Paradoxically, these letter forms, and the independent *alif,* also resemble, in a more developed way, aspects of the script of the famous large-format architecturally decorated Qur‘an discovered in the Sar‘a Mosque cache and attributed to the Umayyad dynasty about 710-15 (Table 2). Three of these letter forms, the *qaf, alif,* and *karnalif,* are of a type which Déroche has categorized as style C.1a, and which he attributes, cautiously, to the second half of the eighth century. The square format of the folio is also an indication of a transitional type of manuscript. The majority of folios written in Hijazi scripts are of vertical format, whereas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2: Early Kufic letter forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caz. 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial ‘ayn/bayn</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lamalif/combination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A’af</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ninth-century codices with fully mature Kufic script tend to be quite strongly horizontal in format. Significantly, other Qur‘ans manuscripts which have this generally square format include the Sar‘a Umayyad Codex, carbon-dated to the late seventh century, but attributed by Borchmer to Umayyad Syria c. 710-15, and the Tashkent Qur‘an, which has been carbon-dated to c. 700. Another calligraphic feature is the use of absolutely equal spacing between letters, not just between the last letter of one word and the first of the next, but between every letter within a word that is not joined with a ligature. On the present folio the space is almost invariably 1 cm. There is very little variation, and it seems certain that the scribe’s intention was to space all the letters equally. This notion is supported by the fact that, if the whole word did not fit at the end of a line, the scribe split the word to keep the spacing even. As a result there is no spatial grouping of letters in words and no spatial differentiation between letters within a word and whole words. The same phenomenon is present on Umayyad epigraphic inscriptions in stone and mosaic, including the gold mosaic Qur‘anic inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock (completed 692; see fig. 1, page 11) and two milestones from the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik, one dated 705 (see fig. 2). It quickly became a standard feature of Qur‘ans written in Kufic script. Interestingly, this approach was also used by Byzantine scribes, particularly in royal manuscripts of the Gospels: the text pages of imperial, purple-dyed Bible codices made in Syria or Palestine during the sixth and early seventh centuries have defined text areas with equal spacing between all letters.

There is no vocalization on the present folio, and this may be a further indication of a relatively early date. The traditional account of the invention of the red-dot system of vocalization by the grammarian Abu‘l-Awad al-Du‘ali (d. 688) would indicate that it came into use during the reign of the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705). Even if this account is not wholly accurate, and the *scriptio plena* provided by vocalization developed more gradually, it is certain that the majority of codices in Hijazi scripts do not have red-dot vocalization, and the majority of codices in fully formed Kufic do. Thus, the absence of vocalization here, on a script that lies somewhere between Hijazi and Kufic, is another indication of a transitional phase.

The letter-pointing consists of dashes of the same brown ink as the main text, applied by placing the nib on the parchment, but not drawing it along the surface, i.e. the shape of the dashes shows the shape of the nib-end. The incidence of letter-pointing appears to follow a formal set of rules. It is not used on all letters that use it in modern Arabic, but it is used on those letters where necessary to differentiate them from others of the same form within the same word, or to make certain of grammatical aspects such as the conjugation of verbs. For example, in the word *kunnun* in the second line of the verso the *nun* is not marked, but the *a* is marked with two strokes above to differentiate it from the other letters of the same form (*nun* in this case) and therefore ensure the correct reading of the word. The system seems to be that, in a word with two letters of the same form, whichever letter comes first is not marked and the second is marked. However, there are exceptions. For example, in line 17 of the verso (verse 91) the word *bi‘azz* has the first *za* marked, but not the second, and in line 10 of the verso the final word of verse 88 – *unyhyu* – has no marks on either the *nun* or the *ba,* nor again on the *za.*

However, where a word has a prefix that uses the same letter form as a letter within the word proper, e.g. the *bi* of
bi-hafiz, this is not counted as two letter forms within the same word, and neither is marked. Presumably knowledge of Arabic grammar and of the text of the Qur'an was advanced enough by this date to assume that a reader would know not to mistake a prefix for a letter in the word proper. Generally speaking ya never seems to be marked. In the word yushayb in the third line of the verso, for instance, neither ya is marked, but both the shin and the ba are marked. With respect to correct grammar the application follows similar lines and is most frequently employed to differentiate persons in the conjugation of verbs, e.g. in the word nataraka in the fourth line of the verso both the nun and the ta are marked, presumably because grammatically it would be possible to mistake natrik (present tense first person plural of the verb taraka) for yatruk or tatruk.

The single and fifth verse divisions are marked with a short diagonal row of oblique dashes in the same brown ink as the main text. These are of a type often seen on early Kufic Qur'ans, including the Sana'a Umayyad Codex, the Tashkent Qur'an, and cat. 3 in this catalogue.

The decorative device that marks the tenth verse division is of square format with a narrow knotted border-band and an internal floral motif. It must have been drawn in brown ink first and then coloured, as the example on the verso has lost its colour and only the brown line drawing remains, whereas the example on the recto still retains its red pigment and infilling of brown ink, showing that the outer areas were coloured and the floral motif left in reserve. The design of this device relates to verse markers and sura heading devices on other Qur'ans which have been attributed to the early eighth century, including cat. 4 and the Tashkent Qur'an.

1 Another folio almost certainly from the same manuscript as the present example is in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad; see Munawwī 1972, fig. 45. An article on the textual aspects of this manuscript, entitled 'An Umayyad Fragment of the Qur'an', is being drafted for publication in the Journal of Qur'anic Studies by Dr Yasin Dutton.

2 (1. A Qur'an in the Dar al-Makhruṭa, Sana'a, discovered in the Sana'a Mosque cache, published by Bothmer (Bothmer 1967) and attributed by him to c. 710-15; see also Amsterdam 1999, cat. 36-41. Its leaves are almost all damaged around the edges, but even in this condition they measure approximately 43 x 43 cm. (2. A very large fragmentary Qur'an known as the Tashkent Qur'an, of which the leaves measure, uninformed, 54 x 69 cm; see Singapore 1997, p. 28; Déroche and Gladis 1999, no. 5, p. 20; Paris 2001, no. 14, p. 37; London 2004, no. 1. A very large codex in the Seyyidzade al-Husaini Shābina, Cairo; see Munawwī 1972, fig. 25. Its exact dimensions are not known, but the scale is similar to the Tashkent manuscript. 3. A fragment of a very large codex in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul; see Munawwī 1972, fig. 46. Its exact dimensions are not listed, but it is similar in scale to (2) and (3).)

