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Deposits of Texts and Cultures in Qurʾānic Palimpsests: A Few Remarks on Objects and Dynamics in Palimpsesting

1. PALIMPSESTS, *CODICES RESCRIPTI*, ERASED PARCHMENTS: TECHNIQUES AND INTENTIONS IN REUSING MATERIALS

Knowledge of the reuse of documents is well-attested in both the Graeco-Latin tradition and the Arabic sources. Thus, for example, Catullus, Cicero and Plutarch wrote about materials to be reused (the *palimpseston*) in the Roman empire,[1] while a few centuries later, in the Islamic empire, accounts of the canonization of the ʿUthmānic text reported the phenomenon of using effaced or washed parchment for writing the Qurʾānic text.

The terminology used to describe manuscript reuse in the different traditions can be diverse. The derivation of the term 'palimpsest' refers to the technique of repeated scraping and erasing of text written on a surface in order to write new texts, and thus can refer to several different scenarios, such as scraping in order to reuse writing materials, erasure in order to amend a text, and retracing to restore faded inks. Similarly, the terminology *(codex) rescriptus* is ambiguous, as it does not clarify the purpose of the act of writing a second time, which could include reuse, restoration, or correction of a text.[2] This article will focus primarily on the recycling of manuscript materials rather than on all possible ways a text might be changed or adjusted by erasures and rewriting. In this sense, the phenomenon of palimpsesting is characterized by the intention of reusing and reallocating resources, rather than the technique of erasing, washing, or scraping. Therefore, not all the parchment surfaces that have been partially cancelled in a manuscript object to replace a section of the text with a revised version of the same text can be defined as palimpsests *stricto sensu*. The Arabic terminology employs—among others—the words *ṭirs* and *ṭils*, both referring to 'effacement' and 'obliteration', being a text of which the writing has been obliterated or effaced—in an effective way in the former case, but an ineffective way in the latter—thus enabling the material to be used again for a new act of writing.[3]

On the basis of this, for example, I interpret the Vienna palimpsest (A.Perg.2, ÖNB, Papyrussammlung) as a non-palimpsest in a proper sense of reuse of the original material surface to produce a new, different, object; the faded traces of a *scriptio inferior* are simply signs of rewriting of the same text by two scribes in a single session, possibly in an educational context.[4] An interesting point to emphasise in relation to this leaf is the fact that part of the same section of the Qurʾānic text was rewritten twice in the *scriptio superior* on the same page.

The case of a manuscript in Istanbul offers a similar example, connected with the ambiguity of the use of the term palimpsest. In his catalogue of the oldest Arabic manuscripts from all over the world, Kūrkīs ʿAwwād lists the manuscripts held at the Topkapı Sarayı, observing the presence of a Qurʾānic palimpsest (*raqq mabšūr*, i.e. 'shaved off or scraped off parchment').[5] This is manuscript E.H.29, composed of 147 leaves, measuring 12 × 18.5 cm with a text area of about 9 × 13 cm of seven lines per page arranged in an oblong format. The

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[1] See for example Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares* VII, 18; Catullus, *Carmina* 22, 5 and Plutarch, *Moralia*, *De garrulitate*, 504D.

[2] On the terms palimpsest, *codex rescriptus*, and *chartae rescriptae*, see Agati, *Manuscript Book*, 70.

[3] On the Arabic terminology used for palimpsested surfaces and manuscripts, see Gacek, *Arabic Manuscript Tradition*, 91, 93.

[4] See Fedeli, Non Palimpsest. Initially, in 2005, I read a few letters in the outer margins of the recto, through direct inspection of the object, as signs of simultaneous corrections in a teaching context. After submission of this article, thanks to the kind collaboration of Bernhard Palme, Director of the Papyrology Collection in Vienna, I was able to look at the special multispectral images of A.Perg.2 with Mike Phelps, Roger Easton, and Keith Knox, who patiently and efficiently processed the images in several steps to improve its readability. The overlapping of two hands in writing both *scriptio inferior* and *superior* made the Vienna fragment more complex than originally thought. The results will be the subject of a separate article.

[5] ʿAwwād, *Aqdam al-maḫṭūṭāt*, 32.

script traced in dark brown ink is close to early Abbasid style DI in Déroche's classification. The consonantal skeleton has been furnished with consonantal diacritic strokes in dark brown ink and vowel dots and orthoepic signs in red and green ink. The 147 leaves contain the text of the first two chapters of the Qurʾān, from the opening to verse 266 of *sūrah al-Baqarah*.

ʿAwwād specifies the meaning of the phenomenon of *raqq mabšūr* by turning to the English word 'palimpsest', which is defined as 'a parchment that has been previously used, from which then the writing disappeared and on which it is written a second time'. I was unable to verify the presence of any palimpsested leaf during my inspection of the manuscript at the Topkapı Sarayı.[6] A possible explanation could be the ambiguous use of the term palimpsest, which in this case refers to the condition of the ink on a few pages. Thus, for example, the script of f. 13r, reading Q.2:26 (from *inna llaha lā yastaḥyī* to *wa-ʾammā llaḏīna kafarū*) is effaced and a few letters are totally illegible, probably because of the deterioration of the ink. At a later stage, the faded illegible script was partially retraced in black ink in an unsystematic and imprecise way, thus producing a) the outline of empty letters, b) partially filled letters (e.g. only the round head of final *qāf* without retracing its tail) and c) misleading filling, such as *fāʾ* and *lām* joined by a long horizontal line in *fa-yaʿlamūna*, thus leaving the other faded letters and providing a misleading aid to properly reading the word. Except for f. 13r and further leaves that show similar characteristics of retracing of effaced script (*jandara* technique), to the naked eye there was no trace of a possible palimpsest in the sense of the reuse and reallocation of a written object.[7]

In the palimpsesting process, the reuse and transformation of the text as well as the object is an essential characteristic of the artefact defined as a palimpsest, while in situations such as a) erasing to correct parts of a text or b) crossing out text by writing a new text above the crossed out parts, as well as c) retracing faded writing, the object—be it a quire, a group of quires or single leaves—keeps its original codicological structure and content, despite the later changes and intervention. The *emendatio*—whether proposed by the copyist or by a later reader—remains an *emendatio* to the original manuscript, whereas the palimpsesting process—in its proper technical meaning—involves the production of a new object using previously written materials.

Palimpsesting is—to some extent—related to the *Genizah*-like practice, since they are both ways of dealing with worn-out or discarded leaves and fragments of texts, and in particular of sacred texts. Disposal of such objects may include washing and erasure, as well as laying aside in a well-protected chamber.[8] The genizah is a deposit of several manuscripts piled in one place, while in the palimpsesting dynamic, two (or more) manuscript texts are stacked together. Both practices have produced deposits of objects and texts, sometimes in a multicultural and multilinguistic environment.

2. HISTORY OF QURʾĀNIC PALIMPSEST MANUSCRIPT STUDIES

The founder of manuscript studies, Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741), is regarded as having introduced awareness of the phenomenon of palimpsests in the Latin and Greek West in his works at the beginning of the 18th century. In Qurʾānic studies, however, the rare examples of a palimpsesting process for the reuse or production of Qurʾānic manuscripts and—more broadly—manuscripts in Arabic script, never led to a proper field of research into Qurʾānic palimpsests.

Removing the ink from manuscripts is a known procedure described in Islamic sources. Thus, recipes for obtaining a new white surface in order to reuse parchment leaves are described in *Zīnat al-katabah* ('The Ornament of the Scribes') by al-Rāzī (d. 925) and in *ʿUmdat al-kuttāb wa-ʿuddat dhawī al-albāb* ('The Staff of the Scribes and the Implement of the discerning') by al-Muʿizz Ibn Bādīs (d. 1062).[9] Concise descriptions of what

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[6] I am very grateful to the director of the Topkapı Sarayı Museum Library for the kind permission to consult the manuscript, and to all the staff for their generous help. This enabled me to verify the exact meaning of the description given in ʿAwwād, *Aqdam al-maḫṭūṭāt*.

[7] See Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest,* 11–12 on the *jandara* technique, i.e. the rewriting of a text by filling the parts of the script which are blank because of faded ink. This indicates an act of retracing, passing the pen over the parts of the writing that have disappeared.

[8] Cohen, Geniza for Islamicists, 136–137, referring to Sadan, Genizah.

[9] On the work of the physician and chemist Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyā al-Rāzī, *Zīnat al-Katabah*, in which there are nine recipes for removing ink traces from writing surfaces and for the reuse of parchment (*tirṣ* or *tils*), see Zaki, Early Arabic Bookmaking. The text of Ibn Bādīs has been translated in Levey, Mediaeval Arabic Bookmaking and Chemistry, 36–37 (ninth chapter, on the work in which writing is eradicated from manuscripts and parchment, from paper and bound books). See Zaki, Early Arabic

the Islamic historical sources report on the process of manuscript production as regards erasing and soaking have been outlined, for example, in the 2000 (and 2007) handbook edited by Déroche, Tuerlinckx' 2009 article focused on Arabic palimpsests, and Hilali's 2017 work on the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest.[10]

As regards awareness of the existence of palimpsested leaves or manuscripts, individual aspects of palimpsesting are quoted in the Islamic sources with reference to the standardisation of the ʿUthmānic text, which record situations such as, for example, ''ʿAbd Allah b. ʿUmar washed Ḥafṣa's leaves with insistence'[11] or 'Thus Muhammad ibn Ishaq [al-Nadim] said: I have seen a number of Qurʾānic manuscripts, which the transcribers recorded as manuscripts of Ibn Masʿūd. No two of the Qurʾānic copies were in agreement and most of them were on badly effaced parchment'.[12] The mention of the reuse of non-Qurʾānic books (e.g. Jewish and Christian scriptures) by washing off their text in order to write the Qurʾānic text is in the *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* by Ibn Abī Dāʾūd al-Sijistānī (d. 928).[13]

The discovery and study of Qurʾānic texts in the *scriptio inferior* of *codices rescripti* and the reuse of Christian scriptures for writing the Qurʾānic text began at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the twentieth. The first Qurʾānic palimpsested manuscript to generate great interest was undoubtedly the so-called Mingana-Lewis palimpsest, a Sinai *codex rescriptus*. The main body of the object was purchased by Agnes Smith Lewis in 1895, and partially edited and studied in 1902. Later, the owner and Alphonse Mingana published a more complete edition of the Qurʾānic leaves used for making six new small quires of the *codex rescriptus* of Christian Arabic homilies. In 1930, Alberto Vaccari observed that a Beuron palimpsest fragment with the Greek text of Genesis on its *scriptio inferior* was part of the Lewis codex. However, the Lewis codex disappeared from 1914 to 1936 after the owner sent it to Leipzig for the 1914 International Book Exhibition, a few days before the outbreak of the First World War. Cambridge University Library inherited the manuscript—bought by Smith Lewis—in 1936, but the two-decade period for which it disappeared created the common impression that the manuscript was lost or destroyed forever.[14] In 2005, I traced the 'lost palimpsest' in Cambridge and disseminated knowledge about its story in an initial article.[15] Later, in 2011, I identified a further half-leaf in Birmingham belonging to the twelfth (according to the written Greek numerals) quire of the *codex rescriptus* as being a Qurʾānic leaf, whereas the catalogue of the Birmingham collection described it as an unknown Christian text.[16] In 2015, the story of the entire object was reconstructed, the Birmingham part being connected with Tischendorf's travels to Sinai, and the disappearance of the Cambridge codex during the Leipzig period being also connected with Tischendorf, as well as other German scholars.[17] In 2018, on the occasion of the conference "New Light on Old Manuscripts: Recent Advances in Palimpsest Studies", I could suggest—thanks to a serendipitous meeting with, and the great kindness of, Bernard Outtier—that the eleven leaves mentioned in the Assfalg-Molitor catalogue of Armenian manuscripts were the last leaves and quires of

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Bookmaking, 224, on the attribution of the work to Ibn Bādīs. The technical treatises and their recipes for removing the ink so that no remnants can be seen are described in great detail in Fani, *Le arti del libro*, 45–48 (recipes no. XI, XII, XX, and XXI in al- Rāzī) and Fani, Arabic Manuals on Ink Making, 442–443, 450–451.

10 Déroche, *Islamic Codicology*, 43–45; Tuerlinckx, Palimpsestes à écriture supérieure arabe, 187–188 and the section on 'Palimpsesting techniques' in Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest*, 7–13. See also Fedeli, Digitization Project, 104–105. See also the recommendation of Mālik ibn Anas regarding the effacement of the text of a deteriorated *muṣḥaf* if the material surface is still usable (Jahdani, Du *fiqh* à la codicologie, 277).

11 Reported in Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest*, 8.

12 Reported in al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 57, and see also *ibid*., 8: 'For a number of years the people of Baghdād wrote on erased sheets. The registers spoiled at the time of Muḥammad ibn Zubaydah were parchments, which after being erased were once more written upon'.

13 See Gacek, Copying and Handling of Qurʾāns, 246.

14 MS Cambridge University Library, Or. 1287. To my knowledge, before the 2005 article (Fedeli, Mingana and the manuscript of Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis), the location of the Lewis palimpsest was not mentioned in any works on Qurʾānic manuscript studies. Thus, scholars in Qurʾānic manuscript studies supposed the Qurʾānic leaves to be in a private collection in Great Britain, while the Greek fragment was known to scholars in Greek manuscript studies, see Tchernetska, Greek-Oriental Palimpsests, 252.

