

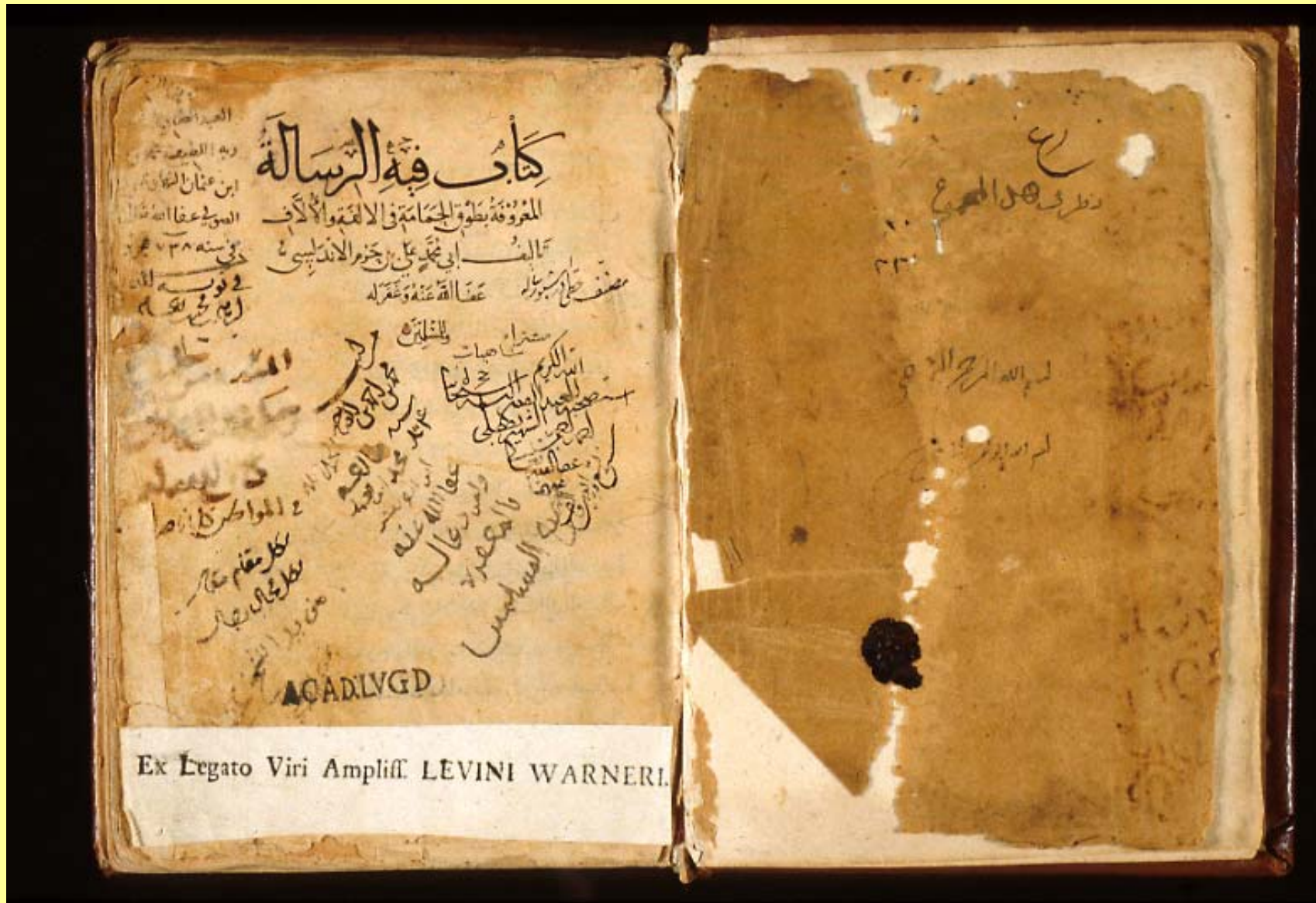
Beyond the codex

Codicology in scholarship

presented by Jan Just Witkam
(University of Leiden, Leiden, The Netherlands)

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The title-page of the unique manuscript of *Tawq al-Hamama*, 'The Ring of the Dove', by Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi. Purchased before 1665 in Istanbul. First edition (by D.K. Pétrof), Leiden 1914.

