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The Alif in Qurʾānic Orthography: Vowel letters and ortho-epic writing variants.

Short pdf version for qhc2, Notre Dame. Preliminary, not for quotation!

The problem

For textual research it is not wise to take the phonetic face of the Egyptian Fuʾād Muṣḥaf as a basis, because there a meticulous system of signs has been strewn over the skeleton text proper which, more often than not, can totally level down the variants of the "Rasm" underneath. Viewed from the accepted Standard Text of 1924 (and later until the Saudi Muṣḥafs from al-Madinah) the variants are mainly ascribed to a lack of precision in script or a lack of orthographical competence on the side of the scribes. Thus, in a broad sense, deviations from the orthography of Classical Arabic are usually seen to be "defective" writings, which can be "healed", however, by the application of a swarm of Masoretic "letters". Two examples may suffice to illustrate the distance between the letters of the Rasm and the word with a full vocalisation and its transcription, i.e. how this skeleton script is expected to be pronounced:

(1) ٱلَّٰٓـِٔى in the Standard Text Surah 33:4; 58:2 and 65:2 is to be read, in a more conventional transliteration, as ʾallãʹī ; its Rasm consists of three letters only الى , but a one-to-one transliteration would need ten letters and signs: ʾlla²a˜ʹiy.

(2) بُرَءَٰٓؤُاْ in the Standard Text Surah 60:4 is to be read, in the conventional transliteration, as buraʾāʾu ; its Rasm consists of four letters only براوا . However, a one-to-one transliteration would need 13 letters and signs: buraʹa˜ʹwuˇ .

The orthography of the Standard Text is full of inconsistencies, as if they became petrified in a time when an orthographic reform had started already, but which had

not yet become effective in the whole Qurʾān. It is just this “defect”, however, which enables us to reveal many details of its orthographic history. The more so if we take the early manuscripts of the Qurʾān into account, because, for lack of a critical edition of the Qurʾān, we cannot rightly be sure at all that the Standard Text is really the “Rasm ʿUthmānī”, i.e. the earliest possible shape of the text.

Therefore, the idea of this article is not to look back from the orthography of Classical (or modern) Arabic which has become (mostly) explicit or *plene,* but on the contrary to follow up the steady enrichment of the Arabic script (as encountered in the earliest manuscripts) by the invention of new signs and devices.

Generally and until to-day there has been no need for differentiation between the vocalisations of the Alif at the outset of a word: أَخٌ ʾaḫuⁿ, أُخْتٌ ʾuḫtuⁿ, إِخْوَةٌ ʾiḫwaẗuⁿ. This is the normal or evident case for those who are familiar with the vocabulary and the grammar of Arabic. Yet, the Qurʾān is not an “ordinary” text! Naturally, its complicated structure tended to be represented in script, too, mainly if the written shape was misleadingly ambiguous.

An important instrument for the definition of a vowel’s quality was the introduction of *matres lectiones,* i.e. (mainly) of the vowel letters Wāw and Yāʹ. Of course, their use was common already for the definition of the long vowels <ᵘ + w> = /uː/ and <ⁱ + y> = /iː/. But the Qurʾānic Standard Text as well as the early manuscripts teach us that a reform was taking place which made use of the *matres lectiones* on a much larger scale than before. Fortunately, we can still observe the reform process because the texts themselves have frequently preserved both the “old” orthography with an Alif only, as well as the enriched orthography with an additional Wāw or Yāʹ, for the same word, but in different verses.

The introduction of *matres lectionis* makes sense only if the pronunciation of an existing Alif can be made more evident as an /u/ or /i/ sound. However, if an /a/ sound was involved – like in the accusative of nouns – the Alif could remain and needed not be removed or substituted. But now its meaning had changed and narrowed down to designate a short or long /a/ sound, only; it could no longer signalize any other vowel. Summing up, we still encounter the differentiation by *matres lectionis* in the Standard Text:

(3) مَلَأُ malaʾu (e.g. 7:60) and مَلَؤُاْ...malaẃuʾ (e.g. 23:24),

(4) مَلإِ..malaʾi (e.g. 2:246) and مَلإِيْهِ...malaʾiÿhi (e.g. 7:103),

(5) مَلأَهُ..malaʾahu (e.g. 10:88), with no alternative writing in the StT.

Finally, and in the perception of the later exegetes, the Alif became generally associated with an /a/ sound – except in the position at the outset of a word (which is still valid to-day). This development or reform was a gradual one: In Classical Arabic it ended up in the Alif's almost complete similarity with the nature of the Wāw and the Yāʹ as *matres lectionis,* now common to define the long /aː/ sound.

