

# No Battle of “Badr”

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*The following article was first published in German as “Keine Schlacht von ‘Badr’: Zu Syrischen Buchstaben in Frühen Koranmanuskripten,” in Markus Gross and Karl-Heinz Ohlig, eds., Vom Koran zum Islam, Inârah: Schriften zur frühen Islamgeschichte und zum Koran, vol. 4 (Berlin, 2009), pp. 642–76. This English version will appear both in the present anthology and in the English translation of the original collection of essays.*

## 1. Introductory remarks

Our first monograph, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* [*The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*], in which our procedure was introduced,<sup>1</sup> listed the main methodological results of an initial, tentative investigation of the Qur’anic text. We observed then that, in the case of individual words, a plausible reading could be deciphered only by assuming an underlying Syriac script (the so-called *Garshuni/Karshuni* script),<sup>2</sup> yet this first suspicion gradually became a certainty only when in-depth philological analysis had made evident a whole series of such erroneous transcriptions. Our initial findings in this regard were set forth in the essay, “Relikte syro-aramäischer Buchstaben in frühen Korankodizes im *ḥiğāzī-* und *kūfī-*Duktus” [“Remains of Syro-Aramaic letters in early Koran codices in *ḥiğāzī-* and *kūfī* script”] in the anthology *Der frühe Islam*<sup>3</sup> [*Early Islam*]. We will now note further examples, along with other erroneous readings in the canonical version of the Qur’an.

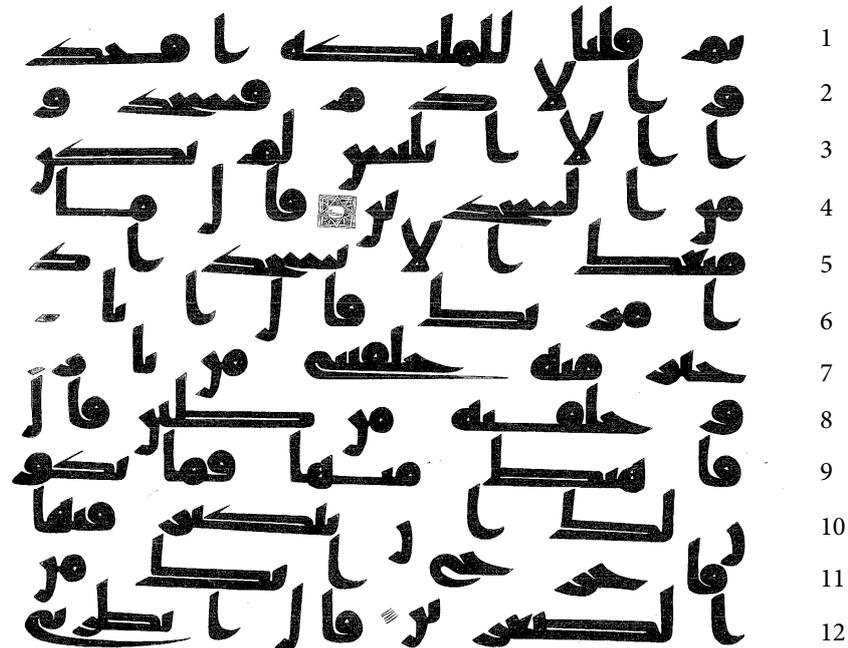
## 2. Proof of a Syriac letter in the *kūfī-*codex of Samarqand

For many critics who consider such philological results to be a mere hypothesis, because they cannot pass judgment on it, this thesis would not be proved unless evidence of a Qur’an manuscript composed in Syriac (*Garshuni*) script could be produced. There is little or no chance of fulfilling this expectation, however, since Ṭabarī (died 923) reports in the introduction to his commentary on the Qur’an that the third Caliph ‘Uṭmān/Osman (644–656), who had the version of the Qur’an which today is considered canonical copied from “folios” [Arabic: *ṣuḥuf*] that were allegedly in the possession of the Prophet’s widow Ḥafṣa, ordered after her death that these “folios,” as well as all privately owned texts of the Qur’an, be *destroyed* or *burnt*, and allowed from then on

only one reading (to the exclusion of the six others), so as to preserve the unity of the young Islamic faith community. Hence there is no trace left of the six variant versions.<sup>4</sup> It is thought, however, that not everyone complied with this order. To this fact we owe the tradition of a large Qur'ānic corpus of writings which discuss variant readings [*qirā'āt*]. It includes the Qur'ān version of Ubai ibn Ka'b, which attests, for example, to a variant Arabic name for Friday: whereas in Surah 62:9 Friday is usually called يوم الجمعة (*yawm al-ġum'a*) or "congregation day," in Ubai we find the expression يوم العروبة الكبرى (*yawm al-'arūba l-kubrā*), "Great Friday = Good Friday," as Good Friday was called in pre-Islamic Christian Arabic.<sup>5</sup>

Certainly this detail alone is not yet proof that the Arabic Qur'ān had been written in Syriac script. But perhaps another detail, a remnant ["*Relikt*"] from the famous *kūfī*-manuscript of Samarqand, can give us more conclusive evidence as to the way in which pre-Arabic Qur'ān was written down.

The following copy is taken from a facsimile, published in 1905, of Samarqand's Qur'ān manuscript.<sup>6</sup>



The preceding illustration is an excerpt from Surah 7:11, starting after *ولقد* (and we have created and also<sup>7</sup> shaped you) with the sentence (according to the Cairo Edition):

ثم قلنا للمليكة اسجدوا لادم فسجدوا

*Ferner [wiederum] sprachen wir zu den Engeln: werft euch vor Adam nieder, und sie fielen nieder.*

After this [again] we spoke to the angels: cast yourselves down before Adam, and they fell down.

In the Cairo Edition the selfsame verb سجد / *sağada* (“to fall down, to cast oneself down”) is repeated. In the Samarqand Manuscript, however, at the underlined first verb اسجدوا / *usğudū* (cast yourselves down) we find another word that could not be identified, either from the script or from the sense. Considered in isolation, the basic drawing or shape[rasm] looks like this:



This word does not agree with the Cairo Edition, a fact that had already been noticed by the pseudonymous Brother Mark.<sup>8</sup> Concerning the second and third letters that he circled in the Samarqand rasm, he remarks:

In line #1 in the “original” of Q7:11 there is a *sad* [=ص / *šād*] whereas there is a *sin* [=س / *sīn*] in the modern versions.

Here the author took 1) the first Syriac letter ܩ / *q* (= Arabic ق / *q*) for an Arabic ص / *šād*, and 2) the following Syriac letter ܥ / *‘ayn* for an Arabic ج / *ğ* (without a point beneath it). The latter character (ج) in fact is distinguished in both *kūfī* and *hiğāzī* script from the Syriac ܥ / *‘ayn* by the fact that the upper stroke leaning to the left (in middle position) extends for almost the same length beneath the line (originally an imitation of the Syriac ܩ / *g*). Compare this with the word on the Samarqand page reprinted above in facsimile, line 2, to the left, the ح in middle position in the rasm فسجدوا (read: *fā-sağadū*) (and they fell down), and also in lines 4 and 5, whereas the initial ح remains over the line, as in line 7: خلقتني (read: *ħalaqtanī*) (you created me), and line 8: خلقتہ (read: *ħalaqtahu*) (you created him). In the latter instance you see that the initial Arabic ح (ğ / ħ / ḥ) is almost no different from the Syriac ܥ / *‘ayn*. Moreover scribes turned the originally unambiguous Syriac ܩ / *g* into a sign for three different phonemes in the Arabic alphabet, which later were further specified by *diacritical* markings (ج / *ğ*, ح / *ḥ*, خ / *ḫ*).

### 3. Deciphering the Samarqand rasm



The middle letter separately:



The preceding explanation truly clarifies the Samarqand riddle. Reading from right to left:

1. The first letter is a Syriac ܩ / *q*; it is easy to see that the Arabic ق / *q* is an imitation of it.
2. The real riddle lay in the following letter, until now not recognized as the Syriac ܥ / *ʿayn*, which in combination with the following *kūfī* ܕ / *d* results in the reading (Syro-Aramaic) ܩܥܕܐ / *qʿad* = (Arabic) قعد / *qaʿada*.

But since this verb in Arabic means “to sit down,” while the following سجد / *sağada* means “to cast oneself down, to fall down,” the early redactors of the Qurʾān could not imagine that God would have commanded the angels “to sit down,” whereas in reality they were supposed to “cast themselves down,” as the Qurʾān, too, attests in four other parallel passages (Surah 2:34; 17:61; 18:50; 20:116). Therefore this (for an Arabic reader) obviously nonsensical “misspelling” was emended simply replacing it with اسجدوا / *usğudū* (cast yourselves down), in keeping with the following verb. This reading is found also in Ṭabari (VIII, 126), which suggests that this emendation had been carried out before him (d. 923).

The Syro-Aramaic spelling ܩܥܕܐ / *qʿad*, however, corresponds—as so often elsewhere in the Qurʾān—to Syro-Aramaic semantics. Thus Mannā (689a/b) interprets Syro-Aramaic ܩܥܕܐ / *qʿad* or Arabic قعد / *qaʿada* = جتا *ğatā* (to prostrate oneself), as ركع / *rakaʿa* (to kneel down). Thus it becomes apparent that the Samarqand reading اقعدوا = (Arabic) اقعدهوا / *iqʿadū* is nothing other than a Syro-Aramaic synonym for the following Arabic verb (which was likewise borrowed from Syro-Aramaic), سجد / *sağada* (to cast oneself down). Explained in this way, the Samarqand variant should be read in Arabic and understood (in Syro-Aramaic fashion) as follows:

ثم قلنا للمليكة اقعدهوا لادم فسجدوا

(*tumma qulnā li-l-malāʾika* [actually: *la-l-malāyke*] *iqʿadū li-Ādam*  
[actually: *la-Ādam*] *fa-sağadū*)

(After this we said to the angels, “Cast yourselves down,” and they prostrated themselves).

Now if this proves *empirically* for the first time that a *Syriac* letter appears in one of the earliest known Qurʾān codices in the *kūfī* script, it would not be surprising if the same *Syriac* letter ܥ / *ʿayn* should be detected in a Qurʾān codex in the *ḥiğāzī* script that is considered to be even older. This proof will be offered in the following section.

