Exploring the Genesis of Early Arabic Linguistic Thought: Qur’anic Readers and Grammarians of the Başran Tradition (Part II)

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While the early Kūfan tradition of readings displayed overwhelmingly conservative characteristics in its engaged approach to the language of scripture, the Başran reading tradition included among its ranks individuals who were far more radical in espousing contentious theories which were scrupulously applied in the attempts to evaluate, explore and authenticate the linguistic features of scripture’s diction. Consequently, the principal innovators of linguistic thought emerged from among these Başran readers, auspiciously formulating approaches to the development of Arabic linguistic thought. Intriguingly, a number of these early Başran readers were linked with pioneering readers of the Hijāz who were already experimenting with revolutionary models for the evaluation of scripture; and yet it was the Başrans who invigorated these models, effecting a shift from a functional approach to the phenomenon of language and the service of scripture to one in which abstract considerations had become a primary objective. The radical inclination of the Başrans does not imply an acute indifference to the sacrosanct status of scripture, but rather a sheer fascination with the phenomenon of language as a detached endeavour. The readers and indeed the grammarians of Basra, like their Kūfan counterparts, persistently alluded to the ascendancy of authenticated precedents in Qur’anic readings when pondering grammatical hypotheses; they also expressed immense reverence for the sacrosanct status of codices. However, the creative nature of their linguistic abstraction inadvertently resulted in their frequently encroaching upon the very principles which they declared sacred. Furthermore, the radical aspects of linguistic analysis which were actively pursued by scholars such as Kisāʿī (120–89/738–804), Farrāʾ (144–207/761–822) and an isolated number of earlier Kūfans seem to have been ventured much earlier and with exceptional vigour by early generations of Başran readers.

Given the magnitude of the contributions made by individuals such as Khalil ibn Aḥmad (d. 175/791) and Sibawayhi (d. 177/193) to the synthesis and development of Arabic linguistic thought, it is not surprising that the inception of grammatical thought was always anchored to these figures’ endeavours. Indeed, contemporary
scholarship tended to commence its history of this tradition with these individuals and the distinction of their linguistic enterprise. The setting which allowed much of this thought to be refined was prepared much earlier by scholars associated with the reader tradition. The text of the Qur’an and the functional endeavours which it inspired sedately served as the catalyst for this scholarship, furnishing decisive resources for the formulation and elaboration of a theory of language. Biographical literature recounts that luminaries such as Abū’l-Aswad al-Du’ali (d. 69/689), Naṣr ibn ʿĀşim (d. 89/708), Yahyā ibn Ya’mar (d. 129/746), ʿAbd Allāh ibn Hurmuz (d. 117/735), Maymūn al-Aqrān (d. 125/743) and ʿAnbasa al-Fil (d. 120/738) were engaged in the physical preservation of the Qur’anic text which was bequeathed by an oral tradition.¹ However, prerequisite to this enterprise was a profound awareness of the integrated relationship between the Qur’an and the corpus of readings or lectiones.

Michael Carter has maintained that many of these early readers were inappropriately paired with innovation, commenting that the linguistic influence of these so-called pioneers was never readily palpable in the currency of grammatical thought embodied in the earliest texts such as Sibawayhi’s Kitāb. Indeed, primary source material made no mention of the putative works that these figures had supposedly authored.² Carter suggested that there was no definitive means of reconstructing the presumed theoretical composition of their endeavours.³ Kees Versteegh has conceded that improvements in the area of diacritics and vowel markings seemingly characterise the initial linguistic contributions of early Baṣrān readers, although his own synthesis of the development of Arabic linguistic thought indicated that mechanisms constructed for the exigencies of grappling with the meanings of scripture were readily imported into an embryonic linguistic tradition and instinctively used for the cultivation of linguistic thought.⁴ Nevertheless, as far as the earliest indications of linguistic activity were concerned it is the Arabic script which becomes the primary focal point of the early linguists’ attention. This included improving upon the use of diacritical and vowel markings, collating the orthographical idiosyncrasies of Qur’anic codices and the enumeration of verses therein. The endeavours of readers were soon extended to include the syntactic, phonetic and phonological resolution of the language of Qur’anic scripture. Although the authority and ascendancy of the oral tradition of Qur’anic readings were never diminished, greater significance was judiciously attached to the written means of securing scripture’s physical preservation. The Arabic script served as a vehicle for the preservation and promulgation of the Qur’anic diction, and a brief review of recent research on the script’s origins and development would help place the linguistic enterprise of early readers within its proper context.
Origins of the Arabic Script: Refining the Use of Diacritics and Vowel Markings

The question of whether the Arabic script was evolved from either a Nabataean or Syriac archetype remains a rather moot point among scholars of orthography. Werner Diem speaks of the Arabic script as being a derivative of the ‘Aramaic cursive used by the Nabataeans’. He also mentions Jean Starcky’s view, refuted by Adolf Grohmann, that the Syriac estrangelo script served as the principal model for this script.\(^5\) While John Healey affirms the Nabataean origin of the Arabic script, he distinguishes between western and eastern variants: the former had a closer affinity with Nabataean and was prevalent in Hijāz, Syria and Jordan; while the eastern script associated with Iraq may have been subjected to the active influence of Syriac models.\(^6\) Writing much earlier, Nabia Abbott traced the Hijāzi script to the so-called jazm prototype, which she described as a modified variant of the Nabataean script.\(^7\) But she also acknowledged Syriac influences. Indeed, positioning her views around Syriac and Arabic etymologies of the term jazm, Abbott referred to the subtle resemblance between the straight, vertical, horizontal and inclined strokes which were typical of Syriac scripts and the early Arabic scripts developed in Iraq; moreover, she was to suggest tentatively that the term jazm was illustrative of the intrinsic link between the two scripts.\(^8\) The aforementioned views are summarised by Beatrice Gruendler, who relates that ‘The general proportions of this pre-Islamic Arabic script suggest Syriac calligraphic influences. Yet the individual Arabic graphemes descend through Nabataean from the west Semitic Arabic’.\(^9\)

The traditional Islamic accounts of the development of writing highlight the role played by the Iraqi cities of Anbār and Hīrā in the evolution of the Arabic script.\(^10\) Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995) historically distinguished an order of four initial Arabic scripts: Meccan, Medinan, Basran and Kūfan, briefly referring to physical features of the alifs employed in the first two scripts.\(^11\) Abbott did accept the general ‘chronological significance implied in this order’. However, she maintained that the Basran and Kūfan scripts, despite inevitably possessing their own specific features, were effectively heirs to the writing tradition and style of the ancient Iraqi cities of Anbār and Hīrā.\(^12\) She also asserted that the Ḥīran script was the leading script of the sixth century and that it influenced even the Meccan and Medinan styles from which the mā‘il (angular or slanted) and mashq (extended strokes) forms emerged.\(^13\) Nonetheless, accentuating the significance of manuscript evidence per se, François Déroche has suggested that the focus of previous scholarship centred upon an interpretation of the sources which deal with a history of the Arabic script. He believes that the actual manuscripts have been largely overlooked in such approaches, as have the substantive issues of typology and chronology.\(^14\) One might add to this observation that only a sample of manuscripts is available for this earlier period; and
this renders early accounts of the development of the script and its features as provided by biographical sources as being equally valuable. Déroche assertively claimed that generic terms such as mashq were misinterpreted as references to scripts instead of being identified as an individual technique applied to a given script. He reports that the subtle distinctions made by Ibn al-Nadim regarding early scripts were never fully appreciated by erstwhile scholarship. He went on to stress that palaeographic evidence confirmed that there existed a wide range of styles used in these early scripts. The central thrust of Abbott’s argument maintains that while the Meccan and Medinan scripts were initially the main vehicles of Qur’anic transcription, the Iraqi script, complemented by orthographical improvements in terms of ‘vocalisation, punctuation, and perhaps, ornamentation’, which had been ingeniously championed by Başran and Küfan readers, became the principal script of Qur’anic orthography. Abbott confirmed that the all-pervading predominance of the Iraqi script led to the ill-defined designation of all early specimens of Qur’anic manuscripts as Küfic; yet this in no way diminishes the significance of the Hijazí script, which, according to Déroche, was in use in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries. Indeed, he argued that this script uniquely enjoyed venerated status due to its poignant connection with the birthplace of the Islamic tradition.

The Qur’anic codices distributed by ‘Uthmān were transcribed on parchment in the so-called scriptio defectiva. According to Werner Diem, this script followed ‘a Hijazí orthography already established when the Qur’an was written down’, although not fully reflecting the Hijazí dialect. Abbott refers to an idiosyncratic use of diacritical markings to distinguish consonants in early Hijazí scripts. This is confirmed by Gruendler who speaks of a ‘selectivity’ and ‘fluidity’ in the use of diacritical markings in these early texts. However, their peculiar use in early manuscripts tells us something about the genuine utility of Başran linguists’ attempts to improve their form and function. Indeed, Grohmann furnishes some telling examples of their somewhat irregular usage of diacritics, referring to their incidence in papyrus documents (22/643), inscriptions (58/678) and coins (85–8/704–7), although he believed that within these earlier contexts ‘the real aim of adding diacritical dots is not fully appreciated’. Grohmann also mentioned that these diacritics occurred in the form of ‘dashes’ in respect of the older Qur’anic manuscripts. He suggested that the subsequent incidence of shorter dashes may well augur a transitory phase to the introduction of dots. Alphonse Mingana recognised that while ‘a different stroke of the pen’ served to distinguish a number of consonants, this was eventually replaced by the use of a diacritical dot; however, it was his view that specific consonants may have previously enjoyed this distinction.

Developments in the sphere of orthography coincide with the emergence of the first reader-grammarians. Early Muslim sources have always underlined the deliberate
omission of diacritical markings from the ʿUthmānic codices. It was viewed as a means of textually accommodating authenticated vocalic variants.26 Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī (371–444/981–1053), the redoubtable specialist in Qurʾanic readings, stressed the significance of this fact.27 Nevertheless, from the preceding discussion it should be emphasised that the linguists’ contributions to this area of scholarship relate to the systematisation and physical improvement of an existing system of diacritics and vowel markings: figures such as Ibn Yaʿmar and Naṣr were singled out as refining this seemingly primitive system of ʾiʿām (diacritical markings) and naqṣ (vowel markings). Classical biographies reported that the introduction of a revised system of naqṣ served as a prelude to the evolution of linguistic thought; the improvements to diacritical markings were broached consequent to this.28 Versteegh mentioned that ‘The system of vowel signs and that of the diacritical dots were borrowed by the Arabs from the Syrians’.29 Versteegh’s original thesis predicated that borrowing was not confined to a system of diacritics and vowel markings, but rather it could be propitiously extended to grammatical terminology and concepts derived from Greek sources; while this contention was eventually discounted as a result of his own research into the development of early Qurʾanic exegesis, the view that Arabic linguists based their system of diacritical and vowel markings on a Syriac model retains support.30 Referring to a number of earlier studies, Versteegh draws attention to the intriguing correspondence between the Arabic terms fatha, kasra and damma and the Syriac terms ṭēṭōḥā, ḥēḇāṣā and ēṣāṣā. A similar observation was made by Mingana in respect of the first two Syriac terms, but he confined the possibility of external influences to the sphere of diacritics, retorting that the philology and grammar of these early linguists were placed on excitingly ‘fresh bases’.31 It is with this remark that we turn our attention to the linguistic activities of the early Başrān readers.

Biographical reports conventionally hail Abū’l-Aswad al-Du’alī as the architect and founder of the Arabic linguistic tradition. The reports in question speak of his being the ‘first to originate the principles of ʿarabiyya, setting out its course and establishing its analogies’; he is also renowned for having devised a revised system of vowel markings.32 However, Abū’l-Aswad seems to have been active in the area of adding vowel markings to Qurʾanic codices. The Başrān grammarian Mubarrad (d. 285/898), the first official Başrān historian, confidently asserted that Abū’l-Aswad was the first figure to supply vowel markings to the mushaf, besides initiating the model of ʿarabiyya.33 Kūfan sources acknowledge the significance of Abū’l-Aswad: the Kūfan reader Ibn ʿAbīyāsh (95–193/713–809) recounts on the authority of ʾĀṣim ibn Abī’l-Najūd (d. 1277/744) that Abū’l-Aswad was the first to establish the science of ʿarabiyya. Dānī states that having completed the pointing of the mushaf from cover to cover, a task for which he was provided with several scribes whom he versed in the
fundamentals of the use of diacritics, Abū‘l-Aswad composed a concise tract covering their application. Reader interest in the field of naqṣ reflected an extension of their functional activities. This was to develop sui generis into a focal point of authorship to which readers devoted numerous treatises. The system of vowel markings recounted in the Muḥkam relates to the peculiar placement of a dot above, parallel to and below a given phoneme to denote fāṭha, dāmma, and kasra respectively. Dānī records that scribes were instructed to employ red ink to indicate vowel markings, while black ink was used to transcribe the main text of the Qur’anic codex; he also mentions the use of two parallel dots to signify ghunna (nunciation or tanwin). The available samples of early Ḥijāzī manuscripts surveyed by Déroche betray a lack of uniformity in the use of diacritical dots, vocalisation, clusters to indicate the end of a verse, ornamental markers and decorative bands. Nonetheless, it is evident that Baṣrān linguists were attempting to refine previous conventions regarding the use of diacritics and vowel markings, and even the orthography of the codices; however, subsequent ‘Abbāsīd manuscripts indicate the somewhat gradual manner in which this was accomplished.

