

Touching and Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qur'an

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1. 'UTHMĀN'S BLOOD AND MU'ĀWIYA'S SPEARS

Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 316/929) opens the *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, a study of the textus receptus of the Qur'an, with the famed narrative of how the third caliph, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (r. 23–35/644–656), was reading from the Qur'an when assassinated. 'Uthmān's blood, the account goes, spilled over the codex and finally beaded up on the following verse, ". . . God will be sufficient for you against them, He is the all-hearing, the all-knowing" (Q 2:137).¹ This particular anecdote occurs with some frequency in the third/ninth-century historiographical sources, with chains of transmission (*asānīd*) that stretch back to at least the Umayyad period.² The literary form of the account, foretelling future schisms within Islam, with such a clear intersection between scripture and salvation history, suggests a discourse associated with the professional *quṣṣāṣ*, early preachers who often served as mouthpieces for Umayyad propaganda.³

It is not entirely apodictic to observe that this particular narrative of 'Uthmān's assassination presupposes a physical copy of the revelation to Muḥammad. The portentous power of this particular codex (*muṣḥaf*),⁴ as it relates to 'Uthmān's place in the larger arc of history, can only fully be understood when set against the central role that 'Uthmān plays in the codification of the Qur'an. Not only is 'Uthmān remembered for establishing the textus receptus, but also for attempting to burn or erase all variant Qur'anic copies then in circulation.⁵ Nonetheless, the various accounts of the collection of the Qur'an into its final recension, as recorded in the *maghāzī*, *sīra*, and *ḥadīth* literature, and inflecting the broader

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1. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Sabḥān Wā'iz (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 2002), 141. On the *kitāb al-maṣāḥif* genre, see Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937), 10–17. In his edition of Ibn Abī Dāwūd's *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, Jeffery did not use the Chester Beattay ms, which begins with this opening anecdote; see Wā'iz's edition, 91–93, 135.

2. See the *takhrij* offered by Wā'iz, 141–42; also Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845), *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1990–1991), 3: 54–55; Aḥmād b. Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. Waṣī Allāh b. Muḥammad 'Abbās (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1983), 1: 470–73; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2005), 7: 520–21; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. de Goeje et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1871–1901), ser. 1: 3007.

3. For an overview of the *quṣṣāṣ* as vehicles for Umayyad propaganda, see Khalil 'Athamina, "Al-Qasas: Its Emergence, Religious Origin and Its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society," *Studia Islamica* 76 (1992): 53–74.

4. On the transformation of this particular *muṣḥaf* into a relic, see my article, "From Drops of Blood: Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the *translatio* of the 'Uthmānic Codex of al-Andalus," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39.3 (2008): 321–46.

5. Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812–13), *al-Jāmi'*, ed. Miklos Muranyi (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmi, 2003), 3: 27, 31; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), in *Mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf* (Vaduz: Jam'īyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmi, 2000–2001), 66.3, §5038, 3: 1048; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* (kitāb al-tafsīr), in *Mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf*, 43.10, §3387, 2: 787–88; T. Nöldeke et al., *Geschichte des Qorāns = GdQ* (Leipzig: T. Dieter, 1909–38), 2: 47–62.

traditions of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, are embroiled in contradictions and discrepancies.⁶ Based on *isnād* analysis of the accounts detailing 'Uthmān's recension, much of the material converges on the religious scholar Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. ca. 124/742), who closely aligned himself to the Umayyad regime.⁷ As to what extent these accounts can be traced even further back, and whether they reflect the actual process of codification, is open to debate.⁸

Origins are notoriously messy for historians; this is especially so for historians of religion. The codification of the Qur'an is a case in point—the impact of scholarship from the last century on the formative periods of Islam is still strongly felt, such that today it is much more difficult to accept at face value early Muslim accounts of their own history. As with any quest for origins, the question of how and when the revelation to Muḥammad became a written scripture remains extremely contentious. This article, however, does not attempt to answer either how or when the Qur'an was first gathered into a *muṣḥaf* in its canonical form,⁹ as quests of this order are clouded by the *Heilsgeschichte* running throughout the primary sources and mired in the very epistemological positivism necessary for such endeavors. Rather, the present study examines early debates surrounding the physical codex in order to better understand the symbolic and ritual significance of the Qur'an as a material object in the nascent periods of Islamic history.

At the symbolic level, 'Uthmān's blood-stained codex prefigures the first Muslim civil war (*fitna*), which centered on the conflicts ensuing from the accession to the caliphate of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661). In the Battle of the Camel (35/656) and again at Ṣiffīn (37/657), *maṣāḥif* appear prominently. In the course of these separate battles, the raising up of Qur'anic codices (*raf' al-maṣāḥif*) is used to signify a move for arbitration. In the case of Mu'āwiya (r. 41–60/661–680) at Ṣiffīn, several traditions detail how his forces lifted the *maṣāḥif* on the tips of their spears to demonstrate their desire for a resolution to the conflict through arbitration based on the book of God (*kitāb Allāh*).¹⁰

The historiographical accounts of these two incidents date back well into the second/eighth century, and while the sources themselves reflect a range of sectarian biases, the symbolic centrality of the Qur'an in its material form is consistent throughout. Yet even if we were to accept the historicity of the accounts themselves, the extent to which these codices reflect in any way the canonical form of the Qur'an remains to be seen. As Martin Hinds has suggested, the *maṣāḥif* impaled on spears actually may have been small sheets of parchment

6. Cf. John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), 115–37; idem, *EQ*, s.v. The Collection of the Qur'an; *El²*, s.v. Qur'an; Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-Image* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 24–28.

7. Cf. Michael Lecker, "Biographical Notes on Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 41 (1996): 21–63.

8. Cf. Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'an: A Reconsideration of the Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam* 78 (2001): 1–34; Fred Donner, "The Qur'an in Recent Scholarship: Challenges and Desiderata," in *The Qur'an in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2008), 29–50.

9. According to the classical dictionaries, the word may be vocalized as *muṣḥaf*, *maṣḥaf*, and even *miṣḥaf*, cf. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v. *ṣ-ḥ-f*. While there are attestations in pre-Islamic poetry, al-Suyūṭī records Ibn Mas'ūd and others ascribing an Ethiopian origin for the term as explicitly differentiated from the *sifr* (*sefer*), i.e., the nomenclature for scripture used by Jews: *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Maktabat al-Mashad al-Ḥusaynī, 1967), 1: 149, apud Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 193–94.

10. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul*, ser. 1: 3329ff.; Naṣr b. Muḥāḥim al-Minqarī (d. 212/827) describes some five hundred Qur'anic codices raised on spears: *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, 2nd ed., ed. Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1962), 478–82, 490–92.

containing Qur'anic verses worn for their talismanic power as amulets around the necks of the soldiers.¹¹ Irrespective of what such sheets or codices may have contained, the prominent role of the *muṣḥaf* in the course of the *fitna*, with its axiomatic function as a material representation of divine writ, suggests, according to Gerald Hawting, a conflict not only over the legitimization of temporal rule, but also over the very authority of scripture itself.¹²

2. ONLY THE PURE TOUCH IT

Aside from such symbolically charged moments surrounding the nascent history of Islam, the significance of the Qur'an as a material object emerges as a site of sustained debate in the early traditions of Islamic jurisprudence. Of particular importance is the question of how the *muṣḥaf* fits into the broader constellation of ritual purity, a subject debated throughout the course of the second/eighth century, with arguments that hearken back to an even earlier period. One of the central issues, in this regard, is whether Muslims may recite the Qur'an or touch the *muṣḥaf* in a state of ritual impurity.

The material from the *maghāzī* and *sīra* literature suggests that the ritual sanctity of the Qur'an as physical object is already established in the earliest stages of the Prophet's mission as part of the larger system of ritual purity (*ṭahāra*). Thus we learn in the *Kitāb al-Maghāzī wa-l-mubtada'* of Ibn Ishāq (d. ca. 150/767)¹³ how the second caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–644), preceding his conversion to Islam, was instructed by his sister Fāṭima, who had already become a Muslim, to purify himself before touching the *kitāb* which she had in her possession, presumably because he was an infidel (*mushrik/kāfir*) and thus ritually impure. As justification for this injunction, 'Umar's sister cites the Qur'anic text, "in a hidden book, which only the purified touch" (*fī kitābin maktūn lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūn*) [Q 56:78–79].¹⁴ 'Umar takes the *kitāb* in his sister's possession—which he goes on to read—only after having performed ablution (*ghuṣl*), thus cleansing himself of major impurity (*janāba*).¹⁵ According to this account, it is upon reciting from the beginning of sura *Ṭāhā* that 'Umar finally converts.

Such an anecdote not only sets out to locate a codified tradition regarding the ritual sanctity of the Qur'an within the lifetime of the Prophet, based on the textual authority of the Qur'an itself and supported by the praxis of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), but it also alludes to both the central significance of scripture in the process of conversion and the question of the impurity of infidels. The dubious historicity of such an account, which establishes the basis of a particular ritual practice at the very origin of Islam, itself archetypical of broader literary topoi of conversion narratives, need not detain us here. It is of note, however, that

11. Martin Hinds, "The Šiffin Arbitration Agreement," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17.1 (1972): 95–96. Some of the oldest *maṣāḥif* are in the form of scrolls; see Solange Ory, "Un nouveau type de *muṣḥaf*," *Revue des études islamiques* 33 (1965): 87–149.

12. G. R. Hawting, "The Significance of the Slogan *lā ḥukmā illā lillāh* and the References to the *Ḥudūd* in the Traditions about the *Fitna* and the Murder of 'Uthmān," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978): 453–63.

13. On Ibn Ishāq's date of death and the title of his work, see Martin Hinds, "Maghāzī and Sīra in Early Islamic Scholarship," in *La Vie du Prophète Mahomet*, ed. Toufic Fahd (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 59–60.

14. Cf. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā l-Saqā' et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2006), 1: 319–21; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 202–3; cf. al-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, ed. Majdī b. Maṣṣūr b. Sayyid al-Shūrā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), (kitāb al-ṭahāra) 1.45, §435, 1: 129; cf. Marion Katz, *Body of Text: The Emergence of the Sunni Law of Ritual Purity* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2002), 159ff.

15. Instead of a *kitāb*, Ibn Hishām references a *ṣaḥīfa*: *al-Sīra*, 1: 320.

not all early exegetes interpreted Q 56:78–79 as bearing upon the ritual system of purity.¹⁶ Based on the legal debates of the second/eighth century over the sanctity of the Qur'an and the *muṣḥaf*, it is hard to maintain that the ritual status of scripture both in its written and oral forms was fully determined before 'Umar's conversion.

Yet much of the anecdotal evidence would lead us to believe that it indeed was. This is clearly the case with the amusing story related in the *Sunan* of al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995) on the authority of 'Ikrima (d. ca. 105/723–24), *mawlā* of Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/686–88), about a midnight tryst that the warrior-poet 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāḥa (d. 8/629) had with a slave-girl (*jāriya*). Upon discovering him in flagrante delicto, Ibn Rawāḥa's wife runs to get a knife and confronts him as he tries to sneak back home. In an attempt to exculpate himself, Ibn Rawāḥa explains to his knife-wielding wife that he had not been with the slave-girl and he could prove this by reciting from the Qur'an, for the Prophet himself had forbidden reciting the Qur'an in a state of major impurity (*junub*)—a state induced, for instance, by sexual intercourse. Ibn Rawāḥa goes on to recite a poem, which his wife, not knowing better, accepts as the Qur'an and as a testament to his fidelity. As the story goes, the next morning Ibn Rawāḥa informed the Prophet of the entire affair, who in turn laughed so hard his molars could be seen.¹⁷ This anecdote speaks of a further effort to delineate an established tradition of ritual praxis surrounding the Qur'an as part of the earliest stages of Islam. The form of the narrative is itself, nonetheless, clearly filtered through the literary conventions of preachers (*quṣṣās*), who aim to both edify and delight.¹⁸

We have further evidence of such literary fashioning with the account of a pseudo-epigraphic dispatch said to have been sent in the year 10/631–32 by the Prophet to 'Amr b. Ḥazm (d. ca. 50/670), his appointed governor of Najrān, Yemen.¹⁹ According to the *Sira* of Ibn Hishām (d. ca. 213/828), in addition to stipulating the collection of taxes (*ṣadaqāt*), the letter (*kitāb*) commands 'Amr to instruct the population of the region in religion (*dīn*) and in the practice (*sunna*) of Islam. This is to be accomplished through such general acts as enjoining right and urging the people to follow truth, as well as teaching and explaining to them the Qur'an; this is qualified with the command that “no one touches the Qur'an unless he is in a state of purity (*tāhir*).”²⁰

16. See Ibn 'Abbās on Q 56:78–79, “in a hidden book which only the purified touch,” referring explicitly to angels: al-Farrā' (d. 207/822), *Ma'āni l-Qur'ān*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002), 3: 36; Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), *Tafsīr*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 3: 318; Ibn al-Ja'd (d. 240/844–45), *al-Musnad*, ed. 'Amir Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Beirut: Mu'assasat Nādir, 1990), §2366, 344; cf. 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf* (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), ed. Ayman Naṣr al-Dīn al-Azhari (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000), 1: 263; cf. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 645; Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Mustaghfirī, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad b. Fāris al-Sallūm (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2006), 1: 217. For further references, see also M. J. Kister, “Lā yamassuḥu illā l-mutahharīn . . . Notes on the Interpretations of a Qur'ānic Phrase,” *JSAI* 34 (2008): 309–23. I would like to thank Yohann Friedmann for sharing with me a copy of this article prior to its publication.

