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Scribal Practices in Arabic Manuscripts from Ethiopia: The ʿAjamization of Scribal Practices in *Fuṣḥā* and *ʿAjamī* Manuscripts from Harar

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Arabic scribal practices in a corpus of Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts from the region of Harar ascribed to the period from the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. Two different aspects will be considered, namely the characteristic realization of specific graphemes and the methods for the justification of the text. The observations take into account the perceived sacred dimension of the texts, from copies of the Qurʾān to ʿAjamī works, and the different level of standardization of their written manifestations. This approach is intended to highlight the results of the cultural interplay between the scribal models acquired and their local reinterpretation in order to identify reference models and determine the criteria at the base of the processes of ʿAjamization of these scribal practices. I hope that the characteristics described in this article will represent the starting point for comparative studies of scribal practices between different Ethiopian regions and with other regions of the Islamic world.

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Keywords

Ethiopia – Harar – Gibe – scribal practices – Qur'ānic manuscripts – Arabic script – *ʿAjamī* manuscripts – calligraphic models

Introduction

As it is well known, the written manifestation of the word, and in particular of the word of God, assumes a crucial role among the arts developed in Islamic context as it entails a deep connection with different aspects of spirituality.[1] Since the first centuries of Islam, the regions that embraced the new religion have contributed to the enrichment of this artistic tradition, developing new writing styles and employing specific scribal practices that can be distinguished according to their geographic origin or functional employment. This article presents a preliminary overview of particular scribal features attested in select Arabic manuscript collections from the Horn of Africa. Looking at the specific results of the cultural interplay between a scribal model and its local reinterpretation, I show how ʿAjamization processes are reflected in the production of the local scribes.

In the Horn of Africa, as in other parts of the Islamic world, the term ʿAjamī primarily refers to the linguistic and literary context, indicating local languages written in Arabic script. The practice, in use since the 17th century in the region of Harar, was originally adopted in order to facilitate the comprehension and acceptance of new concepts related to the Islamic message by deploying known and comprehensible codes of communication, the native languages of local communities.[2] This was part of a much wider process of cultural enrichment which involved all the levels of private and social life, extending to aesthetics and Islamic arts.[3] With respect to the application of the ʿAjamization concept to handwritten materials, I identify its local manifestations through the specific traits adopted and possibly codified by the scribes in order to make their reference models more comprehensible and/or aesthetically satisfying

1 On the subject see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic art and Spirituality*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1987, pp. 17–35.

2 Giorgio Banti, "The Literature of Harar until the End of the 19th Century," in *L'Islam in Etiopia. Bilanci e Prospective*, eds A. Gori and B. Scarcia Amoretti (Civiltà del Mediterraneo, 16–17), Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010, pp. 153–154.

3 For a deeper analysis of this concept, see the introduction to this volume.

for their communities. I will investigate the possible origins of some of these characteristics and the reasons behind the adoption of certain scribal practices.

It is important to clarify here what I mean by "scribal practices," as well as identify the corpus of manuscripts analyzed. I prefer the term "scribal practices" over "calligraphy" or "palaeography" for different reasons; the first is the fact that, in this paper, attention will be devoted not only to features related to the shape of the graphemes (the minimum units of a writing system), but also to other elements of the *mise en page* and to features which involve the perception of the script on the page. Secondly, the term "calligraphy" is generally related to written manifestations created according to aesthetic criteria and intentions, and/or codified rules showing the scribe's artistic capacity. In the corpus of manuscripts discussed in this article, it is quite difficult to determine *a priori* which ones have a purely "calligraphic," thus artistic and aesthetic intentional value and whether the features that the scribes adopted result from their aesthetic motivations. At the same time there is so far no evidence of the existence of schools or *scriptoria* to which prescribed rules or any kind of manual can be related. In fact, as far as we know, no standardized calligraphic tradition or recognized codification has developed in the region. In this respect, the situation in the Horn of Africa seems not to differ from regions such as West Africa. Mauro Nobili, in his classification of the Arabic scripts from the manuscripts of the Gironcourt collection, states for example a general lack of calligraphic level of writing in most West African manuscripts he examined, and that the quality of the manuscripts collected by de Gironcourt is especially poor.[4] Sheila Blair underlines the difference between Eastern regions of the Islamic world and West Africa in the codification of the writing tradition. She points out that differences in the transmission of the scribal knowledge – written and kinetic in the first case, oral and visual in the second – result in a greater variety of individual hands deviating from any "ideal" regional style in West Africa.[5] However, if this lack of calligraphic codification can be stated for specific manuscripts or collections, it must be nuanced when dealing with African manuscripts in a broader perspective. Scholarly understanding of Arabic and ʿAjamī manuscripts and their scribal traditions across Africa is in its infancy and there is anecdotal evidence that may call Blair's hypothesis into question. In the Murīdiyya tradition, for

4 Mauro Nobili, "Arabic Scripts in West African Manuscripts: a Tentative Classification from the de Gironcourt Collection", *Islamic Africa*, 2/1 [2011], pp. 107, 117.

5 Sheila S. Blair, "Arabic Calligraphy in West Africa," in: *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. S. Jeppie and S. B. Diagne, Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2008, pp. 70–71.

example, calligraphy is part of the *curriculum studiorum* for advanced students in the traditional Qur'ānic schools, while among the Hausa a well-developed calligraphic tradition is attested.[6]

Regarding the Horn of Africa handwriting tradition, any reference to "palaeographical features" is also somewhat misleading. First, palaeography implies a specific method of analysis and approach to the written word. The attribution of a witness to a specific period or environment depends, in fact, on its graphic comparison with similar specimens dated and localized. So far, this kind of palaeographic analysis has never been employed for the classification of the Horn of Africa's manuscripts. The number of manuscripts collected from different parts of the Horn and dated is still too scarce to allow significant clues on this specific subject. Also the manuscripts discussed in this article have not previously been processed and described according to their palaeographic or codicological features. Moreover, the quite short span of time in which the production of dated manuscripts stretches (mainly 19th and 20th centuries) can hardly give an idea of the chronological development of the script and makes it difficult to formulate a sound dating of new material on the basis of palaeographical considerations.[7] A preliminary regional characterization seems to be a more achievable goal. This may generate important insights leading to further studies, including diachronic ones. It is also worth noting that the purpose of palaeography goes beyond the mere dating and localization of specimens. It extends to the study of the history of writing in a broader sense. Concerning this, Arianna D'Ottone offers some important insights on the possibility of conducting deeper inquiries about the symbolic and identity-making values related to the script and the writing processes in multi-cultural contexts. This kind of specific analysis could possibly lead to significant results in the Ethiopian context, which is so rich and various in ethnic groups, languages and writing systems.[8]

6 For the Murīd calligraphic tradition, see *Perspective Hagiographique de l'Art en Islam et sa Réhabilitation par le Cheikh*, Dakar, Comité Scientifique du Dahira des Étudiants Mourides de l'Université de Dakar, 1991. For the Hausa calligraphic tradition, see Mustapha Kurfi's contribution to this volume.

