

Toward an Integrated Theoretical Framework for the Study of Qur'anic Manuscripts: Conceptual and Methodological Foundations

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide an integrated theoretical examination of the concept of manuscript Qur'ans through the construction of a conceptual and methodological framework that defines the foundations for their scholarly investigation. The study is grounded in the integration of Qur'anic sciences—particularly the disciplines of the Uthmanic orthography (*rasm al-muṣḥaf*) and Qur'anic readings (*qirā'āt*)—with codicology and textual criticism. It further seeks to analyze the foundational concepts of this field, trace the development of its theoretical approaches, and highlight the major conceptual and methodological challenges confronting researchers in the study of manuscript Qur'ans.

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical theoretical methodology based on the examination of both classical and modern scholarship, without undertaking a practical analysis of specific manuscript samples. The objective is to formulate a comprehensive scholarly framework that clarifies the central concepts, methodological boundaries, and principal research orientations related to the study of manuscript Qur'ans.

The study concludes that the investigation of manuscript Qur'ans constitutes a complex interdisciplinary field that requires the reconstruction of its concepts upon rigorous methodological foundations. It further argues that the absence of a clearly articulated theoretical framework has contributed to inconsistencies in current research approaches, thereby necessitating stronger integration between Qur'anic sciences and manuscript studies within a unified theoretical model capable of regulating and advancing this field of inquiry.

Keywords: Manuscript Qur'ans; Uthmanic Orthography; Qur'anic Sciences; Manuscript Studies; Methodology; Theoretical Study.

INTRODUCTION

Manuscript Qur'ans constitute one of the most significant material witnesses to the history of the Qur'anic text, as their written structures reflect the stages of development of Qur'anic writing prior to the emergence of modern printing, together with the associated systems of vocalization and orthographic marking (Déroche, 2009; Fedeli, 2015). In contemporary scholarship, this field has acquired increasing importance as a point of intersection between the sciences of the Qur'an on the one hand and manuscript studies and textual criticism on the other (Sinai, 2014; Marx, 2011).

With the advancement of academic studies in this field, an urgent need has emerged to reconstruct the theoretical framework governing the study of manuscript Qur'ans, particularly in light of the multiplicity of approaches, the variation in terminology, and the absence of precise conceptual regulation (Déroche, 2022). Furthermore, this interdisciplinary overlap has generated methodological challenges concerning the boundaries

of each discipline and the nature of the relationship between the Qur'anic text as a sacred and liturgically transmitted text, and the manuscript as a historical and material document (Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012).

Accordingly, this study seeks to provide a theoretical treatment aimed at defining the foundational concepts and constructing an integrated methodological framework for the study of manuscript Qur'ans, independent of practical applications and based primarily on conceptual analysis of the relevant scholarly literature.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to organizing this field of knowledge, clarifying its boundaries, and presenting a scholarly framework that may assist researchers in producing more coherent and methodologically rigorous studies in the future.

