original Benaki Museum, which was given to the Greek state in 1931 and inaugurated on April 22 of that year.
Condition: There is an area of damage on the lower right side.
Benaki Museum, Athens (15040)

The main decorative feature on this narrow linen and silk textile is a male figure seated under an arch with distinctive slender columns and a hanging lamp in the center. The figure assumes the orans position, his hands raised in prayer. The arch appears to be inscribed in Arabic, but the script is illegible. It may include the standard bismillah (In the name of God). Rows of stylized floral motifs flank the arch, and below it are several decorative bands, two of which feature stylized birds and fish.

Depictions of worshipers are not part of the usual iconographic repertoire found on Islamic metalwork, ceramics, woodwork, ivory, and textiles. Worshippers in the orans position, typically associated with Christian iconography from the Late Antique period onward, are found in examples of Coptic art.[1] In an Islamic context, the figure with arms raised in an attitude of supplication indicates the leader of prayer in a mosque. Early Islamic coins depicting the sovereign in this pose served a political purpose, asserting the right to deliver the khutbah, or weekly Friday sermon, in the mosque.[2] It is difficult to posit a similar meaning when this iconography is found on a textile, although it appears again on a ninth-century carpet fragment in the Bouvier Collection, which shows the bust of a figure under a lamp with his arms raised.[3] The Benaki Museum owns two unpublished fragments dating from the eleventh to twelfth century that depict worshipers in this pose. MM

1 For example, see the fifth- to sixth-century screen curtain with a representation of a couple praying under an apse and a Coptic inscription in Greek script, Cormack and Vasilakē 2008, p. 424.
2 See Treadwell 1999.
3 See Cornu 1993, p. 120, cat. no. 60.
4 Benaki Museum (15039, 15041). Fragment 15039 is a narrow strip with the same dimensions as the present fragment. It is decorated in bands, the last of which depicts a row of figures with hands raised.

References: Ballian 2006, p. 81; Moraitou 2008a, p. 63.

The Qur'an

Finbarr B. Flood

According to Islamic tradition, the Qur'an comprises a series of revelations from God, transmitted by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina between about 610 and the Prophet's death in 632. For believers, the Qur'an represents the words of God rather than divinely inspired scripture. The interrelationship between verbal and textual transmission is evoked in the angel's first words to the Prophet, which commanded him to recite in the name of he "who has taught by the pen" (Qur'an 96:1–4). In Arabic the written Qur'an is distinguished from its verbal revelation by the term *mushaf* (pl. *masahif*), derived from the word for folio or leaf. This distinction has been reproduced in the historiography of the early Qur'an, with a division of labor between historians who work on the revelation and those who work on its material incarnation. Recent scholarship on both is fraught with controversy,[1] which has, paradoxically, spurred new research the results of which broadly accord with the history of the material Qur'an preserved in Islamic tradition.

In the words of a later jurist, the Qur'an was initially "preserved in the hearts of men," with some parts being transcribed before or shortly after the death of the Prophet.[2] The threat of loss occasioned by the aging of the Prophet's contemporaries prompted the first caliphs to endeavor to preserve the revelation. The third caliph, Uthman (r. 644–61), is said to have been the first to have the revelation collated and copied as a *mushaf*.[3] Divergences between spoken and written Arabic, in which eighteen graphemes transcribe twenty-eight phonemes, were also relevant to Uthman's undertaking. In the absence of conventional marks indicating how the text should be vocalized, distinguishing between different letters with similar basic forms and indicating short (and sometimes long) vowels, variant readings are possible. Having standardized the writing of the text in its entirety, Uthman is said to have dispatched copies to Damascus, Basra, Kufa, and Mecca. While subsequent variants reportedly were destroyed, problems related to the divergence of oral and textual transmission arose periodically thereafter. In the tenth century, seven regional variants were canonized, followed later by others.[4] The early history of the Qur'an is thus bound up with the attempt to refine the orthography of the *mushaf*, in part by the adoption (probably from Syriac) of dashes and dots, conventional marks intended to aid reproduction of the verbal utterance (cat. nos. 189, 193).[5]

A major problem in tracing this history is the lack of early dated examples. Several Qur'ans claimed as Uthmanic are in fact of later date.[6] Inscribed dates on extant manuscripts do not occur before the ninth century; works that might be of earlier date lack their beginnings and ends, where one would normally find the historical information that would be used to date them. Study of folios and fragments has therefore been based on codicological, paleographic, philological, and stylistic analysis, resulting in an opacity that has precluded unanimity of scholarly opinion on the early development of the material Qur'an; the scenario outlined here represents the current consensus but may change with future research.[7]

Most scholars now accept that the earliest extant written versions of the Qur'an were executed in a slanted script identified with the Hijaz region of western Arabia on the basis of a passing reference in a tenth-century text.[8] While the manuscripts are conventionally referred to as Hijazi, the use of this term is no indication that their production was centered in or confined to Arabia; Syria and Iraq may also have been places of production.[9] Moreover, although folios of this type are often said to come from Hijazi Qur'ans, questions have been raised as to whether they formed part of complete Qur'an codices (*masahif*). It has been suggested, for example, that such folios formed part of draft copies intended to function as aids to recitation from memory.[10] Diacriticals are used more sparingly in Hijazi fragments than in Arabic inscriptions and papyri of the same period, which may indicate an attempt to distinguish scripture from other kinds of texts.[11] However, the absence of such marks also enabled the text to be vocalized in different ways; the conservative orthography of the Hijazi fragments may, therefore, reflect the dominance and fluidity of recitation over the fixity of textualization

during a period marked by controversy over the relative status and value of both.[12]

The suggested time frame for production of Hijazi Qur'ans is from about 650 to 700, although later additions and emendations indicate that many were in use as late as the ninth and tenth centuries.[13] They are written in brown ink on specially prepared parchment, with text arranged in a single column of about twenty-five lines per page (fig. 109). Hijazi Qur'ans adopt the vertically oriented codex format used for earlier Christian manuscripts and show strong codicological and paleographic affinities to Syriac Gospels, although their lack of a textual margin is distinctive. Their large size (usually about 13 × 9⅞ in. [33 × 25 cm] per folio) is comparable to that of Byzantine luxury Gospel manuscripts (cat. no. 21), possibly indicating a public use.[14] They lack the elaborate decoration found in later Qur'ans, with title pages and spaces between chapters (suras) left blank and little ornament within the text (those found were often added later).[15]

As Hijazi was not a formal script, it was not standardized.[16] Toward the end of the seventh century, it seems to have been superseded by a more angular, proportionate script, the earliest dated appearance of which is in the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock, those executed both in mosaic (figs. 96, 98) and on a series of repoussé copper plaques that covered its exterior entrances. A similar script appears on the epigraphic coins of 'Abd al-Malik (cat. no. 91). The Dome of the Rock inscriptions constitute the earliest dated quotations of Qur'anic texts; they were clearly designed by calligraphers, possibly from Medina.[17]

Although carefully chosen for their content (see Flood, p. 244), the Dome of the Rock inscriptions occur on thin bands located below the roof level of the octagon; they are virtually illegible from the ground. It seems likely that their content was mediated, verbalized for pilgrims by those who knew it and could recite it by rote. The likelihood of this is heightened by the fact that the quotations are variants on the canonical text, recalling reports that early reciters of the Qur'an felt free to alter word order and to use synonyms, even after the standardization of the text by Uthman.[18] In other words, the Dome of the Rock inscriptions may lie on the cusp between an oral and a textual tradition at a moment when the balance was tipping decisively in favor of the latter. This development is directly related to what has been called "the conscious invention" of a distinct calligraphic tradition, manifest in the dissemination of the formalized angular script used in the Dome of Rock inscriptions to both official texts and Qur'anic manuscripts.[19] The undertaking can be related to major reforms in the Umayyad state during the reigns of 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) and al-Walid I (r. 705–15), including the replacement of Greek (and Persian in the east) by Arabic as the official language of administration,[20] and the attempt to forge a distinct visual identity, to which the Dome of the Rock itself bears witness.

