of comparison we have appended the King Faisal Complex Mushaf as an example of a present day Mushaf.6 The entries are color coded such that all entries exhibiting the same consonantal text, along a single row, share the same color.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surah</th>
<th>Madinah</th>
<th>Kifā</th>
<th>Basra</th>
<th>Sham</th>
<th>Jerusalem</th>
<th>King Faisal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3:133</td>
<td>3:133</td>
<td>3:133</td>
<td>3:133</td>
<td>3:133</td>
<td>3:133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5:54</td>
<td>5:54</td>
<td>5:54</td>
<td>5:54</td>
<td>5:54</td>
<td>5:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7:37</td>
<td>7:37</td>
<td>7:37</td>
<td>7:37</td>
<td>7:37</td>
<td>7:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7:43</td>
<td>7:43</td>
<td>7:43</td>
<td>7:43</td>
<td>7:43</td>
<td>7:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>7:13</td>
<td>7:13</td>
<td>7:13</td>
<td>7:13</td>
<td>7:13</td>
<td>7:13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

template (for subsequent scholars [see for example Abū ʿUbayd, Fudūl, pp. 330-32]. Secondly (and perhaps more importantly), the scholars who could no longer analyze the Mushaf of Madinah per se often state in their writings that they examined "the Mushaf of the people of Ḥijāz [western Arabia]", Meaning, that what they examined were authenticated duplicates of the Mushaf of Madinah, made by well-known Companions or scholars for their own personal use prior to the Mushaf's disappearance (see the note at the end of pp. 171 - 72). In this way they were able to sidestep the actual Mushaf's loss, and carry our detailed analysis of its text anyway.5

See Abū ʿUbayd, Fudūl, pp. 328-33; also ad-Dīnārī, ad-Majānī, pp. 112-14.

Based on the narrative of Ḥafṣ from 'Ājīn, one of the seven unanimously accepted authoritative recitations of the Qurʾān.

Clearly, the six 'Uthmānic Mushafs are by and large congruent with each other. The minor deviations among them can be summed up as follows: (1) an extra ٠ in 11 places; (2) an extra ٠ in 8 places; (3) an extra character (other than ٠ or ٠) in 16 places; (4) a character in place of another in 6 places; (5) an extra ٠ in a single place; (6) an extra ٠ in
one place. Totaling a mere forty-five letters in 9000 lines, these variations in semantics whatsoever. But they cannot be attributed to carelessness. While preparing the master copies Zaid bin Thabit, in each case finding both readings to be authentic and of equal status, retained them in different Musḥufs. The inclusion of both side by side would only have wrought confusion; alternatively, placing one of them in the margin would imply a lesser degree of authenticity. By placing them in different copies he accommodated them on equal terms.

The modern approach to textual criticism requires that, when variations arise between two manuscripts of equal status, the editor cites one of the two in the core text while the deviations are consigned to footnotes. This method is unjust however, as it denoms the value of the second variant. Zaid’s scheme is much the fairest; by preparing multiple copies he sidesteps any implications that this or that reading is superior, giving each variant its just due.

A final word of clarification: these early scholars based their studies only on the official copies of the Musḥuf, as sent by ‘Uhmān himself, or on duplicate copies made and kept by well-known Companions and Qur’ānic scholars. Theirs was not a research into the private copies kept by the public at large (which must have numbered in the thousands), because the official Musḥufs were the standard and not the other way around. Let us however take a look at one of these.

2. Studies on the Musḥuf of Mālik bin Abī ‘Amīr al-‘Asbaḥi

Here we delve into a comparison between ‘Uhmān’s Musḥuf and another, a personal copy kept by a well-known scholar, Mālik bin Anas (94-179 A.H./712-795 C.E.) once handed this Musḥuf to his students and recouped his history; it belonged to his grandfather, Mālik bin Abī ‘Amīr al-‘Asbaḥi (d. 74 A.H./693 C.E.), a student of Caliph ‘Umar, and one of the twelve whom ‘Uhmān assembled to oversee the task of collecting the Qur’ān. He had written it down during ‘Uhmān’s preparation of the Musḥufs. Mālik bin Anas’ students quickly noted some of its features:

- It was decorated with silver.
- It contained sūra separators in black ink along an ornamental band, like a chain running along the entire line.
- It had ṣāhīf (verse) separators in the form of a dot.