#### 4. On the battle of "Badr" (Surah 3:123)

Depending on the Internet search engine, the English-language results for the "battle of Badr" range from around 250,000 to 858,000 hits, although all of them may not pertain to the battle itself. From this, nevertheless, we can see the importance that is attributed to this "battle" even today and to the "historical" victory that is thus connected with the beginning of the Islamic conquests. By way of introduction we cite the following notes on the topic from Wikipedia, the free Internet encyclopedia:

The Battle of Badr (Arabic: غزوة بدر), fought on Saturday, 13 March 624 CE (17 Ramadan, 2 AH in the Islamic calendar) in the Hejaz region of western Arabia (present-day Saudi Arabia), was a key battle in the early days of Islam and a turning point in Muhammad's struggle with his opponents among the Quraish in Mecca. The battle has been passed down in Islamic history as a decisive victory attributable to divine intervention, or by secular sources to the strategic genius of Muhammad. It is one of the few battles *specifically mentioned in the Quran*. Most contemporary knowledge of the battle at Badr comes from *traditional Islamic accounts*, both *hadiths and biographies* of Muhammad, recorded in written form *some time after the battle*. (my emphasis)

We are concerned here, not with the *historicity* of the "Battle of Badr," but rather with the passage from the Qur'ān which is cited by Arabic-Islamic historiography. For this purpose the Qur'ānic context will be investigated hermeneutically with reference to its Syro-Aramaic background.

In order to understand the context, the preceding passages (verses 118-120) must be examined also. To summarize: The faithful are exhorted (118) not to befriend anyone who believes differently, since such people would not be well-disposed to them and would hate them. (119) In speaking with believers they would profess the faith, but behind their backs they would declare their rage against them. So may they die in their rage, for God knows what is concealed in the hearts of men. (120) If good things happen to believers, then the others will begrudge them their good fortune; if bad things befall them, then those who believe differently will rejoice in their misfortune. This mistrust, however, will not be able to harm believers, insofar as they are patient and fear God, for God knows what the envious are up to.

It is evident from the introductory sentence of verse 3:119 that the other persons referred to are the *People of the Book*. For syntactic reasons, among others, they are the ones being considered here. The sentence reads:

هانتهم اولا تحبونهم ولا يحبونكم وتؤمنون بالكتب كله

The substance of this sentence is relatively simple; the translations that we consulted interpret it syntactically as follows:

*Paret* (pages 54 f. [translated from German]):

There, now [*Da ... nun*]: you love them, while they do not love you, and [you] believe [unlike them] in the whole Scripture. (*Da* liebt ihr sie nun, während sie euch nicht lieben, und glaubt (im Gegensatz zu ihnen) an die ganze Schrift.)

*Blachère* (page 92 [translated from French]): 115/119

You are like this [*Vous êtes tels que voici*]: you love [those people] while they do not love you; you believe in Scripture in its entirety.... (*Vous êtes tels que voici* : vous aimez [ces gens] alors qu'ils ne vous aiment pas ; vous croyez à l'Écriture tout entière)

*Bell* (vol. I, p. 56): 115. There ye are! Ye love them but they love not you; ye believe in the Book, all of it....

All three prominent Arabists failed to recognize that this seemingly simple sentence is syntactically a *conditional sentence*, because *classical Arabic* has no such sentence construction. Understood according to Arabic rules of syntax, therefore, they could see in the word هـ / *ha* preceding the personal pronoun انتم / *antum* (you-plural) only a *demonstrative/indicative particle* (*da* / *voici* / there). In Aramaic, however, this Qur'ānic *ha* is just a reduction of the originally *interjectional* Old-Aramaic *conditional particle* ܗܝܢ / *hayn*, which by degrees

- a) was reduced from the diphthong *ay* to the monophthong *hēn*, and then
- b) by dropping the final *nūn* became ܗܝ / *hē*,

of which the Qur'ān has preserved for us only the defective spelling with a simple هـ / *h*, as in the text cited above. We owe the preservation of the unique full spelling with هـ / *hy* (= *hē*) as an *interjection* to the Qur'ān likewise, where this particle occurs in Surah 12:23 as a proclitic (just as the Qur'ān combines the exclamatory particle يا / *yā* with the following word) in the hitherto puzzling word هيت (*hay-ta*), which Ṭabari (XII, 178 ff.), despite various opinions as to its origins (Hauranic, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic), ends up understanding correctly from the context, as do Paret (“Come here”) and Bell (“Come on”), whereas Blachère with his translation “*Me voici à toi*” [“Here I am by/for you”] follows an alternative interpretation given by Ṭabari. In this passage the personal pronoun لك / *la-ka* (literally: to/for you) following هيت (*hay-ta*) and connected with the preposition ل / *la-* should not be understood as an Arabic dative, but rather—as is common in Syro-Aramaic (and modern Arabic dialects)—as a reflexive *dativus ethicus*.<sup>9</sup> The Qur'ānic expression هيت لك (pronounced: *hē! ta la-ka!*) thus faithfully renders the Syro-Aramaic idiomatic phrase ܗܝܬ ܠܟ ( *hē! tā lāk!*) and means literally: “*Hey! Come here!*”

This should refute the conviction that this expression is *genuine Arabic*, as Arthur Jeffrey supposed that he was correctly arguing in his standard work, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān*, while citing other authorities as follows (page 33):

In xii,23, we read that Joseph’s mistress says to him هيت لك. The word occurs only in this passage in the Qur’ān and is a rare expression even outside the Qur’ān, though, as has been pointed out by Barth,<sup>10</sup> there *can be no question* that it is *genuine Arabic*. It was so rare and unusual a word, however, that it was early taken by the exegetes as foreign<sup>11</sup> and explained as Coptic,<sup>12</sup> doubtless on the ground that the Egyptian lady would have spoken to her slave in the Egyptian tongue, and as the only Egyptian language known to the Muslim philologists was Coptic, this rare word was taken to be of Coptic origin.

Now if this originally *interjectional* Aramaic particle ܗܝܢ /hayn > hēn > hē has, in the aforementioned Qur’ānic expression, the meaning of an *exclamation*, as is customary in modern colloquial Arabic (like the English *hey!*), then the *tertiary* form, reduced to the mere letter ه / h in the sentence from Surah 3:119 cited above, has the same conditional meaning as the conjunction ܐܢ /’in (in reality in spoken Arabic the pronunciation is ’ən = if, ), which is considered *Arabic*. For this word, too, is the result of a four-step shift in pronunciation, starting from the Old-Aramaic ܗܝܢ /hayn and proceeding as follows: 1. ܗܝܢ / hayn > 2. hēn > 3. Syro-Aramaic ܗܝܢ /’ēn > 4. (by vowel reduction) New East Aramaic = Arabic ܐܢ /’ən (> *classical Arabic*: ’in).

In order to be able to analyze syntactically the sentence from Surah 3:119 under consideration, we must understand the individual elements in Syro-Aramaic fashion thus:

1. The proclitic ه / h in the Qur’ānic spelling هانتهم should not be read as the Arabic demonstrative/indicative particle hā (there), but rather as the Aramaic conditional particle hē (< hēn / if).
2. The demonstrative pronoun اول should not be read in “*classical Arabic*” fashion as ’ulā’i, but rather in Aramaic fashion (as in many Arabic dialects in the Near East) as ’ōlē (< Syro-Aramaic ܗܘܠܐ /hālēn > West Syriac hōlēn > Syro-Arabic hōlē >’ōlē). This demonstrative pronoun refers not to the subject انتم / antum (you / plural), as the above-cited translators misread it, but rather to the object, which appears as a personal suffix in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural at the end of the verb تحبونهم / tu-ḥibbūna-hum and is to be understood reflexively (literally: “If you-(plural) these [you / plural] love them” = “If you [plural] love these [people]”).

3. If the meaning of the particle هـ / *hē*, as explained above, makes clear that it introduces a *conditional clause*, then consequently it becomes clear that the conjunction وا (before ولا / *wā-lā*), in the following clause is not to be understood as “and” but rather as an introducing particle of the apodosis—as this function is often demonstrated in the Qur’ān.
4. The second conjunction و / *wa*, which introduces the third clause, has in this context an *adversative* or a *concessive* meaning (whereas, while, whereby however, although).

According to this philological examination, the verse excerpt from Surah 3:119 should be read and understood in Syro-Aramaic (and Arabic) fashion as follows:

هانتم اولاً تحبونهم ولا يحبونكم وتؤمنون بالكتب كله

[*hē antum hōlē tu-ḥibbūna-hum, wā-lā yu-ḥibbūna-kum – wā-tūminūn(a) bi-l-kitāb(i) kullih(i)*]

If you (now) love these (people), they, on the other hand (on the contrary), do not love you—even though you believe in the whole Scripture!

A comparable sentence structure is imaginable only in Syro-Aramaic (as well as in modern Arabic dialects of the Near East). In terms of classical Arabic, however, such a syntactical construction is *bewildering*, as the translations of the seasoned Arabists cited above demonstrate.

The same sentence construction occurs in three other passages of the Qur’ān (Surah 3:66; 4:109; 47:38), all of which are categorized as the so-called Surahs of the Medinan period. These, too, should be discussed briefly. In order to understand Surah 3:66 we should take into consideration the preceding and following verses (65 and 67) as follows:

ياهل الكتب لم تحتاجون في ابراهيم وما انزلت التوراة (= اليهودية) والانجيل الا من بعده افلا تعقلون / هانتم هولاء حججتم فيما لكم به علم فلم تحتاجون فيما ليس لكم به علم والله يعلم وانتم لا تعلمون / ما كان ابراهيم يهوديا ولا نصرانيا ولكن كان حنيفا مسلما وما كان من المشركين

The three Qur’ān translators that we have consulted render these three verses as follows:

Paret (p. 49 [translated from German]):

65 (58): You People of the Book! Why do you dispute about Abraham, whereas the Torah and the Gospel were not sent down until after him? Have you then no understanding? 66 (59): You have disputed there about something concerning which you (per se) have knowledge. Why do you dispute now about something concerning which you have no knowledge? God knows all about it, but you don’t. 67 (60): Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was instead a devoted (i.e., to God) Hanīf (*ḥanīfan*)

*musliman*), and not a pagan. [Note 60: Literally: and he was not one of those who associate (other gods with the one God).] (Ihr Leute der Schrift! Warum streitet ihr über Abraham, wo doch die Thora und das Evangelium erst nach ihm herabgesandt worden sind? Habt ihr denn keinen Verstand? 66 (59): Ihr habt da über etwas gestritten, worüber ihr (an sich) Wissen habt. Warum streitet ihr nun über etwas, worüber ihr kein Wissen habt? Gott weiß Bescheid, ihr aber nicht. 67 (60): Abraham war weder Jude noch Christ. Er war vielmehr ein (Gott) ergebener Hanif (*hanifan musliman*), und kein Heide [Anm. 60: W: und er war keiner von denen, die (den einen Gott andere Götter) beigesellen.]

*Blachère* (p. 84 [translated from French]):

58/65 O Holders of the Book, why do you argue about Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were not brought down until after him? Well, what! Will you not reason [be reasonable]?

59/66 Here is what you are: you argue about things concerning which you have knowledge. Why do you argue [also] about things concerning which you have no knowledge? Allah knows, whereas you do not know.