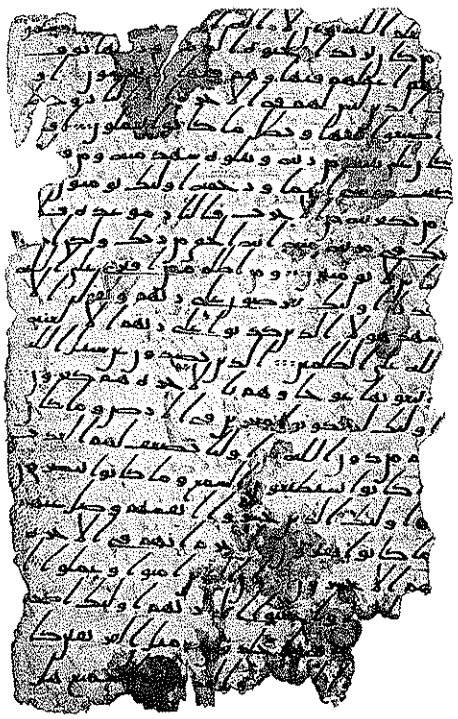
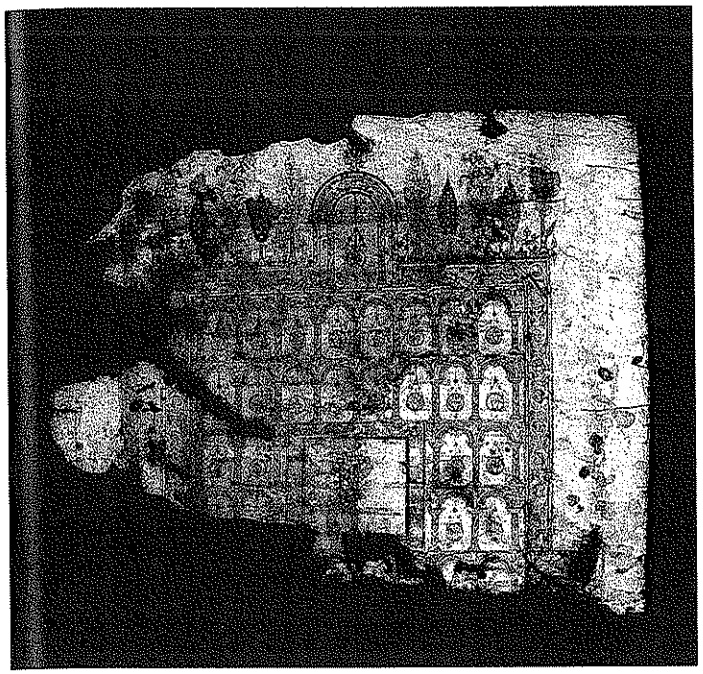


Fig. 109. Folio from a Hijazi Qur'an (recto). Ink on parchment, 8th century. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (KFQ 60)

There is a close iconographic relationship between the decoration of Umayyad mosques and shrines and the remnants of several Qur'ans that appear to date from this formative period, many of which come from a large cache of manuscripts discovered in 1972 in the ceiling of the Great Mosque of Sana'a in Yemen and from similar stores in the Mosque of 'Amr in Fustat (cat. nos. 189, 190) and the Great Mosque of Damascus.[21] Among the Sana'a fragments were remnants of one of the most spectacular Qur'ans ever made.[22] Its large folios (measuring 20⅛ × 18½ in. [51 × 47 cm] or larger) and nearly square format represented a departure from vertically oriented Hijazi Qur'ans (fig. 109), of which its script seems to be a more standardized variant. When complete, the Qur'an would have contained more than 520 folios. The text was prefaced by an elaborate series of paintings, including a double frontispiece that appears to offer combined perspectives of two distinct mosques (fig. 110). The attention to detail is astonishing, including the depiction of a mihrab with patterned marble columns and visible wicks and flames in the lamps that hang within the building and its arcades. Carbon-14 and chemical analyses have suggested a date in the late seventh or early eighth century.

There are significant conceptual, formal, and iconographic similarities between the mosques depicted in the Sana'a Qur'an and those built by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid I (see Flood, p. 244),[23] and the Qur'an may have been intended for use in one of them (including the Sana'a mosque); like Uthman before him, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik is said to have sponsored a revised text of the Qur'an, which was dispatched to the major mosques of the caliphate.[24] The use of architectural illuminations relates the Sana'a manuscript to a group of Umayyad Qur'ans (cat. nos. 189, 190 and fig. 111]), and there are even indications that others in this group may once have featured full-page architectural scenes.[25] The coincidence between the experience of architectural space and its depiction in miniature suggests a deliberate emphasis on architecture and its representation as a mode of dynastic and sectarian self-definition.

The Umayyad Qur'ans belong to a "family" of Christian and Jewish sacred texts featuring similar architectural scenes, including parchment folios from two tenth-century Hebrew Pentateuchs depicting the Ark of the Covenant (cat. no. 75) and Ezekiel's temple (cat. no. 76) and architectural scenes executed in micrography for the frontis- or finispieces of a Karaite Bible completed in Tiberias in 895.[26] Other parallels are provided by parchment quires from the earliest dated Arabic Gospel, produced in Palestine or Syria about 860–61 (cat. no. 34), among them a terminal bifolium in which a combined side and front view of a basilical church hung with lamps is confronted with the image of an altar (fig. 112).[27] Most of this comparative material postdates the Umayyad period, but the recent redating of an important Ethiopian Bible, kept in the monastery of Abu Garima in Tigre, to the late fifth or early sixth century on the basis of Carbon-14



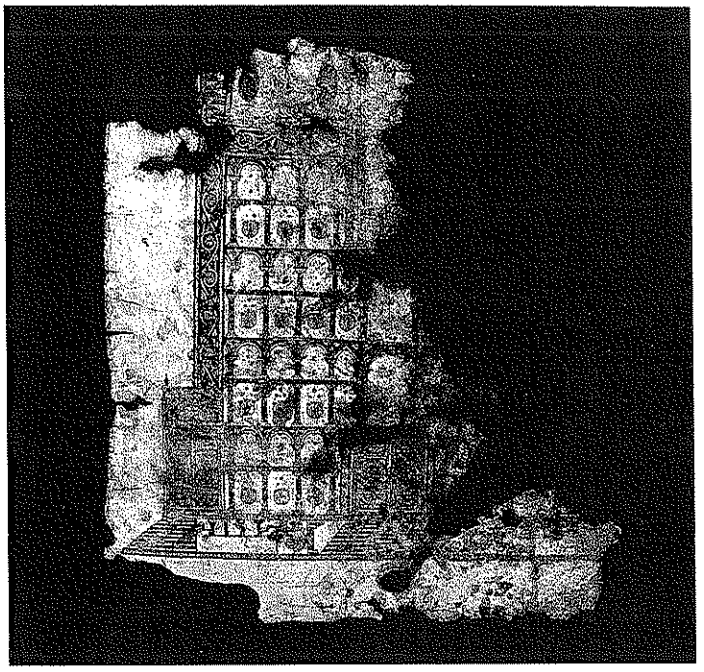
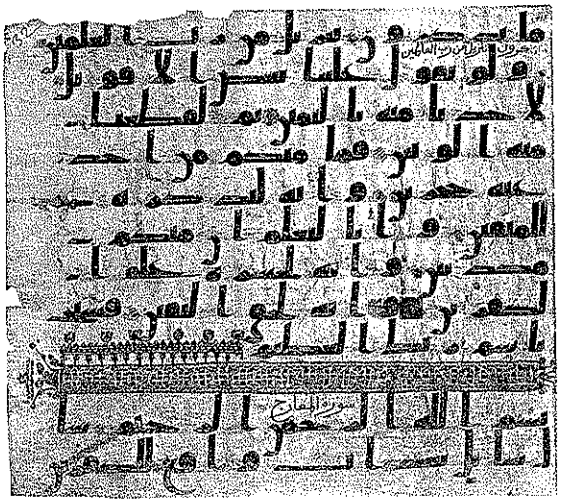


