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**Ilkka Lindstedt**

**WHO IS IN, WHO IS OUT?  
EARLY MUSLIM IDENTITY THROUGH  
EPIGRAPHY AND THEORY**

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM  
THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES



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WHO IS IN, WHO IS OUT?  
EARLY MUSLIM IDENTITY THROUGH EPIGRAPHY AND THEORY

Ilkka Lindstedt  
*University of Helsinki*

**Abstract** This article discusses early Islamic identity based on Arabic inscriptions and other contemporary evidence, which is analyzed with the help of the social identity theory. It will be argued that this evidence tallies with Fred Donner’s hypothesis of the somewhat late articulation of markedly Islamic identity. Circa one hundred published Arabic inscriptions dated to the 640s–740s CE are collected in the Appendix and form the main set of evidence used in the article. The epigraphic material is compared with other material evidence as well as the Qur’ān. It is argued that Arabic inscriptions form an important, but still underused, corpus for the study of early Islamic history. This is because people who were outside the scholarly and political elite produced much of the epigraphic corpus; Arabic inscriptions, then, proffer information for researching aspects of social history. According to the epigraphic corpus, distinctly Islamic identity began to be articulated in the first decades of the eighth century CE, with an emphasis on specific rituals and the Prophet, as well as with the appearance of the words “Muslims” and “Islam” as references to the religious group.

**Keywords** Qur’ān, Arabic inscriptions, epigraphy, social identity theory, early Islam, community of the Believers

“In current scholarship [of Christianity in late antiquity], the traditional categories that have shaped much of the debate are being reconfigured. These categories — not only pagan and Christian but also monotheism and polytheism, elite and popular, magic and religion — reflect the polarized view of our sources, not the religious syncretism and fluid identities that appear to have been the norm for ordinary people. More and more scholars are turning away from the idea of an epic

‘conflict between pagans and Christians’ to discuss the period in terms of religious diversity and overlapping beliefs and practices.”<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Donner’s “Believers theory” and epigraphy

What strikes one most when reading early Islamic-era Arabic inscriptions is their emphasis on monotheism, piety, and sin. Furthermore, until the 70s AH/690s CE if not later, the group identity of the Believers (*al-muʿminūn*), as the community appears to have called themselves,<sup>2</sup> seems to have been negotiable or, at least, different from later usage.<sup>3</sup> Fred Donner, in his by now famous “Believers theory” has discussed this at length.<sup>4</sup> According to his

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<sup>1</sup> Maxwell, “Paganism and Christianization,” p. 851. I thank Fred Donner, Ella Landau-Tasseron, Nina Nikki, Saana Svård, Kaj Öhrnberg, Simona Olivieri, Jens Scheiner, and the two anonymous peer-reviewers for commenting on an earlier version of this study. I owe special thanks to Nina Nikki, whose presentations on the Pauline letters and identity on various occasions at the University of Helsinki got me interested in social identity in the first place. For the geographical area of the inscriptions, see the map, fig. 1, below. Nora Fabritius drew the map, for which I am very grateful.

<sup>2</sup> This is based on the Qurʾān, where the plural *muʿminūn* appears 179 times as an appellation for the ingroup. Other formulations, such as *al-ladhīna āmanū*, “those who believe,” appear hundreds of times. See Badawi and Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary of Qurʾanic usage*, p. 50. The word *muʿminūn* is admittedly rare in other early contemporary evidence, but it appears in inscriptions and coins from the reign of Muʿāwiya. See Appendix, nos. 11-12; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 690-692; and section 4.2., below, for a treatment of the nomenclature that the Believers/Muslims used to refer to themselves.

<sup>3</sup> In this article, I sometimes speak of “Believers,” sometimes of “(early) Muslims,” while in yet other cases I use the combination “Believers/ Muslims.” They all mean different things here. “Believers” refers to the earliest community before the 70s/690s, while “(early) Muslims” refers to the community from that decade onwards. When I use the combined “Believers/Muslims,” I am talking about the community before and after the 70s/690s.

<sup>4</sup> Donner, “From believers to Muslims” and *Muhammad and the believers*. For a rather different interpretation of the early Arabic epigraphic corpus, see Hoyland, “The content and context.” According to Hoyland’s (extremely valuable) article, the boundaries between different religious communities had cemented early, a conclusion with which I disagree (see below, section 1.2.). On a somewhat similar analysis of Arabic inscription to what is suggested here, see Imbert, “L’Islam des pierres.”

reading of the Qurʾān and contemporary evidence, the early community of Believers probably included Jews, Christians, and others who were ready to accept the stringent emphasis of the Believers on monotheism, follow their rites, as well as fight on their side. I should remark at the outset, however, that, in contrast to Donner, I would not necessarily call the Believers' movement ecumenical,<sup>5</sup> meaning that one could have joined the group and still proclaimed Jewish, Christian, or some other religious affiliation as her or his primary one. Believers probably had to cut ties to their prior religious communities and adopt Believer identity at the expense of their former identities. In any case, it is my contention that the ambiguity of the Believer identity that was still developing allowed people of Jewish, Christian, and other backgrounds to rather easily affiliate themselves with Believers and become members of the group if they wanted (or were forced) to do so. This agrees with recent scholarship, by for example Daniel Boyarin, on late antiquity that has emphasized the fluidity of religious identities of Jews, Christians, and others.<sup>6</sup>

This study takes as its basis Donner's hypothesis of the early Believer identity and investigates what the Arabic epigraphic evidence has to offer. I will probe the early Islamic group identities that were primarily based on religion.<sup>7</sup> Believers/Muslims of course participated in other, more profane, group identities, but they are not the main focus of this article and are not extensively attested by the epigraphic record. Nor are specific historical events such as the *ridda* wars or the three civil wars (*fitan*) at the center of my exposition. This study, then, is an exercise in social and ideological, not political, history. In addition, intragroup hierarchy and power are not explored in this article. In the Appendix, I have assembled all published Arabic inscriptions dated between 23-132/643-750; these form the main bulk of the evidence used in my study. To concentrate on inscriptions only up to the end of the Umayyads is, of course, somewhat arbitrary: the early ʿAbbāsī era did not bring about a great change in the themes or

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<sup>5</sup> Donner, *Muhammad and the believers*, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> Becker and Reed, *The ways that never parted*; Boyarin, *Border lines*.

<sup>7</sup> In this study, I treat religion as an amalgam of beliefs, narrative (myths), identity, worldview, and (ritual and other) practice.

formulae of the inscriptions, whether graffiti or monumental.<sup>8</sup> Nor is there a sudden change in paleography: some early paleographic features such as the open medial or final ‘ayn or retroject final yā’ do not become rare or obsolete before the course of the third/ninth century.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, there are particular reasons why concentrating on the period up to 132/750 is worthwhile. What happened during those years of early Islamic history is still very murky. Probing this question with dated evidence written by the community itself (inscriptions) hopefully gives us answers or, at the very least, redefines some of the questions we want to pose. Because most of the Arabic epigraphic material is graffiti, that is, non-monumental inscriptions in which the author and the hand are the same person,<sup>10</sup> it is possible to look at the early Believer/Muslim identity formation from the inside and, I argue, on the grassroots level.

Except the Qurʾān, almost all surviving Arabic literary evidence is from the ‘Abbāsī era, that is, later than 132/750. Granted, modern scholars have been able to reconstruct some works (or, rather, notebooks and lecture notes) that were composed around the turn of the first-second century AH.<sup>11</sup> However, the bulk of the Arabic literary material narrating the formative period is not contemporary with the Believer/early Muslim community: rather, it is late, tendentious, dogmatic, and sometimes demonstrably misleading. As is nowadays rather generally accepted among Islamicists,

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<sup>8</sup> For changes and continuity in the themes and formulae of Arabic graffiti, see Harjumäki and Lindstedt, “The ancient north Arabian.”

<sup>9</sup> Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie*, vol. 2, pp. 93-141. In any case, only explicitly dated inscriptions are used as evidence in this study (Appendix).

<sup>10</sup> One of the anonymous peer-reviewers objected to my use of the word “graffito” in this article, saying that it carries the meaning of crudeness and simplicity. Nothing of the sort is meant here. Merriam-Webster defines graffito as “an inscription or drawing made on some public surface (such as a rock or wall); also: a message or slogan written as or as if as a graffito” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/graffito>), and this value-free meaning is intended here as well. Furthermore, the word graffito is a standard technical term in, for instance, Greek, Latin, Ancient North Arabian, and Arabic epigraphy. For scholarship on graffiti in Classical Studies, see the articles in Baird and Taylor, *Ancient graffiti in context*. In their Introduction (p. 15), they note: “graffiti, because of their non-monumental, private, and often spontaneous nature, sometimes reflect in a more direct way than other categories of inscription the thoughts and feelings of people.” For more theorization on Arabic graffiti as an epigraphic category from an etic perspective, see my “Arabic rock inscriptions” and “Religious warfare.”

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*.



using the Arabic literature to study Islamic origins is rather problematic if one's viewpoint is not the history of early Islam as the later community saw it or, say, narratology. This is why it is not employed in this study. Many exemplars of the non-Arabic literary evidence, on the other hand, are earlier and serve as primary sources for the events.<sup>12</sup> The problem with the non-Arabic sources is that they were produced outside the Believer/Muslim community and are often hostile to it.

Thus, epigraphic evidence, especially the early material, has value, since it sometimes dated and written by the ingroup, nascent Muslim community. There are also other contemporary documents that modern historians can use: 1) numismatic evidence;<sup>13</sup> 2) documents and letters on papyri,<sup>14</sup> and 3) archaeological remains.<sup>15</sup> This study, however, concentrates on the epigraphic material, and compares and relates the evidence to theories of early Believer/Muslim group identity formulation put forward by modern historians.

The first volume of *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (RCEA), published in 1931, included 36 inscriptional texts up to 132/750, but this figure includes four pre-Islamic inscriptions and, furthermore, some inscriptions on portable items (not dealt with in this study).<sup>16</sup> This was, then, a very insufficient corpus to base any conclusions on. The number of lapidary inscriptions since the publication of RCEA has multiplied, thanks to epigraphic surveys carried out by especially Arab scholars during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This can be seen from the Appendix to this article that

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<sup>12</sup> For the non-Arabic sources, see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Phillips, "Currency," Heidemann, "Numismatics." For checklists of early Islamic-era coinage, see Michael L. Bates's website at:

<https://numismatics.academia.edu/MichaelBates>.

<sup>14</sup> The student of this rather ample set of evidence should start with two valuable Internet resources: The Checklist of Arabic Documents ([http://www.naher-osten.uni-muenchen.de/isap/isap\\_checklist/index.html](http://www.naher-osten.uni-muenchen.de/isap/isap_checklist/index.html)) and The Arabic Papyri Database (<http://www.naher-osten.lmu.de/apd>). For the usability of Arabic papyri for the questions of this study, see, e.g., Sijpesteijn, "Arabic papyri," pp. 462-463.

<sup>15</sup> For orientation, see Johns, "Archaeology"; Milwright, "Archaeology."

<sup>16</sup> Early inscriptions on portable items (lanterns, seals, bowls, ostraca, etc.) form a rather small corpus that is somewhat distinct from the lapidary inscriptions as to the themes and formulae. For them, see RCEA, vol. 1; online at <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/-Islam/Inscriptions/>; Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 6, pp. 186-198.

includes around 100 dated early Arabic inscriptions. Although the data is still somewhat on the meager side, I believe that a number of inferences can be drawn on its basis, especially when compared and contextualized with other evidence as well as modern studies and theory.

### 1.2. Criticism of Donner's theory

Donner's theory that the early Muslims, or rather Believers, should be conceived as a pietistic movement of stringent monotheism with negotiable, ecumenical, or emergent identity has received not only praise but also criticism. Before moving further in this article, let me engage with some critics of Donner's Believers theory. Most notable of them have been Amikam Elad, whose detailed article reviewed Donner's 1998 book *Narrative of Islamic origins*,<sup>17</sup> and Patricia Crone, who has offered a critique of Donner's more recent (2010), and more popular, study *Muhammad and the Believers*.<sup>18</sup>

Elad's critique is very rich and I can only deal with the issues relevant for this study here. The main bulk of Elad's review article is dedicated to the question of the beginnings of Arabic historiography, its character, and later transmission. According to Elad, "the historical consciousness and communal awareness of the first believers is very early."<sup>19</sup> I have dealt with the problems of the transmission of Arabic historical material elsewhere;<sup>20</sup> this question is, in any case, outside the scope of the present study. Let me simply remark that I do not agree with Elad's suggestion of the earliness of historical consciousness and, as far as I can see, there is nothing in the way of tangible evidence to prove this. Naturally, a lot hinges on what counts as evidence. I would accept as authentic evidence only contemporary material, but Elad is ready to accept also Arabic literature,<sup>21</sup> which is generally conceived to be late.

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<sup>17</sup> Elad, "Community of believers."

<sup>18</sup> Crone, "Among the believers."

<sup>19</sup> Elad, "Community of believers," p. 300.

<sup>20</sup> Lindstedt, "The transmission."

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Elad, "Community of believers," p. 246: "The evidence regarding the adherence of the tribesmen to Muḥammad indicate that in certain instances, due to their objections, Muḥammad agreed to make some concessions." He refers (n. 4) to studies that are based primarily on Arabic literature.

As for early Muslim identity, Elad criticizes Donner's position of gradual development of it: "Donner uses one of the main claim of the 'Hagarist school', that the earliest documents mentioning the Prophet Muḥammad, Islam and/or Muslims are from the 70s of the first century of the *hijra*."<sup>22</sup> By the "Hagarist school," Elad refers to Crone and Cook's 1977 book *Hagarism* that started the discussion of early Islam and its sources in earnest although most scholars nowadays deem its claims too far-fetched. This appears to be tendentious rhetorics on Elad's part: by equating critical scholarship with a controversial study, he endeavors to show the implausibility of Donner's position of early Believer/Muslim identity. However, it cannot be called anything else than a fact that "the earliest [extra-Qurʾānic] documents mentioning the Prophet Muḥammad, Islam and/or Muslims are from the 70s" or perhaps from the 60s AH (see section 4.). There is no way around it.<sup>23</sup>

In Elad's view, it seems, the late antique Middle East was one of distinct and clear-cut identity groups, and the Islamic identity emerged very early: "The Arabs' title 'mhaggrāyē' in these [Syriac] Christian sources denotes Muslims, and distinguishes their different religion."<sup>24</sup> To put it in another way, Elad seems to claim that things are as simple as: Arabs = *mhaggrāyē* = Muslims. The different contours of their social identity, or their nomenclature, are not explored in his article, which is a shortcoming. I will discuss the appellations *mhaggrāyē*/*muhājirūn*, Muslims, and Arabs, as well as the group identities at length in this study. More problematical still, some of Elad's views on Arabs and Muslims are stereotypical and questionable, his text containing passages such as: "*Nasab* [genealogy] was one of the main, if not the main, characteristics of the Arab ideals. This and other worldly materialistic Arab ideals preoccupied the mind of the early Muslims, and were dominant in the new Arab-Muslim society of the first and second centuries of Islam."<sup>25</sup> No evidence is adduced to support this bold, and rather

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<sup>22</sup> Elad, "Community of believers," p. 246.

<sup>23</sup> Elad, "Community of believers," pp. 282-287 suggests that documents quoted in Arabic literature could be authentic, but this is dubious and need, in any case, to be demonstrated on a case-by-base basis.

<sup>24</sup> Elad, "Community of believers," p. 248.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

demeaning, claim. In any case, one wonders what is so “worldly” and “materialistic” about genealogy.

Patricia Crone’s review of Donner’s *Muhammad and the Believers* puts forward similar criticism from a different viewpoint.<sup>26</sup> In contrast to Elad, Crone does not deem Arabic historiography — or other literature — authentic evidence for the early period. That does not mean that she likes Donner’s reconstruction of it. She summarizes the arguments advanced in his books as follows:

Donner notes that a small number of Quranic passages speak of believers from among the People of the Book, i.e., Jews and/or Christians. Thus sura 3:199, one of the two examples given, says that “There are among the People of the Book those who believe in God and what he has sent down to you and was sent down to them.” Since the Quran as a whole is addressed to believers, this suggests to him that Muhammad’s followers did not form a separate confessional community, but rather included monotheists from any community who believed in God and the last day and were prepared to live piously. He also notes that Abraham is singled out as neither a Jew nor a Christian; that Jews are mentioned, in a document Muhammad drew up in Medina, as forming a community of or along with believers; and that every monotheist could agree to the first part of the Muslim profession of faith, “there is no God but God”: It is this phrase alone that appears on coins, papyri, and inscriptions down to about 685. Donner believes fear of imminent judgment drew the believers together, and by the end of Muhammad’s life, they had turned militant in their desire to establish the kingdom of God on earth. Even so, the “violent conquest” model does not make sociological sense in Donner’s view, and there is little sign of destruction in the archaeological record. All monotheists will have found a place in the new community, without needing to convert, he

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<sup>26</sup> Crone, “Among the believers.” The review was published online, so I cannot refer to specific page numbers.

suggests. It was not until the reign of Abd al-Malik (685-705) that Islam began to emerge as a separate confessional community of its own.

Crone takes issue with many of these suggestions; in some cases her criticism is more firmly grounded,<sup>27</sup> in others, something is left to be desired. She starts by remarking: “The main problem is that the only direct evidence for Donner’s central thesis is the Quranic verses on the believing People of the Book; all the rest is conjecture.”<sup>28</sup> This is somewhat disingenuous, since Donner does adduce other early evidence as well, such as the so-called Constitution of Medina<sup>29</sup> and the Syriac writer John bar Penkaye.<sup>30</sup> Crone doubts the open character of the early movement as interpreted by Donner, noting that “The Jacobite, Nestorian, and Melkite Christians that the Muslims encountered in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq were unquestionably polytheists by Quranic standards.” I agree with Crone in that I find the words “open” or “ecumenical” problematic (see section 4.), but it seems that the Qur’ānic verses that include some of the Christians among the ingroup are mere rhetorics to Crone. In her review, she does not deal with the question how the “inclusive” and “exclusive” verses should be interpreted (see section 4.1. for my analysis). This is, in my opinion, a serious fault in her review. She also suggests that the early non-Arabic evidence shows that the Believers’ movement was viewed as something alien and not ecumenical in any way. This does not take into account the processes of outgroup othering and stereotyping as understood by social psychology (see section 2.): those

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<sup>27</sup> For example, she notes, perhaps quite rightly, that in many cases Donner’s interpretation does not offer anything new: “Isho’yahb, moreover, says of the Christians of Oman that they only had to part with half their property in order to remain Christians, while Bar Penkaye says that ‘of each person they required only tribute, allowing him to remain in whatever faith he wished.’ In other words, both sources confirm the conventional view that non-Muslims had to pay taxes in order to retain their faith. Indeed, Donner himself later speaks of cities peacefully absorbed in exchange for a tax. If it was by incorporating monotheist communities *as tributaries* into their domains that the Believers worked toward their goal of establishing the hegemony of God’s law, Donner’s seemingly revisionist view is simply the conventional one.”

<sup>28</sup> On this, see also 4.1., below.

<sup>29</sup> Donner, *Muhammad and the believers*, pp. 72-74.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

conquered Jews, Christians, and others who did not identify with the Believers' movement certainly saw it as a foe.

Furthermore, Crone claims that Donner's argumentation and book is not based only on evidence but on modern sensibilities: "Donner's book has already been hailed in a manner showing that its thesis appeals deeply to American liberals: Here they find the nice, tolerant, and open Islam that they hanker for." This seems to be a case of projection rather than description, and she offers no evidence for this accusation. Crone herself switches — in my opinion very problematically — from the medieval era to the modern one in one sentence.<sup>31</sup> Naturally, Donner's book is written for a modern audience and uses often modern concepts from an etic perspective. But I find little in the book that could be considered apologetics and, in any case, at the root of Donner's project, as I understand it, is an attempt to interpret the Muslim (emic) identity formation on the basis of contemporary evidence.

Let me remark by way of clarification that I build the arguments of this study perhaps more on Donner's earlier article "From Believers to Muslims" than his more recent *Muhammad and the Believers*, which I find advancing in some cases hypotheses that are too far-fetched, although it is a very valuable book. *Muhammad and the Believers*, it has to be remembered, is written for a wider public. This can be considered a strength or a weakness. For criticism, on the basis of epigraphy, of Donner's rejection of the violent conquest model, see section 4.3., below.

In addition to Elad and Crone, one needs to mention in this context Robert Hoyland's classic 1997 study "The content and context of early Arabic inscriptions," in which he comments on, among other things, early Islamic identity. According to Hoyland, drawing conclusions based on the fact that the early inscriptions do not mention the Prophet and that they purportedly

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<sup>31</sup> A case in point is the following passage in Crone's review: "At another point he [Donner] seems implicitly to abandon his thesis, for he tells us that the early Kharijites 'represented the survival in its purest form of the original pietistic impetus of the Believers' movement.' Are we to see the Kharijites as the bearers of ecumenicalism, then? In the contemporary Middle East, militant fundamentalists are often dubbed 'Kharijites,' with considerable justice. But it is hard to get one's mind around Osama bin Laden or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as representatives of ecumenicalism." This passage reads to me as confused and it is hard to understand what demonstrative power the modern example might have for the early period.

lack typical Islamic formulae “is to misconstrue Islam, which is not primarily Muhammadanism, but rather subordination to an omnipotent and unique God.” Furthermore, “these texts [inscriptions] were never intended as catechisms of Islamic doctrine.”<sup>32</sup> Something can be said about both statements. First, it is true that at the core of Islam lies stringent monotheism; nevertheless, one would be hard put to construe Islam *without* the Prophet. Second, it is specifically this quality — that many of the inscriptions are informal graffiti written by people who did not belong to the elite — that increases, not diminishes their value. These suggestions will be developed in Section 4., below.

All in all, the critical comments on Donner’s model have been welcome appraisals of his work. They raise significant points and show possible pitfalls. Interestingly, neither Elad or Crone point out explicitly that much of Donner’s *Believers* theory is based on *argumentum ex silentio*: the idea that since the pre-60s AH extra-Qur’ānic evidence does not mention distinctly Muslim beliefs or rites is interpreted by Donner to mean that they were absent among the early Believers. Even if I follow Donner to a large extent, it is in my opinion crucial to understand the possible problems in this approach and to admit that future finds and studies can shape, or even upset, the reconstruction proffered here.

## 2. The social identity theory (SIT)

For developing the arguments of this study, I use the social identity theory (SIT) as my theoretical underpinning. It has been rather amply and fruitfully employed in, for instance, biblical studies,<sup>33</sup> but I am not aware of its earlier

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<sup>32</sup> Hoyland, “The content and context,” p. 96. He also remarks (n. 109) that even what could be called generally monotheist phrases can be interpreted as specifically Islamic: “In modern-day Lebanon, for example, the phrase *al-ḥamdu lillāh*, though seemingly unpartisan, would be seen as typically Muslim by Maronite Christians.” I fail to see the value of this example as an analogue for a phase in history where a new religion was budding. As with Crone (the previous footnote), modern examples are scarcely illuminating for early Islam. Although I use in this article theoretic models developed in modern scholarship (section 2.), the analogues that I put forward have to do with early Christianity (section 5.).

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Esler, *Conflict and identity*; Nikki, *Opponents and identity*.

uses in studies on early Islam. The theory was first developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the course of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>34</sup> It is a theory originating in social psychology that attempts to understand and describe social identity and group formation as well as inter- and intragroup behavior and prejudice. In the exposition of the social identity theory that follows, there might be some elements of what is nowadays called the self-categorization theory. Together, the social identity and self-categorization theories form the social identity approach. For simplicity's sake, however, I use the social identity theory (SIT) as a shorthand for this (continuing) discussion about social identity:

- People are cognitively prone to categorization. This leads individuals to identify, construct, and articulate *group identities*<sup>35</sup> that the individual partakes in and influences. A person has many group identities (ethnic, national, religious, ideological, and so on) that are sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory, and in flux. Furthermore, the groups themselves are not stable but changing and dynamic. According to Tajfel, "an individual is a member of numerous groups which interact with other groups. Theoretically, two types of change (and consequently, of the need for cognitive adjustment to change) can be distinguished: intragroup and intergroup."<sup>36</sup> The existence and the outlining of a group are based on an amalgam of both self-identification and outside views.

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<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Turner, "Social comparison"; Tajfel, *Differentiation and Human groups*. For a more recent treatment, see Haslam, *Psychology in organizations*.

