

## The Letter Hamzah: Highlights of Origin and Background

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### Abstract

Hamzah is a difficult letter in pronunciation compared to other letters because its point of articulation (makhrāj) is located at the bottom part of the throat, the farthest compared to other points. Therefore, the symbol of hamzah also has a diverse background based on the hamzah letter identity, which has a concession (rukhsah) in the expression due to the difficulty of pronouncing it. The problem has caused confusion among the community to understand the scope of hamzah symbols found in the mushaf because the Muslim community, especially in Malaysia, is bound by the narration of Hafs bin Sulayman al-Kufi that does not reveal the change of the letter hamzah based on its identity. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to reveal the correct understanding of the scope of hamzah letters involving symbols, colours and vowel marks (lines or harakat) based on the history recorded by qurra'. This descriptive study discusses the views of qurra' related to the letter hamzah, specifically involving symbols, colours and vowel marks (lines or harakat). All data were analysed using inductive and conductive methods. The findings show that the letter hamzah has a diverse background referring to its symbols, colours and vowel marks (lines or harakat). All these backgrounds cannot be realised within the community when they are still bound by the narration of Hafs bin Sulayman al-Kufi. If this understanding is not explained in detail to the public, it is worried that the community will be confused about the identity of the letter hamzah that is subject to various changes in all aspects, whether involving symbols in the mushaf or the variety of pronunciation based on ahurf al-Sab'ah. This study can also be an added value for teachers of the Quran in understanding the scope of the letter hamzah as one of the letters in the hija'iyah letters.

**Keywords:** Hamzah, Symbol, Hija'iyah, Hafs

## Introduction

The Muslim community in Malaysia has been reciting the Quran for many years with the narration of Hafs bin Sulayman al-Kufi. This phenomenon has already created a confusion on the understanding about the origin and background of the symbol of the letter hamzah. It is quite difficult to clear the confusion because the majority community in Malaysia has no information about the knowledge of *al-Qira'at* (Jusoh, 2001: xvi). The confusion needs to be clarified from the beginning of the creation of the symbol until the relationship of pronunciation changes based on the position of the letter hamzah in a word. The confusion is increasingly difficult to overcome because the method of reciting the Quran based on the narration of Hafs bin Sulayman al-Kufi has the least involvement in changing the pronunciation of the letter hamzah as *al-Tahqiq* except in three places based on the three effects of change. The three words are *ءَاعَجَمِيَّ* (*al-Tashil*) in surah Fussilat, *بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ* (*shibh al-Naql*) in surah al-Hujurat and *أَنْتُونِي* (*al-Ibdal* when restarting) in surah al-Ahqaf.

## Research Problem

This study was conducted based on the confusion of facts about the letter hamzah from the time the symbol was created to the practical form of the symbol in the mushaf from one era to another. The letter hamzah is the only letter with diversities from all angles, including the background, symbol, and pronunciation.

The symbol of the letter hamzah in the mushaf is not based on the teaching of the Prophet s.a.w nor from the Sahabah r.a. The mushaf in the time of Rasullullah s.a.w and the Sahabah r.a did not have any harakat diacritics, *i'jam* diacritics or letter of hamzah. The creation of the symbol of the letter hamzah appeared in the time of al-Khalil bin Ahmad al-Farahidi al-Basri (Damrah, 2008: 24).

Therefore, this study is carried out to further clarify the facts involving the letter hamzah which refers to the origin and background of the letter in the situation where most Muslims in the world, especially in Malaysia, recite the Quran using the narration of Hafs bin Sulayman al-Kufi. This narration lacks much impact in providing a complete understanding of the scope of the letter hamzah.

## Research Objectives

This study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explain the identity of the letter hamzah, which is precisely based on the history of writing the mushaf.
2. Study the origin and background of the symbols, colours and harakat diacritics of the letter hamzah.
3. Study the practicality of the symbol of the letter hamzah in the mushaf.