The biographical accounts of the linguists had awarded the contrivance of the system of diacritics to a succession of early figures. Dānī astutely rationalised the contradiction of plurality in a deed, often referred to as unique, by stressing the topical or geographical dimension of these reports. This perceptive approach allowed him to introduce several figures who were historically connected with developing some aspect of what was seen as the science of grammar. Thus in Dānī’s estimation, and indeed a number of prefaces to the biographical accounts, the developments in diacritics relative to the text of the muṣḥaf constitute the principal contributions of the first reader-grammarians to the science of ‘arabiyya. Dānī refers to further improvements to the use of diacritics which were undertaken by Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. These included the graphical representation of al-hamza (glottal stop), al-rawm (‘slurring’ of the final vowel to the extent that only someone close would detect its incidence) and al-ismām (providing ‘a scent’ or ‘flavour’ of the u-sound when pausing). Dānī describes how Khalīl introduced the symbols denoting shadda (gemination) and its opposite khaṭṭ, deriving them from the actual words shaddīd and khaṭṭīf. As Versteegh notes this system of diacritics was developed by Khalīl for the transcription of poetry. Dānī alludes to this very fact, although he adds that their use in the principal codices (al-maṣūḥīf al-jāmi‘a min al-unmāḥār) was not desirable. He related that Khalīl also dispensed with the use of strategically placed dots to denote vocalic values by replacing them with a small wāw for dāmma, a yā‘ for kasra, and an alif for fāṭha, all being derived from their graphic forms. The surveys of both Abbott and Déroche indicate that the adoption of this new system was not instantaneously achieved.
Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim was a renowned student of Abū’l-Aswad. He is recalled as an eminent authority on readings, gaining a reputation for his enterprise in the area of diacritics and codices. A number of biographical reports state that Naṣr added diacritics to the mushaf and that he devised a system for the division of verses into batches of five and ten using ‘unadorned’ markers. It is even mentioned that Naṣr was responsible for establishing ‘arabiyya. Dānī analyses an interesting observation that Naṣr was the first individual to insert two alifs into the text of the Başran indigenous codices in respect of Q. 23:87, 89, and this highlights the nature of these individuals’ activities. Dānī is swift to dismiss the notion that any particle or letter in the Qur’anic mushaf was the subject of whimsical interpolation. Dānī points out that the Başran codex read ‘Allāh’, in both verses; the other indigenous codices read ‘li’llāh’, having prepositional lāms prefixed to the lafz al-jalāla. Dānī refers to the statement of the Kūfīn reader Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim (157–224/774–839), who claims he saw the latter rendering in the imām codex. Furthermore, Dānī alludes to a report transmitted by Hārūn ibn Mūsā al-Aʿ war (d. ca 170/786) on the authority of ʿĀṣim al-Jahḍari (d. 130/747), both prominent Başran reader-grammarians, confirming that the imām codex read li’llāh in both instances, but that Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim was responsible for appending two alifs to each of the verses (presumably in the Başran codices) such that ‘li’llāh’ was rendered ‘Allāh’. A second report has Abū ʿAmr (d. 154/771) claiming on the authority of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) that the Umayyad governor, ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād (d. 85/686), had been responsible for these additions. This is confirmed by the grammarian-reader Yaʾqūb al-Hadramī (117–205/735–820). Dānī categorically denies any such possibility, claiming that it would be unthinkable for such figures to have the audacity to attempt an act of this nature. Dānī adds that ‘the umma would trenchantly renounce, reject and censure’ such a deed. The point at issue is not the variances between codices, which were plausible, but rather the attempts to explain these variances. In Dānī’s view the potential form of these codices would have been determined by ‘Uthmān and his editorial committee.

Reports of this nature intimate the perceived radical nature of these figures’ linguistic approaches to the text of the Qur’an. Farrāʾs analysis of the orthographical differences relating to this particular example confirms that they were original features of the indigenous codices. The work of Abū Aḥmad al-ʿAskarī (293–382/906–92), Sharḥ mā yaqaʿ fiḥi al-taṣḥīf waʿl-taḥrīf, reports that the governor of Baṣra, ʿAbdullāh ibn Yūsuf (d. 109/722) requested that a system for distinguishing homographs be devised due to the proliferation of the misreading and misspelling of Qur’anic texts. Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim carried out that task, using dots (naqṭ), in singualrs and pairs, which were critically placed above and below consonants. ʿAskarī adds that this system was adhered to for sometime until iʿjām was introduced as a further means of elucidation. It seems likely that the phrase iʿjām was employed
at a posterior juncture to distinguish earlier stages of improvements to this system devised by Naṣr. Dānī recalls that there was little distinction between i'jām and nāqī, stating that the two denoted similar processes. Presenting an analysis of the etymology of these terms, he records that a'jama'tul-shay' idhā bayyantahu connotes 'making something clear'. The improvements to the existing system of diacritics and vowel markings which these individuals developed resulted in their being hailed as innovators. Moreover, scholars such as Naṣr served as vital lynchpins between early readers, who were involved in the functional linguistic analysis of the Qur'an, and the next generation of Baṣrān readers, who developed radical linguistic approaches to this text. The biographical reports state that Naṣr taught readings to Abū Išāq al-Ḥadrāmī and Abū 'Amr ibn al-ʿAlā' (d. 154/771), both important figures in the developing Baṣrān linguistic tradition. It is also related that Naṣr's hurūf, the specific features of his Qur'ānic readings, were narrated by Mālik ibn Dīnār (d. 130/748), an individual noted for his accomplished skills as a scribe.

The Baṣrān linguist Zubaydī (308–79/921–89) reports that Yahyā ibn Ya'mar was the first person to supply diacritics to the mushaf. He recounts the fact that Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728) had in his possession a codex pointed by Yahyā. Referring to a report transmitted in Bukhārī's Kitāb al-Taʿrīkh, Ibn al-Jazarī (751–833/1348–1429) adds that Yahyā acquired his knowledge in readings from prominent companions such as Ibn ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. A scholar who served as the principal informant of Qur'ānic readings for Sibawayhi, Ḥārūn ibn Mūsā, also reports that Yahyā was the first figure to point codices. He is linked with later generations of Basrans such as Abū ʿAmr and Abū Išāq al-Ḥadrāmī, who both 'reviewed' (ʿarāda) readings with him; grammatical opinions ascribed to these two figures reveal a distinct measure of theoretical depth.

One figure who falls outside the geographical confines of the Baṣrān tradition is the reader ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Hurmuz. Zubaydī refers to him as the first to establish ʿarabiyya and states that he was the most learned in naḥw and that he was an expert on the genealogy of Quraysh. Zubaydī reported that for these reasons he decided to include him among the ranks of Baṣrans. Reader literature confirms that he reviewed readings with Abū Hurayra, Ibn ʿAbdās and ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAyyāsh (who is noted for enumerating the verses of Medinan codices). The Medinan reader, Nāfīʿ ibn Abī Nuʿaym, reviewed his readings with him. The other two renowned students of Abūʾl-Aswad are Maymūn al-Aqrān and ʿAnbasā al-Fīl: they are often viewed as veritable equals in terms of their reputation as scholars of grammar. However, it is mentioned that Maymūn was supposed to have augmented the ḥudūd or grammatical definitions of topics outlined by Abūʾl-Aswad, who, according to Zubaydī, presented definitions of al-fāʾil, al-mafʿūl bihi and al-mudāf, together with the hurūf of našb, rafʿ, jarr and jazm.
Rafael Talmon has argued that the contradiction created by awarding primacy to several early scholars of the linguistic tradition has to be attributed to the stages of conscious projection: each figure was invoked as an eponym at different junctures in these cycles of projection; hence the contradictory statements which credit each one of them with primacy in the formulation of aspects of Arabic linguistic thought; likewise, with the introduction of Abū’l-Aswad’s primacy, these previous leaders of pseudo-traditions were reclassified as students of Abū’l-Aswad and passively incorporated into the Baṣrān school. It is suggested that the aim of these processes was to conceal the true origin of Arabic linguistic thought. Talmon also dealt with contradictions within the contrived Baṣrān account of the inception of the linguistic tradition. Talmon concluded that anti-shu‘ubiyya motives were at work. He argued that in these biographical accounts the Arabs were elaborately placed in a position of superiority, as they were recorded as helping the newly converted mawāli master the Arabic idiom. It should be noted that these accounts speak of the pioneering grammarians deciding to establish a system of language analysis to assist the mawāli, thereby addressing the proliferation of the phenomenon of solecisms, tahn. However, despite the detailed arguments, Talmon’s hypothesis fails to elaborate why these tendentious accounts neglected to expunge the significance of non-Baṣrāns within the linguistic tradition. Many of the reports on this topic have a Kūfīan provenance; why would Kūfians, who were supposed to have been provoked by rivalry with their Baṣrān counterparts, have wanted to accentuate and corroborate reports pronouncing Baṣrān pre-eminence in the field of Arabic linguistic thought? Indeed, Ibn al-Anbārī (260–328/874–939), who is recognised for his ardent defence of Kūfīan linguistic concepts, is mentioned by Dānī as citing a report on the authority of the Baṣrān Abū ʿUbayda (d. 210/825) in which primacy in establishing ʿarabīyya is linked to Abū’l-Aswad, Maymūn al-Aqrān, ʿAnbasa al-Fil and ʿAbd Allāh al-Hadramī consecutively. Ibn al-Anbārī must have been aware of the relative historical accuracy regarding the prominence of these scholars in the early years. Dānī emphasised that these luminaries excelled in the area of naqṭ and that their contributions in this respect were peremptively cultivated by successive generations of scholars. Moreover, in Talmon’s endeavour to substantiate the processes of rationalisation occurring within the biographical accounts, he refers to the fact that Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), a Baṣrān, was reluctant to endorse the candidacy of Abū’l-Aswad as the architect of the early Baṣrān tradition. The evidence cited by Talmon in this respect is far from convincing. He alleges that Ibn Qutayba draws his readers’ attention to the less appealing characteristics of Abū’l-Aswad: his parsimonious nature and the fact that he limped; this was supposed to be proof of Ibn Qutayba’s reluctance to deal with a highly suspect tradition. It is difficult to countenance how this last fact can be used to substantiate Talmon’s thesis.
Religious Opposition to the Use of Diacritics and Vowel Markings

The employment of diacritical markings within the text of the mushaf was perceived by a number of senior companions as a controversial development: their presence in codices was initially viewed as an intrusive element seemingly deflecting attention from the Qur’anic text. However, opposition to the use of diacritics may have stemmed from the attempts to implement, expand and refine the format regarding their usage, as manuscript evidence along with primary source material suggests they were indeed used in the early periods. Dānī offers an interesting survey touching upon some of these issues. He recounts the fact that ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿUmar disliked the addition of diacritical markings to codices and further related his remarks concerning the need to ‘denude the Qur’an and mix it not with anything’. A similar statement is attributed to Ibn Masʿūd; and the disapproval of the use of diacritics in codices is maintained by Hasan al-Baṣrī and Muḥammad ibn ʿSīrīn, although as we noted above this latter figure seemingly had in his possession a codex pointed by Yaḥyā ibn Yaʿmar. Dānī mentions the tentative disapproval of this practice in the principal Qur’anic codices; this is followed by an explicit approval of their use in Qur’anic codices employed for pedagogical purposes and typically transcribed from prototypes. He asserts that scholars who were previously apprehensive about the use of diacritical markings finally assented to their inclusion in codices. Hence, Hasan al-Baṣrī is reported as having said, ‘There is no harm therein, as long as certain bounds are not exceeded’. Dānī cites the examples of the Kūfans Ibn Abī Laylā (d. 148/765) and Kisāʿī as both approving of the inclusion of diacritics in codices. One can only conclude that the debate was a protracted concern which might have been specific to types of Qur’anic codices and the extensive nature of the proposed improvements. Dānī emphasises that strict rules had been applicable when administering diacritics to the holy text: he disapproved of the use of black ink for pointing, fearing this might create confusion between scripture and diacritics. He adds that this was a precedent stoically established by the pious ancestors. He asserts that a codex should not combine more than one given reading; red ink should be used to denote harakāt, tanwīn, tashdīd, takhfīf, sukūn, wasl and madd, while yellow ink should be used to denote the hamza. Dānī felt that pointing should be confined to case inflection, thereby obviating possible confusion concerning syntactic function (iʿrāb). It was not appropriate to every individual consonant. Abbôt mistakenly viewed opposition to improvements to the script, particularly regarding the use of diacritical markings, as being played out across an Iraqi–Ḥijāzī axis: the Ḥijāzīs resisted such developments, while the Iraqis championed their refinement. However, it is evident that even within the Baṣrī and Kūfī traditions there was initial disagreement regarding the use of diacritical and vowel markings in Qur’anic codices, although this opposition was gradually surmounted. Indeed, the Ḥijāzīs previously had their own system of
diacritical markings, but it is conceivable that they resisted attempts to reform this script.

The opposition in some quarters to the use of diacritical and vowel markings in Qur’anic codices is paralleled by the disapproval of the effective marking off of verses into batches of five and ten. Ibn Mas‘ūd is reported as having expunged the traces of ta‘shīr (dividing verses into batches of ten) in Qur’anic codices. Mālik objected to the use of red and other coloured ink for the purposes of ta‘shīr, although he permitted the use of black ink. The system of divisions ascribed to Naṣr ibn ʿĀşim would have been construed as a unique development. It was probably the reason why he was accorded primacy in developing ʿarabiyya. Déroche suggests that early Ḥijāzī manuscripts employ a somewhat peculiar method of ta‘shīr. However, as in the case of i‘jām, the use of ta‘shīr was justified on the basis that arguments could be adduced to confirm its practical utility in facilitating the preservation and articulation of scripture. The fact that ta‘shīr acquires an ornamental function intimates the growing maturity of the orthographical tradition and this was to match sophisticated developments made in Arabic linguistic thought.

