

# MAŞĀHIF ŞAN'Ā'

19 MARCH - 19 MAY 1985



DAR AL-ATHAR AL-ISLAMIYYAH

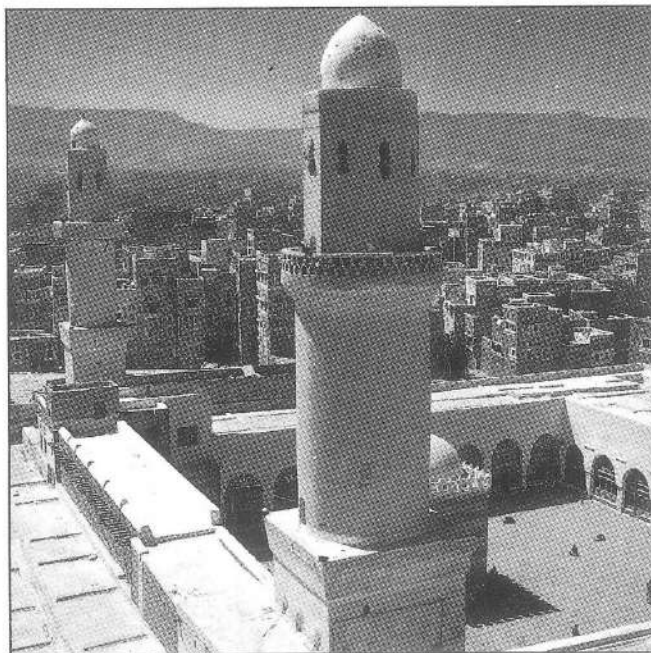
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**DAR AL-ATHAR AL-ISLAMIYYAH**

KUWAIT NATIONAL MUSEUM

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This catalogue has been published to accompany "Masahif San'a'" exhibition held in Kuwait National Museum.

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## Preface

\* Mushaf: Lit. a volume whether printed or inscribed, the text of the Holy Qur'an in its written form. Masahif is the broken plural.

**F**or me this scholarly catalogue and the accompanying exhibition are truly the fulfillment of a dream. In 1981 when two pages of a very early Hijazi Mushaf\* appeared at a Sotheby's auction my husband, Sheikh Nasir and I were very excited and managed, with the help of God, to acquire them for our collection (LNS 19 CA ab). A little later I heard for the first time of the extraordinary discovery in San'a' of Qur'anic pages similar to those we had just acquired. I remember looking at our two pages and dreaming of seeing this collection, but I never thought it would actually be possible to hold the pages in my hands, much less to be able to bring them here to Kuwait.

With the opening of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah in February 1983 our own collection was finally organized and I had time to think again about the San'a' pages. We wanted to organize international exhibitions here in Kuwait and it occurred to me that the San'a' Masahif would make a marvellous beginning. I got in touch with the Qadhi Isma'il al-Akwa', Director of Antiquities in Yemen Arab Republic, and Professor Albrecht Noth in Hamburg University and was delighted to find that they were both enthusiastic about the idea of exhibiting some of the pages here. It is thanks to their enthusiasm that the project has been able to go forward.

During a recent visit to San'a' Dr. Gerd Puin, in charge of the German team working on the manuscripts helped me to select 80 pages, representing the different calligraphic styles, to exhibit in Kuwait. This is, of course, the first time that any of these pages has been exhibited outside North Yemen, and we are extremely grateful for this privilege and very conscious of the great honour which this loan has bestowed upon us.

As for the San'a' discovery, it is difficult to over-estimate its importance. The sheer bulk of the manuscript hoard raises vital and intriguing questions about the whole evolution of Arabic calligraphy<sup>(1)</sup>. The range of scripts and styles, both Eastern and Western Kufic, as well as the Hijazi Script poses many intriguing queries for scholars. Where were these pages written? In Makka, Madina, Qayrawan, or even San'a' itself? In the light of such an imposing wealth of evidence one is tempted to favour a Yemeni provenance, particularly as San'a' was known throughout the first four centuries of the Hijra to be a centre of learning<sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Ahmad Abd al-Raziq's article in this catalogue.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Abdul Mohsen Medej's article in this catalogue.

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The illuminations provide a fascinating challenge to the art historian. In this catalogue Dr. Marilyn Jenkins of the Metropolitan Museum of New York has compared the various decorative idioms with similar known examples from the area of Greater Syria<sup>(3)</sup>. Byzantine and Sassanid influences also seem to be present. But perhaps the sources are not so obvious. Many aspects of the decorative vocabulary have also been found in pre-Islamic stone carvings<sup>(4)</sup> from the Yemen. In spite of the vague attribution, the earliest sections of the wooden ceiling of the Great Mosque provide a series of motifs similar to those on the illuminated pages<sup>(5)</sup>. Although much work still remains to be done, it is possible that the motifs in the illuminations are based on these native sources and they therefore may have a purely Yemeni provenance. Questions like these will not be answered until more research work has been done, not only on the pages themselves, but also on the culture from which they emerged.

As for the future of the San'ā' collection itself, a great deal of work remains to be done. So far, Conservator Ursula Dreibholz has managed to restore over 4000 pages, including the fragments of an Umayyad Qur'an which will shortly be published in facsimile form by the German scholar Dr. Graf von Bothmer. However, that still leaves 32,000 pages to be restored. It is to be hoped that in the course of this painstaking labour a team of young conservators can be trained in the necessary skills. Perhaps in time a Conservation School in San'ā' will be able to restore and repair manuscripts from all over the Islamic world.

What it comes down to is co-operation. This exhibition and the accompanying catalogue are the direct result of co-operation and close co-ordination among scholars in the North Yemen, Germany, America, and Kuwait.

The Qadhi Ismail al-Akwa' gives in his article some historical background of the Great Mosque in San'ā' and explains how these manuscripts were found. Dr. Abdul Mohsen al-Medej gives a brief historical account of the city of San'ā' itself, which emphasizes its cultural role during the first five centuries of the Hijra. Dr. Ahmad Abd al-Raziq's contribution deals with the development of Arabic calligraphy by citing manuscripts from the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah as evidence to support his arguments. Dr. Gerd Puin has written about the methods of research used in the classification of the pages. Dr. Marilyn Jenkins studies the various illuminations and demonstrates how they can be used to date the various manuscripts by comparing them with dated or datable monuments. Miss Ursula Dreibholz has contributed a technical essay describing the steps she has followed in the painstaking reassembly and restoration of the pages as well as summarizing the techniques and experience she has gained from this major task.

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<sup>3</sup> It is through Dr. M. Jenkins that we first came to know about the existence of these rare manuscripts.

<sup>4</sup> Particularly Himyarite, examples of which can be seen in the National Museum in San'ā'.

<sup>5</sup> See Qadhi Isma'il al-Akwa's article in this catalogue (pl 9) also. R.B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, *SAN'Ā'. An Arabian Islamic City*, p. 341 no. 18.45.

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At this point I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to all the people who have made this wonderful exhibition possible. First of all I must thank those in the Ministry of Information for their invaluable assistance as well as all those here at the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah who have worked so hard to make this exhibition a success.

To Qadhi Isma'il al-Akwa' goes my heart-felt thanks and gratitude for making this exhibition possible. Without his enthusiasm and encouragement the entire project would have remained an impossible dream. I thank as well Mr. M.H. Sodmi, General Director of Museums and Manuscripts, Yemeni Organization of Antiquities and Libraries along with his assistant Abdoh Hussein Salah. Dr. Gerd Puin and Miss Ursula Dreibholz deserve our congratulations, not only for their able assistance with this exhibition, but also for the sheer hard work and devotion they have invested in the project from the very beginning. Their painstaking and time consuming labour of restoration, classification, and photography are an inspiration to us all. And finally, I extend my thanks to the scholars who have contributed so generously to this catalogue. The success of their efforts is self-evident.

## Methods of Research on Qur'anic Manuscripts - A Few Ideas

**S**cientific interest in the development of the Qur'an as a written document goes back to the collection of the Qur'an which was compiled under the third Caliph, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. During the three centuries which followed, practically the whole spectrum of Muslim science emerged from Qur'anic studies. For jurisprudence (Fiqh) it was the question of abrogation (Nasikh wa-mansukh) and of the reason for the revelation of certain verses (Asbab an-nuzul) that became vital. Perhaps even more important became questions about the exégesis (Ta'wil, Tafsir) of the Qur'an, since this initiated the systematization of Arabic grammar, the collection of early poetry and the production of dictionaries. A very modern appreciation of the historical development of the Qur'anic text is evident in all of these scientific branches.

One remark has to be made here in order to avoid misunderstandings. The Qur'an was revealed in actual language, not in scriptural form. The script available at the time of the revelation was highly defective, so that it constituted not more than an aid for those who knew the text by heart already. In our studies of the Qur'anic text we are solely concerned with the tradition of its scriptural shape, being well aware that the oral tradition is the more important and valid one. For example, whether the word on = 'alà is written with an Alif or a Ya' maqsurah is not important for the revealed text, but it is for those who are interested in the development of Arabic orthography. By the fourth century A.H. Arab grammarians and linguists had made such progress in this respect, but scholarly research on the subject ceased; only now is it resuming where they left off. At the time of as-Sijistani and ad-Dani no doubt was left concerning the scriptural shape of the Qur'anic text, so, unfortunately, their studies more or less closed the interest of the Arabs in these matters. It was only the "historical-critical" interest of western orientalists which revived the whole question, and which spurred Muslim scholars to make the tools for a new approach available. For example, 'Abd al-Baqi's invaluable concordance of the Qur'an and many manuscripts on the Canonical Readings and other orthographical problems of the Qur'an were published, especially in Cairo. Recently an encyclopedia of the Canonical Readings of the Qur'an was started in Kuwait which certainly will inaugurate a new era of Qur'anic studies.

What kind of Qur'anic studies? With about 40 thousand sheets of old parchment and paper of Qur'anic text from the Great Mosque of San'ā' in hand the question is easily answered: study them and compare what you find with that which authorities

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such as as-Sijistani or ad-Dani reported on the old Masahif! Alas, the task is not as simple as that. How is it possible to put in order such a dispersed mass of fragments? Nothing is easier than counting the number of lines on each page and then measuring the length of the lines — the resulting numbers make up the inventory number for any given Mushaf, no matter if only a single page is preserved of it or a whole section. To find this simple method took about four months of experiments. And what if the number of lines cannot be definitely established for a Mushaf — either due to varying numbers of lines or fragmentary pages? In this case the inventory number starts with the first digits 00. Such is the case with the whole mass of pre-Kufic manuscripts. The next steps for distinguishing the fragments were much more sophisticated. The format of the page, the density of red dots (vocalization), the pattern of Surah dividers, and the shape of decade indicators (Ta'sir) were all decisive elements for finding which pieces belonged together. All sheets had to be restored, i.e. cleaned and flattened, before this process, which meant quite a time lag between the first tentative recognition and final classification. After restoration the text of the pages was determined according to the number of the Surah and the Ayah of the now recognized Qur'anic numbering. Within four years of work of the German Restoration Project close to 8,000 sheets of parchment were restored — about one quarter of those found in the Great Mosque during the restoration campaign of 1971/72. About 750 Masahif on parchment and 350 on paper can be distinguished. Work on the paper manuscripts has not even started yet, because of lack of space and time.

Only the earliest, the Hijazi Masahif can be dated with any certitude. The ordinary Kufic Masahif are problematic in many ways. There are few dated examples in the world. So a different approach to dating seems appropriate, which does not concentrate on the script but rather on secondary features such as illumination. Because determining the age of the parchment itself by scientific methods is still very inaccurate — the margin of error being  $\pm 100 - 200$  years! — an art historical approach, in this case, seems to be more suitable. And indeed, Dr. Graf von Bothmer has been able to assign one of the most monumental and lavishly illuminated Masahif (No. 43 - 47) to the early second century A.H., which makes this masterpiece the first example of the hitherto totally unknown art of the book in Umayyad times. (\*)

If we now compare the calligraphy of this Mushaf with No. 35 and 36 of the exhibition, there can be no doubt that this goes back to Umayyad times, too. Even the question of whether these prominent examples are Yemeni or were produced

(\*) Dr. Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer, who specializes in Islamic art, is the art historian of the German Restoration Project in San'a'. Like Dr. Puin, he is from the University of Saarbruecken. Dr. Graf von Bothmer was the first to point out the extraordinary importance of the fragments, especially of the Mushaf 20-33.1, for the history of Islamic art. He intends to publish the fragments of this manuscript together with examples from other related manuscripts in facsimile, and he hopes to conclude a comprehensive study on the subject in the near future.



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elsewhere can be established by art historical methods, due to the amount of fragments of comparable material present. Thus, one result of this project can already be asserted: Yemen in Umayyad times was of no less importance than the traditionally mentioned centres of art in Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Briefly, therefore, comparative analysis of the illuminations of the manuscripts provides the best dating criteria. This is important in regard to a couple of other aspects in which early Qur'anic manuscripts can be of interest.

The most obvious field of research is Kufic paleography, of which we know very little until now. How can we judge the quality of the calligraphy? I think research has to begin with the most outstanding examples, but not from an esthetic point of view. While we can appreciate Latin, Byzantine and later Islamic styles of calligraphy, the esthetics of Kufic still have to be discovered. There seems to be a unique concept of line: are the letters set onto a specific line, or is the line only the middle of the amplitude of the lower, horizontal part of the script? There are certain letters in Kufic (Ha', Kaf,.....) which can be elongated at will and produce parallel horizontal lines; it may be that the voids between those lines should be considered part of the line concept for Kufic. Even early Hijazi manuscripts already display a calligraphic approach — the final stroke of the Ya', underlining the preceding word or words (as in No. 29), is an example. Another calligraphic feature, which already occurs in the Hijazi script, is the parallelism of the vertical strokes, mainly with Lams and partially with Alifs. But unlike Kufic, Hijazi does not aim at parallelism between the Alif and Lam of the Arabic article. The long parallel strokes, when set one under another, make the vertical links of the lines much more obvious than the parallels within the same line. As a consequence, the early calligrapher was evidently pleased if more than one Alif or Lam were the initial letters of subsequent lines (cf. No. 18 and 4-5), but he does not seem to have used subterfuge to achieve this goal. In the very elaborate styles of Kufic (such is No. 58) a further refinement of calligraphic pleasure of the same kind can be found: The letters beginning the lines are either rounded such as Mim, Fa', or Waw, or are Alifs, with both their vertical and horizontal elements. Here, too, the calligrapher could have achieved more parallels above each other had he wanted, as he could command many more possibilities of lengthening or shortening certain letters



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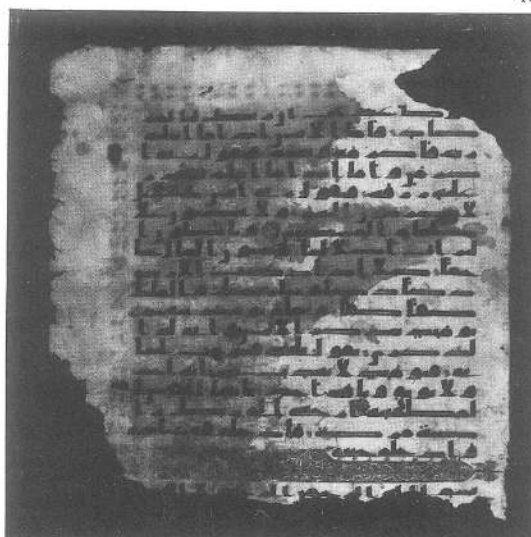
than the Hijazi scribe. Although they are difficult to appreciate, the appearance of vertical roads — voids in the overall image of the script which frequently run through subsequent lines — has to be considered as one of the earliest calligraphic characteristics. This peculiarity is also closely related to the feature mentioned before. Most early manuscripts, including the Hijazi ones, do not display any extra space between the lines, so that the long vertical letters usually touch the horizontal strokes of the letters in the line above. On the other hand, even in Hijazi script a considerable space is left between letters which do not allow a ligature and the following initial forms of letters. This is, I believe, the main reason for the vertical appearance of a Hijazi script.

It is commonly held that the rectangular Kufic style was developed by inscribing on solid surfaces like stone or wood, in other words for architectural purposes. There

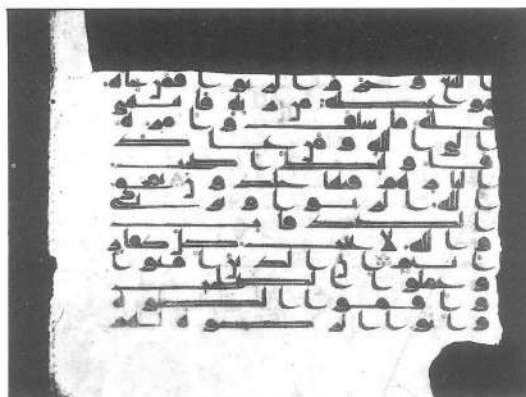
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are many practical reasons for this assumption, if we imagine the techniques and tools for engraving on stone or wood or preparing dies for coins. This action of engraving is very different from handwriting. It really would make no difference whether the craftsman starts his work from the bottom or the top, or from the left or the right. The important thing is the final appearance of the script, so that it can be read as if it was written by hand. Here we touch another question which is interesting both for the emergence of the Arabic script in general and for the development of its subsequent styles: the criteria of cursiveness and ligature. No doubt, even the pre-Islamic Arabic scripts suggest that there is a relation between the scriptural combination of letters by ligatures and cursiveness. At a certain time the capacity of each Arabic letter to be combined with another one by a ligature was well defined and certainly was no longer in question in Islamic times. However, we have to keep in mind that the very necessity of ligatures constitutes the main challenge to the development of Arabic calligraphy. A good example for this is the Alif in both Hijazi and Kufic. It was always written from the top to the bottom in both initial and final position i.e. in its isolated shape or as the final part of a ligature. In the second case we may call the ligature virtual — the scribe only accomplished the necessary ligature with the preceding letter by the *final* stroke of the Alif. The later styles of Naskh developed the Alif in its final position written from the bottom to the top, and so made a true ligature out of a virtual one.

Cursiveness in Arabic script cannot be compared with that in European alphabets. For our purpose, cursiveness can be appropriately defined as the extent to which the physical conditions inherent in the writing process are still recognizable in the resulting script. For research in this field it is indispensable to take into account the basic forms and shapes which can be produced by the individual movements of the fingers, the hand, and the arm of the scribe. In this respect, the quickest and easiest line to be drawn is a stroke inclined to the right, like /, because it is the result of a very easy movement of the wrist — a tangent to the circle described by the hand, with the wrist as the pivot. A stroke inclined in the opposite direction is more difficult to achieve, because the motion does not come from the wrist but, more awkwardly, only from the action of the three fingers holding the pen — a stroke perpendicular to the tangent

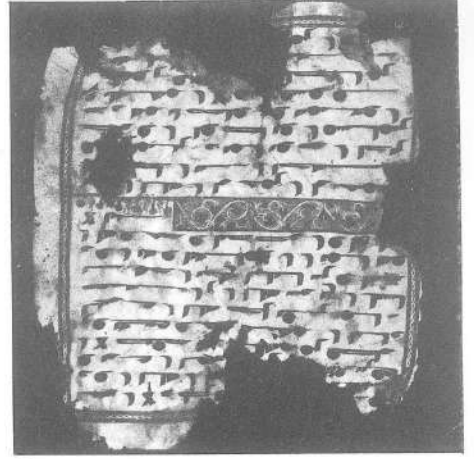
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mentioned above. Therefore, the more the main strokes of a script are inclined to the right, the more cursive we can call it. This is as true for Hijazi as it is for Latin and Greek handwriting. Cursiveness in Arabic calligraphy reached its zenith in the Ta'liq and Nasta'liq styles, where even the ligatures and the short lines follow this easiest movement of the hand. However, it should also be mentioned here that in Kufic calligraphy the esthetic appreciation of parallel vertical lines predominates over cursiveness. Certainly, other conditions have to be taken into account, too, like the angle of the paper or parchment relative to the scribe as well as his sitting position. But since these conditions can hardly be reconstructed from our early manuscripts we have to concentrate our attention on the visible traces of them. Even the intentions of the scribe may be revealed sometimes, as in the case of the Alif and Lam which constitute the Arabic definite article. In our case of a Hijazi Alif, it is inclined, or even rounded, as if the scribe had intended to write a counter-clockwise circle. The following Lam, on the other hand, is rather the beginning of a clockwise circle, though the scribe usually aimed at a horizontal ligature. Now, the definition of cursivity can be extended: at the start of writing a letter the scribe already takes into account the following letter.