15 Fedeli, Mingana and the manuscript of Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis.

16 Fedeli, Digitization Project.

17 The identification of scattered leaves and the story of Tischendorf's involvement in the history of the codex's whereabouts after it left Sinai are in Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts*, 76–82, and Fedeli, Manuscript Acquisitions. Further work has been done by George, who mainly focused only on the palaeographical aspects of the Qurʾānic leaves of the Cambridge manuscript and the multicultural context in which it was assembled, see George, Palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge.

the codex of Christian homilies bought by Smith Lewis.[18] In 2016, the scholarly digital edition of the Qurʾānic leaves, with extensive annotations and the hypothetical retracement of the *scriptio inferior* of the codex of Homilies, was published in the Cambridge Digital Library.

Roughly in the same period in which Agnes Smith Lewis noticed that there were some Qurʾānic leaves among the materials reused for manufacturing the codex that she purchased in Suez, the Academy of Sciences in Berlin charged Bruno Violet and Hermann von Soden with the task of exploring the Christian manuscripts of Damascus. In 1900, the two scholars obtained permission to inspect some treasures from the Qubbat al-Ḫazna in the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.[19] In 1903, von Soden informed the Academy of Sciences about the first survey of the content of the deposit of the mosque, which included some palimpsest leaves.[20] From 1902 to 1908, the Damascus collection studied by Violet and von Soden was sent to Berlin and a very small but representative sample of 54 fragments were photographed before the request—and decision—to return them to Damascus. The photographic album of the Damascus fragments collected in 1908 and now deposited at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin includes a single Qurʾānic leaf (3r and 4r) written on top of a Greek fragment of the Book of Esther in majuscule script.[21] However, the album does not make any reference to the content of the photographed manuscripts. The content of leaves 3r and 4r was noticed and briefly described by Violet in 1905, and then by Kurt Treu in 1966.[22] In the same year, Robert Hanhart published his edition of the Book of Esther and included the Damascus palimpsest among the manuscripts he used. It was Hanhart who rediscovered the album in the archives of Marburg and gave it to Treu. Thus, the album went from Marburg to Berlin around that period, in 1965/1966.[23]

Later works referred to the content of the fragment on the basis of the 1900 German mission and 1908 photographic album,[24] as the location of all of the Damascus fragments that should have been returned to Damascus in 1909 has been unknown since they left Berlin.[25]

In that period of feverish travel activity and trade in manuscripts at the beginning of the last century, another Sinai *codex rescriptus* created by the reuse of several materials in different languages, scripts, and cultures, including Arabic script, entered the Ambrosiana Library. In 1910, the library's prefetto, Achille Ratti (later pope Pio XI), acquired a Sinai *codex rescriptus* from the Rosenthals Antiquariat in Munich. From the 1920s, the Latin and Greek elements of the Ambrosiana codex of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* were known to the scholarly community[26], and its *scriptio superior* was studied by Sauget in 1989,[27] but only in 2000 did a larger project also include the study of the Hebrew and Qurʾānic leaves of the *scriptio inferior*. In fact, among the recycled materials, two Qurʾānic leaves are used to form the twelfth quire of the small codex. François Déroche studied

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[18] See details in fn. 69.

[19] See D'Ottone Rambach *et al.* (eds.), *Damascus Fragments*.

[20] 'Biblische Fragmente. a) Septuaginta. Ein Blatt aus S. V., griechische Majuskel mit darübergeschriebenem Kufi' probably refers to the bifolio here described. See von Soden, Bericht über die Handschriftenfragmente, 829.

[21] Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mss. simulata orientalia 6: Photographien von ausgewählten Fragmenten aus der Omayyaden-Moschee in Damaskus in verschiedenen Sprachen, 1908, 58 ff. Photographs of selected fragments from the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus in different languages. See also Vollandt, The Qubba and the Arabic Bible, 182 fn. 5.

[22] Kurt Treu presented his lecture on the Septuagint fragments from Damascus at the Göttingen Academy in 1965, and the work was published in 1966. Treu thanked his colleague Gotthard Strohmaier for his kind help in reading the *scriptio superior* of the fragment, see Treu, Majuskelbruchstücke der Septuaginta aus Damaskus, 204 fn. 3. He added the reference to Violet as regards the content, i.e. 'Kufi, Koran' (*ibid.*, 210).

[23] See Treu, Majuskelbruchstücke der Septuaginta aus Damaskus, 203 fn. 4 and Hanhart, *Esther*, 11–12. The information reported by Treu and Hanhart regarding the return of the album from Marburg to Berlin in 1965–1966 partially contradicts the supposed loss of the album during the Second World War and the fact that it 'resurfaced at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin in 1999' (Vollandt, *Muslim Genizah in Damascus*, note 2).

[24] See Radiciotti and D'Ottone, I frammenti della Qubbaᵗ al-Ḫazna, 51–52. The Italian article was later translated and modified in English, see D'Ottone, Manuscripts as Mirrors. In the 2008 article, Radiciotti reported a short description of the palimpsest leaf on the basis of the 1966 article by Treu.

[25] 'Seitdem [i.e. 1909] ist der Aufenthalt der Stücke unbekannt', in Treu, Majuskelbruchstücke der Septuaginta aus Damaskus, 203 fn. 4 and 'Die Originale sind seither verschollen, doch besitzt die Kommission für spätantike Religionsgeschichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin Violets Photographien (Akz. Nr. 481) zusammen mit seinen Notizen (Akz. Nr. 484)', in Hanhart, *Esther*, 11–12 (MS no. 822).

[26] Giovanni Galbiati published his article on Virgil's fragment in 1927, see Galbiati, Vergilius latine et græce.

[27] Sauget, Paterikon arabe.

the two Qurʾānic leaves and his description was reported in the joint publication of 2008 published by Colette Sirat.[28] In 2015 and 2019, I had access to the two Qurʾānic leaves on the premises of the Ambrosiana Library, and my preliminary conclusions are published in this article.[29] Recently, in 2020, I located the second missing quire of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* of Ambrosiana *codex rescriptus* L 120 sup.[30]

Among the three Qurʾānic palimpsests acquired or accessed in the period between 1895 and 1910, only the Sinai palimpsest acquired by Smith Lewis was thoroughly studied (within the limits of the technical means available at the time) and widely publicised, although the vicissitudes of its journey led to its being considered lost, stolen, destroyed, or even a fake artefact.

About sixty years later, in July 1973, during restoration work at the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ, a large number of Qurʾānic leaves were discovered in the false ceiling of the building. Among them was an early Qurʾānic manuscript written on top of another early Qurʾānic manuscript. The Italian architect Paolo Costa was the first scholar to communicate to the academic community the news of 'a large deposit of old codices, mainly dismembered, that are piled between the roof and the ceiling'.[31] Among the 'crumpled' leaves that had been discovered, Costa noticed some religious texts, mainly Qurʾānic copies, and interpreted the storing of those manuscripts as a *genizah* practice.[32] A large number of the 15,000 fragments were initially restored, grouped, identified, and classified by a German team of conservators and scholars.[33] Initially, the manuscripts were housed in a side room of the library of the Great Mosque, and the first laboratory was established at the Dār al-Kutub.[34] The manuscripts were then kept in Dār al-Maḫṭūṭāt. The Ṣanʿāʾ Qurʾānic palimpsest (MS DaM 01-27.1, from now on DaM palimpsest) was part of an exhibition held in Kuwait in 1985, as well as the UNESCO 'Memory of the World' project in 1996, and has been the subject of several articles by Gerd Puin, but it achieved the apogee of its fame, reaching the non-academic public, in an article published in *The Atlantic* by Toby Lester in 1999.[35]

From 2008 onward, Elisabeth Puin analysed the DaM palimpsest by means of microfilm made by the German scholars, and recently, following the special imaging executed in 2007 in situ at Dār al-Maḫṭūṭāt,[36] the

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[28] Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits.

[29] I thank the director of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Federico Gallo, for his trust in granting me special permission to see the Qurʾānic leaves, since consultation of MS L 120 sup. is not permitted because of its fragile condition. I inspected the original manuscript with my naked eye without the help of any technical tools or digital images which would be a valuable instrument in retracing the *scriptio inferior* in palimpsests based on a kinaesthetic/palaeographic feedback loop methodology. See Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts*, 94–95.

[30] This recent identification will be the subject of a separate work. The quaternion that I recognized contains the text that corresponds to the section in MS Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire 4225, f. 63v, l. 7, and runs almost parallel to the Strasbourg text, the last line corresponding to MS Strasbourg 4225, f. 66v, l. 10. See also Grigory Kessel's note on MS Strasbourg 4225 in his contribution in this book.

[31] Costa, Moschea Grande di Ṣanʿāʾ, 505–506. As regards the manuscripts found in July 1973, see also Canova, The Great Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ, mentioning Paolo Costa's article on Problems of Style and Iconography in the South-Arabian Sculpture.

[32] Costa, Moschea Grande di Ṣanʿāʾ, 506, 'Esso [the depository used for the manuscript material] risale evidentemente a un restauro della moschea durante il quale fu fatto un riordino della biblioteca. E' probabile che i volumi in cattivo stato di conservazione siano stati in tale occasione rimossi e, per rispetto, non distrutti, ma occultati nel sottotetto'.

[33] Thomas Eich is tracing the details of the conservation projects planned and executed after the discovery of the manuscripts in the 1970s. Some of his results are published in Eich, Projekt zur Restaurierung von Handschriften.

[34] See the details of the first stages of the restoration project in Böhrenz and Bartelt, Einrichtung einer Buch- und Handschriftenrestaurierungswerkstatt. I thank Thomas Eich for his kindness in bringing this reference to my attention.

[35] See Lester, What is the Koran?

[36] It must be noted that the comparison between the Damascus manuscripts brought to Germany and the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest brought to Italy, as it is described in D'Ottone, Frammenti di manoscritti arabi, 261–287, 277 fn. 74, is probably a misunderstanding, as the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest was never brought to Italy and the imaging was done *in situ* on the premises of Dār al-Maḫṭūṭāt—under my direct supervision—in October 2007. The imaging was executed with the funds of the ANR Project 'De l'Antiquité tardive à l'Islam', in agreement with the Ferni Noja Noseda Foundation. Sergio Noja Noseda established personal contacts with Yemeni scholars and institutions from 2002 to 2007 in order to obtain Yemeni trust for executing the imaging of the palimpsest. Yemeni trust was gained through several efforts and not because of any Italian political support or money given to Yemeni people, as is often supposed. Thus, reports such as those published in al-Azami, *Ageless Qurʾan Timeless Text* do not give a complete picture of the story and are incorrect in some of the detail. Al-Azami wrote that in summer 2002 'Curiosity led me to thumb through his [i.e. Noja Noseda's] collection and I was startled at the sheer volume of high-quality images he had of precious Qurʾānic fragments from the treasure

palimpsest has been studied and edited by Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, Asma Hilali, and within the Corpus Coranicum project.[37] After the different editions published by Puin, Sadeghi-Goudarzi, and Hilali, further interpretations of the palimpsesting process and the nature of the fragments were proposed by François Déroche and Eléonore Cellard. The latter focuses on the codicological structure of the possible recycled manuscript, while the former interprets the recycled leaves—that were mainly used with the same disposition of recto/verso in both layers—as part of a *muṣḥaf*, rather than isolated leaves used in a teaching context, as proposed by Hilali.[38]

However, the collective memory of local people in Ṣanʿāʾ reported that there had been a previous discovery of manuscripts, known since the 1960s, before the discovery of the false ceiling—including a further large section of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest—that remained unknown to the scholarly community until recently.[39] This further section of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest consists of several quires that also show some bifolios and have remnants of sewing thread. This was kept at al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya (from 1984, Maktaba al-Awqāf) located on the premises of the Great Mosque in Ṣanʿāʾ in an annexe constructed by order of the imam Ḥamīd al-Dīn (r. 1904–48).[40] The *scriptio superior* of this part of the palimpsest was studied by Razan Ghassan Hamdoun, who submitted her Master's thesis, *The Qurʾānic Manuscripts in Ṣanʿāʾ from the First Century Hijra and the Preservation of the Qurʾān* to al-Yemenia University in 2004.[41] In 2008, during a direct inspection of the object, displayed in a glass showcase at al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, I was able to conclude that the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest section was likely not restored in recent times and its good condition implies a different fate in comparison with the section discovered in the 1970s.[42] The leaves that appeared on the antiquarian market in the 1990s—and were subsequently displayed in museums and institutions—were leaves removed from the section of al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya (from now on MaSh palimpsest).[43]

The *scriptio inferior* of the leaves of this section was never investigated until recently because only the low-resolution images published in the pdf version of Hamdoun's Master's thesis are available to scholars. Despite this limitation, a partial identification of the content of a small number of pages has recently been proposed. Some results are published in the next section of this article and will certainly be expanded and improved upon in the future.[44]

Among the manuscripts discovered in 2007 in a further deposit of discarded manuscripts inside the Great Mosque, I was able to identify and suggest the presence of a further piece of the puzzle. The mosque turned out to be a location for the *genizah* practice, not only in the space between the ceiling and the roof, but also in two niches covered by a wall on the west side of the mosque, near the wall of the minaret. The niches were discovered during restoration work on the wooden ceilings of the mosque carried out by a team headed by the Italian architect Renzo Ravagnan. Initial inspections were carried out in situ, in order to plan a project to

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trove in Ṣanʿāʾ, Yemen. He confided his secret, that his first audience upon reaching Ṣanʿāʾ had not been with the library director but with someone much higher up, the Italian ambassador' (*ibid.*, 3), likely confusing his personal memories of that event. In fact, Noja Noseda obtained the first high-resolution testing images of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest in summer 2007, and the complete set in October 2007. The Yemeni Ministry of Culture gave permission for imaging and publishing the manuscripts to the Ferni Noja Noseda Foundation after five years of visits and discussions.

