Christoph Luxenberg
THE SYRO-ARAMAIC READING OF THE KORAN
A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran
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Verlag Hans Schiler
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FOREWORD

In the year 2000 the first German edition of this study (Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran) presented to the public a fraction of more extensive investigations on the language of the Koran. A second expanded edition followed in 2004. A third German edition has been published recently.

The basis of this first English edition is the first and, in part, the second German edition. Beyond that, the present English edition contains minor supplements and new findings.

It is hoped that the selection of results made in this publication will provide a stimulus to Koran researchers to begin discussing the methods and interpretations arising from them with regard to the contents of the text of the Koran. From the controversy provoked in the meantime over the language of the Koran, no objectively grounded refutation has emerged in view of the essential findings presented here.

What is meant by Syro-Aramaic (actually Syriac) is the branch of Aramaic in the Near East originally spoken in Edessa and the surrounding area in Northwest Mesopotamia and predominant as a written language from Christianization to the origin of the Koran. For more than a millennium Aramaic was the lingua franca in the entire Middle Eastern region before being gradually displaced by Arabic beginning in the 7th century. It is thought that the Greeks were the first to call Aramaic Syriac (as the language of Assyria in the time of Alexander the Great). This term was then adopted by the Christian Arameans, who in this way wanted to distinguish themselves from their pagan fellow countrymen. Syriac is also the name given by the Arabs in their early writings (for example in hadith literature) to this Christian Aramaic, which is an ar-

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2 Thus according to one tradition (hadith) the Prophet is said to have given his secretary, Zaid ibn Thabit (d. 45/665 A.D.), the task of learning Syriac and Hebrew in order to read him the writings he received in these languages. Cf., for
gument for the importance of this language at the time at which written Arabic originated.

As a written language, and especially in translations of the Bible, which presumably existed as early as the second century of the Christian era, Syro-Aramaic achieved such an influence that it soon stretched beyond the region of Syria to, among other places, Persia. The Christian Syrian literature, which was in its heyday from the 4th to the 7th century, is especially extensive.  

With its Syro-Aramaic reading of the Koran this study in no way claims to solve all of the riddles of the language of the Koran. It is merely an attempt to illuminate a number of obscurities in the language of the Koran from this particular perspective. The fact, namely, that Syro-Aramaic was the most important written and cultural language in the region in whose sphere the Koran emerged, at a time in which Arabic was not a written language yet and in which learned Arabs used Aramaic as a written language, suggests that the initiators of the Arabic example, Ibn Sa’d az-Zuhri (d. 230 H./845 A.D.), at-Tabaqat al-kubra, 8 vols. + Index, Beirut 1985, II 358). In the Encyclopedia of Islam, Leiden, Leipzig 1934, vol. 4, 1293b, one reads under Zaid b. Thabit: “In any event he was his secretary, who recorded a part of the revelations and took care of the correspondence with the Jews, whose language or writing he is said to have learned in 17 days or less.” It should be noted here, however, that the Jews did not speak Hebrew at this time, but Aramaic (Jewish Aramaic).  


4 Cf. on this subject Theodor Nöldeke’s Kurzgefasste Syrische Grammatik, Leipzig 1898 (second edition), reprint, Darmstadt 1977, Introduction xxxi-xxxiv. [Compendious Syriac Grammar, Eng. translated by A. Chrichton, London, 1904.] On the importance of Aramaic or Syriac in general, Nöldeke says: “This language was dominant for longer than a millennium in a very extensive area of the Near East far beyond its original boundaries and even served for the less educated neighboring populations as a written language” (xxxii).

5 On this subject Nöldeke says in his sketch Die semitischen Sprachen [The Semitic Languages], Leipzig 1899, second edition, p. 36: “Aramaic was the language of Palmyra whose aristocracy, however, was in large part of Arab descent. The Nabateans were Arabs. It is probable that many Arameans lived in the northern part of their empire (not far from Damascus), but further to the south Arabic was spoken. Only Aramaic was at that time a highly respected civilized language which those Arabs used because their own language was not a written language.”


7 Included here is the project of the WKAS (Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache [Dictionary of Classical Arabic]), which has been in preparation since 1957. Cf. Helmut Gärtje, Arabische Lexikographie. Ein historischer
1. INTRODUCTION

According to Islamic tradition the Koran (in Arabic, ﷽/Qur'an), the sacred scripture of Islam, contains the revelations, eventually fixed in writing under the third caliph 'Uṯmān (Othman) ibn 'Afram (644–656 A.D.), of the Prophet Muḥammad (Mohammed) (570–632 A.D.), the proclamation of which had stretched over a period of about twenty years (approx. 612–632 A.D.) in the cities of Mecca and Medina.

As the first book written in Arabic known to tradition, the Koran is considered by speakers of Arabic to be the foundation of written Arabic and the starting point of an Arabic culture that flourished intellectually in the High Middle Ages. Moreover, according to Islamic theology its contents are held to be the eternal word of God revealed in Arabic.

Non-Muslims see in the Koran a cultural heritage of humanity. It is from this they derive their interest and justification in studying this literary monument from the standpoint of cultural history and the history of religion, as well as from a philological perspective.

Precisely this philological perspective will be occupying us here, since there is naturally a danger of making false inferences on the basis of a text that, in large parts of the Koran, has not been clarified philologically, as not only Western scholars of the Koran, but also the Arabic philologists themselves admit. Whence derives the fundamental interest, not only of the historian of culture and religion, but also and especially of the philologist, to endeavor, as a matter of priority, to clarify the Koranic text.

A good start in this direction was already made by the Western Koran scholarship of the 19th century. Here, listed in the chronological order of their appearance, are the most important publications looking into the text of the Koran in more detail:


Überblick [Arabic Lexicography: A Historical Overview], in Historiographia Linguistica XII: 1/2, Amsterdam 1985, 105-147, loc.cit. 126-138 under No. 7, Allgemeines zum 'WKAS' [On the 'WKAS' in general], with bibliographical information on p. 142 under (B) Secondary Literature.
In fact, Mingana’s contribution to our understanding of the *Syriac influence on the style of the Koran* – never since refuted by Western Koran scholars – could have furthered Koranic studies had anyone taken up and consistently pursued the theoretical guidelines he proposed nearly three quarters of a century ago. The examples given to support his thesis, however, were obviously inadequate. Still, Mingana cannot be far from the truth with his statistical rough estimate of the foreign language portion of the Koran. On a scale of 100, he divides up this portion as

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8 See the following examples to صرامط (ṣārat), قصر (qasr), سطر (saytāra), مصيرط (ṣārat), and اضطر (ijjāra) below p. 226 ff.
follows: 5% Ethiopic, 10% Hebrew, 10% Greco-Roman, 5% Persian and nearly 70% Syriac (= Syro-Aramaic) including Aramaic and Christian Palestinian (cf. op. cit. 80). The evidence he provides for this he then divides into five categories: (a) proper names, (b) religious terms, (c) expressions of ordinary language, (d) orthography, (e) sentence constructions and (f) foreign historical references.

While the items listed under (a), (b), and (d) (I, II, and IV) are for the most part sufficiently well known, the examples cited for (c) turn out to be relatively few, considering that it is, after all, precisely the expressions of ordinary language that make up the brunt of the language of the Koran. Category (e) (V), on the other hand, is examined from four points of view, which could, in itself, have served as the basis of a more in-depth investigation. A prerequisite for an investigation of this kind, however, would be a mastery of both the Syro-Aramaic and the Arabic language at the time of the emergence of the Koran. Finally, in (f) (VI), it is essentially a question of a thematic examination of the text of the Koran in which the author, at times with convincing results, follows up, in particular, on the above-mentioned work by Speyer.

— Günter Lüling, Über den Ur-Qurâân: Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorsislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qurâân [Regarding the Original Koran. Basis for a Reconstruction of Pre-Islamic Christian Strophic Hymns in the Koran], Erlangen 1974 (2nd ed., Erlangen 1993). This study is, after that of Jacob Barth’s, a further, more extensive attempt to elucidate obscure passages of the Koran by changing certain diacritical dots. Lüling’s thesis depends on the one hand on the supposition of an “Ur-Qurâân” (Original Koran), in which the author sees, not without reason, Christian hymns, which he then undertakes to reconstruct. On the other hand, as to his philological method for elucidating obscure passages of the Koran, Lüling supposes a pre-Islamic Christian koine, but one whose essential nature he fails to define. However, by basing himself on an essentially theological argument to achieve the goal of reconstruction and elucidation, Lüling only occasionally succeeds and is, on the whole, unable to solve the enigma of the language of the Koran. His merit is, however, to have re-posed the question of the nature of the language of the Koran. The kernel of his thesis of a Christian “Original Koran” would have engendered further research, had it not been rejected categorically by the representatives of this discipline in Germany.

2. REFERENCE WORKS

The present study has originated impartially, i.e. independently of the works of Western scholarship listed above, as well as of Koran-related Arabic philology and exegesis. They would also, in all probability, have been detrimental to the method, which has gradually been worked out here in the course of this study, for research into the language of the Koran, and will thus only be referred to for comparative purposes during the philological discussions of individual passages in the Koran. In the discussion of the Koranic expressions requiring clarification, the following Arabic reference works have been consulted:

(a) the most important Arabic commentary on the Koran by Ṭabarī (d. 310 H. / 923 A.D.), which also takes into account earlier Koran commentaries: Abū Gaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ṣarrār at-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmiʿ al-bayān 'an taʿwil ḥāl al-Qurʾān (30 parts in 12 vols.), 3rd ed., Cairo, 1968 (cited below as Ṭabarī/Ṭabarī followed by the part and page number);

(b) the principal Arabic lexicon, لسان العرب Lisān al-ʿarab of Ibn Manẓūr (1232–1311 A.D.), based on the Arabic lexicography begun in the second half of the 8th century with كتاب العين Kitāb al-ʿāyn by al-Hallī b. ʿAbdallāh (d. circa 786 A.D.);10 Abū Ḥaṭṭāl Ǧamāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr al-Iṣṭaʿī al-Miṣrī, Lisān al-ʿarab ("Tongue of the Arabs"). 15 vols., Beirut, 1955 (cited in the following as Lisān with the volume number, page number and column letter, a or b).

Furthermore, for comparative purposes, the translations of the main most recent representatives of Western Koran scholarship will be given in the following order – Richard Bell (English), Rudi Paret (German) and Régis Blachère (French) – based on the following editions:

- RÉGIS BLACHÈRE, Le Coran (traduit de l'arabe), Paris, 1957. (Cited in the following as: Bell, Paret or Blachère [vol.] and page.)

To verify the readings interpreted according to Syro-Aramaic, the following Syro-Aramaic lexicons will be used:

- PAYNE SMITH, ed., Thesaurus Syriacus, tomos I, Oxonii 1879; tomos II, Oxonii 1901 (cited in the following as: Thes./Thesaurus volume and column).
- JACQUES EUGÈNE MANNA, Vocabulaire Chaldéen-Arabe, Mosul, 1900; reprinted with a new appendix by Raphael J. Bidawde, Beirut, 1975 (cited in the following as: Mann and column).

The translations cited will show how these Western scholars of the Koran have understood the Koran passages in question, even after a critical evaluation of the Arabic exegesis. The expressions that are to receive a new interpretation will in each case be underlined. This will then be followed by the proposed translation according to the Syro-Aramaic understanding, and also in some cases according to the Arabic understanding, accompanied by the corresponding philological explanations.

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10 Cf. Stefan Wild, Das Kitāb al-ʿāyn und die arabische Lexikographie [The Kitāb al-ʿāyn and the Arabic Lexicography], (Wiesbaden, 1965) 1 ff., 58 ff., and specifically on the Lisān al-ʿarab 87-90.
3. The Working Method Employed

The aim of this work was in the first place to clarify the passages designated in Western Koran studies as *obscure*. However, apart from the previously unrecognized Aramaisms, the investigation of the overall Koranic language, which is considered to be indisputably Arabic, has uncovered, so to speak as a by-product, a goodly number of not insignificant misreadings and misinterpretations, even of genuinely Arabic expressions. Precisely in relation to the latter, it has turned out again and again that the meaning accepted by the Arabic commentators of the Koran has not at all fit the context.

In such cases the reference works of Arabic lexicography, which originated later and were thus, in their developed form, unknown to the earlier commentators of the Koran, have often been able to set things straight. In this regard it should be noted that in his large Koran commentary *Tabari* invariably refers to the oral Arabic tradition, but not once to a lexicon of any kind. Only occasionally, in order to explain an unclear Koranic expression, does he quote verses from Arabic poetry, but these comparisons are often misleading since the vocabulary of this poetry differs fundamentally from that of the Koran.

As a departure from traditional Western methods of interpretation, which for the most part rely closely on the Arabic tradition, in the present work the attempt is made for the first time to place the text of the Koran in its historical context and to analyze it from a new philological perspective with the aim of arriving at a more convincing understanding of the Koranic text. The results will show that perhaps even more passages have been misunderstood in the Koran than those whose uncertainty has been conceded by previous Koran commentators and translators. Beyond this, the analysis will in part reveal considerable deficits in the previous interpretation of many aspects of the syntactic structure of the language of the Koran. The major points of the acquired method, which has evolved in the process of the detailed textual analysis, will be presented in the following.

The canonical version of the 1923/24 Cairo edition of the Koran will serve as the textual basis. Koran citations, orthography (without vowel signs) and verse numbering refer to this edition. This modern Koran edition differs from the earlier Koran manuscripts as a result of the subsequent addition of a large number of reading aids worked out for the faithful by Arabic philologists over the course of the centuries. Included among these are, in the first place, the so-called diacritical dots, serving to distinguish the equivocal and ambiguous letters in the early Arabic alphabet. These twenty-two letters requiring clarification will be discussed in more detail below.

Starting from the understanding that the Arabic readers, in view of the fact that the basic form of the earlier Koranic manuscripts is not easy to decipher even for educated Arabs, have for the most part correctly read today’s accepted version of the Koran, this version is fundamentally respected in the forthcoming textual analysis following the principle of *lectio difficilior*. Only in those instances in which the context is obviously unclear, in which the Arabic commentators of the Koran are at the limit of their Arabic, in which it is said over and over again in *Tabari* “the commentators disagree on the interpretation of the expression in question,” or, not infrequently, when the listing of a series of speculations both in *Tabari* and in the *Lisan* is concluded with the remark *(wa-l-lahu a’lam)* (God knows it best – or in plain English, *God only knows* what the expression in question really means!), only then will the attempt be made, while paying careful attention to the given context, to discover a more reasonable reading. The procedure employed in doing so will be as follows:

(a) For an expression designated as *obscure* by the Western Koran translators, a check is first made in the Arabic commentary of *Tabari* to see whether one or the other of the cited interpretations ignored by the Western Koran translators does not, in fact, fit better in the context. Namely, it occasionally happens that the Arabic tradition has kept an accurate or an approximate memory of an earlier Aramaic expression. If this is not the case, then

(b) in the *Lisan* the Arabic expression in question is examined for possible alternative semantic meanings, since *Tabari* and the earlier Arabic commentators did not have an aid of such scope at
their disposal and in any case in his commentary Tabarî never refers to any Arabic lexicon whatsoever. This step also occasionally results in a better, more fitting sense. However, if the search remains unsuccessful, then

(c) a check is made to see whether there is a homonymous root in Syro-Aramaic whose meaning differs from that of the Arabic and which, based on a consideration of objective criteria, clearly fits better in the context. In a not insignificant number of cases this Syro-Aramaic reading produced the better sense. Here one must see to it that according to the context the two homonyms can occur both in the Arabic and in the Syro-Aramaic meaning. Then, if this check leads nowhere,

(d) an attempt is made in the first place to read the Arabic writing differently than in the Cairo version of the Koran by changing the diacritical points, which were not there originally and which were later and perhaps erroneously added. Not infrequently it can be determined that the Arabic readers have apparently falsely read an expression in itself genuinely Arabic because they lacked the appropriate background information. However, if all of the possible alterations do not result in a sense that fits the context, then

(e) the attempt is made, while changing the diacritical points, to make out an Aramaic root beneath the Arabic writing. In an almost incalculable number of cases this has been successful to the extent that the Aramaic expression has given the context a decidedly more logical sense. However, if this attempt also fails, then

(f) a final attempt is made to reconstruct the actual meaning of the apparently genuine Arabic expression by translating it back into Aramaic by way of the semantics of the Syro-Aramaic expression. This attempt succeeds in importance, extent and level of difficulty the discovery of actual Aramaisms (or Syriacisms) for, as there are still no Arabic-Aramaic dictionaries, the researcher must here depend solely on his or her own knowledge of (the) lan-
guage(s). In the process, what appear to be genuinely Arabic expressions can be divided into: (1) loan formations and (2) loan translations (or calques).

(g) Another category involves, in turn, those for the most part genuine Arabic expressions that are neither susceptible to plausible explanation in the *Liṣṭā* nor explainable by translation back into Syro-Aramaic, either because they have a completely different meaning in modern Arabic or because their basic Arabic meaning is unknown. In such cases the important lexical works by the East Syrian physicians *Bar Ṭalī* (d. 1001) and *Bar Bahîtâl* (mentioned in a document in 963) occasionally provide information on their real meanings. These Syro-Aramaic lexicons were created in the 10th century, presumably as a translating aid for Syrian translators of Syriac scientific works into Arabic, as Syro-Aramaic was being displaced more and more by Arabic. The Syro-Aramaic-(Chaldean-)Arabic dictionary of *Mannā* mentioned at the outset, by taking into account, among other lexicons, that of *Bar Bahîtâl*, continues to a certain extent this tradition of Eastern Syrian lexicography. The Arabic vocabulary that these lexicons employ for the explanation of Syro-Aramaic words and expressions is of eminent importance here, especially when, as an equivalent of a Syro-Aramaic expression, several Arabic synonyms are listed, of

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11 I.e. etymologically related.

12 With its appended *Index latinus* Brockelmann’s *Lexicon Syriacum* does offer a stopgap, however.

13 Anton Baumstark, *Gesichte der syrischen Literatur* [History of Syrian Literature] (Bonn, 1922) 241. It is said of *Bar Ṭalī* in the same work that he worked as an eye doctor and spoke Arabic. On the importance of these works, Baumstark writes (242): “The work by B. Bahlul, which was later on often published in a combined edition with the other and which is especially valuable due to its exact citation of sources, was also geared from the start to the explanation of foreign words of Greek origin and enriched by objective erudition of a philosophical, scientific and theological nature. Naturally, a considerable element of the West Syrian scholarly tradition begins to make itself felt in the complicated textual history of this codification of Eastern Syrian lexicography...”.

14 Cf. Theodor Nöldeke, *Die semitischen Sprachen* [The Semitic Languages], 2nd edition (Leipzig, 1899) 43.
which one or the other occasionally occurs in the Koran. In this respect, the *Thesaurus Syriacus* has proven to be a veritable treasure trove whenever it cites, although irregularly, at least relatively often, the Arabic explanations of the Eastern Syrian lexicographers. In this way it has been possible, thanks to the *Thesaurus Syriacus*, to explain many an obscure Koranic expression. A systematic exploration of the Arabic vocabulary in these early Eastern Syriac lexicons, however, would bring even more to light. Also, the early Christian-Arabic literature of the Eastern Syrians, until now ignored by Koran scholars, yet whose Arabic vocabulary reaches back, in part at least, to the pre-Islamic usage of the Christian Arabs of Mesopotamia and Syria, would lead to more convincing results than the so-called Old Arabic – though for the most part post-Koranic – poetry, whose vocabulary is extremely inappropriate and misleading for understanding the Koran.

This is the case when misunderstood Koranic expressions are used improperly or in a completely different context in this poetry and then cited as authentic evidence for the interpretation of these same Koranic expressions by the later Arabic philologists. This inner-Arabic methodology proper to later Arabic lexicography consists in explaining obscure expressions, for the most part speculatively and in the absence of other literature, on the basis of the often hard to unravel context of earlier Arabic poetry,

in the course of which a borrowing from a foreign language is only sporadically identified correctly. Western scholars of the Koran have not considered these circumstances with sufficient scepticism. Although one often notes the clumsiness of the Arabic commentators, it is mostly without being able to help them out. Compared to this, the fully mature Syro-Aramaic – especially theological – literature existing long prior to the Koran and the reliably traditional semantics of the Syro-Aramaic vocabulary – even after the Koran – offer an aid that, on the basis of the results of this study, will prove to be an indispensable key to the understanding, not only of the foreign-language vocabulary, but also of what is considered to be the Arabic vocabulary of the language of the Koran.

(h) Now and then one also finds genuine Arabic expressions that have been misread and misunderstood because, though they are written in Arabic script, they have been produced orthographically according to the Syro-Aramaic phonetic system and are to be pronounced accordingly, so that one can only identify them as meaningful Arabic expressions in this roundabout way. An example that will be discussed more fully below (p. 111 ff., Sura 16:103; 41:40, Koranic *yulḥidtn* is a misreading of *威尼斯人* = Syriac *yulguztm* phonetically Arabic *威尼斯人* = Syriac *威尼斯人* gives a first hint of the assumption that the original Koranic text was written in *Garshuni* (or *Kharshuni*), that is to say Arabic written in Syriac letters. Further evidences corroborating this hypothesis will be given with empiric accuracy in a forthcoming publication.


16 Thus, for example, Nöldeke (loc. cit. 43) refers to the learned metropolitan of Nisibis, Elias bar Shinnājā (975 – c. 1050 A.D.), who had written “his works intended for Christians either in Arabic or in parallel columns of Arabic and Syriac, i.e. in the spoken language and in the language of the learned.”

17 For example, Nöldeke says in this regard (loc. cit. 53): “Admittedly the poems of the Arab heathen period were only recorded significantly later and not at all without distortion,” and further (58), “In particular the literature of satirical and abusive songs has with certainty introduced many arbitrary and in part quite strangely devised expressions into the (Arabic) lexicon.”

These are the essential points of the working method that has resulted from the present philological analysis of the Koranic text inasmuch as it has involved an analysis of individual words and expressions. Added to this are problems of a syntactical nature which have cropped up in the course of the textual analysis and which have been discussed in detail, case by case. The examples that follow in the main part of this study may be seen as putting this method to the test.

But beforehand it seems necessary to introduce non-Arabists to the problem of Koranic readings. This set of problems is connected in the first place with the virtually stenographic character of the early Arabic script, which for this reason is also called defective script. This can per-

haps be best explained by the following outline of the chronological origins of the Arabic script.

stehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam [The Obscure Beginnings. New Researches on the Rise and the Early History of Islam], Berlin, 2005, 2006, 2007, p. 124-147, C. Luxenberg: Neubeutung der arabischen Inschrift im Felsendom zu Jerusalem [New Interpretation of the Arabic Inscription within the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem]. In this contribution the author has shown that the Arabic letter 璞 / l in the word ًادا (traditional reading libadan) in Sura 72:19 is a mistranscription of the Syriac letter م / l as the copyist has confused with the quite similar Syriac letter ن / l. No wonder that the Koran commentators in East and West were perplexed in the face of this riddle. So Bell translates (II 611 f.) this verse (وإنه لم يقام عبد الله - يدعو كاذباً كاذباً) following the Arab commentators, as follows: “And that, when a servant of Allah stood calling upon Him, they were upon him almost in swarms [note 3: The meaning is uncertain. The “servant of Allah” is usually taken to be Muhammad, and “they” to refer to jinn, which is possible if angels now speak]. However, to solve this puzzle we just need to restore the original Syriac spelling م rigs, that leads to the Arabic reading ًادا / libadan (servants of God) instead of the meaningless ًادا / libadan (allegedly “in swarms”). The philological discussion with regard to the context of the verses 18–20 had as result the following understanding:

18. and that the worship belongs (only) to God; so along with God you shall not invoke any one; 19. and that, when the servant of God (i.e. Jesus, Son of Mary – cf. Sura 19:30, where the child Jesus, immediately after his birth, says about himself: ًادا عبد الله “I am the servant of God!”) had risen (from the dead) going on to invoke Him, they (i.e. the people) almost would have worshiped him (as God); 20. he said (NB – not say): I invoke indeed my Lord and do not associate with Him any one! (Cf. Sura 5:117).
4. The Arabic Script

Except for a few pre-Islamic 4th-6th century A.D. inscriptions stemming from northern Hijaz and Syria, the Koran is considered to be the first book ever written in Arabic script. The early form of the Arabic letters and the type of ligatures employed suggest that the Syro-Aramaic cursive script served as a model for the Arabic script.

Both scripts have the following in common with the earlier Aramaic (and Hebrew) script: the writing runs from right to left; in principle the letters designate the consonants with only two letters serving to reproduce the semi-long and long vowels /a/ and /y/ as so-called *matres lectionis*.

Later on, the *alif lām* which in Aramaic only serves in certain cases as a long /ā/, mainly when final, but occasionally also as a short /a/, was introduced by the Arabs as a third *matres lectionis* for a long /ā/, in general and also in context.

To the extent that this writing reform was also carried out in the first part of the Koran, the consequences for certain readings were inevitable. An initial marking of the short vowels /a/, /u/ and /i/ by points, likewise modeled upon the earlier Syro-Aramaic vocalization systems – according to which the more lightly pronounced vowel /a/ is indicated by a point above and the more darkly pronounced vowel /e/i/ by a point below the consonant, to which was added in Arabic a middle point to mark the /u/ – is said to have been introduced as the first reading aid under 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân (685–705).

The real problem in the early Arabic script, however, was in the consonants, only six of which are clearly distinguishable by their form, whereas the remaining 22, due to their formal similarities (usually in pairs), were only distinguishable from each other by the context. This deficiency was only gradually removed by the addition of so-called diacritical dots. The letters to be differentiated by points together with their variants depending on their position at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a word, connected or unconnected (and accompanied by their Latin transcription), appear as follows (whereby it should be noted that six letters are connected with the preceding letters on the right, but not with the letters following them on the left):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ن} & \quad \text{ث} \quad \text{ث} \quad \text{ث} \quad \text{ت} \\
\text{جْح} & \quad \text{ح} \quad \text{ح} \quad \text{ح} \\
\text{دّ} & \quad \text{دّ} \\
\text{رّ} & \quad \text{رّ} \\
\text{صّ} & \quad \text{صّ} \\
\text{ضّ} & \quad \text{ضّ} \\
\text{طّ} & \quad \text{طّ} \\
\text{غَفُّ} & \quad \text{غَفُّ} \\
\text{فُّ} & \quad \text{فُّ} \\
\text{حَنُّ} & \quad \text{حَنُّ} \\
\text{بِي} & \quad \\
\text{يِ} & \quad \text{يِ} \\
\text{أَي} & \quad \text{أَي} \\
\text{يِ} & \quad \text{يِ} \\
\text{دِ} & \quad \text{دِ} \\
\text{غِ} & \quad \text{غِ} \\
\text{لِ} & \quad \text{لِ} \\
\end{align*}
\]

By taking into account the last letter as a final /ā/ as opposed to the variant /a/ and if one imagines that all of the diacritical points above and below the letters are non-existent, we would even have 23 varieties that could occasion misreadings. Added to this are the possibilities of mixing up the optically similar groups of letters /d/, /g/, and /r/, /z/ as well as of confusing those of the latter group with the /w/, /u/, further,


20 As to this still discussed thesis see John F. Healy, The Early History of the Syriac Script. A Reassessment. In: Journal of Semitic Studies XLV/1 Spring 2000, p. 55-67. The question whether the Arabic script is of Syriac or Nabatean origin (p. 64 f.) – or a combination of both – is ultimately of minor relevance, since a next study will prove that the prototype of the Koran, as mentioned above, was originally written in Garshuni (or Kaštuni), i.e. Arabic with Syriac letters.

21 According to R. Blachère the exact time at which this writing reform took place cannot be established (*Introduction au Coran, 1* edition, 93 f.).

22 The examination of single words will show that the incorrect insertion of the *alif lām* for long /ā/ has on occasion resulted in a distortion of the meaning.

of confusing the phonetically proximate phonemes /h/ and /a/ and mistaking the guttural /a/ for the stop (hamza) /a/, which was introduced later on as a special symbol.

Occasionally the voiceless /s/ has been mistaken for the corresponding emphatic sound /s/, something which, though trivial when considered in purely phonetic terms, is nonetheless significant etymologically and semantically. In individual cases, a confusion has also occurred between the final /s/-h as the personal suffix of the third person masculine and the same special symbol accompanied by two dots /s/-t used to mark the feminine ending (a'um), as well as between the connected final ن/mary with a final َ/y and even the connected final ن/ary. In one case, the three initial peaks in the voiceless /s/ were even taken to be the carriers of three different letters and were – regretfully for the context – provided with three different diacritical points (e.g., /s/ = نیش /n-b-t/).24

In comparing the letters that are distinguishable by means of diacritical points with those that are unambiguous due to their basic form – these are the letters:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ـ} & \quad (\text{as } \ell \text{ or as the so-called hamza bearer}) \\
\text{k} & \quad /k/ \\
\text{l} & \quad /l/ \\
\text{م} & \quad /m/ \\
\text{ه} & \quad /h/ \\
\text{و} & \quad /w/ \text{ or } /\ell/
\end{align*}
\]

– one would have, considered purely in mathematical terms, a ratio even worse than 22 to 6 if one takes into account further sources of error, the extent of which can not yet be entirely assessed.

Compared to the Aramaic/Hebrew and the Syro-Aramaic alphabet, whose letters are unambiguous (except for the /s/ and /h/, which because of their formal similarity are distinguished from each other by a point below or above the letter, which may in turn have served as a model for the subsequently introduced and further developed punctuation system of the Arabic script), the early Arabic script was thus a kind

5. THE ORAL TRADITION

According to Islamic tradition, the Koran was handed down by an unbroken chain of lectors, in part by notable contemporaries of the Prophet, such as Ibn 'Abbās (d. 73 in 692 A.D.) and early authorities, such as Anas Ibn Malik (d. 91 in 709 A.D.). They are also said to have contributed considerably to the fixing of the Koranic text and to have retained their authority as Koran specialists even long afterwards.²⁵

This is contradicted, though, by the report that 'Uṭmań had gotten the “sheets”²⁶ (of the Koran) from Ḥafṣa, the Prophet’s widow, and used them as the basis of his recension. This was the “fixed point backwards from which we must orient ourselves.”²⁷

In any case the Islamic tradition is unable to provide any date for the final fixing of the reading of the Koran by means of the introduction of the diacritical points, so that one is dependent on the general assertion that this process stretched out over about three hundred years.²⁸

Only the long overdue study and collation of the oldest Koran manuscripts can be expected to give us more insight into the development of the Koranic text up to its present-day form. In this regard Koran scholars will always regret that the historical order issued by Caliph 'Uṭmań, conditioned as it was by the political circumstances at the time, has resulted in the irretrievable loss of earlier copies of the Koran.²⁹

6. THE ARABIC EXEGESIS OF THE KORAN

In the history of Koran exegesis there has been no lack of attempts to provide ever new interpretations of the irregular and occasionally rhythmical rhyming prose of the Koran text. In his Geschichte des Qurān [History of the Koran] cited at the beginning, Theodor Nöldeke gives an overview both of the creators of the Arabic exegesis, with Ibn ‘Abbās³⁰ (cousin of the Prophet, d. 68 H./687 A.D.) and his disciples, and of the extant Arabic commentaries of Ibn Isḥaq (d. 151/768) and Waqīdī (d. 207/822), of Ibn Hiṣām (d. 213/828), of Būhārī (d. 256/870) and of Tirmīdī (d. 279/892).³¹

Although the Islamic exegesis refers to Ibn ‘Abbās as its earliest authority, he himself appears never to have written a commentary, considering that he was only twelve years old at the death of the Prophet.³² This seems all the more to be the case since the Prophet himself—according to Islamic tradition—is said to have responded with silence to the questions of his contemporaries on the meaning of particular verses of the Koran. Thus, among other things, it was reported of some who were in disagreement over the reading of a Koran Sura:

“We thereupon sought out the messenger of God — God bless him and grant him salvation — and met him just as ‘Alī was conversing with him. We said: ‘We are in disagreement over a reading.’ Whereupon the messenger of God blushed — God bless him and grant him salvation — and spoke: ‘Those who have preceded you went to ruin because they were in disagreement with each other.’ Then he whispered something to ‘Alī, whereupon the latter spoke to us: ‘The messenger of God — God bless him and grant him salvation — commands you to read as you have been instructed’; (the version following this adds): ‘Each (reading) is good and right’.³³

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²⁵ Blachère 102 ff.
²⁶ Tabari reports of one sheet, however, on which 'Umar had written down the notes collected by the companions of the Prophet: وَكَانَ عَمَّارُ كَتَبَ ذَلِكَ فِي صَحِیْهِ وَاحِدَةَ (cf. Tabari 1 26 f.).
²⁷ Nöldeke-Schwally, Geschichte des Qurān [History of the Koran] II 21.
²⁸ Blachère 71.
²⁹ Tabari 1 27 f.
³⁰ GdQ II 163.
³¹ GdQ II 170 f.
³³ Tabari 1 12 f.
In the introduction to his Koran commentary, Tabari (224/25–310 H./839–923 A.D.) lists a series of variant statements concerning the confusion of the first readers of the Koran, all of which at bottom agree with each other. Thus, among other statements, he gives the following, which is traceable back to Ubayy:

“Two men were arguing over a verse of the Koran, whereby each maintained that the Prophet – God bless him and grant him salvation – had taught him to read it so and so. Thereupon they sought out Ubayy in order for him to mediate between them. However, he contradicted both of them. Whereupon they sought out the Prophet together. Ubayy spoke: ‘Prophet of God, we are in disagreement over a verse of the Koran and each of us maintains that you taught him to read it so and so.’ Whereupon he spoke to one of them: ‘Read it out to me,’ and this one read it out to him. Whereupon the Prophet said: ‘Correct!’ Then he asked the other to read it out to him, and this one read it out differently than his friend had read it out. To this one too the Prophet said: ‘Correct!’ Then he spoke to Ubayy: ‘Read it out yourself as well,’ and Ubayy read it out, but differently than both. Yet to him too the Prophet said: ‘Correct!’ Ubayy reported: ‘This gave rise to such a doubt in me with regard to the messenger of God – God bless him and grant him salvation – as that of heathens!’ And he continued: ‘However, because the messenger of God – God bless him and grant him salvation – noticed from my face what was occurring in me, he raised his hand and struck me on the breast and said: ‘Pray to God for protection from the accursed Satan!’ To this Ubayy said: ‘Then I broke into a sweat’.”

7. THE SEVEN READINGS

This evidenced embarrassment on the part of the Prophet, which, as reported, evinced considerable doubts about his mission among some of his contemporaries, is explained in the Islamic tradition by the following sequence:

Gabriel had at first commanded the Prophet to read the Koran in one reading, but upon the Prophet’s imploring indulgence for his people and Michael’s support, Gabriel, in consideration of the variety of Arabic dialects, had granted the Prophet two, then according to different reports three, five, six and finally seven readings, all of them valid as long as verses dealing (for example) with God’s mercy did not end, say, with His meting out divine judgment – and vice versa – that is, as long as a given reading did not result in an obvious contradiction. Finally, at the behest of Caliph ‘Umar and for the preservation of dogmatic unity among the Muslims, the controversy over the actual meaning of the disputed seven readings was resolved once and for all in favor of one reading by means of the fixing of the Koran in writing. Tabari, however, seems not in the least to have been concerned that in the establishment of the canonic version of the Koran the lack of any diacritical points or other vowel signs made one reading a fiction. By his time (the 10th century A.D.) the consonant text of the Koran already appears to have been fixed by the diacritical points introduced in the meantime (or by the oral interpretation that had prevailed in the meantime).

But when and according to what criteria or according to what tradition these points were introduced, and to what extent the originators disposed of the necessary philological and also, considering the biblical content of the Koran, of the necessary theological competence, for such questions the historical critique of Tabari, though he was considered a scholar in his day, do not seem to have been adequate. He begins as a matter of course from the premise that there had been nothing to critici—

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34 Tabari 118.
35 Tabari 118-26.
36 Tabari 126-29.
ze to that point about the established reading of the Koran and does not allow any other variant readings – at least where the original consonant text is concerned. He does, to be sure, permit divergent readings, but only when vocalic indicators are lacking in the original text and only if the variants in question are supported in the Islamic tradition by a majority or minority of commentators, in which case he usually gives precedence to the majority interpretation.

What exactly, though, is to be understood by what Ṭabarî calls the سبعه أحرف (ṣab‘at aḥruf) (seven letters), whether by that the consonants are meant, or the vowels, or both at the same time, on this subject Ṭabarî says nothing, especially considering the fact that Ubayy does not identify the disputed reading. However, because there are twenty-two consonants in the Arabic alphabet distinguishable by diacritical points (in a given case either with or without points), these can scarcely be meant. On the other hand, if one understands أحرف (aḥruf) simply as bookmarks, then it would be more plausible to understand them as the missing vowel signs. This all the more so since the Thes. (I 419), for أهْبَهَ / أهْبَهَ (アフ / アフ), although it cites حرف (ḥarf) under (2) particula, lists among other things under (3) litera alphabeti, رَنَكَ / رَنَكَ (نا / نا) = gla-nagastā (= accentuation mark) vocalis (BHGr. 351v).

Though one could argue against this that this late piece of evidence from the Syriac grammar of Bar Hebraeus37 (1225/6–1286), likely modeled on the Arabic grammar of Zamaḥšarî (1075–1144), is poorly suited to explain حرف (ḥarf) in the sense of vowel sign, it is still permitted to see in the number seven a reference to the seven vowels of the Eastern Syrians mentioned by Jacob of Edessa (c. 640–708) in his Syriac grammar سِفِرُ النَّاطقِينَ (surūf nāṭeqin) (The Rectification of the Mesopotamian Language).38

These seven vowels were collected by Jacob of Edessa in the model sentence مَلاَمِعُ النِّسَابِ (mala’mu nasab) =

(G / ə / e / ə / ō / a / a) (“May you rest in peace, Edessa, our Mother!”).40

Insofar as Ṭabarî also mentions the variant reading حمسة أحرف (ḥamsat aḥruf) (five letters), a corresponding allusion may thereby be given to the five Greek vowels introduced by the Western Syrians.41 This would be important, at least in terms of Koranic pronunciation, to answer the question as to whether it was not arbitrary that the post-Koranic Classical Arabic system of vowels was fixed at the three basic vowels a, u, i (for short and long).

In terms of comparison, the at least five vowels of the modern-day Arabic dialects of the Near East in the former Aramaic language area provide a better lead than the uncertain pronunciation of the so-called Old Arabic poetry, from which, moreover, for whatever reason, the Koran distances itself (Sura 26:224; 36:69; 69:41). In this connection, Theodor Nöldke also remarks:

“We don’t even have the right to assume that in Proto-Semitic there were always only three dynamically distinct vowels or vocal spheres.”42

Final َ (yā) as a Marker for final َُ

In any case, the Arabic tradition documents the existence of the vowel e to the extent that it designates by the term نَمَلَة (nimla) the modification of a to ə as a peculiarity of the Arabic dialect of Mecca. However, from

38 Baumstark 254.
39 Mann 13.
40 I.e. “our capital” or the “city in which we grew up” (cf. Thes. I 222).
42 Theodor Nöldke, Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft [Essays on Semitic Linguistics], Strasbourg, 1904, 33.
this one can make conclusions about the pronunciation not only of Arabic, but especially of Aramaic loanwords. For example, keeping just to proper names, whose pronunciation is taken to be certain, the transliterated name میکب (Michael), which faithfully reproduces the Syro-Aramaic written form میکب, should not be pronounced میکل, as it is vocalized in the modern Cairo edition of the Koran (Sura 2:98), but میکل according to the Syro-Aramaic pronunciation. The same applies for the name جبريل, which should not be pronounced جبريل, as the Cairo edition reads today (Sura 2:97, 98 and 66:4), but as a transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic جبريل (with the more common spelling جبريل) 

Of the Arabic expressions, one can mention, for example, بلى, which the modern Koran reads in twenty-two passages as بَـلَّا, although the pronunciation بَـلَّ (or بل – with the accent on the first syllable) is still attested today, among other places, in the Arabic dialects of the Mesopotamian region and in Bedouin dialects. The لیسان (XIV 88b) even refers explicitly to the fact that the final ی in بلى, like یَعِه (anne) and عَمِّي (mate), can be pronounced with an ینَال (بالَّ). 

In his chapter entitled “Die wichtigsten orthographischen Eigentümlichkeiten des othmanischen Textes” [The Most Important Orthographical Peculiarities of the Ottoman Text] (GdQ III 26 ff.), Nöldke goes into more detail on this phenomenon. According to Nöldke, the use of the final ی cannot be explained (in these cases) on the basis of etymology. On that basis, one can instead deduce a particular pronunciation of the vowel. Words like قَلِی were not pronounced with a pure ی, but with a “tendency towards یَا’ (= یَأ’).” (ینَال نَاوِه یَا’), and thus as a long or short ی. This explanation is supported not only by the orthography, but also by the rhyme.45

Also belonging here among the Koranic proper names is موسی, which the Cairo edition reads as موسی, whereas according to the Syro-Aramaic form موسی (in Hebrew موسی) موسی (in Western Syriac موسی) would be the pronunciation.

On the Spelling of عیسی (İsâ)

On the other hand, it is doubtful whether one can explain the name موسی (read in the Cairo edition as ‘İsâ) on the basis of an assimilation to میکل, as S. Fraenkel has done (WZKM IV 335 ff.), even though Horovitz backs this view by remarking “how fond indeed the Koran is elsewhere of name pairs and of the assimilation of one name to another.”46

In other words, although for موسی the pronunciation ‘İsâ is attested, for عیسی the pronunciation ‘İsî / ‘İsî is not. Though it is possible in this case that this is based on the Eastern Syrian name ‘İsî (for Jesus), it is scarcely imaginable, as Horovitz says (loc. cit.), that “its final [این] has shifted its position.”

Arguing against both this thesis and Landauer’s thesis, mentioned by Horovitz (in Nöldke DDMG XLI 720, note 2), of an assimilation to Esau, is the final ی in موسی / ‘İsî (whose final ی is usually not pronounced by the Eastern Syrians) and the final ی in عیسی / ‘İsî (or the final āw in Hebrew عیّس) / ‘İsî. Meanwhile, what comes closest to the spelling عیسی orthographically is the Biblical name ’Îsî (in Hebrew يسی / يُسِی), ’Îsî (David’s father) / Isa. 45:25; Is. 11:1, 10).

Here one must bear in mind that among the Eastern Syrians the initial ی / ی is frequently weakened and produced exactly like the ی with an initial glottal stop, while the final ی / ی totally disappears. This pronunciation is to this extent identical with that of the Mandaeans, who use a ی to reproduce the initial ی and leave off the final ی, as is also attested by Nöldke in his Mandäische Grammatik [Mandaic Grammar]47 (§ 55,

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43 Cf. Thes. II 2088, which gives this written form in addition to the more common میکب. On the other hand, with the pronunciation remaining the same, the variant given in Nöldke میکب (see the following note) corresponds to the Hebrew spelling مید.”

44 Cf. Nöldke, GdQ III 17.


p. 56), and precisely in connection with the name מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə “Jesus” = מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə.

This finding is interesting not only because it once again points to the Eastern Syrian region, but also and especially because it raises the question – relevant to the history of religion – as to whether with the name מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə (אֵמָשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə) the Koran has intended the connection between the historical Jesus and Isai, a genealogical ancestor of his, named in Isaiah 11:1,11 and Luke 3:32, or whether it consciously or unconsciously confused מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə (אֵמָשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə) or perhaps took them to be dialectal variants of one and the same name.48

That in any case the modern Koran reads מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə is with certainty the result of post-Koranic phonetics, especially considering the fact that this name does not appear in Old Arabic poetry, as Horovitz (loc. cit. 129) remarks. The Koranic spelling does correspond, on the other hand, to the Eastern Syriac orthography and the phonetics of Biblically documented names. This is why מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə is certainly not to be read Ṭsə, but rather Ṭsə.

Therefore, the fact that, especially in Mandaic, the ʾ/א / Ṭ is used to reproduce the initial plosive ʿ in place of the originally weak initial ʾ/א / Ṭ (and not simply as Horovitz falsely believes [loc. cit.], in citing Nöldeke, “for the designation of ʾ”) is important in explaining historically the later introduction by Arabic philologists of the hamza (i.e. glottal stop) symbol (which is actually an initial ʾ/א / ṭāʾ reduced in size).

In the examples given by Nöldeke (loc. cit. §55), the ʾ/א / ṭāʾ does replace the initial ʾ/א, but what is crucial is that it is supposed to indicate the glottal stop preceding the vowel, something which Nöldeke, however, does not especially emphasize. This becomes clear, though, on the basis of examples in which the ʾ/א, also replaces an initial ʾ/א, the articulation of which always starts with a glottal stop; thus Mandaic מְשַׁמֵּר / מְשַׁמֵּר is written for Syro-Aramaic מְשַׁמֵּר (אֵםָשַׁמֵּר) (there is). This is particularly evi-}

dent in the examples cited by Nöldeke in §16 (p. 15) where initial ʾ and ʾ alternate and have the same function: מְשַׁמֵּר (ʾamra) “she said”, מְשַׁמֵּר (ʾazlat) “she went”), etc.

According to this pattern, then, the spelling מְשַׁמֵּר is to be realized like Mandaic מְשַׁמֵּר = מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə. Finally, one should not fail to mention the fact that the name מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə, presumably created from מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə by monophthongizing the final diphthong, is widespread among Eastern Syrians today. The possibility can thus not be excluded that the Koran considered this name, common among the Aramean Christians of its day, to be a variant form more suitable to the Arabic pronunciation than the actual name מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə (Jesus), which is realized in the Eastern Syriac dialect as מְשַׁמֵּר (or Τσα with the accent on the first syllable). But even in this case the initial מְשַׁמֵּר is to be understood as the glottal stop before the initial ʾ, and hence: מְשַׁמֵּר = מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə.49

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48 It is well known that among Western Syrians the pronunciation ʾ was used for long ʾ in contrast to the pronunciation ʾ among the Eastern Syrians. As Mingana has already pointed out in Syriac Influence 83, the Eastern Syriac pronunciation is to be assumed in the Koran.

49 According to this, the monophthongization of the final diphthong ʾay need not necessarily end in ʾ as Nöldeke assumes. The other alternative would be, as in the present case, the substitutive lengthening of the vowel ʾ/א / ṭāʾ. We can find another example of this in the name מְשַׁמֵּר / Ṭsə (Hebrew מְשַׁמֵּר), which became the Arabic مَسْمَى / مَسْمَى (in a hypercorrect pronunciation with an unjustified vowel stop مَسْمَيَّة / مَسْمَيَّة / Sīnā). On the basis of this phonetic law one could also explain the original name of Abraham’s wife, Sarah, which according to Genesis 17:15 was, at God’s behest, henceforth to be Sāra.
are inflected in the masculine from \(a\) to \(e\). We encounter such endings, for instance, in Sura 11:24 and 39:29 where in each case the Koran has similes with two opposing examples followed by this question:

هَلِّ يَسْتَوِينَا مَثَالًا

The modern Koran reads *hal yastawiyān* madāla*" (literally: ‘Are the two equal to each other as example?’’ It is understandable that the later readers of the Koran could not otherwise interpret the final \(i\) in مثَالًا (< Syro-Aramaic جَيِلَةَ / makīla* as a noun (tamyra) (accusative of specification), in accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar first created toward the end of the 8th century. However, if one were instead to read مثَالًا as a transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic plural جَيِلَاتَ (makīlū) “the examples” (= the plural / al-amgāl) (since there is no dual in Syro-Aramaic except for the dual suffix of the two-numbers ٦٠ / tenn [masc.], ٦٠ / tartēn [fem.], and ٦٠ / mūtēn / (two hundred) and the emphatic ending makes the Arabic definite article the / al- superfluous, the sentence would yield a coherent meaning: “Are the two examples somehow equal?” (and not “Are the two equal as example?”). According to this, when translated into modern-day Arabic (and taking into account the Koranic dual), the sentence would then read: هل يسواقا المثالان (in Classical Arabic: هل يسواقا المثالان / hal yastawī l-matālān).

Besides the fact that the Arabic verb أَسْتَوَى / istawa (in the VIIIth verbal stem) is also derived from the Syro-Aramaic verb with the same meaning، the Koran here combines the Arabic dual in the verb with the Syro-Aramaic plural in the subject. In this passage, the final \(i\) is therefore not to be read as the Arabic singular madāla* (being with an imāla to the \(i\) / \(y\)), but as the Syro-Aramaic plural جَيِلَاتَ / makīlū (with an imāla to the \(i\) / \(y\)).

Furthermore, we find a similar final \(i\) in the plural of ساجد (sagīd) (< Syro-Aramaic ساجيد / sāġīd), whose unusual Classical Arabic plural formation سجدا (sagīdūm) (occurring 11 times in the Koran in Sura 2:58, 4:154, 7:161, 12:100, 16:48, 17:107, 19:58, 20:70, 25:64, 32:15, and 48:29) again turns out to be a transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic plural form جَيَلَاءَ (makīlū). The Koranic spelling سجدا is thus to be pronounced not سُجَّاد، but in conformation with the common pronunciation of vernacular Arabic: ساجد (ساجد / sāḏīd > sāḏīdīn).\(^50\)

**Sura 6:146**

Another example is provided to us by الحويا (al-hawā) (Sura 6:146), a reading that is considered uncertain,\(^51\) but whose meaning (innards) has been correctly suspected even though the الحويا in it (whose form in the early Koran manuscripts corresponds initially to the Syro-Aramaic حويا / g) has been misread as an Arabic حويا / b. As a transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic plural حويا (gawwāyē / gawwāyē), the الحويا should read – based on the Syro-Aramaic expression حويا / al-gawwāyē.

Here, in accordance with the original Syro-Aramaic pronunciation, one can also assume that the ending (with an imāla to the \(i\) / \(y\)) was probably pronounced al-gawwāyē, especially since this expression is neither traditional in Arabic nor correctly recognized in the Koran itself. On closer examination of the two readings, one discovers first of all that the مَلَسِم (XIV 209b), referring to this passage in the Koran and citing al-Farrā (761–822), explains الحويا (hawwāyē) in the same way as ثابت (VIII 75f), who quotes thirteen authorities for the meaning “intestine, large intestine.” What is surprising in this is that under the root حو (حو / gawwāyē) the مَلَسِم (XIV 157b) has exactly the meaning that coincides with the here correct Syro-Aramaic meaning. This is how it explains it: "وجز probable pronunciation al-gawwāyē, especially since this expression is

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50 Some critics, who, in accordance with post-Koranic Classical Arabic grammar, take this plural form as genuinely Arabic, generally overlook the historical-linguistic environment in which the Koranic text came into being. More details to this plural will follow in a next study.

51 Rudi Paret, Kommentar [Commentary], at the conclusion of his remarks on Sura 6:146: "The interpretation of the expression hawwāyē is uncertain."

52 Thes. (I 667) gives under حويا (gawwāyē): حواضن (gawwāyē) membra externa et interna (the external and internal extremities / organs); and on page 668 under حويا: (I) ad quod intestus est, viscera, intestina (that which is inside, intestines, inner organs), (from the Syrian lexicographers): حي (gawwāyē) viscera (intestines), حي (gawwāyē) visceralis (kēfā du-gawwāyē) (gastric complaint, dysentery).
the alternating feminine ending – at times in ٌ (actually ٍ / h = a), at other times in ٌ / at – of جنة (ganna) (garden, paradise) and جنات (gannat), respectively, which the later Arabic readers took to be a plural form and read as جنت (gannät). Insofar as it is here a question of paradise, the word in Syro-Aramaic is always in the singular, namely in the combination جنت عدن (11 times in the Koran, according to the modern reading: gannät ʼadn) = (gannat ʼladen) (the Garden of Eden = Paradise; Thes. I 743).

Even in the remaining genitive combinations جنت (gannat) is always to be understood as singular. On the other hand, determined with the Arabic article al- and probably to be pronounced with a pausal ending, جلالة (al-ganma) is clearly in the singular in 52 passages in the Koran, but understood as plural للجنتات (al-gannät) in one single passage (Sura 42:22). Perhaps it is as a result of an inconsistently executed orthographic reform and of a misunderstood text that جنت (to be read gannat) appears correctly in the Koran 18 times in the status constructus, whereas جنات ganna(t) appears in this function at least five times (presumably because the later writers of Arabic could no longer comprehend the real meaning of these variants). ⁵⁶

Namely, there is otherwise no way to explain to what extent the sound s / h, which is a component of the Arabic alphabet, can also function both as a final ٌ, primarily in designating a feminine ending, and for certain masculine endings in singular and plural. Hence we must assume that originally words s’s in the Koran that ended in al- (a) h – later spelled with two dots as ٌ (a) t – were as such indeclinable, as the alternating orthography of جنات جنات (ganna) / جنات (gannat), لعنة (la’na) / لعنة (lā’nat), نيما (ni’mā) / نيما (nimā”) suggests.

This is best illustrated on the example of a well-known Arabic term taken up with the masculine Syro-Aramaic emphatic ending ٌ: جلالة al-

Franz Rosenthal, A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic (Wiesbaden, 1963) 8 (5): “may be used as vowel letters (par. 10). ٌ and ٌ are used for final ٌ or ٍ, ٌ for ٌ or ٍ, ٌ for ٌ and ٌ for ٌ and ٌ. Final ٌ, which occurs very rarely, is indicated by ٌ.”


which is English is correctly translated by the caliph. Namely, if one reads the Arabic case ending, e.g. in the nominative al-ḥalifatu, it would be like saying “the caliphette (female)” in English. At the same time, خليفة (역, or خليفة al-ḥalifatu) is nothing other than the phonetic transcription of the Syro-Aramaic substantivalized masculine passive participle **halifatu** (be who is put in the place of, substitute, deputy, successor), i.e. a status emphaticus with a final اً, which is not common in Arabic. Later on, this was misunderstood as a partial pronunciation of the feminine ending at and the word was additionally provided with the Arabic article al. The Arabic خ / ح in خليفة renders merely the vernacular Eastern Syriac pronunciation of the ح (b > h).

Furthermore, one encounters similar Syro-Aramaicisms in such still commonly used expressions as طاغية / tāgiya(tun) (< Syro-Aramaic *taγia / tāga/) misled, led astray, in Arabic with secondary ج misunderstood as “tyrant,” in addition to the Arabic correct active participle طاغيا / tāgīaٌ 57, as well as in such analogous formations as عالمة / allūma(tun) (an outstanding scholar, an “authority”), داعية / dāhiya(tun) (a shrewd, cunning person), whose apparently feminine ending is explained by the Arab philologists as a mark of “exaggeration, emphasis.”

This misinterpretation is also given by Carl Brockelmann in his *Arabische Grammatik [Arabic Grammar]* (loc. cit. 82, § 66c): “The feminine ending … (also) serves as a mark of emphasis, e.g. عالمة (allūmaٌ) ‘a know-it-all’ from the adjective عالم (allūmٌ).” Brockelmann, however, will surely have been aware that this supposedly feminine ending, pausally pronounced, is nothing other than the reproduction of the Aramaic emphatic ending اً, which here has nothing to do either with the feminine or with an emphasis, but which has nevertheless been interpreted by the Arabic grammarians, in ignorance of Syro-Aramaic, as such a marker. The same applies to his concluding remark: “Such forms are sometimes also applied to persons, as in راوية (rāwiyaٌ), ‘traditionary’ خليفة (halifatuٌ) ‘deputy, successor.’”

Also deserving of further attention is the reference to § 55a (Arabisch, Grammatik [Arabic Grammar] 68) in which Brockelmann says the following about these “emphasizing forms”: “‘Fā’il’ intensive form of فاعل (fā’il) and other verbal adjectives, e.g. كاذب (kaddab) ‘lying’; this form can derive names from nominative, e.g. حًا (haddā) ‘baker’ from خذ (jube) ‘bread.’” Brockelmann himself shows that he was well aware that these forms were Syro-Aramaicisms in his *Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar]* 70, § 131, where he explains nominal stem formations of the type qātāl as intensive adjectives and vocative names for the most part from pe’al. 58

In the canonical version of the Koran, once كاذبة (kaddibaٌ) occurs (Sura 56:2) and another time كاذب (kaddibٌ) (Sura 96:16), each read with a hypercorrect feminine and case ending. In Syro-Aramaic, however, both passages are to be read, as above, as كاذب / kaddab. But what is thus meant is not Arabic كاذب / kaddab and كاذب / kaddib, respectively, in the sense of “liar,” but Syro-Aramaic in the modern Arabic understanding of مكذب / mukaddib “denier.”

In individual instances the final ج / h was presumably also used to designate the Syro-Aramaic plural ending ج, as is made clear, for example, in the orthography of سفرة (Sura 80:15 = كاتب / sāfīrٌ (writer), but especially in the plural form of دخيل / malāk (68 times in the Koran). One can see from both cases that the final ج / h is not meant as a final ج / ج but as a final ج. Since both endings are borrowed from Syro-Aramaic, the reading with the case vowel ج / ج (safraٌ or الملكة / al-malākaٌ) can hardly be based on a certain Arabic tra-

57 The same Aramaic root f'a was borrowed twice into Arabic, firstly as the above-mentioned tāfī with the secondary sound correspondence 3yn / 3 and secondly as the semantically corresponding root dā'ā with sonorization of the first radical, possibly due to its unaspirated articulation. This latter phenomenon has hitherto been overlooked by scholars dealing with Semitic linguistics and will be treated in more detail in a later publication. The semantic identity of Arabic dā'ā and Aramaic f'a is a strong argument against the interpretation as “tyrant.”

58 Cf. also in this regard Th. Nöldeke in his *Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar]* 70, § 115, where he says concerning these forms as nominata agentis that they belong to verbs of the simple stem peal and of the doubling stem peal, e.g. كاذب / kaddabٌ,
dition, whereas the Syro-Aramaic expression is attested in both cases, in
the latter even, among other places, in the modern Arabic of the Near
East (ملك / malâykē).

Excursus: On the Morphology of ملكة / ملالة (malâ'ika = malâykē)

This word, which has been identified in Western Koranic research as a
foreign word, is most likely borrowed from Aramaic. The grammatical
form of the singular already makes this clear: Arabic malâk is namely
nothing other than the pronominal form of the Syro-Aramaic substantivized
passive participle malâkē. Here, the lengthening of the central ā results,
after the dropping of the original central hamza (*malâ'āk), from the
combination of the two consecutive short a. If this root were originally
Arabic, the passive participial form of the IVth Arabic verbal stem would
have to be mul'ak and not mal'ak (like mursal and not mursal).

Meanwhile, the final h in the Koranic plural form malâykē orthograp-
graphically reproduces the Aramaic plural ending ē. This Aramaic final h,
which was falsely provided with two diacritical points and misinterpre-
ted as tā' marbūta by later Arabic philologists, has nothing to do with
the final l of the corresponding Ethiopic plural form. That this final h be-
fore a personal suffix (as in ملكت / malâykatuhi / malây'katuhi,
Sura 2:98,285; 4:136; 33:43,56) or in status constructus) is nevertheless
realized as l, occurs by analogy to the feminine ending, from which the
Arabic linguistic consciousness no longer differentiates the phonetically
homonymous Aramaic plural ending (nor likewise the masculine Aramaic
status emphaticus). The Lisân (XIII, 134b) gives us an example of the
latter case with the masculine name الله / Talâh, whose final h is
transformed into ʔ (or the “feminine”) before a personal suffix, so that
one has: ُهُلَّةُ ِهِلَتُرَانَةُ, this is our ِهِلَتُرَةُ(t). Until now,
however, no one in Arabistics or Semististics has investigated how the
central y lacking in the Syro-Aramaic plural form malâkē and inserted in
the Arabic malâykē comes into being.

The most plausible explanation seems to be the following: According
to the more recent Arabic feel for language, the unaltered adoption of
the Syro-Aramaic plural form ملكة / malâykē would in Arabic be felt to
be the feminine singular of the masculine form ملك / malâk. To avoid
this, the Arabic feel for language looked for an analogy in the system of
Arabic plural formation and found one in the pattern of the substantiviz-
ed passive participle fa'îl, which forms the plural in Classical Arabic as
fa'īl (but actually as fa'îyel).

The Lisân (X, 481b f.), which correctly gives the root of ملك under
ملك / la'aka, also confirms this explanation by stating (482a, 2 f):
“the plural is malâ'ika (actually, however, malâykē), one (at first) formed the plural perfectly
(i.e. correctly) (namely malâ'îkē) and then added the h to it as sign of the feminine (namely malâykē).” From this one sees that the Arabic philo-
logists were unable to explain to themselves this Syro-Aramaic final h,
which marks a masculine plural ending, any other way than as a char-
acteristic feature of the feminine, which is out of the question here.

To sum up: If J. Barth (op. cit., 483) characterizes this final h in for-

gien words in Arabic as compensation, for which, among others, he cites
ملك / malâ'îka (malâykē), it must be said that it is not this final h,
which in current Arabic usage is correctly received as an Aramaic plural
ending, but the inserted medial ʔ that serves as a compensatory element
for the clarification of the Arabic plural form.

We thus have a typical mixed form composed of elements (a) of the
primary Aramaic, and (b) of the secondary Arabic plural formation.

59 Cf. A. Jeffery, The Foreign Vocabulary, 269f. See further: W. Wright, A
Jacob Barth, Die Nominalbildung in den semitischen Sprachen [Noun For-
mation in the Semitic Languages], Second Edition, Leipzig 1894 (Reprint Hilde-
sheim 1967), 483 (among others).

60 The Lisân cites actually this plural form under the root ملك / malak (X 496a -6)
and refers here to a verse of Umayya b. Abi ṣ-Salt.

61 J. Barth comes fairly close to this explanation when he notes in connection with
the formation of such double plurals arising from mixed forms in Arabic and
Ethiopic (loc. cit. 483): “Both languages often form new plurals on the basis of
broken plurals. The process of these formations is then once again subject to the
This is only one example for many critics who uncritically, in terms of philology and history of language, take traditional erroneous notions as their starting point. Further explanations relating to Koranic orthography and morphology follow elsewhere.

To be added, then, to the final /h as a rendering of the Aramaic emphatic ending /h is the final /w as the regular emphatic ending in Syro-Aramaic. This final /w, which in Arabic, in contrast to the earlier Aramaic, marks the indetermination of nouns, adjectives and participles exclusively in the accusative (but remarkably does not appear on a /t or /t suffix), has in many passages of the Koran been interpreted as accusative under its various grammatical aspects (such as حال / hāl “accusative of condition,” تمييز / tamyīz “accusative of specification,” etc.) in terms of the later Arabic grammar. But in some Koran passages this formal rules of the normal plural formation. The individual form belongs in the Arab(ic) and Eth(io)pic grammar. 61 One must add here that in the case of ملكة / malāʾikā (= malāʾikā) one ought not to take as one’s starting point the secondary Arabic broken plural, but instead the regular Syro-Aramaic plural. There thus subsequently arose, for the reasons presented, out of an originally regular external Syro-Aramaic plural an internal (broken) Arabic plural, which resulted in a new type of Arabic plural.

The further extent to which Aramaic has contributed to the variety of Arabic plural formation will be examined in a forthcoming essay. Moreover, on this example the deficit of a linguistic-historical grammar of Classical Arabic becomes apparent.

62 Typical in this respect is the account mentioned by K. Vollers (Volkssprache und Schriftsprache [Vernacular and Written Language] 183) concerning Ṭa‘bī‘ b. ‘Omar (d. 149 H.), who as a “reformer” of the grammar of Naḥḥād was said to have had a conspicuous preference for the accusative. This funny remark is in reality significant, for it confirms to a certain extent the suspicion that the Arabic “accusative ending” in 1/w as a sign of indetermination is in the end nothing other than a substratum of the Syro-Aramaic emphatic ending, which at the origins of written Arabic had already lost its originally determining function. As a sign of indetermination it therefore presented itself to the early Arabic grammarians as an alternative to the determining Arabic particle ذو / dh-, which in turn confirms the hypothesis that originally it was probably Christian Arabs of Syria and Mesopotamia who, as the originators of written Arabic, imported elements of their Syro-Aramaic cultural language into the so-called Classical Arabic.

63 Thes. II 3522: سن (ṣuḥ), سن (ṣuḥ) (ṣuḥ) (1) permanens, durans. Now one could dispute the etymology of Arabic سن / din < Syro-Aramaic سن / din. C. Brockelmann (Lexicon Syriacum) lists the word under two forms with the following information: (a) (145a ult. f.): سن (din) (AR [dialects aramaeis commune], ut h. ነ_VERTEX ACC. diňo, diňo = ar. doctrine, min. qu(ar)s, Jens., acc. e sum. di? Haupt ZDMG 63 506, Zimm 23); (b) (151b 5):سن (daena, din ex eam. diňo e bab. diňo) Jens in Horn Grundl p. 133 n 2) religio... Yet the Persian form daena with the diphthong ae, as preserved in Arabic ٰ (loan, debt, the reimbursing of which is an obligation, right and
ing of the Syro-Aramaic status emphaticus, which is the reason this ending as such cannot be inflected. Therefore, in this respect it is not to be understood as a sign of the accusative, but rather the word here is grammatically in the genitive, which is why the next word, standing in apposition to it, مَلَّة (milla), must likewise be in the genitive and not, as the modern Koran reads, in the accusative (مَلّة). Yet here too the case vowel is actually superfluous since مَلَّة (milla), as a loanword from Syro-Aramaic مَلَّة (mella), in the status constructus, was in all probability pronounced مَلَّة إبراهيم (milla Abrahām) (and not إبراهيم)⁶⁴ – corresponding to the Syro-Aramaic مَلَّة إبراهيم / mella Abrahām.⁶⁵

As concerns the attribute حنيف (hantīf), in whose ending the Arabic Koran readers saw an accusative of condition – similarly puzzling to Nöldeke – this again has nothing to do with the Arabic accusative; on the contrary, it is a question here too of the Syro-Aramaic status emphaticus حنيف (hantīf), whose ending in this case is a sign of determination: حنيف (hantīf) = حنيف إبراهيم (ال-هَنِيْف) (and not, as in the Arabic reading, حنيف / hantīf).

On the Meaning of حنيف (hantīf)

In accordance with the Syro-Aramaic meaning of حنيف (hantīf)⁶⁶ (heathen), the expression is to be understood as an epithet for Abraham. As a rendering of حنيف (hantīf), this could be translated into what today is considered the correct Arabic form, إبراهيم حنيف, or roughly إبراهيم الحنيف (Ibrāhīm al-hantīf = Abraham the heathen). The fact that in the Koran this expression is regularly in the Arabic accusative proves precisely that it had been taken up in its Syro-Aramaic form and become an established epithet for Abraham. But what is meant by this epithet, "the heathen," is that Abraham, who actually was a heathen, believed precisely as such in the one God. It is also thanks to this special merit that heathen as Abraham’s epithet has acquired a positive significance, so that in the later Islam it was interpreted as an attribute of Abraham in the sense of "being of pure faith."

Already the Koran transfers this epithet to the "faith" itself (actually the rule of conduct, the guiding principle) when it says in Sura 30:30: فُقَّدَ وَجَهَّهُ للدين حنيف “so turn (unswervingly) to the hantīf faith (actually

With his epithet (institution) Bell has approximately guessed the conjectured sense; with "standing," however, he has understood the word qiyām itself according to its meaning in Arabic. For it is only the Syro-Aramaic meaning ضمير (qiyām) “covenant” that lends the verse its real intent: "God has made the Ka’ba, the sacred house, as a covenant for the people."

⁶⁶ Thes. I 1322. Grammatically this form is an early passive participle of the first stem paʿal which is still preserved in a number of Syro-Aramaic adjectives and substantives, whereas the Koranic form حنيف / hantīf accords with the Syro-Aramaic paradigm of the regular formation of passive participles of the same stem.
to the ‘heathen’ rule of conduct = to the guiding principle of Abraham the ‘heathen’).” Here too  حنيف (hanīf) is not an Arabic accusative of condition (“turn ... as a hanīf”), as it has been misinterpreted, among others by the Koran translators, in accordance with the Arabic idea. What is therefore of importance here in terms of the history of religion is the observation that the Arabicized form الدين الحنيف (al-dīn al-hanīf) (actually “the heathen rule of conduct”) has been reinterpreted positively and has become the epitome of the “pure faith,” the “true religion.”

Nöldeke had already correctly traced the Arabic حنيف (hanīf) back to the Syro-Aramaic حنيف (hanīf) “heathen.” Still, in terms of its Koranic usage (loc. cit. 30), he says the following:

“It is difficult to say, however, how the other meanings emerged from this original meaning. One must consider, though, that the naïve Arab heathens had no idea of the nature of other religions and thus could easily have misunderstood and falsely employed such expressions.”

But the fact that the Koran consciously links this term with Abraham can be inferred from the stereotypical clause that comes after Abraham’s epithet, the “heathen” (Suras 2:135; 3:67,95; 6:161 and 16:120, 123) وما كان من المسلمين. Now if this appositive is translated literally, “and he was not one of the idolaters,” one has here missed the connection with hanīf “heathen.” For in reality, this subordinate clause conceals within itself a contradiction to the appositive “heathen.” This only becomes clear, however, when one takes an adversative function as the basis for the introductory conjunction و (wa); only then is the sentence given its correct meaning. With regard to Abraham, who was a “heathen,” this additional clause then says, “he was (as a heathen) nonetheless not an idolater!” Therefore what is meant is: Abraham was indeed (by birth) a heathen, but he was no idolater!

