Article:
Munt, Harry (2022) The Umayyad and early Abbasid inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā. pp. 79-147. ISSN: 1068-1051

https://doi.org/10.52214/uw.v30i.8598

The Umayyad and early Abbasid inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina*

Harry Munt

University of York

(harry.munt@york.ac.uk)

Abstract

This article offers a translation and discussion of a chapter of a relatively little known late third-/ninth- or early fourth-/tenth-century text that offers a transcription of the inscriptions that could be seen around the Prophet's Mosque in Medina after the renovation work undertaken there on the order of the third Abbasid caliph Muḥammad al-Mahdī. This text thus adds significantly to our corpus of known inscriptions from early Abbasid imperial monuments. The article discusses the sources of information about these inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque, the fate of the Umayyad-era inscriptions in the early Abbasid period, and what the new Abbasid-era inscriptions have to tell us about that family's claims to authority in the decades immediately following their seizure power.

Introduction

According to the Imāmī historian ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Nawfalī (d. mid-to-late third/ninth century), as the era of Umayyad rule was drawing to its close, the Jaʿfarid Talibid Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh Abī al-Karrām had a dream:[1]

> I had a vision, as dreamers do, near the end of the Umayyads' rule, as if I had entered the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ). I raised my head and looked at the mosaic inscription in the mosque, which includes, "[This is] among that which the commander of the faithful al-

* I am very grateful to Alain George and Mehdy Shaddel for the time they took to read and comment on an earlier draft of this article. I would also like to thank the peer reviewers for their extremely helpful comments and advice.

[1] For al-Nawfalī, see Sebastian Günther, "Al-Nawfalī's Lost *History*: The Issue of a Ninth-Century Shiʿite Source Used by al-Ṭabarī and Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 241–66; for Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh Abī al-Karrām b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib, a loyal supporter of the Abbasids during the rebellion of the Hasanid Talibid Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh "al-Nafs al-Zakiyya," see Amikam Elad, *The Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762: Ṭālibīs and Early ʿAbbāsīs in Conflict* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 257–58, 377.

> Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik ordered." All of a sudden someone said, "A man from the Banū Hāshim called Muḥammad is going to efface this inscription and write his own name in its place." I said, "I'm Muḥammad and I'm from the Banū Hāshim. Son of whom?"
>
> - "Son of ʿAbd Allāh."
> - "I'm the son of ʿAbd Allāh. The son of whom?"
> - "Son of Muḥammad."
> - "I'm the son of Muḥammad. The son of whom?"
> - "The son of ʿAlī."
> - "I'm the son of ʿAlī. The son of whom?"
> - "The son of ʿAbd Allāh."
> - "I'm the son of ʿAbd Allāh. The son of whom?"
> - "The son of ʿAbbās."
>
> And even though I could not reach al-ʿAbbās, I had no doubt that this was about me. I told people about this dream at that time, though I did not know about al-Mahdī. But he spoke to people about it, so when he entered the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ), he raised his head, took a look and saw the name of al-Walīd. He said, "I see the name of al-Walīd is in the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) to this day." He asked for a chair and one was brought to him in the courtyard of the mosque. He said, "I'm not going anywhere until it has been effaced and my name has been inscribed in its place." He had workmen, scaffolding and all that was necessary summoned and did not leave until it had been altered and his name had been inscribed.[2]

This anecdote fits well within the genre of reports that display the trope of confused apocalyptic expectations of the role to be played by someone in the family of the prophet (here identified as Banū Hāshim) who carries the prophet's own name, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh.[3] For our purposes in this article, it highlights the significance of inscriptions in major caliphal, imperial monuments. Just as his grandson and the future caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–33) was to do with the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān's (r. 65–86/685–705) name in the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the third Abbasid caliph Muḥammad al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–85) here had the name of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 86–96/705–15) in the foundation inscription of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina effaced and his own name inscribed in its place.[4] Al-Mahdī reigned, as this anecdote

[2] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 3:534–35.

[3] See, for example, the discussion in Amikam Elad, "The Struggle for the Legitimacy of Authority as Reflected in the Ḥadīth of al-Mahdī," in *ʿAbbasid Studies II: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies*, ed. John Nawas, 39–96 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010).

[4] For al-Maʾmūn and the Dome of the Rock, see among many discussions Marcus Milwright, *The Dome of the Rock and Its Umayyad Mosaic Inscriptions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 51, 65. For an

reminds us, at a time when Umayyad rule was still within living memory and when the Abbasids and their supporters were still working to articulate precisely the reasons why they were the legitimate caliphal family in the face of numerous opponents' challenges.[5] Monumental, commemorative construction projects were one way of articulating the necessary messages of legitimacy and the Abbasids seem to have jumped at the chance to highlight their victory over their Umayyad predecessors by ostentatiously effacing their names from these imperial monuments.

This suggests in turn that the epigraphic programmes from such major imperial monuments might have quite a bit to tell us about the nature of Umayyad and early Abbasid rule.[6] And such programmes have indeed, together with other aspects of these monuments' form and decoration, formed the basis of important studies into Umayyad caliphs' political agendas.[7] These studies have focused, perfectly understandably, on a fairly small number of monuments, especially the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus; when it comes to the early Abbasids' articulation of political messages through epigraphic programmes in explicitly caliphally patronised monuments, there has been less work. This is in large part due to the relative paucity of texts that remain physically extant, although for the Umayyad period the inscriptions from the Dome of the Rock are a

introduction to foundation inscriptions across the pre-modern Islamic world, see Sheila Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 29–42.

[5] See, for example, among many studies, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dūrī, "al-Fikra al-mahdiyya bayn al-daʿwa al-ʿabbāsiyya wa-l-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī al-awwal," in *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān ʿAbbās on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī, 123–32 (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981); Jacob Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Inquiry into the Art of ʿAbbāsid Apologetics* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1986); Patricia Crone, "On the Meaning of the ʿAbbāsid Call to *al-Riḍā*," in *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times*, ed. C. Edmund Bosworth *et al*., 95–111 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989); *idem*, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 87–98; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); and recently Deborah G. Tor, "The Parting of Ways between ʿAlid Shiʿism and Abbasid Shiʿism: An Analysis of the Missives between the Caliph al-Manṣūr and Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya," *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 209–27.

[6] For the purposes of this article, "early Abbasid" refers to the period of the reigns of the first three Abbasid caliphs, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ (r. 132–36/749–54), Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr (r. 136–58/754–75) and Muḥammad al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–85). The Umayyad period is often divided into three periods and that discussed in this article is almost always the Marwanid era, from 64/684 to 132/749; see further now Andrew Marsham, "Introduction: The Umayyad World," in *The Umayyad World*, ed. Andrew Marsham, 1–20 (London: Routledge, 2021), 14–15.

[7] A large number of studies on the Dome of the Rock are relevant here, but for use of the inscriptions see Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Dome of the Rock as Palimpsest: ʿAbd al-Malik's Grand Narrative and Sultan Süleyman's Glosses," *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 17–105, at 45–56; and Milwright, *Dome of the Rock* (which also provides references to important earlier studies). See also Finbarr Barry Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Alain George, "Paradise or Empire? On a Paradox of Umayyad Art," in *Power, Patronage, and Memory in Early Islam: Perspectives on Umayyad Elites*, ed. Alain George and Andrew Marsham, 39–67 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); *idem*, *The Umayyad Mosque of Damascus: Art, Faith and Empire in Early Islam* (London: Gingko, 2021).

particularly important survival.[8] From the early Abbasid period, there is, for example, a milestone found near Mafraq in northern Jordan, which mentions it was constructed at the command of one 'al-Mahdī' in the year 135/752–53;[9] a text from Baysān/Scythopolis commemorating the construction or renovation of an unspecified building during the reign of Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ in 135/753;[10] an inscription from the mosque in Ṣanʿāʾ recording work patronised there by the caliph in 136/753–54;[11] an inscription from the Masjid al-Bayʿa near Mecca dated to 144/761–62;[12] an inscription recording work on a minaret (*miʾdhana*) and mosque in Ascalon in 155/771–72;[13] an inscription from the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca dated to 167/783–84;[14] and one of the milestones among those so-far discovered along the Darb

[8] For the lack of extant monumental inscriptions from the early Abbasid period, see for example Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 59. A good example of the problem can be seen in Sheila Blair, *The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana* (Leiden: Brill, 1992): of the seventy-nine inscriptions/bunches of inscriptions datable to the first five centuries AH included in this work, there are none dating to the first century, one to the second century and one small collection of graffiti to the third century. For a quick overview of extant Umayyad-era inscriptions from caliphally patronised monuments, see Beatrice Gruendler, *The Development of the Arabic Scripts: From the Nabatean Era to the First Islamic Century according to Dated Texts* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 15–21 (the relevant texts are E4, E9–10, E12–16); and Ilkka Lindstedt, "Arabic Rock Inscriptions up to 750 CE," in *Umayyad World*, ed. Marsham, 411–37, at 428. Some of these can be consulted in Étienne Combe *et al.*, ed., *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1931–91) [henceforth *RCEA*], within 1:8–24 (nos. 9–12, 14–17, 25, 27–28).

[9] Khaled Al-Jbour, "The Discovery of the First Abbasid Milestone in 'Bilād ash-Shām,'" *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 8 (2004): 171–76. Since the text is curtailed, the only word visible in the patron's title is *al-mahdī*, but as Al-Jbour notes, since the caliph Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ is known as 'al-Mahdī' in other texts (see nn. 10–11), the title here probably refers to that caliph.

[10] See Amikam Elad, "The Caliph Abūʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ, the First ʿAbbāsid *Mahdī*: Implications of an Unknown Inscription from Bet-Shean (Baysān)," in *Masʾat Moshe: Studies in Jewish and Islamic Culture Presented to Moshe Gil*, ed. Ezra Fleischer, Mordechai A. Friedman and Joel A. Kramer, 9–55 (Heb.), with Eng. summary at v–vi (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1998), esp. 9 for this text; and Moshe Sharon, *Corpus inscriptionum arabicarum palaestinae* (Leiden: Brill, 1997–) [henceforth *CIAP*], 2:214–19, esp. 215 for the text.

[11] This is perhaps the most frequently discussed to date of these early Abbasid caliphal foundation inscriptions. A photograph and transcription were first published by Eugen Mittwoch, "Eine arabische Bauinschrift aus dem Jahre 136 H.," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 235–38. Since then, the text has also been provided in al-Dūrī, "al-Fikra al-mahdiyya," 124; Robert B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, "The Architectural History and Description of Ṣanʿāʾ Mosques: The Great Mosque," in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City*, ed. Ronald Lewcock and Robert B. Serjeant, 323–50 (London: The World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983), 345 (photograph) and 348 (edition and translation); and Elad, "Caliph Abūʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ," 16 (and further discussion also in *idem*, "Struggle," 39–40, 42). There is also a brief but misleadingly inaccurate citation of the text in Muḥammad al-Ḥajrī, *Masājid Ṣanʿāʾ: ʿāmiruhā wa-muwaffīhā* (Ṣanʿāʾ: Maṭbaʿat Wizārat al-Maʿārif, 1361/1942), 26.

[12] Saʿd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār minṭaqat Makka al-mukarrama* (Riyadh: Wizārat al-Maʿārif, Wikālat al-Āthār wa-l-Matāḥif, 1423/2003), 122. There is another nearby but undated inscription that may be related to this one; see *ibid.*, 122–25. A new edition and study of the known early Abbasid inscriptions from Mecca is currently being prepared by Mehdy Shaddel. I am very grateful to him for discussing these with me.

[13] Another oft-discussed early Abbasid inscription; see *RCEA*, 1:32–33 (no. 42); *CIAP*, 1:144–47; Elad, "Struggle," 58 (with references to further discussion).

[14] Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār minṭaqat Makka al-mukarrama*, 111–13. There is another inscription nearby that seems closely associated with this text, so probably also comes from the same period; see *ibid.*, 113–14. Mehdy Shaddel's forthcoming publication will also include a third text from al-Mahdī's caliphate from the Masjid al-Ḥarām.

Zubayda, the major route that connected Baghdad/Kufa and Mecca, undated but certainly early Abbasid, that mentions the patronage of a caliph.[15]

Such paucity of physically surviving texts makes the study of those epigraphic programmes traces of which are preserved in literary sources all the more important. The study of apparently documentary evidence that is preserved in pre-modern Arabic literary sources has a long history among scholars interested in the early Islamic period.[16] Such study does not appear to be receding and ever more studies are published on "documents" that are preserved only in later Arabic texts.[17] As far as epigraphic programmes are concerned, that which accompanied al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik's new mosque in Damascus, relatively well-known among modern historians of the Umayyad era, can only be studied on the basis of discussions in Arabic literary sources. It is, for example, the famous Damascene historian Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176) who tells us that on narrow bands in blue and gold along the qibla wall could be found the "Throne Verse" (Q2.255) followed by al-Walīd's foundation inscription as well as *sūra*s 1 and 79–81 of the Qurʾan.[18]

Reports of the inscriptions that could be found in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina after the building projects there of al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik between 88/706–7 and 91/709–10, and a few Abbasid caliphs, especially that of Muḥammad al-Mahdī between 162/778–79 and

[15] See Saʿd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Rāshid, "Arbaʿat aḥjār mīliyya min al-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī: dirāsa wa-taḥqīq," *al-ʿUṣūr* 5, no. 1 (1990): 123–42, at 124, 130–31; there is also a very brief note on this inscription in *idem*, "A New ʿAbbāsid Milestone from al-Rabaḏa in Saudi Arabia," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 3, no. 2 (1992): 138–43, at 139. For further discussion of this particular inscription, see the Appendix to this article.

[16] A number of the texts, for example, that are included in the early volumes of *RCEA* are attested only in pre-modern Arabic literary sources. Another well-studied example is the so-called "Constitution of Medina," on which see Michael Lecker, *The "Constitution of Medina": Muḥammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004). For an example of recent reluctance (though in this case perhaps appropriate) to use texts of inscriptions from the Abbasid period preserved in literary sources, see Hagit Nol, "Dating Early Islamic Sites Through Architectural Elements: A Case Study from Central Israel," *Journal of Islamic Archaeology* 6, no. 1 (2019): 41–80, at 57.

[17] For just four examples, see Wadād al-Qāḍī, "An Umayyad Papyrus in al-Kindī's *Kitāb al-Quḍāt*?," *Der Islam* 84, no. 2 (2007): 200–45; Andrew Marsham and Chase F. Robinson, "The Safe-Conduct for the Abbasid ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī (d. 764)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70, no. 2 (2007): 247–81; Andrew Marsham, "The Pact (*amāna*) between Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ (656 or 658 CE): 'Documents' and the Islamic Historical Tradition," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 57, no. 1 (2012): 69–96; and Milka Levy-Rubin, "The Surrender Agreements: Origins and Authenticity," in *Umayyad World*, ed. Marsham, 196–215.

[18] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vols. 1 and 2, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus: al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī, 1951–54), 2/i:37. His source for this information is Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī (d. 277/890), but it cannot be found in the extant parts of the latter's *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa wa-l-taʾrīkh*. The editor of this work included it in his edition based on Ibn ʿAsākir's citation; see al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa wa-l-taʾrīkh*, ed. Akram Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī, 3rd ed. (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1410/1989–90), 3:433–34. Other sources provide a text for the foundation inscription as well; see in general Barbara Finster, "Die Mosaiken der Umayyadenmoschee von Damaskus," *Kunst des Orients* 7, no. 2 (1970–71): 83–141, at 119; Flood, *Great Mosque*, 247–54; and George, *Umayyad Mosque*, 76–77, 175–78, 206–7.

165/781–82, can provide modern historians with some of the most extensive such material.[19] Some aspects of the epigraphic programmes evident from this mosque over the second/eighth century have been discussed before, especially the evidence for al-Walīd's inscriptions.[20] The Abbasid-era texts have received less attention, although they were subjected to a fairly thorough study by Sauvaget based on a good range of sources available to him at the time.[21] These inscriptions are, however, long overdue renewed study. The most significant reason for this is that no detailed study to date has made use of the most important source for research into these inscriptions, a late third-/ninth- or early fourth-/tenth-century work known as *Kitāb al-Manāsik wa-amākin ṭuruq al-ḥajj wa-maʿālim al-jazīra*.[22] Sauvaget's study, upon which most other historians have relied, was written before the publication of this *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and so was based primarily on the inscriptions discussed by Ibn Rusta, who visited the mosque in 290/903, supplemented by material provided by the later local historian of Medina Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643/1245) and the very brief discussions provided by Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (d. 328/940) and Ibn al-Nadīm (d. before 388/998).[23] Sauvaget also made some use of another local history of Medina by al-

[19] For studies of these two building programmes in Medina (al-Walīd's is much better studied than al-Mahdī's), see esp. Jean Sauvaget, *Le mosquée omeyyade de Médine: étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et de la basilique* (Paris: Vanoest, 1947); K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture: Umayyads, A.D. 622–750,* 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 142–49; Ghazi Izzeddin Bisheh, "The Mosque of the Prophet at Madīnah Throughout the First-Century A.H. with Special Emphasis on the Umayyad Mosque" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1979), 201–48; Marcel Behrens, *„Ein Garten des Paradieses": die Prophetenmoschee von Medina* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), 85–90; and Harry Munt, *The Holy City of Medina: Sacred Space in Early Islamic Arabia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 105–11, 115–17.

[20] For discussion of al-Walīd's inscriptions, see Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 78–80; Finster, "Mosaiken," 132; Bisheh, "Mosque of the Prophet," 218; Estelle Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qurʾān," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118, no. 1 (1998): 1–14 at 8–13; Flood, *Great Mosque*, 196–97, 204–5; Elias Khamis, "Two Wall Mosaic Inscriptions from the Umayyad Market Place in Bet Shean/Baysān," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64, no. 2 (2001): 159–76, at 171; and Alain George, "Calligraphy, Colour and Light in the Blue Qurʾan," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 75–125, at 97.

[21] Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 54–68; see also much more recently George, "Calligraphy, Colour and Light," 98–101.

[22] *Kitāb al-Manāsik wa-amākin ṭuruq al-ḥajj wa-maʿālim al-jazīra*, ed. Ḥamad al-Jāsir (Riyadh: Dār al-Yamāma, 1389/1969), 385–95 for the discussion of the inscriptions. The authorship of this work will be discussed further below. For some discussion of this source's provision of the text of early Abbasid inscriptions from the Prophet's Mosque, see Elad, "Struggle," 39, n. 4; Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 115–16, 167–68; and now Bea Leal, "The Abbasid Mosaic Tradition and the Great Mosque of Damascus," *Muqarnas* 37 (2020): 29–62, at 31–32.

[23] For these sources' discussions of the inscriptions, see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, ed. Tharwat ʿUkāsha, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 562–63; Ibn Rusta, *al-Mujallad al-sābiʿ min Kitāb al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1891), 70–71, 73–75; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn, Aḥmad al-Zayn and Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1359–72/1940–53), 6:260–63; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (London: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1430/2009), 1/i:15–16 (future references are to this edition unless otherwise stated); Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna fī taʾrīkh al-Madīna*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAzab (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1416/1995), 176–77, 179. The inscriptions as provided by Ibn Rusta were also included in *RCEA*, 1:29–30, 35–38, 65–66 (nos. 38, 46–47, 83); and 2:265 (no. 786); and that provided by Ibn Qutayba partially (possibly via al-Samhūdī, who also provides it partially in his *Wafāʾ al-wafā bi-akhbār dār al-muṣṭafā*, ed. Qāsim al-Sāmarrāʾī [London: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1422/2001], 2:296) in *RCEA*, 1:98 (no. 122).

Samhūdī (d. 911/1506), although he mostly used the briefer of the extant histories by that author; a much more detailed work also survives and, although it does not provide a full survey of the inscriptions, it does offer important supplementary material that is crucial to their interpretation.[24]

Ibn Rusta's catalogue of inscriptions from the Prophet's Mosque was the most comprehensive published when Sauvaget was at work on his study, but after Ibn Rusta had provided this survey of some of the texts he noted, "There are many texts in places around the mosque and its entrances, inside and outside, which I have not transcribed, preferring concision."[25] The *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, however, does provide these as well. Several other Mamluk-era local histories of Medina that have been published since Sauvaget's study are also useful, especially that by al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1414), which also provides the text of a number of the inscriptions offered in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* but not by other works.[26]

This article, after a brief survey of what is known about work in general on the Prophet's Mosque over the Marwanid and early Abbasid periods, offers a discussion of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s sources for its transcription of the mosque's inscriptions, as well as some of the other relevant pre-modern authors' sources, and a translation of the section of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* that deals with those inscriptions. This then forms the basis for further discussion of what these inscriptions can tell us about several issues relevant to modern research into early Islamic history. There will be a heavier focus on texts from the early Abbasid period, since it is these that the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* provides more fully than any other previously discussed source, but some consideration of the Umayyad-era texts is also offered. It is my hope that this article can help bring the Prophet's Mosque in Medina more fully into discussions of Umayyad, and especially early Abbasid, imperial building programmes so that it occupies a place in modern scholarship more fitting of its clear importance to caliphs and other Muslims in the second/eighth century.

Construction work in the Prophet's Mosque in the Marwanid and early Abbasid periods

[24] Sauvaget used al-Samhūdī's *Khulāṣat al-wafā bi-akhbār dār al-muṣṭafā*, for an edition of which see ed. ʿAlī ʿUmar (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1427/2006); the more important work is al-Samhūdī's *Wafāʾ al-wafā*. For more on this author, see Ḥamad al-Jāsir, "al-Samhūdī: ashhar muʾarrikhī al-Madīna," *Majallat al-ʿarab* 7 (1392/1972): 161–78; al-Sāmarrāʾī's introduction to his edition of the *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, at 1:7–47; 2:5–23; and Harry Munt, "Mamluk Historiography Outside of Egypt and Syria: ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Samhūdī and His Histories of Medina," *Der Islam* 92, no. 2 (2015): 413–41.

[25] Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 75.

[26] Al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba fī maʿālim Ṭāba*, ed. Ḥabīb Maḥmūd Aḥmad *et al.* (Medina: Markaz Buḥūth wa-Dirāsāt al-Madīna al-Munawwara, 1423/2002), 1:425–35.

Although various developments in the structure of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina are said to have taken place during the era of the Rāshidūn caliphs, it is really with the work ordered by al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik that the building came to take much of the shape that defined it throughout the pre-modern period.[27] This caliph is known for ordering significant construction work on a number of major mosques around the caliphate, including in Jerusalem (the Aqṣā Mosque), Damascus, Mecca, Ṣanʿāʾ, Ḥimṣ and al-Fusṭāṭ, as well as in Medina.[28] The work he ordered in Medina was carried out by the governor of that town, his cousin and the future caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, and Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān between 88/706–7 and 91/709–10.[29] As part of this project, the mosque was substantially enlarged to the east, north and west. As Sauvaget noted, it is impossible to provide exact measurements for the size of the new mosque, since the building itself does not, of course, survive and figures given in literary sources vary.[30] One set of numbers, for what it is worth, gives 167.5 cubits for the southern wall, 135 cubits for the northern wall and 200 cubits for the eastern and western walls.[31] Within these walls, a central courtyard was surrounded by arcades comprising numerous columns. This enlargement work brought the Prophet's grave, now within a dedicated chamber, within the walls of the mosque for the first time (near the southeast corner) and other features classically associated with mosques were apparently introduced at the same time, including a concave *miḥrāb* and corner towers later identified as minarets.[32]

[27] Much of this section is summarised from the discussion in Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 105–11, 115–17, where further references are given. For discussion of the literary accounts of the pre-Marwanid mosque, see Thallein Antun, *The Architectural Form of the Mosque in the Central Arab Lands, from the Hijra to the End of the Umayyad Period, 1/622–133/750* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2016), 50–70.

[28] For discussion, see Finster, "Mosaiken," 127–39; and Flood, *Great Mosque*, esp. 184–92. See also Rafi Grafman and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, "The Two Great Syrian Umayyad Mosques: Jerusalem and Damascus," *Muqarnas* 16 (1999): 1–15; and especially now Alain George, "A Builder of Mosques: The Projects of al-Walīd I, from Sanaa to Homs" (forthcoming).

[29] These, at least, are the dates given by the early local historian of Medina, Ibn Zabāla (on whom see below), as cited in Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 71–72; and al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:273–74.

[30] Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 70; see also Antun, *Architectural Form*, 66–67.

