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Lā yamassuhu illā 'l-muṭahharūn...
Notes on the interpretations of a Qur'ānic phrase

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**LĀ YAMASSUHU ILLĀ 'L-MUṬAHHARŪN...
NOTES ON THE INTERPRETATIONS OF A
QUR'ĀNIC PHRASE**

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In memory of Dr. Suliman Bashear

The meaning of the phrase *lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūna*¹ (Qur'ān 56:78–80) became the subject of a heated discussion; this is reflected in the various Qur'ānic commentaries and *ḥadīth* collections. The verses read: *innahu la-qur'ānun karīm [77] fī kitābin maknūn [78] lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūn [79]*. Several interpretations of the phrase and the different opinions of Muslim scholars concerning the Book referred to in this verse may give us a clue regarding the sanctity of the written version of the Qur'ān circulating in the Muslim community.

Some traditions provide information on the integrity of the text and the reliability of the scribes; others indicate that some scribes were not trained in copying the Qur'ānic text and the errors of these copyists are sometimes pointed out in the early sources. Some of the copyists were not Muslims. There are also accounts revealing differences concerning the text found in the various versions of the Qur'ān in circulation. Reports about the transmission of the Revelation to the Prophet and from him to the believers are also of interest.

I

Opinions found in the early sources concerning the meaning of the word *qur'ān* address questions such as whether this denotes only the heavenly

¹See different readings in Ibn Khālawayh (d. 370 AH), *Mukhtaṣar fī shawādhidhi l-qur'ān min kitābi l-badī'*, G. Bergstraesser, ed. (Cairo, 1934), p. 151: *illā l-muṭṭahharūn*; it is understood in the sense of *al-muṭaṭahhirūn*; *al-muṭṭahharūn* (which is understood as referring to angels, *al-malā'ika*). See also the readings and the explanations in Ḥusayn b. Abī l-'Izz al-Hamadānī (d. 643 AH), *al-Farīd fī i'rābi l-qur'āni l-majīd*, ed. Fahmī Ḥasan al-Nimr and Fu'ād 'Alī Mukhaymir, eds. (al-Dawḥa, 1411/1991), vol. 4, p. 422.

Book or it refers also to the Qur'ānic scrolls in the Muslims' possession, and whether the heavenly Book was written by Allāh himself or it is only a reflection of his revelation.

The well known scholar 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211 AH) records in his *Tafsīr*² the interpretation of Qatāda (d. 117 AH)³ (as transmitted by Ma'mar b. Rāshid): the phrase refers to the heavenly Book of the Qur'an which will not be touched "in the Presence of God" (*lā yamassuhu 'inda llāhi*), meaning that the heavenly Qur'an will not be touched except by the purified (i.e., by the angels –k), while in this world the Book is touched even by an impure Zoroastrian (*al-majūsī al-najis*) and by a filthy hypocrite (*wa-l-munāfiq al-rajis*).⁴ A clear line is thus drawn between the exalted heavenly Book which only the angels are permitted to touch and the scrolls of the Qur'an circulating in the Muslim community, touched (among others –k) by hypocrites and unbelievers.

Similar interpretations are put forward by other exegetes. Mujāhid (d. 104 AH) explains *lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūn* saying that "the Book in heaven will be touched only by the angels."⁵ Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Ziyād al-Farrā' (d. 207 AH) understands the "Book" to refer to the "Preserved Tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*), and the *muṭahharūn* are the angels purified from polytheism (*shirk*).⁶ The identification of the Book with *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz* is also recorded by al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548 AH);⁷

²'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tafsīr al-qur'ān*, Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad, ed. (al-Riyāḍ, 1410/1989), vol. 2, p. 273.

³For Qatāda, see Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Ḥaydarābād, 1326), vol. 8, pp. 351–356, no. 635; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Abū Sa'īd b. Khalīl b. Kaykaldī al-'Alā'ī, *Jāmi'u l-taḥṣīl fī ahkāmī l-marāsīl*, Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salāfi, ed. (Beirut, 1407/1986), pp. 254–256, no. 633; 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥanzalī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-marāsīl*, Ṣubḥī al-Sāmarrā'ī, ed. (Bagdad, 1386/1967), pp. 105–110. On the influence of traditions reported by Qatāda as transmitted by Ma'mar b. Rāshid, see 'Abdallāh Abū l-Sa'ūd Badr, *Tafsīr Qatāda* (Cairo, 1400/1980), pp. 51–52, 54.

⁴See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīri l-qur'ān* (= *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*) (Būlāq, 1328; reprint Beirut, 1392/1972), vol. 27, p. 119 and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī l-tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr* (Cairo, 1314), vol. 6, pp. 162–163.

⁵Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makhzūmī, *Tafsīr*, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Sūrātī, ed. (Islāmābād, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 652 infra–653 l. 1; see also Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224 AH), *Faḍā'il al-qur'ān*, Wabḥī Sulaymān Ghāwujī, ed. (Beirut, 1411/1991), p. 25; al-Bayḥaqī, *Ma'rifatu l-sunan wa-l-āthār*, Aḥmad Ṣāqir, ed. (Cairo, 1389/1969), vol. 1, pp. 253–254; Ibn al-Ja'd, *Musnad*, 'Amīr Aḥmad Ḥaydar, ed. (Beirut, 1410/1990), p. 344, no. 2366; Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, Bashshār 'Awwād, Ma'rūf and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khalīl, eds. (Beirut, 1412/1992), vol. 1, p. 90, no. 234 and cf. *ibid.*, p. 91, no. 239. On Mujāhid b. Jabr see Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn b. Khalīl b. Kaykaldī, *Jāmi'u l-taḥṣīl*, pp. 273–274, no. 736.

⁶'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ismā'īl Shalabī and 'Alī al-Najdī Nāṣif, eds. (Cairo, 1972), vol. 3, pp. 129 infra–130 supra; on al-Farrā', see Ibn Ḥajar al-Ājurrī, *al-Sharī'a*, Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī, ed. (Beirut, 1403/1983), p. 89.

⁷Al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīri l-qur'ān* (Beirut,

it is the Preserved Tablet, guarded and hidden from His creatures, in which God put down (*athbata fīhi*) the Qurʾān.

The perception that “the Qurʾān” denotes the exalted Scripture which only the angels are privileged to touch was widely circulated in orthodox circles. Al-Ājurrī, one of the great scholars of the fourth century (d. 360 AH), relates that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal harshly censured those who claim that the text of the Qurʾān in the earthly books is a narration (*ḥikāya*) of the contents of the Preserved Tablet.⁸ A verse of the Qurʾān recited in the presence of a person (or a group of persons –k) is indeed the true speech of God (*kalāmu llāhi*), says al-Ājurrī, not the narration (*ḥikāyatun*) of God’s Word. This utterance refers to the scrolls of the Qurʾān (*maṣāḥif*).⁹

Other interpretations relate the phrases in our verses more closely to purely human activities. Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502 AH) also interprets *kitāb maktūn* as *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*.¹⁰ However, he records also another explanation: the word *maktūn* indicates that the Qurʾān is kept in the hearts of the believers. This is closely related to the virtue of learning the Qurʾān by heart, keeping it in memory and reciting it orally; oral transmission is considered superior to written transmission. Al-Māwardī, for his part, mentions four interpretations of *al-kitāb al-maktūn*: *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*; the *tawrāt* and the *injīl*; the Psalms (*zabūr*), or the Qurʾān as circulated in this world.¹¹

Another interpretation of *lā yamassuhu*, which associates the required purity with humans, is quoted on the authority of al-Farrāʾ: “Only the purified and believing will find its taste (*ṭaʿmahu*) and its usefulness (*naḥʿahu*).”¹²

That the pure beings referred to in the verses are humans is supported by another interpretation in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Tafsīr* (given on the authority of Abū Bakr b. Ḥazm,¹³ reported by his two sons and

1380/1961), vol. 17, p. 132.

⁸Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ājurrī, *al-Sharḥ*, Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Fiḳī, ed. (Beirut, 1403/1983), p. 89.

⁹*Ibidem*, p. 89 infra.

¹⁰*Al-Mufradāt fī gharībī l-qurʾān* (Cairo, 1324), p. 457.

¹¹Al-Māwardī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, p. 178 penult.–179 supra; see the explanation of ‘Ikrima in al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 6, p. 162: “*fī kitābīn maktūnīn*,” *qāla*: *al-tawrāt wa-l-injīl*, “*lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūna*,” *qāla*: *ḥamalatu l-tawrāti wa-l-injīl*, and in Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Ḥayyān al-Ghamāṭī al-Jayyānī’s (d. 745 AH), *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ* (Cairo, 1328), vol. 8, p. 214.

¹²Al-Māwardī (d. 450 AH), *al-Nukat wa-l-uyūn* (*Tafsīr al-Māwardī*), Khidr Muḥammad Khidr, ed., revised by ‘Abd al-Sattār Abū Ghudda (Kuwayt, 1402/1982), vol. 4, p. 179 and traced back to al-Farrāʾ. It is also recorded by Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Mālīkī in his *Aḥkām al-qurʾān*, p. 1725 and traced back to al-Farrāʾ.

¹³See on ‘Amr b. Ḥazm: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamayizi l-ṣaḥāba*, ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, ed. (Cairo, 1328), vol. 8, p. 214.

transmitted by Ma‘mar): the Prophet wrote a letter in which he stated that only a pure person would be permitted to touch the Qur’ān (*lā yamassuhu illā ṭāhir*).¹⁴

It is evident that the Qur’ānic prohibition refers to persons who are not in a state of purity and are willing to touch the Qur’ān. It indicates as well that the scrolls of the Qur’ān may be desecrated if touched by an impure person.

This is reflected in the story of ‘Umar’s conversion to Islam. While still an unbeliever, he approached his Muslim sister and her husband while they were reciting *Sūrat Ṭāhā* and asked them to show him the *muṣḥaf*. They quoted the phrase *lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūn*; ‘Umar understood, washed his body and embraced Islam.¹⁵ The fact that the story is told by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150 AH) indicates that the belief in the sanctity of the Qur’ānic scrolls was current in the Muslim community already in the second century AH.

Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Mālikī’s opinion regarding the sanctity of the copies of the Qur’ān can be deduced from an elegy mourning the Prophet’s death, attributed to Abū Bakr:

We lost the Revelation when you left us:
and the Word of God left us (as well).
Except that what you left for us in the past,
transmitted from generation to generation in the noble
sheets.

[*al-wāfir*]
faqadnā l-wahya idh wallayta ‘annā:
wa-wadda‘anā mina llāhi l-kalāmu.

¹⁴Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 273; ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, Ḥabību l-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī, ed. (Beirut, 1390/1970), vol. 1, pp. 341–342, no. 1328; Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Faḍā’il al-qur’ān*, p. 244, (67, 1–2); ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif* (Dār Qurtuba, n.p., n.d.), pp. 185–186 *infra*; Abū l-Layth Naṣr b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī, (d. 375 AH), *al-Tafsīr al-musammā baḥr al-‘ulūm*, ‘Alī Muhaddad Mu‘awwaḍ *et alii*, eds. (Beirut, 1413/1993), vol. 3, p. 319; ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī (d. 468 AH), *al-Wasīf fī tafsīri l-qur’āni l-majīd*, ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd *et alii*, eds. (Beirut, 1415/1994), vol. 4, p. 240; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī l-Qurtubī (d. 671 AH), *al-Jāmi‘ li-ahkāmī l-qur’ān* (Cairo, 1387/1967), vol. 17, p. 225; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Ḥaydarābād, 1344), vol. 1, p. 88; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 6, p. 162; Abū ‘Alī al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548 AH), *Majma‘ al-bayān fī tafsīri l-qur’ān* (Beirut, 1380/1961), vol. 27, p. 132 records the interpretation of Muqātil (d. 150 AH) stating that the phrase *innahu qur’ānun karīmūn* points to the fact that the Qur’ān is noble (*karīm*) because God honoured it. It is, therefore, forbidden for the ritually impure to touch the Qur’ān.

¹⁵On ‘Umar’s conversion to Islam, see Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawīyya*, al-Saqqā, al-Ābyārī, Shalabī, eds. (Cairo, 1355/1936), vol. 1, pp. 369–370; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 88.

*siwā mā qad tarakta lanā qadīman,
tawārathahu l-qarāṭīsu l-kirāmu.*¹⁶

Ibn al-ʿArabī comments on these verses, saying that they refer to the scrolls of the Qurʾān (*ṣuḥuf al-qurʾān*) in the hands of the Muslims, dictated by the Prophet (*allatī kāna l-nabiyyu ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam yumtāhā*) to his scribes. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the *ṣuḥuf al-qurʾān* are identical with the *qarāṭīs* mentioned in Abū Bakr's elegy.¹⁷ The scrolls of the Qurʾān are thus reproductions of the revelation granted by God to the Prophet and must be treated with proper reverence. The people of Irāq (among them Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī) consequently requested that only a believer in a state of purity be permitted to touch the Qurʾān.¹⁸

The need to preserve the purity of the book seems to have been the reason for a number of prohibitions aimed at preventing those considered unclean from touching the Qurʾān; this probably caused Ibn ʿAbbās to prevent Jews and Christians from reading the Qurʾān.¹⁹ The famous scholar ʿIzz al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī (d. 360 AH) is said to have forbidden to give a copy of the Qurʾān to a Jew or a Christian for binding. It is also forbidden to leave books of *ḥadīth* or *tafsīr* in the hands of an infidel who was not expected to embrace Islam.²⁰

In his *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*,²¹ Abū Ḥayyān quotes an anonymous scholar who says that the *kitāb maktūn* refers to the codices of the Muslims (*maṣāḥif al-muslimīn*), guarded from (vicious -k) changes and alterations (*maṣūna mina l-tabdīl wa-l-taghyīr*). It is instructive that Abū Ḥayyān adds a note saying that at that time (*idh dhāka*), no codices (*maṣāḥif*) of the Qurʾān existed; this is a prediction concerning the situation in the future (*ikhbārūn bi-ghayb*).

Ibn al-ʿArabī quotes the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfa who permitted the impure to touch the Qurʾān on its outer side and on the margins which are without script (*wa-ruwiya ʿanhu annahu yamassu zāhirahu wa-ḥawāshiyahu wa-mā lā maktūba fīhi*). The script, on the other hand, may only be touched by the pure believer. Ibn al-ʿArabī himself rejected this opinion, saying that “the precinct of the forbidden is also forbidden” (*li-annā*

¹⁶Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Aḥkāmū l-qurʾān*, vol. 4, p. 1739.

¹⁷About the *bayt al-qarāṭīs* in the time of ʿUthmān, see M.M. Bravmann, *The spiritual background of early Islam* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 312–314; Bravmann renders the word *qarāṭīs* by *rolls of papyrus* (i.e. documents) on p. 312 *infra*.

¹⁸Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Aḥkāmū l-qurʾān*, vol. 4, p. 1739.

¹⁹Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 17, p. 226.

²⁰See ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī, *Kitābu l-fatāwā*, ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, ed. (Beirut, 1406/1986), p. 67, no. 39.

²¹Vol. 8, p. 214.

ḥarīma l-mamnū‘i mamnū‘un).²²

A legal opinion of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal mentions a case in which the believer in a state of impurity could read the Qur’ān without touching it, being helped in reading by a stick.²³

It is evident that we find here two different interpretations of the meaning of the word *qur’ān*: it denotes either the Holy Book in Heaven, or the text of the Qur’ān in the possession of the believers which should not be touched by the impure, according to the injunction of the Prophet in his letter to ‘Amr b. Ḥazm.

Al-Māwardī records in his *Tafsīr*²⁴ six interpretations for the phrase *lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūn* when referring to the text of the Qur’ān which we hold in our hands: it can only be touched by persons purified from polytheism (*shirk*),²⁵ from sins and faults,²⁶ from ritual impurity and filth (*illā l-muṭahharūn mina l-aḥdāth wa-l-anjās*),²⁷ or only the believers in the Qur’ān who will find the taste of its benefit,²⁸ reap its reward,²⁹ or finally — only the believers will request the Qur’ān (*lā yaltamissuhu illā l-mu’minūn*).³⁰

However, early scholars of Muslim law did not always agree how to preserve the required state of purity. Some Companions (Ibn ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbās) used to read the Qur’ān in a state of ritual impurity after breaking wind (*ḥadath*), without using water for their ablution.³¹ Salmān al-Fārisī used to read verses of the Qur’ān without performing the *wuḍū’*.³²

The story of Salmān is recorded in a slightly different version by al-Samarqandī in his *Tafsīr*:³³ Salmān came out of the privy and was

²²Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām al-qur’āni*, vol. 4, p. 1727.

²³Abū l-Faḍl Šāliḥ b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Masā’il al-īmām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Dīm Muḥammad, ed. (Delhi, 1408/1988), vol. 3, p. 208, no. 1667.

²⁴See al-Māwardī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, p. 179; Abū Bakr ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistāni, *Kitābu l-maṣāḥif*, p. 185 penult.

²⁵Reported by Ibn al-Kalbī.

²⁶Reported by al-Rabī‘ b. Anas.

²⁷Reported by Qatāda.

²⁸Reported by al-Farrā’.

²⁹Reported by Mu‘adh b. Jabal.

³⁰Reported by Ibn Baḥr. Cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 13, p. 548, no. 17320: . . . ‘an Abī l-‘Āliya: *lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūn, qāla: laysa antum, antum aṣḥābu l-dhunūb*; see *al-Suyūṭī*, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 6, p. 162.

³¹See ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 1, p. 338, no. 1316: *innā la-naqra’u ajzā’anā min al-qur’āni ba‘da l-ḥadathī mā namassu l-mā’a*. See also al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 90 and Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath’s *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, pp. 184–185: *hal yamassu l-muṣhaf man qad massa ḍḥakarahu*, and pp. 187–188: *wa-qad rukhkhīsa fī massi l-muṣhaf ‘alā ghayri wuḍū’in* and *al-mustahāda tamassu l-muṣhaf*.

³²‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 1, p. 340, no. 1324.

³³*Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 319, and see this tradition: al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol.

asked by his companions to perform the ablution, as they wanted to ask him about some verses of the Qurʾān. Salmān quoted the tradition about the prohibition of touching the Book by an impure person; he refrained from touching it, but recited the verses of the Qurʾān which his companions had forgotten. Al-Samarqandī concludes that an impure person is forbidden to touch the Qurʾān, but may recite it.

Al-Ḥasan did not see anything wrong with touching the Qurʾān (*al-muṣṣhaf*) and in carrying the Book without performing the required ablution, and al-Shaʿbī did not see any fault (*kanā lā yarā baʿsan*) in carrying the book of the Qurʾān (*al-muṣṣhaf*) wrapped (*bi-ʿalāqatihi*) without performing the required ablution.³⁴ Ibn ʿAbbās permitted a person to carry the Qurʾān while wearing a garment in which he had had sexual intercourse.³⁵ ʿAbdallah b. al-ʿAbbās reports that the Book touched only by the pure is the Book in Heaven. Mujāhid says that the phrase indicates that this Book is guarded from dust (*al-qurʾānu fī kitābihi l-maknūni lladhī lā yamassuhu shayʾun min turābin wa-lā ghubārīn*).³⁶

ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ held that a person who read the Qurʾān and noticed suddenly the smell of his breaking wind must stop reading and wait until the smell disappears.³⁷

An instructive tradition recorded by ʿAbd al-Razzāq seems to indicate that reading the Qurʾān without performing ablution after relieving oneself was a common Islamic practice. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb came out of the privy (*kanīf*) and started to recite verses of the Qurʾān. Abū Maryam al-Ḥanafī asked him in astonishment: “You just came out of the privy (*al-khalāʾ*) and you read the Qurʾān?” ʿUmar retorted: “Is it a legal opinion given to you by Musaylima?”³⁸

A similar case is recorded in Abū Yūsuf’s (d. 182 AH) *Kitāb al-āthār*

1, p. 90.

