

NEW DATA ON THE DELATERALIZATION OF *ḌĀD* AND ITS MERGER WITH *ZĀ'* IN CLASSICAL ARABIC: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OLD SOUTH ARABIC AND THE EARLIEST ISLAMIC TEXTS ON *Ḍ* / *Z* MINIMAL PAIRS

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Abstract

The history of the phoneme *ḏād* and its merger with the phoneme *zā'* has proven enigmatic. By presenting data from Old South Arabian speech communities and lexical data from the Islamic tradition, this article brackets a period of *ḏād* / *zā'* free variation between the fourth and mid-eighth centuries CE. These data support the theory that the pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabic speech community was divided into two segments in respect to the *ḏād* / *zā'* relationship: a group that pronounced both separately and produced the lettered tradition of the Qur'an, and some that did not distinguish between the two phonemes. This article presents data from the earliest Arabic texts on *ḏād* / *zā'* minimal pairs, those of Abū 'Umar al-Zāhid (d. 345/957) and al-Ṣāhib Ismā'īl Ibn 'Abbād (d. 385/995). These texts also provide glimpses into how the Islamic lexical tradition explained the historical link between the two phonemes.

Introduction¹

Charting the history of the enigmatic phoneme *ḏād* (ḏ) in Arabic, and tracing its relationship with the phoneme *zā'* (z) has presented one of the most interesting and challenging questions in Arabic historical linguistics. The linguistic reality of the modern Arab world poses a tantalizing question: why do Bedouins or elements of rural

¹ I must extend my utmost gratitude to Dr Gene Gragg of the University of Chicago (emeritus) for guiding me in this project. I must also thank Dr Hani Hayajneh from Yarmuk University for his helpful comments. Research for this project was made possible by a Multi-Country Grant from the Council for American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC).

populations in areas as far flung as Yemen, Syria and the Libyan Desert pronounce both *ḏād* and *zā'* as *zā'*? Why do Arabic speakers in urban areas from Morocco to Damascus generally pronounce both letters as *ḏād*? Upon inspection, scholars have realized that this question involves a problematic knot of issues: what was the original pronunciation of the letter *ḏād*? Did this proto-*ḏād* (*ḏ) exist in free variation with *zā'*? When did the proto-*ḏād* fall out of general use among Arabic speech communities? How and when did it merge with *zā'* or transform into the *ḏād* so familiar in Modern Standard Arabic today?

Scholarship on this topic has suggested several scenarios for the disappearance of the proto-*ḏād* and its merger with *zā'*, some of which assert a period of free variation between *ḏād* and *zā'* within the broader community of Arabic speakers in the early Islamic period. Kees Versteegh has suggested a pre-Islamic merger of these two phonemes in Western Arabia but is sceptical of the small amount of supporting data offered by the Islamic textual tradition. By presenting data from Old South Arabian speech communities and lexical data from the Islamic tradition, this article brackets a period of *ḏād* / *zā'* free variation between the fourth and mid eighth centuries CE. The loss of distinction between these two phonemes in speech communities in South Arabia and evidence for a continued influence of South Arabian languages on Arabic in the early Islamic period bolster the argument for a pre-Islamic *terminus post quem* for the existence of this free variation. The earliest extant data on *ḏād* / *zā'* minimal pairs from the Islamic textual tradition prove the existence of archaic free variation between the two phonemes among some Arab tribes before the mid eighth century CE. These data support the theory that the pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabic speech community was divided into two segments in respect to the *ḏād* / *zā'* relationship: a group that pronounced both separately and produced the lettered tradition of the Qur'ān, and some that did not distinguish between the two phonemes.

This article presents a set of thirteen *ḏād* / *zā'* minimal pairs drawn from the two earliest surviving works on the difference between the phonemes, written by the tenth-century CE philologists Abū 'Umar al-Zāhid (d. 345/957) and al-Ṣāḥib Ismā'il Ibn 'Abbād (d. 385/995). In addition to providing a mine of early data on the history of the two phonemes, these books offer an insightful glimpse into the manner in which the Arabic philological tradition sought to reconcile its lexical theory with the evident reality of the *ḏād* / *zā'* free variation.

Transliteration Note

Discussing the history of the *dād* and *zā'* letters presents serious transliteration difficulties, for the two letters represent both graphemes and phonemes simultaneously. Furthermore, the historical letter *dād* has not always indicated the same phoneme. Although the grapheme *dād* has come to represent a voiced emphatic dental plosive (phonemic symbol /d/) in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), it originally consisted of a voiced fricative lateral, usually represented as /d̪/.² This was the archaic *dād* described by Sibawayhi (d.c. 180/796) and later Muslim philologists (and that survives in Qur'ān readings in Turkey, an issue which deserves further research).³ The historical unit *zā'* has remained much more stable, consistently representing

² H. Fleisch, 'Dād', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* CD-ROM Edition v. 1.0 (henceforth *EF*); Gotthelf Bergstrasser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN 1983), 162; Chaim Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian* (London 1951), 209; L. Bouvat, 'Un essai de Cheikh Sidia, sur la proposition rituelle du « dād » et du « dhā' »', *Revue du monde musulman* 23 (1913): 310; Jean Cantineau, 'Esquisse d'une phonologie de l'arabe classique', *Société de linguistique de Paris* 126 (1946), 97; Irene Garbell, 'Remarks on the Historical Phonology of an East Mediterranean Arabic Dialect', *Word* 14 (1958), 307; Ibrāhīm Anīs, *Al-Aṣwāt al-lughawiyya* (Cairo, 1971), 48–9; F. Corriente, 'D – L Doubles in Classical Arabic as Evidence of the Process of De-Lateralization of Dād and Development of its Standard Reflex', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 23 (1978), 51; Richard C. Steiner, *The Case for Fricative Laterals in Proto-Semitic* (New Haven 1977), 57–68; idem, 'Addenda to the Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic', in *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau* (Wiesbaden 1991), 2:1499–1514; André Roman, *Étude de la phonologie et de la morphologie de la koinè arabe* (Aix en Provence 1983), 1:163, 190; A.A. Al-Nassir, *Sibawayh the Phonologist* (London 1993), 44–5; Kees Versteegh, 'Loanwords from Arabic and the Merger of d / d̪', in Albert Azari *et al.* (eds), *Israel Oriental Studies 19: Compilation and Creation in Adab and luġa* (Winona Lake, IN 1999); 273, 283; Janet C.E. Watson, *The Phonology and Morphology of Arabic* (Oxford 2002), 2.

³ Sibawayhi describes the proper pronunciation of [d̪] as /d̪/ but also notes an encroaching pronunciation that he contemptibly terms 'the weak *dād*'. To the later philologist Ibn Ya'īsh, this was a mixture between the plosive stop /d/ and the /z/, occasionally emerging as a /t/; Abū Bishr 'Amr b. 'Uthmān Sibawayhi, *Kitāb Sibawayhi*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo 1395/1975), 4:432; Al-Nassir, *Sibawayh the Phonologist*, 45. For later descriptions of *dād*'s lateral pronunciation, see Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh Ibn Suhayl al-Naḥwī (fl. 420/1030), *Kitāb al-Dād wa al-zā'*, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Fatī (ed.), *al-Mawrid* 8:2 (1979), 289; Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229), *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm*, ed. Na'im Zarzūr, 2nd edn (Beirut 1407/1987), 12–13; Abū Bakr al-Ṣafādī al-Qarawī (d. 634/1237), *al-Farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā'*, MS Fatih 5413/7 in Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, 132a. For the most comprehensive discussion tracing Arab grammarians' description of the lateral *dād*, see Roman, *Étude de la phonologie et de la morphologie de la koinè arabe*, 1:162–208.

the voiced emphatic interdental fricative found today in MSA and usually transliterated as /z/ or /ð/.⁴ When specifically discussing the old lateral *ḍād*, we will therefore employ the symbol /ḍ/. Otherwise we will utilize the established /d/ and /z/ symbols for *ḍād* and *zā'*. The / / brackets indicate a strict discussion of phonemes, while [] indicates a letter's textual representation.

Dating the Delateralization of /ḍ/ and the *Ḍād* / *Zā'* Merger

Scholars have presented varying arguments for a merger between /ḍ/ and /z/ in Arabic sometime during the wide window of the seventh to the tenth centuries CE. The primary point on which opinions differ is the question of free variation between the two phonemes. D. Cohen argues for a direct transition. He suggests that the lateral /ḍ/, already a 'fossil' in the early Islamic period, merged into the existing /z/ phoneme. This /z/ articulation remained in Arabic dialects with interdentals and became the new phoneme /ḍ/ in dialects without them. He deduces from this that the disappearance of the original /ḍ/ and its merger with /z/ in certain dialects must have preceded the merger of interdentals with dentals in urban dialects such as Egyptian and Eastern Mediterranean Arabic. As it is assumed that this loss of interdentals occurred relatively early, /ḍ/ must have disappeared in the early Islamic period.⁵

F. Corriente has argued that /ḍ/ dissolved directly into /z/ or /d/, with urban areas such as the Levantine cities and Egypt adopting /ḍ/ for both letters, while Bedouins and many rural areas maintained /z/. He contends that the '*ulamā'* accepted the urban pronunciation for the *ḍād* so that there would be two distinct sounds for the two letters [d] and [z].⁶ In his study on the delateralization of /ḍ/, Corriente

⁴ W.P. Heinrichs, '*Zā'*', *EP*.

⁵ D. Cohen, 'Koinè et langue arabe', *Arabica* 9 (1962), 136.

⁶ F. Corriente, 'Ḍ – L Doublets in Classical Arabic', 51. Muslim religious scholars certainly fought to preserve a distinction between the two letters in Quranic reading even among the masses. As evidence from later scholars like Ibn Suhayl shows, many scholars maintained the pronunciation of the lateral /ḍ/ in Quranic readings. In fact, Turkish Quranic recitation has preserved a noticeable lateral *ḍād* up to the present day. The jurist al-'Izz b. 'Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1261–2), for example, required any person leading prayer who could distinguish between *ḍād* and *zā'* to do so in his Quranic reading or his prayer would be invalid. A person who could not distinguish between the two sounds should be treated like someone with a speech impediment (*al-althagh*); al-'Izz b. 'Abd al-Salām, *al-Fatāwā al-mawṣūliyya*, ed. 'Iyād Khālid al-Ṭabbā' (Damascus 1419/1999), 42. For the same stance from other scholars, see Bouvat, 'Un essai de Cheikh Sidia', 311 ff.

uses minimal pairs where [d] and [l] are not actually mutually contrastive/allophonic to demonstrate that the delateralization of the sound had already occurred when Arab lexicographers were at work collecting data between the early Umayyad period and the ninth century CE.⁷ Some speakers had delateralized the /d/ appearing in a word into /l/ and some into /d/. He argues that this transformation thus occurred during the eighth and ninth century CE.⁸ Like Cohen, Corriente does not specify a period of free variation between /d/ and /z/.

