III

An Appraisal of Orientalist Research
CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE ORIENTALIST AND THE QUR'ÄN

The controversies surrounding Arabic paleography and Ibn Mas'ûd's Mushaf having already been dealt with, we turn now to the broad spectrum of Orientalist attacks against the Qur'ân in their numerous other forms, offering a taste of some of the efforts aimed at opposing the Qur'ân's textual purity through the use of illegitimate sources, unsound methodology and even straightforward deceit.

1. The Urgency of Proving Distortions in the Qur'ân

Intent on proving the West's moral and theological superiority Bergsträsser, Jeffery, Mingana, Preest, Tisdall and many others dedicated their lives to finding within the Qur'ân all the evils of textual corruption uncovered in the Bible. As is apparent from the previous chapter, biblical passages are flooded with variations.1 Taken together they weaken core issues of theology and raise many concerns about spurious episodes interpolated into the text through populist influences. While the urgency of proving a similar outcome for the Qur'ân has gained fresh momentum in the last few years because of the Middle East's shifting political landscape, efforts in this field have largely predated these concerns. Among the historical works are: (1) A. Mingana and A. Smith (eds.), Leaves from Three Ancient Qur'âns, Possibly Pre-'Othmânîc with a list of their Variants, Cambridge, 1914; (2) G. Bergsträsser, "Plan eines Apparatus Criticus zum Koran", Sitzungsberichte.

1 Quoting A. Robert, "Cette masse énorme dépasse ce dont on dispose pour n'importe quel texte antique; elle a fourni quelque 200,000 variantes. La plupart sont des vari-antes insignifiantes ... Dès Westcott et Hort, en donnant ce chiffre, constataient que les sept huitièmes du texte étaient assurés ... Il y en a pourtant" [A. Robert and A. Fouiller (eds.), Introduction à la Bible, tome 1 (Introduction Générale, Ancien Testament), Desclée & Cie, 1959, p. 111]. Roughly, the New Testament has some 200,000 variants, most of which are insignificant (such as variations of spellings). Westcott and Hort, while giving this number, noted that seven eighths of the text was assured. Yet there are very important variants as well. Interestingly the figure of 200,000 variants was reduced to 150,000 in the English translation of the same work [Robert and Fouiller, Interpreting the Scriptures, translated by P.W. Skehan et al, Desclée Company, NY, 1969] p. 115]. See also pp. 318 - 24.

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2. Orientalist Criticism of the Qur'ān’s Compilation

There are numerous gateways for an assault on the Qur'ānic text, one of which is to question its recording and compilation. It is in this spirit that Orientalists enquire why, if the Qur'ān was indeed recorded during the Prophet's lifetime, did 'Umar fear the death of the Inspiār on the Yamāmah battlefields, informing Abū Bakr that much of the Book might disappear with them? Why was the recorded material not kept in the Prophet's own custody? And if it was, why did Zaid b. Thabit fail to utilize it in preparing the Śubah? These accounts, reported by al-Buhārī and accepted by the Muslim community, imply to Orientalists that the claims of early dictation and recording are false.

A lack of knowledge, intentional ignorance (ṣawād) or a disregard for Muslim educational policies are the central culprits here. Let us first assume that there was a copy of the Qur'ān in the Prophet’s possession; why did he neglect to make it available for the penural and benefit of his Companions? Because to furnish such a copy, one that was not up-to-date with the latest revelations, abrogations or shifts in verse sequences, would be a disservice to the people.

A sharing of incorrect information whose pitfalls greatly outweighed the benefits. If this copy existed, however, why did Zaid b. Thabit ignore it as a resource during the reign of Abū Bakr? Earlier I pointed out that, for a document to acquire legitimacy, a pupil must act as an eyewitness and receive it from his teacher in person. Where no element of hearing witness exists, coming across a deceased scholar's book for example, the value of the text is nullified. So it was with Zaid b. Thabit. In dictating verses to his Companions the Prophet was insituting viable transmission routes based on direct teacher-pupil contact. Conversely, because he never lent any written materials to his pupils, no element of witness lay in these parchments and neither Zaid nor anyone else could use them as a primary resource for comparative purposes. ²

