Hišām's ʾIbrāhām: *Evidence for a Canonical Quranic Reading Based on the* Rasm

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Abstract

In early quranic Manuscripts the name of the prophet ʾIbrāhīm occurs in two different spellings either ابرهم *or* ابرهيم. *These two spellings are spread haphazardly throughout the Quran. Close examination of the patterns in the manuscript, however, show that the distribution of this spelling is not random or up to the whims of the scribe. The location where one spelling or the other occurs is highly correlated across the early manuscripts. Moreover, the location of one spelling or the other is highly correlated to where the quranic reader Hišām reads the name as ʾIbrāhām or ʾIbrāhīm. This paper argues that this is not because these manuscripts have been written in the reading of Hišām, but rather that Hišām based his reading on the* rasm *of the quranic text.*

Introduction

The prophet *Ibrāhīm*, equivalent to the biblical Abraham, presents a conundrum in terms of quranic orthography. The name occurs in two different spellings, first as ابرهم and second as ابرهيم. In the ubiquitous Cairo edition of the Quran the distribution of these two names is striking: all attestations of the name in Sūrat al-Baqarah are spelled ابرهم, whereas all other attestations are spelled ابرهيم.

Despite this difference in spelling, the most common reading tradition today, that of Ḥafṣ (d. 180/796) from ʿĀṣim (d. 127/745)—the one used in the Cairo edition—as well as most other reading traditions read this word as *Ibrāhīm* in all its instances. This is the only case of an *ī* spelled defectively in the quranic orthography that cannot be explained some other way.[2]

Many people rightly recognise ابرهم to be the spelling one would expect for the name *Abrāhām*, as it was borrowed from Hebrew or Aramaic, whereas ابرهيم represents a more

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[2] All other cases are part of the sequence *yī* which, like *wū*, is spelled defectively word-internally, an orthographic practice ultimately derived from Aramaic orthography (Diem, 'Schreibung der Vokale', §37–41). There is one more case in الفهم *īlāfi-him* (Q. 106:2), for a discussion of this form see Van Putten, 'Hamzah', p. 110.

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nativised form based on biblical names with similar patterns like ʾIsmāʿīl and ʾIsrāʾīl.[3] If ابرهم is indeed an archaic spelling, reflecting its Aramaic spelling, the distribution that we find in the Cairo edition is rather attractive. The fact that al-Baqarah—the largest, and thematically somewhat isolated, *sūrah*—contains a different spelling could easily be interpreted as an indication that the *sūrah* was perhaps written by a different scribe, who used a more archaic spelling of this name, and may even have pronounced the name differently. The explanation however does not agree with the manuscript evidence that we have. In early quranic manuscripts the spelling ابرهم is more widespread, and is found in *sūrah*s often even mixed with other spellings. For example, in the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus (henceforth CPP) we find Q. 19:46 spelled ابرهيم, but Q. 19:58 spelled ابرهم.[4]

Besides these issues, there is another confounding factor that complicates the issue of these two spellings. Throughout the *qirāʾāt* literature, there is mention of the name ʾIbrāhīm being read as ʾIbrāhām in multiple places. The famous canonisation of the seven readings, *kitāb al-sabʿ fī al-qirāʾāt* by ibn Muǧāhid (d. 324/935), says that ibn ʿĀmir (d. 118/736) would read ʾIbrāhām rather than ʾIbrāhīm in all of Sūrat al-Baqarah, tracing this knowledge back to al-ʾAḫfaš al-Dimašqī, who in his turn traces it back to ibn Ḏakwān (d. 242/856), one of the two canonical transmitters of ibn ʿĀmir's tradition. Ibn Muǧāhid makes no mention of the way ibn ʿĀmir's other canonical transmitter, Hišām (d. 245/859), treats the name ʾIbrāhīm.[5] The reading ʾIbrāhām exactly matches the distribution of the spelling as we find it in the Cairo edition of the Quran, which is unlikely to be a chance correspondence.

Different from ibn Muǧāhid, al-Dānī (d. 444/1053) does comment on Hišām in his *al-Taysīr fī al-qīrāʾāt al-sabʿ*.[6] He agrees with ibn Muǧāhid that ibn Ḏakwān would exclusively read ʾIbrāhām in Sūrat al-Baqarah, but also allows the reading as ʾIbrāhīm. However, the places where Hišām reads ʾIbrāhām is significantly more idiosyncratic. An overview of all attestations of the name, and the pronunciation associated with it by al-Dānī are in the table below.

Ibn al-Ǧazarī's (d. 822/1419) *Našr al-Qirāʾāt al-ʿAšr* describes Hišām in the same way as al-Dānī, but for ibn Ḏakwān he transmits a variety of accounts that have different approaches.[7] Several accounts say that ibn Ḏakwān read ʾIbrāhām in the same places as Hišām. Others say he always read ʾIbrāhīm. Another account says that it was only read ʾIbrāhām in Sūrat al-Baqarah, and some would say both ʾIbrāhīm and ʾIbrāhām would be possible in Sūrat al-Baqarah. Finally, one transmitter adds all cases of ʾIbrāhīm in Q. 3 and Q. 87 to forms that are pronounced as ʾIbrāhām, but ibn al-Ǧazarī says that this is a mistake.

What is interesting is that, unlike ibn Muǧāhid and al-Dānī, ibn al-Ǧazarī does not only comment on the different variations on the reading traditions, he also observes that these reading traditions seem to match spellings in quranic codices. He says that in the 33 places

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[3]Diem 'Schreibung der Vokale', §40; Nöldeke et al. *History*, p. 401 fn. 81; Jeffery *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 44ff.; Puin has a different opinion. To him ابرهم represents a form of ʾIbrāhām with a shift of ā to ē in the final syllable, spelling /ʾibrāhēm/ (Puin, 'ortho-epic writing', p. 167). This "imālah" explanation is unsatisfactory. There is no obvious conditioning factor that would have shifted this final ā vowel to ē, and words with ā in similar environments never undergo such a shift. The name همن *hāmān* or the noun سموت *samāwāt* 'heavens', for example, show no such shift. Invoking an unmotivated "imālah" therefore introduces more problems than it solves.

[4]Déroche, *La transmission écrite*.

[5]Ibn Muǧāhid, *Kitāb al-Sabʿah*, p. 169.

[6]al-Dānī, *Taysīr*, p. 76f.

