

Accurate Understanding of the Letter of *Lam Alif* in Mushaf

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ABSTRACT

Al - Qur'an is the holy book of the Muslims which is revealed in Arabic. Thus, every sentence, word and letter contained used is in Arabic. However, scholars have disagreed regarding the number and pronunciation of Arabic letters used in the Al - Quran. The same applies to the pronunciation of Lam Alif (لا), especially in the teaching and learning process. The purpose of this study is to examine the scholarly disagreement on this matter and to determine which is the correct pronunciation of the letter Lam Alif (لا). This study uses a qualitative approach through the design of content analysis studies. The study found that among the factors that led to the disagreement among scholars on the number of Hija'iyah letters was to determine the letters Alif, whether it is classified as Hamzah, Alif Madd or not. These factors are also the origin of the letter Lam Alif and its pronunciation system. This study further reinforces the need for mastery in Arabic language especially involving Al - Quran such as the knowledge in Tajweed, and at the same time proving the importance of talaqqi and mushafahah in the teaching and learning process of Al - Quran.

Keywords: Lam Alif (لا); Hija'iyah letters; Tajweed letters; Pronunciation of the letters.

1. Introduction

Al-Qur'an is the holy book for all Muslims and miracles of all ages. Every Muslim must read the Quran properly (with *tajweed*) because the law of recitation is *farḍu 'ain* (obligatory act that must be performed by all Muslims) (Sa'ad, 2009). Meanwhile, the law of learning Tajweed knowledge is *farḍu kifayah* (a legal obligation that must be discharged by the Muslim community) (Sa'ad, 2009). Imam Ibn al-Jazari (2000) emphasized the necessity of reading aloud in his *matan*:

وَالأخذُ بِالتَّجْوِيدِ حَتْمٌ لَارِئٌ # مَن لَّمْ يُجَوِّدِ الْقُرْآنَ آتَمٌ
لَأَنَّهُ بِهِ الإِلَهَ أَنْزَلَ # وَهَكَذَا عَنْهُ إِلَيْنَا وَصَلَا

The understanding from this *matan* is, reading correctly with *tajweed* is a must. Whoever does not recite the Al Qur'an by default, then he is guilty because Allah decrees the Qur'an in righteousness, and in righteousness He reaches us. Before being able to read the Quran properly, every Muslim must first learn the basics of *tajweed* such as knowing letters from different angles and names, lines, and other laws of *tajweed*.

In the context of Quranic letters and words, most scholars have argued that the total number of words in the Quran is 77,934 words (Al-Suyuti, 2004). Each of these words is a combination of the letters found in the Quran and all these are Arabic letters that become the language of the Quran. Allah Almighty says:

﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ﴾

Translation: Indeed, we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand. (Yūsuf 12:2)

Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the letters of *hija'iyah* found in the Quran from the different points of view of the scholars and to study how the *Lam Alif* (لا) letter is created and its correct pronunciation in the Arabic language.

2. Methodology

This study is qualitative. Data collection methods are through library research methods, documentation and history. The collected data were analyzed using text and content analysis methods to obtain accurate results. The focus of the research is to study the history of the arrangement of letters and their use in the writing of manuscripts. In addition, the study also focuses on the most accurate pronunciation of the letters Lam Alif as well as the determination of the angle of Lam and Alif between the mushaf. Descriptive analysis was done and accompanied by tables and diagrams to provide a more thorough explanation of the problems of the study. This study is limited to the method of letter arrangement in the Ottoman manuscripts only.

3. Understanding of The Letter

According to the Institute of Language and Literature, letters mean symbols or exponents to the sounds of the language (DBP, 2010). This term is derived from the Arabic word حَرْف (*harf*). Harf is a noun that refers to number one or

mufrad. When this word is plural, it will produce the term حُرُوف (letters) meaning letters.

According to Ibn Jinni (1993), the pronunciation of the letter is triggered by the speech organs in which produced the sound of the letter. According to him, the sound is an element that goes out with his breath in a prolonged and sustained state. The definition of the letter in Ibn Jinni's view is quite close to the meaning of the *makhraj* letter or point of articulation.

