Notes

Introduction

2. Readers are referred to Déroche’s publication (1989) for further detail.
3. See page 31. De Sacy’s original essay was republished in Déroche and Noja Noseda 1998.
4. Amari’s descriptions were eventually published as part of De Slane’s catalogue (1883-95), without carrying the name of their author (Déroche 1990: 210). His essay entitled Bibliographie primitive du Coran, which deals with the history of the Qur’anic text, appears in Déroche and Noja Noseda 2001.
5. An exhibition catalogue of manuscripts from Gotha has recently been published (Nebes et al. 1997). The library’s present name is Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha.
7. Ahlwardt 1887: 162-39. This collection represents the basis of the holdings at the Staatliche Bibliothek zu Berlin.
10. The figure of 210,000 folios was given in Déroche 1990: 1: 59. Most of them are now housed at the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art (TIEM) under the label ‘Ile Esrâîl’ (‘Damascus papers’, heretofore abbreviated as ‘DE’), which makes this institution the largest repository of early Qur’anic leaves in the world. Some of the finest fragments from Damascus also appear to have been transferred to the Topkapi Saray.
11. Moritz 1905. This collection, which is presently held at Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, has hardly come to public attention since.
12. See Marçais and Poinssot 1948 (bindings); Paris 1982: Cats. 317-60 (manuscripts). This collection is now primarily housed at the Musée des Arts Islamiques in Kairouan, with some specimens also at the Musée National du Bardo in Tunis and the Musée des Arts Islamiques in Monastir (Rammah 1997: 136-7).
13. This issue has been discussed in detail by Déroche (1988: 213–17, 221–2). On the broader historiographical debate, see Humphreys 1991: ch. 3 (with further references).
16. The estimates for the number of fragments are by Ursula Dreibholz (ibid.: 299; 2003: 19). Among the otber experts involved in the conservation effort were Albrecht Notth, Gerd-Rüdiger Puin and Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer. This collection, like many others, still awaits to be comprehensively published. Among the existing publications are Kuwait 1985; Von Bothmer 1987a and 1987b; Dreibholz 1991, 1997 and 2003; Puin 1996; Fizovsky 1999: Cats. 35–53. Another major but understudied collection is also known to exist at the sanctuary of the Imams Riya, in Mashhad (Iran) – for a brief overview, see Roper 1991: 41, 482.
18. The partial inadequacy of the term ‘Hijazi’ will become clear in Chapter 1. ‘Rufic’ contains a potentially misleading reference to the city of Kufa, so Déroche (1992: 34) has suggested replacing it with ‘Abbasid.’ However, as he himself recognized, this term is ‘not entirely accurate’, since some manuscripts in this category must in fact be Umayyad. Until this distinction becomes more explicit, a change of terminology seems premature. ‘Rufic’ also has the advantage of being widely understood, having been in use since the medieval period.
19. See Appendix.
20. ‘Carefully constructed as they are … such detailed classifications have not yet provided a viable framework for analysis of Qur’ans from the earliest period’ (Whelan 1996: 113). While the thoroughness and meticulous care of his approach are indeed admirable, the absence of a cultural backdrop, which in the case of calligraphy is quite elaborate, casts some doubts on his detailed classifications and formalist schemes. At best, such ahistorical approach may be convenient for purposes of taxonomy and classification, but it falls far too short when one attempts to deal with problems of change and transformation in calligraphic styles (Talbawu 1991: 120).
21. See George 2003. The use of the Golden Ratio, which I had assumed at that stage, proved to be more problematic than initially anticipated (cf. George 2007: 85–6).

Chapter One: Looking for the Origins

2. Ibid.: 36. In linguistic terms, there is some disagreement as to whether Old

Arabic belongs to the Ancient North Arabian family or represents a distinct linguistic strain, albeit very close to ANA (as asserted by Macdonald).

3. As inscriptions in Ancient North Arabian scripts are unusual, it is difficult to determine when they fell out of usage. Their lack of Christian phraseology, however, would suggest a life span not extending far beyond the fourth century (personal communication from R. Hoyland).

4. See Gruendl 1993. A Syriac origin of the Arabic alphabet has been defended by a minority of specialists (see the references in Robin 2006: 327, n. 24); but as new inscriptions are gradually discovered, the intermediary phases between Nabataean and Arabic are becoming better documented (e.g. Hoyland 2008: 60–2).

5. It has been questioned, in the past, whether the Arabic text at Zabud was indeed written in 512, as the date is given in the Greek and Syriac parts of the inscription. However, detailed observations by Briquel-Chazommet, Feisal and Robin have confirmed that it was carved with the rest of the text in 512 (Robin 2006: 356–7).

6. See for example Hoyland 2008: Figs. 8–9 (inscriptions); and in Yadun et al. 2002 (paper), P. Yadun 2, 3 (both dated c. 6198) and P. Yadun 6 (c. 119).


10. As documented by Robin (2006: 327–8). Readers are referred to his publication for further detail and references.

11. Ibid.: 329–30. On the date of the inscription, see note 5.


19. See King 1997 (with further references). Bêt Qatrây included al-Bahrâyin and al-Qusay; Bêt Mazinây had its main centre at første in modern Oman.


22. Thus Ibn Fârû (d. 1004): ‘It is said that the first person to write in Arabic and Syriac and all scripts was Adam, peace be upon him, three hundred
years before his death, he wrote it in clay and baked it. So when the earth was flooded, every nation found a script and wrote it in it, and Ismaa'el, peace be upon him, mastered Arabic' (Ibn Fàris 1910: 7; see also Ibn 'Abd Rabbih 1983: IV, 239; Jahshyari 1938: 1; Sulí 1994: 17; Nadîm 1971: 7, 8; Andalusi 1991: 3–4). Another legend also has the alphabet invented by people carrying the names of its letters: āhjad, Hawaz, and so on (c.g. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih 1983: ibid.).

23. According to Yaqûq (1906: II, 235), Barqa is the name of a place near Hijra. This is probably the correct reading of the word, which is given as ‘Barqâ’ by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih and ‘Munqâ’ in Murgotten’s translation of Baladhuri’s text. Nadim and Qalqashandi also say that the three men, who were from ‘Barqan, a tribe from Ta’ayyi’, went to Anbar and modelled the alphabet there (references below).


26. Ibid. (see also the very abbreviated version in Sulí 1994: 18).

27. Nadîm 1971: 7–8. In this edition of the Fihrist (based, for this part of the book, on an early manuscript, CII, 3515), the names are given as ‘Murunjeq’ by Ibn Muraq, Aslam ibn Sidrâ and ‘Aniir ibn Jailâq’; whereas in Flugel’s they appear as in Baladhuri (Nadîm 1872: 4–5).


29. See also pages 52–3. Although they need to be approached critically, Arabic sources have, in other contexts, proved to contain genuine information about the pre-Islamic period: by confronting the epigraphic record with medieval Arabic texts, Robin (2001: 562–3) has thus observed cases in which the latter contain ‘extraordinarily precise [information] of great antiquity’, such as the names of South Arabian kings four centuries before the Hijra. See also Hoyland 2008: 58.

30. Bukhari 1688: III, 392–3. Before setting out to complete the task, Jazd would have hesitated to do ‘what the messenger of God had not done’, but these doubts were soon dispelled (ibid.). The same narrative also appears in other Arabic sources – see J. Burton, ‘The collection of the Qur’an’ (EQ): Schoeler 2002: 32–4.

31. For an overview of this problem, see Humphreys 1991: ch. 3.

32. On these two documents, see Râghib 1906: 8–9 and Grohmann 1966: Plate II; PER/589 (held at ÖNB) is also discussed in Jones 1998. In P.Berol. 15002, the word ‘šdm’ appears twice on the first line, but with the letter šd clearly omitted in the first instance, and probably also in the second. This may reflect the text’s early date, before the Arabic spelling of the word, which derives from the Latin sacerdos and the Greek děnarios, had become standardized.

33. Ghabban 2003 and 2008 (English translation). The first, second and third lines respectively are 50, 215 and 54 cm wide; the total height of the inscription is about 50 cm (ibid.: 211).

34. To fit the line given by Robin (2006: 342–3), one can add an inscription from Wâdi Khushiyba, near Najrân, dated 27/648 (Kawazoku 2005: Plate 8:12A; Hoyland 2006: 411).


36. This feature is not attested before Islam. The Usays inscription has been interpreted by al-‘Ushsh and Grossmann as having a ʿtd marbûta in ‘Mughira’ (ﬁ), line 1 (see Robin and Gorea 2002: 507). This reading has been questioned by Robin (ibid.: 508–9), on the basis of a recent picture by Hoyland. A newer photograph by Michael Macdonald defnitively rules it out: the last letter of the same word appears to have either been a ḫ or, less probably, a waw (see the tracing in Figure 6 above).

37. The second inscription of Zuhayr was published in Ghabban 2003: 7 and Ghabban 2008: 213; the Egyptian tombstone, in Wiet 1950: Plate I and Grohmann 1971: Plate X. Robin (2006: 346) sees the two forms of ʿtd in the inscription from Wâdi al-Shâmiyya, north-west of Mecca, dated 60/661. I was unable to conrm this reading: the lines where the long ʿtd should stand are illegible on the only published photograph (Sharafuddin 1977: Plate 49). At the Dome of the Rock and in the milestones of ‘Abd al-Malik (c. 685–705), the long form of ʿtd solely occurs in the phrase ʿalma al-liwâ (‘God’s mercy’), an archaism specific to this formula which persists in the modern text of the Qur’an.

38. Robin 2006: 345. Unlike other parts of this inscription, the word ‘al-ʿAy’, with its medial ʿay, and the date on the last line are clearly legible.

39. Ibid. For example, in the inscription from the region of Tâif dated 678 (Figure 12), the modern notation only occurs in one word, at the end of line 6 (‘Qâhab’). It is also attested at the inscriptions of Wâdi Sabl (46/647) and in papyrus from Nusayra dated 54/674 to 58/678.

40. Robin 2006: 350–1; Hoyland 2006: 403. The seat of the newborn empire was shifted to Syria with the reign of Mu’awiyah, which started in 661.

41. In a preliminary study of dotting patterns in the earliest Islamic papyri, Andreas Kaplony (2008) has shown that these diacritical signs were used in several different but relatively coherent sets of cases: in most of them, the consonantal skeleton is ambiguous, whether in terms of grammar or meaning.