60/67 Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but was hanif and subject (*muslim*) [to Allah]; by no means was he among the Associators.

(O Détenteurs de l'Écriture !, pourquoi argumentez-vous au sujet d'Abraham, alors qu'on n'a fait descendre la Thora et l'Évangile qu'après lui ? Eh quoi ! ne raisonnerez-vous pas ?

59/66 Voici ce que vous êtes : vous argumentez sur ce dont vous avez connaissance. Pourquoi argumentez-vous [*aussi*] sur ce dont vous n'avez pas connaissance ?—Allah sait, alors que, vous, vous ne savez pas.

60/67 Abraham ne fut ni juif ni chrétien, mais fut hanif et soumis (*muslim*) [*à Allah*] ; il ne fut point parmi les Associateurs.)

*Bell* (vol. I, p. 51):

58 O People of the Book, why do ye dispute about Abraham, seeing that the Torah and the Evangel were not sent down till after his time? Have ye no sense?

59. There ye are! Ye have disputed about a thing of which ye have (revealed) knowledge; why then will ye dispute about things of which ye have no knowledge? Allah knoweth, but ye do not know.

60. Abraham was not a Jew, nor was he a Christian, but he was a Hanif, a Moslem, and he was not one of the Polytheists.

Lexical and grammatical explication:

At verse 65:

1. As for the conjecture of the traditional reading تورية (because of incorrect pointing: *Tawrāt*—to be read: يورية / *Yōrayya* /

*Yawriyya*), see the discussion in *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 68 ff.; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 99 ff.; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 101 ff.; English edition, 85 ff.

2. The Qur'ānic spelling افلا is composed of the Syro-Aramaic conjunction اف / *āp̄* (=āf) (then, consequently) and the negative particle لا / *lā* which is the same in Syro-Aramaic and Arabic, so that the compound should be read افلا / *āf-lā*, and not (in Arabic fashion) as 'a-fa-lā.

On verse 66:

The Arabic conjunction *fā* (in فلم / *fa-li-mā*), which introduces the apodosis makes clear that the *h* at the beginning again introduces the conditional sentence: هانتهم هولاء (to be read as: *hē antum hōlē*).

On verse 67:

1. For the meaning of *Hanīf* see the discussion in *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 39 f.; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 65 f.; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 65 ff.; English edition, 55 f.; on the formal difference between the Qur'ānic *hanīf* and the Syro-Aramaic *hanpā*, see *ibid.* [3<sup>rd</sup> German edition], 102, note 134; see also *Zur Morphologie von syro-aramäisch (sātānā = Satan)* and Qur'ānic-Arabic شيطان (*šayṭān*) in Christoph Burgmer, ed., *Streit um den Koran*, 77.
2. In order to interpret the adjective مسلم (until now read: *muslim*) with reference to Abraham, who was actually a *heathen* to begin with and yet not a *polytheist* or *idolater*, the usual interpretation “devoted (to God)” or even “a Muslim” must be revised. For if *hanīf* is a loan-word from Aramaic, then this suggests that the descriptive adjective should likewise be understood in *Aramaic* fashion. Morphologically مسلم / *mslm* corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic مسلم / *mšlm* = *m-šallēmā*. The corresponding Arabic feminine form مسلمة / *mu-sallama* occurs in Surah 2:71 and refers to the cow that Moses required from the Israelites as a sacrifice. In response to the question, what sort of cow it should be, Moses answers finally that it should be مسلمة / *mu-sallama* = “intact, uninjured” and لا شبه فيها = لا شبيهة / *lā šubha fihā* [not as according to the canonical reading: *lā šiyata fihā*], “without blemish, spotless” (concerning the latter conjecture, see the above-mentioned English edition, 232 f.). The reading *mu-sallama* is interpreted correctly in that passage and thus corresponds morphologically and semantically to the Syro-Aramaic participial form مسلم / *m-šallēmā* (sound, intact). Of course there is no comparison between the cow and Abraham, but the term referring to the physical *soundness* of the cow refers in the case of Abraham to *moral integrity*. Just as in the case of the cow the word was not interpreted as *muslima* (“devoted” to God or even “a Muslim woman”), but correctly as

*musallama* (intact), so too the corresponding masculine form, referring to Abraham, should be read *musallam* (upright, honest), and not *muslim*.

This discussion results in the following and partially new understanding of Surah 3:65-67:

65. You People of the Book, why do you dispute about Abraham, since the Torah and the Gospel were not sent down until after him—can't you think, then?

66. If you (now) argue with these (people) about something concerning which you have knowledge, how could you argue about something (literally: how is it that you argue about something) about which you have no knowledge? For God knows, but you don't.

67. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was, rather, an *upright* ("integral," honest) *heathen*, and yet was not an idolater (literally: and he did not belong = but nevertheless did not belong to the idolaters)."

A third example of a conditional clause introduced by the Aramaic conjunction هـ / *hē* (if) occurs in Surah 4:109, where we read:

هانتهم هولاء جدلتم عنهم في الحياة الدنيا فمن يجادل الله عنهم يوم القيمة

(*hē antum hōlē ḡādaltum 'anhum fi l-haywa d-danyā* [the traditional reading is: al-ḥayāt ad- duniyā], *fa-man yuḡādil 'anhum yawm al-qiyaama*)

This sentence, too, is understood syntactically by our Qur'an translators as follows:

*Paret* (78):

109: You there have argued in the life of this world in their defense. But on the day of resurrection, who will argue with God in their defense...?" (*Ihr habt da im diesseitigen Leben zu ihrer Verteidigung gestritten. Aber wer wird am Tag der Auferstehung mit Gott zu ihrer Verteidigung streiten...?*)

*Blachère* (122):

109. Here is what you are: you argue in favor of [these traitors] in this life. Who, then, will argue in their favor on the Day of Resurrection?" (*Voici ce que vous êtes*: vous discutez en faveur de [ces traîtres] en la Vie immédiate. Qui donc discutera en leur faveur, au Jour de la Résurrection)

*Bell* (I, 83):

109. There ye are! Ye have disputed in defence of them in this life, but who will dispute with Allah in their defence on the day of resurrection, ...?"

Philological notes:

1. هانتهم هولا should again be read as *hē antum hōlē*. Here too the demonstrative pronoun هولا / *hōlē* (these) refers not to the subject انتم / *antum* (you pl.), but rather to عنهم / *'anhum*, specifically to “those whom you defend.” Translated into *classical* Arabic, it would have to read: إن أنتم جادلتم عن هؤلاء / *'in 'antum ġādaltum 'an hā'ulā'i* instead of هؤلاء جادلتم عنهم / *hā'ulā'i ġādaltum 'anhum*.
2. The fact that this, too, is a conditional *clause* is shown not only by the verb جدلتم / *ġādaltum*, which in keeping with the laws of Arabic grammar is formally in the perfect tense, although it is to be understood in the present, but also by the conjunction *fa* (in فمن / *fa-man*), which according to those same rules introduces the second clause (apodosis) of such a conditional sentence.
3. In the intermediate/middle-position و / *w* of the Qur'ānic spelling of حيوة the Arabic readers of the Qur'ān saw an indication (albeit an unusual one) of the long vowel *ā*, although the Arabic letter ا / *alif* is otherwise available to stand for that. It is astonishing, though, that the Arabic readers in this case (as also with صلوة / *ṣalwa* [prayer], زكوة / *zakwa* [alms, donation], منوة / *Manwa* [the goddess *Manāt*], ربوا < Syro-Aramaic ربه / *rebbō* > *rebbū* [usurious interest]) took the current *colloquial speech* as their basis, but not in the case of ا / *hōlē*, for which they devised a supposedly *classical* expression *hā'ulā'i*, which however cannot be authenticated anywhere in the Arabic-speaking world.

In Syro-Aramaic, meanwhile, the *status absolutus* (i.e., what Arabic grammar calls the *pausal form*) of هياوت / *ḥayūtā* (life) is هيا / *ḥayū*, from هياوا / *ḥaywā*. The latter form is derived from the pausal form in Imperial Aramaic; it has been preserved in Arabic in words like فتوى / *fatwā* (expert religious opinion), نجوى / *naġwā* (dialogue), بلوى / *balwā* (difficult trial), etc. Parallel to this in Arabic, secondary forms such as فتى / *fatā* (young man, youth) and فناة / *fatāt* (young woman), نجاة / *naġāt* (rescue), بلاء / *balā'* (with the same meaning as بلوى / *balwā* with an invented final *hamza*), etc. arose through vowel reduction, especially with a rising [*steigendem*] diphthong (*wa, ya*). This explains the fact that in each case the secondary *vulgar Arabic* pronunciation *ḥayāt, ṣalāt, zakāt, Manāt, ribā* was transposed onto the aforementioned Qur'ānic-Aramaic spellings. The little or dagger *alif* ا / *ā* added by the later Arabic redactors of the Qur'ān after the و / *w* in each of these words, which misled generations of renowned Arabists and Qur'ān scholars in East and West, is therefore etymologically *wrong*. The hypothesis that in other written traditions, for instance the South Arabian, the *w/u* was used for a long *ā*, cannot be examined here. In any case this hypothesis has nothing to do with the Qur'ānic-

- Aramaic written tradition. Instead, the Qur'ānic spellings just discussed are confirmed by their Aramaic etymology.<sup>13</sup>
4. Following the word *الحياة* / *al-ḥaywa* is the descriptive adjective *الدنيا* / *dunyā* (literally: the "nearby" = the life "of this world," "this" life); here again we are dealing morphologically (and etymologically) with a Syro-Aramaic spelling. The traditional reading *dunyā*, with its secondary middle vowel *u*, approximately renders the centralized dialect pronunciation of the originally Aramaic *a* (from *ܕܢܝܐ* / *danyā*), which is uttered in dialect as the neutral vowel *ə* (*dənyā* / *dənyē*). Pronounced in this way, this participial noun in modern Arabic means the "world," "this life" [as opposed to the "hereafter"]. This *Arabic* form is actually a Syro-Aramaic passive participle, as is shown by its derivation from the corresponding Syro-Aramaic paradigm in [*i.e.*, exhibiting the forms] *p'el* (< *pə'el*) (masculine) and *pa'lā* (feminine), corresponding to the Syro-Aramaic *ܕܢܝܐ* / *danyā* = Qur'ānic Arabic *دنيا* / *danyā* (not *dunyā*) (compare the Arabic *دني* / *danīy*, feminine *دنية* / *danīya* [near, low]). By the spelling with a final *ʾ* / *alif* the Qur'ān renders the Syro-Aramaic feminine ending of the predicative participle, as we find in the feminine form *فعلا* / *fa'lā* of the Arabic *elative*, with a terminal *alif*, not a *tā marbūṭa* (as in the designations for colors, such as *صفرا* / *ṣafrā* [yellow], *حمرا* / *ḥamrā* [red], etc.). The so-called Arabic *elative* is in reality a secondary formation from the Syro-Aramaic *status absolutus* shows; this is demonstrated by, among other things, this feminine ending in *ʾ* / *alif* (besides the variant in *ā* / *ā*), to which, however, a supposedly *classical* final *hamza* was added arbitrarily by the Arab grammarians, so that they would after all be able to inflect (albeit *diptotically*, by means of diphthongs) this ending, which in Aramaic cannot be inflected (like the Arabic *دنيا* / *danyā* / *dunyā*). How they arrived at the formation of the masculine form, however, with the *prosthetic alif* ending in *أفعل* / *af'al*, we can determine phonologically from the dropping of the vowel of the first radical of the masculine form of the Syro-Aramaic participle *\*pa'al* as follows: *\*pa'al* < *pə'al* < *p'al* < (and then to resolve the resulting initial double-consonant, the addition of the Arabo-Aramaic *alif prostheticum*) = Arabic *أفعل* / *af'al*. The key to explaining the *classical Arabic elative* is thus provided to us precisely by the predicative feminine form ending with *فعلا* / *fa'lā* (< *\*pa'alā* / *fa'alā*) which is faithfully preserved in Arabic from the Syro-Aramaic; this feminine form needs no *alif prosthe-*

*ticum* because it preserves the first vowel and thus there is no double consonant.

