Ṯamūd: Reading traditions: the Arabic grammatical tradition; and the Quranic text

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Ṯamūd: Reading Traditions; the Arabic Grammatical Tradition; and the Quranic Text

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1 Introduction

The holy text of the Muslims, the Quran, consists of two main components. The first component is the written consonantal text transmitted with little to no change from the 7th century up until today. And second there is the oral recitation—which comes in the form of several reading traditions. These two layers operate to some extent independent of each other. Both the written and the oral tradition are considered sacrosanct.

When dealing with the development of languages of large literary corpora where oral tradition has played an important role in its transmission, we are often confronted with multiple linguistic layers that are the result of interaction of a written text with an oral tradition, where only some parts of the grammar have been updated to reflect innovations, while others remain unchanged. This article will examine one such an example of an interaction between the written form of the Quran and its oral recitation. The focus of the present discussion is the grammatical treatment of the tribal name *Ṯamūd*. This word exhibits a spelling in the sacrosanct Quranic text which is difficult to reconcile with the grammatical norms of the language the Quran is recited in today. I will examine how the different reading traditions of the Quran interact with the written text in this conflict.

The oral performance of the Quran is an important aspect of religious life to Muslims. Recitation of the Quran plays a central role in Islamic prayers, and its memorization and proper pronunciation is an important part of religious practice. While there is a strong focus on the oral aspect of the Quran, the written form of the Quran is also considered sacrosanct. From the remarkable consistency of contents and orthography across all early Quranic manuscripts, it is clear that these documents stem from a single original archetype.[1] Evidence of carbon-dated manuscripts shows that it cannot have been codified later than

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[1] On the archetype of the Quranic text, see Van Putten (2019). The only text that does not belong to this archetype, as argued by Sadeghi and Goudarzi (2012) and Sadeghi and Bergmann

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the second half of the 7th century, which is mere decades after Muhammad's lifetime. Traditionally, the standard text is said to have been codified by Uthman, the third Caliph, whose reign lasted from 644 CE until his assassination in 656 CE. This standard text is often referred to as the Uthmanic codex. While the exact details and historicity of the recension of Uthman are up for debate, most scholars agree that Uthman played an important role in the codification of the Quran (*EI*, s.v. Uthman), and the evidence we find in the manuscripts is consistent with the traditional Muslim account.

Today, the Quran is recited in Classical Arabic, the most important language of literature, poetry and science from the first centuries of the Islamic period until today.[2] Classical Arabic is very archaic, but it was quite likely already an artificial literary register when it was first codified by the Arab grammarians at the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century CE.[3]

The Quranic text, however, differs significantly from Classical Arabic both orthographically and linguistically.[4] This suggests that the recitation of the Quran has been 'classicized' in its reading traditions. The disconnect between the language of the Uthmanic codex on the one hand and the classical reading traditions adhering to Classical Arabic grammar on the other, occasionally leads to grammatical conflicts.

One such locus of a grammatical conflict may be found with the grammatical treatment of the word *Ṯamūd*. *Ṯamūd* refers to an ancient Arabian tribe that is well-attested in the Pre-Islamic epigraphic record[5] but had disappeared by the rise of the Islam (*EI*, s.v. *Thamūd*). The Quran references it several times as a civilization that was destroyed because of their transgressions against God. *Ṯamūd* is often mentioned in combination with *Ṣād*, another ancient tribe frequently

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(2010), is the lower text of the Sanaa Palimpsest, which differs in many significant ways from all other Quranic codices, and may with reason be considered an alternate version of the text that perhaps even predates the Uthmanic standardization.

2   Although these reading traditions show significant, especially phonological, deviations from what eventually becomes the normative pronunciations.

3   For an introduction to the history of the Arabic grammatical tradition see Carter (2011).

4   Several recent studies have examined the language of the Quran as reflected in the Quranic text, e.g. Van Putten (2017a), Al-Jallad (2017), Van Putten (2017b) and Van Putten and Stokes (2018). These studies do not take the much later addition of the vowel signs as necessarily reflecting the language of the Quran, and instead try to deduce what the language would have looked like, working from the only part that was present at the time of its codification: the consonantal skeleton. For a detailed study of the history of Quranic Arabic from its Hijazi origins to its reading traditions, see Van Putten (2022).

