

## **Main Factors Affecting The Marking Of The Letters In Mashaf Al-Mashariqah And Al-Magharibah**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article aims to discuss the major factors that influence the marking of the letters in mashaf al-Mashariqah and al-Magharibah. All these factors affect the difference in the marking of letters in two large streams of alphabetic designation. The difference in marking is indirectly raises confusion among the public society regarding the designation in the mashaf. This study will also explain the clarity of the confusion thus further confirming the problem. This is therefore a qualitative research. The findings are based on the documentations and analyses that have been analyzed using text and content analysis methods. The findings show that there are four major factors that play a main role in the differences of marking each letter in the two mashaf. Each letter needs to be assessed with the four factors before it is determined whether it should be marked with a dot or not, the position of the dot; above or below the letter, and the number of dots that should be placed.

**KEYWORDS:** Letter dot, al-Masyariqah and al-Magharibah, Dhabt (signs) al-Quran, Mu'jamah letter, l'jam (consonant pointing) dot.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Marking of the Quran is one of the stages in writing progress and modification of the *mashaf*. As you know, the Qur'anic writing in the time of Prophet Muhammad was without any mark, line or letter of *Hamzah* itself. However, there are changes and improvements regarding this matter as the impact of the increasing number of Muslims on the times of the Companions.

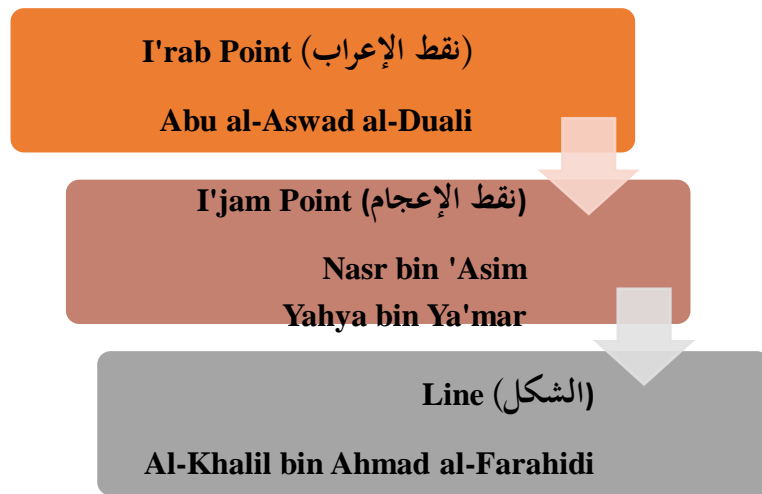
Thus, it is clear here that the demand for the marking of the Quranic letter is due to the non-Arab nation that has embraced Islam. Consequently, the Arabs themselves are not too concerned with the reading and writing of the Quran as these words of Allah is revealed in their language. This is different from other people who do not speak Arabic either in speech and in writing. Allah Almighty said:

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٣﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ  
لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾

*And indeed, the Quran is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down. Upon your heart, [O Muhamad]- that you maybe of the warners – in a clear Arabic language.*

(Al-Shu'ara': 192-195)

## DISTRIBUTION OF QURANIC LETTER



In short, the letters of the Quran went through three phases after the time of Prophet Muhammad. The phases are the I'rab Point, the I'jam Point and the Line. The I'jam Point was created by a scholar named Abu al-Aswad al-Duali. The I'jam Point was made by two scholars, Nasr bin 'Asim and Yahya bin Ya'mar. Subsequently, Line was created by al-Khalil bin Ahmad al-Farahidi. Of the three phases of the study, the focus of this study is on the second phase, the I'jam Point.

In the context of Quranic letters and words, most scholars have concluded that the total number of words in the Quran is 77,934 words (Al-Suyuti, 2004 & al-Mukhallilati, 1992). Each of these words is a combination of the letters of the Quran, and of course all the letters in the Quran are Arabic letters because they are the language of the Quran. Allah Almighty said:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

(Yusuf 12:2)

*Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand.*

Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the letters of the *hija'iyah* found in the Quran from the point of view of the main factors which influence the marking of the letters so that they are divided into two categories namely *mu'jamah* letter (having dots) and *muhmalah* letters (no dots). (Muhaisin, 2004; al-Dani, 1997 & Ghanim, 2009)

Thus, every letter that has a dot in Arabic especially in the Quran is known as the *mu'jamah* letter. While letters that do not have a dot are known as *muhmalah* letter. The cover letter consists of 15 letters, which are ب ت ث ج ذ ح خ ي ن ق ف غ ظ ض ش ز ذ خ ج ث ت ب. Apart from these letters is the *muhmalah* letter.