<sup>35</sup> An individual's social identity is a sum of his group identities (sometimes also called affiliations or memberships). I follow Tajfel's definition of social identity: "social identity of individuals is linked to their awareness of membership of certain social groups, and to the emotional and evaluative significance of that membership," Tajfel, "La catégorisation," p. 292, translated in Deschamps, "Social identity and relations of power," p. 86. The term "(social) group" should be understood as "two or more individuals who share a common social identification of themselves or ... perceive themselves to be members of the same social category," Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition," p. 15. Hence, groups are to be understood more as cognitive and shared constructions rather than physical bodies. Nevertheless, group memberships are not somehow artificial but, rather to the contrary, essential parts of an individual.

<sup>36</sup> Tajfel, *Human groups*, p. 137.



- A group is something more than — and something different from — the sum of the individuals forming that group. The group affects the behavioral patterns of the individuals that identify themselves with that group. “Dealings between groups cannot be accounted for by the psychology of the individual.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, it has been empirically proven that intergroup behavior is different from interpersonal behavior, social groups being more competitive with and keener to draw a distinction from other groups than individuals would be in interpersonal dealings.<sup>38</sup>
- The group that one identifies with is called the *ingroup*; the individuals not part of the ingroup are called the *outgroup*. Groups interact with other groups; the members of a group usually favor the other members of the group (the ingroup) as opposed to members of other groups (the outgroup/outgroups), but different conditions dictate the specific intergroup relationships at a given time.<sup>39</sup> In any case, “prejudice is part and parcel of intergroup relations,”<sup>40</sup> and groups often strive and aim for positive distinctiveness, which is achieved by for example ingroup favoritism and outgroup stereotyping.
- It is usual that intragroup differences are downplayed, whereas intergroup differences are overemphasized.<sup>41</sup> Categorization, then, goes hand in hand with stereotyping.<sup>42</sup>

In this study, I hope to show that these notions can be applied to interpret early Believer/Muslim group formation and identity development. The notable aspect in the SIT is that it is based on decades of empirical observations in laboratory and other settings about how human beings act as individuals and as groups. It is meant to be a universal theory, not restricted to only some eras or communities.

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<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> Turner, “Towards a cognitive redefinition,” p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Intergroup behavior takes place when “individuals belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members *in terms of their group identifications*,” Sherif, *In common predicament*, p. 12 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>40</sup> Tajfel, *Human groups*, p. 131.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>42</sup> Turner, “Towards a cognitive redefinition,” p. 28. The SIT explains why both pre-modern primary sources and many modern scholars often have a preoccupation with clear-cut categories and identities.

On the other hand, the SIT was formulated to explain phenomena in the modern world and the empirical studies that form its basis were done with modern people; utilizing it for the study of the pre-modern world could, some might argue, be problematic. For this reason, the SIT serves in this article as an inspiration, an analytical lens, and not an all-encompassing theory that explains all early Islamic evidence and historical processes. Nevertheless, since the SIT has a basis in real empirical evidence and since I think it is reasonable to suppose that human beings have operated to some extent in a similar fashion as social beings in both the modern and pre-modern eras, I believe that the SIT can be productively employed to study the group identity of the Believers and the Muslims. The predisposition to categorize is a fact about human cognition and in no way limited to the modern world. It could also be argued that social groups were even more essential in the pre-modern era than our current one that heavily espouses individualism.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, social identity theorization and studies have concentrated on intergroup tension and conflict: in my opinion, this makes the SIT a very feasible framework indeed to explain early Islamic history, which was peppered with such tensions (both ideological and physical) between different groups. A further argument for the merits of using the SIT for the period in question is that it helps explain the bigger social setting and contest the interpersonal bias in the Arabic narrative sources<sup>44</sup> that portray history as having been made by exceptional individuals such as the Prophet Muḥammad, the military leader ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, the caliph ‘Umar, or the Umayyad Commanders of the Believers Mu‘āwiya and ‘Abd al-Malik, while overlooking groups of people and their (inter)actions.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Nikki, *Opponents and identity*, p. 60, for more arguments why the SIT is a valid approach to the pre-modern world and texts. Crone, *Pre-industrial societies*, pp. 114-115 has also noted that social roles and group pressure were more constant in the pre-modern than the modern world.

<sup>44</sup> That is to say, they depict long and complex social processes and historical phenomena in an anecdotal and dialogue form in an interpersonal setting consisting of, say, the caliph and some other important early figure.

<sup>45</sup> The SIT takes into account and clarifies the social context and relations as perceived by the groups in question, Tajfel, *Differentiation*, p. 50.

### 3. Arabic epigraphic evidence

I will suggest in this study that the early Arabic epigraphic material can be divided into two phases, a shift starting to occur in the 70s/690s. I call the earliest inscriptions (20s-60s AH, before any mention of the Prophet) the *earliest* layer and the later layer (70s AH onwards) *more distinctively Muslim* inscriptions. It has to be remembered that although the epigraphic evidence is lumped together in these two layers, this is, to some extent, a simplification. Individual writers professed, in their inscriptions, varying concerns, opinions, and views. However, what I propose here is that this division into two layers is useful for conceptualizing and categorization the epigraphic record.

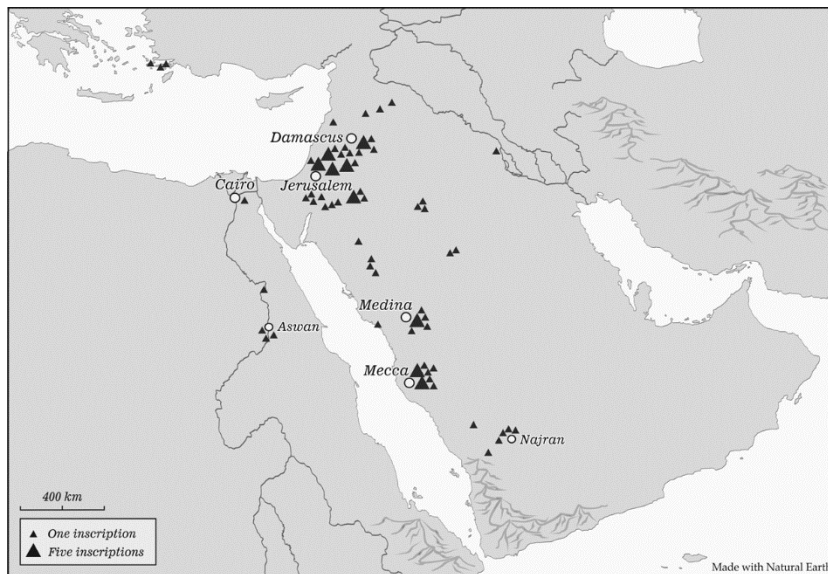


Fig. 1: The distribution of inscriptions contained in the Appendix.

Map drawn by Nora Fabritius.

### 3.1. The earliest layer of Arabic inscriptions (20s-60s AH)

There are only 13 inscriptions with dates in this era. The evidence is, thus, meager to say the least, and all conclusions based on this evidence must be considered, for the time being, provisional only. It is geographically limited, too: majority of these 13 inscriptions come from the Arabian Peninsula. More dated evidence, hopefully to be found in the future, could change our interpretation of the stages of the formation of Muslim identity. Fortunately, the epigraphic evidence can be compared with other evidence from the era, chief among it being the Qurʾān and some early non-Arabic sources. About the Qurʾān, Fred Donner has noted:

The strong concern for piety and morals visible in the Qurʾān, which I take to be evidence of the values prevailing in the earliest community of Believers, did not die out in the period following the death of Muḥammad and the codification of the Qurʾān. Rather, the preoccupation with piety survived among the Believers.<sup>46</sup>

Because of this, comparisons with the Qurʾānic material are fruitful, as will hopefully be shown below in section 4.

Even if the earliest (23 and 24 AH) surviving Islamic-era Arabic inscriptions are mundane in tone (Appendix, nos. 1-3), more religious concerns appear in the two graffiti written by a certain Yazīd ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Salūlī:

29 AH, Wādī Khushayba, Saudi Arabia, graffito: “May God have mercy on Yazīd ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Salūlī; and it was written/he wrote in Jumādā [I or II?] of the year twenty-nine [AH = January-March 650 CE]” (Appendix, no. 4).

29 AH (probably), Wādī Khushayba, Saudi Arabia, graffito: “O God, forgive Yazīd ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Salūlī” (Appendix, no. 5).

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<sup>46</sup> Donner, *Narratives*, p. 85.

This pair of extremely early inscriptions reflect emphasis on the mercy and forgiveness of God. God is invoked for forgiveness in two other early graffiti (46 and 52 AH, Appendix, nos. 9-10). As for God's blessings, they appear alongside His mercy in the following graffito:

40 AH, Wādī al-Shāmiya, Saudi Arabia, graffito: "God's mercy and blessings (*raḥmat allāh wa-barakātuhu*) be upon 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ; and it was written/he wrote in the year forty [AH = 660-1 CE]" (Appendix, no. 8).

There is also one epitaph that survives from the earliest period:

31 AH, Cairo, Egypt, epitaph: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; this grave belongs to 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khayr al-Ḥajrī/Ḥijrī/Ḥujarī/Ḥajarī/Ḥujrī;<sup>47</sup> O God, forgive him and let him enter Your mercy and us with him; ask forgiveness for him when this inscription is recited and say 'amen'; this inscription was written in Jumādā II in the year thirty-one [AH = January-February 652 CE]" (Appendix, no. 6).

Two building inscriptions (incidentally, both mentioning the building of a dam) are extant from this period. Their social function is of course very different from the graffiti: while the latter are mostly self-expression, the former were intended to convey a public and formal message. They are also commissioned inscriptions and, with the epitaphs, belong to the category of monumental inscriptions of the early Arabic epigraphic record. The building inscriptions mention the Commander of the Believers Mu'āwiya (r. 40-60/661-680) and it is especially for him that forgiveness and succor is requested. However, both graffiti and monumental inscriptions reflect similar concerns for piety as well as the idea of God's omnipotence and forgiveness:

58 AH, near al-Ṭāʿif, Saudi Arabia, building inscription: "This dam belongs to the servant of God Mu'āwiya, the Commander

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<sup>47</sup> For the possible ways of reading the *nisba*, see al-Dhahabī, *Mushtabih*, p. 149.

of the Believers; ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ṣakhr built it with the permission of God in the year fifty-eight [AH = 677-8 CE]; O God, forgive the servant of God Mu‘āwiya, the Commander of the Believers, and make him firm and succor him; and grant the believers enjoyment with it [the dam]/through him [the Caliph]; ‘Amr ibn Ḥubāb/Khabbāb/Janāb wrote [this]” (Appendix, no. 11).

40-60 AH, Medina, Saudi Arabia, building inscription: “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; this dam belongs to the servant of God Mu‘āwiya, the Commander of the Believers; O God, bless him through it, Lord of the heavens and the earth; Abū Radhādh, the *mawlā* of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās built it with the power and strength of God; and Kathīr ibn al-Ṣalt and Abū Mūsā oversaw it” (Appendix, no. 12).

What kind of identities are visible in the earliest Islamic-era inscriptions? If analyzed together, we can perceive three different identities, the criteria of identifying oneself with being the following: 1) religious, 2) tribal, 3) based on the dichotomy freeborn vs. freedman/slave. These categories exclude, for example, groups based on gender or professional identities, because they are not clearly attested in the epigraphic record.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> None of the writers of the inscriptions dated up to 132/750 are female, it seems. Women are sometimes mentioned in the evidence (Appendix, nos. 3, 58, 96), and clearly they are supposed to be part of the same group.

## 1) Religious:

## Ingroup:

- *al-mu'minūn*, Believers,<sup>49</sup> who
  - believe in God who is Merciful, Compassionate, and Forgiving, and whose mercy can be entered after death (signifying belief in some sort of afterlife)<sup>50</sup>
  - believe that God is the Lord of Gabriel, Michael, and Isrāfīl as well as the Lord of heavens and earth<sup>51</sup>
  - have concern for sin and forgiveness<sup>52</sup>
  - have a leader (*amīr al-mu'minīn*)<sup>53</sup>

## Outgroup:

- implicitly, those who do not agree with the notions of the ingroup

Remarkably, although it would appear that monotheism is a major feature in the early inscriptions, God's oneness is never explicitly emphasized. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that no religious outgroup is explicitly mentioned in the earliest layer of the Arabic inscriptions. This is surprising, since the Qur'ān contains polemics towards outgroups (however, the Qur'ānic attitude towards Jews and Christians is ambivalent, see below 4.1). As mentioned above, only 13 inscriptions belong to this early period, so it could be just a matter of what has survived, but it is possible to use this nonexistence of religious outgroups in the epigraphic record as further evidence for the fuzziness of boundary lines at this stage.

Patricia Crone has connected the preoccupation of many early (and later) Arabic inscriptions containing the phrase "O God, forgive s.o."

<sup>49</sup> In a private communication, Ella Landau-Tasseron noted that the appellation *al-mu'minūn*, in fact, only appears in inscriptions (of the earliest layer) nos. 11 and 12 that are related with Mu'āwiya's building activities. Hence, it could somehow be linked with Mu'āwiya's community. That is correct. However, the Qur'ānic evidence seems to corroborate the suggestion that this is the primary appellation that the ingroup used for itself. It is abundant in the Qur'ān, where the word *mu'minūn* appears 179 times and the verb *āmana* 537 times, according to Badawi and Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary of Qur'anic usage*, p. 50. See also Smith, *On understanding Islam*, pp. 41-77, which analyzes the development of the meanings of the words *īmān* and *islām*.

<sup>50</sup> Appendix, nos. 4-6, 8, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Appendix, nos. 12 and 13.

<sup>52</sup> Appendix, nos. 5, 6, 9, 11-13.

<sup>53</sup> Appendix, nos. 11 and 12

(*allāhumma ighfir li-...*)<sup>54</sup> with the Qurʾānic verse 8:33 that states that “God would not punish them [the unbelievers] as long as you [probably the Prophet] were among them, nor would He punish them while they were asking for forgiveness” (*wa-hum yastaghfirūna*).<sup>55</sup> Her claim is that both the Believers and the unbelievers of the Qurʾānic milieu were wont to ask for forgiveness from God. However, one could, perhaps, reinterpret this and claim that the Qurʾānic verse and the (generally monotheist) early *allāhumma ighfir* inscriptions hark back to a time when the drawing of confessional boundaries was still underway. Or, to put it in another way, it was possible for people to remain at the fringes of the ingroup through perpetual petitions for forgiveness from God, even if they might have disagreed with some other aspects of the evolving Believer identity.

## 2) Tribal

Ingroup:

- members of one’s own tribal group and its clients, *mawlās* (often signifying ex-slaves who have become part of the Believers and have been manumitted), indicated by tribal *nisbas*<sup>56</sup>

Outgroup:

- implicitly, those of other tribal groups

## 3) Freeborn vs. freedman or slave:<sup>57</sup>

Ingroup:

- implicitly, freeborn Believers

Outgroup:

- freedmen, signified by the word *mawlā*,<sup>58</sup> or, implicitly, slaves (attested only from 110 AH onwards, Appendix, no. 70)

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Appendix, nos. 5, 6, 9, 10, etc.

<sup>55</sup> Crone, “The Quranic *mushrikūn*,” pp. 452-453.

<sup>56</sup> Appendix, nos. 4-6, 13.

<sup>57</sup> This is an implicit categorization in the inscriptions (evinced only in signatures) so its relevance is open to doubt at the early period.

<sup>58</sup> Appendix, nos. 3 and 12.



Although we are operating with scant evidence, it appears rather clear from the extant inscriptions that the most noteworthy identity evinced in epigraphy is religious. In the terms of SIT, the religious identity is *salient*.<sup>59</sup> However, no definite *group* identity arises from the inscriptions of this period – mostly it is just individuals expressing religious feelings.<sup>60</sup> As context, however, it might be useful to quote Peter Brown, who has noted the following about the spread of Christian identity in late antiquity:

Large Christian groups, Chalcedonians quite as much as Monophysites, were prepared to forget ancient loyalties to their cities. Religion provided them with a more certain, more deeply felt basis of communal identity. Even when they lived in villages and cities where their own church predominated, they had come to see themselves first and foremost, as members of a religious community. They were fellow-believers. They were no longer fellow citizens.<sup>61</sup>

This was then the general setting of the world where the Believers entered and, indeed, religiousness appears to prevail over tribalism in the earliest Arabic inscriptions although the specific aspects and the identity of the religious group were still emerging (see section 4. for a longer discussion). It must be noted, in this connection, that any kind of Arab identity is lacking in the early epigraphic evidence if we do not suppose that the tribal or freeborn versus freedman identities are fundamentally connected with this. This will be commented on at more length at the end of the next section.

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<sup>59</sup> Salience refers to “the conditions under which one or the other type of identity becomes cognitively emphasized to act as the immediate influence on perception and behaviour” (Kawakami and Dion, “The impact of salient self-identities,” p. 526). I thank Nina Nikki for the reference.

<sup>60</sup> I thank Ella Landau-Tasseron for this insight.

<sup>61</sup> Brown, *The rise of western Christendom*, p. 189.

### 3.2. More distinctively Muslim inscriptions (from 70s AH onwards)

As was seen above, the religious identity reflected in the earliest inscriptions, the 20s-60s AH, was still rather undefined and, probably, was being negotiated. Other contemporary evidence – the Qurʾān, papyri, coinage, and at least some of the non-Arabic literary evidence – seems to concur with this, even if the Qurʾān and the contemporary non-Arabic literary evidence set more requirements for being a Believer than the epigraphic evidence, including following the Qurʾānic law and some rites (see section 4.2. for this).<sup>62</sup>

In the 70s/690s, things change gradually. The religious identity as reflected in epigraphy becomes more clear-cut because bearing testimony to the prophecy of Muḥammad becomes a defining part of the faith.<sup>63</sup> The community of Believers receives another name: the people of Islam (71/171 AH?, Appendix, no. 15; 72 AH, Appendix, no. 16;<sup>64</sup> Islam is mentioned with certainty in 119/737, Appendix, no. 78) and Muslims (the earliest occurrence is 107/725-6, Appendix, no. 62).<sup>65</sup> Some inscriptions, however, continue the themes and formulae of the earliest layer and do not show any changes in their religious outlook.<sup>66</sup>

There are circa 80 inscriptions dated to 70-132 AH known to me, so we are operating with ampler evidence than in the case of the period 20s-60s AH. Let us see what the religious identity contains (I will only give one

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<sup>62</sup> Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 64-98.

<sup>63</sup> Indeed, Muḥammad as a prototypical figure in the community would be a possible future avenue of research of early Islamic identity formation.

<sup>64</sup> This is the lengthy Dome of the Rock inscription (72 AH, Appendix, no. 16) that includes the phrase *inna l-dīn ʿinda allāh al-islām*, a Qurʾānic quotation. See Donner, “Dīn, Islām, und Muslim” for a discussion.

<sup>65</sup> What is more, the word *umma*, “[religious] community,” appears in a (damaged) painted monumental inscription at Quṣayr ʿAmra dated between 105-125 AH (Appendix, no. 91).

<sup>66</sup> I thank one of the peer-reviewers for emphasizing this. Several inscriptions of this layer put forward rather general insistence on piety and forgiveness; see, for example, Appendix, nos. 84-85, 96.

reference for each aspect even though it might be attested in several inscriptions):<sup>67</sup>

Ingroup:

- *al-muʾminūn*, Believers, now also called Muslims (107/725-6 onwards); same as above, but in addition, the Muslims
  - believe in One God who has no partners (72 AH, Appendix, no. 16)
  - believe in the prophecy of Muḥammad (72 AH, Appendix, no. 16) and other Prophets (92 AH, Appendix, no. 39)
  - believe in Paradise (78 AH, Appendix, no. 19), angels (80 AH, Appendix, no. 25), resurrection (100 AH, Appendix, no. 54), judgment day (123 AH, Appendix, no. 87), and punishment in afterlife (119 AH, Appendix, no. 78)
  - repent (121 AH, Appendix, no. 81), make the pilgrimage (82 AH, Appendix, no. 27), supplicate and pray (92 AH, Appendix, no. 39), and fast (109 AH, Appendix, no. 65)
  - ask for martyrdom (78 AH, Appendix, no. 19) and *jihād fī sabīlihi* (110 AH, Appendix, no. 72), and raid (98 AH, Appendix, no. 48)

Outgroup:

- trinitarians (72 AH, Appendix, no. 16)
- the people of al-Ḥijr, i.e., the Qurʾānic Thamūd, a reference to polytheists (83 AH, Appendix, no. 28)
- *mushrikūn*, “associators” (99 AH, Appendix, no. 48)

As in the earlier record, tribal identities are also attested as is the dichotomy freeborn vs. freedman/slave. For the former, a good example is the following graffito, written remarkably in the first person plural:

100 AH, Abū Ṭāqa, Saudi Arabia, graffito: “In the name of God; we are [from the clan] ʿAnaza of [the tribe] al-Azd; we made the

<sup>67</sup> Of course, since the evidence is much ampler for this later period, it is hard to detect what is real change and what themes pop up simply because we have more material. This (argument from silence), I admit, is a methodological pitfall in this study, but since our evidence is lacking, I do not see, for the time being, how to circumvent it.

pilgrimage in the year one hundred [AH = 718-9 CE]; we ask God for paradise as lodgings” (Appendix, no. 49).

New, local identities based on geography also seem to arise from the 70s AH onwards. This is indicated by the ambiguous word *ahl* followed by a toponym, which can be translated either “people of” or “army unit of”.<sup>68</sup>

78 AH, Qā‘ al-Mu‘tadil, Saudi Arabia, graffito: “In God believes ... [ism damaged] ibn al-‘Āṣ and his companions from the people/army unit of Qinnasrīn; and it was written in seventy-eight [AH = 697-8 CE]” (Appendix, no. 20).

110 AH, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, Syria, building inscription: “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; there is no god but God alone, He has no partners; Muḥammad is the messenger of God; the servant of God, Hishām, the Commander of the Believers, ordered the building of this complex; and it was what the people/army unit of Ḥims did under the supervision of Sulaymān ibn ‘Ubayd in the year one hundred and ten [AH = 728-9 CE]” (Appendix, no. 68).

Because of the equivocality of the Arabic expression, it is not certain what kind of group identity is displayed here. It might be an identity based on the fact that the members of the group lived in the same locality or, on the other hand, it might an identity where the boundary marker is soldier vs. civilian.

Although some scholars have posited a nativist Arab ethnic and political identity that would explain the political history and the conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries CE,<sup>69</sup> there are no traces of such an identity in the epigraphic record, nor, as far as I am aware, in any other documentary evidence.<sup>70</sup> Even if the inscriptions are written in Arabic, none

<sup>68</sup> For the latter meaning, see e.g. Elad, *Rebellion*, p. 194.

<sup>69</sup> E.g., Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*.

<sup>70</sup> True, in some Greek papyri from Nessana, the Islamic-era years are called “year X according to the Arabs” (e.g. Kraemer, *Excavations*, pp. 194-195), but this is an appellation from outside and not inside the community. We have no evidence that the believers/Muslims themselves would have called the calendar, or themselves, by that name. The only early Arabic attestations call it the era of *qaḍā’ al-mu‘minīn* (Rāḡib, “Une ère”). When I have presented material from or similar

of them displays any characteristics of Arab ethnic identity. As Michael Macdonald has ever so pertinently noted:

the strong tendency to make *ethnica* from terms which have nothing to do with ethnicity, affects not only the popular but also the academic mind. The use of the linguistic terms ‘Aryan’ and ‘Semitic’ as racial categories is only one, disastrous, example of what is an almost universal tendency: to associate all human artefacts, including languages and scripts, exclusively with particular groups of people. Once the term and the ethnic group are associated, it is inevitable that all sorts of misleading conclusions will be drawn about the one on the basis of the features of the other. This is particularly hazardous when dealing with the pre-Islamic Near East where, as I have said, we know virtually nothing about how ethnicity was perceived or defined.<sup>71</sup>

In other words, although language is part and parcel of ethnic identity, we cannot reconstruct a clear ethnic, even less so political, Arab identity merely on the basis of the fact that people wrote texts in Arabic.<sup>72</sup> Although Macdonald is here talking about the pre-Islamic situation, the notions also apply to the early Islamic Near East.<sup>73</sup> Of course, many of the inscriptions mention Arab(ian) tribes, but there are no cases in the early period in which

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to this study in workshops and conferences, a few people have commented on the possibility of a new era and dating system as creating or being one of the components of a developing group identity. This is indeed possible. In any case, the affiliation that the era was related to was already Believer-stage. It should be noted, however, that many pre-Islamic Arabians used in their inscriptions the era of the Roman province of Arabia (starting in 106 CE) even if this probably did not entail any articulated Roman or provincial affiliation.