Intrigued by this find the students compared Mālik’s Musḥuf on the one hand, and the Musḥufs of Madinah, Kūfa, Başra, and ‘Uhmān’s master copy on the other. Mālik’s Musḥuf agreed with the Musḥuf of Madinah in all but four places. These are summarized below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sūra: verse</th>
<th>Musḥuf of Madinah</th>
<th>Mālik’s Musḥuf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42:30</td>
<td>٤٢:٣٠</td>
<td>٤٢:٣٠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:71</td>
<td>٤٣:٧١</td>
<td>٤٣:٧١</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57:24</td>
<td>٥٧:٢٤</td>
<td>٥٧:٢٤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91:15</td>
<td>٩١:١٥</td>
<td>٩١:١٥</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this chart we note that Mālik’s Musḥuf remains identical to the Musḥuf of Madinah until sūra 41; from sūra 44 onwards, his Musḥuf is in perfect harmony with the Musḥuf of Başra. While acting as one of the twelve who scribed ‘Uhmān’s Musḥuf, Mālik was simultaneously writing this Musḥuf for his own personal use. Judging from the above list we can

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7 Actually 8,832 lines. The Musḥuf printed by the King Fahd Complex in Madinah has 604 pages with 15 lines per page. Sūra separators take 2 lines each.
8 Abī ‘Ubaid, Fiqh al-I, p. 333; see also ad-Dānī, al-Musḥuf, pp. 118-19.
9 This is also the methodology of the early musḥadāthah. In comparing different copies of the same hadīth manuscripts, they either mention one copy’s text without reference to variations, or cite all the variations inside the core text itself instead of placing notes in the margins. In the Sūfīs of Musḥuf, for instance, the hadīth on sūrat no. 245 indicates only Ibn Numair’s narration; three hadīths earlier (sūrat no. 242), be provides a full account of the different narrations while keeping them inside the core text.
10 These included Ibn al-Qim, Aṣḥab, Ibn Wābah, Ibn ‘Abdul-Ḥakam, and others.
11 Ibn Hajar, Taqwil as-Tahzib, p. 517, entry no. 6443.
13 Ad-Dānī, al-Musḥuf, p. 17.
14 Examples of sūra and ṣāhīf separators from numerous Musḥufs are provided in Chapter 8. As an aside, I came across this statement by Grohmann: “I have suggested, as far as sūra separators are concerned, they were taken over from Greek or Syriac manuscripts, in which they marked the beginning ...” [A. Grohmann, “The Problem of Dating Early Qur’āns”, Der Islam, Band 33, Hefte 3, pp. 228-29]. It is both aggravating and amusing how determined Orientalists are to credit other cultures with seemingly every minute Muslim achievement—even something as simple as separating one verse from the next with a dot.
15 Ad-Dānī, in his book al-Musḥuf [p. 116] mentions the four discrepancies between the Musḥufs of Mālik and Madinah, concluding that “the rest of Mālik’s Musḥuf is according to the Musḥuf of Madinah as described by Ibrāhīm bin Ja’far al-Madani.”
infer that he was first put to work with the group that eventually prepared the Musḥaf of Madīnah. Having finished five-sixths of that Musḥaf, he then switched to the group which was preparing the Musḥaf of Basra; thus the final one-sixth tallies with the latter. For sûras 42 and 43, Mālik appears to have switched back and forth between the two groups.

This provides us with a measure of insight into the preparation of the official copies: it was a team effort where some dictated, and others wrote. The more exciting point, in my opinion, is the initiative and resourcefulness of individuals who penned their own copies. We do not know the precise number of these private copies but a statement by Ibn Shabba suggests that 'Uthmān personally encouraged this practice.16 The Musḥaf of Mālik bin Abī Amir al-Abāla consisted of both ḥāyah and sûra separators, while 'Uthmān’s official copies contained neither. This lack may have been a deliberate tactic on the caliph’s part, perhaps to ensure that the text could handle more than one arrangement of verse separation, or as an added obstacle in the face of anyone attempting to read on his own without the supervision of a certified teacher. Many scholars assume that any old Musḥaf bearing āyah and sûra separators must have been written subsequent to 'Uthmān’s Musḥaf, but given this example we can see that that is not necessarily true.