3 Contrast with cat. 3.

4 See Déroche 1985, no. 9, pl. VII; Déroche 1992, cat. 3, pp. 32-33. The letter pair of fragments are dated by Déroche to the late eighth or early ninth century on the grounds that they are possibly a later, post-Hiiāzi 'veneerings of archaism'. The present author believes it more likely that they are, straightforwardly, products of the primary Hiiāzi styles of the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

5 Bothmer 1987; Amsterdam 1999, cat. 36-41.

6 See James 1980, no. 11, p. 14; Déroche 1983, pl. V; Kazzaz 1983, nos. 3, 4; 11-17; Singapore 1997, p. 26; Déroche and Noyes 2001. The exact statistics for the carbon-dating are as follows: 88% probability of a date between 640 and 705 CE; 99% probability of a date between 595 and 855 CE.

7 E.g. the 'Amatūr' Qur'an, dated before 875-76 CE, in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul; see Beninghaus et al. 2001, p. 75, fig. 118.

8 For the Sana'a Qur'an see Bothmer 1987; Amsterdam 1999, cat. 36-41; for the Tashkent Qur'an see Singapore 1997, p. 28; Déroche and Gladis 1999, no. 5, p. 20; Paris 2001, no. 14, p. 37; London 2004, no. 1. The exact statistics for the carbon-dating are as follows: 90% probability of a date between 640 and 705 CE; 99% probability of a date between 595 and 855 CE.

9 See Nuseibeh and Grabar 1946, pp. 94-95; Grohmann 1967, no. 1, pl. IV; Safadi 1978, p. 11.

10 E.g. the Rossano Gospels (Codex Parpurenus Rossanensis), the Codex Petropolitanus and the Vienna Genesis, all produced in Syria or Palestine in the sixth century CE; see Colognola 1998, no. 1, pp. 60-61; New York 1977, nos. 43, 44; Fingerson and Geisberger 2003, no. 1,2, pp. 42-53.


Qur’an leaf in Kufic script

Hijaz, Yemen or Egypt
Qur’anic text written c. 720-50 CE, vocalization and colour added c. 10th century
Sura 88 (Al-Ghashiya), vv. 22-26; Sura 89 (Al-Fāṣād), vv. 1-30

Folio from an Arabic manuscript written in Kufic script in brown ink on parchment with fourteen lines per page. Letter-pointing is restricted to a very few instances, all with two angled dashes to differentiate the letter ša. The vocalisation (probably added later – see below) is applied using red and green dots, with some pale pinkish dots which may be oxidized or faded brownish-yellow, occasional red nasūd symbols according the system of Khalil b. Ahmad al-Parāhidi, and further vocalization indicators in green. Original single verse divisions are marked with vertical rows of two or three dashes. There are later additions marking the verse divisions in red and green, with small șe-shaped motifs at the fifth verses and the word mdanλyn in a small hand in Kufic script in brown ink (see below for explanation). Tenth verse divisions are marked with square or rounded knot-marks outlined in brown ink decorated (probably later) in red, green and brownish-yellow. These three devices contain abjad letters in brown Kufic script to give the exact verse count. The sura heading of Sura 89 (Al-Fāṣād) is marked with a panel extending the whole width of the page. It is drawn in brown ink and the internal motifs are loosely vegetal and geometric. The central panel has been left blank (perhaps for the inclusion of a sura title) and the lower panel, also blank, has been filled with an inscription enumerating the verse, word and letter counts of the sura (see below for explanation).

The majority of the heading pane has been coloured in red, green and brownish-yellow.

This folio has many unusual and interesting features, some dating probably from the Umayyad period (661-750 CE) and some which cannot have been added until at least the late eighth century, and probably not before the tenth. It appears either that the leaf was written at such an early date that diacritic and orthographic markings were not yet in common use (perhaps 690-720 CE) and that coloured decoration within the sura heading was not commonplace, or that it was left unfinished at the original stage of production, with just the brown textual script and the outline design of the decorative features (the sura heading panel and the tenth verse markers) drawn in brown ink. All the colouring and certain other features seem to have been added by a scribe or scholar with considerable theological knowledge perhaps some two hundred years later. Analysing the various features and examining when they were applied is a useful exercise, for it increases our understanding not just of this folio, but more generally of the style and development of Qur’an manuscripts of the early period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminal</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A.I</th>
<th>B.I</th>
<th>B.II</th>
<th>C.I</th>
<th>C.II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahīm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lāmداد</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>A.I</th>
<th>Hīzā, A.I, C.II</th>
<th>B.I</th>
<th>B.II</th>
<th>C.I</th>
<th>C.II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close to</td>
<td>A.I</td>
<td>Hīzā, A.I, C.II</td>
<td>B.I</td>
<td>B.II</td>
<td>C.I</td>
<td>C.II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instances of Hīzā-style letters</th>
<th>Terminal</th>
<th>Terminal</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Terminal</th>
<th>Terminal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terminal̄</td>
<td>Terminal̄</td>
<td>Independent por</td>
<td>Independent por</td>
<td>Terminal por</td>
<td>Terminal por</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.M</td>
<td>A.M</td>
<td>A.M</td>
<td>A.M</td>
<td>A.M</td>
<td>A.M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Letter-form types in cat. 3
The irregularity and lack of uniformity of the script are notable. Several letters have widely varied forms within the twenty-six lines of this folio, even on adjacent words or lines. A few examples are worth noting, along with the categories of Déroche’s system to which they relate (see Table 3). There are several letter forms that are closer to Hijazi than to early Kufic or Kufic categories (for example, the terminal lam, which occasionally leans back in a mu‘aff style, and a few examples of the alef, the terminal nun and the terminal ya). In addition, the linear discipline (i.e. the imaginary ruled straight line that runs under each line of script) is not yet strict. Finally, there is little parallelism among the vertical letter-forms, some sloping forwards, some back, and some rising straight.