### *Origin and Background of the Letter Hamzah*

The letter hamzah is called as *al-Halq* (Al-Ansari, 1998: 42). It is also known as *al-Alif al-Mutaharrikah* with the characteristics of *jahr*, *shiddah*, *istifal*, *infatih* and *ismat* (Safaqisi, 1974: 47). The study will explain the diversity of the letter hamzah in terms of background, referring to the origin of the creation of symbols up to the practicality applied in the mushaf today. The discussion on the letter hamzah from the background perspective is divided into five parts (Muhaysin, 1995: 27-31), namely symbols, colours, harakat diacritics, conditions

and situations. This study covers the issue of symbols, colours and harakat of hamzah letter only.

### *The Symbols of the Letter Hamzah*

After the generation of Salafiyyun, the qurra' introduced the symbol of the letter hamzah based on two opinions (al-Tunisi, 1995: 231). First, the letter hamzah is given a black round symbol (•). This symbol resembles a dot in a letter, whether the letter hamzah is *muhaqqaqah* or *musahhalah*. This opinion is held by the authors of the mushaf. Second, the letter hamzah is given a small 'ayn letter (ع). This opinion was held by grammarians and writers of letters and poems during the early days of Islam, as mentioned by al-Kharaz (al-Tunisi, 1995: 231):

لَأَجْلِ دَا حُطَّتْ عَنِ الثِّقَاتِ عَيْنًا مِنَ الْكُتَّابِ وَالنَّحَاةِ

Meaning: "For this reason (reasonably discussed earlier), written the symbol of the letter hamzah with a small 'ayn letter by the letter writers and poets and the grammarians".

Al-Dani stated that this situation occurred for two reasons (al-Tunisi, 1995: 231). First, the letter hamzah has the characteristic of *shiddah* and the letter 'ayn has the characteristic close to *shiddah*, and this situation does not apply to other *halq* letters. Second, both letters ('ayn and hamzah) are *halq* letters, and this situation does not apply to other *shiddah* letters al-Kharaz said (al-Tunisi, 1995: 231):

وَحُصِّتِ الْعَيْنُ لِمَا بَيْنَهُمَا مِنْ شِدَّةٍ وَقُرْبٍ مَخْرَجِيهِمَا

Meaning: "Specialized the writing of the letter hamzah to the small letter 'ayn on a reasonable basis between the letter 'ayn and the letter hamzah referring to the *shiddah* characteristic and the close *makhraj* of both letters"

### *The Colours of the Letter Hamzah*

When it comes to colour issues, it is based on six types of hamzah letter (Muhaysin, 1995: 27):

1) *Muhaqqaqah*: The letter hamzah that does not change in terms of pronunciation, for example:

أُنزِلَ

Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 4

The letter hamzah is marked with a yellow round dot symbol, as mentioned by al-Kharaz (Al-Tunisi, 1995: 225):

فَضَبْتُ مَا حَقَّقَ بِالصَّفْرَاءِ نَفْطًا

Meaning: "Coloured the letter hamzah muhaqqaqah in yellow..."

This yellow colouring covers all the letters of hamzah that have no change in terms of original pronunciation. Such hamzah letters can be categorised as follows:

i) Located at the beginning of a word:

أَنْبِئُهُمْ

Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 33

ii) Located in the middle of a word:

سَأَلُوا

Surah al-Nisa', 4: 153

iii) Located at the end of a word:

بَدَأَ

Surah al-'Ankabut, 29: 20

iv) At the letter *alif*, as in the previous examples.

v) At the letter *ya'*:

فُرِيَ

Surah al-Inshiqaq, 84: 21

vi) At the letter *waw*:

يَعْبُؤُا

Surah al-Furqan, 25: 77

vii) Places like the previous examples.

viii) No specific location (by itself):

مَلَّءْ

Surah Ali 'Imran, 3: 91

ix) With harakat, as in the previous examples.

x) *Sukun* (no harakat):

جِنَّتُمْ

Surah Maryam, 19: 89

xi) Isolated, no other hamzah in the word, as in the previous examples.

xii) Combined with another hamzah:

أَوْ تَبْنُكُمْ

Surah Ali 'Imran, 3: 15

## 2) *Musahhalah*

The letter hamzah is pronounced between the letter *alif* and fathah based on the recitation of *al-Tashil*, which only involves certain imams. Examples of words involved are as follows and only involve the second hamzah:

أَرَزَيْتَ

Surah al-Ma'un, 107: 1

The letter hamzah is marked with a yellow round dot symbol, as mentioned by al-Kharaz (al-Tunisi, 1995: 225):

وَمَا سُهَّلَ بِالْحَمْرَاءِ

Meaning: "And the *musahhalah* hamzah is coloured red"

## 3) *Mubdalah harfan muharrakan*

The letter hamzah is changed to letter with harakat based on the recitation of *al-Ibdal*, which only involves certain imams, for example:

i) The letter hamzah is changed to the letter *ya'*:

لَيْلًا: لَيْلًا

Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 150

ii) The letter hamzah is changed to the letter *waw*:

مُوجَلًا: مُوجَلًا

Surah Ali 'Imran, 3: 145

This letter hamzah is also marked with a red round dot symbol. This is because this issue falls into the category *musahhalah*, referring to the meaning of *al-Tashil* generally as *li al-Takhfif*, namely to ease the pronunciation of the letter hamzah as explained by al-Kharaz (al-Tunisi, 1995: 225):

وَدَا الَّذِي ذَكَرْتُ فِي الْمُسَهَّلِ سُهَّلَ بَيْنَ بَيْنٍ أَوْ بِالْبَدَلِ إِذَا تَحَرَّكَ...

Meaning: “And what I have mentioned in the category of *al-Musahhil*, (coloured red) is only to *al-Tashil bayna bayna* and *al-Ibdal* if the letters recited by *al-Ibdal* have *harakat* (not *al-Ibdal* of the letter with *sukun* either the letter *mad* or *sukun sahih*)...”

With the details stated by al-Kharaz, it is understandable even though many categories of hamzah letters are basically included in the term *musahhalah*, only the categories *al-Tashil bayna bayna* and *mubdalah harfan muharrakan* are coloured red when involving the method of colouring the hamzah letter symbols.

#### 4) *Mubdalah harf mad*

The letter hamzah is changed to letter with *harakat* based on the recitation of *al-Ibdal*, which only involves certain imams:

أَرَأَيْتَ : أَرَأَيْتَ

Surah al-Ma'un, 107: 1

There is no colour for the issue of hamzah like this because the letter hamzah has changed into other letters (al-Öabba', 1995: 28).

#### 5) *Manqulah*

The *harakat* of the letter hamzah is removed based on the recitation *al-Naql* and only involves certain imams:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ : قَدْ أَفْلَحَ

Surah al-Mu'minun, 23: 1

Such hamzah letters cannot be coloured because the *harakat* for letter hamzah is removed to another letter, as mentioned by al-Shatibi (Shatibi, 1996: 19):

وَإِخْفِئْهُ مُسْهِلًا

Meaning: “And the letter hamzah is removed to ease the recitation”

#### 6) *Mahzufah*

The letter hamzah is omitted in the recitation of *al-Isqat* and only involves certain imams. This issue only involves the first hamzah:

جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا : جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا

Surah al-Mu'minun, 23: 27

Such hamzah letters cannot be coloured. Because the letter hamzah no longer exists. However, the current practice is not like the above discussion due to some difficulties. If the letter hamzah is in the categories of *musahhalah* or *mubdalah harfan muharrakan*, it is given a black round symbol. No symbol is given for the letter hamzah in the category of *mubdalah harf mad*, *manqulah* and *mahzufah* (al-Dabba', 1999: 110).

### The Harakat of the Letter Hamzah

The majority of the *dabt* scholars agreed to put some rulings involving the *harakat* of the letter hamzah as follows (Muhaysin, 1995: 28):

- 1) *Muhaqqaqah*: The majority of the *dabt* scholars agreed to put a *harakat* to the letter hamzah.
- 2) *Musahhalah*: The majority of the *dabt* scholars agreed not to put a *harakat* to the letter hamzah.
- 3) *Mahzufah*: The majority of the *dabt* scholars agreed to omit the letter hamzah and its *harakat*.
- 4) *Manqulah*: The majority of the *dabt* scholars agreed to remove the *harakat* of the letter hamzah to the *sukun sahih* letter before it there is a *sukun sahih* letter after it:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ : قَدْ أَفْلَحَ