³⁴ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 1, p. 344, no. 1341; and see Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Faḍāʾil al-qurʾān*, p. 245, (67, 4–5). I owe this rendering of *ʿalāqa* to Dr. Mīthqāl Nāṭūr.

³⁵Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 27, pp. 118–119.

³⁶Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Tidhkār fī afḍali l-adkhkār*, p. 101.

³⁷Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 340, no. 1326; this tradition is recorded as well by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH) in his *al-Tidhkār fī afḍali l-adkhkār fī fadli l-qurʾān wa-qārīʾihi wa-mustamiʾihi wa-l-ʿāmili bihi wa-ḥurmati l-qurʾāni wa-kayfiyyati tilāwatihi* (Beirut, n.d.), p. 108, on the authority of Mujāhid. On a special kind of an “imaginary” breaking of winds caused by Satan, see Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, *Kitābu l-āthār*, Abū l-Wafāʾ, ed. (Cairo, 1355), p. 38, no. 137.

³⁸ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 1, p. 339, no. 1318. On Abū Maryam al-Ḥanafī, see Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut, 1377/1957), vol. 3, pp. 377 infra–378; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 90; the name of the man who asked ʿUmar why he recites the Qurʾān after returning from the privy is not mentioned in this report.

on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd who stated that there is nothing wrong with reading the Qur’ān without performing ablution.³⁹

Scholars were divided in their opinion whether menstruating women and men in a state of impurity are allowed to read the Qur’ān and to recite its verses; some objected to an impure believer (*al-junub*) reading the Qur’ān, while others permitted the reading of a small number of verses.⁴⁰

Scholars also disagree whether the impure are allowed to touch dīnārs and dirhams on which Qur’ānic verses are inscribed. Some held this to be strictly forbidden, while others tried to compromise, saying that people have no choice but to touch the coins.⁴¹

Another explanation connects *lā yamassuhu illā al-muṭahharūn* to the story of the Satans who were jailed by Sulaymān in the sea; they would come out and read to the people a Qur’ān; Qur’ān is rendered here as “a recitation” *qirā’ā*.⁴² Al-Ṭabarī records a report on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk saying that the Satans strove to bring down the Qur’ān from Heaven to Muḥammad, but God prevented them and the Qur’ān remained out of their reach.⁴³

Al-Ṭabarī records opinions of many Muslim scholars who glossed “the pure” as referring to the angels in heaven. He mentions, however, another explanation: “the pure” indicate those who are purified from their sins.

³⁹Abū Yūsuf, *Kitābu l-āthār*, Abū l-Wafā’, ed. (Cairo, 1355), p. 66, no. 327: ... *fa-qāla ‘abdu llāhi: lā ba’sa an taqra’a l-qur’ānā ‘alā ghayri waḍū’in*.

⁴⁰See e.g. ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 1, pp. 336–337, nos. 1302–1309; see al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīf*, vol. 4, p. 239 penult.; al-Dhahabī, *al-Arbā’ūna ḥadīthan, mashyakhatu Ibn Taymiyya*, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Sayrawān, ed. (Beirut, 1406/1986), pp. 147–148, no. 30.

⁴¹See ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 1, p. 343, nos. 1335–1338. Cf. Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235 AH), *al-Muṣannaf*, ‘Abd al-Khālīq al-Afghānī, ed. (n.p., n.d., reprint), vol. 1, p. 113: Some pious believers disliked to enter the privy (*al-khalā’*) carrying the “white” dirhams, others did not consider it odious. Some pious people considered it necessary to carry the “white” dirhams entering the privy in order to keep their money safe. See Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallah al-Shiblī, *Maḥāsīn al-wasā’il fī ma’rifati l-awā’il*, Muḥammad al-Tūnjī, ed. (Beirut, 1412/1992), p. 291: ... *awwala man kataba l-qur’ānā ‘alā dirhamīn al-ḥajjāju bnu yūsufa l-thaqafīyyu... kanā l-ḥajjāju awwala man qaraba ḥādhihi l-darāhima l-bīda wa-kataba ‘alayhā sūratān min al-qur’āni. fa-qāla l-qurrā’: “qātalahū llāhu, kataba sūratān min al-qur’āni fa-ḥamala l-nāsa ‘alā mā yakrahūna, ya’khudhuhu l-junubu wa-l-ḥā’id.”* See Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abdallah al-‘Askarī, *al-Awā’il* (Beirut, 1407/1987), p. 174: ... *wa-daraba l-ḥajjāju al-darāhim wa-naqasha fihā: Allāhu aḥad, Allāhu l-ṣamad, fa-karihahā l-nāsu li-makāni l-qur’āni fihā, li-anna l-junuba wa-l-ḥā’ida yamassuhā*; Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitābu l-maṣāḥif*, pp. 186–187; Abū ‘Ubayd, *Faḍā’il al-qur’ān*, p. 245. Cf. W. Muir, *The Caliphate, its rise, decline and fall* (Edinburgh, 1924), pp. 339–340; see especially p. 340, n. 1.

⁴²Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-bayān*, vol. 27, p. 118.

⁴³Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-bayān*, vol. 27, p. 118 infra; and see above, note 8.

Ikrima says that “the pure” were the bearers of the Torah and the Injil.⁴⁴ An interpretation transmitted by Ibn Wahb extends the usual limits of the “pure” by including the angels, prophets and the messengers.⁴⁵

Al-Qurṭubī comments on the phrase *innahu la-qur'ānun karīmūn* stating that the Qur'ān is not a book of sorcery or of soothsaying; it is a book granted to the Prophet as a miracle; it is respected by the believers because it is the Word of God, as well as by the people in Heaven because it is God's revelation. It is a Book sent down by God.⁴⁶ This explication given by al-Qurṭubī is a true example of the *faḍā'il al-qur'ān* genre, which was current already in the early period of Islam.

A typical example of a tradition attributed to the Prophet, emphasizing the miraculous qualities of the text of the Qur'ān was transmitted on the authority of 'Uqba b. 'Āmir al-Juhanī: “Were the Qur'ān wrapped in raw leather and thrown into fire, it would not burn,” (another version: “it would not be touched by fire” –k) (*law kāna l-qur'ānu fī ihābin thumma ulqiya fī l-nāri mā 'htaraqa*).⁴⁷

A tradition transmitted by Jābir b. Zayd (died at the end of the first century of the Hijra –k) and Abū Nahīk (al-Azdī, al-Farāhīdī –k) establishes a link between the heavenly Book and the Qur'ān in the believers' possession; it states that the earthly Qur'ān was sent down from the Tablets of the Qur'ān in Heaven.⁴⁸

II

The verses discussed in the present article were used also in the controversy related to the createdness or otherwise of the Qur'ān. Regarding this issue, it was necessary to define the relationship between the heavenly book and the earthly copies of the Qur'ān. Such a definition is found in Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr*. Qur'ān 7:155 reads: “And when Moses' anger abated in him, he took the Tablets; and in the inscription of them was guidance, and mercy unto all those who hold their Lord in awe” (*akhadha l-akwāḥa wa-fī nuskhatihā hudan wa-rahmatun li-lladhīna hum li-rabbihim yarhabūna*). When commenting on this verse,

⁴⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, vol. 27, pp. 118 infra–119 supra; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkāmī l-qur'ān = Tafsīru l-Qurṭubī*, vol. 17, p. 225.

⁴⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, vol. 27, p. 119.

⁴⁶ Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 17, p. 224.

⁴⁷ Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, vol. 5, p. 324, no. 7466; Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id*, vol. 7, p. 158; al-Firyābī, *Faḍā'il al-qur'ān*, pp. 109–111, nos. 1–2.

⁴⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, vol. 17, pp. 118–119.

al-Rāzī stresses that the verse explicitly states *wa-fī nuskhatihā*, not *wa-fihā*; this indicates that this was not the original text (*awwalu maktūbin*), but merely a copy (*nuskhatun*) of the original text. The word *nuskha* was used because Mūsā began to copy the contents of the broken tablets on a golden tablet (*fa-nasakha mā fihā fī lawḥi dhahabin*) which contained (rules of -k) the Right Way (*hudan*) and of mercy. The other tablets contained details of everything (which would happen in the future -k). According to another opinion, the word *wa-fī nuskhatihā* was used because God dictated (*laqqana*) to Moses the Torah and later ordered him to write it down; Moses then transferred the Torah “from his heart” to the tablets and called it a copy (*nuskha*).

It is obvious that God sent Jibrīl to the Prophet and the angel recited to him the verses of the Qurʾān as he heard them from God. Instructive is al-Rāzī’s analysis of the phrase *innahu la-qurʾānun karīmūn fī kitābin maktūbin*. According to two different explanations, the word *kitāb maktūn* refers either to the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*), or to the the written book (*muṣḥaf*) used by the believers. Al-Rāzī argues that writing down the Qurʾān does not mean that the Qurʾān dwells in the book (*wa-lā yalzamu min kitābati l-qurʾāni fī l-kitābi an yakūna l-qurʾānu ḥāllan fī l-kitābi. . .*). By way of illustration, he explains that this is like a man who writes on the palm of his hand “a thousand dīnars;” this does not mean that he holds in his hand a thousand dīnārs, and thus too if one writes on the palm of one’s hand *al-ʿarsh* or *al-kursī*.

Al-Rāzī further discusses whether it can be assumed that the whole Qurʾān is contained in one book, or that every compendium of the Qurʾān contains only a part of the Qurʾān and only when all the Qurʾāns gathered together contain the entire text. Al-Rāzī rejects all the three options, leading to the idea that the Qurʾān is not contained in any of the books.

Al-Rāzī affirms that the Qurʾān is God’s Word; it is a pre-existent, eternal attribute of God, existing in Him and cannot be separated from Him (*bal huwa kalāmu llāhi taʿālā, wa-kalāmuhu ṣifatur qadīmatun qāʾimatun bihi lā tufāriquhu*).