37 Sadeghi and Goudarzi, Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins; Puin, Früher Koranpalimpsest I, II, III, IV, and V; Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest*. Examples of retracement of the *scriptio inferior* by Hadiya Gurtmann within the Corpus Coranicum project of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities have already been published on a number of occasions, e.g. Gurtmann, Qurʾan written over the Qurʾan and Déroche, *Coran, une histoire plurielle*, 206, 208, and 262.

38 See Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, and Déroche, *Coran, une histoire plurielle*, 209–213. On the different hypotheses in interpreting the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest, see D'Ottone, Frammenti di manoscritti arabi, 263–265.

39 See also Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 4–5, regarding the discovery of fragments during a roof inspection of the Great Mosque in 1965.

40 See Schmidtke, Mosque Library in Yemen, 220–221.

41 Hamdoun, *al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Qurʾāniyya fī Ṣanʿāʾ*.

42 I owe to Marco Di Bella's kindness the viewing of the MaSh palimpsest.

43 See also a leaf which has recently resurfaced at the Louvre Abu Dhabi, as highlighted in social media. See Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 7. These leaves, likely removed from their original items, underline the crucial importance of cataloguing all these new finds to establish their identity and certify their provenance.

44 Recently, since submission of this article, a further study of the MaSh section of the palimpsest has been published. Hythem Sidky has identified a number of words and passages in the *scriptio inferior* of some of the leaves, see Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 14 and fig. 17. Sidky's reading partially overlaps with the results proposed in this article.

conserve, classify, and study the newly discovered manuscripts, and contacts were established with local authorities. This was initially successful, but the project has never been completed, since the war prevented its continuation. The total number of the manuscripts (quires, codices, and single leaves) was estimated at about 4,000 pieces, mainly on parchment and a few on paper. In 2008, over the course of about ten hours, I surveyed four metal boxes—each measuring about 70/80 × 30 × 40 cm—full of leaves, quires, and manuscripts. At the time of that inspection, the purpose was merely to assess the condition and content of the discovery in order to plan the future project. During the survey, I saw only Qurʾānic manuscripts, and noticed a palimpsest leaf that I compared with the Ṣanʿāʾ two-section palimpsest (DaM and MaSh).[45] A few observations about the unedited and uncatalogued leaf (from now on NF palimpsest leaf) are published in this article. Although the low resolution of the image I took does not allow the *scriptio inferior* of the parchment to be read, the discovery of this further piece and its location in the niche of the west side of the mosque can provide new elements in interpreting the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest.[46]

In addition to the well-known Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest, among the manuscripts discovered in 1973 that were photographed as part of a UNESCO project, Elisabeth Puin and Keith Small noticed the presence of another Qurʾānic palimpsest, in their 2007 article, i.e. showcase 6, MS 18–?.a.[47] It is a single leaf of Qurʾānic text written on top of another Qurʾānic text.

Recently, palimpsest leaves of unknown provenance have appeared on the antiquarian market presenting a situation similar to the Damascus leaf, i.e. Christian materials recycled to write Qurʾānic text. In 2018, an auction house put into circulation some palimpsested leaves of the Qurʾān that were previously unknown to scholars. Before the auction, Eléonore Cellard recognized that the Qurʾānic leaves were written on recycled parchments containing a Coptic text. Unfortunately, the context of the leaves is unknown as the auction house did not provide any details about their provenance, which is assumed, on the basis of the content and script of the artefact, to be Egypt.

In the short history of discoveries and studies of Qurʾānic palimpsests that has been traced here, it is worth noting that the first studies on the Lewis palimpsest from Sinai influenced and still influence the field, and hence the understanding of Qurʾānic palimpsests as being pre-ʿUthmānic texts, meaning non-canonical texts that had to be destroyed. The assumption in this understanding of the palimpsests is that they provide indisputable evidence of intention to destroy a Qurʾānic manuscript because it is different from the consensus text of the ʿUthmānic recension. The sensationalist subtitle of the Mingana-Lewis edition, *Leaves From Three Ancient Qurâns; Possibly Pre-Othmanic*, was blown out of proportion by the enormous publicity for the book which was followed by strong reactions against Mingana's edition and introduction.[48] However, examples such as the Ambrosiana palimpsest Qurʾān from Sinai and the single leaf identified in the UNESCO CD, with their 9th/10th-century script of the Qurʾānic text, take us beyond this assumption that Qurʾāns were erased and cancelled because they were pre-ʿUthmānic.

Almost a century later, Lester's *Atlantic* article also contributed to reinforcing this narrow and incomplete perspective on Qurʾānic palimpsests, as traces of a *scriptio inferior* to be cancelled or hidden. In interpreting palimpsests, scholars should not single out the *scriptio inferior* alone as the unique object of their interest. Instead, a palimpsested manuscript is an artefact that is stratified and hence more complex. Palimpsests are repositories of languages, scripts, and cultures in contact, and should be explored as such.[49]

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[45] During the survey, I wrote just a few notes on the special paper used to individually wrap some of the interesting artefacts selected for the first step of the planned project.

[46] The images I took are sized to 2136 × 2848 pixels at 314 ppi.

[47] Small and Puin, UNESCO CD of Ṣanʿāʾ Mss 59–71, 60 and 64.

[48] See Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts*, 310–318, on the criticism against Mingana considered as the only editor and author of the 1914 publication. Thus, for example, according to Muslim scholars, Mingana was 'not free from religious bigotry and prejudice' (quoted in *ibid.*, 312).

[49] See also the contribution of Claudia Rapp in this volume.

3. Qurʾānic palimpsests: they are rare, to our knowledge

The main factor could be the date. In the year 692, when, in Constantinople, the Christian Church prohibited the destruction of holy books by formulating a specific canon at the Council in Trullo (i.e. the *Concilium Quinisextum*), referring to and dealing with a centuries-old practice in the production of books, the situation was rather different in the young empire of the Caliphate under the Umayyad dynasty, where the production of copies of their sacred text was a recent practice, less than a century old.[50] The inevitable result is the relatively meagre number of existing Qurʾānic palimpsests, understanding this term to mean 1) Qurʾānic texts reused to write other kinds of text, 2) Qurʾānic texts reused to write the Qurʾānic text again, and 3) Qurʾānic texts written on top of non-Qurʾānic texts. This number will probably increase in the next few years because of new technologies in imaging manuscripts and new finds, but as things currently stand, the number of Qurʾānic palimpsests can be counted on the fingers of two hands.[51] Moreover, the materials are also a factor. As palimpsesting concerns papyrus and—to a greater extent—parchment, the introduction of paper into the Muslim production of manuscripts is regarded as one possible reason for the small number of Qurʾānic and, more generally, Arabic palimpsests.[52]

According to Cavallo, in Antiquity, in Latin and Greek culture, the use of palimpsested writing surface was common in writing texts for daily use and documentary texts, but such materials were rarely used for assembling an entire codex,[53] while—as mentioned above—the use of palimpsested parchments for writing the Qurʾānic text is a phenomenon repeatedly observed in the Islamic tradition. An example of a document relating to daily life in the Caliphate empire is a commercial letter written in Arabic in the 8th century on the verso of a strip of a parchment, measuring 30 × 9/11 cm that has the remains of a larger parchment leaf with a Biblical text, namely the Latin version of Exodus 8:16–20 and 8:28–9:1.[54]

3.1. The Unique Qurʾānic Palimpsest on Papyrus

As regards their materiality, palimpsests are commonly associated with parchment, although there are several examples of palimpsests on papyrus.[55] To my knowledge, the only example of a Qurʾānic palimpsest on papyrus is a strip from an Arabic protocol reused for writing some Qurʾānic texts arranged in a bifolio layout. The papyrus, P.Ming. 107 (IX.9), has physical signs of having been used as a talisman, folded many times to obtain a small square. The *scriptio superior* has an amalgam of Qurʾānic texts, i.e. Q. 3:7–11, Q. 112 and Q. 113 on the verso of the papyrus and Q. 100, Q. 3:11–13 followed by Q. 59:1 on the recto. The remnants of the *scriptio inferior* are likely part of an original *bi-smi -llāhi l-raḥmāni l-raḥīm* (‘In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate’), *lā ilāha illā llāh waḥdahu Muḥammadun rasūlu llahi* (‘There is no God but God alone, Muhammad is the Messenger of God’), and *amīr al-muʾminīna* (‘commander of the believers’) that refers to the official title of a caliph, since ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb adopted such a title on his election as caliph (634–644 CE).[56] The papyrus surface was reduced to a strip, thus cutting at least half of the original material, and was rewritten on both sides.

The Mingana Papyrus cannot be considered a palimpsest in the proper sense. In fact, the material was reused in its empty parts rather than being processed in order to obtain a new material surface, as the original writing was not cancelled. Nevertheless, the original object was destroyed and reallocated.

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[50] See Canon no. 68 of the Council in Trullo, which states that Old Testament and New Testament books are not to be destroyed or cut into small pieces, or given to book traders or those who prepare perfumes or ointments. See Ohme, *Concilivm Constantinopolitanvm*, 260–261. Cavallo comments on the βιβλιοκάπηλοι, mentioned in the canon of the Council, as ‘resellers of cleaned leaves whose first writing has been removed so that they can be used for a second writing’ (Cavallo, Immagine ritrovata, 10–11).

[51] A comparison with numbers of New Testament palimpsests can give an immediate idea of the striking disproportion between the two written traditions. A list of New Testament palimpsests compiled in 2009 reports about 250 palimpsests. See Welte, Griechischen Palimpseste, 30–52.

[52] See for example Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 146. The scholars explain the rapid spread of paper in the Muslim world as the reason for the very small number of Arabic palimpsests considered as both *scriptio superior* and *scriptio inferior*.

[53] Cavallo, Immagine ritrovata, 8.

[54] See Vaccari, Frammenti Biblici latini, 1–11, reported also in Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie*, 109. Grohmann also mentioned a second example of an Arabic palimpsest in Coptic and Arabic, namely PER Inv. Perg. Ar. 220.

[55] See for example Schmidt, Palimpsestes littéraires grecs sur papyrus.

[56] See Fedeli, Isolated Qurʾānic Fragments, 184–190.

The known Qurʾānic palimpsests, i.e. palimpsested manuscripts with Qurʾānic passages either in the erased layer or in the *scriptio superior*, are listed and described in the following sections, focusing on the structure and layout of the two layers, considered as objects rather than merely *scriptio* (*superior* and *inferior*) in order to identify possible patterns in their productions according to their provenance (and scriptorium).[57]

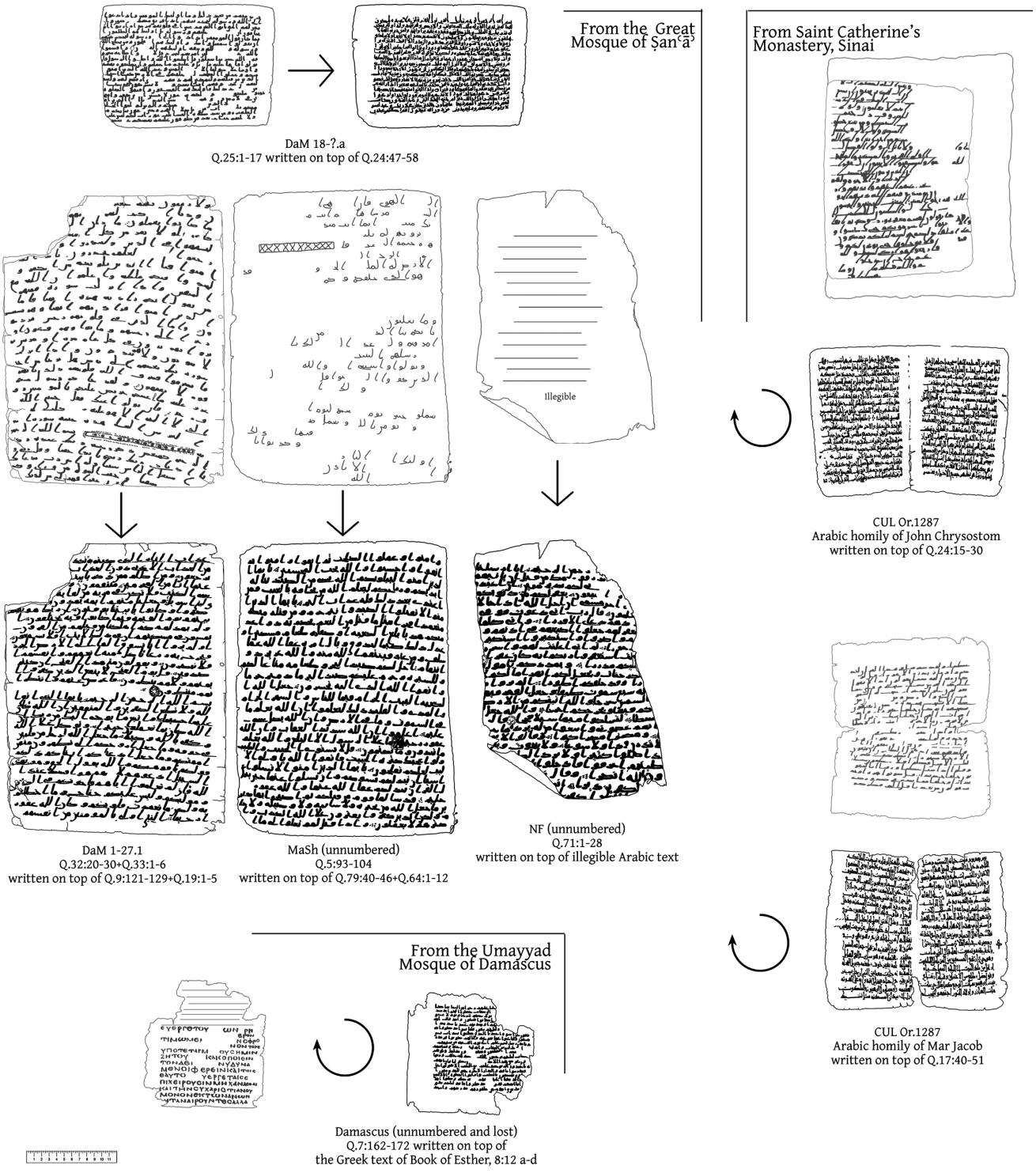

Fig. 1: Overview of the Qurʾānic palimpsests and their patterns
(© Alba Fedeli, 2019)

[57] See Figure 1 with a general overview of the Qurʾānic palimpsests and their patterns.