7 Alessandro Gori, *A Handlist of the Manuscripts in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, II: The Arabic Materials of the Ethiopian Islamic Tradition*, with contributions from A. Regourd, J.R. Brown, S. Delamarter, foreword by A.D. Berhane (Ethiopic Manuscripts, Texts, and Studies Series, 20), Eugene Oregon, Pickwick Publications, 2014, p. xlii.

8 Arianna D'Ottone, "Un'altra lezione negata. Paleografia araba e altre paleografie," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, n.s., LXXXVII, 1–4 (2014), p. 215.

Defining the Case study

In this enquiry a specific Ethiopian region has been identified as a case study for the amount of material possibly ascribable to it. The study of scarce and limited *corpora* of manuscripts, in fact, could complicate or even prevent the distinction between significant and specific characteristics of a hypothetical style and the expression of the personal predilections and habits of a scribe.[9] The group of manuscripts examined in this article is related to the region of Harar (Central-Eastern part of Ethiopia). The foundation of the city dates possibly back to the 13th century, and is credited to Abādir ʿUmar al-Riḍā, who also became the city's most venerated saint.[10] The region was integrated into the Ifāt sultanate, a confederation of different principalities extending in eastern Ethiopia, Djibouti and western Somaliland, under the Walashmaʿ dynasty who had established its capital in Zaylaʿ. After expansionist attacks perpetrated by the Christian Ethiopian Empire from the north, at the beginning of the 15th century the sultanate was defeated and the ruling family was forced to flee to Yemen. The sultanate flourished again around 1415 A.D. under a new leading principality (ʿAdal) with a new capital in the town of Dakar.[11] Then, in 1520, under the sultan Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Āzar, the political centre was moved again, this time to Harar. During the years of Imam Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ghāzī (Grañ), the city of Harar became the center of his campaigns against Christian Ethiopia, and it maintained singular importance for Muslim communities under Grañ's nephew, Nūr b. Mujāhid. In 1576 the capital was transferred to Awsa, due to threats of Oromo expansion from the south. Harar, distant from the central political power, was then governed by viziers, until 1647 when a new ruling lineage under ʿAlī b. Dā'ūd was established. From this point, the city regained its independence lasting until the Egyptian occupation in 1875.

The position of the city, in the eastern part of Ethiopia and at the crossroads of several important trade routes, favored its early Islamization. Its importance as a religious center is well attested until recent times by a large local production of religious literature, and by the intense devotional life, both among

9 François Déroche, "Un critère de datation des écritures coraniques anciennes: le *kāf* final ou isolé", *Damaszener Mitteilungen*, 11 (1999), p. 87.

10 The early history of the town is transmitted by the *Fatḥ Madīnat Harar*, ascribed to Yaḥyā b. Naṣrallāh, and supported by documentary sources, such as lists of the town's rulers or genealogies. For the essential bibliography, see Ewald Wagner, "Harär. Harär history till 1875," *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. S. Uhlig (I–III) with A. Bausi (IV–V), Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003–2014 (*EAe*).

11 Dakar is also spelled Dakkar; it is located in the southeast of Harar. J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, London, Frank Cass, 1952, p. 74, n. 6.

locals and pilgrims, consecrated to the numerous saints whose shrines are situated within the city walls. The locally produced literature is mainly related to Islam, and finds expression both in Arabic and ʿAjamī (in this case Harari or Old Harari in Arabic script).[12] The oldest manuscript codices, in Arabic and the local language, date to the 18th century, while the most recent ones were produced as recently as the 20th.[13] The possibility to analyse manuscript material both in classical Arabic and ʿaǧamī, and the amount of already localised codices available from this region, are central for the intent of this contribution. I in fact examine Qurʾānic manuscripts, which have been considered the most codified in their graphic realization, and ʿAjamī manuscripts of the region in order to evaluate the scribes' use and perception of certain writing practices. The same kind of material from the Gibe region has been evaluated as a term for comparison to determine if the features individuated for the Harar manuscripts can be defined as distinctive of that specific area.

This central-western Ethiopian region takes its name from the river passing through its valley. In particular, it refers to the name of the Omo river in its stretch north of Wälqiṭe. Five ancient Oromo Islamic kingdoms emerged there from 1810 to 1830: Gomma, Guummaa, Geeraa, Jimma Abbaa Jifaar and Limmu Ǝnnarya.[14] These kingdoms were situated within the loop of the river which separated and protected them from the surrounding polities. Frequent wars and struggles among the kingdoms occurred over the definition of borders and for the control of the local commercial routes. Their prosperity was, in fact, based on the trade in coffee, ivory, slaves and other goods. In the last decades of the 19th century, the kingdoms had to submit to the Christian emperors Yohannes IV (r. 1871–1889) – Gomma and Geeraa – and Menelik II (r. 1889–1913) – Limmu Ǝnnarya and Guummaa. Jimma remained autonomous

12 Banti, "The Literature of Harar." For the essential bibliography on Harari language, see Ewald Wagner, "Harari. Harari language," *EAe*. According to oral traditions, manuscripts in the Harari language written in an ornamental secret script were produced until 1970s, but very few have been preserved (Ahmed Zekaria, "Harari secret script", *EAe*).

13 Also, the dating of these specific corpora of manuscripts, when not retrievable from colophons or other paratextual elements, are approximate and tentative. As previously mentioned, in fact, considerations based on palaeographic aspects of these codices lack any term of comparison in either a synchronic or diachronic perspective, and codicological features have not been deeply investigated in the first stage of the project (Gori, *Handlist*, p. xlii).

14 See Herbert Samuel Lewis, *A Galla Monarchy, Jimma Abba Jifar (1830–1932)*, Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 2001; Mordechai Abir, "The Emergence and Consolidation of the Monarchies of Enarea and Jimma in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History*, 6/2 (1965), pp. 205–219; and Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570–1860*, Trenton, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1994.

until 1932, but only by paying substantial tribute. The literature of these centres of Islamic power has only recently started to come to light. In addition to literature in Arabic, which covers the same fields and branches of Arabic literature produced and spread in other regions of the Horn, ʿAjamī literature in Oromo also spread throughout the region.[15]

With regard to the region of Harar, manuscripts coming from that area can now be found in established Ethiopian collections (public and private) as well as in European collections. In particular, the corpora taken into account here are:

- The manuscript collection of ʿAbd Allāh Sharīf Museum in Harar (HRAS).[16]
- The manuscripts of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa related to the city of Harar (IES).[17]
- Mr Gerald Weiner's collection, in Chicago, Illinois, USA, whose Arabic manuscripts are believed to come from Harar (USWE).[18]

As for the manuscripts from the Gibe region, they are mostly preserved in private collections and have been digitized during the field missions of the

15 Most of the material discovered in recent years will be soon retrievable from the *IslHornAfr* open access database. For a specific study on the *Sufi*, and in particular Tijānī Arabic literary production of the Gibe Valley, see Michele Petrone, "Ethiopian Tijāniyya in Context," *Aethiopica*, 19 (2016) [forthcoming]. For the Arabic grammar literary tradition see Sara Fani, "Arabic Grammar Traditions in Gibe and Harär: Regional Continuity vs Specificity of Scholarship," ivi.