All these characteristics imply that the script was written at a time when the development of Kufic had not been fully realised. Hijazi is generally accepted as being the first Arabic script used to copy the Qur’an; it was used from the first to the seventh century, perhaps surviving into the early eighth. It is probable that the present example, with an erratic script containing elements associated with both Hijazi and Kufic and with relatively poor linear discipline, dates from a stage of calligraphic development between Hijazi and fully formed Kufic. That would place it probably in the late seventh or first decades of the eighth century.

The basic design of the sura heading, with a long lateral panel extending across the page and a stepped increase in height at the left end, the upper step of which fills the space left in that line after the final word of the previous sura, is a type which can be seen on several Qur’anic folios, all of which show archaic features and some of which have been generally accepted as dating from the Umayyad period. That this design type is early is supported by the existence of several other folios with related but even more primitive forms of sura heading panel, all of which have scripts of archaic type, with some features more in common with Hijazi.

The present leaf must have been executed in two distinct phases, approximately two hundred years apart. The first stage, probably in the mid Umayyad period, saw the writing of a) the reddish brown script of the main Qur’anic text; b) the vertical rows of dashes marking the verse divisions in the same ink; c) the abjad letter ka‘fat verse twenty; and d) the brown ink outline of the decorative features – that is, tenth verse markers and the sura heading. The brown ink of the outline of the tenth verse markers appears to be applied on top of the ‘three dashes’ verse marker, but this was probably a natural phasing of the original execution of the folio, for the scribe certainly left a larger space between words at these points than on single verse divisions, presumably to accommodate some form of decorative device. It is also noticeable that the device at verse 20 is slightly larger and more complex than those at verses 10 and 30 (even only in terms of the brown outline of the design, and disregarding the colour), and the verse 20 marker is also the one that contains an original abjad letter written in the same brown ink as the Qur’anic text.

We can tell from the verse count of Sura 89 (Al-Fajr) marked on this folio that the original verse numbering was organized according to a Hijazi tradition. It has thirty-two verses, which was the verse count according to the Medinan and Meccan traditions, and originally there was no verse marker after the word ‘ibādī in the final verse (the green dots at that point appear to be later additions). This does not give us a firm geographical origin, but the Hijazi tradition (whether Meccan or Medinan) was most often used in the early centuries of Islam in the Hijaz, Yemen and Egypt. There were two chronological phases to the Medinan tradition: the early Medinan phase, which developed in the second half of the Umayyad period; and the late Medinan phase, which developed in the early ‘Abbasid period. The Meccan tradition had developed in the first quarter of the eighth century. The verse count for Sura 89 (Al-Fajr) was the same for both Medinan traditions and for the Meccan tradition, but the scholar or scribe who annotated it had the advantage of being able to examine the whole codex, whereas here we are restricted to one folio. Thus it is likely that his indication of a Medinan rather than Meccan tradition is correct. The writing of the Qur’anic text and the marking of the rows of dashes for single verses are both original to the folio; the folio cannot therefore pre-date the development of the Meccan verse-numbering tradition, and probably does not pre-date the development of the first phase of the Medinan tradition. Based, therefore, on the evidence of the verse numbering, the original phase of this folio could be estimated at 720-75 CE. Within this timespan, the primitive nature of the script and the archaic form of the sura heading panel would indicate an earlier date, probably c. 720-50 CE.

It appears that the sura heading panel was originally not coloured, either intentionally or because it was unfinished. It is probable that the outline and the internal designs of this feature and the tenth verse markers were drawn in brown ink at the original time of production, but not coloured in, and
that the colour was added at the stage of the later additions.\textsuperscript{6} This is suggested for two reasons, first that the red and green pigments of the sura heading panel and the tenth verse divisions are exactly the same as those of the red dot vocalization and the green additional verse division marker at verses 31-32, implying contemporaneous application;\textsuperscript{7} secondly, the original design of the sura heading panel left a large blank space in the central area which was probably intended to contain the wording for a sura title, or perhaps further coloured decoration.\textsuperscript{8} The upper tier of the panel and the left and right ends were coloured in red and green, but the majority of the lowest strip was left blank and now contains a later inscription. Why should the lowest tier of the panel have been left blank? Surely not for the sura title, because there was a better space for this in the main central part of the panel. At least four examples of uncoloured sura heading panels of similar design to this are published, which show what the present one might have looked like before the later addition of the colour. Significantly, two of these folios also lack vocalization.\textsuperscript{9}

At a much later date, probably in the third century AH, several features were added to the original brown Qur'anic text verse markers and sura heading outline: the folio was in effect brought up to date. It was annotated using different coloured inks probably, judging by the type of information added, by a Qur'anic scholar or a professional Qur'anic scribe. The additions consist of a) all the coloured vocalization (the dots, the \\textit{tasb\={i}d} etc.); b) the small stylized \\textit{ka}\-shaped motifs in a greyish-brown ink that are positioned alongside the three vertical dashes at the fifth verse marks; c) the word \\textit{madani\={y}an} in tiny letters at the same locations; d) the vertical rows of red verse marker dots at the same points; e) the vertical rows of green verse marker dots in the final line of the verso; f) the small brown inscription written in a more cursive hand that has been squeezed into the lowest tier of the sura heading space. The wording of the later inscription in the sura heading panel is as follows:

"The chapter of the By the Dawn thirty and two [verses according to] the two Medinan [traditions] and thirty Kufan and twenty nine Basran the difference [between them] being four verses it was revealed at Mecca and it is one hundred and thirty seven words and it is five hundred and sixty one letters ...."

The later scholar or scribe has effectively annotated the
The Medinan Qur'an manuscript with an architectural frontispiece, estimated by Bothmer to date from c. 750-15 CE; [5] A manuscript in two principal fragments, divided between the Hasenbacher-Herzog collection in Jerusalem (inv. no. 5) and the Dar al-Makhzanat, Sana‘a (inv. 5-301)., described as second century AH, this also has a probably later sura title squeezed in unnaturally between the panel and the baseplate. For all these folios see, respectively, Kuwait 1985 (Minhajin Sana‘a‘s catalogue), nos 19, 35, 36, 40, 51, see also Bothmer 1997, Amsterdam 1999, nos. 39-41, 44; Khader 2001, pp. 49-55, and Déroche 1992, no. 17, p. 65.