Other scholars posit a period of free variation between the two phonemes. Ramaḍān ‘Abd al-Tawwāb and Abdulmunim A. Al-Nassir suggest that free variation between /z/ and /d/ began in the eighth century CE, roughly the same period in which J.W. Fück states that the two phonemes ‘were confused’.⁹ André Roman follows ‘Abd al-Tawwāb’s conclusion on the dating and nature of the merger.¹⁰ Kees Versteegh posits that, in the Ḥijāz, a merger between the two phonemes /z/ and /d/ had already begun in pre-Islamic times. Based on the representation of Arabic loanwords in Southeast Asian languages, however, he concludes that some Arabic speakers in Yemen retained the lateral *dād* until a much later date.¹¹ As mentioned above, Versteegh is sceptical of the evidence provided by the Islamic textual tradition for an early merger between the two phonemes. He characterizes data suggesting that [d] / [z] minimal pairs actually represent instances of free variation as ‘slightly suspect since in most sources only one lemma is mentioned in this connection, *fāda* / *fāza*... (see below).’¹² This article will remedy this dearth of data.

In her study of Eastern Mediterranean Arabic (EMA), Irene Garbell posits a three-stage transition for these letters beginning in the seventh and eighth centuries CE, continuing into the ninth and tenth and finishing in the period between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. During the first stage, the old /d/ phoneme was already

⁷ This approach is methodologically problematic, as will be discussed below, because lexical material could always be manufactured or ‘discovered’ in later periods.

⁸ Corriente, ‘Ḍ – L Doublets’, 54–5.

⁹ Abū al-Barakāt Ibn al-Anbārī, *Zīnat al-fuḍalā’ fi al-farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā’*, ed. Ramaḍān ‘Abd al-Tawwāb (Beirut 1391/1971), 18 (editor’s introduction); Al-Nassir, *Sibawayh the Phonologist*, 45; J.W. Fück, ‘Middle Arabic’, in ‘al-‘Arabiyya,’ *EP*.

¹⁰ Roman, *Etude de la phonologie et de la morphologie de la koinè arabe*, 1:163 ff.

¹¹ Versteegh, ‘Loanwords from Arabic’, 284.

¹² Versteegh, ‘Loanwords from Arabic’, 283.

demonstrating a tendency to merge with /z/ due to what she views as /d̥/'s awkward place in the Arabic consonantal matrix. During the second stage (ninth and tenth centuries CE), both [d̥] and [z] letters were thus pronounced as /z/ in EMA. Finally, between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries this /z/ phoneme became the voiced dental plosive /d/ that we today generally recognize as the letter [d̥] in MSA.¹³ In this period, a general loss of interdental in EMA caused all words with [d̥] and [z] (with the exception of later Turkish loanwords such as *muhāfaza*, 'municipal authority,' which retained the Persianized pronunciation of [z] as a velarized /z/) to be pronounced with a /d̥/.¹⁴ Garbell therefore posits a period between the seventh and tenth centuries CE for the transition from /d̥/ to /z/ to occur. This included a period of free variation between the old /d̥/ and /z/ in the seventh and eighth centuries.

It must be noted, however, that Garbell breaks with the above-mentioned scholars in her reliance on two crucial presuppositions. First, although she agrees with Cantineau and others in her vision of an early Arabic consonantal system in which no voiceless emphatic dental plosive /t̥/ existed (*tā*' was pronounced as /d̥/), she also believes that the lateral /d̥/ did not fit comfortably.¹⁵ Secondly, she assumes

¹³ Garbell's proof for this dating, however, is faulty. She states that [z] could not have become /d̥/ earlier than the eleventh century because Saadia Gaon (d. 942 CE) of Egypt says that the [d̥] of the Hebrew 'apaddno' was pronounced like /z/. This does not address the manner in which the people of Egypt spoke, however, since Saadia was most probably discussing the high language of the Muslim religious scholars, who preserved the interdentals as part of their use of Classical Arabic; see Garbell, 'Remarks', 312. In addition, Saadia notes the word *appaddno* as an example of the letter *pé*, not *dād* or *zā*'. Garbell's citation to Saadia Gaon's *Commentaire sur le Séfer Yesira* also gives the incorrect page number; see Saadia Gaon, *Commentaire sur le Séfer Yesira*, trans. Mayer Lambert (Paris 1891), 45 or 89. The correct page is p. 64.

¹⁴ Garbell, 'Remarks', 308–12.

¹⁵ Al-Nassir agrees with Garbell that the /d̥/ had no stable place in the Arabic consonantal matrix. There existed three sets of voiceless – voiced – emphatic consonants (/th/ – /dh/ – /z/, /t/ – /d/ – /d̥/, /s/ – /z/ – /s̥/), in which /d̥/ did not fit. He argues that this explains its dissolution into /d̥/ and /z/, since 'the brain seems to prefer a more symmetrical pattern of the sound system in which there is a smaller number of contrasts between neighboring sounds'. Rabin, however, conceived of a more robust and symmetrical early Arabic consonant system. He posits four (as opposed to Al-Nassir's three) parallel sets of /unvoiced – voiced – emphatic/ consonants in the form of alveolar fricatives, retroflex/laterals, dentals and interdentals: [/s/ – /z/ – /s̥/], [/sh/ – /l/ – /d̥/], [/t/ – /d/ – /t̥/], and [/th/ – /dh/ – /z/]). Cantineau also sees a place for /d̥/ to fit on the lateral plane with /l/; Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 209; cf. Cantineau, 'Esquisse', 100, 122; Al-Nassir, *Sibawayh the Phonologist*, 45–6.

that the loss of interdental in EMA occurred relatively late. Garbell thus argues that the problematic /Ḍ/ merged with /z/, while /Ḍ/ became /t/ (initially non-existent), and /z/ then became /Ḍ/ to fill the gap of the voiced dental plosive. This involves a three-part movement in which /Ḍ/ became /z/, then /Ḍ/ became /t/, then /z/ became /Ḍ/.

These scholars have focused primarily on the transformation of /Ḍ/ into /Ḍ/ or /z/. Although 'Abd al-Tawwāb, Al-Nassir, Roman and Fück acknowledge a period of free variation between /Ḍ/ and /z/, only the late Egyptian scholar Ibrāhīm Anīs has proffered a theory to describe it. He argues that the Arabic speech community writ large clearly distinguished between the two phonemes; the Quranic lettered tradition of the Ḥijāz and Tamīm dialects demonstrates this. 'It seems, however', Anīs continues, 'that there were two groups from among the Arabs: the majority that pronounced the two phonemes in the manner described by Sibawayhi (i.e. /Ḍ/ and /z/), and a minority that conflated the two phonemes....'¹⁶ The Arabic lettered tradition, emerging from the dominant trend, treated *ḏād* and *zā'* as two distinct phonemes. Others did not. As we shall see, data from Abū 'Umar al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād provides significant support for Anīs' theory.

Evidence for a /Ḍ/ – /z/ Merger in Old South Arabian

Evidence from Old South Arabian languages strongly indicates that during the first few centuries CE the distinction between the /Ḍ/ and /z/ phonemes was breaking down in certain speech communities where the Sabaean (Epigraphic South Arabian, ESA) alphabet was used. Texts written on palm-leaf stocks in a cursive version of this script have been unearthed in Yemen in the last several decades and indicate that the speech communities that produced them had ceased to distinguish between [Ḍ] (presumably the lateralized /Ḍ/) and [z]. In the case of these texts, Stefan Weninger and Jacques Ryckmans have noted that, '[i]n the later miniscule script... both phonemes /Ḍ/ and /z/ are represented by the latter ḏ.'¹⁷ Yusuf M. Abdallah points

¹⁶ Anīs, *al-Aṣwāt al-lughawiyya*, 54; idem, 'Ma'nā al-qawl al-māthūr lughat al-ḏād', *Majma' al-luġha al-'arabiyya* 10 (1966–7), 118–19.

¹⁷ Stefan Weninger, 'More Sabaic Miniscule Texts from Munich', *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 32 (2002), 218; cf. Jacques Ryckmans et al., *Textes du Yémen Antique inscrits sur bois* (Paris 1994), 44 and 73; cf. Christian Robin, 'Les Inscriptions de l'Arabie Antique et les études arabes', *Arabica* 48:4 (2001), 534.

out, for example, that what is written [‘-ḏ-m] in the cursive script should be [‘-z-m] for ‘milk,’ ‘possession’ or ‘fullness’ in the regular (ESA) alphabet.¹⁸ Ryckmans alerts us to the word [dh-ḏ-r-h-n] (*dhū Dahārān*), which he notes appears elsewhere in ESA as ‘*dhū Zahārān*’.¹⁹ The word easily recognizable in Arabic as *zaby* (gazelle) appears as [ḏ – b – y – t – m], or a sack made of gazelle skin.²⁰ While the monumental inscriptions in ESA had regularly represented the /z/ and /ḏ/ phonemes with separate letters, the cursive palm-leaf stock texts later represent both with [ḏ].

Dating the cursive texts written on these stocks has proven very difficult, since they lack the king names so useful in establishing dates eponymically.²¹ Some, however, were clearly written later than the third century CE. Weninger has established that some of the stocks that exhibit this [z] – [ḏ] → [ḏ] merger also include the word *Ṣan‘ā*’ (the capital of Yemen) written as [ṣ-n-‘-w], which was not known by that name until the third century CE.²² As a result, these stocks must date from later than this period.

This merger of [ḏ] and [z] in written texts probably reflects a similar change in spoken language. The cursive texts utilize all the other letters in ESA alphabet besides [z]. Moreover, the ESA letters [ḏ] and [z] are not visually similar. Rather, [z] is clearly a derivative of the [ṣ] grapheme.²³ This argues against concluding that the omission of [z] resulted from a shorthand cursive alphabet that collapsed several graphemes into one (like shorthand Arabic, for example, which relies on the reader’s knowledge to distinguish between the similar characters for [ḥ], [j] and [kh]). The disappearance of the [z] grapheme therefore did not result from script-based reasons. Instead, it indicates that those who wrote and read these cursive texts did not distinguish orally between the phonemes /z/ and /ḏ/ and therefore used one grapheme to indicate both. That these texts tend to deal with

¹⁸ Yusuf M. Abdallah, ‘Ein altsüdarabischer Vertragstext von den neuentdeckten Inschriften auf Holz’, in N. Nebes (ed.), *Arabia Felix* (Wiesbaden 1994), 3.

¹⁹ Ryckmans, *Textes du Yémen*, 51 (text #4).

²⁰ Ryckmans, *Textes du Yémen*, 55.

²¹ Stefan Weninger, ‘Two Sticks with Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions’, *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 31 (2001), 241. Here Weninger notes that the date of the sticks has yet to be determined.

²² Weninger, ‘More Sabaic Miniscule Texts from Munich’, 218.

²³ Letter [z] thus also merges with letter [ṣ] in some Hadramitic palm-stalk texts. Serguei Frenstousoff has demonstrated that the word [ṣabrān] is the Qatabanian version of [zahārān]; Serguei Frenstousoff, ‘Hadramitic Documents written on palm-leaf stalks’, *Proceedings from the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 29 (1999), 55–65.

mundane issues such as small-scale trade, properties and personal correspondences also suggests that they represent a more colloquial register of the language.²⁴

We must not assume, however, that this merger between /d/ and /z/ was global among the speech communities of South Arabia. Using references to the Ḥimyarite calendar, Peter Stein has dated several sticks, and one dated to the third century CE includes the [z] grapheme in the word [z-r-b] (property, to transfer property).²⁵ Since Stein has dated other texts to 439 and 444 CE, we might proffer that the early fourth century CE constituted a cusp of phonological change amid South Arabian speech communities. These data therefore suggest that by about 300 CE, speakers in some communities in South Arabia did not distinguish between the /d/ and /z/ phonemes.