3.2. From Damascus

3.2.1. Damascus. Single leaf from the Qubbat al-Ḥazna

This is a single palimpsested Qurʾānic leaf that was manufactured using a recycled leaf of the Book of Esther in Greek. The current location of the leaf is unknown.[58]

Provenance and context. The single leaf brought to Berlin at the beginning of the 20th century was one of the manuscripts kept in the *genizah* of the Qubbat al-Ḥazna in the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. This was a huge deposit of discarded Qurʾāns and materials in different languages and scripts from diverse cultures and traditions. Thus, the Damascus *genizah* stored Qurʾānic fragments, literary texts in Arabic and Turkish, texts in Latin, Greek, Armenian, Georgian, Coptic, Syriac, Aramaic, and French, dating from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern period.[59]

Structure. The palimpsest is a single leaf, without further connections to other known manuscripts, in both its *scriptio inferior* and *superior*.

Language and culture of the two layers. The *scriptio inferior* of the single leaf has part of the Book of Esther in majuscule Greek. It was reused to produce a Qurʾānic leaf.

Script style of the Qurʾānic text. The Qurʾānic text written on top of the Greek text of Esther has some features of the New Style Script, type III, according to Déroche's classification. Its main characteristic letter shape is final *alif* with its slight elongation below the base line. From the black and white image of the 1908 photographic album, diacritical strokes are not recognizable except in one instance, and no vowel signs are present. The script style is used in some dated manuscripts, thus placing the *scriptio superior* of the Damascus leaf possibly in the 9th/10th century.

Elapsed time between the two layers. The Greek text was probably written in the 5th century[60] and it was reused for writing a section of the Qurʾānic text about four centuries later.

Size and format of the two layers. The maximum dimensions of the leaf are 14 × 14.5 cm. The Qurʾānic text was written by turning the Greek leaf 90 degrees clockwise. Thus, the vertical format of the Greek leaf was adapted to the oblong format of the Qurʾānic leaf in the 9th/10th century. The recto (corresponding to 4r in the photo album, see Fig. 2) has Q.7:155–162, while the verso (corresponding to 3r in the photo album, see Fig. 3) has Q.7:162–172. The text is structured in 19 lines occupying a text area of 9.7 (complete) × 11.4 cm (lacunose). The margins measure about 2.5 cm at the bottom of the leaf, 1.5 cm at its top, and 3 cm in the outer margins.

In the 1908 photo album, the recto of the *scriptio inferior* is difficult to read, and the few unclear traces visible in its last lines are the reading of Esther 8:12 ([ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ βασιλεί]ᾳ Ἀρταξέρξου, τῇ [τρισ]|[καιδεκάτῃ] τοῦ δω|[δεκάτου μην]ός, ὅς | [ἐστιν Ἀδάρ]).[61] Thus, the section of Biblical text in the verso of the leaf is Esther, 8:12 a–d, originally structured in 23 lines, of which ll. 1–3 are missing, ll. 4–10 are illegible due to the quality of the photo, and ll. 11–23 have the text of Esther 8:12c–d (from εὐεργετούντων to ἀνταναιροῦντες ἀλλὰ).[62] The missing writing material used to write ll.1–3 corresponds to the lacuna of the Arabic text, i.e. the outer margins of the leaf (i.e. left side of the recto and right side of the verso) according to the layout adopted for writing the Qurʾānic text. This means that the original recycled material of the Greek text was likely used in its entirety in the palimpsesting process of writing the Qurʾānic text, and the missing parts in both the Greek and Arabic text are a lacuna due to the wear and damage of the parchment rather than a trimming of the parchment in recycling the new object.

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[58] This leaf is also mentioned in the contribution of Ronny Vollandt in this volume. See D'Ottone Rambach *et al.* (eds.), *Damascus Fragments*, Introduction, 19–31 in particular, regarding the items that were lent to Berlin, photographed, and returned in 1909.

[59] See Radiciotti in Radiciotti and D'Ottone, I frammenti della Qubbaṭ al-Ḥazna, 45. See also the contribution of Ronny Vollandt in this volume and D'Ottone Rambach *et al.* (eds.), *Damascus Fragments*.

[60] Treu, Majuskelbruchstücke der Septuaginta aus Damaskus, 210 (on the basis of Violet), and von Soden, Bericht über die Handschriftenfragmente, 829. The dating to the 5th century is also reported in Radiciotti, see Radiciotti and D'Ottone, I frammenti della Qubbaṭ al-Ḥazna, 52.

[61] I thank Theodora Panella for her help in reading the *scriptio inferior* of the Damascus fragment.

[62] The text of ll. 4–10 is illegible on the available image (https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN685013049&PHYSID=PHYS_0007&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001, accessed 01.07.2023). See the edition of the Greek text in Treu, Majuskelbruchstücke der Septuaginta aus Damaskus, 210–211.

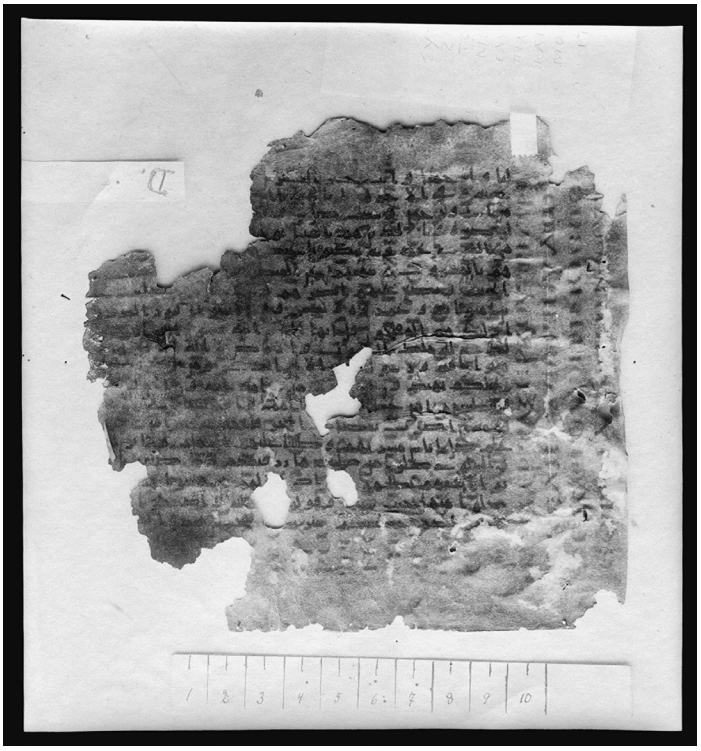

Fig. 2: Damascus palimpsest leaf (Qurʾān written over the Book of Esther in Greek)
Photo from the 1908 photographic album of fragments from the Umayyad Mosque
(© Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, MSS. simulata orientalia 6, f. 4r
[recto of the single leaf, Q.7:155–162])

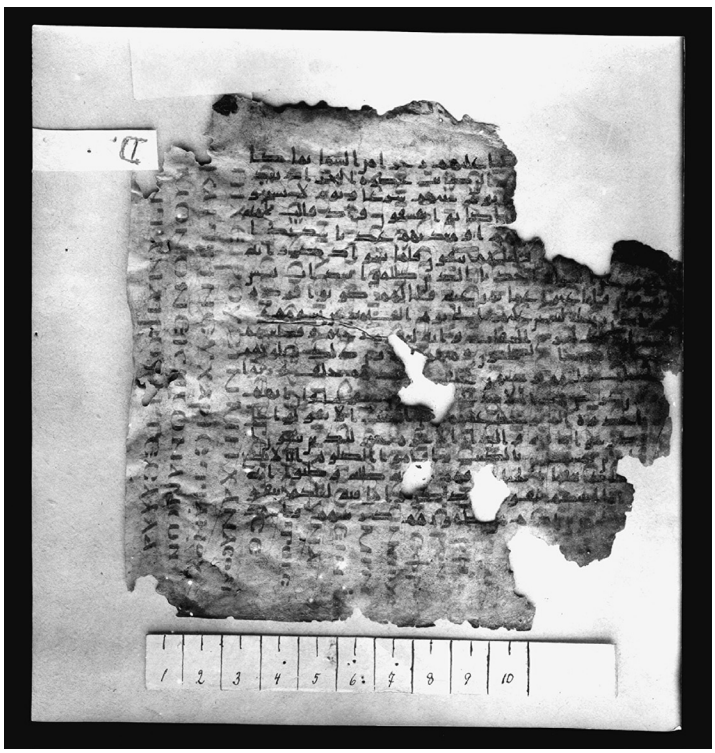

Fig. 3: Damascus palimpsest leaf (Qurʾān written over the Book of Esther in Greek)
Photo from the 1908 photographic album of fragments from the Umayyad Mosque
(© Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, MSS. simulata orientalia 6, f. 3r
[verso of the single leaf, Q.7:162–172])

3.3. From Sinai

Two palimpsests manufactured in Sinai are known as having some Qurʾānic leaves among the composite recycled materials. The two codices are no longer in situ.

3.3.1. Cambridge University Library MS Or. 1287, Birmingham Mingana Christian Arabic Additional 150, 124 and 171, Erzabtei Beuron MS I and II

This is a Christian Arabic *codex rescriptus* from Sinai assembled by converting several leaves in different formats from diverse cultures, languages, and scripts, containing religious and documentary materials. Among the diverse materials are twenty-three leaves of parts of continuous portions of text from two distinct Qurʾānic manuscripts, respectively comprising sixteen and seven leaves, used to make the new small quires of the Christian codex.

Provenance and context. The manuscript of Christian Arabic homilies (*aqwāl*) belongs to the group of Sinai manuscripts which Tischendorf removed piece by piece from the library of the Monastery of St. Catherine in the 19th century. The larger section of the codex then became part of the antiquarian market in Egypt. The script of the homilies, together with their page layout and decorations, are characteristic of the Sinai tradition of writing anthologies of homilies, hagiographies, and hymns. Similar Sinai manuscripts are dated 868, 885, 897, and 901.[63] The Sinai provenance of the codex and its fragments is explicitly mentioned in the purchase documentation relating to the Mingana fragments and on the leaf that likely was added at the beginning of the *codex rescriptus* of the homilies.[64] Like the Ambrosiana MS L 120 sup., its mode of manufacture using recycled composite materials is illustrative of the multicultural and multilinguistic materials available in the environment of the Sinai monastery, where both palimpsests were probably assembled.

Structure. The *codex rescriptus* was produced and kept at St. Catherine's Monastery. Its known fragments are now scattered across three institutions, namely Cambridge University Library MS. Or. 1287 (162 ff. composed of 67 bifolios and 28 single small leaves), Birmingham MSS Mingana Christian Arabic Additional 150 (1 f.), 124 (2 ff. in one bifolio) and 171 (2 single leaves added at the beginning of the codex), and Beuron MS I, Erzabtei showcase 46 (1 f.) and Beuron MS II, no. 32 in the Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts (22 ff. made of ten bifolios and two single leaves, one of which was manufactured by trimming a bifolio).[65] In the mid-19th century, Tischendorf removed at least the three Birmingham fragments from the original codex. These ended up on the antiquarian market in the 20th century and were bought by Alphonse Mingana. The three fragments are catalogued as distinct entities, which I have recently connected. They are part of a larger group of Sinai fragments acquired by Mingana from Erik von Scherling in 1936. Beuron fragment I and likely also fragment II are part of a donation made by the collector Friedrich Grote to the monks because of their pioneering skills in photographing palimpsests, while the larger part of the codex was bought by Agnes Smith Lewis in Suez in 1895.

In Cambridge, the Lewis codex with its quires was disassembled and rebound according to the original order of the 94 recycled leaves and bifolios of the *scriptio inferior*. Each was mounted in cardboard and received new numbering. Recently, during the conservation process to remove the cardboard, which had forced and damaged the elasticity of the parchments during the course of the last century, the volume bound by Agnes Smith Lewis in 1914 was disassembled and now the original leaves and bifolios are kept in single folders. As regards the Birmingham fragments, these are kept in single folders. There has been no way of verifying the presence and condition of the leaves held at the Beuron Archabbey.

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[63] Lewis reported the opinions she received as personal communications from A. Cowley, Aldis Wright, and Ellis regarding the resemblance of the upper-writing of the Sinai palimpsest (then, Cambridge Or. 1287) with Vat. ar. 71, dated 885 CE (in Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca* ix-x). See also George, Palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, 406–410 (Sinai ar. NF Parch. 1, dated 868 CE; Strasbourg, Bibliothèque universitaire et nationale, Arabe 150, dated 901 CE and Arabe 151, dated 885 CE and Vat. ar. 71), and Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic manuscripts*, 84 (Sin. ar. 72 dated 897 CE). George observes the similarity of the script in the codex of Arabic homilies and MS Mingana Chr. Ar. Add. 124, without suggesting that the two fragments were part of the same manuscript.

[64] See Fedeli, Digitization Project, 109, 117, and Fedeli, Manuscript Acquisitions, 229–232.

