The Alif in Qur’ānic 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 Fuʿād 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. في the Standard Text Surah 33:4; 58:2 and 65:2 is to be read, in a more conventional transliteration, as ʿallāʾī; its Rasm consists of three letters only ʾل , but a one-to-one transliteration would need ten letters and signs: ʾj?aʾarʾiyy.

2. بروا in the Standard Text Surah 60:4 is to be read, in the conventional transliteration, as buraʾāʾu; its Rasm consists of four letters only برو . However, a one-to-one transliteration would need 13 letters and signs: buraʾaʾawu .

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 Qur’ān. 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 Qur’ān into account, because, for lack of a critical edition of the Qur’ān, we cannot rightly be sure at all that the Standard Text is really the “Rasm ‘Uthmānī”, 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: ٌاً ‘āhu, ٌاُحَطَّ أَحْتُ ٌاُحْوَّأ “‘ibwātu”. This is the normal or evident case for those who are familiar with the vocabulary and the grammar of Arabic. Yet, the Qur’ān 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 Yā’. Of course, their use was common already for the definition of the long vowels <u+w> = /u:/ and <i+y> = /i:/ But the Qur’ānic 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 Yā’, 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:

\[ (3) \text{ mala}’u \text{ (e.g. 7:60) and } \text{ملوأ...ملاوع} \text{ (e.g. 23:24),} \]
(4) ٌمَلَٰث (e.g. 2:246) and مَلَٰثِي (e.g. 7:103),

(5) مَلُأَ (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 Yā’ as matres lectionis, now common to define the long /a:/ sound.

Even beyond the introduction of the matres lectionis in order to gain more transparency for the understanding or reading, the Qur’ānic 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 Yā’. 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 Yā’ 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) فَالِيَكُ (fa-ʿulayyika) (ms. D) for فَأْوَلِيَكُ in StT (7:9) or
(7) الْآَلِيُّ (mss. DH) for اَوْلِي in StT (35:1) or
(8) اَوْلَا (mss. CDF\(^1\)) for اَوْلَأَ 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 اوألا is written without the Wāw in the first syllable, but this would result in a highly intriguing الا! – 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) saُwāriyum, 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 saُara'yum / “I shall see you”.

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

(10) مَأَلُوَّيَكُمْ maُarıyum, 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) لاُوُضُلِّيْنَهُم laُwusal'ibānāhum 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 ‘an Nāfi’ tradition (# 1-4, 6-8, cf. bibliography).

A parallel example is possibly

(12) أُذْوَاَ أُذْوَاُ in StT 6:34, contrary to أذنوا in ms. D.

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

Finally, the Standard Text has

(13) تَأْوِزُهُمْ تَأْوِزُهُمْ تَأْوِزُهُمْ tawuz¹⁴uhum (19:83), while ms. A and F show تاَوْزْهُمْ تَأْوِزُهُمْ تَأْوِزُهُمْ

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

\[
\text{from } * \text{ تازم } \rightarrow \text{Tâz'âm} \rightarrow \text{ in mss. AF } \rightarrow \text{ in the StT,}
\]

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

\[
(\text{ذاء}) \quad \text{ذ}` \quad \text{ذو} \quad \text{ذو} \quad \text{ذُو} \quad \text{ذُو}
\]

in ms. G (e.g. 57:21, 29)

\[
\rightarrow \quad \text{ذَوْحُ } \quad \text{ذَوْحُ } \quad \text{ذَوْحُ } \quad \text{ذَوْحُ } \quad \text{ذَوْحُ } \quad \text{ذَوْحُ }
\]

in mss. ACDGF (e.g. 13:6)

\[
\rightarrow \quad \text{ذُو } \quad \text{ذُو } \quad \text{ذُو } \quad \text{ذُو } \quad \text{ذُو } \quad \text{ذُو }
\]

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 Ḥīṯāẓī palimpsest DAM² 01-27.1,

\[
\text{تَأَمَّرُونَ } \quad \text{تَأَمَّرُونَ } \quad \text{تَأَمَّرُونَ } \quad \text{تَأَمَّرُونَ } \quad \text{تَأَمَّرُونَ } \quad \text{تَأَمَّرُونَ}
\]

tu'ūmarūna, while the StT has ..

(15:64).