17. al-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan* (kitāb al-ṭahāra), 1.44, §426, 1: 127; on Ibn Rawāḥa, see Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 398–401, 406.

18. According to al-Haytham b. Abī Sinān, he heard the narration of Abū Hurayra (*wa-huwa yaqṣuṣu fī qaṣaṣihi*) relating the same verses of Ibn Rawāḥa, referred to as someone who does not speak obscenities (*lā yaqūlu l-rafatha*), suggesting how a back story could have been elaborated for this account; see al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb al-tahajjud), 19.21, §1164, 1: 217; (kitāb al-adab), 78.91, §6221, 3: 1254–55; and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt et al. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1993–2008), §15736, 25: 11–14, who transmits an entirely different account of Ibn Rawāḥa's night escapade and its moral.

19. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul*, ser. 1: 1727; on the tradition of delegations and letters sent to various regions, cf. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 198–221, and in reference to 'Amr b. Ḥazm, 1: 204.

20. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 4: 502; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul*, loc. cit.; the letter also appears in al-Balādhurī, although no mention is made of this particular injunction: *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000), 49–50. See also 'Abd al-Razzāq on Q 56:79, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1989), 3: 273, cf. 2: 272; idem, *al-Muṣannaf* (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 263.

Discussions surrounding ritual impurity and the written form of the Qur'an emerge at the earliest stages of Islamic jurisprudence, concomitant with the broader formation of a system of ritual purity that occurs during the Marwānid period (64–132/684–750) of the Umayyad dynasty.²¹ The accounts of 'Umar's conversion, Ibn Rawāḥa's deception, and the letter to the people of Najrān all represent decidedly literary attempts at locating ritual praxis vis-à-vis scripture as firmly established by the Qur'an, the Prophet, and the early community. The generic form of these accounts is of significance, for, as opposed to the material transmitting the sayings of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*), these examples all have much more narrative flesh, detailing normative practice but not framed solely as explicit injunctions. And while the movement from *narratio* to *exemplum*, as advanced by John Wansbrough,²² does not fully account for the shifts in the historiographical discourses on the life of the Prophet and the early community,²³ at least in regard to this particular issue there is in the juridical traditions of the second/eighth century a noticeable atomization of the topic.

This is clearly the case with how the Medinan jurist Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796) cites the Prophet's letter to Najrān as a juridical justification for defining the *muṣḥaf* within a larger system of purity.²⁴ Mālik relates a truncated version of the letter, focusing just on the command that only the pure are to touch the Qur'an. He does so in order to justify his argument that no one can carry the codex (*muṣḥaf*) by a strap (*'ilāqa*), in a cover (*khabi'a*), or on a cushion (*sāda*), unless such a person is ritually pure (*tāhir*).²⁵ Mālik explicitly argues that the rationale for this juridical opinion is based on a desire to honor (*ikrām*) and respect (*ta'zīm*) the Qur'an, and not on account of there being something on the hands of the person that could in any way pollute (*yudannisu*) the codex. Concluding his analysis, Mālik turns to the authority of the Qur'an itself, quoting, "No one but the purified (*muṭahharūn*) touch it" (Q 56:79), and ". . . in honored sheets (*suhuf*), exalted, purified (*muṭahhara*) in the hands of scribes . . ." (Q 80:13–15).²⁶

Despite the fact that the Qur'an itself, as Mālik suggests, seems to prefigure the intersection between scripture and ritual purity, early Muslim scholars did not necessarily interpret either of the above verses to explicitly determine the material codex of the Qur'an as bound to what was at this point an evolving system of purity.²⁷ By arguing that one should not touch the *muṣḥaf* save while ritually pure, out of respect (*ikrām*) for the Qur'an, Mālik collapses

21. Katz, *Body of Text*, 207–9.

22. John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), 87.

23. See Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Maghazi and the Muhaddithun: Reconsidering the Treatment of 'Historical' Materials in Early Collections of Hadith," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28.1 (1996): 1–18.

24. Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwattā'*, in *Mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf* (kitāb al-Qur'an), 15.1, §373, 67; cf. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 5: 335–36; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, 1: 263. Al-Dāraquṭnī notes that the account is *mursal*, though the transmitters are *thiqāt*: *Sunan*, §429, 1: 128; likewise Abū Dāwūd, *al-Marāsīl*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1988), §§92–94, 121–22. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad is known not only as a *qāḍī* of Medina but also for his role in collecting the Prophet's letters in his family's possession related to ordinances of taxation (*ṣadaqāt*) and other legal matters for the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 99–101/717–720); see *Muwattā' al-Imām Mālik, riwāyat Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī*, 3rd ed., ed. 'Abd Allāh al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf (Mecca: al-Maktaba al-'Ilmiyya, 1989), 130; al-Dārimī, *Sunan* (kitāb al-muqaddima), ed. Sayyid Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2000), §§487–88, 1: 120–21; Ibn Zanjawayh, *Kitāb al-Anwāl*, ed. Shākir Dhīb Fayyād (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal, 1986), 2: 800; Michael Lecker, "'Amr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī and Qur'an 2,256: 'No Compulsion is There in Religion,'" *Oriens* 35 (1996): 60. Cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Namarī (d. 463/1070), *al-Istihkār*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000), 2: 471–73; and for a Zāhirī position, see Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā*, ed. 'Abd al-Ghaffār (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1988), §116, 1: 94–99.

25. Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwattā'* (kitāb al-Qur'an), 15.1, §373, 67; Abū 'Ubayd relates the same through Ibn Bukayr (d. 231/845), stating that while the position of Mālik is what is practiced (*al-ma'mul bihi*), some scholars have permitted otherwise: *Faḍā'il al-Qur'an*, ed. Sulaymān Ghāwījī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1991), 245.

26. Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwattā'*, loc. cit.

27. See above.

together the oral and textual forms of scripture as one and the same. Yet the persistent view, which Mālik himself seems to have shared, that one may recite the Qur'an while in a state of minor impurity, but may only touch the Qur'an while ritually pure, suggests a clear dichotomy between the oral and textual lines of transmission, insofar as ritual purity is concerned. Mālik's justification for not touching the *muṣḥaf* reflects a later elaboration of a sustained inquiry over the nature of divine scripture in relationship to material existence. As will be shown, the earlier concerns with pollution and the *muṣḥaf* emerge out of a social context in which the written form of the Qur'an is itself in contention.

3. TO TOUCH WITHOUT ANY MEDIATION

Many of the primary sources at our disposal to document the early debates on the nature of the Qur'an form part of a larger corpus of material, which during the course of the early third/ninth century transforms into a genre known primarily as the *faḍā'il/manāqib* or the excellent qualities/merits of the Qur'an.²⁸ A good deal of the information that enters into this genre has its roots in the juridical and exegetical discourses of the early second/eighth century.²⁹ We can trace an evolution in the documentation and further classification of this material, which in its primary form does not seem to be predetermined per se by the emergent *faḍā'il* discourse. Thus, for example, the respective *muṣannaf* collections of the juridical traditions of the Companions, the Successors (*tābi'ūn*), and early scholars by 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) and Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849) both have sections dedicated to *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*.³⁰ This material details the necessity of memorizing, teaching, and reciting the Qur'an primarily for the benefits of intercession that it will offer on the Day of Judgment.³¹ However, in general, these sections do not contain juridical information concerning the ritual and legal status of the Qur'an, most of which is to be found in other parts of their collections.

Thus, while 'Abd al-Razzāq and Ibn Abī Shayba give great attention to legal questions surrounding the *muṣḥaf*, they do so primarily under the juridical headings of ritual purity (*ṭahāra*), ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), and commercial transactions (*buyū'*). Here we can trace explorations into how the Companions and the Successors regarded such topics as the ritual status of both the Qur'an and the *muṣḥaf*; the written transmission of the Qur'an with the various markers and embellishments added to the text; the sale of Qur'anic codices; perfuming (*ṭaṭyīb*) codices; the use of codices in the mosque; and the writing of the Qur'anic verses on coins. Many of these topics became standard to the discourse on *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, as it developed over time, represented, for example, by Abū 'Ubayd b. Sallām (d. 224/838), Ibn Ḍurays (d. 294/906), al-Mustaghfirī (d. 432/1040), al-Rāzī (d. 454/1062), and al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277).³²

28. For the classification of this genre according to medieval authorities, see Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 388/998), *al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002), 57–58; al-Suyūṭī, 4: 102; Ḥājjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn 'an asāmi kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltaqāyā and Rif'at Bilka al-Kilīsī (Istanbul: Wikālat al-Ma'ārif, 1941), 2: 1277.

29. On the exegetical side, see Ibn Wahb, *al-Jāmi'*, 3: 15ff.

30. 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 3: 199–236; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 6: 117–56.

31. Asma Afsaruddin, "The Excellences of the Qur'ān: Textual Sacrality and the Organization of Early Islamic Society," *JAOS* 122 (2002): 4.

32. Abū 'Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, loc. cit.; Ibn Ḍurays, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ghazwa Budayr (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1987); al-Mustaghfirī, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, loc. cit.; 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Aḥmad al-Rāzī, *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān wa-tilawātihi*, ed. 'Amr Ḥasan Ṣabrī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1994); al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān fī ādāb ḥamalāt al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabi, 2002).

A similar pattern can be found in the major *ḥadīth* collections of al-Dārimī (d. 255/869), al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), and to a lesser extent in al-Nasā'ī's (d. 303/915) treatment of the subject in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, all of which deal in some manner with the topic of *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*.³³ Yet these works do not use this classification to adumbrate early legal debates concerning the status of scripture itself. While this pattern is echoed by 'Abd al-Razzāq and Ibn Abī Shayba, they in contrast collate elsewhere in their respective collections a body of juridical material which details how the Successors, often drawing on the authority of the early Companions and the Prophet, constructed a legal discourse surrounding the corporeality of scripture. However, writing on *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, as evinced already in the treatise by Abū 'Ubayd, expands into the juridical realm as a literary form, which comes to draw together disparate material—found in earlier collections and originally located in distinct discursive fields—under one unifying rubric. This arguably represents a further expansion of the genre beginning in the third/ninth century.

The juridical debates recorded in these sources detail a wide heterogeneity of opinion concerning the status and significance of the *muṣḥaf*. How far back we can actually trace these opinions is, of course, open to debate.³⁴ However, before delving into the question of authenticity, which plagues much of this material, we should first explore the actual range of issues at hand. Let us recall that Mālik details in the *Muwatṭā'* that a person should not touch the *muṣḥaf*, let alone carry it by a strap, cover, or a cushion save while ritually pure (*tāhir*). Within the broader system of purity, *tāhir* generally signifies ritually free of both major (*al-ḥadath al-akbar*) and minor (*al-ḥadath al-aṣghar*) impurities.³⁵ In the recension of the *Muwatṭā'* by the Cordoban *faqīh* Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā l-Laythī (d. 234/848), Mālik goes on to suggest that a person, evidently outside of the contexts of ritual observance (*'ibādāt*),³⁶ may recite the Qur'an in a state of minor impurity.³⁷ The justification for this is based upon an account related by the Baṣran traditionist Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110/728)³⁸ that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb quite consciously began to recite the Qur'an after having relieved himself but without having performed the minor ablution (*'alā ghayr wuḍū'*), and thus doing so in a state of minor impurity.³⁹

In his recension of the *Muwatṭā'*, the Kūfan and proto-Ḥanafī jurist Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. ca. 187/803) explicitly states, when commenting on Mālik's view that only the ritually pure should touch the Qur'an, that this is the position of Abū Ḥanīfa save

33. al-Dārimī, *Sunan* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 1: 302–48; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 3: 1046–61; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (bāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), in *Mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf*, 1: 312–24; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), in *Mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf*, 2: 724–37; al-Nasā'ī, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, ed. Fārūq Ḥammāda (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, 1980); cf. the topic index prepared by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ et al. of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, 52: 495ff.; al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2001), 7: 241–92; cf. idem, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*.