[31] Bisheh, "Mosque of the Prophet," 211. Various lengths of cubit (*dhirāʿ*) were known in the early Islamic centuries, usually somewhere around half a metre, give or take, though sometimes ranging more considerably. Umayyad-era buildings were apparently built with a cubit equivalent to 0.56m; see Grafman and Rosen-Ayalon, "Two Great Syrian Mosques," 5–6; George, *Umayyad Mosque*, 136. Following this equivalence, this gives us 112m for the western and eastern walls, 75.6m for the northern wall, and 93.8m for the southern wall. Sauvaget (*Mosquée omeyyade*, 91) offers a plan of his reconstruction of al-Walīd's mosque that agrees roughly with these measurements, although has the northern and southern walls a more similar length to each other.

[32] For these features in this mosque, see also Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 69–92; Bisheh, "Mosque of the Prophet," 201–48; Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 106–11. For other discussions of their origins, see for example, Estelle Whelan, "The Origins of the *Miḥrāb Mujawwaf*: A Reinterpretation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 2 (1996): 205–23; Nuha N.N. Khoury, "The Mihrab: From Text to Form," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 1 (1998): 1–27; Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Minaret* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); and for two other features closely associated with the mosque in Medina, see Heba Mostafa, "The Early Mosque Revisited: Introduction of the *Minbar* and *Maqṣūra*," *Muqarnas* 33 (2016): 1–16.

It was also accompanied by a lavish programme of decoration, most famously a series of mosaics that according to a well-known report transmitted by the early Medinan local historian Ibn Zabāla (more on this figure below), depicted "the trees and villas (*quṣūr*) of Paradise."[33] These, as is often suggested, perhaps resembled those that can still be seen in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.[34] This work was also famously apparently carried out with the assistance of labourers and resources sent by the Byzantine emperor Justinian II (r. 685–95, 705–11 CE).[35]

After al-Walīd's work there does not appear to have been much more done during the remaining years of Umayyad rule. As we will soon see, however, some inscriptions recorded in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and other sources suggest some work was undertaken in the mosque during the reigns of the first two Abbasid caliphs Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ and Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr.[36] It was the construction work ordered by the third Abbasid caliph, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, however, that gave the Prophet's Mosque the general form it would have down to the nineteenth century.[37] Between 162/778–79 and 165/781–82, this caliph had the mosque expanded to north, by 100 cubits (*ca.* 56m) according to some sources, and made several changes to the interior decoration. He also apparently wished to remove the additional steps that an Umayyad caliph had added to the prophet's *minbar* in the mosque to return it to its original form, but eventually decided against doing so out of fear that the necessary work would damage the wood of the original steps. As part of his renovations to the interior decoration of the mosque, al-Mahdī established a programme of inscriptions, that incorporated some earlier texts, around the courtyard and the entrances to the mosque. It is this programme of inscriptions about which the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* provides much more information than can be found in almost any other extant source.

Sources for the texts of the inscriptions

Although the extant works discussed above provide the texts of numerous inscriptions from al-Mahdī's epigraphic programme in Medina, very few offer eyewitness descriptions from their authors; almost all of their authors relied upon earlier witnesses to these inscriptions.

[33] For the quotation, see *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 364–65; Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 69; Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna*, 176; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:270.

[34] For a recent note of the link, see George, "Paradise or Empire," 53.

[35] For a discussion of this with reference to earlier scholarship, see Bisheh, "Mosque of the Prophet," 201–11; George, *Umayyad Mosque*, 87–88.

[36] See also Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 115–16.

[37] *Ibid*., 116, with further references.

(There are no extant sources authored by eyewitnesses to the Umayyad-era texts.) This opens the question of when the inscriptions disappeared. Our most reliable *terminus post quem* for their disappearance is provided by Ibn Rusta, who did apparently see at least some of the texts himself when visiting Medina during the hajj season in 290/903, a date that comes after the death of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s principal source, Abū al-Ḥusayn Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿAqīqī, in 277/890 (see further below on this figure).[38] After this date, the precise circumstances of their disappearance is hard to pin down. For what it is worth, the Andalusī writer Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, when discussing the Prophet's Mosque, notes within his description of the layers of decoration along the internal *qibla* wall that, "Above that there is a marble band (*izār*) as well, within which is a sky-blue strip (*ṣanīfa*[39] *samāwiyya*) over which are five lines inscribed with gold in a thick script, roughly a finger's width, which contain the short *sūras* at the end of the Qurʾan (*qiṣār al-mufaṣṣal*)."[40] Since, as we will shortly see, the Umayyad-era *qibla* wall inscription was said to have included *sūra*s 91 to 114, this might suggest that this at least could still be seen in the early fourth/tenth century, although there is some debate over the relationship between Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's description and the actual appearance of the mosque in Medina in his time.[41] Al-Samhūdī noted that some remnants of mosaic from the time of al-Mahdī's expansion of the mosque could still be found by the northwest minaret and along the western wall near that minaret, but that these were then destroyed in the devastating fire that broke out in the mosque in Ramaḍān 886/November 1481.[42] It is unclear whether these surviving mosaic fragments included any epigraphy.

The inscriptions were certainly still visible throughout the third/ninth century, however, and may have been restored in the middle of that century along with other features of the mosque's decoration: according to al-Balādhurī (d. before 279/892), the caliph Jaʿfar al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–47/847–61) ordered repairs to be undertaken on the Prophet's Mosque in 246/860–61, for which purpose he sent "plenty of mosaic" there.[43] The two best known sources from the late second and third/ninth century cited as eyewitnesses to the Abbasid-

[38] Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 73. For brief discussion of Ibn Rusta's trip to the Ḥijāz, see Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 69–70.

[39] Sauvaget (*Mosquée omeyyade*, 78) reads this as *ṣuffa*.

[40] Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, 6:261.

[41] Sauvaget made heavy use of this passage in his reconstruction of Prophet's Mosque; see his *Mosquée omeyyade*, 31, 69–92; and also Finster, "Mosaiken," 132. Nuha Khoury, however, has discussed this passage in a particularly interesting way that questions its relationship to a Medinan reality; see her "The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 80–98, esp. 89–94. That said, Flood (*Great Mosque*, 193–94) has argued in favour of taking Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's description seriously.

[42] Al-Samhūdī, *Khulāṣat al-wafā*, 1:317; *idem*, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:296. For this fire and its consequences, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:413–30; Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 46–47; Behrens, *Garten des Paradieses*, 93–96.

[43] Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1866), 7.

era inscriptions are Ibn Zabāla (wr. 199/814) and Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī. Al-Samhūdī mentions explicitly that, "He [i.e. Yaḥyā] and Ibn Zabāla recounted the inscriptions, inside and outside [the mosque], as well as around its entrances. We have left them out because they have not survived."[44] When al-Samhūdī does actually provide the text of a handful of these inscriptions, mostly in his chapter discussing the entrances to the mosque, he almost always explicitly credits Ibn Zabāla and/or Yaḥyā with being his source.[45] The author of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* is quite clear that Yaḥyā was his source and both this work and Yaḥyā will be discussed shortly. There is no reason not to accept Ibn Rusta's claim that he read at least some of these texts himself—the fact he is the one source to provide an inscription recording work ordered by the caliph al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 279–89/892–902) in 282/895–96 seems to confirm this[46]—although it is clear that he otherwise made heavy use of Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna* as a source for his account of Medina; it is also clear that Ibn al-Najjār made heavy use of Ibn Zabāla's work, so he may well have been the ultimate source for his discussion of the inscriptions.[47] Qāsim al-Sāmarrāʾī seems convinced that Ibn Zabāla was the source for al-Fīrūzābādī's discussion of these inscriptions and, although I cannot see that clearly stated in the latter's work, given the considerable overlap between material in al-Fīrūzābādī's history and that attributed elsewhere to Ibn Zabāla, that is certainly plausible.[48]

Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna* (known probably through at least one later recension) was without doubt the single most important source for the history of Medina's early Islamic topography, population and monuments for many later authors, especially those active in the Ayyubid and Mamlūk periods. This work has, however, been discussed in detail elsewhere.[49] Here, we will focus on the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and that work's main source for the inscriptions, Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī.

The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* is not a work particularly interested in the rites of the hajj and the umrah, but rather a very important source of geographical and topographical information on the Arabian Peninsula. It is particularly concerned, as its full given title suggests, with the

[44] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:274.

[45] See, for example, *ibid*., 2:291; 3:8, 14, 23.

[46] Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74: "Abū al-ʿAbbās, the *imām* al-Muʿtaḍid bi-llāh, the commander of the faithful, may God lengthen his remaining time, ordered the building's restoration in the year 282 [895–96 CE]." See also *RCEA*, 2:265 (no. 786); and discussion in Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 57–58.

[47] For these (and other) sources' reliance on Ibn Zabāla, see Harry Munt, "Writing the History of an Arabian Holy City: Ibn Zabāla and the First Local History of Medina," *Arabica* 59, no. 1–2 (2012): 1–34, at 2–3, 13, 15, 19, 23–27.

[48] Al-Sāmarrāʾī in al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:274, n. 8.

[49] See most recently (with references to further discussions), Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Zayn Salāma, *Akhbār al-Madīna li-Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zabāla* (Medina: Markaz Buḥūth wa-Dirāsat al-Madīna al-Munawwara, 1424/2003); Munt, "Writing the History."

routes that pilgrims used to travel from regions across the caliphate to the Ḥijāz. It survives in a single manuscript held in Mashhad.[50] That manuscript is missing its introduction and consequently there has been some debate over the identity of its author. The text's editor, Ḥamad al-Jāsir, argued forcefully that it is a work by Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Isḥāq al-Ḥarbī (d. 285/898–99) and this identification of its authorship is often followed when the work is cited by others.[51] This identification, however, has been challenged by Abdullah al-Wohaibi, who instead argued for the work's attribution to Muḥammad b. Khalaf Wakīʿ (d. 306/918), otherwise well known, especially for his extant history of the judiciary in the early Islamic centuries.[52] Some aspects of al-Wohaibi's case are convincing, particularly concerning the overlap between sources used and the way they are cited in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and in Wakīʿ's *Akhbār al-quḍāt*. Ibn al-Nadīm does also, as al-Wohaibi notes, credit Wakīʿ with a *Kitāb al-Ṭarīq*, which apparently contained "reports about regions and routes," although he also notes that it remained unfinished.[53] Leaving the precise identity of the author aside, the studies of al-Jāsir and al-Wohaibi have firmly established, largely on the basis of authorities cited, that the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* is a work of the late third/ninth or early fourth/tenth century.

The *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s direct source for this discussion of the inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque is also cited at least thirty-three times throughout the work as a whole. Abū al-Ḥusayn Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥasan b. Jaʿfar b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Aṣghar b. ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, known as al-ʿAqīqī, was, according to al-Samhūdī, along with Ibn Zabāla one of the first to compose a history of Medina.[54] We know a fair amount about his life, his ancestors, and his descendants, mainly due to notices in ʿAlid genealogies.[55] Yaḥyā was born in Medina in 214/829, seven years before the death of his

[50] Ms. Mashhad, al-Maktaba al-Riḍawiyya, no. 5751. The manuscript is undated, but it was suggested by its most prominent student, Ḥusayn ʿAlī Maḥfūẓ, that it was copied approximately in the early sixth/twelfth century; it was certainly owned by someone in 899/1493–94. I have been unable to consult Maḥfūẓ's studies directly, but see the summary in al-Jāsir's lengthy introduction to his edition of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 9–273 (henceforth JāsMuq.), at 271.

[51] For al-Jāsir's argument, see JāsMuq., esp. at 262–70; and also *idem*, "Makhṭūṭ ʿan maʿālim jazīrat al-ʿarab li-l-imām al-Ḥarbī (198–285 H)" (part II), *Majallat al-ʿarab* 3, no. 3 (1388/1968): 193–98.

[52] Abdullah al-Wohaibi, *The Northern Hijaz in the Writings of the Arab Geographers, 800–1150* (Beirut: Al-Risalah, 1973), 450–53. Al-Wohaibi refers to the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* by the title *Manāzil ṭarīq Makka*. For discussion of Wakīʿ's *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, see Mathieu Tillier, *L'invention du cadi: la justice des musulmans, des juifs et des chrétiens aux premiers siècles de l'Islam* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2017), esp. 154–55.

[53] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 1/ii:353. Wakīʿ was an important source for al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's (d. 463/1071) topographical discussion of Baghdad and Lassner speculated that the latter may have taken material from Wakīʿ's *Kitāb al-Ṭarīq*, but there is nothing in the extant *Kitāb al-Manāsik* that (if this work were by Wakīʿ) could confirm this; see Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages: Text and Studies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 30–31.

[54] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:65.

[55] Abū Naṣr al-Bukhārī, *Sirr al-silsila al-ʿalawiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (Najaf: al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1382/1963), *passim*; al-Najāshī, *Fihrist asmāʾ muṣannifī al-shīʿa al-mushtahar bi-Rijāl al-Najāshī*, ed.

father at the age of thirty-seven in 221/835–36.[56] His grandfather Jaʿfar is said to have been recognised as an *imām* by some Zaydīs, and known as al-Ḥujja, "the Proof."[57] Jaʿfar was presumably seen as a threat by the Abbasid caliphs because he was arrested by Hārūn al-Rashīd's last governor of Medina, Abū al-Bakhtarī Wahb b. Wahb, and held for eighteen months.[58] The family does not seem to have been at odds permanently with the Abbasids, but many of them are reported to have been imprisoned or come to otherwise nasty ends.[59] There is, for example, a suggestion that the Abbasids' revolutionary commander Abū Muslim tried to poison Abū Jaʿfar ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Aṣghar.[60] The family also appears to have had some problems with other ʿAlids; Yaḥyā's brother, ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. Jaʿfar, for example, is said to have been killed by al-Ḥasan b. Zayd in Ṭabaristān.[61]

Of Yaḥyā himself we know relatively little. Apart from his birth date, noted above, we know that he died in Mecca in 277/890 and that the Abbasid governor of Mecca at the time, Hārūn b. Muḥammad, prayed over him.[62] He may have studied with Ibn Zabāla in Medina, since he is Yaḥyā's most oft-cited direct source according to al-Samhūdī's citations.[63] However, what we know of Ibn Zabāla's life suggests that, for chronological reasons, this would be highly unlikely; it is more probable that Yaḥyā simply used Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna* as a source or studied it with one of the latter's students. This suggestion is supported by four *isnād*s in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* which have Yaḥyā transmit Ibn Zabāla's material with

---

Mūsā al-Shabīrī al-Zanjānī (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Tābiʿa li-Jamāʿat al-Mudarrisīn, 1407/1986), 64 (no. 149), 441–42 (no. 1189); al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Āl Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, 2nd ed. (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1380/1961), 208 (no. 801). Extracts from these and several other pre-modern sources on Yaḥyā's life and works are also usefully collated in the editor's introduction [henceforth KāẓMuq] to Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī, *Kitāb al-Muʿaqqibīn min wuld al-imām amīr al-muʾminīn*, ed. Muḥammad al-Kāẓim (Qom: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-ʿAẓamī al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1422/2001), 6–9. Modern discussions include Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-ʿAlī, "al-Muʾallafāt al-ʿarabiyya ʿan al-Madīna wa-l-Ḥijāz," *Majallat al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿirāqī* 11 (1384/1964): 118–57, at 129–30; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: Brill, 1967–) [henceforth *GAS*], 1:273; Ḥamad al-Jāsir, "Muʾallafāt fī taʾrīkh al-Madīna," *Majallat al-ʿarab* 4 (1389–90/1969–70): 97–100, 262–66, 327–34, 385–88, 465–67, at 386; Sebastian Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen zu den „Maqātil aṭ-Ṭālibiyyīn" des Abūʾl-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī (gest. 356/967): ein Beitrag zur Problematik der mündlichen und schriftlichen Überlieferung in der mittelalterlichen arabischen Literatur* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1991), 226–28; Kazuo Morimoto, "The Formation and Development of the Science of Talibid Genealogies in the 10th and 11th Century Middle East," *Oriente Moderno* 18, no. 2 (1999): 541–70, at 544–45; Teresa Bernheimer, *The ʿAlids: The First Family of Islam, 750–1200* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), esp. 18–19.

[56] Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, as cited by KāẓMuq., 8; also KāẓMuq., 11.

[57] For detailed discussion of the significance of the Shiʿi use of the term *ḥujja* to describe the imam, albeit in Imāmī rather than Zaydī circles, see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *La preuve de Dieu: la mystique shiʿite à travers l'œuvre de Kulaynî IXe–Xe siècle* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2018).

[58] Abū Naṣr al-Bukhārī, *Sirr al-silsila*, 71–72.

[59] See the discussion in Bernheimer, *ʿAlids*, 19.

[60] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr, 4th ed. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1427/2006), 159.

[61] *Ibid*., 558.

[62] Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī, al-Marwazī and Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, as cited by KāẓMuq., 7–8.

[63] See also al-ʿAlī. "al-Muʾallafāt al-ʿarabiyya," 129–30.

the latter's best-known *rāwī*, "transmitter," al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (d. 256/870) as intermediary between the two.[64] Yaḥyā apparently had seven sons, one of whom, Ṭāhir, was allegedly murdered.[65] As al-Samhūdī mentions, Yaḥyā's descendants came to be the local rulers of Medina for centuries;[66] the first to have held this position seems to have been Yaḥyā's great-great-grandson, Ṭāhir b. Muslim b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir b. Yaḥyā.[67]

The pre-modern bio-bibliographical sources attribute four works to Yaḥyā: *Akhbār al-Madīna*;[68] *Ansāb āl Abī Ṭālib*;[69] *Kitāb al-Manāsik ʿan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn*;[70] and *Kitāb al-Masjid*.[71] Of these four titles only one, *Ansāb āl Abī Ṭālib*, survives, and that possibly only partially.[72] As regards the other three, there is some evidence to suggest that they should actually be regarded as one and the same and that the different titles were attached to different recensions of this one work during the long process of transmission. We can be reasonably confident that *Akhbār al-Madīna* and *Kitāb al-Masjid* are two titles which refer to the same work. The three extant sources which quote a significant number of traditions from Yaḥyā—the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* (at least thirty-three citations), al-Marāghī's (d. 816/1414) *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra* (at least thirty-six citations),[73] and al-Samhūdī's *Wafāʾ al-wafā* (approximately two hundred and eighty citations)—use him as a source for the Prophet's Mosque much more frequently than for any other subject: thirty-two citations in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, twenty-four in the

[64] *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 365, 367, 369, 379. For al-Zubayr b. Bakkār as a *rāwī* of Ibn Zabāla, see Munt, "Writing the History," 14–18, 24–25.

[65] For Yaḥyā's seven sons, see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī *apud* KāẓMuq., 7; on Ṭāhir's murder, see Abū al-Faraj, *Maqātil*, 551.

[66] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:424.

[67] See Richard Mortel, "The Origins and Early History of the Ḥusaynid Amirate of Madīna to the End of the Ayyūbid Period," *Studia Islamica* 74 (1991): 63–78, at 64–66; though cf. the slightly different version of events in Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Arabia," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 1: The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson, 397–447 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 411.

[68] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Iʿlān bi-l-tawbīkh li-man dhamma al-taʾrīkh*, ed. Franz Rosenthal and Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-ʿAlī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 274; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:424; 2:65, 159; 3:141; 5:27, 61, 107; Hājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. Şerefettin Yaltkaya and Rifat Bilge (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1360–62/1941–43), 1:29. Modern discussions include al-ʿAlī, "al-Muʾallafāt al-ʿarabiyya," 129–30; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, *Muʿjam mā ullifa ʿan rasūl Allāh (ṣ)* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1402/1982), 93–94; ʿAbd Allāh ʿUsaylān, *al-Madīna al-munawwara fī āthār al-muʾallifīn wa-l-bāḥithīn qadīm*^{an} *wa-ḥadīth*^{an} (Medina: ʿAbd Allāh ʿUsaylān, 1418/1997), 32–33.

[69] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 442; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 208; also discussed in *GAS*, 1:273; Morimoto, "Formation and Development," 544–45; KāẓMuq.

[70] Al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 208.

[71] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 442; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 208; Ibn Shahrāshūb *apud* KāẓMuq., 7. The title is said to refer to the Prophet's Mosque. Muḥammad al-Kāẓim also mentions (KāẓMuq., 12) four other works by Yaḥyā but these do not appear in the pre-modern bio-bibliographical literature that I consulted: *Akhbār al-fawāṭim*; *Akhbār al-zaynabāt*; *Kitāb fī al-khilāfa*; *al-Makr fī man kunniya bi-Abī Bakr*.

[72] Yaḥyā, *Muʿaqqibīn*.

[73] Al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra bi-talkhīṣ maʿālim dār al-hijra*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh ʿUsaylān (Medina: ʿAbd Allāh ʿUsaylān, 1422/2002).

Taḥqīq al-Nuṣra, and just over three-quarters of the citations in the *Wafāʾ al-Wafā*.[74] Many of the other citations from Yaḥyā in these works concern subjects which might reasonably be included in a discussion of the Prophet's Mosque, including for example: Medina's distinctive merits (*faḍāʾil*);[75] the prophet's *hijra*;[76] the prophet's death;[77] the performance of *ziyāra* (pilgrimage or pious visit) to the prophet's tomb;[78] and other mosques in which the prophet was believed to have prayed.[79] It seems likely, therefore, that Yaḥyā's *Akhbār al-Madīna* and *Kitāb al-Masjid* were originally one and the same work that came to be transmitted via different routes under different titles.[80] Such an eventuality would hardly be unique since many works from the earliest Islamic centuries were transmitted to later periods under different titles, most likely because they never originally had any single one.

Although the author of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* appears to be citing Yaḥyā directly, that there were several recensions of Yaḥyā's *Akhbār al-Madīna* we know from al-Samhūdī, who had seen at least two, maybe three, and possibly, although less likely, four.[81] He maybe had one recension from an unnamed transmitter and certainly had one from Yaḥyā's grandson, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, known as Ibn Akhī Ṭāhir (d. 358/969).[82] There was at least one more recension available to al-Samhūdī, via Yaḥyā's son Abū al-Qāsim Ṭāhir; al-ʿAlī suggested that Ṭāhir transmitted two different recensions, but this is probably incorrect.[83] We also know that one of the transmitters of Abū al-Qāsim Ṭāhir's recension of

[74] The editor of al-Marāghī's *Taḥqīq* assumed that all the references to a "Yaḥyā" refer to one Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd. However, since most of the relevant passages are either near parallels to material quoted from Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī in al-Samhūdī's *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, or show a reliance upon similar sources, I think that, except in the few cases where the full name Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd is given by al-Marāghī as his source, the editor was incorrect.

[75] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:154; 3:320–21, 323.

[76] *Ibid*., 1:414, 424–25, 425–26, 433, 442–44, 447–48, 453, 456.

[77] Al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra*, 146–47; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:526, 528; 3:390.

[78] Al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra*, 172, 193–94; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 5:27, 29, 42–43, 61, 77, 101, 107–8.

[79] *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 425; al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra*, 56; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:147, 152, 169, 175, 177, 178, 182, 183, 195–96, 215, 228, 231, 240, 249, 250, 253, 421, 426, 428, 432, 433–34, 440.

[80] Since it seems that Sunni sources were more likely to know the work as *Akhbār al-Madīna* and Shiʿi sources as *Kitāb al-Masjid* (see references in nn. 68 and 71), there appears to have been a sectarian divide in the work's transmission.

[81] Al-Jāsir ("Muʾallafāt," 386) and al-Sāmarrāʾī (in the introduction to his edition of al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:36) thought he had access to three; al-ʿAlī ("al-Muʾallafāt al-ʿarabiyya," 129) suggested four.

[82] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:447; 2:239.