Finally al-Rāzī deals with the expression *tanzīl* and *munzal*. These two expressions could lead one to the erroneous conclusion that the revealed Qurʾān which was sent down was separate from the Essence of God; that would of course mean that the Qurʾān was created, as everything — except God — is created. But the truth is that the Qurʾān was sent down in a way which did not invalidate the concept that it is an indivisible part of the Essence of God, since it is His Word. The “sending down” of the Qurʾān was carried out in the same way as revelation was given to Moses: God taught Jibrīl the Qurʾān and he learned it by

heart. Jibrīl in turn taught the Qur'ān to the Prophet who then taught it to the Muslim community.⁴⁹

The problem of the status of the Qur'ān as an inseparable part of the divine essence was the subject of exhaustive discussions among Muslim scholars. "God's Words" (*al-nabī al-ummī alladhī yu'minu bi-'llāhi wa-kalimātūhi*), mentioned in Qur'ān 7:158, are understood as referring to the Qur'ān.⁵⁰ In the same way, the expression *'ilm* in Qur'ān 3:61 and 2:146 was interpreted as referring to the Qur'ān constituting a part of God's essence.⁵¹ Al-Ājurrī mentions a specific group of believers who held that the Qur'ān is the Word of God, but refrained from stating that the Qur'ān was not created. This group was called *al-wāqifa* and were accused of belonging to the Jahmiyya.⁵²

In his *al-Ibāna an uṣūli l-diyāna*, al-Ash'arī (d. 324 AH) draws a peculiar comparison between the Jahmī view that God's Word was created and placed in a tree (or in a bush –k) and the Christian allegation that the Word of God was located in the womb of Maryam; he vigorously refutes this claim. Al-Ash'arī also rejects the Jahmiyya's perception according to which the names of God are created; these are included in the Qur'ān; the Qur'ān is the uncreated Word of God; thus the names of God are uncreated.⁵³

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH) gives a concise account of his credo regarding the nature of the Qur'ān. He stresses that it is the uncreated Word of God. He who denies this is to be considered an infidel (*kāfir*) and shedding his blood is lawful. Some curses attached by al-Ṭabarī at the end of this account are directed against those who would distort his opinions concerning the Qur'ān.⁵⁴

A comprehensive exposition of this subject is given by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 457 AH). Of special importance is his opinion concerning the difference between the written Qur'ān and the orally transmitted Qur'ān. The first tenet challenged by Ibn Ḥazm is the assumption that the Qur'ān

⁴⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Unmūdhaj jalīl fī as'ila wa-ajwiba min ghara'ib āyi l-tanzīl*, Riḍwān al-Dāya, ed. (Beirut, 1411/1990), pp. 158–159 and 496–497.

⁵⁰ See al-Ājurrī, *al-Sharī'a*, p. 76.

⁵¹ Al-Ājurrī, *al-Sharī'a*, p. 76–77. See also on pp. 77–82 the utterances of 'Abdallah b. al-Mubārak: "He who says that the Qur'ān was created is an infidel (*kāfir*);" Mālik b. Anas, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, Wakī', Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Shāfi'ī and others — all repudiated the assumption that the Qur'ān was created and demanded severe punishment for those who held this belief.

⁵² Al-Ājurrī, *al-Sharī'a*, p. 88; and see al-Khallāl, *al-Musnad min masā'il Aḥmad*, MS. BL. Or. 2675, fols. 154b–158a, 179b, 180a, infra, 180s, 159a, 160b, 181b.

⁵³ Al-Ash'arī, *al-Ibāna*, pp. 22–23.

⁵⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ṣarīḥu l-sunna*, Badr b. Yūsuf al-Ma'tūq, ed. (al-Kuwayt, 1405/1985), pp. 18–19: . . .*fa-man rawā 'annā aw ḥakā 'annā aw taqawwala 'alaynā fa-'dda'ā annā qulnā ḡayra dhālika fa-'alayhi la'natu llāhi wa-ghadabuhu wa-la'natu l-lā'inīn wa-l-malā'ikati wa-l-nāsi ajma'in*. . .

was created. It was based on Qur'ān 85:21–22: ... *bal huwa qur'ānun majīd fī lawḥin maḥfūz*. This verse might mislead people to think that the Qur'ān, having been put into the Guarded Tablet, was created after the creation of the Tablet and afterwards placed in it. Whether the Qur'ān was allegedly created simultaneously with the Tablet, or put into the Tablet after its creation, one might erroneously conclude that it was created by God. But the truth is, according to Ibn Ḥazm, that the Qur'ān, the everlasting Word of God, was not put into the Tablet after God created it. The Tablet contains merely a written reproduction of the Qur'ān, not the Qur'ān itself.

Ibn Ḥazm affirms that God created the Tablet, but the Tablet contains only writing which cannot be heard (*lā yuḥītu illā bi-rasmin maktūbin fihī, ghayri masmū'in*), while the Qur'ān is God's Word, voiced (*masmū'*), which cannot be seen (*lā yurā*). Conversely, the writing in the Tablet can be seen, but cannot be heard until read aloud and brought to the knowledge (of the people –k). The written script in the Tablet constitutes an exposition of God's Word (*fa-'lladhī fī-l-lawḥi khaṭṭun marsūmun, 'ibāratun 'an kalāmi llāhī 'azza wa-jalla*).

Ibn Ḥazm also observes that the Guarded Tablet is of limited size; were it true that the Qur'ān is included in the Guarded Tablet, it must be smaller than the Tablet. This is however impossible, as God assured the Prophet about the endless dimensions of the book in Qur'ān 18:110 and 31:28.

Ibn Ḥazm concludes that the Word of God will not be exhausted, it has neither beginning nor end; thus it cannot be contained in the Tablet which has finite dimensions. The Word of God, like His other attributes will last forever; what is in the Guarded Tablet is just a script (*fa-'lladhī fī-l-lawḥi innamā huwa khaṭṭun maktūbun*).

Ibn Ḥazm's opinion relates to God's Word in the *maṣāḥif*: God is indeed mentioned in the Qur'ānic compendia, circulating among the believers, pronounced with their tongues, but He does not reside in their compendia (*wa-huwa, 'azza wa-jalla, ghayru ḥallin wa-lā dākhilin fī maṣāḥifinā*). He is seated on His throne, He is omniscient, His Word has been written down on the Tablet. His Word is heard, but not seen; Moses and Adam heard His Words; the Prophet heard His Words on his nocturnal journey (*isrā'*).⁵⁵

In another passage, Ibn Ḥazm lists among the books of revelation containing divine speech the Torah, the Gospel (*injīl*), the Psalms (*zabūr*) and the scrolls (*ṣuḥuf*) (the sheets on which God's Revelation was recorded –k); all of these are also the Words of God and no one in the

⁵⁵Ibn Ḥazm, 'Alī b. Aḥmad, *al-Uṣūl wa-l-furū'*, Muḥammad 'Āṭif al-Irāqī, Suhayl Faḍlullāhī Abū Wāfiya and Ibrāhīm Ibrāhīm Hilāl, eds. (Cairo, 1978), pp. 394–400.

Muslim community would contradict it. Materials which help to convey God's Word to his creation, such as parchment, ink, as well as the voice of those who recite the Qur'ān or the other scriptures — all these are created by God but are not identical with the uncreated Word of God.⁵⁶

‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561 AH) reiterates a part of al-Ṭabarī's credo quoted above. He maintains that even the expression “My recitation of the Qur'ān is created” (*lafẓī bi-l-qur'ān makhḷūq*) must be renounced and the person who uttered it must be severely punished. The letters of the Arabic alphabet were also not created by God; they are a part of His Essence. He who says that these letters are created (*muḥdatha* or *makhḷūqa*) is an infidel (*kāfir*), and is guilty of transforming the Qur'ān into a created Book.⁵⁷

Some scholars in the later period of Islam compiled special treatises concerning the problem of the Qur'ān as a part of God's Essence. These treatises are of a popular character and are widely circulated in the Muslim community. Two of the authors of these treatises may be mentioned. Muwaffaq al-Dīn ‘Abdallah b. Aḥmad b. Qudāma al-Maqdisī (d. 620 AH),⁵⁸ and Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī (d. 643 AH), who thoroughly analyzed a widely circulating tradition, transmitted by several Companions of the Prophet in which the idea of the Qur'ān as a part of the Essence of God was especially emphasized: “From Him it began and to Him it will return.”⁵⁹

III

There were contradictory opinions as to the problem of selling and buying written copies of the Qur'ān (*maṣāḥif*). Some scholars disapproved of both buying or selling the books of the Qur'ān, while others opposed only selling Qur'āns, for it is not right to make a profit from God's Book.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī l-mīlal wa-l-ahwā' wa-l-niḥal*, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayra, eds. (Beirut, 1405/1985), vol. 3, pp. 11–23.

⁵⁷‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-tālibī tarīqi l-ḥaqq* (Cairo, 1322), vol. 1, pp. 65–67.

⁵⁸*Al-I‘tiqād*, ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abū l-‘Abbās, ed. (Cairo, 1990), pp. 36–39.

⁵⁹Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Ḥikāyat al-munāzara fī l-qur'ān ma'a ba'ḍi ahli l-bid'a*, ‘Abdallah b. Yūsuf b. Juday‘, ed. (al-Riyāḍ, 1409/1989).

⁶⁰See Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Faḍā'ilu l-qur'ān*, pp. 237–239, nos. 62, 1–62, 12. The same opinions were uttered by the early scholars according to the traditions recorded by Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī in his *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, pp. 173–178. See Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 6, pp. 60–63: *man kariha shirā'a l-maṣāḥif*; p. 62: . . . ‘an ibnī ‘umara qāla: *wadidtu annī ra'aytu l-aydiya tuqta'u fī bay'i l-maṣāḥif*. See also ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 8, p. 112, nos. 14524; Ibn Abī

The chapter concerning the selling and buying of *maṣāḥif* in Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī's *al-Maṣāḥif* contains some peculiar traditions which reflect uncommon opinions concerning the purchase of scrolls of the Qur'ān. Al-Sha'bī (d. 109 AH) argued that people selling copies of the Qur'ān merely sell the sheets (of paper, or the parchment –k), and get paid for their labour (of writing the text –k) (*wa-llāhi mā yabī'ūna kitāba llāhi, innamā yabī'ūna l-waraqa wa-'amala aydihim*).⁶¹ It is noteworthy that the assumption that the books of the Qur'ān contain only the ink and the sheets (of the paper or parchment –k), exposed above by al-Sha'bī and other respected scholars, was sharply censured by some orthodox scholars as belonging to the Mu'tazila.⁶²

The problem of writing *maṣāḥif* for sale was dealt with by the well known *faqīh* 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī.⁶³ He was asked whether a man who professionally copies the text of the Qur'ān and sells the written books may be considered to be performing a lawful work, or whether he should refrain from this work out of piety (*wara'*). Likewise, may he pursue this profession if he finds it difficult to observe ritual purity during the copying of the Qur'ānic text; in this case, is he allowed to write it while ritually impure?