Source: MS Leiden, Or. 927, f. 1a

First questions and observations:

* How unique is unique?

- Unique tells you something about progress (or lack thereof) of bibliography, not of the manuscript. It is also a bookseller's term.

* If this is an Andalusian text, why is it written in *Mashriqi* script?

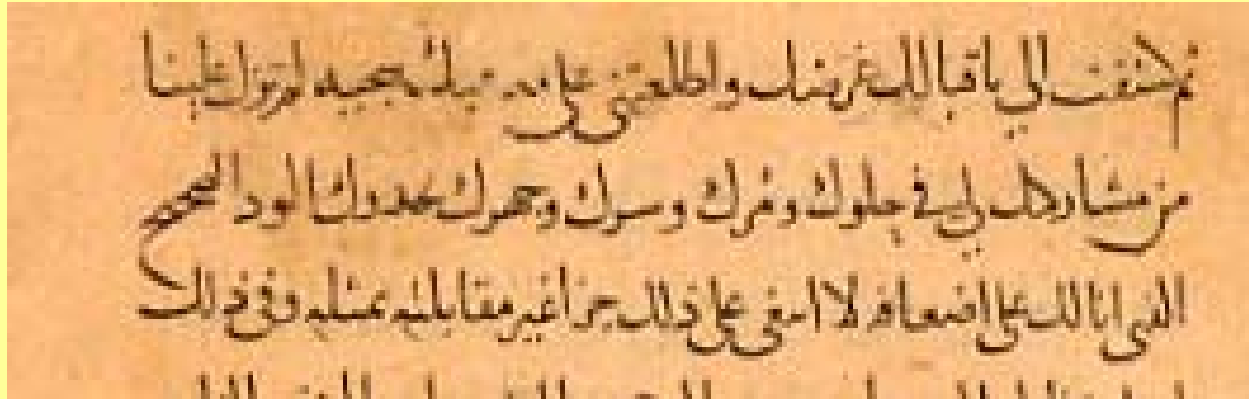
- The MS is dated 738/1338 and probably comes from Syria. In the three centuries of life of the text, it has come to the East and at some stage has been converted into Oriental script.

* Why is there this difference in time between acquisition and publication?

- This is common with many texts. They need to be discovered, and only then they get published.

* Why was the manuscript in Istanbul anyway?

Mamluk libraries were transported *en masse* to Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt in 1517.