43. Ibid.: 9. The name ‘Hijazi’ suggests an Arabian provenance, whereas what
follows will open the possibility of a wider geographical spread. 'Murād' has also been used in the past to qualify some of these manuscripts, but it should be avoided as it stems from a corruption of Nadīm's original text (see Déroche 1996: 7–9; Déroche 2002: 614).


46. The inscription was first published in Miles 1948. One leaf from the palimpsest was sold at Sotheby's on 23 October 1992 (Lot 551), and another on 22 October 1993 (Lot 31). These two leaves are directly consecutive in their text. The former, which is reproduced here, was again offered for sale at Christie's in 2001 (1 May, Lot 12) and by Sam Fogg two years later (London 2003) before reaching the David Collection, Copenhagen. Other points of comparison, albeit slightly less close, are the second hand of BNF, Arabe 328a (in Déroche and Noja Noseda 1998); and a palimpsest from Sanaa (Kuwait 1985: no. 4, p. 59; Von Bothmer 1987b: Plate 1) of which leaves seem to have also appeared on the market (Bonhams, 11 October 2000, Lot 15; Christie's, 8 April 2008, Lot 20). The latter manuscript and the two palimpsest leaves discussed above have a comparable lower script and folio size, but their upper script clearly differs.

47. Other letter forms, such as lām-ālif and medial kā'ah, differ between the two texts. Marcus Fraser has also drawn a parallel between the lower script of the same fragment and Mu'awiyah's inscription (Fraser and Kwaiatkowski 2006: 17).

48. The Sanaa Qur'ān, Marbel 13, Arabe 330c and the Damascus Qur'ān are studied in the next chapter.

49. The inscription from Mecca was originally published by Sa'd al-Rashid (1995: Fig. 66; see also Hoyland 2006: Fig. 4); the one from Mawṣiqqar, by Robert Hamilton (1946a and 1946b).

At Mecca, final sīn, with its slightly rounded shape, and the flat return of independent ālif are reminiscent of B.I.b; while medial kā'ah, like the lower return of final gīf and āyn, could equally recall B.I or B.II (the nuances that distinguish these two styles are not as clear in inscriptions as they would be in manuscripts).

At Mawṣiqqar, final sīn, with its rounded shape, is also reminiscent of B.I.b. The lower return of independent ālif fluctuates between the forms encountered in B.I.b (where it is flat and horizontal) and B.II (slightly curved and pointing upwards). The curve of final āyn recalls B.II (see the part of the shaft with the date in Hamilton 1946b: Plate XXIII). Medial jam, kā'ah (both of which extend below the baseline) and initial āyn could suggest a parallel with either style.

A similar conclusion was reached by Déroche (2002: 649–1). For later survivals of Hijāj, see the next chapter.

50. In Arabe 328a (BNF), a clear change of hand occurs between the recto and verso of several folios (see Déroche and Noja Noseda 1998). The same phenomenon can also be observed in Sanaa, Inv. 01.25.1 (Kuwait 1985: no. 3, pp. 60–1). See also Déroche 2002: 617 and figs. 1–4; Déroche 2002: 242.


52. See Brock 1994 and, on Nestorian remains in China, Sasaki 1951.

53. For Greek manuscripts of this period, see Metzger 1981; Cavallo and Maaebler 1987; Turner 1987; for Syriac, Hatch 1946; Leroy 1964; Mundell Mango 1982 and 1991; Briquel-Chauvin 1998.

55. CPA is linguistically distinct from Syriac. Of about 110 surviving CPA manuscripts, 85 were written in the sixth to eighth centuries (Bar–Asher 1988: 33 and p. 22). For a discussion of the tradition’s backgrounds, see Griffith 1997: 16–24.

56. Bondhuro 2000: 32. Demotic had previously been employed for everyday secular documents.

57. For an introduction and further references, see R. Firestone, 'Abyssinia' and M. al-Farouque, 'Emigration' (EQ); Bowersock et al. 1999: 483–5 ('Ethiopia', article by C. Robin).

58. Mercier 1996: 40. Parchment samples from two decorated pages of Gārima 2 have been tested: in the first, the result pointed to the range as 450–650 and in the second, as 360–540, with a 95.54 per cent confidence interval in both cases.

59. Ibid.: 41–5; Heldman 1995: 129–90. When he first published the two manuscripts, Jules Leroy (1966 and 1968) recognized their antiquity but found it difficult to propose a date because of the lack of known references: after first suggesting the ninth or tenth century, he moved his estimate to the tenth or eleventh century.

60. The decoration of the two Gārima Gospels may naturally have been produced in Ethiopia by Syrian scribes or their local pupils. In Gārima 1, discrepancies have been noted in layout between the architectural frames of the Canon tables and the text they contain, which might suggest that the leaves were imported with an empty space left to be written by local scribes (Leroy 1969: 141). In either case, the text cannot be much later than these leaves, as they are unlikely to have been kept blank for centuries (Mercier 2000: 43).

61. In Gārima 1 and 2 respectively, the text was written in the same hand, hence at the same time, across the body of the Gospels and the illumination pages (ibid.). The reproductions given by Leroy (1960 and 1968) show, in both manuscripts, a layout in two columns with line–by–line and justification rulings (these rulings appear to be incised, though this detail is not entirely clear).

62. Andreasz (1910) initially proposed the sixth or seventh century but the form of Syriac punctuation used led Raj Barr to favour the seventh century (Andreasz and Barr 1938: 94). More recently, Skjervø has asserted an
earlier production, perhaps in the fourth century (for an overview of this debate, see Durkin-Meisterernst 2006: 6–7).

63. On these correspondences, see ibid.: 2–3; Andreas and Barr 1933: 93–4. Syriac fragments were also unearthed as part of the same find, and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst has suggested that the manuscript may be of Iranian or Mesopotamian origin (ibid.: 7–8). For Pahlavi papyri of the same period, see Guignoux 1991.

64. For a general introduction, see Sirat 2002: 19–50. Among the numerous publications about the Dead Sea Scrolls, one can note the facsimile editions by Sokanik (1985) and Trever (1972). Reproductions and studies of major early Hebrew codices are published in Beli-Arié et al. 1997.

65. Sirat 1989. No extant Hebrew fragment attributable to the seventh century or earlier appears to have belonged to a codex, whereas several clearly come from scrolls. What is more, early Hebrew sources (second to seventh centuries) explicitly prescribe the use of the scroll format (Megulla) to the exclusion of any other for religious texts. The first unambiguous references to the word ‘alimm as ‘codex’ appear only in the old Hebrew translation and in a later version of the Babylonian-Aramaic Halakhot Pesahot (late eighth/early ninth century), then in the colophons of the oldest extant Hebrew parchment codices (late ninth to tenth century).

66. Roberts and Skeat 1988: 45–61. Motives of economy and practicality were also involved in this process. A bound codex is easier to browse through and can contain more leaves than a scroll, while parchment is more sturdy than papyrus, and both sides are suitable as surfaces for writing. As a result – to give a significant example – the complete text of the Gospels could easily fit into one parchment codex, as opposed to about four papyrus scrolls.


68. Ibid.: 79. The square format also became the norm for Qur’ans in the Maghribi scripts, but at a much later date: the earliest known example was completed in 1107 (Déroche 2001: 611).

69. Sirat 1985: 23, 72–5. These features are absent from earlier Hebrew fragments. See also Sirat 2002: 35.

70. Dukan and Sirat 1997: 36.


73. Some allusions in other texts could suggest that he was Jewish before Islam.

74. Ibid.: 267.

75. Canova 1913: 121. On the definition of the Arabic terms, see Gaze 2001: 45–6, 82–3.


77. Ory 1965. From the published reproductions and tracings, the earliest of these specimens appear to be written in style D, and none in Hijazi.

78. As already noted by Déroche in his article ‘Manuscrits of the Qur’ans’ (EQ). On the difference between nisus and column, see Déroche 2000: 13–14. Beside Hebrew, the scroll format was used in Greek and Latin documents.

79. At the Bibliothèque Nationale, I have directly studied nine Hijazi manuscripts (Arabic 328a, 328b, 328h, 328c, 328c, 328h, 328a, 328c, 6180a), two others in style B.Ia (Arabic 329d, 331), as well as the collection’s holdings in styles A.I, B.B, C.Ia, C.Ib, C.II, C.III and a few unclassified early fragments (Arabic 330c, 330g, 335a, 334d). For a complete catalogue, see Déroche 1985a.

80. Horizontal items were published in Kuwait 1985: no. 23, p. 54 (Samia IN 00–18.3); Sotheby’s, 28 April 1981, Lot 179 and 22 October 1993, Lots 11 and 15; Déroche 1992: Cat. 2 (Khaliil KFQ4, Figure 62 above); Blachère 1947: Fig. 1 (BNF Arabic 328a).

81. The Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century), the oldest Greek manuscript of the New Testament, is laid out with four columns (see for example Brown 2006: Cat. 26).

82. There are also a few exceptions to this rule: fragments of two or more relatively small (c. 22 x 19 cm) vertical Hijazi manuscripts are preserved in the lower text of the Qur’an, 1287 (fol. 8–12, 32–35, 56–63 in the modern numbering).

