# The Hijazi Script

In his bibliographical work, the *Fihrist,* the 10th-century Baghdadi scholar Ibn al-Nadim gave an account of the early forms of the Arabic script. In this he stated that 'for the *alifs* of the scripts of Makkah and al-Madinah, there is a turning of the hand to the right and lengthening of the strokes, one form having a slight slant.'[1] In the middle of the 19th century, Michele Amari used this text to identify examples of the Meccan script, and almost a century later Nabia Abbott gave scripts of this type the more general name of Hijazi, the Hijaz being the region of western Arabia where both Mecca and Medina lie.[2] Although the number of Qur'an fragments written in the thin, slanting strokes typical of Hijazi is small, they display a great variety of styles. It is not clear, however, whether this was because the Arabic script was still in search of its identity, or whether styles were already very numerous, as they were in later times. The fragments all have an air of considerable antiquity about them, and it may be that their very age is one reason for their scarcity. The account of Ibn al-Nadim gives some weight to the idea that Hijazi was in use during the 1st and early 2nd centuries AH, for in his time this style of script was associated with the holiest period of Islamic history. It is even possible that the Hijazi fragments have survived as pious relics.

Further evidence of the antiquity of Hijazi can be obtained by comparing it with texts written in the Arabic alphabet before the rise of Islam and during the first decades after the Hijrah. The earliest are a number of inscriptions in stone from the 6th century AD, all of which were discovered in what is now the Syrian Arab Republic.[3] In these, the basic shapes of the letters are more or less constant and are roughly the same as those used in Hijazi.[4] We may conclude from this that the first Muslim scribes had a relatively well-defined set of characters at their disposal. Even in these very short texts, however, there are variations in the letter forms. These variations are not great, but they show that the rules of the script had not yet been codified. During the 7th century, the situation remained moderately fluid. Inscriptions show that attempts were made to regularize the Arabic script and to turn it into a vehicle suitable for the decoration of such outstanding monuments as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, whose inscriptions date from the 690s. The success of these experiments was no doubt partly responsible for, and also partly influenced by, the decision of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik to make Arabic the chancery language of his empire, which he did in AD 697.[5] At the other extreme were the rapidly executed, rather coarse hands employed by scribes writing on papyrus. These may be considered cursive styles in that they had been adapted as far as possible to the natural movements of the hand, and so to economy of effort.[6] As Grohmann has shown, there were fairly close links between documents written on papyrus and some manuscripts in Hijazi, which must therefore be understood in relation to the cursive, taking into account the variations and irregularities in a script used for everyday purposes.[7] Indeed, we may infer from Ibn al-Nadim's account in the *Fihrist* that the Meccan and Medinan hands were used in these towns before the rise of Islam, very probably for purely utilitarian purposes.[8] Hijazi was not unaffected by the trends illustrated by the monumental inscriptions, for the Hijazi manuscripts show that the scribes who wrote them sometimes made a deliberate attempt to refine the original repertory of forms. Underlying these refinements was an æsthetic that would be exploited more fully in the development of the Early Abbasid scripts.

The number of fragments in Hijazi is so small, and the fragments themselves are usually so short, that no precise description of the script used in an individual example may be given, for the extent of variation within a particular hand cannot be defined with any certainty. The fluctuations observed in these hands suggest that the copyists were more concerned with the

transmission of the Qur'anic text than with the external appearance of their work. The hand of cat. 1 below provides a particularly clear illustration of this first stage in the development of Qur'anic calligraphy, and it may be compared with other folios from the same manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the Vatican Library. The number of lines to the page varies between 22 and 26 in this material, which suggests that each page was written without much preparation, but the presence of ruling on some pages somewhat undermines this conclusion. The long, thin vertical strokes help to give the script an extenuated appearance. As a result of a deliberate choice, there is a clear contrast between *alif,* which always leans to the right, and *lām,* which is vertical. In the independent form, *alif* has a short return at the base, and the careful spacing between the two *lām*s in the word *Allāh* should also be noted. The movement of the pen has not been disguised, and the formation of the ligatures can be clearly traced. This is particularly so in the case of the medial form of *'ayn*, whose characteristic v shape is marked by a slight re-entrant at the intersection of the two antennae. The same is true for the initial and medial forms of *hā'*, in which the bar varies between an almost vertical position and a marked inclination to the left. The 'eyes' of the letter are very clear, while in the final form the loop is extended horizontally. The circular *mīm* already presages a round final form; in the Khalili fragment, this has a vertical tail which is often tiny. Final and independent *nūn* and other letters with similar endings show some variation in their shape. As a rule, they are curved, but the part below the characteristic 'tuck'– the short stroke that rises above the base line – was rendered in different ways. Similar variations may be observed in the final form of *yā'* (see cat. 1).

Having considered the variations within a single Hijazi manuscript, we must now turn to variations between manuscripts or, where we are fortunate, between groups of manuscripts. The differences in the letter forms within the body of Hijazi material suggest that several different styles of writing coexisted, and a tentative identification can be made of four principal varieties; this typology is, of course, open to amendment. Cat. 1 is an example of Hijazi I, and the hand of cat. 2 is a modified form of it: it still has the extenuated appearance typical of Hijazi, but there is greater regularity, the letter forms being more precisely defined. Other notable features of cat. 2 are the more pronounced base line, the consistent horizontal ruling and the horizontal format. Hijazi II, which is more generally known as *mā'il* on the basis of the description in Ibn al-Nadim, has the characteristic sloping *alif,* but here it lacks the return at the base. The best known example is OR.MS.2165 in the British Library.[9] Hijazi III is known from MS.arab.330a in the Bibliothèque Nationale, while Hijazi IV is the style of cat. 3 below, which, like cat. 2, is in the horizontal rather than the vertical format. Hijazi III and IV are less extenuated, more 'plump' than their predecessors. In these scripts, independent *alif* has a longish return; final *mīm,* with its horizontal tail, looks as though it has been flattened; *nūn* consists of three identifiable elements; and the bar of *hā'* and the indentation of *bā'* are oriented in the same direction as *alif*, whereas they had formerly run in the opposite direction. A style closely related to these Hijazi scripts is B.1a, which may have been the prototype of B.1b. Like cat. 2, B.1a has the extenuated appearance of Hijazi but is more regular.