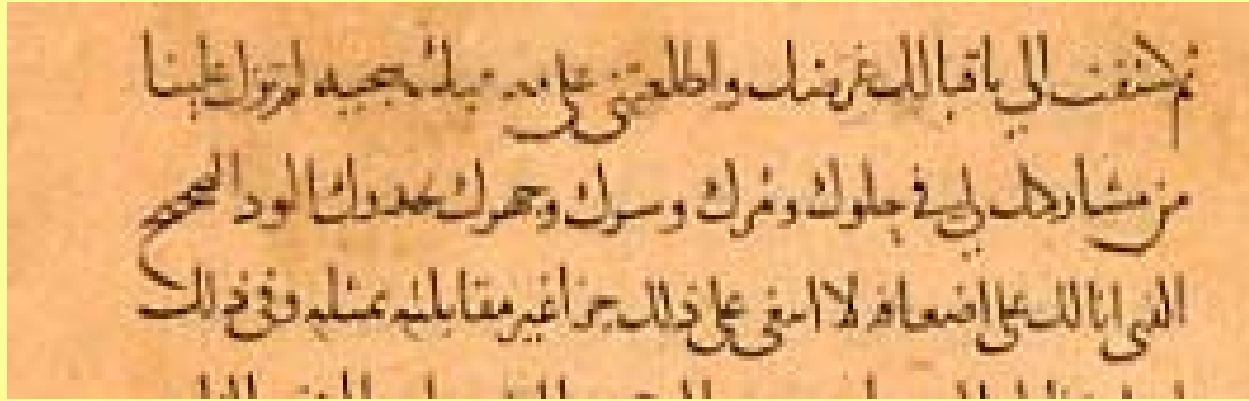


الذى انا لك اضعافه لا ابتغى **على ذلك** جزا غير مقابلته
بمثله وفى ذلك

A.J. Arberry's translation (London 1953): 'In this you were led by true affection,] the which I doubly reciprocate, desiring no other recompense **for that** but to receive a like return. It was upon this [theme that I composed the following verses in a long poem addressed ...'

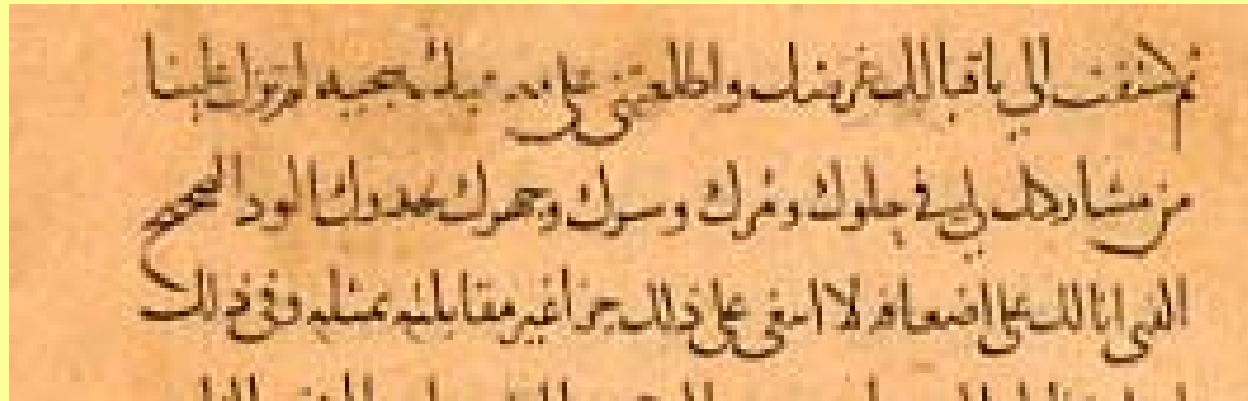
Detail from the opening pages of Ibn Hazm's Tawq al-Hamama.

Source illustration: MS Leiden, Or. 927, f. 2a, lines 1-3



الذي انا لك اضعافه لا ابغى **على ذلك** جزا غير مقابلته
بمثله وفي ذلك

The words **على ذلك** in line 3 are not translated by Arberry, and Pétrof has omitted them from his edition, no doubt by mistake. All subsequent editions lack the words **على ذلك** as well. What does this mean? Yes: all subsequent editions were made after Pétrof's edition, not after the 'unique' manuscript.



الذى انا لك اضعافه لا ابغى **على ذلك** جزا غير مقابله
بمثله وفي ذلك

It also means that all (more than thirty!) newer editions of this famous text, and all translation for that matter (except the Dutch one by Kruk & Witkam, 1978), have not been compared with the original manuscript, and that all emendations found in these editions have no direct relationship with the manuscript, but are based on the knowledge and ingenuity of their editors. And also: new editions develop new variant readings, independently from the manuscript.

Source illustration: MS Leiden, 927, f. 2a, lines 1-3

This brings us to the core of the question: **what happens beyond codicology?** Let us have a quick look:

- In the manuscript age texts were reproduced by copying in a 1 to 1 ratio.
- Even if the copyist is very careful, he is bound to make mistakes.
- Mistakes are made at random: skipped words can be important and also unimportant, negligence by its very nature is not choosy.
- The mistakes (or inaccuracies) are copied by the next copyist, who may add a few of his own in the manuscript that he produces.
- Important mistakes may be corrected (emended), the unimportant mistakes (**على ذلك**) slip through, go undetected, and they are the philologist's little helpers.
- They are helpers in textual criticism, the reconstruction a text so that it looks most like the copy that the author once sent into the world.