I am indebted to Dr. Yasin Dutton for his guidance on the subject of verse numbering traditions and their development and usage.

Déroche states that his study of early Qur’an manuscripts indicates that in most cases the artist first drew an outline of the illumination and decorative devices. Déroche 1992, p. 22.

7. The pigments were viewed under 160, 80 and 100 magnification.

11. The different traditions of verse numbering are distinct from but related to the traditions of the different readings of the text, of which the classification into seven formal traditions is associated principally with the scholar Ibn Majahid (884-931 CE).

12. Several Qur’ans of the tenth century use both systems, the earliest published example being dated 292 AH (905 CE) (Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms. 1417; James 1980, no. 12, p. 26). But both the datable Qur’an of the ninth century still use only the coloured dots of the earlier tradition (e.g. the ‘Amar’i Qur’an, datable to before 262 AH/875-76 CE) Ertug in et al. 2001, no. 118, p. 75.)
Large Qur'an leaf in Kufic script

Near East or North Africa
8th century, probably Umayyad
Sura 4 (Al-Nisa'), vv. 123-30

Folio from an Arabic manuscript on parchment written in Kufic script with sixteen lines per page. There is no original letter-pointing. The letter-pointing now present, consisting of brown ink dashes, is a later addition. The vocalization consists of red and green dots. Single verse divisions are marked with a short row of three diagonal brown ink dashes. The fifth verse divisions are marked with a slightly larger letter alif drawn with a thin nib in brown ink and indented with decoration in brown and green. (From other published folios of the same manuscript we know that the tenth verses were marked with a knotted motif also decorated in brown and green.) The ink on the verso, which is the hair side, has worn and been re-inked at a later date.

FOLIO 52.4 x 39.1 cm
TEXT AREA 34 x 31.5 cm

This folio comes from a widely dispersed manuscript of the Qur'an that is notable for its singular script and for several archaic features. The script is characterized by a strong degree of horizontal stretching (maslaq), a very rounded form to the terminal nun that visually punctuates the page, and a relatively tightly spaced layout, both in terms of the number of words and letters per line and in terms of the number of lines per page. There are other idiosyncrasies of the script, such as the distinctive medial faq'a and 'ayn that sit above the line of script, attached by a very thin ligature to the base line. All these have led François Déroche to assign the manuscript a script category all of its own.

Déroche links the style to two inscriptions of the eighth century, one dated 100 AH/718-19 CE, the other dated 160 AH/776-77 CE. The terminal forms of the 'ayn and ghayza in the present script are notable for their extended tail that loops back below the line further than in other styles. However, there are two manuscripts in which the terminal 'ayn/gayn form has at least some resemblance to the present example. One is a large fragment of eighty-one folios written in Hijazi script probably dating from c. 700 CE, and the other is a monumental copy of the Qur'an discovered in the Sana'a Mosque cache and attributed to the Umayyad dynasty c. 710-15 CE. A visual comparison of these three forms is useful (Table 4).

Other features of cat. 4 that might be associated with early scripts include the lack of original letter-pointing. The letter-pointing now present is almost certainly a later addition, as it is applied in a much more crude and irregular manner than the script, and on the whole uses a darker ink. However, an examination of this ink under x60 and x100 magnification shows there to be a similar amount of drying and cracking as on the main script. It is likely therefore that the letter-pointing was applied within perhaps a century or two of the main script. If this manuscript does date from the eighth century then (as in cat. 3) the letter-pointing might have been added in the tenth century.

The single verse dividers consist of a row of three angled dashes applied in brown ink. This is a form that appears mostly on Hijazi and early Kufic material, later examples more often employing a small gold rosette or roundel between verses. Other manuscripts and leaves on which a row of angled dashes is used for verse markers include several fragments in Hijazi script, including the famous monumental Qur'an found in the Sana'a Mosque cache and dated by Bothmer to about 710-15 CE, another fragment from Sana'a also attributed to the eighth century, and several others probably from the eighth century (including cat. 2).

In a similar vein, the fifth verse markers on this Qur'an leaf are unusual, consisting of a large letter alif drawn in brown ink and segmentally internally in brown and green (the example on the present folio is faded, but other folios from this manuscript have retained the brown and green pigments). The most common device for marking the fifth verses, if indeed there was any special device, was a Kufic letter ha in gold, representing the number five in the abjad system. On some early Qur'ans, such as the monumental codex known as the Tashkent Qur'an, which has been carbon-dated to c. 700 CE, the fifth verse markers appear as small devices of circular or square format decorated predominantly in red, green and brown.

Interestingly, the proportion of the width to height of the
text area of cat. 4 is 1.33 (3:4 as a ratio). This proportion is known as the rectangle of Pythagoras, made up of two right-angles triangles. The study of the use of geometric forms and classical proportions in early Qur’ans (as well as early Islamic architecture) is an area of growing interest. Déroche mentions that several Qur’anic folios in the Khalili Collection are organized along principles of Pythagorean rectangles and triangles, and he indicates that the Pythagorean proportion 1.33 was more often used on Qur’ans that are thought to be relatively early, perhaps dating from the eighth century CE.4

The sura heading panels of the present Qur’an also exhibit early features. The general design has a decorated horizontal panel as the main feature, with a palmette extending into the margin on the outer end and a similar root or base palmette at the inner edge. Neither the end palmettes nor the lateral panel shows any use of gold, the design being coloured with brown and green on reserved areas, with some use of red. It appears that the sura titles (see fig. 3), written in red Kufic script, were a subordinate aspect of the design as they were squeezed in above or below the main panel in a slightly smaller script. However, the calligraphic style of the red lettering is exactly the same as the brown script of the main text, and was probably written by the same original scribe. Another Qur’anic fragment in a Kufic script that Déroche has dated to the late seventh or early eighth century has a similar instance of the sura title squeezed in red ink.5 In later Kufic Qur’ans of the ninth and early tenth century the sura headings were more often designed with the sura title as the main feature, often written in gold, with a palmette extending into the margin.6