34. See Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'an," loc. cit.

35. This nomenclature is not found in the earliest *fiqh* works; see Ze'ev Maghen, "Close Encounters: Some Preliminary Observations on the Transmission of Impurity in Early Sunnī Jurisprudence," *Islamic Law and Society* 6.3 (1999): 354; Kevin Reinhart, "Impurity/No Danger," *History of Religions* 30.1 (1990): 1–24.

36. As for ritual purification before the performance of *'ibādāt*, as stipulated in Q 5:8 and to a lesser degree in Q 4:43, see Reinhart, "Impurity/No Danger," 5ff.

37. Mālik, *al-Muwatṭā'* (kitāb al-Qur'ān), 15.2, §484, 67.

38. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 143–54; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad Ma'awwad et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2004), 7: 626–28; Ibn Sīrīn appears as the transmitter of this statement in accounts related by 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 262, al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 212, and Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṭahārāt), 1: 99, where an additional line of a transmission is given through Qatāda, who is also a Baṣran traditionalist; see Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 171–73.

39. 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 262; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṭahārāt), 1: 98; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 212.

in one respect (*khaṣla wāhida*), namely, there is no harm in reciting the Qur'an when not in a state of purity (*'alā ghayr ṭāhir*), except if it is a state of major impurity (*janab*).⁴⁰ According to the multiple other recensions of the *Muwaṭṭā'*, this seems to also have been Mālik's position.⁴¹ We need not detain ourselves with the issues surrounding the redaction of the *Muwaṭṭā'*⁴² other than to observe that such a divergence over the ritual status of touching the codex and reciting the Qur'an, as will be shown below, had become a point of contention among various legal scholars at least a generation previous to any possible dispute between Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa over this issue. We should pause to note that both Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa hold that the material codex has a unique ritual status such that only the pure should even approach it. This physical demarcation for Abū Ḥanīfa, and also apparently for Mālik, is more restrictive than limitations on reciting the Qur'an, suggesting a distinct ritual status for the Qur'an in its physical form.

The material preserved in the respective *muṣannaḥ* collections of 'Abd al-Razzāq and Ibn Abī Shayba, in addition to such other works as the respective *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* collections of Abū 'Ubayd and al-Mustaghfirī and the *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* of Ibn Abī Dāwūd, suggests that inquiry over the ritual status of the Qur'an goes as far back as the Companions of the Prophet and continued on through the following generation of Successors. If indeed this were the case, then the literary accounts in 'Umar's conversion, Ibn Rawāḥa's deception, and the Prophet's letter would seem all the more to be later attempts at firmly establishing the practice with the first community of Muslims. Nonetheless, the extent to which such Companions as Salmān al-Fārisī (d. ca. 36/656), Ibn 'Abbās, and 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb actually participated in these debates remains to be seen.⁴³ As for the generation of Successors, the opinions ascribed to them may indeed reflect an archaic stratum in the formation of Islamic juridical discourse.

Based on the separate accounts of the Baṣran traditionists Ash'ath b. 'Abd al-Malik (d. ca. 146/764) and Hishām al-Qurdūsī (d. ca. 147/765), the famous jurist al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) saw no harm (*lā ba'sa*) in picking up the *muṣḥaf* while not having performed the minor ablution (*'alā ghayr wuḍū'*).⁴⁴ According to Hishām, the prominent Baṣran Muḥammad b. Sīrīn also supported this position.⁴⁵ Likewise, in Kūfa Abū Razīn (d. ca. 90/708) is said to have held a similar view on the matter.⁴⁶ In contrast, both Ibn Abī Shayba and 'Abd al-Razzāq relate, through a similar *isnād*, that 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Aswad (d. 99/717–

40. al-Shaybānī, *Muwaṭṭā'* *al-Imām Mālik*, §§297–98, 106–7.

41. See *al-Muwaṭṭā' bi-riwāyātihi*, ed. al-Hilālī (United Arab Emirates: Majmū'at al-Furqan al-Tijāriyya, 2003), with the recensions of Yaḥyā, al-Zuhrī, al-Qa'nabī, and Ibn Bukayr, which all detail this issue, §513, 2: 513–14; see the *takhrīj* of al-Shaybānī's transmission of Mālik, which stands against such a practice, offered by the editor, §512, 2: 512.

42. See Harald Motzki, "The Prophet and the Cat: On Dating Mālik's *Muwaṭṭā'* and Legal Traditions," *JSAI* 20 (1998): 18–83; Wael B. Hallaq, "Dating Mālik's *Muwaṭṭā'?*," *UCLA Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law* 1.1 (2001–2): 47–65.

43. On Salmān al-Fārisī, see 'Abd al-Razzāq (*kitāb al-ḥayḍ*), 1: 262–63; Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṭahārāt*), 1: 98; and on Ibn 'Abbās, see 'Abd al-Razzāq (*kitāb al-ḥayḍ*), 1: 261; Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṭahārāt*), 1: 99; for 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, see above.

44. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 114–32. Cf. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṣalāt*), 2: 142; Abū 'Ubayd, 245; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 632; cf. 'Abd al-Razzāq (*kitāb al-ḥayḍ*), 1: 264, al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 221; on Ash'ath, Hishām, al-Qurdūsī, and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, see Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 204, 200–201, 114–32, respectively; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1: 335–36, 6: 635–38, 2: 24–29, respectively.

45. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṣalāt*), 2: 142, a point perhaps substantiated by Ibn Sīrīn's possible role in the relating of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's practice of reciting the Qur'an while in a state of minor impurity.

46. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṣalāt*), 2: 142; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 1: 639–40.

18) and al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. ca. 106/725), both of Medina, and Ṭawūs b. Kaysān (d. ca. 101/720) of Yemen discouraged directly touching the codex in any state of impurity,⁴⁷ a position further associated with Ibn ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.⁴⁸

As Mālik's comments in the *Muwatṭāʾ* suggest, the controversy over touching the *muṣḥaf* in a state of impurity extended to any kind of indirect contact, either with its strap, cover, or cushion. The problem of this kind of oblique contact appears to already have been a central part of the debate in the beginning of the second/seventh century. According to ʿAbd al-Razzāq, the Meccan traditionist Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/768) questioned his teacher, the most important legal scholar of Mecca at the time, ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. ca. 114/732),⁴⁹ as to whether a person in a state of major impurity (*junub*) or a menstruant (*ḥāʾid*)—who in the ritual system would also be in a state of *janāba*—may handle the codex while it is in a covering (*khibāʾ*). ʿAṭāʾ responds in the negative, to which Ibn Jurayj further inquires whether it would be permissible if, in addition to the *khibāʾ* protecting the codex, their hands themselves were covered by another cloth (*thawb*). ʿAṭāʾ again responds in the negative, explaining that since the *khibāʾ* is no more impenetrable than cloth (*akaff min al-thawb*), adding that more layers would not change the matter. As for those in a state of minor impurity (*ghayr al-mutawaddiʾ*), ʿAṭāʾ acknowledges that they do not cause the codex any harm (*yaḍurruhu*) by touching it. He nonetheless states that only someone who has performed *wuḍūʾ* can touch the codex directly without a barrier (*mufaḍḍiyan ilayhi*).⁵⁰

As to the historical authenticity of such an exchange, Harald Motzki has gone to great lengths to argue that the *isnād* pattern ʿAbd al-Razzāq–Ibn Jurayj–ʿAṭāʾ reliably opens up for us a window onto scenes of juridical inquiry in its earliest stages.⁵¹ While such a position is subject to debate,⁵² I would advance that regardless of the historicity of this specific exchange, its unique form, representing the juridical genre of responsum/dictum (*jawāb/masʾala*), helps us to better understand some of the more truncated pieces of information associated with the period. This is the case with several accounts in which such wide-ranging figures as the traditionist Saʿīd b. Jubayr (d. ca. 95/713) and jurist Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), both of Kūfa,⁵³ are said to have only allowed people in a state of major impurity—infidels (in this case a Zoroastrian) and menstruants, respectively—to carry the *muṣḥaf* by a strap (*ʿilāqa*).⁵⁴ Such statements can only be understood against a backdrop where the very ritual demarcation of the *muṣḥaf* is debated.

Yet the problem as to what extent this material reflects actual historical controversies from the first two centuries of Islam cannot be so easily disregarded. Take, for example, the

47. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 265; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 142; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 218. For biographical information on these Successors, see Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 5: 4, 142–48, 6: 66–70; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4: 10, 5: 309–10, 3: 287–88, respectively.

48. Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 142; Abū ʿUbayd, 244–45.

49. On Ibn Jurayj, see Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 6: 37–38; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4: 248–50; on ʿAṭāʾ, see Ibn Saʿd, 6: 20–22; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4: 488–90; *EP*, s.v. ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ.

50. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 264; al-Mustaghfirī, 2: 218.

51. Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh Before the Classical Schools*, tr. Marion Katz (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 77ff.

52. Cf. G. H. A. Juynboll, “New Perspectives in the Study of Early Islamic Jurisprudence,” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 49 (199): 358–61.

53. Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 6: 267–77, 350–52; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 2: 625–26, 715–18.

54. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb ahl al-kitāb), 6: 87, var. cover (ghilāf); Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 142; Abū ʿUbayd, 102, 245–46; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 631–32, where also Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab is mentioned in place of Saʿīd b. al-Jubayr; see al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 6.4, 1: 63.

account of how an unidentified man asks Ibn ‘Abbās whether he can place the *muṣḥaf* on the bed where he makes love, has wet dreams, and sweats. Ibn ‘Abbās responds in the affirmative.⁵⁵ It is of note that the *isnād* of this particular exchange, itself also molded upon the form of the responsum/dictum, is related to ‘Abd al-Razzāq from Ibn Jurayj on the authority of ‘Aṭā’. It is not entirely clear what advantage any of these men might have had in forging such a narrative, which seems to go against the general spirit of ‘Aṭā’'s opinion concerning the ritual sanctity of the codex. However, it is, of course, within the realm of possibility that a good deal of this material is entirely spurious and thus need not be internally consistent.⁵⁶

I would argue that the wide heterogeneity of the various positions presented, covering juridical expressions across Baṣra, Kūfa, Medina, and Mecca throughout the course of the second/eighth century, reflects the broad contours of an ongoing debate concerning the ritual boundaries of scripture in its written form. Furthermore, there are certain elements within these debates that speak directly to independent historical phenomena of the late first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries.

4. INFIDELS, COINS, AND RECITATION

On the question of the spatial/geographic demarcation of scripture, a saying of the Prophet, repeated throughout the major *ḥadīth* collections, forbids traveling with the Qur’an into the land of the enemy (*arḍ al-‘aduww*).⁵⁷ We should note that nowhere in the canonical six books of *ḥadīth* literature or the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) does the Prophet speak directly of a *muṣḥaf*,⁵⁸ nor does the term appear in the Qur’an itself.⁵⁹ While there are many words to describe divine scripture (*ṣuḥuf*, *zūbur*, *kitāb*, *qur’ān*), the word *muṣḥaf* is part of an altogether different lexical sphere, one that specifically reflects a historical process of collecting and codifying the Qur’an into an established textual medium. Observable throughout much of the early juridical discourse is the privileged place of the recited Qur’an as symbolically and ritually distinct from the *muṣḥaf*. In contrast, the deployment of such prophetic commands as only the pure may touch the Qur’an, or no one should travel with the Qur’an into hostile lands, seems to reflect a desire to collapse together written and oral articulations as equivalent expressions of scripture.⁶⁰

The above-mentioned injunction against taking the Qur’an into the *arḍ al-‘aduww* highlights a repeated concern regarding the extent to which non-Muslims should be allowed to

55. ‘Abd al-Razzāq (*kitāb al-ḥayḍ*), 1: 264; Abū ‘Ubayd, 246; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 221.

