

ELISION

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It is not the purpose of this paper to undertake an exhaustive treatment of the whole range of phenomena implied by the title.¹ In the nature of things much of the material which should be dealt with in this short survey will have to be elided, and all that can be done here is give a general account of elision and the main problems connected with it, on the principle of *rubba 'iṣānatin 'ablaḡu min 'ibāratin*. Within these limits there will be just enough space to mention the terms and conditions for the process of elision and the method of reconstructing elided elements by *taqdīr*, then to look briefly the implications of elision and *taqdīr* for the text of the Qur'ān and finally to draw some very broad conclusions about elision in medieval Arabic grammatical theory.

Terminology

Table One	
a. not specific:	<i>suqūl</i> , <i>ḡahāb</i> , <i>ḡazm</i> , <i>taskīn</i> , <i>waqf</i> <i>istiḥṣāf</i> <i>'iḡāz</i> , <i>ittisā'</i> , <i>iqtisār</i> , <i>iḥtiṣār</i>
b. specific:	<i>kaff</i> , <i>ḡazl</i> , <i>iḥtizāl</i> <i>ḡadf</i> , <i>'idmār</i> , (<i>taqdīr</i>)

Table One lists the rather large set of terms which occur in the context of elision, though not all, of course, are synonymous. To dispose of the minor candidates first, let us note that the loss or removal of elements is often referred to as *ḡahāb* and *suqūl*, which need hardly be considered as true technical terms. On the other hand *ḡazm*, *taskīn* (also *'iskān*) and *waqf* clearly denote some formal kind of grammatical contraction, but do not specifically refer to elision in the narrow sense which concerns us here (although the loss of an internal vowel, as for example in *wa-l<i>-ya'ḥuḡū*, and even the loss of final vowel in *ḡazm* can indeed be called elision, *ḡadf*).² *Istiḥṣāf*, while manifesting itself as elision, is more precisely a motive for or a result of elision, i.e. a display of the natural tendency to economize under the

¹ Even Reckendorf (1895:306) had to give up on the task of providing a complete account of elision, though he furnishes a very useful starting point both in the work cited and in his *Arabische Syntax*:349 (where further references).

² Two early statements on *ḡadf* for the loss of *-n* in *ḡazm* are az-Zaḡḡālī, *Ma'ānī* II, 98, and Pseudo-az-Zaḡḡālī, *Frāb* 835. Ibn Ġinnī, *Sirr* I, 30, uses *ḡadf* to describe the loss of final vowel in the *ḡazm*, e.g. *yaq'ud <u>* (cf. Bakalla, 1982:207), which means that the comment in M. G. Carter (ed.) 1981:71, 3.73, note 2, that *ḡadf* is not used for the *ḡazm*, must now be regarded as an error.

pressure of "frequency of use", *katrat al-isti'māl*, a phrase often found together with the term *istiḥṣāf*.

More delicate is the relationship between the words *'iḡāz*, *ittisā'*, *iqtiṣār*, *iḥtiṣār* and the specific concept of elision denoted by *ḥadf*. *'iḡāz* and *ittisā'* can be dealt with quickly as belonging more to the vocabulary of rhetoric than of syntax, even though they are usually realized through ellipsis, e.g. by reducing a prepositional phrase to a single term direct object, or eliding whole clauses.³ For *iqtiṣār* and *iḥtiṣār* we follow Ibn Hišām's explanation (*Muḡnī* II, 160) that not every instance of a missing element is necessarily an ellipse: verbs, for example, may be used without their direct objects, as in Q. 2.258, *rabbī lladī yuḥyī wa-yumītu*, which is not elision but simply *iqtiṣār*, "restriction".⁴ *Iḥtiṣār*, by contrast, is a form of elision by "abbreviation", and the term frequently co-occurs with *ḥadf*. But *iḥtiṣār* is like *istiḥṣāf* in that it describes the motive and result of elision and belongs to the pragmatics of language rather than the mechanics. To clear the decks before turning to the two main terms, let us note that Ibn Fāris (*aṣ-Ṣāhib* 197, 240, 256) sometimes refers to elision as *kaff* "withholding", perhaps a personal idiosyncrasy, and that Sībawayhi occasionally uses *ḥazl/iḥtizala* for the "cutting out" of an element, which may be a stylistic alternative to the synonyms *ḥadf* and *'idmār*, in the proximity of which *ḥazl/iḥtizala* are usually found.⁵