3. Transmutation of Islam into Foreign Idioms

A second gateway for an attack on the Qur'ān is the wholesale conversion of Islamic studies into foreign terminology. In his *Introduction to Islamic Law*, Schacht divides Islamic jurisprudence into the following headings: persons, property, obligations in general, obligations and contracts in particular, etc.² This arrangement deliberately transmutes Islamic Law into Roman Law as it has no relevance whatsoever with the headings and classifications used in the Islamic legal system; the implication of course is that it is wholly derivative of Roman Law. J. Wansbrough does the same with the Qur'ān, dividing his *Qur'anic Studies* along the following lines: Principles of Exegesis (1) Masoretic exegesis; (2) Haggadic exegesis; (3) Deutungsbedürfnisgkeit; (4) Halakhic exegesis; and (5) Rhetoric and allegory.³

These exegeses take up over half the book, yet if I were to approach any Muslim scholar living in the East or even educated in the West, he would not be able to decipher even the table of contents. Yes, perhaps a Jewish

² In Jeffery’s words, “Western scholars do not consent that the arrangement of the text of the Qur'ān which is in our hands now is the work of the Prophet” [Miqâṣī, Introduction, p. 5]. Here Jeffery is referring to the arrangement of both suras and verses.
³ See p. 84.
⁴ Referring back to pp. 98 - 99, Sawārī's ḍādībī claims that Zaid compared 'Uthmān's Murājib with the Prophet's personal copy of the Qur'ān, kept in 'Aisha's custody. Zaid might have afforded it a secondary status in the course of his endeavors.
theologian can decode this OT terminology, but this is akin to placing the garbs of a Muslim sheikh on a rabbi. Why this insistence on transmuting Islam, unless it be to force it beyond the scope of Muslim scholars and imply its derivation from biblical sources!

4. Allegations of Biblical ForGERY

This leads us to a third gateway for an assault on the Qurʾān: the recurrent accusations leveled against Islam as merely a forgery of Judaism and Christianity, a fraudulent offshoot appropriating Scriptural literature for its own purposes. Warburg, himself a firm proponent of this idea, insisted for example that "Islamic Doctrine generally, and even the figure of Muhammad were modeled on Rabbinic Jewish prototypes."  Here we assess the sentiments of two scholars writing in a similar vein.

i. Accusations of Boshed Appropriation

In an Encyclopaedia Britannica (1891) article T. Nöldeke, a pioneer Orientalist, mentions numerous errors in the Qurʾān due to the "ignorance of Muhammad" concerning early Jewish history - a supposed bungling of names and details which he stole from Jewish sources.  Tabulating these mistakes he states that,

[Even the] most ignorant Jew could never have mistaken Haman (the minister of Ahasuerus) for the minister of Pharaoh, or identified Miriam the sister of Moses with Mary (= Miriam) the mother of Christ...  [And] in his ignorance of everything out of Arabia, he makes the fertility of Egypt - where rain is almost never seen and never missed - depend on rain instead of the inundations of the Nile (xi. 49).  

In his deceit Nöldeke neglects to point out that the Qurʾān refers to Mary the mother of Christ as "sister of Aaron,"  not Moses. Aaron was the first in line for the Israelite priesthood. According to the New Testament Elizabeth, cousin of Mary and mother of John the Baptist, came of a priestly family and was thus "of the daughters of Aaron,"  By extension we can just as convincingly designate either Mary or Elizabeth as "sisters of Aaron" or "daughters of Himmān," Aaron's father.  As for Haman the argument is that his name must have come from the Bible, insinuating that no other notable by that name existed in history. Who is to say that Pharaoh did not also have a close associate by that same, simply because earlier scriptures failed to mention him? In the Bible his sole appearance is in the book of Esther, largely regarded as a work of fantasy.  Contrary to his role in Esther no record exists of a Haman, or any other non-Perisan, being second-in-command to Xerxes (Ahasuerus) at any time. But reference to Haman is in fact found in the Egyptian hieroglyphs, as a name for the chief of the stone quarry workers during the New Kingdom Period.  This occupation fits the Qurʾānic sense perfectly, and the era coincides with the time of Moses.  Not until the 19th century did Hieroglyphic rise from dead language to decipherable text again, and this only demonstrates the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān and its divine origin.

What of Nöldeke’s claim regarding Egyptian fertility? The inundations of the Nile are due in most part to variability of rainfall at its source, as any ecologist will attest, but let us put that aside. Verse 12:49 reads:

"Then after that [period] will come a year in which the people will be delivered, and in which they will press [wine and oil]."

I will leave the reader to extract any reference to rain; in fact this accusation stems from Nöldeke confusing the nouns for ‘rain’ and ‘delivery’.  