'Izz al-Dīn states in his legal opinion that it is lawful to gain profit from copying the Qur'ān, and that there is no piety (*wara'*) in giving up this occupation. It is even a laudable profession because it encourages the person to repeat the text continuously (*istidhkar al-qur'ān*). Such a person must, however, observe the conditions of ritual purity while writing the text of the Qur'ān.

'Izz al-Dīn was also asked concerning a scribe who made some mistakes while copying the Qur'ān: some people reading this text might accuse the scribe of perpetrating a sin. What is the status of the copied text? 'Izz al-Dīn rules that if the copyist is a learned man, he has to correct the mistakes; if he does not know how to fix the text properly

Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 6, pp. 63–64: *man rakkhaṣa fī ishtirā'ihā*; pp. 64–65: *man rakkhaṣa bay'a l-maṣāḥif*. Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā*, vol. 9, pp. 45–46.

⁶¹Abū Dāwūd, *al-Maṣāḥif*, p. 177, *infra*; and see *ibid.*, ult. the saying of al-Sha'bī: *laysa yabī'ūna kitāba llāhi, innamā yabī'ūna l-waraqa wa-l-anqāsh*; cf. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, (Haydarābād, 1352), vol. 6, pp. 16–17; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Masā'il al-imām, riwāyat ibnihi Abī l-Faḍl Ṣāliḥ*. Faḍlu l-Raḥmān Dīm Muḥammad, ed. (Delhi, 1408/1988), vol. 2, p. 402, no. 1081. 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 8, pp. 110–114, nos. 14516–14531, 14530; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 6, p. 64, no. 270: ...*'anī l-Sha'bī 'annāhu qāla: innahum laysū yabī'ūna kitāba llāhi, innamā yabī'ūna l-waraqa wa-'amala aydihim*.

⁶²See e.g., Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Ḥikāyat al-munāzara fī l-qur'ān*, p. 47: ...*wa-yaqūlūna inna l-qur'āna maktūbun fī l-maṣāḥif, thumma yaqūlūna: laysa fihā illā l-ḥibru wa-l-waraqa. wa-in kāna kamā za'amū fa-lima lā yamassuhā illā l-muṭahharūn wa-mā ra'aynā l-muḥditha yumna'u min massi ḥibrin wa-lā waraqa*.

⁶³*Kitāb al-fatāwā*, p. 147, no. 106.

(*lā ya'rifu dabṭa l-qur'āni*), he should refrain from working as a scribe, because he may lead the ignorant astray.⁶⁴ On the other hand, there is a prophetic tradition stating that if a believer reads the Qur'ān distorting the text, or erring in his reading, the angel will put it down exactly as it was revealed.⁶⁵ In a similar vein, a non-Arab who mispronounces some words in the Qur'ān will be granted a reward as if he had read them correctly.⁶⁶ This indicates that some non-Arabs who embraced Islam used to pronounce the Qur'ānic text incorrectly.

In the early period of Islam, the believers seem to have been reluctant to pay professional scribes for copying the Qur'ān. They doubted their sincerity, faith and knowledge. Many anecdotes circulate concerning warnings issued by the pious as to the knowledge which is required of the copyist in Arabic, in matters of abrogation (*naskh*) and in the various readings of the Qur'ān.

In the first period of Islam, the believers did not buy copies of the Qur'ān (*maṣāḥif*); they used to ask their acquaintances, people of piety and virtue, to copy out some parts of the Qur'ān; sometimes people used to gather and write the text of the Qur'ān together. It was a collectively written text, accomplished out of expectation of divine reward (*kānū yaḥtasibūna bi-maṣāḥifihim*).⁶⁷

It seems that the use of professional scribes became prevalent at the end of the first century AH. One of the respected scholars who decided to make his living by copying the Qur'ān with the approval of the Muslim community was Mālik b. Dīnār.⁶⁸ Another person who became a professional scribe was Maṭar al-Warrāq.⁶⁹

⁶⁴Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, *Kitābu l-fatāwā*, pp. 144–145.

⁶⁵Ibn Kathīr, *Faḍā'il al-qur'ān*, p. 66.

⁶⁶Ibn Kathīr, *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶⁷'Abdallah b. Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitābu l-maṣāḥif*, p. 171.

⁶⁸Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, index; Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'* (Beirut, 1387/1967), vol. 2, pp. 357–389.

⁶⁹Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, index; Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 3, pp. 75–78.

Excursus

Abrogated verses and variant readings in the Qur'ān

Abrogated verses of the Qur'ān were sometimes circulated and transmitted by scholars.¹ Such was for instance the case of an abrogated verse defining the aim of the money donated for performing prayer and paying *zakāt*.² Another verse remembered by the believers despite its abrogation was a verse revealed during the expedition of Bi'r Ma'ūna, concerning the readers of the Qur'ān (*al-qurrā'*) killed in this battle: "Let our people know that we met our Lord" (*ballighū 'annā qawmanā annā laqīnā rabbanā*).³

A verse of legal character not included in the text of the Qur'ān was transmitted by 'Umar: "An old man and woman, if they fornicate, definitely stone them" *al-shaykhu wa-l-shaykhatu idhā zanayā fa-rjumūhumā al-battata*.⁴

¹See e.g., Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Ḥanafī, *al-Mu'taṣar min al-mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 163: *wa-qad yakhrūju minā l-qur'āni wa-yabqā fī l-ṣudūri*.

²See Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Risālatu l-jihād*, Laurenziana, *majmū'a* 197, fol. 89b, infra: *wa-kāna fī l-qur'āni l-mansūkh: innamā anzalnā l-māla li-iqāmi l-ṣalāti wa-ṭā'i l-zakāt*; this is mentioned in connection with the division of spoils. See al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa-fahmu l-qur'āni*, Ḥusayn al-Quwwatī, ed. (Beirut, 1402/1982), p. 399.

³Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Faḍā'ilu l-qur'ān*, p. 134; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 1, p. 105: *ballighū qawmanā annā qad laqīnā rabbanā fa-raḍīya 'annā wa-arḍānā*. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, vol. 2, p. 26. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut, 1377/1957), vol. 3, p. 515. See al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa-fahmu l-qur'ān*, p. 399: *kunnā naqūlu fīmā nusikha an: ballighū ikhwānanā annā qad laqīnā rabbanā fa-raḍīya 'annā wa-raḍīmā 'anhu*. Cf. the story of Ḥamza: when he and his friends were killed at Uḥud, his friends were eager to inform their brethren (i.e., the believers –k) how God had honored them. Then a special verse was revealed: *... lā yuḍī'u ajra l-mu'minīn* in Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī's *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn*, Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī, ed. (Beirut, 1409/1989), vol. 1, p. 418, no. 735; see also Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Musnad*, Akram Ḍiyā' l-Dīn, ed. (Beirut, 1405/1985), pp. 14–15, no. 3.

⁴Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Faḍā'ilu l-qur'ān*, p. 136; al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa-fahmu l-qur'āni*, p. 398; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, vol. 2, p. 26. Another story transmitted by 'Umar relates that he approached the Prophet when the verse was revealed and asked him to include it in the Qur'ān. The Prophet, however, disliked the idea.

See the conversation of 'Umar with God about the difference of punishment for fornication met out to the old in contradistinction to the punishment imposed on the young. This verse was transmitted by 'Umar in a slightly extended form: *al-shaykhu wa-l-shaykhatu idhā zanayā fa-rjumūhumā al-battata nakālan minā llāhi wa-llāhu shadīdu l-'iqābi*. 'Umar is said to have refrained from including the verse in the Qur'ān, fearing that he would be accused of falsely inserting the verse into the book. See al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'* (Beirut, 1961), vols. 3–4, pp. 433 ult.–434, l. 1; Yā'qūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī (= al-Basawī), *al-Ma'rifa wa-l-ta'rīkh*, Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umarī, ed. (Beirut, 1401/1981), vol. 2, p. 728; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, vol. 2, p. 26; Hossein Modarressi, "Early debates on the integrity of the Qur'ān: a

A peculiar story about the disappearance of this verse as well as of a verse concerning the suckling of an old man⁵ is reported on the authority of 'Ā'isha. According to this story, the verse ordering the stoning of a fornicator and the verse concerning the suckling of an adult were sent down and were kept under 'Ā'isha's bedstead on a parchment. When the Prophet once fell ill and was being taken care of, a domestic animal entered 'Ā'isha's home and ate the parchment containing the two verses.⁶

A tradition reported by Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām and traced back to 'Ā'isha says that the verse concerning the punishment for fornication was included in *Sūrat al-aḥzāb*, which originally contained the same number of verses as *Sūrat al-baqara*. The verses of *Sūrat al-aḥzāb* were however reduced to 73 and the verse concerning the fornication was "lifted" (*rufi'at*, i.e., it was abrogated -k) and was not included in the *mushaf*. Thus, according to the statement of 'Ā'isha, God lifted to Himself several verses reducing the number of the verses of *Sūrat al-aḥzāb* to 73. Al-Qurṭubī, however, denies that the verse concerning the punishment of fornication was recorded on a sheet (*ṣahīfa*) in the home of 'Ā'isha and was devoured by a domestic animal; he holds that this story was invented by the Shī'īs (*rawāfiḍ*) and the heretics (*malāḥid*).⁷ The verse concerning fornication and its punishment is indeed recorded in al-Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-manthūr*.⁸

According to a tradition traced to Ibn 'Abbās, 'Umar is said to have summoned the believers to attend a gathering in the mosque, ascended the *minbar* and told the believers that the fornication verse was revealed to the Prophet and read by the believers, but had "gone" with the Prophet together with many other verses of the Qur'ān. It is, however, a convincing proof of the validity of stoning for fornication. The Prophet laid down the punishment of stoning in that case, as did Abū Bakr; but there would come (in later generations -k) people who would

brief survey," *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993): 10–11, at notes 17–21. 'Abdallah b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Zawā'id fī l-musnad*, 'Āmir Ḥasan Ṣabra, ed. (Beirut, 1410/1990), p. 364, no. 158, recorded on the authority of Ubayy b. Ka'b: *la-qad ra'aytuḥā* (i.e., the *Sūrat al-aḥzāb* -k) *wa-innahā la-tu'ādīlu sūrata l-baqara, wa-la-qad qara'nā fihā: "al-shaykhu wa-l-shaykhatu idhā zanayā fa-rjūmūhumā al-battata nakālan mina llāhi wa-llāhu 'alīmun, ḥakīmun"*. See also *ibid.*, pp. 365–370, on the evaluation of this *ḥadīth*.

