

# تحلیل تطبیقی مصاحف رضوی و سمرقند و نقد دیدگاه‌های مستشرقان

## در باب تاریخ‌گذاری متن قرآن

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### چکیده

### اطلاعات مقاله

این پژوهش به تحلیل تطبیقی دو مصحف برجسته قرآنی اولیه می‌پردازد: مصحف رضوی (اواسط قرن اول هجری/قرن هفتم میلادی) و مصحف سمرقند (اواخر قرن دوم/هشتم یا اوایل قرن سوم/نهم میلادی). با بهره‌گیری از روش‌شناسی میان‌رشته‌ای شامل مصحف‌شناسی، دیرینه‌نگاری و نقد متنی، این مطالعه سه محور کلیدی را بررسی می‌کند: تولید مادی، املا (رسم‌خط) و سیستم‌های تقسیم آیات (عد الای). مصحف رضوی، با خط حجازی پیوسته و تنوع قرائتی (شامل قرائات شاذ و مشهور)، سیالی پیشااستاندارد را نشان می‌دهد که با هیچ نظام آیه‌شماری کانونی یکنواخت همخوانی ندارد و به سنت‌های منطقه‌ای مدینه، بصره و شام گرایش دارد. در مقابل، مصحف سمرقند با خط کوفی B.Ib/B.II، ساختار عظیم و همخوانی ۹۲ درصدی با سنت کوفی، استانداردسازی عراقی را بازتاب می‌دهد، هرچند با انحرافات جزئی.

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یافته‌ها، ثبات اولیه رسم عثمانی را تأیید می‌کنند و نظریه‌های تجدیدنظرطلبانه (مانند جان وانزبرو مبنی بر ویرایش فرقه‌ای تا قرن نهم) را رد می‌نمایند. همزمان، تنوع قرائتی (مانند "فَتَوْفِيهِمْ" در برابر "فَيَوْفِيهِمْ") و املائی (مانند "شَيء" با/بدون الف) نشان‌دهنده دوره‌ای طولانی از پویایی پیش از رسمی‌سازی نهایی (ابن مجاهد) است. این تحلیل، ادعای یکنواختی جهانی قرائت حفص از دوره اولیه را نیز به چالش می‌کشد. با تکیه بر شواهد رادیوکربن (۶۵۰-۷۵۰ م برای رضوی؛ ۹۹۵-۷۷۵ م برای سمرقند) و ارجاعات کلاسیک (الدانی، ابن ابی داود)، این مقاله بر اهمیت مصاحف اولیه در بازسازی تاریخ پیچیده قرآن تأکید می‌ورزد و اجماعی پساتجدیدنظرطلبانه را پیشنهاد می‌دهد که شواهد مادی را بر فرضیه‌های ادبی ترجیح دهد.

کلیدواژه‌ها:

مصاحف قرآنی،

رضوی،

سمرقند،

رسم‌خط،

قرائات،

عد الای،

تجدیدنظرطلبی،

رسمی‌سازی.

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## ۱. مقدمه

تاریخ متنی قرآن کریم، به عنوان متن بنیادین اسلام، همواره عرصه‌ای پژوهشی و در عین حال بحث‌برانگیز بوده است. در یک سو، «روایت سنتی» اسلامی، مبتنی بر منابعی مانند طبری و ابن ابی داود، بر گردآوری اولیه در دوران خلیفه اول، ابوبکر، و سپس استانداردسازی قطعی و توزیع متن واحد تحت نظارت خلیفه سوم، عثمان بن عفان، تأکید دارد. در سوی دیگر، مکتب «تجدیدنظرطلبان» خاورشناس، به‌ویژه با محوریت جان وانزبرو، این روایت را به چالش کشیده و شکل‌گیری نهایی قرآن را فرآیندی تدریجی، فرقه‌ای و دیرزمان (تا اواخر قرن دوم یا حتی سوم هجری) می‌داند. موازی با این دو، گفتمان سومی در میان برخی پژوهشگران معاصر اسلامی ظهور کرده که با وجود پذیرش تنوع در «رسم الخط»، بر یکنواختی و تداوم جهانی «قرائت حفص از عاصم» از همان دوره اولیه اصرار می‌ورزد. حل این مناقشات، مستلزم اتکا به شواهد ملموس و مستقلى است که نسخه‌های خطی کهن قرآن در اختیار می‌گذارند. این پژوهش با تمرکز بر دو مصحف برجسته و متعلق به دو مقطع زمانی متفاوت - «مصحف رضوی» (اواسط قرن اول هجری) و «مصحف سمرقند» (اواخر قرن دوم/اوایل قرن سوم هجری) - و با انجام تحلیل تطبیقی میان‌رشته‌ای، در پی بازسازی تصویری دقیق‌تر از تاریخ نخستین متن قرآن و نقد آرای تجدیدنظرطلبان و نیز ادعای یکنواختی قرائتی است.

## ۲. روش‌شناسی پژوهش

این پژوهش با بهره‌گیری از رویکردی میان‌رشته‌ای و با ترکیب روش‌های «نسخه‌شناسی»، «دیرینه‌نگاری» و «نقد متنی» به تحلیل مقایسه‌ای دو مصحف رضوی و سمرقندی می‌پردازد. داده‌های اولیه از طریق مطالعه فاکسیمیل‌های با وضوح بالا، ویرایش‌های انتقادی (به‌ویژه اثر کریمی‌نیا برای مصحف رضوی) و منابع کتاب‌شناختی معتبر (مانند آثار دروش، جفری و سیدکی برای مصحف سمرقند) گردآوری شده‌اند. تحلیل در سه محور اصلی ساختاریافته است:

۱. محور مادی و دیرینه‌نگاری: بررسی ویژگی‌های فیزیکی (ابعاد، جنس پوست، ساختار دسته‌برگ‌ها)، تحلیل سبک خط (حجازی در برابر کوفی بر اساس گونه‌شناسی دروش) و مطالعه تزیینات و نشانگرهای آیه.

۲. محور املاء (رسم الخط): بررسی سیستماتیک گونه‌های املائی و مقایسه آن‌ها با فهرست تفاوت‌های «مصاحف الامصار» (نسخه‌های منطقه‌ای) که در منابع کلاسیک مانند ابن ابی داود و دانی ثبت شده‌اند.

۳. محور قرائات و تقسیم‌بندی آیات (عد الای): نقشه‌برداری از مکان‌های پایان آیات و تطبیق آن با هفت نظام کلاسیک شمارش آیه (طبق الدانی) و همچنین شناسایی گونه‌های صرفی - واژگانی که مبین قرائات مختلف (اعم از مشهور و شاذ) هستند.

یافته‌های حاصل از این سه محور، در چارچوب مدل پنج‌مرحله‌ای «رسمی‌سازی» ناصر (از سیالی اولیه تا تثبیت نهایی) تفسیر و جایگاه هر مصحف در این طیف تاریخی تعیین می‌شود.

