

Was it *sūrat al-baqārah*?

Evidence for Antepenultimate Stress in the Quranic Consonantal Text and its Relevance for صلوه Type Nouns*

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Summary: This article revisits the problem of the orthography of III-w nouns belonging to the CaCaCat pattern in the Qur’anic Consonantal Text. The third radical of these nouns is spelled with a *waw* in the unbound state, but with an *alif* when followed by a pronominal clitic. Scholars have offered a variety of solutions to account for this anomaly, ranging from the influence of Aramaic to Arabic-internal sound changes, but none has so far been entirely satisfactory. In this paper, we integrate the understanding of this spelling into the broader issue of the collapse of triphthongs in Arabic, concluding that the collapse of the triphthong *awa*, and the quality of the ensuing monophthong, was dependent upon the position of the accent.

1 Previous Views

It has long been recognized that the Arabic words *ṣalāh* ‘prayer’ and *zakāh* ‘alms’ were loans from Aramaic (e.g., JEFFERY 1938; KERR 2012), and it has even been suggested that their Aramaic pronunciation underlies the spellings of these words in the Qur’anic Consonantal Text (QCT: *ṣlwh* (passim), cf. Syriac *ṣlwt*, and *zkwh* (passim), Syriac *zkw*’ (SPITALER 1960). But, as RABIN (1951, pp. 105–106) already pointed out, such spellings extend to a number of Arabic words as well, where the influence of Syriac cannot be invoked:¹

* This article arose out of a series of conversations about the nature of the Qur’anic Consonantal Text (QCT) with my friend and colleague Dr. MARIJN VAN PUTTEN. He brought to my attention this problem during his work on the reflexes of the Proto-Semitic triphthongs in the QCT, and the following pages are a solution I offered to a small part of the broader dilemma of triphthongs. I thank him for his assistance in looking up variant spellings, critical remarks on a draft of this paper, and above all his friendship. I owe thanks as well to Dr. SEAN ANTHONY, Dr. CHARLES HÄBERL, Dr. JULIEN DUFOUR, and Dr. BENJAMIN SUCHARD for their helpful remarks on an earlier draft of this paper through participating in an Academia.edu session. I also thank Dr. ALESSIA PRIOLETTA for reading and directing my attention to some peculiarities in the South Arabian inscriptions. All mistakes are my own.

¹ SPITALER (1960), followed by DIEM (1979), argues that the Aramaic spellings of the loanwords *ṣalāh* and *zakāh* influenced the practice of writing *ā(h)* with *w*, and this spread by ‘graphische Analogie’ to native Arabic words. This line of reasoning must be rejected in light of the pre-Islamic Arabic evidence which shows not only that the *w* here is rather early and

QCT	Translit.	Classical Arabic pronunciation (pause)	Translation
حويه ² passim	<i>ḥywh</i>	<i>ḥayāh</i>	‘life’
نحوه Q 40:41/44	<i>ngwh</i>	<i>naḡāh</i>	‘salvation’
عدوه Q 6:52; 18:28	<i>ḡdwh</i>	<i>ḡadāh</i>	‘tomorrow’
موه Q 53:20	<i>mnwh</i>	<i>manāh</i>	‘Manāt’, divine name
مسكوه ³ Q 24:35	<i>mškwh</i>	<i>miškāh</i>	‘niche’

RABIN (1951, p. 107) instead argued that the *w* here reflects a sound change of **ā* to *ō*, cf. the Canaanite Shift.⁴ The spellings of Nabataean words and names where **ā* is written with *w* suggested to him that the rounding of **ā* was a phenomenon localized in the Ḥiḡāz.⁵ In further support of this hypothesis, he summons evidence from ‘Thamudic’ *mnwt* and Safaitic *slwm*, but neither of these can be used in support of such a change, as both writing systems are strictly consonantal.⁶

While RABIN concludes that *slwh*, *zkwh*, and *ḥywh* are loanwords from Aramaic, he points out that it is remarkable that the Aramaic endings *ūtā* and *ōtā* were not represented by *ūt*, which is the normal way Arabic borrows them (*malakūt* < *malkūtā*), but by *āb*. Based on this, he concludes that these words were completely Arabicized, and suggests the existence of an unattested colo-

occurs in contexts where orthographic conventions and Aramaic influence cannot be argued, e. g. Safaitic *ngwt* ‘rescue’ (AL-JALLAD 2015, p. 331) = QCT *ngwh*. This spelling is especially significant because the word for prayer was loaned into Safaitic as *slt*, without the *w*. This indicates that the direction of influence was the opposite of the one proposed by SPITALER!