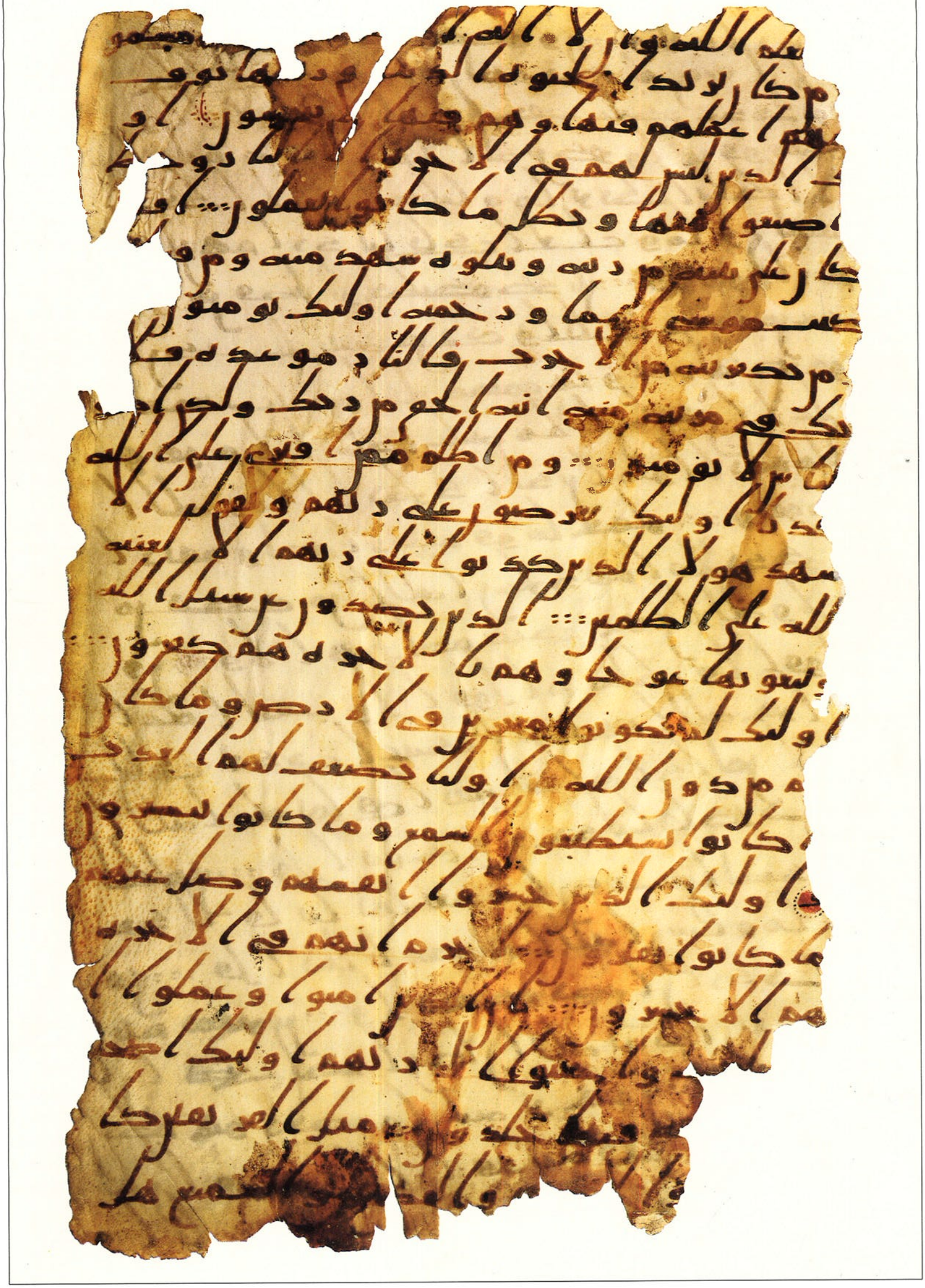
These observations, although far from exhaustive, enable us to make some more general remarks. Hijazi was certainly employed for copying the Qur'an in the 7th century AD and may have continued to be used in the 8th, especially since it enjoyed the incomparable prestige of being directly connected with the beginnings of Islam.[10] The letter forms found in the oldest examples – among them cat. 1 – vary from one fragment to another, but it is not clear whether this was the result of differences in local practice, such as those that divided Meccan and

Medinan usage for example, or merely of differences between the work of one scribe and another. The repertory of graphic forms found in this early manuscript material underwent a gradual process of standardization. Cat. 2 doubtless reflects this phase, which may have coincided with the first attempts to introduce the horizontal format. This process eventually produced the Early Abbasid scripts, but some Qur'an material produced after the 7th century, such as cat. 3, combines elements of both the Hijazi and the Early Abbasid traditions. It may be that some calligraphers who were working within the later tradition were influenced by the prestige of the earlier Hijazi script and incorporated some of its characteristic features, such as the slant, into their work. The orthography of Hijazi manuscripts was also subject to considerable variation: there is no vocalization in either cat. 1 or cat. 2, for example, while diacriticals are much more common in cat. 2. If we compare the long vowels used in these fragments with the *scriptio plena* of the Cairo edition, we see that *scriptio defectiva*, as when *qala* was written instead of *qāla*, was frequently used in the Hijazi material.[11]

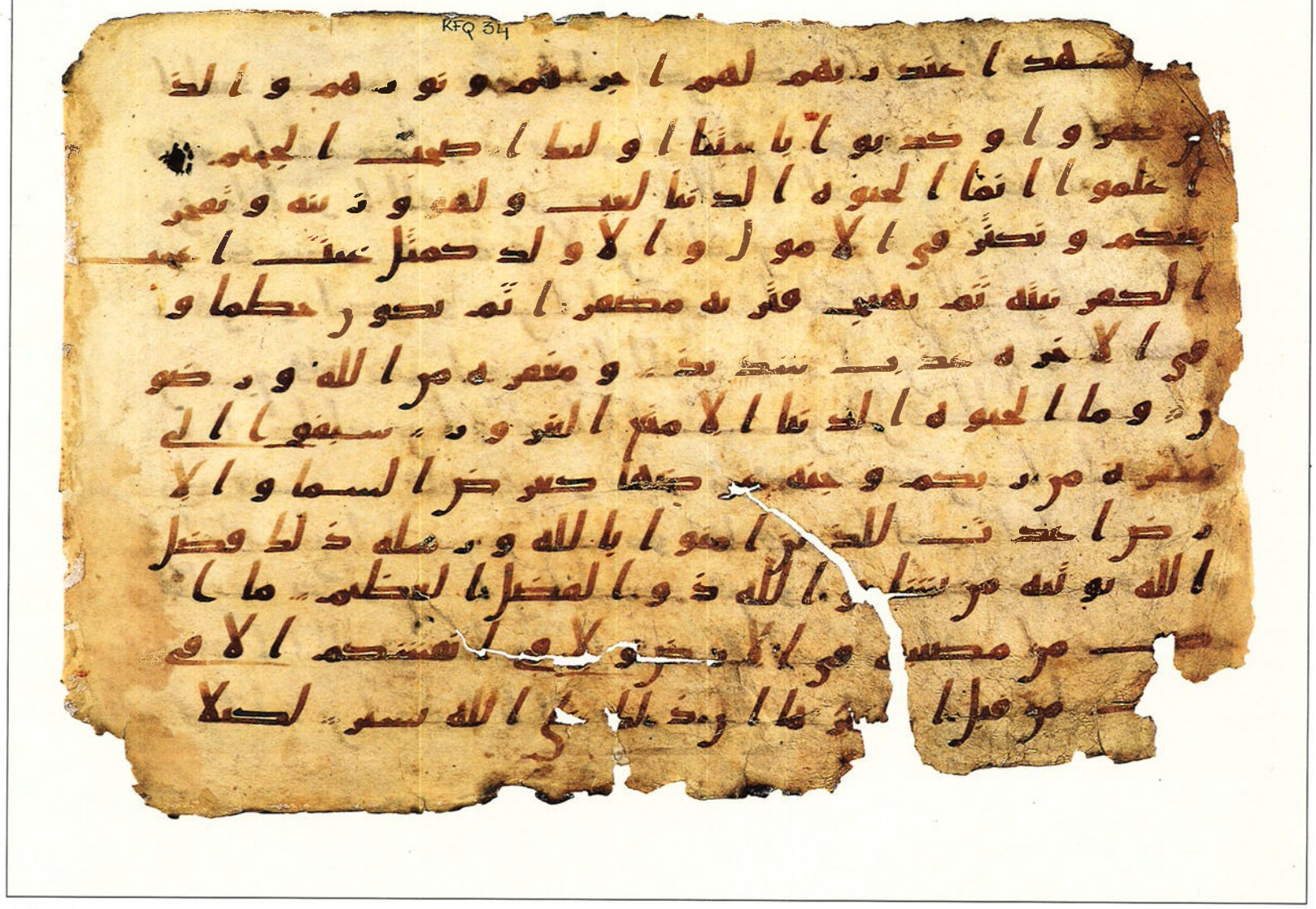
The decoration of Hijazi manuscripts was quite modest: rough geometrical bands were drawn in ink between the surahs, and groups of dots or small lines were placed between the verses. At first sight, cat. 3 might seem to be an exception, but the later date to which it must be assigned explains the richer palette and the slightly more elaborate vocabulary of motifs.