5   E.g. in the Safaitic inscription WH 3792.1 *l ntn bn ʾdm bn ʾqdm bn qʿṣn w wrd t̲l̲t̲t̲ ʾs²hr s¹nt ḥrb g{s²}m ʾl **t̲md*** 'By Ntn son of ʾdm son of ʾqdm son of Qʿṣn and he went to water for three months in the year that G{s²}m and the people of **Ṯamūd** made war.' (Al-Jallad 2015, 292).

mentioned in the Quran (*EI*, s.v. *ʿĀd*). In Classical Arabic grammar, the word *Ṯamūd* generally belongs to a morphological category of nouns known as 'diptotes', to be distinguished from the more common 'triptotes'; this is, however, in disagreement with the Quranic text which appears to treat it as a triptote. I will now first introduce the basic distinction between 'triptotes' and 'diptotes'.

2   Triptotes and Diptotes

Classical Arabic grammar knows two kinds of inflection for nouns. On the one hand, we have the class of triptotes, which is the most common class of nouns. It shows three different case forms, regardless of whether they are indefinite, definite or in construct (Fischer 2002, §147–149), e.g.:

TABLE 8.1   Inflection of triptotic nouns

	Indefinite	Definite	Construct	
Nom.	*masǧidun*	*al-masǧidu*	*masǧidu*	'mosque'
Gen.	*masǧidin*	*al-masǧidi*	*masǧidi*	
Acc.	*masǧidan*	*al-masǧida*	*masǧida*	

Besides this class of triptotic nouns, a significantly smaller class only shows a two-way case distinction and lacks the characteristic *-n* suffix in the indefinite form. These are the so-called diptotes (Fischer 2002, §152–153), e.g.:

TABLE 8.2   Inflection of diptotic nouns

	Indefinite	Definite	Construct	
Nom.	*masāǧidu*	*al-masāǧidu*	*masāǧidu*	'mosques'
Gen.	*masāǧida*	*al-masāǧidi*	*masāǧidi*	
Acc.	*masāǧida*	*al-masāǧida*	*masāǧida*	

Several nouns are diptotic by virtue of their stem shape. The most common such stem shapes are:
1.   ʔaCCaC- stems (either colour/bodily defect adjectives or elatives).
2.   CaCCān- stems.

3. Stems with the *-āʔ-* feminine ending (and historically those with the **-ay-* feminine ending).[6]

4. Plurals with the CaCāCiC- and CaCāCīC- stem.

Besides these morphologically determined diptotes, most other diptotes are the result of the interaction of stem-formation and their semantics, where being a proper name is the most important factor of causing a word to become diptotic. All proper names that are grammatically feminine (referring to a feminine person or a place) are diptotic according to Classical Arabic grammar, e.g. *miṣru* 'Egypt', *ḥalabu* 'Aleppo' and *hindu* 'Hind (personal name)'. Moreover, all names that take the feminine ending *-at-* are diptotic, while nouns with the same ending are triptotic. Names with the feminine ending *-at-* do not exclusively refer to women; there are also masculine names with this ending, and they are diptotic too: *fāṭimatu* 'Fatimah (female name)',[7] *muʕāwiyatu* 'Muawiyah (male name)'.

As for masculine names, these are generally also diptotic (*ʕumaru* 'Umar', *yūsufu* 'Joseph', *ʕuṯmānu* 'Uthman'), with the exception of nouns with the shape CVCC (*ʕamrun* 'Amr'), CV̄C (*nūḥun* 'Noah') or CaCaC (*ḥasanun* 'Hasan'), and any name that is morphologically a participle (*wadūdun* lit. 'loved one') or a diminutive (*zuhayrun* lit. 'little blossom').