16 Belle Asante Tarsitani, "Merging Past and Present in the Museums of Harar, Ethiopia," *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*, 13 (2009), pp. 1–16.

17 These include around 50 manuscripts (IES00256-320) which show the previous shelf mark "Harar" and constitute the first inception of the collection. To these, manuscripts IES00955-963 must be added, being registers and legal documents from Harar. Another subgroup (IES01843-1851) has been considered for this inquiry as it includes copies of the Qurʾān (different *juzʾ*) with *waqf* attestations (in Islamic law, an inalienable charitable endowment) related to Harar governors. For a general description of the collection see Gori, *Handlist*, pp. xl–xli. For the ones with *waqf* attestations, see Alessandro Gori, "Waqf certificates of Qurʾāns from Harar: A first assessment," in *Essays in Ethiopian Manuscript Studies. Proceedings of the International Conference Manuscripts and Texts, Languages and Contexts: the Transmission of Knowledge in the Horn of Africa. Hamburg, 17–19 July 2014*, eds. A. Bausi, A. Gori, D. Nosnitsin, (Supplement to *Aethiopica*, 4), Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015, pp. 281–295. Finally, as the collection of texts they transmit seem to be specifically related to the city of Harar, also IES01855, IES02662-2666 have been examined for this enquiry (see *infra*).

18 Gori, *Handlist*, p. XXXVII.

project *Islam in the Horn of Africa*.[19] In addition to these, also manuscripts preserved and exhibited in the Jimma Museum belonging to Abbaa Jifaar II (r. 1878–1932), king of the Gibe kingdom of Jimma, have been included in this inquiry.

So far no specific studies have been undertaken regarding the features of the Arab writing system in the Horn of Africa or on writing styles adopted in the region. No consideration about the script has been made in the recent *Handlist of the Manuscripts in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies* compiled by Alessandro Gori,[20] nor in the database of the project *IslHornAfr*, which is mainly devoted to the study of the literary and prosopographic content of the manuscripts from that area. In Wagner's catalogue of Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts, only short descriptions of the handwriting are given, but, even if very different, scripts are generally defined as "a form of *naskhī* typical of Ethiopia."[21] In fact, in each description only brief accounts of the size of the script, and of the presence of vocalization are given. Wagner also adds that this regional style "seems to us disproportioned and awkward."[22] A similar standard definition is given by Renato Traini in his description of the collection of manuscripts taken back to Italy by the engineer Luigi Robecchi-Bricchetti (1855–1926) from his expedition to the Harari region in 1888–1889. Also in this case the script is generally defined as "*naskhī* of eastern Africa," with the occasional mention of the presence of vocalization and of the thickness of the *rasm* (the stroke traced by the *qalam*, or reed pen).[23] In his introduction, Traini also specifies that the codices

19 For a presentation of the project, see Alessandro Gori, "IslHornAfr: Islam in the Horn of Africa, a Comparative Literary Approach," in Bausi, Gori, Nosnitsin, *Essays in Ethiopian Manuscript Studies*, pp. 17–20. The report of the first field mission is available on the project's web site at: http://islhornafr.eu/IslHornAfr_mission1.pdf.

20 Gori, *Handlist*.

21 Ewald Wagner, *Afrikanische Handschriften II: Islamische Handschriften aus Äthiopien*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997, p. xvi (English translation mine). Adam Gacek describes the *naskh* as the "bookhand, par excellence, of the Islamic East which came on the scene at the end of the 4/10th century and the beginning of the 5/11th century and progressively developed into a great variety of regional forms"; Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Handbook of Oriental Studies, 98), Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2009, p. 162, s.v. "Naskh script".

22 "Viele Handschriften sind in einer für Äthiopien typischen Form des Nasḫī geschrieben, die auf uns unproportioniert und ungelenk wirkt", Wagner, *Afrikanische Handschriften II*, p. xvi.

23 Renato Traini, "I manoscritti arabi esistenti nelle biblioteche di Pavia (Collezione Robecchi–Bricchetti)," *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1973, serie VIII. Rendiconti: Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, 28, fasc. 7–12, Roma, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974, pp. 841–865 (*passim*).

"lack any calligraphic appeal" and, being even harsher in his judgment, that this seems to be coherent with their modest content, which is notable merely for its "documentary contribution."[24] These kinds of prejudicial assumptions regarding the content and the material aspects of these manuscripts reveals more general negative considerations about Islam in Africa, opinions that in recent years have been increasingly challenged thanks to the efforts of various scholars.[25] It is undeniable that such a general devaluing approach to Islam in Africa represented an impediment to both the interest and study of handwritten materials from these regions.

For this preliminary overview of the scribal practices typical of the manuscripts coming from the Harar region, I first focus on the individuation of the texts that can be considered expressions of more codified graphic rules. In this respect, of course, copies of the Qurʾān play a pivotal role, being the text to which greater attention is generally devoted, both for the accuracy of its content transmission and for the beauty of its material expression. Other devotional texts are particularly accurate from a calligraphic and decorative point of view. These include: *al-Fatḥ al-Raḥmanī* by Hāshim b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Hararī (b. ca. 1711, d. ca. 1765),[26] *Mawlid Sharaf al-ʿālamīn*, a *mawlid* collection from Harar,[27] and *Tanbīh al-anām* by ʿAbd al-Jalīl b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn ʿAẓẓūm al-Qayrawānī,[28] another devotional text found widely in the regions of Harar, Gibe, and other areas. Specific graphic features in the copies of these texts from Harar have been identified and described. Among them the most distinctive are presented below.

A First Characterization of the Arabic Script from Harar

Generally speaking the Qurʾānic script of the manuscripts from Harar is quite compact and tight, with little spacing between letter groups. The script shows

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 842–843 (English mine).

25 See for example Alessandro Gori, *Contatti culturali nell'Oceano Indiano e nel Mar Rosso e processi di islamizzazione*, Venezia, Cafoscarina, 2006, pp. 10–13, and with regard to West Africa, Nobili, "Arabic Script", pp. 109–110.

26 Ewald Wagner, "Hāšim b. ʿAbdalʿazīz," *EAe*.

27 The collection is structured around two pivotal Arabic texts, namely the *Qaṣidat al-burda* by al-Būṣīrī (or its *takhmīs* by al-Fayyūmī), and the *ʿUnwān al-Sharīf* by Abū al-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Nāṣir (Alessandro Gori, "Texts in the Mawlid Collection in Harar: Some First Critical Observations," *African Study Monograph*, 41 [2010], pp. 51–62).

28 Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur. Zweiter Supplementband*, Leiden, Brill, 1938, p. 691.