83. Exceptionally large manuscripts are, in Greek, the Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century, 40 x 35 cm), Alexandrinus (fifth century, c. 32 x 26 cm), Patroclus Petropolitanus (sixth century, c. 33.5 x 28.5 cm) and BNF Giselin 1 (seventh century, 36 x 25 cm). In Syriac, one can also note BL Add. 12,150 (10 x 411, c. 37 x 28), Vatican 158 (a 581, c. 31 x 24 cm), the Rabhub Gospels (a 586, 33.6 x 27 cm), BL Add. 12,170 (a 604, c. 31 x 23.5 cm). But in both traditions, these formats represent the exception rather than the rule (for a list of Greek codices with their dimensions, see Turner 1977: Table 16; for Syriac, Hatch 1946). In CPA, the size of some fragmentary pages found in Stras also suggests a large format (e.g. Broue 1995: CPA Sp. 16). The leaves of the Gärma Gospels, written in Ethiopic (Figure 17), measure c. 34 x 22 cm.
84. See Boud'hors 2000: 56; Boud'hors 2004: 8. 9 and Morrall 2000: xii-xiii (and for examples of larger parchment codices, Tisserant 1914: Cat. 68; Turner 1977: 155).
85. E.g. BNF Arabe 328f (reproduced in Guesdon and Vernay-Nouari 2001: Cat. 29, 328b, 328a, 6144a) (unpublished).
86. One can also note traces of lead rulings in BL Or.2165 (Déroche and Noja Noseda 2001, possibly from the same manuscript as Arabe 328e); yet on folio 56r, for example, there is a strong slope in lines 10-23, while lines 19-20 are broken.
87. See Mundell Mango 1991: Fig. 13.
88. The first variant occurs in Camb. Or. 1287, fols. 32-5 (Hiijazi), as well as BNF Arabe 330 d, e, f (style A), 333a (unclassified and 337b (C.1a); the second one in BNF Arabe 339b (intermediary between Hijazi and Kufic) and BL Add.11,737.1 (style A). In Arabe 326b (style A), which has line-by-line incised rulings, no vertical ruling has been observed, but given that only two of its folios survive, it is preferable not to draw a general conclusion about the whole manuscript.
89. Beside the Freer Gospels (Figure 25; see also Sanders 1912a and 1912b: 7), this can be observed in published facsimiles of the Coptic Marashanas (Cozza-Luzi and Ceriani 1890) and Alexandrinus (London 1909-57), as well as the Coptic manuscripts in Hyerat 1888: Plates II-1, Ill, IV-2 and Wright 1875-83: Plate XLI. See also Hatch 1939: 14, n. 11; Boud'hors 2000: 56; Boud'hors 2004: 9; Morrall 2005: xx; and on CPA, Desreumaux 1991: esp. p. 18.
90. Fols 87-94 (modern numbering, corresponding to Qur'an A' in Lewis and Minorsky 1914). On this manuscript, see also note 79.
91. See Chapter 2, note 120.
92. Based on my observation of the British Library's collection, especially Add. 17,126 (to 511), 14,408 (to 509), 14,478 (to 622, Figure 23), 14,617 (to 688), 12,134 (to 697), 14,429 (to 719). See also the similar remarks by Wright (2002: xxiii) and Hatch (1946: 4) who, however, fail to articulate a contrast with Greek.
93. I have directly observed this feature in BNF Codex I. (sixth-seventh century) and the Coptic Sinaiticus (fourth century, viewed at the British Library behind a protective glass). I am grateful to Martha Smith, paper conservator at the Freer Gallery, for her remarks about the Freer Gospels (fourth/fifth century, Figure 25) and Psalms (fifth century), which confirmed this pattern; see also the observations of Henry Sanders (1912b: 5-6) on the former manuscript.
94. Beside the examples cited here, Arabe 6144a (BNF) has thick parchment and a clear layer of white coating, but no ruling. Dribihole (1991: 301) has also frequently observed coating traces on the Hijazi manuscripts from Sanua.
95. While bifolios represent the theoretical basis of quire construction, they were often replaced, in practice, by two single folios arranged in the same manner (Déroche 2000: 84-5). Beside quaternions, question also occur in Greek parchment manuscripts, but much less frequently (Turner 1977: 62-4; Irigoin 1998: 6). Binions, tenions and other compositions are also occasionally encountered. On Coptic, see Boud'hors 2000: 56; Boud'hors 2004: 8-9; Schenke 1991: 17. The quire structure of one ninth-century CPA manuscript has been reconstructed by Brock (1999: 335), who concluded it must have consisted of quaternions. On Syriac, see below.
98. Déroche 2004a: 113 (Sanua IN 01-23.1).
99. Beside the present illustration, see Déroche and Gladiss 1999: Abb. 48 (TIEM SE 87); James 1988: No. 1 (CBL. 1615). Further sura markers, which remain unpublished, appear in BNF Arabe 325c, fols. 75v, 76r, 82v, 86c and Arabe 328f, fol. 96r.
100. This type of decoration also occurs frequently in the upper text of Synes Sinaiticus, e.g. Hips 1936: fols. 76v, 91v, 181r (this layer of the manuscript is dated ca 698 or 779, cf. Hatch 1946: 97). Horizontal chapter markers with other decoration are found, for example, in BL Add. 14,447, fols. 32v, 33r, 54v, 64v (unpublished); in Sinai Ms. 16 (Figure 34); and the CPA manuscript illustrated above (Figure 16).
101. A few abstract motifs are used in the Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century) as framing lines for larger decorative motifs, but they are fundamentally different from the Hijazi and Syriac ones in form and initiation of a more ancient Greek model. This view fails to convince since a distinct approach to script, ruling, parchment and decoration can be observed in Syriac.
102. On these red titles and their possible Hijazi antecedents, see page 58.
103. Sura III, verse 44; XXXI, 27; LXXVIII, 1; XXXII, 4.
104. See Hatch 1946: 8. The need may have been introduced at a later date, possibly after the tenth century, in some Syriac manuscripts (ibid: 9). Wright (2002: xxiii) has argued that reeds were used on the basis that 'is almost every particular, a Syriac manuscript is a mere imitation of a more ancient Greek model.' This view fails to convince since a distinct approach to script, ruling, parchment and decoration can be observed in Syriac.
105. In 'Alexandrian' uncial and Hebrew, the stroke width varies only slightly and there can be rounded letter endings, possibly because the pen was sharpened to a point. This type of nib cut, however, is not compatible with the thick strokes of Hijazi manuscripts.
106. This feature is already pronounced in early Kufic styles, with the exception of C.I.
107. For Nahataean examples, see Gruender 1993: 113 (especially N200); Hoyland 2008: 61.

108. Among the manuscripts listed in Table 1, this type of ِْ occurs in Camb. Or.1297, fols. 87-94 (related to Syriac) and Arabic 328a (related to Greek). Other manuscripts exhibiting this feature, but which could not be studied for their codicology, are Vatican Ar. 1605 (Levi della Vida 1977: [no. 1]), BL Or.2165 (Déroche and Noja Nosaed 2001) and CBL 1615 (James 1980: No. 1).


110. As already noted by Déroche (2000: 238).

111. The shaping form of fā’lā may represent a further legacy of this period but it is more pronounced in some manuscripts than in others, and the relative chronology of these manuscripts remains poorly understood.

112. 'Abd al-Razzq 1978-2: VIII, 114 = no. 14530. "Abd al-rāznīn bi ahi laylā kataba luku nayrān min ahl al-ba’ta nushafān bi-ta’īs'īn dīkhāna." Déroche (2004b: 265, n. 83), who first noted these sources, implicitly assumed that the reference was to Muhammad ibn Abi Layla; but it is clearly to 'Abd al-Ra’īmān, as indicated by both the chain of transmission and the koher of itself.

113. Safiyya and Muhammad ibn Abi Layla were both Kufans and according to biographers, the former considered the latter as a great specialist in Islamic law (J. Schacht, 'Ibn Abi Layla', in EI2). The study of several thousand traditions recorded by 'Abd al-Razzq and their mechanism of transmission has led Harald Motzki (1991) to strongly assert the reliability of this source.

114. Ibn Abi Shaybah 1995: IV, 294 = no. 20228; Ibn Abi Dawud 1937: 133. Ibn Abi Shaybah cites a price of ۹۰ dinas instead of 70, perhaps as the result of a slip in the dating of the word mā'īn. Ibn Abi Dawud does not explicitly mention that the scribe was Christian, although this is clearly implied by the context of the anecdote in the paragraph. The three sources are otherwise virtually identical in their wording.

115. Ibn Abi Dawud 1937: 133. "Abd al-rāznīn bi ahi istaktaba 'afaṣāfūn min ahl al-ba’ta nayrān man nushafān bi-ta’īs'īn dīkhāna." The verb istaktaba could also have the meaning 'to dictate.'

116. Ibid.: 'Almaw kataba luku nayrān man nushafūn.'

Chapter Two: The Birth of Kufic

1. For a detailed discussion, see George 2007 and 2003.

2. The only exceptions to this rule come from B, a transitory style between Hijazi and Kufic where minor variations can be found in the number of lines.

3. On the date of this manuscript, see George 2003: 3, 12-13 (with further references); and for a detailed explanation of its interline system, ibid.: 5-7. The edge had been measured, at that stage, up to the base of the serif, but taking into account the whole height of the letter now seems a more logical option.

4. The number of interlines naturally varied from manuscript to manuscript (for a detailed analysis, see George 2007: 97-103). In his study of early Arabic papyri, Geoffrey Khan (1993: 39) made a similar distinction between a scribe's 'competence' (the ideal forms he was trying to write) and his 'performance' (the actual result) — two terms derived from an analogy with linguistics.

5. George 2007: 88-94. The ratio is that of width to height in horizontal manuscripts and vice versa in vertical manuscripts (i.e. the long side over the short).

6. Ruling traces only appear in the early stages of the Kufic tradition (cf. pages 44-6 above), and even then not in every manuscript. One exception to this general trend is the Blue Qur'an, where the dye of the parchment would have prevented work by transparency (ibid.: 103).

7. Ibid.: 103 and Fig. 21. In my experience of Kufic manuscripts, the parchment almost always has a translucent quality in styles D1 to D3. This quality also occurs in earlier styles, but less systematically. Significantly, the parchment of manuscripts in style A is often less transparent than in D, even though it tends to be thinner.


11. See page 48.

12. See also Déroche 1988a: Plate IV-A (also from Arabic 327); Salam-break 1991: Kufic musafq no. 3, fol. 109A (C.II); and for Syriac, BL Add. 14,647, fol. 54v (unpublished). The rope-and-pearl motif also occurs in Greek and Coptic art, including mosaic, wall painting and textile, but its use in this position alongside marginal flourishes is specific to Syriac and Kufic.

13. See, for example, BL Or.2165 (in Déroche and Noja Nosaed 2001) and the closely related fragment in Kuwait, Dar al-sāhayr al-islāmiyya, LNS19CAxb (Jenkins 1985: 18); as well as BNF Arabic 328d, fol. 89v (unpublished).

14. The median interline was not drawn in manuscripts but internalized by the scribes during training; it appears, for example, on a second-century wooden tablet used by students in Egypt (Turner 1987: No. 4).

15. Sheila Blair (1992) has challenged the accepted view that 72/692 was the year of completion, arguing that this was the date construction began. This idea has been rejected on various grounds by Jeremy Johns (2003: 424-6). The debate is still unresolved.

16. These two inscriptions were respectively published in Shazafadin
average 1 cm² (Van Berchem 1969: 312). Within each part of the inscription, they tend to be of regular height, with more variation in the width.

