No Battle of “Badr”

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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, 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), 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 ḥiǧāzī- und kūfī-Duktus” [“Remains of Syro-Aramaic letters in early Koran codices in ḥiǧāzī- and kūfī script”] in the anthology Der frühe Islam [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 Ṭabarî (died 923) reports in the introduction to his commentary on the Qur’an that the third Caliph ’Uṯmān/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 uni-
ty of the young Islamic faith community. Hence there is no trace left of the six
variant versions. It is thought, however, that not everyone complied with this
order. To this fact we owe the tradition of a large Qur'anic corpus of writings
which discuss variant readings [qirāʻāt]. It includes the Qur'ān version of
Ubai ibn Kaʻb, which attests, for example, to a variant Arabic name for Fri-
day: whereas in Surah 62:9 Friday is usually called يوم الجمعة (yawm al-ğumʻa)
or “congregation day,” in Ubai we find the expression يوم العربية الكبرى
(yawm al-ʻarūba l-kubrā), “Great Friday = Good Friday,” as Good Friday was
called in pre-Islamic Christian Arabic.

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.

The preceding illustration is an excerpt from Surah 7:11, starting after
沃尔قد خلقتمكم ثم صوانيكم (and we have created and also shaped you) with the sentence
(according to the Cairo Edition):

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 سجَد / sağada ("to fall down, to cast oneself down") is repeated. In the Samarqand Manuscript, however, at the underlined first verb أسجِدوا / 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. 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 سد [= س / sad] whereas there is a سين [= س / sin] in the modern versions.

Here the author took 1) the first Syriac letter در / q (= Arabic ض / q) for an Arabic سد / șād, and 2) the following Syriac letter جر / ʿayn for an Arabic ح / ḡ (without a point beneath it). The latter character (ح) in fact is distinguished in both kūfī and ḥiǧāzī script from the Syriac جر / ʿayn 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 ج / 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 (فَسجَدَوْا) (and they fell down), and also in lines 4 and 5, whereas the initial ح remains over the line, as in line 7: خَلَقتُني (read: ḥalaqtašnī) (you created me), and line 8: خَلَقْتُهُ (read: ḥalaqtašhu) (you created him). In the latter instance you see that the initial Arabic ح (ح / ḡ / ḫ) is almost no different from the Syriac جر / ʿayn. Moreover scribes turned the originally unambiguous Syriac ج / ʿayn into a sign for three different phonemes in the Arabic alphabet, which later were further specified by diacritical markings (ح / ḡ, ح / ḡ, ح / 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 AndPassword; it is easy to see that the Arabic قـ / q贵 is an imitation of it.

2. The real riddle lay in the following letter, until now not recognized as the Syriac ʿayn, which in combination with the following kūfī د / d results in the reading (Syro-Aramaic) قعد / qʿaḏ = (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 إسجدوا / 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 قعد / qʿaḏ, however, corresponds—as so often elsewhere in the Qurʾān—to Syro-Aramaic semantics. Thus Mannā (689a/b) interprets Syro-Aramaic قعد / qʿaḏ or Arabic قعد / qaʿada = گثا / گاک (to prostrate oneself), as ركع / rakaʿa (to kneel down). Thus it becomes apparent that the Samarqand reading إسجدوا / 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:

(ṯumma qulnā la-l-malāʾika [actually: la-l-malāykē] iqʿadū li-Ādam
[actually: la-Ādam] fa-saǧadū)

(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 ʿayn should be detected in a Qurʾān codex in the hijāzi 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,  غزوة) 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’an which is cited by Arabic-Islamic historiography. For this purpose the Qur’anic 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:

جَاهَنَمْ أَلَّا تَحْبُوْنَهُمْ وَلَا يَحْبُوْنَكُمْ وَتَوَُّمُونَ بَالَّكِتَابِ كَلَّهَا
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 [ces gens] while they do not love you; you believe in Scripture in its entirety. (Vous êtes tels que voici : vous aimez 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 ها / 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 هن / hayn, which by degrees

a) was reduced from the diphthong ʾay to the monophthong ʾhen,
and then
b) by dropping the final diphthong ʾun became هن / hēn,
of which the Qur’ān has preserved for us only the defective spelling with a simple ه / h, as in the text cited above. We owe the preservation of the unique full spelling with ه / 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 ي / yā with the following word) in the hitherto puzzling word هيت (hay-ta), which Tabari (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 Tabari. In this passage the personal pronoun الل / la-ka (literally: to/for you) following هيت (hay-ta) and connected with the preposition لـ / 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.9 The Qur’ānic expression هيت للك (pronounced: ʾhē! ta la-ka!) thus faithfully renders the Syro-Aramaic idiomatic phrase هيت للك (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 Qurʾān*, while citing other authorities as follows (page 33):

In xii,23, we read that Joseph’s mistress says to him هيت لک. The word occurs only in this passage in the Qurʾān and is a rare expression even outside the Qurʾān, though, as has been pointed out by Barth,¹⁰ 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 foreign¹¹ and explained as Coptic,¹² 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 philologers was Coptic, this rare word was taken to be of Coptic origin.