The idea that Abraham as a heathen already believed in God and was therefore no longer an idolater is pre-Koranic and we encounter it in a similar way in Saint Paul. In his Epistle to the Romans (4:9–12) Abraham’s faith was already imputed to Abraham before the circumcision (hence when he was still a heathen). Through this he is said to have become the father of all those who as the uncircumcised (and thus as heathens) believe.

Koranic Arabic and Koranic Aramaic

As someone thoroughly familiar with Syro-Aramaic, Nöldeke ought surely to have been able to recognize the nature of the Koranic language, had he only not expressed himself as follows, during the controversy over the language of the Koran initiated by Karl Vollers, on the side of the advocates of the ’Arabiyā (the classical Arabic language):

“And thus it remains that the Koran was written in the ‘Arabijā, a language whose area was broad and which naturally exhibited many dialectal dissimilarities. Such are also reflected in the Koranic readings, and such have also been preserved, unchanged or transformed, in modern dialects.” (ibid. 5)

The fact, however, that in the case of these dissimilarities it is a question not only of dialectal variants of the Arabic language, but in particular of borrowings from the civilized Aramaic language nearby, is evidenced by many further features in the Koran. Precisely this final ـلا, which evoked surprise in Nöldeke, is especially striking. So, for example, in Sura 2:26 and 74:31 it says ماذا أراد الله بهذا مثلاً “(But) what does God aim at with this parable.” According to the Arabic understanding “parable” is in the accusative of specification demanded by its final ـلا. Accordingly the verse is then understood: “(But) what does God aim at with that as parable.”

It should no longer come as a surprise that the Koran frequently combines grammatical forms of Arabic and Syro-Aramaic, since at the time the Koran originated Syro-Aramaic was the most widespread written language of a civilized people in the Orient, and there was still no Arabic grammar. The extent to which the Koran follows different rules than those of the subsequent grammar of so-called Classical Arabic is demonstrated by another example in which the number twelve is not fol-
lowed by a singular – as it would normally be according to the rules of Arabic – but by a plural. For example, it is said in Sura 7:160: وَقَطَعُوهُمُ الْإِثْنَىَّ عَشْرَة ِضِيَّاقًا (wa-qat‘a’nāhum `iμtay `aṣra ta aṣbātan) “And we divided them into twelve branches”, instead of the Arabic اثني عشر سبيطاً (`iμtay `aṣarā sibtan) twelve tribe. This, too, would be characterized as false according to the rules of Arabic, but as fully correct according to the rules of Syro-Aramaic.

Moreover, this raises the question as to whether in this case the 1/-an ending, explained as a kind of accusative of specification according to the rules of Arabic, does not come instead from a Syro-Aramaic plural ending in гад. This, because the Arabic rule, according to which the nouns following numbers between eleven and ninety-nine must be (a) in the singular and (b) in the accusative, is not exactly logical. A more logical explanation would be that such a phenomenon interpreted formally in Arabic as a singular with an accusative ending was originally a Syro-Aramaic plural ending. This, in turn, would mean that the Arabic explanation is secondary and not at all classical. A similar case would be the singular prescribed in Arabic after the number one hundred, which is contradicted by the plural following the number three hundred in Sura 18:25: “three hundred years”), although an attempt has been made with the current Koran reading jālāta minātīn sināna to uncouple the number three hundred from “years” and to suggest the reading “in years” in order to cover up this Arabic irregularity, which in reality is perfectly correct Syro-Aramaic.

The same is true for the phoneme ǝ, which is lacking in Classical Arabic, but documented in the Koran. On this Nöldeke remarks:

“This spelling of the ǝ with ǝ is opposed to another, limited to a few specific words, with و. Since the grammarians expressly remark that the pronunciation of the Hijāz (Hijaz) in these words is broader (فخيم, تُلفظ) and tends toward the و (iμāla nābw al-wāw), we have to assume that the vowel here was pronounced

[long] ǝ or ө. These words are: زكوة, صلوة [Footnote 2: In both these words the vowel is probably influenced by the vowel of the Aramaic original forms ِلَهَاوْت and ِلَهَاوْت (Schwally); cf. Nöldeke, Neue Beiträge (New Essays) 25, 29]; مَمْشِكَةٌ, حِبْوَةٌ Sura 24:35 [Footnote 3: Ethiopian maskōt (actually maskōt is more likely), Nöldeke, Neue Beiträge (New Essays) 51]; خِيْوَةٌ Sura 40:44 and ِلَهَاوْت Sura 53:20 [Footnote 4: Also Nabatean سَفْلَحِيْ (Schwally)], as well as the word رَا رَيَا (the only passage with nounation, cf. p. 38 above). Here the spelling with و applies only if the word is without a suffix, whereas with the addition of a suffix the vowel is indicated by ِ or is written defectively.”

As cited here by Nöldeke, these words, in which the ǝ according to Arabic tradition was probably originally pronounced as ө, do not exhaust the other examples that occur in the Koran. To be mentioned would be formations based on the Syro-Aramaic type َبَرَُّدَة, which Nöldeke himself defines as follows in his Syriac grammar (op. cit., 68, § 107):

“The nomina agentis can be formed with ǝ on the basis of the 2nd root from any active participle of the simple verbal stem (Peal): مَامِلا (qāmāla) “murderer,” صَمَّس (gāmīma), دَلْلَمَة (galām-ya), etc.”

Accordingly, سَجَدَ, which in four passages is intended as an infinitive (Sura 48:29, 50:40, and 68:42,43), should in two other passages be understood as a rendering of the plural form of the Syro-Aramaic nomen agentis سَجَدَهُ (sagādeh) (without the emphatic ending) (Sura 2:125: للطائفين والمكتفين والركع: كما جعلوا مكتفيين والمكتفين والركع السجود). The meaning “those who prostrate themselves” for السجود is

67 See Th. Nöldeke, Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik [Compendious Syriac Grammar], with an appendix prepared by Anton Schall (Darmstadt, 1977), 95, §§ 151, 152.

clear from the context of the two passages. The fact that the Lišan (III 204a) gives for the active participle ساجد (ṣājidā) (= ساجدا / sājadi both مسجد and سجدة) and سجدا (ṣūgadda) (سجدا / sājadi) as plural forms is with certainty traceable to these unrecognized Koranic Syriacisms. These uncommon, arbitrarily vocalized and odd-sounding plural formations have also never been accepted in Arabic usage. The plural form سجد (ṣūgadda) occurring in eleven passages in the Koran is obviously the transliteraton of سجدا, which again gives us an indication of the pronunciation ن for certain / endings that come from Syro-Aramaic plural forms. By comparison, in eleven other passages the Koran uses the correct and today still common Arabic plural forms, الساجدن (as-sājidīn) (once) and الساجدين (as-sājidīn) (ten times).

Another expression corresponding to the مصمة (qāyimā) cited above by Nöldeke as an example of the type مصمة is the الققوم (Sura 2:255, 3:2 and 20:11), vocalized al-qāyīm in the modern Koran, but in Syro-Aramaic qāyima 69 and thus to be read al-qāyīm in Arabic.

To these نمینا أجنسي نولديك (op. cit. §107) adds a few substantives such as نثنا (yādrīnā) “jackal” and نباش (pādrī / pājīr-ram) “table.” This, in turn, gives us a clue towards clarifying a substantive, here-tofore considered a puzzle, which occurs in the Koran in Sura 74:51, قسورة, and which in the modern Koran is read qaswara.

69 Karl Ahrens, Christliches im Koran [Christian Elements in the Koran], ZDMG 84, new series, vol. 9 (1930): 44, refers here to Dan. 6:27. In the corresponding passage of the Psalter / qāyīm is in the status absolutus and is used verbally, مصمة لئليح (qāyīm l-ālmān): “he is existent = he exists for ever.” In the Koran passage in question, الققوم is attributive and corresponds orthographically to the form مصمة (qāyīmā). Although this expression is usually used as a substantive (in the sense of head, administrator), the Thes. (II 3352) also refers to the Eastern Syrian lexicographers, who, among other things, cite as its Arabic equivalent قائم، ثابت, ثابت قائم، ثابت قائم, ثابت (qāīm, tabīt, thabīt). Whence the meaning “he who is living, he who is constant” (i.e. he who is constantly living) for الحي الققوم (al-bayy al-qāyīm / al-qāyīm).

Sura 74:51

In context, the verses 49 to 51 say:

فما لهم عن التذكارة معرضين / كأنهم حمر مستفترة / فريت من قسورة

In this connection, the disputed word qaswara has been understood by our translators as follows:

(Bell II 619): 50. “What is the matter with them that they from the reminder turn away; 51. As if they were startled asses fleeing from a lion?”

(Paret 490): 49: “Warum wenden sie [Note: D.h. die Ungläubigen] sich von der Erinnerung [Note: D.h. von der mahnen Botschaft des Korans] ab, 50: (scheu) wie aufgeschreckte (Wild)- esel, 51: die vor einem mächtigen (Löwen) fliehen?”

(Blachère 625): 49: “Qu’ont-ils eu à se détourner du Rappel (tag- kira) 50 comme des onagres effarés 51 qui ont fui devant un lion?”

For قسورة (qaswara), Jeffery (Foreign Vocabulary 31 f.) first refers to Tagar who on the basis of a tradition going back to Ibn ’Abbās explains the word as Ethiopian in the meaning of “lion.” A check of the lexicons, however, shows that there is nothing of the kind in either Aramaic or Ethiopian. Examining the problem in more detail, he continues (35 f.):

A word like قسورة in lxiv, 51, is a puzzle at the present day, so that it is no wonder if it gave some trouble to the early exegetes. It is usually taken to mean lion, and as-Suyūtī quotes authorities for its being an Abyssinian word. There is no such word, however, in Ethiopian or any of the later Abyssinian dialects... As far as one can see there is nothing in any of the other languages to help us out, and perhaps the simplest solution is to consider it as a formation from قسارة (qasara), though the great variety of opinions
on the word given by the early authorities makes its Arabic origin very doubtful.

In any event, on this point Jeffery is right, for the word is Syro-Aramaic, appearing in the Thes. (II 3681) under the variant ܐ׳ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ  taraf) as usinus e senectute decrepitus qui onus sustineere non possit (an old, exhausted ass incapable of carrying a burden).

Now, if the Syro-Aramaic – perhaps metaphorically created – dialectal variant exemplifies the genuine meaning of the Koranic expression, it can be noted in favor of the Koranic form قصار (qasār) that the Koran has preserved the more classical Syro-Aramaic form. Namely, this coincides exactly with the nomina agentis described above by Nöldeke. Thus, according to the basic formقاصر, قسار is not to be read as qaswara, as it has been read until now, but as قسار.

As to the meaning of this expression in the Koranic context, it can be said that the comparison to a frightened ass, in referring to those who turn away from the Koranic admonition, is explainable in two ways: (a) either one runs away from something that represents a real danger (say, from a lion – and that would be logical), or (b) one runs away from something which by its very nature cannot involve a threat. The latter is here the case. With this metaphor the Koran wants to say that there is nothing frightening about its admonition. It therefore compares those who nevertheless turn away from it in fright to asses who let themselves be scared away, not, say, by an intimidating lion, indeed not even by a normal ass like themselves, but of all things by a hoary, feeble and decrepit ass about which there is no longer anything threatening at all.

Concerning the term حرف (ahfr) (letters / bookmarks), the Arabic tradition ultimately is not incorrect to have taken it purely and simply as a
synonym of قراءات (qira’āt), variant readings, to the extent that it has related them not just to the missing vowels, but also — and especially — to the defective writing of the basic consonant form of the original Koranic text before this text became fixed, in the course of a process lasting centuries, in the one variant reading of the currently accepted canonical version.

Yet, the Prophet is said to have remained silent for the most part, not only about the variant readings themselves, but also about the meaning of individual verses of the Koran. There is, for example, a report of the following statement by ʾAʾīsā (Aisha), the youngest wife of the Prophet:

“The Prophet — God bless him and grant him salvation — had the habit of interpreting nothing from the Koran except for a few verses that Gabriel — may salvation be upon him — had taught him.”

It is therefore no wonder that the earliest commentators on the Koran were also unable to know any better, which led ʿTabarṭ, the author of the most substantial Arabic Koran commentary to date, to exclaim:

إني لأعجب ممن قرأ القرآن ولم يعلم تأويله، كيف يدأ قراءته؟

"Yet I am surprised at anyone who reads the Koran without being able to interpret it: How on earth can he take pleasure in reading it?"

The encyclopedic work of ʿTabarṭ (consisting of 30 parts in the Cairo edition) is characterized by Theodor Nöldeke as a turning point in the history of the interpretation of the Koran. Among Muslims his commentary is considered an incomparable achievement:

“It is indeed, due to the wealth, variety and reliability of the communicated material, the most informative interpretive work that the Mohammedan world has ever produced.”

72 ʿTabart 137.
73 Cited by Mahmoud Muhammad Shaker in his introduction to the Koran commentary of ʿTabarṭ (Cairo 1374 H./1955) vol. 1 10.
74 Th. Nöldeke, GdQ II 172 f.

As Paret remarks in his Encyclopedia of Islam article, in this commentary ʿTabarṭ has

“collected for the first time the ample material of traditional exegetis and thus created a standard work upon which later Koranic commentators drew; it is still a mine of information for historical and critical research by Western scholars.”

8. WESTERN KORANIC STUDIES

Without intending to go into a detailed history of the origins of Western Koran studies, which emerged around the middle of the 19th century, some indication will be given here of the actual results of this Koranic research as represented by the translations of Western Koran scholars. August Fischer provides an overview of the subject in his essay, "Der Wert der vorhandenen Koran-Übersetzungen und Sura III [The Value of the Existing Koran Translations and Sura III]." On dealing with the task of translating the Koran, Fischer remarks:

"A Koran translation is no easy task. The renowned Arabists, scholars such as Reiske, Sacy, Fleischer, De Goeje, Nöldeke, and Goldziher, among others, have avoided it, at least partially because they knew of its great difficulties. Most of the previous Koran translators have been second-, indeed even third- and fourth-rate Arabists."

This was August Fischer’s opinion in 1937. However, with the more recent Koran translations by the Briton Richard Bell, the Frenchman Régis Blachère, and the German Rudi Paret, we in the meantime have translations by Arabists of the first rank. Yet despite their scholarly meticulousness, these translations have also contributed little to an essential improvement of our understanding of the Koran. With their appearatus criticus they have merely confirmed the problems identified by August Fischer. He summarizes the major difficulties a Koran translator has to cope with as follows:

1. A considerable number of words and sentences in the Koran are obscure and ambiguous.
2. The numerous allusions in the Koran are hard to interpret and their clarification in the Arabic tradition is contradictory and inadequate, so that in such cases only internal criteria can be of further assistance.
3. There is no systematic or chronological ordering of the Suras.
4. There is a lack of a real textus receptus with secure bookmarks. The imperfection of the script in the old Koran manuscripts permits numerous variant readings. The Arabic commentaries on the Koran differ considerably one from the other and not infrequently provide more than half a dozen possible interpretations for one obscure passage in the Koran. All the same, one can by no means do without these commentaries. The result is that one is never able to be sure of understanding the Koran in all of its details. A conscientious translator of the Koran will instead always have to work with numerous question marks and lists of the various possible interpretations.

The Koran translators, and in particular Rudi Paret, have fulfilled these requirements and at the same time revealed the limits of Koran studies. Yet it must be granted to Western scholarship that, thanks to its historical-critical methods, it has released the study of the Koran from its inflexibility and made considerable advances, more so from a theological-historical than from a philological perspective. The works of principal interest to this study were cited at the outset.

77 Cited from Rudi Paret, ed., Der Koran, Wege der Forschung [Directions of Research], vol. 326 (Darmstadt, 1975) 7.
81 According to Régis Blachère, sometimes up to a dozen (see his Introduction au Coran [Paris, 1947] xxxii).
82 Der Koran, ed. Rudi Paret (Darmstadt, 1975) 7 f.
9. THE LANGUAGE OF THE KORAN

Although justifiable doubts have been entertained concerning the reliability of the oral transmission, considering the fact that, as mentioned above, Tābiʿī reports several times that the Prophet was not accustomed to expressing himself either on disputed readings or on the meaning of individual verses or Suras in the Koran, there has nevertheless until now been no doubt among the specialists about the language of the Koran, since after all it is said in ten passages in the Koran itself that it was sent down, i.e. revealed, in Arabic (Suras 12:2, 13:37, 16:103. 20:113, 26:195, 39:28, 41:3, 42:7, 43:3 and 46:12).

However, since Arabic at the time at which the Koran originated still possessed no standardized written language, but instead consisted of spoken dialects, it was naturally assumed that the language of the Koran was identical with the dialect of the Prophet and his sib, the Quraṣh in Mecca. In Tābiʿī, this view is grounded on the following verse of the Koran (Sura 14:4):

وَمَا أُسْرِئَلْ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا بِلِبَاسِهِمْ لَيْبِينَ لَهُمْ

“We have never sent a messenger but in the language (i.e., speaking the language) of his people, that he may explain (the message) to them.”

Given this statement it must come as a surprise that the Prophet – as reported in Tābiʿī – was supposedly unable to explain this language to his contemporaries. Also concerning Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, one of the seven scholars of Medina (d. 712), Tābiʿī reports that in response to questions about a Koranic verse he “kept quiet as if he had heard nothing” (مَكَتْ كَأنَّهُ لَمْ يَسْمَعْ). To another such knowledge-hungry individual he responded: “Do not ask me about a verse of the Koran; rather ask him who maintains that nothing of it remains concealed from him,” by which he was referring to ‘Ikrima (a companion of the Prophet who died in 634). The fact that even after the Prophet nobody has succeeded in penetrating the final mystery of this language for as long as the Koran has existed has led in the Islamic tradition to the belief that the language of the Koran is of heavenly origin and thus finally unfathomable for mortals. With the term إعجاز (‘ajza‘) (on the basis of Suras 2:23, 10:38, 11:13) the Islamic tradition does indeed characterize the Koran as a miracle that cannot be imitated by mortals, but this may refer in general to the human inability to understand the Koran completely into its last detail.

Yet when the Koran speaks of the “Arabic language,” one can well ask what language it was talking about at the time of its origin. Faithful to Islamic tradition, which has always encouraged the search for knowledge (طلب العلم), and keeping in mind the well-known sayings of the Prophet “Knowledge is light” and “Seek knowledge and be it in China,” Tābiʿī takes the view that philologists (علماء اللفظ) are fundamentally authorized to explain the language in which the Koran was sent down (اللغة التي نزل بها القرآن) because outside of them nobody else is capable of acquiring a knowledge of it (لا تتوفر في علم ذلك إلا من فقههم), in so far as they are able to provide irrefutable and philologically verifiable arguments for the explanation and interpretation of this language (وأوضحهم برهانا فيما ترجو وبين من ذلك) (ما كان من فقههم من جهة اللغة) and regardless of who the interpreters in question may have been.

In the sense of Tābiʿī we therefore intend in the following – by taking a philologically prior linguistic phase as a starting-point – to undertake the experiment of reading the text of the Koran differently than the Arabic commentators of the Koran have done it, partially according to an understanding of the Arabic of their time and partially with recourse to Old Arabic poetry. Only on the basis of the results of this linguistic analysis may one judge whether it actually also leads to a better understanding of the Koranic text or not.

83 Ibid. 29.
84 Ibid. 28.
85 Ibid. 41.
10. FROM SYRO-ARAMAIC קָרָא to ARABIC قُرآن

The present study is based on the elementary finding that the term Koran (قُرآن) holds the key to the understanding of the Koranic language. Whereas, namely, the Arabic philologists in the interpretation of the word قُرآن (qur'an), whose Arabic origin they do not doubt, have not made up their minds yet between the verbal roots قرآن (qarana) (to bind, to put together) and قرأ (qara'a) (to read). In Western Koranic studies that cultural terms like قرأ (to read) — and accordingly also كتب (kataba) (to write) — could not be Arabic in origin. As Theodor Nöldeke says in his Geschichte des Qorān [History of the Koran] (I 31–34):

"Now, since a cultural word like 'read' can not be proto-Semitic, we may assume that it migrated into Arabia, and indeed probably from the north. ... Now, because Syriac has besides the verb كتب the noun كتب, and indeed in the double sense of كتب (the act of reading, reading aloud) and كتب (reading or lesson, reading matter), the assumption gains in probability, in connection with what has just been said, that the term Qorān is not an inner-Arabic development out of the synonymous infinitive, but a borrowing from that Syriac word with a simultaneous assimilation to the type فلن."

Nöldeke's probable assumption of the Syriac origin of Qur'an has in the meantime become so well accepted in Western Koranic research that the indication of its Christian-Aramaic origin has today become a matter of course in the standard Western encyclopedia of Islam, whereas this has been completely ignored by both the earlier and modern Islamic exegetes. Thus Erwin Gräf accurately defines the Koran as follows:

"The Koran, according to the etymological meaning of the word, is originally and really a liturgical text designed for cultic recitation and also actually used in the private and public service. This suggests that the liturgy or liturgical poetry, and indeed the Christian liturgy, which comprises the Judaic liturgy, decisively stimulated and influenced Mohammed."

As an ecclesiastical terminus technicus (technical term), the Koran thus corresponds originally to the lectionarium (lectionary) still used in Western Christianity today as a liturgical book containing excerpts from scripture to be read aloud during the service.

If it has now been established that the Arabic قرآن is a direct borrowing from the Syro-Aramaic كتب, then the question must be asked as to the extent to which – in Nöldeke's words – the assimilation of قرآن to the type فلن has taken place.

Information on this subject is provided for us by the Islamic tradition. Thus the Līsān (I 128b f.) records a statement reaching back from ܣܪܐ-ܡܐܝ by way of a traditionary chain to Muḥāhid, ܐܒܝ ܒܐܒ, and ܒܫܠ, according to which the Prophet had pronounced قرآن (qur'an) without a hamza, i.e. without the glottal stop before the ܐ (long a), قرآن (qur'an). On the basis of the ālif and hamza signs (ال), which were gradually introduced as a reading aid, but scarcely before the middle of the 8th century, the later Arabic readers, who were no longer familiar with the Prophet's original pronunciation, كتب, went on the assumption that قرآن (qur'an) was to be pronounced without the hamza, simply قرآن (qur'an). In doing so they ignored the view widely held in the Arabic tra-

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86 Cf. Nöldeke, GaQ 132, note 3.
87 Ibid. 33 f. Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether فلن is a genuinely Arabic type. The fact is that in practice the nominal form قرآن has never become generally accepted, though it is cited by the Arabic lexicographers as a variation of the common infinitive قرآن and also actually occurs in this function in the Koran. One can also identify the non-Arabic origin in the fact that in Arabic usage Qur'an is only understood as a proper name used to designate the holy scripture of Islam.

88 See, for example, the article al-Kur'an in The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol. 5 (Leiden, 1986) 400.
90 Blachère says in his Introduction au Coran 94 that it is impossible to establish more precisely the point in time at which this writing reform took place.
dition according to which the hamza was pronounced softly in the Arabic dialect of Mecca. This does not at all mean in this case, however, the absence of the hamza without replacement, but its realization as a soft ـي/y. Accordingly, the pronunciation of the Prophet documented by Islamic tradition must have been قرآن (qaryân), a pronunciation that exactly corresponds to that of the Arabic-speaking Aramaic Christians of Syria and Mesopotamia. This is also said by the Thesanūs with a reference to the Eastern Syrian lexicographers as follows: “Ap. lex. القرآن (qaryân: al-qaryán); it. القراءة (Thes. II 3716). In this case the vowel e in qaryân is to be produced, in accordance with the oral tradition of the Eastern and Western Syrians (usually in a single closed syllable), as a so-called murmur vowel (dark ə or “shwa”).

The hamza spelling in the medial and final position adopted according to the will of later Arabic philologists against the documented pronunciation of the Prophet has finally had as a consequence that the original Syro-Aramaic pronunciation qaryân has been abandoned in favor of the Arabicized pronunciation qu'rân (following the pattern of قرآن < قراین / qu'ran).91

Consequences of the Orthographic Transformation of qaryân to qu'rân

The Arabic transcription of Syro-Aramaic قراین (qaryān) must originally have been pronounced قرآن (qaryân). Until now, however, research on old manuscripts of the Koran has been unable to establish this spelling. In today's spelling قرآن (qu'rân) it is generally recognized that both the hamza and the alif ـي/y (long a) are secondary. In two passages (Suras 12:2, 43:21) the canonical version of the Koran gives evidence of the earlier written form with an accusative ending قرآن, as has already been pointed out by Nöldke (Bergsträßer-Pretzl) (GdQ III 43).92

Yet even if the extant manuscripts of the Koran have until now not confirmed the presumed spelling قرآن (qaryân), the original Syro-Aramaic term suggests this written form. Accordingly, one can imagine the following four phases in the transformation of the Arabic orthography to today's accepted canonical spelling قرآن (qu'rân): (1) قرآن (original pronunciation: qaryân); (2) defective spelling: قرآن (pronunciation: qu'rân); (3) full spelling قرآن (same pronunciation: qu'rân); and last of all (4) with the inserted hamza: قرآن (accepted pronunciation: qu'rân).

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that in a first post-Koranic orthographic reform the Arabic philologists no longer recognized the real meaning of the little peak of the letter carrier ـي/y in قرآن (qaryân) as a defective spelling for ـي/y. On the basis of the pronunciation of the Prophet (qu'rân), as documented according to Arabic tradition, they must have read the spelling قرآن as “qu'rân.” Whence the removal, without replacement, of the ـي/y, from which emerged, in a second phase, the defective spelling قرآن with the pronunciation qu'rân. The introduction of the alif ـي as a mater lectionis for ـي (long a) logically led, in a third phase, to the full spelling قرآن (with the same pronunciation: qu'rân). The

91 Thus what Nöldke called the fu'lala type would not exactly be Arabic.
92 Further reference is made, under note 3, to earlier manuscripts of the Koran with the spelling al-qur'an and قرآن (qu'rân).
acceptance of the hamza resulted finally, in a fourth phase, in what is today the common spelling in the canonical edition of the Koran, قرآن or قران (with the pronunciation qurān).

However, if the Arabic tradition according to which the Prophet said qurān is correct, then this would lead to the understanding that the Koran readers of the first generation did not read the little middle peak ى in the original spelling أذن as اذن or اذن, but as long أ. Later copyists, interpreting this peak as a long أ, would have then omitted it as an apparently incorrectly written character. Previously, however, it was known (for etymological reasons) that the little peak only functioned in Koranic orthography to indicate the long vowel أ in the reproduction of a secondary أ in a final position for tertiae أ roots before suffixes (e.g. أت لَا أنْ / بَنَّا مَ in Sura 79:27).

The conjecture that the little peak ى for indicating a long أ was not exclusively used for a secondary أ in tertiae أ verbs before suffixes, but was used in other cases as well during the first phase in the editing of the Koran, does not depend solely on earlier Koran manuscripts for its confirmation. On the contrary, evidence can already be provided now on the basis of a few misread words in the modern Cairo edition of the Koran. Of these the following examples may suffice:

France, 1998). As opposed to the spellings السبأت (as-sayyīʿāt) (Sura 4:18), السبأت (sayyīʿātākum) (Sura 4:31; 5:12) and السبأ (sayyīʿāthin) (Sura 3:195) in the Cairo edition of the Koran, the Paris Ms. 328(a) has (without diaecritical points): السبأت، السبأت، السبأت، (sana a) (I 101b ff), each with the same original meaning (to hate). See also the spellings reproduced under chapter 6 (55) in connection with the “orthography of the Lewis palimpsest” in Th. Nöldke (Bergsträßer-Pretzl), GdQ III.

94 This observation, made by the author in a lecture in 1996, was the startingpoint for the initiative to make microfilms of the Koranic fragments of Sanaa in the expectation that one would there be able to find further proofs. These microfilms have been available since 1998. Subsequently, a first (and still now sole) confirmation has been provided there by the spelling of the word أذن = أذن = أذن/ أذن (god, deities), where the middle peak marks the long أ as mater lectionis, however without any alteration of the meaning (see G.-R. Püin, Über die Bedeutung der ältesten Koranfragmente aus Sanaa (Yemen) für die Orthographiegeschichte des Korans [On the Importance of the Oldest Koranfragments of Sanaa (Yemen) for the History of Koranic Orthography]. “Neue Wege der Koranforschung” [New Ways of Koranic Research], 2. in: magazin forschung [magazine research], Universität des Saarlandes [University of the Saarland], I, 1999, p. 37-40). The other examples quoted there from the standard edition of the Koran, however, require some rectification. A first discussion concerning the spelling and the etymology of both Syro-Aramaic السبأ (sanaa) (Egyptian السبأ / śānh) and Koranic أذن (sayyin) will follow below.

95 Tabari (XV 1 f.) reads أذن (aṣdan) and gives the following explanations: أذن (aṣdan) (we inform you), أذن (aṭfahuk) (we obey you), with the note: أذن (aṭfahuk) as a synonym for أذن (aṣdan).
hook ـ، which here stands for a long ـ، is to blame for this. If the oral tradition had not been broken, the later Arabic readers would quite certainly have been able to recognize this well-known Arabic adverbial expression (although borrowed from Syro-Aramaic ܒܝܕܐ / ܐܘܝܕܐ [＜ *ܚܝܕܐ-ܚܝܟ > *ܚܝܕܐ-ܚܝܟ], with secondary vowel reduction and darkening > ِْدوALLOW, with following monophthongization of ِاو > ِدوALLOW > Arabic ِداALLOW / ِداALLOW. Namely, the misread ـ in when read as a long ـ results in the reading ِذاALLOW (then, whereupon) (actually ِداALLOW), which can also be written in modern Arabic in the contracted form ِذاALLOW (see, for example, H. Wehr, Arabisches Wörterbuch [Arabic Dictionary]). According to this reading the passage cited above (this time in Arabic) can now be understood as follows:

“On the day when he will call to them, ‘Where are they (now), my associates?’ they will then answer: ‘None of us professes’ to these any longer.”

Sura 68:13

Example 2: ُعِلَّ (ʼutall)

In this context a list is made of the negative behaviors of an infidel. Included among them is the character trait described in Sura 68:13–14:

ُعِلَّ بعد ذلك زينم / أكان ذا مال وبنين

On the basis of the wavering understanding of the Arabic commentators, 96 our Koran translators have translated this continuous double verse as follows:

96 Cf. Thes. I 1002, where to the Syriac ܒܝܕܐ (ʼutall) corresponds the Chaldaic (i.e. in this case vernacular Eastern Syro-Aramaic) ද楽しめる (iddāl) > Arabic ِذاALLOW or ِداALLOW.

97 Arabic ِذِهَة (shādah) does not just have the meaning of “witness.” The Arabic ِذِهَة (shādah), meaning “confession of faith,” is also a borrowing from the Syro-Aramaic ecclesiastical term ِذِهَة (shādah) (to testify, actually to admit publicly, from which ِذِهَة / ِذِلُّت “martyr, confessor” also comes).

1. The misread ـ in the spelling ُعِلَّ (pronounced ʼutall) is responsible for the different translations of this word by our Koran translators (Bell: “gross”; Paret: “Grobian”; Blachère: “arrogant”). Only Blachère, with “arrogant,” has even come close to guessing the real sense correctly from the context. The meaning “arrogant, overbearing” is actually yielded only by the reading ُعِلَّ (ʼutall). That the later Arabic readers incorrectly placed two dots (ـ) over the medial peak intended as a long ـ and came up with the meaningless reading ُعِلَّ (ʼutall) is precise confirmation of the assumption that an oral tradition no longer existed at the time of the fixing of the Koranic text. And this, even though this genuinely Arabic expression occurs in singular and plural in this meaning in four other passages in the Koran (Suras 10:83; 44:31; 23:46; 38:75). There, however, the original peak has been replaced by the subsequently inserted ِذِهَة 1 as a mater lectionis for long ـ. Thus these passages were read correctly. But in the case of Sura 68:13 this meaning was obviously not recognized. The misreading of the spelling as it was left in its original form, however, is to be explained in particular by the absence of an oral tradition.

The realization that the peak was often not just provided with false dots, but from time to time also replaced by an ِذِهَة 1 / ِذِلُّت, is of importance for Koranic studies for the understanding of many a misreading.

99 [Note 1]: “Or ‘adopted’ from an ignoble family, which is said to refer to Walīd b. Maghira. But the word is probably from ِذِلُّت to mark a well-bred camel by cutting a part of the ear and letting it hang down.”
For whereas with the canonical edition of the Koran it is only necessary to imagine the dots as absent, in the case of the alif 1 the problem is that a primary is not readily distinguishable from a secondary alif, especially considering the fact that, in examining them, both Arabic and Syro-Aramaic (and occasionally Hebrew) linguistic components must be considered each time. But that the later insertion of the alif by incompetent editors has led to the distortion of many a word would, in view of the unsure or absent oral tradition, only be a logical consequence.

2. Our Koran translators have rendered the spelling زَنَم (zanîm) in just as contradictory a fashion as the Arabic commentators (Bell: “highly-esteemmed”; Paret: “der sich (überall) eindrängt”; Blachère: “batard”). Given the way the word has been misread (zanîm), one would be most likely to see it as an active masculine Hebrew plural participle רהמ (ţâhim) (whoring, engaging in prostitution).100 However, because the Koranic context speaks of a single individual, such a Hebrew plural form is out of the question.

Some information about this is provided for us by the following statement given as indirect speech in Verse 14: أن كان ذا مال وبنين “that he has wealth and children.” This statement, however, presupposes a verb, which the misreading of زَنَم (zanîm) has distorted. Here, too, the absence of an oral tradition has resulted in the Arabic readers’ not knowing what to do with this spelling. Whence the arbitrary reading زَنَم (zanîm), whose just as adventurously imagined meanings H. Wehr, for example, (in his Arabisches Wörterbuch [Arabic Dictionary]) gives, without further examination, as “low, base; bastard, son of a bitch; stranger, one who does not belong to something.”

One cannot blame the Arabic readers, however, if behind the spelling زَنَم they were unable to imagine a Syro-Aramaic verb form. Namely, if in its place we read رَتَم (ratîm), what results is the transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic רתם (ratîm) in status absolutus. For it the Thesaurus (II 3997) gives the following definition under the verbal root רתם (ratîm):

“enunciavit, spec. indistincte et submissa voce locutus est” (to say, to pronounce, especially to speak unclearly and quietly).

In the case of the Koranic form, it is a question of a Syro-Aramaic passive masculine participle with an active meaning, as Theodor Nöeldeke explains in his Syrischen Grammatik [Syriac Grammar] (§280):

“Some participia of the form "ḥum (p't) are used in an active meaning: in part this is based on the fact that the verba involved could be doubly transitive; in part it is caused by the analogy to forms having a related meaning.”

This Koranic example should be added to those listed by Nöeldeke. The attributive passive participle רתם (ratîm) is also explained actively by the Thesaurus (loc. cit.) with “blæsus, balbutiens” (lisping, stammering, metaphorically: twaddling). With the now no longer common phrase ما رتم بكلمة (mî ratam bi-kâlma)101 (he didn’t speak a word) and the rhetorical: الكلام الخفي (ar-ratam: to speak quietly) Arabic has preserved a memory of the Syro-Aramaic expression.

Based on this analysis, the double verse from Sura 68.13–14 is now to be read:

عال بعد ذلك رتم / أن كان ذا مال وبنين

( palabras more / that he has wealth and children)

According to the Syro-Aramaic reading, it should thus be understood as follows:

“arrogant furthermore twaddling 14. that (even without God) he has wealth and children!”

100 Cf. W. Gesenius, Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch [Concise Dictionary of Hebrew and Aramaic] 201b.

101 Cf. Lisân XII 226a; the same under رتم (ratîm): (al-arâm): هو الذي لا يصحح كلامه ولا يبيته

(who speaks inarticulately).
Example 3: (ar-raqîm)

In a recent article, James A. Bellamy has been the latest to deal with this expression, heretofore considered an unsolved problem in Koranic studies. Taking as a starting point an error on the part of a copyst, he proposes the reading (raqîd) (the sleeping [boys]) in place of the substantive recorded in the canonical version of the Koran (ar-raqîm) (roughly, memorial tablet). In its context this verse reads:

ام حسبت ان أصحاب الكهف والرقوم كانوا من ايتنا عجبنا

The German translator Paret (238) renders this verse as follows:

"Or do you think that the people of the cave and the inscription (?) ar-raqîm [Note: The interpretation of ar-raqîm is very uncertain] was (one of our signs, about which one should be (especially) surprised?"

Blachère (318) renders "ar-Raqîn" as a place name and refers to the contradictory explanations of the commentators. Bell (I 275) does the same and adds the following comment (footnote 1):

"Much difference of opinion prevails as to the identity of ar-Raqîm, some holding it to be the name of the mountain or the village associated with them, others that it is the name of the dog. Torrey suggests that it is a misreading of Decius as written in Hebrew characters; E.G. Browne, Oriental Studies, p. 459."

The thought that, to introduce this legend of the seven sleepers one would expect a corresponding expression, is in itself correct. For the former contested reading (wa-r-raqîm), J.A. Bellamy proposes the following emendations: (1) removal of the conjunction and / wa as superfluous; (2) removal of the medial / as having resulted from inattentiveness or a blot; (3) changing the final / into a / o / d, and (4) insertion of a presumably omitted final / d. Thus we would have the reading evidenced in Verse 18 (raqîd) (sleepers) as the plural of (raqîd) (sleeping male). Instead of the previous reading (the people of the cave and the inscription), one would then have (the sleeping people of the cave).

However, by proposing four emendations to a word made up of a total of five letters (if we ignore the article / ah), J.A. Bellamy spoils a consideration that is otherwise plausible in its approach. In contrast, the principle of lectio difficilior would be better served if we had to change just one letter.

The key is here provided to us by precisely that little middle peak that J.A. Bellamy has considered either faulty or only a blot, but which here stands for a long / a. Then we would need only to read the probably misread final / m as a final / d. Namely, experts of the Hâgazi manuscripts know that the pronounced ring-shaped final / is produced on the line without the vertical infralinear extension. Nonetheless, one cannot in the first place make a mixing up of final / d and final / m responsible for the misreading. Much more likely is the assumption that later Arabic copyists could no longer recognize the peak / as a long / a. Interpreted as a long / l, they must have read (wa-r-raqîd), a form that doesn't exist in Arabic at all. The next best alternative was therefore to make a final / m out of the final / d.

That the latter letter was occasionally confused with the Arabic / r, on the basis, however, of an earlier transcription from Syriac script (due to the identically formed letters / d and / r distinguishable only by the upper and lower dots, respectively), will find itself substantiated in a subsequent study. An initial case first became conspicuous in the following discussion of the spelling (yalûdûn) instead of (yalûdûn) from Sura 16:103. Two more examples from the Cairo edition of the Koran can be provided as confirmation of this phenomenon:

a) Concerning the transcription of an originally Syriac / d as an Arabic / r: Such a mistake is encountered in the word (allegedly: soft voice) instead of the Syriac (memory) from Sura 19:98:

Bell (I 291) translates according to Arab commentators: “How many a generation have We destroyed before them! Dost thou perceive of them a single one or hear of them a whisper?”

The word رکزا (rikza) is transcribed in the facsimile of the هیغزت Koran codex Or. 2165 (fol. 1–61), published by the British Library in 2001, as رکزا (rkra) (without diacritical points) (fol. 50b, 11). This spelling provides us with a typical example of the unpointed Arabic rendering of the identically shaped Syriac consonants ـ/د and ـ/ر, but which with the respective lower and upper dots should have been rendered in Arabic as ـ/د and ـ/ر. Provided with the diacritical dots, the first ـ in the Arabic spelling would thus correspond to the Syriac ـ/د, the second ـ to the Syriac ـ/ر (and not to the Arabic ـ). In this way the original reading ذکزا (dikra) can be restored. This also results etymologically and semantically in a sense that fits better to the context. Namely, that رکزا (rikza) would mean a whispering, a soft voice, is a pure invention of the Arab commentators, who were unable to come up with anything more suitable in connection with the preceding verb سم (sami‘a) (to hear). If one hears something, it must be a voice, they must have thought. At the same time one can also hear of someone, that is, learn something about him. Insofar is ذکزا (dikra) here to be understood as remembrance of the deceased, whose memory continues to exist even after their passing away. The verse cited above is therefore to be corrected and understood as follows:

“Dost thou perceive of them a single one or hear of them any mention?”

b) Concerning the transcription of an originally Syriac ـ/ر as an Arabic ـ/د: One such example (among others) is to be encountered in the heretofore ـ/د/س (allegedly تاذ) from Sura 26:63. Following the Old Testament account Moses is commanded to strike the sea with his staff; there then follows:

Bell (II 356, 63): “… and it [the sea] clave asunder; each part became like a cliff mighty.”

Although the word has been understood correctly here, only Paret (303) gives it in parentheses (تاذ), by means of which he wants to indicate that the word in itself is unusual. The unique mistaken writing of this well-known word through the mistranscription of the Syriac ـ/د as Arabic ـ/د is all the more astonishing since the otherwise correctly transcribed طور (تاذ < Syro-Aramaic ـ/د, ـ/د, mountain) occurs ten times in the Koran (Sura 2:63:93; 4:154; 19:52; 20:80; 23:20; 28:29; 46:52; 1:142); the corresponding Arabic expression is used once in connection with the sea (Sura 11:42); there it is said of Noah’s ark that it sailed في موج كالجبال (fi mawg ka-l-ğibal) “between waves (high) as mountains.”

c) Since the Arabic letters ـ/د and ـ/ر are clearly distinguishable in the early Koran manuscripts in the هیغزت as well as in the کیف style, a primary mutual mixing up of these letters is only conceivable on the basis of an original mistranscription of the equivalent Syriac letters ـ/د and ـ/ر from an original composed in Syriac

In fact (تاذ) is not only unusual, it does not exist in Arabic at all. A supposed verbal root طور (tada) from which a fictitious seventh stem طور (inttada) is derived with an equally imaginary meaning “to rise in the air, soar up,” as quoted, for example, by H. Wehr [A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (Arabic-English), edited by J. Milton Cowan, Wiesbaden 1979, 669f], and the excogitated modern Arabic word طور (manţafa) (ـ/د) “balloon, blimp; zeppelin, dirigible” that results, also shows the basis on which Classical Arabic is partly grounded. The لسآن (II 270a) explains طور as the طور (تاذ) as the طور (ـ/د) of the طور (ـ/د) (a towering mountain). But herewith it actually just explains the mistranscribed Syro-Aramaic word (تاذ) (ـ/د), which the لسآن (IV 508b) explains with the same meaning: ـ/د (ـ/د), i.e. a mountain.

See in the Appendix in the CD copy 0585 from the Koran manuscript of Samarkand, line 2, the kufic ـ/ر in the word طور /ـ/ر and the ـ/د in the word طور (Tadh).
script (Garshuni/Karshuni). In turn, only in this roundabout way can one explain the Arabic misreading of the final d (by mistranscription written incorrectly as a final r) as final m. The occasionally remarkable similarity of the final r (here instead of the final d) and the final m in early Kufic Koran manuscripts (caused by insufficient careful transcription) can finally be illustrated with the help of a few examples from the Koran manuscript of Samarkand (cf., e.g. in the Appendix 8, 9, and 10 in the spelling مريم / yā-Maryam in the corresponding passage from Sura 3:45, CD 0098 [see p. 348], according to the copy of sheet 95, -2). This determination provides us with the graphical proof of a reconstructible mixing up of final r (written incorrectly from final d) and final m in a second stage of the Arabic transcription of the Koranic corpus in the Kufic style. This would mean that the Kufic Koran manuscript of Samarkand belongs, not to the first, but at the earliest to a second generation of the Arabic handing down of the Koran. It nevertheless contains in itself sufficient graphical evidence for a Syriac original version of the Koran text, as will be explained.

In so far as the Arab readers did not have the historical background information as to the Syriac scripture of the early Koran, they may have seen within the Arabic scripture system no other alternative than the reading والمُرقَد = والمَرقَد (war-raqqad) instead of والمَرقَد = والمَرقَد (war-raqqad = war-raqqad). Although this reading also didn’t seem very reasonable, at least it was known to exist in Arabic. In cases of doubt, such undefinable words nevertheless have the advantage of becoming interpreted as proper names or place names that cannot be verified, evidence of which is also provided by the commentaries in question. The analogous method of interpretation employed by Arabic philologists will have struck anyone who has worked in particular on Old Arabic poetry.

However, if one reads instead of والمَرقَد (war-raqqad) والمَرقَد (war-raqqad), then the problem is already solved. As the nominal form of المَرقَد (raqqad) (to sleep), the Lisān (III 138a) gives المَرقَد (an-nawm) (sleep) as a definition of المَرقَد (ar-raqqad). Read like this, Sura 18:9 makes the following sense:

“Do you think, say, that the people of the cave and sleep were strange among our signs?”

Example 4: النوروية (al-tawwārāt)

To the designation of a long ʿa with a little peak (ي) in the interior of a word C. Brockelmann names as the only exception the foreign word النوروية (tawwārāt) (Torah) (Arabische Grammatik [Arabic Grammar], §2 d, note 2, p. 7). On the other hand, Theodor Nöldeke, in his Geschicht des Qorāns [History of the Koran], had suspected the pronunciation النوروية (tawwārāt). In his Untersuchungen zur frühen Geschichte der arabischen Orthographie [Studies on the Early History of Arabic Orthography], W. Diem contradicted him and found a more detailed elucidation of the traditional reading tawwārāt (249a) faulty. He rejected the derivation from Hebrew ישועת (Yōʿāṭ) that A. Jeffery and J. Horovitz assert by referring to J. Wellhausen, who would have expected the Arabic *tawaraḥ as the equivalent of the Hebrew feminine ending ʿā, whereas the Koranic spelling with ʿā, in which K. Völlers saw an ināša from ʿā to ʾ as a variant of Torah, is not modeled on the Hebrew spelling ישועת. Against the suggestions by F. Schwally, R. Köbert.

105 The author has to thank Tariq Ismail for providing a CD copy of the Koran codex of Samarqand [SAMARKANDSKII KIFICHEKSII KORAN – Koran coufique de Samarqand écrit d’après la tradition de la propre main du troisième Calif Osman (644–656) qui se trouve dans la Bibliothèque Impériale Publique de St. Petersbourg. Edition faite avec l’autorisation de l’Institut Archéologique de St. Petersbourg (facsimile) par S. Pissareff. St. Petersbourg. 1905].

106 GdQ (Göttingen, 1860) 255.
108 Foreign Vocabulary 95 f.
111 Skizzen und Vorarbeiten [Sketches and Preliminary Studies] 6 (Berlin, 1899) 265.
112 GdQ (1899) 304, note 3.
and A. Fischer\textsuperscript{114} involving the drawing in of the Jewish-Aramaic or Aramaic ניינא (tawrāt) and the hypothetical “hybrid form” ניינא הדריתא (tawrāt), from which the Arabic التورية (at-tawrāt) would have emerged, he asserts that in this case the Arabic form in the final position *tawrātah should have resulted and not the actual spelling tawrāh.

In fact, W. Diem believes he has found the solution in G. Dalman’s\textsuperscript{115} realization that in a part of the Jewish-Aramaic dialects “the Nisba ending of the feminine -אָיְּתָה experienced a shortening of the א and monophthongization of the thus created diphthong או to א.” From this phenomenon (אָיְּתָה > אֵיָתָה > אֵּיָתָה), which is also well known in East Aramaic dialects, there would have emerged from a hypothetical Aramaic form *tawrātah / *tawrātah / *tawrātah the only possible choice in Arabic, a word ending in -āḥ, and thus tawrāh.

Apart from his giving no further evidence for this alleged form, W. Diem has apparently overlooked the fact that in Arabic another frequently documented structural type ending in -yāa lends itself more readily to the Aramaic Nisba ending -אָיְּתָה / -אֵיָתָה than the one he has proposed. Parallels such as the Syro-Aramaic ניינא וֹ (yawmānā) = Arabic يومنى (yawmānā) (daily), ניינא וֹ (barrana) = Arabic يومينى (barrana) (outside, to be found in the country), ניינא וֹ (gawmānā) = Arabic يومينى (gawmānā) (related to the air or atmosphere)\textsuperscript{116} are only a few popular examples. In the Koran in Sura 19:26 a further example is provided for the Syro-Aramaic ניינא (a)nāšāyā by the Arabic 'אנסא / instāyā for the equivalent masculine ending, though here one could also make a claim for the necessity to rhyme.

If for the reasons given by W. Diem (op. cit. 248) a borrowing from the Hebrew תנורת / tawrāt is now out of the question for the Koranic spell-

\textsuperscript{114} Zur arabischen Rechtschreibung [On the Arabic Orthography] 331.

\textsuperscript{115} Brünnnow-Fischer, Arabisches Chrestomatie [Arabic Chrestomathy], glossary s.v.

\textsuperscript{116} Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch [Grammar of Jewish-Palestinian Aramaic] (Leipzig,\textsuperscript{1905}) 193.

The shift in meaning of Syro-Aramaic ניינא (gawmānā) (interior) to Arabic גו (gaww) (air, atmosphere) in Classical Arabic (see below page 221 f.) was probably caused by the misinterpretation of this Syro-Aramaic expression in Sura 16:79.

There are a few examples of this in Syro-Aramaic, precisely in the case of proper names. Well known first of all is the pronunciation יאש’ (among the Western Syrians) and יוֹ (among the Eastern Syrians) for Jesus. One could also mention יאש’ (Urdān) (Jerusalem) in Syriac and יאש’ (Irūšām/Virūšām) in Christian-Palestinian (Thes. I 101; 1630). Also of interest is the Syriac lexicographers’ explanation for the Aramaic names of the Jordan, which the Thes. (I 1584) renders as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item יאש’ (Yurdān): יאש’ (i.e.Urdān) יאש’ (i.e.)
  \item יאש’ (nuhrā gnaḥ fā') (the light has appeared to us), in addition to the Arabic variant: יאש’ (al-Urdān).
\end{itemize}
Finally, we find in the Koran itself a further example in the name ياقوج (Yaqūq) (Sura 18:94; 21:96), whose initial y alternates with the a of the Syro-Aramaic spelling Ḥāḡ (Agāg).\(^{117}\)

On the Spelling of ياقوج (Yaqūq) and ماجوج (Maḡūq)

With this pair of names we would have one example, among others in the Koran, of the use of the alif as mater lectionis (vowel letter) for short a in accordance with the Aramaic writing tradition. Whereas A. Jeffery (loc. cit., 288) sees in this alif a long ā (Yājūj / Mājūj), the Cairo edition takes it to be a hamza carrier and reads: Ya’gūg wa- Ma’gūg.

Arguing against both these readings is (a) the Syro-Aramaic pronunciation, whose a in both cases\(^ {118}\) is short; (b) the defective spelling without alif in the recently published facsimile of the Koran codex Or. 2165 of the British Library,\(^ {119}\) where in both cases (Sura 18:94 / Folio 47a, 18; Sura 21:96 / Folio 58a, 2) one finds موجوج (Maḡūq) and موجوج (Maḡūq); (c) the confirmation of this pronunciation in today’s usage in the Middle East where these two names are familiar as a standard quotation.

As a further example of an alif in a medial position for a short a the word مئاد (Mā’ida) that the Cairo edition reads as mā’ida should for the time being suffice. In the Arabic dialect of northern Mesopotamia, however, this word is still commonly used today in the pronunciation mayde. As a consequence, the Koranic spelling ought to have been mayda.\(^ {120}\)

\(^{117}\) Cf. Thes. I 23.

\(^{118}\) Although the Thes., II 2003, gives two vowel variants for ماجوج / Maḡūg and ماجوج / Maḡūg, the latter variant predominates.


\(^{120}\) Th. Nöldeke, NSbS (Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft [New Essays on Semitic Linguistics]), Strasbourg 1910, 54 ff., is starting from the pronunciation mā’ida when he explains: “The word was then usually and often compressed into ميدتا (mayda),” which, however, in reality corresponds to the original Koranic pronunciation. But the borrowing of this word from Ethiopic (see A. Jeffery, loc. cit., 255 f.) is doubted by Nöldeke, who then remarks (55): “Finally, it is not even clear at all that the Ethiopic word is of Semitic origin.” This recently gave rise to the following attempt at a new interpretation: Manfred Kropp, Viele fremde Tische, und noch einer im Koran: Zur Etymologie von ṣirāt (line = way), whose emphatic initial s is in turn rendered in Latin by st (= strata) (see below p. 226 ff.). As already discussed, this is demonstrated by the rendering of city names such as that of the city of برز / Brēzra south of Damascus, which is rendered in Greek and Latin as Bostra / Bostra. In one case the emphatic s is rendered by the sound combination ps. Thus the Greek / Latin transcription of the city مسیت is Mopsuestia (Thes. II 2195).
Instead of the previous pronunciation *tawrāt* / *tawrāt* for the Koranic spelling توریة, we would accordingly have criteria for the pronunciation *yawriya* / *yārīya*, in an Arabicized pronunciation perhaps *yawriya*. The weak point in this argumentation, however, remains the fact that (at least until now) no evidence has been given of the existence of an Aramaic or Syro-Aramaic variant such as *Kinnor / כְּנֵו* (*yārīya*).

On the other hand, our foundations are strengthened if in the case of the spelling توریة we read the medial peak *ה* as the phonetic rendering of the Hebrew feminine ending *-kah* (as finally transmitted) to designate the long *ה*. Namely, contrary to Diem's assumption, the Koran does not always render the foreign orthography faithfully in the case of borrowed proper names. An example of this is the orthography of the name Abraham, which in the Cairo Koran edition is written *אברם* (Ibrāhim = *Abraham*) in fifty-four passages and *אברם* (Abrahām) in fifteen passages (see below the example 5, p. 93).

However, it has appeared meanwhile that such an assumption as to the spelling of توریة is erroneous, inasmuch as the Koran does not provide any example for the usage of a double mater lectionis *י* / *y* to mark the final *ה*, considering the fact that, according to the Aramaic (and Hebrew) orthographical tradition, in this case only the final *ה* / *h* fulfills this function. This consideration led us to undertake further investigations to determine the real reading of the little peak *י* before the final *ה* / *h*. The results can now be presented in what follows.

*On the new interpretation of the spelling*

توریة (Tawrāt / Tawrāt) = *yawriya* / *yārīya*

Taking up once more the Koranic name beginning with *י* (Yaqūq), we have here a parallel for the Syriac spelling *yawriya* (Ağūq), which would justify an initial *י* for the Koranic spelling توریة (Yawriya) for Syro-Aramaic *Orayta* (= arabisch *Oriya / Ūriya* / *Yūriya*).

In the first German edition of this study (p. 68 ff.) this well-founded reading was temporarily set aside because until then no evidence of it could be given. In the meantime, it not only seems obvious through the reference to the above-mentioned parallel; it can also be substantiated, thanks to the *Mandaic Grammar (MG)* of Nöldeke,¹²¹ Namely, in the first chapter on *Schrift und Lautlehre* [*Writing, Phonetics and Phonology*], he remarks under § 6 (p. 7) (3):

An example of initial *spiritus lenis* with *u, o* is *שָׁאָרָא* (Šārā) "Thora"; *ראָא* (Rā) (name of the worst devil, from Hebrew *רַע* (Rā) "Feuer");... This *h* however, can in some circumstances also be *ew, iv ...

That *י* *yārīya* can accordingly not only be pronounced *Orayta*, but in some circumstances also *Yūriya*, is in turn supported by the Mandaic dictionary.¹²² There (p. 191a) the spelling given by Nöldeke as an example is rendered alternatively under both pronunciations: "YUR = AUR II (= "UR II) to shine"; further: "YWR = AWR (="WR) to blind, to dazzle with light." Another example of the initial *י* is provided to us by Nöldeke in the *MG* (§ 62 [5]) with the spelling *Kinnor* (*yārā / yārā") "shine."

With these examples the Mandaic writing tradition again helps us to solve the riddle of the Koran spelling توریة. Consequently, from now on we can be certain that this spelling should no longer to be read as *Tawrāt / Tawrāt*, but as *Yawriya / Yōriya / Yūriya*.

Now what makes this reading into a certainty is not only the initial *י* which was heretofore unexpected in research on the, but in particular the ending *י* in which Nöldeke had correctly expected the pronunciation *yāa*. The argumentation in the first German edition of this study in favor of the reading *Tawrāh / Tawrāt*, according to which the next to the last little peak can be seen as *mater lectionis* for long *ה*, is erroneous since the final *h* fulfills precisely this function.

In other words, as a rule two *matres lectionis*, one following immediately after the other for one and the same function, contradicts the Koranic and Aramaic writing tradition. For this reason the ending *yāa* is

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to be confirmed. Thus for the Koranic spelling بوريه the result is clearly the reading واوريه or عوريه / يوريه.

In the light of this misreading of a presumably familiar name, the question can be asked as to how the Arabic reader was able to arrive at such a misinterpretation of the Koranic orthography. The answer can only be that, for the lack of an oral tradition, they allowed themselves to be told by Jewish informants that in Hebrew the word is تورى, even though in Jewish-Aramaic (as in Syro-Aramaic) this is pronounced התריא (Orayà / Øreñà) (status absolutus התריא / Orayàyà / Øriyà).123

The fact that the Arabic exegetes transferred this reading to a differently pronounced Koranic spelling is reminiscent of the Biblical principle of כֶּלִית / k itch (so written) and קֶלֶּה / q itch (differently read). This appears to be the principle that A. Jeffery (loc. cit. 95 f.) is following when – despite the 18 times in which the spelling التوريه occurs in the Cairo version of the Koran – he renders this word in the modern Arabic transcription (توريه / Tauriñ) and reads it Tauriñ. Just as rashly did Jeffery agree with the Western Koran scholars who had argued for a direct borrowing from Hebrew, whereby he rejected Fraenkel’s consideration, which, with its presumption regarding an Aramaic borrowing, was closer to the truth.124

With his comprehensive knowledge of the Aramaic dialects, in particular of Mandaic, Theodore Nöldeke, however, would certainly have had the competence to cope with the riddle of this Koranic orthography had he concerned himself more closely with the text of the Koran.

Example 5: On the spelling of أبرهيم (Ibrähìn = Abrähám)125

In the case of this name the Arabic readers have proceeded in the opposite fashion: Whereas in the preceding spelling التوريه they have falsely seen in the next to the last little peak a mater lectionis for long ꝏ (instead of ꝏ or ꝏ), for the spelling أبرهيم they have taken the next to the last little peak to be a mater lectionis for long ꝏ instead of for long ꝏ. This is all the more surprising since the name Abraham must have been quite familiar to them.

That with the spelling أبرهيم the reading Abrähám is intended is supported by the fifteen passages in the Cairo edition of the Koran with the defective spelling أبرهيم (Abrahm). This faithfully renders the Hebrew and Syro-Aramaic written form אברם and is to be read as “Abrähám.”126 The partial full spelling occurs in fifty-four other passages in the Cairo version. Here the fact that it is not the first long ꝏ, but the second that is indicated by a little peak, can be explained by the Koran writer’s wanting in this way to emphasize the accented syllable (Abrahám).

Sura 12:88

Example 6: مزجية (allegedly muzgät)

This is actually an example of a little peak that has been misread and taken to be a long ꝏ. W. Diem explains (op. cit. § 57):

“In the spelling of the feminine singular forms ending in ꝏ constructed from tertiae infirmae roots, sometimes ꝏ and some-


124 Thus Jeffery writes (op. cit. 96): “Western scholars from the time of Marraci, Prodromus, I, 5, have recognized it as a borrowing direct from the Heb. (Note 2: So de Sacy, J. A. 1829, p. 175; Geiger, 45; von Kremer, Ideen, 226 n.; Pautz, Offenbarung, 120, n. 1; Hirschenfeld, Beiträge, 65; Horovitz, KU, 71; JPN, 194; Margoliouth, ERE, x, 540), and there is no need to discuss the possible Aram. Origin mentioned by Fraenkel, Vocab, 23 (Note 3: Fischer, Glossar, 18a, however, suggests that it may be a mixed form from the Heb. והרי והרי (Toriñ) and Aram. והרי (Orayà); cf. also Ahrens, ZDMG, lxxxiv, 20, and Torrey, Foundation, 51.), The word was doubtless well known in Arabia before Muhammad’s time, cf. Ibn Hishám, 659.”

125 In A. Jeffery, op. cit. 44-46.

126 As Th. Nöldeke (Bergsträßer-Pretz), GdQ, III, 17, remarks (in note 1): “What is meant by the shorter spelling أبرهيم is the pronunciation أبرهيم (Abrahām) (this, according to the Damascene imam Âmir, is considered certain in Sura 2; other passages are still in dispute).” Also concerning these two variants on p. 98: “16:124 أبزهيم: أبرهيم [Note 3: Not listed by Mingana]; this may be a difference in spelling, but may also represent the form أبرهيم (Abrahām) that appears in the Othmanic text.” The effort expended by A. Jeffery, Foreign Vocabulary, 44-46, to explain this orthography was therefore unnecessary.
times *alif* is encountered. The spellings familiar to me are: مُزِجَة
12,88 *muzāgh* (zḡw) “little”; ... Of these spellings, مُزِجَة corresponds to expectations, since for the undocumented masculine form *muzāgh* of spellings like مَسْمِعُ np (§ 45) one can infer a spelling with a final *yādig* that, in accordance with § 56, could then be retained for the spelling of the feminine."

Indeed, one could have spoken of the “مُزِجَة type” if this word had not been misread. That *mediae geminatae* and *tertiae infirmae* roots can be variants of one and the same root is a well-known phenomenon in Syro-Aramaic and Arabic. But the fact that the three verbal forms attributed to the root (زجا زجو) in the Koran (Suras 17:66; 24:43; 12:88) have actually been misread (the first two from the Arabic رِجاٰ ل and / argha’a “to hold up,” the third from the Syro-Aramaic / raggā “to make damp or wet”) and falsely interpreted as the *mediae geminatae* root زج / zaqqa (push, throw), raises the question whether the *tertiae infirmae* root زج / zaq / zḡw was not adopted into the Arabic lexicography with the same meaning as the root زج / zaqqa on the basis of this misreading (cf. both roots, e.g. in H. Wehr, *Arabisches Wörterbuch* [Arabic Dictionary]).

With far too much confidence, A. Jeffery says of مُزِجَة / *muzāgh* (Foreign Vocabulary 33 f.) that it is “undoubtedly genuine Arabic.” But one ought not to take the Arabic commentators for so ignorant when even *Tabart* (XIII 50 ff.) says on the subject: اختلاف أهل التأويل في البيان "on the interpretation of this (expression) the commentators are of various opinions.” Among the forty opinions listed by *Tabart* (bad, trifling, low-grade, inaccessible goods; clarified butter and wool; inferior, insufficient money) only one of them comes close to the actual Biblical sense to which this expression alludes. It is the interpretation attributed to *Abu Shālī* (op. cit. 51) according to which it means الصنوبر والحبة الخضراء (as-sānawbar wa-l-ḥabba al-ḥadrā) “pine seeds and terebinths (turpentine pistachios).”

This opinion is not at all as outlandish as it appears at first glance. Rather, one must assume that this *Abu Shālī* was aware of the corresponding passage in the Bible (Genesis 43:11). Namely, there it is said that Israel (Jacob), before the second journey of his sons to Egypt with Benjamin, instructs each of them, in addition to the double amount of money, to take something with them of the best fruits in the land as a present. These fruits are enumerated (op. cit.) as follows (according to the *Pšiṭā*):

“Pine seeds (or balsam), honey, resin, pistachios, terebinths (turpentine pistachios) and almonds.”

This hint could have contributed to the clarification of the familiarly obscure expression مُزِجَة (supposedly *muzāgh*) if our Koran translators had taken a closer look at the corresponding passage in the Bible and not been satisfied with repeating the wavering opinions of the commentators. 128 If *Tabart*, however, has taken the trouble to list up to forty *ha-dith*, he surely must have imagined that one or the other interpretation was correct. In the process, this again confirms that occasionally the Arabic exegesis of the Koran has preserved a correct interpretation of an expression that was considered to be unclear. The task of Koran research should have then been, on the basis of philological and objective criteria, to identify this one interpretation.

In the present case, the above-mentioned Bible passage gives us an objective indication concerning the identity of the Syro-Aramaic root of the spelling misread as مُزِجَة المزجة (muzāgh / *muzāgh*). For in reality (a) the dot over the ز / z has been falsely placed and this letter should be read as ز / r, and (b) the next to the last peak should not be read as long أ but as أل / y / l. This results in the reading مزِجَة - مَزِجَة = Syro-Aramaic مزِجَة (m-raggayda). As the active or passive feminine attributive participle of مزج (raggāī) (to moisten, to wet, to refresh) the Thes. (II 3806) gives us

127 The *Jerusalemer Bibel* [Jerusalem Bible] renders this passage as follows: “some balsam, a little honey, gum, ladanum, pistachios and almonds.”

128 R. Paret, for example, says in his *Kommentar* [Commentary] (253) on this passage (12:88): “The interpretation of *bīdā’a* *muzāgh* is not certain.” In his *Koranübersetzung* [Koran translation] (198) he renders the expression with “Waren von geringem Wert [goods of little value] (?).” R. Blachère (268) translates in a corresponding manner: “une marchandise de peu de prix [low-priced merchandise]”, and R. Bell (225): “we have brought transported goods.”
under “poma ṭmli (ṛgayh) recentia” the meaning “fresh fruits,” which would fit our context. Moreover, under ṭmli (ṛgayh) (3805, l. 43805) the Thes. gives the following as synonyms for ṭmli (ṛgayh): ṭmli (ṛght), ṭmli (ṛght), (in Arabic) ṭmli (yurattīb) (to wet, to moisten, to refresh).

Now, although the Syro-Aramaic participial form ṭmli (m-raggaytā) can be understood actively or passively, it would be more likely to be understood as active here since in Syro-Aramaic usually the passive participle of P’al ṭmli (ṛgayh) is used for the passive meaning. In the case of the synonymous ṭmli (ṛght) we would have by analogy the Arabic ṭmli (raṭḥ) for the latter and ṭmli (murrāṭṭib) for the former case.

Thus the most obvious thing to do would be to read the Koranic transcription, for which there is no root in Arabic in this sense, actively as murrāṭṭib. The expression ṭmli (yurattīb) (giīnā bi-biḍā’ta’um murrāṭṭib) (Syro-Aramaic: ṭmli ayyīnan tēgurā m-raggaytā) would then be in Arabic understandable today:

"We have brought along refreshing" fruits.

Hence, according to the Biblical account, Joseph’s brothers have brought along with them the present for the host that is still in part customary according to Oriental practice today.

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129 Cf. Thes. (l. 3805 f.), under ṭmli (ṛgayh): ṭmli ṭmli (qaysāt ṭmli) ḥalāw ḥalāw (fresh wood), ṭmli ṭmli (sawkt ṭmli) ḥalāw ḥalāw (sawd, young, fresh twigs).

130 Supporting this meaning, moreover, is the synonymous expression given by the Thes. (l. 3893) (muyāt m-rattāb) (refreshing water), as well as the explanation cited from the Syrian lexicographers on the A’f’l ṭmli (ḥigit): ṭmli ṭmli ṭmli ṭmli (ṣawkt ṭmli) ḥalāw ḥalāw (fresh wood, young, fresh twigs).
The occasion for R. Paret’s proposal of contradictory alternatives for يُبْعَط (barā’ā), “termination [Aufkündigung]” (of an agreement) or “(declaration of) immunity [Schutzerklärung],” must have been the distortion, by the insertion of the 알, of the original spelling يُبْعَط (barṭyā). Namely, on the basis of the context, this spelling can only be the transliteration of the Hebrew ברעה (brṭy) (agreement). Among the definitions listed by W. Gesenius (Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch [Concise Dictionary of Hebrew and Aramaic] 116) for this well-known Biblical expression, the following should suffice:

“1. An agreement which receives through a solemn ceremony an especially forceful and obligatory character…. Such a solemn obligation occurred in various cases, for example (a) when a covenant was concluded between persons, nations or tribes; (b) in the case of treaties, or contracts, referring to specific obligations or performance; (c) in the case of agreements between winners and losers…”

The meaning of يُبْعَط (barā’ā) = يُبْعَط (barṭyā) would thus be established as a rendering of the Hebrew ברעה (brṭy) (agreement, covenant). The same applies for Sura 54:43: “or have you, say, a covenant (with God) in the Scripture?” Here, too, it is probably not يُبْعَط (barā’ā) that should be read but يُبْعَط (barṭyā). The corresponding Syro-Aramaic expression in the Psāṭtā is مصأحح (gāṭāh). This is also what must be meant in Sura 5:97: “God has made the Kaʿba, the Sacred House, a covenant for mankind.”