The Continued Influence of South Arabian in the Early Islamic Period

What implications might this merger in Old South Arabian have for Old Arabic and the Early Middle Arabic of the early Islamic period? Although very closely related, Old South Arabian and Arabic were two separate languages. Certainly, the fact that Cantineau noted that the modern Arabic spoken in the Dathīna region of South Arabia preserves a lateral pronunciation for *dād* suggests that this region may offer valuable information on the development of the phoneme.²⁶ Both data from epigraphic inscriptions and the Islamic textual tradition further militate against excluding this Old South Arabian phoneme merger from our consideration of the *dād* – *zā'* merger in the Arabic of the early Islamic period. As Rabin has shown in his classic *Ancient West Arabian*, the linguistic map of the Arabian Peninsula at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad was a fluid polyglot of dialects of North and South Arabian. The ESA script was certainly still used in greater Yemen during the early Islamic period. Christian Robin has identified inscriptions (Robin, Umm Layla 2 and 3) in Yemen that represent an Islamic-period Arabic text written in ESA script.²⁷ There also exists a bilingual ESA/Arabic inscription

²⁴ Robin, 'Les Inscriptions de l'Arabie Antique et les études arabes', 564–5.

²⁵ Peter Stein, 'The Inscribed Wooden Sticks of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich', *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 33 (2003), 268 (see line 9 of second text).

²⁶ Cantineau, 'Esquisse', 97.

²⁷ See Christian Robin, 'Résultats épigraphiques et archéologiques de deux brefs séjours en République Arabe du Yémen', *Semitica* 26 (1976), 188–92.

in Najrān that Said al-Said has dated to approximately the ninth century CE.²⁸ The text of this inscription is in Arabic, with the writer including the name of the person for whom it was written in ESA script as well.

In addition to the ESA script, Old South Arabian also survived into the Islamic period in the form of the transitional Ḥimyarite language. Beeston argues that, although the Sayhadic languages were different from early Arabic, they exerted a great deal of influence on the speakers of central Arabia.²⁹ From the Islamic textual tradition, we know that the Yemeni traveller al-Hamdānī (d. 334/945) knew Ḥimyaritic and enough ESA to decipher some epigraphic inscriptions, although scholars are virtually unanimous that all real knowledge of Old South Arabian languages such as Sabaean had disappeared by his time. As scholars such as Rabin have noted, however, al-Hamdānī's knowledge of first person forms (rarely attested in monumental inscriptions) of Ḥimyaritic indicates some access to oral sources on that language.³⁰

The very mysterious and seemingly liminal nature of Ḥimyaritic suggests a survival of Old South Arabian speech communities into the early Islamic period. Ḥimyaritic probably represents a transitional stage between older languages, such as Sabaean, and Arabic, with Ḥimyarites still using the ESA script to write monumental inscriptions.³¹ The fact that the fourteenth-century CE Egyptian legal scholar Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) stated confidently that 'Ḥimyarite' was still spoken in his day suggests that the name might have subsumed surviving South Arabian languages such as Sokotri.³² Rabin felt that Ḥimyaritic was basically Yemeni Arabic with a large number of loan words from Ancient South Arabian as well as some morphological borrowing, such as the [-k] first/second-person perfect form verbal suffixes.

²⁸ Said al-Said, 'Early South Arabian-Islamic Bilingual Inscription from Najran', *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 15 (2004), 86.

²⁹ A.F.L. Beeston, 'The Languages of South Arabia', *Arabica* 28 (1981), 180.

³⁰ Chaim Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 42; Beeston, 'The Languages of South Arabia', 179–80; Andrew Rippin, 'Epigraphical South Arabian and Qur'anic Exegesis', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), 161; cf. Robin, 'Les Inscriptions de l'Arabie Antique et les études arabes', 524.

³¹ Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 25; Rippin, 'Epigraphical South Arabian and Qur'anic Exegesis', 161; Robin, 'Les Inscriptions de l'Arabie Antique et les études arabes', 538.

³² Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), *al-Muzbir fī 'ulūm al-luġha wa-an-wā'iha*, ed. Muḥammad Jād al-Mawlā *et al.* (2 vols, Beirut [n.d.]), 1:28.

Rabin argues that this language was still spoken into Islamic times.³³ In addition to the large number of South Arabian names that survived into the early Islamic period, such as 'Shurāḥbīl' and 'Raḥmān,' we have at least two extant written sources attesting a usage of Ḥimyaritic. In one, the famous Yemeni student of religious lore Wahb b. Munabbih's (d. 110/728 or 114/732) mother describes how 'I dreamed that I would give birth to a son made of gold (*ra'aytu ka-walidtu ibn^{an} min ṭīb*).'³⁴ This text utilizes both the South Arabian/Ḥimyaritic [-k] verbal suffix and [k -] as a subordinating conjunction.³⁵

The Texts of Abū 'Umar al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād on *Ḍād* and *Zā'*

Writings on the difference between *ḏād* and *zā'* or lists of [ḏ] – [z] minimal pairs constitute a long-lived genre in Arabic philology and belles-lettres. The two earliest works on this subject have apparently not survived, however: Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Qayrawānī's (d. 318/930–1) *Kitāb al-Ḍād wa-al-zā'* and Abū Fahd al-Naḥwī al-Baṣrī's (d. 320/932) *Kitāb al-Ḍād wa-al-zā' wa-al-dhāl wa-al-sīn wa-al-ṣād*.³⁶

The two books under examination here are the two earliest extant works on [ḏ] – [z] minimal pairs, attributed to Abū 'Umar Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Zāhid (d. 345/957), a grammarian and *Ḥadīth* scholar of Baghdad; and the Buyid vizier and intellectual al-Ṣāḥib Ismā'īl Ibn 'Abbād (d. 385/995). Al-Ṣāḥib's *al-Farq bayn al-ḏād wa-al-zā'* has been published by Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl-Yāsīn in a 1958 Baghdad edition. The work *al-Farq mā bayn al-zā' wa-al-ḏād* of al-Zāhid, however, remains only in the form of a unique manuscript in the Laleli collection (#3141) of the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul. The authors dedicate these two works to clarifying the difference in meaning between [ḏ] – [z] minimal pairs due to the difficulty that people, specifically government secretaries (*kuttāb*), were having in

³³ Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 25, 45.

³⁴ Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 48.

³⁵ For [k-] as a relative pronoun, see A. Jamme, *Sabaeen Inscriptions from Maḥram Bilqīs (Mārib)* (Baltimore 1962), 55 (text 570/7); for the *l-k* perfect tense verbal ending in the modern South Arabian languages, see David Appleyard, 'The South Semitic Languages', Shlomo Izre'el (ed.), *Israel Oriental Studies XX* (Winona Lake, IN 2002), 405.

³⁶ Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Mālik, *al-Ḥimād fī nazā'ir al-zā' wa-al-ḏād*, ed. Ḥatīm Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin (Beirut 1404/1984), 96 (editor's intro).

distinguishing between the two letters in both writing and speech. Correcting this deficiency, they state, is essential because words appearing in these minimal pairs possess very different meanings. A failure to master these distinctions, they warn, results in the misuse of words, lowers a person's status (*hujna*) and corrupts the Arabic language.³⁷

Al-Zāhid and al-Şāhib apparently had good reason for their concern. Writing shortly after al-Şāhib's death, the Andalusian scholar Abū 'Amr al-Dānī (d. 444/1053) notes that in his time even many religious scholars did not distinguish [z] from [d] in pronunciation.³⁸ The expectations of stricter scholars remained high, however, for al-Dānī's contemporary in Iraq, Ibn Suhayl (fl. 420/1030),³⁹ emphasized the proper lateral pronunciation of [d]. He describes the letter as articulated 'from the corner of the mouth (*min al-shidq*) with the middle of the tongue (*bi-wasaṭ al-lisān*)' on either the right or left side.⁴⁰ [Z], on the other hand, is pronounced with the end (*ṭaraf*) of the tongue.⁴¹

Al-Şāhib Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād cuts one of the most fascinating figures in medieval Islamic history. A onetime government scribe of Iranian birth who rose to become the grand vizier of the Buyid dynasty in Iran and Iraq, his political power was matched only by his accomplished interests in Arabic poetry, prose and lexicography.⁴² Among al-Şāhib's extensive writings on matters ranging from Muslim creed to poetry is his famous dictionary, *al-Muḥīṭ bi-al-luġha* (The Encompassing Work on Language), which attracted immediate attention

³⁷ Abū 'Umar Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Zāhid, *al-Farq mā bayn al-zā wa-al-dād*, MS 3141 Laleli, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, 67b; al-Şāhib Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, *al-Farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl-Yāsīn (Baghdad 1377/1958), 3.

³⁸ Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-Dānī, *al-Farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā*, ed. Aḥmad Kishk (Cairo 1410/1989), 59.

³⁹ I have not been able to fix the exact death date of Ibn Suhayl, whose full name was Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh Ibn Suhayl al-Naḥwī. He may be the same Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī al-Naḥwī (d. 499/1105), a judge in Basra who studied jurisprudence with Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī and al-Māwardī; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb Bughyat al-wu'āt fī ṭabaqāt al-luġawiyyīn wa-al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn al-Khānjī (Cairo 1326/[1908]), 72.

⁴⁰ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā*, 289.

⁴¹ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā*, 311.

⁴² See Cl. Cahen and Ch. Pellat, 'Ibn 'Abbād', *EP*; Pellat, 'al-Şāhib Ibn 'Abbād', in Julia Ashtiany et al. (eds), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: 'Abbasid Belles Lettres* (New York 1990), 96–107; Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb al-ma'rūf bi-muġjam al-udabā'*, ed. D.S. Margoliouth vol. 2 (Leiden 1909), 273–343.

from scholars.⁴³ Although some scholars have questioned al-Ṣāḥib's authorship of *al-Farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā'*, we have early corroboration that al-Ṣāḥib did in fact pen the book.⁴⁴ The scholar Ibn Suhayl, writing only a generation after al-Ṣāḥib, mentions his book on the two letters and some of the rare words he included in it.⁴⁵

Abū 'Umar al-Zāhid presents a more problematic historical persona, for al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) explains that some material was incorrectly attributed to him. It was widely reported that some of al-Zāhid's peers did not trust him on language issues, but there are also stories of him besting the great philologist Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) in poetry and grammar. In addition to serving as tutor to the children of the Baghdad elite, al-Zāhid was an important *Ḥadīth* transmitter in Baghdad and the major source for people to learn the *oeuvre* of the famous poet and philologist Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Tha'lab (d. 291/804). There is no note, however, of his having written a book on *dād* and *zā'*.⁴⁶ A critical factor in determining whether or not al-Zāhid actually wrote the *dād / zā'* text attributed to him is thus determining whether the work predates al-Ṣāḥib's established text.

Indeed, al-Ṣāḥib's work and the Istanbul text attributed to al-Zāhid actually represent two versions of the same book. The texts are most often identical, with noticeable intentional alterations in al-Ṣāḥib's work. I believe that the Istanbul text clearly constitutes the earlier version of the book and that al-Ṣāḥib revised it. Al-Ṣāḥib's work builds on and reacts to the Istanbul text, with important differences between the two books including:

1. Al-Ṣāḥib's work adds numerous clarifications to definitions as well as literary vignettes.⁴⁷

⁴³ Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Yūsuf al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt 'alā anbāh al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo 1369/1950), 1:202–3.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Anbārī, *Zīnat al-fudalā'*, 23 (editor's introduction).