For Ibn Sina (1978), the definition of letters involves sound and air and refers to the state of the difference between one sound and the other in terms of the strength and objectivity of the sound itself.

The definitions given by these two figures are the beginning of a more refined understanding of modern scholars. At that time, both figures worked scientifically to provide detailed explanations of letters especially in the field of language or linguistics. Among the common points found in each definition are the differences between sound and letters. For them, letters are shaped by the specific circumstances that occur to the sound.

However, the letter intended in this study refers to the smallest unit that forms a word. Words are small units of language that have their own meanings, which often combine with other words to form a sentence, thus forming the basis of communication and interaction between people. (Mohd. Zaki, 2001)

In general, all languages that exist around the world are based on sounds spoken by their speakers and understood by their listeners. This is because the spoken form is a fundamental feature of language use. The second feature, however, is the form of writing that symbolizes sound.

A word will be constructed with letters as raw material originally derived from the human mind and is spoken by his tongue or written by his hand. Thus, the letters are said to have three dimensions. The first dimension is the dimension of the mind which is the spiritual picture of the human mind. The second is the dimension of conversation or speech. This dimension is a sound that is spoken and heard by the ear. The third dimension is the writing dimension, which is the eye-catching pen carving. (Mohd. Zaki, 2001)

Thus, letters are a term that includes aspects of sound and written symbols. This is in line with Ibn al-Jazari's point of view in his book *al-Nashr* (Ibn al-Jazari, 1993) which has been one of the main references of Quranic scholars from ancient times to the present.

4. Letters in Arabic Language and Their Development in Islamic Era

Before the researcher explains more about the structure of the letters in Arabic, there are a few things to keep in mind such as the history of the

Arabic alphabet and its development. However, the explanation of this matter is very brief given that many studies have been conducted on the subject.

Among the dependable of Arabic texts and letters before the advent of Islam was to a Quraish figure Harb bin Umayyah bin 'Abd al-Shams, father of Abu Sufyan r.h. He is a trader who always travels overseas to trade. According to 'Abd al-Fattah al-Qadi, due to over-travelling, Harb bin Umayyah learned many languages, including the writing. According to one historian, he studied with 'Abdullah bin Jad'an, who continued his *sanad* with al-Khaljan bin al-Mawham, the author of the revelation to the Prophet Hud a.s. Thus, he was a teacher who taught the language and writing to the Quraish community every time he returned to Mecca. (Abd al-Fattah, 2003)

According to Mohd Zaki (2001), it is possible that the Arabic letter began in the early 4th Century, along with the growth of the Arabic language among the Bani 'Adnan bin Isma'il bin Ibrahim a.s. The Arabs began to take note of their writings after the revelation of the Al – Qur'an al-Karim.

As we know, the Al – Qur'an al-Karim in the time of Prophet Muhammad was written without a line and dots. It is revised with the guidance of Prophet (PBUH) especially regarding the location and order of Quranic verses to be written by the revelation authors. Prophet Muhammad says:

لَا تَكْتُبُوا عَنِّي سِوَى الْقُرْآنِ، فَمَنْ كَتَبَ عَنِّي غَيْرَ الْقُرْآنِ فَلْيَمْحُهِ

Translation: Do not take down anything from me, and he who took down anything from me except the Qur'an, he should efface that and narrate from me.

[*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no.3304]

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِمَّا يَنْزِلُ عَلَيْهِ الْآيَاتُ فَيَدْعُو بَعْضَ مَنْ كَانَ يَكْتُبُ لَهُ وَيَقُولُ لَهُ "ضَعْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ فِي السُّورَةِ الَّتِي يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا كَذَا وَكَذَا"

Translation: When the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Prophet (PBUH), he called someone to write them down for him and said to him: Put this verse in the surah in which such and such has been mentioned

[*Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, no.786, *Da'īf*]

In addition, the first form of letters and writings used to compose the revelation was al-Hijazi. This text is derived from the writings of al-Anbar, but it has been undergone several refinements during its use in Mecca, so it was later known as the Hijazi. (Abd al-Fattah, 2003)

Other writings such as the Kufi, Riq'ah, and Nasakh have not been used in Quranic writing at this time. However, the lettering began to find its place in the writing of the time of the Uthman caliph r.a., thus expanding rapidly during the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphs.