27. This glimmering effect and the contrast between parts B (left) and C (right) can be clearly observed in Nuseibeh and Grabar 1996: 113–14, a wide-angle picture taken from ground level. See also Van Berchem 1969: 311; and, on the general technique, Borsok et al. 2006: 208.

28. This last point was also noted by Marguerite Van Berchem (1969: 309).

29. See also Blair 2006a: 92 and 2006b: 24. Most of the tesserae at the Dome of the Rock are made of tinted glass, to which a thin leaf of precious metal was added (for gold and silver (Van Berchem 1969: 510). During their fabrication, large glass slabs would have been incised to the desired shape with a sharp instrument, then struck with a hammer, thereby allowing a measure of control over their size and form (Borsok et al. 2006: 305).

30. A full transcription of the text is given in Kessler 1970: 4–9 and Grabar 1996: 184–5. In the outer inscription, diacritics appear in the word ‘ṣayyabi’ (middle of the text) and, according to Grabar’s transcription only, in ‘ṣayyabu’ (end).


32. On this technique, see Lasn 1957: 9–10.

33. Van Berchem 1969: 311. Her remark applies to the monument as a whole: for the inscription, a red underdrawing of the calligraphy may have sufficed to carry out the work.

34. At both Damascus and Bayt Sam`ān, one layer of plaster and a setting bed with an underdrawing have been observed. At Bayt Sam`ān, the underdrawing was done in a red pigment, possibly with some incised guidelines (Khanis 2001: 164–5). At Damascus, red and black (or dark grey) were used, as at the Dome of the Rock (Van Berchem 1969: 366).

35. See Dunbabin 1999: 281–6 and Prudhomme 1975. Close in place and time to the Dome of the Rock, preparatory guidelines have been documented in sixth-century mosaics at the monastery of Khirbat al-Muraqqa, near Jerusalem (Magen and Talgam 1990: 49–50). They may also have been used at the Umayyad inscription from Baytin (see above). In his work on Byzantine mosaics, Paul Underwood (1986: 157–7) has found this type of preparation mainly attested in monuments with stone masonry (like the Dome of the Rock) and two layers of plaster (as in Umayyad mosaic); whereas reports of their existence are rare for brick structures with three layers of plaster (as at Constantinople).

36. Underdrawings were systematically made at this level in Byzantine and Umayyad mosaic.

37. I have found no antecedents of this approach to script in earlier Greek mosaics from greater Syria, Sinai and the little left from Constantinople.


39. Robinson 2005: 72. On the change of language in the dishīn, see Mawardi
1869: 282-3; Mawardi 1996: 221 (English translation); Jalaliyari 1988: 38;
41. The tall letters are seven to eight interlines high. The circular body of the
sits at midline and is four interlines high. The lower return of the final
łım is three interlines below the baseline, while the top of dāl and initial
ʿon is three interlines above the same line. The vertical stroke of the
short letters (bāʾ, dāl, ḥaʾ, and the like) is about three interlines high.
42. The other milestones are devoid of diacritical signs. The one from Abu
Ghosh is published in Van Berchem 1920: Plate II-4.
43. Ibid.: Plate II-3 (Khurazhyi, published as a square); Cyprian Silverman
44. Several features of the inscription – the large loop of final ǧīf, the slanting
vertical bar of medial hāʾ, and the short, slightly curved upper stroke of dāl –
find a parallel in style A1. Another point of comparison lies in the group
of manuscripts heralded by Marcel 13 (cf. note 76).
45. Elad 1999. In one of them, the month has survived: šurṭuḫ 85, i.e. 8 August
15 September 704 (ibid.: 37).
46. Sharon 1966: Plate I. Although the last word of the date is lost, Sharon has
argued that it must have been salluṭ (ibid.: 370-1).
47. The word tawīq appears in the Jerusalem group, but not in the Golani.
Likewise ḥādūkā in the Golani becomes ḥādūkā al-alā in Jerusalem. With
regard to the latter, when the Golani milestones were made, "alā yad i
mustaʿ wa lāyin " and the levelling inscription "alā yad yahū bin al-bakmūr.
No such mention appears in the Jerusalem group (Elad 1999: 35, 37-8; Sharon 1966: 360).
49. The formula roḥma allāh ʿalayh does not appear, for example, in the two
earlier funerary texts that are firmly dated, the inscription of Zuhayr, written
in 646 (Figure 9) and the tombstone of 652 (Figure 11). Its reading in the
inscription of Wadi al-Shamiyya dated 661 is uncertain (see Chapter I, note
37); and in any case, there is no evidence that the latter was a funerary text.
dīnām carrying the mention ʿalā lām al-aʿān wa l-mīn ʿāli-hājī (the name of
the commander of the faithful in the Fitqa) and dated 105/724 also
survive (ibid.: lxxxix-xlvi, 103).
51. The year 97 ended on 12 January 674.
printing press was in Babil (Armenia) between 84 and 87, then moved to
Harran (south-east Turkey) in 87-90. Dirhams were also struck at Tiflis
(Georgia) in 85.
53. Between these two stages, we can detect a short phase of experimentation,
in 85, when a slightly more polished script was framed within the old
design (Klat 2002: Cat. 680c).
54. On the obverse, the body of the letters is two interlines high; the top
of ʿāl is on the third interline; that of alif/lam corresponds to the fifth
interline, on which also rests the bottom of hāʾ and nāʾ. One can note, on
the same side, the relatively lower return of the independent alif. On
the reverse, the body of the letters is one interline high, while the top of
alif/lam tends to be on the second interline.
55. For a convenient introduction to minting techniques, see Toll 1972-1.
56. Earlier Arab-Sasanian coins are published in Album and Goodwin 2002;
Walker 1941.
57. It is thus attested in the year 90 in al-Furat (Klat 2002: Cat. 506), Harāt
(Cat. 835), Jundišapur (Cat. 238), Karak (Cat. 522), Merv (Cat. 587),
Uhran (Cat. 624), and so on. The evidence from both Kaif and Bara is interrupted between 82 and 100. On the successive phases of
coinage production in that period, see Album 1989: XVIII, XXI.
58. For example, in the coin struck in 90 at Merv, the lower part of final hāʾ,
final hāʾ and hāʾ-šīf is slightly larger than at Wāsiṭ, while several letters,
like dāl and initial hāʾ, are less sharp; nāʾ is also less rounded than at
the latter mint; and the final mīn of the ḫanīf in the date has a distinct upward
imprint. Comparable distinctions can be made between the other eastern
mints, which generally have a lower level of execution than Wāsiṭ.
59. See also Klat 2002: Cat. 543 ff. (Damascene dirhams with dotted letter
endings, starting at 98) and Walker 1956: Plates XII-XIII (dirhams in which
the new design is clearly attested from 101/720 onwards, though it may
have been introduced slightly earlier).
60. The mints of Ḫirṣiyah and al-Andalus respectively began to operate in
97/716 and 101/720 (Album 1989: XXII). The characteristic dotted letter
endings of the Damascene design appear in a few early dirhams issues from
al-Andalus (103/722 to 104/723, Klat 2002: Cats. 116-17); and rather
fairly at Ḫirṣiyah between 102/721 and 111/730 (Cats. 99-99a). But
these borrowings were shortlived; coin issues began to move towards
the Wāsiṭ type in 105/724 at al-Andalus (Cat. 118), in 111/730 or 112/731
at Ḫirṣiyah (Cats. 98b-99) and in 110/729 at the northern peripatetic
mint, which was in Armenia until that year (Cat. 64) then in al-Bāb from
114/735 onwards (Cats. 142-54).
61. Most sources place the foundation of the city around 85/705 but the
earliest, Bahshah (d. c. 901), says it was built between 75/655 and 78/698
(Cresswell 1969: 182).
63. On this inscription, see Whelan 1998: 8-9.
64. Assertions about 'the first person to ...' (awwāfī) commonly occur in early
Islamic historiography, where they tend to have a legendary dimension
(see Noth 1994: 104-8). On the other hand, the existence of Saʾd and
Khilifa bīn Abī al-Hayjaj as historical figures is confirmed by other sources
(Čeke 1967: 18; Whelan 1998: 10-11). Unlike other Umayyad rulers,
"Umar II is generally praised in Islamic historiography for his austerity and piety, so his rejection of the manuscript does not necessarily have a pejorative connotation.

65. Déroche 2004a. We will follow his convention of designating the three fragments (Marcel 11, 13, 15) which belong to this manuscript as 'Marcel 13.'

66. The line of writing is subdivided into eight interlines to which the letters consistently adhere, although less closely than in later Kufic: the tall letters are five interlines high, final ʿāin extends four interlines below the baseline, ʿāin and ẓāʾ are three interlines high, as opposed to two in ʿāin and the body of ʿāin, ʾāl, ḥāʾ; the lower return of final ẓāʾ/ḥāʾ maghāra reaches the baseline of the line below.

67. Déroche 2004a: 231; 5; Déroche 2002: 629, 632. The Damascene Qur'an and Arabic 330c are respectively illustrated in Déroche 2002: Fig. 11 and Déroche 2004a: Fig. 42. The former's designation refers to the place where the manuscript was found, rather than its scriptural origin (which is unknown).

68. Red dots appear in one Hijazi manuscript, BNF Arabe 6141a, although one cannot rule out that these represent a later addition to the original manuscript. The patronage of the system is attributed by textual sources to a variety of figures ranging from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661) to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d. 728), the most commonly cited being Abū al-ʿĀṣma al-Dāri (d. 689). See Bergsträsser and Pretzl 1938: 261–2; Abbott 1939a: 39.


70. I am grateful to Olga Vasilyeva for this information about Marcel 13. On Arabic 330c, see Déroche 1983a: 144–5. In the Damascene Qur'an, the number of lines varies between eighteen and twenty-one, the format is smaller and the quality of execution somewhat lower (personal communication from F. Déroche).

71. Déroche 2004b: 236–7 (Marcel 13); Déroche 2002: 634 (the Damascene Qur'an, for which the sequence of hair and flesh is not mentioned). The quire structure of Arabic 330c cannot be studied since only nine of its folios survive.