While diacritical and vowel markings served as features supplementary to the orthography of the Qur’anic text, the established orthographical conventions of the ʿUthmānic codices were held in great reverence. The statement of Mālik ibn Anas (112–79/731–95) concerning the transcription of codices demonstrates this very point. Mālik was asked whether one should adopt the refined methods of orthography in the duplication of Qur’anic codices or indeed adhere to the precedents set by the amanuenses of the first generations of Muslims. Mālik’s response was that one should adhere to the conventions established by the first generation of amanuenses. A similar position is taken by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855). He articulated the view that contravention of the orthography of the mushaf of ʿUthmān was prohibited however minute the nature of encroachment. This seems to have been a position devoutly inherited from the pious ancestors, who viewed the orthographical conventions established by ʿUthmān as sacrosanct.

Even among later Başran and Kūfan protagonists the issue was debated: Ibn al-Anbārī (260–328/874–939), famed for his apologia for the codex of ʿUthmān, censures as presumptuous the orthographical improvements intrepidly proposed by Ibn Qutayba and other Başrans to the transcription of codices. The Kūfan philologist Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1005) takes up the cudgels of this argument with a dogmatic defence of the inviolable nature of the orthography of the early codices. He presented a thesis proposing that the orthography of the Arabs along with its conventions was established via tawqīf (i.e. divinely inspired), extending the orthodox thesis concerning the origin of language (tawqīf al-lughā). It, like grammar and prosody,
was revelationist in source and had been essentially rediscovered by the likes of Abūʾl-Aswad and Khalil ibn Aḥmad. The principal purpose of Ibn Fāris’ exposition of the origin of the linguistic sciences was to emphasise the sacrosanct nature of the orthographical conventions adhered to in the Uthmānic recension of the Qurʾān. It was also a statement about the rectitude of Kūfān approaches to the holy text and a reassertion of religious orthodoxy within this school. The historical tension between readers and grammarians, which had been strained as a result of differences in approaches to the language of scripture, had remarkably resurfaced in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries to take on a Kūfān–Baṣrān axis.

Spheres of Specialisation: A Mark of Maturity

In the same way that grammarians and philologists emerged from among the ranks of readers pursuing areas of learning which defined their own linguistic interests, the advent of specialists in the field of diacritics is likewise a corollary of conceptual advances made within this tradition. Dānī’s preface to his seminal work al-Muhkam fi naqṭ al-maṣāḥif presents an outline of succeeding generations of scholars who were renowned as authorities on orthography and diacritics; moreover, the orthographical conventions they established were adhered to in later scholarship. Dānī mentions that the Baṣrans Baḥshār al-Nāqīṭ and Muʿallā ibn ʿĪsā were second/eighth century specialists in orthography and diacritics. ʿĪsā ibn Minā Qālūn (140–220/756–835) was Medina’s leading authority on diacritics, while for the Kūfāns, Sāliḥ ibn ʿĀṣim al-Naḥwī, an associate of Kisāʾī, was the expert on orthography. Ibn al-Jazārī does mention Baḥshār when recounting the biography of the Muʿtazilite ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd (d. 141/759). Baḥshār is said to have narrated ʿAmr’s hurūf which were derived from Hasan al-Baṣrī. Dānī recalls that Baḥshār was a mentor of Yaʿqūb al-Ḥadrāmī, the Baṣrān reader. Muʿallā narrated the reading of ʿĀṣim al-Jaḥḍārī and he was responsible for transmitting his enumeration and division of Qurʾānic verses, which fell under the purview of early readers. He is given the epithet of al-Warrāq; moreover, he shows not only a determined interest in ikhtilāf al-maṣāḥif, but he is cited as an authority on peculiar features of their orthography. Even the Andalusians had their orthography specialists: Dānī confirms that Ḥakīm ibn ʿĪmrān was his city’s authority on naqṭ and that he was a companion of Ghāzī ibn Qays (d. 199/814), who was the first figure to introduce the Andalusians to the reading of Nāfī. Ghāzī is also noted for circulating Mālik’s Muwaṣṣa. The emergence of a class of specialists from among these readers, whether they were grammarians, philologists or indeed experts in orthography, inexorably points to the growing maturity of Arabic linguistic thought.

Intriguingly, biographical accounts preserve references to the fact that the new system of diacritics had displaced the system previously in the employ of earlier generations
of Hijāzī readers. It was reported by Dānī that the Medinan reader Qālūn observed
that the codices of the Medinans included two hamzas juxtaposed in the reading of Q.
12:53. He remarks that, from a perspective of recitation, this was not something
approved of by Hijāzī readers as they favoured tashil, the facilitation of the glottal
stop, in such instances. Qālūn adds that Abū Ja‘far Yazīd ibn al-Qa‘qā‘ (d. 127/745)
was one of those readers who omitted the hamza in his reading of this verse and at
other analogous junctures in the Qur‘an.79 However, despite the fact that Medinan
readers omitted the hamza in their recitation, they had implemented the Başra
system of diacritics and graphically represented the hamza using yellow ink in their
codices, while red ink was used to indicate vowel markings. He added that this was
certainly not the convention (madhhab) of their predecessors, nor indeed a feature of
their vernacular in readings, but it was evidence of the established status of the Başra
system of orthography and diacritics. Qālūn asserts that even those who inherited the
Medinan style of readings, the Andalusians, adhere to this system of diacritics. Dānī
reports that he had examined the codices of the Medinans written at the time of Ghāzi
ibn Qays and noticed that all of these codices adhered to the Başra format. He also
confirms that the Meccans adopted the Başra model of diacritics and vowel
markings, despite the fact that their predecessors had adhered to different
conventions. Indeed, the inference here is that there was an existing Hijāzī system of
applying diacritics and vowel markings to codices, but it was superseded by the
unique Başra model. Dānī does quote Ibn Ashta al-Iṣfahānī (d. 316/970), the author
of a work cataloguing differences among codices, who reports that the musheaf of the
Meccan Ismā‘īl al-Quṣṭ (100–70/718–86), whose exploits in grammar we shall detail
shortly, employed a system of vowel markings which contravened the consensus
generally accepted in this respect. His placement of dots to indicate damma and fatha
were not in concord with the Başra system: a dot placed above a consonant was used
to designate a damma, while fatha was distinguished by virtue of a dot placed
alongside a consonant.80

The ‘ancient’ system of diacritics to which Qālūn referred is spoken of in Farrā’\’s
Ma‘ānī al-Qur‘ān. Farrā‘ adduces a report on the authority of Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna
(107–98/725–814), which mentions that a transcribed verse, Q. 2:259, was presented
to Zayd ibn Thābit who proceeded to apply dots to various consonants, thereby
furnishing the reading nunshizuhā (Ibn Kathīr, Nāfī‘ and Abū ‘Amr read the verse
nunshiruhā); he also altered the orthography of the verb yatasanna by suffixing a hā’
to it.81 In a further instance Farrā‘ explains that he noticed the codex of Ibn Mas‘ūd
differed with the consensus regarding the reading of Q. 49:6: the consensus reading
was fa-tabayyanaţ, while ‘Abd Allāh’s codex was pointed to read fa-tathabbatâ, in
this particular verse and in two further occurrences in Q. 4:94. The Küfans Kíṣa‘i, Ḥan
ma ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt (d. 156/772) and Khalaf ibn Hishām al-Bazzâr
(150–229/767–844) all emulate Ibn Mas‘ūd in his reading of these verses. The use of diacritics to distinguish consonants and readings must have been widespread in these relatively early periods. Activity in this area was soon followed by a more comprehensive approach to the language of scripture and one which explored syntax, phonology and philology.

Theoretical Bases for the Resolution of Linguistic Thought: Grammarians contra Readers

The application of diacritics and vowel markings to readings provides a crucial conjunction between an operational approach to collating readings and one in which abstract considerations in terms of grammar are palpable. The collating of seemingly infinitesimal orthographical variances among codices was a well-established genre (ikhilāf al-mašāḥif); it was logically complemented by an appreciation of the specific features of linguistic variations distinguishing the readings or lectiones. The nature of the abstract relationship between the Qur‘an and its readings is a subtle one. The readings or qirā‘āt constituted the variants which were the recorded differences concerning a confined ‘letter’ (harf) or ‘letters’ (hurūf) within a verse and this implicitly predicates agreement regarding the remaining linguistic configuration of that verse. These differences predominantly operated on the morpho-syntactic and morpho-phonological levels. Thus, within a given verse of the Qur‘an, the vocalic value of one particular morpheme may vary according to the typical way in which it was transmitted and received, but it hardly represents a complete restructuring of the linguistic constitution of that verse. The readings were further regulated through reference to isnād and ‘arabiyya. One should bear in mind that variant readings are predominantly univocal. Proceeding technically, each authenticated instance of a variant was confirmed as an intrinsic constituent of Qur‘anic canon and it was valid in acts of worship (its recitation in a typical ritual prayer).

The fact that the ‘Uthmānic codices were theoretically free from diacritical and vowel markings allowed substantiated readings, which consisted of vocalic and consonantal variants, to be mentally superimposed upon the text; hence the argument that these codices served as mnemonic devices. The imposition of these codices dictated that readings featuring exegetical glosses and textual interpolation, which infringed upon the confines of the consonantal outline of these texts, were not tolerated. Therefore, if one were to consider the aforementioned verse (Q. 2:259), which is a rather lengthy verse concerning which Zayd supplied diacritical markings to furnish the nunshinizâhā and yatassannah readings, the differences therein were confined to these two instances and to the term a‘lām, which can be read in the jussive as given or as the imperfect indicative, a‘lamu. In other examples of substantiated differences the nature of variation is much less acute. The infinitesimal nature of variances in respect of
pre-Uthmanic and post-Uthmanic codices led John Wansbrough to question their real purpose. He inferred that they were remnants of a conscious attempt to sustain the perception of fixed canon: preoccupation with unity in terms of scripture (and indeed community) was part and parcel of the processes of projection. However, this view overlooks the symbolic devotional value of scripture, and the collective purpose of all these readers’ efforts was the physical preservation of scripture and the accentuation of its liturgical import. Wansbrough does concede, however, that the paraenetic phraseology of the Qur’an was primitive in terms of its origin and form.  

Ensuing generations of reader-grammarians focused more attention on an explanation of the grammatical reasoning behind the linguistic phenomena inherent in Qur’anic readings. One figure who epitomises the shift from the functional to the abstract approach to scripture is the Baṣrî ʿAbd Allâh ibn Abī Ishāq al-Ḥadrāmî (d. 127/735 or 137/745). He is directly linked with the students of Abūʾl-Aswad: Maymûn al-Aqrān, Yahyâ ibn Yaʿmar and Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣîm, whom tradition identifies as his teachers in the science of Qur’anic readings. His own readings were transmitted by his students: ʿĪsâ Ibn ʿUmar al-Ṭhaqafi (d. 149/766), Abû ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlî and Hārûn ibn Mûsâ al-ʿIrâw, all important figures in the early Baṣrî tradition. He was noted for promoting analogical models for the examination of linguistic material, often criticising poets for contravening established syntactic conventions. An example of this is found in Fârâ’s Maʿânî al-Qurʾān. Quoting from both Ruʿāsî and Abû ʿAmr, Fârâ recounts Ḥadrāmî’s criticisms of the grammatical inflection in the poetry of Farazdaq (d. 110/728), claiming that it contravened the standards of ʿarabîyya.

The work of the third century linguist and historian Muḥammad ibn Sallām (d. 232/847), Taḥaqāt fiḥūl al-shuʿarâ’, presents an intriguing report which allows one to gauge the grammatical significance of arguments forwarded to justify linguistic features of readings. The grammarians were concerned with identifying the ʿilla (cause) governing grammatical case endings: how does one reconcile the linguistic phenomena in these readings within a conceptual framework of grammar? The report in question contends that ʿĪsâ Ibn ʿUmar and Ḥadrāmî both read Q. 6:27 with the verb nukadhthib(a), inflected for naṣb (accusative). Abû ʿAmr, Yûnis ibn Ḥābib (d. 182/798) and Ḥasan al-Ḥâṣrî favoured the raf’ (nominative) reading of the verse, nukadhthib(u). Ibn Sallām accordingly asked Sibawayhi which reading is the finer (al-waḥj) and Sibawayhi expresses his preference for the latter one. Ibn Sallām then queried the origin of the naṣb rendering: Sibawayhi promptly informs him that ‘they heard the reading of Ḥadrāmî and followed it’. Ibn Sallām continues on the subject of the reader-grammarians’ selection of readings by referring to a number of other verses. He mentioned the fact that Ḥadrāmî’s student ʿĪsâ Ibn ʿUmar cited parallels in the poetry of the Arabs to justify his reading of Q. 24:2 and Q. 5:38, al-zâniyatu(a)
and al-sāriqat(a), with both participles, which are seemingly inchoative, taking an accusative ending. Zubaydi’s biographical treatise relates that this was also the reading of Ḥadrami, ‘Īsā’s teacher. Zubaydi referred to this reading as ‘khlāf (contrary to) that articulated by the qurrā’.

Curiously, Sibawayhi’s Kitāb presents a detailed grammatical rationalisation of the raf’ reading, adducing taqdir (textual restoration) to demonstrate that the raf’ reading could be reconciled with the grammarians’ thesis of ‘arabiyya. He clearly resorts to the use of parallels in respect of language usage and poetry to validate this reading. However, it is quite obvious that he favours the naṣb reading, not because of its having a finer isnād, but because he argues that imperative clauses of this nature are best governed by naṣb. Sibawayhi asserts that ‘some have read (the two verses) with naṣb, which in terms of ‘arabiyya is veritably cogent’. However, he is compelled to relent that the ‘āmma amongst the qurrā’ will consider only the raf’ reading. Indeed, one finds that even Farrā’ suggested that the naṣb reading was acceptable. Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb described Ḥadrami as ‘enjoying equality with naḥw’, while Ibn Sallām referred to him as the first to ‘split qiyās and extend analogies’.

