

## A.PERG.2: A NON PALIMPSEST AND THE CORRECTIONS IN QUR'ĀNIC MANUSCRIPTS

### Present situation and unanswered questions

A.Perg.2 is a parchment kept at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [1] and it was described by H. Loebenstein in her catalogue [2]. It is a Qur'ānic fragment containing a portion of *sūrā al-Qaṣaṣ*, namely [3]:

on hair side, 28:61—75, written by hand A;  
on flesh side, in the upper part 28:75—9, written by hand B;  
and in the bottom of the page 28:75—7, written by hand A.

Loebenstein notes that the upper part of the flesh side is a palimpsest. The “alte Schrift” of the palimpsest is visible to the naked eye on the right margin of the page, at lines 3, 4, 8 and 9. On the basis of the remains of the *scriptio inferior*, feeble signs of the words, she assumes that this was the same as the handwriting A. In the opinion of Loebenstein, the fragment of the supposed *scriptio inferior* is the continuation of the text on the hair side, 28:75 (Table 1).

The peculiarity of this parchment is the reutilization only of the upper part of the page, I mean that from this point of view the existing situation is:

hand A: 28:61—75;  
hand A: 28:75—9 (we have to note that A continues exactly the text of the hair side);

hand A: 28:75—7 (we suppose that the lacuna in the bottom of the page contains 28:77—9).

and, after the reutilization of the parchment:

hand A: 28:61—75;  
hand B: 28:75—9 (we have to note that B writes *āya* 75 from the beginning);  
hand A: 28:75—7 (79).

Given the above, the unanswered question put by Loebenstein is the reason why copyist A wrote twice the same text and copyist B wrote it again, for the third time. She suggests two explanations: 28:75—9 was written by copyist A with some errors, so it was written again correctly and then the defective text was rubbed out or washed and overwritten.

An alternative hypothesis could be that copyist A wrote 28:75—9 and, after a pause of his job, he started again writing twice the same text by mistake. Thereafter copyist B overwrote the same part of the *sūrā*.

Although all of the above explanations are simply unanswered questions put by Loebenstein, scholars have taken those hypothesis for granted [4].

### Is A.Perg.2 really a palimpsest?

- Only the upper half of the flesh side has been erased and subsequently re-written.
- The supposed *scriptio inferior* is visible only on the right margin of the page, while on the rest of the page there is no trace of the old writing.
- The same text has been written three times.

It is natural to put some questions. Why only a part of the parchment has been re-used? Why the older writing is visible only in the margin and above all, why has it been written three times?

**A hypothesis:** Probably this parchment is an example of Qur'ānic text written by two hands, which is not unusual [5], where hand B is an apprentice and hand A is his supervisor amending text written by B.

### Qur'ānic manuscripts and corrections

Written transmission of texts necessarily implies mistakes, if nothing else, due to errant human nature. In the knowledge transmission of the *ḥadīth*-literature, for example, we can notice that a standard typology of manuscript corrections took shape early.

As to what concerns Qur'ān, because it was a Holy Book, whose careful copying would attract many blessings for the believer, copies made of its *textus receptus*, i. e. the 'Uthmānic text, largely excluded the possibility of corruption [6].