International Literature Review

- The study of manuscript Qur'ans has undergone significant transformation over the past century, evolving from descriptive cataloguing and traditional Qur'anic scholarship into a complex interdisciplinary field that incorporates codicology, palaeography, textual criticism, art history, and digital humanities. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes Qur'anic manuscripts not merely as handwritten carriers of the Qur'anic text, but as historical, visual, and material witnesses that reflect the development of Islamic intellectual and manuscript culture.
- Within the classical Islamic tradition, discussions related to manuscript Qur'ans were primarily embedded within the broader sciences of the Qur'an (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*), especially the disciplines of Uthmanic orthography (*rasm al-muṣḥaf*), Qur'anic readings (*qirā'āt*), and the compilation of the Qur'an (*jam' al-Qur'ān*). Foundational works such as *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyutī, *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, and *Al-Muqni' fī Rasm Maṣāḥif al-Amṣār* by Abu Amr al-Danī established the theoretical foundations for understanding Qur'anic writing and recitation. However, these works did not treat manuscript Qur'ans as an independent field of material or codicological inquiry in the modern academic sense.
- The emergence of modern manuscript studies in Western academia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries introduced new methodological approaches to Qur'anic manuscripts. Early Orientalist scholarship often approached Qur'anic manuscripts through philological and historical-critical frameworks influenced by Biblical textual criticism. Textual criticism refers to the analytical comparison of manuscript variants in order to investigate the historical transmission and development of texts. In Qur'anic studies, however, the application of textual criticism remains methodologically sensitive because the Qur'an was historically transmitted through an integrated oral and written tradition regulated by the sciences of *qirā'āt* and *rasm al-muṣḥaf*. These approaches attempted to reconstruct the historical development of the Qur'anic text primarily through manuscript comparison and textual variation analysis. However, many of these early studies were criticized for insufficient engagement with the Islamic sciences of *qirā'āt* and *rasm al-muṣḥaf*, which traditionally regulated the relationship between oral transmission and written orthography.
- A major transformation in the field occurred with the development of codicology and palaeography as specialized disciplines in manuscript studies. Among the most influential contemporary scholars is François Déroche, whose works significantly advanced the material and historical analysis of early Qur'anic manuscripts. Déroche's studies emphasized the importance of script typology, manuscript production, page layout, and regional writing traditions in reconstructing the history of Qur'anic manuscripts. His research contributed to shifting the focus from purely textual analysis toward the manuscript as a visual and material artifact embedded within broader Islamic manuscript culture.
- Similarly, Alba Fedeli expanded the field through detailed investigations of manuscript transmission, scribal practices, and the relationship between textual and material layers within Qur'anic codices. Her studies demonstrated that many apparent textual variations in manuscripts are more accurately understood as codicological or orthographic phenomena rather than evidence of textual instability.

- Another influential direction in contemporary scholarship is represented by Behnam Sadeghi, whose research on early Qur'anic manuscripts—particularly the Ṣan'ā' palimpsest—introduced sophisticated methods of textual and historical analysis. Sadeghi's work generated extensive academic discussion regarding the relationship between early manuscript evidence and the traditional Islamic narrative of Qur'anic transmission. While his studies contributed significantly to manuscript research methodologies, they also revealed the methodological tensions between Western textual criticism and the normative frameworks of classical Islamic scholarship.
- In recent decades, scholars such as Nicolai Sinai and Michael Marx have further developed interdisciplinary approaches that integrate historical analysis, codicology, and Qur'anic studies. These approaches increasingly recognize that the Qur'anic manuscript tradition cannot be adequately understood through purely philological methods detached from the Islamic sciences governing Qur'anic transmission.
- At the same time, Muslim scholars working within Qur'anic sciences have sought to re-engage manuscript studies through frameworks grounded in *rasm al-muṣḥaf* and *qirā'āt*. Contemporary studies in this direction emphasize that the orthographic flexibility of the Uthmanic codices was historically connected to the accommodation of multiple canonical readings. Accordingly, many orthographic features observed in manuscript Qur'ans should be interpreted within the broader oral-written transmission system rather than through modern textual-critical assumptions alone.
- An important contemporary development is the increasing integration between codicology and Qur'anic sciences. Rather than treating manuscripts solely as textual witnesses, recent scholarship views manuscript Qur'ans as multidimensional objects that combine textual, visual, historical, and material dimensions. This interdisciplinary orientation has also been strengthened by digital humanities projects, including high-resolution manuscript imaging, digital cataloguing, and computational analysis of scripts and orthographic patterns.
- Despite these important developments, contemporary scholarship continues to face significant conceptual and methodological challenges. One of the most notable issues is the absence of a unified theoretical framework capable of integrating Qur'anic sciences, codicology, manuscript studies, and textual analysis within a coherent methodological structure. Existing studies often remain fragmented between purely textual approaches, material analysis, or historical interpretation without sufficient interdisciplinary synthesis.
- Furthermore, considerable terminological instability persists within the field. Expressions such as “Qur'anic manuscript,” “manuscript Qur'an,” and “early Qur'anic codex” are frequently employed without precise conceptual distinction. Likewise, methodological disagreements continue regarding the extent to which Qur'anic manuscripts should be approached through textual criticism derived from Biblical studies versus frameworks rooted in the Islamic sciences of transmission.
- Accordingly, recent scholarship increasingly calls for the reconstruction of the theoretical foundations governing manuscript Qur'an studies. The present study contributes to this scholarly direction by proposing an integrated conceptual and methodological framework that seeks to bridge the gap between Qur'anic sciences and modern manuscript studies while preserving the distinct epistemological nature of the Qur'anic textual tradition.