56. Take, for instance, how ‘Aṭā’, on the authority of Waki’ via Ayman b. Nābil, is said to have permitted a menstruant to carry the codex by a strap, a point that appears to go against his opinion as detailed by Ibn Jurayj: Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṣalāt*), 2: 142; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 633.

57. Mālik b. Anas, *Muwatta’* (kitāb al-jihād), 21.2, §968, 157; ‘Abd al-Razzāq (*kitāb al-jihād*), 5: 145; Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-radd ‘alā Abī Ḥanīfa*), 7: 277; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb al-jihād), 15.129, §3026, 2: 579–80; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb al-imāra), 23.24, §§4946–48, 2: 822; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* (kitāb al-jihād), in *Mawsū‘at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf*, 15.88, §2612, 2: 445; Ibn Māja, *Sunan* (kitāb al-jihād), in *Mawsū‘at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf*, 25.45, §§2989–90, 421; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§4507, 4525, 4576, 5170, 5293, 5465, 6124, 8: 99, 121, 183, 9: 157, 218, 335, 10: 274–75). Also see Abū ‘Ubayd, 57; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 621–31. See al-Sarakhsī’s (d. ca. 490/1096) interpretation of this command as restricted to the time of the Prophet: *al-Mabsūṭ*, ed. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shāfi‘ī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2001), 10: 34, cf. 13: 156.

58. See A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulman* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), s.v. *muṣḥaf*.

59. Cf. *El*², s.v. *Muṣḥaf*; *EQ*, s.v. *Muṣḥaf*.

60. Thus, of note is the variant recorded by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal substituting the *muṣḥaf* for the Qur’an (*yanhā an yusāfara bi-l-muṣḥaf . . .*), related as indirect speech: *Musnad*, §5465, 9: 335; similarly Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 623, 631.

interact with Muslim scripture. The filth of infidels (*najāsāt al-mushrikīn*),⁶¹ itself a theme fully expressed within the Qur'an (e.g., Q 9:27), suggests a delineation between religious communities. On this topic Abū 'Ubayd rhetorically inquires how it is permissible for infidels (*ahl al-shirk*) to touch the *muṣḥaf* when Muslims are loath for their own (*ahl al-Islam*) to touch it while in a state of major impurity (*junub*).⁶²

The very notion of *janāba*, which Kevin Reinhart translates as “preclusion,”⁶³ predicates a symbolic and ritual demarcation of physical reality. Scripture both in its oral and written forms is itself a relational concept, often functioning as the defining agent within a dialectic between self and other.⁶⁴ The concern about the extent to which non-Muslims may come in contact with scripture forms a key part in these early juridical discussions. The distinction, in ritual and legal terms, between the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) and infidels (*mushrikūn*) is also of significance for the debate. Thus, the implicit suggestion in the account mentioned earlier of the Kūfan Sa'īd b. Jubayr having his Zoroastrian slave carry the codex by a strap, is that Zoroastrians should only have oblique contact with the codex. In this early period, Zoroastrians were generally considered to be infidels not in possession of revelation.⁶⁵ Such a point is significant for it ties into the broader question of the debated purity status of infidels.⁶⁶ Thus we should contrast the restricted contact of the Zoroastrian slave with the *muṣḥaf* with how the early Companion 'Alqama b. Qays (d. ca. 62/682) and fellow Kūfan jurist 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Laylā (d. 148/765) are said to have had Christians—that is, People of the Book who are ritually distinct from Zoroastrians—make copies of the Qur'an for them.⁶⁷

The written expression of scripture raises a series of ritual concerns distinct from a purely oral medium of articulation. This is due primarily to the fact that in the form of a physical object, the Qur'an enters into the realm of material existence, itself bound to and defined by a larger system of purity. Such is suggested by the distinct ritual classifications, given by Mālik and others, for touching the *muṣḥaf* versus reciting the Qur'an. The issue of touching the *muṣḥaf* in various states of ritual impurity forms part of a larger concern over the written dissemination of scripture. Unlike an oral line of communication, which passes through bodies but does not occupy a physical form, the written expression of the Qur'an is much harder to regulate in terms of its movement within the broader configurations of purity/impurity.

Michael Cook has suggested that defunct legal controversies are precisely the location for mapping out debates that shaped the early development of Islamic law.⁶⁸ The juridical discourses on the ritual implications of the Qur'an as a text offer rich material for such an exercise. One such entry point is the numismatic use of Qur'anic material. According to Ibn Jurayj, although 'Aṭā' preferred not to touch either dirhams or dinars without having done the minor ablution, and discouraged menstruants and those in a state of major impurity from

61. See Maghen, “Close Encounters,” 364ff.

62. Abū 'Ubayd, 102–3.

63. Reinhart, “Impurity/No Danger,” 14ff.

64. Cf. William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 5–6.

65. See Michael Cook, “Magian Cheese: An Archaic Problem in Islamic Law,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47.3 (1984): 451.

66. See Katz, *Body of Text*, 157–64.

67. Abū 'Ubayd, 102, 245; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-buyū'), 4: 294. On Ibn Abī Layla, see Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 6: 146–52, 166–68; Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4: 558–59, 121–23. For further references to Christian copyists, see Kister, “Lā yamassuhu,” 330–31.

68. Cook, “Magian Cheese,” passim, apud Katz, *Body of Text*, 101–2.

doing so, he also recognized the necessity of people to use coins, as they were made to be circulated.⁶⁹ In a similar vein, Ibn Abī Shayba reports how several authorities, such as Mujāhid (d. ca. 100/718) of Mecca and al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad of Medina,⁷⁰ loathed bringing dirhams into the privy (*khalāʿ*).⁷¹ The Kūfan jurist Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. ca. 96/714),⁷² well known for his objection to touching dirhams in a state of ritual impurity,⁷³ argued that Muslims had a legal obligation to safeguard the dirhams of someone who has gone into the privy.⁷⁴

The issue that concerns these jurists is the appearance of Qurʾanic material on coins. The circulation of currency both within and beyond the community of Muslims directly intersects with the larger symbolic universe of purity. While the printing of the *basmala* is recorded on some of the earliest Umayyad coinage,⁷⁵ the introduction of Qurʾanic formulae does not occur until the sweeping currency reforms of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705).⁷⁶ As for political propaganda and the potential religious symbolism of currency, al-Balādhurī (d. ca. 278/892) credits al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714), governor of the eastern provinces of the Umayyad empire, with minting dirhams printed with the sura *al-Ikhlās*. According to al-Balādhurī, the *fuqahāʿ* detested these coins, calling them “loathed” (*makrūha*).⁷⁷ Indeed, the post-reform dirhams and dinars minted in all parts of the Umayyad empire save North Africa and al-Andalus, bear the inscription of *sūrat al-Ikhlās*.⁷⁸ Al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), for his part, explains that the *fuqahāʿ* objected to these coins stamped with Qurʾanic verses because the ritually impure could carry them about. He suggests, however, that the coins bore the nickname *makrūha* as the Persians loathed them for their reduced weight, itself a central part of ʿAbd al-Malik’s monetary reform.⁷⁹

Whatever the case may be, the juridical discourse documents a vociferous objection by many legal scholars of the period to the introduction of Qurʾanic material onto coins. Such is the case with the Baṣran jurist Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, who is not only known to have detested (*kariha*) buying or selling coins marked with the Book of God (*kitāb Allāh*) and their exchange with infidels,⁸⁰ but is also said to have explicitly objected to the dirhams of al-

69. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 264, al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 218.

70. G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance, and Authorship of Early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 42; *EP*, s.v. Muḍjāhid b. Ḍjabr.

71. Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṭahārāt), 1: 106–7; both ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Ibn Abī Shayba discuss the permissibility of bringing signet rings, inscribed, evidently for talismanic purposes, with Qurʾanic material, into the privy: (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 266–68, and (kitāb al-ṭahārāt), 1: 106, respectively. Cf. al-Shaybānī, *Āthār*, ed. al-Wafāʿ al-Afghānī, repr. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992), 1: 54–46.

72. Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 6: 279–91; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1: 168–69; *EP*, s.v. al-Nakhaʿī.

73. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 264–65; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 640–42.

74. A position held by others: Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṭahārāt), 1: 107.

75. J. Walker, *A Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1941), 1: 25–26.

76. Philip Grierson, “The Monetary Reforms of ʿAbd al-Malik: Their Metrological Basis and Their Financial Repercussions,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3.3 (1960): 241–64.

77. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 287; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul*, ser. 2: 939–40; Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Shudhūr al-ʿuqūd fī dhikr al-nuqūd*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sayyid ʿAlī, 5th ed. (Najaf: al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1967), 11–16; also see Michael G. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), 47–48.

78. Walker, *A Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins*, 2: lvii, and the following tables, for specimens. The inscriptions lack the command *qul* of the original verse.

79. al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya*, ed. Khālid ʿAbd al-Latīf (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabi, 1990), 274; Grierson, “The Monetary Reforms of ʿAbd al-Malik,” loc. cit.

80. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 642–43; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṭahārāt), 1: 107; ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 264; al-Maqrīzī, *Shudhūr al-ʿuqūd*, 15.

Ḥajjāj, as they were printed with the sura *al-Iklās*.⁸¹ Yet as with most of the controversies in this early period, we have documented dissenting voices, e.g., the Baṣran jurists Qatāda (d. ca. 117/735) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who saw no problem in using such coins.⁸²

While vestiges of this controversy can be found in later juridical works attending primarily to questions of ritual praxis,⁸³ the outrage over the actual appearance of Qur'anic material on coins appears to have dissipated. This is even more pronounced for the debates surrounding the permissibility of buying and selling codices, as well as decorating such codices in silver and gold,⁸⁴ all of which are points of contention in the early period. Yet by the time of both the *Muwattā'* of Mālik and *Kitāb al-Umm* of al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), these activities are taken as common practice.⁸⁵ By and large, such issues cease to be relevant in the following generations precisely because imprinting coins with Qur'anic phrases, as with the purchase of codices, no longer represent innovations, but rather form part of what has become the established use of scripture in the public sphere.⁸⁶

Unifying these issues is the status of the Qur'an as a written object. Several modern scholars have positioned the early juridical aversion to writing prophetic *ḥadīth* as strikingly similar to the dichotomy between the "Written Torah" and the "Oral Torah" in Rabbinic Judaism, where the preference for the oral dissemination of prophetic *ḥadīth* by many early Muslim jurists parallels the non-scriptural tradition of rabbis.⁸⁷ Such a parallel, in large part, posits the Qur'an to be privileged as a written text. This is complicated by the fact that within the early juridical material there are also certain misgivings about the Qur'an in its written

81. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 643.

82. 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 264; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṭahārāt), 1: 106–7; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 642. On Qatāda b. Di'āma al-Sadūsī, see Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 171–73; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5: 326–31.

83. See, for example, the discussion of this issue by al-Namarī, *al-Istidhār*, 5: 21–23; al-Kāsānī (d. 587/1189), *Badā'i' al-ṣanā'i' fi tariḥ al-sharā'i'*, ed. Aḥmad Mukhtār 'Uthmān (Cairo: Zakariyā 'Alī Yūsuf, n.d.), 1: 152; al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū' sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab*, ed. Muḥammad Najīb al-Muṭī'ī (Riyadh: Dār 'Ālam, 2006), 2: 58–59; al-Tūsī (d. 460/1066–67), *al-Istibṣār fīmā ikhtalafa min al-akhbār*, 3rd ed., ed. Ḥasan al-Mūsawī al-Kharsān (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1390/1970–71), 1: 113. According to al-Maqrīzī, Mālik b. Anas is said to have seen no problem with the use of coins imprinted with Qur'anic material, explicitly positioning the issue as an archaic matter: *Shudhūr al-ʿuqūd*, 15.

84. 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-buyū'), 8: 88–90; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-buyū'), 4: 292–94 (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 6: 149; cf. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 547–49, 601–17; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 226–34; al-Nawawī, 117; al-Suyūṭī, 4: 163–64.

85. Mālik, *al-Muwattā'* (kitāb al-buyū'), 31.16. §1329, 235–36 (kitāb al-musāqa), 33.1, §1392, 269–70; al-Shāfi'ī, *Kitāb al-Umm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1980), 2: 45ff., 4: 225, 305. On Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī opinions concerning the theft of Qur'anic codices and its punishment as it relates to property law, see al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūt*, 10: 180–81.