Grammarians such as Ḥadrami sought parity with a synthetic model of ‘arabiyya in their linguistic justification of Qur’anic readings. Conversely, the qurrā’ adhered to the processes of narration and the relevance of isnād. The naṣb reading is attested in the reading literature. This, however, in no way disguises the speculative processes vigorously pursued by grammarians in selecting a given reading. Moreover, the inclination to speculate grammatically was to dominate the linguists’ approach to authenticating scripture, distinguishing them from their reader peers. Sibawayhi skilfully negotiated the issue of variation between the aforementioned readings. As a linguist he explicitly endorsed the naṣb rendering because of its greater compatibility with his thesis of ‘arabiyya; yet he accepted that the consensus among the readers was to favour the nominative reading. It is this refined resolution of Qur’anic readings which sustains later Arabic linguistic thought. Grammarians are tangibly realigning the objectives of such endeavours. The service of scripture is somewhat eclipsed in these approaches. The early proliferation of the genre of ma‘ānī and ihtijāj compositions serves as a lucid and cogent reminder of a qualitative shift within the developing Arabic linguistic tradition.

A further reference to Ḥadrami’s eccentric approach to readings occurs in his analysis of Q. 54:49 which reads innā kullā shay’in khalāqānū hu bi-qadar: the issue here is the fact that the particle kulla is in the accusative (inflected for naṣb) and an explanation for this is required. Sibawayhi confirmed that this is a perfectly acceptable form of ‘arabiyya: it is frequently found in the diction of the Arabs. Indeed, he equates such constructs with the maxim Zayd(ān) darabtuhu. He then adduced a second verse (Q. 41:17) wa ammā Thamūd(ā) fa-hadaynāhum to illustrate
its incidence; however, he guardedly qualifies his acceptance of this second reading by stating that ‘conventions adhered to in readings should not be contravened because al-qirā‘a is determined by precedents’. The consensus reading among the qurrā‘ was Thamūd(û), taking a nominative case ending. The literature which surveyed the corpus of shawādhdh or anomalous readings attributed the nasb reading to two of Sibawayhi’s predecessors: Ḥadramī and ‘Īsā ibn ʿUmar, who were both aspiring grammarians.92

Versteegh has argued that there is not only evidence of a linguistic awareness among Sibawayhi’s predecessors, but also that such figures were preoccupied with grammatical issues.93 He was dealing with the rather sceptical approach taken by Carter towards those reports which refer to the introspective grammatical endeavours of these pre-Sibawayhian figures. Versteegh does concede, along with Carter, that biographical literature tended to exaggerate the nature of contacts between Sibawayhi and his so-called predecessors; and likewise the nature of their grammatical discourse is viewed as contrived and deliberately shaped by posterity.94 Talmon’s attempt to resolve the issue of who was the first grammarian of Arabic led him to conclude that Ḥadramī was the most probable candidate for this honour.95 Ḥadramī was the putative author of a text entitled Kitāb al-Hamz.96 Abū ʿAmr was impressed by the work’s explanation of causes in respect of grammar. Ḥadramī’s text on hamz is not extant, but later linguists composed works on this subject.

The figure of ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar is influential in terms of his use of grammatical projection in the justification of readings and their authentication. Along with being a student of Ḥadramī, he was also linked with the Başran readers ʿAṣim al-Jahdarī and Hasan al-Baṣrī.97 Ibn al-Jazaarī reports that he narrated the hurūf of the Meccans Ibn Kathir and Ibn Mujāyshin. We are informed that his own reading was circulated by Hārūn ibn Mūsā and Khalīl ibn Ṭamīḥ. The Kūfī philologist and reader Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām notably stated that ʿĪsā had his own ikhtiyār in readings.98 He adds that this was based upon madhāhib ‘arabiyya (linguistic considerations); moreover, this seemingly departed from the qirā‘a of the principal readers. Abū ʿUbayd is then quoted as saying: ‘It was disapproved of by most people for he seemed predominantly influenced by a propensity to nasb, if he was able to find a way to that’.99 This propensity to nasb is identified in one of the aforementioned readings in addition to two further instances: one of which was Q. 11:78 which reads ḥunna athar(ā) lakum. This is confirmed in Ibn Khālawayhi’s survey of anomalous readings, Mukhtasār al-badī‘.100 Zubaydī reports that it was contrary to what the grammarians agreed upon and it conflicted with consensus readings.101 The same is said of his reading of Q. 111:4 (ḥammalat(ā) al-ḥaṭāb), in which the participle is inflected for nasb. Zubaydī also adduces a further verse Q. 34:10, to which nasb is similarly applied wa‘l-ṭayr(ā). The whole
point of the grammarians' interest in such verses was to ponder the grammatical 'illa which accounts for inflection: how does one justify nāsh in the aforementioned instances? ʕIsā ibn ʕUmar took the view that an elided vocative agent explained the nāsh reading. Versteegh perceives the significance of the attempts to explain the 'surface structure of the verse' in this instance as evidence of the grammarians employing ellipsis (ḥadhf) as 'an explanatory device'.

He observed that Abū ʕAmr's grammatical justification of the reading sought a link with the ellipsis of a verb.

The biographical literature reports that ʕIsā was the author of two texts on grammar. These were supposedly praised in some poetry by Khalil ibn Ahmad. Mubarrad claims to have seen one of these works, commenting that it focused on ʿusūl. He is alleged to have engaged Ḫisāʾī in grammatical disputation. Carter had argued that ʕIsā ibn ʿUmar's legacy to the study of grammar was never a substantial one for the simple fact that the material nature of his contribution to the Kitāb is negligible; indeed, the putative works which he is supposed to have authored are not mentioned therein. Versteegh emphasises once again the fact that biographers tended to inflate material which related to contacts and scholarly influences. Versteegh accepted that Ḥadramī and ʿIsā ibn ʿUmar had 'introduced the concept of qiyās (a form of analogical reasoning) in an attempt to regulate the language of the Arabs, and they probably laid the foundation for a terminological apparatus in morphology and syntax'. Versteegh strangely ventures the view that the linguistic approach of these two figures 'led to the correction of the text of the Qurʾān', something Sibawayhi would never countenance. However, the presumed activities of these earlier reader-grammarians led to the formulation of a synthetically devised model of language which precariously allows hypothetical projection and justification on the basis of linguistic considerations to thrive; it can hardly be described as 'correction of the text of the Qurʾān'. The textual integrity of the Qurʾān was as sacrosanct to Ḥadramī and ʿIsā ibn ʿUmar as it was to Sibawayhi, who also indulges in the same forms of grammatical speculation. Linguistic inquisitiveness prevails among them all. Thus if Versteegh accepts that Sibawayhi's innovation was the fact that he was no longer focusing exclusively on an 'explanation of the Holy Book, but the analysis and explanation of the linguistic facts' which relate to this book, then by implication the spirit of such an approach was pioneered by these earlier figures. Indeed, a cursory glimpse of the efforts of early readers confirms the thesis that what is being witnessed here is a simple but subtle shift in focus from the service of scripture to the abstract exploration of its grammatical features. Sibawayhi, far from disassociating himself from the efforts of his predecessors, actually attempted to sanction their endeavours: the readings we examined above demonstrate that his sympathies were with reader-grammarians such as Ḥadramī and ʿIsā. Moreover, Ruʾāsī and other earlier Kūfāns
had scholarly contacts with these early Başrans and it is not improbable that they had instructively shared interests in methodologies, perspectives and objectives.

**The Significance of the Hijāzī Connection**

In Talmon’s survey of the conceivable existence of a school of grammar in the Hijāz, which was referenced to Farrā’î’s allusions to a collectivity of nahwiyyūn in his Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān, the assumption was that Başran biographers deliberately played down the importance of the grammatical activities of this region’s linguists. Scholars not distinctly connected with Başra were provided, where appropriate, with Başran credentials, or they were simply relegated to the periphery of Arabic linguistic thought and their intellectual endeavours trivialised.107 Nevertheless, it is evident that these tendentious accounts failed to erase the trace of non-Başrans and therefore one wonders if the notion of a clearly defined conspiracy to shape retrospectively a Başran predominance, thereby distorting the whole history of the linguistic tradition, misconstrues what was effectively a cursory venting of prejudices. The biographical account which was manifestly critical of non-Başrans, although on occasion this work even criticises Başrans, is Abū Taayib al-Lughawi’s Marātib al-nahwīyīn. His work recounted the lives of around sixty linguists and readers. The sources for his criticisms of readers and Kūfans can be traced to prominent figures in the Başran camp. One Başran, Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869), quoted throughout the Marātib, is especially derisive of a number of non-Başrans. The Marātib ridicules the idea that there existed corresponding centres of linguistic learning outside of Iraq, rejecting the grammatical activities of the so-called Hijazī grammarians.108 However, the nexus between early Başran and Meccan luminaries, whose knowledge in grammar is renowned, remains salient.

The chronological pedigree of the Meccan tradition of readings places Mujāhid ibn Jabr (d. 104/722) as a key link between the early authorities of this tradition and subsequent luminaries who went on to excel in grammar, readings and exegesis. Mujāhid’s contribution to exegesis is renowned. His association with Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/688) proved to be a critical channel for the transmission of a profusion of exegetical reports which inexorably shaped the literature of tafsīr.109 Biographical reports keenly emphasise his importance in this respect, noting that on three occasions during his review of readings with Ibn ‘Abbās, which are said to have numbered thirty, Mujāhid enquired of ‘every verse and its significance’.110 His mentor, Ibn ‘Abbās, was viewed as an authority on the readings of Ubayy ibn Ka’b (d. 20/641 or 22/643), Zayd ibn Thābit (d. 45/665) and ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭalib (d. 40/661); the same matrix of authorities who, along with Ibn Mas‘ūd, were primary sources for Kūfan readings.111 Mujāhid was the mentor of the following figures: ‘Abd Allāh ibn Kathīr (45–120/665–737), Ḥumayd ibn Qays (d. 130/747), Ibn Muḥaysin (d.
123/740), A‘mash (60–148/680–765) and Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ. To place this into perspective, Ibn Kathīr and Ḥumayd are associated with the functional forms of scholarship (the collating of readings and the enumeration and division of verses); Ibn Muḥayṣin is a figure to whom we shall turn shortly; A‘mash and Abū ʿAmr were proponents of a more radical blend of linguistic thought. Abū ʿAmr described Ibn Kathīr as more learned in ʿarabīyya than Mujāhid; while one of Sibawayhi’s early mentors, the traditionist Hammād ibn Salama (d. 167/784), was one of his students.112 Other students included Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qusṭānṭīn, also known as Qust, whose peculiar system of vowel markings we mentioned above, and authorities in readings such as Ismāʿīl ibn Muslim (d. 160/777), Jarīr ibn Ḥāzim (85–170/704–87), Shibl ibn ʿAbbād (70–148/690–765) and Maʿrūf ibn Mushkān (d. 165/782).113 The reading of Ibn Kathīr was for many centuries distinguished among the Meccans; it was included in Ibn Mujāhid’s Kitāb al-Sabʿa as the prominent reading of Mecca. The Baṣrānīs’ ultimate hegemony in the field of linguistic thought tended to obscure the true measure of the early Hijāzī readers’ linguistic enterprise. Indeed, the radical element in the approach to authenticating the language of scripture, which becomes an indelible feature of the methods adopted by Baṣrān and Kūfī authorities, seems to have been nurtured much earlier by the Meccan reader Ibn Muḥayṣin and it is to this figure that we now turn our attention.

