

The Deflection (*l-Imālah*), the ‘a’ Consonant (*l-Fatḥ*), and that which is in Between.

A group of Reciters singled out this topic for publication; included among them is Ibn `l-Qāsiḥ, author of the work *Qurraṭ `l-`Ain fī `l-Fatḥ wa `l-Imālah wa mā bayna `l-lafẓain*.

`l-Dānī said: The ‘a’ Consonant and the Declension are two dialects common to the language of those eloquent Arabs in whose dialect the Qur`ān was revealed. The use of the Consonant is the dialect of the people of Hijāz while the Declension is the dialect of the majority of the people of the Najd region, including the Tamīm, the Asad, and the Qais tribes. He said: “The authority for this recitation is the *marfū`* tradition of Huẓaifa which states: “recite the Qur`ān in the strains and sounds of the Arabs, and avoid the sounds of sinners, and the People of the two Books”. He said: “Declension without doubt, belongs to the seven modes of recitation, and to the strains and the sounds of the Arabs.”¹

Abū Bakr b. Abū Shaibah said: “Waqī` narrated to us, on the authority of `l-A`mash, from Ibrāhīm, who said: “In their recitations they considered the letters *alif* and *yā* to be similar. He went on to say that by *alif* and *yā* is meant their emphasis (*tafkhīm*) and their declension.

And in the work *Tārīkh `l-Qurrā`* he quotes Abū `Āsim `l-Darīr `l-Kūfī who quotes Muḥammad b. `Abd Allāh, who quotes `Āsim, who quotes Zirr b. `Hubaish as saying: A man once recited the verse *ḥā hā* without the *kasrah* in the presence of `Abd Allāh b. Mas`ūd. `Abd Allāh b. Mas`ūd then recited the verse as *ḥī hī* with the *kasrah* on both letters. But the man again recited *ḥā hā* without the *kasrah*. So `Abd Allāh b. Mas`ūd again recited *ḥī hī* with the *kasrah* on both letters. The man again recited *ḥā hā* without the *kasrah*. So `Abd Allāh b. Mas`ūd recited *ḥī hī* with the *kasrah* and said: “Thus did the Messenger of God (s) teach me”. Ibn `l-Jazarī said: “this tradition falls into the category of *gharīb*, and we know it only in this form. Its narrators however, are sound, except for Muḥammad b. `Ubaid Allāh, the `Azramī, who is considered weak by the scholars of hadīth. He was however, a pious man who lost his written material and was thus reduced to quoting from memory. He was thus criticised.

I would add: This tradition of his appears in the exegesis of Ibn Mardawaih with the addition “Thus did Gabriel bring it down” at the end.

And in the work *Jamāl `l-Qurrā`* Šafwān b. `Assāl is reported to have heard the

¹ This particular tradition is used by John Wansbrough in *Quranic Studies: Sources and methods of Critical Interpretation* New York, 2004, p.104, as part of his discussion on the Koran as *lingua sacra*.

Messenger of God (s) recite: *Yā Yaḥyē* ". He was then told: "O Messenger of God, you decline even though this is not the dialect of the Quraish?" So he said: "it is however, the dialect of its maternal branch, the Banu Sa`ad."

Ibn Ashtah quotes Abū Ḥātim, as saying: "the Kufans justify declensions by pointing to various places in the Qur'an where the *yā'* appears in place of the *alif*. They reproduced the same written form, and declined so that the *alif* closely resembles the letter *yā*."

l-Imāla refers to the act of bending the sound of the *fatḥa* in the direction of the *kasra*, and more often, the *alif* in the direction of the *yā*. This is the pure form of the declension. Less well known names given thereto include *l-idjā*, *l-baḥḥ* and *l-kasr*. It is a sound that falls between two letters which is also called *l-taqlīl*, *l-talḥīf*, and *bayna bayn*. It is of two kinds: The Intense (*shadīdah*) and the Intermediate (*mutawassiḥah*), and they may both be used in recitation. When the Intense form is used then the total declension of the *alif* to the *yā* (qalb) should be avoided; and so too, the excessive lengthening of vowels. The Intermediate sound falls between the 'a' consonant and the intense declension.

l-Dānī has said: "our scholars differ as to the best and the most superior of these two. I choose the Intermediate declension which is in between. This is because the objective of the declension is achieved thereby; and it serves as an indication that the origin of the *alif* is the *yā*, and brings attention to its occasional change to a *yā* in certain places or to its melding with an adjoining *kasra* or *yā*."