Now if this originally *interjectional* Aramaic particle  הין‎ / hayn > ħēn > ħē has, in the aforementioned Qurʾānic 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  h in the sentence from Surah 3:119 cited above, has the same conditional meaning as the conjunction  إن‎ / ʾin (in reality in spoken Arabic the pronunciation is ’ʾn = if, ), which is considered Arabic. For this word, too, is the result of a four-step shift in pronunciation, starting from the Old-Aramaic  هין‎ / hayn and proceeding as follows:


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  h in the Qurʾānic spelling هانتم‎ should not be read as the Arabic demonstrative/indicative particle  hā (there), but rather as the Aramaic conditional particle ħē ( < ħēn / if).

2. The demonstrative pronoun ʾəlāʾi should not be read in “classical Arabic” fashion as ʾulāʾi, but rather in Aramaic fashion (as in many Arabic dialects in the Near East) as ʾōlē ( < Syro-Aramaic ʾalēḥ / halēn > West Syriac ʾōlēn > Syro-Arabic ʾōlē >ʾōlē). This demonstrative pronoun refers not to the subject ʾantum (you / plural), as the above-cited translators misread it, but rather to the object, which appears as a personal suffix in the 3rd 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 / wa-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 Qurʾān.

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:

هَمْ، الْهَادِينِ أَوْلَئِكَ لَا يُحَبِّبُونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحَبِّبُونَهُمْ أَوْلَٰئِكَ

[ḥē antum hōlē tu-ḥibbūna-hum, wa-lā yu-ḥibbūna-kum – wa-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 Qurʾān (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:

ياَهِلَ الْكَتِبِ لَمْ تَحَاجَنَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا اتَّلَىَ الْتَورَاةَ وَالْإِلَـٰهِ بِالْآتِ (الْأَوْحَى) وَالْإِلَـٰهِ بِالْآتِ (الْأَوْحَى) = الْأَوْحَى

بعد اَنْتَقُلُوْنَ / هَيَّاهُ هُمْ مَا هَيَّاهُ هُمْ مَا هَيَّاهُ هُمْ ما هَيَّاهُ هُمْ ما هَيَّاهُ هُمْ ما هَيَّاهُ هُمْ ما هَيَّاهُ هُمْ مَا هَيَّاهُ هُمْ مَا هَيَّاهُ هُمْ مَا هَيَّاهُ هُمْ مَا هَيَّاهُ هُمْ مَا هَيَّاهُ هُمْ Masseła ما كان وما كان من المشركين

The three Qurʾān 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) Hanif (hanīfan
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 Ḥanīf (ḥanifan 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 Ḥanīf and subject (muslim) [to Allah]; by no means was he among the Associators.

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 Ḥanīf, 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 /
2. The Qur’anic spelling ﴾افلا﴿ is composed of the Syro-Aramaic conjunction ﴿=āf﴿ (then, consequently) and the negative particle ﴿لا﴿ 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 ﴿fa﴾ (in ﴿فلم / fa-li-mā﴿), which introduces the apodosis makes clear that the ﴿h﴾ at the beginning again introduces the conditional sentence: ﴿هولا هانتم﴾ (to be read as: ﴿hē antum hōl﴾).

On verse 67:
1. For the meaning of ﴿Ḥanīf﴾ see the discussion in ﴿Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran, 1st ed., 39 f.; 2nd ed., 65 f.; 3rd ed., 65 ff.; English edition, 55 f.; on the formal difference between the Qur’anic ﴿ḥanīf﴿ and the Syro-Aramaic ﴿ḥanpā﴿, see ibid. [3rd German edition], 102, note 134; see also ﴿Zur Morphologie von syro-aramäisch (sāṭānā = Satan) and Qurʾānic-Arabic ﴿شيطان﴾ 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 ﴿ḥanif﴾ 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 ﴿AML CM / mšlm = m-šalləmə﴾. 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 شية فيها = lā šubha fīhā﴾ [not as according to the canonical reading: ﴿lā šiyata fīhā﴿], “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 ﴿AML CM / m-šalləmə﴾ (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 /hē (if) occurs in Surah 4:109, where we read:

(ḥē ṣantum ḫālā dālātum ‘ānhum fī l-ḥayāt ad-dunyā [the traditional reading is: al-ḥayāt ad- dunyā], fa-man yuǧādil ʾānhum yawm al-qiyāma)

This sentence, too, is understood syntactically by our Qurʾān 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…?"

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?"

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. The verb جدلتم / ǧādaltum, 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 فم / fa), which according to those same rules introduces the second clause (apodosis) of such a conditional sentence.