Even beyond the introduction of the *matres lectionis* in order to gain more transparency for the understanding or reading, the Qurʾānic orthography still contains a few features which can only be explained as the remnants of an early effort to ensure the proper recitation of the text. These variants will be called ortho-epic. Although this category concerns mainly the Alif, analogous observations can be made with the Wāw or the Yāʹ. However, while the ortho-epic treatment of the Fatḥah-Alif issue will be in the fore-ground, the ortho-epic writing of the Wāw or Yāʹ are mentioned in short, only.

1 The Wāw

1.1 The additional Wāw at the beginning of a word

In old manuscripts, and before the vocalisation by red dots or else had been invented, the only way to gain more precision for the vocalisation of the first Alif was the *mater lectionis*. The task consisted mainly in the differentiation between homographs. Thus, we find

(6) فاليك (فَأُلَـٰٓئِكَ) fa_ʾulaʾÿika (ms. D) for فَأُوْلَـٰٓئِكَ in StT (7:9) or

(7) الى (أُلِى) ʾuliy (mss. DH) for أُوْلِى in StT (35:1) or

(8) اولا (أُوْلُاْ) ʾuwlu ʾ (mss. CDF[1]) for أُوْلُواْ in StT (e.g. 3:7).

The Arabic version in round brackets is the vocalised interpretation of the Rasm as found in the manuscript. The more common writing in the Standard Text as well as in

[1] Precisely 3:7, 18 in ms. C; 8:75, 38:29, 39:9 in ms. D; 13:19 in mss. CDF.

the manuscripts has the *mater lectionis* Wāw in the first syllable, numbers (6) and (7). As for (8) I have not found a manuscript version in which اولا is written without the Wāw in the first syllable, but this would result in a highly intriguing الا , to be read as أُلُأٌ ! – For the second *mater lectionis* in this word see below, 1.2.1.

Another kind of differentiation concerns the more exact definition of the verbal stem. A prominent example is

(9) سَأُوْرِيكُمْ sa_ˈuw̆riykum, in Standard Text 7:145 and 21:37, but also in mss. CFH. – The possible reason for the addition of the Wāw is to define the causative (IV.) stem and to prevent from the reading sa_ˈaraẏkum / "I shall see you".

In another verse, however, the same word is written less explicitly:

(10) مَاأُرِيكُمْ maˈuriykum, in StT 40:29 (as well as in mss. like K).

One should expect to find many more examples of this kind of *matres lectionis,* since the text of the Standard edition contains many verbal forms parallel to this constellation.[2] However, to my knowledge, there is only

(11) لأُوْصَلِّبَنّهم la_-ˈuw̆ṣal²iban²ahum in 7:124; 20:71 and 26:49 which have a Wāw as a *mater lectionis* – although this Wāw is neither realized in the Standard Text nor in the few early manuscripts which I could consult (CFGHK), but – amazingly enough – in a few recently printed Muṣḥafs, mainly in the Indian traditon, but also in a Libyan-Yemeni edition in the Qālūn ʿan Nāfiʿ tradition (# 1-4, 6-8, cf. bibliography).

A parallel example is possibly

(12) أُوذُواْ in StT 6:34, contrary to اذوا in ms. D.

In this case, the Standard Text shows the "correct" (Classical) orthography with the Wāw, while it is written in one manuscript – erroniously? – with an Alif only.

Finally, the Standard Text has

(13) تَؤُزُّهُمْ taẃuz²uhum (19:83), while ms. A and F show تاوزهم

[2] Parallel examples without an initial *mater lectionis* in the Standard Text are: wa_li_ˈutim²a (2:150), la_ˈukaf²iran²a (3:195, 5:12), la_ˈudḫilan²ahum (3:195, 5:12), la_ˈuḍil²an²ahum (4:119), la_ˈuman²iyan²ahum (4:119), sa_ˈunzilu (6:93), la_ˈuqaṭ²iʕan²a (7:124, 26:49), sa_ˈulqiy (8:12), la_ˈuzay²inan²a (15:39), la_ˈuġwiyan²ahum (15:39, 38:82), sa_ˈunab²iýuka (18:78), la_ˈuʕaḏ²iban²ahu (27:21), sa_ˈurhiquhu (74:17), sa_ˈuṣliyhi (74:26).

ta⌋uw̆z²uhum, which in turn is likely to contain the Wāw as a *mater lectionis,* so that an original تازهم * ta⌋uz²uhum has to be assumed, although this could not be documented, so far. But we may take the historical sequence

from تأُزُّهُم * → تَأُوْزُّهُم in mss. AF → تَؤُزُّهُم in the StT,

for granted, especially if we take the well-documented sequence of

(14) ذا (ذُأٌ) ḏu⌋ in ms. G (e.g. 57:21, 29)

→ ذوا (ذُوْأٌ) ḏuw⌋ in mss. ACDGF (e.g. 13:6)