3. Existing Musḥafs which are Ascribed to Caliph 'Uthmān

The official copies which 'Uthmān dispatched to the provincial centers are long lost. At present a few copies of the Qurʾān do exist that are popularly attributed to the third caliph, each bearing the appellation of Musḥaf 'Uthmān. There is disagreement among scholars however as to whether they are truly 'Uthmānic. One of these, an almost complete copy that is missing only a couple of folios, is preserved at the Topkapı Sarayi Museum; a second is kept at the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi Museum. Both are in Istanbul. A third lies in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. A fourth copy is preserved at al-Mashhad al-Husayn Mosque in Cairo and the fifth is in the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg. Here we will assess each of these celebrated Musḥafs including a detailed study of their orthography. We begin with the Musḥaf of 'Uthmān in Tashkent as it is the most famous and the most studied.

16 Ibn Shabba, Taprīb al-Madīnā, p. 1002.
17 According to Prof. Hamidullah, there exists a Musḥaf at the India Office Library in London that is also ascribed to Caliph 'Uthmān.

i. The Copy in Tashkent

Also known as Musḥaf Samaqand. According to Prof. Hamidullah18 the Musḥaf was originally housed in Damascus; it caught the eye of Tamerrlane after he sacked the city and was removed to Samarqand, where it was kept in the Ak Medrese next to the Khwāja Aḥyār as-Samaqandī Masjīd. In 1686 the Russians overran Samarqand and moved the Musḥaf to the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg, where it remained for nearly fifty years. With the Bolshevist advance at the end of the First World War, General Ali Alībar Tepchī Bashi, who did not savor the thought of living under Communist rule, decided to safeguard the precious Musḥaf before fleeing to Paris. He dispatched a commando force to seize control of the royal palace and seek out the Musḥaf from the royal library. He then hurried to the railway station and, given his rank as an army general, demanded an engine from the station master. Placing the Qurʾān in the engine compartment with an army escort, he ordered the engine driver to push onwards to Turkistan as quickly as possible. A few hours later the Communist army commanders received intelligence of what had happened. They sent another engine with an escort to chase the one carrying the Musḥaf, but failed to catch up with it. In this way the manuscript reached Tashkent and the Communist authorities chose not to damor for its return. It was stored in the Museum of History until 1989, when it was handed to the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.

Following an 1891 article by A. Shebunin,19 a Russian Orientalist who gave a detailed account of the Musḥaf, Orientalist interest in the Musḥaf became so pronounced that S. Pissareff opted to publish a facsimile edition.20 Before doing so he took the very ill-advised step of retracing with fresh ink those folios which had faded over time, and in the process introduced many alterations into the text. Jeffery claimed that “while some mistakes due to ignorance have been made here and there in the process of re-inking, there are no adequate grounds for [any] charge of deliberate alteration.”21

20 S. Pissareff, Coran Coupinque de Samarquand: écrit d'après la traduction de la propre main du troisième calife Osmen (644-656), qui se trouve dans la Bibliothèque Impèriale Publique de St. Petersbourg, St. Petersburg, 1905. Only fifty copies of this full-size facsimile seem to have been made, of which only twenty-five were sold for 500 rubles each.
The History of the Qur’anic Text

Whatever Pissareff’s intentions, the text has been corrupted and any attempts to trumpet the differences that now exist between this Mushaf and others, as is the wont of certain internet sites, is beneath contempt.

Figure 11.1: A folio from the Tashkent Mushaf, taken from Christie’s 1993 auction.

The Mushaf itself is large but incomplete, written on vellum in Kufic script without pointing or diacritics, though verse endings are marked by small panels of diagonal lines. Each folio is sized 68x53 cm, the text block itself is 55x44 cm. Based on Pissareff’s facsimile edition of 353 folios with 12 lines per page, it is estimated that the full copy of the Mushaf must have comprised about 950 folios.22 Shehunin dated the Mushaf to the late first/early second century A.H.; based on the orthography of the 1905 facsimile edition, Jeffery dated it to the early ninth century C.E. (corresponding to the late second/early third century A.H.). Déroche assigned it to the second half of the eighth century C.E. (c. 135-180 A.H.).23 Carbon-dating of a folio from this Mushaf was carried out by Oxford. The result showed a 68% probability of a date between 640-765 C.E. (19-148 A.H.) and a 95% probability of a date between 595-855 C.E./27 B.H. - 241 A.H.24 The results of carbon-dating are usually reported in the form of a standard deviation, followed by a confidence level. If the deviation is large the experiment becomes meaningless. In their 1989 paper “Radiocarbon Dating of the Shroud of Turin,” the largest deviation listed was 32 for the 90% confidence level.25 For this Mushaf the given value of 725±130 c.e. (for the 95% assurance level) does not inspire confidence in the experiment.26 Radiocarbon dating can only supplement the ‘traditional’ paleography and is rarely used in dating.