Orthographically, the difference between diptotes and triptotes is visible only in the indefinite accusative. The final *-an* of triptotic nouns is spelled with a final *ʔalif*.[8] This *ʔalif* is absent for diptotic nouns, as the accusative does not end in *-an*, but in *-a*.

TABLE 8.3 Triptotic and diptotic inflection as reflected in orthography

	Nūḥ- 'Noah' (triptote)		*Miṣr-* 'Egypt' (diptote)	
Nom.	نوح ⟨nwḥ⟩	*nūḥun*	مصر ⟨mṣr⟩	*miṣru*
Gen.	نوح ⟨nwḥ⟩	*nūḥin*	مصر ⟨mṣr⟩	*miṣra*
Acc.	نوحا ⟨nwḥʔ⟩	*nūḥan*	مصر ⟨mṣr⟩	*miṣra*

6 On the history of this feminine suffix, see Van Putten (2018).

7 But this feminine active participle, if used as a noun is triptotic, *fāṭimatun* 'weaning'.

8 Final *ʔalif* usually denotes a word-final *-ā*. In utterance-final position, the indefinite accusative ending is pronounced *-ā*. The spelling is generally taken to be based on the pronunciation of the word in utterance-final position, even in positions where the word is not utterance-final.

3   *Ṯamūd* as a Triptote in the Quranic text

In the reading tradition of Ḥafṣ, the most popular and widespread reading today,[9] *Ṯamūd* is always treated as a diptote. This is in disagreement with the Quranic text, as Puin (2011, 178) shows. Puin cites four examples of *Ṯamūd* appearing in the accusative, and in these four cases the noun is consistently written with a final *ʔalif*, the sign of the triptotic accusative:

> *ʔinna ṯamūda* (ثمودا ⟨tmwdʔ⟩) *kafarū rabba-hum*
> Thamūd denied their lord
>   Q11:68

> *wa-ʕādan wa-ṯamūda* (ثمودا ⟨tmwdʔ⟩) *wa-ʔaṣḥāba r-rassi*
> And [we destroyed] *ʕād* and *Ṯamūd* and the companions of *al-Rass*
>   Q25:38

> *wa-ʕādan wa-ṯamūda* (ثمودا ⟨tmwdʔ⟩)
> And [we destroyed] *ʕād* and *Ṯamūd*
>   Q29:38

> *wa-ʔanna-hū ʔahlaka ʕādan al-ʔūlā* (51) *wa-ṯamūda* (ثمودا ⟨tmwdʔ⟩)
> And that He destroyed the first [people of] *ʕād* and *Ṯamūd*
>   Q53:50–51

From this, Puin concludes that in the Quranic text, *Ṯamūd* is treated as a triptote, despite its treatment as a diptote in the tradition of Ḥafṣ.[10] However, the situation is a bit more complex. *Ṯamūd* appears one more time as an accusative in the Quranic text, and there it lacks the triptotic *ʔalif* ending:

> *ʔātaynā ṯamūda* (ثمود ⟨tmwd⟩) *n-nāqata mubṣiratan*
> And We gave *Ṯamūd* the she-camel as an evident (sign)
>   Q17:59

It seems likely that the exceptional orthographic behaviour in this verse is the result of haplography. The next word starts with a non-connected *ʔalif* sign

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9   This is the reading tradition whose vocalization is printed in the authoritative Cairo edition, which can be considered the modern standard text of the Quran.

10   In the Cairo edition, these cases are marked with a sign of quiescence on top of the *ʔalif* to indicate that it is to be ignored in the reading.

(الناقه ⟨ʔlnʔqh⟩) and *Ṯamūd* ends with a non-connected *ʔalif*. Since early Arabic handwriting does not put spaces between words that are bigger than word-internal spaces, it is certainly possible that the *ʔalif* of ثمودا ⟨ṯmwdʔ⟩ was erroneously taken as the first *ʔalif* of the following word:[11]

ثمود ا ا النا قه   (intended spelling)
ثمود ا النا قه   (haplography)

There is yet another possible explanation for the apparent diptosy of *Ṯamūd* in this verse which I will return to later in section 6.