FIGURE 1 *IES1848, f. 5v.* Qur'ān, juz' IX. *Harar, 18th century. The tail of the* mīm *extends beyond the lines below and in the lower margin of f. 5v.*
PDF IMAGE BY STEVE DELAMARTER AND JEREMY R. BROWN, ETHIOPIC MANUSCRIPT IMAGING PROJECT (EMIP).

angular ligatures and develops in a non-straight baseline, with quite evident ascenders and descenders, as, for example, the *mīm* which sometimes extends touching the line below, or occupying the lower margins.[29]

The effect of the script's tightness is obtained by a limited use of horizontal *mashq* (elongation of the *rasm*), but also by covering and filling the blanks with the letters' diacritical marks. The most widespread case, even if not the only one, pertains to the dot of the *ḏāl*, which often appears in the middle of the grapheme or slid on the right and covering the blank above the upper diagonal tract of the grapheme. This feature is not particularly distinctive of manuscripts produced in this area, as its occurrence is quite common throughout the Islamic world, but it is interesting to note that, in this context, the mobility of the letter's dot is not always related to the presence of the *tashkīl* covering the space above the grapheme where the dot is normally situated. Its dislocation seems rather to be dependent on the fully aesthetic need to fill in the blank spaces.[30]

Among the regional variants of Arabic graphemes, the *kāf* seems to deserve particular mention.[31] It generally appears in manuscripts from Harar in the two typical shapes attested in Arabic calligraphic tradition. The first is a single long sweeping stroke like an S-curve with the two lower branches almost horizontal and parallel, which is found mainly in initial and median position. This variant of the *kāf* in a serpentine horizontal shape is occasionally used, together with the elongation of the *sīn*, especially in the *basmala*, on behalf of the *mashq*, modulating its length according to the space in the line.[32] The second is a more angular *kāf*, which consists of a vertical stroke (more or less sloping on the top-left) and an oblique stroke on the top of it. This alternation seems to be quite common in Arabic manuscripts of different periods and regions. The first variant is the only one attested in ancient copies of the Qur'ān at least until the 11th century, when the so called "proportioned handwriting" (*al-khaṭṭ al-manṣūb*), introduced by the Abbasid calligrapher and vizier Ibn Muqla (272/886 – 328/939), spread across the Islamic world.[33] In the famous Qur'ān copied by Ibn al-Bawwāb in 391/1000–1, in Baghdad, for example, both variants

29 For example in manuscripts HRAS0199; HRAS0201; HRAS0202; HRAS0242; HRAS0012; IES00259; IES1848. See Figure 1.

30 Figures 2 and 3.

31 It is interesting to note that the shape of the final and isolated *kāf* revealed to be a sound dating parameter in ancient Qur'ānic scripts (Déroche, "Un critère de datation", pp. 87–94).

32 Figure 3.

33 Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic calligraphy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp. 157–160.

FIGURE 2 *USWE0012, f. 6r (detail).* Qurʾān. *Harar, ca. 19th century. The* ḏāl *with the dislocated dot in the middle of the grapheme is systematic and visible throughout the entire page, even if there are no* tashkīl *signs occupying the space above the letter (see for example l. 8).*
PDF IMAGE BY STEVE DELAMARTER AND JEREMY R. BROWN, EMIP.

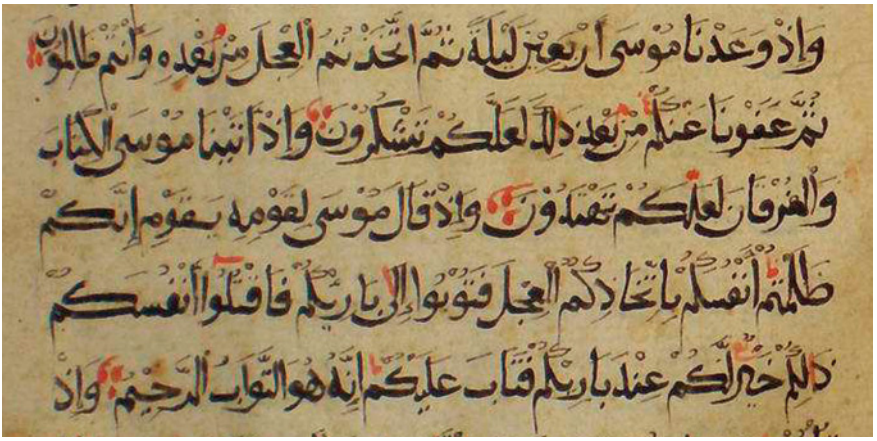


FIGURE 3 *HRAS0009, f. 3r* (*detail*). Qur'ān. *Harar, 19th century. The S-shaped* kāf *at the end of the lines is extended as* mashq *to cover the entire lines. The dot of the* ḍāl *is generally placed on the upper right side of the grapheme, filling in the blank space between it and the preceding grapheme.*
PDF IMAGE BY STEVE DELAMARTER AND JEREMY R. BROWN, EMIP.

of *kāf* appear, even in the same line in medial position.[34] The two different realizations of the grapheme found here are also described in classical literary sources on calligraphy and penmanship. In particular four different shapes of the grapheme are mentioned in the treatise ascribed to Ibn Muqla and are referred to as *mustalqin* (stretched out on the ground), *muntaṣib* (erected), *munkabb* (bent over), and *munsaṭiḥ* (spread out).[35]

Even if it is not easy to understand exactly how each of these variants was in fact realized, it is clear that different shapes were used and were not solely dependent on the position of the grapheme within the word. Another ancient source, Ibn Durustawayh (258/871–2 – 347/958), refers to two shapes of *kāf* in his treatise for the *kuttāb*, naming the *mashkūl* (shaped, modeled) and the

34 *Ibid.*, p. 163, Figure 5.8 (the broken *kāf* is visible in line 3 [Qur. LIII, 60], and also in the marginal chrysography). On the randomness of their occurrence, a specific inquiry should be undertaken taking in to account material from other regions of the Islamic world. For the moment, it is interesting to underline that the same two words appearing in Ibn al-Bawwāb's Qur'ān are reproduced each with the same *kāf* in a Qur'ānic manuscript from Harar, dated 1141/ 1729 (a paratextual note in IES00258, f. 1v).

35 Hilāl Nājī, *Ibn Muqla. Ḫaṭṭāṭan wa-adīban wa-insānan*, Baghdad, Dār al-shu'ūn al-ṭaqāfiyya al-'āmma, 1991, p. 121. The ascription to the famous calligrapher of the brief treatise preserved in Dār al-kutub in Cairo with the title *Risālat al-khaṭṭ wa-l-qalam* (published *ibid.*, pp. 111–126) is far from certain (see Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, p. 186, n. 65).