→ ذُو ḏuw throughout in the Standard Text

into account. The three stages show the development of the orthography: In a period when the Alif was mainly associated with the /a/ sound, the addition of the Wāw was felt to be a help to define the vocalisation of the Alif with an /u/ sound. In the next stage, however, the Alif was felt to be irritating; it was considered to be a scribal error and taken out of the Rasm. The complete loss of a formerly existing Alif can be observed elsewhere, too. As a proof for the oldest concept of an Alif's value we may adduce a word from the *scriptio inferior* in the Ḥiǧāzī palimpsest DAM[3] 01-27.1,

(15) تامرون tu⌋marūna, while the StT has ..تُؤْمَرُونَ (15:64).

As the context of this passage does not allow for a different reading, i.e. an active voice تَأْمُرُونَ , we can be sure that the scribe was aware to write the passive voice تُأْمَرُونَ tu⌋marūna in this way!

1.2 The additional Wāw at the end of a word

1.2.1 *Plene* writing of the short vowel /u/

If the last syllable of a word ends on a short /u/, this vocalisation is expressed in the Fuʾād Muṣḥaf in two different ways at the same time. As for the writing of nouns we have:

(16) نَبَأُ	naba⌋u	(9:70)	and	نَبَؤُاْ	(14:9)
(17) مَلأُ	mala⌋u	(7:60)	and	مَلَؤُاْ	(23:24)

[3] = Abbreviation for Dār al-Makhṭūṭāt, Ṣanʿāʾ.

(18) ضُعَفَـٰٓأُ	ḍuʕafaʹ̄u	(2:266)	and	ضُعَفَـٰٓؤُاْ	(14:21)
(19) نَشَـٰٓأُ	našaʹ̄u	(6:83)	and	نَشَـٰٓؤُاْ	(11:87)
(20) دُعَـٰٓأُ	duʕaʹ̄u	(13:14)	and	دُعَـٰٓؤُاْ	(40:50)

This double orthography proves that the process of a reform had not yet taken possession of the whole text. The disambiguation by the regular application of the vowel letters Wāw and Yā′ as *matres lectionis* would have certainly led to a more homogenous orthography. However, before this homogeneity was achieved, a far more effective device had been found, which did not necessitate a changement of the Rasm any more: The words in question could remain as they were at a certain moment, as if petrified, but the new vocalisation systems of red dots (or the later small strokes) could be laid over any previous orthography in order to maintain (or achieve or pretend) the phonetic identity of the words.

It seems that the insertion of the Wāw as a *mater lectionis* had reached the verbal forms more completely that the nouns, because we do not find alternative writings (i.e. without the Wāw) in the Standard Text in these cases:

(21) تَفْتَؤُاْ	taftaẃuˇ	(12:85)
(22) يَتَفَيَّؤُاْ	yatafay²aẃuˇ	(16:48)
(23) يَعْبَؤُاْ	yaʕbaẃuˇ	(25:77)
(24) يُنَشَّؤُاْ	yunaš²aẃuˇ	(43:18)
(25) يُنَبَّؤُاْ	yunab²aẃuˇ	(75:13).

So far, only in one case the older orthography without the vowel letter Wāw could be observed:

(26) اتوكأُ ʹatawak²aʹu (ms. H) instead of أَتَوَكَّؤُاْ (20:18) in StT.

If we consult the old manuscripts we can find many more examples of the old orthography with nouns, as compared with the (relatively) more advanced orthography of the Standard Text:

(27) مَـٰٓأُكُم	maʹ̄ukum	(ms. D)	instead of	مَاؤُكُم	(67:30)
(28) جَزَٰٓأُهُم	ǧazaʹ̄uhum	(ms. A, C)	instead of	جَزَاؤُهُم	(3:136)
(29) شُرَكَـٰٓأُ	šurakaʹ̄u	(ms. A)	instead of	شُرَكَـٰٓؤُاْ	(6:94)

The original script in the manuscripts (left side) does not show vocalisation signs,

notably no daggar Alif. Just in order to visualize the function of the Alifs in the manuscripts these have been equipped here with a Hamzah and the Ḍammah in the examples (26) – (29).

We observe that the Wāws are inserted after the Alif (22, 23) because the Alif could be used as a *mater lectionis* for the long /aː/. – In the examples (21) and (24) the Wāws were placed before the final Alifs, which in turn lost their quality as glottal stops, but which were retained in script, though considered to be “superfluous” (zāʾidah).