⁵ Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-'udabā'*, vols. 3–4, p. 434 supra.

⁶ Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 14, p. 113.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 5, pp. 179–180. See a shorter version of this tradition in Muḥammad b. Ayyūb b. al-Durays al-Bajalī's *Faḍā'il al-qur'ān*, Gh. Budayr, ed. (Damascus, 1408/1987), p. 153, nos. 225–227; see also 'Abdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Zawā'id*, p. 370; Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām's *Faḍā'il al-qur'ān* (Rabāt(?), 1995), vol. 2, pp. 147–148.

say that punishment by stoning was a lie and an invention.⁹ Some well known scholars argued that stoning of fornicators was not mentioned in the Qurʾān, and was merely a rule commonly accepted by the Muslim community.¹⁰

Ubayy b. Kaʿb held that the following verses were part of the Qurʾān (*ubayy b. kaʿb qāla: kunnā narā hādhā mina l-qurʾāni: law anna li-bni ādama wādiyayni min mālin la-tamannā wādiyān thālithan. lā yamlaʿu jawfa bni ādama illā l-turābu, thumma yatūbu llāhu ʿalā man tāba*). Ubayy b. Kaʿb said: “We considered that (i.e., the following sentences –k) as being a part of the Qurʾān: “If a man had two valleys of goods, he would desire a third valley; the interior of the man will not be filled except by dust; then God will restore the man who repented to His grace.” Ubayy added: “This was the practice of reading these verses (including the verse *alhākum al-takāthuru*) until Sūra 102 was revealed.”

Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī said that a Sūra the length of *Sūrat al-barāʿa* was revealed to the Prophet, but was later abrogated (*fa-rufiʿat*). Abū Mūsā remembered only one verse of this Sūra: “God will aid this religion by means of people who have no share (in Paradise)” (*innā llāha layuʿayyidu hādhā l-dīna bi-aqwāmin lā khalāqa lahum. . .*).¹¹ A prediction of similar content is sometimes described as a *ḥadīth* rather than as a Qurʾānic verse. ʿUmar reported a saying in which the Prophet he predicted that the Christian nomads of the tribe of Rabīʿa, dwelling on

⁹See ʿAlī b. Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūli l-aḥkām*, Muḥammad Aḥmad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, ed. (Cairo, 1398/1978), vols. 5–8, p. 1139.

¹⁰Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 6, p. 387. This verse was included in the version of the Qurʾān transmitted by ʿAbdallah b. Masʿūd; see al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabāʾ* (Beirut, 1961), vols. 3–4, pp. 433–434; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 1, p. 105 *infra*. ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (d. 255 AH) records in his *Sunan*, Muḥammad Aḥmad Dahhān, ed. (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 318–319, the verse as transmitted by Qatāda on the authority of Anas (b. Mālik –k). Anas, the Companion of the Prophet, records the verse uttered by the Prophet with a remarkable reservation: “I do not know whether it was a verse (of the Qurʾān –k) sent down to him or was it his saying as he said it,” (*fa-lā adri a-shayʿun unẓila ʿalayhi am shayʿun yaqūluhu wa-huwa yaqūlu. . .*). The opinion of Anas casting doubt on whether the utterance was a saying of the Prophet or an abrogated verse of the Qurʾān is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās in Abū ʿUbayd’s *Faḍāʾil*, p. 192, nos. 51–9. The utterance about the valleys coveted by man is preceded by the prediction of the Prophet: *innā llāha sa-yuʿayyidu hādhā l-dīna bi-aqwāmin lā khalāqa lahum*. And cf. this verse of the abrogated Sūra about the wicked people coupled with the saying about the man who covets the third valley: Abū l-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Ḥanafī, *al-Muʿtaṣar min al-mukhtaṣar min mushkīli l-āthār* (Ḥaydarābād, 1362), vol. 2, p. 163 *infra*; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAqlu wa-fahmu l-qurʾāni*, p. 405.

¹¹Nūr-al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid wa-manbaʿ al-fawāʾid* (Beirut, 1967), vol. 5, p. 302. The chapter in which the report of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī is recorded contains several utterances of the Prophet predicting that Islam will be aided by wicked people. A peculiar utterance attributed to the Prophet says that “the stock of my people are the wicked” (*qiwām ummatī shirāruhā*).

the shores of the Euphrates, will assist the cause of Islam, and therefore refrained from killing them. This was, of course, a justification of the political decision to grant the Arab Christians a special status in the Muslim polity of the Arabian peninsula.¹²

A tradition transmitted by Abū Umāma supplies a vivid description of how certain Sūras of the Qur'ān were suddenly abrogated. Some believers memorized a Sūra of the Qur'ān. One morning they got up and were unable to recite even one verse of the Sūra. They came to the Prophet and complained that they had forgotten the Sūra. The Prophet calmed them by saying that the Sūra had been abrogated during the night.¹³ Several cases of abrogated verses are mentioned in *adab* collections, in *zuhd* literature and in works of *tafsīr*.¹⁴

There were considerable differences in the reading of words in the Qur'ān. 'Ā'isha read in Qur'ān 4:117: *in yad'ūna min dūnihi illā awthānan*, instead of the usual reading: *in yad'ūna min dūnihi illā ināthan*. Another reading attributed to 'Ā'isha is *in yad'ūna min dūnihi illā unthā*.¹⁵

The verb *wa-qaḍā* in the phrase *wa-qaḍā rabbuka an lā ta'budū illā iyyāhu* of Qur'ān 17:23, was glossed by *amara*. Several commentators considered the reading *wa-qaḍā* an error; the scribe had erred and read the word *wa-qaḍā* because a *wa* was seen as attached to the *sa* and

¹²Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id*, vol. 5, p. 302: . . . *wa-'an 'umara bni l-khaṭṭābi, qāla: lawlā annī samī'tu rasūla llāhi ṣallā llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam yaqūhu 'inna llāha sa-yumatti'u (scil. sa-yamna'u -k) hādhā l-dīna bi-naṣarā min rabī'ata 'alā shāfi'i l-furātī mā taraktu a'rābiyyan illā qataltuhu aw yuslima.*

¹³Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Ḥanafī, *al-Mu'taṣar min al-mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 163; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 1, p. 105; *idem.*, *al-Itqān*, vol. 2, p. 26 *supra*; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa-fahmu l-qur'ān*, p. 406.

¹⁴See e.g., al-Fasawī, *al-Ma'rifa wa-l-ta'rīkh*, vol. 2, p. 727 and p. 262; al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa-fahmu l-qur'ān*, pp. 359–475; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī, ed. (n.p., 1400/1980), vol. 11, pp. 268–269, nos. 9148–9152; see the opinion of Ibn Mas'ūd about the two last Sūras, the *mu'awwidhātān*: . . . *'an 'abdi llāhi 'annahu kāna yaḥukku l-mu'awwidhātayni mina l-maṣāḥif wa-yaqūhu: innamā amara rasūla llāhi ṣallā llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam an yuta'awwadha bihimā wa-lam yakun yaqra'u bihimā.* Ibn Mas'ūd stated that the two Sūras were deliberately inserted into the Qur'ān but they do not belong to it.

¹⁵See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 2, pp. 222 *infra*–223; *awthānan* was the reading of Mujāhid as well. (The *Tafsīr* of Mujāhid, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Sūratī, ed. [Islāmābād], p. 174 gives the reading *ināthan*, but glosses it by *awthānan*). See Sa'ūd b. 'Abdallāh al-Fanīsān, *Marwiyyāt ummi l-mu'minīna 'Ā'isha fī l-tafsīr* (al-Riyāḍ, 1413/1992), pp. 168–169.

erroneously read *wa-qadā*. The proper reading should be read *wa-waṣṣā rabbuka*.¹⁶

Shahr b. Ḥawshab transmitted a peculiar reading of Qurʾān 106:1–2: *waylu ummikum qurayshu riḥlata l-shitāʾi wa-l-ṣayfi* instead of the common *li-īlāfi qurayshin īlāfihim riḥlata al-shitāʾi wa-l-ṣayfi*.¹⁷

The issue of the reading of Qurʾān 20:63 is well known. ʿĀʾisha read the phrase *in hādhāni la-sāḥirāni* in contrast to other readers, who tried to comply with certain grammatical rules. ʿĀʾisha was aware that it was a *lahn* of the Bedouins, or a mistake of the scribe, but it could be hoped that the Arabs would improve the reading in the future.¹⁸

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The Qurʾān was highly respected and the writing of the text, learning it by heart, reciting verses in public prayers — all these were laudable deeds characterizing people of distinction and piety. “Those who carry the Qurʾān in their memory (*ḥamalatu l-qurʾān*) are the nobility of my people,” was an utterance of the Prophet transmitted by Ibn ʿAbbās.¹⁹ Another prophetic saying states that reading the Qurʾān fills the body of the believer with prophecy, even though he was not granted revelation.²⁰ When a man enters the room with a copy of the Qurʾān, those present must stand up; this is out of respect for the Qurʾān which is thus honoured, in the same way as one honours a learned man.²¹

¹⁶Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 1, pp. 170–171; al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 264; al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī, *al-Wasīṭ*, vol. 3, p. 102.