72. See Spitaler 1935: 16–28 (verse counts); Bergsträsser and Pretzl 1938: 6–19 (variants). The earliest sources noted by the above authors are Abu ʿUbayd ibn Sallām (779–858) for textual variants and al-Dānī (d. 1052) for verse counts. The textual variants in question are minor, typically an extra ʾalāʾ or ʿalāʾ in a few lines (a list is given in ibid.: 11–14). For verse counts, two traditions are said to have existed in Mecca, and a school derived from that of Damascus would also have developed in Homs (Spitaler 1935: 17).

73. Déroche 2004a: 240–2. A non-Damascene variant occurs in one instance (ibid.). The pattern is nevertheless consistent, whereas in their analysis of a few Kufic manuscripts along these lines, Bergsträsser and Pretzl (1938: 270–1) had found, in each case, a mix of variants from different cities. All the verse counts observed in Marcel 13 also reflect the Damascene tradition. Some, which are noted in the body of the text in ʿābid form, are certainly original. The others, written in words in the red titles, may or may not be contemporary with the manuscripts, but still follow the same numbering (Déroche 2004b: 241–2).

74. See also ibid.: 253–8.

75. Compare the published page of the Damascene Qur'an (Déroche 2002: Fig. 11) with the mosaics at the Dome of the Rock in Grabar 1996: Figs. 30, 36, 42; and the sura headings of Arabic 330c (Déroche 2004a: Fig. 42) with Grabar's figures 51 and 52.

76. Déroche 2002: 632; Déroche 2004a: 232–4. Final ʿāin extends below the baseline in a manner also observed in the milestones; as in the milestones and copper plaques, final ʿāin is sometimes modelled on the lower stroke of final ʿāid. The form of final or isolated ʿāid, with its very long horizontal stroke in the middle of which sits a much shorter, slightly inclined vertical stroke, again finds its closest parallel in the milestones, as well as the mosaic and copper inscriptions at the Dome of the Rock.

77. Von Bohmer et al. 1999: 45. The full results are, regrettably, not yet in print. In an exhibition catalogue, Von Bohmer has also noted that the text 'points to a slightly earlier date' than the reign of al-Walid, without further comments (Piotrowsky 1999: 101).

78. I am grateful to Lawrence Conrad for providing me with this information (from the late Albrecht Noth).

79. See George 2007: 98–9 (Ms. 2; the number of lines is erroneously given as twelve instead of twenty).

80. In my analysis of five published plain text pages, the ratio of text block height to width fell in the range 1.12–1.15.


82. Architectural decoration was particularly common in Late Antique Bibles as a framing device for canon tables, e.g. in Greek, the 'Golden canon tables' (Brown 2006: Cat. 68); in Syriac, the Rabbanî Gospels (Cocchelli et al. 1959); and in Ethiopic, the Gārima Gospels (Figure 17 above).

83. For a detailed discussion of these features, see Von Bohmer 1987a: 5–6.

84. Jonathan Bloom (1989a) has argued that the towers at Medina, which are known to have existed from texts, were the only ones built in the Umayyad period, however, a minaret appears to have belonged to the Umayyad Mosque of Qaysal (Jordan), although this would have been a single tower (Bisheh 2007). Apart from this, we possess no clear archaeological evidence of mosque towers built in the Umayyad period (see notably Creswell 1989: 130–1).

85. As also suggested by Von Bohmer (1987a: 9, 10, 16). At Medina, the axis of the mihrāb appears to have been distinguished not by its width or height but by its richly decorated ceiling (Sauvaget 1947: 81–2).

86. Von Bohmer (ibid.) thought it represented the Umayyad Mosque of Medina, but there do not seem to be sufficient grounds to support this
claim, notably in the absence of towers (the Prophet’s mosque, as rebuilt under al-Walid, also lacked axiality in its ground plan – see Sauvaget 1947: Fig. 5). Another possibility could be the Umayyad mosque of Samarra, where the manuscript was found and may have already been, together with the rest of the Yemeni finds, by the tenth century. This mosque, which was also redone under al-Walid, had a simple courtyard plan (for a recent reconstruction, see Crewe 1989: 83-8). But this analogy remains too general to be compelling.

87. See Crowfoot 1931: Plates IV-b, XIII-b (mosaics from Jerash, sixth century); as well as Abercy 1967: Plate 13 and Ergü 1988: Plate 3 (Qur’anic frontispieces, ninth century).

88. See Jenkins 1985: 22.

89. Ibn Ilyas 1907: 194.


91. Ibid.: 58-8. See also the descriptions by Saint Gregory Nazianzus (ibid.: 26) andProcopius (ibid.: 75).

92. See Grabar 1990: Figs. 43-5. This imagery could be related to the ‘two gardens’ and ‘two types of fruit’ in the above Qur’anic passage. At the Dome of the Rock, only the large tree bears fruit; this has been interpreted by Mekel- Matteson (1990: 162-4) as symbolizing Islam in relation to Judaism and Christianity; but this reading does not seem relevant to the manuscript, where both the small and large trees are fertile.

93. As already noted by Von Bothmer (1987a: 16), who suggested an attribution to al-Walid himself. The size estimate is also by him (ibid.: 5). The maximum dimensions of the published pages, which are all damaged, come near 45 cm in height and 44 cm in width.


96. Ibn Shabbāḥ 1990: I, 7-8 (statement attributed to a member of al-Hajjāj’s guard). The family of ‘Uthmān, according to Ibn Shabbāḥ, resented this gesture, so they were told: ‘Bring the code of ‘Uthmān, and it will be read.’ They replied: ‘It was lost the day ‘Uthmān was killed’ (ibid., see also Pérode 1995: 198-9).

97. Ibn Dughmāq 1993: fourth part, p. 72. According to Ibn Dughmāq (ibid.: p. 75), the above-mentioned Qur’an was later named after the granddaughter of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Asma’, who had it in her possession in the eighth century.

98. Ibid.: page 5 of the French introduction by the editor of the text, Karl Völlers.

99. Ibid.: fourth section, p. 79.

100. CBL 1494 (Blair 2000a; Fig. 45; James 1980: No. 10; Whelan 1990: Figs. 19-22); Samarra IN 01-29-2 (Piorovsky 1999: Cate 24-5; Kowair 1985: nos. 36, p. 11) and IN 20-19-18 (ibid.: Fig. 35, p. 48); Christie’s, 27 April 1998, Lot 16.

101. Pages from this manuscript are dispersed between different collections: see Moritz 1985: Plates 1-12 (fragment from Cairo, Dar al-Kanûn al-Miṣrîyya); Nebes et al. 1997: 105-7; Déroche and Gladieux 1999: Abb. 5 (Guda 1997: 85); and on INS Arabic 924 (illustrated here), Déroche 1983a: Cat. 45; Guesdon and Vernay-Nouri 2001: Cat. 14; Tisserant 1914: Cat. 42. The present folios, with their imposing dimensions, are trimmed.

102. Christie’s, 18 October 1994, Lot 37. The auction catalogue linked the horsehoe arches to a western origin; however, several Syriac manuscripts also display comparable arches, e.g. the Rabula Gospels (facsimile in Cécchelli et al. 1959); Bl. Adv. 14,429; folio 5r (unpublished). A total of 193 folios from this Qur’an were offered for sale, together with the illumination, in 1994. One leaf that probably comes from the same manuscript is in the Khalili Collection (KFQ19, Déroche 1992: Cat. 15); others have sporadically appeared on the market, notably at Sotheby’s (c.g. 21 November 1985, Lot 209; 29 November 1986, Lot 254; 14 December 1987, Lot 172; 10 October 1988, Lot 156; 30 April 1992, Lot 518; 19 October 1994, Lot 3; 24 April 1996, Lot 1).

103. In addition to the examples cited above, see Von Bothmer 1987b: Plate 4 (Qur’an in an early style close to C).

104. Danton 1990: 118-20 (English); Dünn 1960: 87 (Arabic).

105. See also Album and Goodenow 2002: 29 and Plates 15-16; Morony 1984: 47-8.


107. Mawardi 1900: 154; Mawardi 1996: 170-1 (English translation); Ibn al-‘Athr 1965: IV, 417. The latter does not mention weight as an explanation for ‘mahraja.’

108. In Baldalhuri’s text, the reference to al-Hajjaj’s coins immediately follows that to ‘Abd al-Malik’s, making it unclear whether the name mahraja applies to the former only or both. Al-Mawardi and Ibn al-‘Athr clearly imply that the reference is to both types of coins.


110. Ibn Abi Dāwūd 1957: 141-3, 150-2, 178-9. Most of these scholars are only citing as rejecting one of the above features. With regard to vocalization, several traditions are cited in support of the innovation, as well as against it.

111. For instance, several abūbārīb assert that al-Hasan al-Bakri and Ibn Sīrīn (d. 728) rejected the vocalization of manuscripts, while nearly as many suggest the contrary (ibid.: 141-5). One khābat against the embellishment of Qur’ans and manuscripts is attributed to three different authors by three different chains of transmissions (ibid.: 150). These contradictions are not concealed but rather made to stand out by Ibn Abi Dāwūd.


113. Christie’s, 29 October 1992, Lot 225. The carbon-dating pointed to the
ranges to 649–765 with a 68 per cent confidence interval and to 595–835 with a 95 per cent confidence interval.


115. See for instance Tabbaa 1991: Fig. 2 (Tehran, Iran, Banda Museum, Ms. 4251); Christie's, 1 April 1982, Lot 158 and 22 November 1984, Lot 110; Sotheby's, 27 April 1994, Lot 5.

116. See Déroche 1992: Cat. 6 (Khallili KFQ20); Nebes et al. 1997: Fig. 54 (Gotha Or. A1433); Vienna 1988: Abb. 17 (ÖNB Cod. Mixt. 917); Bonhams, 2 May 2001, Lot 8 and 29 April 2004, Lot 54; Ricqlès,Hôtel Drouot (Paris), 22 March 1996, Lot 8; Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, Lot 29.

117. These examples from the Khallili Collection were originally published in Déroche 1992. For other sura titles in red ink, see Nebes et al. 1997; Fig. 54; Zaw al-Din 1968: Fig. 68; Sotheby's, 13 October 1981, Lot 133. Decorated sura markers also appear in Déroche 1992: Cat. 8 (B.J) and, with gold, in Sotheby's, 18 April 1983, Lot 5 (K.J).

118. On the Khallili fragment, see also Déroche 1992: Cat. 2; an image of the Paris fragment (which comprises six folios) is published in Blachère 1947: Fig. 1; cf. also Déroche 1983a: Cat. 1. Although both fragments share a similar script, layout and size, they belong to markedly different parts of the Qur'an (Suras XII and XVII respectively), which invites some caution as to their common origin.