[65] The unnumbered manuscript from the Archabbey of Beuron is Manuscript no. 32 in Assfalg and Molitor, *Armenische Handschriften*, 114–116.

As mentioned above, among the diverse materials used to produce the *codex rescriptus*, twenty-three Qurʾānic bifolios belonging to two different objects (made of respectively sixteen and seven leaves) were reused to produce six quires originally numbered by the monks. Quires VI, XI, XII, XVII and XVIII are indicated with Greek alphabetic numerals.

Languages and cultures of the two layers. The composite recycled materials are the Syriac text of the *Protevangelium Jacobi* (or Infancy Gospel of James) and the *Transitus Mariae* (or Account of Mary's Passing) dating from the latter half of the 5th or beginning of the 6th century, the Peshitta (Gospels of Matthew and John) from the 5th/6th century, and a hymn from the 9th century; [66] the Greek text of Genesis[67] from the 7th/8th century;[68] the Armenian text of fragments from the Letter to the Hebrews, the Epistle to the Galatians, and the First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians, dated before the 9th century;[69] a Christian Arabic text in a script similar to the *scriptio superior* from the 9th/10th century; and the Arabic text of a few Muslim documentary materials from the 9th century.[70] Among the recycled materials used for assembling the new codex are sixteen small Qurʾānic leaves and seven larger Qurʾānic leaves.[71]

Script style of the Qurʾānic text. The script used for writing the small and large leaves of the Qurʾānic text is in *ḥijāzī* style from the 7th/8th century with 24 to 30 and 21 to 23 lines respectively, arranged in a vertical format.[72]

Elapsed time between the two layers. The codex of homilies written in Sinai in the 9th/10th century was produced using available recycled materials spanning a long period of time, from the 5th/6th century (the Syriac texts of the apocryphal Gospels and the Peshitta version of Matthew and John) to the 9th/10th century Christian Arabic text (placed in the same quire that includes three large Qurʾānic leaves), which is written in a script similar to the almost-contemporary text of the *scriptio superior*. As regards the Qurʾānic leaves, about two centuries elapsed between their production and the manufacturing of the Christian homilies in Arabic.

Thus, the person(s) who assembled the new object had at their disposal recycled composite materials in different formats expressing the multicultural and multilinguistic environment in which the codex of homilies was produced and used.[73]

Size and format of the two layers. The *codex rescriptus* consists of 190 extant small parchment leaves in vertical format, measuring about 20 × 12.7 cm.[74] The Arabic text of the homilies, arranged in a variable number of lines from fifteen to eighteen, is written in dark brown ink. Titles of homilies and their attribution

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[66] Texts edited in Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, 2–115 of the Syriac section (*Protevangelium Jacobi* and *Transitus Mariae*); 116–121 text of Isaiah and Exodus; 122–124 (and xxvi–vii) Hymn; 125–126 Mar Ephrem; 127–129 Miscellanea; 130 Mar Jacob; 131–132 Miscellanea. See also *ibid*., xii–xvii. As regards the Peshitta, see *ibid*., xxiii–xxiv.

[67] Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca,* xxi–xiii. On Beuron MS Erzabtei showcase 46, which bears a portion of Genesis 41 matching f. 11 of the Cambridge codex, see Vaccari, Palinsesti biblici di Beuron, 235.

[68] See Tchernetska, Greek-Oriental Palimpsests, 253–254, on the dating to the 7th to 8th century, while George reports a later dating (namely 8th/9th century) provisionally suggested by Guglielmo Cavallo, see George, Palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, 418.

[69] The Armenian text of the Mingana bifolio (Armenian version of Hebrews 11:15–23 and 24–32) was studied in Brock, Early Armenian Palimpsest. My hypothesis concerning the matching leaves of Beuron was initially based only on the information mentioned in Assfalg and Molitor, *Armenische Handschriften*, 114–116 and in their description in Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 350–351. See Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic manuscripts*, 87 and fn. 101. After my meeting with Bernard Outtier and his kindness in providing me with the images of the Beuron leaves, I was able to support my hypothesis with further evidence.

[70] On the dating of the materials, see George, Palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, 418–421.

[71] Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, xvii–xxi and xlix–lxviii and the later edition produced with Alphonse Mingana (Mingana and Lewis, *Leaves from Three Ancient Qurâns*). See Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts*, 105–125, 276–330, and Fedeli, *Edition of MS CUL Or 1287*. This work is the first complete edition of the Qurʾānic leaves, since some leaves had not been identified in the 1902 and 1914 editions and, consequently, in later works.

[72] Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts,* 105–125. George suggests a very early date for the large leaves, see George, Palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, 396–404. In 1996, Déroche was the first to classify the Qurʾānic palimpsest leaves as part of the corpus of manuscripts in *ḥijāzī* style, likely on the basis of the images reproduced in the 1902 and 1914 editions, as the location was unknown at that time (Déroche, Manuscrits du Coran en caractères higâzî, 14).

[73] Agnes Smith Lewis edited the texts of the *scriptio inferior* of the codex in 1902 (Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*). See also the interesting observations about the environment in which the codex was manufactured in George, Palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, 413–416. The Armenian leaves are not included in the previous studies of the codex of homilies.

[74] As some leaves have been removed from the codex and exposed to damage over the course of time, some of the parchments are now smaller. It should be noted that one leaf is on paper (Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca* xii).

to a Church Father are marked in red ink and the separation between one homily and the next is indicated by simple coloured decorations.

The scattered fragments of the codex of homilies have all been kept as flat disconnected leaves, as some leaves were removed by Tischendorf and the supplier of Grote, and the rest of the codex was disassembled by Agnes Smith Lewis when she bought the codex and discovered that it was a palimpsest. The structure of the Lewis main section of the codex—as it was in 1895—is described in her 1902 publication, where she represented the 162 leaves structured in 21 quires, mainly quaternions, except quires I (two single leaves), II (a quaternion plus two single leaves) and XI (quinion),[75] whereas the extant Greek alphabetic numerals indicate quires V (corresponding to quire VII as indicated by Lewis) to XVIII (corresponding to quire XXI as indicated by Lewis). The actual order and structure of the quires as acquired by Lewis are likely to be different from the original order of the codex, according to the irregularities of the quire structure and the order of the homilies compared with the sequence given in MS Mingana Chr. Ar. Add. 171.[76] The eleven Armenian leaves from Beuron and the Birmingham Armenian fragment constitute the last three quaternions of the codex.[77]

The composite recycled materials have been used and adjusted to the small format of the codex. Thus, some leaves have been used without cutting or trimming, as in the case of the small Qurʾānic leaves (22 × 18 cm), whereas other leaves have been trimmed to reduce their measurements to the small leaves, such as the large Qurʾānic leaves. These now measure 24/25 × 18/19 cm, while originally they were about 31–32 × 23–24 cm. Thus, the manufacturing of the new codex caused more than one third of the original parchment surface to be trimmed off.[78] The small leaves maintained their whole area, as the generous margins suggest. Both the small and the large leaves were turned 90 degrees and folded to obtain bifolios for the small codex.

It is quite probable that the first layer of the Qurʾānic script was not visible at the time when the codex of homilies was manufactured, however it must be noted that the small Qurʾānic leaves were kept together to assemble complete quaternions corresponding to 1) ff. 13–20 (Q. 13:18–34 + Q.13:34–14:8 and Q.15:85–16:18 + Q.16:18–39); 2) ff. 53–60 (Q.7:143–158, Q.9:35–58, 16:78–96 + Q.16:96–116); 3) ff. 95–102 (continuous text from Q.16:117–17:9 + Q.17:9–30 + Q.17:30–51 + Q.17:51–69); 4) ff. 103–109+Mingana leaf (Q.7:158–174; Q.9:18–35; Q.9:59–78; Q.11:17–37). The large leaves were used to assemble the two last quires of the Cambridge Lewis section, namely the complete quaternion of ff. 147–154 (Q.19:76–20:40; Q.22:34–65; Q.40:78–41:21; Q.44:37–45:21) and three leaves of the quaternion of ff. 155–162 (Q.24:2–30; Q.28:29–52; Q.29:18–43). Therefore, it seems more plausible to think that the recycled materials were kept together even as 'new' material surfaces, rather than assuming that the cleaned recycled parchments were piled up in a random and disorderly fashion.

Moreover, it is logical to assume that the sections of the Qurʾānic text used as recycled materials did not start and finish abruptly, thus lacking the continuity and meaning of the completeness of the syntactical structure. Thus, the small and large leaves were probably part of two larger objects. However, there are no traces or elements which make it possible to deduce the original quire structure of the small and large extant leaves.

3.3.2. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS L 120 sup.

This is a Christian Arabic *codex rescriptus* from Sinai that reuses several leaves in different formats from diverse cultures, languages, and scripts, from both religious and classical traditions. Among the diverse reused materials are two single leaves of Qurʾānic text.

Provenance and context. Manuscript L 120 sup. is one of a number of Christian Arabic manuscripts datable from around the 10th/11th century or the 11th/12th century, purchased by Achille Ratti from Rosenthals

[75] Quires XIII and XIV are two quaternions, now that the Birmingham half leaf of the Qurʾānic text has been interpreted as joined to f. 103 of the Lewis Cambridge palimpsest. See the observation about the irregularity in the quire structure in Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, xi–xii, reported also in George, Palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, 411 fn. 75 without observing the different interpretation of the quire structure following the discovery of the Birmingham half leaf.

[76] See Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts*, 88–91.

[77] Ff. 9v and 8v of the Beuron leaves have alphabetic Greek numerals indicating respectively 19 and 20. The Beuron Armenian quire 19 follows the last quire of the Cambridge manuscript, marked as quire 18.

[78] Fedeli, *Early Qurʾānic manuscripts*, 120–121.

Antiquariat in Munich in 1910.[79] The *codex rescriptus* is a *Paterikon* that contains the Arabic version of a collection of *Apophthegmata Patrum* in the first part and a composite collection of *Apophthegmata*, anecdotes, and edifying stories in the second.[80] The Arabic script of the new codex is similar to other manuscripts produced in the scriptorium of the Monastery of St. Catherine. The process of its manufacture, putting together several recycled leaves in different scripts, languages, and cultures, is similar to the construction of the *codex rescriptus* Sinaiticus described in the previous section (3.3.1).

Structure. The original *codex rescriptus* was disassembled when it entered the Ambrosiana, and it now consists of flat leaves kept in single cardboard folders grouped in a further folder, quire by quire. Two Qurʾānic leaves have been reused to produce ff. 86 and 91 in the twelfth quire of the *codex rescriptus*.[81]

Languages and cultures of the two layers. The *codex rescriptus* L 120 sup. is a Christian Arabic text, i.e. a *Paterikon* that was assembled in the 10th to 12th century by reusing several texts in different scripts and languages: Hebrew, Greek, Greek with Arabic, Latin with Greek, and Arabic.[82]

The new codex contains 524 elements from composite texts. Sauget defined it as 'un Paterikon arabe mixte'.[83] The first part, comprising elements no. 1–436, corresponds to a systematic collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* with a few characteristics that suggest a connection with the Syriac text of the *Paradisum Patrum* by the monk Ananisho (*ʿAnān-Īshōʿ*). Moreover, some features of the Arabic version in translating proper names reveals 'l'influence incontestable du syriaque'.[84] The second part, comprising elements nos. 437–524, is an amalgam of heterogeneous pieces from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the *Pratum spirituale* of John Moschus, the *Narrationes* of Anastasius of Sinai, the *Historia Lausica* of Palladius, and ascetic writings and lives of saints.[85]

The majority of these recycled leaves (90 ff. out of 140) belonged to six Arabic manuscripts, of which only the two Qurʾānic leaves have been identified.[86] Moreover, there are eleven manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible (28 ff. of the *codex rescriptus*), including fragments of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Proverbs, dated from the 10th–11th century;[87] one manuscript (2 ff.) of the Siddur with the prayers written in Hebrew and the liturgical prescriptions in Arabic language and Hebrew script from the 10th-11th century; one manuscript of Virgil's Aeneid in Latin with Greek translation (8 ff.) from the 4th–6th century;[88] one Greek manuscript of a tractate of John's Gospel (2 ff.) from the 9th century;[89] and one Septuagint manuscript (Habakkuk and Daniel) with translation into Arabic (4 ff.), from the 9th century.[90] Excluding the 96 leaves

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79 Sauget suggested the 10th/11th century (Sauget, Paterikon arabe 474) while Sirat reports the 11th/12th century (Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 145).

80 Sauget, Paterikon arabe.

81 The Qurʾānic leaves are indicated as corresponding to ff. 91–92 of the 11th quire of the *Paterikon* in the text of the article by Sirat, although the list reports correctly ff. 91:86 of the 12th quire as having Qurʾānic text on their *scriptio inferior* (Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 147). To manufacture the 12th quire, in addition to the two small Qurʾānic leaves, two large Arabic leaves in vertical format and one large leaf with fragmentary Hebrew text of II Samuel, 15: 14–29 have been used. The former have been kept in their entire size while the Hebrew fragment has been cut horizontally in two and only the upper half of the original leaf has been used in the extant part of the *codex rescriptus*. The upper part of the Hebrew leaf is now divided into two small leaves.

82 Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 18–19, no. XIX (L 120 sup., formerly S.P.II.161); Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 145; Fressura, I perduti ff della Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 241–242.

83 Sauget, Paterikon arabe, 474.

84 Sauget, Paterikon arabe, 494.

85 Sauget, Paterikon arabe, 473, 501–508.

86 Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 147. To the 90 leaves in Arabic, we have to add the four bifolios that I recently identified, see above. Thus, the total number of Arabic leaves is 98 out of 148.

87 Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 150.