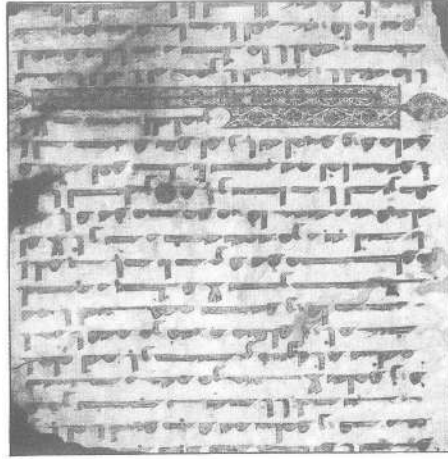
Unfortunately, these observations cannot contribute much to solving the problem of dating, as was stated at the outset. It is not unlikely for instance, that the Umayyad Masahif (No. 35 and 36, or No. 43 - 47) are contemporary with the palimpsest (No. 4 - 6), if we consider the very conservative attitude of some scribes towards the scriptural shape of the Qur'an. After the complete text had been gathered by the third Righteous Caliph, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, he sent copies of this text to the new centres of Islamic civilization in the recently conquered countries. The script of these copies was certainly Hijazi, and we learn from the historical accounts that it contained no vowel marks and hardly any diacritics. The scriptural appearance of these copies, the so-called Rasm 'Uthmani has been held in respect ever since, although the script itself was not unequivocal and required an oral tradition or reading. Eventually, reading aids like short vowels and diacritics were added to the Rasm, especially for teaching purposes, but we read that prominent scholars strongly objected to such innovations. From such reports we may conclude that in scholarly circles the Hijazi script as well as the pure Rasm 'Uthmani were still in use and being copied while the Kufic style and the insertion of reading aids became common usage. Moreover, a Mushaf of the old style could easily be modernized by adding the red vowel dots later. But until we can

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accurately identify the pigments from these dots we can only prove such updates when diacritical marks consistently differ, in colour and appearance, from the Rasm, an assumption that can be demonstrated very well with the help of a microscope. As we are still at the beginning of Arabic palaeography, as far as handwriting is concerned, an absolute chronology can only be envisioned as a synthesis of relative chronologies of very different aspects. The stylistic development of the Arabic script does not provide much help for the absolute chronology, as we have seen. Nor, given the conservative attitude towards the scriptural shape of the text, can we expect much progress from the analysis of Qur'anic orthography. The same applies to research on the names of the Surahs: We know that from the very beginning the Surahs bore names but, as we see, the earliest Masahif only show a void to mark the separation of two Surahs. Subsequently, this space could be filled with an illumination — and even older Masahif could be modernized that way (probably No. 16 and 17 are examples of this). Only later was the name of the Surah inserted either into the void, or was written on top or at the margins of the illumination, until finally it was incorporated into the decoration itself. It is surprising that the naming of the Surahs was always accompanied by the mentioning of the number of its verses. Since tradition preserves numerous references to different regional counting systems, a way still has to be found to apply this information logically to the huge amount of old San'ani Masahif. Only then can we hope to understand why the naming and the counting of verses were

seemingly of equal importance. As we see in the old manuscripts, the verses were separated by dots, and from very early on decades and pentades were marked. However, these indicators for counting each tenth and fifth verse do not always coincide with the number of verse separators. It seems that in the beginning these separators had rather an orthoepic significance — Waqf-, in other words, to indicate permissible pauses for breath taking during the recitation of the Qur'an.

All this sounds like a research program for generations to come — and it probably is. But the major obstacle to all kinds of Qur'anic research is the limited access to manuscripts. As in the case of the San'ani manuscripts, most oriental collections of fragments are not properly catalogued and classified, which would be the pre-requisite for microfilming as well as for proper quotations. Moreover, the condition of these fragments has to be taken into account as well, and restoration of the manuscripts may well be the first necessary step before extensive handling can be allowed. In brief, a lot of practical work has to be initiated in Muslim countries in order to preserve their written cultural heritage. Research and critical appreciation of the past will then be the next steps.

At the outset I have described the first practical proceedings of classification. Still, the next steps need to be mentioned too, because they are a good example of



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what can be achieved with modest effort by manuscript libraries and scientific institutions. About ninety percent of the fragments can easily be classified and assigned to the other fragments of the same Mushaf. For the rest a detailed investigation is necessary. Let us assume two sheets are of an identical size and bear the same number of lines, identical in length. Moreover, the style of the script seems the same as well as the decorative elements. If then you discover that both sheets contain parts of the same text you have to deduce that two separate manuscripts, written by the same scribe, have become totally mixed up like two packs of cards. If this were really the case, the only way to collate the two manuscripts would be to find the consecutive pages in each — if there was at all a substantial number of pages preserved from both fragments. Statistically, the case of two identical Mushafs is rare, though we have such an example in San'ā'. More frequent are cases where tiny differences — first in decoration, then in the script — can be found and checked for consistency in both manuscripts. Of course you don't have to extract a complete alphabet from each fragment for the sake of comparison. Usually it is sufficient to concentrate on a few letters which are known to occur in many varieties, like the final Qaf or Mim. The experience gained by such classification leads inevitably to a growing admiration of Kufic calligraphy, especially if you try to verify your impressions by measuring the proportions of the script. The regularity of good calligraphy is astonishing, but you have to discover where the scribe intended regularity and where not. Only then are you able to judge the quality of the calligraphy. Even in this field much work still has to be done. Until now we are not even able to prove or reject the notion that two Mushafs with different sizes of script were written by the same calligrapher.

To end this survey I should like to apologize to the reader who presumably expected answers rather than the enumeration of problems and questions. But it is not the fault of the author that the questions still outnumber the answers by far. The aim of both the exhibition and this contribution goes beyond showing some exquisite examples of calligraphy and applauding their obvious qualities — both are a call for esteeming and preserving, and, it is hoped, for serious research as well as enjoyment.

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## A Vocabulary of Umayyad Ornament

### *New Foundations for the Study of Early Qur'an Manuscripts*

<sup>1</sup> Aside from those on coins, there are only thirteen dated inscriptions from the first century of Islam in addition to several papyrus documents. Abbott, Nabia, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and its Kur'anic Development, with a Full Description of the Kur'an Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute*, (Chicago, I, II, 1939), p. 15

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>3</sup> Abbott, Nabia, "Arabic Paleography", *Ars Islamica*, vol. VIII, 1941, p. 74

<sup>4</sup> Safadi, Yasin Hamid, *Islamic Calligraphy*, (Boulder, 1979), p. 10

<sup>5</sup> I would like to take this opportunity to first of all commend Qadhi Isma'il al-Akwa for his wisdom in placing this find in the right hands so as to conserve and thus, to preserve it for posterity. Secondly, I would like to thank those individuals who graciously permitted me in the summer of 1982 to view the group of fragmentary Qur'ans and individual Qur'an leaves in their care, namely, Qadhi Isma'il al-Akwa, Prof. Dr. Albrecht Noth, Dr. Gerd-R. Puin and Ms. Ursula Dreiholz.

<sup>6</sup> Due to the size and splendor of these pages, I am inclined to believe that this group must have formed part of one of what Nabia Abbott has called the *ummahat* or large mosque copies. There is no doubt in my mind that more leaves of belonging to this group exist in the cache. I simply did not isolate more of them when I was permitted to see the whole group in 1982. Only three of the leaves discussed in my first group are in the present exhibition.

<sup>7</sup> More leaves exhibiting this particular format must surely exist in the cache as well. None of them is in the present exhibition.

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the stepping-down of the heading is to accommodate the short final line of the preceeding surah. A characteristic of this heading type is the transformation of the upper border into the stem of a leaf which extends over the lower half of the illumination.

The unequivocal statements which can be made about Arabic paleography and epigraphy, in general, during the first century and a quarter of the Islamic era are few;<sup>1</sup> and since there appears to be a total lack of parchment manuscripts bearing colophons which place them firmly in this formative period,<sup>2</sup> we are at an even greater loss when considering this material in particular.

To glean what knowledge we have about manuscripts of the Qur'an produced during these one hundred and twenty-five years, scholars have been largely dependent upon matching contemporary descriptions of various scripts with those on extant leaves.<sup>3</sup> Almost no use has been made of the decoration on pages of calligraphy to date early scripts since it has been commonly thought up to now that one of the features of script of an early date was a lack of illumination.<sup>4</sup>

The spectacular find above the ceiling in the Great Mosque of San'a, which is the subject of this catalogue and the accompanying exhibition, promises to change all this since a number of beautifully calligraphed leaves in the cache are also sumptuously illuminated and their decorative elements are very closely related to those on buildings which are dated or datable. Thus, we can finally begin laying solid foundations for the study of early Qur'an manuscripts which are based on dates which can be fully substantiated.

Among the pages in this trove<sup>5</sup> there are ten I would like to discuss here. Seven of these, from the point of view of original leaf size, calligraphy, page layout, ornament and color scheme as well as their vertical orientation, appear to be from the same manuscript.<sup>6</sup> The other three, with a squarer decorative format, may belong to a second, contemporary Qur'an.<sup>7</sup>

The surah headings on the seven, vertically oriented, leaves are of two types: 1) an elongated rectangle with a palmette shaped marginal decoration at each end; and, 2) rectangular along the left half of its width then stepping down on the right to a ground-line which supports vegetation — as in type 1, there is a palmette-shaped design at both ends (Plates Nos. 43-47). Originally all of the approximately same dimensions, those leaves with a rectangular surah heading bear eighteen lines of script and those with a stepped heading nineteen.<sup>8</sup> the average length of each of these lines measuring just under thirteen inches.

The three pages with an almost square decorative format share the convention of inner and outer guard bands bearing a vegetal design, executed in gold, on either side of a wide border which frame the inscribed leaves and outline the illumination on the decorated page.

The vegetal rinceau decorating the rectangular heading for Surah 68 is strikingly similar to that forming the border of the repousse bronze plate covering the lintel of the North entrance of the Dome of the Rock<sup>9</sup> (which is dated 72 A.H./691-92 A.D.), particularly in the heart-shaped elements and in the method of handling the tendrils. (Figure 1<sup>ab</sup>)



Figure 1<sup>a</sup>  
Detail from heading for Surah 68  
see plate 45



Figure 1<sup>b</sup>  
Detail from Dome of the Rock lintel covering

Certain characteristics of the stylized tree filling the marginal decoration at the left side of the heading for Surah 69, most especially the idiosyncrasy of depicting branches (the tree's own or those of another plant) encircling or in some way entwining themselves with the tree's trunk (Figure 2<sup>ab</sup>), are to be found on the trees decorating the facade of Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi<sup>10</sup> (which is dated between 105-109 A.H./724-727 A.D.).

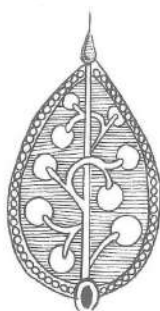


Figure 2<sup>a</sup>  
Detail from heading for Surah 69

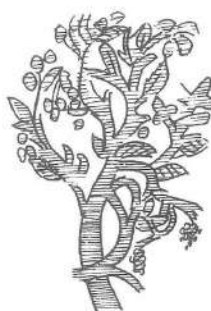


Figure 2<sup>b</sup>  
Detail from facade of  
Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi



<sup>9</sup> Creswell, K.A.C., *Early Muslim Architecture*, 2nd edition, Vol. I, Part One, Pl. 3<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *The Arts of Islam*, exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery, (London, 1976), No. 469, p. 298

The stepped heading for Surah 75 contains within its left half a geometric design which bears very close comparison with the mosaic floor in the Hammam at 'Anjar<sup>11</sup> which was built during the last year of al-Walid's reign (96 A.H./714-15 A.D.). (Figure 3<sup>a,b</sup>)

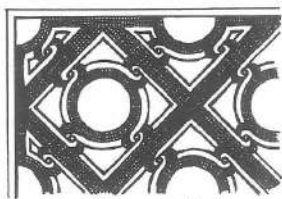


Figure 3<sup>a</sup>

Detail from heading for Surah 75  
See plate 47

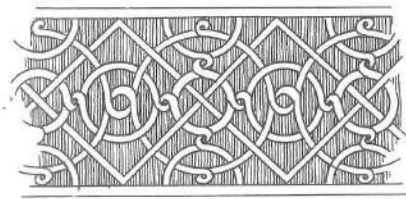


Figure 3<sup>b</sup>

Detail from 'Anjar mosaic floor

The pomegranates, heart-shaped leaves and grape clusters to be found on the lower, right half of the heading are paralleled in the Dome of the Rock as well as Khirbat al-Mafjar<sup>12</sup> (which is dated to ca. 739-43). (Figure 4<sup>a-c</sup>)

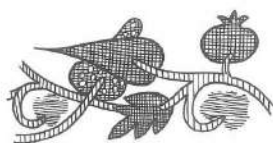


Figure 4<sup>a</sup>

Detail from heading  
for Surah 75



Figure 4<sup>b</sup>

Detail from Dome of the  
Rock mosaic



Figure 4<sup>c</sup>

Detail from Khirbat  
al-Mafjar niche-head

The stepped heading for Surah 76 as well as that for several other surahs incorporates the convention of having vine scrolls emerging from a cornucopia-like object — a very common Umayyad decorative device. Numerous examples of this motif can be seen in the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock and in the nicheheads of Khirbat al-Mafjar.<sup>13</sup> (Figure 5<sup>a-c</sup>)

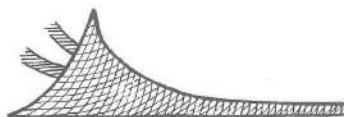


Figure 5<sup>a</sup>

Detail from heading for Surah 76

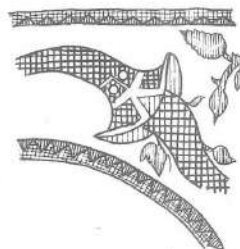


Figure 5<sup>b</sup>

Detail from Dome of the Rock mosaics

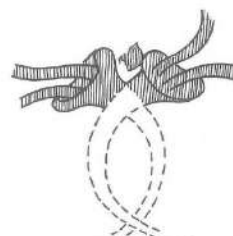


Figure 5<sup>c</sup>

Detail from Khirbat  
al-Mafjar niche-head

<sup>11</sup> Creswell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Part Two, Pl. 78c<sup>b</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Creswell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Part One, Fig. 152; Hamilton, R.W., *Khirbat al-Mafjar, An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, (Oxford) 1959, p. 145, Fig. 98

<sup>13</sup> Creswell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Part One, Fig. 173; Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 141, Fig. 90

The diaper pattern filling the entire rectangular heading for Surah 85 is also a design which seems to have been quite popular during the Umayyad period both on architecture and on decorative arts. Examples of this motif can be cited from Khirbat al-Mafjar and the Dome of the Rock as well as on a luster painted glass goblet which was excavated in Fustat and which can be dated to the third quarter of the eighth century.<sup>14</sup> (Figure 6<sup>a-d</sup>)



Figure 6<sup>a</sup>  
*Detail from heading  
for Surah 85*



Figure 6<sup>b</sup>  
*Detail from Khirbat  
al-Mafjar niche-head*



Figure 6<sup>c</sup>  
*Detail from Dome  
of the Rock mosaics*



Figure 6<sup>d</sup>  
*Detail from luster-  
painted glass goblet*

The second group of leaves with a squarer format also has numerous points of comparison with dated monuments in the Umayyad realm. Not only do the trees which circumscribe each of the eight points of the star on the purely decorative page of this Qur'an bear very close comparison with those in the Great Mosque of Damascus (founded between 85-87 A.H./705-707 A.D.)<sup>15</sup> but they also share the idiosyncrasy mentioned above of having their trunks encircled by or entwined with their own branches or those of other plants. (Figure 7<sup>a,b</sup>)



Figure 7<sup>a</sup>  
*Detail from frontispiece*



Figure 7<sup>b</sup>  
*Detail from Great Mosque of  
Damascus mosaics*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Fig. 94; Creswell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Part One, Fig. 335; *The Arts of Islam*, No. 119, p. 136

<sup>15</sup> Creswell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Part One, Pl. 55

<sup>16</sup> Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 208, Fig. 152; Serjeant, R.B. and R. Lewcock, *San'a' An Arabian Islamic City*, (London, 1983), p. 341, 18.45

<sup>17</sup> This corroborates the dating given to a Qur'an in the Egyptian (formerly Khedival) Library in Cairo which was published by B. Moritz, *Arabic Palaeography*, (Cairo, 1905), pls. 1-12 as 1st-2nd century after the Hijra and assigned a more specific date of about 107 A.H./725 A.D. by Arnold, T.W. and A. Grohmann, *The Islamic Book*, (Paris, 1929), p. 22. (David James, *Qur'ans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library*, (London, 1980), p. 23, includes this manuscript with a group he places in ninth-tenth century Egypt without offering any data to support this new attribution or to refute that of earlier scholars). Although the illumination of this Qur'an is less finely executed and of a more limited palette (yellow, green and red) than that decorating either of the groups presented here, it is closely related to that found on them as regards motifs. For example, one of its stepped headings (Moritz, *op. cit.*, pls 1 and 2) supports three pomegranate bushes similar to those seen above in Figure 8 and arcades containing hanging lamps each of which is equipped with a receptacle for a wick. Similarly adorned arcades are the principal motif on the breathtakingly beautiful double frontispiece of the vertically oriented manuscript under discussion here. This is to be published by a member of the German team headed by Prof. Dr. Albrecht Noth.

<sup>18</sup> All of the drawings illustrating this article were executed by Shin-ichi Doi of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The border of the leaf belonging to this group and containing Surah 114 incorporates a design which is found in several places during the Umayyad period, namely a palmette-like plant whose upper petal or leaf has been transformed into a pomegranate on a tall stem. It can be seen filling two panels at Khirbat al-Mafjar and gracing numerous wooden corbels in the Great Mosque of San'a', which are part of the restoration instituted by al-Walid.<sup>16</sup> (Figure 8<sup>a-c</sup>)

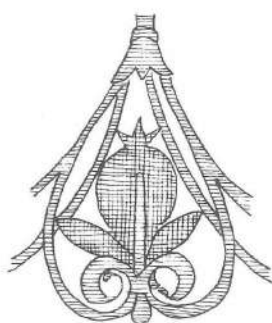


Figure 8<sup>a</sup>  
*Detail from border  
for Surah 114*



Figure 8<sup>b</sup>  
*Detail from Khirbat  
al-Mafjar diwan dome panel*



Figure 8<sup>c</sup>  
*Detail from Great  
Mosque of San'a' corbel*

What is the period into which these two groups of leaves should be placed? Taking the buildings mentioned here which incorporate motifs found on these pages and using the earliest foundation date as a *terminus post quem* and the latest completion date as a *terminus ante quem*, we find ourselves within the years from 691 to 743 or roughly in the second half of the Umayyad period.<sup>17</sup>

Where were these leaves executed? The numerous Islamic parallels<sup>18</sup> — not to mention those discernible in Syriac manuscript illumination and Byzantine architectural decoration — to be found in Greater Syria for the decorative motifs incorporated on these pages should leave little doubt as to the general area of their production.

If a more extensive study of these two group of pages corroborates these provisional conclusions, we are dealing with some of the oldest datable Qur'an leaves extant which were executed somewhere in Greater Syria and which are, unquestionably, some of the most beautiful ever created in the Islamic world.