Textual criticism in the sense that one compares as many manuscripts of a text as possible, rigourously shifts out the variant readings which they have or do not have in common, and that one then tries, with constant reference to the manuscript witnesses, and with the application of a number of text critical methods, to make a reconstruction of the author's version, or at least a reconstruction of the archetype which stands at the beginning of the transmission of a text, ...

All that is a relatively new idea, not much older than two hundred years, and was first practiced by the German philologist Karl Lachmann (1793-1851).

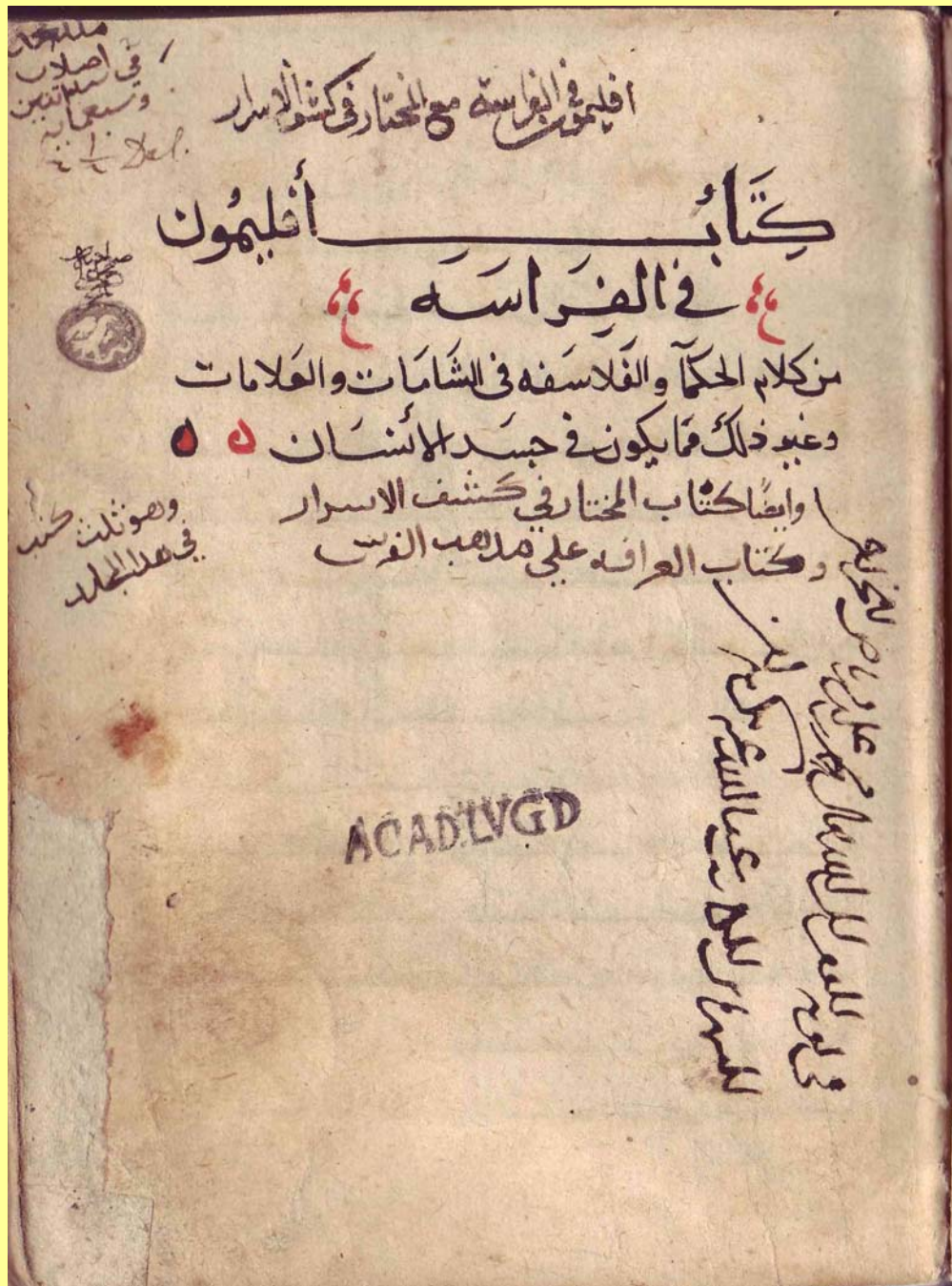
The Renaissance philologists (for Greek and Latin texts) were convinced of the importance of manuscript witnesses, but for them expert knowledge of the language of a text was almost as important as the manuscript(s). Many emendations on the manuscripts were made on the basis of their (presumed) expert knowledge of the language, as if they knew the language better than the author whose text they edited.