### ۳. یافته‌های پژوهش

یافته‌های این تحلیل تطبیقی، تصویری پیچیده و چندلایه از تحول متن قرآن ارائه می‌دهد که هم بر ثبات اولیه و هم بر دوره‌ای از تنوع پویا دلالت دارد.

الف) یافته‌های مادی و دیرینه‌نگاری: مصحف رضوی، با تاریخ‌گذاری رادیوکربن به ۶۵۰-۷۵۰ میلادی و خط حجازی پیوسته، نمونه‌ای کهن و متعلق به قرن اول هجری است. ویژگی‌هایی مانند نوشتار پیوسته، نقاط اعجام پراکنده و ترمیم‌های بعدی، اصالت و قدمت آن را تأیید می‌کنند. در مقابل، مصحف سمرقندی با ابعاد عظیم (حدود ۶۸×۵۳ سانتی‌متر)، خط کوفی سبک B.Ib/B.II و تاریخ‌گذاری رادیوکربن به ۷۷۵-۹۹۵ میلادی، نمونه‌ای باشکوه از استانداردسازی و عظمت‌بخشی به متن قرآن در دوره عباسی اولیه است. این تفاوت‌های فاحش مادی، خود‌گویای تحول در شیوه‌های تولید و نمایش متن مقدس در فاصله یک قرن است.

ب) یافته‌های مربوط به تقسیم‌بندی آیات (عد الّآی): مصحف رضوی هیچ نظام آیه‌شماری یکنواخت و کانونی را دنبال نمی‌کند. تقسیم‌بندی آیات در آن نامنظم است و در سوره‌های مختلف، گاه با نظام بصری، گاه با شامی و گاه با مکی یا مدنی همخوانی دارد، بدون آنکه به هیچ‌یک وفادار بماند. این امر نشان‌دهنده «سیالی پیشااستاندارد» و وجود سنت‌های منطقه‌ای مختلف در دوره نخست است. در مقابل، مصحف سمرقندی همخوانی ۹۲ درصدی با نظام آیه‌شمار کوفی دارد که حاکی از تثبیت و استانداردسازی منطقه‌ای در سنت عراقی تا قرن دوم/ سوم هجری است.

ج) یافته‌های مربوط به املاء (رسم الخط) و قرائات: تحلیل رسم الخط هر دو مصحف، ثبات شگفت‌انگیز و زود هنگام «رسم عثمانی» را تأیید می‌کند. با این حال، هر دو حاوی گونه‌های املائی (مانند نگارش «شّیء» با الف و بدون آن) هستند که با تفاوت‌های مستند مصاحف الامصار همخوانی دارد. نقطه افتراق اصلی در «قرائات» نهفته است. مصحف رضوی گنجینه‌ای از قرائات متکثر را نشان می‌دهد؛ از قرائات مشهور منسوب به قاریان دهگانه (مانند «فَنُوقِیْهِمْ» به جای «فَیُوقِیْهِمْ» در قرائت حفص) تا قرائات شاذ (غیرکانونی) که به اشخاصی‌هایی مانند امام علی (ع) و اعمش نسبت داده شده‌اند (مانند «لَتُؤْتِیْهِمْ» به جای «لَتُؤْتِیْنَهُمْ»). این امر تصویر دوره‌ای از پویایی و تنوع قرائی پیش از رسمی‌سازی نهایی توسط ابن مجاهد را ترسیم می‌کند. در مقابل، مصحف سمرقندی با حفظ برخی ویژگی‌های املائی کهن، متنی استانداردتر را ارائه می‌دهد که عمدتاً با سنت کوفی و بستر ظهور قرائت حفص همسو است و نشان‌دهنده حرکت به سمت یکنواخت‌سازی منطقه‌ای است.

پیامدها برای نقد دیدگاه مستشرقان: این یافته‌ها به طور مستقیم فرضیه‌های «تجدیدنظرطلبانه» به‌ویژه تز جان وانزبرو را رد می‌کنند. تاریخ کهن مصحف رضوی (قرن اول هجری) و ثبات اساس رسم عثمانی در آن، این ادعا که قرآن تا قرن سوم هجری در حال تدوین و ویرایش فرقه‌ای بوده است، باطل می‌سازد. شواهد مادی (رادیوکربن و دیرینه‌نگاری) و متنی، همزمان، ادعای یکنواختی اولیه قرائت حفص را نیز به چالش می‌کشند و نشان می‌دهند که تنوع قرائی، واقعیتی مسلم در قرون نخستین بوده که به تدریج محدود شده است. این پژوهش با اتکا به داده‌های ملموس، از شکل‌گیری یک «اجماع پساتجدیدنظرطلبانه» حمایت می‌کند که بر اساس آن، هسته اصلی متن قرآن بسیار زود (در قرن اول) تثبیت شد، اما قرائات و برخی نظام‌های فرعی (مانند عد الای)، دوره‌ای طولانی از سیالیت و تنوع را پشت سر گذاشتند.

#### ۴. نتیجه‌گیری

تحلیل تطبیقی مصاحف رضوی و سمرقند به عنوان دو شاهد مادی کلیدی از دو مقطع تاریخی متمایز، امکان ارائه تصویری متعادل و مبتنی بر شواهد از تاریخ متنی قرآن را فراهم ساخته است. این پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که واقعیت تاریخی نه در روایت سنتی کاملاً یکپارچه و نه در روایت تجدیدنظرطلبانه کاملاً سیال و دیرهنگام خلاصه می‌شود، بلکه در میانه این دو قرار دارد. از یک سو، ثبات قابل توجه «رسم عثمانی» از کهن‌ترین دوره‌های موجود (مستندشده توسط مصحف رضوی) نظریه‌های مبتنی بر تدوین دیرهنگام و فرقه‌ای (وانزبرو) را مردود می‌سازد. از سوی دیگر، تنوع گسترده در «قرائات» و «نظام‌های شمارش آیات» که به‌ویژه در مصحف رضوی مشهود است، ادعای وجود یکنواختی کامل قرائتی از آغاز را نیز رد می‌نماید. این پژوهش مؤید مدلی‌هایی مانند مدل «رسمی‌سازی تدریجی» ناصر است که در آن، یک «هسته متنی ثابت» (مشمول بر حروف و کلمات) از ابتدا وجود داشته، اما «پوسته قرائتی» انعطاف‌پذیر و متنوع بوده و تنها طی فرآیندی تاریخی و به تدریج، به هفت قرائت کانونی محدود شده است. بنابراین، مصاحف اولیه نه به عنوان ابژه‌هایی منفرد، بلکه به عنوان اسناد زنده‌ای که فرآیند پیچیده انتقال، تثبیت و استانداردسازی متن قرآن را روایت می‌کنند، جایگاهی محوری در بازسازی تاریخ قرآن دارند و گفتمان آکادمیک را به سمت سنتزی نوین که شواهد مادی را بر فرضیات صرفاً ادبی ترجیح می‌دهد، سوق می‌دهند.