After this philological excursus, the hitherto unnoticed *conditional sentence* from Surah 4:109 that we have just discussed should be read as follows:

If you (now) argue about these (people) in this life, who will argue with God about them on the day of resurrection?

A similar sentence structure can be found, finally, in Surah 47:38, which reads:

هانتهم هولاً تدعون لتنفقوا في سبيل الله فمنكم من يبخل ومن يبخل فانما يبخل  
عن نفسه والله الغني وانتم الفقرا

The translations that we have consulted render this sentence syntactically as follows:

*Paret* (426):

38 (40): You there are called for God's sake [note 27: Literally, on the way of God] to give alms. Now among you there are those who are avaricious. But anyone who is avaricious is so to his own detriment. God is the one who is rich [note 28: Or: dependent (*ḡani*) on no one]. You, though, are the poor ones. (Ihr werdet da aufgerufen, um Gottes willen [Anm. 27: W: auf dem Weg Gottes] Spenden zu geben. Nun gibt es unter euch welche, die geizig sind. Wer aber geizig ist, ist es zu seinem eigenen Nachteil. Gott ist derjenige, der reich [Anm. 28: Oder: auf niemand angewiesen (*ḡani*)] ist. Ihr aber seid die Armen.)

*Blachère* (541):

40/38 Here is what you are. You are called to make expenditures along the way of Allah, [but] among you there are some who prove to be avaricious. Now someone who proves to be avaricious only proves to be avaricious at his own expense, [for] Allah is the Self-Sufficient whereas you are the Needy. (Voici ce que vous êtes. Vous êtes appelés à faire dépense dans le chemin d'Allah. [*mais*] parmi vous, il en est qui se montrent avares. Or celui qui se montre avare ne se montre avare qu'à ses dépens, [*car*] Allah est le Suffisant à Soi-même alors que vous, vous êtes les Besogneux.)

*Bell* (II, 518):

40 There ye are! Ye are called to contribute freely in the cause of Allah, and some of you are niggardly; but any who are niggardly, are only niggardly to themselves; Allah is the Rich, and ye are the poor....”

Grammatical and lexical notes:

In terms of its content, this sentence is relatively easy to understand. Lexically the frequently occurring Qur'ānic expression الله في سبيل / *fī sabīl Allāh* (literally: on the way of God) reproduces the Syro-Aramaic idiomatic

expression: ܒܘܪܗܐ ܕܐܠܠܗܐ / *b-urhā d-Allāhā* (on the way of God), which the *Thesaurus syriacus* (I, 375) explains as follows under subheading 3) [*consuetudo, agendi ratio, institutum*]: “*in via Dei, hoc est, in eo agendi modo qui Deo placet [in a manner pleasing to God].*”

Syntactically the above-cited translators were unable, from an Arabic perspective, to recognize a *conditional sentence*, the initial clause of which, as in the three preceding examples, is introduced by the Aramaic conjunction ܗܗ / *hē*, while its second clause (apodosis) begins with the Arabic conjunction *fa* (before ܗܗܢܗܘܢ / *hānūn*). After ܗܗܢܗܘܢ / *hē antum* (If you) comes the Arabo-Aramaic demonstrative pronoun ܗܘܠܐ / *hōlē* (these); in this context, in contrast to the three preceding parallel passages, the pronoun has a correlative function in the sense of “those who” and thus refers to the subject ܗܢܗܘܢ / *antum* (you, plural). This is conceivable, however, only if one has in mind the corresponding Syro-Aramaic usage of this determinative (demonstrative) pronoun as Theodor Nöldeke explains it in his previously cited *Syrische Grammatik* [Syriac grammar] under the heading “*Das Relativpronomen*” (p. 175), §236, as follows:

A. Very commonly, however, a correlative appears with no preceding noun. So it is with demonstratives (e.g.) ܗܗܠܗܘܢ / *hālēn d-* (West Syriac *hōlēn < hōlē* / these = the ones).

According to this, the introductory Qur’ānic words ܗܗܢܗܘܢ ܗܘܠܐ (*hē antum hōlē*), translated into Arabic, should be read إن أنتم الذين (*‘in antum al-ladīna*) = إن أنتم هم الذين (*‘in antum hum al-ladīna*) (if you are those who). That results in the following reading for the above-cited sentence from Surah 47:38:

If you (now) [are] those [who] are called upon to donate to a cause that is pleasing to God, then there are among you some who are stingy; but anyone who is stingy is stingy with himself; for God is (in Himself) rich, but you are (ultimately) the poor ones.

##### 5. Concerning the traditional reading بيدر / *bi-badr* (Surah 3:123)

Although the passages examined above mention differences with the People of the Book and also animosities toward unspecified hypocrites and envious individuals, it cannot be gathered from them that there were any sorts of conflicts, much less hostilities, with the godless or pagan inhabitants of Mecca, to which the following verses supposedly refer according to the biography of the Prophet and the Qur’ānic commentators. The philological analysis of the following sequence—Surah 3, verses 121 to 126—will attempt to explain their

connection contextually. For purposes of comparison with the reading commonly accepted until now, the translations by Rudi Paret, Régis Blachère, and Richard Bell will be cited first after each verse from the Qurʾān. Then comes the philological discussion of the underlined passages (if any) and the suggested new translation. Surah 3:121–126:

واذ عدوت من اهلك تبوي المومنين مقعد للقتال والله سمع عليم

Paret (55):

3, 121: And (then) in the early morning when you went away from your family so as to direct the believers to their positions for battle (against the unbelieving Meccans)! God hears and knows (everything). (Und (damals) als du in der Frühe von deiner Familie weggingst, um die Gläubigen in die Stellungen zum Kampf (gegen die ungläubigen Mekkaner) einzuweisen! Gott hört und weiß (alles).)

Lexical notes:

1. The Qurʾānic *rasm* عدوت originally had no point over the ع / ‘ayn and was therefore supposed to be read ‘*adawta* (to run, hurry on foot), and not *ḡadawta* (to do something in the morning). The *Lisān* (XV, 32a) suggests this reading when it comments on العديّ / *al-‘adī*: جماعة القوم من يحمل من يعدون لقتال ونحوه (a military unit hurrying to a battle or the like). (it also means: the first infantry soldiers to attack, because in doing so they run swiftly). The fact that the Prophet set out *on foot* is confirmed by Ṭabarī (IV, 69) also. The commentators, however, do not agree about the battle that is referred to in this verse. Ṭabarī ends up favoring the majority opinion that it was a question of *Uḥud* rather than of *al-Aḥzāb*.
2. Ṭabarī (IV, 71) explains التبوئة / *at-tabwiʿa* to mean اتخاذ الموضع (take up a position). As an alternative to تبوي / *tubawwiʿ* the alternative reading تنوي / *taṭwiʿ* is suggested, from the Syro-Aramaic ܬܘܘܐ / *twā* according to Mannā (830b) (3): رغبّ . حتّ (spur on, incite). This reading would have its parallels in Surah 8:65, which reads:

يا ايها النبي حرض المومنين على القتال

(O Prophet, spur the believers on to battle!)

3. The believers in the same verse are supposed to be صبرون / *ṣābirūn* (steadfast), a synonym for the *rasm* مقعد / *maqʿad*, which should be read as an infinitive; this should give us the meaning of the lexically equivalent Syro-Aramaic infinitive ܡܩܥܕ / *metab*, for which Mannā (319a, at [4]) indicates in Arabic استقرّ . ثبت (to be steadfast, constant), whereby the believers are admonished to *constancy*.

Hence for this verse the following translation is recommended:

3,121: Since you were now setting out and leaving your relatives, in order to incite the believers to constancy—whereby God hears (their prayers) and knows (everything)”

اذ همت طائفتان منكم ان تفشلا والله وليهما وعلى الله فليتوكل المؤمنون

Paret 122:

And (then) when two groups of you would have preferred to give up (lacking the courage to put up any resistance or to fight on) [Note 109a: Literally: when two groups of you had it in mind ... to give up], even though God was your friend. [Note 110: Or: is]. The believers should (always) trust in God.” (Und (damals) als zwei Gruppen von euch am liebsten (mutlos jeden Widerstand und weiteren Kampf) aufgegeben hätten [Anm. 109a: W: als zwei Gruppen von euch im Sinn hatten ... aufzugeben], wo doch Gott ihr Freund war [Anm. 110: Oder: ist]. Auf Gott sollen die Gläubigen (immer) vertrauen.)

Lexical notes:

1. Actually the verb هم / *hama* is fittingly translated here with the definition noted by H. Wehr *et al.*: “to be worried, concerned,” which is still current in modern Arabic.
2. Although ولي / *walī* is used in the Qur’ān in the sense of “friend” also, the meaning “helper” not only follows from this context but is also confirmed by other passages in the Qur’ān, where ولي / *walī* and نصير / *naṣīr* (helper) are used side by side as synonyms. In this respect ولي / *walī* came about as a loan-word based on the Syro-Aramaic ܘܢܝܐ / *ʾnyā*, for which Mannā (16b) lists the Arabic equivalents معين / *muʿīn*, مساعد / *musāʿid*, نصير / *naṣīr* (helper).

This results in the following reading for verse 122:

whereas two groups of you were worried about failing, even though God was at your side (as your helper)—indeed, the believers should trust in God...