4   *Ṯamūd*: A Diptote or a Triptote?

It is now interesting to examine the treatment of *Ṯamūd* by the earliest and most prominent grammarian of the Arabic language whose works have come down to us, the Persian known as Sibawayh (d. 170–193 AH/789–809 CE, Carter 2004, 7 ff.). In his grammar of Arabic known as *Kitāb Sībawayh* "The book of Sibawayh" or simply *al-Kitāb* "the book", he dedicates a whole chapter to the use of the names of tribes (*qabīlah* pl. *qabāʔil*) and clans (*ḥayy* pl. *ʔaḥyāʔ*) (Sibawayh: III 246–256). In this chapter he takes considerable space to discuss the inflection of tribal names.

The distinction between a 'tribe' and a 'clan' appears to be for Sibawayh a purely formal distinction depending on the behaviour of the noun that it describes. Both tribal and clan names can be massive tribal confederacies or smaller sub-groups within the traditional Arabic genealogies.[12] For example, *Qurayš* and *Maʕadd* are both 'clans'. *Maʕadd* is well-known as one of the primary tribal confederacies in Arabic genealogy, and the prophet Muhammad himself (who belongs to the *Qurayš*) traced his lineage back to *Maʕadd* (Webb

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11   There is no evidence of the non-haplographic spelling in early Quranic manuscripts that I have examined (through www.corpuscoranicum.de). This would mean that the haplography goes back to the archetype of the Quranic text tradition. This might be different for *miṣr* which once appears as a triptotic accusative (Q2:61) and once as a diptotic accusative (Q12:99) in the Cairo Edition of the Quran and many early Quranic manuscripts. However, also here the diptotic instance is followed by a word that starts with an *ʔalif*. Once, in the manuscript known as Saray Medina 1a, two *ʔalif*s are written in this position. A full discussion about the implications of this problem (*miṣr* should be diptotic according to Classical Arabic grammar) falls outside the scope of this paper.

12   This is the so-called *Nasab* literature, which developed a hierarchy of different terms for confederations, tribes, and clans.

2016, 209). *Tamīm*, on the other hand is a 'tribe' which is also considered a branch of *Maʕadd* (Wüstenfeld 1852, 2nd part, overview).

Tribes such as *Tamīm*, *Salūl* and *ʔasad* are diptotic when used to refer to the tribe as a whole. And when one treats them as triptotic they refer to the eponymous father of the tribe. People of a tribe are often referred to as 'sons' of this eponymous father, therefore in such a construction, the name refers to the eponymous father and is triptotic, e.g. *Tamīmu* 'the (whole) tribe Tamīm', *banū Tamīmin* 'the sons of Tamīm'. Sibawayh also admits the possibility to use the second construction in an elliptic way, in which case it continues to be triptotic, i.e. *Tamīmun* '(the sons of) Tamīm'.

Clans such as *Maʕadd*, *Qurayš* and *Ṯaqīf*, are triptotic. Different from tribes, it is impossible to say **banū Qurayšin 'the sons of Qurayš'. These formal distinctions can get blurred, as Sibawayh admits the possibility to treat clans like tribes and inflect them as diptotes. This is licensed exclusively by citations from poetry, which seems to suggest that this is mostly poetic license.

Sibawayh (III 252 f.) explicitly states that *Ṯamūd* can be either treated as a tribe or a clan,[13] and that both are equally common. He subsequently licenses the treatment exclusively with Quranic verses cited above, which by some readers are read as triptotes, and nothing else. This would be surprising if Sibawayh were correct in saying that both are equally common. But as it turns out, the triptotic form of *Ṯamūd* seems to be exclusively employed in Quranic context.