⁴⁵ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā'*, 320.

⁴⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut 1417/1997), 3:159–62; al-Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb al-ma'rūf bi-mu'jam al-udabā'*, ed. D.S. Margoliouth vol. 7 (London 1926), 26–30; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam fī tārikh al-umum wa-al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā and Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (19 vols, Beirut 1412/1992), 14:103–6; Shams al-Dīn al-Dhababī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, ed. Zakariyyā 'Umayrāt (4 vols in 2 Beirut 1419/1998), 3:61–2; idem, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb Arnā'ūt and Ibrāhīm al-Zaybaq (25 vols, Beirut 1419/1998), 15: 508–13; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān* (7 vols, Damascus [n.d.]), 5:268–9; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 8 (Leiden 1982), 154–8.

⁴⁷ See, for example, a story that al-Ṣāḥib introduces about the caliph Mu'āwiya; al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 74b; Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Farq*, 24–5.

2. Al-Ṣāḥib found a bizarre [z] counterpart for a word that the Istanbul text lacks: [z – ‘ – n]. This entailed moving the entry from the section for words with no [z] counterparts to the earlier section on minimal pairs.⁴⁸ This clearly constitutes a reorganization and addition of information to an existing text.
3. Al-Ṣāḥib adds an entire entry for [*bayd*] / [*bayz*], providing the earliest known attestation for the [z] form of this pair.
4. Al-Ṣāḥib's work removes all citations from the grammarian Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. al-Mu'allā al-Azdī (fl. mid 300/900s), several of which are lengthy.⁴⁹ Al-Ṣāḥib, however, retains one of al-Azdī's statements but omits any citation of the scholar.⁵⁰ This strongly suggests a redactor selectively editing an existing text that included the original citations from al-Azdī. The fact that al-Ṣāḥib seems to have plagiarized the work wholesale from al-Zāhid suggests a reason for omitting these references: al-Ṣāḥib was probably born too late to study with al-Azdī. Since the citations from al-Azdī are direct (ex. 'al-Azdī told me'), al-Ṣāḥib knew that retaining al-Zāhid's direct transmissions from al-Azdī would cast suspicion on his authorship of the book.

The fact that the Istanbul text precedes al-Ṣāḥib's established work but was written by a contemporary of al-Azdī who had studied with him strongly suggests that it is the product of the early to mid tenth century CE. Since this was the period in which al-Zāhid was active, there is little reason to doubt the attribution of the Istanbul text to him.

Other Early Works on *Ḍād* / *Zā'*

Al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāḥib's works represent early instalments in an enduring genre of books on the difference between *Ḍād* and *zā'*. In addition to the two above-mentioned texts that predated al-Zāhid, the other works on the subject are:

⁴⁸ See al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 73b, 74a; Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Farq*, 20.

⁴⁹ I have not been able to fix al-Azdī's (al-Ṣafadī refers to him as al-Asadī) death date exactly. He was one of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Durayd's (d. 321/933) students, which means that he probably flourished during the first half of the tenth century CE. Although this means that both al-Ṣāḥib and al-Zāhid could have conceivably studied with him, al-Ṣāḥib's treatment of al-Azdī's citations suggests that only al-Zāhid did; Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, ed. S. Dederling (Beirut 1389/1970), 5:43; al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āt*, 106; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 2 (Leiden 1975), 2:249; *ibid.* vol. 8, 112.

⁵⁰ See al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 76a.

1. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Jarbādhqānī (fl. 370/980): *al-Rawḥa fī al-zā' wa-al-dād*.⁵¹
2. Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Qazzāz (d. 412/1021): *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁵²
3. Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh Ibn Suhayl al-Naḥwī (fl. 420/1030): *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā'*.⁵³
4. Abū al-Faṭḥ Aḥmad b. Muṭarrif b. Ishāq al-'Asqalānī (d. 413/1022): *Risāla fī al-dād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁵⁴
5. Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān al-Dānī (d. 444/1053): *al-Farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā'*.⁵⁵
6. Abū al-Qāsim Murajjī b. Kawthar al-Baṣrī (d. 449/1057–8): *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁵⁶
7. Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd b. 'Alī al-Zanjānī (d. 470/1077–8): *Mā'rifat mā yuktabu bi-dād wa-zā'*.⁵⁷
8. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Su'ūd al-Anṣārī al-Dānī (fl. 470/1080): *al-Iqtidā' li-al-farq bayn al-dhāl wa-al-dād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁵⁸
9. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Abī al-Faraj al-Ṣaqallī al-Qaysī, (d.c. 470/1080): *Kitāb fī mā'rifat al-dād wa-al-zā'*.⁵⁹
10. Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122): poem of all the words featuring [z] (not extant).⁶⁰
11. Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Baṭalyawṣī (d. 521/1127): *al-Farq bayn al-ḥurūf al-khamsa: al-zā' wa-al-dād wa-al-dhāl wa-al-sīn wa-al-ṣād*.⁶¹

⁵¹ Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Jarbādhqānī, *Kitāb al-Rawḥa fī al-dād wa-al-zā'*, MS Fatih 5194, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul. This book has been mistitled in the Süleymaniye catalogue and in Sezgin's *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, (see, *ibid.* 8:205) as *Rawḥat fī al-tā' wa-al-dād*. The book in fact deals with the letters *zā'* and *dād*. The work has been published by Fuat Sezgin in a rare edition: Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Jarbādhqānī, *Kitāb al-Rawḥa*, ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt 1985).

⁵² Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 8:250; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab* (15 vols, Beirut [1955–6]), 7:455 (entry for [q-r-z]).

⁵³ See n. 3 above.

⁵⁴ Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 8:245.

⁵⁵ Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān al-Dānī, *al-Farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā'*, ed. Aḥmad Kishk (Cairo 1410/1989).

⁵⁶ Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā mā'rifat al-adīb al-mā'rūf bi-mu'jam al-udabā'*, 7:159.

⁵⁷ Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd b. 'Alī al-Zanjānī, *Mā'rifat mā yuktabu bi-dād wa-zā'*, MS 202 *lughā*, Taymūriyya Collection, Cairo.

⁵⁸ Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Marrākushī (d. 701/1303), *al-Dhayl wa-al-takmila li-Kitābay al-Mawṣūl wa-al-Ṣila*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (8 vols, Beirut [1964]–1965), 5:2: 641–2.

⁵⁹ Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Abī al-Faraj al-Ṣaqallī al-Qaysī, *Kitāb fī mā'rifat al-dād wa-al-zā'*, ed. Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Ḍāmin (Beirut, 1405/1985).

⁶⁰ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir fī 'ulūm al-lughā wa-anwā'ihā*, 2:286–8.

⁶¹ Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Baṭalyawṣī, *al-Farq bayn al-ḥurūf al-khamsa: al-zā' wa-al-dād wa-al-dhāl wa-al-sīn wa-al-ṣād*, ed. 'Abdallāh al-Nāṣir (Beirut 1404/1984).

12. Mawhūb b. Aḥmad al-Jawālīqī (d. 540/1145): *Risāla fīmā yuqālu bi-al-zā' al-mu'jama*.⁶²
13. Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Ḥamīda (d. 550/1155–6): *al-Farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁶³
14. Abū al-Faḍl Yaḥyā b. Salāma al-Ḥaṣkafī (d. 551/1156–7): *Mā yuqra'u bi-al-ḍād al-mu'jama*.⁶⁴
15. Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Farrūkhī (d. 557/1161–2): *Manzūma fī al-farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*.⁶⁵
16. Abū Muḥammad Sa'īd b. al-Mubārak Ibn al-Dahhān (d. 569/1173–4): *al-Ghaniyya fī al-ḍād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁶⁶
17. Abū al-Barakāt Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 577/1181): *Zīnat al-fuḍalā' fī al-farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*.⁶⁷
18. Muḥammad b. Nashwān al-Ḥimyarī (d. 610/1213–14): *al-Farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*.⁶⁸
19. Abū al-Futūḥ Naṣr b. Muḥammad al-Mawṣilī (d. 630/1232): *Risāla fī al-ḍād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁶⁹
20. Abū Bakr al-Ṣadafī al-Qarawī (d. 634/1237): *al-Farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*.⁷⁰
21. Abū al-Hasan 'Alī b. Yūsuf al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1249): *Kitāb al-Ḍād wa-al-zā'* (not extant).⁷¹
22. Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274): *Urjūza fī al-farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*.⁷²
23. —: *al-ʿIṭimād fī nazā'ir al-zā' wa-al-ḍād*.⁷³
24. Athīr al-Dīn Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Andalusī (d. 775/1373–4): *al-Irtidā' fī al-farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*.⁷⁴

⁶² Al-Qaysī, *Kitāb fī ma'rifat al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*, 9 (editor's introduction); Rama-zan Şeşen (ed.), *Nawādir al-makḥḥūtāt al-'arabiyya fī maktabāt turkiyya* (3 vols, Beirut 1975–82), 1:419.

⁶³ Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb al-ma'rūf bi-mu'jam al-udabā'*, 7:41.

⁶⁴ MS 327 *lugha*, Taymūriyya Library, Cairo.

⁶⁵ MS 327 *lugha*, Taymūriyya Library, Cairo.

⁶⁶ Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), *Wafayāt al-ā'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (8 vols, Beirut [1968]), 2:382.

⁶⁷ See n. 9 above.

⁶⁸ Muḥammad b. Nashwān al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl-Yāsīn (Baghdad 1961).

⁶⁹ Al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āt*, 403.

⁷⁰ Abū Bakr al-Ṣadafī al-Qarawī, *al-Farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*, MS Fatih 5413/7, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul.

⁷¹ 'Abd al-Tawwāb, ed. *Zīnat al-fuḍalā'*, 31 (editor's intro).

⁷² Ibn Mālik, '*Urjūza fī al-farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*', ed. Ṭāhā Muḥsin, *al-Mawrid* 15:4 (1986), 95–122.

⁷³ Ibn Mālik, *al-ʿIṭimād fī nazā'ir al-zā' wa-al-ḍād*, ed. Ḥātim Şāliḥ al-Dāmin (Beirut 1404/1984).

⁷⁴ Printed in same edition as al-Ḥimyarī, see n. 68.