اذ همت طائفتان منكم ان تفشلا والله وليهما وعلى الله فليتوكل المؤمنون

Paret 123:

God helped you nevertheless (in due course) in Badr to attain victory, while you (for your part) were a modest, insignificant band. Therefore fear God! Perhaps you will be grateful. (Gott hat euch doch (seinerzeit) in Badr zum Sieg verholfen, während ihr (eurerseits) ein bescheidener, unscheinbarer Haufe waret. Darum fürchtet Gott ! Vielleicht werdet ihr dankbar sein.)

Philological analysis:

1. In this context the Arabic word نصر / *našara* does not mean “help to win the victory” (since there can be no question here of a “battle of Badr”), but rather “help, stand by.”
2. Beneath the rasm بيدر, the second point (or dot) from the right, which led to the misreading Badr, is placed incorrectly. The original reading (copied below from the facsimile of the *hiğāzī* codex of the Qur’ān BNF 328a, folio 5b, line 16, second word from the right) looks like this:



Separately: the first two letters:

The *rasm* shows clearly that the two prong-shaped peaks are not the same. Whereas the first prong is vertical, the pen stroke of the second leans to the left. That proves that this written character—as in the case of the word in the earlier illustration اقعدوا = (in Arabic) اقعِدُوا / *iq‘adū* (cast yourselves down) from the *kūfī* Qur’ān codex of Samarqand—is a Syriac ܢܘܢ / *‘ayn*. Since the two points beneath the written character are obviously later additions, we need only imagine the second point gone, which results in the reading: (Syriac) ܢܘܢ = (Arabic) بعذر / *bi-‘idr*.

3. The meaning of the Syro-Aramaic word ܢܘܢܐ / *‘edrā*. For this word the *Thesaurus syriacus* (II, 2814) gives the following definition: “*auxilium, adjumentum*” (help, aid, support; auxiliary troop, armed forces); Ap. lexx. (according to the East Syrian lexicographer, Bar Ali, in Arabic): معونة / *ma‘ūna*, عون / *‘awn*, نصره / *našra*. The fact that the alleged “Badr” is in reality an “auxiliary troop” (from heaven) made up of “three thousand angels” will be demonstrated in the next verse.

Nor is it any accident that Ṭabarī (IV, 74 f.) mentions the contradictory opinions of the Qur’ānic commentators as to the real origin of the name “Badr.” In this regard he lists three opinions: a) *Badr* is the name of a man, after whom the *well* in question was named; b) others contradict this, saying that it is instead the name of the whole region, just as other lands are called by their respective names; c) *Badr*, finally, was a *well* to the right of the road from Mecca to Medina.

4. Ṭabarī (IV, 75) correctly understands the adjective اذله / *aḍilla* (plural of ذليل / *ḍalīl* < Syro-Aramaic ܕܠܝܠܐ / *dlilā*) to mean “few, small in number.”

This philological discussion and the conjecture about the canonical misreading بيدر / *bi-badr* > بعذر / *bi-‘idr* results in the following new interpretation of Surah 3:123:

(123) then God supported you with a (heavenly) help (= auxiliary troop)—so fear God, so that you might be grateful (to him)!

اذ تقول للمومنين ان يمددكم ربكم بثلاثة الف من المليكه منزلين

Paret 124:

(Then) when you said to the believers, “Will it not be enough for you (then) that your Lord supports you with three thousand angels (that are) sent down (for that purpose from heaven)?” (Damals) als du zu den Gläubigen sagtest: “Wird es euch (denn) nicht genügen, daß euer Herr euch mit dreitausend Engeln unterstützt, (die dazu vom Himmel) herabgesandt (werden)?”

Philological and syntactical note[s]:

1. The Cairo Edition of the Qur’ān reads the particle introducing the direct discourse as a negative interrogative particle / ‘*a-lan* (< Aramaic interrogative particle *hā* > ‘*a* + negation *lā* > proclitic *la-* + demonstrative particle *hayn* > *hān* > *ān* > enclitic *an* = ‘*a-l-an* / ‘*alan*), which refers to the future. The same defective spelling, pronounced *al-’ān* (consisting of two Aramaic demonstrative particles: *hal* > ‘*al* + *hayn* > *hān* > ‘*ān* = *al-’ān*), means “now” and occurs seven times in the Qur’ān (once in plene writing الان). In this context, however, the defective spelling should be read as ان = *al-’ān* (now). (The future ان / ‘*a-lan* occurs in two other places in the Qur’ān.)
2. The final clause of the sentence makes it clear that the misreading “*badr*” is in fact a *heavenly legion* consisting of three thousand angels, sent as reinforcement seeing that they were a small number (*adilla*).

Hence this verse should be understood as follows:

(124) when you said to the believers, “now it is enough for you that your Lord is supporting you with three thousand angels sent down (from heaven).”

بلى ان تصبروا وتتقوا ويأتوكم من فورهم

هذا يمددكم ربكم بخمسة الف من المليكه مسومين

Paret 125:

Yes! If you are patient and God-fearing, and (if) they [Note 112: *i.e.*, the enemies] now immediately(?) [Note 113: Or: in a compact attack(?)] come

against [Note 114: Literally: to] you, your Lord supports you (even) with five thousand angels, which hurry onward(?) (in an attack against the enemy) [Note 115: Literally: which make (their horses) hurry onward(?) (against the foe), or: which are equipped with emblems (? *musauwimīna*). The meaning of the expression is uncertain.] [Ja! Wenn ihr geduldig und gottesfürchtig seid, und (wenn) sie [Anm. 112: D.h. die Feinde] jetzt sofort(?) [Anm. 113: Oder: in geschlossenem Angriff(?)] gegen [Anm. 114: W: zu] euch (daher)kommen, unterstützt euch euer Herr (sogar) mit fünf tausend Engeln, die (im Sturm gegen den Feind) vorpreschen(?) [Anm. 115: W: die (ihre Pferde gegen den Feind) vorpreschen lassen(?), oder: die mit Kennzeichen versehen sind (? *musauwimīna*). Die Deutung des Ausdrucks ist unsicher.]

Philological notes:

1. The Qur'ānic particle بلي / *balā* / *balē*, a contraction composed of the Aramaic particles *bal* + *hayn*, like the Syro-Aramaic particle ܒܝܢܝ / *'ēn*, has two functions: a) as an affirmative particle, “yes, indeed,” b) as an adversative conjunction “however, but;” the latter function seems to have been overlooked in Arabic studies and Qur'ānic research to date.
2. To this day the expression من فورهم / *min fawrihim* has not been explained. Yet the verbal root *fwr* / *fār*, which is common to Arabic and Syro-Aramaic, is rather well known, not only in its basic meaning (to overcook, to bubble up or gush forth), but also in its extended meaning (to lose one's temper, to be angry). Thus Mannā (580b) defines the Syro-Aramaic ܦܐܪ / *fār* in Arabic (2) as إغتاظ . غضب (to be angry). Since the Qur'ān speaks in Surah 3:118-119 about the “fury” of the opponents against the believers, the relevance is clear. The sense therefore is: “If these opponents من فورهم / *min fawrihim* ‘out of their fury = driven by their fury = infuriated’ should turn against the believers, then...”
3. Following من فورهم / *min fawrihim* comes the even more puzzling هذا / *hādā*, which was taken for an Arabic *demonstrative pronoun* that logically had to refer to a very particular *fury*. Yet aside from the fact that هذا / *hādā*, too, is a secondary loan-word from Aramaic, in this passage it is nevertheless not a demonstrative but rather an *adverb* (albeit an unusual one); its reduction parallels that of the Syro-Aramaic ܗܝܢܝܢܝܢ / *hāy-dēn* (from *\*hayn-d-hayn*) as follows: Old Aramaic *\*hayn-d-hayn* > *hāy-d-hān* > *hā-d-hā* > *hā-dā* = هذا / *hādā*, which in this context has the same meaning as the Qur'ānic-Arabic حينئذ / *hīna'iden* (thereupon).
4. Finally, it is less problematic to explain the equally puzzling participle مسومين / *musawwimīn* referring to the five thousand angels—a term which causes Qur'ān translators unnecessary headaches. For we simply need to look up in Mannā (775b f.) the Syro-Aramaic verbal root ܫܡܢܝܢ / *šām*, in order to find the corresponding participial form ܫܡܢܝܢܝܢ / *m-šimānā*, which indicates for us the Arabic meaning of the Qur'ānic expression as



it possible to write the character in one stroke. So developed the current but greatly simplified form of the medial Arabic ع / 'ayn, in which the original form is scarcely recognizable. The similarly-shaped final ع / 'ayn concludes with a bow-shaped, elongating line extending downward, which was retained in modern Arabic script.

In the case of initial ع / 'ayn the *hiǧāzī-* and *kūfī-* scripts show their dependence on the Syriac ܥ / 'ayn in that the starting stroke of the ܥ was rounded off to about a quarter circle, so as to avoid confusion with the very similar-looking initial ܥ (ǧ / ḥ / ḥ). See also in Illustration 0342 of the Samarqand Manuscript, verses 7 and 8, the way the initial ع / 'ayn is written in the preposition عن / 'an (from, out of, away from, etc.). Later the rounded starting stroke was further emphasized and was drawn as a half circle open toward the right (ع / 'ayn), as is usual in modern Arabic. The same rasm shows a final *nūn* extending under the line, which apparently is an adaptation of the Aramaic ܢ / n, which in modern Arabic script, however, developed into a half circle ن / n.

This final *nūn* is remarkable, however, in that both the *hiǧāzī-* and the *kūfī-* scripts occasionally use the Syriac final ܢ / ܢ, which leads to a confusion with the Arabic retroflexive (retrograde) final *yā*, as was already demonstrated in the article *Relikte syro-aramäischer Buchstaben in frühen Korankodizes*<sup>14</sup> ["Relics of Syro-Aramaic letters in early Qur'ān codices"]. We find a further example of this sort of hitherto unrecognized Syriac final *nūn* in Surah 40:81, which according to the Cairo Edition reads:

وِيرِيكُمْ آيَتَهُ فَآيِ آيَتِ اللّٰهِ تَنْكُرُونَ

Ostensibly there is no other way for an Arabist to interpret this verse than the way in which Paret translates it (395):

And God [Note 56: Literally: he] allows you to see his signs. Which one of God's signs do you now wish to refuse?

The problem here is with the underlined interrogative pronoun آي / *ayya* (which, masc. fem.), which as a secondary formation is borrowed from Syro-Aramaic,<sup>15</sup> although there can be no doubt as to its use in Arabic.