If we look at its treatment in Classical Arabic literature, *Ṯamūd* seems to be treated consistently as a diptote. On a specific case-by-case basis we find that, for example, the Quranic exegesis of Ibn Kaṯīr (d. 774 AH/1372 CE) mentions *Ṯamūd* nineteen times in its section on the history of this tribe. Each time it is mentioned, it is treated as a diptote (Ibn Kaṯīr III 393 ff.). Taking a broader look, I have searched for attestations of ثمودا *ṯamūdan* in the vast collection of literary Arabic texts collected by the Open Islamicate Texts Initiative[14] up until the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate (656 AH/1258 CE). The vast majority of the times that the triptotic *ṯamūdan* is mentioned, it is in reference to, or direct quotation from the Quranic attestations (attestations in 98 different works, all with multiple attestations, going up to about 250 attestations). The next largest source of the form is in poetry; it is possible as a poetic license to shift any diptotic noun to triptotic if the meter requires it (9 different poems). After that there are some sayings attributed to the prophet Muhammad (three different ones attested several times). If these are genuine, it of course makes sense that

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13   This is also the case for *Sabaʔ* (= the biblical Sheba), another word which gets variously treated in the Quran as a triptote or a diptote, depending on the Quranic reader.

14   https://iti-corpus.github.io/

Ṯamūd would be treated as a triptote in them. Use of triptotic *Ṯamūd* outside of this context occurs, it seems, in about 26 different works. This indeed confirms that the overwhelming majority of attestations of the triptotic accusative form is found in direct quotations of the Quranic passages, or concern discussion of these passages.

It seems, then, that within Classical Arabic grammar *Ṯamūd* was essentially considered diptotic. This however, is never mentioned explicitly by any of the grammarians,[15] lexicographers[16] or exegetes[17] who all dutifully mention that it may be either diptotic or triptotic—every time explicitly licensing the triptotic treatment by citing the Quran and its reading traditions.

5   The Treatment of *Ṯamūd* in the Reading Traditions

Although the fact that Quranic orthography points to a triptotic inflection of *Ṯamūd*, its treatment as such in the reading traditions of the Quran is inconsistent. While the eponymous readers lived several centuries earlier, the earliest surviving description of the reading traditions is *Kitāb as-sabʕah fī al-qirāʔāt* "The book of the seven among the readings" by Ibn Muǧāhid (d. 324 AH/936 CE), postdating the canonization of the Quranic text (presumably around 30 AH/652 CE) by hundreds of years (Nasser 2013, 36). Ibn Muǧāhid described seven readings, one for each capital city of the five Islamic provinces, except for Kufa (Iraq) which has three—presumably because there was not a single authoritative reading style in the city before canonization (Nasser 2013: 55–59). Each of these seven readings is normally associated with two transmitters. These fourteen transmitters form the basis of the different reading traditions

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15   E.g. al-Zaǧǧāǧ's *Kitāb mā yanṣarif wa-mā lā yanṣarif* ('The book of what is treated as a triptote and what is not treated as a triptote'): *wa-ʔammā 'ṯamūdu' fa-marratan isman li-l-qabīlati wa-marratan isman li-l-ḥayyi* 'As for Ṯamūd [diptote!], it is at times the name of a tribe [*qabīlah*] and at times the name of a clan [*ḥayy*],' (al-Zaǧǧāǧ, *Kitāb Mā Yanṣarif* 59) referring back to Sibawayh's original distinction.

16   E.g. Ibn Manẓūr's (d. 711 AH/1311 CE) *Lisān al-ʕarab* states: *wa-ṯamūdu qabīlatun min al-ʕarabi l-ʔawwali, yaṣrifu wa-lā yaṣrifu* 'Ṯamūd [diptote!]: A tribe [*qabīlah*] of the first Arabs, it is treated as a triptote or it is not treated as a triptote (and thus a diptote).'