25. 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (d. 796/1394–5): *al-Farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*.⁷⁵
26. Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418): section in his *Ṣubḥ al-a'sḥā' fī šinā'at al-inshā'*.⁷⁶
27. Ibn al-Najjār Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. c. 870/1465): *Risāla fī al-farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā' fī tilāwat al-Qur'ān al-karīm*.⁷⁷
28. Yaḥyā b. 'Umar al-Makkī al-Qurashī (d. 885/1481): *Mā yuktabu bi-al-ḍād wa-al-zā' ma'a ikhtilāf al-mā'nā*.⁷⁸
29. Muḥadhdhab al-Dīn Shamīm al-Ḥalwī (fl. Mamluk period?): *Qaṣīda tufarriqu bayn al-zā' wa-al-ḍād*.⁷⁹
30. Pseudo Ibn Qutayba, *Urjūzat al-zā' wa-al-ḍād* (probably Mamluk period).⁸⁰
31. 'Alī b. Sulaymān al-Muqrī' al-Manṣūrī (d. 1134/1722): *Radd al-ilḥād fī al-nuṭq bi-al-ḍād*.⁸¹
32. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Azmīrī (d.??): *Risālat al-Azmīrī fī ibdāl al-ḍād bi-al-zā'*.⁸²
33. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Kātib: *Qaṣīda fī al-farq bayn al-zā' wa-al-ḍād*.⁸³

These works on *ḍād* and *zā'* fall into four subgenres. The earliest books, the tenth-century CE texts of al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib, represent a genre that was as subtle and multivalent as the rich Islamic literary and scholarly culture of the Abbasid period. The authors introduce their work by bemoaning the sad state of the Arabic language in

⁷⁵ 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī, *al-Farq bayn al-ḍād wa-al-zā'*, ed. Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin (Damascus 2003).

⁷⁶ C.E. Bosworth, 'A Mamluk Text on the Orthographic Distinction between *Ḍād* and *Zā'*', *Orientalia Hispanica* (Leiden 1974), 135–49.

⁷⁷ Ṣalāḥ Muḥammad al-Khaymī, *Fibris makhtūṭāt Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyya: 'ulūm al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (3 vols, Damascus 1403/1983), 1:188 (MS #5987).

⁷⁸ MS 259 Taymūriyya Library, Dār al-Kutub, Cairo: fols. 29–58.

⁷⁹ Muḥadhdhab al-Dīn Shamīm al-Ḥalwī, *Qaṣīda tufarriqu bayn al-zā' wa-al-ḍād*, MS Fatih 5413/8, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul: fols. 166b–7a.

⁸⁰ This work on *ḍ/z* minimal pairs is attributed to the famous litterateur and scholar Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889). This consists of a poem defining these minimal pairs in verse form. The editor of the text, Dāwūd al-Chalabī al-Mawṣilī, found the book in a manuscript notebook in Mosul and published it as *Urjūzat al-zā' wa-al-ḍād* in 1929. I feel this attribution to Ibn Qutayba, however, is faulty and that the work actually dates from much later. It uses the poetry-style of pedagogy that became common in the late Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods and also includes some words that do not appear at all in al-Zāhid or al-Ṣāhib's book, such as *zadd/ḍadd*; Pseudo Ibn Qutayba, '*Urjūzat al-zā' wa-al-ḍād*,' *Lughat al-arab* 7:6 (1929), 471–3.

⁸¹ Al-Khaymī, *Fibris*, 1:169 (MS # 307).

⁸² Al-Khaymī, *Fibris*, 171 (MS #5351).

⁸³ Şeşen, *Nawādir al-makhtūṭāt al-arabiyya*, 1:232.

their time, namely the inability of scribes and other participants in lettered culture to master or preserve the richness of Islam's language. They present their work as an effort to aid readers in distinguishing between words with *dād* and *zā'* and stem the tide of decline. Although a scribe might genuinely benefit from reading al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib's books, they are as much an act of participation in high culture as they are attempts to protect it. The books are brief, pleasant to read and provide ample opportunities for the two authors to showcase their unique knowledge of obscure words and verses of poetry.⁸⁴ This wordsmithing subgenre would become more explicitly appreciative in later centuries, when serious grammarians like Ibn Mālik and Pseudo-Ibn Qutayba would pen occasional small poems about *dād / zā'* minimal pairs for literary enjoyment (*mulḥa*).

Another subgenre was more seriously philological. Exemplified by Ibn Suhayl's work, that of al-Dānī, al-Baṭalyawī as well as Ibn Mālik's more profound *al-ʿIṭimād fī nazāʾir al-zā' wa-al-dād*, this subgenre focused more specifically on scholarly questions of usage. Ibn Suhayl, for example, states that his teacher asked him to write a *dād / zā'* book that focused on words used in ordinary speech as opposed to lexical rarities or unusual (*waḥshī*) language.⁸⁵

Another subgenre that aimed at a serious scholarly objective consisted of books designed to improve the distinction between and pronunciation of the *dād* and *zā'* in reading the Qur'ān. Al-Manṣūrī's *Radd al-ilḥād fī al-nuṭq bi-al-dād* and Ibn al-Najjār's *Risāla fī al-farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā' fī tilāwat al-Qur'ān al-karīm* exemplify this subgenre, with the former presenting a rebuttal of earlier scholars who had approved of the 'weak *dād*' pronunciation (which al-Manṣūrī, like Ibn Ya'īsh [d. 643/1245], describes as a phoneme pronounced between the lateral *dād* and *zā'*).⁸⁶

Finally, the mammoth *Rawḥa fī al-zā' wa-al-dād* of al-Jarbādhqānī (fl. 370/980) is *sui generis*. The work is exhaustive rather than practical or enjoyable. The manuscript of this massive work consists of 307 folios in which the author provides extremely lengthy definitions of all words including [d] or [z]. The book is thus by far the largest work on the subject. Interestingly, al-Jarbādhqānī draws almost entirely on the great early lexicographer 'Abd al-Malik al-Aṣma'ī (d. 213/828).

⁸⁴ For a discussion of how *adab* was designed to entertain through education, see Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (3 vols, Chicago 1974), 1:466.

⁸⁵ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā'*, 289.

⁸⁶ Al-Khaymī, *Fihris*, 1:186.

Dating Lexical Data from al-Zāhid and al-Šāhib's Texts

In general, we can date material taken from al-Zāhid's book to the author's career in the early tenth century CE at the very latest. Material from al-Šāhib's book that he himself introduced to al-Zāhid's work we can only date confidently from the mid tenth century CE at the latest. Al-Šāhib and al-Zāhid's works, however, do not provide unprecedented definitions for all the words they include. In many cases, the two authors draw their definitions directly from the earliest surviving Arabic dictionary: the *Kitāb al-'Ayn* of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. 160/776 or 170/786 or 175/791) of Basra. Although this lexicon has always been associated with al-Khalīl, and he certainly provided one of the major sources for its contents, the work was truly compiled and edited by his student Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. c. 187/803). Even after it left his hands, however, the *Kitāb al-'Ayn* was once again reworked by one Abū Mu'adh 'Abdallāh b. 'Ā'idh (fl. 185/800) circa 815 CE.⁸⁷ In cases where al-Zāhid or al-Šāhib draws on the *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, we can thus date the material to the late eighth century CE at the latest.

Dating this lexical material from the authors' career is a secure but certainly very conservative approach. Even for material in al-Zāhid and al-Šāhib's books not taken from the *Kitāb al-'Ayn* or a demonstrably earlier source, there is still compelling reason to believe that it was in use long before the careers of the two authors. Although we may have no datable evidence for earlier usage of these definitions, it is highly probably that such lexical rarities would have been derived from poetry collected from Bedouins by earlier lexicographers in the eighth and ninth centuries CE. Corriente bases his dating of the delateralization of /d/ on this supposition. He contends that word pairs where the [l] and [d] appear as allophones demonstrate that the delateralization occurred before the first lexicographer recorded the definition of these words. What the lexicographer heard as two separate words was actually the same word pronounced in two dialectical variations of the original /d/. Corriente thus dates this material from before the careers of early lexicographers, between 'the Umayyad period and the ninth century [CE]'.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ R. Sellheim, 'Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad', *ELP*; John A. Haywood, *Arabic Lexicography* (Leiden 1980), 22–6; G. Troupeau, 'A propos des grammairiens cités par Sibawayhi dans le Kitāb', *Arabica* 8 (1961), 309–12; cf. M.G. Carter, 'Les origines de la grammaire arabe', *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 40 (1972), 69–97.

⁸⁸ Corriente, 'D – L Doublets', 54–5.

Lexicographers of al-Zāhid's and al-Ṣāhib's time, however, were very capable of adding new material to existing data, and we must admit the possibility that many of the words that they included in their works were recently manufactured 'rarities' to provide scholars and litterateurs with interesting fodder. We must thus err on the side of caution, and fix al-Zāhid's or al-Ṣāhib's careers as the *terminus ante quem* for lexical material not found in the *Kitāb al-'Ayn* or attested in earlier texts.

Scholars like Rafael Talmon have demonstrated the problematic nature of statements attributed to early philological authorities such as al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad and Sībawayhi in later philological works.⁸⁹ These early foundational figures in the Arabic grammar tradition proved effective legitimizers for later explanations of linguistic phenomena, and we cannot treat statements attributed to them by later philologists as authentic without examination. In dating the [d] – [z] merger we will thus not rely on any attributions for which we have no synchronic textual attestation in surviving works. Unattested comments still yield great utility, however, on the less chronologically sensitive topic of understanding the manner in which participants in the Arabic lexical tradition reacted to [d] – [z] free variation.

Compelling Word Pairs

1. /BAYD/: *egg* → [*bayḍ* / *bayz*]:
mid 900s CE *terminus ante quem*

The [d] version of this pair is extremely well attested. '*Bayḍ*' generally denotes 'egg', and is widely used in this sense. It also has the common derivative meaning of 'white (*abyaḍ*).' Al-Ṣāhib seems to have been the first lexicographer to note the specialized [z] form of the word, however, as it does not appear in al-Zāhid's text, the *Rawḥa* of al-Jarbādhqānī or Khalīl b. Aḥmad's *Kitāb al-'Ayn*. [*Bayz*] certainly ranks among the rarest and most poorly attested words in Arabic.⁹⁰ The famous lexicographer Aḥmad Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) wrote, 'I do not know [it] from the correct speech of the Arabs.'⁹¹

⁸⁹ See Rafael Talmon, 'A Problematic Passage in Sībawayhi's *al-Kitāb* and the Authenticity of *Aḥbar* about the Early History of Arabic Grammatical Thinking', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104: 4 (1984), 691–701.

⁹⁰ See *Lisān al-'arab*'s very limited definition; Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, 7:437, 452.

⁹¹ Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Fāris, *Mu'jam maqāyis al-lughā*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 6 vols. (Beirut 1411/1991), 1:367.

This [z] form, however, is clearly a dialectical variation of the [d] form, denoting 'sperm/semens (lit. 'the water of a stallion/male [*mā' al-fahl*])' or 'ant egg' in al-Šāḥib's *al-Farq bayn al-dād wa-al-zā'*.⁹² In his *al-Muḥīṭ*, al-Šāḥib omits the 'ant egg' definition and limits the word to 'semens (*mā' al-rajul*) or a woman's womb'.⁹³ Several decades later, Ibn Suhayl repeats this definition, noting *bayz* as 'semens (*mā' al-rajul*)'.⁹⁴

2. /*DAFR*/: a broad-based and tall sand dune → [*dafr* /*zaf*r]:
early 900s CE terminus ante quem

Although the root [d – f – r] generally denotes 'braiding,' al-Zāhid and al-Šāḥib note an isolated and rare usage of the word [*dafr*] as 'a broad-based and tall sand dune'. Both note that this word can also be written or pronounced with a [z].⁹⁵ This free variation, however, occurs only in this word and not in other words derived from the two roots. The *Kitāb al-'Ayn* does not mention this dialectical difference, although there appears to be no entry on the very common root [z – f – r] in the Baghdad edition of the work.⁹⁶ The *Lisān al-'Arab* also fails to mention this variation.⁹⁷ Al-Šāḥib was clearly relying on al-Zāhid for this information on the dialectical variation, for he makes no independent mention of it in his *al-Muḥīṭ*.⁹⁸

3. /*Z – H – R*/: outer, manifest → [*z – h – r*] / [*ḍahr*]:
late 700s CE terminus ante quem

The root [z – h – r] is very widely attested in Arabic, generally denoting 'outward or apparent nature.' The word [*ḍahr*], however, is extremely rare and appears to be an archaic word of desert origin. Al-Zāhid and al-Šāḥib define it as the part of the rock of an out-

⁹² Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Farq*, 22–3.