Although ʾuw̆luw̆ʾ occurs in the Standard Text 17 times with two Wāws as *matres lectionis,* the second Wāw lacks in a few manuscripts:

(30) اولا (أُوْلُأٌ) ʾuw̆luʾ (mss. CDF[4]) for أُوْلُواْ ʾuw̆luw̆ʾ in StT

The evidence of this “defective” writing at the end of the word in the manuscripts is a strong argument against the oroginal existence of a long /uː/ vowel in the second syllable: If the word’s ending was in fact the vowel /u/ (and not /a/) – which I do not doubt because of the later writing with a *mater lectionis* as اولوا - then it must have been a short /u/ expressed by the final Alif. This final Alif would then have the quality to express any short vowel, the /a/ anyway like مَلأَهُ, the /u/ in this example or in اتو كأُ, and as an /i/ in examples like نَبَإٍ or مِنْ وَرَإٍ below. – The Alif at the end of a word, without a *mater lectionis,* will be treated below in chapter 3.3.

This raises the question about the function of the final Alif in words like إِذَا ʾiḏa or أَنَا ʾana or the negation لاَ la. Evidently, these Alifs are not meant to designate long /a/ sounds, but the short vowel /a/ . If we combine this observation with the fact that all of the three Arabic vowels could be expressed by a simple Alif at the end, then we come to the conclusion that the leading idea of this orthography was its quality as a glottal stop, so that its function, in a modern rendering of the Arabic script, could be illustrated like this: إِذَأٌ / أَنَأٌ / لَأٌ / ذُأٌ / ذِأٌ / ذَأٌ .

[4] 3:7,18 in ms. C; 8:75, 38:29, 39:9 in ms. D; 13:19 in mss. CDF.

2 The Yāʹ

Like the addition of a Wāw, the Yāʹ was used to disambiguate the phonetical value of the Alif.

2.1 The additional Yāʹ at the beginning of a word

(44) إِيلٰفِ and إِـٰلفِهِم in StT 106:1, 2

If ʾiylaˈfi is considered to be a direct derivation of the root ʹ-l-f the verbal noun of the 4th stem would be إِئْلاف → إِيلاف , which would be written "plene", exactly as in Surah 106:1. Then the problem is with the second occurrence of the word in the next verse ʾiˇlaˈfihim . Here the Yāʹ is not part of the Rasm, it is added separately between the initial Alif and the following Lām: اـٰلفهم .

Thus, there are two possible explanations for the different orthography. Either the second Rasm (without the Yāʹ) is the older one – and the *scriptio difficilior* –; in that case the first Rasm is an example of a *mater lectionis* in order to ensure the vocalisation of the Alif as an /i/ sound. This implies that the word is not derived from the root ʹ-l-f, but it had to be protected from misreading, say, of آلاف .

Or the first Rasm is the correct one, and the second one had to be identified with the first one by adding the small Yāʹ, and by that correcting an old erroneous writing, without interfering into the inherited Rasm of the text. Nevertheless, it seems to be absolutely strange that the second Rasm could preserve its wrong orthography just side by side with the "correct" one. Anyway, the double appearance of this *hapax legomenon* raises the suspicion that its real meaning had been forgotten.

If we take the writing of

(45) أَفَإِيْن ʾa_fa_ʾiˇyn in the Standard Text 3:144, 21:34

as a model for the use of the Yāʹ as a *mater lectionis,* it is worth while looking at similar constellations in the Qurʾān. Usually the small particles like ʾin, ʾinna etc. are "below the radar" of concordances, to use Thomas Milo's expression, but they are listed in Flügel's and in the Iranian concordance of Rūḥānī (cf. Bibliography). The following list contains words which are interpreted now to be compositions of the questioning particle ʾa- at the outset, like

(46) أَإِنْ ʾa_ýin (36:19)

(47) أَئِنَّ ʼla_ýin²a (26:41)

(48) أَئِنَّا ʼla_ýin²a⌋ (13:5; 17:49, 98; 23:82; 27:67; 32:10; 37:16, 36, 53; 56:47; 79:10)

(49) أَئِنَّكَ ʼla_ýin²aka (12:90; 37:52)

(50) أَئِنَّكُمْ ʼla_ýin²akum (6:19; 27:55; 29:29: 41:9)

(51) أَئِذَا ʼla_ýiḏa⌋ (13:5; 17:49, 98; 19:66; 23:82; 27:67; 32:10; 37:16, 53; 50:3; 56:47; 79:11)

However, like in أَفَإِيْن or لَئِن or وَلَئِن (cf. table below) the Yā′ could be an old *mater lectionis* to ensure the reading ʾin (instead of ʾan). By a later interpretation of this orthography the Yā′ tooth mutated, it could be reinterpretated to bear a Hamzah, thereby producing a question instead of a statement. It would need some research to decide whether the context allows for an indicative rather than for a question, which is outside the scope of this article. In the following table a collection of inconsistent writings is offered, if more than one Rasm orthography can be traced. A dash means that the word has been looked up in the manuscript, but it is not there because of incompleteness or else. The red squares indicate the existence of Alifs, which might prove that the ensuing Yā′ is a *mater lectionis* - wa-ʾllahu aʿlam.