The history of the writing of the Al- Quran al-Karim in no form and line was followed by Abu Bakr al-Siddiq r.a. and 'Uthman bin al-'Affan r.a. during their era. However, with the passage of time and the increasing number of people converting to Islam, especially among non-Arabs, there has been an error in the reading of Arabic texts which has led to misreadings of the Al-Quran. (Abd al-Fattah, 2003)

Therefore, for the first time the Al-Quran al-Karim was written with some of the marks known as *i'rab* (inflexion) or الإِعْرَاب نَقَطُ (*i'rab* point). The sign was designed by a scholar who specializes in Arabic, Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali in the time of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan r.a. According to Muhammad Salim (2003), the signs in question are:

- i. Harakat (motions) *fathah* (the /a/ sound) small line placed above the letter.
- ii. *Kasrah* (the /e/ sound) small line placed below a letter.
- iii. *Dammah* (the /u/ sound) small curl-shaped placed above a letter.
- iv. *Tanwin* (doubled) placed double vowel marks.
- v. *Sukun* (absence) no marks.

Subsequently, Quranic writings have undergone a renewal during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan. He had al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi instructed two scholars 'at that time, namely Nasr bin' Asim and Yahya bin Ya'mar to renew the Arabic text in general and the Al -Quran in particular. These two scholars' have created dots to distinguish between letters in Arabic such as ج (Jim) and خ (Kha '), as well as ب (Ba') and ن (Nun). These dots are then known as الإِعْجَام نَقَطُ (I'jam dots). (Muhammad Salim, 2003)

Then there was the last significant change to the Arabic alphabet and the Al-Quran al-Karim. The change was made by a great scholar 'al-Khalil bin Ahmad al-Farahidi during the reign of the al-'Abbasiyyah caliphate. He combines two methods that scholars have made before ', further adding and refining the signs in Arabic. Thus, signs such as the fathah of Alif, the kasrah of Ya', and the dammah of Waw were introduced. In addition, other reading markers are also introduced such as *sukun*, *tasydid*, *ikhtilas* and *isymam*.

In conclusion, all the efforts made by the previous scholars were to facilitate Muslims in learning Arabic especially in reading the Al-Quran. In addition, efforts have been made to avoid misunderstandings in pronouncing

alphabetical letters and Quranic verses especially for those who reverts to Islam and non-Arabs.

5. Arrangement of Language Languages and Its Calculation

The order of the letters in Arabic was originally the Abjadi's order taken from the Finiq people which are أ ب ج د ه و ح ز ه د ج ب أ ص ف ع س ن م ل ك ي ط ح ز و ه د ج ب أ سَعَفَصْ كَلْمُنْ حُطَيِّ هَوَزُ أَبْجَدُ (28 letters) assembled in ضَظْعُ تَحَدُ قَرَشَتْ. After the rising of alphabetical order, the letters in the Abjadian's order are numbered numerically for the purpose of numbering, counting and recording. (Mohd Zaki, 2001)

Table 1: Letters and value of numbers given

Letter	أ	ب	ج	د	ه	و	ز
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Letter	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل	م	ن
Value	8	9	10	20	30	40	50
Letter	س	ع	ف	ص	ق	ر	ش
Value	60	70	80	90	100	200	300
Letter	ت	ث	خ	ذ	ض	ظ	غ
Value	400	500	600	700	800	900	1000

(Source: Al Hafiz & Kamarul Shukri, 2021)

Table 1 above shows the beginning with the first letter of *Alif* or *Hamzah* is given 1 value, followed by a second value of two until *Ya* with a value of 10. Starting from this letter, the value count changes to two digits of 10, 20, up to 90 is in the letter *Sad*. Then starting with the *Qaf* letter, the value count changes to three digits which is 100, then the next letter is 200 and so on to the letter *Za'* with a value of 900. This count ends with *Ghayn's* letter of four digits being 1000. This form of counting is used widely by Arabs even in Quranic sciences such as al-Fawasil. (Al-Shatibi, 2007)