² This word has previously been considered a loan from Aramaic because of its spelling, but I hope to demonstrate in this paper that such spellings cannot be used to argue for Aramaic extraction. Moreover, the word for ‘life’ is attested in Safaitic as *ḥywt* (ISB 14), where we cannot reasonably argue for an Aramaic origin.

³ This word is of Ethiopic origin and is discussed in section 3.2.

⁴ On this shift, see HUEHNERGARD 2013.

⁵ On these spellings, see DIEM (1979, § 18). HEALEY (1993, pp. 60–61) believes that such forms point towards the influence of the Arabic substrate, which may very well be the case. The fact that these all occur mainly in personal names makes it hard to identify a conditioning environment. In any case, it is clear that if these *w*-spellings of /*ā*/ were reflective of an Arabic colloquial, this language would not have been ancestral to that of the QCT as *fa‘lān* nouns are never spelled with *w*, while they are often spelled as such in the Nabataean material, e. g. *dnwn* /‘adnōn/ < *‘adnānu; *ptmwn* /paṭmōn/ < *paṭmānu, (cf. note 1).

⁶ The form *slwm* does not in fact occur in Safaitic. Thamudic *mnwt* must reflect /manawat/, as the form *mnt* is given as the equivalent of the Nabataean *mnwtw* in JSNab 17. This means that whatever vowel was represented by *w* in Nabataean had no orthographic representation in Thamudic D. Also, in Dadanitic, a script that does not indicate internal vowels, the name is spelled *mnwt*, so JSLih 264 and 319 *hn²mnwt* /hāni²-manawat/.

nial dialect of Aramaic in the Ḥigāz that preserved the *status absolutus* form, *ū*, which gave rise to forms such as *zakū* and *ṣalō* (1951, p. 109). These, on account of their resemblance to “native” Ḥigāzī pronunciations of words like *nagō(h)* (CAr *nağāh*), were Arabicized according to this noun pattern.

Let us discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of RABIN’s proposal. First, I think RABIN is right in suggesting that *šlwh* and *zkwh* represent Arabicized forms of words that are ultimately Aramaic. Arguments based on orthographic analogy and metagrammatical thinking, however, are wholly unconvincing and do not take into account the pre-Islamic evidence, as discussed in note 1. These words were also loaned from Aramaic into Late Sabaic as *slt* and *zkt*,⁷ which better reflect the original Aramaic pronunciation with a long vowel in the (pen)ultimate syllable: *šlōtā* and *zkūta*, respectively. In Safaitic, Aramaic *šlōtā* is attested twice, both times written *slt*.⁸ In these cases, we can argue that the Aramaic form was taken over faithfully. If the QCT reflected the same type of unaltered borrowing, then we should expect the spelling *šlwt* and *zkw*t in all positions. The QCT spelling *wh*, on the other hand, suggests that these nouns were re-worked into the etymological pattern /CaCaWatu/, which yields spellings of this type in native words.⁹ In contrast, this did not happen in Safaitic or Sabaic, as triphthongs do not generally monophthongize in either language.

Now for the weaknesses: RABIN does not argue for a triphthong in these positions, but rather for an /ā/ that shifted to /ō/, in line with the sound change posited for the Arabic substrate of the southern Nabataean inscriptions. He does not, however, explain what conditions this shift. As will be argued in §4, it is clear that the QCT does not experience this shift in the same categories of words as in Nabataean, suggesting that, if such a change operated in the QCT, it was unrelated to the Nabataean sound change. As RABIN articulates it, the *w* /ō/ realization of *ā in the QCT is an ad-hoc

⁷ See BEESTON (1994) on these words in Sabaic. Note that my colleague Dr. ALESSIA PRIOLETTA informs me that ~~Note that~~ *slt* might be attested once as *šlwt* in RES 4699 (cited in BEESTON 1994 as a “Had[ramitic] graffito”, but being in fact in Sabaic). This reading was given by J. RYCKMANS and maintained by PIRENNE and DASI. However it cannot be confirmed from the tracings and, in view of the consistent spelling *slt*, PRIOLETTA states that it should probably be rejected.