## Conservation of the Manuscripts

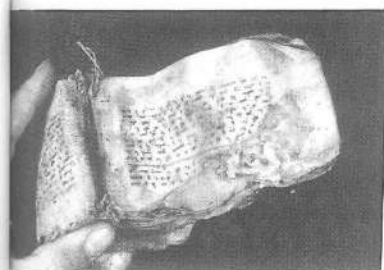
Coming to Yemen after working for eight years in the United States was certainly a different experience but I immediately loved the country. At the time of my arrival all the parchment and paper fragments of the old Qur'anic manuscripts had already been presorted and had been stored neatly, though temporarily, in plastic bags and cardboard boxes. Seeing their poor condition was not pleasant — or was it? After all, this was the reason for me to have come here! — but I was surely far from the shock the first people seeing them must have experienced. I found the work on this difficult and extremely valuable material a great challenge. And the establishment of a good restoration workshop at the new manuscript library here in San'a' was an exciting, if sometimes frustrating undertaking. I cannot say how grateful I am that I was given the chance to work here, and how sorry I am that I have to leave so soon, long before being able to complete the work. I can only hope, at this point, that I could contribute to the installation of good working conditions and to the knowledge of treatment procedures, and that, after our departure, the Yemenis themselves will make every effort to continue our work!

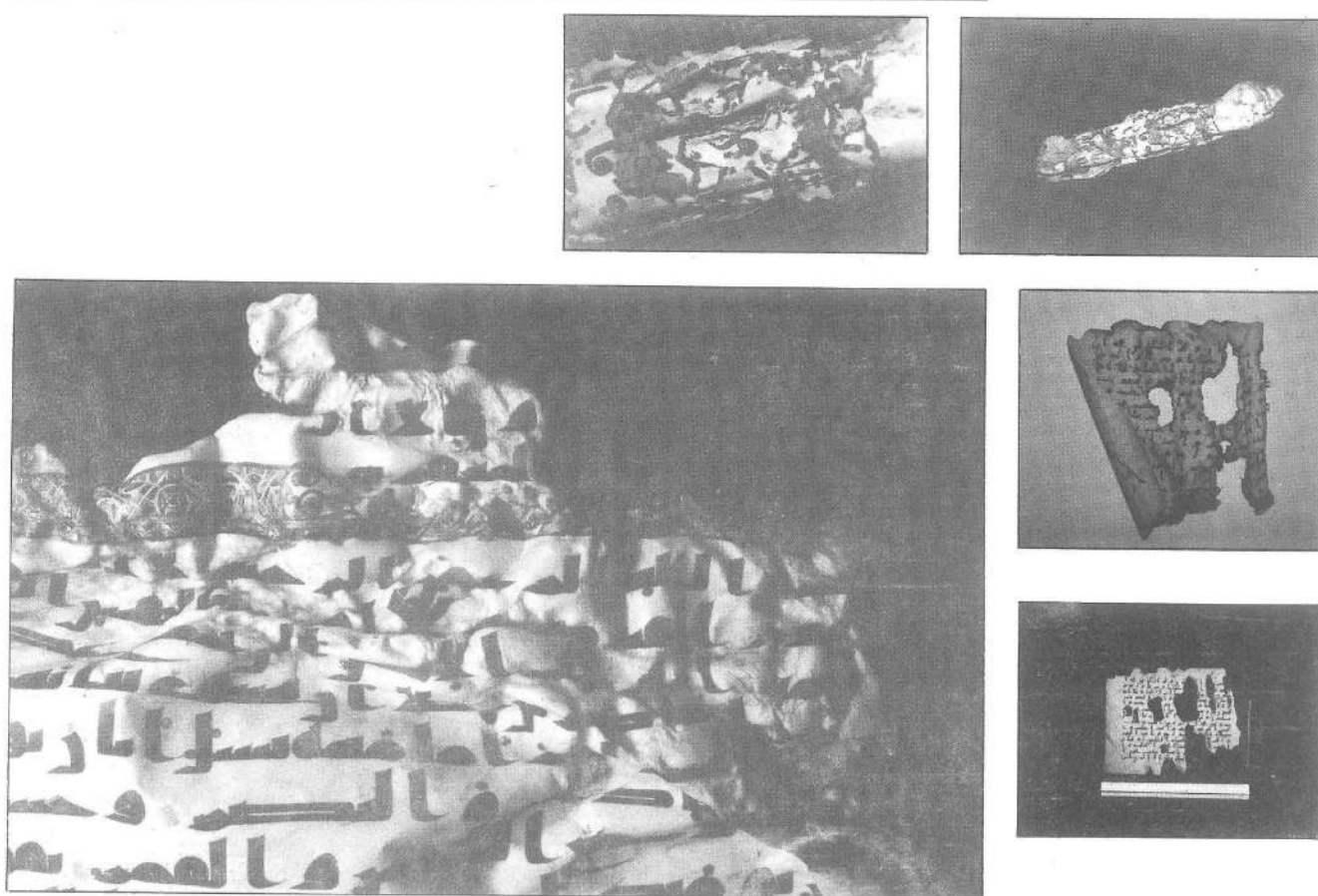


The manuscripts were first sorted according to their artistic importance and general state of preservation, a process made necessary by the very large quantity of material at hand. In this way all the objects of special interest, i.e., those having decorative illuminations, outstanding calligraphy, large format, or other important features were given priority in conservation treatment.

At this point it may be said that while all of the important manuscripts have been covered there remain many single pages and a multitude of smaller fragments. In addition there are also volumes, or better parts of volumes which retain their sewing nearly intact. The manuscript pages themselves measure anywhere from 5×8 cm to approximately 40×45 cm.

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At the time of their discovery the condition of the objects varied from very good to almost totally destroyed. Besides the extensive damage done by rodents and insects chewing away at the parchment pages, which left heavy accumulations of "fly spots" and other soiling behind, there was major water damage possibly from leaks in the roof during the two rainy seasons in San'ā'. The city dust also creates problems. Although it can usually be removed very easily from the manuscripts, this is not true when it has been mixed with water and then dried to form heavy incrustations or even cake together the pages of some volumes. Occasionally the inscriptions or illuminated decorations have been irreparably washed away; however in some cases this may have the unexpected advantage of revealing the otherwise hidden ink underdrawing for the illuminations. This exposure to water has often caused the parchment to shrink, rot beyond possible consolidation, or even desintegrate completely. Individual pages may also be torn, folded rolled, creased or pleated, and even human damage is obviously evident when an otherwise perfectly preserved page has parts cut out of it. It is interesting to note that the extremely dry, summer climate (10-20% relative humidity) does not seem to have done the pages any permanent damage.



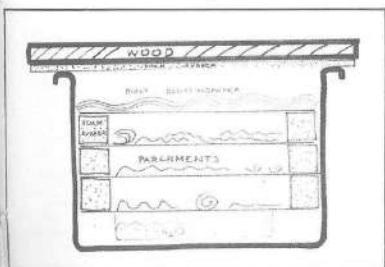
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### *Method of Treatment*

Before treatment begins the dry and rigid parchment pages need to be softened. Due to their hygroscopic character they regain their flexibility by absorbing moisture out of a super-humid atmosphere. For this purpose we acquired a sophisticated laboratory unit with climatic control. But before this piece of equipment could be put into operation I employed a much simpler device which anyone can set up very easily: A shallow tray filled with water is placed in a larger and deeper container. Above this is suspended nylon netting, with its edges glued between strips of strong plastic to give support to the parchment pages. The nets are in turn supported by "frames" cut out of sheets of foam rubber or styrofoam, which allow enough space between the nets to place the San'a' pages. The uppermost net is then covered by a layer of moist blotting paper, while wooden board with a thinner foam rubber glued on to it closes this modest humidity chamber sufficiently tight to create a quite humid atmosphere inside. The humidity level can be varied by leaving the cover slightly open, by not using moist blotting paper, or by leaving the pages in the chamber for longer or shorter periods of time. After the pages have been removed from the chamber they can easily be unrolled or unfolded, and pages stuck together can be separated with care.



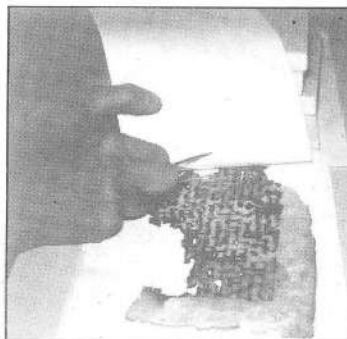
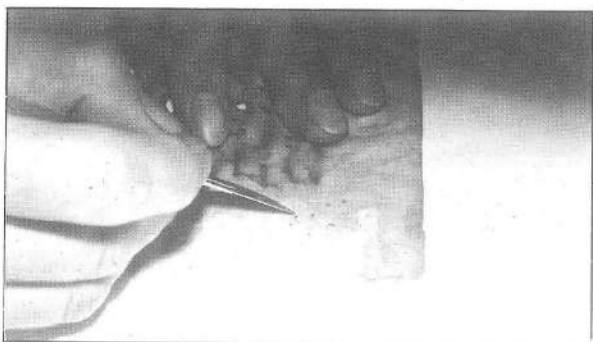
The dirt may then be cleaned off with a cotton ball moistened with a solution composed of 4 parts alcohol (ethanol) and 1 part water by volume. After several tests I found that this was the most effective mixture for this purpose. If used carefully it does not affect the ink or paint, while removing dust and dirt effectively. It also softens fly spots and incrustations to the point where they can be removed easily with a scalpel. The alcohol content helps to distribute the moisture evenly throughout the parchment, while at the same time it prevents it from becoming too wet. I always dampen the hair side of the parchment first because it does not absorb as much moisture as does the more absorbent flesh side, I thus can postpone the usually very annoying curling of the edges. It appears that even parchment which has previously been exposed to excessive moisture, a fact clearly indicated by its shrinkage, decomposition or discoloration, is much more hygroscopic. This means these pages will absorb much more moisture in the humidity chamber than those which have never been wet. Great care must be taken not to let it become too wet again. Irreversibly decomposed areas are then cut away, as are the rotten edges or holes caused by water damage.





The next and perhaps most difficult step is to remove creases, stretch shrunken parts and flatten curled edges. This task is accomplished by putting the parchment page between sheets of waxpaper with the waxed side towards the object, and then weighing it down, section by section, with small heavy weights. I use metal weights, sprayed with lacquer to prevent rusting, covered with felt. So that no sharp edges remain to cause accidental damage. In special cases the weights can be placed directly on the parchment when the intermediate waxpaper would be too slippery to effect proper stretching. Waxed paper is preferable to blotting paper at this stage since the former has no fibres which can stick to the moist ink or paint, nor does its smooth surface allow ink or paint to stick to it.

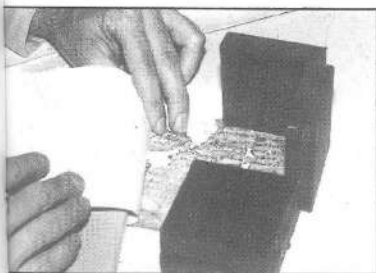
This procedure of stretching and weighing down is usually carried out once, but it can be repeated several times. Any time the parchment is getting too dry it needs to be sprayed again with the alcohol-water solution.



As soon as the parchment page lies flat between the sheets of wax paper, the small weights are removed and are replaced by heavier weights, this time pieces of marble, which are supported by several layers of strong cardboard glued together. After having dried slightly the parchments are pressed carefully in a press. Should moist parchment be inadvertently pressed too strongly, it becomes irreversibly transparent. After a day the waxpaper is replaced by blotting paper because there is now no further danger of paper fibres sticking to the damp ink or paint. The pages are then left between the blotters in the press for a week, or even longer, until they are completely dry.

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After this treatment the sheets have regained their flexibility and can be handled by scholars. The parchment pages, however, have a tendency to roll and must therefore be stored in a manner to prevent this happening. The present practice is to keep some of the big and very decorative pages sealed between two sheets of Mylar, although open spaces are left along the edges in order to allow air to enter and to let the pages "breathe". If only few sheets of any given codex are preserved they can be stored in acid free folders. If a larger part of a volume has been saved it will be kept in a drop-back Solander box, the sheets being held tightly together between two stiff covers connected by string which are tied together and placed inside the box. No other form of treatment is now applied to the manuscripts. All consideration of mending tears, filling in lost areas, or of rebinding the mostly fragmented volumes must be postponed until a more comprehensive programme of priorities has been established.



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#### **List of Abbreviations**

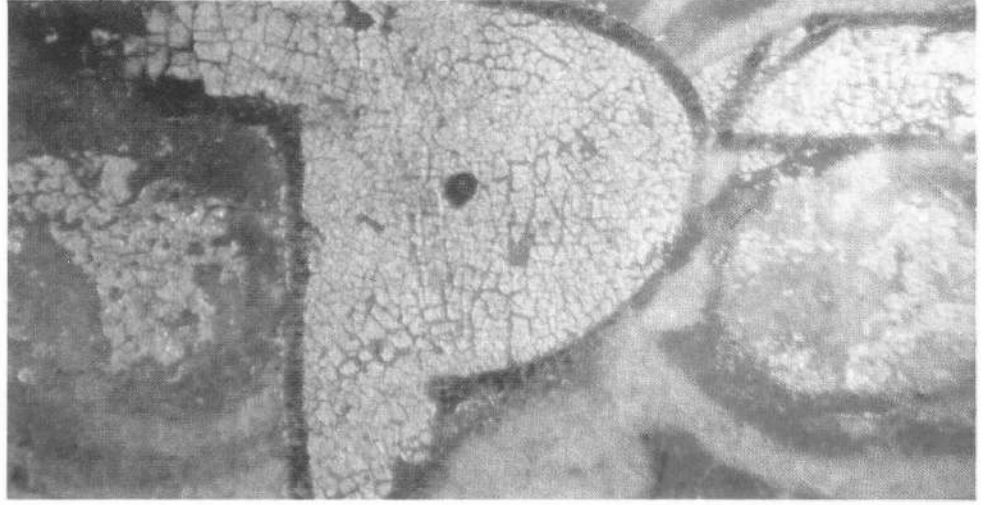
- IN : Inventory Number of the Parchment Mushaf in the  
Dar al-Makhtutat al-Yamaniyyah collection, San 'ā'
- DP : Double page, measurements are of one page only
- FS : Flesh side of parchment
- HS : Hair side of parchment
- H : Height of the page, in cm
- W : Width of the page, in cm

Number in brackets refer to the object numbers  
in the cases.

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# MAŞĀHIF ŞAN‘Ā’



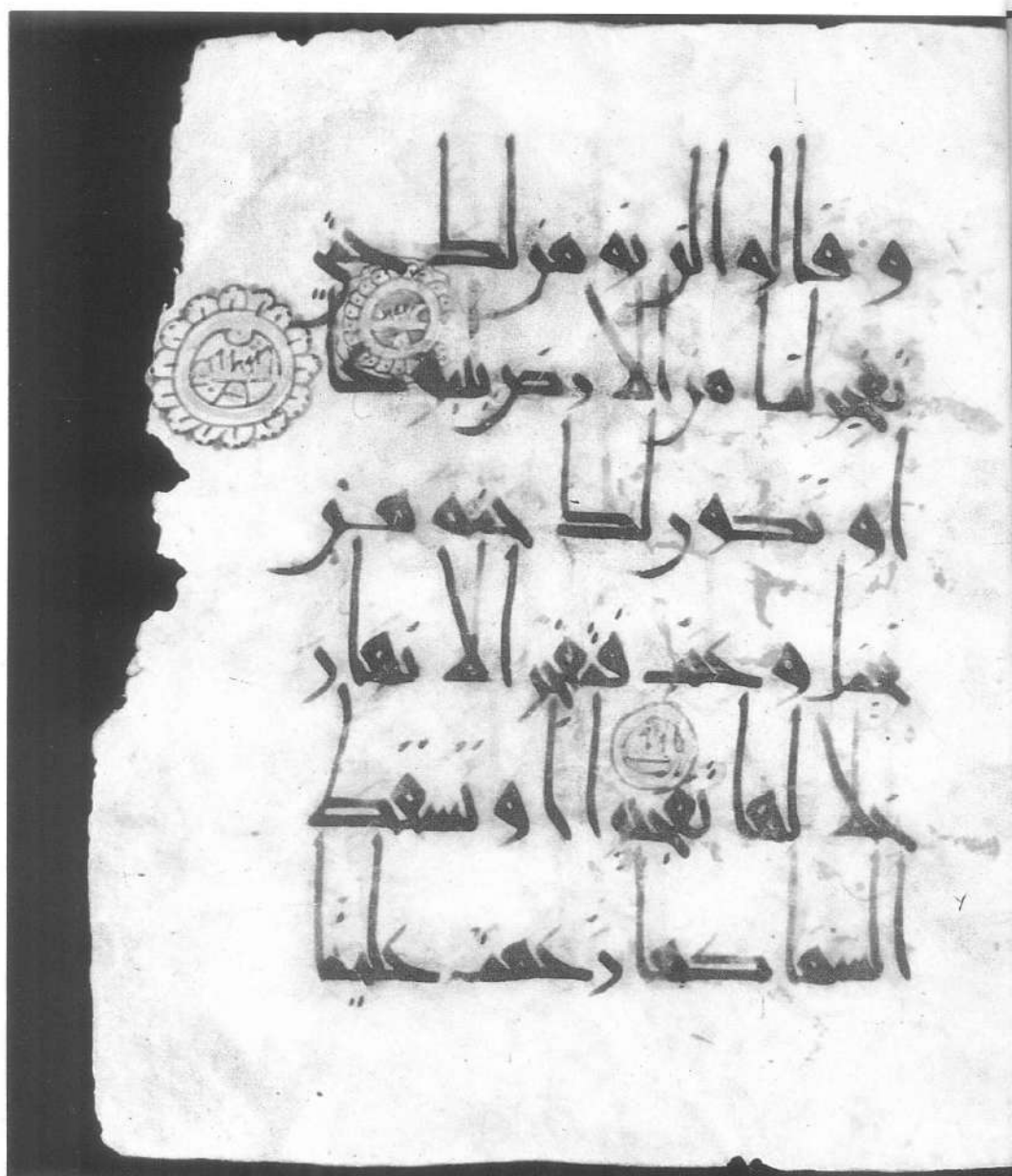
Tables

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Eastern Kufic

Two pages from  
the same Mushaf  
as number [ 76 - ٧٦ ]

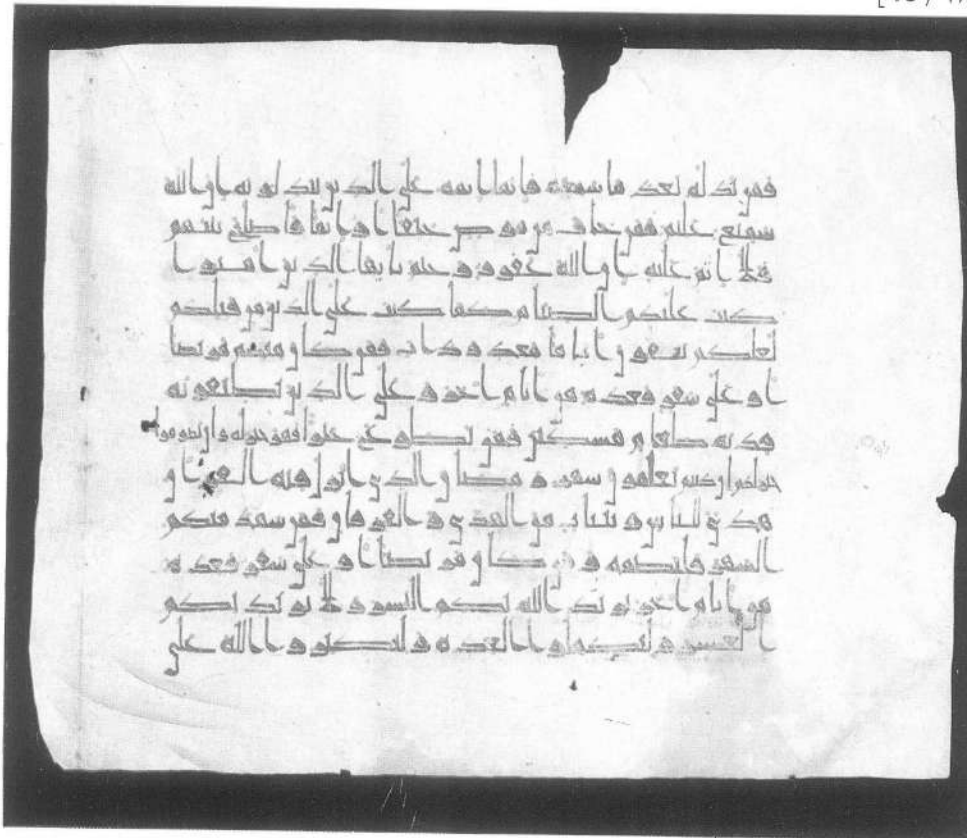


IN: 6-8.1  
DP/HS: H 14.4 cm W 12 cm  
Surah: 18:4-18:6/  
17:90-17:92

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[ 78 / ٧٨ ]



This Mushaf is imbued with cool and formal elegance, more appropriate to architecture. It bears few diacritical marks but is fully vocalized traditional system. Probably 4th cent. A.H.