As for the 'a' consonant, it is formed with the reciter opens his mouth to pronounce a letter. It is also called *l-tafkhīm*. And it too falls into the category of the Intense and the Intermediate. For the Intense form the reciter will open his mouth widely; but this is not permissible in the case of the Qur'an—it is in fact, non-existent in the Arabic language. The Intermediate form falls between the Intense 'a' and the Intermediate Declension. l-Dānī said: "this is the form used by the pro-declension reciters."

Differences exist as to the declension being a branch of the 'a' consonant or to them being independent. Reasons given for the first view are that the Declension is always with cause: If it is absent then the 'a' consonant becomes necessary. But if it does exist, then both the 'a' consonant as well as the declension forms of recitation are permissible. But for every word that is declined, there exists among Arabs a similar word that is recited with the 'a' consonant. The 'a' consonant's frequent usage points to it being the original and to the declension being a branch thereof.

The discussion in regard to the declension assumes five forms: Its causes; forms, its uses, those who apply declension; and that which is declined.

As for its causes, reciters mention ten, which Ibn `l-Jazarī says hinge on two factors: The first is the kasra, and the second, the *yā*. Each of these letters appear either before or after the place of declension. At times it is assumed to exist in the place of declension itself. It might also be that neither the *kasra* nor the *yā* exist in the word, nor are they assumed to be in the place of the declension, but they are posited nonetheless, in some word inflections. At times the *alif* and the *fatḥa* may be declined due to some other *alif* or *fatḥa*., in which case it will be called: A declension because of a declension (*l-Imāla li ajl li l-Imāla*). At other times the *alif* is declined to mimic another declined *alif*.

Ibn `l-Jazarī has said: “Declension also occurs because of repetitive usage, and to distinguish between the noun and the particle. This would then bring the causes to twelve.

As for the declension brought about by a preceding *kasra*, it is conditional on there being but a single letter in between, such as the *alif* in *kitāb* and *ḥisāb*. This gap is in respect of the *alif*. As for the declined *fatḥa* there are no gaps between it and the *kasra* - or between two letters in which the first is governed by a *sukūn*, e.g. *insān*, or between two *fatḥas* in which the second letter is the *hā* because of its obscurity.

As for the preceding *yā*, it is either connected to the *alif* e.g. *l-ḥayāt* and *l-ayāmī*, or separated by two letters of which one is the *hā* e.g. *yadahā*

As for the *kasra* that follows, the same rule would apply whether it is permanent e.g. *ʿAbid* or temporary, e.g. *min l-nās* and *fī l-nār*. As for the *yā* that comes afterwards, one example would be the word *mabāyi*. And as for the imputed *kasra*, one example would be the word *khāfa* because originally it was *khawifa*. As for the imputed *yā* e.g. *yakhshā*, *l-hudā*, *abā* and *l-tharā*. In all such cases the *alif* has been changed from a *yā*, and the preceding letter has been given a *fatḥa*.

And the same applies to the *yā* in words such as *ḥāba*, *jā'a*, *shā'a* and *zāda* because the first letter of the root word (*fā*) gets a *kasra* along with the pronoun having a voweled d'amma.

The same applies to the temporary *yā* as in *talā* and *ghazā* because their *alif* has been substituted for the *waw*. It has been declined because of its change to a *ya* as in the words *tuliya* and *ghuziya*.

As for the declension because of another declension, this is exemplified by `l-Kisā'i's declension of the *nūn* after the *alif* in the verse *innā li Allāh* because of the Declension of the

alif in *li Allāh* . He did not however, decline the words *wa innā ilayhā* because of its absence thereafter. Similarly, he has declined *l-dhuḥā*, *l-qurā dhuḥāhā* and *talāhā*.

As for the declension because of resemblance, an example thereof is found in the feminine *alif* in *l-ḥusnā* and the *alif* of *Mūsā* and *Īsā*; this because they resemble the *alif* in the word *l-hudā*.

As for the declension due to repetitive usage, according to the author of the work *l-Mubhij*, an example thereof is the word *l-nās* as recited in three places.

As for the declension due to the difference of the noun and particle, example thereof are the opening letters of the various chapters. And as Sībawaih has said: "Included therein are the letters *bā* and *tā* of the alphabet because they are the names of the sounds made thereby, as opposed to particles such as *mā*, *lā*, etc.

As for its methods, these are four, all of which hinge on the foregoing causes. Its bases are two: affinity and intimation. As for Affinity (*l-munāsabah*) it comprises of a single category which is that which is declined for reasons inherent in the word itself, and which is declined because of some other declension. Their objective was to have the action of the tongue and the adjoining pronunciation of the declined letter to be from the same place and to follow the same form.

