On editing epigraphy in Arabic script
A suggested form of editorial presentation*
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The Muslim world is very rich in epitaphs and monumental and other inscriptions, which contribute greatly to our knowledge of the histories of individuals, dynasties, towns, states, monuments and art. About a century ago major attempts first began to be made to collect these texts and to make them accessible to the scholarly world. Since that time the texts of probably several thousands of such inscriptions have been published.

While students of Muslim epigraphy have so far concentrated on rendering accessible as many texts as possible together with the details which the reader may need for a correct understanding (translations, commentaries, photographs, indexes, comparative studies etc.), little thought seems to have been spent on how actually to present these materials. Yet a rigid form of editorial presentation can help very much to facilitate the consultation of an edition, to prevent unnecessary diffuseness and to provide the editor with a useful check on his own conclusions.

Before entering into a discussion of the technique of editing epigraphy in Arabic script, it is appropriate to define in general the editor's task vis-à-vis the reader and the demands made by this kind of material, and, in order to prevent duplication and the rise of a useless variety of editorial systems, to see what thought students of epigraphy in other scripts have so far given to this subject and what conventions they use.

The verb 'to edit' means 'to prepare for publication'. From the editor's point of view this means 'while doing as much as possible justice to the original text, to present it in a manner as convenient as possible for the reader'*. With modern texts of living authors this means that with the approval of the author the editor may alter the wording or the arrangement if this helps to make the meaning more apparent. In the case of older texts, however, where the creator of the work can no longer be consulted, the editor has no such liberty but must render the text faithfully.

Merely from the point of view of editorial handling, two major categories can be distinguished among these older texts, viz. that of texts surviving in several later copies only and that of texts whose originals survive, the major representatives of the former category being long texts of an expository or literary character, and those of the latter being short texts of a documentary character (papyri, inscriptions). Owing to these differences the editorial treatment of the texts of these two categories also differs. While much of the task of the editor of a text of the former category consists essentially of collation, the editor of a text of the latter category will necessarily engage more specifically in research on matters relating to palaeography, terminology, history etc. And whereas the former editor can in his edition justifiably limit himself to reproducing, besides what he believes to be the text closest to the original, only the most important variant details of the various copies used, the latter editor can, and indeed, in order to serve the reader best, must, reproduce a large variety of detail of the unique copy which he is editing.

When addressing the issue of how to publish the texts of inscriptions and papyri, one must consider what questions the critical reader may ask of an edition. These questions are essentially: what text is available? what portions if any are lost? which of these have apparently been lost accidentally and which through wilful deletion? what may have been the content of such lost portions? what text, though available, cannot be read? of which among the available letters is the reading doubtful? how are any abbreviations or contractions available in the text to be filled out? what errors does the available text contain? which of these errors can be assumed to be due to contamination of whatever kind and which to mere inadvertence on the part of the scribe? what alternative readings deserving serious consideration have been suggested by others? what is known of the history of the document itself? what are its physical characteristics? what is its location? and how is it to be interpreted?