One further notable feature of the decorated panels of this Qur’an, and a further pointer to its early date, is the pair of square devices with knotted borders and an internal quatrefoil floral motif visible at the right side of the illustration above. This exact design also appears as the tenth-verse marker of cat. 2, the large (probably) Umayyad folio with primitive Kufic script.7

1 Déroche 1992, no. 66, p. 123.
2 Style F; see ibid., pp. 46-47.
3 Ibid., p. 42.
4 Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, inv. no. E-20; see Paris 1985, no. 1, pp. 112-13; Dar al-Ma’had, Sana’a, inv. no. 20-33; see Bothmer 1987, Amsterdam 1999, nos. 36-41.
6 The statistics for the carbon-dating are: 68% probability of a date between 640 and 705 CE, 95% probability of a date between 595 and 855 CE. See Fendall 2003, no. 3; Christie’s 1999, lot 225.
7 Taken as an average of the present folio and three other published folios.
8 The text area of cat. 4 has the same proportions.
9 Déroche 1992, p. 20-21. He indicates that proportions of 1.5 (2:3) and 2 (1:2) are used on later Qur’an. Related ideas are being explored further by Alain Fouad George in a PhD thesis presented to Oxford University. For a geometric and proportional analysis of an early Mamluk Qur’an see Fraser 2005.
10 Other sura headings from this Qur’an are illustrated in Christie’s, 15 October 1996, lot 47, and Sotheby’s, 29 April 1996, lot 2 (here fig. 3).
11 Illustrated in Déroche 1983, no. 19, p. 68, pl. IV, A. The definition of the calligraphic style of that folio is Bbb, which Déroche links to inscriptions of the late seventh and early eighth centuries; see Déroche 1992, p. 35.
12 The ‘Amurat’ Qur’an, datable to before 875-76 CE, uses this style; see Déroche 1983; so does a manuscript in similar calligraphic style in Qayrawan, dated 907-09 CE; see Eininghausen et al. 2001.
الله تعالى في 말씀ه تعالى: لَوْ تَنْفِقَ مُلْظمًا مِّنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مِنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مَأْوَىٰ بَعْضٌ مِّنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مَأْوَىٰ بَعْضٌ مِّنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مَأْوَىٰ بَعْضٌ مِّنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مَأْوَىٰ بَعْضٌ مِّنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مَأْوَىٰ بَعْضٌ مِّنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مَأْوَىٰ بَعْضٌ مِّنْ فَاطِرِ الْعَالَمِ مَأْوَىٰ
Large Qur'an leaf in gold Kufic script

Near East or North Africa
Late 8th-early 9th century
Sura 38 (Sad), vv. 4-22

Folio from an Arabic manuscript on paper written in gold Kufic script on parchment with fifteen lines per page. There are very few examples of original letter-pointing; these are very thin and faint and are applied in the same pale brown ink as the brown outline of the gold script — they appear to have been applied with the same nib. The dark, visually obvious letter-pointing is a later addition. The vocalization is applied using red and blue dots. Each individual verse division is marked with a diagonal row of gold dashes, each outlined in brown, placed so close together as to appear as a single diagonal line. Fifth verse divisions are marked with a stylized letter لā in gold Kufic script within a gold rounded folio. Both verse divisions are marked with an illuminated square device containing an abjad letter giving the exact verse count. The text area is surrounded by a band of plait motifs drawn in brown ink and illuminated in gold, red, green and blue on reserved ground. The corners and mid-points of the bands have square knotted motifs in gold and a stylized vegetal motif extends into the margin from the mid-point of the outer band.

FOLIO 27.4 × 36.8 cm
TEXT AREA 18.6 × 37.5 cm
BORDERED AREA 22.5 × 30 cm

This magnificent folio is from the second volume of a well-known Qur'an written entirely in gold script and with every page surrounded by an illuminated border. The entirety of the first volume and most of the second volume are in the Nuruosmaniye Library in Istanbul, while individual leaves from the second volume are found in major collections in Europe and the United States.¹

The technique of chryography (writing in gold) differs from that of ordinary calligraphy in brown ink. Instead of dipping the nib of the stylus into ink and drawing it across the page to form the letters, the chryographer first wrote the text in a liquid glue. Next the gold was applied on to the glue, automatically assuming the basic calligraphic form of the glue 'script'. As this would have left the script with a slight lack of definition and clarity, the letters were outlined and internally delineated in brown ink.

This folio is from one of only a handful of Qur'ans written in gold Kufic script.² The manuscript from which it came, along with the famous Blue Qur'an (see cat. 10), which is of similar dimensions, is much the largest of this group of Qur'ans. It is characterized by its richness and luxury, and must have been an extremely costly undertaking. It is almost inconceivable that it was commissioned by anyone lower in rank and wealth than a prince or powerful regional governor, and it is quite possible that it was a caliphal commission.

There was an early Islamic precedent for the writing of the Holy Word in gold. The tenth-century scholar Ibn al-Nadim, author of the Kitāb al-Fihrist, tells us that in the early eighth century "the first person to write copies of the Qur'an at the very beginning and to be praised for the beauty of his script was Khalid b. Abīl-Hayyaj [...] who composed the inscription on the qibla of the Mosque of the Prophet [...] in gold, from 'By the sun and its morning light' to the end of the Qur'an.['] It is also related that 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz[,] said, 'I wish you to transcribe a copy of the Qur'an for me on the same lines[, and he made him a copy, taking great pains about it. 'Umar began to leaf through it and to show his appreciation, but he found the price too high and returned it to him'.³

In addition to the obvious luxury aspects of the manuscript, there are several interesting features worth noting. The original letter-pointing is applied using thin brown dashes, of the same ink as the outline of the script. There are also sporadic additional instances of letter-pointing in black ink in a coarser hand, which appear to be later additions. The script has been identified as type Dvr of Déroche's categorization,⁴ but many letter forms are closer to type Dc. Certainly the D category offers generally the closest comparison.