The two terms which concern us most are *ḥadf* and *'idmār*, both used freely to denote respectively the "cutting out" or "mental concealing" of elements, but which are obviously not synonyms, to the extent that *'idmār* in Sībawayhi and all later grammarians also refers to pronominalization, where the idea of "elision" seems inappropriate. Conversely *'idmār* is not used for the elision of elements at the phonological level,⁶ hence the terms only partially overlap. That *ḥadf* genuinely denotes "elision" in the linguistic sense is beyond doubt, but *'idmār* might best be thought of as "suppression", reflecting the sense of "keeping in mind" which unites the concepts of elision and pronominalization, both of these being the antithesis of *'iḥḥār*, "expressing overtly", which is automatically evoked every time the term *'idmār* occurs. A closer study of *ḥadf* and *'idmār* as technical terms is certainly needed, and a good place to start is a quotation from Ibn Hišām to the effect that "in the sentence

³ The passage from Q. 4.102, quoted below may be taken as representative, since it was essentially introduced by the Pseudo-az-Zaḡḡāg to illustrate the inimitable concision (*'iḡāz*, *iḥtiṣār*) of divine rhetoric.

⁴ However al-Ḡurḡānī (*Dalā'il* 118-119) evidently considers *iqtiṣār* a type of *ḥadf*, and specifically mentions the omission of direct objects as an example, quoting Qur'ānic verses of very similar content to the one cited here.

⁵ But there may also be a difference in meaning: in metrics *ḥadf* is evidently specific to the removal of a final syllable while *ḥazl* refers to the elision of a medial syllable, cf. al-Ḡurḡānī, *Ta'rifāt* 88, 103. In this work, incidentally, the applications of *ḥadf* and *ḥazl* appear to be entirely restricted to metrics.

⁶ *'Idmār* also has a metrical connotation, however, which does involve the elision of a part of a word, reducing the foot *mutafā'ilun* to *mustaf'ilun* (= *mut < a > fā'ilun*), see Fleisch 1960.

ḍarabant wa-ḍarabtu zaydan the agent of *ḍarabant* is *maḥḍūf*, not *muḍmar*,⁷ where *ḍarabant* is clearly analysed not as "struck [he]" with a hidden agent *pronoun* according to the normal rules for the agent of a verbal sentence but as *ḍarabant* <*zaydun*> with the agent *zaydun* elided.

Categories of elision

The types of items that can be elided are briefly illustrated in Table Two, though it must again be stressed that there has been no attempt at completeness: the purpose of the examples is merely to demonstrate the wide range of the phenomenon denoted by *ḥaḍf*.⁸ The separation into various levels, from phonological to syntactic (the metrical example is mentioned only for the sake of completeness), has been superimposed on the material for the convenience of Western scholars and has no real analogue in the original Arabic grammatical literature beyond the broad subdivision of *naḥw* into syntax proper and *taṣrif*, morphology.

Table Two	
a. Phonological	<i>lam yaku</i> < <i>n</i> >; <i>lam 'uba</i> < <i>a</i> > < <i>i</i> >; <i>bi</i> ' < <i>i</i> > < <i>sa</i> >
b. Morpho[phono] -logical	<i>ya</i> < <i>w</i> > <i>ṣilu</i> ; <i>lam yaqu</i> < <i>w</i> > <i>m</i> ; <i>lam yaqdi</i> < <i>y</i> > < <i>ta</i> > <i>tafa'alu</i> ; <i>is</i> < <i>ta</i> > <i>ṭ'a</i> <i>yakūnū</i> < <i>na</i> >; <i>kitābu</i> < <i>n</i> > <i>r-raḡūli</i> <i>kataba</i> <Agent> <i>r-riḡālu</i>
c. Syntactical	
word level	<i>wa-llāhi</i> < <i>lā</i> > <i>'af'alanna</i> ; <i>lā</i> < <i>ba'sa</i> > <i>'alayka</i>
phrase level	<i>kāna</i> < <i>miqdāru masāfati qurbihi miḥla</i> > <i>qāb[i]</i> <i>qawsayni</i>
clause level	<i>'anta zālimun</i> <i>in fa'alta dālika</i> < <i>fa-'anta zālimun</i> >
sentence level	<i>hal qāma zaydun?</i> <i>na'am</i> < <i>qāma zaydun</i> >
d. Metrical	reduction of final foot, e.g. <i>fā'ilātun</i> -> <i>fā'ilun</i>

⁷ Ibn Hišām, *Muḡnī* II, 158, citing al-Kisā'ī, Ibn Hišām and as-Suhaylī. From Sibawayhi's discussion of the elision of agent pronouns, *Kitāb*, ed. Der., I, 201, Būlāq ed. I, 235, we might contrast *'idmār* and *ḥaḍf* as follows: *'idmār* is the mental act of "suppressing the agent", while *ḥaḍf* denotes the physical "cutting out" of the agent morphemes from the verb. In this way there is no contradiction in using *'idmār* and *ḥaḍf* with reference to the same grammatical event. The paper on Functional Grammar given at this Colloquium by Martine Cuvalay suggests a possibility of separating *'idmār* from *ḥaḍf* by supposing that the former takes place at a much deeper level: whereas *ḥaḍf* can really only occur once the phonological form of the utterance has been determined, *'idmār* would seem to belong to a stage before any syntactic categories at all are selected. This may also explain why only *'idmār* and not *ḥaḍf* is used for the suppression of the conjunction *'an*, since the decision to subordinate is presumably prior to the selection of the appropriate verb form.