It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that editors of inscriptions and papyri came to feel that they could only serve scholarship in the true sense of the word by presenting their editions in a form answering all of these questions; until that time they had mostly been content with presenting facsimi-
les, or something standing between a facsimile and a text set from type, provided with scanty supplementary details. Several methods of critical editing came to be developed concurrently and soon the need was felt among epigraphists and papyrologists for uniformity. The matter came to be discussed increasingly, and in 1928 the Royal Academy of Belgium presented to the Union Académique Internationale a plan for the unification of the methods followed and of the conventional signs used in scholarly text editions, including editions of inscriptions and papyri. The Union took action and in 1932 published a brochure entitled Emploi des signes critiques. Disposition de l'apparat dans les éditions savantes de textes grecs et latins. Conseils et recommandations. Meanwhile the question had also been discussed in the papyrological section of the 18th international congress of orientalists, held in Leiden in 1931. After having taken notice of various views, including what must have been a preliminary version or proofs of the brochure of the Union, the Section on 11 September of that year unanimously accepted the text of a resolution prepared by a committee of three members of the Section, entitled Essai d’unification des méthodes employées dans les éditions de papyrus. This document proposed a well-considered system of conventions for editors of papyri which, though new, followed as closely as possible the systems already in use, in order to avoid undesirable discontinuity. In the same resolution the Section also stressed the desirability of as good as possible a uniformity in the principles followed in the editing of all unique documents, not only papyri but also such others as Greek and Latin inscriptions. (It would seem that the existence of papyri and inscriptions in other languages and the need for their publication, too, did not occur to the Committee.) The Union in its turn responded in 1938 by publishing a revised edition of its brochure, which included comments and suggestions for a slight revision of some of the proposals of the Leiden Committee. However, this did not prevent the new system from coming to be known as the Leiden System or, in German, the Leydenner Klammernsystem. Since that time various scholars have published their comments on the theory of certain conventions among those proposed by the Leiden Committee, and/or suggested changes or refinements. Some of these suggestions have been adopted, others have not. The most comprehensive attempt of this kind is the brochure by the specialist of Greek epigraphy at Harvard University, Sterling Dow, entitled Conventions in Editing. A Suggested Reformulation of the Leiden System, which was published in 1969. The scholar who introduced the system in the field of the study of documents in Arabic script is probably Adolf Grohmann. Specifically for the use of students of Arabic papyrology he published, in 1952, and several times subsequently, summaries of the system adapted for use in editions in Arabic script.

The stress placed by the Leiden Committee on the need for uniformity is entirely justified. Considering the numerous particularities which the editor must indicate in order to provide the reader with all the details which he may want to know, any system will of necessity be complex. In order to spare the reader from having to master a new system whenever he consults another edition, this uniformity is essential. Deviation from the Leiden System is therefore to be limited preferably to those instances where, for whatever reason, the system does not suit the Arabic script: and deviation from Grohmann’s adapted version is justified only insofar as such a deviation is a patent improvement or refinement.

The questions which the critical reader may ask of an edition have already been listed above. We shall now discuss these in further detail with specific reference to inscriptions in Arabic script.

(1) Extant text. As regards the extant text of a document in Arabic script, one might publish it in transliteration, which may prove easier to print. However, this may occasionally necessitate interpretation of a kind which at this stage is undesirable, and will complicate comparison with the original document. Moreover, the reader may find it easier to read the text in the original script. Having said this I think the reader is served best if the edition is not a facsimile but is printed from regular Arabic type: in instances where the writing in the original document is very intricate and the reading is disputable, the editor may in the critical apparatus present a drawing of the contours of the letter or letters concerned as they appear in the original document.

In inscriptions in Arabic script diacritical signs are not always completely available, while such auxiliary signs as vowels tend to be almost completely lacking. While on occasion this absence is due to apparent inadvertence on the part of the scribe, often it is evident that these signs have been omitted intentionally, as a calligraphic licence. The question of how the editor is here best to serve the various interests involved is difficult to answer: while the epigraphist may prefer an edition presenting exclusively the signs available in the original document, the historian may prefer an edition that makes reading as easy as possible. At the same time both typesetting of the auxiliary orthographic signs proper to the Arabic script and deletion of the regular diacritical dots add significantly to the cost of printing. Last but not least, one may wonder whether these signs with their mostly secondary importance for the understanding of the text deserve that amount of the editor’s attention. On the basis of these considerations I suggest the following compromise:

(a) To supply tacitly diacritical dots whose lack is not due to apparent inadvertence (in which event an editorial substitution is required (see below)).
(b) In editions of texts in languages other than Arabic, to supply tacitly any of the lacking supplementary diacritical signs used in the writing of those languages, unless their absence in the original document is apparently due to inadvertence (in which event, again, an editorial substitution is required).

(c) To omit all other auxiliary orthographic signs, but in Arabic texts to retain consistently or to supply tacitly some, viz., following the rules drawn up by Régis Blachère and Jean Sauvaget for the contributors to two French series of Arabic text editions: ḥamzā, ṣhadda and madda with the exception of shadda over ‘solar’ letters following the article; vowels and juzma wherever their absence might cause ambiguity; and the two subscript diacritical dots of final ya’ used to distinguish that letter from alif maqṣūra. In editions of epigraphic texts in other languages the same rules might mutatis mutandis be applied.