6. Letters Arrangement and Pronunciation of Lam Alif

The days of Nasr bin 'Asim and Yahya bin Ya'mar were the earliest days of the translation of Arabic letters from the order of Abjadi to alphabet which is

widely used today. Thus, in those days letters of similar shape began to be distinguished by certain points (Al-Shatibi, 2007). The letters involved are:

ب ت ث ن ي - ج خ - ذ - ز - ش - ض - ظ - غ -
ف ق

The name of the Abjadian order is derived from the position of the letter in the order itself beginning with the letter *Hamzah* or *Alif*, followed by the letter *Ba'* as the second letter, *Jim's* letter as the third letter and *Dal's* letter as the fourth letter. If these letters are connected, they will form as follows, أَبْجَدْ (Abjad). (Ghanim, 2009)

The same goes for naming the alphabetical order. The sequence begins with the letter *Alif*, followed by the letter *Ba'*, followed by the letter *Ta'*. The word "alpha" is derived from the alphabet spelling of الف and is then paired with the letter *Ba'* and *Ta'*. The result is, أَلْفَبْتُ (Alphabet). (Ghanim, 2009)

However, from the point of view of most letters, most Arabic scholars agree that the number of letters in Arabic is 29 letters, while at the same time there are differences in the order of the letters. The researcher is more likely to choose Ibn Jinni's (1993) opinion of 29 letters beginning with *Hamzah* and ending with *Ya'*. This is because the arrangement is widely adopted by the Malaysian Muslim community.

However, the number of *hija'iyah* letters that widely spread in the Mukaddam of Quran in Malay community, especially Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei are 30 letters. This number has not been added to Jawi letters like Ga, Nya, and Ca. The 30 letters are as follows:

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن و ه لا
ء ي

The order of the letters above distinguishes between *Hamzah* letters, *Alif* mad letters, and *Alif* not mad letters. *Alif's* letter at the beginning of the sequence is *Alif* not mad. *Hamzah's* letters are placed after the letter *Lam Alif*, while the letter *Alif* on *Lam Alif* refers to the letter *Alif* mad.

In reference to Ibn Jinni's arrangement, he created two forms of Arabic alphabetical order, the *makhraj* and the alphabetical. Arranging by *makhraj* is the practice of most ancient scholars such as al-Khalil (1967), Sibawayh (1977), and Ibn Jinni (1993) himself. The following is an order according to the *makhraj* made by Ibn Jinni (1993):

ء ا ه ع ح غ خ - ق ك - ج ش ي ض - ل ر ن - ط د ت - ص ز س -

ظ ذ ث - ف ب م و

For the second category of alphabetical order, Ibn Jinni used the alphabetical method of placing Hamzah on Alif at the beginning of the sequence, and placing Alif on Lam before the final letter. He has also divided the letters into two categories: mad (vocal) and non-mad (consonant).

The mad letter has three letters namely ي و ا. These letters are not readable because they do not have a mark or line. Therefore, it is necessary to come up with another letter in line to sound mad. For example, how do you say the letter *Alif* mad (ا) that does not even have a row? If it sounds "aaa", then there has been the addition of another previous letter, like *Hamzah* with the uppercase letter such as أ. The same goes for other mad letters.

Therefore, this alphabetical order was created to solve problems involving the letters (vowel) and not mad (consonants). Here are 29 letters arranged in alphabetical order (Mohd. Zaki, 2001):

أ - ب ت ث - ج ح خ - د ذ - ر ز - س ش - ص ض - ط ظ - ع غ -
ف ق ك - ل م ن - ه و لاي

In this order, *Hamzah's* letters are placed above *Alif's* letters at the beginning of the sequence to indicate that they are consonant letters. The second *Alif* is placed in the category of *Waw* and *Ya'* because *Alif* is a vowel that is neither solitary nor solitary. Then *Lam* was placed in front of the *fathah* to allow *Alif's* letter to be pronounced. So, the correct reading is لا (Laa), not *Lam Alif*. (Mohd. Zaki, 2001)

The choice of *Lam* letters to be compared to *Alif* mad letters is based on several factors, including its high usage rate in Arabic especially in the Quran. For example, the *Lam* letter is numerous and is often associated with the letter *Alif* in forming *Alif Lam Ma'rifah*, whether *Alif Lam Shamsiyyah* or *Alif Lam Qamariyyah*. For example, التَّيْنِ (*Alif Lam Shamsiyyah*) and العَلْقِ (*Alif Lam Qamariyyah*).

