



# **The Sanaa Palimpsest: The Transmission of the Qur'an in the First Centuries AH (Qur'anic Studies Series)**

*Asma Hilali*

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*The Sanaa Palimpsest: The Transmission of the Qur'an in the First Centuries AH* provides a new annotated edition of the two layers of the "Sanaa Palimpsest," one of the oldest Qur'an manuscripts yet discovered. It features a critical introduction that offers new hypotheses concerning the transmission of the Qur'an during the first centuries of Islam. The palimpsest contains two superimposed Qur'anic texts within two layers of writing, on thirty-eight leaves of parchment collectively numbered MS 01.27-1 in the Dar al-Makhtutat, Sanaa, Yemen. The palimpsest's lower text, which has been dated to the first century of Islam (seventh century CE), was subsequently erased and the parchment was later reused for writing another Qur'anic text, which remains visible in natural light. This upper text is thought to date from the second century of Islam (eighth century CE). The two layers were imaged in 2007 by a French-Italian mission.

Both Qur'anic texts are fragmented and present aspects of work in progress. In its lower layer, the manuscript offers the oldest witness of a reading instruction in Qur'an text and perhaps even in any Arabic text. Such peculiarities offer rare evidence as to how the Qur'an was transmitted, taught and written down in the first centuries of Islam. The critical introduction and annotated edition contextualises the volume in the field of Qur'an manuscript studies and Qur'anic studies, and engages with the historical and institutional contexts of transmission of the Qur'anic passages. Asma Hilali also makes systematic reference to previous studies and partial editions of the same manuscript.

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