[7]Ibn al-Ǧazarī, *Našr*, vol 4., pp. 2184–2187.

Table 1. The readings of *ʾIbrāhīm* by Hišām from ibn ʿĀmir.

All *ʾIbrāhām*	All *ʾIbrāhīm*	Mixed	
Q. 2 (15x)	Q. 3 (7x)	Q. 4:54	*ʾIbrāhām*
Q. 14:35	Q. 11 (4x)	Q. 4:125	*ʾIbrāhām*
Q. 16 (2x)	Q. 12 (2x)	Q. 4:125	*ʾIbrāhām*
Q. 19 (3x)	Q. 15:51	Q. 4:163	*ʾIbrāhām*
Q. 42:13	Q. 21 (4x)	Q. 6:74	*ʾIbrāhīm*
Q. 51:24	Q. 22 (3x)	Q. 6:75	*ʾIbrāhām*
Q. 53:37	Q. 26:69	Q. 6:83	*ʾIbrāhām*
Q. 57:26	Q. 33:7	Q. 6:161	*ʾIbrāhām*
	Q. 37:83 (3x)	Q. 9:70	*ʾIbrāhīm*
	Q. 38:45	Q. 9:114	*ʾIbrāhām*
	Q. 43:26	Q. 9:114	*ʾIbrāhām*
	Q. 87:19	Q. 29:16	*ʾIbrāhīm*
		Q. 29:31	*ʾIbrāhām*
		Q. 60:4	*ʾIbrāhām*
		Q. 60:4 (sic)	*ʾIbrāhīm*

where Hišām reads *ʾIbrāhām*, the name is written as ابرهم in Syrian Codices, and that he has also seen this in Medinese Codices, and that some of these would only have such a spelling in Sūrat al-Baqarah.[8]

The Medinese codices that only write ابرهم in Sūrat al-Baqarah correspond exactly in this orthographic idiosyncrasy to what we find in the Cairo edition. This then obviously causes one to wonder whether it is the case that also the Syrian distribution, as described by ibn al-Ǧazarī, shows up in old quranic codices.

In this paper, I will show that the occurrences of ابرهم in early quranic manuscripts, which are now available and easily accessible online via the Corpus Coranicum website,[9] correspond remarkably well to the places where Hišām is said to have read *ʾIbrāhām*. It will be shown that this cannot be because the *rasm* of these manuscripts was adapted to represent Hišām's reading tradition. Instead, it must be understood as a case where Hišām's reading tradition adapted the reading to the *rasm*.

The Manuscripts

Nearly all of the early quranic manuscripts available on the Corpus Coranicum website either match the places where ibn al-Ǧazarī reports the ابرهم spelling perfectly, or almost perfectly.[10]

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[8]Surprisingly, al-Dānī makes no mention of the codices as described by ibn al-Ǧazarī in his *Muqniʿ fī Rasm Maṣāḥif al-ʾAmṣār* (al-Dānī, *Muqniʿ*, p. 96).

[9]www.corpuscoranicum.de

[10]Those that do not match ibn al-Ǧazarī's appear in two types. Those that have ابرهيم in all places, i.e. the upper text of the Sanaa Palimpsest (DAM 01-27.1), and the clearly later Rampur Raza Library: No. 1, Korankodex. And those that have ابرهم in Q. 2 and ابرهيم elsewhere, these will be discussed later in the article.

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Kairo, al-Maktabah al-Markaziyyah li-l-Maḫṭūṭāt al-Islāmiyyah: Großer Korankodex

The Großer Korankodex corresponds closely to the distribution as described for Hišām. There are six disagreements, two of which are almost certainly later additions. The six points of disagreement are:

	Hišām	Hussein Mosque Quran
Q. 2:127	ʾIbrāhām	ابرهم
Q. 6:74	ʾIbrāhīm	ابرهم
Q. 9:70	ʾIbrāhīm	ابرهم
Q. 19:58	ʾIbrāhīm	ابرهم
Q. 2:125	ʾIbrāhām	ابر ه‍[ـ]ـم
Q. 2:125	ʾIbrāhām	ابر ه‍[ـ]ـم
Q. 2:127	ʾIbrāhām	ابر ه‍[ـ]ـم
Q. 2:132	ʾIbrāhām	ابر ه‍[ـ]ـم

For Q. 2:132 we are almost certainly dealing with a later addition of the denticle for the *ī*, as the ductus is much thinner than other instances of the denticle, see Fig. 1. Q. 2:125, the ductus is similar to the word, but the connection of the denticle to the م is different than in other parts of the manuscript, compare Figs. 2 and 3.

This manuscript attests 68 instances of the 69 attestations in the Quran (the only missing one being Q. 3:33). If we tabulate these results, taking Q. 2:125, and Q. 2:132, as spelling ابرهم, we get the following overview, the columns designate the spelling in the manuscript,

Fig. 1. Q. 2:132

Fig. 2. Q. 2:127

Fig. 3. Q. 3:97

and the rows designate the reading of the name as either ʾIbrāhām or ʾIbrāhīm in Hišām's trad-
ition. The numbers between brackets designate the numbers if Sūrat al-Baqarah is removed
from the data.

Table 2. Distribution in the Großer Korankodex.

	ابرهم	ابرهيم	
ʾIbrāhām	31 (17)	2 (1)	33 (18)
ʾIbrāhīm	2	33	35
	33 (19)	35 (34)	68 (53)

The statistical procedure known as Fisher's exact test is able to calculate the odds of this
situation occurring by chance. The resulting *p* value is the probability that the correspond-
ence would be due to chance, a *p* value of 0.05 is equivalent to a chance of one in twenty
(0.05 = 1/20) that it would be due to chance. Calculating the *p* value, we get a value so sig-
nificant, that chances of this happening by chance are virtually zero (a chance smaller than
one in 52 trillion): $p = 0.00000000000019$

Even if we take Q. 2:125 and Q. 2:132 as spelling ابرهيم, the *p* value is still virtually zero
($p = 0.000000000016$).

If we remove Sūrat al-Baqarah from the calculation, as this is of course the position where
we also find ابرهم in the Cairo edition, we still get a highly significant result. ($p =
0.0000000009$).

This extremely high level of correlation between where Hišām reads ʾIbrāhām or ʾIbrāhīm
versus the spelling ابرهم and ابرهيم shows clearly that this manuscript is related to a manuscript
that ibn al-Ǧazarī describes.

Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek: Ma VI 165

Ma VI 165 has four attestations of ابرهم (Q. 19:41, 46, 58; Q. 29:31) and nine attestations of
ابرهيم (Q. 21:51, 60, 62, 69; Q. 22:26, 43, 78; Q. 26:69; Q. 29:16), these match perfectly with
Hišām. Interestingly, we can see in Q. 29:31 was originally spelled ابرهيم and the denticle has
been purposely removed to represent ابرهم, corresponding to Hišām's ʾIbrāhām (see Fig. 4).
The correspondence is highly significant correlation ($p = 0.0014$). Assuming that Q. 29:31
represents ابرهيم, the correlation is still significant ($p = 0.014$).

Fig. 4. ابرهيم with the mistaken ى partially removed in Q. 29:31.

Kairo, Nationalbibliothek: qāf 47

There are five instances of ابرهم in Qāf 47 (Q. 4:125 (twice); Q. 9:144 (twice); Q. 14:35) and six instances of ابرهيم (Q. 3:65, 67, 68; Q. 6:74, 75; Q. 21:62). They perfectly correspond to the reading of Hišām ($p = 0.0021$).

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek: Kodex Samarkand (Facsimile)

The Samarkand Codex attests quite a few instances of ابرهـ[ـيـ]ـم. Surprisingly, the last four attestations of ʾIbrāhīm in Sūrat al-Baqarah are written ابرهيم, disagreeing both with the Cairo edition and the tradition of Hišām. Despite this, the correlation is highly significant both including Sūrat al-Baqarah ($p = 0.0000083$) and excluding it ($p = 0.001$).

Table 3. Distribution in the Kodex Samarkand.

	ابرهم	ابرهيم	
ʾIbrāhām	14 (4)	5 (1)	19 (5)
ʾIbrāhīm	0	15	15
	14 (4)	20 (16)	34 (20)

Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus

Dutton observed that there was a relationship between the reading tradition of Hišām and the places where the different spellings show up.[11] Déroche comments on the presence of the spelling ابرهم in three places, but his edition misses seven other places where ابرهم instead of ابرهيم is written.[12] Five of these agree with Hišām's reading (Figs. 5–9).
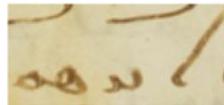

Fig. 5. Q. 6:161 ابرهم

Fig. 6. Q. 9:114 (first) ابرهم

There are two places where the CPP quite clearly has ابرهم without the *yāʾ* where we would expect it to be present if it followed Hišām's reading tradition.

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[11]Dutton, 'Oldest Qurʾan Manuscript', p. 45.
[12]Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, p. 60.

Fig. 7. Q. 9:144 (second) ابرهم

Fig. 8. Q. 14:35 ابرهم

Fig. 9. Q. 42:13 ابرهم

The first one is Q. 43:26 (Fig. 10), the other is Q. 3:33 (Fig. 11). Q. 3:33, however, clearly is the correction of a later hand and close examination of the high resolution photos shows that the original form of this word, before correction, was spelled ابرهيم. Dutton is therefore correct in saying that Arabe 328(a) aligns perfectly with the reading tradition of Hišām, but the broader manuscript of the CPP shows at least one deviation (Q. 43:26 is part of Arabe 328(b) not examined by Dutton).[13]
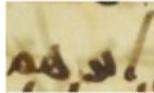

Fig. 10. Q. 43:26 ابرهم

There are two more instances of ابرهم/ابرهيم in the St. Petersburg portion of the CPP (Marcel 18). Q. 57:26 based on the reading Hišām would be expected to be spelled ابرهم and Q. 26:69 would be expected to be spelled ابرهيم. Both of these are read by Déroche as ابرهيم. As I do not have access to photos of this manuscript, I have decided to not include these two forms in the calculation below. The resulting correlation is highly significant (p = 0.0004).

Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi: M1 (= Saray Medina 1a)

Saray Medina 1a agrees in quite a few attestations of ابرهم, although in some environments the now regular spelling is attested. While the number of corresponding ابرهم spellings is a minority, the relation is still highly significant (p = 0.00028).

[13]Dutton, 'Oldest Qurʾan Manuscript', p. 45.

Fig. 11. Q.3:33 ابرهم with erased ابرهيم below.

Table 4. Distribution in the CPP.

	ابرهم	ابرهيم	
ʾIbrāhām	8	0	8
ʾIbrāhīm	1	9	10
	9	9	18

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek: Wetzstein II 1913 + Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: Arabe 6087

Wetzstein II 1913 and Arabe 6087 are correctly identified by the Corpus Coranicum project to be part of the same codex. This fairly complete early codex can also be said to agree with the reading tradition of Hišām. However, it is clear that the text has been retouched in many places. Surprisingly, in Sūrat al-Baqarah, it seems that all instances of ابرهم have received an added *yāʾ*. While in some cases, it is quite clear that these are later additions (e.g. Fig. 12), in other cases this is not as obvious (Fig. 13) and the writing is almost indistinguishable from places where we would expect the spelling ابرهيم (Fig. 14). If we take the most conservative approach and assume that all instances of ابرهيم are original and not retouched, the correlation is not significant if we include Sūrat al-Baqarah ($p = 0.0951$); however, if we reasonably exclude Sūrat al-Baqarah from the calculation, the correlation is significant ($p = 0.0098$).

London, British Library: Or. 2165 & Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: Arabe 328(e)

As Déroche correctly identifies,[14] Or. 2165[15] and Arabe 328(e) belong to a single codex. All 34 attestations of ʾIbrāhā/īm correspond perfectly with the reading tradition of Hišām. This

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[14]Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, p. 39, fn. 5.
[15]This manuscript has been accessed through the website of the British Library, rather than through the Corpus Coranicum website which does not have images of this manuscript. URL: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or_2165

Table 5. Distribution in Saray Medina 1a.

	ابرهم	ابرهيم	
ʾIbrāhām	6	9	15
ʾIbrāhīm	0	36	36
	6	45	51

Fig. 12. ابرهم with ى clearly added in Q. 2:258 (second)

Fig. 13. ابرهيم with possibly an added ى in Q. 2:135

Fig. 14. Example of genuine ابرهيم spelling in Q. 6:75.