119. Arabic 326a has justification and baseline rulings drawn with a dry point, with twelve to thirteen lines per page.

120. Déroche (2002: 616) also sees this manuscript as 'a later development' by the standards of the Hijazi tradition. The same author (ibid.: 641; 1992: Cat. 3) has suggested that fragments in the style he labelled 'Hijazi IV' (BNF Arabic 354c, Khallili KFQ59 and 61) could reflect the enduring prestige of Hijazi in the eighteenth century. These fragments combine the traditional slant of Hijazi with letter shapes close to Cufi. The parallel is reinforced by the similar sura markers used in both styles, as well as the rigorous approach to layout and red vocalization dots of Hijazi IV. To my mind, it remains unclear whether these features reflect a transitory style or a conscious reference to the past.

Chapter Three: On Calligraphy and Proportion


2. See Creswell 1909: 74 (with his observations and those of other modern writers), or for example, the eyewitness of Ibn Batūtah (1558: 78–9), in the fourteenth century.


4. Mauss (1888) has put forward a simple scheme for the ground plan, which was essentially followed by Wilkinson (1981), who interpreted the elevation as the vertical transposition of the ground plan. Chen (1980) suggested, instead, that the Golden Ratio lay at the base of the ground plan and elevation. But his method, the choice of his pivotal points and their measurement have been criticised – see Herz-Fischler 1988, Jacobson 1983 and Chen's reply (1985). The relevance of the Golden Ratio in aesthetics and art in a pre-modern context is also questionable (cf. Herz-Fischler 1994, with further references).

5. My illustration is based on circles, but the same figure could equally have been drawn with an eight-pointed star that radiates from the inner (yellow) square (as in Mauss 1888: 19; Wilkinson 1981: 167). The circular configuration has been chosen here for its greater clarity. It may also be better suited to the inside-out logic of the building, centred as it is around the sacred rock.

6. See the illustration in Nuseibeh and Grabar 1996: 116–17, where the lintel and the larger part of the columns can be seen together. I do not possess an exact measurement of column width. According to Richmond (1924: 15), the lintel height is 29 cm. On top of it is a course of stone work 32 cm deep (ibid.). This is close to known estimates of the Byzantine foot (cf. note 21 below), suggesting that the latter may have been the module.


8. Mango 1973: 61–2. The church of St Sergius was built in the early years of Justinian's reign, probably before 536.


10. Ibd.: 74. On the date and context of De architector, see Mango 1992: 42–3.


12. Description (Gr. ἀρχιτεχνίτη) was one of the standard literary exercises of Late Antique rhetoric, but these texts cannot be seen as mere rhetorical exercises. As noted by Henry Maguire, later Byzantine ἀρχιτεχνίτη was tended to be largely derivative, drawing from literary models rather than actual observation, with architecture standing out as an exception to the rule. However, Procopius, Choricius and the whole sixth-century 'school of Gaza' have been noted for their descriptive accuracy: their production would itself become, in the later Byzantine period, a source of literary ἀρχιτεχνίτη (Maguire 1974: 113–20). Mango (1992: 43) also thinks that Procopius had not seen some of the buildings described in De architectoris, but this remark does not apply to Hagia Sophia, of which the author clearly demonstrates his first-hand knowledge.


14. 'A construction of masonry rises from the ground ... to describe a semicircular shape, which is called a half cylinder by specialists' (ibid.: 74). A few lines later, he describes the special construction method of the piers, and adds about its arches: 'architects call them lintels' (ibid.: 75–7).
17. Vitruvius, Book III, ch. iii.
19. In our reconstruction, we have assumed a foot equal to two-thirds of a cubit, since the cubit was normally equal to 1½ foot.
20. This dimension is half the length of the octagon sides.
21. To give an idea of scale, the Byzantine foot measured between 0.308 and 0.32 m, and the Roman foot about 0.2957 m (see Milon 2003: 166-7, with further references). The circle drawn here follows Gregory’s prescription that it should be cut by eight angles, i.e. the octagon is inscribed within it. The base of the conical roof, by contrast, would be inscribed within the octagon. The doors have been omitted, as they are not mentioned by Gregory.
23. On mosaic, see also page 67 above. In architecture, the idea of a grid of panels is closely related to the concept of ‘order’ (pages 95-6).
24. See page 44.
25. George 2007: 83, 85. While the term may primarily define this elongation, some sources also refer to it as a writing style; but like other script names given in this period, its practical identification is problematic, if not impossible (see Déroche 1989: 216-17; Gacek 2001: 135). Line-end fillers are encountered in a few Hijazi manuscripts that are close to each other in style, but their layout remains markedly disorganized (e.g. Bouhamsi, 11 October 2000: Lot 13).
26. All the features outlined here were already present in the earliest stages of the tradition: Jafar styles A, B and C are part of the analysis presented in George 2007; on Marcel 13, Arabes 330c and the Damascus Qur’an, see Chapter 2).
27. Book III, ch. iii, §12. This ratio is valid for column heights under 15 feet; different ratios apply to longer columns (ibid.).
31. This dimension of building did not escape even a fundamentally positivist scholar like Cresswell, who wrote about the design of the Dome of the Rock: ‘That literature contains no reference to this remarkable system goes for nothing, as it is well known that craft secrets were only imparted under vows of secrecy. Under a scheme whereby the size of every part is related to every other part in some definite proportion … a building, instead of being a collection of odd notes, becomes a harmonious chord in stone, a sort of living crystal; and after all it really is not strange that harmonies of this sort should appeal to us through our sight, just as chords in music appeal to us through our hearing’ (Cresswell 1969: 75).
32. See Burkert 1972: ch. V; Guthrie and Fideler 1988: 24-8. At the time, these observations were made in terms of relative string lengths. They can be translated, in modern physical terms, into sound frequencies.
34. The translation used here is by Donald Zeyl (Plato 2000).
35. Ibid.: xi-xii (commentary by D. Zeyl).
36. Plato’s series is 1·4-3·3-2·2-8·3-3-4-9·2-16·3-6-8-9·7-22·18·27 (the units are indicated in bold script). Each of the terms is either 4/3 or 3/2 or 9/8 of its predecessor (for a detailed discussion, see Plato 2000: 20–21, n. 25).
37. Cornford (1987: 66–72) has also pointed out that the Timaeus scale partly obeys considerations ‘extraneus to music’, because Plato’s primary concern is with the intangible, rather than the audible.
38. The image of the chariot rolls the procession of the gods in Phaedrus (ibid.: 144).
42. See Brock 1982.
43. Quenashe was founded by John bar Aphtho (d. 537) and continued to be a centre of learning until the ninth century (see Watt 1999; Nau 1910: 226).
45. Nau 1910: 249–50. Plato is introduced by Severus as the ‘first and [most] famous philosopher’ of the Greeks. Timaeus is mentioned by name and the citation is literal except for its last phrase, which is not found in the established Greek text: ‘You were missing writing in many things, and used to die voiceless.’ The name Critias is also corrupted as ‘Architas.’
46. On Jacob’s visualization system, see Segal 1953: 88–44.
47. Martin 1888: 472-83 and 417 (for the metaphor of the architect); Teixidor 2003: 124.
49. On the issue of innovation, see pages 89-91.
51. Whelan (1990: 122–3), who noted the divergence with the realm of secretees, then tried to relate Qur’anic calligraphy to the milieu of religious scholars. However, evidence for this is lacking, especially in the Abbasid eighth and ninth centuries.
54. Ibid.: 110.
55. Ibid.: 104.
56. Ibid. Other combinations cited are yellow with red (dignity), yellow with black (indignity), and so on.
57. On Timaeus, see above. In De sensu, Aristotle says that all colours are a mixture of black and white. On this basis, he applies musical theory to vision and flavour. In the words of Richard Sorabji (1972: 295–6), ‘the most pleasant colours are produced by the ratios of black and white which are uncomplicated ... and expressible in numbers easy to calculate with.’ Aristotle had briefly discussed musical ratios in Metaphysics (1083a26). However, as shown by Sorabji, he was more interested in the overall theory than in the detail of its application. In Metaphysics (1073b10–17), he thus stated that he preferred to leave the mathematical details of his celestial system to specialists, and he seems to be doing the same with sound in De sensu. His astronomical exposition also suggests that he had weak mathematical knowledge (Sorabji 1972: 308).
59. See page 143.
61. Krau 1942: 48, n. 7. See also ibid.: 203–6.
62. According to al-Ma‘arifi (1966 V, 159 = §3312), al-Kindi wrote a refutation of the alleged fabrication of gold and silver by alchemists.
63. Endress 1997: 62 (where he coined the expression to qualify al-Kindi’s Platonism).
64. The practical nature of these treatises cannot be assumed a priori, but will need to be assessed by future research. To give two significant examples, the recipes of Greek alchemy have often proved to be impractical (cf. Pfitzer 1935); in Islamic surgery, there may also have been important gaps between the theory recorded in Arabic treatises and contemporary practice (Savage-Smith 2000).
65. Some authors did not endorse such ideas: for example in his musicology, al-Farabi (879–950) rejects the Pythagorean view of a music of the planets and does not apply musical ratios to realities other than sound (D’Erlanger 1939–41: vol. 1, especially p. 59).
66. Mentioned by al-Nadim, Ibn al-Qafi, Ibn Abi Usaybi‘a and al-Biruni (Pines 1936: 90). Shimomo Pines (ibid.) thought the title in question was probably On the Generation of the Soul in Timaeus; he also mentioned a lost work by Plutarch (On the Creation of the Universe according to Plato) as a second possibility. The original text is published in Plutarch 1976: 158–54.
70. §229 (ibid.).
71. Y. Marquest, ‘Ilkwan al-Safi’ (EI2).
73. To give but one example, in astronomy, the influence of the seven planets on the earth is most powerful when ‘they are in relation to each other according to the most noble proportion, called the musical proportion’ (Iklwan 1999: I, 147). See also I, 113 (summary statement about number, sound, calligraphy, and so on); I, 152–3 (astronomy); I, 223–5 (anatomy); I, 252–3 (colour); and so on.
74. I, 185. The idea of proportion as necessary to all arts frequently recurs in the Rasa‘il (e.g. I, 250).
75. I, 219. The first sentence is repeated almost word for word at the end of the section (I, 222). Similar statements about calligraphy reappear in other parts of the epistles.
76. I, 219 (this is repeated in II, 149).
77. III, 145. This statement comes from the seventeenth epistle, on languages and scripts. It repeats the one made in the epistle on music (I, 220) almost word for word, but adds to it the important mention of layout.
78. I, 222: 54 corresponds to the major third in music – on the other ratios, cf. page 103.
79. Safadi 1979: 49. I am grateful to Omar Ali De Uozaga for this information.
81. See Chapter 4.
82. The aperture of didh has an obtuse angle, whereas in final šit it is markedly acute (about 45°).