88 Two small leaves of the *codex rescriptus* (i.e. ff. 115–116) disappeared between 1946 and 1957, coinciding with the end of the exhibition in Lucerne where the four Latin and Greek Aeneid leaves were displayed, as reconstructed in Fressura, I perduti ff della Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 241–273, 269. The fragment is attributed to the end of the 5th century/ beginning of 6th by Elias Avery Lowe, while it was dated from the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 5th by Giovanni Galbiati. See Pasini, Integrazioni e correzioni, 269 fn. 9.

89 Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 145; Pasini, Integrazioni e correzioni, 270–271. Pasini specifies the Anatolian-Palestinian location of the production of the Greek leaves on a palaeographical basis.

90 Pasini, Frammento greco-arabo, 41. The scholar compares the leaves with the script of another manuscript dated 861/862, of Palestinian origin (Sin. gr. NF MG 12 + Sin. gr. 210).

in Arabic whose content is still unknown, the *codex rescriptus* brought together Muslim, Jewish and Christian texts, as well as Virgil. It is worth noting the presence of texts accompanied by their translation, i.e. the Latin Virgil with translation into Greek, the Greek Septuagint with translation into Arabic, and the Hebrew Book of Prayers with Judeo-Arabic. The two bifolios containing the Greek Septuagint accompanied by its Arabic translation side by side are a significant factor in retracing the context of the entire object. Moreover, the Arabic script of the two bifolios has some New Style features in the writing of the Qurʾānic text, adapted to the script style of the Sinai and St. Saba scriptoria in the 8th/9th century.[91]

The two Qurʾānic leaves have two sections of the text of *sūra al-Nisāʾ*,[92] namely Q.4:34 (from *wa-ḥjurūhunna fī l-maḍājiʿ*) to Q.4:38 (supposedly *wa-lladhīna yunfiqūna*) on the flesh side of the first leaf, corresponding to f.86v of the *codex rescriptus*, and Q.4:38 (from *ʾamwālahum riʾāʾa*) to Q.4:43 (*wa-ʾin kuntum marḍā ʾaw*) on its hair side. The second leaf has the text from Q.4:95 (from *[al-ḥus]nā wa-faḍḍala*) to Q.4:101 (supposedly *ʿalaykum junāḥun*) on its hair side, corresponding to f. 91r and Q.4:101 (from *ʾan taqṣurū min-a l-ṣalawāti*) to Q.4:103 (supposedly the beginning of the verse) on its flesh side.[93]

Script style of the Qurʾānic text. The Qurʾānic text that has been cancelled to write the *Paterikon* is written in New Style script with features of NS III, according to Déroche's classification. Qurʾānic manuscripts written in a similar script include MSS BnF ar. 374a, 374c, 382a, and 382c. Despite the great limitations of direct inspection with the naked eye without the help of special images or special lights, which did not enable recognition of details of the traits of the letters, it was possible to identify a few distinctive letters of the New Style III, for example the isolated and final *alif*, initial and medial *kāf*, the ligature of *lām-alif* and final *nūn*. The consonantal skeleton is likely to be furnished by rare diacritics if a few strokes have this function rather than being spots of parchment material. It must be noted that no coloured dots or end of verse markers seem to have been added to the script.

There are Qurʾānic manuscripts in NS III that have an explicit date in their leaves, attesting dates such as 905, 926, 936, and 949, which support the hypothesis that NS III was introduced at the end of the 9th century and was widely used in in the 10th century.[94]

Elapsed time between the two layers. The *Paterikon*—probably written in Sinai in the 10th/11th century or 11th/12th century—was manufactured by using composite materials dating from the 4th–6th century (the Latin and Greek Aeneid) to the 10th–11th century (the Hebrew Bible leaves), the latter being (almost) contemporary with the text of the *scriptio superior*. In the case of the two Qurʾānic leaves, written probably in the 10th century, the period of time elapsing between the two layers is also relatively short.

Unfortunately, as already mentioned, the majority of the leaves, namely 96 Arabic leaves, have not been identified,[95] thus preventing any definitive interpretation of patterns in the reuse of previous documents. Nevertheless, the significant aspect of the reuse of materials to assemble the *Paterikon* is the diversity of materials, which implies an environment in which Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Judeo-Arabic texts were available, with a special component of bilingual texts, thus supporting the idea of a multicultural and multilinguistic context, as already observed for the Mingana-Lewis palimpsest and the Damascus leaf.

Size and format of the two layers. The *codex rescriptus* of *Apophthegmata Patrum* is acephalous and incomplete. It consists of 140 small parchment leaves in vertical format, measuring 17 × 13.5 cm. The leaves are structured in quires, mainly quaternions placed according to Gregory's rule.[96] On the basis of the quire structure and its triple numbering, Sauget suggested that the codex was originally composed of 176

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[91] Pasini, Frammento greco-arabo, 41 and fn. 32.

[92] The content was identified in Sirat *et al*., Vingt manuscrits, 147, although without specifying the precise sections of the text ('passages de la sourate IV').

[93] Here the *scriptio inferior* is illegible to the naked eye and the text is reconstructed on the basis of the length of the previous lines, the number of lines on the other three pages, and the identification of a few letters and words at l. 7 (Q.4:102, likely *maṭarin ʾaw kuntum*).

[94] Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, 51.

[95] I was able to inspect the four leaves of the 12th quire which have some lines of the *scriptio inferior* not covered by the *scriptio superior*. Although I was unable to identify the text from the direct inspection, the script is rounded and very small, the height of *alif* being 0.3 cm, and is likely to have been written at a time quite close to the text of the *scriptio superior*.

[96] Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 147.

small leaves, grouped into twenty-two quires.[97] The Christian Arabic text, arranged in sixteen lines, is written in dark brown ink and some introductory words referred to the narration are written in red ink (e.g. *qāla* and *ʾaḫbarū*).[98] Sauget observed that the quires have traces of three strata of numbering, Arabic, Coptic, and Georgian, the latter system being clear evidence of the place of production or, at least, of assembling, i.e. the Monastery of St. Catherine.[99] The Sinai production of the codex is also supported by the comparison of the text of the *Apophthegmata* with other manuscript texts of Sinai origin.[100]

The composite recycled materials have been adjusted to the small format of the new codex. Thus, for example, large Hebrew leaves have been cut vertically into twos and used as two bifolios in the new codex.[101] Large Arabic leaves measuring about 21–24 × 16.5 cm and showing a vertical arrangement of the lines seem to have been used without cutting or trimming the parchment, but simply rotating the leaf 90 degrees and folding the large leaf into the two small leaves of a bifolio.[102]

Another interesting adjustment can be seen in the two smaller Qurʾānic leaves, ff. 86–91. The two single leaves now measure 14.5 × 16.5 cm and 13.5 × 15 cm, with the text arranged in nine lines disposed in an oblong format of about 11.5 × 14 and 12 × 15.5 cm.[103] The distance between one base line and the following one is about 1.2/1.3 cm. The leaves have been rotated 90 degrees in order to change the oblong format into a vertical one, thus rebinding the oblong leaves in their new vertical format. Thus, the upper margins of the two oblong leaves have been used to make a stub that extends beyond the spine-fold, by folding the upper margin at 1 and 1.5 cm from the upper margin. Along the fold for making the stub, the sign of the quire structure of the *codex rescriptus* is still visible in the now flat and disassembled leaves. Then, the inner margins of the leaves with part of the writing area and likely the bottom margins have been trimmed to adjust the size of the oblong leaf to the new vertical leaf and the two single leaves put together. Thus, the Qurʾānic leaves in oblong format were originally larger, likely about 14.5 × 19.5 cm (ff. 86–91).

A final consideration with regard to the nature of the two single leaves placed in a flesh-hair, hair-flesh arrangement. As their inner margins have been cut, there are no traces revealing their possible original structure as a bifolio or leaves joined by means of a stub. A reasonable hypothesis is that the text after *wa-ʾin kuntum marḍā ʾaw* (in Q.4:43) was not interrupted but continued on a following leaf, and the text starting from *[al-ḥus]nā wa-faḍḍala* in Q.4:95 was completed by its previous part, namely subject and verb before *[al-ḥus]nā*, thus conveying a complete meaning in '[yet to each God has promised the reward] most fair'. Assuming a complete sequence of the Qurʾānic text from Q.4:43 to Q.4:95 and arranging the 1139 word lacuna in nine lines per page, about 90/100 words per page, the missing text would occupy six leaves that would fit perfectly between ff.86 and 91 of the *Paterikon*, suggesting at least a quaternion if we interpret the two single Qurʾānic leaves which ended up in Sinai as a recyclable writing surface. In this scenario, ff. 86–91 could have been a bifolio that has been kept in the new *codex rescriptus*, despite the change from oblong to vertical format and the trimming of the parchment. Without further data about leaves from the same Qurʾānic item, there is no evidence for supporting this hypothesis of an original outer bifolio.

3.4. From Ṣanʿāʾ

Provenance and context. These four palimpsests (three groups of leaves and quires belonging to a single project described in section 3.4.1, and one isolated single leaf in section 3.4.2) are part of the findings from the *genizah* practice within the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ discovered in the 1970s, 2007, and likely also earlier, in

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97 Sauget, Paterikon arabe, 474–475.

98 On the content of the *Paterikon*, see Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 18–19, Sauget, Paterikon arabe, and Faraggiana, Nota sul rapporto fra l'Ambr. L 120 sup.

99 Sauget, Paterikon arabe, 474–476, reported also in Pasini, Frammento greco-arabo, 35.

100 On the comparison of the text of the *apophthegmata* in the Ambrosiana manuscript with the Sinai manuscript tradition, see Faraggiana, Nota sul rapporto fra l'Ambr. L 120 sup.

101 See for example ff. 111–112 and 122–123 of the *Paterikon*. The two bifolios represent respectively the right and left half of an original large Hebrew leaf with the text of Deuteronomy structured in three columns.

102 See the bifolio constituted by ff. 90–87 of the *Paterikon*, with an unidentified Arabic text on its *scriptio inferior*.

103 Thus confirming the supposition by Déroche, who had access to the images of the hair side only and could only estimate the possible size and format of the leaf, in Sirat *et al.*, Vingt manuscrits, 147.

the 1960s. Apart from five leaves that left Yemen and ended up on the antiquarian market, all the leaves were in Ṣanʿāʾ until at least spring 2018.

The mosque had a deposit of unused and discarded manuscripts, mainly Qurʾānic leaves. After the 1970s discovery, 950 fragmentary copies of Qurʾānic text and 150 other religious texts dating from the 7th to the 11th centuries were identified. The hurried survey of the New Finds conducted in 2008 led to the suggestion that almost all the fragments and manuscripts are Qurʾānic texts from the 7th to the 11th century. For the discovery in the 1950s or 1960s, knowledge was passed down by the collective memory of local people, but there are no details about further Qurʾānic copies that could have been found together with the section of the Qurʾānic palimpsest now kept at al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya.

In order to understand the possible connections between the fragments stored in the niches and above the ceiling of the mosque, it is important to know whether the two groups of manuscripts were deposited in two distinct periods. As Paolo Costa suggested that the mosque's structure was changed and adapted with the purpose of building new spaces above the ceiling level to host the rich library of the mosque,[104] it is likely that the niches behind the false wall were made, used, and closed before the building of the library space above the ceiling. In fact, the large and accessible *genizah*-space of the ceiling could have had hosted many more manuscripts without generating the need for a new *genizah* project in the two niches.

3.4.1. Dār al-Maḫṭūṭāt 01-27.1, al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya and its scattered fragments, New Finds unnumbered single leaf

Structure. Three separate fragments were part of the same object. MS DaM 01-27.1 was restored in the 1980s and consists of flat single leaves, fragments, and one bifolio, kept together in a cardboard box.[105] The *codex rescriptus* of the al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya still keeps its original quire structure and bifolios, apart from the leaves that were removed and put on the antiquarian market.[106] The NF single leaf is an isolated leaf among the recently discovered fragments. All the palimpsested Qurʾānic leaves and fragments were written on Qurʾānic leaves and quires.[107]

Language and culture of the two layers. Both layers are Qurʾānic text. The MaSh *codex rescriptus* and the DaM leaves were probably produced in the 7th/8th century by reusing Qurʾānic leaves written in the 7th century.[108] Although it is possible that the new leaves and manuscript were produced in Ṣanʿāʾ, using the recycled materials available, there is no evidence supporting this argument except the logical observation that the people in charge of manufacturing a *codex rescriptus* of the Qurʾānic text in Ṣanʿāʾ in the 7th and in the 9th/10th century would have had at their disposal a huge amount of Qurʾānic manuscripts rather than composite materials as in the case of the Sinai Monastery of St. Catherine in the period between the 9th and the 12th century.

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104 Costa, Moschea Grande di Ṣanʿāʾ, 490.

105 In 2007, at the time of the imaging, the Dār al-Maḫṭūṭāt held thirty-seven (fragments of) leaves under the classmark 01–27.1 (f. Q.31:24–32:20 being missing). The thirty-eight leaves have been entirely or partially accepted by scholars as part of a single entity. See Cellard, Review of *The Sanaa Palimpsest* and Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 5.

106 Leaves removed from the MaSh section are in Copenhagen, at the David Collection; in Stanford, in the hands of a private collector; in Abu Dhabi, at the Louvre; and were sold by auction at Bonham's in 2000 and at Christie's in 2008. See Fedeli, Early Evidences of Variant Readings; Noja Noseda, La mia visita a Sanaa, 55–58; Sadeghi and Bergmann, The Codex of a Companion; and Sadeghi and Goudarzi, Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins. As regards the Abu Dhabi Louvre leaf recently identified, see Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest.