<sup>71</sup> Macdonald, “Some reflections,” p. 183.

<sup>72</sup> Pace Hoyland, “Epigraphy.”

<sup>73</sup> If we want, then, to talk about an Arab ethnonym in this period, we can only do it from the exonym perspective, not endonym. For the most recent discussion on Arab ethnogenesis and ethnic identity in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras, see Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*. This is of course a debated area of study, for the most part outside the scope of this paper. In addition to the works quoted in this and the previous two footnotes, see Bashear, *Arabs and others*; Macdonald, “Arabs, Arabias, and Arabic”; and Retsö, *The Arabs in antiquity*. See also my review of Greg Fisher, ed. *Arabs and empires before Islam*.

a writer identifies him- or herself as an Arab (*al-ʿarabī/al-ʿarabiyya, min al-ʿarab*, or something similar) in the early period. Arabs are never mentioned in the epigraphic record used in this study, and the same goes for other ethnonyms, such as Persians or Romans.

#### 4. Analyzing the early Believer/Muslim identity

In this section, I will deal with the development of and change in the Believer/Muslim religious identity and consider the different traits that it was based on, concentrating especially on my main source set, inscriptions. Once again, it must be emphasized that it is to some extent problematic to lump all Arabic epigraphic evidence into one whole and draw conclusions on the basis of it. There is, in all probability, diachronic and synchronic (geographical, individual, and so on) diversity that cannot be taken into account here in all its variety. However, it is promising that the arguments proffered here on the basis of epigraphy mostly agree with other types of contemporary evidence.

One further problem in this analysis is created by the presence of epigraphic formulae. The inscriptions are highly formulaic and have certain phrases that are recurrent. Since it often seems that the engravers were copying, with some variation, earlier inscriptions, it is vital to ask whether the inscriptions could be understood as “mere” rhetoric. Drawing any conclusions about the religious or social outlook of the engravers would, in this interpretation, be unwarranted.<sup>74</sup> This is a notion that I am willing to entertain but do not myself agree with. Epigraphic formulae are not born out of thin air; they are not only rhetoric but acts of communication.<sup>75</sup> The fact

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<sup>74</sup> E.g., Elad, “Community of believers,” p. 247: “One should remember that the wording of inscriptions became clichés, common formulae.”

<sup>75</sup> For more arguments for this, see Harjumäki and Lindstedt, “The ancient north Arabian,” and Lindstedt, “Writing, reading, and hearing.” One of the peer-reviewers suggested to ponder the nature of the epigraphic sources and their connection with historical reality. She or he agreed that there is a development in the terminology and formulae of the Arabic inscriptions, but questioned whether this fact reflects a development in the beliefs and identity of the Believers/Muslims, or rather, merely a development in the way the members of the group expressed themselves. In my opinion, this sounds a somewhat obsolete distinction: these two “developments” cannot be considered separate processes. Since the 1970s, social sciences and

that inscriptions are so formulaic of course reduces their usability: not all inscriptions are independently crafted expression. However, Arabic epigraphy does contain clear diversity, as the reader can see from the Appendix, and it has been argued in this article that the epigraphic record is essential evidence for understanding the development of early Believer/Muslim social identity and religious stances, of which process we are not yet fully informed, because Arabic epigraphy is in some cases explicitly dated and often written by lay persons, not by religious scholars or the political elite. The significant factor to note here is that most early Arabic inscriptions are graffiti offering a window on the religiousness of individuals whose views are not present in other sources.

According to the Arabic narrative sources — historiography, religious literature, and so forth — Islam was born more or less ready. There was, according to the sources, a clear dichotomy, from the Prophet's life onwards, between Muslims and non-Muslims, the latter divided to *mushrikūn*, “polytheists,” and *ahl al-kitāb*, “the People of the Book,” meaning especially Jews and Christians as well as, at times, members of other religious groups such as Zoroastrianism. The *ahl al-kitāb* could be tolerated, if they were submissive and paid the poll tax, but in theory the polytheists only had two choices: death or conversion to Islam. However, religions are never born ready but develop over (long periods of) time;<sup>76</sup> it is nowadays customary among modern Islamicists to doubt the traditional picture painted in this paragraph.

While in the third/ninth century, when the narrative sources were written or compiled, the demarcation between Islam and other religious traditions was rather clear, in the first/seventh and early second/eighth century the Believer/Muslim identity was still in the process

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humanities have been affected by what is called the linguistic turn, the realisation that “discourse — by which I mean not just words but also authoritative structures of meaning and action — does not reflect the ‘real world’ of its participants, but rather constructs that world,” as formulated by Jacobs, “The lion and the lamb,” p. 107. Conceptualized in this way, the inscriptions do not (only) reflect the identity and boundary-making developments but are a primary example how the boundary was gradually created and, later, maintained, especially when it is remembered that these inscriptions — both monumental and graffiti — were visible in public space.

<sup>76</sup> For a comparison with Christian origins, see 5. Conclusions.

of formation. The ingroup has an appellation (*al-muʿminūn*, later also *al-muslimūn*), with some noticeable characteristics. In the epigraphic record, the outgroup lacks a clear identity until at least the 70s AH.

Even if the tables above have shown the pertinent elements of the Believer/Muslim identity based on epigraphy, it might be useful to linger somewhat longer on this religious identity and see how it developed and what sets the Believer identity apart from the early Muslim identity. In the next sections, I will compare the epigraphic evidence to other contemporary evidence and see if we can define the aspects of the Believer/Muslim affiliation more clearly.

Above, the epigraphic record was divided into two layers. We can go further and also divide the group identities reflected in the contemporary sources as *Believer group identity* (up to the 60s AH) and *early Muslim group identity* (starting from the 70s AH). Fred Donner too places the change from Believers to Muslims at around the same time: “apparently during the third quarter of the first century A.H.”<sup>77</sup> I will base my treatment here on earlier scholarship,<sup>78</sup> so I do not feign to be presenting something entirely novel. However, the dated Arabic epigraphic corpus has not been considered to this extent before.

#### 4.1. Believer group identity

The basis of the *Believer group identity* as evinced in inscriptions consists of a) belief in God, who is Merciful and Lord of angels as well as of heaven and earth, b) belief in some form of afterlife, and c) acknowledgement of sin and the possibility of God forgiving it. No specific rites are mentioned and the outgroup remains hazy. Indeed, as mentioned above in section 3.1, no religious outgroup appears explicitly in the inscriptions.

Other contemporary evidence is slight, but the little that there is should be used to study the Believer affiliation. The principal source is naturally the Qurʾān, which can probably be traced back to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad and the consonantal text of which was written down

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<sup>77</sup> Donner, “From believers to Muslims,” p. 12.

<sup>78</sup> Donner, “From believers to Muslims,” *Narratives, and Muhammad and the believers*; Shoemaker, *The death of a prophet*, pp. 197-265; Penn, *Envisioning Islam*.



around the 30s/650s.<sup>79</sup> It is assumed here that the Qurʾānic text reflects the religious outlook of the Believers not only during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad but also after it. Interestingly, the Qurʾān also emphasizes some principles, such as God’s oneness or Muḥammad’s message, that are not mentioned in the epigraphic evidence of the earliest layer. This may seem to introduce a certain incongruity into my arguments of the development of the religious identity.<sup>80</sup> However, we do not need to envision a clear line of development but rather to imagine a lively discourse and debate during those crucial decades about the contours of that emergent Muslim identity. Furthermore, as I hope to show below, the main point is that (some) Qurʾānic passages include (some) Jews and Christians as Believers, which is in no way inconsistent with the post-Qurʾānic, earliest layer of epigraphic evidence. As will be seen however, the Qurʾānic message is not harmonious and other verses make a clearer categorization of Jews, Christians, and others as outside the ingroup. Perhaps there is no easy solution at the moment for this disagreement between different Qurʾānic passages. In discussing the Qurʾān, my methodological starting point is to read the Qurʾān with the Qurʾān and to overlook the traditional Muslim exegesis which postdates the Arabic scripture by centuries.<sup>81</sup> I also suppose that the Jews and Christians are not (automatically or *in toto*) included in the Qurʾānic groups *mushrikūn*, “associators,” or *kuffār*, “disbelievers.” If that was the case, the surfacing picture would naturally be very different.

To simplify the contours of the Qurʾānic message very much, we can state the following: the Qurʾān insists that there is only one God, the Creator, who will give punishment and reward to human beings on Judgment Day. To receive salvation in the afterlife, the Believers have created a

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<sup>79</sup> Sinai, “The consonantal skeleton.”

<sup>80</sup> One of the peer-reviewers noted this inconsistency between the Qurʾān (where God’s oneness is a major theme) and the earliest inscriptions (where it does not explicitly appear). This can be seen as a pitfall in my treatment, which relies on the argument from silence to some extent: since not even God’s oneness is not mentioned in the earliest layer of the inscriptions, how can we expect to see the Prophet mentioned there? As a counterargument, I would note that the Qurʾān is clear about the importance of accepting God’s oneness (and the earliest inscriptions *do* mention God — and only one God — after all) but it is not obvious at all from the Qurʾān how much authority and what standing the Prophet was supposed to have among the Believers *after his life* (when the inscriptions that we possess were written).

<sup>81</sup> For a defense of this method, see Crone, *The Qurʾānic pagans*, p. xiv.

community (*umma*) that lives in piety following God's guidance and law.<sup>82</sup> One facet, namely willingness to take part in fighting, is described in more detail in section 4.3.

Fascinatingly, Qur'ān 2:62 and 5:69 mention Jews, Sabians (a nebulous term),<sup>83</sup> and Christians among the receivers of salvation if they believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds (see also Qur'ān 3:199 and 5:65-66). While these passages are inclusive in what they promise at least in the afterlife for Jews, Sabians, and Christians, there are a number of verses that evince of borderline cases of Jews and Christians, who are to be counted as Believers, even if the broader category in which they belong to are not. According to the Qur'ān (3:110), some of them are indeed included in the community: "if the People of the Book had faith, that would be best for them; among them are Believers but most of them are transgressors" (see also Qur'ān 3:113-115). Furthermore, the Believers are commanded to "argue with the People of the Book only in the best [manner] except with those that do wrong among them. Say: 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and you. Our God and your God is one; we submit to Him.' Thus We have sent you the Book. Those that have received the Book [before] believe in it, and among them<sup>84</sup> are those that believe in it. Only the disbelievers reject our signs" (Qur'ān 29:46-47). Moreover, the Qur'ān states that those who have received the Book before rejoice at what has been revealed to the Prophet, but there are some groups (*al-aḥzāb*) that deny it (Qur'ān 13:36).<sup>85</sup>

In many verses, salvation is open to what seems to be a rather inclusive group: "Those who believe, do good deeds, keep the prayer, and give alms will have their reward with their Lord. There will be no fear upon them, nor shall they grieve" (Qur'ān 2:277). At least I fail to see in the previous verse anything that we could call specifically Islamic: Jews and

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<sup>82</sup> Donner, "From Believers to Muslims," pp. 12-18.

<sup>83</sup> Notwithstanding who this group might have included, it is interesting to note that the Qur'ān only says positive things about it.

<sup>84</sup> I think it is somewhat unclear which group the pronoun "them" refers to. The verse appears repetitive, since the logical referent of the pronoun is, in my opinion, "those that have received the Book [before]," although it could also mean "other people."

<sup>85</sup> Verses 28:52-55 explicitly say that those who have received the Book before believe in the current revelation as well. Qur'ān 74:31 appears to categorize the *ahl al-kitāb* and the Believers as receiving the same eschatological reward in opposition to the disbelievers.

Christians also emphasized the importance of good deeds, prayer, and almsgiving. Qurʾān 2:111-113 remarks that the Jews claim that only they follow the right religion and get to paradise and the Christians hold the same belief.<sup>86</sup> This is denied (Qurʾān 2:111), but, crucially, the Qurʾānic message in this passage is not that the Jews and Christians will not receive a heavenly reward, but rather, I believe, the Qurʾān says here that they are not the only ones to do so. Qurʾān 3:75 remarks that some Jews and Christians are reliable whereas others are not. In Qurʾān 10:94, the Prophet is even instructed to consult the *ahl al-kitāb* if he doubts what he has been revealed.

Verses 5:82-85 are positive towards Christians but engage in controversy against Jews:

You [sing.] will see that the people with most enmity towards those who believe are Jews and those who associate [other things to God]; and [the people] with most love towards them are those who say “We are Christians.” That is because among them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant. When they hear what is revealed to the Messenger, you will see their eyes filling with tears because they have understood the truth, saying: “Our Lord, we believe! Register us among the witnesses. Why would we not believe in God and what has come to us of the truth, for we aspire that our Lord will admit us in the company of the righteous?” God has rewarded them for their words with gardens with flowing streams, eternally. That is the reward of doers of good.

This passage categorizes Christians both as among the Believers and among those who will receive the heavenly reward. Certainly, the revelation of the Messenger is mentioned, but it should be noted that the Christians are not portrayed as explicitly stating their belief in his prophecy in clear terms. They simply indicate that they believe in God and “and what has come to us of the truth.” All in all, Qurʾān 5:82-85 seem to accept many of the Christians

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<sup>86</sup> In Qurʾān 5:18, the Jews and Christians claim that they are God’s sons and beloved ones.

as Believers although the passage at the same times downgrades the Jews to the same category as the *mushrikūn*, “associators.”<sup>87</sup>

To be sure, there are also passages that seem to construct rather clear lines between Jews, Christians, and Believers: indeed, they are more numerous than those that accept (some) Jews and Christians among the community of Believers.<sup>88</sup> For example, verses 2:109 and 120 recount that the Jews and Christians (called *ahl al-kitāb*<sup>89</sup> in the former verse) wish that they could turn you (pl.) back to disbelievers (*kuffār*) or hope that you (sing.) would adopt follow their religion (*millatahum*). A similar idea is expressed in 2:135, where the Believers are instructed to say that they belong, rather, to the religion of Abraham (*millat ibrahīm ḥanīfan*).<sup>90</sup> In contrast to the verses discussed above, where a certain gray area was accepted, in these verses the Jews and Christians are generalized to be outside the Believer ingroup. In a few verses (e.g. Qurʾān 2:105, 3:186, 4:51), (some of?) the *ahl al-kitāb* are included in the same category as the associators. Verses 3:98-99 ask rhetorically why the *ahl al-kitāb* do not believe in God’s signs and why do they divert the Believers from God’s path.

Qurʾānic verses against trinitarianism and Jesus’ divinity are a multitude (e.g., 4:171, 5:17, 5:73, 9:30, and 43:57-64). It is clear from the

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<sup>87</sup> Verses 4:45-46, 4:160-161, 5:64, 5:78-81, 6:146, 16:118, 17:4, and 62:6 also single out the Jews/Israelites as the object of censure.

<sup>88</sup> Donner, “From believers to Muslims,” pp. 24-28; see also Griffith, *The church*, pp. 6-11. This finds a comparison in the Greek Bible, where Jews and others are often polemicized against but sometimes described favorably as believers in Jesus; Wilson, *Related strangers*, p. 58. The ambivalence or contradictory definitions of religious boundaries are often rather similar in the New Testament and the Qurʾān. The Gospel of Matthew proffers an interesting case. It was written by and for believers of Jewish background. Despite this, it contains ample and venomous denigration of Jews and Judaism; see Wilson, *Related strangers*, p. 46-56. In parallel with this, Qurʾānic reproach of Jews, Christians, and polytheists can in some instances be interpreted not as attempts to close these groups outside the ingroup but, instead, to include them in it more strongly by making them shed some old dogmas and practices and adopt some new ones.

<sup>89</sup> The expression *ahl al-kitāb*, “the People of the Book,” is ambivalent and never explicitly identified in the Qurʾān. In most cases, Jews and Christians are meant, but we should not exclude the possibility that the Prophet and Believers saw also other religious groups as belonging under this umbrella term. By this I mean the *majūs* mentioned in Qurʾān 22:17 and the *ṣābiʿūn* mentioned in Qurʾān 2:62, 5:69, and 22:17. In verses 2:62 and 5:69 the *ṣābiʿūn* are moreover promised the heavenly reward.

<sup>90</sup> The word *ḥanīf* seems to have meant “a monotheist of Gentile background.” See El-Badawi, *The Qurʾān*, pp. 62-66 for a discussion of this term. See Qurʾān 2:140, 3:67, 3:69 for similar verses.

Qurʾānic evidence that Christians that clung to these dogmas could not have been considered to be among the Believer ingroup. Qurʾān 2:145 say that the *ahl al-kitāb* do not follow the *qibla* (prayer direction) of the Believers.

Interestingly, some Qurʾānic verses disparage Jews and Christians not because they are Jews and Christians but because they are *bad* Jews and Christians. Verse 2:101 criticizes “those who have already received the Book” as casting the Book aside when a Messenger came to them confirming what they already have (*muṣaddiqun li-mā maʿahum*). A number of verses (2:65-66, 4:47-48, 4:154, 5:60, 7:163-166, 16:124) denigrate people — the Jews are not explicitly singled out — who broke the Sabbath.<sup>91</sup> According to Qurʾān 3:187-188, the *ahl al-kitāb* cast out the covenant of God; for this reason, they will receive a painful punishment.<sup>92</sup> One of the most severe verses against them is, perhaps, Qurʾān 5:51, which reads: “O those who believe, do not take Jews and Christians as friends.<sup>93</sup> They are friends to each other. Whoever of you (pl.) takes them as friends is one of them (*fa-innahu minhum*).”<sup>94</sup> In this verse, the categorization and partition between the ingroup (Believers) and the outgroup (Jews and Christians) is total and complete. But, in my opinion, it would be unwarranted to claim that this single verse represents the ethos of the Qurʾān more generally. A much discussed verse, Qurʾān 9:29, instructs to fight the *ahl al-kitāb* — those who do not believe in God and the last day, do not deem forbidden what God and his Messenger have declared forbidden, and do not adopt the religion of truth — until they pay the *jizya*, poll-tax.<sup>95</sup>

It is noteworthy that those verses that are clearer in the boundary-drawing and those that are more inclusive or leave space for a number of borderline cases seem contemporary, appearing as they do in late, Medinan, Sūras such as 2 and 5.<sup>96</sup> It does not appear to be a tenable reconstruction to

<sup>91</sup> See Rubin, *Between Bible and Qurʾān*, pp. 213-232 for these verses and their exegesis.

<sup>92</sup> Also verses 5:12-19 express the supersessionist idea that the Jews and Christians have lost their covenant with God.

<sup>93</sup> The word *awliyāʾ* could also be translated as “allies,” in which case the instruction would not be so much in the context of day-to-day social life but warfare.

<sup>94</sup> See also Qurʾān 5:57 for a rather similar verse.

<sup>95</sup> Qurʾān 9:29 has been much commented by traditional exegesis and modern scholars. For a discussion, see Firestone, *Jihad*, pp. 63-65, with references. Verses 33:25-27 describe how some *ahl al-kitāb* aided the disbelievers, but the Believers overcome them, killing some and capturing others.

<sup>96</sup> For their traditional dating, see Nöldeke, *History*, pp. 141-188.

suppose that there is a chronological development in the Qurʾān from a more inclusive to a more exclusive group identity. This is not to deny that Qurʾānic Sūras, especially the longer ones, contain material from different historical contexts; they most certainly do. But there is no scholarly consensus about what the earlier or later elements in the Sūras might be.

Let us go back to the ingroup, Believers, and their characteristics. It seems that, according to the Qurʾān, entrance to the community of Believers meant especially accepting God's oneness and living according to the revealed Law.<sup>97</sup> (This entering to the community can, of course, be called "conversion," but I think that using the latter word would unwarrantedly give an impression of a clear-cut process of moving from a well-defined religious community to another.) This seems to be confirmed by the so-called Constitution of Medina, which is, according to the majority of scholars, datable to the Medinan era of the life of Muḥammad. In this document, Jewish groups appear to be mentioned as being part of the community of the Believers.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, we seem to have some evidence that Jews and Christians took part in the early conquests on the side of the Believers as well.<sup>99</sup>

I would speculate that to join the Believer movement Jews and Christians had to go through some sort of process of renunciation of their former religious identity to the extent that it disagreed with the Believer affiliation. For Christians, this would for example mean that they would have

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<sup>97</sup> Donner, "From believers to Muslims," pp. 22-23.

<sup>98</sup> The composition, transmission, and meaning of the text is debated; I do not wish to dwell on it since it is in my opinion unclear how much it transformed during the century or more of transmission. See Donner, "From Believers to Muslims," pp. 29-34 and Lecker, *The "Constitution of Medina"* for two different interpretations. Interestingly and rather confusingly, the text as we have it contains *muʾminūn* and *muslimūn* as what seems to be two distinct categories; Lecker, *The "Constitution of Medina"*, pp. 43-45. I do not know how to resolve this. Furthermore, the document states that the Jews have *dīnuhum* and the *muslimūn* theirs; Lecker, *The "Constitution of Medina"*, p. 35. Much depends on the translation of the word *dīn* here, especially if we suppose that the text as it is quoted in later sources contains the original wording of the document with certainty. In any case, the word *dīn* often means "law, judgment" in the the Qurʾān, so it could also mean this here, rather than "religion," see Donner, "From Believers to Muslims," pp. 14-15. Moreover in any case, even if we translate the clause as meaning that the Jews have their religion and the *muslimūn* theirs, this is not necessarily incongruent what the Qurʾān (e.g., 29:47) says and what I am arguing here: that some (perhaps a small minority) of Jews and Christians were counted as Believers.

<sup>99</sup> Donner, "From believers to Muslims," p. 44. See also section 4.3., below.

to leave the conception of Trinity behind (e.g., Q. 4:171);<sup>100</sup> for Jews, that they would accept the Qurʾānic law (e.g., Q. 16:114-118). This means that not all, nor even a majority, but perhaps a small segment of Jews and Christians were willing to join the Believers. One can conjecture that both former Jews and Christians may have had to pronounce a proto-*shahāda*, testimony of faith,<sup>101</sup> to make their joining of the Believer group official. Of course, it is possible that many of them still self-identified to some extent as Jews or Christians even though they were counted as part of the Believer group.<sup>102</sup> All of this signifies, I believe, that the religious outlook of the Believers was still rather open and, even if it cannot be proven, we can speculate that different religious rites probably coexisted. The discourse about, for instance, what rites were the orthoprax ones, was still underway.

One example of this is the number of daily prayers that the Believers were required to perform. It is well known that during the medieval and modern eras Muslims prayed and pray five times a day. But, according to the Qurʾān, the Believers are commanded to pray two or three times a day.<sup>103</sup> Nowhere in the Qurʾān is a requirement for five daily prayers mentioned, which probably means that the change from two-three daily prayers to five was made after the life of the Prophet. How much after is at the moment impossible to pinpoint.<sup>104</sup> Other rites — although hinted at or

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<sup>100</sup> I thank Nina Nikki for pointing out to me that the Believer/Muslim criticism of the Trinity should be understood as social competition wherein the Believers/Muslims endeavor to gain positive distinctiveness by underscoring their own monotheism and denying that marker to Christians.

<sup>101</sup> For Arabic literary evidence that seems to contain traces of this proto-*shahāda*, see Kister, ‘...illā bi-ḥaqqihī...’ pp. 41-52; for material evidence, see Bacharach and Anwar, “Early versions” and below.

<sup>102</sup> However, Jewish or Christian identification in all likelihood could no longer have been the salient one after their joining the ingroup. Empirical studies in the field of the SIT have shown that group formation does not in most cases occur without shared social identification, perceived communal fate, or shared threat; see Turner, “Towards a cognitive redefinition,” pp. 22-28. Thus, it is unlikely that people could have come together as the group of Believers without an identity as such.

<sup>103</sup> See Qurʾān 2:238, 6:52, 7:204-206, 11:114, 17:78-79, 18:28, 20:130, 24:58, 25:64, 50:39, 52:48-49, 76:26.

<sup>104</sup> Five daily prayers do not, as far as I am aware, appear in any type of evidence before the Arabic works of the late second and early third century AH. For a discussion of the number and character of prayers in early Islam, mostly on the basis of Arabic literary evidence, see Goldziher,

discussed at more length in the Qurʾān — were also probably subject to change in the early period. Stephen Shoemaker has suggested that the pilgrimage to Mecca was not a firmly established practice in the seventh century CE,<sup>105</sup> even though it is mentioned in some detail in the Qurʾān (2:158, 2:196-200, 22:27). Indeed, according to the epigraphic evidence of this article, mentions of the pilgrimage appear only in the early eighth century CE.<sup>106</sup> In the matter of the pilgrimage, then, there is an incongruence between the Qurʾān (which mentions the rite) and the earliest layer of the inscriptions (which does not). The same incongruence seems to occur with religious warfare (4.3.), although whereas the pilgrimage to Mecca occurs only infrequently in the Qurʾān, fighting is a rather common theme there. It seems probable that the scant early (pre-70s AH) inscriptions that we have did not discuss all contours of the Believer/Muslim identity and religiousness that were important at the time, which makes it dubious to put forward far-reaching arguments on the basis of that material.