Orthography in Standard Text: Yellow = وَلَئِن, White = لَئِنْ, Turquoise = أَفَإِيْن

Surah: Verse	ms. A	ms. B	ms. C	ms. D	ms. E1	ms. F	ms. G	ms. H	ms. K
3:144	افين	-	افاين	-	-	-	-	-	افاين
6:109	-	-	لين	لاين	لين	-	-	لين	لين
10:22	-	-	لين	-	-	لاين	لين	-	لين
13:37	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين	-	-	ولين
16:126	-	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولاين	ولين
17:62	-	-	-	-	-	لاين	-	-	لين
18:36	-	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	-	ولين

21:34	-	-	-	-	-	افاين	-	افين	افاين
29:10	-	-	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين
29:61	-	-	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين
29:63	-	-	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين
30:51	-	ولين	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين
30:58	-	-	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين
31:25	-	ولين	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين
35:41	-	-	-	-	-	-	ولاين	-	ولين
35:42	-	-	-	لين	-	-	لان	-	لين

For أَبِـذَا a similar table could be made, although with less entries.

2.2 The additional Yā' at the end of a word

Although the word

(52) نَبَإٍ nabaʼli (e.g. 6:67; 27:22) and نَبَإِىْ nabaʼliy (6:34)

occurs exactly in two different orthographies the next examples taken from the Standard Text are comparable only in principle because the second orthography has a suffix –hi at the end of the word:

(53) مَلإٍ malaʼli (2:224; 38:69) and مَلإِيْهِ (e.g. 7:103; 10:75)
(54) لِقَاءِ(لِقَـاإِ) liqaʼli (e.g. 6:31, 154) and لِقَايِهِ (e.g. 18:105; 29:23).

In addition, the early Qurʾānic manuscripts we find e.g.:

(55) وراكم (وَرَاإِكُم) waraʼlikum (ms. G) in StT: وَرَايِكُم (4:102)
(56) سايل (سُإِيُلَ) suʼliyla (mss. A, D) in StT: سُبِلَ (2:108)
(57) ساى (سِأَىْ) siʼlay (ms. A) in StT: سِىءَ (11:77)

These observations help to understand a few odd writings in the Standard Text, too: It has preserved the passive voice of جا (= جَأَ* ǧaʼla) "to come" in a way which is

perfectly in the line of the previous examples:

(58) جِأَىْ ǧiʾlay̆ in StT written as جِاْىٓءَ (39:69; 89:23). The circle upon the Alif means that the Alif has to be disregared for pronunciation, as if only جِىءَ was written. – In the next example of

(59) جِأْتُكُم ǧiʾltukum (ms. H) instead of StT جِئْتُكُم (43:24)

the Alif has its function like in (58), but in the Standard Text it was also substituted by a Yāʹ.

In addition, all of the plenty occurrences of the word šayʹ "thing" are written uniformly as شَىْء in the Standard Text, except for 18:23, where we find

(60) لِشَاْىْءٍ li_šaʾlyʹiⁿ , written with an Alif, which is almost normal in most of the early manuscripts.

Thus, if we recognize the writing with an Alif to be the original letter – before the Yāʹ was added as a *mater lectionis* – we come to the conclusion that the primordial vowel involved was a short one, expressed by an Alif aloneThe Arabic script would have to be interpreted as سُإِلَ / سِأَ / جِأَ / شِأٌ . Only after the Alif had lost its quality as a glottle stop and became associated with a long /aː/, the addition of a Yāʹ was necessary. The pronunciation of the first word was certainly /suʔila/ , whereas the other words were probably pronounced with a short /i/ as /siʔa/, /ʤiʔa/ and /ʃiʔa/.

2.4 Yāʹ instead of Alif = Writing the Imālah?

Normally, in early texts neither the short /a/ nor long /aː/ were part of the script. Consequently, in more cases than not the question remained open whether the vocalisation was thought to be a Fatḥah or a superscript Alif, viz. a "daggar Alif". In transcription the uncertain vowel length can be expressed by the letter <ã̆> which combines the short vowel <ă> with the long vowel <ã> which is only expressed later by the daggar Alif, or which became substituted by the addition of an Alif which was thus integrated into the Rasm.

It seems, however, that in a few cases the former ambiguous <ã̆> vocalisation was not disambiguated by the insertion of a daggar Alif or an Alif into the text, but of a Yāʹ instead. I propose to see this phenomenon not as a singular case for the name of

Abraham, but in the context of the Imālah[5] in general, because of a few similar examples.