[83] Ṭāhir's recension is noted in *ibid*., 1:155, 424; 2:239, 256, 314, 3:215, 5:29. Al-ʿAlī's argument for a fourth recension stems from the fact that, at one point, al-Samhūdī says (*Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:256), "Such is in the copy that his son transmitted on the authority of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madāʾinī." Al-ʿAlī suggested ("al-Muʾallafāt al-ʿarabiyya," 129) that this meant that Ṭāhir had transmitted another copy of Yaḥyā's work, this time not directly from his father but rather on the authority of one Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madāʾinī, who had in turn taken it from Yaḥyā. However, this Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madāʾinī is almost certainly the famous Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Madāʾinī (d. between 225/839–40 and 235/849–50), who predeceased Yaḥyā by quite some time. It is simply that al-Madāʾinī is the source of this particular report in Yaḥyā's work.

his father's work was called Ibn Firās.[84] Yaḥyā's grandson, Ibn Akhī Ṭāhir, also appears in some sources as a transmitter of his *Ansāb āl Abī Ṭālib*.[85] Abū al-Qāsim Ṭāhir's recension of his father's work appears to have been the most widely used. It is the one that al-Samhūdī mentions the most and, when other later local historians of Medina such as Ibn al-Najjār and al-Marjānī (d. after 770/1368–69) cite Abū al-Qāsim Ṭāhir b. Yaḥyā, they are presumably referring to his recension of Yaḥyā's work.[86]

There may have been one more recension of Yaḥyā's work on Medina, since al-Sakhāwī notes that one Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-ʿAlawī composed a book on the history of Medina.[87] Since there is no mention of Yaḥyā's son Muḥammad writing a work on Medina anywhere else, this probably refers to al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā's (Ibn Akhī Ṭāhir's) recension of Yaḥyā's history, although it could be yet another recension of its own.[88] As is the case with many other works from the third/ninth century, the existence of several recensions of Yaḥyā's work(s) on Medina, together with the lack of a uniform title, does not mean that Yaḥyā did not compile a work on Medina for dissemination with a relatively fixed form.[89] Again, however, we have to assume that the nature of the transmission of texts in this period would have left its mark upon Yaḥyā's original. Al-Samhūdī, for example, notes a minor difference between the recensions of Abū al-Qāsim Ṭāhir and Ibn Akhī Ṭāhir, and tells us that in Ibn Firās's recension of Ṭāhir's recension, the former added to the work some information that he had received orally from Ṭāhir.[90]

Since we know that Yaḥyā was a descendant of the Husaynid *imām* ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. *ca.* 95/713–14) and the author of a genealogical work on the descendants of Abū Ṭālib, it is only to be expected that his works display some pro-ʿAlid inclinations. His genealogical work shows that Yaḥyā was concerned with the persecution faced by the descendants of Abū Ṭālib. In the surviving manuscript, a list of ʿAlids who came to an unfortunate end as the result of persecution is provided, besides the usual genealogical material. These lists include topics such as the descendants of ʿAlī who were poisoned, the Hasanids who were killed during the reign of Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr, and ʿAlids who died in prison during the reign of Hārūn al-

[84] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:314.

[85] For example, in al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 208; and in al-ʿUmarī and Ibn ʿInaba as cited in KāẓMuq., 6, 8.

[86] See Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna*, 63, 205; al-Marjānī, *Bahjat al-nufūs wa-l-asrār fī taʾrīkh dār hijrat al-nabī al-mukhtār*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Faḍl (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), 1:209.

[87] Al-Sakhāwī, *Iʿlān*, 273; followed by al-Munajjid, *Muʿjam*, 93–94; and ʿUsaylān, *al-Madīna al-munawwara*, 33.

[88] Incidentally, yet one more confusing title, an *Akhbār al-Madīna* of one Yaḥyā b. Jaʿfar al-Nassāba, is thrown into the mix in al-Munajjid, *Muʿjam*, 93–94. This Yaḥyā, however, is clearly our Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥasan b. Jaʿfar al-ʿAqīqī, the author of a work entitled *Ansāb āl Abī Ṭālib*, hence also al-Nassāba, "the genealogist."

[89] For a similar argument concerning Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna*, see Munt, "Writing the History," 14–18.

[90] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:239, 314.

Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809).[91] The citations from his work on the history of Medina also show that he was interested in traditions concerning Fāṭima and the ʿAlids. For example, he is the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s and al-Samhūdī's main source for the discussion of Fāṭima's apartment and tomb chamber in the Prophet's Mosque; al-Samhūdī also cites a prophetic *ḥadīth* from Yaḥyā that come the Day of Resurrection, Muḥammad, Fāṭima, ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn would be in the same position.[92] In line with the earlier noted title of Yaḥyā's own work on pilgrimage rites (*manāsik*), as part of his guidance about how to perform the pilgrimage to the tomb of the prophet he provided examples of how prominent ʿAlids, especially ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, acted.[93] He is similarly interested specifically in how ʿAlids undertook a visit to another mosque closely associated with the prophet's career in Medina, in Qubāʾ to the south of the town.[94] There are also a number of traditions cited on Yaḥyā's authority with *isnād*s of prominent ʿAlids, often including the *imām*s ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818), Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 115/733).[95] However, he by no means restricted his interests to pro-ʿAlid material. Such reports that either display a clear pro-ʿAlid inclination or feature prominent ʿAlids in their *isnād* are very much in the minority among extant material cited from Yaḥyā; and while he may have been al-Samhūdī's key source for the tomb of Fāṭima, he was also an important authority on the tombs of the first two caliphs, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.[96]

Yaḥyā's work on Medina seems to have received early acceptance as an important source—he is the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s most oft-cited source for the history of the Prophet's Mosque—and although he was little used in later Medinan local histories for several centuries, this all changed with al-Marāghī, in whose work he is the second most oft-cited Medinan historian from the first three Islamic centuries, behind Ibn Zabāla. He is then al-Samhūdī's most important source for matters concerning the Prophet's Mosque up to the mid-third/ninth century.

Before we move on to look more closely at the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s section on the inscriptions, it is worth looking briefly into one of Yaḥyā's sources for his material about the Umayyad-era inscriptions, as preserved in this work. The *isnād* given for that material mentions one Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, almost certainly the figure otherwise known as Abū

[91] Yaḥyā, *Muʿaqqibīn*, 116–17, 117–23, 125–30.
[92] *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 366–67; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:207–10.
[93] Al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra*, 146–47; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 5:61, 77.
[94] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:152.
[95] *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 367; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:44, 337–38; 3:323; 5:27–29, 61.
[96] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:309–18.

Ghassān al-Kinānī (d. between 201/816–17 and 210/825–26).[97] He was the single most important source for the Iraqi ʿUmar b. Shabba's (d. 262/876) history of Medina, appearing as the latter's direct source in the *isnād*s of 278 out of 1,065 reports that make up the first part of the extant manuscript of this work.[98] The vast majority of the discussion of the Prophet's Mosque is missing from this manuscript, although Abū Ghassān is cited in the portion of that discussion that does survive and he also appears as a source on seventeen occasions (all bar one through one or two intermediaries) in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*.[99] Some have considered whether, in light of this prolific activity, he may also have penned a work on Medina's history. Ḥamad al-Jāsir, for example, drew attention to the fact that Abū Ghassān descended from a long line of administrators (*kuttāb*) and noted that we should not, therefore, be surprised if he had committed his teachings to writing.[100] Nagel also suggested that Abū Ghassān had likely written down the reports on the revolt of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh "al-Nafs al-Zakiyya" which were then transmitted by Ibn Shabba and cited by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).[101] Abū Ghassān was a source for a large quantity of written documents, including a letter by ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the famous correspondence that passed between Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh "al-Nafs al-Zakiyya," and this does suggest that he valued written material and sought to ensure its transmission.[102] Ibn Shabba also stated at least twice that he had found something written on Abū Ghassān's authority which he had not heard from him.[103] Elsewhere, he cited a piece of writing (*kitāb*) by Abū Ghassān for a report, but noted as well that he had read over the report in question with him.[104] Taken altogether, this does suggest the probability that Abū Ghassān possessed at least personal

[97] See, for example, al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1402–13/1982–92), 26:636–39; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-aʿlām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1407–24/1987–2004), 14:379.

[98] Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna al-munawwara*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Dandal and Yāsīn Saʿd al-Dīn Bayān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1417/1996), 1:7–344.

[99] On seven of those occasions, the intermediaries are Hārūn b. Mūsā and Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī, as in the section translated below; see *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 359, 363, 369, 381, 383, 385–86, 403.

[100] Al-Jāsir, "Muʾallafāt," 328; see also Elad, *Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya*, 415–18.

[101] Tilman Nagel, "Ein früher Bericht über den Aufstand von Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh im Jahre 145h," *Der Islam* 46 (1970): 227–62, at 236–38; see also the thoughts in Elad, *Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya*, 418.

[102] For ʿAlī's letter, see Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:139–41; for the letters between al-Manṣūr and al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:207–15, with discussion in Nagel, "Ein früher Bericht;" Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 44–45; Elad, *Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya*, 171–93; and Tor, "Parting of Ways." For some other documents transmitted by Abū Ghassān, see Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:96; and Michael Lecker, "The Preservation of Muḥammad's Letters," in his *People, Tribes and Society in Arabia Around the Time of Muḥammad*, no. 10 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 12, n. 60.

[103] Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:72, 80.

[104] *Ibid*., 1:365.

notebooks containing traditions and copies of documents dealing with the history of Medina, which were distributed to his students.

The upshot of all this is that, in general terms at least, we have reason to be relatively confident about the transcription of the inscriptions provided, at least those that were added in the early Abbasid period. We have—between Ibn Zabāla, Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī, the author of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, Ibn Rusta and perhaps (although this is far less certain) Abū Ghassān—several avenues of relatively early (i.e. compiled between the late second/early ninth and early fourth/ tenth centuries), written testimony to their texts, involving figures of different backgrounds and with different scholarly interests. There are, of course, as can be seen in the notes to the translation below, some differences in the precise readings of some of the inscriptions offered between various sources, and sometimes those differences are meaningful. This does make it more difficult for us to establish what the actual text of the inscription was, but it does not mean there was no original text. Such discrepancies could easily be down to the nature of the reception of such epigraphic schemes among visitors/readers, a topic that will be taken up again briefly later in this article.

I do not want the arguments of this article to become circular and, since the evidence of the protocols for referring to the caliphs in these texts will be picked up layer in the discussion, we should not place too much emphasis on them when verifying the general accuracy of the transcribed texts. It can be pointed out, however, that many aspects of the texts given for these inscriptions, and particularly the protocols for referring to caliphs, is generally in line with what should be expected on the basis extant inscriptions from the second/eighth century, as well as from similar protocols on other objects such as coins.[105] That is to say, as we will now see, many of the relevant inscriptions offer variations on one of two standard phrases, either:

amara ʿabd allāh [ism] amīr al-muʾminīn bi-...	"The servant of God, [name], the commander of the faithful, ordered..."

Or slightly less commonly:

[105] For references to extant inscriptions, see above, nn. 8–15. Some early Abbasid coins with similar rules for providing titles and names for a reigning caliph are discussed in Michael L. Bates, "Khurāsānī Revolutionaries and al-Mahdī's Title," in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri, 279–317 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003). That *ʿabd allāh* [*ism*] *amīr al-muʾminīn* was the standard way of referring to Umayyad caliphs, see Aram Aldo Shahin, "Struggling for Communitas: Arabian Political Thought in the Great Century of Change (ca. 560–ca. 660 AD)" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2009), 410.

mimmā amara bihi ʿabd allāh [ism] amīr al-muʾminīn...	"[This is] among that which was ordered by the servant of God, [name], the commander of the faithful..."

In other texts, other titles are added to the early Abbasid inscriptions, but this is where things get more interesting and discussion of this will be picked up at the appropriate place in what follows.

The Kitāb al-Manāsik on the inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque

The following is a translation of the section of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* that deals with the inscriptions that could be seen in the Prophet's Mosque.[106] This work records texts inscribed between the caliphates of al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik and Hārūn al-Rashīd. The notes provide references to where these same texts can be found in other sources. Only those that can also be found in the surviving section of Ibn Rusta's *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa* have been the basis for almost all existing discussions to date. The one other source that provides almost (but not quite) as complete an account of these inscriptions as the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s is al-Fīrūzābādī's *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba fī maʿālim Ṭāba*. Although some use will be made of the latter work in this article, it is the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s account around which discussion will centre.

[385] *This is an account of the inscriptions (al-kitāb) which run around the mosque*

Yaḥyā b. Ḥasan b. Jaʿfar Abū al-Ḥusayn al-ʿAlawī[107] --- Hārūn b. Mūsā[108] --- Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā[109] --- Ḥusayn b. Muṣʿab:[110]

ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz had the texts (*kutub*) inscribed in the mosque, and [he is] the one who had inscribed the text (*kitāb*) which is along the *qibla* [wall] of the Prophet's (ṣ) Mosque; it starts with the whole of Umm al-Qurʾān, and then "By the sun and its brightness in the

[106] *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 385–95. The page numbers from al-Jāsir's edition are given in square brackets in the translation. The numbers given to the inscriptions have been added by me for cross-referencing.

[107] This is Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī, discussed above.

[108] Hārūn b. Mūsā b. Abī ʿAlqama al-Farwī al-Madīnī (d. in 252/866–67 or 253/867), who was a student of Abū Ghassān and a teacher of Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī; see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, 26:637; 30:113–15.

[109] This is almost certainly Abū Ghassān Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Kinānī, discussed above.

[110] He is listed by al-Mizzī among those from whom Ibn Zabāla narrated (*Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, 25:62), although not among Abū Ghassān's teachers. Ibn Zabāla and Abū Ghassān were, however, of the same generation of Medinan scholars and many topics discussed on both of their authority are very similar, so it would make sense that they shared many sources.

forenoon," down to finishing with "Say, 'I seek refuge with the Lord of men.'"[111] It runs from opposite you to the right when you enter the mosque from the entrance next to Dār Marwān along to Bāb ʿAlī.[112]

He said: It was inscribed by a *mawlā* of Āl Ḥuwayṭib b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā, called Saʿd Ḥaṭabah.[113]

He said: ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz is the one who put up the lead which runs around the mosque and the waterspouts which are made of lead. Only two waterspouts of those put up by ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz remain, one of which is in the place where funeral prayers take place (*mawḍiʿ al-janāʾiz*),[114] and the other is over the entrance through which **[386]** the people from the east (*ahl al-mashriq*[115]) enter, and which is known as Bāb ʿĀtika. The mosque had no merlons (*shurafāt*) until those constructed by ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Naṣrī,[116] who was the governor of Medina in the year 104 [722–23 CE].

The *ḥarūriyya* destroyed the inscription which was in the mosque's courtyard, though ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. ʿAṭiyya al-Saʿdī restored it when he was governor of Medina in the year 130 [747–48 CE].[117] Then Dāwūd b. ʿAlī destroyed it when he came as governor for Abū al-ʿAbbās in the year 132 [749–50 CE]. Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān[118] helped him restore it, but Dāwūd passed

[111] I.e. Q1 and 91–114. All translations of verses from the Qurʾan are slightly adapted from those of Alan Jones, *The Qurʾān* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), unless otherwise specified. (I regularly make alterations to the capitalisation of certain words.)

[112] Al-Mahdī's mosque seems to have had a large number of entrances, with some twenty-odd regularly listed in sources; see the overview in al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:5–31; and also see below, Figure 1. It is less clear how many were there in the Umayyad period; see Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 75–78. The entrance by Dār Marwān would be that near the southwest corner of the mosque along the western wall, which came to be known as Bāb al-Salām and does seem to have existed in al-Walīd's structure; see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:28–30; Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 77. I follow al-Samhūdī (*Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:7–8) in identifying Bāb ʿAlī as the southern-most entrance along the eastern wall of the mosque, so probably loosely opposite the entrance by Dār Marwān. These two entrances thus corresponded roughly to the Bāb al-Salām and Bāb al-Baqīʿ as identified on the plan of the Prophet's Mosque following the Saudi work of 1949–55 in ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Kharīṭa al-athariyya li-l-Madīna al-munawwara* (Cairo: Majmūʿat Najjār li-l-Tijāra wa-l-Ṭibāʿa, 2005).

[113] An important and renowned early copyist of the Qurʾan. He is the individual also identified as responsible for these inscriptions in Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 1/i:15–16. He was apparently known as "Saʿd *ṣāḥib al-maṣāḥif*;" see Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1371–73/1952–53), 3:550.

[114] This was by Bāb ʿAlī; see below and al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:8.

[115] Ibn al-Najjār (*al-Durra al-thamīna*, 176) has "people from the marketplace" (*ahl al-sūq*).

[116] Many other sources have al-Naḍrī instead, although al-Naṣrī seems to be correct; see al-Jāsir's note in *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 386, n. 1. He was governor of Medina, and also seemingly Mecca and al-Ṭāʾif as well, from 104/722–23 to 106/724–25; see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:1449–52, 1471, 1487.

[117] The *ḥarūriyya* here are the followers of Abū Ḥamza al-Mukhtār b. ʿAwf, who led an army from South Arabia which briefly occupied Mecca and Medina in 129–30/747; for discussion with further references to their activities in the Ḥijāz, see Harry Munt, "Caliphal Imperialism and Ḥijāzī Elites in the Second/Eighth Century," *al-Masāq* 28, no. 1 (2016): 6–21, at 6–7, 12–13. Ibn Rusta (*al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 70) gives the date of its restoration as 128/745–46, but this is clearly a mistake.

[118] A well-known figure associated heavily with al-Walīd's and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's work on the Prophet's Mosque; see Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 106–7. He died in 140/757–58; see Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1421/2001), 7:513.

away before he could complete it; Ziyād b. ʿAbd Allāh [*sic*] al-Ḥārithī finished it.[119] One of the *mawālī* of the Medinans, who was called Ibn Ghazāla, was summoned to him, and he is the one who altered it and completed it.

We have made a copy of what was inscribed along the *qibla*, and what was inscribed after it in its place, letter by letter. When Ibn Ghazāla had finished he came to Ziyād b. ʿAbd Allāh asking him for his pay. Ziyād said, "Ibn Ghazāla, when you see us act in accordance with what has been written, then come and take your pay."

Abū al-Ḥusayn said: This is the inscription which Ibn Ghazāla wrote and finished:

> **[§1]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. There is no god but God, Who is One and has no companion. Muḥammad is His servant and His messenger, whom He sent "with the guidance and the religion of truth, to cause it to prevail over all [other] religion, even though the polytheists dislike that."[120] **[387]** The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful, has commanded fear of God and obedience to Him as well as action in accordance with the Book of God and obedience to it/Him as well as the *sunna* of His prophet (ṣ). [He commands] doing right by one's family, the magnification/veneration of God's ordinances that the tyrants belittled, and the belittling of the falsehoods they magnified; [he commands] the revival of the rights that they killed off, and the killing off of the enmity and oppression that they revived. [He commands] that God is to be obeyed and that servants be disobeyed [when necessary] out of obedience to God. Obedience is owed to God and to those who obey God; no obedience is due to anyone acting in disobedience to God. We call for the Book of God and the *sunna* of His prophet (ṣ); and to justice in governing the affairs of the Muslims, the equitable division of the *fayʾ* among them and the appropriate expenditure of the "fifths" which God commanded [be distributed] to "kinsmen, orphans, the destitute, [and] travellers."[121]

[119] Dāwūd b. ʿAlī died in 133/750. He is famously associated with having taken other, violent measures against members of the Umayyad family in the Ḥijāz during his brief tenure in the region; see Chase F. Robinson, "The Violence of the Abbasid Revolution," in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, ed. Yasir Suleiman, 226–51 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 239. Ziyād b. ʿUbayd Allāh was governor of Medina (and also at times Mecca, al-Ṭāʾif and al-Yamāma) from 133/750 to 141/758–59; see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:73, 81, 84, 90–91, 121, 124, 127, 129, 137–38, 161. He apparently oversaw the work that Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr ordered to be undertaken in the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca; see al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka wa-mā jāʾa fīhā min al-āthār*, ed. Rushdī al-Ṣāliḥ Malḥas (Mecca: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Mājidiyya, 1352–57/1933–38), 2:58.

[120] Q9.33.

[121] Cf. Q2.177. For other versions of this story and this inscription, sometimes abbreviated or with slightly different text, see Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 70–71; Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna*, 176–77 (with a very important variant, discussed further later in this article); al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:436–38; *RCEA*, 1:29–30 (no. 38). For discussion, see Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 54–56. Ibn Rusta also provides a second version of the inscription, with slightly different wording; see Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 73; *RCEA*, 1:36–38 (no. 47); Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 56–57.

When Ibn Ghazāla had finished he came to Ziyād asking for his pay. Ziyād, who was irrationally angry with him, said to him, "Ibn Ghazāla, when you see us act in accordance with what is in it, then come and take your pay."[122]

al-Mahdī's (may God have mercy upon him) inscriptions

Abū al-Ḥusayn said: Immediately after this [i.e., the above inscription] is this inscription, which al-Mahdī had written in the year 162 [778–79 CE]:[123]

> **[§2]** The servant of God, al-Mahdī, the commander of the faithful, may God ennoble him and glorify his victory, ordered the expansion of the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) and its strengthening, out of desire for God alone and the last abode—may God grant him the greatest recompense—and to make it more spacious for his family and his descendants among all the Muslims who pray there. May God magnify the reward of the commander of the faithful for the pious work he intended **[388]** and make great his recompense.[124]
>
> **[§3]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. **Then he had the whole of Umm al-Qurʾān inscribed.**[125] **Then inscribed after that was, "The only ones to visit God's places of worship", the whole verse.**[126] **Then he had written:** The expansion of the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) that the servant of God, al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful—may God ennoble him—ordered was started in the year 162 [778–79 CE]. It was completed in the year 165 [781–82 CE]. The commander of the faithful—may God make him thrive—lavishes praises upon God for permitting him and giving him the distinction of (re)constructing the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) and making it more spacious. We praise God, the Lord of the Worlds, at all times.[127]

---

[122] It is a bit strange that this anecdote is repeated and with very slightly different wording. Perhaps it suggests there has been a change of source?

[123] From what follows in the inscription, it cannot actually have been written before 165/781–82, although it refers to the period of building work that began in 162/778–79.

[124] See also Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 73–74; Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna*, 179. Ibn Rusta presents this text as a continuation of his repeat of the previous inscription (§1) without any intervening words, so some have considered it part of the previous text; see, for example, *RCEA*, 1:36–38 (no. 47). The *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, however, clearly supports Sauvaget's earlier argument (*Mosquée omeyyade*, 56–57) that it was originally a separate text.

[125] I.e. Q1. The use of ** as parentheses marks out text where the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*—or its source(s)—is summarising the content rather than providing it in full transcription.

[126] Q9.18.

[127] See also Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74; Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna*, 179; *RCEA*, 1:35–36 (no. 46); Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 58–59. Between the preceding and this text, Ibn Rusta inserted an inscription commemorating work undertaken during al-Muʿtaḍid's caliphate (r. 279–289/892–902) in 282/895–96; see Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74; *RCEA*, 2:265 (no. 786); Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 57–58. Both Ibn al-Najjār and the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* omit this, which makes sense given it postdates the deaths of their stated or likely sources (discussed above).

Then besides this inscription is another which was written during the reign of Abū al-ʿAbbās, which this inscription [i.e., the one given above] reaches. It is:

> **[§4]** The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful, ordered the decoration of this mosque, that its adornments be put in order (*tartībihi*) and that the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) be made more spacious in the year 132 [749–50 CE], desiring to please God and reward from God. For with God is "the reward of both this world and the next. God is Hearing and Observing."[128]

[389] Abū [al-]Ḥusayn said: There is a marker (*ʿalāma*) of the first mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) on the ceiling, crescent moons in gold, next to the interior wall opposite the first mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ). [Another] marker of the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ), next to the courtyard to the western side, is four arches finished with mosaic, all of them dark green/blue (*khuḍr*). The upper parts of the arches of the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) along the *qibla* [side] are blocked with teak, which is twisted (*muḥarraf*).[129] There are small openings along the eastern [side] together with arches blocked with teak. Above them are panels with no openings.[130]

In the eastern corner of the inside of the mosque is written:

> **[§5]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. O God! Your servant and Your caliph (*khalīfataka*), ʿAbd Allāh, (son of)[131] the commander of the faithful, praises You for permitting him to (re-)build this mosque and adorn it. The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful, commanded the decoration of this mosque, the ordering of its adornments, and making the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) more spacious in the year 133 [750–51 CE], desiring to please God, His reward and His generosity. For with God is "the reward of both this world and the next. God is Hearing and Observing."[132] There is no god but God, Who is one and

[128] A slight rearrangement of the wording of Q4.134. For alternative versions of the text, see Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74 (where the date is given as 162/778–79); al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:291. This inscription is sometimes discussed as a continuation of the previous; see *RCEA*, 1:35–36 (no. 46). This text is discussed in more detail later in this article.

[129] Perhaps this should be read as *mujawwaf*, "hollow" or "concave," instead.

[130] This is quite a confusing passage. An abridged version, which removes the more confusing portions, can be found in Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74. An alternative, again less confusing description of the known spots which mark sections of the original mosque built by the prophet after his arrival in Medina can be found in *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 360; and al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:54 (followed by detailed further discussion).

[131] The text has a "*bn*" here, but it is perhaps unclear if it should be there or not. It does not appear in the list of titles in the following sentence.

[132] A slight rearrangement of the wording of Q4.134.

has no companion. "We serve only God and we associate nothing with Him."[133] God be praised and exalted. Moreover, may God be praised and exalted high above what the unbelievers say.[134] There is no power or strength save with God the High, the Magnificent.