يعطى هذا المصحف تأثيراً قوياً من الأناقة المصطنعة التي يتوقع الإنسان أن يشاهدها على الأغراض المعمارية . وهو يحتوي على بعض علامات الإعجام ، كما يغلب على حروفه علامات التشكيل ذات الأسلوب المتطور ، لذا يرجح نسبته إلى القرن الرابع الهجري .

IN: 12-29.1  
FS: H 34 cm W 41.9 cm  
Surah: 2:185-2:188



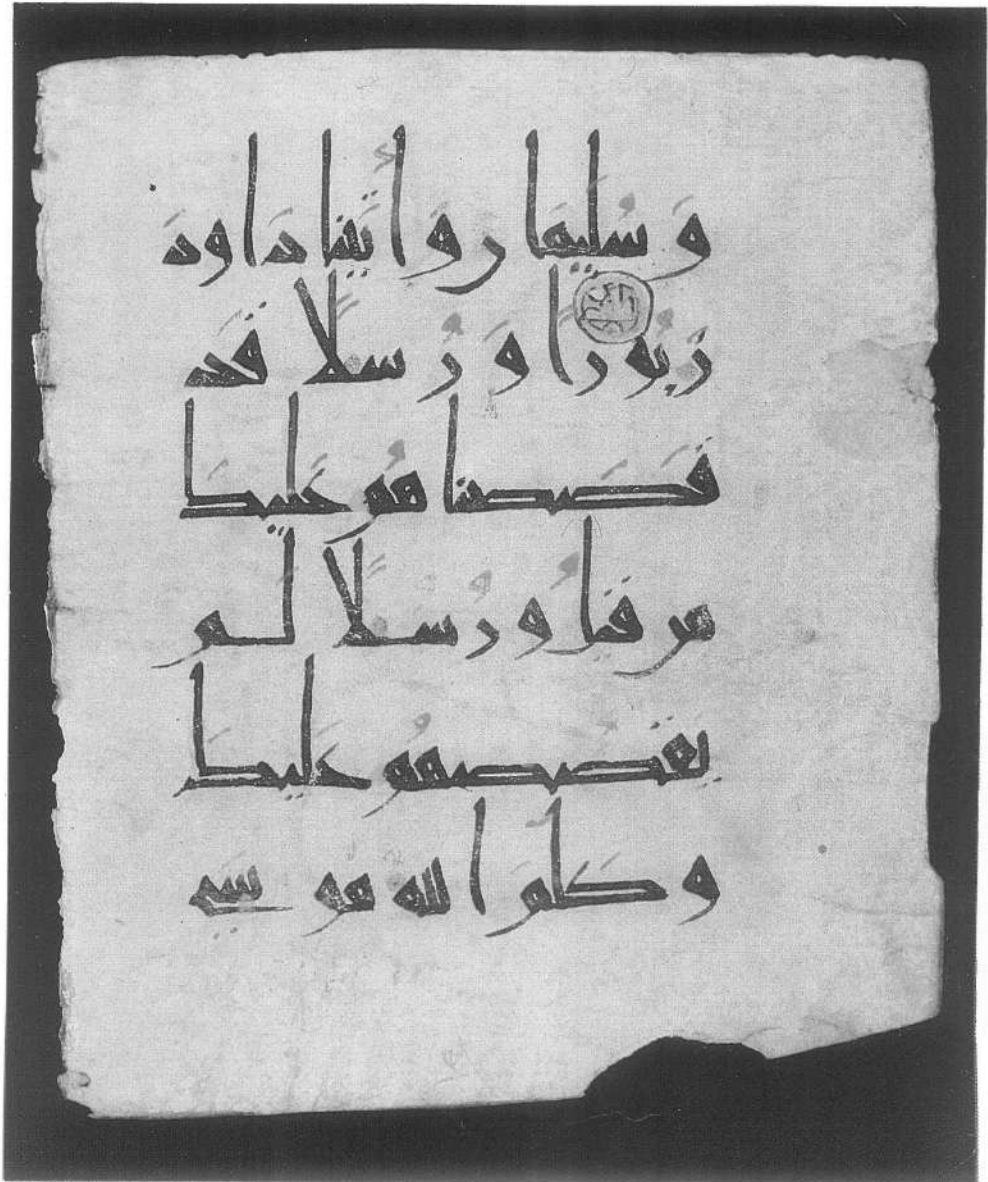
The "broken" style of Kufic appears during the 4th cent. A.H. in Iraq and Persia, but it was not restricted to these areas.

هذا الطراز من الخط الكوفي (المنكسر) ظهر أثناء القرن الرابع الهجري في كل من العراق وفارس ، ومع هذا فهو ليس قاصرا على هذه المناطق .

[ 76 / ٧٦ ]

*Calligraphic Eastern Kufic, 5th/6th cent. A.H. The vocalization system is a mixture of the traditional coloured dots and the new marks developed by the grammarians for use in the Naskh scripts. The script of the Surah title retains the classical Kufic character. In this Mushaf every single verse is counted.*

خط كوفي شرقي ، ينسب الى القرنين الخامس أو السادس للهجرة . الاسلوب المتبع هنا في شكل الحروف يجمع بين النقط التقليدية الملونة والعلامات الحديثة التي تطورت على أيدي النحاة لتستخدم مع الخطوط النسخية . خط عنوان السور لا يزال يحتفظ بميزات الخط الكوفي التقليدي في هذا المصحف الذي يمتاز ايضا بترقيم كل آية على حدة .



IN: 6-8.1  
HS: H 14.6 cm W 12.4 cm  
Surah: 4:163-4:164

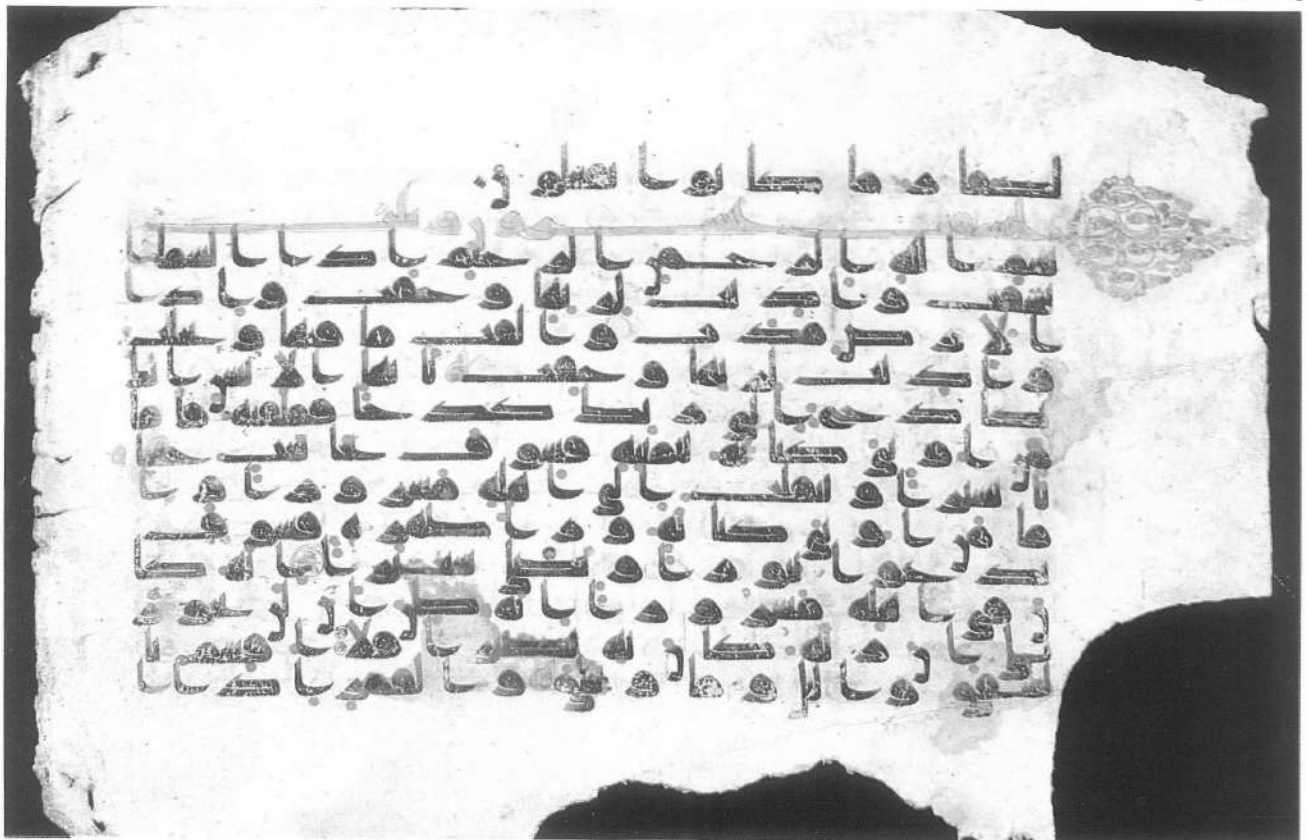
## Styles of Kufic

Probably 3rd cent. A.H. no diacritical marks but advanced system of vocalization. Moreover, this Mushaf marks the different canonical readings of the text (Qir'at). The process of restoring a masterpiece like this provides the unique opportunity to display the beauty and philological precision of one Mushaf by showing more than just two pages.

## نماذج من الخط الكوفي

من المرجح نسبته الى حوالي القرن الثالث الهجري ، وهو يخلو من علامات الاعجام في الوقت الذي يظهر فيه علامات التشكيل المتطورة .  
يشتمل هذا المصحف ايضا على علامات القراءات المختلفة ، والواقع ان العمليات التي اتبعت في ترميم قطعة فريدة مثل هذه ، سمحت لنا بتفكيك المصحف وابراز اكثر من الصفحتين المعتادتين .

[ 70 / ٧٠ ]



IN: 14-21.1  
FS: H 19 cm W 28.3 cm  
Surah: 101:1-102:7

### Stules of Kufic

In this example (3rd./4th cent. A.H.), the horizontal and round elements prevail. Only if dated pieces of this type appear can we desivately determine their period and provenance.

### نماذج من الخط الكوفي

هذا المثال الذي ينسب الى القرنين الثالث أو الرابع للهجرة نلاحظ ان العناصر الأفقية والمستديرة غاية في الاتقان وان كنا لازلنا بحاجة الى ظهور نماذج مؤرخة منها حتى يمكن عقد المقارنات اللازمة في محاولة جديدة لتحديد عصورها ومصادرها .

[ 62 / ٦٢ ]



IN: 5-17.1

HS: H 16.4 cm W 26 cm

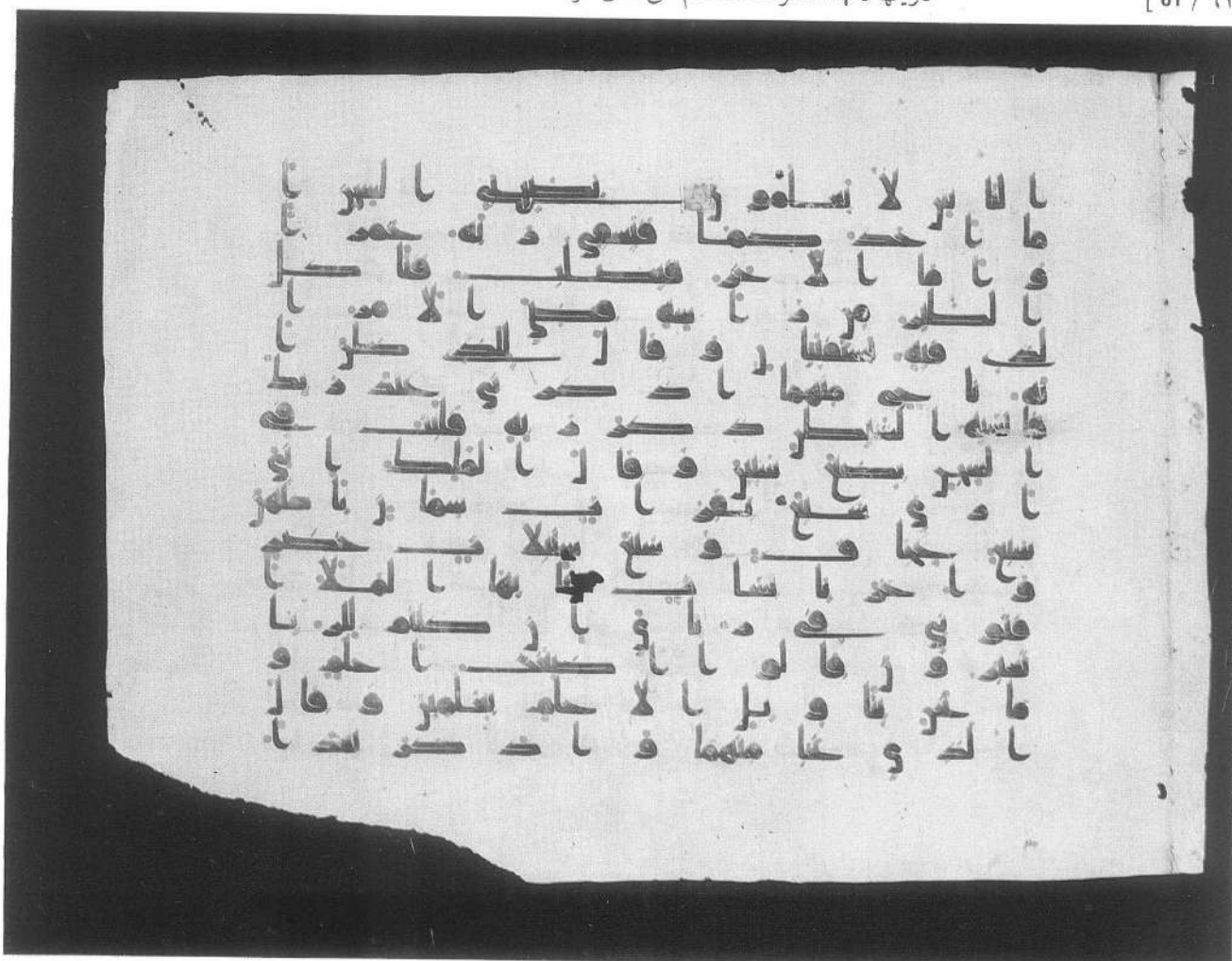
Surah: 39:55-39:56

## Styles of Kufic

From the general appearance of developed Kufic styles one is tempted to date those early examples according to the vertical elements of the script. However, different styles of calligraphy were in use at the same time and that makes dating even more

نماذج من الخط الكوفي  
من الشكل العام للخطوط الكوفية المتطورة يمكن القول بأن النماذج التي تتميز بالمبالغة في استطالة بعض عناصر الحروف تعتبر سابقة على تلك التي تتميز عناصر حروفها بظاهرة المط في الخطوط الأفقية ، وذلك في الوقت الذي شاع فيه نماذج متنوعة من الخطوط ، الأمر الذي يزيد من صعوبة تأريخها لأنها استمرت تستخدم على مدى فترة

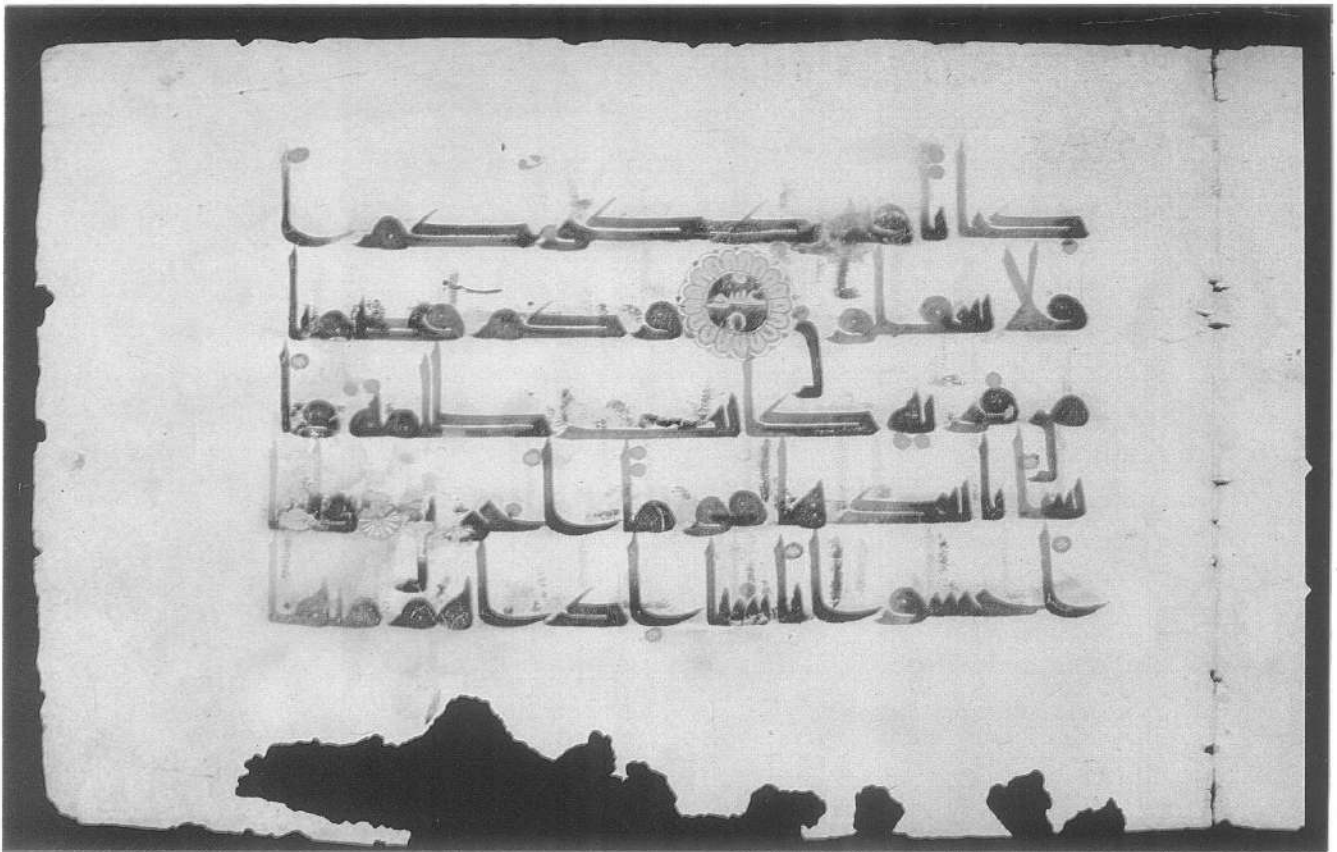
[ 61 / ٦١ ]



difficult, they persisted for long periods. Classical Kufic became the style par excellence for writing the Qur'an and this continued even after the ordinary cursive (Naskh) had been developed to calligraphic standards.

طويلة . ولقد صار الخط الكوفي التقليدي بحق الأسلوب الشائع في كتابة المصاحف، بل واستمر ذلك حتى بعد أن استطاع الخط اللين المستخدم في المعاملات اليومية أن يصل إلى درجة مناسبة من التجويد والتنسيق والجمال .