(67) ابرهيم ʾibraˡhiym (ʾIbrāhīm) is written thus 54 times in the Standard Text, except in the second Surah where the name is always written without a Yāʹ as ابرهم , which only allows for a reading ʾAbrāhām – completely in line with the Hebrew / Syriac name. However, in order to ensure the uniform pronunciation of ʾIbraˡhiym, a superscript Yāʹ is inserted, only in this Surah throughout: إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ . This clear-cut difference within the Standard Text is far from being realized in the early manuscripts:

As for the second Surah, ms. K writes ابرهيم in 2:140, and if we look at the other Surahs where the Standard Text has ..ابرهيم.. throughout, we see the writing ابرهم in 3:33 (ms. C), 4:125; 19:41; 19:58 (ms. A), 53:37 (ms. D), 16:42 (ms. F). Thus it can be safely said that the Standard Text has undergone at least one orthographical harmonization in which either the second Surah became ابرهم or all other Surahs became ابرهيم . In his *Untersuchungen* Diem[6] proposes that ابرهم was used by the Arabs as a historical Aramaic writing, whereas the writing with a Yāʹ represents the actual pronunciation of the name by the Arabs. This idea does not contradict the following argument of an influence of the Imālah on the orthography.

In view of the fact that it is doubtful whether ابرهيم is a pre-Islamic name[7], and that it has only been preserved in early Islamic inscriptions[8] we propose to see this orthography as the representation of an extreme "Imālah" in early Arabic pronunciation which tended to be written by the letter Yāʹ rather by an "Alif" which was not expressed in script anyhow. The original pronunciation of the name was certainly أَبْرَهَـٰم ʾAbrāhām.

Only an Imālah pronunciation in Arabic of a long /aː/ in the other Semitic languages

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[5] For the question of Qurʾānic orthography and the Imālah see Bergsträsser/Pretzl in GdQ III p. 37 fn. 3.

[6] Werner Diem: Untersuchungen zur frühen Geschichte der arabischen Orthographie. Orientalia 48 (1979) p. 227.

[7] Horovitz: Koranische Untersuchungen 86 f.

[8] Muḥammad Abū ʾl-Faraj al-ʿIshsh: *Kitābāt ʿarabiyyah ghayr manshūrah fī Jabal Usays*. In: al-Abḥāṯ (Bayrūt) 17 (1964) 3., p. 227-346. The four inscriptions are either undated like 75/97 and 85/107, or are datable for the time of the Umayyad reign of al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, 10/21 and 36/55. – In all inscriptions the name is written ابرهيم .

could lead to the new orthography with a Yāʹ because this letter was felt to be closer to the real pronunciation. In a way this changement symbolizes the emancipation of Arabic from the scribal traditions of akin and/or superior languages, and possibly the "invention" of the Arabic alphabet as opposed to the old Abjad fell into this early period. – In some modern Qurʾān editions the Imālah is written as a thick round dot instead of a Kasrah; this cannot be reproduced by the available Arabic character sets, but in transliteration only: Instead of the <i> for the normal Kasrah an <e> is used here, and the "digraph" combination of the <e> with the following Yāʹ is marked additionally by an arch <ē͡y>: ʾibraʿhē͡ym = ʾIbrāhēm.

In the Standard Text there are still a few other graphic traces of the Imālah writing:

(68) بايم bi_ʾay²ē͡ymi (bi-ʾayyēmi), only once in StT written as ..بِأَيَّيْمِ. (14:5), while the usual orthography has أَيَّامًا (3:24) or الأَيَّامُ (3:140). In the early manuscript C both words are written defectively as ايـما and الايـم .

(69) بايـيد (بِأَيِـيْدٍ) bi_ʾaʿyē͡ydiⁿ (bi-ʾāyēdiⁿ), in StT vocalised differently as بِأَيْيْدٍ bi_ʾayy̆diⁿ (51:47). - Here, it is likely that the orthography has a different plural in mind which would match perfectly with the (existing) secondary plural أَيَادٍ.

Although there is no longer any trace of it in the Standard Text, the old manuscripts have preserved almost totally the orthography of ʾāyaẗuⁿ (sg.) or ʾāyāẗuⁿ (pl.) written with two Yāʹs instead of one. We propose to interprete the conventional word ايه as أَيَةٌ , the regular plural would then be أَيَـتٌ , its modern vocalisation in the Standard Text being ءَايَةٌ and ءَايَـت .

In the early manuscripts, however, the singular اية is – according to our sources – always written as ايـيه , which is possibly the clue to understand that the first Yāʹ represents the Imālah, and so we assume:

(70) إِيْـيَه ʾē͡yyaẖ (ʾēyaẖ), as in 3:49, 20:47 (ms. A), 3:50 (ms. A), 7:106 (ms. J), 13:38 (mss. CDF). – Theoretically, the reading أَيْـيَه ʾaẏyah (ʾàyah) is also possible, but in that case we would rather expect a writing with one Yāʹ only, أَيَة, like in the Standard Text today.