We are indebted to the Samarqand Qur'ān, nevertheless, for having preserved for us in the written character ܢ the unaltered way of writing the Syriac final *nūn* (ܢ); in the canonical edition of the Qur'ān it was mistakenly misread and transcribed as an Arabic final *yā*, and for centuries all traces of it were blurred. This written character, in fact, corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic defective spelling of ܢ / *ēn* (originally ܢ / *ayn* > ܢ / *ēn*). Both ways of writing/spelling it occur in the Qur'ān. The particle in question was originally *interjectional*; depending on the situation it could acquire various semantic nuances, which will be examined in detail in a future study.<sup>16</sup> We limit ourselves for the moment to this passage in the Qur'ān, where the written



*Paret:* (Q 7:113): And the magicians came to Pharaoh. They said:<sup>20</sup> “We will (certainly) receive a reward [won’t we], if *we* are the victors?”

(Q 26:41): Now when the magicians had come, they said to Pharaoh, “We will (certainly) receive a reward, if we are the victors?”

Sure 7:113 should be understood thus:

Now the magicians came to Pharaoh (and) said (= asked): “Does a reward<sup>21</sup> belong to us if we are the victors?”

Syntactical notes:

1. Concerning the combination of two verbs in sequence *without a conjunction*, because they essentially amount to one main action, see Theodor Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*,<sup>22</sup> § 337.A.
2. The final *ā* in *اَجْرًا* / *ağrā* / *ağrā* does not indicate here the *Arabic accusative*, since the rule (arbitrarily) laid down by the Arab grammarians—that after an introductory *إِنَّ* / *inna* the following subject should be in the *accusative* (ending in *a* / *ā*) while the predicate should be in the *nominative* (ending in *u*), does not take effect here, since *أَنْ* / *ēn* in this sentence is an interrogative particle which, as everyone knows, is *neutral with regard to inflection*. Hence with the spelling *اَجْرًا* / *ağrā* the Qur’ān faithfully reproduces the Syro-Aramaic word *ܐܓܪܐ* / *agrā* in the *status emphaticus*. The Arab grammarians later saw in this Syro-Aramaic spelling the indication of the Arabic *accusative* in its various aspects. This phenomenon occurs rather frequently in the Qur’ān.
3. To the word *اَجْرًا* / *la-ağrā* is prefixed *لَا* / *la-*, which here has no intensifying function, as is frequently the case in the Qur’ān when it appears in combination with the intensifying particle *إِنَّ* / *inna* (< Syro-Aramaic *ܐܢܢܐ* / *ēn*, “yes, indeed!”) or before an oath; instead it expresses an uncertainty that underlies the interrogative particle *أَنْ* < *ܐܢܢܐ* / *ēn*, which naturally lends to it a *dubitative* nuance.

Further examples of this sort of semantic use of *أَنْ* < *ēn* (combined with a personal pronoun) and *لَا* / *la-* are provided by the Qur’ān in Surah 12:90. When Joseph reveals his identity indirectly to his unsuspecting brothers, they ask him:

أَنْتَ لَأَنْتَ يَوْسُفَ

The Cairo Edition, which sees from the context that this is a question but is unable to recognize an interrogative particle in the spelling *أَنْتَ* / *ēn-ka*, interpolates after the *alif* a *hamza* (invented by the Arab grammarians), whereby the *alif* becomes an (Arabic) *interrogative particle* and the following *inna* becomes an (Arabic) *intensifying particle*, especially since the latter seems to confirm this function through the following prefixed *لَا* / *la-*, and the edition reads:

أنتك لانت يوسف ؟ /a-'inna-ka la-anta Yūsuf?

Paret (198) accordingly translates this correctly: "Are you, *then*, Joseph?" By rendering the prefixed ل / la- as "then," Paret may have sensed an *intensifying* nuance in the question. Here, however, this ل / la- is intended to emphasize precisely the *dubitative* character of the question, which means that this question should best be translated as: "Are you *perhaps* Joseph?"

We find another textbook example in Surah 79:10-11, which reads:

يقولون انا لمرودون في الحافرة / اذا كنا عظما نخره

Here, too, the Cairo Edition misses the interrogative particle in انا (Arabic: 'innā) and once again interpolates a *hamza* after the *alif*, reading: انا / a-'innā. This, however, is superfluous, since the underlying element is not the Arabic explanatory particle انا / inna which introduces a declarative sentence, but rather the Syro-Aramaic interrogative particle "ēn," and it is connected with the suffix of the first person plural نا / -nā, resulting in the doubling of the middle/medial nūn. Hence the original Qur'ānic *rasm* should be read انا / ēn-nā (and not: a-'innā). This interrogative particle is followed, as above, by the prefixed *dubitative* ل / la-(*mardūdūn*).

In the following verse the *hamza* interpolated at the conjunction اذا / idā (when) is not only superfluous but also *wrong*, because in this temporal clause there should be no repetition of the interrogative particle. Exasperated by the Cairo reading, Paret (498) translates the two connected verses as follows:

10. They say, "Shall we perhaps be brought back (again to life) on the spot(?)? [Note 3: Or: Shall we perhaps be brought back to our former condition(?)? Or: Shall we (who lie?) in the earth's bosom be brought back (again to life)? The meaning of the expression *fī l-ḥāfirati* is quite uncertain.] 11. (Shall that perhaps happen) after [Note 4: Literally: when] we are (*i.e.*, have become) decaying bones?" (Sie sagen: „Sollen wir etwa auf der Stelle (?) (wieder ins Leben) zurückgebracht werden? [Anm. 3: Oder: Sollen wir etwa in den früheren Zustand(?) zurückgebracht werden? Oder: Sollen wir (die wir) in der Erde Schoß (liegen)(?) (wieder ins Leben) zurückgebracht werden? Die Deutung des Ausdrucks *fī l-ḥāfirati* ist ganz unsicher.] 11. (Soll das etwa geschehen) nachdem [Anm. 4: W: wenn] wir (zu) morsche(n) Knochen (geworden) sind?)

Blachère, too, cannot quite cope with the double verse and translates (635):

10. [The unbelievers] ask: In truth, will we be certainly sent back to earth 11 when we shall be fleshless bones? [Note 11: Instead of the variant handed down here, the Vulgate has: 'a'idā = "is it when," but this reading compels us to suppose that there is a missing sentence.] ([Les infidèles] demandent :

« En vérité, serons-nous certes renvoyés sur la terre 11 quand nous serons ossements décharnés ? [Note 11: Au lieu de la var. reçue ici, la Vulg. porte : 'a'idā « est-ce que lorsque », mais cette leçon contraint à supposer une phrase en suspens.]

Bell (II, 633) sees no particular difficulty in these two sentences, except for the real meaning of 𐤊𐤀 = *ēn-nā* with a following 𐤌 /*la-*, which he renders with “verily:”

10. Saying: “Are we verily bought back as we were before? [Note 4: The meaning is uncertain; but the word is usually said to mean “original state.”]  
11. When we are bones decayed?”

According to the following philological analysis, however, this verse should be interpreted thus:

They say (= they ask), “Will we perhaps in the grave (*i.e.*, while we are lying in the grave) be brought back (to new life), when<sup>23</sup> we are decayed<sup>24</sup> bones?”

Unlike Paret and Blachère, Bell gives a translation of this two-part sentence that is semantically and syntactically almost fitting. Granted, he does not enter into a discussion of the word حافرة / *ḥāfira*, which Paret considers suspect. Ṭabarī (XXX, 33 f.) offers three explanations for it: 1. *return to earth or to life*, 2. *grave, pit*, 3. *the fire [of hell]*. The second meaning is correct. Morphologically, too, الحافرة / *al-ḥāfira* is correctly explained to mean الأرض المحفورة التي حفرت فيها قبورهم (the earth dug up to make graves) and interpreted as a passive participle like the Arabic محفورة / *ma-ḥfūra* (dug, hollowed out). This corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic passive participle ending in *pa'lā*, as we find in the form ܨܗܝܬܐ / *sa'ṭā* (rejected), ܨܗܝܬܐܢܐ / *sa'ṭānā* (reprehensible, abominable) > ܨܗܝܬܐܢܐ / *sāṭānā* (the abominable, detestable one) = “Satan.”<sup>25</sup> After this the medial *alif* in حافرة as *mater lectionis*, stands not for a long *ā*, but for a short *a* (*ḥafra* > dialect form *ḥəfra* = pit, hollow). Now if such a Syro-Aramaic form is carried over into Arabic, as a rule the emphatic *ā* ending is dropped. Through the resulting vowel shift, the Syro-Aramaic form *pa'lā* then gives rise to the Arabic forms *fa'l*, *fa'al* and *fa'il*, which the Arabic philologists (as the *Lisān* frequently attests) usually took for noun forms with adjectival meaning. One example (among many others) is the Qur'ānic word صمد / *ṣamad* (Surah 112:2), which remains a riddle in Islamic exegesis. For more about this theological term see the above-cited essay in the anthology by Christoph Burgmer, ed., *Streit um den Koran*, page 76, note 1. According to that essay, Sure 112 should be interpreted thus:

(To the question, who is God the One, you should reply):

1. Say: God the One, 2. (that is) God the “United/Allied” (*Ṣamad*) (into a unity) (= the “Triune”<sup>26</sup>), 3. (who) has not begotten and was not begotten 4. And who has no equal.”<sup>27</sup>

The fact that God is One is stated in Surah 72:3 also. It is astonishing that the word حد / *ḥad* (someone) (< Syro-Aramaic ܚܕ / *ḥad*) (one), which occurs in that Surah and is used extensively in many modern Arabic dialects, was altered with a superfluous and meaningless point beneath it, which distorted the agreement in the sentence. The verse reads:

وانه تعالى جد ربنا ما اتخذ صاحبه ولا ولدا

For the dubious word جد / *ḡadd* the translators have a choice in Arabic between grandfather, seriousness, eagerness and happiness. Paret translates (485):

3. And (I was inspired to know that the jinn said): "Our Lord, the epitome of happiness (and blessing), is exalted. [Note 1: Literally: The happiness (*ḡadd*) of our Lord is exalted.] He has found for himself neither a female companion nor a child [Note 2: Or (in the plural): children]." (Und (mir ist eingegeben worden, daß die Dschinn sagten): "Unser Herr, der Inbegriff von Glück (und Segen), ist erhaben." [Anm. 1 W: Das Glück (*ḡadd*) unseres Herrn ist erhaben.] Er hat sich weder eine Gefährtin noch ein Kind [Anm. 2: Oder (Mehrzahl): Kinder] zugelegt.)

Blachère (619) offers an elegant solution for this verse:

3. Our Lord (may His greatness be exalted!) took neither female companion nor child." (Notre Seigneur (que Sa grandeur soit exaltée !) n'a pas pris de compagne ou d'enfant.)

Bell (II, 610) agrees with him and translates:

3. And that He—exalted be the majesty of our Lord—hath taken for Himself neither wife [Note. 1. Literally: "female companion"] nor offspring; ..."

It is just as astonishing that it did not occur to these translators of the Qur'an to eliminate the point under جد / *ḡadd* and to read حد / *ḥad* (one). This results in the following reading:

And the Most High<sup>28</sup> (is) One: Our Lord neither took a female companion nor (adopted) a child.