Summary

The determination that the little peak not only serves as the carrier of five letters (بَّيْنِيَّةٍ), but occasionally (except for the endings of verbs teratiae yā’ before suffixes) can also designate long ā’, provides a solution to many a phenomenon considered inexplicable in the Koran until now. As W. Diem comments under (e) طيب / ṭaba and the like (op. cit., §60, 250 f.):

“For the spellings 4:3 طاب / ṭaba ‘it was good,’ 2:228 والجلال ‘and to the men,’ as well as for جا / gā ‘he came’ and جات / gāt ‘she came’ ad-Dāni reports [Muqni’] 71. See also Jeffery-Mendelson: ‘Samarquand Qu’ran Codex’ 186 as variants the spellings طيب, والجلال, جا, جات. The spellings with yā’ are explained by Nöldeke [GdQ 4 1860, 255], Vollers [Volks- sprache und Schriftsprache 102] and Bergsträßer-Pretzl [GdQ III 40, 92] by้มāl; Brockelmann [GvG I 608, Note 1] also assumes an ālām in the case of يُبْعَط, which he sees as being derived from forms containing an t such as āl. The explanation with ālām is made too ad hoc to be convincing, and would also be surprising in the case of ṭab, in emphatic surroundings. Not to mention the fact that I consider it impossible that a phonologically irrelevant variant could have caused a change in the orthography. There is still no explanation for this: at best, for يُبْعَط [sic! for يُبْعَط] one could imagine the possibility that the yā’ of spellings of other derivations (yafīṭu, ālūt, ālūt etc.) had infiltrated by association, as was also considered for the wāw in the الأرب، للجلال (§ 47). However, cannot be explained in this way.”

The determination presented above now makes it clear that what is meant by the spelling طاب (ṭāb), what is meant by the spelling جا (gā), and what is meant by the spelling يُبْعَط (barā’ā), which W. Diem (op. cit. §30, 227) considers equally puzzling, and for the examples cited by Th. Nöldeke (Bergsträßer-Pretzl, GdQ III 49)

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131 This word, pronounced ‘briya,’ is very current in actual spoken Algerian Arabic in the meaning “letter” (= written document).
132 Properly considered, “Book of Psalms,” which (being part of the Scripture) Ṭabart (XXVII 108) also explains with “Scripture.”
(Sura 14:5). Further examples would be the variants from Sura 7:40 (الحياط < Syro-Aramaic ṣāṭḥum) and m-ṭāṭ (sewing needle) (op. cit. 67), no matter how hard the Lisān (VII 298 f.) tries to explain these Syro-Aramaic forms as Arabic. This also renders superfluous the concluding remarks on the corresponding orthography in the Lewis palimpsests (op. cit. 57).

In this way, too, many a Koranic spelling (qāf) will turn out to be ق (qāf) (perhaps even the Syro-Aramaic ʾā / qāl “word, speech”). As to the later use of the peak as the carrier of the hamza in the Koran, it should finally be noted that in the early Koran manuscripts the peaks were conceived of exclusively as carriers of the above-mentioned sounds, but never as carriers of the hamza. A later analysis will show that many a distortion has resulted from the subsequent incorrect provision of a traditional peak with an unforeseen hamza.

On the Morphology and Etymology of Syro-Aramaic ʾāṣātān and Koranic Shayṭān

Concerning the thesis that the medial peak ʾ (y) in the Koranic spelling of Shayṭān is a mater lectionis for the vowel a corresponding to the transliteration of Syro-Aramaic ʾāṣātān (sāṭān / sāṭān), a preliminary remark is to be made about the Koranic orthography of this word. For while, for example, the spelling of ʾābrāhām (Ibrahim = Abrahām) occurs in the Cairo Koran edition fifteen times (in Sura 2) as ʾābrāhām (Abrahām), without the facultative mater lectionis ʾ (y = ā), as has been noticed by Th. Nöldeke (Bergsträßer-Pretzl) in GdQ [History of the Qurʾān] III, 17, n. 1 (see above p. 93), this is not the case for the regular spelling of Shayṭān, whose pronunciation is moreover very common in vernacular Arabic. It is therefore unjustified to maintain that the Koranic orthography simply reproduces the phonetic spelling of Syro-Aramaic ʾāṣātān.

This thesis has been recently rejected by M. Kropp, who tries to demonstrate the correlation between the Arabic and the Ethiopic origin of Shayṭān. It is here not the place to discuss the conclusions of this instructive contribution which foreshadows the complexity of this momentous term for cultural, religious and linguistic history. However, apart from the detailed examples of the usage of this word in Arabic and Ethiopic, no explanation is given as to its original meaning. Thus further details will be briefly provided here to point out that Shayṭān is originally neither Arabic nor Ethiopic, but that the two spellings, ʾāṣātān (sāṭān) as well as Shayṭān (Saytān), are morphologically and etymologically two secondary Eastern (Babylonian) Aramaic dialectal variants of one and the same Syro-Aramaic verbal root.

This root is still conserved in Classical Syro-Aramaic with the medial ʾā / ʾāyn in its unaltered form ʾāṣātān / sāṭān (or sʿēṭ). The original meaning is given by C. Brockelmann (Lexicon Syriacum, 487b f.) as follows: “taeduit eum, abhorruit” (to loath, abhor, abominate). From this root two verbal adjectives were derived:

1. a) A first adjective was derived from an early passive participle of the first stem of three consonant verbs according to the

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form pa’lā\textsuperscript{134} = סָּמַל /sa’lā + the suffix ān + the suffix of status emphaticus ā = סָּמַל /sa’lānā. The suffix ān has among other things the same function as the Latin suffix -abilis (English -able) and conveys on the participle the meaning of a gerund. Thus סָּמַל / sa’lānā means “worthy to be abominated = abominable.” This is the classical form of the original Syro-Aramaic root.

b) From this classical form the medial  א / ̀ayn was dropped early on in the vernacular Eastern Syro-Aramaic. The phonetical consequence of this dropping is the compensative lengthening (Ersatzdehnung) of the initial ā. So סָּמַל / sa’lānā became סָּמַל / sālānā as it is attested in the Hebrew Bible (> יָנַשׁ /sāšn as well as in the New Testament, and, since then, in many modern European languages. Because this word came with this (dialectal) spelling into Syriac through the translation of the Old and New Testament, the Syrian lexicographers were no longer able to recognize its actual Syro-Aramaic etymology (with the medial א / āyn). Even Ephearem the Syrian derived it falsely from the root סָּמַל / sālā which means “deviate, lose the way,” for which reason

son, he explains, the devil was called סָּמַל / sālānā (cf. Thes. I 2601, Ephr. ii. 474 D). However, before Satan became a name of the devil, its actual meaning was “abominable.” Therefore, when Jesus rebuked Peter with the words: “Get thee behind me, satan!” (“Mt 16:23), the latter word was not to be understood as a proper name, but verbatic: “Get thee behind me, abominable!” The same meaning is to be assumed in Mt 4:10, when Jesus repulsed the devil just once with the same epithet: סָּמַל / sālānā (= abominable!), whereas in this passage in the Pešitta the devil is called four times סָּמַל / ākel-qarṣā (calumniator, accuser = adversary) (Mt 4:1–11).

2. a) The second adjective derived from the root סָּמַל / sālā (according to the pattern of the passive participle pa’lā / p’tā of the first stem of regular verbs) runs in Classical Syro-Aramaic סָּמַל / sa’lā > s’lā. After the dropping of the medial א / āyn in the vernacular Eastern Syro-Aramaic, the spelling and the pronunciation become סָּמַל / sayṭāl, as attested in Mandaic. C. Brockelmann (Lexicon Syriacum) gives on the one hand the Classical Syro-Aramaic form as סָּמַל / s’lā (488a 4), and on the other hand the Mandaic form as סָּמַל / sayṭāl (487b -3), both with the same meaning: “repudianthus” (abominable). But Brockelmann did not notice that he just needed to add to this word the suffix ān /ānā\textsuperscript{135} to have the vernacular Eastern Syro-Aramaic form סָּמַל / sayṭānā from which (after changing the s > 严格按照 omission of the final ā) the Koranic Arabic سُمِّيت / sayṭān is derived.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{134} In the classical Syriac grammar this form is limited to verbs tertiae a or y (with final ā or y), as e.g. (for masculine singular in status emphaticus): סָּמַל / malyā (full), סָּמַל / samā (mad), סָּמַל / samā (blind, a blind man) (see C. Brockelmann, Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar], Paradigma p. 140. Yet, that this form had also existed in early Syriac in regular verbs is attested in some still conserved adjectives as e.g.: סָּמַל / ṣaqā (difficult), סָּמַל / bnaṭā (בּנָתָא) / saṭā (impure), סָּמַל / salmā (sound, wholesome), etc. Interesting is this earlier form in the Syro-Aramaic adjective סָּמַל / bnaṭ (heathen) beside the regular, in Syro-Aramaic unused but in the Koran transmitted form סָּמַל / Arabic خَانِق / bnaṭāl. The same is to be found in the substantivized (i.e. used as a noun) Syro-Aramaic סָּמַל / halpāt (secondary helpāt > Arabic خَانِق / halṣāt) and the Arabic, from Eastern Syro-Aramaic סָּמַל / halpā (with the vernacular pronunciation of h > ḥ) borrowed form خَانِق / halṭā (substitute). A further example we have in the Syro-Aramaic substantive סָּמַל / bnaṭāt and Arabic خَانِق / halṭāt (milk). Both participial forms occur finally in a few number of substantivized participle adjectives in Classical Syriac, as e.g.: סָּמַל / kārštā (a fortified town, fortress, citadel) = סָּמַל / kīṛšt (surrounded, encircled).

\textsuperscript{135} Cf. Th. Nöldeke, Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar], § 128, § 129: “To form adjectives, ān is added to very various words…” See further ibid., Mandaische Grammatik [Mandaic Grammar], § 114 c: “Nouns formed with suffixes: With ān and its variants. The suffix ān, ānā, that can be substituted in some cases by ̀ayn (§ 20), is likewise very common in Mandaic, namely, both for abstract nouns and for adjectives…”

\textsuperscript{136} Concerning the alternation of סָּמַל / s and סָּמַל / sh in Syro-Aramaic and Arabic see S. Fraenkel, Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen [The Aramaic Foreign Words in Arabic], p. XII f., XXI.
As one can see, though the determination that the little peak — as occasional mater lectionis for medial long ā may be of some importance for Koranic research, however, it can not be considered as a key to solve such intricate riddles as the Koranic شيطان /ṣayṭān. Moreover, the erudite investigation of M. Kropp as to the use of this cultural word in Ethiopic confirms once more the view of Th. Nöldeke with regard to some Ethiopic words borrowed from Aramaic (cf. Mandäische Grammatik / Mandaic Grammar, p. 134, note 4 explaining the Syro-Aramaic word ʾərīt / ʾōrayāt): “Auch ins Aethiopische ist dies Wort mit anderen durch die aramäischen Missionäre als ʾərīt hineingetragen [This word has with others also been introduced into Ethiopian as ʾərīt by the Aramaic missionaries].”

Qurʾān < Qəryān: Lectionary

If Koran, however, really means lectionary, then one can assume that the Koran intended itself first of all to be understood as nothing more than a liturgical book with selected texts from the Scriptures (the Old and New Testament) and not as all as a substitute for the Scriptures themselves, i.e. as an independent Scripture. Whence the numerous allusions to the Scriptures, without a knowledge of which the Koran may often seem to be a sealed book to the reader. The reference to the Scriptures, however, is not only apparent from the individual allusions; rather, in more than one passage the Koran refers explicitly to the Scriptures, of which it conceives itself to be a part. So, for example, we read in Sura 12:1–2:

1. “These are the (scriptural) signs (i.e. the letters = the written copy, script) of the elucidated Scripture: 2. We have sent them

(Bell I 218): 1. “These are the signs of the Book that is clear. 2. Verily We have sent it down as an Arabic Qurān; mayhap ye will understand.”

(Paret 190): 1. „Dies sind die Verse der deutlichen Schrift. 2. Wir haben sie als einen arabischen Koran hinabgesandt. Vielleicht würde ihr verständig sein.“


The proposed translation according to the Syro-Aramaic understanding:

1. “These are the (scriptural) signs (i.e. the letters = the written copy, script) of the elucidated Scripture: 2. We have sent them

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137 Borrowed from Syro-Aramaic, the Arabic verbal root بَنَانُ (bānān), second stem (bāyana), is identical with the Syro-Aramaic بَنَنَ (bānān, undocumented in Peal), Pael بَنُ (bāyn). Thus, in this context the Syro-Aramaic (as well as Arabic) meaning to elucidate, to explain (Thes. I 468: intellegere, discernere fecit) gives the more exact sense. It is to this extent to be understood as a synonym of فَسَلُ (fāṣala) (a loan translation from Syro-Aramaic فَسَلُ / prāš / pūras, see below). As a passive participle of the second stem it ought to have been mu-bayyan (corresponding to Syro-Aramaic مَعْبَايَانُ, m-bayyan), as the active participle of the fourth stem mubān. The active participle of the fourth Arabic stem mubān (elucidating, explaining), as the Koran now reads, would only be justifiable here from the necessity to rhyme, since the fourth stem بَنَنُ (bānān) does not occur elsewhere in the Koran. The participial form مَعِينُ (mubān) monotonously derived from it without any consideration for the semantic context should therefore have been read or understood, depending on the context, either passively mubayyan (thus, for example, in Sura 19:38 فَلَمْ يَأْمُرُوهُ بِمُعِينٍ مَعِينٍ “in apparent error”), or actively mubayyin (as, for example, in Sura 46: 9 مَا أُنْفِئُ مَعِينٍ “I am only an elucidating, explaining warner” [Paret: “a clear warner”]).
down as an Arabic *lectionary* (= Koran) (or in an Arabic *reading*) so that you *may understand* (it)."

The Koran makes even more explicit, with further expressions borrowed from Syro-Aramaic and explained below, that what is meant by *"eluciated"* Scripture is the *"translated"* Scripture.

With the Syro-Aramaism *الكتب* (umm al-kitāb) or *الكتبة* (umm al-kitab) ("mother of the scripture" — main scripture or scripture-proper) the Koran names the *Scriptures* as its actual source in Suras 3:7, 13:39, and 43:4. This emerges most clearly from Sura 3:7:

**Sura 3:7**

هو الذي أنزل علوك الكتاب منه

ايت محكمات هن امل الكتاب لأخر مشهيدت

By the Koran translators, this verse segment has been understood as follows:

(Bell I 44): 5. "He it is who hath sent down to thee the Book; in it are clearly formulated verses; these are the essence [Lit. "mother"] of the Book; other (verses) are ambiguous."

(Paret 44): "Er ist es, der die Schrift auf dich herabgesandt hat. Darin gibt es (eindeutig) bestimmtes Vers (Ayat muhkamāt) — sie sind die Urschrift (umm al-kitāb) — und andere, mehrdeutige (mutsašbihāt)."

(Blachère 76): 5/7 "C'est Lui qui a fait descendre sur toi l’Ecriture. En celle-ci sont des aya confirmées (?) qui sont l’essence de l’Ecriture, tandis que d’autres sont équivoques."

On the basis of both Arabic and Syro-Aramaic, this verse segment is to be understood as follows:

"He it is who has sent the Book down to you. *Of it* (a part consists of) precise (or well-known) writings (i.e. texts), which (are) (quasi) the Proto-Scripture (itself), and (a part of) other (writings), which (are) alike in meaning (to these)."

Only if one analyzes each term according to its equivalent Aramaic semantic contents does one do justice to the real meaning of this verse. In connection with the *"eluciated"* scripture, there is, behind the Arabic participial adjective *محكمات* (muḥkamāt) (here "precise" or "well-known"), the Syro-Aramaic *ḥattāt* or *ḥattāta* (ḥattāta). The first adjective is used precisely in connection with "exact" translations. The latter can refer to the knowledge of the content. Behind *متشبهات* (mutsašbihāt) (similar) is the Syro-Aramaic *damyātā* (similis, comparable)."
With these two terms the Koran defines the origin of its content. It therefore consists, on the one hand, of "faithful" (or well-known) excerpts from the "Proto-Scripture," i.e. the "canonical Scriptures," and, on the other hand, of parts taken, say, from apocryphal or other scriptures "comparable" to the Proto-Scripture. The content of the Koran we have before us also confirms this brief "table of contents." With comparable verses, the Koran is at the same time making it clear that for it the standard to which it persistently refers is the "Proto-Scripture," i.e. the Scriptures considered to be canonical.

Now, notwithstanding the assertion in the Koran itself (in Suras 16:103 and 26:195) that the Prophet had proclaimed the Koranic message in "clear Arabic speech," all Arab, as well as all non-Arab commentators on the Koran have since time immemorial racked their brains over the interpretation of this language. Generations of renowned Koran scholars have devoted their lives to the meritorious exercise of clarifying the text of the Koran grammatically and semantically, word for word. In spite of all these efforts one would not be far from the truth if one were to estimate the proportion of the Koran that is still considered unexplained today at about a quarter of the text. But the actual proportion is probably much higher insofar as it will be shown that a considerable number of passages that were thought to be certain have in reality been misunderstood, to say nothing of the imprecise rendering of numerous Koranic expressions.

11. The Historical Error

We are now in the year 1428 of the Hiğra/Hegira, the emigration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. that marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Considering the variety of Arabic dialects spoken at the time of Prophet, it was a legitimate question to ask in what dialect the Koran was sent down. To this end, Tabari cites Sura 14:41:

"We have never sent an apostle except in the language of his people, that he may explain (the message) to them."

This results in the Koran's having being composed in the Arabic dialect of the Qurayš, the Prophet's clan in Mecca.¹⁴⁷

Thus, when the Koran emphasizes in ten passages that it has been composed in the Arabic language, it does so to stress the particularity that differentiates it from the Proto-Scripture of the Old and the New Testaments, which had been composed in a foreign language. This reference becomes quite plain in Sura 41:44:

Sura 41:44

By our Koran translators, this verse has been understood as follows:

(Bell II 481): "If We had made it a foreign Qur'ān, they would have said: 'Why are not its signs made distinct? Foreign and Arabic?' Say: 'To those who have believed it is guidance and healing'..."

¹⁴⁷ Tabari I 29. On the morphology and etymology of Quraysh (Qurayš) see below p. 236.
"Wenn wir ihn (d.h. den Koran) zu einem nichtarabischen Koran gemacht hätten, würden sie sagen: 'Warum sind seine Verse (wörtl.: Zeichen) nicht (im einzelnen) auseinandergezogen (so daß jedermann sie verstehen kann)? (Was soll das:) ein nichtarabischer (Koran) und ein arabischer (Verkünder)?' Sag: Für diejenigen, die glauben, ist er eine Rechtleitung und ein Quell des Trostes (wörtl.: Heilung)…"

(Blachère 509): "Si nous avions fait de [cette Révélation] une prédication en langue barbare, ils auraient dit: 'Pourquoi ces aya n'ont-elles pas été rendues intelligibles? Pourquoi [sont-elles en langue] barbare alors que [notre idiom] est arabe?' - Réponds: '[Cette Edification], pour ceux qui croient, est Direction et Guérison…"

In connection with the composition of a book, the Syro-Aramaic (םحمد) "to compose" is to be assumed to be behind the Arabic جمل (qa‘al*).

Inasmuch as Arabic فعل (faṣal*) here lexically renders the Syro-Aramaic פארס (parš/parrēs), it should not be understood in its original meaning of "to separate" (Paret: to place asunder in individual parts), but in its broader sense of "to explain, to interpret" (cf. Thes. II 3302 ult.: עֲמַל / la-m-parrāšā interpretari scriptionem). Moreover, if one considers that in many languages today the earlier expression for "to explain, to interpret" is used to mean "to translate" (as attested by the modern Arabic ترجم "to translate" from the Syro-Aramaic / תרגמ "to explain, to interpret" as well as by the French "interpréter, interprêter"), the meaning of "to translate" or "to render" becomes virtually unavailable here. In his commentary on Sura 41:3, 44 Ṭabarî also understands فعل (faṣal*) as a synonym of ביאן (bayan*) "to clarify, to explain." The Koran verse cited above is therefore to be understood as follows:

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If we had composed it as a lectionary in a foreign language, they would say: 'One ought then to have translated its scripts!'"

In the case of the noun clause that follows "foreign and Arabic," Ṭabarî without question sides with the majority of the Arab commentators who read an interrogatory particle السُّؤُل (hamza) that was obviously added subsequently in front of the أُعَجمي (أَعْجمي) / 'a-‘ajamī. Though this means an unjustified intervention in the text, the translations given above reproduce the corresponding interpretation by Ṭabarî. Only Bell suspects an omission, which he illustrates in his translation by leaving a section of the line blank. Yet this noun clause can be more reasonably explained without an interrogative particle if one follows the minority reading, whose interpretation Ṭabarî briefly mentions. This is how the Qurâns must have understood the clause: "But this Koran had been sent down foreign (i.e. in a foreign language) and (in Arabic)," so that both foreigners and Arabs could understand it. Whereupon God, according to this verse, had sent down all manner of foreign words, of which Ṭabarî cites, as an example, حجرة من سجيل (bīgātra min siggīl) (with) stones of clay (Suras 11:82; 15:74; and 105:41), in which case the word siggīl is explained as being a Persian loan-word. If one accordingly takes أَعْجمي وعربي foreign and Arabic to refer to the language of the Koran – and not foreign to refer to the Koran and Arabic to the Prophet – then this part of the verse should be understood as follows:

148 Thes. II 2557 (2) composit librum (to compose a book). Mann* 483b (5) أَفْتَرَسَ (allāf, anśa‘a).
149 Ṭabarî XXIV 90 and 126.

150 Later the question will be dealt with as to why the Arabic لَا los (law-lū) has been falsely interpreted here and in other passages as an interrogative particle.
151 Ṭabarî XXV 126 f. (cf. A. Jeffery 164). But actually حجرة السجيل (mīn siggīl) is a mistranslation of the Syro-Aramaic passive participle السُّؤُل (hamza) / سَمِعَة (from which is derived Arabic مَسِعَتُه / سَمِعَتُه (cf. Mann* 872a (3) / wahīl, tīn [mud, clay, argil]) and is to be read in Arabic مَسِحَال (from which is derived Arabic كَسَمَال / [coast, shore, littoral – as "muddy"]). That with حجرة السجيل not necessarily "stones of baked clay" are meant, as R. Bell translates (according to the allegedly Persian "sang" [stone] and "gel" [clay]), but rather "stones of (dried) clay," makes Sura 51:33 clear, where the Koran uses as a synonym حجرة السجيل / bīgātra min tīn "stones of clay."
“(Now whether it be) foreign or Arabic, say then: It is for those who believe (right) guidance and pure (belief).” 152

In Sura 16:103 there is also talk of a foreign language and Arabic:

Sura 16:103
ولقد نعلم أنهم يقولون إنما يعلمه بلغة SOME LANGUAGE which Paret places in parentheses with a question mark, and which تابع nonsensically interprets as “to be fond of; drawn to, attracted to, inclined towards, lean towards somebody,” a suggestion that Bell, Paret and Blachère, however, do not follow. Instead, based on the context, they have preferred to “guess” its probable meaning. Yet this meaning is not at all derivable from the Arabic verbal root لَحَد (lāhada) (to dig, to bury; to deviate from, to incline towards), and thus we would seem to be justified in asking whether it is not a question here of a foreign root, the identification of which may lead to a more plausible sense.

With this suspicious verb, بلحون (ylulhdītna), we are in fact dealing with a typical example of the erroneous Arabic transcription of a Syro-Aramaic script, the cause of many misreadings in the Koran. In the present case, it is a question of the Syro-Aramaic spelling of the verbal root لَحَد (līgz), where the لـ/ل in the Koran stands for the Syro-Aramaic لـ/ل (lāhada), لـ (laθara), لـ (laθara), لـ (laθara), لـ (laθara), لـ (laθara), لـ (laθara), لـ (laθara) (in Garshuni/Kurshuni لـ/ل (līgz = Arabic لـ (laθara) with any Arabic root, the most obvious possibility for them was to interpret the final ل/ل as a final ل/ل, and then to read it as لـ (lāhada)—which

152 The translations that have been cited, “healing, Quell des Trostes/Heilung [source of consolation/healing], guérison [recovery, cure, healing],” as well as تابع’s interpretation, “healing from ignorance” (جلب / ِةال) or from paganism” may well make sense as they stand. But here the Arabic شفاء (ṣīth) appears to have been borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic حَذَبا (ṣīyāda or ِيِلَذ). For this the Thees. (II 4261) gives: حَذَبا (ṣīyāda ِشـ اش) complanatio, defaecatio (evenness, purity of the way); metaphorically, puritas, sinceritas (purity, sincerity) حَذَبا (ṣīyāda w-suṣūla ḍ-ḥassab) (purity and integrity of thought). The same is given under حَذَبا (ṣīyāda ِشـ اش) (ṣīyāda haymāta) puritas, simplicitas fidei (purity, integrity of belief). In connection with ِذن (huda) (Syro-Aramaic حَذَبا / حَذَا, ḍ-ḥadda, حَذَا / حَذَا (huddya) (right guidance), the Syro-Aramaic synonymous meaning of “integrity” (of doctrine, of belief) should be adopted for شفاء (ṣīth, actually ḍ-ḥadda).

153 تابع XIV 179 f.
154 In the last meaning solely on the basis of this passage in the Koran, and in accordance with تابع, here, as in a large number of other passages, falsely taken up by Arabic lexicography (cf. Hans Wehr, Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart [Arabic Dictionary for the Written Language of the Present Day] [Wiesbaden, 1985]).
is, in fact, an Arabic root, but whose real meaning, “to fall away from the faith,” does not fit here at all. However, if one falls away from the faith, one could obviously also say that one turns away from it. But if one turns away from something, one can also reinterpret this to mean that one turns toward something else. Only by means of a train of thought such as this can one arrive at the scarcely convincing interpretation that Tabart, without any further details or explanations, wants to suggest.

In reality, there is no evidence in Arabic linguistic usage for this meaning of لَادَم (labada) adopted by Tabart. The Arabic lexicons cannot substantiate this meaning—except on the basis of this misread and misunderstood passage. What is in the meantime striking, however, is that the Syro-Aramaic لَغَازَة (lāgaza) in Thes. II 1891, appears to be a late borrowing from the Arabic لَغَاز (lāgaza). For this expression, namely, the Thes. does not cite any evidence at all from Syro-Aramaic literature, but refers only to the Eastern Syrian lexicographers. More recent native lexicons cite the pa’el, ctp’el and ctp’al forms (lāgaz, lēgayz, etlāgaz), while Brockelmann does not mention this verbal root at all. The reason for this is that the etymologically correct equivalent of the Arabic لَغَاز (lāgaza) (with the secondary dot above the g) is the Syro-Aramaic لَدَم (lēgayz).  

155 With the same meaning (to speak enigmatically, allegorically), whereby the Syro-Aramaic ܐ/׳, phonetically corresponding to the Arabic غ/غ, is to be pronounced as غ. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that in the early Hedjazi and Kufic Koran manuscripts the original form of the Arabic letter ﭐ/ Spells quite exactly the Syriac letter ܐ/׳. This is not the only graphical detail that will prove that the Koranic text was originally written in Garshuni, i.e. Arabic with Syriac letters.

156 Cf. Manah 369a/b.

157 Cf. Thes. II 1961 f., 霪 (lēgayz): indistinct locutus est (to speak indistinctly, unclearly) (with further meanings and examples); Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum, 368b f. The Līṣān (V 405b) gives under لَغَاز (lāgaza) the same definition: لَغَاز الكلام ولَغَاز فيه: عنى مراده وأضمره على خلاف ما أظهره (In reference to speech ağaza means: to conceal and disguise one’s purpose, as opposed to what one actually says).

Thus, in rendering the verse segment لسان الذئ يلحنون عليه as “the speech of him they hint at” and “die Sprache dessen, auf den sie ansprechen [the language of him to whom they allude],” Bell and Paret have correctly guessed the meaning of لَادَم (labada = lāgaza) from the context, even though they were unable to recognize its etymology. In particular in the case of the preposition لَنَم (lānām) pronounced لَغَاز (lāgaza) in Arabic – is to be understood as a synonym for لَمَّا إلَى (ramaza ila) لَمَّا إلَى (lamma ila) (to allude to, refer to something). Transferred into modern Arabic, this passage would accordingly read:

لسان الذئ يرمزون عليه “(listān l:lāqī yarmuzānā, yu-lammatānā ilayhi) (the language of the one to whom they are alluding).”

Now, although this root is common in Arabic, it is worth noting that the Koran here reproduces the obviously dialectal Syro-Aramaic written form, which was probably created only later under Arabic influence and which turns out to be the phonetic transcription of the Arabic verb. The fact that in the Koran words common to Arabic and Aramaic are occasionally used in the foreign pronunciation has already been established elsewhere. This detail is all the more interesting in that it reinforces other details in the Koran that point to the Eastern Syrian-Mesopotamian region.

The same phenomenon can be observed in two more passages where the root لَادَم (labada) appears in the Koran in similar graphic form, but in a different sense. Thus we find in Sura 7:180:

158 Cf. Anton Schall, Coranica, in Orientalia Suecana XXXII-XXXV (1984-1986) 371. See also Nöldeke’s comment on Arabic لَغُنَة (lagūna) and Syro-Aramaic لَغَاز (lēgayz) (oil drum, wine cask) in Siegmund Fransen’s aramische fremdworter im Arabischen [Aramaic Foreign Words in Arabic] 130: “This is probably an Aramaic-Arabic word that the Fellāhen of Aramaic origin employ, as is so much in Bar Ali and Bar Bahlul (whom the Thesaurus Syriacus usually cites as local lexicographers).”
Sura 7:180

ودرو الذين يلحدون في اسمه

(Bell I 155): 179. “... and pay no attention to those who make covert hints in regard to His names.”

(Paret 140): “… und laßt diejenigen, die hinsichtlich seiner Namen eine abweigige Haltung einnehmen (?) (Oder: die seine Namen in verruf bringen (?)”

(Blachère 198): “… et laissez ceux qui blasphémente au sujet de Ses noms.”

In the light of the following explanation, this verse from Sura 7:180 will be understood to mean:

“Leave off from those who scoff at his names.”

Paret repeatedly remarks on this verse in his Commentary (179): “It is not clear what the expression یُلَعِبْنَا فَآسَمَلِتْهُ is exactly supposed to mean.” In doing so, he refers to the divergent translations by Bell and Blachère. With Tabart’s comment on the expression، قوله اختلف يلحدون أهل التأويل (the commentators disagree on the meaning of the word [of God] “یَلَعِبْنَا”159 and the subsequent hunches (to deny God, to attribute other gods to Him, up to and including the interpretations attributed to al-Kisâ’i), one is hardly any nearer to being able to make up one’s mind. Although on the basis of his solid feel for the language Bell, with his translation “make covert hints,” comes closest to the correct sense, this meaning cannot be derived from the root یَلَحَدِ (lahada). However, before going into the etymological and semantic meaning of this expression, Sura 41:40 should be cited as well:

Sura 41:40

إن الذين يلحدون في إياها لا يخفون علينا

(Bell II 480): “Verily those who scoff Our signs are not hid from Us.”

(Paret 399): “Diejenigen, die hinsichtlich unserer Zeichen eine abweigige Haltung einnehmen (?) sind uns wohl bekannt [gleiche Anmerkung wie oben].”

(Blachère 509): “Ceux qui méconnaissent Nos signes ne Nous sont pas cachés.”

Here, too, Bell captures the sense best, but not on the basis of the Arabic meaning of یَلَحَدِ (lahada) or یَلَحَدْ (alhada). Here, as above, the real meaning of the expression – in itself Arabic – can only be determined with the help of the Syro-Aramaic reading یَلَحَدِ (lhez) and its semantic contents. Then, even if یَلَحَدِ (lahada) or یَلَعِبْنَا (yelhuda ila yahi) yalguztana / ylazhi means “to whom they allude” in Sura 16:103, this verb, as Bell correctly supposes, does not have the same meaning in the context of the last two verses. The ensuing analysis will show that the verse cited above from Sura 41:40 is to be understood as follows:

“Those who scoff at our signs (i.e. scriptures) do not remain concealed from us.”

Starting from the original meaning aenigmaticus locutus est (to speak enigmatically, in a veiled way, concealing the truth), the Thes. (I 1891) refers to Bar Bahlil, who explains یَلَحَدِ (lhez) with the Syro-Aramaic synonym یَلَعِبْنَا (amleh). The additional meanings of this verb prove to be the key to understanding the last two Koran passages. For example, for یَلَعِبْنَا (amleh) the Thes. II 2250 gives (a) parabolice dixit; (b) fabulatus est, stulte locutus est (to talk a lot of nonsense, to babble stupidly), and as another synonym for it یَلَعِبْنَا (baden) (to talk drivell, to blather). Finally, under یَلَعِبْنَا (baden) the Thes. (I 1449 f.) lists, among other things, finxit, falsa, inepte dixit; under یَلَعِبْنَا (abdl), nugavit, falsa dixit, خذاع (badul) (to humbug, to talk twaddle, to
feign); and under حَمَشَةُ (hāimagin), qui vana, inepta loquitur, nugax (a babbler talking nonsense).

An insight into the understanding of لَنْزَحَ (lagaza) in the sense of حَمَشَةُ (hamsha) (to drivel, to talk nonsense) is provided to us by parallel passages from the Koran. Namely, not in the same, but in a similar context the Koran employs the expressions سَخَرْ (sahira), هُزَا (haza), and occasionally also لَعْبُ (la’iba), the last-named in corresponding passages to be understood as a synonym for the two preceding expressions, and indeed as a loan-translation of the Syro-Aramaic جَتَعُ (satāi), whose Arabic meaning the Eastern Syrian lexicographers render as follows: لَعْبُ مُرْحُ (Manna 805b). On the other hand, the Koran uses this جَتَعُ (satāi), transliterated in the third person plural as سُعُرَ (sa’aw), in the sense of لَعْبُ (la’iba) = هُزَا (haza) (laugh at, scoff at) in the following context:

Sura 34:5

والذين سمو في ابتهاج معجزين أو تلك لهم عذاب من رجز أليم

(Bell II 421): “But those who busy themselves with Our signs, seeking to make them of no effect - for them is a punishment of wrath painful.”

(Paret 352): “Diejenigen aber, die sich hinsichtlich unserer Zeichen ereisern, indem sie sich (unserem Zugriff ?) zu entziehen suchen (?) (Oder: in der Absicht, (sie) unwirksam zu machen (?) mu lagizna), haben ein schmerzhaftes Strafgericht (a’dabun min rijein almun) zu erwarten.”

(Blachère 455): “Ceux qui [au contraire] se seront évertués contre les aya d’Allah, déclarant Son Impuisance, [ceux-là] auront un tourment cruel.”

In this context the Arabic اغْجز (agaza) (to make incapable) is to be understood as a synonym of بَطَالُ (batfala) or بِطَالَةُ (batfala) (صَلِّى / batfala) in the meaning of “to dispute” (a truth, to contest its existence), for which the Koran usually employs كَتْنَبُ (kaddaba) (صَلِّى / kadde) (to deny).

That which is meant by رِجْعُ (rigz), actually رَجُعُ (rā’i) (κακός / rā’), is (God’s) “wrath.” 160 This then results in the following understanding of Sura 34:5:

“And those who contentiously scoffed at our signs (will be meted out) a severe punishment by the (divine) wrath.”

With the identification of the root, misread in Arabic as لَنْزَحَ (lagada), via the Syro-Aramaic spelling لَمْ (lame), and the Arabic لَنْزَحَ (lagaza), we would clarify, via the nuances of the Syro-Aramaic semantics, three Koranic passages that had been previously acknowledged to be obscure. At the same time, we have discovered that the synonymous Syro-Aramaic verb جَعَتُ (satāi) (to play, to laugh at, to make fun of, to mock) must be distinguished, depending on the context, from its homonymous Arabic root سُعُرَ (sa’aw) (to strive after, to make an effort, to run). The Syro-Aramaic meaning of “to make fun of” or “to amuse oneself, to enjoy oneself” should therefore be adopted in additional passages of the Koran (such as in Suras 79:22, 2:205, and 5:33). 162

Linking this again to Sura 16:103, we can gather that the suspicion raised against the Prophet in that verse, i.e. that he had been taught by a human being, is met by the Koran with the argument that the man they meant spoke a foreign language, whereas the Koran itself is (composed) in clearly comprehensible Arabic. However, that a direct connection exists between the Koran and the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians,

160 Cf. Thes. II 3808, كَتْنَبُ (kaddaba) (κακός / rā’), 2 Reg. xxiii, 26...; ira divina (divine wrath). It is astonishing that Paret and Blachère have overlooked this meaning, whereas Bell at least renders the word literally.

161 I.e. by denying the existence of God or the Afterworld.

162 Namely, if we trace the Koranic expression سُعِيِّي (sa’ta fī l-sam’ī / satata), which as a familiar quotation has become a part of Arabic linguistic usage, back to its suspected Syro-Aramaic origin جَعَتُ (satāi) (صلّى / satata), then the Syro-Aramaic meaning “to have (oneself) a devilishly good time on earth” would make more sense than, for example, the translation proposed by Paret for Sura 2:205 “eifrig darauf bedacht sein auf der Erde Unheil anzurichten [to be eagerly intent upon wreaking havoc, causing mischief on earth]” Cf. also H. Wehr: “to be detrimental, to develop a detrimental effectiveness;” (Engl. Wehr): “to spread evil, cause universal harm and damage.”
characterized as كتاب (kitāb) (Book, Scripture) and as being written in a foreign language, is furthermore admitted by the Koran in the following verse:

Sura 41:3

كتاب فصلت أياه قرآن عربيا

(Bell II 477): 2. “A Book whose signs [or “verses”] have been made distinct as an Arabic Qurʾān …”

(Paret 396): “… eine Schrift, deren Verse (im einzelnem) auseinandergesetzt sind, (herabgesandt) als ein arabischer Koran.”

(Blachère 505): «Ecriture dont les aya ont été rendues intelligibles, en une révélation arabe…».

As previously expounded, however, what is meant by Fسل (fāṣṣāl), as the lexical equivalent of the Syro-Aramaic ضار (parres), is in this context, here as well as above, “to translate, to transfer.” Therefore the verse is to be understood as:

“A scripture that we have translated as an Arabic lectionary (or into an Arabic version) …”

Insofar as the Arabic قرآن (qurʾān) is, as expounded before, a loan word from Syro-Aramaic قرأنا (qaryānā) (reading, pericope, selection for reading), it is not to be understood everywhere in the Koran as a proper name. Rather, in each case it is the context that determines the meaning, which Mannā (699a) gives in Arabic as follows: (1) قراءة (qirāʿa) (reading), (2) درس (dras) (study, teaching/learning), (3) كتاب القرآنيات البيعة (kitāb ḥudūd al-masāʿib) (ecclesiastical lectionary). Sura 75: 17-18 may serve as a test case; there it is said:

Sura 75: 17-18

إن علينا جميع وقروننا / فذا قروننا فابن قروننا

(Bell II 621): 17: “Ours is it to put it together, and recite it; 18: When We recite it follow thou the recitation;”

(Paret 491): “Es ist unsere (und nicht deine) Aufgabe, ihn zusammenzubringen und zu rezitieren. 18: Und (erst) wenn wir ihn dir (vor)rezitiert haben, dann folge seiner Rezitierung.”

(Blachère 626): 17: «A nous de le rassembler et de le prêcher! 18: Quand nous le prêchons, suis-en la prédication.»

Deserving of a preliminary remark here is the verb جمع (gamaʿa) (to bring together, to collect), which has a specific meaning in this context with reference to the Koran. Insofar as the Syro-Aramaic جمع (qaryānā) (lectionary) designates a church book with excerpts (readings) from the Scriptures for liturgical use, the Arabic جمع (gamaʿa), as the lexical rendering of the Syro-Aramaic جمع (kannes) (to collect), has to do directly with the collecting of these excerpts from the Scriptures, and indeed specifically in the meaning of “compilavit librum” (cf. Thes. I 1771, under 1).

If we look further among the meanings cited by Mannā قرآن (qurʾān) for a liturgical Book, seems to use here this term in the sense of liturgical Service (Officium), so that قرآن القرآن (qurʾān -al-fāg) “the dawn-Reading” corresponds as a synonym to مصلوة الفجر (salāt al-fāg) “the dawn-Prayer = the dawn-Service” (Officium matutinum) (Sura 24:58).

\(\text{\'in / qary\'an}\) to find ourselves a meaning that fits this context, the result for the previously cited double verse is the following sense:

“It is incumbent upon us to compile it (the Koran/Lectionary) (by means of excerpts from the Scriptures) and to recite it (instructively). When We recite (instructively), then follow its recitation (i.e. the way it has been taught you).”

This may be the basis of the above-mentioned remark (p. 111) in Sura 16:103 that it was a man who has taught him. Moreover, this meaning emerges clearly from the following verse:

\[\text{Sura 87:6}\]

سنقرك فلا تتسي

“We will teach you (in such a way) that you will not forget.”

That a corresponding expenditure of time is required for the compiling of the Koran is made clear in Sura 20:114; there it says:

\[\text{Sura 20:114}\]

ولا تعلّج بالقرآن من قبل أن يغضي إليك وحيه

“Be not hasty with (the recitation of) the Koran (i.e. Lectionary) before it be taught you completely.”

But because the Scriptures are written in a foreign language, a translation into Arabic is necessary. This, too, the Koran demonstrates, even more clearly than before, in the following verse from the Mary Sura:

\[\text{Sura 19:97}\]

فلما سارت له سلبان تبتشر به السقين

(Bell I 291): “We have made it easy in thy tongue in order that thou mayest thereby give good tidings to those who show piety …”

(Paret 253): “Wir haben ihn (den Koran) (indem wir ihn) eigens in deiner Sprache (eingeggeben haben) dir leicht gemacht, damit du den Gottesfürchtigen mit ihm frohe Botschaft bringst…”

(Blachère 336): “Nous l’avons simplement facilité par ta voix pour que tu en fasses l’heureuse annonce…”

Arabic يسر (yassara) does in fact mean “to facilitate, to make easy.” The corresponding Syro-Aramaic verb on which it is lexically based is فَعِلَ (fašeq), which has the following meanings: 1. To make easy, facilitate; 2. to explain, to annotate; 3. to transfer, to translate; in the last meaning, of all things, in connection with “language,” documented, among others, by the following example:

فَعَلَ دَجَّةً جِميًّا مِنْ أَفْلَامَ هُمْمَدْ (fašeq dajja jami‘am min aflam hummed) (“he translated this book from the Greek into the Syriac language”) (Thes. II 3326, with further examples).


166 In the Syrian tradition, the man who teaches the liturgical reading is called مَعَلَّمٌ (maeqyânā (cf. Thes. II 3717): qui aritem legendi docet (who teaches the art of reading).

167 Paret and Bell have here overlooked the fact that in connection with the verb يَشر (baššara) the preposition ـَـ ـَـ ـَــَـ ـَـ (baššara bi-) = to proclaim something to someone.
The verse cited above from Sura 19:97 is then to be understood as follows:

"We have translated it (the Koran or the Scripture) into your language so that you may proclaim it (the Koran or the Scripture) to the (god-)fearing ...".

All of the other verses in which يسْرَ (yassara) is used in connection with the Koran are to be understood accordingly; these are:

Sura 44:58

إِذَا يَسْرُنَا لَسْنَا بِذُنُوبٍ

“We have translated it (the Koran) into your language so that they may allow themselves to be reminded.”

In addition to this there is the recurring verse in Sura 54:17, 22, 32, and 40:

وَلَتَرْسَلْنَا القَرَانَ إِلَى الْجِنَّ وَإِلَى الْإِنسَ (وَلَدَوْنَا) لَيْسَ فِي نَزْكٍ

“We have translated the Koran (the Lectionary) as a reminder; are there then those that may (also) allow themselves to be reminded?”

In these passages, as a technical term, يسْرَ (yassara) cannot be paraphrased in such a way as to say that God has “made it easy” for the Prophet insofar as He has “prompted” the Koran to him “specifically in his own language,” as Paret, for example, says. Instead, the term clearly states that this occurs indirectly by way of a translation from the Scriptures.

The fact that the Koran to this extent does not claim that it is a direct revelation is underscored by the Koran itself in the following verse:

Sura 42:51

وَمَا كَانَ لِيُبْنِي إِلَّا أَنْ يَكْلِمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحِيًا أو مَرَأَيٍ حَيٍّ أَوْ يُرِدْ رَسُولًا فَوْحِيًّا بَيُّتَهُ ما يَشَاء

(Bell 489): “It belonged not to any human being that Allah should speak to him except by suggestion or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to suggest by His permission what He pleaseth;”

(Paret 406): “Und es steht keinem Menschen (baṣar) an, daß Gott mit ihm spricht, es sei denn (mittelbar) durch Eingebung (waḥyan), oder hinter einem Vorhang, oder indem er einen Boten sendet, der (ihn) dann mit seiner Erlaubnis eingeht, was er will.”

(Blachère 517): “Il n’a pas été donné à un mortel (baṣar) qu’Allah lui parle, sinon par révélation, ou de derrière un voile, ou en envoyant un messager tel que celui-ci révèle ce qu’Il veut [à l’Homme], avec Sa permission.”

The Arabic root وَحَیٰ (waḥī) (with its denominative-like fourth verbal stem waḥā) is restricted in Arabic usage to the meaning of to give, to inspire, to reveal. Speaking in favor of its being a borrowing (with metathesis) from the Syro-Aramaic root سَمَ (sam) is the fact that one can also find in the Koran the further meanings deriving from the Syro-Aramaic verb – “to show, to indicate, to present, to announce, to communicate, to teach” – although only a part of these have been guessed.

168 In this meaning, Arabic ذَكَرَ (dakhar) and its derivatives do not come from Syro-Aramaic ذَكَرَ (dakhar) (to recall, to remember), but from the synonymous أَذَكَرَ (had) in the Aṯter form, أَذَكَرَ (aḥdk). For this Manna cites, at 530b under (3), the following Arabic equivalents: نَصِّحَ (nasah), أَذَكَرَ (aḥdk), نَابِيْذَ (nabbiḥ) (to advise, to preach / admonish, to warn).

169 Cf. Thes. I 1208 f. Manna (223) quotes the following Arabic meanings: (1) أَرْيَ (to allow to be seen), أَرْيَ (to allow to be shown), أَرْيَ (to demonstrate, to make clear, to expound), (2) أَذَكَرَ (to indicate, to inform, to tell), أَذَكَرَ (to indicate, to inform, to tell), أَذَكَرَ (to indicate, to inform, to tell), (3) أَذَكَرَ (to teach). C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 220a, had already noticed the etymological relation between Syro-Aramaic سَمَ (sam) and Arabic ذَكَرَ and Arabic وَحَیٰ (waḥī).
by the Koran translators on the basis of the context. This is why all of
the Koranic passages in which this expression occurs need to be exam-
ined in terms of the corresponding Syro-Aramaic meaning in each in-
stance.

If one furthermore does not automatically understand رسول (rastl) as an angel, but as a man (sent by God) (apostle, missionary), which is also what the Koran usually calls the Prophet of Islam, then the verse
cited above ought to be understood as follows:

"With no man has God ever (directly) spoken except through in-
spiration or behind a curtain or in that he sends a messenger
(apostle) who, with His permission, teaches (him or communi-
cates to him) what He wants."

With this linguistically clear and sober statement the Koran gives us an
unambiguous indication of the language it acknowledges as the lan-
guage of the Scriptures and which is essential for its conception of itself.
With this language, which it for the first time calls "Arabic," the Koran
surely did not intend that language whose norms were established two
hundred years later in part by non-Arab grammarians no longer capable
of properly understanding the Koranic language. This is the reason for
the present attempt to decipher the previous mystery of this language by
means of that language, the key to which the Koran delivers us in its
clear reference to the original, unadulterated Syro-Aramaic term "Qurān".

12. ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL SURA VERSES

The now following philological analysis of individual expressions recog-
nized in part by Koran scholarship as obscure is intended to serve as
an illustration of the working method that was discussed at the outset.
Concerning case (a) and (c) (p. 22 f.): There is no agreement among
the Arab commentators on the Koran about the real meaning of the ex-
pression occurring in two variants تحت (tahta) as well as of ضرية (sariyā)
in the following verse of the Mary Sura:

Sura 19:24

فيذها من تحتها إلا تحرزني قد جعل ربك تحتك ضرية

In keeping with the majority of the Arab commentators, the Western
Koran translators render this verse as follows:

(Bell I 286): 24. "Then he (probably 'the child') called to her
from beneath her: 'Grieve not; thy Lord hath placed beneath
thee a streamlet':..."

(Paret 249): 24: "Da rief er (d.h. der Jesusknebe) ihr von unten
her zu, 'Sei nicht traurig! Dein Herr hat unter dir (d.h. zu deinen
Füßen?) ein Rinnsal (sari) (voll Wasser) gemacht'."

(Blachère 331): 24 "[Mais] l'enfant qui était à ses pieds lui parla:
'Ne t'attriste pas! Ton Seigneur a mis à tes pieds un ruisseau'."

For Arabic تحت (tahta), which is understood as the preposition under by
all of the commentators cited in Ṭabarī, Jeffery in The Foreign Vocabu-
lar (32 f.) makes a reference to as-Suyūṭī (1445-1505), who reports
that Abū I-Qāsim in his work Lughāt al-Qurān [Foreign Expressions in
the Koran] and al-Kirmānī in his al-ʿAjāʾib [The Miracles] had both
thought that this was a Nabatean (i.e. an Aramaic) word and meant as
much as بطوس (bapt), (which Jeffery renders in English, on the basis of
the Arabic understanding, as womb, although here, based on the Syro-
Aramaic (battā) \textit{foetus} \textsuperscript{170} is more likely what should be understood, a view that is not held by anyone in Tabart. But Jeffery rejects the notion, saying that there is nothing in Nabatean that would confirm this assumption since, even in Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac and Ethiopic, the homophonic expressions have exactly the same meaning as the Arabic expression \textit{tahta} (namely \textit{under}).

Yet had Jeffery considered that in the Semitic languages precisely the triliteral prepositions and adverbs were originally nouns and could at times even appear as subjects and objects, \textsuperscript{171} he would have perhaps come to another conclusion. The above-mentioned tradition, according to which \textit{tahta} was in this case to be understood as a noun, confirms the supposition that the Arabic tradition has occasionally preserved a memory of the original Aramaic form. Namely, the lack of a verbal root in Arabic suggests a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic \textit{nabēt}, of which the preposition \textit{nahtā} (\textit{taht}) / \textit{nahtē} (\textit{thē}) is only a secondary form. Let’s first of all examine this clue in a little more detail.

Although the corresponding Syro-Aramaic nominal form \textit{nabēt} (nabētā) (as well as \textit{nabētē}, \textit{nabētī}, \textit{nabētīḥa} and further derivatives) does not exactly mean \textit{foetus}, it does have something to do with it insofar as, among other meanings, by way of the meaning \textit{descent}, \textit{origin}, what is meant here is \textit{delivery}. \textsuperscript{172} Therefore, the meaning of \textit{nahtīḥa} (\textit{min} \textit{tahtīḥa}) would not be “\textit{under her},” but “\textit{her delivery}.”

This Syro-Aramaic reading, however, first has the coherence of the context in its favor to the extent that we have interpreted the preposition \textit{nahtīḥa} (\textit{tāhīḥa}) not locally (\textit{from beneath her}), but temporally in the Syro-Aramaic sense of “\textit{from (that point in time),} i.e.: immediately, \textit{after her delivery.”}\textsuperscript{173} This temporal use of \textit{nahtīḥa} (\textit{min}), though not attested in Classical Arabic, \textsuperscript{174} is nonetheless quite common in modern Arabic dialects of the Near East as a Syro-Aramaic substratum, for example, in: "\textit{من وصولي فيت لـ = من وصولي فيت لـ} (\textit{instantly, immediately after my arrival I said to him}).

The memory of an earlier nominal use of \textit{tahta} (\textit{tāhīḥa}) has, moreover, been retained by the \textit{Liṣān} (II 176 f.): \textit{tahta} (\textit{tāhīḥa}) sometimes occurs as an adverb, sometimes as a noun. Even the adjectival use \textit{qawma taḥtūn} (\textit{lowly people}) \textit{(Liṣān, op. cit.)} can be traced back to Syro-Aramaic \textit{nabēt} (\textit{tāhīḥyē}). (Thes. II 4425: \textit{infinitum hominum}).

Now that the \textit{Liṣān} has confirmed the nominal usage of \textit{tahta} (\textit{tāhīḥa}), there would be nothing to criticize about the traditional Koranic reading were it not that the reading \textit{nahtīḥa} (\textit{min nahtīḥa} or \textit{nuḥṭīḥa}) based on Syro-Aramaic \textit{nabētē}, \textit{nabētī}, \textit{nabētīḥa} / \textit{nabētē}, \textit{nabētī}, \textit{nabētīḥa} is better. Namely, under the root \textit{naḥṭa} the \textit{Liṣān} gives a series of phases indicating the Syro-Aramaic origin of this root. For example, among others, it gives the following verse by the poet \textit{al-Harīq}, the sister of the Old Arabic poet \textit{Tarafa} (c. 538-564 A.D.):

\begin{quote}
\textit{الخالقين نجحت بنصارهم }\\
\textit{وذوي الغني منهم بدي القفر }\\
\textit{“who brought the lowly among them together with their nobles” }\\
\textit{“and the wealthy among them with the needy.”}
\end{quote}

As a conjecture the \textit{Liṣān} explains the expression \textit{naḥṭa} as \textit{naḥṭīḥa} (\textit{min} \textit{naḥṭīḥa} or \textit{nuḥṭīḥa}) \textit{(stranger). Yet the opposites of \textit{lowly} \textsuperscript{176} and \textit{noble}, \textit{poor} and \textit{rich} in both parts of the verse clearly refer to members of one and the same community. The ignorance of Aramaic prompts the Arab lexicographers to guess the meaning of borrowed expressions from the context. That the error rate in the process is relatively high is evidenced by the countless

\textsuperscript{176} Cf. Thes II 1514: \textit{Improprie de foetu, \textit{nabētā} (battā): id quod conceperat.}

\textsuperscript{177} Cf., e.g., C. Brockelmann, \textit{Arabische Grammatik [Arabic Grammar]} § 85; \textit{Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar]} § 201.

\textsuperscript{178} Cf. Thes. II \textit{on nabēt (nabētē) 2344}, (r) \textit{ortus est, genus duxit}; further in C. Brockelmann, \textit{Lexicon Syriacum 424a}, under 10: \textit{ortundus fuit (to sprung from, to be descended from, to be born).}

\textsuperscript{173} Cf. Thes. II 2155: \textit{Valet etiam (men d-): postquam (after)}. Mammā, 407a: \textit{men da-grāyā} (as soon as he called him).

\textsuperscript{174} Not to be confused with the temporal \textit{min} in the sense of \textit{Mean}, \textit{Men} (cf., e.g., \textit{Liṣān XIII 421 b): \textit{men naḥṭīḥa} (\textit{for a year}).

\textsuperscript{175} Discovered with the help of Syro-Aramaic.
unrecognized Aramaic roots in the Lisān, the encyclopedic dictionary of the Classical Arabic language. In our case, نحیت (nahī), is a clear borrowing from Syro-Aramaic نسب (nahīy or nahīhī), documented by the Thesaurus with نسب (nahīhī) gen. vir infimum, e plebe oriundus: (a man) of lowly origin, and, citing the Syrian lexicographers, with the corresponding Arabic translation: نحیت الحصب والنسب (nahīhī al-ḥisb wa-al-nasb), ignobilis, humiliis genere et conditione, وضع ، وطیب الأصل , نسب، نسب الناس (nahīhī: descendens, Thes. II 2345). As in opposition to نحیت (nahī), is also how the Lisān explains النصرب (an-nasrār – actually an-nasrār: (al-hāliṣu a-nasrāb) (a man) of noble descent, which clearly confirms the antonymous Syro-Aramaic meaning of نحیت (nahīhī).

The situation is similar for the other expressions connected with this root, all of which the Lisān tries to explain through popular etymology, but whose real meaning is to be determined through Syro-Aramaic. Rich pickings are guaranteed to anyone willing to devote himself or herself to the deserving task of studying the Aramaicisms in the Lisān. Such would reveal the extent of the Aramaic influence on the Arabic language 177 and smooth the way for a yet non-existent etymological dictionary of Classical Arabic.

Still, the above-mentioned evidence merely confirms the Syro-Aramaic meaning "to be lowly." For the meaning "to be hereditary, innate," the Lisān cites the نحیت the tribe that is hereditary to a person = that is innate to him). In the definition of the loan term from Syro-Aramaic نحیت (possibly in Syro-Aramaic نحیت), the Lisān uses the loan verb from Syro-Aramaic نحیت (in the passive voice) (to be descended from, to come away from, to be delivered of in the sense of to be born), which it takes to be the possibly homonymous root نحیت (nahīhā), but which was probably first borrowed from Syro-Aramaic and only understood in later Arabic in the sense of to chisel (actually to knock off, to chop off, to knock down), and correspondingly explains it as (the nature according to which one) was hewn, cut to fit, i.e. in its sense as "shaped." There is then a citation from al-Līḥyānī, which somewhat correctly explains the expression in question: نحیت (he is the tribe and the parent (hiya j-tab'a'atu wa-l-aṣl), it is nature and origin, i.e. the innate).

The other examples in the Lisān, the نحیت (noble-mindedness is innate to him), إله كريم (noble-mindedness and the tribe) (he is of a noble-minded nature and birth), وقد نحیت على الكرم (noble-mindedness is his by birth and nature), 178 furnish evidence of the earlier use of the root نحیت (nahīhā), common only to individual tribes. His concluding opinion on the subject (58) is all the more surprising:

"But still the abundance of words is exceedingly large, and the Arabic dictionary will always remain the principal aid in the search for instruction on obscure expressions in other Semitic languages [where just the opposite seems to be the case, though he then adds the qualifier]: only if this occurs with the requisite amount of level-headedness; then it's quite all right.

177 Lisān II 98a. The reading نصرب / an-nasrār results from the lexical equivalent of Syro-Aramaic نسب / nasbā, the meanings of which Mannā (461b) gives as follows: (4) successful, victorious, triumphant, and under شريف, جليل, فاضل (noble, honorable, highborn, illustrious). The Arabic expression النصرب renders the Syriac meaning under (4), presupposing that the semantic nuance under (7) is included. Thus the root نصرب / an-nasrār means نصرب (the notables).

178 Lisān II 98b; through the conjectural explanation of Arabic نحیت (nahīhā) (97b) with the شرب and the شرب (an-našr wa-l-qaṣār) (to see, to know) – the Lisān testifies to its ignorance of the original meaning of this root originally borrowed from Aramaic, when, for example, it explains نحیت with نحیت (nahīhā) with ما نحیت من نحیت (kah naḥīt min naḥīhā) (what has been peeled from wood). At the same time, this nominal form already exhibits a direct borrowing.
(nahata) (or nahita) in Arabic as a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic (nbeṭ) in the meaning “to come down from, to give birth to, to be descended from.”

Now, whether one were to read منتقتها (min tahtihā), من نحتها (nahatihā), or (nahatihā), or (based on the customary defective spelling in the Koran) nubahatihā,179 would, to be sure, change nothing in terms of the sense, from Syro-Aramaic من نحتها (nahatihā) or من نحتها (nahatihā) with the correspondent meaning here, “what has fallen off.” Also, منتقتها (nāhata l-ğābā) does not actually mean منتقتها (qā‘atra) “to cut,” but according to the original Syro-Aramaic meaning “to chop off, to strike down” (the mountain); the same is true for منتقتها (an-nāhā’t) (98a): أَنْ حَتَّى (abará marátá) (well-known wells), whose original meaning the Listān again derives from “to cut.” The figurative sense “to degrade,” on the other hand, derives from the following expressions (98b): منتقتها (nāhata bi-lisṭihi: tamaḥā wa-sāmatihi) (to “degrade” somebody with the tongue: to rebuke, revile him); منتقتها (an-nāhā’ti) (Syro-Aramaic من نحتها (nabthi) means primarily that which is inferior, bad, reprehensible; منتقتها بالخص: ضربه بها (naphatī bi-l-ğās: darabahu bi-ğā) (to hit somebody with a stick, actually in this way “to degrade” him, “to knock” him “down” with it); the same is true when one is said منتقتها (nabāṭi l-murā’i: nakhabaḥā) (to “degrade = to dishonor” a woman: to lie with her).

On the other hand, in his Lexicon Syriacum 424b, C. Brockelmann categorizes the Syro-Aramaic منتقتها (nbeṭ) etymologically with the Arabic منتقتها (batta), and that its first radical منتقتها (nbt) (nā) has fallen off guesses, in turn, according to the expressions cited in the Listān (II 22a ff.), a borrowing from this very Syro-Aramaic root with the original meaning “to fall off.” That this root was unknown to the Arabs is shown not least by its reduction in colloquial modern Arabic to a verbal form with the meaning “to rub off, to scratch off” (see, for example, Hans Wehr) as well as “to become worn through use” (said of pieces of clothing and carpets, actually “to be worn out, run down”).

179 Cf. Listān II 98a where منتقتها (an-nahā’ta) is explained with the help of منتقتها (al-barayā) (shavings). For this unidentified Syro-Aramaic root in the Listān the derivation of the Arabic منتقتها (nahata) from Syro-Aramaic منتقتها (narah) or منتقتها (nahat) would nevertheless be obvious, whereby the Arabic feminine ending is to be viewed occasionally as a purely phonetic rendering of the Syro-Aramaic emphatic ending of the masculine nominal form. This, however, does not rule out the possibility that an Arabic feminine ending may be derived from such an ending in Syro-Aramaic. Concerning this nominal form Nöldeke writes in his Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft [Essays on Semitic Lin-

in any event what does speak for the last reading is the fact that both in Syro-Aramaic and in the Listān this root corresponds more closely to the meaning “delivery,” which the Listān also documents with further derivatives. Since the Koran elsewhere uses the root منتقتها (walada) for the general sense of منتقتها (to give birth and to procreate), but specifically uses the root منتقتها (wada’a) (to lay, to lay down) (cf. Suras 3:36; 22:2; 35:11; 41:47; 46:15; and 65:4,6) for to be delivered of, to give birth to, the latter appears to correspond lexically to the Syro-Aramaic منتقتها (nahat). Accordingly, منتقتها (min nubahatihā), expressed otherwise in Koranic Arabic, would be منتقتها (min waḍ‘ihā) in the sense of منتقتها (waḍ‘a) in the sense of منتقتها (waḍ‘a) which in turn could be rendered in modern Arabic as منتقتها (nalba waḍ‘a) and منتقتها (nalba waḍ‘a).

180 Although not specifically in the meaning to be delivered of, to give birth to, but in the general meaning to send down, to drop, to lower, the Eastern Syrian lexigraphers include among the various derivations the following Arabic equivalents: منتقتها (anazda), منتقتها (affa), منتقتها (affa), منتقتها (wada’a). (Cf. Thes. II 2344 f.; Mamm. 442b f.). Since the Thes. does not provide any examples for منتقتها (nahat) in the meaning to be delivered of, to give birth to, it would be interesting to document this usage in other Aramaic dialects.
Hallal tawli'dihā or hallal wilādatihā (immediately upon her giving birth).

The fact that the Koran here uses as a hapax legomenon borrowed from Syro-Aramaic this verbal root نَحْبَتَا (nabhatah) (in the sense of نَازَلَة, nazzala, to make descend, to bring down = to give birth), instead of the otherwise customary Arabic root وَفِعَ (wafā) (to lay, to lay down, to give birth to), raises the question, relevant both theologically and in terms of the history of religions, as to whether the Koran does not want deliberately, by this unusual expression, to connect and emphasize in a special way the extraordinary delivery of Mary with the supernatural descent of her son. This question imposes itself all the more since the basic stem َتَحْبَأ (tahbā) “to come down” (said, for example, of Christ, who came down from heaven) and the causative stems َتَحْبِثَ (tahbat) / َتَحْبِثُ (tahhat) “to cause to descend, to send down” (said, for example, of God, who sent down his son) have in fact been documented in this sense in Syro-Aramaic, though not in the specific meaning of “to give birth, to be born” in the sense of a natural birth.

The search for an equivalent usage in Aramaic finds its confirmation in a synonymous expression that Gesenius¹⁸¹ gives under the Aramaic root َخَل (nqal) “to fall” in the meaning of “to be born” and explains as “actually an extra term for a birth standing in opposition to regular natural processes.” This usage, attested nowhere else in Arabic, of َخَلَت (nahlah or nabhatah) < Syro-Aramaic َتَحْبَأ (tahbat or nabhat) in the meaning of “to give birth, to be born” (actually “to cause to descend [from above]”)¹⁸² would, at least in the case of this segment of the Mary Sura, an earlier period in the editing of the Koran than the second Meccan period estimated by Nöldeke-Schwalny.¹⁸³ In it one can recognize with certainty a central element of the Christian components of the Koran.

According to the Syro-Aramaic reading, the first verse segment of Sura 19:24 should therefore be understood as follows:

“Then he called to her immediately after her giving birth: Be not sad!”

Based on this understanding, the concerns expressed by Paret in his Koran commentary to this passage (324) as to whether the caller is the newborn infante Jesus or the infant Jesus still located in the womb, as well as the reference to the text from Pseudo-Matthew cited below, are unnecessary.

It follows from the preceding remarks that in the second part of the verse قد جعل ربك تحتنك سريا, (according to the previous understanding) “Your lord has made a rivulet beneath you,” the repeatedly occurring تحَلَك (tahtak) does not mean “beneath you,” but “your giving birth.” Still to be explained, however, is the expression سريّة (saryya), misinterpreted as “rivulet,” with which we would have an example of case (c) (see page 24).

Tabart (XVI 69 ff.) prefaches the explanation of the word سريّة (sary) with the stereotypical remark that the commentators are of different opinions about its meaning. The majority (over nineteen traditionary chains) favor the meaning river, little river, a river named Sari, designation of the Isr river (= Jesus river), stream, rivulet. In particular, Muğāhid and ad-Dahlkh believe it is river or stream in Syriac, whereas Sād b. Ḥubayr is of the opinion that it is a stream, rivulet in Nabatean. On the other hand, two traditionaries object and advocate the view that Jesus himself is meant by the designation sary. Probably on the basis of the conjectured Persian meaning noble, honorable,¹⁸⁴ Ibn Zayd asks: “But who, after all, could be أَسْرَى مَنْهُ (asra minhu) nobler than Jesus!”

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¹⁸² What is striking here is that, regarding the “sent-down Scriptures” in the sense of revelations, the Koran usually employs the Arabic َخَلَت (nahlah) (to have come down, to send down) in addition to َخَلَت (nahlah) (< Syro-Aramaic َخَلَت (nahlah / ayft) (to have come, to bring, to deliver).

¹⁸³ Cf. GdQ 1 I 117-143; but on page 130 (line 3) it is conceded: “The Sura is the oldest, or at least one of the oldest, in which holy persons from the New Testament such as Mary, Zachary, John the Baptist and Jesus are mentioned.”

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Lissan XIV 377b: السُّرَى: المَوْعِظَةُ وَالشَّرَفُ (as-sary: al-maw'zah wa-ššaraf) (manfulness, noblemindedness); 378a: additional remarks on السَّرِّي (sary) in the meaning of شَرَفُ (noble, nobleminded).
cerning the erroneous opinions of those who see a river in this term, he makes use of his good common sense and argues: "If this is a river, then it ought to be beside her and not, of all places, beneath her." 185

But Tabart does not follow him. Like an arbitrator, on democratic principles he agrees with the majority that sees it in a stream, from which— in his opinion— God has, according to Sura 19:26, expressly ordered Mary to drink: فاطمی والشری: "So eat and drink."

Among our selected Western translators of the Koran, only Paret (by placing sarr in parentheses) suggests that the meaning of this expression is unclear. Blachère and Bell seem for the most part to approve of the explanation Tabart gives. Blachère only observes concerning (من تحتها) that in accordance with Koranic usage this expression means "at her feet," and not, as so often translated, "from beneath her." 186 Bell, on the other hand, refers to Tabart (XVI 67 f.) and the controversial issue among the Arab commentators as to whether it was the Angel Gabriel or the Infant Jesus that called to Mary "from beneath her," concerning which he rightly supposes: "probably the child." 187 As to the word sarr, in his commentary (I 504 f., v. 24) he considers "stream" to be the most likely meaning, but points to the opinion held by several commentators that it could also mean "chief, head" (referring to Jesus) in accordance with the (probably Persian) meaning "to be manly, noble," which is listed in the Lisân (XIV 377b) under سرا (sar) and with a reference to Stbawayh / al-Lihyâni.

In examining the corresponding passage more closely, Paret refers in his Koran commentary (323, on Sura 19:23-26) to W. Rudolph, 188 who says about the attendant circumstances of the birth of Jesus described therein: "The most likely explanation is that Muhammed is here influenced by a scene the so-called Pseudo-Matthew reports of the flight to Egypt in chapter 20 and transfers this to the birth":

„tunc infantulus Jesus laeto vultu in sinu matris suae residens ait ad palamam: flectere, arbor, et de fructibus tuis refice matrem mean ... aperi autem ex radicibus tuis venam, quae absconsa est in terra, et florat ex ea aquae ad satietatem nostram."