⁸ This is presumably one reason why treatments of *ḥaḍf* are so diffused through the sources: only Ibn Hišām seems to deal with elision in a comprehensive and unified way, in *Muḡnī* II, 156-177.

Here I digress for a moment to comment on that fact, since Arabic grammar has more than once attracted criticism for its apparent terminological looseness, lack of high order abstraction and especially its failure to distinguish between levels of analysis. The term *ḥarf* is the most notorious culprit, but there are others which have a similarly wide application, such as *badal* for phonological, morphological and syntactic substitution, *maḥraġ* for both phonetic and syntactical features, *binā'* for morphological and syntactic phenomena, *'idāfa* used by Sībawayhi both for the *nisba* suffix and annexation and by later grammarians for predication, *fā'il* for form and function classes, etc., and it is surely time to consider whether this seeming indifference to linguistic levels might not reflect some conscious and systematic preference. The short answer is, of course, that it does indeed, yet in spite of the obvious fact that the sciences of foreign culture can only be properly understood through their own terminology, even today Arabic grammar is sometimes still judged by the criteria of traditional Latin-based grammar or contemporary theoretical linguistics. Islamic science exhibits a striking economy of technical vocabulary and it is significant that as well as the vertical comprehensiveness just alluded to, there can be a surprisingly broad horizontal uniformity: the terms *waqf*, *nash*, *hāl*, *ḥaraka wa-sukūn*, for example, are important technicalities in more than one Islamic discipline.⁹ The versatility of the word *ḥadf*, then, is not evidence of scientific inadequacy but of a unified concept of language as a continuum rather than as a set of discrete, hierarchical layers.

Having delivered myself of this short sermon I will now comment on the examples in Table Two:

a. These are clearly not productive, and in fact Sībawayhi quotes *lam yaku* and *lam 'ubal* more than once to show that certain cases of elision cannot be generalized beyond the instances recorded as having been used by "the Arabs".¹⁰

b. Here is the familiar elision of the weak radicals under specific conditions. Sībawayhi correctly observes (*Kitāb*, ed. Der. II, 301, Bul. ed. II, 277) that these elisions are now grammaticalized and persist even when the conditions which produced them no longer apply, thus *lam yaḥaf* never recovers its long vowel in contexts where the third radical is nevertheless always vocalized, for instance in juncture: *lam yaḥaf-i r-raġulu*, not *'yaḥāf-i*.

It is arguable whether the dialect forms *tafa'alu* for *tatafa'alu* and *istā'a* for *istaḥā'a* belong under phonology or morphology (in either case they would be under *taṣrif* in the Arabic system anyway!), but they are placed here because they affect a complete paradigm and are thus somewhat more general than the isolated type represented by *lam yaku*.

Note that elision (*ḥadf*) is the term used to describe the loss of *-n* in the dependent and apocopated forms of the "five verbs", and the dropping of *tanwīn* from the first element of an *'idāfa* construction (and also in the presence of *'alif-lām*). We can add here the process of *tarḥīm*, again with reservations as to whether it should be classified as a phonological or morphological event.

⁹ The same observation has been made for the sciences of Ancient Greece. Siebenborn 1976:117.

¹⁰ E.g. *Kitāb* ed. Der. I, 113, 124, Bul. ed. I, 124, 148.

One of the more spectacular cases of elision in this category (or should it be under syntax?) is the deletion, *ḥaḍf*, of the agent pronoun when there is an overt noun agent (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* ed. Der. I, 201, Bul. ed. I, 235). Similarly the agent is said to be elided (*ḥuḍifa*, though for different reasons) in the process of passivization.

c. At the syntactic level any element from an individual free morpheme to an entire sentence can be elided (the elision of bound morphemes seemed more at home in the previous category, as morphological events). The examples, I hope, will largely speak for themselves.¹¹

d. The metrical application of *ḥaḍf* is mentioned only for the sake of completeness: it is part of the sparse information provided by the article on elision by T. H. Weir in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*¹²

Principles of elision

At the outset we should distinguish between the conditions and the motives for elision. The latter are not strictly the subject of grammar: they include frequency of occurrence, ease of articulation and rhetorical and other pragmatic considerations which have been noted by all the grammarians since the beginning and will not concern us any further.