The fragmentary state of the manuscripts and the small number of examples that survive has prevented us from making any comparisons – except as regards format – between the codicological aspects of the Hijazi material and those of the Qur'ans written in the Early Abbasid scripts, which survive in far greater numbers and in much better physical condition. It would also be easier to understand the development of Islamic manuscript production at this early date if we had more solid information about other Middle Eastern traditions. The following conclusions can therefore only be provisional. As we have seen, parchment was well established as the most common writing material by the 7th century AD, and the codex had taken over from the roll by the 4th century.[12] Both were adopted by Islamic copyists. A vertical format was used in what appears to be the oldest Hijazi material. The horizontal format was also used, but the few examples we have seem to be in later forms of Hijazi, and they probably appeared when this format was already well established. The quires of the volume to which cat. 1 belonged seem to have conformed to what is known as Gregory's rule, as the hair sides face each other, which was not the case in later Qur'ans.[13] This may mean that in the earliest times quires were made by folding, as suggested by Sellheim,[14] but one example does not allow us to generalize, and we would first need to know whether the quires were of eight leaves.

Hijazi, or, more accurately, the hands that have been classed as Hijazi on the basis of the reference in the *Fihrist*, is not sufficiently well known to allow us more than a glimpse of the development of the Arabic script in the 7th century and at the beginning of the 8th. The historical role of this script, and even the fact of its existence, were obscured by the triumph of the Early Abbasid styles to such an extent that none of the Qur'ans attributed to 'Ali or 'Uthman in subsequent centuries is in this hand, but its importance is shown by the survival into the 8th century of some of its æsthetic, as we have seen in the case of cat. 3. We cannot at present determine the relationship between Hijazi and the more extenuated types of Early Abbasid script which also appear in vertical-format Qur'ans, such as A.1 or B.1. If we could, a whole chapter in the history of Arabic calligraphy would emerge from oblivion.



1 recto



2 verso

1
## Single folio
## Early 8th century AD

Fragmentary (largest dimensions now 32.5×20.5 cm), with 23 and 25 lines to the page
*Material* Parchment; the recto is the hair side
*Text area* 29.5×20.5 cm
*Script* Hijazi I
*Accession no.* KFQ60
*Other fragments from the same Qur'an*
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.328a (Déroche 1983, no.2); Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, MS.arab.1605/1 (Levi della Vida 1947, pp.1–2 and pl.1)

This folio illustrates the first stage in the history of Qur'anic calligraphy. The format is vertical, and the script, which is thin and slender, also has a distinct vertical emphasis, despite the slant to the right. The hand is rather free, and the number of lines varies between 22 and 26 in the surviving material. The folios in Paris show signs of ruling, but the copyist did not always keep strictly to the horizontal. This and other factors – the rounding of the upper lines of letters such as *dāl*, *ṣād* and *kāf*, for example – show that, for the copyist, the horizontal element was not the most important.

The forms of *alif*, *lām*, final *kāf*, *ṭā'* and *ẓā'* emphasize the orientation on an oblique vertical, and even a line drawn between the two extremities of final *nūn*, would run in this direction. There is no attempt to disguise the movement of the pen, particularly in the case of the medial form of *'ayn*, whose characteristic V has a slight re-entrant. The same is true for the initial and medial forms of *hā'*, whose bar is sometimes almost vertical and sometimes slopes to the left. The circular *mīm* has a short, downward-pointing tail in the final form. Final *nūn* and other letters with similar endings show some variation in their shape, as does final *yā'*, which can end in a backward curve (recto, line 11) or a form that resembles *nūn* (line 10).

The text is written in brown ink, with occasional diacritical strokes. There is no vocalization. Six oval dots ranked in three pairs (2.1.4) punctuate the verses. Every fifth verse is marked by a red *alif* surrounded by dots (see recto, line 3). A red circle (1.A.11) indicates every tenth verse but may be a later addition. It contains a letter in black which gives the number of verses in the *abjad* system.

The text is *Sūrat Hūd* (XI), verses 14–35. As the damaged folio in the Vatican Library ends at verse 13, it almost certainly preceded cat.1.

2
## Single folio
## Early 8th century AD

17.5×25.5 cm, with 12 lines to the page, ruled
*Material* Parchment; the verso is the hair side
*Text area* 13.8×23 cm
*Script* Hijazi I
*Accession no.* KFQ34
*Another fragment from the same Qur'an*
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.326a (Blachère 1959, pp.95 and 98 and fig.1; Déroche 1983, no.1)

This is an example of the next stage in the development of Qur'anic calligraphy. The page format is horizontal rather than vertical. The ductus still has the extenuated appearance typical of Hijazi, but the letter forms are more precisely defined, and the leaf bears coherent horizontal ruling. The base line is more strongly marked than in cat.1, because the horizontal plays a greater role in this script: the upper line of *dāl*, *ṣād* and *kāf* is now parallel to the base line, for example.

Some letter forms resemble those of cat.1, but only one type has been retained in the case of letters such as *nūn* or *hā'*, which had more than one form in the earlier example. Other letter forms were modified, the clearest example being final *mīm*: its tail is now horizontal, and its body either sits on the line or straddles it, depending on which letter precedes it. Most vertical strokes still slant to the right, but some verge on the vertical. This is clearly visible in the word *Allāh*, where the second *lām* is almost straight.

The text – verses 13–23 of *Sūrat al-ḥadīd* (LVII) – is written in brown ink, with many diacritical strokes. There is no vocalization. Triangular clusters of three strokes (1.1.4) mark the end of each verse. At verse 19 a crude marker has been added in black ink to indicate the end of a group of ten verses.