(Translation of the Latin text):

“Therupon spoke the Infant Jesus, of joyful countenance sitting in his mother's lap, to the palm tree: Bend over, tree, and refresh my mother from your fruits ... further open out of your roots a vein that lies hidden in the earth, and let waters stream out upon us to quench our thirst.”

Blachère, too, sees a parallel to our Koranic verse and an explanation for the stream at Mary's feet in this description from Pseudo-Matthew. 189 Bell argues along similar lines in his commentary (loc. cit.). By citing the quoted passage from Pseudo-Matthew the Western Koran scholars had their proof that in the case of the expression سرا (sarr) it must indeed be a question of a watercourse, a stream, just as the Arab exegetes had also finally assumed after all.

The commentators in the East and the West will be shown, however,

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185 The compiler of the Lisân nevertheless saw no reason not to include the unrecognized Syro-Aramaic expression (sarr) in the supposed meaning of نهر (nahr) (river) and جدول (gadwal) (brook) and to cite in connection with it the corresponding misinterpretation by the Koran commentators: "النهر الصغير كالماء يجري إلى النخل (a small or a stream-like river that flows to the palms) (Lisân XIV 380a). As we shall see, this is not an isolated case of mistranslation and misunderstood Koranic expressions that have been accepted into the Arabic lexicography without being contested up to the present day. But also other expressions cited by the Lisân under the root شري (sariya) and سرا (sariya) and explained by means of folk etymology provide ample proof of their Aramaic origins. To point these out here, however, would be to exceed the scope of this study. It would therefore be of eminent importance not only from the standpoint of cultural history, but also from that of philology, to scrutinize the Arabic lexicon for the countless Aramaicisms that have until now been overlooked or falsely taken to be "Old Arabic."

186 Blachère, loc. cit. 331, notes 23-32.

187 Bell, loc. cit. 1286, note 2.

188 Wilhelm Rudolph, Die Abhängigkeit des Korans von Judentum und Christentum [The Dependence of the Koran on Judaism and Christianity] (Stuttgart, 1922) 79.

189 Blachère 331, notes 23-32.
that in the interpretation of this Koran passage they have succumbed in the first case to a linguistic error and in the second to fallacious reasoning.

Careful attention to the Koranic context is the fundamental prerequisite for a linguistically coherent understanding. That the Koran transferred the scene depicted by Pseudo-Matthew of the flight to Egypt to the birth of Christ is in no way proven by the passage cited above. The sole parallel is the palm that is spoken of in both passages. The other circumstances, however, are completely different.

Namely, when according to Pseudo-Matthew the infant Jesus directs the palm to cause water to flow forth, the logical reason may lie in the fact that for mother and son there was otherwise no water in the surrounding desert. Hence the command that water bubble forth to slake their thirst.

Not so in the Koran. Namely, when Mary according to Sura 19:23 calls out in despair, “If only I had died beforehand (i.e. before the birth) and been totally forgotten!” it is clearly not because she was dying of thirst! What depressed her so much was much more the outrageous insinuations of her family that she was illegitimately pregnant, something which is clearly implied by the scolding she receives in Verse 28: “And make mention in the scripture of Mary (Maryam)!(that time) when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East”). The passive usage is additionally confirmed here by the preposition من (min) (by), which again corresponds to Syro-Aramaic practice, but is totally impossible according to Arab.

The reflexive eighth Arabic verbal stem may have also led the Koran translators to make this grammatically equivalent, but nonetheless nonsensical assumption. When one considers, namely, that the Koran, following Syro-Aramaic usage, also uses reflexive stems with a passive meaning, the result is the better fitting sense for this verse, “she was cast out,” which indeed also represents a continuation of the introductory statement of Verse 16:

“Make mention further in the scripture of Mary when she was cast out by her family to an empty (= a waste) place.” (Paret: “Und gedenke in der Schrift der Maria (Maryam)! (Damals) als sie sich vor ihren Angehörigen an einem östlichen Ort zurückzogen” (“And make mention in the scripture of Mary (Maryam)! (at that time) when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East”). The passive usage is additionally confirmed here by the preposition من (min) (by), which again corresponds to Syro-Aramaic practice, but is totally impossible according to Arab.

190 *Tabarî* XVI 63.
192 The Koranic spelling سِرَقُّيَةَ is to be read *sarqîyâ* according to Syro-Aramaic سوارقية / śarqîyā (to a place). The Syro-Aramaic reading is logically confirmed by the parallel verse 22, where it is said that Mary, after having become pregnant, was expelled with her child to a place “far away” (makâna maqata): "Him expelled from her place" and not as Arabic سِرَقُّيَةَ (to a place).
193 Cf. e.g., Lk. 2:18: "And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds" (from the Syriac Bible 63D, United Bible Societies [London, 1979] 77a). The Koran, moreover, has the same passive construction in Sura 21:43, where it is said of the *idols*: "They are not even capable of helping themselves nor are they (as idols) accompanied by us (as helpers)" (i.e. nor are we put with them as god). This construction, which is indefensible from the point of view of Arabic syntax, also confuses our Koran translators. Paret, for instance, translates (265): “(– Götter) die weder sich selber Hilfe zu leisten vermögen noch (irgendwo) gegen
bic grammar. There is namely no reason for the Koran to submit, as classical Arabic grammar would have it, to the prohibition imposed by later Arabic (or Persian) grammarians against naming the active subject in a passive sentence by means of the preposition من min (by).\textsuperscript{194} Therefore, seen in this light, the classical Arabic grammar proves rather to be a hindrance in determining the proper understanding of particular passages in the Koran, while attention to Syro-Aramaic grammar assists in opening up insights into heretofore unimaginated aspects of the Koranic language. This basic Syro-Aramaic structure of the Koranic language must be gone into in more detail.

Thus Verse 22 – correctly understood – indicates that Mary is cast out by her family because she is suspected of illegitimate conception, especially considering that the Koran does not place any fiancé or sham husband at her side to protect her from malicious tongues. As a result it is understandable that Mary in Verse 23, immediately before giving birth, longs desperately for her own death. The initial words of consolation from her newborn child would naturally need to be directed first of all to removing the reason for her desperation. But this could surely not occur by attempting to console her with the simple reference to a stream allegedly located beneath her. The idea assumed by Tabarî that God according to Verse 26 had commanded Mary to drink from it (فكي / so eat and drink), therefore misses the mark. For it is not, say, the lack of food and drink that keeps Mary from eating and drinking, but much more her depressive mental state. That is why the consoling words of her child had to have such a content, so that she would no longer have any reason to be depressed and would therefore regain her desire to eat and drink.

The Western Koran scholars’ reference to the above-mentioned passage from Pseudo-Matthew is also fallacious because the expression سريا (read saryā in today’s Koran), which the Arab Koran commentators had already argued about and falsely interpreted as a watercourse, was thereby just as unphilologically and conjecturally confirmed and provided, once and for all, with a seal of approval.

Namely, in the case of this spelling سريا it is not a question of an Arabic, but of a Syro-Aramaic root. The problem is also already solved if it is presented in its original Syro-Aramaic form as  {	extsuperscript{195} }سريا (saryā). For what one expects in the Koranic context is a countering expression to the reproach of her illegitimate pregnancy that would suffice to free her of this stigma. Now if one understands unmarried in the sense of unlawful, illegitimate, then its countering expression married would accordingly be lawful, legitimate. And so it is in modern Arabic that an illegitimate son (especially as a swearword) is ابن حرام (ibn ḥarrām), which is countered by its opposite ابن حلال (ibn ḥalāl) (a legitimate, legally born = an upright, honest person).

In this context the Syro-Aramaic expression سريا (saryā) has exactly this meaning, however, here it is not to be understood as a substantive (stream, rivulet), but as a verbal adjective in the sense of “legitimate.”

The twenty-fourth verse of the Mary Sura, which has previously been misunderstood as follows by all of the Koran commentators we know of,

“Then he (probably “the child”) called to her from beneath her: ‘Grieve not; thy Lord hath placed beneath thee a streamlet.” (Bell)

is now, after this elucidation of its original meaning, to be understood as summarized in the following way:

\textsuperscript{195} See Thes. II 4308: سريا (saryā) absolvens; solvit, liberavit. Further, Mannā 816b (among the 27 different meanings of سريا Saryā (21): (to allow, to declare legitimate; opposite of to forbid, to declare illegitimate), and under سريا Saryā (7): (legitimate, allowed, opposite of forbidden and illegitimate). C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum [Syriac Lexicon] 804a: 6. سريا (saryā): licet (it is allowed, legitimate).
"Then he called to her *immediately after her delivery*: ‘Do not be sad, your Lord has made your *delivery legitimate*.'"

Only after the infant Jesus has consoled this hitherto despairing mother with the *acknowledgment of his legitimacy* does he direct to her the encouraging words (from Verse 26) that she is therefore (and not because she is dying of thirst) "*to eat and drink and be happy.*" Just as logically does Mary (according to Verse 27) then take heart and return with her newborn child to her family. Confronted with the family's initial indignation (Verse 28), she follows the instructions of her newborn and allows her child to respond (Verses 30-33) and in so doing to reveal his miraculous birth.

Thus, in contrast to the hitherto distortedly rendered Arabic reading of this passage, the Koranic presentation of the birth of Christ now for the first time acquires its original meaning through the bringing in of Syro-Aramaic.

Misreadings of Identical Spellings

The Arabic misreading of سربية (suryā) for Syro-Aramaic سربية (Surya) henceforth opens our eyes to insights into other misread, but originally identical spellings in the Koran. So, for instance, in the Koranic version of the Tale of Alexander (in which Moses has taken the place of Alexander) about the dead fish which upon contact with aqua vita comes back to life and escapes into the ocean.  

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196 For the Koranic expression وقري عليه (wa-qarī 'a'na"), Mannā gives (698a) as the Syro-Aramaic equivalent مبشر (māṣeb, qurrat 'aynā). مبشر (māṣeb, qurrat 'aynā), مبشر (māṣeb, qurrat 'aynā) (qurrat lebbā, rūdhā) (qurrat 'aynā, farah, taṣ'a) (cheerfulness, joy, consolation); see also Thes. II 3711: مبشر (māṣeb, qurrat rūdhā) (qurrat rūdhā) (consolatio (consolation).


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Sura 18:61

فاتخذ سبيله في البحر سربية

The last expression (sarabā) is understood by our Koran translators as follows:

(Bell I 280): 60. "(They forgot their fish,) and it took its way in the sea freely (sarabā)."

(Paret 243): "Der nahm seinen Weg in das große Wasser (bahr) (und schwamm) auf und davon."

(Blachère 324): "Ils oublïêrent leur poisson qui reprit son chemin dans la mer, en frétilissant."

After remarking (اختفت أهل العلم) that the scholars disagree about the meaning of this expression (saraba), Tabart enumerates the following opinions: (a) the way the fish took, so to speak, turned to stone after it; (b) rather the water was frozen after its passage; (c) whatever the fish touched in the ocean was solidified into a rock, and (d) the fish made its way to the water not in the ocean, but on land. Tabart lets all of these explanations stand. However, he considers as most plausible the interpretation, attributed to the Prophet, according to which the water divided itself as if into a passageway in front of the fish.  

Paret disapproves of this last explanation by Tabart and the corresponding translation by Friedländer, according to which the fish "had made its way through a subterranean passage into the ocean." He himself takes the expression to be an adverbial infinitive of Arabic sariba "to flow," which would mean as much as "(and it swam) away." To this extent he concedes the correctness of Bell's translation, "and it took its way in the sea freely;" whereas Blachère — perhaps inspired by the shimmering of a mirage (in Arabic سربا / saraba) — translates the expression with "en frétilant" (wriggling).  

In fact, only Bell, with "freely," has correctly guessed the expression

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198 Tabart XV 273 f.
from the context, though without justifying it philologically. For it has nothing to do with Arabic sariba (to flow); otherwise the Arabic commentators would have probably also figured it out. The fact, however, that they had arrived, so to speak, at the limits of their Arabic simply suggests that here it is not a question of an Arabic root. It is surely as a result of the preceding and the following rhyme that the Arabic readers have here read سربا (saraba), especially since there is an equivalent Arabic root. From this root, however, the Arabic commentators were justifiably incapable of wresting any reasonable meaning.

However, one of the meanings of the Syro-Aramaic participial adjective discussed above, ⦁�始 (ṣaryā), which in this case of course cannot mean "legitimately," exactly fits the correct meaning here, "freely." Thus Mannā (loc. cit.) lists under (5) حر، مطلق، غير مفتوح (free, unattached, unattached); and the Thes. (II 4307) under the root ⦁始 / ⦁始 (d) solvit vincula, liberavit, dimisit; further C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum [Syriac Lexicon] 803b (under ⦁始 / ⦁始): 2. liber (free). And so in this way only the Syro-Aramaic reading ⦁始 ⦁始 ⦁始 ⦁始 ⦁始 (ṣaryā) gives the expression from Sura 18:61 its proper meaning: "And it (the fish) made its way freely into the ocean." Or expressed in modern Arabic: فاتخذ سبيله في البحر حر (fa-tahada sabt-lahu fi l-bahr hurra).

Sura 78:20

We come across another homonymous and misread spelling in Sura 78:20. There we read: وسيرت الجبال فكانت سربا (wa-syyirat l-igbalu fa-kānat saraba). According to the understanding until now:

(Bell II 630): "The mountains will have been moved and become a mirage."

(Paret 497): "And die Berge bewegen sich (von der Stelle) und sind (schließlich nur noch) eine Luftspiegelung."

(Blächere 633): "[où] les montagnes, mises en marche, seront un mirage."

Noteworthy here is that in the cited translations none of the three translators has taken exception to the underlined expressions. Thus they, too, are following Ṭabarī (XXX 8), who explains this verse in the following manner: The mountains are blown up out of their foundations and reduced to dust so that like a mirage they only seem to have their original form.

What is conspicuous in the process is that Ṭabarī does not understand the verb سيريت (syyirat) in the original Arabic meaning of the word, "to be set into movement," but instead interprets it as "to be blown up." In doing so, he may have had other parallel passages in mind, such as, say, Sura 19:90, وتخير الجبال هذا (and the mountains will fall down in ruins), or when it is said of mountains in Sura 20:105 that يبسمها ربي نسفا "my Lord will blow them up" (according to the Arabic understanding) or "purveyor them, turn them into dust" (according to the Syro-Aramaic understanding). The following verse provides us with a further example:

Sura 69:14

 wombelt die Erde und die Berge hochgeheben

This is how our Koran translators have understood this verse:

(Bell II 601): "And the earth and the mountains shall be moved, and shattered at a single blow."

(Paret 480): "Upon the Erde und die Berge hochgeheben, und (auf) einmal; (zeroth and) zu Staub gemacht werden; ..."

200 This last meaning is supported by Syro-Aramaic مدخ (nṣaf), which in the Thes. (II 2477) is equated with the synonym مدخ (nḥal) (to sift through) and thus "to turn into powder, into flour." The Arabic تسف (nasafa) seems to be derived from this, according to the explanations provided by the Līsān (IX 328b), which correspond exactly to Syro-Aramaic usage, تسف (nasafa) (approximately, to sift through), as is sifted flour, سفنا (nṣafna) (< Syro-Aramaic مدخ / nṣaf).
Bell has understood the Arabic expression correctly, in accordance with the *Lisan*, the translations proposed by Paret with "(zerstoßen und) zu Staub gemacht [to (crush and) turn to dust]" and by Blachère with "pulverisés [pulverized]" are nevertheless to be taken into account. Namely, among other expressions, the *Thes.* gives as an onomatopoeic equivalent to the Syro-Aramaic دَاذَ (daq) (contundit, contrivit, comminuit: to crush, to grind, to smash to pieces), Arabic داك (dakka), which it presents as a synonym of the Syro-Aramaic دَامَكَ (damak) (as a passive participle: ground, crushed; as a noun: dust, powder). The last meaning would be the more logical consequence of removal, destruction, namely their being reduced to dust or powder.

According to this clarification and on the basis of the meaning of the Arabic expression حمل (hamala) (to carry = to carry away, to remove) established via the semantics of its Syro-Aramaic lexical equivalent, the verse under discussion (69:14) is thus to be understood as follows:

“and [when] the earth and the mountains are destroyed (removed) and at the same time reduced (to dust).”

The Koranic conception, according to which the mountains are crushed or turned to dust on Judgment Day, may now explain why *Tabari* interprets the verb سَيرِتُ (suyūrat) in Sura 78:20 accordingly and does not understand it, as our Koran translators do, on the basis of the Arabic sense of “to set in motion.” This makes one wonder whether it is not much more likely that *Tabari* had read the Arabic transcription of Syro-Aramaic...
Aramaic ס ayr (sūtrat /sattir), since only the Syro-Aramaic root produces, besides the Arabic meaning of ס ayr (satār), “to protect, to wrap, to veil,” the further meaning of “to destroy.”

In fact, it is also only through this Syro-Aramaic interpretation that the further reading and the respective understanding of the subsequent obscure expression ס ayrא (sarāba’) is cleared up. It is hard to imagine that this expression is supposed to mean, according to the Arabic understanding, a mirage which the mountains set in motion would eventually become. In comparison, the Syro-Aramaic rectification of the misread Arabic spelling ס ayrא = ס ayrא (sarāya) or in plural (referring to mountains) ס ayrא (ṣarayā) produces a meaning in harmony with the verb ס ayrא (satār) = ס ayrא (sattar) “to destroy.” This we find namely in Manā (816a, b), be it under (10) in the meaning “to destroy or tear down something or other such as a building,” or under (11) in the meaning “to wipe out, to annul, to cancel, to remove.”

The latter meaning gives, to be sure, the more logical sense to the extent that, as a result of their destruction, the mountains “are wiped out, removed, destroyed, disintegrated.” Accordingly, if we understand the misread Arabic spelling ס ayrא (sarāba’) not as a noun (mirage), but as a Syro-Aramaic masculine plural participial adjective ס ayrא (ṣarayā) (destroyed, disintegrated [mountains]), Sura 78:20 produces the following Syro-Aramaic reading:

w-me-statrin fiṭre w-hāwēn ṣarayā (w-me-statrin fitre w-hāwēn sarāya)

Accordingly this verse ought to be read:

 diferença jurisprudence Shariya (wa-sūtrat l-ġībāl fa-kānat sarāya)

In other words, in Koranic Arabic in the style of Suras 19:90 and 56:6:

Differência jurisprudence Shariya (wa-huddat l-ġībāl fa-kānat ḥabbā’) (talāṣat)

The verse that has heretofore been misunderstood on the basis of the Arabic misreading as

“and the mountains move (from their place) and are (eventually just) a mirage” (Paret)

is now to be understood according to the Syro-Aramaic reading as:

“and [then] the mountains collapse and disintegrate.”

First of all, the identification would thus be attested of three Syro-Aramaic spellings in the Koran which, though originally homonymous in terms of orthography, were later misread in Arabic due to the incorrect placement of points (or vowels):

a) ס ayrא (sarāya’) (Mary Sura 19:24) (“rivulet”) as the Syro-Aramaic ס ayrא (ṣarayā) in the sense of “legitimately” (born);

b) ס ayrא (saraba’) (Sura 18:61) (said of the fish, Tābart: “escaped through a channel”; Bell – guessed from the context: “freely,” Paret: “away”; Blachère: “wriggling”) as the Syro-Aramaic ס ayrא (ṣarayā) in the sense of (swam) “freely” (into the ocean);

c) ס ayrא (saraba’) (Sura 78:20) (“mirage”) as the Syro-Aramaic plural ס ayrא (ṣarayā) (in reference to the mountains) in the sense of “disintegrated, dispersed.”

Secondly, in connection with this we would at the same time have identified the Arabic spelling ס ayrא (sūyirat) – which has been misread, subject to no challenge by previous Koran scholars and misinterpreted in the sense of “to be set in motion, to be moved” – as the Syro-Aramaic root ס ayrא (sattar) (to destroy, to tear down) in the passive form ס ayrא.
(estattar) = read in Arabic: ستارت (suttirat) (to be torn down, to be destroyed).

_Sura 13:31_

This last root in turn clears the way for us to identify other homonymous and likewise misread spellings, three more of which are given to us by the Koran concordance in Suras 13:31; 18:47 and 81:3. Thus, for instance, we read in Sura 13:31:

ولو أن قرائنا ستارت به الجبال أو قطعت به الأرض

(Bell I 232, 30): “Though / If only by a qur’ān the mountains had been moved, or the earth been cleft, ...”.

(Paret 204): “Und wenn durch einen (Offenbarungs)text (qur’ān) bewirkt würde, daß Berge sich (von der Stelle) bewegen oder die Erde in Stücke zerreiβt (Note: oder sich spaltet) ...”

(Blachère 276): “Si une incantation par laquelle les montagnes seraient mises en marche, ou par laquelle la terre serait mise en pièces ...”

Here, too, it is not ستارت (suyyirta) that should be read, but following the Syro-Aramaic form, as above, ستارت / suttirat (to be torn down, to be destroyed). As for the other Arabic verb قطعت (quttirāt) (literally: to be torn to pieces), Paret with the meaning “had been split” in the note and Bell with “had been cleft” have correctly suspected, though without justifying this, that it is a synonym of شق (ṣaqqa), which is usually used in this context in the Koran, for example in Suras 19:90 and 80:26. In this respect, it is lexically equivalent to Syro-Aramaic ʿṣrṣa (ṣrṣa), which can mean both.207

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207 Cf., e.g., Mannah (647b): ʿṣrṣa (ṣrṣa) (to cut off, to detach), (2) شق (ṣaqqa) (to split). This meaning occurs in Sura 2:266: "فخذ أربعة من الطير شق هن اليد (Bell I 139, 262): “Then take four of the birds and incline them to thyself [‘Sense uncertain.’].” The latter can be only understood in the meaning of the Syro-Aramaic loan-word quoted above as follows: “Then take four of the birds and cut them (in two).” The prepositional reflexive pronoun اليد (lajka), unusual in Classical Arabic, is known in the Syro-Aramaic grammar as dativus ethicus (cf. Th. Nöldeke, Syrische Grammatik [Syriae Grammar], § 224: “The preposition Ṽ (l-) with a reflexive personal pronoun often follows a verb without essentially changing its sense.”

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_Sura 18:47_

وهيوم نسيء الجبال وترى الأرض بارزة

وحشرنهم فلم نعذر منهم أحدا

(Bell I 278, 45): “On the day when We shall cause the mountains to move, and one will see the earth stepping forward. And We shall round them up and leave of them not one;”

(Paret 242): “Und am Tag (des Gerichts), da wir die Berge (von der Stelle) bewegen und du die Erde (darunter?) herauskommen sichst und wir sie (d.h. die Menschen) (schließlich alle zu uns) versammeln und nicht einen von ihnen auslassen!”

(Blachère 323): “au jour où Nous mettrons les montagnes en marche, où tu verras la terre [rasée] comme une plaine, où Nous rassemblerons les [les Humains] sans laisser personne parmi eux.”

After the lexical and syntactic analysis that follows, this is how this verse will be understood:

“On the day when the mountains collapse and the earth appears
to be split open, we will gather them (the people) together and none of them will be overlooked.”

First of all, here, too, it is not نسیر (nusayyir) (we move from the spot), but نسمت الجبال (nusattar l-ğibal) (when we shall tear down the mountains) or the passive نسمت الجبال (tusattar l-ğibal) (when the mountains will be torn down). The next problem case occurs in وتری الأرض بارزة (wa-tarā l-arḍ bārīzatun) and concerns the participial adjective بارزة (bārizā), which has been variously interpreted by our Koran translators:

(Bell): “the earth stepping forward.”

(Paret): “und die Erde (darunter?) herauskommen siehst (and you will see the earth coming out [underneath them??].”

(Blachère): “la terre [rasée] comme une plaine” (the earth [shaved] like a plain).

Blachère to some extent follows Tabart, who explains this passage as follows: On the day when we shall set the mountains in motion and they will be removed from the earth, it will appear to the observer to have been stripped of every object whatsoever. Paret and Bell both attempt in their own ways to interpret logically the Arabic root بارزة (baraza) (to stand out), one in the sense of “to step forward,” the other in the sense of “to stand out.”

The divergence in these attempts at interpretation is understandable, considering that in the case of the misread Arabic spelling بارزة (bārizā) (with the secondarily inserted l) it is not a question of the Arabic بارزة (baraza), but of the Syro-Aramaic (tāz) (tāz), the meaning of which Manna (849a) renders in Arabic as الفتح (inšaqqa) (to rip open, to split). In Syro-Aramaic this clause would read }<id:2968580722746174880>
ring to it. But if we read the first part of the verse passively, “On the day when the mountains are destroyed and the earth appears (literally: is to be seen) split open,” this reading would produce a more plausible sense.

The main problem, however, is of a syntactical nature and can be found in the second part of the verse, which, as a coordinate clause, is combined with the first by means of the conjunction ́/ wa (and) with a simultaneous shift in tense and subject, which here emerges as God in the first person plural. Our Koran translators have noticed that the temporal clause introduced by the adverb ́/ (yawma) (on the day when) lacks the expected apodosis. As a result, each has tried in his own way to deal with the problem. Whereas Paret makes it into an exclamatory clause that requires no apodosis, Blachère links it with the preceding verse and sees in it a simple succession of individual statements. Bell, on the other hand, reproduces the Koranic sentence faithfully, but sees that the clause hangs “in the air” and therefore suspects a gap, which he illustrates in his translation by starting a new paragraph with the second part of the verse and by leaving the line before it empty.

For this kind of sentence structure, the ḫalqulb / Pišṭtā, the Syro-Aramaic translation of the Bible, offers us several typical examples. There is the following passage, for example, from the story of Joseph (Genesis 39:10-11):

\[\text{(w-kād amrū (h)wa ta leh kallym, w-lā āsā' (h)wa lah, l-megdāk l-wāth wa-l-meblah āmmāth, wa-hwā h-had men yawmāgā...)}\]

“When she spoke to him by day, but he hardened not to her (insofar as) to lie by her and to be with her, [and] it happened one day...”

In the case of this temporal sentence introduced by ́/ (kād) (as, when)

the apodosis begins with the conjunction ́/ w (and): “When she spoke to him ..., and it happened ...”. Just as in the English (and German) construction, however, this and in both the Syro-Aramaic and the Arabic temporal sentence is not only superfluous to introduce the apodosis, but above all confusing. It appears, if only sporadically, to have slipped into Syro-Aramaic as a Hebraism via the translation of the Bible. In most cases, however, it is left out in the Pišṭtā. The same applies for the Koran.

To this extent the observation about Ancient Hebrew that Theodor Nöldeke had already made in his above-mentioned sketch Die semitischen Sprachen [The Semitic Languages] (26) comes into play:

“The character of Ancient Hebrew is in essential parts of it, in particular in sentence construction, very old-fashioned. The coordination of sentences predominates over subordination more than in another Semitic written language more exactly known to us. The sentences are preferably joined together only with an “and.” Even subclauses and adverbial modifiers, especially of a temporal nature, are commonly combined to form a whole with a mere “and it was,” “and it will be,” and then the main clause is loosely linked to that with an “and.” Naturally, it is thus for us often

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210 The Jerusalemer Bibel [Jerusalem Bible] (15th edition, Freiburg, 1979) makes a new sentence out of the apodosis of the Pišṭtā (Verse 11).

211 Note (1) “For example, ‘And it was when he had made an end to offer the present, and he sent away the people,’ Judg. 3:18 (= ‘And when he had made an end..., he sent away the people’). ‘And it came to pass that Isaac became old, and his eyes became weak to see, and he called Esau his eldest son,’ Gen. 27:1. ‘And it was at her coming, and she moved him,’ Judg. 1:14. ‘And it came to pass in the evening, and he took Leah his daughter,’ Gen. 29:23 – ‘And it shall be if the wicked man (be) worthy to be beaten, and the judge shall cause him to lie down and to be beaten...’” Deut. 25:2. ‘And it will come to pass on that day, and I will break...’, Hos. 1:5. Similarly in countless cases.”

In the case of all of these passages the “and” before the apodosis is left out in the Pišṭtā. The passage cited from Judges 1:14, however, reads according to the Pišṭtā version: ḫalqulb wa ́/ (h)mlā bih ḫalqulb hawā ́/ (w-kād ay-šā, ḫalqulb l-meblah men abū ḥaqāl) “And when she came in (to her husband, i.e. when she was led to him), she was moved (by him) to ask of her father a field.”
doubtful where, according to the sense, the apodosis begins.\textsuperscript{212} What are so lacking are particles that could clearly express the finer concatenation of thoughts. To a large extent fantasy determines the usage of the verb tenses, sometimes seeing what has not been completed as completed, at other times what has been completed as still taking place.”

This observation of Nöldeke’s on the syntax of Ancient Hebrew fits the sentence from Sura 18:47 being discussed here exactly, because:

(a) as a result of the “superfluous” \(\text{w} / \text{and}\), the apodosis beginning with \(\text{وَحَرَّنُوهُم} / \text{and gathered them}\) (\(\text{wa-}\text{hāṣarnāhūm}\)) has not been identified as such by our Koran translators, even though the tense change it introduces (perfect as opposed to the imperfect in the protasis) particularly emphasizes this and clearly distinguishes the two parts of the sentence from each other;

(b) Nöldeke’s comment, according to which something future (\textit{not completed}) is presented as having already happened whereas the protasis is in the imperfect (or future) tense, is further true here of the apodosis in the perfect tense (\(\text{وَحَرَّنُوهُم} / \text{and gathered them}\)) literally, “and we have gathered them and overlooked none of them” instead of “and we shall gather them and overlook none of them”). According to the modern-day understanding just the opposite relationship would be correct: “On the day when \(\text{when}\) one day the mountains \textit{have} collapsed and the earth \textit{has} split open, we shall gather them together and overlook none of them.” In this respect, Nöldeke’s previously cited comment on Ancient Hebrew is also true of this unusual sentence construction: “To a great extent fantasy determines the usage of the verb tenses,
sometimes seeing what has not been completed as completed, at other times what has been completed as still taking place.”

The lexically as well as syntactically misunderstood and distorted rendering sentence from Sura 18:47,

“\textit{And on the day (of the Last Judgment), when we move the mountains (from their places) and you see the earth (under them?) come out and we (finally) gather (all of) them (i.e. the people) to us) and do not leave out one of them! [Und am Tage (des Gerichts), da wir die Berge (von der Stelle) bewegen und du die Erde (darunter?) herauskommen siehst und wir sie (d.h. die Menschen) (schließlich alle zu uns) versammeln und nicht einen von ihnen auslassen!]” (Paret)

should be understood, on the basis of the lexically more reasonable Syro-Aramaic reading, but syntactically on the basis of a sentence construction that is also attested in part in the Syro-Aramaic translation of the Bible under the influence of Biblical Hebrew, as follows:

“On the day when the mountains \textit{collapse} and the earth \textit{appears to be ripped open}, we \textit{shall} gather them together and \textit{overlook} none of them.”

\textit{Sura 37:78-79}

Insofar as for Arabic طَرَكُ (\(\text{ṭarākū}\)) (to leave, to abandon) the Koran also uses تَرَكُ (\(\text{ṭarāku}\)) as a synonym, reference will be made in the case of the latter to the following spellings misread in four passages as تَرَكُ (\(\text{ṭarāknā}\)) (we have left, to be left over) instead of تَرَكُ (\(\text{ṭarākū}\)) (we have blessed). These are the following verse refrains in Sura 37 to the memory, respectively, of the prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, and Elias: 78, 108, 119, and 129. Verses 78, 108 and 129 each run: تَرَكُ عليه في الآخرة (\(\text{ṭarākū} \text{alayhi fi l-}\text{akhirah}\)) (In the end two thousand years, 2400 years); Verse 119, referring to Moses and Aaron, says in the dual:

\footnote{212 Indeed, Nöldeke’s comment (18) in his \textit{Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft} [\textit{New Essays on Semitic Linguistics}] in the chapter on “Stylistic and Syntactic Peculiarities of the Language of the Koran,” (paragraph four), bears witness to this: “Frequently a protasis in the Koran lacks the apodosis or the main clause.” At the same time, Nöldeke apparently did not notice that his observations about Ancient Hebrew can also in part be carried over to the Koran.}
the Koran (al-áhirat) here refers either to Syro-Aramaic حَالَةٍ (zāhā) (times)214 or حَالَاتٍ (ālmā) (worlds).215 Precisely the latter meaning is referred to in the verse immediately following Verse 78, i.e. Verse 79, سُلِّمَ عَلَى نَوْحٍ فِي الْحَالَاتِ, which has been misunderstood by our Koran translators as follows:

(Bell II 445, 77): “Peace be upon Noah in (all) the worlds.”

(Paret 371): “Heil (salām) sei über Noah unter den Menschen in aller Welt (al-ālamān)”216

(Blachère 477): “Salut sur Noé dans l’Univers!”

Yet what is to be understood in this context under the Arabic حَالَاتٍ (al-ālamān), is, as a transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic حَالَةٍ (al-ālamān), “both worlds”: this world, the secular world, and the next world, the hereafter. What is intended here by the Syro-Aramaic plural suffix بَنٍّ / -bān would be the Arabic dual suffix بَنٍّ / -bān. Namely, this understanding follows from the Koranic context insofar as God (a) rescued Noah and his family from the Flood (Verse 76) and kept his descendants alive (Verse 77) and (b) in addition to this, he has praised him in the hereafter (Verse 78); and from which results (c) (Verse 79): “Peace be upon Noah in both worlds!” In other words, God’s blessing applies to Noah in this and the next world. Also corresponding to this sense is the summarizing conclusion in Verse 80: “Thus (namely) do we reward the righteous!” The previously cited Verses 78 and 79 are to be understood as follows:

“And we blessed him (in addition to this) in the hereafter: Peace be upon Noah in both worlds!”

214 Cf., e.g., Thes. I 127: حَالَةٍ بَنٍّ [al-bānā] “novissimis temporibus.”

215 Cf. Thes. I 3009: حَالَاتٍ بَنٍّ (al-āmān d-qaṣīmu w-ša’īfa) saecula praesentia et futura (present and future “worlds”), in addition, 2899 under (2): حَالَةٍ بَنٍّ (al-ālamān) haec vita (this earthly) life, this world, in opposition to حَالَاتٍ (al-ālamān) (future world); hence the “two worlds”: حَالَاتٍ بَنٍّ (twin al-ālām) (Ephr. II 338A, ...).

216 The plural form (al-ālamān) that Paret puts in parentheses and gives in the Arabic status rectus should therefore be viewed as hypothetical.

213 Cf. Lisan IV 14b: والأخيرة والأخرى: دار البقاء (al-āhira and al-āhirat: the perpetual place of residence, the hereafter). With regard to its being a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic مَسَاءَلَةٍ (masāyla) cf., e.g., Mann (14a): (2)่วนت (āhira), نهاية (nibāya) (end = last days, hereafter).
The other verse refrains 108, 119 and 129 are to be understood accordingly. Furthermore, in Sura 26:84 what is meant by the term الأخرین (al-lāḥirīn) is also not the “later (generations)” (Paret), but the “last (times)” = the “hereafter.”

Sura 26:90-91

In order to return to the spelling برز (baraza), the verses 90-91 from Sura 26 may be cited in this context:

وأَلْقَتْ الْجِنَّةَ للْمَطَفِيقِينَ وَلَبِزَتْ الْجِحْمَ لِلْغَابِرِينَ

Without further ado following the laconic interpretation by Ṭabarī (XIX 87), our Koran translators render the underlined expressions as follows:

(Bell II 357): 90. “The Garden shall be brought nigh to those who show piety, 91. And the Hot Place advanced to those who are beguiled...”

(Paret 304): (90) “Und das Paradies wird (an jenem Tag) an die Gottesfürchtigen nahe herangebracht. (91) Und der Höllenbrand wird denen, die abgeirrt sind, vor Augen gestellt (burriżat).”

(Blachère 397): 90 “[au jour où] le Jardin sera avancé pour les Pieux 91 et la Fournaise sortie pour les Errants...”.

It remains to be seen whether in Arabic the root زلف (zalafā) really does mean سنة (danā) (< Syro-Aramaic كنأ / dānā or نِئِب / qaruba) “to be near, to come closer,” as the Līsān (IX 138a ff.) conjecturally explains it in referring to two dubious Arabic verses. On the other hand, if we base it on the Syro-Aramaic root التلم (zalāf), what results in the first place is the figurative sense “to shine, to gleam, to adorn,”217 Whence the reflection on whether the spelling ألقفت should be read, not “uzlāf,” but ألقفت “azlaqat” or “uzliqat.” In fact, only the Syro-Aramaic root ألم (zalaq) yields the original meaning of “to radiate, to shine,” which the Thes. (I 1131) assigns to its more common variant form ألم (zalāq). This is, in turn, used most of the time in the Aṣīl form.218 Therefore the reading ألقفت (azlaqat) would be justified. Accordingly, Paradise would not be “brought near unto the god-fearing” (Paret), but would, more reasonably, “shine forth for the god-fearing.”

This reading is confirmed by a number of expressions that the Līsān (X 144b) cites under the root زلف (zalāq), whereby it, in turn, is also not always able to distinguish here between the Arabic original meaning “to slide” and the homonymous Syro-Aramaic root with the original meaning “to shine.” What is in any case revealing is the meaning “to adorn oneself” used to explain (with reference to بعث تزلف) the reflexive stem زلف فzan وتزلف إذا تزلف (it is said of someone tazallaqa and tazayyaqa when he smartens himself up). This meaning is also confirmed by the ensuing بدأ according to which ألم characterized two men coming out of the baths منتراط (mutazalliqya) “all spruced up” as من لمان (mālufahīrīn) “belonging to those who strut.” The closing explanation is equally clear: زلف الرجل إذا تعم حتي يكون لوجه ريق وميصص (one says of someone tazallaqa when he looks after himself in such a way that his [skin]color receives a glow and a shimmer [a shimmering glow]). On the other hand, the Līsān (IX 138a ff.) cites several expressions under the root زلف (zalafā) that probably belonged under the root زلف (zalāq), for instance, when it describes the mirror as الزنفة (az-zalafā)219 (139b) although it points rather to the Syro-Aramaic ألم (zalaq) (to shine).

Now that the Līsān has also confirmed the Syro-Aramaic reading, the first part of Verse 90 cited above is accordingly to be understood as follows:

“(on the day when ...,) and Paradise will shine forth (or adorn itself) for the god-fearing...”

217 Thus the Thes. I 1130 cites: ألم (zulaq) ornate, polito, elegante vestitum, in Arabic): صقل الليل والبضو (ornament and shine of clothing); further 1131, under ألم (m-zalafā), also as applied figuratively to “elegant and brilliant discourse.”

218 Cf. Thes. I 1126, under apa. ألم (azlafā) affulsit, effulsit, splenduit; and with reference to the Syrian lexicographers: اشرق أثار لامع . سطع. أضاء.
The spellings that were misread (as "\(\text{زناة} / \text{uzlifat}\)) in Suras 50:31 and 81:13, but which are in reality homonyms (ـ\(\text{زناة} / \text{azlaqat} / \text{uzliqat}\)), are to be corrected in the same way.

As for the misread spelling ("\(\text{بِرَزَّنَت}\)) in the second verse segment, what was already said above about the Syro-Aramaic root (\(\text{ترَذَّل} / \text{to split, to split open}\)) in Sura 18:47 can be applied, so that here Hell will "split itself open" (in the sense of "to open up suddenly") in order to "devour" the damned. Summarizing, the double verse from Sura 26:90-91 would thus read:

“(On the day when …,) (90) Paradise will shine forth (or adorn itself) (91) for the god-fearing and Hell will split itself open for the damned.”

Sura 68:51

Picking up from the root (\(\text{زلاق} / \text{azlaq}\)) reference will be made to a passage in Sura 68:51 that, though read correctly, has nevertheless been misinterpreted:

واَن يُكَادُ النَّفْسُ كَفَرَتْ لَيْزَانُكُم بِبَصْرِهِم لَا سَمَعَ

الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ اِنْ لمَّا يَمْتَعُون

Our Koran translators render the underlined expression as follows:

(Bell II 599): 51. “Lo, those who have disbelieved almost cause thee to stumble with their looks, when they hear the Reminder, and they say: ‘Surely, he is mad.’”

(Paret 479): 51: “Diejenigen, die ungläubig sind, würden dich, wenn sie die Mahnung [d.h. den Koran] hören, mit ihren (bösen) Blicken beinahe zum Strauchen bringen. Und sie sagen: ‘Er ist (ja) besessen.’”

(Blachère 611): 51 “En vérité, ceux qui sont incrédules, ayant entendu cette Édification, te perceront certes de leurs regards et diront: ‘Cerites, il est possédé!’”

Thus they partially follow the interpretations enumerated in \(\text{Tābūt}\) (XXIX 46) for the expression لَيْزَانُكُم (\(\text{la-yuzliqunaka}\)). In doing so, however, they pay no attention to the one that comes closest to the Syro-Aramaic sense, namely: لَيْزَانُكُم (\(\text{la-yasra'tunaka}\)) (they would almost "knock" you “down” with their looks). In connection with this, \(\text{Tābūt}\) makes reference to a saying of the Arabs: كاذِ بِكَانَ يَصِرْعِي بِشَدَّةِ نَظْرِهِ (so-and-so nearly “knocked” me “down,” “floored” me with his penetrating glance). The \(\text{Līsān}\) (X 144b) cites the expression أَرْقَانَ / زلاق (\(\text{azlaqahu} / \text{azlaqahu bi-baṣarihi}\)), though without quite knowing how to interpret the verb أَرْقَانَ (\(\text{azlaq}\)). As a conjecture it gives the explanation “to force someone from his spot or position” as well as the above-mentioned saying with the meaning “to knock down, to dash to the ground,” to which it adds the following: نظر فلَّان إِلَى نَظْرِهِ كَاذِ بِكَانَ يَصِرُّ عَنِي ("so-and-so cast me such a look as to almost devour me or knock me down").

In fact, however, the root زلاق (\(\text{zaliqa / azlaqa}\)) is connected with the Syro-Aramaic \(\text{دا} / \text{azlaq}\)) to the extent that the latter can mean not only “to be radiant, to shine, to gleam,” but also – under the \(\text{Aḇel}\) form

219 Compared to this, immediately after Christ’s death on the cross, according to the Christian idea, Sheel is “split open” to free the souls imprisoned therein as a result of the work of salvation; this is documented by the \(\text{Thes.}\) (II 4498) with the following citation from Jacob of Sarug (d. 521 A.D.): كَيَدُ اللَّهُ تَلَّيْنَ وَإِلَيْهِ (\(\text{etararet sayl wa-afqa sere de-bhsan bth}\)) (Sheel split itself open, and the rows [of people] imprisoned therein came out).

220 Namely, the lexical basis of the Arabic word (\(\text{غلوين} / \text{gawiyn}\)) is the Syro-Aramaic (\(\text{يَلَّي} / \text{yalay}\)), which \(\text{Mannān}\) (289b) defines in Arabic as follows: غَلِيلٌ (1) (gawiyah) (to lose one’s way, to go astray), (4) دَلَّ (btd, halak) (to be lost, to be damned). It is also likely that it was from the latter meaning that the Arabic (halak) “eternal damnation” (cf. H. Wehr) originated as a religious technical term. Here, too, as so often, the Koran uses the first lexical meaning of the Syro-Aramaic expression in the assumption that the further meanings will emerge from it as a matter of course.

221 Here Blachère adds the following note: “yuzliqun-ka ‘they will pierce you.’

Literally: they will make you slide. The sense seems to be: Considering the Prophet to be possessed, they try to exorcise him and resort to hypnotism.”
“to flash, to cause to flash” and thus in a general sense: “to kill by lightning, to dash to the ground, to strike down.”

However, the findings made in the meantime as to the confusion of specific Syro-Aramaic letters in the process of transcription from Garshuni / Karshuni into the Arabic writing system make it more likely that the Arabic letter لـ / لـ (azlq) is a mistranscription of the Syriac letter دـ / دـ (ylq). Read Garshuni / Karshuni لـ / لـ (ylq) < Syro-Aramaic لـ / لـ (azlq), 1. to cry, yell, 2. to peal, rumble [thunder], Aֶl יִדְרָדָם / azlq – cf. Mammâ 205b), this verb means as a variant of Arabic سَأَقُ ya'aqa (1. originally: to cry < Old Aramaic / Hebrew سَأَقُ < ya'aqa) 2. to strike down with lightning – the latter meaning Arabic rather سَأَقُ / ya'aqa (cf. Lisan X 198a: أسمعته الصاغة / ya'aqa: is said of someone struck by lightning). This meaning is to be assumed figuratively, in the causative/transitive stem in the sense of “to strike suddenly down”, as in the verse discussed above, and in the intransitive stem in the sense of “to collapse suddenly”, as attested in Sura 7:143: وحَزِرَ مُوسِى صَعْقاً “and Moses fell (suddenly) down thunderstruck.”

222 Cf., e.g., C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 198b: فِلْجُرْ (azlq) 1. Fulgor, radius (lightning, ray); Af. Fulgere fecit (to cause to flash).


225 Morphologically, the Koranic spelling صَفَأ (traditional pronunciation صَفَا) – Syro-Aramaic صَفَا renders accurately the Syro-Aramaic status emphaticus as attributive form of the passive participle *صَفَأ / صَفَا, Old Aramaic *כִּרָא / סָרָא, as discussed above in the chapter on Satan (p. 98). In the vernacular of the Near East the word صَفَا / سَرَأ (lightning) in the sense of lightning, thunderbolt (< Syro-Aramaic صَفَا < صَفَا / صَفَا [lightning] – cf. Mammâ 205b) is quite common.

Since it appears now clear that the meaning lightning, thunderbolt is a metaphorical sense derived from the original meaning cry, none of our Koran translators seems to have noticed that the Koran employs the synonymous Arabic substantive صَفَا / صَفَا in the same sense (cry = lightning, thunderbolt). This meaning can be inferred from the context of the following ten Koran passages:

The philological discussion of Sura 68:51 leads us henceforth to the following understanding:

“Truly, those who are unbelieving would with their scowls have almost struck you down (= looked daggers at you) when they heard the admonition, saying: ‘He is indeed a possessed one!’”

So understood, the verse being discussed from Sura 68:51 would thus be:

“Truly, those who are unbelieving would with their scowls have almost dashed you to the ground (as if with a bolt of lightning) when they heard the admonition and (at the same time) said: ‘He is indeed one possessed!’”

Suras 11: 67,94; 15: 73,83; 23: 41; 29: 40; 36: 29,49; 38: 15; 54: 31. Although Tabarî XIV 44 explains this word in Sura 15:73 (صِيّحاً = the cry) as ضَمِّحَاتِ الرَّاجِب = (the lightning of pain = punishment), all our three Koran translators understand it literally as (Bell: the Shout, Blachère: le Cri; Paret: der Schrei). On the other hand, the word صَفَا (cry) in eschatological connection has the sense of the (trumpet)-blast on the Judgement Day. This understanding can be derived from the following passages: Suras 36:53; 50:42 (cf. following Suras, where it will be blast upon the trumpet: 6:73; 18:99; 20:102; 23:101; 27:87; 36:51; 39:68; 50:20; 69:13; 74:8; 78:18). The word صَفَا (cry / lightning / trump of doom), that occurs thirteen times correctly in the Koran, is once misread in Sura 80:33. The Koranic seeming هَلِاء legomenon with the spelling (allegedly صَفَا), from a nonexistent Arabic root صَفَا, is nevertheless correctly explained in the Lisan III 33a as صَفَا (the cry = crack of doom). The medial صَفَا in the misread sentence is, as seen above (p. 72-96), an alternative writing of medial صَفَا / صَفَا as in (false) صَفَا (cf. : صَفَا) صَفَا (Suras 9:1 and 54:43; see above p. 97 ff.). That this uncommon spelling has its origin in an occasional Syro-Aramaic orthographical peculiarity will be shown elsewhere.

From the different renderings of the verb tenses one can see that our Koran translators are having trouble coming to terms with the syntactic cohesion of this sentence. What determines the tense in this case is the main clause in the past tense (أَلَمْ سَمِعْتُ “when they heard.” The imperfect subordinate clause, وَمَا سَمِعْتُ (wa-yaswqdt) (literally) “in that they speak” describes an action occurring in the past and is therefore to be rendered in the perfect tense...
Additional examples in the Koran of apodoses introduced by و/ wa (and)

Sura 37:103-104

The further apodoses exceptionally introduced by the conjunction و/ wa (and) will demonstrate that Nöldeke’s remark — that in the case of many a protasis in the Koran the apodosis is lacking — is for the most part not true. Among other places, we encounter such a temporal clause in Sura 37:103-104:

فَ حَلَبَ أَنْ لَهُ لَيْلَةَ الْجَبَّةِ وَلَدَى هِوَانَ إِنْ يَأْبَاهُم

Here, despite the و/ w (and) preceding it, the apodosis has been cor-

rectly identified, already by Nöldeke, and by our Koran translators. Because of other misreadings, however, their translations will be given in the following:

(Bell II 446): “When they had resigned themselves, and he had laid him down upon his face (literally, ‘to the forehead’), (104) We called to him: ‘O Abraham!’…”

(Paret 372): “Als nun die beiden sich (in Gottes Willen) ergeben hatten und Abraham seinen Sohn (W.: er ihn) auf die Stirn niedergeworfen hatte (um ihn zu schlachten), (104) riefen wir ihn an: ‘Abraham!’…”

(Blachère 479): “Or quand ils eurent prononcé le salâm et qu’il eut placé l’enfant front contre terre. (104) Nous lui criâmes: ‘Abraham!’…”

The following Syro-Aramaic reading will result from the philological analysis of this connected double verse:

(103) “Now when the two of them were finished (arranging the pyre) and he (Abraham) had (laid) him (his son) bound upon the firewood, (104) we called to him: Abraham!…”

The first thing to be said about the verb أسلم (aslama) (< Syro-Aramaic نصلي < ašlem) is that according to its Syro-Aramaic transitive usage it is a priori not to be viewed as reflexive in this passage, as Paret and Bell

227 Th. Nöldeke, ibid. 18 (penultimate paragraph).
228 Nevertheless, Paret remarks in his Commentary (417) in this regard: “The apodosis seems to be missing. For this reason an equivalent supplement must be inserted at the end of Verse 103 (according to Zamahšāṛt and Baidāwī after qad saḫṭaṯa r-raʿyā in Verse 105). Or it to be assumed that the apodosis is exceptionally introduced by wa- (as Tahart says concerning this passage:...).” In fact, Tahart (XXIII 80) maintains that the “‘Abrah” sometimes set the و/ ʿaw (and) in front of the apodosis of فَ حَلَبَ أَنْ لَهُ لَيْلَةَ الْجَبَّةِ (Fāmā waḥi wa ili) (as, until, when) (i.e., of temporal clauses beginning with these three words). Still apparently nobody has noticed that this usage, limited to the Koran, is to a certain extent indirectly a Syro-Aramaism, but is more frequently a Hebraism.
In his Commentary Paret refers to Helmer Ringgren, *Islam, 'aslama and muslim* (Uppsala, 1949) 26 f. The Künzlinger translation reproduced there, "When they were finished" (27), should not be dismissed just because 'aslama in this meaning is not attested in Arabic and because Künzlinger had taken this from Hebrew. To be more exact, it has been taken from Syro-Aramaic. Both meanings, (a) to submit (oneself) and (b) to finish (something), would in themselves be acceptable according to the Syro-Aramaic ܡܲܠܳܪܲܐ (ašlem), depending on which object one is imagining with it.\(^2\) For the understanding of the Koranic context, however, Genesis 22:9 ought to be quoted:

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an (or the) altar there, and laid the (fire)wood in order (upon it); then he bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar upon the (fire)wood."\(^2\)

In contrast to this, the Koranic report skips the details relating to the arranging of the altar and the firewood, but summarizes it in the outcome with ܒܲܠܳܡܲܐ (fa-lammā aslama): "Now when they were finished (with the arranging of the pyre)." This interpretation is supported by the traditional reading according to *Ibu Mas’ūd, Ibu ‘Abbās* and *Muḥābid* upon which Blachère (479, note 103) bases his translation: ܪܲܠܳܡܲܐ (sašlammā) (misunderstood by Blachère as follows): "Quand ils eurent prononcé le salām" (when they had spoken the salaam). Yet precisely this variant reading, which in the Arabic transcription is to be pronounced ܣܠܡܐ / salimā and not sallamā, is equivalent to the Syro-Aramaic ܐܠܲܠܳܡܲܐ (šlemā); "(when they) were finished."\(^2\)

Against Ringgren’s opinion that the most natural explanation here would be that Abraham and his son had submitted to God’s will, one can point to Verse 102 from which this already follows. Namely, in response to Abraham’s question concerning the sacrifice of his son, which God had demanded of him in a dream, the son consents and declares that he is willing to submit to God’s command.\(^2\) That the two then set out on their way, as well as the other unmentioned details from Genesis 22:3-9, is presupposed by the Koran as already known. As a result it is more likely that ܦܲܠܲܡܲܢܲܐ (fa-lammā aslama) ("now when they were finished") is to be understood as the conclusion of the prior preparations. The related ܘܲܠܲܬܲܐ (wa-tallahu li-l-gabān) (according to the previous reading): "(after they were finished, and he) had thrown (him) down on his forehead" (Paret), fits just as logically as the last act before the burnt offering. The following analysis concerns itself with this last detail.

Of all the previous scholars of the Koran, none appears to have become suspicious about the detail just cited, although neither in the Biblical account nor in the Apocrypha, nor in any other literature is there any indication that Abraham had specifically laid (Speyer)\(^2\) or thrown his son down on his forehead (Paret). The Western Koran scholars must have seen in this a Koranic variation.

But even linguistically nobody has raised any objections, although the conjectural explanations on this point by the Arabic Koran commen-

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229 *Tabart* (XXIII 79) gives three interpretations for the verb: (a) to agree, to be of the same opinion (both Abraham and his son agreed...); (b) to submit (to the divine will); (c) the son surrendered himself to God, whereas Abraham surrendered his son to God. All three interpretations correspond to the Syro-Aramaic ܡܲܠܳܪܲܐ (ašlem) (Thes. II 4186f.): concordavit; se dedivit; tradidit.

230 Cf. Thes. II 4186: ܡܲܠܳܪܲܐ (ašlem) (1) complevit, perfectit (to bring to an end, to complete); (4187): Cum ܲܠܳܡܲܐ (našā): se dedidit (to devote oneself, to submit).

231 Translation according to the *Syriac Bible 63DC*, United Bible Societies (London, 1979) 15b.

232 See Thes. II 4183: ܡܲܠܳܪܲܐ (šlem), Ar. ܣܠܡܐ (salmā), finitus, completus, absolutus est; and with a reference to the Syrian lexicographers (4184): ܡܲܠܳܪܲܐ (šlem): ܡܲܠܳܪܲܐ (faragā / farīgā): ("we are finished"). The expression mentioned by the *Lisṭā* (XII 291a) ܣܠܡܐ (salim min al-amir) is accordingly not to be understood, as interpreted by the *Lisṭā* in Arabic, as ܢܲܳܐ (nasā) (to escape from, to successfully elude an affair), but in the Syro-Aramaic sense as ܲܠܳܫܲܡܲܐ (faragā / farīgā minifa) (to be finished with it).

233 The reference in the Haggadah to the devotion of Abraham and his son, mentioned by Heinrich Speyer, may also refer to this (Die biblischen Erzählungen im Koran [The Biblical Stories in the Koran] 165).

234 Cf. H. Speyer, loc. cit. 164.
tators are scarcely convincing. Thus, for example, *Tabart* (XXIII 80) offers the following interpretations for this passage: (a) He threw him to the ground on his temple?( here *Tabart* explains the dual [al-gabītān] as that which is located to the left and right of the forehead, and furthermore that the face has two [temples? *Tabart*; al-gabītān between which is the forehead); (b) he laid him down with his face to the ground; (c) he threw him down on his mouth; (d) he threw him down on his forehead; (e) he held him by the forehead to slaughter him.

Jeffery (101), uncontradicted and without any further justification, adopts the interpretation given by *Tabart* under (a) with the definition: “The temple, or side of the forehead.” But his subsequent explanation is indecisive:

“The exegeses got the meaning right, but neither they nor the Lexicons have any satisfactory explanation of the origin of the word from the root *gabīn*.”

Citing Barth, he nonetheless considers an early borrowing from Aramaic كاسحة (gabīnā) (brow or eyebrow) or Syro-Aramaic كاسحة (gabīnā) (eyebrow) to be possible. What is lacking here, however, is any indication of the usage of *gabīn* (forehead) in modern written Arabic, as well as in the contemporary Arabic dialects of the Near East.

But actually the above-mentioned clarification of the expression by *Tabart* does suggest the meaning of the Syro-Aramaic كاسحة (gabīnā) (eyebrows). When *Tabart* explains that there are two *gabītān* to the left and the right of the forehead, he with certainty means by that the Syro-Aramaic كاسحة (gabīnā), namely the two “eyebrows,” and not, as this came to be misunderstood by the Arabic lexicographers, the two “sides of the forehead.” But if the forehead lies “between the two eye-

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235 See, for example, Hans Wehr *Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart* [Arabic Dictionary for the Written Language of the Present Day] (Wiesbaden, 1985), in which the meaning given there besides “forehead,” “side of the forehead,” must have stemmed from this misinterpretation by *Tabart*.

236 The *Lisan* (XIII 85a) explains this as follows: "and the temples, the upper part of the temple: of brows,” this absolutely corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic expression كاسحة (beity gabiynā), namely that which lies “between the eyebrows” (or in the area of the eyebrows), i.e. precisely: the “forehead.” In the Arabic *gabiynā* in the meaning “forehead” probably originated etymologically from the Syro-Aramaic by omitting the Syro-Aramaic كاسحة (beity) (between) and adopting the singular or pausal form of كاسحة (gabīnā).

But the real problem does not lie in the etymologically correct explanation of this expression, but in its misreading. In fact, the concrete guidelines of the Biblical account (Gen. 22:9) provide us with an indication of the real sense of this passage. There it says namely that Abraham has “bound (his son) and laid (him) over the (fire)wood.” Upon closer examination, the Koranic passage proves to be absolutely adequate.

Namedly, subjected to further justification by Arab commentators on the Koran and just as seldom subject to examination by Western Koran scholars, the meaning of the verbal root تل (tallā) in the sense of
maic ُ(ُلُصُص) can at the same time mean “to hang, to hang up” and “to tie (to), to bind” is illustrated by the Thes. (II 442) under (3) with the following citations:

\textbf{لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (تَُلُصُصِّي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ) (they hung him on = bound him to the cross); عَلَى البَيْتِ (تَُلُصُصِّي) (tie it to the cross).}

But the Thes. (II 4441) presents us with a further instance that could have virtually been taken from our Koranic passage. Namely, in speaking of Abraham it is said: لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (تَُلُصُصِّي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ) “he bound his son (and placed him high) upon the pyre” (i.e. he placed his son bound upon the pyre). The Syro-Aramaic expression لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ) (here to be understood as altar, pyre)\textsuperscript{239} in turn helps us to decipher the misread expression لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ) (previously understood as: to be thrown down upon one’s forehead). Namely, read differently, this should yield a synonym of لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ) (altar, pyre). For that, we only need to imagine the point under the مَثَلُ وَلَا يُبِيرُ and not as being there, which results in the reading لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ). However, read in Arabic the root قن (قان), after a search through the Lists, produces no meaning. Yet here, too, as in the case of the two preceding expressions, an identical Syro-Aramaic root should help us further.

First of all the Koranic spelling suggests the triliteral Syro-Aramaic root قن (قان). With the original meaning of “to be lazy, sluggish,” this proves, however, after a check of the Theauras and Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum, to be unsuitable. The next root to be considered is the mediae geminatae قن (قان) whose original meaning “to burn”\textsuperscript{240} appears to fit our passage. The suffix ين / -n would correspond

\textsuperscript{238} C. Brockelmann, Lex. Syr. 824b, instead cites the Arab. لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (تَُلُصُصِّي) (to let down a rope), which he may have taken from the Lists (X 79b). However, the verse that the Lists quotes as evidence for this interpretation (to let a rope down when drawing water in a well) is seemingly unclear and does not, say, on a hanger or a roller (cf. the Arabic explanation given in Mann (199b) for the Syro-Aramaic term قن (قان): “two supports affixed above a well on which a wheel is attached for the drawing of water”). Namely, the meaning “to attach, to tie (to), to tie up” for the Syro-Aramaic قن (قان) is rendered by Mann (838b) in Arabic under (3) as follows: قن (قان), Anāṭ (انَاط), رأب (رَابَ). Similarly, in reference to a female camel (spoken of in a مَثَلُ) with its قن (قان) (Lists X 78a), it is no “he had her knee!” as presumed by the Lists, but rather “he tied her up” that is meant. In general, the Lists here confuses the roots قن (قان) and قن (قان) because of the defective Arabic spelling. Only with the help of the cited expressions can a given meaning sometimes be determined on the basis of the context of the equivalent Syro-Aramaic root. As concerns the further مَثَلُ (هَدَى البَيْتِ), the key to the treasures of the earth were brought to me and hung up (Lists X 78a), this last meaning in Syro-Aramaic قن (قان) would fit better than the interpretation presumed by the Lists, “thrown down into my hand.” The same is true of the Syro-Aramaic root قن (قان) to which the Thes. (II 4437) assigns the Arabic لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ (تَُلُصُصِّي). Here, too, the explanations provided by the Lists (79b) are not always convincing.

\textsuperscript{239} Cf. Thes. II 2891 (2) excelsum, altare, ara.

\textsuperscript{240} Thes. I, 1168: قن (قان), exsas, accessus est. Mann (213b): قن (قان), مَثَلُ, لَمْ يَسِرُّ وَلَا يُبِيرُ. Arguing in favor of a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic is the Arabic root قن (قان), which is still common usage only in the meaning “to love, to like;” which derived originally from “to be inflamed in love for.”
to the Syro-Aramaic masculine plural suffix -in. The Syro-Aramaic transcription شبه (hábbbn) would accordingly be an active masculine plural participle, congruent with the reference – implicit in the Koran but explicitly named in Genesis 22:9 – to مک (gaysé) (pieces of wood), which would yield the meaning “the (pieces of wood) (for) burning.” The originally attributive active participle (the burning), referring to the implicit noun (pieces of wood), would substitute for it as the substantive. Accordingly, under حب (hábbbn), in analogy with the Koranic plural وق (waqád) (Suras 2:24; 3:10; 66:6; 85:5), one would understand “burning” (materials / pieces of wood) = “burning materials” / “pieces of wood for burning” (or collectively: firewood).242

Still to be explained in the case of الحبين (li-l-hábbbn) is the function of the prefixed preposition ل / li- on the basis of the examples cited above from the Thesaurus, one would here expect the equivalent of the Syro-Aramaic ل (‘al) (on, above), i.e. the Arabic على (‘al). It is not documented in Classical Arabic that the preposition ل / li- is used in this meaning.243 The Thesaurus also gives no example for this usage in

Syro-Aramaic. مان (‘al) however, out of a total of 31 functions of the ل / li-, mentions under the twenty-fifth the meaning على (‘al) (on) with the following example (364 a):

لا بناء لهم في الأرض ولا إمامة موضوع على صخرة.

“They have neither bases (anchored) in the ground nor foundation based on rock.”

Further Utilization of ل / li- instead of على (‘al)

Sura 7:143

We further encounter this function of ل / li- in the meaning of على (‘al) (on) in Sura 7:143: (‘al-tamhā’ taqlā ‘arrahhu li-l-gabah). The preposition ل / li- (actually לא), here as dative, has been misunderstood by our Koran translators as follows:

(Bell I 150, 139): “but when his Lord unveiled His glory to the mountain, …”

(Paret 135): “Als nun sein Herr dem Berg erschien, …”

(Blachère 191): “[Mais] quand son Seigneur se manifeste à la montagne, …”

However, what is probably meant here is that God appeared on the mountain, as is confirmed by Exodus 24:16. This function of the preposition ل / li- (la-) in the sense of على (‘al) (on, above), a function that is documented by the Eastern Syrian lexicographers, is one of the hitherto unappreciated Eastern Syriac details in the Koran.

Thus, according to the Syro-Aramaic reading, the double verse 103-104 from Sura 37 is to be understood as follows:

„Now when the two of them were finished (with the arranging of the altar for the burnt offering) and he (Abraham) had (laid) him (his son) bound upon the fire(wood), we called to him: Abraham!”

241 On the verba mediea geminatae, cf. Nöldeke, Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar], § 178 B.

242 On the attributive use of the active participle, see Nöldeke, Syr. Gramm., § 282, par. 2: لحم (nitra yaqitiš) “a burning fire,” several times in Daniel 3; on the nominal use of the participles: §§ 281, 282; the Thes. (I, 1621) provides a further example in this regard with مک (yaqitā) (1) fomes, ligna quibus ignis accenditur, (al-hattāb) (firewood), for which مان (‘al) (on, above) additionally cites the Koranic وق (waqád) (firewood, fuel). The Thes. documents ل / ab as a verb (I 1168): (gumret habēn mench) carbones succens sunt ab eo (coals blazed up out of him), 2 Sam. 22:9, Ps. 13:9; and additionally as a substantive (1170): (habénta) quidcumque facile accenditur, quisquiliae, sarmentum (anything easily inflammable, hay, brushwood), accompanied by further examples.

243 Yet what Carl Brockelmann calls “the direction-pointing la,” as discussed in his Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen [Outline of the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages] II, Berlin, 1913 (pt. Hildesheim, 1961), 377, § 242, has in reality the same function. This appears clearly from the example quoted there: takabbas ḫughibih meaning (he) “fell on his face.” That this la- is a reduced form of على / ‘al / i’d > ل / la (not li-) will be explained in a forthcoming publication.
the altar for the burnt offering) and he (Abraham) had bound him (his son) to become (as) a burnt offering. (we called to him: Abraham!) ..."

Yet as reasonable as this reading may appear, it has two arguments against it: (a) the prototype of the Biblical account (Gen 22:9), according to which Abraham bound his son and laid him on the firewood, and (b) the circumstance that, at least until now, the Syro-Aramaic root سيم (slm), except in Mannâ, does not appear to have occurred anywhere else in Syro-Aramaic literature. Thus, as things stand, preference must be given to the first reading.

Finally, a point should be made about a further detail in the last verse. The borrowed Arabic particle إن / an (properly إِنَّ / ēn, from Old Aramaic ṣan / hēn > ṣen / ēn, originally, among other things, a demonstrative pronoun) used so frequently in the Koran to introduce direct speech (إن يأباهُم / an yâ ḫirâhm) is nothing other than the rough translation of the corresponding Syro-Aramaic particle ṣ / d, which also has this function.245 As a Syriacism, this use of the particle إن / an proper to the Koran has never really been absorbed into the Arabic language, even though it was employed in later classical Arabic literature in imitation of the Koran, and this, probably also for the reason that, because unusual, it was considered particularly classical.246

*Sura 12:15*

Moreover, another apodosis introduced by the conjunction و / wa (and) occurs in the following temporal sentence from Sura 12:15:

فلما ذهبوا به وجمعوا أن يجلووه في غيب الصدح وأوحيت اله نلتبنتمه باسمه هذا وهم لشعون


246 Cf. C. Brockelmann, *Arabische Grammatik* [Aramic Grammar] § 147, note 2 (184). However, Brockelmann refers, in the case of the function of إن / an to introduce the direct question in classical Arabic, to no dependence whatsoever on Syro-Aramaic.
Confused by the ٖ/ wa (and), our Koran translators are unable to comprehend the syntactical scheme of this temporal sentence made up of a protasis and an apodosis and try in different ways to find a solution:

Bell (I 219) fails to see the apodosis and suspects a gap in the text: "So when they had taken him away, and agreed to place him in the bottom of the cistern ... ... and We suggested to him the thought: 'Thou wilt certainly tell them of this affair of theirs, when they are not aware.'"

Paret (191) comes up with the apodosis and puts it in parentheses: "Als sie ihn dann mitgenommen hatten und übereingekommen waren, ihn auf den Grund der Zisterne zu tun (war es um ihn geschehen). Und wir gaben ihm ein: 'Du wirst ihnen (später) über das, was sie da getan haben (W: über diese ihre Angelegenheit) Kunde geben, ohne daß sie (es) merken (daß du selber zu ihnen sprichst).'"

Blachère (260) shifts the apodosis to Verse 16 and reads three protases in front of it: "Quand ils eurent emmené Joseph et furent tombés d'accord pour le jeter dans les profondeurs d'un certain puits, [quand] Nous eûmes révélé [a Joseph pour le consoler]; 'Tu leur rediras, sans qu'ils le pressentent, leur actuel méfait!', 16 [quand] ils furent revenus le soir à leur père, en pleurant, ils s'écrièrent..."

Here our Koran translators seem to have overlooked Tabart, since he has recognized that in this temporal sentence a ٖ/ wa introduces the apodosis, although he places the latter too early. In his opinion the sentence should be read:

"Now when they had taken him with them, they came to an agreement to let him down into the depths of the cistern. And we gave in him: 'Truly, you will, without their noticing it, proclaim them this, their affair.'" 248

One could accept this reading if the verse had not been cut unnecessarily into two sentences as a result. Yet the unity of the sentence is preserved if one places, as follows, the apodosis in the last part of the sentence (which Nöldeke,249 however, overlooked):

"Now when they had taken him with them and together decided to let him down into the depths (or into the darkness) of the cistern, we gave in him: 'You'll see, you will, without their noticing it, proclaim them this their conspiracy.'"

