

CONNECTING THE DOTS: DIACRITICS, SCRIBAL CULTURE, AND THE QUR'ĀN IN THE FIRST/SEVENTH CENTURY*

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Abstract

Modern historians assert that the earliest manuscripts of the Qur'ān were written in an Arabic *scriptio defectiva*, devoid of orthographic aids such as consonantal diacritics and vowel markers. In fact, the earliest extant manuscripts—those in the Hijāzī script, dated to the first/seventh century—do exhibit consonantal diacritics, though only sporadically and insufficiently to create a completely unambiguous text. Previous studies have provided inconclusive results regarding the uses of these spare diacritics and have suggested that scribes may have purposefully excluded them from Qur'ān manuscripts in order to allow different readings of the text to coexist in the same text. Focusing on the few diacritics that do appear in early manuscripts, this paper situates early Qur'ān manuscripts within the context of other Arabic documents of the first/seventh century that exhibit similarly infrequent diacritics. Shared patterns in the usages of diacritics indicate that early Qur'ān manuscripts were produced by scribes relying upon very similar orthographic traditions to those that produced Arabic papyri and inscriptions of the first/seventh century.

Modern historians of the Qur'ān routinely assert that the earliest qur'ānic manuscripts were devoid of such orthographic reading aids as diacritics (*iṣām* or *naqt*) for distinguishing homographic consonants, signs indicating short vowels (*iṣāb*, *shakl*, or *ḥarakāt*) and long *ā*, or representation of the letter

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hamzah.¹ Since this *scriptio defectiva* could not unambiguously record the spoken Arabic language in which the Qurʾān was revealed and recited, modern writers assume that this bare written text must have functioned as an *aide-mémoire* for a primarily orally-transmitted Qurʾān.² The emendations to the qurʾānic text proposed by writers such as James Bellamy, Christoph Luxenberg, and Günther Lüling emerge from assumptions that diacritics and other orthographic devices were significantly later—and in some cases erroneous—additions to the Qurʾān’s consonantal skeleton (*rasm*).³

In fact, while signs indicating short vowels and the *hamzah* are indeed largely absent from Arabic orthography until the second/eighth century, the textual record of written Arabic displays a much earlier and more widespread usage of diacritics for differentiating homographic letters than is commonly acknowledged.⁴ Within dated Arabic documents, consonantal

1. Examples of this tendency to assume a *scriptio defectiva* in recent scholarship are cited in ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim Ghabban and Robert Hoyland, “The Inscription of Zuhayr, the Oldest Islamic Inscription (24 AH/AD 644–645), the Rise of the Arabic Script and the Nature of the Early Islamic State,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 19 (2008): 210–237, 234. Others include: James A. Bellamy, “Textual Criticism of the Koran,” *JAOS* 121 (2001): 1–6; Gerhard Böwering, “Qurʾān,” in Gerhard Böwering et al. (eds.), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 447–456; Fred M. Donner, “The Qurʾān in Recent Scholarship: Challenges and Desiderata,” in Gabriel Said Reynolds (ed.), *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 29–50; Farid Esack, *The Qurʾān: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2001), 111; Beatrice Gruendler, *The Development of the Arabic Scripts: From the Nabatean Era to the First Islamic Century According to Dated Texts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 126; Efim Rezman, “Orthography,” *EQ*, s.v. (2003); Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, in collaboration with and trans. by Shawkat M. Toorawa (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 34.

2. Among many others, see Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*, 30–39; Alan Jones, “Orality and Writing in Arabia,” *EQ*, s.v. (2003)

3. Bellamy, “Textual Criticism,” 1–2, 6; Günther Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation: The Rediscovery and Reliable Reconstruction of a Comprehensive Pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal Hidden in the Koran under Earliest Islamic Reinterpretations* (Delhi: Motival Banarsidass, 2003), 1–6, 9–11, 23; Christopher Luxenberg, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran: A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran*, revised and enlarged ed. (Berlin: Hans Schiler, 2007), 31–39, 331–332. On these issues, see Devin J. Stewart, “Notes on Medieval and Modern Emendations of the Qurʾān,” in Reynolds (ed.), *Qurʾān in Its Historical Context*, 225–248; Behnam Sadeghi, “Criteria for Emending the Text of the Qurʾān,” in Michael Cook, Najam Haider, Intisar Rabb, and Asma Sayeed (eds.), *Law and Tradition in Classical Islamic Thought: Studies in Honor of Professor Hossein Modarressi* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 21–41.

4. On the history of the development of orthographic signs in the Arabic script, see Nabia Abbott, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and Its Qurʾānic Development, with a Full Description of the Qurʾān Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute* (Chicago: University of

diacritics were used already in the early first/mid-seventh century: the earliest surviving examples are two administrative papyri dated to 22/643 and an inscription dated to 24/645, all of which exhibit consonantal diacritics on some letters.⁵ The earliest extant Qur'ānic manuscripts—written in the Ḥijāzī script and dated paleographically to the first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries—likewise display dots or dashes to discriminate between homographic letters.⁶ The fact that these diacritics were written in the same

Chicago Press, 1939), 38–41; Alain George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy* (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 29–31, 75, 119–125; Jan Just Witkam, “The Neglect Neglected: To Point or Not to Point, That Is the Question,” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 6 (2015): 376–408. George and Déroche suggest that red dots were used to mark short vowels in Qur'ān manuscripts by the late first/seventh century, basing their dating on several Qur'ān manuscripts in the so-called “O I” script type that exhibit these vowel markers. See François Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads: A First Overview* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 77, 99, 113; Alain George, “Coloured Dots and the Question of Regional Origins in Early Qur'ans (Part I),” *JQS* 17.1 (2015): 1–44, 4–5. On the identification of a proto-*hamzah* mark in several first/seventh-century texts see Frédéric Imbert, “Réflexions sur les formes de l'écrit à l'aube de l'Islam,” *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 42 (2012): 119–127; Younis al-Shdaifat, Ahmad Al-Jallad, Zeyad al-Salameen, and Rafe Harahsheh, “An Early Christian Arabic Graffito Mentioning ‘Yazīd the King,’” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 28 (2017): 315–324; Ahmad Al-Jallad, “‘Moge God Yazīd de Koning indachtig zijn’: Nadere beschouwingen over de Yazīd-inscriptie en de ontwikkeling van de Arabische schriften,” in Josephine van den Bent, Floris van den Eijnde, and Johan Weststeijn (eds.), *Mohammed en de Late Oudheid* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2018), 189–208; Mehdy Shaddel, “Traces of the *Hamza* in the Early Arabic Script: The Inscriptions of Zuhayr, Qays the Scribe, and ‘Yazīd the King,’” *Arabian Epigraphic Notes* 4 (2018): 35–52; Marijn Van Putten, “*Hamzah* in the Qurānic Consonantal Text,” *Orientalia* 87 (2018): 93–120.

5. George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 29; Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 233. On these documents, see Youssef Ragheb, “Les Premiers Documents Arabes de l'Ère Musulmane,” in Constantin Zuckerman (ed.), *Constructing the Seventh Century* (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance 2013), 679–729, 679–726. I thank Asma Hilali for this reference and for sharing with me a pre-publication version of her book, *The Sanaa Palimpsest: The Transmission of the Qur'an in the First Centuries AH* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

6. On the dating of the Ḥijāzī-script Qur'ān manuscripts by paleographic means, see François Déroche, “New Evidence about Umayyad Book Hands,” in *Essays in Honour of Salah al-Din al-Munajjid* (London: al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2002), 611–642, 616, 640–641; Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'ans of the 8th to the 10th Centuries A.D.* (London: The Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1992), 27–32; George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 32. Carbon dating, which places several of these manuscripts in the mid-first/seventh century, is discussed in Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer, Karl-Heinz Ohlig, and Gerd-Rüdiger Puin, “Neue Wege der Koranforschung,” *Magazin Forschung* [Universität des Saarlandes] 1 (1999): 33–46; Yasin Dutton, “An Umayyad Fragment of the Qur'an

ink as the letter forms in these texts indicates the diacritics “were considered to be part of the script.”⁷ The appearance of consonantal diacritics in several different types of first/seventh-century Arabic writings suggests that they were part of “the state of the script at the very beginning of Islam” and, indeed, that the Qurʾān could potentially have been recorded using diacritics even within the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁸

and Its Dating,” *JQS* 9.2 (2007): 57–87, 63–64; Michael Josef Marx and Tobias J. Jocham, “Zu den Datierungen von Koranhandschriften durch die ¹⁴C-Methode,” *Frankfurter Zeitschrift für Islamisch-theologische Studien* 2 (2015): 9–37; Behnam Sadeghi and Uwe Bergmann, “The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet,” *Arabica* 57 (2010): 343–436, 348–354. Caution about the accuracy of carbon dating is called for in Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, 11–14, 128; Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest*, 13, 20.

7. François Déroche, *Islamic Codicology: An Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Script*, ed. Muhammad Isa Waley, trans. Deke Dusinberre and David Radzinowicz (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2005), 220. X-Ray fluorescence imaging performed on a folio from a Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾān manuscript confirms that “the diacritical marks and verse dividers were in the same ink as the main text”: Sadeghi and Bergmann, “Codex of a Companion,” 348.

8. George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 52. In a *ḥadīth* attested only in late sources, the Prophet Muḥammad gives advice on writing diacritics, recommending that “when you (pl.) disagree about a *yāʾ* and a *tāʾ*, write it with *yāʾ*”: Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Iṣbahānī, *Maʾrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, ed. ʿAdil b. Yūsuf al-ʿAzāzī (7 vols.; Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan liʾl-Nashr, 1419/1998), 1.409 (no. 309); Abū ʿl-Faql Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Iṣbah fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥābah*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (16 vols.; Cairo: n.p., 1429/2008), 1.579 (no. 690); Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Jazarī Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah fī maʾrifat al-ṣaḥābah* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1433/2012), 120 (no. 452). This tradition is occasionally cited as evidence of the usage of diacritics during the Prophet’s lifetime, such as in ʿAlī Ibrāhīm Al-Ghabbān, “The Evolution of the Arabic Script in the Period of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Orthodox Caliphs in the Light of New Inscriptions Discovered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” in M. C. A. Macdonald (ed.), *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language. Papers from the Special Session of the Seminar for Arabian Studies Held on 24 July, 2009* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 89–101, 93. The ascription of this statement to the Prophet is likely a backwards projection: earlier texts ascribe similar statements not to the Prophet, but instead to his Companion ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/652–653) or to Successors such as Khālīd b. Maʿdān (d. 104/722) and ʿAṭīyah b. Qays (d. 121/739). See Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿzamī (11 vols.; Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1390–1392/1970–1972), 3.362 (no. 5979); Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Abī Shaybah, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. Usāmah b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad (15 vols.; Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīthah liʾl-Ṭibāʾa waʾl-Nashr, 2008), 10.72–73 (nos. 30886–30889); Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, *Sunan*, ed. Saʿīd b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ʿAl Ḥumayyid (8 vols.; Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī liʾl-Nashr waʾl-Tawzīʿ, 1993–2001), 2.256–259 (nos. 63–65); Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb b. Muslim al-Miṣrī, *al-Jāmiʿ: Tafṣīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. Miklos Muranyi (3 vols.; Beirut:

However, while diacritics were clearly used in the Arabic script of the first/seventh century, they were deployed in ways that seem counterintuitive to modern eyes. Manuscripts, papyri, and inscriptions from this period do not display diacritics consistently on every consonantal letter that would exhibit a diacritic in modern Arabic script; instead, diacritics appear in these texts infrequently, often leaving the text quite ambiguous. Illustrating the distinction between a first/seventh-century Qur'ān manuscript and a modern printed edition, François Déroche notes that on one folio page containing most of Q Tawbah 9:113–121, there are eight dotted letters where the equivalent modern text has 240 of them.⁹

We might assume that scribes would write these few diacritics in the most textually ambiguous places of the *rasm*, so as to make the Arabic text easier to read.¹⁰ Curiously, however, the actual placement of the diacritics does not seem to reflect any such goal. As Adolf Grohmann writes, in the early Arabic papyri “it very often occurs that diacritical dots are added to words which can hardly be misunderstood at all, and are lacking, where they should be bitterly needed.”¹¹ Marcus Milwright similarly writes that the purpose of the diacritics in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions is unclear, as “the application of diacritics ... does not always serve to make explicit the meanings of ambiguous words” and “it is difficult to understand [the reason for] the application of diacritics to a straightforward word such as *fihī* ... and *ibn*.”¹² Déroche finds a similar situation in the Ḥijāzī-script qur'ānic manuscripts, writing that diacritics appear, “strangely enough to a modern observer, not primarily in places which could be ambiguous for the reader.”¹³ Throwing up his hands at the seemingly arbitrary usage of diacritics by

Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2003), 3.44 (no. 86). Notably, in these earlier texts, we do not find “write” (*uktubū*) the *yā'*, but instead “make it a *yā'*” (*ij'alū-hā yā'*) or “make [the word grammatically] masculine” (*dhakkirū*), leaving ambiguous whether an oral or written text is being referenced.

9. François Déroche, “The Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus and the Ḥijāzī Scripts,” in Macdonald (ed.), *Development of Arabic*, 113–120, 116.

10. Gruendler, *Development of the Arabic Scripts*, 127; Khalil I. H. Semaan, “A Linguistic View of the Development of the Arabic Writing System,” *WZKM* 61 (1967): 22–40, 31.

11. Adolf Grohmann, *From the World of Arabic Papyri* (Cairo: Al-Maaref Press, 1952), 83. See further Yūsuf Rāḡib, “L'écriture des papyrus arabes aux premiers siècles des Islam,” *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 58 (1990): 14–29, 16.

12. Marcus Milwright, *The Dome of the Rock and Its Umayyad Mosaic Inscriptions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 110–111, 142.

13. Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117.

early Qurʾān copyists, Déroche states that “this question needs further investigation.”¹⁴

If we investigate these confusing dots, what might we learn? I suggest that diacritics can in fact offer us a small but important window into the social world of early Arabic writing, including the early writing of the Qurʾān. When we closely examine where diacritics appear in first/seventh- and second/eighth-century qurʾānic manuscripts, we find many correspondences with contemporaneous Arabic papyri and inscriptions. Based upon these convergences, I argue that the same (classes of) scribes who produced early Islamic imperial correspondence and monuments in Arabic likely also produced the written Qurʾān in this same period. Attending to these small dots, I suggest that shared patterns in the display of diacritics provide a strong indication that those who copied our earliest surviving Qurʾān manuscripts likely came from the same scribal backgrounds as those who produced other Arabic texts of the first/seventh century.

If this hypothesis proves correct, it raises a wider social and religious issue: who was able to read the Qurʾān in the first/seventh century? As mentioned above, scholarship on early Islam presumes that qurʾānic manuscripts served as *aides-mémoire* for oral recitation. But in a world of limited literacy, whose memory would be aided by such manuscripts? If the Arabic writing culture that produced Arabic papyri in the first/seventh century was related to (if not coterminous with) that which produced Qurʾān manuscripts in this same period, does this imply that such manuscripts could only be read, or were principally read, by the same scribes able to produce and read mundane Arabic texts? Was there a larger body of literate individuals with access to written Arabic texts, both intellectually and physically? In this article, I use diacritics to provoke and grapple with these questions about the early social history of the Islamic scripture.

The Emergence of Arabic Diacritics in Myth and History

Like the early history of the Arabic script more generally, the origin of Arabic diacritics has been mythologized in Islamic historiographical texts, which offer several stories of the markings' creation. Emphasizing either their antiquity or their close association with the recording of the Qurʾān, these narratives place diacritics within Islamic sacred history and especially the history of the qurʾānic text. While these narratives reveal much about later perceptions of the significance of diacritics, when they are compared with the material record of Arabic writing from the first/seventh century, we find

14. Déroche, “New Evidence,” 627 n. 46.

that, as Alan Jones writes, these “traditional accounts of the development of Arabic diacritics must be wrong.”¹⁵

Recorded in historical compendia, narratives about the beginning of the Arabic script situate the Arabic language within Islamic prophetic history and/or Arab tribal history.¹⁶ Among the proposed origins, Arabic is said to have first been written by the prophet Adam (along with all other scripts), by the prophet and Arab progenitor Ishmael, or by certain Arabs of Iraq from whom the practice was eventually transmitted to the Quraysh of the Ḥijāz, thereby enabling its usage in Mecca during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad.¹⁷ While most versions of these narratives mention neither the

15. Alan Jones, “The Word Made Visible: Arabic Script and the Committing of the Qur’ān to Writing,” in Chase F. Robinson (ed.), *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1–16, 15. Similarly: Grohmann, *From the World*, 82; George, “Coloured Dots,” 6–7; Déroche, *Qur’ans of the Umayyads*, 21, 72, 138.