⁸ Both of these attestations are unpublished, the first from the collection of inscriptions to be edited in the Leiden Ph.D. thesis of CHIARA DELLA PUPPA and the second in a collection of inscriptions to be published by Prof. H. HAYAJNEH.

⁹ One can of course suggest that both *zakūtā* and *ṣalōtā* were Arabicized by adding the native /at/ feminine ending, producing *zakūwat* and *ṣalōwat*, but neither of these sequences would collapse in Classical Arabic to *zakātun* or *ṣalātun*, cf. *ḥwā* stays *ḥwā* and the subjunctive *yad’uwa* obtains. Moreover, Sibawayh’s statement that the people of the Ḥigāz pronounce these words with *alif tafḥīm* further indicates that they were monophthongs rather than /awa/, by his time at least.

sound change that only affects * \bar{a} when it is a reflex of an original $a\omega a$ triphthong, and not all the time (for example, * $da'awa$ is spelled d^{c} and not $d^{\text{c}w}$). Moreover, his explanation does not take into account the final h of these nouns. If the w spelling represents an original / \bar{a} / rounded to / \bar{o} /, then we should expect something like * $nag\bar{a}tu > nag\bar{o}tu$, spelled $ngwt$. The sound change * $at > ah$ would not have had an opportunity to operate and so the final t should not have shifted to h .

RABIN discussed another detail that is significant to finding a solution for this problem, namely, that spellings with a w are not used with pronominal suffixes. Instead, in such cases, the vowel is represented by *alif*, so $'l\text{-}slw\bar{h}$ (Q 2: 3) vs. $\text{\textit{š}l't}\text{-}hm$ (Q 6:92).¹⁰ RABIN (1951, p. 106) explained this as the * \bar{a} being pronounced less like / \bar{o} / in these situations, but offers no explanation as to why this might have been the case.¹¹

2 Excursus on III-w feminine nouns

Before moving on to a solution, it may be worth emphasizing that nouns of the $\text{\textit{ص}لو\textit{ه}}$ type originally contained a triphthong. CH. ROBIN suggested that y and w were both used to write / \bar{a} / in any position, basically in free variation (2001, p. 573). According to this reasoning, III-w/y verbs and nouns did not contain an actual consonant but rather a long vowel, e.g. Sabaic $\text{\textit{t}w}$ 'he came' would signify / $\text{\textit{t}a}\bar{a}$ /. If one only takes into account the pronunciation of Classical Arabic, this seems like a reasonable inference. But the comparative evidence indicates that verbs of this class in fact terminated in a triphthong that was only lost at a later point in the various languages.¹² Their presence in purely consonantal scripts like Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Safaitic leave little doubt that the triphthong obtained in the earliest attested stages

¹⁰ I thank Dr. SEAN ANTHONY (p. c. through an Academia.edu session) for pointing out to me that $\text{\textit{š}l't}\text{-}hm$ appears sometimes in early manuscripts. This spelling is phonetically equivalent to $\text{\textit{š}l'}\text{\textit{t}}\text{-}hm$, reflecting a difference in the choice to represent the long / \bar{a} / or not. It remains significant that $\text{\textit{š}lw\textit{t}}$ forms do not appear in such contexts.

¹¹ DIEM (1979, §51) argues that this allophony points towards the fact that the vowel behind this spelling was / \bar{a} / in all cases, and that scribes simply spelled phonetically in forms with pronominal suffixes. This type of alternation is not witnessed elsewhere in the Qur'ān, for example, the *alif al-wašl* is not absent based on the syntactic position of words bearing it. Such an explanation should therefore be a last resort, as it attributes the solution to an imagined scribal practice for which there is no independent evidence to corroborate.