Table Three	
a. Context, <i>dalīl</i> :	of situation, <i>dalīl ḥālī</i> , <i>dalīl al-ḥāl</i> , (<i>lisān al-ḥāl</i>)
	textual, <i>dalīl maqālī</i> , <i>dalīl lafẓī</i> , <i>naṣṣ</i>
b. Restrictions: cannot elide	integral elements, e.g. <i>fā'il</i> of verb
	appositionals, substitutes and corroboratives
	"weak" operators, e.g. <i>lam</i> , <i>lan</i>
c. Elision is optional	< <i>idrib</i> > <i>zaydan!</i>
	<i>bal</i> < <i>nattabī'u</i> > <i>millata 'ibrāhūma</i>
compulsory	<-> <i>subhāna llāhi</i>
	<i>lawlā 'abdullāhi</i> < <i>kāna bi-ḍālika l-makāni</i> >
	<i>kutiba</i> <Real Agent>

¹¹ The example *kāna* <...> *qāba qawsayni* is al-Zamahṣārī's reconstruction (*taqḍīr*) of Q. 53,9 (see *al-Kaṣṣaf* ad loc.), also cited by Ibn Hišām, *Muḡnī* II, 165.

¹² The new *Encyclopaedia of Islam* has unfortunately postponed the article from "II" for *Ḥaḍf* until "N" for *Nahw*.

a. The most obvious condition in which elision can take place is that the listener should be able to recover the elided elements from the context. Sībawayhi (*Kitāb*, ed. Der. I, 240-241, Bul. ed. I, 279) provides many elaborate and circumstantial accounts of elision from this perspective, one of which is translated in full here:¹³

Chapter in which the subject is suppressed (*muḍmar*) while the predicate is expressed (*muzhar*). This happens when you see the form of a person and your body language shows [the listener] that you know him (*šāra 'āyatan laka 'alā ma'rifaṭihi*), and you say "Abdullāhi, by God!" as if you had actually said "That's 'Abdullāh!" or "This is 'Abdullāh!". It also happens when you hear a voice and recognize its owner and your body language shows [the listener] that you know this person, and you say "Zayd, by God!". Likewise if you touch a body or smell a scent and say "Zayd!" or "Musk!", or you taste something and say "Honey!". Similarly if you are told about someone's good qualities and your body language shows [the listener] that you know this person, you would say "Abdullāh!", exactly as if someone had just said "I passed by a man who is kind to the poor and dutiful towards his parents" and you had replied "So-and-so, by God!".

It can hardly be questioned that for Sībawayhi language always functioned in a real context of speaker and listener and that elision is only possible when the real context makes the elided elements obvious.¹⁴ Later grammarians formalized this as two kinds of "indicator" (*dalīl*) determining the possibility of elision, the non-linguistic *dalīl ḥālī* (also referred to as *dalīl al-ḥāl*), familiar to us as "context of situation", and the verbal context, *dalīl maqālī*, *dalīl lafẓī*, or *naṣṣ*.¹⁵

b. This section is an extreme simplification of Ibn Hišām's long list of categories which may not be elided, namely those regarded as integral to the sentence, such as the agent (though there is no objection to eliding either subjects or predicates!) and corroborative and appositional words whose elision clearly contradicts their emphatic function. The "weak operators" are not too well defined by Ibn Hišām, and he gives no examples; however, he evidently understands them to include the *ḥunīf al-ḡarr*

¹³ The principle of *'ilm al-muḥdāṭab* which is so important for Sībawayhi is frequently invoked in the context of elision, e.g. *Kitāb* (ed. Der.) I, 94ff, (Bul. ed.) I, 114 and passim. For the passage quoted here we assume that the difficult phrase *šāra 'āyatan laka 'alā ma'rifaṭihi* (see Jahn's note on this) must be interpreted as involving the listener as well, because only the presence of a listener legitimizes a correct elision. Goldziher (1888-90:II, 8) has shown that *'āya* in early poetry meant a specifically verbal message, and there would seem to be no reason why Sībawayhi's use of it here should not be translated as "body language".

¹⁴ Proof of this is seen in another context, where Sībawayhi notes (*Kitāb*, ed. Der. II, 309, Bul. ed. II, 283) that since *'ismām* is an inaudible physical event a blind man will not know the difference between a word pronounced with and one without *'ismām*!