Apart from mistakes introduced by Pissareff, there are some errors within the Mushaf which could only have stemmed from the original scribe himself. T. Alkula, in his detailed study of the Tashkent Mushaf,27 provides a sampling of these scribal errors: (a) in Q 3:37,28 it is missing from the verse. (b) it in Q 3:51,29 it is missing from the verse. (c) in Q 3:78,30 it is missing from the verse. (d) it in Q 6:116,31 it is missing from the verse. Moreover the Mushaf lacks consistency in its spelling, as the words éna and h, and are occasionally spelled -

The original 1988 radiocarbon dating by three independent teams of 21 scientists concluded that the shroud was only from the Middle Ages and not from the time of Jesus, with a dating 1260 – 1390 c.e. Even since the announcement the authenticity of these tests has been challenged. Following accusations from both sides, C. Ramsey, head of the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit agreed to a further test that may resolve the initial dating.32

Many depends on who is doing what and there are ways to introduce bias. The results of the 1995 radiocarbon dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls were described as "too gross and silly to settle any argument." See H. Shanks, "New Carbon-14 Tests Leave Room for Debate", Biblical Archaeology Review, vol. 21, no. 4 (July/Aug. 1995), p. 61.

22 T. Adikula, Mi-Mushaf At-Sharif Attributed to Uthman bin Affan (The copy at the Tashkent Palace Museum), Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul, 2007, p. 67 (English Introduction). Some of the folios have recently turned up in auctions by Christie’s and Sotheby. A folio from this Mushaf was sold by Sotheby’s in 2008 ("Arts of the Islamic World", Sotheby’s, London, 9 Apr 2008, Sale L08220, Lot 1). It is possible that some of these came from folios which were torn by visitors, once by one, prior to the Mushaf’s relocation to St. Petersburg in 1869 [Adikula, op. cit., p. 68].

23 See Jeffery and Mendelow, op. cit., p. 195; see also F. Déroche, "Note sur les fra -
and so. The normal procedure for 'Uthmân's master copies was that they were carefully transcribed, carefully scrutinized by a scholar of reading, then fully revised to redress any errors prior to being sent forth. As the Tashkeela Muḥāfāz clearly did not undergo this process, Alitikulaç opines that it cannot be one of the official Muḥāfāz dispatched by Caliph 'Uthmân. He does conclude though that it might have been copied from the official Muḥāfāz of Küfa or from a copy based on it.

### ii. The Copy at Topkapi Sarayi

A note at the beginning of this Muḥāfāz states that the governor of Cairo, Muḥammad 'Ali Pasha, sent it as a gift to the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II in 1226 a.h./1811 c.e. with the proposal that it be kept in the 'Pavilion of the Holy Mantle' at the Topkapi Sarayi Museum. It is currently preserved there as item no. 44/32. Recently a facsimile edition of this Muḥāfāz was printed in Turkey.

![Figure 11.2: A folio from the 'Muḥāfāz 'Uthmān' at Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul.](image)

### iii. The Copy at Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi

This is almost a complete Muḥāfāz, missing just two folios. Written on vellum (antelope skin) in Kūfic script, each folio measures 41 x 46 cm, the text area is 32 x 40 cm and in general there are 18 lines on every page. The Muḥāfāz is extensively marked with red dots, possibly by a later hand, bearing ad-Du'ali's dotting scheme. It also features big circular motifs after every 5th and 10th āyāh and a rectangular device after every 100 āyāhs. A wide horizontal band separates the āyāhs.