¹² The reconstruction of III-w/y roots with a triphthong realization rather than a monophthong is clear (SUCHARD, forthcoming), *pace* WENINGER (2011, p. 154). Vocalic realizations can be explained through monophthongization where they occur (HUEHNERGARD/RUBIN 2011, p. 268).

of many Semitic languages. In addition to evidence from the Safaitic inscriptions, the discovery of the Graeco-Arabic inscription A1 (AL-JALLAD and AL-MANASER 2015), where the verb *'tw* ‘he came’ is written *αθαοα* /'atawa/, confirms this to be the case for Old Arabic as well. With regard to nouns belonging to the CaCaWat pattern, we have a clear spelling of *mnwt* in an inscription dedicated to the deity by a Palmyrene in Latin transcription, written as MANAVAT.¹³ This removes any doubt that the original pronunciation of this word contained a triphthong. Thus, we have no reason to assume the existence of an *original* long vowel—either *ā* or *ō*—in CaCaCat patterns of III-w roots.

3 A solution: where does the stress fall?

The foregone discussion shows that III-w nouns terminating in *wh* have yet to be explained in a linguistically satisfying manner. Let us now clarify a few facts about the fate of the triphthong **awa* in the Qurʾān.¹⁴ What is clear is that III-w verbs collapse to a monophthong represented by *alif*, so *d^c*, most likely /daʿā/ from original **daʿawa*. This change cannot immediately explain the spellings of words like *ngwh*, if we assume it descends from an earlier **nagawatu*, as such a sequence would have collapsed to *nagātu*. We are then forced to posit, like RABIN, an ad-hoc sound change of *ā* > *ō* to produce the Qurʾanic spelling, but even this leaves us with an unexplained shift of *t* to *h* following a long vowel. The collapse of the triphthong *awa* to *ā* would, however, explain the form with a pronominal suffix, *slʿtk*. The second issue is that the collapse of the triphthong in the nominal form has to take place *after* shift of *at* to *ah*, implying that it post-dates the loss of final short vowels. Thus, we must seek a rule to explain why the outcome of **awa* in the unbound noun is different from the bound noun and the verb, but without losing final short vowels in the verb while at the same time requiring them to be absent in the noun:

¹³ This inscription is CIL III, 7954. NÖLDEKE (1887, p. 709 and n. 2) suggested the vocalization *manawatu* for the Nabataean realization of this name; the idea that Nabataean *mnwtw*, in *ʿbdmnnwtw*, must reflect a plural *manawāt* has been suggested (CASHEL 1926, p. 24), but this must be rejected as the same word occurs in the Thamudic D text (JSTham 1) accompanying JSNab 17, where it is spelled *mnt*. This indicates that the Nabataean *w* represented a vowel, likely *ō*, rather than a consonant, which would have been noted in Thamudic D orthography (DIEM 1979, §19). The vocalization of the Nabataean is therefore /manōto/, the length of the final vowel however is undetermined. For an excellent discussion of this name and its various spellings, see HEALEY (2001, pp. 132–137).

¹⁴ A full treatment of the triphthongs in the QCT will appear in VAN PUTTEN (forthcoming).

<i>da'awa</i>	> <i>da'ā</i>	<i>d^o</i>
<i>nagawatuka</i>	> <i>nagātuka</i>	<i>ng'tk</i>
<i>nagawatu</i>	> <i>nagawah</i> > <i>nagōh</i> (?)	<i>ngwh</i>

3.1 Accent in the QCT

The position of the accent in the QCT is not known and the Classical Arabic grammarians did not discuss this issue. There is no reason to assume that the accent conventionally assigned to the pronunciation of Classical Arabic—on the first heavy non-word final syllable or on the first syllable of the word if no heavy syllable is present—held true for the QCT. A variety of accent patterns are employed in the modern Arabic dialects, and the antiquity of these has not yet been established.¹⁵ In many of the modern dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, nouns of the CaCaCat type are stressed on the etymological antepenultimate syllable (the penultimate in synchronic terms). Thus we have the following examples and reconstruction of the stress, following JASTROW (FISCHER/JASTROW 1980, p. 109):