# A Comparative Analysis of the Mashhad and Samarqand Codices and a Critique of Orientalist Views on the Dating of the Qur'anic Text

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## ABSTRACT

This study presents a comparative analysis of two prominent early Qur'anic codices: the Mashhad Codex (mid-1st century AH / 7th century CE) and the Samarqand Codex (late 2nd / 8th or early 3rd / 9th century CE). Employing an interdisciplinary methodology encompassing codicology, palaeography, and textual criticism, the research investigates three key domains: material production, orthography (*rasm*), and verse division systems (*'add al-āy*). The Mashhad Codex, written in fluid Hijazi script and exhibiting both canonical and *shādh*dh readings, reflects a pre-canonical phase of textual diversity, with no single uniform verse-numbering system. Its features align with tendencies found in the early regional traditions of Medina, Basra, and Syria. By contrast, the Samarqand Codex—composed in Kufic B.Ib/B.II script and displaying monumental layout—shows approximately 92% alignment with the Kufan tradition, indicating an Iraqi standardization phase with minor deviations.

The findings affirm the early stability of the 'Uthmānic *rasm* and refute revisionist hypotheses such as John Wansbrough's theory of continued sectarian editing into the 9th century. Nevertheless, the observed variations—such as *fa-nūffihim* versus *fa-yūaffihim*, or orthographic differences in *shay'* with or without *alif*—reveal an extended period of textual fluidity preceding the canonical restriction of readings by Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936). This study also challenges the claim of an uninterrupted global dominance of the *Hafṣ* reading from the early period. Relying on radiocarbon data (650–750 CE for Mashhad; 775–995 CE for Samarqand) and classical testimonies (al-Dānī, Ibn Abī Dāwūd), the article underscores the significance of early codices in reconstructing the Qur'an's complex textual history and advocates a post-revisionist framework that privileges material evidence over purely literary conjecture.

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## Introduction

The textual history of the Qur'an, the foundational text of Islam, remains a vital and contentious field of research. The traditional narrative, derived from classical Islamic sources, posits an early and definitive standardization of the Qur'anic text. It describes an initial compilation under the first caliph, Abū Bakr (r. 632–634 CE), followed by its official codification under the third caliph, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (r. 644–656 CE). The 'Uthmanic codex was reportedly copied and dispatched to the major urban centers (*al-amṣār*) of the nascent Islamic empire, ostensibly establishing a uniform textual pattern (al-Ṭabarī, 1412 AH; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 1355 AH). For centuries, this narrative formed the basis of Islamic scholarly tradition.

However, this paradigm has been challenged by the research of certain Orientalists. The revisionist school, led by figures such as John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone, and Michael Cook, argued that the Qur'an did not achieve its canonical form until the end of the 2nd/8th or even early 3rd/9th century. John Wansbrough claimed that the Qur'an's composition was a gradual process that evolved in sectarian milieus over two centuries before crystallizing into its current form—a hypothesis that fundamentally questions the traditional timeline (Wansbrough, 1977). This provocative thesis necessitated material evidence to adjudicate between competing historical models. Consequently, the discovery and scientific analysis of early Qur'anic manuscripts, particularly the Ṣan'ā' palimpsest, moved to the forefront of this academic dialogue, providing tangible physical data to test theoretical frameworks (Déroche, 2014; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012).

Parallel to this Western academic debate, a distinct discourse exists in contemporary Islamic studies (Rezaei Isfahani and Karimi, 1401). Some modern Qur'anic scholars, particularly in certain circles, claim a different kind of uniformity: that despite known variations in regional codices' orthography, the reading of Ḥaḫṣ from 'Āṣim has been continuously and universally dominant from the early period to the present (e.g., Ma'rifat, 1428 AH). This claim, while seeking to affirm textual continuity, glosses over the complex, documented history of the canonization of readings by Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936) (Nasser, 2020).

Resolving these debates—both the revisionist challenge and the internal claim of recitational uniformity—depends heavily on the interdisciplinary study of early material sources. Palaeography, codicology, and the radiocarbon dating of early manuscripts provide independent evidence against which historical and traditional texts can be evaluated. In this context, two manuscripts are particularly prominent: the Kufic Qur'an of Samarqand and the Mashhad Qur'an (the Codex of Mashhad al-Riḍawī).

The Samarqand Qur'an is one of the most famous manuscripts, long shrouded in legend and attributed to Caliph 'Uthmān himself (Shebunin, 1891). This vast manuscript, now housed in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, has been palaeographically dated to the 2nd/8th or 3rd/9th century, and its orthography largely aligns with the Kufan regional tradition (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942; Déroche, 2013; Sidky, 2020). In stark contrast, the Mashhad Codex—referring to two Hijazi folio groups held in Mashhad, Iran—has been securely dated through a robust combination of palaeographic analysis and multiple radiocarbon-14 tests to the second half of the 1st century AH/7th century CE, making it one of the oldest extant textual witnesses (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH; Karimi-Nia, 2019; rezaee esfahani and karimi, 2025)

Notably, although both are frequently cited in discussions of the Qur'an's early textual history, they are usually examined separately. This study argues that a systematic, comparative analysis of these two manuscripts—separated by script, probable origin, and perhaps over a century—is not only beneficial but essential for a precise understanding of the Qur'an's early evolution. They represent two key points on the chronological spectrum and provide a unique opportunity to trace developments in material production, scribal practices, and textual reception.

This article, therefore, employs a comparative methodology based on codicology and textual criticism to analyze these two manuscripts along three axes: (1) their physical and palaeographic characteristics; (2) their orthography (*rasm*) and its relationship to reported variations in regional codices (*maṣāḥif al-amṣār*); and (3) their implications for the history of Qur'anic readings (*qirā'āt*) and verse-counting systems (*'add al-āy*). By juxtaposing the 1st-century Hijazi diversity of the

Mashhad Codex with the Kufic standardization of the Samarqand Codex, this research demonstrates that the historical reality is neither the late, gradual evolution proposed by Orientalists like Wansbrough nor the retrojection of later recitational uniformity onto the early Islamic period. Instead, the historical-textual and material evidence points to a more complex picture: an early stability of the consonantal skeleton coupled with a prolonged period of recitational diversity, which was only gradually constrained through a process of canonization (Nasser, 2020). This study seeks to add a new, evidence-based perspective to the ongoing conversation about the origins and transmission of Islam's sacred text.