16. Gerhard Endress, “Die arabische Schrift,” in Wolfdietrich Fischer (ed.), *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 1: *Sprachwissenschaft* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1982), 165–197, 169–170; Beatrice Gruendler, “Arabic Script,” *EQ*, s.v. (2001); Semaan, “Linguistic View,” 34–35; George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 26–27; Witkam, “Neglect Neglected,” 379–380; Adam Gacek, “The Copying and Handling of Qur’āns: Some Observations on the *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* by Ibn Abī Da’ūd al-Sijistānī,” *MUSJ* 59 (2006): 229–251, 232–233; Jan M. F. Van Reeth, “Les prophéties oraculaires dans le Coran et leurs antécédents: Montan et Mani,” in Daniel De Smet and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (eds.), *Controverses sur les écritures canoniques de l’islam* (Paris: Cerf, 2014), 77–145, 100–109.

17. Abū ‘l-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid (2 parts in 4 vols.; London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2009), 1.11; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Rabbihī al-Andalusī, *al-Iqd al-farīd*, ed. Mufid Muḥammad Qumayḥa et al. (9 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1404/1983), 4.239–240; Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sahl al-‘Askarī, *al-Awā’il*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Wakīl (Ṭaṭā: Dār al-Bashīr li’l-Thaqāfah wa’l-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah, 1408/1987), 84–85; Abū ‘l-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-a’shā fī šinā’at al-inshā’* (14 vols.; Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Khadawīyyah, 1331–1338/1913–1919), 3.11–19; Abū ‘Abbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yan wa-anbā’ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (8 vols.; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1972–1978), 3.344; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Wasā’il fī musāmarat al-awā’il*, ed. Abū Ḥājar Muḥammad al-Sa’īd b. Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1406/1986), 113 (nos. 830–834); Abū ‘l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Yahyā b. Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Anīs al-Ṭabbā’ and ‘Umar Anīs al-Ṭabbā’ (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Ma’ārif, 1407/1987), 659–660; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. al-‘Abbās al-Fākihī, *Akhhār Makkah fī qadīm al-dahr wa-ḥadīthihī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Duhaysh, 2nd ed. (6 vols.; Beirut: Dār Khidr, 1414/1994), 3.214 (nos. 1996–1997); Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān b. al-Ash’ath al-Sijistānī [Ibn Abī Dāwūd], *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn Wā’iz, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyyah, 1423/2002), 151–153 (nos. 12–13); Abū ‘l-Mundhir

presence nor absence of diacritics in the earliest Arabic script, one telling of the Iraqi Arabs' creation of the script explicitly places the invention of diacritics alongside that of the script itself. This version appears in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995), narrated from the Prophetic Companion 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās (d. ca. 68/687–688):

The first people to write in Arabic were three men of Bawlān, a tribe inhabiting al-Anbār. They came together and created the letters, both separated and joined. They were Murāmīr b. Marwah, Aslam b. Sidrah, and 'Āmir b. Jidhrah; [the first and third were] also called [Ibn] Murrah and [Ibn] Jidhlah. Murāmīr created the forms [of the letters], Aslam the separations and connections [between the letters], and 'Āmir the diacritical points.¹⁸

Here the co-inventors of the Arabic script are identified as three members of an Iraqi Arab tribe, each of whom contributes a specific aspect of the writing system: the forms of the letters, the ways of connecting them to one another, and the diacritical points (*al-iṣām*).

This narrative suggests that a well-developed orthographic system was available from the beginning of the Arabic script's existence, with 'Āmir b.

Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī, *Nasab al-Ma'add wa'l-Yaman al-kabīr*, ed. Nājī Ḥasan (2 vols.; Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1408/1988), 190–191; Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdūs al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa'l-kuttāb*, ed. Ḥasan al-Zayn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Ḥadīth li'l-Ṭibā'a wa'l-Nashr, 1408/1988), 8; Ḥamzah b. al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh 'alā hudūth al-taṣḥīf*, ed. Muḥammad As'ad Ṭalas, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1412/1992), 19; Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī, *al-Ma'arīf*, ed. Tharwat 'Ukāshah (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arīf, 1969), 552–553; Ibn Qutaybah, *Kitāb 'Uyūn al-akhbār*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī al-'Adawī (4 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.), 1.43; Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Durayd, *Kitāb al-Ishṭiqāq*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1854), 223; Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī, *Adab al-kuttāb*, ed. Muḥammad Bahjat al-Atharī (Baghdad: al-Maktabah al-'Arabīyah, 1341/1922), 30; Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-Dānī, *al-Muqni' fī ma'rifat marsūm maṣāḥif ahl al-amṣār*, ed. Nūrat bt. Ḥasan b. Fahd al-Ḥamīd (Riyadh: Dār al-Tadmuriyyah, 1431/2010), 161–162 (no. 14); Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaḥ*, 12.307 (no. 36837); Muḥammad b. Sa'd b. Manī' al-Zuhrī, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (11 vols.; Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1421/2001), 6.7.

18. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (ed. Sayyid), 1.11; Bayard Dodge (ed. and trans.), *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (2 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1.7 (adapted here). In the Flügel edition of Ibn al-Nadīm, the names appear as “Murāmīr b. Murrah, Aslam b. Sidrah, and 'Āmir b. Jadarah, also called [Ibn] Marwah and [Ibn] Jadalāh.” See Abū 'l-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist mīl Anmerkungen*, ed. Gustav Flügel (2 vols.; Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1871–1872), 1.4–5 and the notes in 2.2. This version of the report also appears in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aṣḥā*, 3.12, 155.

Jidhrah—or, alternatively, ‘Āmir b. Jidhlah—as the innovator of *iṣām*. Ancient lexicographers commonly understand *iṣām* as marks for distinguishing consonants, but the word is also used in reference to the recording of short vowels with dots.¹⁹ Notably, a tradition reported from the historian Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/819 or 206/821) states that “Aslam b. Khudrah was the first to place the diacritical points and the dots [*al-iṣām wa’l-naqṭ*].”²⁰ It is unclear if this “Aslam” is a completely different figure from the “‘Āmir” in Ibn al-Nadīm’s text or simply a variant name for the same person.²¹ Similarly unclear is exactly what this Aslam purportedly invented: he is said to have been the first to use both *iṣām* and *naqṭ*, words that Arabic sources use nearly interchangeably for consonantal diacritics, but which were both also used in reference to vowel markers.²² It appears that both consonantal diacritics and

19. For *iṣām* as consonantal markers specifically, see Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Durayd, *Kiṭāb Jamharat al-lughah*, ed. Ramzī Munīr Ba’lbakī (3 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li’l-Malāyīn, 1987), 1.484. In contrast, vowel markers are referred to as *iṣāb* and *shakl* in Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat*, 2.877. *Iṣām* is defined as meaning both “dots and vowel markers” (*naqṭ wa-shakl*), in Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Fayyūmī, *Kiṭāb al-Miṣbāḥ al-munīr fī gharīb al-sharḥ al-kabīr li’l-Rāfi‘ī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Shinnāwī (2 vols.; Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.), 2.395. Some lexicographers clarify that *iṣām* refers to consonantal diacritics by describing them as “black dots” (*al-naqṭ bi’l-sawād*), distinguishing them from colored vowel dots: Ismā‘īl b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ taj al-lughah wa-ṣiḥāḥ al-‘arabiyyah*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ‘Aṭṭār, 2nd ed. (6 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li’l-Malāyīn, 1399/1979), 4.1981; Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Dānī, *al-Muḥkam fī naqṭ al-maṣāḥif*, ed. ‘Izzat Ḥasan, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1418/1997), 19, 35. See further: Semaan, “Linguistic View,” 31–32, 35–36; Semaan, *Linguistics in the Middle Ages: Phonetic Studies in Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 14–19; Asma Afsaruddin, “The Excellences of the Qur’ān: Textual Sacrality and the Organization of Early Islamic Society,” *JAOIS* 122 (2002): 1–24, 8 n. 43; Witkam, “Neglect Neglected,” 379; Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 144.

20. al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 35.

21. The name could be a conflation of those in the list of three creators of the Arabic script.

22. For *iṣām* and *naqṭ* as synonyms, see Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kiṭāb al-Ayn*, ed. Maḥdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī (8 vols.; Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1980), 1.238; Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat*, 1.484; al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 22–23. For *naqṭ* used in reference to vowel markers, see al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 4. For *naqṭ* meaning consonantal diacritics, see al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 2, 17, 35; Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Ziyād al-Farrā’, *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad Yūsuf Najātī and Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Najjār (3 vols.; Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1403/1983), 1.172–173. As noted above, some sources clarify that consonantal diacritics are meant by referring to them as “black dots,” as opposed to the colored dots of the early vowel systems. On these terms, see also Semaan, “Linguistic View,” 31 n. 25, 35; Gacek, “Copying and Handling,” 238 n. 50; Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 144, 288.

vowel markers are ascribed here to one man: a phenomenon that, we will see below, is not uncommon in narratives about the early development of diacritics.

These reports place the beginning of Arabic diacritics in the pre-Islamic period, without associating their invention with the qur'ānic text. Conversely, other reports suggest that diacritics were first added to Arabic writing—or to the qur'ānic text, at the very least—only near the end of the first/seventh century, and specifically in order to record the Qur'ān more accurately. For example, the *Kitāb al-Tanbīh 'alā ḥudūth al-taṣḥīf* of Ḥamzah b. al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca. 360/971) reports that “the occasion for the introduction of the dots” (*sabab iḥdāth al-naql*) occurred when the Iraqi governor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqaḥī (r. 75–95/694–713) ordered his scribes (*kuttāb*) to devise a system to curtail the proliferation of erroneous readings of the Qur'ān in Iraq:

When the reading errors spread in Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj sought aid from his scribes and asked them to place signs upon the ambiguous letters. They thus placed the dots [*al-naql*] in ones and twos, differentiating them by placing some above the letters and some below.²³

When this intervention did not solve all of the variant readings, the scribes then “introduced the diacritical points” (*aḥdathū'l-iṣām*), perhaps referring here to vowel markers.²⁴ Finally, when *naql* and *iṣām* are together unable to prevent the spread of misreadings (and the scribes are unable to find a third orthographic device to integrate into the text), it is resolved that the written text is itself insufficient and only study and oral transmission will enable error-free reading of the Qur'ān.

23. Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahānī, *Tanbīh*, 27–28. On the reported insertion of diacritics in this period, see Omar Hamdan, “The Second *Maṣāḥif* Project: A Step towards the Canonization of the Qur'ānic Text,” in Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Smith, and Michael Marx (eds.) *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 795–835, 800, 804, 807–809. Critiques of Hamdan's interpretations of this material appear in Nicolai Sinai, “When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure? Part I,” *BSOAS* 77 (2014): 273–292, 279 n. 42; George, “Coloured Dots,” 36 n. 32.

24. For different interpretations of this passage, see Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, “Mémoire sur l'origine et les anciens monumens de la littérature parmi les Arabes,” *Mémoires de littérature tirés des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 50 (1808): 247–440, 323–324; William MacGuckin de Slane (trans.), *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary* (4 vols.; Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842–1871), 1.359–360, 364 n. 15; Mustafa Shah, “Exploring the Genesis of Early Arabic Linguistic Thought: Qur'anic Readers and Grammarians of Başran Tradition (Part II),” *JQS* 5.2 (2003): 1–47, 7–8.

Like the report about Aslam b. Khudrah, the narrative about al-Ḥajjāj's scribes places the introduction of *ijām* and *naqf* close together, suggesting a nearly simultaneous imposition of both consonantal diacritics and vowel markers into the qur'ānic text. This theme also appears in traditions that associate the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705) with these actions, such as the report found in 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. 'Aṭīyyah al-Andalusī's (d. 541/1147) *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-'azīz*: "As for the vocalization [*shakl*] and placement of diacritics [*naqf*] in the *muṣḥaf*, it is reported that 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān ordered that it be done and that al-Ḥajjāj devoted himself to that in Wāsit."²⁵ Some narratives provide further historical (or historicizing) details by identifying the individuals who allegedly performed these tasks: the scribes Naṣr b. 'Aṣim (d. ca. 89/707)²⁶ and Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar (d. 129/747)²⁷ are associated with al-Ḥajjāj's/'Abd al-Malik's project in some reports, and each is alternatively called "the first to

25. Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. 'Aṭīyyah al-Andalusī, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-'azīz* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002), 27. See Hamdan, "Second *Maṣāḥif* Project," 800; Semaan, *Linguistics*, 19; Sinai, "When Did the Consonantal Skeleton," 279.

26. Naṣr's name is introduced into the report about al-Ḥajjāj's efforts in the versions found in Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'īd al-'Askarī, *Sharḥ mā yaqa' fihī al-taṣḥīf wa'l-taḥrīf*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Aḥmad (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1383/1963), 13; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Ayyak al-Ṣafadī, *Taṣḥīḥ al-taṣḥīf wa-taḥrīr al-taḥrīf*, ed. Sayyid al-Sharqāwī and Ramaḍān 'Abd al-Tawwāb (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1407/1987), 13–14; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 2.32; MacGuckin de Slane, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1.359–360. He is identified as "the first to dot [Qur'ān] manuscripts" in al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 6–7; Abū 'l-Khayr Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāyah fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, ed. Gotthelf Bergsträsser (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2006), 2.293 (no. 3728); Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, *Muḥarrar*, 27; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, ed. Aḥmad Khān (3 vols.; Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li'l-Buḥūth wa'l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah, 1418/1997), 1.47; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'ṣhā*, 3.160–161.

27. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, *Muḥarrar*, 27; Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl b. 'Umar b. Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, ed. Sāmī b. Muḥammad al-Salāmah (8 vols.; Riyadh: Dār al-Taybah, 1420/1999), 1.50. Yaḥyā is called "the first to dot [Qur'ān] manuscripts" in Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, 521 (no. 445); al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 5, 6; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūt and Ḥusayn al-Asad (25 vols.; Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1401–1409/1981–1988), 4.442; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa'l-a'lām*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām al-Tadmurī (53 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1407–1421/1987–2000), 6.503; Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāyah*, 2.331–332 (no. 3873); al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'ṣhā*, 3.161. It is specified that he was "the first to dot [Qur'ān] manuscripts with short vowels" (*awwal man naqqata 'l-maṣāḥif bi-nuqaṭ al-i'rāb*) in al-Dhahabī, *Ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, 1.41.

place dots in [Qurʾān] manuscripts” (*awwal man naqqata ʾl-maṣāḥif*).²⁸ Other traditions ascribe this “first” to Abū ʾl-Aswad al-Duʾalī (d. ca. 69/688–689), who is also depicted as the creator of a qurʾānic vowel system using dots (*naqṭ*) under the auspices of Ḥajjāj’s predecessor as governor in Iraq, Ziyād b. Abīhi (d. 53/673), or the latter’s son, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād (d. 67/686).²⁹ A tradition in Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s (d. 911/1505) *al-Itqān fī ʾulūm al-Qurʾān* credits Abū ʾl-Aswad with the introduction of both consonantal diacritics and vocalization to the Qurʾān (*naqṭ al-muṣḥaf wa-shakluhu*), reporting that he “was the first one to do that ... [doing so] at the order of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān.”³⁰

When discussing the development of the qurʾānic text’s orthography, modern historians often cite these reports about al-Ḥajjāj, ʿAbd al-Malik, and their scribal collaborators, pointing to this period as a crucial point in the improvement of the Arabic script and, thereby, the qurʾānic text.³¹ Yet

28. Hamdan, “Second Maṣāḥif Project,” 809; Abbott, *Rise of the North Arabic Script*, 38–41; Régis Blachère, *Introduction au Coran*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Besson & Chantemerle, 1959), 75–82, 89–90; Rezvan, “Orthography”; Sinai, “When Did the Consonantal Skeleton,” 279, 283–284.

29. Versions of the narrative about Abū ʾl-Aswad’s introduction of vowels appear in Abū ʾl-Faraj ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥafḥānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ed. Ḥsān ʿAbbās, Ibrāhīm al-Saʿāfin, and Bakr ʿAbbās (25 vols.; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1423/2002), 12.216; al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 3–4; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (ed. Sayyid), 1.104–105; Abū al-Qāsim ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Saʿīd ʿUmar b. Gharāmah al-ʿAmrawī (80 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Fikr: 1995–2001), 25.189; al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, 4.83; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, 5.278; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʾshā*, 3.160; Abū Saʿīd al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Sūrāfi, *Akhbār al-naḥwīyyīn al-Baṣriyyīn*, ed. Ṭāhā Muḥammad al-Zaynī and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim Khafājī (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awladuhu, 1374/1955), 12. He is called “the first to dot [Qurʾān] manuscripts” in Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Awāʾil*, 371–372; Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Andalusī al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwīyyīn waʾl-lughawīyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Abū ʾl-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1973), 21; al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, 4.83; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʾshā*, 3.160–161; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1.50; Ibn ʿAtīyah, *Muḥarrar*, 27.

30. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ʾulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūt (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah Nāshirūn, 1429/2008), 754. See Semaan, *Linguistics*, 19.

31. Alan Jones, “The Dotting of a Script and the Dating of an Era: The Strange Neglect of PERF 558,” *IC* 72 (1998): 95–103, 99–100, noting Phillip K. Hitti’s citation of this story. For other examples, see Arthur Jeffery, *The Qurʾān as Scripture* (New York: R.F. Moore Co., 1952), 98–99; Frederick M. Denny, “Exegesis and Recitation: Their Development as Classical Forms of Qurʾānic Piety,” in Frank E. Reynolds and Theodore M. Ludwig (eds.), *Transitions and Transformation in the History of Religions: Essays in Honor of Joseph M. Kitagawa* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 91–123, 114; Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 206–208; Esack, *Qurʾān*, 111; Claude Gilliot, “Creation of a Fixed Text,” in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion*

skepticism is called for when analyzing the historicity of these stories, which betray their authors' interests in creating entertaining and morally edifying stories to explain ancient history.³² Notice, for example, that Ḥamzah al-Isfahānī's narrative of al-Ḥajjāj's introduction of *ijām* and *naqt* to the Qur'ān emphasizes the importance of the oral transmission of the Qur'ān, even when given the aid of the written text. This focus on the importance (and indeed preeminence) of oral transmission is even more strongly emphasized in the version of the report found in later texts, in which the scribes are unable to accurately transmit the text of the Qur'ān "except by taking [it] from the mouths of men" (*illā 'alā 'l-akhdh min afwāh al-rijāl*).³³ In this story purportedly about the improvement of the Arabic script, the heroes of the story are ultimately the oral transmitters, who can preserve the Qur'ān when the written text fails.³⁴

Wariness is similarly warranted regarding the traditions that name the first individuals to use diacritics: such reports of "firsts" (*awā'il*) are a formulaic topos in several genres of early Islamic texts and often convey tendentious and legendary information.³⁵ For example, it has been suggested that the story of

to the Qur'ān (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 41–57, 48; Alexander Knysh, "Multiple Areas of Influence," in McAuliffe (ed.), *Cambridge Companion*, 211–233, 212; Jan Retsö, "Arabs and Arabic in the Age of the Prophet," in Neuwirth et al. (eds.), *Qur'ān in Context*, 281–292, 283; Nora K. Schmid, "Quantitative Text Analysis and Its Application to the Qur'an: Some Preliminary Considerations," in Neuwirth et al. (eds.), *Qur'ān in Context*, 441–460, 442. More circumspect analyses of these narratives appear in Donner, "Qur'ān in Recent Scholarship," 35–36; David S. Powers, *Muhammad Is Not the Father of Any of Your Men: The Making of the Last Prophet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 160; W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 47–48; Alford T. Welch, Rudi Paret, and J. D. Pearson, "al-Ḳur'ān," in *EF*², s.v. (1986). For Arabic-language scholarship on this question, see Ghabban and Hoyland, "Inscription of Zuhayr," 219–220.

32. Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11–13 and *passim*.

33. Abū Aḥmad al-'Askarī, *Sharḥ mā yaqa'*, 13; al-Ṣafadī, *Taṣḥīḥ al-taṣḥīf*, 13–14; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 2.32; MacGuckin de Slane, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1.359–360.

34. Gregor Schoeler suggests that these stories of al-Ḥajjāj might be read within the context of "a whole genre of traditions according to which caliphs (or, in the provinces, governors ...) charged scholars with writing down knowledge which previously had only been transmitted 'orally' in scholarly circles": *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl, ed. James E. Montgomery (New York: Routledge, 2006), 81.

35. Albrecht Noth and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source Critical Study*, trans. Michael Bonner, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 104–108; Franz Rosenthal, "Awā'il," in *EF*², s.v. Notably, 'Amir b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha'fī

the three Iraqi Arabs' invention of Arabic script and diacritics is an etiological myth, with attention drawn to the euphony and potentially symbolic meanings of the Arabs' names.³⁶ Alain George notes of these stories, "the variability of the tradition brings to mind an oral tradition," with slightly different versions of the names appearing in different texts and manuscripts.³⁷ Thus, while some kernel of historical information may lay behind this presentation of Iraqi Arabs playing a role in the early development of the Arabic script, the story of the three men simultaneously developing the Arabic script and its diacritics is likely not accurate.³⁸

Caution is also due with the *awā'īl* reports about Abū 'l-Aswad al-Du'alī and his purported students Naṣr b. 'Aṣim and Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar.³⁹ Rafael Talmon has demonstrated that the traditions about these individuals' involvement in the origins of Arabic grammar "proves to be a largely fictitious body of reports invented by historians in the third (probably even late second) Islamic century" that were meant to "establish the primacy of the Basran school of grammar over any other school."⁴⁰ This third/ninth-century historiographical effort is likely related also to the reports ascribing the creation of consonantal diacritics and vowel markers to a representative of the Baṣran school, whether

(d. circa 103–110/721–728), transmitter of a "disproportionately large number of reports of the *awā'īl* genre," appears as the narrator of several of the reports about the role of the Arabs of al-Anbār in the invention of Arabic writing: G. H. A. Juynboll, "al-Sha'bī," in *EI*², s.v. (1997).

36. Claude Gilliot, "Une reconstruction critique du Coran ou comment en finir avec les merveilles de la lampe d'Aladin?" in Manfred S. Kropp (ed.), *Results of Contemporary Research on the Qur'ān: The Question of a Historio-Critical Text of the Qur'ān* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), 33–137, 73–74; Abbott, *Rise of the North Arabic Script*, 6 n. 36.

37. George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 26, 166 n. 27. See note 18 above.

38. On the possible role of Near Eastern Christians in the emergence of the Arabic script, see Robert G. Hoyland, "Epigraphy and the Linguistic Background to the Qur'ān," in Reynolds (ed.), *Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, 51–69, 59–60; George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 26–27.

39. For 'Aṣim and Yaḥyā as Abū 'l-Aswad's students, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (ed. Sayyid), 1.108; al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 6; al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 28; al-Sīrāfī, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, 17; al-Dhahabī, *Ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, 1.41. Talmon expresses skepticism about these reports: Talmon, "Schacht's Theory in the Light of Recent Discoveries Concerning and the Origins of Arabic Grammar," *SIs* 65 (1987): 31–50, 43–44; Talmon, "Review of *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Ḥadīth* by G. H. A. Juynboll," *JSAI* 11 (1988): 248–257, 256.

40. Talmon, "Review of *Muslim Tradition*," 253, 256; Talmon, "Schacht's Theory," 40–46. For Abū 'l-Aswad as the first grammarian, see Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 434; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (ed. Sayyid), 1.103, 106, 107; al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 21; al-Sīrāfī, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, 10, 13. For Naṣr b. 'Aṣim as the first, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (ed. Sayyid), 1.103; al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 27; al-Sīrāfī, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, 10, 15.

Abū 'l-Aswad, Naṣr, or Yaḥyā.⁴¹ Indeed, the assertion of these individuals' roles in the invention or introduction of diacritics seems to be a relatively late development. In Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahānī's text, for example, the innovative scribes who added diacritics go unnamed: only later texts add the aside that "it is said that Naṣr b. 'Āṣim undertook this," suggesting that his involvement was a secondary development of this story. On the other hand, early biographical compendia—such as those of Muḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/845), Khalifah b. Khayyāt (d. 240/854), and Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870)—make no mention of diacritics in their entries for Abū 'l-Aswad, Naṣr b. 'Āṣim, or Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar, though admittedly these texts focus on *ḥadīth* transmission rather than the history of Arabic grammar or orthography.⁴² While these were no doubt significant figures in the field of Arabic grammar (and this is likely why the development of diacritics was ascribed to them), their being the "first(s)" to use diacritics and/or vowel markers appears dubious.⁴³

Indeed, when read against the material record of Arabic writing from the first/seventh century, these narratives about the origins of diacritics appear largely inaccurate. As noted above, the dotted Arabic papyri and inscriptions from as early as 22/643 demonstrate that diacritics were used in Arabic writing fifty years before al-Ḥajjāj's governorship, and thus could not have been introduced in the late first/seventh century. These early documents displaying diacritical marks indicate that they "must have been available to the earliest scribes of the Qur'ān (whether they were used or not)" and that "the most that al-Ḥajjāj could have insisted upon was the revival and regular

41. Rafael Talmon, "Who Was the First Arab Grammarian? A New Approach to an Old Problem," *ZAL* 15 (1985): 128–145, 134–135.

42. For Abū 'l-Aswad: Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9.98; Abū 'Amr Khalifah b. Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umarī (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-'Ānī, 1387/1967), 191, 206; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt*, ed. Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umarī, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 1405/1985), 200, 202; Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh al-kabīr* (4 vols. in 8; Hyderabad Deccan: Maṭba'at Jam'iyyat Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmāniyyah, 1360–1384/1941–1964), 6.334 (no. 2564). For Naṣr b. 'Āṣim: Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9.77; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ṭabaqāt*, 204, 206; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, 303; al-Bukhārī, *Ta'rikh*, 8.101 (no. 2333). For Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar: Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9.372; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ṭabaqāt*, 203, 322; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, 303; al-Bukhārī, *Ta'rikh*, 8.311–12 (no. 3140).

43. For possible evidence of a Ḥijāzī system of diacritical markers, equally or more ancient to that ascribed to the Iraqis, see al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 7–9, 18–19; Shah, "Exploring the Genesis," 13; Yasin Dutton, "Red Dots, Green Dots, Yellow Dots and Blue: Some Reflections on the Vocalisation of Early Qur'anic Manuscripts—Part I," *JQS* 1.1 (1999): 115–140, 117–118. This would correspond well with Talmon's evidence for the study of Arabic grammar in the second/eighth-century Ḥijāz: Rafael Talmon, "An Eighth-Century Grammatical School in Medina: The Collection and Evaluation of the Available Material," *BSOAS* 48 (1984): 224–236.

use of earlier features already available within the Arabic script.⁴⁴ However, there is no clear evidence in extant Qurʾān manuscripts of a change in the usage of diacritics associated with the period of al-Ḥajjāj's rule as governor and, more specifically, no evidence of the imposition of the kind of fully dotted *scriptio plena* that the historical sources suggest was al-Ḥajjāj's intended goal.⁴⁵ There is some manuscript evidence for the introduction of vowel markers into the Qurʾān in this period, but this development is not associated with the introduction of diacritics as our literary sources suggest.⁴⁶ While 'Abd al-Malik and/or al-Ḥajjāj do appear to have played a role in the evolution of the Qurʾānic text, the initial introduction of diacritics into the text was not part of this process and it is unclear what development in the usage of diacritics took place at their instigation.⁴⁷

Drawing upon inscriptions, papyri, and manuscripts, modern scholars of the Arabic script are divided on when diacritics for distinguishing homographic consonants did begin to be used. Citing the lack of diacritical markings in the few pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions in Arabic script and the sudden appearance of several dotted Arabic documentary texts with the advent of Islam, Christian Robin and Robert Hoyland suggest that the introduction of the markings may have come about during the early Medinese caliphate as part of a larger reform of the Arabic script.⁴⁸ By contrast, Omar Al-Ghul has recently published a single-word inscription on wood in Arabic script bearing diacritics, discovered alongside late sixth- and early seventh-century Greek papyri at Petra.⁴⁹ If authentically ancient, the text would provide direct

44. Jones, "Dotting of a Script," 100.

45. Keith Small, *Textual Criticism and Qurʾān Manuscripts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 165; Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, 138; Welch et al., "al-Ḳurʾān."

46. Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, 99; George, "Coloured Dots," 4–7.

47. For differing interpretations of the evidence about 'Abd al-Malik's and al-Ḥajjāj's interventions into the Qurʾānic text, see Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, 139; George, "Coloured Dots," 7; Hamdan, "Second *Maṣāḥif* Project"; Alfred-Louis de Prémare, "'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and the Process of the Qurʾān's Composition," in Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-R. Puin (eds.), *The Hidden Origins of Islam: New Research into Its Early History* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2010), 189–221; Chase F. Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik* (Oneworld: Cambridge, 2005), 100–104; Powers, *Muḥammad Is Not the Father*, 160–161.

48. Christian Julien Robin, "La réforme de l'écriture arabe à l'époque du califat médienois," *MUSJ* 59 (2006): 319–364, 344–345, 351; Robert G. Hoyland, "New Documentary Texts and the Early Islamic State," *BSOAS* 69 (2006): 395–416, 403; Ghabban and Hoyland, "Inscription of Zuhayr," 234.

49. Omar Al-Ghul, "An Early Arabic Inscription from Petra Carrying Diacritic Marks," *Syria* 81 (2004): 105–118.

evidence of pre-Islamic usage of diacritics in Arabic: however, some scholars have suggested a modern provenance for the text.⁵⁰

Several scholars place the origin of Arabic diacritics in the context of the gradual evolution of the Nabataean Aramaic script into the Arabic script in the centuries before the emergence of Islam. John Healey and M. C. A. Macdonald, among others, argue that scribes writing quotidian Arabic texts in the Nabataean script (such as bills and receipts) on papyrus and other perishable materials developed “a cursive script which led directly into the formation of the early Arabic script.”⁵¹ As they developed this cursive Nabataean/proto-Arabic script, scribes likely used diacritics to discriminate between similarly shaped letters as they “introduced modifications to make their task easier and to eradicate ambiguities.”⁵² Notably, inscriptions in a “transitional” script between Nabataean and Arabic do display diacritics for distinguishing homographs, though not always on the same letter forms as they would appear in the Arabic tradition.⁵³

50. Ernst Axel Knauf, “Arabo-Aramaic and ‘Arabiyya: From Ancient Arabic to Early Standard Arabic, 200 CE–600 CE,” in Neuwirth et al. (eds.), *Qur’ān in Context*, 197–254, 244 n. 146; M. C. A. Macdonald, “Old Arabic (Epigraphic),” in Kees Versteegh (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics. Volume 3* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 464–477, 467.

51. John Healey, “Nabataean to Arabic: Calligraphy and Script Development among the Pre-Islamic Arabs,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 5 (1990–1991): 41–52, 44; M. C. A. Macdonald, “Ancient Arabia and the Written Word,” in Macdonald (ed.), *Development of Arabic*, 5–28, 21; Macdonald, “ARNA Nab 17 and the Transition from the Nabataean to the Arabic Script,” in Werner Arnold, Michael Jursa, Walter W. Müller, and Stephan Procházka (eds.), *Philologisches und Historisches zwischen Anatolien und Sokotra: Analecta Semitica In Memoriam Alexander Sima* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 207–240, 217, 229. On the development of Arabic script from Nabataean, see further: Gruendler, “Arabic Script”; Gruendler, *Development of the Arabic Scripts*, 123–130. For Nabataean texts on papyrus and other soft materials, see John Healey, “A Nabataean Papyrus Fragment (Bodleian MS Heb. D. 89),” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 146 (2004): 183–188, citing further publications.

52. Robert G. Hoyland, “Epigraphy and the Emergence of Arab Identity,” in Petra M. Sijpesteijn, Lennart Sundelin, Sofia Torallas Tovar, and Amalia Zomeño (eds.), *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 219–242, 236; Hoyland, “Epigraphy and the Linguistic Background,” 57; John Healey, “The Nabataean Contribution to the Development of the Arabic Script,” *Aram* 2 (1990): 93–98, 96–97; Healey, “Nabataean to Arabic,” 45. Other writers advocating a pre-Islamic development of diacritics within the Arabic script include: Abbott, *Rise of the North Arabic Script*, 38; Gruendler, *Development of the Arabic Scripts*, 125; Jones, “Orality and Writing in Arabia.”

53. Healey, “Nabataean to Arabic,” 45; Laïla Nehmé, “A Glimpse of the Development of the Nabataean Script into Arabic Based on Old and New Epigraphic Material,” in Macdonald (ed.), *Development of Arabic*, 47–88; Hoyland, “Epigraphy and

The importance of diacritics for the Arabic script has led to several narratives and traditions about their origins, tying diacritics not only to the emergence of the script itself, but also to the careful recording of the Qurʾānic text. The material record of Arabic writing throws both of these accounts into question: papyrological and inscriptional evidence indicates that Arabic consonantal diacritics likely emerged not at the end of the first/seventh century, but earlier in that century, if not sometime during the pre-Islamic period. However, rather than the product of one famous individual's genius, Arabic diacritics likely emerged over time out of the collective effort of numerous, now anonymous scribes. These scribes likely developed and utilized diacritics when writing Arabic documents—such as tax receipts and letters—in order to make their work easier, rather than in order to record the Qurʾān more accurately. Such a scribal milieu, I will argue below, is reflected also in the diacritics that appear in the early manuscripts of the Qurʾān.