Chapter Four: Towards the Codification of Cursive

1. The intermediary NJS-II, which was part of the first classification (Déroche 1983a: 45–7), was later abandoned (Déroche 1992: 136–7).
2. Rice (1955) and Tabbaa (1991, 2001) employed ‘semi-Kufic’, while Whelan (1990: 124 and n. 59) preferred ‘broken Kuﬁc’ or ‘broken cursive’; the latter term was subsequently adopted by Blair (2006). The names ‘Persian Kufic’, ‘eastern Kuﬁc’, ‘‘hadf’’ and ‘chomoush’ have also been used (ibid.: 143–4). These different designations do not reflect divergences as to the formal qualities of the group. To some extent, they do echo its perceived degree of continuity with Kufic, or its assumed geographical spread. In the following pages, I will adopt Déroche’s terminology.
3. One can also note the angularity of medial ‘ayn/ghayn and initial ‘at’; or the sinuosity of initial ‘ain ‘an ‘ain ‘ain ‘ain.7
5. On the palaeographical significance of this letter, see Déroche 1999 (where mention is made of the present inscription, p. 92).


7. Zayn al-Din 1968: Fig. 112. See also, besides the examples discussed in this section, Grohmann 1934-62; III, nos. 171 (65 856-61), 172 (65 866-9), 173 (65 884-96); ibid.: IV, nos. 237 (65 864), 285 (65 876); Zayn al-Din 1968: Fig. 118 (65 879); Munajjid 1966: Plate 14 (65 880).

8. The dialectics are indicated by short strokes tending towards the shape of a dot, as opposed to longer, inclined strokes for the short vowels (on other aspects of the notation used in this manuscript, see Blair 2006: 145-7). This is presently the oldest dated Arabic manuscript on paper (another specimen written in 848 is mentioned in Beitz-Arië 1996: 9-10, but its exact reference and authenticity remain to be confirmed).

9. The largest extant fragment of the Rauqi Qur’an in CBL 1417 (187 folios, cf. Arberry 1967: Nos. 23-6; James 1989: No. 12; and Blair 2006: 148 for a colour picture). According to Whelan (1990: 134, n. 96), four (unpublished) folios given by Kirkor Minassian to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (25.161.5, two folios) and the Library of Congress (LC-1-85-154.82a-aa, two folios) are also from this manuscript. The Sinaitic Bible was originally published in Metzmaris 1985 (Parchment 52). Like the Rauqi Qur’an, it is written on parchment.

10. I am grateful to Elaine Wright, curator of the Islamic collections at the Chester Beatty Library, for this information. The Sinaitic manuscript appears to have eleven lines of text throughout, but they are irregularly spaced. In the image shown here, four rectangular rulings in lead outline the text box on the right page. The top ruling is less than one line height above the top baseline; it corresponds to the top of the sūl letters.

11. The rounded letter endings can be either curves combined with straight strokes at an angle, or approximate semicircles, but of markedly different sizes. The height of the alif can vary almost by half within the page space.

12. The tail of the final sān is closer to a quarter circle. One exception to this rule is the sān at the end of ‘waabia’ (right-hand side, line 4), which is flattened at the end.

13. For other examples of early Qur’anic NS, see Déroche 1992: Cat. 79 and Déroche 1983b: Plate IV-b.

14. The colophon of this manuscript is transcribed, but not reproduced, in Sayyid 1993-98: 21, making it difficult to confirm whether it is written in the same hand as the rest of the text. The scribe named in it, Abū Isāq al-Najjarī, was of Baghdadi origin, and a note at the end of the book states that it was read in Baghdad in 365/976 (ibid.: 21-2); provided the colophon is authentic, there is a good chance that the manuscript was copied in that city.

15. On this manuscript, see also Arberry 1953.

16. The pages from the Palermo and Isfahan Qur’ans illustrated here both belong to the Kullāh Collection. Other leaves are respectively preserved at the Nuruosmanîye Library (Istanbul, Ms. 23) for the Palermo Qur’ān and at TIEM (Ms. 453-6), as well as an unknown private collection, for the Isfahan Qur’an (cf. Déroche 1992: 146, 154).

17. Déroche (ibid.: 137) has compared one form of lām alif in ‘NS to that encountered in DJ. See also his remarks in ibid.: 37, 133.

18. This can be observed, for example, in the Isfahan Qur’an and in Arberry 1967: Plate 23 (CBL 1434); Nebes et al. 1997: Fig. 65 (Gotha Or. A442, transitory style between D and NS).

19. In a few cases, the modern signs completely prevail, e.g., the miniature manuscript attributed to Ibrāhīm Abū ‘Ayyash (Abbott 1941: Figs. 1-2); Arberry 1967: Plate 22; Paris 1982: Cat. 360.

20. See also Déroche 1992: Cat. 78; Jenkins 1983: 20-1; Christie’s, 1 April 1982, Lot 157; Sotheby’s, 18 April 1983, Lot 6.

21. This trend can be illustrated by a few figures. In the Palermo Qur’an, I have measured the ratio of text box width to height in three pages, where it varies between 1.58 and 1.01. The standard deviation from the mean text box ratio is 0.017; this variability is very small, and comparable to that observed in Kufic. But in the Isfahan Qur’an, the same ratio ranges between 1.47 and 1.59 in five published text pages, hence a standard deviation of 0.047, largely over the Kufic norm (see George 2007 for an explanation of these terms and of the underlying method).

22. Whereas qurūn were the scribing norm in Kufic, quaternions and even ternions are also attested in NS (Déroche 1992: 134).


24. E.g., Moritz 1905: Plates 119-20 (Fourth al-ka’dith of Abū ‘Ubayd ibn Sallām, 60 925) and 121 (a slightly later grammar of Sibawayh, 60 962).

25. See Şepen 1989: 46; Ritter 1953: Plate III.

26. For example, Vajda 1938: Plate 03 (Mathematical treatises, 60 969); Şepen 1989: Plate VI (Astronomical treatises by Thābit ibn Qurra, 60 980); Aitia 1955: Plate VII (Psalters, 60 977); Lewis and Gibson 1907: Plates IV (Lectionary of the Gospels, 60 980), V (Christian legends and histories, 60 998).
989); Vajda 1958: Plate 18 (Al-‘asr al-yawm al-tamam‘) by al-Dihābî, 1995). The page from the Mudakkhar al-kalâm of Abu Mar’shar published by Vajda (ibid.; Plate 17) is to fact a later addition to the original manuscript of Ms 927 (BNF Arabe 5902, Guessedon and Vernay–Nouri 2001: Cat. 22).

27. See notes 24 and 26.

28. D.S. Rice (1955: 11–28) has convincingly established the authenticity of this manuscript’s colophon and date. An ‘Ode on the art of calligraphy’ ascribed to Ibn al-Bawwâb is recorded in the Mughaddesam of Ibn Khaldûn (d. 13798; see Blair 2006a: 161–2 and James 1989. While it mentions paper, ink and the reed, no reference is made to letter shapes.

29. I have measured this ratio in the three plain text pages published by Rice (1955: Folios 10r, 138v, 283v), where its numerical value fluctuates between 1.43 and 1.46, i.e. a relatively small variation (on the underlying procedure, see George 2007).

30. See Rice 1955: Plate II.

31. We have seen that the ratio of text box height to width fluctuated slightly in the Qur’an of Ibn al-Bawwâb (note 29). A remarkable precision was achieved in Khalîli QUR828 (Figure 78), where this ratio remains virtually equal to 1.55 throughout the three plain text pages reproduced in James 1992 (Cat. 1). In a third example, QUR86 (ibid.; Cat. 2), the variation between the four published pages is much more important, with values ranging between 1.38 and 1.45: this manuscript, however, is later than the previous two (c. 1050–1150). Pages with a decorative band at their top or bottom are not included in these measurements, as this tends to disturb their layout.

32. The manuscript illustrated here (Figure 78) was first published in James 1992: Cat. 1. For further uses of NS in the Qur’an of Ibn al-Bawwâb, see notably Rice 1955: Plate V (Folios 280v, 286v). Examples from other manuscripts are TIE 440 (ibid.; Plate XIV); Deroche and Gladiss 1999: Abb. 47, attributed to Ibn al-Bawwâb, Ms 1011; TIE 451 (the ‘Suhaylî Qur’ân’, Figure 80 and Rice 1955: Plate XVII); Khalîli QUR87 (James 1980: Cat. 5); QUR407 (ibid.; Cat. 7); QUR797 (ibid.; Cat. 9) and QUR292 (ibid.; Cat. 11, dated 1283).


37. Tasvîrî 1951 (Arabic); Rosenthal 1971 (English). The Arabic and English versions were first published side by side in Rosenthal 1948.

38. Rosenthal 1971: 24. The Arabic phrase is ‘hum tufanman tukhab bi-humab jihabdâmûm’ (Tasvîrî 1951: 30). The name Yâqût, which presumably refers to the famous Yâqût al-Mu’taqi, is an abbreviation, as the latter lived some two centuries after Abû Hayyân (the less famous calligraphers known by the same name are also later). In the unique manuscript from which the treatise was edited, the place where the word now stands was scratched, which makes it appear as a subsequent addition (Rosenthal 1971: 20).

39. Tasvîrî 1951: 31; Rosenthal 1971: 28 (where the phrase is rendered as ‘the expert penman’).

40. A close variant is attributed to Ibrâhîm ibn Jabala in the same treatise (Tasvîrî 1951: 41; Rosenthal 1971: 39). On further versions of the same saying in other sources, see ibid. 26, n. 4.


43. Ibid.

44. XVI (al-Nâhî): 68: ‘And thy Lord revealed unto the bees, saying: “Take unto yourselves, of the mountains, houses, and of the trees, and of what they are building”’ (trans. A.J. Arberry). This point was also noted by Rosenthal (ibid.).