Table 6. Distribution in Wetzstein II 1913.

	ابرهم	ابرهيم	
ʾIbrāhām	5	26 (11)	31 (16)
ʾIbrāhīm	1	33	34
	6	59 (44)	65 (50)

was already observed by Dutton[16] for just Or. 2165. But also if we include Arabe 328(e) this is the case.

The line on which Q. 43:26 appears is written by a very different hand, and seems to correct some damage on the manuscript. I have left it out of the calculation. The correlation is highly significant ($p = 0.0001$).

Codex Amrensis 1

The recently published edition of the quranic codex that goes by the name of Codex Amrensis 1[17] has four attestations of ابرهم (Q. 9:114 (twice); Q. 14:35; Q. 42:13) and seven attestations of ابرهيم (Q. 9:70; Q. 11:69, 74, 75, 76; Q. 15:61; Q. 60:4 (second mention)). This is in perfect agreement with the reading tradition of Hišām, and as such the correlation is significant ($p = 0.003$).

An absence of early Qurans of the Baqarah-only type

An interesting observation that can be made from the early quranic manuscripts that are known to us is that there is a—perhaps surprising—lack of Qurans that have the distribution that corresponds to the tradition of ibn Dakwān with ابرهم in Sūrat al-Baqarah and ابرهيم everywhere else—the distribution found in the Cairo edition today. Qurans of this type must have certainly existed during al-Dānī's lifetime (b. 371/981-2, d. 444/1053) as he describes the Quran as having such a *rasm*.[18]

The only Quran that is of the *Baqarah*-only type that is available on the Corpus Coranicum website at the time of writing is the virtually complete Kufic Quran codex of ʿAbdarraḥmān bin Zīdān from the Gotthelf-Bergsträßer archive.[19] This is clearly a later quranic text than some of the ones we have discussed so far, being written in a clear Kufic B II script, rather than the Hijazi script styles of the CPP, Saray medina 1a, Ma VI 165,[20] Or. 2165 and Qāf 47. It seems therefore that the *Baqarah*-only type as found in the Cairo Edition is a development of the manuscript tradition that post-dates the distribution that correlates to that of the Hišām reading tradition. This should probably be seen as a regularisation of the rather haphazard distribution of the two spellings for *ʾIbrāhīm* as it is attested in these early manuscripts, retaining the defective spelling ابرهم only in Sūrat al-Baqarah, where the spelling was consistent and common in the early manuscripts.

Interpreting the data

In the previous sections, it has been shown that in a variety of old quranic manuscripts, the correlation of the spelling ابرهم to the pronunciation *ʾIbrāhām* in the Hišām reading tradition is highly significant. The observation by ibn al-Ǧazarī that such quranic manuscripts exist is

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[16]Dutton, 'Oldest Qurʾan Manuscript', p. 45.
[17]Cellard, *Codex Amrensis* 1.
[18]al-Dānī, *Muqniʿ*, p. 96.
[19]Minutoli 296 technically agrees with this pattern as well. All attestations in Sūrat al-Baqarah are spelled ابرهم, and the single attestation outside of it, Q. 14:35 spells it ابرهيم. This manuscript is too fragmentary to decide whether this distribution is meaningful ($p = 0.0624$).
[20]This document is perhaps better identified as Kufic B Ia, as Déroche does (Déroche, *Catalogue*, p. 67). This style is quite close to the Hijazi styles (op. cit., p. 37).

confirmed by the evidence available to us. Surprisingly, however, there appear to be no early Quran manuscripts that display the pattern as it is found in the modern Cairo edition today. It therefore seems that such quranic manuscripts are in fact later than those which have the distribution that is similar to Hišām; so much later, in fact, that they seem to have fallen almost completely outside of the scope of the types of manuscripts that the Corpus Coranicum project aims to collect on their website.

Of course, the extremely high correlation with the reading tradition of Hišām requires an explanation. I see three possible options:

1. All these manuscripts represent the reading tradition of Hišām, and the *rasm* of the manuscripts was adapted to represent this reading tradition.
2. The variable pronunciation of *ʾIbrāhīm* and *ʾIbrāhām* in specific *ayah*s in the Quran used to be much more widespread in other reading traditions, and these manuscripts represent this.
3. Hišām based his reading of *ʾIbrāhīm* and *ʾIbrāhām* on the spelling that was present in a codex available to him. This codex must have been very close to the quranic manuscripts discussed here.

We will discuss these three possibilities separately.

Option 1: All these manuscripts represent the Hišām tradition

One reason why the early quranic manuscripts examined so far seem to agree rather strikingly with ibn ʿĀmir's (d. 118/736) reading tradition as transmitted by Hišām (d. 245/859) could simply be that these Qurans were written to represent this reading tradition. If this is the case, it would mean that the *rasm* of the text was purposely altered to accommodate this reading tradition. In light of the highly defective writing of early quranic manuscripts, this is unlikely. If the *rasm* was freely adapted to accommodate certain reading traditions, we might expect many more subtle changes to the *rasm* to accommodate such variants, which do not seem to occur.

To test this hypothesis, the most obvious approach is to examine variant readings of the quranic text in these manuscripts and see if they correspond to the reading tradition of ibn ʿĀmir, and if possible more specifically to that of his transmitter Hišām. This latter option is unlikely, as several of the early quranic manuscripts examined here certainly predate Hišām's lifetime (d. 245/859). Such an examination is not always easy, as reading traditions only seldom disagree in terms of the consonantal skeleton, and consonantal dots often are not used.

Dutton[21] suggests that the CPP must indeed be a quranic manuscript related to the ibn ʿĀmir reading tradition of the late Umayyad period based on thirteen consonantal variants of which six are associated exclusively with ibn ʿĀmir. Dutton[22] also observed that the spelling of *ʾIbrāhīm/ʾIbrāhām* in both the CPP and Or. 2165 accord with the reading tradition of

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[21]Dutton, 'An Early *Muṣḥaf*'.
[22]Dutton, 'Oldest Qurʾan Manuscript', p. 45.