Fig. 110 (above, left and right). Double frontispiece from a luxury Qur'an found in the ceiling of the Great Mosque of Sana'a. Ink and pigment on parchment, early 8th century. Dar al-Mukhtutat, Sana'a, Yemen (20-33.1). © Dr. Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer

analysis, may change this. Garima I contains canon tables comparable to those in the Rabbula Gospels (cat. no. 39), while Garima II includes a full-page rendering of a pedimented church or temple hung with chandeliers (fig. 113).[28] The building's arched openings at the basement level recall the basement story and jars (provision for ablutions?) on one of the Sana'a frontispieces (fig. 110).[29] It is not clear whether the architectural scene, which may have been executed in Syria, formed part of a frontis- or finispiece, or whether it was originally one of a pair. Nevertheless, the depiction of sacred space within Christian and Jewish texts of the pre- and Early Islamic period suggests that the Sana'a frontispieces and the illuminated Qur'ans to which they are related represent an Umayyad variant on a more widespread tradition.

Despite these analogies, the absence of animal and human figures in the illuminations of the Umayyad Qur'ans differentiates them from Christian manuscripts (see Flood, p. 244). At some point, probably about or before the middle of the eighth century, a change in format from vertical to horizontal conferred a more visible distinction on the material Qur'an (cat. nos. 191, 193).[30] This visible difference is paralleled by less apparent divergences from Christian manuscripts, including a preference for bifolia gathered in groups of five (quinions).[31] The precise reasons for the wholesale adoption of the horizontal format are unclear, but if dated correctly, it would coincide with a moment of concern about the differentiation of Muslim bodies, mosques, and practices from those of other monotheists (see Flood, p. 244). Prefigured by the square format of



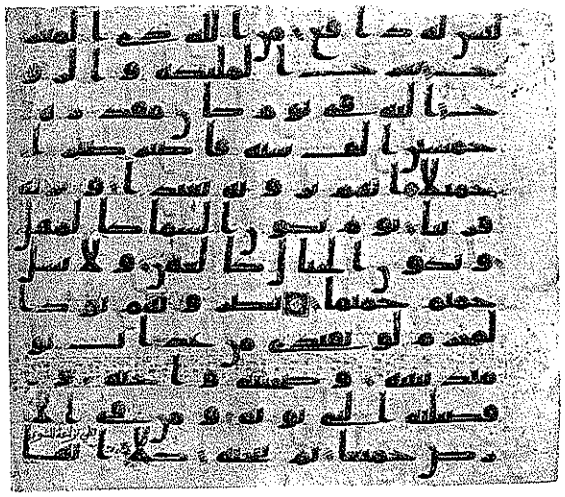


Fig. 111. Cat. no. 190, folios 32r and 32v

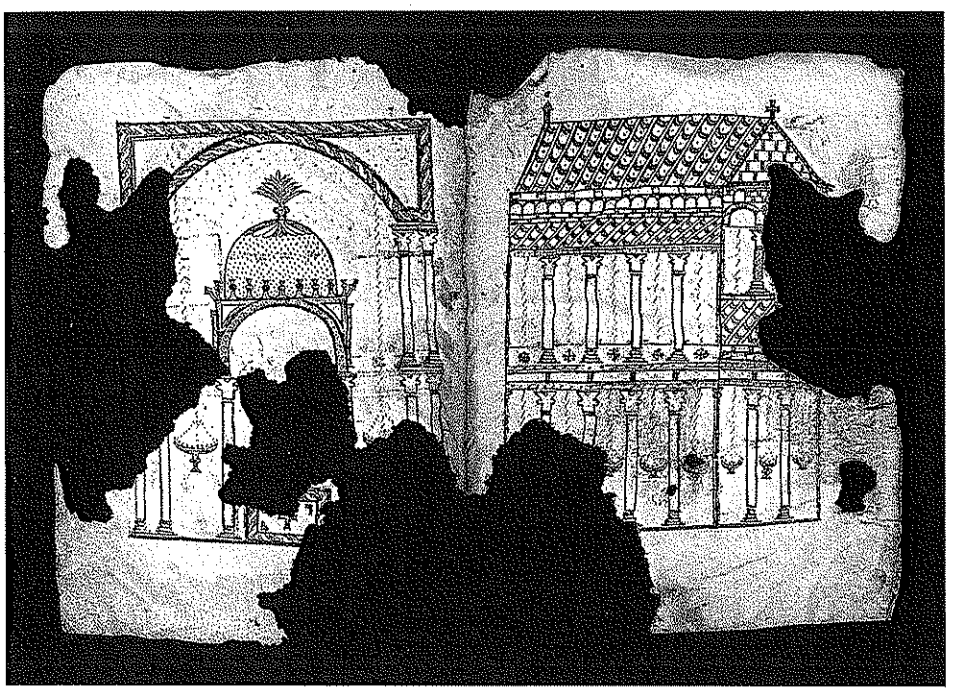


Fig. 112. Cat. no. 34 (Arabic NF Ms. 16), bifolium showing an altar (left) and a basilica (right)

some Umayyad Qur'ans (cat. nos. 188–190), this reorientation was perhaps intended to distinguish the Qur'an not only from Christian codices and Jewish scrolls but also from written copies of the hadith, conventional rather than divine in origin.[32]

Like Umayyad Qur'ans, horizontal Qur'ans made use of the angular script known as Kufic (or, less commonly, as early Abbasid).[33] Kufic Qur'ans are perhaps most noteworthy for their profligate use of space (and thus parchment), with wide margins and often few lines of text per page that made their production expensive and time-consuming. One of the best-known examples was produced at Tyre in or before 876 for Amajur, the Abbasid governor of Damascus. The Amajur Qur'an, whose large folios (5⅛ × 15¾ in. [13 × 40 cm]) bore only three lines of script per page, may have used up to 750 sheepskins. It is also one of the earliest to bear a date.[34] It is divided into thirty distinct sections (*juz'*; pl. *azja'*), one for each day of the lunar month; other Kufic Qur'ans are divided into seven, for the days of the week. In the most elaborate Kufic Qur'ans, each *juz'* opened with a double-page frontispiece featuring lavishly gilded geometric and vegetal ornament.[35] In addition, distinctions between chapters were generally marked by a gilded rectangular text box from which a treelike palmette extended horizontally into the margin, a development from illuminated Umayyad Qur'ans (cat. no. 190).