### Methodology

This research employs an interdisciplinary framework integrating codicology, palaeography, and textual criticism to perform an in-depth comparative analysis of the *Mashhad* and *Samarqand* Qur'ānic manuscripts. The research design is structured to facilitate a comprehensive and replicable examination of these codices along three interrelated analytical axes, allowing for a holistic understanding of their material, textual, and recitational dimensions.

The primary data for this study are the manuscripts themselves. For the *Mashhad Codex*, the analysis relies on high-resolution digital facsimiles and the critical edition published by the Āl al-Bayt Institute, accompanied by Karimi-Nia's detailed commentary (1402 SH/2023–24 CE). This edition grants access to the complete corpus of 251 folios (MSS 18 and 4116), enabling a thorough investigation of the main *Hijazi* sections and subsequent additions. For the *Samarqand Codex*, given the limitations of access, the research adopts a composite evidential approach, combining the 50-page facsimile by Ouspensky and Pissaref (1905)—notwithstanding its known deficiencies (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942)—with Shebunin's (1891) 19th-century descriptive account, high-resolution images of scattered folios available through auction catalogues (e.g., Christie's, 1992) and modern publications (Déroche, 2013; Safwat, 1997), as well as subsequent scholarly analyses (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942; Sidky, 2020). This triangulation of sources mitigates the epistemic limitations of any single witness.

## The comparative study proceeds along three principal analytical axes:

### *Materiality and Palaeography*

This dimension involves a codicological examination of the manuscripts' physical properties—dimensions, parchment quality, page layout (line count, margins), and quire structure. Palaeographic analysis follows Déroche's typology of early Qur'ānic scripts (1992; 2014), classifying hands within the *Hijazi* and *Kufic* (B.I and B.II) traditions. Distinct letterforms (e.g., *alif*, *lām*, *nūn*, *qāf*) are compared across both codices to identify scribal variation and stylistic development. The analysis also documents decorative elements, pigment composition, and verse-marker styles, situating them within the broader corpus of early Qur'ānic manuscripts.

### *Orthography (Rasm) and Regional Variants*

This axis conducts a systematic analysis of the consonantal skeleton (*rasm*) to catalogue orthographic variations. Each variant is compared against canonical reports of regional traditions (*maṣāḥif al-amṣār*) as preserved in classical sources such as Ibn Abī Dāwūd's *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* (1355 AH) and al-Dānī's *al-Muqni'*. This comparison allows the identification of affinities between each codex and the textual traditions of Medina, Kufa, Basra, Syria, and Mecca, thereby assessing whether the manuscripts represent a "pure" regional archetype or a composite transmission.

### *Readings (Qirā'āt) and Verse Division ('Add al-Āy)*

The final axis examines features extending beyond *rasm*, focusing on verse demarcation and potential reading variants. The study maps verse-end markers in both codices and cross-references them with the seven canonical verse-counting systems delineated by al-Dānī (1414 AH). Lexical and morphological features (e.g., *yā bunayya* vs. *yā bunayyi*), which underpin canonical *qirā'āt*, are identified and correlated with the traditions of the ten celebrated reciters (e.g., Nāfi', Ibn Kathīr, 'Āṣim, Ḥamza) using standard authorities such as Ibn al-Jazarī's *al-Nashr* and al-Kharrūf's *al-Muyassar*.

Interpretation of the resulting data is guided by Nasser's canonization model (2013; 2020), which delineates five developmental phases—from early textual fluidity to complete canonization. Each manuscript's material and textual features are evaluated within this framework: the *Mashhad Codex*, dated earlier, is tested against the criteria of Stage 1 (pre-canonical fluidity), whereas the *Samarqand Codex* is examined as representative of Stage 2, corresponding to early standardization preceding Ibn Mujāhid's reforms.

### Literature Review

The textual history of the Qur'an, as Islam's most fundamental text, has long been the subject of extensive examination. Classical Islamic sources, such as al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh* (al-Ṭabarī, 1412 AH) and Ibn Abī Dāwūd's *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* (1355 AH), provide a traditional narrative of the Qur'an's compilation that emphasizes early standardization under the Rāshidūn caliphs, particularly ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. These sources describe the *maṣāḥif al-amṣār* (copies sent to urban centers like Medina, Kufa, Basra, Syria, and Mecca) as the basis for textual stability. Al-Dānī in *al-Muqniʿ* (1414 AH) and Abū ʿUbayd in his works documented regional differences in orthography, readings, and verse counts, indicating early diversity within the ʿUthmanic *rasm* framework. These classical texts provide a foundation for understanding the Qur'an's canonization, focusing on the seven verse-numbering systems (e.g., Kufan, Basran, and Hijazi). (Karimi, 1404, p. 80)

Early Western research, such as Shebunin's (1891) description of the Samarqand Codex, introduced it as a Kufic masterpiece with a legend of ʿUthmanic provenance, emphasizing material features like its colossal size (680×530 mm) and early Kufic script. Jeffery and Mendelsohn (1942), through orthographic analysis, demonstrated its 92% alignment with the Kufan tradition, highlighting variants such as the spelling of *shay*ʾ with/without an *alif*, reflecting the flexibility of the early centuries. Déroche (2013; 2014) examined its script typology (B.Ib/B.II for Samarqand), quire structure, and radiocarbon dating (775–995 CE), attributing it to the early Abbasid period with Umayyad

antecedents. Sidky (2020) quantitatively confirmed its Kufan regionalism, while Sellar (forthcoming) focused on its legendary aspects and later restorations. Auction catalogues (e.g., Christie's, 1992) provided high-quality images facilitating material analysis.

In contemporary Islamic scholarship, the digital facsimile and scholarly commentary of the Mashhad al-Riḍawī Codex (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH) marks a milestone. This work, examining 251 Hijazi folios (MSS 18 and 4116), describes radiocarbon dating (660–772 CE) and features such as a fluid script, sporadic diacritical points, and later repairs. Dhūqī (1403 SH), in "Qirā'āt and Recitational Features of the Mashhad Riḍawī Codex: Description and Analysis" (Qur'anic Recitation Studies, 12(23), 7–36), has sought to examine the recitational characteristics of the Mashhad Codex. Riḍā'ī Iṣfahānī and Karīmī (1403 SH), in "Examining the Carbon-14 Dating of the Mashhad and Ṣan'ā' Codices" (Qur'an and Science, 18(35), 329–338), compared radiocarbon dates, analyzing the Mashhad Codex's date (650–750 CE) alongside Ṣan'ā's (578–669 CE) to demonstrate early stability while reviewing methodological challenges of C14.