The second factor that contributes to the selection of *Lam* letters is the nature and *makhraj* (origin of the letter) of *Lam's* own letter. This letter is in the category of light letters with weak properties (Mohd. Zaki, 2001). Likewise, the *makhraj* at the end of the tongue makes it easier to speak. Therefore, when examined, the *tahlil* pronunciation is dominated by the letters *Lam* and *Alif*, لا إله إلا الله (La ilaha illaLah). As such, it is very easy to pronounce and light in speech. Immediately the pronunciation of the speech itself can be spoken without the need for large movements of the other speech organs and even with the movement of the tongue alone.

7. The Angles of Lam Alif In Mushaf

The study found that there are two forms of Lam Alif angle in the Mushaf Uthmani. The difference refers to the two blocks of writing and marking the mushaf, namely al-Mashariqah and al-Magharibah. For al-Mashriqah, the first angle is Lam while the second angle is Alif. This is different from al-Magharibah. On the side of al-Magharibah, the first angle is Alif while the second angle is Lam.

Figure 1: Lam Alif angle for al-Mashariqah. Black for Lam and blue for Alif



(Source: Mushaf al-Quran al-Mashariqah)

Figure 2: Lam Alif angle for al-Magharibah. Black for Lam and blue for Alif



(Source: Mushaf al-Quran al-Magharibah)

Figure 3: Example of Lam Alif in the mushaf al-Magharibah.

وَأُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّ
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ ءَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا
 يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾ خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ
 غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَأَمَّنَّا
 بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤﴾ يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ
 ءَأَمَنُوا وَمَا يُخَدِّعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥﴾ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
 مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٦﴾
 وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصَدِّقُونَ ﴿٧﴾
 أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ

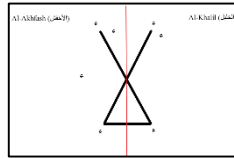
(Source: Mushaf al-Quran al-Magharibah)

Figure 4: Example of Lam Alif in the mushaf al-Mashariqah.

أَبْصَرِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ
 مَن يَقُولُ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾
 يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَأَمَنُوا وَمَا يُخَدِّعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ
 وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا
 وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ
 لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصَدِّقُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ
 هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ
 ءَأَمِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ
 أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا لَقُوا

(Source: Mushaf al-Quran al-Mashariqah)

Figure 5: Hamzah's position between the opinions of al-Khalil and al-Akhfash.



(Source: Al Hafiz & Kamarul Shukri, 2021)

The findings of the study show that the main factor of difference between al-Mashariqah and al-Magharibah is due to the difference of opinion between al-Khalil and al-Akhfash. Al-Mashariqah according to the opinion of al-Akhfash while al-Magharibah according to the opinion of al-Khalil. The majority of Muslims use the mushaf based on the opinion of al-Mashariqah, including in Malaysia. However, the difference was found not to affect the recitation of the Qur'an in any narration because it all goes back to the discipline of the study of the Qur'an, namely talaqqi mushafahah.

8. Conclusion

From the description made, it can be concluded that the arrangement and numbers created by Ibn Jinni are still in use and are even more popular because they are based on similar shapes and are easier to learn and remember. This arrangement is in line with those introduced by Nasr bin 'Asim and Yahya bin Ya'mar who changed the order of Abjadi to Alfaba'i. (Mohd. Zaki, 2001). Regarding the pronunciation of *Lam Alif* (لا), the disagreement over the form of the pronunciation does not affect the original function of its creation. Recommendation for teachers is not to teach it in one form only. I hope that this study will increase the information of the teachers on the subject and can clearly tell the students about the origin of the creation and its proper pronunciation. Wallahua'lam.

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