Between Bāb al-Nabī[135] and Bāb ʿUthmān[136] is inscribed the following on a broad panel (*ṣafḥa*) on the interior wall in mosaic, between it and the marble:

[§6] Among what the servant of God, Hārūn, the commander of the faithful—may God lengthen his remaining time—ordered to be carried out by Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad,[137] may God make him thrive. It is the work of people from Jerusalem.[138]

To the left of the arch of Bāb al-Nabī (ṣ):

[§7] This is where the work carried out by the people of Jerusalem finished.

Along the *qibla* [wall] on the outside, at the place where the funeral prayers are held (*mawḍiʿ al-janāʾiz*), where the dead are prayed over **[390]**, by Bāb ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with him), is inscribed:[139]

[§8] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "God and His angels bless the prophet. O you who believe, bless him and salute him."[140] O God, bless Muḥammad (ṣ). The mercy of God and His benedictions.

Over Bāb al-Nabī (ṣ) is inscribed on the outside:

[§9] "In the creation of the heavens and the earth," **the whole verse.**[141]

---

[133] Part of Q3.64.

[134] Cf. Q17.43.

[135] I follow al-Samhūdī (*Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:7–8) in identifying Bāb al-Nabī as the second entrance along the eastern wall of the mosque heading north from the *qibla* wall.

[136] Also known as Bāb Jibrīl; see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:8–12; Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 76.

[137] Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad was one of Hārūn al-Rashīd's governors of Medina, according to al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:739. It is not precisely clear when he served in this position, but al-Ṭabarī lists him as the fifth out of ten governors of Medina during Hārūn's caliphate.

[138] See also Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74–75; *RCEA*, 1:65–66 (no. 83); Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 67. Sauvaget assumes, probably correctly, that this commemorates only small restoration work to the decoration on this wall.

[139] For Bāb ʿAlī, see above, n. 112.

[140] Q33.56.

[141] Q3.190. Al-Samhūdī (*Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:8) has this text by Bāb ʿAlī and not by Bāb al-Nabī.

Over Bāb ʿUthmān is inscribed:

[§10a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "God and His angels," **the whole verse**.[142] O God, bless Muḥammad the prophet (ṣ), make him blameless, increase his standing, ennoble his structure, honour his lodging places/stations, and reward him with the best reward You could give to a prophet, as he brought us Your message and strove to carry out Your command so that he made clear Your religion, made manifest Your authority, Your words were finished, he made lawful what You had made lawful and forbade what You had forbidden. That did not deviate from Your oneness;[143] You have no companion. May peace be upon the prophet, and the mercy of God, and His benedictions.

To the right of Bāb ʿUthmān is inscribed:

[§10b] The work of the people of Ḥimṣ.

And to its left is inscribed:

[§10c] The work of the people of Ḥimṣ.

On the outside of Bāb ʿUthmān is inscribed:

[§10d] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "A messenger has come to you from among yourselves," **to the end of the *sūra.***[144]

On the inside of the entrance facing (Bāb)[145] Dār Rayṭa is inscribed:

[§11a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "God, there is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal," **up to** "Hearing and Knowing."[146]

---

[142] Q33.56.

[143] Al-Jāsir was obviously himself unsure what to make of this in his edition. I read: *wa-lam yaʿul dhālika waḥdaka*.

[144] I.e. Q9.128–129; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:426; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:12.

[145] This second "*bāb*" is clearly written in the edition, but it would make more sense without it. The text should here be describing Bāb Dār Rayṭa, which, according to al-Samhūdī (for example, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:8), is the next entrance along the eastern wall after Bāb ʿUthmān. The Rayṭa in question was the daughter of Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ and Bāb Rayṭa/Bāb Dār Rayṭa is also known as Bāb al-Nisāʾ; see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:12–13; Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 76.

[146] Q2.255–256. Q2.255 is, of course, the famous "Throne Verse," which al-Samhūdī (*Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:13) also noted was inscribed on this entrance (though he has it on the outside) on a mosaic panel before it was destroyed

On the outside of the entrance facing Dār Rayṭa:

[§11b] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "The only ones to visit God's places of worship," **the whole verse.**[147]

On the inside of the entrance facing (Bāb)[148] Asmāʾ bt. al-Ḥasan [*sic*] is inscribed:

[§12a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "O man, fear your Lord, and be afraid of a day," **to the end of the *sūra.***[149]

[391] On it [the same entrance] on the outside is inscribed:

[§12b] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "O you who believe, fear God and speak straight speech."[150]

On the inside of the entrance opposite Dār Khālid[151] is inscribed:

[§13a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Your God is One God," **the two verses.**[152]

Immediately following is:

---

in the second major fire. According to al-Fīrūzābādī (*al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:426), this was inscribed on the outside of this entrance. Two other later Medinan local historians, al-Maṭarī (d. 741/1340) and al-Marjānī (d. after 770/1368–69) both also mention that this verse was inscribed on a mosaic panel over the outside of this entrance: see al-Maṭarī, *al-Taʿrīf bi-mā ansat al-hujra min maʿālim dār al-hijra*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ (Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1417/1997), 89; and al-Marjānī, *Bahjat al-nufūs*, 1:545.

[147] Q9.18. This verse is also in another inscription already noted above (§3). According to al-Fīrūzābādī (*al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:426), this was inscribed on the inside of this entrance.

[148] This would seem to be a mistake and should read "*dār*," since the entrance opposite Dār Asmāʾ is the next entrance after Bāb Rayṭa discussed in al-Samhūdī's survey of the entrances (see *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:13–14), still along the eastern wall. According to him, the Asmāʾ in question is Asmāʾ bt. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.

[149] I.e. Q31.33–34; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:427.

[150] Q33.70; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:427.

[151] On this entrance, opposite Dār Khālid b. al-Walīd, still in the eastern wall of the mosque, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:14.

[152] This could be Q2.163–164 or Q16.22–23. It is probably the former, since that verse begins with a *wāw*, which this inscription apparently included. That this text was inscribed here is also noted by al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:428 (the editor of this text suggested it is the former two verses being cited).

[§13b] "When My servants question you about Me...," **the verse.**[153]

On the outside of it [the same entrance] is inscribed:

[§13c] "They say, 'Praise belongs to God, Who has removed grief from us,'" **the verse.**[154]

On the border (*ḥāf*)[155] of the entrance, on the inside, is inscribed:

[§13d] O God, bless[156] Muḥammad the prophet (ṣ). [This is] among [the things] that al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful, commanded and is among what the Basrans carried out, in the year 162 [778–79 CE].[157]

It is the place where al-Mahdī's enlargement of the mosque began.[158]

On the inside of the entrance facing Zuqāq al-Manāṣiʿ[159] is inscribed:

[§14a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Your Lord is God Who created the heavens and the earth," **the two verses.**[160]

And on the outside of it is inscribed:

[§14b] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Rivalry in worldly gain has distracted you," **to the end of the *sūra.***[161]

On the inside of the entrance next to al-Ṣawāfī is inscribed:[162]

[153] Q2.186; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:428.
[154] Q35.34; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:428.
[155] Al-Samhūdī (*Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:14) reads "lintel" (*nijāf*), which may make more sense.
[156] Reading *ṣalli* instead of *ṣallā*.
[157] See also al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:14.
[158] I assume this is the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s (or its author's source's) comment, rather than part of the text of inscription §13d.
[159] For this entrance, still in the eastern wall, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:14–15.
[160] This could be either Q7.54–55 or Q10.3–4. (Given the general tenor of the Qurʾanic verses used in Umayyad and early Abbasid mosques, the latter might be more likely.) That this text was inscribed here is also noted by al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:428 (this text's editor suggested it is Q7.54–55 inscribed here).
[161] Q102; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:428.
[162] On this entrance, apparently the northernmost along the eastern wall, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:15–16. Al-Ṣawāfī were also known as Abyāt Quḥṭum; see Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:158; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:59.

[§15a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. **From the start of Āl ʿImrān down to** "as He wishes. There is no god but Him, the Mighty and the Wise."[163] O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant and Your prophet.[164]

And on the outside of it is inscribed:

[§15b] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "There will be a blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on earth will swoon," **the two verses.**[165]

At the back of the mosque in the direction of Syria on the inside of the first entrance is inscribed:[166]

[§16a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Those who repent and act righteously turn to God in repentance," **to the end of the *sūra.***[167]

An on the outside is inscribed:

[§16b] "God. There is no god but Him. He will indeed gather you to the Day of Resurrection," **the verse**.[168] O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant and Your messenger, *imām* of the God-fearers and seal of the prophets.[169]

On the inside of the second entrance is inscribed:

[§17a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "In houses **[392]** which God has allowed to be raised," **to the end of the three verses.**[170]

And inscribed on the outside:

[163] I.e. Q3.1–6.
[164] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:429.
[165] I.e. Q39.68–69; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:429.
[166] We have now moved onto the northern wall of the mosque.
[167] I.e. Q25.71–77; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:429.
[168] Q4.87.
[169] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:429.
[170] I.e. Q24.36–38; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:429.

[§17b] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant and Your messenger, and reward him with the best reward You grant to the prophets and the best of what you give to the messengers. The servant of God, al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful, ordered work on this mosque, its building and making it more spacious.[171]

On the inside of the third entrance is inscribed:

[§18a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Prosperous are the believers," **down to,** "Those are the inheritors."[172]

And inscribed on the outside:

[§18b] There is no god but God. He is the Living, Who cannot die. May God be praised and exalted high above what they associate with Him.[173] It is He "Who has not taken to Himself a son."[174] "He is the High and the Great."[175]

On the inside of the fourth entrance[176] is inscribed:

[§19a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "The companions of the Garden and the companions of the Fire are not equal. The companions of the Garden are the winners," **down to** "High above what they associate [with Him]" (*wa-taʿālā ʿammā yushrikūn*).[177]

And inscribed on the outside:

[171] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:429, albeit with a slight variant: "The servant of God, al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful, ordered work on this mosque, its adornment and making it more spacious."

[172] I.e. Q23.1–10; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430.

[173] Recalls many verses of the Qurʾan, but see in particular Q17.43, also alluded to in an earlier inscription (§5).

[174] Cf. Q17.111 and 25.2 (it is a bit closer in language to the former).

[175] See Q22.62, 31.30, 34.23 and 40.12. That this text was inscribed here is also noted by al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430, with a slight variant, "He is the Living Who has not taken to Himself a son..."

[176] Al-Samhūdī mentions four entrances along the northern wall of the mosque; see his *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:16–17.

[177] This presumably refers to Q59.20–23, but in the Uthmanic text, the end of Q59.23 reads "*subḥān Allāh ʿammā yushrikūn*." I assume it is a mistake that has crept in somewhere; it does not appear among the variants recorded by Arthur Jeffery in his *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān: The Old Codices* (Leiden: Brill, 1937). It is a wording that appears in several other Qurʾanic verses. That this text was inscribed here is also noted by al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430 (where the more "standard" Qurʾanic text for the final verse's ending is given).

[§19b] God is the Mighty and the Wise.[178] He has permitted, with His grace and distinction, the servant of God and His caliph (*khalīfatihi*), al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful to enlarge the mosque of the messenger of God (*ṣ*), to make it more spacious and to adorn it. May God magnify his reward and perfect for him His grace, let him enjoy His generosity and glorify his victory.[179]

On the inside of the last of the entrances to the mosque along the western side, near Dār Munīra,[180] is inscribed:

[§20a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "In the creation of the heavens and the earth," **down to** "You will not break the tryst."[181]

And on the lintel of the entrance, on the inside of the arch, is inscribed:

[§20b] O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant and Your messenger. [This is] among what the servant of God, al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful, ordered. It is the work of the people of Basra.[182]

Between there and the next entrance there is a *manjanīq*,[183] used when necessary to sweep the roof of the mosque;[184] there is another *manjanīq* to the east of the *maqṣūra*. On the outside of this is inscribed:

[§21] "The smiter," **until the end.**[185]

---

[178] These two epithets appear together on twenty-nine occasions in the Qurʾan, at Q62.3 to give just one example.

[179] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430, with a very minor variant: he has "His servant and His caliph," instead of "the servant of God and His caliph."

[180] This is the first of the entrances along the western wall, starting from the north, discussed in al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:17–18. He notes that the Munīra in question was a *mawlā* of Umm Mūsā; Ibn Shabba (*Taʾrīkh*, 1:144) has Munīra as a *mawlā* of the commander of the faithful. Presumably, therefore, she was a *mawlā* of al-Khayzurān, the mother of Mūsā al-Hādī, who along with one of her slaves called Muʾnisa was responsible for some work on the Prophet's tomb enclose in 170/787; see Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 117.

[181] I.e. Q3.190–194; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430.

[182] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430 (although he leaves out the caliph's name Muḥammad). He also notes more specifically that it could be found "on the lintel of the entrance, inside, below/aside from (*dūn*) the arch."

[183] This word usually refers to a device for flinging stones, such as an onager or a mangonel, but here it presumably refers to some form of scaffolding or crane.

[184] The existence of this *manjanīq* used for sweeping the roof is noted also by al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430, although he does not discuss the text inscribed on it.

[185] I.e. Q101.

[393] On the inside of the entrance that is also opposite Dār Munīra[186] is inscribed:

> **[§22a]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Muḥammad is the messenger of God," **to the end of the *sūra.***[187]

And on its outside is inscribed:

> **[§22b]** "O my servants, who have been prodigal against yourselves."[188]

On the inside of the entrance facing Dār Nuṣayr[189] is inscribed:

> **[§23a]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "He will say, 'How long have you remained on earth, by number of years?,'" **down to the end of the *sūra.***[190] O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant and Your prophet.[191]

And inscribed on the outside:

> **[§23b]** "Praise belongs to God, Who has been true to us in His promise," **the two verses.**[192]

On the inside of the entrance opposite Dār Jaʿfar b. Yaḥyā[193] is:

> **[§24a]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Praise belongs to God, Who has not taken to Himself a son," **the verse.**[194] O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant and Your messenger, in the best way You have blessed any of Your prophets or Your messengers. O God, send him to the blessed station that You promised him so the ancients and those who followed them can emulate him there, just as he delivered Your message, advised Your servants and recited Your verses.[195]

---

[186] Al-Samhūdī, following Ibn Zabāla and Yaḥyā (so perhaps based on this same passage), notes that there was a second entrance along the west wall opposite Dār Munīra; see his *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:18.

[187] Q48.29.

[188] Part of Q39.53. The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* does not mention in this instance that the whole verse was inscribed, but perhaps this is an accidental omission. It would certainly make more sense with the rest of the verse.

[189] For this entrance, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:18. Nuṣayr was in charge of the prayer ground to the west of the Prophet's mosque (*ṣāḥib al-muṣallā*) and a *mawlā* of al-Mahdī.

[190] I.e. Q23.112–118.

[191] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:430–31.

[192] I.e. Q39.74–75; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:431.

[193] For this entrance, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:18–19. The one-time owner of the *dār* is Jaʿfar b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid b. Barmak.

[194] Q17.111.

[195] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:431.

On the arch underneath this is inscribed:

[§24b] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Your Lord [is God] Who," **down to** "Lord of all beings."[196] May the blessings of God be upon Muḥammad, and greetings, the mercy of God and His benedictions.[197]

Inscribed on its outside is:

[§24c] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Have we not expanded for you your breast," **down to the end.**[198]

On the inside of Bāb ʿĀtika[199] is inscribed:

[§25a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "The messenger believes," **to the end of the *sūra.***[200]

The inscription (*kitāb*) on the arch[201] comes to an end [with]:

[§25b] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "A messenger has come to you **[394]** from among yourselves," **the two verses.**[202] "Say, 'He is God, One,'" **to the end.**[203] May God bless Muḥammad the prophet and may greetings, the mercy of God and His benedictions be upon him.[204]

---

[196] Q7.54. In the text of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, the word "Allāh" is missing from the opening text of this *sūra*: *inna rabbakum Allāh alladhī...* This does not appear as a variant among those noted by Jeffery in his *Materials* and I assume it is a copyist's mistake or a typographical error in the edition.

[197] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:431 (although he misses out the *basmallah*).

[198] I.e. Q94. The text of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* here has "*a-lam tashraḥ la-ka ṣadraka*," instead of the more "standard" *nashraḥ*. In this instance, I assume this to be a typographical or copying error, since this variant makes little sense and it does not appear among the variants noted by Jeffery in his *Materials*. That this text was inscribed here is also noted by al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:431, with the "standard" *nashraḥ*. The editor of this text assumes only Q94.1 was inscribed here, but the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* makes it clear the whole *sūra* is meant.

[199] ʿĀtika bt. ʿAbd Allāh b. Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya. For this entrance, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:19–21; Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 76–77. The entrance has also been known as Bāb al-Sūq and Bāb al-Raḥma and is supposedly one of the entrances given to the mosque in the original building of the Prophet himself (although al-Samhūdī offers an interesting investigation of this).

[200] I.e. Q2.285–286; see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:431.

[201] Al-Fīrūzābādī simply places this inscription "beneath it [the entrance or the previous text] on the arch;" see his *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:431–32.

[202] I.e. Q9.128–29.

[203] I.e. Q112.

[204] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:431–32.

Inscribed outside it is:

> **[§25c]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "God enjoins justice, doing good and giving to kinsfolk," **the verse.**[205] The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful, ordered building work in this mosque.[206]

On Bāb Ziyād[207] there is a teak plaque nailed up and inscribed on the outside of the mosque and another inscription (*kitāb*) on the inside:[208]

> **[§26]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "God. There is no god but Him," **the verse.**[209] Muḥammad is the messenger of God, whom He sent "with the guidance and the religion of truth."[210] The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh,[211] the commander of the faithful, may God ennoble him, ordered building work on the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) and the construction of this courtyard, to make the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) more spacious and for those Muslims who come to it, in the year 151 [768–69 CE], out of desire for God alone and the last abode. The commander of the faithful, may God ennoble him, is the most worthy of men to oversee that because of his close kinship to the messenger of God (ṣ) and because of his caliphate (*khilāfatihi*) with which he/He distinguished him.[212] May God magnify the reward of the commander of the faithful and make great his recompense.[213]

There is no inscription on the *khawkha*, neither inside nor outside.[214]

---

[205] Q16.90.

[206] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:432.

[207] This entrance is named after the aforementioned early Abbasid governor of Medina, Ziyād b. ʿUbayd Allāh. For a discussion of this entrance, see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:21–27.

[208] It is unclear if this is an inscription on one side of this entrance, or that it runs between both, or that it is repeated, once on each side. Al-Samhūdī only notes (*Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:23), citing Ibn Zabāla and Yaḥyā, that it was inscribed on the outside, and al-Fīrūzābādī (*al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:432) notes the same. It is quite a lengthy text, especially if it does include the "Throne Verse," so perhaps it started on the outside of the entrance and was continued on the inside.

[209] There are several verses this could refer to, but the obvious candidate is the "Throne Verse," Q2.255, also used elsewhere in the mosque (§11a). Al-Fīrūzābādī's text of this inscription explicitly mentions it was indeed the "Throne Verse;" see his *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:432–33.

[210] Part of Q9.33. Al-Fīrūzābādī's text gives a slightly fuller quotation from this verse.

[211] Al-Fīrūzābādī omits the second *ʿabd allāh*.

[212] Al-Fīrūzābādī has "because of his close kinship to the messenger of God (ṣ) and because of his caliphate with which God distinguished him."

[213] Al-Samhūdī provides the text of this inscription from "The servant of God" to "the last abode," in his *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:23. Al-Fīrūzābādī offers the whole text in his *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:432–33. There are some other variations between the texts of this inscription offered by the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and al-Fīrūzābādī, although I have only noted here those that may alter the meaning. For some discussion of this text, see Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 167–68; and further below in this article.

[214] For this statement, and a discussion of this *khawkha*, "small opening," also known as Khawkhat Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, see also al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:27–28 (citing Ibn Zabāla for this statement).

On the inside of the entrance which is by Dār Marwān[215] is inscribed:

[§27a] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "God and His angels bless the prophet. O you who believe, bless him and salute him."[216] O God, bless Muḥammad the prophet (ṣ) and salute him, make him blameless, increase his standing, ennoble his structure, honour his lodging places/stations, and reward him with the best reward You could give to a prophet to/on behalf of/away from his community (*ʿan ummatihi*). For he brought Your message and strove to carry out Your command so that he made mighty Your religion, made manifest **[395]** Your authority, Your words were finished, what You had made lawful was made lawful and what You had forbidden was forbidden. He made commands [in line with] Your justice, Your oneness, You have no companion.[217] May peace be upon him and the mercy of God and His benedictions.[218] The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful, ordered work on the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) in the year 160 [776–77 CE],[219] a [sign of] generosity from God through which He ennobled his caliphate, a treasury which those before him stored away for him and a gift which He gave to him over those who come after him.[220] Praise be to God, Who brought the commander of the faithful to rule after others[221] and whom He ennobled with the [...] of his community,[222] the spreading of his customs (*sunan*) and purifying it.[223] May God magnify the reward of the commander of the faithful and multiply his good deeds.[224]

And inscribed on the outside:

[§27b] There is no god but God, Who is One and has no companion. Muḥammad is the messenger of God, whom He sent "with the guidance and the religion of truth," **the verse.**[225] O God, grant forgiveness to your prophets and the caliphs of the believers (*khulafāʾ al-muʾminīn*), alive and dead. O God, bless Muḥammad, Your servant and Your prophet, You,

[215] See above, n. 112, on this entrance.

[216] Q33.56.

[217] Al-Fīrūzābādī's text is a bit odd here: "With You he commanded that, Your oneness, You have no companion" (*wa-bi-ka nafadha dhālika waḥdaka lā sharīk la-ka*).

[218] The part of the inscription down to this point is very similar to that on the loosely opposite entrance, Bāb ʿUthmān (§10a).

[219] There is a potential date/name problem here since the reigning caliph in 160/776–77 was Muḥammad al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–85), although this seems not to be an error (see further discussion later in this article). Al-Fīrūzābādī has the year as 130/747–48, which is equally (actually, as it turns out, more) problematic.

[220] Al-Fīrūzābādī has, "through which God ennobled his caliphate from a treasury which He had stored for him apart from those who came before him and a gift which He gave to him over those who come after him." In some ways, this makes a little bit more sense.

[221] Al-Fīrūzābādī has, "Who put the commander of the faithful in charge of making it more spacious after others."

[222] The edition reads *b*l*s*r millatihi*; al-Jāsir suggests reading the first word as *bi-naṣr*, so giving us, "with the victory of his community."

[223] Al-Fīrūzābādī has, "and whom He ennobled with adorning and purifying it."

[224] For this text, see also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:433–34. I have only noted above variants that alter the understanding of the inscription.

[225] Q9.33.

> Your angels and all of the believers.[226] The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful, ordered work on the mosque of the messenger of God, the restoration of what had been brought into disrepair, and its (re)construction in the year 152 [769–70 CE].[227]

The inscription which was written for ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz along the *qibla* [wall] of the mosque, the one that Saʿd Ḥaṭabah inscribed,[228] begins:

> **[§28]** In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "Praise belongs to God," **to its end,**[229] and "By the sun and its brightness in the forenoon," **to its end.**[230]

* * *

In total, the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* reports fifty separate inscriptions in the Abbasid mosque after al-Mahdī's renovations, one of which (§28) had survived from the Umayyad period. The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* offers the text of these inscriptions in a fairly straightforward and logical manner. The work begins with the courtyard inscriptions, starting with that along the *qibla* side of the courtyard and then following them all the way round in order. Then it reports the texts of the remaining inscriptions, mostly but not exclusively around entrances to the mosque, running from the southeast corner along the eastern, northern and western sides to the southwest corner, finally ending where it began with the text of the Umayyad inscription that remained along the *qibla* wall of the mosque. (See Figure 1 for an approximate plan of the locations of the courtyard inscriptions and the entrances to the Abbasid mosque.)