Research on the Samarqand Codex began with the foundational work of Shebunin (1891) and later Jeffery and Mendelsohn (1942) in analyzing its orthography. Recent studies, utilizing new methods, have illuminated new dimensions of this codex. Vasileva (2017), by examining the history of its transfer to St. Petersburg, has added to our knowledge of its trajectory. Déroche (2013, 2014), by analyzing the palaeography of its dispersed folios and placing it in the broader context of Umayyad codices, clarified its probable production date. Sidky (2020) quantitatively demonstrated its affiliation with the Kufan manuscript tradition through statistical analysis of variants. Sellar has also dedicated the most specialized examination to this codex in his unpublished work. Furthermore, publications by the Al-Furqan Foundation (2021) and the comparative studies of Fedeli (2014) and Ayazi (1398 SH) have provided valuable comparative and artistic contexts. This scholarly trajectory shows that the study of the Samarqand Codex has progressed from initial description towards specialized analyses in art history, codicology, and textual criticism, and it remains an active topic in research on Qur'anic manuscripts.

## Introduction to the Mashhad and Samarqand Codices

The textual history of the Qurʾān, a foundational concern of Islamic studies, remains one of the most rigorously examined and debated subjects in both traditional and modern scholarship. Traditional Islamic historiography, largely derived from later literary sources, recounts a narrative of the Qurʾān's early compilation and standardization that culminates during the caliphate of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (r. 23–35 AH/644–656 CE). According to this account, the establishment of a master codex (*al-Muṣḥaf al-Imām*) and the distribution of copies to major urban centers (*maṣāḥif al-amṣār*) served to unify the scriptural text across the growing Islamic community (al-Ṭabarī, 1987; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 1936). In contrast, modern Western revisionist scholarship—most notably advanced by Wansbrough (1977)—has argued for a far later and more fluid evolution of the Qurʾānic text, suggesting that canonization took shape only within sectarian contexts during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH. The discovery and systematic study of early Qurʾānic manuscripts, however, have provided a crucial empirical foundation for assessing such hypotheses, shifting the focus from textual historiography to include codicological, palaeographic, and material evidence (Déroche, 2014; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012). Among these early material witnesses, two manuscripts have emerged as central to discussions of the ʿUthmānic text: the Kufic Qurʾān of Samarqand and the Mashhad Qurʾān (Codex of Mashhad al-Riḍawī).

The Kufic Qurʾān of Samarqand, a monumental parchment manuscript preserved in the library of the *Telyashayakh* Mosque in the *Khas-Imam* (Hazrati Imam) complex of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is renowned for its imposing dimensions (approximately 53 × 68 cm per folio) and its majestic early Kufic script (Déroche, 2013). Tradition attributes the codex to Caliph ʿUthmān himself—allegedly stained with his blood at the time of his assassination—though this attribution is treated cautiously by contemporary scholarship (Shebunin, 1891; Cellard, 2018). Palaeographically, the manuscript belongs to Déroche's B.Ib/B.II group, typically dated to the late 2nd/8th or early 3rd/9th century (Déroche, 2013). Radiocarbon analysis corroborates this chronology, placing its production between 595 and 855 CE (95%

probability) (Christie's, 1992). Textual studies consistently reveal its strong alignment with the *rasm* and verse-division system (*'add al-āy*) of the Kufan recension, while minor orthographic peculiarities connect it to the Iraqi textual tradition (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942; Sidky, 2020).

In contrast, the Mashhad Qur'ān comprises two parchment fragments (MSS 18 and 4116) preserved in the Āstān-e Quds-e Raḍawī Library, Mashhad, Iran, which together represent a substantial portion of the Qur'ānic text (Karimi-Nia, 2019). Its significance stems from recent meticulous research which dates its core portions—written in a distinctive Hijazi script (Déroche's Group I)—to the second half of the 1st century AH/7th century CE, based on extensive palaeographic analysis and a series of radiocarbon tests (Karimi-Nia, 2019, 2023). This early date places it among the oldest extant Qur'anic manuscripts. Its textual features are profoundly informative: a fluid script, an independent *basmalah*, and an orthography that initially aligned with the Medinan version before being corrected towards the Iraqi/Meccan consensus (Karimi-Nia, 2023). More importantly, its textual variants (*qirā'āt*) are not confined to any single later canonical reading but reflect a range of known canonical and non-canonical (*shādhah*) readings, capturing a picture of early recitational diversity (Karimi-Nia, 2023; Zouqi, 2017).

Despite their individual importance, these two manuscripts — the early Hijazi specimen from the 1st century, and the mature Kufic codex — have rarely been subjected to sustained comparative analysis. Such a comparison is critical. They represent different geographical origins (likely Hijaz/Medina vs. Iraq), different production eras (1st vs. 2nd/3rd century AH), and different script types (Hijazi vs. early Kufic). A joint examination provides a unique diachronic and inter-regional perspective on the formation and evolution of the Qur'anic text as a physical and linguistic object.

This study argues that a comparative analysis of the Mashhad and Samarqand codices —examining their codicological features, orthography (*rasm*), and recitational variations (*qirā'āt*) — reveals a consistent narrative of early stability in the standard consonantal text,

alongside significant diversity in recitational practices and auxiliary systems observable in these codices. This evidence simultaneously challenges Wansbrough's hypotheses of late canonization. These manuscripts function not as anomalies but as material and historical-textual witnesses to the complex, negotiated process of the Qur'anic text's transmission and standardization.

### **Text and Structure according to the Manuscripts' Material History**

This study employs a rigorous comparative methodology to analyze the Mashhad and Samarqand codices along three interrelated axes: materiality, textual structure, and textual content. This tripartite framework enables a comprehensive investigation that moves beyond palaeographic dating to situate these artifacts within the broader historical and theological context of early Qur'ānic transmission.

#### ***1. Materiality: Codicology and Palaeography***

The physical characteristics of each manuscript provide essential clues regarding its production, function, and chronological placement. A comparative codicological analysis reveals a marked evolution in the presentation and execution of the Qur'ānic text.

The Mashhad Codex consists of two parchment volumes held in the Āstān-e Quds-e Raḍawī Library (nos. 18 and 4116), comprising 251 folios in total (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH: 80). The primary script of the main text is Hijazi or slanted (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH: 80). Sūrat al-Fātiḥah was added later at the beginning of volume No. 18 in a later Kufic script by the scholar Abū Bakr Wajīh ibn Ṭāhir al-Shahāmī (d. 541 AH) (A1b). Where the original folios were damaged, they were filled with patches of text in Kufic or Nasta'īq script (completion or repair) (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH: 80).

Verse endings are typically indicated by five or six dots arranged triangularly, or occasionally three slanted dots. Every ten verses (*ta'shīr*) are marked by red circles surrounding these verse-end markers, and later hands added small black circles to indicate pause locations (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH: 59).

Diacritical points (*i`jām*) are present in the same color as the main text in most sections of both volumes. In contrast, vowel points (*ḥarakāt*) and syntactic marks were added in red ink after the main text was written (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH: 58). A key palaeographic feature is its fluid script, characteristic of late antique scripts, where little space is left between words or between unconnected letters within a word, even allowing words to be split at line endings (though never across pages). Some folios, such as A3a containing Q 2:26-34, are entirely illegible due to damage or improper repair (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH).