IN:15-29.1  
HS:H 30.4 cm W 41 cm  
Surah:12:40-12:45



IN:5-15.1  
 DP/HS:H 14.5 cm W 21.5 cm  
 Surah:21:10-21:12/  
 21:18-21:19

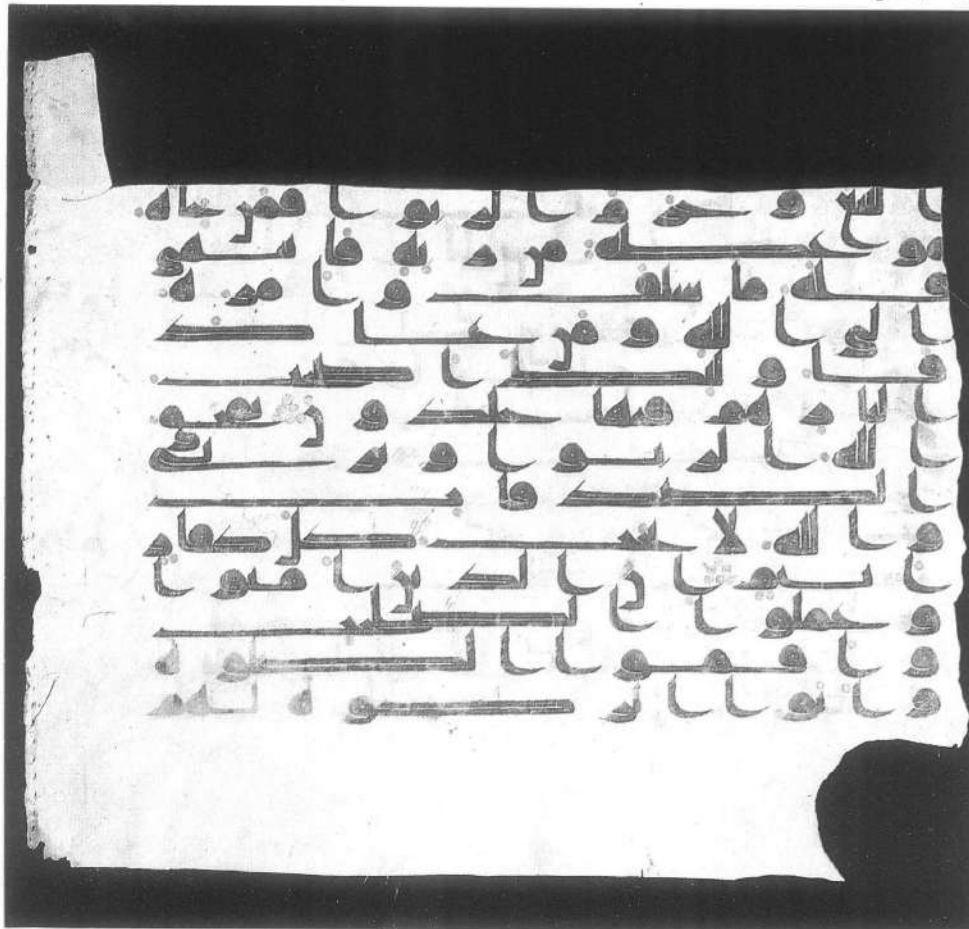
The calligrapher of this masterpiece from the third cent. A.H. composed the script so carefully that he was able to close the lines precisely at the (invisible) frame. For the rosette of the decade, space was left by the scribe.

عمد الخطاط في هذه اللوحة الفريدة التي تنسب إلى القرن الثالث الهجري إلى نقش خطوطه بمهارة كبيرة بدليل أنه استطاع أن ينسق سطوره داخل اطار لا وجود له . أما فيما يتعلق بوريدة ترقيم الآيات ، فقد ترك لها الخطاط الفراغ الذي نقش فيه .

### The Element of Mashq

Mashq is a term used for the horizontal elongation of certain Arabic letters in the earliest Kufic calligraphy. In a way, Mashq indicates the scribe's intention to produce a piece of art and not just a nice cursive script.

[ 58 / ٥٨ ]



*Excellent classical Kufic from the third cent. A.H., no diacritical marks but developed vocalization. The scribe did not leave space for the insertion of verse separators.*

نموذج رائع للخط الكوفي التقليدي من القرن الثالث الهجري يخلو من الاعجام وذلك في الوقت الذي تبدو فيه علامات التشكيل أكثر تطوراً وإن كان الخطاط لم يترك فراغاً لوضع فواصل الآيات.

IN:13-38.1  
HS:H 38.4 cm W 44 cm  
Surah:2:275-2:277



## ظاهرة المشق :

استخدمت لفظة المشق للدلالة على الامتداد الأفقي لبعض الحروف العربية في الخط الكوفي . على كل حال فإن خط المشق يشير إلى رغبة الخطاط في إنتاج تحفة فنية وليس مجرد خط جميل يتسم بالبساطة . يكشف لنا التحليل الدقيق لامتداد الحروف أن خطوطها الأفقية قد

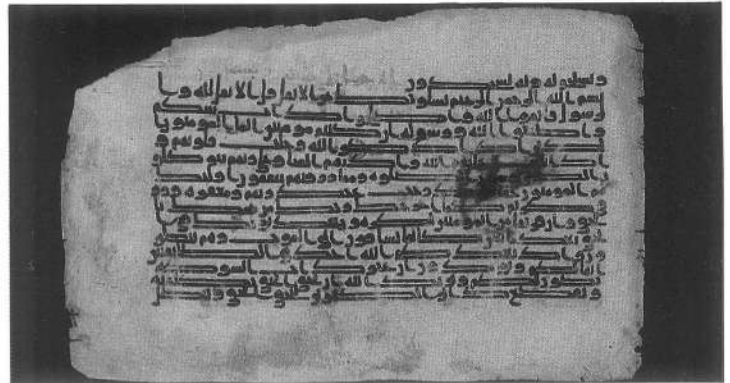
رسمت من اليسار إلى اليمين على العكس تماما من أسلوب الكتابة العربية . وهذا يعني أن الخط الجيد ما هو إلا إنتاج اصطناعي إلى درجة كبيرة ، حيث يصبح الوصل المطلوب بين بعض الحروف شكليا وغير عمليا .

[ 55 / ٥٥ ]

Examples of Mashq on small leaves of different periods.

نماذج من خط المشق على صفحات صغيرة تنسب إلى فترات مختلفة .

IN:15-16.3  
HS:H 12.9 cm W 20.3 cm  
Surah:7:206-8:8



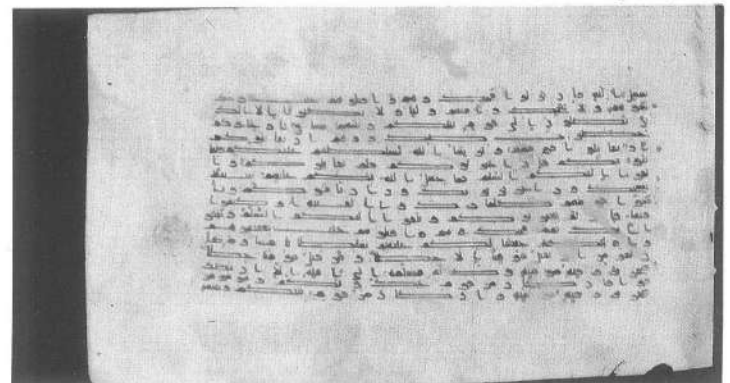
[ 56 / ٥٦ ]

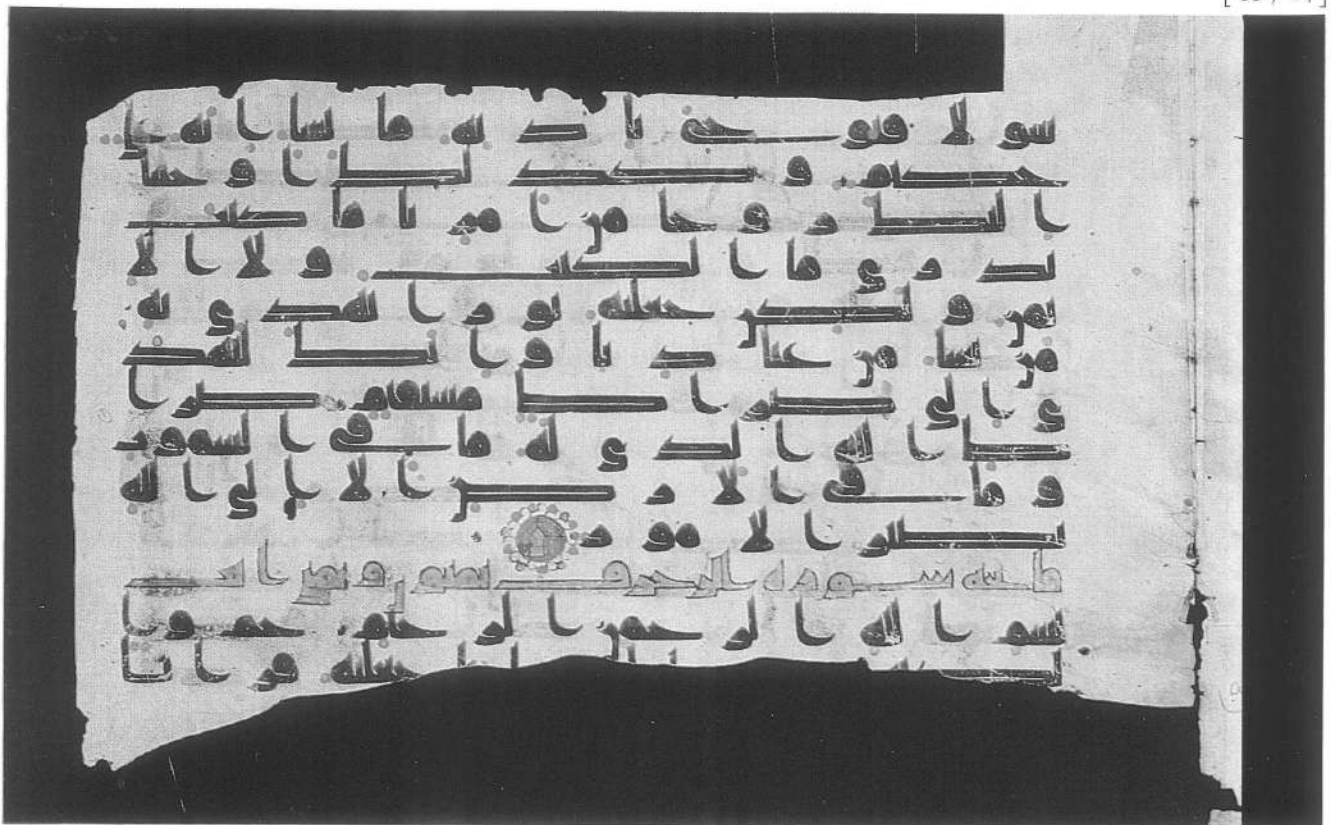
IN:7-9.1  
DP/FS:H 8.1 cm W 13 cm  
Surah:1:1-1:7/  
2:29-2:31



[ 57 / ٥٧ ]

IN:16-11.2  
HS:H 8.7 cm W 14.7 cm  
Surah:4:89-4:92





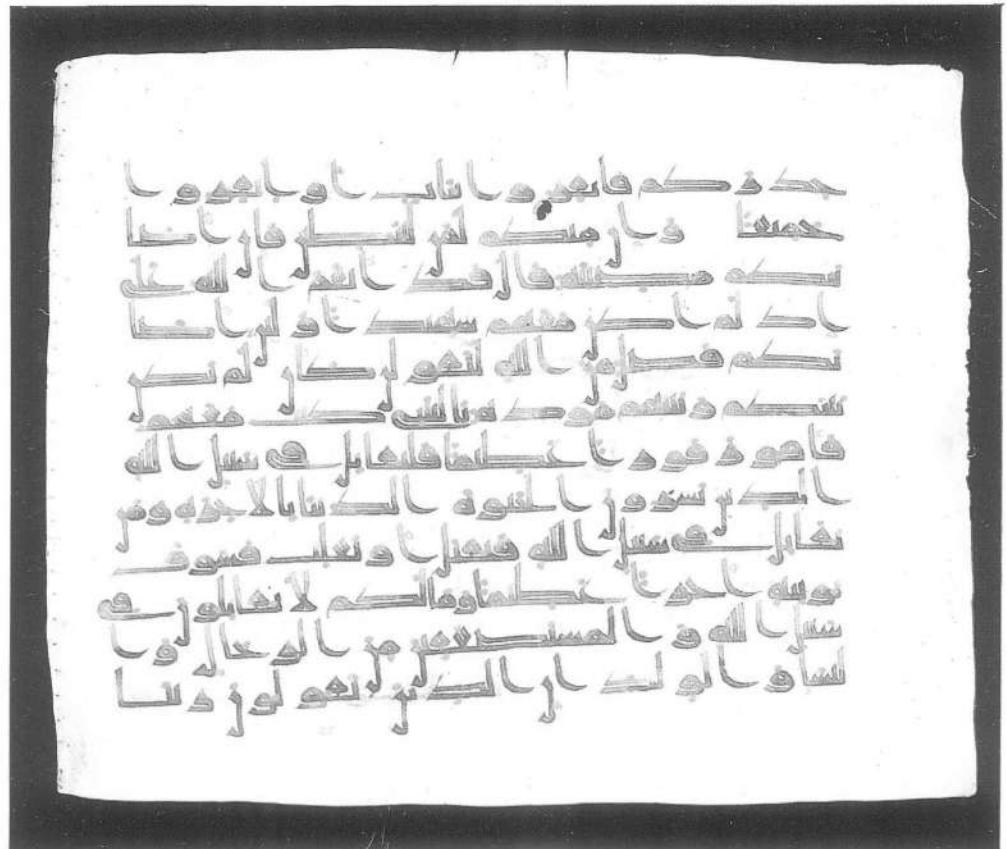
*Elegant, classical, Kufic Mushaf, third century A.H. with few diacritical marks but developed vocalization system. The decades of verses are decoratively indicated by the Abjad numerical letters. Part of the elegance of the calligraphy is due to the horizontal extension of certain letters (Mashq).*

مصحف بالخط الكوفي التقليدي  
المجود . ينسب الى القرن الثالث  
الهجري . يزين بعضه علامات  
اعجام ، ولكن حروف التشكيل  
تبدو أكثر تطورا . اما فيما يتعلق  
بترقيم الايات فقد نفذ بطريقة  
زخرفية بواسطة حروف الابدادية .  
هذا وترجع بعض اناقة هذا الخط  
إلى ظاهرة المد التي تتجلى في خط  
المشق .

IN:13-26.1  
HS:H 22.5 cm W 30.5 cm  
Surah:42:51-43:3



IN: 12-31.1  
HS: H 32.5 cm W 39.5 cm  
Surah: 4:71-4:75



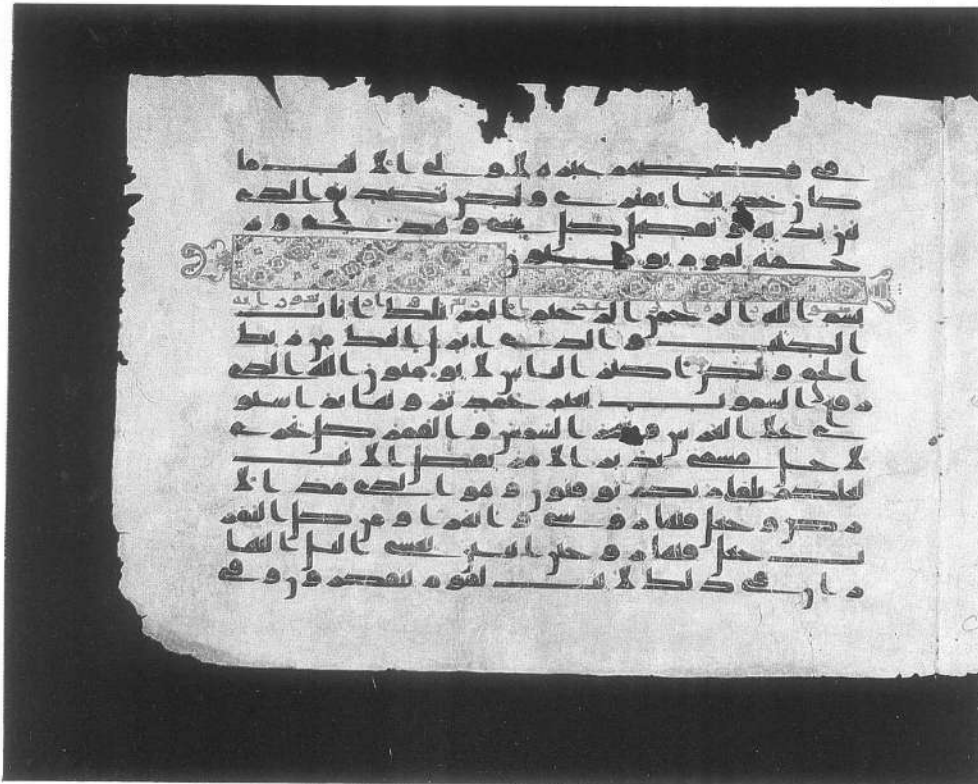
Third or fourth century A.H. While diacritical marks are totally lacking, this Mushaf is extensively vocalized, but has, amazingly enough, no verse separators. If we compare the script with the pure Kufic of no. (53) we notice the introduction of a new calligraphic element in addi-

tion to the vertical, horizontal and round strokes of classical Kufic, a 45 degree angle is favoured in cases of the medial Fa, Qaf, Ayn, Ghayn and final Ra and Zay. This "broken" style eventually leads to Eastern or Persian Kufic.

القرن الثالث أو الرابع للهجرة . جديدة . فبالإضافة إلى الخطوط الرأسية والافقية والدائرية التي تميز الخط الكوفي التقليدي وجدت حروف ذات زوايا حادة مقدارها ٤٥ درجة مثل الفاء والقاف والعين والغين الوسطى والراء والزين المنتهية . وهذا الأسلوب يذكرنا بالخط الكوفي الشرقي أو الخط الفارسي .

في الوقت الذي تختفي فيه علامات الاعجام في هذا المصحف ، نجد ان اغلب حروفه مشكولة والمثير للدهشة حقا هو انه لا يحتوي على فواصل بين الايات . واذا نحن قارنا خط هذا المصحف بالخط الكوفي البحت الذي نشاهده على الصفحة المقابلة ، سوف نلاحظ ظهور عناصر خطية

[ 49 / ٤٩ ]



The absence of contemporary diacritical marks and the simple vocalization system utilized are indications that this Mushaf is of the 2nd century A.H. Here again, note the varying quality of the illumination within the same Mushaf.

نظرا لغياب علامات الاعجام اصلا ، ولا استخدام وسائل التشكيل البسيطة ، فان هذا المصحف يبدو انه من القرن الثاني ، ويلاحظ هنا أيضا تنوع الاداء الفني المستخدم على نفس المصحف .

IN: 15-30.1  
HS: H 27.8 cm W 38.7 cm  
Surah: 12:111-13:4

## The Umayyad Mushaf

Early second century A.H., few diacritical marks, extensive simple vocalization, verse counting by pentades (Takhmis, with the letter Ha) and decades (Ta'shir, letter-numbers according to the Abjad). Unfortunately only a few leaves of this Mushaf are preserved. There is no doubt about the early dating and that its illumination and calligraphy make it the most important Mushaf of the San'a collection. Although it still has to be proven that the Mushaf was written and illuminated in Yemen, it seems highly probable especially if we consider the large quantity of excellent collection of San'a.