Research Gap

- Despite the growing body of scholarship on Qur'anic manuscripts, contemporary studies remain fragmented between textual, codicological, and historical approaches without the existence of a unified theoretical framework integrating Qur'anic sciences with modern manuscript studies. Most existing research focuses either on descriptive manuscript analysis or textual criticism, while insufficient attention has been given to constructing a comprehensive conceptual and methodological model for the study of manuscript Qur'ans as an interdisciplinary field.

Research Problem

The research problem lies in the existence of conceptual ambiguity and methodological inconsistency in the study of manuscript Qur'ans, manifested in the following issues:

- The absence of a precise and comprehensive theoretical definition of the concept of manuscript Qur'ans.
- An inadequately regulated overlap between Qur'anic sciences and manuscript studies in addressing this field.
- The multiplicity of research approaches without the existence of a unified theoretical framework.
- Weak methodological grounding in defining the limits and tools of the discipline.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- Construct a conceptual framework for manuscript Qur'ans.
- Clarify the theoretical foundations for studying this field.
- Analyze the relationship between Qur'anic sciences and manuscript studies.
- Identify the conceptual and methodological issues present in contemporary scholarship.
- Propose an integrated methodological framework for the study of manuscript Qur'ans.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following principal question:

What is the appropriate theoretical and methodological framework for studying manuscript Qur'ans as a complex interdisciplinary field of knowledge?

From this main question emerge the following subsidiary questions:

- What is the precise scholarly concept of manuscript Qur'ans?
- What are the theoretical foundations upon which their study is based?
- How do the disciplines of Uthmanic orthography (*rasm al-mushhaf*) and Qur'anic readings (*qirā'āt*) integrate with manuscript studies in this field?
- What are the principal conceptual and methodological issues associated with the study of manuscript Qur'ans?
- What are the contemporary trends in constructing the theoretical framework of this field?

Significance of the Study

- This study is significant because it contributes to reconstructing the theoretical foundations governing manuscript Qur'an studies through an integrated interdisciplinary framework. It further seeks to bridge the gap between Qur'anic sciences and modern manuscript studies by clarifying conceptual boundaries and methodological approaches. The study may also assist future researchers in developing more coherent analytical models for the study of manuscript Qur'ans within both Islamic and contemporary academic scholarship.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- This study adopts a theoretical descriptive-analytical methodology based on the analysis of concepts and theoretical frameworks presented in both classical and modern sources related to Qur'anic sciences and manuscript studies. It further examines contemporary research trends in this field with the aim of constructing an integrated conceptual and methodological framework for the study of manuscript Qur'ans.
- The study does not include any practical analysis of manuscript samples, as it is confined exclusively to the theoretical and conceptual level.

Structure of the Study

The study consists of an introduction, three main sections, and a conclusion:

- **Introduction:** including the research problem, research questions, research objectives, methodology, and structure of the study.
- **Section One:** The conceptual framework of manuscript Qur'ans.
- **Section Two:** The theoretical foundations for the study of manuscript Qur'ans.
- **Section Three:** Methodological issues and contemporary research trends.
- **Conclusion:** including the findings and recommendations of the study.

Section One: The Conceptual Framework of Manuscript Qur'ans

First: The Concept of Manuscript Qur'ans

Manuscript Qur'ans constitute one of the most important material witnesses to the history of the Qur'anic text in Islamic civilization (Déroche, 2009). They represent handwritten copies of the Qur'an produced prior to the advent of modern printing and reflect the historical development of Qur'anic writing, vocalization, and orthographic systems.

In its basic sense, a manuscript Qur'an refers to a handwritten copy of the Qur'an. However, contemporary scholarship understands the term as a multidimensional concept that extends beyond a simple descriptive definition. It encompasses several interrelated dimensions: textual, historical, material, and artistic (Fedeli, 2015; George, 2010).