3. In the intermediate/middle-position / w of the Qur’anic spelling of حياة the Arabic readers of the Qurʾān saw an indication (albeit an unusual one) of the long vowel ā, although the Arabic letter / a 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 / rebbū [usurious interest]) took the current colloquial speech as their basis, but not in the case of حوله, for which they devised a supposedly classical expression حوله, 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 حياة / ḥayāt (life) is حياة from حيا / ḥayā and حيا / ḥayā. 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 / naǧwā (dialogue), بلوى / balwā (difficult trial), etc. Parallel to this in Arabic, secondary forms such as فتى / fatā (young man, youth) and نجاة / naǧāt (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 حياة, صلاته, زكاة, ربا, and مانة, ribā was transposed onto the aforementioned Qur’anic-Aramaic spellings. The little or dagger alif / ā added by the later Arabic redactors of the Qurʾān after the / w in each of these words, which misled generations of renowned Arabists and Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic-
Aramaic written tradition. Instead, the Qur’ānic spellings just discussed are confirmed by their Aramaic etymology.13

4. Following the word الحيِّوة / al-haywa 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 الدَنيَا / danyā), which is uttered in dialect as the neutral vowel a (danyā/danye). 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 (< po’el) (masculine) and pa’lā (feminine), corresponding to the Syro-Aramaic مَوْعِدَ / danyā = Qur’ānic Arabic دِينَ / daniyā (not dunyā) (compare the Arabic دَنيَا / daniy, feminine دَنيَّة / daniya [near, low]). By the spelling with a final i / alif the Qur’ān renders the Syro-Aramaic feminine ending of the predicative participle, as we find in the feminine form فَعْلَا / fa’lā of the Arabic elative, with a terminal alif, not a tā marbūta (as in the designations for colors, such as صَفْرَا [yellow], حَمْرَا / hamrā [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 i / alif (besides the variant in ى / ى), 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 دِينَ / danyā / dunyā). How they arrived at the formation of the masculine form, however, with the prosthetic alif ending in أَفَّل / 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 < po’al < p’al < (and then to resolve the resulting initial double-consonant, the addition of the Arabo-Aramaic alif prostheticum) = Arabic أَفَّل / af’al. The key to explaining the classical Arabic elative is thus provided to us precisely by the predicative feminine form ending with فَعْلَا (< *fa’lā / fa’alā) which is faithfully preserved in Arabic from the Syro-Aramaic; this feminine form needs no alif prosth-
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:

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 (gani) 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 (gani)] 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 avarie ne se montre avarie 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’anic expression في سبيل الله / fi sabīl Allah (literally: on the way of God) reproduces the Syro-Aramaic idiomatic
expression: \( \text{b-urḥā d-Allāhā} \) (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 ﻫـ / hē, while its second clause (apodosis) begins with the Arabic conjunction ﻓـ (before ﻓـ / fa-minkum). After ﻫـ / hē antum (If you) comes the Arabo-Aramaic demonstrative pronoun ﻫـ / 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 ﻫـ / 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.) ﻫـ / hēlēn ﻫـ / hōlē (West Syriac ﻫـ / hōlēn < ﻫـ / these = the ones).

According to this, the introductory Qur’ānic words ﻫـ / hē antum ﻫـ (hē antum hōlē), translated into Arabic, should be read ﻫـ (in antum al-ladīna) = ﻫـ (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 ﻫـ / b-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 توبة المومنين مقعد للفتال والله سمع علم

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 einer 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 / 'ayn and was therefore supposed to be read 'adawta (to run, hurry on foot), and not gadawta (to do something in the morning). The Lisān (XV, 32a) suggests this reading when it comments on جماعة الالعديّ / al-'adī: جماعة القوم لقتال يعدون و نحوه (a military unit hurrying to a battle or the like يحمل من العدو يسرعون العدو (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 Uhud rather than of al-Ahzāb.

2. Ṭabarī (IV, 71) explains التبوئة / at-tabwiʾa to mean الموضعاتخاذ (take up a position). As an alternative to تبوي / tubawwi' the alternative reading تثوي / taṯwī is suggested, from the Syro-Aramaic ṭav / twā according to Mannā (830b) (3): حثّ (spur on, incite). This reading would have its parallels in Surah 8:65, which reads:

يا بها النبي حرض المومنين على الفتال
(O Prophet, spur the believers on to battle!)

3. The believers in the same verse are supposed to be صبرون / sābirūn (stead-fast), 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 بتم / meth, for which Mannā (319a, at [4]) indicates in Arabic يستقرّ. (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 همَّ طَايِفَانَ من كُنِّكمُ ان تفَشَّا وَلِيْهِمَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فِي تَوَكُّلِ المُؤمِنِينَ"

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 / hamma 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 / wali is used in the Qur’an 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’an, where ولي / wali and نصير / naṣir (helper) are used side by side as synonyms. In this respect ولي / wali came about as a loan-word based on the Syro-Aramaic ʿīlā / ʾīyālā, for which Mannā (16b) lists the Arabic equivalents معين / muʿīn, مساعد / musāʿid, نصير / naṣir (helper).