⁹³ Al-Šāḥib Ismā'il b. 'Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fi al-luḡa*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl-Yāsīn (11 vols, Beirut, 1414/1994); 8:54, 10:47. See also, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (with addenda), *Tartīb kitāb al-'ayn*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Bukā'ī (Qom, 1993), 102 (the Iranian edition adds '*mā' al-rajul*,' but the author says he has not heard a verb from it or an attested plural); idem, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, 7:68 (for b – y – ḍ).

⁹⁴ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā'*, 320.

⁹⁵ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 73a; Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Farq*, 22.

⁹⁶ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, 7:27–8; idem, *Tartīb kitāb al-'ayn*, 502–3.

⁹⁷ See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*; 4:518–20, 490.

⁹⁸ There is some mix-up here, either on the part of the author or the editor, because in the *Muḥīṭ* al-Šāḥib says that the word *tazāfara* means 'cooperation (*ta'āwun*),' while in his *al-Farq* he follows al-Zāhid by insisting that only the [d] version of the word (*taḍāfara*) renders that meaning; Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*; 8:6; 10:25; idem, *al-Farq*, 22.

cropping or mountain that differs in colour from its internal composition (*jibilla*).⁹⁹ Both al-Ṣāhib and al-Zāhid evidently took this definition verbatim from al-Khalil's *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*.¹⁰⁰ Al-Jarbādhqānī also quotes al-Aṣmaʿī for the same definition verbatim, glossing it elsewhere as 'a chipped hole in a mountain (*nuqra fī jabal*)'.¹⁰¹ Interestingly, in his extremely short entry on [*dahr*] in the *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311–12) also quotes the famous philologist al-Kisāʿī (d. 189/805) as defining the word as 'a tortoise shell'.¹⁰²

This archaic word [*dahr*], which we can date back at least to the late eighth century CE through the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* may be what geologists and archaeologists call 'desert varnish,' or the discoloration of the outer layer of a rock exposed to the desert sun. The difference in colour between this outer layer and the underlying rock is central in creating petroglyphs, since it allows for a colour difference between the face of the rock and cut relief.

4. /Ḍ – R – R/: *harmful, dangerous* → [Ḍ – r – r] / [z – r – r]:
early 800s CE terminus ante quem

The root [Ḍ – r – r] is well attested in Arabic and other Semitic languages as denoting 'harm,' with Bergstrasser asserting that its origins lie in the Proto-Semitic root for 'rival wife.'¹⁰³ The [Ḍ – r – r] root thus appears in manifold permutations in Arabic. The [z] counterpart words, however, are rare and tied to obscure Bedouin usages. [*Maẓarrat*] denotes a rock with a sharp edge like a knife, occurring in an instrumental case (*ism al-āla*). [*Zarīr*] is an area of ground characterized by sharp, knife-like rocks (*makān al-ḥazn*). [*Mazrūra*] (lit. cut with a sharp rock, feminine form) indicates a female camel on whose vagina a small pimple-like cyst has grown. The link to the notion of sharpness/harm is that this cyst is cut off with a sharp rock (*maẓarra*).¹⁰⁴ [*Zirr*] appears more commonly as a sharp flint. In his *al-Muḥīṭ* al-Ṣāhib notes that the root can appear as the verb 'to slaughter (*dhabah*)', based on a Prophetic tradition in which the root

⁹⁹ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 72b – a; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 18; idem, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 3:400.

¹⁰⁰ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 1:287; 3:406. The *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* defines *dahr* as 'a place in a mountain, or a characteristic [part] of a rock of a mountain that differs with its internal composition (*mawḍiʿ fī al-jabal, khilqatun fī al-jabal min ṣakhrin yukhālifu jiballatahu*)'.

¹⁰¹ Al-Jarbādhqānī, *al-Rawḥa*; 11a, 143b.

¹⁰² Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 4:494. Ibn Manẓūr cites an "Alī b. Ḥamza", whom I assume is Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ḥamza al-Kisāʿī.

¹⁰³ Bergstrasser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, 210–11.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 71a–72b; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 16.

is used to describe a sharp rock (*zīrār*) that can be used for that purpose.¹⁰⁵ Although the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* has no entry on the [z] version, this *ḥadīth* is attested in Ibn Ḥanbal's (d. 241/855) *Musnad*.¹⁰⁶ Ibn Suhayl seconds al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib's definitions for *zarār* as 'a place in which there are sharp rocks (*zurar*),' which he describes as 'a rock that fills the palm of one's hand and may be used to slaughter animals (*ḥijāra mal' al-kaff wa-rubbamā yudhbahu bihā*).'¹⁰⁷

5. /F – Y – D/: to flood out, pour out → [fāz]:
early 700s CE terminus ante quem

The root [f – y – d] is well attested in Arabic in the field of 'flooding out,' and 'flowing amply.' The lemma [fāz], however, is extremely rare and limited to one usage only: 'to die, a soul leaving the body.'¹⁰⁸ Al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib define the word as describing the soul's exiting the body upon death, and it thus appears in its feminine form (matching the feminine word for the verb's subject, soul, *rūh*). In his *al-Muḥīṭ*, al-Ṣāhib even notes a causative usage in which God causes the soul to leave the body (*afāza Allāhu nafsahu*).¹⁰⁹ Although both al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib feature this definition, this word does not appear in the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*.

Of all the words appearing in these two texts, however, we can nonetheless assign the earliest date for the usage of [fāz]. In the *al-Sīra al-nabawīyya* (Biography of the Prophet) of Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767), edited by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833 or 213/828), [fāz] is used by a Jewish woman from the oasis town of Khaybar, north of Medina, to mean 'die'.¹¹⁰ This provides not only a *terminus ante quem* in the mid eighth century CE for the word [fāz], it also supports the conclusion that this word represented a dialectical variation of its [d] counterpart that was preserved as a lexical oddity by historians fascinated by its usage in the Prophet's biography. Further suggesting a matter of dialectic variation, early philologists seem to have contended at length over this word. Al-Baṭalyawsī quotes the early

¹⁰⁵ Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 10:7–8; see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 4:517.

¹⁰⁶ Aḥmad, *Tarīb Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 502; *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*: 4:256 (Wensinck citation).

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā'*, 321.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 71b–a; Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Farq*, 15–16; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 7:452–4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 10:43.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawīyya*, ed. Jamāl Thābit *et al.* (5 vols, Cairo, 1419/1998), 3:246.

Arab philologist al-Mubarrad (d. 286/900) as saying that only the tribe of Banū Ḍabba used the [z] version to indicate the soul leaving the body (all others said ‘*fāḍat al-rūḥ*’).¹¹¹ Al-Farrā’ (d. 207/822) says that the [z] version is better, with only the Tamīm and Kalb tribes saying ‘*fāḍat al-naḥs*’ (the soul exited).¹¹² Another famous early Arab philologist, al-Aṣma’ī, also noted this definition. He contends, however, that the verb does not represent the act of the soul leaving the body, but simply of the person dying. Like the others, however, al-Aṣma’ī notes the dialectical variation and that some Arabs say ‘*fāḍat*.’¹¹³

6. / ‘ – Ḍ – Ḍ /: to bite → [‘ – z – z]:
late 700s CE terminus ante quem

The root [‘ – ḍ – ḍ] is widely attested in Arabic as ‘to bite’ or ‘to cling onto with one’s teeth.’¹¹⁴ The [z] version, however, is rare, denoting ‘to harm or afflict.’ Both al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāḥib take their definitions from the *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, where it is defined as ‘severity and war (*al-shidda wa-al-ḥarb*).’¹¹⁵ Al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāḥib complain that the two words are sometimes incorrectly interchanged in poetry.¹¹⁶ The *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, however, admits a clear semantic relationship, explaining that it is ‘as if it is from the war “biting,” but these two [words] are not distinguished as *da’atha* (water bloating, illness) and *da’aza* (deep sexual penetration) are, because of the difference in these [latter] two usages (*waḍ’ayn*’). Al-Khalīl thus argues that the seeming similarity between the two roots is really just the result of unfortunately similar meanings. He admits, however, that they are also dialectical variations.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, Ibn Suhayl further admits the relation between the two words in his efforts to distinguish between them: [‘ – ḍ – ḍ] means biting on something as far back as one’s molars, while [‘ – z – z] only denotes biting with the front of the mouth (*bi-jamī’ shafatayka*). He adds that the [z] version is also specifically for use with the word ‘war.’¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Al-Baṭalyawī, *al-Farq bayn al-ḥurūf al-khamsa*, 177.

¹¹² Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 7: 453.

¹¹³ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Ḍād wa-al-zā*, 317.

¹¹⁴ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, 1:72; Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Ḍād wa-al-zā*, 306.

¹¹⁵ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 67a; Ibn ‘Abbād, *al-Farq*, 4–5; idem, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 1:77, 88; Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, 1:83.

¹¹⁶ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 67a; Ibn ‘Abbād, *al-Farq*, 4–5.

¹¹⁷ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, 1:83.

¹¹⁸ Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Ḍād wa-al-zā*, 321.

7. / [Q – R – D] : poetry recitation → [q – rr – z] :
late 700s CE terminus ante quem

The root [q – r – d] is widely attested in Arabic as denoting ‘lending, loan.’ The rare derivation *qarīd*, however, specifically means ‘épique poem (*qaṣīd*),’ and *qard* ‘the recitation (*nuṭq*) of poetry.’ In the classical period, the corresponding [z] root generally denoted a specific type of leaf used for dying and was common as a name (ex. *qāriḡ*, *qurayḡa*). Both al-Zāhid and al-Šāhib, however, indicate a primary meaning as ‘panegyric, praising a person.’¹¹⁹ This is attested in a *ḥadīth* from the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) in which the Prophet warns against ‘praising me (*tuqarrizūnī*) unduly’, like the Christians praised Jesus.¹²⁰ For this usage al-Zāhid and al-Šāhib use the causative (form II) of the verb [q – rr – z / *taqrīz*]. This definition is paraphrased from the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, which defines [q-r-z] first as a leaf used for dying but then adds ‘extreme praise for your brother, and severely ornamenting (*tazyīn*) his person’. The *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* also provides the same rare usage for [q – r – d] as al-Zāhid and al-Šāhib: the reciting (*nuṭq*) of poetry.¹²¹ In *al-Muḥīṭ*, al-Šāhib slightly restricts the definition of [q – rr – z] to praising a living person.¹²²

8. / ʿ – Z – M / : bone, greatness → [ʿidām] :
late 700s CE terminus ante quem

The root [ʿ – z – m] is widely attested in Arabic for ‘greatness’ and ‘bone (*ʿazm* pl. *ʿizām*).’¹²³ Both al-Zāhid and al-Šāhib define the rare root [ʿ – d – m] as denoting ‘grasping with one’s hand,’ with [ʿidām] being the grip of a bow, the part of a plough where the iron meets the wood or the tailbone of a camel (*ʿasīb al-baʿīr*).¹²⁴ This root is rarely attested and did not even merit an entry in al-Firūzābādī’s *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*. Al-Šāhib and al-Zāhid’s definitions are taken from the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, which lists [ʿidām] as the grip of a bow, the tailbone of a camel (*ʿasīb al-baʿīr*) or the link of plough and wood.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 70b–a; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 11–12.