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10 Qurʾān 19:28.
13 Typical is the stance of The Jewish Encyclopedia, that "the vast majority of erro- er res expositors have reached the conclusion that the book is a piece of pure fiction, although some writers qualify their criticism by an attempt to treat it as a historical romance" ["Esther"]. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1905, s.v. 336. The Oxford Companion to the Bible likewise states that "in terms of literary genre the book is not history...[it] is best understood as a novel" [p. 199].
16 The approximate dates for the New Kingdom Period are 1575-1087 B.C.E. and most scholars concur that Moses lived during the reign of Ramses II, thereby during the Exodus to the mid 13th century B.C.E. [The Oxford Companion to the Bible, pp. 189, 210].
ii. A Counterfeited Bible

This is the charge directed against the Qur’ān by Hirschfeld.17 If by Bible he refers to the NT, let us recall two of the major doctrines in Christianity: Original Sin and Atonement. The former is the automatic inheritance of every human, being the progeny of Adam, while the latter embodies the belief that God sacrificed His only begotten Son as the sole means of absolving this sin. The Qur’ān categorically rejects both:

\[ \text{\textit{Quran 2:37}} \]

“Therewith Adam received words [of guidance] from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance.”

15 \[ \text{\textit{Quran 6:164}} \]

“\textit{And whatsoever wrong any human commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another’s burden.”}

The Trinity and salvation through Christ, the very essences of Christian doctrine, find only outright dismissal in the Qur’ān, while the biblical stories present therein are more a matter of history than ideology.

18 \[ \text{\textit{Quran 11:1-2}} \]

“\textit{Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Abundant; He begets not, nor is He begetten; and there is none like unto Him.”}

So where exactly does this counterfeiting manifest itself? And concerning appropriations from the OT (as alleged by Wansbrough, Noldeke and others), why should the Prophet seek to emulate a Scripture portraying Yahweh as a tribal God, affiliated not even with the Samaritans or Edomites but solely with Israel? At the very opening of the Book we find:

19 \[ \text{\textit{Quran 6:164}} \]

“In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds.”

A universal invocation to Allah, transcending tribes and races and based only on the precepts of faith. One cannot pluck such a rich mango from the prickly arms of a cactus.

5. Deliberate Distortion of the Qur’ān

A fourth gateway is to falsify the Holy Book itself. We have already critically explored Goldziher and Arthur Jeffery’s theories on variants, but there are other notables as well.

1. Blachère’s Attempted Distortion of the Qur’ān

In translating the Qur’ān into French (Le Coran, 1949), Regis Blachère not only changes the sura order in the Qur’ān but adds two fictitious verses into the body of the text. He bases this on a psoriatic narration in which Satan made his own ‘revelations’ to the Prophet, who was apparently incapable of telling apart the Words of Allah from the polytheistic mumblings in the story. None of the transmission channels for recitation and none of the 250,000 extant Qur’ānic manuscripts contain these two verses which, by themselves, wholly contradict everything preceding them and following them, and in fact the very essence of the Qur’ān.21

Labeled ‘20 bis’ and ‘20 ter’, the fake verses are a call to Muslims to glorify the idols of pre-Islamic Makkah.22

This fraudulent report has proven too charming for Orientalists to pass up, Sirus Ibn Ishaq, an early and definitive biography of the Prophet, was translated by Rev. Guillaume and this has enjoyed immense success, being published continuously in non-Arab Muslim countries since 1967. In this translation Guillaume resorts to dishonesties too numerous to mention. Among them is the insertion of two pages from one of at-Tabarî’s works, in which at-Tabarî recounts this spurious tale for its curiosity value. Guillaume never indicates his external quotations clearly, flanking them with parentheses instead of setting them apart from the main body of text, and preceding them with a ‘T’ which is vigorously employed but never explained. This lengthy narrative of two pages benefits from the same

18 Qur’ān 2:37.
19 Qur’ān 6:164.
22 For a detailed discussion on this see: Urwah h. as-Zuhair, al-Maghâzî, pp. 106-10, in particular the footnotes.
23 Counterfeit verses aside, Blachère (and others such as Rodwell and Richard Bell) altered the order of suras in their translations, challenging again the holiness of the text in a convenient way given Western views regarding the alleged cursus arrangement in Ibn Mar’ûd’s Mus’hâf.
of lines, the following blunders: incorrect transcription of (which he transcribes as, which he conveniently drops altogether); addition of an extra ; omission of such words as ; inability to read partial words such as (which he reads as ); and so on, in a series of errors that can only be classed as incompetence.