As the context of this passage does not allow for a different reading, i.e. an active
voice تَأَمَّرُونَ, we can be sure that the scribe was aware to write the passive voice
تَأَمَّرُونَ tu'ūmarūna 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
Fu‘ād Mušḥaf in two different ways at the same time. As for the writing of nouns we
have:

\[
(\text{naba'ulu} ) \quad (\text{9:70}) \quad \text{and } \quad (\text{nabī'ūn} ) \quad (\text{14:9})
\]

\[
(\text{mala'ulu} ) \quad (\text{7:60}) \quad \text{and } \quad (\text{māli'ūn} ) \quad (\text{23:24})
\]

³ = Abbreviation for Dār al-Makhtūtāt, Şan‘ā‘.
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:

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
(21) & \text{taftawu} (12:85) \\
(22) & \text{yatafayawu} (16:48) \\
(23) & \text{ya'bawu} (25:77) \\
(24) & \text{yunašawu} (43:18) \\
(25) & \text{yunabawu} (75:13).
\end{array} \]

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

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
(26) & \text{atawakawu} \text{ (ms. H)} \quad \text{instead of} \quad \text{ana'awu} \text{ (20:18) in StT.}
\end{array} \]

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:

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
(27) & \text{ma'ukum} \text{ (ms. D)} \quad \text{instead of} \quad \text{ma'akum} \text{ (67:30)} \\
(28) & \text{žaza'hum} \text{ (ms. A, C)} \quad \text{instead of} \quad \text{zi'ahum} \text{ (3:136)} \\
(29) & \text{šuraka} \text{ (ms. A)} \quad \text{instead of} \quad \text{šuraka} \text{ (6:94)}
\end{array} \]

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 Dammah 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” (zā’idah).

Although ٣١٥ ٣١٨ occurs in the Standard Text 17 times with two Wāws as matres lectionis, the second Wāw lacks in a few manuscripts:

\[(30) \text{اولاؤل} (\text{أولـ} ) \text{٣١٥} \text{٣١٨} \text{(mss. CDF)} \text{for } \text{٣١٥} \text{٣١٨} \text{ in StT}\]

The evidence of this “defective” writing at the end of the word in the manuscripts is a strong argument against the original existence of a long /uː/ vowel in the second syllable: If the word’s ending was in fact the vowel /uː/ (and not /a/ ) – which I do not doubt because of the later writing with a mater lectionis as -اولاؤل - 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 ملأ، the /u/ in this example or in انوأ، and as an /i/ in examples like من ور إل or كنيا 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 إذا ‘ida or أنا ‘ana or the negation لَا 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:

\[
\text{إذا، كأنا، فلأنا، لذأنا، ذأنا، أذأنا، ذذأنا، ذذأنا) .}
\]

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2 The Yā’

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

2.1 The additional Yā’ at the beginning of a word

(44) and إلَّافُ تُلْفِمٌ in StT 106:1, 2

If یَیَلْفَی is considered to be a direct derivation of the root ‘-l-f the verbal noun of the 4th stem would be إیلَافُ تُلْفِمُ تُلْفِم , 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 یَیَلْفَوُم . Here the Yā’ is not part of the Rasm, it is added separately between the initial Alif and the following Lām: أَلْفِمُ تُلْفِم .

Thus, there are two possible explanations for the different orthography. Either the second Rasm (without the Yā’) 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 ‘-l-f, but it had to be protected from misreading, say, of آَلَافُ تُلْفِم .

Or the first Rasm is the correct one, and the second one had to be identified with the first one by adding the small Yā’, 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) أَفِیلْن تُلْفِمُ تُلْفِم in the Standard Text 3:144, 21:34

as a model for the use of the Yā’ as a mater lectionis, it is worth while looking at similar constellations in the Qur’ān. Usually the small particles like ‘in, ‘inna 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 Rūhānī (cf. Bibliography). The following list contains words which are interpreted now to be compositions of the questioning particle ‘a- at the outset, like

(46) أَیْنُ تُلْفِمُ تُلْفِم (36:19)
(47) ﺍَِّآ ﯽٍّٚا (26:41)

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

(49) ﺍَِّآ ﯽٍّٚا (12:90; 37:52)

(50) ﺍَِّآ ﯽٍّٚا (6:19; 27:55; 29:29: 41:9)


However, like in ﺎَِّآ ﯽٍّٚا or ﺔَِّآ ﯽٍّٚا (cf. table below) the Yā’ could be an old mater lectionis to ensure the reading ‘in (instead of ‘an). By a later interpretation of this orthography the Yā’ tooth mutated, it could be reinterpreted 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-‘llahu a’lam.