Surah al-Mu'minun, 23: 1

If there is a *tanwin* after the letter hamzah, the majority of the *dabt* scholars agreed to remove the harakat of the letter hamzah verbally without changing the writing:

عَدَابٌ أَلِيمٌ : عَدَابُنْ لِيمٌ

Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 104

5) *Mubdalah harfan muharrakan*: Involves *al-Ibdal* of the letter *ya'*:

لَيْلًا : لَيْلَا

Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 150

This issue is divided into two opinions:

i) The letter *ya'* replacing the letter hamzah without harakat.

ii) The letter *ya'* replacing the letter hamzah with harakat.

The second opinion has been practised as in the previous examples.

6) *Mubdalah harf mad*: The majority of the *dabt* scholars agreed to put a harakat to the letter hamzah that is recited using *al-Ibdal* (second hamzah) and is divided into two types:

i) Single hamzah.

The letter hamzah and its harakat are omitted and replaced with a *mad* symbol at that particular location:

أَرَاءَيْتَ : أَرَاءَيْتْ

Surah al-Ma'un, 107: 1

ii) Combined with another hamzah: This issue is divided into five parts:

a) Combination of two hamzah letters.

Involves hamzah *istifham* with hamzah *wasl* in one word:

أَلذِّكْرَيْنِ : أَلذِّكْرَيْنِ

Surah al-An'am, 6: 143

Hamzah *wasl* and its harakat are omitted and replaced with a *mad* symbol at that particular location:

b) Combination of the hamzah letters.

In the case where the second hamzah is not hamzah *wasl* and after that, there is a *sukun sahih* letter:

أَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ : أَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ

Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 6

The second hamzah and its harakat are omitted and replaced with a *mad* symbol at that particular location: Some opinions say there is no need to put any symbols, but the opinions that say there should be a *mad* symbol are practised.

c) Combination of the hamzah letters.

Refers to hamzah *istifham* with hamzah *wasl* in one word, and after that, there is *harakah' aridah* (incoming harakat). This category also involves the recitation of *al-Naql*:

أَلَا نَ : أَلَا نَ

Surah Yunus, 10: 51

The second hamzah is omitted, and a *mad* symbol is not placed at that particular location unless it involves prolonging a *mad*, as in the previous examples. Some opinions say a *mad* symbol should be placed and others say it is not, and the opinions that say there should be a *mad* symbol are practised.

d) The letter hamzah combined with another letter:

Both letters are in a word, and after that, there is *harakah asliyyah* (original harakat):

ءَالِدٌ : ءَالِدٌ

Surah Hud, 11: 72

The second hamzah and its harakat are omitted and no *mad* symbol is placed at that particular location:

e) The letter hamzah combined with another hamzah in two words:

The second hamzah and its harakat are omitted, and no *mad* symbol is placed at that particular location:

شَاءَ أَنْشَرَهُ : شَاءَ أَنْشَرَهُ

Surah 'Abasa, 80: 22

To further strengthen the the previous explanations, the study concludes with the words of al-Kharaz (al-Tunisi, 1995: 238-239):

وَهَمْزُ ءِالَانَ إِذَا مَا أَبْدَلَا وَبَابِهِ مَطُّ عَلَيْهِ جِعَلَا  
وَلَكَ فِي ءَأَنْتَ أَنْ تُتَبَّرَهُ وَبَابِهِ وَلَا تَقْسُنْ شَأَ أَنْشَرَهُ

Meaning: "And the second hamzah in ءِالَانَ and similar examples (involving hamzah istifham combined with hamzah wasl), a mad symbol is placed. And the same goes for other examples such as ءَأَنْتَ (not like ءِالَانَ) to be analogous with ءِالَانَ and not analogous to شَأَ أَنْشَرَهُ"

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, the authors have presented the background of the letter hamzah involving symbols, colours and harakat based on the facts recorded by scholars. This study has also unravelled some issues involving the letter hamzah that is often changed in terms of shape, colour and harakat based on the identity of the letter hamzah. However, all the findings will not be appreciated if the community is still bound to the narration of Hafis bin Sulayman al-Kufi.

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