Dr. Alitikulaç reports the following scribal errors: (a) In Q 2:257 شکا is repeated twice, as the last word in folio 5a and the first word in folio 5b; (b) in Q 6:152، is misspelled یا; (c) in Q 7:192، is misspelled ابی; (d) in Q 8:48، is misspelled with two adīf 感 în the verse انہ الف; (e) in Q 14:16، is misspelled انہ در; (f) in Q 39:18, the یس is missing in the verse انہ الف; (g) in Q 41:19, the adīf from the end of the word انہ is missing; (h) in Q 59:2، is misspelled ابی; (i) in Q 59:13، is misspelled ابی. As the manuscript clearly shows the script, illumination and dotting of the Umayyad era, it cannot be one of 'Uthmān's master copies. But in Alitikulaç's view the readings in this Muḥāfāz are closely related to the Muḥāfāz of Madinah. A calligraphy expert, M. Serin, dates it to the turn of the second century a.h.

Regarding the origins of this Muḥāfāz there is little information. Currently preserved at the Museum of Islamic Art in Istanbul as item no. 457, this Kūfic Muḥāfāz on vellum has also recently been reproduced as a facsimile edition.

33 Ibid, p. 70.
34 Ibid, pp. 72-73.
36 Ibid, p. 76.
37 Ibid, p. 81.
The Muṣḥaf consists of 438 folios, constituting almost a complete copy of the Muṣḥaf.⁴¹ Each folio measures 32×23 cm and has 15 lines on each side. Four short, slightly slanted lines are used as āyāh separators with a different design for every fifth and tenth āyāh. The sūra separators contain more detailed information than the ones in Topkapı. Evidently, the original scribe was very meticulous as not a single scribal error has been found; he was also remarkably consistent in his orthography.⁴² Some of the letters in the Muṣḥaf have skeletal marks not in dot form but rather as short strokes slightly tilted to the left.⁴³ As for diacritical markings the Muṣḥaf follows ad-Du‘āl’s system. It seems that the scribe initially used black dots, instead of the red dots proposed by ad-Du‘āl. Having realized his mistake he recolored them red. In many instances the size of the red dot is slightly larger than the original black and is visible from the opposite side of the folio, and this necessitates caution when reading the manuscript if attention is not paid to which side the dot is on.⁴⁴ After careful examination Dr. Altikulac concludes that the readings in this Muṣḥaf closely reflect the ones in the official Muṣḥaf of Başra.⁴⁵ Based on the paleographic evidence the Muṣḥaf is either from the second half of the first century or the first half of the second century A.H. (c. 670 – 766 C.E.).⁴⁶

⁴¹ There are three missing folios, aside from 14 lost folios which were replaced in 841 A.H./1437 C.E. by another scribe [ibid, p. 112 (Arabic introduction)].
⁴² There are a few minor exceptions. For example the word hamāla, which occurs nine times, is spelled ala in five instances and ala in the other four [ibid, p. 114].
⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 115.
⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 120.
Q 4:57, it is misspelled in later copies.
(c) in Q 6:157, missing alif in the original scribe was also inconsistent with his spellings, e.g., َءَيْن and َءَيْن are sometimes spelled وَءَيْن and وَءَيْن. Citing numerous reasons, Dr. Alizah explains that this Muṣḥaf cannot be one of 'Uthmān's authorized copies. It may have been dated to the second half of the first century A.H. (late 7th/early 8th c.e.).

Based on its readings, its closest match is the Muṣḥaf of Kūfā.

vi. The Copy at the Institute of Oriental Studies

The largest portion of this manuscript is held at the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg (manuscript no. E20). In 1998 E. Rezvan published an article detailing this manuscript and F. Déroche, who had published some Qur’ānic fragments at Katta Langar, identified both manuscripts as belonging to the same Muṣḥaf. Later on they independently discovered two more collections belonging to this Muṣḥaf, a folio at the Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent and two folios at the Ibn Sinā Bukhārā Regional Library. Rezvan, who recently published a facsimile edition of this Muṣḥaf, speculates that the E20 manuscript arrived in St. Petersburg through Central Asia.

This is an incomplete Muṣḥaf of 97 folios, constituting about 40% of the text of the Qur’ān. Each folio is sized 34.5 x 25.5 cm, and is written in late Ḥijārī script with two different copyists involved.

There are eleven additional minor errors which I have not listed here for the sake of brevity. For the full list, see ibid., pp. 177-179. Nine folios were added later as a replacement for missing portions; this list does not include any abridgment errors present in the nearer folios.