Lachmann's methods (which he never wrote down in a handy textbook, but which must be distilled from the prefaces of his own editions) cannot, however, simply be applied to the textual criticism of Arabic and other Islamic or medieval texts (Witkam 1988).

The most important differences between the philology of classical Greek and Latin and the philology of Arabic, etc.:

- Autograph manuscripts of antiquity are always lost
- Transmission phase in classical antiquity is usually lost
- Alexandrian (Hellenistic) versions sometimes preserved
- Medieval recensions are preserved

The paradox is that this gives the classical philologist a much greater freedom of action than the Arabic philologist. The distance in time and the by its nature defective material, next to the scarcity of manuscripts for most texts, permits the classical philologist to an abundance of emendations and conjectures.



Title-page of the Arabic translation of the book on physiognomy by the Hellenistic scholar Polemon / Aflimun (d. 144 AD).

The Greek text is largely lost, and this manuscript seems to be the most complete of the existing witnesses, which are all in Turkish libraries. The Leiden manuscript was acquired in Istanbul.

Manuscript copied in Damascus, 757/1357.

Source: MS Leiden, Or. 198, f. 2a

البَابُ التَّاسِعُ وَالسُّتُونَ ٢ علامه عشق النساء لكل غريب
البَابُ السَّبْعُونَ ٢ علامه الرجل الذي يفكر في بلايا عظام
 من قبل ان يصل اليه شيء منها **ع** **ه**
البَابُ **الْأَوَّلِي**

٢ فراسه العين وعلاماتهما

من علم الفراسه بعلامات العين وفضل البيان فيها على ما سواها
 من الجوارح **ه** اذا رايت العين مضيئة براقتين فامرهما حسن
 بدهن على صلاح شان صاحبها واكثر اهل هذا النوع الصبيان واذا
 رايت الناظر حسا عريض الحدقه فاقض على صاحبها بالحمق
 وقله الفهم وصغر الناظر يدل على النجور وقله الفهم وكثره الجت
 وكل من كانت عينه صغيرة دلت على كثره المكر بشبه صنفا
 من الحيات والفردة والثعالب وما اشبههن واما العيون
 الكبار النواظر فاقضى على اهلها بالحمق واللين والبله الذي في
 البقر والحمار والغنم وما اشبه ذلك من الدواب واذا قتت
 الناظر بالعين فوجدته اعظم من قدر العين ووجدت سواده

Firasa of Polemon, 5a, 11-14:

وكل من كانت عينه صغيرة دلت على كثرة
 المكر بشبه صنفا | من الحيات والقردة
 والثعالب وما اشبههن واما العيون | الكبار
 النواظر فاقضى على اهلها بالحمق واللين
 والبله الذي في | البقر والحمار والغنم وما
 اشبه ذلك من الدواب ...