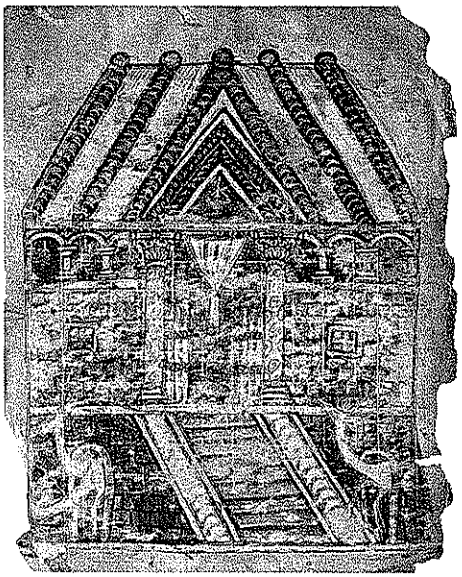


Fig. 113. Depiction of a church or temple in Abu Garima Ethiopian Gospel, Monastery of Abu Garima, Tigre

Other illuminations included rosettes marking every fifth and tenth verse of a chapter or the fourteen points in the text where prostration is prescribed. The ends of verses were variously marked with pyramidal arrangements of gold balls or several diagonal strokes of the pen. Covers were usually wooden boards wrapped in molded, stamped, or tooled leather bearing geometric patterns. With the exception of the image of the cross, there are close parallels between the leather covers of early Gospels and those of Qur'ans, the latter represented by important examples from the Great Mosques of Qairawan in Tunisia and Sana'a in Yemen.[36]

The Amajur Qur'an was stored in two boxes, but the largest Kufic Qur'ans, which measured more than 26¾ × 20⅞ in. (68 × 53 cm) and could contain six hundred folios, apparently were bound in a single volume (cat. no. 190 and fig. 111), making their daily use impractical.[37] In addition, following a precedent established by the Dome of the Rock inscriptions, Kufic Qur'ans exploited the angularity and malleability of the Kufic script for aesthetic effect, elongating proportionally spaced letter forms to establish visually harmonious rhythms.[38] Despite the use of red dots to facilitate vocalization, this aesthetic manipulation of the text was often at odds with legibility. It seems likely that Kufic Qur'ans were intended not to be read but to function as aide-mémoire for reciters who had committed the Qur'an to heart. By contrast, reports of an Umayyad *mushaf* being carried in procession from palace to mosque in Medina suggest that the large vertical-format Umayyad Qur'ans (cat. nos. 188, 189) were intended for display, which may explain the coincidence between their ornamentation and that of early mosques.[39]

Several dated Kufic Qur'ans were produced for high functionaries of the Abbasid state, and the expense entailed in their production occasionally was heightened by the use of dyed parchment and even chrysography, perhaps following Byzantine precedents (cat. no. 21). The use of gold had been pioneered in the illuminations of earlier Qur'ans (cat. no. 189). This despite juridical objections, similar to those raised against Christian texts written in gold on purple parchment, as early as the fourth century.[40] The most celebrated example, the so-called Blue Qur'an (cat. no. 192), which made use of indigo-dyed parchment, was once attributed to al-Andalus or Fatimid North Africa but has been more plausibly, if not conclusively, attributed to Abbasid Iraq.[41]

Until the late ninth or early tenth century, Qur'anic texts, whether on coins, manuscripts, or monuments, were written in Kufic script.[42] This exclusivity may reflect a conservative treatment of scripture, but it also seems to reflect a distinction between scribes who worked in quotidian contexts and those responsible for inscribing the Qur'an. The continued use of parchment, even though paper had been adopted in the Abbasid chancery as early as the late eighth

or early ninth century, also points in this direction. The situation began to change in the late ninth to early tenth century, when a new, more proportional and rounded style of Kufic script, characterized by the use of both thick and thin pen strokes and variously known as Broken Kufic, Eastern Kufic, or New Style, came into use for Qur'ans.[43] Traditionally, the development of the new script is attributed to the Abbasid vizier Ibn Muqla (d. 940), although this may be either a later attempt to assign authorship to an organically occurring development or the product of interference between two distinct scribal genres (or both).[44] About the same time we witness a reversion to the vertical format favored in Hijazi Qur'ans, although horizontal Kufic Qur'ans continued to be produced for about a century.

The course of the tenth century saw further major changes, including the introduction of paper support, new carbon-black inks, and the use of cursive scripts. These developments increased the legibility of the text while further eroding the distinction between scribal practices employed in religious and secular contexts. Although Kufic continued in use in subsidiary contexts for several centuries, with the exception of al-Andalus and the Maghreb (where a more conservative tradition prevailed), by the year 1000 the Qur'an was being written in cursive scripts and on a paper medium.

188. Folio from a Qur'an

Syria (?), late 7th–early 8th century (?)
Brown ink and pigments on parchment; the back side has been reinked with a black carbon ink; decorative details in red, green, yellow, and white
46.5 × 39.9 cm (18⅜ × 15¹¹⁄₁₆ in.)
Condition: The folio is in good condition with limited water damage and losses on the lower margin. The verso has been reinked.
The David Collection, Copenhagen (26/2003)

This folio from a large luxury manuscript contains portions of the later, shorter suras (chapters) of the Qur'an. The recto, which contains the full text of Sura 91, "The Sun," demonstrates the use of ornamental chapter dividers: an upper band of green and red lozenges, a lower band of zigzagging yellow and white leaves. Other ornaments include red circles to indicate the end of every five verses, and green, red, and yellow stars to mark every ten verses; these elements find parallels in the mosaic inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock.

This folio is one of two that are closely related to fragments of a large codex discovered in the Great Mosque of Sana'a in Yemen in 1972; finds from the same cache in 1965 disappeared before they could be studied.[1] Since the comparable material has been tentatively ascribed to Umayyad Syria, it should be noted that similar chapter dividers in the form of narrow polychromatic geometric bands were used in pre-Islamic Syriac Bibles.[2] These Qur'ans differ from earlier Hijazi Qur'ans (see Flood, p. 265, and fig. 109) in their scale and square format; other differences include the use of margins, ornamental chapter dividers, verse markers, angular Kufic script, and twenty lines of verse per page. They belong instead to a distinct stylistic group identified by the late Estelle Whelan, who suggested that variations between this group of vertical-format Qur'ans and another comprised of horizontal Kufic Qur'ans might represent differences in contemporary centers of production and function rather than different moments in the evolution of the material Qur'an.[3] Alternatively, they may represent an intermediary phase before the emergence of a strong preference for horizontal-format Kufic Qur'ans (cat. nos. 191–193).[4]

FBF

1 Another folio from what seems to be the same Qur'an is now in a private collection; see Roxburgh 2007, p. 15, fig. 5. On the Sana'a codex (Dar al-Makhtutat 01-29.2), see Puin 1985, pp. 10–11, cat. no. 36; Piotrovskii 1999, pp. 104–5, cat. nos. 41, 42 (Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer). On the full circumstances of the find, see George 2010, pp. 17–19.
2 George 2010, p. 58, fig. 34.
3 In particular, Whelan (1990, pp. 122–23) comments on differences in format, ornament, and script between this group and another comprised of horizontal-format Kufic Qur'ans.
4 George 2010, pp. 74–89.