The individual verses are marked by a diagonal row of three gold dashes, placed so close together that they appear almost as a single stroke. This form of verse marker is relatively archaic, and seems to have been used mostly on early Qur'anic manuscripts, several in calligraphic styles such as Hijazi that indicate an Umayyad origin. The row of
dashes on the present leaf is much neater and more carefully applied than these very early examples, but the form itself nevertheless seems to be an early one. The majority of Qur'ān manuscripts written in what might be termed a mature Kufic script employ small gold roundels, illuminated rosettes or clusters of gold dots between verses. The tenth verse markers use the abjad system to record the exact verse count. Sadly, no folios have been published that show a sixteenth verse, from which we would be able to deduce whether the eastern or western abjad system was being used, and hence get some approximate indication as to the geographic origin of the manuscript.

An examination of the first volume of this manuscript reveals that the scribe demarcated several additional textual divisions. Many early Qur’āns had markers for single, fifth and tenth verses, suras, and sometimes juz' and hizb divisions. Some manuscripts also had markers (either decorative devices or explanatory words) for divisions of sevenths. The manuscript presently under discussion has marginal markers, in the form of explanatory words written in gold Kufic script, for fifths, sevenths, seventeens and tenths, as well as a more usual thirtieths (juz', pl. ajza'). However, these extra divisions are not always consistently noted, some being omitted for no apparent reason.

The sura titles are written in exactly the same script as the main body of the text and at exactly the same scale. No extra space has been left for a sura heading panel, so the decorative panel that has been drawn round the wording of the title is relatively small and tightly fitted to the space. It consists of repeating trefoil devices (vaguely resembling a floret of broccoli or cauliflower) in reserve on a green or orange ground.

The first volume, which is exactly half the Qur'ān, numbers 268 folios. Thus the whole codex must have contained around 416 folios. The opening of the first volume has three double pages of illumination surrounding the opening text, and a series of illuminated tables containing Arabic letters in square compartments. The scribe has used a relatively tightly spaced style, with fifteen lines of script per page and several words on each line. The visual result is a block of gold on a pure white ground. The sense of a text ‘block’ is reinforced by the use of the border band to surround the text on every page, further delineating its edges. It is as if the border band provided a kind of sacred cordon sanitaire round the text, marking it out as an area of holiness, a calligraphic haram. The dimensions of the text block are also worth noting. Measured from the outer edge of the border band, the dimensions are 22.5 cm high and exactly 30 cm across. This gives a ratio of exactly 3:4, or 1.33 recurring expressed as a quotient. This proportion is known as the rectangle of Pythagoras, made up of two right-angles triangles. In our case the two sides of the rectangle are 22.5 cm and 30 cm, and the length of the hypotenuse is exactly 37.5 cm. Thus the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the square of the other two sides.

The study of the use of geometric forms and classical proportions in early Qur’āns (as well as early Islamic architecture) is an area of growing interest. Deroche mentions that several Qur’ān folios in the Khalili Collection are organised along principles of a Pythagorean rectangles and triangles, and he indicates that the Pythagorean proportion 1:1.33 recurring was more often used on Qur’āns that are thought to be relatively early, perhaps dating from the second half of the eighth century CE. An eighth-century date for the present folio would accord with the slightly archaic single verse markers noted above, but would be an early example of the ‘D’ styles of Kufic script, the majority of which date from the second half of the ninth century.

Another feature of the Gold Qur’ān that can be associated with early manuscripts of the Qur’ān is the presence of the continuous border-band surrounding the text on every page. Many Qur’āns in Kufic script have partial border-bands framing the text on particular pages, for instance where a juz’ division or sura heading falls, and these range in date from the early eighth century to the tenth, but only one other published manuscript has the
border band on every page. This is a fragmentary codex discovered in the Sana'a Mosque cache, dated by Bothmer to the eighth century.14

The design of the marginal palmette that extends from the border band on every page of the present Qur'an is interesting and worth examining. The base of this leaf is flanked by two downward-curving motifs in green. Their form is essentially foliate, but also resembles the winged motifs, borrowed from Sasanian art, seen in much early Islamic art from the Umayyad period onwards. The upper part of these foliate motifs spreads laterally, forming a base from which 'grow' several essentially vegetal forms, which Déroche has called "golden pine cones" and "pomegranates."15 They are arranged roughly in two registers. The three larger motifs in the lower register do resemble pine cones, but they also echo the shape of a candle flame, and the smaller two in the lower register and all the motifs in the upper register do resemble stylized pomegranates, but they also resemble miniature glass mosque lamps.16 The resemblance between these forms - pine cone and candle, and pomegranate and mosque lamp - is convenient, and has probably been consciously exploited by the illuminator, who has chosen to mix the symbolism of trees with that of light and lamps, all of which are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an, to produce a kind of tree of light. This combination of symbolism is explicit in Sura 24 (Al-Nur - the Chapter of Light), v. 35:

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. [This lamp is] kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, the oil of which would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah guideth unto His light whom He will ...."17

1 An inventory records the first volume still in Istanbul in 1756, but it was in the United States by 1904, when it was acquired by Robert Garrett, a keen collector and bibliophile. It is not known how the volume arrived in the United States. Robert Garrett donated the manuscript to Princeton University, where it remained until 1942. In 1942 Princeton sold it to Robert's brother John Work Garrett. When John Work Garrett died a few months later, he bequeathed the manuscript, along with approximately 30,000 other rare books, to the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. In 2000 the manuscript was returned to the Nuristanian Library as a gift by the Johns Hopkins University to the Republic of Turkey, rejoicing the second volume, which had remained in Istanbul. The first volume is complete, whereas the second has several lacunae. The majority of the folios in the second volume have Ottoman-period catchwords written on the verso, probably added during a restoration or binding process. However, several of these detached folios, including cat. 5, do not have these catchwords, implying that they were separated from their host volume beforehand (for other examples of this, see Déroche 1993, p. 91). Single leaves or bifolia from the manuscript are to be found in collections including those of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the David Collection, Copenhagen, and the Nasser D. Khalili Collection, London. For the latter see Folsach 2001, p. 55; Déroche 1993, no. 41, pp. 90-91. The five folios in the Khalili Collection were also exhibited in the exhibition Heaven on Earth: Art from Islamic Lands at the Courtauld Institute in 2004; see London 2004, cat. 3, pp. 34-34.