A Special Case? Diacritics in the Ḥijāzī-Script Qurʾān Manuscripts

There is strong evidence that diacritics were used in Arabic papyri and inscriptions by the 20s/640s and, possibly, even earlier. But was the Qurʾān written with diacritics at such an early date? Influenced by the narratives of al-Ḥajjāj's first imposing diacritics upon the Qurʾān only in the late first/seventh century, scholars have argued that early scribes must have written the Qurʾān differently than they did other Arabic texts, omitting diacritics where they might have used them when writing non-scriptural texts. In fact, the usages

the Emergence of Arab Identity," 236 n. 42; Hoyland, "Epigraphy and the Linguistic Background," 60–63; Uzi Avner, Laïla Nehmé, and Christian Robin, "A Rock Inscription Mentioning Tha'laba, an Arab King from Ghassān," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 24 (2013): 237–256, 238–239; al-Shdaifat et al., "Early Christian Arabic," 316; Al-Jallad, "Moge God," 191–195. Alternatively, some scholars have suggested that diacritics were borrowed from Syriac script, rather than developed within the transitional Nabataean/Arabic script: Abbott, *Rise of the North Arabic Script*, 2, 19, 38; George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 27, 51; Gacek, "Copying and Handling," 238; E. J. Revell, "The Diacritical Dots and the Development of the Arabic Alphabet," *JSS* 20 (1975): 178–190. Healey offers a compromise view, writing that "we may suspect that the concept of diacritics came to the Arabs with the Nabataean script, even if the later orderly usage of them developed under Syriac influence (in the eighth century A.D.):" Healey, "Nabataean Contribution," 97; Healey, "Nabataean to Arabic," 45. On Syriac diacritics, see F. Stanley Jones, "Early Syriac Pointing in and behind British Museum Additional Manuscript 12, 150," in René Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum VII: Uppsala University, Department of Asian and African Languages 11–14 August 1996* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1998), 429–444; George Anton Kiraz, *The Syriac Dot: A Short History* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2015).

of diacritics in these different kinds of first/seventh-century Arabic texts do not appear to be as distinctly different as has been assumed, suggesting that comparison between these bodies of text could be fruitful.

Attempting to reconcile the narratives of a late introduction of diacritics into the Qur'ān with the existence of early dotted papyri, Jones suggests that it is “possible ... that less cursive styles than that exhibited in [papyrus documents] were used for the writing of the Qur'ān, and that dotting did not feature in these.”⁵⁴ He elaborates elsewhere that there was possibly a “two-track evolution of Arabic script in the seventh century CE: Kūfic basically as a form of *aide-mémoire* to go with the oral [qur'ānic] text, while a more cursive form, which used dots at the whim of the writer, was employed for more practical documents.”⁵⁵ Robert Hoyland similarly indicates that “the Qur'an was treated as a special case, distinct from documents and inscriptions” in regards to certain orthographic devices such as diacritics.⁵⁶ According to these writers, scribes wrote the Qur'ān differently from how they wrote other Arabic texts in the first/seventh century: either in different scripts (according to Jones), or in the same/similar script but with different usage of diacritics (according to Hoyland).

Neither of these suggestions accords well with the material record of Arabic writing from the first/seventh century. Jones' proposed “two-track evolution of Arabic script,” for example, relies upon the assumption that “the development of the Kūfic form of Arabic script—without any diacritical dots—was a concomitant of the Qur'ān's being committed to writing.”⁵⁷ In fact, the development of the so-called “Kufic” scripts was not contemporary with the earliest written Qur'ān manuscripts, but instead the Kufic script styles were developed during the late first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries: it is only in this period that the “concept of specifically qur'ānic scripts,” distinct from non-qur'ānic scripts, emerged.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the Hijāzī-script Qur'ān manuscripts, produced earlier in the first/seventh century than were the Kufic manuscripts, are written in an Arabic script very

54. Jones, “Dotting of a Script,” 100.

55. Jones, “Orality and Writing”; Jones, “Word Made Visible,” 16.

56. Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 234–235.

57. Jones, “Orality and Writing”; Jones, “Word Made Visible,” 16.

58. By “Kufic,” I refer here to the scripts more recently labelled “early ‘Abbāsīd scripts” by François Déroche and classified by him into six groups (labelled A–F) on the basis of distinct orthographic features: Déroche, “Manuscripts of the Qur'ān,” *EQ*, s.v. (2003); Déroche, *Abbasid Tradition*, 34–47; George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 55–93; Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 97–98, 138; Daniella Talmon-Heller, “Scriptures as Holy Objects: Preliminary Comparative Remarks on the Qur'ān and the Torah in the Medieval Middle East,” *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 4 (2016): 210–244, 218–220.

similar to that used to write other Arabic texts of this period and appear to predate the emergence of scripts specifically used to write the Qurʾān.⁵⁹

Like the script used, the deployment of diacritics does not appear to have been clearly different in qurʾānic and non-qurʾānic texts in the first/seventh century. As Jones suggests, a tradition of not including consonantal diacritical marks in qurʾānic manuscripts did in fact emerge in the Kufic writing tradition, evidenced in some early Kufic-script Qurʾāns that completely lack diacritics.⁶⁰ However, all of the extant Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾāns display consonantal diacritics in the form of either dots or short dashes, similar to those found in contemporary papyri and inscriptions.⁶¹ It would appear, therefore, that the

59. The history of scholarship on this issue is discussed in Déroche, “New Evidence,” 622–627; Déroche, *Abbasid Tradition*, 27. See further: Adolf Grohmann, “The Problem of Dating Early Qurʾāns,” *Der Islam* 33 (1958): 213–231; Nabia Abbott, *The Kūrah Papyri from Aphrodito in the Oriental Institute* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), 33–39; Déroche, “New Evidence,” 614–615, 622–627; Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, 62; Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Papyri: Selected Material from the Khalili Collection* (London: The Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1992), 27–39; Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 223–225. There is no indication in first/seventh-century Arabic sources (or in later sources describing this period) to indicate that the script that was used to transcribe the Qurʾān was distinct from that used for writing other texts: François Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l’islam: Le codex Parisino-petropolitanus* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 115–116; Déroche, *Le livre manuscrit arabe: Préludes à une histoire* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2004), 18.

60. Small writes: “The earliest Qurʾān manuscripts in Kufic script were either completely without consonantal diacritics, or contained some sporadically applied consonantal diacritical marks.” Keith Small, “Textual Variants in the New Testament and Qurʾānic Manuscript Traditions,” in Markus Groß and Karl-Heinz Ohlig (eds.), *Schlaglichter: Die beiden ersten islamischen Jahrhunderte* (Berlin: Hans Schiler, 2008), 572–593, 579. He notes that this tendency conforms with the “later Kufic texts (eighth–ninth/second–third century) that are more sparingly pointed than the earliest Ḥijāzī texts.” Small, *Textual Criticism*, 71. Cf. Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 234 n. 35. This development was likely related to the split between qurʾānic and non-qurʾānic Arabic scripts and/or debates about the acceptability of the inclusion of reading aids in the Qurʾān itself that emerged in the second/eighth century. Reports in *ḥadīth* sources describe second/eighth-century traditionists favoring the removal of diacritics from the Qurʾān. On these accounts, see Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 234; Munther Younes, “Charging Steeds or Maidens Doing Good Deeds? A Re-Interpretation of Qurʾān 100 (*al-ʿādiyāt*),” *Arabica* 55 (2008): 362–386, 384–385; Travis Zadeh, “Touching and Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qurʾān,” *JAOIS* 129 (2009): 443–466, 457–461.

61. George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 194 n. 59. Notably, even the *scriptio inferior* of a qurʾānic palimpsest in Ḥijāzī script displays some consonantal diacritics: Sadeghi and Bergmann, “Codex of a Companion,” 358; Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, “Ṣanʿā 1 and the Origins of the Qurʾān,” *Der Islam* 87 (2012): 1–129, 27;

inclusion of (minimal) diacritics in the writing of the Qur'ān was an early phenomenon, and it was only later (likely the second/eighth century) that diacritics were at times purposefully excluded from the writing of the Qur'ān.

Perhaps the difference in the writing of qur'ānic and non-qur'ānic texts was not in the scripts used—or even in the presence of diacritics—but rather in the ways that diacritics were deployed therein. Might scribes have used diacritics differently in different kinds of texts, treating the Qur'ān as a “special case” as Hoyland suggests? Indeed, attempts to explain the diacritical marks present in early Qur'ān manuscripts have tended to assume that scribes copying the Qur'ān followed certain writing conventions that were determined by needs or anxieties spurred by the text's unique scriptural status. Most prominent among these is the suggestion that scribes largely avoided writing diacritics in Qur'ān manuscripts in order to allow different recitation traditions to coexist in the same manuscript. Déroche, for example, suggests that the early Qur'āns are “open: with deliberately few diacritical marks and no vowels, they could satisfy a wider spectrum of readers.”⁶² Dutton similarly proposes that the limited presence of diacritics may have been an intentional move “to make conscious allowance for known, different readings of the text.”⁶³

These suggestions rely upon the assumption that scribes of the first/seventh century were familiar with—and sought to preserve textually—multiple qur'ānic reading/recitation traditions. In this respect, Déroche and Dutton echo the assertions within Islamic texts that precisely such knowledge of, and care for, multiple recitation traditions extended all the way back to the period of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁶⁴ According to the traditionist Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148), the Prophet's Companions produced qur'ānic manuscripts

in the way that they used to write it for the Messenger of God ... without dots (*naql*) or vocalization (*dabt*). They transcribed it this way so that the people

Elisabeth Puin, “Ein früher Koranpalimpsest aus Ṣan'ā',” in Groß and Ohlig (ed.), *Schlaglichter*, 461–493, 467; Hilali, *Sanaa Palimpsest*, 23.

62. François Déroche, “Studying the Manuscripts of the Qur'ān, Past and Future,” *MUSJ* 59 (2006): 163–181, 170.

63. Yasin Dutton, “Some Notes on the British Library's ‘Oldest Qur'ān Manuscript’ (Or. 2165),” *JQS* 6.1 (2004): 43–71, 48. Alternatively, Dutton suggests that the possibility of different readings enabled by the undotted Arabic script, and the manuscript producers' ignorance of which reading was actually “correct,” may have forced these producers to leave certain consonants unpointed.

64. On these traditions, see Shady Hekmat Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qur'ān: The Problem of Tawātur and the Emergence of Shawādhdh* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 5–10.

could easily preserve what is in the *muṣḥaf* in their recitation, while still allowing for difference in vocalization.⁶⁵

The qurʾānic scholar Abū ʿl-Khayr Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429) similarly writes that the Qurʾān manuscripts sent out by the caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān had been stripped of diacritics and vowels (*jurridat ... min al-naqṭ waʿl-shakl*) in order to allow for such variation.⁶⁶ These writers thus place within the lifetimes of the Prophet and his Companions an effort to maintain scriptural continuity simultaneously with a limited amount of variability, and suggest that the earliest Qurʾān manuscripts intentionally embodied this delimited combination of uniformity and difference.

While knowledge of variants certainly did affect the production of Qurʾān manuscripts in later centuries, it is questionable if scribes in the first/seventh century were influenced by such notions of multiple readings.⁶⁷ Variant readings appear to have emerged—in some cases at least—from regional differences in recitation, variants in the text of individual manuscripts, and indeed the ambiguity of the early Arabic script, throwing into question the possibility that individual scribes of the early period would know (and attempt to allow for) multiple authoritative readings within the manuscripts that they produced.⁶⁸ Furthermore, it is questionable whether scribes in the earliest period of the Qurʾān’s textual transmission would have consciously desired to preserve multiple qurʾānic readings, since “the idea of a discrete number of

65. Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Naṣṣ al-kāmil li-kitāb al-ʿawāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, ed. ʿAmmār Ṭālibī (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 1997), 358; Nasser, *Transmission of the Variant Readings*, 104–105; Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 221.

66. Abū ʿl-Khayr Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Jazarī, *al-Naṣḥ fi ʿl-qirāʾat al-ʿaṣr*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Ḍabbāʿ (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, n.d.), 1.7–8, 33. Similarly: al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 3.161. These passages are translated in Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 221. See also Shah, “Exploring the Genesis,” 4–5.

67. In some Kufic manuscripts, differently colored dots and dashes are used to mark vocal and consonantal variants. See Dutton, “Red Dots (I)”; Dutton, “Red Dots, Green Dots, Yellow Dots and Blue: Some Reflections on the Vocalisation of Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts—Part II,” *JQS* 2.1 (2000): 1–24; al-Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 19–20. Colored inks were also used to mark variants in other ways, such as a green line striking through a letter “to indicate its *absence* in the variant reading.” See Mark Muehlhaeusler, “Additional Reading Marks in Kufic Manuscripts,” *JIS* 27 (2016): 1–16.

68. Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, 69–70, 138; Frederik Leemhuis, “Readings of the Qurʾān,” *EQ* s.v. (2004); Michael Cook, “The Stemma of the Regional Codices of the Koran,” *Graeco-Arabica* 9–10 (2004): 89–104; Small, *Textual Criticism*, 124; Stewart, “Notes on Medieval,” 229; Talmon-Heller, “Scriptures as Holy Objects,” 216–217.

different yet equally canonical *qirā'āt* did not develop before the fourth/tenth century."⁶⁹ It is unclear how widespread this doctrine was before then and how exactly it affected manuscript production.⁷⁰

To use these ideas about *qirā'āt* in explaining the diacritics in early manuscripts risks confusing later “religious doctrine” with “textual criticism.”⁷¹ As Hoyland suggests, the narratives about early manuscripts intentionally devoid of diacritics and vowels are likely “pious fiction to ground the variant readings of the Qur'an in the practice of the Companions themselves.”⁷² Moreover, neither these Islamic narratives nor Déroche's and Dutton's suggestions address the *presence* of diacritics within the early Qur'an manuscripts, but instead attempt to explain the general *absence* of such marks in the text. Focusing on what is present rather than what is absent, we might ask: Why are certain consonants in the *rasm* of the Ḥijāzī-script Qur'ans marked when the general tendency is to leave consonants unmarked? What might have led the copyists to include the limited diacritics that do appear in these manuscripts?

69. Gabriel Said Reynolds, “Introduction: Qur'anic Studies and Its Controversies,” in Reynolds (ed.), *Qur'an in Its Historical Context*, 1–25, 2. See further Christopher Melchert, “Ibn Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qur'anic Readings,” *SI* 91 (2000): 5–22; Melchert, “The Relation of the Ten Readings to One Another,” *JQS* 10.2 (2008): 73–87; Intisar A. Rabb, “Non-Canonical Readings of the Qur'an: Recognition and Authenticity (The Ḥimṣī Reading),” *JQS* 8.2 (2006): 84–127, 100–107.

70. At least in part, the idea of multiple acceptable readings of the Qur'an was predicated on the authority of the Prophetic *ḥadīth* stating that the Qur'an was revealed in “seven *aḥruf*” (*al-aḥruf al-sab'ah*). While many Muslim authors would come to contest any equivalence between the seven *aḥruf* and the “Seven Readings” that were canonized by Abū Bakr Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936), the two conceptions seem to have been conflated in the early period, as Fred Leemhuis points out: “it is clear that in the second/eighth century *ḥarf* was taken to mean the same thing as *qirā'ah* in the narrow sense of ‘variant reading.’” On these issues, see Nasser, *Transmission of the Variant Readings*, 7–29, 98–99; Yasin Dutton, “Orality, Literacy and the ‘Seven *Aḥruf* *Ḥadīth*,’” *JIS* 23 (2012): 1–49, 34–42; Leemhuis, “Readings of the Qur'an”; *GdQ*, 1.50–55.

71. Reynolds, “Introduction,” 3. Asma Hilali's recent comment on the study of early Qur'an manuscripts is instructive: “I suggest that when considering early sources, we should focus strictly on the paleographic and philological features of the manuscript and resist overlaying it with later theological considerations.” See Hilali, “Was the Ṣan'ā' Qur'an Palimpsest a Work in Progress?” in David Hollenberg, Christoph Rauch, and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 12–27, 13, 18.

72. Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 234. Similarly: Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, 138.

In an article on the Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾān British Library Or. 2165, Dutton offers one explanation for the presence of diacritics: the recording of particular readings (i.e., *qirāʾāt*) of the Qurʾān. Dutton writes that, within this manuscript, “there are at least twelve instances where the marking of a specific consonant seems to indicate a specific choice between possible readings” and that these readings accord with those of the Syrian Qurʾān reciter ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir’s (d. 118/736) recitation of the Qurʾān.⁷³ While the marking of these letters necessarily “excludes” the possibility of other readings, Dutton notes that it is not clear whether or not it was the scribe’s (or the scribes’) conscious intention to preserve Ibn ‘Āmir’s reading/recitation tradition, and thereby to exclude other known readings, or if this was simply a result of the scribe’s (or scribes’) recording the reading tradition that he/they were familiar with or deemed correct.