¹⁷Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tahdhīb taʾrīkh Dimashq al-kabīr*, ʿAbd al-Qādir Badrān, ed. (Beirut, 1399/1979), vol. 6, p. 346 *supra*.

¹⁸See the lengthy discussion of the subject in al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 11, pp. 216–219; al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī, *al-Wasīṭ*, vol. 3, pp. 211–213, (and see the note of the editors (p. 212) who criticize sharply the reading of ʿĀʾisha and her opinion on this reading by the believers after some centuries –k); Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, pp. 347–348; Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Korāns* (Hildesheim, 1961), vol. 3, (G. Bergstraesser and O. Pretzl) pp. 3, 5; Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, p. 34.

¹⁹Ibn Kathīr, *Faḍāʾil al-qurʾān* (Beirut, 1966), p. 89.

²⁰Ibn Kathīr, *Faḍāʾil al-qurʾān*, p. 92: *man qaraʾa l-qurʾānā fa-kaʾannamā ustadrījat al-nubuwwatu bayna janbayhi ghayra annahu lā yūḥā ilayhi*.

²¹Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān fī ʾādāb ḥamalati l-qurʾān* (Cairo, 1379/1960), p. 99.

*

Worn out copies of the Qur'ān were carefully collected and respectfully disposed of. Scholars discussed at length the proper ways for their disposal.²²

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An item discussed by early scholars of Islam was the loud recitation of the prescribed parts of the Qur'ān during the obligatory prayers in the mosque. A report recorded by 'Abdallah b. Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī in his *Kitāb al-jāmi'* says that in the "old time" people were not used to listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān from a book. Mālik (b. Anas) disapproved of such recitation. It was introduced by al-Ḥajjāj.²³

According to early traditions, people disliked to be led in their prayer by an *imām* who read the Qur'ān from a *muṣḥaf*; this was seen as adopting customs of the People of the Book. Some scholars indeed quoted the *ḥadīth*: *lā tashabbahu bi-ahli l-kitāb* in connection with the reading of the Qur'ān from a *muṣḥaf* by the *imām* during the canonical prayer.²⁴

Furthermore, the Prophet enjoined that the Qur'ān be read with the tunes of the Arabs, not with the tunes of the libertines (*ahl al-fisq*); time would come, after the death of the Prophet, that people would read the Qur'ān with tunes of the monks, with voices of weeping or lamentation. Their hearts would go astray and this would be the lot of their adherents as well.²⁵

²²See the magisterial work of Joseph Sadan on this subject: "Genizah and Genizah-like practices in Islamic and Jewish traditions, customs concerning the disposal of worn-out sacred books in the Middle Ages, according to an Ottoman source," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 43 (1986): 36–58. See Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, p. 195; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Faḍā'il al-qur'ān*, pp. 41–45; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Tidhkār fī afdālī l-adkhkār*, p. 114; al-ʿIzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām, *al-Fatāwā*, p. 167, no. 117.

²³'Abdallah b. Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, *Kitāb al-jāmi' fī l-sunan wa-l-ādāb wa-l-maghāzī wa-l-ta'rīkh*, Muḥammad Abū l-Ajfan and 'Uthmān Biṭṭīkh, eds. (Beirut-Tunis 1402/1982), p. 164; Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *al-Madkhal* (Beirut, 1972), vol. 2, p. 211: ... *wa-awwalu man aḥdatha ḥādhihi l-bid'ata fī l-masjidi l-Ḥajjāju, a'nī l-qir'āta fī l-muṣḥafi, wa-lam yakun ḥādihā min 'amali man maḍā.*

²⁴Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *al-Maṣāḥif*, pp. 190–191; and see p. 191: ... *an qatāda 'ani l-ḥasan annahu kariha an ya'umma l-rajulu fī l-muṣḥaf. qāla: kamā taf'alu l-naṣārā.* On *lā tashabbahu*, see M.J. Kister, "Do not assimilate yourselves...: *La tashabbahu...*," *JSAI* 12 (1989): 321–322.

²⁵Al-Fasawī, *al-Ma'rifa wa-l-ta'rīkh*, vol. 2, p. 480; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Tidhkār fī afdālī l-adkhkār*, p. 117.

On the other hand, dictating the Qurʾān from memory to be written down in the *maṣāḥif* was a rare case. It was the Companion Ibn Masʿūd, a man with an outstanding knowledge of the Qurʾān, who used to dictate the *maṣāḥif* from memory.²⁶ Believers were enjoined not to read the Qurʾān to the people of the *maṣāḥif*, and not to gain knowledge from the *ṣahāfiyyūn*, the people of the sheets (i.e., people using written compendia, or compilations of the *ḥadīth*).²⁷

Christian copyists of the Qurʾān

In contrast to the injunctions according to which one should restrict learning, memorizing and writing the *maṣāḥif* to the orthodox and the pious, the leaders of the Muslim community were forced in many cases to resort to non-Muslims in order to spread the religious ideas of the Muslim faith.

A profound change in the Muslim community occurred a very short time after the death of the Prophet. This is indicated in a report of ʿAmr b. Murra: *kāna fī awwalī l-zamānī yajtamī ʿūna fa-yaktubūna l-maṣāḥifa thumma innahum kasalū wa-zahidū fī l-ʿajri fa-ʿstaʿjarū l-ʿibāda fa-katabūhā lahum*.²⁸ These Christian *ʿibād* from the region of al-Ḥīra were the first to sell the *maṣāḥif*, according to a report by al-Sijistānī, and some details about them have been preserved in the tradition. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, the Companion of the Prophet, asked a Christian from al-Ḥīra to copy out the Qurʾān for him and paid him sixty dirhams. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Laylā paid a man from al-Ḥīra seventy dirhams for a *muṣḥaf* copied for him.²⁹

Several details in the early sources confirm the reports concerning the activity of the *ʿibād* and other Christians in copying the *maṣāḥif*. Abū ʿUbayd records in his *Faḍāʾil al-qurʾān* a report saying that Alqama entrusted a Christian with copying a *muṣḥaf* for him.³⁰ ʿAbd al-Razzāq records the report mentioned above,³¹ saying that a Christian from al-Ḥīra wrote a *muṣḥaf* for ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Laylā; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān

²⁶ Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *al-Maṣāḥif*, p. 137.

²⁷ Al-Fasawī, *al-Maʿrifā wa-l-taʾrīkh*, vol. 2, p. 412. And see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādī, *al-Faḡīh wa-l-mutaḥaqiqh*, Ismāʿīl al-Anṣārī, ed. (Beirut, 1400/1980), vol. 2, pp. 97–98.

²⁸ Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *al-Maṣāḥif*, p. 171, *infra*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁰ Abū ʿUbayd, *Faḍāʾil al-qurʾān*, p. 245, no. 67–7. Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā*, Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, ed. (Cairo, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 84.

³¹ See above, note 28.

paid him seventy dirhams for his work.³²

The role of the Christian 'ibād in copying the Qur'ān in early Islam seems to have been known in the Muslim community. It seems that there were such cases even in the third century AH. This can be deduced from the response of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH) who was asked by a man whether it was true that Christians copied the texts of the Qur'ān. Aḥmad affirmed that the Christians of al-Ḥīra used to write the *maṣāḥif*; they did so because there were few others who could perform this task.³³

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's answer serves as a clear indication that Christians (and especially the 'Ibād of al-Ḥīra -k) played an important role in early Islam by copying the Qur'ān for the orthodox believers, who had no reservations whatsoever to accept their services. Non-Muslims contributed a great deal to the dissemination of Islam in this initial period.

The fact that the Christian 'ibād were employed in the very early period of Islam in copying the Qur'ān seems to have brought about some changes in the Muslim community's perception of the sacredness of the material on which the *maṣāḥif* were written, of the accuracy of the copied text, and of the the liberty to introduce some changes which the transmitter was said to have heard from the Prophet. The text itself, in spite of the officially established version of 'Uthmān, was not certain and was not recognized by the community's consensus; this was already pointed out by Goldziher.³⁴

³²Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Mus'annaf*, vol. 8, p. 114, no. 143530. And see this report: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Mus'annaf*, vol. 6, p. 66, no. 276.

³³See Sulaymān Bashīr, *Muqaddima fī l-ta'rikhi l-ākhar* (Jerusalem, 1984), p. 74, note 23; Bashīr quotes the utterance of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal from the MS Ḥāhiriyya, *majmū'* 83. He was the first to publish a reference from this MS, which was recently edited. See Abū l-Qāsim al-Baghawī (*al-rāwī* -k), *Mas'āl Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, 'Amr 'Abd al-Mun'im Salīm, ed. (Cairo, 1413/1993), p. 47, no. 10.

³⁴Goldziher, "Katholische Tendenz und Partikularismus im Islam," *Beiträge zur Religionswissenschaft* 1 (1913-14): 115-116, 118 *supra*. See also e.g., Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib Ḥammūsh al-Qaysī, *al-Ibāna 'an ma'ānī l-qirā'āt*, 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ismā'il Shalabī, ed. (Cairo, 1379/1960), p. 56: *wa-qad turikat qirā'ātu bni mas'ūdin al-yawma, wa-mana'a mālik wa-ghayruhu an yuqra'a bi-l-qirā'āti llatī tunsabu ilā bni mas'ūdin*. See also *ibidem*, p. 57: . . . *wa-lī-dhālika qāla Ismā'il al-Qādī: mā ruwiya min qirā'āti bni mas'ūdin wa-ghayrihi, ya'nī min mā yukhālifu khaṭṭa l-muṣḥafi, laysa yanbaghī li-aḥādīn an yaqra'a bihi l-yawma*. Cf. Ibn Shabba, *Ta'rikh al-Madīna*, p. 993: 'an *zayd b. thābit: annā hudhayfa b. al-yamān (r) qadīma min ghazwatīn ghazāhā bi-farjī armīniya fa-ḥadarahā ahlu l-'irāqi wa-ahlu l-shāmi fa-idhā ahlu l-'irāqi yaqra'ūna bi-qirā'āti 'abdi llāhi bni mas'ūdin wa-ya'tūna bi-mā lam yasma' ahlu l-shām, wa-yaqra'u ahlu l-shāmi bi-qirā'āti ubayyi bni ka'b, wa-ya'tūna bi-mā lam yasma' ahlu l-'irāqi, fa-yukaffiruhum ahlu l-'irāq*.