Hišām from ibn ʿĀmir and he tentatively concludes that this may also be a piece of evidence that the CPP is representing this reading tradition.[23]

Dutton bases the identification of these manuscripts as part of the Syrian tradition on the comments in the *rasm* literature such as al-Dānī's *Muqniʿ*, which describes the differences in the consonantal skeleton of the Uthmanic text as they are found in different regional codices —primarily citing variants of the four provinces of Syria, Medina, Basrah and Kufah. These variants have been studied in detail by Michael Cook,[24] who shows that these make up a manuscript stemma. The overview of the regional variants in Cook's article allows us to identify the regional variants that are present in a manuscript, and with that assign it a region.

From the CPP and Or. 2165, both Syrian manuscripts which both have the haphazard distribution of the spelling of *ʾIbrāhīm* that correlates with the tradition of ibn ʿĀmir, one might indeed conclude—as Dutton tentatively does—that this feature reflects Syrian regionality. However, this would only be true if all other quranic manuscripts that clearly correlate the spelling of *ʾIbrāhīm* also contained the Syrian *rasm* variants. This, however, is certainly not the case. While Wetzstein II 1913, like the CPP and Or. 2165, is a codex of the Syrian tradition, the other manuscripts examined clearly belong to different traditions.

Using Michael Cook's overview of the different consonantal differences, we can establish to which codex traditions these manuscripts belong.[25] For an overview of the features I refer the reader to the Appendix. We can sum up here the likely provenance of the manuscripts discussed here. All four of Cook's manuscript types are present:[26]

Syrian: CPP; Wetzstein II 1913; Or. 2165
Medinan: Saray Medina 1a; Codex Amrensis 1; Qāf 47; Ma VI 165 (or Syrian? or Basran?)
Basran: Großer Korankodex
Kufan: Samarkand Codex

We must therefore conclude that in the quranic manuscripts where the spelling ابرهيم/ابرهم correlates with the reading of Hišām, this is not because the quranic manuscripts are intended to represent Hišām's transmission of the ibn ʿĀmir reading tradition.

Option 2: The two variant readings of ابره(يـ)م used to be more widespread

It is of course possible that originally all the reading traditions and not just that of Hišām pronounced the name as *ʾIbrāhām* where it is spelled ابرهم. In this case, despite the manuscripts examined not representing ibn ʿĀmir's tradition, they could still be intended to represent such readings. While this is not impossible, there is absolutely no positive evidence for this.

Moreover, in this scenario, we would still be unable to explain the source of disagreement between the tradition of Hišām and of ibn Ḏakwān, who both read *ʾIbrāhām*, but disagree on

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[23]However, see Rabb 'Non-Canonical Readings'. Rabb identifies this manuscript as belonging to a non-canonical Ḥimsi reading.

[24]Cook, 'The Stemma of the Regional Codices'.

[25]Cook, 'The Stemma of the Regional Codices'.

[26]An examination of the features attributed to the Meccan codices indeed confirm that Cook is right to feel uneasy in accepting the Meccan codex as belonging to one of the original copies of the Uthmanic Archetype.

the positions where this is done. This is different from option 3 where, as we will see, the source of disagreement between Hišām and ibn Ḏakwān is easily explained.

Option 3: Hišām based his readings on the spelling of the codex

As the first option is not possible, and the second option is unlikely, the third option remains: a reversal of the scenario. Hišām based his reading on the spelling in his codex.

It seems likely that in the establishment and canonisation of the tradition of Hišām from ibn ʿĀmir, it was decided upon that every time the quranic manuscript had the spelling ابرهم it would be read ʾIbrāhām, whereas when it had the spelling ابرهيم it would be read ʾIbrāhīm. This tradition was then later decoupled from the spelling as present in the *rasm* of the manuscript it was based on, and came to take on a random-looking distribution when overlaid over the Cairo Edition *rasm*.

From this principle we can not only understand the Hišām tradition, but also the tradition of the other transmitter of ibn ʿĀmir – ibn Ḏakwān. We know that there are (at least) two manuscript traditions when it comes to the distribution of the ابرهيم and ابرهم spellings. The first tradition can be called the *Baqarah-only* tradition. Belonging to this manuscript tradition, we most notably have the Cairo Edition of the Quran. The other tradition can be called the *Hishamoid* tradition, which has ابرهم not only in *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, but also in a variety of other places throughout the Quran.

If we assume that the original principle of the tradition of ibn ʿĀmir was simply to read *ʾIbrāhīm* wherever ابرهيم was written, and *ʾIbrāhām* wherever ابرهم was written, we can understand the differences between the two transmitters of ibn ʿĀmir. The tradition of Hišām based itself on a quranic manuscript similar to, for example, the CPP and the Großer Korankodex whereas the tradition of ibn Ḏakwān based itself on a quranic manuscript similar to the Cairo Edition or the ʿAbdarraḥmān b. Zīdān Kufic Quran.

This does not mean that we can therefore date the innovation of the *Baqarah*-only type quranic manuscript to the period of ibn Ḏakwān's lifetime (d. 242/856). If *ʾIbrāhām* was read whenever ابرهم was written was indeed the rule, it is possible that the reading only started agreeing with the *Baqarah*-only type in later transmitters of his tradition. The disagreement amongst the transmitters on where ibn Ḏakwān read *ʾIbrāhām* is a strong indication that a cause for disagreement only developed after his lifetime.[27]

The relation between the *rasm* and the reading traditions

I have argued in the previous section that the variation of the *ʾIbrāhīm* and *ʾIbrāhām* pronunciations in the ibn ʿĀmir reading tradition should be considered a reading based on the *rasm* of codices which had these different spellings. This finding has important implications on how we understand the relation of the *rasm* to the reading traditions.

The important studies by Dutton[28] form a fundamental basis for looking at early quranic manuscripts in light of their reading traditions. In these two articles, Dutton clearly shows

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[27]Ibn al-Ǧazarī, *Našr*, vol. 4, p. 2185f.
[28]Dutton, 'An Early *Muṣḥaf*'; Dutton, 'Oldest Qurʾan Manuscript'.

that both the CPP and Or. 2165 display clear peculiarities of their consonantal skeleton that are also present in the descriptions of the reading tradition of ibn ʿĀmir.