The Arabic expression اَجْمِعْ (āğma‘a) in the meaning "to agree, to agree on something" has become so common in Arabic that no one would think of questioning its Arabic origin. If one compares it, however, with the lexically equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression دَجَعْ (dajatu) (to meet) in its reflexive form دَجَعُضْ (dajatōt), it becomes clear from the meaning documented in the Thes. (I 1171) under (1) convenit (to come together; to come to an agreement; to decide together) and under (2) conclusus est (to be decided, to come to the conclusion)250 that Arabic اَجْمِعْ (āğma‘a) in this specific sense is a loan formation from the lexically equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression. This would be a further example of our case (l) (see page 24 above).

An interpretation of the expression غَيِّبَتَ (gayabat) is lacking in Tabart (XII 160). The meaning assumed by Bell and Paret, "bottom" (of the cistern), corresponds to that advocated – without any further explanation – by the Lišān (I 655b). The meaning "profondeurs" (depths), as Blachère has in part correctly conjectured (but without justifying this philologically), corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic حَدِصَ (‘ubbāt), evi-

247 However, under note 11a Paret makes a correct assumption: "Or, 'to put him onto the bottom of the cistern, we gave him in.'"

248 Cf. Tabart XII 160.

249 Th. Nöldeke, Neue Beiträge [New Essays] 18 (penultimate paragraph). It is astonishing that Nöldeke here saw no connection with his remark, cited above, on the function of the conjunction ٖ/ wa (and) to introduce the apodosis in Ancient Hebrew.

250 The same in C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syr. 336a (under 7): conclusum est.
dence for which we find in the following examples cited in the Thes. (II 2823) under (2): مُكِّتَفٌ (عَبَةٌ تَحْتَيْةٌ عَرْقَةُ) (the lower depths of the earth); مُكِّتَفٌ (عَبَةٌ عَلِيْقَةُ) (the deep abysses); مُكِّتَفٌ (عَبَةٌ دَارِيَةٌ) abyssus inferorum (the immeasurable depths of Hell). However, because of the Koranic defective spelling, probably the Koranic as well as the variant reading of عَبَيْرُ (عَيْبَةٌ عَرْقَةُ) given by the Lisān (I 655b, ult.) correspond to the Syro-Aramaic حَجْمَةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ) (Thes. II 2824): obscuration (darkening, darkness), which would justify the pronunciation عَيْبَةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ). Also coming close to this sense is the additional nominal form حَجْمَةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ), for which the Thes. under (2) gives the expression حَجْمَةٌ مُكِّتَفِةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ مُكِّتَفِةٌ), the Syro-Aramaic can once more be of assistance. This is because عَيْبَةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ) as a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic حَجْمَةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ) is etymologically related to حَجْمَةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ) ("abyss," etc.). As to the participial adjective مُكِّتَفَةٌ (عَيْبَةٌ مُكِّتَفِةٌ), it should be noted that the Arabic sound كُلَّ (k) can correspond to the Syro-Aramaic كُلَّ (k) (cf. S. Franckel, Aaramäische Fremdwörter [Aramaic Foreign Words], xix: "Only in isolated cases does one find a كَلَلَ for hard G ... "). The etymological equivalent of the Arabic root كَفَّا (kaffa) would accordingly be the Syro-Aramaic كَفَّاةٌ (gaffa) although the Thes. cites the variants كَفَّاةٌ (gaffa) and حَجْمَةٌ (gaffa) and حَجْمَةٌ (gaffa) in the same meaning gibbus, gibbosus). Interesting here is the Arabic equivalent that the Thes. (I 765, penult.) gives for حَجْمَةٌ (gaffa): "Ar. كَفَّا (kaffa) (clausus (to close), cf. مُكِّتَفٌ (kaffa))" (Lisān IX 303b, designation for a blind person whose eyes are closed). Finally, under the variant كَفَّا (gaffa), Manān (99a) lists an Arabic equivalent (2): جَفَّاءٌ (gaffa) (close the door), and C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 110a, under Eta جَفَّاءٍ (gaffa) (clausus est (to be closed), the Arabic equivalent: "ut ar. جَفَّاءٌ (gaffa) (to close), which documents the borrowing of this no longer common Arabic expression from Syro-Aramaic (cf. Lisān IX 35b, according to a حَجْمَةٌ (gaffa) in the pilgrimage: جَفَّاءٌ (gaffa l-bāḥī) ("closed your doors"). It follows from this that حَجْمَةٌ (kaffa) and جَفَّاءٌ (gaffa) in this meaning were in all probability originally dialectically caused variants of one and the same Syro-Aramaic root, wherein the Syro-Aramaic sound كُلَّ (g) was sometimes rendered in Arabic by كُلَّ (k), thus explaining the origin of both variants in Arabic. According to this, the previously cited حَجْمَةٌ (gaffa) would, with the help of Syro-Aramaic, have the following sense: "No raiding and no fighting (any more): (from now on) the rift between you and us is closed."
here rules out the meaning قرب (qa‘r) “bottom” that was falsely conjectured by the Lisān and that in this context is only possible in the singular. On these grounds it seems justified, as proposed above, to translate في غيبت الجبل (gayhāb‘l-ğubb‘) with the intensifying plural: into the “depths” (into the abyss) or into the “darknesses” (into the dark) of the cistern.

In this connection in the case of the Syro-Aramaic root حَمَّام (lah) (in the first stem, to be ridiculous; to go under, to disappear no longer common) one should note the following Arabic equivalents that Manna (531b) cites under حَمَّام (‘ayyab) (and in part under حِجْم (‘ayyab), غيب (sahra) (to ridicule, to make fun of): (2) غيب (gayyaba), وار (‘atama) (to make invisible, to cause to disappear, to darken); (3) غيم (gayyama) (to cover with clouds, to cloud over).

From this Syro-Aramaic root two main variants, which were in all likelihood originally created dialectally, then developed in Arabic with each of them being assigned one of the two original meanings of the Syro-Aramaic expression: (a) one variant faithful to the original عاب (‘aba) غيب (‘ayyab) in the meaning of “to bear a stigma; to find fault with, to revile due to a stigma,” and (b) a second Arbaicized variant غاب (gāba) غيب (gayyaba) in the meaning of (I) “to go under, to disappear, to not be seen” and (II) “to cause to disappear, to make invisible,” from which was derived an extended Arabic secondary variant: غيب (‘ayyab) غيب (gayyhab) (which the Lisān [I 632f. / 653b] gives, respectively, as an additional root: غيب or غيب) that these last are secondary variants is evidenced by the nominal form cited in the Lisān with the meaning “dark of night, darkness,” غيب (gayyhab), whose plural form غيام (gayhāhib) (darknesses, obscurities) corresponds exactly to the Koranic غيبة الجبل (gayhāb‘l-ğubb‘) (darknesses of the cistern). In the same way, the Lisān (I 633ff., 654a ff.) quotes under each of the earlier main variants expressions that indicate their Syro-Aramaic origin. As a result of the pronunciation-based splitting of this originally single root, it was practically inevitable that the later Arabic lexicography would in part mix up the interpretation of these two variants.

253 On the expression أُمرا (‘imra‘) (in the context: There you have done something terrible), Paret’s translation [244], Paret remarks in his Commentary on the passage (318) that its interpretation is uncertain. Yet the context suggests a borrowing from the Syro-Aramaic root يم / āmar: (original meaning) to be bitter, (of persons) to feel pain, (in impersonal) to pain (cf. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 400b: 1. acerbus fuit. 2. (āmar) āmar (āmar) āmar (attā) doluit). In terms of its form, أُمرا is an unrecognizable Arabic elative (an absolute superlatives, a comparative form of the adjective) and accordingly to be read āmar and not āmra in the sense of أُمرا (‘umāra‘) (extremely upsetting, extremely shocking, scandalizing). Moreover, a homonymous elative āmra (‘umra‘) occurs in Sura 54: 46, where the final hour is characterized as “very painful” (only correspondingly translated by Blachère [566] with très amère). Under ap. āmar (‘umra) and pal. āmra (‘ummar), the Thes. (I 2200) gives a whole series of equivalents in this figurative sense: ممر، أمير، أمير، أعظم، أعظم ما أُمرا (‘umra‘) لامرأ (‘umra‘) etc. For the expression in this figurative sense the Lisān (V 167b) explains āmar (‘umra‘) verbally (what that one has said is neither bitter nor sweet). Moreover, here too the Lisān is not always able to distinguish the root borrowed from Syro-Aramaic مام (‘umra‘) (to be bitter or to feel pain) from the homonymous Arabic root مام (‘umra‘) (to go past, to pass by). An example of this is provided by the expression مَر (‘umra‘) in Sura 7:189 when it is used in reference to a woman at the beginning of her pregnancy: فمَرنا على من حمل بالغف (Bell (I 156 f.): “[S]he bore a light burden and passed on with it.” Paret (140 f.) translates: “Als er dann beigewohnt hatte, war sie auf eine leichte Weise schwanger. Dieser Zustand dauerte bei ihr eine Zeitlang an.” Finally, Blachère (199): “...elle porta [d’abord] un fardeau léger et alla sans peine.” In this, our translators follow the interpretation by Ṭabart (IX 143 f.), advocated among others by the Lisān (V 165b), for the expression مَر (‘umra‘): “she
bore it (in this easy state) for a time without complaining." Here it suffices to read murāt (passively) in the sense of murāt (tamarnarat) to arrive at the meaning cited above in Brockelmann of الماء (māa) / مرت (lāh) bch = مرت به (murrāt bīh) "she had trouble with it," where exactly the opposite is meant, namely the complaints at the beginning of pregnancy. In the case of the spelling امرأة (amāra) the made-up misreading (imra) is in the same way responsible for its misinterpretation. Here the identical expression in Surah 54:46 should have suggested the reading anmarra. A conceivable explanation for this might be that the Arabic readers, confused by the final End-1 / ل, did not want to see in the spelling امرأة an elative of their familiar adjective مَرَأة (marra) because, according to the rules of the later Arabic grammar, the elative is considered to be diptotic and to that extent cannot take a final 1 / ل in the accusative case. They seem never to have hit upon the fact that the latter could be justified due to the rhyme. That may be why they considered it preferable to devise an expression with this vocalization that did not exist in Arabic than to assume that the Koran had (in their opinion) committed a grammatical error. In the process, the fact that Tabart (XXV 284) refers to the linguistic usage of the "Arabs" and to a verse by al-Rāzī does not mean at all that the expression imra is not been misread or that it has not been used further in this misread form. The explanation that al-Imrāz (al-imrāz) is a nominal form of امرأة (anmarra), that according to Mert (lāh bch), that is, certain persons entering the linguistic usage of the Arabs, it is said of people if they lose hold of their food and grow stronger, shows precisely this that there is no connection whatsoever with our Koranic context (to say nothing of the doubtful interpretation). On the other hand, the remaining explanations: امرأة [اللد، الحب، نادر] / امرأة [يكونو، يقلب، مكرب] "you have done something monstrous and committed a reprehensible deed" as well as امرأة [نادر] / أغرب [مكرب] "you have done something repugnant" come closer to the suspected sense. Nevertheless, it remains astonishing that the Arabic commentators have not hit upon the idea of امرأة (anmarra) still quite common today in expressions like ذاق الأمر (al-amr) (he experienced, suffered something bitter), usually in the intensifying dual form ذاق الأمرين (al-amaryn) (something doubly bitter, cf., e.g., H. Wehr under امرأة / anmarra). Thus the expression امرأة (anmarra) with the Arabic cativic and the Syro-Aramaic semantic content (shocking, scandalous) offers an typical example of the combination of two linguistic components in terms of form and content. In passing, it should also be noted that the Koranic use of امرأة (اللد، الحب، نادر) (as well as elsewhere امرأة / امرأة, with and without م Gund / br, e.g., Surah 4:15,9,19,25; 60:12; 65:1) in the meaning of "to commit" is obviously derived from the Syro-Aramaic لاموم (lām) (or لاموم) (cf., Manna 45:36, 118).
(Bell I 281,78): “... I wished to damage it ...”

(Paret 245): “... Ich wollte es nun schadhaft machen ...”

(Blachère 326): “... j’ai voulu l’endommager ...”

For his part, Ṭabarṭ (XVI 1 f.) refers to Muğḥid, who explains the (general) sense of the expression with the verb occurring in Verse 71, خُرْق (harqah): “to damage (something) by ripping a hole (in it).” The sceptical question, what the use of this would have been, since in the Koran it is said of this king after all that he was taking every boat whether damaged or not, is met with the answer: This king was seizing every intact boat (كل سفينة صحيحة) as certain readings show. At the same time Ṭabarṭ refers to the alleged reading of Iba ʿMasʿūd and وكان وراءهم ملك يأخذ كل سفينة صالحة غصباً, whom, without further ado, Blachère also follows and translates: “... un roi qui, derrière eux, s’arrogeait tout bon vaisseau, comme prise [a king who, behind them, was seizing every good vessel as booty].” The fact that this dubious addition has in reality had to take the rap for the misinterpreted reading أُعَيِّنَتْ (aʾībahā) will be shown in the following.

The explanation provided by Ṭabarṭ to interpret the statement فأَرَادَتْ أُعَيِّنَتْ (I wished to “damage” it), فأَرَادَتْ أُعَيِّنَتْ (by that he made it clear that he also “damaged” it), testifies namely to an uncustumary transitive use in Arabic of the basic stem عَبَ (ʿaba), even though the Arabic lexicons, probably on the basis of this misinterpreted Koranic passage, in addition to the customary intransitive use (faulty, to have defects) also falsely list this transitive use (to make faulty). This is just one among other examples of misunderstood and distorted Koranic expressions that have been accepted into the Arabic lexicography.

The actual basis for this misunderstanding, however, is that the traditional Koranic reading أُعَيِّنَتْ (aʾībahā) leaves absolutely no room for doubt in this context about the transitive use of the root عَبُ (ʿaba), understood in Arabic. But if one imagines under it the Syro-Aramaic causative stems جَدَّتْ (ayyeh) and جَدَّتْ (aʾīḥ), it becomes clear that what is meant by the traditional Arabic reading أُعَيِّنَتْ (aʾībahā) is nothing other than the Syro-Aramaic جَدَّتْ (aʾīḥ) جَدَّتْ (اِعْيَنَتْ) جَدَّتْ (aʾīḥ). Akin to the phrase I wanted to camouflage it). Namely, under both of the causal stem Mannā (531b) gives the Arabic equivalent as, among other things, غَيْبَة, وآرَى (gāyyaba, wārā) (to cause to disappear, to make invisible). Thus, to this extent, the only thing that would have been needed to obtain the equivalent correct Arabic reading in the second causative stem غَيْبَة (gāyyibaḥā), was a dot over the ʾayn. Read in this way, أُعَيِّنَتْ (fa-arattu an uṣṣāuiḥā), the verse segment therefore acquires its real sense for the first time: “… I wanted in this way to make it invisible = to camouflage it.” As a result, the interpretation according to which Moses wanted “to make” the boat “defective” is not only linguistically and grammatically, but also objectively false.

In other words, if one asks oneself to what extent Moses wanted only to make the boat invisible or camouflage it, against the reproach that he wanted instead to allow those sitting in it to drown, this is made fairly clear to the extent that he wanted to make the boat virtually invisible from a distance for the greedily prowling king. Namely, speaking of the latter, the Koran says he was seizing every boat. The attempt to evade him by “making the boat defective” would accordingly have been in vain. From his companion’s reproach one can thus infer instead that he wanted only to sink the boat partially as camouflage so that from a distance it could no longer be identified as such. Moreover, that the boat has not been completely sunk is proven not least by the circumstance that Moses was only able to make this statement to his companion after the apparently successful weathering of this adventure.

A final comment on this verse will be accorded to the expression غَشْبُ (gašba) *(violent), referring to the king who was forcing entry to every ship. Conspicuously, the Arabic root غَشْبُ (gašba) (to force) or the corresponding reading occurs only in this passage in the Koran. All of the other comparable spellings (with personal suffixes) are based on the roots غَشْبُ (gašba) (to anger) or أُعَيِّنَتْ (aʾīḥ) (< Syro-Aramaic...
(ṣāḥib) (to be unruly, disobedient). However, a look at the other meanings of the Syro-Aramaic verb ḥāṭib (ṣāḥib) yields in addition the transitive meanings “to force, to capture,” which Mānna (557b) renders in Arabic under (2) as follows: زَمَّرُ-quarter. فَعَّلَ (alzama, aqabara, qasara, qahara, qalaba). The Thes. (II 2952) also cites equivalent expressions and other Arabic expressions from the Eastern Syrian lexicographers, with the exception of غَصَابَة (gasaba). This suggests that the spelling غَصَابَة (gasaba) is not to be read as َغَصَابَة; but — corresponding to the Syro-Aramaic expression — غَصَابَة / َغَصَابَة, although in the end this changes nothing in the sense. Namely, compared with the Arabic terms attested by the Eastern Syrian lexicographers, the reading َغَصَابَة appears to be a more recent secondary form which, though common in modern Arabic, first arose etymologically from the root غَصَابَة (gasaba) < Syro-Aramaic حُصَاب (ṣāḥib) (to wind, tie, to wrap). The root غَصَابَة (gasaba) has also been misread in the following case:

Sura 21:87

An additional, similarly misread spelling based on the Syro-Aramaic root حُصَاب (ṣāḥib) (to be disobedient, unruly) occurs in Sura 21:87: وَذَا الْقُلْوَةِ (wa-ṣāḥib n-nīn id dāhaha mughādiba). The expression has been understood by our Koran translators as follows:

(Bell I 311): “And him of the fish — when he went off at cross purposes…”

(Paret 268): “Und (weiter) dem mit dem Fisch [d.h. Jonas]. (Damals) als er zornig wegging…”

(Blachère 354): “Et [fais mention de] l’Homme au Poisson quand il s’en fut courroucé…”

The fact that Jonah did not exactly go off “in rage,” but in rebellion against Yahweh’s command, Bell may have correctly assumed from the corresponding Bible passage (Jonah 2:3), but not from the Arabic misreading غَصَابَة (mughādiba) (enraged). This he seems to have trusted just as little as the interpretation Tabart (XVII 76 ff.) gives of it according to which Jonah was not incensed at God, but rather at his own people, because it ill befit a prophet to bear his Lord a grudge. But Bell could have justified his legitimate suspicion by the adequate Syro-Aramaic reading حُصَاب (m-ṣāḥib), which results in the like-meaning Arabic مَغْصُوبَة (muṣiyah) “refusing to comply with, disliking, rebellious.”

This relatively simple example precisely illustrates the inhibitions of Western Koran scholars to question in any way, let alone to correct, the traditional canonical reading of the Koran, even if they occasionally see themselves forced, out of objective considerations, to interpret the Koranic expression tacitly in a way that deviates from its actual Arabic meaning.

The following may serve to exemplify the nuances or shades of meaning of a term in general usage.

Sura 12:15

وَاجْعَلاَوْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ غَيْبَتِ الْجَبَّ رَبَّكَ

What we are looking for is the appropriate nuance for the Arabic expression جَالَة (ga‘ala) (here: to do, to place or put somewhere) with regard to the cistern whose abyss (or gloom) Joseph has been “done” into by his brothers (Paret). Once more this can be established via the lexically equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression. If we assume, among other possibilities, that this is َسَامُ (sām), Mānna (483b) then gives for this as the Arabic original meaning جَالَة (ga‘ala) (to do, to place or put somewhere), قَرَبَ (qa‘iba) (to lay, to place somewhere), and under (11): قَرُبَ (qa‘iba), دَفَنَ (da‘anā) (to bury, to inter), where what is actually meant is “to lay, to lower into the grave.”255 In light of the Biblical account according to which the majority of his brothers are of a mind to kill Joseph, it appears more reasonable to carry over precisely this meaning to the cistern Joseph was “let down” or “deposited” into (as into a grave).256

255 Similarly in the Thes. II 2557 under (1): terrae mandavit cadaver, sepellivit.
256 The comparison is not unfounded when one considers the other meanings of جَابِثُ (gubbāh), which Mānna (87a) gives in Arabic as follows: (2) قَرَبَ (qa‘iba)
Finally, in this context a more meaningful sense is expected for the expression أمَّرُهُمْ (amrīhīm) (according to the Arabic understanding, their “affair”) than Paret, for example, gives it. Although Blachère with “méfait” (monstrous crime, outrage) is closest, he again does not provide a more detailed justification for his choice. Now, although in modern Arabic the original Arabic stem أمرُ (amr) is restricted solely to the meaning “to command,” whereas its nominal form أمرُ (amr) can mean both “command” and analogous derivatives like “matter, affair,” its extended verbal stems, such as the sixth تَأَمَّرَ (ta’amara) “to talk something out, to arrange something together (conspiratively),” recall the Aramaic origin אוֹמָר (emar) or the Syro-Aramaic אֲמָרַה (emara) “to say, to speak.” That the Koran, however, with the nominal form أمرُ (amr) can mean not only “command” or “matter, affair,” but also “conspiracy, plot,” in the sense of the modern Arabic nominal form مَأْوَرَة (mawarah) is documented by the following sentence from Verse 102 of our Sura: وما كنت لديهم آث محمد وهم يمرون: راحذلا (wa, roughly paraphrased, but more or less correctly, by Paret (199): “And you were not with them (i.e., Joseph’s brothers) when they put together and hatched plots.”

However, understood exactly it reads: “For you were not there (literally: with them) when they agreed on their plot (مَأْوَرَة) (وهم يمرون: راحذلا) and so doing behaved in an underhanded manner (ومرون: راحذلا).” To this extent أمرُ (amr) in the sense of مَأْوَرَة (mawarah) (conspiracy, plot) corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic synonym מָלִלָה (mellilah), which the Thes. (II 2111) documents among other things with the meaning conspiratio (4): collusion, plot. Thus, in order to do justice to each of the meanings of the Koranic terms أمرُ (amr) (Arabic: command, affair), كلمة (kalima) (word), and even قول (qawil) (speaking, or its contents: words) and their derivatives, the different semantic contents of the Syro-Aramaic synonyms מָלִילָה (mellila) (the infinitive or nominal form of the verbal root ℰמר, “to say, to speak”), מְלַלֵּה (mellila) (original meaning: word, substantive of the root מָלַל / mellal, “to speak”) and מַלְל (qallah) (voice, words) must absolutely be taken into account.

It is astonishing that all three Koran translators miss the direct reference in this verse to Verse 15, even though Verse 102 with its أعْمِوا أَمَرُهُمْ (agma it amrahum) (they resolved together, they agreed upon their plot) again takes up exactly the same expressions occurring in Verse 15. Thus the grounds are provided for rendering the expression مَأْوَرَةً (mawarah) here with “you’ll see, you will proclaim to them this their conspiracy.”

Additional Apodosis Introduced by ﴿وَ﴾ (and)

Sura 2:259

Beyond this syntactical particularity this verse segment offers a series of lexically interesting expressions, which, though neither questioned by TABARI nor by our Koran translators in any way, should nonetheless be rethought. In terms of content, it is a question of a man who does not believe in resurrection. To prove its existence to him, God has him die. After a hundred years have passed, He awakens him again and asks him how long he thinks he has been dead. “One day or just a fraction of a day,” the man answers. “It was all of a hundred years,” God replies, and continues:

فَانظَر إلى طعامك وشرابك لم يتبينه وانظر إلى جماعك 
وتجعلك إيا للناس وأنظر إلى العظام كيف تنشيرا ثم تكشرها لحما

This verse segment has been understood by our Koran translators as follows:

(Bell I 38, 261): “[L]ook at thy food and drink; it has not become stale; and look at thy ass – in order that We may make thee a sign to the people – and look at the bones how we shall make them stand up and clothe them with flesh.”

(Paret 38): “Sieh auf dein Essen und dein Getränk (das du vor dem Einschlafen bei dir hattest)! Es ist (trotz der hundert Jahre) nicht verdorben [Note: W: alt (und schlecht) geworden]. Und sieh auf deinen Esel! (Auch er hat sich nicht verändert.) (Wir haben dieses Wunder) auch (deshalb bewirkt) um dich zu einem Zei-
chen für die Menschen zu machen. Sich nun auf die Gebeine (dieser verödeten Stadt?), wie wir sie sich erheben lassen und sie hierauf mit Fleisch bekleiden!"

(Blachère 70): "Regarde ta nourriture et ta boisson! Elles ne sont point gâtées. Regarde ton âne! Nous allons faire certes de toi un signe pour les hommes. Regarde ces ossements comment Nous les resuscitons et les revêtons de chair!"

This lexically and syntactically misunderstood verse segment will be examined in further detail in the following.

1. Arabic طعام (tā'am) (nourishment, food) is etymologically identical with Syro-Aramaic פֵּדֶת (pēdēt) (fēm) (to eat, to taste) is not in common use (in the first verbal stem) in modern Arabic, but occurs four times in the Koran in the former meaning (to eat) (Sura 5:93; 6:138,145; 33:53), and once in the latter (to taste, to sip, said of water) (Sura 2:249).

One cannot see, however, why God first of all points out to the man who has been restored to life that his food and drink have not gone bad, even though Blachère sees in this a parallel to the legend he cites. Namely, one must pay attention to the essential difference between 'Abed-Melek, who in said legend has only been asleep, and the man restored to life who is spoken of in our Koran passage. This particular circumstance makes it seem difficult to comprehend the connection with eating and drinking, as well as with the donkey. Now, although from the point of view of Arabic such elementary terms as eating, drinking and the donkey allow no leeway at all for alternative interpretations, which is also why our Koran translators have not doubted them in the least, we should still try with the help of a Syro-Aramaic reading to arrive at a more plausible sense.

In fact, according to the Thes. (I 1497), Syro-Aramaic פֵּדֶת (pēdēt) also has the meaning (y) mens (understanding). 257 Nearer to

257 The same can be found in W. Gesenius, Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch (Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary) (Berlin, Göttingen, Heidelberg, 1959) 278a: "adeon (tā'am) – 2. Feeling and accordingly intelligence, hand here, however, is the variant פֵּדֶך (pēdek), for which the Thes. (I 1497) gives the meaning (3) qualitas (condition), and Mannā (291a) (šān, amr, ḫal, bāšṣa) (condition, matter, state, property).

2. This latter meaning is fitting as a synonym for the next expression שַׁד (šād), which, transcribed in Syro-Aramaic without the secondary ꜱ, reads שַׁד (šād) and according to the Thes. (II 4322) results in the following meanings: (1) res, negotium, causa, quod attinet ad (state of affairs, circumstance, relationship, that which affects one). Mannā (819a) gives for שַׁד (šād) under (3) the same Arabic synonyms as above: שַׁד (amr, ša'n) (matter, condition, that which affects one).

3. That we are dealing in the case of these two synonyms with one

الضمير (lām yatassana). The fact that this verb is derived from Syro-Aramaic שָׁד (šād), שָׁד (estēn) (to change, to alter), 258 explains the uncertainty of the Arabic commentators in interpreting it. For instance, in Ṭabarî (III 37 ult.) it is said that during the editing of the Koran, in answer to a question by Zayd ibn Ṭābit as to whether one should write the verb שָׁד (šād) as לְמ יתסנה (lām yatassana) or לְמ יתסנה (lām yatassannal), ʿUmmān had ordered the latter spelling with the final ה. Whence the folk-etymological explanation that this is a denominative of שָׁד (šād) (year) (> אספה / asaha) which would mean as much as “to alter over the years.” 259 With the former spelling the verb is explained with לְמ יתסנה (lām yutzn) (it is not rotted) (loc. cit. 38 f.). Instead of “Look at your food and drink! It has (despite the hundred years) not gone bad (literally: has not become old (and bad))” (Paret), the following understanding results for this part of the verse according to the Syro-Aramaic reading:

258 Cf. Thes. II 4233, 4236: mutatus est. Mannā (802b) تَغَيَّرَ تَبَکُل: (tagayyara, ta-badalla).

259 Here, however, according to the Aramaic orthography, the final h simply marks the short vowel ā.
“Look at your condition (i.e.: how you are constituted) and your (overall) state: it has not changed!”

4. As for the spelling حمار (himārika), it must first be noted that it could not be read by Arabic readers as anything but “donkey” since (except for a denominative from the elative حمار / abmar “red”) that is the only verbal root in Arabic. In Syro-Aramaic, on the other hand, there is the root جمار (gmar) with the original meaning “to be perfect, to be complete” and further derivatives. The only word borrowed from this in Arabic is the noun حمر, حمرة “glow,” probably insofar as this denotes perfectly or completely glowing coal. In the Koranic context, however, the reading جمارك (gmarรก) offers itself as the context of Syro-Aramaic جمارك (gmarك) “your perfection or completeness” (referring to the man who has been restored to life), particularly since there is absolutely no explanation here for this abruptly appearing donkey. It is simply astounding that in the previous research on the Koran nobody has ever wondered about this donkey.

The explanation for it in Tabari (III 40) is that God said to the man: Look at your dead donkey whose bones were rotted and behold how we have stood it up again and covered it with flesh. Then God caused a wind to come up and collect the donkey’s bones, which had been carried away by birds and animals of prey and were lying scattered about. The man then beheld how the bones fitted themselves together piece by piece and assembled themselves into a donkey skeleton. Then this was provided by God with flesh and blood so that a living donkey was standing there with flesh and blood, but still without a soul. An angel then came along and blew into the donkey’s nostrils. And, behold, the donkey began to bray. Amazed, the man exclaimed: “Truly, God is capable of everything!”

Concerning this passage (56), Paret has already referred in his Kommentar [Commentary] to the allusion to Ezekiel 37 (1-10). For his part, Blachère refers (69 f.) to a widespread legend especially popular in Jewish-Christian literature, and which is reminiscent of the Seven Sleepers. According to the Ethiopic version of the Book of Baruch, ‘Abed-Melek had slept for 66 years and, upon awakening after the Captivity, had found Jerusalem rebuilt. Moreover, through a miracle his bread and his figs were as fresh as they had been the day before he fell asleep.

Meanwhile, the legend told about the donkey in Tabari is in contradiction with the Koranic context insofar as it is said explicitly: “Let me make you an example for the people,” not the donkey. From this it follows that the subsequent description of the resurrection in the Koranic text refers unequivocally to the man. This is all the more so the case because there is no talk anywhere in the Bible about animals also being resurrected. The following analysis may thus serve to provide us with another understanding of this passage.

Therefore, the subsequent وامظ الى حمارك does not say, “And look at your donkey!” (Paret), but logically:

“Behold your perfection (or completeness) (i.e.: how perfect, how complete you are)”

To instruct the other people who will one day be resurrected, it is graphically depicted to the resurrected man in retrospect, on his example, how God will proceed in the restoration of the resurrected people. Hence this description does not refer to the abruptly appearing donkey, of which it cannot at all be a question here. In the process, the subsequent sentence is composed syntactically of a protasis and an apodosis that is introduced by a (superfluous) و wa (and):

“And therewith we make you an example for the people, [and] behold how we restore your bones and cover them anew with flesh.”

5. In reading ننشز (namšuzu) the dot of the ز / z has been falsely placed, which is all the more surprising since the verb ن(identifier) (nasara) occurs several times in the Koran in connection with resurrection (for example, in Suras 21:21; 25:3:40; 35:9; 44:35; 67:15; 80:22). The reason must be that the verb here refers explicitly to the bones. Whence, also, the misinterpretation ascribed to it: “to cause to rise up.”260 This circumstance

260 This misinterpretation has made its way into the Arabic lexicography. Thus, H. Wehr, for example (loc. cit.) explains both أنشز (anšazu) and أنشر (anšara) with
speaks in favor of a loan translation from Syro-Aramaic υἱοὶ (pšaḥ), whose original meaning Mannā (618a) gives in Arabic as بسط فرش نشر (basāta, faraša, našara) (to unfold, to reach out, to spread out), as well as the following figurative senses under (4): سوئي عدل قومي صلاح (sawwa, addala, gawwama, aslah) (to make straight, to rectify, to straighten, to restore). From the Koranic context it is now clear that the last meaning is what is meant.

What is interesting in this connection are the synonyms سوئي (sawwa), which the Koran uses several times, in addition to خلق (jalaqa) (to create), in the sense of “to make,” and عدل (addala) (to make straight), which occurs in Sura 82:7 (الذي خلقك فسألك فجعلك) (who created you, formed you and made you straight). It is now clear from the loan translation that what is meant by the Koranic expression نشر (našara) is not per se “to raise from the dead,” but, with reference to Syro-Aramaic υἱοὶ (pšaḥ), “to restore.” Also corresponding to this idea of the renewed creation of man on the day of resurrection is the Koranic formula, repeated in different variations, as for example in Sura 10:4, “He created first time and repeated it anew."

It becomes clear from this example of case (f) (page 24),
(a) that a genuinely Arabic expression has been misread because the Arabic philologists were unable to recognize its meaning in the Koranic context;
(b) that its rectification is only possible after identifying, on the basis of the context, the Syro-Aramaic expression of which it is apparently a loan translation;
(c) that its more exact meaning can be subsequently determined thanks to the semantics of the lexically equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression.

6. Finally, the Arabic adverb ثم (tumma) is not to be understood here in the normal sense of “thereupon, afterwards.” Following Syro-Aramaic ثم (tham), the meaning “anew” is more appropriate to the context.

From this philological discussion the following syntactic and lexical understanding results according to the Syro-Aramaic reading for the verse segment from Sura 2:259 cited above:

“Yet behold your condition (i.e.: how you are constituted) and your (overall) state: it has not changed. Behold your perfection (i.e.: how complete you are)! And therewith we make you an example262 for the people, [and] behold how we restore your bones and cover them anew with flesh!“

Period Construction

Sura 11:116-117

(116) فلولا كان من اللقون من قبلكم اولو بقية ينحون عن العصاة في الأرض ان قلتم أحدكم منهم ولحق الذين ظلموا ما أشفقو فيهم وكنا يوم الدين (117) وما كان ربك ليهلك القرى بظلمها وأهلها مصلحون

Not alone the failure to appreciate the true function of the extrinsically “superfluous” conjunction ژ وا (and) has had as a result that the subsequent apodosis has been overlooked and that the syntactical structure of these two connected verses, Verses 116 and 117 of Sura 11, has been thus totally distorted by our Koran translators and, as a consequence, nonsensically rendered as follows:

(again). Mannā (831b): ثم ، أيضًا : ثانياً (pumma, aydan, taniyatan) (afterwards, also, once more / again). That the Koranic ثم (misread as tumma) is not Arabic at all, but a defective spelling of the secondary Eastern Syriac dialectal form ثم (tum < Syro-Aramaic tũh), as is attested in Mandae (cf. E.S. Drower, R. Macuch, A Mandaeic Dictionary, Oxford 1963, p. 483a: "tum 1 [Talm 2, Syr. thu, Ar. ثم]", then, after that, MG xxxiii n. 1, 49:ult., 204:13, 429:9-15”), will be discussed (with other Koranic particles) in a forthcoming study.

262 In the case of the Koranic لیا (ayya), as a loan word from Syro-Aramaic ژ لیا (ayya), the Syro-Aramaic meaning should regularly be taken into account, depending on the context. In this case, Mannā (46a) gives it under (8) in Arabic: خیرة (tbra) (example, instance, model).
(Bell 1216b): 118. "If only there had been of the generations before you men of perseverance restraining from corruption in the land — except a few of those whom We rescued from amongst them —; but those who have done wrong have followed that in which they luxuriated, and have become sinners. 119. Thy Lord was not one to destroy the towns wrongously, their peoples being upright livers."

(Paret 189): 116: “Warum gab es denn unter den Generationen vor euch nicht Leute (begabt) mit (moralischer) Stärke (?) [Note: Oder: mit einem trefflichen Charakter (['uṭūth battīyatā)], die dem Unheil auf der Erde Einhalt gebot, — abgesehen von (einigen) wenigen von ihnen, die wir erretteten [Note: Oder: abgesehen von (einigen) wenigen, (Leuten) die wir vor ihnen (d.h. ihren ständig Zeitgenossen) erretteten(?)]? Diejenigen, die frevelten (— und das war die überwiegende Mehrzahl —) folgten dem Wohlbefinden, das ihnen zugefallen war (mā utrīth Allāh), und waren stündig. 117: Dein Herr konnte die Städte unmöglich zu Unrecht zugrunde geben lassen, während ihre Bewohner taten, was recht ist (wa-ahlaṭa maslahān)."

(Blachère 257): 118/116 "Parmi les générations qui furent avant vous, pourquoi les gens de piété qui interdirent le scandale sur la terre et que Nous sauvâmes, ne furent-ils que peu nombreux, alors que les Injustes suivirent le luxe où ils vivaient et furent coupables? 119/117 Ton Seigneur n’était pas capable de faire injustement périr ces cités alors que leurs habitants pratiquaient la sainété."

The following discussion will show in the case of the double verse cited above that we are dealing with a previously unrecognized hypothetical conditional sentence, the first part of which (Verse 116) forms the protasis and the second part (Verse 117) the apodosis. Two elements have essentially led our Koran translators to tear apart the syntactical unity of this sentence by carving it up into either two (Blachère) or three sentences (Bell and Paret):

(a) The determining factor is the misinterpretation of the Arabic particle َلا لو (law-lā), which Paret and Blachère see as an interrogative particle, whereas Bell sees in it an optative particle and, in so doing, is following Ṭabart (XII 138), who indeed explains لو ل (law-lā) with لجا (hallā) (oh, if only). Right from the start, however, in both cases, this erroneous assumption excludes an apodosis. As to the former case, it is astonishing first of all that one could take لو ل (law-lā) to be an interrogative particle at all. Bergsträsser’s view263 that, insofar as it does not have the meaning “if not” it corresponds to the German “warum nicht” (English “why not”) in a rhetorical question, is misleading to the extent that thus only an optative clause introduced by لو ل (law-lā) (e.g., لو ل law-lā گا جاء “if he had only come!”) can also be formulated as a rhetorical question (“Why in the world didn’t he come?”). What is needed for this, however, is not the optative particle لو ل (law-lā), but only the interrogative particle لا لم (lj-mā) or لم لم لم (li-mādā). That it is even possible according to Ibn Hisām to consider لو ل (law-lā) as a genuine interrogative particle must be based on a misinterpretation of the Koranic use of this particle. This is confirmed, moreover, by Bergsträsser’s remark that such a use is unknown in the non-Koranic language, which is why one substituted hallā for it in the exegesis of the Koran. With this exclamation particle, however, the intention was precisely to make clear the meaning of لو ل (law-lā) as an optative particle and not as an interrogative particle. From this it becomes clear that all of the Koran passages in which لو ل (law-lā) was taken to be an interrogative particle,264 and in which the meaning was thus partially distorted, should be revised.


However, the lack of this meaning in both post-Koranic Arabic literature and vernacular Arabic suggests that the explanation quoted in the Lisān is actually made up. Thus, the assumption is more likely that the later points set on both ر/ر are superfluous and that the original spelling was استكرأ / istafir: “put to flight” (i.e., avert, turn away from me).

(b) In contrast to Bergsträsser, Bell initially grasps ل و (law-lā) correctly as an optative particle in the meaning of “if only.” In the process, this Koranic usage also corresponds to that of current Arabic dialects of the Near East where the attached particle ل (lā), which is unstressed in its pronunciation, is perceived as a pure filler particle without further meaning. To this extent an optative clause introduced by the particle ل و (law-lā) (actually law-lā) makes an apodosis superfluous. Bell also translates Verse 116 accordingly.

But the following exception particle connected with ل (illā) (“except” or after a negation “only”) suggests here a negative use of ل و (law-lā), even if Bergsträsser in considering this passage (loc. cit., note 2) thinks that this may have been “invented” because of the illā or may perhaps even be based on the “misunderstanding” that the sentence would for that reason have a negative sense. This is because the Arabic philologists that Bergsträsser cites certainly did not have in mind the equivalent Syro-Aramaic usage of أΛ αλκ (ellī lā) (“if not”).265 However, if we take this Syro-Aramaic understanding as a basis, Arabic ل (law-lā) is to be read separately as law lā and understood as a hypothetical conditional particle with negation. From that point of view ل (law-lā)

265 Cf. Thes. I 198: أΛ αλκ (ellī lā) (also written together), si non, nisi, which is compared, citing the Syrian lexicographers, with the Arabic ل و (law-lā) or ل (law-lā an). For the expression of a condition presented as impossible by أΛ αλκ (ellī lā) or أΛ αλκ (ellī lā), see further Noldeke, Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar] § 375.
kāna) should be understood to mean (law lam yakun) (had there not been). From this it becomes clear that what is being introduced with it is in fact a hypothetical conditional clause which by definition requires an apodosis.

(c) This apodosis in Verse 117 is perhaps not accidentally introduced by the particle ʿ/ wa (“and”). Namely, this is to be distinguished from the superfluous particle before the apodosis of a temporal sentence insofar as Mannā (182b) cites as the eighth function of the equivalent Syro-Aramaic conjunction ʿ/ w (li-taqwiyyat al-māʿa) “for meaning intensification, emphasis.” It would to this extent correspond to the Arabic intensification particle ʿ/ la-, which among other things serves to introduce the apodosis of a hypothetical conditional sentence. Thus the ʿ/ lamā (wa-mā kāna) introducing the apodosis in Verse 117 is to be understood in Arabic in the meaning lamā (la-mā kāna) (then [would have] not).

Once one has stopped to think about the Syro-Aramaic meaning of the two introductory particles, ʿ/ lamā (law ʿal) (if not) in the protasis and ʿ/ wa-mā (in the sense of lamā (la-mā) (then...not) in the apodosis, one can, as follows, reconstruct the aforementioned double verse as a hypothetical conditional sentence:

116: “If among the generations before you there had not only been few virtuous (people) – some of whom we saved – to stand up to the evil on the earth, so that those who committed wicked deeds continued in their excesses” and remained sinners, 117:

268. The consecutive meaning of the Syro-Aramaic conjunction ʿ/ wa (and) in the sense of “so that” is documented by Mannā (182b) under ʿama (sākisra) as follows: ʿamā kūn (law yuʿqrân hālān wa-saw (a)nāša w-tāb) (the rise in prices was such that the people became bold and entered). 267 Literally: “to follow up on that wherein they were committing excesses.” 268 In this context the Arabic verb kāna (to be) is to be understood with the meaning of its Syro-Aramaic equivalent ṣwa (law to be), that among other things means (as in English) to remain, to stay (cf. C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum, 173a: 1. fuit (to be), 2. duravit (to remain, stay, persist); cf. also

269 your lord would not have come to destroy the cities (had) their inhabitants (been) righteous.”

Through the syntactical elucidation of this double verse the allusion becomes clear to the Biblical account in which it ensues from a dialogue between Yahweh and an Abraham begging for mercy that there were not even ten righteous people to be found in Sodom (Gen. 18:23-32), which is why Yahweh let brimstone and fire rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed these cities (Gen. 19:24-25), but spared Lot and his family (Gen. 19:16,29).

Mannā 170b: ṣwā kāna (ḥwā l-wāt ḫlā) (makatā, ʾaqṭna ʾinda fāln) (to remain, to stay with someone).

269 On the function of the Syro-Aramaic ʿ/ wa (and) before the apodosis, Nöldeke explains in his Syrischen Grammatik [Syriac Grammar] § 339: The conjunction ʿ/ does not serve to introduce the apodosis (like the German “so,” etc.). Wherever it seems like that in the Old Testament, it is a literal translation of the Hebrew י; in other passages it has occurred as a result of textual corruption. Now, however, ʿ/ seems to have acquired the entire scope of meaning of the Greek καὶ and is often “also,” where it then alternates with ἐν or ἀπὸ; such a ʿ/ “also” can appear in all positions of the sentence, therefore also at the beginning of the apodosis.

In addition to this, the Koranic usage of ʿ/ wa to introduce the apodosis can be explained in particular as an intensifying particle in connection with the negative particle ʿ/ mā (wa-mā kāna rabbukā), although not exactly in an exclusive meaning, as Nöldeke then explains it in cases like ṣwā mā (w-lā had) (Arabic ʿ/ wa-lā had “not even one” and ṣwā mā (w-lā meddem) (Arabic ʿ/ wa-lā say) “nothing at all.”

270 As a participial clause this subordinate final clause is not defined in more detail in terms of time; literally it reads “and (= while) their inhabitants righteous.” Paret and Blachère nonsensically translate it in the indicative since they have not grasped the hypothetical context of the entire sentence construction. To this extent, however, it should accordingly be understood as subjunctive. What Nöldeke said loc. cit. § 375 (300, second paragraph) about ṣwāʾ (ellt) also applies here:

“Sometimes beyond the ṣwāʾ, which is in itself clear, there is no other indication of the unreal at all and that is followed by a clause with the imperfect, the participle or a nominal clause;...”
With this distortedly rendered hypothetical conditional sentence previously unrecognized by Western Koran scholars, the Koran offers us at the same time a perfect example of a syntactically demanding sentence composition like those Nölske sketches in his Syrischen Grammatik [Syriac Grammar] under the chapter heading “Period Construction: Crossing Clauses and Other Irregularities” in § 378:

“Grounded in the make-up of their language, the Syrians’ tendency to construct longer periods is in no small way encouraged by the model of the Greek style. Such periods arise through the coordination and subordination of clauses of the discussed types or of types quite similar to them. Here there is an unlimited abundance of possible ways in which to combine the familiar elements in individual cases. § 379. The freedom of the word order in the clause is in part also carried over into the arrangement of the clauses serving as the component parts of the period. For stronger emphasis the governed clause is sometimes placed far before the governing clause, and not infrequently veritable crossing clauses occur.”

With this in mind, the underlined expressions in the previously cited double verse still need to be individually examined.

On the Meaning of بقية (baqiyā)

Koran scholars have puzzled a great deal over the Koranic expression أولوا بقية (tll bāqiyā) (virtuous [people]). Tabart (XII 138), starting from the Arabic meaning of بقية (baqiyā) (rest, what is left), explains the expression succinctly with, ذو بقية من الفهم والعقل, “such as have (so much) insight and understanding left over [to spare, i.e. they have more than they need]” that they recognize what an advantage they have as believers in God, and what a disadvantage they have as unbelievers. In his Kommentar [Commentary] on this passage Paret refers to his note on Sura 2:248, and there to baqiyā in Sura 11:86 and 116 (53):

“Thus in both cases baqiyā appears to mean a quality or power that in some way works against disaster.”

Looking more closely at Verse 2:248, in which it is said of the Ark of the Covenant that it is equipped with “saktna” and “baqiyā” (not translated in Paret’s Übersetzung [Translation] 36), he continues:

“Accordingly one can also interpret the expression in the present verse as such a quality possessed, together with saktna, by the Ark of the Covenant. But the subsequent minmā taraka... (“of which something ... has been left”) does not specifically refer to baqiyā, but generally to the Ark and its contents. See R. Paret, “Die Bedeutung des Wortes baqiyā im Koran [The Meaning of the Word baqiyā in the Koran]” (Attestamentliche Studien, Friedrich Nötscher zum sechzigsten Geburtstag [Old Testament Studies, Festschrift for Friedrich Nötscher on His Sixtieth Birthday], Bonn 1950, pp. 168-171); A. Spitaler, “Was bedeutet baqiyā im Koran? [What Does baqiyā Mean in the Koran?]” (Westöstliche Abhandlungen, Rudolf Tschudi zum siebzigsten Geburtstag [West-to-East Monographs, Festschrift for Rudolf Tschudi on his Seventieth Birthday], Wiesbaden 1954, pp. 137-146). Spitaler translates baqiyā in 2:248, depending on one’s interpretation of the passage, either with “favor,” “goodness” or simply with “remains or relics”.

The guessing game over the explanation of this expression can in the meantime be put to an end by the Syro-Aramaic. Following our proven method we need only look for the Syro-Aramaic lexical equivalent. This we find in the erbal root يَقِيّد (iqr), whose original meaning the Eastern Syrian lexicographer Mannā (320b) gives in Arabic as follows: فضل يقيني (faslī yāqinī) (to be left, to remain as rest). With that, however, the Arabic expression بقية (baqiyā) is still not explained. To determine the real sense, the further semantic meanings of the Syro-Aramaic verbal root must then be examined. Among these Mannā gives us under (4) the following Arabic meaning: فضل كن فاضلا (faslū kān fādila) (virtuous, to be excellent). And corresponding to these Mannā
(321a) gives us further under (2) the Arabic meaning of the Syro-Aramaic nominal forms禧禧禧禧 (m-yattārāt) and禧禧禧禧 (m-yattārāt): فائدة, فائدة (faḍīla, basāna) (virtue, excellence). In Arabic, the expression فائدة, a lexical borrowing from Syro-Aramaic, has been taken up into the language in the figurative sense of "virtue, excellence," but not the synonymous expression, بقية (baqīya), which is only understood in its concrete sense of "rest."

It is clear from the Koranic context, however, that with بقية (baqīya) ("rest") the Koran, following the Syro-Aramaic semantics, really means فائدة (faḍīla) (virtue). As a result, our Koranic expression أولاً فائدة (أولاً baqīya) (= أولاً فائدة) would be explained as "[people] with virtue = virtuous [people]."

On the Meaning of أترف (utrīfī)

Our Koran translators have for the most part correctly translated the verb أترف (utrīfī) (from Verse 116). Referring to the linguistic usage of أترف (utrīfī) (pronounced: ba'aw) (pronounced: ba'aw) is still in use today, say, in the following expression, فائدة, فائدة (m-ba'aw) (a man without "rest" = without morals, without moral backbone), where again a loan translation from the lexically equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression has also been additionally confirmed in the vernacular.

The pronunciation أولا (with a short first أولا) as the canonical version of the Koran reads it, is implausible. It contradicts the Koran orthography to the extent that this generally omits the أولا in a closed first syllable as a mater lectionis for short أولا. This is evidenced by the Arabic transcription of Syro-Aramaic loan words in the Koran, such as أترف (utrīfī) ("to be soft, limp, flabby, slack, loose") was not recognized by the Arab philologists. Instead, the Arabic verbal form أترف (utrīfī), which had been borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic extended verbal stem أترف (utrīfī) (to live a dissolve life, a life of licentious indulgence), has been falsely incorporated into the Arab lexicography as the root أترف (utrīfī).

In doing so, the Arabic philologists have not recognized the prefix أولا / أولا as such and have taken it to be the first radical. From this, there then arose in Arabic such logically false derivatives as the noun أترف (utrīfī) (luxurious, dissolve life) (to which the Syro-Aramaic أترف (utrīfī) actually corresponds) and the corresponding adjective أترف (utrīfī), both of which are still in use today. This is how we have an example of a Koranic expression, borrowed from Syro-Aramaic, whose general sense the Arabic philologists have understood correctly, although they have categorized it falsely in terms of etymology.

This is all the more surprising since with the root أترف (utrīfī) (whose أولا / أولا was probably originally conceived of as a mater lectionis for the أولا / أولا and its quite common derivatives, modern Arabic has preserved an authentic variant of the Syro-Aramaic form أترف / أترف). On the basis of the partially identical examples cited in the لیسان under each of these forms, the further varieties أترف / أترف (utrīfī) and أترف / أترف (utrīfī) and أترف / أترف (utrīfī) also suggest a common Aramaic root, of which the variations preserved in Arabic are apparently dialectal. Even

271 C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum [Syriac Lexicon], 741a, Etna. 3. luxuriatus est. Theor. ii 3960 cites: خستخ (yāḏē ṭayyārā) "nores dissoluti (loose morals).

274 Cf., e.g., H. Wehr, Arabisches Wörterbuch [Arabic Dictionary], under أترف / أترف.

275 E.g., in H. Wehr, loc. cit.: أترف / أترف, أترف / أترف, أترف / أترف: easy life, comfort, well-being, etc., as well as أترف / أترف (verbal noun of the 2nd stem): providing oneself or others an easy life.
though the **Lisān** continually refers to the linguistic usage of the “Arabs,”
its occasionally clumsy explanation of it demonstrates precisely that it is
unfamiliar with the expression in question, for example, when it cites
the still commonly used congratulations for newlyweds،

بالرَّفَاءِ وَالْفِنْنِ (bī-r-rāfāʾ wa-l-banīn)،
under both رُفَاءُ (rafaʿā) (I 87b) and رَفَاهُ (rafāh) (XIV 331a) and falsely explains the expression رُفَاءِ (rafaʿā) with “harmony.”

H. Wehr (loc. cit.) even translates it accordingly: “Live in harmony and have sons!” Yet according to one *hadīt* the Prophet is said to have for-
bidden the use of this congratulatory formula. This indicates that under
رُفَاهُ (rafāh) he did not exactly understand “harmony,” but instead must
have understood the more negative Syro-Aramaic meaning of رفاهة (rafahah) or رفاهية (rafahiyah) (“softness” = exuberant, dissolve life).

Positively, however, the borrowed رُفَاءُ (rafaʿā) is equivalent to the ex-
pression, probably created in Arabic via a loan translation، رُفَاهُ (rafāh) (“softness” = carefree life, prosperity, luck). In this way the above-
mentioned congratulations also become comprehensible: “The best of
luck and many children!”

Just as suspicious is the meaning “to bring on shore” for رفاها (rafaʿā) (see H. Wehr, loc. cit.), from which رفاها (marrfaḥa) “harbor” is derived.

Namely, it is contradicted by the *hadīt* of Abu Ḥurayra about the Day of
Judgment, which the **Lisān** (I 87a) cites as evidence of its use: فكَنَّ
الأرض كالمخينة المرفأة في البحر تضرِبُها الأمواج (the earth will then be-
come like a (violently) shaken ship on the ocean that is thrown to and fro by the waves). In terms of the meaning، الـمـرـفـأـة (almurfaṣa) is based on the *medite geminatae* root رف (rafaʿā) (< Syro-Ara-
maic رف / raf), so that the expression (al-murfaṣa) should actually be pronoun-
ced (al-murfaṣa) (Syro-Aramaic كَتَبَ / da-m-raffah). For only this reading produces the expected sense here، “to be shaken، to be
shocked,” corresponding to تصَرِبُها الأمواج (tadribuhah l-anamwāḏ) “to be
thrown to and fro” (< Syro-Aramaic كَتَبَ / raf).  

276 On the rendering of the Syro-Aramaic كَتَبَ / raf by the Arabic ب / dar see S. Fraen-
kel، *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* [The Aramaic Foreign
Words in Arabic] xxii: “Occasionally ب occurs for Aramaic كَتَبَ (Φ) ....”

Here it must be pointed out that ب / dar in the oral tradition of the East Syrians is always pronounced as a hard (p)، which is also still evidenced today by the New

Namely، the sense of the Arabic verb ضرب (daraba) (schlagen) expected in this context could only be discovered via the semantics of the
Syro-Aramaic verb كَتَبَ / raf - as reproduced above. Whence the sus-
picion that ضرب (daraba) is only a phonetically Arabicized form of the
Syro-Aramaic كَتَبَ (raf) (or the East Syriac *raf*).

Excursus on the Etymology and Semantics of
Arabic ضرب (daraba) (to strike)

If this assumption is correct، then this finding should open up new per-
spectives for a potentially different understanding of each use of the verb ضرب (daraba) in the Koran. For this، a comparison must be made with the semantic contents of the Syro-Aramaic verb كَتَبَ (raf) to determine first of all to what extent Arabic ضرب (daraba) stands for
Syro-Aramaic كَتَبَ (raf).

For in the process one must not lose sight of the fact that (a) another Syro-Aramaic synonym may stand behind it، and that (b) ضرب (daraba) has perhaps slipped into Arabic and became

East Syriac dialects. The presumption that Arabic ضرب (daraba) is a secondary
dialectal formation derived from Syro-Aramaic كَتَبَ (raf) (or East Syriac
*raf*) is supported by the semantic contents of the Syro-Aramaic root. In this re-
gard، see *Thes.* 1523 ff، which lists among the Arabic expressions quoted by
the Eastern Syrian lexicographers يَضْرِبُ (yadribū) (1524) and يَضْرِبُ
(1525 f.).

Insofar is Fraenkel، who sees in ضرب (daraba / darb) a genuine Arabic expres-
sion for striking coins (loc. cit. 195)، to be contradicted. Here one must consider whether it is not more likely that behind this stands the Syro-Aramaic كَتَبَ (raf)
(East Syriac *raf*، which among other things can mean both “to cast، to
smelt، to purify” (especially with regard to precious metals) and “to press، to
punch” and “to hurt” (cf. *Thes.* 111246 ff، Brockelmann، *Lexicon Syriacum*
638). In any case، the Arabic expressions Fraenkel discusses and whose origins he questions، are traceable back to this Syro-Aramaic root: (a) صرف (sarf) “*the
pure wine*” (172)، (b) the same in the meaning “pure rod” (185)، further صرف
(saraf) (probably originally “caster of coins”، then “changer of coins”) as well as
صرف (saraf) “to crack، to crunch،” which in Fraenkel’s opinion does not
appear to belong here at all (see *Manna*، صرف / saraf، 650a، under (4): صرف
*asanhu* “to press one’s teeth together، to grind one’s teeth”).
semantically independent long before the Koran. We find a first example in an expression that confirms the former assumption. In Sura 24:31 certain rules are listed concerning the behavior of women; among them we find:

Sura 24:31

ولا يضربن بارجلهن ليلمع ما يخفف من زينتهن

Until now this verse segment has been understood, in accordance with Tabart (XVIII 124), in the following way:

(Bell I 339): 2. “... and let them not beat with their feet so as to let the ornaments which they conceal be known.”

(Paret 289): “Und sie sollen nicht mit ihren Beinen (aneinander) schlagen und damit auf den Schmuck aufmerksam machen, den sie (durch die Kleidung) verborgen (an ihnen) tragen [Note: W.: damit man merkt, was sie von ihrem Schmuck geheimhalten].”

(Blachère 379): “Que [les Croyantes] ne frappent point [le sol] de leurs pieds pour montrer les atours qu'elles cachent.”

According to this understanding, women are indeed allowed to wear jewelry, but not to show it on the outside or to draw attention to it by slapping their legs together or stamping on the ground with their feet. From this conjectural and unsuccessful interpretation one sees that the Arabic commentators did not know what to do with this, to their ears, foreign-sounding expression: (yadribna bi-arğulihinna) (speaking of women, “they strike with their feet”). However, the sense becomes clear as soon as one imagines the equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression that stands behind it, and which the Thes. (I, 1524) cites as follows: "(n-urfqān b-reglyahēn) pedibus suis tripudiantes, incensus artificiali utentem ("striking" with their feet, "stamping" their feet = hopping, skipping, in that they walk about in an artificial way), Isa. 3:16.” What is interesting here is that the Koran paraphrases this Bible passage with the Syro-Aramaic expression of the

\[\text{Psifta}\] more accurately than, say, the Jerusalem Bible.\(^{277}\) However, in Syro-Aramaic the expression actually means "to hop on one’s feet = to skip." Furthermore, if one were to compare the Arabic زينة (zīnah) (jewelry) with the Syro-Aramaic (ṣhibbāḥ), for the latter the Syrian lexicographers also give the figurative sense (bāḥā, busa, ḫamāl) (magic, grace, beauty) (Thes. II 3360, deccus). Thus, roughly translated, the verse cited above from Sura 24:31 should instead be understood as follows:

“They should not (walk around) with their feet hopping (=skipping) so that their concealed charms stand out.”\(^{278}\)

\(^{277}\) In other words, there (loc. cit. 1036b) this passage from Isa 3:16 is rendered as follows: “and jingling their ankle bracelets.” Here the Hebrew (דבורה תוקסנה תוקסנה) (tu-qāssā, tu-qāssā) parallels the Syro-Aramaic (maa, qa) as well as Syro-Aramaic (madd, qa) equivalents that Gesenius (614a) etymologically associates with it with the meaning “to spin, to wriggle.” Interesting in this respect is the expression that is cited by the Liddell (VI 145a) for (kāsma): (ta’kkasa t-r-rgul: masā maṣṣa l-arā) (said of someone ta’kkasa means: to walk like a snake = to wriggle, to weave), whereas the Koranic or Syro-Aramaic variant means (to skip, so that while walking one) “artificially twists or turns one’s feet,” whereas the Koranic or Syro-Aramaic variant means (to skip, so that while walking one) “artificially hops on one’s feet.” The fundamentally seductive intent in this is documented by the Thes. (II 2967a) in the figurative sense of stimulatio, incitatio (stimulation, seduction) with, among other things, the following Hebrew-related Syro-Aramaic expression (ṣafryāḥān w-taṣṣāwṣā) (her charms and enticements) (Epbr. ed. Lamy i. 489, 5).

\(^{278}\) Literally: “They ought not “to stamp” with their feet (= “to hop”) in such a way that they conceal their charm becomes known (= revealed).” By that what is meant is; in that they display their concealed charms in a seductive way. The meaning “to reveal, to display” for Arabic (latta) (to cause to be known) results from the lexically equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression.
Another Meaning of بقية (baqiya) 
Sura 11:86

(بقيت الله خير لكم أن كنتم مومدين)

(Bell I 213): 87. “The abiding (portion) [i.e. the eternal reward] of Allah will be better for you, if ye be believers.”

(Paret 186): “Die Kraft (?) [note: Oder: Güte (?baqiya)] Gottes ist besser für euch, wenn (anders) ihr gläubig seid.”

(Blachère 254): 87/86 “Ce qui reste auprès d’Allah [note 87. Text.: le reste d’Allah] est un bien pour vous si vous êtes croyants.”

In this verse the expression بقية الله (baqiya Allah) has a different meaning than بقية (baqiya) in Sura 11:116. In the verse which precedes it, Verse 85, Su'ayb (Shu'ail) warns the Midianites against dishonest profit through the falsification of weights and measures. The expression بقية (baqiya) is directly connected with this unlawful enrichment. Blachère and Bell do in fact approximate the sense, but without being able to explain the term properly.

That is because here, too, the real meaning is to be determined via the semantics of the same Syro-Aramaic lexical equivalent סחָטֶה (yur'tanā) (profit). Under the root סח (yur) Manna (320a), besides the original meaning بقية (baqiya) (to remain), lists under (6) the following Arabic meaning: يعِز (rabi'a, iktsaba) (to win, to acquire). Under the aforementioned nominal form (321b) he accordingly lists under (2): يعِز (ribh, maksab) (profit, acquisition). As a synonym for بقية (baqiya) (trade, profit) the Thes. (II 4389) cites the following expressions: “de mercatura spirituali (tēqūrah d-daryāyālah) (spiritual acquisition through a monastic way of life); (2) labor, opus, سَرْکَانā (tēqūrah da-h'dilābah) (the work of the adversary, of Satan). That could be contrasted with بقية الله (baqiya Allah) as the “work of God,” here in the sense of “acquisition well pleasing to God.” From this the following sense results for this expression in the context of Sura 11:86:

“The acquisition (pleasing to) God is of greater advantage to you if you are believers!”

A Third Meaning for بقية (baqiya) 
Sura 2:248

(إنية ملكه ان بتلكم الناسوت فيه سكنينة من ربي وقيقه مما تركه الموسى وعالهرون)

In his translation (36) Paret leaves the expressions سكينة and baqiya untranslated as special Koranic terms, although in his Kommentar [Commentary] (52) he suggests for baqiya another meaning the “rest” (= "relic"). The latter seems to be the best fit here inasmuch as مانا (821b) gives for the Syro-Aramaic synonym سركان (ṣarkānā), in addition to the original meaning بقية (baqiya) (rest), under (2) ذكرية (dāhiba) (relic). There is accordingly in the Ark of the Covenant a “relic” that Moses’ and Aaron’s clans have left behind.

(awda) (Thes. I 1557): scire fecit, ostendit, indicavit (to cause to be known, to reveal, to indicate).

279 The Koranically borrowed تجارة (tēqūrah) in Sura 35:29 they expect a profit that will not become worthless, i.e. a profit of lasting value) and Sura 61:10 is meant in this Syro-Aramaic sense of “acquisition, profit.” So, too, the expression بقية المصلحة (al-baqiyya al-salihah) (probably for سخاحة مسلاحة / my-attrajah athlete, Thes. I 1653, regapia facta, gesta praeclara) “good, excellent works” in Sura 18:46 and 19:76.
13. ON MANY A SYRO-ARAMAIC BASIC STRUCTURE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE KORAN

To return once more to the above-mentioned grammatical basic structures of the language of the Koran, we want to take a closer look from this perspective at the previously cited (p. 95) Verse 23 of the Mary Sura: "If only I had died beforehand and been totally forgotten!"

There is nothing to quibble about concerning the sense. What interests us here is the component part of the sentence (wā-κορατυτ κανασαμ) "(had) been totally forgotten." This well-known Koranic expression, which has entered the Arabic language and the Arabic lexicography as a familiar quotation, is an example of a syntactical figure characterized in Arabic grammar as مفعول مطلق (miftāl muttaqūl) (in English: accusative of the inner [verbal] content, or of the absolute or inner object). Reduced to a simple formula, this object consists of the infinitive or a noun derived from the employed verb, which stands in place of a lacking adverb or to reinforce the homonymous verb as that verb's object in the accusative.

A familiar example of this is provided by the sentence: He slept the sleep of the righteous (i.e., he slept like one who is righteous). The key here, however, is that in Arabic (as in English) this object regularly stands after the verb and as a noun naturally remains unchanged, whereas the verb itself can assume any form whatsoever.

In our Koranic clause, however, what stands out is that the infinitive object κανασαμ (nasya) (forgetting) stands before the verbal form, in other words, that the order prescribed according to the rules of Arabic grammar is reversed. Were one to assert that this is caused by the need to rhyme, one could reply that the final syllables of the two words are homonymous. That according to the current reading of the Koran (as a transcription of Syro-Aramaic جرسلا is actually to be read m-nasîyâ) is to be pronounced manstîyâ with a doubling of the t and for this reason should stand at the end of the verse, is not a convincing argument since نسی (in Verse 26), which as an unequivocal transliteration of Syro-Aramaic جرسلا should not be pronounced insîyâ, but (a)nâsîyâ (a human being), is also, according to the modern reading of the Koran because of the rhyme, to be pronounced in exactly the same way with a reinforced t.

Even presupposing that this reading in light of the purely Aramaic prototype is not arbitrary, نسی (nasya) could have been in the correct word order according to the rules of Arabic sentence construction and could have nevertheless been pronounced for the sake of the rhyme in the same way nasîyâ. The purely formal, superficial argument used to justify this sequence of clauses running counter to the strict rule of Arabic grammar is therefore not convincing.

For this obvious irregularity from the point of view of Arabic, the Arabic commentators have tried to give another interpretation. What is meant by the masculine verbal noun κανασαμ (nasya) is allegedly a "forgotten memory" or a "forgotten object," which as the predicate of κορατυτ (kunta) according to the rules of Arabic grammar is correctly in the accusative, which would in turn be why the κανασαμ (manstîyâ) following it is logically understood as its corresponding masculine attributive participial adjective. Accordingly, Mary would be thinking: "Oh, were I only a forgotten object!" or "were my memory forgotten!"

The deeper cause, however, actually lies in the fact that we are dealing here with a typical Syro-Aramaic sentence construction. Theodor Nöldeke accurately outlines this as follows:

"It is a characteristic of Aramaic that it has a much greater capacity for linking clauses than Hebrew and Arabic. It possesses many
conjunctions and lightly modifying adverbs. In addition to this it has considerable freedom in terms of word order.”

Such a word order occurs in the Koranic verse under discussion. In contrast to Arabic, the verb comes after the noun. Accordingly, the word order وَكَانَتِ نَسْيَةٌ مَّنْسِيَةٌ (wa-kuntu nasya” mansya”) exactly corresponds to, and has the same meaning as, the Syro-Aramaic شُوْمَا (wa-hwâ nasyá m-nasyâ).

Once we have become conscious of the Syro-Aramaic form of this verse, we are then able to perceive another detail: not only the word order, but also the congruence of the subject and the participial adjective does not correspond to the rules of Arabic grammar. That is to say, if one asks an educated Arab well-versed in grammar how he accounts for this sentence construction, he will at first be taken aback because this sentence in this form is so familiar that he has never thought about it. Its problematic nature is only brought home to him by a series of elementary questions:

a) What is the subject here of كنت (kuntu) (were I)?
   - Answer: Mary.

b) What is its corresponding predicate participial adjective?
   - Answer: منسيا (mansya”) (forgotten).

c) Is the ending here masculine or feminine?
   - Answer: Masculine.

d) To what then does this predicate refer?
   - Answer: Obviously to the masculine نسيا (nasya”) (a forgetting).

e) Conclusion: نسيا منسيا (nasya” mansya”) would accordingly be: a forgotten forgetting.” Hence, not Mary should be forgotten, but the forgetting itself should be forgotten.

f) What would be correct here, referring to Mary, according to the rules of Arabic grammar?
   - Answer: وَكَانَتِ نَسْيَةٌ مَّنْسِيَةٌ (wa-kuntu mansya” nasya”).

This is in fact how the sentence should read in correct Arabic.