The Traditions of Bukhārī is of course a hadith compilation, and I use this simply as a test case. Returning to the Qurʾān we find that here too Mingana leaves behind a legacy, publishing a work entitled Leaves from Three Ancient Qur’āns, Possibly Pre-Othmanīc with a list of their Variaents.

Figure 19.1: Bachelès translation with the two fictitious verses, '20 bis' and '20 cer':

ii. Mingana’s Attempted Distortion of the Qurʾān

Prof. Rev. Mingana, held by some as ‘a great scholar of Arabic’, has in fact a shaky grasp of the subject at best. Publishing An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of Bukhārī he commits, in copying only a handful

26 Cambridge, 1936.
27 Cambridge, 1914.
28 The two writings are perpendicular to one another. Palimpsest refers to a parchment or tablet that has been written upon more than once with the earlier text, imperfectly erased, remaining partly visible.
demanding, so Mingana showers three pages with infrared light to increase contrast.29

Analyzing the leaves, Mingana lists the Qur’anic variants in this manuscript along with an English translation. It is not difficult to detect his incredible dishonesty in this regard, aimed especially at readers with little knowledge of Arabic. The following four variants will clarify:

1. Mingana writes:

   "Unless the الل ک (el-lak) means blow, fist, boxing, it is an obscure word. The sentence of the [printed] Qur’an is as follows: ‘ئل ی ر ل ن سیت ل ت ل ت (el-lak).’ They will not take the place of Allah in anything, for thee (Muhammad).’ Our text is:

‘ئل ی ر ل ن سیت ل ت ل ت (el-lak).

‘In derision, they will not take the place of a blow, for thee.’ If this sense is rejected, the real meaning of this substantive would be problematic. The کاکاکی (kakak) in its tri-literal form instead of the form کاک (kak) is not much used in the post-Qur’anic compositions, but the adjective کاک (kak) is found in good writers.”30

Notes: So much linguistic gymnastics, and all for a moot point. Keeping in mind his inability to read even the lucid manuscripts of al-Bukhari, not to speak of palmseeds, Mingana’s translation here is patently false because the ending makes no conceivable sense in this context. The word کاک (kak) squarely belongs in the boxing arena, not the Qur’an, and the most charitable rendering I can give is, ‘Out of wickedness they will not protect you from the punch [ja]’. That the final two words are due to scribal error is glaringly obvious (what scribe would deliberately try to alter this verse by inserting such absurdities?), but Mingana refuses to give up.

2. From sura 17:131

| Printed Qur’an (as given by Mingana): | وکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکاکa
main figures in the restoration of the Mustaḥfa in San‘a’, Yemen. Puin found himself and the Yemeni fragments thrust into the spotlight with the article’s publication. Lester’s words occasioned both sensational joy and deep anger concerning Puin’s work, depending on whether one spoke with Orientalists or devout Muslims, so to counter the anger of the Muslim street and wipe clean the distrust, Puin wrote a lengthy letter in Arabic to al-Qadi al-Akwa’ of Yemen. The letter then appeared in the Yemeni daily ath-Thawra newspaper, and I have reproduced it elsewhere. Praising the San‘a’ Mustaḥfa and how they fortified the Muslim position, he nevertheless wrote with enough subtlety and vagueness to cast a pall over the whole history of the Qur’an. Following is a translation of part of the letter that is related to this theme:

The remnants of these old Mustaḥfa go back, scientifically assured, to the first century after Hijra! Because of the existence of these manuscripts in San‘a’, ... we have [the only monumental proof of the completion of the Qur’an in the first century of Hijra and not, as so many non-Muslim scholars assert, from the early third century of Hijra! Of course Muslims may ask what is the point of such information from a non-Muslim scholar, when Muslims are certain that the complete Mustaḥfa has existed ever since the third Caliph, ‘Uthman b. ‘Affan. Theirs is a belief held in good faith, since we do not have the original copy of the Mustaḥfa which was written under the supervision of ‘Uthman, nor any of the further copies which he dispatched to other territories....

A summary of his main points runs thus:

1. The San‘a’ manuscripts are the only proof of the Qur’an’s completion by the first century of Hijra, a solid refutation against the many non-Muslim scholars who claim that it was not completed until the early third.

2. Muslims possess no proof that the complete Mustaḥfa has existed since ‘Uthman’s reign. Good faith is their sole buttress.