Orthography in Standard Text:  Yellow = ﺔَِّآ, White = ﺎَِّآ, Turquoise = ﺔَِّآ ﯽٍّٚا

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For 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) naba’ī (e.g. 6:67; 27:22) and naba’īyy (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) malī (2:224; 38:69) and malīyīd (e.g. 7:103; 10:75)

(54) liqa’ī (e.g. 6:31, 154) and liqa’īy (e.g. 18:105; 29:23).

In addition, the early Qur’ānic manuscripts we find e.g.:

(55) wa’llākum (ms. G) in ST: wālā’ākum (4:102)

(56) su’iyal (mss. A, D) in ST: sī’il (2:108)

(57) sīla’ (ms. A) in ST: sī’il (11:77)

These observations help to understand a few odd writings in the Standard Text, too: It has preserved the passive voice of *gā’ā* (جالا) “to come” in a way which is
perfectly in the line of the previous examples:

\( 
\text{جَيَّاَف} \) in StT written as \( 
\text{جَيَّاَف} \) (39:69; 89:23). The circle upon the Alif means that the Alif has to be disregarded for pronunciation, as if only \( 
\text{جَيَّاَف} \) was written. – In the next example of

\( 
\text{جَيَاَنَشُكُم} \) (59) \( 
\text{جَيَاَنَشُكُم} \) instead of StT \( 
\text{جَيَاَنَشُكُم} \) (43:24)

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

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

\( 
\text{لِسَيَّاَي} \), 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 Yā’ was added as a ِـٰٓسَي mater lectionis – we come to the conclusion that the primordial vowel involved was a short one, expressed by an Alif alone. The Arabic script would have to be interpreted as َِـٰٓسَي. Only after the Alif had lost its quality as a glottal stop and became associated with a long /aː/, the addition of a Yā’ was necessary. The pronunciation of the first word was certainly /su?ila/, whereas the other words were probably pronounced with a short /i/ as /si?al/, /d?i?al/ and /j?i?al/.

2.4 Yā’ 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 َِـٰٓسَي which combines the short vowel َِـٰٓسَي with the long vowel َِـٰٓسَي 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 َِـٰٓسَي vocalisation was not disambiguated by the insertion of a daggar Alif or an Alif into the text, but of a Yā’ instead. I propose to see this phenomenon not as a singular case for the name of
Abraham, but in the context of the Insalah in general, because of a few similar examples.

Ibra'hiyim (‘Ibrāḥīm) is written thus 54 times in the Standard Text, except in the second Surah where the name is always written without a Yā‘ as Ḥā‘em, which only allows for a reading ‘Abrahām – completely in line with the Hebrew / Syriac name. However, in order to ensure the uniform pronunciation of ‘Ibra’hiyim, a superscript Yā‘ is inserted, only in this Surah throughout: إِبْرَاهَٰم. 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 ابراهيم in 2:140, and if we look at the other Surahs where the Standard Text has ابراهيم throughout, we see the writing ابراهيم 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 ابراهيم or all other Surahs became ابراهيم. In his Untersuchungen Diem proposes that ابراهيم was used by the Arabs as a historical Aramaic writing, whereas the writing with a Yā‘ represents the actual pronunciation of the name by the Arabs. This idea does not contradict the following argument of an influence of the Insalah on the orthography.

In view of the fact that it is doubtful whether ابراهيم is a pre-Islamic name, and that it has only been preserved in early Islamic inscriptions we propose to see this orthography as the representation of an extreme “Insalah” in early Arabic pronunciation which tended to be written by the letter Yā‘ rather than be “Alif” which was not expressed in script anyhow. The original pronunciation of the name was certainly ابراهيم ‘Abrahām.