*There are several different ways of separating Surahs: An empty space can be left at the end of the last verse of a Surah or a whole line can be left empty or an illumination can be inserted into these spaces. In this particular case two solutions are combined. The illuminator filled the rest of the line with a decoration different from that which he executed for filling the space of the complete line. The title of the Surah was then written on top of the illumination of the complete line and not integrated into the design.*

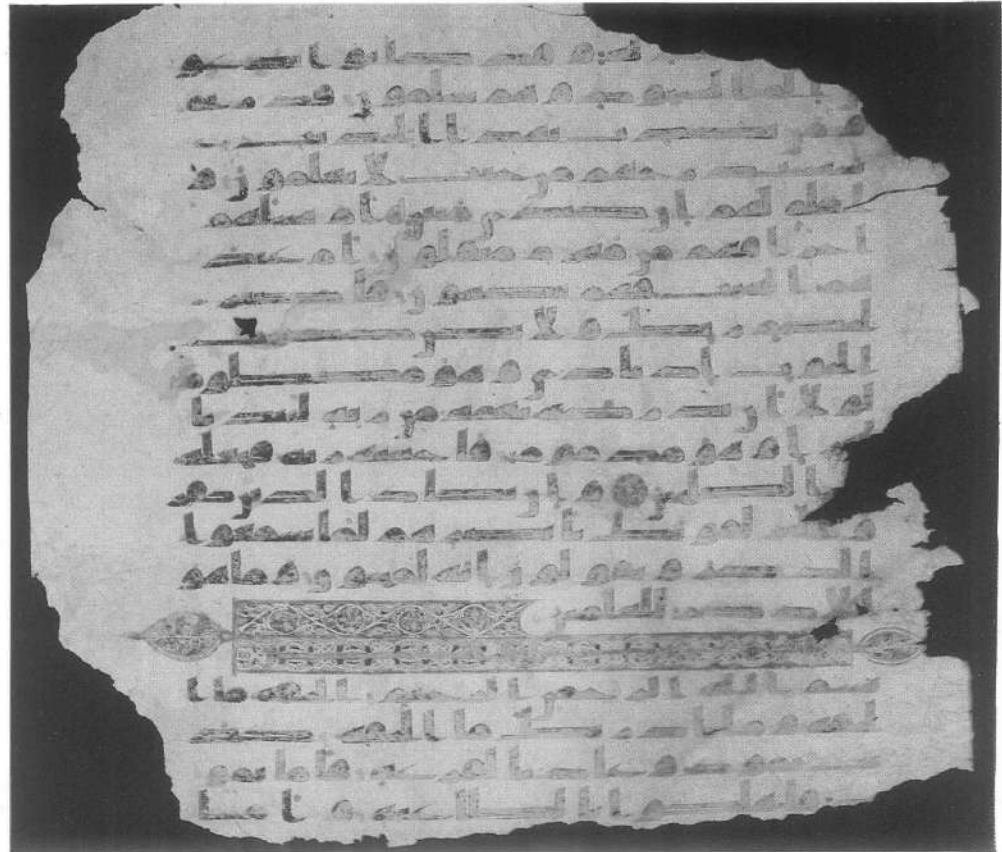
وجدت وسائل متعددة للفصل بين السور ، أما عن طريق ترك الفراغ المتبقى من السطر الأخير ، أو عن طريق ترك السطر الأخير بأكمله ، وفي هذه الحالة كان يمكن إضافة نوع من الزخارف . ونشاهد في هذا المثال مدى نجاح المزوق في الجمع بين الأسلوبين إذ ملأ نهاية السطر بزخرفة تختلف عن تلك التي نقشها في السطر الخالي ثم دون عنوان السورة في أعلى الزخرفة وليس في داخلها دون مراعاة لاشكال العناصر الزخرفية .

IN:20-33.1  
FS:H 42.4 cm W 43.3 cm  
Surah:68:43-69:1

## من المصحف الأموي

أوائل القرن الثاني الهجري ، به القليل من علامات الاعجام والكثير من علامات الشكل البسيطة . أرقام الآيات ميزت عند نهاية كل خمس آيات بالحرف هاء ( الذي يرمز إلى رقم خمسة في الأبجدية ) . لسوء الحظ أنه لم يتبق من هذا المصحف سوى بضع صفحات ونحن لانشك على الإطلاق في نسبته إلى هذا العصر المبكر كما أن زخارفه وخطوطه تجعله أهم المصاحف في مجموعة صنعاء . ومع أنه ليس بالامكان حالياً أن نقطع بأن هذا المصحف قد كتب وزوق في اليمن ، إلا أن هذا يبدو محتملاً لو أخذنا في الاعتبار تلك الأعداد الضخمة من المخطوطات ذات الكتابات الكوفية الرائعة المحفوظة في مجموعة صنعاء .

[ 45 / ٤٥ ]

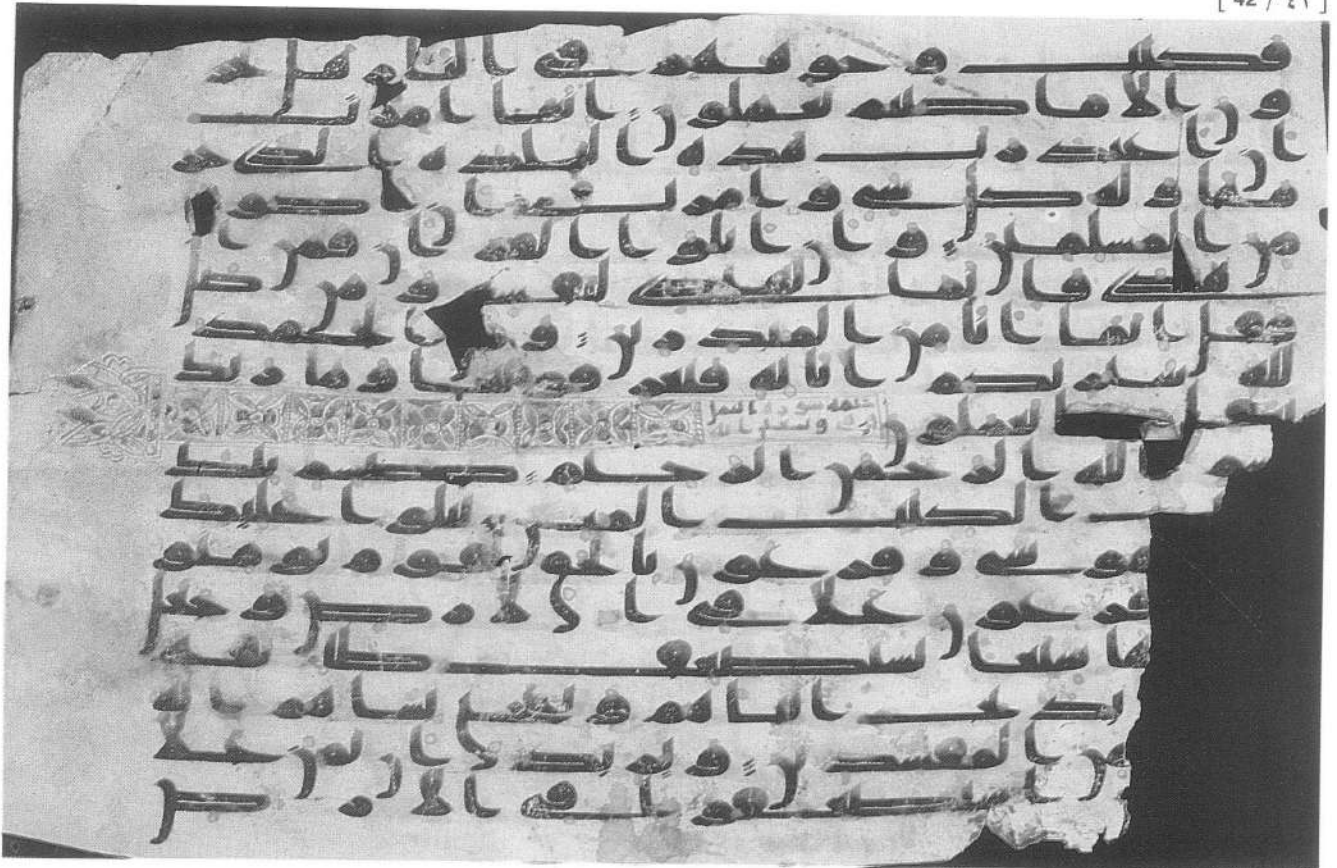


## The Kufic Style

Second and third cent. A.H., few diacritical marks but extensively vocalized. The simple system of marking the three short vowels of

Arabic (a, i, u) by red dots above, below or on the preceding consonant is ascribed to the Basran grammarian Abu l-Aswad ad-Du'ali (d. 69 A.H.).

[ 42 / ٤٢ ]



While the calligraphy is uniformly excellent, we notice substantial differences in the quality of illumination within the same Mushaf.

خطوط رائعة ذات حلول جريئة ،  
نلاحظ أنه قد تم دمج عنوان السورة  
فوق زخارف فاصل السورة .

IN: 17-25.1  
HS: H 17.7 cm W 27.6 cm  
Surah: 27:90-28:5

يديه ، التي تنسب الى النحوي البصري أبو الاسود  
الدؤي ( المتوفي سنة ٦٩ هـ ) .

من القرنين الثاني والثالث للهجرة ، يشتمل على القليل  
من علامات الاعجام والكثير من علامات الشكل .  
الاسلوب البسيط للتشكيل يتمثل في العلامات الاعرابية  
الثلاث بواسطة النقط الحمراء فوق الحرف أو أمامه وبين

[ 38 / ٣٨ ]



Excellent calligraphy with  
bold solutions, note, the  
Surah title integrated with the  
illumination of the Surah  
separator.

الى جانب الخط المتقن نلاحظ هنا ايضا تناقضا بين  
مستوى الخط والزخارف

IN: 15-27.3  
HS: H 24.7 cm W 31.5 cm  
Surah: 4:176-5:2



## The Kufic Style

The Kufic style of writing originated during the first century A.H. Thus, important manuscripts of the Umayyad period may well have been written in this style, especially if they are of extraordinary size like our examples.

[ 35 / ٣٥ ]

## خط كوفي

لقد بدأ استخدام الخط الكوفي في الكتابة نتيجة لاستعماله على المواد الصلبة . خلال القرن الأول الهجري . لذلك ليس بغريب أن نجد في المخطوطات الهامة التي تنسب إلى العصر الأموي خصائص الكتابات الكوفية ، لاسيما إذا كانت ذات أحجام غير عادية .



Every page was decorated with a different frame and the Surah separator exhibits a fine geometricised vegetal motive. The calligraphy is exquisite; probably to give the script the appearance of equal overall density, the calligrapher filled the gaps at the end of the line with horizontal strokes. Although this Mushaf does not separate the verses, the decades are numbered according to the Abjad's numerical values of the letters.

يحيط بكل صحيفة إطار زخرفي متنوع ، كما يعطي فاصل السورة حلا هندسيا ظريفا عبارة عن عناصر نباتية . والخط هنا غاية في الجودة ، إذ يلاحظ أن الخطاط قد لجأ إلى استخدام شرط أفقية في نهاية كل سطر ليضفي على خطه شيئا من التوازن . وعلى الرغم من خلو هذا المصحف من العلامات الخاصة بترقيم الآيات فإن الأخيرة قد أحصيت بواسطة الأبجدية العددية للحروف

IN: 20-29.1  
HS: H 39.6 cm W 33.5 cm  
Surah: 14:48-15:1

## The Kufic Style

The angular Arabic script was called "Kufic". It was used for architectural purposes earlier than for the writing of the Qur'ans. Presumably the very nature of material such as stone and mosaic dictated the preference for angularity. Kufa, one of the most important early centres of Islamic civilization, may have developed this architectural script first.

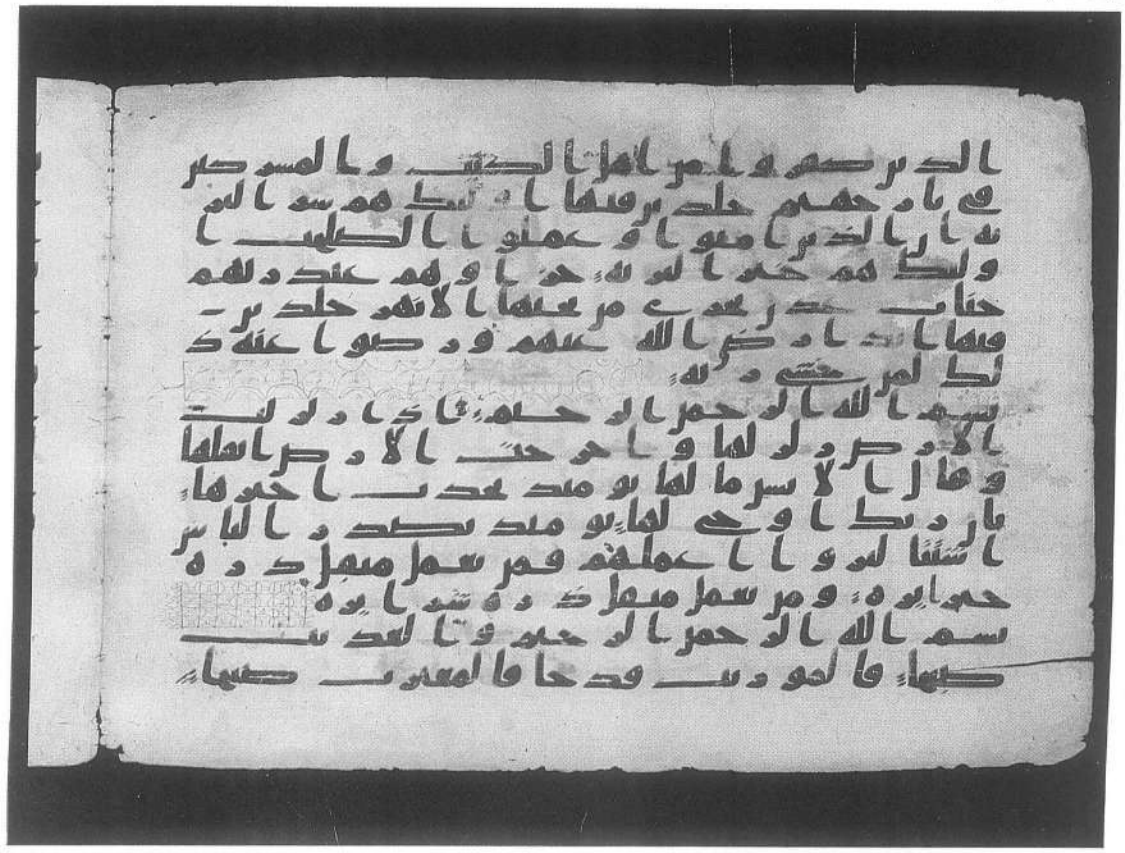
## الخط الكوفي

اُطلق على الأسلوب المزوي من الخط العربي اسم الكوفي ، الذي استخدم منذ وقت مبكر في الكتابات المعمارية قبل أن تكتب به على المصاحف . ويبدو أن طبيعة المواد التي نقش عليها من حجر ، وفسيفساء قد أجبرت على تقبل طبيعته الهندسية ، وربما لعبت مدينة الكوفة ، كأحد مراكز الحضارة الإسلامية المبكرة دورا هاما في تطوير هذا الخط المعماري في بادئ الأمر ، لدرجة أن الخطوط العربية المزواة صارت تعرف باسم الكوفي .

[ 34 / ٣٤ ]

Page of an early Mushaf. The illumination which fills out the rest of the line of the previous Surah was later erased partly in this manuscript for the insertion of the Surah title, but not consequently, as can be seen here.

صفحة من مصحف بالخط الكوفي المبكر . يلاحظ هنا أن الزخرفة تقتصر فقط على بقية السطر المتضمن لنهاية السورة السابقة ، إذ تم أحيانا محو جزء من الزخرفة اليسرى ليدون فوقها عنوان السورة التالية وعدد آياتها .



IN:15-27.1  
DP/HS:H 22.2 cm W 31.6 cm  
Surah: 98:6-100:3/  
88:22-89:17

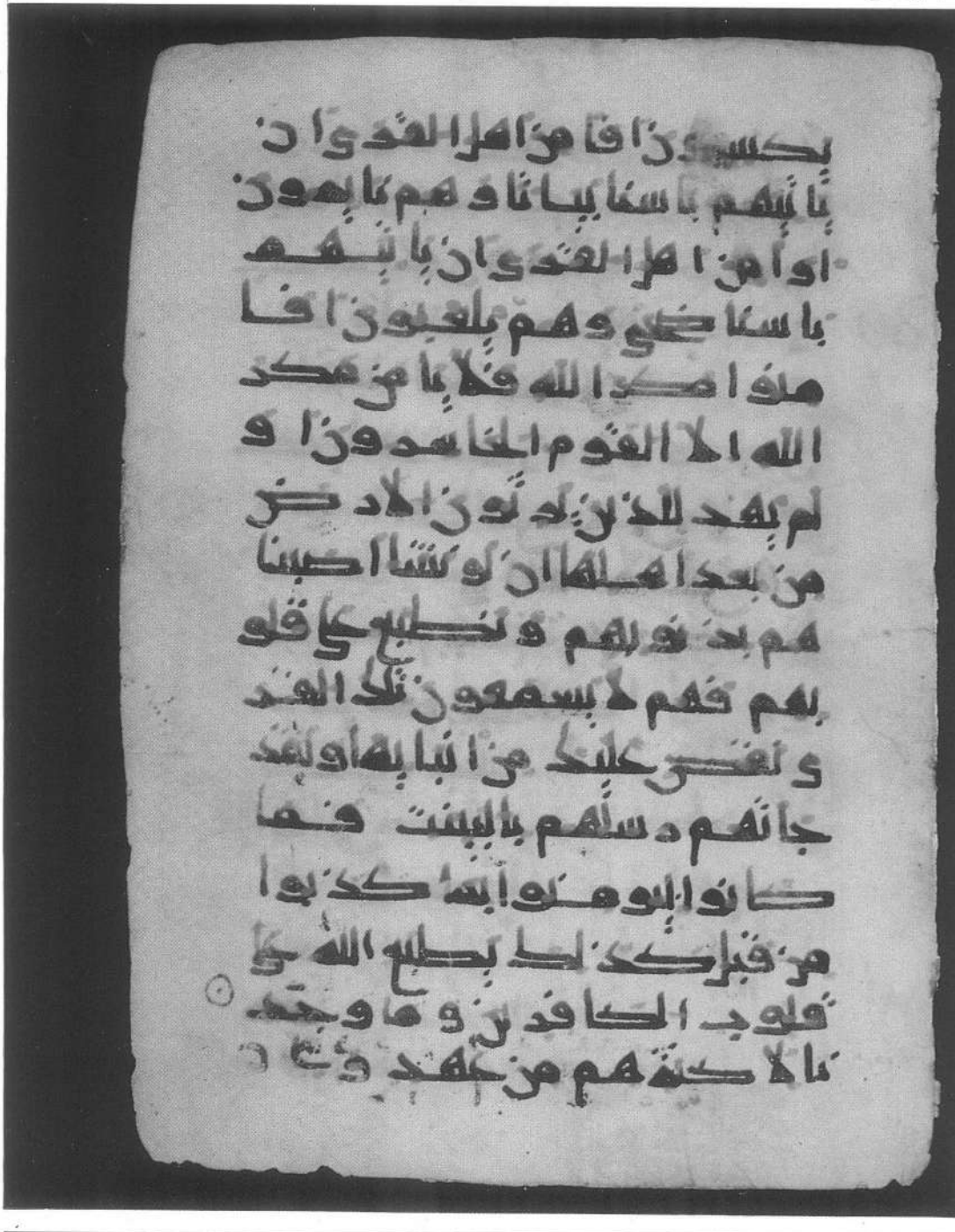


## A display of a variety of Kufic styles

The principle of rectangularity is uniformly adopted, whereas the employment of diacritics and vocalization marks varies. The crucial problem is the dating of Kufic Qur'ans; because, once the "ideal" Kufic script was developed for architectural

purposes during the first century A.H. (Qubbat as-Sakhrah/Jerusalem, 72 A.H.), it became the style par excellence for the Qur'ans for centuries. Thus, dating of Kufic Masahif has to rely more on research on illumination, orthography and vocalization.

[ 31 / ٣١ ]



An example of a late Kufic manuscript for comparison. Some features of the Naskhi style are already visible (note the final Nuns) and the vertical format may be an indication of an influence by the format of paper Masahif.

مثال لمخطوط كوفي متأخر من أجل المقارنة . يلاحظ هنا ظهور بعض صفات خط النسخ ( انظر حرف النون المنتهية ) ، وكذلك الحجم المستطيل الذي يدل على أن هذا المصحف ربما قد تأثر بأحجام المصاحف المدونة على الورق .

