huruuf almaani ‘particles of meaning’ have occupied a prominent place in Arabic grammar. Ibn Hiṣaam (muynii allabeeb), Al-Zajjaji (allaamaat0, and Muraadi (janaa al-daani) dedicated a great deal of space to discussing these particles. This paper provides a detailed comparison between the most productive particle, the laam, and all the rest. The data used comes from Palestinian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic.

The most typical thematic roles of this laam assigns are maleactive, location, adverb of time, reason, motive, direction and benefactive. As a sample, consider:

(1) ʕabaye-l-ha maglu:beh (benefactive)
    cooked.1s-for-her maglubeh
    ‘I cooked maglubeh for her/on her behalf.’
(2) wadde:te-l-ha maktuu (direction)
    sent.1s-for-her a letter
    ‘I sent a letter to her.’
(3) ḥi:te-l-ha (reason)
    came.1s.for-it
    ‘I came because of it’

Note the glossing above claims that the laam and the pronominal clitic merge. Evidence for this comes from negation:

(4) ma-ʕabaye-l-ha-ʃ maglu:beh (benefactive)
    NEG-cooked.1s-for-her maglubeh
    ‘I did not cook maglubeh for her/on her behalf.’

While all particles may merge with negation when they have a pronominal clitic, none of them may merge with negation:

(b) ma-plementation-eʃ ale:ha
    NEG-went.1s_for-it-NEG
    ‘I did not go there.’
(c)* ma-plementation-ʃ ale:ha
    NEG-went.1s-for-it-NEG
    ‘I did not go there.’

Adapting ideas from Alsina(2001), Asina and Mchombo(1990), Baker (1988), Baker, Safir, and Sikuku(2012), Basilico(2008), Benmamoun (2000, 2012),Carol and Salanova (2011), CreisselSs (2010), Gerdts and Kiyosawa (2005), Jeong (2006), Kiyosawa (2006), Kuo (2013), Kupula(2008), Lin(2009),Maranz (1993), Peterson (2004), Pylkkänen (2000, 2002, 2008), Soltan (2012, 2014) and Valenzuela(2010), I argue that the syntactic differences between the laam and all the other particles can be accounted for if we assume that the laam has the configuration (a) whereas all the other particles have (b) as their underlying representations:

(a) **VP**
    / \      / \  
    V laam Phrase VP PP
    / \  
    laam DP
(b) **VP**
    / \      / \  
    V / \  

Thus, the laam merges with DP and both raise to V and merge with it. This is impossible in (b).