The Umayyad-era inscriptions and their fate in the Abbasid period

The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* adds little that is completely new to our existing understanding of the form and content of the epigraphic programme that accompanied al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik's construction of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, although it does help to clarify some issues. It is also clear from this source that Marwanid inscriptions ran along the length of the *qibla* wall of the mosque and that they comprised the Qurʾanic *sūra*s 1 and 91 to 114; there had also

[226] A clear reference to Q33.56.
[227] See also al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:434.
[228] The edited text here reads Saʿd Khaṭabah, but the earlier Saʿd Ḥaṭabah is surely correct.
[229] I.e. Q1.
[230] I.e. Q91. Since we were told at the beginning of this section of the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* that this *qibla* inscription included all the verses from Q91 to the end of the Qurʾan, that is presumably what is meant here as well.

been at least one inscription in the mosque's courtyard.[231] There was presumably a foundation inscription as well; that would be expected and the existence of one is necessary to understanding al-Nawfalī's anecdote with which this article began. There are no surviving inscriptions from any of al-Walīd's mosques and they may not all have had any to begin with.[232] Two other mosques that he had constructed, however, are reported to have had inscriptions and the reported contents of these are loosely in line with those reported for the Prophet's Mosque. We have seen above that Abū Yūsuf al-Fasawī (d. 277/890) observed in the Great Mosque of Damascus inscriptions on narrow bands in blue and gold along the *qibla* wall containing the "Throne Verse" (Q2.255) followed by al-Walīd's foundation inscription as well as *sūra*s 1 and 79–81 of the Qurʾan.[233] There is also said to have been an inscription in al-Walīd's mosque in al-Fusṭāṭ on green plaques ("tables vertes"), although the original has been lost and is known only through a French translation published by Pierre Vattier in 1666.[234] According to that translation, the inscription, dated to 92/711, seems to have contained several verses from the Qurʾan (Q3.18, 4.172, 9.33 and 57.2) and called for various blessings for the prophet and the caliph. That caliph is recorded as ordering the expansion of the mosque and is addressed as, "The servant of God, al-Walīd, the commander of the faithful" ("Gabdolle le valide Commandeur des fidelles"). It also seems as though at one point in this text al-Walīd may have been referred to as "caliph," or deputy (*khalīfa*): "en le faisant vostre Lieutenant." The work is recorded as having been carried out by al-Walīd's governor of Egypt from 90/709 to 96/714, Qurra b. Sharīk ("Corras fils de Serique").

It also seems to have been the case that, just as the texts from Damascus and al-Fusṭāṭ, the Umayyad inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque were set, probably in gold letters, against a blue/dark green background. The only source, however, to state this explicitly is Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, whose testimony has been questioned and is in any case relatively late and may refer

[231] Other sources to note some of these inscriptions include Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 70; and Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 1/i:15–16. That at least one (and maybe more) of the early Abbasid inscriptions around the courtyard seems to have replaced an earlier Umayyad-era text, see also the discussion below; and George, "Builder of mosques."

[232] One description of al-Walīd's mosque in Ṣanʿāʾ provides some information about the decoration of the *qibla* wall, but does not seem to note the existence of inscribed texts; see al-Rāzī, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Ṣanʿāʾ*, ed. Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAmrī, 3rd ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1409/1989), 135–37. Cf., however, Serjeant and Lewcock, "Architectural History," 323, 347, where it is noted (citing al-Rāzī) that the *miḥrāb* al-Walīd installed in the mosque in Ṣanʿāʾ contained inscriptions. Al-Rāzī states that as part of the decoration in this *miḥrāb* could be seen "*nuqūsh waraqāt*," but this need not mean inscribed texts.

[233] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 2/i:37; see also Finster, "Mosaiken," 119; Flood, *Great Mosque*, 247–54; George, *Umayyad Mosque*, 175–78.

[234] Gaston Wiet, *Matériaux pour un Corpus inscriptionum arabicarum, première partie: Égypte*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1930), 6–9; *RCEA*, 1:17–18 (no. 19).

to the *qibla* wall's post-Umayyad decoration.[235] Different materials seem to have been used for the Umayyad-era inscriptions: Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih has the *qibla* inscriptions in marble, while other sources describe inscriptions from al-Walīd's time in mosaic. Al-Nawfalī's anecdote, for example, is explicit that the foundation inscription it refers to was in mosaic and it can be inferred from al-Samhūdī's discussion as well that the other texts were inscribed in mosaic: "From the discussion of Ibn Zabāla on the inscriptions (*kitāba*) around the entrances to the mosque in the time of al-Mahdī, it can be ascertained it had been decorated with mosaic (*bi-l-fusayfisāʾ*), just as al-Walīd had done."[236] Since gold letters on a dark blue/green background was the setting of choice for other Umayyad caliphal inscriptions in mosaic, including those in the Dome of the Rock and from the marketplace patronised by Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik at Baysān/Scythopolis, it does seem reasonable to assume that this scheme was applied to the epigraphic programme in Medina.[237] Others have discussed the imperial connotations of such a colour scheme in the late antique Roman and early Islamic empires.[238]

One problem concerning the Umayyad inscriptions that the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* does help us to clear up is the identity of the figure responsible for the design of the inscriptions: a *mawlā* of Āl Ḥuwayṭib b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā, called Saʿd Ḥaṭabah. A figure called Saʿd has previously been recognised as playing a role in the creation of these texts, but often only as the patron of another Qurʾanic copyist called Ibn Abī al-Hayyāj. The source for this supposed outsourcing of the work is a brief passage in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*.[239] Saʿd Ḥaṭabah himself, however, was clearly the figure responsible for the execution of these texts, a task with which Ibn Abī al-Hayyāj actually had nothing to do. We can now see this thanks to the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s provision of a crucial piece of information—the fact that this Saʿd was known as Saʿd Ḥaṭabah—that clears up a difficult reading in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* and reveals that the

[235] See above, nn. 40–41. Ibn al-Nadīm (see below, n. 243) does confirm the letters were in gold, but does not mention the colour of the background.

[236] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:296.

[237] Khamis, "Two Wall Mosaic Inscriptions;" Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*; see also George, "Calligraphy, Colour and Light," 97.

[238] Flood, *Great Mosque*, 102; George, "Calligraphy, Colour and Light," 95–104; Lawrence Nees, "Blue Behind Gold: The Inscription of the Dome of the Rock and Its Relatives," in *And Diverse Are Their Hues: Color in Islamic Art and Culture*, ed. Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, 152–73 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 197–99. For a wide-ranging discussions of the use of gold letters in late antique mosaics, see Sean V. Leatherbury, *Inscribing Faith in Late Antiquity: Between Reading and Seeing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 42–56.

[239] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 1/i:15–16; translations offered in Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 79–80; Alain George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy* (London: Saqi, 2010), 74–75. For discussion, see Nabia Abbott, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and its Ḳurʾānic Development, with a Full Description of the Ḳurʾān Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 54; Khamis, "Two Wall Mosaic Inscriptions," 171; Whelan, "Forgotten Witness," 10–13.

common (mis)understanding of this passage has been based on a variant that happened to appear in the manuscript that formed the basis of Gustav Flügel's edition of the text.[240] The relevant passage can now be read as follows:

> The first to write out a *muṣḥaf* at the very beginning and to be known for the beauty of [his] calligraphy was Khālid b. Abī al-Hayyāj. I have seen a *muṣḥaf* in his hand. Saʿd Ḥaṭabah[241] used to write out *maṣāḥif*, poetry and anecdotes (*akhbār*) for al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik; it is he who carried out the inscription (*kitāb*) which is on the *qibla* [wall] of the Prophet's (ṣ) Mosque in gold, from "By the sun and its brightness in the forenoon," to the end of the Qurʾan.[242] It is said that ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz said to him, "I want you to write a *muṣḥaf* for me along this model." So he wrote for him a *muṣḥaf* with the utmost care. ʿUmar came to inspect it and praised it highly, but he set a high price for it, so he refused [to buy] it.[243]

This re-reading confirms the identity of the figure who executed the epigraphic programme in al-Walīd's Prophet's Mosque in Medina. It helpfully clarifies who this otherwise randomly appearing and unidentified Saʿd is in Ibn al-Nadīm's text and explains why elsewhere Saʿd Ḥaṭabah is referred to as a noted copyist of the Qurʾan.[244] Finally, it removes the problem, first identified by Nabia Abbott, that Ibn Abī al-Hayyāj is elsewhere in the *Fihrist* identified as a companion of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and would, therefore, have had to be either a very young associate of ʿAlī or a very old designer of the inscriptions in al-Walīd's mosque and copyist for ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.[245]

Before we turn to the inscriptions added to the mosque in the early Abbasid period, it is worth considering the fate of these Umayyad texts after the fall of that dynasty. Many Umayyad inscriptions from the major imperial monuments founded during ʿAbd al-Malik's and al-Walīd's reigns seem to have been either destroyed or appropriated by Abbasid rulers and their representatives, a process that Flood has labelled "epigraphic mutilation."[246] Al-

[240] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel (Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel, 1871–72), 1:6.

[241] This is the word that caused the confusion. Sayyid's text has Saʿd Ḥuṣṣah, but this must surely be the same person as the Saʿd Ḥaṭabah mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*; Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Riḍā Tajaddud (Tehran: Maktabat al-Jaʿfarī, 1391/1971), 9, has Saʿd Khuṣṣah. So, the text in these editions reads, *wa-kāna Saʿd Ḥuṣṣah/Khuṣṣah yaktubu al-maṣāḥif*. Sayyid's edition notes that a variant in a surviving manuscript reads instead *wa-kāna Saʿd naṣabahu li-katb al-maṣāḥif*, "Saʿd had commissioned him to compose *maṣāḥif*...;" and, as Tajaddud mentions in a note, Flügel's edition reads this as well, which is presumably why previous translations have followed this alternative reading. Saʿd Ḥaṭabah is clearly the correct reading.

[242] I.e. Q91–114.

[243] Translation based on Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (ed. Sayyid), 1/i:15–16.

[244] See above, n. 113.

[245] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 1/i:107; Abbott, *Rise of the North Arabic Script*, 54.

[246] Flood, *Great Mosque*, 125–26; see also *idem*, "Signs of Silence: Epigraphic Erasure and the Image of the Word," in *The Image Debate: Figural Representation in Islam and Across the World*, ed. Christiane Gruber, 46–71

Maʾmūn famously had ʿAbd al-Malik's name in the Dome of the Rock's foundation inscription replaced with his own and also had extra inscriptions bearing his name added to the copper panels bearing Umayyad inscriptions by the entrances to that same building.[247] In Damascus, it seems to have been the Qurʾanic texts that were effaced by al-Maʾmūn, according to al-Fasawī.[248] The anecdote with which this article opens has al-Mahdī having al-Walīd's name in the foundation inscription of the Prophet's Mosque replaced with his own.

Sauvaget thought he had identified evidence in the extant notices about the Abbasid inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque for such a replacement of the name of the Umayyad caliph by an Abbasid ruler and his argument was in some ways persuasive.[249] His argument concerns Ibn Rusta's version of an inscription explicitly credited in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* to the first Abbasid caliph Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ (§4). Sauvaget's interest was raised by the fact that in Ibn Rusta's account, this inscription is credited to a ruler labelled, "The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the Commander of the Faithful," but then dated to 162/778–79. This would place the text during the construction work of al-Mahdī, but that caliph was called Muḥammad, not ʿAbd Allāh. He also noted the significant overlap in content with the first part of an inscription not reported by most of the sources discussed here—its text is provided by Ibn Qutayba—which credits work on the Prophet's Mosque to al-Maʾmūn. Ibn Qutayba notes that he had read the following text:

> The servant of God [or: ʿAbd Allāh] ordered work on the mosque of the messenger of God (ṣ) in the year 202 [817–18 CE], desiring recompense from God, desiring reward from God and desiring God's generosity. For with God is "the reward of both this world and the next. God is Hearing and Observing."[250]

(London: Gingko, 2019), esp. 49–56 on Abbasid era. This is, of course, not a feature unique to the early Abbasid Islamic world; see, for example, the discussion of pre-Islamic Iranian epigraphic practices in Matthew P. Canepa, "Inscriptions, Royal Spaces and Iranian Identity: Epigraphic Practices in Persia and the Ancient Iranian World," in *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, ed. Antony Eastmond, 10–35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and in the same volume Jonathan M. Bloom, "Erasure and Memory: Aghlabid and Fatimid Inscriptions in North Africa," 61–75. The months surrounding the Abbasid takeover of power from the Umayyads also witnessed many episodes of revolutionary violence targeted at relatives and supporters of the deposed ruling family; see further Robinson, "Violence." Later decades witnessed, alongside "epigraphic mutilation," extensive efforts to rewrite the memory of the Umayyad era and that family's rulers; see esp. Antoine Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: l'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72–193/692–809)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[247] For the latter, see Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 76.

[248] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 2/i: 37; Flood, *Great Mosque*, 126, 253; cf. now in part George, *Umayyad Mosque*, 175–76.

[249] Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 58–67.

[250] A slight rearrangement of the wording of Q4.134; see also *RCEA*, 1:98 (no. 122).

> The servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, has commanded fear of God and awe of Him as well as doing right by one's family and action in accordance with the Book of God and the *sunna* of His messenger (ṣ). [He commands] the magnification/veneration of God's ordinances that the tyrants belittled and the revival of the justice that they killed off; [he commands] the belittling of the enmity and oppression they magnified. [He commands] that God is to be obeyed and that those who obey God be obeyed and those who disobey God be disobeyed. No obedience is due to any creature acting in disobedience to God. [He commands] the equitable division of the *fayʾ* among them and the appropriate expenditure of the "fifths."[251]

The second part of this text is clearly a version of the Ibn Ghazāla inscription discussed by the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* (§1) and other sources. The first part does indeed heavily overlap in content with §4, although of course the date is completely different. For inscription §4, then, we do seem to have three different readings of the same text and it is worth emphasising that it can be inferred from Ibn Rusta's account of the Abbasid texts, which he places around the courtyard of the Prophet's Mosque, that §4 would have been followed by §1.[252] The main difference is the dates: the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and al-Samhūdī (both citing Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī) have 132/749–50; Ibn Rusta has 162/778–79; and Ibn Qutayba has 202/817–18. There has been scepticism about Ibn Qutayba's reading of the text for centuries and Sauvaget followed al-Samhūdī's precedent in, correctly, rejecting it; Sauvaget astutely assumed that Ibn Qutayba had tried to make the date match a caliph he knew to have been called ʿAbd Allāh.[253] Sauvaget ended up arguing that the discrepancy between the name of the caliph and the date—remember he was basing his discussion on Ibn Rusta's version of the inscription—is the end result of an Abbasid re-writing of an originally Umayyad text: the name al-Walīd was replaced, for reasons of calligraphic fit, with the name ʿAbd Allāh and the date was altered.[254]

Since Sauvaget was working with Ibn Rusta's account of the early Abbasid inscriptions, his argument made some sense of a confusing text. Other texts, however, remove the need for such a convoluted argument. The fact that Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī (according to both the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and al-Samhūdī) dated the text to 132/749–50 removes the problem of the discrepancy between the date of the text and the name of the caliph. Alternatively, if Ibn Rusta's reading of the date as 162/778–79 were correct, there are actually other extant

[251] Ibn Qutayba, *Maʿārif*, 562–63.

[252] See below, Figure 1, and the plan in Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 64. (§1 is Sauvaget's "A" and §4 is Sauvaget's "E.") That inscriptions §§1–4 were located "around the courtyard of the mosque" is mentioned in Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 73.

[253] For al-Samhūdī's scepticism, see his *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:296.

[254] There is a reconstruction of what the relevant sections of both texts might have looked like in Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 66.

inscriptions (§27a, for example, and see the discussion below) that suggest that the caliph Muḥammad al-Mahdī could perhaps be referred to in inscriptions as *ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh*, "the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh." Finally, Sauvaget's argument has always begged the question of why al-Mahdī would have replaced the name al-Walīd with ʿAbd Allāh for reasons of calligraphic fit: after all, al-Maʾmūn's reworking of the inscription in the Dome of the Rock suggests that Abbasid caliphs could be content with fairly crude alterations to Umayyad texts.[255]

This particular inscription, then, may not turn out to be a case of Abbasid-era "epigraphic mutilation" of an originally Umayyad text. That such mutilation happened, however, seems clear enough. Al-Nawfalī's anecdote suggests that this did happen in the Prophet's Mosque and there is other evidence. Both the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and Ibn Rusta, in their narrative of events leading up to the composition of inscription §1, state that this text was the result of early Abbasid reworking of a text originally put in place by ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz during the construction work in al-Walīd's reign. In another version of inscription §1, provided by Ibn al-Najjār, the name of the caliph in the text is actually given as, "The servant of God, the commander of the faithful, al-Walīd."[256] This seems to represent Ibn al-Najjār's attempt to restore an original Umayyad text, but it is a logical enough attempt at restoration even though, as will be discussed below, the language of §1 as a whole is much more aligned with Abbasid than Umayyad political vocabulary.

Despite the evidence for early Abbasid "epigraphic mutilation" in the Prophet's Mosque, however, it does seem to be the case that the Qurʾanic texts along the *qibla* wall did remain. Ibn Rusta does not explicitly confirm that these were among the inscriptions he read on his visit in 290/903—in fact, he refers (albeit vaguely) to other sources to note their existence[257]—but Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's testimony, if accurate, would support their continuing existence. This also seems to be confirmed by the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s author's decision to repeat their content at the very end of the survey of inscriptions around the entrances to the mosque (§28). That survey began near the southern corner of the eastern wall and ended near the southern

[255] For the crude nature of al-Maʾmūn's replace of ʿAbd al-Malik's name with his own, see the transcription of the relevant part of the text in Christel Kessler, "'Abd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970): 2–14, at 9; there is also an image in Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 30. The most important transcription of the Dome of the Rock's mosaic inscriptions can now be found in the foldouts at the front and back of Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, but in the relevant place he restores ʿAbd al-Malik's name. It is worth noting that the words in Arabic for "thirty" and "sixty" could potentially be confused if unclearly engraved.

[256] Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna*, 177.

[257] Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 73: "More than one scholar has reported that…"

corner of the western wall. The notice of the Umayyad inscriptions along the *qibla* wall, therefore, completes a full circuit and suggests that those texts were still *in situ* after al-Mahdī's work on the mosque.

The early Abbasid inscriptions

The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* provides a fair amount of information about texts added to the Prophet's Mosque in the early Abbasid period, of which it reports forty-nine in total, although there are some details which remain frustratingly obscure. Perhaps the most frustrating such detail is the material used to create the inscriptions. A few texts are explicitly said, by the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* or another source, to have been in mosaic and one seems to have been on a teak plaque.[258] There is also the aforementioned notice from al-Samhūdī that according to Ibn Zabāla's account of the inscriptions, al-Mahdī had used mosaic in the Prophet's Mosque just as al-Walīd had done.[259] The way this is phrased suggests, as Alain George has also noted, that many of the early Abbasid inscriptions in the mosque were executed in mosaic, perhaps—although there is no explicit evidence for this—in the caliphal/imperial colour scheme of gold on blue.[260] We can, therefore, only study these texts on the basis of their locations and content, since we have so little evidence for other aspects of their non-verbal communication.[261] We have, for example, no indication of the script(s) used. It would be interesting to compare these texts with those that have survived in Mecca and are dated to the early Abbasid period, although these await a full study. What has been published so far indicates that two texts from the Masjid al-Ḥarām, one dated to 167/783–84 during al-Mahdī's caliphate and the other probably linked to this text, close to that mosque's Bāb al-Ṣafā, are in raised Kufic script on marble columns.[262] Another inscription from the Masjid al-

[258] Mosaic: §6; Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74–75; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:13 (which corresponds to §11a). Teak plaque: §26; al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:23. See also Leal, "Abbasid Mosaic Tradition," 32. Al-Marjānī and al-Maṭarī also noted that §11a was on a mosaic panel as well, although they actually date this to the caliphate of al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik: see al-Maṭarī, *al-Taʿrīf*, 89; al-Marjānī *Bahjat al-nufūs*, 1:545. Since, however, they both also seem confusingly to attribute all the entrances in al-Mahdī's mosque, including those in the portions added to the structure by al-Mahdī, to al-Walīd, they were quite possibly wrong about this too; see below, n. 270, for reference to their confusion over the entrances.

[259] See above, n. 236. For further discussion of the use of mosaics to decorate Abbasid monuments over the first Abbasid century or so, see Leal, "Abbasid Mosaic Tradition," esp. 30–34 for the use of mosaic in the Ḥijāz.

[260] George, "Calligraphy, Colour and Light," 98. That said, a mosaic inscription added to one of the entrances to the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca by Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr, recording work undertaken between 137/754 and 140/758, was apparently actually in the reverse colour scheme, "in black mosaic on gold mosaic;" see al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, 2:58–59; also Sheila Blair, "Inscribing the Hajj," in *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, ed. Venetia Porter and Liana Saif, 160–68 (London: The British Museum, 2013), 161–62.

[261] For the importance of non-verbal, visual evidence in interpreting epigraphic schemes, see the essays collected in Eastmond, *Viewing Inscriptions*.

[262] Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār minṭaqat Makka al-mukarrama*, 111–14.

Bayʿa in Mecca, dated to 144/761–62, is in what its editor has labelled a "Ḥijāzī" script on a rectangular granite pane.[263] It is possible that some of the inscriptions around the entrances to the Prophet's Mosque may have been similar, but there is little indication that this was the case. It would also be possible to consider other extant examples of Arabic architectural inscriptions in mosaic, wood and stone from the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries to gain some indication of what the visual effect of the Prophet's Mosque's inscriptions may have been. Since, however, any comparison would have to remain almost entirely conjectural, it seems more appropriate to focus our attention here on what we do know about these texts.

The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* and Ibn Rusta between them allow us to pinpoint quite clearly the locations of most of the early Abbasid inscriptions. According to the latter, several of these texts (§§1–4) were "around the courtyard of the mosque, above the arches and beneath the merlons (*shurafāt*)."[264] Sauvaget offered a credible plan of their arrangement running around the courtyard, one after the other, and nothing in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* suggests his plan is incorrect.[265] Of the additional early Abbasid texts discussed by the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, one was in the "eastern corner of the inside of the mosque" (§5), presumably from context by the southeast corner; one was along the outside of the *qibla* wall by the southeast corner (§8); and one was on the *manjanīq* next to the northern end of the western wall (§21). The remaining inscriptions (§§6–7, 9–20, 22–27) were located around, both inside and outside (and sometimes on connected arches and lintels), the entrances to the mosque.[266] (See Figure 1.)

There is some dispute surrounding the number of entrances to the Prophet's Mosque over the second/eighth century. Sauvaget noted that the state of the entrances to al-Walīd's mosque is very difficult to ascertain, although he made a valiant effort.[267] Ibn Zabāla mentions four entrances, all in the western wall, that were apparently there in the very early Abbasid period, predating al-Mahdī's expansion.[268] Most of our sources are more interested in discussing the entrances to the mosque following al-Mahdī's expansion of the building,

[263] *Ibid*., 122.
[264] Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 73.
[265] Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 64.
[266] The relatively extensive use of inscriptions to decorate the mosque is not particularly surprising in an Abbasid-era context. The (admittedly century-or-so later) Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn in Cairo famously had a two kilometre-long inscription on wood; see K.A.C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture,* revised by James W. Allan (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1989), 402.
[267] Sauvaget, *Mosquée omeyyade*, 75–78, 91.
[268] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:24.

but still they disagree over the total number and sometimes over their location. The main dispute surrounds any entrances that may or may not have been found along the *qibla* wall of al-Mahdī's mosque. Ibn Zabāla apparently gave the mosque twenty-four entrances, eight along the eastern and western walls as well as four along the northern and southern walls.[269] Al-Samhūdī, however, disputed whether some of these were really entrances and in his own survey discusses only twenty, those along the eastern, northern and western walls.[270] Ibn Rusta says he counted twenty-two entrances when he visited the Prophet's Mosque in 290/903.[271] The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* mentions twenty entrances in its survey of the inscriptions, which starts in the southeast corner (along the eastern wall) before progressing in order along the eastern, northern and western walls; these are the same twenty discussed by al-Samhūdī, who seems to have based his discussion on Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī's and Ibn Zabāla's surveys of the inscriptions. Texts are located on or around all of them except one, the small opening (*khawkha*) in the western wall.[272] Of all these inscriptions around the entrances, those from §§13 or 14 along to §§23 or 24 were in the new section of the mosque added as part of al-Mahdī's enlargement.[273]

The content of the texts is fairly regular and falls under four main themes (more than one theme can appear in one inscription). First of all, there are texts commemorating building projects commissioned by particular caliphs. Fourteen of the inscriptions mention such work, with three identifying Abū al-ʿAbbās as the commissioning caliph (§§1, 4, 5), two al-Manṣūr (§§26, 27b), one Hārūn al-Rashīd (§6) and seven al-Mahdī (§§2, 3, 13d, 17b, 19b, 20b and almost certainly 27a); one (§25c) names the caliph as "the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful," but provides no other identifying information or date. These

[269] *Ibid*., 3:6–7.