Yet even if the scribe(s) of the British Library manuscript intended specifically to record Ibn ‘Āmir’s version, he/they do not appear to have frequently used diacritics for this purpose. In the manuscript, “consonants ... are relatively frequently differentiated by dashes,” but Dutton is able to identify only twelve instances in which these dashes appear to reflect a desire to transcribe the reading of Ibn ‘Āmir.⁷⁴ As Dutton notes, “there are many instances where consonants which might well be marked [to indicate the reading of Ibn ‘Āmir] ... have not been marked.”⁷⁵ An intention to record Ibn ‘Āmir’s text cannot, therefore, explain the majority of the diacritics found in the British Library manuscript and Dutton concludes that it is “not at this stage possible to ascertain why some consonants ... should have been marked with dashes and others not.”⁷⁶

British Library Or. 2165 is not unique in this regard: the diacritical marks in other Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾāns likewise appear generally irrelevant to the

73. Dutton, “Some Notes,” 45–46.

74. Dutton, “Some Notes,” 43. On the diacritics in BL Or. 2165, see further Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, 41–42; Rabb, “Non-Canonical Readings,” 91.

75. Dutton, “Some Notes,” 48.

76. Dutton, “Some Notes,” 48. In a study of another Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾān (BNF Arabe 328a), Dutton attributes these folios to Ibn ‘Āmir’s reading of the Qurʾān, as he does the British Library Or. 2165 manuscript. Dutton’s analysis is not pertinent to this study, as Dutton does not suggest that any usage of diacritics in BNF Arabe 328a indicates a desire to preserve a particular reading of the Qurʾān: he only highlights “consonantal variants” that indicate the presence of Ibn ‘Āmir’s reading, such as an additional “tooth” in a verbal *rasm*. See “An Early *Mushaf* According to the Reading of Ibn ‘Āmir,” *JQS* 3.1 (2001): 71–89. According to my reading of the relevant folios of BNF Arabe 328a, none of the variants noted by Dutton are marked with a diacritical mark in the manuscript’s *rasm*, even where such a mark would help to differentiate the reading.

marking of specific qur'ānic reading traditions and, indeed, largely irrelevant for making the *rasm* less textually ambiguous. Déroche writes of the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus (on which, see below) that “the use of diacritical marks remains negligible and considerably below what would have been necessary to avoid any ambiguity” since the diacritics occur in this manuscript “not primarily in places which could be ambiguous for the reader.”⁷⁷ Elisabeth Puin similarly writes that the usage of diacritics in the *scriptio superior* of the palimpsest manuscript Ṣan'ā' Dār al-Makhṭūṭāt 01-27.1 is not linked to whether or not the dotting “facilitates the readability of the text.”⁷⁸ If first/seventh-century scribes were producing Qur'āns with the goal of conveying specific qur'ānic reading traditions, their deployment of diacritics does not seem to reflect this plan very well.⁷⁹

How, then, are diacritics actually used in the first/seventh-century Qur'ān manuscripts? With regard to the seemingly inexplicable placement of the few diacritics in extant Qur'ān manuscripts, Déroche has stated: “To characterize the use of diacriticals as random would perhaps be excessive, but it was clearly ... a matter of personal choice on the part of the copyists.”⁸⁰ Déroche thus suggests that the “individual taste” of scribes explains the placement of diacritics, noting that different scribes seem to deploy diacritics more often than others, or to prefer dotting specific letters rather than others. By contrast, Keith Small makes a more concrete, if provisional, suggestion regarding the appearance of diacritics in early Qur'ān manuscripts: “Some of this placement [of diacritical marks] seems to reflect early orthographic

77. Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117; Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 118; Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, 20, 22, 26. Déroche does write that “one cannot say that the copyists systematically avoided putting marks on possibly disputed graphemes in order to leave open the reading of the text,” noting a few instances of marked consonants that indicate that “the copyists did sometimes take sides.” Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117.

78. Puin, “Ein früherer Koranpalimpsest,” 467.

79. For Déroche's evaluation of the diacritics in the Hījāzī corpus as a whole, see Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, 72, 135–137. Examining folios from an early Kufic-script Qur'ān that displays partial diacritical pointing, Dutton finds that “the pointing seems to be almost random, or at least not internally consistent.” Dutton, “Umayyad Fragment,” 73–74. Instead of placing this manuscript in the Umayyad period, as Dutton does, Déroche dates it to the early 'Abbāsīd period: Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, 128.

80. Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117; Déroche, “New Evidence,” 627; Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 44, 173. Small likewise finds “a discernable attitude of limited freedom in the placement of diacritical marks,” noting that the appearance of multiple systems for differentiating *fā'* and *qāf* “highlights the degree of flexibility of diacritical mark systems being used in the Qur'ān manuscripts at this time”: Small, *Textual Criticism*, 70–72, 138–139.

conventions that are not necessarily there to make the text easier to read.”⁸¹ Small suggests that, in at least some cases, the diacritics in these manuscripts are not present for the purpose of improving the phonetic legibility of the text, as has generally been assumed: instead, the diacritics reflect some kind of “orthographic conventions” in early Arabic writing.

What orthographic conventions might these be? As we will see below, it is here that a comparison with the diacritics present in early Arabic documentary material is most illuminating. The dotting present in the early Arabic papyri and other documentary texts has long confounded Arabists, including Grohmann, who writes (as noted above) that in the early Arabic papyri “it very often occurs that diacritical dots are added to words which can hardly be misunderstood at all, and are lacking, where they should be bitterly needed.” Grohmann’s words could well be used to describe the diacritics in the Qur’ān manuscripts, which appear, as Déroche describes, “not primarily in places which could be ambiguous for the reader.” There is perhaps a connection, therefore, in the usage of diacritics in these different bodies of first/seventh-century Arabic texts. Rather than being a “special case,” the usages of diacritics in the early qur’ānic manuscripts appear to share much with the usages of diacritics in contemporaneous non-qur’ānic Arabic texts, for these materials display what appear to be comparable examples of “early orthographic conventions” in Arabic writing.

Diacritics in Arabic Documents and Qur’ān Manuscripts: A Comparative Approach

In a recent article, Andreas Kaplony addresses the diacritical conundrum described by Grohmann and attempts to explain the inscrutable appearances of diacritics in early Arabic papyri and inscriptions. Within these texts, Kaplony argues, diacritical points do not appear “at random,” and he identifies “two purposes” to explain the diacritics that do appear.⁸² According to Kaplony, diacritics are placed on (1) letters in verbs in order “to mark affixes [i.e., prefixes, suffixes, and infixes] and, thereby, certain *grammatical categories*”; and (2) radical letters in “a small choice of *individual words* ... mostly

81. Small, *Textual Criticism*, 138.

82. Andreas Kaplony, “What Are Those Few Dots For? Thoughts on the Orthography of the Qurra Papyri (709–710), the Khurasan Parchments (755–777) and the Inscription of the Jerusalem Dome of the Rock (692),” *Arabica* 55 (2008): 91–112, 95. See the evaluations of Kaplony’s results in Ghabban and Hoyland, “Inscription of Zuhayr,” 233; George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 167 n. 41; Eva Mira Grob, *Documentary Arabic Private and Business Letters on Papyrus: Form and Function, Content and Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 203.

prepositions and a few frequently used verbs and nouns,” seemingly out of scribal habit, or to transliterate foreign words more clearly.⁸³

Regarding the words in this latter category—the “small choice of *individual words*” whose radical letters are found dotted with some regularity—Kaplony suggests that a “tradition of orthography” may explain their relatively frequent exhibition of dots, which likely made the words “easy to recognize.”⁸⁴ Such a tradition of orthography may also explain the dotted words that appear only once in Kaplony’s overall corpus of texts and “the more documents we find, the more likely it is that we can assign them to the group of words regularly carrying dots.”⁸⁵ Might the Ḥijāzī-script Qur’ān manuscripts display similar usages of diacritics and provide further proof of Kaplony’s proposed “tradition of orthography”? Might Kaplony’s “tradition of orthography” be related to the “orthographic conventions” that Small suggests for early qur’ānic manuscripts?

To try to answer these questions, I have collected and examined the instances in which diacritical dots are present within a sample of one Ḥijāzī-script Qur’ān: the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus, the name given by François Déroche to a fragmentary Ḥijāzī-script Qur’ān manuscript whose folios have been dispersed into several different collections. The folios that I examine here are from Bibliothèque nationale de France Arabe 328a.⁸⁶ These folios have long been acknowledged as providing a very early witness to the written qur’ānic text, and the codex as a whole is dated by Déroche to the third

83. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 100 (emphasis in original).

84. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 98.

85. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 98. It is important to note that, within the system/tradition of dotting described by Kaplony, dotting is not always used. Even those words that are most frequently dotted are not dotted in all cases, and in fact they are often not. Yet there is some consistency regarding those situations in which dots do occur: as Kaplony describes it, “obviously, most of the time dots are switched off, but if they are on, there is no doubt where to put them.” Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 97.

86. To examine this material, I relied upon the published facsimile of the manuscript: François Déroche and S. Noja Noseda (eds.), *Sources de la transmission manuscrite du texte coranique, I: Les manuscrits de style hiǧāzī*, vol. 1: *Le manuscrit arabe 328 (a) de la Bibliothèque nationale de France* (Lesa: Fondazione Ferni Noja Noseda, 1998). The manuscript can be viewed online at: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8415207g>. I also compared my findings with the transcription of the manuscript provided in Déroche’s *La transmission écrite*, in which Déroche includes only those diacritical dots that seem to be part of the original copying of the text. Although the subsequent hands that used this manuscript may have added or erased diacritical marks—and therefore this sample is imperfect in some respects—I attempt here to recover the diacritics included at the time of the manuscript’s original writing. See Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 158–159, introduction to Arabic text.

quarter of the first century AH (roughly 671–695 CE).⁸⁷ My sample covers the first ten extant folios (verso and recto) of the codex, which include portions of Qurʾān Sūrah 2, 3, and 4. According to Déroche, these folios include the work of two different copyists, whom he labels Hands A and D. Hand A is the principal copyist in the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus and his work makes up 68 percent of the extant codex: while A's handwriting is sometimes hesitant, it is overall consistent and displays expertise in the Arabic script.⁸⁸ Hand D wrote only folios 9v and 10r in the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus—roughly 1 percent of the extant codex—but his handwriting is sufficiently advanced for Déroche to conclude that his is one of two hands in the text (alongside Hand C) that are “certainly professional copyists.”⁸⁹

I compare the diacritics in these Qurʾān folios with those that appear in Arabic papyri and inscriptions from the first/seventh and eighth/second centuries. In his paper, Kaplony collects the diacritics that appear in “three of the oldest corpora” of Arabic texts—the administrative correspondence of the governor of Egypt Qurrah b. Sharik from around 90–91/709–710, the legal documents and letters of the family of Mīr b. Bēk from Balkh from 138/755 to 160/777, and the inscription of the Dome of the Rock from ca. 72/692—in addition to “a few papyri and inscriptions of the first century of the *Hijra*.”⁹⁰ These letters, business receipts, and inscriptions take us to “the beginning of Arabic scribe [*sic*] culture” and provide evidence of how Arabic diacritics were used by professional scribes of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries.⁹¹ In addition to Kaplony's corpus, I draw upon two other collections of early Arabic texts. The first is the body of Arabic graffiti from al-Ḥanākiyyah in western Arabia edited by Fred Donner: while undated, these graffiti were likely recorded during the first two centuries of the Hijra, based on their paleographic features.⁹² The second is the collection of previously unpublished Arabic letters on papyrus recently edited by Khaled Mohamed Mahmoud Younes in his Leiden University doctoral dissertation: these texts too often do not display dates, but can be dated between the first/second and mid-third/ninth centuries of the Hijra on the basis of both their scripts and dateable Arabic epistolary conventions.⁹³

87. Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 156–158; Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, 34.

88. Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 31.

89. Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 39 and 173.

90. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 93.

91. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 93.

92. Fred M. Donner, “Some Early Arabic Inscriptions from al-Ḥanākiyya, Saudi Arabia,” *JNES* 43 (1984): 181–208, 182.

93. Khaled Mohamed Mahmoud Younes, “Joy and Sorrow in Early Muslim Egypt: Arabic Papyrus Letters, Text and Context” (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2013), 6–7, 18–19.

The instances of dotting in the examined Qur'ān folios do not correspond exactly with those found in the papyri and inscriptions, and there are some notable inconsistencies. For example, verb affixes are not as common in the Qur'ān sample as Kaplony finds them in the documentary materials: while Kaplony finds that within his corpus “one third of all dots go with affixes,” they make up only 33 of 208 total dotted forms in Hand A's sample (33/208 = 15.8%; see Appendix One) and none of Hand D's 20 dotted forms (see Appendix Two).⁹⁴ Furthermore, while there are a few parallels to the specific dotted affixes found by Kaplony (the imperfect suffix *-ūna* and the imperfect prefix *ta-*, for example), the majority of affixes present in the Qur'ān sample are not paralleled in Kaplony's corpus.⁹⁵

One notable point of comparison is in the marking of first-person plural forms. The first-person plural perfect suffix *-nā*, imperfect prefix *nu-*, and enclitic personal pronoun *-nā* make up 26 of the attested affixes in my sample of BNF Arabe 328a (26/33 = 78%), an unusually frequent amount of dotting within the manuscript.⁹⁶ Within the papyri and inscriptions in his study, Kaplony found that “no dots are found on the perfect suffixes *-t* and *-nā* and the imperfect suffix *na-*” and “enclitic personal pronouns ... never carry dots.”⁹⁷ However, several of the early papyri edited by Younes (and not included within Kaplony's study) exhibit examples of these forms being dotted.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, the repeated dotting of first-person plural forms in

94. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 96. In this respect, my sample corresponds to the characteristics of the entire manuscript since, as Déroche states, “among the three copyists who used diacritical marks to any extent, i.e., A, B, and D, I can find only eleven instances of verbs in the imperfect or related forms with one or two dots providing a clue as to the correct reading of the initial letter.” Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117.

95. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 101–102.

96. Again these folios appear representative of the manuscript as a whole, as Déroche finds a frequent level of the dotting of *-nā*, “identified by a dot in 233 cases.” Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117.

97. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 96.

98. Examples of perfect suffix *-nā*: رايٰنا *ra'aynā* (P.CtYBR.inv. 2666 [line 19]); عرفنا *arafnā* (P.CtYBR.inv. 2666 [line 19]). Examples of possessive/prominal suffix *-nā*: لديننا *li-dīnīnā* (P.CtYBR.inv. 2666 [line 22]); يعبنا *yu-finā* (P.Cam.Michaelides A 1354r [line 8]); اخبرنا *ukhbīranā* (P.Cam.Michaelides A 1354r [line 18]); ايٰلينا *ilaynā* (P.Cam.Michaelides Q 19r [line 11]); عندنا *ʿindanā* (P.Cam.Michaelides Q 19v [line 4]). Example of imperfect prefix *na-*: نسال *nas'alu* (P.Cam.Michaelides Q 19r [line 10]). For editions and images of these texts, see Younes, “Joy and Sorrow.” In citing the papyri, I follow the abbreviations given in “The (Cumulative) Arabic Papyrology Bibliography of Editions and Research,” *The Arabic Papyrology Database* (<http://www.naher-osten.lmu.de/apb>).

the Qurʾān is striking and a notable discrepancy from the comparatively infrequent (but not completely absent) dotting of such forms in papyri.

There is no clear explanation for this discrepancy. Perhaps the repeated usage of the first-person plural in the qurʾānic text led to a practice of marking these verb forms and pronouns because of their frequency and/or perceived semantic significance.⁹⁹ A more mundane explanation appears in the relatively frequent dotting of the letter *nūn* in both bodies of texts. In a study of early Arabic papyri and inscriptions, Beatrice Gruendler finds that “*nūn* represents the letter that is most often diacritically marked.”¹⁰⁰ This is paralleled in the Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾān manuscripts: Déroche notes that “*nūn* is by far the most frequently pointed” letter in the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus, making up roughly 70 percent of the dots;¹⁰¹ Elisabeth Puin finds a similar frequency for the dotting of *nūn* in the *scriptio superior* of Ṣanʿāʾ Dār al-Makhṭūṭāt 01-27.1;¹⁰² and Dutton highlights the “frequent” marking of *nūn* in British Library Or. 2165.¹⁰³ While these phenomena do not explain the discrepancy between the Qurʾān sample and the Kaplony corpus regarding the dotting of specific verbal affixes, there is certainly a correspondence between the qurʾānic and non-qurʾānic corpora in the specific letter most frequently receiving diacritics.