It is the practice of Max van Berchem and his followers to present in editions not the full texts of Koranic citations as these appear in the original documents but only the references to those citations, and not the full blessings as they appear in the original documents after the names of God, Mohammed, etc. but only the conventional contractions of these. It is true that this method saves space, but it may deny us possibly interesting variant readings and should, I think, not be followed. As regards punctuation, I think the reader will be served best if in prose texts the editor supplies consistently at any rate full stops and hyphens, and perhaps also colons.  

(2) Text lost by accident. Portions of text apparently lost by accident are marked in the edition by a square bracket on each side (see sample No. 1). Any conjectural restorations of such missing text are placed between these brackets. In cases where the extreme end of a line of text is missing and the length of the portion missing cannot or not approximately be determined, the bracket that comes next to the extreme available letter may alone be placed and the other left out. However, the use not of a pair of brackets but of a single bracket alone may cause confusion if preceding or following lines also contain brackets or if the editor makes a conjecture (in which event the reader may fail to notice the single bracket and consequently the fact that a conjecture is being made). This method must therefore be applied only in those rare instances where there is really no way at all for the editor to define even approximately the length of the portion missing.

(3) Borrowings from existing records. The virtual founder of the study of Arabic epigraphy, Max van Berchem, complained as early as 1892 about the rapid decay of inscriptions in the Muslim world. Fortunately, interest in inscriptions as auxiliary sources of historical information appears to have existed already at an early date, e.g. in Turkey, with the result that all kinds of Ottoman chronicles include records of inscription texts. With specific reference to verse inscriptions, records of these may be found in dīwāns. With some critical caution the modern editor can safely supply from such records portions now lost. For the critical reader it is essential to know, however, that these portions, though lost, are not conjectures but have been borrowed from existing records. Martin West, the author of the most authoritative modern handbook of textual criticism, therefore stresses the appropriateness of the use (the existence of which had already been noted in the brochure of the Union) of only the bottom half of the square bracket, the halving indicating the fact that in supplying the text the editor stands on firmer ground than if he had made a mere conjecture (in which event he would have used the full square bracket) (see sample No. 2). Dow’s recommendation to underline such portions instead, seems to me less logical.

(4) Doubtful readings. The reading of individual available letters may be doubtful owing either to physical damage or to lack of accuracy on the part of the scribe. In many instances, however, the reading of such letters will be evident from the context. Yet strictly speaking the readings of such letters are conjectures. Since these particular letters are not lost or at any rate not entirely lost, it would be incorrect to place them within square brackets. In classical epigraphy the fact that the reading of such a letter is, strictly speaking, a conjecture, is indicated by printing a dot underneath that letter. In the Latin and Greek scripts this critical sign is entirely appropriate, as it attracts the readers attention and yet causes no inconvenience while reading. Unfortunately, in editions of our texts the presence of the diacritical dots proper to the Arabic script make the further dot undesirable as a critical sign. Grohmann proposes the use of small superscript query marks; I myself have in my edition of the Ottoman historical inscriptions in Edirne used overlining. Superscript query marks seem to me to distract the eye too much from the text proper, especially if they are numerous, and what is more, they may suggest that the reading not only of the letter or letters concerned but of the entire word is doubtful. Moreover, most printers will find it hard to set superscript query marks. It is true that many printers will find it hard to set the superscript bar too, but if need be they can quite easily incorporate this sign by hand. The superscript bar has the additional advantage of being familiar to readers of manuscripts in the Arabic script as a means to make certain portions of text stand out. Provided that care is taken to avoid possible confusion with faṭḥa and madāда by placing the superscript bar one register higher than the superscript auxiliary signs of the Arabic script, it will serve its purpose well (see sample No. 3).

With reference to the marking of doubtful readings it may be useful to add that among inexperienced editors there is a tendency towards also marking
damaged letters whose readings even in isolation are beyond doubt. Van Groningen and others have stressed the uselessness of this mode of procedure. What interests the reader in the first place is what text is legible. As long as the reading of an individual letter is beyond doubt in spite of any damage, that letter ought to be printed without any critical sign.

With respect to the marking of letters of doubtful reading it must finally be noted that in certain instances the Arabic script unfortunately lends itself ill to such markings, as letters may appear not only next to one another but also underneath one another (e.g. in the common ligature ُلم). The only solution in such instances seems to be to have such letters printed as if there existed no such ligatures.