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jahmī, Ibn Muḥayṣin, is one of the most significant reader-grammarian pioneers of linguistic thought. His approach to the authentication and justification of the language of scripture presaged a revolutionary stage in the evolution of Arabic linguistic thought and one in which linguistic considerations were given greater authority and currency. This innovative approach ostensibly formed a crucial foundation for the models of language developed by luminaries of the Baṣrān tradition. Biographical accounts state that Ibn Muḥayṣin was of mawālī extraction, reviewing his readings with Mujāhid ibn Jabr, Dirbās and Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (d. 975/714). Īsā ibn ʿUmar and Abū ʿAmr are linked with this figure; the latter, along with Shibl ibn ʿAbbād, reviewed readings with him. Ibn al-Jazārī asserts that Īṣā ibn ʿUmar and Ismāʿīl ibn Muslim only heard (samīʿa) his ḥurūf. Scholars of the reading tradition emphasise an important distinction between samīʿa and qaraʿa; the second method of instruction is perceived as yielding greater accuracy in the acquisition and promulgation of readings.114 Referring to Sālim’s monograph on Īṣā ibn ʿUmar, Versteegh has suggested that Īṣā’s contacts with Ibn Muḥayṣin were brief: he presumably encountered him during the annual pilgrimage. Indeed, the reference to Īṣā’s having ‘heard’ his ḥurūf suggests that this is probably the case. The true strength of Ibn Muḥayṣin’s influence seems compelling given that the forms of analysis one associates with Ibn ʿUmar were first espoused by this Meccan reader.115
In the preface to his *Kitāb al-Sab‘a* Ibn Mujāhid explains that Ibn Muḥaysin formulated an ikhtiyār in which he differed with his fellow Meccans, adding that it was based on ‘madhīhī *arabiyya*. He claims that this led the Meccans to shun his readings due to their contravening the consensus among readers. This resulted in the Meccans favouring the readings of Ibn Kathīr. This peculiar fact is confirmed by Ibn Mujāhid who reports that Ibn Muḥaysin ‘constructed and organised (readings) according to the principles of *arabiyya*. Quoting Ibn Mujāhid, Ibn al-Jazarī recalls that Ibn Muḥaysin applied himself wholly (*tajarrada*) to qirā‘a; moreover, he regretted that his readings conflicted with the Ḥāfīzī *Uthmānic* codex. This ultimately prevented him from including these readings amongst the qirā‘āt al-mashhūra. While differences among readings and codices are of an infinitesimal nature, they are always technically linked to the concept of precedents: unsubstantiated readings impinged upon the liturgical value of scripture. Abū Ṣubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām states that Ibn Kathīr, Ḥumayd ibn Qays and Muḥammad ibn al-Muḥaysin were the principal readers of Mecca, although Ibn Muḥaysin was the most learned and most capable in *arabiyya*. Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī reports that Ibn Muḥaysin was of Qurayshite lineage: he was a grammarian who read the Qur‘ān with (Ibn) Mujāhid. One of Ibn Muḥaysin’s protégés, Shībīl ibn ‘Abbād, was a mentor of Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qustantīnī, who composed a treatise of grammar which was derived by Abū Ḥātim in the *Marātib*. It is alleged that this figure travelled to Baṣra and experienced at first hand the linguistic endeavours of the Baṣrans. He is reported to have swiftly discarded his own work upon realising the sophistication of the Baṣrans’ models of linguistic thought, although this did not deter him from compiling a second treatise. We noted above that Qust’s personal codex employed a system of diacritics which adhered to the ancient conventions of the Hijāzīs. Biographical reports state that despite the fact that Abū Ḥātim was a student of Akhfash, he harboured a deep dislike of his mentor. Indeed, he apparently accused Akhfash of plagiarising Abū ‘Ubayda’s *Majāz al-Qur‘ān*. Zubaydī seems to have had recourse to Abū Ḥātim’s collection of readings, *Kitāb al-Qirā‘āt*, which he refers to during his quotation. In citing from this text, Zubaydī mentions the endeavours of a figure by the name of ‘Alī al-Jamal, a Medinan grammarian, who produced ‘a worthless treatise on the subject of grammar’. Zubaydī adds that it was Abū Ḥātim’s surmise that Akhfash had relied upon this work when composing his own grammatical tract.

Talmon referred to these figures’ linguistic activities as proof of the existence of grammatical traditions of learning outside of Iraq. Ibn Muḥaysin’s linguistically inspired approach to readings seems to have left its mark on his many students within the early Baṣran tradition. However, the official accounts of the history of the linguistic tradition attenuated the role played by individuals like Ibn Muḥaysin,
dismissing their role as mentors of Başran luminaries. Abū Tayyib describes Ibn Muḥaysin as slightly able in some aspects of grammar, and states that the ‘Kūfans greatly admired him and acquired much of their knowledge and readings from this figure’. In reality, the converse was true: he was a principal mentor of several important Başrans. Moreover, his students went on to invigorate the debate on the importance of ‘arabiyya in the authentication of readings. It became the focus of maʿānī texts, also featuring in the works which aimed at formulating a theory of language. The reading of Ibn Muḥaysin did eventually take its place among the reputable Qur’anic readings, but this was achieved only once posterity had applied to it the rigours of traditional authentication, justification and narration. It was designated the eleventh of the so-called fourteen readings.

Later Başrans: From Functional Relevance to Abstract Theorising

Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ was ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar’s peer among the Başrans. He was born in Mecca and died in Kūfa. He was trained in readings and philology, gaining an accomplished reputation in both disciplines. Likewise, he took an avid interest in poetry. Abū ʿUbayda reports that Abū ʿAmr’s home was filled to the brim with profane literature; however, in the later years of his life he became very ascetic and consequently burnt all that he had amassed in terms of this literature. Abū ʿUbayda reminisced over the fact that he was the most learned person in qirāʾāt, ‘arabiyya, the battles of the Arabs and poetry. The biographical accounts stress his association with the Bedouin Arabs. On one occasion, Abū ʿAmr was asked concerning his system of ‘arabiyya, ‘does it encompass the entire speech of the Arabs?’ Abū ʿAmr admitted that it does not, and emphasised the importance of the phenomenon of frequency within his system of ‘arabiyya, such that divergent material is classified as dialectal. He is quoted as an authority on philology some fifty-seven times in Sibawayhi’s Kitāb. The functional works attributed to Abū ʿAmr include a text on waqf waʾl-ibtidāʾ and a further text entitled Kitāb Marsūm al-muṣḥaf; Dānī refers to him frequently as an authority on codices in his Kitāb al-Muqniʿ. However, linguists from Abū ʿAmr’s generation were now focusing on the composition of literature of a more profane nature and perspective; and this augurs an important shift in emphasis as far as the corpus of Arabic linguistic thought was concerned. Abu ʿAmr was said to have composed commentaries on poetry, a book on proverbs (amṯāl) and most portentously a work entitled Kitāb al-Nawādir. The nawādir genre was popular among generations of linguists of both the Kūfan and Başran traditions. Qāsim ibn Maʿn (d. 175/791), Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī (d. 213/828), ʿĪsāʾi and Ibn al-Aʿrābī (150–231/767–846) were Kūfans who composed nawādir texts, and even Abū ʿUbayd devoted two chapters of his encyclopaedic Gharib al-muṣannaf to the nawādir phenomenon. The Başrans ʿUyun ibn Ḥabīb, Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215/830) and Yaḥyā ibn al-Mubārak (126–202/744–817) were all authors of
authoritative works on this subject. Abū Zayd is recalled as Sibawayhi’s informant for philological material in the Kitāb.\(^{129}\)

The nawādīr works catalogued and often contrasted exotic as well as peculiar philological data attested in the language of selected Bedouin tribes, focusing on applied aspects of etymology, dialectology and morphology. The material in question was to assume a critical role in the substantiation, elucidation and evolution of grammatical theories which were then applied in the justification of the linguistic features of Qur’anic diction and its readings. The resort to a broader corpus of data for philological and grammatical purposes reveals a greater conceptual intricacy in these scholars’ attempts to evolve Arabic linguistic thought. A similar trajectory can be plotted for the genre of works on gharīb and lughāt: they begin with the Qur’an as their specific focus of study but gradually shift to material of a more profane nature, which incidentally serves to illustrate the linguistic tenor of Qur’anic canon. Once the material is synthesised and resolved it re-enters the sphere of exegetical literature, serving in a utilitarian capacity. These sophisticated cycles of development would confirm that these genres of literature have considerable historical depth.

Abū ʿAmr is portrayed as a paragon of religious orthodoxy. His discourse with the Muʿtazilite ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd in which Abū ʿAmr refuted the Muʿtazilite conception of waʿd and waʿid is engagingly recounted in Qifti’s Inbāḥ.\(^{130}\) His students, who included Khalīl ibn ʿĀhmād, ʿUmmūs ibn Ḥabīb, Aṣmaʿī, Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī, ʿAḥyā ibn al-Mubārak and Abū ʿUbayda, were key players in the Baṣrī tradition, critically developing much of the literature and thought of this school. Ibn Mujāhid remarks that among the designated readers no one had more mentors than Abū ʿAmr: he studied in Mecca, Medina, Kūfah, Baṣra and, driven by an interest in philology, he spent extended periods traversing Bedouin regions. Taking into account an assumed hyperbole employed in biographical notices of this kind, the influence of Abū ʿAmr and the extent of his repute are hardly figments insidiously created by biographers. His influence is seemingly discerned in the general trajectory taken by Baṣrī linguistic thought in its radical approach to the linguistic justification of scripture. However, it is remarkable to consider that this approach, which was to be employed by later Baṣrī and Kufan linguists, was seemingly nurtured by earlier figures such as Ibn Muḥayṣīn.\(^{131}\)

While a number of Abū ʿAmr’s linguist peers pursued linguistic considerations in the justification and selection of readings, it is Abū ʿAmr whose criticisms of the linguistic features of peculiar readings of scripture resonate in primary source material of both Kufan and Baṣrī provenance. Among the commonly adduced examples which illustrate the rather dynamic and yet prescriptive nature of Abū ʿAmr’s approach to the linguistic evaluation of readings deemed grammatically
anomalous is Q. 20:63, *inn(a) hādhāni la-sāhirāni*. Abū ʿAmr took the view that the predicate of *inn(a)* was governed by an accusative marker: this would render the dual demonstrative to read as *hādhayni*. While principal readers differed over whether the *inn(a)* particle was geminated or quiescent, they all agreed that the *hādhāni* rendering was an authenticated one. Abū ʿUbayda’s *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, a text which operates within the same boundaries as the *maʿānī* type works, reports that Abū ʿAmr, ʿĪsā Ibn ʿUmar and Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb referred to the need to distinguish between orthographical idiosyncrasies and their relative articulation (*lařz*) which predicated that the verse ought to be recited with an *accusative* rendering, but its transcription as (*hādhāni*) was plausible, a distinction to which one of the earlier Baṣrān authorities had referred.132

Abū ʿUbayda recalls that it was also possible to adduce parallels in the speech characteristics of the tribe of Baṣrū Kināna which substantiated the nominative reading. This tribe employed the dual demonstrative marker (*alif*) to denote accusative and genitive instances of inflection. Nonetheless, the later literature of *tafsīr* along with grammatical commentaries was to emphasise Abū ʿAmr’s rejection of the nominative reading. This was compounded by the seemingly conspicuous circulation of reports attributing the origin of what was perceived as grammatical irregularities to the errors of scribes and the remarks of the caliph ʿUthmān that the *muṣḥaf* comprised irregularities and that the Arabs would ‘put them right’.133 These remarks were supposedly expressed when he was presented with the codex prepared by Zayd ibn Thābit. The possible motive for such reports was the desire to undermine readers’ declarations that they were merely adhering to authenticated precedents when defending specific Qurʾānic readings. It is evident that reports of this nature served the grammarians well as they allowed them to indulge in linguistic pedantry.

Gauging the Kūfān grammarians’ reaction to these dramatic developments, one finds that Farrāʾ locates parallels in the diction of the Arabs to support the consensus readings. He expressed the view that it was imperative to respect the sacrosanct status of codices when evaluating readings. Farrāʾ subtly alludes to differences among the *qurrāʾ* concerning Q. 20:63, stating that ‘certain readers claimed that this was *laḥn*, but we should continue reading thus to avoid contravening the *Kitāb*’.134 Farrāʾ then recalls the reading of Abū ʿAmr and this figure’s insistence that: ‘It has reached me on the authority of one of Muḥammad’s companions, peace be upon him, who said, “The *muṣḥaf* has *laḥn*, but the Arabs will put it right.”’ This report would seemingly justify Abū ʿAmr’s stance. However, Farrāʾ says of this, ‘I wish not to contravene the *Kitāb*’, referring to the consonantal outline of the *muṣḥaf* which supported the nominative (*hādhāni*) reading. At another juncture in his *Maʿānī*, Farrāʾ seemingly embraces the orthodoxy of the readers in stating: ‘Adherence to the codex, if it can be related to an aspect of the speech of the Arabs and the readings of the *qurrāʾ*, is
preferable to contradiction therein’. He then recalls Abū ʿAmr’s reading of Q. 20:63 and a second verse also subjected to Abū ʿAmr’s criticisms, Q. 63:10, concerning which alleged alterations to the codex are proposed, and says, ‘I would not have the audacity to commit such an act’. Farrāʾ’s criticisms of Abū ʿAmr are misleading as he himself tends to get embroiled in the criticism of readings which contradicted his own prescriptive linguistic conventions. The second reading which was also subjected to the emendation of Abū ʿAmr was Q. 63:10. The consensus reading was fa-āṣaddaqa wa akīn min al-ṣāliḥīn. Abū ʿAmr read wa akīn, adding the wāw while suggesting it was coordinate with the preceding verb āṣaddaqa. Farrāʾ declared that Abū ʿAmr inserted a wāw into the Kitāb (Qurʾan), adding, ‘I do not approve of that’. One must bear in mind that Farrāʾ’s reference to this verse is set out while discussing an entirely different sura and hence the interfaced nature of his grammatical exposition. However, in his analysis of the verse in question in its actual sura, Farrāʾ is able to justify grammatically the jussive reading (akīn) by referring to the discrete nature of the conjunctions introducing the verbs in question: the former is preceded by a fāʾ and the latter by a wāw. But he pronounces that the reading with a wāw (akīn) was permissible and that it could be sourced to the qirāʾa of Ibn Masʿūd. The Meccan readers Mujāhid and Ibn Muhaysin are among a number of readers who also favour the akīn reading. Besides, even Farrāʾ substantiates this reading on the basis that the orthographical conventions of the Arabs predicated that they would often elide the wāw and alif in scripts. To all intents and purposes some later generations of Başrans did not accept the reading associated with Abū ʿAmr nor the attempts to justify it on the basis of orthographical irregularities. Concerning this very verse Q. 63:10, the Başran trained linguist Nahḥās (d. 338/949) reports that Hasan al-Basri, Ibn Muhaysin and Abū ʿAmr all read akīn, citing Ubayy and Ibn Masʿūd as their authorities. He then recalls the arguments advanced by the reading’s supporters concerning the anomalies of the Arabic script: it was supposed that wāws and alifs were invariably omitted from the text of the mushaf. Nahḥās argues, adducing the opinion of Mubarrad, that if this were the case, why was this convention not adhered to at other analogous junctures in the mushaf? The fundamental point in the labyrinth of these arguments is the fact that Abū ʿAmr is not only adhering to a given reading on the basis of his own linguistic preferences, but rather he is rejecting an alternative. The transition from functional relevance to abstract theorising was almost complete.