The number of *muhmalah* letters varies among scholars based on differences in alphabet: *alif*, *lam alif*, and *hamzah*. Therefore, the number should be 15 letters, 14 letters, or 13 letters. The discussion involved the total number of *hijaiyyah* letters in either 28 letters, 29 letters, or 30 letters. (al-Khalil, 1967; Sibawayh, 1977; Ibn Jinni, 1993; al-Shatibi, 2010; Ibn al-Jazari, 2000; Muhammad Hasan, 2006; Nasr Sa'id, 2008; Mohd Zaki, 2001; Al-Juraysi, 1999 & Surur, 2007)

However, Muhaisin (2004) in describing the marking of letters in the early days of his creation mentioned only 13 letters of *muhmalah* letters. He did not include the letters *hamzah* and *lam alif* in the *muhmalah* category. This is because both letters have a special discussion in the field of *Dabt* study. The letters are as follows:

اح درس ص ط ع ك ل م و ه

Al-Dani (1997) has divided the letters of *hijaiyyah* into several categories. These categories are created based on the letters themselves that are very similar to each other. In conclusion, the *hijaiyyah* letters have been divided into six categories:

i. First Category:

ب ن - ت ي - ث

ii. Second Category:

ج ح خ

iii. Third Category:

د ذ - ر ز - ص ض - ط ظ - ع غ

iv. Fourth Category:

س ش

v. Fifth Category:

ف ق

vi. Sixth Category:

ك - ل - م - و - هـ

Influence on the study, it is found that these six categories of letters used by al-Dani (1997) play a significant role in the understanding of letter marking in contemporary Ottoman *mashafs*. However, al-Dani (1997) in his book *al-Muhkam* has stated that the categories created are based on what was accepted from the method of marking by Nasr bin 'Asim and Yahya bin Ya'mar.

#### **MAIN FACTORS OF MARKING LETTERS IN *MASHAF AL-MASHARIQAH* AND *AL-MAGHARIBAH***

There are numbers of questions regarding letter dots especially among the scholars of the Quranic field. One of the questions is why the letter *Ba* is placed one point below when the letter comes first instead of the letter *Nun* from the alphabetical order. What is the factor that makes the *Shin* letter with three dots while the *Sin* letter has no dots at all? Most letters start with no dots then are marked with one dot, two dots and so on, but why do the letters *Fa'* with *Qaf* continue to be dotted without any letters without dots in between? How can it be in the Ottoman *mashaf*, the letter *Fa'* is one dot below and *Qaf* with one dot above?

These are some of the questions about marking the dots in the letters of the *mu'jamah*. In fact, each of these questions is closely related to the dots-setting factors created by two prominent scholars, Nasr bin 'Asim and Yahya bin Ya'mar. This method was then pioneered by two blocks of scholars in the field of *Dabt* (tagging). These two blocks of scholars are known as *al-Mashariqah* and *al-Magharibah*. The *al-Mashariqah* block stretches from Egypt to Iraq, and Yemen to Syria. The *al-Magharibah* block extends from Libya to Maghribi (Morocco) including al-Andalus (al-Zahabi, 2004). Apart from these areas, Muslims in other areas used *al-Mashariqah* marking, including Malaysia. (Refer to the example flag in the appendix section)

Of these two blocks, there are many differences between the angle of the line and the letter dots. However, this study will focus only on the dot of the *mu'jamah* letter only without denying the importance of knowledge of the lines of letters in the Quran.

Before deciding the number of dots and positioning of a dot in any letter, there are a few things to be considered first. These factors are a contributing factor to the form of letter marking as it is today. Studies show that there are four factors contributing to the formation of *mu'jamah* letters. These factors are as follows:

- i. Position of the letter:  
This factor refers to the position of the letter in any word either at the beginning of the word, in the middle, or at the end.
- ii. Function of the letter:  
Referring to the function of letters from the standpoint of Arabic methods such as *جر حرف* (prepositions) and so on.
- iii. Pronunciation of the letter:  
Pronunciation of the letter here does not mean how to pronounce the letter, but the sound produced when the letter is spoken.
- iv. Arrangement of the letter:  
The order here is referring to *alfabaiyyah* order, not *abjadiyyah*.

### **AL-DANI LETTER CATEGORY AND LETTER MARKING FACTOR**

As mentioned earlier, the category of letters cited by al-Dani (1997) provides an easy way to better understand the dot-marking factor in the *mu'jamah* letter. Each category will be compared to all four factors before obtaining any results. In addition, differences of opinion between *al-Mashariqah* and *al-Magharibah* will also be discussed as today's world is dominated by these two points of view from the *mashaf* marking.