Dutton suggests that because of this, the CPP and Or. 2165 were written according to the reading of ibn ʿĀmir.[29] In other words, he believes that the manuscripts of this type could *only* have existed in a period that the reading tradition of ibn ʿĀmir had taken shape. This is an important fact because Dutton[30] dates the manuscript on the assumption that it cannot have existed before the time that ibn ʿĀmir's reading tradition had taken its final shape "[i]f […] Ibn ʿĀmir's reading was not really fixed until the time of those later considered as the main *rāwī*s from him, i.e. Hishām (d. 245/859) and Ibn Dhakwān (d. 242/856), then this could simply be a late (i.e. Abbasid) example of a parchment, vertical-format, Ḥijāzī manuscript[…]".[31]

This, however, presupposes that the *rasm* of this codex was changed from the Uthmanic archetype in order to accommodate the reading tradition. And while this is possible, this is not the only solution. The other possibility is that when the copies of the Uthmanic codex were sent out to the provincial capitals, these variations were present in these initial copies. Due to a predominant ideology that an authoritative reading has to agree with the Uthmanic *rasm*,[32] the local readers would have adjusted their reading tradition to the local codices available to them.[33] As a result, the reading tradition of ibn ʿĀmir, as an authoritative Damascene reader, would naturally have a reading that agreed with the deviations as present in the Syrian codex and its copies. Had this not been the case, he would not have been eligible to be part of ibn Muǧāhid's canonisation.[34]

The fact that such a scenario is likely, is already suggested by Cook's seminal work[35] on the regional codices, in which he convincingly shows that the *rasm* variations described by al-Dānī in his *Muqniʿ fī Rasm Maṣāḥif al-ʾAmṣār*[36] can be formulated and analysed through the methodologies of stemmatics, yielding convincing stemmata of the regional codices. Such a result would not at all be expected if the *rasm* variations found in the regional codices have their origin in oral traditions that predate these codices.

While these facts are highly suggestive in the direction of a *written* exemplar informing the reading traditions (and in that sense are, indeed, actual *reading* traditions), so far no direct evidence had been presented that proves that the reading traditions were directly influenced by the *rasm* that said readers were exposed to. This paper shows that the transmitters of ibn ʿĀmir based their reading of the name *ʾIbrāhīm* on the *rasm* as it was present in the codex

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[29]Dutton, 'An Early *Muṣḥaf*', p. 74; Dutton, 'Oldest Qurʾan Manuscript', p. 48.

[30]Dutton, 'An Early *Muṣḥaf*', p. 82f.

[31]Dutton 2001: 74.

[32]The ideology that a reading must agree with the *rasm* certainly existed by ibn Muǧāhid's time (d. 324/936) (Nasser, *Transmission*, p. 52). Nasser argues in his book that *tawātur* was not yet as important to ibn Muǧāhid. But ibn Muǧāhid's contemporary, Muḥamad Ḥabaš says that the *rasm*/ʿ*arabiyyah*/*tawātur* criterion was present as early as the 3rd/9th century (Nasser, *Transmission*, p. 48).

[33]For a similar interaction between oral tradition and agreement with the *rasm* see Sadeghi, 'Criteria', pp. 24–26.

[34]It is clear that to ibn Muǧāhid agreement with the *rasm* was an important criterion for choosing a canonical reading. Nasser (Nasser, *Transmission*, pp. 56–59) convincingly argues that the absence of a majority reading in Kufa that agreed with the *rasm* was the reason for ibn Muǧāhid to choose three relatively minor Kufan traditions rather than the dominant non-Uthmanic reading of ibn Masʿūd.

[35]Cook, 'The Stemma of the Regional Codices'.

[36]Al-Dānī, *Muqniʿ*.

available to them. If the *rasm* had شله هم it would be read as ʾIbrāhām, whereas if the *rasm* had هدم، شله, it would be read as the commonly accepted form ʾIbrāhīm. The fact that this orthographic alternation is *not* a regional variant, but an orthographic idiosyncrasy attested in all regional codices proves that it cannot be taken as an example where the *rasm* has been changed to accommodate the reading tradition. Instead the reading tradition must have been changed to accommodate the *rasm*.

Implications

The data presented in this paper shows that the reading traditions of the Quran cannot be seen as the product of an exclusively oral transmission of the of the quranic text that developed independently from the standardised Uthmanic *rasm*. The canonisation of the reading traditions along the criterion that a tradition has to agree with the Uthmanic *rasm* at the time of ibn Muǧāhid did not function as a 'filter', in the sense that only reading traditions that by chance happened to agree with the *rasm* were qualified to be considered for canonisation. Instead, the presence of the official *rasm* warped and changed the reading traditions over time, so that they would have come closer and closer to the text their readers were using. The reading traditions were informed by the *rasm* and evolved from there. And the *rasm* of the regional codices was certainly not subordinate to the reading traditions as Dutton suggests.[37] In this case, the *rasm* was not changed to reflect the reading traditions. The reading traditions were changed to accommodate the *rasm*.

We should not conclude from this that the reading traditions are completely devoid of an oral component that predates the Uthmanic canonical text. There are many cases where the canonical readers converge upon a reading, while the bare orthography of the Uthmanic *rasm* is highly ambiguous, and a potentially more obvious reading is left in favour of an idiosyncratic, but precise, word. This is not what we would expect if there had not been an oral tradition associated with the text.

One such an example is found in Q. 36:49 يحصمون 'they are disputing' which by all but one of the seven readers is read as an anomalous assimilated stem VIII form.[38] The different readings of this word as presented by ibn Muǧāhid[39] are as follows:

yaḫaṣṣimūna   Ibn Kathīr[40]
yaḫaṣṣimūna   ʾAbū ʿAmr
yaḫiṣṣimūna   ʿĀṣim, al-kisāʾī, ibn ʿĀmir
yaḫṣṣimūna   Nāfiʿ
yaḫṣimūna   Ḥamzah

While there are four different forms of this verb in the seven traditions, all but the one transmitted by Ḥamzah, have an anomalous verb form that does not otherwise occur in

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[37]Dutton, 'An Early *Muṣḥaf*'; Dutton, 'Oldest Qurʾan Manuscript'.

[38]For the identification of this verb as an assimilated stem VIII form, see for example al-Farrāʾ *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, vol. 2, p. 379 who moreover relates that ʾUbayy b, Kaʿb read this form as *yaḫtaṣimūna*.

[39]Ibn Muǧāhid, *Kitāb al-Sabʿah*, p. 541. For a similar case, compare Q. 10:35 يهدى read variously as *yahdī*, *yahaddī*, *yahiddī* and *yahăddī*, ibn Muǧāhid, *Kitāb al-Sabʿah*, p. 326.