Such deviations from the norms of Arabic grammar are habitually explained as peculiarities of the language of the Koran. Yet, to anyone who would conclude from this that the Koran was composed in faulty Arabic, it should be replied: This is not incorrect Arabic, but perfectly correct Aramaic. Namely, in the participial form منسيا (mansya”) (forgotten), what looks like an Arabic masculine accusative ending is, in reality, if one imagines the transliterated Syro-Aramaic spelling منسيا (m-nasýâ), a Syro-Aramaic feminine predicate ending. According to the rules of Syro-Aramaic grammar the predicate participle and adjective are namely in the so-called status absolutus. In the case of the feminine this means that the k / t of the emphatic feminine ending الك / الت drops away leaving only the final ا / a behind.

Arabic has no such rule. No distinction is made between attributive and predicate adjective and participial adjective in written Arabic, so that in the case of the feminine the final / is always retained. It is therefore from an Arabic perspective impossible to see a feminine ending in a form like منسيا (mansya”) unless one sees it through Syro-Aramaic glasses.

We encounter this Syro-Aramaic feminine predicate ending in additional passages of the Koran. There is, for example, بنغيا (bagiya) in Verse 20, واللله بنغيا (since I am no prostitute) and in Verse 28, وما كانت، بنغيا (and yet your mother was no prostitute), is a faithful rendering of Syro-Aramaic بنغيا (bâya’). One tries to justify the fact that بنغيا (bagiya) does not have an Arabic feminine ending here, not just on account of the rhyme, but in particular with the argument that certain adjectives referring exclusively to women formally take a masculine ending.

This explanation, however, is not valid because we encounter other cases in the Koran that cannot be justified by it. Thus, for example, in Sura 33:63 it says: What do you know? “What do you know? The (final) hour may be near.” The fact that قربا (qarba”) as a predicate for the الساعة (as-sâ’a) (the hour) here has the Syro-Aramaic feminine end-

283 Th. Nöldeke, Die semitischen Sprachen [The Semitic Languages] (Leipzig, 1899) 46.

ing in *status absolutus*, one would like to explain according to Arabic grammar as an adverbial ending in the sense of "(an *qarib* in the near future, soon). But that would be contradicted by Sura 42:17, وما *qarib* لا يدرك للсуاء (the same meaning). That here *qarib* (or *qarīb*), although a predicate of the *sā'ā* (the hour), does not have the expected feminine, but instead (also according to Syro-Aramaic grammar) a masculine ending, will again be explained here by the evident need to rhyme.

There is still Sura 7:56 (*The goodness of God is near to those who are righteous*). Here there is no excuse for the fact that the predicate *rahma* (goodness), a masculine ending. The real reason for this, however, is that when masculine Aramaic words are taken over into Arabic they customarily pass over into Arabic in the *status absolutus*, i.e. with the omission of their originally determining emphatic ending /ə̣/ (in other words: in the so-called *pausal form* in Arabic). Examples: Syro-Aramaic *allahā* = Arabic الله (*allah*; *qarīb* /ə̣/) (near). In the present case, we must keep the Syro-Aramaic equivalent of *in sā'ā* (the goodness of God is near) in mind as follows: *rahmat allah* /ə̣/ *qarīb*. According to this, the original Arabic form must have been *qarīb* (*qarīb*/*qarīb*). Arguing in favor of a primary Arabic transcription into *qarīb* (*qarīb*), would be the explanation that an early copyist has taken the Syro-Aramaic predicate feminine ending in *status absolutus* /ə̣/ (*qarīb*/*qarīb*), which is formally indistinguishable from an attributive emphatic masculine ending, for such a masculine form and has, mutatis mutandis, *Arabicized* it, that is, by dropping the Syro-Aramaic emphatic /ə̣/ ending, has converted it into the masculine Arabic pausal form.

The explanation of a secondary conjecture could be that a later copyist saw in the ending *qarīb*/*qarīb* an Arabic accusative, which is here in obvious contradiction with the subsequently established Arabic grammar. This prescribes, namely, that in a noun clause introduced by the particle *in sā'ā* the subject is to be in the accusative, but the predicate in the nominative case. As such, however, *qarīb*/*qarīb* has, according to Arabic orthography, a masculine accusative ending. Instead of replacing it with the appropriate feminine ending, the final /ə̣/ was dropped without replacement. This is, to be sure, a mere supposition, the correctness of which could only be proven by corresponding examples from earlier Koran manuscripts.

In any case, the former explanation is confirmed by a further instance in Sura 3:40 (*Lord, how shall I have a son when old age has now overtaken me and my wife [is] *barren*?*). Here, too, *aqrā* (أَقْرَأَ) is a predicate of the *māl*: *māl* (my wife) and has, from the point of view of Arabic, a masculine ending. As discussed above, however, this is based upon an *optical illusion*, since the Syro-Aramaic *status absolutus* feminine أَقْرَأَ is formally indistinguishable from the *status emphaticus* masculine أَقْرَأَ. Whence the conversion by analogy into the Arabic masculine pausal form.

Finally, the two instances in Sura 19:5 and 8, where it is repeated, *wa-kānātimarattāt* أَقْرَأَ (in that my wife is *barren*), are not to be explained by the need to rhyme. Here the Syro-Aramaic spelling of the *status absolutus* feminine أَقْرَأَ (أَقْرَأَ) is faithfully reproduced.

Omission of the Feminine Ending of the Adjective in Classical Arabic

This rule of Syro-Aramaic grammar according to which the *status absolutus* feminine in the predicate adjective and participle, through the dropping of the /ə̣/ and the retention of the final /ə̣ / does not differ formally from the *status emphaticus* of the corresponding attributive masculine form, now opens our eyes to a phenomenon of classical Arabic grammar that has until now been considered a mystery. Carl Brockelmann *Arabische Grammatik [Arabic Grammar] § 65* summarizes this phenomenon as follows:

Note 1. "Thus the adjectives that refer to the sexual life of a
woman or a female also do not require the feminine ending, such as "موضع (murdiˈʔə)" 'suckling,' "عاقر (aqrir)" 'barren.'

2. The adjectives "فعل (faˈʔl)" in the active and "فعل (faˈʔl)" in the passive sense as well as "كاذب (kaˈʔab)" "lying" and "جريح (garth)" "wounded" also take no a feminine ending as predicate and attribute."

Brockelmann derives this analogy from those Semitic words that are also feminine in gender without a feminine ending. He makes no mention of the Aramaic background, although the first group is documented in the Koran and the adjectives named in the second group "فعل (faˈʔl)" and "فعل (faˈʔl)" clearly point the way to the equivalent Aramaic (or Syro-Aramaic) prototypes.

But even before him Theodor Nöldeke drew attention to the problem. In his study Zur Grammatik des classischen Arabisch [On the Grammar of Classical Arabic] (Vienna, 1897; reprint Darmstadt, 1963), he remarks in this connection (20 §19):

"In the case of adjectives, the use or omission of the feminine ending ٓ merits a more comprehensive examination. What the ancient and modern grammarians have given does not exhaust the subject. In Sura 22:2, one would expect ٓ to explain very artificially."'

Nöldeke would surely have been able to recognize the quite simple reason for this phenomenon, if only his view had not been obstructed by his respect for the exaggerated antiquity of the so-called old Arabic poetry. As already discussed with regard to the example from Sura 22:2 cited above, there is no reason to leave off the feminine ending of "موضع (murdiˈʔə)" (one giving suck) according to Syro-Aramaic grammar since this word does not assume a predicate position in the sentence. That is also why it appears correctly in the status emphaticus with the feminine ending.

It’s a different story for the other examples, "Oh, neighbor woman (= wife), go forth, you are dismissed" (line 8) and "retire from me as dismissed" (line 9), where the underlined expressions appear as predicates in the status absolutus feminine and thus have the corresponding (Syro-Aramaic) ā (not the Arabic ā / h) ending, insofar as one can regard the vowel less final ā / h in طاقة as a variant for the emphatic final ā / h.

Thus, the phenomenon of the lacking feminine ending in certain adjectives and participles originally appearing in a predicate position in the Koran and in classical Arabic is explained as an Aramaic (or Syro-Aramaic) substratum.

Misinterpretation or Mistaking of Syro-Aramaic Roots

Sura 16:79 provides us with two examples of the mistaking or misinterpretation of Syro-Aramaic roots; there we read:

الأم بروا الى الطير (muruˈʔa) مخزوفت في جر السما ما يمسكين الا لله

Our Koran translators have understood this verse as follows:

(Bell I 256): 81. “Have they not seen the birds, performing their service in the midst of the heaven, no holding them but Allah?”

(Paret 222): “Haben sie denn nicht gesehen, wie die Vögel in der Luft des Himmels in den Dienst (Gottes) gestellt sind? Gott allein hält sie (oben, so daß sie nicht herunterfallen).”

(Blachère 299): “N’avez-vous pas vu les oiseaux soumis [au Seigneur] dans l’espace du ciel où nul ne les soutient hormis Allah?”

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1. For the expression في جو السما (〈ft ḡawwā’s-sama〉) Bell, with his translation “in the midst of the heaven,” was the only one who correctly recognized from the context the equivalent Syro-Aramaic root expression 〈b-ḡaww šmâyā〈 (cf. Thes. I 665: ḡawwā; b-ḡaww intra, in medio (“inside, in the midst of”)). As a Syro-Aramaic substratum the expression ḡawwā (〈ḡawwā / ḡawwā〉 (inside), as the opposite of 〈ḡa barrā〈 (〈Syro-Aramaic ḡawwā / barrā “outside”〉), is quite common in contemporary Arabic dialects of the Near East, both adverbially and as a preposition (as in جوlette ال البيت ḡawwāt al-bêt “inside the house”), yet not in classical or modern written Arabic. It is very likely that in today’s Arabic the common expressions (al-barid al-ḡawwā) (airmail), خطوط الجو (as-nilāḥ al-ḡawwā) (airforce), (al-ḥūt ḡawwā) (air routes, airlines), (an-našr l-ḡawwā) (weather report), etc. are traceable back to the unrecognised Syro-Aramaic prepositional expression 〈b-ḡaww〉 = Arabic (〈ft ḡaww〉 (inside, in the midst of) in Sura 16:79 and its misinterpretation as a noun (air, atmosphere).

Now, even if 〈ft ḡaww〉 in the mentioned Sura has been read correctly, it has nonetheless been misunderstood. On the other hand, the spelling جو (al-ḥawā) (〈Syro-Aramaic ḡawwā / ḡawwā〉 the inwards) in Sura 6:146 has been correctly understood, but incorrectly read. That is also why it has not been recognized that both expressions stem from one and the same Syro-Aramaic root.

2. In the Koranic usage of the verb سخر (〈sahhara〉) it has until now apparently not been noticed by Koran scholars that two Syro-Aramaic roots must here be distinguished from one another:

a) 〈sahhara〉 (〈sahhara〉), which corresponds to the Arabic سخر (〈saxxara〉) (cf. Mannā, 784a: 1. فعض. سود / fāḥhamat sawwada / to blacken, to make black [this meaning has been retained with the unchanged pronunciation ‹sahhara in Arabic]; 2. فعض. هنئك / fādana, hátaka / to disgrace, to expose; 3. ‹saxxara, šagálα / to exploit, to make someone work without pay). Without exception our Koran translators have based their translations on this last meaning, which has entered into Arabic with the Arabicized pronunciation سخر (〈sahhara〉).

b) What has been overlooked in the process, however, is that with the spelling سخر (〈sahhara〉) the Koran is also reproducing the Syro-Aramaic causative stem (〈af-če〉 〈awbär〉 (〈awbär〉. This, however, is cognate with the root تأ (ehar) and is a variant of the causative stem (〈af-če〉 〈awbär〉, which corresponds to the Arabic ﹶ (〈ahhara〉. For example, for this the Thes. (I 125f) gives in Arabic the (transitive as well as intransitive or reflexive) ﹶ (〈ahhara〉 (to hold back, to detain), ﹶ (ta-ḥhara) (to be late, to stay); and for 〈awbär〉 (〈awbär〉 retardavit, retinuit (to hold back, to hold onto). Although the last meaning emerges clearly from the context of Sura 16:79, and in particular from the subsequent Arabic verb ﹶ ما ﹶ ﹶ (only God holds onto them ), none of our Koran translators have noticed that here ﹶ (musatḥhara) cannot mean “to be in the service of”. Read as the Syro-Aramaic 〈m-sawbhrad〉 (held back, held onto), the verse has the following meaning:

“For have they not seen how the birds stay in the middle of the sky (whereby) only God is holding onto them?”

Depending on the context it will accordingly be necessary to examine whether in a given passage the Koran means with the Arabic سخر (〈sahhara〉) (a) the Syro-Aramaic تأ (〈sahhara〉) (to subject, to make subservient) or (b) 〈wabär〉 (〈awbär〉) in the Arabic sense of ﹶ (〈ahhara〉) (to detain, to hold back).

This idea that God holds the birds suspended in the sky and prevents them from falling to the earth is also based on the verbal form ﹶ (mawāhir) in Sura 16:14 and 35:12. There it is said of ships on the sea that they are “ploughing through it” (Bell 1 250). Paret translates “Und du siehst die Schiffe darauf (ihre) Furchen ziehen” (216, 359), and Blachère “voguer” (293).

Yet the Arabic plural form ﹶ (mawāhir) is not, as until now wrongly assumed, based on the imaginary Arabic root ﹶ (mahara), which has falsely entered into the Arabic lexicography with the likewise imaginary meaning of “to plow, to plow furrows” (see, for example, H. Wehr, Arabisches Wörterbuch, where ﹶ / māhir supposedly means
“cutting through the water, a ship setting to sea” and مَثَّرّة / mawāhīr (plural مَوَّارِد / mawāhr) supposedly even means “ship”). Instead, what we have here is a Syro-Aramaic masculine plural present participle مَثَرّ (m-awhr) (the feminine plural being مَثَرّة / m-awhrāt) of the causative stem مَثَرّ (awhr) (to hesitate, to linger, to stay). This means that ships linger on the sea (on the surface of the water) (i.e., that God prevents them from sinking).

This again shows how Western Koran scholars have allowed themselves to be led astray by Arabic philologists who, in ignorance of Syro-Aramaic, have once more taken the prefix m- (from مَثِرّة / m-awhr) for a radical. This has also led A. Jeffrey to place مَثَرّة (mawāhīr) in the corresponding alphabetical order (m-). He explains the expression as follows:

“Plu. of مَثَرّة (mawāhīr), that which ploughs the waves with a clashing noise, i.e. a ship. Zimmerman, Akkad. Fremde, suggests that it was derived from Akk. clippu māhîra, a ship making its way out into a storm. If this is so it would have been an early borrowings from Mesopotamia.”

Although the expression may stem directly from Mesopotamia, in any case not from the Akkadian māhîra, but from the a’el form of the Syro-Aramaic root مَثِرّ (awhr) (which is not common in p’el), namely مَثِرّ (awhr), whose masculine singular and plural present participles are, respectively, مَثِرّة / m-awhrāt (m-awhr) and مَثِرُ (m-awhr), the feminine being مَثِرُة / m-awhrāt (cf. Thea. I 125 f.: act. part. مَثِرّ / m-awhr) moratur, cunctatur, tardat [he is hesitating, lingering, staying]). The Koran gives the last form with the Arabic plural of nouns مَوَّارِد (according to the modern reading, ma-wāhīr).288 where here too the middle alifā /

288 The lack of the earlier Syro-Aramaic feminine ending plural -ān of the participle in Arabic is substituted in the Koran mostly by the suffix -āt of the regular feminine plural (pluralis sanus / sound plural) of verbal adjectives (as substantives), but also sporadically (in contradiction to the classical Arabic) by the irregular plural form (pluralis fractus / broken plural) of some nouns derived from participles (e.g. مَثِرّة / bāhîrā [steamboat], plural مَثِرّ / bāhîr, as in this case مَوَّارِد / mawāhr(a) instead of classical Arabic مَثِرّة / mawāhrāt). A further example may be found in Sura 42:33, where it is said of the ships رواكِد / rawākīd(a) (still, stagnant) instead of classical Arabic راکِد / rākīdā.)
This is probably also why one pronounced שֶׁרַת ה (instead of שֶׁרַת / rawrekh)387 (op. cit. 756).

The localization of this phenomenon in the East Syrian-Mesopotamian region may give us an interesting clue concerning the orthography of many a word in the Koran. In this regard the Koranic spelling of סֶרַת (sahhara) for the Syro-Aramaic סַּנָר (sawbar) seems to provide a parallel, though here too, at any rate according to the modern reading, instead of the compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel a, a doubling of the following consonant occurs. However, one must not overlook the fact that the Syro-Aramaic verbal stem under discussion, סֶפֶל, is unknown in Arabic and for this reason a distinction could not be made between סֶרַת (sahhara) for סַּנָר (sawbar) and סַנָר (sawbar), which is why, in the last instance, analogy is to be assumed to the verbal stem which has made its way into Arabic סֶרַת (sahhara). This example precisely illustrates the problem, that not only different verbal classes are identifiable behind the scriptio defectiva (defective spelling) of the Koran, but also verbal roots that have to be distinguished from one another.

On the Etymology of the Koranic Word סֶרַת (sirāṭ)

Regarding the etymology of the word סֶרַת (sirāṭ), Jeffery (p. 195 f.) refers to the early Arab philologists, who had taken it to be a borrowing from Greek. He concedes that they are right, but he points out that the Greek word is in fact a Hellenized form of the Latin strata. However, all the Western authorities cited by Jeffery (Fraenkel, Kremer, Dvorák, Volland) seem to have overlooked the fact that the Koranic orthography is merely the phonetic transcription of the Syro-Aramaic אַרְגוֹת (ṣerṭa) or אְרָגְוֹת (ṣerṭá). Jeffery also cites the variants סֶרַת / sirāṭ and זְרַת / zirāṭ, whereby the latter variant also corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic אַרְגוֹת (ṣerṭa) as recorded in Thes. II 2739). Under the verbal root אַרְגָו (ṣarat) the Thes. (II 2738 f.) gives the following coreresponding Arabic words: (a) נָשׁ (ṣarat), (b) calpsit (to score, to strike) (i.e., duxit, delineavit, scripsit, κατάβα (ṣarat) (to draw a line, or write). Furthermore, the Thes. (II 2739) gives under the nouns אַרְגוֹת (ṣerṭa) and אְרָגְוֹת (ṣerṭá) the corresponding Greek γραμμή and Latin linea (line), as well as the Arabic metathesis סֶרַת (ṣarat) (line) that is quite common in today’s Arabic. The verbal form סֶרַת (ṣarat) (to write) occurs five times in the Koran (Suras 17:58; 33:6; 52:2; 54:53; 68:1) (Jeffery p. 169 f.).

Consequently, the Koranic expression סֶרַת mustaqqam does not mean “straight path” but “straight line.” Therefore, one is justified in asking whether the Latin strata does not come from Syro-Aramaic אַרְגָו (ṣarat), with the emphatic phoneme s being rendered by st. As proof for this thesis one can cite the historically attested Greek and Latin transcription of the name of the North Nabatean town סֶרַת (sirāṭ), or by Сират as Sirāt and Sūrat respectively, whereas the first t in the Latin word strata is not found in the Koranic spelling סֶרַת / sirāṭ. In one case the emphatic phoneme s is rendered in Greek and Latin by ps as attested in the name of the town סֶרַת (sirāṭ) (Masṣsiṭa), which is transcribed as Mopsuestia (see Thes. II 2195).

Are Latin lexicographers right in deriving strata from the verb sternō (to sprinkle and, only secondarily, to flatten, to pave), or, given the secondary meaning of this verbal root, unless the Latin is a coincidental allophone of the Koranic word, is not this etymology more likely a fiction? The usage of line in the sense of way is, moreover, quite common in modern European languages, as for example in English bus line or in German Eisenbahnlinie (railway line). It is therefore not contradicted by the Koranic parallel expression סֶרַת (sirāṭ) (sawt as-sabīṭh) (< Syro-Aramaic סֶרַת (sirāṭ) / sawt as-sabīṭh, the straight path, literally: the straightness of the path) (Suras 2:108; 5:1; 60,77; 60:1).

On the etymology of the word قِسْر (qasr)

A further example of the Greek and Latin transcription of the emphatic phoneme s by st is the Koranic word قِسْر (qasr) (< castle) (Suras 7:74; 22:45; 25:10), borrowed from Eastern Syro-Aramaic קָסָר (qasr) as
allophone of Syro-Aramaic ܐܹܩܹܪܬܐ (qasrā) / ܓܹܪܬܐ (gzārā) and transcribed in Latin as castrum and in Greek as κάστρον (Jeffery p. 240). All the western specialists quoted by Jeffery (Guidi, Fraenkel, Nöleke, Krauss, Vollers) have overlooked this phonetic phenomenon. If Jeffery is right with his assertion that this word has no verbal root in Arabic, it does not automatically follow that the root must be either Greek or Latin. The Arabic form قصر (qasr) is a direct borrowing from Eastern Syro-Aramaic ܓܲܣܰܪܐ (qasrā) (morphologically a passive participle like لیکت /sāːrā > sātāna = Satan – see above p. 100 ff.), the root of which is a phonetic variant of Syro-Aramaic ܓܲܣܰܪܐ (gzar) with the original meaning “to cut” (referring to the crenelated wall or to “cut” trenches or any other defensive measures giving protection from assailants “cutting” fortifications).

That according to Nöleke (ZDMG xxix 423) “พอּסָר (qasrā) as used in the Mishnah and Jerusalem Talmud is but a form of פִּינָה (qasra), which like (Syriac) ܓܲܣܰܪܐ (qasrā) was derived directly from κάστρον” (Jeffery 240, note 6), is get it backwards. Both Aramaic פִּינָה (qasra) and Syriac ܓܲܣܰܪܐ (qasrā) (scarcely used in Syro-Aramaic, though quoted in dictionaries) are nothing but a secondary re-borrowing from Latin castrum or Greek κάστρον. Hence it follows that Latin castrum (diminutive) castellum castellum castellum > English castle, German Kastell, French château (and similar words in other European languages) are a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic via Greek and Latin.

These examples show how the etymology can contribute to reveal us, be it in a small way, a hidden side of a former cultural interchange in the Mediterranean area between East and West. Some of these borrowed Semitic words in Greek and Latin are traceable in the Occident to the Phoenicians, whose language is closely akin to Hebrew and Syro-Aramaic, or to the Hellenes in the Orient since Alexander the Great. This can explain the etymology of some still unexplained (or incorrectly explained) Greek or Latin words as e.g. taurus (bull; Taurus) < Greek ταῦρος, that C. Brockelmann (Lexicon Syriacum 819b) compares to Syro-Aramaic ܬܘܪܐ (tawrā) and Arabic ثور (jawr). Yet rather than a common Semitic origin (SEM) assumed by Brockelmann, the original meaning of this word can be concluded from the secondary Syro-Aramaic verbal root שָׁב /šwar < שָׁב /šwar (to break, to cut up [the soil, the field] = to plough). This meaning makes clear the Koranic passage in Sura 2:71, where the cow that Moses demands from his people as sacrifice is described as follows:

كيف تقول أنها بقرة لا تأكل الأراضي ولا تسقي الحرش مسلمة لا شبة فيها (Bell I 10, 66): “He says, she is to be a cow not broken in to plough up the land or to irrigate the cultivated ground, but kept sound without a blemish upon her.”

Philological analysis:
a) According to Old Aramaic (whereof in some Syro-Aramaic verbal adjectives still preserved forms) as well as to Hebrew, ܕܳܠܐ /dalīl is grammatically a passive participle (like רָסוּל / rasūl)

The relation of castrum with the Old Aramaic verbal root מַזַּר (qasrā) (to cut) (cf. S. Segert, Altaramäische Grammatik (Old Aramaic Grammar), Glossar (glossary) p. 550: פִּינָה /qasr “erntien to harvest” (?)) – properly “to cut”, as in New Hebrew – cf. W. Gesenius, Hebrewisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch, 722a) helps us again to elucidate the etymology of the Latin verbal root castrō (to castrate) in its original meaning according to the semantics of the Syro-Aramaic root ܓܲܣܰܪܬܐ (gzārā). This with the proper sense of the derived Latin word cast-

tratus (castrated = “cut” = eunuch) becomes clear. Both Old Aramaic and Syro-Aramaic variants (�ܐܪܒܐ /qasrat and ܓܲܣܰܪܬܐ / gzārā) continue as substratum in Arabic (as قصر / qasrā [to restrict, restrain, confine], لحاشأ / kasara [to break < to cut] and نحاشأ / kasrā [to break < to cut], thence from مأ / qazār [butcher]) with some further semantical variations.
[messenger] = مرسل / mursal [dispatched]) and were to be rendered in classical Arabic accordingly by مطلة / mudallala in the sense of مسورة / musahhara [subjected, made subservient]. The lack of the feminine ending in دال / dalīl (instead of داللا / dalīla) is due to the dropping of the feminine end-t of the Syro-Aramaic participle in predicative position (as explained above p. 217 ff.). Thereby the latter form (as status absolutus) is orthographically no longer to be distinguished from the masculine participle in attributive position as status emphaticus (*داًلا / داللا > داللا = دال / داللا). This explains the analogous transposition of the Syro-Aramaic predicative feminine form into the Arabic masculine form (as in Sura 7:56: إن رحمة الله قريب / [qarib] instead of قرية [qariba = Syro-Aramaic رُبُ / qariba] من المحسنين [assuredly, the mercy of God is near to the benefactors = those who do well, right]).

b) The following verbal form طير / tuṭr, derived from the secondary Syro-Aramaic verbal root تاء / tawr > ت / tār, renders the Af'el form تار / asfir with the meaning quoted by Mannā (833b) under (3): حور / للأرض: ف لَوَّحة / barāja, falaḥa l-ard (to plough, to till the land).

This meaning makes clear that the derived noun رواب / tawrā is etymologically the form from which the Arabic, Greek and Latin words تَور / τωρ, ταυρός and taurus are borrowed and that semantically, according to Syro-Aramaic تاء / tawrā, the proper meaning of this word was originally a "plough-(animal)" (and not necessarily a bull).

c) The spelling طاسق / tasq, as imperfect of the Arabic root ضاق / soqqā (< Syro-Aramaic ضاق / šqā) means indeed "to give to drink = to irrigate". Yet who has observed the agricultural labor knows that the working order subsequent to the ploughing is not to irrigate the cultivated ground, but to harrow it. Now, to obtain this sense, we just need to read the retroflexed Arabic end-س / َس (نا), as it is attested in the Koran codex of Samarqand (CD 0024, l. 2; see p. 348), as a Syriac end-س / n (= Arabic ن / n) and to strike out one dot on the ق / q to obtain the Arabic reading طاسق / tasqī (< Syro-Aramaic طاسق / šqān) instead of the false modern Arabic transcription طسق - misread as tasqī. The Syro-Aramaic verbal root ضاق / šqān explains Mannā (801b) in Arabic as follows: سلَف سوؤ الأرض بالمسيلة لتور / salafa, sawwā l-ard bi-l-misla fi-l-tawra (to harrow, to level the field with a harrow for sowing). The Lisin (XIII 209b f.) is not able to understand what the root ضاق / safana exactly means, since he interprets it approximately by قَاثر / qašara (to peel). Consequently, the solely derived and in modern Arabic very common word ضفينة / safina (ship, boat) is so called, because it peels the surface of the water (لاذنها تستفن وجه الماء أي تقشر), whereas the Syro-Aramaic verb means to glide on the water surface. Hence ضفينة / safina means properly a "glider".

d) Since the Arabs have borrowed the agricultural expressions from the Arameans,290 it is only logical that the Koranic word حَارد (a ploughed field) is a direct borrowing from Syro-Aramaic رَد / ḥarā (< verb root د / ḥār (to plough, to cleave)).291 Yet the latter meaning suggests that the Syro-Aramaic verb is a secondary formation of an original root mediae geminatae *ḥ / ḫarr (>ḥār), of which some verbal adjectives are still conserved in Syro-Aramaic, as حَارِه / ḥarrā (hole), حَارُ / ḫār (hollow, cavern), حَارُ / ḫarrā (well, cistern).292 This original meaning shows that the Syro-Aramaic substantive رَد / ḥarā (= Koranic حُور / ḥurğ) is grammatically an early passive participle as attributional adjective (hence in the status emphaticus) with feminine ending (according to the feminine Syro-Aramaic رَد / ḫarrā) / حُور / ḫarrā, feminine رَد / ḫarrā < رَد / ḥarā = Koranic حَارد (حرَد).

291 Cf. C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum, 260a, 1. fodē, excavāvit (to dig, to excavate); Mannā, 267a: حَارد / ḫarā, ḵalla, šaqqā (to plough, to till, to cleave).
292 Cf. Mannā, 259b.
Thus it appears that the Syro-Aramaic verb ṣawā / ḫrāt (→ Arabic حَرَث / ḥarṭa) is formed by the addition of the feminine ending of the attributive participle to the original verbal root *ṣawā / ḫarr (→ ḫār). Both Syro-Aramaic verbs ṣawā / ḫarr (→ Arabic أَذَار / azāra) < ṣawā / ḫarr > *ṣawā / ḫarr = ṣawā / ḫarr as well as ṣawā / ḫarr (→ Arabic حَرَث / ḥarṭa) turn out to be synonyms as to their original meaning (to cleave, to break up [the ground]).

e) The Koranic verbal adjective سَمَلَّمًا / musallama (perfect, faultless) renders the Syro-Aramaic passive participle of the second stem مَسْلَمًا / m-ṣallmā and corresponds to the common Arabic form سَلِيمًا / salīma or سَالِيما / salima. The end -h in the Koranic spelling is an alternative writing of the Syro-Aramaic end-ā that marks the Aramaic feminine status absolutus of the predicative participle (without end-ā). Grammatically, it does not differ from the pausal form دُلُو / dalū, that in Syro-Aramaic must be written with an end-ā or an end-ā (دُلُو / dalū). From the point of view of the historical Semitics, the reading of the Cairo version is erroneous as far as the Aramaic end-ā has been taken for an Arabic حَرَث / ḥarṭa. Consequently, the Koranic spelling سَمَلَّمًا, as accurate Aramaic orthography, is to be read without dots on the -h / -h and without hypercorrect classical Arabic inflection (munation): “mu-sallama” (and not mu-sallama-tun).

f) Presumably, non-Arabs must have read the next spelling شَيْعَتَ - that hardly exists in Arabic. The supposed root وَشَيٌّ / wašā, from which the noun شَيْعَة / šiyā is supposed to be derived, as explained by Tabart (I 351 ff.), is nothing but a conceived secondary form of the root وَشَعَ (used in the IIth, Vth and VIIIth stem) as denotative from the noun وَشَح / wašah (ornamented belt) by dropping of the end-ā / ā (a phenomenon that occurs in some dialects). It is hence not a mere accident that the imagined root وَشَيٌّ / wašā has quite the same derived sense (to decorate, embellish with many colors). The second meaning attributed to this root, as quoted in the dictionaries (cf. for example H. Wehr: to slander, defame; to denounce, betray) is probably due to the mistranscription of the Syro-Aramaic i / r of the verbal root وَشَيٌّ / wašā as an Arabic وَشَيٌّ / wašā instead of وَشَيٌّ = وَشَيٌّ = رُكَة, رُكَائلا [to bribe], مَمَأ / muμa / μαμα [to blaming, censure, disgrace]; under A(f) / arš / arš = قَرِبت / qarrāfa, itthama [to charge, suspect, accuse]). The general meaning supposed by some commentators relates to the clearness of the colour of the cow, while some others are of the opinion that she has to be without any blemish. The latter sense can be approximately confirmed, if we read instead of شَيْعَتَ / šiyāta: لا شَيْعَة / lá šiša or لَاء شِبَّه / lá šihā “without [any] suspicion” (as to her blamelessness).

After this philological analysis, the discussed passage of Sura 2:71 can henceforth be reconstructed as follows:

يقول آلهة بقّة لا دُلُو ثَيْر الأَرْض وَلا تُفْسَن الحُرْث مَسْلَمًا لا شَيْعَة

(yaqūl(u) innaḥā baqara(tun) lā ḫatīh(a) tu-ttā(u) l-ṭarr(a) wa-lā tasfin(u) l-barī(a), mu-sallama lā šišb(a)/šubh(a) fiḥā)

“He says: she is to be neither a cow subjected to plough the soil nor to narrow the ploughed [field], [she shall be] faultless, without [any] suspicion [as to her blamelessness].”

Further misunderstood identical spellings

The same homonymous root of the latter form, written with the alternative emphatic مَصِيَّطُون (al-musayṭīthūn) and Sura 88:22 (مصيَّط / musayṭīth, was falsely understood as “to dominate.” With the stereotypical phrase that the commentators are divided in their word), Tabart (XXVII 33 f.) in this regard quotes two meanings: (a) مُصِيَّطُون / al-musallāṭūn (those who are established as rulers), (b) المُحْزُون / al-munazzīlīth (those who cause to descend – in the context of Sura 52:37 [according to Bell] – from the treasuries of thy Lord). Although this understanding is nearer to the intended sense, Tabart decides in favor of the majority of commentators
who conjecture that saytāra / سِحْطَارَ, allegedly according to the language use of the Arabs (في كلام العرب), means to dominate, to command, to be mighty. This meaning has led to a verbal root that does not exist in any Arabic dialect or any Semitic language. Nonetheless, this fictitious root has persisted in modern Arabic to this day in this sole irregular form (fay`al), in a false lexical order and with this false meaning. But actually, the intercalated ِ- ِ/ y, pronounced correctly as the diphthong ِ/ u, serves here to dissolve the following gemination of the medial radical of the second stem صَفْطَر / سَفْطَر < Syro-Aramaic صَفَطُ / سَفَطُ = Arabic ضُرُ / صَفْطَر = قَسْم / قَسَمَا / قَسَمَا, “to divide, to distribute” (cf. Mannā, 410b). This phenomenon is known in a small number of verbs of the second stem in some local Arabic dialects of the Near East, as for example in بِيْدَ / baddal, دَحْش / dahhas, دَيْنِخَ / daynah, دَيْعِ / da`yah / (to make enter), رَجَعِ / rayga, رَجَعِ / rayga (to give, to send back; to repeat, reiterate), ضَيْبِ / dahhar, ضَيْبِ / dayhar (to bring out), شُلِّحِ / sallah, شُلِّحِ / saylah (to undress, to plunder), عُلِّجِ / alag, عُلِّجِ / m-maylah, عُلِّجِ / m-maylah, عُلِّجِ / m-maylah, عُلِّجِ / m-maylah, عُلِّجِ / m-maylah, عُلِّجِ / m-maylah, نُزَلِ / nazzal, نُزَلِ / nayzal (to make descend), طَلِّعِ / talla, طَلِّعِ / paya (to make ascend, to move out). Further examples may exist in different individual dialects. In some few cases the inserted ِ/ y can be substituted by a ٍ/ w, as e.g.: رَكْبِ / rakhab, رَكْبِ / rakhab (to jam, get jammed / stuck - Metathesis of رَكْب / rakhab, رَكْبِ / rakhab, رَكْبِ / rakhab / to become embarrassed, get entangled, be caught, come to a standstill), صَفَرِ / safar, صَفَرِ / sawfar (to whistle), عُكْرِ / `ukkar, عُكْرِ / `ukkar / to render turbid, to make cloudy). 293

Sometimes the ِ/ w can be postponed, as e.g.: زَعُفِ / za`uf, زَعُفِ / za`uf (both to scream, to shriek), قَرْنِ / qarwas (to chatter, to gossip). This phenomenon con-

cern likewise substantives, as the common noun ضِاعَكْ / sawbak (rolling pin), a secondary form of the nomen agentis *ضِاعَكْ / sabbāk, derived from ضِاعَكْ / sabbāk < Syro-Aramaic صَعَِكْ / saabek (to paste, to stick together). S. Fraenkel and J. Barth had noticed this relatively scarce formation, but without to recognize its secondary character. 294 While namely S. Fraenkel considers the form ضِاعَكْ / sawbak to be genuine Arabic, adducing as argument the word ضِاعَكْ, that he takes for Ethiopian (see above p. 100 ff.), J. Barth sees these cases reduced only to substantives in Arabic and means that such forms apparently do not occur in other (Semitic) languages. But in reality both S. Fraenkel and J. Barth have overlooked a) the above quoted verbal forms in spoken Arabic, b) at least two verbs in Syro-Aramaic, namely: هَمْن / haymen, حَمْن / hammen (both from the Arabic word حَمَن / `ammana, حَمَن / `ammana (to believe) and حَمْن / haymen, حَمْن / hammen (to be patient, to endure, to persevere).

Since it is now clear that ضِاعَكْ / sawbak is nothing but a secondary form of the root ضِاعَكْ / sawbak َ< Syro-Aramaic صَعَِكْ / saabek (from which the Arabic word ضِاعَكْ / sawbak, (cleaner, is morphologically and etymologically derived), the two Koranic passages are henceforth to be understood as follows:

ـ (Sura 52:37)

“Do they have the treasuries of your Lord? Are they the directors?”

(Sura 88:21-22)

“Be wary, you are just a warner, you are not the distributor (i.e.: the one who attests the retribution) among them.”

The subsequent verses 23-26 confirm this meaning, since it is there said that it is God that will punish the unbelievers.


295 R. Bell (II 653) translates: “But thou art not over them an overseer” and notes to the last word: “The meaning and derivation of the word is not quite certain.”
The same root is finally misread in Sura 2:126:

ومن كفر اعترم قليلا ثم اضطرموه إلى عذاب النار

(Bell I 17, 120): “And whosoever disbelieves I shall give enjoyment of life for a little and shall then drive to the punishment of the fire…”

The eighth Arabic stem أضطر /巴菲特 (by the Arab lexicographers falsely attributed to the root ضر / دارا [to damage, to harm], whereas the original meaning of Syro-Aramaic أضطر / تضر [to strike, to overtake] shows that the Arabic ضر / د is the result of a secondary sonorization of the Syro-Aramaic emphatic أضطر / تضر > ضر / د) is primarily a reflexive (to force oneself) with a secondary passive meaning (اضطر - to be forced). Hence it is paradoxical to use this reflexive stem as a transitive, as if one were to say: I shall be forced him. The transitive meaning given in the dictionaries (to force, oblige someone) is contradictory and refers exclusively to this sole misreading in the Koran. To resolve this grammatical nonsense we only need to eliminate the point from ضر / د and to read: أضطر / أضره = أضطره = أضره / أضره - in the modern Arabic sense of أضره / أضره: “I shall segregate him” (to the punishment of the fire).

Excursus:

On the Morphology and Etymology of أرضي (Qurayṣ)

The Arabic spelling أرضي (Qurayṣ) (Sura 106:1), taken for an Arabic diminutive and falsely pronounced Qurayṣ, corresponds morphologically to the Syro-Aramaic masculine plural of the passive participle أرضي / أرضي - qristi = gathered together, i.e.: foederati, and hence is to be pronounced in Arabic (without the Syro-Aramaic ending أرضي) Qarāṣ. This meaning is attested in the Lisan (VI 335a) in one among other (from Aramaic) transmitted explanations as follows:

وقيل: سميت بذلك تقرشها أي تجمعها إلى مكة من حواليا بعد تفرقها في البلاد حين علِب عليها قصي بن كابلا ، وبه سمى قسي مجمعا

“It is said: the name of Qurayṣ is derived from (the verb) ta-qarrasha i.e. ta-γamma = (to meet, come together) to Mecca from its surroundings after they (i.e. the Qurayṣ / Qarīs) were dispersed in the countries, when Qusayy (actually Qasī < Syro-Aramaic كسي / qasī = the Far One - as far as he is said to be almost a Nabatean originating from Syria) b. Kīlāb had triumphed over it; for this reason Qusayy / Qasī was called 'assembler'.”

From this philological understanding Qurayṣ / Qarīs cannot be the name of a single tribe, particularly of that of the Prophet, as it is assured by the Islamic tradition. What this word designates is rather a tribal confederation known as foederati in the Eastern Roman Empire. It is hence not excluded that with these Qurayṣ / Qarīs (quoted once in Sura 106:1) the almost Christianized Arabs foederati of Syria were meant (to compare with Sura 30:2-5, where it is said that the Believers will rejoice over the victory of the Romans with the help of God). This would in return explain that Qusayy / Qasī, said to be coming from Syria, was possibly able to occupy Mecca with the help of these Qurayṣ / Qarīs = foederati (assuming, however, that this account of the traditional Muslim historiography is authentic).

From the original meaning of the Syro-Aramaic verbal root أرضي / qarāṣ (to gather – that C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum, 702a II, takes mistakenly for a borrowing from Arabic قرض / qaraṣa), are further derived figurative meanings as quoted by Mannā (710a/b). To these meanings belong in classical Arabic: ضر و را (ب) 만 = qaraṣa (< Syro-Aramaic أرضي / qaraṣ – cf. Mannā 705b) (biting coldness – with regard to [a] the together drawn = contracted water by freezing, [b] the gathered = contracted limbs – under the influence of cold – making someone to shiver up, to shiver with cold); the variant أرضي / qaraṣa (to pinch – by gathering = pressing the skin together between two fingers < Syro-Aramaic

Some examples of mistranscribed Syro-Aramaic letters

As to the mistranscription of Syro-Aramaic letters from an originally in Garshuni| Karshuni written Koranic text, the Koran offers a number of such into the Arabic writing system falsely transcribed Syro-Aramaic letters. Such typical mistranscriptions concern (among others) the two similar letters of the Syriac alphabets ‚/d (with a lower point) and 主义者 (with an upper point), that not only have been occasionally confused between each other, as seen above, but the basic form of which has also led to mistake them as an Arabicʃ/w.

These findings are not owing to any early Koran manuscripts, since the same mistakes are found there; they are much more the result of the philological analysis of the Koranic contexts, as it will be shown by the following examples.

a) As an Arabicʃ/w mistaken Syro-Aramaic ‚/d (The suspected word is underlined).

(Asura 8:2)

"لَا ذَكُرْنَ اللَّهَ وَجَتَتْ قَلْبِهِمْ"

Bell (I 162) translates: "The believers are those whose hearts thrill with fear when Allah is mentioned". Though the intended meaning has been approximately found out from the context, the spelling (traditional reading wafalat), from an imagined verbal root وَجَلَّ/wगिल with a likewise imagined irregular imperfect وَجَلَّ/wगिल, is nevertheless mistranscribed. The meaning concluded from the context, to be scared, to be afraid, can namely only be confirmed, if we read the Arabicʃ/w as a Syro-Aramaic ‚/d and the 主义者/ɡ without dot as a –/h, according to the well-known Syro-Aramaic verbal root ظ/ ihtel = Arabic دخل/daゅala = خاف /_highlighted_text: ḍhāf (to be afraid – cf. مانذ/145b). The List (XI 239a) transmits this meaning cited by Shamad, who said:

(\.I heard Mr. I. b. Máṣʿáb saying: "Lā tadḥal""in Nabatean means" Lā ṭahaf” = "be not afraid"). The mistranscribed وَجَتَتْ قَلْبِهِمْ/wafalat qulabhum is hence to be rectified as دخلت قلوبهم /daゅalat qulabhum (whose hearts stand in fear = in reverence). The same is to apply to Sura 22:35.

297 The same may concern the homonym corset, the function of which suggests a possible derivation from the Syro-Aramaic verbal root مَتَاجَر /qarṣa (to press), that makes more sense than from French noun corps (body); unless corset is rather composed of the Latin nouns corpus and sēdēs (< sēdē / sēdē), i.e.: "body-fu".
Accordingly, the three further identical passages are to rectify as follows: (Sura 15:52) (traditional reading: innā [properly: innā] minkum waḡilūn = (to read: ḏāḥilūn – as present participle) (we are afraid of you); (Sura 15:53) (traditional reading: lā ṭawāqal = (to read: lā ṭadhal [be not afraid]) – as confirmed by the Lisān, by what means the Koran is discharged from an unjustified anomaly imputable to the Arab grammarians and philologists; (Sura 23:60) (traditional reading: wa-qulūbhum waḡila-tun) = (to read: wa-qulūbhum ḏāḥīl [their hearts being in fear], as transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic present participle plural, the end-h being an alternative writing of the end-alif to designate the plural ending ē = إ / ḏāḥīl – Arabic to read: ḏāḥīl > ḏāḥīl – by no means ḏāḥila-tun).

As to this alternative writing, the Koran gives us the following convincing illustration: (Sura 68:43; 70:44) (traditional reading: ḥāšā-tan absārhum); (Sura 54:7) (traditional reading: ḥusṣā-an absārhum). Both traditional readings are arbitrary and without any philological foundation, since the historically verifiable Syro-Aramaic orthography leads in both spellings to the sole possible reading: ḥāšē (Arabic ḥāšā – not ḥāšā-tan and less than ever ḥusṣā-an) absārhum (their looks down cast [in reverence]).

b) As an Arabic /w mistaken Syro-Aramaic ḏ r
There are more examples for the rendering of a Syro-Aramaic ḏ r as an Arabic /w. In Sura 11:70 we find the following example:

FLAMA RA AYDIBIM LAM TOSIL ALA NIKRUM WA-JIN SN MINH EXIFIA

Bell (I 212, 73) translates: “Then when he saw their hands not reaching forward to it, he misliked them and conceived a fear of them”.

Though, here too, the underlined word is nearly correctly understood, a verbal root ḥas / waḡasa is nevertheless unknown in Arabic. The unsettled explanation attempts made hereto by guess in the Lisān (VI 253) relate to the presumable understanding of this Koranic passage. Ibn Sayyidih is right, when he says:

هو عندي أنه على الناس إذ لا نعرف له فعلاً (in my opinion, it is a denominative, because we don’t know a verb of it).

The verbal root is in fact Syro-Aramaic. To reconstruct it, we need only to replace the /w in awḡasa by a Syro-Aramaic ḏ r = Arabic /r = ḏ arṣa, to have the Syro-Aramaic Verb شعر. According Mannā (723a), this verbal stem means in Arabic: شعر / Šā‘ār, ḏ āṣsa (to feel, to perceive).

Besides, the verb نكرهم / nakirhum (Arabic: nakirhum – rather na-karhum) means not ,he disliked them”, but, as borrowing from Syro-Aramaic_purchase / naṣrī, according to Mannā (448b) under (5): استغرب: I ṣṭārab (to find strange).

The above cited Koranic verses from Sura 11:70 is hence to understand as follows:

“Then when he saw their hands not reaching forward to it, he found them [= their behaviour] strange and perceived a fear of them”.

240
14. MISSREAD ARABIC EXPRESSIONS

Sura 17:64

Sura 17:64 offers us one example, among others, of not just Syro-Aramaic but also Arabic expressions that have been misread and/or misinterpreted. Here the context is that God has cast Satan out of Paradise for his refusal to bow down before Adam. Satan asks God for permission to be allowed to abide among men until the Day of Judgment in order to sow confusion among them. God grants him his request and adds:

واستقرز من استطعت منهم بصونك واجلبالهم بخيلك ورجلك
وشاركم في الأموال والولد وعدهم وما بعدهم السخطان إلا غورا

Following the Arabic understanding this verse is rendered as follows (here on the basis of Paret’s representative translation):

(Paret 233): “And startle (wa-staťăziz) with your voice whom-ever of them you can, pester (?-wa-aglib’alaĥim) them with all of your hosts [note: literally – with your cavalry and your infantry], take part in their wealth and their children (as a partner) and make them promises!” Satan only makes them deceptive promises.

(Blachère and Bell translate accordingly).

Concerning the underlined terms:

(a) That Satan is said to “startle” the people with his voice contradicts another Koranic statement according to which Satan “whispers in the hearts of men” (Sura 114:5). For the dubious reading "istafîr" (the Lisân (V 391b) gives the following meaning:

298 The Koranic verb استقرز (la-ajtábanāna) (Verse 62) has been misread; by Paret (233) it has been rendered thus: (I will with few exceptions) “do in” (? [Note: Or “bring under my sway” (?)] [his descendants]. The falsely placed upper point of the /n/ yields as a lower point / l/ b the correct reading استقرز (la-ajtábikann). بخيلك (b ašš), Manná (215a): (3) (balbala, Šawwaša) (to entangle, to confuse).

299 The expression occurring in Sura 4: 98 (Paret 77: “who dispose of no possibility [bšt]) has nothing to do with the homonymous Arabic word in the meaning of “trick.” As a loan translation from the Syro-Aramaic expression مكل (mšš b Bavd) (Manná, 412b: “to be capable of a strength,” i.e. “to have the strength at one’s disposal,” a tautology for “to be able to, to be capable of, to be in a position to”), it is still today a commonly employed Syriacism in Arabic. That which in modern Arabic is taken to be the feminine ending of حيلة (bšt) should in the Koran be viewed as a reproduction of the emphatical Syro-Aramaic ending of مكل (Bawd). The


and the halâlah: which serve for fishing) – again, as a Syro-Aramaic loan word, also to be understood here not as the feminine [bibâlā], but as the transliteration of the masculine Syro-Aramaic defs 8 [bibâlā]; Manna [216a] [4]: 

bibālā, šarak, masyada [trap, snare]; [5]: makr, makâda [deception]. Following the Syro-Aramaic meaning, both “trap, snare” and “cunning, deception” are possible.

(d) In the case of (wa-raγ̄išika) (your infinity) one must assume that the r/d is a misread, the original word (wa-daγ̄išika) (< Syro-Aramaic daggûla) (daggûla) is meant in a meaning that makes any sense: “lying, lies and deception” (Manna, 137a, 300). This one among other examples for the mistranscription of a Syro-Aramaic ( ) as an Arabic ( ) from an original text in Garshuni ( ).

(e) Finally, (wa-šarîkhun) (and take part with them) is still without a meaningful explanation. In Tabârî (XIV 119 ff.) all the commentators understand this verb in the sense of “to take part.” In answer to the question as to the way in which Satan would take part in the wealth of people, it is explained that it is in their unlawfully acquired wealth, and in the case of their children: (a) in those born as a result of adultery, and (b) in that one gives them other gods’ names (e.g., “abd šams “Servant of the sun = Sun-worshipper”). What is more likely, however, is the figurative sense of the Syro-Aramaic verb šarâk/sarrēk, which Manna (515b) renders in Arabic with awlā’aagrâ (to tempt, to seduce). From this root in Arabic only the nominal form šarâk (sherâk) is known in the meaning “trick, snare” (Listân X 450b): (a) “take refuge in you from the evil of Satan and his snares or temptations” (wa-šarak) (as-šarak: the snares of the hunter), which is also mentioned in the cited hadît: “I take refuge in you from the evil of Satan and his snares or temptations” (wa-šarak). Accordingly, in the passage in the Koran what is meant is not the third Arabic verbal stem (sherâk) (to take part with someone), but the second Syro-Aramaic verbal stem (wa-šarak) (to tempt). Thus, instead of (sherâk) (to tempt them) (stârikhun) (take part with them), (stârikhu) (tempt them) should be read.

According to this analysis, the previously cited verse from Sura 17:64 is to be understood in Arabic and Syro-Aramaic as follows:

“Hence avert with your voice whomever you can of them, outwit them with your snare and your lies and deception, tempt them with wealth and children and (to that extent) make them promises – yet nothing but vain illusion does Satan promise you!”

300 Here we have an example of a possibly secondarily inserted 1/ a that causes a change in meaning. However, the alif can also designate a short a according to the orthographical tradition of Syro-Babylonian Aramaic (cf. Rudolf Meyer, Hebräische Grammatik [Hebrew Grammar] I, Berlin, 1966, p. 50 f.; Theodor Nödeke, Mandäische Grammatik [Manichaean Grammar], § 31); Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar], § 35). As to the sporadic use of an alif for a short a, the Koran follows a Syro-Aramaic tradition. This tradition was abandoned in the later classical Arabic, except for some cases, where the alif is still taken for a long a as in the suffix of the first personal pronoun, e.g., katabna (we have written), the end-alif of which is to be read as a short a. That the traditional transcription renders it as a long a, is etymologically wrong, since the Arabic personal suffix plural na/-na is nothing but a tertiary remnant of the Syro-Aramaic personal pronoun plural nouns (-nan/-nas – cf. Thes. I 250), enclitico form > -nan, Arabic enclitico form after dropping of the Syro-Aramaic end-n > -na. That this end-a is spoken as a long a before an object suffix, as in katab-nâ-hu (we have written it), is the result of a compensatory lengthening (Ersatzdehnung), generated by the dropped end-n.

The explanations of Carl Brockelmann in his Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen [Compendium of the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages] (I p. 299 f.) as to this pronoun require a more thoroughgoing investigation.

original Koranic reading was therefore with certainty not la yastatt'ina bitha’tan but bithâl. Besides, for the meaning "to outwit" the Koran usually uses makar (mekar).
Sura 33:53

A further instance of the misreading of genuine Arabic words is provided to us by Sura 33:53 in the misread word (iināhū), which has been misinterpreted as “cooked (foods)” (said of a meal) instead of لَاتِه (ināhā) “his wives” (in referring to the Prophet), and that in a late Medinan text! In the passage in question believers are asked not to enter the houses of the Prophet unless they have been invited for a meal, but then it is said that they are to enter خَيْر نَائِرِينَ أَيَّامَهُ (gayra nāṣirīna ināhū) (as it reads in the modern Koran) “without waiting for its (the meal’s) being cooked,” where, if read correctly, it should say: خَيْر نَائِرِينَ أَيَّامَهُ (gayra nāṣirīna ināhū)301 “without looking at his wives.” In the process the Arabic commentators have even deliberately interpreted the unambiguous Arabic verb نَظَر (nāzara) (to look) as نَتَرَ (intaqara) (to wait) to justify the misreading “its being cooked” instead of “his wives.” In this example it is still a question of a relatively harmless distortion, which our Koran translators have nevertheless not noticed.302

15. THE MISREADING AND MISINTERPRETATION OF THEMATIC CONTENTS

Now that it has become clear from the preceding analysis of individual samples of the language of the Koran that already in normal linguistic usage the Koran text has been in part so misread and misinterpreted by Arabic philologists and exegeters, it will no longer be surprising if meanwhile deeply anchored notions in the Islamic tradition, indeed religious contents, have been partially based on an equally misunderstood Koran text. Included among these notions are the Ḥārūs or Virgins of Paradise.

The Ḥārūs or Virgins of Paradise

To introduce in the following the notion of the so-called Ḥārūs or Virgins of Paradise, which until now has been considered as a specific component of the Koranic presentation of Paradise, the article ḤJṣ will be cited from The Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden, London, 1971; vol. 3, 581b f.)303:

ḤJṣ, plural of ḥāwrā, fem. of ḥāwar, literally “the white ones,” i.e. the m a i d e n s in P a r a d i s e, the black iris of whose eyes is in strong contrast to the clear white around it. The nomen unitatis in Persian is hārī (also ḥārī-bībīshtrī), Arabic ḥārīya. The explanation of the word found in Arabic works “those at whom the spectator is astounded (ḥārī)’ is of course false and is therefore rejected even by other Arab philologists. These maidens of Paradise are described in various passages in the Kūrān. In Sūra 2:25, 3:15, 4:57, they are called “purified wives”; according to the commentators, this means that they are free alike from bodily impurity and defects of character. In Sūra 55:56, it is said that their glances are retiring i.e. they look only

301 It should be mentioned in this regard, however, that as a rule in Arabic لَاتِه (iināhī) serves as the word for the gender (feminine or female). On the other hand, in Syro-Aramaic the etymological equivalent אָמָה / אָמָה is used for “woman” as well as for “wife.” The later Arabic readers were evidently no longer aware of this. The same spelling as a plural, although without the personal suffix (iināhā / ināhā), is in any case read correctly in six other passages (Suras 4:117; 17:40; 37:150; 42:49,50; 43:19).

302 Thus, Paret translates, or, rather, paraphrases (349): “Ihr Gläubigen! Betretet nicht die Häuser des Propheten ohne daß man euch (wenn ihr) zu einem Essen (eingeladen seid) Erlaubnis erteilt (einzutreten), und ohne (schon vor der Zeit) zu warten, bis es so weit ist, daß man essen kann (gaira nāzīrīna ināhū)! [You Believers! Enter not the houses of the Prophet without, (if you are invited) to a meal, being granted permission (to enter), and without already ahead of time waiting until the time that one can eat (gaira nāzīrīna ināhū)].” Blachère (452) translates in an equally confusing way: “[N’entrez point aînors sans attendre le moment de [ce repas]] [(Do not enter at all) without awaiting the moment of (the meal)]” Bell (II 417) at least notes in reference to his translation, “without observing when he is ready”: “As it stands in the text, this is usually taken as referring to the meal, but the grammatical construction of the phrase is difficult....”

303 See also the Enzyklopaedie des Islām, vol. 2 (Leiden, Leipzig, 1927) 358 f.
upon their husbands. “Neither man nor jinn has ever touched them”; this is interpreted to mean that there are two classes of them, one like man and the other like the jinn. They are enclosed in pavilions (55:72). They are compared to jacinths and pearls (Sūra 55:58).

Later literature is able to give many more details of their physical beauty; they are created of saffron, musk, amber and camphor, and have four colors, white, green, yellow, and red. They are so transparent that the marrow of their bones is visible through seventy silken garments. If they expectorate into the world, their spittle becomes musk. Two names are written on their breasts, one of the names of Allāh and the name of their husband. They wear many jewels and ornaments etc. on their hands and feet. They dwell in splendid palaces surrounded by female attendants and all possible luxury etc.

When the believer enters Paradise, he is welcomed by one of these beings; a large number of them are at his disposal; he cohabits with each of them as often as he has fasted days in Rumaḍān and as often as he has performed good works besides. Yet they remain always virgins (cf. Sūra 56:36). They are equal in age to their husbands (ibid. 37), namely 33 years (al-Baidawī). These are all very sensual ideas; but there are also others of a different kind. In discussing the Koranic “wives” (2:25), al-Ba’daṭwī asks what can be the object of cohabitation in Paradise as there can be no question of its purpose in the world, the preservation of the race. The solution of this difficulty is found by saying that, although heavenly food, women etc., have the name in common with their earthly equivalents, it is only “by way of metaphorical indication and comparison, without actual identity, so that what holds good for one may hold for the other also.” In another passage (on Sūra 44:54) al-Ba’daṭwī observes that it is not agreed whether the hūrīs are earthly women or not. Likewise Shī‘ī authors have spiritualized the hūrīs (see especially Berthels, loc. cit.).

Sale (The Koran, London 1821, Preliminary Discourse, p. 134) and others (see Berthels, l.c., p. 287) think that Muḥammad owed the idea of the maidens of Paradise to the Parsis. Dozy (Het Islamisme, Haarlem 1880, p. 101, note) has rejected this opinion with the comment that Sale’s parsistic source is much earlier than the Korān and the relationship is thus the reverse. In the article DJANNA it is suggested that Muḥammad misunderstood Christian pictures of Paradise and that the angels in them are the originals of the youths and maidens of the Korān. [Followed by Bibliography.] (A.J. Wensinck)

That the notion of the hūrīs or virgins of Paradise in the Islamic tradition can be traced back to a Persian influence has been suggested at the beginning of the article cited above from The Encyclopaedia of Islam. It is however not the task of this study to go into the historical circumstances that have led to the creation of this mythological construct. Ascertainment that is better off left to the historians of religion and culture.

The following analysis confines itself to the purely philological interpretation of the passages of the Koran relevant to the so-called hūrīs or virgins of Paradise. It will show that among the Islamic commentators Baidawi rightly poses the question of the real meaning of these heavenly females. Furthermore, it will confirm the suspicion referred to at the end of the article cited above to the extent that it was not, say, that the Prophet had misunderstood Christian illustrations of Paradise, but rather that the later Islamic exegesis had misinterpreted the Koranic paraphrase of Christian Syriac hymns containing analogous descriptions of Paradise under the influence of Persian conceptions of the mythological virgins of Paradise. This analysis is based on the method that was introduced above and explained with the help of individual examples.

The Koran takes as its starting point the axiom that the Scripture preceding it (the Old and New Testament) has been revealed. Understanding itself as a component of this Scripture, to be consistent it derives from this the claim that it itself has been revealed. In this regard, it emphasizes in no small number of passages, again and again, that it “confirms” (مصدق / musaddiq) the Scripture (e.g. Sura 2:41, 89, 91; 3:3;
4:47; 5:46; 6:92, etc.). To this extent it takes the Scripture as its model, for example in Sura 4:82 when it cites as an argument to prove its own authenticity:

ولو كان من عند غير الله لوحدوا فيه اختلافا كثيرا

"Were it (the Koran) namely not from God, you would find (in comparison to the Scripture) many differences (inconsistencies)."

There would be such an inconsistency, however, if the likes of the hāris, assumed by the Koran to be an essential feature of its eschatological notions, were not to be found in the Scripture. Then the Koran, against its usual assertion, would have thus produced proof that it had not come from God.

Yet in its conclusions the following discussion will concede that the Koran is right. For the Koran is not to blame if, out of ignorance, people have read it so falsely and projected onto it their subjective, all too earthly daydreams. We therefore intend to deal in more detail with the individual verses upon which these so-called hāris or virgins of Paradise are based.

**Sura 44:54; 52:20**

وزوجتهم بحور عين

The starting point for this misunderstanding is in all likelihood these two Sura verses (44:54 and 52:20), where in each case (according to the reading until now) it says: “wa-zawwaghnāhum bi-hārūm 'in ma'.” Without contesting it, our Koran translators accordingly render this clause as follows:

(Bell 501,536): “and We have paired them with dark-, wide-eyed (maidens).”

(Paret 415,439): “Und wir geben ihnen großaugige Huris als Gattinnen...”

(Blachère 528): “Nous les aurons mariées à des Houri aux grands yeux.”

(558) Nous leur aurons donné comme épouses, des Houris aux grands yeux.”

On the basis of the following discussion this verse will be understood in the Syro-Aramaic reading as follows:

“We will make you comfortable under white, crystal-clear (grapes).”

It is characteristic of Western Koran research that it has never called into question the diacritical points that were subsequently added to the Koran text and that in each case first determined the suggested letters in an original spelling in need of interpretation. Today the extent, still unpointed early Koran manuscripts provide evidence that these points are not authentic. Nonetheless the conviction has never been challenged that the later pointing was based on an assured oral tradition. A detailed philological analysis, however, will reveal that this is a historical error.

**On the Verb زوجتهم (zawwag-nā-hum)**

In the previously cited verse it should first be noted that in the verb زوجتهم (zawwag-nā-hum) two falsely placed points (one above the ر / r [=ُ / ُ] and one below the ح / h [=١ / ١]) have resulted in the misreading “to marry.” Namely, if we read the original spelling purified, i.e. without these two points, the result is the reading زوجتهم (zawwag-nā-hum) (according to the context): “we will let them rest” (as God says with regard to the blessed spirits of the departed in Paradise). This reading finds its justification in the common Syro-Aramaic and Arabic verbal root روح / روح (rawaḥ), under whose causative stem rawaḥ Manna (728a) gives under point (2) the homonymous Arabic meaning: لراح (arálḥ) (to let rest). But the causative stem with the same meaning is also quite common, 304 so that one wonders how Arabic read-

304 Cf., e.g., H. Wehr, Arabisches Wörterbuch [Arabic Dictionary], 330a, under ريح, II: “to refresh, to revive; to allow to rest, to allow to relax, to give rest and relaxation.” In any case in modern Arabic the variant ريح (rayyāḥ) is
ers could have read it wrongly. The reason is presumably that they did not know what to do with the following preposition — /bi- (in, with), which in Arabic is incompatible with this verb, whereas in the meaning “with” it is perfectly compatible with the verb زوج (zarafah) (to marry); therefore in this connection the only possible reading according to the Arabic understanding was “to marry with.”

On the Meaning of the Preposition — / bi-

In the process the Arabic philologists with certainty did not think about the meaning of the preposition — / bi- in Syro-Aramaic. Namely, among the 22 different functions of this preposition, Manna (48a) gives under (20) the following meaning: بين (bayn) “between, under.” In fact, this meaning alone gives the reading زوجهم (zarafah-nahum) its correct sense: “We will let them rest under (between)” (so-called حور عن bār ‘īn) (roughly: “We will make them comfortable, cozy, snug under such [bār ‘īn]).

On the Double Expression حور عن (bār ‘īn)

Now because one assumes on the basis of the masculine personal object suffix (zarafah-nahum) that it is men who are supposed to be married, it was only logical to the Arab commentators that it had in the case of the following double expression, حور عن (bār ‘īn), to be a question of female creatures with whom those men were to be married. Whence the necessity to interpret this expression accordingly. The Arabic philologists have correctly understood the Arabic adjective حور (bār) (as a plural of the feminine حورة / bawrā’) as a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic حور (bwar) “to be white” (kwār / bawrā / “white”). But on the basis of the presupposed virgins, they have likewise understood the following عين (‘īn), which is unclear in terms of pronunciation and form, as a description of “eyes.” Thus there was later derived out of the double expression حور عن (bār ‘īn), misinterpreted as “white big-eyed (ones),” the expression bārī, which never occurs in the Koran, as the name for these imaginary virgins of Paradise. In the process the spelling عين (‘īn) was interpreted as the plural form of the feminine adjective عيناء (‘aynā’) in the meaning “big-eyed.”

Yet whether the legendary notion of the so-called bāris or virgins of Paradise stands or falls depends on the right or wrong interpretation of this Koranic double expression.

On the Expression حور (bār)

With regard to the word حور (bār), it has been said already that the Arabic philologists have correctly understood it as the Arabicized plural form of the feminine adjective حورة (bawrā’) in the meaning of “white.” But because what it is referring to is not named in the Koran, this had to be imagined. In this context in the Koran there is no talk anywhere of its needing to be, of all things, women or virgins. To be sure, there is mention in two passages of the earthly wives with whom the righteous are to be brought together in Paradise; these are: (a) Sura 43:70:

إدخلوا الجنة ائتتم وأزواكم تحبرون

“Enter into Paradise, (therein) shall you be brought together with your wives.”

305 Cf. Lisan XIII 302b: العين (‘īn) and عيناء (‘aynā’): plural of عين (‘īn) , i.e. a big-eyed [one].

306 In a miscellaneous contribution to the Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik [Journal of Arabic Linguistics] (ZAL) 29 (Wiesbaden, 1995) 77 ff., Michael B. Schub has already correctly identified the origin of the Koranic verb َتَحَبَّتْ from the Hebrew/Aramaic root bhar in the meaning of “congregated together.” Following the Arabic commentators, Bell (496) translates “in gala attire” [note:] or “made happy”; Parec (411) “ergötzt euch (darin)?” [take delight (therein) (?)].” and Blachère (523) “vous...serez fêtés [you will be entertained].” How-
The Koran also keeps its promise and accordingly presents the pious together with their wives in Sura 36:56:

هم وزوجاتهم في ظل على الأرائك متكون

“They and their wives lie (reclining) on carpets in the shade.”

Quite apart from the fact that with the supposed ḥūres the Koran would be contradicting Scripture, with this latter statement it would also be contradicting itself. After all, with the clear contents of these two verses the Koran is in effect ruling out the existence of any “(female) rivals.” Namely, one can well imagine how the earthly wives, in the bliss of Paradise and for all eternity, would be forced to look on helplessly while their husbands enjoy themselves with the putative virgins of Paradise. Josef Horovitz has already pointed out this scarcely imaginable contradiction in his article “Das koranische Paradies [The Koranic Paradise].”

Entering into the particulars of the verse cited above, he explains:

“On the other hand, 43:70-73 is remarkable because there the wives of the pious are also assured admission into Paradise. “Enter into the Garden, you and your wives, to enjoy yourselves. Bowls of gold will pass around among you and cups in which there is that which souls desire and eyes feast upon, and you will abide there forever.” The wives are also mentioned in 36:56 and, though there one could in any case also think of the Ḥūrīs, who according to 44:54 (see above) are indeed given to the blessed departed ones as wives, such an interpretation cannot be upheld for a passage like 43:70; the invitation to enter Paradise with their spouses can only be directed at the earthly wives.”

In spite of this statement, which contradicts the sense imputed to Sura 44:54, Horovitz stops at these findings without daring to take the further step of trying to clarify this obvious contradiction. In fact, it would have sufficed to subject the corresponding passages to a closer philological examination. This may now bring the hoped-for solution to the puzzle.

To conclude with regard to the expression حور (ḥūr), it has now been ascertained that it is formally an Arabic feminine plural adjective, and that this adjective refers to a substantive of the same gender which, although the Koran does not name it here, can be determined from the remaining Koranic description of Paradise.

On the Expression عين (임)

This word, whose singular form in the pronunciation (ʾayn) (eye, well, etc.) is common to both Syro-Aramaic and Arabic, has been understood in the Arabic exegesis of the Koran as a plural. Yet the two commonly employed plural forms for this in Arabic are عيون (ʿayn) and أعين (aʿyan) (for eyes and wells, respectively, not to mention أعين / aʿyan for notables). Accordingly in the case of this form, which is explained as an additional plural variation occurring only in this Koranic expression عين (임), it may be a question of the graphical rendering of the Syro-Aramaic plural عين (ʿayn), though in the Arabized pausal form (i.e. with the omission of the Syro-Aramaic emphatic ending which is foreign to Arabic). Of necessity the only possible pronunciation in Arabic, to make the distinction from the singular (ʾayn), would accordingly have been عين (임). This does not mean however that (임), for example, would be an Arabic plural of the substantive عين (ʾayn) (eye). Whence the necessary assumption in Arabic that one is dealing here with the plural form of the feminine adjective عين (ʾayn) in the meaning “big-eyed” (woman), as the Lisān310 explains it.