The Prophet Muḥammad's role is somewhat ambivalent in the Qurʾān. He is called both *rasūl* (Messenger) and *nabī* (Prophet), but his importance is not overwhelming there,<sup>107</sup> although accepting his authority was a prerequisite for the Believers (e.g. Q. 4:59). He is not, say, divine or, as in the later Muslim dogma, protected from sin.<sup>108</sup> He is merely a human being even if he does receive revelation (Q. 41:6). Nor is he the only messenger-cum-prophet in the Qurʾān: Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others feature in similar roles as well: “Muḥammad is but a messenger; messengers have passed away before him” (Q. 3:144). The *shahāda* probably did not yet include what we know nowadays as its second part where Muḥammad's prophetic role is mentioned. According to the surviving exemplars of it from the early period, this proto-*shahāda* simply reads “there is no god but God alone, He

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*Muslim studies*, I, pp. 39-43 and Rubin, “Morning and evening prayers.” Rubin deems it possible to use the late sources to study pre-Islamic Arabia, which I think is very problematic. See my “Pre-Islamic Arabia” for some methodological notions.

<sup>105</sup> Shoemaker, *The death of a prophet*, pp. 241-245.

<sup>106</sup> For example: 82 AH, near Ḥā'il, Saudi Arabia, Appendix, no. 27; 91 AH, al-Awjariyya, Saudi Arabia, Appendix, no. 38; 100 AH, Abū Ṭāqa, Saudi Arabia, Appendix, no. 49; 110 AH, Southern Jordan, Appendix, no. 72.

<sup>107</sup> Donner, “From believers to Muslims,” pp. 34-35.

<sup>108</sup> For the development of this concept, see Kister, “A bag of meat.”



has no partners” (*lā ilāh illā allāh waḥdahu lā sharīk lahu*).<sup>109</sup> Although I am relying on an argument from silence, which is always problematic and could be overturned when more documents are found, extant extra-Qur’ānic documentary evidence of the 20s-60s AH appears to confirm the hypothesis of the Prophet’s to some extent ancillary role. There, the Prophet is never mentioned, in all probability signifying that he had not attained the exceedingly significant role – the marker that sets Islam apart – as he was to do later.<sup>110</sup>

It was recently suggested by the late Patricia Crone that there were a sizable number of people professing forms of Jewish Christianity in Arabia before and during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>111</sup> These Jewish Christians would have followed the Mosaic law as well as accepted Jesus as an eminent religious teacher but not necessarily as the son or incarnation of God. If Crone’s suggestion is tenable – and I am not certain whether we have data at the moment to test it – it would ensue that a group of people living in Arabia, the Jewish Christians, identified themselves with religious notions that were somewhat compatible with early Believer piety and developing dogmas: the Qur’ān assigns the role of a prophet to Jesus but vehemently denies his deification. The Qur’ānic position on Jesus could have been somewhat difficult to accept by both Jews (who for the most part did not accept Jesus in any role) and Christians (who for the most part put emphasis on Jesus having been God in flesh), but not by Jewish Christians. The Jewish Christians could have joined the community of Believers without problems, provided that they were willing to fight for the community (see section 4.3 for this) and to submit to its laws. What I find questionable in Crone’s analysis of the Qur’ānic passages discussing the *naṣārā*, however, is that she appears not to take into account the probability that the Qur’ān not only describes

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<sup>109</sup> Donner, “From Believers to Muslims,” pp. 47-48. There are also some Syriac texts that seem to suggest the same, see Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>110</sup> See also Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, where the authors argue on the basis of e.g. early Arabic poetry that the head of state, the Caliph, was much more significant as an authority and source of law than the traditional narrative emerging from Arabic literary evidence would allow. According to Crone and Hinds, it was only later that these legal promulgations were retrojected to the Prophet.

<sup>111</sup> Crone, “Jewish Christianity.” On Jewish Christianity in the milieu of pre- and early Islam, see also Shaddel, “Qur’ānic *ummi*.”

groups but constructs and accentuates them. Its description of the *yahūd* and *naṣārā* should, I believe, be read with this in mind: not just as identity and community depiction but formation as well. Just because the Qurʾān claims that these groups were proponents of different religious ideas does not necessarily mean that they themselves would have agreed with the Qurʾān's depiction.

To conclude this section, what I have tried to argue here is that there is a number of Qurʾānic verses that include some individuals or, perhaps, subgroups of monotheists as part of the Believer group. As far as I know, there is nothing in other early evidence to discredit this. Some Qurʾānic passages, on the other hand, seem to condemn all Jews and Christians and demote them outside the ingroup, as shown above. This should be, I argue, understood as a communicative process where intragroup differences are toned down and the outgroup is stereotyped, as explained by the SIT. However, these, more exclusive, Qurʾānic passages obscure the varied situation on the ground, revealed by those verses that assign positive characteristics to (some) Jews and Christians. It has to be noted that both the inclusive and exclusive verses appear in what are considered by the traditional exegesis and modern scholars as being chronologically the latest, Medinan, Sūras, such as Sūra 5. Thus, it does not stand to reason to suppose a development in the Qurʾān from an inclusive religious identity towards a more exclusive one: as far as we can judge, the verses putting forward such identities are contemporary.

#### 4.1.1. The words *islām* and *muslim(ūn)* in the Qurʾān

The verbal noun *islām* appears eight times, the verb *aslama* 22 times, and the participle *muslim*, with inflections, 43 times in the Qurʾān.<sup>112</sup> They are, then, rather rare when compared with words derived from the verb *āmana*, “to believe,” which occur around 800 times.<sup>113</sup> The verb *aslama* is usually, and I believe correctly, interpreted to mean in the Qurʾānic parlance, “to submit to something/someone” or “to serve someone/ something alone.”<sup>114</sup> Total

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<sup>112</sup> Badawi and Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary*, p. 450. For a longer treatment of the question, see Donner, “Dīn, Islām, und Muslim.”

<sup>113</sup> Badawi and Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary*, p. 50.

<sup>114</sup> See Baneth, “What did Muḥammad mean” for discussion.

submission and servitude (to God) is what is implied by the word; *al-islām* does not seem to denote a specific religion save for perhaps in a few instances, nor are the *muslimūn* the primary name for the ingroup in the Qurʾān. Most Qurʾānic occurrences of the words can, and should, be understood as common rather than proper nouns.<sup>115</sup>

However, there is a (limited) number of verses in which the words *islām* and *muslimūn* might indeed function as proper nouns.<sup>116</sup> Qurʾān 3:19 states that “the religion with God is *al-islām*,” and, in the same Sūra, verse 85, we read that “whoever chooses anything else than *al-islām* as religion (*dīnan*), it will not be accepted from him and he will be among the losers in the afterlife.” One part of Qurʾān 5:3 says that “today, I [God] have perfected your [pl.] religion to you, fulfilled My favor upon you and approved *al-islām* as religion for you.” According to verse 22:78, “God has named you *al-muslimīn* before and in this [revelation].” These verses indicate that the word *al-islām* might have been, in a very limited way, used during the life of the Prophet to denote the religion of the ingroup, although it cannot have been the primary word so being used, given its infrequency in the Qurʾān. Furthermore (but this is debatable), it is possible that the word means “total submission” in these instances as well, especially if we keep in mind that the Qurʾānic word *dīn* often signifies “law,” “judgment,” rather than “religion.” Verses 3:19, 3:85, and 5:3 could hence be interpreted as requiring total submission to the revealed Law.<sup>117</sup>

Very interesting for the purposes of my argument is verse 49:14. It reads: “The nomads say: ‘We believe’ (*āmannā*). Say: You do not believe [yet]. Say instead: ‘We submit’ (*aslamnā*). Belief (*al-īmān*) has not entered your hearts. If you obey God and His messenger, He will not deprive you [the reward] of any of your deeds. God is Forgiving, Merciful.” In this verse,

<sup>115</sup> Thus e.g. Qurʾān 2:112, 2:128, 2:131, 3:20, 3:83, 4:125, 5:44, 6:71, 10:84, 16:81, 22:34, 27:44, 27:81, 31:22, 39:54, 40:66, 48:16, 49:17.

<sup>116</sup> Verse 3:64 could be added to the following list, although its use of *muslimūn* is ambivalent as to whether a common or proper noun is meant.

<sup>117</sup> Donner, “From believers to Muslims,” p. 15 argues that the “Qurʾānic term for someone who strove to live in obedience to the law seems to have been *muslim*.” Smith, *On understanding Islam*, p. 47 suggests that Qurʾān 3:19 could be understood to mean “the proper way to worship God is to obey Him.”

submission is clearly inferior to belief/faith (*al-īmān*). The latter, not *al-islām*, is the term denoting communal belonging.

In section 4.1., I endeavored to demonstrate through a rather comprehensive survey of the Qurʾānic evidence that we cannot really find an Islamic religious identity, distinct from other monotheistic traditions, in the Qurʾān. Nor cannot we find *al-islām* or *al-muslimūn* as primary referents for the religion or the members of the ingroup. In fact, as I will claim in the next section, the two processes – constructing the boundary and marking the ingroup with a proper name – went, to some extent, hand in hand.

#### 4.2. Early Muslim group identity

If, as is argued in this article, the 70s/690s brought about a (gradual) change in the Believer/Muslim religious identity, what kind of change was this? Starting from that period, accepting the prophecy of Muḥammad appears as a requirement for participation in the community. Indeed, Muḥammad's prophecy becomes the most distinctive characteristic that established Islam's confessional difference from other monotheistic traditions.<sup>118</sup> The change must have been in some way connected with the second *fitna* (61-73/680-692) and intragroup developments during that troubled era as well as efforts in constructing the contours of prophetic biography.<sup>119</sup> By the early second century AH, the members of the ingroup began to use Muslims as their primary name and call their religion Islam. However, the change

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<sup>118</sup> Donner, "From Believers to Muslims," p. 39. The first Arabic extra-Qurʾānic piece of evidence mentioning the Prophet Muḥammad is a coin from Bīshapūr dated 66/685-6, see <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Coins/drachm1.html>. The name Muḥammad appears on some coins from Palestine and Transjordan (dated tentatively between 647-58 CE) but these are usually understood by modern scholars as references to a local governor; see Foss, *Arab-Byzantine coins*, p. 34. The name Muḥammad also occurs without further qualifications on two early Arabic-Middle Persian coins, one from Shīrajān 38/658-59, and one from Rayy 52/672-73; see Gaube, *Arabosasanidische Numismatik*, p. 36. It is likely that the Prophet is not intended here.

<sup>119</sup> Shaddel, "Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr," p. 18, notes that the "Second Civil War was not just about claims to the caliphate. It was also about claims to precedence in religion, closeness to the prophet, and ostentations of religious zeal. It was at this time that unequivocal professions of Islamic faith – including the name of Muḥammad – first appeared on a coinage, that of the Zubayrids." See also Shoemaker, *The death of a prophet*, pp. 253-257.

from the community of Believers to the community of Muslims was not abrupt.

Attested in the epigraphic record from the 70s/690s onwards is a strong belief in judgment day and resurrection as well as an afterlife that can be either rewarding or punishing. These are of course already present in the Qurʾān but not so strongly in other Believer-phase evidence. Distinct Muslim rites are also mentioned (see the table in section 3.2): for example, supplication (*duʿāʾ*), prayer (*ṣalāt*),<sup>120</sup> pilgrimage (*ḥajj*),<sup>121</sup> and fast (*ṣawm*).<sup>122</sup> It is perhaps not likely that this means that the earlier Believers did not see these rites as prominent to their religion and group affiliation; however, it could mean that they did not see *all* of these rites as important or their meaning was different from what it was later. The Believer emphasis on piety was, for the Muslims of the early eighth century CE, not enough anymore.

Although the prophecy of Muḥammad is underlined, other Prophets are also mentioned. For example, one inscription contains the formula “amen, once again amen, Lord of Muḥammad and Abraham, Lord of the world” (121 AH, Appendix, no. 83). Just as some early Christians deemed that only those who have faith in Christ had a rightful claim to Abrahamic ancestry,<sup>123</sup> Muslims saw Abraham as the prototypical monotheist and proto-Muslim, a *ḥanīf* (this is of course already in the Qurʾān, e.g., 3:67). Their developing ingroup identity incorporated Abraham, Jesus, and other figures as prophets of Islam, while at the same time gradually relegating Jews and Christians to the outgroup. The narratives on these prophets became shared memories of the social group, Muslims, attested in later Arabic literature.

The following graffito mentions God as being “Lord of Moses and Aaron.” It will be quoted in full because of its importance and length. Probably because of Qurʾānic quotations, the graffito changes between the third and first person singular a few times, even though it seems that the writer and the person on whose behalf the deity is invoked is one and the

<sup>120</sup> Both *duʿāʾ* and *ṣalāt* are mentioned in the 92 AH graffito, Appendix, no. 39, quoted below.

<sup>121</sup> Appendix nos. 27, 38, 49, and 72.

<sup>122</sup> Appendix no. 65, a long graffito that begins “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; O God, accept (*taqabbal*) from ʿAbd al-ʿAlāʾ ibn Saʿīd his prayer and his fast (*ṣalātahu wa-ṣawmahu*).” Note that the inscription is explicitly dated to Ramaḍān 109 AH, so clearly the Muslim fast is meant.

<sup>123</sup> Nikki, “Contesting the past,” p. 247, referring to Gal 3:15-18.

same, ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Umar, although it is hard to understand the phrase “I ask You that You accept from him his supplication and prayer”<sup>124</sup> towards the middle of the graffito. In any case, the text reads:

92 AH, Qaṣr Kharāna/Kharrāna, Jordan, graffito in ink: “O God, have mercy on ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Umar and forgive him his earlier and later sins and those that he made public and kept secret and those that You know best; he ... if you do not forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the losers [Qurʾān 11:47]; my Lord, You bestow benefactions upon me, for You are certainly the Benefactor; and You have mercy on me, for You are certainly the Merciful; I ask You that You accept from him his supplication and prayer; amen, Lord of the world, Lord of Moses and Aaron [Qurʾān 26:47-48]; may God have mercy on who recites it [the inscription] and then says, ‘amen, amen, Lord ..., the Mighty, the Great’; and ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Umar wrote [this inscription] on Monday, al-Muḥarram 27, in the year ninety-two [AH = November 24, 710 CE]; O God, forgive ... so that he and I may be together in this world and the next” (Appendix, no. 39).

It will be noted that the above inscription contains virtually nothing that would not be acceptable to Jews and Christians as well (if the fragmentary end – “so that he and I may be together in this world and the next” – does not refer to the writer’s wish for meeting the Prophet Muḥammad in the afterlife).<sup>125</sup> The development from Believers to Muslims was, arguably, piecemeal and did not proceed linearly.

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<sup>124</sup> Who is the “I” in this sentence? The inscription begins “O God, have mercy on ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Umar and forgive him his earlier and later sins” and also states that “‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Umar wrote [this inscription].” The text ends (if my reading is correct – see the next note) “so that he and I may be together in this world and the next.” Of course, it is possible that the inscription contains two authors or two hands, but this is mere speculation.

<sup>125</sup> Indeed, Imbert, “Inscriptions et espaces d’écriture,” pp. 404-405, reads the end *tajtamī’a bi-n-b-y wa-nabīhi* and translates “faire rencontrer mon Prophète et le sien.” However, “my prophet,” should be *nabīyyī* (*n-b-y-y*), not *n-b-y* as here. My suggestion is to read it as *yajtamī’a baynī wa-*

Let me next discuss who are conceived of as the outgroup, the non-Muslims, in the Arabic inscriptions. The following are mentioned explicitly: “the people of al-Ḥijr” (83 AH, Appendix, no. 28), *mushrikūn* (99 AH, Appendix, no. 48), and those who associate false deities (*ṭāghūt*, if my interpretation of the inscription is correct), especially Wadd and Hubal,<sup>126</sup> with God (107 AH, Appendix, no. 62).<sup>127</sup> The outgroup seems, hence, to be formed of (imagined or factual) polytheists and, probably, of trinitarians, as *mushrikūn* could also be understood. Interestingly and significantly, there is not a very clear difference between polytheists and non-Muslim monotheists in inscriptions. This could be because of one of the principles of the SIT, namely *it is usual that intragroup differences are downplayed, whereas intergroup differences are overemphasized*: one is either a Muslim or one is not. Notably, too, the early Arabic inscriptions lack any mention of intragroup divisions or sects, which could also be explained by the same SIT rule. Later Arabic literature contains of course ample discussion of these divisions and “heresies.” This is the same era in which the idea of the separation of Muslims and “others” had cemented (notwithstanding the contacts between different religious groups) and could be explained, as has been shown by Daniel Boyarin in the case of Judaism and Christianity, through the dual function that the heresiographical discourse has: first, to conceptualize intergroup divisions as other religions and, second, to conceptualize intragroup divisions “heresies.”<sup>128</sup> Through this, the concept of the orthodox ingroup is maintained.

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*baynahu*, which can be compared with the phraseology in other inscriptions, see Appendix, no. 56: *wa-ʿarrif baynahu wa-bayna dhurriyatihī fī mustaqarr min raḥmatika*.

<sup>126</sup> The interpretation Hubal is not certain since the Arabic reads *h-ā-b-l*. The editor of the inscription supposes that this is a misspelling for *h-b-l*, or Hubal, see Appendix, no. 62. In any case, the reading of other parts of the inscription is problematic too.

<sup>127</sup> Traditional paganism continued in many areas after the Muslim conquests. From Iraq, for instance, we have evidence that it was still practiced on a rather large scale by the local people in the tenth century CE, if not later; see Hämeen-Anttila, “Continuity of pagan religious traditions,” and, in more detail, his *The last pagans of Iraq*.

<sup>128</sup> Boyarin, *Border lines*.

The non-Arabic (mostly Syriac, Greek, and Armenian) literature must also be briefly assessed here.<sup>129</sup> It is not completely clear whether the non-Arabic literature supports the arguments of this article or not. The early specimens of this set of evidence suggests that, according to people outside the group, the Believer/Muslim movement was strictly monotheistic and iconoclastic, perhaps especially against the cross. Furthermore, the Believers/Muslims denied Christ's divinity. They had a temple, called the Ka'ba, which they honored and prayed towards; what is more they honored Jerusalem. In addition to the Ka'ba, they had other places of worship, mosques. The Believers/Muslims followed Muḥammad, who was their guide, instructor and lawgiver (he is rarely called a Prophet in non-Arabic sources). The law that Muḥammad brought does not seem to have been very detailed, at least according to the outside testimonies, but the Believers/Muslims refrained from carrion, wine and fornication.

Fred Donner notes that the seventh-century CE Syriac texts did not apparently view the Believers (whom they called *mhaggrāyē*, probably from the Arabic *muhājirūn*, meaning "settlers") as a clearly defined religious group.<sup>130</sup> Donner's assessment echoes the earlier evaluation of the Syriac material by Sebastian Brock. In the latter's understanding, the Syriac sources

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<sup>129</sup> The following assessment is mainly based on Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p. 549. For a new translation of the Syriac sources, see Penn, *When Christians first met Muslims*, and for an appraisal of them, Penn, *Envisioning Islam*.

<sup>130</sup> Donner, "From believers to Muslims," p. 39. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, p. 55 says that "the first generation of Syriac writers," before the second *fitna* (680-692 CE), "rarely saw their conquerors as possessing their own religion." According to Penn, this changes with the reign of 'Abd al-Malik, but even after that Syriac texts "point toward a world characterized by continued religious ambiguity and border crossings" (Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, p. 181). "Syriac sources thus go beyond simply documenting interreligious contact. They also challenge the modern assumption of clearly defined boundaries between early Christianity and early Islam" (Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, p. 155). Penn's analysis mostly conforms with the arguments advanced in this study. Of course, it is possible to argue that Islamic boundaries were already well defined (and in the same way that the boundary-drawing was done later) in the period before the 70s/690s and the Syriac writers simply did not care or know enough about the new religious community to describe it as such. But this seems unlikely in the view of contemporary Arabic evidence written by Believers/Muslims. Rather, to me the early Arabic and Syriac texts represent independent corpora of evidence that often agree with each other in their information about Muslim identity formation.



viewed the conquerors primarily as an ethnic, not religious, group.<sup>131</sup> To cite Brock, “sources best anchored in the seventh century suggest that there was greater awareness that a new empire (*malkuta*) had arisen, [rather] than that a new religion had been born.”<sup>132</sup> However, it must be noted that their view is contradicted by Hoyland,<sup>133</sup> according to whom the non-Arabic sources attest to the idea that the early Believers/Muslims possessed a distinct religious identity.

All in all, it can be said that the results arrived at with epigraphy are comparable to those that have been suggested in earlier scholarship which has, of course, used the epigraphic evidence to some extent. Because the different sets of contemporary sources are rather independent of each other, the probability of the historical reconstruction presented here is increased. With caution (since for the earliest decades the evidence is meager and much depends on the argument from silence), we can follow through epigraphy the historical process of the early Believers’ movement developing into a distinctively Muslim community in the 70s/690s. On the basis of the evidence discussed here, I suggest that early Islamic history should be considered as consisting of two phases: first, the *Believer phase* (1-60s/622-680s) and, second, the *early Muslim phase* (70s-/690s-).<sup>134</sup>

Fred Donner has argued that the interest in historical narration among Muslims also began only at this time (the 70s/690s).<sup>135</sup> Indeed, historical narration was, according to Donner, one of the most notable means through which Muslim affiliation and social memory were created. Earlier Believers were not interested in historiography properly speaking, even though oral lore must have circulated among them. Modern studies based on *isnād-cum-matn* analysis seem to corroborate this, dating the earliest narrations on the Prophet’s biography and other significant historical events

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<sup>131</sup> Brock, “Syriac views,” pp. 14, 17.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p. 549; but supported by the most recent analysis, Penn, *Envisioning Islam*.

<sup>134</sup> The end of the “early” Muslim phase could be considered to be not the coming-to-power of the ‘Abbāsīs *per se* but the reign of Caliph al-Manṣūr and his sponsoring of Ibn Ishāq and other scholars who created the outlines of Islamic sacred history. Furthermore, it is during the ‘Abbāsīs that the first legal treatises were composed.

<sup>135</sup> Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 94-97.

to around the late first century AH.<sup>136</sup> What is more, these early historical accounts were not written down in authored books proper but rather disseminated in the forms of notebooks and lecture notes in an aural, lecture-based, environment.<sup>137</sup>

To recapitulate the arguments put forward in this section, it seems to me that the Believers started in the 60s-70s/690s-700s to emphasize the belief in the prophecy of Muḥammad (which went hand in hand with the construction of social memory about him) as a way of drawing the line between the ingroup and outgroup and developing the ingroup's identity. Closely connected with that is the appearance, in the 70s-80s/690s-700s, of quotations from the Qurʾān in monumental inscriptions<sup>138</sup> and graffiti.<sup>139</sup> During the decades 70s-110s/690s-730s, they finally settled upon the names Islam and Muslims (which had Qurʾānic precedent and nicely describe the monotheist ethos of the new religion that underlines "submission" to the only God) for the ingroup.<sup>140</sup> This happened through piecemeal realization that, because this emphasis on Muḥammad, the Believers are rather clearly distinct from Christians, Jews, and others. That is to say, the beginning of the defining and boundary-drawing processes preceded the naming process by some time (even if the latter should naturally be interpreted as one of the examples of the former). In another publication,<sup>141</sup> I have tried to demonstrate, on the basis of literary evidence, that the Believers also applied another name, *muhājirūn*, "settlers,"<sup>142</sup> to themselves during the course of

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<sup>136</sup> Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*. See also my "Historiography and the *ḥadīths*," where I endeavor, among other things, to show a link between the construction of the Prophetic biography, *ḥadīths*, and the formation of Islamic identity. The Prophet Muḥammad as imagined by the later generation served as a prototypical Muslim, a great man of the past whose deeds the later Muslims should emulate. On prototypicality and leadership in the SIT, see Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, *The new psychology of leadership*.

<sup>137</sup> Schoeler, *The oral and the written* and idem, *The genesis of literature*.

<sup>138</sup> The Dome of the Rock inscription, 72 AH, Appendix, no. 16.