According to Rezvan, the copy at the Institute of Oriental Studies was bought in 1936 from an elderly lady who most likely purchased it from the library of I.G. Nozef, a professor of Arabic and Islamic law at the School of Oriental Languages of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nozef, a Lebanese Arab-Christian, was invited to teach there beginning in 1860. Towards the end of his life, his son secretly sold off his library possessions to bookbinder E. Rezvan, The Qurʾān of 'Uthmān (St. Petersburg, Katta-Langer, Bukhāra, Tashkent), St. Petersburg Center for Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 17-18.

The handwriting is handwritten in ink with the handwriting in sūra 20 verse 89 and onward (the portion in-between is lost). So it is possible that the copyists shared the work evenly with each focusing on a different half of the Muṣḥaf. The number of lines per page varies widely as well (ibid., p. 61).

Figure 11.6: A folio from the 'Muṣḥaf 'Uthmān' held at the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg.

Consonants of the letters in this Muṣḥaf feature skeletal dots, though I posit that at least some of these are the work of a later scribe. Ayah separators are present and unique to each copyist, with the first using a larger, more ornate pattern than the second. Colorful tenth and one-hundredth ayah markers, and ornamented illuminations between verses, were appended by a later hand. Radiocarbon dating of a fragment of this Muṣḥaf yielded the result 885±110 C.E.272±113 A.H., for a 95.4% confidence level. Rezvan's own paleographic analysis gives a date corresponding to the final quarter of the eighth century C.E. (c. 158-184 A.H.). It is doubtful of its attributes neither seems satisfactory.

There are few minor errors which were subsequently corrected by a later scribe: (a) in Q 7:130, letter ل is missing in لَوْلَا; (b) in Q 10:28, first ل is missing in لَيْكَ; (c) in Q 26:42, كَيْر is missing in كَيْر; (d) in Q 28:27, لِكَ is missing in لِكَ; (e) in Q 49:6, لِكَ is missing in لِكَ.
4. Differences Between 'Uthmân's Master Copies and Existing Musḥafīs Attributed to him

Among the dispatched Musḥafīs of Madīnah, Makkah, Kufa, Baṣra and Shām (Syria), and 'Uthmân's own personal copy, the total skeletal variations amounted to forty-five characters spread throughout six Musḥafīs. None of the multiple readings yields a contradiction in meaning. A survey of the differences between 'Uthmân's official copies, and the Musḥafīs we have covered which are ascribed to him, is given in the table below. We opted to drop Musḥaf 'Aşālkhī from the list as it has been tampered with. Our table, while relying on the work of Alīkhulaq,86 differs from his in that we list the words as they were penned by the original scribe (including orthography), not taking into account what changes may have been wrought by a later hand. An entry for the St. Petersburg Musḥaf, which Alīkhulaq did not study, has been added. Identical entries are like-colored while grey panels indicate that the folio is missing or that the manuscript is illegible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Madīnah</th>
<th>Makkah</th>
<th>Kufa</th>
<th>Baṣra</th>
<th>Shām</th>
<th>Topkapi</th>
<th>Makhshīmar</th>
<th>St. Petersburg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2:116</td>
<td>وَلَوْلَا</td>
<td>واللَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2:133</td>
<td>وَلَوْلَا</td>
<td>واللَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3:133</td>
<td>وَلَوْلَا</td>
<td>واللَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3:184</td>
<td>وَلَوْلَا</td>
<td>واللَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
<td>مَا</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[86 Ibid., pp. 144–45, table 13. There are a few others which Ravan lists, but most of them have to do with dropping the alif (e.g. in Q 2:95:6, original جمَعَ) corrected by a later scribe to جمَعَ. As this was common practice in early writing (see pp. 144–48), these cannot be counted alongside genuine errors.


[88 A later scribe added alif so that it now reads وَلَوْلَا. 

[89 Letter واودلاء added later. 

[90 Letter واودلاء added later. 

[91 Letter واودلاء added later. 

[92 Waṣālī added later. 

[93 Dot beneath the alif serif of وَلَوْلَا and زِيْمان added later. Now reads وَلَوْلَا. 

[94 Letter واودلاء added later. 

[95 Letter واودلاء added later. 