Most of Puin’s claims have been dealt with; the irregularities of writing alif were covered extensively in Chapters 10 and 12; his triumphant discovery of a fragment where sura 26 is followed by sura 37 is not the least bit unique as I have shown from other partial Mustaḥfas, see pp. 78-81. As regards misplacement of some ayah separators, incoherencies in this area

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37 The entire letter appeared in the issue dated 24.11.1419 A.H. I have reproduced part of it as Figure 1.1.

38 Interestingly, there are approximately 2,327 copies of Sahih al-Bukhari worldwide, as mentioned in the catalogue al-Fitrī as-Shimil li al-Tawārīkh al-‘Arabī al-Islāmī al-Mabithīq al-Hadith wa-l-Nahār ‘an-Sharīf wa l-‘Ulamā‘u wa l-Waṣīṣu ‘alā al-Hatt Foundation, London, 1991, i:949-955). In view of this vast number (though the catalogue is neither very accurate nor comprehensive), it is quite safe to assume that the number of Mustaḥfa manuscripts is many folds this figure.

39 This is a conservative figure and in reality it may easily exceed it. The collection at Türk ve İslam Eserleri Museum in Istanbul is estimated to contain about 210,000 folios [J. R. P. Puin, “Methods of Research on Qur’anic Manuscripts: A Few Ideas”, in Mafāṣif San‘a’, p. 9]. There are many sizable collections in other parts of the world. Recently a new Mustaḥfa attributed to ‘Uthman has been uncovered, manuscript E20 at the

have already been noted and catalogued by early Muslim scholars. The one claim that we have not elaborated on is discussed next.

1. Are the San‘a’ Fragments the Only Proof of the Qur’an’s Completion by the First Century?

Puin makes two intertwining assertions. He pulls the date for the Qur’an’s completion from the third century to the first but then, by refraining from anything more specific, subtly opens up a wide timeframe within which to work.

Not all Orientalists agree that the Qur’an was completed in the early third century. There are some, e.g. Rev. Mingana, who argue that it was completed by the first, and yet others, e.g. Muir, who hold that the present Mustaḥfa is identical to the text given by the Prophet. Then there is al-‘Urdajj (d. 95 A.H.), to whom many Western scholars give credit for the Qur’an’s final recording. All these dates belong to the first century, and Puin’s imprecation leaves the door open for assigning any date within this period. Precision is a key element of serious scholarship, however, and one we must abide by. With the Prophet’s passing in early 11 A.H. the revelations arrived at their natural end. They were compiled into their external form during the reign of Abu Bakr (d. 13 A.H.), and the spelling standardized and copies dispatched by ‘Uthman (25-30 A.H.), that is the Muslim view. Never have Muslims alleged that the complete Qur’an did not materialize until ‘Uthman, and if Puin claims this they he certainly does not speak on behalf of any Muslim tongue.

Several dozen first-century manuscripts of the Qur’an exist in various libraries around the world,38 my personal guess is that, worldwide, there are about one quarter of one million partial or complete Mustaḥfa manuscripts covering all eras.39 Below is a list of some of these which have been

2. [2] Another copy attributed to 'Uthmân bin 'Affân. Amanat Khizana, Topkapi Sarayi, no. 208. This copy has some 300 folios and is missing a portion from both ends.

3. [3] Another attributed to 'Uthmân bin 'Affân. Amanat Khizana, Topkapi Sarayi, no. 10. It is only 83 folios and contains notes in the Turkish language naming the scribe.


Oriental Institute, St. Petersburg. For a facsimile edition see E. Rezván, *The Qur‘ân of 'Uthmân* (St. Petersburg, Katta-Langer, Buchbinder, Tashkent), St. Petersburg, Center for Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg, 2004. This Mushaf was (along with others ascribed to Caliph 'Uthmân) detailed in Chapter 11.


50 A few points regarding this list:

- Though a good number of these Mushafâs were supposedly penned by this or that individual, we cannot confirm or deny these claims since the manuscripts themselves are mute on this point. Other sources, mostly anonymous, have supplied the scribes' identities. For approximate dating we must do our own homework. Where a Mushaf is attributed to 'Uthmân etc., it may well mean for example that the scribe copied it from a Mushaf dispatched by 'Uthmân.

- Many new writings have been discovered which add to the evolution of a script. An ugly-looking script does not necessarily precede a more attractive one, date wise, and I have encountered one such example myself: crude inscriptions in Baraqa Palace versus more polished, earlier ones from the same region. [Ysbrâhîm Jumâ, *Dirāsât fî Tâlihat al-Kitsâb al-Kiftâyya*, p. 127.] A Mushaf penned in a beautiful hand does not inevitably mean that it is of a later date; this unfortunately has been the attitude of al-Munagqîd and others, who blindly acquiesced to some unproven theories.