<sup>139</sup> Three graffiti by the same hand, 80 AH, Appendix, nos. 21-23, and other graffiti from the 80s AH onward.

<sup>140</sup> This dating is on the basis of epigraphy. It is naturally possible that Islam and Muslims started to be in use some decades before they are attested in inscriptions. For example, Arabic poetry (the authenticity of which is in no way guaranteed for the whole corpus) appears to evidence the use of *muslimūn* towards the end of the first century AH, Lindstedt, "*Muhājirūn*," p. 73.

<sup>141</sup> Lindstedt, "*Muhājirūn*."

<sup>142</sup> This designation does not appear in Arabic inscriptions, however.

the first century of the Islamic era, but eventually abandoned this designation because it was to a large extent restricted to those Believers that took part in the conquest effort and settled in the conquered or annexed areas. It thus excluded, for example, nomads and those that did not for some reason feel inclined to be part of the fighting force.<sup>143</sup> It was in the early second century AH that *muslimūn* became the standard appellation.<sup>144</sup> It was inclusive in the sense that it covered all Muslims regardless of their way of life but exclusive in the sense that it completed the difference between the Muslim ingroup and the non-Muslim outgroup. The arguments of my previous publication are, I suggest, corroborated by the epigraphic evidence, through which we can trace the replacement of the term *mu'minūn* with *muslimūn* with more securely dated data. The reason that *muslimūn* replaced *mu'minūn* was probably the fact that, with the growing assertion that Jews and Christians cannot belong to the ingroup, the very general "Believers" could not serve as a sufficiently exclusive signifier.<sup>145</sup>

By the early second century AH, the ingroup identity was thus based on God's oneness and Muḥammad's prophecy as well as practicing rites that later became known as the pillars of Islam. Individuals and groups that did not profess these tenets and practices could not easily affiliate

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<sup>143</sup> In section 1.2., it was noted that Elad, "Community of believers," p. 248 understood the title *mhaḡḡrāyē* appearing in the Syriac sources as distinguishing the religion of the Arabs/Muslims (more or less synonyms in his parlance). But since the Syriac *mhaḡḡrāyē* appears to be a loan from the Arabic *muhājirūn*, something else is at stake. The word *muhājirūn* was applied in particular to a subgroup of the Believers, the settlers and fighters. These are of course the Believers that the Syrian Christians, for example, encountered. See Lindstedt, "Muhājirūn" for a longer discussion.

<sup>144</sup> Lindstedt, "Muhājirūn," p. 73.

<sup>145</sup> One of the peer-reviewers of the article suggested to differentiate between the appellation question and the boundary-drawing question. Hence, the boundaries might have been clear-cut from the beginning although the group could have changed its name and the requirements for its members over the time; there was only fluidity in early dogma and practice, not boundaries. I find this conceptually confused. It seems problematic to me that the group might have attained complete distinctiveness in group identity without a proper name ("Believers" is not specific enough). Furthermore, I would conceptualize this differently: I and the peer-reviewer agree that there was fluidity in dogma and practice, but, in my opinion and in contrast to her or him, this exactly means that the boundaries were moving as well. Above (section 4.1.), I have argued that the Qurʾān attests to a number of borderline cases of Jews and Christians who are indeed part of the Believers (e.g. Qurʾān 2:62, 3:110-114, 5:44, 5:69, 5:82-85).

themselves with the developing group identity. Further communal cohesion was created by the designation Muslims that became the primary one for the ingroup. The positive distinctiveness that the Muslim group identity could offer was, at least for some, connected with the promise of an afterlife. As discussed above, while the Qurʾān is somewhat ambivalent about which groups deserve the afterlife (some verses seem to promise it to several religious communities) and while the epigraphic evidence of the 20s-60s AH only once (possibly) mentions the afterlife, the later inscriptions are full of allusions to Paradise (*al-janna*),<sup>146</sup> the promise of which is in one inscription explicitly connected with the community of Muslims.<sup>147</sup>

### 4.3. Religious warfare

One of the distinctive building blocks of the Believer/Muslim social identity is their willingness to participate in religious warfare (*jihād*) and, curiously, their craving for martyrdom in the sense of dying while fighting.<sup>148</sup> By religious warfare I mean warfare that is justified and discussed in religious terms. Individual motivations to fight might have been in many cases different, for example, materialistic, even though they are not so clearly evidenced in the contemporary record.<sup>149</sup>

It is worthwhile to observe that none of the dated epigraphic evidence related to *jihād*, quoted below, is from the time of the earliest conquests. All inscriptions dealing with this theme are somewhat late, more precisely, 78-117 AH, that is, what I have termed the Muslim phase. This seems to indicate that the context of these inscriptions is the Umayyad

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<sup>146</sup> Appendix, nos. 19, 24, 32, 44, 49, 51, 61, 63.

<sup>147</sup> Appendix, no. 87. This compares remarkably with the history of Christian origins and identity formation: the casting of Jews as others and excluding them from salvation was one of the ways in which Christian distinctiveness and affiliation were highlighted; see Wilson, *Related strangers*, pp. 290-291.

<sup>148</sup> For martyrdom in Islam, see Cook, *Martyrdom*. For suffering and martyrdom in the (rather different) context of Paul, see Nikki, *Opponents and identity*, pp. 62-63, 186. She argues that by showing willingness to suffer for the group, an individual is seen as being a faithful member of the group and not a free-rider. This adds up to the cohesion of the group.

<sup>149</sup> See Donner, "The Islamic conquests" for a treatment of scholarly suggestions about the motivations of the conquerors.

expansion policy that continued in earnest after the second *fitna*.<sup>150</sup> However, I think it is improbable that we should draw the conclusion that the early Believers did not know or wage religious war since religious warfare is in any case a well-known concept in the Qurʾān and thus was probably also rather well known to the earliest community of the Believers.<sup>151</sup>

Let us start with the Qurʾān. As stated already, I believe that the Qurʾān originates in the time of the Prophet and later Believers/Muslims were rather strongly affected by its message. Thus, we can also study the conception of religious warfare among Believers/Muslims after the death of the Prophet with the hypothesis that many aspects of the Qurʾānic message were shared by the Believers/Muslims.

“Fighting in God’s way” (*qitāl fi sabīl allāh*) and “striving in God’s way” (*jihād fi sabīl allāh*) were two more or less synonymous expressions appearing in the Qurʾān to signify religious warfare (e.g., Qurʾān 2:190, 5:35). In addition to the fact that fighting is enjoined, also death while fighting is portrayed as something positive:

Do not say to those killed in God’s way that they are dead;  
rather, they are alive (Qurʾān 2:154).

Whether you are killed in God’s way or die, God’s forgiveness  
and mercy are better than what people amass (Qurʾān 3:157).

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<sup>150</sup> For an in-depth study on Arabic graffiti discussing or related to *jihād*, see my “Religious warfare.”

<sup>151</sup> The peer-reviewers of this article noted that I use the Qurʾān and the epigraphic evidence opportunistically, as it were, sometimes supposing a continuity between the Qurʾān and the Believers (as is the case here, with religious warfare) and sometimes not (rituals, the status of the Prophet). I take their criticism seriously, but I would like to say that I only suppose continuity in the cases where, according to my interpretation, the Qurʾān contains a (more or less) well-defined description or instructions about a dogma or practice. The Qurʾān is in my opinion perfectly clear about, say, God’s oneness, and rather clear about the importance of fighting “in God’s way,” so I believe it is reasonable to suppose a continuity in these cases even if the earliest epigraphic record does not prove this. However, according to my reading, the Qurʾān is ambivalent about the exact forms of the rituals of the Believers as well as the authority of the Prophet, *especially after his death*. So, in these instances, I think the argument from silence can be used, at least cautiously, to suppose that the ambivalency continued. It is of course possible that future finds will change the scenario sketched in this article. Or perhaps there is no good explanation for the fact that, for instance, the oneness of God is absent in the earliest inscriptions.

Let those of you who are willing to trade the life of this world for the life to come fight in God's way. To anyone who fights in God's way, whether killed or victorious, We shall give a great reward (Qur'ān 4:74).

God has purchased from the Believers their lives and their properties in exchange for that they will have Paradise. They fight in God's way, so they kill and are killed (Qur'ān 9:111).

Waging war for God and martyrdom are seen as earning the rewards of the afterlife. These Qur'ānic notions surface in the (later) epigraphic record. The inscriptions are quoted below. Some of them appear here in abridged form; for the complete inscriptions, see the Appendix.

78 AH, near Ṭā'if, Saudi Arabia: "and I ask Him for martyrdom on His path" (Appendix, no. 19).

98 AH, Cnidus, Turkey, graffito: "May your deeds please God, O Khaṭṭāb ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAmmī al-Ṣakhrī; and I wrote this inscription of mine on a raid [of ...] in the year ninety-eight [AH = 716-7 CE]" (Appendix, no. 46).

99 AH, Cos, Greece, graffito (very damaged): "ʿAṭā' ibn Sa'd al-... [fought against?] polytheists on a raid ... in the year ninety-nine [AH = 717-8 CE]; the help of God and great victory [cf. Qur'ān 110:1]" (Appendix, no. 48).

110 AH, Southern Jordan, graffito: "Before God prostrates Kāhil ibn ʿAlī ibn Aktham and upon Him he relies, asking God for *jihād* on His path; he made the pilgrimage in the year one hundred and ten [AH = 728-9 CE], may God forgive him" (Appendix, no. 72).

117 AH, Negev, Israel, graffito: "O God, make my deeds obligatory *jihād* and grant (?) martyrdom in Your path" (Appendix, no. 76).

It has been suggested in this section that one of the rather clear features of the Believer and later Muslim group identities was the willingness to participate in fighting for the sake of God — and die as a martyr if that was

to be the case.<sup>152</sup> Warfare supposes a marked dichotomy “us vs. them,” and some could argue that the notion of religious warfare shared by the Believers/Muslims would have brought about a clear demarcation early on of not only Believers vs. non-Believers but also Muslims vs. non-Muslims. I do not believe that this is the case for the earliest period. Rather, I would propose that those individuals who were willing to recognize the stringent monotheism and devoutness towards God, the concern for sin and forgiveness, the leading role of the *amīr al-muʾminīn*, and to wage religious warfare would have been accepted in the community of Believers regardless of whether they had met the Prophet Muḥammad or regarded his prophecy as very momentous. It is, above all, these aspects that form the early, Believer phase, identity evinced by the contemporary evidence from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (the Qurʾān) up to the 60s/680s.<sup>153</sup> Above (section 4.1.) it was said that accepting the authority of the Prophet is depicted in the Qurʾān as one of the preconditions of becoming and being a Believer. But in the 10s-60s AH, that is to say, after his death and before the first attempts to formulate his biography,<sup>154</sup> it is difficult to say what this might have meant.

Wadād al-Qāḍī has recently drawn attention to the narratives in the Arabic literary evidence of non-Muslims in the conquest army otherwise described as Muslim.<sup>155</sup> In them, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and polytheists are portrayed as fighting alongside the Muslims; most are situated in the early era, that is, the lifetime of the Prophet or the early conquests. The narratives could be reminiscences of the early conquest period before the second *fitna* and before the development of the Muslim identity, although they discuss the events in a way that retrojects clear-cut

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<sup>152</sup> As can probably be inferred already, I disagree with Donner’s recent argument (*Muhammad and the believers*, pp. 106-119) that the conquests were not, for the most part, violent. Donner supposes that the Believers theory necessitates giving up the violent conquests model, but, as can be seen here, I do not believe this is the case. Of course, I agree with Donner that many regions simply capitulated and no fighting was necessary. These areas were, then, annexed rather than conquered.

<sup>153</sup> See Landau-Tasseron, “From tribal society,” for an interpretation of these events from a different, political, point of view.

<sup>154</sup> See Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, for a reconstruction of ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr’s tradition that form one of the earliest endeavors towards this direction.

<sup>155</sup> Al-Qāḍī, “Non-Muslims in the Muslim conquest army.”

religious boundaries in the past.<sup>156</sup> However, it must be admitted that there are some passages in Arabic literature describing non-Muslims fighting with Muslims even after the articulation of the Muslim identity towards the end of the first century AH, although the number of reports concerning the earlier period (before the second *fitna*) is larger than for the later period. Besides, in general (but with some qualms) the early Muslim jurists condoned this practice,<sup>157</sup> so it could have continued later, now with the blessing of the rules of the *jihād*.

In any case, I would suggest, first, that the Believer/Muslim identity was created partly through ideology emphasizing readiness for physical struggle and, second, that actual successes and challenges on the battlefield created further cohesion in the group. The notion of a group's cohesion is of great importance according to the SIT since, while cohesion is not a prerequisite for group formation as such, it increases intragroup cooperation and favoritism. Ideally, intragroup relations are exemplified by

- (1) the perceived similarity of members;
- (2) mutual attraction between members or social cohesion;
- (3) mutual esteem;
- (4) emotional empathy or contagion;
- (5) altruism and cooperation;
- and (6) attitudinal and behavioural uniformity.<sup>158</sup>

What is more, according to the SIT the stronger affiliation of members to a group "is often achieved at the cost of using the group's capacity to put another group at a disadvantage."<sup>159</sup> This is certainly true for the Believers/Muslims and their conquests, which resulted in an empire where the Believers/Muslims were socially and economically superior, enjoying, for instance, tax benefits and owning slaves from among the members of the outgroup.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Al-Qāḍī's own interpretation of the material does not significantly problematize the communal identities.

<sup>157</sup> Al-Qāḍī, "Non-Muslims in the Muslim conquest army," p. 87.

<sup>158</sup> Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition," p. 29.

<sup>159</sup> Tajfel, *Human groups*, p. 140.

<sup>160</sup> The question of ethnicity is one that is often in scholarship given a lot of weight: Arab Muslims enjoyed more benefits than non-Arab Muslims; Arab Christians were more privileged than non-Arab Christians, and so on. However, following Peter Webb, I believe that this should probably



## 5. Conclusions

Following Fred Donner, I would like to rethink the identity of early Believers/Muslims on the basis of evidence that is contemporary.<sup>161</sup> Epigraphy fulfills this criterion and, hence, serves as a central, and underused, body of evidence for the formation of early Islam. What is more, in contrast to non-Arabic sources, the inscriptions were produced by the community itself. In contrast to papyri, which are often administrative in nature, inscriptions are mostly religious and hence better for studying the religious affiliation of their writers. Of course, we must remember that the dated epigraphic record is still scanty, especially for the 20s-60s/640s-680s, and drawing excessively far-reaching conclusions on the basis of it is not desirable. Thus, the arguments and suggestions presented in this article must be treated, for the time being, as provisional. Preferably, epigraphy should be used in unison with other types of evidence.

It is my contention, however, that a framework based on a solid foundation of contemporary and documentary evidence can serve as a means for understanding and analyzing the later Arabic literature such as historiography.<sup>162</sup> If it is accepted that the cementing of the appellations

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be reconceptualized since it is questionable to what extent such an Arab identity existed at this era. To quote Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, p. 152: "Arabness as a self-reference for the Muslim elite thus gained ground in the later first/seventh century, and, like identities in other parts of the world, there was no grand entrance of Arabs onto the world stage, but only a gradual swelling of consent amongst the Conquerors to express their elite status around Arabness. The process developed distinctly 'ethnic' trappings of identity to wrap around groups of early Muslims, and resembles similar processes of entrenching confessional identities in ethnic guises amongst other groups in the post-conquest Middle East." Later (p. 155), he notes that the stipend system (which, according to the traditional understanding based on later literary accounts, provided a bigger pay for Arabs than non-Arabs) might have also undergone Arabization process where the possible original reason — *hijra* or settlement in the new regions — was forgotten and another one — Arabness — replaced it.

<sup>161</sup> Fred Donner himself, upon reading an earlier version of this article, remarked that it was really other scholars, such as Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, and Robert Hoyland, who began the insistence on contemporary evidence. This is of course true. But to me it seems that Donner's comments on the particular subject of *early Muslim identity formation* — the main focus of this study — have proved to be the most enduring and gained considerable acceptance.

<sup>162</sup> The *isnād-cum-matn* method could be used to probe this question further and to proffer corroborating or contradicting evidence both as to the appellations of the ingroup and the

Muslims/Islam and the identities and other features connected with them are, in fact, the result of a longer historical development, it can be deduced that the narratives in Arabic literature retrojecting these to the lifetime of the Prophet or the following generation are anachronistic and should be discarded or reinterpreted if one is pursuing how the historical figures of that era experienced religious affiliations and practices. Conversion stories (so plentiful in Arabic biographical and other literature) about the Companions of the Prophet switching from paganism, Judaism, Christianity, and so on, to Islam, should be comprehended, I believe, as narratives behind which we can see gradual social processes where individuals and groups cast off some of the ideological and theological dogma, as well as rites, of their former religious group and adopted some of those of the community of Believers.<sup>163</sup> What the latter considered orthodoxy and orthopraxy was, in any case, fluid at the time. Furthermore, if it is acknowledged that Arabness played a limited role in the self-identity and definition of the Believers and early Muslims,<sup>164</sup> we, as scholars, have to rethink whether there is any reason to call their conquests “Arab conquests” or their empire an “Arab empire.”<sup>165</sup>

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requirements of belonging to it. Unfortunately though, the method does not seem to take us to the earliest decades (pre-70s AH) of Islamic history.

<sup>163</sup> For ideas what conversion to Islam might have meant in the early period, see Al-Azmeh, *Emergence of Islam*, pp. 388–398; Munt, ““What did conversion to Islam mean.”

<sup>164</sup> Conventionally in scholarship, this is depicted the other way around: the Arabness of the Muslims was indeed salient at the beginning of the Islamic era but its importance diminished over time. According to Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, p. 64, for example, it is only with the reign of ‘Umar II (717–720 CE) and increasingly so with the reigns of the ‘Abbāsī caliphs (beginning in 749 CE) that the non-Arab converts were accepted as equal to Arab Muslims. This, however, I believe is not borne out by the contemporary sources where ethnicity rarely appears as an important marker. What is more, ethnonyms surface mostly as exonyms — Saracens, *ṭayyāyē*, etc. — in non-Arabic texts written outside the Believer/Muslim community. I am not aware of any text written by a first/seventh-century Believer/Muslim where she/he would self-identify as an Arab. Granted, the Qur’ān (12:2 and some other occurrences) calls itself an Arabic revelation, but it would not be prudent to jump headlong from this linguistic identification to an ethnic one. Arabness is mostly absent in the poetic corpus of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras (Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, pp. 66–88); and, in any case, this corpus was transmitted over centuries before being written down, so not all of its poems or lines are authentic representations of the original compositions.

<sup>165</sup> See, e.g., the title of Nevo and Koren’s book: *Crossroads to Islam: the origins of the Arab religion and the Arab state*. There, not only are the conquests and the state called “Arab,” but their religion in the pre- or proto-Muslim phase is as well.

To summarize the timeline for the development of the Muslim identity as reflected in epigraphy in a simplified manner: we have indeterminate pious formulae up to the 70s/690s, when the first instances of the emphasis on the Prophet surface.<sup>166</sup> Simultaneously, designations referring to different outgroups appear in the 70s-90s/690s-710s.<sup>167</sup> Following this, in the 80s-100s/700s-720s, we have mentions of specifically Muslim rites such as pilgrimage, prayer, and fasting.<sup>168</sup> The processes of boundary-drawing and group designation are brought to a close around 100s-110s/720s-730s, when the words Muslims and Islam appear as clear references to a specific group.<sup>169</sup> The idea that the Muslims formed a distinct community is attested by, for example, one writer of a graffito of the year 123/741 who asks God to bless the totality of Muslims (*‘āmmat al-muslimīn*) and to let them into Paradise.<sup>170</sup> Among the rites, pilgrimage is mentioned the most often. It appears in four different graffiti among the epigraphic corpus of approximately one hundred inscriptions used in this study<sup>171</sup> (prayer occurs in two graffiti<sup>172</sup> and fasting in one).<sup>173</sup> Although the texts do not mention Mecca explicitly, it is reasonable to suppose that they refer to a pilgrimage there since three of the graffiti are from Saudi Arabia and one from southern Jordan. The prominence of a sacred Arabian locality over other places (say, Jerusalem) was one of the means through which Muslim distinctiveness from Jews and Christians was underscored. Prayer, as a daily rite, would have increased the salience of Muslim identity in quotidian life.

What I have stated does not, naturally, mean that Islam was complete — indeed, Qur’ānic exegesis, the *ḥadīth* corpus, and legal thought, to name just a few literary and intellectual fields, were only beginning to develop.<sup>174</sup> Nor does it signify that there was no interreligious contact (either ideological or practical), collaboration, or cross-contamination after that. I

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<sup>166</sup> Appendix, nos. 17, 19.

<sup>167</sup> Appendix, nos. 16, 28, 48.

<sup>168</sup> Appendix, nos. 27, 39, 65.

<sup>169</sup> Appendix, nos. 62, 78, 89.

<sup>170</sup> Appendix, no. 87.

<sup>171</sup> Appendix, nos. 27, 38, 49, 72.

<sup>172</sup> Appendix, nos. 39, 65.

<sup>173</sup> Appendix, no. 65.

<sup>174</sup> In any case, the Muslims formed a tiny minority among the non-Muslims in the Middle East at the time. See Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*, for a quantitative study.

simply argue that by the 100s-110s/720s-730s most Muslims agreed on what the communal affiliation was about and how it differed from other religious groups,<sup>175</sup> although it must be remembered that these borders between different religious denominations are “as constructed and imposed, as artificial and political as any of the borders on the earth.”<sup>176</sup> As stated in section 2., change in group identities and in cognitive adjustment to change can be either intragroup and intergroup.<sup>177</sup> In Islamic identity formation it was indeed both, occurring at the same time.<sup>178</sup>

Many Jews, Christians, and others had of course been incorporated into the ingroup during the first century AH; in the later Arabic literature, this development was discussed in the context of religious conversion (in Arabic, simply *islām*) from one clear-cut religious community to another, which I do not think was the case. Rather, the process was one of the slow shifting and defining of communal boundaries.

As already hinted, and as argued at length by Peter Webb, the articulation of religious boundaries preceded, not followed, the Arab ethnogenesis; that is, the process through which all or most Arabic-speaking individuals (and perhaps some others as well) began to understand and self-define themselves as belonging to the same ethnos came second.<sup>179</sup> This should be dated to the second/eighth century. Arabic epigraphy agrees with Webb’s argument. It is not until the third/ninth century that inscriptions emphasizing someone’s Arabness first appear (for example 250 AH tombstone of a certain Maryam bint Ismā‘il *al-‘arabiyya*).<sup>180</sup> The salience of

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<sup>175</sup> Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, p. 181 would postpone this date (100s-110s/720s-730s), arguing that “Syriac texts indicate that even as late as the ninth century Islam and Christianity had not fully parted.”

<sup>176</sup> The quotation is from Boyarin, *Border lines*, p. 1, where it is used to describe the borders between Judaism and Christianity, but it seems to fit very well with religious identity construction in general and the boundary drawing between Muslims and non-Muslims in particular.

<sup>177</sup> Tajfel, *Human groups*, p. 137.

<sup>178</sup> Significantly, the years 100s-110s/720s-730s more or less coincide with the stipulations that the Jews and Christians dress differently from the Muslims; see Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims* for a discussion of these stipulations and their date. The primary goal of these provisions was, in my interpretation, to accentuate and maintain communal boundaries.

<sup>179</sup> Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, p. 356.

<sup>180</sup> Wiet, *Catalogue général*, p. 197, no. 3545.

the Arab identity, then, increased with time, contrary to what has been conventionally supposed in scholarship.<sup>181</sup> That the Believer/Muslim group identity was mostly expressed in Arabic is a notable fact, but it must be noted that not all Arabians (a geographical term) spoke Arabic as first or even second language. Many South Arabians who joined the movement were probably not fluent in Arabic. Moreover, Persian-, Aramaic-, Greek-, Coptic-, and Berber-speaking people affiliated themselves with the group early on.

This article started with a quotation from a chapter written by Jaclyn Maxwell. The citation was meant to convey some current tendencies in the study of late antique Christianity, including interest in the gray zone and in the overlapping aspects between different religious communities.