*

‘Ā’isha and ‘Uthmān had a very mild opinion concerning the mistakes in the Qur’ān, stating that these mistakes would be corrected in the future by the believing Arabs with their tongues.³⁵

Abū l-Aswad al-Du’alī, when asked about the questionable form of the phrase *mā hādhā basharan* in Qur’ān 12:31, answered that this form (“*basharan*” instead of “*basharun*”) is a scribal mistake.³⁶

Zayd b. Thābit inserted the verse *la-qad jā’akum rasūlun min anfusikum* (Qur’ān 9:128) and the following verse into the text of the Qur’ān on the authority of Khuzayma b. Thābit, who kept these two verses in memory.³⁷ Zayd b. Thābit did listen to the Prophet’s reading of the verse *min al-mu’minīna rijālun ṣadaqū mā ‘ahadū llāha ‘alayhi*. The verse was lost and Zayd b. Thābit was glad to find that Khuzayma b. Thābit had preserved it, and he inserted it in its proper place (Qur’ān 33:23).³⁸

The tradition attributed to the Prophet, saying that the Qur’ān wrapped in leather would not burn if thrown into the fire³⁹ was given a new interpretation: the leather in which the text of the Qur’ān was wrapped and the ink will be burnt, but the Qur’ān (i.e., the text in the *mushaf* –k) will be taken back to God.⁴⁰

The idea of the glorious Qur’ān as a part of God’s Essence, and the miraculous revelation of its verses transmitted by the angel Jibrīl to the Prophet when he was alone in the cave, were placed side by side with traditions emphasizing the simplicity of the Prophet’s life, his suffering during his prophetic activity in Mecca, his persecution by the members of his tribe, the hardships he had to endure and the ascetic and devoted character of his everyday activities, which conformed with the tenets of the Qur’ān. ‘Ā’isha could rightly state that his character was according to the tenets and injunctions of the Qur’ān.⁴¹

³⁵See Ibn Shabba, *Ta’rīkh al-Madīna*, p. 1013.

³⁶Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, MS. ‘Āshir Ef., Istanbul 597–598, fol. 893 b: ... *fa-qāla lahu inna llāha yaqūlu: mā hādhā basharan, fa-qāla: hādhā lladhī qultuhu kalāmu l-‘arabi l-fuṣṣāḥi, wa-lakinna l-kātiba zāda hādhīhi l-alif*.

³⁷See Ibn Kathīr, *Fadā’ilu l-qur’ān* (Beirut, 1966), p. 16.

³⁸‘Abdallah b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Zawā’id ‘Abdallah b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal fī l-musnad*, p. 369 infra–370, and Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib, *al-Ibāna*, pp. 30 penult.–31.

³⁹See note 49 above.

⁴⁰See Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, pp. 252–254.

⁴¹Al-Sulamī, *Adāb al-ṣuḥba* (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 23, ll. 1–2: *wa-su’ilat ‘Ā’ishatu raḍīya llāhu ‘anhā ‘an khuluqi l-nabiyyi ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam fa-qālat: kāna khuluquhu l-qur’ānā*.

In the period of the prophetic activity in Medina, the Prophet's revelation was transmitted to a growing number of his Companions who circulated it among their relatives and also disseminated details about the Prophet's righteous way of life, his kindness towards his Companions and his noble attitude towards his opponents; all this formed the *sunna* of the Prophet. The help he gave to his wives and his respect for them was stressed in the early tradition. 'Ā'isha could state with pride that she was the only woman from among the wives of the Prophet who was granted the honour and the privilege that the Prophet received the revelation in her presence, while both were covered by the same blanket.⁴²

Ibn Qutayba, the well known scholar of the Qur'ān, tried to bridge the gap between the two perceptions of sanctity, the glorious and holy book of the Qur'ān and the sheet of the Holy Book devoured by a domestic animal. In a lengthy passage, Ibn Qutayba gives a description of the social and economic situation of the Prophet in Medina. The Qur'ān was at that time written on palm branches, soft white stones and dry skins. The verses of the Qur'ān were not collected in a book; the texts written on these coarse materials merely circulated among the believers. Even the letters of the Prophet sent to the kings were written on animals' skins.⁴³

People at that time had no cupboards (*khazā'in*) or locked ebony chests; when they wanted to deposit anything (of value -k) they put it under the bedstead in order to guard it from being harmed by children or animals. The Prophet used to patch his garments, because of poverty, to repair his sandals and his boots. The Prophet stated about himself that he feels like a servant, eating like a servant sitting on the floor. Other prophets lived like poor people, eating barley-bread and wearing woolen garments.

Ibn Qutayba mentions various explanations why Allāh allowed verses of the Qur'ān to be eaten by the ewe; it may be that it was a revelation which had to be carried out, but not necessarily be put down in the text of the Qur'ān, The phrase *lā ya'tihī l-bāṭilu min bayni yadayhi wa-lā*

⁴²See e.g., al-Suyūṭī, *ʿAyn al-iṣāba fī istidrāki ʿĀ'isha ʿalā l-ṣaḥāba*, ʿAbdallah Muḥammad al-Darwish, ed. (Cairo, 1409/1988), p. 31: *wa-kāna ya'tihī l-waḥyū wa-anā wa-huwa fī liḥāfi wāḥid*. Muḥibb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallah al-Ṭabarī, *al-Simt al-thamīn fī manāqib ummahāti l-mu'minīn* (Cairo, n.d.), p. 34: *... lā tu'dhīnanī fī ʿĀ'ishata fa-innahu, wa-llāhī, mā nazala ʿalayya l-waḥyū fī liḥāfi ʿmra'atin minkunna ghayrahā*. Abū Maṣṣūr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAsākir, *Kitāb al-arbaʿīn fī manāqib ummahāt al-mu'minīn*, Muḥammad Aḥmad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, ed. (Cairo, 1410/1989), p. 130.

⁴³See e.g., the report of a letter sent by the Prophet to the people of ʿUmān in Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Manda, *Juzʿ fīhi man ʿāsha miʿatan wa-ʿishrīna sana mina l-ṣaḥāba*, Mashhūr Ḥasan Salmān, ed. (Beirut, 1412/1992), p. 84: *jāʿanā kitābu l-nabiyyi ʿallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam fī qifʿatin min adīm*.

*min khalfti*⁴⁴ does not mean that the sheets would not be injured by some mishap. The phrase in fact implies that Satan will not be able to insert into the Qurʾān words which were not in the text before or after the revelation.⁴⁵

Some details about the writing (or rather: the copying –k) of the Qurʾānic text by a *mawlā* and the changes introduced into the text by ʿĀʾisha, are recorded in some *ḥadīth* collections. ʿĀʾisha is said to have ordered her *mawlā*, Abū Yūnus, to write for her a *muṣḥaf*; she asked him, however, to inform her when he would reach the phrase *ḥāfiẓū ʿalā l-ṣalawāti wa-l-ṣalāti l-wuṣṭā* (Qurʾān 2:238). When the *mawlā* reached this phrase, ʿĀʾisha dictated a different version of the phrase to him. Tradition records two versions of the change introduced by ʿĀʾisha: *ḥāfiẓū ʿalā l-ṣalawāti wa-l-ṣalāti l-wuṣṭā wa ṣalāti l-ʿaṣri*, and *ḥāfiẓū ʿalā l-ṣalawāti wa-l-ṣalāti l-wuṣṭā ṣalāti l-ʿaṣri*.⁴⁶ The reading of ʿĀʾisha constituted a substantial deviation from the accepted version established by ʿUthmān.

There is a tradition according to which Ḥaḥṣa, the daughter of ʿUmar, ordered the *mawlā* of ʿUmar, ʿAmr b. Rāfiʿ, to copy a *muṣḥaf* for her. When he reached the verse mentioned above, she ordered him to insert her reading: *ḥāfiẓū ʿalā l-ṣalawāti wa-l-ṣalāti l-wuṣṭā ṣalāti l-ʿaṣr*.⁴⁷

The scholars differed as to the meaning of the *ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā*: this could refer to *ṣalāt al-ṣubḥ*, *ṣalāt al-ẓuhr*, *ṣalāt al-ʿaṣr*, or even to *ṣalāt al-fajr*.⁴⁸

The tradition of Ḥaḥṣa, who also entrusted the copying of the Qurʾān to a *mawlā*, may imply that the two servants were youths captured during a military expedition, who were familiar with the Arabic script and were presented as servants to ʿĀʾisha and Ḥaḥṣa. They may have been Christians.

⁴⁴Qurʾān 41:43.

⁴⁵Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb taʾwīl mukhtalifi l-ḥadīth* (Cairo, 1326), pp. 397–404.

⁴⁶See the different readings in Saʿūd b. ʿAbdallah al-Fanīsān, *Marwiyyāt ummi l-muʾminīna ʿĀʾisha* (al-Riyād, 1413/1992), pp. 108–112, nos. 163–172; Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwad, ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, Zakariyyā ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Nawtī, ed. (Beirut, 1413/1993), vol. 1, pp. 213–214; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Kāfi al-shāfiʿī fi takhrīji aḥādīth al-kashshāf*, following al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, p. 21, nos. 175–179; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, vol. 7, p. 200, nos. 6823–6826, p. 248, nos. 7009–7010.

⁴⁷See Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 213 *infra*; and see *ibidem*, the tradition saying that some people stated that that was the reading of ʿAbdallah b. Masʿūd.

⁴⁸See Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 213–214; ʿAbdallah b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Zawāʿid*, pp. 169–170; al-Wasīṭī, *al-Wasīṭ fi tafsīri l-qurʾāni l-majīd*, vol. 1, pp. 349–351.