[270] *Ibid*., 3:7–31. Al-Fīrūzābādī's survey of the entrances (see his *al-Maghānim al-muṭāba*, 1:425–35) differs slightly in places from al-Samhūdī's, but the latter in his own survey argues persuasively for his reconstruction, which agrees fully with the *Kitāb al-Manāsik*'s arrangement. Al-Maṭarī and al-Marjānī both discuss twenty entrances, which they claim were put into the mosque by al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, but since they include entrances only found in the extension built on the instructions of al-Mahdī, they were clearly confused: see al-Maṭarī, *Taʿrīf*, 88–91; and al-Marjānī *Bahjat al-nufūs*, 1:543–48.

[271] Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 75.

[272] Although the only text located near Bāb ʿAlī is §8 and it is not explicitly clear how close to the entrance this was.

[273] The *Kitāb al-Manāsik* is clear that texts §13a–d were around the entrance that marked the place along the eastern wall where al-Mahdī's expansion began, but it is unclear whether this entrance was at the limit of al-Walīd's mosque or in a section of the wall that only existed after the early Abbasid expansion. There is no such explicit information about the western wall, but from its relative location Bāb Dār Jaʿfar b. Yaḥyā seems likely to mark the corresponding spot there. The next entrance heading south, Bāb ʿĀtika is one thought to have been in al-Walīd's mosque.

texts are often associated with thanks for God, praise for the prophet and calls for God's blessings and rewards for the caliph.[274]

Secondly, there are texts which identify the origins of the craftsmen who worked on those sections of the mosque:[275] two texts identify work carried out by craftsmen from Jerusalem (§§6, 7), two by workers from Ḥimṣ (§§10b, 10c) and two by Basrans (§§13d, 20b). No craftsmen are named individually—the sole inscription that mentions the agency of an individual other than the caliph (§6) refers to a local official who oversaw the work—although that would be uncommon for architectural epigraphy in this period.[276] Such identification of groups of craftsmen's geographical origins, however, seems to have been relatively common in the Ḥijāz around this time. Two extant early Abbasid texts from the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca also identify the geographical origin of those who worked on sections of the mosque, in both cases Kufa.[277] Moreover, the mid-to-late fourth/tenth-century traveller al-Muqaddasī, who visited Mecca at least twice in 356/967 and 367/978, noted that the outsides of the walls of the arcades of the Masjid al-Ḥarām were decorated in mosaic, executed by workers from Syria and Egypt whose names could be seen there.[278] That caliphal projects in the Marwanid and early Abbasid periods could see large numbers of craftsmen and labourers moved around the empire—and perhaps brought in from outside the empire—has been well-established, thanks largely to papyrological evidence from Egypt and some literary evidence for al-Walīd's building projects.[279] These Meccan and Medinan inscriptions seem to provide further corroboration for such migrations of labourers to work on major imperial monuments. We also should not be surprised to see different teams of craftsmen at work on different sections of the mosque, since it also seems to have been the

[274] As Blair notes, "In a typical foundation inscription, far more space was given over to the patron than to what he built;" see her *Islamic Inscriptions*, 35.

[275] This, at least, is what appears to be meant. It is just about possible that they commemorate sections paid for by the communities identified, but specific craftsmen do seem to be intended.

[276] For this phenomenon in later periods, see Sheila Blair, "Place, Space and Style: Craftsmen's Signatures in Medieval Islamic Art," in *Viewing Inscriptions*, ed. Eastmond, 230–48; *idem*, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 49–52. For artisans' individual signatures on portable objects from the first four centuries AH, see Fanny Bessard, *Caliphs and Merchants: Cities and Economies of Power in the Near East (700–950)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 221–26. Some architectural inscriptions from the early Islamic centuries do provide names for their inscriber, but not for those who undertook work on the wider decorative schemes; see, for example, Bilha Moor, "Mosque and Church: Arabic Inscriptions at Shivta in the Early Islamic Period," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40 (2013): 73–141, at 79, 80, 87, 90.

[277] Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār minṭaqat Makka al-mukarrama*, 111–14.

[278] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 73; see 101 for the dates of his visits to Mecca. It is not clear when these mosaics were first put in place, as noted by Leal, "Abbasid Mosaic Tradition," 31.

[279] Recent discussion in George, *Umayyad Mosque*, 77–91.

case that different teams of mosaicists were at work on monuments like the Dome of the Rock and al-Walīd's mosque in Damascus.[280]

Thirdly, many of the texts include demands for praises, blessings and greetings for the prophet, from either God, His angels or the Muslims more generally. The mosque in Medina does, of course, contain the prophet's grave, but there is little in these inscriptions in praise of Muḥammad that would be out of place elsewhere in the Islamic world. Some texts do call on Muslims to pray for/greet the prophet, which could be related to ideas about pilgrimage to the prophet's grave in the mid-second/eighth century, but discussions in favour of such pilgrimage from that period are relatively difficult to uncover.[281] In any case, such calls are also frequently found in inscriptions from elsewhere in the Islamic world.[282]

The fourth theme is, of course, citations from the Qurʾan. Clearly direct citations from the Qurʾan can be identified in forty of the inscriptions and more texts contain obvious allusions to the Qurʾan, or make use of Qurʾanic vocabulary, if not necessarily direct citations. Twenty-three of the texts offer only quotations from the Qurʾan, often following a *basmallah*.[283] There is a clear preference for extracts of a verse or several verses from a longer *sūra* rather than full citations of short *sūra*s. The latter, of course, is what apparently dominated the Umayyad mosque's epigraphic programme, but among the early Abbasid inscriptions only *sūra*s 1, 94, 101, 102 and 112 were cited in full. Some verses were cited twice: this was certainly the case for Q2.255, 3.190, 9.18, 9.33 and 9.128–129; Q33.56 was cited directly three times. Q7.54 was probably cited twice (although one of these may have been another verse instead); Q17.111 was directly cited once and alluded to on another occasion; and Q4.134 and 17.43 seem to have been alluded to twice. The citation of or allusion to all these verses, including those referenced more than once, is not really surprising in such a context: many invoke Qurʾanic references to the prophet/messenger, to "mosques" (*masājid*) or to the superiority and triumph of Islam over other faiths. As Robert Hillenbrand noted, "[T]he choice of Quranic inscriptions for use in a mosque was only theoretically wide. In practice it was narrow."[284] It

[280] See the discussions in George, *Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 60–68; *idem*, *Umayyad Mosque*, 146; Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 111–14.

[281] See the discussion in Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 123–47.

[282] Similar calls appear famously, for example, in the Dome of the Rock's inscriptions; to give just one other example, they can also be seen in one of the texts (probably early Abbasid) from Mecca; for the latter, see Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār minṭaqat Makka al-mukarrama*, 113–14.

[283] §§9, 10d, 11a, 11b, 12a, 12b, 13a, 13b, 13c, 14a, 14b, 15b, 16a, 17a, 18a, 19a, 20a, 21, 22a, 22b, 23b, 24c, 25a. For some discussion of the use of Qurʾanic verses to adorn entrances to mosques more broadly throughout the pre-modern Islamic world, see Erica Cruikshank Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), 1:73–80.

[284] Robert Hillenbrand, "Qurʾanic Epigraphy in Medieval Islamic Architecture," *Revue des études islamiques* 54 (1986): 171–87, at 172. That said, sometimes specific verses not commonly used elsewhere were used to fit

is, therefore, not surprising to see significant overlap between the verses used in al-Mahdī's mosque in Medina and those used in other pre-modern mosques. Of the *sūra*s that Hillenbrand noted as those most commonly drawn upon in architecture—Q2, 3, 9, 17, 24, 48, 112 and 114—verses from all bar the last were used in al-Mahdī's inscriptions in Medina (and, of course, Q114 may well still have been visible in the Umayyad *qibla* wall inscription).[285] And of the most commonly used verses from *sūra* 9 in architectural settings—Q9.18, 21–22 and 33—Q9.18 and 9.33 are both cited twice in Medina.[286] That said, there is one point of interest here: Q9.33 is apparently cited frequently on funerary stelae so its use here, in the mosque that contained the Prophet's grave, is possibly notable.[287] The appearance twice of the so-called "Throne Verse" (Q2.255) also fits that verse's regular use in other monuments associated with caliphal patronage.[288] Two of the verses cited or referenced more than once (Q33.56 and 17.111) also appeared on the outer face of the Umayyad mosaic inscription in the Dome of the Rock, as did Q112 which was used once in the early Abbasid inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque (§25b).[289] Although many of these Qurʾanic citations and blessings for the prophet of course had a specific significance for the message the inscriptions' patrons were

specific monuments, such as Q3.96–97 used in the mosaic inscription erected above an entrance to the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca by Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr; see al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, 2:58–59; Blair, "Inscribing the Hajj," 160–61.

[285] Hillenbrand, "Qurʾanic Epigraphy," 172; Hillenbrand's data is drawn from Dodd and Khairallah, *Image of the Word*. There is also, for example, some overlap with the Qurʾanic inscriptions, perhaps dating to the early-to-mid second/eighth century, from the mosque at Shivta (al-Subayṭā); for these, see Moor, "Mosque and Church."

[286] Q9.18 is apparently "[b]y far the most common Koranic text used in the decoration of a mosque," apparently often in foundation inscriptions, which is the case for its use in §3 here; see Dodd and Khairallah, *Image of the Word*, 1:63.

[287] Hillenbrand, "Quranic Epigraphy," 173. That said, it does appear in another (this time extant) early Abbasid inscription, from Ṣanʿāʾ and dated to 136/753–54, which commemorates the restoration/construction of mosques; see Mittwoch, "Eine arabische Bauinschrift," 235, 237; al-Dūrī, "al-Fikra al-mahdiyya," 124; Serjeant and Lewcock, "Architectural History," 348; Elad, "Caliph Abūʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ," 16. It also apparently featured in al-Manṣūr's inscription in the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca; see al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, 2:58–59; Blair, "Inscribing the Hajj," 161.

[288] See, for example, Flood, *Great Mosque*, 247–48; Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 74–79; Milka Levy-Rubin, "Why Was the Dome of the Rock Built? A New Perspective on a Long-Discussed Question," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80, no. 3 (2017): 441–64, at 462. Necipoğlu suggests ("Dome of the Rock," 46) that the "Throne Verse" was also displayed in the dome of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock, although the earliest witness is from the sixth/twelfth century, after the Fatimids had rebuilt the dome and renovated its decoration. For the verse's use in other mosques across the pre-modern Islamic world, see Dodd and Khairallah, *Image of the Word*, 1:64–65. In light of the fairly common use of this verse in Umayyad and early Abbasid imperial monuments, it is interesting that Greek biblical inscriptions displaying comparable messages of divine dominion and God's throne over the Roman triple gate in the southern wall of the temenos in Damascus were left *in situ* in the new mosque there; see George, *Umayyad Mosque*, 95.

[289] This actually may account for all of the Qurʾanic inscriptions used in the outer face text in the Dome of the Rock. Others have identified references there to Q57.2 and 64.1, which do not appear in the Prophet's Mosque, as well, but Scott Lucas has recently argued intriguingly that these may be incorrectly identified and that in this place the inscription is actually citing a prophetic *ḥadīth* instead; see his "An Efficacious Invocation Inscribed on the Dome of the Rock: Literary and Epigraphic Evidence for a First-Century *Ḥadīth*," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 76, no. 2 (2017): 215–30.

attempting to promote, the decoration of a mosque with such texts in and of itself presumably would have contributed to the sanctity of the space.

This article will soon end with a discussion of what these inscriptions from the Prophet's Mosque can tell us about early Abbasid messages concerning the legitimacy of their rule. Before we get there, however, it is important to consider how visitors to the mosque might have reacted to the texts. They were clearly designed to be visible, although that does not necessarily mean they were designed to be easily legible;[290] we cannot say much about how difficult it was to read them without knowing much more about their precise locations (including how they faced the light) and their material. That said, their location around the entrances and the courtyard seems significant. On the one hand, these locations may have ensured that some of the texts did receive as much light as possible. On the other hand, inscribed scriptural passages were often used to decorate (and perhaps to sanctify) entrances to many late antique religious buildings, as well as certain locations in the interior of such buildings, and this significance may not have been missed by visitors to the Prophet's Mosque even if they could not always read the texts of the inscriptions.[291]

The various extant sources reporting the inscriptions' contents do disagree over their wording. Sometimes this is a matter of minor variations, but sometimes significant portions are read differently, notably (as we have seen) concerning the dates of some of the texts. This could, of course, simply be a result of errors in transcription or by later copyists of the manuscripts. We have also discussed some cases where the dates or names of caliphs may have been altered to make the data fit better with a later scholar's knowledge (Ibn Qutayba) or in an effort to reconstruct a more original text (Ibn al-Najjār). It could also, however, reflect visitors' and readers' engagement with these texts, gaining an appreciation of the general gist of the message and perhaps often recognising specific Qurʾanic verses, but not necessarily of the precise names, dates and other information they may have contained. Those who cared more about precision with these details, including the authors of our surviving sources, tried to make these out albeit with varying results. Many visitors, however, presumably cared less about the details of these texts, while marking (but not, of

[290] See, for example, Hillenbrand, "Qurʾanic Epigraphy," 178: "[E]ven if inscriptions are visible they do not need to be legible." The ways in which late antique inscriptions in religious buildings were supposed to be read and engaged with features heavily in the recent discussion in Leatherbury, *Inscribing Faith*, see for example the comments at 14–18.

[291] Leatherbury, *Inscribing Faith*, 262–71. Irene Bierman has made a similar point about the use of inscriptions adorning entrances in city walls; see *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 31–32, 35, 73.

course, necessarily accepting) their messages of prophetic authority and obedience to God, adherence to which could be demonstrated by recognising the legitimacy and philanthropic generosity of the reigning "servant of God" and "commander of the faithful."[292]

As has long been understood in modern scholarship, "One of the main reasons to erect a monumental inscription was propaganda and advertising, to broadcast a ruler's good name and works or to mark his sovereignty."[293] Even if these texts in Medina were not designed to be legible, aspects of their setting may have emphasised their imperial message: this would be the case, for example, of any texts that may have been executed in the gold on blue scheme. It is also worth noting that the appearance of inscriptions around all the entrances to the mosque as well as along the *qibla* wall and around the courtyard would have meant that texts encircled large sections of the mosque and encircling texts have been identified as conveying important messages of imperial rule in late antique and early Islamic contexts.[294]

What the inscriptions actually said is, of course, still important and some of the texts provide an indication of how these early Abbasid caliphs expected visitors to the mosque to understand the nature of their sovereignty and the reasons underpinning the legitimacy of their authority. The details of the early Abbasids' justifications for overthrowing the Umayyads and of their own claims to caliphal authority have long been a matter of debate among historians, who have attempted to track the developments in their claims to rule on the basis of being members, in a more or less particular fashion, of Banū Hāshim, the family of the prophet.[295] The early Abbasid inscriptions from the Prophet's Mosque in Medina provide some examples of already generally well-known strategies and claims, but also evidence of some lesser known efforts.

Among the better known claims found in these inscriptions are those that fit nicely the context of the years that followed the Abbasids' successful seizure of power from the Umayyads. These come, appropriately, in the text supposedly installed by Ibn Ghazāla to replace an earlier Umayyad text (§1). First of all, we see here calls to action in accordance

[292] There is an interesting discussion of the necessity of the readability of royal inscriptions in pre-Islamic Iran in Canepa, "Inscriptions," for example at 13: "Even if their contents were not exactly known, inscriptions' tangible presence extended the power and presence of the royal patron beyond the palace into the landscape." See also the discussion in Jeremy Johns, "Arabic Inscriptions in the Cappella Palatina: Performativity, Audience, Legibility and Illegibility," in *Viewing Inscriptions*, ed. Eastmond, 124–47.

[293] Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 41.

[294] For example, Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 197, 254; see also the wider discussion of inscriptions that encircled religious buildings in late antiquity in Leatherbury, *Inscribing Faith*, 148–55, and the comments about inscriptions encouraging viewers to move around monuments at 248–53, 259, 286.

[295] See above, n. 5, for some relevant studies. That "Hāshimī" was a label used, already in the Umayyad period, to describe members of the family of the prophet more broadly than the Talibids or ʿAlids, see Wilferd Madelung, "The *Hāshimiyyāt* of al-Kumayt and Hāshimī Shiʿism," *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989): 5–26.

with the Book of God and the *sunna* of His prophet as well as an emphasis on the necessity of disobeying and overturning the false practices of the tyrants. Anti-Umayyad rebels, including those leading the movement that brought the Abbasids to power, apparently made frequent and somewhat generic use of calls for action in accordance with "the Book of God and the *sunna* of His prophet."[296] Other texts (for example, §27a) also emphasise that it is the Abbasid caliph who is the guardian of the *sunna*. The Ibn Ghazāla inscription (§1) also calls for just caliphal oversight of fiscal matters, principally through the "equitable division of the *fayʾ*" and the "appropriate expenditure of the 'fifths.'" Such a call also fits well within the context of rulers who had recently seized power from the Umayyads, since the latter family's supposed mismanagement of the empire's finances was again a major complaint of rebels against their rule.[297] This inscription offers a symbolic rewriting of an Umayyad-era text with many of the key messages proclaimed by the rebels whose actions had eventually brought the Abbasids to power.

Among the more interesting language revealed in these inscriptions is the relatively common reference to the Abbasids as "caliphs" or as possessors of "caliphate," in two cases as part of their list of titles (see §§5 and 19b) and in three cases in other parts of the text (see §§26, 27a and 27b). This may seem innocuous enough, since we are well aware that the title "caliph" was applied to all these rulers. The debate about the precise meaning of this title remains ongoing, however, and it also remains the case that relatively few caliphs from the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods are known to have made use specifically of this title in public media.[298] Although during the reigns of Muḥammad al-Mahdī, Mūsā al-Hādī (r. 169–

[296] Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 58–96. That there were various different ideas in the early Abbasid period about the meaning of "the *sunna* of the prophet" and who its most appropriate guardians were, see also Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, esp. within 70–118.

[297] See, for example, the accusations levelled in the sermon of the anti-Umayyad rebel Abū Ḥamza b. Yūsuf in 129–30/747, in Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 131–32; more generally, see Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 52; *EI*[3], s.v. "Fayʾ" (Andrew Marsham).

[298] The classic study is Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*. In line with trends in scholarship on the early Islamic centuries over the past couple of decades, many more discussions have been published on Umayyad caliphs' titles and political thought than the early Abbasids'; see, for example, Wadād al-Qāḍī, "The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad Ideology and Practice," in *Saber religioso y poder político en el islam: actas del Simposio Internacional (Granada, 15-18 Octubre 1991)*, 231–73 (Madrid: Agencia Español de Cooperación Internacional, 1994); Shahin, "Struggling for communitas;" Luke Treadwell, "The Formation of Religious and Caliphal Identity in the Umayyad Period: The Evidence of the Coinage," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu, 1:89–108 (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017); Andrew Marsham, "'God's Caliph' Revisited: Umayyad Political Thought in Its Late Antique Context," in *Power, Patronage, and Memory in Early Islam*, ed. George and Marsham, 3–37; Sean W. Anthony, "Prophetic Dominion, Umayyad Kingship: Varieties of *Mulk* in the Early Islamic Period," in *Umayyad World*, ed. Marsham, 39–64. Some discussions of early Abbasid titles and political thought are referenced in footnotes throughout this article (esp. but not exclusively in n. 5); particularly useful as well among recent studies are the relevant sections of Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 183–

70/785–86), Hārūn al-Rashīd and ʿAbd Allāh al-Maʾmūn, the title *al-khalīfa* does appear occasionally on coins, often in conjunction with another title or *laqab*, it is hardly known on public media other than coins.[299] This makes five apparent uses of the title around one building by the late second/eighth century quite remarkable. It is entirely to be expected given the conclusions of earlier studies on this question, but also important to point out that in the two cases where the word forms part of the caliph's titles, it is explicit that he is God's caliph.

One text in particular is worth looking at in a bit more detail: the inscription from Bāb Ziyād towards the southern end of the western wall commemorating Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr's work dated to 151/768–69 (§26).[300] In this text, the Abbasid caliph has it explicitly noted that, "The commander of the faithful, may God ennoble him, is the most worthy of men to oversee that because of his close kinship to the messenger of God (*ṣ*) and because of his caliphate with which he/He distinguished him." It is the fact that al-Manṣūr's caliphate (*khilāfa*) is juxtaposed with his "close kinship to the messenger of God" that is particularly notable here. It has long been pointed out that the rebellion of the Hasanid ʿAlids Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh "al-Nafs al-Zakiyya" and his brother Ibrāhīm in 145/762, while not necessarily a serious military challenge to early Abbasid rule, presented the new ruling family with a major challenge to the claims underpinning their authority from members of a family that felt they had a better claim to rule on the basis of the closeness of their relationship to the prophet.[301] This inscription from Medina suggests that, in the aftermath of this revolt, al-Manṣūr saw the public patronage of work on the Prophet's Mosque as a way of countering the claims of rivals within the wider family of the prophet.[302] Quite how successful such claims were in heading off opposition is not obvious, including in the opinions of Muslim who were not members of the family of the prophet. Among the interesting surviving letters said to have passed between the Syrian legal scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/773–74) and Abbasid caliphs or their representatives or members of their family, there is a group of three,

249; and Linda T. Darling, "'The Viceregent of God, from Him We Expect Rain:' The Incorporation of the Pre-Islamic State in Early Islamic Political Culture," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134, no. 3 (2014): 407–29.

[299] The title was perhaps also used by ʿAlid rebels of this period on coins as well; see George C. Miles, "al-Mahdī al-Ḥaqq, Amīr al-Muʾminīn," *Revue numismatique*, 6th series, 7 (1965): 329–41; Michael Bonner, "al-Khalīfa al-Marḍī: The Accession of Hārūn al-Rashīd," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 1 (1988): 79–91.

[300] Much of this paragraph repeats an argument made originally in Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, 167–68.

[301] See especially Elad, *Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya*; and also recently Tor, "Parting of ways."

[302] The undated, but probably early Abbasid, inscription from the Masjid al-Bayʿa in Mecca also attempts to emphasise the significance of the Abbasids' eponymous ancestor, al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, in the Muslim community's history by celebrating his role in the oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) to the prophet that that mosque was built to commemorate; see al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār Minṭaqat Makka al-Mukarrama*, 122–25.

which can be dated to 138–39/755–57, addressed to al-Manṣūr urging him to ransom Muslims captured by the Romans/Byzantines in Qālīqalā (modern Erzurum). In one of these, al-Awzāʿī urges the caliph to consider following the prophet's *sunna* as more important for appropriate rulership than the closeness of his relationship to him.[303]

The final contribution these inscriptions from Medina make to our understanding of the nature of early Abbasid rule concerns the public use of titles by reigning caliphs. There are probably at least six extant inscriptions commemorating caliphally sponsored building work from the early Abbasid period, that both mention a reigning caliph and provide a date that can help us to identify him specifically. There are two others that are not dated but which, from other information provided by the inscriptions, can be dated fairly securely to the early Abbasid period, and one more that can perhaps be linked to a nearby dated text. The following table provides information about how these nine texts refer to the reigning caliph:[304]

Location	Date (AH)	Titles (Arabic)	Titles (English)
Mafraq[305]	135	*al-mahdī* [...][306]	"the *mahdī*"
Baysān/Scythopolis[307]	135	*al-mahdī ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the *mahdī*, the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful"

[303] For the letter, see Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*, 1:195–97 (this relevant section is at 195–96); and for discussion, Rana Mikati, "Missives from the Frontier (130–152/747–769): al-Awzāʿī and the Abbasids," *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020): 1–32, esp. 13–18.

[304] I am leaving aside references to reigning caliphs on coins and other media and types of inscriptions, although these can provide interesting parallels; see, for example, Bates, "Khurāsānī revolutionaries." There is, however, one interesting item that could be considered here as well. An Arabic inscription on an ivory casket held in the treasury of the Basilica of St Gereon in Cologne notes that it was produced in (or perhaps imported to) ʿAdan (in modern Yemen) and calls on God's blessing for "the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful" (*ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*). Given that the inscription also mentions the governor of Yemen, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Rabīʿ, the caliph in question would be either Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ or Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr. For this text, see J. Gildemeister, "Zwei arabische Inschriften auf Elfenbeinbüchsen," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 25, no. 1–2 (1871): 248–50; *RCEA*, 1:32 (no. 41). It is briefly discussed in Elad, "Struggle," 39–40, n. 5; and in Noelia Silva Santa-Cruz, "The Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Their Spreading to al-Andalus," *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 4, no. 1–2 (2017): 147–90, at 153 (with several further references). For the suggestion this casket was imported into Yemen, rather than produced there (as the inscription suggests), see Ralph Pinder-Wilson, "Ivory Working in the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods," *Journal of the David Collection* 2, no. 1–2 (2005): 13–23, at 15. It has been suggested that the casket could be dated slightly later on the basis of the governor's name, to sometime in the reign of Muḥammad al-Mahdī, but the reasoning behind this suggestion is flawed; see Avinoam Shalem, *The Oliphant: Islamic Objects in Historical Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 26.