The study of Christianity can proffer another analogue as well.<sup>182</sup> Specifically, one can see similarities in the processes of early Christian and early Muslim identity formation: Christianity had its origins as a rather obscure movement or sect in the context of Second Temple Judaism and among a group of Near Eastern Jews and (after the death of Jesus) Gentiles, developing into a religion of its own perhaps towards the end of the first century CE.<sup>183</sup> The movement begun with the life and teaching of Jesus, who died perhaps in the 30s CE. His followers started to shape a religious community of their own, distinct from the Jews, through a complex process of Christian self-identity formation during the first century CE.<sup>184</sup> According

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<sup>181</sup> However, it must be noted that tribal identities are well evidenced in the documentary and contemporary record. But there is at the moment no support for the idea that these different tribes and their members conceived themselves as part of the same ethnos, Arabs, before the third/ninth century. See Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, pp. 194–224, for analysis of the processes of the Arab genealogy construction. Even the pre-Islamic South Arabians were later included in the Arab ethnos, even though we have ample evidence that they themselves did not self-identify as Arabs.

<sup>182</sup> Naturally, the study of early Christianity has inspired scholars of early Islam before as well; see e.g., Peters, “The quest.”

<sup>183</sup> The scholarship on Christian origins is much too vast for me to master. For a standard study, see Dunn, *The partings of the ways*, and cf. Boyarin, *Border lines*; Becker and Reed, *The ways that never parted*. The latter two books argue for a much longer formational period and problematize the conventional discourse of Judaism and Christianity “parting ways.”

<sup>184</sup> Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, p. 151, notes: “Indeed, the Jesus communities [before the crystallization of the Christian identity] seem to have achieved a balance between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ rare within early Judaic communities. They represented an openness of boundaries similar to natural

to James Dunn, the crucial historical turning points were the first and the second Jewish revolts in 66-70 and 132-135 CE, respectively, or, actually, the period between them.<sup>185</sup> The second revolt resulted in the final breach, with some more minor “partings” occurring in the later centuries. Overlap in religious rites, practices, and worldviews of many people of course remained, but, generally, Christianity and Judaism were considered separate religions from the second century onward.

Defining what it meant to be a Christian also meant defining what it meant to be a non-Christian. Here, the acceptance of Jesus as (first) redeemer and messiah<sup>186</sup> and (later) also as God in flesh<sup>187</sup> became the crux of the matter. The term “Christianity” appears in the sources in the early second century CE, where it is contrasted with “Judaism”<sup>188</sup> (there is no ingroup without an outgroup). However, groups somewhere on the borderline of the two religions, labelled by modern scholars as Jewish Christians, who accepted Jesus as messiah or religious teacher but not as God, existed well into the Middle Ages.

In a somewhat similar timeline, Muḥammad’s prophetic message and actions promulgate a movement of Believers: he dies in 11 AH,<sup>189</sup> leaving behind a community of stringent monotheists; the communal boundaries begin to settle in the 60s-70s AH with an emphasis on not only the uniqueness of God but also the uniqueness of the Prophet Muḥammad; and the names Muslims and Islam for the new religion become standard by the beginning of the second century AH.<sup>190</sup> Both the Christian and Muslim identity formations and boundary drawings vis-à-vis other denominations were rather long processes that, of course, continue until today, although their contexts and crucial questions have changed over the centuries.

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Jewish communities, even while cultivating an intense communal life characteristic of intentional communities.” Something similar could be said about the community of Believers.

<sup>185</sup> Dunn, *The partings of the ways*, p. 317.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215-240.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266-270, 298-300.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

<sup>189</sup> If not later; see Shoemaker, *The death of a prophet*.

<sup>190</sup> Above, 4.1.1., I discussed the words *islām* and *muslimūn* in the Qurʾān, noting that there is very limited evidence of them being used as concepts denoting a reified religious and communal identity.

The social identity theory was employed in this study to interpret the group identities of early Believers/Muslims and their development. Even if it cannot answer all the questions, it is still, I believe, a useful instrument to analyze identities, particularly in the pre-modern era about which our evidence is often scarce.

The reader might think that because this article has concentrated on group identity and its formation, it follows that I view and wish to portray the early Believers/Muslims as lacking individual agency. This is not the case. However, for now, it will be left for other studies to analyze and explain how the individual Believers/Muslims acted, whether among, on the fringes of, or in opposition to their group and what the exact intragroup dynamics were. Many of the individual Believers/Muslims, it can be supposed, identified with aspects of the group affiliation only slightly and, perhaps, deemed group identities other than the religious one more salient, even if this is not immediately borne out by the sources. To quote Tajfel, “in each individual’s life there will be situations in which he acts mainly as an individual rather than as a member of a group; there will be others in which he acts mainly in terms of his group membership.”<sup>191</sup>

It will also have been noticed that discussion on female Believers/Muslims has been lacking in this article. This is because women so rarely appear in the documentary and contemporary record (save the Qurʾān).<sup>192</sup> Current and future studies will continue to untangle how gender was construed in different types of early Arabic texts, be they documentary or literary.<sup>193</sup>

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This is where I conclude this essay. The epigraphic record and other contemporary evidence show us that the members of the Muslim affiliation,

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<sup>191</sup> Tajfel, *Human groups*, 278.

<sup>192</sup> However, Appendix, no. 89, which is a damaged monumental inscription from Quṣayr ‘Amra datable to 105–125 AH, begins: “O God, keep pious the heir apparent of male and female Muslims” (*al-muslimīm wa-l-muslimāt*).

<sup>193</sup> For studies on the Qurʾān and Islam from a gender studies perspective, see e.g. Ahmed, *Women and gender*; Ali, *Sexual ethics and Marriage and slavery*; Anwar, *Gender and self*; Hidayatullah, *Feminist edges*; Wadud, *Qurʾan and woman*.

which came together at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century AH through the construction of perceived shared ideology, scripture, practices and other common features, as well as sacrifices on the battlefield, formed a dominant,<sup>194</sup> even if still a minority, group in the Near East of the early Middle Ages. I have argued that, with early dated evidence, we can, cautiously, reconstruct how Islam became distinctively Islam. The Muslim identity was mostly promulgated in Arabic, but the shared language did not lead to the formation of Arab identity or emphasis on the Arabic-ness or Arab-ness of the Believers/Muslims before the second and third centuries AH. The religious identification was thus more salient than the ethno-linguistic one in the early period. Most writers of the inscriptions putting forward Believer and Muslim identities were free males. The Muslim identity construction occurred by defining both the ingroup (“us”) and the outgroup or outgroups (“them”),<sup>195</sup> the border between which became more accentuated and less traversable than earlier. The Muslims formed a community (*umma*),<sup>196</sup> the members of which were persistently penitent and mindful of sin.<sup>197</sup> Some displayed an inclination to die as martyrs of God.<sup>198</sup> In the inscriptions, God is called for example “Lord of Muslims” (*rabb al-muslimīn*)<sup>199</sup> and, indeed, “of all people” (*rabb al-nās ajma‘īn*).<sup>200</sup> But salvation was reserved for Muslims.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> For a theoretical discussion on “dominant” and “dominated” groups, see Deschamps, “Social identity and relations of power.”

<sup>195</sup> “[T]he characteristics of one’s own group (such as its status, its richness or poverty, the colour of its skin) acquire their significance only in relation to the perceived differences from other groups ... the definition of a group (national, racial, or any other) makes sense only in relation to other groups. A group becomes a group in the sense that it is perceived as having common characteristics or a common fate only because other groups are present in its environment,” Tajfel, “La catégorisation,” p. 295, translated in Deschamps, “Social identity and relations of power,” p. 87.

<sup>196</sup> Appendix, no. 91.

<sup>197</sup> Sin and asking for forgiveness are the most frequent themes in the inscriptions.

<sup>198</sup> Section 4.3 above.

<sup>199</sup> Appendix, no. 62.

<sup>200</sup> Appendix, no. 32.

<sup>201</sup> Appendix, nos. 61, 87.



**Appendix:**  
**Arabic rock inscriptions dated to 23-132/643-750**

I have collected here all published Arabic lapidary inscriptions (whether graffiti or monumental) known to me that are explicitly dated between 23 AH (our earliest Islamic-era inscription) and 132 AH, the end of the Umayyad rule. There are some inscriptions in the Appendix that can be dated on the basis of their contents, for example, the individuals mentioned; but they are kept to a minimum, because these kinds of datings are often conjectural. Inscriptions dated by modern editors on the basis of paleography are also omitted here because paleography is always a somewhat subjective matter. The Appendix includes only those inscriptions that we have actual material remains of and not those that are quoted in the Arabic literary sources. The Appendix incorporates the material from two Internet resources, <http://www.epigraphie-islamique.org> and <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/>, to which I have added a significant amount of other material. Two inscriptions that are perhaps known to the readers, that from Batman, supposedly 22 AH, and that from Cyprus, supposedly 29 AH, are not included since it is unclear whether they were correctly quoted and whether their dates are reliable (for them, see *RCEA*, vol. 1, pp. 5-6). No trace of these survives today.

The information given before the transliteration is as follows: 1) date; 2) original find place (if known); 3) country; 4) the type of the inscription. The readings of the inscriptions have been, if possible, checked against the published photographs or tracings but a full critical apparatus is not included here in order to save space. The transliteration includes long medial *ā*s and *hamzas* even though the early Arabic script rarely indicates them. I will give, at the end, one or two references for each inscription; this is not supposed to be an all-inclusive bibliography. Different possible interpretations of the names mentioned in the inscriptions, often given inadequately in the scholarly publications, have been sought with the help of al-Dhahabī, *Mushtabih*. Line breaks are not given: slashes indicate possible variant readings (except in the poetic graffiti of 98 AH, where they refer to hemistiches). Three dots refer to the fragmentary state of some part of the text; whether this fragmentary part is long or short is not commented on

here. I refer the reader to the original publications of the inscriptions for more detailed information. Translations of some of the inscriptions were given above. In these cases, I have omitted the translations in the Appendix.

- no. 1) 23 AH, near Yanbu<sup>ʿ</sup>, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *kataba salama/salima thalāth wa-ʿishrīn*, “Salama/Salima wrote [this] [in the year?] twenty-three [AH = 643-4 CE]” (Kawatoko, “Archaeological survey,” p. 51).
- no. 2) 24 AH, Qā<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tadil, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *bi-sm allāh anā zuhayr katabtu zaman tuwuffiya ʿumar sanat arbaʿ wa-ʿishrīn*, “In the name of Allāh; I, Zuhayr, wrote [this] at the time when ʿUmar died, in the year twenty-four [AH = 644-5 CE]” (Ghabban, “The inscription of Zuhayr,” p. 211; Imbert, “L’Islam des pierres,” p. 63, notes that *bi-sm allāh* in the beginning might be a later addition).
- no. 3) 24 AH (probably), Qā<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tadil, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *anā zuhayr mawlā ibnat shayba*, “I am Zuhayr, the *mawlā* of Bint Shayba” (Ghabban, “The inscription of Zuhayr,” p. 213).
- no. 4) 29 AH, Wādī Khushayba, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *tarahḥama allāh ʿalā yazīd bn ʿabd allāh al-salūlī wa-kutiba/kataba fī jumādā min sanat tisʿ wa-ʿishrīn* (the publication, Kawatoko, Tokunaga, and Iizuka, *Ancient and Islamic rock inscriptions*, pp. 9-10, gives the date as 27 AH but since the first tooth of the year is taller, the year should rather be given as *tisʿ*, <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/-wadi1.html>).
- no. 5) 29 AH (probably), Wādī Khushayba, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma* [written ʿ-l-h-m] *ighfir li-yazīd bn ʿabd allāh* [written ʿ-l-h] *al-salūlī* (the orthography could indicate that the person’s father’s name was ʿAbdilāh, but compare with the previous inscription, where the name is clearly spelled ʿAbd Allāh; the same orthographic peculiarity occurs in the word *allāhumma*; Kawatoko, Tokunaga, and Iizuka, *Ancient and Islamic rock inscriptions*, p. 7).
- no. 6) 31 AH, Cairo, Egypt, epitaph: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm hādihā al-qabr li-ʿabd al-raḥmān bn khayr al-ḥ-j-r-ī allāhumma ighfir lahu wa-adkhilhu fī raḥma minka wa-iyyānā/ātinā maʿahu istaghfir lahu idhā qurīʿa* [sic? written q-r-ā] *hādihā al-kitāb wa-qul āmīn wa-kutiba hādihā*

- al-kitāb fī jumādā al-ākhir sanat ihdā wa-thalāthīn* (El-Hawary, “The most ancient”).
- no. 7) 32 AH?, Jerusalem, monumental inscription (mentioned by Rāḡib, “Les premiers documents,” pp. 705-706, due to be published in Sharon, *Corpus*).
- no. 8) 40 AH, Wādī al-Shāmiya, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *rahmat allāh wa-barakātuhu ‘alā ‘abd al-raḥmān bn khālīd bn al-‘aṣ wa-kutiba/kataba li-sanat arba‘in* (Sharafaddin, “Some Islamic inscriptions,” pp. 69-70).
- no. 9) 46 AH, Wādī al-Sābil, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma ighfir li-‘abd allāh bn dayrām [sic?] kutiba/kataba li-arba‘a layāl khalawna min muḥarram min sanat sitt wa-arba‘in*, “O God, forgive ‘Abd Allāh ibn Dayrām; it was written/he wrote in Muḥarram 4 of the year forty-six [AH = March 16, 666 CE]” (Grohmann, *Expédition*, p. 124).
- no. 10) 52 AH, Wādī al-Khushna, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma ighfir li-jadhīm/khidhyam/khudhaym bn ‘alī bn hubayra wa-kutiba/kataba li-sanat thnatayn [sic] wa-khamsīn*, “O God, forgive Jadhīm/Khidhyam/Khudhaym ibn ‘Alī ibn Hubayra; and it was written/he wrote in the year fifty-two [AH = 672-3 CE]” (Sharafaddin, “Some Islamic inscriptions,” pp. 69-70; Gruendler, *The development*, p. 15; Ghabban, “The inscription of Zuhayr,” p. 217).
- no. 11) 58 AH, near al-Ṭā’if, Saudi Arabia, building inscription: *hādihā al-sadd li-‘abd allāh mu‘āwiya amīr al-mu‘minīn banāhu [written b-n-y-h] ‘abd allāh bn ṣakhr bi-idhn allāh li-sanat thamān wa-khamsīn allāhumma ighfir li-‘abd allāh mu‘āwiya amīr al-mu‘minīn wa-thabbithu wa-nṣurhu wa-matti‘ al-mu‘minīn bi-hi kataba ‘amr bn ḥubāb/ khabbāb/janāb (al-Ḥārithī, *Al-Nuqūsh al-‘arabiyya*, p. 79).*
- no. 12) 40-60 AH, Medina, Saudi Arabia, building inscription: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm hādihā al-sadd li-‘abd allāh mu‘āwiya amīr al-mu‘minīn allāhumma bārik/barrīk lahu fīhi rabb al-samawāt wa-l-arḍ banāhu abū radhādih mawlā ‘abd allāh bn ‘abbās bi-ḥawl allāh wa-quwwatihi wa-qāma ‘alayhi kathīr bn al-ṣalt wa-abū mūsā (al-Rāshid, *Dirāsāt fī al-āthār al-islāmiyya*, pp. 46-60; Hoyland, “New documentary texts,” pp. 415-416; I thank Mehdy Shaddel for noting that the name of the *mawlā* of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās should be read Abū Radhādih instead of Abū*

Raddād as in al-Rāshid and Hoyland: there is clearly a dot above one of the *dāls*).

- no. 13) 64 AH, Ḥafnat al-Abyaḍ, Iraq, graffito: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm allāh wa-kubbira/kabbir kabīran wa-l-ḥamd li-llāh kathīran wa-subḥān allāh bukratan wa-aṣīlan wa-laylan ṭawīlan allāhumma rabb jibrīl wa-mikāl wa-isrāfīl iḡfir li-thābit* <sup>202</sup> *bn yazīd al-as‘adī/al-ash‘arī mā taqaddama min dhanbihi wa-mā ta‘akhhara wa-li-man qāla āmīn āmīn rabb al-‘ālamīn wa-katabtu/kutibat [sic?] hādḥā al-kitāb fi shawwāl min sanat arba‘ wa-sittīn*, “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; may God be extolled/extol God greatly; and much glory to God; and praise to God in the morning and in the evening and during the long night; O God, the Lord of Gabriel, Michael, and Isrāfīl, forgive Thābit ibn Yazīd al-As‘adī/al-Ash‘arī his previous and later sins and [forgive] who says ‘amen, amen, Lord of the world’; and I wrote/was written this inscription in Shawwāl of the year sixty-four [AH = May-June, 684 CE]” (al-Ṣandūq, “Ḥajar”; Gruendler, *The development*, p. 16; Hoyland, “The content and context,” p. 88 reads *allāhu wakbaru kabīran*, an interesting possibility for a sound change *‘akbaru* → *wakbaru*; it is also possible that the phrase was intended to be read as *allāhukbar kabīran*).
- no. 14) 70 AH?, Jabal Usays, Syria, graffito: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm min [?] bukayr bn bakr... [sanat?] sab‘īn*, “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; from Bukayr ibn Bakr... [in the year?] seventy [AH = 689-90 CE]” (reading as well as dating uncertain, al-‘Ushsh, “Kitabāt ‘arabiyya,” p. 270).
- no. 15) 71 AH? (actually, more likely 171 AH or even 271 AH) Aswān, Egypt, epitaph: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm inna a‘zam maṣā‘ib ahl al-islām muṣibatuhum bi-l-nabī muḥammad ṣallā allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallama hādḥā qabr ‘abbāsa ibnat jurayj (?) bn ...* <sup>203</sup> *raḥmat allāh wa-maghfiratuhu wa-riḍwānuhu ‘alayhā tuwuffiyat yawm al-ithnayn li-arba‘ ‘ashr khalawna min dhī al-qa‘da sanat iḥdā wa-sab‘īn wa-hiya tashhadu allā ilāh illā allāh*

<sup>202</sup> The original publication has Layth, but this is impossible, since the *rasm* consists of three teeth of more or less equal height. The name Thābit is the best candidate.

<sup>203</sup> The readings of ‘Abbāsa’s father’s and grandfather’s names are not certain. The published photograph is too unclear to suggest anything.

*waḥdahu lā sharīk lahu wa-anna muḥammadan ʿabduhu wa-rasūluhu ṣallā allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama*, “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; the greatest calamity of the people of Islam is their losing of the Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace; this is the grave of ʿAbbāsa bint Jurayj (?) ibn ..., may God’s mercy and forgiveness and acceptance be upon her; she died on Monday, Dhū al-Qaʿda 14, in the year 71 [AH = April 19, 691, actually a Wednesday], witnessing that there is no god but God alone, He has no partners, and that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace” (El-Hawary, “The second oldest”; Bacharach and Anwar, “Early versions”; Hoyland, “The content and context,” p. 87, n. 65 notes that the date might actually refer to 171 AH, with the century omitted, because of the elaborate script and phraseology; one finds the phrase *inna aʿzam maṣāʾib lamuṣibat al-nabī muḥammad* in various epitaphs of the second and third centuries, e.g., *RCEA*, vol. 1, p. 42, dated 186 AH, but not before).

- no. 16) 72 AH, Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, monumental inscription: a long, well-known and much-discussed inscription. It consists of Qurʾānic quotations and pious phrases as well as the mention of the date of the building. The Qurʾānic quotations are the following: conflation of Qurʾān 64:1 and 57:2; 33:56 complete; 4:171-72 complete; 19:15 complete; 19:34-36 almost complete; 3:18-19 complete; 112 complete; 33:56 complete; 17:111 almost complete; conflation of 64:1 and 57:2 (for a longer discussion and full text, see Kessler, “ʿAbd al-Malik’s inscription”; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 696-699; Whelan, “Forgotten witness”; Milwright, *The Dome of the Rock*).
- no. 17) 73 AH, Fīq, Golan, inauguration of a road inscription: *bi-sm al[lāh al-rahīmān] al-rahīm lā ilāh [illā a]llāh waḥdahu lā sharīk lahu muḥammad rasūl allāh ama[ra bi-ta]shīl hādhihi al-ʿaqaba ʿabd allāh ʿabd al-malik amīr al-muʾ[mi]nīn wa-ʿumilat ʿalā yaday yaḥyā bn [al-ḥakam] fī al-muḥarram min sanat thalāth [wa-sabʿin] ....*, “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; there is no god but God alone, He has no partners, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God; the servant of God ʿAbd al-Malik, the Commander of the Believers, ordered the levelling of this mountain road; and it was carried out under the

- supervision of Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥakam in al-Muḥarram of the year seventy-three [AH = May-June 692] ..." (Sharon, "An Arabic inscription").
- no. 18) 74 AH, near Ḥāʾil, Saudi Arabia, graffito or perhaps several graffiti: *allāhumma laka al-ḥamd ghafara allāh li-ʿumar bn ṭarīf/ẓarīf bn al-ḥārith wa-li-anas bn salama al-munabbahī wa-li-wālidayhi wa-li-aṣḥābihi wa-li-magharra (?) bn saʿd āmīn wa-kutiba fī dhī al-qaʿda min sanat arbaʿ wa-sabʿīn*, "O God, to you belongs praise; may God forgive ʿUmar ibn Ṭarīf/Ẓarīf ibn al-Ḥārith and Anas ibn Salama al-Munabbahī and his parents and companions and Magharra (?) ibn Saʿd, amen; and it was written in Dhū al-Qaʿda of the year seventy-four [AH = March-April 694 CE]" (al-Thenayian, *Nuqūsh al-qarn al-hijrī al-awwal*, pp. 63-64).
- no. 19) 78 AH, near al-Ṭāʾif, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *shahida al-rayyān bn ʿabd allāh annahu lā ilāh illā allāh wa-shahida anna muḥammadan rasūl allāh thumma huwa yudammī [? uncertain] man atā an yashhada ʿalā dhālika raḥīma allāh al-rayyān wa-ghafara lahu wa-istahd[ā] bihi ilā širāṭ al-janna wa-asʾaluhu al-shahāda fī sabīlihi āmīn kutiba hādhā al-kitāb ʿam buniya al-masjīd al-ḥarām li-sanat thamān wa-sabʿīn*, "Al-Rayyān ibn ʿAbd Allāh testifies that there is no god but God and he testifies that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God; and he [scil. al-Rayyān] makes it easy for he who comes to testify that; may God have mercy on al-Rayyān and forgive him; and he seeks guidance through Him to the road of Paradise; and I [sic] ask Him for martyrdom on His path, amen; and this inscription was written in the year the Masjīd al-Ḥarām was (re)built, year seventy-eight [AH = 697-8 CE]" (al-Ḥārithī, "Naqsh kitābī nādir," with some modifications to the *editio princeps* by me).
- no. 20) 78 AH, Qāʿ al-Muʿtadil, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *bi-llāh āmana ... bn al-ʿāṣ wa-ṣuḥbatuhu min ahl qinnasrīn wa-kutiba li-thamān wa-sabʿīn* (al-Kilābī, *Al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*, pp. 63-64).
- no. 21) 80 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, three graffiti (this and the next two nos.) by one ʿUthmān ibn Wahrān; two of the graffiti mention the date 80/699-700. The graffiti quote the Qurʾān with minor differences from Cairo ed., 38:26 (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*, pp. 160-165; available online at:

- <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/-makkah2.html>).
- no. 22) 80 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, graffito, Qurʾān 56:28-40; online at: (<http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/-makkah5.html>).
- no. 23) 80 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, graffito, Qurʾān 4:87 (<http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/-makkah6.html>).
- no. 24) 80 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *ʿafā allāh ʿan al-walīd bn maʿbad ghafara lahu allāh dhanbahu wa-kutiba/kataba li-sanat thamānīn wa-huwa yaʿalu allāh al-janna nuzulan wa-l-malāʾika rusulan*, “May God pardon al-Walīd ibn Maʿbad; may God forgive him his sins; and it was written/he wrote in the year eighty [AH = 699-700 CE]; he asks God for Paradise as lodgings and angels as messengers” (al-Thenayian, *Nuqūsh al-qarn al-hijrī al-awwal*, pp. 71-72; the same person could be the author of other, undated inscriptions, see al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*, pp. 42-45, 73-74, 85-87).
- no. 25) 80 AH, Wādī al-Ṣānī, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *anā maymūn mawlā abū [sic] maryam mawlā rubāḥ/rabāḥ/riyāḥ asʿalu al-janna nuzulan wa-l-malāʾika rusulan wa-kutiba fī sanat thamānīn*, “I, Maymūn the mawlā of Abū Maryam the mawlā of Rubāḥ/Rabāḥ/Riyāḥ, ask Paradise as lodgings and angels as messengers; and it was written in the year 80 [AH = 699-700 CE]” (al-Kilābī, *Al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*, pp. 65-66).
- no. 26) 81 AH, Qaṣr al-Burquʿ, Jordan, building inscription: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm hādḥā mā banā al-amīr al-walīd bn amīr al-muʾminīn hāʾulāʾ al-buyūt sanat wāḥida wa-thamānīn*, “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; this is what the *amīr* al-Walīd, son of the Commander of the Believers, built: these houses, in the year eighty-one [AH = 700-1 CE]” (Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie*, vol. 2, p. 84; Gruendler, *The development*, pp. 18-19).
- no. 27) 82 AH, near Ḥāʾil, Saudi Arabia, graffito or perhaps two different graffiti (written below the inscription dated 74 AH, quoted above): *ghafara allāh li-sahm mawlā abū zurʿa al-...ī wa-taqabbala ḥijjatuhu āmīn rabb al-ʿālamīn ghafara allāh li-maḥmūd al-abram al-sammān mawlā yaʿmur bn ḥabīb wa-taqabbala minhu ḥijjatuhu wa-kutiba fī sanat ithnayn*

*wa-thamānīn*, “May God forgive Sahn, the *mawlā* of Abū Zur‘a al-...ī, and accept his pilgrimage; amen, Lord of the world; may God forgive Maḥmūd al-Abram<sup>204</sup> the butter merchant, the *mawlā* of Ya‘mur ibn Ḥabīb, and accept his pilgrimage from him; and it was written in the year eighty-two [AH = 701-2 CE]” (al-Thenayian, *Nuqūsh al-qarn al-hijrī al-awwal*, pp. 77-78).