17   E.g. the exegesis of al-Zamaxšarī (d. 538 AH/1143 CE) says: *wa-quriʔa 'ʔa-lā ʔinna ṯamūd[a/an]' wa-'li-ṯamūd[a/in]' kilā-humā bi-ṣ-ṣarfi wa-mtināʕi-hī, fa-ṣ-ṣarfi li-ḏ-ḏahāb ʔilā l-ḥayyi ʔaw al-ʔabbi l-ʔakbari, wa-manʕi-hī li-t-taʕrifi wa-t-taʔnīṯ, bi-manʕā l-qabīlati* ''ʔa-lā ʔinna ṯamūd' and 'li-ṯamūd' are both read as triptotes and as diptotes; as triptotes in the meaning of a clan (*ḥayy*), or the father of the tribe, and as diptotes [...] in the meaning of tribe (*qabīlah*).' (al-Zamaxšarī, *al-Kaššāf* II 409).

TABLE 8.4   The seven canonical readers of the Quran and their two canonical transmitters

Capital	Reader	First transmitter	Second transmitter
Medina	Nāfiʕ (d. 169/785)	Warš (d. 197/812)	Qālūn (d. 220/835)
Mecca	Ibn Kaṯīr (d. 120/738)	Al-Bazzī (d. 250/864)	Qunbul (d. 291/904)
Damascus	Ibn ʕāmir (d. 118/736)	Hišām (d. 245/859)	Ibn Ḏakwān (d. 242/856)
Basra	Abū ʕamr (d. 154/770)	Al-Dūrī (d. 246/860)	Al-Sūsī (d. 261/874)
Kufa	ʕāṣim (d. 127/745)	Ḥafṣ (d. 180/796)	Šuʕbah (d. 193/809)
Kufa	Ḥamzah (d. 156/773)	Xalaf (d. 229/844)	Xallād (d. 220/835)
Kufa	Al-Kisāʔī (d. 189/804)	Al-Dūrī (d. 246/860)[a]	Al-Layṯ (d. 240/854)

a   This is the same Al-Dūrī that is the transmitter of Abū ʕamr.

as they are present in the Islamic world today. Each of these traditions differs to smaller or greater extent on specific details of the reading of the Quranic text. An overview of the readers and their transmitters adapted from Watt and Bell (1991, 49) is given above.

Of the fourteen transmitters, the reading of ʕāṣim as transmitted by Ḥafṣ is by far the most widespread tradition in the world today. After Ḥafṣ, the reading of Nāfiʕ as transmitted by Warš is very common, especially in North Africa. Many of the others have almost completely fallen out of use.

Ibn Muǧāhid (*Kitāb as-sabʕah*, 337) describes the treatment of *Ṯamūd* in some detail in his work. However, he *only* discusses the places when *Ṯamūd* can be read as a triptote. He says that there is disagreement among the readers concerning the inflection of *Ṯamūd* as a diptote or a triptote in five instances (across four verses). These four verses are the exact places mentioned in section 3 where the spelling of the Quranic text suggests that *Ṯamūd* was a triptote.

– Q11:68 And it is *Tamud* [acc.] who disbelieved their lord, therefore away with *Ṯamud* [gen.]
– Q25:38 And [we destroyed] ʕād and *Ṯamūd* [acc.] and the companions of *al-Rass*.
– Q29:38 And [we destroyed] ʕād and *Ṯamūd* [acc.]
– Q53:50–51 And that He destroyed the first [people of] ʕād and *Ṯamūd* [acc.]
All canonical readers except for Ḥamzah and ʕāṣim (as transmitted by Ḥafṣ) read the instances of accusative *Ṯamūd* as triptotes, in accordance with the canonical consonantal text of the Quran.[18]

18   Some accounts suggest that the accusative *Ṯamūd* in Q53:51 was read by Šuʕbah—the

There are therefore essentially three systems present in these five places. First, there is one that simply ignores the *ʔalif*, and treats all instances of *Ṯamūd* as diptotes. Second, there is one that does not ignore the *ʔalif*, and reads those instances as a triptote as the Quranic text suggests. The third approach does not want to switch between a triptotic inflection and diptotic inflection within a single verse, and also treats the genitive of Q11:68 as a triptote.