(5) Intentional erasures. Areas where the scribe or a later hand have apparently deleted a portion of text intentionally are marked in the edition by a double square bracket on each side (see sample No. 3). Erased letters that can still be read with some certainty (for instance because the contours are still visible) can be printed between those brackets; if the reading is doubtful, overlining must be added; conjectures of text once available there must be printed between single square brackets within double brackets; portions of text which apparently after the erasure have been inscribed in an erased area are printed between the double square brackets with the words 'Second Text' printed from small type overhead (if the editor is somehow capable of supplying also the first, erased text of that area he puts that text between the double square brackets with the words 'First Text' overhead, and the second text on top, with the words 'Second Text' overhead).

(6) Abbreviations and contractions. In inscriptions in Arabic script abbreviated writings sometimes occur, especially in the mention of dates. I have not yet come across contractions but perhaps these occur too. Readers cannot be supposed to understand these, and the editor will do well to fill them out. In order to indicate that the portions filled out are editorial additions, they are placed between brackets, this time parentheses (see sample No. 4).

(7) Scribal errors. Scribes may skip letters, or write superfluous or erroneous letters. Some of these errors are not made inadvertently but are due to insufficient familiarity with grammar or orthography and/or to contamination of whatever kind. Such errors may be indicative of the scribe's education and possibly of the nature of the influences to which he has been exposed. Also, an apparent error may represent a spelling accepted during a certain historical period and be indicative of the development of the language and/or the orthography. Such writings should therefore in the edition not be corrected but be retained as they are (and come back to in the interpretative part of the edition). Patent orthographic errors apparently due solely to inadvertence, however, should for the convenience of the reader be marked. The Leiden System advises the editor to place between angle brackets letters which he has inserted to supply letters or words which he considers to have been intended to be inscribed but to have been omitted by error (see sample No. 5), and between braces letters or words which he considers not to have been intended but which have been inscribed by error (see sample No. 6), and this convention has now been generally accepted. If an editor, suspecting one or more entire words to have been skipped, wishes to make a conjecture, he places that conjecture between angle brackets; if in such an event he wishes to make no conjecture he inserts the angle brackets and between them leaves appropriate space. The third kind of editorial correction, the substitution, has often been placed between angle brackets too. The use of a single critical sign for two different purposes was found admissible in that the reader was felt to notice the difference in another way: in the case of a substitution the critical apparatus would necessarily include an entry showing the word precisely as read by the editor in the original document, while in the event of an editorial addition the reader would find no such entry in the critical apparatus. However, the inconvenience caused to the reader by this cumbersome method was recognized at an early date. Bidez and Drachmann, op. cit., p. 20, have proposed the use of a separate critical sign for marking editorial substitutions, viz. the top half of the square bracket. While the idea of the use of a separate sign is a good one, the particular one suggested has not generally been accepted, perhaps because it was felt to be too inconspicuous to sufficiently attract the reader's attention and prompt him to consult the critical apparatus. The classical scholar Rheinhold Merkelbach has suggested the marking of editorial substitutions by a subscript asterisk instead. The choice of the asterisk he very appropriately justifies by the fact that this sign, which is often used for reference, has the advantage of drawing the reader's attention in a very natural manner to the critical apparatus. However, in conformity with the device proposed above for the marking of letters of doubtful reading, viz. the superscript bar, the asterisk ought in our inscriptions perhaps to be placed not underneath the letter concerned but overhead. Unfortunately, the incorporation of sub- and superscript asterisks may present difficulties to the typesetter. I therefore suggest that the asterisk should indeed be used, but at one end of the word, and more precisely at the beginning of the word because so the reader will notice sooner. While it is true that this is an infringement on the principle that a critical sign should be in the immediate vicinity of (i.e. over, under or next to) the letter or text portion concerned, the deviation from this principle here would seem to be justifiable in view of the limitations of typography and to cause no inconvenience to the reader (see sample No. 7).
As to any letters possibly left incomplete by the scribe, Dow, op. cit., p. 11, has pointed out that these should be considered not as doubtful readings but as errors due to inadvertence and should, editorially speaking, be treated accordingly, i.e. the incomplete letter should be replaced by the correct letter, an asterisk be added and the reading on the stone be indicated in the critical apparatus.