Of the dotted verb and noun stems found in my sample from BNF Arabe 328a, a fairly large number have no parallels in the papyri or inscriptions. In many cases, these words occur in dotted form only once in the Qurʾān manuscript, but some words appear in dotted form multiple times: for example, the word *dhunūb* (“sins”) appears with a dot on the *dhāl* on four different occasions. Such words may be part of an “orthographic tradition” that formed around the dotting of certain words for which the documentary texts provide no corroborating evidence. An interesting example is *dhurriyyah* (“offspring”), which is dotted on the *dhāl* on two occasions by Hand A and once by Hand D. In this case, two different scribes dot the same word in the same way, perhaps evidencing a shared practice of the orthographic writing of this word.

Possible parallels between the qurʾānic folios in BNF Arabe 328a and the papyri and inscriptions appear in individual nouns and verb stems found

99. In this respect it may be noteworthy that the first-person plural pronoun *nahnu*, another word that is unattested in Kaplony’s corpus, is dotted (on the first *nūn*) in one instance in these folios.

100. Gruendler, *Development of the Arabic Scripts*, 102. Kaplony does not mention Gruendler’s finding on *nūn*, though he relies upon much of the same corpus collected by Gruendler; see Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 95.

101. Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117; Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, 19–20.

102. Puin, “Ein früherer Koranpalimpsest,” 467–468.

103. Dutton, “Some Notes,” 45.

dotted in single instances in both corpora. Thus the nouns *amānah* (“trust”) and *nisf* (“half”) each appears dotted on *nūn* once in the Qur’ān sample and each also occurs dotted on *nūn* in papyrus documents.¹⁰⁴ The verb *ḥazana* (“to sadden”) is dotted on *zā’* and *nūn* once in the Qur’ān folios and on the same letters in a papyrus letter.¹⁰⁵ An indirect parallel between the corpora appears in the noun *farīdah* (“obligation”), dotted on the *ḍād* in the Qur’ān sample: a verb from the same root (*farada*) appears dotted in a papyrus document.¹⁰⁶ A similar case is the emphatic qualification *ni’ma* (“What an excellent ...!”), dotted on *nūn* in the Qur’ān folios: the related noun *ni’mah* (“favor”) is also found dotted on *nūn* in a papyrus letter.¹⁰⁷ Finally, the adjective *ukhar* (“other”) is dotted on *khā’* in the Qur’ān folios, and in two related words in a papyrus letter.¹⁰⁸ The evidence relating to these individual words carrying dots in the Qur’ān folios may perhaps enable us to “assign [these words] to the group of words regularly carrying dots,” as Kaplony suggests.

The Dome of the Rock inscriptions offer a useful point of comparison with the Qur’ān folios, as the inscriptions include several Qur’ānic verses.¹⁰⁹ A notable overlap appears in the words dotted in Q Āl ‘Imrān 3:18–19, found on folio 2v of the manuscript and on the interior façade of the Dome of the Rock inscription.¹¹⁰ Of the 21 dotted forms in the Dome of the Rock version

104. For *amānah* in P.Cair.Arab. 158 (line 15), see Carl H. Becker, “Neue arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes,” *Der Islam* 2 (1911): 245–268; Werner Diem, “Philologisches zu den arabischen Aphrodito-Papyri,” *Der Islam* 61 (1984): 251–275, 254–256; Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 104. For *nisf* in P.RagibAn22 (line 1), see Yūsuf Rāḡib, “Les plus anciens papyrus arabes,” *Annales Islamologiques* 30 (1996): 1–19, 14; Ragheb, “Les Premiers Documents,” 702; Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 105.

105. P.Cam. Michaelides A 605v (line 11): Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 104–105, plate 6. The related noun *ḥuzn* (“sorrow”) is dotted only on *nūn*, not *zā’*, in P.Cair.Arab. inv. 397 (line 7): Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 163–164, plate 32.

106. The word appears as *فرصت* in P.Heid.Arab I 3 (line 51), with a dot on the second radical letter. Kaplony suggests it should instead be corrected to read as *فرصت*, with the dot moved to the *fā’*? It is possible that the dot should instead be shifted to the *ḍād*, creating *فرصت*, and thus a parallel for the dotting of *farīdah* (فريضة) found in the Qur’ān folio. See Carl H. Becker, *Papyri Schott-Reinhardt I* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1906), 72, Tafel IV; Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 106.

107. P.Cam.Michaelides Q 19r (line 6): Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 109–110, plate 8.

108. These are found in P.Cam.Michaelides A 1354r: *الآخرة al-ākhirah* (line 14); *الآخرة al-ukhrā* (line 19). Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 98–99, plate 5.

109. Christel Kessler suggests the presence of diacritics in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions “reflects the diacritical marking of the early Muṣḥaf [sic]”: “Abd al-Malik’s Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration,” *JRAS* (1970): 2–14, 13. See also: Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 109–124, 143–157.

110. Kessler, “Abd al-Malik’s Inscription,” 6–7.

of these verses, four are directly paralleled in the Qurʾān manuscript: (1) *nūn* on *annahu*, (2) *khāʾ* on *ikhtalafa*, (3) *ghayn* on *baghyān*, and (4) *nūn* on *baynahum*. The inscription is a more fully dotted version of what is found in the Qurʾān manuscript: none of the dots differs between the two versions (i.e., is found on different word forms), but the Dome of the Rock version adds several more diacritics than appear in the manuscript's version. In several cases, additional letters are dotted within the same words that receive dots in the manuscript, such as adding dots to: (1) the *tāʾ* in *ikhtalafa*, (2) the *bāʾ* and the *yāʾ* in *baghyān*, and (3) the *bāʾ* and the *yāʾ* in *baynahum*.¹¹¹ These overlaps between the two versions seem particularly significant in light of the almost 40 dotted forms that appear in the modern printed version of Q 3:18–19.

These parallels may suggest a connection between the writing of diacritics in the Qurʾān manuscript and the Dome of the Rock inscriptions, with the Dome of the Rock perhaps appearing as an orthographically improved version of what is found in the Qurʾān folios. The time of the Dome of the Rock inscription's creation (i.e., the rule of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik) overlaps with a period of “reforms involving the Qurʾānic text,” in which “the *scriptio plena* is gaining ground” in the manuscripts, including the demarcation of long *alif*, *hamzah*, and short vowels.¹¹² This may explain the slightly more extensive usage of diacritic marks in the Dome of the Rock inscription's version of Q 3:18–19, as compared to the version in BNF Arabe 328a.

It is important to note that the dotted words in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions do not always directly mirror those found in their parallel passages in the Qurʾān folios, but do seem connected to the patterns of dotting found in the manuscript more generally. For example, in the text of Q al-Nisāʾ 4:171 in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions, several words are dotted, including the

111. For purposes of comparison, this is the version found in folio 2v, with dotted words underlined:

شهد الله انه لا اله الا هو والملئكة واولوا العلم فانما بالفسط لا اله الا هو العربر الحكيم ان الدس عند الله
الاسلم وما اختلف الدس اوتوا الكتيب الا من بعد ما جاهم العلم بغيا بينهم ومن يكفر باينيات الله فان الله سريع
الحساب.

This is the version in the Dome of the Rock inscription, again with dotted words underlined:

شهد الله انه لا اله الا هو والملئكة واولوا العلم فيما بالفسط لا اله الا هو العربر الحكيم ان الدس عند الله الاسلم
وما اختلف الدس اوتوا الكتيب الا من بعد ما جاهم العلم بغيا بينهم ومن يكفر باينيات الله فان الله سريع الحساب.

112. Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, 75–102. Kessler “Abd al-Malik’s Inscription,” 12 suggests that “introducing these reading aids must have been a matter of real concern to ʿAbd al-Malik,” due to the meaning of the verses and their value for his religio-political program. Milwright offers a qualified agreement, but notes issues with this explanation, including the inconsistency in the dotting: Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 110–111.

nouns *khayr* (on *khā'* and *yā'*) and *subhān* (on *bā'* and *nūn*), the verb *āmanū* (on *nūn*), and the preposition *min* (on *nūn*).¹¹³ These words all appear undotted in the equivalent text of Q 4:171 in folio 20r of BNF Arabe 328a: however, each word appears dotted elsewhere in the manuscript. Thus while individual words are not always dotted within the same qur'ānic loci in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions and in BNF Arabe 328a, in several cases the same individual words are dotted in both the inscriptions and the manuscript folios. Rather than copying dots directly from a qur'ānic manuscript, the scribes who produced the Dome of the Rock inscriptions were perhaps dotting words based on an orthographic tradition that was common to producers of both Arabic inscriptions and manuscripts: scribes appear to have commonly dotted certain specific words, rather than specific passages in the Qur'ān.

Indeed, when we focus on the verb and noun roots that are most commonly dotted in BNF Arabe 328a, we find several parallels with the dotted terms in inscriptions and papyri that indicate shared orthographic traditions. There are nine verbs that are dotted on their root letters on at least two instances in the Qur'ān sample from Hand A: *amina* (dotted on *nūn*), *khalafa* (on *khā'*), *dakhala* (on *khā'*), *ḍarra* (on *ḍād*), *ghalla* (on *ghayn*), *kāna* (on *nūn*), *nadiya* (on *nūn*), *naṣara* (on *nūn*), and *wadhara* (on *dhāl*). Of these, five have direct parallels in the documentary materials, appearing as verb forms dotted on the same letter as in Hand A's folios: *amina*, *khalafa*, *dakhala*, *kāna*, and *naṣara*.¹¹⁴ The verb *khalafa* also finds an indirect parallel in the form of a noun from the same root (*khalīfah*) that is dotted on the same letter (*khā'*) in both the Qur'ān manuscript

113. Kessler, "Abd al-Malik's Inscription," 4.

114. The verb *amina* appears dotted on *nūn* on two occasions in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions and on two occasions in a graffito dated to "the first century or first half of the second century A.H.": Kaplony, "What Are Those," 104; Donner, "Some Early Arabic," 183–186 (W 1). It also appears dotted on *nūn* in a graffito dated to 83/702–703 found near al-Aqra' in northwestern Arabia: Alī Ibrāhīm Al-Ghabbān, *Les deux routes syrienne et égyptienne de pèlerinage au nord-ouest de l'Arabie Saoudite* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2011), 516–517, 608. *Khalafa* is dotted in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions, though Kaplony, "What Are Those," 108 suggests that these dots were added after the time of the original inscription. Kessler, "Abd al-Malik's Inscription," 6–7, 12 provides no indication of this. *Dakhala* appears dotted in the second/eighth-century letter on papyrus P.Cam. Michaelides A 605 (line 11): Younes, "Joy and Sorrow," 104–105, plate 6. *Kāna* is dotted in several papyri: P.Heid. Arab. I 3 (line 20), P.Heid. Arab. 18 (lines 5 and 7), P.Ragib Qurra 2 (line 4). See Becker, *Papyri Schott-Reinhardt I*, 70, 101, Tafel XI; Yūsuf Rāḡib, "Lettres nouvelles de Qurra b. Šarik," *JNES* 40 (1981): 173–187, 178–182; Kaplony, "What Are Those," 104. *Naṣara* appears dotted in an inscription near Ṭā'if and in a graffito at al-Ḥanākiyyah: George C. Miles, "Early Islamic Inscriptions near Ṭā'if in the Ḥijāz," *JNES* 7 (1948): 236–242, 237, 240; Kaplony, "What Are Those," 106; Donner, "Some Early Arabic," 195–199 (W 5).

and a papyrus letter.¹¹⁵ The verbs that are dotted at least three times in the Hand A folios—*amina*, *kāna*, and *našara*—are each also attested in dotted form more than once in the papyri and/or inscriptions. In Hand D's two folios, three verbs appear dotted twice: *atā* (dotted on *tā*^ʔ), *taraka* (on *tā*^ʔ), and *nazala* (on both *nūn* and *zā*^ʔ). Each of these also occurs in dotted form, on the same respective letters, in inscriptions and/or papyri.¹¹⁶ Thus nearly all of the most frequently dotted verbs, for both Hands A and D, find parallels in papyri and/or inscriptional evidence.

A similar pattern is found among the dotted noun and pronoun forms. Among nouns and pronouns, eighteen forms exhibit dots at least twice in the examined folios of BNF Arabe 328a written by Hand A. For nine of these—*antum*, *alladhīna*, *hasan*, *jazā*^ʔ, *khayr*, *maghfirah/ghufrān*, *faḍl*, *nafs/anfus*, and *nās*—there are direct or indirect parallels in the papyri and/or inscriptions.¹¹⁷ Of

115. *Khalīfah* is dotted in the papyrus document PERF 558 (line 6). See Jones, “Dotting of a Script”; Ragheb, “Les Premiers Documents,” 702–703; Rāḡib, “Les plus anciens,” 13; Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 104.

116. *Atā* is paralleled in the Dome of the Rock inscription, as well as in the second/eighth-century papyrus document P.Cam.Michaelides A 1354v (line 14): Kessler, “‘Abd al-Malik’s Inscription,” 6; Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 105; Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 115–116, plate 10. *Taraka* appears in dotted form in a graffito from al-Ḥanākiyyah, as well as in the papyrus P.Cam.Michaelides A 1354r (line 23): Donner, “Some Early Arabic,” 195–199 (W 5); Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 98–100, plate 5. *Nazala* appears in dotted form twice in a second/eighth-century letter on papyrus, P.Cam.Michaelides A 1041v (lines 18, 22), once dotted on both *nūn* and *zā*^ʔ and the second time dotted only on *nūn*: Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 171–172, plate 35.

117. The second-person plural pronoun *antum* is dotted on *nūn* in the folios, while the singular form *anta* appears dotted on both *nūn* and *tā*^ʔ in a graffito dated to 92/710 and in the papyrus P.CtYBR.inv. 2603v (line 12): Frédéric Imbert, “Inscriptions et espaces d’écriture au Palais d’al-Kharrāna en Jordanie,” *Studies on the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 5 (1995): 403–416, 404–406; Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 105; Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 127–128, plate 16. The relative pronoun *alladhīna* is dotted on the *dhāl* in the Qur’ān folios, but on the *yā*^ʔ in P.CtYBR.inv. 2710 (lines 3 and 4): Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 121–122, plate 13. The adjective *hasan* is dotted on *nūn* both in the Qur’ān folios and in P.Cam.Michaelides Q 19r (line 8): Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 109–110, plate 8. The verb *hasana* is also dotted on *nūn* in the Qur’ān folios. The noun *jazā*^ʔ is dotted on the *zā*^ʔ in the Qur’ān folios, and the word *jizyah* appears dotted variously on the *jīm*, *zā*^ʔ, or *yā*^ʔ in P.Cair.Arab. 163 (line 4), P.Qurra 5 (line 6), P.Cair.Arab. 149 (line 23), and P.Heid.Arab. I 1 (lines 7–8): Becker, “Neue arabische Papyri,” no. 16; Abbott, *Kurrah Papyri*, 52–53, plate 4B; Becker, “Neue arabische Papyri,” no. 3; Becker, *Papyri Schott-Reinhardt I*, 58, Tafel IA; Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 104. The noun *khayr* is dotted on *khā*^ʔ in the folios, and is dotted on both *khā*^ʔ and *yā*^ʔ in the Dome of the Rock: Kessler, “‘Abd al-Malik’s Inscription,” 4. See further examples in note 119. The nouns *maghfirah* and *ghufrān* are dotted on *ghayn* (and, in the latter case, on *nūn*) in the folios, and a verbal form from the same root appears to

the three nouns or pronouns that appear dotted at least three times in the BNF Arabe 328a folios—*khayr* (dotted on *khā'*), *nafs/anfus* (on *nūn*), and *dhunūb* (on *dhāl*)—*dhunūb* is the only word unattested in dotted form in papyri or inscriptions. In the cases of *nās* and *nafs/anfus*, their relatively frequent dotting in Hand A's sample is paralleled in Kaplony's corpus, in which these words are amongst the most commonly dotted nouns.¹¹⁸ As for *khayr*, it appears in dotted form in the Dome of the Rock inscriptions and in several of the papyri edited by Younes.¹¹⁹ Thus, similar to the case of the verbs, several of the nouns most frequently carrying dots in BNF Arabe 328a are paralleled in the papyri and inscriptions.

