Adding diacritics to Arabic characters
Adobe InDesign, with the Tasmeem plugin

Sometimes one encounters Arabic characters in either a non-Arabic or a non-standard Arabic context which carry diacritics absent from Modern Standard Arabic text, for instance ڭ in the placename ازكّي *Azukkī*. Using Tasmeem in Adobe InDesign, and applying one of the DecoType fonts (Emiri, Naskh, Nastaliq, etc.), these characters can still be composed.

First of all, below is a list of diacritics that can be added to consonants, with their Unicodes, combined as an example with the base letter ح (and the *waṣla* with ا *alif*). The second column shows the Unicode hexadecimal value of the diacritic (a PUA or Private Use Area value starting with the digit F), the third column gives a description, and the fourth column shows the consonant plus diacritic *after repositioning the diacritic*.

ح **F601** one dot above ح (compare خ *ḫāʾ* as a precomposed character)

ح **F602** two dots above ح (the *centre* of the ̈ is positioned where the single dot of خ *ḫāʾ* would be)

ح **F603** three dots above ح (the *weighted centre* of the ̂ is horizontally shifted where the single dot of خ *ḫāʾ* would be, but the bottom two dots are in the vertical position of خ)

ج **F604** one dot below ج (compare ج *jīm* as a precomposed character)

ج **F605** two dots below ج (the *centre* of the ̤ is positioned where the single dot of ج *jīm* would be)

ج **F606** three dots below ج (compare Persian چ *čīm* as a precomposed character)

ا **F65F** *waṣla* ا (compare ا *alif-waṣla* as a precomposed character)

Note that – apart from the case of *alif* plus *waṣla* – you almost always need to reposition the diacritics using **OpenType Diacritic Positioning [*OpenType: positive adjustment is up*]**! Please *zoom in very far* in either the .indd or the .pdf file of this document in order to accurately gauge the positions of the various diacritics.

The insertion of these characters can be performed in one of two ways:

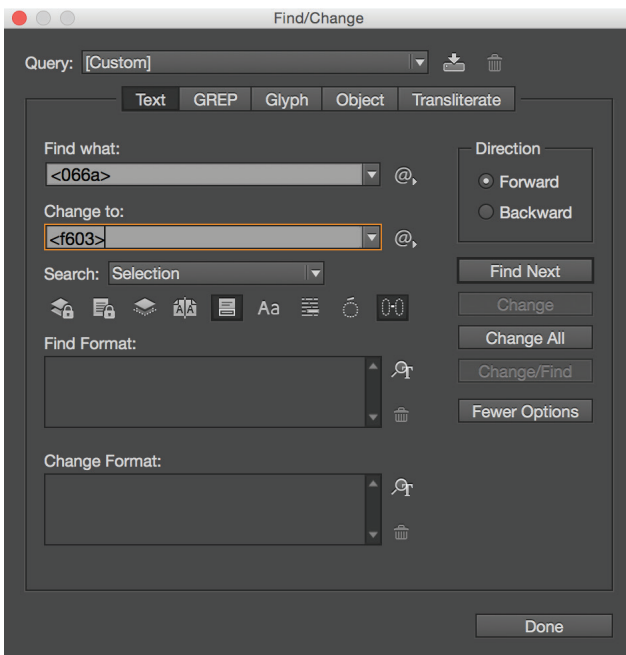1 Where a diacritic needs to be inserted, key a 'dummy' character, preferably from the Arabic range, for instance ٪, the Arabic Percent Sign (U+066A). Then, run an Edit → Find/Change operation, finding <066a> and replacing it with the required Unicode value in angle brackets as well. Let us say you want to add the cluster of three dots above the letter ك, as shown on the previous page of this document. Key:

ك٪

Note that there should be no space between the ك and the ٪ (the Selection Helper will prove an indispensable tool!):

Now perform the Replace of <066a> with <f603> (I have selected the characters in order to constrain the Replace action):

The string now looks like this: كٔ. The Selection Helper shows a rectangle where the diacritic appears, making it easier to copy once you have inserted it the first time.

You then have to reposition the diacritic slightly using Diacritic Positioning.

2 The other, quicker, insertion method becomes available when you have inserted a diacritic once before already: make sure you select it using the Selection Helper (see above), copy, position the insertion point where you want to insert the diacritic and paste. Reposition the diacritic as needed using Diacritic Positioning.

For easier copying, please use the InDesign version of this document to copy the diacritics from the examples on the first page. Use the Selection Helper to be sure that you copy the right character, and later on to select the diacritic when you need to reposition it using OpenType Diacritic Positioning.

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Software used: Adobe InDesign CC2014, Tasmeem for CC, DecoType Emiri font for the Arabic.