This results in the following reading for verse 122:

"إذ همَّ طَايِفَانَ من كُنِّكمُ ان تفَشَّا وَلِيْهِمَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فِي تَوَكُّلِ المُؤمِنِينَ"

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 / naṣara 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 ببـدر, the second point (or dot) from the right, which led to the misreading بادر, is placed incorrectly. The original reading (copied below from the facsimile of the ḥiǧāzī codex of the Qurʾān BNF 328a, folio 5b, line 16, second word from the right) looks like this:

Separately:

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 دواـقـعـدو / iqʿadū (cast yourselves down) from the kūfī Qurʾān codex of Samarqand—is a Syriac /ʼayn. 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) بعذر / bi-ʿiḏr.

3. The meaning of the Syro-Aramaic word ʿدراس / ʿeḏrā. 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): ممعونة /maʿūna, عون /ʿawn, نصرة /naṣra. 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 Qurʾānic commentators as to the real origin of the name “Badr.” In this regard he lists three opinions: a) بادر 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) بادر, finally, was a well to the right of the road from Mecca to Medina.

4. Ṭabarī (IV, 75) correctly understands the adjective ذئل / aḏilla (plural of دليل < Syro-Aramaic دليل / dīlā) to mean “few, small in number.”
This philological discussion and the conjecture about the canonical misreading بـبـدر / bi-badr / bi-ʿiḏr 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 للمؤمنين أن يكفيكم ان يبدكم ربك بثلاثة ألف من المليكة 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 Qurʾān reads the particle introducing the direct discourse as a negative interrogative particle / ʿa-lan (< Aramaic interrogative particle ḥā > ʿa + negation lā > proclitic la- + demonstrative particle hayn > hān > ān > enclitic an = ʿa-l-an / ʿalan), which refers to the future. The same defective spelling, pronounced al-ʿān (consisting of two Aramaic demonstrative particles: hal > ʿal + hayn > hān > ān = al-ʿān), means “now” and occurs seven times in the Qurʾān (once in plene writing الآن). In this context, however, the defective spelling should be read as الأن = al-ʿān (now). (The future الآن / ʿa-lan occurs in two other places in the Qurʾān.)

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 (aḏilla).

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)."

هذا يبدكم ربك بخمسة ألف من المليكة 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 (against the enemy) [Note 115: Literally: which make (their horses) hurry onward (against the foe), or: which are equipped with emblems (? musawwimīn). 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 (? musawwimīn). Die Deutung des Ausdrucks ist unsicher.)

Philological notes:

1. The Qur’ānic particle بلى / balā / balē, a contraction composed of the Aramaic particles bal + hayn, like the Syro-Aramaic particle ʾēn / ʾēn, 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 rpār / 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 / hāḏā, 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 / hāḏā, 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 ʾay-dēn / hay-dēn (from ‘hayn-d-hayn) as follows: Old Aramaic ‘hayn-d-hayn > hāy-d-hān > hā-d-hā > ħā-d-ḥā = هذا / hāḏā, which in this context has the same meaning as the Qur’ānic-Arabic حينئذ / ḥīna’idēn (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 ʾăm / ʾām, in order to find the corresponding participial form مسومين / im-šimānā, which indicates for us the Arabic meaning of the Qur’ānic expression as
follows: (disastrous, causing pain or damage, etc.).

This philological discussion results in the following reading for Surah 3:125:

(125) But if you are steadfast and God-fearing and they (the unbelievers), infuriated (literally: out of their fury), should importune you, then your Lord will support you with five thousand powerful (literally: tormenting) angels.

Verse 126, finally, summarizes and repeatedly confirms that all help comes from God:

وما جعله الله إلا بشري لكم ولطمن بمغصيقكم به
وما النصر إلا من عند الله العزيز الحكيم

Paret 126:

God made it [Note 116: i.e., the declaration that he will support you in this way] for this purpose only: to let you have a good tiding, so that you should feel quite secure [Note 117: Literally: so that your heart might be calmed thereby]. The victory comes from God alone, the Mighty and Wise. (Gott machte es [Anm. 116: D.h. die Ankündigung, euch auf diese Weise zu unterstützen] nur zu dem Zweck, euch eine frohe Botschaft zukommen zu lassen, und dass ihr euch ganz sicher fühlen sollet [Anm. 117: W: damit euer Herz sich dadurch beruhige]. Der Sieg kommt von Gott allein, dem Mächtigen und Weisen.)