[40]And Nāfiʿ according to Warš.

the Quran, and does not conform to the regular word formation of Classical Arabic.[41] Had the readers based themselves completely on the *rasm* without any accompanying oral tradition, it seems unlikely that we would encounter such broad agreement on the use of this unusual verb form. From the *rasm*, the reading *yaxṣimūna* 'they are disputing' is clearly more straightforward, but nevertheless is only found with one of the seven canonical readers.[42]

Moreover, if it is indeed true that the Uthmanic standard text did not have any consonantal dots at all,[43] it seems highly doubtful that a sensible reading—and something that approaches a consensus on most of the words in the Quran among the different readers—could be arrived at based purely on the consonantal skeleton, without knowledge of what the text is supposed to say.

In the light of this, it seems that we must consider the reading traditions neither the result of a purely oral tradition unrestrained by the written text that belongs to it, nor a purely written text completely devoid of *a priori* knowledge what the holy text is supposed to have said. We may therefore consider the reading traditions or rather semi-oral traditions, not altogether different from the traditional Tiberian recitation of the Hebrew Bible, which likewise is certainly dependent on the consonantal skeleton, but nevertheless preserves features in the oral tradition that would not be recoverable if the only thing that survived of the text was the consonantal text.[44]

It is hoped that this investigation encourages further research into the variant readings and their relationship to not only the orthography of the Cairo Edition, but also of the earlier quranic manuscripts, whose internal variation and interrelation have yet to be examined in much more detail.

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[41]It is forms like these that place excruciating focus on the deep circularity of, e.g. al-Ṭabarī's requirement of the reading traditions to be in accordance of the grammar of the ʿArabiyyah (Nasser, *Transmission*, p. 46). This form would not have been likely to have been accepted as grammatical in the ʿArabiyyah had it not been for the fact that it occurs in the Quran.

[42]It seems to me that these forms should all be derived from single quranic Arabic form close to that of the tradition of Nāfiʿ, e.g. /yaxṣṣimūn/. This cluster is disallowed in the Classical Arabic phonotactics, and forms like *yaxaṣṣimūna* and *yaxiṣṣimūna* can be analyzed as different solutions to alleviate this problematic cluster. The form *yaxṣṣimūna* appears to be the result of the syncope of **a* with subsequent assimilation of the **tṣ* cluster to *ṣṣ*, i.e. **yaxtaṣimūna > *yaxtṣimūna > yaxṣṣimūna*. The motivation for this unexpected syncope, however, is unclear.

[43]This traditional view, which very often taken as fact by modern scholars of the Quran, should be doubted in light of manuscript evidence. While it is true that Kufic texts generally lack the dots to distinguish consonants in the *rasm*, this certainly is not true for Qurans in the earlier Hijazi script. Many, if not all, early quranic manuscripts written in this script have some amount of consonantal dotting. Combining this with the knowledge that the consonantal dotting certainly existed during Uthman's reign – as we find it in an inscription from 24/646 (Ghabban & Hoyland, 'The inscription of Zuhayr') and a papyrus from 22/644 (Grohmann, 'Aperçu') – it seems premature to accept the traditional narrative that the Uthmanic codex had no consonantal dotting at all.

[44]As Khan puts it: "[…] [T]he reading was a separate layer of tradition that was closely related to, but nevertheless independent from the tradition of the consonantal text." (Khan, *A Short Introduction*, 46f.). This should not be understood to mean that the Tiberian reading tradition was not in some places subordinate to the Masoretic consonantal text, as Khan shows that there are several readings clearly influenced by what the consonantal skeleton allows (op. cit., p. 49).

Appendix: Identification of manuscript traditions

The table below is based on the differences in the *rasm* of the regional codices as described by Cook[45] which in turn summarizes al-Dānī.[46]

The first table gives an overview of the different *rasm* features. As can be seen, the features marked by S, are features unique to the Syrian codices; those marked with M are shared by the Syrian and Medinese codex; The one marked by B is unique to the Basran codex, and those marked with K are unique to the Kufan codex.

Table 7. Overview of the regional codex variants.

	Verse	Syria	Medina	Basra	Kufa
(S1)	Q. 2:116	قالوا		وقالوا	
(S2)	Q. 3:184	بالزبر وبالكتب		والزبر والكتب	
(S3)	Q. 4:66	قليلا		قليل	
(S4)	Q. 6:32	ولدار الاخره		وللدار الاخره	
(S5)	Q. 6:137	شركايهم		شركاوهم	
(S6)	Q. 7:3	يتذكرون		تذكرون	
(S7)	Q. 7:43	ما		وما	
(S8)	Q. 7:75	وقال		قال	
(S9)	Q. 7:141	انجيكم		انجينكم	
(S10)	Q. 10:22	ينشركم		يسيركم	
(S11)	Q. 17:93	قال		قل	
(S12)	Q. 39:64	تامرونني		تامروني	
(S13)	Q. 40:21	منكم		منهم	
(S14)	Q. 55:12	ذا العصف		ذوا العصف	
(S15)	Q. 55:78	ذوا الجلل		ذى الجلل	
(S16)	Q. 57:10	كل		كلا	
(M1)	Q. 2:132		واوصى		ووصى
(M2)	Q. 3:133		سارعوا		وسارعوا
(M3)	Q. 5:53		يقول		ويقول
(M4)	Q. 5:54		يرتدد		يرتد
(M5)	Q. 9:107		الذين		والذين
(M6)	Q. 18:36		منهما		منها
(M7)	Q. 26:217		فتوكل		وتوكل
(M8)	Q. 40:26		وان		او ان
(M9)	Q. 42:30		بما		فبما
(M10)	Q. 43:68		يعبادى		يعباد
(M11)	Q. 43:71		تشتهيه		تشتهى
(M12)	Q. 57:24		فان الله الغني		فان هو الله الغني
(M13)	Q. 91:15		فلا		ولا
(B1)	Q. 23:85-89	الله		لله، الله، الله	الله
(K1)	Q. 6:63		انجيتنا		انجينا
(K2)	Q. 21:4		قل		قال
(K3)	Q. 23:112		قال		قل
(K4)	Q. 23:114		قال		قل
(K5)	Q. 36:35		عملته		عملت
(K6)	Q. 46:15		حسنا		احسن

[45] Cook 'The Stemma of the Regional Codices'.
[46] Al-Dānī, *Muqniʿ*.