[305] Jbour, "Discovery."

[306] The text breaks off at this point.

[307] Elad, "Caliph Abūʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ," 9; *CIAP*, 2:215.

Ṣanʿā'[308]	136	*al-mahdī ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*[309]	"the *mahdī*, the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful"
Mecca (Masjid al-Bayʿa)[310]	144	*ʿabd allāh (ʿabd allāh)*[311] *amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, (ʿAbd Allāh,) the commander of the faithful"
Mecca (Masjid al-Bayʿa)[312]	No date (perhaps connected to the above)	*ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh (amīr al-muʾminīn)*[313]	"the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, (the commander of the faithful)"
Ascalon[314]	155	*al-mahdī amīr al-muʾminīn*[315]	"the *mahdī*, the commander of the faithful"
Mecca (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām)[316]	167	*ʿabd allāh muḥammad al-mahdī amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, Muḥammad, the *mahdī*, the commander of the faithful"
Mecca (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām)[317]	Undated (but presumably connected to the above)	*ʿabd allāh al-mahdī muḥammad amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, the *mahdī*, Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful"
Darb Zubayda milestone (held today in Jedda)[318]	Undated (but perhaps from al-Mahdī's caliphate)	*al-mahdī ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the *mahdī*, the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful"

[308] Mittwoch, "Eine arabische Bauinschrift;" al-Dūrī, "al-Fikra al-mahdiyya," 124; Serjeant and Lewcock, "Architectural History," 348; Elad, "Caliph Abūʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ," 16. Since Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ died midway through the last month (Dhū al-Ḥijja) in the year 136, he is almost certainly the caliph mentioned in this text; see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:87. Cf., however, Serjeant and Lewcock, "Architectural History," 348 (who assume that the caliph in question was al-Manṣūr).

[309] Al-Ḥajrī, *Masājid Ṣanʿāʾ*, 26, mistakenly reads: *amīr al-muʾminīn ʿabd allāh al-mahdī*, "the commander of the faithful, the servant of God [or ʿAbd Allāh], the *mahdī*."

[310] Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār Minṭaqat Makka al-Mukarrama*, 122.

[311] Al-Rāshid's edition of the text omits one *ʿabd allāh*, but it is clearly there in the photograph he provides.

[312] Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār Minṭaqat Makka al-Mukarrama*, 122–25.

[313] Al-Rāshid's edition of the text omits the *amīr al-muʾminīn*, but it is clearly there in the photograph he provides.

[314] *RCEA*, 1:32–33 (no. 42); *CIAP*, 1:144.

[315] It has been suggested that this should read *al-mahdī* [*bn*] *amīr al-muʾminīn*, "al-Mahdī, [son of] the commander of the faithful;" see Elad, "Struggle," 58, n. 91; Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*, trans. Ethel Broido (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 193. That would certainly overlap with usage on coinage, for which see Jere L. Bacharach, "*Laqab* for a Future Caliph: The Case of the Abbasid al-Mahdī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 2 (1993): 271–74; Bates, "Khurāsānī Revolutionaries." It is not, however, what this inscription actually says, so I am inclined to follow Sharon (*CIAP*, 1:146–47) and read it without the added "*bn*."

[316] Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār Minṭaqat Makka al-Mukarrama*, 111–13.

[317] To be included in Mehdy Shaddel's forthcoming publication on the extant early Abbasid inscriptions from Mecca.

[318] See the Appendix.

The early Abbasid inscriptions from the Prophet's Mosque reported in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* provide another fourteen texts that provide formal titles for reigning caliphs, which can add substantially to this list:[319]

§§	Caliph	Titles (Arabic)	Titles (English)
§§1, 4, 5	Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ	*ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful"
§5	Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ	*(inna) ʿabdaka wa-khalīfataka ʿabd allāh (bn)*[320] *amīr al-muʾminīn*	"Your servant and Your caliph, ʿAbd Allāh, (son of) the commander of the faithful"
§§26, 27b	Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr	*ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful"
§2	Muḥammad al-Mahdī	*ʿabd allāh al-mahdī amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, the *mahdī*, the commander of the faithful"
§§3, 17b, 20b	Muḥammad al-Mahdī	*ʿabd allāh al-mahdī muḥammad amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, the *mahdī*, Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful"
§13d	Muḥammad al-Mahdī	*al-mahdī muḥammad amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the *mahdī*, Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful"
§19b	Muḥammad al-Mahdī	*(li-)ʿabd allāh wa-khalīfatihi al-mahdī muḥammad amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God and His caliph, the *mahdī*, Muḥammad, the commander of the faithful"
§27a	Muḥammad al-Mahdī[321]	*ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful"

[319] Neither of these lists is comprehensive. There are certainly more extant texts out there, either awaiting discovery or in publications I have not seen; and there are plenty more relevant inscriptions reported in other literary sources for other towns and regions of the caliphate. These two lists, however, suffice for the analysis here.

[320] See above, n. 131, for the oddity of the "*bn*," "son of," here.

[321] Given the placement of this inscription in the epigraphic programme, it is possible that the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* has incorrectly recorded the date of this text and that it could be a text dating to al-Manṣūr's caliphate, just as §§26 and 27b.

§6	Hārūn al-Rashīd	*ʿabd allāh hārūn amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, Hārūn, the commander of the faithful"
§25c	Not clearly identifiable	*ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the commander of the faithful"

There are three initial observations worth making here. The first is a reiteration of the fact that the word caliph, *khalīfa*, was apparently used within titles in the Prophet's Mosque inscriptions in Medina, although use of that title is not attested on extant building inscriptions that commemorate caliphal patronage from the early Abbasid period. Secondly, although in every extant text dating to the caliphate of Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ (from Mafraq, Baysān/Scythopolis and Ṣanʿāʾ) he is referred to with the title *al-mahdī*, as seemingly is Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr on one occasion (in Ascalon), these two caliphs are not given this title in the Medinan texts. Only the third caliph, the one most commonly identified as "al-Mahdī," is given this title here, as he also is in a great many other extant objects and documents.[322] The Medina texts do, however, potentially suggest (see §27a), especially in combination with an extant inscription (that held currently in Jedda), that the caliph Muḥammad al-Mahdī could be designated, just as his father and uncle, as *ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh*, "the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh," despite this latter not being his given name. This allows us to consider in turn the possibility that the repetition of this particular phrase/theophoric name could have been a more broadly used early Abbasid title for a reigning caliph, not only for those who apparently carried the given name ʿAbd Allāh (as the brothers Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ and Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr both apparently did).

Although there are ways in which these titles all seem to fit a somewhat standard pattern, particularly in the regular use of at least one *ʿabd allāh*, "servant of God," and *amīr al-muʾminīn*, they also display significant variation at times. There does seem to have been a set of standard vocabulary for protocols for early Abbasid caliphs in official texts, but it seems that

[322] For discussion of Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ being given the title "al-Mahdī," see especially al-Dūrī, "al-Fikra al-mahdiyya," 128; Elad, "Struggle;" Jbour, "Discovery," 173; and Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 83–84, 369–71. For the use of the title "al-Mahdī" on coins and in documents referring to Muḥammad, the son of Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr, including during his time as heir apparent (*walī al-ʿahd*), see the references above, n. 315; and Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan* (London: Nour Foundation, 2007), 96 (no. 3), 132 (no. 21), and discussion at 35–37. For further discussion of al-Mahdī being designated heir apparent and given this title, see, for example, al-Dūrī, "al-Fikra al-mahdiyya," 129–32; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Routinization of Revolutionary Charisma: Notes on the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī," *Islamic Studies* 29, no. 3 (1990): 251–75; Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, 193–202; Elad, "Struggle;" and Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 374–76.

elements of that vocabulary could be selected and arranged in different ways. This suggests in turn that in the early Abbasid period there was some experimentation with how caliphs were given titles, perhaps reflecting the apparent uneasiness and recognition of the necessity to develop the ways in which they attempted to argue for the legitimacy of their authority. This perhaps contrasted with the late Umayyad period, in which the formula *ʿabd allāh* [*ism*] *amīr al-muʾminīn*, "the servant of God, [name], the commander of the faithful," seems to have been the official standard on building inscriptions.[323] It might also be contrasted with the inscriptions commemorating building work of Abbasid caliphs in the third/ninth century, when several texts offer only minor variations on the basic formula, *ʿabd allāh* [*ism*] *al-imām* [*laqab*] *amīr al-muʾminīn*, "the servant of God, [name], the *imām*, [personal title], the commander of the faithful," including for example:

Location	Date (AH)	Titles (Arabic)	Titles (English)
Jerusalem (Dome of the Rock)[324]	216[325]	*ʿabd allāh ʿabd allāh al-imām al-maʾmūn amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, ʿAbd Allāh, the *imām*, al-Maʾmūn, the commander of the faithful"
Near Mecca (at a resting stop for pilgrims, found near ʿArafa)[326]	245	*ʿabd allāh jaʿfar al-imām al-mutawakkil ʿalā allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"the servant of God, Jaʿfar, the *imām*, al-Mutawakkil ʿalā Allāh, the commander of the faithful"
Medina (Prophet's Mosque)[327]	282	*abū al-ʿabbās al-imām al-muʿtaḍid bi-llāh amīr al-muʾminīn*	"Abū al-ʿAbbās, the *imām*, al-Muʿtaḍid bi-llāh, the commander of the faithful"

[323] See the references with directions to finding extant texts above, n. 8. Foundation inscriptions as reported in literary texts for Marwanid caliphs also offer this fairly standard formula; see, for example, Flood, *Great Mosque*, 252. And see also the discussion above (references in n. 234) of the inscription from the mosque in al-Fusṭāṭ known only though Vattier's seventeenth-century French translation.

[324] In the mosaic inscription: Kessler, "ʿAbd al-Malik's Inscription," 9. On the copper plates: Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 53, 76.

[325] Since the texts that al-Maʾmūn had added to the copper plaques by the entrances were dated to 216/831, the replacement of ʿAbd al-Malik's name in the mosaic inscription was presumably undertaken at this time as well.

[326] Al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār Minṭaqat Makka al-Mukarrama*, 125–26.

[327] Reported in Ibn Rusta, *al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, 74; *RCEA*, 2:265 (no. 786). The lack of an *ʿabd allāh* at the start is perhaps Ibn Rusta's (or a later copyists') accidental omission.

This form of Abbasid caliphal titles then carried on being used in inscriptions into the later third and fourth/tenth centuries as well.[328]

Conclusions

The texts that could be found around the Prophet's Mosque by the end of the caliphate of Muḥammad al-Mahdī, provided most fully in the late third-/ninth- or early fourth-/tenth-century *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, reveal a significant corpus of architectural inscriptions from the early Abbasid period. Perhaps first and foremost, therefore, the study of this corpus can help to narrow down an appropriate methodology for the use of extant literary descriptions of inscriptions, and perhaps of monuments and objects more broadly, which have long since disappeared themselves. Pre-modern Arabic texts about Mecca and Medina actually offer abundant descriptions of buildings in those two towns' early Islamic history, a material culture of which, as is well known, very little has survived.[329] This article has focused on one small example of such available literary material, but it is an example with potentially wide-ranging implications. Since so few inscriptions in monuments commissioned by early Abbasid caliphs have actually survived, the testimony of literary sources to the existence of several dozen others is important for modern research into second-/eighth-century Arabic epigraphic practices and, especially, the use of inscriptions by caliphs to promote their authority and legitimacy.

We certainly have to be careful when studying inscriptions of the early Islamic centuries that survive only through their texts' inclusion within extant literary sources. There is often much that we would like to know about such inscriptions that no sources were interested in telling us. We can rarely use the extant descriptions to gain much of an understanding of the visual impressions these inscriptions would have made upon their viewers. Similarly, we also cannot often learn much about how these texts' contents may have engaged with other elements in their buildings' decorative schemes. Both these problems apply to the inscriptions analysed here. For the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, however, we do have relatively early testimonies, with a seemingly good history of written transmission, to the

[328] See, for example, the texts from the caliphates of Abū Muḥammad al-Muktafī (r. 289–95/902–8) and Jaʿfar al-Muqtadir (r. 295–320/908–32) published in George C. Miles, "ʿAli b. ʿĪsâ's Pilgrim Road: An Inscription of the Year 304 H. (916–917 A.D.)," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 36 (1955): 477–87; Solange Ory and Dominique Sourdel, "Une inscription ʿabbaside en Syrie du nord," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 18 (1963–64): 221–40; and Amikam Elad, "Two Identical Inscriptions from Jund Filasṭīn from the Reign of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph, al-Muqtadir," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35, no. 4 (1992): 301–60.

[329] See, for example, the discussions of two local histories of Medina in Munt, "Writing the History;" and *idem*, "Mamluk Historiography."

contents and locations of a large number of inscriptions. Through a study of these inscriptions' contents and locations, we can learn quite a bit about the messages that the early Abbasid caliphs wished to convey to visitors to this imperial monument.

The inscriptions in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina after al-Mahdī's renovation work have much to add to our perspective on early Abbasid claims to legitimacy, their reuse and/or "epigraphic mutilation" of Umayyad-era texts, and the ways in which particular verses and *sūra*s from the Qurʾan were used in the decoration of mosques in the second/eighth century. Their study is in part important simply because the early Abbasid mosque in Medina is much more poorly understood than its Umayyad predecessor. In large part, of course, this is thanks to the important work of Sauvaget and his successors in revealing the history of the latter. As this article has demonstrated, however, there is considerably more material available on the early Abbasid mosque and al-Mahdī's work there than is often appreciated. The study of the Prophet's Mosque in the second half of the second/eighth century is in turn important because Medina was a particularly important place for early Abbasid caliphs to articulate the legitimacy of their rule. It held an emerging significance by this time among many Muslims as a *ḥaram* and as a holy city;[330] and it had been the site of the major ʿAlid revolt against early Abbasid rule, during the caliphate of Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr. That the caliph responsible for most of the inscriptions supplied by the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* was al-Mahdī adds a further significance since his reign is often considered to have been a period in which the precise reasons the Abbasids and their followers were giving to underpin their legitimacy were being altered.[331] Muhammad Qasim Zaman has suggested briefly that the mosques in Mecca and Medina played an important role in al-Mahdī's efforts to emphasise his and his family's connections to the prophet and to contribute to religious discourse.[332] The inscriptions discussed here provide much more evidence for what exactly these efforts entailed and reveal the importance of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina specifically to early Abbasid imperial commemorative efforts and as a place of experimentation as they tried to find the most effective way of expressing the legitimacy of their authority in the face of various opponents, Umayyads and ʿAlids among many more.

[330] This, at least, is the argument of Munt, *Holy City of Medina*.
[331] See, for example, Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 45–48; Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 92–93.
[332] Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 205–6.

Appendix – an early Abbasid milestone from (near) the Darb Zubayda

The milestone in question is held currently in Jedda in the King Abdulaziz Centre, no. 33. It is a particularly important text for understanding the usage of caliphal titles in the early Abbasid period so, since the only current edition of the text known to me is in a publication not widely accessible, it seems helpful to provide an edition and brief discussion here.[333] It has been referred to in a handful of other publications, often simply as a milestone dating to the caliphate of al-Mahdī.[334] It consists of eight lines in a clearly legible Kufic script:[335]

١ – هذا ما امر به ا

٢ – لمهدي عبد الله

٣ – عبد الله امير ا

٤ – لمومنين على يدي

٥ – يقطين بن موسى

٦ – هذا على اثني

٧ – عشر ميلا من بريد

٨ – اسود العشاريـ

> This was ordered by al-Mahdī ʿAbd Allāh, the servant of God, the commander of faithful, to be carried out by Yaqṭīn b. Mūsā. This is twelve miles from the post station (*barīd*) at Aswad al-ʿUshāriyy[āt].[336]

Despite the lack of date and the fact that the caliph seems to be given titles that otherwise accord with the designation of the first Abbasid caliph, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ, in extant inscriptions, Saʿd al-Rāshid assumed without further discussion that the caliph mentioned in

[333] Al-Rāshid, "Arbaʿat aḥjār mīliyya," edition of this inscription at 124.

[334] See, for example, al-Rashid, "New ʿAbbāsid Milestone," 139; Ahmad bin ʿUmar Al-Zaylaʿi, "Les inscriptions arabo-islamiques sur pierre," in *Routes d'Arabie: archéologie et histoire du Royaume d'Arabie Saoudite*, ed. Ali Ibrahim Al-Ghabban *et al.*, 486–87 (Paris: Musée du Louvre, and Somogy, 2010), 487.

[335] This is my reading based on the best photograph known to me, that provided in Al-Zaylaʿi, "Inscriptions arabo-islamiques," 487. My reading agrees entirely with Saʿd al-Rāshid's ("Arbaʿat aḥjār mīliyya," 124), whose article also provides a photograph and facsimile of the text (*ibid.*, 137, 139).

[336] Aswad al-ʿUshāriyyāt is approximately 200km southwest of Fayd, on the route between Fayd and Medina. That it was the location of a post station (*barīd*) is also confirmed in *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, 518–19. For further discussion of this location, see al-Rāshid, "Arbaʿat aḥjār mīliyya," 130–31 (and see also its location on the map at 135). The term *barīd* had several usages in the Abbasid period, but for this particular meaning, see Manfred Ullmann, *Zur Geschichte des Wortes Barīd „Post"* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 43. For discussion of the communications network in the Marwanid and early Abbasid empires, see Adam Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 59–84.

this text is Muḥammad al-Mahdī.[337] It does actually seem at least possible that this is correct, although it is certainly a suggestion that requires further justification. The main reason for thinking that the caliph in question might be Muḥammad al-Mahdī is the reference to Yaqṭīn b. Mūsā (d. 186/802) as the overseer of the work. This figure did serve several Abbasid caliphs and had apparently been around already in Kufa during the Abbasid movement's revolutionary phase;[338] he was, however, particularly well-known for his work on behalf of Muḥammad al-Mahdī, now, by this stage of his career, primarily in the Ḥijāz. He was, for example put in charge of al-Mahdī's work on the expansion of the Masjid al-Ḥarām;[339] he was held responsible for problems with the water supply for pilgrims;[340] and, most significantly, he was put in charge by al-Mahdī in 161/777–78 of making significant improvements to various aspects of the infrastructure—including milestones—of the pilgrim route to Mecca, work on which he continued until 171/787–88.[341] It is possible that al-Mahdī put him in charge of such work because he had previous experience of overseeing similar projects for an earlier caliph. We are told, for example, that the first Abbasid caliph, Abū al-ʿAbbās, did order the placement of milestones (*amyāl*), together with beacons (*manār*), along the route from Kufa to Mecca in 134/751–52.[342] However, another passage indicates that the work ordered by Abū al-ʿAbbās on the route to Mecca—although here the only structures mentioned specifically are *quṣūr* and not milestones—only covered the northeast section of the route from al-Qādisiyya to Zubāla, so would not have reached anywhere close to the location of this extant milestone.[343] It is of course possible that the caliph mentioned in this text is Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ, but given the fairly sparse state of our extant evidence for early Abbasid caliphs' titles on building inscriptions—together with the potential evidence from the Prophet's Mosque inscriptions that Muḥammad al-Mahdī could be referred to with

[337] Al-Rāshid, "Arbaʿat aḥjār mīliyya," 123, 130. This assertion of al-Rāshid's was accepted without comment by Al-Zaylaʿi (see above, n. 334).

[338] See, for example, *Akhbār al-dawla al-ʿabbāsiyya wa-fīhi akhbār al-ʿAbbās wa-waladihi*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dūrī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Muṭṭalibī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 1997), 231; al-Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Munʿim ʿĀmir and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1960), 358, 379; al-Yaʿqūbī, *al-Taʾrīkh*, ed. M.Th. Houtsma (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 2:439–40; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:103, 390, 567; al-Fasawī, *al-Maʿrifa wa-l-taʾrīkh*, 1:119; al-Rāzī, *Akhbār Fakhkh wa-khabar Yaḥyā ibn ʿAbd Allāh wa-akhīhi Idrīs ibn ʿAbd Allāh*, ed. Maher Jarrar (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1995), 147, 185.

[339] Al-Fasawī, *al-Maʿrifa wa-l-taʾrīkh*, 1:156; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:476–77; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:520; see also al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, 2:62, 203; and al-Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka fī qadīm al-dahr wa-ḥadīthihi*, ed. ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Duhaysh, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār Khiḍr, and Mecca: Maktabat wa-Maṭbaʿat al-Nahḍa wa-l-Ḥadītha, 1414/1994), 2:169. He is also mentioned in one of the extant inscriptions commemorating al-Mahdī's work in the Masjid al-Ḥarām discussed above; see al-Rāshid *et al.*, *Āthār Minṭaqat Makka al-Mukarrama*, 111–13.

[340] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:502.

[341] *Ibid.*, 3:486.

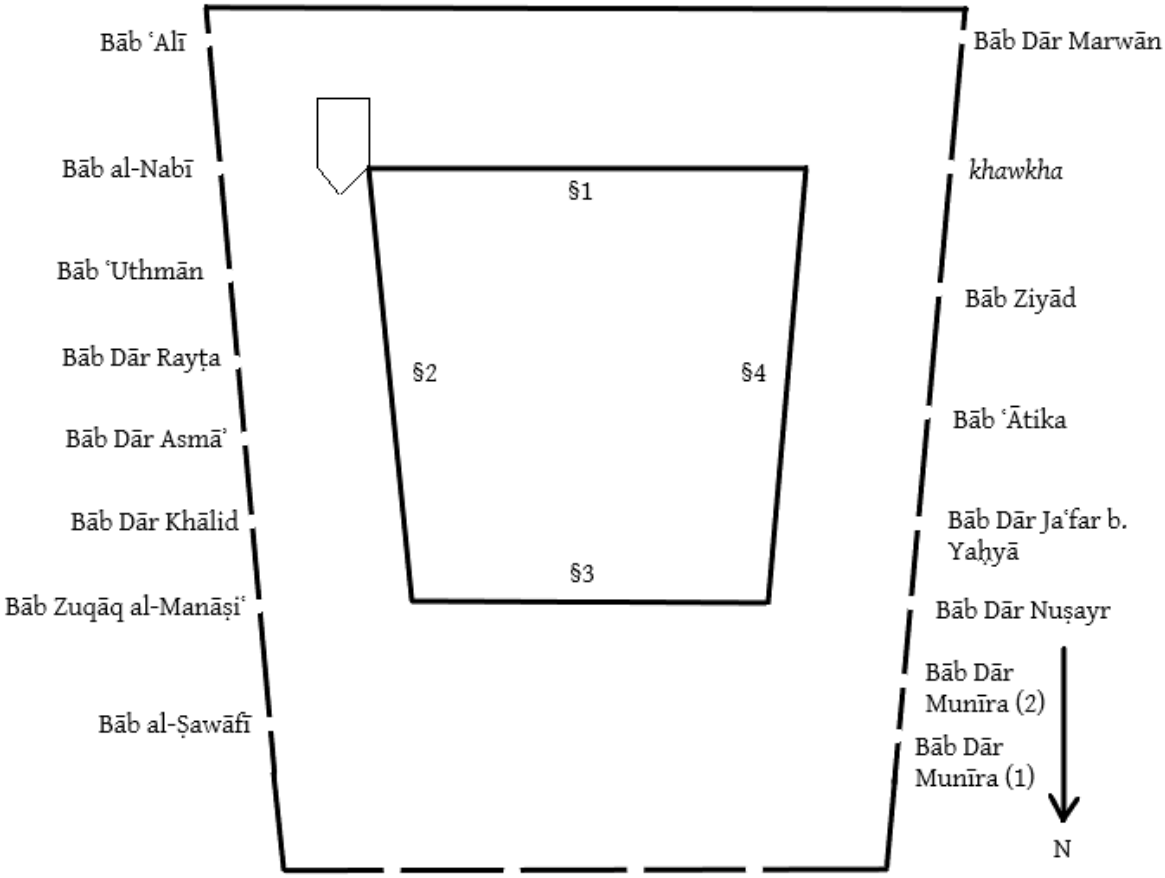
[342] *Ibid.*, 3:81.

[343] *Ibid.*, 3:486.

similar titles (§27a)—we should perhaps keep all possibilities open for now. This is an area where we might reasonably hope that future discoveries can provide greater clarity.