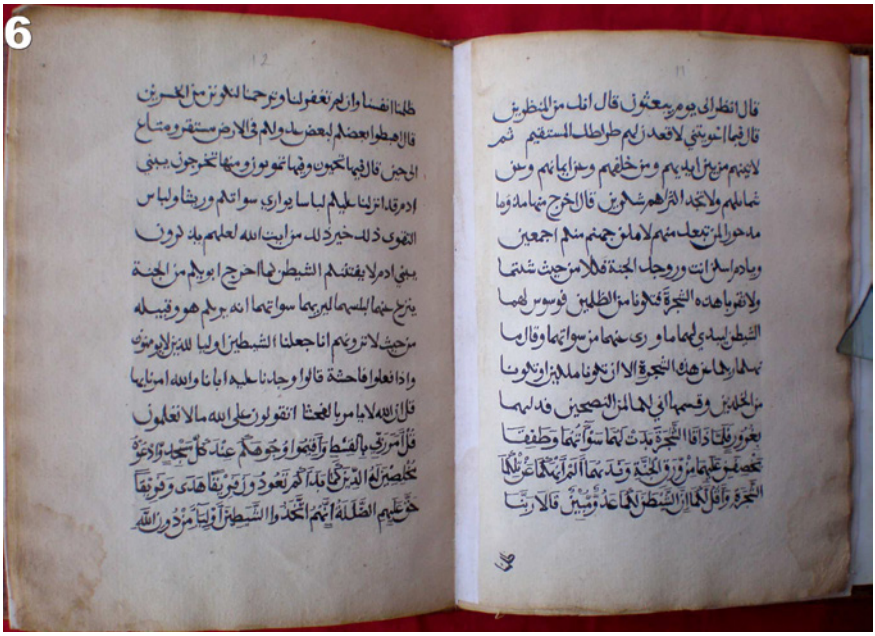
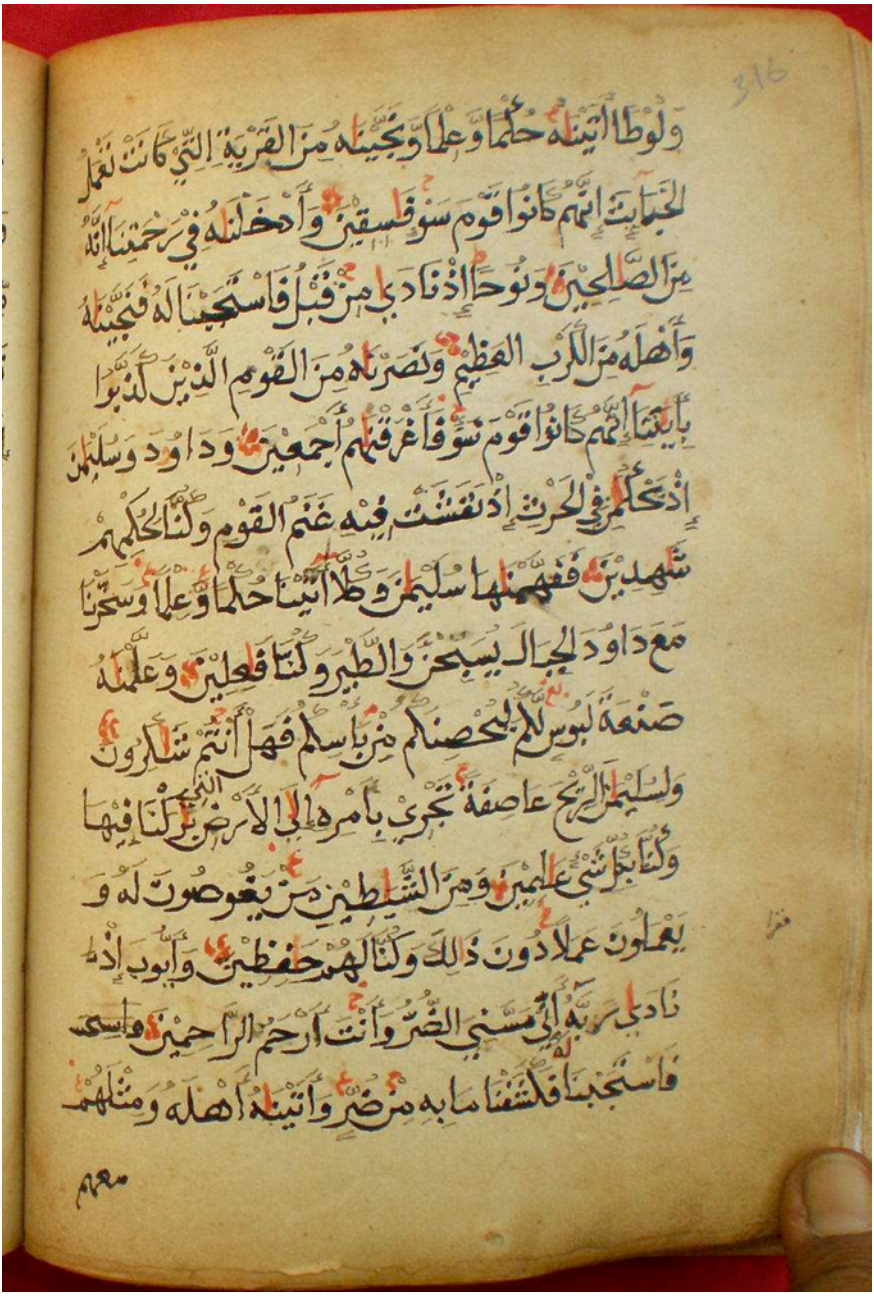


FIGURE 4 *HRAS0042, ff. 5v-6r.* Qurʾān, juz' *IX. Harar, 20th century. The upper part of the folios lacks the* tashkīl*, thus also revealing that the small serpentine* kāf *above the ascender of the grapheme* kāf *is realized contextually to the* ḥaraka *and with a different* qalam.
PDF IMAGE BY STEVE DELAMARTER AND JEREMY R. BROWN, EMIP.

muʿarran (uncovered, naked).[36] In this case the difference between the two seems to lie on the presence of the diagonal stroke on the top of the ascender, as also confirmed by the later but likewise authoritative work of al-Qalqashandī (756/1355 – 821/1418), *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshā*. What is important to highlight before introducing the next observations on the Harari script, is that, after having differentiated the *kāf mabsūṭa* (S-shaped, occurring in initial, medial and isolated position) from the *mashkūla* (more angular and erected, occurring in initial and medial position), describing the case of the *kāf muʿarran,* al-Qalqashandī specifies that a small *kāf mabsūṭa* is added above it, to avoid confusing the grapheme with *lām*.[37] The presence of this small *kāf* on the top of the vertical stroke of the grapheme is actually common in the Harari Qurʾānic manuscripts assuming a distinctive role in its occurrence. It can be realized

36 Ibn Durustuwayh, *Kitāb al-kuttāb*, ed. L. Cheikho, Beyrut, Maṭbaʿa al-Ābāʾ al-Yasūʿīyyin, 1921, p. 67.

37 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshā*, III, Cairo, Wizārat al-ṭaqāfa wa-l-irshād al-qawmī al-muʾassasa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma, pp. 80–81, 155.