¹⁵ A historical study of these terms is still needed: in the sources used for this paper *dalīl ḥālī*, *dalīl maqālī* are used by Ibn Hišām (*Muḡnī* II, 156) and *dalīl lafẓī* id. 157, *dalīl al-ḥāl* is in al-Čurḡānī (*Dalā'il* 120). *Lisān al-ḥāl* is used by al-Širbīnī (Carter, 1981, 9, 1.1 note 3), but note that it is not identical with context of situation as applied to elision, being a more general term for non-verbal communication altogether. *Dalīl* is, of course, used frequently by Sībawayhi to refer to the supplementary information (usually textual) which completes an elliptical expression, but he does not refine the term into the categories of verbal and non-verbal.

and such verbal operators as *lam* and *lan*. A "weak operator" is created in the elliptical expression '*akaltu s-samakata hattā ra'suhā*, with *ra'suhā* instead of the more regular *ra'sihā* or *ra'sahā*, because *ra'suhā* has now to be understood as the subject of an elided predicate <*ma'kūlun*> and the predication operator, being *ma'nawī*, i.e. abstract, is weaker than the overt, *lafẓī* operator *hattā*, which is why the variant *hattā ra'suhā* was disallowed by the Basrans (Ibn Hišām, *Muğnī* II, 156ff).

c. A most important question is the compulsory or optional nature of elision, but only the following provisional observations can be made here, this being a theme which certainly deserves a more thorough investigation:

The issue of optional versus compulsory elision was well recognized from the beginning, and is prominent in the *Kitāb*.

Sībawayhi (*Kitāb*, ed. Der. I, 125, Bul. ed. I, 149) in fact established three levels of optionality for elided verbs, viz.

- (i) it is incorrect to suppress the verb (*lā yaḥsunu 'idmāruhu*)
- (ii) the verb may be expressed but is usually elided
- (iii) the verb is never expressed.

He also identified non-productive types of elision, e.g. *'alayka...!*, having what he called quasi-proverbial status with compulsory elision of the missing elements.

Later grammarians, lacking the real spoken context as the determinant, tended to group compulsory elision into two classes, the non-productive, quasi-proverbial fixed forms, and productive syntactic categories such as the *lawlā* construction, certain asserative constructions and the passive verb.

Worthy of a deeper analysis is the fine distinction by Ibn Hišām (*Muğnī* II, 156) between elision of a structurally indispensable element, (*'imād*), which requires a *dallī ḥālī*, and elision of structurally redundant elements (*faḍla*), which does not. This suggests that the context can itself be an *'imād* or supporting element of an utterance, an idea which is latent in Sībawayhi's treatment of the speaker as an operator and which surely has important semantic as well as structural implications. The word *'āya* in the Sībawayhi quotation above clearly implies a direct interaction between speaker, listener and context in the production of elliptical utterances.

Principles of Reconstruction

Finally we must give some attention to the well developed ideas on the methods of restoring the elided elements, generally called *taqdīr*, literally "estimating" what the missing elements might be, and thus complementary to the terms *ḥaḍf* and *'idmār*. For purely historical reasons it should be emphasized that Sībawayhi uses this term exceedingly sparingly, only 24 times in fact, once merely asserting that the *taqdīr* of the word *tadāra* is *tadarru*, and on no less than twenty occasions *taqdīr* refers specifically to the treatment of *hamza* as an *'ayn*, i.e. giving it full consonantal value.¹⁶ Only three times does the idea of *taqdīr* occur explicitly in a syntactic context, where the possibility of glosses cannot be ruled out, and it is surely significant that the term *taqdīr* never occurs in the context of elision.

¹⁶ See G. Troupeau (1976:s.v. *qaddara, taqdīr*). Among the twenty is an instance of *hamza* not being treated as *'ayn* but being elided in juncture instead.

However, Sībawayhi does give plenty of advice on reconstruction without calling it *taqdīr*, the most perceptive being that if a verb has to be restored it should be a verb denoting an action by the listener. In other words (context of situation!), since most ellipsis occurs in direct speech (hence the frequent appearance of expletives in the examples) the listener will automatically tend to assume that he or she is the agent of any elided verb. It is extremely rare, says Sībawayhi (*Kitāb*, ed. Der. I, 108, Bul. ed. I, 128) to elide a verb which refers to someone other than the addressee.