[96 Letter waodal removed. 

[97 Letter waodal removed. 

[98 Letter waodal removed. 

[99 Does added later so as to make it وَلَوْلَا. 

[100 Letter waodal removed. 

[101 Letter waodal removed. 

[102 Letter waodal removed. 

[103 Letter waodal removed. 

[104 Letter waodal removed. 

[105 Letter waodal removed. 

[106 Letter waodal removed. 

[107 Letter waodal removed. 

[108 Letter waodal removed. ]
Orthographically, all the extant Musḥaf which are ascribed to ʿUthmān are confined in their readings to the acknowledged variants found in the five master copies of Madīnah, Makkah, Kūfa, Baṣra and Shām. There is, however, one entry that obliges further elaboration. Entry no. 10 (Q 6:137) lists three variants, namely: 31): 16:85 2:613 3:613

So in Q 6:137 the Musḥaf at Topkapi reads 31) (the red dot lies after the alif, not beneath it, signifying a damma); likewise the Musḥaf at the Museum of Islamic Art also reads 31) unambiguously. But what about the other two Musḥaf, is it 31) or something else? Without al-Duʿāʾi’s dotting scheme to guide us it becomes difficult to say. We contend that the Musḥaf at Cairo and St. Petersburg in fact read 31) (1) it was noted that the original copyists of both Musḥaf lacked consistency11 and (2) even these days the word 31) is often written 31) instead of the more correct 31).

Summarizing the table of differences.

The table reads, the Musḥaf at Topkapi matches with ʿUthmān’s official Musḥaf of Madīnah in 38 places out of a maximum of 43, and in 25 places

66 Probably a scribal error.
67 This is probably the wording in the original. A later scribe has erased it and written over it in red ink 31)
68 As in the previous footnote. Now written in red ink 31)
69 A later scribe added alif and a note about multiple readings for this verse. Now reads, alif, and 31)
70 The word 31) may have been added later. Difficult to resolve.

71 See pp. 179 - 82. As another example of the scribe’s inconsistency in the Musḥaf at St. Petersburg; the word 31), occurring twice in the same verse (Q 4:134), is once spelled with alif and once without.
72 Using an internet search engine we found: 31) with 484 hits, 31) with 4,410 hits and 23,300 hits for 31)
out of 43 for the Muḥāfaz of Makkah. From the material evidence we deduce that the Topkapı Muḥāfaz and the one at St. Petersburg are both closest to the Muḥāfaz of Madīnah, while the one at the Museum of Islamic Art is almost perfectly congruent with the Muḥāfaz of Baṣra. The one in Cairo is held closest to the master copy sent to Kūfa.

5. Other Muḥāfaz from the First Century A.H.

Recently Déroche and Noseda published facsimile editions of two sizeable Muḥāfaz, one preserved at Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), Paris as Arabe 328a,73 the other at the British Library (BL), London as Or 2165.74 Written in Ḥijāzī Maʾāl script, both belong to the first century A.H.75

We may summarize the differences between the five official Muḥāfaz of Uthmān and these two copies, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slavonic</th>
<th>Makah</th>
<th>Makah</th>
<th>Kufa</th>
<th>Basra</th>
<th>Slavonic</th>
<th>BL Or 2165</th>
<th>Arabe 328a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


74 F. Déroche and S.N. Noseda (eds.), Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte Coranique, Les manuscrits du style bigézi, Volume 2. Tome 1. Le manuscrit Or. 2165 (f 1 à 61) de la British Library, Fondazione Perin Niosa Noseda, Leu, 2001. Tome 1 includes the first 61 folios of a total of 121 kept in the British Library as Or. 2165. These 121 folios encompass about 53% of the entire text of the Qur’ān.