<i>rguba</i>	< <i>raqāba</i>	< <i>raqābatu</i>	'neck'
<i>šbika</i>	< <i>šabāka</i>	< <i>šabākatu</i>	'web'

If we posit a similar antepenultimate stress in the QCT, we get the following distribution:

<i>dá'awa</i>	> <i>dá'ā</i>	<i>d^o</i>
<i>nagawátuka</i>	> <i>nagātuka</i>	<i>ng'tk</i>
<i>nagáwatu</i>	> <i>nagawah</i> > <i>nagōh</i> (?)	<i>ngwh</i>

Before making a generalization, it should be stressed that it is unclear how forms with pronominal suffixes were vocalized. If the stress situation of Akkadian and Classical Arabic was original, then it is possible that forms with pronominal suffixes preserved an older situation. Thus, *nagawatuka* would have been realized as *nágawatuka*, in contrast to unbound *nagáwatu*, and then *nagātuka*, with the expected collapse of unstressed *awa* to /ā/. On the other hand, if we invoke a consistent antepenultimate stress rule, then one would have to argue that both unstressed *awa* and *awá* collapse to /ā/, while stressed *áwa* goes to /ō/. The latter scenario is favored as it allows us to explain the spelling of the Ethiopic loanword *miškāh* (see §3.2).

Rules explaining the collapse of *awa* triphthong:

- Stressed *w*-triphthong shifts to *ō*: *áwa* > *ō*
- Unstressed (or stressed on second mora) *w*-triphthong shifts to *ā*: *awa/awá* > *ā*

¹⁵ For an excellent overview of stress in Arabic, see KAGER 2009.

The collapse of *awa/awá* and *áwa* did not occur at the same time. Instead, in order to generate the sound change of *at* to *ah*, we must argue that *áwa* collapsed after the loss of final short vowels. But in order to generate *awa* to *ā* in *da'awa*, a final short vowel must have been present. Thus, we can posit the following relative chronological order:¹⁶

1. *awa* and/or *awá* > *ā* : *dá'awa* > *dá'ā*; *nagawátuka* > *nagātuka*
2. loss of final short vowels : *nagáwatu* > *nagáwat*
3. shift of *at* to *ah* : *nagáwat* > *nagáwah*
4. *áwa* to *ō* : *nagawah* > *nagōh*

3.2 مرصا and مسكوه

The penultimate stress rule allows us to explain the spelling of the Ethiopic loan *miškāh* ‘niche’ (JEFFREY 1938, p. 266), spelled in the QCT as *mškw* مسكوه (Q 24:35). Like *šlw* and *zkw*, this word was reworked into an Arabic nominal pattern, producing *miškawatu*, which, if we posit the antepenultimate stress, would have been accented as *miškáwatu* rather than *miškawatu*. The former produces the expected *miškōh* through the rules described above. As for *مرصا mardāt*, which must derive from an earlier *mardawatu*, it only occurs in construct. This point is significant as construct forms were proclitic and have no stress of their own, as is made clear in Hebrew, and also in Arabic and Aramaic as the *t* feminine ending is preserved in construct while lost in the unbound state. In this case, the phrase *mardawatu-llāhi* would have produced an unstressed *awa*, resulting in *ā*, as explained by the rules above, which was naturally spelled with the *alif*.

4 Are Nabataean spellings of /ā/ with *w* related to the QCT?

The following Arabic words are spelled with *w* in the Nabataean inscriptions:

Nabataean spelling	Vocalization (?)	Classical Arabic equivalent
‘ <i>dnwn</i>	‘adnōn	‘adnān
‘ <i>bd’ dnwn</i>	‘abd-‘adnōn	‘abd-‘adnān
‘ <i>rpwn</i>	‘erpōn	‘irfān
‘ <i>bwdw</i>	‘abbōdo	‘abbād

¹⁶ As simply a typological parallel, different historical stress patterns in Hebrew produce different vocalizations, so מַלְאָה *mələ’ā* (Isaiah 22:2 < *Proto-Northwest Semitic *malí’at*?) vs. מַלְאָה *māl’ā* (Gen. 6:13; < Proto-Northwest Semitic **mali’át*). I thank Dr. CHARLES HÄBERL for this example.