In very poorly executed inscriptions transposition of words may occur. If the transposition is evidently due not to unfamiliarity with syntax but to inadvertence, the editor may put the words in the right order, place an asterisk at each end of the transposition and present in the critical apparatus the reading of the original text.

(8) Alternative readings. Previous editors or others may have suggested alternative readings that can be expected to be of interest to the critical reader. The best place for the editor to indicate such alternative readings is the critical apparatus. I suggest that the reader's attention be drawn to the critical apparatus by means, again, of an asterisk placed before the word concerned in the edited text or, if two or more words are concerned, by asterisks at both ends of the passage—the use in these instances of the asterisk helps to avoid an undesirable increase in the number of the critical signs used, an increase which, here, is also unnecessary, as the presence in the critical apparatus of the previous editor's siglum will tell the reader that the lemma is concerned not with a substitution or a transposition but with someone else's reading. (See sample No. 8.)

Dow recommends the use, in editions of Greek and Latin inscriptions, of yet further critical conventions, which in editions of our inscriptions seem of little use. It may be useful, however, to mention them for the sake of completeness. He recommends:

(a) To print small superior * or vide or vacat wherever there is a blank space in the original text. Given that the design of the typical inscription in Arabic script is very regular (mostly also symmetrical), that the text portions therein are usually enclosed in frames and that the text usually fills the complete space simply be left between the brackets corresponding in size with the absent or illegible portion. Wherever text is available but the editor is unable to read it, he may leave corresponding space open, too; however, in order to indicate that the text in that area is not missing but available he places overhead the bar indicating doubtful reading.

With general reference to these various devices it must be remarked that wherever text is somehow absent and no conjecture possible, classical epigraphists and papyrologists will, in addition to the various brackets already used to indicate such absences, place a dot for every letter which they estimate is missing, or indicate the number of the missing letters by means of a number: if they feel they can somehow make no such estimate they will place dashes instead. Owing to the particular nature of the Arabic script, which comprises characters of very different widths, which especially in inscriptions is often written in two or more registers and where the text often alternates between loose and compressed writing, it is in most instances quite impossible to estimate the number of the missing or illegible letters. Hence I suggest that in such circumstances space simply be left between the brackets corresponding in size with the absent or illegible portion. Wherever text is available but the editor is unable to read it, he may leave corresponding space open, too; however, in order to indicate that the text in that area is not missing but available he places overhead the bar indicating doubtful reading.

With general reference to restorations. Dow, op. cit., pp. 20ff, esp. pp. 30f, proposes a scheme of conventions to indicate their degree of probability. That scheme would also seem to be well suited for use in the editions with which we are concerned here. It may suffice here to indicate that he proposes: to add to a restoration a small superior query mark if that restoration, though definitely probable, is not so certain or probable as to admit no reasonable doubt; in the case of many such definitely probable restorations, Dow recommends the use in an edition, to use no query marks but to add to the edition a general heading stating that the restorations are uncertain conjectures; and to present restorations in the commentary alone if they are no more than crude approximations suggesting the general nature of the restoration.

Even though Dow does not say so, the same method may, I think, be followed in cases of uncertain resolutions of abbreviations or contractions, and of uncertain editorial additions. (Uncertain readings of erased letters, as has been explained above, should, since traces of these letters are apparently still available, be overlined between the double square brackets.) This completes our survey of the main textual particularities to be met with in our inscriptions and of how they ought to be indicated in editions. Should the printer have difficulty in typesetting one or more of...
the less common brackets, as e.g. the angle brackets or
the double square brackets, it may be useful to realize
that most Arabic fonts contain in addition to paren-
theses and square brackets round and angle duckfoot
quotes (guillenets) as well as superior and floriated
parentheses. If need be these might be used to replace
a kind of bracket unavailable to the printer, provided
the editor duly notifies the reader.