Verse 126 presents no particular difficulty apart from the word victory, which in Arabic also means “aid, support,” which is more appropriate in this context. Thus the passage about “Badr” concludes:

God intended it only as a good tiding for you, so as to calm your hearts thereby, for help (comes) from God alone, the Mighty, the Wise.

6. Comments on individual written characters of the ħiḡāzī- and kūfī script

The Syriac letter /’ayn, detected in the Qurʾān codex of Samarqand, is imitated in the kūfī and ħiḡāzī- script, inasmuch as the corresponding letter consists of an additional counterstroke leaning to the right, which gives this written character approximately the appearance of a (spread-out) Latin “v.” See also in the illustration above, line 4, the third written character (reading from right to left) in the rasm مغصيقكم / (má) mana‘aka (what prevented you). Later in cursive script the two prongs were connected in a triangle, because that made
it possible to write the character in one stroke. So developed the current but greatly simplified form of the medial Arabic ـعـ / ‘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 hiḡāzi- and kūfī- scripts show their dependence on the Syriac ـعـ / ‘ayn in that the starting stroke of the ع was rounded off to about a quarter circle, so as to avoid confusion with the very similar-looking initial حـ (ğ / ḥ / ḫ). 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 ن / n extending under the line, which apparently is an adaptation of the Aramaic ن / n, which in modern Arabic script, however, developed into a half circle ن / n.

This final ن / n is remarkable, however, in that both the hiḡāzi- and the kūfī- scripts occasionally use the Syriac final ن / ن, which leads to a confusion with the Arabic retroflexive (retrograde) final ي / yā, as was already demonstrated in the article Relikte syro-aramäischer Buchstaben in frühen Korankodizes [“Relics of Syro-Aramaic letters in early Qurʾān codices”]. We find a further example of this sort of hitherto unrecognized Syriac final ن / n in Surah 40:81, which according to the Cairo Edition reads:

ويريكم ایه فای ایبت الله تتكرون

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 ای / ayya (which, masc. fem.), which as a secondary formation is borrowed from Syro-Aramaic, although there can be no doubt as to its use in Arabic.

We are indebted to the Samarqand Qurʾān, nevertheless, for having preserved for us in the written character ن / ن the unaltered way of writing the Syriac final ن / ن; in the canonical edition of the Qurʾān it was mistakenly misread and transcribed as an Arabic final ي / yā, and for centuries all traces of it were blurred. This written character, in fact, corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic defective spelling of ن / en (originally ن / ‘ayn > ن / en). Both ways of writing/spelling it occur in the Qurʾān. 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. We limit ourselves for the moment to this passage in the Qurʾān, where the written
character ١ should not be read in Arabic fashion as “ayya” but rather in
Syro-Aramaic fashion as “ēn.” In the context of the above-cited verse
from the Qur’an, “ēn” has the meaning of an interrogative particle and as such
 corresponds to the Arabic هل / hal, which for its part is a defective spelling,
consisting of two Syro-Aramaic particles: the interjection ُن / ḥāl and the
negative particle ُن / là = ḥā-lā (“ḥā” not? = perhaps not?) or in reverse
order: ُن +ُن / là + ḥā (surely not?).

Now the Samarqand spelling looks like this:

The Syriac final ُن (ُ) separately:

If we read the second letter as a Syriac final ُن, the word should be written
in Arabic (defectively) أن and pronounced in Syro-Aramaic fashion (plene) as
“ēn.” If we add that the traditional Qur’ānic word آية / āya, as already ex-
plained,¹⁸ has been misread a total of 384 times in the Qur’ān (albeit without a
change of meaning), then this results in the following emendation and new
reading for verse 81 from Surah 40:

ویریکم لله اثنين (فهل لله تکرون)

wa-yurikum l-lāh āṯāt(a) (= fa-hal) āṯ(a) tu-nkirūn ?

and he (God) shows you his (wondrous) signs—would you then deny the
(wondrous) signs of God?

The Qur’ān moreover gives examples of the defective as well as the full spel-
lng (plene) of the Syro-Aramaic interrogative particle أن / ُن (ēn) in the following almost identical verses from Surah 7:113 and Surah
26:41:

وجئ السحر فرعون قالوا إننا لاجرا ان كنا نحن الغلبيين

wa-jā l-sāhīr Frūʿūn qawlā yānu lā jār(a) innā an kāna n-nāh gūlbiyīn

Although the question emerges clearly from the context, Paret sees in the two
Syro-Aramaic interrogative particles the Arabic intensifying particle إن / inna
and even أَنَّ / a-inna (sic!) (both pronounced “ēn”) and translates:
Paret: (Q 7:113): And the magicians came to Pharaoh. They said,\textsuperscript{20} “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\textsuperscript{21} belong to us if we are the victors?”

Syntactical notes:

1. Concerning the combination of two verbs in sequence \textit{without a conjunction}, because they essentially amount to one main action, see Theodor Nöldeke, \textit{Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik},\textsuperscript{22} § 337.A.