More interesting, however, is what is left unmentioned by Ibn Muǧāhid. *Ṯamūd* occurs twenty-six times in the Quran: Ten times in the nominative,[19] eleven times in the genitive,[20] and in the accusative once without the extra *ʔalif* that marks the triptotic accusative, as against four times with the extra *ʔalif*. As the attestations in the nominative and genitive are ambiguous in their consonantal skeleton, one might expect there to have been disagreement on this matter. But Ibn Muǧāhid's complete silence means that all readers are in agreement how this word in these positions is to be treated, i.e. as a diptote with a nominative *ṯamūdu* and genitive *ṯamūda*.[21]

The only exception to the uniform treatment of non-accusative forms as diptotes is found in the reading of the Kufan reciter Al-Kisāʔī (who reads the accusative as a triptote *ṯamūdan*). He treats the genitive in Q11:68 as a triptote *ṯamūdin*, contrary to the majority reading as a diptote *ṯamūda*. This can be understood from the fact that the verse Q11:68 has *ṯamūd* occur twice. The first time, it occurs as an accusative, written as a triptote and thus read as *ṯamūdan*, and the second time as a genitive ('And it is ***Ṯamūd*** [acc.] who disbelieved their lord, therefore away with ***Ṯamūd*** [gen.]'). Al-Kisāʔī—a figure associated with the early Kufan school of Arabic grammar—apparently did not feel comfortable with treating the noun as a triptote and subsequently as a diptote within a single verse. This is confirmed by the early exegete al-Farrāʔ (d. 207/822) who was a student of al-Kisāʔī. He relates an account where al-Kisāʔī explains his reading, saying: "It is read as the triptotic genitive (i.e. *ṯamūdin*), as it is ugly (*qabīḥ*) to have the same word occurring twice (within a single verse) and hav-

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other transmitter of ʕāṣim—as a diptote, while the other three instances of the accusative were read as triptotes. Traces of this tradition can be found in early Quranic manuscripts, where specifically this verse occasionally lacks the *ʔalif* on *Ṯamūd*, e.g. BnF Arabe 333 (d) and Saray Medina 1a, both of which have added an *ʔalif* in a clearly later hand (manuscript accessed via corpuscoranicum.de).

19   Q11:95; Q22:43; Q26:141; Q38:13; Q41:17; Q50:12; Q54:23; Q60:4, 5; Q91:11.

20   Q7:73; Q9:70; Q11:61, 68; Q14:9; Q27:45; Q40:31; Q41:13; Q51:43; Q85:18; Q89:9.

21   Treating *Ṯamūd* as a triptote (outside of the canonical positions) is recorded in the collection of *šawāḏḏ* (irregular, rare) readings by the fourth/tenth century scholar ibn Xālawayh (*Muxtaṣar*: 44), a student of ibn Muǧāhid.

ing it disagree (on its inflection). So, I make it triptotic because of its proximity to it (i.e. *ṯamūdan*, which he treats as a triptote)" (Al-Farrāʔ *Maʕānī al-Qurʔān* II, 20).

Given the consistent treatment of the Quranic readers of *Ṯamūd* as a diptote in the nominative and genitive, it seems clear that within the norms of classical Arabic grammar, *Ṯamūd* was essentially always considered a diptote. This caused a conflict with the Quranic text, which clearly treats it as a triptote. As a result, readers were confronted with a conflict in the accusative form of *Ṯamūd*, between what was felt to be 'proper Arabic', and what the text seemed to reflect. Ḥafṣ and Ḥamzah chose to ignore the Quranic text and treated *Ṯamūd* as a diptote in all its occurrences. The other readers of the Quran treated *Ṯamūd* as a triptote whenever the Quranic text left no other option, but otherwise went for the more usual diptotic reading. The triptotic reading of *Ṯamūd* seems to be entirely based on these Quranic verses.

6   The Implications

This article has explored the result of the interaction between a sacrosanct and more-or-less unchangeable text and an oral reading tradition of this same text that tries to adhere to the grammatical ideal of Classical Arabic.