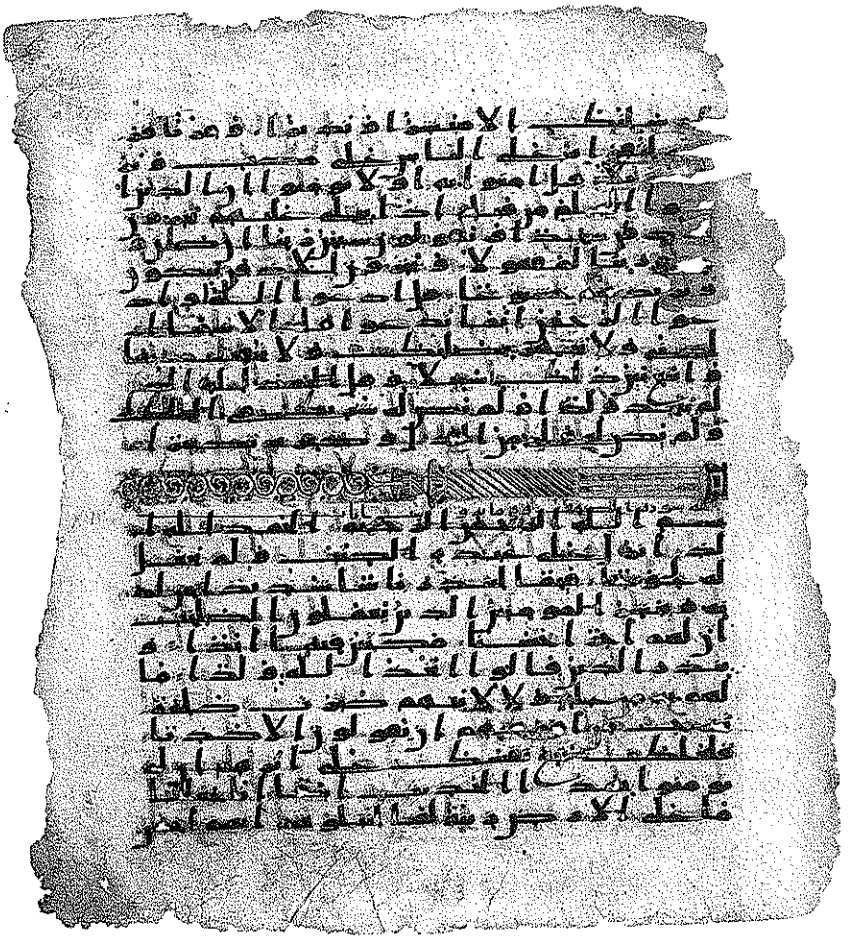
Reference: Blair and Bloom 2006, p. 98, cat. no. 33.

Recto

Verso

189. Folios from a Qur'an

Probably Syria, ca. 700–725
Ink and pigments; 42 folios
37 × 31 cm (14⅝ × 12³⁄₁₆ in.)
Provenance: These folios belong to approximately one quarter of a Qur'an acquired by Jean-Joseph Marcel, a member of the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt (1798–1801), in the Mosque of 'Amr in Fustat.[1] The same mosque was the source of numerous fragments of early Qur'an manuscripts, among them catalogue number 190, now dispersed between international museum collections.[2] Acquired by the Imperial Public Library (now the National Library of Russia) in 1864.
Condition: The folios are unbound and have suffered rodent and insect damage.
National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg (Marcel 13), fols. 3, 8, 11, 15



Fol. 3

The vertical format, scale, and use of roughly twenty-five lines of text per page relate this lavishly illuminated early Qur'an to the so-called Hijazi Qur'ans thought to predate it (fig. 109). The script shows affinities to both Hijazi and the more angular Kufic script that seems to have superseded it for Qur'anic calligraphy by the early eighth century. Diacritical marks in the form of black dots distinguish different letter forms, while red dots indicate short vowels. As in other early Qur'ans (cat. no. 190), the end of each verse is indicated by a series of oblique lines.[3]

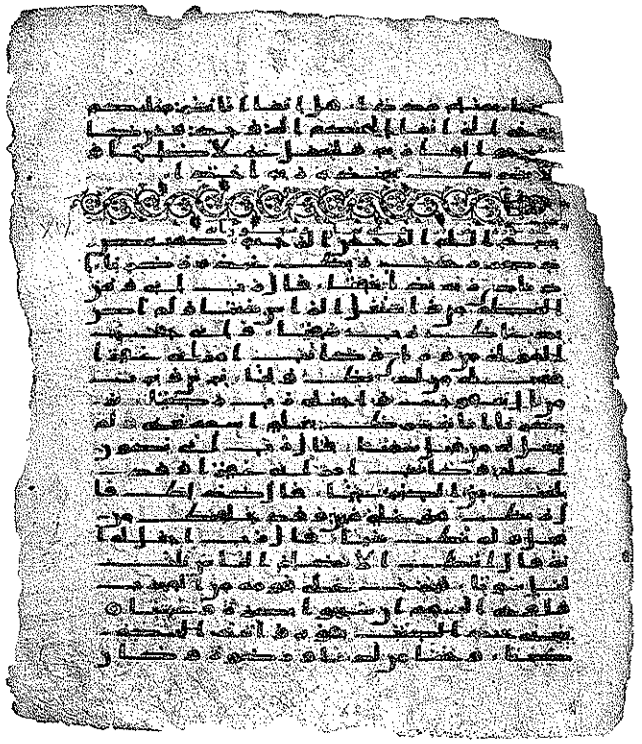
The most striking aspect of the Qur'an is the use of elaborate architectural and vegetal motifs to mark the divisions between chapters. Some dividers consist of rectangular frames enclosing repeated rosettes, representing a more elaborate version of those seen in catalogue number 188. Others make use of spectacular combinations of architecture and vegetation. In this folio the end of Sura 17, "The Children of Israel," is distinguished from the beginning of Sura 18, "The Cave," by a gilded green and red striated and spiral column supporting a vase, from which emerges a tightly scrolled vine (fol. 3). Below, a later inscription in red ink gives the name of the chapter and the number of verses it contains. On other folios, scrolls with flowers or fruit-bearing vines grow horizontally across the page, issuing from baskets or amphorae set atop multisectioned gilded columns (fol. 8). Some of these columns are themselves perched precariously on amphorae, as if to underline the subversion of function entailed in depicting an architectural element horizontally, divorced from any architectural context. The attention to detail is as astonishing as the variety and subtlety with which the limited palette has been deployed, sometimes to distinguish different colors of marble in adjoining sections of the same columnar structure. A similar palette is seen in the chapter divisions of catalogue number 188, but the architectural and vegetal ornament employed here is far more ambitious in its precision and meticulously representational character.