### 7. On the erroneous reading of صاحبه / *ṣāḥiba* (female companion)

The Qur'ānic defective spelling of صحبه admits two readings. The Cairo Edition of the Qur'ān reads صاحبه / *ṣāḥiba* and makes it out to mean (God's) "female companion," whereas the reading صحابه / *ṣāḥāba* (plural) results in the meaning "companions" (e.g., the comrades or associates of the Prophet),<sup>29</sup> which is more in keeping with Qur'ānic theology. In other passages the Qur'ān uses as a synonym for this the term شريك / *ṣarīk* (in the singular) and (in the plural) شركا / *ṣurakā* (participants). This misreading of the *rasm* صحبه occurs a second time in the Qur'ān in Surah 6:101 as follows:

بديع السموت والارض انى (= أين) يكون له ولد ولم تكن (= يكن) له صحبه  
(صاحبه = صحابه) وخلق كل شي وهو بكل شي عليم

Paret (114) translates:

101. (He is) the Creator of heaven and earth. How could he acquire children, when he had, after all, no female companion (who could have brought them into the world for him) and (on his own) created everything (in the world)? He knows about everything." ((Er ist) der Schöpfer von Himmel und Erde. Wie soll er zu Kindern kommen, wo er doch keine Gefährtin hatte (die sie ihm hätte zur Welt bringen können) und (von sich aus) alles geschaffen hat (was in der Welt ist)? Er weiß über alles Bescheid.)

Blachère (164) and Bell (I, 125) understand the term accordingly (*compagne/female companion*). According to the recommended emendation, however, this verse should be interpreted thus:

(He, who is) the Creator of heaven and earth, how<sup>30</sup> could he have a child? After all, he had no companions, since he created everything and knows about everything (or: is able to do everything!)<sup>31</sup>

The twofold misreading of the Qur'ānic defective spelling صحبه and its erroneous interpretation as صاحبه / *ṣāḥiba* (female companion) instead of صحابه / *ṣāḥāba* (companions)<sup>32</sup> is confirmed by two parallel passages in the Qur'ān. Surah 17:111 reads:

وقل الحمد لله الذي لم يتخذ ولدا ولم يكن له شريك في الملك

And say: Praise be to God, who took for himself no (adopted) child and had no one participating in his sovereignty...."

The same idea is found in Surah 25:2:

الذي له ملك السموت والارض ولم يتخذ ولدا ولم يكن له شريك في الملك

. . . to whom (*i.e.*, God) (belongs) sovereignty over heaven and earth, (who) did not adopt a child and had no one participating in his sovereignty. . . .

The notion that God would have needed a *female companion* in order to *acquire a child*, as Paret understood the passages under discussion, thus becomes baseless. Instead, the last-cited passages make clear the fundamental Monarchic idea of Qur'anic theology. This [second- and third-century Christian heresy] rejects not only the theology of *Divine Sonship* (alluded to in Surah 112:3), but also that of *Adoptianism* (which held that God adopted a human being as his Son). The latter polemic is presumably directed against the theology of the East Syrian Nestorians. An *adoptive son* who allegedly participated in the divine lordship is rejected just like any other form of participation. Hence God has neither an *adoptive son* nor other sorts of *participants* (and not a "*female companion*").

## 8. Typical erroneous transcriptions of similar-looking Syriac letters

The erroneous copying of Syro-Aramaic letters into the more recent Arabic system of writing during the redaction [*"Erstellung"*] of the Arabic Qur'an has already been pointed out by means of the concrete, philologically and contextually reasoned examples above. At what historical point in time this transcription took place cannot be determined at the present state of Qur'anic scholarship. Nor is that the purpose of this essay. Instead it intends to contribute to a more plausible interpretation of the Qur'anic text through the examination of further examples. This essay limits itself first of all to the confusion of the following similar-looking letters of the Syriac alphabet.

 *l-ēnay-hōn*. The first three letters enlarged:  *l-ē-n*

These three letters taken from the Rabbula Gospel Book (586 A.D.)<sup>33</sup> (from right to left: ܠ / *L*, ܘ / *'ayn*, ܢ / *N*), as even the layman can see, were mistaken for each other even within the Syriac system of writing, depending on the diligence or carelessness of the copyist in question. No wonder such typical mistakes occurred also in transcriptions into the more recent Arabic system of writing, which was not yet entirely familiar to the Arabic or Arabo-Aramaic copyists. The (fateful) difference, though, is that, whereas the Syriac reader could recognize such copyist's mistakes within the Syriac language relatively easily from the context, this was no longer possible for the educated Arab reader, since the corresponding Arabic letters are so different from each other in form that it was practically impossible to mistake one for another.

The Syriac-Arabic correspondence of the three Syriac letters illustrated above is as follows (from right to left):

Syriac ܐ = Arabic ʾ / L ;  
 Syriac ܢ = Arabic ن / N ;  
 Syriac ܥ = Arabic ع / 'ayn ;

The erroneous transcription of the Syriac ܥ / 'ayn as an Arabic ʾ / L was first noticed in the essay “Neudeutung der arabischen Inschrift im Felsendom zu Jerusalem”<sup>34</sup> [“New interpretation of the Arabic inscription in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem”]. It was demonstrated there that the Arabic ʾ / L in the rasm لبدأ (read: *libadan*—meaning unclear), which occurs in Surah 72:19, should be read as a Syriac ܥ / 'ayn. In context the Cairo Edition of the Qurʾān reads:

وانه لما قام عبد الله يدعوه كادوا يكونون عليه لبدا

Following the interpretation of the Arabic commentators, Paret (486) translates: [the invisible *spirits* go on to say:]

19. And “As the servant of God [Note 12: *i.e.*, Muhammad] stood up, so as to call on him [Note 13: Or: to pray to him], they might almost have crushed / overwhelmed him (*kādū yakūnūna ʿalaihi libadan*). [Note 14: The interpretation of the verse is quite uncertain.]” (Und: „Als der Diener Gottes [Anm. 12: D.h. Mohammed] sich aufstellte, um ihn anzurufen [Anm. 13: Oder: zu ihm zu beten], hätten sie ihn (vor lauter Zudringlichkeit?) beinahe erdrückt (*kādū yakūnūna ʿalaihi libadan*)” [Anm. 14: Die Deutung des Verses ist ganz unsicher].“)

Reading in Arabic عبدا / *ʿibādan* instead of لبدا / *libadan* produces the following interpretation:

19. [The invisible *spirits* say] further: “When the Servant of God (namely *Jesus, son of Mary*) had arisen (and) continued to call on him (= God) (*i.e.*, continued to worship the one God), they (= people) might almost have worshipped him (as God). 20: [The *Servant of God* resisted this and] said: “Indeed I am invoking my Lord (*i.e.*, I, however, am worshipping only the one God) and associate no other with him!”<sup>35</sup>

Further examples of confusing Syriac letters in this way followed in the essay, “Relikte syro-aramäischer Buchstaben in frühen Korankodizes im *hiḡāzī*- und *kūfī*-Duktus.”<sup>36</sup>

On the subject of the erroneous transcription of the three Syriac letters in the illustration above, another publication is in the works, which will present, together with philological and contextual arguments, further examples from the canonical version of the Qurʾān as we have it in the Cairo Edition.



- words  $\text{ثم لا} / \text{tum(ma) lā}$  don't mean "after that not," but as a rule, "again not = not again = no longer."
- 8 Brother Mark, *A 'Perfect' Qur'an* (New York: International Bible Society, 2000), Appendix A: Samarqand MSS VS 1924 Egyptian Edition, p. XIX, line 1, at page 338.
  - 9 See Th. Noldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*, p. 169, § 224.
  - 10 *Sprachwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen*, i, 22, with reference to Ibn Ya'īṣ, I, 499, line 7. Cf. also Reckendorf, *Die syntaktischen Verhältnisse des Arabischen* (Leiden, 1898), 325; Wright, *Arabic Grammar*, 1:294 d.
  - 11 Siddiqi, *Studien*, 13.
  - 12 Itq, 325. Others thought it Aramaic (Mutaw, 54) or Ḥauranic (Muzhir, I, 130), or Hebrew (Itq, 325).
  - 13 On this subject see Anton Spitaler, "Die Schreibung des Typus  $\text{صلوة}$  im Koran: Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung der koranischen Orthographie," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. 56, Festschrift Herbert W. Duda (Vienna, 1960).
  - 14 In: Karl-Heinz Ohlig, ed., *Der frühe Islam: Eine historisch-kritische Rekonstruktion anhand zeitgenössischer Quellen* (Berlin, 2007<sup>1</sup>), pp. 393–412.
  - 15 From the Syro-Aramaic  $\text{ܐܝܢܐ} / \text{aynā}$ , composed of the interjectional particle  $\text{ܐܝܢ} / \text{ayn} < *ܐܝܢ / \text{hayn}$  and the enclitic demonstrative/indicative particle [Deutepartikel]  $\text{ܢܐ} / \text{hā}$ , which by sound-shift becomes  $> \text{ܐܝܢܐ} / \text{aynā}$  by the assimilation of the  $\text{nūn}$  and the resultant doubling of the  $\text{yā}$  by way of substitution, we get the Arabic form  $\text{أَي} / \text{ayyā}$  (pronounced:  $\text{ayyā} / \text{ayy}$ ). N.B.: The inflection according to nominative, genitive and accusative ( $\text{ayyu}$ ,  $\text{ayyi}$ ,  $\text{ayya}$ ) prescribed by classical Arabic grammar is fictitious, since etymologically this interrogative pronoun should be treated no differently from the demonstrative pronoun  $\text{هذا} / \text{hādā}$  (this), which is also borrowed from Aramaic and which Arabic grammar –rightly this time—considers indeclinable. The original Syro-Aramaic form  $\text{ܐܝܢܐ} / \text{aynā}$  (pronounced  $\text{ayna}$  and  $\text{ēna}$ ) is still alive today in several Arabic dialects of Syria and Mesopotamia. Contrary to the analysis of the *Thesaurus* (I, 158), which explains the Syriac  $\text{ܐܝܢܐ} / \text{aynā}$  as a combination of [1] the secondary particle  $\text{ܐܝ} / \text{ay}$  (which comes about only when the final  $\text{nūn}$  is dropped) (from  $*ܐܝܢ / \text{hayn} > \text{ܐܝܢ} / \text{ayn} > \text{ܐܝ} / \text{ay}$ ), in which it sees an independent interrogatory particle (*particula interrogativa*), and [2]  $\text{ܢܐ} / \text{hānā}$  (which again arises secondarily from a contracted  $*ܐܝܢܐ / \text{hayn} > \text{ܐܝܢ} / \text{hān} + \text{ܢܐ} / \text{hā}$ ), modern Arabic dialects of the Near East employ surviving variants of "here" such as  $\text{hēn}$ ,  $\text{hān} > \text{hōn}$  (West Syriac)  $\text{hōn}$ ,  $\text{hena} / \text{hēna}$  and  $\text{hnā}$ , which are all contracted forms from the Syro-Aramaic  $*ܐܝܢܐ / \text{hayn} > \text{ܐܝܢ} / \text{hēn} / \text{hān} > \text{hōn}$  (isolated + enclitic  $\text{ܢܐ} / \text{hā}$ ), from which comes, last but not least, the classical Arabic  $\text{هنا} / \text{hunā}$  (in which the  $\text{u}$ , if not fictitious, could be explained only by West Syriac pronunciation). The Chaldaic (= East Syriac-Babylonian) variants mentioned in the *Thesaurus* can be explained in a similar way; their plural forms  $\text{ܗܢܘܢ} / \text{hannōn} > \text{ܗܢܘܢ} / \text{annōn}$  are composed of the demonstrative  $*ܐܝܢܐ / \text{hayn} > \text{hēn} > \text{hən} > \text{ən}$  and the enclitic plural personal pronoun  $\text{ܗܢܘܢ} / \text{hōn}$ , whereby the assimilation of the enclitic  $\text{h}$  results in the doubling of the medial  $\text{n}$ .
  - 16 On the particular meanings of Syro-Aramaic  $\text{ܐܝܢܐ} / \text{ēn}$  see Mannā (16b):  $\text{نعم} / \text{bli}$  (yes, indeed); (2)  $\text{يا} / \text{āyā}$  (Oh as an exclamation); (3)  $\text{هل} / \text{laṣṭafham}$  (interrogative particle); (4)  $\text{لكن} / \text{lkn}$ . إلا /  $\text{ghayr ān}$  (but, nevertheless, however).