As regards the layout of the edited text proper, the
following remarks may be in place. First, for easy
comparison with the original document, that layout
should as much as possible reproduce that of the
original text. Second, numbering of the lines and
stones of which an inscription is composed is essential
for reference. Considering the fact that these texts are
generally short and their commentaries long, number-
ing of each line is preferable to numbering of each
third, fourth or fifth line, as is sometimes done in
editions of longer texts. Since, in epigraphy in Arabic
script, verse inscriptions with three, four or even more
hemistichs per line are not uncommon, in the editions
of such inscriptions such lines may need to overrun. In
such cases verse numbering is desirable in addition to
the line numbering. As regards the form of these
numberings, I have found satisfactory the method
employed by myself in my edition of the inscriptions
in Edirne, viz. the numbering of the lines with the so-
called 'Arabic' numerals (i.e. those used not in the
Arabic script but in the modern Latin script). of verses
with lower case italic letters and of stones with capital
roman letters, the practical advantages of this method
being that the use of non-Arabic numerals and letters
precludes the impression that the numbering is part of
the edited text proper, and sets off visually that text.
while to the typesetter the use of these numerals and
letters in these editions need not present difficulties.

For the correct reading and understanding of verse
texts the metre may prove essential. Editors of such
texts have in the past often contented themselves with
mentioning only the names of the metres. This is of
little help to the reader, as he can hardly be expected
to have memorized all the existing metres and their
variant forms. Hence, when preparing his edition the
editor should not only scan the text carefully himself
but for the convenience of the reader supply the
metrical scheme, preferably at the beginning of the
edited text proper.

Immediately underneath the edited text comes the
critical apparatus. This is the place where the editor
indicates variant readings by previous editors which in
his judgment deserve consideration. It is also the place
where he indicates the original readings of words in
which he has substituted letters, and the order in the
original document of words transposed in the edited
version. In each item in the critical apparatus the
edited form, including any asterisks, comes first, for
reference (since epigraphical texts are usually short
there will normally be no need for references to line
numbers). Then, after a colon, comes the variant
reading or the form as it appears in the original
document, whichever applies. Variant readings are fol-
lowed by the siglum of the editor or edition concerned.

Items in a critical apparatus should preferably not be
separated from one another by a full stop, a semi-
colon, a dash or any other sign that might be considered
for this purpose, as this might suggest that these signs
form part of the portions of text quoted. Much better
is it simply to print extra space, which has the additional
advantage of being more pleasing to the eye. In order
to avoid possible confusion with the edited text pro-
per, the critical apparatus is normally printed from
smaller type and separated from the edited text by
some extra interlinear space.

Before the edition comes the introduction, which
should tell the reader the location, the physical fea-
tures, any details known of the history of the stone itself,
previous editions, and who were the editors.

Since interpreting inscriptions often requires a cer-
tain expertise, and since the editor himself is most
likely of all to possess precisely that expertise, it is the
editor's duty to have the edition accompanied by a
translation and a commentary. For the reader's conve-
nience and for reasons of conciseness certain brief
comments need not necessarily be included in the
commentary but may go in the translation between
square brackets. This is true for identifications, e.g. of
Koran citations and of towns, rivers etc. today known
under different names; interpretations of words or
expressions on the stone that contain errors appar-
tly due to contamination, e.g.:

(text:)

(translation:) ... the successor of [jânishîn-i] Gûl-
shenî ...;

and conversions of dates to the Christian era. The
complete yet concise commentary discusses any ques-
tions of authenticity and date of the document, draws
the reader's attention to phenomena of special interest
(palaeographic, prosodic, linguistic, orthographic, ter-
minalogical, religious, artistic, historical etc.) and ans-
wers all of his possible primary questions, referring
him for further details to the main sources. The
commentary need not enter into questions the answers
to which the reader can be expected to find on his own
in the major dictionaries of the language concerned.

Full photographs as well as an index listing not
only names but also conventional blessings and epi-
thes and giving full references to the various phenome-

na noted in the commentaries are indispensable in
any serious edition of inscriptions—without photo-
graphs or facsimiles the book is useless for the critical
reader, without a comprehensive index useless for the
serious epigraphist.

The arrangement of the edited texts of individual
inscriptions within a corpus is a matter needing consi-
deration. For instance, the epigraphist may prefer a merely chronological arrangement while the historian may prefer an arrangement by location or by historical personage. The editor must decide here for himself which category of scholars he thinks will use his corpus most and how their interests are served best. The arrangement by location is unique in having the additional advantage of leaving the way open for endless natural expansion, provided at least the extant epigraphy of the individual locations is presented completely.