3
## Two folios
## End of the 8th century AD or early 9th

Fragmentary; largest dimensions now 16×24.5 cm (KFQ59) and 13×18.5 cm (KFQ61), with parts of 13 and 11 lines surviving
*Material* Parchment; the hair side is the verso in both cases
*Text area* 12.8×20.5 cm (KFQ59), 10.9×17 cm (KFQ61)
*Script* Hijazi IV
*Accession nos* KFQ59, KFQ61
*Another fragment from the same Qur'an*
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.334c (Déroche 1983, no.9)

The script of these two fragments may be an intermediate style, for it strongly resembles c.1b, but there is a slight slant to the right, as in Hijazi. The *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadim shows that, by the time that this style was in use, the peculiar features of Hijazi were fairly widely known. The veneration paid in later periods to Qur'ans of the Abbasid period that were mistakenly attributed to Companions of the Prophet suggests that in earlier times copies in Hijazi inspired a similar degree of awe. It is thus not impossible that calligraphers sought to retain the most characteristic feature of Hijazi, while using a style of script that was thoroughly contemporary in other respects. This would explain the odd appearance of Hijazi, type IV.

The text of the first fragment (KFQ59) runs from *Sūrat al-nūr* (XXIV), verse 59, to *Sūrat al-furqān* (XXXV), verse 4, with a lacuna between verses 61 and 63 of *Sūrat al-nūr*. The text of the second fragment (KFQ61) consists of verses 77–124 of *Sūrat al-shu'arā'* (LXXVI), with a lacuna between verses 93 and 110. The two fragments are probably part of the same quire and may have been the two halves of the same bifolio, perhaps folios 3 and 8 of the quire.

The text is in black ink, with occasional diacritical strokes. Red dots were used to indicate the vocalization, and clusters of three oblique strokes in ink (1.1.1) were placed at the end of every verse. On the second fragment (recto, line 3; verso, line 1), a red circle surrounded by strokes in ink (1.A.11) indicates the end of a group of ten verses. On the verso of the first fragment a decorative band divides the two surahs: a row of small rosettes separated by a pair of vertical bars ends with a vignette organized around a pomegranate in the left-hand margin. Every fourth rosette is painted in a very dark green, and there is a central group of five red and yellow rosettes.

3 (KFQ 59) recto

3 (KFQ 59) verso

# The Early Abbasid Scripts

Since the late 18th century, Western students of Islamic calligraphy have applied the name Kufic to the types of Arabic script that supplanted Hijazi in the production of Qur'ans. The term is misleading, for it associates all these scripts with the town of al-Kufah in southern Iraq, a connection which has never been, and can never be, substantiated. As we have already seen, J.G.C. Adler, one of the first scholars to use the term, borrowed it from Islamic sources without serious consideration of its implications and applied it to the early Qur'anic material in the library of the Danish kings, a collection that was too narrow in its range to be representative. Only a few years after Adler first used the term, Silvestre de Sacy remarked that 'quoique ce nom ait prévalu et que l'on s'en serve communément pour désigner toutes les écritures arabes antérieures à celles qu'inventa Ebn Mokla, il est certain que c'est donner à l'épithète de Cufique une signification trop illimitée',[1] and a rapid survey of the 'Kufic' fragments in the Khalili Collection shows that the variety of scripts used in this period is too great to be defined by so restrictive a name. Indeed, scholars such as von Karabacek and Abbott introduced new names such as *'irāqī* and *mashq* in their studies of early Islamic scripts, presumably because they felt that 'Kufic' was inadequate, but they created some confusion by not explaining the relationship between the scripts they identified and those usually called Kufic.[2]

For these reasons, it is clear that, if we are to use a generic name to cover the whole range of Qur'anic scripts that replaced Hijazi, we should avoid the term Kufic or any similar appellation that refers to a precise geographical location. It would seem less perilous to choose a very general name that reflects what little we know of the chronology of the scripts, and we have therefore proposed that they be called the Abbasid scripts, after the dynasty of that name which assumed the caliphate in the middle of the 8th century AD and ruled during the period when 'Kufic' flourished. Even the term Abbasid is not entirely accurate, for some of the styles included under this heading were already in use in the period immediately before the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate in AD 750. One of the Abbasids' Umayyad predecessors, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (*reg* 685–705), probably played a part in their development as a result of his reform of chancery usages, and early inscriptions already show some of the letter types which appear in the manuscripts.[3] However, although some examples of what we call the Abbasid scripts are earlier than the manuscripts examined here, the overwhelming majority of the extant examples, including all the dated Qur'ans, was produced in the Abbasid period.

This present essay is devoted to an analysis of scripts. There is, however, an inherent link between scripts and the materials on which they are written, and for a discussion of the codicology of manuscripts written in the Early Abbasid scripts the reader should refer to the discussion on pages 17–25 above. The Abbasid scripts fall into two main groups, the Early Abbasid styles and the New Style, which were the equivalent of Kufic proper and Eastern Kufic in the usual nomenclature. The cursive scripts might be classified conveniently as a third group, but they do not seem to have been in general use for copying the Qur'an until the 11th century, and they do not fall within the scope of this catalogue. The Early Abbasid group is characterized by a proliferation of styles, and this is reflected in contemporary sources such as the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadim, which contain lists of names for the different types of script. Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to identify these names with any of the scripts that occur in the surviving material,[4] and we have therefore been forced to rely on other means to identify them. In labelling the different styles, we have tried to develop a system that is flexible enough to incorporate new discoveries, and for this reason we have chosen to use codes based on letters and numbers. The six main styles are identified by the letters A to F. Most of the main

styles have then been subdivided into types identified by Roman numerals, as in D.I, D.II and D.III. In a few cases, we have had to distinguish between variants of these types, and the subtypes, such as C.Ia or D.Vb, are indicated by the addition of a lower-case letter to the code.

Not all the scripts are represented equally. Some, such as B.II, appear on large numbers of fragments, while others, such as D.II, occur on very few.[5] It must also be borne in mind that whole classes of material may have been destroyed, with the result that our picture of the development of Qur'anic calligraphy will never be complete. Any number of other causes for the uneven distribution of the Early Abbasid scripts could be cited, but care must be taken in evaluating these, as almost all the manuscripts or fragments on which our knowledge is based were found in the western half of the Islamic world, most notably in the storerooms of mosques in Cairo, Damascus, Kairouan and San'a'. As a result, next to nothing is known about the situation further east, and it may be that some of the rarer types of script belong to groups that were once relatively common in the eastern Islamic lands. The fragments found in Cairo, Damascus, Kairouan and San'a' cover more or less the same range of scripts, but we must wait for the definitive publication of these collections before the proportions in which the various scripts survive can be determined. Even then, we will never be sure that the element of chance in the rates of survival has not given us a distorted picture of the original situation.

*Group A*

In assembling the Khalili Collection, the aim has been to cover the whole spectrum of early Islamic calligraphy as fully as possible, and almost all the Early Abbasid styles are represented in it. Style A, of which very few examples survive, is represented by cat. 5 below. Its transitional character is evident in its combination of letter forms. Some, such as initial and medial *hā'*, bear a close resemblance to the same forms in Hijazi, while others are more typical of the later Abbasid styles: the combined form of *lām* and *alif* resembles the solution adopted in D.I, for example, and the final *nūn* of group A is very similar to that of group C, although the return at the base is longer. The vertical strokes are mostly perpendicular to the base line, but those of *ṭā'* and *ẓā'* and final *kāf* and *lām* retain the Hijazi tilt to the right. Several fragments were found in Cairo and Damascus,[6] but no external evidence has been discovered for dating them.