The Başran Readers

Presenting a synopsis of the biographical pedigree of the Qur’anic reading tradition, the seventh/thirteenth century work of the historian and traditionist Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabi refers to seven principal companion readers whom this tradition
sententiously distinguished as sources of Qur’anic readings: ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, ʿAlī ibn ʿAbī Ṭālib, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, Zayd ibn Thābit, Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī and Abū Dardāʾ; their readings would have been theoretically sourced to the Prophet. Although other eminent companions are referred to, these figures were the main authorities from whom subsequent generations of readers acquired their Qur’anic readings; indeed, even companion figures such as Ibn ʿAbbās and Abū Hurayra are recognised as having reviewed readings with authorities among these seven eponyms. Ensuing generations of readers were placed in a sequence of chronological classes (ṣabaqāt). This was a hierarchy upon which the whole reading tradition was predicated in terms of its primary sources. Readers were guided by the unyielding principle that qirāʾāt were governed by precedents: they were conveyed orally through the delicate mechanisms of ḥarf, ikhtiyār and musḥaf. The ṣabaqāt and akhbār compilations, whether they were biographical dictionaries or prosopographic in format, have an important role to play in deciphering the history of both the linguistic sciences and the reading tradition. The argument that material from biographical sources is unreliable, because of the fact that its contents are consciously shaped by dogmatic expediencies and not historical reality, can be addressed by corroborating such material with contributions found in primary source material. In terms of Qur’anic readings it is always the case that there is no single companion figure serving as the exclusive source of readings for a particular city, but rather a panoply of individuals. Variances among readings are mostly confined to specific consonantal and vocalic values. Therefore grammarians and readers are effectively engaged in a discourse, not surrounding the body text of scripture, but focusing upon these infinitesimal distinctions of readings. Two significant conclusions can be drawn from this understanding of the reading tradition: firstly, the liturgical import attached to these readings; and secondly, by implication, the saliency of the oral nature of this tradition and the physical attempts to preserve it.

The reading tradition of Baṣra, just like its Kūfān counterpart, traced its pedigree to scholars among the aforementioned seven eponyms of Qur’anic readings. Indeed, the figure implicated as the inventor of grammar, Abūʾl-Aswad al-Duʿāli, was said to have reviewed his readings with ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Relying upon earlier sources, Dhahābī states that Abūʾl-Aswad read with these two figures and that he narrated (riwāya) the readings of ʿUmar, Ubayy and Ibn Masʿūd. The companion Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī’s association with Baṣra is notable. He reviewed the readings of two Baṣran protégés: Ḥiṭān ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Raqqāshī (d. ca 70/690) and Abū Rajāʾ al-Uṭāridī (d. 105/724). Similarly, Ibn ʿAbbās occupies a revered place within the Baṣran reading tradition: he is said to have reviewed the reading of Sulaymān ibn Qatta on three occasions. He is connected with figures such as Uṭāridī and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. These scholars were pre-eminently responsible for
transmitting the stock of readings (hurūf) to later generations of Basran readers and among these we find individuals such as Yūnus ibn ʿUbayd (d. 139/757), Shihāb ibn Shurnufa (d. 160/777), ʿĪsā ibn ʿUrwa and Sallām ibn Sulaymān al-Ṭawil (d. 171/788). Additionally, individuals like ʿĪsma and Sallām are also linked with prominent Kūfan authorities and this inter alia would have seemingly served to influence the idiosyncratic features of hurūf and ikhtiyārāt adopted by scholars of the Basran tradition. The first figures identified as pioneers in the inception of Arabic linguistic thought were notably the same figures spoken of as early Basran readers: Abūʿl-Aswad, Yahyā ibn Yaʿmar, Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim, ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar, Ibn Abī Iṣḥāq al-Ḥaḍramī and Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ.

Surveying the Kūfan reading tradition, we noted that its readers tended to be very conservative in their general approaches to the language of scripture; this fact is observed in areas of learning such as determining pauses and points of inception in the recitation of scripture or indeed the authentication of Qurʿanic readings. It is among later generations of emerging grammarians such as Ruʿāsī, Kisāʾī, and Farrāʾ that a more radical inclination took hold. However, there does exist previous references in the biographical literature to Kūfan individuals whose prescience in the grammatical analysis of scripture substantiates early Kūfan participation in the genesis of Arabic linguistic thought. Nevertheless, among early Basran readers this inspired creativity is more pronounced, becoming a sustained feature of both its grammatical and reading constitution, as we shall witness below.

ʿĀṣim al-Jahdārī (d. 130/747) reviewed his readings with Sulaymān ibn Qatta and he read (qarāʾa) with Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim, Ḥasan al-บาشī and Yahyā ibn Yaʿmar. ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar reviewed his readings with him. He is clearly linked with impressive reader-grammarians protégés, and their influence is apparent in Jahdārī’s somewhat irregular approach to balancing orthographical anomalies between the physical representation of readings in codices and their recitation. According to Ibn Qutayba, it was said that Jahdārī’s method for dealing with perceived grammatical irregularities in readings, such as the ones contested by Abū ʿAmr and those displaying similar ‘peculiarities’, Q. 4:162, Q. 5:69, and Q. 2:177, was to adhere to the consonantal outline of the ‘Uthmānic codices when transcribing his personal codex, but to ‘emend’ the reading in his actual recitation, paradoxically undermining the purpose of the codices and the authority of the oral tradition. Jahdārī’s method provided a means of circumventing grammatically ‘irregular’ readings. He thereby fused both the traditional and the innovative in respect of his approach to these readings. Jahdārī adduced the statement of ʿUthmān, relating to the alleged existence of laḥn in the codices which the Arabs would correct, as sanctioning his actions therein; but it is certainly indicative of the revolutionary approach taken by Basran readers and grammarians to the language of scripture. It had little to do with emendation and was motivated by prescriptive pedantry.
Having previously recalled the grammatical exploits of Abū ʿAmr it is worth noting that this did not diminish his reputation as a reader. He was viewed as a principal authority in readings along with his peer Hasan al- Баshire. The readings of Abū ʿAmr and Sallām ibn Sulaymān predominated in Baṣra. Ibn Mujāhid reports that Abū ʿAmr’s selection of readings was invariably in agreement with the ikhtiyār of his predecessors. Ibn Mujāhid emphasises his ingenuity in ʿarabiyya, but tempers this with the proviso that he adhered rigidly to precedents in readings. In a report related by ʿAṣmaʿī, Abū ʿAmr utters the comment, ‘If I were not aware that readings were regulated by precedents, I would have read a given harf in such and such a manner’. Indeed, Abū ʿAmr is asked by ʿAṣmaʿī to explain how one is supposed to distinguish readings which had an identical consonantal outline, but were vocally dissimilar? Abū ʿAmr replies, ‘That can only be determined by what was heard on the authority of our first shaikhs’. Thus the reader literature focuses upon Abū ʿAmr’s stringent adherence to precedents in respect of qirāʾa. He had an impressive array of teachers who were linked with Kūfān and Baṣran luminaries. He boasted of his training with the Ḥijāzī readers, claiming that he emulated them in their reading conventions. Shuʿba ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/777) once said that his reading was destined to become isnād. Indeed, due to its popularity in Baṣra, Ibn Mujāhid was obliged to select it as the city’s standard reading.

One also finds among a number of later Baṣran and indeed Kūfān readers a tendency to collect and collate readings while seeking to place them within a grammatical framework. This was at a juncture in the history of the linguistic tradition when grammarians tended to view themselves as members of a scholarly élite. These works, like the maʿānī type compositions, were to serve as a prelude to the hujja and ihtijāj genre of works, but they also precipitated reader-based collections in which emphasis was placed upon riwāya (narration). Yaʿqūb al-Ḥadrāmī, whose grandfather was one of the prominent pioneering grammarians, helped shape the form and content of this type of literature, taking a specific interest in the grammatical justification of Qur’anic readings. He is described by Yāqūt as an authority on readings, grammar, philology and jurisprudence. He reviewed his readings with principal luminaries of the Baṣran tradition. Moreover, included among his students was the Baṣran philologist and reader Abū Hātim al-Sijisti. Abū Hātim recalls that Yaʿqūb was the most knowledgeable regarding the subject of hurūf and differences in respect of Qur’anic readings together with their grammatical explanation. Dānī reports that the majority of Baṣrāns after Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ adhered to his ikhtiyār. Indeed, the itinerant geographer Muqaddasī (334–90/945–1000) mentions that the reading of Yaʿqūb was predominant in Baṣra. Ibn Ashta recounts that the imams in Baṣra continue to adhere to his readings. The biographical literature records that a contemporary of Yaʿqūb, Ayyūb al-Mutawakkil (d. 200/819), disagreed with his
fellow Başran on the subject of readings. Ayyûb was recognised for his strict adherence to precedents in relation to readings.\textsuperscript{157} Abû Ḥâtim al-Sijistâni describes him as a very able scholar, and relates that Ayyûb once said he was only able to ‘overcome Yaʿqûb al-Hadrami by virtue of āthâr’, which would seem to relate to the selection of readings.\textsuperscript{158} Given Yaʿqûb’s interests in pursuing the perspectives of grammarians when collating readings, it seems plausible that linguistic considerations pervaded his approach therein.

Drawing from earlier sources, Yâqût mentions that Yaʿqûb was the author of a work entitled Kitâb al-Jâmi\textdegree{} which comprised differences regarding aspects of readings, and that each ħarf (vocalic or consonantal value) was traced to its reader. This work may well have been inspired by one of his predecessors among the Başran readers, Hârûn ibn Mûsâ al-Aʾwar. Abû Ḥâtim al-Sijistâni reports that Hârûn was among the first Başrans to collate variant Qur’anic readings, pursuing asânîd for the so-called anomalous (shûdhâh) readings. He is described as both a grammarian and reader. It is reported that he narrated the readings of ʾĀṣîm al-Jâhdirî, ʾĀṣîm ibn Abî al-Najûd, Ibn Kathîr, Ibn Muḥaysîn and Ḥumayd ibn Qays, making him an important source of Qur’anic readings for Sibawayhi and his peers; and indeed, he also features as an authority on codices in Dâni’s works. We mentioned above that Ĥârûn and Yaʿqûb were cited in a number of reports suggesting that Naṣr ibn ʾĀṣîm appended alîfs to certain verses in the Başran codex. In line with the types of works that one would associate with readers, Yaʿqûb was the author of a text entitled al-Wagal al-tamâm.\textsuperscript{159} He was also a mentor of the grammarians Abû ʾAmr al-Jarmî (d. 225/839), and Abû ʾUthmân al-Mâzînî (d. 249/863), whose influence within the Başran grammatical tradition was enormous, particularly in the dissemination of the Kitâb. The eminent status enjoyed by a figure like Yaʿqûb within the late Başran reading tradition gives some idea of the innovatory texture of linguistic thought which held sway within this tradition.

Towards the Zenith of Arabic Linguistic Thought

The refined status of Arabic linguistic thought prior to the advent of luminaries such as Khalîl ibn Aḥmad and Sibawayhi seems indisputable. Later generations of the grammarians of Başra had taken the rudimentary instruments of linguistic analysis developed by readers and furnished them with greater theoretical depth and purpose, and this is reflected in the ensuing literature which linguists composed. Khalîl is traditionally celebrated as the principal mover behind Arabic linguistic abstraction: his links with Hijâzî readers, who were already indulging in the suppositional linguistic analysis with which his peers and pupils were to become synonymous, were striking. He is quoted some 600 times in the text of Sibawayhi’s Kitâb.\textsuperscript{160} A number of biographical accounts suggested that the Kitâb comprised a digest of ʿĪsâ ibn
Umar’s putative text on grammar supplemented by the theoretical thought of Khalil, which was then given synthesis by Sibawayhi. In terms of authorship Khalil has several works attributed to him on the subject of prosody, confirming his fame as the first figure to introduce metres to classify the poetry of the Arabs. He also composed treatises on music, and the celebrated Kitāb al-ʿAyn. He was the author of a text entitled Kitāb al-Naqt waʾl-shakl. Although works on the subject of diacritics were ascribed to early Başrân readers such as Naṣr ibn ʿĀşim, Dānī states that Khalil ibn Aḥmad was the first figure to ‘organise and outline it (naqt) in a work which recalled its ʿīlal or explanations’. Scholarly enterprise in the field of diacritics and orthography had the Qur’anic codices as their principal point of focus.

Carter does acknowledge that Khalil, together with Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb, was a mentor of Sibawayhi. However, according to Carter the earlier grammarians were engaged in ‘a rigidly analogical type of reasoning which not only led occasionally to absurd conclusions, but which also could claim no systematic authority’. However, Carter had earlier conceded that, in addition to grammatical terms introduced by Sibawayhi, the Kitāb drew from a reservoir of primitive nomenclature in circulation among his predecessors. Moreover, much of this previous terminology was added in statements attributed to several of Sibawayhi’s mentors. The primitive nomenclature recalled by Carter included the following terms: ism, fiʿl, ʿ harf, raʿf, naṣb, ǧarr, ǧazm, damma, ḍāṭha, kasra, waqf, iʿrāb, iʿjām, bināʾ, maʿrifa, nakira, tanwīn, ḥarakā, sukūn, idāfa, isnād, ʿ atf, ʿ imād, sabab, taʿalluq and imāla. He argued that these terms might be linked to the science of prosody, but many of these terms were consistently in the employ of early readers.