Nabataean spelling	Vocalization (?)	Classical Arabic equivalent
<i>snwn</i>	senōn	sinān
<i>mnwtw</i>	manōto	manāt
<i>'kwr</i>	'akkōr	'akkār
<i>pṭmwn</i>	paṭmōn	faṭmān
<i>rqwš</i>	raqōš	raqāšī
<i>tmwn</i>	ṭamōn	ṭamāni

The linguistic roots of these words are unclear, but suffice it to say that *none* of the Nabataean names in Greek transcription display such a shift (AL-JALLAD 2017). Moreover, in the 'En 'Avdat inscription, /ā/ is consistently omitted or written with *alif* in final position, indicating that it had not experienced such a change.¹⁷ As it would seem, the shift of /ā/ to /ō/ must have been localized to the southern periphery of the Nabataean realm. Now, is this shift related to the *w* spellings in the Qur'an? The spelling of *mnwtw* resembles Qur'anic *mnwh*, but, in fact, the two are not necessarily related. Unlike the QCT, *w* spellings in Nabataean are not restricted to III-w feminine nouns, but apply to what would appear to be stressed /ā/ in general. If an original *manawato* collapsed to *manāto*, then this ā could have shifted to ō under the scope a more general sound rule, namely, ā > ō. This view is supported by the spelling of Manāt as *mntw* in the Nabataean graffito JS I, 246: no. 184, which suggests first the collapse of *awa* to ā, as this vowel is not represented orthographically in word-internal position.

In an Aramaic inscription from Taymā', **manawatu* is spelled *mnwh*,¹⁸ which matches the QCT and suggests the same order of rules, namely, **at* to *ah* before the collapse of the triphthong. Because all examples of Manāt terminate in a vowel in Nabataean proper, e. g. *mn(w)tw* and *mnwty* (gen.), this is example may be unrelated to the Nabataean situation. On the other hand, if this Aramaic form represents the original pronunciation of the divine name, which was then taken over by the Nabataeans, the pronunciation /manōh/ may stand behind spellings like *mnwtw* and *mnwty*, with the restoration of the *t* on account of the presence of a vocalic suffix. This solution, however, would not explain the spelling *mnt* mentioned above.

In conclusion, the *w* spellings of **ā* in Nabataean do not seem related to *صلوه* type nouns in the Qur'an as their distributions are different. The single

¹⁷ For the most recent discussion of this text, see MICHAEL MACDONALD's contribution to FIEMA et al. 2015.

¹⁸ See HEALEY (2001, p. 134) for a discussion; for the edition of the text, see BEYER/LIVINGSTONE 1987.

overlapping word is Nabataean *mnwtw/y* and QCT *mnwh*, but this similarity is likely a coincidental outcome of two different sets of sound changes.

5 Conclusions

The spellings of the loanwords *šlwh* and *zkwh* follow the native pattern of III-w nouns in the QCT. This suggests that they were re-worked into the noun pattern CaCaWatu. To explain this spelling and its allomorph with an *alif* before pronominal suffixes, I have argued that, like many modern dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, these nouns have antepenultimate stress, and the different realizations of the triphthong *awa* can be predicted from this starting point. While this explanation helps us explain the QCT spellings in a linguistically consistent way, it does suggest that the original pronunciation of the QCT is not reflected in any extant reading tradition, as none make a distinction between the realization of the reflex of the triphthong in *šlwh* compared to *šl't-k*.

Sigla

CIL III	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum, Inscriptiones Asiae, provinciarum Europae Graecarum, Illyrici Latinae</i> (ed. TH. MOMMSEN) 1873.
ISB	Safaitic inscriptions in OXToby 1968.
JSLih	Dadanitic inscriptions in JAUSSEN/SAVIGNAC: <i>Mission archéologique en Arabie</i> . Paris 1909–1922.
JSNab	Nabataean inscriptions in JAUSSEN/SAVIGNAC 1909–1922.
RES	Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique I–V (ed. J.-B. CHABOT <i>et al.</i>), 1900–1919.

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