*Group B*

All the scripts included under this heading have the same basic forms of *alif*, *mīm*, *hā'*, and, to a lesser extent, *nūn*. The sub-types B.Ia and B.Ib are very similar. B.Ia has *alifs* that slope slightly to the right, which may mean that it should be considered a form of Hijazi; in B.Ib, however, the vertical upstrokes are always perpendicular to the base line. The small group of B.Ia fragments found in Cairo, Damascus and San'a' show the same hesitation in writing final *nūn*: in some cases it resembles the form that occurs in Hijazi manuscripts, but in other cases it is very close to the final *nūn* of B.Ib.[7] Other letters are more consistent in the forms they take, which sometimes approximate to the shapes seen in Hijazi, and sometimes to those of B.Ib. This second sub-type is generally a medium-sized or large script. The manuscripts and fragments written in it include items found in Cairo and Damascus.[8] From a codicological point of view, this material is very varied, for, besides examples in the vertical format, such as cat. 4, and others in the horizontal format, such as cat. 6, it includes a third type that has square leaves, a format that must go back to the ancient use of papyrus.[9] No examples of B.Ia or B.Ib are dated, but the inscription on the al-Ta'if dam which contains the date AH 58 (AD 677–8) is in a similar style,[10]

as are the graffiti from the beginning of the 2nd century AH (8th century AD) that Miriam Rosen-Ayalon discovered in the Negev.[11] More generally, analogous forms of *mīm* and *hā'* occur quite often in the oldest Islamic inscriptions.[12] We may take this as evidence that the B.I sub-group was in use in the 8th century, with B.Ia perhaps slightly earlier than B.Ib.

The second type of script included in this group, B.II, is the style that von Karabacek called *'irāqī*.[13] It is generally a small hand, and there is no trace of the oblique slant or the extenuated appearance of Hijazi: the line is thick, and the short upward strokes are always strictly vertical. Examples written in this style occur among the discarded Qur'an material discovered in Cairo, Damascus, Kairouan and San'a',[14] and the Damascus material has yielded two dates with which it can be associated, AH 22[9] (AD 843–4) and Safar AH 249 (April AD 863),[15] while a fragment reproduced by Moritz bears the date AH 270 (AD 883–4).[16] It appears from this that B.II was in use fairly early in the 9th century.

*Group C*

Fourteen items in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris have similar forms of *mīm*, *nūn* and *hā'*, and they were grouped together on this basis.[17] Many more examples have now been identified, and it is possible that the palæographical definition of some styles should be revised. C.Ia is a thick, vertical script, while C.Ib is thinner, and its horizontal strokes have triangular endings. Fragments written in both of these sub-types have been found in Cairo, Damascus and San'a'.[18] A form of *hā'* very close to that of C.Ia appears in an inscription in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem which dates from AH 72 (AD 691);[19] letter forms used in both C.Ia and C.Ib are similar to those of Hijazi IV, which seems to have been employed in the 8th century AD; and there is other evidence to suggest that C.I was in use in the second decade of the 3rd century AH (between AD 825 and 835). We may therefore conclude that C.I was in use in the 8th century AD, or at least in the second half of that century.

C.II is a thick, vertical script and may be a more elaborate variant of C.I. No external evidence for the dating of this style has yet been found, but a comparison with the two sub-types of C.I suggests that it is later – perhaps only a little later. At present, the sample available is very small, but it includes material from Cairo and perhaps Damascus.[20]

C.III is a medium-sized hand, which is generally very close to C.II. Manuscripts and fragments from Cairo and Damascus give a fairly complete picture of its range.[21] It may have been the last style in this group to develop, for a document that accompanies a Qur'an written in C.III dates from the last years of the 9th century AD.

*Group D*

This is the most numerous and most varied group of Early Abbasid scripts. It contains five different styles, and one of these (D.V) is divided into three sub-types. However, many of the individual hands that can be related to one or other of these types and sub-types are imperfect versions of them. The basic letter forms we have chosen for the purposes of comparison – those of *alif*, *mīm*, *nūn* and *hā'* – are rendered in different ways, but it is impossible to place their development in a chronological sequence, and the codes we have given the scripts in this group do not reflect a classification of this type. The line is thick, and the vertical upstrokes are always perpendicular to the base line.

D.I is a large hand.[22] Examples of it have been found in all four of the great caches of discarded Qur'an material.[23] Several copies of the Qur'an written in D.I bear dates in the 9th and 10th cen-

turies AD: a copy in Istanbul with an inscription that commemorates a birth in Shawwal AH 232 (May–June AD 847);[24] the Qur'an of Amajur, dated AH 262 (AD 875–6);[25] an example in Cairo with a *waqfiyyah* dated AH 267 (AD 880–81);[26] the Qur'an of 'Abd al-Mun'im, which has a *waqfiyyah* dated Dhu'l-Qa'dah AH 298 (July AD 911);[27] and another copy in Istanbul with a *waqfiyyah* of Ramadan AH 337 (March AD 949).[28] From this, we may conclude that this style had been elaborated by the beginning of the 9th century AD and that it remained popular at least until the end of the century and most probably into the next. Some less skilful versions may even date from quite late in the 10th century, if we can trust a *waqfiyyah* dated Ramadan AH 366 (AD 976–7) in a Qur'an fragment in Paris.[29]

D.II can be distinguished from D.I by the slight curve to the right in the upper part of the shafts of *alif, ṭā', lām* etc.; by the return at the base of independent *alif,* which is perhaps less rounded; and the lower return of final or independent *nūn,* which is less clearly oriented upwards. The other letter forms generally resemble those of D.I, but the overall impression is of a certain awkwardness, despite the coherence and regularity of the style. Is it perhaps the product of a single scribe, or of a provincial school? A limited number of D.II manuscripts were found in Cairo and Kairouan,[30] and they can be easily distinguished by their large hands and illumination. There is no external evidence that would allow us to date D.II, but, on the basis of the stylistic relationship to D.I, we may ascribe it to the 9th century AD or perhaps a little later; the matter is open to debate.

D.III is a large hand. Like D.I, it is well represented in the material from all four major finds,[31] but it is difficult to date. A Qur'an in D.III from Kairouan is dated AH 295 (AD 907–8),[32] and similar forms of *alif* and *nūn* appear in a *waqf* deed dated Dhu'l-Qa'dah AH 298 (July AD 911),[33] but this evidence is not sufficient to allow us to conclude that D.III is later than D.I. We may assign it provisionally to the second half of the 9th century AD.