86. Note the divergence of Ḥanbalī positions on the matter of selling the *muṣḥaf*. Although purchasing a Qur'anic codex does not seem to have been contentious generally, there are contradictory opinions about its sale; see Ishāq b. Maṣṣūr al-Kawsaj (d. 251/865–66), *Masā'il Imām Aḥmad*, ed. Šāliḥ b. Muḥammad al-Mazīd (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Madani, 1994), §42, 204, and editorial note, 421; compare with Šāliḥ b. Aḥmad (266/879–80), *Masā'il Imām Aḥmad*, ed. Faḍl al-Rahmān Dīn Muḥammad (Delhi: al-Dār al-'Ilmiyya, 1988), §1081, 2: 402, and editorial note; 'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad (d. 290/903), *Masā'il Imām Aḥmad*, ed. Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1981), 284; and Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Masā'il Imām Aḥmad*, ed. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Muḥammad Amīn Ramj, n.d., reprint of Cairo ed., 1353/1934–35), 191. Also see Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), *al-Mughni*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad 'Alī Shāhīn, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2004), 4: 187–88. For further contextualization, see Christopher Melchert, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 6.2 (2004): 23–24; Ibn Abī Dāwūd relates an account that situates the origin of the sale of Qur'anic codices during the reign of Mu'āwīya, a statement that, given the context, seems aimed at casting a negative light on the practice: 2: 607–8.

87. Michael Cook, "The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam," *Arabica* 44.4 (1997): 498ff.; cf. Gregor Schoeler, "Mündliche Thora und Ḥadīṭ: Überlieferung, Schreibverbot, Redaktion," *Der Islam* 66 (1989): 214–51.

form. And while not as vocally expressed as the injunctions against writing *ḥadīth*, there is a strong current in this juridical discourse that gives preference to the oral transmission of the Qur'an.⁸⁸

A common counsel surrounding these second-century debates directs never to learn *ḥadīth* from a *ṣāhifī*, whose knowledge is based solely on notes, nor to study the Qur'an with a *muṣḥafī*, who knows divine writ only through codices.⁸⁹ To be sure, many injunctions against the written documentation of *ḥadīth* often claim to be based on a desire to disambiguate the sayings of the Prophet from the Qur'an as a sacred text.⁹⁰ We should note that the very controversy over writing *ḥadīth* takes place in a social context in which the Qur'an is already viewed as occupying the space of written scripture. However, the distrust of writing as a vehicle for disseminating sayings of the Prophet appears to build on an even older anxiety toward fixing scripture as a written form.

Such prominent jurists as Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī of Kūfa and Qatāda of Baṣra, along with Mujāhid of Mecca and Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab (d. ca. 94/712) of Medina, express their distaste for an imam leading the prayer services or the night recitations of Ramaḍān by reading from the *muṣḥaf*.⁹¹ Many of these figures explicitly formulate their aversion to using the written text as based on a desire not to imitate the liturgical practices of Jews and Christians (*ahl al-kitāb*).⁹² The authority of the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is invoked in support of this claim, as he is said to have forbidden the use of the codex in leading prayer.⁹³ The practice of reading from the *muṣḥaf* evidently incited a fair amount of contention, as is evident in one account in which an imam leading a prayer service received a kick because he was reading from a codex instead of reciting from memory.⁹⁴ Given the equal number of those who

88. Afsaruddin, "The Excellences of the Qur'an," 20ff.

89. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' l-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1952–53), 1: 31; al-Rāmḥurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāḍil*, 3rd ed., ed. Muḥammad 'Ajjāj al-Khaṭīb (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984), §101, 211; al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥaḍarāt al-udabā'* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1961), 1: 106; al-Ṣafādī, *Taṣḥīḥ al-taṣḥīf wa-tahrīr al-tahrīf*, ed. al-Sayyid al-Sharqāwī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1987), 9; *GdQ*, 3: 145–46; M. J. Kister, ". . . Lā taqra'ū l-qur'āna 'alā l-muṣḥafīyyīn wa-lā taḥmilū l-'ilma 'ani l-ṣaḥafīyyīn . . ." Some Notes on the Transmission of *Ḥadīth*," *JSAI* 22 (1998): 133. See Gregor Schoeler, "Schreiben und Veröffentlichen. Zu Verwendung und Funktion der Schrift in den ersten islamischen Jahrhunderten," *Der Islam* 69 (1992): 30, cf. 37; an outline of his thesis in regard to the oral and textual transmissions of the Qur'an is made in idem, "Writing and Publishing on the Use and Function of Writing in the First Centuries of Islam," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 423–35; and idem, *Écrire et transmettre dans les débuts de l'islam* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 31–41.

90. See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taqyid al-'ilm*, ed. Yūsuf 'Ishsh (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1949), 27ff., 47, 57. On not using quires (*karāris*) for writing *ḥadīth*, which are similar to the arguments used for Qur'anic codices, see Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb 'Ilal wa-ma'rīfat al-rijāl*, ed. Waṣī Allāh 'Abbās (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1988), §256, 1: 217; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 504–5; Kister, "*Lā taqra'ū l-qur'āna*," loc. cit.; Cook, "The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition," 491–92; cf. the early aversion to writing the Qur'an on *karāris*, as related by Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 504.

91. 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 278; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 125; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 652ff. On Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab, see Ibn Sa'īd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 5: 89–109; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 2: 689–92; cf. Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Āthār*, ed. Abū l-Wafā' (Hyderabad: Lajnat Iḥyā' al-Ma'ārif al-Nu'māniyya, 1355/1936–37), 34.

92. 'Abd al-Razzāq reports on the authority of Qatāda, followed by Nawf al-Bikālī, son of the wife of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, how the Jews would refuse to recite the Torah by heart, which stands in contradistinction to the oral recitation by Muslims: *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2: 236–38, apud Kister, "*Lā taqra'ū l-qur'āna*," 152. See Abū Ḥanīfa's opinion against reciting directly from the *muṣḥaf* for the performance of ritual prayer, along with how both Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad al-Shaybānī distance themselves from this position: al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ*, 1: 360–61.

93. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 651.

94. *Ibid.*, 2: 655; Ibn Abī Shayba, 2: 125.

advocated the practice of reading from the text, such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ʿAṭāʾ, Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, and even ʿĀʾisha, it is evident that a deeper series of values is at play.⁹⁵

The internal logic of these early inquiries into the status and place of scripture is predicated on the existence of a textual form of the Qur'an. Without the presupposition of a physical articulation of scripture, none of these controversies could be meaningful. In other words, in order to understand the broader significance of these debates, we must posit a society in which the *muṣḥaf* is itself already an object in use, whatever the text therein might have contained. Thus the strongly expressed aversion by the likes of Mujāhid and Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī to placing a *muṣḥaf* in the *qibla* of a mosque,⁹⁶ only makes sense in a world where such codices already have potential symbolic meaning.

While the discursive universe of this early juridical material presupposes the existence of scripture in a written form, such controversies over the ritual and symbolic implications of the Qur'an as text suggest a society in which the value and function of scripture is far from established. The most evident example of this is the tension surrounding the actual writing of the *muṣḥaf*. Before delving any deeper, we should recall that according to tradition the ʿUthmānic *textus receptus* only established the *rasm* of the Qur'an, that is, the bare consonantal form of the letters, and did not actually vocalize the text itself.⁹⁷ A range of *qirāʾāt* or readings based upon the ʿUthmānic text emerged, as, for example, the famous seven readings that Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936) "canonized," all of which developed in the course of the second/eighth century.⁹⁸ Yet, other readings, such as those of Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652–53) and Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. ca. 35/656), not based upon the consonantal form or order of the ʿUthmānic redaction, also appear in the Muslim tradition of the dissemination of the Qur'an.⁹⁹

It is against the backdrop of a non-vocalized text where the question of distinguishing consonants or vowels orthographically by adding diacritical marks (*nuqaṭ*) and vocalizations (*tashkīl*) appears as an issue of juridical concern. As with other restrictions on the textual character of the Qur'an, this issue is framed as not limited to one particular region. Muḥammad b. Sīrīn and Qatāda, both of Baṣra, along with Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī of Kūfa, express their displeasure of adding vocalizations and diacritical marks to the Qur'an.¹⁰⁰ Even more numerous are the scholars who object to incorporating any additional elements within the Qur'an that could in any way facilitate reading, such as sura headings, divisions between suras (*tafṣīl*), and medallions marking the divisions of ten verses (*taʿshīr*). Thus we hear that

95. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 278–79; Ibn Abi Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 124, cf. 2: 241–42; idem (kitāb faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān), 6: 143–44; Ibn Abi Dāwūd, 2: 656–61. On later opinions concerning the value of reciting directly from the *muṣḥaf*, see al-Rāzī, 144–46; al-Nawawī, 59–60; al-Zarkashī, *Burhān fi ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya), 1: 313–15; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 304–5.

96. Ibn Abi Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 1: 398; cf. Ibn Abi Dāwūd, 2: 618–21.

97. Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī (d. 444/1053), *al-Muḥkam fi nuqaṭ al-maṣāḥif*, 2nd ed., ed. ʿIzzat Ḥasan (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 3ff.; Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *Muqaddīmat al-jāmiʿ al-muḥarrar*, in *Two Muqaddīmas to the Qurʾanic Sciences*, ed. Arthur Jeffery (Miṣr: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1954), 276, apud Schoeler, "Schreiben und Veröffentlichungen," 31.

98. See Christopher Melchert, "Ibn Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qurʾanic Readings," *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000): 5–22.

99. Ibn Abi Dāwūd, 1: 283ff.; Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 41–43; al-Yaʿqūbī (d. ca. 292/905), *al-Taʾrīkh*, ed. ʿAbd al-Amīr Muḥannā (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-ʿĀlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1993), 1: 352–54, 362–63; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 181–83; cf. *GdQ*, 2: 30–47.

100. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣiyam), 3: 249; Ibn Abi Shayba (kitāb faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān), 6: 150; Abū ʿUbayd, 239–40; Ibn Abi Dāwūd, 2: 524–25; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 235; al-Dānī, 10–11. Ibn Ḍurays records Ibn Sīrīn in favor of a vocalized codex, with Ibrāhīm strongly opposed, 41–42; for more voices in favor, see Ibn Wahb, *Jāmiʿ*, 3: 41.

such scholars as ‘Aṭā’ and Mujāhid, both of Mecca, and Abū Razīn of Kūfa were averse to adding further textual elements into the Qur’an.¹⁰¹

Repeated throughout these discussions is the command to remove from the Qur’an all extraneous textual additions. The notion of stripping away (*tajrīd*) such elements as vocalizing markers and diacritical points is itself semantically linked with the verb *tajarrada li-*, which comes to signify, by the time of Ibn Mujāhid, the act of specializing in a particular recitation of the Qur’an.¹⁰² This is of particular significance, for without vocalization and diacriticals the *muṣḥaf* would function merely as a memory aid.¹⁰³ Gregor Schoeler has argued that these early codices function as draft copies (ὑπομνήματα) meant to be accompanied by an oral transmission or “reading” that would fix the meaning of the consonantal form.¹⁰⁴ Evidently at stake in these early debates are the status and function of the Qur’an reciter (*qārī*’, pl. *qurrā*’) in preserving and transmitting scripture.¹⁰⁵

According to Muslim accounts, the earliest manuscripts of the Qur’an were written with little in the way of vowel points or diacritical signs, containing primarily the consonantal *ductus* (*rasm*) of the text.¹⁰⁶ We know this to be the case with the early “Ḥijāzī” codices that have survived the vicissitudes of time.¹⁰⁷ Also according to autochthonous Muslim sources, the practice of adding diacritics and vocalization developed throughout the course of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries.¹⁰⁸ The various accounts detailing when the practice of vocalizing manuscripts began often center on Baṣra, during the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik.¹⁰⁹ We need not, however, detain ourselves with the very contentious issue of dating early

101. ‘Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣiyam), 4: 249; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 240–41; idem (kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān), 6: 149–50; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 514–28; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 236–38. On the use and evolution of divisions between suras and markers of verses, see Adolf Grohmann, “The Problem of Dating Early Qur’āns,” *Der Islam* 33.3 (1958): 228ff.