The textual dimension relates to the transmission of the Qur'anic text as preserved within the Islamic tradition, while the material dimension concerns the physical characteristics of the manuscript, including writing materials, scripts, and copying techniques (Déroche, 2022). The historical dimension reflects the context of production and circulation across Islamic regions, whereas the artistic dimension demonstrates the development of Islamic ornamentation and page design.

Accordingly, the manuscript Qur'an should not be viewed merely as a carrier of text, but rather as a complex epistemic structure requiring interdisciplinary analytical approaches. Its study also demands methodological sensitivity due to its association with the sacred Qur'anic text within the Islamic worldview.

Second: The Development of the Concept of Manuscript Qur'ans in Islamic Studies

In the classical Islamic tradition, manuscript Qur'ans were not treated as an independent academic field in the modern sense. Rather, they were studied within the broader framework of Qur'anic sciences, particularly in discussions related to the compilation of the Qur'an, the Uthmanic orthography (*rasm al-mushāḥaf*), and the variant readings (*qirā'āt*) (al-Suyūṭī, 1974; al-Zarkashī, 1957).

Early Muslim engagement with manuscript Qur'ans was primarily motivated by the preservation and protection of the Qur'anic text from alteration (al-Dānī, n.d.; Ibn al-Jazarī, 1998). Over time, partial interest emerged in aspects such as calligraphy, manuscript copying, and ornamentation, especially during later Islamic periods marked by the flourishing of Arabic calligraphy.

The major transformation occurred in the modern period, when Western and later Islamic academic scholarship began to examine Qur'anic manuscripts through analytical and interdisciplinary methodologies. This development benefited from advances in codicology, textual criticism, and visual studies of texts (Déroche, 2009; Small, 2011).

Consequently, the manuscript Qur'an came to be understood not merely as a religious document, but as a multidisciplinary object of study encompassing material structure, writing history, orthographic systems, Qur'anic readings, and calligraphic traditions. Modern technologies, particularly digitization and high-resolution imaging, have further expanded the scope of manuscript studies and intensified the need for a refined conceptual framework (Fedeli, 2015).

Thus, the concept of manuscript Qur'ans may be understood through three major stages:

1. **The Stage of Preservation and Sanctification:** where the manuscript was approached primarily as a sacred text to be preserved.
2. **The Stage of Traditional Description:** where attention expanded to include script, recitation, and manuscript aesthetics.
3. **The Modern Academic Stage:** where manuscript Qur'ans became subjects of analytical study within codicology and textual scholarship.

Third: The Scholarly Characteristics of Manuscript Qur'ans

Manuscript Qur'ans possess several scholarly characteristics that distinguish them from other manuscript traditions and necessitate specialized methodological tools.

1. Textual Stability and Formal Diversity

Although manuscript Qur'ans preserve a stable and transmitted Qur'anic text, they exhibit considerable diversity in visual and formal presentation, including script styles, page layout, vocalization systems, and ornamentation (Déroche, 2009; George, 2010). This combination of textual stability and formal variation constitutes a distinctive feature of Qur'anic manuscripts.

2. Connection to the Uthmanic Orthography

Manuscript Qur'ans are closely linked to the Uthmanic orthographic system established during the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (al-Dānī, n.d.; al-Zurqānī, 2021). This writing system includes distinctive conventions of omission, addition, separation, and orthographic variation that differ from modern Arabic spelling. Understanding these conventions is essential for interpreting Qur'anic manuscripts.

3. Codicological and Analytical Potential

Qur'anic manuscripts provide rich material for codicological analysis through the study of script styles, writing materials, bindings, page organization, and layers of textual annotation (Déroche, 2022). Such analysis also sheds light on the historical and regional schools of Islamic manuscript production, including Kufic, Hijazi, and Maghribi traditions.

4. Multiple Scribal Layers

A manuscript Qur'an often contains multiple textual layers, including:

- the primary Qur'anic consonantal text,
- vocalization and diacritical markings, and
- later additions such as explanatory notes or recitational annotations (Fedeli, 2015).

These layers are significant for tracing the historical development of Qur'anic writing without implying alteration of the Qur'anic text itself.

5. Cumulative Historical Character

The manuscript Qur'an reflects a cumulative historical process shaped by successive developments in Islamic scholarship, calligraphy, and manuscript production. Each manuscript therefore represents a unique historical document embodying particular intellectual and artistic traditions.