D.IV is a small or medium-sized script remarkable for the frequent use of *mashq.* It appears in all four of the great finds of early Qur'an material.[34] Ascribing this style to a particular period is not easy, although two manuscripts written in it contain dated inscriptions. The date in one of these inscriptions, a *waqf* deed of AH 270 (AD 883–4), seems acceptable, whereas the other, a *waqfiyyah* dated AH 329 (AD 940–41), is surprisingly late, and the manuscript in which it occurs is in the vertical format rather than the horizontal format one would have expected.[35] Such a late date for D.IV would, however, fit with Jonathan Bloom's recent dating of the Blue Qur'an, which is related stylistically to D.IV, to the middle of the 10th century.[36]

The D.V sub-group seems to have developed as the result of external influences on the basic repertory of group D. This may indicate the growing popularity of scripts that were closer to contemporary practice. The letter forms of D.Va are close to those of D.I, but there is a slight vertical extenuation of the letters, a feature which is more apparent in D.Vb. In D.Va we can also see examples of the shaft of *ṭā'* developing a slant and a break in its upper register; of final *mīm* with a thread-like tail; and of letters superimposed. A D.Va manuscript in Istanbul contains a *waqf* deed dated Jumada II AH 299 (January–February AD 912),[37] and at present this is our only evidence for dating this group. There are examples of this sub-type in all four major finds of early Qur'an material, and some are in the vertical format.[38]

D.Vb, which differs from D.Va in its more pronounced vertical extenuation, is a large or medium-sized script which figures in manuscripts or fragments from Cairo and Damascus.[39] It is not unusual to find it in vertical-format manuscripts, which perhaps shows that it is relatively late. This contention appears to be supported by the colophon of a manuscript in Istanbul,

Table II
Letter forms of groups A and B

| | Alif | Jīm/ḥā'/khā' | | Ṭā/ẓā' | 'Ayn/ghayn | | | Qāf |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A.I |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |
| B.Ia |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |
| B.Ib |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| B.II |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Group A*

*Alif.* The shaft is vertical, and the return at the base is short and relatively flat.
*Jīm.* Within a word, but not after an initial indentation such as *yā'*, it consists of an oblique stroke across the line. As a final letter, its shape varies: in cat. 5, its tail is long and flat, with no final loop (KFQ62, verso, line 2).
*Ṭā'.* The vertical shaft slopes to the right, as in Hijazi.
*'Ayn.* When initial, the upper hook is thickened. In the medial form, the right-hand antenna is vertical. The long, flat tail of the final and independent forms rests on the base line, like that of *jīm* (cat. 5, KFQ42, verso, line 6).
*Qāf.* The final and independent forms end in an open curve, which narrows with the turn of the pen. In some manuscripts, it extends to the left of the head of the letter, parallel with the base line.
*Mīm* is approximately circular. The short, flat tail of the final form rests on the base line.
*Nūn.* The crescent shape of the final form ends in a flattened return which is often quite short (cat. 5, KFQ62, verso, line 2). In other instances (cat. 5, KFQ42, verso, line 8), it is longer and rises towards the base line.
*Hā'.* The initial and medial forms are close to that of Hijazi I: the bar slopes to the left; the 'eyes' are well defined; and the letter rests on the base line.

*Group B*

B.Ia

The most striking feature of this sub-type is the way that the vertical upstrokes slope to the right, as in Hijazi. In almost all other respects, it is very close to B.Ib.

B.Ib

*Alif.* The shaft is always strictly vertical, and the independent form has a horizontal return with a blunt end which is almost perpendicular to the shaft.
*Jīm.* The medial form is shaped like an oblique bar placed across the base line. The horizontal tail of the final form ends in a short downward hook which is open to the right (cat. 6, recto, line 7).
*'Ayn.* In the medial form, the right-hand antenna is almost vertical, and the left-hand antenna leans to the left. In the initial form, the upper curve is generally reduced to a short, sloping hook. In the final form, the right antenna is prolonged almost vertically before

| Mīm | | Nūn | | Hā' | Lām-alif | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Cat.5; and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.330e, folio 39a, for the *ṭā'*/*ẓā'* only |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.331, folio 43a |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Cat.6 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Cat.9 |

ending in a short return to the left, nearly parallel with the base line.
*Qāf*. Finally, its tail takes the form of a U whose branches are parallel with the base line.
*Mīm* is a circle, placed more or less neatly astride the line. The tail of the final form is usually horizontal but often curves almost imperceptibly upwards.
*Nūn*. Finally, the head is slightly curved but not thickened; the body of the letter is vertical; and the lower return curves very slightly upwards – a feature also seen in the lower return of final and independent *lām*.
*Hā'*. Supported on a bar which has the Hijazi habit of leaning to the left, the initial and medial forms of this letter sit astride the base line, which is indicated by the stroke that separates the two 'eyes'. A kind of semicircle leans against the bar to form the body of the letter. In some versions (see cat. 4), the initial and medial forms resemble final *hā'*; the only feature shared with the more normal form is a slight extension below the base line.
*Lām-alif*. The *alif* curves away from the intersection with the *lām*, which is straight and slightly slanted.

B.II
*Alif*. Always strictly vertical, it has a short, hook-like lower return in the independent form.
*Jīm*. Medially, it resembles B.Ib, with the bar tending to the vertical. In the final position, the tail thickens slightly before turning back on itself, parallel to the base line.
*'Ayn*. Within a word, the two antennae are hardly differentiated, but that on the right is completely vertical. Finally, the tail extends in a generous curve (cat. 11), although, at cat. 10, folio 40b, it has kept the straight element (see D.1). The hook of the initial form is relatively pronounced compared with letters such as *bā'* and *fā'*, and it tapers off at the end.
*Qāf*. In the final position, it recalls the shape seen in B.Ib, except that the U-ending is generally pushed further to the right in relation to the head of the letter.
*Mīm*. As in B.Ib, this letter is circular. It is distinctly so in the final form, whose short, horizontal tail rests on the base line.
*Nūn*. In the independent position, this letter is reduced to a vertical stroke, with a short perpendicular return at the bottom. At the end of a word, a triangular element is added to the upper part of the letter, which makes it look as though the top end has been bent over.
*Hā'*. Initially and medially, the form is that of B.Ib, but thicker.
*Lām-alif*. The two letters form a saltire, with the arm formed by the *lām* being the finer. In the independent position, it has an asymmetrical base.

Table III
Letter forms of group C

| | Alif | Jīm/ḥā'/khā' | | Ṭā/ẓā' | 'Ayn/ghayn | | | Qāf |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C.Ia |  |  | |  |  | | |  |
| C.Ib |  |  | | |  | | |  |
| C.II |  |  | | |  | | | |
| C.III |  |  | |  |  | | |  |

*Group C*

C.Ia

*Alif*. In isolation, this letter has a short return which turns up slightly.

*Jīm*. Within a word, this letter rests on the base line and does not descend below it. When it occurs at the end of a word, the tail is horizontal.

*'Ayn*. In the medial form, the two antennae are virtually identical. In the initial form, the hook looks as though it has been broken: it begins as an oblique stroke to the left, from which a spur strikes out to form an acute (or at the most a right) angle.

*Mīm*. At the end of a word or in isolation, it is a flattened circle whose base lies on the line or is indistinguishable from it. The horizontal tail ends in an oblique angle and sometimes looks like a mere extension of the side.

*Nūn*. The final form is a crescent which narrows as the pen turns to form the lower return.

*Hā'*. This can be described as a quarter-circle propped against a vertical bar and laid on the base line.