FIGURES 5, 5A, AND 5B

HRASOON, f. 159v (details ll. 5 and 7), Qur'ān. *Harar, 19th century. The vertical stroke of the* kāf *takes a particular shape when followed by ascender graphemes like* alif *or* lām, *bending towards them.*

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FIGURES 5, 5A, AND 5B (Continued).

with the same *qalam* used for the *rasm*, but it is more often realized with a different one, that is the same used for the *tashkīl*, which is normally thinner, as it is evident in HRAS0042, where half of the text is without vocalization, thus also without the small *kāf*.[38] Exactly as described by al-Qalqashandī, the *kāf mashkūla* assumes a particular shape when followed by ascender graphemes like *alif* or *lām*, bending towards them (possibly this is what is meant by Ibn Muqla's *kāf munkabb*) in the shape of a half-almond.[39]

In copies of the Qurʾān where indications for reading are added, usually in red in the interlinear space, it often happens that a small *kāf*, in red, is added above the diagonal stroke on the top of the grapheme. The small red *kāf* must not be confused with the reading signs, because it appears only above the *kāf* and the usual meaning given to this letter when used as an abbreviation would make no sense in its new occurrence. In these cases, the small *kāf* does not appear above the *kāf* realized in S-curve shape.[40]

But there are also at least three cases among the manuscripts analyzed in which the specific function of the *kāf* added as reading indication is clear. In

38 Figure 4.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 80. See Figure 5.

40 For example in HRAS0010; HRAS0014; HRAS0063. Figure 6.

these cases, it is written with a different ink (green), and its meaning (*al-waqf al-kāfī*, "the sufficient pause") is expressed in the introduction of the text.[41]

This distinctive shape of the grapheme is not unique to the scribal practices of Harar, as it is also attested in the Arabic sources mentioned above and in particular in al-Qalqashandī. In fact, the additional small *kāf* is something recommended to the scribes, at least in cases where the *kāf* appears without the upper diagonal stroke (*kāf muʿarran*), i.e. mainly the final position.[42] This shape of the *kāf* is described by Witkam in relation to old copies of the Qur'ān as an "unexpected" result of the so-called *ihmāl* (meaning "neglect,"), a system of notation added to the dotless variants of the graphemes in order to indicate the absence of the dots.[43] In this respect, *kāf* should be seen as an allograph of *lām*, particularly in its final position.[44] Witkam explains that, once the system of *ihmāl* was well established, *kāf* in the final position was often written with a small *kāf*. Even the diagonal stroke on the top of the letter in the other positions could thus be read as a trace of an *ihmāl* notation, which, together with the small *kāf* inside the final, would represent the only case of *ihmāl* still in use.[45] In the case of the Qur'ānic manuscripts from Harar, the use of the small *kāf* as *ihmāl* marker for the final *kāf* has also been extended to the other positions of the letter, instead of the diagonal stroke or added above it with a certain redundancy, which in fact lies at the base of the *ihmāl* system.[46]

In her monograph on Islamic calligraphy, Sheila Blair shows specimens of similar realizations of the grapheme. They are attested in what she identifies as an Eastern-Anatolian or North-Western-Iranic Qur'ān of the 13th – 14th centuries, which is provided with interlinear translations in Persian and Chaghatay Turkish.[47] She describes this group of manuscripts as lacking standardization

41 HRAS0043; HRAS0250; HRAS0249. In these cases, the small *kāf* of the grapheme is added with black ink. See Figure 7.

42 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, p. 155.

43 Januarius Justus Witkam, "The Neglect Neglected. To Point or Not to Point, That is the Question," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, 6 (2015), pp. 376–408, in particular pp. 403–404. See also Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 286, s.v. "Unpointed letters."

44 Witkam notes this is true at least in the "new style." In older scripts, in fact, only the serpentine variant existed; thus, the two graphemes could not be confused (Witkam, "The neglect," p. 403, n. 48).

45 *Ibid.*, p. 404.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 396.

47 Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, pp. 371–372, fig. 9.2, 9.2a. She notes that this was the period in which merchants and mystics carried Islam to other areas and the calligraphic styles that developed in these provincial regions seem to have been the basis for the styles used elsewhere, particularly for Qur'ān manuscripts used for proselytizing.

FIGURES 6, 6A, AND 6B

HRAS0010, f. 21v (details ll. 3 and 6). Qurʾān. *Harar, 19th century. The small* kāf *is added in red ink above the broken variant of the grapheme, with the same* qalam *and ink as the abbreviations for reading.* PDF IMAGE BY STEVE DELAMARTER AND JEREMY R. BROWN, EMIP.

FIGURES 6, 6A, AND 6B (Continued).

FIGURE 7 *HRAS0250, f. 7r (detail ll. 11–15).* Qur'ān. *Harar, 19th century. The interlinear small* kāf *for reading indications is realized with green ink (ll. 11, 13, 15) and its meaning is explained in an introduction to the text. The small* kāf *which represents part of the grapheme is instead realized in black ink on the top of its vertical stroke (ll. 11, 12, 13, 15).*
PDF IMAGE BY STEVE DELAMARTER AND JEREMY R. BROWN, EMIP.

because of their physical differences in format, number of lines per page, and their range in size and shape. But at the same time, she identifies a common style in calligraphy, which is defined as a "combination of traits of *ṯuluṯ* and *muḥaqqaq* used in metropolitan areas."[48] Together with the particular realization of the *kāf,* the author lists the common variation in thickness of the strokes and the distinctive shape of some letters, for example the final *mīm*, of which she describes the tail as "swooping" and sometimes "extending half way

48 *Ibid.*

down the page."[49] Two other eastern specimens, both in *muḥaqqaq* script, are reproduced, showing the small *kāf* just below the diagonal stroke on the top. They are (1) a Qur'ān copied in Baghdad at the beginning of the 14th century by a disciple of the famous calligrapher Yāqūt al-Musta'ṣimī (d. 696/1296), and (2) a huge copy from Samarkand made at the end of the same century.[50] A copy of the Qur'ān preserved in Dār al-kutub, Cairo, and attributed to Yāqūt himself, shows indeed the same variant of the *kāf*.[51]

As already mentioned, the same shape of grapheme with the addition of the small letter on the top of the vertical stroke or added above the diagonal stroke on the top is common in Harari Qur'ān manuscripts. However, after a broader survey, similar examples have been found in manuscripts from various regions of the Islamic world. The variant with the additional small *kāf* above or below the diagonal stroke, in fact, seems to be not uncommon in specimens from 14th – 15th centuries Iraq, Egypt and Syria. The small *kāf* replacing the diagonal stroke is instead less frequent and seems to be characteristic of manuscripts coming from more eastern regions, suggesting a parallel process of 'Ajamization in Harar. For example, the two folios of a Qur'ān with interlinear Persian translation produced in 14th century India, written in a *thuluth-muḥaqqaq* script, show the small *kāf* instead of the diagonal stroke on the ascender.[52] Another more recent specimen showing the same shape of the grapheme is a 17th century Qur'ān at the British Library, written in *ṣīnī* script, a variation of *muḥaqqaq*, with pen strokes influenced by Chinese calligraphy.[53] Evidently, the scribes of Harar and the scribes from other regions of the Muslim world referred to models that showed this particular realization of the grapheme. This practice has been maintained for centuries in Harar, possibly with no reference to its original meaning that goes back to the *ihmāl* notation, but with a different or new

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 248–250, 265–268.