107 The *scriptio inferior* of the NF leaf has not been identified, but presumably is Qurʾānic text. As regards the quire structure of the first layer, this is evident in the MaSh section, while it has been reconstructed in the case of the DaM section, see Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest.

108 The dating is on a palaeographical basis. Moreover, pieces of the parchment from the DaM and MaSh sections have also been radiocarbon dated. A piece of the Stanford leaf (removed from the MaSh section) has been analysed at the Accelerator Mass Spectrometry Laboratory at the University of Arizona, estimating that the Ṣanʿāʾ parchment had a 95% probability of belonging to the period from 578 to 669 CE and a 75.1% probability of being older than 646 CE (see Sadeghi and Bergmann, The Codex of a Companion, 348, 353-354). Three parchment pieces from the DaM leaves (corresponding to Q.21:72, Q 6:159 and Q 20:74) have been analysed at the Centre de Datation par le RadioCarbone at the University of Lyon. The results gave respectively between 388 and 535 CE (radiocarbon age 1620 +/- 30 BP), 543–643 CE (radiocarbon age 1475 +/- 30 BP) and 433–599 CE (radiocarbon age 1530 +/- 30 BP). I retrieved the results from the BAnque NAtionale de DOnnées RAdiocarbone pour l'Europe et le Proche Orient of the Lyon Laboratory in May 2015 and February 2016. They are reported in Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*,13 and Robin, L'Arabie dans le Coran, 65 (Appendice: Les manuscrits coraniques en écriture ḥijāzite de Ṣanʿāʾ: quelques datations).

The *scriptio superior* of the MaSh quires and their removed leaves has the text of the Qurʾān from Q.2:246 to 3:154; Q.3:179 to Q.5:111; Q.7:40 to 9:71; Q.9:168 to Q.10:75; Q.10:94 to 12:49; the DaM leaves have a more fragmentary sequence of the text, namely Q.6:49–73; Q.6:149–Q.7:11; Q.9:112–115 and 124–127; Q.14:32–41 (indicated as 15:32 and 15:41 on the parchment, i.e. its verso) and Q.14:52–15:16 (indicated as 15:1 and 15:16 on the parchment, i.e. its recto); Q.16:73–Q.17:6; Q.17:40–77; Q.18:22–32; Q.19:38–98; Q.20:1–130; Q.21:16–22:16; Q.25:10–59; Q.26:156–176 and 198–221 (indicated as 26:128 and 26:201 on the parchment); Q.27:25–49; Q.28:58–86; Q.29:29–54; Q.30:26–54; Q.31:24–33:37;[109] Q.34:52–35:18; Q.37:38–90 and 102–172; Q.38:73–39:6; Q.41:17–43 and 41:47–42:16; Q.42:21–48; Q.43:63–44:11; Q.47:15–48:2; Q.55:16–69; Q.57:1–22 and 57:27–58:22 and 59:1–60:1. The *scriptio superior* of the NF single leaf has 71:1–28 (from the *basmala* to the beginning of verse 28 which is covered by the natural rolling of the parchment) and Q.72:6–28 (until the end of the *sūra*).[110] Given the lacunae in the parchment material, it is difficult to identify clearly the sequence of the text on the recto and verso of the leaf.[111]

All the leaves of the new object *rescriptus* reuse Qurʾānic leaves. Due to the quality of images of the NF leaf, there are no conjectures about the section of the Qurʾānic text in its *scriptio inferior*, but the script style of the few recognizable letters seems to be the same as the other two sections of the object. The 41 MaSh leaves[112] are available and accessible only by means of the low-resolution pdf images in Hamdoun's thesis, which focus only on the *scriptio superior* of the palimpsest. Nevertheless, a few words and sentences are recognizable and thus allow a tentative and incomplete reading of some unedited leaves of the first layer, thus proposing words from Q.2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 75, 76 and 79+64, namely Q.6:130–137 (f. 1r); Q.7:28 (f. 3r); Q.2:243 (f. 4v); Q.2:257 (f. 5v); Q.2:229–232 and 2:225–227 (f. 8 recto and verso); Q.7:38 and 44 (f. 10v); Q.5:72 (f. 14v); Q.76:20–21 and 24 (f. 20v); Q.75:18–35 (f. 21r); Q.79:40–46 followed by Q.64:1–11 (f. 22r);[113] Q.2:153–161 (f. 25r); Q.2:177 (f. 26r);[114] Q.2:179–180 (f. 26v); Q.7:142–146 (f. 27v); Q.7:155 (f. 28r); Q.4:59–60 (f. 33r).[115]

The Qurʾānic content of the *scriptio inferior* of MS DaM 01-27.1 has been studied and published by Puin, Sadeghi-Goudarzi, and Hilali[116] and consists of sections from Q.2; 5; 35[117]; 11+8+9+19; 22; 33; 24; 16; 20+21;

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[109] The parchment Q.31:24–32:20 was not in situ in October 2007 and thus, is not part of the 2007 set of images but of the German microfilms only.

[110] The text, structured in 26 lines in both verso and recto of the leaf, has been written by hand B as identified by Cellard in DaM, see e.g. Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, fig. 6. Apart from identical letter shapes, the NF leaf shows a very interesting feature in understanding the complexity of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest, namely the medallions just sketched in brown ink (as in Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 10 and Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest*, 78).

[111] Q.71 starts with the *basmala* at the beginning of the page with an abundant margin, filled at a later stage with the text of *sūra al-Iḫlāṣ* (the Sincerity), while the side starting with Q.72:6 ends with the text of the last verse of the *sūra* and an abundant bottom margin. Thus, it is also possible to interpret the parchment as the end of *sūra* 72 plus the bottom margin and then the upper margin plus the beginning of *sūra* 71, showing the sūra order that is also attributed to Ibn Masʿūd, namely Q.72 followed by Q.71 (see Jeffery, *Materials for the History*, 22).

[112] In the 2004 Master's thesis by Hamdoun, only 72 sides of the 41 leaves are reproduced. In fact, these are the missing leaves and pages: 12r (between 11v/table 63 and 12v/table 65); 16v (between 16r/table 79 and 17r/table 81); 19v /between 19r/table 89 and 20r/table 91); f. 23r+v (the word *masjid* which is readable on the verso at the left of the recto in table 103 possibly from Q.7:29 or 7:31, implies the presence of a further leaf between table 101 and table 103, i.e. f. 23); 34v (between 34r/table 143 and 35r/table 145); 36r (between 35v/table 147 and 36vr/table 149); 37v and 38r (between 37r/table 151 and 38v/table 153); 40r (between 39v/table 157 and 40v/table 159) in Hamdoun, *al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Qurʾāniyya fī Ṣanʿāʾ*.

[113] Thus suggesting a *sūra* order that corresponds to the sequence attributed to Ubayy b. Kaʿab (see Lagarde, *Parfait manuel des sciences coraniques*, 235 and Jeffery, *Materials for the History*, 115), which should be compared with other points of the DaM palimpsest, i.e. the sequence of Q. 11+8+9+19; 12+18; 34+13 and 15+25. See also Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 25.

[114] Here the manuscript text seems to have the reading without *wa -l-sāʾilīna* ('and those who ask'), which is also the reading attributed to Ubayy b. Kaʿab, see Jeffery, *Materials for the History,* 120.

[115] The identification of a few words and sections here proposed agrees with and complements Sidky's reading published in Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest.

[116] See Puin, Früher Koranpalimpsest I, II, III, IV and V; Sadeghi and Bergmann, The Codex of a Companion; Sadeghi and Goudarzi, Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins; Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest*. Sadeghi and Goudarzi's edition also includes some leaves removed from the MaSh manuscript, thus reporting the sequence Q. 63+62+89+90 in the leaf auctioned at Christie's in 2008 and the sections from Q.2 and Q.5 in Stanford, the David Collection, and Bonham's leaves. The observations reported in this article are based on my work on the DaM palimpsest conducted between 2007 and 2008 that accompanied the imaging mission executed in 2007.

[117] In Sadeghi and Goudarzi, Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins, as I did not identify Q.12 before Q.18 in 2008.

28; 15+25; 30; 39+40; 37; 12+18[118]; 34+13.

Script style of the Qurʾānic texts. Both layers have Qurʾānic text written in the same script style, i.e. *ḥijāzī* style from the 7th century, as regards the *scriptio inferior*. Probably a few decades later, in the 7th/8th century, the leaves were recycled for writing a second layer of Qurʾānic text. Pieces of parchment from MS DaM 01-27.1 and from one leaf removed from al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya have also been radiocarbon dated, giving somehow different results, possibly because of the contamination of the two objects that were kept in separate storage places.[119] Nevertheless, the dating range provided by the radiocarbon analyses confirm the antiquity of these parchment materials from the 7th century.

Elapsed time between the two layers. Thus, only a few decades passed between the production of the first Qurʾānic leaves and their reuse for writing a further Qurʾānic manuscript.

Size and format of the two layers. The parchment leaves measure about 37 × 28 cm (e.g. DaM 01-27.1, f. 1, Q.6:49–73, and 37 × 27.5 cm in f. 2, Q.6:149–7:11) but the DaM object is very fragmentary and in some cases only small pieces of parchment are extant from some leaves.[120]

The leaves of the first layer have been reused maintaining similar layout, measurements and format. The margins – quite meagre according to the habits of *ḥijāzī* style manuscripts – have not been trimmed, the leaves have not been folded and turned 90 degrees, but have been reused preserving the original format. In a few cases, the leaf has been used upside down by turning the parchment 180 degrees, e.g. MS DaM 01-27.1, f. Q.29: 29–54 and MS MaSh, f. Q.3:107–119.[121] Both texts are structured in a variable number of lines placed vertically, from 21 to 36 (mainly 24 to 27–28) lines in the *scriptio superior* and from 23 to 35 lines in the *scriptio inferior*. As already mentioned, even the script style is similar, resulting in the same height of the letters. The letter *alif*, for example, measures about 1.2 cm in the *scriptio inferior* and 1 cm in the *scriptio superior* (measurements taken randomly in MS DaM 01-27.1, f. 2v).

As regards the quire structure in the two layers, Eléonore Cellard has recently argued that the leaves of the *scriptio inferior* were organized in quires that were also partially retained in the *scriptio superior*. The DaM palimpsest still preserves one bifolio in its leaves, and the bifolio has been used as such in both layers. The al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya section has evident traces of quires and bifolios.[122]

The fact that leaves with a continuous sequence of the text were also kept together in the production of the object *rescriptus* can be compared with the situation described above as regards the Sinai-Lewis palimpsest. Although in the Sinai *codex rescriptus* there are no traces of bifolios, as the Qurʾānic leaves have been adjusted to the new format of the small codex and the area of the large leaves has been trimmed, they have been kept together to make complete quires in the new codex.

The three Ṣanʿāʾ objects were part of the same project of *codex rescriptus*. If the single NF leaf is part of the same project, as is plausible, this would influence our perspective on the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest. The content of the new leaf in its *scriptio superior* (Q.71 and 72) implies a new horizon regarding the size of the scattered objects in their *scriptio superior*. Indeed, the possibility that the three objects were stored in three different places within the mosque, possibly in three different periods, must be considered, and this would necessarily imply that the *muṣḥaf* at a certain point was no longer a single item. The distinction between text (possibly almost all the complete—even if fragmentary—text from Q.2 to Q.72) and the object(s) is suggested by the fact that the text was composed of separated parts that were stored separately in three different places. It is quite implausible that the single item was separated into three pieces to be deposited in their respective sacred storage places. The fact that the text could have included a long portion from Q.2 to Q.72 supports the hypothesis that the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest was an (almost) complete *mushaf* while the possible existence of separate pieces (at least one in the roof and one in a niche of the wall) confirms the hypothesis of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest—in its *scriptio superior*—as a fragmented text.

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[118] In Sadeghi and Goudarzi, Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins, as I did not identify that in 2008.

[119] See fn. 108.

[120] See Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 6, regarding the different dimension of the parchment leaves kept at DaM and MaSh. According to the scholar, the latter leaves are smaller probably because they have not been treated with humidification and flattening.

[121] Table 49 in Hamdoun, *al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Qurʾāniyya fī Ṣanʿāʾ* (f. 8r). In its *scriptio inferior* I was able to read part of Q.2, namely words from verses 229, 231, 232 and 233.

[122] Cellard, Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest, 11f.

A further factor revealing the use and reuse of the Ṣanʿāʾ leaves is the presence of annotations in the margins. The NF leaf palimpsest shows signs of later use of the object. In fact, in the upper margin, before the beginning of Q.71 (*sūra Nūḥ*, i.e. 'Noah'), someone added the text of Q.112 (*sūra al-Iḫlāṣ*, i.e. 'the Sincerity'), consisting of a concise declaration of God's absolute oneness (*al-Tawḥīd*). The text of *sūra al-Iḫlāṣ* was added, possibly in the 9th/10th century, thus confirming the life of the object after its first production and later recycling process.[123]

3.4.2. Dār al-Maḫṭūṭāt 18–?.a

Structure. Single isolated Qurʾānic leaf written on a Qurʾānic text.

Languages and cultures of the two layers. Both layers are Qurʾānic text.[124] The *scriptio superior* has part of *sūra al-Furqān*, namely Q.25:1–17 (from its beginning to *ʾa-ʾantum aḍlaltum ʿibādī*)[125] that was written—likely in the 9th/10th century—reusing an older Qurʾānic leaf, containing part of *sūra al-Nūr*, i.e. Q.24:47–58.[126]

Script style of the Qurʾānic texts. The text of the *scriptio inferior* is written in an early Abbasid style which—assuming that the available image is not misleading—has some features in common with the transitional type A of Déroche's classification, i.e. with elements similar, for example, to MS BnF ar. 326d. The *scriptio superior* is in a New Style III script which is dated to the 9th/10th century.