Finally, it may be useful here to say a word on the problems which this suggested form of editorial presentation may present to the typesetters and on how these may be solved. When speaking, above, about overlining as an indication of doubtful reading, we have referred to the occasional need which this may entail of printing two successive letters not in the form of their conventional ligature but next to one another, as if there existed no such ligature. In modern typesetting this procedure may be possible only with certain technical measures. While until recently text in Arabic characters was typeset on purely mechanical keyboards having a separate key for each individual variant form of a letter (initial, medial, final, isolated), modern electronic typesetting machines have one key per letter only, it being the machine's computer which selects the proper variant form or ligature to be used in a certain place. This now presents difficulties in the type-setting, as the machine may refuse to set in our case to set anything other than the conventional ligature. Also, the machine may refuse to set on the right-hand side of a bracket any other variant forms of a letter than the isolated or the final ones (to the exclusion of the initial and medial ones) and on the left-hand side any other forms than the isolated or the initial ones (to the exclusion of the medial and final ones). In such circumstances the only way out is deceiving the machine by inserting, in the place where the machine will refuse to do what is needed, the device available to the typesetter for elongating Arabic words: the elongation stroke. The insertion of this stroke will stop the machine from selecting ligatures and other variant forms of its own choice and permit the setting of the connected form wanted by the editor. It is true that this stroke (not necessarily longer than one millimetre) mars the edition but this effect is very slight and is far outweighed by the advantage of the appearance, in the edition, of the variant letter form actually wanted.

The picture here presented of editing inscriptions in Arabic script may convey the impression that the editing of such inscriptions is an extremely complex and back-breaking job. It is true that at times the editing of inscriptions is difficult. It should be remembered, however, that very much of what has been said above concerns epigraphical particularities that are rare. Instead I would say that in view of the authenti-

city of our inscriptions as historical sources and thanks to the elegance both of the appearance and the content of many of them the editing of these is often also fascinating and most rewarding.

**Samples**

(In the sample-texts a series of dots indicates text available but here omitted.)

»No. 1«

Text lost, and restored by conjecture. F.Th. Dijkema, *The Ottoman Historical Monumental Inscriptions in Edirne* (Leiden 1977), inscription No. 1 (the restoration is based on contextual and historical evidence and on comparison with other inscriptions):

... أمر السلطان ... بايزيد ... هذه المرة لا زالت معمورة ...

أذن سنة وأثاثة ...

»No. 2«

Text lost and supplied from existing record. *Ibid.*, inscription No. 32, line 4 (the portion supplied is borrowed from several chronicles and a tedhkire):

جوهور، ويزان، إبن هدى معمور

»No. 3«


(Translation of the First Text:)

1 This is the tomb of the one who needs God (may He be exalted) [he?]
2 [ ]
3 al-Sayîf [ ]
4 on Monday the 17th of Rabi` al-Àkhar of the year eighty-four [8 June 1479]. May God (may He be exalted) have mercy upon him and may God have mercy upon whoever invokes His
5 mercy and upon the Muslim dead. Praise to God!
6
I wish to thank Dr. V.L.M. Ménage, emeritus professor of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, for very kindly reading the text and helping me to present it in correct English style. I am grateful to Mr. P.F.A. Koree and Mr. A.W. Copier, both of the former printing house of E.J. Brill, for advice on typographical matters.

1 If 'to edit critically' is meant add 'critical' before 'reader'.
2 Anonymous (Paris).
5 Published as volume 2 in the series 'Greek, Roman and Byzantine Scholarly Aids' by Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, but available from the Circulation Manager of Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies at Cambridge, Massachusetts. The brochure includes a most useful bibliographie raisonnée on the subject. Some of Professor Dow’s very precise and appropriate definitions have been gratefully used in this paper.

We shall deal here with the questions which the reader may ask of an edition of an available inscription, not with the specific questions which he may ask of an edition based exclusively on a surviving transcription. With the enormous masses of our inscriptions that are still awaiting publication in critical editions there is little chance of our finding the time soon for editing and publishing inscriptions whose texts are now only available in transcriptions. However, it may be useful to indicate here that Dow (op. cit., pp. 121) has given some thought to the editing of this particular kind of text.

