

[A pdf comment by Omar Abur-Robb for the post: [Fundamentalist Christians Are Not the Only Ones to Make Dumb Arguments](#), in Bart Ehrman blog dated April 28, 2024, in response to the comment of Tom.Hennell, dated April 29]

Date: May 7, 2024

Hi Tom,

I truly appreciate your input here, and the link for Marijn's article. Actually, It took me a while to understand this article; as there were new terminologies for me (eg: stemmata, stemmatics, etc.), and it took me a while to recognize the Arabic equivalent of "Orthographic idiosyncrasies". I didn't yet go through your other link for Hythem Sidky's article, as I am still with Marijn.

Now ... the process of analysis used by Cook & Marijn was very smart, and I actually can utilize their results to clarify the origin of these "Orthographic idiosyncrasies".

But let us first clarify the basic data:

"Mercy of God" in Arabic is written as "Rahmat Allah", and Rahmat is a feminine word, and the current classic Arabic would write the end-T of this word with a close-T.

Now ... the phonetic "T" has two style of drawing/scripting: open-T and close-T. The open-T is a horizontal line with a tooth at both ends. A tooth here is just a small vertical line. The close-T is just a circle.

Now .... most of feminine words with end-T in the Quran would be written with a close-T, however, there are 13 different feminine words that were mostly written in the Quran with close-T, but also, they were written sometimes with open-T.

Marijn's article analyzed the word "Blessing" (Nea'mat), and he demonstrated that the consistency of this variations (Open & Close-T) in the old 14 different Quranic Manuscripts does prove that these manuscripts followed a written archetype, confirming the traditional Islamic narratives.

Now ... this variation of open&close T is a well-known phenomenon within the ancient Muslims studies, and they tried hard to use compare-and-contrast analyses to identify a pattern, and they came with an interesting pattern that was really good, but it wasn't totally consistent.

Now ... taking the results in Marjin's article, I can present the following hypothesis:

1.1# Based on the trusted "chain-oral-tradition" narratives, the Prophet did instruct scribes to write the verses of the Quran in parchments, but these parchments weren't collected into one document at the time of the Prophet.

1.2# However, we can argue here that the scribes were mixed from Meccans and Yathribans (i.e. the people of Yathrib which later became known as Al-Madina) who have some differences in the style of scripting. I am assuming here that some of the scribes used the close-T for feminine words, and others used the open-T.

Also, I am going to assume here that the Meccans preferred the close-T for feminine words, but also, the open-T was an accepted style for them.

1.3# One year after the death of the Prophet, a committee was established to collect the Quran. The methodology (according to the trusted “chain-oral-tradition” narratives) required the verse of the Quran to be attested by (at least) two witnesses and with (at least) one written parchment. After this collection, the parchments were copied as-is into the first written book of the Quran that was later called “Mus-haf Hafsa”.

1.4# But the Quran was an oral-book, and each Arabian tribe wrote this oral-book using their own style of scripting. This caused a serious problem, and another committee was established (at the time of Othman) to standardize the scripting style of the Quran. This committee used “Mus-haf Hafsa” as a reference, and the methodology was to standardize the script according the Meccan’s style.

1.5# As assumed before, the close-T and open-T for feminine words were both accepted in the Meccan’s style. Therefore, it seems that the committee didn’t standardize the variations related to them; therefore, they were kept as in “Mus-haf Hafsa”.

1.6# The output of this committee was a document that was called “Mus-haf Othman” and it was the archetype for the later Quranic Manuscripts.

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Therefore, the reason for this variations are likely due to the different style-of-scripting of the original scribes at the time of the Prophet.

So, we can map here the stages:

2.1# The Quran was an oral-book that came through one person.

2.2# Many scribes (with probably different scripting styles) wrote the verses of the Quran in parchments.

2.3# Approved parchments (that were attested by two witnesses) were copied as-is into one document (Mus-haf Hafsa).

2.4# The script in “Mus-haf Hafsa” was standardized to follow the Meccan’s style, and therefore, producing “Mus-haf Othman”, which became the archetype for the later Quranic Manuscripts.

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Now ... Othman has standardized the script (i.e. how the words are written) but he didn’t standardize the readings. There are about 10 known readings for the Quran and the differences between these readings is less than 3%, and they are not contradictory but complementary, therefore, we have 100% of the meaning of the Quran with a minimum of 97% of its exact wordings.

However, the scribes who wrote these different readings would write the variances according to the standard script of Othman.

But the article of Marijn has highlighted one surprising anomaly: it seems that there is a free variation (without correlation) in including or excluding the long vowel “a” in some words in the Quranic manuscripts.

Now ... I hope there would be more research into this anomaly, but I will present here my quick preliminary thoughts:

All Semitic scripts (including the ancient Coptic script) didn't have short vowels. The Muslim scholars invented marks to be placed at the top or bottom of the characters to represent the short vowels.

Also, it seems that the Arabic scrip is the only scrip in the Semitic languages that include long vowels. A, W, and Y are Arabic consonants that are also used to represent 3 long vowels, which are “a”, “o” (represented by the character w), and “e” (represented by the character y).

However, there are many words in all the Quranic Manuscripts that don't include the long vowels. For example the name written in the Quran as “Al-Rhmn” is pronounced “Al-Rhman” (so the long vowel “a” is not written), and the name of David in the Quran is written as “Dawd” and pronounced “Dawod” (so the long vowel “o” is not written), and many others words as well.

Furthermore, in the current Quranic Manuscript in Surah “Taha” we find the words “ya mosa”. “Ya” is rhetoric word for calling, so if Peter was among people and you want to call him, then you say: Ya Peter. And “Mosa” is Prophet Moses.

However, these two words were written in the Birmingham Manuscript as “ymosa”. So, the long vowel “a” after “y” was omitted here.

It seems to me that the scribes after “Mushaf Othman” didn't regard the long vowel “a” to be an essential part of the script standardization.

As I have said, this is just a quick preliminary thoughts about this anomaly, and it does deserve further research.

#### The Reference:

Marijn (Marijn van Putten), The Grace of God” as evidence for a written Uthmanic archetype: the importance of shared orthographic idiosyncrasies (2019) SOAS University of London, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bulletin-of-the-school-of-oriental-and-african-studies/article/grace-of-god-as-evidence-for-a-written-uthmanic-archetype-the-importance-of-shared-orthographic-idiosyncrasies/23C45AC7BC649A5228E0DA6F6BA15C06>