IN:16-10.1  
HS:H 20.3 cm W 14.4 cm  
Surah:7:97-7:102

## خط كوفي مبكر

القرن الثاني الهجري عرض لنماذج متنوعة من الخط الكوفي الذي يتميز بالطابع الهندسي وذلك في الوقت الذي تتنوع فيه علامات الاعجام والشكل وكذا احجام الصفحات . والمشكلة الأساسية التي نواجهها هنا تلخص في كيفية تأريخ كوفي المصاحف ، لأن الخط الكوفي الذي تم

[ 28 / ٢٨ ]

تطويره منذ القرن الأول الهجري لكي يستخدم في الكتابات التذكارية على العمائر ( انظر كتابات قبة الصخرة من سنة ٧٢ هـ ) أصبح بعد ذلك الخط المفضل لكتابة المصاحف على مدى قرون عديدة . لذلك فإن تأريخ كوفي المصاحف يعتمد بصفة أساسية على الابحاث المتعلقة بالزخارف وعلامات الشكل والاعجام .

Fine example of Kufic writing without any addition to the "Rasm Uthmani", ca. 2nd century A.D.

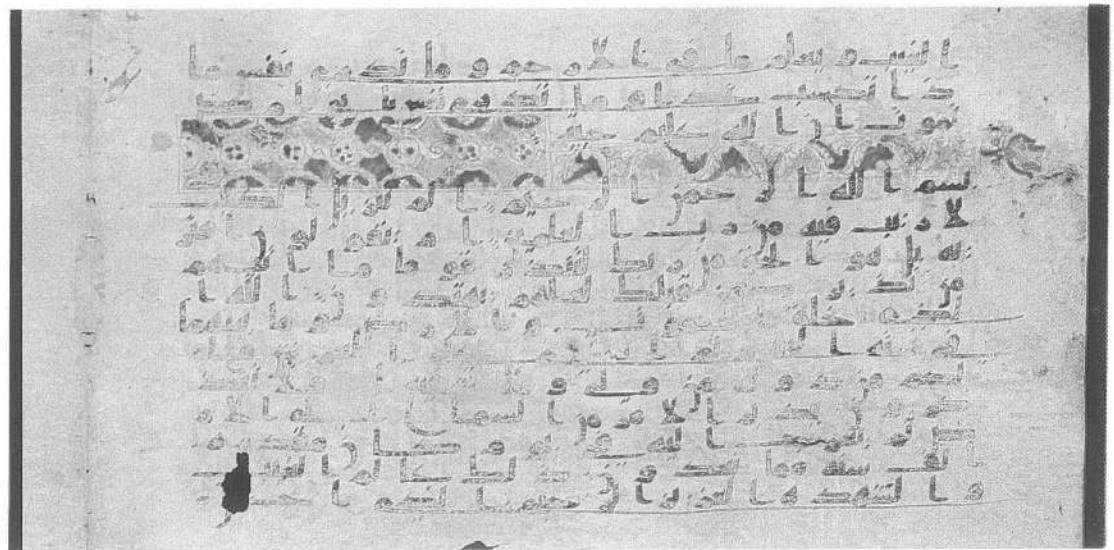
نموذج رائع للكتابات الكوفية بدون أية اضافات إلى الرسم العثماني .



[ 29 / ٢٩ ]

IN:12-15.1  
HS:H 12.5 cm W 18.7 cm  
Surah:3:62-3:66

Early Kufic Qur'an with calligraphic ambitions: note the long, re-bent lines of the letter Ya, which already occur in the Hijazi style. The Surah separator with its geometric pattern may have been added later, its protrusion into the space of the "frame" of the text is an indication of late antique influence ("Ansa").



IN:15-18.1  
DP/FS:H 13.3 cm W 22.3 cm  
Surah:30:11-30:21/  
31:34-32:7

مصحف بالخط الكوفي المبكر ، تشير ظهورها في الخط الحجازي ، حروفه إلى اجتهد الخطاط نحو وفصل السورة بعناصره الهندسية التحسين . لاحظ الخطوط الطويلة الذي ربما أضيف في عصر لاحق إذ المراجعة لحروف الياء التي سبق أن في طريقة دمج داخل المساحة

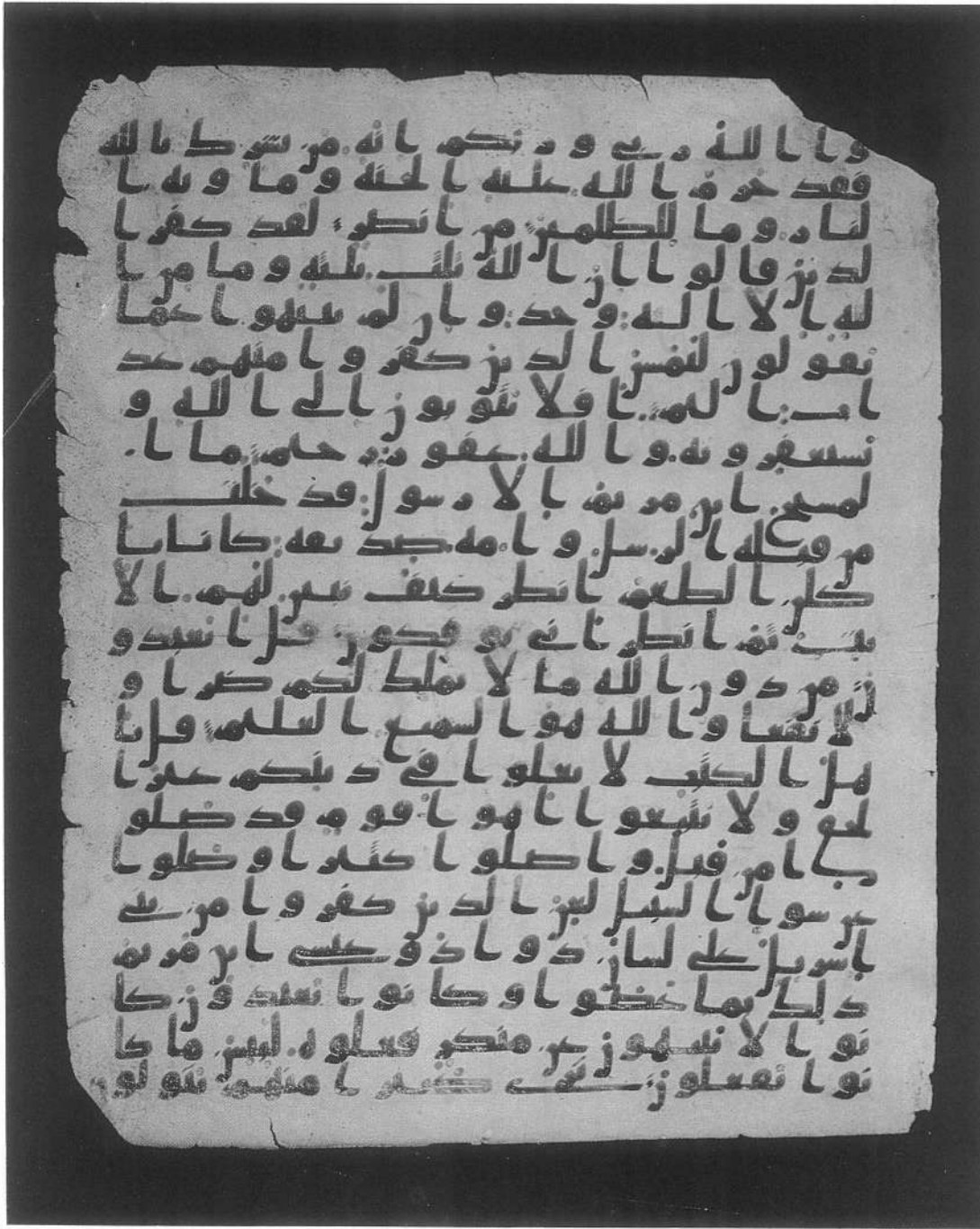
### Late Hijazi Style

Presumably second century A.H., with a few diacritical marks. The vocalization is probably contemporary. The style bears many features common to both Hijazi and early Kufic. Perhaps this is the unique *San'āni* style which is mentioned briefly by al-Hamdani in his "Description of the Arabian Peninsula".

### خط حجازي متأخر

حوالي القرن الثاني الهجري ، مع بعض النقط للتمييز بين الحروف المتشابهة ، من المرجح ان علامات الشكل هنا معاصرة . يلاحظ ان شكل الحروف يبدو هنا اكثر ليونة ، كما يجمع بين مميزات الخط الحجازي ، والخط الكوفي المبكر . ربما كان احد نماذج الخط الصنعاني الذي اثار اليه الهمداني في ايجاز شديد في كتابه صفة جزيرة العرب

[ 25 / ٢٥ ]



IN: 00-32.1  
HS: H 43.8 cm W 35.4 cm  
Surah: 5:72-5:80

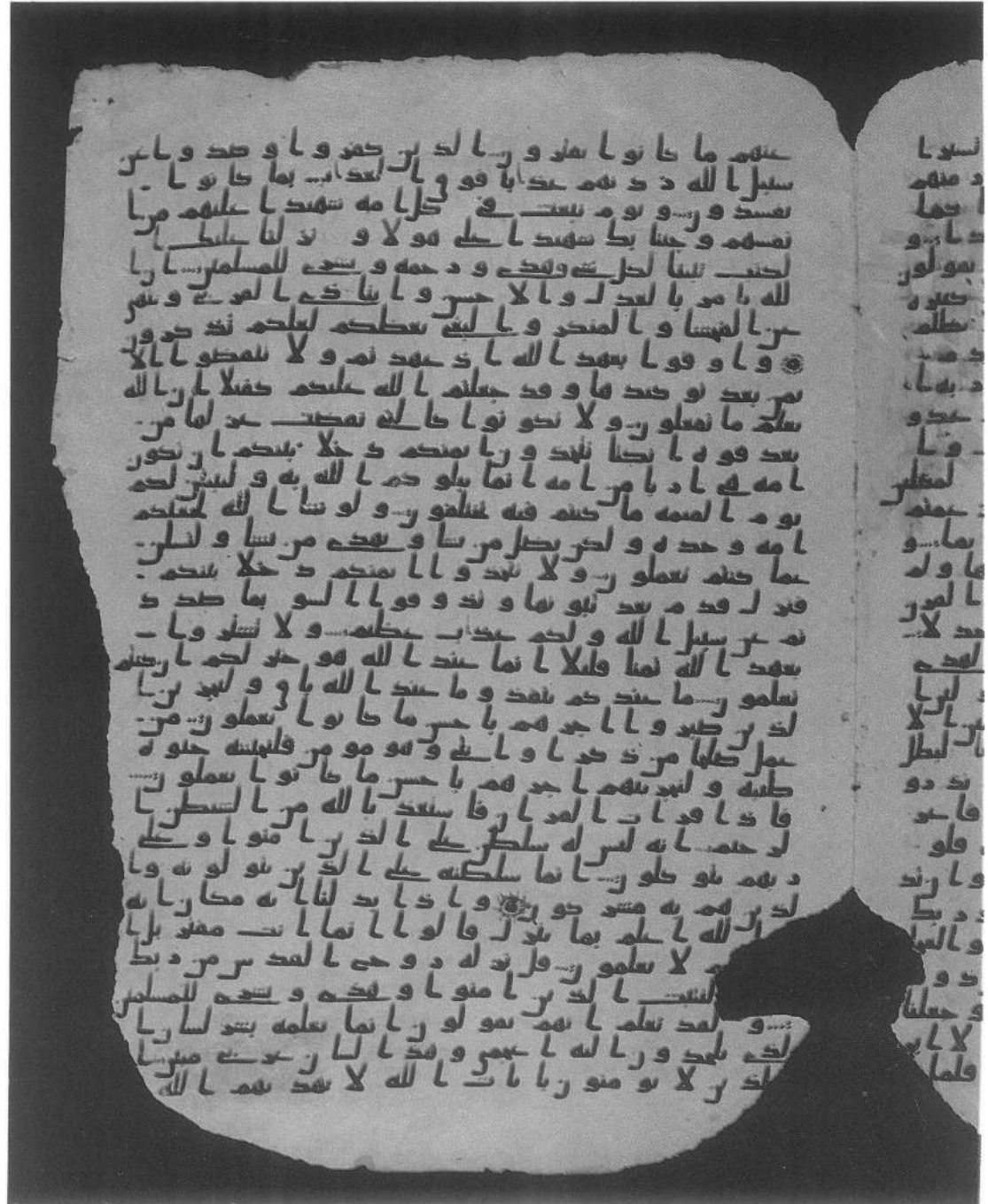
Second century A.H., with a few  
diacritical marks but no vocalization.

القرن الثاني الهجري ، مع قليل من النقط للتمييز  
بين الحروف المتشابهة ولكن بدون شكل .

[ 24 / ٢٤ ]

Page of a representative  
Mushaf. The indication of  
the end of every 10th verse  
(Ta'shir) has been added la-  
ter.

صفحتان متلاصقتان من مصحف  
فاخر ، يلاحظ أن علامات التعشير  
اضيفت في وقت لاحق .



IN:00-30.1  
DP/HS: H 50.3 cm W 36 cm  
Surah: 18:46-18:61/  
16:87-16:104

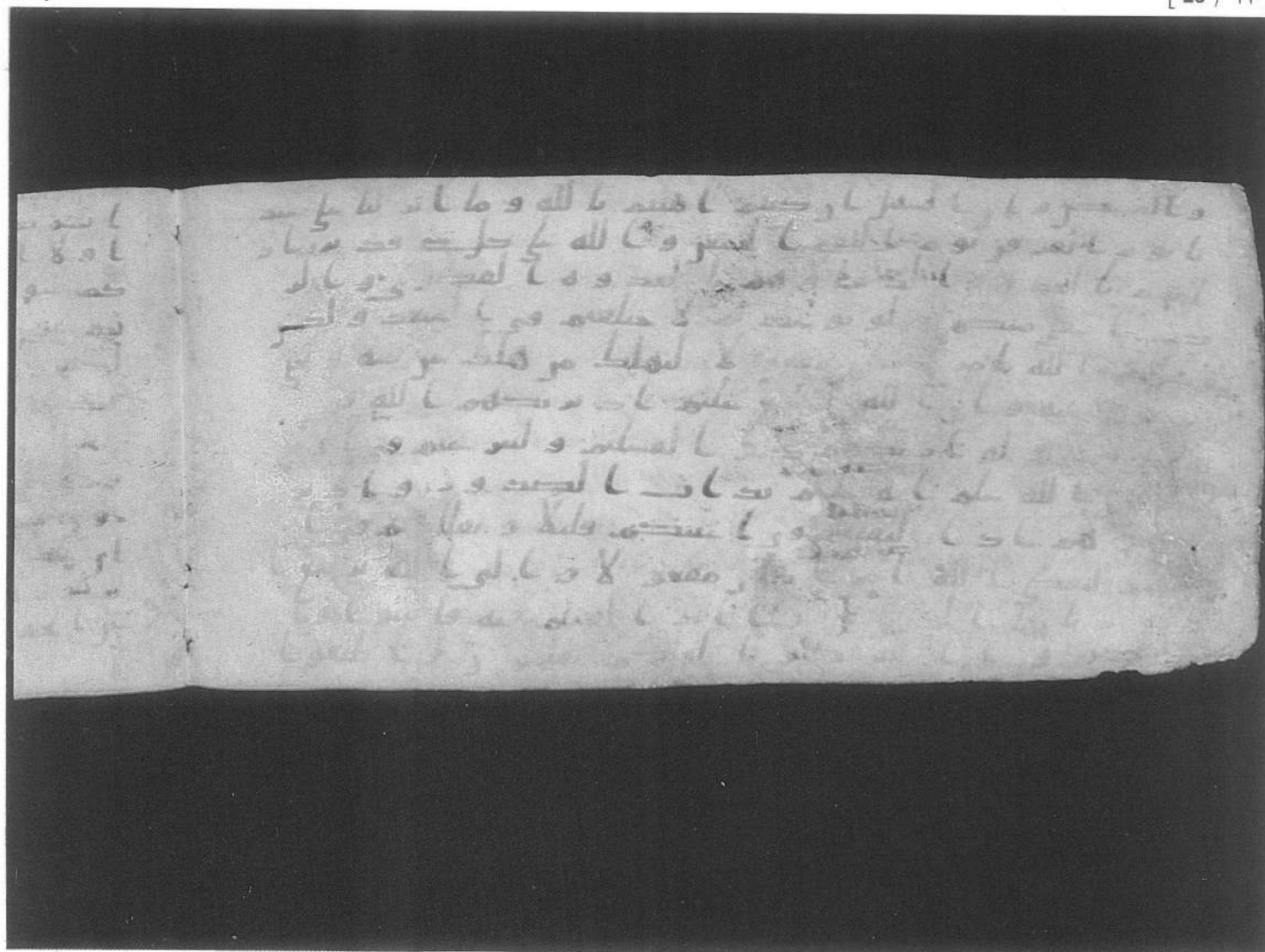


### Late Hijazi Style

First and second centuries A.H., with a few diacritical marks but no vocalization. The vertical format is a common feature of most Mashahif written in Hijazi style. The two examples shown here are exceptions, where the horizontal format somewhat contradicts the vertical features of the script.

يعتبر الحجم المستطيل من الخصائص العامة لاغلب المصاحف التي كتبت بالخط الحجازي . بيد أن المثالين المعروضين هنا يشدان على هذه القاعدة ، حيث يتعارض حجمها المستعرض بعض الشيء مع القوائم المستطيلة للخط .

[ 23 / ٢٣ ]



IN:00-18.3  
HS:H 9.2 cm W 19.6 cm  
Surah:8:41-8:46

Two examples of pre-Kufic writing in horizontal format.

القرن الأول والثاني للهجرة ، مع بعض النقط للتمييز  
بين الحروف المشابهة ولكن بدون علامات شكل ...

[ ٢٢ / ٢٢ ]



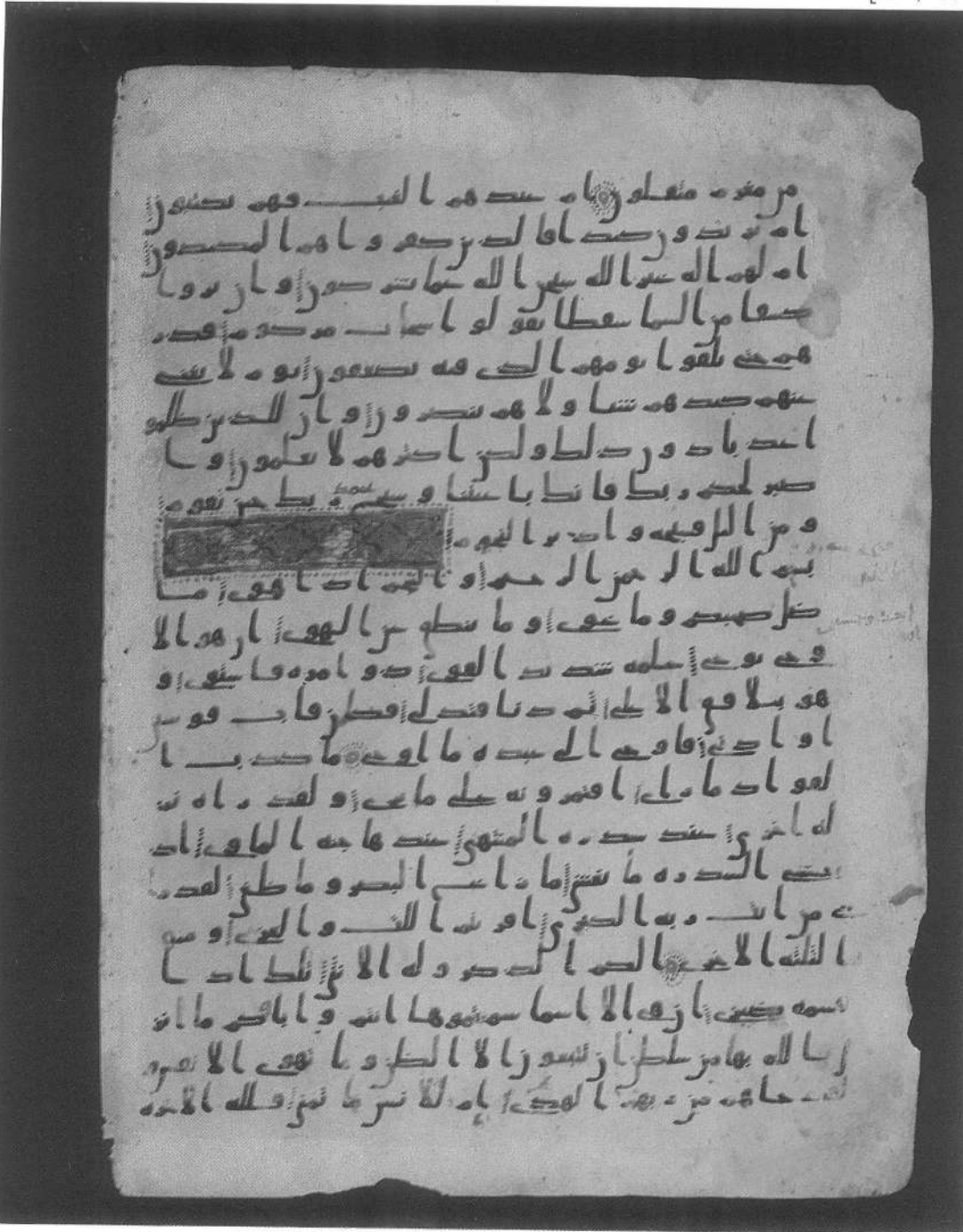
نموذجان من كتابات سابقة على  
الخط الكوفي على صفحات  
مستعرضة .