As for Intimation (*l-Ish`ār*), it comprises of three categories: The intimation of the base word, the intimation of the word in some places, and intimation because of resemblance to the base word.

As for its uses, it serves to facilitate pronunciation. This is because the tongue in the consonantal mode is elevated, and through declension is lowered. Lowering is easier on the tongue than elevating. This is why some decline. And those who maintain pronunciation in the 'a' mode, do so because the consonant is the base and because it is stronger.

As for those who decline, all ten the reciters belong to this category, except Ibn Kathīr who does not decline a thing in all of the Qur'an. As for what is declined, this is exhaustively discussed in the books of recitals and in those works dedicated to discussing the declension. We mention hereunder some rules:

Ḥamza, *l-Kisā'ī* and Khalaf decline every *alif* found in the Qur'an that has been transmuted from a *yā*, be it in a noun or a verb. Examples include: *l-hudā*, *l-hawā*, *l-fatā*, *l-amā*, *l-zinā*, *atā*, *abā*, *sa`ā*, *yakhshā*, *yaḏā*, *ijtabā*, *ishṭarā*, *mathwā*, *ma'wā*, *adnā* and *azkā*.

They also decline every feminine *alif* on the scales *fu`lā*, *fi`lā* or *fa`lā* such as in the words *ṭūbā*, *bushrā*, *quśwā*, *l-qurbā*, *l-unthā*, *l-dunyā*, *iḥdā*, *thikrā*, *sīmā* *d'zā*, *moutā*,

marḏā, *`l-salwā* and *`l-taqwā*. Included herein are the words *Mūsā*, *Īsā* and *Yaḥyā*.

They also decline words on the scale *fu`ālā* or *fa`ālā* such as *sukārā*, *kusālā*, *usārā*, *yatāmā*, *nasārā* and *`l-ayāmā*.

And words in the Qur'an that are written with a *yā*, e.g., *balā*, *matā*, *yā asafā*, *yā waylatā*, *yā ḥasratā*, *annā* (the interrogative particle). Excluded are the following: *ḥattā*, *ilā*, *`alā*, *lada* and *mā zakā*; these will not be declined at all. Likewise, they decline letters having the *wāw* whose first letter has a *kasra* or a *damma* e.g. *ribā* wherever it occurs, *`l-dhuḥā* whatever form it takes. *`l-quwā* and *`l-`ulā*.

They decline the opening letters of eleven chapters. These take the forms: *ḥā hā*, *wa`l-najm*, *sa`ala*, *`l-qiyāmah*, *wa`l-nāzi`āt*, *`abasa*, *`l-a`lā*, *wa`l-shams*, *wa`l-lail*, *wa`l-ḏuḥā* and *`l-`alaq*. *Abū`Amr* and *Warsh* concur with regard to these chapters.

Abū`Amr declines every word having a *rā* followed by the *alif*, in every scale it appears. Examples include: *thikrā*, *bushrā*, *asrā*, *arāhu*, *ishtarā*, *yarā*, *`l-qurā*, *`l-nasārā*, *usārā* and *sukārā*. It conforms with the *alif* on the scale of *fu`lā* wherever it comes.???

Abū`Amr and *`l-Kisā`ī* decline every word in which an *alif* followed by the letter *rā* appears, whether that happens to be at the ends, or in the genitive form. Examples include: *`l-dār*, *`l-nār*, *`l-qahhār*, *`l-ghaffār*, *`l-nahār*, *`l-diyār*, *`l-kuffār*, *`l-abkār*, *bi qinṭār*, *absāru hum*, *ouwbarihā*, *ash`ārihā* and *ḥimārika*. This would be the case whether the *alif* is or is not a root letter.

Ḥamza declines the *alif* of the middle radical of the following ten verbs in the perfect tense: *zāda*, *shā`a*, *jā`a*, *khāba*, *rāna*, *khāfa*, *zāgha*, *ṭāba*, *dāqa* and *ḥāqa* where and how it occurs.