The plural in the manuscripts is generally ايـيت or ايـيته or ايـيتى or ايـيتنا, which I should interprete, in the light of the singular, as إِيـيَـت or إِيـيَـته or إِيـيَـتى or إِيـيَـتنا, in the more conventional transcription ʾēyātiⁿ, ʾēyātihi, ʾēyātī, ʾēyātinā.

(71) رجيل riğēylu^{n} (riğēlu^{n}) instead of the StT رِجَالٌ (72:6) occurs in manuscript D,

(72) طيب ṭēyba (ṭēba), instead of طَابَ in the StT (4:3) occurs in ms. A; for this cf. Dānī: *Muqniʿ* p. 71.

A frequent variant without parallels in the Standard Text is

(73) اليه ʾilēyhu^{n} (ʾilēhu^{n}) instead of إِلَٰهٌ ʾilāhu^{n} in the Sxtandard Text. The variant occurs in 6:19; 7:65; 10:90; 23:91 (ms. D), 7:85 (ms. J), 20:14; 40:3 (ms. H).

In a more general sense it seems worthwhile to investigate the extent of the Imālah pronunciation in the different "readings", not only in the centre of a word like in the name of Abraham, but also at the end like in the prepositions إِلَىٰ or عَلَىٰ , or any other Yāʼ-Alif like in الهُدَىٰ or مُوسَىٰ or تَهْوَى or النَّصَـٰرَىٰ (e.g. in the *riwāyah* of Warsh ʿan Nāfiʿ).

3 The Alif

3.4 Ortho-epic variants of the Alif

3.4.2 *Plene* writing of a Fatḥah before a Ḥamzah in the Standard Text

Among the rules for recitation of the Qurʾān is the lengthening of any vowel before a glottal stop. When the idea as well as its sign "Hamzah" was not invented yet, the Alif alone could be used to carry out the function of the later Hamzah.

The most prominent group of examples for the *plene* writing of a Fatḥah are the verses which start with "I swear .../ lā ʾuqsimu / laا ʾuqsimu / لاأُقْسِمُ..." (56:75; 69:38; 70:40; 81:15; 84:16; 90:1). Although there can be no doubt that the formula introduces a swearing indeed, there has been much irritation about the explanation of the negation "lā", and even Arne Ambros in his *Dictionary* (p. 329) qualyfies the lā as a "particle of unc(ertain) function before *ʾuqsimu* "I swear"". In my view the لا lā is simply the *plene* writing of the assertive particle لَـ la-. It is amazing that none of the manuscripts consulted shows a variant like لَأُقْسِمُ , nor do any of the printed editions consulted (# 1-19, see bibliography), which are basically manuscripts, too.

Bergsträsser/Pretzl (in GdQ III p. 48 fn. 2) have already observed that there are two more examples of this kind in the Qurʾān, viz.

Standard Text		= *rasm* like Standard Text		variant writing		
Surah: Verse	Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim	in the old manu-scripts	in the printed editions #	(Arabic)	in the old manu-scripts	in the printed editions #
10:16	لَآ أَدۡرَىٰكُم	= CFGK	= 1-11, 14-19	لادريكم		= 12, 13
27:21	لَأَاْذۡبَحَنَّهُۥٓ	= K	= 1-19			

At the same place Bergsträsser/Pretzl even quote al-Naysābūrī that he saw in a Damascene manuscript

2:221	وَلَأَمَةٌ	= K	= 1-19	ولامة	(Damascene ms.)

However, neither the manuscripts consulted nor the printed editions would confirm this, although the orthography would not be “wrong” in the light of the cases listed below.

I propose to look at the phenomenon of a *plene* writing before a following Hamzah on a larger scale, because there are similar cases of allegedly “otiose” Alifs in early manuscripts or in actual Qurʾān editions other than the Standard Text from Cairo/Madīnah, apart from the lā ʾuqsimu verses mentioned above.