102. Melchert, “Ibn Mujāhid,” 13–14. When relating the accounts of how Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī say *jarridū l-Qur’ān*, Abū ‘Ubayd puzzles over how this could mean strip the Qur’an of all additional markers, suggesting that they mean that one should only read from the Qur’an and not from the books of the *ahl al-kitāb*: *Gharīb al-ḥadīth* (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Majlis Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1964–67), 4: 46–49; cf. al-Zarkashī, 1: 324–25; al-Suyūṭī, 4: 162.

103. Alan Jones, “The Word Made Visible, Arabic Script and the Committing of the Qur’ān to Writing,” in *Texts, Documents, and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards*, ed. C. F. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 4; Fred Leemhuis, “From Palm Leaves to the Internet,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’ān*, ed. Jane McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006): 146; Donner, “The Qur’ān in Recent Scholarship,” 41.

104. Schoeler, “Schreiben und Veröffentlichen,” 30.

105. Cf. E. Beck, “Arabiyya, Sunna und ‘Āmma in der Koranlesung des zweiten Jahrhunderts,” *Orientalia* 15 (1946): 208, apud Schoeler, “Schreiben und Veröffentlichen,” 26.

106. Cf. al-Dānī, *al-Muḥkam*, 2ff.; al-Ṣafādī, *Taṣḥīḥ al-taṣḥīf*, 13–14.

107. See Gerd Puin, “Methods of Research on Qur’anic Manuscripts: A Few Ideas,” *Maṣāḥif Ṣan‘ā’* (Kuwait: Kuwait National Museum, 1985), 14–15, and accompanying figures, particularly IN:00-25, IN:00-27, IN:00-29; see the plates in *GdQ*, 3: t. 1–8; Yasin Dutton, “An Early *Muṣḥaf* According to the Reading of Ibn ‘Āmir,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 3.1 (2001): 71–89.

108. al-Dānī, op. cit.; *GdQ*, 3: 257–69. Dots were added to Qur’anic codices to highlight variant readings (*qirā’āt*), see Yasin Dutton, “Red Dots, Green Dots, Yellow Dots and Blue: Some Reflections on the Vocalisation of Early Qur’anic Manuscripts,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 1.1 (1999): 115–40; 2.1 (2000): 1–24.

109. Al-Dānī describes how “ahl al-Madīna” took the process of vocalization from “ahl al-Baṣra,” 6–8. He gives various accounts of those who first pointed Qur’anic codices, focusing on Abū l-Aswād al-Du‘alī (d. 69/688–89), Naṣr b. ‘Āṣm al-Laythī (d. 89/707), and Yahyā b. Ya‘mur (d. 129/746), all associated with Baṣra, 3–7; cf. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 521; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *Muqaddimat*, 276. According to Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), Abū l-Aswād al-Du‘alī merely revitalized an older tradition of vocalizing the Arabic script, *al-Ṣāḥibī fī fiqh al-luḡa al-‘arabiyya*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Maṭba‘at ‘Isā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1977), 13; cf. al-Zarkashī, 1: 178; al-Suyūṭī, 4: 160–61. See *GdQ*, 3: 261–64; Régis Blachère, *Introduction au coran*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Besson, 1959), 78ff.

Qur'anic manuscripts.¹¹⁰ Rather, there is sufficient evidence for such an outline with the example of the dated Qur'anic inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock, executed in the year 72/691–92 during the reign of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik.¹¹¹ Though in the form of monumental calligraphy, as with the earliest Qur'anic manuscripts, diacritical marks are almost entirely lacking from these inscriptions.¹¹²

Yet a diacritical system for the Arabic script is not unknown in the first/seventh century. Two papyrus fragments, both dated 22/643, provide evidence for the early use of diacritics to disambiguate graphemes.¹¹³ The fact that early Qur'an manuscripts seem to be intentionally not pointed speaks to the pivotal part played by Qur'an reciters in the oral transmission and dissemination of scripture, where the *muṣḥaf* stands in as an incomplete simulacrum of the recitation. This is an issue that Ibn Mas'ūd, famed *qāri'* of Medina and Kūfa, is said to have stressed with his remark that the best decoration (*zayn*) for the *muṣḥaf* is its correct recitation (*tilāwatuhu bi-l-ḥaqq*).¹¹⁴

It has been argued that a *scriptio plena* would have threatened the very centrality and influence of the Qur'an reciters.¹¹⁵ Assuming, as John Wansbrough suggests, that the function of the warrior-*qurrā'* in society reflected a liturgical and cultic use of scripture,¹¹⁶ it stands to reason that the textual codification of the Qur'an could have limited their political/charismatic control of scripture and that the stories of the 'Uthmānic recension, and the concomitant opposition to it, have broader social and political implications concerning the controlled dissemination of the Qur'an.¹¹⁷ Whatever the case may have been, the result of

110. See Grohmann, "The Problem of Dating Early Qur'āns," loc. cit.; Puin, "Methods of Research on Qur'anic Manuscripts," loc. cit.

111. See Estelle Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'ān," *JAOS* 118.1 (1998): 1–14.

112. Oleg Grabar, *The Dome of the Rock* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), 90ff., figs. 27–30, 33, 39.

113. See Yusuf Ragib, "L'écriture des papyrus arabes aux premiers siècles de l'Islam," *Les premières écritures islamiques—Revue du monde musulman et de la méditerranée* 58 (1991): 14–29, apud Efim Rezvan, "The Qur'ān and Its World. VI. Emergence of the Canon, the Struggle for Uniformity," *Manuscripta orientalia* 4 (1998): 16. As to whether such early diacritical marks are contemporaneous to the fragments themselves, see Grohmann, "The Problem of Dating Early Qur'āns," 226–27; also, idem, *From the World of Arabic Papyri* (Cairo: al-Maaref Press, 1952), 82–87, plate XIa; Alan Jones, "The Dotting of a Script and the Dating of an Era: The Strange Neglect of PERF 558," *Islamic Culture* 72.4 (1998): 95–103.

114. 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣiyam), 4: 250; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 6: 149; Abū 'Ubayd, 242; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 545; Ibn Ḍurays, 43; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 239; al-Suyūfī, 4: 159. This statement is meant to echo Q 2:121 (*yatlūnahu ḥaqqā tilāwatihi*).

115. Blachère describes the *qurrā'* as posing the greatest obstacle to the unification of the vulgate: *Introduction*, 106; see also Rezvan, "The Qur'ān and Its World," 16. For an overview of the debates concerning the identity of the *qurrā'*, see Mustafa Shah, "The Quest for the Origins of the *Qurrā'* in the Classical Islamic Tradition," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 7.2 (2005): 1–35. See also Martin Hinds, "Kūfan Political Alignments and Their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century AD," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2.4 (1971): 346–67.

116. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*, 69. A parallel can be made between the cultic function of the *qurrā'* and the role played by the pre-Islamic *kuhḥān* in the context of the battlefield, see Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe* (Paris: Sindbad, 1987), 119–20. Régis Blachère suggests that by the reign of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib the term *qāri'* had taken on an ascetic connotation, signifying a *vir religiosus* (*zāhid*): *Introduction au coran*, 103ff. For the political role played by the *qurrā'* in Baṣra and Kūfa, supporting the insurrection against the Umayyad general al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, see Redwan Sayed, *Die Revolte des Ibn al-Aṣ'at und die Koranleser* (Freiburg: Schwarz, 1977), 277ff., 348ff.

117. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul*, ser. 1: 2952, apud Schoeler, "Schreiben und Veröffentlichung," 25. For further contextualization, see Hawting, "The Significance of the Slogan," 463; and Jeffery, *Materials for the History*, 8.

a *textus receptus* is to bind scripture into a canonical form, effectively closing the polysemous expanse of individual recitations and arrangements.

In order to understand these early debates, we must envision a social milieu where the *muṣḥaf* is an established part of reality, but its existence is still relatively novel and its ritual boundaries and symbolic significance are yet to be fully defined. Let us recall the individual case of Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, the famed jurist of Kūfa, who was renowned for his transmission of material from the Qurʾan reciter Ibn Masʿūd, who in turn is remembered as a staunch opponent of the ʿUthmānic redaction.¹¹⁸ Of the diverse legal opinions that surround Ibrāhīm concerning the significance of scripture in a written form, the following details appear: he loathed touching the *muṣḥaf* or dirhams written with Qurʾanic verses in a state of minor impurity,¹¹⁹ while in contrast he argued that there was no problem reciting from the Qurʾan in such a state;¹²⁰ furthermore, he was a staunch opponent of adding diacritical marks and vocalizations to the *muṣḥaf*, reciting from it while leading prayer, or placing it in the *qibla*. He is also remembered not only to have been in opposition to writing *ḥadīth*, but to writing in general.¹²¹

From these opinions, which span a wide range of juridical issues, a coherent pattern emerges that suggests his preference for the oral dissemination of the Qurʾan. It is in this light that his transmission of Ibn Masʿūd’s comments on the fluidity of recitation is all the more revealing:

The mistake is not reciting one section of the Qurʾan in another section, nor finishing the verse “forgiving, compassionate” (*ghafūr raḥīm*) with “knowing, wise” (*ʿalim ḥakīm*) or with “powerful, wise” (*ʿazīz ḥakīm*); rather the mistake is reciting that which is not in the Qurʾan or finishing a verse of compassion (*raḥma*) with a verse of punishment (*ʿadhāb*).¹²²

This comment about mixing and matching as long as one stays within the parameters of the Qurʾanic intent is, however, often set alongside the case of the early companion and Qurʾan reciter Bilād (d. ca. 20/641), who is thought to have enjoyed reciting parts of various suras together.¹²³ This kind of rearranging suggests a notion of reciting scripture that resists a

118. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 1: 179–92, with further references given by the editor; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrikh*, 2: 66–67.

119. On his opinion of touching the *muṣḥaf*, see Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 142.

120. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ḥayḍ), 1: 262.

121. Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 6: 279–80; on Ibrāhīm’s “retraction” of this position, see Cook, “The Opponents of Writing,” 455–58.

122. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (*faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*), 3: 222; Abū ʿUbayd, 213–14. On the issue of order, Abū ʿUbayd also recounts a statement made by Ibn Masʿūd permitting opening a recitation of one sura and then moving on to another without finishing the first, 96–97, quoted in al-Suyūṭī, 1: 308–9. ʿAbd al-Razzāq relates a parallel exchange between the famed *qārī* Ubayy b. Kaʿb and the Prophet concerning the use of variant readings. Here the Prophet uses similar language as Ibn Masʿūd, permitting such substitutions as long as not substituting a verse of compassion (*raḥma*) for a verse of punishment (*ʿadhāb*). Thus it is possible to recite “knowing, hearing” (*samiʿ ʿalīm*) instead of “powerful, wise” (*ʿazīz ḥakīm*). Since, as the Prophet concludes, God is indeed “knowing, hearing,” there is no distortion in the meaning: (kitāb al-jāmiʿ), 10: 216. The movement from a Companion to the Prophet in this saying suggests an attempt at legitimizing variant readings; cf. Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān), 6: 138; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* (kitāb al-witr), 8.22, §1479, 1: 252; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-ʿAṭṭār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 1: 34, 38. See also Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§8390, 9678, 14: 120, 15: 424 and the accompanying editorial notes, 14: 120–21, cf. §9678. Al-Ṭaḥāwī comments on this *ḥadīth* and others similar to it: *Sharḥ Mushkil al-āthār* (bāb . . . anzāla l-qurʾāna ʿalā sabʿati aḥurfīn), ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Shāhīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), §§3374, 3386, 3391, 4: 127, 131–32; al-Zarkashī situates this prophetic *ḥadīth* in a debate between Ubayy and Ibn Masʿūd over proper recitation: 1: 158; also al-Suyūṭī, 1: 134; cf. Burton, *The Collection of the Qurʾān*, 148–52.

123. He likened it to mixing “the good with the good” (*al-tayyib bi-l-tayyib*), a practice the Prophet is said to have discouraged: ʿAbd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 326–27; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān), 6: 150–51;

standard codification in written form. Ibn Mas'ūd's statement can be coupled with similar sentiments that privilege the oral transmission of the Qur'an based on meaning (*riwāya bi-l-ma'nā*) rather than verbatim dictation (*riwāya bi-l-lafz*).¹²⁴ And while such a statement presupposes an established corpus and meaning of Qur'anic material, it also suggests a powerful role accorded to the individual process of recitation. Such a fluid interaction with scripture stands to favor the flexibility of oral transmission over the rigidity of a definitive canonical text, which would necessarily fix both the arrangement and the form.