2. The final \(\dot{a} / \dot{a} / a\) in \(\text{اجرا} / a\dot{g}\) / aģrā / aģrā does not indicate here the \textit{Arabic accusative}, since the rule (arbitrarily) laid down by the Arab grammarians—

that after an introductory \(\text{إنّ} / \text{inna}\) the following subject should be in the \textit{accusative} (ending in \(a / \dot{a}\)) while the predicate should be in the \textit{nominative} (ending in \(u\)), does not take effect here, since \(\text{ان} / \text{ēn}\) in this sentence is an interrogative particle which, as everyone knows, is \textit{neutral with regard to inflection}. Hence with the spelling \(\text{اجرا} / a\dot{g}\) the Qur’ān faithfully reproduces the Syro-Aramaic word \(\text{arga} / \text{agrā}\) in the \textit{status emphaticus}. The Arab grammarians later saw in this Syro-Aramaic spelling the indication of the \textit{Arabic accusative} in its various aspects. This phenomenon occurs rather frequently in the Qur’ān.

3. To the word \(\text{لااجرا} / \text{la-a\dot{g}}\) / la-aģrā is prefixed \(\text{لـ} / \text{la-}\), which here has no intensifying function, as is frequently the case in the Qur’ān when it appears in combination with the intensifying particle \(\text{إنّ} / \text{inna}\) (< Syro-Aramaic \(\text{ˆya} / \text{ēn}, “yes, indeed!”) or before an oath; instead it expresses an uncertainty that underlies the interrogative particle \(\text{ان} < \text{ˆya} / \text{ēn}\), which naturally lends to it a \textit{dubitative} nuance.

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

\text{أنك لانت يوسف}

The Cairo Edition, which sees from the context that this is a question but is unable to recognize an interrogative particle in the spelling \(\text{النّك} / \text{en-ka}\), interpolates after the \textit{alif a hamza} (invented by the Arab grammarians), whereby the \textit{alif} becomes an (Arabic) \textit{interrogative particle} and the following ‘\textit{inna} becomes an (Arabic) \textit{intensifying particle}, especially since the latter seems to confirm this function through the following prefixed \(\text{لـ} / \text{la-}\), and the edition reads:
Paret (198) accordingly translates this correctly: “Are you, then, Joseph?” By rendering the prefixed لـ / la- as “then,” Paret may have sensed an intensifying nuance in the question. Here, however, this لـ / 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:

Here, too, the Cairo Edition misses the interrogative particle in أنا (Arabic: ʾinna) and once again interpolates a hamza after the alif, reading: أنا / a-ʾinna. This, however, is superfluous, since the underlying element is not the Arabic explanatory particle إنّ / 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 نًا / -nā, resulting in the doubling of the middle/medial نūn. Hence the original Qur’ānic rasm should be read أنا / ēn-nā (and not: a-ʾinna). This interrogative particle is followed, as above, by the prefixed dubitative لـ / la-(mardūdūn).

In the following verse the hamza interpolated at the conjunction اذّا / iḏā (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 فِي الْحَافِرة 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 (die wir) in der Erde Schoß (liegen)(?) (wieder ins Leben) zurückgebracht werden? [Anm. 4: W: wenn] wir zu morsche(n) Knochen (geworden) sind?] 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: اتِلِمْا = “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: ‘aʾiḏā “ 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 ēn-nā with a following /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 we are decayed 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 ḥāfira / 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, / al-ḥāfira is correctly explained to mean the earth dug up to make graves) and interpreted as a passive participle like the Arabic مَحْفَوْرَةٌ / maḥfūra (dug, hollowed out). This corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic passive participle ending in paʾlā, as we find in the form مَحْفُوْرَةٌ / saʾṭānā (reprehensible, abominable) > مَحْفُوْرَةٌ / saʾṭānā (the abominable, detestable one) = “Satan.” After this the medial alif in حافرة as mater lectionis, stands not for a long ā, but for a short a (ḥafra > dialect form ḥafra = 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 paʾlā then gives rise to the Arabic forms  faʾl, faʾal and faʾil, which the Arabic philologists (as the Lisān frequently attests) usually took for noun forms with adjectival meaning. One example (among many others) is the Qurʾānic word صمَد / 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” (Samad) (into a unity) (= the “Triune”), 3. (who) has not begotten and was not begotten. And who has no equal.”
The fact that God is One is stated in Surah 72:3 also. It is astonishing that the word حـد / ḥad (someone) (< Syro-Aramaic 邯 / ḥaḏ (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:

وَلَا كُتِبَ لَهُ اِلْحَدُّ وَلَا وَلَا صَحِبَتَهُ

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

For the dubious word جـد / ǧadd 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 (ǧadd) 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 (ǧadd) unseres Herrn ist erhaben.] Er hat sich weder eine Gefährtin noch ein Kind [Anm. 2: Oder (Mehrzahl): Kinder] zugelegt.)