Ibn Ğinnī is among those who have discussed *taqdīr* from a theoretical standpoint, applying the long-standing distinction between *taqdīr al-ʾrāb*, "reconstructing the syntax" and *tafsīr al-maʾnā* "interpreting the meaning". One of his illustrations is in Table Two, c, *'anta zālimun 'in fa'alta dālīka*: he points out that it is perfectly correct to interpret the meaning as "if you do that you will be wrong" but this *tafsīr al-maʾnā* has misled people into a false *taqdīr al-ʾrāb* which analyses the sentence as an inversion of protasis and apodosis. "God forbid!", says Ibn Ğinnī: while he agrees that *'anta zālimun* fills the semantic place of the apodosis it is in no way the actual apodosis, for that has been elided.¹⁷

Three further examples from Ibn Ğinnī:

a. *'ahlaka wa-l-layla*

(wrong) *ilḥaq 'ahlaka <qabla> l-layli*

(right) *ilḥaq 'ahlaka <wa-sābiqi> l-layla*

b. *kullu raḡulin wa-ḡayʾatuhu*

(wrong) *kullu raḡulin <maʾa> ḡayʾatihi*

(right) *kullu raḡulin wa-ḡayʾatuhu <maqrīnāni>*

c. *ḡarabtu zaydan sawḡan*

(wrong) *ḡarabtu zaydan <bi-> sawḡin*

(right) *ḡarabtu zaydan <ḡarbata> sawḡin*

These demonstrate that even if the meaning can be correctly understood the first syntactical reconstructions in examples (a) and (b) must be rejected because in restoring the elided elements an unnecessary change of case (*al-layli*, *ḡayʾatihi*) is imposed on the original elliptical utterances. As the third example shows, a syntactical reconstruction must both account for the meaning and involve the least distortion of natural linguistic operations: here, says Ibn Ğinnī, it is more plausible to assume an elided *maṣdar* than an elided preposition. The *mudāf* may be freely elided where the preposition may not, and such exceptional cases as *'amartuka l-ḡayra* cannot be used to justify an elision of *bi-* here (Ibn Ğinnī, *Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* I, 284, as-Suyūṭī, *Aṣbāḥ* 170).

Ibn Hišām (*Muġnī* II, 162ff) discusses the methodology of *taqdīr* at length. The essence of his ideas is that *taqdīr* should always reconstruct an element in the same position (i.e. syntactic function) as the elision occurred, as far as possible of the same

¹⁷ Ibn Ğinnī, *al-Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* I, 279-284, reproduced by as-Suyūṭī, *Aṣbāḥ* II, 167f. Note also Ibn Ğinnī's following chapter, I, 284-293, entitled *'iddā dallat id-dalālatu 'alayhi* (scil. *al-ḡadq*) *kāna fī hukmi l-malfūṭi bihi*, a study of the kind of elisions represented by the exclamation *al-ḡirāḡa* "[may you hit] the target!" to one about to loose off an arrow, cf. Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* (ed. Der.) I, 109, (Bul. ed.) 130 etc.

size and grammatical category as the elided item. There is a preference for restoring an elided subject rather than a verb, and in cases where it is not clear whether the first or second of two components have been elided, it is better to assume the latter to have been dropped.¹⁸

Conclusion

At this point I would like to turn to the question of elision in the Qur'ān and the place of the theory of elision in Islam in general, with a sidelong glance at contemporary linguistics.

It is remarkable how uninhibitedly and audaciously the grammarians approach the matter of Qur'ānic elision, rephrasing and emending God's speech with utter casualness and supreme confidence even when, as the following simple example makes clear (Q. 42.26),

wa-yastağību <llāhu li-> lladīna 'āmanū wa-'amilū ṣ-ṣāliḥāti wa-yatduhum min faḍlihi

wa-yastağību lladīna 'āmanū wa-'amilū ṣ-ṣāliḥāti <li-rabbihim> wa-yatduhum min faḍlihi,

they produce quite divergent reconstructions of what God is supposed to have elided, making *alladīna 'āmanū* either the agent or the direct object of the verb *yastağību*.¹⁹ While this particular specimen of *taqdīr* does not have any serious theological consequences there is no doubt that grammar was often used for doctrinal ends, e.g. in the assumption that there must be an elided interrogative prefix in Abraham's triple declaration, "This is my Lord", *hādā rabbī*, to save him from blasphemy since in each case it obviously is not his Lord!²⁰ This is a rich field for further study, and it would be instructive to learn whether the Zāhiris on the one hand and the Mu'tazilis on the other have left any specific polemics about elision (rather than the more general theme of *ta'wīl*) in their literature.²¹

¹⁸ The elided elements range from individual morphemes to complete syntactical units, which reminds us that even at this late date, language was still regarded as a continuum.