‘As for everyone who has a small eye, it indicates much cunning, resembling kinds of snakes, monkeys, foxes, and the like. As for eyes with large pupils, judge that the owners have the stupidity, softness, and folly that is in cows and donkeys, sheeps and goats, and other such animals.’
 (Hoyland, pp. 341-343).

وكل من كانت عينه صغيرة دلت على كثرة المكر يشبه صنفا
من الحيات والقردة والثعالب وما اشبهه من اهل العيون
الكبار النواظر فاقضى على اهلها بالحمق واللين والبله الذي في
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وكل من كانت عينه صغيرة دلت على كثرة المكر يشبه صنفا | من الحيات والقردة والثعالب
وما اشبههن واما العيون | الكبار النواظر فاقضى على اهلها بالحمق واللين والبله الذي في |
البقر والحمير والغنم وما اشبه ذلك من الدواب ...

Issues at stake:

correcting grammar: *saghirata* (without *tanwin*)

correcting diacritics: *bi-shibh*

correcting hypercorrection: *ashbahahunna*

correcting grammar: *faqdi* (with long vowel)

Source: MS Leiden, Or. 198, f. 5a, lines 11-14:

وكل من كانت عينه صغيرة دلت على كثرة المكر يشبه صنفاً
من الحيات والقردة والثعالب وما اشبهه من اهل العيون
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Wider issues at stake: Normalize the orthography? Normalize the grammar? If so, up to what level?

Hoffmann's edition (1893) chooses for normalization. Hoyland's edition (2007) chooses for emended rendering of the manuscript tradition (*bi-shibh* => *yashbahu*).

Source: MS Leiden, Or. 198, f. 5a, lines 11-14:



Qalam or *Qasab* (reed, sugar reed) and Papyrus, as depicted in the Arabic translation of the *Materia Medica* of Dioscurides (c. 40-90 AD), in a manuscript written in Samarqand in 475/1082.

A lucky coincidence that the base materials for writing, the pen and the leaf, are here depicted on one and the same page.

See also the medical use of the papyrus plant, the care for the wounds made during treatment of hemorrhoids and fistulae.

Source: MS Leiden, Or. 289, f. 35a

These examples, which are by no means rare, show that a strict Lachmannian adherence to the manuscripts and a faultless and complete application of Lachmann's methodology is not always possible. What is more serious: when one tries to apply Lachmann's method, it often proves to work out on a theoretical level only, as the tacit assumption in it is the closed recension of a text (Paul Maas 1957). That is a simplification that can be fatal.

But more often than not, a recension cannot be considered as closed, since the existing transmission is defective and unreliable. Then one must opt for a less rigorous approach (Martin L. West, 1973).

Lachmannian textual criticism as to be used for Arabic texts has been advocated by Salah al-Din al-Munaggid (1955).

Choices

In the choice for normalization the editor can come far away from the manuscript source, but he should constantly asking himself how far he has gone and whether it is necessary to go that far.

Especially matters of orthography are not so innocent as they seems. They can reflect the oral rendition of a text, of which we know next to nothing. Normalization destroys the little we have.

Sometimes normalization is unavoidable, however. When one edits a text in classical Arabic on the basis of a number of manuscripts, none of which is complete, and all of which diverge on the level of orthography, normalization according to modern orthography is sometimes a solution.

Sometimes normalization goes further and the editor is obliged to correct his text, even against what his witness tells him. This is particularly the case in the copying of the Qur'an, and in Hadith.

Beyond codicology

The history of collections is important. An example is the removal of great quantities of manuscripts to the Ottoman capital in the course of the 16th century, from where some were in turn exported to Western collections in the 17th century.

The diverging opinions on textual criticism show that there is not just one method, but that strategies should be devised that are custom-made for each individual text.

Western classical textual criticism cannot automatically be applied to the editing of Arabic and other Islamic texts. But it is important to make use of its methodology.

Norms applicable should all the time be carefully thought and rethought.

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