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

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.)

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.)

It is just as astonishing that it did not occur to these translators of the Qurʾān to eliminate the point under جـد / ǧadd and to read حـد / ḥad (one). This results in the following reading:

And the Most High (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 صاحبه admits two readings. The Cairo Edition of the Qurʾān reads صحبه / ṣāḥiba and makes it out to mean (God’s) “female companion,” whereas the reading صحابة / ṣaḥāba (plural) results in the meaning “companions” (e.g., the comrades or associates of the Prophet), which is more in keeping with Qur’ānic theology. In other passages the Qurʾān uses as a synonym for this the term شريك / šarik (in the singular) and (in the plural) شركا / šurakā (participants). This misreading of the rasm صحبه صحابة occurs a second time in the Qurʾān in Surah 6:101 as follows:

بديع السموم والارض اني (أي) صاحبه له (= يكون = لم يكن) له صحابه

(صاحبه = صحابه) وخلق كل شي وهو بكل شيء علم

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 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)!

The twofold misreading of the Qur’ānic defective spelling صحبه صحابة and its erroneous interpretation as صاحبه صاحبة / ṣāḥiba (female companion) instead of صحابة / šaḥāba (companions) is confirmed by two parallel passages in the Qurʾān. Surah 17:111 reads:

وهل 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 السموم والأرض ولم يتخذ ولدا ولم يكن له شريك في الملك
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 Adoptionism (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.

OutputStream

These three letters taken from the Rabbula Gospel Book (586 A.D.) (from right to left: L / L, / 'ayn, N / 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):

\[ \text{Syriac } \Delta \text{ } = \text{ Arabic } لـ / L; \]
\[ \text{Syriac } \Uparrow \text{ } = \text{ Arabic } عـ / ʿayn; \]
\[ \text{Syriac } \n \text{ } = \text{ Arabic } نـ / N. \]

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

وأنه لما قام عبد الله يدعو كادوا يكونون عليه لبذا

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 yakānūna 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 Zuänglichkeit?) beinahe erdrückt (kādū yakānūna 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!”

Further examples of confusing Syriac letters in this way followed in the essay, “Relikte syro-aramäischer Buchstaben in frühen Korankodizes im ḥiǧāzī- und kūfī-Duktus.”

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.
Notes:


2 The first case cited as an example was the Arabic spelling of [يَلْحُدُونَ](yulḥudūn) (traditional reading: [yu-lḥidūna](yu-lḥidūna)), which in the context makes no sense but supposedly means "allude to" (Suras 7:180; 16:103; 41:40); the meaning finally becomes clear, however, from the Syriac (Garshuni) spelling, transcribed phonetically into Arabic as [يَلْغَزُونَ](yulḡizūn), which the *Lisān* (V, 405b) also corroborates: فيه وَألَغَزَ الْكَلامَ أَلْغَزَ أَوْلَدَهُ، معنَى مرَادَهِ وَأَضْمَرَهُ مَراَدَهُ: (with reference to speech, algaza means "to obscure what is meant and not to express it clearly").


4 *Ṭabarî* (Commentary on the Qur’an), I, 26 ff. It is reported there that the Syrians quoted the reading by Ubai b. Ka‘b, whereas the Iraqis cited the one by Ibn Mas‘ūd.


7 Syro-aramaic *תועב* /tūḇ > Mandaean (= East Aramaic-Babylonian) *ثم* /ṯum > Arabic *ثم* /ṯum(ma) [Old Aramaic *ثال* /ṯūḇ > Hebrew *שוב* /šūḇ] does not actually mean “after that,” as Paret (123) translates it (“And indeed we created you [men]. After that we gave you a [harmonious] form”), but rather: “again, furthermore, both-and”; see *Mannā* (831b), article *בַּתּוּ (lā tūḇ)* nondum (not again = not yet), according to the *Thesaurus* (II, 4400), however, (or else in addition), at the article *בַּתּוּ (tūḇ lā): non amplius* (not again = no longer); corresponding to this is the Qur’anic-Arabic *لا* *ثم* (lāṯumma lā), as in Surah 11:113 (lāṯumma lā), rendered by Paret (189) as follows: “(And some day) you will not be helped,” with the note (107): “Literally: after that.” Yet it should be understood (in Syro-Aramaic fashion) to mean: “And you will no longer be helped.” So too in various passages of the Qur’an, where the connecting
words ٌ ثم /ثم ma là don’t mean “after that not,” but as a rule, “again not = not again = no longer.”


9 See Th. Noldeke, Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik, p. 169, § 224.

10 Sprachwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen, i, 22, with reference to Ibn Ya‘īs, 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).