C.Ib

*Alif*. The independent form has a medium-sized return which is somewhat flattened.

*Jīm*. As in C.Ia.

*'Ayn*. The initial form is similar to C.Ia. In the medial form, the right-hand antenna tends to droop. In the final form, the tail follows the line of this antenna to form a broad curve.

*Mīm* has taken on the shape of a rounded triangle that has been laid on, or, rather, squashed down on to, the base line. The tail of the final form is horizontal.

*Nūn*. The final and independent forms are similar in shape to those of C.Ia: the head leans to the left, without thickening, and the lower return is horizontal and is preceded by a narrowing of the ductus. The body of the letter slopes to the right.

*Hā'*. The initial and medial forms are similar to those of C.Ia, except that the support is entirely vertical.

*Lām-alif*. The two arms curve towards each other more noticeably than in C.Ia.

C.II

*Alif*. The lower return of the independent form is short and fine.

*Jīm*. As in C.Ia and C.Ib, the medial form sits on the base line; only a short, crimped element descends beneath it. In the independent form, it has a flat tail.

*'Ayn* has forms analogous to those seen in C.Ia and C.Ib. In the final form, the letter ends in a long, tapering curve which does not follow the line of the right-hand antenna (see B.II). The hook in the initial form is more open and reaches upwards.

*Lām*. In the final and independent forms, the lower return has a triangular ending. The

| Mīm | | Nūn | | Hā' | Lām-alif | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  | Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.324c |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.334b, folio 21b |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS.arab.334e, folio 63a |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Cat. 16 |

outer side is curved.
*Mīm* is like a circle crushed on to the line; a vaguely triangular effect is made stronger in the final form by the triangular tail.
*Nūn*. The final form has the basic crescent shape common to group C, but it is smoother here: the pen seems to have drawn the head and body with a single rounded stroke. The lower ending begins with a characteristic constriction, but broadens out into a triangle.
*Hā'*. The initial and medial forms resemble those of C.Ia and C.Ib, although there is sometimes a slight flattening of the letter.
*Lām-alif*. The curving of the branches is less noticeable in C.II than it is in C.I.

C.III
*Alif*. The lower return of the independent form is normally lengthened, as though flattened on to the line.
*Jīm*. As in C.I and C.II.
*'Ayn*. The medial form is similar to those of the other C scripts. As an initial letter, it resembles the form seen in C.II, with the hook wide open.
*Mīm*. The triangular but rounded shape is particularly noticeable in the final form, where it is emphasized by the reduction of the tail to a horizontal point.
*Nūn*. The other distinctive trait of the C group is the treatment of the lower end of final or independent *nūn*. In C.III, it tapers off to finish the curve of the letter's body, directly recalling the form seen in C.II. In some manuscripts (cat. 17, for example), a triangular lower ending may be seen.
*Hā'*. As in C.I and C.II.
*Lām-alif*. The two arms curve towards each other, the *lām* being the higher.

which is dated Jumada I AH 307 (September–October AD 919);[40] but the colophon is in a different script to the main text and was added at some point when the manuscript was repaired. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the text of the colophon dates from the time of the repair or was copied from the old colophon.

D.Vc is close to D.Vb. It is a relatively thin script in which the U-ligature found occasionally in D.Va was used very frequently. This style, which Amari called 'écriture de Damas',[41] is attested in the material from Cairo, Damascus and Kairouan.[42] The dating of D.Vc should no doubt be linked to that of D.Vb, but we have very little direct evidence: the *nūn* of this sub-type figures in a *waqf* deed from Damascus dated Dhu'l-Qa'dah AH 298 (July AD 911),[43] but this may be because D had been adapted to current practice, in which *mīm* and *nūn* had similar forms.

*Group E*

This group contains a series of scripts with related characteristics, but, like D, it has a central core of good manuscripts, which in the case of E is rather small, and a majority of fairly mediocre copies. Among the latter we find some systematic recourse to *mashq*. Sometimes the whole text is treated in this way; at other times, horizontal elongations over one or more lines give the impression of an exact and careful page layout.[44] E.I figures extensively in the material from Cairo and Damascus.[45] The *waqf* deed of AH 298 (AD 911) has already been remarked upon above,[46] and E.I is also the script of a Qur'an fragment in which a birth was recorded in AH 309 (AD 921–2).[47] A date at the end of the 9th century AD or the beginning of the 10th would therefore seem assured, were it not for the use of a variant of E in a manuscript dated AH 512 (AD 1118–19).[48] Some E usages deserve to be pointed out. One is the use of a semicircular *nūn* similar to that of D.Vc in manuscripts from San'a' and Damascus;[49] another is the occurrence of a group of manuscripts in which characteristics of group E (*alif*, the tail of *mīm)* were combined with others from B.II (the body of *mīm*, *nūn* and *hā'*), thus showing that it was perfectly possible to create hybrid scripts.[50]

*Group F*

*Mashq* is a constant feature of this style, which seems to be present only in the material from Damascus. None of the manuscripts or fragments in this group is dated, although there are similarities with a milestone in Tbilisi dated about AH 100 (AD 718–19),[51] and the treatment of horizontal endings recalls those in an inscription of the caliph al-Mahdi which is dated AH 160 (AD 776–7).[52] We can therefore venture a dating to the 2nd century AH for this style.

*Group D*

D.I

*Alif*. The lower return of the independent form is long and tapering, with a definite curve.
*Jīm*. As in group C, the medial form rests on the line. The letters before the *jīm* were often placed slightly higher. In the final and independent forms, it has a thickened tail which turns back on itself in a tight curve and ends under the head of the letter.
*ʿAyn*. When initial, it appears as an open hook with a curved body. When medial, the right-hand antenna is vertical. When final, the return does not follow the line of the right-hand antenna but slants to the left and ends in a sickle shape. When independent, the tail has the same design as that of the *jīm*.
*Qāf*. The final and independent forms keep the U-shaped tail, which is tucked in under the letter, parallel to the base line.
*Mīm*. Although the letter is still flattened on to the line, the upper part is more separate than in the C scripts. The horizontal tail of the final form follows the lower part of the letter along the base line.
*Nūn*. In the final form, the head is slightly thickened and joins the vertical body in a noticeable curve. The lower return droops towards the line.
*Hā'*. The medial form is set on the base line and consists of a semicircle resting on a vertical bar.
*Lām-alif*. The *lām* is the finer of the two arms and curves delicately towards the *alif*, which has a pronounced slant.

D.II

*Alif*. Very like that of D.I. The return is perhaps less rounded, but the main difference is in the treatment of the upper part of the shaft, which bends slightly and ends in a curved 'chamfer'. The same feature can be observed in the vertical upstrokes of other letters such as *ṭā'* and *lām*.
*Nūn*. In the final and independent forms, it resembles those of D.I, except that the lower return is less clearly oriented upwards.
The other letters generally resemble those of D.I.