- 17 Mannā (165a) : ܠܐ ܗܐ (lā hā ?) أو ما أليس . (is it not ...?); moreover the *Thesaurus* (II, 1869) notes: ܠܐ (lā), particula negativa et privativa,... 3) interrogativa, nonne; Valet: \* ) annon ? nonne ? Jud. 10:11, Matt. 7:22, 10:29...; ita ܠܐ ܗܐ (lā hā ?), Matt. 5:46–47, 6:26, Hebr. 1:14 ; ita ܠܐ ܗܐ (lā (h)wā ?), Heb. ܘܠܐ (hā-lā /hā-lō [perhaps contracted > hallā] ?), Exod. 4:4, 1 Cor. 10:16, James 2:5, 21, 25...
- 18 Christoph Luxenberg, “Die syrische Liturgie und die ‘geheimnisvollen Buchstaben’ im Koran” [“The Syrian liturgy and the ‘mysterious letters’ in the Koran”], in: Markus Gross and Karl-Heinz Ohlig, eds., *Schlaglichter*, 426–435.
- 19 The fact that the final inflection of the regular feminine plural (ات / āt) is *i* and not *a*, is an arbitrary determination of the later founders of classical Arabic grammar, which finds no application in the language of the Qur’an, especially since the Syriac singular (ܐܬܐ / ātā) ends in *ā*, just like the plural form (ܐܬܐܘܬܐ / āt̄wātā) of this Qur’anic loan-word.
- 20 Concerning the combination of two verbs in sequence without a conjunction, because they essentially amount to one main action, see Theodor Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*, § 337.A.
- 21 a) To the word لا جراً / la-ǧrā is prefixed ل / l-, which here has no intensifying function, as is frequently the case in the Qur’an when it appears in combination with the intensifying particle إن / inna (or before an oath); instead it expresses an uncertainty that underlies the interrogative particle ان < ܐܢ / ēn, which naturally lends to it a dubitative nuance.
- 22 Theodor Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*, second revised edition (Leipzig, 1898); reprinted with an appendix edited by Anton Schall (Darmstadt, 1977), 263.
- 23 Depending on the context, the Qur’anic forms اذ / id and اذ / idā correspond semantically to the Syro-Aramaic ܕܥܘ / kaḏ (when, while, as), in rare cases even in a concessive sense (although), as in Sura 7:12, where God asks Iblis: ما منعك الا تنسجد اذ امرتك (What kept you from casting yourself down, although I commanded you to do so?).
- 24 Like حافرة / ḥāfira (actually: ḥafra), نخره / naḥira (= naḥra) is morphologically a Syro-Aramaic passive participle ending in pa’lā (= Arabic محفوره / mahfūra [dug, hollowed out], منخوره / manḥūra [perforated, punctured]).
- 25 On this subject see Christoph Luxenberg, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*, 100-104: “On the Morphology and Etymology of Syro-Aramaic ܫܝܬܐܢܐ (šātānā) and Koranic شيطان (šaytān)”; a more extensive discussion can be found in: Christoph Burgmer, ed., *Streit um den Koran: Die Luxenberg-Debatte: Standpunkte und Hintergründe*, third expanded edition (Berlin, 2007), 69–82: “Zur Morphologie und Etymologie von syro-aramäisch ܫܝܬܐܢܐ (šātānā = Satan) und koreanisch-arabisch شيطان (šaytān).”
- 26 This interpretation can be corroborated in the Qur’an. Surah 17:85 reads: ويسلونك عن الروح قل الروح من امر ربي وما اوتيتم من العلم الا قليلا  
“If they ask you about the Spirit, then answer: The Spirit (is = proceeds) from the Logos of my Lord” (cf. the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople: “et in Spiritum Sanctum qui ex Patre Filioque procedit”). The rejection of this doctrine in Sura 5:73 لقد كفر الذين قالوا ان الله ثالث ثلاثة (“They are heretics who say that God is the

- third of three”) shows that the author of this anathema overlooked or did not comprehend the theological statement in Sura 17:85. The conclusion of this verse reads: *وما اوتيتكم من العلم الا قليلا* “Of course you have little notion of theology!” (literally: “and no ‘knowledge’ [= divine knowledge / theology] has been conveyed to you, except a little”).
- 27 The Arabic *كفى* / *kafā* (to suffice) corresponds lexically (and consequently semantically as well) to the Syro-Aramaic *ܣܦܩܘܡ* / *sfaq*, for which Mannā (508a) notes the following Arabic meanings: (1) *كان كافيا* . *كفى* (to suffice, be enough); (4) *أدرك* . *فهم* (to understand, comprehend); (5) *كان أهلا جديرا* . *ساوى* (to be equal, of equal rank). The traditional Qur’anic reading for *كفوا* is (erroneously) *kufuwan*, a hypothetical noun form, whose final *alif* (according to the rule of classical Arabic grammar) was regarded as a sign of the accusative as the predicate of the verb *كان* / *kāna* (to be). The Aramaic spelling, however, points instead to the reading *kafū hin* (in classical Arabic *كفوء* / *kafū’*), which morphologically also corresponds to a *nomen agentis* [name of an acting person or thing] and harmonizes better syntactically with the sentence. We find a comparable form in Surah 4:99, which reads *وكان الله عفوا غفورا* / *wakāna llāh(u) ‘afūwa(n) ḡafūrā* (literally: for God is [a] Lenient, Forgiving [One]). Alternatively one could interpret the last sentence of Sura 112 in Syro-Aramaic fashion thus: “and no one can comprehend him.” This theologically tenable interpretation (for instance with regard to the mystery of the “Doctrine of the Trinity”) would have to be examined, however, in terms of the history of religions.
- 28 Granted, *تعالى* / *ta ‘ālā* means “he is/may he be exalted,” but this commendation is used as a verbal name for God and is still customary today.
- 29 The *Lisān* (I, 519b f.) lists the following plural forms of *صاحب* / *ṣāhib* : *أصحاب* / *aṣḥāb*, *صحاب* / *ṣahb*, *صحابة* / *ṣaḥāba*, *صاحبان* / *aṣāḥīb*, *اصحابان* / *ṣuḥbān*, *صحاب* / *ṣiḥāb*, *صحاب* / *ṣahb*, *صحابة* / *ṣaḥāba*, *ṣiḥāba* (and also a *ḥadīṭ* referring to the Prophet with the comment): *ولم يجمع فاعل على فعالة إلا هذا* (this is the only case in which the form *fā’il* is pluralized as *fa’āla*); concerning the final *-h* (which in Arabic indicates the feminine singular ending) adopted by Arabic to indicate the Aramaic plural ending in *-ē*, the *Lisān* explains: *تراد الهاء لتأنيث الجمع* (the *h* is added in order to make a “feminine” out of the plural).
- 30 Concerning the erroneous transcription *انى* / *annā* instead of *اين* / *ayna* (28 times in the Qur’an) through a confusion of the Syriac final *nūn* with the Arabic final *yā*, see Christoph Luxenberg, “Neudeutung der arabischen Inschrift im Felsendom zu Jerusalem,” in: Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-R. Puin, eds., *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 20051), 136, note 18.
- 31 In this context the latter meaning should preferably be taken into consideration, inasmuch as the Arabic *علم* / *‘alima* is borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic *ܠܗܠܡ* / *‘lem*, *‘lam*, and this verbal root is in turn a secondary construction from the Syro-Aramaic *ܠܗܠܡ* / *ḥlam* through the vocalization of the guttural sound *ܠܗ* / *ḥ* as *ܠܗܝܢ* / *‘ayn* (basic meaning: to be strong). Arabic borrowed only the extended meaning, “knowledge” (as intellectual strength). As a result of the pronunciation of the guttural sound *ḥ* as *ḥ* (kh / ch) in East Syriac-Babylonian, in Arabic the *ḥ* was again vocalized as (tertiary) *ḡ*, producing the word *غلام* / *ḡulām* (a growing boy, a youth who is gaining strength < Syro-Aramaic *ܠܗܠܡܐ* / *ḥalmā*, *ܠܗܠܡܐ* / *ḥlīmā* > *ܠܗܠܡܐ* / *‘laymā*) and the corresponding verbal root *علم* / *ḡalima*.

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- 32 According to the *Lisān* (I, 520a) this may also be intended as an infinitive or a verbal noun (مصدر / *maṣḍar*) (perhaps “participation, membership”).
- 33 *The Rabbula Gospels, Facsimile Edition of the Miniatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. I, 56 in the Medicean-Laurentian Library*, edited and commented by Carlo Cecchelli, Giuseppe Furlani and Mario Salmi (Olten and Lausanne: URS Graf-Verlag, publishers, 1959), f. 159a, column b, line 11.
- 34 In: Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-R. Puin, eds., *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 20051), 131 ff.
- 35 Cf. Surah 19:36.
- 36 In: Karl-Heinz Ohlig, *Der frühe Islam: Eine historisch-kritische Rekonstruktion anhand zeitgenössischer Quellen* (Berlin, 20071), pp. 377–414. [See note 3 above.]