As for the dotted particles in the Qur'ān sample, the parallels to the inscriptions and papyri are striking.¹²⁰ In the Qur'ān folios written by Hand A, particles account for over a fifth of the dotted forms (43/208 = 20.6%). In Hand D's small corpus of 20 dotted forms, particles account for over a third of dotted forms (7/20 = 35%). The frequency with which these words—many of them the same particles found dotted in papyri and inscriptions—appear

be dotted on the *fā'* in an inscription near Ṭā'if: Miles, "Early Islamic Inscriptions," 240; Kaplony, "What Are Those," 106. An early graffito with dotted *fā'* in *ghafara* also appears at al-Ḥanākiyyah: Donner, "Some Early Arabic," 192–195 (W 4). *Faḍl* is dotted on *dād* in the folios, and on both *fā'* and *dād* in the papyrus P.Cam.Michaelides Q 19 (line 6): Younes, "Joy and Sorrow," 109–110, plate 8. The noun *nafs* and its plural *anfus* are both found dotted on *nūn* in the folios, while *nafs* is dotted on the *fā'* in several administrative papyri, including P.Cair.Arab. 146 (line 10), P.Qurra 4 (line 12), and P.Heid.Arab. I 3 (line 74). For these, see Becker, "Neue arabische Papyri"; Diem, "Philologisches," 254–256; Abbott, *Kurrah Papyri*, 50–51, plate 4A; Becker, *Papyri Schott-Reinhardt I*, 74, Tafel V; Kaplony, "What Are Those," 105. Finally, *nās* is dotted on *nūn* in both the folios and in administrative papyri, including P.Cair.Arab. 148 (lines 9–10), P.Heid.Arab. I 2 (line 7), P.Heid.Arab. I 13 (line 7). See Grohmann, *From the World*, 126–128; Diem, "Philologisches," 148; Becker, *Papyri Schott-Reinhardt I*, 62, 98, Tafel IX; Kaplony, "What Are Those," 105.

118. Kaplony, "What Are Those," 97–98, 105.

119. Kaplony, "What Are Those," 98, 105. Examples of *khayr* carrying dots: بالخير *bi'l-khayrah* (P.CtYBR.inv. 2666r [line 6]); حير *khayr* (P.CtYBR.inv. 2666r [line 23]); الخير *al-khayr* (P.Cam.Michaelides Q 19r [line 5]); خير *khayr* (P.Cam.Michaelides A 1354v [line 15]); بيحير *bi-khayr* (P.Cair.Arab.inv. 403 [line 13]). For texts and images, see Younes, "Joy and Sorrow." Notably, the word is dotted either (a) only on the *yā'* or (b) on both the *khā'* and the *yā'* in the papyri and the Dome of the Rock inscription, while it appears only dotted on *khā'* in BNF Arabe 328a.

120. Kaplony, "What Are Those," 96–97, 103–104. Notably, a graffito at al-Ḥanākiyyah includes three of the same dotted particles as found within Kaplony's corpus, including the conjunctions *fā-* (dotted on *fā'*) and *inna* (dotted on *nūn*), and the preposition *fī* (dotted on *fā'* and *yā'*). See Donner, "Some Early Arabic," 189–192 (W 3). Many of these particles are also dotted in the papyri edited in Younes, "Joy and Sorrow."

dotted in the BNF Arabe 328a folios is intriguing: for example, combining both Hands A and D, *idhā* is dotted (on *dhāl*) seven times overall, *inna* is dotted twelve times (on *nūn*), and *min* is dotted eight times (on *nūn*). For words whose *rasm* (as Grohmann writes) “can hardly be misunderstood at all,” this seems like an unusually frequent level of dotting.¹²¹

Of the proper names that are dotted in the Qurʾān folios, all are of non-Arabic origin. *Jahannam* and *nūḥ* are each dotted once in the text (in both cases, on *nūn*), while *zakariyyā* is dotted three times (on *zāʾ*). Since all these names are borrowings from other Semitic languages, it is possible that they were dotted in order to help readers discriminate the readings of these foreign names, as is the case in many of the non-Arabic terms and names in the papyri.¹²² Alternatively, perhaps there existed an orthographic tradition of dotting these names. This is particularly feasible in the case of *zakariyyā*, which, as noted, is dotted in three separate instances.

Based on these comparisons, we see that the the usages of diacritics in the BNF Arabe 328a folios and those found in the early Arabic papyri and inscriptions are not directly parallel in all cases. Certain questions remain: why are first-person plural affixes and pronouns so often dotted in BNF Arabe 328a, but comparatively rarely in papyrus documents and inscriptions? Conversely, why are affixes more commonly dotted in the papyri and inscriptions than they are in the Qurʾān folios? Is there some explanation for the verb and noun stems dotted in BNF Arabe 328a, but not dotted in papyri or inscriptions, and vice-versa?

Even with these lingering questions, I suggest that the wide body of overlaps between the the Qurʾān folios and the papyri and inscriptions is likely not a result of random scribal choices, but rather reflective of some connection in writing/dotting traditions. Nearly 40 percent of the total affixes, verbs, or nouns dotted by Hand A in BNF Arabe 328a have exact parallels in the papyri and inscriptions ($82/208 = 39.42\%$) and over 50 percent have either direct or indirect parallels ($118/208 = 56.73\%$). The fact that three-quarters ($15/20 = 75\%$) of all words dotted by Hand D have direct parallels to the papyri and inscriptions likewise points to a connection between the writing of the Qurʾān and the writing of other texts, perhaps especially as Déroche has characterized Hand D of BNF Arabe 328a as a “professional copyist.”

121. As in the cases above, the sample folios are reflective of the rest of BNF Arabe 328a, as these particles are often dotted elsewhere in the manuscript too: Déroche, “Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus,” 117.

122. *Jahannam* may have come into Arabic from Hebrew via Ethiopic: Rosalind W. Gwynne, “Hell and Hellfire,” *EQ*, s.v. (2002). Early Arabic philologists recognized *zakariyyā* to be of foreign origin: Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qurʾanic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 399.

Focusing on the specific words where we find diacritics, we continue to see significant correspondences between the Qur'ān folios and the inscriptions and papyri. Overall, over 40 percent ($18/43 = 41.8\%$) of Hand A's dotted verb roots in the Qur'ān folios are directly paralleled in the inscriptions and papyri, and slightly less than half are either directly or indirectly paralleled ($21/43 = 48.83\%$). The dotted noun/adjective roots show significantly greater variability between the Qur'ān folios and the inscriptions and papyri: less than ten percent ($6/84 = 7.14\%$) of Hand A's dotted nouns and adjectives find direct parallels, though roughly a third ($30/84 = 35.71\%$) find either direct or indirect parallels. However, in Hand D's case, over sixty percent ($8/13 = 61.53\%$) of dotted nouns or verbs are directly paralleled in the papyri and inscriptions. While not exact, these overlaps indicate that, in a great many cases, the scribes of BNF 328a were dotting the same words as the scribes who wrote Arabic papyri and inscriptions.

Indeed, the words that are most frequently found dotted in both Hand A's and Hand D's folios are also found dotted in the Arabic papyri and inscriptions. Several of the most frequently dotted verbs and nouns in the Qur'ān sample—such as *khayr*, *kāna*, *nafs/anfus*, and *nās*—are also those most frequently found dotted in papyri and inscriptions.¹²³ Even more strikingly, an overwhelming number of the same particles are found dotted both in the Qur'ān sample and in the documentary materials: Hand A's particles are directly paralleled in over 60 percent of all cases ($27/43 = 62.79\%$) and either directly or indirectly paralleled in over 80 percent ($36/43 = 83.7\%$), while all of Hand D's particles find parallels ($7/7 = 100\%$). Since this list of frequently dotted words so often overlaps in the two corpuses, I suggest that a common orthographic tradition, or closely related traditions, underlies both of them.

Based on these factors, I suggest that a shared Arabic writing tradition underlies the diacritical dotting present in this corpus of Arabic papyri and inscriptions and in these Qur'ān folios. Indeed, situating the diacritics in BNF Arabe 328a within the context of those found in non-qur'ānic first/seventh-century Arabic texts helps to contextualize the otherwise seemingly random placement of diacritics within Qur'ān manuscripts that Déroche, Dutton, and others have described. The usage of diacritics in this manuscript cannot be explained by the desire to elucidate the most “ambiguous” forms: the dotting of most words in these folios is not crucial to the decipherment of the *rasm*, especially in the cases of the particles, but also in the cases of many of the frequently dotted verbs and nouns. Nor can a desire to mark a specific recitation tradition account for the presence of diacritics on almost any of these words: almost all of the dotted graphemes are undisputed forms,

123. Kaplony, “What Are Those,” 97–98.

irrelevant to the different recitation traditions.¹²⁴ What calls for explanation, then, is why these words receive dots, contrary to the manuscript copyists' general tendency not to include dots. I suggest that an orthographic tradition likely underlies the usage of diacritics present in BNF Arabe 328a, much like the tradition suggested by Kaplony for the papyrus and inscriptional sources.

Qur'ān Manuscripts within the World of First/Seventh-Century Arabic Texts

This paper has compared the diacritics in a section of one Ḥijāzī-script Qur'ān manuscript with those found in Arabic papyri and inscriptions. It would be illuminating to see if the same patterns identified here are present in the dotting of other manuscripts of the first/seventh century.¹²⁵ If similar tendencies are identified, this would further indicate connections between the writing traditions that produced non-qur'ānic Arabic texts and those that produced the early written Qur'ān.¹²⁶ While the close relationship between the scripts of early Arabic documentary materials (especially papyri and inscriptions) and that of Ḥijāzī-script Qur'āns has been studied in great detail, the similar way(s) that these texts use diacritical markings has been left largely unexamined, thanks in large part to the seemingly random nature of the diacritics' appearance in these texts.¹²⁷ If common patterns can be identified in the two corpora, the usage of diacritics may provide further confirmation of common writing traditions underlying the production of both types of Arabic texts.

Such a scenario would not be unusual, as production of both literary texts and documents by the same scribal hands was a common phenomenon in the Near East. In the first centuries of the Common Era, scribes of the

124. On a small number of exceptions to this pattern, see Déroche, "Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus," 117.

125. I hope to carry out a larger survey of the usage of diacritics in early manuscripts in the future.

126. On the possible existence of "multiple writing schools of Arabic" in the early period, see al-Shdaifat et al., "Early Christian Arabic," 322; Al-Jallad, "Moge God," 192, 195, 202–205.

127. Almost certainly the lack of scholarship is also due to the difficulty in ascertaining whether the diacritics present in a text are original or were added at a later date. This difficulty is addressed for the earliest dated Arabic texts by Robin, "La réforme de l'écriture arabe," 343. For early Qur'ān manuscripts, see Grohmann, "Problem of Dating," 227; Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 120 n. 34; Small, *Textual Criticism*, 71. George Miles noted the importance for the study of the early written Qur'ān of a first/seventh-century Arabic inscription that displays diacritics: Miles, "Early Islamic Inscriptions," 240–241.

Greco-Roman Mediterranean world “were often multifunctional and multicontextual” and were employed to produce copies of both administrative documents and literary texts.¹²⁸ This was likewise the case with some Hebrew book scribes, who also might produce documents.¹²⁹ The ability to produce both documentary materials and literary works also appears in evidence from Coptic scribes of the century before the Islamic conquests.¹³⁰ With these parallels, it is reasonable to suggest that scribes who produced Arabic documentary materials might also have been called upon to copy manuscripts of the Qur'ān, or vice versa, especially in a period in which the number of Arabic scribes was likely relatively small.

If such connections between the writing of documentary and literary Arabic texts can be demonstrated more generally, some assumptions about the early written Qur'ān—and early written Arabic more generally—may need to be revised. As noted at the beginning of this essay, the idea that the Arabic script at the time of the production of the Qur'ān was a *scriptio defectiva* still dominates assumptions about the Qur'ān's textual history. Yet as we have seen, diacritics are evidenced in Arabic writing from at least as early as 22/643 in papyri and inscriptions, where they appear as a fully formed system. Based on the presence of diacritics in Ḥijāzī-script Qur'ānic codices, it seems likely that diacritics were a part of the script from the beginning of the Qur'ān's written transmission. Yet if consonantal diacritics were known and used in the writing of Arabic at the time of the production of the Ḥijāzī-script manuscripts, why do they appear so rarely therein? Did scribes leave manuscripts “open,” without diacritics in order to allow for (known or hypothetical?) variant readings, as Déroche and Dutton suggest?

128. Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22, 32–34, 62–63; AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 74–77, 149–150, 230.

129. Michael Owen Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 3–6, 200, 227, 243–244.

130. Jean-Luc Fournet, *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI^e siècle: La bibliothèque et l'œuvre de Dioscore d'Aphrodité* (2 vols.; Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1999), 1.245–248; Fournet, “At the Desk of a Man of Letters: Literate Practices in Byzantine Egypt according to the Dossier of Dioscorus of Aphrodite,” in Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 221–248, 225–228, 243–248; L. S. B. MacCoull, “Further Notes on Interrelated Greek and Coptic Documents of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries,” *Chronique d'Égypte* 70 (1995): 341–353, 343; S. J. Clackson, “Papyrology and the Utilization of Coptic Sources,” in Petra M. Sijpesteijn and Lennart Sundelin (eds.), *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 21–44, 26.

Recall, in this connection, Kaplony's suggestion that in the case of the Arabic papyri, "the spare use of dots made writing quick, and reading the exclusive business of professional scribes."¹³¹ While the Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾān manuscripts may appear (to modern eyes) stripped of dots, they are instead likely representative of the standards of written Arabic in the first/seventh century, as displayed also in contemporary papyri and other documentary texts. As Dutton suggests, the manuscripts likely reflect "a stage in the development of the Arabic script where marking such consonants was considered optional and, for the most part, unnecessary."¹³² Rather than treating the writing of the Qurʾān as a "special case," as suggested by both traditional Islamic history and modern scholarship, scribes in the first/seventh century wrote the Qurʾān as they did other Arabic texts: they neither "left out" diacritics to leave the text open, nor "added" more to clarify it, but in most cases simply wrote diacritics where they were accustomed to writing them by habit or convention. Perhaps the qurʾānic text was no more or less incomprehensible to them than other Arabic texts that were commonly written without full diacritics. Alternatively, perhaps the spare usage of dots "made writing quick" and the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus and other early manuscripts are witness to a period when the need for swift production left an impact on the textual presentation of qurʾānic manuscripts.¹³³

If in fact the early qurʾānic manuscripts were written within the same orthographic traditions that produced other written Arabic documents in the first/seventh century, an interesting question emerges regarding the usage of these manuscripts in this early period: assuming these partially-dotted qurʾānic manuscripts were used as *aides-mémoire* for the transmission/recitation of an oral text, whose memories would they actually aid? To rephrase the question: who could read these early Qurʾān manuscripts? Several scholars have suggested that a relatively small number of individuals were literate in Arabic during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, even

131. Kaplony, "What Are Those," 99.

132. Dutton, "Some Notes," 48.

133. Déroche suggests that the need for speedy production may explain the usage of multiple scribes in the copying of individual manuscripts of the Qurʾān: Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 155–156, 177; Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, 66. On the collaboration of multiple scribes in copying Ḥijāzī-script Qurʾāns, see further: Bothmer et al., "Neue Wege der Koranforschung," 42; Déroche, *La transmission écrite*, 127–130; Déroche, "New Evidence," 629; Alain George, "Le palimpseste Lewis-Mingana de Cambridge, témoin ancien de l'histoire du Coran," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (2011): 377–429, 395, 400; Rabb, "Non-Canonical Readings," 99; Sadeghi and Bergmann, "Codex of a Companion," 354–357; Hilali, "Was the Ṣanʿāʾ Qurʾān Palimpsest," 20, 22.

in urban centers.¹³⁴ If Kaplony is correct that “the spare use of dots made ... reading the exclusive business of professional scribes,” great importance would lay in the ability of potential Qur’ān readers to decipher these “few dots.” Indeed, commenting on early Arabic letters on papyrus, Younes notes that “finding a good reader was definitely a difficult task at that time, since he should have considerable knowledge of Arabic and the ability to read the partially dotted Arabic script.”¹³⁵ If the scribes of the Hijāzī-script Qur’āns deployed a similar orthographic system of dotting to the one used to read and write Arabic papyri and similar texts, were these manuscripts only read—or principally read—by these same types of specialized scribes?¹³⁶

We should not overstate the case for the complete indispensability of diacritics for the legibility of these Arabic texts. Within papyrus documents and inscriptions, for example, the usage of stock phrases and generic conventions in many cases likely enabled potential readers to decipher the texts’ orthographic inexactness: this “*highly conventionalized way to express thoughts* ... accounts also for the factor of the under-specified Arabic script that omitted the diacritical dots.”¹³⁷ Irene Bierman argues that “contextual literacy” similarly allowed viewers in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries to read Fatimid inscriptions in Kufic script that were largely devoid

134. Jones, “Word Made Visible,” 3–4; Peter Stein, “Literacy in Pre-Islamic Arabia: An Analysis of the Epigraphic Evidence,” in Neuwirth et al. (eds.), *Qur’ān in Context*, 255–280; Redwan Sayed, *Die Revolte des Ibn al-Aṣʿat und die Koranleser: Ein Beitrag zur Religions- und Sozialgeschichte der frühen Umayyadenzeit* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1977), 279; Petra M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 255. Conversely, based on a corpus of Arabic papyrus letters from Egypt of the first/seventh to fourth/tenth centuries, Eva Mira Grob writes that “the ability to read must have been relatively widespread, and not only in the upper class.” Much of Grob’s material is clustered in the third/ninth century, so it is unclear if her conclusions apply to the period studied here. Grob, *Letters on Papyrus*, 87, 207. For a nuanced estimation of literacy in the ancient Arabian Peninsula, focusing on graffiti, see Macdonald, “Ancient Arabia.”