¹⁹ The literature, as well as other papers in this colloquium, provides many more complex examples which are not suitable for an oral presentation. In Q. 39.3 *wa-lladīna utahādū min dīnīhi 'awliya'a <qā'ilūna/qā'ilīna> mā na'buduhum 'illā li-yuqarrībūnd <-> <inna llāha yahkumu baynahum>*, for instance, there are four possible parsings depending on whether the elided *<qā'ilūna/qā'ilīna>* is (1) a *ḥāl*, (2) a *badal* or (3) a first predicate, this last option depending on whether the verb *yuqarrībūnd* has (3a) the unbelievers as its agent (i.e. the same as *alladīna*), or (3b) Jesus, angels and other objects of worship (i.e. not the same as *alladīna*, but then there must be an elided pronoun object, *yuqarrībūnd <hum>*) and in both cases there is an elided second predicate *<inna llāha yahkumu baynahum>* (Ibn Hišām, *Muḡnī* II, 170).

²⁰ Q. 6,76-77-78, referring to the planets. See Pseudo-az-Zaḡḡāḡ, *T'rīb*, 352.

²¹ An obvious starting point is I. Goldziher (1920: esp. 9f on "ziyādāt"), and see 12f for specific examples; cf. also H. Gärtje (1971:299), which translates al-Ġazālī's chapter on *tafṣīr bi-r-ra'y*, especially 303, where he warns against those peculiarities of Arab usage such as elision and inversion etc. which can mislead an exegete. As we might expect, an opposite position is held by al-Ġurġānī, who positively rejoices in the rhetorical beauties of the Qur'ān, not least elision, which he calls (oblivious of the possible implication of blasphemy) "a kind of magic, where it is more eloquent not to say something, more informative to be silent" etc. (*Dalā'il* 112). We have one example at least of God being at risk of speaking

A final example is reproduced here to show to what extraordinary lengths the grammarian could go in applying the principle of context of situation to the restoration of Qur'anic elisions. It is taken from a work attributed, not very plausibly, to az-Zağğāg,²² and the context is *ṣalāt al-ḥawf*, prayer under conditions of war.

wa-'idā kunta fthim fa-'aqamta lahumu ṣ-ṣalāta fa-l-taqum tā'ifatun minhum
 <lam yuṣallū> ^(a) ma'aka <bi-rak'atin> ^(b) wa<lladīna nṣarafū tuğāha l-'aduwwi
 wa-lam yuṣallū ma'aka> ^(c) li-ya'ḥudū 'asliḥatahum fa-'idā sağadū fa-l-yakūnū
 min warā'ikum wa-l-ta'ti tā'ifatun 'uhrā lam yuṣallū fa-l-yuṣallū ma'aka
 <minhum> ^(d) <rak'atan> ^(e) <fa-l-tanṣarifi l-'ūlā wa-tu'addī r-rak'ata bi-ğayri
 qirā'atin wa-tasallumin> ^(f) wa-l-ya'ḥudū <bāqithim> ^(g) ḥadarahum
 wa-'asliḥatahum. (Q. 4.102)

The whole passage is explained with reference to 'Abū Hanīfa's description of the procedures for *ṣalāt al-ḥawf*, in which the congregation is divided into two units, each alternately turning to face the enemy while the other prays behind the imām. Note that in this situation two difficulties have to be overcome, one the obvious need for defence and the other to avoid the imām's praying twice. The elisions marked (a) and (b) instruct the first group to pray one *rak'a*, while those who are to be on guard are directed to take up their weapons in ellipsis (c). On the strength of the sequential meaning of the *fa-* in *fa-'idā sağadū* the group that prayed first must now turn to face the enemy while the second group prays, these being indicated by the elided *minhum* (d), and likewise are directed to pray only one *rak'a* (e). Then the first group resumes and prays its second *rak'a*, according to ellipse number (f), at which point the imām formally completes his prayers though the congregation does not. Finally the group which is not praying is enjoined to take up its weapons in ellipse number (g), as the pronoun in *wa-l-ya'ḥudū* must be taken as referring to the group that is on guard and not the immediate masculine plural antecedent, which is the group that is currently praying.²³ Eventually both groups will have performed two *rak'as* and the accompanying *taṣahhud*, but their prayers will not be completed until they all pronounce the formal greeting to the imām at the very end of the whole procedure.²⁴

incorrect Arabic, namely with the elision of the relative pronoun in a non-canonical reading of Q. 4.95 and 57.10, *wa-kullun wa'ada <hu > illāhu l-ḥusnā*, but blame is transferred to a human being by ascribing it to the Reader Ibn 'Āmir, see Pseudo-az-Zağğāg, *F'rāb* 331 and Ibn Iḥiām, *Muğtā* II, 159.