`l-Kisā`ī declines the *hā* of femininity and the letter before it into an unqualified pause when appearing after fifteen letters which are combined in the acronym "*fajathat Zaynab lathūd shams*". These are: the *fā*, in the words as in *khalīfa* and *rafah*; the *jīm* as in *walījah* and *lujjah*; the *thā* as in *thalātha* and *khābīthah*; the *tā*, as in *baghtatan* and *`l-maytah*; the *zā* as in *bārizah* and *a`izzah*; the *yā* as in *2hashyah* and *shabah*; the *nūn* as in *sunnah* and *jannah*; the *bā* as in *ḥabbah* and *`l-taubah*; the *lām* as in *laylah* and *thullah*; the *thāl* as in *laththa* and *`l-mauqūthah*; the *wāw* as in *qaswah* and *`l-marwah* the *dāl* as in *baldah* and *`iddah*; the *shin* as in *`l-fāḥishah* and *`ishah*; the *mīm* as in *rahmah* and *ni`mah*, the *sin* as in *`l-khāmisa* and *khamsah*.

He maintains the 'a' consonant as is when it appears after the following ten letters: *jā`a*, letters of *`l-isti`lā`i.e.* (*Qaf ṭā khā sād dhād ghayn ṭā*), the remaining 4 letters i.e. (*Alif kāf*

hā rā). If a *yā* with a sukun appears in front or a *kasra* that is joined or un-joined with a vowel-less letter then too declension will occur. If that is not the case then it will be read as a normal consonant.

There remain some letters that are in dispute or require further explanation. Furthermore there are no rules that govern these letters. They may be found in the works relevant to this field.

And with regard to the opening letter of the various chapters: Ḥamza, `l-Kisā`ī, Khalaf, Abū `Amr, Ibn `Āmir and Abū Bakr decline the verse *Alif lām Rā* in the five chapters. Warsh opts for the recital in between

Abū `Amr, `l-Kisā`ī and Abū Bakr decline the *hā* in the opening words of the chapters *Maryam* and *Ṭā Hā*.

Ḥamza and Khalaf decline the opening letters of *Ṭā Hā* but not *Maryam*.

Apart from Abū `Amr those who decline the *alif lām rā*, also decline the *yā* at the beginning of *Maryam*. And the first three in addition to Abū Bakr decline the *yā* at the beginning of *Yās m*.

These four also decline the *ṭā* of *Ṭā Hā*, *ṭā sīm mīm*, *ṭā sīm* and the *ḥā* of *ḥā mīm* in the seven Hā Mīm chapters. Ibn Thakwān concurs with them in regard to the ḥa.

Conclusion

Some scholars have reservations about the Declension in light of the tradition “the Qur’ān was revealed to be recited with fullness (tafkhīm)”. Several responses have been given to this.

1. That whilst the first revelations were so governed, later declensions were absolved of this rule.
2. That it means that the recitals be conducted in the voice of the male. The voice should therefore, not be lowered to that of women.
3. That it means that such verses were meant to express harshness and severity towards pagans. But the author of the work *Jamāl ‘l-Qurā’* has said that this explanation is farfetched, because verses meant to express mercy and compassion are also governed by this tradition.
4. That it means that the Qur’an be recited with dignity and reverence. In other words, it should be glorified and revered. He thus encourages this sort of recital in order to glorify and dignify the Qur’an.
5. That fullness means placing a vowel in the middle of the word. This

would require that disputed words be given a d'amma and a kasra but not the pause (*sukūn*) because the damma and the kasra confer such words with a certain loftiness and richness.

ʿI-Dānī has said: "Thus was it explained by Ibn ʿAbbās." He then said: "Ibn Khāqān narrated to us, as did Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, as did ʿAlī b. ʿAbd ʿI-ʿAzīz, as did ʿI-Qāsim that he heard ʿI-Kisāʿī quote Salmān who quotes ʿI-Zuhrī as saying: "Ibn ʿAbbās said: "the Qurʿān has been sent down to be recited with heaviness and fullness, as is the case with the word *ʿI-jumuʿah*, and so on. This he cited as an example of heaviness. He then quoted the tradition of Ḥākim on the authority of Zayd b. Thābit which states: "the Qurʿān was revealed to be recited with fullness."

Muḥammad b. Muqātil, one of the narrators said: "I heard ʿAmmār say that the verses "*ʿuthran au nuthran*"² (77:6) and "*ʿI-ṣadafayn*"³ (18:96) must be recited by placing a vowel in the middle.

He said: "This is supported by Abū ʿUbaydah's assertion that the people of ʿI-Ḥijaz recited everything except the word *ʿAshrah* with fullness; the latter they recited with a *sukūn*. The people of the Najd however, omit fullness except the word, *ʿashirah* to which they give the *sukun*.

ʿI-Dānī said: "this view is preferable as an explanation of the tradition.

² "To cut off all excuses or to warn".

³ "He filled the gap between the two mountains"