46. Ibid.: 31; Tasvîrî 1951: 35.

47. Secretarial treatises of the ninth century hardly ever refer to layout, and then only very simply, for example when Ibn Durâstawîyya mentions, without further elaboration, arrangement (al-tuwa‘îya), the separation of letters, their compactness (tanjîf), the joining of the lines and how they are spaced, among other elements of script (Ibn Durâstawîyya 1977: 114). He also discusses proper uses of elongation (al-ma‘a‘) in relation to such factors as the tightness of line spacing or the density of writing (ibid.: 121).


50. Two such manuscripts (Cairo, Dîr al-Kutub al-Mi’aîyâ, Ta’lîm Ta’yîmîr 18 = Sînā’a 14; and Tunis, Bibliothèque Nationale de Tunisie, Or.672) are reproduced in Raveï 1975 (the Tunis manuscript is also briefly outlined in Torki 1932: 243–4). Three more manuscripts of treatises attributed to Ibn Mugi’la are listed by Fâruz Sa’d in Ibn al-Sa’îqî 1997: 213–14 n. 78.

51. For instance, sin is composed of five strokes: one vertical, one curved, one vertical, one curved and one curved’ (Qalqashandi 1913: III, 31;
Rayat 1975: Tunis Ms, fol. 3v and Cairo Ms, fol. 3r; in the latter instance, the last ‘curved’ is replaced by ‘vertical’.

52. To give another example, in the Cairo manuscript (fol. 3r) add ‘is composed of four strokes: one bent to the right, one vertical, and two curved’, whereas in the Tunis manuscript (fol. 3v), it is made of ‘three curved strokes.’

53. Cairo Ms, fos. 3v-3r. The reference to proportion is absent from the two other versions of the text (Tunis Ms, fol. 3r; Qalqashandi 1913: III, 30 and 36), where ‘fi niṣba maqaddada fi al-fāṭir’ is given as ‘fi niṣba siṣna [Tunis = siṣna] maqaddada fi al-fāṭir’. This is probably a corruption of the original meaning.


55. Nadim 1971: 11. Al-Nadīm’s silence is particularly evocative, given the bibliographical nature of the Fihrist and the special attention it devotes to calligraphy, script types and both Ibn Maqṭla and brothers. Likewise, the bulk of al-Tawhidi’s epistle consists of quotations of numerous kutāb, Ibn al-Zahrāʾ, whom we have cited above, was an acquaintance of both Ibn Maqṭla and the Bānū Thawba.

56. See page 110.

57. Tabbara 1991 and 2001: ch. 2 (the latter being a slightly reworked version of the earlier article). Blair (2006a: 174-7) and Dérécho (2007: 29-30) have raised objections to Tabbara’s thesis.

58. For a general introduction to the issues surrounding variants and further references, see F. Leenhouvis, ‘Codices of the Qur’an’; idem, ‘Readings of the Qur’an’; C. Melchert, ‘Reciters of the Qur’an’; G.S. Reynolds, ‘Uthman’ (EQ).

59. See Chapter 1. In the traditional narrative, the earliest manuscripts of the Qur’ān were written without diacritics. These signs always appear in extant Hijāri manuscripts, though in some cases they are extremely parapiruncious.

60. See page 75.

61. The reading of Ḥafṣ follows the Kufan verse division, which has therefore become standard today. While it generally prevails in the contemporary Muslim world, a few other readings continue to be used regionally, notably that of Warsh (d. 815) after Naṭīf (d. 780) in West Africa and the Maghrib. Beside the above references, see M. Albin, ‘Printing of the Qur’ān’ (EQ).

62. See F. Leenhouvis, ‘Readings of the Qur’ān’ (EQ); and on the notation of variant readings in manuscripts, page 145.

63. For a discussion of these events, see Melchert 2006; as well as G.H.A. Janniholl, ‘Ibn Miksam’ and R. Paret, ‘Ibn Shamabudith’ (EI2).


66. As noted by Melchert (ibid.: 22), for whom the seven readings were ‘never formally or even universally accepted’ but rather reflect a turn towards ‘limited agreement and manageability.’ On the ten and fourteen readings, see Dutton 1999: 120-1.

67. On his anti-Shīʿa actions, see Sourdel 1959-60: II, 560-1. Dominique Sourdel, who studied the vicissitudes of his career in much detail, characterised Ibn Maqṭla as ambitious, deeply embroiled in court intrigues and, most of all, lacking political vision (ibid.).

68. As already noted, along with this broad issue, by Blair (2006a: 175 and 192, nn. 125-6). One could also cite the colophon of a Qurʾān in NS dated 1041 where the scribe traces his ancestry to ‘Abi ibn Abī Ṫūbah (Christie’s, 26 April 2005, Lot 15).

69. Blair 2006a: 175; for examples, see Table 4 and the above illustrations.


72. Ibid. This affinity could go back to the days of his father, who was a bānawi or atir; the clerk in charge of the curtain opening to the audience hall (Ibn Khalikān 1845: 71-2, 285).


74. Textual sources about the Fatimid treasury are conveniently gathered in Sayyid 1998: 8-13 (in Arabic).


78. Sayyid 1998: 19-30 (and also Blair 2006a: 176). One of these manuscripts is the genealogical treatise probably copied by al-Nāṣārīy (d. 954, see Table 1 and note 14 above). The other two do not carry an indication of provenance, but their script suggests production in the tenth or eleventh century, as noted by Aymar Frut’s Sīyār.

79. This manuscript is discussed in more detail by Rice (1955: 31-2 and Plate XVI), who does not give the evidence for the date 1096.


81. On the letter of al-Mustānṣir, see Hamdāni 1934: 312. Its date, 21 jamādā I, 456 (11 May, 1664), is erroneously given by Rice as 1661.

82. Rice 1955: 32.

83. See Stern 1960. The decree shown here was originally published by
Grohmann (1957: 644). Another decree issued the same year by al-Zahir is known to have been in the hands of the Karaiti community in Cairo in the early twentieth century, but no photograph of it has been published (Stein 1962: No. 2).


87. On this issue see R. Marián, 'Creation of the Qur'an' (Eq).

88. M. Taleb, 'Sâlihîn' (E12). I am grateful to Wilfred Madelung and Jeremy Johns for their remarks on this subject.

89. The definit pace of the text is made less obvious by its lack of legibility.


91. The issues of orthography and legibility have been noted by Tabbaa (1991: 125, 135, 140-1, 143), in the framework of his argument about Sunni orthodoxy.

92. One cannot exclude that vocalization was sometimes added to Qur'ans written at an earlier date. Nevertheless, if we look not at individual specimens but at series, a dividing line clearly emerges between Qur'ans in the earliest Kufic styles (AJ, BJ, CI, C), where these dots are often absent; and those in styles BII, CII, CIII and the D group, which are virtually always vocalized, even to a limited extent.

For examples of fully annotated manuscripts see, (i) in D.I.C, B1616 (James 1888: No. 2); CBL 1407 and related folios (ibid.: Plate 3); Sotheby’s, 29 April 1998, Lot 5; Christie’s, 29 April 1998, Lot 18; (ii) in D.III, Christie’s, 29 October 1992, Lot 232; Sotheby’s, 15 October 1997, Lot 7; (iii) in DVA, the manuscript in gold with five lines to the page (dispersed between many collections, e.g. Déroche 1992: Cat. 19); Sotheby’s, 15 May 2001, Lots 5-6 (where the discrepancies are later than the text); (iv) in DVB, Déroche 1992: Cat. 57 and (v) in DVC, ibid.: Cat. 58.

93. Twenty-one manuscripts have been studied along these lines by Yasir Dutton (1999 and 2000). Among the conventions that he observed are, for instance, green dots for 

94. In the latter category, one can note, for instance, the red vertical lines that indicate /âlif/ not marked in the skeleton of the text.

95. Dini 1969: 87 (Arabic); Dutton 1999: 119 (English); see also ibid.: 136, n. 46 and Dutton 2000: 13. The above conventions are listed in this description, with the minor difference that al-Dini saw green dots instead of blue for /âlif/ liaison (âlif al-wâw).

96. See Déroche 1992: Cat. 57, Salvat 1997: 34 and Christie’s, 16 October 2001, Lot 6 (D.Vb, all from the same manuscript); Sotheby’s, 25 April 1979, Lot 7 (horizontal Qur’an in D.Vb). See also Paris 1982: Cat 338 and Stanley 1996: Item 15 – both these manuscripts, which are in D.Va, have no discrepancies but use the modern notation for the short vowels. Some manuscripts in NS are also entirely vocalized with modern signs (cf. note 19).

97. Tabbaa 1991: 129-30; Déroche 1992: 135 and n. 35 (where a reference to CBL 1434, a manuscript dated 972, is erroneously cited for the ninth century). In the Kairouan collection, a verse table appears in one (unpublished) folio that apparently belongs to a ninth-century manuscript (personal communication from F. Déroche).

98. A full description is given in Déroche 1992: Cat. 82. See also Abbott 1941: Figs. 1-2 (miniature manuscript attributed to Ibn Mufâl, 23 lines, exact size unknown), Christie’s, 4 July 1985, Lot 72 (11.7 x 8.5 cm, 29 lines), Déroche 1992: Cats. 78 (15.5 x 11 cm, 13 lines), 80 (9.6 x 7.3 cm, 10 lines).

99. See James 1880: No. 2 (D.I, 21 x 16.5 cm, 20 lines); Salvat 1997: 32 (D.Va, 15.5 x 10.5 cm, 20 lines).

100. The size of these manuscripts is normally smaller than 15 x 10 cm (the Qur’an of Ibn al-Bawwab, with its 17.5 x 13.5 cm, is a relative exception to the rule). Besides our illustrations, see Rice 1955: Plate XIV c-f and Tabbaa 1991: Figs. 29-30 (CBL 1430, dated 803/1407); Rice 1955: Plate XIV a-b, g, Déroche and Gladis 1999: Abb. 47 and Tabbaa 1991: Figs. 31-2 (TEIM 449); James 1992: Cat. 2 (Khalil Qur’an, on parchment).

101. As noted by Déroche (1992: 133), who saw NS as ‘a compromise between calligraphy and everyday practice.’


103. On this subject, see also Whelan 1990: 122-5 and Blair 2004a: 177-18, who singled out the rise of the secretarial class as the main contributing factor.