8 Règles pour éditions et traductions de textes arabes (Paris 1953), §§ 36, 37, 40, 41. The two series referred to are the ‘Collection arabe’ of the Association Guillaume Budé and the ‘Documents relatifs à l’histoire des Croisades (Textes orientaux)’ of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. Blachère and Sauvaget’s instruction to place koraic citations within floriated parentheses would in epigraphic editions cause confusion with the many other kinds of brackets used as critical signs. Moreover, in epigraphic editions such brackets seem to serve no useful purpose, as both the translations and the commentaries offer ample opportunity to identify the citations. The instruction of the two French scholars to vocalize fully verses, proverbs and citations from the Koran and from hadith (§ 39) seems to me to serve no useful purpose either.

In inscription No. 15 of the present writer’s The Ottoman historical monumental inscriptions in Edirne (Leiden 1977) the reading of a full stop after the fifth word of the fourth line is indeed crucial to the understanding of that text. It is external evidence that has shown the need for the
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It may be useful to take this opportunity to explain that the present paper is based both on experience gained in the preparation of that edition and on further research specifically into editorial technique. Some of the notions expounded in this paper have therefore been developed after the book was completed. The book is therefore not in all respects a precise representation of the technique proposed in this article.


11 Martin L. West, Textual criticism and editorial technique applicable to Greek and Latin texts (Stuttgart 1973). The work is acknowledged as authoritative also by editors of texts in languages other than Greek and Latin. See e.g. Jerome J. McGann, A critique of modern textual criticism (Chicago and London 1983), pp. 11.

12 See above, note 9.


14 Haplography (writing once what should be written twice), which in classical epigraphy is an error, in Ottoman epigraphy is an accepted palaeographic/calligraphic licence (see Dijkema, op. cit., index, s.v.). Unless an haplography is apparently due to a mistake of the scribe it may therefore in Ottoman epigraphy, and perhaps also in other epigraphy in Arabic script, be considered not as an error but as a form of abbreviated writing.

15 Angle brackets of some fonts mar the appearance of the edition by the amount of space they take. The editor may be well advised to ask the printer to use angle brackets whose angle is about 135°, and certainly not smaller than 90°.

16 See e.g. Dijkema, op. cit., inscription No. 107, line 2 and the commentary on that line.


18 Typesetters’ fonts normally include several kinds of asterisks, including large, heavy ones and smaller, light ones. Even a rather inconspicuous asterisk will probably serve its purpose satisfactorily; it will in any event prevent the appearance of the edition being marred. The editor may well be advised to discuss this matter with the printer or the publisher.

19 For a textual error that may to some extent be considered a transposition see Dijkema, op. cit., inscription No. 120, line 1.

20 Blachère and Sauvaget, op. cit., § 47, prescribe the placing, between the hemistichs of a verse, of the little flower customary in Arabic manuscripts and books. Considering the numerous signs already used in epigraphic editions I suggest simply leaving additional space instead, which, also, in the West is generally found to be more pleasing to the eye.

21 Inscriptions like No. 79 in Dijkema, op. cit., require in this respect much inventiveness on the part of the editor.

22 This is the generally accepted convention in text editions. The reason why the siglum is placed not before but after the variant reading is probably because editors wish to be consistent with other kinds of references, such as references to footnotes, which are conventionally placed not preceding but following the statement they belong to.

23 Dijkema, op. cit., inscription No. 78, verse c (the braces there printed are to be ignored).

24 For the editor himself the inclusion of a translation and a commentary has the advantage of allowing him another check on the correctness of his edition. In my work on my own edition this has helped me to detect quite a number of erroneous readings in time.

25 With respect to photographs of inscriptions I take this opportunity to convey for the use of future epigraphists the main lessons I learned while photographing the extant Ottoman monumental inscriptions in Edirne: (1) Inscriptions on photographs tend to grow less legible very quickly as the angle of the axis of the lens of the camera with the surface of the stone grows less than 90°. Legibility is best ensured if the axis of the lens coincides precisely with an imaginary perpendicular dropped on the very centre of the stone (or the portion of the stone) to be studied. (2) Detail of very worn inscriptions is best made visible with skimming light, that of other inscriptions with indirect lighting.