A possible relationship to the use of columns (sometimes topped by crosses) as decorated initials in pre-Islamic Latin Gospels cannot be ruled out,[4] but the conceptual and formal reconfiguration witnessed here is a hallmark of Umayyad religious art and architecture in general (see Flood, p. 244). The details of both script and ornament relate to the mosaics in the Dome of the Rock and in other monuments of the Umayyad period.[5] In its use of illuminations featuring architecture and vegetation, this Qur'an may be compared with at least three others that have been dated to the Umayyad period;[6] the array of architectural elements used as chapter divisions, however, render it closest in spirit (if not in scale) to catalogue number 190.[7] In all three of these Qur'ans, representational ornament illuminates the iconographic significance of the text. The lamp that hangs in arches depicted within some columnar chapter dividers likely refers to scripture as a source of enlightenment (Qur'an 42:52) while recalling the so-called Light Verse (Qur'an 24:35), in which the light of God is compared to that of a hanging lamp.[8] In later Qur'ans the same idea was sometimes given expression through chrysography (cat. no. 192).[9]

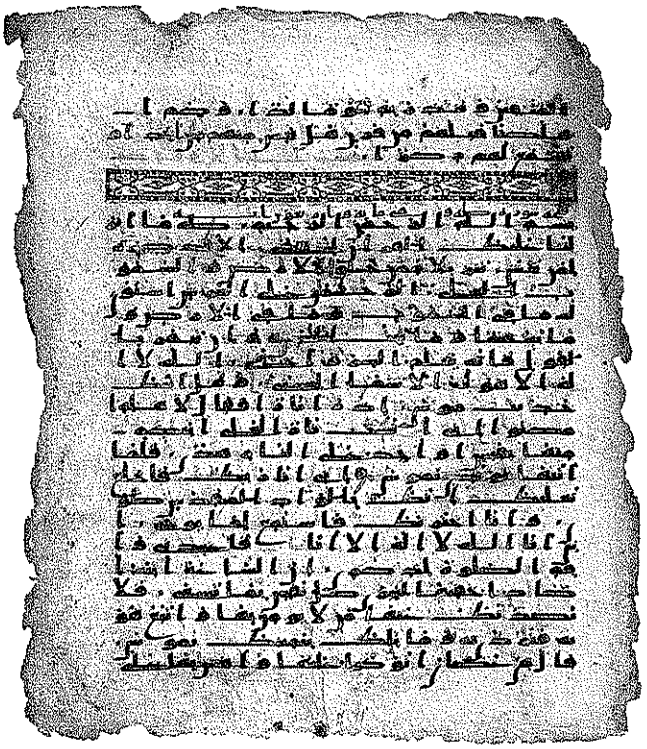
On iconographic and paleographic grounds this manuscript has been assigned to the late seventh or early eighth century.[10] The provenance is no indication of an Egyptian origin; based on the content of its illuminations, and on a mode of vocalization and verse counts later identified with Damascus, a Syrian origin is quite likely.[11]

FBF

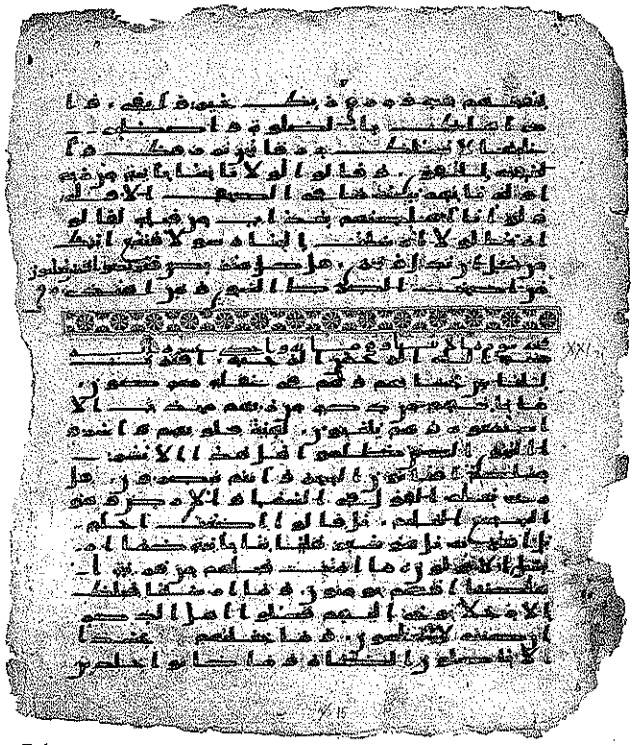
Jean-Joseph Marcel (1776–1854), director of Napoleon's printing office, took to France 3,000 manuscripts from Alexandria and Cairo, including 132 early Qur'ans later acquired by Russia.[12] Recently "rediscovered," dated, and localized by Francois Déroche and Alain George, Marcel 13 contains three fragments: Suras 17:62(60)–23:12(12); 24:48(49)–61(61); and 34:18(19)–41:10(11).[13] Other sections of the Qur'an, originally one or more



Fol. 8



Fol. 11



Fol. 15

volumes, are found in Marcel 11 (eleven folios) and Marcel 15 (ten folios), and probably also in MS Arab. 330c in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (nine folios). All are written in the so-called Umayyad script and similarly decorated. Four of the ten ornamented Sura-headings in Marcel 13 shown here recall the architectural style of early (and not only) Arabic codices.[14] Parallels are also found in Jewish manuscripts, including catalogue numbers 75 and 76 and the Hebrew Book of the Prophets copied in Jerusalem in 988–89, where gold-ornamented columns with triangular bases and palmette "heads" appear between three text columns.[15] Many earlier Christian Gospels begin with canon tables inscribed under arcades (cat. no. 39). ov

1 The acquisition of Marcel's collection was published in the Report of the Imperial Public Library for the Year 1864 (Saint Petersburg, 1865), pp. 22–24.

2 Déroche 2009, pp. 10–13.

3 In what appears to be an early incarnation of *abjad*, a system in which letters are ascribed a numerical value, on some folios a golden letter outlined in brown gives the verse count after every fifth verse. It is not clear, however, whether this system was consistently applied throughout the manuscript. George 2009, pp. 92–93, fig. 10.

4 Nordenfalk 1970, pl. 45.

5 George 2010, p. 78.

6 The three Qur'ans in question are the famous Sana'a Qur'an (fig. 110), catalogue number 190, and an unpublished manuscript found in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, several folios of which feature composite architectural and vegetal motifs, including in two cases gilded columns bearing chalices, arranged horizontally to divide chapters. Déroche 2002, pp. 629–40, fig. 11; Déroche 2004a, pp. 254–56.

7 The abstract vegetal motifs that sit atop some columns (for example, fol. 33r) are similar to the crowning elements on one of the mihrabs depicted in the Sana'a Qur'an (fig. 110). The form of the gilded arch that divides the two sections of column on the same folio and the transparent globular lamp that hangs within it are also closely related to the arcades and lamps of the Sana'a frontispieces.

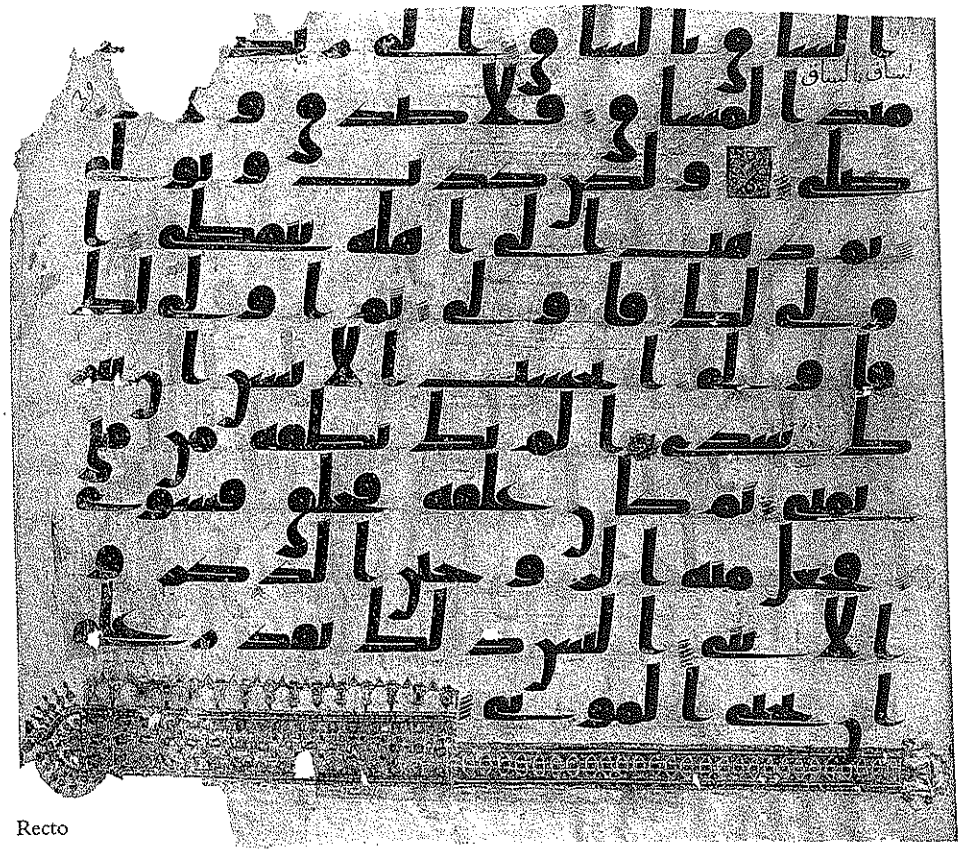
8 Flood 1999.