Standard Text		= *rasm* like Standard Text		variant writing		
Surah: Verse	Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim	in the old manu-scripts	in the printed editions #	(Arabic)	in the old mss.	in the printed editions #
3:158	لَإِلَى ٱللَّهِ		= 5, 9-13, 15-19	لاالى...	= ACK	= 1-4, 6-8, 14
3:167	لَّأَتَّبَعۡنَٰكُمۡ	= K	= 5, 7-19	لااتبعنكم	= A[9]CG	= 1-4, 6
4:119	لَأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمۡ	= CK	= 1-19	لاامنينهم	= G	

[9] Dānī: Muqniʿ 18

4:119	لَأٓمُرَنَّهُمۡ	= CK	= 1-19	لاامرنهم	= G	
4:119	لَأٓمُرَنَّهُمۡ	= CK	= 1-19	لاامرنهم	= G	
5:12	لَأُدۡخِلَنَّكُمۡ	= GK	= 1-19	لاادخلنهم	= C	
5:27	لَأَقۡتُلَنَّكَ	= GHK	= 1-19	لااقتلنك	= C	
9:47	لَأَوۡضَعُواْ		= 5, 9-13, 15-17	لااوضعوا	= FK	= 1-4, 6-8, 14, 18-19
11:87	لَأَنتَ	= FK	= 1-19	لاانت	= A[10]	
14:7	لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمۡ	= CFK	= 1-19	لازيدنكم	= D[11]	
20:71	لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمۡ	= FHK	= 5, 9-19	لاوصلبنكم		= 1-4, 6-8
26:49	لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمۡ	= GK	= 2[12], 5, 9-19	لاوصلبنكم		= 1, 3-4, 6-8
28:38	لَأَظُنُّهُۥ	= K	= 1-19	لااظنه	= G	
37:68	لَإِلَى ٱلۡجَحِيمِ		= 5, 9-13, 15-19	لاالى...	= AGK	= 1-4, 6-8, 14
59:13	لَأَنتُمۡ		= 7-13, 15-19	لاانتم	= K	= 1-2, 3[13], 4, 5[14], 6[15], 14

[10] Erroneously Jeffery/Mendelsohn: The Orthography ..., p. 190 wrote: "... لأنت is mistakenly written لاأنت. Doubtless a scribal error."

[11] The additional Alif was inserted later. As the variant is not common, but rather seems to be a singular amendment it is legitimate to speculate that the one who made this "correction" did it because he had another standard in his mind ("ortho-epical"), or because he inserted the Alif because of a different manuscript original which he copied and believed to be more authentic.

[12] Wāw erased later.

[13] The second Alif has been deleted, however, the space left is still visible now.

[14] The second Alif has been deleted, however, the space left is still visible now.

[15] The second Alif has been deleted, however, the space left is still visible now.

5 Bibliography

5.1 Manuscripts seen through:

A	= Samarqand, as far as the orthographical information by A. Jefferey and I. Mendelsohn was given, cf. Bibliography.	[Kūfī style]
C	= Paris, BN 328 (a)	[Ḥijāzī style]
D	= Ṣanʿā′, DAM 01-28.1	[Ḥijāzī style]
E1	= Birmingham, Mingana Coll., Cat.2 = # 1572	[Ḥijāzī style]
F	= London, BL Or. 2165	[Ḥijāzī style]
G	= St. Petersburg, E 20	[Ḥijāzī style]
H	= Ṣanʿā′, DAM 01-29.1	[Ḥijāzī style]
J	= Ṣanʿā′, DAM 01-25.1	[Ḥijāzī style]
K	= Topkapı “Muṣḥaf ʿUthmān”	[Kūfī style]

5.2 Recently printed Qurʾān editions seen through:

Indian Tradition

1	= 40- Ar+En 01.1 Yusuf Ali	1946
2	= 40- Ar+Ge 01.1 Ahmadiyyah	2006
3	= 40- Ar+Ge 01.2 Denffer	1997
4	= 40- Ar+En 01.2 Sheikh	2004
5	= 40- Ar 13.2 Maʿrifah	2004
6	= 40- Ar 13.1 Idara	2004

Qālūn < Nāfiʿ

7	= 2- Ar 15.1 Lībyā	1983
8	= 2- Ar 15.2 Maʿrifah	1427 AH

Warsh < Nāfiʿ

9	= 3- Ar 11.1 Maghribī	ca 2000
10	= 3- Ar 15.1 Maghribī	1964
11	= 3- Ar 15.2 Maʿrifah	1425 AH

al-Bazzī / Qunbul < Ibn Kathīr

12	= 5- Ar 15.1 Alqeraat (al-Bazzī)	2008

13	= 7- Ar 15.1 Alqeraat	(Qunbul)	2008

al-Dūrī < Abū ʿAmr

14	= 9- Ar 15.1 Maʿrifah	1420 AH

Ḥafṣ < ʿĀṣim

15	= 16/4- Ar 15.1 Bayḍūn	1977
16	= 16/4- Ar 15.2 Muṣḥaf	1979

Khalaf < Ḥamzah

17	= 18- Ar 15.1 Maʿrifah	2008

Ottoman

18	= 16/3- Ar 15.5 Özçay	1998
19	= 16/3- Ar 15.2 Amidi	1394

5.3 Other Publications