- no. 28) 83 AH, al-Aqra‘, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *āmantu bi-mā kadhdhaba bi-hi aṣḥāb al-ḥijr wa-kataba ‘afīr/‘ufayr bn al-muḍārib fī sanat thalāth wa-thamānīn*, “I believe in that which the people of al-Ḥijr [modern Madā’in Ṣālīḥ] deemed false; and ‘Afīr/‘Ufayr ibn al-Muḍārib wrote [this] in the year eighty-three [AH = 702-3 CE]” (al-Kilābī, *Al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*, pp. 66-67).
- no. 29) 83 AH, Abū ‘Ūd, Saudi Arabia, graffito/graffiti: *‘abd allāh bn abī ‘urayḍ ya‘taṣīmu bi-rabbīhi katabahu fī sanat thalāth wa-thamānīn wa-muḥammad bn ibrāhīm wa-kataba shahādātahu bi-yadihi*, “‘Abd Allāh ibn abī ‘Urayḍ takes refuge in his Lord; he wrote it in the year eighty-three [AH = 702-3 CE]; and Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm and he wrote his testimony with his own hand” (al-Kilābī, *Al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*, pp. 68-70).
- no. 30) 84 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *yā ayyuhā al-nās ittaqū rabbakum alladhī khalaqakum wa-lladhīna min qablikum la‘allakum tuflīhūna wa-kataba ‘abd allāh bn ‘umāra li-sanat arba‘ wa-thamānīn*, “O people, fear your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may prosper; ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umāra wrote [this] in the year eighty-four [AH = 703-4 CE]” (the inscription seems to be a mixture of different Qur’ānic passages: e.g., 4:1, 2:21 and 2:189; al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*, pp. 26-29).
- no. 31) 84 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, graffito: [...] *rabbī lā tafḍaḥ ḥakīm bn ‘umāra bi-sm [allāh] fa-sabbīḥ bi-ḥamd rabbika qabla ṭulū‘ al-shams wa-qabla ghurūbihā wa-min anā’ al-layl fa-sabbīḥu wa-aṭrāf al-nahār la‘allaka tardā wa-kataba ḥakīm ibn ‘umāra li-sanat arba‘ wa-[thamānīn] ghafara allāh lahu dhanbahu āmīn*, “[the beginning is damaged] ... my

<sup>204</sup> This could also be a nickname or a reference to a profession, but I have not found any such meaning for the word *abram*. The words *mubrim*, *baram* and *barrām* carry many different meanings, such as “rope-weaver,” “niggardly,” “heavy,” of which *abram* could be the elative.



Lord, do not expose the faults of Ḥakīm ibn ‘Umāra; in the name of God; and exalt the praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and exalt Him during the moments of night and at the ends of the day, so that you may be content; Ḥakīm ibn ‘Umāra wrote [this] in the year eighty-four [AH = 703-4 CE]; may God forgive him his sins, amen” (the inscription contains an almost verbatim quotation of Qur’ān 20:130, al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*, pp. 55-57; different sons of ‘Umāra also left their engravings in other places nearby, possibly to be identified as members of the same family and possibly also written in 84 AH; see the whole collection, al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*).

- no. 32) 85 AH, Negev, Israel, graffito: *ghafara allāh li-ḥakīm bn ‘amr [ghayr] hā[lik] wa-lā mafqūd āmīn rabb al-‘ālamīn rabb al-nās ajma‘īn wa-kutiba/kataba fī mus[ta]hall dhī al-ḥijja sanat khams wa-thamānīn a[dkhi]lhu al-janna [...]*, “May God forgive Ḥakīm ibn ‘Amr — not perished and not lost — amen Lord of the world, Lord of all people; and it was written/he wrote at the beginning of Dhū al-Ḥijja in the year eighty-five [AH = December 4, 704 CE]; let him enter Paradise... [last line damaged]” (Nevo, Cohen, and Heftman, *Ancient Arabic inscriptions*, p. 36, no. MA 4265(19); Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, pp. 384-385; there are also other inscriptions from the area written by Ḥakīm ibn ‘Amr who might be the same person; see Nevo, Cohen, and Heftman, *Ancient Arabic inscriptions*, p. 118).
- no. 33) 85 AH, Fīq, Golan, milestone: *[bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm lā ilāh illā allāh wa]ḥdahu lā sharīk [lahu muḥammad rasū]l allāh amara bi-ṣan‘at hā[dhihi al-amyāl ‘abd] allāh ‘abd al-malik amīr al-[mu’minīn ‘alā yaday] musāwir mawlā amīr al-[mu’minīn fī ...] min sanat khams wa-thamā[nīn min dimashq ilā] hādhā ithnayn wa-khamsīn mīl*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; there is no god but God; He has no partners; Muḥammad is the messenger of God; the servant of God ‘Abd al-Malik, the Commander of the Believers, ordered the building of these milestones under the supervision of Musāwir, the *mawlā* of the Commander of the Believers, in [the month of ...] in the year eighty-five [AH = 704-5 CE]; from Damascus to this [milestone] fifty-

- two miles” (part of the text is missing but reliably reconstructed by the editor, Elad, “The southern Golan,” pp. 33-35).
- no. 34) 85 AH, Fīq, Golan, milestone: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥ[īm] lā ilāh illā allāh waḥdahu lā sharīk lahu muḥa[m]mad rasūl[un] allāh amara bi-ṣan‘at hādhihi al-amyāl ‘abd allāh [‘abd a]l-malik amīr al-mu‘minīn ‘alā yaday musāwir mawlā amī[r al-mu‘minīn] fī sha‘bān min sanat khams wa-thamānīn min dimashq ilā hādihā thalātha [wa-khamsīn mīlan], “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; there is no god but God; He has no partners; Muḥammad is the messenger of God; the servant of God ‘Abd al-Malik, the Commander of the Believers, ordered the building of these milestones under the supervision of Musāwir, the *mawlā* of the Commander of the Believers, in Sha‘bān in the year eighty-five [AH = August-September 704 CE]; from Damascus to this [milestone] fifty-three miles” (Elad, “The southern Golan,” pp. 36-37).*
- no. 35) 65-86 AH, Khān al-Ḥathrūra, Palestine, milestone: ... *wa-sallam [amara bi-‘imārat] hādihā al-ṭarīq wa-ṣan‘at al-amyāl ‘abd allāh ‘abd al-malik amīr al-mu‘minīn raḥmat allāh ‘alayhi min dimashq ilā hādihā al-mīl tis‘a wa-mi’a mīl, “[the end of taṣliya, then:] the servant of God ‘Abd al-Malik, the Commander of the Believers, God’s mercy be upon him, ordered the building of this road and the making of the milestones; from Damascus to this milestone one hundred and nine miles” (van Berchem, *Matériaux*, pp. 17-18; Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 3, pp. 104-105; Elad, “Community of believers,” p. 287 argues that the phrase *raḥmat allāh ‘alayhi* shows that ‘Abd al-Malik was deceased at the time when the milestones were made but this is an anachronistic understanding of the phrase: in the early period it did not necessarily imply that the person mentioned had died; see for instance no. 65 below where the individual in question is alive).*
- no. 36) 65-86 AH, four other (damaged) milestones from ‘Abd al-Malik’s time, found in ‘Ayn Hamad (Cytryn-Silverman, “The fifth *mīl*”), Bāb al-Wād (Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 2, pp. 4-7), Dayr al-Qalt (van Berchem, *Matériaux*, pp. 19-21; Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 3, p. 104), and Abū Ghūsh (van Berchem, *Matériaux*, pp. 19-21; Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 1, p. 4).

- no. 37) 65-86 AH (probably), near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *ṣallā allāh ‘alā ‘abd allāh ‘abd al-malik amīr al-mu’minīn*, “May God bless the servant of God ‘Abd al-Malik, the Commander of the Believers” (the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 75 AH, and this inscription might be related to that event, al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*, pp. 151-153; for another inscription reading simply *anā ‘abd al-malik bn marwān*, possibly the caliph, see Imbert, “Califes, princes et poètes”).
- no. 38) 91 AH, al-Awjariyya, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma ighfir li-makhlad/mukhallad bn abī makhlad/mukhallad mawlā ‘alī wa-taqabbal minhu ḥijjatuhu āmīn rabb al-‘ālamīn wa-kutiba/kataba fī dhī al-qa‘da min sanat ihdā wa-tis‘īn raḥima allāh man qara’a hādihā al-kitāb thumma qāla āmīn*, “O God, forgive Makhlad/Mukhallad ibn abī Makhlad/Mukhallad, the *mawlā* of ‘Alī, and accept his pilgrimage, amen, Lord of the world; and it was written/he wrote in Dhū al-Qa‘da in the year ninety-one [AH = September-October 710]; may God have mercy on who recites this inscription and then says ‘amen’” (al-Kilābī, *Al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*, pp. 70-71).
- no. 39) 92 AH, Qaṣr Kharāna/Kharrāna, Jordan, graffito (in ink, with some damage): *allāhumma irḥam ‘abd [a]l-malik ibn ‘umar wa-ighfir lahu dhanbahu mā taqaddama minhu wa-mā ta’akhhara wa-mā asarra wa-mā a’lana wa-mā anta a’lam bihi huwa ... illā taghfir li wa-tarḥamnī akun min al-khāsirīn rabbi tamunnu ‘alayya fa-innaka anta al-mannān wa-tarḥamu ‘alayya fa-innaka anta al-raḥmān allāhumma innī as’aluka an taqabbala minhu du[‘ā’ahu] wa-ṣalātahu ... āmīn rabb al-‘ālamīn rabb mūsā wa-hārūn raḥima allāh man qara’ahu thumma qāla āmīn āmīn rabb ... al-‘azīz al-‘azīm wa-kataba ‘abd al-malik bn ‘umar yawm al-ithnayn li-thalāth baqīna min al-muḥarram min sanat ithnayn wa-tis‘īn allāhumma ighfir li- ... an yajtami’a baynī wa-baynahu fī al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirā* (I follow Imbert, “Inscriptions et espaces d’écriture,” pp. 404-405, whose reading is superior to previous attempts; however, he reads *tajtami’a bi-nabī wa-nabīhi*, which I suggest to emend to *yajtami’a baynī wa-baynahu*. The latter reading seems to be confirmed by the photograph of the inscription published at

- [awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/kasr.html](http://awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/kasr.html), which includes the two dots of the *yā'* of the word *baynahu*.)
- no. 40) 92 AH (probably), Qaşr Kharāna/Kharrāna, Jordan, graffito (in ink, last line illegible): [*bi-sm*] *allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm allāhumma ighfir li-‘abd al-malik bn ‘umar...*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; O God, forgive ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Umar...” (Imbert, “Inscriptions et espaces d’écriture,” p. 406).
- no. 41) 93 AH, Jabal Usays, Syria, graffito: *allāh lā ilāh illā huwa al-ḥayy al-qayyūm wa-kataba ‘alī bn ‘abd allāh fi shawwāl sanat thalāth wa-tis‘in*, “God — there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting; and ‘Alī bn ‘Abd Allāh wrote [this] in Shawwāl in the year ninety-three [AH = July-August 712 CE]” (al-‘Ushsh, “Kitābāt ‘arabiyya,” p. 241).
- no. 42) 96 AH, near Medina, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma ‘āfi ribāḥi bn ḥafṣ bn ‘āṣim bn ‘umar bn al-khaṭṭāb awṣā bi-birr<sup>205</sup> allāh wa-l-raḥim wa-kutiba/kataba fi sanat sitt [wa-]tis‘in*, “O God, efface [the sins of] Ribāḥi ibn Ḥafṣ ibn ‘Āṣim ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb; he urges devoutness towards God and relatives; and it was written/he wrote in the year ninety-six [AH = 714-5 CE]” (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya ghayr manshūra min ruwāwat al-Madīna*, pp. 83-86 dated this to 76 AH, but see Imbert, “L’Islam des pierres,” p. 61, n. 3, according to whom the date is more likely 96 AH, since the first tooth in the letter sequence indicating the decade is taller than the following three).
- no. 43) 98 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, poetic graffito (the slashes in the transliteration indicate the end of a hemistich of the poem; the case endings are given; the meter is *kāmil*): *afnā l-jadīda taqallubu l-shamsi / wa-ṭulū‘uhā min ḥaythu lā tumsi // wa-ṭulū‘uhā bayḍā’a ṣāfiyatan / wa-ghurūbuhā ṣafrā’a ka-l-warsi // wa-kataba abū ja‘far bn ḥasan al-hāshimī sanat thamān wa-tis‘in*, “New things are made to perish by the turning of the sun and its rising from where it is not in the evening; it rises bright and clear, and sets, pale like the [color of the] warsi plant; Abū Ja‘far ibn Ḥasan al-Hāshimī wrote [this] in the year ninety-eight [AH = 716-7 CE]” (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*,

<sup>205</sup> The original publication gives *bi-yad*, which does not yield very good sense, as the editor admits. Imbert 2011: 67 repeats the probably erroneous reading with other mistakes in the transliteration.

- pp. 60-66, with references to similar verses in the Arabic literary evidence).
- no. 44) 98 AH, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, graffito: Quotation of a part of Qurʾān 65:3, after which the inscription reads *wa-kataba umayya ibn ʿabd al-malik li-sanat thamān wa-tisʿin wa-huwa yasʿalu allāh al-janna*, “and Umayya ibn ʿAbd al-Malik wrote [this] in the year ninety-eight [AH = 716-7 CE] and he asks God for paradise” (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min Makka*, pp. 162-163).
- no. 45) 98 AH, Ghayl/Wādī al-Mandaj, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *rahma[t a]llāh ʿalā thābit ibn abī tamīm ṣāniʿ al-jirār wa-ʿalā ahlihi ajmaʿin āmin rabb al-ʿālamīn wa-kataba thābit yawm al-sabt fi ʿashr layāl khalawna min min [sic] jumādā al-ākhar min sanat thamān wa-tisʿin*, “God’s mercy be upon Thābit ibn abī Tamīm, maker of jars, and his whole family, amen, Lord of the world; and Thābit wrote [this] on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> of Jumādā II, in the year ninety-eight [AH = January 29, 717 CE]” (al-Thenayian, “Ghayl al-Mandaj”).
- no. 46) 98 AH, Cnidus, Turkey, graffito: *raḍḍā allāh ʿamaluka yā khaṭṭāb ibn ḥajar thumma al-ʿammī thumma al-ṣakhrī wa-katabtu kitābatī [sic] hādhā [ghaz]wa ... fi sanat thamān wa-tisʿin* (the reading of the names as well as other parts of the inscriptions is difficult because of damage to the stone; Imbert, “Graffiti arabes de Cnide et de Kos,” pp. 734-736)
- no. 47) 98 AH, Cos, Greece, graffito: *al-ḥakam bi-llāh wāthiq fi al-muḥarram sanat thamān wa-tisʿin wa-kataba makhlūf*, “Al-Ḥakam trusts in God; in al-Muḥarram in the year ninety-eight [AH = August-September 716]; and Makhlūf wrote [this]” (Imbert, “Graffiti arabes de Cnide et de Kos,” pp. 749-750).
- no. 48) 99 AH, Cos, Greece, graffito (very damaged): ... *ʿaṭāʾ bn saʿd al... mushrikīn fi ghazwa ... sanat tisʿ wa-tisʿin naṣr allāh wa-l-faṭḥ al-ʿaẓīm ...* (Imbert, “Graffiti arabes de Cnide et de Kos,” pp. 746-747).
- no. 49) 100 AH, Abū Ṭāqa, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *bi-sm allāh naḥnu ʿanazat al-azd ḥajjunā sanat miʿa nasʿalu allāh al-janna nuzulan* (al-Kilābī, *Al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*, pp. 72-73, including a discussion of the tribal group ʿAnaza ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿAuf ibn ʿAdī ibn ʿAmr ibn Māzin ibn al-Azd).

- no. 50) 100 AH, southern Jordan, graffito: *allāh āmīn ghafara li-dāwud/duwād/dhawwād bn muṣṭafā bn ‘alī min dhanbihi sanat mi’a*, “May God — amen — forgive Dāwud/Duwād/Dhawwād ibn Muṣṭafā ibn ‘Alī his sins, in the year one hundred [AH = 718-9 CE]” (Karīm, “Nuqūsh islāmiyya ta’ūdu li-l-‘aṣrayn al-umawī wa-l-‘abbāsī,” pp. 297-298).
- no. 51) 100 AH, southeastern Jordan, graffito: *ghafara allāh li-ziyād bn jābir maghfirat ahl al-janna sanat mi’a*, “May God forgive Ziyād ibn Jābir like the people of paradise; in the year one hundred [AH = 718-9 CE]” (Karīm, *Nuqūsh islāmiyya du‘ā’iyya*, pp. 196-200).
- no. 52) 100 AH, southeastern Jordan, graffito: *hishām bn ra’d bn mu‘adh bn amīn bn ja’far bn ‘ammār bn ‘imād bn ‘umar bn ‘ammār al-bāhili sanat mi’a maghfira wa-‘āfiya*, “Hishām ibn Ra’d ibn Mu‘adh ibn Amīn ibn Ja’far ibn ‘Ammār ibn ‘Imād ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Ammār al-Bāhili; in the year one hundred [AH = 718-9 CE]; forgiveness and health” (note the absence of all verbs and the long lineage going supposedly back to pre-Islamic times; Karīm, *Nuqūsh islāmiyya du‘ā’iyya*, pp. 236-241).
- no. 53) 100 AH, near Medina, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *āmana abū salama bn ‘ubayd allāh bn ‘abd allāh bn ‘umar bi-llāh al-‘azīm wa-kutiba/kataba sanat mi’a*, “Abū Salama ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar believes in God, the Great; and it was written/he wrote in the year one hundred [AH = 718-9 CE]” (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya ghayr manshūra min ruwāwat al-Madīna* pp. 98-100).
- no. 54) 100 AH, Wādī al-Furaysh, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma ‘āfi sulaym/salīm bn ḥafṣ bn ‘āṣim bn ḥafṣ al-ṣadafi/al-ṣadaqī fi al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirā wa-yawm yamūtu wa-yawm yub‘athu ḥayyan wa-‘āfihi fi dīnihi wa-fi jasadīhi wa-fi amrihi wa-ighfir lahu dhanbahu mā taqaddama wa-mā ta’akhhara āmīn rabb al-‘ālamīn raḥima allāh man qāla āmīn wa-kutiba/kataba fi sanat mi’a*, “O God, pardon Sulaym/Salīm ibn Ḥafṣ ibn ‘Āṣim ibn Ḥafṣ al-Ṣadafi/al-Ṣadaqī in this world and the next and on the day he dies and the day he is resurrected [Qur’ān 19:15]; and pardon him in his religion and in his body and in his matter; forgive him his earlier and later sins, amen, Lord of the world; may God have mercy on who says ‘amen’; and it was written/he wrote in the year

- one hundred [AH = 718-9 CE]" (al-Thenayian, *Nuqūsh al-qarn al-hijrī al-awwal*, pp. 101-102).
- no. 55) 100 AH, Jabal Usays, Syria, damaged graffito: *allāhumma ighfir ... sanat mi'a*, "O God, forgive ... in the year one hundred [AH = 718-9 CE]" (al-Ushsh, "Kitabāt 'arabiyya," p. 232).
- no. 56) 100 AH? (reportedly, but I do not know the basis of this claim since there is no date in the inscription), Khirbat Niṭil, Jordan, epitaph?: *allāhumma ighfir li-'abd al-'azīz bn al-ḥārith bn al-ḥakam mā taqaddama min dhanbihi wa-mā ta'akhhara wa-'arrif baynahu wa-bayna dhurriyyatihi fī mustaqarr min raḥmatika wa-aqī[mhu 'alā] ḥawḍ muḥammad ...*, "O God, forgive 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn al-Ḥārith ibn al-Ḥakam his earlier and later sins; and make him and his offspring known in an abode of Your mercy and place him at the pool of Muḥammad ..." (Musil, "Zwei arabische Inschriften"; Gruendler, *The development*, p. 21).
- no. 57) 101 AH, al-Ṣuwaydira, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *thiqatī bi-llāh wa-rajā'ī/raj'ī* [written r-j-y] *wa-kataba 'abd al-ḥamīd bn sālīm fī sanat ihdā wa-mi'a*, "My trust and hope is in God; and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Sālīm wrote in the year one hundred and one [AH = 719-720 CE]" (al-Rāshid, *al-Ṣuwaydira*, 420-421).
- no. 58) 102 AH, Aswān, Egypt, epitaph: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm tabāraka alladhī bi-yadihi al-mulk wa-huwa 'alā kull shay' qadīr hādihā qabr fāṭima ibnat al-ḥasan bn ... raḥmat allāh wa-maghfiratuhu wa-riḍwānuhu 'alayhi* [sic] *tuwuffiya* [sic] *yawm al-ithnayn awwal yawm min sha'bān min sanat ithnayn wa-mi'a*, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; blessed be He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things powerful [Qur'ān 67:1]; this is the grave of Fāṭima bint al-Ḥasan bn ..., may God's mercy and forgiveness and acceptance be upon him [sic]; he [sic] died on Monday, the first day of Sha'bān in the year one hundred and two [AH = February 4, 721 CE, actually a Tuesday]" ('Abd al-Tawab, *Stèles islamiques*, p. 2).
- no. 59) 102 AH, Buṣrā, Syria, building inscription (damaged): *... [hādhihi al-mi']dhanat* [sic] *wa-qāma 'alā ṣan'atihi al-ḥārith ibn ... sanat ithnayn wa-mi'a wa-kataba al-ḥārith ...*, "... this minaret; and al-Ḥārith ibn ...

- oversaw the making of it ... in the year one hundred and two [AH = 720-1 CE]; and al-Ḥārith wrote ...” (Sauvaget, “Les inscriptions arabes de la mosquée de Bosra”, p. 54).
- no. 60) 104 AH, al-Muwaqqar, Jordan, building inscription in three parts: i. *allāhumma ṣallī ‘alā muḥammad ‘abdika rasūl allāh*, “O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant, the Messenger of God”; ii. *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm amara bi-bunyān hādhihi al-birka ‘abd allāh yaz[id] amīr al-mu’minīn aṣlahahu allāh wa-ḥafizahu wa-madda lahu fī al-‘umr wa-l-yusr wa-atamma ‘alayhi ni‘matahu wa-karāmatahu fī al-dunyā wa-l-ākḥira buniyat ‘alā yaday ‘abd allāh bn sulaym*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; the servant of God Yazīd [II], the Commander of the Believers, ordered the building of this pool, may God keep him pious and preserve him and prolong his life and ease and make His favor and bounty upon him full in this world and the next; and it [the pool] was built under the supervision of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sulaym”; iii. *sanat arba’ [wa-mi]’a*, “In the year one hundred and four [AH = 722-3 CE]” (Hamilton, “An eighth-century water-gauge”; Mayer, “Note on the inscription”).
- no. 61) 105 AH, Wādī Salma, Jordan, graffito: *allāhumma ghāfir al-dhanb wa-qābil al-tawba shadīd al-‘iqāb dhū al-tawl lā ilāh illā anta ighfir li-thawāba bn ‘uthmān al-ṣarmī dhanbahu mā taqaddama minhu wa-mā ta’akḥkhara wa-ij’al al-janna ma’ābahu wa-l-mu’minīn aṣḥābahu innaka anta al-samī‘ al-‘alīm ghafara allāh li-man qara’ a hādḥā al-kitāb thumma qāla āmīn rabb al-‘ālamīn wa-kutiba/kataba yawm al-jum’a fī jumādā al-ākḥar sanat khamsa wa-mi’ a*, “O God, the One forgiving sin and accepting repentance, severe in punishment, powerful [cf. Qur’ān 40: 1-3], there is no God but You; forgive Thawāba ibn ‘Uthmān al-Ṣarmī his earlier and later sins; and make paradise his place of return and believers his friends; You are Hearing, All-Knowing; may God forgive who recites this inscription and then says ‘amen, Lord of the world’; it was written/he wrote on Friday, Jumādā II, in the year one hundred and five [AH = November-December 723 CE]” (al-Jbour, “Arabic inscriptions,” p. 674).
- no. 62) 107 AH, Wādī al-Gharra, Jordan, graffito: *raḍiya allāh ‘an aqraf ibn murr bn riḍā lā ashraḥu aḥadan wa-lā [tāghūt] wadd wa-hubal [sic?*



written *h-ā-b-l*] *āmīn yā rabb al-muslimīn allāh sab‘ wa-mi’a*, “May God be pleased with Aqraf ibn Murr ibn Riḏā; I do not associate anything [to Him], and not the false deities of Wadd and Hubal; amen, O Lord of the Muslims, God; [in the year?] one hundred and seven [AH = 725-6 CE]” (the reading given in Karīm, “Naqsh kūfī” seems problematic and the photograph is very poor; here I have tried to give a better interpretation on the basis of the tracing but I admit that this reading, too, is somewhat conjectural).