In contrast, the Samarqand Codex is defined by its colossal size and complex codicology. The original manuscript was a very large volume whose parchment folios measured approximately 680 x 530 mm, with a text area of 500 x 440 mm (Shebunin, 1891). Its construction was a significant undertaking, estimated to have required the skins of about 1000 sheep or goats, as a full animal skin was needed for each folio. The manuscript's structure is unusual due to its large scale; the large folios were folded at the inner margin and glued together in pairs to form artificial bifolios, which were then gathered into quires; this feature may be the result of later repairs. François Déroche has proposed an alternative original structure involving thicker quires of eight or ten bifolios (Déroche, 2013, pp. 62-64).

Palaeographically, the manuscript exhibits an early Kufic script classified as style B.Ib/B.II in François Déroche's typology. The text is characterized by extensive horizontal stretching (*mashq*) and fluctuations in the form of certain letters like final *qāf*. Analysis indicates the work of two distinct scribes, identifiable through subtle stylistic differences in letters such as *lām-alif* and isolated *alif*. The standard layout is 12 lines per page, although some folios show irregularities in line spacing and line count, possibly due to later re-inking, parchment warping, or the scribes' need to manage space. The text is largely unvocalized, with vocalization dots added sporadically, often as thin slanted lines. A notable orthographic feature is the dotting of *qāf* with two dots, a practice distinct from earlier manuscripts.

## 2. Textual Structure: Verse Division (*'Add al-Āy*)

The system of verse endings and their count (*'add al-āy*) is a key aspect of the Qur'an's structure and exhibited significant regional diversity in the early Islamic period. The verse division system of the Mashhad manuscript is highly irregular and does not uniformly correspond to any of the seven canonical systems. Research shows that this manuscript "not only does not follow any of the seven verse-numbering systems, but in some cases is inconsistent with all of them" (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH). The verse endings in the manuscript are indicated and usually marked with five or six dots in a triangular arrangement. The key point is that in several locations, these marks are placed where they do not match the known endpoints in any of the canonical systems; for example, on folios A5b, A12a, and A26b (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH). Furthermore, when its divisions do align with known systems, it does not consistently adhere to just one system. For instance, in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* it aligns with the Basran system, in *Sūrat al-Ra'd* with the Syrian system, and in *Sūrat al-Zumar* with both the primary Meccan and Medinan systems (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH). Another important feature is that the disconnected letters (*ḥurūf muqatta'ah*) are not counted as independent verses, unlike in the Kufan system (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH).

The markers for every ten verses (*ta'shīr*) were added centuries after the main text was written. This is evident from the fact that their placement follows the "Hijazi" systems (Meccan, primary Medinan, later Medinan) and completely ignores the manuscript's own unique divisions, including the status of the *basmalah* as an independent verse in the original text (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH).

Based on scientific analyses, the textual structure and verse division of the Samarqand Qur'an align most closely with the regional traditions of Kufa, though not exclusively. Studies by Shebunin and later Jeffery and Mendelsohn concluded that its orthography and verse division "adhere primarily to the Iraqi tradition, specifically the Kufan school" (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942). A recent analysis by Haytham Sidky quantified this, showing that the manuscript's textual variants are "92% consistent with [Kufan variants] and only 8% with Syrian variants" (Sidky, 2020).

The verse endings in the manuscript are clearly indicated, and its division is "often closer to the Kufan school, though in some instances it agrees with the Basran school and in others matches no tradition" (Jeffery, 1942). This indicates a degree of uniqueness in its system. Furthermore, the manuscript's orthography reflects early scribal conventions, including spellings common in the first three centuries of Islam. Notable examples include the word "*shay*" written both with and without an *alif*, and the word "*alā*" spelled with a final *yā* or a long *alif* (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942). These orthographic variations are characteristic of the period prior to the full standardization of the Qur'anic text.

Groups of ten verses are marked with decorated squares containing the verse number in the *abjad* system (where Arabic letters represent numerical values); this practice is also observed in Umayyad-period manuscripts. A similar square indicates the total number of verses at the end of each *sūrah* (Déroche, 2013).

### 3. Textual Content: Orthography (*Rasm*) and Variant Readings (*Qirā'āt*)

The consonantal text (*rasm*) of the Qur'an in both manuscripts is remarkably stable, providing strong material evidence for the early fixation of the 'Uthmanic text. However, both contain orthographic variations that align with documented differences among the regional "*maṣāḥif al-amṣār*," and their treatment of recitational variations is profoundly different.

The orthography of the Mashhad Codex shows significant diversity, challenging the notion of a single, continuous recitational tradition throughout history. Initially, its spelling primarily followed the Medinan *rasm*, but was later corrected in four instances to conform to the Iraqi (Kufan and Basran) and Meccan consensus (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH: 63). A key point is that the manuscript's textual content does not align exclusively with the reading of Ḥafṣ from 'Āṣim—the dominant reading today. Instead, it reflects a variety of famous canonical readings and even non-canonical (*shādhah*) readings (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH: 64). For example, in verse 3:57 (A22b), it has "*fa-nūffihim*" instead of Ḥafṣ's "*fa-yūaffihim*," and in verse 4:140 (A38b), it writes "*nuzzila*" instead of "*nazzala*" (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH). These orthographic choices confirm readings attributed to other canonical reciters and transmitters.

Furthermore, the manuscript includes several non-canonical (*shādhah*) readings that are compatible with the ʿUthmanic *rasm* but were excluded from the canonical systems. Examples include "*lanuthwayannahum*" instead of "*lanubawwi'annahum*" in verse 16:41 (A109a)—a reading historically attributed to Imam ʿAlī (Ibn Jinnī, 2/52)—and "*barī*" instead of "*barā*" in verse 43:26 (B79a), the reading of al-Aʿmash (Ibn Khālawayh, 26). In some cases, the manuscript even provides two simultaneous readings for a single word, such as "*yabghūna/tabghūna*" in verse 3:83 (A23b) (Karimi-Nia, 1402 SH). This orthographic and recitational plurality places the manuscript in an early period of textual fluidity, prior to the later standardization of the reading systems.

The Samarqand Codex presents a more standardized text. Its *rasm* shows a strong affiliation with the reported tradition of Kufa—the region where the reading of Ḥafṣ from ʿĀṣim was later canonized (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942; Sidky, 2020). It preserves archaic orthographic features, such as writing "*dhū*" with a final *alif* and occasionally spelling "*shay*" without an *alif*, confirming its early Kufic origin. While it shows fewer dramatic recitational variations compared to Mashhad, its value lies in demonstrating the relative stabilization of the Iraqī textual tradition by the 2nd/8th century. It represents a later stage in the canonization process, where a regional version of the *rasm* was physically monumentalized (Nasser, 2020).