2 Two others written in Kufic script on white parchment are published in Paris 1982, nos. 337 (ten lines per page, 18 × 26 cm) and 346-48 (five lines per page, 15 × 20.5 cm).

3 The phrase 'By the sun and its morning light' is Sura 91 (Al-Shams), v. 1.

4 Umayyad Caliph, reigned 717-20 CE.

5 Fihrist, I, p. 11, and Stanley 1995, p. 7. This quotation is interesting not just for the light it sheds on the copying of the Qur'an in gold in epigraphic and calligraphic form, but for the fact that it implies that Khalid b. Abii-l-Hayyay was being asked to be paid for the work he had done. Despite that fact that he was asked (ordered?) to carry out this commission by the Caliph, he seems to have produced the manuscript on a speculative basis and then tried to sell it to 'Umar. This is surprising to say the least.


7 See the line drawings and discussions in Déroche 1984, p. 27, and Déroche 1992, pp. 21-23.

8 Déroche 1992, pp. 21-23; see also here cat. 8, 13, 14.

9 The famous Blue Qur'an (see cat. 10), for instance, was actually physically divided into sevenths and bound in seven volumes; see Stanley 1995, p. 10.

10 The text area of cat. 4 has the same proportions.

11 Déroche 1992, pp. 20-21. He indicates that proportions of 1:5 (2:3) and 2:1 (2:2) are used on later Qur'ans. Related ideas are being explored further by Alain Fovad George in a PhD thesis presented to Oxford University. A geometric analysis of an early Mamluk Qur'an is given in Fraser 2003.


13 The earliest is the well-known monumental manuscript with an architectural frontispiece discovered in Sana'a (see Bothmer 1987 and Amsterdam 1999, nos. 36-41). For a later example see James 1980, no. 7, p. 20, and Sotheby's 2000, lot 32. A continuous ruled frame round the text on a manuscript in the Khalili Collection, inv. no. QUR106, is a later addition. Déroche 1992, no. 59, pp. 112-13.


16 That mosque lamps of that form were known in the early Islamic period is attested by their representation on the architectural frontispiece of the large Umayyad Qur'an discovered in the Sana'a Mosque cache; see Bothmer 1987, Amsterdam 1999, no. 36.

17 Translation by M. Pickthall.
6 Two large Qur’an leaves in Kufic script

Near East or North Africa
About 850-950 CE
Folio A: Sura 11 (Hud), vv. 17-41
Folio B: Sura 12 (Yosif), vv. 29-54

Two large folios from an Arabic manuscript written in Kufic script in brown ink on parchment with eighteen lines per page. There is no letter-pointing. The vocalization employs an extended system in which red and green dots provide fatha, kahra and damma, and in addition the medial long alif is marked with a vertical red line (but not always where needed) and a horizontal green line marks waaw tashdid is sometimes a red circumflex and occasionally a red symbol close to the modern tashdid mark (like a tiny letter w), but often is not marked at all. There are no single or fifth verse divisions. Tenth verse divisions are marked with a simple red circle.

FOLIO 36.7 x 54 cm
TEXT AREA 31 x 41 cm

Although at first glance the script of these remarkably large folios has a slightly primitive feel to it, this probably does not indicate a particularly early date. On close examination of the letter forms it is apparent that the basic graphic elements are closest to styles D1-D2 of Déroche’s categorization, scripts mostly of the late ninth to early tenth century CE, while the alif and terminal qaf are closest to style C1. There are one or two calligraphic idiosyncrasies, such as one instance of a terminal min that has a thin, drooping tail (v. 34r, line 9, final word). The folio is unusually large, but the text area is well filled with eighteen lines of quite tightly spaced script. Furthermore, there is almost no use of masbq (horizontal stretching of letters or ligatures), and no artistically inspired non-functional aspects of the script, except perhaps the terminal ya, which is enlarged and extended slightly beyond its functionally necessary form.

The vocalization is similar to that of cat. 12, but has here been applied in a very idiosyncratic way. Not every instance, for example, of a tashdid has the relevant marker, and this is the same for all the vocalization symbols.

The fact that there are no markers between verses is not necessarily an archaic feature. Even folios written in the Hijazi scripts, generally though to be the earliest group of scripts, had some form of simple demarcation between verses, mostly a vertical, horizontal or diagonal row of brown ink dashes. Most of the Qur’an leaves that employ scripts of type D have more elaborate verse markers consisting of small gold rosettes or triangular clusters of gold or coloured dots. In this case there are no markers for individual verses, and some instances of tenth verses marked merely with a simple red circle, in this case verse 20 of Sura 11 (Hud) on folio A and verse 50 of Sura 12 (Yosif) on folio B.

On line fifteen of the verso of folio A (v. 39), the scribe omitted the final word yu’zaha, but realised his mistake straightaway and added it in small letters above the final ba of the previous word in the same brown ink as the rest of the text. Then, at the beginning of the next line he mistakenly included the word min, which he then partially erased, presumably at the same time. In three places on the recto of folio A the original scribe omitted words from the text which were added later in the same red ink as the vocalization dots.
لا يرجع ما لسائد في السحر في المجال، فما لم يضر ممناً ما لم يكن له صفاء محذراً، بل ينحى في سباقه، خاتاً ما لسياج، فأياً ما ولد، أن يكون له منه، فإنه محذراً، ومثله: ما توهم مداوت ولا وهم مداوم، وهم ما تكون، وهم ما يكون، هل أدركهم كاذباً، لما وضعوا له الجهم، ولما اتجهوا به الجهم، استظلوا به الجهم، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأفراء يا نجاح، لسأف‌
These are line 10, rabbāhum, line 11, wa’t basiru, line 15, amthalna.

The use of red ink written in a different, non-Kufic, hand to correct these latter three mistakes implies that they were corrected at a different stage of production from the brown Kufic correction mentioned above.