135. Younes, “Joy and Sorrow,” 15.

136. Sadeghi and Bergmann, “Codex of a Companion,” 372 suggest that early scribes may have had relatively limited reading and writing abilities. Hoyland suggests that early inscriptions and “graffiti too seem often to have been commissioned by figures of high standing, then carved for them by trained scribes,” whose skill might allow them “to ask as considerable fee for a well-executed graffito.” Robert G. Hoyland, “The Content and Context of Early Arabic Inscriptions,” *JSAI* 21 (1997): 77–102, 92, 94.

137. Grob, *Letters on Papyrus*, 158 (emphasis in original); Ilkka Lindstedt, “Writing, Reading, and Hearing in Early Muslim-era Arabic Graffiti,” *IQSA Blog*, January 2, 2017, <https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/2017/01/02/writing-reading-and-hearing-in-early-muslim-era-arabic-graffiti/>.

of diacritics, noting that “incomplete scripts can convey fully clear meanings to readers knowledgeable of the contents.”¹³⁸ Yet how far did such a “contextual literacy” for the Qur’ānic text extend throughout Islamic society in the first/seventh century? How “knowledgeable of the contents” were early readers of Qur’ān manuscripts?

The relevance of these questions seems particularly clear in light of recent scholarship that has questioned the priority of the orally-transmitted Qur’ān and has instead suggested the equally important, if not earlier, status of the written text in the early Islamic period. Fred Donner writes that “the present recitation seems to be derived from the written text of the Qur’ān, complete with its occasional textual irregularities, [and] reveals that the written text was taken early on to be fixed and sacred.”¹³⁹ Similarly, Andrew Rippin writes that “it appears that there was a stage at which the written text of the Qur’ān was analyzed and determined as to its meaning and pronunciation on the basis of a skeleton consonantal text with no reference to a living oral tradition.”¹⁴⁰ If Donner and Rippin are correct, the question of who produced and read the early manuscripts of the Qur’ān would be of central importance to understanding the scripture’s emergence and the ways in which it was understood as it was transmitted in the early centuries. This significance of early manuscripts and their readers is all the more apparent if G. H. A. Juynboll is correct that knowledge of Qur’ān recitation was not “by any standard extensive in quantity or in quality” among Muslims in the period of early Islam.¹⁴¹

The question of literacy is a persistent one in the history of the written transmission and usage of scriptures and other texts in the ancient world.¹⁴²

138. Irene A. Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 27.

139. Fred M. Donner, “Qurānic Furqān,” *JSS* 52 (2007): 279–300, 297–298. Similarly: Donner, “Qur’ān in Recent Scholarship,” 40–41.

140. Andrew Rippin, *The Qur’an and Its Interpretive Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), xi. Similar viewpoints appear in Stewart, “Notes on Medieval,” 229; Patricia Crone, “Two Legal Problems Bearing on the Early History of the Qur’ān,” *JSAI* 18 (1994): 1–37, 7–21; Bellamy, “Textual Criticism,” 1–2; Sadeghi and Goudarzi, “Ṣan’ā’ 1,” 26.

141. G. H. A. Juynboll, “The Position of Qur’an Recitation in Early Islam,” *JSS* 20 (1974): 240–251, 246–247.

142. On early Christian literacy, see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). On literacy among communities in the late antique Near East, see Nicholas Everett, “Literacy,” in G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Graber (eds.), *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 543–544; Kim Haines-Eitzen, “Textual Communities in Late Antique Christianity,” in Philip Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (London:

Yet the Qur'ān's early written transmission raises difficult historical questions regarding literacy in a region and time period for which we have relatively few contemporary sources, and in a language and script whose early history is still debated. Because the mechanisms by which the Qur'ān emerged and was transmitted in Late Antiquity are still unclear in many important respects, it is of the utmost importance that we understand the early textual remains that have managed to survive, including even the tiny dots on their pages. When we take these material sources into account, a more nuanced image of the early history of the Qur'ān can emerge alongside of, and in dialogue with, the information gained from literary sources.¹⁴³ This study can further our knowledge of the Qur'ān and its position in relationship to the other written and oral scriptures of Late Antiquity, as well as the scribal cultures that produced Arabic texts in the first/seventh century.

Appendix One: Words Dotted by Hand A¹⁴⁴

a. Verb Affixes

* Perfect Suffix *-nā* — سمعنا *sami' nā* (1v16); اطعنا *ṭa' nā* (1v17)

* Possessive/Object Suffix *-nā* — ربنا *rabbānā/rabbīnā* (1v19, 2r14, 2r15, 2r17, 2v9, 9r18); فلنا *qablīnā* (1v20); ارحمنا *irḥamā* (1v22); قلوبنا *qulūbānā* (2r15); هدايتنا *hadaytanā* (2r15); لنا *lanā* (2r16, 2v9, 6v14); اننا *innanā* (2v9);

Basil Blackwell, 2009), 165–197; Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001); Hezser, “Jewish Literacy and the Use of Writing in Late Roman Palestine,” in Richard Kalmin and Seth Schwartz (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 149–195; William F. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Scott Bucking, “On the Training of Documentary Scribes in Roman, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Egypt: A Contextualized Assessment of the Greek Evidence,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 159 (2007): 229–247; Robert Browning, “Literacy in the Byzantine World,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 4 (1978): 39–54.

143. For recent examples of the combined usage of material and literary sources for the study of Islamic history, see the essays in Daniella Talmon-Heller and Katia Cytryn-Silverman (eds.), *Material Evidence and Narrative Sources: Interdisciplinary Studies of the History of the Muslim Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

144. References given in parentheses are to the folio number, recto or verso, and line number in the manuscript BNF 328a. Words/roots with direct parallels—i.e., the same word dotted on the same letter—to papyri and/or inscriptions are marked with an asterisk (*). Those with indirect parallels—i.e., either (a) the same word, but dotted on a different letter(s), or (b) a different word, but from the same root, dotted on the same letter(s)—are marked with a dagger (†). Transcriptions are based on the standard Egyptian edition of the Qur'ān.

ذوننا *dhunūbanā* (2v9–10); فنا *qinā* (2v10), فعنا *fā-qinā* (9r15); امرنا *amrinā* (6v14); اقدمنا *aqdāmanā* (6v15); انصرنا *uṣurnā* (6v15); اطعونا *aṭāʿūnā* (8r7); سائنا *sayyiʿātīnā* (9r20)

- * Imperfect Suffix *-ūna* — تدبرونها *tudīrūnaha* (1v3–4); بالونكم *ya ʿlūnakum* (5v4); تحبونهم *tuhībūnahum* (5v7); تكلمونهم *taktumūnahu* (9r5)
- * Suffix *-anna* — لسنننه *la-tubayyīnunnahu* (9r5)
- Imperfect Prefix *nu-* — نعرف *nufarriqa* (1v16); نملی *numlī* (8v3)
- * Imperfect Prefix *ta-* — تحسبنا *taḥsabanna* (8v9, 9r6)

b. Particles

- † *idh* — إذ (2r15, 3v1, 3v19, 5v12, 5v14, 5v17, 9r4)
- * *idhā* — إذا *idhā* (1v5, 5v8 [x2], 6v11); فإذا *fa-idhā* (7v8)
- * *inna* — فانه *fa-innahu* (1v6); انك *innaka* (2r16, 2r17, 3v12, 9r16); اننا *innanā* (2v9); انه *innahu* (2v11); فانما *fa-innamā* (2v19); انی *innī* (3v6); انما *innamā* (7r19, 8v22, 10v2)
- anna* — انی *annā* (3v9, 3v15); انما *annamā* (8v3)
- † *bayna* — بينهم *baynahum* (2v15); بينه *baynahu* (3r17)
- * *ʿan* — عنهم *ʿanhum* (4r8); عنا *ʿannā* (9r20) [dot shared with First Plural Suffix?]
- * *ʿinda* — عند (2r13, 2v7, 7v16, 7v22)
- ladunka* — لذك (2r16, 3v11–12)
- * *min* — منكم *minikum* (5v14, 7r10, 7r18); منهم *minhum* (8r4, 8r15)
- hunālika* — هنلك (3v11)

c. Verb Roots

- * *amina* — امنا *āmānā* (2r13, 2v9, 5v8) [dot shared with First Plural Suffix?]
[Form IV]; المؤمنون *al-muʿminūna* (7v12) [Form IV]
- † *baghā* — ابغنا *ibtighāʿa* (2r11) [Form VIII]
- bāna* — لسنننه *la-tubayyīnunnahu* (9r5) [Form II]
- khaziya* — اخرسه *akhzaytahu* (9r16) [Form IV]
- khaffā* — يخفف *yukhaffāfu* (4r7) [Form II]
- * *khalafa* — خلف *yukhliḥu* (2r18) [Form IV]; اخلف *ikhtalafa* (2v14) [Form VIII]
- khāfa* — يخوهم *takhāfūhum* (8r21)
- † *hasana* — احسنوا *aḥsanū* (8r15) [Form IV]
- * *hazana* — يحزنك *yaḥzunka* (8r22)
- * *dakhala* — دخل *dakhala* (3v8); تدخل *tudkhili* (9r16) [Form IV]
- rasakha* — الرسخون *al-rāsikhūna* (2r13)
- zāgha* — نزع *tuzigh* (2r15) [Form IV]
- ḍarra* — يضار *yaḍarra* (1v5) [Form III]; يضركم *yaḍurrukum* (5v12)
- zālama* — يظلمون *yaẓlimūna* (5v3)
- ʿazama* — عزمب *ʿazamta* (7v8)
- ʿadda* — عضوا *ʿaddū* (5v8)

- 'anita* — عنم *'anittum* (5v5)
ghafara — يغفر *fa-yaḡhfuru* (1v13)
ghalla — يغلل *yaḡhlul* (7v12); غل *ghalla* (7v13)
 † *qabada* — معوضه *maqḃūḡatum* (1v8)
 * *kāna* — يكونا *yakūnā* (1r21); يكونوا *takūnū* (4v21, 7r21)
naba'a — اونبكم *a-unabbi'ukum* [Form II] (2v6)
nabata — انبها *anbatahā* (3v7) [Form IV]
nadiya — فنديه *fa-nādathu* (3v12) [Form III]; مندنا *munāḡḡian* (9r17) [Form III]
nadhara — نذب *nadhartu* (3v2)
 * *našara* — نصرس *nāširīna* (2v23); نصركم *našarakum* (5v15); انصرنا *unšurnā* (6v15); النصرس *al-nāširīna* (6v19–20); نصركم *yanšurkum* (7v10); نصركم *yanšurukum* (7v11)
wadhara — ذروا *dharū* (1r7); لذر *li-yadhara* (8v5)

d. Noun and Adjective Roots

- iḥm* — اثما *iḥman* (8v4)
 † *ākhirah/ukhar* — اخر *ukharu* (2r10)
ikhwān — لاخونهم *li-ikhwānihim* (8r6)
āmin — امنا *āminan* (4v2)
 * *amānah* — امنه *amānatuhu* (1v9)
mu'min — see *amīna* under Verb Roots
anāmīl — الانمل *al-anāmīla* (5v9)
anhār — الانهر *al-anhāru* (6r15)
baṭn/buṭīn — بطنى *baṭnī* (3v3); بطونهم *buṭūnihim* (10v3)
 † *baghy* — بغيا *baghyān* (2v15)
balāgh — البلغ *al-balāghu* (2v19)
 † *jazā'* — جزاهم *jazā'uhum* (4r6, 6r14)
junūb — جنوبهم *junūbihim* (9r13)
jannah — حنه *jannatin* (6r8)
junāḡ — جناح *junāḡum* (1v4)
 * *hasan* — حسنا *ḡasanān* (3v8); حسنه *ḡasanatun* (5v10)
khabāl — خلا *khabālan* (5v4)
 † *khayr* — خير *khayr* (6v19, 7v4, 8v3)
khayl — الخيل *al-khaylī* (2v4)
dunyā — الدنيا *al-dunyā* (2r5, 8v24)
dhunūb — ذوننا *dhunūbanā* (2v9–10, 6v14, 9r20); ذونكم *dhunūbakum* (3r19)
dhurriyyah — ذريها *dhurriyyatahā* (3v6, 3v12)
dhillah — الذله *al-dhillatu* (5r21)
adhillah — ادله *adhillatum* (5v16)
dhū/dhāt — ذو *dhū* (2r5–6); بذاب *bi-dhāti* (5v10)
zawj — زوج *azwājun* (2v8)

- zaygh* — رنغ *zayghun* (2r11)
 † *subhān* — سبحانك *subhānaka* (9r15)
sultān — سلطانا *sultānan* (6v22)
sunan — سنن *sunanun* (6r16)
ḍalāl — ضلل *ḍalālin* (7v20)
ad'āf — اضععا *ad'āfan* (6r4)
'ard — عرضها *'arḍuhā* (6r8)
'azīz — عزيز *'azīzun* (2r5)
'azīm — عظيم *'azīmun* (8v9)
 † *ghufrān* — غفرانك *ghufrānaka* (1v17)
 † *maghfirah* — مغفوره *maghfiratin* (6r7); لمغفوره *la-maghfiratin* (7v4)
ghālib — غلب *ghāliba* (7v10)
ghamm — الغم *al-ghammī* (7r9)
ghayb — الغيب *al-ghaybi* (8v7)
ghayz — بعظكم *bi-ghayzikum* (5v9)
fitnah — الفتنه *al-fitnati* (2r11–12)
 † *farīdah* — فريضه *farīdatan* (10v11)
fiddah — الفضة *al-fiddati* (2v4)
 † *fadl* — فضله *fadli-hi* (8r10); فضل *fadlin* (8r20)
qanāṭir/muqanṭara — القنطير *al-qanāṭiri* (2v3); المعنطره *al-muqanṭarati* (2v4)
la'nah — لعنه *la'nata* (4r6)
muḥḍar — محضرا *muḥḍaran* (3r17)
maskanah — المسكنه *al-maskanatu* (5r14)
maw'izah — مو عظه *maw'izatun* (6r18)
an'ām — الانعم *al-an'āmi* (2v5)
munkar — المنكر *al-munkari* (5r8, 5r19)
nār — النار *al-nāru* (3r1); النار *al-nāra* (6r5)
 * *nās* — للناس *li'l-nāsi* (2r4); الناس *al-nāsi* (2r17)
nisā' — النساء *al-nisā'ī* (2v3); نسا *nisā'an* (10v5)
 * *niṣf* — النصف *al-niṣfu* (10v6)
 † *ni'ma* — نعم *ni'ma* (8r18)
 † *nafs/anfus* — نفسا *nafsan* (1v18); نفسه *nafsahu* (3r17); انفسهم *anfusahum* (5v3); انفسكم *anfusikum* (8r7, 9r1)

e. Pronouns

- † *alladhīna* — الذنن *(2r10, 2r18)*
 † *antum* — انتم *(4v7, 8v5–6)*
naḥnu — نحن *(8v13)*

f. Proper Names

- Jahannam — جهنم *(2r24)*

Zakariyyā — زكريا (3v8 [x2], 3v11)

Nūḥ — نوحا (3v22)

Appendix Two: Words Dotted by Hand D

a. Particles

* *idhā* — اذا (10r9, 10r18)

* *inda* — عند (9v8 [x2])

* *min* — منها *minhā* (9v18); منه *minhu* (10r17, 10r20)

b. Verb and Noun Roots

* *atā* — اتوا *ātū* (9v21, 10r4) [Form IV]

* *amina* — امنوا *āmanū* (9v13) [Form IV]

* *taraka* — ترك *taraka* (10r16); تركوا *tarakū* (10r21)

adnā — ادنى *adnā* (10r4)

dhurriyyah — ذرته *dhurriyyatan* (10r21)

dhālika — ذلك *dhālika* (10r4)

kathura — كثر *kathura* (10r17)

* *nazala* — نزل *nuzulan* (9v8); انزل *unzila* (9v10 [x2]) [Form IV]

nikāḥ — النكح *al-nikāḥa* (10r9)