

Before the canonization of the text various efforts had been made to overcome the inherent ambiguities of the Arabic script and to ensure a more uniform orthography.⁶ First, the identical shapes of some of the consonants had to be distinguished from each other by means of diacritical points; then, a system of vocalic signs consisting of colored dots was developed by Abū l-Aswad, and improved by another grammarian, Ibn Abī Ishāq.⁷ This system was replaced by a better one, devised by Ḥalīl, although the original notation remained in use for Qurʾānic manuscripts. Various orthographic devices were added to the system in order to indicate the glottal stop (*hamza*) and the doubling of consonants (*šadda*).