15 From the Syro-Aramaic اين (ayn) and the enclitic demonstrative/indicative particle [Deutepartikel] /hā, which by sound-shift becomes > (aynā) by the assimilation of the nūn and the resultant doubling of the yā by way of substitution, we get the Arabic form این (pronounced: ayyā / ayy). N.B.: The inflection according to nominative, genitive and accusative (ayyu, ayyi, ayya) prescribed by classical Arabic grammar is fictitious, since etymologically this interrogative pronoun should be treated no differently from the demonstrative pronoun هذا / hāḏā (this), which is also borrowed from Aramaic and which Arabic grammar—rightly this time—considers indeclinable. The original Syro-Aramaic form اين (aynā) (pronounced ayna and 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 اين (aynā) as a combination of [1] the secondary particle اين / ay (which comes about only when the final nūn is dropped) (from اين / hayn > اين / layn > اين / lay), in which it sees an independent interrogatory particle (particula interrogativa), and [2] اين / hānā (which again arises secondarily from a contracted اين /hayn > اين / hān + اين / hā), modern Arabic dialects of the Near East employ surviving variants of “here” such as هن, هن > (West Syrian) هن, هن / hān and هن, which are all contracted forms from the Syro-Aramaic اين / hayn > اين / hān / hān > هن (isolated + enclitic اين / hā), from which comes, last but not least, the classical Arabic هذا / hunā (in which the 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 هنون / hānōn > اينون / hānōn are composed of the demonstrative “hayn > هن > هن > on and the enclitic plural personal pronoun هن, whereby the assimilation of the enclitic h results in the doubling of the medial n.

16 On the particular meanings of Syro-Aramaic اين (en) see Mannā (16b): (1) نعم، يلي: (yes, indeed); (2) يا. أيا النداء (Oh as an exclamation); (3) هل للإسفهان (interrogative particle); (4) ولكن، إلا. غير أن (but, nevertheless, however).
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17 Mannā (165a): (lā ḥā ?) (is it not ...?); moreover the Thesaurus (II, 1869) notes: (lā), partícula negativa et privativa... 3) interrogativa, nonne; Valet: * ) annon ? nonne ? Jud. 10:11, Matt. 7:22, 10:29...; ita (lā ḥā ?), Matt. 5:46–47, 6:26, Hebr. 1:14 ; ita (lā hāwā ?), Heb. 855 (hā-lā /hā-lō [perhaps contracted > hallā ] ?), Exod. 4:4, 1 Cor. 10:16, James 2:5, 21, 25...


19 The fact that the final inflection of the regular feminine plural (āt / āt) is  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 (āţā / āṯā) ends in ā, just like the plural form (āţwāţa / āṯwāţa) 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 لاجرا / la-aǧrā is prefixed لـ / 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 إنّ / inna (or before an oath); instead it expresses an uncertainty that underlies the interrogative particle إن؟ / 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 ذ / iḏ and أذا / iḏā correspond semantically to the Syro-Aramaic کاذا / kaḏ (when, while, as), in rare cases even in a concessive sense (although), as in Sura 7:12, where God asks Iblīs: (What kept you from casting yourself down, although I commanded you to do so?).

24 Like حافرة / ḥāfira (actually: ḥafra), نخرة / naḫira (= naḫra) is morphologically a Syro-Aramaic passive participle ending in pa’lā (= Arabic محفوره / maḥfūra [dug, hollowed out], منخره / manḫūra [perforated, punctured]).


26 This interpretation can be corroborated in the Qur'an. Surah 17:85 reads:

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 (“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: "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 كفا / kafā (to suffice) corresponds lexically (and consequently semantically as well) to the Syro-Aramaic كفأ / sfaq, for which Mannā (508a) notes the following Arabic meanings: (1) كافا (to suffice, be enough); (2) ساوق (to understand, comprehend); (3) كاف (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 / kana (to be). The Aramaic spelling, however, points instead to the reading كفو / kafū (in classical Arabic كفوم / 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 كفوا / kafuwan, a verbal name for God and is still customary today.

28 Concerning the erroneous transcription إنى / annā instead of أين / aynā (28 times in the Qur'an) through a confusion of the Syriac final نون with the Arabic final ياء, 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.

29 In this context the latter meaning should preferably be taken into consideration, inasmuch as the Arabic علم / ʿalima is borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic حلم / ḫlam through the vocalization of the guttural sound ḫ as ح / ħ as ذ in Arabic the ح was again vocalized as (tertiary) ḏ, producing the word غلم / ǧulām (a growing boy, a youth who is gaining strength < Syro-Aramaic حلما / ḫalma, حلما / ḫalma, حلما / ḫalma).
According to the *Lisân* (I, 520a) this may also be intended as an infinitive or a verbal noun ( مصدر / maṣdar) (perhaps "participation, membership").


*Cf.* Surah 19:36.