75 Both collections exhibit similar handwriting. Grohmann dates the one kept at the British Library to the first century "(Zum Problem Der Datierung Der Ältesten Koran-Handschriften)" in H. Franke (Ed.), Abenteuer Viermillenjähriger Internationaler Orientalisten-Kongress München, 28 August – 4 September 1957: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, Weibdehn, 1959, p. 272). Based on the similarity of both manuscripts, Y. Duran suggests re-dating the manuscripts to the time just prior to the reign of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Wahid (r. 86-96 A.H.), i.e. prior to 85 A.H. ("Some Notes on the British Library’s ‘Oldest Qur’ān Manuscript’ (Or. 2165)", Journal of Qur’ānic Studies, vol. 8, no. 2 (2006), pp. 84-126).
Both Mushafs, the one at BL (Or 2165) and that at BNF (Arabe 328a), tally in all but one place with the Mushaf of Shām (Syria). Arabe 328a will, however, be in complete accord with the Mushaf of Shām if we consider "کَرَیْ" to represent "کُرَیْ", a case we argued earlier. This is on par with the conclusion of Y. Dutton who showed that both manuscripts are written in the qira'at (recitation style) of Ibn 'Amir (d. 118 A.H./736 C.E.), which according to Ibn al-Jazari was the reading used by the people of Syria up until the beginning of the sixth century A.H.\textsuperscript{77}

6. Conclusion

As soon as Caliph 'Uthmān dispatched his official Mushafs to different fronts, scholars painstakingly went through each of them and tabulated the differences in their texts. These amounted to forty-four places in the Qur'an, a divergence of forty-five characters in a corpus nine thousand lines long. These stemmed from multiple readings, each emanating from the Prophet and so equally authoritative, none affecting the meaning or outcome of the verse involved. To grant each multiple reading its just due, Zaid bin Thabit consigned them to different copies rather than having to denote one or the other to secondary status. An unintended but fortuitous consequence of this act was that, all these centuries later, we can use the orthographic layout that is unique to each of the master copies to conclude whether any given Mushaf is directly descended from one of these official Mushafs. The details presented here reveal that the Mushafs popularly ascribed to Caliph 'Uthmān are not truly 'Uthmānic, as none of them tallies perfectly with a master copy from beginning to end. But there are some that come intriguingly close. More heartening still is that every Mushaf we have examined abides by one of the two multiple readings for each of the forty-four positions, a demarcation of what was acceptable in the earliest era of Islam beyond which these famous Mushafs of the first and second centuries A.H., and indeed those printed in our own time, have never presumed to cross.


\textsuperscript{77} Ibn al-Jazari, Ghiyāṣuʾ an-Nihāyāt fī Tahqīq al-Qur'ān, i,424, 292.

Chapter Twelve

CAUSES OF VARIANT READINGS

One of the gateways for an Orientalist assault on the Qur'ān is distortion of the text itself. In my estimate there are over 250,000 copies of the Qur'ān in manuscript form, complete or partial, from the first century of Hijra onwards. Errors are classified in academic circles into the dual categories of deliberate and unintentional, and in this vast collection of manuscripts it is a certainty that many copyists must have committed unintentional errors. Scholars who deal with this subject know very well what fatigue or a momentary lapse of concentration can engender, as discussed at length in the following works: (1) Ernst Würthwein, The Text of the Old Testament, 2nd edition revised and enlarged, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995; (2) Bart D. Ehrman, The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, Oxford Univ. Press, 1993; and (3) Bruce M. Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, 3rd enlarged edition, Oxford Univ. Press, 1992.

The first of these relates to the OT and the others to the NT. All three meticulously categorize mistakes of this nature with terms like transposition, haplography, and dittography, occasionally probing into the very mind of the now-deceased scribe to show what distraction must have flashed through his mind as he committed his silly mistake thousands of years ago.\textsuperscript{7} But this same treatment is not afforded the Qur'ān, and in fact many errors—obvious scribal blunders resulting from exhaustion—are treated as genuine variants, as evidence of corruption in the Muslim Holy Book.

True that it is difficult to ascertain whether an error is intentional or deliberate; let us therefore tackle the two possibilities together, as the end result in both is textual corruption.

As we have seen, the 'Uthmānic Mushaf was thoroughly dotless. Goldziher alleges that this dotlessness, both skeletal and diacritical, provoked divergences in the readings of the Qur'ān. Thus a skeleton such as ۶۶, can possess several possible readings such as: ۶۶. These mean, respectively: elephant, he was killed, it was said, to kiss, front portion of the body and before.\textsuperscript{7} In this chapter I aim to negate the idea that dotless Arabic

\textsuperscript{1} Refer to pp. 280 - 81 and pp. 320 - 23.

\textsuperscript{2} For a discussion on when such a text, lacking dots, can cause corruption and when it is harmless, refer to section 3 of this chapter.