Only an Insalah pronunciation in Arabic of a long /a:/ in the other Semitic languages

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5 For the question of Qur’ānic orthography and the Insalah see Bergsträsser/Pretzl in GdQ III p. 37 fn. 3.
7 Horovitz: Koranische Untersuchungen 86 f.
8 Muḥammad Abū ‘I-Faraj al-Ishsh: Kitābāt ’arabiyyah ghayr manshirah fi Jabal Usays. In: al-Abhāt (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. ‘Abd al-Malik, 10/21 and 36/55. – In all inscriptions the name is written ابراهيم.
could lead to the new orthography with a Yā’ 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 Qur’an 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 Yā’ is marked additionally by an arch <ēy>: ʼibraḥēym = ʼibrāḥēm.

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

bi_layēyāmi (bi-‘ayyēmi), only once in StT written as بَلَىَّيِمَيِّ (68) (14:5), while the usual orthography has أَيْمَيَّ (3:24) or أَيْمَيَّا (3:140). In the early manuscript C both words are written defectively as آيَمَيَّ and آيَمَيَّ.

bi_leyyādi” (bi-‘ayyēdi”), in StT vocalised differently as بَلَيَّيْدِي (69) بَلَيِّدِي, in StT vocalised differently as بَلَيَّيْدِي (51:47). - Here, it is likely that the orthography has a different plural in mind which would match perfectly with the (existing) secondary plural آيَمَيَّ.

Although there is no longer any trace of it in the Standard Text, the old manuscripts have preserved almost totally the orthography of ʼayā’u (sg.) or ʼāyā’u (pl.) written with two Yā’s instead of one. We propose to interpret the conventional word يِمَيَّ as أَيْمَيَّا, the regular plural would then be أَيْمَيَّات, its modern vocalisation in the Standard Text being أَيَّمَيَّة.

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

ٍيَّاه (70) ُّيَّاه (‘yāh), as in 3:49, 20:47 (ms. A), 3:50 (ms. A), 7:106 (ms. J), 13:38 (mss. CDF). – Theoretically, the reading أَيَّهِ (‘yāh) is also possible, but in that case we would rather expect a writing with one Yā’ only, أَيْمَيَّ, like in the Standard Text today.

The plural in the manuscripts is generally أَيَّات or اِيَّات, or أَيَّاتي or اِيَّاتي, which I should interpret, in the light of the singular, as أَيَّات or اِيَّاتي, in the more conventional transcription ʼēyāṭi”, ʼēyāṭihi, ʼēyāṭī, ʼēyāṭīnā.
(71) رجبيل (72:6) occurs in manuscript D,

(72) طيب (72) instead of طاب in the StT (4:3) occurs in ms. A; for this cf. Dānī: Muqni’ p. 71.

A frequent variant without parallels in the Standard Text is


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 إلى or إلى or ، or any other Yā’-Alif like in المقصود or الهوى or موسي or التصريح (e.g. in the riwāyah of Warsh ‘an Nāfi’).