6. The Visual Nature of the Text

The manuscript Qur'an is fundamentally a visual text whose meaning is closely connected to its graphic and spatial organization, including letter forms, spacing, and page design (George, 2010). Its study therefore requires careful visual and palaeographical analysis in addition to linguistic reading.

Conclusion of the Section

This section demonstrates that the manuscript Qur'an is not merely a written or historical document, but a complex epistemic and material structure integrating textual, historical, visual, and artistic dimensions. The evolution of its study within Islamic scholarship reflects a transition from preservation and sanctification toward systematic academic analysis.

Its distinctive characteristics—such as textual stability alongside formal diversity, its connection to the Uthmanic orthography, the multiplicity of scribal layers, and its visual nature—establish manuscript Qur'ans as an independent field of scholarly inquiry requiring rigorous and interdisciplinary methodologies. This conceptual framework therefore serves as the foundation for the subsequent theoretical and methodological discussions of the study

Section Two: The Theoretical Foundations for the Study of Manuscript Qur'ans

First: The Science of Uthmanic Orthography (*Rasm al-Muṣḥaf*)

The science of Uthmanic orthography constitutes one of the principal theoretical foundations for the study of manuscript Qur'ans, as it provides the primary framework for understanding the historical written form of the Qur'anic text (al-Dānī, n.d.; al-Zarkashī, 1957). It refers to the orthographic system employed in the codices compiled during the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, which later became the standard model for writing the Qur'an.

This orthographic system differs from later Arabic spelling conventions, as it reflects an independent historical writing structure characterized by features such as omission and addition of letters, separation and connection of words, and distinctive spellings that do not conform to modern orthography (al-Zurqānī, 2021).

The importance of *rasm al-muṣḥaf* lies in its explanatory role in interpreting many graphic phenomena found in Qur'anic manuscripts (Ibn al-Jazarī, 1998). It also demonstrates the close relationship between the written text and oral transmission, since the orthographic system was designed with a degree of flexibility capable of accommodating multiple canonical readings.

Accordingly, the science of Uthmanic orthography is not merely a branch of Qur'anic studies, but a foundational theoretical framework essential for understanding manuscript Qur'ans.

Second: The Science of Qur'anic Readings (*Qirā'āt*)

The science of *qirā'āt* represents another central theoretical foundation in the study of manuscript Qur'ans, as it reflects the phonetic and recitational dimension of the Qur'anic text (Ibn al-Jazārī, 1994; Nasser, 2012). Since the earliest period of transmission, the Qur'an has been conveyed through multiple canonical readings, each governed by established principles and transmitted through authentic chains.

Its significance in manuscript studies lies in explaining many orthographic variations that may initially appear as textual differences but are, in fact, reflections of legitimate recitational diversity (Nasser, 2012). Thus, some writing variations in manuscripts can only be properly understood through the framework of *qirā'āt*.

Qirā'āt analysis refers to the scholarly examination of the canonical modes of Qur'anic recitation and their relationship to the written consonantal text of the Qur'an. This analytical approach enables researchers to interpret many orthographic and vocalization differences found in manuscript Qur'ans within the framework of accepted recitational variation rather than assuming textual contradiction or instability.

This science further highlights the inseparable relationship between sound and writing in the Qur'anic tradition (al-Suyūfī, 1974). The Qur'an was transmitted both orally and textually, producing an integrated system in which orthography and recitation function together within a unified textual framework.

Therefore, *qirā'āt* provides an essential interpretive dimension in manuscript studies, linking the written form of the Qur'an with its oral performance while preserving the unity of the Qur'anic text.

Third: Codicology and Manuscript Studies

Codicology refers to the scholarly study of manuscripts as physical and material objects. In the context of manuscript Qur'ans, it examines features such as writing materials, script styles, page layout, bindings, ink, ornamentation, and methods of manuscript production (Déroche, 2022). Unlike purely textual analysis, codicology focuses on how the manuscript was physically produced and transmitted across different historical and regional contexts.