41 For an excellent study of this Mushaf and facsimile see, Tâyyûr Aztikâlî, *Al-Mushaf Al-Shârîf: Attributed to 'Uthmân bin 'Affân (The copy at the Topkapi Palace Museum)*, Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul, 2007.

42 For a detailed study of this Mushaf and facsimile see, Dr. Tâyyûr Aztikâlî, *Hârâqat al-Asâr: 'Uthmân bin 'Affân* (IRCICA: Istanbul, 2007).

43 The duty of this office is to register every manuscript of the New Testament, be it a 2x3cm fragment or a lectionary. See B. Meisner, *The Tess of the New Testament*, pp. 206-63.
Regardless, the list above shows that many complete (and semi-complete) Mushafāhs have survived from Islam’s earliest days, and among them may well be ones predating ‘Uthmān’s Mushafāh.

Though certainly a great treasure containing a wealth of orthographic oddities, the Mushafāhs in Sa‘a‘ do not add anything new or substantial to the body of proof which already establishes the Qurān’s completion within the first decades of Islam.

7. Conclusion

Schacht, Wansbrough, Nöldeke, Hirschfeld, Jeffery, Blachère, Guillaume, Mingana, and Puin are not the only players on the field. All Orientalists must, to varying extents, approach the Qurān with duplicity if they are to distort it, whether by transmutation, deliberate mistranslation, willful ignorance, use of spurious references, or other means. Prof. J. Bellamy has composed a few articles to amend certain ‘scribal errors’ found in the text, and in this endeavor he is by no means a lone figure. The recent past has witnessed a rising chorus of Orientalists demanding a systematic revision of the Qurān. Hans Kung, a Roman Catholic theologian who found discourse with Islam to be at an impasse, advised Muslims in the late 1980s to admit to the element of human authorship in their Holy Book.

Likewise Kenneth Cragg, an Anglican bishop, urged Muslims to rethink the traditional Islamic concept of sūrah, “probably as a concession by Muslims in the current pluralist spirit of interfaith dialogue.” In a later piece entitled “The Historical Geography of the Qurān,” he proposed abrogating the Madani verses (with their political and legal emphasis) in favor of their Makkan counterparts, which are more focused on basic issues of monotheistic faith, signifying that political Islam deserves no shelter in a world of secular democracies and Roman Law. His abrogation, he ventured, can be imposed by appealing to the consensus of like-minded laymen and simply bypassing the opinion of Muslim scholars.

The Qurān states:

“We have revealed unto you the Remembrance [the Qurān], that you may explain to humanity that which has been revealed for them and in order that they may give thought.”

The Prophet will forever remain the only sanctioned expounder of the Holy Book, his summa a practical guide to its implementation and the reference point as to which exegetical threads are permissible and which are not. In seeking to divorce the two, let alone to divorce one half of the Qurān from the other, Orientalists thoroughly ignore the myriad rules which govern the interpretation of all laws and statutes, and which prevent even the majority of the learned from dipping their fingers into this business, to say nothing of the uninformed layman. Their theories imply that everyone is welcome to de-throne the commands of Allah even if meddling with secular state law remains firmly out of the question.

With Scriptural corruptions taken for granted as the norm, many scholars feel impelled to dip the Qurān into the same muddled cauldron without realizing that the ideal they wish to discredit, one of certainty and flawless preservation, can and really does exist. In this regard Hartmut Bobzin writes,

Christian polemics against the Koran or Islam as a whole is of much more interest for European ‘Geistgeschichte’ than for Islamic studies in the stricter sense. Many of the topics which were handed over again and again had nothing to do with real Islam.

He draws an analogy to the Guardi brothers who, in 18th century Italy, devised a series of ‘Turkish paintings’ by mimicking contemporary Turkish artists in a particular way.

Thus, ‘Oriental sujets’ as painted by the Guardis are mostly examples of their own imagination as to how the Orient must be conceived.

What the Guardis intended is not so different from the portraits that Orientalism paints of Islam. A small wonder then that so much of Orientalist research runs counter to Muslim faith, since its fantasy of how the East “must be conceived” is hatched in a distinctly political world.

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48 Ibad, i:81-92.
49 Qurān 16:44.