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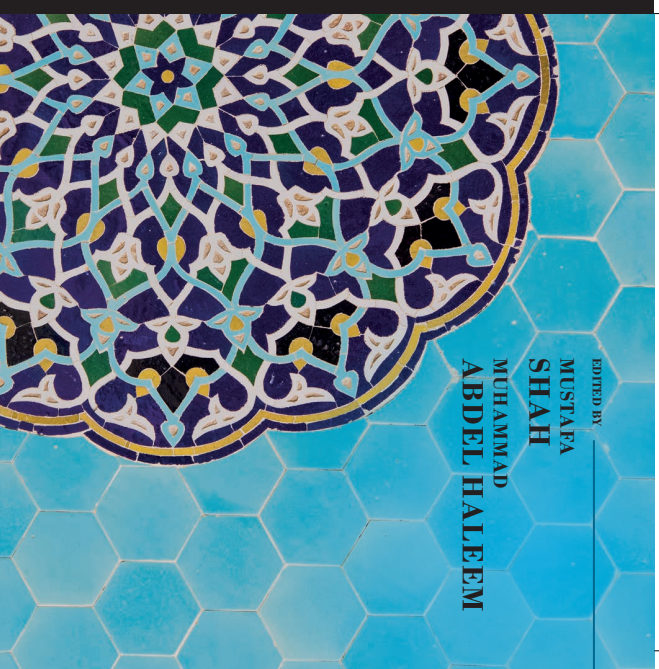
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The Oxford Handbook of QUR'ANIC STUDIES

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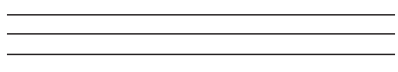
Traditionally revered as the literal word of God, the Qur'an serves as Islam's sacred book of revelation. Accordingly, its statements and pronouncements rest at the core of the beliefs and teachings that have invariably defined expressions of the Islamic faith. Indeed, over the centuries, engaging with and poring over the contents of the Qur'an inspired an impressive range of traditional scholarship. Notwithstanding its religious pre-eminence, the Qur'an is also considered to be the matchless masterpiece of the Arabic language and its impact as a text can be discerned in all aspects of the Arabic literary tradition. Presenting contributions from leading experts in the field, *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies* offers an authoritative collection of chapters that guide readers through the gamut of themes, subjects, and debates that have dominated the academic study of the Qur'an and its literary heritage. These range from chapters that explore the text's language, vocabulary, style, and structure, to detailed surveys of its contents, concepts, transmission, literary influence, historical significance, commentary tradition, and even scholarship devoted to translations. With the aim of serving as an indispensable reference resource, the *Handbook* assesses the implications of research discourse and discussions shaping the study of the Qur'an today. There exists no single volume devoted to such a broad review of the scholarship on the Qur'an and its rich commentary tradition.

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Abdel Haleem

The Oxford Handbook of
QUR'ANIC STUDIES



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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

QUR'ANIC
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Edited by

MUSTAFA SHAH

and

MUHAMMAD ABDEL HALEEM

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The Corpus of Qur’anic Readings (*qirā’āt*) History, Synthesis, and Authentication Mustafa Shah (SOAS)

Abstract

The history of the study of the corpus of *qirā’āt* or Qur’anic readings is principally defined by the substantive contributions made by the work of Theodor Nöldeke, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, Otto Pretzl, and Arthur Jeffery. From the publication of critical editions of manuscripts and supplementary research covering classical scholarship on Qur’anic variants, to the establishment of a manuscript archive on the Qur’an, it is widely acknowledged that the cumulative efforts of these scholars effectively laid the foundations for much of the academic work carried out on the history of the textual transmission of the Qur’an. Offering a review of the principal debates and arguments germane to the study of Qur’anic readings, this chapter also assesses approaches to the treatment and synthesis within the Islamic tradition. It suggests that recent research boosted by the availability of a broader range of critical editions of manuscripts and related studies will contribute to a profounder understanding of the historical importance of this corpus.