In Qur'anic manuscript studies, codicology allows researchers to distinguish between different textual and visual layers within a manuscript, including the original consonantal text, vocalization marks, marginal annotations, and later additions. Such analysis contributes to reconstructing the historical development of Qur'anic manuscripts without implying instability in the Qur'anic text itself.

Codicological analysis also enables the identification of regional and historical manuscript traditions, such as Hijazi, Kufic, and Maghribi schools of writing (Déroche, 2009).

Moreover, it reveals the relationship between the sacred text and its visual-material presentation, demonstrating the development of Islamic artistic and manuscript culture (George, 2010).

Thus, codicology complements Qur'anic sciences by providing the material and historical dimensions necessary for a comprehensive understanding of manuscript Qur'ans.

Fourth: Integration Between the Disciplines

The study of manuscript Qur'ans cannot rely on a single discipline in isolation; rather, it is inherently interdisciplinary (Sinai, 2014). Qur'anic sciences provide the normative textual framework, *qirā'āt* explain the diversity of recitation, and codicology offers analytical tools for examining the manuscript as a material object (Déroche, 2022; Nasser, 2012).

The integration of these disciplines produces a comprehensive understanding of the manuscript Qur'an as an interaction between sacred text, orthographic system, oral transmission, material form, and historical context. Such integration also prevents reductionist approaches that focus exclusively on either the textual or material dimension.

Accordingly, manuscript Qur'an studies represent a model of interdisciplinary scholarship in which multiple fields converge to form a unified analytical framework. This transforms the manuscript Qur'an from a specialized subject within a single discipline into an independent field of knowledge requiring integrated theoretical and methodological approaches.

Conclusion of the Section

This section has demonstrated that the study of manuscript Qur'ans is founded upon three principal theoretical bases: Uthmanic orthography, the science of Qur'anic readings, and codicology. Each discipline contributes a distinct analytical perspective essential for understanding the nature of Qur'anic manuscripts.

It has also become evident that the integration of these disciplines is indispensable for constructing a balanced and comprehensive scholarly approach, as no single field alone can fully explain the complex phenomenon of manuscript Qur'ans. Consequently, the study of manuscript Qur'ans emerges as an interdisciplinary field grounded in the interaction between text, recitation, and materiality within Islamic scholarship.

Section Three: Methodological Issues and Contemporary Research Trends

First: Conceptual Challenges

One of the major challenges in the study of manuscript Qur'ans is the lack of conceptual stability within the field. Contemporary scholarship continues to suffer from inconsistent terminology, varying definitions, and the absence of a unified theoretical framework (Fedeli, 2015).

A central issue is the lack of a precise definition of the manuscript Qur'an. Some scholars define it primarily as a handwritten artifact, while others focus on its function as a carrier of the Qur'anic text. More recent approaches attempt to combine both dimensions, viewing the manuscript Qur'an as a composite entity integrating textual, historical, and material aspects.

Another conceptual problem lies in the frequent confusion between Uthmanic orthography (*rasm al-muṣḥaf*) and modern Arabic spelling conventions (al-Zurqānī, 2021). Applying contemporary orthographic standards to historical Qur'anic manuscripts often leads to inaccurate interpretations of their writing systems and textual features.

In addition, the field suffers from inconsistent terminology, with expressions such as "manuscript Qur'an," "ancient Qur'an," and "Qur'anic manuscript" often used interchangeably without precise scholarly distinction. This terminological instability complicates comparative research and highlights the need for a more rigorous conceptual lexicon.

Second: Methodological Challenges

Alongside conceptual difficulties, manuscript Qur'an studies face significant methodological challenges.

The most prominent issue is the absence of a unified theoretical framework guiding research in the field (Sinai, 2014). Existing studies approach manuscript Qur'ans from diverse perspectives—textual, historical, codicological, or visual—without sufficient methodological integration. As a result, research outcomes often remain fragmented and difficult to synthesize into cumulative scholarly knowledge.

Another challenge is the weak integration between related disciplines such as Qur'anic sciences, codicology, *qirā'āt*, and textual criticism (Marx, 2011). Many studies focus narrowly on one dimension while neglecting the broader interdisciplinary nature of the manuscript Qur'an.

Furthermore, contemporary research demonstrates considerable variation in methodology, ranging from descriptive and historical approaches to visual and textual-critical analysis. While methodological diversity is not inherently problematic, the absence of a shared analytical framework often leads to inconsistent interpretations of the same phenomena.