IN:20-18.1  
DP/FS:H 15.4 cm W 20.4 cm  
Surah:3:130-3:144/  
3:20-3:29

First or second centuries A.H., with a few diacritical marks but no vocalization.

القرن الأول أو الثاني الهجري مع بعض النقط للتمييز بين الحروف المتشابهة ولكن بدون شكل.

[ 17 / ١٧ ]



The Surahs are separated by a coloured ornament; their titles are added later with red ink to make clear that they do not belong to the "Rasm Uthmani", i.e. the revealed text. The leaves show noticeable stylistic variation and a tendency towards a calligraphic appearance.

تم فصل السور بواسطة زخارف ملونة ، أما عناوين السور فقد أضيفت في وقت لاحق بجبر أحمر للدلالة على أن هذه العناوين ليست من الرسم العثماني . وتكشف هذه الصحائف عن نماذج خطية متنوعة ، وعن ميل نحو التأنق في أسلوب الخط .

IN: 00-28.1  
HS: H 41.5 cm W 30 cm  
Surah: 52:40-53:25



This fragment belongs to a later period of Kufic script because the complete vocalization which we see on this page only occurs in the 4th century A.H. It is exhibited here together with the other pages to show examples of badly damaged parchment leaves and to demonstrate what can be achieved by careful restoration.

تنسب إلى فترة متأخرة من الخط الكوفي لأن التشكيل النهائي لهذا الخط لم يكتمل إلا في القرن الرابع الهجري ، بيد أنها صُنفت هنا مع بعض النماذج الأخرى لكي تظهر الحالة السيئة التي كانت عليها صحائف الرق ، والجهود المضنية التي بذلت في ترميمها .



IN:00-16.1

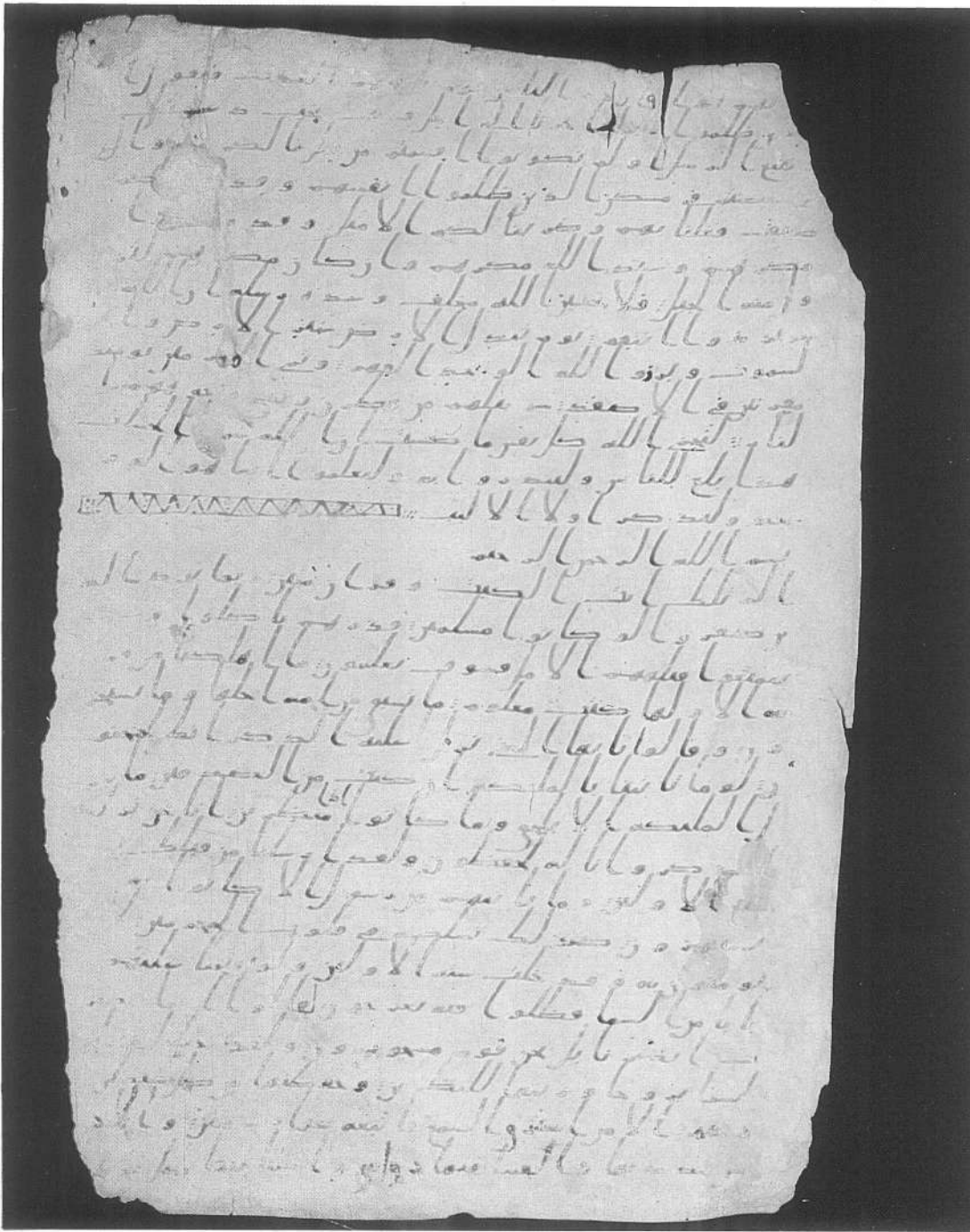
DP:H 18.4 cm W 12.5 cm

Surah: DP

Hijazi script, 1st century A.H., with a few diacritical marks but no vocalization. The Surahs are separated by simple ornaments.

خط حجازي ، القرن الأول الهجري مع بعض النقط للتمييز بين الحروف المتشابهة ولكن بدون شكل . يفصل السور زخارف بسيطة .

[ 11 / ١١ ]



IN: 00-29.1  
FS: H 43 cm W 29.7 cm  
Surah: 14:43-15:20

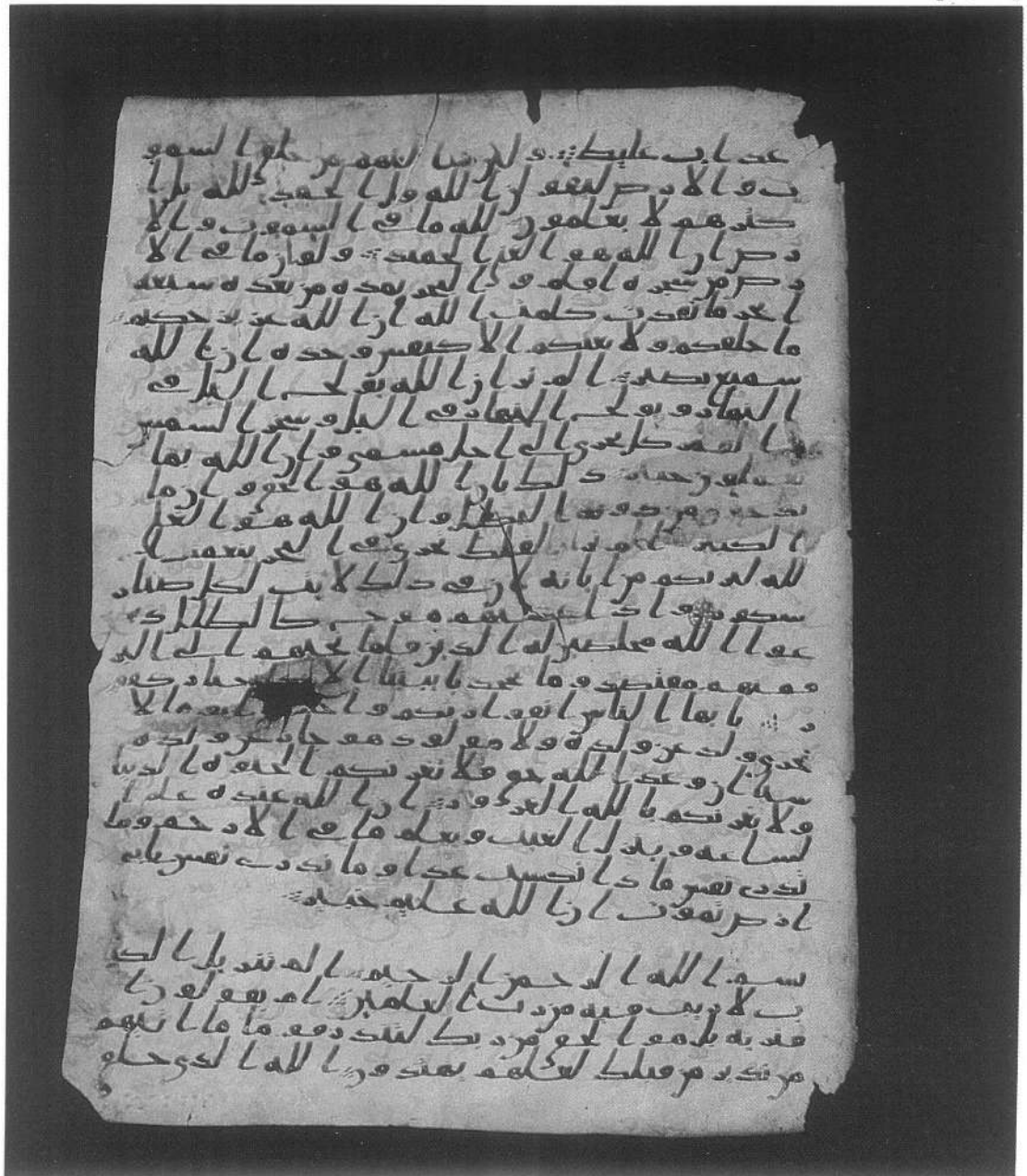
Hijazi script, 1st century A.H., with a few diacritical marks but no vocalization and no Surah titles.

خط حجازي ، القرن الأول الهجري مع بعض النقط للتمييز بين الحروف المتشابهة ولكن بدون شكل وبدون عناوين للسور .

[ 4 / ٤ ]

Leaf of a Mushaf which might date to the first half of the first century A.H., since it is re-written in Hijazi script on a washed-off parchment. The text underneath is Koranic also.

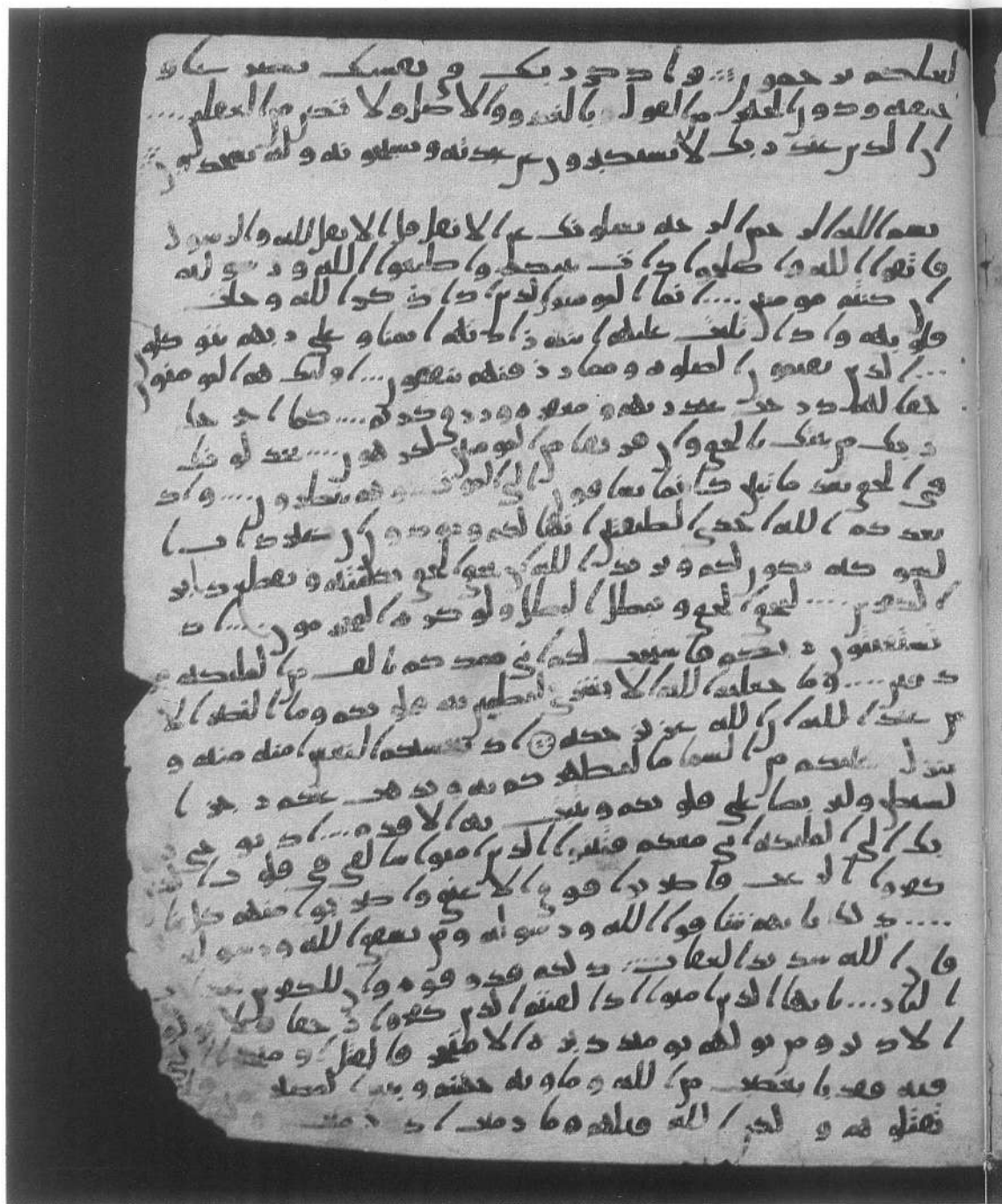
صفحة من مصحف يمكن تأريخها بالنصف الأول من القرن الأول الهجري ، إذ أعيد كتابتها بالخط الحجازي فوق ورق مغسول . يلاحظ أن النص الذي تم محوه كان أيضا نصا قرآنيا .



IN:00-27.1  
HS:H 37.1 cm W 28 cm  
Surah:31:24-32:4

# Earliest Writing of the Holy Qur'an

Hijazi script, 1st century H.H., with a few diacritical marks but no vocalization.

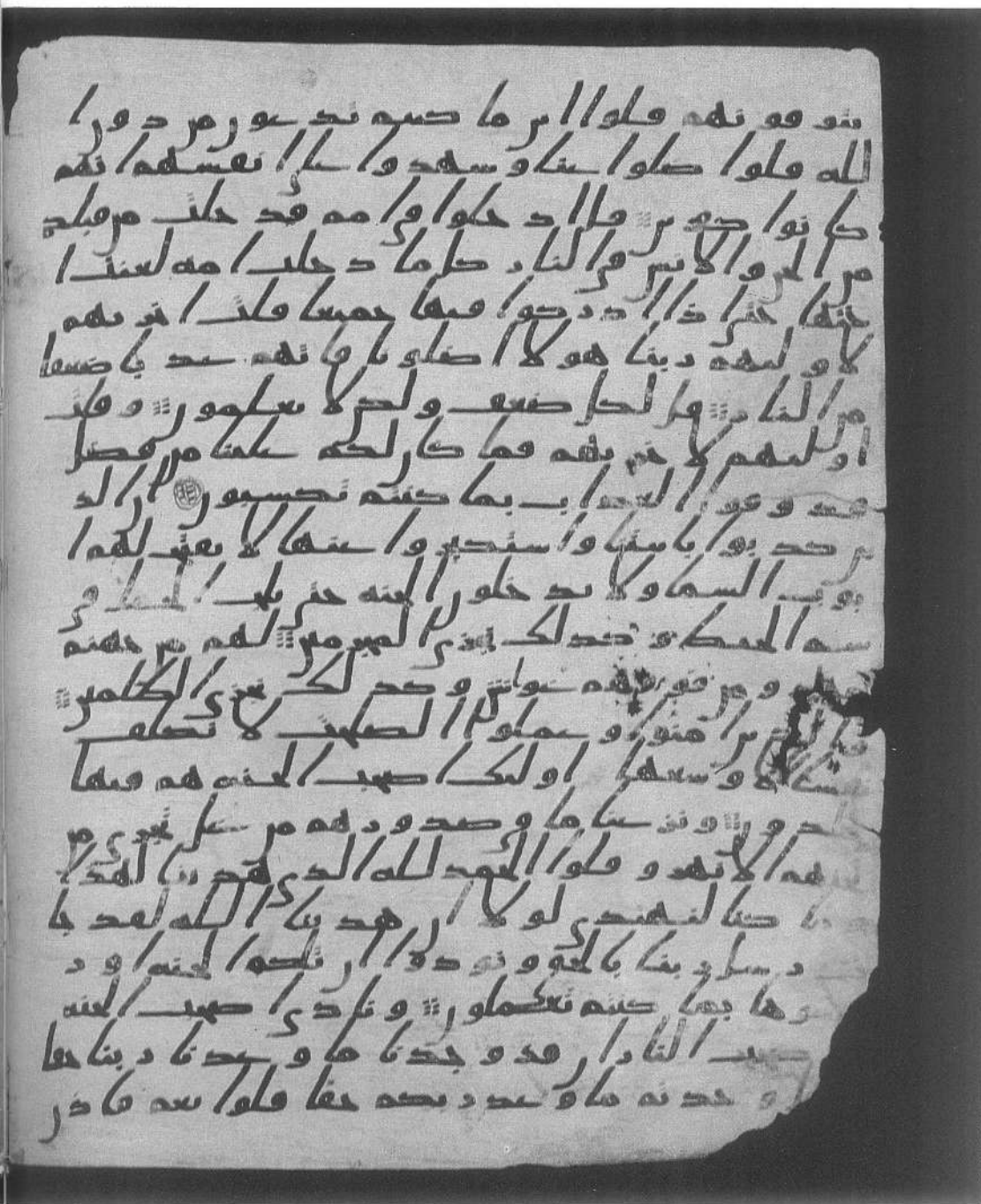


IN:00-25.1  
DP/FS:H 33.8 cm W 26.2 cm  
Surah:7:37-7:44/  
7:204-8:17



خط حجازي ، القرن الأول الهجري ، مع بعض  
النقط للتمييز بين الحروف المشابهة ولكن بدون  
علامات شكل .

[ 3 / 3 ]



مصحف بدون عناوين للسور .