#### **First Category: Letter ب ن - ت ي - ث**

The letters above are in one category because there are similarities in shape. For example, when the letter is at the beginning of a word, its shape is difficult to distinguish without a dot. For example:

س = يبت

The word *يَبْتُ* above is an example of a word in the state after and before the dots and the line. Note that there are four letters in the word, but it is difficult to determine whether the letter is due to the shape of the letters in the first category. However, not all letters have the same shape when they are in different positions. Examples are the letter ن and the letter ي. These two letters are different from the letters in the first category when they are at the end of a word and have their own form. Thus, out of the five letters of the same shape in the two positions, at the beginning of the word and the middle of the word, the two letters are different when they are at the end of the word. This position difference is the first factor that determines the number and position of the dots in the letters in this category.

Next before placing a dot, it is necessary to look at the letters ث ت ب first instead of the letters ن and ي since the three letters are in an earlier command in *alfabaiyyah* order (one of the marking factors). Three dots are required because the number of letters is three letters. In determining the position of a dot, the function factor and the factor of pronunciation are of utmost importance. The pronunciation of ب ت ب is generated when the letter is spoken with the line of expression (top) which is ثاء تاء باء. Therefore, the position of the dot needs to be marked above the letter making the letter *Ba'* one dot above, the letter *Ta'* two dots above, and the letter *Tha'* three dots above. This pronunciation method is used in the absence of other factors that prevent or hinder it. Therefore, it is found that the dot for *Ba'* is not above, but below. This is because there are other factors that prevent the placement of the dot above the letter. The limiting factor is the functional factor.

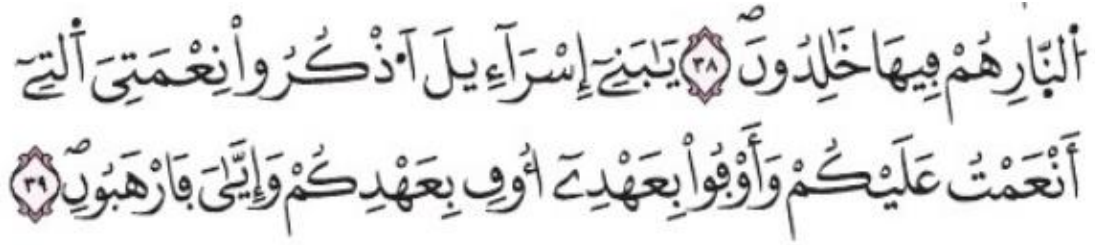
The letter *Ba'* in Arabic is widely used in the جر حرف (preposition). One of the functions of a joint word is to put the line below (*Kasrah*) at the word that comes after it, for example الله بسم. The letter Mim on بسم is placed in the line below (*Kasrah*) because it is preceded by the letter *Ba'* as a joint word. As a result of the function of the letter *Ba'* in this method, the dot for the letter *Ba'* is placed below the letter while the letters *Ta'* and *Tha'* are retained above.

The remaining two letters are the letters *Nun* and *Ya'*. These two letters look different from the other three letters in the same category when they are at the end of a word. For example, في - فن - فت - فث. Therefore, like the three letters before, the pronunciation factor and the functional factor must be considered before placing a dot in any position. The *Nun's* letter from the pronunciation corner is spoken with the front line (*Dammah*), نُون. This front line has a long discussion in *Dabt's* study. However, most scholars of either *al-Mashariqah* or *al-Magharibah* chose to put the front line on the letter. Therefore, the letter *Nun* is placed one dot above the other position as it has not yet been assigned to other letters in the same category.

The letter *Ya'* is given the position of the dot below even though it is pronounced with the upper line (*Fathah*) يَاء. This is because of a function factor that prevents the letter *Ya'* from being in the top position. According to the Arabic method, there are two types of *Ya'* which are regular and as '*mad*'. In addition, the letter *Ya'* is also known as the *harakah tawilah* (long line) and the lower line (*Kasrah*) is known as the *harakah qasirah* (short line). Both names are given because the lower line (*Kasrah*) actually comes from the letter *Ya' Ma'qusah* (*Ya'* with inverted tail). Therefore, the dot *Ya'* is placed below the letter and is marked with a colon because dot one has been given to the letter *Ba'*.

As for the letters *Nun* and *Ya'* from the standpoint, *al-Magharibah* scholars do not place a dot on either of these letters at the end of the word. On the side of *al-Mashariqah*, only the letter '*Ya'*' at the end of the word is left blank. This is because the definition and purpose of the I'jam Point

is to distinguish between letters so that no letters can be obscured. Thus, when the letter *Nun* and the letter *Ya'* are at the end of the word, there is no resemblance to the other letters in terms of form as these two letters have a special shape without further ado to the dot.