Although rearranging the order and words of the Qur'an gave rise to juridical controversy, such practices themselves speak to a radically different way of approaching scripture in the earliest recordable periods of Islamic history. This flexibility may help us to better contextualize the codicological evidence, which reveals two major forms of divergence from the *textus receptus* present in several early Qur'anic manuscripts, namely, variant readings not attested to by Muslim tradition and sura arrangements that do not correspond to established sequences.¹²⁵

While these accounts do not lend further evidence to the traditional Muslim narratives of the codification, they also do not detract from them. For that matter, it is not impossible to suppose, from the deeply rooted oral and cultic components suggested by these sources, that an even more archaic and polysemous core layer of liturgical material circulated both orally and textually. Nonetheless, already in the beginning of the second/eighth century jurists were wrestling with the reality of scripture in a written form and trying to work out how such writing impacted the broader ritual and symbolic network that they were in the process of constructing. While we may be led to question the authenticity underlying any of the aforementioned juridical opinions, taken in the aggregate the range of positions—many of which are abandoned in the preceding generations—reflects an early anxiety over the place and function of scripture as a textual object bound to the material realm. The codicological, numismatic, and archaeological evidence lends further credence to our claim that this information recorded in the third/ninth century silhouettes an actual series of evolving debate surrounding the textual and oral roles of scripture, dating back to the end of the first/seventh century and continuing on into the next.

5. INGESTING THE QUR'AN

The concern over the written expression of scripture in the formative stages of Islam forms part of an even more archaic anxiety. In Rabbinic Judaism scriptures themselves are considered polluting, as explicitly expressed, for example, in the *Mishna* (Yad. 3:4–5, 4:5–6)

Abū 'Ubayd, 95–96; al-Zarkashī, 1: 318; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 308–9. For the topic of reading in reverse order (*mankūs*), see Abū 'Ubayd, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, 4: 103–5; idem, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 56; 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣiyam), 4: 250; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 208.

124. 'Abd al-Razzāq follows Ibn Mas'ūd's statement with an account also related through Ibrāhīm of a man who was chided by Abū l-Dardā' (d. ca. 32/652) for substituting “. . . the food of the sinful!” (*ta'ām al-athim*) (Q 44:44) with “the food of the orphan” (*ta'ām al-yatim*), suggesting an example of the kind of switching that would not be appropriate: (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 3: 222. Ibn Wahb ascribes this account to Ibn Mas'ūd, not Abū l-Dardā': *Jāmi'*, 3: 54–55; likewise, Abū 'Ubayd, 183; quoted in al-Zarkashī, 1: 158–59, and in al-Suyūṭī, 1: 135. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī ascribes this account to Ibn 'Abbās, stating that he permitted reciting the meaning of the Qur'an in lieu of the actual words: *Muḥāḍarāt*, 4: 434. On *riwāya bi-l-ma'nā* and *riwāya bi-l-lafz* in relation to the oral transmission of the Qur'an, see Schoeler, “Schreiben und Veröffentlichen,” 25–26; cf. Melchert, “Ibn Mujāhid,” 17–18.

125. Gerd Puin, “Observations on Early Qur'ān Manuscripts in Ṣan'ā',” in *The Qur'ān as Text*, ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: Brill, 1995): 107–11, apud Rezvan, “The Qur'ān and Its World,” 23.

and the *Tosefta* (Yad. 2:11–13; 2:19).¹²⁶ The impurity of writing has an ancient pedigree—as attested by Vedic traditions¹²⁷—which is distinct from purely an emphasis on orality, as with Zoroastrian attitudes concerning the oral preservation of the Avesta.¹²⁸ To be sure, the injunction against touching the Qurʾan identifies the human body as the agent of pollution and not the scripture itself, an inversion of, say, the respective Halakhic and Vedic models. However, already in the beginning of the second/eighth century we can identify a strong movement toward the veneration of the physical Qurʾan. It is only in a social context in which such a process of sanctification is taking place that injunctions against perfuming the *muṣḥaf* and beautifying it with adornments are meaningful.¹²⁹

One of the central concerns surrounding early Muslim narratives on the collection of the Qurʾan is the question to what extent the written form of the text reflects the original divine revelation to Muḥammad.¹³⁰ According to Muslim accounts, a bifurcation between oral and written lines of transmission, concomitant with the variant readings—themselves expressed both orally and textually¹³¹—characterizes the early dissemination of the Qurʾan. The dichotomous relationship between the oral and the textual is further accentuated in a leitmotif that runs throughout the Qurʾan concerning a divine *Urschrift*, referred to as the original scripture (*umm al-kitāb*, Q 43:4), or a hidden scripture (*kitāb makhnūn*, Q 56:78), preserved upon a heavenly tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*, Q 85:22).¹³² This heavenly archetype of scripture, which is very much akin to the pre-existent Torah of Judaism¹³³ and other similar traditions that stretch across the ancient religious landscapes of Mesopotamia,¹³⁴ stands in contrast to the explicit oral character of the revelation to Muḥammad as presented in the Qurʾan (cf. Q 4:153, 6:7).¹³⁵

Orality forms a dominant theme in the revelation to Muḥammad. As has often been noted by modern Western scholars, the word *qurʾān* itself signifies in a primary sense “reading” or “recitation,” etymologically related to the Syriac *qeryānā* “chant” or “invocation.”¹³⁶

126. See Jacob Neusner, *The Halakhah: An Encyclopaedia of the Law of Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 5: 426–27.

127. See Thomas Coburn, “‘Scripture’ in India: Towards a Typology of the Word in Hindu Life,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52 (1984): 435–59; C. Mackenzie Brown, “Purāṇa as Scripture: From Sound to Image of the Holy Word in Hindu Tradition,” *History of Religions* 26.1 (1986): 68–86; Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, 70–74.

128. See Geo Widengren, “Der avestische Kanon,” in idem, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965), 245–59; H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), 149–76; M. Stausberg, “The Invention of a Canon: The Case of Zoroastrianism,” in *Canonization and Decanonization*, ed. A. van der Kooij et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 257–77; *EIr*, s.v. Avesta.

129. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-adab*), 5: 308; Abū ‘Ubayd, 241; Ibn Ḍurays, 41; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 549.

130. See Hossein Modarressi, “Early Debates on the Integrity of the Qurʾān,” *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993): 5–39; Burton, *The Collection of the Qurʾān*, 117ff.

131. See Dutton, “Red Dots, Green Dots,” *passim*.

132. al-Zarkashī, 1: 194–97; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 143–48. For the larger cosmographical significance of the divine tablet in salvation history, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Futayḥ (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1992), 1: 13–14.

133. See Arthur Jeffery, *The Qurʾān as Scripture* (New York: R. F. Moore Co., 1952), 14–17; Francis Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), 2: 72–80; Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–97), 4: 626.

134. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, 50–51.

135. See Madigan, *The Qurʾān’s Self-Image*, 53–77.

136. *GdQ*, 1: 33–34; Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 233–34; Schoeler, “Schreiben und Veröffentlichen,” 20; William Graham, “The Earliest Meaning of ‘Qurʾān,’” *Die Welt des Islams* 23 (1984): 361–77. For *qurʾān* as “recitation” in traditional Muslim etymologies, along with other explanations, see al-Zarkashī, 1: 194–95; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 146–47.

The “recitation” is not a book in any immediate sense, as, according to early Muslim accounts, the textual Qur'an came into existence as a *muṣḥaf* only when it was organized and codified after the Prophet's death.¹³⁷ The various *qirā'āt* themselves affirm the continued importance of orality. The early stress on the melodic and artful forms of recitation (*tazyīn al-ṣawī*),¹³⁸ which develop into the elaborate and sophisticated traditions of formal Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*, *tartīl*), speaks to the lasting importance of the oral dimensions of scripture. The practice of weeping (*bukā'*) while reciting, a tradition supported throughout the *ḥadīth* literature by the *sunna* of the Prophet,¹³⁹ highlights the devotional engagement with scripture through the emotive power of the spoken word.

The recitation of the Qur'an as divine speech (*kalām/logos*) passing through the believer suggests a primacy to oral articulation. Yet despite any early aversion toward writing scripture, the oral transmission of the Qur'an never came to displace the textual form. Thus, for example, while Abū 'Ubayd lists a wide range of benefits obtained by reciting the Qur'an from memory, he also describes how it is meritorious to do so by reading directly from the *muṣḥaf*.¹⁴⁰ With the surrounding ritual accoutrements already in play during the second/eighth century, such as the cover (*khabī'a*) and the cushion (*sāda*) for the *muṣḥaf*, it is not surprising that later sources detail a complete sanctification of the codex—venerated by reading with a pointer (*'ūd*) rather than touching it directly¹⁴¹—as the written form comes to represent the material trace of the divine, to be kissed, perfumed, and disposed of by only special means, such as burning, burying, or erasing with water.¹⁴²

One of the most prominent sites to trace the lasting importance of the Qur'an as text is in the realm of divinatory and theurgical practices, where both oral and textual articulations are to be observed. The use of Qur'anic incantations (*ruqya*, pl. *ruqan*) based on specific suras, particularly *al-Fātiḥa*, *al-Iklāṣ*, and the last two suras (i.e., *al-mu'awwadhatān*), is a practice ascribed to the Prophet throughout the *ḥadīth* literature.¹⁴³ Many of the works treating *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* address in some way the use of oral incantations,¹⁴⁴ which are also standard in the exposition of prophetic medicine (*al-ṭibb al-nabawī*).¹⁴⁵ However, such deployments of the Qur'an are not limited to speech-acts alone. Given the unique importance of scripture, it is not surprising to see the use of writing from an early period in a wide

137. al-Zarkashī, 1: 167ff.; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 164ff.; al-Nawawī, 111.

138. 'Abd al-Razzāq (kitāb al-ṣalāt), 2: 319–23; Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 6: 119–20; Abū 'Ubayd, 75–81; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§18494, 18516, 18616, 18704, 18709, 30: 451, and accompanying notes, 479, 580, 633, 636; al-Nasā'ī, 109–13; al-Rāzī, 64–65; al-Nawawī, 62–67; al-Dārimī, *Sunan* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 23.34, 344–47; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 66.31, 3: 1059; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 302–3.

139. Abū 'Ubayd, 63–66; al-Nasā'ī, 128; al-Nawawī, 52–53; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān), 66.35, 3: 1060; Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Āḥār*, 46; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 301–2; cf. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §16312, 26: 238–39.

140. Abū 'Ubayd, 46–47; al-Nawawī, 59–60; al-Zarkashī, 1: 313–15; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 304–5.

141. al-Ājjurī (d. 360/970–71), *Akhlāq ḥamalat al-Qur'ān*, ed. Fawwāz Aḥmad Zarmalī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), 75; al-Nawawī, 114.

142. Abū 'Ubayd, 241; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 2: 665–66. Al-Zarkashī describes the opinions of various legal scholars concerning the proper disposal of the *muṣḥaf*, 1: 323; on kissing, 1: 324; similarly, al-Suyūṭī on kissing, perfuming, and proper disposal, 4: 164–65; for a later juridical view on the issue of how to dispose of an old *muṣḥaf*, see J. Sadan, “Genizah and Genizah-Like Practices in Islamic and Jewish Traditions: Customs Concerning the Disposal of Worn-Out Sacred Books in the Middle Ages, According to an Ottoman Source,” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 43 (1986): 36–58.

143. Ibn Abī Shayba (kitāb al-ṭibb), 5: 41–49; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 311–13; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb al-ṭibb), 72.32–42, 3: 1187–90; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (kitāb al-salām), 40.16, 19–23, 2: 948–53; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* (kitāb al-ṭibb), 29.18–19; 2: 654–57; Ibn Māja, *Sunan* (kitāb al-ṭibb), 32.33–35, 509–10.

144. Abū 'Ubayd, 229–33; al-Mustaghfirī, 1: 311–13; al-Nawawī, 103–4.

145. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṭibb al-nabawī*, ed. 'Ādil Azharī et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Fatḥ, 1957), 136–47.

array of practices, as with the making of amulets (*tamā'im/ta'awīdh*), talismans (*tilsam*, pl. *ṭalāsīm* < τέλεσμα), magic squares (*wafq*), and traditions of bibliomancy (*fa'l al-Qur'an*).¹⁴⁶ Such practices of veneration of the textual form of the Qur'an have an ancient pedigree, building upon widespread traditions of sympathetic magic throughout ancient Egypt, Greece, and Mesopotamia.

The Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) in his exposition on prophetic medicine draws authority for amulets written with Qur'anic verses from the precedents of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who are both said to have employed them.¹⁴⁷ He further argues that the act of writing verses of the Qur'an in ink, immersing the paper in water, and then drinking the water, was also a tradition accepted by many in the early community (*salaf*).¹⁴⁸ Similarly, in his treatment of *faḍā'il al-Qur'an*, the Shāfi'ī jurist al-Nawawī details the practice of writing the Qur'an on a vessel (*inā'*) which is then filled with water to be digested by a person in ill health (*marīḍ*).¹⁴⁹ Al-Nawawī draws support for this practice from the likes of such early figures as Mujāhid and al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774). Furthermore, he details how the Shāfi'ī scholars al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn al-Marwazī (d. 462/1069) and al-Baghawī (d. ca. 516/1122) saw no problem in writing the Qur'an on foods, such as sweets (*ḥalwā*), to be ingested.¹⁵⁰

Expectedly, such practices are ubiquitous in the material treating the charismatic and medicinal qualities (*khawāṣṣ*) of the Qur'an.¹⁵¹ Ibn al-Khashshāb (d. ca. 650/1252), for example, opens his treatise on the subject with a recipe, supposedly dictated by the Prophet himself, which details the process of writing on a bowl (*taṣht*) a specified series of Qur'anic verses in saffron, which are to be dissolved in water, preferably from the Zamzam spring in Mecca, and then imbibed.¹⁵² These engagements with scripture invest supernatural power in the written form of the Qur'an and suggest a literal rendering of such prophetic sayings as "the Qur'an is the best medicine"¹⁵³ and "a man without any bit of the Qur'an in his belly (*jawf*) is like a broken-down house."¹⁵⁴

While there is ample evidence to document the accepted use of these talismanic practices,¹⁵⁵ the issue of ingesting Qur'anic verses, as al-Zarkashī outlines, raises a series of juridical concerns, foremost regarding the implications of polluting the Qur'an as it passes through the digestive system (*al-najāsa al-bāṭina*).¹⁵⁶ Such debates themselves have their

146. Fahd, *La divination*, 180ff.; *EQ*, s.v. Amulets; *El'*, s.v. Waḳf.

147. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṭibb al-nabawī*, 277–78.

148. *Ibid.*

149. al-Nawawī, 103.

150. al-Nawawī, 103, 112; *idem*, *al-Majmū'* 2: 60, 138; cf. al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1999), 3: 30–36, 4: 46–50.

151. Fahd, *La divination*, 241–43; al-Suyūṭī, 4: 137–44.

152. Ibn al-Khashshāb, *al-Durr al-naẓīm fī faḍā'il al-Qur'an al-'aẓīm*, Mawlana Azad Library, Aligarh, India, Ḥabīb Ganj, MS 12/214, fols. 4a–b. See Ḥajjī Khalifa, 1: 736; *GAS*, 1: 414; C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (London: Luzac and Co., 1927), 1.1: 53. See the abridgement of this work ascribed to 'Abd Allāh b. As'ad al-Yāfi'ī (d. 768/1367), *al-Durr al-naẓīm fī khawāṣṣ al-Qur'an al-'aẓīm*, ed. Muḥsin 'Aqil (Beirut: Dār al-Rasūl al-Akram, 1999), 11; cf. al-Suyūṭī, 4: 137; *GAS*, 2: 226–28. Similar recipes are found throughout al-Būnī (d. 622/1225), *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Thaqāfiyya, n.d.), 218, and *passim*.

153. Ibn Māja, *Sunan* (kitāb al-ṭibb), 32.28, §3230, 408. On the Qur'an as medicine, see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṭibb al-nabawī*, 272–73.

154. al-Dārimī, *Sunan* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'an), 23.1, §3302, 1: 302; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* (kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'an), 41.18, §3161, 2: 734; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §1947, 3: 417.

155. See *EQ*, s.v. Popular and Talismanic Uses of the Qur'an.

156. al-Zarkashī, 1: 322–23; al-Suyūṭī, 1: 144.

origin in the early stages of Islamic juridical thought. Given the antiquity of such theurgical traditions, many of which predate Islam,¹⁵⁷ it is not surprising to find early inquiries into the charismatic relationship of scripture and the body. The tradition of bowls marked with magic formulae, for example, has roots in the ancient religious practices of Mesopotamia. The archaeological evidence reveals the widespread use of magic bowls with Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, and Mandaic inscriptions, preceding and continuing past the advent of Islam.¹⁵⁸ The adaptation of Qur'anic material onto drinking vessels itself hearkens back to deeply ingrained attitudes toward the cosmic power of writing.¹⁵⁹

In his treatment of the topic of medicine (*ṭibb*), Ibn Abī Shayba details in his *Muṣannaḥ* a broad range of early juridical debates concerning the talismanic use of the Qur'an—thus the case of how Muḡhira b. al-Miqṣām al-Ḍabbī of Kūfa (d. ca. 136/753) attached to his forearm a charm containing the following verse, “O fire, be coolness and peace for Ibrāhīm” (Q 21:69) when suffering from a fever.¹⁶⁰ We learn that such practices of attaching (*ta'liq*) amulets and charms written with Qur'anic verses to the body found favor with the likes of Mujāhid of Mecca, Muḡammad b. Sīrīn of Baṣra, and the Shī'ī Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (d. ca. 95/713).¹⁶¹ This is a position further supported by 'Aṭā' of Mecca, who is said to have never heard of any objection to the practice until asked about the issue by the people of Baṣra and Kūfa (*ahl al-Īrāq*).¹⁶²

In contrast, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, both associated with Kūfa, are said to have stood in opposition to such uses of scripture, a sentiment furthered by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who argued that these practices risked reducing the Qur'an into a mere series of incantations (*a-ja'altum kitāba llāhi ruḡan?*).¹⁶³ The activity of dissolving written pieces of the Qur'an in water and digesting them is also discussed. While the authority of such figures as 'Ā'isha and Ibn 'Abbās is drawn on for support, Muḡammad b. Sīrīn, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī all come out against the practice.¹⁶⁴ In contrast, Abū 'Ubayd, when detailing this issue in *Faḏā'il al-Qur'ān*, objects to those who oppose using the Qur'an in oral and written incantations, arguing that great benefits can be gained by seeking the intercession (*istishfā'*) of the Qur'an and grasping onto its charismatic power (*al-iltimās bi-barakatihī*).¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the position expressed by Abū 'Ubayd, al-Nawawī, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and others

157. On Islamic uses of amulets and their relationship to other traditions, see E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1930), 33–81; on block print amulets of Qur'anic material, see Karl Schaefer, *Enigmatic Charms: Medieval Arabic Block Printed Amulets in American and European Libraries and Museums* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 7–20; also Mark Muehlhaeusler, “Eight Arabic Block Prints from the Collection of Aziz S. Atiya,” *Arabica* 55 (2008): 528–82.

158. Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *JAOS* 85 (1965): 511–23; Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987), 13–38.

159. H. Henry Spoer, “Arabic Magic Medicinal Bowls,” *JAOS* 55 (1935): 237–56; idem, “Arabic Magic Bowls II,” *JAOS* 58 (1938): 366–83.

160. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṭibb*), 5: 35; Abū 'Ubayd, 231; for a similar use of this verse, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṭibb al-nabawī*, 276; cf. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 6: 328; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 6: 386–87; Ibn Wahb, *Jāmi'*, 3: 38.

161. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṭibb*), 5: 42–43; cf. Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *al-Iqd al-farīd*, ed. Barakāt Yūsuf Habbūr (Beirut: Dar al-Aqam, 1999), 6: 265–66. Al-Mustaghfirī records a prophetic *ḥadīth* of dubious origin that explicitly permits the deployment of Qur'anic amulets (*ta'widh*), 1: 255.

162. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṭibb*), 5: 39; Abū 'Ubayd, 233; cf. al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḡāḏarāt*, 4: 437.

163. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṭibb*), 5: 34–35; Abū 'Ubayd, 231; cf. al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḡāḏarāt*, loc. cit.

164. Ibn Abī Shayba (*kitāb al-ṭibb*), 5: 39.

165. Abū 'Ubayd, 231.

by and large wins the day, as traditions of drawing on the textual forms of the Qur'an for its prophylactic, apotropaic, or medicinal power have played a central part in the devotional uses of scripture for centuries.¹⁶⁶

It is of little coincidence that throughout this juridical controversy the early Kūfan jurist Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, who consistently views the textual form of the Qur'an with apprehension, also expresses a deep aversion to the use of written charms, a feeling that he is said to have based on a desire not to pollute the Qur'an.¹⁶⁷ This is also the case with the dialogue recorded by 'Abd al-Razzāq between Ibn Jurayj and 'Aṭā' concerning the permissibility of a woman wearing a charm bearing Qur'anic material while menstruating, or while in a state of major ritual impurity (*janāba*): 'Aṭā' answered that if such written material were placed within the hollow of a reed or tube (*qaṣaba*), i.e., an amulet case, then there would be no problem, but if it were only on a sheet (*ruq'a*), e.g., of parchment, and not in a protective container, then she should not wear it. Ibn Jurayj inquired into the difference between the two; 'Aṭā' explained that a reed is more impermeable than a sheet (*akaff min al-ruq'a*),¹⁶⁸ suggesting that the problem at hand is the potential of polluting sacred writing.

Such lines of argumentation fit into an early pattern of trying to delineate and define the place of scripture. The very act of ingesting the trace of the written word dissolved in water represents a desire to draw the sacred power of the divine into the body. These early juridical controversies all suggest attempts at regulating the interaction between the corruptible human body and divine *logos*, setting the stage for later theological inquiries into the nature of scripture as a physical form.¹⁶⁹ Writing in its very temporality, as bound to material existence, intersects immediately with an emergent symbolic matrix of ritual purity. The proposition that in the beginning of the second/eighth century jurists concerned themselves with the charisma of the Qur'an as a text, speaks to the already present, formidable power of the written word.

Detectable through this early period, however, are tensions regarding the textual articulation of the Qur'an, along with questions concerning its symbolic and ritual functions. While early written recensions of the Qur'an appear as informal copies to aid the memory in a privileged oral articulation of scripture, the otherworldly charismatic power associated with the written Qur'an also suggests an emergent sanctification of the physical codex. As such, the early voiced attempts at regulating the physical dissemination of scripture hearken back to a time before the Qur'an became codified as divine *logos* within the temporal and corruptible medium of writing, which inevitably would be touched, and even ingested.

166. The state governing agency for issuing legal opinions (*fatāwā*) in Saudi Arabia (*al-Lajna al-Dā'ima li-l-Buḥūth al-'Ilmiyya wa-l-Iftā'*) has ruled on a variety of issues concerning the permissibility of incantations (*ruqan*) and various talismanic uses of the Qur'an, including writing verses on paper and dissolving them in water to be ingested, an activity it has determined to be licit and valid: *al-Fatāwā l-dhahabiyya fi l-ruqā l-shar'iyya*, ed. Khālid al-Juraysī (Riyadh: Mu'assasat al-Juraysī, 1996), 65–66. On West African traditions of Qur'anic amulets and dissolving Qur'anic verses for ingestion, see A. Osman El-Tom, "Drinking the Koran: The Meaning of Koranic Verses in Berti Erasure Africa," *Journal of the International African Institute* 55 (1985): 414–31; for examples of such amulets, idem, "Berti Qur'anic Amulets," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17 (1987): 224–44.

167. Ibrāhīm disliked the idea of children using such amulets, as they might enter into the privy with them: Ibn Abi Shayba, 5: 35; Abū 'Ubayd, 234.

168. 'Abd al-Razzāq (*kitāb al-ḥayḍ*), 1: 266; cf. al-Mustaghfarī, 1: 224. Cf. the discussion between Ibn Jurayj and 'Aṭā' referenced above, 451, at n. 50.

169. On the theological issues surrounding the materiality of the Qur'an as they develop in the following centuries, see my article, "Fire Cannot Harm It: Mediation, Temptation, and the Charismatic Power of the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 10 (2008): 50–72.