If we accept one case of haplography (see section 3), it seems that in the language of the Quranic text the tribal name *Ṯamūd* was considered to be a triptote; and if we do not, it may have been in free variation. This is clearly at odds with what was felt to be correct grammar. In the reading traditions we find multiple solutions to this conflict between the grammar of the text and the grammar of the reading tradition. One tradition simply ignores the text, while most others accommodate the text, but only in those places where this is absolutely necessary. Wherever the Quranic text did not cause a conflict with reading *Ṯamūd* as a diptote, it was simply read as a diptote.

This observation has important implications for our understanding of the history of the reading traditions and their relationship to the text. In our paper on case in the Quran, my colleague Phillip W. Stokes and I have argued, on the basis of internal rhyme and certain orthographic variations, that the original case system of the language of the Quranic text was much reduced compared to that of Classical Arabic (Van Putten and Stokes 2018). Instead of a full tripartite case system, we argue that only the indefinite accusative of triptotic nouns was distinguished for case by a suffix -ā:

TABLE 8.5   The triptotic and diptotic inflection as recon-
            structed for Quranic Arabic

	Triptote 'a mosque'	Diptote 'mosques'
Nom.	*masǧid*	*masāǧid*
Gen.	*masǧid*	*masāǧid*
Acc.	*masǧid-ā*	*masāǧid*

The implication of those conclusions, however, is that the reading traditions of the Quran must at some point have imposed the much more archaic Classical Arabic case system onto the Quranic text. This thesis is difficult to prove from the orthography itself, as in the vast majority of cases, the Classical Arabic conjugation and the proposed Quranic Arabic conjugation have the exact same spelling.

However, the case of *Ṯamūd* shows a visible conflict between the language of the Quranic text and Classical Arabic. Classical Arabic grammar wishes to treat it as a diptote, while the Quranic text evidently treats it as a triptote. The outcome for most readers is a mixed paradigm that is not recognized to be part of Classical Arabic grammar. This proves that, at least to some extent, the assignment of the Classical Arabic case inflection was subject to artificial imposition of Classical Arabic linguistic norms onto the sacrosanct text. This is an indication that our proposed artificial introduction of the Classical Arabic case system into the Quranic text could indeed have taken place.

Finally, it is worth noting that the reconstructed original case system could help us explain the anomalous accusative of *Ṯamūd* in Q17:59 in an alternative way. Arabic does not allow for superheavy cv̄c syllables. When these occur, the vowel is generally shortened. This is not usually expressed in orthography on word boundaries, but for each of the three long vowels, *ā*, *ī* and *ū* we find isolated examples of phonetic spelling that reflects this shortening. The table on the following page gives an overview.

This type of context spelling allows us to suggest that the expected /ṯamūdā n-nāqah/ would be spelled with a context form, that is, with a shortened vowel of the accusative.

TABLE 8.6   Orthographic shortening of word-final long vowels in closed syllables

	Regular orthography	**Context spelling**
/ʔayyuhā/ vocative pcle.	ايها الناس ⟨ʔyhʔ ʔlnʔs⟩ *ʔayyuha n-nās* (Q4:133) 'O people!'	ايه المومنون ⟨ʔyh ʔlmwmnwn⟩ *ʔayyuha l-mūminūn* (Q24:31) 'O believers!'
/yamḥū/ 'he eliminates'	يمحوا الله ⟨ymḥwʔ ʔllh⟩ *yamḥu ḷḷāh* (Q13:39) 'God eliminates'	يمح الله ⟨ymḥ ʔllh⟩ *yamḥu ḷḷāh* (Q42:24) 'God eliminates'
/hādī/ 'leader'	بهدى العمى ⟨bhdy ʔlʕmy⟩ *bi-hādi l-ʕumy* (Q27:81) 'the leader of the blind'	بهد العمى ⟨bhd ʔlʕmy⟩ *bi-hādi l-ʕumy* (Q30:52)[a] 'the leader of the blind'

a   The reader Ḥamzah recites Q27:81 and Q30:52 as *tahdi l-ʕumy* 'you lead the blind', a reading that is likewise consistent with the ambiguous consonantal skeleton of the Quranic text (Ibn Muġāhid *Kitāb as-sabʕah* 486).

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