9 George 2009, pp. 105–6.

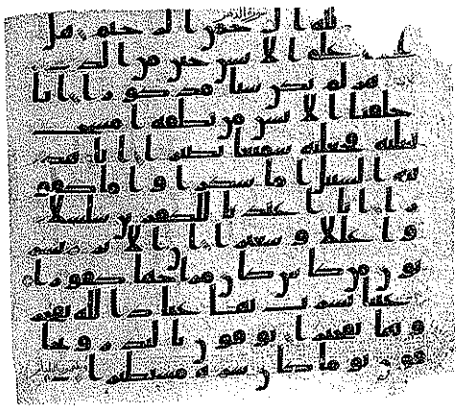
10 Déroche 2004a, pp. 240–42; Déroche 2009, p. 154; George 2010, pp. 75–78.

11 George 2010, p. 78. Note, however, that the text of at least one sura was later amended to reflect an alternative reading: Déroche 2009, p. 148.

12 On the history of the Marcel collection, see Vasilyeva 2007, pp. 442–51. See the online exhibition *Early Qur'ans from the J.-J. Marcel collection*, http://www.nlr.ru/eng/exib/Koran/.



Recto



Verso

13 Déroche 2004a; Déroche 2004b, p. 100, fig. 33, pp. 115–20; George 2010, pp. 75–78.

14 Most illustrative among Arabic manuscripts are the Qur'an fragments at the Manuscript House in Sana'a, Yemen, especially two pages showing a mosque typically resembling the Great Mosque built in Damascus by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid I (fig. 110). See Piotrovsky 1999, pp. 131–32.

15 The decorations appear at the end several leaves of the Masoretic text, National Library of Russia, Firk (Hebr. II B of 39, fols. 152r and 154r). See Levitt Kohn 2007, pp. 80–82.

References: Piotrovsky 1999; Déroche 2004a; Déroche 2004b, p. 115, fig. 33; Levitt Kohn 2007; Vasilyeva 2007; George 2009, pp. 86, 92–93, fig. 10; George 2010, pp. 75–78, 80, 148, figs. 50, 51.

190. Folio from a Qur'an

Probably Syria, ca. 700–725
53.7 × 62 cm (21⅛ × 24⅜ in.)
Brown and black ink and pigments on parchment
Provenance: Acquired by Jean-Louis Asselin de Cherville (1772–1822; French consul in Cairo beginning 1816), from the Mosque of 'Amr ibn al-'As in Fustat (Cairo); collection of Jean-Louis Asselin de Cherville until 1822; in 1833 the Bibliothèque Royale (now the Bibliothèque Nationale) purchased Asselin de Cherville's entire collection of 1,515 manuscripts.
Condition: The folio has been trimmed at the top; the upper left corner is damaged. There are additional small losses of parchment. The ink and pigment are worn in areas.
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (Arabe 324c), fol. 39

This folio comes from the largest known Kufic Qur'an, originally comprising up to six hundred folios measuring at least 26¾ × 20⅞ in. (68 × 53 cm).[1] Its scale relates it to a group of unusually large Kufic Qur'ans that may have been intended for display in mosques.[2] Carbon-14 dating suggests a date range of 640 to 765 for the group.[3] The size and use of frankly representational architectural illuminations, something of a hallmark of Umayyad Qur'ans (cat. no. 189), also support an early dating.

The script relates to that of at least four extant Qur'an manuscripts, including the Sana'a Qur'an (fig. 110).[4] As is the case with catalogue number 189, a later hand has inscribed some chapter titles in red ink. The end of each verse is indicated by a series of oblique lines. In addition, every fifth verse is marked by a rosette, and every tenth verse by a four-pointed rhomboid inscribed in a square. The chapter dividers consist of thick horizontal belts featuring guilloche, rhomboid, and arcade designs, stepped where necessary to accommodate the preceding text block, as in other Qur'ans of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. These bands project into the margins and terminate in arches (sometimes tasseled) filled with abstract vegetal motifs or miniature columns bearing elaborate floral sprays (fig. 111), recalling the more large-scale use of similar ornament in catalogue number 189. The dividing bands are crowned with architectural motifs, often in the form of continuous arcades featuring horseshoe or rounded arches, within which stylized lamps sometimes hang.[5] The use of dwarf arcades finds antecedents in the miniature canon tables that appear in some earlier luxury Greek and Latin Gospels.[6] In this manuscript, however, the architecture is far more elaborate in its construction, with arcades often supporting crenelations and stepped pyramidal structures resembling corbeled domes.

The columnar chapter dividers of catalogue number 189 are more precise and sophisticated in their execution, but the variety of architectural forms here lends this manuscript an especially exuberant quality. In several cases, the mid- or terminal points of these structures support double- or quadruple-winged motifs, calling to mind those in the Dome of the Rock mosaics and on some funerary monuments of the Early Islamic period (cat. no. 167). Their striking anthropomorphism recalls the use of winged and vegetal motifs to evoke angelic creatures in Byzantine, Coptic, and Jewish art. It has been suggested, for example, that the two leaves flanking the Ark of the Covenant in catalogue number 75 were intended to evoke the cherubim.[7] Precedents for the use of abstract, aniconic, or vegetal devices to allude to angelic and living beings by nonfigurative means likely exist in Umayyad art as well.[8] While its architectural illuminations relate this Qur'an to others of the Umayyad period, it is also possible that its vegetal illuminations attest to a bold iconographic experiment—an attempt to recall the angelic mediation central to the revelation while avoiding the

literal depiction of living creatures.[9] Such an enterprise would be in keeping with the unusual scale of the Qur'an and the considerable investment of resources to which it bears witness. FBF

1 Other folios from the same Qur'an now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (fig. 111), the Dar al-Kutub (the former Khedivial Library), Cairo, and the Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, Gotha (Ms Or.A462), were, like those in catalogue number 189, acquired in the Mosque of 'Amr; see Moritz 1905, pls. 1–12; Nebes et al. 1997, pp. 105–7; Déroche and von Gladiss 1999, fig. 5.