51 Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, *Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya bayna al-ams wa-l-yawm wa-l-ghad*, Cairo, al-Hay'a al-'āmma li-Dār al-kutub wa-l-waṭā'iq al-qawmiyya, 1429 [2005], pp. 62–63. Another sample with the same grapheme variant is a 14th-century Qur'ān in *muḥaqqaq* from Persia which is kept in the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. See http://islamic-arts.org/2011/islamic-calligraphy-%E2%80%93-1250-to-1450-a-d/. Last access 18th July 2016).

52 They are kept in Morgan Library & Museum, New York (MS M.846.4a) and are decorated with a kufic inscription frame. See http://islamic-arts.org/2012/the-morgan-treasures-of-islamic-manuscripts/15/. Last access 18th July 2016.

53 Colin F. Baker, *Qur'ans Manuscripts, Calligraphy, Illustration, Design*, London, The British Library, 2007, pp. 84, 867 pl. 49.

additional meaning. Because this practice is particularly related to the handwritten copy of the Qur'ān, at least in the Harari region, it is possible that it has been used for aesthetic reasons in addition to clarity and legibility, which sometimes result in redundant outcomes. It is worth noting that the only reference to such a practice in Maghribī script found to date is the use of writing a double top stroke of the *kāf,* which could possibly become a smaller *kāf*. However, this practice is never attested in the Harar manuscripts examined in this study.[54]

Other Scribal Practices Attested in the Manuscripts from Harar

In addition to the realization of specific graphemes, other scribal practices regarding the line management and justification can be identified in Qur'ānic manuscripts from Harar. In manuscripts in Arabic script, the text is usually arranged inside a rectangular frame (more squared in the Maghrib), which sometimes is evident and decorated with colored fillets, within which the lines of the script are justified. Despite this general rule, it is common to find the last parts of words which do not fit within the scribal frame, extending beyond it in the lateral margin of the folio, simply crossing the ideal justification lines. This is a frequent practice also attested in codices from Harar. Nonetheless, as Adam Gacek clearly notes, the most widespread ways to achieve the justification of the lines in the manuscript pages are the modifications of the grapheme *rasm* (elongation, *maṭṭ*, *madd*, *mashq*, or contraction, *jamʿ*) or the superscription (*taʿlīq*) of the letters, a method typical of certain calligraphic styles.[55] While the use of *mashq* is very rare in Harari Qur'ānic manuscripts with the common exception of the *basmala* at the beginning of each *Sūra*, *taʿlīq* seems widely employed. The use of the interlinear space (mainly favored when there is only one grapheme missing, or small groups of graphemes) is particularly common in manuscripts of Iranian origin or influence and it is a well-attested characteristic of the *nastaʿlīq* or *taʿlīq* styles.[56] But in Harari manuscripts other ways of treating the words at the end of the lines are widespread as well, for example the word-break at the end of lines, which occurs mostly with graphemes not linked to the following on their left side. Even if this was a common practice

54 Nico van den Boogert, "Some Notes on Maghribi Script", *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 4 (1989), p. 39 (n. 23).

55 Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, pp. 146–147, s.v. "Line management and justification".

56 Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, pp. 270–286.

in early copies of the Qurʾān all over the Islamic world, it was soon abandoned and substituted by the aforementioned graphic methods to obtain the justification of the lines.[57] Nonetheless, it is typical to find such features in recent Harari codices, including in copies of the Qurʾān. In other cases, it is possible to notice the use of a sort of catchword or semi-word at the end of the lines that is repeated at the beginning of the following. The semi-words in the upper lines, sometimes showing only the *rasm* of the letters, without dots, can occasionally be crossed out.[58] In addition to these methods, in very rare cases, the use of signs or abbreviations to fill in the line has been observed.[59]

I now turn to the features of some of the most widespread local texts in ʿAjamī. The first is *Kitāb al-farāʾiḍ*, a prose text on Islamic beliefs and devotion which consists of three different parts, each of them attributed to a different author.[60] The second is *al-Muṣṭafā bi-al-lugha al-hararīyya*, a devotional poem by Hāshim b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Hararī.[61] With regard to the *Kitāb al-farāʾiḍ*, the particular shape of the graphemes *kāf* or *mīm*, is never attested. However, it is very common to find the methods for the justification of the page described above, and especially breaking words at the end of lines. In ʿAjamī devotional texts, which mainly consist of poems to be chanted, it is not common to find methods of justification that affect and break their metrical arrangement. Additionally, the variants of the graphemes typical of the Qurʾān manuscripts from Harar are usually not attested. An exception to this, but certainly not the only one, is a devotional poem in Harari in which the variant of the *kāf* with the small *kāf* in place of the upper diagonal stroke is used. In this case, it is possible to argue for some calligraphic motivation on the part of the scribe, which can be perceived through the general accuracy of the manuscript realization. Thus, it is not surprising that the scribe decided to use the same graphic elements and traits usually earmarked for copies of the Qurʾān. Additionally, the *mise en page* in this case is not arranged according to the verses of the poem, but rather turns out to show a regular justification of the text.[62] To obtain this,

57 On the relationship between the *scriptio continua* and the specific fruition of texts in Islam see, Sheila Blair, "Transcribing God's Word: Qur'an Codices in Context", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 10 (2008), p. 78.

58 Figure 8.

59 In HRAS0043, *passim*, for example, the scribe fills the end of the line with a small sign like *sīn* when it is empty.

60 Ewald Wagner, "Farāʾiḍ, Kitāb al-", *EAe*.

61 *Ibid.*, "Hāšim ibn ʿAbdalʿazīz", *EAe*. Because this is a poem, thus in verses, word-breaking and other justification practices are not adopted.

62 Cf. *supra*, note 61.

FIGURE 8 *HRAS0004, ff. 17v-18r.* Qur'ān, *juz' XI. Harar, 19th century. Presence of catchwords or semi-words at the end of the lines* (*f. 17v, ll. 4–5, 7–8; f. 18r, ll. 2–3, 6–7, 8–9*), *in addition to* ta'līq. *Note at f. 17v, l. 7 that the empty space above the* lām *is filled with a catchword, despite the fact that the* rasm *of the script reaches the end of the line.* PDF IMAGE BY STEVE DELAMARTER AND JEREMY R. BROWN, EMIP.

word breaks, catchwords or semi-words and interlinear word-overlapping are also employed at the end of the lines.[63] Similar links between the particular realization of the graphemes and the calligraphic motivations of the scribes are also attested in another manuscript in Arabic from the same region (IES00285, ff. 1r-7v). This is a *Takhmīs* on the poem *Bānat Su'ād* by Ka'b b. Zuhayr.[64] In this copy the small *kāf* on the top of the grapheme is limited to the original *qaṣīda*, whose text has to be highlighted.

In addition to this genre, I have also examined the Arabic documentary texts in prose related to the city of Harar as possible samples of non-graphically

63 Enrico Cerulli, *Inventario dei manoscritti Cerulli etiopici, introduzione, integrazioni e indici a cura di Osvaldo Raineri* (Studi e Testi, 420), Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2004, p. 236 (Tav. II)-237.