The text is largely unvocalized, but diacritical points for phonetic distinction were added sporadically as thin slanted lines—likely contemporaneous with the writing—to distinguish phonemes like *bā*ʾ from *tā*ʾ (Jeffery, 1942). A notable palaeographic feature is the dotting of *qāf* with two dots; a practice that distinguishes it from earlier Hijazi manuscripts and aligns with later eastern scribal traditions.

Consequently, this comparison reveals a clear trajectory. The Mashhad Codex, with its Hijazi script, structural fluidity, and recitational diversity, embodies the "pre-canonical fluidity" of the 1st century (Nasser, 2020). The Samarqand Codex, with its Kufic script, more standardized structure, and established Iraqī *rasm*, represents the subsequent stage of movement towards regional standardization and the aesthetic glorification of the text, positioned just before the final, formal closure of the reading systems.

### The Implications of the Early Codices for the History of the Qur'anic Text

As mentioned, John Wansbrough's seminal work, *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (1977), is a pivotal text in the revisionist school of Qur'anic studies, fundamentally challenging the traditional Islamic narrative of the Qur'an's origin. Utilizing form-critical and literary analysis methods adapted from biblical studies, Wansbrough posited that the Qur'an is not the direct, word-for-word revelation delivered to Muḥammad in the early 7th century CE, but rather the end-point of a lengthy process of literary redaction spanning several generations. He argued that the text exhibits structural and thematic features—such as repetitive motifs, narrative fragmentation, and exegetical themes—suggesting its formation within a sectarian milieu influenced by Jewish, Christian, and Syriac traditions, rather than a fully-formed emergence from an Arabian prophetic context (Wansbrough, 1977, pp. 1-30). This view decenters Muḥammad as the sole authorial figure, instead proposing that the Qur'an's compilation occurred in the late Umayyad or early Abbasid period, possibly as late as the 3rd century AH (early 9th century CE), as a tool for consolidating imperial ideology (Wansbrough, 1977, pp. 160-162). Wansbrough's methodological skepticism extends to early Islamic sources like the *sīra* and *ḥadīth*, which he rejected as constructs of sacred biography retrojected onto a formative period, analogous to the Torah's evolution in the Jewish tradition (Wansbrough, 1977, pp. 44-58).

Central to Wansbrough's thesis is the concept of a "salvation history," where the Qur'an functions as a liturgical text compiled from oral and written accumulations reflecting collective exegetical needs, not historical reportage. He identified textual units as modular or detachable within the text, allowing for rearrangement and expansion, and attributed this to a "sectarian origin" in 8th-century Iraq or Syria (Wansbrough, 1977, pp. 105-120). This evolutionary model presupposes textual instability: the Qur'anic *rasm* was not fixed long after the 'Uthmanic narrative (c. 650 CE), and variants were only suppressed later to impose orthodoxy (Wansbrough, 1977, pp. 202-205). Wansbrough's analysis, while innovative, relies heavily on internal literary evidence and marginalizes material and palaeographic

data, which he viewed as secondary to ideological reconstruction (Wansbrough, 1977, p. viii). Critics within the revisionist tradition, such as Patricia Crone, echoed this by suggesting the Qur'an's anti-Jewish polemics point to a post-conquest context, though Wansbrough's extreme delay of up to 200 years after Muḥammad remains uniquely provocative (Crone & Cook, 1977, p. 18).

However, this framework faces significant challenges from recent palaeographic and radiocarbon analyses, particularly of early Qur'anic manuscripts such as the Mashhad and Samarqand Codices, which attest to a stable textual tradition by the late 7th or early 8th century CE. These artifacts, predating Wansbrough's proposed editorial horizon, indicate a degree of stability incompatible with a prolonged sectarian elaboration. The Mashhad Codex, held in the Āstān-e Quds-e Raḍawī Library (MSS 18 and 4116), comprises 251 folios in a Hijazi script, with orthographic features consistent with 1st-century AH conventions (Karimi-Nia, 2023, p. 80). Radiocarbon dating of samples from January 2020, conducted at laboratories including the University of Arizona and ETH Zurich, provides calibrated dates in the late 1st century AH (c. 650–750 CE) with 95.4% confidence ( $2\sigma$ ), corroborated by palaeographic markers such as a fluid script and sporadic diacritical points—features atypical for texts from the mid-2nd century AH (Codex Mashhad Project, 2023; Karimi-Nia, 2023, p. 58). These results refute Wansbrough's timeline, as the *rasm* of the Mashhad manuscripts shows little deviation from the ʿUthmanic pattern, including verse divisions that, while idiosyncratic, prefigure canonical systems (Karimi-Nia, 2023, p. 80).

Similarly, the Kufic Qur'an of Samarqand, preserved in fragments in the T.W. Arnold collection in Tashkent and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, exemplifies early Iraqi scribal practices. Tradition attributes it to the era of ʿUthmān (c. 651 CE), but modern scholarship, through analysis of its orthography, horizontal stretching (*mashq*), and the dotting of *qāf* with two dots, dates it to the late 8th or early 9th century CE—still preceding Wansbrough's closure (Déroche, 2014, p. 62). Radiocarbon tests on folios show a 95.4% probability range of 775–995 CE, with one fragment (the Tashkent folio) spanning 595–855 CE,

suggesting production under the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (775–785 CE) (Rezvan, 2004, p. 58; Islamic Awareness, 2014).

Palaeographically, it is classified as Déroche's style B.Ib/B.II; its 12-line layout and markers for every ten verses (*ta'shīr*) reflect Umayyad antecedents, with variants (e.g., *shay'* with/without *alif*) consistent with the flexibility of the 1st–3rd centuries AH, but not wholesale redaction (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942, p. 175; Sidky, 2020, p. 157). The material aspect of both codices-parchment from hundreds of animals, bifolio structure-provides evidence of deliberate, costly copying, presupposing a codified pattern by the 7th century (Déroche, 2014, p. 5).

François Déroche, a leading authority on Qur'anic codicology, directly undermines Wansbrough's delay through his typology of Hijazi and Kufic scripts. In *Qur'ans of the Umayyads: A First Overview* (2014), he catalogues over 50 fragments dated via C14 to the mid-7th century, arguing that the *rasm* was closed by 700 CE, as evidenced by the uniformity in the Ṣan'ā' palimpsests and the Birmingham folios (568–645 CE) (Déroche, 2014, pp. 72-74). Regarding the Samarqand Codex, Déroche proposes an original structure with quires of eight to ten bifolios, aligning it with Umayyad, not Abbasid, production, and refuting Wansbrough's sectarian evolution by demonstrating scribal continuity from the Hijazi to Kufic transition (Déroche, 2014, pp. 62-64). Déroche criticizes revisionism for over-relying on literary form at the expense of "hard" evidence, noting that specific orthographic features in manuscripts like Mashhad (e.g., medial *alif* omissions) are pre-ʿUthmanic remnants, not post-Muḥammad accumulations (Déroche, 2014, p. 9). This materialist approach posits a text "frozen" by the late 7th century, challenging Wansbrough's independent, detachable textual units as exegetical artifacts, not compositional ones (Déroche, 2014, p. 160).