¹²⁰ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 7:455; cf. *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*: 1:160 (Wensinck citation system).

¹²¹ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 5:133; 5:49–50.

¹²² Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 5:249–50, 371. Ibn Suhayl says that (q-r-z = to praise) can be used in Form 1 too; Ibn Suhayl, *Kitāb al-Dād wa-al-zā*, 317.

¹²³ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 2:92; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 1:457–8.

¹²⁴ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 69b; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 8–9.

¹²⁵ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 1:287.

9. /M – D – D/: to cause pain, to whip → [māzz / mizāz]:
early 900s CE terminus ante quem

The root [m – d – d] is well attested in Arabic for the meaning ‘to whip, to cause pain or unpleasantness,’ and in his *al-Muḥīṭ* al-Ṣāḥib draws directly on the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* for such usages as ‘the whip caused me pain (*amaddanī al-sawī*).’¹²⁶ The root [m – z – z], however, is rarer (with only a small definition in *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* but a definition in the *Lisān al-ʿArab* comparable to its [d] counterpart).¹²⁷ It does not appear in the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*. In al-Zāhid’s and al-Ṣāḥib’s works, however the word appears as ‘to insult, attack verbally, to blame (*nāzaʿa, shārara*).’ Interestingly, Ibn Fāris cites a very obscure ḥadīth ‘Don’t attack (*tumazz*) your neighbour, since other people will go but he will remain.’¹²⁸ It also denotes a pomegranate tree.¹²⁹

10. /NADD – NAZZI/: to insist on, to strum the strings of a
musical instrument: early 900s CE terminus ante quem

Al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāḥib have the root [n – z – z] as ‘to insist on (*alabḥa ʿalā*),’ or ‘to strum the strings of an ʿūd,’ which both note can appear with [z] or [d]. While al-Zāhid states unequivocally that these two are dialectical variations (*luḡhatān*), al-Ṣāḥib removes that explanation from the text.¹³⁰ This definition is extremely rare, not appearing in the [n-d-d] listing of *Lisān al-ʿArab*, which has no entry on [n-z-z]. By al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāḥib’s time these words must have only existed as lexical curiosities, for both scholars confused and conflated [n –] with [b –]. In the *al-Muḥīṭ*, al-Ṣāḥib lists the same [n–] definitions under [b-z-z] – [b-d-d]. He adds that [b-d-d] can also yield the meaning of ‘a plump woman,’ but makes no note of the two words being dialectical variants.¹³¹ His entry in the *al-Muḥīṭ* drew on and conflated the [n-d-d] and [b-d-d] entries from the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, where *badḍa* is a plump woman and the verb form is the standard definition of water coming slowly from rock. This is the root/definition unit that would later appear in the authoritative dictionary

¹²⁶ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 7:17–8; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 7:445.

¹²⁷ Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Firūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (Beirut 1419/1998), 699; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 7:463–4.

¹²⁸ Ibn Fāris, *Muʿjam*, 5:273; Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥman al-Aʿzamī (Beirut n.d.), 244 (words of Abū Bakr).

¹²⁹ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 70b–71a; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 15; idem, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 10:17.

¹³⁰ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 71b; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 14–15.

¹³¹ Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 7:442; 10:16.

Lisān al-ʿarab.¹³² Neither the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* nor the *Lisān al-ʿarab* has an entry under the [z] counterpart, [n-z-z], which appears to be extremely rare and archaic.¹³³

11. /F – Z– ‘ /: *to be great, terrible, dreadful, abominable or foul*
→ [f – d – ‘] *late 700s CE terminus ante quem*

Al-Zāhid and al-Šāḥib assume that their audience knows the primary definition for [f – z – ‘], ‘great, terrible, foul.’¹³⁴ For the [d] counterpart, [f – d – ‘], both are almost as laconic. Al-Šāḥib says simply ‘to make [it] appear (*abdā*).' We understand his intended meaning through al-Zāhid, whose original definition had lacked a shade of euphemism: ‘his faeces appeared.’¹³⁵ This definition of ‘to defecate’ appears in the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, where al-Khalīl notes that this word is a metathesized version of the root [d – f – ‘].¹³⁶ Al-Jarbādhqānī quotes the philologist and religious scholar Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838) as defining [f – d – ‘] as ‘to push out [faeces] (*da-fāʿa*).'¹³⁷

12. /Z – L – F/: *difficult, rocky terrain* → [*uzlūfa* / *udlūfa*, *zalif* / *ḍalif*]: *early 900s CE terminus ante quem*

Both al-Zāhid and al-Šāḥib note that the root [z – l – f] has no [d] counterpart. They also acknowledge, however, that two words derived from this rare root have dialectical variations with [d]. They define [*uzlūfa*] / [*udlūfa*] as ‘ground full of sharp rocks,’ with al-Šāḥib adding that the [z] version is more correct. They both also note that the adjective [*zalif*] or its [d] counterpart [*ḍalif*] mean a place that is ‘nice and full of sand (*ḥasan dhū raml*).'¹³⁸

13. /KHAZRIF/: *an old and infirm woman* → [*khazrif* / *khadrif*]: *early 900s CE terminus ante quem*

Both al-Zāhid and al-Šāḥib note that the rare word [*khazrif*] (an old and infirm woman) has no [d] equivalent, but also note that this

¹³² Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*; 7:117; 7:436 (for b-d-d and b-z-z).

¹³³ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 7:15–16.

¹³⁴ Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 2:89.

¹³⁵ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 68a–69b; Ibn ‘Abbād, *al-Farq*, 7–8.

¹³⁶ Al-Khalīl, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 1:282.

¹³⁷ Al-Jarbādhqānī, *al-Rawḥa*, 243a.

¹³⁸ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 78b; Ibn ‘Abbād, *al-Farq*, 34.

word can appear with both phonemes as a dialectical variation (*luḡhatān*). Again, al-Ṣāhib adds that [z] is better.¹³⁹

An Analysis of the Word Pairs: Preservation of Archaic Free Variation between /d/ and /z/

In the case of those pairs where both a [d] and [z] word existed, enjoyed significant use and possessed a well-attested definition, we must conclude that their shared semantic field resulted from dialectical variations being recorded in the lexical entries of the word's [d] or [z] counterpart. This seems to be the case for [zafīr] / [dafīr] and [q-rr-z] / [q-rr-d]. The two parts of these specific pairs each have very different meanings, with only one or two permutations of the root being recorded in the definition of its phonemic counterpart. This is certainly the case for [khazrif] and [z-l-f], where no corresponding [d] word exists beyond an admitted dialectical variation.

In the case of the other word pairs, however, we must conclude that the [d] / [z] pairs are the results of an archaic free variation between the two phonemes among different Arabic speech communities. Definitions and usages for the eight roots [n-z-z], [f-d-ʿ], [ʿ-z-z], [f-y-z], [ʿ-d-m], [d-h-r], [b-y-z] and [z-r-r] are extremely limited, found only in specialized works on *dād* and *zā'*, or restricted to obscure Bedouin settings. [M-z-z] seems to be an intermediate case.

These data strongly suggest that these words were not originally separate semantic units, but rather existed as dialectical variation of their [d] / [z] counterpart. Only by assuming that some Arabic speech communities in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods did not distinguish between /d/ and /z/ while others did can we explain the existence of these word pairs. These archaic dialectical variations must have survived or been collected from speakers that did not distinguish between /d/ and /z/. They were thus frozen in verses of poetry and rare instances of use recorded or employed by early lexicographers.

The archaic nature of these words and their origins as dialectical variations is attested not only by the very limited or nonexistent entries on many of them in massive dictionaries like *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* or *Lisān al-ʿArab*, but also because the words themselves seemed to have lost any link with actual usage. The utter confusion surrounding [n – d – d] / [n – z – z] and the two roots' conflation with their [b –]

¹³⁹ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 80b–80a; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 40–1 (the editor of al-Ṣāhib's text has it *'khanzarif*).

counterparts illustrates that these words probably existed only in specialized lexicographic literature. There was no linguistic reality to check the authors or copyists of the work. As the poems and smaller literary works written about *dād* and *zā'* words demonstrate, bizarre [d] and [z] usages were bound together within this closed setting of sophisticated literary appreciation. Ibn Manẓūr thus conflates two such words that would otherwise be unrelated in usage. He lists one definition of [*ʿadm*] as ‘a line in a mountain that differs from the rest of its colour (*khatṭ fi jabal yukhālifu sāʿir lawnahu*)’ – almost the same definition as [*dahr*]. He even cites a verse of poetry featuring both words: ‘how many an [*ʿadm*] have I seen in the middle of a [*dahr*].’¹⁴⁰

Yet because early lexicographers and philologists such as al-Aṣmaʿī, al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib were all participants in the high linguistic tradition of the Qurʾān, which treated /d/ and /z/ as two distinct phonemes, they interpreted these archaic dialectical variations as separate words. Similarly, if future researchers uncovered a copy of the Oxford English Dictionary, they would find set definitions for the lexical item ‘player’. If they also unearthed a dictionary of African-American English, they would find an entry for a word differing from ‘player’ in only one phoneme, ‘playa,’ meaning ‘a successful, attractive, hip and stylish man.’¹⁴¹ They might note a semantic proximity between ‘playa’ and ‘player’ in the latter’s capacity as ‘an important actor in certain affairs,’ but the clear phonemic distinction might lead them to treat the two items as two separate words. This would certainly be the case in the Arabic philological tradition, which treated the idiosyncratic linguistic usages of Bedouins as authoritative.

The Arabic Lexical Tradition and Reconciling the Merger of *Dād* and *Zā'*

The Arabic lexical tradition has maintained an advantageous attitude towards the dialectical (and even linguistic) variety that characterized the Pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods. As Jonathan Owens

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 12:409.

¹⁴¹ For definitions of ‘playa’ in urban American dialects, see <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=playa> (last accessed 9/13/05).