- no. 63) 108 AH, southeastern Jordan, graffito: the interpretation given by the editor is highly suspect, so the text is not reproduced here in full. The graffito starts with a petition for forgiveness, *allāhumma ighfir li-*, followed by the names of two or three different individuals. It might be a case of a number of graffiti written amidst each other but interpreted by the editor as one. The text ends: *yas’alu allāh jannata[hu] (?) sanat thamān wa-mi’a kataba zayd bn ‘ammār*, “he asks God for His paradise in the year one hundred and eight [AH = 726-7 CE]; Zayd ibn ‘Ammār wrote [this]” (Karīm, *Nuqūsh islāmiyya du‘ā’iyya*, pp. 252-258).
- no. 64) 108 AH, Jabal Usays, Syria, graffito: *allāh walī al-mukhawwal bn ‘ammār wa-kutiba/kataba fī shahr rabī‘ al-ākhir sanat thamān [wa-]mi’a*], “God is the patron of al-Mukhawwal ibn ‘Ammār; and it was written/he wrote in the month of Rabī‘ II in the year one hundred and eight [AH = August-September 726 CE]” (al-‘Ushsh, “Kitabāt ‘arabiyya,” p. 299).
- no. 65) 109 AH, Wādī Shīra, Jordan, graffito: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm allāhumma taqabbal min ‘abd al-‘alā’ bn sa‘īd ṣalātahu wa-ṣawmahu wa-ḥfaẓhu fī ahlihi wa-khluḥu fī [safari]hi wa-aṣliḥhu innaka ‘alā [kull shay’ qa]dīr ṣallā allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallama wa-aslama ‘alayhi wa-raḥmat allāh wa-barakātuhu wa-kutiba/kataba fī ramadān sanat tis‘ wa-mi’a*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; O God, accept from ‘Abd al-‘Alā’ ibn Sa‘īd his prayer and his fast; and preserve him in his family and be a replacement [among his family] for him during his travel; and keep him pious; You are over all things powerful; may God bless him and grant and give him peace; and may the mercy and blessings of God be [upon him]; and it was written/he wrote in

- Ramaḍān in the year one hundred and nine [AH = December 727-January 728 CE]" (Hoyland, "The content and context," p. 97; Bqā'in, Corbett, and Khamis, "An Umayyad era mosque," pp. 114-115; my reading differs slightly from the two).
- no. 66) 109 AH, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, Syria, building inscription: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm lā ilāh illā allāh waḥdahu lā sharik lahu amara bi-ṣan'at hādhā al-ʿamal ʿabd allāh hishām amīr al-muʾminīn awjaba allāh ajrahu ʿumila ʿalā yaday thābit bn abī thābit fī rajab sanat tisʿ wa-miʿa*, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; there is no god but God alone, He has no partners; the servant of God Hishām, the Commander of the Believers, ordered this work, may God grant him reward; it was made under the supervision of Thābit ibn abī Thābit in Rajab in the year one hundred and nine [AH = October-November 727 CE]" (RCEA, vol. 1, no. 27).
- no. 67) 109 AH, Petra, Jordan, graffito: *[allā]humma ighfir li-sulaymān bn maḥmūd dhanbahu wa-kutiba/kataba fī shahr rabīʿ al-ākhir [sa]na[t] tisʿ wa-miʿa*, "O God, forgive Sulaymān ibn Maḥmūd his sins; and it was written/he wrote in the month of Rabīʿ II, in the year one hundred and nine [AH = July-August 727 CE]" (Salamen, "Early Islamic inscriptions," pp. 73-74).
- no. 68) 110 AH, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, Syria, building inscription: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm [lā] ilāh illā allāh waḥdahu lā sharik lahu [mu]ḥammad rasūl allāh amara bi-ṣan'at hādhīhi al-madīna ʿabd allāh hishām [a]mīr al-muʾminīn wa-kāna hādhā mim mā ʿamila ahl ḥims ʿalā yaday sulaymān bn ʿubayd sanat ʿashr wa-miʿa* (Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil*, pp. 285-293).
- no. 69) 110 AH, Palmyra, Syria, graffito: *tarahḥama/yarḥamu [allāh/rabbī] ʿabd al-ṣamad bn ʿubayd wa- [sic? or bn?] muḥammad bn yazīd mā taqaddama min dhanbihi wa-mā taʿakhhara wa-kutiba/kataba fī sanat ʿashr wa-miʿa raḥīma allāh man qaraʿa wa-man qāla āmīn [written ā-m-y-y-n]*, "May God/my Lord have mercy on ʿAbd al-Ṣamad ibn ʿUbayd and/ibn Muḥammad ibn Yazīd [on account of] his earlier and later sins; and it was written/he wrote in the year one hundred and ten [AH = 728-9 CE]" (Sauvaget, "Les inscriptions arabes de Palmyre," p. 51)

- no. 70) 110 AH, Wādī Khushayba, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *shahida ṣāliḥ bn abī al-yamāmī/al-tammāmī anna allāh lā ilāh illā allāh ... rabbuhu muḥibban (?) allāhumma uktub ... shahida bi-hi ‘abd wa-kataba fī sanat ‘ashr wa-mi’a*, “Ṣāliḥ ibn abī al-Yamāmī/al-Tammāmī testifies that God — there is no god but God ... his Lord, lovingly; O God, decree ...; a slave testified it and wrote in the year one hundred and ten [AH = 728-9 CE]” (Kawatoko, Tokunaga, and Iizuka, *Ancient and Islamic rock inscriptions*, pp. 16-17).
- no. 71) 110 AH, southeastern Jordan, epitaph: *rabbī allāh taraḥḥama/yarḥamu ‘adī bn ṣadr (?) [bn] ‘abd al-malik bn ja‘far tuwuffiya al-aḥad sanat ‘ashr wa-mi’a*, “May God, my Lord, have mercy on ‘Adī ibn Ṣadr (?) ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Ja‘far, who died on Sunday in the year one hundred and ten [AH = 728-9 CE]” (Karīm, *Nuqūsh islāmiyya du‘ā’iyya*, pp. 22-30).
- no. 72) 110 AH, southern Jordan, graffito: *li-llāh yasjudu kāhil bn ‘alī bn aktham wa-bi-llāh tawakkala wa-yas’alu allāh ji[hā]dan fī sabīlihi wa-ḥajja sanat ‘ashr wa-mi’a ghafara allāh lahu* (the editor, Karīm, “Nuqūsh islāmiyya ta‘ūdu li-l-‘aṣrayn al-umawī wa-l-‘abbāsī,” pp. 298-299, reads *wa-yas’alu allāh ḥamdan fī sabīlihi*, which I find somewhat unlikely, so I emend *ḥamdan* to *jihādan*, cf. 117 AH graffito from Negev, below).
- no. 73) 111 AH, Aswān, Egypt, epitaph: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm qul huwa allāh aḥad allāh al-ṣamad lam yalid wa-lam yūlad wa-lam yakun lahu kufu’an aḥad hādhā qabr ... raḥmat allāh wa-maghfiratuhu wa-riḍwānuhu ‘alayhi tuwuffiya yawm al-arbi‘ā’ li-thalāth layāl khalat min al-muḥarram sanat aḥad ‘ashr mi’a sana [sic]*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; say: ‘He, God, is One, God, the Eternal; He has not begotten nor born [Qur’ān 112]; this is the grave of ... [name illegible], may God’s mercy and forgiveness and acceptance be upon him; he died on Wednesday, the third of al-Muḥarram in the year one hundred and eleven [AH = April 7, 729 CE, actually a Thursday]” (Wiet, *Catalogue*, p. 2).
- no. 74) 112 AH, Negev, Israel, graffito: *allāhumma [ighfir] li-l-ward bn sālim mā taqaddama min dha[n]bihi wa-mā ta’akhhara wa-atimma ni‘mataka ‘alayhi wa-ihdihi ṣirāṭ [sic] mustaqīman āmin [sic] rabb al-‘ālamīn rabb*

*mūsā wa-hārūān* [sic] *wa-li-man qara'a* [written *q-r-y*] *wa-li-man qā[la]* *āmīn kutiba/kataba fi [...]* [sanat] *thāniya 'ashara wa-mi'a 'al* [sic] *khilāfat hishām*, “O God, forgive al-Ward ibn Sālim his earlier and later sins; and may your favor upon him be full; and guide him to the straight path; amen, Lord of the world, Lord of Moses and Aaron; and [forgive] who recites [this inscription] and says ‘amen’; it was written/he wrote in ... in the year one hundred and twelve [AH = 730-1 CE] during the caliphate of Hishām” (there are some orthographic peculiarities in this inscription; see Nevo, Cohen, and Heftman, *Ancient Arabic inscriptions*, p. 18, no. SC 305(3); Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 3, p. 179, reads the date as 119 AH but the published photograph is not clear enough to ascertain this).

- no. 75) 113 AH, Jabal Usays, Syria, graffito: *allāhumma aṣliḥ 'abdaka ḥafṣ bn 'abd allāh wa-kutiba/kataba fi dhī al-qa'da sanat thalāth 'ashara wa-mi'a*, “O God, keep pious your servant Ḥafṣ ibn 'Abd Allāh; and it was written/he wrote in Dhū al-Qa'da in the year one hundred and thirteen [AH = January-February 732 CE]” (al-'Ushsh, “Kitabāt 'arabiyya,” p. 361).
- no. 76) 117 AH, Negev, Israel, graffito: *bi-sm allāh al-rahmān al-rahīm allāhumma i[ghfi]r li-ḥasan bn maysara wa-li-wālidayhi wa-mā waladā āmīn rabb muḥammad wa-ibrāhīm allāhumma ij'al 'amalī jihādan wājiban wa-aqnī/wāfinī* [? reading uncertain] *istishhād* [sic] *fi sabilika wa-kataba ḥasan yawm al-thalā[th]a fi thamān baqīna min rabī' a[l-a]wwal wa-fīhi tuwuffū banī* [sic] *ḥā[ti]m yarḥamuhum allāh jamī'an wa-huwa fi sanat sab'at 'ashara wa-mi'a*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; O God, forgive Ḥasan ibn Maysara and his parents and their offspring; amen Lord of Muḥammad and Abraham; O God, make my deeds obligatory *jihād* and grant martyrdom in Your path; and Ḥasan wrote [this] on Tuesday, Rabī' I 22, in which died Banū Ḥātīm, may God have mercy on them all; and it was in the year one hundred and seventeen [AH = April 21, 735 CE, actually a Thursday]” (Nevo, Cohen, and Heftman, *Ancient Arabic inscriptions*, p. 21, no. HS 3155-56(6); I follow here, for the most part, Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 3, pp. 179-180).

- no. 77) 117 AH, Madīna, Egypt, graffito: *basmala*, followed by passages from the Qurʾān (41:40, 3:89-92), then: *wa-kataba malik bn kathīr fī rajab sanat sabʿat ʿashara wa-miʿa*, “and Malik ibn Kathīr wrote in Rajab in the year one hundred and seventeen [AH = July-August 735 CE]” (RCEA, vol. 1, no. 30).
- no. 78) 119 AH, Jabal Usays, Syria, graffito: *rabbī allāh wa-dīnī al-islām ʿalayhi tawakkaltu wa-ilyahi unību wa-ilyahi al-maṣīr wa-kataba ḥafṣ fī dhī al-qaʿda* [mistakenly written *al-ʿq-d-h*] *sanat tisʿ ʿashara wa-miʿa man maḥāhu ajzāhu allāh fī al-ākhirā āmīn*, “My Lord is God and my religion is Islam; upon Him I rely and to Him I turn [Qurʾān 11:88] and to Him is the returning [Qurʾān 40:3]; Ḥafṣ wrote in Dhū al-Qaʿda in the year one hundred and nineteen [AH = October-November 737]; may God recompense [i.e. punish] in the afterlife who erases it [the inscription], amen” (al-ʿUshsh, “Kitābāt ʿarabiyya,” pp. 290-291).
- no. 79) 120 AH, near Medina, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *anā ʿuthmān bn ḥafṣ ūminu bi-llāh al-ʿazīm wa-kutiba fī sanat ʿishrīn wa-miʿa*, “I, ʿUthmān ibn Ḥafṣ, believe in God, the Great; and it was written in the year one hundred and twenty [AH = 737-8 CE]” (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya ghayr manshūra min ruwāwat al-Madīnat*, pp. 101-102).
- no. 80) 120 AH, Beit Sheʿan/Baysān, Israel, building inscription in two parts (a mosaic inscription): i.) [*bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*] *lā ilāh illā allāh waḥdahu [lā] sharīk [lahu muḥamma]d rasūl allāh*; b) *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm amara bi-hādhā al-bunyān ʿabd allāh hishām amīr al-muʿminīn ʿalā yaday al-amīr ishāq bn qabiṣa wa-fī sanat [ʿishrīn] wa-miʿa*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; there is no god but God alone, He has no partners; Muḥammad is the messenger of God;” ii.) “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; the servant of God Hishām, the Commander of the Believers, ordered the [the building of] these buildings under the supervision of the governor Ishāq ibn Qabiṣa; and [this] in the year one hundred and twenty [AH = 737-8 CE]” (Khamis, “Two wall mosaic inscriptions,” with a discussion of the date).
- no. 81) 121 AH, near Medina, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *tāba allāh ʿalā ʿabd allāh bn ʿumar bn ḥafṣ wa-kutiba/kataba sanat ihdā wa-ʿishrīn wa-miʿa*, “May God accept the repentance of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn Ḥafṣ; and it

- was written/he wrote in the year one hundred and twenty-one [AH = 738-9 CE]" (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya ghayr manshūra min ruwāwat al-Madīna*, pp. 56-58, with a discussion of the individual mentioned).
- no. 82) 121 AH, near Medina, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *tāba allāh ‘alā ‘āṣim bn ‘umar bn ḥafṣ wa-kutiba/kataba sanat ihdā wa-‘ishrīn wa-[mi]’a*, "May God accept the repentance of ‘Āṣim ibn ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣ; and it was written/he wrote in the year one hundred and twenty-one [AH = 738-9 CE]" (al-Rāshid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya ghayr manshūra min ruwāwat al-Madīna*, pp. 93-95, with a discussion of the individual mentioned).
- no. 83) 121 AH, Muwaysin, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *bi-sm allāh al-rahmān al-rahīm allāhumma ighfir li-l-ḥārith bn ṣāghir mā taqaddama min dhanbihi wa-mā ta’akhhara āmin thumma āmin rabb muḥammad wa-ibrāhīm rabb al-‘ālamīn wa-kutiba/kataba fi wāhida wa-‘ishrīn wa-mi’a sa[n]a inna al-ḥukm li-llāh*, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; O God, forgive Ḥārith ibn Ṣāghir his earlier and later sins; amen, once again amen, Lord of Muḥammad and Abraham, Lord of the world; and it was written/he wrote in one hundred and twenty-one year; judgment belongs to God" (al-Muaikel, *Critical study*, vol. 1, pp. 155-157; al-Muaikel, *Study*, pp. 139-141).
- no. 84) 121 AH (probably), Muwaysin, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma ighfir li-l-ḥārith ibn ṣāghir wa-li-zawjatihi wa-kataba wa-huwa yas’alu allāh al-ghifra/al-[ma]ghfira*, "O God, forgive Ḥārith ibn Ṣāghir and his wife; and he wrote while asking God for forgiveness" (al-Muaikel, *Critical study*, vol. 1, pp. 158-159; al-Muaikel, *Study*, pp. 141-142).
- no. 85) 121 AH (probably), Muwaysin, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *allāhumma ighfir<sup>206</sup> li-l-ḥārith ibn ṣāghir wa-rḍa ‘anhu*, "O God, forgive Ḥārith ibn Ṣāghir and be content with him" (al-Muaikel, *Critical study*, vol. 1, pp. 159-160; al-Muaikel, *Study*, pp. 142-143).
- no. 86) 122 AH, Hammat Gader, Israel, graffito (beginning missing): *... tanazzalnā fi hādhihi al-ḥammām yawm al-khamīs mustahall rabī’ al-awwal sanat ithnay wa-‘ishrīn wa-mi’a*, "... We stayed in this bath house on Thursday, the beginning of Rabī’ I, in the year one hundred and twenty-two [AH = February 4, 740 CE]" (Sharon, *Corpus*, vol. 5, p. 288).

<sup>206</sup> A later hand has added *lā*, "not," before the word *ighfir*.

- no. 87) 123 AH, ‘Ayn al-Jarr/‘Anjar, Lebanon, graffito: *tarahḥama allāh ‘alā al-qāsim bn hilāl al... wa-raḍiya ‘anhu wa-‘āfāhu min sharr yawm al-ḥisāb wa-ṣallā allāh ‘alā ‘āmmat al-muslimīn wa-adkhalahum jannāt al-na‘īm wa-kutiba/kataba fī rajab sanat thalāth wa-‘ishrīn wa-mi’a*, “May God have mercy on al-Qāsim ibn Hilāl al... and may He be pleased with him and may He efface evil off him on the Day of Reckoning; and may God bless all Muslims and let them enter Gardens of delight; and it was written/he wrote in Rajab in the year one hundred and twenty-three [AH = May-June 741]” (Ory, “Les graffiti umayyades,” p. 100).
- no. 88) 105-125 AH, near al-Suwaydā’, Syria, building inscription: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm lā ilāh illā allāh waḥdahu lā sharīk lahu muḥammad rasūl allāh amara bi-ṣan‘at hādhihi al-birka ‘abd allāh hishām amīr al-[mu?]minīn aṣlahahu allāh ‘alā yad[ay] ‘ammār...*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; there is no god but God alone, He has no partners; Muḥammad is the messenger of God; the servant of God, Hishām, the Commander of the Believers, may God keep him pious, ordered the building of this pool under the supervision of ‘Ammār...” (Rihaoui, “Découverte”).
- no. 89) 105-125 AH, Quṣayr ‘Amra, Jordan, damaged painted monumental inscription: *allāhu[mma] a[ṣ]liḥ (?) walī [‘a]hd al-muslimīm wa-l-muslimāt ... ‘āfiya min allāh wa-ra[h]m[a]*, “O God, keep pious the heir apparent of male and female Muslims ... pardon from God and mercy” (Imbert, “Le prince al-Walīd,” p. 340).
- no. 90) 105-125 AH, Quṣayr ‘Amra, Jordan, damaged painted monumental inscription: *allāhumma bārik ‘alā al-amīr kamā bārakta [‘alā] dāw[ūd] wa-]ibrāhīm wa-āl millatihi ... rasūluhu ...*, “O God, bless the amīr as you have blessed David and Abraham and the people of his community ... His messenger ...” (Vibergt-Guigue, Bisheh, and Imbert, *Les peintures de Qusayr ‘Amra*, p. 46 and plate 84c; Imbert, “Le prince al-Walīd,” p. 342).
- no. 91) 105-125 AH, Quṣayr ‘Amra, Jordan, damaged, but restored, painted monumental inscription: *allāhumma aṣliḥ al-walīd bn yazīd bi-l-ṣalāhiyya ... l-h-q [lahiqa or li-ḥaqq?] al-ṣāliḥīn wa-aḥiṭhu [sic] bi-burd [ra]ḥimihi/[ra]ḥmatin yā walī al-‘ālamīn li-ummatihi [khālidan] (?) ... al-*

- milla yawm ... jamī' ...* “O God, keep al-Walīd ibn Yazīd pious with piety... may he meet/for the reward of (?) the pious and surround him with the garment of his relatives/mercy, O Master of the World, for his/His community forever ... the religion on the day of ... all ...” (Imbert, “Le prince al-Walīd,” p. 332).
- no. 92) 105-125 AH, Quṣayr ‘Amra, Jordan, damaged painted monumental Graeco-Arabic inscription on a mural: *qayṣa[r] [rudhari]q ki[s]rā [al-najā]shī*, “Caesar; Ruderic; Khosrow; Negus” (Imbert, “Le prince al-Walīd,” p. 344-346).
- no. 93) 105-125 AH, Quṣayr ‘Amra, Jordan, damaged painted monumental inscription: *bi-s[m] allāh al-raḥmān al-ra[ḥīm] lā il[āh illā] allāh waḥda[hu] lā shar[īk la]hu ... allāh ... allāh ...*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; there is no god but God alone, He has no partners; ... God ... God ...” (Imbert, “Le prince al-Walīd,” p. 337).
- no. 94) 127 AH, ‘Asīr, Saudi Arabia, graffito: *shahida ‘abd al-malik ibn ‘abd al-raḥmān anna allāh ḥaqq lā ilāh illā huwa al-ḥayy al-qayyūm wa-kutiba/kataba fī al-muḥarram sanat sab‘ wa-‘ishrīn wa-mi’a la‘ana allāh man maḥā hādhā al-kitāb aw ghayyarahu āmīn*, “‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān testifies that God is truth, there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting; and it was written/he wrote in al-Muḥarram in the year one hundred and twenty-seven [AH = October-November 744 CE]; may God curse whoever erases this inscription or changes it, amen” (the reading given by the editor, al-Rāshid, *Mudawwanāt khaṭṭiyya*, pp. 60-61, omits some words, but I supply the missing words in my reading on the basis of the photograph of the inscription in al-Rāshid’s book).
- no. 95) 128 AH, Buṣrā, Syria, building inscription: *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm mim mā amara bi-hi al-amīr ‘uthmān bn al-ḥakam a‘azza allāh naṣrahu [sanat] thamān wa-‘ishrīn wa-mi’a*, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; [this is] what the governor ‘Uthmān ibn al-Ḥakam, may God make [His] help towards him strong, ordered [to be built], in the year one hundred and twenty-eight [AH = 745-6 CE]” (Sauvaget, “Les inscriptions arabes de la mosquée de Bosra,” pp. 56-57).



- no. 96) 131 AH, southeastern Jordan, epitaph: *tuwuffi[yat] al-ḥujja mālā bint [‘ibā]d [bn] ma‘n bn murr [layla]t al-sabt wāhid wa-mi’a [wa-]thalāthīn sana allāh allāhumma ighfir la-hā āmin*, “The Proof [of God/religion] Mālā bint ‘Ibād ibn Ma‘n ibn Murr died on Saturday, year one hundred and thirty-one [AH = 748-9 CE]; God, O God, forgive her, amen” (the name of the deceased person is unusual and probably incorrectly given but since the published photograph is unclear, I follow the editor, Karīm, *Nuqūsh islāmiyya du‘ā’iyya*, pp. 38-44).
- no. 97) 131 AH, southeastern Jordan, graffito: *[gha]fara allāh [li-]mu‘ādh bn ‘umar [wa-li-l-]muslimīn wa-li-ma[n qāla āmin] ... layāl li-dhī al-ḥijja sanat wāhid wa-thalāthīn wa-mi’a*, “May God forgive Mu‘ādh ibn ‘Umar and the Muslims and who says ‘amen’ ... days of Dhū al-Ḥijja in the year one hundred and thirty-one [AH = 748-9 CE]” (Karīm, *Nuqūsh islāmiyya du‘ā’iyya*, pp. 355-358).

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