Not all of these features are equally good as diagnostics for identifying a Quran to belong to one regional codex tradition rather than the other. Especially the features S8, K2, K3 and K4, which rely on the *plene* spelling of *qāla* are likely not features original to regional codices as this word is, generally spelled defectively in early quranic manuscripts.

The table below gives a comparative overview of the different quranic manuscripts examined. The columns are examinations of the different quranic manuscripts examined. CPP = Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus; Or. 2165 = Or. 2165 and Arabe 328(e); W = Wetzstein II 1913; S = Samarkand Codex; K = Großer Korankodex; SM1a = Saray Medina 1a; M = Ma VI 165; Q47 = Qāf 47 and CA1 = Codex Amrensis 1. The bottom row gives my identification of each manuscript.

As can be seen, occasionally these manuscripts display variants which are technically mutually exclusive, e.g. appearance of the non Syrian variant of (S10) and (S14) and (M2) in Wetzstein II 1913. Nevertheless this manuscript so overwhelmingly has the other variants that point towards the Syrian tradition, that the overall identification is unambiguous.

The CPP and Or. 2165 are completely Syrian, which in light of the fact that not a single other identification lack mutually exclusive identifications, is rather surprising.

The Samarkand Codex has one Syrian variant in (S6) but otherwise points to a Basran or Kufan variant. It has one feature that is exclusive to the Kufan codex, allowing us to tentatively identify it as a Kufan codex.

The Großer Korankodex has (K3) and (K4) in their defective spelling, which is not a strong identification in favour of the Kufan variant. (K5) and (K6) unambiguously point to the non-Kufan form. Save for (M2), (M4) and (M12) the features point to a Basran identification, and it seems fairly safe therefore to identify this manuscript as Basran.

For Saray Medina 1a the majority of the Syrian features point to a non-Syrian Codex, whereas the Medinan features point to a non-Kufan/non-Basran identification. As a result its identification as Medinan seems clear.

Ma VI 165 is too fragmentary to make a strong identification possible. It is a Codex that has the Basran variant for (B1) but the Syrian/Medinan variant for (M6) and (M7). This manuscript may therefore be identified as either Basran, Medinan or Syrian. It is difficult to decide which of the features carries more weight. Cook expresses unease with identifying (B1) as a genuine Basran feature, rather than a late feature. "As we lack evidence of early basran manuscripts that retain this section of the manuscript, it remains to be seen whether Cook's unease with this variant is justified." This does not exclude the possibility that it is not a feature part of the Basran uthmanic codex, however.

The data of Qāf 47 is fragmentary. The data that we have points to an identification as Medinan.

The data of Codex Amrensis 1 is fragmentary, but what is there is consistent with an identification of the codex as Medinan.

Table 8. Identification of the codices examined by their *rasm* variants.

	Verse	CPP	Or. 2165	W	S	K	SM1a	M	Q47	CA1
(S1)	Q. 2:116			BK	MBK	MBK				
(S2)	Q. 3:184	S		S	MBK	MBK			MBK	
(S3)	Q. 4:66	S		S		MBK			MBK	
(S4)	Q. 6:32	S		S	MBK	MBK				
(S5)	Q. 6:137	S[47]		S[48]	MBK	—	—			
(S6)	Q. 7:3	S		S	S	MBK	S			
(S7)	Q. 7:43	S	S	S	MBK	MBK	MBK			
(S8)	Q. 7:75	S	S	S	MBK	MBK	MBK			
(S9)	Q. 7:141	S	S	S		MBK	MBK			
(S10)	Q. 10:22	S	S	MBK		MBK	MBK			MBK
(S11)	Q. 17:93		(S)MBK	(S)MBK	(S)MBK	(S)MBK	(S)MBK	(S)MBK		
(S12)	Q. 39:64			S		MBK	MBK			
(S13)	Q. 40:21			S		MBK	MBK			
(S14)	Q. 55:12			MBK		MBK	S>MBK			
(S15)	Q. 55:78			S		MBK	S>MBK			
(S16)	Q. 57:10	S		S		MBK	S			
(M1)	Q. 2:132				BK	SM				
(M2)	Q. 3:133	SM		BK	BK	BK			SM	
(M3)	Q. 5:53		SM	SM		BK			SM	
(M4)	Q. 5:54		SM	SM	SM	SM			SM	
(M5)	Q. 9:107	SM		SM		BK	SM			SM
(M6)	Q. 18:36		SM	SM	BK	BK	SM	SM		
(M7)	Q. 26:217	SM	SM	SM			SM	SM		
(M8)	Q. 40:26			SM		BK	SM			
(M9)	Q. 42:30	SM	SM	SM	BK	BK	SM			SM
(M10)	Q. 43:68	SM	SM	SM		BK	SM			
(M11)	Q. 43:71	SM	SM	SM		BK	SM			
(M12)	Q. 57:24	SM		SM[49]		BK>SM[50]	SM			
(M13)	Q. 91:15					BK	SM			
(B1)	Q. 23:85–89	SMK	SMK[51]	SMK		SMK	SMK	SMK>B		
(K1)	Q. 6:63	SMB	SMB	SMB		SMB	SMB		SMB	
(K2)	Q. 21:4		SMB(K)	SMB(K)		SMB(K)	(SMB)K	SMB(K)		
(K3)	Q. 23:112	(SMB)K[52]	(SMB)K	SMB		(SMB)K	SMB(K)	SMB		
(K4)	Q. 23:114	(SMB)K	(SMB)K	SMB		(SMB)K	SMB(K)	SMB		
(K5)	Q. 36:35		SMB	SMB	K	SMB	SMB	SMB		
(K6)	Q. 46:15			SMB	K	K	SMB			SMB
		Syrian	Syrian	Syrian	Kufan	Basran	Medinan	Medinan?	Medinan	Medinan

[47] The *yāʾ* has been removed here, but the scratch marks confirm that originally it contained the Syrian variant.

[48] The text has the Syrian variant, but it was clearly added by a later hand. It is difficult to judge what the form of the original text was.

[49] The هو was originally present, first removed to comply with SM and then added again by a much later hand.

[51] An ʾalif of the Basran text type has been added with red ink.

[52] As defective قل can easily stand for *qāla*, the fact that (K3) and (K4) agree with the Kufan spelling is not significant.

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