D.III

*Alif*. The independent form has a longer, tapering lower return, which has been flattened on to the line. The passage from the shaft to the return is often accompanied by a relative thickening of the ductus.
*Jīm*. In the final and independent forms, the thickening of the tail is all the more noticeable in that it ends with a slender point; in some cases, the base line between the head of the letter and the thickening of the tail was subject to *mashq* (i.e. it was extended horizontally).
*ʿAyn*. In the initial form, there is a lengthening of the base on to which the upper hook has been grafted. The hook itself is very open. Within a word, the two antennae are clearly distinguished, the right-hand antenna being vertical. In the final form, the tail either disengages itself from the right-hand antenna at a slight angle or rises vertically and then turns fairly sharply to the right.
*Mīm* is all but identical to that of D.I: at the very most, the tail is sometimes a little more distinct, and there is a tendency to accentuate the angle of the 'chamfer' in order to sharpen its lower point, as in the case of other horizontal endings.
*Nūn*. In the final and independent forms, it is simpler than in D.I: the thickening of the head, which differentiated it from the body, has gone, so that the line is uniformly thick. The lower return is horizontal.
*Hā'*. Very close to that of D.I.
*Lām-alif*. This differs from the form seen in D.I by the stiff and vertical appearance of the *lām*.

D.IV

*Alif*. When it stands by itself, the lower return is relatively flat, although less so than in D.III, and it has a blunt end.
*ʿAyn*. At the beginning of a word, the upper hook is at a less open angle to the base line and is most often short and straight. There is a variety of final forms: one resembles that of D.I; another is closer to that of B.II; and the Blue Qur'an (cat. 42) offers a third, in which the head is V-shaped, and the tail turns sharply to the right to follow the base line.
*Qāf*. The independent and final forms resemble those of D.I.
*Mīm*. Although close to D.I in form, it has a tendency to cross below the base line. In this case, the lower part of the letter bulges slightly, as in B.II.
*Nūn*. The head of the final and independent forms is short and relatively thick; this is particularly noticeable in the independent form. The lower return is very short and does not disengage itself strongly from the vertical body.
*Hā'*. As with *mīm*, the form of this letter resembles that seen in B.II. It is composed of a rough semicircle leaning on a vertical bar and tends to drop below the line.
*Lām-alif*. One form is reminiscent of D.I, while another has two parallel vertical arms.

D.Va

*Alif*. The independent form resembles that of style D.I.
*ʿAyn*. As in D.I, except perhaps when a break appears in the curve of final *ʿayn* as it turns back on itself.
*Mīm*. Generally as in D.I.
*Nūn*. As in D.III, but the head of the final and independent forms is not strongly marked, and the body is longer.
*Hā'*. Mostly as in D.I.

D.Vb

*Alif*. When it stands by itself, it has a long and gently rising return. The shaft is tall and thin, like those of *ṭā'* and *lām*.
*Ṭā'*. The shaft is often oblique and curves over at the top. This form was also used for final *kāf*.
*ʿAyn*. Reminiscent of D.I.
*Mīm*. Mostly as in D.I.
*Nūn*. In the final and independent forms, the head is not differentiated from the body, which is vertical and much longer than before. The horizontal lower return is perpendicular to the body. The whole letter is of an even thickness (see D.III).
*Hā'*. As in D.I.
*Lām-alif*. There is some variety, even within a single manuscript. D.I and D.III types occur, as well as a form in which the two branches are parallel.

D.Vc

*Alif*. As in D.Vb, but the shaft is more slender.
*ʿAyn*. As in D.Vb.
*Mīm*. The final and independent forms most often end in a thread-like tail which leaves the letter and follows the line of its left side, curving round to the left.
*Nūn*. There are two forms in final or isolated position: one is the same as D.Vb; the other is almost a semicircle. This outline is also used for final *yā'* and especially for *sīn*.
*Hā'*. As in D.Vb.

Table IV
Letter forms of group D

| | Alif | Jīm/ḥā'/khā' | | Ṭā/ẓā' | 'Ayn/ghayn | | | Qāf |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D.I |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D.II |  |  |  | |  |  | |  |
| D.III |  |  |  | |  |  | | |
| D.IV |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |
| D.Va |  |  |  |  |  |  | | |
| D.Vb |  |  |  |  |  |  | | |
| D.Vc |  |  |  |  |  |  | | |

| Mīm | | Nūn | | Hā' | Lām-alif | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | Cat. 21; and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. arab. 350a, for *qāf* and medial *jīm/ḥā'/khā'* only |
| | | | | | | | Cat. 24 |
| | | | | | | | Cat. 25 |
| | | | | | | | Cat. 39 |
| | | | | | | | Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. arab. 342a, folio 13b |
| | | | | | | | Cat. 57 |
| | | | | | | | Cat. 58 |

# Table V
# Letter forms of groups E and F

| | Alif | Jīm/ḥā'/khā' | | Ṭā/ẓā' | 'Ayn/ghayn | | | Qāf |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E.I |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |
| F.I |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Group E*

*Alif*. The independent form is shaped like a vertical rod, as the lower return has disappeared.
*'Ayn*. As in D.
*Mīm* is almost circular, like the *mīm* of D.IV. Its lower line tends to drop below the base line. In the final form, its thread-like tail is usually vertical but sometimes has a slight curve.
*Nūn*. The final form is often a version of that found in D, with a short, swollen head.
*Hā'*. Close to D.

*Group F*

*Alif*. The vertical shaft is relatively extenuated. In the independent form, the lower return sometimes recalls that of D.I , but it is sometimes flatter.
*Jīm*. The tilted upper bar is turned up slightly. In the medial form, it sometimes drops below the base line, on which it is normally placed, so that the turning up is accentuated. In the final form, the tail turns back on itself in a fashion similar to that of the final *jīm* of B.II, but when it stands by itself the tail lies flat on the base line.
*'Ayn*. When initial, the hook rises more rapidly from the base line than in most other styles; it describes a smooth curve and ends in a sharp point. Within a word, the two antennae form a V which sometimes stands on a little stalk. The forms of the letters on either side were adapted to form a frame round the letter, an arrangement that also occurs with medial *fā'* and *qāf*. The V-shaped head also appears in final *'ayn*, whose tail takes on a very unusual form: it seems to spring straight from the base line, describing a wide curve.
*Qāf*. In the final and independent forms, it ends with a U-shaped tail arranged at an oblique angle to the base line, due to the triangular splay at the lower end. This treatment of horizontal endings, and of similar endings such as that of final *nūn*, is typical of F.I.
*Mīm*. The predominant form is a circular, or roughly circular, shape which encroaches on the base line. When final, the horizontal tail ends in a triangular stub.
*Nūn*. When it stands by itself or at the end of a word, it oscillates between the shape seen in C scripts, which features a break in the flow of the curve before the lower return, and a semi-circle; in both cases, the two ends are splayed.
*Hā'*. In the initial and medial forms, it resembles the *hā'* of group C, a quarter-circle leaning against a vertical bar. The bar is sometimes incorporated within the letter to such an extent that it shows only as a little spur sticking out from the upper end.
*Lām-alif*. Its triangular base and almost symmetrical shape recall the *lām-alif* of group C, particularly that of C.II; its arms are often almost parallel.

| Mīm | | Nūn | | Hā’ | Lām-alif | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ـمـ | ـم | ـنـ | ـن | ـهـ | ـلا | Cat. 62 |
| ـمـ | ـم | ـنـ | ـن | ـه | ـلا | Cat. 66 |