Keywords

qirā’āt; *variae lectiones*; early Qur’anic manuscripts; ‘Uthmānic Collection; *muṣḥaf*; textual transmission of the Qur’an; *shādhah*; Ibn Mujāhid; *al-Shāṭibiyya*

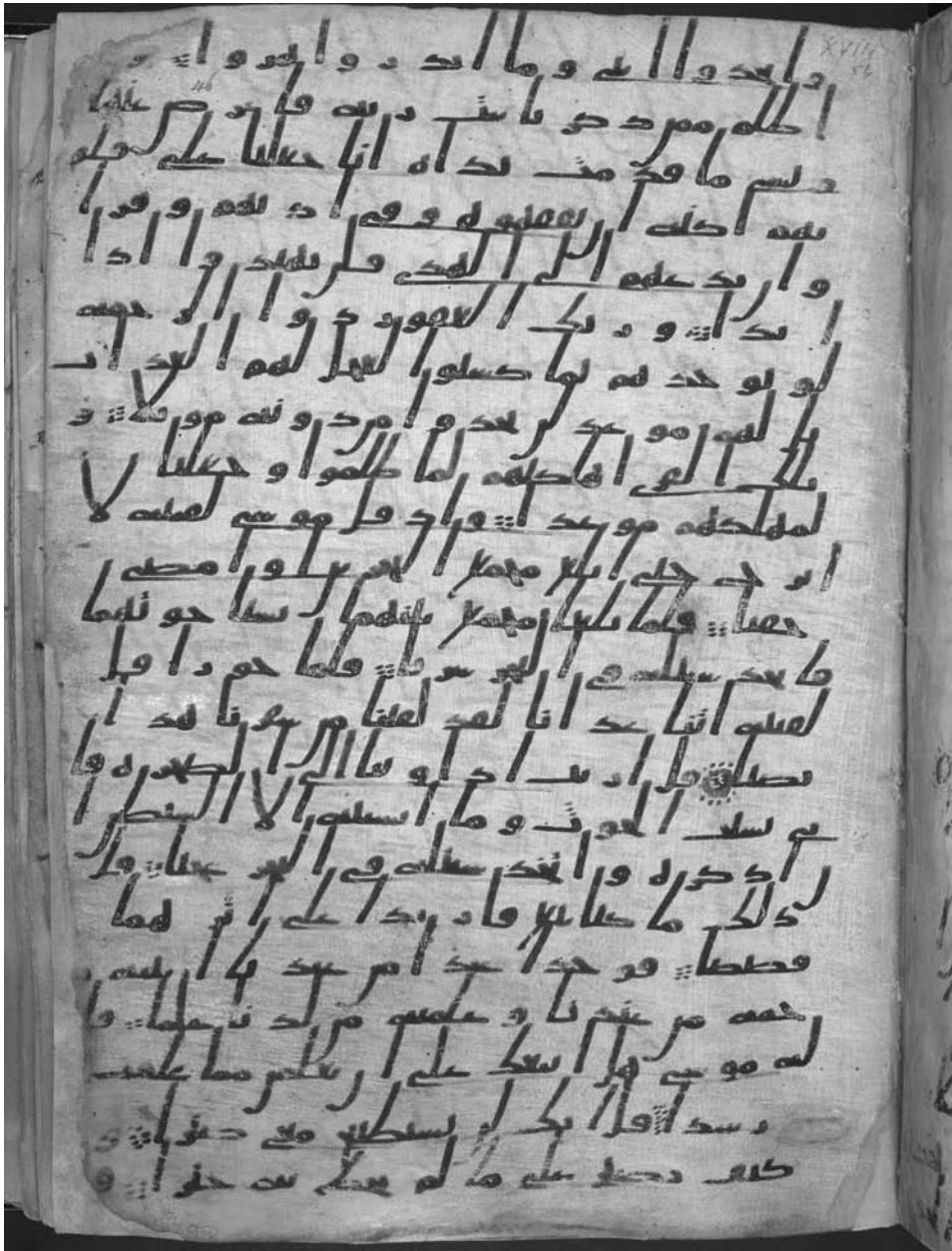


FIGURE 13.1 A folio from the British Library's oldest manuscript of the Qur'an, Or. 2165, featuring verses from Q. 18:57–68 (The Cave). The manuscript comprises 121 folios containing over two-thirds of the complete text. © British Library Board.