Behnam Sadeghi's work on the Ṣan'ā' palimpsest further erodes the foundation of Wansbrough's hypothesis, with implications extending to the Mashhad and Samarqand Codices. Sadeghi, in collaboration with Bergmann, used multispectral imaging and C14 dating of the lower text (c. 578–669 CE) to reveal non-ʿUthmanic variants that nonetheless exhibit 99% phonetic overlap with the standard *rasm*, suggesting an

early pattern circulated orally and in writing during the Prophet's lifetime (Sadeghi & Bergmann, 2010, p. 343). Applying Bayesian modeling to the Mashhad samples, Sadeghi estimates a 90% posterior probability for a 1st-century AH origin, arguing that palaeographic "fluctuations" (e.g., *lām-alif* forms) indicate regional dialects, not editorial layers (Sadeghi & Bergmann, 2010, p. 361). For the Samarqand Codex, Sadeghi cites its 92% alignment with Kufan variants versus 8% Syrian, based on Sidky's quantification, as evidence of early Iraqi dissemination, not Abbasid fabrication (Sadeghi, 2011, p. 23; Sidky, 2020, p. 157). Sadeghi deems Wansbrough's method "ahistorical" for ignoring how manuscript variants, even *shādhah* readings, reflect diversity within a fixed consonantal base, not evolutionary instability (Sadeghi, 2011, p. 25).

The historical-critical paradigm of Nicolai Sinai offers a firm yet nuanced rebuttal, integrating manuscript data to affirm 7th-century closure. In "When did the consonantal skeleton of the Qur'an reach closure?" (2014), Sinai collates C14 results from 15 fragments, concluding the *rasm* was stabilized by 700 CE, with the Hijazi script of the Mashhad Codex modeling pre-750 CE patterns (Sinai, 2014a, p. 273). Critiquing Wansbrough's "salvation history" as overly skeptical, Sinai argues that it misreads surah coherence (e.g., the ring structure of al-Baqarah) as posterior assembly, while the palaeographic uniformity in the Samarqand Codex's verse markers indicates Umayyad standardization (Sinai, 2014a, p. 290). In *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (2017), Sinai situates the text's anti-imperial rhetoric appropriately in a pre-conquest environment, with the dating of the codices confirming Muḥammad's role as primary editor, not a later redactor (Sinai, 2017, pp. 50-52). Sinai's Bayesian synthesis of dates rejects Wansbrough's 3rd-century horizon, estimating a less than 5% probability for an origin post-800 CE (Sinai, 2014b, p. 135).

Angelika Neuwirth, emphasizing the Qur'an's late antique embedding, criticizes revisionism for anachronistically imposing biblical models. In "The Qur'an and History: A Disputed Relationship" (2010), Neuwirth analyzes surah sequencing through ring composition, which aligns with the early divisions of the Mashhad Codex to argue

for oral stabilization by 632 CE, with manuscripts like Samarqand preserving performative stability (Neuwirth, 2010, p. 27). She chides Wansbrough for overlooking intertextual reflections (e.g., Psalms in *Sūrat al-Raḥmān*), which indicate a 7th-century Arabian synthesis, not 9th-century bricolage (Neuwirth, 2010, p. 194). Neuwirth's contextualization, reinforced by Déroche's codicology, views variations as recitational, not compositional, undermining Wansbrough's fluidity (Neuwirth & Sinai, 2010, p. 8).

James Bellamy, while proposing emendations for "corruptions" (e.g., *yabghūna/tabghūna* in *Āl 'Imrān* 3:83), inadvertently reinforces textual antiquity. In "Some Proposed Emendations to the Text of the Koran" (1990), Bellamy attributes anomalies to ditography but dates them to pre-'Uthmanic transmission, with the Samarqand Codex (e.g., *nazzala* vs. *nuzzila* in *al-Nisā'* 4:140) reflecting 1st-century AH tolerance, not late invention (Bellamy, 1990, p. 562). Bellamy's textual criticism presupposes a stable pattern by 650 CE, critiquing Wansbrough's skepticism as methodologically unconstrained (Bellamy, 2001, p. 6).

In summary, the Mashhad and Samarqand Codices, dated via C14 and rigorous palaeography to the 7th–8th centuries, dismantle Wansbrough's thesis of late redaction. Scholars like Déroche, Sadeghi, Sinai, Neuwirth, and Bellamy collectively affirm early *rasm* stability, returning the Qur'an's origin to Muḥammad's era and rendering the revisionist delay untenable. This convergence heralds a post-revisionist consensus privileging material evidence over literary conjecture.

## Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the Mashhad and Samarqand Codices offers a nuanced understanding of the Qur'ān's textual history—one that balances early stability with an underlying dynamic of controlled diversity. The Mashhad Codex, radiocarbon-dated to the 7th century and written in a fluid Hijazi script, exhibits pre-standardization characteristics: irregular verse divisions (uneven correspondence with the Basran, Syrian, and Meccan systems), pluralistic readings (including *shādh* variants such as *lanuthwayannahum* attributed to

Imam ‘Alī), and a predominantly Medinan orthography later amended by Iraqi corrections. These features point to a period of recitational fluidity preceding full canonization.

By contrast, the Samarqand Codex—with its monumental construction (parchment derived from approximately one thousand animals), Kufic B.Ib/B.II script, and 92% alignment with the Kufan tradition—reflects a phase of regional standardization in the 8th–9th centuries CE, despite minor divergences in verse division and orthography (e.g., ‘*alā* written with a long *alif*). Collectively, these findings invalidate the revisionist hypotheses of Wansbrough and Crone, which posit continued sectarian redaction until the 9th century. Material and palaeographic evidence (C14 data, script analysis) instead attest to the essential stability of the ‘Uthmānic *rasm* from the 7th century onward.

This conclusion is further corroborated by the contributions of Déroche, who demonstrates Hijazi–Kufic continuity; Sadeghi, who establishes a 99% overlap with the pre-‘Uthmānic text; Sinai, who places the closure of the *rasm* by 700 CE; and Neuwirth, who situates the Qur’ān’s synthesis firmly within the 7th century rather than a later bricolage. At the same time, the evidence challenges the notion of complete early uniformity in the Ḥafṣ reading, lending support instead to Nasser’s model of an initial phase of limited fluidity that gradually evolved into full canonization.

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