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ever, it is more likely that the Koranic expression is a direct borrowing from the synonymous Syro-Aramaic تماش / etḥabbar (to be led together, to be brought together).


308 See the note above on this expression.


310 As far as that goes, it may be correct that the Arabic عين (임) is the plural of the
In the pronunciation [ع] (ع) the word would be understood in Syro-Aramaic as a status absolutus singular (emphaticus ُ). Arguing in favor of the plural is first of all the preceding Arabic plural حور (حور) (white), by which it is explained, according to the Arabic understanding, the following عين (ع) as the attributive feminine plural adjective “big-eyed” white = حور. For the assumption of an original Syro-Aramaic plural of the substantive ُ (عين) (eye, etc.) that would stand in apposition to the preceding حور (حور), the coherence of the Koranic context will be decisive.

The Arabic explanation, according to which the double expression حور عين (حور) would designate the particular gleam of the whites of the eyes as a mark of the beauty of these virgins of Paradise does not only contradict Arabic linguistic usage. Namely, when one describes the beauty of eyes, it is said as a rule, and indeed not just in Arabic, “beautiful black, beautiful brown and beautiful blue eyes,” but never “beautiful white eyes,” unless of course one is blind. For instance, in the Koran it is also said of Jacob that from all his crying over his son Joseph his eyes have become “white” (سورة 12:84), i.e. they have been blinded. The further explanation given by the Arabic commentators that this white particularly emphasizes the beauty of (big) black eyes is only an invented makeshift explanation, but one which Bell takes at face-value by translating: “dark, wide-eyed (maidens)” (whereas Paret and Blachère simply suppress the key expression “white”).

If for linguistic reasons the meaning “eyes” in the sense of women’s eyes is now to be ruled out, then the imagined حور عين or virgins of Paradise to which these “eyes” until now have referred, disappear ipso facto.

The tertium comparationis

This is to be found among what the Koran calls the fruits of Paradise. These include, among others, date palms and pomegranates (Sura 55:68) as well as grapes (Sura 78:32). These last-mentioned are conspicuously named only in this passage in connection with Paradise, whereas they occur in no fewer than ten passages among the other fruits of the earth and of earthly gardens (Suras 2:266; 6:99; 13:4; 16:11, 67; 17:91; 18:32; 23:19; 36:34; 80:28). This is an essential determination in the identification of our metaphorical expression حور عين (حور). If in fact the grapevine is an essential component of the earthly garden, for which the Koran also uses the same Arabic word حور (ganna) borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic حور (ganna), to designate the heavenly Paradise, then in the latter it is even more so the fruit of Paradise par excellence. Still, it makes one particularly suspicious that the grapevine is almost never lacking in earthly gardens in the Koran, but is in heavenly gardens, of all places, explicitly named only once.

311 Cf. Ther. II 2867.


313 Cf., e.g., C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 122a f.
The Significance of Ephraem the Syrian

An important clue is offered here by the fourth-century Syro-Aramaic hymns of Ephraem the Syrian (ca. 306-373) "in Paradise." A debate over the significance of its vividly described grapevines of Paradise was begun by a book written by the Swedish theologian and Islamic studies specialist Tor Andrae (Mohammed, sein Leben und Glaube [Mohammed: His Life and Belief] [Göttingen, 1932]). Andrae wanted to prove with this parallel that the Koranic depiction of Paradise had been inspired by those of the Syrian Christian, but he was at the same time advocating the thesis that in Ephraem there are also allusions to the Koranic virgins of Paradise. The German Syriologist, theologian and Koran scholar Edmund Beck expressed his opinions on this in an article, from which the following excerpt taken from his introduction (398) should suffice:

"A closer consideration of this work by St. Ephraem gives me the occasion to express my opinions on the surprising hypothesis that Tor Andrae attaches to his final quotation [pp. 71/2]: Wine...is also not lacking in the Christian Paradise, and one can even recognize a more specific suggestion of the virgins of Paradise in Ephraem’s words: “He who has abstained from the wine here below, for him the grapevines of Paradise. Each of them extends him a drooping cluster. And if someone has lived in chastity, then they (fem.) receive him in their pure bosom, because as a monk he fell not in the bosom and bed of earthly love.”

On the basis of the appended Latin translation of the corresponding Syro-Aramaic passages Edmund Beck contents himself with saying that in Ephraem it is only a question of a vivid description of the grapevines of Paradise, but by no means of virgins of Paradise. He does not take the further step of demonstrating to Tor Andrae that the reversed relationship is the case, namely that in the case of the supposed hûrs of the Koran – in agreement with Ephraem’s Syro-Aramaic description of Paradise – it is also only a question of grapes. That also marked the end of the discussion on the subject.

But not least the internal criteria of the Koran will convince us that with the double expression حَرْبُ عَينِ (hûr ‘în) the Koran is doing nothing more with this metaphor than describing this fruit of Paradise par excellence in a totally special way and emphasizing it over the other fruits of Paradise, and that by this it finally means nothing more than what Ephraem the Syrian also meant, namely, grapes.

Taking as a starting point the Syro-Aramaic expression نَتْمُوس (gnûmos) (grapevine) that Ephraem the Syrian uses in his hymn, it should first be noted that the word is feminine, which is also what led Tor Andrae to see in it an allusion to the virgins of Paradise. In the end it was also this that led the Arabic exegetes of the Koran to this fateful assumption.

With this term documented in connection with Christian-Syriac literature of the 4th century in the same context, we would have the tertium comparationis we were looking for, the key word constituting the referent of its congruent feminine adjective حَرْبٌ (hûr). The Arabic plural, though, refers to the grapes themselves, which the Koran also employs elsewhere in the collective form عبد (‘nab) (twice) and in the plural form أنْتَمْ (a’nâb) (nine times) (in Syro-Aramaic, the feminine singular نَتْمُوس / ‘inab). This is made especially clear through the other

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316 Cf. Edmund Beck, loc. cit., 400. On نَتْمُوس (gnûmos) and نَتْمُوس (gnûmos), see, for example, C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 128b.
317 Cf. ibid. 534b. To be doubted is Fränkel’s all too assertive claim in Aramäische Fremdwörter [Aramaic Foreign Words] (156): “The Arabic language has meanwhile preserved from Proto-Semitic times a large number of genuine words that are related to wine and wine-growing. Thus, for example, حَرْب and قَرْم are protected from any suspicion of being a borrowing, likewise علب.....” The usage of the Koran should suffice to refute this.
metaphors in the Koran that compare grapes with “pearls” (Sura 52:24; 56:23; 76:19). Namely, the latter have in common with white grapes that they are both completely white, which, after all, is known not to be the case for the eye.

Surprisingly the Lisan (VII 125b) provides us with an Arabic parallel to the borrowed adjective حَرَّم (hâr) in the meaning “white (grapes)” with the following explanation: النبيّة : عم: يَصَرُّ عليه الكح‍ل “al-bayda’” (is) a (variety of) white grape with large berries in Ṣāhī. The substantivized Arabic adjective البيضاء (al-bayda) (actually white (grapes)) the “white” here (as in the Koran) clearly stands for the implied substantive “grape.”

This in turn is sensibly associated with the equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression, which the Thes. (I 1230) gives under the special meanings of the adjective وَهَرْا (howarda) (white) in the feminine form under (a): وَهَرْا (howarda) ([the] white [one]): vitis species (a variety of white grape).318

Solution I

These examples ought to rule out the imagined virgins of Paradise, who are not mentioned anywhere in the Koran, as the referent for the substantivized adjective حَرَّم “white.” Not least the اعنت (a’nâb) “grapes” mentioned repeatedly in the Koran in connection with gardens allow one to conclude instead that it is these for which the term حَرَّم = “white” (grapes) stands as a substituted substantive.

Part of the watertight solution to the puzzle, however, is still the explanation of the next expression, عَنْ (In). Since we had established that this word is perhaps in the plural, as a substantive it can therefore not be understood adjectivally in the sense of “big-eyed” since the previously assumed virgins of Paradise have been eliminated. Now insofar as the adjective white in the Koranic context designates the color, the appearance of the grapes, one should look in Syro-Aramaic for an equivalent descriptive meaning for the noun عَنْ (In) that follows it in apposition.

The most reasonable explanation seems to be the following cited in the Thes. (II 2867) under حَرَّم (In):

“valet etiam aspectus (appearance), color (color), \textit{white} (\textit{eye} = coloring, shiner, gleam of the pearl, of the crystal, of the gem), Num. XI, 7, Ephr. I, 256 C...; \textit{white} (\textit{eye} of the wine = its “sparkle”), Prov. XXIII, 31, Ephr. Opp. Gr. II, 408 D...319 (2870, Ap. lexx.): حَرَّم (In) berulhâ (eye) = sparkling, gleaming of the pearl or of the crystal — so-called: حَرَّم (l-sāfara da-hażeh) (because of its beautiful appearance). Further Mannâ 540a, (2): وَعَجَرْ مَنْ تَرْنُ (vağh, manjar, lawn (appearance, sight, color).”

It is moreover interesting to note that the Lisan (XIII 302b f) has also preserved a reminiscence of the Syro-Aramaic meaning in the following expression: وَعَجَرْ مَنْ تَرْنُ (wa-aynu rağul: manzarab) (the “eye” of a man = his “appearance” — actually his “esteem,” hence: عَنْ (the notables)320, and further on (306a): عَنْ (the “eye” of something = its exquisiteness, treasure — hence: عَنْ (the excellent thing).321

With that the meaning of عَنْ (In) should actually be clear. As a noun standing in apposition to the plural حَرَّم (hâr) “white” (grapes), it has a descriptive function. As such it can be in the singular (“a gleaming, splendid appearance” in the meaning “of gleaming, splendid appearance”) or in the plural (in the sense of “treasures”). The


cite{319}{For the same meaning in Hebrew, see W. Gesenius, \textit{Hebraisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch [Compendious Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary]} 582b, (h) figuratively speaking: (a) the eye of the wine, i.e., its sparkling in the cup, Prov. 23:31...; (y) sight; hence, form, appearance, Num. 11:7, Lev. 13:5,55, Ezek. 1:4 ff. 10:9, Dan. 10:6.

cite{320}{The Lisan does not remark that the current plural عَايَنَ (a’ayn (notables) is derived from this meaning.

cite{321}{This feminine form means in modern Arabic “specimen, sample”. But the original Syro-Aramaic meaning is “choice, prime, elite, flower” (= modern Arabic: خَلَق / mühba [select, choice], خَلَع / hîtra [the best, choice, elite]).
Solution II

Inasmuch as the Koran explicitly compares the “white(s) (grapes) with pears,” the actual sense of عين (in) or (야온) “eyes” has also been cleared up. Taking as its starting point the “sparkle, gleam” or the “sparkling, gleaming appearance” of gems, the Syro-Aramaic expression بِتْرُ (in), as the Thesaurus proves, has itself been transferred to the gems. However, because the Koran compares the grapes with “pearls,” though these are not gems in the proper sense, we can take the alternative meaning given by the Thes. “crystal” (due to its clarity and its shine) or “jewel” as an expression of the “preciousness,” which in this respect is confirmed by the ليشان (عين الثني : النesson منه) for the Koranic context. Now because حور (bitr) as a designation of “white” (grapes) is in the plural, the noun عين that follows it in apposition is logically also to be read as plural, which is indeed confirmed by the traditional reading of the Koran. Accordingly, the Koranic double expression حور عين (bitr:ayon) says:

“White” (grapes): “jewels” (or rather) “crystals” = Crystal-clear white (grapes) [instead of “dark, wide-eyed” (maidsens)].

This would explain the syntactic relationship between “eyes” [= crystal-clear] as a nominal adjective and the substantivized adjective “white” (grapes).324

324 In a recently by Jan M.F. van Reeth published essay entitled: “Le vignoble du Paradis et le chemin qui y mène. La thèse de C. Luxemburg et les sources du Coran [The Vineyard of the Paradise and the Way leading there. The Thesis of C. Luxemburg and the Sources of the Koran]” in: Arabic, vol. LIII, 4, (Brill) Leiden, 2006, p. 511-524, the author undertakes the task to detect the Christian sources of the Koran. Based on his erudite findings, he supposes a misreading of the double Koranic expression حور عين (rather bitr:ayon) and proposes instead the emendation حور عين (kibr ‘inab) or حور عين (kibr ‘inab) in the sense of “some quantity of grapes or vine” (une certaine quantité de raisins, de vin – p. 515). Indeed, حور kibr designates in Syro-Aramaic a “dry or liquid measure” of variable size and حور kibr “grapes”; yet the palaeography allows such an emendation not. For neither within the بیخس and کییت style nor in the assumed case of a transcription from Syro-Aramaic is a misreading or mis-transcription of an Arabic initial س / k as a حور / h nor a Syro-Aramaic or Arabic final سب / b as a final ن / n conceivable. A comparison of these four letters on the appended copies of the Samarqand codex suffices to exclude normally their confusion. See for example the second copy [CD 0098] following the index, line 4, the initial سب / k and the final ن / n in the word سبک / ar-raktin [Sura 3:43], and line 5, the dotless final ن / b in the undotted first word سبک / al-gaby [the invisible], that can also be read سبک / al-inab [grapes] but not سبک / al-inab (or rather سبک) [eyes = jewels, crystals], further the حور / h in the following undotted word نحیة / نحیة [we inspire it]. The unconsidered emendation of these letters, the graphical form of which is unequivocal, would transgress the principle of the lectio difficilior. The double expression حور عين (bitr:ayon) occurs three times in the Koran (Suras 44:54; 52:20; 56:22); its reading is graphically incontestable and semiologically covered through the following expounded context. The task of the philologists is to clarify the Koranic text in order to guard the historian of religion against hasty deductions and to provide him with a reliable basis for his far-reaching investigations.
In the history of the Koranic text this significant expression, which served as the inexhaustible source for the mythologized subject of the ḥārīt and not just for Arabic popular literature, would thus be restored to its historically authentic dimension thanks to Syro-Aramaic. It helps the Koran to achieve its original inner coherence. That the Christian-Oriental notions of Paradise depicted by Ephraem the Syrian find expression in the Koran can no longer be surprising when one knows that the Christian Syro-Aramaic hymns of Ephraem in the 4th century and afterwards gained such currency beyond the Aramaic speech area of Syria and Mesopotamia that they were even translated into foreign languages such as Greek and Armenian.\(^3^5\)

Remarkable are to that extent the erudite and to the Bible referring investigations of the author as to his new comparative interpretation of the Sura الفاتحة (p. 519-524). As to the expression غير المعصوب عليهم (gayr al-maghdīb ilayhim) in verse 7, another understanding as the proposed reading from the supposed Arabic verbal root ḫb in the sense of “couper, transpercer, abattre, éloigner” (to cut, pierce, strike down, take away) is conceivable without to modify the traditional reading, if we start from the Syro-Aramaic sense of the equivalent expression כְּעָנָן (the angel of the Lord), as far as sinners (who transgress = פָּשַׁט = Koranic yafṣiqu n the divine law) incur the divine anger (cf. Mammā 721b, 722a / argaez, 1. أُغَضِبُ / aqāba [to anger], 2. أُغْضِبُ أَخْطَأ / aqābā, ḥtā [to commit an offense, a sin]). Instead of the proposed understanding: “le chemin de ceux que tu combles de grâce, non de ceux qui sont aménantis ou égarés”, it should be proposed: “le chemin de ceux que tu combles de grâce, non de ceux qui se sont attiré ta colère [= qui ont transgressé ta loi] ni de ceux qui se sont égarés [= qui se sont écartés de ton droit chemin].”

\(^3^5\) Cf. also A. Baumstark, Geschichte der syrischen Literatur [History of Syriac Literature] (Bonn, 1922) 32 ff.: “The life story of the ‘Prophet of the Syrians,’ as the grateful admiration of his people called him, began very early on to weave its web around the pious legend. Already purely in terms of volume the mass of what has been preserved under his name in the original and in the variegated dress of foreign languages is overwhelming, without one’s even coming close to exhausting what he actually wrote.” On the translations, 35 ff.: “Translations of A.'s [Ap(h)rem’s = Ephraem’s] works already appeared in Greek during his lifetime.” Further, on page 36: “One cannot help but be struck to a great degree by how relatively seldom it was for pieces existing in Syriac to come back in Greek translation.” ... “Finally, in the best of circumstances one would at least always have to expect that the old translations, during their hundreds of years of use as practical devotional literature, would scarcely be able to escape unintentional distortion and deliberate revision of various sorts.” (We have before us such a revision for devotional purposes on, among other things, the topic of Paradise in the Koran.) The Armenian translation of the works of Ephraem is assigned to the 5th century. Later, translations were made by way of Greek into Coptic and into Old Church Slavonic. An Armenian translation, also via Greek, of around 50 pieces by A.[p(h)rem] on ascetic and moral subjects is said to have been completed as late as the year 980 (37).
The Koran does not only apply the expression زوج (zawâq) to people in the sense of "spouses," but also to animals and plants in the sense of "kind, genus, species." This is made clear from the context of many a verse, such as in Sura 43:12, which Paret (407) correctly identifies: "And (be it is) who has created all (possible) pairs [note: i.e. kinds (of living beings)]." Specifically applied to the plants of the earth (Sura 31:10), it is here too correctly identified by Paret (339): "And we have caused all manner of magnificent species (of plants and fruits) to grow upon it." Further examples can be found in the Suras 20:53; 22:5; 26:7; 36:36 and 50:7.

However, because the Koranic paradise consists of trees, plants and fruits, it is clear that what is meant by زوج مطهرة (azwâq mutâhabara) is not "purified wives," but "all manner of species of pure (fruits)."

Moreover, that the fruits of paradise are pure will be shown in the passages that are yet to be discussed.

Sura 37:48-49

وعندهم قصاصات الطرف عين كاهن بيض مكون

(Bell II 444): 47. "With them are (damsels) restrained in glance, wide-eyed. As they were eggs [or "pearls"], well-guarded."

(Paret 370): 48: "Und sie haben großaugige (Huris) bei sich, die Augen (sittsam) niedergeschlagen, 49: (unberührt) [Note: or (makellos)] als ob sie wohlverwahrte Eier wären."


According to the Syro-Aramaic reading this will be understood as follows:

"They will have (at their disposal) hanging fruits (grapes) (for the picking), jewels(-like), as were they pearls (yet) enclosed (in the shell)."

On the Expression قصاصات الطرف (qâşirât t-tarf) قصاصات الطرف (qâşirât t-tarf)

Before one can here determine a fitting meaning for the first expression قصاصات (qâşârât), the second word طرف (tarf) must first be explained. Now that نور (nûr) are out of the question, it would be nonsensical to want to speak of their (demurely lowered) "eyes," as this word has been previously used in Arabic. What is thus sought is a meaning that goes well with grapevine or grapes.

Here the Syro-Aramaic synonym نور (tarpâ) (with the original meaning "leaf, foliage") proves helpful. For the meaning we are seeking the Thes. (I 1525) lists under نور (taref) folia decaspersit, racemavit (to pick [clean] the leaves or the grapes), with the following example: نور (âlâ da-naref karmâ) (we must pick [clean] the vineyard or the wine leaves). In addition to this there is in Mannâ (297) under (4): قطع . قطع . جمي الوترق والشر (to pick the foliage or the fruits). Finally, in New East Syriac نور (tarpâ) is documented in the meaning (a) leaf, foliage, (b) small branch. 327

This leads us first of all to the meaning of the small branches laden with foliage and grapes of the grapevine. However, insofar as the de

326 With "pure" the Koran is perhaps rendering one of the meanings of the Syro-Aramaic (gâbîq) (exquisite, noble), for which Mannâ (87b) gives, among others, the following Arabic expressions: (3) صقر . جيد. فاخر . نور . فاخر (sheer, noble, precious, splendid). However, the actual meaning "pure" is also confirmed by Sura 55:56,74, where it is said that nobody before the blessed spirits of the departed has ever "defiled, soiled" these grapes.

(fruits) to be picked (قهطوفها / qattatifuhā) hang down low. This meaning should be assumed for طرف (tarf).

With this last meaning, قصرات (qasirat) should then produce an adequate sense. For the Syro-Aramaic verb مَبِين (masar) Mannā (696b) gives under (2): “قصر نضخ (gašara, ṣaṭada) (to make short, to lower). This corresponds to the meaning assumed by our Koran translators, however with regard not to “lowered eyes,” but to “lowered,” i.e., “low-hanging” (and to that extent easy-to-pick) branches. A parallel expression occurs in Sura 69:23 with قطوفها ذاتية (qattatifuhā dāniyā) (its fruits are near to be picked, i.e. within easy reach) (< Syro-Aramaic مَبِين datā).328

A similar thought is contained in the expression وذلت قطوفها ذاتية (wa-dullilat qattatifuhā tādiyā) (and its fruits are quite easy to pick).329 Thus for the expressions and the parallel passages from Sura 69:23 and 76:14 suggest the following understanding:

“By them (will be) low-hanging branches (laden with fruit).”

The next word عين (‘in) could here stand for the Syro-Aramaic plural حيطة (‘aynā). The dropping of the emphatic ending would be caused by the Arabic transcription. Besides the meaning “gleam, shimmer,” especially of gems, it has already been explained that the term can also designate the gem itself or a jewel.330 Accordingly, the double verse cited above from Sura 37:48-49 is to be understood as follows:

“By them (will be) fruits (grapes) hanging down, (like) jewels, as were they enclosed pearls (still in the shell).”

The final expression بيض (bayḍ‘am), which Paret has rendered according to the Arabic understanding with “eggs,” Blachère and Bell (in addition to “eggs”) have correctly conjectured as “pearls,” though not on the basis of the actual Arabic meaning. In fact, in Ṭabar (XXIII 57 f.) the majority of the commentators explain the expression in the meaning of “like an unhulled egg,” although the interpretation as “pearl” is also advocated once. Ṭabar himself, however, pronounces himself in favor of the former, the majority opinion. However, the parallel passage from Sura 52:24 “as if they were enclosed pearls,” suggests the latter meaning. Like لؤلؤ (lūlū) (pearls), بيض (bayḍ) too is a collective noun, which is indicated by the singular form of the verb. On the basis of the Arabic understanding, one can in fact understand “eggs” under بيض (bayḍ). The Lisān does indeed document the feminine form بيضة (baṣda) in the sense of “white” to designate a variety of white grapes, but not to designate pearls. Once again, it is only via Syro-Aramaic that we arrive at this meaning to the extent that the Thes. (I 606), with a reference to the Eastern Syrian lexicographers, designates both the مَرَكَز (mārakār) and مَرَكَز (mārakkār) margarita (pearl as well as crystal) as “white”: Albo limpidoque colore est, سُمَوَ مِلْمِلَ (hewwār wa-siḥ) (white and clear); hence the Syrians explain مَرَكَز (mārakār) as مَرَكَز (mārakkār) margaritae albae (white pearls). Accordingly, just as in the case of “white” (grapes) (حَرِّ / ḥrī), with the Arabic collective noun بيض (bayḍ) the Koran is also designating “white” (pearls) following the equivalent Syro-Aramaic designation.

Sura 38:52

وعنهما قصرت الطرف اثراب

(Bell II 454): “With them are (females) restrained in glance, of equal age.”

(Paret 378): “während sie gleichaltrige (Hüris) bei sich haben, die Augen (sittsam) niedergeschlagen.”

(Blachère 486): “tandis qu’auprès d’eux seront des [vierges] aux regards modestes, d’égale jeunesse.”

328 Cf. Mannā 153b, ḍalāl (datā) (to be near).
330 Thes. II 2867, Ap. lex. (1) gemma (gem, pearl): furthermore, at 2870, Ap. lex., the Arabic المَلِّ (maḥā’ / "pearls" as well as "crystal") is given, among other terms, by Bar Bahilāt and Bar ‘Alf for “حَيْطَة (‘aynā / al-‘ayn). With this expression, the Koran has once again handed down to us an interesting detail pointing to the Syrian-Mesopotamian region.
As opposed to both of the prior verses (37: 48-49), in the present verse only the expression أثراب (atrab) has been added. This expression could of course not fail to help spur on the fantastic imagination of the حيتة to yet another adequate property. For, although one knew about the “big-eyed حيتة” that they were to that extent “cute,” they still lacked one characteristic: in addition to that they had to be “young.” And so one hit upon the idea that this misunderstood Arabic expression had to mean something like “of the same age,” from which there resulted the meaning “forever young.”

Subsequent commentators then even pinned their age down to the symbolic figure of thirty-three. So much for the history of the development of the expression أثراب (atrab).

It is in the meantime clear that all the commentators were so taken with the idea of the حيتة that for them anything else was out of the question. Yet it is astonishing that they have paid so little attention to the Koranic context. Namely, two verses further (54) it is said in regard to the supposed حيتة: “This is our (heavenly) nourishment (وزن) /rizqan)”, it will be inexhaustible.” The Koranic statement is actually clear and excludes every possible figment of the imagination. In excess of food and drink there is nothing in Paradise.

The Koran confirms this statement in several passages, where it is said among others to the pious: “Eat and drink (كلا وشربا / kalil wa-sariba) (Suras 52:19; 69:24; 77:43), enjoy (the fruit) of your toil”. Furthermore, it should be noted that even in later Medinan Suras the believers are never promised more than “gardens [properly bowers], under which rivers flow”.

Not even in the Medinan verse (3:169) referring to those killed for the cause of Allah حيتة are mentioned. Instead it is said about them (Bell I 62, 163): “Count not those who have been killed in the way of Allah as dead, nay, alive with their Lord, provided for”.

Through the actual sense of the attributive adjective أثراب (atrab) (fleshy, juicy) it is clear from the context of this verse that with طرف (tarf), as determined from the Syro-Aramaic expression, what is in fact meant are “fruits ripe for the picking.”

334 Though the Koran here uses طرف (tarf) as a collective noun, it also has the plural أثراب (atrab) in two other passages; in Sura 13:41 it says: "وهم أمل رأوا نارتاحا (narinuha) (and thus reduce the area of their power?)"

With أثراب (atrab) here, however, it is not “ends” that is meant, but the “fruits” of the earth that God “decreases” as punishment. Namely, with نارتاحا the Koran is reproducing the Syro-Aramaic ت باسم (jassur) or ت اسم (asur), for which مانث (254b) (2) gives in Arabic ناقد (naqasa, qallala) (to reduce, to decrease). The same applies for Sura 21:44. Likewise, the expression
Sura 55:56

فيهن قصرت الطرف لم يملمنهن آس قبلهم ولا جان

(Bell II 551): “In them are (damsels) of restrained glance, whom deflowered before them has neither man nor jinn.”

(Paret 448): “Darin [Note: D.h. in den Gärten (Mehrzahl)] befinden sich auch, die Augen (sittsam) niedergeschlagen, weibliche Wesen, die vor ihnen [Note: D.h. vor den (männlichen) Insassen des Para-dieses, denen sie nunmehr als Gattinnen zugewiesen werden] weder Mensch noch Dschinn (futan) entjungfert hat.”

(Blachère 570 f.): “Dans ces jardins seront des [vierger] aux regards modestes que ni Homme ni Démon n’aura touchées, avant eux.”

The result of the ensuing analysis will show that this verse is to be understood Syro-Aramaica as follows:

“Therein (are found) drooping fruits (ripe for the picking), which neither man nor genius (i.e. an invisible being) before them has ever defiled.”

335 The original meaning of the Syro-Aramaic verbal root גָּמָה / gann, גָּמָה / gnā, Hebrew גָּמָה / gann > gnan (1. to hide, 2. to protect) suggests that “genius” (as a “hidden” = invisible being) is etymologically derived rather from Syro-Aramaic than from Greek γῆς / gēs > Latin genis > gignō (to engender, to bear). Of the same etymology is Arabic جَنَّة / jannāt > Syro-Aramaic גָּמָה / gannāt, גָּמָה / gannāt (garden > paradise – grammatically a passive participle) as a “protected place.” The most likely interpretation of the Koranic plural גָּמָה / gannāt would be that of the single (vine) arbours as “shaded places”, under cover of which the pious are said to rest (just the same sense as the Arabic word خمامة / haima [tent, bower]; cf. Sura 55:72: حَرِيرُ مِصْرُوتِ رُفَعَ [White] (grapes) hanging in (wine) bower); etymologically, خمامة / haima is derived from the root حَمَّ / hāmā [to protect], the حَمُّ / hām being a vernacular Eastern Aramaic pronunciation of the حَمُّ / hām, this root being again a phonetical variant of the Syro-Aramaic verbal root حَمْرَ / hāmār [to cover, to hide]; cf. Maimā 547b. S. Fraenkel, Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen [The Aramaic Foreign Words in the Arabic Language], was indecisive as to this etymology, when he noticed (p. 30): “Unklarer Herkunft, aber durch äthiop. haimat (Dillm. 610) als echt erwiesen ist خمامة [Of not clear origin, yet through Ethiopian haimat (Dillm. 610) is خمامة / haima proved as genuine].”
emerged as a denominative.\(^{336}\) This arises not only from the feminine present participle طاشم (tāmīt) (said of a woman when she has her period) listed by the *Lisān* (II 165b), but also from the listed meanings that coincide with those of the Syro-Aramaic verb ԵՔ / ԵՔ (tamiša) (Thes. I 1484), although with some shifts in meaning. Of course, an etymologically equivalent Arabic root طمي (tami'a) given by both the *Thesaurus* and Brockelmann, is not listed by the *Lisān*, which is an argument in favor of its having also been borrowed from the Aramaic.

Now whereas the Syro-Aramaic root actually means “to be impure,” one has related the Arabic denominative to menstruation and naturally connected this with the idea of blood. So if a woman says “I am طاشم (tāmīt)” (for *I have my period*), in Arabic one has understood “I am bloody,” whereas in Syro-Aramaic this meant “I am impure.” In Arabic usage, this notion was also logically applied to the transitive, thus resulting in the meaning “to deflower.” The comparison between the *Lisān* and the Thes. shows clearly that with the meaning “to deflower” one has a concrete imagination of *blood* in the Arabic usage, whereas in Syro-Aramaic one understands this in the figurative sense of “to render impure, to defile, to dishonor.”

And hence this fateful misunderstanding occurred in the Koran where the verb لم يتمش في (lām yatμithunna) is used transitively. By that in Arabic, especially with regard to the imaginary hūrīs, one was thus only able to understand “to deflower,” whereas in Syro-Aramaic it means “to render impure, to defile.” What moreover reinforced the Arabic commentators in their notion that the grapes of Paradise were women is precisely the feminine personal suffix هن / -huna, which according to the rules of Arabic grammar can refer only to rational living beings, i.e. exclusively to women, whereas the Koran in accordance with the rules of Syro-Aramaic does not always make this distinction in the case of the feminine.\(^{337}\)

Finally, one should not fail to mention in favor of the Arabic commentators that *Tabari* (*loc.cit.*) also explains لطمت (tamiša) in the meaning of “to touch,” as Blachère likewise translates it. With reference to the white grapes of Paradise, this understanding would be correct. However, with regard to the intended hūrīs this expression is only a euphemism.

Thus the previously cited verse is to be understood according to the Syro-Aramaic reading as proposed at the outset.

The related Verse 58, as correctly translated by Paret (449), [“They are (so radiantly beautiful), as if they were hyacinths and corals. / Sie sind (so strahlend schön), wie wenn sie aus Hyazinth und Korallen wären.”], accordingly refers not to the hūrīs, but to the grapes and the other fruits of Paradise.

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\(^{336}\) This fact has previously been noticed by R. Dozy, *Die Israeliten zu Mekka* [*The Israelites in Mecca*], Leipzig-Haarlem 1864, p. 182, note 7: “As to امرأة طمث (imra’a tāmīt) it must be noticed that طمث (tāmīt) is not an Arabic word that were derived from a root طمث (tāmīt), it is הָעַד (tami’/tami’a), the usual term for impure in Levitic sense; the last letter is a feminine ending.”

\(^{337}\) Thus, for example, in Sura 12:43 it is said of the seven fat cows devoured by seven lean ones: يأكلون سبع يبقون (ya kūl ahum – as they were women), instead of classical Arabic – like a singular: يأكلها (ya kūl hā). In like manner, it is said of the seven withered ears of corn لبصن (yābisī) (as a sound feminine plural for reasonable beings) لبيض النعل (lī-l-īsāq), i.e., women and not بديبة (yābisā – like a feminine singular لبض النعل / lī-gayr al-īsāq) for not reasonable beings). So, too, in numerous other passages of the Koran.
(Blachère 570 f.): 70 “Dans ces jardins seront des [vierges] bonnes, belles. 72 des Houris, cloîtrées dans des pavillons, 74 que ni homme, ni Démon n’aura touchées, avant eux.”

First of all, to comment on the individual words:

Verse 70: The words “good” and “beautiful” do not refer to “(damsels)” (Bell) or “female creatures” (Paret), who are not even mentioned in the Koran. Paret’s understanding of this has been falsely concluded from the feminine ending of the preceding adjective (which according to Arabic grammar is restricted to rational living creatures).

(a) The Arabic adjective خيرات (to be read hayyirāt rather than bayyirāt) stands for Syro-Aramaic حَبْلٌ (gabylāḥ), for which the Thes. (I 636 f.) gives the meaning electus (choice). The Arabic meanings that the Mannā (87b) gives for this are revealing: (3) كريم . شين . فاخر (good, excellent, pure), فاضل. طاهر (noble, precious, first-rate), خ互联 الشن (5) (that which is choice). This last meaning is meant here with regard to the “choice (heavenly fruits).” Also interesting, however, is the first definition listed under (3) طاهر (pure), which makes clear the real meaning of the supposed “purified wives” (Suras 2:25; 3:15; 4:57), where what is really meant, however, are “choice fruits of every sort.”

Meaning (4) كريم (precious), which the Koran uses as a synonym in this context (e.g. Suras 8:4; 26:7; 31:10), further confirms this meaning.

The Syro-Aramaic expression helps us moreover to deduce another word characterized as obscure in the Koran. In Verse 25 of the Mary Sura, namely, it says: “Shake the trunk of the palm so that they will fall down to you.” Paret (249) translates the two words read as رَتَابَا “gantya” as “fresh dates.” In his Commentary (329) he remarks (19, 25): “The expression رَتَابَا (yaz) actually means ‘(freshly) picked,’ which does not fit here.” In reality, however, Syro-Aramaic حَبْلٌ (rabiā) / حَبْلٌ (rabiā) means everything “fresh and green” (see Thes. II 3893 f.; Mannā 737a: (رطب. أخضر. نضر). Therefore it is accordingly not “dates” that are meant, but “fresh” (fruits). In the adjective that follows the upper dot has been falsely set. Setting it lower results in the reading حبلا (gabyla according to the rhyme, but really gabyla). Namely, as a transliteration of the Syro-Aramaic حَبْلٌ (gabyla) it means “choice.” And thus these two adjectives do not mean “fresh dates,” but “fresh, choice” (fruits).

(b) The second Arabic adjective حسان (hisān) is to be understood as a synonym of the first. As the lexical equivalent of the Syro-Aramaic حَبْلٌ (rabiā), namely, it results in exactly the same meaning, which Mannā (277b) cites under حسانت (rabiā) with the following Arabic expressions:

خيار . حسن . فاضل . كريم . فاخر . شين

Here too the Syro-Aramaic expression confirms the Arabic equivalents appearing in the Koran خيارات (hayyirāt), حسان (hisān), and كريم (karm) in the meaning of “excellent, choice.” That this adjective refers to the indicated fruits is clear from the Koranic context.

Thus, in the above-mentioned Verse 70 “good and beautiful female creatures” are out of the question. The verse should instead be understood in this way:

“Therein are found choice, excellent (fruits).”

The problem of Verse 72 is relatively easy to solve when you know that the Arabic word خيمة (jayma) means not only “tent,” but also “bower.” However, questionable figments of the imagination arise when Paret translates the verse in this way: “Houris cloistered in tents (so as to be withdrawn from the sight of strangers).” In accordance with the expressions explained above and recurring in this verse, this verse should instead be understood Syro-Aramaically as follows:

“White (grapes) hanging in wine bowers.”

Interesting in this respect is the parallel with Ephraem the Syrian considering that in what was quoted above he likewise speaks of grapevines of paradise that present hanging grapes to the righteous one.

As a repetition of Verse 56, Verse 74 has actually been clarified. In context the Verses 70, 72, and 74 from Sura 55 are thus to be understood Syro-Aramaically as follows:
70. “Therein (are found) choice, first-rate (fruits),
72. White (grapes) hanging in (wine) bowers,
74. which neither man nor genius has ever besmirched”

Sura 56:22-23

وحور عين كامل للؤلؤ المكون

(Bell II 555): 22. “And (maidens) with dark, wide eyes, like pearls treasured — …”

(Paret 450): 22. “Und großäugige Huris (haben sie zu ihrer Verfügung), 23: (in ihrer Schönheit) wohlverwahrten Perlen zu vergleichen.”

(Blachère 572): 22 “[Là seront] des Houris aux grands yeux, 22/23 semblables à la perle cachée, …”

This double verse has actually already been clarified and only needs to be repeated:

22: “White (grapes), jewels, 23: Like pearls that are (still) enclosed (in the shell).”

Sura 56:34-37

فرش مرفوعة / أنا أنشئ انثى
فجعلهن أيكارا / عربا اترابا

(Bell II 555): 33. “And carpets raised. 34. Verily We have produced them [The hours of Verse 22] specially, 35. And made them virgins. 36. Loving and of equal age, …”


Jungfrauen gemacht, 37: heißt liebend ( uruban ) und gleichaltrig, …”

(Blachère 573): 33/34 “[couches sur] des tapis élevés [au-dessus du sol], 34/35 [Des Houris] que nous avons formées, en perfection, 35/36 et que nous avons gardées vierges, 36/37 coquettes, d’égale jeunesse, …”

In this verse is the culmination, as though in an apotheosis, of the mythological notion of the so-called hours. It is not easy to straighten out this crooked train of thought, but we intend to make the attempt and examine the individual words.

On Verse 34: Here the only word that needs to be explained is فرش (furush), which as an Arabic plural can if fact mean either “mattresses, beds” or “carpets.” In this meaning it corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic کتاس (præsāl), from which it is derived. But beyond that, this Syro-Aramaic word has, among others, the following meaning given by ماناة (611b): (4) خيمة. مطلة (tent, bower). In this respect it can be understood as a synonym of the Arabic خيمة (hiyān) (tents, wine bowers) occurring in Sura 56:72 above. The following participle مرفوعة (marfūʿa) (raised) also refers to this, which results in the meaning: “raised [or high-climbing] wine bowers” (and not “thickly upholstered beds” or “carpets raised above the floor”).

On Verse 35: Here the Arabic verb انشأ (anšaʾa) is lexically equivalent to the Syro-AramaicANN (awʾ) (or to the synonym 아שלא ašwal), the Arabic equivalent of which ماناة (313b) gives as follows: انشئ (to cause to grow), انشئ انشأ، (2) مصدر (to provide, to create). From this it becomes clear that here the Koran means انشأ (anšaʾa) in the sense of انشئ (انشأ) (to cause to grow). In this way this verse also adds itself seamlessly to the one preceding it:

34. “raised (high-climbing) wine bowers; 35. these we have had grow tall.”

On Verse 36: Supposedly God has made the hûrīs into “virgins.” Yet both in Arabic and in Syro-Aramaic the meaning of the expression بكر (bikr) is not primarily “virgin,” but first of all “first work” as well as
“first born.” However, in particular in Syro-Aramaic it has the meaning we need here, which مانن (Mann) (bakkarīd), defines in Arabic as follows: (first works, in particular first fruits). This means that the precondition of all of the previously listed qualities (pure, crystal-clear, choice, first-rate) is this: as first fruits the heavenly fruits include in themselves the above-mentioned advantages. Thus Verse 36 is:

“We have made them into first fruits.”

On Verse 37: That God supposedly had made the ḥārīs “passionately loving” and “of equal age” is naturally one of the high points of this mythological conception.

It is no accident that the Koranic spelling عربا, which is considered unexplained to this day, has been misread as ‘uruba”. As an unexplained term, it could be explained at one’s discretion. But then if the ḥārīs were “young and pretty,” they still lacked one property: in addition to this they had also to be “passionately loving,” since nothing would be more boring in Paradise than a cool beauty.

Yet it is a question precisely of this property in the case of the misread word عربا (uruba*), which would be correctly read in Syro-Aramaic as عربها (arrāyēh) (cold, ice-cold), and should accordingly be read in Arabic as عربها (probably arrāyē or arrāyē). That the heavenly fruits are “choice” as well as “chilled” is substantiated by the Koran in Verses 42-44, where it is said on the contrary of those who are on the left (that is, of the damned) that they will be in the heat of fire, where they will receive nothing لبارد ولا كريم (lah bārid wa-lā kartm) cool nor choice.

The next word أشرا (which is to be read ṣ̣̃̈̄ra) has already been discussed above. Accordingly, Verse 37 no longer refers to ḥārīs that would be “passionately loving and of equal age,” but of heavenly fruits that are “chilled and juicy.”

To sum up, according to the Syro-Aramaic reading, the Verses 34-37 of Sura 56 should now be understood as follows:

34. “(They will have) high-climbing (wine) bowers, 35. these we have had grow tall, 36. and made into first fruits, 37. chilled and juicy.”

Sura 78:33

This verse offers us a kind of second selection on the subject ḥārī in the Koran. Verses 31-34 may be cited in this connection:

أن للمتقين مفازا / حدائق واعتنى
وكواعب اشرا / ركنان دهفا (Bell II 630): 31. “Verily, for the pious is a place of felicity, 32. Orchards and vineyards, 33. And full-breasted (ones) of equal age, 34. And a cup overflowing, ...”


Verses 32 and 34 show that the pious will have gardens and wine bowers as well as brimming wine cups. In this context one has to wonder how the houris (who are not named) suddenly appear with swelling bosom (Paret) or as “full-breasted” (Bell). Here the misinterpreted expression كواص (kawāth) is genuinely Arabic. In Tabart (XXX 18) it is explained by mutual agreement as “buxom women.” The Lisān (I 719a) explains the verb كواص as follows: ملاها : كلما (kā“ab means, in speaking of a vessel or whatever: to fill it). In Arabic one seems to have transferred this meaning to women’s breasts. The meanwhile generally accepted notion of the ḥārīs appears to have so fired the imagina-
tion of the commentators that this property has now also been ascribed to the "young, pretty" and "passionately loving" virgins of Paradise.

Yet this interpretation, which is unworthy of the Koran, is driven ad absurdum by the Koranic context itself. To the extent that the أئذاب (attrāb or atrāb) following مكاز (kawāb) was explained as "juicy" (fruits), it can already no longer be a question of "full-breasted (ones) of equal age." Only "fruits" can be meant by this expression, if need be, such fruits considered as "full vessels." This understanding is suggested namely by other Koran passages, for example, in Sura 43:71, where there is talk of golden platters and goblets, and in Sura 76:15, of silver vessels and chalices. To be sure, the connection with goblet, chalice or cup is also present in this context, but nothing is said about bowls. Thus it is here more reasonable to assume that the two consecutive adjectives refer to grapes (or other fruits).

Therefore the expression مكاز (ka-wāb), misinterpreted as "swelling breasts," should also now be understood in Arabic in the context of the verses 78:31-34 cited above as follows:

31. "The pious (will) (in days to come) (have) a place of felicity:" 338 32. Gardens and grapes, 33. and (indeed) lush, succulent (fruits), 34. and a brimming-full 339 (wine) cup."

This concludes the philological analysis of the complex of themes surrounding the هُرَّس or heavenly virgins in the Koran. May the efforts taken in this regard to arrive at a linguistically sound understanding be of assistance in lessening the discrepancy between the Koran as it is to be understood historically and the previous understanding of the text.

These philological conclusions constitute a terminus post quem (= a quo) as to the so-called old Arabic poetry and the Hadith-literature, in so far as the theme of the هُرَّس or heavenly virgins they refer to is the product of the later Koran commentators of the ninth and tenth century. 340

The subject that now follows, the boys of Paradise, is not as serious as that of the هُرَّس, although it too contradicts to a certain extent the conception of Paradise in the Scripture.

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338 Arabic مُفَاز (mafaż) at first suggests a loan translation from a nominal form of the Syro-Aramaic root مُفَاز (Thes. II 2437: [1] to shine, to beam; [2] to flourish, to become famous; [3] to win, to triumph). For the nominal form مُفَاز (mafaż), in Arabic equivalents, among others: مُفَاز (nāsib), مُفَاز (nāsib) the following Arabic equivalents, among others: مُفَاز (nāsib), مُفَاز (nāsib) (to glorify, to delight); (3) مُفَاز (nāsib, zaffār) (to bestow victory on, to help to triumph). The Koran renders the latter meaning with the synonymous noun مُفَاز (mafaż), but what it means by that in this context is the former (happiness, splendor). As a nomen loci it thus seems justified to render مُفَاز (mafaż) following the Syro-Aramaic semantics as a "place of bliss or of splendor." Although Bell captures the proper meaning with his translation (place of felicity), as opposed to the original Arabic meaning of فِاز (fażza) (to be victorious), he does not give his reasons for doing so. Analogously, the other derivations of فِاز (fażza) ( فز / mawz / فاز / fażza) occurring in the Koran are to be understood in each case by taking into account the Syro-Aramaic semantics.

339 مُفَاز (mafaż) (139a) alone lists the expression مُفَاز (mafaż) (nāsib) (nominal form nāsib / dhaqāq) with the Arabic meaning مُفَاز (mafaż) (nāsib) (to fill, to fill to overflowing, to pour).

16. THE BOYS OF PARADISE

Now that the dream is gone of the hātrīs or virgins of Paradise, some may seek consolation in the conception of the remaining boys of Paradise, because there is allegedly also talk of such in the Koran. For this we need to look individually at the three verses in which they are named, that is, Sura 76:19, 56:17 and 52:24.

Sura 76:19

ويボード عليهم ولاد مخلدون إذا رأيتهم حسبتهم لولا منثورة (Bell II 624): 19. “Round amongst them go boys of perpetual youth, whom when one sees, he thinks them pearls unstrung.”

(Paret 493): 19: “Ewig junge Knaben (wildān mun muḥālladtna) machen unter ihnen die Runde. Wenn du sie siehst, meinst du, sie seien ausgestreute [Note: Oder: ungefäβte (?manṭttn)] Perlen (so vollkommen an Gestalt sind sie).”

(Blachère 629): 19: “Parmi eux circuleront des éphèbes immortels tels qu'à les voir tu les croirais perles détachées.”

Two expressions are crucial for the proper understanding of this verse: (a) the noun ولد (wildān), and (b) the participial adjective مخلدون (muḥālladtn) (both in plural).

Only Paret draws attention to the dubious meaning of these parenthetical expressions. In so doing he has rightly put in question the existence of “boys of perpetual youth” in Paradise, whereby the Koran, moreover, would deviate in a further point from the conception of Paradise in the Scripture. That this, though, is in fact not the case, the following philological analysis will attempt to prove.

First of all it was established from a purely formal point of view that the participial form مخلدون (muḥālladtn) only occurs twice in the Koran and, indeed, precisely in connection with these “eternal boys,” whereas the forms خالدون (hālidtn) and خالدين (hālidtn) occur 25 and 45 times, respectively, in the same meaning of “eternally living.” This is no accident. If the Koran conspicuously makes this distinction, there must be a reason for it.

The next suspicious element is the circumstance that in this verse as well as in Verse 52:24 the Koran compares these boys to “pears.” This causes one to sit up and take notice since the Koran, after all, at other times compares “white grapes” to “pears,” as the analysis of the hātrīs has shown.

We would thus have two important clues to help us solve the riddle. But here, if one considers the meaning of the central expression upon which everything depends, the task is not that easy. In other words, how can one make “boys” into “grapes”? Specifically, the word ولد (wildān) has not been misread; it is genuinely Arabic and as such rules out other interpretations.

Yet here, too, the Syro-Aramaic proves helpful. Under the etymologically corresponding נים (yaldāt) (child: that which has been born) the Thes. (I 1594) in fact lists for the expression נים (yaldtt da-gēttā) the following references from the New Testament: Mt. 26:29, Mk. 14:25, and Lk. 22:18. These three passages refer to the Last Supper at which Christ took leave of his disciples. In this context it is said that after Christ had blessed the bread and distributed it among his disciples, he raised the chalice, gave thanks and passed it to his disciples, saying (according to the Pṣīṯa from Mt. 26:28): “This is my blood (that) of the new testament, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I say unto you (now follows the Syro-Aramaic citation from Mt. 26:29):

וים נים וים נים וים נים (d-lā esē th men hātna yaldtt da-gēttā l-jawmā d-ṭeb eštn khí t-amkātn batā l-malkūtah d-ahṯf).

“I will not drink henceforth from this “child” of the vine, since I will drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

The Christian symbolism of the wine of Paradise can probably be traced to these well-known words from the Last Supper. Also based on this are the Christian notions of Ephraem the Syrian concerning the grapevines
of Paradise. Finally, traceable to this are the falsely understood ḫarīs and the correctly understood white grapes of the Koran.

With the expression يَلَدَة (yaldā / da-ḡeṭṭā) (literally) "child" (= product) of the grapevine, it is then the "fruit" or the "juice" of the grapevine that is meant. Manna (310 f.) first gives this meaning under يَلَدَة (yaldā) in Arabic as follows: (3): ولد ناح، فمرة: (child, product, fruit), and under يَلَدَة بنت الكرمة: خمرة (yaldā / bint al-karama / hamra) ("daughter of the vine," wine). The Arabic rendering as the feminine بنت (bint) (daughter) (for masculine يَلَدَة / yaldā [child, product] is probably best viewed as an assimilation to خمرة (hamra) (< Syro-Aramaic masculine يَلَدَة / hamra)) (wine), which is taken to be feminine in Arabic.

With the meaning "fruit" (or "juice") the Syro-Aramaic now lends the Koranic expression ولد (wildan) a meaning that is, in contrast to the prior understanding ("boys"), adequate to the metaphor "pearls." At the same time proof would be furnished for the parallel to "white grapes," which are compared to "pearls."

If this is so, then how is the active verb يَطْفِع عَلَيْهِm (yatfūt alay-him) "there go around (among them)," to be explained?

Here it must first be pointed out that in three other passages in the Koran this verb is used in the passive voice; these are the Sura verses 37:45, 43:71, and 76:15. There what is said is يَطْفِع عَلَيْهِm (yatfūt alay-him) "it is passed around to them." Hence here the active verb is not absolutely to be understood as personified either. However, in the hymn cited above (234), Ephraem the Syrian tells us who it is who passes around the fruits and beverages of Paradise. There in fact it is said of the grapevines of Paradise that each of them holds out a drooping cluster to the righteous one. The Koran also transfers this notion to the beverages of Paradise. For in the bliss of Paradise one is freed from earthly efforts. Here one need not trouble oneself about food and drink: the fruits and beverages themselves offer to the righteous.

This is why the active verb يَطْفِع (yatfūt) is accordingly applied to the fruits and beverages of Paradise. This therefore does not imply that the task should be assigned to "boys of eternal youth." The expression "boy," moreover, has been falsely derived from the secondary meaning of the Koranic ولد (wildān). Primarily the root means ولد (wildā) "to give birth to, to produce." In Arabic, the now familiar secondary meaning "boy, lad" has developed from the noun ولد (wildā), a meaning, though, that the Syro-Aramaic مَكَزَّ (yaldā) does not have.

For the Koranic expression ولد (wildān) this is already reason enough not to adopt the Arabic secondary meaning "boy," or even less "young man," for that matter.

The meaning of the participial adjective مَكَزُون (muhalladān), which Paret renders as "eternally" (young), could be applied without any problem to the fruits of Paradise to the extent that one can assume that these would be just as eternal as Paradise itself. However, we have established that this passive participle (of the second stem), which occurs only twice in the Koran, does not without reason stand out in opposition to the active participle (of the first stem), which occurs 70 times. Under this special form one should therefore expect to find a special meaning.

The following are some of the marks of quality attributed to the fruits of Paradise in the Koran: They are first fruits, to the extent that they are choice, pure, white; like jewels they are, among other things, compared to pearls; they are furthermore lush and juicy.

However, an equally essential characteristic has been previously overlooked in the Koran. That these fruits and beverages are iced can be at least indirectly inferred from the two-fold occurrence of the Arabic adjective بَارد (bārid) (cold, cool) (Sura 56:44, 78:24). There, though, it is said of the Damned in Hell that they will receive nothing cool, but only hot things (to eat or to drink). With regard to Paradise itself, however, the expression بَارد (bārid) is never used.

The reason for this is that the corresponding expressions are Syro-Aramaic. One of them has already been identified (cf. 256 above) with

341 This is another example of a Syro-Aramaic masculine emphatic /A ending which is taken to be feminine in Arabic. Whence, too, the in itself erroneous explanation that there are in Arabic two forms for "wine," one masculine خمرة (hamra) (as a pausual form) and one feminine خمرة (hamra). This has had as a result that the masculine خمرة (hamra) can also be feminine (cf. H. Wehr, Arabisches Wörterbuch [Arabic Dictionary]). In his Aramäische Fremdwörter [Aramaic Foreign Words] 160 f., S. Fraenkel has not drawn attention to these two variants.
Sura 56: 17-19

"While round them circle boys of perpetual youth. 18. With goblets and jugs, and a cup of flowing (wine), 19. From which they suffer neither headache nor intoxication."

(Bell II 554): 17. “While round them circle boys of perpetual youth, 18. With goblets and jugs, and a cup of flowing (wine), 19. From which they suffer neither headache nor intoxication.”


(Blachère 572): 17 “Parmi eux circuleront des éphèbes immortels, 18 avec des cratères, des aiguillettes et des coupes d’un limpid breuvage 19 dont ils ne seront ni entêtés ni ivénrés.”

It is not the “boys of eternal youth” that circle “with tankards, jugs, and cups,” but rather:

17. “Ice-cold (grape)juices circle among them 18. in 344 goblets, pitchers and a cup from a spring 19. from which they neither get headaches nor tire. 345

The verses that now follow should also be understood accordingly.

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342 The Thes. (1724) cites under َغَلْدَةَ (ghilada) glaciers precisely these two expressions as synonyms: َغَلْدَةَ (ghilada) (cold, icy cold), َغَلْدَةَ (ghilada) (on a cold and icy day = on a freezing cold day).

343 With reference to the Syrian lexicographers, the Thes. (12486) cites under ap. ِنَمْ (nur), besides the borrowed Arabic word َنَمْ (nur) “to cause fruits to fall individually by shaking a tree,” the meaning َنَمْ (nur) “to pick.” In current Arabic usage in the Near East the nominal form is َنَمْ (nur) “fallen fruit, windfall.” Applying the meaning of “pick” to َنَمْ (nur) say, in the sense of (freshly) harvested pearls, would appear, however, to be a bit too daring, since there is no evidence of such a use.

344 In Arabic the preposition ْبَيْنِ (bīn) means both ٌبِ (bīn) and ٌبِ (bīn) and the homonymous Syro-Aramaic preposition ْبِ (bīn) can have both meanings.

345 Here the Syro-Aramaic َغَرَف (graph) is meant (Thes. II 3961): remisq egit, segnis fut (to tire, to become listless). The Koranic lettering has been misread. Instead of َذَرُفَ (yugartā) it should read َذَرُفَ (yugartā). This Syro-Aramaic root has nothing to do with the Arabic َنَزَفَ (nazafā) (to bleed).
**Sura 52:24**

"Around them circle attendants of theirs, as if they were pearls treasured."

(Paret 439): 24: "Und Burschen, die sie bedienen (gilmănun la-hum), (so vollkommen an Gestalt als ob sie wohlverwahrte Perlen waren, machen unter ihnen die Runde."

(Blachère 558): 24 "Pour les servir, parmi eux circuleront des épébes à leur service qui sembleront perles cachées."

With the plural غلامان (gilmăn)\textsuperscript{346} the Koran is here obviously using a synonym of ولدن (wildăn). The renewed comparison with pearls makes this especially clear and rules out the meaning, assumed here, of "lads."

Our three translators have at any rate had trouble with the syntactic classification of لهم (la-hum), which they have apparently understood as dative in the sense of "belonging to them." That’s not the case here. The prefix لا / la should instead be understood simply as an intensifying Arabic particle. The personal pronoun هم (hum) accordingly functions as a copula of the subsequent relative clause. For the verse cited above, then, the following understanding is produced:

"Among them circle fruits that are (so) as if they were pearls (still) enclosed (in the shell)."

With this philological analysis an explanation has also been provided for the "perpetually young boys," in which it was previously thought one could see the "youths of Paradise." Accordingly, one can no longer with Josef Horovitz accuse the Koran of having "images of banquets in Paradise looking more like imitations of the descriptions of poets than like the depictions of lived scenes based on one’s own experience" (loc. cit 65).

\textsuperscript{346} Cf. C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*, 528a: حلاص (laynā) (Arabic (gulăn) 1. Puer (child).
17. The Analysis of Individual Suras

While the preceding examples have shown that individual misread or misinterpreted expressions have affected the understanding not only of a given word, but also of entire sentences and their interconnected contents, this applies to an even greater extent for entire Suras that have previously been so misread that, as a result, they have been given a fundamentally different sense. This may be illustrated on two succinct examples.

Sura 108
الكوثر / “al-Kawthar”

The following interpretation of the Arabic Koran exegesis of this short Sura as presented in this article from the Encyclopaedia of Islam (vol. 2, Leiden, Leipzig, 1927) may serve as an introduction.

“KAWTHAR, a word used in Sūra 108:1 after which this Sūra is called Sūrat al-Kawthar. Kawthar is a faw’al form from kathara, of which other examples occur in Arabic (e.g. navfal; further examples in Brockelmann, Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik, I 344). The word, which also occurs in the old poetry (e.g. the examples in Ibn Hišām, ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 261, and Nöldeke-Schwally, Geschichte des Qur’ān, I 92), means “abundance” and a whole series of Muslim authorities therefore explain al-Kawthar in Sūra 108:1 as al-Khair al-kathr (see Ibn Hišām, op. cit.; al-Ṭabarī, Taṣārīf, XXX 180 f.). But this quite correct explanation has not been able to prevail in the Taṣārīf. It has been thrust into the background by traditions according to which the Prophet himself explained Kawthar to be a river in Paradise (see already Ibn Hišām, p. 261 below, and notably al-Ṭabarī, Taṣārīf, XXX 179), or Muhammad says that it was a pool intended for him personally and shown to him on his ascension to Paradise (see al-Ṭabarī, Taṣārīf, XXX 180), which latter view al-Ṭabarī considers the most authen-

tic. Even the earliest Sūras (77:41; 88:12 etc.) know of rivers that flow through Paradise, but it is not till the Medīna period that they are more minutely described, notably in, Sūra 47:15: “there are rivers of water which does not smell foul: rivers of milk the taste whereof does not change; and rivers of wine, a pleasure for those that drink, and rivers of clarified honey.” These rivers correspond to the rivers of oil, milk, wine and honey, which had already been placed in Paradise by Jewish and Christian eschatology; the only difference is that Muhammad replaced oil by water; in Arabia pure water was not to be taken for granted and besides it was necessary to mix with the wine of Paradise (see Horovitz, Das koranische Paradies, p. 9). When, after the Prophet’s death, eschatological explanations of the “abundance” of Sūra 108:1 began to be made, al-Kawthar was identified as one of the rivers of Paradise and when we find in one of the versions quoted in al-Ṭabarī’s Taṣārīf that “its water is whiter than snow and sweeter than honey” or “and its water is wine,” etc. we have obviously an echo of Sūra 47:15. But they did not stop at simply transferring these Koranic descriptions to the Kawthar but the imagination of later writers gave the river of Paradise a bed of pearls and rubies and golden banks and all sorts of similar embellishments. According to a later view (see Abwāl al-Qiyāma, ed. Wolff, p. 107) all the rivers of Paradise flow into the Ḥawd al-Kawthar which is also called Nahḥ Muḥammad, because, as we have seen above, it is the Prophet’s own.” (J. Horovitz)

Before going into the philological analysis of this Sūra, which has been made into a legend in the Islamic tradition, it would be good first of all to give the Koranic text and its understanding on the basis of the Arabic exegesis with the traditional reading.

إنا أعطيك الكوثر / فصل لريك واحتر / إن شئتكي هو البت

(innā ʿaynīka l-kawṭar / fa-sālī harrī-bikā wa-nhar / inna ʾānī ḥuwa l-ḥabar)
These three verses are rendered according to the Arabic understanding as follows:

(Bell II 681) 1. “Verily, We have given thee the abundance.”
2. So pray to thy Lord, and sacrifice. 3. Verily, it is he who hateth thee who is the doomed one.”


(Blachère 668): 1 “En vérité, Nous t’avons donné l’Abondance. 2 Prie donc en l’honneur de ton Seigneur et sacrifice ! 3 En vérité, celui qui te hait se trouve être le Désérité!”

The explanation of this short Sura has caused Koran scholars in the East and the West a great deal of trouble. Even a summary of the nearly eleven pages of attempted interpretations in Tabarî (XXX 320-330) would be taking things too far. In any case, this would only serve as an example of how falsely the Koran text has been in part interpreted by the Arab exegetes. Nevertheless Paret devotes just under two pages to it

347 (Introductory remarks): “SURAH CVIII: This looks like a fragment, but it is difficult to find a suitable context for it. The rhyme might indicate a position in LXIV – after v. 39 (?). That, however, necessitates a fairly early date, and the reference to sacrifice is difficult to explain, unless we are prepared to assume that Muhammad continued to take part in heathen rites in Mecca. Otherwise it seems necessary to assume that the Sura is Medinan. It is, in any case, an encouragement to the prophet under insult.”

348 (Note 1): “Al-kauṭar, from the root meaning ‘many,’ is interpreted as meaning much wealth, or by others as referring to the number of his followers; others again take the word as the proper name of a river or pool in Paradise.”

349 (Note 2): “Mutilated,” “having the tail cut off,” probably in the sense of having no son. The word has presumably been applied to Muhammad by an enemy.”


in his Kommentar [Commentary] (525-527). As an introduction (525) he remarks on the subject: “Harris Birkeland has published an extensive interpretation of this short, but difficult Sura (The Lord Guide: Studies on Primitive Islam, Oslo 1956, pp. 56-99).”

The following explanation of the individual words will show that all of the previous efforts were love’s labor’s lost.

1. The expression selected as the title of the Sura الكؤوثر (al-kawtâr) is the transliteration of the Syro-Aramaicケット / kutāra, which is the nominal form of the second stem مهقد / kattar (to persevere). This verbal root (*k*tar) is found in both languages, the Arabic root كُثْر / kâtura (to be much, many) referring to quantity, while the Syro-Aramaic counterpart مهقد / kattar (to remain, to last) merely refers to quantity of time, i.e. duration. In the Koran this Syro-Aramaic meaning occurs only occasionally, e.g. in Sura 20:33, 34: Kay nusabbihuka kaṭṭāra / wa-naḍḍuraka kaṭṭāra “that we may constantly glorify Thee and make constantly remembrance of Thee”. The medial مهقد / waw in كؤوثر (kawtâr) is mater lectionis for short u, as is normal according to Syro-Aramaic spelling. The word should therefore be interpreted as kutâr as in Classical Syriacケット / kutāra or Western Syriacكَتّار (kêt’tar) (constancy, persistence, steadfastness). The fricative f (pro-

351 Although Bell here translates the adverb كُثْر / kâtura according to modern Arabic usage as “ofen,” the Syro-Aramaic semantics and the context suggest the meaning “constantly.” Another example of the Syro-Aramaic meaning can be found in Sura 56:32,33, wherein the believers are promised مهءفأ نعنة / wa-fa’ikiha kaṭṭāra, ِلَا مَعَناَاا / wa-ma’âna ma’āa “And fruit profuse, Not cut off and not forbidden” (Bell). The Arabic verb مهقد / mana’a (to forbid) is, however, only one possible equivalent of the Syro-Aramaic verb مهقد / kâ (see Mānâ 337b), the more common meaning being “to cease, to come to an end” (Mānâ 5, توافقة / tawaqāfa, ٦ / recyclâ), Moreover, مهقد / kûta here does not mean (as in modern Arabic) “to cut off,” but according to the wider Syro-Aramaic semantics “to cease, to come to an end, to be used up.” A preferable translation of the whole verse would therefore be: “and constantly available fruit, never ending nor running out.” The latter meaning is furthermore attested in Sura 38:54: “إِن هذِه أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مَعَ نِسْبِي” which is our provision, of it is no failing” (Bell).

352 Cf. Thes. I 1859 f., اكتُر (kuttâr) / كُثْر (kâtura) (1) mora, espectatio, ожидание,
nounced as th in English “thing”) of the canonical Koranic reading (kawwar) reflects the Western Syriac pronunciation after the gemination of consonants was generally dropped. Since such a mater lectionis is uncommon in the Koran, the Arabic philologists interpreted this mater lectionis as the non-syllabic part of the dipthong aw, thus reading the form as kawwar (= faw’al). The corresponding Arabic form of the Syro-Aramaic “kuttara” would be تكاثر (takṭhr). 353

This uncommon form kawwar ought to have aroused the skepticism of the commentators. It is also no accident that the word that never has made its way into Arabic in the meaning of “abundance.” This is also, as it is

353 The /w/ in the irregular form kawwar could also be justified as an element serving to dissolve the following gemination. However, for such a reading there is no evidence. A parallel case of Syro-Aramaic nominal forms of the second stem can be found in Sura 78:28: كدو noticias bi-iyātānā kikāthay (Bell: And they counted Our signs false utterly), and 78:35: لا يسمعون outweigh discouragement linguist (addressed by one of their teachers) or َلا يسمعون kikāthay (Bell: In which they will hear neither babble nor accusation of falsehood). The form kikāthay is an erroneous reading and reflects Syro-Aramaic كُتَثَّا / kāṭṭā, in this case, however, without mater lectionis for the short vowel u. The equivalent truly Arabic nominal form of the second stem كَذَّبُ (kāṭṭa) is not takthay, as in Sura 85:19: بل الذين كذروا في تكثير. (takṭhr) (Bell: Nay, those who have disbelieved are engaged in counting false). A similar case is attested of the Syro-Aramaic second stem verb نفَّذ / naffaṭ, of which the correct nominal form would be نفَّذ / naffaṭa. In Sura 19:24 the form occurs twice, in the first case as the false Arabic reading نفَّذ (Bell: from beneath her), which should be read as Syro-Aramaic “nafḥattiha,” i.e. “right after her accouchement,” and in the second case as the erroneous Arabic reading نفَّذ (Bell: beneath you) for Syro-Aramaic “nafḥattiha = your accouchement.” See above, p. 127 ff., for the discussion of the passage from Sura 19:24. A remnant of this Syro-Aramaic form in today’s Arabic is found in the specific (and abnormal) word كِتَاب / kattab (Koran school or elementary school – plural: كتابين / katāthīn), that morphologically could be taken for the plural of the Arabic singular كتاب / kāṭīb (writer, author). But actually, it is the Syro-Aramaic infinitive of the second stem كتاب / kattaba (to make write = to teach the art of writing), corresponding to the Arabic infinitive كتاب / takṭhr.

often the case, why it is regarded as the name of a river in Paradise and, among other things, is still used today as a woman’s name (with the actually Syro-Aramaic meaning of “Constantia”).

2. The same meaning is expressed by the borrowing from Syro-Aramaic صل / salli (pray). On the other hand, the word that has been understood in Arabic as “slaughter,” / wā-nār, has been misread. What is meant here in connection with “to pray” is the Syro-Aramaic root / نَار (to wait, to hold out, to persist). 354 The only meaning from this root that has entered into the Arabic borrowed form نَزَر is the meaning “to plane.” In the Koran, however, it is the first meaning that is meant. Therefore, Arabic وَأَنْجَر / wa-nār (and persist – in prayer) should be read here. The Koran employs in this connection among other things the synonymous root صر / saybar (so worship him and wait in his worship) and Sura 20:132: وَأَمَّ أَهْلُكُ (command your family to pray and persist therein). Furthermore, with the lexically equivalent Arabic verb دَامِ / dām (modern Arabic: دام / dām, to persist in something, to do something constantly), it is said in Sura 70:23 of those who pray: الذين هم على صلاتهم دائمون (who say their prayers constantly).

3. As a further adapted transcription of Syro-Aramaic مسيحي / (sānāš, (your hater = enemy, adversary) in Arabic, the Koranic شئشة / (šaša) has been understood correctly as “your hater.” In the Christian Syriac terminology, Satan is referred to, among other things, as a “mixanthrop” – hence an “adversary” – in contrast to God, who is referred to as مسيحي / (raḥmân > Arabic رحمن / raḥmān) “one who loves mankind” (philanthropist).

4. Finally, the root بَتَر / batr (to break off, to amputate), based on the Arabic elative البَتَر / al-abetar, is a metathesis of the Syro-Aramaic

354 Cf. Thes. II 2284 ff. / أَنْجَر (1) longus fuit, productus est (to continue, to go on and on); (2) patientis, longanimis fuit (to be patient, to have patience), أَسْتَمْعِرَ / see above.