¹⁴² Jonathan Owens, *The Foundations of Grammar: an Introduction to Medieval Arabic Grammatical Theory* (Amsterdam 1988), 21; cf., Y. Gruntfest, ‘The Diachronic Approach to Language in Medieval Arabic Philology’, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 15 (1992), 149–70.

notes, 'Arabic grammatical theory was a rigid synchronic model'¹⁴² that preserved order globally while exploiting variety locally. While philologists gradually dismissed unacceptable grammatical variations as dialectal features of certain tribes, the startling lexical variety of Classical Arabic in great part stems from the differing sets of words used in different tribes and regions. As words appearing in the Qur'an, *Hadīth*, poetry or the expansive 'speech of the Arabs' during the Jāhiliyya and the first century and a half of Islam, the Arab lexical tradition accepted this diverse body of lexical material as legitimate. What had originally been dialectal or even linguistically exclusive to a certain tribe became near synonyms within the inclusive Arabic lexical worldview, the slight distinctions in meanings that scholars elaborated between former dialectal variants serving as testimonies to the richness of the Arabic language. While archaic features such as the Yemeni Ṭayyi' tribe's '*Dhū al-Ṭayyi'iyya*' (use of the South Arabian *dhū* instead of the standard *alladhī* relative pronoun) were marginalized, the unique words that this tribe might have used for 'lion' or 'sword' would contribute to the Arabic lexicon.¹⁴³

Arabic philologists thus had no compunction about admitting that dialectal variation existed between /z/ and /d/ for what they perceived as *one* word, a phenomenon they termed 'replacement' (*ibdāl*).¹⁴⁴ Scholars certainly held up a distinction between the two phonemes as the desired norm, and Muḥammad b. Ziyād Ibn al-A'rābī's (d. 231/845–6) statement that blurring /d/ and /z/ was entirely permitted thus met with contempt.¹⁴⁵ Philologists, however, could not deny that this dialectal variation occurred. Concerning the word pair [*ḥuẓāz*] / [*ḥuḍād*] (a type of eye kohl), for example, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad is reported to have said that 'those whose dialect (*lughā*) is *dād* pronounce both with *dād*, and those whose dialect is *zā* pronounce both with *zā*'.¹⁴⁶ By the tenth century CE, philologists had come to enjoy the dialectal variety in Arabic phonetics. Abū 'Alī Ismā'il b. al-Qāsim al-Qālī of Baghdad (d. 356/967) narrates a

¹⁴³ Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002) recognized how the Arabic lexical tradition was widened in this manner; see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir fī 'ulūm al-lughā wa-anwā'ihā*, 1:262–3 (chapter on *Mā'rifat tadākhul al-lughāt*), 1:322 (chapter on *Mā'rifat khaṣā'is al-lughā*); cf. Rabin, 'Classical Arabic', in 'al-'Arabiyya', *EP*; idem, *Ancient West Arabian*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir fī 'ulūm al-lughā wa-anwā'ihā*, 1:460 ff. (chapter on *Mā'rifat al-ibdāl*). See also, Roman, *Etude de la phonologie et de la morphologie de la koinè arabe*, 1:166.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 4:307.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Baṭalyawṣī, *al-Farq bayn al-ḥurūf al-khamsa*, 186.

humorous story in which a man asks the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'what do you say about a man who *zabḥa bi-dabby* (he meant *dabḥa bi-zaby*, or 'slaughtered a gazelle')?' When 'Umar responds with shock and incomprehension at the unknown word '*zabḥa*,' the man replies 'indeed it is a dialect.'¹⁴⁷

Although philologists might have enjoyed such harmless dialectical curiosities, the actual phonological identity of a word was sacrosanct. In the language of God's revelation, each word and the root from which it was formed possessed a specific meaning inherently appropriate for the thing it indicated.¹⁴⁸ As it became widely established in Arabic linguistic theory, 'the assumption in language is the absence of synonymy (*al-asl fī al-luġha 'adam al-tarāduf*);' each root had a unique meaning.¹⁴⁹ After all, for most great Muslim linguistic theorists, language was the result of divine inspiration and not human convention.¹⁵⁰ In a well-known etiology for the Muslim study of Arabic grammar, the famous early philologist and supposed progenitor of Arab linguistics, Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī (d. 69/688), encounters a Persian convert to Islam who was walking his horse. When al-Du'alī asks him why he was not riding his mount, the Persian replied 'indeed it is [*dāli'*] (disobedient)'. While bystanders laughed at the convert, al-Du'alī understood immediately that he was trying to say the word's [z] equivalent, [*zāli'*], which meant

¹⁴⁷ Abū 'Alī Ismā'īl b. al-Qāsim al-Qālī, *Kitāb Dhayl al-amālī wa-al-nawādir* (2 vols, Beirut, [1926]), 2:142.

¹⁴⁸ For the inherent identity of each trilateral root and the words derived from it, see Abū al-Faṭḥ 'Uthmān Ibn Jinnī, *al-Khaṣā'is*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār (3 vols, Cairo 1371/1952), 1:5 ff.; Muhammad Hasan Bakalla, *Ibn Jinnī: an Early Arab Muslim Phonetician* (London 1402/1982), 41–2. Al-Suyūṭī provides examples of a number of famous philologists, such as al-Aṣma'ī, Ibn Durayd and Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244/858), all attesting to the eminently appropriate relationship between a root/word and its definition; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzḥir fī 'ulūm al-luġha wa-anwā'ihā*, 1:49–54 (*bāb munāṣabat al-alfāz li'l-ma'ānī*).

¹⁴⁹ Philologists who upheld this position on synonymity include Ibn Durustawayh (d. 346/957) from the Basran school, Abū al-'Abbās Tha'lab (d. 291/904) from the Kufan school, Ibn al-A'rābī and Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004). The influential Shāfi'ī legal theorist al-Bayḍawī (d. 685/1286) also upheld this position; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzḥir*, 1:406. See also Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī' (d. 1014/1606), *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, ed. Jamāl 'Aytānī (Beirut, 2001), 9:297. I must thank my friend and colleague Matthew Ingalls of Yale University for this latter citation.

¹⁵⁰ This was the opinion of Ibn Jinnī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935–6), Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027), and al-Suyūṭī. The minority Mu'tazilite school generally held that language was the result of human convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*), while other major Sunni thinkers such as al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) said both positions were possible; Ibn Jinnī, *al-Khaṣā'is*, 1: 40, 47; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzḥir fī 'ulūm al-luġha*, 1:9, 16, 19–20.

'lame'.¹⁵¹ Emanating from the high tradition of early Islamic philology, the story underscores the axiom that each root possesses a unique and stable meaning. The humour in the situation, as well as al-Du'ālī's concern for the decay of proper language, rests on the shared assumption that the [d] and [z] words enjoy separate semantic existences.

The proof-value of these the *dād* / *zā'* lexical curiosities thus presented a problem when two distinct and stable roots that should be minimal pairs were actually dialectical variations. When two words differing only in one phoneme had similar, clearly related meanings and were thus probably instances of a sound in free variation, the lexical theory broke down. As al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib argue, conflating the meanings of [d] / [z] pairs 'changes the rules of Arabic.'¹⁵² Since the default in their semantic theory was non-synonymy, the easiest method for dealing with this challenge was to introduce semantic distinctions between the /z/ and /d/ pair. In their discussions of the words [q-rr-d / *taqrīd*] and an archaic [z] version of the same word, both of which can mean 'to recite praise poetry,' al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib insist that they are in fact 'mutually contrasting (*mutā'ā-riḍān*).' The [z] version denotes panegyric poetry only, the [d] satirical.¹⁵³ This represents an attempt at distinguishing between two words that clearly occupy the same semantic field, as there is no contemporary corroborative indication that [q – r – d] connoted only negativity.¹⁵⁴ It was, after all, synonymous with 'epic poem (*qaṣīd*)'.

Another attempt to reconcile the existence of archaic evidence of free variation between /d/ and /z/ was to posit that semantic similarity is linked to phonological similarity. Describing the lemma [*fād*] / [*fāz*], al-Aṣma'ī argues that 'the meaning of "*fād*" is close to "*fāz*" be-

¹⁵¹ Khalil I. Samaan, *Linguistics in the Middle Ages: Phonetic Studies in Early Islam* (Leiden 1968), 23; Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, trans. Bayard Dodge (New York, 1970), 1:88. If this story were accurate, it would probably mean that the emphatic dental plosive (modern urban [d]) was a recognized pronunciation for [d], for a Persian convert who had no interdentials in his language would not have been able to pronounce either the lateral continuant /d/ or the emphatic interdental /z/. Unfortunately, the Persian identity of the character in this story is most likely a trope to represent the deteriorating mastery of Arabic in al-Du'ālī's time, when the Muslim community received a massive influx of 'foreign (*ʿajamī*)' (read Persian) speakers.

¹⁵² Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 67b; Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Farq*, 3.

¹⁵³ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 67b; Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 5:249–50, 371; idem, *al-Farq*, 3.

¹⁵⁴ An example of a clearly negative usage comes from a third/ninth-century Shiite who was criticized for having 'slandered in poetry (*yuqarriḍu*)' 'Uthmān; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:261 (bio of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣāliḥ).

cause *zā'* and *dād* are both emphatic/velarized (*iṭbāq*) letters, and their places of articulation (*makhraj*) are close to one another'.¹⁵⁵ When the famous satirical poet al-Farazdaq (d. 110–12/728–30) used what should have been the word [*ʿazz*] (intense hardship) in its [d] form in the verse 'the hardships of time, O son of Marwān, have not left – of wealth but that which has been destroyed or eaten away', al-Ṣāhib says that the verse was originally 'hardship (*ʿazz*)' but has been narrated as 'bite (*add*)' metaphorically.¹⁵⁶ Al-Aṣmaʿī was more open about the two roots' common origin. He states that the derived words [*iṣāz*] (to assault, attack verbally) and [*iḍād*] (biting) are indeed one word, 'but [people] distinguished between the two pronunciations (*lafẓayn*) when they distinguished between the two meanings (*maʿnayayn*)'.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

The great polymath al-Jāhiz (d. 255/868–9) recounts the story of a mid eighth-century man from Basra who had a slave girl named [*Zamyā'*], but whose name he could only manage to pronounce as [*Ḍamyā'*].¹⁵⁸ Did this man suffer from a speech impediment, or was he simply the product of the phonologically heterogeneous world of the Arabian Peninsula in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods? Like the South Arabians whose quotidian correspondences we have recently unearthed, he may have hailed from a Yemeni tribe that had ceased to distinguish between /d/ and /z/, collapsing both into /d/ as early as the fourth century CE. Perhaps he represented the audience to which Wahb b. Munabbih addressed the Ḥimyarite scatterings in his stories or for whom nostalgic South Arabians had carved their names on rock faces in the Sabaean script during the early Islamic period.

As the word pairs presented here from Abū ʿUmar al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād illustrate, the Arabic lexical tradition had absorbed material from speakers like this Basran, who had merged /d/ and /z/ into one phoneme. Although the earliest concrete date that we can assign to this material is the early 700s CE, the archaic usages

¹⁵⁵ Al-Jarbādḥqānī, *al-Rawḥa*, 246a. For interpretation of the meaning of *iṭbāq*, see Versteegh, 'Loanwords from Arabic', 274.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Zāhid, *al-Farq*, 67a; Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Farq*, 4–5.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 7:447.

¹⁵⁸ Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr al-Jāhiz, *al-Bayān wa-al-tabyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (2 vols, Cairo 1968), 2:211.

of many of these words suggest that they existed in Arab speech communities even earlier. Bracketed between the merger of *ḌĀD* and *zā'* in elements of Old South Arabian in the fourth century CE, and the existence of dialectical variations of words in the Early Arabic of the eighth century lies a period of free variation between the /Ḍ/ and /z/ phonemes among Arab speech communities. As participants in a high philological tradition that distinguished rigorously between these two phonemes, scholars like al-Zāhid and al-Ṣāhib found themselves forced to reconcile evidence of this archaic free variation with a semantic theory that insisted on the distinct identity of each phonemic root. By either insisting on subtle distinctions in meaning between [Ḍ] / [z] pairs or associating semantic and phonological similarity, these Muslim scholars were able to preserve their vision of the Arabic language.