2 These include a Qur'an folio of identical size now in a private collection, the famous Sana'a Qur'an, which measures 20⅛ × 18½ in. (51 × 47 cm) (fig. 110), and a vertical-format Qur'an from Katta Langar in Uzbekistan whose folios measured at least 20½ × 12⅝ in. (52 × 32 cm); see Piotrovskii 1999, pp. 190–104, cat. nos. 36–41 (Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer); Déroche 1999; Roxburgh 2007, p. 8, fig. 3; Dutton 2007, pp. 75–77. See also a large-scale Kufic Qur'an preserved in the Mashhad al-Hussein in Cairo: Munajjid 1971, pp. 53–54; Déroche 2004b, p. 28, fig. 4.

3 Déroche 2003, p. 261.

4 George 2010, pp. 87, 152.

5 Similar designs appear on a full-page illumination from another Umayyad Qur'an: ibid., pp. 87–88, fig. 58.

6 M. Brown 2006, pp. 238–39, 306, cat. no. 70.

7 Metzger 1958, p. 209; Levy 1993–94, pp. 82–83; Raby 1999, pp. 129–33, figs. 18–24.

8 Rosen-Ayalon 1989, pp. 54–55; J. Wilkinson 1992, pp. 133–39; Flood 2001, pp. 39–41; Avner 2011, p. 42.

9 See also early traditions concerning the existence of a heavenly Qur'an that only the angels are permitted to touch; Kister 2008, p. 310.

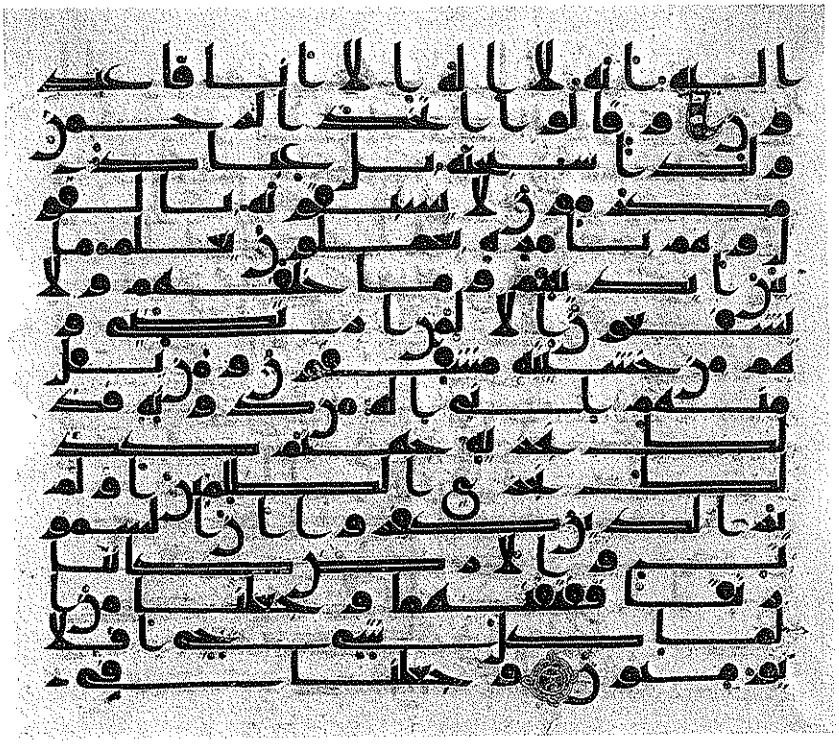
References: Tisserant 1914, p. xxxii, no. 42; Déroche 1983, pp. 75–77, no. 45; Guesdon and Vernay-Nouri 2001, cat. no. 14; Déroche 2004b, pp. 115, 117, figs. 34, 41; George 2010, p. 87, fig. 57.

191A, B. Two Folios from a Qur'an

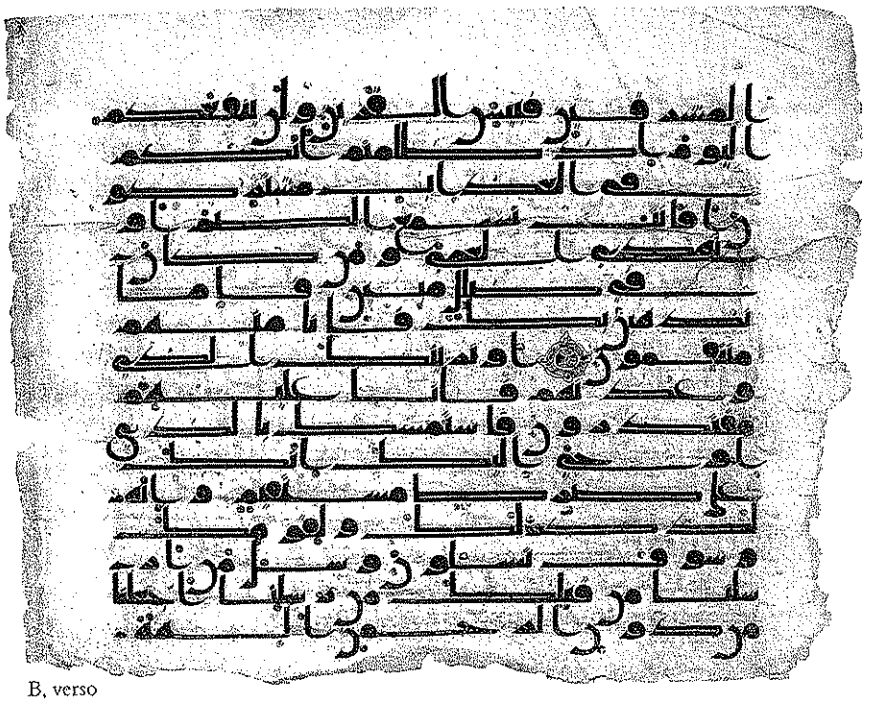
Damascus, late 8th century
Ink, pigments, and gold leaf on parchment

A. Folio with Verses from Qur'an 21:19–25
32.1 × 39.4 cm (12⅝ × 15½ in.)
Condition: The folio's condition is fair. There are some uneven, torn, and creased edges and areas where media are flaking. The ink and pigment are more stable and intact on the verso of the parchment than on the recto, where ink loss is severe. The acid in the iron-gall ink has so discolored the parchment that the text on each side is faintly visible on the other and has also caused some small tears in the parchment.
Brooklyn Museum, New York, Gift of Joan Palisi in memory of her husband, Dr. Joseph J. Palisi of Brooklyn, New York (1995.186)

B. Folio with Verses from Qur'an 43:37–44
31 × 39 cm (12⅜ × 15⅜ in.)
Condition: The folio's condition is fair. A horizontal tear along the base of the fourth line of text has been mended on the recto. There are some losses along the edges, as well as a few areas of creasing and small tears in the parchment. Some of the text on the recto is visible on the verso, probably because the acidity of the iron-gall ink weakened the paper.
The David Collection, Copenhagen (18/1965)



A, recto



B, verso

Originally from the same bound codex, this pair of elegantly scripted folios—one in the Brooklyn Museum, the other in the David Collection, Copenhagen—illustrates the exceptional skill and care with which Qur'ans were made. They are the product of practices developed in pre-Islamic Egypt and Syria and of innovations that appeared after the advent of Islam. For example, the physical structure of the parchment codex followed classical and ancient Near Eastern traditions, associated largely with Christian scriptures but also with Late Antique literary texts.[1] The most dramatic Islamic innovation was the Arabic script, which made a bold statement about the new religion and power by means of monumental inscriptions, coinage, and religious and official texts.

BYZANTIUM AND ISLAM

AGE OF TRANSITION

7th–9th Century

EDITED BY

Helen C. Evans with Brandie Ratliff

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London