355 Cf. Thes. II 2668 ff. actually Arabic أَسْتَمْعِيْك. 
Excursus

On the Etymology of the Arabic Root أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا

The result of the philological analysis of the individual expressions is that, except for the form, scarcely one word in this Sura is of Arabic origin. In the end, the only verb considered to be genuinely Arabic, أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (to give), will prove to be, etymologically (by the shifting of the hamza to 'ayn and the resultant emphasizing of the อ่/อ่), a secondary dialectal formation of Syro-Aramaic (a'at > Arabic أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا to come), with all its derivatives, are countless. The Arabic form أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (to give) corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic Аُتُؤُأُث (a'at (to summon, to bring). This is already clear from the Koranic use of these two roots. In other words, the Arabic root أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا occurs a total of 13 times in the Koran, the 356 instances of the root borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic (a'at > Arabic أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا to come), with all its derivatives, are countless. The Arabic form أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (to give) corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic Аُتُؤُأُث (a'at (to summon, to bring). The equivalent Arabic form would be أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا > *أَعْطُي أُنَّا, a form which would violate the phonotactical rule in Arabic, which does not allow two consecutive hamza, especially when the second one is vowelless356. To circumvent this rule, the second hamza was replaced by the acoustically most similar phoneme ‘ayn. As the place of articulation of the ‘ayn is pharyngeal, the following consonant was consequently pharyngealized, i.e. it became emphatic f. These phonetic replacements thus resulted in the secondary Arabic verb أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (to give), the radicals of which, however, have no counterparts in any other Semitic language. C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum, gives the
eymological correlates of the Syro-Aramaic verbal root أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (520a) (1. deleit, evertit / to efface, to cancel, to exterminate) as follows: Hebrew הָבִית (a'at) velavit (to veil), Arabic غَاطَث (a'at) textit (to cover), Accadian ettāt obscurem esse (to be obscure). These etymological correlates make clear that the Arabic verb أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا, in the sense of “to give”, is not genuine Arabic, but a secondary derivation from the Syro-Aramaic verbal root أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (a'at) > Arabic أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا, 4th stem أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا > أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا. The last sprints may be convinced by the following evidence quoted in A. Jeffery, Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’an, 146 (codex of Ubai b. Ka’b), Sura 20:36, where the canonical reading أَوَلِتُتُسْكِي (‘ūltātī) (in the context – literally: “you are given” your request = your request is granted) is transmitted in this old codex as أَوَلِتُتُسْكِي (‘ūltātī),357 Hence: أَوَلِتُتُسْكِي (‘ūltātī) = أَوَلِتُتُسْكِي (‘ūltātī).357

357 This is not the unique secondary Arabic formation from a Syro-Aramaic verbal root. The Koran offers us two further secondary derivations from the Syro-Aramaic verbal root أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا: 1. From the IIth intensive stem أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (a'at (to bring) (by secondary sonorization of the t > د > Arabic أَدَدَ أُنَّا, addā in the Koran in the meaning “to bring, to give back” in the following passages: Suras 2:283; 3:75 [2x]; 4:58, in the vernacular Egyptian Arabic أَدَدَ أُنَّا means = أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (give me); 2. from the most used Syro-Aramaic اًتُؤُأُث stem أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا in the sense of “to bring”, the Koran forms by monophonization of the diphthong ad > أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا the 4th Arabic stem أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا formally equal to the IIIrd stem), as it is attested in numerous passages with the same meaning. A further secondary derivation is to be found in the today’s spoken Arabic of Iraq, where for example the imperative form أَعْطِ أُنَّا / أَعْطُي أُنَّا (give me) shows its derivation from the Syro-Aramaic intensive stem أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (imperative أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا) after the dissolution of the gemination of the medial radical by insertion of a preceding أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا / أَعْطُي أُنَّا, as it is observed in a number of Arabic verbs borrowed from the Eastern (Mesopotamian) vernacular Aramaic, as it is relatively frequent e.g. in Mandaic (cf. Th. Noldke, MG, § 68). This phenomenon can help to clarify the etymology of the Hebrew (and Old Aramaic) verbal root أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا (to give) as a secondary formation from Eastern Aramaic with a secondary first and third radical from the second intensive stem أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا + the enclitic object suffix of the first person singular أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا or plural أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا أَتَأَتَ أُنَّا, thereby accent-shifting on the last syllable and consequently dropping of the unaccented initial radical أَعْطُي / أَعْطِ أُنَّا.

356 The Lisān (XII 24b f) quotes as sole exception the plural of أَمَامَ (أَمَامَ (‘imāmā) (where the second hamza, however, is not vowelless) and explains nevertheless that this form with two hamza, according to the philologists of Kufa, is an exception and not a norm (بَعْضُ IsValid عليه) since the most Koran readers read أَمَامَ (‘imāmā). Hence he concludes that “two successive radical hamza never occurred” in Arabic:

فَهَذَا لَا يَأْتِي فِي الْقَلَامَ لِفِتْنَةٍ تُوالَتْ فِيهَا هَمَّةُ أَصْلِ الْبِتَةُ
8 “Wake up (Brothers) and be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith.”

From this first evidence of Christian epistolary literature in the Koran it now becomes clear that it has previously been a mistake to connect the text of Sura 108 with any of the enemies of the Prophet Muhammad, not to mention with the expressions the Koran has been accused of using in this regard, expressions which are unworthy of it. This text is without a doubt pre-Koranic. As such it is a part of that matrix out of which the Koran was originally constituted as a Christian liturgical book (Qurʾān), and which as a whole has been designated in Western Koran studies as the “first Meccan period.”

The address in the second person in this as in other Suras is moreover not necessarily directed at the Prophet himself. Rather, as is customary in liturgical books, each believer is addressed in the second person.

As in the Roman Catholic compline, one can easily imagine these three verses as an introduction to an earlier Syro-Aramaic hour of prayer. Bell’s suspicion that it is a fragment from Sura 74 cannot be ruled out, since this Sura as well as Sura 73 with their call to bedtime prayer, i.e. to the vigils, read in part like a monastic rule. Whence there too the hitherto unrecognized Syro-Aramaisms, the explanation of which is being reserved for a future work.

Sura 96

A second prime example of a largely misunderstood text is Sura 96. In the Islamic tradition this is held to be the beginning of the prophetic revelation. Serving as the title is a keyword selected from the text, المعلق.

358 Cf. Nöldke-Schwally, GdQ 174-117.
359 Cf. Tor Andrae, Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum [Christianity and the Origin of Islam] (Uppsala, 1926) 139: “The eschatological piety of the Koran is thus very closely related to the religious viewpoint predominant in the Syrian churches before and at the time of Mohammed. This Syrian piety is actually a monastic religion...”
(al-‘Alaq), which until now has been falsely translated by “Clotted Blood” (Bell), “Der Embryo” (Paret), and “L’Adhérerence” (Blachère). For purposes of comparison the following rendering of Paret’s translation (513 f.) ought to be sufficient.

Sura 96:1-19

العلق / “al-‘Alaq”

1: “Recite in the name of your Lord who has created, 2: has created man out of an embryo! 3: Recite! Your Lord is noble like nobody in the world [Note: literally, the noblest (one) (al-akramu)], 4: (He) who [Note: (Or) Your Lord, noble like nobody in the world, is the one who] taught the use of the calamus-pen [Or who taught by means of the calamus-pen], 5: taught man what (beforehand) he did not know.

6: No! Man is truly rebellious (yaqtūd), 7: (for) that he considers himself his own master (an nāthu stağnāt), 8: (Yet) to your Lord all things return (some day) [literally: To your Lord is the return].

9: What do you think, indeed, of him who 10: forbids a slave [Or: a servant (of God)] when he is saying his prayers (sallā)? 11: What do you think if he (i.e., the one?) is rightly guided 12: or commands one to be God-fearing? 13: What do you think if he (i.e., the other?) declares (the truth of the divine message) to be a lie and turns away (from it)? (That the latter is in the wrong should be clear). 14: (For) Does he not know that God sees (what he does?) 15: No! If he does not stop (doing what he is doing) we will surely seize (him on Judgment Day) by the forelock, 16: a lying, sinful forelock. 17: May he then call his clique (nādîl)! 18: We shall (for our part) call the henchmen (of Hell) (? az-zabānīya), 19: No! Prostrate yourself (rather in worship) and approach (your Lord in humility)!

The discussion of the underlined expressions will first of all be carried out verse by verse.

Verse 1: Borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic ܩܪܐ ܡܐ (qara ma‘, the Arabic verb قرأ (qara‘, although originally probably qara‘ like bānū and rama‘), has for the most part taken over the meaning “to read” from Syro-Aramaic. Elsewhere, the Koran furnishes evidence of the meaning “to teach” once in Sura 87:6 (sanuqri ika, which should actually be read sanuqtka), which is rendered as follows by Paret (507): “We will cause you to recite (revelatory texts). You will now forget nothing (thereof).” Under ܝܓܪܐ (yąqra‘) Mannā (698b) gives the meaning “to teach” in Arabic with ܐܠܐܡ (‘alam). Accordingly, what is meant by this verse is: “We will teach you (in a way) that you will not forget.”

The correct interpretation of the expression ܩܪܐ ܒـܝـܡ ܝܗܢܘ (qara‘ b-sēm Yahweh), had translated the Koranic expression correctly with “proclaim the name of thy Lord!” The explanation given by the Arabic grammarian Abū ‘Ubaida – that qra‘ (qara‘) means as much as ذكر (dakara) “to call (upon)” here – proves to be equally correct, despite the fact that it is rejected by Nolddeke with the comment: “But qra‘ never has this meaning.” For that, he refers to M. J. de Goeje in the glossary to Taburī where qra‘ is said to mean “he read in something.” Thus...

360 The phrase that is cited in Nolddeke-Schwally, ĠdQ 1:33, 33 and قرأ فلن السلام (qara‘ fālān salaam) and قرأ فلان لسلام (qara‘ fālān salaam) as cited in the Isra‘īlī’s (Th. (II 3713) and explained with salutavit. The same is in Ṣanū‘ (908): Qarā‘ (qara‘ šlamā ‘a: 908) – الصلام على. The lobster (XV 174a ff.) lists under the root قر (qara‘) (with the variants قرى / qar-y and قرد / qar-y) a whole series of no longer common expressions in modern Arabic that can only be explained on the basis of their Syro-Aramaic origin. One of them is, for example, قرائد (qara‘ d-dā‘ay), which the Isra‘īlī (179b) conjecturally explains with “to honor a guest,” but which in Syro-Aramaic means “to call = to invite a guest.” Also interesting are the further forms such as ܢ(server, whose form already betrays their Syro-Aramaic origin.
Nöldeke took as his model for the explanation of this early Koranic expression its later misunderstood use in Arabic, instead of tracing it back to its Syro-Aramaic (or Hebrew) origin. The fact is that the equivalent Syro-Aramaic expression taken from Biblical usage (qra b-šem māryāh) (with and without b) has in general become a technical term for “to pray, to hold divine service.” But as far as how the preposition b is to be explained, it is simply to be understood here as follows: Call: “In the name of the Lord!” One does this particularly at the beginning of a prayer or a divine service, and indeed it was this that was also replaced later on in the recitation of the Koran by the parallel formula (bism allāh arhamnā rāḥumā) (In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful).

Nöldeke has also not noticed that this expression, though not with the borrowed verb قرأ (qra / qra), but with the lexically equivalent Arabic verb دعا (da’ā) (to call, to invoke), is documented in connection with the preposition b in this meaning in a verse attributed to Waraqa ibn Nawfal (cousin of Hadrīa, the first wife of the Prophet), which runs as follows:

Verse 2: About the expression اللق (alaq) Blachère (657) remarks correctly that it seems originally to have been a noun derived from the verb alaq, “to stick, to cling.” To that extent, he is doubting the interpretation “clots of blood” of the Arab exegetes, which Paret, in turn, interprets as “embryo.” With the corresponding translation, “adhérence” (adhesion), however, he is nonetheless not able to explain the actual meaning of this metaphorical expression. This is because here, too, the tertium comparationis can only be determined by way of the Syro-Aramaic. Add to this that the Thes. (II 2902) cites for us under حلق (alq) (for which it gives the loan word in Arabic اللق / alaq “leech”) the following commentary from the Syrian lexicographers, who, besides

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361 Cf. Thes. II 3713: ... (qra b-šem) proclamavit nomen ejus; vocavit, invocavit Deum. Furthermore in Manna 698: (qra b-šem māryāh) (to invoke God’s name, to pray, to worship, to worship God). G. Lüling, Uber den Ur-Qur’ān [About the Original Qur’ān], p. 30, A Challenge to Islam for Reformation, p. 32, was right in confirming this understanding by Gustav Weil and Hartwig Hirschfeld.


363 In the article WARAQ b. Nawfal b. Asad al-Qurāšt in the Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam (Leiden, 1934, 631) it is reported that Waraq was “encouraged and possibly influenced by the Prophet in the first years of his mission” (in Mecca). As a Christian “he was abstemious, knew Hebrew, studied the Bible, and had written down” (i.e. translated) “the Gospels” (probably one Gospel) allegedly in the Hebrew alphabet. It was he “who found Mūhammad as a child when he strayed from his nurse.” He is also the one who “warnly approved” of the first marriage of the Prophet to Waraq’s cousin Hadrīa. The (Islamic) tradition admits that Waraq was nonetheless never converted (to Islam).

364 Arabic دوم (bfa) has already been recognized by S. Frauenkel, Aram. Fremdwörter Aramaic Foreign Words 274, as a borrowing from Syro-Aramaic حبل (bfa) (egg, dome = church); the plural مجم (biya) occurs in the Koran in Sura 22:40. The expression is still common today among Arabic-speaking Christians in the Mesopotamian region.
the leech named after this property, also explain the following with this nomen agentis “clinger”:

(aw ’Ilāh w-layša d-dāḥqān b-lādā w-asqān l-mettāqūn)

The expression “clinger” designates either a “leech” “or the clay or dough that sticks to one’s hand and is difficult to wash off.”

With that, the expression علقة (’alaq) would be explained, since the property “sticky” is indeed used by the Koran in connection with “clay,” in one instance, in Sura 37:11 “we have created you out of sticky clay.” Adapted to the rhyme, the Koran is here using the synonymous Syro-Aramaic expression familiar to it. With من علقة (min ’alaq) what is meant in Arabic is لآرب = لآرب (out of something sticky = sticky clay).

Verse 3: For the Arabic elative (absolute superlative) referring to God, الأكرم (al-akram), the meaning also common in modern Arabic, “honorable, admirable,” is actually adequate, especially since it is here precisely a question of the worship of God in the church service.

Verse 4: Because God has taught man بالقلم (bi-l-qalam) “with the calamus reed-pen,” surely the most plausible explanation is the knowledge revealed through the scripture.

Verse 6: There begins at this point in the Sura, with كل (kull),367 which has been misread in Arabic and misunderstood abruptly in the context as “No!”, a series of three adverbs, all of which mean the Syro-Aramaic حكّ (kull) and which are, depending on the context, to be understood positively in the sense of “everything,” but negatively in the meaning of “not at all.” In this verse the كل (Syro-Aramaic kull, in the sense of Arabic كلية, kuliya,) belongs with the preceding ما لم يعلم (mā lam yalam), because in the Koran the sentence does not necessarily end with the rhyme. Hence this كل is to be drawn into Verse 5, so that this verse will then be: “he taught man what he did not know at all.”368

Secondly, Paret translates the verb طغيّ (taghī) with “aufsässig sein [to be rebellious]” (Blachère: “L’homme ... est rebelle”; Bell: “man acts presumptuously”). Except for the secondary غ / g there is, in itself, nothing Arabic about this verbal root.

Excursus

On the Etymology of the Verbal Root طغيّ (taghī)

This verb is unusual in any Arabic dialect. Its use in modern Arabic is due exclusively to this misread Koranic word. The etymological Arabic equivalent is in fact the verbal root ضاع / ḍa’a (generated by sonorization of the Syro-Aramaic emphatic ʼāy / t > ض / ḍ with simultaneous sound-shifting). The Arabic خ / ‘ayn in ضاع / ḍa’a makes clear that the diacritical point in طغيّ / taghī has not any justification and that the original spelling طغيّ / ā’ā renders truly the Syro-Aramaic verbal root حكّ / kull.

The etymology is covered by the original meaning of both verbal roots (cf. C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 282a, حكّ / kull 1. erravit [to go astray] = Arabic ضاع / ḍa’a (to get lost). According to the classical correspondence table of the Semitic sounds in C. Brockelmann’s

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365 As a Syro-Aramaic substratum al-Munqid fi l-’Iqā wa-l-’Iām, Beirut 1987, 526b, has recorded the expression علقة (’alaq) in the meaning الطين الذي علقة باليد (at-fīn al-lāfi’ ya’laq bi-l-yad) (the clay that sticks to one’s hand). This meaning is missing in the Liṣṭa.

366 Even though the meaning of the Arabic لآرب (’alaq) “sticky, clinging” is actually clear, Paret (368) translates “of pliant [literally, consistent] clay,” ["aus geschmeidigem (W: konsistentem) Lehmn"], Blachère (475) “of solidified clay,” ["d’argile solidifiée"]; and Bell (II, 443), approximately, “of clay cohering.”

367 Paret begins the sentence with “Nein!”, Blachère sees in it a warning: “Prenez garde!”, Like Paret, Bell understands “Nay.”

368 The same sense has the Syro-Aramaic adverbial expression حكّ / ḍur (Mammā 112b: حكّ / ḍur / abadān, qaṭī, bātta; C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 121b: absolute, omnino [absolutely, completely, ever/never]).
Syriac Grammar [Syriac Grammar] (p.15), the Arabic ض /d/ can only correspond with a Syriac א /ayn. A classical example is Syriac אנ /tarâl = Arabic ضرب /darba (to strike, to hit), from which there are three variants that illustrate the transition from Syro-Aramaic ض /d/ into the Arabic ض /d/. a) طرف /tarâf < Western Syro-Aramaic אט /trað < (to hit, to touch the eye with something) (Lisân IX 213b, 11f.); b) ضرب /tariba < Eastern Syro-Aramaic אט /trað – with sonorization of the p > b (to be touched emotionally = to be moved, to be delighted); c) finally with sonorization of the emphatic ض /d/ (darba) (to strike).

The Koran offers a further example of a sonorized Syro-Aramaic emphatic ض /d/ with the secondary Arabic verbal root ض /d/ (to harm, damage) < Syro-Aramaic אס /trâ (to strike, to push) – 7 further variants in C. Brockelmann, that C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum 287a, compares with the actually from Syro-Aramaic truly borrowed Arabic Verb ضرأ /trâ, the tertiae hamza of which is nothing but a fictitious pronunciation imagined by the Arab philologists. Not only the apparent restriction of this verb to the first stem and its semantics field to one general meaning (to break in, overtake, befall) shows that it is borrowed, but also the fact that the Arab lexicographers did not observe that its VIIIth stem יטס /ittârata (to be forced, compelled), according to its original meaning, does not fall under the root ض /d/ (to damage), but under ضرأ /trâ, according to the meaning of Syro-Aramaic אס /trâ (to push away, to repeat) and its reflexive stem אסר /eittrâ). That the secondary Arabic form ضرأ /dâra is derived from the Syro-Aramaic אס /trâ, shows C. Brockelmann (op. cit.) by the same specific meaning quoted under 6.: offendi (to harm).

The second element that shows the perplexity of the Arabic Koran readers is the variable reading of the alternative writing of the nominal form of the verbal root ضرأ /dâra, depending on its spelling with or without the Syro-Aramaic emphatic ending ָא of the status emphatic. Apart from the reading ָא (harm, damage) as antonym of ָא (use, benefit), the Koranic spelling ָא (without the emphatic end-א) is read ִ (derived from the IIth Syro-Aramaic intensive stem אס /tarâ, verbal noun אסא /túrayd) (19 times in the Koran in the sense of distress, adversity). When, on the other hand, the same word is written with the Syro-Aramaic emphatic end-א (properly: ִ with dropping of the unaccented y of the Syro-Aramaic word before the end-א as in ָא < Syro-Aramaic אס /qaryâni /qaryân > Arabic ָא /qurân or with the Arabic article ָא (etymologically: ִ < אסא /túrayd) (both spellings 9 times), this spelling is read with an added hamza after the end-א as ָא (א-דרא), as though this spelling were etymologically different.

On the Origin of the Arabic End-Hamza

In his “Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen [Compendium of the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages]” (I 593, C.a.), C. Brockelmann supposes a verbal class tertiae hamza, according to the classical Arabic grammar, when he says: “Als 3. Radikal war ָא schon im altara. Dialekt des Ḥīḍāz nach i und u zu i und ָא geworden...[As 3rd radical, the ָא (= hamza) had become already in the old Arabic dialect of Ḥīḍāz and ָא after i and u ...]”.

But in fact, what C. Brockelmann says about the Hebrew (op. cit. 594 b), Syriac and Assyrian (594 c.) as to the “dropping” of the III (tertiae hamza), is likewise to apply on the so-called (post-Koranic) Old Arabic. For the Koranic orthography has no graphical sign for a final hamza. Spellings as ָא (I lean) – same spelling in both codices of Samarqand and British Library Or. 2165 – traditional reading: ִ (Sura 20:18) let suspect a hypercorrect late emendation according to the classical Arabic grammar. As to the supposed III (tertiae hamza), the end-א in the Koranic spelling has been erroneously regarded as a hamza-bearer. From Syro-Aramaic borrowed verbs, as e.g. ָא (to read) and ָא (to create), are not to be read ָא and ָא, but – according to the Syro-Aramaic pronunciation: ָא and ָא.
cept some onomatopoetic verbs in Arabic, as تُتَّاق / ta'ta'a (to stammer), "تَضا / ṯa'ṯa (to bow one’s head) and the glottal stop in spoken Arabic in لَ / la’, la’ = lā (no), perhaps also in the case of a softened غ / āyn as in بُدَ / bud‘a < metathesis of Syro-Aramaic / bud’ / bud’ (to create),369 it can be said that with regard to the Koranic orthography the Koran does not know a III' (tertiæ hamza).

Much graver is however the addition of the by no means justified hamza after an end-alif, as far as such an alif in Syro-Aramaic can designate at least three different categories:

a) The ending of a status emphaticus masculine (be it a noun or an adjective), as e.g., شَفَاء (traditional reading: šī‘ān – Suras 10:57; 16:69; 17:82; 41:44) < Syro-Aramaic ꧆ / šēfyyā or šēfyyā (cleanness, purity); the same Syro-Aramaic form ꧆ / šēfyyā or šēfyyā = Arabic هِدَى / hidāya (leading, guidance) shows how arbitrary the traditional different reading of the alternative spelling of these both words in Sura 41:44 (الهدى وشفاء) as “ hudān wa-shī‘ān” is, since both words, according to the same Syro-Aramaic origin, are to read likewise as “ hūdē wa-shī‘ā” (after dropping of the unaccented Syro-Aramaic y before the emphatic end-ā).

The superfluous end-hamza can also distort a genuine Arabic adverb, as in Sura 12:16, where it is said of Joseph’s brothers: وَجَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَلَى الْشَّيْطَانِ / wa-jā‘a ʿalayhim ʿalay ‘l-sā‘īyān (Bell I 219: They came to their father in the evening, weeping), whereas the adverb “in the evening” occurring four times in the Koran (Suras 19:11; 62; 30; 18; 40:46) as عَلَيْهِ / ʿalayhim and not عَلَى / ʿalīyān, should have called the attention of the Arab readers to the fact, that the latter original spelling, without the end-hamza, was to read غَايَأ (šī‘ān yābūn) “fallaciously weeping”.

b) All cases of the Arabic feminine elative with an end-alif reflect truly the ending of the Syro-Aramaic status absolutus feminine with an-ā and are consequently to read without the superfluous end-hamza, as e.g., صَفْر (yellow) in Sura 2:69, that is to read adequately safā (as in spoken Arabic) and not صَفَر (traditional reading: safā ‘). The early Arab grammarians were obviously aware of this morphology, in so far as they declared such an ending منفع من الصف / mannūl ‘min as-saf’ (banned as to the inflection = indeclinable). Later grammarians may have interpreted this rule as partially declinable (rendered in the Western Arabic grammars by the term diptotic) and added to this purpose the fictitious end-hamza. This concerns as well the following plural endings.

c) The plural ending, corresponding to the Arabic plurals of the types: فَعَلَتْ / fa’alat‘ and فَعَلَ / fa‘al‘, are to value same wise. All these unjustified additions are an invention of the Arab philologists subsequent to the creation of the classical Arabic grammar in the second half of the eighth century and later. As far as such forms occur in the Arabic poetry, this linguistic-historical criterion would provide a terminus post quem (= as of the origin of the corresponding poetical works. Further morphological formations of the classical Arabic grammar, borrowed from Syro-Aramaic, will be demonstrated with some examples from the early Arabic poetry in a forthcoming study.

369 This sense is attested in the Koran in Sura 2:117 and 6:101: ہَوُدُ / hūd‘ as-samawā‘āt wa-l-armā‘ / ہَوُدُ / hūd‘ as-samawā‘āt wa-l-armā‘ (Creator of the heaven and the earth). The secondary Arabic verb بُدَ / bud‘ā, with the secondary common meaning “to begin”, has in the Koran partially the original meaning of “to create”, as it arises e.g. from Sura 7:29: كَمَا بِدَأَكَمُ / kamā badā‘akum or bud‘akum ta‘aldīna (As He created you, you will turn again) (Bell I 139 translates: “As He began you, ye will come again”).

Continuation of Sura 96:6
Since it became now clear that طَقُي (muqā = ta‘ā) (with all other Koranic derivations) is a borrowing from the Syro-Aramaic ꧆ / ṭā‘ā (‘ā‘ā), its meaning can consequently be found among the equivalent semantics field appropriate to this context. It follows from the context that the meaning to be retained is the one cited in مَانْذَ (289b f.) under (6) نَسْيُ (nāsīyā‘).
(to forget). Accordingly, this verse does not say “man is rebellious,” but “man forgets.”

Verse 6: First of all, the result of the above misunderstood لطيف (layyit) was that the particle following it, ان, was misread as ‘an (that) instead of in (when). The personal suffix for the verb اسم (ra'ayu – properly: ra-hu) has been correctly understood reflexively from the context. This usage happens by chance, of course, not to be Arabic, but Syro-Aramaic.370

Secondly, however, in the case of the next verb استغنى (istagni), it is not “considers himself his own master” that is correct, but rather the alternative that Bell proposes (II 667) in note 4: “he has become rich.”

The verses 6-7 are accordingly:

“In truth, man forgets when he sees that he has become rich.”

Verse 7: In the first place, it should now be clear that this understanding yields a conjunction ان (anā) (that) introducing a dependent clause. The hitherto misunderstood context, however, has caused the syntactical unity of this sentence construction to be so torn apart that one made this dependent clause into an independent main clause introduced by the intensifying particle In (inna).

Secondly, from this misunderstanding the need arose to interpret the Arabic verbal noun الرجع (ar-raqa – rather ar-raqa) in no other way than the general sense of “return to your Lord.” If one considers the new understanding, however, then this “return,” referring to the “man who has become rich,” is to be understood as the “return” or “repatriation” of this circumstance unto God, which man “forgets” to the extent that he, in accordance with a familiar human experience, no longer thinks about praying. Verses 6-8 are thus directly concerned with the subject of this Sura and should be understood as follows:

6. “In truth, man forgets. 7. when he sees that he has become rich.
8. that (this) is to be returned unto your Lord.”

Whereas until now it was a question of a man become wanton who fails to pray out of personal conviction, in the sequence which now follows the Koran addresses the external influence of an unbeliever who wants to stop a devout man (a servant of God) from praying. In the process, the verses 9-14 consist syntactically of two previously completely overlooked conditional clauses, the first formulated as a question and the second as a counter-question. From Paret’s translation, the previous confused understanding is evident. Nevertheless, first of all, as an introduction to the syntactic structure, the individual elements will be analyzed.

Verse 9: From the perspective of the Arabic understanding, the particle ًا prefixed to the verb فعلي (g-ra'ayt) – properly: a-rayt) in Verses 9 and 11 cannot be understood otherwise than as an interrogative particle. This understanding excludes a subsequent conditional clause, but exposes at the same time the disharmony of the syntactic period.

Excursus
(a) On the Meaning of the Particle ًa

This problem cannot be overcome without the help of Syro-Aramaic. For only the Syro-Aramaic can give us information about the genesis of the Arabic interrogative particle ًا, which until now has considered classical. In his study on the subject Bergsträsser371 naturally starts from the classical assumption and contents himself with a descriptive

370 Cf. Th. Nöldeke, Syrische Grammatik [Syriac Grammar] § 223: “The personal pronouns must also express the reflexive wherever this function is not already performed by the verbal form... That is, very often one uses مك (nafsah) “soul,” and less frequently مك (gana) “person” with the personal suffixes for the exact expression of the reflexive relationship...” In Arabic the only way to express the reflexive is by means of the equivalent expressions (nafsah) and (hal). Accordingly, ان رأى (in ra-ayu – properly: ra-hu) in Arabic should have properly been ان رأى نفسه (in ra a nafsahu).

371 Gotthelf Bergsträsser, Verneinungs- und Fragepartikeln und Verwandtes im Kură. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Grammatik des Arabischen [Negative and Interrogative Particles in the Koran: A Study of the Historical Grammar of Arabic] (Leipzig, 1914) 89-100. Concerning في (ba) (3-91) he says laconically: “Subordinate clauses are occasionally inserted after a, but then the a is usually repeated. The text causes more difficulties here than elsewhere....”

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reproduction of the opinions of the Arabic grammarians. Nobody seems to have realized till now, however, that, on the basis of the Koranic usage, the Arabic interrogative particle ۰۰۰ has only grown secondarily out of the Syro-Aramaic particle ۰۰۰ (aw) through the omission of the ا. Evidence for this is provided by the Koranic usage itself. For example, it can be determined that the original particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ occurs as an interrogative particle in conjunction with the negative particle ۰۰۰ (әً or әً-әً) three times and with ۰۰۰ (әً-әً-әً) 33 times, whereas, with 78 occurrences, the usage with the monophthongized particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰, for instance, ۰۰۰ (a-lam), clearly predominates.

The Lisân (XIV 55b) cites al-Farra', who explains the ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ of the Koranic interrogative particle ۰۰۰ (әً-әً-әً) as an “isolated waw” to which the interrogative particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ was added (إِنْيَا وَأَمَرَكُهَا نَخْلَةً). Hence the awareness that this interrogative particle is not of Arabic origin is lacking among all the Arabic philologists. The other uses of the particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ in the Koran also coincide to a large extent with that of the homonymous Syro-Aramaic ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰. ۰۰۰

Thus, for example, the Koranic use of the monophthongized particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ has found its place in Arabic as a conjunction introducing an apodosis expressing uncertainty or doubt, especially after corresponding negative verbs, as in ۰۰۰ (نَفَقَ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ ۰۰۰ (I do not know whether...) (cf., e.g., Sura 72:10,25). As a rule this is felt to be an indirect interrogative particle. From one’s feeling for the language, however, one can already no longer recognize this function as soon as, instead of the Arabically naturalized secondary particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰, the original

Syro-Aramaic particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ occurs. An example of this is provided by Sura 3:128:

ليست لك من الأمر شيء أو يتوب عليهم أو يعذبهم فإنهم ظلمون

Paret (55) renders this verse as follows:

"- it is not for you (to decide) the matter – or to turn again to them (mercifully) or (else) to punish them. They are (indeed) wrongdoers."

The Lisân (XIV 55a) explains the particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ here in the sense of “until he takes pity on them” or “unless God takes pity on them” (حتى ينفي عليهم وَإِنْ يَتَوَبُّ عَلَيْهِمْ). However, according to the Syro-Aramaic understanding of the conjunction ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ the verse says:

“It should be a matter of indifference to you whether (God) takes pity on them or dooms them to death (by fire): they are (in any case) wrongdoers.”

(b) On the Usage of the Particle ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ in the Sense of ۰۰۰ / ۰۰۰ (if)

The list that the Thes. (I 48) supplies, by way of the East Syrian lexicographers, on the usage of the Syro-Aramaic conjunction ۰۰۰ (aw) is interesting in this regard. Under the eight occasionally occurring functions Bar Bahit gives the meaning ۰۰۰ (en) (if). This in turn coincides with the explanation provided by Kisâr (953-1002), cited in the Lisân (XIV 55a), that ۰۰۰ (aw) may also occur conditionally (فال الكلام وحده: وَكَانَ ۰۰۰ (شَرِّطاً).

The Solution of Verses 9 to 14

On the basis of this excursus, the following new interpretation emerges for these verses:

9-10. The first لرَأَيْت (in ra’ayt?) (if you see). Accordingly, the double verse runs:

372 Cf. Thes. I 47, particula (1) distinctiva; (48) (2) interrogativa, num, an, ne. The Hebrew particle ۰۰۰ (ha) that Brockelmann associates with the Arabic interrogative particle ۰۰۰ (ینس) in Arabische Grammatik [Arabic Grammar] § 86, note (a), would suggest a sound shift from ۰۰۰ to ۰۰۰. But the parallel usage of ۰۰۰ (aw) and ۰۰۰ (ینس) as an interrogative particle in the Koran would seem to verify the creation of the latter through the monophthongization of the Syro-Aramaic particle ۰۰۰ (aw). This, however, does not rule out the possibility that the former was also first created through a sound shift of the demonstrative particle ۰۰۰ (haw) to ۰۰۰ (aw).
“If you see one who (wants) to stop a worshipper (of God) (from praying) when he is praying....”

11-12. The second لعیت is to be understood as a question in the sense of “to think”: “do you (then) think that....” Accordingly, the falsely read إن (in) must be read as أن (an). As a result, this double verse reads as an apodosis:

“do you (then) think that he is on the right path or is thinking pious thoughts?”

13-14. Parallel to Verse 9, the repeated لعیت is in turn to be read إن رویت (in ra`ayt) (if you think), followed once more by أن (an) (that) instead of إن (in) (if), and understood as a counter-question with a protasis and apodosis:

“If (on the other hand) you think that he is denying (God) and turning away (from Him), then does he not know that God sees everything?”

15. What is meant by the second كلا is again Syro-Aramaic حعل (kullâ) (in the sense of كل شيء / kull` say) (everything); as an object it belongs to the preceding verb.

The particle لآن (falsely la`-in, actually to be read l-ən) consists of the intensifying Arabic particle ل / la- and the Syro-Aramaic conjunction كلا (ən). This form occurs 61 times in the Koran. Older Koranic manuscripts should provide evidence of the full spelling لآن ( = l-ən). The little peak considered as a ən / y carrier was, contrary to the Koranic (i.e., Syro-Aramaic) pronunciation, subsequently occupied by a hamza. In the canonical version of the Koran, this orthography (افيل / al-ən < كلم / ə / ə of al-ən) is documented twice (Suras 3:144 and 21:34).

The Arabic verb للسع (la-nastu`a`) certainly does not mean “to seize.” In the Lisân (VIII 157 b f.) the meaning is given correctly as لطلم (latam`) and ضرب (darab`) (to strike). On the other hand, the explanation that follows, and proves that لعیت: جذب وأخذ وقبض ("to seize" by the "forelock"), is based on the false understanding of "forelock.” What is meant by “to strike,” however, is "to punish" in a figurative sense (in modern Arabic usage, as well). It is likely that here as an exception the final ن is omitted, in place of the final ن, to mark the energetic, which requires the pronunciation as with نعمة. A parallel to this is provided by Sura 12:32 (وليكون / wa-l-yakûna`).

It is astounding that, of our Koran translators, not one has objected to the expression "forelock” (Paret “Schopf,” Blachère “toupet”). Yet, what is meant here by the spelling نعمة (except for the secondarily inserted ن / ن) is Syro-Aramaic نعمة (nasâyâ). For this, the Thes. (II 2435) first gives the meaning: contentious, rixosus (contentious, quarrelsome) (said of a woman, as in Prov. 21:9, 19; 25:24). From the Syriac lexicographers it then cites, in addition to further Syro-Aramaic synonyms, the following Arabic renderings: مقصوم (opponent, adversary).

But more amazing than this is the discovery that, over and over again, even the Lisân (XV 327) explains the root نصمة (nasây), documented in earlier Arabic, as a denominative of نصمة (nasây), presumably misunderstood in Arabic as “forelock, shock of hair,” even though the past of نصمة that it cites actually makes the Syro-Aramaic meaning clear. Namely, therein نصمة is recorded as saying: لم تكن واحدة من نساء النبي تخاصم من غير زنب (none of the wives of the Prophet quarreled with me except for Zaynab). Although the Lisân then explains this as: أي تنازل عن وتاريخ (i.e., “she quarreled with me, she opposed me”), it traces this explanation back to the circumstance that in doing so the two women, so to speak, “got into each other’s hair” (وهو أن يأخذ كل واحد من المنتمين بنانية الأخ (أحمر), or more exactly, "seized each other by the scruff of the neck.” It can be seen from this how little the later Arabic philologists have understood the earlier Syriacisms and Aramaisms.

The following understanding therefore results for Verse 15:

“If he does not stop, we will (severely) punish the adversary.”

In the same way as for ناصية (nasiya, but actually nasiyya), the apparent feminine ending for کادجة (kaddah) and خاطئة (hadi, actually bada) is nothing other than the phonetic rendering of the Syro-Aramaic emphatic ending. Therefore, Verse 16, modeled on Verse 15, is to be understood as follows:

“The denying, sinful adversary.”

17. The expression ناديه (nadiyahu), which occurs here, must be redefined. The “clique,” as Paret translates the expression in the modern Arabic sense of “club, association,” (Bell: “council,” Blachère: “clan”), is out of the question. Inasmuch as the facultative medial ی/ال (ال/ال) in ناديه, according to the Eastern Syro-Aramaean orthographical tradition, can occasionally designate a short a, the spelling yields the Syro-Aramaic نادية (nadiyyeh or naddayeh). As a nomen agentis this form leads us to the intensive stem نا (naddi), whose primary meaning the Thes. (I 2291) gives as “com movit, conscusit, terre fecit” (to agitate, to shake, to scare off). Applied to the idols that are probably meant here, this would result in the meaning “of the one who arouses fear” (i.e. whom one fears as a god). The Thes., however, then refers to a further form: “Partic. جن (m-naddē) vide infra.” The expression that is found further down (2292) نادية (skirta wa-m-nad-dayah) [something or someone disgusting and repulsive] brings us closer to the sense we are seeking. The Arabic meanings that are cited by Mannā (431b) under ین (aneq) are: (2) رذل (to hate, to detest), (3) دل (to reject, to disown), (6) بن (to make dirty, to besmirch), (7) ذل (to scare away, to frighten). All these meanings lead namely to the “unclean spirit” or “idols” designated with synonymous expressions in Syro-Aramaic (cf., e.g., Thes. I 1490, under ین ِابب “impurius, impuro”; ᾧξάδαρς de daemonibus, Matt. 10:1;...; further under ین / ين : pollutio, res quae pollut = idolum, Exod. 8:26, Deut. 7:26, Jer. 32:34; de idolatriiis, Deut. 20:18;... in connection with this, the following expression [1491], documented in the Koran

with انداد (andad) [nidditum] [impurity] also becomes a designation for ین [pantrē] [idols], etc.).

Thus, with the tertium comparationis discovered via Syro-Aramaic, Verse 17 is to be understood as follows:

“May he then call upon his idols [literally: impure ones]!”

18. The expression الادا (until now pronounced az-zabāniya) is still considered a puzzle. The misreading of the preceding verbal form in the first person plural سيد (sa-nadī) is of course responsible for one’s seeing in this incomprehensible expression in Arabic the "hunchmen" (of hell) that God will allegedly call in. However, if we transcribe the original spelling (without the secondary ی/ال into Syro-Aramaic, the result is the reading جن (za-bn) (zabnīya). As the adjective from ین (zabnīya) (zabnī) (time), this simply gives us, according to the Thes. (I 1079) under ین (zabnī), the meaning: temp ralis, temporarius, haud aeternus (temporal, transitory, not eternal). This designation is a perfect match for the (transitory) "idols" of the (God-) denying adversary. It is to this extent only logical that the verbal form سيد (sa-nadī) is to be read in the third person (sa-yadū). This results in the following understanding for Verse 18: “...he will (only) call upon a transitory (god)!”

375 The translation of the Koranic plural انداد (andad) by (god’s) “of his own kind,” as our Koran translators render it, trusting in the Arabic commentators (e.g. Paret at Sura 2:22), is therefore false.

376 In Jeffery, Foreign Vocabulary 148: “The guardians of Hell.”

377 This would be justified as an appellative by the word determined by the Arabic article ال / al. The Koran, however, does not always orient itself according to the Arabic norm, and so it often happens that the Koran also leaves out an article required by Arabic, as in Sura 95:5, although it is seen in Arabic as an independent (and therefore as a false) genitive of the status constructus is considered as determinate and as correct in Syro-Aramaic. Variations in both directions are to be observed in the Koran, so that criteria of Arabic as well as of Syro-Aramaic grammar must be taken into account depending on the context. Cf. for example the variants in the old codices edited by Arthur Jeffery, Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur‘ān, Leiden 1937, p. 178 (Codex of Ubad b. Ka‘b), Sura 95:5, where سفلى (saffin) is transmitted with the article أ / al: السافلين (as-saffin), “as Ibn Mas‘ūd.” The
19. Although the third and last can be read in Arabic as *kallā* (no) in connection with, and as intensifying, the negative imperative that follows it, in Syro-Aramaic (*kullā*) it has the meaning of “(not) at all.”

In addition to the actual Syro-Aramaic meaning of “to bow” (as an external sign of respect), one should also assume for the Arabic borrowed verb *saqād* (ما سجَّد) the metaphorical meaning of “to worship God” (Thes. II 2522, “metaph. adoravit Deum”).

The Arabic borrowed verb *qarāb* (اقرب) has in this context a quite particular content that the general Arabic meaning “approach” (without object or reference) is not able to provide. As a translation of Syro-Aramaic *qetqarrab* the Thes. (II 3724) gives us (in particular as a reflexive or intrinsitive verb) the specific meaning that fits here, as follows: “spec. *celebrata est liturgia* (to celebrate the liturgy); it. Eucharistiam acceptit (to receive the Eucharist). The latter meaning is logically to be assumed provided that one as a believer takes part in the celebration of the Eucharist. The term points in any case without a doubt to the participation in the “sacrifice of the mass,” in the “celebration of the Eucharist” or in the “communion liturgy.”

Those that this unambiguous explanation shocks are invited to refer to the Arabic dissertation mentioned in the Foreword (ix. note 4) (part I, chapter 4, “Religious Customs and Rites Among Christian Arabs Before Islam,” 89).

In sum, the result of this philological discussion is the following reading and understanding for Sura 96 according to the Syro-Aramaic reading:

1. *Call* the name of your Lord who has created,

الخلق الأسمن من علاق

(al-qād ُالنافع) The Clay (Literally: the “sticking”)

اقرأ باسم ربك الذي خلق

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

1. *Call* the name of your Lord who has created,

الخلق الأسمن من علاق

(al-qād ُالنافع) The Clay (Literally: the “sticking”)

اقرأ باسم ربك الذي خلق

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

1. *Call* the name of your Lord who has created,

أَنَاِ هُوَ الْيَتَّمَّى

(َهُوَ الْيَتَّمَّى)

2. (who) has created man from *sticky* (clay);

أَقْرَبُ الْأَكْرَم

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

3. *Call* (indeed) your *most admirable* Lord,

الخصم المعلوم بالقلم

(al-ladī ُاللَّهُ bi-l-qalam)

4. who has taught by the reed pen (i.e., the scripture),

أَنَّ الرَّحْمَانَهُ مَنْ يَلْهَمْهُ كَلا

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

5. has taught man what he did *not* know at all.

أَنَّ الرَّحْمَانَ لَمْ يَلْهَمْهُ كَلا

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

6. Verily, man forgets,

إِنْ رَأَى اسْتَغْفَرَ

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

7. *when* he sees that he has become rich,

أَنْ رَأَى الْبَرْكَةَ

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

8. *that* (this) is to be returned to your Lord.

أَرْبَى الْمَلَكَةَ يَتَّخَذُ

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

9. *If* you see one who (wants) to stop

إِنَّاْ أَهْدَى قَلْبَهُ

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

10. a worshipper (of God) (from praying) when he is praying,

إِنَّاْ أَهْدَى قَلْبَهُ

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

11. do you think (perhaps) *that* he is on the right path,

إِنَّاْ أَهْدَى قَلْبَهُ

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

12. or be satisfied

إِنَّاْ أَهْدَى قَلْبَهُ

(*qād b-isnār rabbik* ُاللَّهُ ُاللَّهُ)

13. Namely, in Arabic the conjunction *wa* also has an explicative function, including that of a more detailed explanation.

378 Syro-Aramaic *kō* is the supposed lexical equivalent for Arabic *nahā* (ناهي). For this, *Mannā* (337b) cites in Arabic, besides *nahā* (ناهي) (to forbid), also عاق (sadāl, *’aq* ) (to hinder, to hold back).
12. or is even thinking pious thoughts?

( awr? an kaddab wa-tawallu)

13. If you (on the contrary) think that he is denying (God) and turning away (from Him),

( l-?u lam ya’lam bi-an?a illah? yar? kulla)

14. (then) does he not know that God sees everything?

(L-?a lam yantahi la-nas?a an bi-n-nas?iya or naa?iya)

15. If he does not stop (doing that), (one day) we shall punish the adversary (severely),

( naas?iya kadiha has?iya or naas?iya kaddabha haatya)

16. the denying, wicked adversary!

( fa-l-yaddu nadiya-hu or nadya-hu)

17. May he call (then) on his (whoever) idol—

( sa-yaddu z-zabaniya or zabaniye)

18. (in doing so) he will call on transitory (gods)!

(kulla la tu?hu)

According to this understanding, Sura 96 proves to be a unified composition having as its overall content a call to take part in the divine service. As such it has the character of a proemium introducing the Christian Syriac liturgy, which was replaced in the later Islamic tradition by the introductory prayer. That this liturgy is Communion is indicated by the final Syro-Aramaic term. An important task in the history of religion would be to find out which pre-Islamic Christian Syrian (or possibly Judaeo-Christian) community this was.

Now, if the Arabic tradition considers this to be the oldest Sura, one must concede that it is right to the extent that this Sura is, in any case, part of that nucleus of the Koran, the Christian Syrian origins of which cannot be ignored. Whether this is also the first that was revealed to the Prophet is probably based on a later legend grown out of the misinterpretation of the opening verse. Arguing in favor of its being very probably pre-Koranic, i.e., much more pre-Islamic, is its language, hitherto perceived as mysterious and puzzling. For it is precisely this language with its unadulterated expressions that reveals to us its venerable origins.

One such expression is the Arabic verb أقرب (aqarab) borrowed from the Syro-Aramaic verb ṣaqqarab. As a technical term of the Christian Syriac liturgy it gives us a valuable, hitherto unexpected insight into the origins, not only of the oldest parts of the Koran in terms of the history of religion. For only this expression opens our eyes to a parallel occurring in what is held to be the last Sura revealed, Sura 5 (The Table), a parallel whose actual importance in terms of the history of religion has in a similar way been ignored until now. Between this term and the “table” that Jesus, the son of Mary, requests of God in Sura

380 Among the eight different aspects (πρόσωπον / parapòde) of the Syro-Aramaic conjunction ατή (aw) that Bar Bahil names, the Thes. (I 48) cites the “intensifying” meaning designated with αιτητός (yattite). This conjunction is also used with such a meaning in the Koran, in Sura 37:147, where it is said of Jonas "and we dispatched him to one hundred thousand or (even) more." The Arabic philologists have noticed this nuance (see Lisah X 45b).

381 The single meaning of the Arabic borrowed verb أمر (amar) "to command" does not do justice to the present context. It is not a question of "commanding," but rather of the "beliefs" or "convictions" upon which the action is based. To that extent the meaning given by Maqar (26a) in Arabic under (4) for the Syro-Aramaic أسئ (amar) (ita’i) is (to think, to consider, to ponder) is appropriate.

382 Literally: Bow (instead) (to honor God). As a terminus technicus, مسجد (ṣaqqad) here means "to hold divine service."
“that it may become ours as liturgy,” for the first and the last of us,” and which, in Verse 115, God sends down from heaven, threatening any who would deny it (fā-mān yakfi̇r) with the severest of all punishments (Fa'ālāt ‘a‘ābi`a ta`amunī ‘a‘ābi`a; hlm I shall punish in such a way as I shall punish no man), there exists a connection insofar as both clearly allude to the liturgy of Communion, whose importance was misjudged in later Islam and has since been totally forgotten. This central item in the Christian components of the Koran is, in any case, of eminent importance in terms of the history of religion.

If any should doubt, however, the importance of the Christian Syriac liturgical term łączār (qxtarab, qxtarab) (to take part in the liturgy of Communion, to receive the Eucharist), they may refer to the Arabic dissertation mentioned in the Foreword (p. iii, note 4) where the author (89), in the fourth chapter of the first part of her work, “Religious Customs and Rites of Christian Arabs Before Islam,” refers to the Arabic compilation (al-‘Agānt) (vol. II 107) of Abū l-Farāq al-‘Isfahānt (d. 356 H./967 A.D.), who reports of Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin Zayd (‘Adī ibn Zayd) (d. circa 590 A.D.) and ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin ‘Abd al-Rahmān (Hind bint an-Nu‘mān) (d. after 602 A.D.) how they went on Maundy Thursday into the church of al-Hira (located southwest of the Euphrates in modern-day Iraq) “to take part in the liturgy of Communion” (LI-yataqarrab) “to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist” (or to receive the Eucharist).

In the corresponding passage in the Kitāb al-‘Agānt (Book of Songs) Abū l-Farāq al-‘Isfahānt (d. 967) cites the traditional account of the pre-Islamic Christian Arab poet ‘Adī ibn Zayd living in al-Hira according to which he had gone on Maundy Thursday into the church of al-Hira (Li-yataqarrab) “to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist” (or to receive the Eucharist) On this occasion, he wanted to see Hind, the daughter of the last of the Lahmids’ kings of al-Hira, an-Nu‘mān III (580-602), who had gone to the aforementioned church (tataqarrab) “to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist.”

Thus, this liturgical term is already historically documented in the 6th century even from the Arab side as a Syro-Aramaic ecclesiastical term of the Christian Arabs of Syria and Mesopotamia.

383 The true meaning of the term ‘a‘ābi`a (‘ahd), which occurs as a hapax legomenon in the Koran, has until now been overlooked. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum (515b), explains the derivation of Arabic ‘a‘ābi`a (‘ahd) in the meaning “feast” as the phonetic rendering of the common Aramaic pronunciation of  prostitutas (‘ahd > ‘ahd). As a faithful rendering of the Syro-Aramaic  prostitut (‘ahd), however, the Koranic term has accordingly, in addition to the original meaning of “practise, custom,” the meaning of “liturgy,” which is clear here from the Koranic context. Cf. also the Thes. II 2827: Valet etiam  prostitut (ydhó) ritualis, caeremonia (rite, ceremony).


385 This term is still used among the Arabic speaking Christians of the Near and Middle East.
18. RéSUMÉ

The importance of the Koran in terms of the history of religion and cultural history is a generally acknowledged fact. Although its role as a mediator between a more than thousand-year Aramean civilization and the Arabic culture it ushered in has been recognized, the Aramaic language’s share in the process has not been sufficiently appreciated. That is why opinions have differed ever since on the interpretation of its contents and of its mysterious language. This is first of all due to the interwoven composition of the Koran text, but secondly to the linguistic approach of the Arabic Koran exegesis, which from the beginning can be characterized as unsuccessful. It was this that was finally decisive in steering the interpretation of the Koran in a direction that was not intended by the Koran at all.

I. The Language of the Koran

The Arabic philologists themselves realized that the language that the Koran calls Arabic for the first time differs essentially from the later Classical Arabic language, the Ḥarábīya. Contrary to the earlier assumption of a dialect of Arabic spoken in Mecca, the present study has shown that, insofar as the Arabic tradition has identified the language of the Koran with that of the Qurayš, the inhabitants of Mecca, this language must instead have been an Aramaic-Arabic hybrid language. It is not just the findings of this study that have led to this insight. Namely, in the framework of this study an examination of a series of hadith (sayings of the Prophet) has identified Aramaisms that had either been misinterpreted or were inexplicable from the point of view of Arabic.

This would lead one to assume that Mecca was originally an Aramean settlement. Confirmation of this would come from the name Mecca (Makka) itself, which one has not been able to explain etymologically on the basis of Arabic. But if we take the Syro-Aramaic root דאכ (makk, actually makkh) (lower, to be low) as a basis, we get the adjective דאכמ (makkhā) (masc.), דאכת (makkathā) (fem.), with the meaning of “(the) lower (one).” Topographically, this adjective would designate a place located in a low-lying area or in a valley, which indeed is also the case for Mecca. As opposed to this דאכת (rāmtā) (masc.), דאכת (rāmtathā) (fem.) “(the) high (one)” (the upper one) designates a place located on a rise, a hill or a mountain.

However, because the Thes. (II 2099 ff.) usually gives the figurative sense for this root, this should also be taken into consideration. For instance, among other things the Thesaurus (2100) cites the expression דאכת דאכת (dakkāṭa makkāṭa) with the explanation: agrí minoris

386 The findings made in the meantime as to the Relics of Syro-Aramaic letters in Early Koran Codices in Ḥ 示例 and Ḥ 示例 Style, mentioned above and partially shown in this study, provide a further concrete evidence for the existence of a proto-Koran written in Garšuni / Karšuni (i.e. Arabic with Syriac letters) corroborating the intimate connection between the Koran and the Syro-Aramaic culture. This may confirm the assumption expressed by Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren in their collective work: Crossroads to Islam. The Origin of the Arab Religion and the Arab State, Amherst, New York (Prometheus Books), 2003, p. 328, especially note 2:

“We cannot tell if the resulting Arabic texts were actual translations of the original Syriac ones; more probably they were formulations in Arabic of Judaico-Christian ideas known from Syriac texts.”

That with al-ingil (the Gospel), mentioned in the Koran, the Syriac Dēṭesaron (the so-called Gospels Harmony, a chronological disposition of the four Gospels arranged by the Syrian Tatians, presumably in the second half of the second century) is meant, Jan M.F. van Reeth says in his essay “Le Koran et ses scribes [The Koran and its Scribes]” in: Acta Orientalia Belgica (published by the Belgian Society of Oriental Studies, ed. by C. Cannuyer, A. Schoors, R. Lebrun), vol. XIX, Les scribes et la transmission du savoir [The Scribes and the Transmission of Knowledge], ed. by C. Cannuyer, Bruxelles, 2006, (p. 67-81), p. 73, 21 ff.:

“Ce constat s’ajoute à la théorie de Luxemburg tout en la renforçant: le livre sacré que lisait la communauté de Muḥammad, était un livre en syriaque [This conclusion is to be added to the theory of Luxemburg, reinforcing it: the holy book that was read by the community, of which Muḥammad was a member, was a Syriac book].”

387 Thus, for example, the city located near the Syrian border in modern-day Jordan, أربة (ar-Ramā) = Syro-Aramaic דאכת (rāmtā).
pretii (low-quality farmland). This meaning would find confirmation in Sura 14:37; there namely Abraham says:

ربنا آن نكبت من ذرتي بود غير ذي زرع عند بني المحرم

"Lord, I have settled (some) of my offspring in a barren valley near your holy house."

Thus both Syro-Aramaic meanings would fit Mecca and would at the same time suggest that it was an early Aramean settlement.\(^\text{388}\) The Aramean origin of Medina has already been identified by S. Fraenkel (Arämäische Fremdwörter [Aramaic Foreign Words] 280).

Now, if according to Sura 42:7 the Koran has expressly given the Prophet the task of proclaiming the Koranic message to the metropolis (أم القرى) (namely Mecca) and its surrounding area (ومن حوله), one can assume that the Meccans also correctly understood this message. To this extent the Koran did not intend its language for those Arabs who laid out another Arabic language around a century and a half afterwards. This essential circumstance explains historically why the later Arabs no longer understood this Koran Arabic.

What widened the gap even more, however, is the lack of reference to the Scripture in the Arabic exegesis of the Koran. Historical reasons must have led the later Islamic tradition to renounce the Scripture, the heeding of which by the believers is assumed as a matter of course by the Koran in the words from Sura 3:119: "تؤمنون بالكتاب كله (tu'iminūn bi-l-kitāb kullihī) “you believe, indeed, in the entire Scripture.” At the same time consideration of the Scripture would have been more capable

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\(^{388}\) For Bäcker (allegedly: Bakka) in Sura 3: 96, although until now this has been taken to be a second name for Mecca, in reality it is here a question of a misread verbal form. The verse from Sura 3: 96 runs:

إن أول بيت وضع للناس الذي بيك تبة مبارك وهم للعلماء

This has been understood by our Koran translators as follows:

(Bell I 54): 90. “The first house founded for the people was that at Bakka [i.e. Mecca], a blessed (house) and a guidance to the worlds.”

(Paret 52): “Das erste (Gottes)haus, das den Menschen aufgestellt worden ist, ist dasjenige in Bakka [Note: D.h. Mecca], (aufgestellt) zum Segen und zur Rechtleitung für die Menschen in aller Welt (al-ālamīn).”

(Blachère, 88): 90/96 En vérité, le premier temple qui ait été fondé, pour les Hommes, est certes celui situé à Bakka [Note 90: Autre forme de Makka = la Mekke], [temple] bénit et Direction pour le monde (al-ālam)."

Thus, our Koran translators are following, without hesitation, the interpretation given in Tabart (IV 9 f.), according to which this word, inexplicable from the point of view of Arabic, has therefore to be (applying the tried and true method) a second name for Mecca. As justification, Tabart etymologically derives this word from the (no longer commonly used) Arabic verbal root ب (bakka) (to press, to push) and applies this to the district of the Ka‘ba around which the pilgrims “pressed” in circling it. The name Bakka would thus designate the shrine, whereas Makkah would designate the surrounding houses, i.e., the city itself, and not, as others believe, the other way around.

In the case of the misread spelling ب (supposedly bi-Bakka = “in Bakka”), it is in fact a question of the Syro-Aramaic verbal root وج (taq) in the paštal form, وج (tyaqeq), whose meaning Manna (832b) renders in Arabic under (4) as حافد (haddada) (to surround), سيج (sayyaga) (to enclose), ألح (alhata) (to surround with a wall). The Thes. (II 4406f.) refers, among other things, to Deuteronomy 12:8, where it is said that in building a house its roof should be surrounded by a balustrade وج (tyaqeq). The only word preserved from this root in Arabic is the substantive ج (tikka) (dialectally ج / dikka / dokke) (a cloth belt, waistband), about which Ibn Durayd (Lisa X 406b) says: لا نحبها إلا دخيلها وإن كنا قد نكلومها بها قديما (I consider it a foreign word even though it was used earlier).

It is therefore no surprise if the later Arabic readers of the Koran were unable to suspect a Syro-Aramaic root behind the spelling ج (be). From this arose the need to see in it (as so often) an undocumented epithet for Mecca. In the process (assuming this was also true), instead of the here misread preposition ب (fi), the Arabic في (fi / ب (in) would have been more expected. Transliterated into Syro-Aramaic, however, this spelling yields the reading ج = Arabic ج (sayyahu) = م (sayyahu) (he fenced it off, built a wall around it), in which the case figurative sense من (manahah) (he protected it, made it therefore into a protected district) من (lo. cit., under 2) is also possible. This results in the following reading for Sura 3: 96:

ان أول بيت جعل للناس الذي تكة مبارك وهم للعلماء

"The first shrine that was erected for the people is the one that He has fenced off (enclosed) as a holy (literally: blessed) (district) and (as) right guidance for the people.”

This reading is confirmed by the subsequent verse 97, in which it is said that the place of residence ج (m-qamāt) of Abraham was located in this (district): ومن دخله كان أمنا (and whoever enters it enjoys protection)."
of contributing substantially to the understanding and clarification of the language of the Koran than the systematic reference to the so-called Old Arabic poetry, which has in many cases driven the exegesis further off the track than before such reference.

Other inferences could also be drawn concerning the origin of the language of the Koran, but it would be premature to do so on the basis of these individual findings since these bases on such grounds could prove to be fallacious. Only a comprehensive philological explanation of the text of the Koran would provide an objective foundation for further conclusions.

II. The Oral Tradition

The unsuspected extent of the misreading that has come to light in connection with numerous Koran passages raises the question of the authenticity of the previously alleged oral Arabic tradition. In view of this, the thesis advocated so far in this regard can no longer be upheld. On the contrary, this necessitates the assumption from the beginning of a text transmitted in writing. The early Koran manuscripts still extant today in defective Arabic script make it clear even to a non-specialist that without a reliable oral tradition a text would not have been easy to decipher even for a learned Arab. It is therefore understandable that the later Arab exegetes and philologists who had endeavored for generations to achieve a reasonably coherent reading of the Koran text were not up to the task inasmuch as they took as their starting point an understanding of language based on a written Arabic that was first standardized around the second half of the 8th century. This makes the numerous misreadings and misinterpretations of the Koran text comprehensible.

This determination, however, will have more impact on Koran studies than on Islamic studies. The task of Islamic studies will continue to be the concern with Islam as it has developed historically. For Koran studies, however, the task set is another. For it can now already be stated that the Koran exegesis in East and West has started out from historically false assumptions. This is evidenced not least by the Western Koran translations whose authors, though they always endeavored anew to shed some light on the obscurities of the language of the Koran, could not conjure more out of it than the Arabic language as such was able to give.

III. Arabic Philology

This refers, above all, to the Persian Sthawayh (d. circa 796) as the founder of the grammar of the Arabic written language still valid today for standard modern Arabic. The Arabic philologists call their written language al’-Arabiya. In Western Arabistics it is designated as Classical Arabic. Essentially, this claim is traced back to the literary language's preservation of three case endings from the hypothesized proto-Semitic, but also to the other sounds lost in colloquial Arabic, apart from particular syntactic structures.

In the course of their work, the Arab philologists based their reflections on the one hand on the Koran, as the first written monument, and on the other hand on the so-called Old Arabic poetry. Insofar as the latter, however, was not fixed in writing, one relied on the accepted oral tradition of the Arabian nomads, who, in particular, it was presumed, had preserved the so-called hamza, the stop in a medial or final position, from prehistoric times. But because a reliable oral Arabic tradition was likewise assumed for the Koran as well, the defective script of which – except for the original mater lectionis ١ and ١ – had no vowel signs at all, once it was fixed according to the model of the so-called Old Arabic poetry, the course for the future was set. For the correct understanding of the Koran text, this circumstance was of crucial and, at the same time, of fateful historical significance.

For whereas one knew until now that the hamza and partly the alif had been inserted later on into the text of the Koran as a mater lectionis for long ١ and the other vowel signs, one was nevertheless convinced that this had occurred on the basis of a reliable oral tradition. Beginning from the assumption of the downright phenomenal memory of the Arabs, who supposedly had orally preserved an impressive quantity of poetical works, one assumed as a matter of course that this was also the case for
the Koran, not only because it was the first, but even more so because it was the *holy Scripture* of the Arabs.

However, to this day nobody has dared to take seriously into consideration the occasionally expressed suspicion that the Koran text was *misread* and *distorted* not only by the introduction of the vowel signs, but especially by the subsequently inserted *diacritical points* that first established the *original consonant script*.

*IV. The Historical Error*

The findings of this first study, however, force one to conclude that the previous thesis of a reliable oral transmission of the text of the Koran stemmed from a mere legend.

According to the examples presented here, if the Arab philologists and commentators have even misread genuinely Arabic expressions, the only possible conclusion regarding the oral transmission of the Koran is obvious. If such a tradition existed at all, it must be assumed that it was interrupted fairly early on. In any case, the least conclusion that one can draw from this is that it has considerable gaps.

*V. The New Reading of the Koran*

If the above philologically underpinned analysis has demonstrated that on the basis of both philological and objective criteria the Koran text has been misread and misinterpreted to a degree hitherto considered unimaginable, then the inevitable consequence is the need for a fundamentally new reading of the Koran. The findings of the present study have created the prerequisites for such a reading.

From this results an essential finding of this study, according to which the hitherto scarcely perceived importance of Syro-Aramaic lexicography has turned out to be crucial not only in providing evidence of actual Aramaicisms (or Syriacisms) but also and especially in the determination of even the Arabic vocabulary of the Koran. To this extent it may not be too audacious to hope that with the method on which this work has been based the way has now been cleared for the creation of a new glossary of the Koran.

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389 Karl Vollers, for instance, in the conclusions of his work *Volkssprache und Schriftsprache im alten Arabien* [Vernacular Language and Written Language in Ancient Arabia] (184), voiced the opinion that “the way in which the Koranic language, which is based on imitation, is praised by posterity as genuine *'Arabiya* should be labeled by the historian as *counterfeiting*.” To correct a Koran text that has been misread in numerous passages, a critical edition of the oldest Koran manuscripts, as advocated, for example, by R. Blachère (*Introduction au Coran* 196) and from which he expects insights into the origins of the Arabic language, is certainly desirable. Yet, read properly, the basic form of the canonical Cairo edition of the Koran is already sufficient in itself to enable one to make far-reaching conclusions regarding this.
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*Nqā’n kartin*. Cairo, 1972.


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Robert Marzari
Arabic in Chains
Structural Problems and Artificial Barriers.
ISBN 978-3-89930-119-9

“What distinguishes Marzari’s work is his ability to explain complicated matters in clear and even entertaining language. Linguists often cut a poor figure here, given their propensity to gallop non-stop through the brushwood of grammar. Not so Marzari. He illustrates the potentials and limits of a language that over 300 million Muslims in the Middle East call their mother tongue, aside from the many others elsewhere in Africa as well as in Asia, who recite Arabic as the language of the Qur’an.” Wolfgang G. Schwanitz / Der Tagesspiegel, Berlin

Abit Yasar Kocak
Handbook of Arabic Dictionaries

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Amr Hamzawy (ed.)
Civil Society in the Middle East
ISBN 978-3-89930-027-7

The internal Arab, Iranian and Israeli debates on civil society in the 1980s and 1990s have only partly found their way into Western studies on the issue. An analysis of the discursive structures of the local debates, which represents the major objective of the current edited volume, may help shifting the nexus of the academic discussion to Middle Eastern perceptions and actors. Amr Hamzawy analyses the Arab sociological and political discussion on civil society, depending on the intellectual literature of the last ten years. Asghar Schirazi distinguishes in his contribution between three central intellectual currents in Iran: Islamist, leftist, and liberal, each of which can be further subdivided. The article of Angelika Timm explores the historical development of the Israeli civil society and addresses some important spheres of civil activities.

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Annegret Nippa / Peter Herbstreuth (ed.)
Along the Gulf
From Basra to Muscat – Photographs by Hermann Burchardt.
ISBN: 978-3-89930-070-3 / bilingual German-English

The book explores the Arabian Gulf around 1900 through the eyes of Hermann Burchardt, a man without a political mission and no economical interests, merely intended “to take up a picture”. Hermann Burchardt ist the answer to various turn-of-the-century exoticsms, sobering people’s fantasies about the Orient. He saw the truth of photography in a sequential alignment of various perspectives as opposed to the single image. His mirroring aimed to create a tension as regards interpretation, appearing as curious as reality itself.

Ali Hassan Jama
Who cares about Somalia?
Hassan’s Ordeal - Reflections on a Nation’s Future
ISBN 978-3-89930-075-8

This book is about a Somali civil war and the fall of the Siad Barre regime. It is about how people living there at the time did really suffer from it as a result. Although it principally relates to a family, the book tells an applicable story of flight, provisional shelter and finally exile. It is also about the political history of Somalia and about Somali ethnicity in general; and the book discusses the future of the Nation and how international and regional powers are involved in playing their sometimes influential roles in its intricate and complicated political path. For Somalis, international observers, historians and scholars alike one hopes these few lines shall offer some ideas to ponder and some more food for thought.

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Christoph Luxenberg, a scholar of ancient Semitic languages in Germany, argues that the Koran has been misread and mistranslated for centuries. His work, based on the earliest copies of the Koran, maintains that parts of Islam's holy book are derived from pre-existing Christian Aramaic texts that were misinterpreted by later Islamic scholars who prepared the editions of the Koran commonly read today. Luxenberg's radical theory is that many of the text's difficulties can be clarified when it is seen as closely related to Aramaic, the language group of most Middle Eastern Jews and Christians at the time. The New York Times

Scholars of the first rank will now be forced to question the assumption that, from a philological perspective, the Islamic tradition is mostly reliable, as though it were immune to the human error that pervades the transmission of every written artifact. Hugoye – Journal of Syriac Studies

In the West, questioning the literal veracity of the Bible was a crucial step in breaking the church's grip on power – and in developing a modern, secular society. That experience, as much as the questioning itself, is no doubt what concerns conservative Muslims as they struggle over the meaning and influence of Islam in the 21st century. But if Luxenberg's work is any indication, the questioning is just getting underway. Newsweek International

This naturally leads to the most fascinating book ever written on the language of the Koran, and if proved to be correct in its main thesis, probably the most important book ever written on the Koran. The Guardian

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