Third: Contemporary Research Trends

Recent scholarship on manuscript Qur'ans has witnessed significant methodological and technological developments.

One important trend is the growing emphasis on the visual analysis of Qur'anic manuscripts (George, 2010). Researchers increasingly examine page layout, script forms, spacing, and visual organization, treating the manuscript Qur'an not only as a linguistic text but also as a visual artifact.

Another major development is the rise of interdisciplinary studies integrating Qur'anic sciences with codicology and manuscript studies (Déroche, 2022). This approach seeks to overcome the traditional separation between text and materiality by analyzing the Qur'anic text within its historical and physical context.

Digital technologies have significantly transformed manuscript Qur'an studies in recent years. High-resolution imaging, digital cataloguing, and computational analysis tools now enable researchers to examine manuscript details with unprecedented precision (Fedeli, 2015). Digital humanities approaches also facilitate large-scale comparative analysis of scripts, orthographic patterns, and manuscript structures across geographically dispersed collections. These developments expand the methodological possibilities of the field and contribute to greater integration between traditional Qur'anic sciences and modern analytical technologies.

In parallel, contemporary scholarship has increasingly sought to reconstruct the methodological foundations of the field through the development of broader and more integrated theoretical models.

Fourth: Toward a Unified Theoretical Model

In light of these conceptual and methodological challenges, there is a growing need for a unified theoretical framework for the study of manuscript Qur'ans. Such a model should integrate three principal dimensions:

1. **The Textual Dimension (Qur'anic Sciences):** including Uthmanic orthography, *qirā'āt*, and related Qur'anic disciplines that define the nature of the Qur'anic text.
2. **The Material Dimension (Codicology):** focusing on the manuscript as a physical object, including script, writing materials, visual organization, and historical context.
3. **The Methodological Dimension (Textual and Analytical Methods):** incorporating comparative analysis, textual criticism, and interdisciplinary research tools.

In practical scholarly application, this integrated framework may be employed through a multi-layered analysis of manuscript Qur'ans. Researchers may begin by examining the manuscript's codicological features, including script type, page organization, and writing materials, followed by analysis of its orthographic system in relation to the principles of *rasm al-mushaf*. Subsequently, *qirā'āt* analysis may be utilized to interpret orthographic and vocalization variations within the framework of canonical recitational traditions. Such an integrated methodology enables a more balanced understanding of manuscript Qur'ans as textual, material, and historical objects simultaneously.

The integration of these dimensions would contribute to overcoming current theoretical fragmentation and establishing manuscript Qur'an studies as a coherent interdisciplinary field.

Limitations of the Study

It should also be noted that the present study is primarily theoretical and conceptual in nature. Therefore, it does not undertake practical case studies or detailed codicological analyses of specific manuscript Qur'ans. Rather, the study aims to establish an integrated conceptual and methodological framework that may serve as a foundational model for future applied research in manuscript Qur'an studies. Consequently, practical investigations of individual manuscripts, as well as the integration of digital humanities tools and computational analysis, remain important directions for subsequent scholarly work.

Conclusion of the Section

This section has shown that manuscript Qur'an studies continue to face major conceptual and methodological challenges that hinder the development of a stable scholarly framework. Nevertheless, contemporary research trends indicate the possibility of overcoming these issues through interdisciplinary methodologies and advanced analytical approaches.

The future of the field appears increasingly oriented toward the construction of a unified theoretical model integrating textual, material, and methodological dimensions, thereby enabling a more comprehensive and rigorous understanding of manuscript Qur'ans.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the study of manuscript Qur'ans constitutes a complex interdisciplinary field that requires a precise theoretical framework capable of defining its concepts and methodological foundations. The research further shows that the absence of such a framework has contributed to methodological inconsistency in contemporary scholarship, and that overcoming this challenge depends upon strengthening the integration between Qur'anic sciences and codicology within a unified scholarly model.

The study also recommends expanding theoretical research in this field and developing more rigorous and coherent analytical methodologies in order to consolidate manuscript Qur'an studies as an established domain within contemporary Qur'anic scholarship.

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