64 The *takhmīs* is a special kind of amplification of poetry. In this case the original poem is the *qaṣīda* (the traditional form of Arabic poem) composed by Ka'b b. Zuhayr.

codified manuscripts. In the materials I have examined thus far, the grapheme variants described above are not attested, and the most common method for the justification of these texts is breaking words at the end of the lines.

A Tentative Comparative Analysis through Space and Time

In the final stage of this article I compare manuscripts from Harar and those in the Gibe region. In general, the three features related to the line management and justification are also quite common in the manuscripts from the western Ethiopian region, even if they never occur in copies of the Qurʾān.[65] None of the variants of the grapheme *kāf* discussed above has been observed in the specimens from the Gibe region. The reason why this specific practice seems to be so uncommon in western Ethiopian manuscripts, or at least in the ones I have examined, is possibly related to the different cultural influences in the two regions. If Harar has been definitely more exposed to Eastern influences (Arabian, Middle Eastern, and even Indian), the Gibe Valley has historically had more connections with West Africa and the Maghrib, where the use of the variants of the grapheme *kāf* observed in Harar manuscripts is not a common scribal practice. Nonetheless, few exceptions have been noticed. One is seen in the *muṣḥaf*, or one-volume Qurʾān, kept in the Abbaa Jifaar Museum in Jimma (JIJM0001). This volume contains the typical Harari *kāf* with the small one on the top of the vertical stroke. It is not impossible, however, that the codex was produced in another region and then given to the king as a present. Another example from the same area, and in particular from the collection of Suuse, is a loose folio (ms SSE0002B, f. Ar-v) in which the same realization of the grapheme *kāf* is found. Nonetheless, the fact that in the devotional poem copied on the folio Hāshim b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Hararī is mentioned suggests a possible Harari origin of the manuscript.

Because the lack of old Islamic manuscripts does not allow me to conduct a diachronic analysis, I offer a tentative comparison of the distinctive scribal features with the ones I have observed in the epigraphic inscriptions from the same Ethiopian region.[66] In this respect, it has to be considered that, even though stones are not as easy to move and transport as manuscripts are,

65 I must note that the number of copies of the Qurʾān examined from the Gibe region is much smaller than the number I consulted in Harar.

66 For a general overview and bibliography, see Alessandro Gori, "Inscriptions. Arabic inscriptions in the Ethiopian regions", *EAe*.

inscriptions could have been made by non-local craftsmen. Thus, the inscriptions could have become possible external models for the local handwritten production. Among the Arabic inscriptions found in the region of Harar dating back to the second half of the 13th century, two in particular have caught my attention. These two inscriptions are now kept in the Museo Coloniale in Rome. They probably come from Arsi, but possibly fit within the general socio-historical pattern from which the inscriptions from the Harar region originated. The Harar region was in fact linked to the trading network that connected the shores of Asia and Africa through the Indian Ocean and extended further to Central Ethiopia.[67] The inscriptions show a particular realization of the grapheme *kāf* that resembles the one found in the copies of the Qur'ān from Harar.[68] The particular shape of the grapheme, similar to a vertical chevron, has been noticed by Ettore Rossi, even if not described in detail. Rossi clearly states that the variants of the grapheme *kāf* in the two inscriptions share similarities, though one is less monumental than the other. This assertion seems to entail that the two inscriptions were realized and inspired by a possible common model, rather than being the result of the personal aesthetic and decorative motivation of the scribes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, if the particular realization of specific graphemes such as *kāf* or *mīm* seems to be mostly related to the copies of the Qur'ān or other texts copied with aesthetic intent from the region of Harar, other practices related to the justification of the texts can also be found in other regions of Ethiopia, and in different kinds of texts. The latter are mainly written in prose and include, for example, local documentary texts. The presence of these features in copies of the Qur'ān, the most codified and fixed text in the Islamic canon, is meaningful as it suggests that they are possibly perceived as aesthetic devices, rather than oddities or clumsy practices. Based on the material I examined, there is no direct correspondence between the use of these aesthetic graphic devices and

67 *Ibid.*, p. 167; Gianfrancesco Lusini, "Lingue di cristiani e lingue di musulmani d'Etiopia", in *L'Islam in Etiopia. Bilanci e prospettive*, eds. A. Gori and B. Scarcia Amoretti (Civiltà del Mediterraneo, 16–17), Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010, p. 136.

68 Ettore Rossi, "Iscrizioni funerarie arabe musulmane del paese degli Arussi nel Museo Coloniale di Roma", *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, 2 (1942), pp. 278–280 (Inscription n. 1 and n. 2).

the language of the texts. This implies that there is no difference in the perception of the written texts, whether they belong to the same religious or devotional genres. These examples illustrate the complexity and depth of the processes of ʿAjamization in Ethiopia. In the Ethiopian texts examined in this article, ʿAjamization processes not only entail the interplay of local traditions with the presumed "orthodox" Islamic practice, but they reflect the reinterpretation of original Islamic elements and practices according to different tastes, sensibilities and intents, generating a new and distinctive scribal tradition in a specific region. These processes of enrichment through choices, reinterpretations and assimilation can result from various factors and circumstances, including historical and geographical factors as well as aesthetic perception.

As attested by local epigraphs and manuscripts from different Islamic regions, the shape assumed by specific graphemes seem to be vestiges of ancient samples coming from abroad. Among these, the handwritten copies of the Qurʾān, the first and most important book for the Islamization of the region, certainly represented the main model for a long lasting scribal tradition related to that particular text. Indeed, the Qurʾān not only needs a sound textual model for its copying, but also deserves graphic devices necessary to produce aesthetically satisfying results or to recall a successful and appreciated model. Among the graphic peculiarities noticed, the small *kāf* on the top of the vertical stroke of the grapheme is attested in literary sources on calligraphy as a distinctive mark used to differentiate it from its allograph *lām*. Thus, it is reasonable to assume the ancient origin of this practice, its assimilation by Harari scribes as legacy of ancient models and a very conservative scribal tradition in the region.[69] Variants of this practice, in which an additional small *kāf* appears above or below the diagonal stroke of the grapheme, are clearly the result of a hyper employment and redundant use of the same mark, which seems to serve an aesthetic purpose, as attested in calligraphic samples, mainly copies of the Qurʾān, from Eastern lands of the Dār al-Islām. This variant is generally reserved for texts that deserve a particularly careful and accurate rendering. If no calligraphic schools nor *scriptoria* which gave birth to codified calligraphic styles have been identified in the region so far, it is nonetheless evident that some of the scribal practices described in this article are widespread enough to be recognized as distinctive of the Harari region. Finally, even though the shape of one or two graphemes is not enough to define a writing style, the

69 The repetition in a smaller dimension of the same grapheme above or below the standard one is in fact the most common method of *ihmāl* notation since the very beginning of its use in the 3rd/9th century (Witkam, "The neglect", *passim*).

identification of these traits and their occurrence can be at least the starting point for a regional investigation and characterization. Such efforts could offer new insights and interesting clues on external influences and scribal models that reflect the movement of people, ideas, texts and their material and graphic expressions.