The above example is the marking of *al-Magharibah* in surah al-Baqarah, verses 38 and 39. However, if both letters are at the beginning of a word or in the middle of a word, then they are given dots as the original method.

### Second Category: Letter ج ح خ

These three letters have similarities from the shape of the word to the beginning of the word, the middle of the word, and the end of the word. Therefore, there is no further discussion from the standpoint of position factors. Similarly, from the point of view of the function, there is no in-depth discussion of the three letters involved among scholars.

However, there are two other factors that determine the position and number of dots for the three letters in this category. These factors are pronunciation and order. The speech line for the pronunciation of *Jim's* letter is different from the letter *Ha'* and *Kha'*. *Jim's* letters are pronounced with the lower line (*Kasrah*) جيم, while the letters *Ha'* and *Kha'* are spoken with the upper line (*Fathah*) حَاء - خَاء. Since only *Jim's* letter differs from that of the pronunciation in that of the lower line (*Kasrah*), *Jim* is given a dot below the letter.

For the letters *Ha'* and *Kha'*, *Ha'* does not need a dot since there are only two letters in the second category. Match one dot to the letter '*Kha'*' to distinguish it from the letter *Ha'*'. The position of the point for the letter '*Kha'*' is also above the letter as it is pronounced with the upper line (*Fathah*).

### Third Category: Letter د ذ - ر ز - ص ض - ط ظ - ع غ

The ten letters in this category are a set of five letter pairs that have the same shape. This equation occurs in all letter positions either at the beginning, middle, or end of the word. Just like the letters in the second category, the function factor does not interfere with the letters in this category from the dot position. Again, two factors are needed to determine the number and position of the dot.

From the pronunciation view, all the letters are spoken with the upper line (*Fathah*), ذال دال - غين غين - ظاء ظاء - ضاد ضاد - زاي زاء - . Therefore, the position of the dot is above each letter involved. However, when there are only two letters of the same shape in each pair, the first letter in alphabetical order is not given a dot. This is because it is enough to place a single dot on the second letter to distinguish between the two letters. Then end up with one dot above the letters *Dzal*, *Zai*, *Dad*, *Za'*, and *Ghain*.

#### **Fourth Category: Letter س ش**

The letters *Sin* and *Shin* are like letters in the third category of two letters of the same shape and in pairs. But there is a slight difference between the letters in this category and the letters in the third category. In terms of position, the letters *Sin* and *Shin* have the same shape regardless of their location. From a functional standpoint, these letters do not work as the letter '*Ba* or *Ya*'. As such, position factors and functional factors do not play a major role in marking this category.

If studied from a structural standpoint, the *Sin* letter is placed ahead of the *Shin* letter. Therefore, when involving two letters of the same shape in all positions, the letters that are placed first need not be given a dot. Simplify by placing a dot on the next letter. So, the *Sin* letter is empty from any dot.

However, there was discussion among scholars on the *Shin* letter point from the point of view of the number of dots to be given. If only one dot was given, it would have been confused with other letters, especially the *Nun*. Therefore, the scholars chose to place three dots for *Shin*'s letter in line with his house number of three houses while also wanting to avoid confusion with other letters. (Al-Dani, 1997)

#### **Fifth Category: Letter ف ق**

This letter pair is found to have a unique discussion especially when it involves two blocks of scholars, *al-Mashariqah* and *al-Magharibah*. This is because each of them have their own opinions that are different from each other. Turning to the four factors mentioned, the position factor does not allow the letter '*Fa*' and the letter *Qaf* to be blanked from the dot. This is because the two-letter form resembles the *Waw* letter at the end of the word. As for the beginning and middle words, these two letters have the same shape as each other. Therefore, the letter *Fa* and the letter of *Qaf* are indispensable to the dot as the difference between the two. This was agreed upon by the scholars of *al-Mashariqah* and *al-Magharibah*. However, these scholars disagree on the position and number of dots that need to be put. (al-Dani, 1997 & Ghanim, 2009)

*Al-Mashariqah* argues that the letter *Fa*' must be given one dot and the letter *Qaf* must be given two dots. These numbers: one and two are based on alphabetical order in *alfabaiyyah* order. The letter *Fa*' is given one dot because it comes earlier than the letter *Qaf* which was given two