²² 31 ff. Both the authorship and title of the work have been rightly questioned by an-Naffāḥ (1973-74), as noted in Sezgin (1982:100, n. 1). an-Naffāḥ argues that the true author is one 'Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Iṣfahānī al-Bāqūlī, known as Ġāmi' al-'Uḷūm (not Makkt ibn 'Abī Ṭālib al-Qayrawānī as suggested by al-Abyārī) and the title is not *F'rāb al-Qur'ān* but *al-Ġawāthir*.

²³ Our author disposes of the objection that pronouns can refer to different antecedents in a digression which cites various other Qur'anic examples, op. cit. 32-33.

²⁴ The author takes time to demolish al-Šāfi'ī's version of *ṣalāt al-ḥawf*, in which the first group prays one *rak'a* with the imām and its second one without him, completes the full cycle including the final greeting and then goes out on guard. The other group now prays one *rak'a* with the imām, who thus performs his second *rak'a*, then he waits while they perform their second *rak'a* to complete their own cycle, whereupon they and the imām join in the formal greetings to conclude the whole prayer. Our Pseudo-az-Zağğāg rejects all this on the grounds that the sequential meaning of the conjunction *fa-* makes

The paper concludes with some general remarks on elision. Firstly it is obvious that no theory of elision can exist without a prior notion of what constitutes a complete utterance, and the later grammarians certainly did analyse elision on this basis, once the concept of the sentence (*ḡunla*) had replaced that of the utterance (*kalām*). Sībawayhi presents an interesting problem here: he has been criticized for not having an explicit concept of the sentence, yet this criticism would seem difficult to sustain in view of his extraordinarily thorough treatment of elision. He certainly goes further than at least one modern theoretical linguist (Lyons, 1974:177), who (following de Saussure) relegates a category of elliptical expressions to what he calls "ready-made" utterances which need not therefore be analysed: this is a capitulation which no Arab grammarian, least of all Sībawayhi, would make!

Simply juxtaposing medieval Arab and contemporary European methods of analysis need not, of course, lead to any useful results, but it is worth mentioning that the Arabs (again represented as early as Sībawayhi) were certainly aware that elliptical utterances are of different kinds. What de Saussure called "ready-made" expressions are surely covered by Sībawayhi's term *maṭal*, which translates neatly as "quasi-proverbial" with all its implications of non-productivity, while such terms as *'iḡāz*, *ittisā'*, *iqtisār* and *iḥtiṣār* strongly suggest that the grammarians also recognized the difference between true ellipsis, *ḥadf*, which depends on the context, and the type of ellipsis which is independent of the context, where the sentence remains grammatically complete (Lyons, 1974:175).

The idea of context of situation provides the theme of my final remarks. When we compare Sībawayhi and Ibn Hišām (they are admittedly a long way apart in time, but this paper is not a historical survey!) we observe a fundamental change in the notion of context from what was for Sībawayhi a largely non-linguistic, real-life environment of language use into one consisting essentially of more sentences. Ibn Hišām's position is coincidentally the same as that of some modern linguists who appear to regard the true context of language as being simply more language. The long Sībawayhi quotation above is a clear demonstration of that fact that for Sībawayhi the non-linguistic and linguistic contexts were equally important, but I would also like to argue that there are good reasons for the shift from a real-life context to one almost exclusively of words and documents.

If we consider Pseudo-az-Zaḡḡāḡ's analysis of the *ṣalāt al-ḥawf* as a case in point we cannot fail to observe that the restoration of the elisions in this passage is achieved entirely in terms of another text, the extra-Qur'anic corpus known collectively as the Ḥadīṭ. No-one denies that the Qur'ān is often reticent or even silent on religiously important matters, and we can see from the example before us that the grammarians could make the text of the Qur'ān appear as full of holes as an Emmenthaler cheese. The only resource for filling these gaps was either reference to other parts of the Qur'ān or to the Ḥadīṭ, and more particularly to the subset of traditions which supported the literature of the *'asbāb an-nuzūl* and the legal system in general. It is a commonplace that Islam eventually became a logocentric religion and this is surely confirmed by Ibn Hišām's treatment of elision, where every variety

it impossible: if al-Šāfi'ī were right, he says, it would mean half the congregation finishing the prayers before their imām and the other half keeping him waiting before he could finish his own!

of ellipse is illustrated as far as practicable by Qur'anic quotations and the contexts of situation are all sentences. In this regard, incidentally, even secular material such as pre-Islamic poetry is just another linguistic corpus by this time. Whereas, then, Sībawayhi's theory of elision presumes a living language, that of Ibn Hišām is based by contrast on a text, where ellipsis occurs in a universe of discourse which was not only literary in nature but circumscribed in content, being nothing more or less than the Arabic, and only that Arabic, which functioned as the vehicle of expression for the Sunna.

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