3 The Alif

3.4 Ortho-epic variants of the Alif

3.4.2 Plene writing of a Fāṭḥah before a Ḥamzah in the Standard Text

Among the rules for recitation of the Qur’ān 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 Fāṭḥah are the verses which start with “I swear .../ lā ‘uqsimu / la َلَا إِعْسَمُ / لا أُقِيمُ ...” (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 “لā”, and even Arne Ambros in his Dictionary (p. 329) qualifyes the لā as a “particle of unc(ertain) function before ‘uqsimu “I swear””. In my view the لā is simply the plene writing of the assertive particle لَا-. It is amazing that none of the manuscripts consulted shows a variant like لَا أُقِيمُ , 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 Qur‘ān, viz.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surah: Verse</th>
<th>Standard Text</th>
<th>= rasm like Standard Text</th>
<th>variant writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haṣṣ `an ‘Āṣīm</td>
<td>in the old manuscripts</td>
<td>(Arabic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:16</td>
<td>لا أذرنكم</td>
<td>= CFGK</td>
<td>لاذركم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:21</td>
<td>لا أذبحنها</td>
<td>= K</td>
<td>لاذبحنها</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surah: Verse</th>
<th>Standard Text</th>
<th>= rasm like Standard Text</th>
<th>variant writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لا ولامة</td>
<td>= K</td>
<td>لا ولامة</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Qur‘ān editions other than the Standard Text from Cairo/Madīnah, apart from the lā `uqsimu verses mentioned above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surah: Verse</th>
<th>Standard Text</th>
<th>= rasm like Standard Text</th>
<th>variant writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haṣṣ `an ‘Āṣīm</td>
<td>in the old manuscripts</td>
<td>(Arabic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3:158        | لاٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍٍِّ_ "Dānî: Muqni‘ 18"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Variant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:119</td>
<td>لاَمَرُوهُم</td>
<td>CK</td>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>لاَمَرُوهُم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:119</td>
<td>لاَمَرُوهُم</td>
<td>CK</td>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>لاَمَرُوهُم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:12</td>
<td>لاَدْخِلْنَّهُمْ</td>
<td>GK</td>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>لاَدْخِلْنَّهُمْ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:27</td>
<td>لاَقُلْنَاكَ</td>
<td>GHK</td>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>لاَقُلْنَاكَ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:47</td>
<td>لاَوْضَعُوا</td>
<td>FK</td>
<td>5, 9-13, 15-17</td>
<td>لاَوْضَعُوا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:87</td>
<td>لاَاتَّلَّتْ</td>
<td>FK</td>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>لاَاتَّلَّتْ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:7</td>
<td>لاَزَايدَنَّكُمْ</td>
<td>CFK</td>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>لاَزَايدَنَّكُمْ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:71</td>
<td>لاَوُصِّبْنَكُمْ</td>
<td>FHK</td>
<td>5, 9-19</td>
<td>لاَوُصِّبْنَكُمْ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:49</td>
<td>لاَوُصِّبْنَكُمْ</td>
<td>GK</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;, 5, 9-19</td>
<td>لاَوُصِّبْنَكُمْ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28:38</td>
<td>لاَلَّهَ</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>لاَلَّهَ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37:68</td>
<td>لاَلِّيَنَجِيمٍ</td>
<td>AGK</td>
<td>5, 9-13, 15-19</td>
<td>لاَلِّيَنَجِيمٍ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59:13</td>
<td>لاَأَنْتُمْ</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>7-13, 15-19</td>
<td>لاَأَنْتُمْ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>10</sup> Erroneously Jeffery/Mendelsohn: The Orthography ..., p. 190 wrote: “... لاَاتَّلَّتْ is mistakenly written لاَاتَّلَّتْ. Doubtless a scribal error.”

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Wāw erased later.

<sup>13</sup> The second Alif has been deleted, however, the space left is still visible now.

<sup>14</sup> The second Alif has been deleted, however, the space left is still visible now.

<sup>15</sup> 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) [Hijāzī style]
D = Şan‘ā‘, DAM 01-28.1 [Hijāzī style]
E1 = Birmingham, Mingana Coll., Cat.2 = # 1572 [Hijāzī style]
F = London, BL Or. 2165 [Hijāzī style]
G = St. Petersburg, E 20 [Hijāzī style]
H = Şan‘ā‘, DAM 01-29.1 [Hijāzī style]
J = Şan‘ā‘, DAM 01-25.1 [Hijāzī style]
K = Topkapı “Muṣḥaf ‘Uthmān” [Kūfī style]

5.2 Recently printed Qur’ān 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 Ma‘rifah | 2004 |
| 6 = 40- Ar 13.1 Idara | 2004 |

Qālūn < Nāfi‘

| 7 = 2- Ar 15.1 Lībyā | 1983 |
| 8 = 2- Ar 15.2 Ma‘rifah | 1427 AH |

Warsh < Nāfi‘

| 9 = 3- Ar 11.1 Maghribī | ca 2000 |
| 10 = 3- Ar 15.1 Maghribī | 1964 |
| 11 = 3- Ar 15.2 Ma‘rifah | 1425 AH |

al-Bazzī / Qunbul < Ibn Kathīr

| 12 = 5- Ar 15.1 Alqeraat (al-Bazzī) | 2008 |
5.3 Other Publications

13 = 7- Ar 15.1 Alqeraat (Qunbul) 2008

al-Dūrī < Abū ‘Amr

14 = 9- Ar 15.1 Ma’rifah 1420 AH

Hafṣ < ʿĀsim

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

Khalaf < Ḥamzah

17 = 18- Ar 15.1 Ma’rifah 2008

Ottoman

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