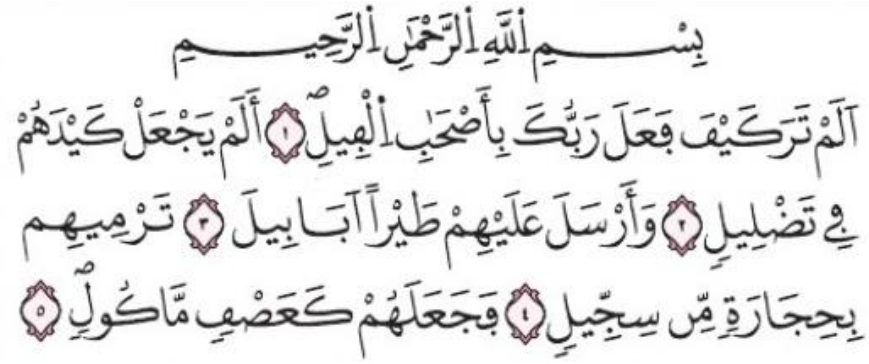
dots because it comes after the letter *Fa*. The position of the dots for both letters is above the letters based on the pronunciation factor. The letter *Fa* 'and the *Qaf* are spoken by the upper lines (Fathah) namely *فَاء* and *قَاف*, so the position of the dots should be above that of *al-Mashariqah*.

However, *al-Magharibah* has its own opinion. Factors that play a major role in these differences are functional factors. This factor is the main point of differences between *al-Mashariqah* and *al-Magharibah* in the marking of the letters *Fa* 'and *Qaf*. For scholars of this block, the letter *Fa* ' needs to be placed one dot below since its function is like the function of the letter *Ba* ' as a joint word. Generally, letters that come after a joint must be underlined with a bottom line (*Kasrah*). Therefore, the letter '*Fa*' should be placed one dot below even though the reference is to the top line (*Fathah*). If the letter *Fa* 'is given one dot below, then the letter *Qaf* is given only one dot above. The number and position of this dots are sufficient to distinguish between the letters *Fa*, *Qaf*, and *Waw*.

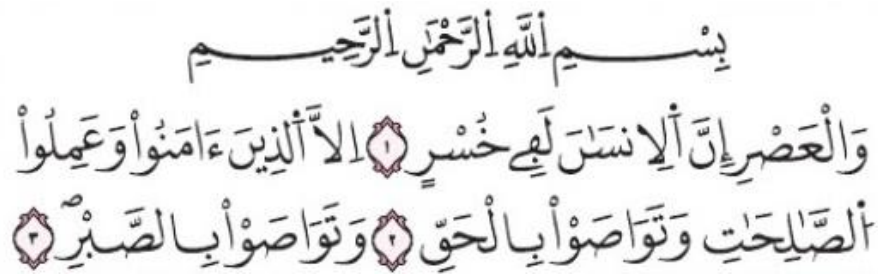


Example of marking by *al-Magharibah* in Surah al-Baqarah, verse 1-3

At the same time, *al-Magharibah* also considers the position factors for the letter '*Fa*' and '*Qaf*'. Like the letter *Nun* and the letter *Ya* ', *al-Magharibah* thinks of the letter *Fa* ' and the letter *Qaf* is not necessary to the dot when it is at the end of the word. The shape of these two letters is enough to distinguish the two.



Example of marking the dot for Fa' at the end of the word in Surah al-Fil based on *al-Magharibah's* opinion



Example of marking the dot for Qaf at the end of the word in Surah al-Asr based on *al-Magharibah* opinion.

#### Sixth Category: Letter ك - ل - م - و - ه

The five letters in this sixth category do not have significant shape similarities to the other letters. Each has its own form. As a result, all these letters are left blank because they are incompatible with each other. This is agreed upon by *al-Mashariqah* and *al-Magharibah* and is used in *mashaf* markings.

#### CONCLUSION

This is the result of the study on the main factors of marking the dots of the letter in the Ottoman *mashaf*. These factors are not stated and do not come together directly among scholars. Some scholars mention only one factor, while others mention on the other two different factors. As a result, this study has concluded that there are four main factors in the characterization of the dots of letters either in terms of number of dots, position of the dots and so on.

Finally, the knowledge of letter marking is one of the important things that the reader of the Quran needs to know especially educators with *Rabbani* traits. Today's Ottoman *Mashaf* is widely written in one of two monumental tracts namely *al-Mashariqah* and *al-Magharibah*. In addition to recognizing the signaling pathways between the two streams, it is also important to understand the causes and factors that cause such differences. Hopefully this article will enlighten everyone while benefiting Muslims. Wassalam.

Appendix 1



Example of marking by *al-Mashariqah* in Surah al-Fatihah



Example of marking by *al-Magharibah* in Surah al-Fatihah

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