All these aspects would point to this folio and the manuscript from which it came having been a more functional production of the late ninth century. Like cat. 12 it was probably a Qurʾan of which the primary role was scholarly rather than artistic, essentially a working copy of the Qurʾan rather than a show copy. It may have been made for a mosque or madrasa, the extra vocalization marks being included as aids to reading, teaching or exegesis.

Furthermore, these features suggest that the script, vocalization and red corrections might have been applied at different, though probably temporally close, stages. The brown script may have been the work of a professional scribe, while the red vocalization and corrections would have been completed by the customer imam or shaykhs on receipt of the codex. Perhaps it could have been the case that the patron wanted a copy of the Qurʾan with just the basic consonantal script, on to which he could then add the vocalization and certain other annotations according to his own needs. He might have instructed a professional scribe, perhaps in a commercial scriptorium or in that of the mosque or madrasa, then have added the vocalization and variant words himself. It may be that this was a common system during the period, and there are several other Qurʾan manuscripts in Kufic script which have a similar system of vocalization and a general style corresponding to the present folios, not so much in terms of the exact letter-forms, but rather in their script’s lack of artistic ambition, tight spacing of words on the line and lines on the page, and functional feel.1

1 Cf. cat. 13, 14.
2 Compare, for instance, the number of verses of the Qurʾan contained in this folio, i.e. 25, with the number in other folios which use the D group of scripts: cat. 9 has just over one verse, and cat. 14 has seven.
5 Contrast the visual and aesthetic impact of this folio with cat. 7, 8, 9.
6 As is implied by Stanley when he discusses another folio from this Qurʾan: Stanley 1995, no. 2.
7 Cat. 12; a folio in the National Library in Tunis (see Paris 1982, no. 354); a folio published by Bernard Quaritch Ltd in 1993, see Stanley 1995, no. 1; Christie’s, 14 October 1997, lots 38 and 41; Sotheby’s, 22 April 1999, lot 2; and perhaps a second folio in the National Library in Tunis (Paris 1982, no. 345; Linge and Safadi 1976, no. 31).
لا يمكن قراءة النص العربي من الصورة.
Large illuminated Qur’an bifolium in Kufic script

North Africa or Near East
Late 9th century
Sura 2 (Al-Baqara), vv. 156, 159-220

Bifolium in Arabic in dark brown ink on parchment with seven lines of script per page. There is no original letter-pointing and the vocalization consists of red, yellow and green dots. Single verse divisions are marked with triangular arrangements of gold dots, and tenth verse divisions are marked with roundels in red and gold containing the exact verse count in gold Kufic script.

FOLIO 27.2 × 36.2 cm
TEXT AREA 14.3 × 23.5 cm

The script of this large bifolium is very close to that of the well-known Amajur Qur’an, a manuscript on parchment given as a waqf (endowment) to a mosque in Tyre by the ‘Abbasid governor of Damascus, Amajur, in 875-76 CE. The Amajur Qur’an has only three lines of script per page, while here there are seven. However, the individual letter-forms are unmistakably similar. A dating for the present bifolium in the second half of the ninth century is further supported by several other Qur’ans written in a similar script which are either dated or have dated waqf inscriptions ranging from 847 to 911 CE.²

It is perhaps possible to define this style of script as the mature ‘Abbasid Kufic (see also the scripts used on the present cat. 8, 9 and 11).³ It seems to occur approximately a century after the dynasty came to power, and lasts for nearly another century before innovations, such as elements of so-called Eastern Kufic, start to creep in. Its style can be characterized as follows - a well-executed, elegant script, with strong horizontal stretching (marshq) of letters and ligatures, and vertical letter-forms which provide a visual balance to the horizontal stretching, but are not yet in themselves a focus of emphasis (contrast this to the present cat. 14); a relatively wide and even spacing of the letters along the lines and of the lines on the page (often five or seven lines per page, sometimes three, and even in cases of nine or eleven lines per page the spacing is in proportion to the smaller script and still provides a feeling of spaciousness); a typical horizontal format for the text area and page; few or no original letter-points; a regular visual rhythm; sura headings, where present, of which the main
feature is often simply the title written in gold Kufic with an adjacent illuminated palmette, or sometimes the title in reserve on a panel of predominantly gold illumination. There seems to be an emphasis on the graphic qualities and visual impact of the script itself, and the decoration of the sura headings is simplified to fit in with this aesthetic. The notion that this was an intentional artistic approach is supported by the absence of original letter-pointing on this and other scripts of this type. Where present, they are often very thin, faint nib touches, designed to be used for textual accuracy where absolutely necessary, but almost invisible unless closely inspected. (The absence of letter-pointing in this case should not be confused with the quite separate and unrelated absence, or at least random application, of letter-pointing on early manuscripts in Hijazi script, which was due to the relatively primitive state of calligraphic and orthographic development in the seventh and early eighth century.) In the present case letter-pointing had been known and used for well over a century, but seems to have been intentionally omitted in many scripts of this type. These ‘mature’ Kufic scripts have an austere beauty which seems to emphasize the power and significance of the text, underlining the centrality and iconic status of the word of the Qur’an. This is further enhanced by the slight abstraction of some letters through the use of ruqā’.

Two other folios from this manuscript are in the Museum of Islamic Arts, Qayrawan.

1 For a photograph of the Amalur Qur’an see Etinghausen et al. 2001, fig. 118, p. 75. For a clear description and visual depiction of this script, which Déroche describes as style D3, see Déroche 1992, pp. 43-45.
2 See Déroche 1992, pp. 36-37.
3 This style would equate to Déroche’s group D styles (D1, D1a, D1b, D2, D3, D4 and D5a, but not D4b or c); see Déroche 1992, pp. 44-45.
4 For sura headings of this type see Paris 1832, nos. 325, 330, 334, 339, 351, 352; also Lings 1976, nos. 7, 8.
5 See also cat. 8 and 11; the Amalur Qur’an, mentioned above, a Qur’an in the Buxton Museum, Tilman, Ms. 42/89 (see Lings 1976, no. 5), and several Qur’ans in Tunis (Paris 1982, nos. 325, 328, 329, 332, 333, 335, 339).