Figure 1

This figure provides a rough outline (not accurately to scale) of the Prophet's Mosque after al-Mahdī's renovation work to offer an indication of the approximate location of the courtyard inscriptions (§§1–4) and the entrances to the mosque discussed in the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* (twenty in total, including four unnamed entrances along the northern wall). Apart from the courtyard inscriptions, almost all of the texts mentioned by the *Kitāb al-Manāsik* can be located loosely in relation to one of these entrances.



References

Sources

Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī. *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*. Edited by Aḥmad Ṣaqr. 4th ed. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1427/2006.

Abū Naṣr al-Bukhārī. *Sirr al-silsila al-ʿalawiyya*. Edited by Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm. Najaf: al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1382/1963.

Akhbār al-dawla al-ʿabbāsiyya wa-fīhi akhbār al-ʿAbbās wa-waladihi. Edited by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dūrī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Muṭṭalibī. 2nd ed. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 1997.

Al-Azraqī. *Akhbār Makka wa-mā jāʾa fīhā min al-āthār*. Edited by Rushdī al-Ṣāliḥ Malḥas. Mecca: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Mājidiyya, 1352–57/1933–38.

Al-Dhahabī. *Taʾrīkh al-islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-aʿlām*. Edited by ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1407–24/1987–2004.

Al-Dīnawarī. *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Munʿim ʿĀmir and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl. Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1960.

Al-Fākihī. *Akhbār Makka fī qadīm al-dahr wa-ḥadīthihi*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Duhaysh. 2nd ed. Beirut: Dār Khiḍr, and Mecca: Maktabat wa-Maṭbaʿat al-Nahḍa wa-l-Ḥadītha, 1414/1994.

Al-Fasawī. *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa wa-l-taʾrīkh*. Edited by Akram Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī. 3rd ed. Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1410/1989–90.

Al-Fīrūzābādī. *Al-Maghānim al-muṭāba fī maʿālim Ṭāba*. Edited by Ḥabīb Maḥmūd Aḥmad *et al*. Medina: Markaz Buḥūth wa-Dirāsāt al-Madīna al-Munawwara, 1423/2002.

Hājjī Khalīfa. *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*. Edited by Şerefettin Yaltkaya and Rifat Bilge. Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1360–62/1941–43.

Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih. *Al-ʿIqd al-farīd*. Edited by Aḥmad Amīn, Aḥmad al-Zayn and Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1359–72/1940–53.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim. *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1371–73/1952–53.

Ibn ʿAsākir. *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*. Vols. 1 and 2. Edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid. Damascus: al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī, 1951–54.

Ibn al-Nadīm. *Al-Fihrist*. Edited by Riḍā Tajaddud. Tehran: Maktabat al-Jaʿfarī, 1391/1971.

———. *Kitāb al-Fihrist*. Edited by Gustav Flügel. Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel, 1871–72.

———. *Kitāb al-Fihrist*. Edited by Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid. London: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1430/2009.

Ibn al-Najjār. *Al-Durra al-thamīna fī taʾrīkh al-Madīna*. Edited by Muḥammad ʿAzab. Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1416/1995.

Ibn Qutayba. *Al-Maʿārif*. Edited by Tharwat ʿUkāsha. 4th ed. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.

Ibn Rusta. *Al-Mujallad al-sābiʿ min Kitāb al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*. Edited by M.J. de Goeje. Leiden: Brill, 1891.

Ibn Saʿd. *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*. Edited by ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1421/2001.

Ibn Shabba. *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna al-munawwara*. Edited by ʿAlī Muḥammad Dandal and Yāsīn Saʿd al-Dīn Bayān. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1417/1996.

Kitāb al-Manāsik wa-amākin ṭuruq al-ḥajj wa-maʿālim al-jazīra. Edited by Ḥamad al-Jāsir. Riyadh: Dār al-Yamāma, 1389/1969.

Al-Marāghī. *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra bi-talkhīṣ maʿālim dār al-hijra*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh ʿUsaylān. Medina: ʿAbd Allāh ʿUsaylān, 1422/2002.

Al-Marjānī. *Bahjat al-nufūs wa-l-asrār fī taʾrīkh dār hijrat al-nabī al-mukhtār*. Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Faḍl. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002.

Al-Maṭarī. *Al-Taʿrīf bi-mā ansat al-hujra min maʿālim dār al-hijra*. Edited by Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ. Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1417/1997.

Al-Mizzī. *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*. Edited by Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1402–13/1982–92.

Al-Muqaddasī. *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*. Edited by M.J. de Goeje. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1906.

Al-Najāshī. *Fihrist asmāʾ muṣannifī al-shīʿa al-mushtahar bi-Rijāl al-Najāshī*. Edited by Mūsā al-Shabīrī al-Zanjānī. Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Tābiʿa li-Jamāʿat al-Mudarrisīn, 1407/1986.

Al-Rāzī, Abū al-ʿAbbās. *Taʾrīkh madīnat Ṣanʿāʾ*. Edited by Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAmrī. 3rd ed. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1409/1989.

Al-Rāzī, Aḥmad b. Sahl. *Akhbār Fakhkh wa-khabar Yaḥyā ibn ʿAbd Allāh wa-akhīhi Idrīs ibn ʿAbd Allāh*. Edited by Maher Jarrar. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1995.

Al-Sakhāwī. *al-Iʿlān bi-l-tawbīkh li-man dhamma al-taʾrīkh*. Edited by Franz Rosenthal and Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-ʿAlī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.

Al-Samhūdī. *Khulāṣat al-wafā bi-akhbār dār al-muṣṭafā*. Edited by ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar. Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1427/2006.

———. *Wafāʾ al-wafā bi-akhbār dār al-muṣṭafā*. Edited by Qāsim al-Sāmarrāʾī. London: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1422/2001.

Al-Ṭabarī. *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*. Edited by M.J. de Goeje *et al.* Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901.

Al-Ṭūsī. *Al-Fihrist*. Edited by Muḥammad Ṣādiq Āl Baḥr al-ʿUlūm. 2nd ed. Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1380/1961.

Yaḥyā al-ʿAqīqī. *Kitāb al-Muʿaqqibīn min wuld al-imām amīr al-muʾminīn*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Kāẓim. Qom: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-ʿAẓamī al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1422/2001.

Al-Yaʿqūbī. *Al-Taʾrīkh*. Edited by M.Th. Houtsma. Leiden: Brill, 1883.

Studies

Abbott, Nabia. *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and its Ḳurʾānic Development, with a Full Description of the Ḳurʾān Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.

Al-ʿAlī, Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad. "Al-Muʾallafāt al-ʿarabiyya ʿan al-Madīna wa-l-Ḥijāz." *Majallat al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿirāqī* 11 (1384/1964): 118–57.

Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali. *La preuve de Dieu: la mystique shiʿite à travers l'œuvre de Kulaynî IXe–Xe siècle*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2018.

Anthony, Sean W. "Prophetic Dominion, Umayyad Kingship: Varieties of *Mulk* in the Early Islamic Period." In *The Umayyad World*, edited by Andrew Marsham, 39–64. London: Routledge, 2021.

Antrim, Zayde. *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Antun, Thallein. *The Architectural Form of the Mosque in the Central Arab Lands, from the Hijra to the End of the Umayyad Period, 1/622–133/750*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2016.

Bacharach, Jere L. "*Laqab* for a Future Caliph: The Case of the Abbasid al-Mahdī." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 2 (1993): 271–74.

Bates, Michael L. "Khurāsānī Revolutionaries and al-Mahdī's Title." In *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung*, edited by Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri, 279–317. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003.

Behrens, Marcel. *„Ein Garten des Paradieses": die Prophetenmoschee von Medina*. Würzburg: Ergon, 2007.

Bernheimer, Teresa. *The ʿAlids: The First Family of Islam, 750–1200*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Bessard, Fanny. *Caliphs and Merchants: Cities and Economies of Power in the Near East (700–950)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Bierman, Irene. *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Bisheh, Ghazi Izzeddin. "The Mosque of the Prophet at Madīnah Throughout the First-Century A.H. with Special Emphasis on the Umayyad Mosque." PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1979.

Blair, Sheila. "Inscribing the Hajj." In *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, edited by Venetia Porter and Liana Saif, 160–68. London: The British Museum, 2013.

———. *Islamic Inscriptions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

———. *The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana*. Leiden: Brill, 1992.

———. "Place, Space and Style: Craftsmen's Signatures in Medieval Islamic Art." In *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, edited by Antony Eastmond, 230–48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Bloom, Jonathan M. "Erasure and Memory: Aghlabid and Fatimid Inscriptions in North Africa." In *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, edited by Antony Eastmond, 61–75. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

———. *The Minaret*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Bonner, Michael. "Al-Khalīfa al-Marḍī: The Accession of Hārūn al-Rashīd." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 1 (1988): 79–91.

Borrut, Antoine. *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: l'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72–193/692–809)*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Canepa, Matthew P. "Inscriptions, Royal Spaces and Iranian Identity: Epigraphic Practices in Persia and the Ancient Iranian World." In *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, edited by Antony Eastmond, 10–35. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

CIAP. See Sharon, Moshe.

Combe, Étienne, *et al.*, ed. *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe.* Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1931–91.

Creswell, K.A.C. *Early Muslim Architecture: Umayyads, A.D. 622–750*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

———. *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture,* revised by James W. Allan. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1989.

Crone, Patricia. *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

———. "On the Meaning of the ʿAbbāsid Call to *al-Riḍā*." In *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times*, edited by C. Edmund Bosworth *et al.*, 95–111. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989.

——— and Martin Hinds. *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Darling, Linda T. "'The Viceregent of God, from Him We Expect Rain:' The Incorporation of the Pre-Islamic State in Early Islamic Political Culture." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134, no. 3 (2014): 407–29.

Dodd, Erica Cruikshank, and Shereen Khairallah. *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture*. Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981.

Al-Dūrī, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. "al-Fikra al-mahdiyya bayn al-daʿwa al-ʿabbāsiyya wa-l-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī al-awwal." In *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān ʿAbbās on His Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by Wadād al-Qāḍī, 123–32. Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981.

Eastmond, Antony, ed. *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Elad, Amikam. "The Caliph Abūʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ, the First ʿAbbāsid *Mahdī*: Implications of an Unknown Inscription from Bet-Shean (Baysān)." In *Masʾat Moshe: Studies in Jewish and Islamic Culture Presented to Moshe Gil*, edited by Ezra Fleischer, Mordechai A. Friedman and Joel A. Kramer, 9–55 (Heb.), with English summary at v–vi. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1998.

———. *The Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762: Ṭālibīs and Early ʿAbbāsīs in Conflict*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

———. "The Struggle for the Legitimacy of Authority as Reflected in the Ḥadīth of al-Mahdī." In *ʿAbbasid Studies II: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies*, edited by John Nawas, 39–96. Leuven: Peeters, 2010.

———. "Two Identical Inscriptions from Jund Filasṭīn from the Reign of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph, al-Muqtadir." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35, no. 4 (1992): 301–60.

Finster, Barbara. "Die Mosaiken der Umayyadenmoschee von Damaskus." *Kunst des Orients* 7, no. 2 (1970–71): 83–141.

Flood, Finbarr Barry. *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

———. "Signs of Silence: Epigraphic Erasure and the Image of the Word." In *The Image Debate: Figural Representation in Islam and Across the World*, edited by Christiane Gruber, 46–71. London: Gingko, 2019.

GAS. See Sezgin, Fuat.

George, Alain. "A Builder of Mosques: The Projects of al-Walīd I, from Sanaa to Homs." Forthcoming.

———. "Calligraphy, Colour and Light in the Blue Qurʾan." *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 75–125.

———. "Paradise or Empire? On a Paradox of Umayyad Art." In *Power, Patronage, and Memory in Early Islam: Perspectives on Umayyad Elites*, edited by Alain George and Andrew Marsham, 39–67. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

———. *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*. London: Saqi, 2010.

———. *The Umayyad Mosque of Damascus: Art, Faith and Empire in Early Islam*. London: Gingko, 2021.

Gil, Moshe. *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*, translated by Ethel Broido. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Gildemeister, J. "Zwei arabische Inschriften auf Elfenbeinbüchsen." *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 25, no. 1–2 (1871): 248–50.

Grafman, Rafi, and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon. "The Two Great Syrian Umayyad Mosques: Jerusalem and Damascus." *Muqarnas* 16 (1999): 1–15.

Gruendler, Beatrice. *The Development of the Arabic Scripts: From the Nabatean Era to the First Islamic Century according to Dated Texts*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993.

Günther, Sebastian. "Al-Nawfalī's Lost *History*: The Issue of a Ninth-Century Shiʿite Source Used by al-Ṭabarī and Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 241–66.

———.*Quellenuntersuchungen zu den „Maqātil aṭ-Ṭālibiyyīn" des Abūʾl-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī (gest. 356/967): ein Beitrag zur Problematik der mündlichen und schriftlichen Überlieferung in der mittelalterlichen arabischen Literatur*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1991.

Al-Ḥajrī, Muḥammad. *Masājid Ṣanʿāʾ: ʿāmiruhā wa-muwaffīhā*. Ṣanʿāʾ: Maṭbaʿat Wizārat al-Maʿārif, 1361/1942.

Hillenbrand, Robert. "Qurʾanic Epigraphy in Medieval Islamic Architecture." *Revue des études islamiques* 54 (1986): 171–87.

Al-Ḥusaynī, ʿAbd Allāh. *Al-Kharīṭa al-athariyya li-l-Madīna al-munawwara*. Cairo: Majmūʿat Najjār li-l-Tijāra wa-l-Ṭibāʿa, 2005.

Al-Jāsir, Ḥamad. "Makhṭūṭ ʿan maʿālim jazīrat al-ʿarab li-l-imām al-Ḥarbī (198–285 H)." (Part II.) *Majallat al-ʿarab* 3, no. 3 (1388/1968): 193–98.

———. "Muʾallafāt fī taʾrīkh al-Madīna." *Majallat al-ʿarab* 4 (1389–90/1969–70): 97–100, 262–66, 327–34, 385–88, 465–67.

———. "Al-Samhūdī: ashhar muʾarrikhī al-Madīna." *Majallat al-ʿarab* 7 (1392/1972): 161–78.

Al-Jbour, Khaled. "The Discovery of the First Abbasid Milestone in 'Bilād ash-Shām.'" *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 8 (2004): 171–76.

Jeffery, Arthur. *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān: The Old Codices*. Leiden: Brill, 1937.

Johns, Jeremy. "Arabic Inscriptions in the Cappella Palatina: Performativity, Audience, Legibility and Illegibility." In *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, edited by Antony Eastmond, 124–47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Jones, Alan. *The Qurʾān*. Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007.

Kessler, Christel. "ʿAbd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970): 2–14.

Khamis, Elias. "Two Wall Mosaic Inscriptions from the Umayyad Market Place in Bet Shean/Baysān." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64, no. 2 (2001): 159–76.

Khan, Geoffrey. *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan*. London: Nour Foundation, 2007.

Khoury, Nuha N.N. "The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century." *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 80–98.

———. "The Mihrab: From Text to Form." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 1 (1998): 1–27.

Landau-Tasseron, Ella. "Arabia." In *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 1: The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, edited by Chase F. Robinson, 397–447. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Lassner, Jacob. *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Inquiry into the Art of ʿAbbāsid Apologetics*. New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1986.

———. *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages: Text and Studies*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970.

Leal, Bea. "The Abbasid Mosaic Tradition and the Great Mosque of Damascus." *Muqarnas* 37 (2020): 29–62.

Leatherbury, Sean V. *Inscribing Faith in Late Antiquity: Between Reading and Seeing.* Abingdon: Routledge, 2020.

Lecker, Michael. *The "Constitution of Medina": Muḥammad's First Legal Document*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004.

———. “The Preservation of Muḥammad’s Letters.” In his *People, Tribes and Society in Arabia Around the Time of Muḥammad*, no. 10. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

Levy-Rubin, Milka. “The Surrender Agreements: Origins and Authenticity.” In *The Umayyad World*, edited by Andrew Marsham, 196–215. London: Routledge, 2021.

———. “Why Was the Dome of the Rock Built? A New Perspective on a Long-Discussed Question.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80, no. 3 (2017): 441–64.

Lindstedt, Ilkka. “Arabic Rock Inscriptions up to 750 CE.” In *The Umayyad World*, edited by Andrew Marsham, 411–37. London: Routledge, 2021.

Lucas, Scott. “An Efficacious Invocation Inscribed on the Dome of the Rock: Literary and Epigraphic Evidence for a First-Century *Ḥadīth*.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 76, no. 2 (2017): 215–30.

Madelung, Wilferd. “The *Hāshimiyyāt* of al-Kumayt and Hāshimī Shiʿism.” *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989): 5–26.

Marsham, Andrew. “‘God’s Caliph’ Revisited: Umayyad Political Thought in Its Late Antique Context.” In *Power, Patronage, and Memory in Early Islam: Perspectives on Umayyad Elites*, edited by Alain George and Andrew Marsham, 3–37. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

———. “Introduction: The Umayyad World.” In *The Umayyad World*, edited by Andrew Marsham, 1–20. London: Routledge, 2021.

———. “The Pact (*amāna*) between Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ (656 or 658 CE): ‘Documents’ and the Islamic Historical Tradition.” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 57, no. 1 (2012): 69–96.

———. *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

——— and Chase F. Robinson. “The Safe-Conduct for the Abbasid ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī (d. 764).” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70, no. 2 (2007): 247–81.

Mikati, Rana. “Missives from the Frontier (130–152/747–769): al-Awzāʿī and the Abbasids.” *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020): 1–32.

Miles, George C. “ʿAli b. ʿĪsâ’s Pilgrim Road: An Inscription of the Year 304 H. (916–917 A.D.).” *Bulletin de l’Institut d’Égypte* 36 (1955): 477–87.

———. “Al-Mahdī al-Ḥaqq, Amīr al-Muʾminīn.” *Revue numismatique*, 6th series, 7 (1965): 329–41.

Milwright, Marcus. *The Dome of the Rock and Its Umayyad Mosaic Inscriptions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Mittwoch, Eugen. “Eine arabische Bauinschrift aus dem Jahre 136 H.” *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 235–38.

Moor, Bilha. “Mosque and Church: Arabic Inscriptions at Shivta in the Early Islamic Period.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40 (2013): 73–141.

Morimoto, Kazuo. “The Formation and Development of the Science of Talibid Genealogies in the 10th and 11th Century Middle East.” *Oriente Moderno* 18, no. 2 (1999): 541–70.

Mortel, Richard. “The Origins and Early History of the Ḥusaynid Amirate of Madīna to the End of the Ayyūbid Period.” *Studia Islamica* 74 (1991): 63–78.

Mostafa, Heba. “The Early Mosque Revisited: Introduction of the *Minbar* and *Maqṣūra*.” *Muqarnas* 33 (2016): 1–16.

Al-Munajjid, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. *Muʿjam mā ullifa ʿan rasūl Allāh (ṣ)*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1402/1982.

Munt, Harry. “Caliphal Imperialism and Ḥijāzī Elites in the Second/Eighth Century.” *Al-Masāq* 28, no. 1 (2016): 6–21.

———. *The Holy City of Medina: Sacred Space in Early Islamic Arabia.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

———. “Mamluk Historiography Outside of Egypt and Syria: ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Samhūdī and His Histories of Medina.” *Der Islam* 92, no. 2 (2015): 413–41.

———. “Writing the History of an Arabian Holy City: Ibn Zabāla and the First Local History of Medina.” *Arabica* 59, no. 1–2 (2012): 1–34.

Nagel, Tilman. “Ein früher Bericht über den Aufstand von Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh im Jahre 145h.” *Der Islam* 46 (1970): 227–62.

Necipoğlu, Gülru. “The Dome of the Rock as Palimpsest: ʿAbd al-Malik’s Grand Narrative and Sultan Süleyman’s Glosses.” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 17–105.

Nees, Lawrence. “Blue Behind Gold: The Inscription of the Dome of the Rock and Its Relatives.” In *And Diverse Are Their Hues: Color in Islamic Art and Culture*, edited by Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, 152–73. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Nol, Hagit. “Dating Early Islamic Sites Through Architectural Elements: A Case Study from Central Israel.” *Journal of Islamic Archaeology* 6, no. 1 (2019): 41–80.

Ory, Solange, and Dominique Sourdel. “Une inscription ʿabbaside en Syrie du nord.” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 18 (1963–64): 221–40.

Pinder-Wilson, Ralph. “Ivory Working in the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods.” *Journal of the David Collection* 2, no. 1–2 (2005): 13–23.

Al-Qāḍī, Wadād. “The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad Ideology and Practice.” In *Saber religioso y poder político en el islam: actas del Simposio Internacional (Granada, 15-18 Octubre 1991)*, 231–73. Madrid: Agencia Español de Cooperación Internacional, 1994.

———. “An Umayyad Papyrus in al-Kindī’s *Kitāb al-Quḍāt*?” *Der Islam* 84, no. 2 (2007): 200–45.

Al-Rāshid, Saʿd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, “Arbaʿat aḥjār mīliyya min al-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī: dirāsa wa-taḥqīq.” *al-ʿUṣūr* 5, no. 1 (1990): 123–42.

———. “A New ʿAbbāsid Milestone from al-Rabaḏa in Saudi Arabia.” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 3, no. 2 (1992): 138–43,

——— *et al. Āthār minṭaqat Makka al-mukarrama*. Riyadh: Wizārat al-Maʿārif, Wikālat al-Āthār wa-l-Matāḥif, 1423/2003.

RCEA. See Combe, Étienne, *et al.*, ed.

Robinson, Chase F. “The Violence of the Abbasid Revolution.” In *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, edited by Yasir Suleiman, 226–51. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

Salāma, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Zayn. *Akhbār al-Madīna li-Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zabāla*. Medina: Markaz Buḥūth wa-Dirāsat al-Madīna al-Munawwara, 1424/2003.

Santa-Cruz, Noelia Silva. “The Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Their Spreading to al-Andalus.” *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 4, no. 1–2 (2017): 147–90.

Sauvaget, Jean. *Le mosquée omeyyade de Médine: étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et de la basilique*. Paris: Vanoest, 1947.

Serjeant, Robert B., and Ronald Lewcock. "The Architectural History and Description of Ṣanʿāʾ Mosques: The Great Mosque." In *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City*, edited by Ronald Lewcock and Robert B. Serjeant, 323–50. London: The World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983.

Sezgin, Fuat. *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. Leiden: Brill, 1967–.

Shahin, Aram Aldo. "Struggling for Communitas: Arabian Political Thought in the Great Century of Change (ca. 560–ca. 660 AD)." PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2009.

Shalem, Avinoam. *The Oliphant: Islamic Objects in Historical Context*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Sharon, Moshe. *Corpus inscriptionum arabicarum palaestinae*. Leiden: Brill, 1997–.

Silverstein, Adam. *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Tillier, Mathieu. *L'invention du cadi: la justice des musulmans, des juifs et des chrétiens aux premiers siècles de l'Islam*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2017.

Tor, Deborah G. "The Parting of Ways between ʿAlid Shiʿism and Abbasid Shiʿism: An Analysis of the Missives between the Caliph al-Manṣūr and Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya." *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 209–27.

Treadwell, Luke. "The Formation of Religious and Caliphal Identity in the Umayyad Period: The Evidence of the Coinage." In *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, edited by Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu, 1:89–108. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017.

Ullmann, Manfred. *Zur Geschichte des Wortes Barīd „Post"*. Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997.

ʿUsaylān, ʿAbd Allāh. *Al-Madīna al-munawwara fī āthār al-muʾallifīn wa-l-bāḥithīn qadīm*^{an} *wa-ḥadīth*^{an}. Medina: ʿAbd Allāh ʿUsaylān, 1418/1997.

Whelan, Estelle. "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qurʾān." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118, no. 1 (1998): 1–14.

———. "The Origins of the *Miḥrāb Mujawwaf*: A Reinterpretation." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 2 (1996): 205–23.

Wiet, Gaston. *Matériaux pour un Corpus inscriptionum arabicarum, première partie: Égypte*. Vol. 2. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1930.

Al-Wohaibi, Abdullah. *The Northern Hijaz in the Writings of the Arab Geographers, 800–1150*. Beirut: Al-Risalah, 1973.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

———. "Routinization of Revolutionary Charisma: Notes on the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī." *Islamic Studies* 29, no. 3 (1990): 251–75.

Al-Zaylaʿi, Ahmad bin ʿUmar. "Les inscriptions arabo-islamiques sur pierre." In *Routes d'Arabie: archéologie et histoire du Royaume d'Arabie Saoudite*, edited by Ali Ibrahim Al-Ghabban *et al.*, 486–87. Paris: Musée du Louvre, and Somogy, 2010.