Among the many examples in Sibawayhi’s Kitāb typifying the way in which models of grammar were systematically applied to the justification of the linguistic features of scripture is Khalil’s explanation of the jussive akun in Q. 63:10; this was the reading questioned by Abū ʿAmr. Khalil supports this reading by referring to a verse of poetry attributed to Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā:

Badā liya anñi lastu mudrika mà maqā
Wa lā sābiq(in) shayʾan idḥā kāna jāʾiyyān

The phenomenon of suppletion (tawāhhum) is identified in this verse: namely the inferred ellipsis which explains perceived grammatical idiosyncrasies in the inflection of certain terms; in this instance sābiq(in), which in theory is conjoined to mudrika, but whose ending is reconciled with a grammatically restored bi-mudrika. Baalbeki drew attention to the phenomenon of tawāhhum in his examination of this grammatical device, propounding the view that later grammarians (fourth/tenth century onwards) were never fully aware of the technical value of grammatical terms coined by earlier authorities. Nevertheless, using this grammatical technique,
Khalil was able to substantiate the reason for the jussive in the verse (akun) and confirm that it was a genuine form of 'arabiyya: hence the reading was grammatically justified and accepted. This mode of rational analysis formed the nucleus of ma'ānī type works. In the Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān Farrāʾ refers to the exploits of the Medinan grammarians and their justification of a peculiar reading of Q. 6:137. This lectio featured a physical separation between the muḍāf and the muḍāf ilayhi. Despite the fact that the maṣāḥif al-Shām upheld such a reading, Farrāʾ dismissed the attempts of the Hijāzī grammarians to justify this separation through the citation of poetry exhibiting similar linguistic features. Farrāʾ argued that the poetry adduced to support this grammatical idiosyncrasy is misconstrued. These examples indicate that the procedures for justification and evaluation were predominant during these early periods. These early readers were clearly invoking a rational grammatical model for the purposes of justification. The linguists of Kūfa and Baṣra were to take these intricate strands of scholarship and furnish them with greater definition and resolution.

Yūnūs ibn Ḥabīb is revered as one of Khalil’s loyal disciples: he was a gifted expert in poetry, appraising the compositions of contemporaries such as Farazdaq (d. 110/728), Jarīr (d. 113/731) and Akhtal (d. 113/731). He was also an authority on Khalil’s linguistic thought; he is described as having his own analogies in respect of grammar and unique madḥāhib therein. That one of the most distinguished authorities on Arabic philology, the Baṣran Abū ʿUbayda, recounts that for forty years he had visited the study-circles of Yūnūs recording philological material, is sufficient testimony to his standing. Indeed, Kūfan linguists were also connected with this figure. The works which are attributed to Yūnūs broadly confirm the extent to which grammarians had systematically widened the scope of their enquiries, marking a perceptible shift in emphasis towards collating profane sources used to service grammatical theories as opposed to the applied exposition of the holy text. Thus not only is Yūnūs mentioned as the author of the following works: Kitāb Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān al-kabīr, Kitāb Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān al-ṣaghīr, but he also composed Kitāb al-Lughāt, Kitāb al-Nawādir al-kabīr, Kitāb al-Nawādir al-ṣaghīr and Kitāb al-Amthāl.

The classical biographical compilations recognise the creative brilliance of Sibawayhi together with the exceptional nature of his Kitāb. These accounts relate that it was apparently saved from obscurity by the efforts of two Baṣran grammarians: Abū ʿAmr al-Jarmī and Abū ʿUthmān al-Māzīnī, who as students of the only figure memorising its contents, Akhfash al-Awsāt, had played a significant role in preserving and transmitting the work. Akhfash was Sibawayhi’s principal student and he was also the author of an extant Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān text which was supposed to have been the blueprint which Kūfan such as Kisāʾi and Farrāʾ had emulated when producing their
own texts. Versteegh has pointed to the research of Bernard and Humbert in which it is argued that grammarians such as Akhfash and Jarmi were more creative and independent in their elaboration of grammatical thought. It is suggested that the reformulation of the history of the Baṣran tradition by Mubarrad meant they were cast in a new light as propagators of the Kitāb and its teachings. While naturally accepting that the Kitāb was ‘the founding text of Arabic grammatical science’, Carter also refers to the findings of both Bernard and Humbert concerning the role of Mubarrad in imperiously positioning the Kitāb at the fulcrum of Arabic linguistic abstraction among Baṣrans. Intriguingly, much is made of the fact that Mubarrad was the author of a text entitled al-Radd ‘alā Sibawayhi; and indeed other Baṣrans such as the renowned philologist Ašmā‘i was supposedly critical of Sibawayhi’s interpretation of poetic loci probantes (shawāhid). He appears to have conspired to embarrass Sibawayhi during a study session held at the main mosque in Baṣra. Mubarrad subsequently claimed that his early refutation was written during a period of intellectual adolescence; his work was the subject of an intrepid riposte by the Egyptian linguist Ibn Wallād in his book entitled Kitāb al-Intiṣār. The tenor of such material suggested that it was well after Sibawayhi’s death that the Kitāb was expediently acknowledged as the magnum opus of the Baṣran tradition and furnished with numerous commentaries. The significance of recognising the distinction of the delayed acceptance of the Kitāb and its reception among Baṣran linguists is critical, for it betrays the concomitant existence of a tradition of Arabic linguistic thought which paved the way for the Kitāb. It therefore embodies years of linguistic thought, a living scholarly tradition to which numerous figures among Sibawayhi’s predecessors had contributed.

Notwithstanding the composition of numerous philological treatises, which in themselves represent expressions of allegiance to a specific tradition of learning, grammarians of Kūfa and Basra continued to produce a profusion of treatises and monographs on grammatical concepts, theories and thought. The many commentaries on Sibawayhi’s Kitāb confirm the true measure of its contribution to the Arabic linguistic tradition; however, it was never the case that a single text and the teachings therein exclusively dominated the tradition. The authorship of grammatical tracts and treatises by Baṣran and Kūfīan scholars remained a broad and variegated enterprise. This is reflected in the literary output of Mubarrad. He was the author of al-Muqtadab, the contents of which were critically shaped around the text of Sibawayhi’s Kitāb, along with a number of commentaries exploring aspects of the Kitāb. This included an introductory treatise and a commentary on the text and its poetic shawāhid. In addition to these previous texts, he was also the author of a work entitled al-Ziyāda al-muntaza‘a min Kitāb Sibawayhi and a Ma‘nā Kitāb Sibawayhi.
Mubarrad was also the author of several ma‘ānī-type texts, confirming Basran interest in this genre of writing: Ma‘ānī al-Qurān, Kitāb al-Ḥurūf fī ma‘ānī al-Qurān ilā Sūrat Ṭāhā.¹⁸⁴ There is also a definitive selection of separate monographs and grammatical treatises which he composed: al-Madkhal ilā l-naḥw, Kitāb al-lrāb, Kitāb al-Taṣrīf (morphology), Kitāb al-Ḥurūf and Kitāb al-İştiqāq (etymology); and he is the author of several works on prosody and poetry: Kitāb al-‘Arūd, Kitāb al-Qawāfī, Qawāfī id al-shī‘r and a Kitāb Darūrat al-shī‘r. In addition to the aforementioned works he composed a number of orthographical treatises, including Kitāb al-Khaṭṭ wa‘l-hijāz. It is also significant that he compiled a work entitled Kitāb Iḥtiyāj al-qurrā‘ wa i‘rāb al-Qurān, a text which would have systematically presented a grammatical apologia of readings.¹⁸⁵

These broad and eclectic trends in authorship, and indeed approaches to linguistic analysis, were continued by successive generations of Basran and Kūfān luminaries. Abū Bakr ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 316/927) authored the celebrated Usūl fi‘l-naḥw, which is said to have epitomised Basran attempts to evolve a canonical model of grammar. Yaqūt reports that the Usūl combined the finer detail of Sibawayhi’s Kitāb with the Masā’il of Akhfas and those of the Kūfāns. He also mentioned that the Usūl contravened the grammatical consensus of the Başrans on several topics, declaring that ‘grammar remained recalcitrant until it was restrained by Ibn al-Sarrāj with his Usūl’.¹⁸⁶ Ibn al-Sarrāj also composed the following array of works: a treatise on ıştiqāq; an apologia for Qur’anic readings: Iḥtiyāj al-qurrā‘; a commentary on Sibawayhi’s Kitāb; several orthographical treatises; texts supplementing the grammatical issues of the Usūl; and a work on poets and poetry. The comprehensive approach to the authorship of grammatical texts remained salient. The 4th/10th century grammarian Rummānī composed commentaries on the following works: Sibawayhi’s Kitāb, the Masā’il of Akhfas, Jarmū’s Muhktašar fi‘l-naḥw, Māzīni’s al-Alif wa‘l-lām, Mubarrad’s Muqtađab, the two texts of Ibn al-Sarrāj: al-Usūl fi‘l-naḥw and al-Mūjaz fi‘l-naḥw, Zajjāj’s Ma‘ānī al-Qurān and an exposition of Zajjāj’s Kitāb al-Jumal.¹⁸⁷ The Arabic linguistic tradition embodied a hybrid core of linguistic thought and concepts distilled through centuries of classical scholarship.

The reader biographical literature offers very terse accounts of Khalīl and Sibawayhi. The latter’s notice merits a few lines only; he is described as being imām al-nuḥāt and it is stated that he narrated the readings of Abū c Amr ibn al-c Alā‘.¹⁸⁸ No reference is made to his having been the author of any of the functional type of compositions that one associates with early readers (the enumerating of verses in codices; the division of verses; differences among Qur’anic codices). Later generations of Başran and indeed Kūfān grammarians do continue this functional enterprise. Akhfas al-Awsat was the author of a tract on ıṣtiqāq (etymology), two works on prosody, including an extant tract entitled Kitāb al-Qawāfī, a work entitled al-Waqq al-tamām and two
works on grammatical definitions: al-Masā'il al-kabîr and al-Masā'il al-ṣaghir. This is in addition to his extant text on the subject of Maʿāni al-Qurʾān.189 Many others among his Başran and Kūfan peers composed a similar repertoire of works. Indeed, the Başran Ibn Kaysān (d. 299/912) enjoyed scholarly associations with both Thaʾlab and Mubarrad. He was the author of the following works: al-Masaʾilʾ al-ʿalā madhhab al-nahwiyyīn mimnā ikhtalaf fīhi al-BAṣṣirīyyūn waʾl-Kāfiyyūn; Kitāb al-Kāfī fī l-nahw; Kitāb al-Qirāʾāt; Kitāb al-Waqf waʾl-ibtidāʾ; Gharīb al-hadīth, consisting of 400 pages; Kitāb al-Mudhakkār waʾl-muʾannath; Kitāb al-Hijāʾ; and numerous other treatises.190 The authorship of both abstract and functional type tomes is testimony not only to the early reader origins of Arabic linguistic thought, but the fact that the full gamut of Arabic linguistic abstraction was now to be used in the defence and elucidation of the more traditional reader sub-disciplines. Having attained an exceptional level of sophistication following its early struggle for dominance with the reader tradition, the tradition had assertively achieved its independence and had nothing more to prove. It could now return to the service of scripture; its abiding legacy was that it had succeeded in furnishing the reading and exegetical traditions with an array of highly developed theoretical instruments for the resolution, authentication and appraisal of scripture. However, equally, the tenacity of the readers, in their resolute adherence to the hegemony of precedents, had ensured that the functional disciplines that they had cultivated were now consummately defended by rational means. Religious orthodoxy emerged triumphant.

The Question of the Existence of Schools: Fiction or Reality?

It is perhaps worth reflecting briefly upon the question of the existence of discrete traditions of language studies as exemplified in the presumed antithesis between Başran and Kūfan approaches to grammatical analysis. To a certain extent this discussion is linked to our earlier review of the origins of Arabic linguistic thought (Part 1 of this article). Carter would argue that if one accepts that grammar only comes into being with Sibawayhi’s Kitāb, then there can be no nominal notion of schools of grammatical thought before the inception of this text. Versteegh’s hypothesis would by implication furnish two traditions: the older Iraqi school favoured by the qurrah and perpetuated by the Kūfans; alongside the innovative tradition championed by the Başrans and Sibawayhi in particular. This would also be a view favoured by Talmon, although the essence of his theory locates an exterior channel for the initial diffusion of linguistic thought and concepts. The presence of well-defined distinctions in terms of terminology and methods of approaches would be cited by these two figures as proof of the existence of discrete linguistic traditions. Thus for Carter, the text of the Kitāb does not presuppose the existence of opposing traditions: one is dealing with differences between personalitites as opposed to separate linguistic schools or theoretical exceptional approaches. Baalbaki has spoken
of an antithesis in approaches to the phenomenon of language which can be explicitly referenced to Sibawayhi’s *Kitāb* and Farrā’s *Ma'āni*. Jonathan Owens’ painstaking analysis of the corpus of grammatical literature spanning the formative years of this tradition argues that it is during the period of the Baṣran Zajjāj (241–311/854–923) that grammatical opinions were polarised around traditions and this was a grammar which had been distinctively based on the analyses of language elaborated by Sibawayhi and Farrā. This view predicates a much later provenance for the inception of schools than that supposed by Weil. However, Owens shows that the intricate methods and features of Farrā’s grammatical synthesis differed considerably with that of Sibawayhi and later Baṣrans; this synthesis purposefully served as a resource and reference point around which the posterior Kūfan tradition could position itself.