Elapsed time between the two layers. As there are no elements for dating the production of the first layer, it is difficult to suggest how many years later the leaf was reused. The only conclusion is that the production of the leaf *rescriptus* is likely not contemporary with the first layer.

Size and format of the two layers. The parchment leaf measures 14 × 20 cm. The oblong format of the *scriptio inferior*—with the text arranged in 21 lines—has also been maintained in the *scriptio superior*—with the text in 18 lines—without turning or folding the original leaf. The text in New Style script has generous margins, while in the early Abbasid style script, the layout has smaller margins and the (possible) outer margin is non-existent, which could mean that the parchment was slightly trimmed.

3.5. Coptic Palimpsest of Unknown Provenance

Provenance and context. This item was sold at auction by Christie's without details about its provenance, which is presumed to be Egypt on the basis of the content of the *scriptio inferior* of the leaves, i.e. a Coptic text reused to write a section of Qurʾānic text. However, nothing is known about the wider context/deposit of which the manuscript was arguably a part.

Structure. The item sold at Christie's in April 2018 was composed of nine isolated leaves whose present location is unknown. All the nine leaves have Qurʾānic text produced using recycled materials in Coptic as recognized by Cellard.

Languages and cultures of the two layers. The *scriptio superior* has fragments of *sūra al-Māʾida* and *sūra al-Anʿām*[127], written reusing Coptic leaves in the Sahidic dialect containing sections of Deuteronomy

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123 The text of *sūra al-Iḫlāṣ* has been added in the upper margin of the first side of a bifolio that starts with Q.58:8 (*bi-l-ʾiṯmi wa-l-ʿudwāni*). In another isolated leaf, starting with the end of Q.23:89 (*tusḥarūna*), another section of the same *sūra* (Q.23:47–58) has later been added in the upper and outer margins.

124 The UNESCO CD, reviewed and explored by Puin and Small in 2007 (Small and Puin, UNESCO CD of Ṣanʿāʾ Mss), provides only one side of the leaf.

125 The text has a few distinctive readings, namely *yakūnu lahu jannatun* (in Q.25:8) which corresponds to the *qirāʾa* of al-Aʿmaš as reported in al-Šarfī, *Al-muṣḥaf wa-qirāʾātuhu* 68 (vol. 3); *wa-yawma naḥšuruhum* (in Q.25:17) which corresponds to the *qirāʾa* of the majority of readers from Kūfa, e.g. al-Nāfiʿ, see *ibid*. 70 (vol. 3) and *fa-ṭallū* (in Q.25:9).

126 In addition to some common orthographic features, the text has a distinctive reading in Q.24:54 for *wa-mā ʿalā l-rasūli illā l-balāġu l-mubīnu* (i.e. 'It is only for the Messenger to deliver the manifest Message'). As there is no space for the article before *rasūl* whose *lām* is not in its final shape but seems to be followed by a denticle and *alif*, it is possible to suggest the reading *wa-mā ʿalā rasūli-nā illā l-balāġu l-mubīnu* which corresponds partially to the expression used in Q.5:92 (i.e. *anna-mā ʿalā rasūli-nā l-balāġu l-mubīnu*).

127 In April 2018, I transcribed only part of the text of the leaves from the images—now no longer available—connected with the auction, thus reading Q.5:44–45, 53–57, 119–120; Q.6:1–11. Christie's catalogue reports Q.5:40–58, 69–76, 83–88, 116–120 and Q.6:1–9. Cellard presented some results relating to the Qurʾānic and Coptic leaves at the IQSA conference in Denver, November

and the Book of Isaiah, probably written within the Coptic community in the 6th century in the region of Middle Egypt between Abydos and Hermopolis.[128] Thus, the Copto-Arabic palimpsest can be compared with the Damascus leaf, whose Greek Book of Esther was used for writing the Qurʾānic text three or four centuries later.

Script of the Qurʾānic text. The early Abbasid script style, close to group CI in Deroche's classification, suggests the 8th century as a possible dating.[129]

Elapsed time between the two layers. Thus, about one or two centuries elapsed between the production of the Sahidic text of the Bible and its reuse for writing the Qurʾānic text.

Size and format of the two layers. The measurements indicated in Christie's catalogue are 11.1 × 12.7 cm for the largest fragment. The Arabic text is arranged in eleven lines per page. The Coptic text is arranged in two columns and its leaves have been folded without being turned 90 degrees.[130]

3.6. Unknown and Unrecognized Qurʾānic Palimpsests, e.g. the Fustat Geniza

To assemble the Ambrosiana *codex rescriptus* with its 140 small leaves, 90 Arabic leaves were reused in addition to the eight leaves recently recognized as part of the same codex. Among them are two Qurʾānic leaves, while 96 leaves are still unidentified. There are probably still further items that need to be identified and added to the meagre list of Qurʾānic palimpsests enumerated above. Their study is rendered more difficult because the erased layers are rarely legible with the naked eye, and images, if they are available at all, are often of uneven quality. Thus, for example, it was possible to identify parts of the content of the low-resolution pdf images of Hamdoun's thesis, although the results are not comparable to the reading of the images of the DaM leaves sized to 4888 × 6510 pixels at 300 ppi.

Thus, sometimes, traces of older palimpsested objects are not immediately evident but appear at a later point in the course of our studies. This is what happened with the manuscript from the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and further leaves from the National Library in St. Petersburg that once belonged to the same object.[131] Only through extended and frequent study of the leaves was it possible to recognize a few traces of earlier writing, but only proper multispectral imaging will allow scholars to identify the text of the *scriptio inferior*. Despite it being unidentified, the faded ink of the stratified object reveals that in assembling the *rescriptus*, the format, layout, and script style of the earlier layer were maintained, i.e. the *ḥijāzī* script style in vertical format, like in the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest (i.e. MSS DaM, MaSh and NF).

Thus, still-unidentified faded traces of a previous script that seems to have been erased to enable the support material to be recycled, rather than being mere corrections of single words, would suggest the presence of Qurʾānic palimpsests also in the Mosque of ʿAmr in Fustat, the old Cairo. There, early Qurʾānic manuscripts from the beginnings of Islam were kept for centuries. It may be possible to discover further leaves through special imaging, and thus to gain a new perspective on Fustat as a location where *genizah* practices were applied not only to the so-called 'Cairo Geniza' in a Jewish environment, but also to the mosque from a Muslim *genizah* perspective. In fact, the two buildings were a few metres from one another, in a multicultural and multilinguistic context.[132]

2018 in her paper From Coptic to Arabic: A New Palimpsest for the History of the Qurʾan in Early Islam. After submission of the present article, Cellard and Louis' article has been published reporting the content of the manuscript, i.e., Q.5:40–59, 5:69–89 and 5:116–6:11 (Cellard and Louis, From Coptic to Arabic, 46) and a detailed analysis of the artefact.

128 See Cellard, Une nouvelle contribution; Cellard and Louis, From Coptic to Arabic, 57, 77–86. The identified sections are Deuteronomy 6:3–4, 16–17, 9:5–6a, 14b–16a, Isaiah 40:15–16 (?), and Louis edited Isaiah 40:21–22a, 26–27 (f. 9) and 42:7b–9a and 42:23–24 (f. 8), see Cellard and Louis, From Coptic to Arabic, 86–94.

129 Cellard and Louis, From Coptic to Arabic, 49–51, 63.

130 See also Cellard and Louis, From Coptic to Arabic, 47–49, reporting the size of the least damaged folio (f. 9), i.e., 120 mm high by 131 mm wide. The nine leaves are part of two original quires (ff. 1–7; ff. 8–9).

131 See, for example, Museum of Islamic Art of Doha, MS.67.2007, ff. 2v and 3r. I am waiting for special images of the MIA leaves to verify my hypothesis and identify the text of the possible *scriptio inferior*.

132 See Vorderstrasse and Treptow, *A Cosmopolitan City*, 35.

4. DEPOSITS: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STRATIFIED OBJECTS

Palimpsests are like stratigraphic sequences revealing distinct phases of production on an archaeological site, although the stratigraphic relationship between the two (or more) layers is neither evident nor necessary within a palimpsest. The place of production of the two textual objects linked in one palimpsest is not necessarily the same, and the people involved in the production of the second layer are not necessarily aware of the nature of the first layer. This archaeological approach to palimpsested objects leads us to consider the crucial aspect of reconstruction of deposits and cultural identities. In fact, such stratigraphic manuscripts are an important way into studying the availability of documents in a certain place and period. In understanding and investigating palimpsests, Cavallo suggests a few questions: were the different ancient texts produced in the same area? Where? Did they arrive in the scriptorium in which they were assembled to produce new material as dismembered leaves/quires, or as a single object? What about the provenance of the older texts?[133]

Agati observes a certain connection between script and language from an archaeological perspective. Thus, for example, Greek script and language in the first stratum might be replaced by Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew in the *scriptio superior*, providing details about the new context in which the fragment is found reused.[134]

As regards Qurʾānic palimpsests, the context in which the new objects have been produced is known, except in the case of the Coptic fragment sold by Christie's. Thus, concluding from the elements described above, Qurʾānic texts were replaced by Christian Arabic texts in the Sinai scriptoria by destroying the codicological structure of the original manuscripts, while they were replaced by Qurʾānic texts, in a similar script and format, in the Ṣanʿāʾ Mosque context. However, in both situations, bifolios and leaves have been kept quite close together in assembling the quires of the new *codices rescripti*. This means that even if the recycled parchments arrived at the scriptoria as empty parchments ready for reuse, leaves from a single manuscript were kept together, probably also because of their size, format, thickness, and quality.

Qurʾānic texts replaced Biblical texts—in Greek and Coptic—and Qurʾānic texts. The latter case refers to the Ṣanʿāʾ Mosque, while examples of the former process belong to the multicultural deposit of Damascus and to an unknown location in Egypt. From a perspective of chronological stratification, it seems reasonable to suppose that texts written in roughly the same period or within a short distance of time, such as the two Qurʾānic strata in the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest, were part of the same cultural and manufacturing context. As regards the composite Sinai palimpsests, some reused leaves were produced centuries before the *codex rescriptus*, while others were reasonably contemporary. Moreover, in the case of the Ambrosiana palimpsest, Pasini observed that the Arabic-Greek text of the Septuagint in the *scriptio inferior* was produced in Palestine, probably in the Sinai region.

In fact, even more significant in terms of the archaeological context is the question of the languages and scripts that were in contact with the Qurʾānic texts in the manufacturing of the new quires. Excluding the single-leaf cases, it can be noted that the Ṣanʿāʾ environment seems to have had at its disposal only Qurʾānic texts, and this matches our knowledge of the nature of the texts from the *genizah* practice in the mosque. The Sinai palimpsests represent a wider range of texts available in the 9th/10th and 11th/12th century: in one object, Qurʾānic leaves, unidentified Arabic texts, the Hebrew Bible, the Hebrew Siddur and its notes in Judaeo-Arabic for the liturgy, Latin Virgil and its Greek translation, Greek New Testament commentary, the Septuagint and its translation into Arabic; and Syriac apocryphal Gospels,[135] the Peshitta of the New Testament, a Syriac hymn, the Greek Genesis, an Armenian New Testament, Christian Arabic texts, and Muslim documentary texts together with Qurʾānic leaves in the other repository.

Thus, following Cavallo's interpretation, palimpsests are archives, and 'documenti di riconversione di materiali e di stratificazione di tecniche e di testi di grandissimo interesse culturale'.[136] Cavallo observes that it is

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133 Cavallo, Immagine ritrovata, 13.

134 Agati, *Manuscript Book*, 71.

135 Syriac leaves from the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and the *Transitus Mariae* were also used in assembling the *Codex Arabicus*, Sin. ar., 514, see the contribution of Grigory Kessel in this book. The upper text was written probably in the 9th/10th century in a script style similar to the *scriptio superior* of the Cambridge-Lewis *codex rescriptus* of Arabic homilies.

136 Cavallo, Immagine ritrovata, 11. The scholar uses the term 'archivi' ('Vi sono codici palinsesti che – assemblati con spezzoni di vari e più antichi manoscritti – costituiscono 'mausolei', per adoperare un'espressione di Lowe, o piuttosto 'archivi', nei quali sono

common practice to focus on the *scriptio inferior* of palimpsests, and the history of Qurʾānic palimpsest studies strongly confirms this approach. Thus, he invites scholars to pay great attention to the *scriptio superior* as well. The main feature of palimpsest is the destruction of previous texts that somehow survive, while Cavallo astutely emphasizes that the reuse of parchment implies a transformation of old texts into new ones, a survival of documents that are placed in a new cultural context,[137] a reallocation of important resources, just like the pieces of old columns used for building the new columns of the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ, that later housed discarded manuscripts and palimpsests.[138]

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depositati documenti rari o unici di storia della trasmissione dei testi o della cultura scritta').

137 Cavallo uses the concepts of *Überleben* and *Nachleben* (Cavallo, Immagine ritrovata, 13: 'Il reimpiego in questo caso ha significato – per adoperare due termini della lingua tedesca – non un *Überleben*, una pura sopravvivenza alla distruzione, ma un *Nachleben*, una trasformazione di vecchi in nuovi libri, quindi l'inserimento in un nuovo contesto culturale'). The scholar is mainly focusing on the *disiecta membra*, several texts reused to assemble a new codex.

138 See the stratigraphy of the Great Mosque in Costa, Moschea Grande di Ṣanʿāʾ 489–490. The comparison between the mentality of washing or erasing previous texts for their reuse and the similar approach in reusing materials for building monuments is underlined in Cohen, Geniza for Islamicists, 136–137.

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