Versteegh’s earlier survey of Arabic linguistic thought alluded to interesting parallels between the Baṣran and Kūfan linguistic traditions and those of the ancient Greek schools of grammar: the Alexandrians and the Stoics. The Baṣrans were likened to the Alexandrians, who were purportedly noted for their propensity towards order and Aristotelian logical definitions in their analyses of grammar. Conversely, the Kūfans, like the Stoics of Pergamon, represented the anomalists; they were receptive to a broad but discursive corpus of linguistic material in the formulation of grammatical principles. Versteegh stressed that such a comparison was mistaken, indeed flawed; however, it provides a constructive parallel of the distinctions which are conventionally cited when separating the characteristics of language analysis of Baṣran and Kūfan linguists. The Kūfans are viewed as the exponents of *samāʿ*, which connotes the authority of generally received and accepted linguistic conventions. This allowed ample latitude in the formulation of grammatical precepts through the integration of a greater corpus of linguistic material, even when such material infringed upon formulated grammatical principles. For that reason, the designation of the Kūfans as anomalists appeared fitting. Baalbaki does argue that this propensity to *samāʿ* is attested in Farrā’s approach to the formulation of grammatical principles.

One writer, whose examination of the history of the Kūfan linguistic tradition remains valuable, Mahdi Makhzūmī, argued that the primacy granted to *samāʿ* by Kūfan grammarians was one of the legacies of the city’s affinity with the tradition of Qur’anic readings. Later Kūfan grammarians had merely replicated the methodology of early Kūfan readers, who respected the integrity of the vast corpus of readings on the basis of substantiated precedents. However, as we have noticed from previous examples, this is not necessarily reconciled with some of the critical positions taken by Kisāʾī and Farrā towards readings which contravened their derived rules of grammar. Makhzūmī went on to describe the Baṣrans as the exponents of a profoundly synthetic analysis of language, using the tools of *taqdis*
(suppletion), ta'wil (rationalisation) and qiyās (analogical reasoning) to reconcile anomalies not accommodated in their theories. They were not inclined to alter or rectify their general grammatical precepts. According to Makhzūmī, Başran grammar therefore betrayed an efficiently organised constitution; he intimates that a regimented fascination with the abstract, philosophical and logical dimensions of linguistic thought tellingly prevailed.

However, granting the merit of these assumed methodological distinctions, Carter makes a significant point that Sibawayhi consistently balances his acceptance of qiyās against samāʿ; accordingly, ‘he can hardly be claimed as a representative of either school’.197 Furthermore, for Carter ‘substantive differences between the Başran and Kūfan are impossible to state precisely’.198 Indeed, it can be argued that the amenability of the source material sustains both perspectives in terms of an assumed opposition in approaches. Carter has recently returned to this issue of the antithesis between Başran and Kūfan approaches to grammatical analysis, employing a legal parallel to explain the Başrans’ supposed propensity to qiyās. He argues that Başrans sought to eliminate istiqrāʾ (deduction), whose imposition meant that the corpus of linguistic data was effectively fluid. Circumvention of istiqrāʾ allowed the Başrans to restrict this corpus, countering the greater compass and latitude furnished by the Kūfans’ approach.199 Carter decided that the origins of the Kūfan–Başran dichotomy can be traced to differences regarding istiqrāʾ.200 He therefore concludes that the historical reality of this opposition can only be dated as far as the mid-tenth century.201 However, texts whose provenance precedes this period: Thaʿlab’s Kitāb al-Majālis and the celebrated Iṣlāḥ al-Manṭiq of Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244/858), feature examples which clearly betray an antithesis in terms of opinions articulated by grammarians and the methodology used to formulate them. These early grammarians are arguing about substantive linguistic issues as opposed to argumentum ad hominem. Classical literature merely preserved the generic distinctions enshrined in the earliest source material. It is feasible to contend that attitudes towards religious orthodoxy play a pivotal role in shaping distinctions in approaches to the phenomenon of language; these evolved distinctions manifest themselves in Kūfan and Başran approaches to the design, utility and function of the Arabic linguistic tradition. However, this will be attempted at another juncture.202

Conclusions

The trajectory of the genesis of Arabic linguistic thought should be traced to the attempts to broach the physical preservation of the holy text as a corpus of scripture enshrined for its liturgical and religious value. The linguists and readers were attempting to develop the means to safeguard the oral tradition of Qurʾanic readings. The primary focus of their attention had been issues of orthography, diacritics and
vowel markings, together with collating the physical features of Qur’anic codices. These readers were also concerned with the authentication of the stock of Qur’anic readings and their phonological definition. The early Arabic linguistic tradition combined all of these strands of functional scholarship; yet it was essentially predisposed to the service of scripture. The Baṣrān readers, who had refined many of the existing linguistic approaches to the text developed by earlier authorities, were genuine pioneers in terms of their ability to place these strands of linguistic thought within a coherently devised theoretical framework. That individual grammarians in the Hijāz were already indulging in sophisticated forms of grammatical analysis is testimony to their contribution to linguistic thought. Indeed, a number of Meccan readers served as mentors of early Baṣrān and Kūfan scholars. The pronounced focus on the abstract and conceptual aspects of the language of scripture together with the attempts to formulate a theory of language is engineered by Baṣrān luminaries. The endeavours of these luminaries allowed Arabic linguistic thought to assume a more insular countenance. However, although the Kūfan readers pursued a distinctly functional bent in their approaches to preserving the diction of scripture, they were clearly familiar with the earliest forms of analysis developed for these purposes. Moreover, later generations of Kūfan readers were able to join their Baṣrān counterparts as distinguished grammarians, pursuing the type of linguistic enterprise nurtured by Baṣrāns. Indeed, they were able to participate actively in the evolution of a stream of grammatical and philological theories. The distinction between grammarians and readers was defined well before the advent of Sibawayhi and his many peers. Indeed, the early preoccupation with the composition and collation of so-called profane literature such as the gharib, nawādir and lughāt genres is commensurate with the increasing sophistication of Arabic linguistic thought. The tradition was suitably poised to be placed on a meticulously abstract plane by post-Sibawayhian grammarians.

NOTES


15 Loc. cit.

16 See art. ‘Calligraphy’ in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, p. 280. Solange Ory argues that the use of terms such as *māʾil* never fully takes into account the diversity of the early Hijāzī scripts.

18 Déroche, *Abbasid*, p. 27. Methodological developments highlighted by Ory refer to the classification of handwritten copies of the Qur'an into two main groups: Hijāzī and 'classical Kufic'; while Déroche prefers the label 'Abbasid' for all the so-called Kufic scripts. See art. 'Calligraphy', p. 280; Déroche, *Abbasid*, p. 16. Introductions to penmanship also became the detailed subject of Küfan and Başran treatises: *Adab al-kuttāb* by Abū Bakr al-Ṣūfī and Ibn Qutayba's *Adab al-kātib* are prime examples, while Farrā'ī's *al-Maṣāfir wa'l-mamādīd* focuses specifically on the relevant orthography relating to certain endings.


21 B. Gruendler, art. 'Arabic Script', *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, pp. 139–40.


24 Alphonse Mingana & Agnes Smith Lewis, *Leaves from Three Ancient Qur'āns Possibly Pre-Othmānic With a List of their Variants* (Cambridge: CUP, 1914), pp. xxxiii. Abbott also refers to a phased influence on the development of diacritics which can be traced to pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, see p. 39.


31 Mingana & Smith Lewis, *Leaves from Three Ancient Qur'āns*, p. xxx. Administrative contingencies also provide momentum for the refinement of orthography.


36 Dâni, Muḥkam, p. 4 and pp. 6–9.


38 Dâni, Muḥkam, p. 6.

39 This is Pierre Cachia’s translation of these terms: *The Monitor, a Dictionary of Arabic Grammatical Terms* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), see p. 40 for slurring (rawm) and p. 50 for ishmām, ‘giving one vowel a scent or flavour of the other; a sound between those of kasra and damma; scent or flavour of the u-sound’, which tallies with tajwīd type definitions. The lengthy definitions highlight the difficulty of finding a single term to convey these meanings: in recitation manuals on such topics rawm applies only to instances of (u) and (i) i.e. fīl-mafrūʿ wa’l-madrūm wa’l-majrūr wa’l-maksrūr; whereas ishmām is defined as iḥbāq al-shafatayn ba’d al-iskān wa tada’ baynahuma inšfrājan li-yakhruj al-nafas bi-ghayr šawt wa dhālika ishāratun li’l-haraka’l-latī khatamta biḥā al-kalima. And yet ishmām applies only to instances of endings with ‘u’.


41 Dâni, Muḥkam, p. 22.


43 Dâni, Muḥkam, pp. 104–5.

44 Loc. cit.

45 Loc. cit.


48 Dâni, Muḥkam, pp. 22–3. The argument here is that the fourth form of the verb inverts the original meaning and in this instance we have an antithesis between ‘unclear’ and ‘clear’. This is not mentioned by Carter in his ‘Arabic Grammar’: see p. 119 in which he defines it as ‘making foreign’.


51 Zubaydī, Ṭabaqāt al-nahwīyyīn, p. 29.


55 Zubaydī, Ṭabaqāt al-nahwīyyīn, p. 21.

59 Loc. cit.


62 Loc. cit.

69 Déroche, *Abbasid*, p. 22; cf. his description of four eighth century folios in which physical distinctions relating to the use of markers and verse endings vary considerably, pp. 30–3.


76 Dānī, *Muqni‘*, p. 72 and p. 79; also note his observations regarding the orthography of Ibrāhīm as found in the codices, p. 92 and p. 34.
80 Loc. cit.


88 Sibawayhi uses the term ‘they’ (al-nās), which probably suggests he is referring to Baṣrīan readers.

89 Zubaydi, Ṭabaqat al-nahwiyīn, p. 33.


91 Ibn Sallām, Ṭabaqāt, p. 30.


93 Versteegh, Arabic Grammar, p. 162.

94 Loc. cit.

95 R. Talmon, ‘Who was the First Grammariam?’, p. 143.

96 Sirāfi, Akhbār al-nahwiyīn al-BAṣrīyyīn, pp. 43f.


98 Loc. cit.

99 Loc. cit.

100 Ibn Khālawayhi, Muktaṣar, p. 65.

101 Zubaydi, Ṭabaqāt al-nahwiyīn, p. 41.

102 Versteegh, Arabic Grammar, p. 148.


104 Yaqūt al-Ḥamawi, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, p. 519.


106 Versteegh, Arabic Grammar, p. 205.


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113 Op. cit. vol. 1, p. 443–4; Ma‘rifat, vol. 1, p. 71. Ibn Mujāhid reports that the Baṣra ʿAbū al-ʿUmar al-Majmūʿī, a mentor of ʿAbū al-ʿUmar, had narrated aspects of Ibn Kathīr’s,hurif. He was viewed as ʿAbū ʿAmr’s equal in terms of his knowledge of grammar, although once again an initial Meccan link is significant.


116 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sabʾa, p. 65.

117 Loc. cit.


120 Zubaydī, Taβaqāt al-naḥwīyīn, pp. 73f.


123 Abū Ṭāyyīb, Marāṭib al-naḥwīyīn, p. 25.


136 Loc. cit.
137 Loc. cit.
146 Abūʾl-Bilād al-Nabhāni is quoted once in Farrāʿ’s Maʿānī; adducing poetry to support the phenomenon of addād (antonyms). Ibn al-Jazari stated that Yahyā ibn Abī Sulaym Abūʾl-Bilād al-Nabhāni was renowned for having an ikhtiyār in readings. Citing Dānī, he relates that this ikhtiyār was predominantly based on qiyyās ʿarabīyya, which is remarkable given his early period; he was a contemporary of Ḥādrami. It is with these Kūfīans that we have the earliest documented proof of a radical bent; however, this seemingly substantiates distinctions separating grammarians from readers.
147 This can be contrasted with late Kūfī figures such as Hamza ibn Ḥabīb and Ḥumrān ibn Aʿyan whose adherence to precedents is resolute. See Part 1 of this article, Journal of Qurʾanic Studies 5:1 (2003), pp. 68–9. Dhahabi, Maʿrifā, vol. 1, p. 52.
152 Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī, Muʿjam al-udabāʾ, vol. 5, p. 644. He is referred to as the ‘ninth’ reader.
154 Maʿrifā, vol. 1, p. 130.


162 See Ramzi Balbaki, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn and Jamhara al-lughā* in Early Medieval Arabic, pp. 44–62. Cf. Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyiyyīn* (and *Muzhir*, vol. 2, pp. 77–92, for Suyūṭī’s defence). The ascription of this work to Khālij was disputed by many of his linguist contemporaries, although the theoretical framework for the treatise is consistently seen as his proposition.


Muḥammad ibn Jahm al-Simmari is also significant as a ṭawī of Fārrāʾ’s Maʿānī al-Qurʾān: Yāqūṭ al-Hamawī, Muʿjam al-udabāʾ, vol. 5, p. 620.
179 Sīrāfī, Akhbār al-nahwīyyīn, p. 66.
184 Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist, p. 56; it should be noted that this work is also listed under the alternative title of Iḥtiyāj al-qirāʾīt.
192 Owens, Early Arabic Grammatical Theory, pp. 214f. This includes even the text attributed to Khalaf al-Ahmarr (d. 180/796) which has been the subject of much debate (see Versteegh, AGQE, p. 15. See also Baalbaki, ‘The Book in the Grammatical Tradition: Development in Contents and Methods’ in G. Atiyeh (ed.), The Book in the Islamic World (New York: State University of New York, 1995), p. 127).
193 Loc. cit.
195 Baalbaki, ‘A Study of the Analytical Methods’, see Chapters 3 and 4; also Baalbaki’s ‘The Treatment of qirāʾīt by the Second and Third Century Grammarians’, Zeitschrift für arabische
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197 Carter, ‘Sibawayhi’, pp. 528f.


201 Loc. cit. See also p. 68.
